INVESTIGATING THE HEBREW CONCEPT ברית *BERIT* (COVENANT) IN GENESIS 31:1-55 AND ITS THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS TO THE CONCEPT OF *AITUTUKET* IN TRADITIONAL ITESO COVENANT RELATIONSHIPS

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of Theology
St. Paul's University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

---

by
Japheth Okware Ochorokodi
October 2023

INVESTIGATING THE HEBREW CONCEPT OF ברית BERIT (IN GENESIS 31:1-55) AND ITS THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS TO THE CONCEPT OF*AITUTUKET* IN TRADITIONAL ITESO COVENANT RELATIONSHIPS

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of Theology
St. Paul's University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Japheth Okware Ochorokodi
October 2023

Supervisors:
Lead Supervisor: Prof. Diphus Chosefu Chemorion
Co-Supervisor: Dr. Sammy Githuku
October 2023

DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University. No part of this thesis may be reproduced without the prior written permission of the author and/or St. Paul's University.

Signature of the Student .....

Word Count: 86,566

Declaration by Supervisors

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as University Supervisors.

Lead Supervisor: Rev. Prof Diphus Chemorion

Signature: ..... . Date:

Co Supervisor: Rev. Dr Sammy Githuku

Signature: ..... Date .....

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To God be the Glory. I would not be able to come this far, had it not been for the creator's gracious provisions, our God whose loving-kindness transcends all life hindrances along the path of His children. I will remain indebted to Professor Diphus Chemorion, my first supervisor who has supervised this work thus far and whose patience never fainted in the course of this study journey. I appreciate the guidance of Dr. Sammy Githuku, my second supervisor who supervised the progress of this work. May God truly bless the good intentions of my supervisors. The SPU Library staff who served indiscriminately are part of this success and I applaud them. I will remain thankful to my family and my employer Seventh-day Adventist Church (West Kenya Union Conference) for the full cost of this program and all other support extended to me to this end. The list will remain long as I remain grateful to everyone whose goodwill has brought me this far.

ABSTRACT

One of the challenges facing society today is infidelity in agreements that are mutually and legally entered upon. As much as legal systems are used to address the overwhelming challenges of broken agreements, not much is achieved because of infidelity and violation of the instruments upon which relationships are built. In both the Ancient Near Eastern and Traditional African societies, covenants were made between two or more parties to establish a relationship with a particular purpose. Although some covenants were respected, many were broken. Regardless of whether or not Old Testament covenants were respected, they are laden with theological lessons that may benefit contemporary people. This study sought to find out how the Hebrew concept of *Berith* (covenant) could be used to strengthen the traditional Iteso *Aitutuket* agreement relationships. Both narrative criticism and ethnographical approaches were used in the study. The empirical part of the study was done among the Iteso people of Malaba region. Data from key informants was obtained through questionnaires, observation checklists and interview guides. The investigation on the Jacob-Laban covenant relationship in Genesis 31:1-55 and the traditional Iteso concept of *Aitutuket* (covenant) revealed that theological insights from the human covenants in the Old Testament could enrich contemporary Iteso concepts of *Aitutuket* (covenant) and enhance peaceful covenantal relationships.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION 3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS i
ABSTRACT ii
GLOSSARY xii
CHAPTER ONE 1
INTRODUCTION 1
1.0 Introduction 1
1.1 Background of the Study 1
1.2 Statement of the Problem 3
1.3 Purpose of Study 4
1.4 Specific Objectives 4
1.5 Research Questions 4
1.6 Significance of the Study 5
1.7 Scope of the study 6
1.8 Methodology 6
1.8. 1 Exegetical Method. 6
1.8.2. Narrative criticism 7
1.8.3 Ethnographical Method 9
1.8.5 Thematic Framework Indexing: 11
CHAPTER TWO 14
THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST (ANE) WORLD AND COVENANT RELATIONSHIPS 14
2.1. Introduction. 14
2.2. History and geographical location of the Ancient Near East 14
2.2.1. Significant Physical features (ANE) 14
2.2.3. Social responsibility 16
2.3. The Hittites 18
2.3.1 Identity 18
2.3.2 Political Advances 19
2.3.4. Hittites and Covenant Life 20
2.3.5. Political History of Hatti 22
2.4. Hittite Covenants 24
2.4.1. Vassal-Suzerain covenant/Treaties 25
2.4.2. Equal status/Parity Covenants 25

2.4.3. Diplomatic Marriages 25
2.4.4. Political covenants 25
2.5 Characteristics of Hittite Covenants. 27
CHAPTER THREE 43
COVENANT HISTORICITY IN ISRAEL 43
3.0. Introduction 43
3.1. Covenant Historicity 43
3.2. The Genesis Account of Covenants 45
3.3. Covenants and the Hebrew Religious Life. 48
3.4. Major Hebrew Covenants 50
3.4.1. Noahic Covenant 50
3.4.2 Abrahamic Covenant 55
3.4.3 Mosaic Covenant 58
3.4.4 The Davidic Covenant: 62
3.5 Other Significant Covenants 66
3.6 Elements of the OT Covenants 67
3.6.1. Preamble: 67
3.6.2. Historical Prologue 68
3.6.3. Covenant stipulations 69
3.6.4. Curses 71
3.6.5. Blessings. 72
3.6.6 Observable Hebrew Covenant elements In The Pentateuch 72
3.6.7. Covenant formula 73
3.6.8. Covenant symbols 74
3.6.9. Mutual Commitment 75
3.6.10. Prevalence of Hesed (loving kindness) 75
3.6.11. Covenant and the New Testaments. 77
3.7 The Theology of Old Testaments Covenants 78
3.8. A factual nature of divine revelation 81
3.9. Declaration of God's will to His people. 81
3.10. Existence of a binding relationship created between the covenant contracting parties 82
3.11. Initiation of a new arrangement 82
3.12. Ownership and exchange of interest 83
3.13. Conclusion. 83

CHAPTER FOUR....86
EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF GENESIS 31:1-55....86
4.0 Introduction....86
4:1 Context of Genesis 31....86
4.2 The structure of Genesis 31:1-55....90
4.3 Exegetical Expose- Verse by verse....91
4.4 SUMMARY SCALE OF THE NARRATIVE PLOT....116
4.5 Summary of the Chapter.....122
CHAPTER FIVE....126
THE TRADITIONAL ITESO COVENANT RELATIONSHIPS....126
5.0 Introduction:....126
5.1 Background:....127
5.2 The Political structure of the Iteso people.....128
5.3 Iteso Traditional Social Life....130
5.4 Iteso Economic Activities....131
5.5.1 'Aitutuket'- Iteso understanding....132
5.6 Covenant Existence....133
5.7 Types of Covenants....134
5.8. Covenant features:....135
5.8.1. Ebusaa/Alcohol....136
5.8.2. Ekaree/Ululation....136
5.8.3. Assembly of Elders.....136
5.8.4. Eating and drinking.....137
5.8.5. Sacrifices....138
5.8.6. Celebrations....138
5.9. The Iteso Traditional Covenants....138
5.9.0 Introduction:....138
5.9.1. Boundary Covenants....139
5.9.2 Treatment Covenants (Evasit ceremony)....140
5.9.3 Ekurumane Inheritance....141
5.9.4 Akitutukin....142
5.9.5 Ebela....143
5.9.6 Akou....144

5.9.7 Akipukokin....145
5.9.8 Abanya....146
5.9.9 Emanyit....146
5.9.10 Dowry payment....147
5.9.11 Agwelakin....148
5.9.12 Alomakin....149
5.9.13. Reconciliatory covenant....150
5.9.14. Labour / Ekitai Covenant....150
5.9.15 Elders Covenants....151
5.9.16. Evanit....151
5.9.17 Amuruokin ekiror (Naming)....152
5.9.18. Anyamiaar atap (Eating new food)....153
5.9.19. Akipukokin....153
5.9.20. Cattle herding....154
5.9.21. House Building Agreement....155
5.9.22. Sales/Agwelakin....156
5.9.23. Pledges /Abanya....156
5.9.24 Peace Covenant- Bukusu Verses Iteso....157
5.9.25. Community Covenants....158
5.9.26. Religious Covenants....158
5.9.27. Traditional Iteso Covenants and Marriage....159
5.9.27.1. Marriage Covenant preliminaries.....159
5.9.27.2. Maturity....160
5.9.27.3. Official indications....160
5.9.27.4. Marriage Stipulations....161
5.9.27.5. Marriage covenant preparedness.....162
5.9.28. Types of marriage covenants among the Iteso community....162
5.9.28.1. Akitani or Child betrothal (Appendix 7 i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1)....162
5.9.28.2. Apuseru or Ekirumane/Inheritance....163
5.9.28.3. Surrogate Marriage....163
5.9.28.4. Dowry....163
5.9.28.5. Divorce & Covenants....165
5.10. Clan and Inter-clan Covenants Among the Iteso....166
5.10.1 Akivan:....166
5.10.2. Evasit....167
5.10.3. Aramar/Akilot akanin (washing hands)....168
5.10.4. Ekutet/exuming.....169
5.10.5 Akisuk Imwatuk....169
5.10. 6. Ekitai (Inter-clan)....170

5.10.7. Aporiaun Ikoku....171
5.10.8. Akipudun-Ikoku....172
5.11. Iteso Covenant symbols....173
5.11.1. Local brew/busaa....174
5.11.2. Ejamu/(Skin)....174
5.11.3. Akojoo (....174
5.11.4. Drum....175
5.11.5. Horn....175
5.11.6. A spear....175
5.11.7. Ekimeng' (tree)....176
5.11.8. Animal skin....176
5.11.9. Brown Ugali....177
5.11.10. Echodit....177
5.11.11. Ekosilet....177
5.11.12. Emuria....178
5.11.13. A broom....178
5.11.14. Calabash....179
5.11.15. Akilong (bathing)....180
5.11.16. Akigwan ceremony....180
5.11.17. Echadut....180
5.11.18. Ebela/Egaat-....181
5.11.19. Ekwasiet (animal tail) -....181
5.12. 0. Benefits brought about by the practice of Aitutuket in relationships....182
5.12.1 Akimorikina (Unity)....182
5.12.2 Ayongara (Respect): -....183
5.12.3. Victory in war....183
5.12.4. Political stability....184
5.12.5. Economic stability....184
5.12.6. Living in peace....186
5.12.7. Marriage institutional stability....186
5.12.8. Promote the Iteso culture....186
5.12.9. Leadership integrity....186
5.13. Covenant relationship challenges....187
5.13.1. Aitutuket offenders....189
5.13.2. Violence....190
5.13.3. Witchcraft....190
5.13.4 Early pregnancy....191
5.13.5 Relatives' marriage....191

5.14. Appeals 191
5.14.0. Introduction: Several cases had chances for appeals against the rullings 191
5.14.1. Land demarcation 191
5.15.1 Similarities between the Iteso covenant and the Christian covenants of today. 193
5.15.2. Marriage – weddings. 193
5.15 .2. Both give advice to the community 193
5.15.3. Both sides advocate for peace 193
5.15.4. Both undertake an elaborate naming process 194
5.16. Recommendations regarding the use of Aitutuket 194
5.17. The Iteso Covenant Structure 195
5.17.1. Venue 196
5.17.2. Meetings 196
5.17.3. Agreement 197
5.17.4 Agenda 197
5.17.5. Regulations 198
5.17.6. Witnesses or no Witnesses: 198
5.17.7. Curses and Blessings: 199
5.17.8. Covenant between the Iteso and the sabaots: 199
5.18. Analysis of the Characteristic Features/elements of the Traditional Iteso Covenant 200
5.18.0 Introduction: 200
5.18.1. Etem: 200
5.18.2. Alimor/Introduction 201
5.18.3. Ikisila /Regulations 201
5.18.4. Luketeunak/Witnesses 201
5.18.5. Ilami/Curses 202
5.18.6. Asulweny/Blessings 203
5.18.7. Akites /Symbols 203
5.18.8. Epuchit /Celebration 204
5.19. The Traditional Iteso Covenant Relevancy to society today 204
5.20. Chapter conclussion: 204
CHAPTER SIX 206
COMPARISON OF THE HEBREW AND THE TRADITIONAL ITESO COVENANT RELATIONSHIPS 206
6.0. Introduction 206
6.1. Covenant Characteristics' Comparison. 206

6.2 Traditional Iteso Covenant and the ANE-Hebrew Elements Comparison 209
6.3. The Theology of the Covenants Compared 214
6.3.1. ברת (Berit) 214
6.3.2. Parity covenants. 217
6.3.3. Hexateuch 218
6.3.4. ברת שלום (berit shalom) 218
6.3.5. Promise 219
6.3.6. Father-son relationship 220
6.3.7. Declaration of God's will 220
6.3.8. Human position before a deity 221
6.3.9. Initiation of a new order 221
6.3.10. Divine revelation 222
6.3.11. (i) Comparative Tables-Hebrew and the Iteso (Characterizetion) 222
6.3.12. Covenant Objectives and Philosophy 224
CHAPTER SEVEN 229
DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE OLD TESTAMENT COVENANTS AND AITUTUKET 229
7.1. Theological insights. 230
(i) Family values: 230
(ii) Attitude reveals the hidden secrets of the heart and mind. 233
(iii) The influence of deities on covenant relationships: 235
(iv) Cooperate decisions: 237
(v) Covenant infidelity. 239
(vi) The book of Lamentations 1:20 240
(vii) Political and leadership formation 241
(viii). Intercultural effects to covenant relationship 242
(ix). The effects of Character formation in children. 244
(x). Divine influence: 245
(xi). Forgiveness option/grace /mercy 245
(xii). Human condition/sin effect 246
(xiii). Promises 247
(xiv). Salvation theme 248
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS 250
8.0 Introduction 250
8.1 Conclusion 250
8.2. Recommendations 257
APPENDICES: 266

APPENDIX 1. Legal protocals - Research Licenses 266
Research Authorization 268
(i) : The Ancient Near East 269
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH - PRELIMINARIES: 273
AITUTUKET AMONG THE ITESO PEOPLE AMUKURA SUBLOCATION (BUSIA COUNTY) 273
(i). Introduction 273
(ii). Development of Instruments 273
(iii). Methodology 273
Data Collection Appendix 4. 274
Semi-structured tools 274
(i). Structured tools 274
(i). Focus group tool 274
(ii). Observation 275
(iv). Justification 275
(V). Permits/Approvals 275
(vi). Respondent Recruitment 275
(vii). Sessions 276
APPENDIX 5 278
(i). STUDY SAMPLE POPULATION: FOCUS GROUP OF 20 PARTICIPANTS AGES 30-40 278
APPENDIX: 6 281
RESPONDENTS AND THEIR RESPONSES 281
(i). Interview Guide 281
(iv). Thematic Framework (Indexing) 282
APPENDIX: 7 283
DATA PRESENTATION: (Focus Group Discussion sessions) 283
(i). AGE GROUP 30-40 283
(ii). AGE GROUP 40-50: 291
(iii). AG3: 50-70yrs – 298
APPENDIX 8 311

ANALYSIS 311
(viii). Covenant disadvantages 312
(ix). Solution to Covenant challenges 312
(x). Covenant artefacts/symbols 313
APPENDIX 9 314
COVENANT PRESENTATION 314
(i). Significant covenantal ties among the Iteso people 314
(ii). Recommendations 314

GLOSSARY

1. *Aitutuket* – This is a Covenant or an agreement between two parties
2. *Aitutukin*-To Compress or to insist or ensure that the decision taken is not easy to be undone.
3. *Akimorikina* – Unity. Staying together. Embracing unity
4. *Akipudun* – Bringing to the public as in showing a newborn baby the people or non-family members of the community.
5. *Akirosia* – Double-dealing. Mostly used for those who engage in immoral behaviors of having affairs with other women while in marriage.
6. *Akisuk Imwatuk- A ceremony of receiving twin children shortly after giving birth*
7. *Akivan/Ekivane*- Iteso ceremony to receive a newly married first wife (also- Bathing ceremony).
8. *Amaran ketome*- This is an Elephant's rib used in traditional covenants such as *akigwan* when a newly married wife is welcomed to her new home.
9. *Aporiaun Ikoku*- A procedure through which a woman who has lost many children through death adopts her child at birth. When a child is born, it is given to some other woman who goes and brings the child up as her own child and finally returns the child back to the original mother.
10. *Apuseru* – Widows. These are those ladies whose husbands died
11. *Aramar/Akilot akanin*- Kumbukumbu, remembrance of the departed relative
12. *Ateker*- Tribe. These are other ethnic communities that lived with the iteso
13. *Atenus* – This is a drum made of animal hides. A round-like drum used to produce sound and for warning signals or music.
14. *Atuket*- These are meetings officially called by a leader with the agenda to be discussed and agreed upon. Such meetings could be of covenant processes.
15. *Atukokin* – This is a delegates' meeting. It is not just a meeting, but a coming together of delegates of the called meeting.

16. *Ayong'ara* – Respect for one another. Keeping the spirit of respect one for another.
17. *Ebela/Egaat*- This is a leader's rod, staff which acts as a symbol of power held by a leader e.g. of a clan or a political leader.
18. *Ebulesit*- Man of God anointed for a particular work.
19. *Ekachudan*- A witch/night runner.
20. *Ekaraban*- Advocate. One who speaks on behalf of another in places like the elders' council.
21. *Ekek*- Clan. This is an administrative unit of the Iteso comprising members of kinsmen.
22. *Ekimen'g* – A specific species of a tree used when blessing the loyal
23. *Ekirumane* - Inheritance. This is a form of marriage that comes to a widow by a brother-in-law or one of the family members who inherits the widow.
24. *Ekutet* - ceremony of exhuming the dead as a way of appeasing the ancestors.
25. *Ekwasiet* - This is a cow's tail well made for authority. Like *Ebela*, some leaders preferred *Ekwasiet* to *Ebela* as their symbol of power
26. *Emurwon* – This is a prophet/seer, a personwho claims to read times and prophesy things.
27. *Epali* – Doing something without shame. Shameless behavior.
28. *Eparas* – A specific species of a tree used in cursing offenders
29. *Evasit* - A married woman who has violated the marriage covenant stipulation and hence brought sickness to the children goes through the cleansing ceremony called *Evasit*
30. *Loidokokino* – On top of the previous a deal.
31. *Lokakurmi* - Father of the widow.
32. *Mumia* – From the word one hundred, was a secret name used for the Iteso warriors by the Wanga people of western Kenya during war saying that the Iteso people killed in hundreds. From the Kiswahili word Mia-hundred

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. KJV - King James Version
2. O. T - Old Testaments
3. N.T. - New Testaments
4. ANE - Ancient Near East
5. Ch - A biblical passage referred to as a chapter
6. Akk – Akkadians
7. R.S.V – Revised Standard Bible.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter introduces the subject of research that was conducted through Exegetical and Ethnographical methods. The chapter addresses the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of study, specific objectives, research questions and significance of study, methodology, and outline of the chapters. Every segment mentioned was attended to within its context with the view to achieve the specific objectives of study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Covenants, also refered to as Contracts, treaties, pacts, accords, agreements, arrangements, or deals, are instruments that are widely used in the contemporary world to establish relationships of different kinds. Some of these relationships revolve around areas such as economic activities that attract agreements, political pursuits that involve coalution and engagement agreements, religiouse practices that call for exemplary representations and social relationships that include specific involvements such as marriage, boundaries etc. The history of covenants can however be traced back to ancient civilizations. In both the Ancient Near Eastern and traditional African societies, covenants were made between two or more parties to establish a relationship with a particular purpose. Among the Hebrew people, the covenant between God and Israel led to a "Father-Son" relationship between God and the Israelites. Acording to (McCarthy, 1965:217), this meant that Israel was literally the son of God. It suggests that a covenant relationship meant more than an ordinary casual agreement between people.

One of the greatest roles of covenants in the ANE communities was maintenance of good relationship among neighboring nations. Different types of covenants were made between kings and sometimes inidviduals depending on the existing relationship and the status of the parties involved in the covenant. Parity treaties for example, were made between equal nations while Suzerain-Vassal treaties were made between superior and inferior nations. These covenants however did not guarantee permanent cordial relationship as expected. (Ezek 16:59; Isa 24:5, 1 Kings, 11; Deut 29:25). It therefore surgests that peace agreements would be violated and nations would revert to war regardless of the covenants entered.

This goes without saying that the violation of agreements witnessed in the world today is not entirely a new phenomenon. It was common even in the ancient near East and consequences for breaking the covenants were meted in accordance with the terms of the covenant.
Violation of covenants was also witnessed in the relationship between the nation of Israel and their God. Mendenhall argues that although the ancient tradition held that a covenant relationship was stronger than kinship relationship, the Jews as a nation never rested from conflicting with their God in terms of covenant relationship (Mendenhall, 1954:51).

It is phenomenological that the main idea behind covenants is the security of a relationship between two parties that have agreed to engage with each other. It is also true that covenants all over face fidelity challenges. In reference to the Mosaic covenant, God through prophet Jeremiah declares that "the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenants which I made with their fathers" (Jer.11:10ff, 11: 8-10; 1912:9,4, 14). This declaration in the first-person form is God's own indication of how Israel failed in upholding the covenant entered, hence affecting their relationship. But in spite of violating God's covenant several times, Israel's solidarity as portrayed in the Biblical narratives can only be attributed to the covenant relationship. This means that both successful and failed Old Testament covenants provide us with vital lessons for establishing relationships.

Among the Hittites for example, covenant violations were treated with the up-most pain to the violators including the extended family members of the offender (Beckman, 1996:36). As presented by Beckman, the intensity of the punishment categorized as a curse displays an elaborate extent for which the practice was appreciated among them. The Hebrews in equal strength, demonstrate the same phenomena in their covenant relationships by the very fact that curses were part of the treatment extended to the violators (Collins, 2004:12-20). The impression created by both the Hittites and the Hebrews demonstrates an existing vice of violations at all social levels and throughout history.

The story of Laban and Jacob recorded in the book of Genesis 31:1-55, illustrates how covenant relationships can be restored in spite of broken deals. In Gen 31:7, Jacob painfully explains the pain in his heart to his wives, lamenting how their father (Laban) had violated his covenant rights ten times in a row ver a period of 21 years. While Jacob complained of the unfaithfulness of Laban in keeping covenants, he (Jacob) also added to the breakdown of relationship with Laban by escaping with his family without informing Laban, (Gen 31:20-21 a matter that ends up constituting the strongest charge against Jacob by Laban at Mt Gilead (Gen 31:26-30). However, the peace between Jacob and Laban was restored through a divinely directed covenant that they made at Mizpah (Gen 31:44-50).

The traditional Iteso people lived a life of covenant relationship by nature with equal curse-levels as those among the Hebrews and the Hittites, as explained by a former colonial District Commissioner J.C.D. Lawrence (Lawrence, 1957:268-271). There were several memoranda of understanding among the Iteso communities but many of the agreements were also violated. Violation of agreements among the Iteso, just like the case in other Kenyan communities, continues to take place even today and if this problem is not addressed the moral fabric of the society could be ruined completely. Given that infidelity is also witnessed among the Iteso Christians, it is necessary to explore the extent to which Old Testament mechanisms of preserving covenant relationships could be adopted among the Iteso Christians.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In the Old Testament and the larger Ancient Near East civilizations, covenants were made to establish relationships between two or more parties. Some of the covenants were respected by the key players but many of them were also violated. Similarly, in many contemporary societies including the Iteso, some agreements are respected but there is a marked increase in infidelity to the covenant relationships among the covenanters. Covenant infidelity today is responsible for the rampant corruption where people assigned to offices of trust do not respect the oath of office as expected. These include religious, social, economic, and political covenant relationships. Religious covenants were and are still expected to bring about the faithfulness believers have to

their God. However, many covenants have been disrespected. Socially, marriages break now and again, and family relationships that were entered through a covenant end up breaking. This shows that covenant relationships entered, no longer stand for what they are meant to. Regardless of whether or not Old Testament covenants were respected, they are laden with theological lessons that may benefit contemporary people. This study seeks to investigate the Jacob-Laban covenant relationship in Genesis 31:1-35 with an overall goal of deriving theological insights that can enrich the traditional Iteso concept of *Aitutuket* (covenant).

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to investigate theological insights underpinning Hebrew covenants, concerning Jacob-Laban covenant, and how they may be applied to strengthen traditional Iteso agreements.

1.4 Specific Objectives

1.To analyze the main elements of Hebrew covenant relationships.
2.To analyze the characteristic features of traditional Iteso covenant relationships.
3.To show the comparison between the Hebrew and traditional Iteso covenant relationships.
4.To illustrate how Hebrew covenant relationships can inform the traditional Iteso and the contemporary society on mutual agreements.
5.To identify theological insights from the Hebrew covenant relationships that can enrich the traditional and contemporary Iteso covenant relationships.

1.5 Research Questions

1.What are the main elements of Hebrew covenant relationships?
2.What are the characteristical features of traditional Iteso covenant relationships?
3.What are the similarities and differences between the Hebrew and traditional Iteso covenant relationships?

4. How can Hebrew covenant relationships inform the traditional and contemporary Iteso society on mutual agreements?
5. What theological lessons can be drawn from the Hebrew covenant relationship to strengthen the traditional and contemporary Iteso covenant relationships?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The Twenty-first century is characterized by the technological developments that have greatly affected society in terms of covenant relationships. A covenant relationship in its entirety calls for consistent integrity whether in public or private life. Technology has provided an opportunity where one can declare faithfulness to a covenant while it is not true because technology has aided infidelity without responsibility. People can cheat in their marriages by way of phones, defraud others, and even institutions against their covenant commitments and oath of office through technology.

In communications for example, men and women have had it possible to chat, talk, and even send nude appearances to their extramarital partners even when in the same house with their covenant partners. Indicating different positions and locations when not in the referred location has caught covenant partners on the wrong footing. This research provided insights that will aid in instilling values and enhancing commitments to covenant demands against the influence and effects of technology.

To the Iteso of Kenya, some of the effects of this development is infidelity in religious, social, economic, and political covenant relationships. In trying to address this challenge, society heavily relies on the legal framework that leaves the rule of compromise. The legal system so far just as it was in the Old Testaments, presents in-adequacy in reducing the level of covenant infidelity that has led to social rote in terms of relationships.

This study samples the Iteso people of Busia County in reference to the subject of study and the Hebrew people with a background from the Ancient Near Eastern world's cultural practices on

covenant relationships through a comparative study with the view that a theological insight will result from the study. This is expected to make a significant theological contribution to the Iteso and the general society on fidelity and infidelity to covenant relationships.

This study is not only be beneficial to the Iteso people but to all those that will find a need in the research as presented on how fidelity to mutual agreements can be restored in covenant relationships. The theological reflections that will be deduced from this research will not only benefit the scholarly field, but will also bring a need to compare social behaviors in relations to covenant relationships to the general readership on the need of a better society.

1.7 Scope of the study

This study bound itself to the background and context of **ברת** (*berit*) in Genesis 31:1-55. It is delimited to Biblical texts and theology that help to shed light on the subject in the Old Testament. The study is specifically grounded on the Hebrew concept of בְּרִת in Genesis 31:1-55 and how it can enrich the concept of *Aitutuket* in traditional Iteso agreements. The researcher utilized information from secondary sources such as textbooks, journals, periodicals, magazines and newspapers and field research about the Iteso people of Amukura village of Busia County-Kenya.

1.8 Methodology

This study has both literary and empirical research components. The researcher made use of mixed research methods in both the exegetical and ethnographical research methods to address the research problem.

1.8. 1 Exegetical Method

Felix (2009:7) discusses the usage of Biblical exegesis pointing out more than twenty methods used in Biblical exegesis. They range from biblical criticism to critical methods. Exegesis is a careful investigation of the original meaning of texts in their historical and literal contexts, it is

argued by Felix in the usage of the Greek word *ex* meaning out, and *agein* meaning to lead with the purpose of suggesting that an exegesis is a Biblical approach that seeks for the meaning of the word or passage from the word or passage itself.

Robert Bryant contests that every biblical interpreter battles with the danger of imposing his/her own ideas on the text and bending it towards his/her personal inclinations. His suggestion is that, for proper exegesis, the following thoughts and questions have to be considered.

Such ideas and questions are, what is known to the researcher about the text? What un-answered questions are there in the text, consider all possible translations of the text, analyze the form of the text, analyze the key concepts of the text, analyze the context of the text, and finally reflect on the text and write about the text. Genesis 31 is a text that exhibits several such potential and that requires an Exegetical method in exposing certain sections of interest in the text.

1.8.2. Narrative criticism

Narrative criticism was one of the exegetical research methods that was used for an in-depth analysis of the Jacob-Laban covenant relationship narrative in Genesis 31:1-35. There were several reasons for choosing the narrative criticism approach. First, the passage under investigation is mainly in a narrative genre and this makes narrative criticism the most preferable approach to analysis (Waltke, 2007:93).

Secondly, the choice of narrative criticism as a tool for analyzing narratives is also supported by Holbert (1991:60-61), who argues that there cannot be any understanding of the Biblical narration unless the Bible is approached through "narrative analysis. The steps involved in Narrative criticism that begins from the initial stage through the climax to resolution, presents as the best approach to the Hebrew narratives' understanding.

The story of Jacob and his uncle Laban can be classified as a Narrative because of its plot, setting and flow that begins from a family argument through several engagements to the agreement/covenant and culminates at the ceremony of departure on the heals. It presents a resolution that finds God at the centre of it all, whose interest is to begin a generation that will finally accomplish His purpose through Christ the final redeemer.

One other most prominent scholars of narrative criticism approach is Alter (1981:3-16). Born in 1935 in America, Robert climbed through the academic ladder and ended up as a professor of Hebrew language and comparative literature at California University from 1967. In his book entitled "The Art of Biblical Narrative" he discusses the importance of narrative criticism as an art of understanding the scriptures. He defines a literary analysis as "that manifold variation of minutely discriminating attentions, tone, sound, imagery, syntax, narrative viewpoint, compassionate units and much else the kind of disciplined attention."

According to Alter, the treatment of these small elements of literary honor is what brings out this meaning in a text. Alter uses an illustration from Genesis 38, which brings forward Judah, his sons and a daughter-in law to play and finds the position of the narrative between the tragic purported death of Joseph's son of Jacob as a passage out of place (Alter 1981: 3-16). He pinpoints a situation in the plot and connects them to the characters and finds out that "this sort of critical discussion focuses attention on it in a more nuanced way" which the historical method did not consider (Alter, 2011:12).

Tremper Longman, is one other renowned scholars of a literary approach to the analysis of biblical texts (Longman, 1987:83-85). In his works on literary approaches to Biblical interpretation, he points out that narrative analysis entails the examination of dynamics such as author/reader relationship, implied author/implied reader and narrator/narrattee The Laban-Jacob narrative attracts the reader to observe aspects of the author, reader relationship, implied other/implied outher understanding and narrator and narratee relationship.

In his arguments, he classifies types of narratives into first- and third-person narratives. He indicates that in first-person narratives, the narrator is usually a character in the story and has a limited point of view. However, in the third person narratives, the characters are referred to impersonally and the narrator may display omniscience and omnipresence (Longman, 1987: 85-

86). He points out that the narrator is the one who mediates perspectives on the characters and the events in the story and therefore, in analyzing narratives, it is important to analytically identify which part of the selected narrative shows the narrator's point of view.

Gunn's work on Narratology gives more enlightenment on the use of the method to interpret narratives in the bible. His perception is illustrated in the way he illustrates that "a narrative constructs a verbal world that imitates and centers on human characters (for personification) their speech and actions, their relations and desires, their ideas and institution".
He further argues that there are usually at least two characters but generally three or more characters in a story i.e., the voice of the narrator, the listener, and the reader. According to him, a narrative is distinguished from a genre by a plot which is a sequence of actions connected in terms of cause and effect leading from initial, situation through complications to the same sense of resolution (or revelation) (Gunn, 1993:2).

Finally, in the chart of exegetical methods, Gorman, (2001:196) classifies narrative criticism under literary and rhetorical analysis. He indicates that this method treats the text as a finished product and its goal is to analyze the text in its final form, with respect to thematic lines, character development, point of view or other appropriate features of narratives. Gorman also indicates that the sample questions in this approach are; what is the plot? What are the key points in the sequence events? How does the author portray the characters?

The narrative criticism methodology was applied in Chapter four in the exegetical analysis of Genesis 31-55, to identifie areas of significant impact in covenant relationship between Laban and Jacob.

1.8.3 Ethnographical Method

The ethnographic research method was used in the study of the Iteso concept of *Aitutuket* through a qualitative research approach. According to Osmer (2008:51), the ethnographical approach seeks to develop a description of a cultural or social group. Here, researchers examine

observable patterns, behaviors, customs, and their way of life. This is done through field work by participating in the life of a group and observing their day-to-day behaviors.

This includes conducting interviews, and the study of artifacts and symbols that express the group's identity and history as shown in appendix D & F attached. Osmer further argues that this approach is not only a detailed holistic description of a community but also depicts the way characteristic features of a community hung together in a coherent manner both in tensions and fissures (Osmer, 2008:51-52). Allen (2017:75) discusses Narrative Ethnography as a storied form of ethnographic research. He argues that while ethnographic stories feature the actions of others through description and interpretation, Ethnographer's experiences appear as personal narratives that are interwoven within the ethnographic narratives (Allen, 2017:75).

Using this method led the researcher into a deeper collection of data through interviews and observations both collectively and individually. The researcher endeavored to reach out to the Iteso community by sampling out a population in Amukura village of Busia County – Kenya with a specific target audience of 50 interviewees spread in the rations as presented in Appendix C and with segregated age brackets. Chapter five of this study presents data that was collected in the field through the ethnographic methodology. This method was applied when carrying out Qualitatitive research involving data collection of the sampled population as discussed in chapter five and explained in the appendices 2-6.

1.8.4. Thematic interpretation

Away from the historical development of the covenant concept, lies the reality that covenants are a unity of revelations derived from God's intentions to relate to His creation. Brill (1995) discusses the use of thematic interpretation to the Old Testament records and suggests that covenants are a holistic record of God's approach to a relationship.

Brill is persuaded that the writers in Judaism and in Antiquity including the New Testament writers looked at the Old Testaments they read as a unity and as an end product of a development and God's revelation. Thematic interpretation views Israel's religion as a unity and a totality and one coherent past tradition that leads to the pronouncement that there is only one God (Brill, 1995:27-29). In my view, this approach to the understanding of Old Testament's covenants services due to the nature of the relationship that existed between God and His people including Jacob whose covenant narrative in Genesis 31 is considered in this study. This is the persuasion in the minds of the researcher when discussing issues in chapter 3 & 4.

1.8.5 Thematic Framework Indexing

Ritchie and Lewis (2013:220) describe the thematic framework as the central component of the method used to classify and organize data according to key themes, concepts and emergent categories. This approach to qualitative data analysis and study leaves the process dependent on the type of research undertaken, to have its own thematic framework. According to them, each study has its own distinct thematic framework comprising a series of main themes subdivided by a succession of related subtopics.

With this analysis, one can look at the collected data and find distinct themes. It is usually used to describe a group of texts, like an interview or a set of transcripts. The researcher closely looks at the data to find common themes: repeated ideas, topics, or ways of putting things. The themes observed in the data collected were structured to take the form of questions that were asked and answered per age group.

The qualitative research conducted in Malaba Village of Busia County came up with the themes that enhanced the specific objectives of this research in accordance with the framework structure preferred.

Summary of the methods used

	METHODOLOGY	USED IN CHAPTER
1	Thematic Interpretation	3
2	Narrative Criticism	4
3	Exegetical Method	4
4	Thematic Frame Work Indexing	5
5	Ethnographical Method	5

1.9 Organization of the study

This work is organized into 8 chapters, starting with this present chapter that presents the background, problem statement and the objectives of the study. In chapter 2, attention is given to the ANE and covenant relationships. In this chapter, the various types of ANE covenants are discussed and especially the Hittite covenants which had a lot of influence on the structure of the Hebrew covenants. Chapter 3 deals with the historicity of covenants in the Old Testament and several Hebrew covenants are discussed. In chapter 4, an exegesis of Genesis 31:1-55 is carried out, highlighting the covenant relationship between Jacob and Laban. In chapter 5, we look at the Iteso covenants and their major characteristics. In chapter 6, a comparison of Old Testament and Hebrew covenants is undertaken. Chapter 7 demonstrates how the Hebrew covenants can enrich the Iteso traditional covenants. The conclusion of the study is provided in Chapter 8.

Summary/Conclusion.

Chapter one presents a summary of what the research displayed in the effort to achieve the desired results. The cooperation received from the regulatory research bodies that include NACOSTI, which facilitated access to various libraries including McCmillian Library - Nairobi for the quantitative research conducted, the ministry of Education-Busia County office, The local Administration - Amukura Location, the goodwill of the Iteso community of Amukura in positive responses to the inquiries, the research assistants who helped in organizing, recording and interpreting the raw data from the Ateso Language to English contributed immensely in the

whole process of this research. The immense information documented in this thesis as guided by the research structure shown in the introduction bit which includes the background, statement of the problem, purpose of study, specific objectives, research questions, significance of the study, methodologies and the organization of the study, informs that the information is authentic and can be relied on.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST (ANE) WORLD AND COVENANT RELATIONSHIPS

2.1. Introduction

This chapter presents some of the prominent communities of the Ancient Near East and their practices of covenant relationships in their context. Special attention was given to the history and geographical location of the ANE from which the covenant relationships were practiced. The Hittite community; the political history that influenced their relationships, their political covenants, their legal literature, and the characteristics of their covenants are issues of discussion in this chapter. The significance of this chapter is seen in the way the background exposed will aid in the practical understanding of how the communities involved interacted with the practice of covenant relationships, with the view of radiating its values to the understanding of the Iteso covenant practices. The Iteso then become the beneficiaries of this enlightenment.

2.2. History and Geographical Location of the Ancient Near East

While the term Ancient Near East (ANE) is not commonly used today, Mieroop, (2007:1) traces its use to nineteenth-century scholarship, where it was used to identify the remains of the Ottoman Empire on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea. It is traditionally believed that the ANE extended from Asia Minor in the north by the way of Iran in the east and Persian-gulf to Egypt in the south with the Mediterranean Sea being taken as the western boundary beyond which the latter classical world begins and would be equated to a grand empire. It covers the Arabian Peninsula, Cyprus, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestinian territories, Syria, and Turkey. (Mieroop, 2007:1-2)

2.2.1. Significant Physical Features (ANE)

Looking at the physical features of the region we find the presence of three major rivers, namely the Tigris, Euphrates, and Nile, resulting in a population of pastoralists, nomads, and sedentary people who kept little cattle. One would agree with Woude, (1986:202-205) who argues that with this kind of natural topography, the area gave rise to and impacted cultural and political

constellations, which explains the existence of internal regional differences. The several/numerous tribes established in the area engaged in farming, cattle raising, and commerce, city-states, powerful kingdoms, power blocks, dynasties, and empires came up as a result of their variety.

2.2.2. ANE Civilization/Education

Acording to Woude, (1986:202-213), the Sumerians were the pioneers of the ANE civilization. As early as 4000 BC, they developed a writing system and they were able to create documents such as invoices, receipts, notes, and letters of credit that would have assisted in sustaining covenant relationships.

Brice & Bricket-Rees, (2016:10-15) urgue that the Sumerians championed the creation of scripts that led to today's alphabet, which resulted in the enormous impact seen in the first millennium and aided the documentation structure found in ANE to this day. The Mesopotamian influence became stronger in ANE schools throughout the second millennium, especially in Elam among the Hittites in northern Syria during the Amarna period (1400 BC). All documents were written in Babylonian, the diplomatic language of the time. This also explains why the Hittites maintained their covenant arrangements as they are in the record (Woude, 1986:202-213).

The Land of Hatti embraced the Babylonian educational culture that swept the region at the time and helped them to develop a documentation culture, in contrast to the Egyptians, who did not appear to be active in advancing their civilization, as evidenced by the lack of sufficient documentation in regions dominated by the Egyptian civilization (Woude, 1986:202-213; Brice & Bricket-Rees, 2016:10-15).

It is also observed that the approach taken by the Egyptians compared to the Babylonians is responsible for the evidenced scarcity of information in Egypt compared to the Babylonians. This also explains why documents are scarce in areas where the Egyptians were dominant, such

as Palestine and southern Syria, where little was preserved in terms of scripts, ceremonials, and dedicatory descriptions, even though Egypt was already developed in terms of political formation by 4000 BC (also called Old Kingdom by then). (Woude, 1986:202-213; Brice &Bricket-Rees, 2016:10-15)

Regrettably, the Egyptian traditions of the first millennium had the Phoenicians, Israelites, and Aramaeans, who employed pen, ink and papyrus in their literary work. This material used in documenting information that would be history later, had much of their knowledge lost as contrasted to the areas controlled by the Babylonian education system that engraved most of their documentation as a means of storage (Woude, 1986:202-213; Brice & Bricket-Rees, 2016:10-15). The historical benefit to the knowledge of covenants can then be un-mistakenly attributed to the Sumerian civilization that preserved the covenant practices to this day.

2.2.3. Social Responsibility

The ANE world had equally established legal system, which aided in the development of covenant writing and processes as a day-to-day way of life for the people. During the Sumerian period, *Aram Naharayim* (Mesopotamia) had already established legal systems that aided in the development of community relationships. King Sargon, assumed to have been the first political leader of *Aram Naharayim*, established the greatest city-state in Aram and expanded his dominion beyond his borders as early as 2600 BC (Hinson, 1973:14, 21-22). This advancement came with the need for order and discipile that established the culture of covenant relationships.

According to Woude, (1986:216), the Semites taught the Sumerians the *Lex-Talionis* rule of an eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth. However, it is not clear how this rule came to be until Moses utilized it as a covenant requirement or a curse. If it is true that the Semites acquired *Lex - Talionis* legislation from an earlier civilization as well, then most of the covenant legislation that was later used, may have received some influence from the earlier ones. How far the earlier ones began to exist may be a matter of faith and not empirical proof for the very fact that there are

traces of covenant pronouncements in Eden to the early human life, and this associates the early communities with their proximity to the earliest human life in Mesopotamia.

The Semites also introduced the concept of "*semi-private administration of justice*"(Woude, 1986:216). This law mandated the victim of the crime to bear the responsibility of bringing the offender to justice. It also advocated for the "*Law of inequality before the law*", which compelled people in higher social and professional levels to bear more responsibilities than those in lower social and professional levels when involved in crime. According to this law, if a person from a higher group committed an offense against a person from a lower category, the penalty was greater for the person in the higher category than for the person in the lower category, hence *the law of insufficient differentiation.* This legislation mandated that all offenses be punished, whether done deliberately or unintentionally.

Although the Sumerians drafted their rules to impose penalties rather than death, the Akkadians expanded them to include death sentences. These laws, which were inherited by subsequent communities such as the Babylonians, particularly under the leadership of Hammurabi, King of Babylon, formed the central element in covenant-making, and it is important to note their role in the making of covenants and agreements (Woude, 1986:216).

The Hittites, whose usage of covenants is key in this study research, seem to have drawn heavily from these Summerian and the Akkadian legal systems (Woude, 1986:216).
King Sagon of Sumer, who organized the greatest known military force by 2600 BC, was most likely to be one of the early rulers who extended their domains through covenants with the many city states listed in *Aram Nahayarim*.

Covenant relationships had already been in existence for over 2600 years and much longer if the Genesis account is to be considered by the time the Hittites came to the practice of covenant relationships in Northern Syria around 1400 B.C, aided by the diplomatic civilization of Babylon

that swept the region. The area's legal and economic growth may have been acquired due to the presence of the three rivers, namely the Euphrates, Tigris, and Nile, which drew people from all over the region for trade and settlement. It follows that such connections must have necessitated the establishment of solid institutions in order to preserve the region's social fabric through covenants (Finegan, 1969:9-10)

2.3. The Hittites

The Hittites stand out significantly in the history of the ancient communities that existed before and after the pronouncement of the Hebrew existence as a nation. This group of ancient communities presents significant covenant relationship practices that may have been used to inform the Israelites covenant relationship practices. This section of the study engages renowned scholars on the subject of covenants, and how covenants enhanced relationships in the Hittite society.

2.3.1 Identity

The identity of the Hittites of Anatolia has generated a significant amount of discussion in view of the Biblical Hittites featuring in Biblical texts. While Trevor.B. & Jessie. B, (2016:115) suggest that the term 'Hittite as described by modern historians, referring to the peoples of the late Bronze Age, who lived in the region of Hatti in north-central Anatolia is synonymous to the Anatolian Hittites, this idea initially originated around 19th century by academicians, who also argued that the people so named were related to the Hittites mentioned in biblical texts.

Historical records has it that the name Hittite is derived from the Assyrian term Hatti that designated the geographical area of central Anatolia as early as the Akkadian Empire under Sargon, as the term is also reflected in the name of the empire's capital city, Hattusa. Away from the Hebrew Canon, the land of Hatti is said to have been first discovered by a French explorer, Charles Texie in 1834 when he found some ruins of a great nation and that the nation did not resemble Rome or any other city around (Collins. B. J, 2007:1-22).

The city had many religious monuments and artefacts, and it was later discovered to be the Hittite city of *Baghatzkoy* on the high plateau of central Anatolia (current Turkey). This discovery though initially disputed later, found support in 1884 from a discovered Assyrian text that made repeated mention of the land called Hatti. The Egyptian text deciphered at the same time mentioned the names Ht/Heta/Hatti and the Hebrew Bible identified it as Hittim (Collins. B. J, 2007:1-22).

Genesis 23: 1-20 suggests that even as Abraham purchased land for the burial of his people, Hebron (Ezekiel 16:8-45) already had the Hittite inhabitants (Finegan, 1959:146). It is possible that the Hittites belonged to the house of Ham, the descendants of Ham the son of Canaan (Genesis 10:15). The Hamites (Genesis 10:6) had close interaction with Abraham - the Hebrew Patriarch. Abraham's movement to Canaan gave him an exposure to many communities/nations also called Amorites, (Gen 15:18-20), (Josh 1:4), hence leading to his much interaction with the Hittites that led to Abraham's grandson marrying a Hittite daughter (Siegfried, 1960:50); (Aaron, 1988:1123). They are depicted as living in the mountainous- regions of Canaan where they dominated even during David's time through Solomon as in Numbers 33:55-56.

2.3.2 Political Advances

The Hittites invaded Mesopotamia for the first time and conquered Babylon around 1550 BC. The early known Kings of the Hatti people included Libarnas and Mursilis I, who raided Babylon and carried away the golden statutes of Marduk the Babylonian pantheon. Mursilis ended the Babylonian dynasty and from thence onward, the Hittites were rivals only to the Egyptian dynasty (Finegan, 1976:113-114). Most of these conquests were associated to the strong covenant relationships with the ally armies.

The second king of Hatti who led Hatti to an empire status was King Suppiluliumas who controlled the whole Asia Minor around 14th C.B.C. Around this time, Egypt was a power to be considered. Although the king of Hatti was so powerful, the widowed queen of Egypt asked the

prince of Hatti to marry her as a way of appeasing him with the intention of pulling down the power of Hatti. This was a pure political agendum, considering that one of the Hittite political approaches to peace, besides the ordinary covenants, was marriage, and as earlier mentioned, King Amuru of Hatti once received girls as gifts (Beckman, 1996:4).

The queen of Egypt's desire for the prince of Hatti was political and since the ANE shared on certain traditions, it was desired of the queen that the prince of Hatti's approval of the proposed marriage would reduce the Hatti's aggression to Egypt. This could not be realized as the attempt by the prince of Hatti was reduced to his death (killed) while on the way to the queen of Egypt who promised to give him the throne of Egypt as king. This move that presents a covenant approach must have been a common practice when there was a desire to control a region (Finegan, 1976:113-114).

It would be appreciated that the rivalry between Ramses II of Egypt and Muwatali King of Hatti about 1300 BC ended when they entered into a peace treaty between the Hittites and the Egyptians, in which king Hattusilis of Egypt married a Hittite woman and from that time, peace existed between the two superpower nations (Siegfried, 1960: 500-501; Finegan, 1976:113-114).

Thus, giving a background of the Hittite covenant tradition as based on relationships explains why the Hittites were able to control the whole land of the Amorites without much resistance. Whenever war conquests could not succeed, the Hittites could then engage in treaties/covenants to create a lasting peace. As earlier indicated, most of the city-states in *Aram Naharayim* ended up being kingdoms hence, Aram being a region of many nations. For King Musilis to be able to conquer them all, covenants played a great role.

2.3.4. Hittites and Covenant Life

The Hebrew canon portrays the Hittites as one of the nations during the Israelites' entry into Canaan from Egypt under the leadership of Joshua. Among the nations Yahweh mentioned to

Joshua that should be cleared on entry, was the nation of Hatti, though it clearly appears that this did not happen to the Hittites. They remained in the land even during the later days of Israel as indicated by Yahweh that He too would not remove them from the land (Judges 2:3).

The Israelites cohabited with the Hittites and even gave them positions of respect and responsibilities (1Kings 10:29, 2Kings 7:6). As a nation that remained a constant threat to the sovereignty of Israel, the Hittites maintained their sovereignty in Canaan (Aaron, 1988:1124). It is almost unanimous that the Hittites were the descendants of Seth, the son of Canaan and grandson of Ham that settled in Asia Minor and got absorbed by the Indo-European Hittites. How this happened is probably by way of movements. These Hittites moved and mixed with the Indo-Europeans when they moved to Anatolia from the Northeast.

Genesis 15:18-20, 23:3-20, 26:34 indicates that some of the Hittites must have lived in Palestine in the time of Abraham and that Esau may probably have married from them. Although there could be a possible distinction between the Biblical Hittites and the secular Hittites since Biblical Hittites of the Bible lived in Canaan earlier than the Israelites and the Northern Syria where the Hittites' domination could be as a result of migrations (Siegfried, 1960:502). The linguistic approaches used by the scholars to differentiate the two, suggest that in Anatolia, part of what is now called Turkey and an archaeological site called *Hattushash* as one of the Hittite concentration points, is also identified as an Indo-European land and language that used cuneiform scripts hence Cuneiform Hittites (Siegfried, 1960:502).

The Indo-Europeans community identified is a group of Hittites identified by a Language which used hieroglyphic. They superseded those that used Cuneiform scripts hence gained the name Hieroglyphic Hittites who are also traced in Asia Minor and Northern Syria. It is observed that all the three groups of the Hittites, thus, the Anatolia Hittites, the Cuneiform Hittites and the Hieroglyphic Hittites that formed the Hittite empire with their capital city at Hattushash, have no connection with the Biblical Hittites. The idea above agrees with the observations made by North

(1966:231), that the term Hittites is not found in the ancient texts, but was invented by modern students who depended on the historical connection of these languages and the Kingdom of Hatti in Asia Minor, and that the use of the conventional name Hatti to them (Hieroglyphic) is irrelevant and confusing (Watchtower, 1988:1225).

Elwell.W, Beitzel. B, (1988:530–531) also argue for the connection between the Bible Hittite religion and the secular Hittite religion being far and distinct. His argument is that the Hittite people were one of Israel's key neighbours during the time in which the Bible was composed. There are possibilities that the Hittites may have lived in Palestine way before the Israelites, and their many interactions with the Israelites, Egyptians and the Babylonians may have helped them build their strong culture (Burns, 1991:78). This suggests that they may not have been the descendants of Jacob, but that the proximity would bring them to the early familiarities with the Israelites, and they may have shared many cultural elements of life that influenced each other.

2.3.5. Political History of Hatti

The Hittite Empire spread from the central Anatolian plateau to the borders of Mesopotamia and through the northern Levant. The territory occupied by the Hittites was mountainous and rocky though with rivers sufficient to support agriculture. The border of the Hittite Empire extended along much of the southern coast of the Black Sea to the Aegean and the Mediterranean, absorbing the lands of Pala and Arzawa, including ancient near east territory.

The 13th-century Karabel monument (in modern Turkey's Izmir province) marks the western extent of the empire. The empire extended south through Amurru (Syria) and inland to the city of Upi or Apina (Damascus). Further east, the Hittites took the lands of Mittani, with a southeast border abutting Assyria in Mari and then extending due north through Isuwa to the Black Sea. Critical principalities in the southeast include Kadesh, Aleppo, and Carchemish. The Hittite Empire was in power in the ANE from the 17th to the 12th century BC and collapsed prior to the founding of the kingdom of Israel in the region. (Bryce, 2005: 44, 154–189), (Elwell. W, Beitzel.

B, 1988:530–531). These arguments reduce the possibility of the Hittites influencing the Hebrew community in to covenant culture and instead suggesting that because the Hebrew lived their own culture and traditions, the Hittites may have copied the covenant traditions from the Hebrews since they were neighbours.

The political growth of Hatti could therefore be attributed to both military conquest and mutual covenant processes. It would also be appreciated that these are the times when Egypt and many city-states in Palestine were making their way to control the region. It is also argued by other scholars that Israel's covenant with Yahweh is likely to have drawn its structure from 2000 BC. Hittite treaties follow a rigid formula and as observed, it could take one of the two forms that include the Parity and the Suzerain-Vassal form. The Hittite Kingdom, with its capital in Hattusa (modern Bogazkale, in central Turkey), was a late Bronze Age nation-state that lasted roughly from 1750 until 1200 BC. The Hittite empire ultimately collapsed amid the 1200 BC crisis that saw the ruin of several city-states (e.g., Ugarit), the weakening of Egyptian hegemony in Canaan, and large-scale migration of several people groups around the eastern Mediterranean region e.g., the Sea-peoples (Elwell. W, Beitzel. B, 1988:530-531).

Collins (2007) observes that the Hittites rose to dominance through developments and blending cultures. The Aram world was rich in culture because the region supported a lot of livelihoods through its agricultural design that attracted many people groups. From 4000 to the 2000 BC, central Anatolia was continuously inhabited by several people groups.

The demand for tin for the production of bronze that swept the economy in the region likely led these people groups to develop trade routes and prominent settlements in the region, such as Hattus (later Hattusa), Zalpa, and Nesa (Kanesh) during the Early Bronze II (3000–2700 BC) period. It appears that the indigenous Hattians were the majority inhabitants of central Anatolia in the Early Bronze II period.

As supported by archaeological evidence, Indo-European groups, including the Luwians, Palaians, and the Nesite speakers, were present in Anatolia at least by the end of the third millennium (Collins. B. J, 2007: 23–24). Tudhaliya IV's heir, Arnuwanda III, died within a year of his succession and without an heir. His brother, Supiluliuma II succeeded him as the final King of Hatti. Despite mended relations with Assyria, many vassals in the east operated independently of Hittite control. Supiluliuma suppressed a rebellion in the south western territories of the Lukka and in the one-time capital city Tarhuntassa. He also tried and failed to recapture the island of Alasiya (Cyprus) through a naval campaign.

Several issues contributed to the collapse of the empire, including subversion from within the royal family, some of whom ruled in prominent cities of the empire, jeopardizing the King's ability to rule Hatti effectively; famine, likely caused by a severe drought, military campaigns and the renovation of Hattusa - which took men away from farms and further burdened the agrarian society, the appearance and sporadic assaults of the Sea Peoples in various regions of the Near East. The powerful centres of Ugarit and Tarhuntassa fell around 1200 BC, and the Hatussa population gradually abandoned the city.

The neighbouring Kaska likely razed Hatussa in the early decades of the 12th century BC. The fate of the Hittite royal family is uncertain; they may have fled to Carchemish, which maintained control of the much of the eastern empire. Carchemish functioned as one of the few powerful Neo-Hittite states through the eighth century (Collins, 2007: 78–80).

2.4. Hittite Covenants

According to Beckman (1996:13), the Hittites had four major types of Treaties/covenants through which their society was bound and by which their relationships were enhanced. These were the Vassal-Suzerain covenants, the equal status/parity covenants, diplomatic marriages, and the protectorate status covenants. The various types of covenants are discussed below

2.4.1. Vassal-Suzerain covenant/Treaties

These were sets of covenants that involved the superior and the inferior powers as explained above. They were mostly entered in a mutual consent where a king who felt a need of a superior protection would voluntarily surrender to a suzerain king and recite stipulations as a vassal or through a military conquest (Beckman, (1996:13).

2.4.2. Equal status/Parity Covenants

In this covenant, no party vowed or was under the obligations of the other. This was a diplomatic relationship that assured positivity in a relationship. These types of covenants don't seem to have been many since such powers were also not many. The known powers included Babylon, Assyria, Hatti, and Ahhiyawa. Records exist of such a relationship between the unknown king of Hatti and Padaddatissu of Kizzuwatna. The second known such relationship was between Hattusili III of Hatti and Ramses of Egypt. Others are still subjects of study. A closely related covenant of equal status is between Tudhaiiya II of Hatti and Sunashshura of Kizzuwatna:

> "Seal of Tudhaiiya, [Great King, King of Hatti(?)]. When with [Sunashshura(?).] They [swore] an oath to one another and concluded this treaty with one another" (Beckman, 1996:13).

2.4.3. Diplomatic Marriages

These was an equal approach to a covenant relationship where the superior kings would give their daughters to an inferior king as an indication of ploughing a relation and they could still take oaths over the same. This kind of relationships under oath helped the king check the level of security and confidence of the Vassal to the king of Hatti for example (Beckman, 1996:11-13).

2.4.4. Political Covenants

The Hittite political covenants/treaties were mostly composed in Akkadian, the acknowledged Hittite diplomatic languages of the time. With specific designation, two terms were used probably with the intention of making emphasis to areas of importance. These terms were used to

mean binding and oath, both within the Akkadian and the Hittite languages. The Hittites used the word Isbiul- (Binding) and Lingai- (Oath) while the Akkadians used the words Rikiltu/rikistu/riksu- (binding) and mamitu (oath) (Beckman, 1996:1). The two terms equally matched two important elements in agreements. With these two bits of a covenant the contracted parties, invoked the gods as witnesses and guarantors. It is important to note and observe that even when communicating to the Hittite officials, within the Hatti themselves, this communication was also referred to as *Isbiul* (binding). It could be referred to as internal memo or a signal in Kenyan military (Beckman, 1996:1).

The Kings regarded covenants as solemn acts for which the King was responsible, and required an apology in the event of a failure. In the summary of his career, king Hattusili III apologises, all the kings before him and who were in good terms with Hatti remained on the same good terms with him and began to send him messages, gifts much more than those sent to his fathers and forefathers. He states that the kings who owed him respect respected him, but he prevailed over the lords that demonstrated enmity to him. He added district upon district to the lands of Hatti and that those who had been enemies of his father and his forefathers concluded peace with him (Beckman, 1996:1).

The Hittite foreign policy preamble describes the Hittites as people who believed that foreign lands were either enemies or friends and neutrality was not an option. It led to their belief that all land then belonged to them and should be acquired either through war/military or treaty. This policy defined the Hittites behaviour for the time they existed as an independent entity Beckman, (1996:1).

In their quests to reduce hostile neighbouring countries, they used two main approaches namely Military and Treaty/covenant in defining their international diplomacy to attain peace. Those lands that were humble to them were annexed to the empire of Hatti as vassals or were drawn to them by alliances as equals (parity treaties). The next method was by military conquest. Under

this spirit, the Hattians made many covenants with nations as portrayed in their records found in the Hittite archives (Beckman, 1996:1).

The two-fold approaches of the Hittite kings in their political career demonstrate the effectiveness of a covenant as a consideration in a society. The confession above also clarifies the fact that covenants follow humble patterns of faithfulness, sincerity, and obedience. It is in the loss of these characteristics that military approach was sought for Gentry, (2012:277). The significance of a covenant in a relationship is here demonstrated as a key component equal to or even more preferably to military approach, and that it can substitute a military when a political offensive is carried out with views to expand a territory.

2.5 Characteristics of Hittite Covenants.

The analysis of the Hebrew word ברת (*Berith*) as used by the Hittites encompasses all types of covenants, agreements, treaties that were entered in the Hittites homeland of Asia Minor (present day Turkey), were significant to their times and circumstances. Although ancient Hittite covenants varied in formats depending on the time and place of its construction, the following standards stand:

Preamble

The preamble is a key element of the Hittite covenants/treaties which seem to have influenced most of the ANE covenants. It identifies the covenant author-the (Suzerain), his numerous divinely associated titles, attributes, and occasionally, the genealogical data as an expression of his greatness and a right to proclaim the treaty. Preambles and always came first in all ANE covenants showing treaty period, and locations (Walton, 1989:101-102). The mandatory items of the preamble include the following:

Name

This was mostly the name of the one initiating a covenant also referred to as a Suzerain. Title. (of the Hittite). This section presented the owner of the covenant and the position he occupies in

power. The authority of the king was spelt out here, e.g., the great king of Hatti etc. The actual document below displays the section referred to as it appears in the Hittite documents.

"Thus says Labarna, Hattusili, Great King, King of Hatti, Hero; son of Mursili, King of Hatti, Hero; (grandson) of Hatti, Hero; (descendant of Hattusili), man of kussar" (Beckman, 1996:95).

Most of the treaties presented by Beckman, (1996:2), do not mention the vassal in the preamble. In the covenant between Tuthalia of Hatti and sunashshura of Kizzumtna for example, there is no document containing details of a preamble that well represents the Hittite covenant writing of the Akkadian origin (Beckman, 1996:13). This document has a detailed report from the Eurarian of Hatti dating to the time of his grandfather and giving a political account of how the land of Kizzumtna, which was formerly in the possession of Hatti revolted and freed itself and went to the land of Hurri, but later on returned to the land of Hatti. They describe as cattle that have chosen their stable, have freed themselves from the ruler of Hurri. The preamble seems to serve the purpose of affirming the authority as relevant and capable.

Historical prologue/Introduction

This section of the treaty presents a significant review of the relationship that existed between the two parties as they begin, and before the entry into the new agreement and expressions of the covenant that gave the suzerain a standing in the arrangement. This section is also expected to impress the vassal for the opportunity to be identified by the suzerain and the benefits that come with it while at the same time feeling the weight of responsibilities that equally come with it. The tone of this section however, as much as it was expressed in all covenants, was toned down in the parity covenants. Emphasis was laid on the historical and the kind acts of the Suzerain in the whole section.

Walton, (1989:103-104) argues that the details provided, and the ego display exhibited only meant to call for total submission of the vassal to the suzerain. The treatment Background of the king to the vassal before, only serves to humiliate the vassal to submission. It is presented as

mandatory to provide the previous course of relationship between Hatti and the Vassal and the individual king and the particular subordinate as a means of justification to the superior position in the arrangement. It was also meant to give justification for the vassal to be loyal to the king of Hatti in a way of giving back for what the King had done to the potential vassal and the entire family. There was no provision for the vassal to give his part of the story in this section. Whether this was not provided because it was assumed that it came from an inferior source and or as a sign of humiliation, is not clear but for one or two reasons, the historical background of the vassal was assumed.

Below is a treaty between Kizzuwatna and the great king of Hatti providing an actual Historical prologue of a covenant as captured by Beckman (1996), formerly, in the time of my grandfather, Kizzuwatna came into the possession of Hatti, but afterwards, the land of Kizzuwatna freed itself from Hatti and turned to the land of Hurrl when the people of the land of Isuwa, (subjects*)* of My Majesty, (commenced) hostilities against My Majesty, I, My Majesty, went (in battle) against them. I overpowered the land of Isuwa, and (the Isuwans). The declaration here is about the power of Another Historical prologue picked by Beckman (1996:1-13).
reads:

> "Arzawa group was con- by Mursiii II with the king of the closely associated lands of Mira ìwaliya. Bearing the same name as an earlier adversary of Hatti. This Kupanta-Kurunta seems to have been a loyal king to the king of Hatti. §1 (B i 1-2) [Thus says] My Majesty, Mursili, Great King, King of Hatti, Hero; [son of] Suppiluliuma, Great King, King of Hatti, Hero….and forced him to flee from the land. Then when he came to my father my father did not turn him out, but took him up and gave him his daughter, my sister Muwatti, in marriage. She was your (adopted) mother, Kupanta- Kurunta. But my father was (occupied) in another land and was not able to back him."

In the Historical background, there is found a demonstration of the power of the covenant/treaty owner as king. Another example is found in the Treaty between Suppiluliuma I of Hatti and Shattiwaza of Mittanni and reads:

> When My Majesty, Suppiluliuma, Great King, Hero, King of Hatti, Beloved of the Storm god, and Artatama, king of the land of Hurri, made a treaty with one another, at that time Tsuruta, king of the land of Mittanni, called for attention from the Great King, King of Hatti, Hero. And I, Great King, Hero, King of Hatti, turned my attention to Tushratta, king of the land of Mittanni: I plundered the lands of the westbank of the River (Euphrates), and I annexed Mount Lebanon, A second time King Tushratta Beckman, (1996:37-38). Vassals also enjoyed some special benefits from the kings that included.

In his argument on the privileges accorded to the vassal, Walton indicates and reveals that the Vassal had been favored by the great king as a special offer to him and his people. He further argues that it was necessary to demonstrate this in public, probably as an indication that no other king had done favors to the vassal, hence demanding significant absolutism to the king.

Some of the significantly cited favours that the king provided in his speech was the exemption to a military offensive during civil war times that was extended to this particular vassal. This gave the King recognition to the vassal and to the rest of the kings who could wish to take the vassal. He had been spared from the severe punishment he deserved and probably out of the favor given, the King may also choose to adopt the man, and or even give him his daughter to marry. The quoted Historical prologue section of the treaty sited below took the longest bit of the whole speech. It is also observable that in some treaties, the stipulations were even longer (Walton, 1989:201-204).

Stipulations

This section presented the prohibitions to the Vassal that included prohibition of; foreign relationships outside Hatti, enmity to anything inside Hatti, requirement to answer to all calls by the King of Hatti, which included call to defend the sovereignty of Hatti, total trust and confidence to the king of Hatti, all differences between the Vassals must be reported to the King of Hatti, no asylum to the refugees and the final among the general stipulations, was the requirement to appear before the king of Hatti during the annual tribute. No treaty lacked this bit of the treaty (Walton, 1989:203-204).

The Treaty between Tudhaiiya II of Hatti and Sunashshura of Kizzuwatna presents the imagery show of a covenant stipulation. Stipulations or conditions to be observed mainly by the Vassal although in a situation where the treaty brings together two equal powers referred to as parity treaties where they both observe stipulations, vassal are first line casualties of stipulations (Beckman, 1996:12). Some of these stipulations include Fugitives - political fugitives, must be returned to the king of Hatti. Handling of fugitives was considered a responsibility on the Vassal. All Vassals were required to return back to the Suzerain or to a parity king all run-away criminals as an indication of loyalty to the King of Hatti or parity King.

Public Reading

This public act does not present a cut-across trend but seems to have been most practiced by the Hittites though it appears to be an integral part of the Hittite traditions and covenant writing. Its main objective being the need to remember the stipulations and other contents of the treaty (Walton, 1989:103).

Deposition

Metal tablet where the treaty is written is deposited in the temple of the vassal chief deity to offer the oversight of the gods. It was a standing practice even among the Hebrews of Jeremiah's time to keep covenant documents safely. For Jeremiah, this document was best kept in the earth,

probably in view of the perceived temple destruction by the foreseen Babylonians; it was not safe to keep this document in the temple (Jeremiah 32:8-14).

The Hittites had a similar practice of keeping the covenants in the vassal's temple to keep him reminded that violation of its precepts was at the full view of the gods also known as the witnesses who listened, guaranteed, served in secret, and witnessed everything that could happen to the covenant document. The heavy presences of gods keeping watch of the documents were perceived to be that the vassal bore the heaviest responsibility. The same formula is seen in the Hebrew swearing pattern where God of Abraham, God of Isaac and the God of Jacob are called to witness on an occasion. Exodus (3:15) A typical document illustrating the custody of the Hittite covenant well written in a tablet and kept in the vassal's temple reads as follows:

> A duplicate of this tablet is deposited] in the land [of Mittanni before the Storm-god, Lord of the kurinnu of Kahat. It shall be read repeatedly, for ever and ever], before the king of the land [of Mit- tanni and before the Hurrians. Whoever, before the Storm-god, Lord of the kurinnu of Kahat, alters] this tablet, [or sets it in a secret location —if he breaks it, if he changes the words of the text of the tablet] — in regard to [this treaty we have summoned the gods of secrets and the gods who are guarantors of the oath. They shall stand] together [and listen and be wit- nesses... (Beckman, 1996:47).

Provisions were made for the deposition of the treaty in a temple and for periodic public readings of it. This kind of clause in treaties served two purposes, as Mendenhalle points out: "First, to familiarize the entire populace with obligations to the great king; and second, to increase the respect for the vassal king by describing the close and warm relationship with the mighty and majestic Emperor which he enjoyed." Walton, (1989:103).

In the Ancient Near Eastern world, these documents are found to rare, perhaps because as Walton says, "Some of the treaties are broken at the point where this clause was originally present." Nevertheless, Hillers provides a good example of such a clause in a treaty between Suppiluliumas and Mattiwaza of Mitanni, citing the following section: "A duplicate of this tablet has been deposited before the Sun-goddess of the Arinna, because the Sun-goddess of the Arinna regulates kingship and queenship. In the Mitanni land (a duplicate) has been deposited before Tessup, the lord of the kurinnu [a kind of shrine] of Kahat.

At regular intervals, shall they read it at the presence of the king of Mitanni land and in the presence of the sons of the Hurri country. Here, one can see that the treaty was put in a shrine and had to be read periodically in the presence of the vassal king and his regents. Furthermore, duplicates were dispersed. One document was found abode in the suzerain's shrine, and the other in the vassals. As the document became enshrined before the gods, the suzerain's, and the vassal's gods (who "enlisted in the foreign service of the suzerainty" at this point) became witnesses and avengers to those who broke the oath (Walton, 1989:103-104).

In Israel the book of Exodus 25:16, 21; 40:20 and Deuteronomy 10:1-5 mention two tablets and the ark in which they were placed. In Deuteronomy 31:24-26, Moses commands the Levites to store the tablets in the ark, that they may serve as a witness against the people's past stubbornness. Since Yahweh was Israel's Suzerain who lived among them, both copies of the document were deposited in the same place, the sanctuary.

This follows the Hittite treaty custody tradition where the treaty was kept under the feet of the gods, who would then correspond strikingly to the arrangements in the Israelites holy of holies." However, this may not have been Decalogue, which

probably had already been stored, but perhaps Moses' account of the wilderness wonderings which made up the part of the Pentateuch.

Furthermore, analogous to the treaty between Suppiluliuma and Mattiwaza, Moses in Deuteronomy 31:10-13, commands that the Law be read at the appointed time of the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, when all Israel comes before the LORD. The reason of reading Israel's copy of the document was to encourage faithfulness and fear of the Lord, as well as to be witness (Deuteronomy 31:26) against covenant violators.

List of Divine Witnesses

During the pronouncement of the covenant ritual, it is also observable that several deities were involved to witness the agreement as cited bellow. Deities of all partners are invited to witness the provisions and oaths. The Thousand Gods shall now stand for this (oath). They shall observe (and listen). A typical listing of witnesses would be as shown below:

> "[The Sun-god of Heaven, the Sun-goddess] of Arinna, the Storm-god of Hatti, [Sheri], Hurri, Mount Nanni, [the Storm-god of the Market(?), the Storm-god] of the Army, the Storm-god of Aleppo, the Storm-god of Zippalanda, [the Storm-god] of Nerik, the Storm-god of Lihzina, the Storm-god of the Ruin Mound, [the Storm-god of Hisashapa], the Storm-god of Sahpina, the Storm-god of Sap- god of Hurma, [the Storm-god of Sarissa], the Storm-god of Help, the of Uda, [the Storm-god of Kizzuwatna], the Storm-god of [the Storm-god of . . .], the Storm-god of Arkata, the Storm-god of Tunip, [the Storm-god of Aleppo] resident in Tunip, Milku." (Beckman, 1996:36).

Occasionally, however, there are instances where the oath was administered and witnessed by the human witnesses as opposed to divine witnesses shown as follows:

> This tablet (was written) in the city of Urikinain of the Crown Prince Nerikkaili; Prince "Tashmi-Sharrumma; Prince Huzziya; Ini-Teshshup, king of the land of king of the land of Isuwa; AMAR.MUSHEN, Halpa-ziti, commander of the troops of the right; Prince Heshni; Prince Tat- tamaru; Prince Uppara-muwa, overseer of the golden grooms; Prince Uhha- ziti; Sahurunuwa, chief of the wooden-tablet scribes; Hattusa-Kurunta, general; Prince Tarhunta-piya; LUGAL.^{d}LAMMA, commander of the troops of the left; Ali-ziti, chief of the palace servants; Tuttu, chief of the store- lord of the city of Hurma; Walwa-ziti, chief of the of the cupbearers; Kammaliya, chief of the cooks; ai, chief of the offering officials" (Beckman, 1996:108).

This list included the gods that witnessed the covenants and the oath being entered and sworn (Lopez, 2004:76-77). The ancient legal tradition called for witnesses - typically, a list of gods or elements (mountains, rivers, springs, heaven and earth, sea, clouds, and the winds) which were probably considered to be gods. As pointed out by Walton and Mendel Hall, that if the need arose, the gods were called to enforce the covenant made emphasis on the importance of witnesses in the covenant relationship. Ancient Near Eastern Type in their text provides ample evidence of the existence of this part of the treaty. For example, Lopez presents that the treaty between Tudhaliya IV with Kurunta of Tarhuntassa calls gods to witness, as well as enforce, the law (Walton, 2006:18-27).

The aspect of witnesses in Hittite covenants, with the exception of pagan gods, appears in the Israelite covenant. Israelite Equivalent of this part can be traceable in Exodus 24:4 perhaps may be taken as a witness verse and whether the pillars played the role of witnesses after Israel agreed to comply with all of Yahweh's commandments (Exod. 24:3), is difficult to determine. Rodgers quoted by Walton, may be correct in observing that, "Sinc the pillars of Exodus 24:4 are not mentioned as being witnesses and would remain in the desert when Israel left, it is better to view

the stones as merely symbols of the presence of the twelve tribes." However, Joshua 24:27, which clearly portrays the stones as witnesses to Israel, may clarify Exodus 24:4. Within the context, in Joshua 24:22, God actually calls Israel to be witness against themselves, to which they answer, "We are witnesses!" Walton, (2006:18-27).

In Deuteronomy 31:16-30, God instructs Moses to compose a song for Israel to serve as a witness against the people on God's behalf. Within the same context, God also summons the Book of the Law (v.26) and heaven and earth (in v.28) to be witnesses against Israel. The song in Deuteronomy 32 may also act as a witness. Walton says: The [entire] Song of Moses, which is recorded for us in Deuteronomy 32, fits into the witness category, for it affirms Yahweh's ability to enforce the terms of the covenant. Of particular significance are verses 39-43, in which Yahweh takes an oath to exact vengeance on behalf of his people [which is analogous to the last two lines of the treaty between Tudhaliya IV with Kurunta quoted earlier]. Walton (2006:18-27).

Curses

Throughout the Hittite covenant practice, curses are seen to be unavoidable components of the Hittite treaty establishments. The participation of curses in a treaty is presented as an instrument of security to the promises made in the treaty by the covenanters.

This security comes in the form of gods with divers' powers. The penalty prescribed to the offenders of the treaty is such severe that it adversely affects the individual offender, the family to which the offender will seek refuge in, his person/wives/sons/grandsons/household, his city, his land, and his possession. This level of punishment pauses severe consequences that are meant to keep the vassal obedient. The treaty between Suppiluliuma I of Hatti and Aziru of Amurru represents the magnitude of the curse effects to the offender and it reads:

> "[All the words of the treaty and of the oath which are written] on this tablet - [if Aziru does not observe these words of] the treaty and of the oath, [but transgresses the oath, then] these oath gods shall destroy Aziru, [together with

his person, his wives, his sons, his grand- sons, his household], his city, his land, and [his possessions]" (Beckman, 1996:36).

In the list of curses, there were serious issues that pertained to the integrity of the parties. Breaking the covenant came with severe consequences including deportation, death, and other severe punishments. It seems clearly here that the practice of covenant infidelity existed right from the earliest times of its beginnings (Collins, 2004:121-122).

All treaties included blessings and curses. Usually, in this document, the suzerain specifies what he will do to the vassal who disobeys the stipulations and what blessings he will bestow on him for obedience.

As already seen, the gods act not only as witnesses but also as guarantors that the stipulations of the treaty will be carried out, as 'lords of the oath. They are to pursue relentlessly all who break their oath, but reward those who adhere to the terms of the treaty. And so together with the list of gods goes the list of blessings. Basic and standard element in all ancient Near Eastern treaties is the list of curses and blessings, although the blessing element in these treaties is "not so prevalent." Unlike the brief curse segments found in the Hittite treaties, the curse sections found in the Assyrian and Syrian documents are quite elaborate.

Covenant curses appear in various forms; however, the treaty forms of the third millennium usually contained three elements: (1) the name of the deity, (2) epithet of the deity, (3) and the curse. Second-millennium treaties normally did not contain all of these characteristics (i.e., they could exclude either the epithets or names or the gods or at times only mention a single god), although there are exceptions (Lopez, 2004:74). Furthermore, although Hittite treaties do not necessarily name their gods in the curse section, they refer

back to the witness section that usually has an elaborate list of these gods, which is exemplified in the treaty between Mursili and Duppi-Tesub:

> "[Sun-god of Heaven, Sun-goddess] of Arinna, Storm-god of Heaven, Storm-god of Hatti, [Seri (and) Huri] … let them be witnesses to this treaty and to the oath! All the words of the treaty and the oath written on this table-if Duppi-Tesub [does not keep these] words of the treaty and of the oath, then let these oath gods destroy Duppi-Tesub together with his head, his wife, his son, his grandson, his house, his city, his land and together with his possessions. But if Duppi-Tesub observes these words of the treaty and the oath which are written on this tablet, let these oath gods protect Duppi-Tesub together with his head, his wife, his son, his grandson, his city, his land, your (!) house, your(!) subject [and together with his possession!]" (Lopez, 2004:74-76).

As Hillers puts it, the most common element in the second-millennium treaties is curses and blessings. It is also observable that as time passed by, changes in the covenant structure changed. What is seen in the third millennium deviates a lot from what is seen in the second millennium as seen above although the expected results were the same that the Suzerain received his rights from the Vassal and vice vassal. The fact that curses were aimed at total destruction points to the gravity of breaking a covenant with the suzerain and this presents an Israelite Equivalent.

Like the ancient Near Eastern treaties, blessings and curses were very much part of the Israelite covenants. It is also visible from the discussion that, Israelites covenant curses are not like the magical texts or incarnations of the Hittites or other ancient Near Eastern treaties. Unlike the other books within the law (e.g., Deut. 28-30), Exodus does not develop an orderly and formal list that details the blessings and the curses. However, it shows that "The punishment given for the disobedience of the Law (e.g., Exodus 22:19; 11:15, 17: 35:5; 21:12-14; 11:15-16 etc.), as well as the sprinkled blood (Exodus 24:6-8), are in reality parts of the covenant curses."

More formal and extensive lists of blessings and curses are located in Leviticus 26:3-13 (blessings) and 14-33 (curses). Furthermore, in all scripture, Deuteronomy 28:1-14[blessings] and 15-68 [curses]) is the best-known chapter and key to Israel's future success and blessings in the land, since Israelite treaties, like other ancient Near Eastern treaties, contain an extensive curse section (Lopez, 2004:74); Collins, (2004:121-122); Robin (1980:1-16).

Blessings

All Hittite covenant blessings came with conditions requiring fulfilment of all the stipulations. In the treaty between Suppiluliuma I of Hatti and Huqqana of Hayasa for example, the blessings are pronounced on a conditional requirement. Huqqana is required to give protection to the majesty and take a stand to the majesty only. "… But if you, Huqqana, protect only My Majesty and take a stand only behind My Majesty, then these oath gods shall benevolently protect you, and you shall thrive in the hand of My Majesty" (Beckman, 1996:25).

Again, it is even more pronounced in the Treaty between Hattusili III of Hatti and Olmi-Teshshup of Tarhuntassa that protection over the family of the Suzerain king more so his son, who is perceived as the incoming king is given prominence in every Hittite treaty. The blessings pronounced are measured by the same weight of the curses given upon violation of the treaty requirements. It reads:

> "But if you observe the words of this tablet and protect My Majesty, the Queen, and later the son of My Majesty as overlords, only My Majesty, the Queen, and later the son of My Majesty as then these oath gods shall benevolently protect your person, together with your wife, your son, your land, your house, your threshing floor, your orchard, your fields, your oxen, your sheep and all your possessions and you shall live to a good old age in the hand of My Majesty.§11 (rev. 12-14) These oath gods shall eradicate from the Dark Earth, together with his progeny, whoever in this land brings difficulties upon Ulmi-Teshshup and takes it away from the son or grand-son, son of Ulmi-Teshshup or diminishes his territory or alters the words of this tablet" (Beckman, 1996:108).

The Oath

At the conclusion of a covenant, the vassal usually uttered an oath. This gave assurance to the suzerain that the stipulation of the treaty would be kept. Furthermore, an oath ceremony also served to secure bilateral faithfulness of the parties. In the ancient Near East, taking an oath was common whereby in the Hittite treaties, the suzerain could sometimes take an oath on behalf of the vassal, as in the treaty between Mursilis and Duppi-Tesub of Amurru. In the Hebrew Exodus-Joshua covenants, structures and elements did not remain constant. As shown below, some elements could be clearly pronounced, while in other texts, a manifestation could be sufficient indication of an element presence.

This is equally manifested even among the general ANE Treaties and covenants which did not have a uniform structure of elements. This characteristic is also traceable in the Iteso traditional covenants. As time passed, other elements could be dropped and others adopted owing to the changes in social events and time. They include those which linked to the blessing and curse section, and which accompanied many treaties like the oath and sacred ceremony to seal the treaty. The ratification of the treaty, blood sacrifices, formal oath of acceptance, preparation, sealing, and handing over of the covenant document were all part of certain treaties.

As Collins (2004:12:25) puts it, at the conclusion of a covenant, the vassal usually uttered an oath. This gave assurance to the suzerain that the stipulation of the treaty would be kept. Furthermore, an oath ceremony also served to secure the bilateral faithfulness of the parties. In the ancient Near East, taking an oath was common. In Hittite treaties, the suzerain could take an oath on behalf of the vassal, as in the treaty between Mursilis and Duppi-Tesub of Amurru. In the analysis done by Collins (2004:12-20) presented in the table below, we can see the common elements in the Hebrew documents with similarities to the ANET. J. B. Pritchard in his numerous collections from Ancient Near East, sites a case titled "Settlement of Claim by Oath" which presents as a divorce bill. This bill reads:

> "In accordance with the action which we took at Syene, let us make a division of the silver, grain, raiment, bronze, iron, and all goods and possessions and marriage contract.

> Then, an oath was imposed upon you, and you swore to me concerning them by the goddess sati. I was satisfied by the oath which you took to me concerning your goods and I renounce all claims on you from this day forever" (Pritchard, 1958:279).

The same partten of covenants are visible in this oath because a deity is mentioned, the place of the covenant desolution is mentioned as *syene*, the items of the covenant that included marriage and other goods are mentioned. The oath is then declared, and the covenant is broken. It presents therefore that, both the Egyptians, the Akkadians, the Hittites, the Babylonians and the sumerians shared a common covenant formula that is also prevalent among the Hebrews covenants. As earlier discussed, covenants came along with its violations hence infidelity.

2.5 Chapter Conclusion

The Ancient near East world has presented a phenomenon that represents the general livelihood of the world region then. All aspects of life seem to have revolved and influenced all around by the covenant practice. The political arena presents a dominant covenant relationship that defined all levels of life. The Suzerain-vassal arrangement defined all relationships including religious, political, social and economic spheres. Marriage for example, is used as one of the means of securing a relationship such as that between the prince of Hati and the queen of Egypt (cited above).

The characteristics of the regional covenants that included a preamble, name of the covenant initiator, historical prologue, stipulations, curses, public reading, deposition of covenant document, list of Idols, blessings, and oaths, seem to have carried the central culture that explains the civilization of the region in the sense that its implications affected both the active partner and the innocent partner of the population. With the types of covenants highlighted as Vasal-Suzerain, covenant, equal status/parity covenant, diplomatic marriage covenants and finally political covenants, the ANE community displayed a lifestyle that was full of give and take and that suited themselves.

This chapter has examined the history of the ANE, major geographical features, the Hittites, and the major characteristics of Hittite covenants. The sampled regions of the ANE communities as discussed above may represent the general population of the vast territory occupied by ancient Israel and her neighbours. Though variant in the degree of implementation, the Iteso covenant element seems to mirror the ANE elements. This characteristic suggests a long way through which the practice of covenants has come. We have also seen that the Hittite covenants had several elements that may also be found in the Israelite covenants. In the following chapter, attention will be given to the covenant historicity of Israel. This chapter has shed light on the path of covenant relationship that asks a question, on whether the Israelites who to some degree appear to have mingled with the Hittites, shared in the same characteristics of covenant elements as discussed above. The Hittites prided in covenant relationship as discussed above and that gave them the strength to develop the strongest empire in the region. The Israelites under their ancestors developed through the covenant structure. The next chapter discussed the covenant life among the Hebrew people.

CHAPTER THREE

COVENANT HISTORICITY IN ISRAEL

3.0. Introduction

The Old Testament (OT) also called the Hebrew Bible documents the Hebrew traditions and practices in relation to their God. One of the running themes throughout the OT book is the relationship between Yahweh and the Israelites referred to as His people. It is appreciated, and as the discussion will indicate that Yahweh's relationship with His people was fully covenantal in nature and practice. This chapter discusses various covenant relationship themes beginning with the covenant historicity, the Genesis account of covenants, the Covenant, and the religious life of the Hebrews. Elements of the Hebrew covenants common to the Hittites, Hebrew major covenants, major OT covenant elements, Covenant formula, covenant and politics, Covenant in marriage, and the theology of the OT Covenants. It is expected that at the end of the study, significant themes will have emerged to demonstrate the theological insights that will benefit the Iteso people in their covenant relationships.

3.1. Covenant Historicity

The term covenant can be defined as an agreement, duty, obligation, or pact that brings two parties together for a common interest. The Hebrew word *between* in the *Tanakh* means agreement, obligation, or designation. According to Hartman & Borowitz, The *Tanakh* covenant meaning also includes covenants of man to man, groups of individuals, and man to their deity (Hartman & Borowitz, 2012:326-327, David & Baker, 2003:139).

Covenants as relational agents within human life seem to have been the way of life from the time life began. Baker and David argue that covenants are divided into three main groupings namely, Universal, Ancestral and National covenants. This categorization captures the covenants, the nature and the chronology in time across history with a clear indication of what Gentry argues as

berith hakim and *berith Karat* suggesting that some covenants are built on the shoulders of the creation covenant (David & Baker, 2003:139-155).

When tracing the practice of covenant relationships in the Bible, it is found that the Biblical account of Genesis presents elements of covenants right from the beginning of life in Eden. The possibility that generations carried on this practice from one to another is evident in the Genesis account. This explanation suggests that the concept of covenant relationships does not begin its existence and effects to the human society with the Israelites as a religious society.
Although the Israelites made it come out as their official way of relating to their God, traces of the same elements of a covenant could be traced outside of Israel.

Other societies outside Israel equally embraced the idea of covenants in many other ways and applications including religion. The Hebrew traditions, which were part of the Ancient Near Eastern traditions, carry the definition of covenants from Mesopotamian backgrounds. As (Waltke, 2007) acknowledges that there are striking similarities between the Israelite and the Mesopotamian covenants, he observes that the resemblance should not be taken to mean that Israelite covenants antedate Mesopotamian covenants (Waltke, 2007:197).

His argument is that although similarities exist between the Genesis account and the Babylonian Genesis account of creation (*Enuma Elish)*, "all other ANE cosmogonies (founding myths of creation) are Polytheistic and Pantheistic, but Israel cosmogony represents God as an implied *aseity* (self-existent) radically differentiated from the impersonal matter He creates" (Waltke, 2007:197). Most scholars will be quick to indicate that probably, Moses may have had an influence by the surroundings he lived in when writing the Genesis account, but this is strongly confronted by reality as argued above.

3.2. The Genesis Account of Covenants

The Genesis account suggests that at the time of this first and earliest covenant, Gen 1 & 2, the world population was only two people who were not born but created. (David & Baker, (2003:141). The text presents God entering into an agreement between Him and other un-named members of the deity. There is an argument that God may have entered into an agreement with the earth in creating Adam such that the earth gives the body, and the Deity **(***Elohim*) gives the spirit of life. This position however, is mitigated by the prophetic utterance of Isaiah chapter 40:13, arguing that God does not council with anyone but Himself (Ellicott, 1905:1-25).

The first manifestation of a covenant however, appears to be clearly spelled out in Genesis 1 having the preamble that introduces God as the Giver. This covenant which tends to take a similar pattern with the subsequent covenants at Sinai and beyond, seems to suggest the beginning of covenant relationships within the human race (Waltke, 2007:288-289). To begin the covenant tradition in Eden, God said "I" have given (*natati*) **נתתי** you every herb bearing seed… (Gen 1:29). NAS Exhaustive Concordance supplies the word *abandon* for the word *natatti* meaning that God's Suzerainty is superior to human Suzerainty in terms of providing for the Vassal. It also means that God abandoned from His own, for the pleasure of His human creature.

This gesture aligns with *berit shalom* spirit. This introduction to the first human race paints a picture suggesting that God has all along introduced Himself to man and His covenant partners as the source of blessings. The agreement is that man shall rule over the rest of the creation and subdue it (Gen 1: 26).

Although not mentioned as the historical prologue of the covenant entered between *Elohim* and the first human beings and in the order of the Hittite covenant structure, creating man on the last day of the creation week had a purpose of showing man the historical prologue as an element that will characterize His covenants with His people in all ages as need will call for.

God is depicted in this prologue as the absolute creator of all creation historically segmenting His work in stages of what the Genesis author apportions to "days". This gives *Elohim* (God) the Suzerain position and powers (according to the Hittite structure) to initiate the covenant as seen in chapter two through three.

Genesis 1: 28 presents a long list of blessings as the latter covenants will come to present. These blessings in the Eden covenant include being fruitful, multiplying and replenishing the earth. Subduing it, having dominion over the fish of the sea, the fowl of the air and every creeping thing. The blessings also included all seed-bearing herbs as food (vs.29). The stipulations in this covenant are made clear in Genesis 2 by attaching the most painful penalty of death to its violations. The Genesis account presents the most punitive stipulations (2:16-17), just as those given by the Suzerains of the later days to be seen in the Hittite and the Assyrian covenants.

Genesis 2:17 contains both stipulations and curses. The stipulation is pointed out as "Don't eat … "while the curse is: - "in the day that you shall eat, you will surely die". The word die translated from the Hebrew word **מת** (*mooth/muth*) *also means "cause to die."* Hence God told the first man and woman that their death will be caused by themselves. This then, is seen in chapter three where man and the whole of his generations are condemned to death. These stipulations seem to have been read occasionally because of the way Adam recites them to the personality designated as Serpent in Genesis 3. (2:16-17).

The Eden covenant was followed by other covenant relationships that other early living human beings entered with their deity or with themselves. These include Noah and his God (Genesis 9), Abraham and his God (Genesis 12), Jacob and his uncle (Genesis 31), Moses and his God (Exodus 19-24), David and his God (2 Samuel 7) and many other covenants entered that follow the human history of existence.

The underlying characteristics behind all the covenants listed are previous or perceived enmity that led or may lead to separation. If it becomes agreeable that a covenant is an arrangement

between two parties involving mutual obligations as demonstrated in the relationship between God and his first created people, then it follows that, in the Eden covenant, God has conveyed to humanity the meaning of human life and salvation. It becomes true that a covenant is one of the central themes of the Bible, where some covenants are between human beings and others are between God and human beings. This observation is summarized by Beitzel when he argues that:

> "the covenant theme in the OT, implicit in the Garden of Eden, is developed from Noah to Abraham and reaches its first climax in the covenant formed between God and Israel at Mt Sinai. After King David's time, the history of the covenant becomes a less prominent theme. At a low point in covenant history, the Bible introduces the prophet Jeremiah's prophecy of a "new covenant" in Israel's future. Christians believe that Jeremiah's prophecy eventually found fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus Christ. A covenant relationship is not merely a mutual acquaintance but a commitment to responsibility and action*"*. (Beitzel. B, 1988 Vol. 1, pp. 530–531).

The tradition of covenants then becomes one of the characteristics of a society both before and after the fall. Within the religious circles, it is argued that Israel attested to covenant relationships between her and her God more than all religions of the Ancient Near East (Waltke, 2007:409). Among the secular and the religious ANE, Israel being a religious movement demonstrated true appreciation to a covenant relationship than all in their milieu.

The theological controversy on whether the author of the Hebrew Pentateuch, referenced from the Ancient Near East or vice versa is real because of the overlap of covenant ideas between them. However, if the Genesis account stands to explain the beginning of life on earth, then it goes with the perception leading to the reality that the Genesis account may have found its way into the ANE through history and hence influenced the ANE tradition of covenants and this gives the rest of the world a true history of covenant practices.

3.3. Covenants and the Hebrew Religious Life.

Covenants were an integral part of life across the Ancient near Eastern world but there was never one religion that embraced ברית (*berith*) (covenant) to their god as the Israelites did to their God. When analysing the Law given at Sinai from Exodus to Leviticus, it is found that the whole law as practiced by the Israelites is full of mixtures of the forms of the Ancient Near Eastern laws from the third and early second millennium.

The Hittite covenant elements seen profiled and parallel in the Old Testaments covenants with the vassal treaties authored and issued to the vassals by the Hittite chiefs, present a clear influence of the ANE covenant relationship portrayed in the Exodus to the Levitical covenants (Waltke, 2007:409; David & Baker, 2003:139-155).

Walton, (2006) presents the differences that exist between the treaties/covenants drawn from Anatolia, Egypt, Syro-Palestine, and Mesopotamia. His work demonstrates that covenant life has a history beyond the period so far appreciated by the earliest known scholars. Despite the fact that some communities like the Mesopotamian communities lived together, there is an indication that covenants bear their structures depending on the particular people in their time and place.
This is seen where within the same people group, for examplethe Babylonians of Hammurabi and the Babylonians of Nebuchadnezzar, present different formats of covenants (Walton, 2006:18). What this scenario presents is that time and place change people's behavior and expectations.

Although human beings remain the same, their relational behavior and expectations largely depend on the environment and time. The ANE world related more to covenants than to mutual levels in their social relations. This kind of relationship seems to have stretched all the way from the third millennium beyond and the third millennium down to the Jew's covenant in Sinai. According to Walton (2006:19-22), the practice of relating through covenants/treaties as a way of social, political, religious, and economic relationships may have started all the way from the

third millennium to the Sinai covenant. While using the Confessional approach of hermeneutics, Walton (2006:299-300) identifies several similarities between the Hebrew religion and the social cultural rituals of Mesopotamia and confines his discussion into a comparison of the differences between the covenant and the Law as put forth in Mendenhall's chart. The main question voiced is whether all covenants and their elements would look alike?

From the discussion above, it is that several factors like culture and place influence the structure of a covenant and while maintaining the same objectives, the Iteso covenants are not exempt of the said factorial effects in the structure of their traditional covenants. It is evident that covenants do not necessarily look alike. Culture, people-type, and environment can affect the characterization of covenants.

While exploring the Deities of the Middle Eastern world, Walton, (2006) describes Yahweh as a covenant God when he says*:* "Yahweh- the God of Israel is a cosmic deity, a covenant deity, a national deity, and a family deity." This declaration suggests that Yahweh was a superior deity even as early as then. It also explains that Yahweh may have been behind early covenants appreciated in the Ancient Near eastern Communities. The emphasis is on Yahweh the patron of Jerusalem where His temple was located, and that both the Elephantine texts and the excavation of what is probably a temple of Yahweh at Arad suggests that other shrines to Yahweh existed despite official policy (Walton, 2006:341).

Waltke (2007:500-501) maintains that a covenant is a structure whereby one looks for a relationship with the other, with the intention of using the other to achieve a purpose. His input is that a relationship is best handled within the structure of a covenant. Eichrodt (1961:36) affirms, "the concept in which the Israelites thought gave definitive expression of the binding of the people of God and by means of which they established firmly from the start, the particularity of their knowledge of Him was the covenant" (Waltke, 2007:500-501).

This affirmation clearly indicates that the Israelites did not base their relationship on a bare ground but on formulae contained in the covenant. This being the situation where God/deity relates with His creation through a covenant arrangement whereby He assumes more responsibilities. The question is whether the ANE people would do the same. In his view, a covenant was an important tool by which God chose to relate to His people (Waltke, 2007:500-502).

3.4. Major Hebrew Covenants

The major covenants considered in this discussion include the Noahic covenant (Gen 9**)** Abrahamic covenant (Gen 12), the Mosaic covenant (Exo. 19, 20-23), and the Davidic covenant (2 Sam 7) on the larger scale.

3.4.1. Noahic Covenant

Noah son of Lamech and Father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, is the central human character in the Hebrew Bible story of the flood (Freedman 2000:968). The name "Noah" means "to provide comfort" (Gen. 5:29). It is derived from the Hebrew word נהם meaning to provide comfort" or to "to give rest" (Freedman 2000:964).The name alludes to the comfort that God provided after the curse of Genesis 3:17-19 and after the flood. Noah is the ninth descendant in Adam's genealogy through Seth (Gen 5:1-6, 8) (Freedman, 2000:968). His life is characterized by the flood event, which puts him and his family on the spot as those whom God chose to enlighten the world of the impending catastrophic event. Noah is pictured as the great preacher of the time though he was able to save his family only in a whole period of 120 years (Unger, 1957:797).

Unger however, puts Noah's position from Adam, to 10th in descent arguing from Genesis 5:28. Noah's relationship with his God seems to have been occasioned by the then fact that he appeared to be the only righteous one among the descendants of Adam. The evil society of the time provoked God's anger to destroy the creation leaving Noah and his family alone. The Hebrew Bible presents Noah as a righteous man who found favour with God. God promised a

covenant to Noah as soon as He conceived the idea of destroying the human race because of their sins. In His bitterness and regrets for creating the human race, He remembers Noah and promises him a covenant relationship in Genesis chapter 6, and finally delivers the covenant in Genesis chapter 9. As earlier mentioned, God's seeking of a covenant relationship with Noah was His desire to reveal Himself to the human race yet another time just the same way He did to Adam and Eve and in the foregoing covenants. This includes those entered with Abraham and Moses known as eternal/everlasting covenants.

The Noahic covenant also called the covenant of Grace is a covenant with a promise that, never again will God destroy the world through floods. This covenant is unconditional, no threats presented neither is it threatened by human weaknesses, (Gen 9:15-17) it is an everlasting covenant between God and all human beings including all creatures. The notable aspect of this covenant is that in this covenant, God does not only seek to relate with human beings but also with the rest of His creation.

In the Noahic covenant, God, whose relationship had dwindled, now vows never to enhance any loss of a relationship and life through catastrophic judgement. He vows by himself through a rainbow, that he will never again entertain destruction of relationship terms. While acting on His own terms, it is presented here that God provided sufficient grace that raises a new generation in order to establish His promise forever.
According to Gentry, (2012), Genesis 6:18 present the first occurrence of the word **ברית** (***berit***) in the Hebrew bible. Gentry (2012:655). This however does not negate the fact that Genesis 1-3 manifests covenant conversations in Eden.

This covenant is preceded by the wickedness of the human race then, and God's cataclysmic course of action (Gen 6:5-13, 18). Appearing in the flood narrative, the covenant demonstrates that God was not seeking a relationship with Noah and his generation, but that He was establishing a covenant. The Hebrew noun used in the narrative is **ברת הקם (***berith heqim***)** and

not **ברת כרת** (*berith karat)*. **ברת כרת (***Berit karat*) referring to cutting a covenant, has the idea of initiating a covenant which to this particular one does not apply since it uses a different word i.e., **ברת הקם** (*berit heqim*) meaning establishing a covenant. Establishing a covenant has the indication of building on an existing covenant or making further clarification on an already existing covenant. Gentry's understanding of the word **ברת הקם (***berit heqim*) encompasses the meaning of an already existing covenant whose promises were not fully fulfilled.

Dumbrell's (1984) argument suggests that the covenant between God and Adam was a progressive one though it was interfered by sin. It therefore needed to continue through generations to which the generation of Noah was raised. The Hebrew therefore appear to have been introduced to a higher level of covenant relationship practices that supersede the ordinary covenant relationships between man and man, and all other political, economic and political covenants of both the Hittites the Assyrians, Egyptians and all other communities of Mesopotamia (Dumbrell, 1984:11-42).

According to Gentry, **ברת הקם** (*berit heqim*) confirms that God was only fulfilling his part of the covenant or upholding the promise earlier made to Adam in the Noahic covenant. The same expression is observed in the Abrahamic covenant where in Genesis 15, God's promises of land in Genesis 12 are formalized. The word in Gen 12 is **ברת כרת** *berit karat* while in chapter 15 the word is **ברת הקם** (*berit heqim*) as shown in Gen 15:18 and in chapter 17, God upholds the covenant **בערת העקמ** (*berit heqim*) and verses 7,19,21 employ the word **ברת הקם (***berit heqim*) consistently. The question is, when then did God initiate a covenant with Noah?

Gentry (2012:689) argues that the covenant here referred is the covenant made between God and His creation.When God says that He is confirming or upholding His covenant with Noah, He is saying that His commitment to His creation, the creator's care to preserve, provide for and rule over all that He has made including the blessing and the ordinances that He initiated through and with Adam and Eve and their family are now to be with Noah and his descendants.

In spite of the theological confrontation between Williams and Dumbrell on whether indeed the word הקם (*heqim*) absolutely means a confirmation of the covenant, is an ongoing discussion which in my opinion, does not change the usage of the terms as used by Dumbrell, that **ברת הקם** (*berit heqim*) refers to an establishment not cutting a covenant as in **ברת כרת** (*berith karat*) (Gentry, 2012:689-697).

The use of the word **ברת הקם** (*heqim berit*) to mean to uphold the already existing covenant that was broken is also used by other prophets like Jeremiah in Jeremiah. 34:18. The first word used to mean to enter a covenant/initiate a covenant is used in Jeremiah. 34:8, 13, and 15 in a similar expression as to **ברת כאראת** (*berith*) karat meaning enter a covenant. Jeremiah 34:10. The Noahic covenant contains important elements (Christiansen, 1995:27-43).

3.4. 1.1. Significant Features in the Noahic Covenant

The connection between the creation covenant and the Noahic covenant is a significant characteristic in covenant theology as it moves further from the creation covenants to the Sinaic covenant and beyond. As earlier argued, the effects of sin to the relationship between God and the human race in Eden to eternity, appears not to have in any way changed God's will and direction of thought about the human race. What He promised and blessed Adam with, is what He blessed Noah with (Gen 9:8-17; Gentry, 2012:724; Gen 6:18). In Genesis 9:7, the same words spoken to Adam in Genesis 1:28 are repeated to Noah. Noah is blessed through a covenant instrument to multiply and be fruitful and increase in numbers and to fill the earth. This is the blessing originally given to Adam (Gentry, 2012:724). This part of the covenant speaks to the oneness of the human society as bound by the Noahic covenant.

Genesis 9:7 provides a new manifestation that acts as a covenant stipulation, declaring that life is of divine value and that no one has permission to take it away from the owner without vengeance. It is also observable in Eden that God demanded of Cain a clear response as to the death of his brother and went ahead to pronounce curses to Cain for an expiation from Cain (Gen

4). The standard of justice is given to Noah and his generation, which is today a social deficiency. This stipulation asks the generation of Noah to treat circumstances fairly in view of the fact that all life and property including the ability to multiply comes from the blessing of the covenant, hence handed on trust.

The second feature in the Noahic covenant that matches the Adamic covenant is the blessing to rule over all the creation. That includes wild animals, birds, the crawling creatures, and the fish in the sea. The same commandment was given to Adam in Genesis 1.

The third feature of the Noahic covenant is that animals are officially pronounced as food to the human race as plants were given to Adam during creation (Gen 1:29-30). This blessing and stipulation comes with restrictions to man, that man may not eat animals with blood.

The seriousness of this stipulation is further amplified in the Law of Moses, stipulating that blood must be completely drained from animals before turning them to food (Lev 3:17; Deut. 12:16-24; 1 Sam 14:32-34); Gentry, 2012-726).In this stipulation, respect for all human life is explained to both humans and animals stating that even animals that kill and remove human life are held accountable by the giver of life. Homicide of all nature is denied in this stipulation. It therefore means that breaking a covenant, be it social, political or religious that may lead to loss of life is denied even in the next generation of Noah. The impression created here is that the words “rule and subdue” in Gen 1:26-28 were more amplified in the Noahic covenant to mean that do not kill. Gen (9:7-9). This connection explains that the power to rule does not include removing life. This stipulation is further amplified in the Sinai covenant (Exo. 20:13). The covenant then expresses God’s will in the value attached to life. The fourth feature in the Noahic covenant is the fact that God puts two sub-stipulations to protect life.

The first one is the retributive action to those who take away life, and the second one is the demand that He requires an account of the life of other humans from others, whether we take care of it or not as demanded from the first human family (Gen 4:9-10; Gentry, 2012:277).

A covenant relationship is therefore a broad aspect of life that involves all social beings with the principle of respecting each other. The foundation of this respect is because all life contained in blood belongs to God who demands accountability of each person to each other. This can only be achieved in a covenant plan, which reveals God's wish for the human race. It is observable that God's covenant with creation is amended and continued with Noah. This amendment is visible to accommodate the challenges brought in by sin. The promises, signs and parties as explained also characterize this covenant. The sign of the rainbow speaks to the human race of God's commitment to love humanity and protect them forever (Gentry, 2012:277-280).

3.4.2 Abrahamic Covenant

Abraham, the son of Terah, husband of Sarah and father of Ishmael and Isaac is the patriarch by whom the Jews trace their ancestry, Abraham's son and Jacob his grandson. (Freedman, 2000:8-9). This section discusses Abraham's conversion into Yahweh's religion, and the covenant relationship that existed between him and his deity, and between him and his fellow men. The watch Tower refers to the name Abraham to mean the father of crowds/multitudes, a name given to him when he was 99 years. Though listed first in the genealogy, he actually was not the first-born child of Terah. (Gen 11:26, 32). Abraham lived in a Chaldean city of Ur in the land of Shinar near the junction of Euphrates and Tigris River. This city was full of idol-worship as Babylon was popularly known for, but God, out of this evil city saw Abraham and called him for His purpose through a covenant relationship (Watchtower, 1988:28-229).

Hertz quotes a statement reading that:

> "… in their land of idol worship, thou art not worthy to rear sons to the service of God, the evil surrounding could contaminate them" (Hertz, 1960:45).

Even with full knowledge of all the evils of the land as observed, God still went ahead and called Abraham in to a covenant relationship with the purpose of raising a generation that will fear Him. Pfeiffer, quoting the Midrash that says:

> "Mankind descending from Adam became hopelessly corrupt and was swept away by the deluge. Noah alone was spared but before many generations pass away, mankind once again became arrogant and moral darkness overspread the earth and God said Let Abraham be and there was light" Midrash quoted by Hertz (1960:200).

This discussion not only demonstrates the long-term dependency of covenants in history but also shows how Yahweh valued a covenant as a tool of relationships.

The Abrahamic covenant deviates much more from the Hittite covenants in the blessing bracket where God promises that,

> "I will make you into a great nation, I will bless you, I will make your name great, I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you and in you all nations will be blessed."

All that Abraham is required to do is to keep God's covenant i.e., to keep the promises at heart and wait upon them as they get fulfilled (Gentry, 2012:1018). What these studies reveal is that in the three, and even the fourth, including the Mosaic experience, is that God employed the covenant as a means of re-uniting with His repellent companion of human society.

The consistency with which God employs covenants in resolving conflicts between Him and the run-away human society aided by sin, is suggestive of the effectiveness of a covenant as a tool sufficient to resolve and reduce the levels of social rot. This is a situation where God seeks for a covenant relationship with Abraham and is interested in raising a community/generation through Abraham.

The Abrahamic covenant is also called an everlasting covenant **ברית עולם**(*berit olam*) (Gen. 17: 1-7). In this covenant, God introduces conditions to confirm the Vassal's willingness to live according to the covenant. Circumcision becomes mandatory in this covenant and Abraham is

willing to go with. The last covenant moves from individual covenant relationship between God and Noah, God and Abraham to a covenant between God and Israel as a people (nation). It is a promissory covenant to the Israelites that they will be given land later to be referred to as; the land of Israel/Canaan.

According to Gentry (2012), the Abrahamic covenant narrative has four main stages.1. Abraham receives the promises that lead to his call. (Gen. 12) 2. The actual making of the covenant that leads to the promise of land and descendants (Gen. 15) 3. Confirmation of the covenant that brings in the sign of circumcision (Gen. 17) and finally, 4. Abrahams's response to all the above through an oath and obedience (Gentry, 2012:1015-1016). Different from the ANE political treaty that majored on protective and defensive stipulations, the Abrahamic covenant majored on the good will from the covenant owner to the recipients. In the Abrahamic covenant, Gen 12:1-3, two things stand out i.e., the command and the promise.

The command to Abraham is to "go". This command is accompanied by a promise. (1) I will make you into a great nation. (2) I will bless you. (3) I will make your name great. This good will does not first end with Abraham but extends to the rest of the world. (1) I will bless those who bless you (2) I will curse him who curses you. (3) In you all nations will be blessed. (Gen 12:4-9). In response to this situation, (1) Abraham responds with obedience (Gen 12:4-6). (2) Confirms with circumcision (Gen12:7), and finally (3) with obedience to go. Chapter 12 of the text divides itself into two – v3 carries the divine word while v 4 carries Abraham's response.

Tracing the common elements of a covenant in the Abrahamic covenant, introduction, history, stipulations, blessings, curses depository place, witnesses, is plain in the narrative. The difference lies in the intentions and direction of divine covenant compared to political covenant of the Hittites as discussed in the previous sections.

3.4.3 Mosaic Covenant

The mosaic covenant is well covered in the book of Exodus and by extension the book of Deuteronomy, which makes further clarifications on the practicality of the covenant. It covers about twenty chapters in the book of Exodus running all the way from chapters 19 to 40. The mosaic covenant presents as a major covenant that completes all the earlier covenants from Edenic covenant through Noahic covenant, Abrahamic covenant to the famous Sinai/Mosaic covenant.

Exodus 24:3-8 presents an enougral ceremony of the Moseic covenant with Moses teling the Israelites all that God told him. (Exod 24:1-3, 19:3-4). This part of the enougral ceremony signifies the Hebrew's first element of a covenant (Historical prologue) as he introduces God to the people with a clear background as God Himself told him. The response of the people was that they will obay (Exod 24:3). In Amos 3:2, God declares that Israel alone does He know in the whole land hence necessitating a covenant relationship.

Gentry (2012) outlines the breakdown of the text as; Chapter 19- covenant background, Chapter 20- The famous ten statements (commandments), although the word commandments is not found in the exodus referred text. Chapters 21-23- covenant expectations, Chapter 24- covenant celebrations and finally Chapters 25 - 40- the position of the suzerain/Divine kingship in the relationship. This structure gives the book of exodus the name of a covenant book and supported by Deuteronomy also called the second law (Gentry, 2012:13334-1335).

The wide usage of the word covenant in the Pentateuch defines the Hebrew community as a covenant people whose life was a true colour and strength of a covenant. In reference to the Hittite treaties, the Mosaic covenants present significant characteristics like in the Preamble - Chapter 20:1, Historical Prologue - chapter 20:2, covenant Stipulations - this is presented in two levels in the book of Exodus (i) basic stipulations - 20:3 (ii) detailed stipulations 17, 21, 23 and the covenant document clause- 24. The exodus document lacks the blessings and curses clauses

which are actually well covered in the second law book of Deuteronomy (Gentry, 2012:1345-1346).

The general structure of the Mosaic covenant is actually the Suzerain-vassal structure where God stands as the Suzerain father and king of Israel while Man stands as the Vassal obedient son in a relationship of loyal love and trust which receives concurrence with the Hittite Treaties/agreements (Gentry, 2012:1346). At Sinai, God made a covenant of grace, which also allowed unholy people to live with a Holy God. The Sinaic covenant equally shares in the scope **ברת ולם** (*berith olam*). In Sinai, the covenant of Grace allows holy people to live with a holy God (Anderson, 1999:78-83). This covenant shared certain significant characterizations that included a sign, a symbol and a name.

The Mosaic covenant presents some aspects derived from the preceding covenants of Noah and Abraham. In this covenant, the historical prologue is here given as the first event that God brought the Israelites out of Egypt and that by this prologue, the obligation of the Israelites to their Suzerain is established and in return, they obligate themselves to obey the stipulations of the Decalogue (Exodus 19:8). Mendenhall (1954:52-57) projects that in the Amarna letters, there are precise parallels of the statements about this covenant where after the Historical prologue follows a solemn ceremony that puts the covenant to place, and effect is traceable.

The ceremony includes sprinkling of blood on the altar and people, and the next is the banquet in the presence of Yahweh. As seen in these two items of covenant making process, the clans of Israel then are confirmed as the vassals to Yahweh and bound to each other in a sacred truce. In this process there seems to be no clan that is sovereign. The terms of the covenant leave each clan free to regulate its internal affairs so long as the religious covenant obligations are protected. In this sense, the unique unity that was observed in Israel through ages was established although the new federations were not politically interwoven, the covenant united them more than what political unity could do.

The Decalogue's demand in its first stipulation of the covenant was to reject all foreign relations i.e., with other gods and by implication with other political groups. The Israelites could not make covenants with their neighbours both in the desert and later in Palestine as to do so would be to recognize other pagan deities as witness and guarantors of the covenant (Exod 20:1-3). One would wonder how impossible it would be to enter into another covenant with other sovereigns. Being constructed in such a manner gave Israel a firm beginning point with reference to Yahweh. Being a practice that was unique to Israel alone as group, it gave Yahweh high ground among the pagan gods of the time and place hence giving Yahweh prominence among the communities around.

The Mosaic covenant introduced two unique qualities in covenant relationships as compared to the heathen covenants. One was their interpersonal relationship. The covenant stipulation provided for the total acceptance and respect of each other as an obligation impeded in the covenant stipulations. This is clearly indicated in the Decalogue in the last six stipulations of the covenant in the Sinaic covenant, deal with the person-to-person relationship while the first four covenants' stipulations deal with the vassals' responsibilities to Yahweh (Exodus 20).

This arrangement presents a perfect structure that bound the Israelites to each other and to their God, making it different from the pagan covenant relationship where all relationships were geared towards the Suzerain and that the one other time the family of the Suzerain addressed the community of the Vassal was when the Vassal failed to respond to the calls of the Suzerain, which was responded to by total destruction of the Vassal and his family/clan. The unity achieved among the Israelites because of the covenant form gave this federation a unique continuity in the history of federations.

The second uniqueness realized by the sojourning community was that their obedience to their Suzerain gave them significant victories against their enemies. It is strongly attested in the

Hebrew narrative that the city of Jericho fell down entirely because of the power of Yahweh and the faithfulness to the covenant (Joshua 6:1-27).

Mendenhall (1954:51-55) argues that the isolation that put the Israelites away from relating with other gods and by extension with other kings, made and gave them the strength through which they resisted assimilation by the receiving communities of Canaan. In exhibiting parallelism to the second -millennium covenant forms, the depositing of the law (Decalogue) into the covenant box is also reasonably considered as parallel to the Hittite practice of depositing the covenant document to the sanctuary of the temple where the Vassal lived for the gods to witness considering them the ark was actually the portable sanctuary.

It is important to observe that there are items in the Hittite Decalogue not mentioned as part of the structure of the Mosaic covenant process though they are implied. The reason for this is not strange, because even the rest of the elements found in the Hittite covenants are all implied in the Israelite covenants. In the Decalogue, they seem to include a direct requirement to deposit the document in the sanctuary and periodic public reading. The covenant is deposited in the temple of the vassal (Israel). Others include lack of a list of witnesses. It can be observed that all witnesses in the Hittite covenants were gods. No wonder in Malachi 2:14, we see that the absence of this list is by obvious reasons that Yahweh was one and that He was the only needed witness who did not need to be enlisted while curses and blessings oath are also not indicated as the foundation of the covenant.

Mendenhall (1954:52-56) however argues that, “although there is no curse and blessing, the formula in the Decalogue itself is a most important and most early part of Israelites’ “Legal tradition as the curse and blessing formula is in itself inseparably connected with covenants”. New “Legislation” becomes binding in the ancient world (Jeremiah 34) through this one means. It is however observable that, indeed there is no mention of designated periodic reading of the covenant as the Hittite practice is a persistent element in the Israelite traditions although there is however an indication of reading the law of Mosses every Sabbath (Acts 15:21). As Bruce Scott

discusses the Jews feasts, he points out that *Simchat Torah*, a celebration that came after the Jews feast of *sukkot* makes the Jews practice of covenant reading more practiced than the Hittite practices (Bruce, 1997:123-126).

3.4.3.1. Infidelity in the Mosaic covenant

Exodus 19 presents a serious commitment by the Israelites to the covenant life. Exodus (19:17-20). Much as it is arguable that Moses may have instilled fear in the hearts of the Israelites to accept the covenant without reasoning, this discussion does not uphold that argument for lack of sufficient evidence. The Israelites confirmed that the entire nation of Israel has said, they will do. To the contrary, Exodus 32: 17-19 displays a situation where the same Israelites have even substituted the very God who brought them out of bondage with a calf and this level of covenant infidelity irritates Moses the more. There is enough evidence in the Bible that the Israelites being the people of God did fail severally when relating with Yahweh through a covenant structure.

3.4.4 The Davidic Covenant

Introduction

1Samuel 17:12-17 points out to one of the sons of Jesse, an Ephrathite of Bethlehem of Judah who according to the text was the youngest and easy to send to errands (v17). This young and light-hearted boy grows to maturity, and in war experience, ends up being the King of Israel by God's direct choice. This election does not end at being the king of Israel but when provoked by the un-informed advice of Nathan the prophet, ends up opening God's sealed file about the world's future in the hands of David's house. This section will discuss ways and means through which God works to achieve His purpose for the good of humanity by way of a covenant relationship that He entered with David.

3.4.4.1. The Covenant Between David's House and God

The Davidic covenant presents itself as a transitional covenant as it holds to itself the promises that can be traced in life before David and life after David. Peter Gentry unveils these ideas when he argues that the Davidic covenant carries within its own domain the intentions and purposes of

God expressed in the Israelite covenant and further back in the covenant with Abraham (Gentry & Wellum, 2012:1702). 2Samuel 7 presents one of those covenants that its description does not carry with itself the word berit/covenant while presenting all covenant elements including promises, conditions and all other elements of a covenant.

As Gentry and Ellum present in their work, the Davidic engagement with God is referred to as a covenant and expounded in other writings which include: Psalms 89:3-4 which says, "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, thy seed will I establish forever, and build up thy throne to all generations". Other texts affirming the covenant between God and David include Isaiah 55, 2Chronocles 13:5, 2Samuel 23:5 and Jeremiah 33:21 (Gentry & Wellum, 2012:1702-1719).

The covenant entered between God and David makes several claims that are relational in nature. David maykes the first offer to God, which God challenges very strongly claiming that He has never desired such offers since time immemorial. On the contrary, God provides an offer that is far reached into history. David is promised a dynasty whose existence is described by the Hebrew word **ולם** (*olam*) defined by strong's concordance with Hebrew and Greek Lexicon, to mean long duration/antiquity/futurity/all ages/ancient times/always.

The promise in this covenant is timeless. It refers to God's attributes of being "infinite". His origin and destiny are immeasurable. It also means that what God is handing on to David has been in the hands of others or in existence from time immemorial. It is his privilege to continue sustaining God's purpose. Within the same text, the Hebrew word **כרת**(*karat)* meaning to cut off/cut down as used in a covenant-making process is also accompanied by the Hebrew word (*kun/Koon*) which carries the same meaning as the word **הקם** used in the Genesis Abrahamic covenant to mean establish/continue as opposed to entering into a covenant afresh.

The covenant between God and David appears unique in the sense of the two Hebrew words, (*karat*) and (*hakim*) at the same time and affecting the same covenant. The psalmist appears to be in a vision when verbalizing the verse Psalms 89:3-4.

The Davidic covenant presents a relationship that attracts all humanity to God. God promises to be a father to David as David is expected to be a son to God. This formula is making a demand for the terms of engagements to a relationship whose stipulations reveals the character of God, as a God whose love is not dictated by human failure. As He intended so shall it be.

A true covenant should not then peg the fulfillment of its promises to continued obedience to the stipulations that could be challenged by natural inclinations but be dictated by the promise itself. As Anderson puts it, the Abrahamic covenant of land and increase progresses to the Sinaic covenant has to do with the behavior of the people in the Land. He continues to connect the three covenants seeing them all as facilitators of the one single objective now to be achieved through the Davidic royal covenant (Anderson, 1998:195).

Covenants then though entered in different times in history, finally converge at one point where the human race finds God fulfilling His initial intentions in creation. The main intention being, that of restoring the lost creation to its intended position being at the centre of it all. Though all covenants carry with them the stipulation bit as a standard to be kept if promises are to be fulfilled, the Davidic covenant seems to violate this requirement when then it is declared that the conditions that failed Saul will now not be the standard to measure David's reception of promises.

It is unique to observe that God's promises to David are purely based on a father son relationship and that the father is not interested in what the son wants to give him but most interested with what He, the father is offering to the son and his generation. This covenant wants to explain that though a father may give instructional condition to the son, violation of the same

conditions do not allow the father to deny His son because a child does not belong to more than one father biologically. The apostle Paul alluded to this fact when He said that all believers are now sons and not slaves hence the conditions to benefit are not tied to the failures occasioned by is. (Gal 4:7).

Anderson argues that the Davidic royal covenant reflects the motives entertained by God in the struggle for kingship in Israel during Samuel's time and the subsequent election of Saul to rule Israel. His argument is that Samuel was from the old theology of theocracy while theology had developed such that God was developing the new theology to be consummated in the Davidic royal covenant in entertaining the people's demand for a king. Samuel's argument however seems to have been backed up by the fears of becoming like the god-king syndrome that characterized the Ancient Near East (A.N.E) communities who built big temples for their worship while God's picture was bigger than Samuel's imaginations (Anderson, 1998:196).

The theology of the monarchy and the temple presented to David and his house seems to be the results of the development in the growth of covenant relationship between God and His creation. Anderson (1998:196), 1Samuel 8. Though Samuel did not understand it so soon, God seems to have sustained the idea across Samuel's inferior mindset and the challenges of human failures occasioned by sin.

The Davidic covenant then presents the introduction of the final journey to perfect relationship initiated by God sooner after sin and guided through covenants as a means to achieve the objective. This covenant also suggests that good as an idea may be, its journey requires strong structres such as covenants to sustain it if it is to reach its final consummation.

3. 4. 4. 2 King David's infidelity.

While King David is a highly revered king of Israel and whose heart is after Gods's own heart, (1Sam 13:14) The Bible records a terrible departure from a covenant stipulation that were once

most respected by David. When God rejected Saul, the reason was within the violation of the covenant commitment. RSV states that Saul did not keep the commandment of God as the reason of His rejection.

The strong's concordance defines the word *tsavah* to mean, to lay charge upon, give charge to, command, or order, as used in v14 to bring the meaning of not keeping what the Lord commanded (*tsavah*) him to do. This brings to view the aspect of a covenant rule violation. In exchange of the one apostate violator, (Saul) David is brought in and makes even the worst violation of plotting, supervising and executing the act of immorality with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah. (2 Sam.11) In the Pentateuch, covenant stipulations, both murder and adultery are condemned (Exod 20:13-14). It paints a picture of the acts of infidelity needing an external assistance from other sources rather than from within.

3.5 Other Significant Covenants

The Hebrew as a people is seen having other covenants that were not religious in nature. Some of the notable covenants that were not between Yahweh and the Israelites include and not limited to: between David and Jonathan (1Samuel 18:3-4, 23:8), League covenant, that included legal sanctions between David and Jonathan (1Samuel23:18), between Solomon and one of his subjects (1Kings 2:42), Jehoiada the high priest and the royal guard (2 Kings 11:14), King David and Abner (2 Samuel 3:12-21), and he finally brings in the covenant between Yahweh and the Israelites (Exodus 19; Allen, 1987:241).

Most of these covenants were characterised by certain rituals like swearing an oath (Gen: 24:2-3,9,41), shared meal (Gen. 26:28ff), exchange of clothes (1Sam.18:4), cutting of the sacrifice (Gen.15:9-21; Jer. 34:18-20) and walking between the pieces of meat to show that whoever will break the covenant will be cut like the animal sacrifice. These symbols acted as memorial figures to the covenanters until the full consummation of the covenant (Allen, 1987:240-241). Yahweh's relationship with Israel was purely covenantal in nature.

3.6 Elements of the OT Covenants

As already noted in the previous discussions, the OT covenants shared common elements with the covenants made in other ANE regions especially among the Hittites. The distinguishing factor between OT covenants and other ANE covenants is the involvement of Yahweh, either directly when he made covenants with human beings or when human beings called upon his name when they made covenants of one type or the other. In this section, attention is paid to outstanding features of Old Testament covenants.

3.6.1. Preamble

The ANE communities, which include the Hebrew people at the background, had the preamble element section most common in their treaties.

The preamble comes first with a purpose that defines the scope of authority and the real covenant anticipated. As earlier explained above, this section came with a synopsis of the covenant owner, the Suzerain, displaying his summary extent of influence that included his name, titles, genealogy, divine attributes and influence that were uttered by him in the opening speech.

The effect of this utterance was meant to create total confidence that would lead to productive commitment on the part of the Vassal to the Suzerain and vise-versa. Because most of the ANE covenants were power gathering oriented, a title-introductory was important as a means of introducing power, expected authority, confidence and assurance to the vassal. This aspect does not come out clear among the Iteso people while working on their covenants.

This could be attributed to the nature of the traditional covenants done by the Iteso people, which appear to be more of social covenants than authoritarian nature like the Hittite covenants. Exodus 3:13, presents Moses' demand to know God's name before he speaks to the Israelites. The subsequent conversations between Moses and God in Exodus through Deuteronomy and beyond on what to tell the Israelites is always accompanied by the word "Thus says the Lord" or "the Lord has spoken" (Deut 6:19) The use of this formula in the divine speech constitutes the usage of the Suzerain introduction or the preamble section of the Hebrew, and the entire ANE usage of

the same. The divine attributes to the Suzerain's speech in the preamble played the same role of strengthening the scope of the covenant authority.

This bit of the covenant introduction assumes that the suzerains also had the same power to execute just as God could, and this again gave the covenant the strength making it of Divine origin. The Iteso people, much as they believed that the ancestors lived in the East (*Kide*), and were believed to be gods, were not attributed to the covenant owners as if they were gods but were always viewed as witnesses who stood with those who were right. These gods could punish or bless the righteous, but the covenant owners did not impersonate their powers. Yes, it seems that the covenant owners were influential by the mere fact that the gods backed them, but they did not become gods by so being influential. This aspect also presents a deviation in terms of covenant practice between the Iteso and the ANE world (Collins, 2004:12-20).

3.6.2. Historical Prologue

This section of the covenant, common to both the Hebrew and the Hittite communities was not so far from the preamble since it was a continuation of the preamble in a consistence manner. The Historical prologue places the emphasis on the previous acts of mercy by the king to the Vassal, with a clear motive of painting the Suzerain as being better than the Vassal covenant partner. This impression defines the kind of relationship that is going to be adopted as one of the inferior and the superior parties.

It can be clearly observed that the intention of this section in continuation of the preamble is to keep the Suzerain at an advantage position over the Vassal. These expressions of pride and indications of self-exaltation serve no less than to intimidate the Vassal as it comes with the power of the covenant. Whether this was going to result in instilled fear to the Vassal as a means of soliciting for obedience or risking rebellion, can only be proved in time. It is however observed that the Iteso people in their covenants, had moments when poverty on the part of an elder led to what was referred to as an elders' covenant, whereby one who was not able to pay a

cow as compensation, was allowed to borrow one through a covenant procedure which required to accept that children born out of the compensation, be named after the one who gave the compensation cow.

The Iteso people do not demonstrate an affirmative claim of the past acts of mercy to the recipient of the compensation, but is viewed as an act of salvation with favors expected from the giver. Much as the Iteso demonstrated acts of mercy, the nature of the covenant process was such that the recipient and the giver were both viewed as participants under some leadership guidance and this reduced the glory of either party from making excess claims. Most of the Iteso covenants were not personalized in the spirit of self, as it was in the ANE. There will then be seen a slight deviation between the Iteso and the Hebrew Historical prologue in terms of the motives involved. The Iteso can then be advised by this practice, to identify one of the covenant participants, to claim glory out of the past acts of mercy as a means of having some reference when relationships call for who should be referred to as the lead participants. (Collins 2004:12-20).

3.6.3. Covenant stipulations

The ANE Hebrew covenant relationships present stipulations as the central focus of interest of the whole covenant and relationships arrangement. The section also presents the selfish culture of kings, and those who organized the covenants. Stipulations represented the arrogant and unmerciful face of the arrangement that included loss of life, where stipulation offenders were destroyed through death in instances where the vassal failed to appear before the Suzerain as stipulated, banishments where the Vassal collaborated with the enemies of the ruling Suzerain if not killed, and the general pain of the relationship where compliance could not be achieved. On the other hand, stipulations represented the security and assurance of the relationship entered through the covenant procedures.

This aspect of the covenant seems to have cultured the whole region of the ANE world, leading to a culture of violence and lack of dignity to life. As it is observable to date, the Middle East community culture seems to spend much of their livelihood in organizing killer plans such as seen in Al-Shabaab and other criminal gangs who perceive the rest of the world as not towing to their lines of culture, religion and practices. This bit of the covenant may also be considered the point at which the curses are implemented, both among the Iteso people and the Hebrew communities. The Iteso people are not exempted from this brutal handling of covenant offenders as seen the way they handled the offenders, to the extent of killing them.

The difference seems to be at the rate of punitive punishments and the embracing of reconciliation compared to the Hebrew and the general ANE culture. The Iteso people seem to have embraced the legal systems of justice more today than their Middle East counterparts who seem to fail at the mercies of corruption and impunity where offenders are left scot-free. The Iteso covenant stipulations of burning the witches, banishing the immoral once, termite biting punishment where culprits of early pregnancies were subjected to termite bites, are no longer implemented due to human rights agitations and that this has led to social decay in terms of covenant infidelity. While the implementation of traditional covenant violation stipulations has collapsed, the society has in the same vein experienced extreme injustices and impunity of the worst experiences.

The Hebrew covenant stipulations of a tooth for a tooth and a hand for a hand still practiced in all Semite communities to date, represent the dark part of covenant relationship against the modern enlightenment of the modern civilization though guidelines in terms of stipulations, are key to any relationship (Collins, 2004:12-20).

3.6.4. Curses

Among the whole population of ANE people, curses were viewed as consequences of violations. Both Hebrews and the Hittites indicate that curses were of two origins. The first one being, that of physical infliction of pain, and the second being, that which came from the reaction of gods.

Curses came in the form of severe punishments from the Suzerain to the Vassal, banishments etc. depending on the violation. The reaction of gods to a covenant offender was the most feared one, since no one knew the magnitude, and especially which god had been most offended. Gods that responded to such violations included sun god, the female and male gods, the river god, the heaven and earth god, the wind god the clouds god, the futility god etc.

Violation of stipulations attracted punishments that include sickness like mental challenges and death. It is also presented here clearly, that gods also served as witnesses to the covenants entered, with the view of maintaining a relationship. The influence of gods in covenant relationships has continued to influence relationships across history, both among the Hebrew and the traditional Iteso people.

Among the people of ANE list of gods, the order is presented as beginning with the name of the deity: This is seen to display the authority of the god referred. The god of fertility could probably not be as powerful as the god of the sea and the god of the heavens and earth. The lineup then could be a suggestion that the greater the name of the god invited, the more secure the covenant, leading to perfect observance of the covenant stipulations and demands. Some of the curses that proceed from violations of covenant stipulations indicated in Leviticus 26:14-20 include:

> "Appointment of terror, consumption, the burning urge that shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart and sowing the seeds in vain for the enemies shall eat it."

Violation of covenant agreements led to total destruction that could not be compared to the offence committed. If this be the outlook of covenant relationship, then it could be the reason

why the modern society does not find meaning in it. However, the problem that this study seeks to provide answers to, are the consequences of the extremes, occasioned by total abandoning of the process and the provided solutions that have been marred by infidelity. This study exposes that a balance need be struck where painful extremes are minimized as fidelity is achieved in a relationship that is regulated by a covenant and its structures.

This can be achieved by marrying the Iteso covenant practices, The Hittite political covenant stipulations and the Hebrew inclusion of **ברת שלם** in covenant relationships, as this will enhance forgiveness to the offenders and at the same time provide for tolerable correction to the offender (Collins, 2004:12-20).

3.6.5. Blessings

While disobedience brought painful experiences to the offenders of covenant relationships, obedience to the stipulations on the other hand brought equal and more blessings of joy and fulfillments to the covenanters. Some of the blessings experienced by obeying covenant stipulations among the ANE people include protection by gods against enemy's harm and any other danger that awaited the Vassal. Protection and care by the Suzerain were assured. It is presented in the Hittite covenants that gods would provide protection to the wife, sons, land, house, oxen, sheep field etc. The same protection and more is provided to those who will obey the covenant commandments of Yahweh as indicated in Leviticus 26:3-13 that include; rain in due season, more yield in the land including trees, peace, victory in war, etc. The most significant aspect of the Hebrew covenant blessings is that when they are pronounced, an assurance is provided by a historical prologue reminding the beneficiary of the past deeds of mercy done to the Vassal (v.13) (Collins, 2004:12-20).

3.6.6 Observable Hebrew Covenant elements in the Pentateuch

The contention on whether it is the Hittites that reflect the Hebrew pattern of covenants, or is it the Hebrews who emulated the Hittite, may not hit a compromise between the conservative

scholars and the liberal scholars but nevertheless, there are indications of commonalities between the Hebrew and the Hittite covenants. The table below presents elements commonly found even among the Hittite covenants. These same elements are also found in the Hittite covenants explained in Chapter Two of the text above.

Collins had some phenomenological observations on the appearance of the three Hebrew Biblical texts on the covenants which come up in the table below. This table displays the prevalence of covenant relationships among the Hebrew people, and how this approach to relationships made the Hebrew people significant in the midst of idol worshipers (Collins 2004:12-20).

Exodus-Leviticus	Deuteronomy	Joshua 24
Introduction of speaker	Introduction of speaker	Introduction of speaker
Historical Prologue	Historical Prologue	Historical Prologue
Stipulations	Stipulations	Stipulations
	Document Clause	Curses
Blessings	Blessings and Curses	Witnesses
	Epilogue	Document Clause
	Witness	

In the table presented above, Deuteronomy gives a more detailed manifestation of a Hittite covenant, although the covenant is officially pronounced in Exodus indicating that the Pentateuch author was not a stranger in the covenant formulation (Collins, 2004:12-20).

3.6.7. Covenant formula

The Hebrew covenants are coded with formulas which lay emphasis on the promises provided in the covenant. Exodus 19:1-7 is an example of a covenant formula where after laying plain to them the historical prologue in verse 4, reminding them of the acts of mercy that He did to them,

gives them an affirmation that they shall be unto Him a kingdom of priests and a holy nation in v6, and insists to Moses that these are the words that he shall speak to the children of Israel.

The same emphasis is seen in Gen 17:7-8 that after confirming ברת עלם **(***berit olam*) as the Abrahamic covenant, in v7, the same emphasis is made, that He will be their God after fulfilling all promises of the covenant, He still reminds them that He will be their God. The same theme is seen in the New Testament writings of Revelation 21:3, 7 carrying the same emphasis that He will be their God and they will be His sons. This affirmation summarizing a covenant process, is significant to the commitment of fulfilling the covenant promises and being loyal to the stipulations of a covenant relationship. This aspect of the covenant is not indicated in the covenant relationships among the Iteso people. The Hittite and the rest of the ANE communities do not indicate appreciation of this aspect as a gesture to demonstrate their commitment to the covenant relationship.

The Iteso could have had other ways of appreciating their covenant relationships other than formulaes such as strict athererance to dos and donts by defaults as the discussion will demonstrate in chapter five bellow.

3.6.8. Covenant symbols

One of the most common features found among the Hebrew covenant relationships, is the symbolic features that stand as a representation of commitment and a constant reminder to the covenanters that they are still committed to the binding requirements of the covenant. These symbols also define the will of the Suzerain to the Vassal as he does not intend to keep the Vassal in darkness about his commitment to the covenant.

Transparency is one indication of the Suzerain/Vassal that enhances commitment to the covenant relationship. Genesis. 9:1-29 explains the meaning of the rainbow given to Noah as a symbol that God will not use water to destroy life again. To Abraham He gave circumcision and to Moses He gave the Sabbath as a symbol of His commitment to keep to His promises. The Traditional Iteso

people highly appreciated this practice of using symbols in their practices as discussed above. The Iteso with their many covenants, command the majority of symbols in their covenants compared to the ANE communities. This may have been occasioned by the fact that their covenants were more of political and religious compared to the Iteso covenants many of them being social.

3.6.9. Mutual Commitment

Old Testament covenant relationships also present themselves in political relations.

According to Von Rad, (1965: 126-124), the central point in a covenant relationship between God and man is that "God entered into a covenant commitment with men and from beginning to end, covenants encompassed and circumscribed the divine-human relationships". That whether it is the covenant of works as it was with Adam before fall, or the covenant of Grace after fall, the central point was and is relationship. Von Rohr (1965:126-129) in his confession states that "And yet it is not simply in this evangelical portrayal as such, that the distinctive assurance of the covenant was understood to reside. Rather, added to the evangelical promise was the comfort found in the very nature of the covenant itself."

3.6.10. Prevalence of Hesed (loving kindness)

Old Testament covenants ride on a unique staying power of *hesed* (his loving kindness). Covenants present God's desire to enter into relationships with man and woman created in His image and presents God's self-disclosure (Gentry and Willum, 2012:72). As earlier mentioned, there existed *hesed* covenants among the human beings, although this happens as a reflection of the Divine *hesed* covenant that has taken effect in a human being.

An example can be seen when Jacob requests his son Joseph not to leave his bones in Egypt. Jacob requesting Joseph not to bury him in Egypt, but Canaan comes with *hesed* (loving kindness), leading to the aspect of the stronger party helping the weaker. At this point, Jacob was

helpless needing *hesed* treatment from his son whom he knows as having entered into a covenant relationship with Yahweh. (Gentry, 2012:629).

God's covenants that are *hesed* covenants and are not political contain the intention to lift His fallen beings and restore them into His image. Gentry (2012:630). *Hesed* is right in the framework of covenant making where the giving of the promises in Yahweh's covenant is the foundational act of *hesed.* The divine act of *Hesed* in a covenant therefore challenges the effectiveness of conditions in a covenant and makes them weaker as love becomes stronger.

This aspect of *hesed* in a divine covenant presents Yahweh's revelation of his love for humanity. In a similar way, God reserves himself the right to grant mercy to whom he wills and denies at will even as (*hesed*) is in His nature Ex 33:19.

Yahweh presents himself as gracious and merciful and at the same time merciful and gracious which outplay any negative function in his relationship with humanity (Gentry, 2012:640). **הסד** *Hesed* equally has a function of forgiveness, which appears to be more active than condemn. This nature of God estranged in a covenant relationship, is presented in what Moses experiences when he is allowed to see the back of God. He showed Moses his back as an act of demonstration of a covenant relationship that expresses the totality and effects of **חסד** (*hesed*).

As much as God loved Moses, allowing him to see God in full and die would not have demonstrated His divine covenant relationship. This then pauses the question of "what is the position of conditions/stipulations in a divine covenant relationship?'' The response would be that in a divine covenant relationship, there is a provision to cure stipulation offenders within the nature of Yahweh without entertaining sin Ex 20:5-6, Gentry (2012: 640). Psalms 117 (*emet*) meaning – (loyal love). It will then just be sufficient to state that covenant theology, is all that is contained in the modes through which Yahweh, who is holy, reveals himself to fallen humanity full of sins. These modes may include**חסד** (*hesed)*- (his loving kindness) that comes with

unconditional love or loyal love, creating a difference between political covenants from divine covenants**. מת (***Emet*) covenants that express loyal love insist on God's endurance in his dealings with fallen human beings. Shalom covenants come with a complete unit of God's love in his relationship with human beings. Revelation-in divine covenant. God reveals himself to humanity as He breaks into their ranks in love, beginning to mould a person from within, hence revealing his will to humanity.

3.6.11. Covenant and the New Testaments.

The New Testament community viewed the Hebrew word *berith* in many different ways. In the Last Supper officiated by Jesus Himself, William M. Swartley argues that the occation was a covenant making occasion for ending Israel exile and renwing broken covenant. He aargues that this was a covenant of peace probably aimed at re-uniting God with His lost family through sin and recovered through the deadth of Jesus. (Swartley, 2006:177). He brings in the salvation to them through a covenant process.

It seems to the new testament readers that the use of the word *testament* coils itself from the Latin word *testamentum* used in the valget, and translated in to Greek word *diatheke* translated from the Hebrew word (*berith*) carries more of a covenant relationship sought by Jesus in the last supper than a mere meal (Brown & Moloney, 2017:4-5). The New community raised through the cross experience, then derives its communion from the covenant promises given in Eden and repeated to Noah and Abraham (Sherman, 2015:24-25).

It is then clear to a New Testament believer that a covenant relationship is the most cherished relationship. In classifying God, John C. Peckham introduces God as one who creates, sustains and creates; speaks, hears and responds, sees, provides, delivers, /saves and rules etc (Peckham 2021:1-2). In all matters of salvation, the NT pen sees the relationship re-created through Christ as a covenant relationship. The extend of OT covenant practice spills over to the first centuary AD with the same characteristics as those in the OT. The conversation in John 13-17 is an ideal

covenant process done in the new Testaments. In this covenant, Jesus is the initiator of the covenant.

3.7 The Theology of Old Testaments Covenants

The theology of covenants in the Old Testament has attracted a discussion from major Old Testament scholars, including Gerhard Von-Rad and Walter Eichrodt who are considered the founding fathers of Old Testament Theology. Von-Rad (1965:129-130) argues that covenant theology may or may not be fully encompassed in the Hebrew word *berit* which arbitrarily may carry a makeshift meaning of an agreement in itself including the ceremonial bit and may also bring in the idea of communion /fellowship between partners. He points out terms like *credo* (creed) which in their contents carried covenant manifestation, annals, epochs and epics in different times and places manifested covenant characteristics, revealing a deeper sense of a covenant that is contained in the Hebrew word (*berit*).

In their arguments, Von Rad and Begrich contend that the word **ברת** (*berith*) presents an exclusive meaning of an agreement between two parties and that there is no room for parity covenant in **ברת (***berith*). The covenant is to be understood as a relationship between two parties of unequal status. "In no sense then is a relationship of parity as between the partners always presupposed'' (Von Rad, 1962:129).

The theory of the Hexateuch gives such meaning of ברת **(***berit*) limiting it to a mere agreement of peace as seen in Joshua 9, 1 king 20:34, Samuel 11:1. In all the agreements in the texts above, the decisions to act were all in the hands of the superior. The difference comes in when the word "shalom" is encompassed in the word covenant. The relationship confirmed through a covenant was ever designated by the word shalom. Such are found in Gen 26:30, 1 king 5:26, v2, Isaiah 54:10, Job 5:23, where, however, the English word peace is inadequate to the Hebrew word shalom.

If the reflections made above are taken in their theological footing, then a covenant made for the purposes of securing war, peace or cease fire, stands away from the theological meaning of **ברת**(*berit*) that is designated by the word **שלם** (*Shalom*) (peace) since **שלם** (*Shalom*) brings in the sense and meaning of un-impairedness, the un-holiness and a state of harmonious equilibrium, the balancing of all claims and needs between parties. This gives a new meaning of making a covenant with the benefit of relational intactness, orderliness, and rightness between the two parties Deut. 9:9, 11, 15 and synonymises the word covenant to the word commandments - this is another significant feature in the Hebrew covenant (Von-Rad, 1962:130).

As in the Hittite covenant where stipulations are found in all covenants, the word covenant and the word commandments go hand in hand. Von Rad holds that Israel held a tradition of a promise given to her by Yahweh in the form of a covenant. The understanding is that it is Yahweh who owns the promised item called "covenant." The nature of this covenant is that Yahweh is seen as being given the right to initiate the covenant by virtue of His divine right, dismissing the idea of human natural relationship (Von-Rad, 1962:130).

A close observation of two prominent covenants i.e., the Abrahamic and the mosaic covenants reveal that the covenant entered between Yahweh and both Moses (Israel) and Abraham was of the unique nature of a grant from Yahweh to the recipients, which put **ברת** (*berit*) in Suzerain-Vassal type of covenant. A case in point is seen in the Abrahamic covenant, where Yahweh plays the active part of Suzerain and Abraham plays the part of a recipient. Abraham is seen sinking into total unconsciousness as Yahweh performs the covenant ritual. The same experience is realized in the mosaic and the Noahic covenant (Von-Rad, 1962:131). What Von Rad presents in his work, is that both the Yahweists and the Elohist traditions did not have room for parity covenants, but Yahweh was the one who granted a covenant designated as shalom to Israel.
The significance here is that it is impossible for human beings to achieve a shalom covenant, owing to their sinful inabilities (iniquities). Yahweh did not expect an equivalence of rights in a covenant with the Israelites. Abraham sinking into unconsciousness in the process of performing

the covenant rite, leaving Yahweh alone performing the rite, demonstrates this. It is by Yahweh's righteousness, not Israel's, that the promises will be fulfilled (Deut 9).

The covenant was equally predictive in nature as demonstrated in God's covenant with Abraham which had three future promises. God promised that Abraham will become the father of many people. This promise was not to happen immediately but would come in Abraham's future. Miraculous as it was at the patriarch's old age, God had to secure Abraham's trust on Him by fulfilling this promise in His time as an indication of the future fulfilment of the bigger part of the promise through the messianic influence.

The second promise declares that there will be a new relationship between God and Abraham's descendants. "I will be your God" is the promise that will end up running throughout the Hebrew Bible. This declaration from a Suzerain of Yahweh's stature is highly fulfilling, leading to Abraham's confidence in Yahweh. The third promise again comes to be fulfilled at the time of most of the Israelites'lifetimes. God is promising the descendants of Abraham that they will possess the land of their own. The three elements found in the Abrahamic covenant were all fulfilled even beyond Abraham's time.

The first promise was fulfilled in Egypt with Israelites growing into a multitude, they became a national threat to the Egyptians at a time when Egypt was a superpower, indicating that their numbers could be felt nationwide. The second promise was fulfilled at Sinai when Yahweh entered into a special relationship with the Jews community that began with one Abraham. Yahweh enters into this relationship through a Shalom-covenant that is complete in all lines of a covenant and moulds Israel into His likeness. In this covenant referred to as Shalom covenant, peace is expected to rule in the hearts of the recipients. Finally, the third promise was fulfilled under Joshua when at last, land was their permanent possession as much as these fulfilments remain partial and salvation is still their final consummation. A covenant is all about God to man

and not man to God. God has always initiated a relationship with man and not vice versa (Von Rad, 1962:135).

Eichrodt's volume two of theology of the Old Testament has attained much deserved reputation internationally, on the assertion that the Old Testament is about the acts of Yahweh - the covenant God upon the favoured covenant people. Thus, he summarises the theology of covenants in a five-point statement: These points demonstrate God's way of revealing Himself to His creation as follows:

3.8. A Factual Nature of Divine Revelation

In this point, God does not use ordinary straight way common to His creation but as Eichrodt states, that while God does not reveal Himself in a common way to human beings, a covenant reveals the factual nature of divine revelation. That to understand God's nature is not a classroom package. The mysterious nature of God is revealed to people or a person when he breaks into one's life and in the life of his people, in the way of dealing with them from inside taking them through structured experience of successful molding them according to His will in history and events that His revelation about Himself is understood **(**Eichrodt, 1961:36-44).

This can only be experienced when one enters into a relationship with God through a covenant. Hebrew covenants with Yahweh then move away from mere observance of stipulation as seen in the political covenants of the ANE into an individualized relationship, with a life changing experience. In a covenant relationship with Yahweh, one changes into the likeness of God as a result of communing with Him **(**Eichrodt, 1961:36-44).

3.9. Declaration of God's will to His People.

In subjecting the character of His people to a standard, Yahweh was declaring His will to his people and revealing Himself to the people of His choice in history and experience. The declaration that "you shall be my people and I will be your God", is a clear revelation of His will

to identify with His people. Belonging to Yahweh in this manner would lead to a life with a goal and a meaningful history. Human positions before Yahweh's will (Eichrodt, 1961:36-44).

A covenant does display the human position before Yahweh's will, as is demonstrated by the way Israel achieved unity within the fragment lines of families and tribes. The covenant revealed that solidarity is the will of God. Considering that before the formation of Israel as a nation, there existed strong nations like ancient Babylon, Sumer, Anatolia, and yet these nations did not achieve the kind of solidarity realized in Israel. This manifestation clearly demonstrates the revelation effects of God and its effect to humanity (Eichrodt, 1961:36-44).

3.10. Existence of a Binding Relationship Created Between the Covenant Contracting Parties

The covenant is a pact of mutual obligations entered in to freely but restrictive in the constraint that it then places upon the covenanting parties. He who commits himself by covenant is bound to fulfil what he has promised so long as the covenant prevails. And so, it is with the covenant of Grace and with God." (Eichrodt, 1961:37). This submission suggests that covenants come with obligations. Once entered, unless otherwise, the demands remain.

3.11. Initiation of a New Arrangement

God broke into the lives of people in His dealing with them and moulded them according to His will that He grants them knowledge of His being (Eichrodt, 1961:37-38). This idea explains the importance and the seriousness of a covenant relationship. It also explains the effect of this arrangement to the one who enters into a covenant with God. This includes total change of behaviour, intended to suit into the new relationship through the inner moulding.

This kind of a covenant is described in the ancient Near Eastern communities (the Hittites), as suzerain-vassal covenant where the parties are not equal. In this type of covenant, the vassal benefits and changes more than the suzerain changes. The clearest intension of the Inferior-Superior covenant relationship arrangement appears to me as an opportunity for the great to

serve the weak and poor. Although this came with responsibilities, the main objective was for the mighty, who has all, i.e., "God" to benefit the poor/weak.

The change of character and the moulding aspect may differ between the Iteso and the Hebrew on the basis that the religious strength of the Iteso people on individual covenant engagement may be lower compared to the Hebrew one and their God. However, even among the Iteso, there is a covenant relationship between them and their God.

3.12. Ownership and Exchange of Interest

Echrodit explains that in a relationship like in the covenant arrangement, where two parties are involved, there shall be found an exchange of interest. This will include ownership where the statements like "you shall be my people and I will be your God", "providing life with a goal and History with a meaning" is considered. Echrodit (1961:38) observes that in a healthy covenant relationship, both parties should feel that each other's will is considered.

It is easy to realize that in the modern world where covenants are entered, a level of doubt is entertained, and clarity of interest is opaque. The end results are the disappointments that leave each other pained. The common factor in all the scholarly work that has been cited, demonstrates that covenants are key to the strength of the society. No doubt that even the Moabite community embraced the covenant life that led the young Ruth to treat the foreign husband in a way that pleased them and even their new husband (Ruth 1:16). Could this be the missing ingredient in families and finally in societies?

3.13. Conclusion

This chapter explored the concept of covenants in the context of the Ancient Near East. We observed that the Hittite covenants influenced the framing of covenants in the larger ANE environment. The Hittite covenants were in two clusters, (I) the group of covenants that were done between 1500 and 1200 BC, and (ii) the Syrian treaties done within the 8th century. These treaties consisted of those whose parties were not of equal status. These treaties are associated

with a time when kings were expanding their territories, conquering City states, and making them their vassals through a covenant or an agreement. This was *vassal- suzerain* type of covenant who was unequal partners, the superior and the inferior party though each had obligations. Although the standard elements of a covenant would change and individual treaties varied one from the other, the objective remained the same (Collins, 2007:121). However, whether it is mentioned or not, the standard elements of the Hittite covenants that include introduction, historical prologue, stipulations, list of witnesses, curses and blessings and provisions for reading and storage, are either clearly mentioned or manifested, leading to some scholars believing that probably one must have been influenced by the other.

Within the ANE including Israel traditions, a clear difference exists between the Anatolian covenants and covenants entered between Yahweh and His elect, as compared to the covenants done in the land of Mesopotamia and Egypt. While the ANE covenants reflect more on political gain, Hebrew covenants focus more on promises perceived by some scholars like the dispensationalists, as not yet fulfilled while others see fulfilment of these same promises within the life period of Israel. In the Hebrew covenants, Yahweh who is seen as the sovereign Suzerain in the Hebrew-covenant relationships. He is seen providing for atonement to those found in violation of stipulations through a system that includes sacrifices, confessions, and his own commitment first and foremost to Himself, His creation, and His image bearers (Gentry and Wellum, 2012: 91).

In this order which is devoid in the political covenants of the land of Hatti and ANE at large, Yahweh employs some of His characteristics like *hesed* and *shalom* in His exercise of covenant relationship which leads to a greater deviation from other practices of covenant relationships. Finally, we looked at the theology of Old Testament covenants and noted that covenants were a means by which God revealed Himself to His creation, the human beings.

They were also avenues for pronouncement of God's will, growing commitments, and served as platforms for new beginnings. In the following chapter, we shall carry out an exegesis of Genesis 31:1-55, which contains the covenant between Jacob and Laban. It is however notable that even among the Israelites, covenants experienced infidelity at all levels.

The infidelity found in the Genesis covenants stand a ground of significant position to the human race from the beginning of covenant life when Adam and his wife choose to break a covenant stipulation that denied them the right to some garden trees (Gen 3). The Noahic covenant life demonstrates covenant infidelity along the line of life between Noah and his sons leading to Noah cursing Ham.

Curses were reactionary acts of response to covenant violation (Gen 9:24-25). The Abrahamic Covenant life does not miss a dent of infidelity when Abraham and his wife Sarah doubt the promises of God and lays with a maid for the purposes of getting a child, and finally this brings a discord in the covenant relationship between Abraham and Sarah - His wife. (Gen 16:1-6), the Davidic covenant life is even worse with Bethsheba (2 Sam 11) where David displays human inability to keep a covenant life by himself.

As discussed above, David's infidelity challenges God's description of David as a man after His own heart (1Samuel 13:14). All Hebrew major covenant actors failed in upholding covenant standards with Israel as a nation failing the more (Exodus 24) patronage by Aaron.

Much as this study seeks to find informative support to the Iteso traditional covenant practices, challenges in upholding Covenant life present an otherwise phenomenon across humanity.

CHAPTER FOUR

EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF GENESIS 31:1-55

4.0 Introduction

This chapter exegetically examines the meaning of the phrace **ברת** (*berith*) in Genesis 31:1-55 within its literary, theological, and cultural context and then applies it to the contemporary Iteso traditional covenants. This section delved into the historical context of Genesis 31, its literary structure, and finally, the linguistic analysis of the text in question, followed by an interpretation of the findings. In the following sections, we look at important aspects of Genesis 31, beginning with the context of the text, form and structure of the text, verse by verse exposition of the text, Summary scale of the text and the conclusion of the text. This chapter applied both Narrative criticism and the Exegetical method in its interpretation.

4:1 Context of Genesis 31

The book of Genesis 31, like other books of the Bible that present narratives in a coherent manner, displays a characterization of a covenant relationship between Laban and Jacob, with numeral challenges. The chapter is a continuation of the literary context in Genesis 28:10-36: 43 that deals with the life of Jacob after he began the journey from his father's land in Beersheba south of Canaan to Harran with a distance difference of about 800km (Adeyemo, 2010:53).

The story about Jacob and his uncle is situated between the story of Isaac settling in Beersheba and Jacob's encounter with Esau (Gen. 32). Genesis 28:10-22 presents Jacob and the hard experience he undergoes through travelling long distances. At this point, a demonstration of God's fulfilment of his promise to be fulfilled in this descendant of Abraham is here with Jacob. Jacob gets exhausted and decides to rest and while resting, God appears to him in a vision and identifies Himself as the Lord of his fathers (v. 13).

God's appearance and self-revelation to Jacob seems to tell Jacob that "you (Jacob) are not hidden from me" and that God's promise overshadows mistakes that appear threatening to Jacob. Jacob responds by pouring oil on the stone he used as a pillar, setting it apart for other use in the future. He pledges to give a tithe to the temple to be built at the very significant place for him in Bethel. (Gen 28:19- 22). Chapter 31 is the climax of the narrative from the beginning of the action to conflict at the first short-changed marriage (29- 30) and now the narrative is at the conflict most intense (31), and steadily moves to the unavailing stage towards resolution at the end of the chapter (Tremper, 1994: 3).

First and foremost, the chapter relates to how Jacob observed that Laban and his sons envied his prosperity and having received a call from God at the same time to return to his own country, decided to acquaint his wives with it, and with the most upsetting experience being that of their father changing agreements/covenants up to ten times. He reported to them that Laban's ill usage of him, and the wonderful appearance of God to him, and for him, and that God's orders to depart from thence were a timely solution to his plights.

In Genesis 31:1, the report by Jacob was well received by the wives, to which they all agreed knowing of their father's unkindness, and that they had nothing to expect from him, judged it best to go off with what they had received through the gift of God unto them. (Gen31:3). Upon reaching this agreement, Jacob set out privately with all he had towards his own country when Laban was shearing his sheep. (Gen 31:26).

The question that remains unanswered, is as to whether Jacob was timely in carrying out this procedure of inciting his wives at this time when their father was on an assignment that could take this long, to give him ample time to organize himself and flee away or was he ready, and that time had come and that he had to do it anyway. His argument of God calling him does not indicate the exact timing. Three days after, Laban being informed of it, pursued Jacob and

overtook him at Mt. Gilead, however, God had warned him on the way about what he should say to him (Gen. 31:22-25).

Nevertheless, Laban expostulated him about his secret flight not giving him the opportunity to bid his children goodbye and more especially for taking away his gods. (Gen 33:26-30). In this encounter with Jacob, Jacob equally responds actively to him chiding him severally for his hot pursuit of him, his charge of stealth when he could find nothing on him. He expressed his hard labor of twenty years with requital of him for it, full of agreement changes every step of his achievements (Gen 31:7, 41-42).

If God did not talk to Laban the previous night, a terrible war would have broken out at Mt. Gilead (Carson, 1994:81). At this point, Jacob is not expected to be young at all for the very fact that at his departure from Canaan, Isaac was heavily age stricken and could not even see considering that Esau and Jacob were his first-born twin children.
Jacob who was born probably when his father was sixty years old, Isaac having stayed for twenty years after marrying Rebecca and that at the time of the event, Jacob's children are responsible enough to be left with animals could also be relatively very old (Gen 27:1, 25:19-22, 30; 35).

The Genesis stories about Jacob also characterize Jacob as a humble God-fearing man. All assurance seems to indicate that God should be with him. In chapter 29, Jacob is headed to meeting his future wife as a man guided and destined to social prosperity. He meets Rachel in a well and is surprised to learn that Rachel is actually Laban's daughter and his cousin.

As Mathew Kenneth puts it, the narrative of Genesis 31 falls under the narrative literature, and as contented by documentarians, the narrative is a composite text of three sources indebted to the Elohists (E). The Elohists are characterized by the popular use of the divine name Elohim Mathew (2005:508-510). Gen 31:5, 7, 9, 11, 16, 24, 29, 42, 50, 53. With this evidence, Mathew believes that the narrative can be classified in to the Elohist group of Pentateuchal writings.

Mathew argues that this is so true because the narrative contains an allusion to the vow taken at Bethel, (the house of God - Elohim). (v. 13, 28:17-18, 20-22). Other scholars however dispute that chapter 31 of Genesis could be well associated with the work of the Yahwists. Some of these scholars include, Speiser whose sensitivity to the unity of the passage presents the trend in Pentateuch criticism of a dwindling role of the Elohists in the narrative.

Mathew (2005:508-510) also notes that Genesis 31 presents a work well-knit and self-contained unit authored by the Yahwists who employed a number of pre-existing traditions and whose work underwent two major expansions as seen in v4-16 and v43-54. As quoted by Mathew, Westermann argues in the same sense after assigning and associating the chapter to Gen 28:10-22.

Van Seters also recognizes that chapter 31, which depends on chapter 28, is purely a Yahwists narrative, and the scholars who are bent towards the text being associated with the Yahwists are many. Blum Like believes that the author of the promising Jacob's story took over early Jacob traditions about his trickery and re-directed them, producing a moral Jacob who was the honorable ancestor of Northern Israel (Mathew, 2005:508-510).

While those two positions are strong one to another, the researcher considers them as relative positions on the basis that each one of them has a sustainable argument and a right to knowledge, and respects them as such. The focus of the study is to consider the circumstances that surround covenant relationships among the Old Testament people as compared to the same among the Iteso people.

While it may not be possible to exhaust all scholars' arguments about Genesis 31 narrative composition and structure in this discussion, and at the same time maintain the focus of the study, whether the narrative considered is a reconstruction or an original document, the researcher maintains the state of the narrative in its current position (Mathew, 2005: 508-510).

4.2 The structure of Genesis 31:1-55

As Mathew Kenneth observes, Genesis chapter 31 presents four major scenes easily recognized by any reader as follows: The first scene is seen in the decision to flee Vv1-16. Mathew (2005:515-516) argues that the second one can be seen in Vv17-21 in what can be described as the flight deception. The third one is found in v 22-44 to be seen as the overtaking of the fleeing party and the dispute. Finally, Vv45-55 present the peaceful settlement of the disputing parties with the most common verb in the narrative being "Said/saying" **אמר** (*amar*) (**Strong's H559)** appearing 23 times in the narrative. This presents the four sections as characterized by speeches that are connected by brief narratives.

The first narrative unit is observably about Laban's sons speaking to themselves disparagingly about Jacob, to which upon seeing this, the Lord counters by a command telling Jacob to return home (V3). This is the setting and the onset of the narrative where Jacob presents his longest speech to his women that led to Leah and Rachel consenting to the call to go back to the homeland of their husband (V14-16).

The second unit is a narrative bridge and absent of any discourse (V17-21). The third unit begins with an ancient near eastern characterization of a covenant prelude. It is evident in the way of establishing the background setting for the prolonged speeches of the disputing parties, first, by Laban (V26-35), and lastly Jacob (V36-42). This unit presents the argument that expected an elaborate answer from Laban to Jacob. Nevertheless, on failing to achieve a satisfactory answer, Laban resorts to a compromise through a covenant of peace (V44-45). The fourth unit is of a brief statement from Jacob to his own group of people (V46) and Laban's speech which illuminates and gives the covenant stipulations, (V46-53) (Mathew, 508-510).

It also turns out that, the first unit explains the motivation and decision of Jacob and his wives to return secretly to his father's house (vv. 1–16). Verses 1–3 give two motivations: Laban and his sons' objections to Jacob's new wealth and the divine directive to return. Verses 4–13 narrate

Jacob's elaboration of these two motivations, explaining to Rachel and Leah the deceit he suffered by Laban and the dream he received from God instructing him to return.

Mathew further observes that the second unit describes their clandestine departure (vv. 17–21). Two deceptions occur in this unit: first, Rachel "stole" (*gānab*) her father's *tĕrāpîm* ("household gods," NIV) and second, Jacob secretly stole away (*gānab*), "deceived," NIV), that is, fleeing Paddan Aram with his family and possessions. The geographical movement is structurally important to the flow of the narrative, crossing west of the Euphrates from Paddan Aram to the hill country of Gilead (Mathew, 2005:511).

The third unit is the dominant segment, providing the narrative tension of Laban overtaking Jacob (vv. 22–45). The two men present their allegations: first, Laban accused Jacob of harming him by stealing away secretly and by stealing his *tĕrāpîm* (vv. 26–35). Second, Jacob counter-charged Laban with duplicity in his wages (vv. 36–42). Laban's response is mixed, proposing a peace treaty but only after, he sounds a sour note (vv. 43–44).

The fourth unit portrays the agreement that the men enter into (vv. 45–55). Two witnesses to their compact, a stone pillar and a stone heap (vv. 45–47), and two rituals, an oath and covenant meal, conclude it (vv. 53b–54). Sandwiched between is Laban's declaration of the treaty's contents (vv. 48–53a). The last verse provides closure to the ordeal, describing Laban's final farewell and peaceful withdrawal home (v. 55) (Mathew, 2005:508-510).

4.3 Exegetical Expose- Verse by Verse

Introduction: It is so far clear that a covenant may not necessarily carry all the elements characterizing a formal covenant as such. A conversation may however manifest phenomenal covenant features or practices that will identify it, as a covenant.

It is also appreciated that if a practice carries significant characteristics of a covenant and that, these practices or deliberations lead to binding protection of an agreement, such

deliberations/conversations or practice bearing demands or commitments in their settings, may be considered as covenant deliberations/conversations and that, if Such practices, deliberations/conversations may be leading to a healthy relationship. If this becomes the case, then it is true that any deliberation/conversation expected to benefit one or both parties, shall be treated as a covenant conversation because its violation brings offense to either both or one. With this premise, the conversation or a narrative recorded in Genesis 31 gives a vast indication of covenant relationship manifestations and is worthy of this study.

Verse 1: Genesis 31:1 begins with a conversation manifesting a broken covenant relationship in the sense that the sons of Laban acting on envy and covetousness, were heard complaining of Jacob taking away that which by covenant or as agreed culturally belonged to their father, and by extension, to them. Jacob who seems to have known the content of Proverbs 27:4 could not withstand the cruelty of anger and envy Mathew (1991:147). According to the sons, out of their father has Jacob gotten his glory. The level of envy seems to have been rampant in Mesopotamia.

The Philistines had a similar reaction to Isaac when Isaac multiplied his wealth (Gen 26:14; Gaebelein, 1990:204). As Adeyemo puts it, after dealing with their father over several agreement changes, including the marriage one (Gen 29:1-28). Jacob now faces the next challenge with the confronting sons over their father's wealth (Adeyemo, 2010:58).

To the sons of Laban, what Jacob has is an undue benefit. Neither legally nor culturally acquired. Verse one of this chapter exposes the response of an offended heart because of a broken relationship that is a covenant in nature. It is clear in the minds of these sons, that their father had property that provided the family with the glory that now belongs to Jacob and not them. The words of Laban's sons come out to demonstrate the level of pain in the sons' hearts.

As rightly argued by Nichol, Though Laban's sons raised complaints against Jacob over their wealth being taken away, this complaint might be countered by the fact that even after Laban had

left for his ancestral land, vs. 19 indicates that Laban still had a flock within his possession that he went to shear when Jacob was planning to leave.

Nichol continues to argue that any provable evidence of malice did not support the sons' arguments, since Jacob's argument could be proven by his evident labor and hard work (Nichol, 1978:398).

What these sons may have missed is the level of engagements and agreements entered between their father and Jacob, hence convinced that what Jacob had, came from their family but "how?" was their problem. Involving all concerned persons in an agreement then becomes imperative at all times to avoid later painful aggressions.

The Hebrew word **דבר** (*dabar*) is translated by Strong's concordance to mean speech, account, commandments, and sentence, suggesting the depth of pain in the hearts of Laban's sons. It means that they gave a literal *account* of their father's wealth that had gone with Jacob, and they could not bear it anymore. The word also could mean that they gave *a sentence/judgment* suitable to Jacob in retaliation to their lost property. Their tone of speech demonstrated commands that Jacob heard and could not wait for. The NKJV adds that this wealth in Jacob's possession robbed their father of the family glory, translated by other versions as "wealth" **דובכ** also means glorious). The word **דובכ** *(Kabod)* would also mean abundance, honor, and glory, which left the house of Laban in total gloom and darkness.

This situation could also describe what could happen to one if God chooses to bless them. Jacob's claim that it was out of his sweat that he got the wealth and that his God was behind the scenes could be a lesson to these people, of what being trustful in God could turn one into as Jacob claims that it is God who took and gave him.

Verse.2. Verse two of this text does not seem to continue the discussion in verse 1. It starts a new episode of what happened between Jacob and Laban at a place and time not mentioned.

Butricks (1952:710). Nichol points out a confirmation of Jacob's plight as a family scheme when the sons' hard conversations align with Laban's ugly face and look to Jacob. (Nichol, 1978:398).

Verse 2 also casts a shadow on whether Jacob saw Laban's countenance at the time the sons began to agitate or whether this expression by Laban was a recent past existing attitude. Laban's countenance is not just large but an expression of sin itself, which does a great deal towards the ruin of peace (Prov 23:6; Mathew, 1991:147).

This is important to note because by it, then Laban can well be characterized with relentless hate. Between verses, one and four, three serious things are mentioned which affect Laban family relationship in a way that suggests an impending wars. In verse two, Laban presents to Jacob a face that is described in Hebrew *(enennu),* meaning the opposite of the original, or a contradiction of the obvious.

What Jacob claims in this verse is that, although Laban had not been good to him even in the past, this day presents a worse Laban to him. Within the same conversation, the text presents a new scenario where God is involved in the resolve, probably of the ugly face of Laban. It might be interesting to find out whether God's intervention at this point is because of the ugly face or because of the previous inhuman acts done to Jacob by Laban.

God's call seems to be independent of Jacobs's plight at this point and is accompanied by a promise that God will escort Jacob to the land of his people safe. This assurance can be viewed in two ways. One, is that God is interested in the traveling safety of Jacob, or God is calling Jacob into a more significant responsibility than what he has now. In this episode, the sons of Laban do not feature.

The third issue that comes in and looks detached from the Narrative flow is the calling of Jacob's wives to a private place in the field where he tenders his flock, by Jacob himself. (V.4). These

segments of narratives in the plot may describe different times and places of occurrences, though all issues describe Jacob's plight in Laban's hands. Conversation between Jacob and his wives takes long before Laban is mentioned in v19 as having to shear his sheep.

This bitterness in V.1 and the countenance of Laban in verse2 match to indicate that Laban had become helpless about what to do with his departed wealth hence his lost glory, until his sons passed judgment/sentence on Jacob. Laban's sons may have not just begun the conversation from nowhere.

Laban's countenance may have triggered his sons' anger to begin burning. This shows that Laban's face/ outside appearance had changed all of a sudden, attracting his sons' anger. Though expressed in different places and times, both the father and the sons shared the same pain against Jacob. The whole saga revolves around and expresses dishonesty between the two parties. Verses 1 and 2 demonstrate that Laban's family was divided, as seen in verses 3 and 4, where the daughters take a different view of Laban and his sons.

One would wonder whether Laban intimidated his daughters because of the cultural dynamics against females, or if this was just Laban's real family leadership weakness. This section tends to present Laban's family as one that was sharply divided alongside gender lines just in case Laban had no cultural prejudice. Appealing as the view of cultural dynamics seems to contain the substance in Laban's treatment of his female children to the extent that the viewpoint of his sons, compared to his daughters, differed sharply. The issue of rights of belonging as claimed by the daughters' plays loud in the conversation of verse 14 compared to verse 1.

Verse 3 These differences between the half family of Laban and Jacob seem to have caught God's attention probably because of the words spoken by Laban's sons (Vers.1) where (*dabar*) **דבר** meaning sentence/judgement, would be directed at Jacob. God seems to provide a solution that is headed towards the fulfillment of His promise to Jacob's ancestors. The text reads, "And

the Lord said to Jacob, return unto the Land of thy fathers and thy Kindred and I will be with you" this speaks about God's timely involvement in the matters affecting humanity. God being omnipresent in nature, listens to and observes the way we relate and behave and that He is near us.

Nichol's argument makes sense when he says that Laban's attitude then becomes the means by which Jacob's return is facilitated (Nichol, 1978:398). Verse 3 explains that God does not only listen to our conversations that affect our relationships but also provides solutions. Covenant infidelity does not only affect our relationship between the related parties, but also affects the third party, and in this case, God is affected to a level of intervening immediately. Whether God allowed Jacob to feel the danger posed to him by Laban's sons as a way of provoking him to go back home, is speculation that can only be taken by faith as stated above by Nichol (Mathew, 1991:147).

Verse 4 Two serious interventions were immediately entered upon the reaction of the sons of Laban. This decision to pursue their perceived stolen glory and the impact it created in the heart of Jacob, did not only touch the concern of God, but also sent a lot of fear to Jacob's heart, provoking him to seek the support of his women, who are also Laban's daughters. (Mathew, 1991:148).

The words for sent shalach (**שלך**-*(shalach*) also means to "cast off," denoting the urgency with which Jacob wanted to leave Laban's place and get back to his people. As Nichol presents, things seem to have worked for Jacob when Laban traveled to a distance only to be reached after three days. Jacob, at the same time is probably with his own flock and that the meeting with his wives could not take place at home in fear of breach of privacy, giving him time with them alone, away from home (Nichol, 1978:398; Mathew, 1991:147). Verses one to four display the tension in Laban's home, and the unfortunate thing is that this happens in the absence of Laban.

The feelings are deep because Jacob is planning to run away with the family Pride, which is only found through inheritance, and the sons are vulnerable to poverty because of Jacob. One will say that Jacob worked for it, but the challenge is that Laban's wealth decreased, as Jacob's, who is an employee, increased tremendously (Mathew 1991:148-149)

Verse 5 Verse five is an affirmation of Jacob to his wives that it is God involved in the whole matter, and seems to continue the spirit of v3 in the sense that Jacob expresses the same expression from the sons, as also seen on the face of Laban; to his women. As Nichol puts it, to Jacob, it was God working to enrich him. (Nichol,1978:398). The question then comes that are there are times when God compensates through enabling means that disadvantage the other party? The answer is matter of intense discussion.

The situation in Laban's home is an expression of Covenant curses that come with covenant relationship violations. In his expression, Jacob seeks to convince his wives to affirm that he has served their father with all his might. This affirmation is geared towards the nested statement aimed at neutralizing Laban's claims through his sons that the property he has is out of his sweat.

The issues that emerge here are, in verse 7, Jacob claims that he has been shortchanged ten times, and meaning that if Laban did not lie to him, his wealth would even be more than what the sons claim to be the whole glory of the family gone. This suggests that Jacob was going to take over Laban's family with everything called wealth.

The statement also alludes to the sons' complaint that, indeed, Laban's glory was gone, and more was yet to go. What is not clear is how Laban undertook an agreement with Jacob on a pay-service formula that would deplete his capital investment without replenishing the same. These covenant relationships were bound to end in pain, with Laban paying salary out of capital investment rather than increase. It also explains that Laban may have entered this agreement without involving his daughters and sons. It shows that whether a covenant is entered formally or

informally, caution needs to be exercised on the subsequent consequences in the long run because of the regrets that may follow.

The claimed miracles of Verse eight to nine are a matter of faith or co-incidence, because it appears that Jacob was working with his God to defeat Laban's treachery tactics or that this was a matter of coincidence. Jacob claims that Laban had broken their covenants ten times within the period of their relationship and that this could have resulted in a wave of equal anger, leave alone Laban's sons' anger. When a covenant relationship is perpetually broken, this effect is a ripple.

It looks for a revenge opportunity. V.8-10 explains that his anger did not flare up because God compensated all losses caused by Laban's changes in labor payments. Unfortunately, this provision was not a privilege to Laban, who lost his glory to Jacob without compensation. (Gaebelein, 1990:204-205)

Verse 11 Talking of his discussion with divine agencies, Jacob makes his agreement with God more grounded by indicating that even angels were involved in the process of his wealth acquisition. Varied opinions, however, exist among scholars as argued by Nichol, that this dream may have come by way of the dream in verse three, or this one came separately.
Others also argue that this came during Jacob's last six terms of service, yet others argue that this was an ordinary dream that Jacob connected to the dream at Bethel for the purpose of creating a strong impression on his wives (Nichol, 1978:399).

In verse eleven, Jacob justifies his source of wealth by invoking the name of divine agencies to sustain his arguments. The indications presented by Jacob to the wives are intended to demystify the notion raised by the sons, on the loss of their wealth to Jacob. It might be argued that this is a true dream come from God, but whatever that means, it only serves to convince the ladies that God is involved in the devoted desire to leave Laban's house.

It would later be realized that this move is against the traditional practice of a nephew to an uncle, but a process that comes with indications of untruthfulness. Much as a covenant may be presented as structured, social practice has it that there are covenants in every conversation and practice. Covenants come in omissions and commissions. This means that doing something that brings discontentment shows that the earlier agreement did not anticipate it.

This plays a lot in relationships where unstructured offenses to the other party may, of course, sour relationships hence breaking the covenant of relationships. Covenant of relationship includes openness and transparency to each other. Much as this may not be a written-down covenant, its violation comes with covenant implications.

Jacob's choice to call his women to a private place and invoke the name of Elohim when Laban was not around is a questionable act. It can be argued that Laban's sons and the dream from God provoked Jacob; however, both considerations would have all waited for Laban to come. Family life is a covenant with loyalty to the family head and requires truthfulness (Gaebelein, 1990:205-206)

Verse 12-13 The narrations given from v 12-13 serve to justify Jacob's claims and can only be confirmed by Jacob alone (Mathew, 1991:147). Whether these claims by Jacob are true or not is a matter of trust, because he has been involved in divine conversations that only he can confirm. Many covenants get sore when third parties who cannot be physically verified, become witnesses, hence leading to the monopoly of thought against the other party.

It would be appropriate to stick to shreds of evidence that are supported by both and consciously nodded upon by both, even if they are not physical. The sons of Laban are only able to see these claims as a cover-up and not reality, and this explains why they went ahead and decided against Jacob. Covenant arguments are well liberated through verifiable evidence, and here, both the Iteso and the Hebrew share common practices and beliefs.

Verse 14-16 These verses begin with an off note because Jacob is driving an appeal for his women to back him up in the bid to heed to the call to return to Canaan (Mathew 1991:147). Their intervention into the conversation is in line with verse seven that Laban is scrupulous in his dealings with his covenanters, suggesting that Jacob had either spoken for a long time and had bothered them, or the conversation about Laban's behavior had taken a toll on them and blocked their thoughts from listening to Jacob's other episodes. It appears that the introduction of Yahweh into the persuasion had taken them excitingly, hence wanted to inform Jacob that they are of the idea to leave the land of their ancestors and follow him.

This was the point of another covenant that negates the first covenant by birth. Laban's daughters', now agreeing to walk away with Jacob, unaware of their father, is another informal covenant that will end up painstaking. This agreement comes with strong affirmation, almost confirming the covenant of infidelity between Jacob and Laban. Both women answered with evidence that their father did not live a faithful covenant life.

In the above affirmation, they raise pertinent issues of covenants. The first one is a matter of inheritance portions. The opening words of the women's speech denote the gravity of Laban's violation of the covenant relationship. "Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house?" The Hebrews one-word covers the three words and gives it one meaning, "Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house?" Its original word is part of speech that is a substantive adverb, accusative, meaning going around or continuance no longer, still, etc., presents Laban's squandering character.

The phrase would also describe Laban as one who knew no boundary when it came to the misuse of family resources. The phrase may also implicate Jacob, who is said to have taken all the glory of Laban to himself. However, this view does not pass because their complaint is in favor of Jacob. This would therefore mean that Jacob was not necessarily the only exit route of the family

wealth. This phenomenon created by Laban's daughters is a justification for Jacob's concern about Laban's irresponsible actions in to covenant relationship (Gaebelein, 1990:205-26).

The complaint by the daughters also displays another hint that inheritance comprised portions of wealth reserved for girl children, unless the women were complaining on behalf of their younger brothers. The phrase "for us" (*lanu*) is inclusive and may mean for the daughters or the rest of the family. The second issue raised by their husband is the issue of substance and material wealth. The women were complaining about material substances, which included land and territory. Gen 14:24 uses the word חקל (*haqal*) when considering Abraham's retention of dignity when perceiving that his enemies will accuse him of taking their property (Ps 16:5, I Sam 30:24). The usage of the word demonstrates very personal ownership is not transferable. In this phrase, Laban is again portrayed as one who does not observe traditions and culture that form part of the family covenant relationship. Inheritance is equally personal ownership prescribed by traditional arrangement and structure.

The Hebrew word used is a feminine speech meaning possession, property, and inheritance. The items described as portions make emphasis that Laban's daughter lost their family identity. Hence, the verse is affirming that they were treated as strangers since strangers never inherited family property. Their affirmative statement– that "are we not counted of him as (strangers)?" NKJV does not lose the meaning that these women were complaining against their father Laban. The word "him", which is in the third person singular, does not refer to Jacob but to Laban, who was not around (Gaebelein, 1990:205-206).

Verse 16-18 The daughters of Laban, who also happen to be Jacob's wives, appear to have been suffering internally and seeking for a savior who would save them from the terror of their father. Their readiness to take up and absorb Jacob's ideas without making any inquiry of "what if?" And "how about?", is a sure indication that theirs was a sigh of relief to go to Jacob's ancestral land. They clearly and unmistakably recognize that Jacob's riches are from God.

As Nichol states, the long-standing differences between Rachel and Leah are now a lesser evil to hang on. Laban is actually a greater evil needing a united mind and effort to deal with, hence their unity of purpose for now (Nichol, (1978:399). This statement could also mean that God allowed the property taken by others; this is a true picture of the attitude caused by covenant violators. This statement also extends its meaning to say that God took away from Laban both Laban's and his daughters' inheritance and left them poor and vulnerable. This conclusion by the daughters projected their lives in the hands of Laban, and they found it not working, hence following Laban's advice, hence Jacob's encouragement to leave (Nichol, 1978:399). At this point, the covenant relationship between Laban and Jacob ended abruptly while Laban was away.This covenant breakage was demonstrated by the exodus of Jacob, his family, cattle, and all his goods and substance taking off to Canaan from *Padan Aram* (Gen 31:17-18); verse 19 discloses that at this point and time, Laban was away to shear his sheep. To demonstrate a protest breakage of the family covenant, v19-20 displays the extra damage done by Jacob and his wives. Rachel steals her father's idols and at the same time together with Jacob, they stole (**גנב**) themselves from a home that had kept them all along (Gaebelein, 1990:205-206).

It is not acceptable among the Semites that girls inherit gods. Being a reserve for the first-born male children, Laban's daughters violated the informal covenant relationship stipulations by taking the gods belonging to their father. Still, in protest, they felt that this was the only way they could get revenge on their denied inheritance (Nichol, 1978:399).

Verse 19 Nichol argues that RSV puts a better word than KJV when describing the absence of Laban at home that gave Jacob an opportunity to scheme. The RSV says, "While KJV says "went" Laban had gone". Nichol wants to suggest that Laban had already gone and probably spent somedays before Jacob began to scheme (vs 17-18) as opposed to "went" which brings a connotation that he was on the way going. In this context, separation is an avenue of

manipulation that is dangerous to covenant relationships. Many marriage relationships have received dents during separations (Nichol, 1978:399).

As Nichol puts it, Jacob knew too well that Laban would spend more time in sheering the sheep since he knew that sheering included very elaborate celebrations (2Samuel 13:23, 1 Samuel 25:4,11). The stealing of gods, Jacob's stealing away of himself, and scheming to steal himself all happened during this short separation of the two.

It might be correct to align with Adeyamo who suggests that Jacob may have chosen not to accompany Laban to the shearing ceremony for the reasons that gave him an opportunity to address the challenge that he had with Laban's son. Adeyemo (2010:59). This whole scenario begs for an answer as to why Jacob did not go to the sheering celebration. It can also be argued that, it was either Jacob's own choice not to go for the sheering celebratin in the effort to find time to address his challenges together with his women or Laban chose not to take him out of his long-standing hetrate and exploitation of Jacob. Either way, Jacob seems to have made his way out of Laban's confussion (Nichol, 1978:399).

Verse 20-21 Stealing away himself unawares was an infidelity by itself, that Jacob did to his uncle Verse 20– 21 presents Jacob's characterization of fleeing away due to guilt. Gen 27:44, the whole text of Genesis 27, is a discussion on how Jacob stole his brother's firstborn birthright, and verse 44 describes Jacob's escape from his brother Esau's wrath as fleeing, as advised by his mother Rebecca. Jacob receives a character of fleeing due to his unacceptable covenant relationship disorders.

It was by a covenant that the first-born child inherits certain designated blessings, and although not structured as in the Hittite covenant, violating it was unacceptable.

Similarly, Jacob had stayed in Jacob's home for more than twenty years, acquired wealth, and a family with children, it was apparent by the unwritten covenant that he needed a decent sendoff back to the land of his people from his uncle.

The Hebrew word for "flee" *barach* also used in Judges 9:21 means to escape go through with the meaning of not going by way of an official gate or route, i.e., hiding away. This is a characterization of guilt and dishonesty overly occasioned by untruthfulness. Someone will now question the integrity of the claim that he had been talked to by God through a dream and may want to doubt whether the story of the dream is accurate. It is however possible to believe that God may have been involved in his call back to Canaan, but his way of responding to the call, came with his human wickedness coupled with fear for doubt on how he acquired his wealth.
It is also clear here that every relationship is a covenant without which enmity rules. Any behavior that represents a covenant relationship brings discontent to the two if denied transparency and not conducted properly (Mathew, 1991:148-9).

Verse 22-23 Describes a scenario that pauses questions, was this distance such far that Laban could not hear of Jacob's significant exodus until after three days? As said by Adeyemo, crossing river Euphrates during the winter must have attracted attention of the neighborhood since that could have only happened by a miracle of God (Adeyemo, 2010:59). Neither did his brothers, including Laban's complaining sons. This would also mean that Laban did not live well with his neighbors, who would have informed him of the exodus. This vacuum gives room to Nichol's argument, which it may have taken Laban more than thirty days until he got to Gilead, where Jacob had camped.

Considering that someone must have traveled for three days to reach Laban, three days back home, preparation to mobilize the army of his relatives, and to take over 2500 miles where a camel would only go ten miles a day. The reason was that the estimated distance from where he went for to Gilead was approximately 275 miles. Crossing the river Euphrates during summer

was not easy; it then means that even Jacob could have hardly taken a few days to cross with animals.

All this labor comes into one's life because of violating a relationship that comes by way of a covenant. Nichol (1978:400). Keeping in mind that a covenant comes with curses and oaths, covenant violation revenge is expensive ventures since many risks have to be managed, many sacrifices have to be offered and much fear has to be dispelled. Both Laban and Jacob had to deal with the three issues above on their way to settle a broken covenant relationship.

Verse 24 Expresses Laban's selfish reaction, which his coveted wealth had gone. The quick mobilization of his family army was occasioned by the loss of his idols and Jacob's wealth that he always thought to be his, against relational covenants. It is questionable if the issue of his daughters motivated his reaction. Verse 24 speaks of God's involvement in protecting Jacob from Laban and his army by speaking to Laban.

The appearance of God to Laban in a dream, concerns the same way God came to Jacob in a dream and clears the doubt that Jacob's dream was an imagination coupled with exaggerations. The text reads. The most important point observed here is that Laban was able to recognize that God spoke to him even though deep in his heart it was clear that he was a crooked person.

God's love does not discriminate between the evil and the righteous. He can speak even to the crooked Laban. God is not limited by how much His vassal has violated a covenant between him and Him. When the time comes to fulfill his purpose comes and He chooses to use an individual, He will speak even to the devil himself not to destroy the one He has chosen to use. Speaking to Laban not to hurt Jacob (v24), is the same way He spoke to Lucifer not to destroy Job's soul (Job 1.12; Nichol 1978:400).

Speaking to Laban is a strong act of faith that the Iteso people need to grasp about God, that He fights for His chosen ones who fulfill the covenant assignment and that when God has made a covenant with an individual, He follows that covenant commitment and removes all obstacles

that may hinder its final fulfillment. If the Iteso people in their covenants protected each other, then their covenant relationship would last. This is what God had told Jacob over 20 years ago that, He will be with Jacob in all places (Gen28:15; Nichol, 1978:40).

Verse 25-30 presents the center of the whole narrative of the Jacob-Laban covenant relationship mix. Adeyemo suggests that Laban's delayed reception of News was God's design in favor of Jacob. (Adeyemo, 2010:59). According to WatchTower (1988:943), the name Gilead coming from the name Galeed meaning "witness heap" was among the geographical sites presenting a dome-like mountainous region East of the Jordan river. This mountain, also known for many other events, gives the true picture of the Jacob-Laban covenant, meant to enhance a relationship with a long history of infidelity.

Gilead is first seen controlled by King Sihon. This is the Amorite king who controlled the region of Gilead south of the valley Jabbok and Og, King of Bashan, controlled the part of Gilead to the North upon the Israelites' entry into this land. Under Moses, the Israelites defeated both kings, and the tribes of Gad and Reuben occupied the region (Num 21:21-24, 33-35, 32:1-5). A section of the tribe of Manase also settled there; Josh 22:9,10, 26-29 speaks of the three tribes that settled here coming back after fighting to conquer the promised land and built an altar as a memorial of faithfulness to Joshua (Josh 22:9, 10, 26-29), (WatchTower, 1988-943-4; Nichol, 1978:399-400). Several wars were fought in this region, including king David's, and the Assyrians'Y6 under Tiglepilezar (iii). They carried the people of Gilead though God promised to bring them back Jer. 50:19, mic 7:14, Zech 10:10. Laban is mentioned as an Assyrian who lived in the flat land of Haran in Mesopotamia, meaning he lived in the best part of the land. Jacob's choice to do a stopover in Gilead does not seem to be strange because of the historical nature of this region, as described above.

The text, however, does not explain whether Laban noted that Jacob had already pitched a tent at Gilead before he also pitched his, and agreed to meet there but it is found that all of them

ended up in Gilead probably because of the history that indicated God's special preference of Gilead (Zec 10:10; Mathew, 1991:149-150).

A few things of interest are present in this region, just as the site itself has already been presented; it is clear why the site was preferred. In verse 26, Laban engages Jacob in a covenant breakage tone as having not sought his consent in leaving with his daughters. He charges him with theft reread to as in the real sense of human trafficking. What Laban fails to know is that the movement was an agreement/covenant between God, Jacob, and the daughters and not just Jacob with the sword as he claimed. Laban's revisiting of the word fleeing, is meant to emphasize the fact that he actually stole himself from Laban's home and probably that he knew Jacob's previous character of fleeing. However, whether Laban used the word fleeing because it was used to characterize Jacob's run-away from Esau or not, is a matter of further study. Still, Jacob is reminded that his character has played out again as it played out in the previous incident.

In verses 27-8, Laban contradicts the claims raised by his daughters that they are strangers, meaning slaves in their home, by claiming willingness to prior anticipation of readiness to prepare and organize a celebratory send-off of his daughters to their new home.
The contradiction comes when Jacob, in his defense, claims that Laban would have denied him his wives, should it have been done in the open. (v31). If this contradiction is closely observed, it then exposes Laban's high level of hypocrisy and self-defeating, because of Jacob's claim that Laban had changed his wages ten times (V.7). Jacob remains standing on a piece of evidence to reject Laban's false claim that he would have given his daughters a decent send-off. This characterization of Laban as a liar by Jacob, is one single source of bitterness in a covenant relationship. Sugarcoating in a covenant entrance creates high hopes that wait for fulfillment where its failure leads to sharp bitterness. This has been demonstrated in the Laban-Jacob and Jacob Esau covenant relationships.

Jacob claims that 1. He would have sent his daughters with mirth, Songs, Timbrell and Harp. The natural imagination would put Laban on a very high scale of care and honesty if he truly meant that he would act his claims as listed above. All these claims collapse because of the claim from Jacob about the change of his wages by Laban. In V29, Laban exposes his hidden behavior of hate and destruction by demonstrating that there is power in his hands, the power to hurt, and that this power can only be restrained by God. The complications of Laban's character expose themselves in every step of his actions. By mentioning that he can hurt, Laban confesses that he was ready to hurt and that had it not been for the fact that God spoke to him, the full strength of his malice would have been displayed on Jacob. This character is confirmed by the daughter's lament to Jacob.

Verse 30 Exposes Laban as an idol worshiper who may have not fully embarrassed Elohim as his God, and no wonder, in verse 29, he distances himself from the God of Jacob by use of the second person singular "*your God."* In response to Laban's outbursts, Jacob presents a humble demeanor aimed at taming Laban's anger. It also demonstrates Jacob's tact that hides his scrupulous behavior. Verse 31 presents a humble man who knows that his uncle could hurt him and chooses wisely to provide a cowardly response. The use of the word "By force" (NKJV) in his reply would also explain Jacob's knowledge of who his uncle was.

The scenario in **verse 31,** is an expression of a relationship marred with intimidation and pretense. Such relationships are those that do not observe any remote or structured covenant relationship, leading to a relationship without meaning. This expression displays the kind of relationship Laban had with his family, hence giving his daughters an easy time taking sides with Jacob. In their answer to Jacob's persuasions, Rachel and Leah indicated the level of relationship that pointed to a lack of human dignity and total disrespect to each other, which led to the use of lies in every conversation. With this kind of practice; Rachael had no issue devising a lie to her father about the idols she sat on. The relational covenant between father and daughter had long been broken and lost in due course.

V 32-35 is a saga demonstrating the total practice of dishonesty that had taken deep roots in Laban's home. Rachel's answer to her father was a lier (Adebeye, 2010:59). Although the text indicates that Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the Teraphims, his verdict did not mind his relationship with Rachel. To declare the death penalty on Rachel was reckless and careless, a trait that defines Jacob's covenant relationship with Rachel, the girl of his initial choice whom he now puts at the risk of the Amurabi's code of code of conduct. As Adebeye rightly guesses, Jacob may have thought that one of his servants could be responsible for the theft of gods (Adebeye, 2010:59). What Jacob said was that Rael's life should be removed if found guilty though he may have not known that she could be a victim.
Jacob's reaction also exposes how much anger he had over the infidelity done to him and the false accusation lebled against him by Laban. Jacob was priity sure that the gods claimed to be in his possession were not in his hands or pockets or even with any of his family members.

Gen 31:32 exposes the difference levels between these two parties when Jacob invokes the Amurabi code of conduct. According to Nichol, it was punishable by Hamurabi's code of conduct to the death penalty if one was found culpable of stealing sacred objects. By pronouncing that whoever is found with the gods of Laban should be put to death, Jacob was handing over himself and whoever could be found to have stolen the gods to the laws of Amurabi fully aware that the code killed. This constitutes another risk that Jacob was willing to undertake. Another risk taken was by Rachel who refused to stand, even when asked to do so by her father. The law of Moses required children of every age and rank to stand before their parents and seniors. Rachel's failure to stand did not only disobey her father, but also broke the law of Moses (Code of Amurabi sec 6; Nichol, 1978:400; Lev19:32; 1 King 2:19).

Breaking a covenant, does not therefore, end in one damage, but has a way of extending its damages. It comes with so many other images that were not in the picture at the time of breaking the covenant. In marriage, for example, people think that they separate and nobody else, suffers

except for the two. Shortly, the children begin to suffer. In this verse, many unforeseen issues arise and the same affect covenants to date. Although Jacob painfully worked to have Rachel as his wife, his verdict on Rachel did not consider her initial value - which moved him to serve an extra period of seven years. The words “Let him not live”, written in the masculine form of the Hebrew gender, did not consider the feminine involvement in the offense.

Jacob may have thought that may be one of the so referred to as brethren (v.46) (male), could be involved in the teraphim theft. When Laban is in the tents of his daughters to search for the gods, the accompanying emotional influence is from the words of Jacob, that whoever is found with the teraphims should not leave. Because the teraphims were not found, no one knows what Laban could have done to whosoever had the items. His history can however suggest that he might have harmed such victims, in line with the words of Jacob. In both biblical and traditional Iteso traditions, the Covenant relationship was equally inconsiderate of the level of relationship under circumstances that covenant stipulations had been broken. It all depended on the prescribed discipline. Jacob’s verdict may have followed the prescription to theft as such. While Rachel did not care about a covenant relationship that contained the stipulation prohibiting theft, for her sake, invoked the covenant relationship stipulation that denied men and, more so, parents to see the menstrual blood of their daughters, which Laban faithfully observed. To demand for a right where one cannot reciprocate is trickery that destroys covenant relationships. It therefore profiles Rachel as a dishonest daughter on a higher scale (Nichol, 1978:400-402).

Verse. 36-42 continues with the same spirit of a disintegrated covenant relationship between the young Jacob and the old Laban. Jacob’s reaction matches Laban’s reaction in v26-30. The question Jacob asks is, first, out of ignorance - not knowing that Rachel had hidden the family *teraphims* under her seat. This can also be a defensive tone, just in case he knows that Rachel had taken the idols. It is no longer news that Jacob and Laban did not observe any covenant that is about relationships. The issue of age differences that are considered in covenant relationships

no longer bears reference. In Jacob's reaction, he gives a long list of items contained in history bearing deep-cup bitterness against Laban (Mathew, 1991:150-151).

NKJV states that "and Jacob was wroth/angry and chode with Laban." The Hebrew word supplied for wroth/angry in its original word is **הרה** (*hadah*) meaning to burn with anger or be kindled with anger (Strong's Concordance.) This expression knows no boundary. It can lead to a fight without hesitation. The NKJV adds the word chode. Jacob's answer claiming that Laban perused him swiftly is countered by his burning response to Laban. A society that lacks such basic relational covenants is bound to be corrupt and infidel in nature.

The demand by Jacob that Laban displays his evidence about the stolen items when he knows that no evidence was recovered was an art of intimidation in itself to ensure that Laban does not lay claim over any item in his possession, including his daughters. (vs37). This act of popularity was meant to silence Laban, and indeed, he achieved it.

The third intimidation in (vs38) is meant to convince the Judges present who failed to condemn him (Jacob) to get the historical injustice of Laban and therefore justify his (Jacob) flee mode. In vs39, Jacob displays his faithfulness in serving against wild beasts and sacrificing to pay for those animals destroyed or eaten by wild beasts. Haran and Giliead both fell under the legal influence of Mesopotamia.

Acording to Nichol, Jacob had a legal argument against Laban according to the Mesopotamian Laws, for charging him for the animals destroyed by wild beasts. The Amurabi code (267), quoted by Nichol, (1978:401), clearly stated that it was wrong to charge a shepherd for the animals eaten or destroyed by wild beasts. Even in covenant crisis management, justice still takes presidency. It is wrong to over exercise power to a covenant violator during settlement of differences.

In the hearing of both members who accompanied Jacob and Laban, Jacob seeks to present himself as a truthful person by arguing that he took it upon himself to pay what by law was not his responsibility. This is also meant to convince his wives that, indeed, he did not defraud their father but instead, their father defrauded him all along. The fourth intimidation comes in verse 40, which Jacob speaks of his suffering while tending the flock. Lost sleeps, consumed in the day by the sun and by frost at night, are all meant to trigger the emotional sympathy of the witnesses listening to the speech. The last blow to Laban is the revelation that having served Laban for 20 years only to receive a salary changed ten times is all Jacob needed to demonstrate on Laban's covenant infidelity.

The Hebrew word (הלפ) for change as claimed by Jacob against Laban meaning to pass through, change, overstep transgress, substitute, or alter, sends a deeper meaning and as used by Habakkuk (1:11) goes with the meaning of to re-direct the mind. This act is equivalent to being sly, a liar a dishonest person, to speak the least. It refers to a breaker of covenants and one who gains through deception. Jacob concludes his speech by invoking the name of God as the one who protected him. The relationship between Jacob and Laban broke from formal to informal covenants, where informal is seen in their disrespect to each other in speech, while formal is in breaking the contract of employment. All of these rendered him vulnerable to disrespect and loss of covenant relationship.

In verse 42, Jacob's point is that it is not just about the God he worshiped but even the God of Isaac his father and Laban's cousin, and the God of Abraham, cousin to Laban's grandfather are witnesses to the righteous way he acquired his wealth (Nichol, 1978:401). Laban portrays a sadistic character when in verse 43, he lays a claim on Jacob's children as his, including the cattle and all that Jacob has as being his. He is not yet convinced that he is wrong and a covenant violator of the highest order (Nichol, 1978:401-402).

However, having been overpowered against his persistence, Laban is broken and dissolved. He is looking for a solution, though grudgingly. He makes a passionate appeal with a preamble that "these daughters are my daughters, and these cattle are my cattle and all that though seest is mine," This preamble is meant to set the stage for the formal covenant.
Laban's speech represents withdrawal characterization, and a symbol of wisdom. Chances are that Jacob expected the normal Laban hot reaction after his hot speech, but on the contrary, Laban knowing that his daughters are fully convinced to go to Canaan, chose the peaceful way.

In this reaction, Laban provides a way forward as opposed to many instances where heat was pursued by heat. He demonstrates that whenever there is a covenant conflict that affects relationships, the best option is to choose a ceasefire and allow the relationship to prevailing. Jacob also emulates this thought in his cooperation with Laban's call. (Mathew, 1991:150-151).
Verse 43 explains Laban's choice of direction after higher reasoning. He says, "And what can I do this day unto these my daughters, or unto their children which they have borne?" His concern has shifted from the material grid to true family love, and because of this newly acquainted love, a covenant is the only solution.

The issue is that human beings depend on hard pressure to make the right choice, particularly when it comes to family covenant relationships. Laban's choice of renewing his covenant relationship with Jacob is only a product of hard pressure when he considers that his daughters are going away, and he might not see them again.This scenario describes why covenants came with stringent stipulations, just to drive hard sense to stubborn minds.

In Verses 43-44, the Hebrew word **אתתצה** (*attach*) describes the beginning of a new way of looking at things. As used in Ezekiel 23:43, the word provides proof of a new practice, not in line with the first practice. They worshipped God but turned into adultery with idols, hence Ezekiel's prophecy. The same usage of the word can be found in Genesis 12:19, Exodus 18:11,

Judges 17:13, non-exhaustive concordance (1981). Laban is now ready to take a new direction of thought and calls on Jacob to share in the same (v44; Nichol, 1978:402).

In this new covenant sought, Laban seeks to take the position of the Suzerain (V.42) by claiming that everything Jacob has is his (v43), and Jacob allows him to be the one who calls for the covenant. Although the calling words almost indicate a parity covenant of equals, justifying or rather defending that the daughters and the children are all his, denies parity the grip in the covenant categories. The covenant is particular, "I and thou" i.e., Laban and Jacob. (NKJV) at this point, no more intimidations, and in the narrative scale, the narration is towards resolutions. The covenant initiator spells out the reason for the covenant, which will be a "witness" between Laban and Jacob. The Hebrew word is **דע** (ed) a witness or evidence or testimony, as used in the text. The covenant is intended to speak to the two relatives about the whereabouts of Laban's daughters, in their absence one from the other. Similar usage of the word דע. Joshua 22:24. 26-27, where an altar is built not for burnt offerings but as an **דע** (witness). In this symbolic covenant, Laban wants to ask God to take charge of securing his daughters when his will is absent, hence maintaining a relationship that is of the covenant in nature between the father and child. In verse 45, Jacob responds by taking a stone and setting it up on a pillar.

The Hebrew word **לקה** (*laqah*) used by RSV to mean "to take" also means to accept or conceive a baby by way of pregnancy in marriage. The impression here is that Jacob was moved by the humble and seemingly broken-down Laban in his speech and could not resist the call. At this point, Jacob's anger is vanished and is ready to take the covenant. It can also mean his inside excitement of achieving his objectives of getting away with Laban's glory as raised by Laban's children. Jacob not only gets stones, but also involves his brethren in collecting the covenant symbolic stones. This might not be Jacob's brothers or cousins but the people he left with, including his children. This covenant included celebrations of eating, which is a common element of a covenant (Nichol, 1978:402). Verse 47-52 brings in another feature of the covenant

not common even among the rest of the Hittite and Hebrew covenants, though traces of naming could be traced where the patriarchs stopped on their journeys such as this one.

The second feature is that of a speech after the covenant, which was practically done by the Suzerain before signing a covenant, also referred to as the historical prologue. In this text, Laban puts more emphasis on the care of his daughters by Jacob and involves the name of God to seal the deal. By charging Jacob not to mistreat his daughters or take other wives, this section represents the stipulations laid down, but does not take the responsibility of punishing Jacob in case he violates the covenant stipulations, but instead refers the punishment bit to God, who is Omnipresent. This is against the common practice where Suzerain takes it upon himself to punish the violator. The witness of the heap is symbolic of God's omnipresent characteristic (Nichol, 1978:402).

Verse 53 is a common feature in both the traditional Iteso covenants and the ANE covenants. The gods were always invited to witness a covenant and supervise its implementation.
The sacrifice offered in verse 54, makes the end of the covenant process, and God is the final being in the covenant.

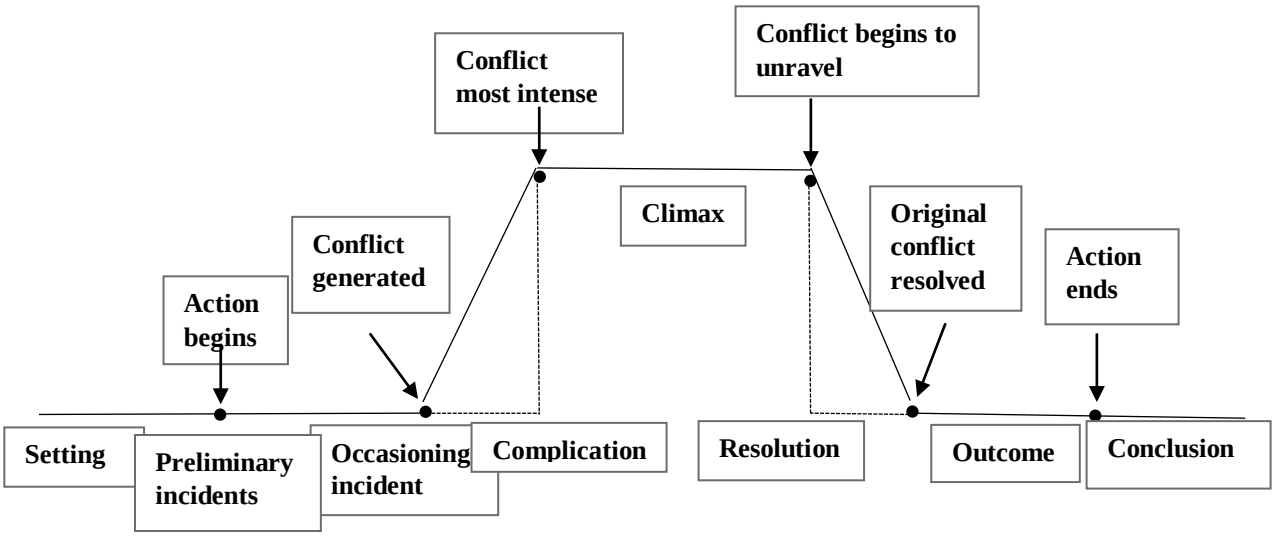
Verse 55 present the successful end of the long-standing dispute with complete reconciliation. Adebeye (2010:61). What Laban wanted is finally done when he got the opportunity to kiss his sons and daughters, and this marks the end of the narrative plot conclusion. The call made by Laban on the divine witnesses, is a contested interpretation by scholars on whether Laban meant Yahweh who was known to Abraham, Nahor, and Isaac, or the plural gods. Nichol's argument on the contested interpretation stems from the observation that the word judge, as used by Laban, is in the plural form and may indicate that Laban was calling on his gods to witness the new covenant (Nichol, 1978:403).

The words in verse 53 transliterated as, "*welohe elohe na-ho-wr yis-pe-tu benemu elohe a-bi-hem"* reading, "and the gods of Nahor may they judge between us". The cal to the gods of their fathers tend to bring an impression of several gods involved, as opposed to a popular understanding that they all called on Yahweh. What this statement clearly wants to tell us is that, God/gods must witness covenants. Nichol's argument is that the verb judge '*yispetu'* is in the plural, showing that Laban was calling upon two gods although LXX, Peshitto, and the Vulgate render judge in the singular, hence making Laban recognize the one true God (Nichol 1978:403). The joyous ending of the covenant presses with Laban kissing his grandchildren, demonstrated that there was hope of continuity even in the absence of fear because gods had put their node and approved the whole process of the covenant (Mathew, 1991:151-152).

4.4 Summary Scale of the Narrative Plot

Tremper Longman (1994:33) presents a scale formula on narrative criticism whose Idea can be used to structure the Laban-Jacob narrative for in-depth understanding. This idea presents Gen 31:1-55 as follows:

Table 4.4.8 Analysis of the Narrative



Application of the narrative scale Gen 31;1-55:

A -Action Begins. (Verse 1 – 18)

B- Conflict generated. (Verse 19 – 24)

C- Conflict Most Intense. (Verse 25 – 42)

D- Conflict begins to unravel. (Verse. 43- 53)

E- Action Ended (verse 54)

F- Original conflict resolved. (Verse 55)

According to Longman, (1994:33), Narratives have a weighing scale of weightier matters in terms of the beginning of the action, the conflict generated, the conflict most intense, the climax, the conflict begins to unravel, original conflict resolved to action ending.

The Laban-Jacob covenant relationship conflict fits into the scale as explained above, with perfect specifications. It appears that the action stage begins from verse 1, ending in verse 18, where the narrator presents the beginning of the covenant relationship conflict in a dramatic way. In this part, Jacob is presented as overhearing the sons of Laban plotting a conspiracy against him.

As discussed above, these sons of Laban did not only express their anger against Jacob, but also passed sentences against Jacob. All this is done in the background with the assumption that nobody is hearing this conspiracy, and this marks the beginning of the conflict. As the narrative progresses, it will be evident that this conspiracy by the sons of Laban is, however, not the beginning of conflicts between Laban and his son-in-law, but that this was one of those stages of the conflict between the two. As complained by Jacob (v7), there existed small conflicts that were not addressed, but ignored until there was an opening to confront them when the sons exploded with anger. However, Verse 1 still serves as the beginning of this conflict since the previous experiences were ignored as inconsequential because it was covered by intense lies that God compensated with other benefits sought from within.

This section of the narrative suggests that the speeches by the sons of Laban to each other were so spirited, that Jacob convened a private meeting to look into the possible ways of addressing

the matter. The discussion with the wives reveals the previous injustices committed by Laban to Jacob and his daughters.

This private discussion provides convictions that set up the conflict. The encouragement to engage in the conflict was also enhanced by the revelations made by God through dreams to Jacob that he (Jacob) needed to think of his ancestral home, then sticking to Laban's home. This beginning of the conflict in this narrative presents a fact of life, showing that delayed action comes with increased liability. Long as it may take, a conflict is only delayed by not taking responsibility to address it, but it will finally present its demands for redress at a higher scale.
It also suggests that patience is a cherish able virtue, but if exercised in anticipation of fairness and justice where injustice is the rule of order, it will finally be rewarded, but with scars that could have been avoided by first thinking and acting. By the time Jacob consolidates his thoughts to decide, his relationship with his uncle had deteriorated leaving hatred as a product.

The second stage of the Jacob-Laban narrative addressing infidelity in covenant relationships is presented in verses 19 to 24. This stage also described as *conflict generated*, stages itself up when Laban is informed of the conspiracy between Jacob and his daughters and is set up by the reaction of Laban to pursue Jacob no matter the consequences. This stage can also be seen in the reaction of Jacob to begin the journey described as *fleeing* because it is fleeing that provoked Laban to pursue, hence beginning the conflict-generating stage.

The conflict is deeply intended because it is generated from the realization by Laban that all he has been accumulating through fraud and unfair means is gone, and that he can't take it lying down. The center of Laban's selfish being has been provoked, hence generating high-level conflict. Covenant disputes come with recovery reactions that follow revenge, occasioned by deep pains from the injustice committed.

Laban is now reacting to the consequences of what he has been overlooking for a long time as claimed by Jacob, whose claim is that Laban changed his wages ten times (Gen 31:7) in open disregard and violation of the covenant demands. Laban is waking up to the realization that covenant violation now claims his own children, whose argument align with Jacob's claims of injustice.

It then follows that covenant offenses, seem to cut deeper than ordinary and daily offenses of commission and omission committed to each other. It triggers revenge that is aimed at recovering the effects of betrayal and trust once shared, more than the actual damage of salary and other losses. This type and level of revenge transcends relationships, be it blood or social relationship, and may need to be watched. Verse 14-15 of the referred text demonstrates the idea that covenant injustice erodes relationships to the end. The Hebrew word **הלק** and **נהלה** used by Laban's daughters describing their father's selfishness of what they were losing in their father's hands are defined by Strong's concordance to mean possession, property, inheritance also used by Joshua in the subdivision of the land in Canaan. (Josh 13:23).

The complaint describes Laban's greed that disrespected and violated both labour and traditional covenant requirements that apportioned his daughters some property which, in this case, was denied by Laban to them. What Laban's reaction will do may not save anything for him but just the assurance that his daughters will be safe in his absence.

Verse 25-42 provides the third stage in the narrative scale described as *conflict most intense,* where Laban has overtaken Jacob in swift pursuit of his daughter and his teraphims. Laban's charge against Jacob is that Jacob is a thief who has stolen Laban's daughters.
The description of Jacob's theft is exaggerated by Laban, to mean a real war that took place between him and Jacob that resulted in Jacob fleeing with Laban's daughters. This exaggeration closely works hand in hand with the selfish heart of Laban. (Vs 26-27). Mount Gilead provides a historical ground for this stage where Laban and Jacob confront each other with facts that are

coming in too late. Laban seems to have come ready for war, had it not been for the God of Jacob who spoke to him cautioning him not to harm Jacob. At this point, Laban marches to Jacob's tent for a thorough search of the idols carried away by Rachel, which in itself was an indication of total disrespect of the girl child to her father. (V33-35).

While at this most intense moment, Jacob responds to Laban's fruitless efforts with a high temper though ignorant of Rachel's offense. Jacob remembers twenty years of his stay with Laban and the sacrifices of the sun scorches and the repayments of Laban's destroyed animals by the wild beast, that he made to keep the relationship going on, and retorts to Laban in revenge for what Laban had just done to him in front of his wives. This contest at Mt. Gilead marks the end of the long kept cold war, with Laban losing in all aspects. Laban has here lost all the possession of animals, his daughters, lost the arguments in all stages, but is left with one option that sets in the next covenant scale to be called *conflict beginning to unravel*. At this point, it is clear to Laban that he has lost in all. This experience ushers in the fact that unfairness has it to lose at the end of it all. While it is true that the daughters and animals came from Laban, the overriding facts that have challenged the relationship that was bound by the code of a covenant have been violated. This is a theatrical stage that threatened the relationship to permanently receive its damage, as shown in the narrative plot. This section provides the true meaning of an intense conflict because it reveals the more profound negative memories of injustice, as Jacob remembers the ten times Laban changed his wages once more. Covenant relationship infidelity does, therefore, never leave the memories, making it an evil act that leaves permanent scars in someone's heart.

It is, therefore, not strange that a violation of a covenant relationship can sometimes lead to loss of life and or lifelong hostility to each other. The change of Jacob's wages ten times and the robbery of his daughter's birth rights present a summary of Laban's character of infidelity, that tortured the members of his family throughout. Some of the indications of danger in this stage include Jacob's willingness to release life or allow a death penalty should one of his companions

be found with the teraphims. On Laban's failure to find one teraphim among the companions of Jacob, Jacob sounds exceedingly emotional in a way that corresponds to his pronouncement, to allow death to one or several of his companions. These phenomena demonstrate the highest point of conflict in the Jacob-Laban covenant relationship and pronounces the magnitude of damage caused by covenant infidelity.

Verse 43 presents (*the conflict beginning to unravel* part (a). At this point, emotions have cooled down, and reason begins to take shape in their thoughts. Laban recollects his thoughts and carries out an analysis that gives him negative results in the sense that his daughters, while looking at him, still chose to go with Jacob and not him. His daughters did not find any reason in their father to pursue them that much. To them, their father wasted time and energy pursuing them. The parental covenant relationship with his daughters appears to inform him, that even if they have gone to the land where his sister Rebeca is married, far as it is, let them be happy wherever they will be, hence calling for a relationship covenant to keep them alive. Verse 43 presents Laban's deepest regret in life. He regrets of daughters, children born by his daughters and cattle, and all that Jacob had, and that all is gone. This section relates well with when a fine is pronounced in court to an offender, and costs are counted.

All feelings are settled, and the damage becomes real. Continued fighting might not be an option. Laban calls for an amicable settlement of this case. There seems to be a healthy pause or ceasefire for other considerations.

Conflict begins to unravel Part b. (Verse 44-53) of this plot section is a solemn call by Laban to his nephew to enter into a covenant of peace. What Laban is forced to accept, is that he is now entering into a covenant that he has no control over, unlike the first covenants that he violated. His daughters are going to a far country where he will only believe that they are safe. Mt. Gilead is again placed at another historical prominence in the new covenant, even as each party struggles to give it a name that is significant to him- Laban calls it Je-gar-sa-ha-d-tha, while Jacob called it Galeed.

Verse 54 Presents the section in the narrative study described as the *end of conflict* where complete reconciliation is achieved, and life is ordered back to a fidelity covenant relationship. This section seems to satisfy all parties, and Laban is now ready to go back to Aram Naharaim, contented even without teraphims and children. This point of the conflict presents the confidence attached to the traditions of covenants in all traditions. It suggests that people everywhere trust that covenants convey a message of life continuity and hope to the disappointed when adequately constituted. That covenants provide a healing solution where conflict rules. Great things happen at the mediation of a covenant in a broken covenant relationship.

The narrator here wants the reader to see a powerful redirection or change of thoughts under the confidence laid on the component of relationships called covenants. At this point, Jacob achieved a covenant tool of relationships as this final scenario presents all that Laban wanted to happen when his daughters leave his home. All the expressions of joy, singing, trumpets, harps, and kissing of his sons (Jacob's children) have all been achieved in the celebration that took the whole night with eating and probably drinking though not mentioned, caused by the confidence off (v.54, 27-28).

Verse 55 This presents the last bit of the narrative, as everyone packs and leaves Gilead to his final destination. This section described as the *original conflict resolved*, marks the end of it all in great jubilations all in the usage of a covenant tool again.

4.5 Summary of the Chapter

As summarised in the summary scale of the narrative plot, this chapter exposes the detailed infidelity in verse seven where Jacob claims that Laban changed his wages ten times with no guilt or regret. In verses 14-16, Rachel, the most loved of the father, opens another of Laban's files of infidelity and abuse to them when she claims that their father had treated them like strangers. This is worsened when even children demonstrate the same vein of infidelity by

witnessing what their father does. Verse 25-42 presents a drama at mount Gilead where the climax of infidelity is climaxed by Rachel's choice of leading the drama. The confrontation at the mountain exposed several things including Jacob's ignorance of what Rachel had done.

The next exposure of this chapter is the solution brought about by a covenant to the two who had differed. Laban, on realizing that he could not win back his daughters, resorts to a covenant as a solution to their standoff. Laban's choice of a covenant must have been informed by the power contained in a covenant as a relationship's tool.

This chapter proves that parental infidelity stretches its effects to the whole family, in the sense that it is the children of Laban who seem to have been most affected by the version presented by Laban to them about Jacob. Laban, who knew what he was doing, did not realize that his sons were not only listening to the defensive narratives of their father to them, against Jacob, but also in denial of the facts as known by the daughters and Jacob. Unfortunate is the situation, since Jacob did not choose to reveal these facts to the sons, probably because of their bitterness against him, and this divided the family into two halves. The Iteso people are therefore informed, that family covenant infidelity does not only affect those who entered into the covenant arrangements but escalates to the rest of the family. The Iteso people are also informed that covenant violations should be kept in check at all times to avoid far-reaching consequences.

The most valuable element of a covenant relationship is honesty. When dishonesty is committed within the meaning of a covenant relationship arrangement, its negative consequences may only be delayed, but they will arrive with extra demands. It is therefore a caution to all those who recognize that the relationship entertained by themselves is bound by a covenant code, hence demanding high commitments and responsibilities. The Iteso people will be safe in their covenant relationships with this in mind.

This chapter lays emphasis on the fact that the consequences of covenant infidelity disrupt emotional stability, leaving the concerned highly vulnerable, a lot in the attempt to recover from the effects of revenge. Laban took it upon himself, all the way to Mt. Gilead, insensitive of all dangers both on the way and in the encounter with Jacob, and still recovered nothing.

It is also re-emphasized that infidelity in a covenant relationship finally exposes the infidel party, should the fidel party lay demands. All that Laban had banked on as his strength in the whole infidelity, got lose when even his own daughters chose a stranger over him. Covenant infidelity attracts revenge with regrets in the sense that, Laban's daughters, not knowing where they are going to, chose their husband and not their father's home.

It tends to indicate that even nature works against infidelity, as shown by the way Rachel successfully used the language of nature to defend herself against Laban's aggressive search for the idols.

While it is true that civilization has taken place in the world that has tended to erode the culture of traditional covenant relationships, this chapter informs the Iteso people that covenants still bring satisfaction and reliable confidence as a solution to those whose relationships have dwindled. It acted as the only solution that would have Laban and their family go back home with some indication of hope, even though they could not recover their lost glory. The Iteso can be informed that covenants still have their place in relationships. At Mt. Gilead, all that Laban wanted to do for his daughters captured as restored by the new covenant entered. In a covenant, things are made new, and the former enmity is buried. Laban went home happy, and Jacob proceeded to the land of his ancestors with his full family.

Conclusion: A covenant relationship is a societal ingredient that cannot be ignored without consequences. Both the ANE Hebrew and the traditional Iteso community share common social needs to achieve social coherent objectives. The study demonstrates that certain things just must be done in a certain specified way.

As seen in the discussion above, the human community is well-designed and defined with several covenant relationship structures, since it is now apparent that a society without guidelines is a society soon to end because of selfish conflicts within man, that have engraved infidelity even where covenant relationship is defined. Life in Laban's family has shown that infidelity transcends even across social life protected by covenant relationships. It remains a subject of interest to keep comparing covenant relationship structures for the best information to strengthen the existing structures.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE TRADITIONAL ITESO COVENANT RELATIONSHIPS

5.0 Introduction:

This chapter explores the Iteso Covenant life through the information retrieved from the primary sources that constitute the social phenomenal character observed in the society. This chapter presents the Iteso backgound, including their political structure and socio-economic activities, and all that is documemted in the appendices through analytical as guided by Ethnographical and Thematic Framework Indexing approaches.

Through Ethnographic guidance, this chapter presents the main features of the Iteso covenants, the covenant elements of the Iteso traditional covenants, the Iteso traditional covenants, the covenants tied to marriage among the Iteso, among others. For more clarity, the details of the Iteso covenants covered in this chapter and the application of the Ethnographic methodology used in the collection of the primary data, are presented, well explained and applied in Appendices as follows:

Appendix 1 demonstrates how the retrievial of the information on the Iteso traditional covenants was carried out in the Amukura sublocation of Busia County of the Republic of Kenya, with all protocols observed and as indicated in Appendix 1. Appendix 3 contains information on research preliminaries that include mobilization of the research population and training. Appendix 4, Contains a data collection process through the Ethnographic methodology that was used. Appendix 5, contains study sample populations that were used to extract information about the Iteso covenant relationship. Appendix 6. contains interview guides that were used to provide guidance to the respondents. Data presentation is documented in Appendix 7 and analysis is carried out in Appendix 8. Analysis is carried out through a *Thematic Framework Indexing* method advocated by Richie and Levis (2013) that calls for Data to be subdivided into

subsections of themes and topics for easy analysis. Finally, Appendix 9 contains the Iteso traditional covenant presentation as the main forcus of study.

The following sections breaks down the qualitative data collected from the field with the central forcus on the traditional Iteso covenants and their practical aspects among the Iteso people of Amukura village in Busia County. APPENDIX 1(i), 3-6.

5.1 Background

The Iteso people, largely populated in Eastern Uganda and some portions of western Kenya claim the second largest position among the ethnic groups in Uganda. This group of Nilotes is believed to have originated from Egypt, and through the Blue Nile to Ethiopia and finally to Uganda and Kenya. They are largely found in Amuria, Soroti, Katakwi, Pallisa, Bukedi, Kaberamaido, Tororo, and Busia Districts of both Kenya and Uganda. Iteso, member tribe of the Nilo-Hamite family is one of the largest tribes in East Africa. The Nilo-Hamitics include the Iteso, the Karamajong, the Turkana and the Toposa (Lawrence, 1957). Their distant relatives include the Maasai, Nandi and Pokot.

Lawrence states that, when the Iteso people came to Uganda, they found the land empty though earlier occupied by the Stone Age race. He futher argues that the Iteso people coming in to this land of Uganda found the last survivors of the Stone Age still alive and living on the rocks of Achuloi, Asuret and Nyero. They were Bushmen who were hunters and gatherers (Lawrence, 1957:6). It is generally accepted that the Iteso belong to the Nile-Hamitic or Half Hamitic family of Karamojong, Teso and Langi in Uganda, the Turkana and Suk in Kenya, the Toposa, Donyiro in Sudan, Buma and the Karo in Abyssinia. These are called *Itung'a* (people). All the affiliate tribes of the Iteso are considered to have originated from the Karamojong (Lawrence,1957:7).

According to Lawrence, the Teso ancestors came to Uganda from Abyssinia through Karamojong District, through six generations: -*Ojurata's tadpoles* – men of short stature, large heads and lived among swamps and lakesides, *Okori's generation* – men who begun the art of

tilling the ground and growing crops, *Oyang'aese's* (Lawrence,1957:7-8). The main activity of the Iteso include farming and hunting, a practice they have since shifted from to cultivating (Lawrence, 1957: VII) The Iteso people are considered to have drifted by far from their "spectacular clothing styles and body ornaments so far retained by the Maasai and the Karamojong"(Lawrence, 1957: VII) to serious cultivating, a practice that has moved them a shoulder high from their fellow Nile-Hamites economically, socially and even politically.

5.2 The Political Structure of the Iteso People

According to Lawrence (1957:31) and Webster, Okalany, Emudong and Okuda (1973:167-168) life in the Iteso communities had relationships that were organized and protected by the covenants that they entered. Lawrence argues that the Iteso people kept covenants that guided the society even during separations that left some Iteso people in Kenya, Uganda and Sudan without war (Lawrence, 1957:31). The theme of covenant relationships considers that all covenants were entered because of a desired relationship.

The Iteso people lived as a closed community in their social political organization. They originally did not have governance systems that included kings or other elaborate governments like the Baganda of Uganda. Theirs was what could be referred to as segmentary systems that embraced kinship. Their basic unit was called *Ekek* (clan). Ekek comprised of a family and brought on board all family members from one particular home. A home that was polygamous could have a very large family that required an elder as a leader.

Several families formed an *ekek* (clan) but from one lineage. The main job description of this leader being that of making sure that all social standards or agreed ways of life also called covenants regulating relationships are observed to the latter. Within the *Ekek* (clan), were rules of conduct that governed the clan. Any departure from these rules or taboos that served as covenants of relationships against one person was considered as having departed from the whole clan. The main essence of this governance was to secure covenant relationships. The offenders of

covenant relationships were brought before the Elders for executions. The offenders of a covenant such as marriage, who received the punishment were called *Ebulesit*, and were rendered homeless.

Beyond the Ekek was *Atekе*r-(sub-clan). Issues that could not be handled by the *Ekek* were referred to the higher audience of elders who were drawn from several sub-clans called *Ateker*. Such infidelities that could be referred to *Ateker* included clan breakage.
If a clan threatened to split, due to issues arising from such disputes as the division of dowry, according to customs and clan covenants, division of specific parts of a slaughtered cow or bull meant for a specific *Ekek*, or as a result of extremely enlarged *Ateker* that becomes unmanageable, such cases were referred to this council of elders to sanction the division of *ateker*, which came with the breaking of a covenant that united them. (Webster, 1973:167-168).

Some of the covenants that were broken at this point included marriage covenants leading to divorce, murder of an offender that broke the covenant which said do not kill a human being, etc. According to Webster, the Iteso Judicial procedures and legal principles were sort of in a place called *Airabis and Aidieket*. *Aidieket* comes from the word *akidiak*, meaning to separate as in if two people were fighting; the act of separating them is called *akidiak*. This court addressed issues like marriage infidelities, theft, incest, land and ownership disputes, and or inter-clan disputes (Webster, 1973:129).

The advocates in these courts were the elders of a clan referred to as *Ekeraban*. If the case was inter-clan in nature, two clans came together, but sat opposed to each other, and *Ekaraban* (advocate), from both sides presented their sides beginning with the complainants. In this case, the murderer or *ekachudan-night runner* (an inter-clan offender) was carried out by a neighbor clan. This category of offenders included rain killers, night runners, poisoners, leprosy spreaders, etc. Their execution came by way of being taken to another clan to be killed, in a way of putting them at the warfront, or being invited to a drinking place and being killed on their way back

home while drunk. (Webster, 1973:229-231). All offenses were confirmed by *Emuruon* (prophet) or *Imuruok* (several).

In this arrangement, covenant relationship was observed on a close range, to ensure that offenders were brought to book the sooner they offended. The significant aspect of the Iteso covenant relationship was that every dispute ended in a reconciliatory tone, despite the punishments that included exclusion from the clan.

5.3 Iteso Traditional Social Life

The Iteso people, whose origin is associated with the Karamojong, enjoyed a large spectrum of social life. They enjoyed dance a lot as the existence of their dancing instruments can be traced even today. Some of their instruments included *Atenus*, *Etida, Ideteta*, *Amidiri* etc and were all made of drums and skin strings. In most of their social gatherings, skilled men who knew how to play the instruments were invited to grace the occasions. Other instruments included wind instruments, stringed instruments and open songs. Lawrence (1957) in his work, has even constructed staff notations for some of the traditional songs sung by the Iteso people during their celebration moments (Lawrence, 1957:160-164)

Drinking alcohol (beer), is practical to date among the Iteso people in their social gatherings. They prepared beer from flour made from millet, finger millet as yeast and maize flour. It is however noted, that drinking points usually ended up in a fight. Some of the potential occasions where beer was a key component of celebrations, were when dowry negotiations were undertaken, visits of all nature, and during ritual practices.

There were however greedy behaviors during such celebrations to avoid potential fights. The Iteso people as a community loved dancing since time immemorial. It is not clear when they began to use drums as an instrument of music, but Lawrence (1957) has it that this must have been an influence from the Nilotic and the Bantus in the recent past (Lawrence, 1957:153).

Their traditional instruments of music were and are still called *Adongo*, and entertainment from this instrument did not include a drum. But with time, the Iteso people embraced the use of drums in their cultural dances to date. The four major types of the drums assimilated in to the Iteso cultural celebrations were called the *Atenus drum, Ideteta drum, Etida* drum and finally the *Emidirin* drum. Each drum produced a tone, harmonious with the rest of the drums. Other instruments used in entertainments included windpipe from a hollow tube from a euphorbia tree, Stringed instruments, Songs, etc.

Their dancing styles had names suc h as *Akuma* and *Ikacuit* dances - This kind of dance was mostly danced by the elderly, and the song was sung by a carefully selected young girl for the entertainment of the elderly. *The Etida dance*: This dance was done to provide healing to the sick in the company of the *Etida Drum* and mostly at night. *Twins dance*: this was not one of the best dances, because it was organized to ridicule the one who had given birth to twins among others Lawrence (1957:153-170).

5.4 Iteso Economic Activities

Lawrence (1957) and Webster, Emudong, Okalany and Egimu-Okuda (1973) agree that the Iteso people underwent growth through economic evolutions. These stages began all the way from becoming man to: farming, cattle keeping, crafts, and divisions under the pressure of the Turkana, into three sections and finally split further into what they are today. (Webster, 1973:20).

They fashioned logs into stools and tables and decorated animal skins into dresses and sheets that could be exchanged for other goods for domestic use.

Visual art was one of the other methods embraced by the Iteso people for their economic income and entertainment. They carved stools, clay plates, bird and animal carvings for decorations etc. They would also do very beautiful designs on their walls, gourds, etc. (Lawrence, 1957:174).

In their economic activities, the Iteso people practiced covenant relationships in most of their core and day-to-day dealings with each other and this united them in a more cohesive manner than the legal systems of today could do. This can be attested to by way of their stringent and punitive practices expressed in the covenant stipulations.

The punitive reaction of ancestors to the offenders, explains the reality that not only the visible powers were required to keep the Iteso people within their expected fidelity levels, but the invisible powers of gods were more involved in the social order than the physical human powers.

5.5 Qualitative Data Retrieval

5.5.0. Introduction: As mentioned in the introduction above, this section presents the Iteso covenant life including their understanding of the term Aitutuket, its existance, types of covenants, covenant features, Iteso traditional covenants, covenant symbols, covenant benefits, covenant challenges, covenant structure/elements, other covenants between the Iteso and other communities, and finally the analysis.

This chapter demonstrates that indeed the Iteso people had traditional covenants and that they lived by these covenants as a means of achieving their unity and community cohesion.

5.5.1 'Aitutuket'- Iteso Understanding

The Iteso people used the word *Aitutuket,* (Covenant) to mean the kind of agreement that is reached/confirmed and bound in a traditional way. The decisions that ended up in this kind of agreement, were backed up by evidence and were not under the custody of an individual but of all those who assembled *atuket*/*atukokin* (an assembly), on the day the agreement is entered. Such other covenants entered in a similar manner included those of marriages, sale of property, community agreements, peace agreements, and other such covenants.

Iteso people, briefly described above, understood covenant *Aitutuket* (Covenant) relationships as a means through which relationships lasted, and because of its dettachments led to curses, people lived and grew up since childhood knowing that any relationship was important.
As it clearly shows in all communities, covenants formed major components of any relationship and the Iteso as a community did involve and continue to involve themselves in covenant relationships to date.

Life among the Iteso was regulated by pre-existing and established covenantal taboos, covenants and rules of social order. These taboos were carried out in a covenant pattern, in the sense that certain characteristics in these practices portrayed covenant elements, although the practices were not described as covenants, they were official agreements undertaken both verbally and documentarily. Some of the covenants did not need a witness. Appendix 7 (i. Qn1) (ii. Qn1) (iii. Qn1) (iv Qn1).

5.6 Covenant Existence

Covenants among the Iteso existed and were highly regarded as a social tool in all social life. As demonstrated in the (Appendix 6. (i), (Table ii. &. iii), the knowledge and existence of traditional covenants among the Iteso were found to be evident by an indication right from age 30 through age 100, and as the years diminished to early times compared to the current times, the covenants present a higher appreciation than today. Society then, seems to have enjoyed the benefits of a covenant relationship even in the absence of tight government agencies like the police, observed today.

Boundaries were respected and marriages stayed stronger than today because of the binding power of the Iteso traditional covenants. In this research, all respondents of all age groups acknowledged that the traditional Iteso covenants existed and practiced covenant relationships (see appendix 6 Table ii. &. iii). The appreciation of the covenant relationship by the early Iteso man with little civilization may have worked more than today, when civilization has come in

with many complications compared to the challenges that were exhibited. An example to explain this argument could be that the cases handled by an Iteso leader may have been made workable, because people did not seem to have acquired much social dynamics as compared to today.

The level of infidelity, arguments, and courage to say "No" even when it is glaringly "yes", crime technology compared to today, economic stress that tempts many to commit infidel crime, exposure to things that were not there before, and that drive the minds to temptations, have all made honesty difficult today, indicating that all levels have moved, yet people have not updated their honesty levels. This however does not grant the society permission to pepertuate dishonesty and disrespect to covenants duly entered.

Knowledge of the covenant practices among the Iteso was and still is common knowledge. Its continued practice is done in the same way it was done centuries ago, and its advocacy is still receiving prominence among the Iteso people. The Iteso traditional covenants were not a preserve of a specific age group alone. Whenever a covenant was conducted, except for direct participation like in the covenant of *Ekutet*, where the Iteso people exhumed their ancestors and only elderly ladies were involved at the graveside, information about what was happening was not hidden to the rest of the age sets and gender (Appendix 6. (i), (Table ii. &. iii).

5.7 Types of Covenants

There were four main types of traditional Iteso covenants namely, social covenants, religious covenants, political covenants, and economical covenants. Examples of social covenants included but were not limited to marriage covenants.

Marriage covenants kept the Iteso people united and kept the utmost respect for the new family acquired through marriage. Religious Covenants: Every Iteso person was traditionally religious. Right from birth, a child was introduced into the world through a religious process that began with naming. Though they did not address the heavenly God, their worship was through the

ancestors. This beginning of life through ancestral veneration accompanied every activity done among the Iteso.Among the Iteso people, politics and leadership were one and the same. The leadership of the Iteso was structured to begin from the head of the family, who in this case was the father. Then the head of the *Ekek* (clan) headed all decisions that affected that clan as a people. The appointments of these offices were by mutual consent, bearing in mind that the ancestors were also interested in this arrangement.

The influence of covenants on the Iteso relations was always seen in whatever thing they did, as many of their involvements were sealed by a covenant. It is of essence to note that the major factor in their relationships, stood on the reaction of the ancestors to their fidelity or infidelity and commitment to the covenants. The Iteso people lived with their ancestors day by day and the influence of the ancestors on their practices, and more so on the covenant commitment was strong, though not visible (Appendix 7 (i) Qn 1), (ii) Qn 1, (iii) Qn1, (iv) Qn 1.

5.8. Covenant Features

There were, and still exist specific traceable features that were ever seen when conducting the Iteso covenant to establish a relationship. They included traditional *Etem* (under a tree/meeting place). This was, and still is the meeting place of choice, which was usually under a big tree, preferably a fig tree. Any moment people were seen seating under a tree, it was suspiciously viewed as conducting a covenant of some sort. Trees have served great functions among the Iteso people historically.

Trees were viewed as sacred places of worship, a place of abode for the exhumed bones of the ancestors, and medicine. The most significant usage of trees is to be found as a courtroom, where decisions affecting relationships are taken. Trees also served as places of resting for elders and fire points in the evenings. Education for the young was also done under trees, as preparation for covenant life. Warnings and encouragement were all given at this point. (APPENDIX 7iv Qn 13).

5.8.1. Ebusaa/Alcohol

Ebusaa is an alcoholic drink brewed from grains that include maize floor, finger millets, and even sorghum. Busaa was used in many covenant functions like in child naming as a symbol of approval that the name of the ancestor given to the child, is agreeable both to the child and the ancestor.

Marriage covenants never ended without *busaa* (traditional alchohole). *Busaa* was an entertainment beverage that was taken in all covenant functions either to mark the successful end of the process, or as an element of the process as in naming. Children were however restricted from taking busaa because of its intoxicating effect. Women were also regulated from taking it. (APPENDIX 7iv Qn 13).

5.8.2. Ekaree/Ululation

When people met for a function such as covenants of marriage, dowry payments, dances, social work etc., they culminated such activities with eating and drinking. When at a point the group having advanced in their joy, a spontenious expression of joy is expressed through ululation/*Ekaree*. These acclamations also followed after functions, like at the end of a covenant that has been concluded, or the covenant was approved and successfully entered. Jubilation was a common phenomenon among the Iteso people. When women in particular felt that the covenant process had culminated at a high point or that gifts were given to the deserving ones, the response to such acts was jubilation and ululation. Ululation served the purpose of demonstrating approval and joy. Ululation was not done by men, but by women for reasons not known. It was taken as a feminine behavior. (APPENDIX 7iv Qn 13).

5.8.3. Assembly of Elders

In most covenant processes, elders would assemble in a significant way featuring specific seating arrangements, with either the clan's elder or an elder from another clan depending on the type of covenant administered. The sensitivity that came with this feature created sensations about the

covenant process just about to happen and made the practice popular and known to the community and the society at large. Some features were common to many different types of covenants, hence not all features were specific covenants.

The Iteso people had a very clear and structured structure when it came to the point of covenant making. A group of people must attend and sit in a meeting under the tree called *Etem:* This was the official court hall, where agreements/covenants were done, made or entered.
As here discussed, Etem was the official meeting place for this process that served as the venue. People of honor were given specific areas to speak on. A chance to speak in such meetings were given in an orderly way, beginning with the one with the interest. He would justify why and how the interest was developed in his speech. In this meeting, it was assumed that the dead were invisibly present. In some covenants, the traditional brew should be available (APPENDIX 7iv Qn 13).

5.8.4. Eating and Drinking.

Covenant-making was a place where eating and drinking was made to celebrate the achievement of going through the process of covenant-making. The Iteso people grew lots of finger millet. Food made from finger millet was considered one approved by the ancestors. This food called *atap-ka-Kima* (*food from millet*) was traditionally eaten with very dried beef that has been reserved in a finger millet store for up to and beyond one year. This type of meal was only eaten occasionally when there is such a function with a special guest. During dowry negotiation and payments or similar functions, *Ebusaa* (*alcoholic drink*) was inevitable. At the end of every agreement, food was served and followed by the (*ebusaa*) Jubilations were the indications of a successful process. Neighbors were ever invited to share in the joy including some pieces of beef sent to their homes by the young ones (APPENDIX 7iv Qn 13).

5.8.5. Sacrifices

The most successful method of handling the ancestors (gods) and appeasing them among the Iteso people was through Sacrifices. Angry gods that brought sicknesses and misfortunes needed a sacrifice. Most gods would be angered by a covenant stipulation violated. It was believed that specific parts of animal meat were most preferred by ancestors. Sacrifices accompanied most of the Iteso covenants, as this was the way to honor the ancestors. The most preferred animals and birds used in the Iteso covenant relationship covenants included chicken, sheep, and bulls.

Where women were the main characters in the traditional covenant, female animals were used, and the same applied to the male characters. The elders were keen into some specific parts of the animals to read the prophesies there-in. Some appearance of the intestines could indicate omens not good, while some would indicate good fortunes (APPENDIX 7iv Qn 13).

5.8.6. Celebrations

Celebrations are never missed in any Iteso covenant process. The Iteso people were celebratory in their traditions. Drinking and sometimes fighting marked the pick of an event. The most interesting part of this celebration came immediately after declarations had been made and the gathering was headed to the house to eat and drink. The traditional dance characterized by jumping up will follow, accompanied by ululations and shouts of joy, all mark the success of the process just concluded. These celebrations can be accompanied by gifts and lifting up of the guest of honour or the first beneficiary of the process (APPENDIX 7iv Qn 13).

5.9. The Iteso Traditional Covenants

5.9.0 Introduction

The Iteso people presented themselves as people who observed covenant relationships a lot more in their social relationships than without. Every activity was regulated by either a written/memorized creed or the fear of gods. Some of the known traditional covenants among the Iteso that are going to be discussed below include; Boundary covenants, Treatment covenants,

*Ekurumane/*Inheritance covenants, *Akitutukin* covenants, Ebela covenants, *A kou* covenants, Akipukokin covenants, Abanya Covenant, Emanyit covenant, Dowry covenant, *Agwelakin* covenant, *Alomakin* covenant, Reconciliatory covenants, Labour/Ekitai covenants, Elders covenants, *Egwanit* covenant, *Amurwokin ekiror* covenant, *Anyamiar atap* covenant, *Akipukokin* covenants etc. These and many more of the Iteso covenants defined the Iteso ethical behaviors that shaped the society. I will highlight each one of them with emphasis on how they were conducted.

5.9.1. Boundary Covenants

This covenant was one of the actively attended and honored covenants. Children enjoyed seeing elderly people carrying sisal plants and keeping their roots in the dug hall to mark the boundary. Neighbors came to see the traditional administration, give orders and directing processes in the exercise. How did it begin? A date was fixed by the local administration of the *Ekek-* (clan) on request by the family head/father.

Sometimes this covenant was done between the father and his children alone if there was no anticipation of chaos, and it was still a covenant. No one violated it, as it was understood that going against what the head of the family/father had decreed attracted the ancestors' negative reactions. Young plants of Sisal were brought in time, a *jembe*/hoe and a bunch of energetic men could be invited just to carry the sisal from one hole to another. At home, there was serious business of preparing food and getting the local brew ready for use after the exercise was over. Three men stood by the hole to plunge the sisal into the hole.

While carrying the sisal up and before putting it in the hole, an officiating elder would say, "Whoever moves this boundary from this point would be cursed" and the sisal was put in the hole. This covenant was sealed by the planting of sisal under a vow that characterized a covenant. The planting was done by three parties, who all held the sisal and slowly planted it. *Akiraa Euko*r (Planting a boundary) was done in the presence of the elders who played a role in

the process. Whoever became hard-headed in the process would face the wrath of the gods. The stubborn ones could also be brought before the elders who would settle any complaints and indisciplines associated with the agreement.

If it was a newly bought land or a subdivision of the family land, it was still officiated by three participants: the seller or the family head/father, the buyer or the children, and a witness. Under this covenant, whoever uprooted the sisal would be cursed. The covenant was considered final and protected. It could be presented in any body of decision-making and be held still as final. Most of these covenants were traditionally not written but held in memories of individuals who could be called to witness.

If for any reason i.e., say of death, a witness could not be found, a close friend of the departed witness could be sought, just in case the departed witness gave him any useful information in regard to the boundary. Such information from the second-party witness was taken as evidence, particularly if the second-party witness came from among the clansmen.

After the planting of the sisal exercise was completed, ululation and dancing followed as they moved home for the celebration and drinking. Appendix 7 (i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1), Appendix 8)

5.9.2 Treatment Covenants (Evasit ceremony)

Among the Iteso people, no death or sickness was without cause, more so curses. Sometimes, the mother in the family or even the husband could be blamed for the disease, hence calling for this covenant. When sickness ravaged the family too much and all treatments could not do, a decision was taken to send the mother back to their home to make peace.

This process was believed to be a result of the mother having violated some covenant stipulations during the covenant of *Akivan.* During the *Akivan* covenant, the newly married wife is given terms and conditions that will fit her into the new family.

Some of these conditions would include what to eat and what not to eat or touch. If one of these stipulations was broken, the ancestors would then prescribe the punishment which would be administered as sickness. It happened when there was continuous sickness in the family. When sickness was suspected to bea result of covenant violation, the brother-in-law to the wife were sent to the home of the wife to make demand that the covenant of *Evasit*, be conducted by her family. It took place in the following manner.

The treatment of this disease would then be another covenant with the clan she is married to, and to which the violation was done. It is a reinstatement of the broken ceremony of *akivan*, as *akivan* is the covenant of establishing a newly married wife to the family while *evanit* is the covenant of treating and reinstating the first covenant broken. A lady would go to their home, a cow would be slaughtered, and the woman made to carry meat on her head with a piece of the colon hanging on her back. The intestines containing animal waste would drip all over her back. If she had a young baby, she'd carry the baby on her back all the way to her home.

This covenant was meant to re-unite, or to marry afresh, ignoring the first process, hence cleansing the wife who has now made fresh peace with the family clan that was offended (Appendix 7 (i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1).

5.9.3 Ekurumane Inheritance

The word *Ekurumane* is a proceed of the word *akirum*, meaning "to hold" something that was already held by someone. A close word to the word akirum is *akiting* - which conveys the same meaning- "to hold". Its use in the context of marriage would then bring the meaning of taking over the family affairs of another person, and in this case the home or wife of the deceased.

The word would mean to receive from someone's hands (*Ekurumane)* and involved women's inheritance. This was done in a very formal way, that its violation would result negatively on the violators. It was done after a husband dies.

Whosoever inherits the widow was not left to anybody's freedom to, or not to go for. A meeting of elders would be convened at the *Etem* tree to deliberate on who becomes the next husband of the widow. The elders would choose whom to inherit the lady, being cognisant of the tradition that a wife that was officially married belonged to the clan and so everyone was concerned. They advocated for one from the family to inherit the lady. The agreement comes where the sitting will take place so that one person is chosen, and an individual would prepare a ceremony for the same. It took some keen consideration to arrive at who emerged as the winner to inherit. The announcement from the Etem tree was received with ululation and jubilance as the widow now shook off the title of a widow (*apuserut*) and took the name of the new husband. A ram would be slaughtered for this ceremony. It would then be understood that the widow was someone's wife, and any trespass was punishable. The new husband would also agree to the responsibilities that came with it, including taking care of the children's education and health included. (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1)

5.9.4 Akitutukin

The word *akitutukin* comes from the word *akitutu*. The Iteso traditional houses were made of mud walls and cement-free floors. These floors were made by way of thumping the ground with a special wood made flat, to create flat and level surfaces in all rooms. The act of making this surface flat and hard ready to be smeared with cow dung is called *akitutu*. This practice is the philosophy behind the tradition of the *akitutukin* covenant. How was it done? The Iteso people appreciated good spirits inhibited in social behavior. It followed the reason why the Iteso elders were closely involved in the marriage of their children and in this case the boy children. There were many observations to make before settling on the family that an important relationship as that of marriage would be consented to.

If a woman died and she was known to be a responsible woman, the sister would be brought as a replacement, through a covenant process of elders meeting under a tree called *etem*. The brother of the deceased lady, if he is the one who used the deceased's dowry to marry his, wife will be

key in this covenant. He is the one who will give his wife to take his sister to the widower as a replacement for the deceased, to strengthen and keep the relationship. This covenant is binding just as the first marriage.

It was also practiced to create peace in a way that, when two parties fought and one died in the process, they would go and inter-marry as a sign of covering the enmity and continue a relationship with the offended party. This was done through a normal procedure of covenant making this brought unity among the members and continued relationship. Also, one other way to conceal an offense was by an agreement between the two involved in a war that led to the loss of life, that, if twins are born among them or by one of them, males would be named after the uncles of the other person involved (*Amai*), and the females would be named after the aunties of the same family (*Aja*).

The names of the responsible people would be used. Evil people such as thieves, night runners, and witches were not named. This was done by the council of elders and *busaa* never missed, *ugali* and meat was prepared. *Akitutukin* was, therefore, a general name for all the covenants that enhanced relationships and concealed damages. (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1)

5.9.5 Ebela

Sickness was a major cause for covenants among the Iteso, and the unfortunate thing was that most of the sicknesses was associated with the women whom they married. They were viewed as the prime suspects of covenant violations.

If a child was born and sickness persisted, a stick also called *ebela* was gotten. This stick was used to escort the wife/mother to their home, carrying finger millet up to their home. This stick was roughly crushed (*akikisikis*) to get some chip powder that would be mixed with animal oil and be smeared on the child, and the child would be healed. *Ebela* sickness was caused by a broken stipulation of a marriage covenant by the people from the mother's side, causing sickness

to the child. The essence of this covenant was to repair the former covenant broken by the mother of the sick child. (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1)

5.9.6 Akou

One of the most significant covenant practices of the Iteso people was the protection that came with the *Akou* Covenant that was found within the marriage covenant. *Akou*/animal head, was and still is a cow that is given as the last meal of the deceased to her people as she departs to the land of the dead. During her life long, this cow was alive though not numbered with the cows at home but existed in the spirit.

The purpose of this cow was to guarantee security to the lady, under oath by her husband, that he will not hurt her in any way to put pain in her. The cow signified the presence of this lady's people in the home of those who married her and security. When she died, she then, present in the spirit among the living, gave her people the last meal and indicated that there was no now nobody in her home to welcome them there, hence the last meal. The husband gave this cow to the family on the departed's family on the burial day.

Akou was a cow given when a woman died, without which no burial was conducted to mean that the marriage covenant is dissolved by this covenant of the *Akou.* No more such relationships as before during a marriage covenant live time. One of the covenants is that, even if no cow remained after full dowry had been paid, the family of the deceased would have to give one cow, which would be slaughtered on the burial day on their way home to end the marriage agreement. Burial would not be conducted without this bit of the covenant being completed. This would then mean the dissolution of the marriage covenant. This covenant of dissolution was not a common covenant even among many Ancient Near East communities.

Much as many covenants were entered, no indication of dissolution is strongly mentioned even among the Hebrew people. Although the Hebrew woman who went to the Moabites chose to

come back after the death of her husband, (Ruth 4), there is no established tradition among them to dissolve a covenant indicated. Painful as it was to pronounce unconsciously that this is my last meal to you in my home, this is the only covenant that was not celebrated positively.

People's hearts sank and tears rolled painfully as they left their sister laying in the grave no more to welcome them to her home or cook for them. This was a unique covenant. Children who now were left with a loose relationship to their maternal uncles, had also lost their mother but the covenant stood that it was no more for the uncles coming to their former sister's home and house, with the freedom and demands enjoyed. It is now forbidden.

5.9.7 Akipukokin

The Iteso people also practiced social-economic balances that sustained the community close to the same economic levels. If a man found out that he had more cows than the space available for their grazing, he then approached a neighbor, a relative, or even one of his clansmen with a request that "I have more cows than my space can accommodate. Can you keep for me one or two on the following arrangement: 1. If a cow gave birth severally, one of them will be yours, 2. You will also take all the milk, 3. You will give it good care etc".

When you gave someone your animals to take care of, your reward was a cow and not money. Elders sat and said can we give that man to take care of our cow? "Let us go and ask him." If it was agreed, then it was done on an agreement. It could be a cow per year or whichever way you agreed. If the agreement was breached, the animals would die. That is, if the owner refuses to acknowledge the agreement, you will face other family calamities. In this situation, to appease the ancestors, the family of the complainant would go and appease the spirits on a specific tree called *Emoris* with a spear then the calamities would end. The person performing the ritual would not look back as he left the site of the ritual. (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1)

5.9.8 Abanya

When a person felt that he was over-pressed by some burdens of this life, he would go to his colleague and request for a cow so that he may sell it and solve his problems. Again, elders met and sat to determine the request.

If it was agreeable to give him a property, then that was done on an *Aitutuket* arrangement. An agreement was made when someone borrowed an item. It involved the community elder, the lender and the borrower. Witnesses were invited. (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1)

5.9.9 Emanyit

Iteso people used to pay a total of 12 cows and 6 goats as dowry. There was something called *Asut*. They also had something referred to as *Epir-Katoto*. This was the mother's portion of the whole deal in a marriage covenant. For those girls who were kidnapped, the father of the boy would visit the girl's parents telling them not to go out looking for their girl.

In some situations, a messenger, (*Okeju*) would be sent to deliver the message. They always agreed on the way forward. When it was noticed that one's daughter is missing; a meeting of elders is called, and a resolution is made to visit the possible home where the daughter is. This was called *Asut.* This is the act of following a daughter who is married before the marrying family comes to the parents of the boy. It is meant to close doors between the two families and enter into an agreement for the good of the young family. This took place when a girl got married without the husband visiting her father's home. The father would get a few friends and then visit where she was married. When he visited, they always sat down and agreed on the way forward (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1)'. In the past, there came circumstances where a girl could get married without telling her parents and the parents of the boy also kept silent about it. If the family of the girl got to know, the father of the girl took her brother and the boys who called this girl their sister and went to the boy's home. A select group of brothers and uncles did it.

When they arrived and the boy agrees that he has married, and the father of the boy says his son is married, a ceremony followed and all those who went were given a gift ranging from a goat to cockerels. The father was given a cock. This was to identify that the daughter has come here. These were the initial stages of the marriage covenant. Appendix 7 (i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1). An old man would visit his friend's home and light a fire at his friend's home. The owner of the home will come out and talk to his friend. Now at that point, the friend will explain his interest. He'll ask for food. The owner of the house would go back and talk to the wife about the same, then go and he'll get their feedback. After some time, he'll receive a bull or a cow from his friend which will be slaughtered, and the liver be taken to the cow giver.

Out of such relationships, they always found a way to make things stronger by getting their boys or daughters married into the family.

If a man agrees with a lady, the boy's family will go appreciate the girl's family. Before paying the dowry, a letter would be sent to the family not to look for their girl because she'll be in safe hands. The letter contained two shillings, which were meant for the letter reader. Then a team of the lady's sisters would be sent to deliver some food, including ready-made ugali which the man was not allowed to eat. If one eats, his marriage will collapse.

These were the two approaches used in securing a marriage among the Iteso people. Kidnaping was also used but, as it presents, this approach was not all round welcomed by all people. (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1).

5.9.10 Dowry payment

When a man was ready to pay dowry, he would approach his father, who invited his team for further discussion. The clan would help in contributing cows for dowry. After the meeting, a letter would be sent to the girl's home by a messenger called (*Okeju*). He would deliver the letter, after which the girl's family would also respond. On the dowry payment day, the team moving with the cows goes first, then other negotiators escorting them would follow. When they arrived at the girl's home, the two teams would sit somewhere under a tree and negotiate the

dowry before any other programs took place. The negotiation team involved about 5 people from each side.

After they came to an agreement, the team would then be invited into the house. It was also believed that the first wife was community property, hence they would pay a dowry for you. The second wife was personal leisure, so one would pay dowry by himself. Sometimes, animals were taken to a girl's home in advance without the girl knowing the purpose. They would later kidnap her and take her to the boy's home, and that was the first step into marriage. Some parents started by being family friends and one would take cows to the other family '*akipukokin*'. The animals were not just taken to be looked after; it was an advance dowry payment. The two families would share their interest and agree. The girl would be taken by the boys' team, then a ritual would be performed. This ritual was called *Akigwan*. Some oil was smeared on her to say that she cannot go back.

After the ritual, the lady would not go back to their home. If for any reason that girl died, the girl's family would still meet and say, our relationship was very good. We will still take another daughter to that family because of the former relationship (Historical prologue). This arrived at a discussion in an *Etem*. In this meeting, a historical review was made referring to the past relational history. Some marriages depended fully on the parents' relationship (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1).

5.9.11 Agwelakin

Among the most pronounced covenants among the Iteso people were the covenants of *agwelakin*. The exchange of commodities was a common and daily practice, as people enjoyed the good of others. Some exchanges however required an elaborate involvement owing to its importance and value in the hands of the buyer. Land for example, was not easily and carelessly handled in terms of its sale. The sale covenant, which represents the highest percentage of fraud cases involving infidelity, is to be found in sale covenants. The Iteso people practiced barter

trade in most of their dealings. Land for example, was bought by use of cows and not money in most cases. Foodstuff could be bought using chicken, goats, sheep, and even cows as a mode of exchange.

Some sales required witnesses while some did not, depending on the value attached to it. If an elder or a man of his home found that where he lived had become narrower, he went to someone who according to him would sell him land. An agreement was entered between the two in the presence of witnesses. It happened in a situation where one realized his land had become small; he'd approach his friends to confirm if they could sell some piece to him. Demarcating land was by use of sisal as a way of agreement sealing. All agreements were done in view of the fact that gods were witnessing. The sisal planted was never removed by anyone. The two held the sisal and a leader while vowing against tempering with it hence sealing the covenant. Appendix 7 (i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1)

5.9.12 Alomakin

This covenant was conducted to facilitate the relationship between the father-in-law and the daughter-in-law. The main objective being that of allowing the father-in-law to eat at his daughter-in-law's house. Before this happened, the father-in-law was not allowed to eat food cooked by the daughter-in-law. The daughter-in-law would prepare food and the local brew for the father-in-law and the team. On the other hand, the father-in-law would get a gift. If he's well off, a cow would be given out as a gift. From this period onward, their relationship would be free, the father-in-law would be able to visit and eat at his son's house without any problem.

After the covenant was entered and the team of elders was welcomed to the joy of the covenant, the father-in-law pronounced blessings to the daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law confessed total submission to the principles of respect to the elders governing that family, then drinking and celebrating followed. They would only be barred from close contact like a handshake. This is

considered a covenant of respect, to show that the old man can eat at his daughter-in-law's house with distinct respect. (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1)

5.9.13. Reconciliatory Covenant

Reconciliation among the Iteso people included very serious issues like murder, theft, boundary interference etc. When a person was killed, for example, the two parties met to discuss the way forward, since sanctioning another death was considered a double tragedy. An individual from a different clan headed the meeting. They would take one bull and a ram for the two sides to share. To make the relationship look better, the family of the guilty one would give the other party a girl as a uniting factor. The bull slaughtered cemented everything as a done agreement. The family of the killer has no right to dominate the agreement discussions.

Aman who defiled another man's wife was penalized a bull and a sheep, but if a man killed his rival for defiling his wife, that case was not given a fair hearing as it was dismissed on arrival. Offenders, however, were supposed to repent before their apologies were considered for reconciliation and in order not to carry the curses. Reconciliation was highly advocated as a social virtue. The covenant was however, that the offender was not going to be heard of the same offense again (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1).

5.9.14. Labour / Ekitai Covenant

The Iteso people enjoyed living communally. Food production was a social obligation to every member of society. The Iteso people had a social and community covenant, which enhanced food production, good neighborhood, and community fellowship. It was agreed that when rains began to show signs, every family prepared the land for planting. When food crops had germinated, people requested neighbors both young and adults to join hands in weeding the crops. This was called *ekitai*.

In this arrangement, food and drinks were prepared to be enjoyed after work in the afternoon. Those who violated this call to community work suffered rejection at the meal and drinking

moments. No payment was made to anybody, apart from the fellowship meals and drinks. Aside from this, community work that was free and lovely, individuals were also at liberty to contract other individuals to work for them at a pay agreed upon. Before giving someone any job or employment, one would consider getting a go ahead from the parents of the boy, and the agreement would not take place without their consent. So that, in case there's a breach of an agreement, it was easy to handle since witnesses were there. Then the engagement went on in the presence of witnesses. (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1)

5.9.15 Elders Covenants

Elders covenant was a covenant of sympathy. If the clan's elders noted that one of their own was languishing in poverty, and after observing that the man was incapable of raising his own economy and livelihood, elders meeting at the *etem* would discuss the poverty of this man and one would volunteer to give a cow to the poor man and to demand a refund. This was a covenant to balance the family/clan/community economy. When one had no cows to pay dowry, his fellow clansmen through an agreement would help him. This case was on pure trust. No refund was expected, but the 1st born of the man would be named after the person who gave out the cattle. This agreement/covenant was most welcomed because a name was a great thing. (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1)

5.9.16. Evanit

The Iteso people did not leave relationships to guesswork. When a woman was married to a family, official functions were scheduled to make a difference in the status of the two. *Evasit* was one such covenant that was conducted to seal off the woman from any other relationships, and to establish her presence in the new family joined. This was done to show that the woman had been accepted in the family and that the lady had also accepted being in that family. If after this ceremony, the newly married wife chose to go away, several curses will befall her. These curses include sicknesses that could not be treated conventionally. It would call for another covenant to undo the curses as discussed, to reverse the curses and re-order the *evanit* covenant. When a wife

has been married into a home strange to her in culture and beliefs, *evanit* was the covenant to welcome her.

Outside the homestead, the ladywoman would be made to sit on a skin carpet as she waited for the covenant ritual to happen. They will smear the woman's body with cow oil telling her that, if she dares leave her home, she'll never give birth nor will she get married again. She would get sick and no cure would heal her. At this point, she was also introduced to the things she is allowed and not allowed to do or see, and not allowed to eat or touch according to the taboos of that family. Violation of these simple stipulations would result in heavy curses. Sending a woman away was not a one-person decision, it was done by the clan.

The clan would send the lady away due to some misconduct. After paying the dowry, the stick that was used to escort the cows would be brought back home with a cock from the woman's home. That stick would be hung at the door, to show that the woman was legally married marking the end of such a marriage covenant. This covenant was done to bless a married woman. At the end of all these, she is now officially and forever married. Ululation and dance, drinking and eating would follow (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1).

5.9.17 Amuruokin ekiror (Naming)

This covenant was among those covenants done between the living and the dead, where the living was the baby, and the dead are the bearers of the names to be named after the child. The elderly women in the community did it. They would do it in different ways. One, they would let the mother of the child carry the baby. A name would be mentioned and if the baby suckles, it will be a way of accepting the name. If he refused to suckle, it was well assumed that the baby had refused the name. After naming, if the baby kept crying overnight, this was considered inappropriate, like two ancestors were competing to be named after. They'd take two cocks and be named after their ancestors. The two cocks would be thrown up, and the one that came down first would not be considered. The baby would be named after the cock that remained up there.

There was no name dictation by the parents. This was a continuity of the clan. It was accepted that the two quarreling ancestors had come to an agreement by the sending down of one cock to leave the other one up to be named. This was followed by celebrations and joy feelings. (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1)

5.9.18. Anyamiaar atap (Eating new food)

This was a covenant made between the living and the dead, to facilitate peace and the promise of the next harvest. This happened after the harvest. No product would be used before the ceremony was conducted. Normally, the ceremony brought the community together. They would prepare millet flour for *Ugali* preparations, an animal to be slaughtered, and some local brew. In the process when the meals are ready, they would throw food on the ground while calling the ancestors names. This united the living and the dead, and the dead would definitely bless the soil since their spirits were made happy. This was done in fulfillment of the covenant entered at planting, with the dead that the living would reward the dead at harvest (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1).

5.9.19. Akipukokin

This covenant involved the lending of cows or goats. One would ask someone, if he would accept to keep some animals for him for a period. An agreement was entered in the presence of witnesses, and it so happened. The agreement included a payment of a cow for cows and a goat for a goat. If you refused to return the flock as agreed, curses would follow you according to the agreement. There were two types of curses; One from ancestors, and one that was made by the complainant by taking a spear and pinning it at a specific tree, and then goes back home without looking backward while calling the name of the offender and pronouncing curses. The tree was called *Esingororot/Emasait*. He never looked at where the spear was, until he died.

When someone got infected by a disease suspected to be a curse out of stipulation violation, he was instructed to go hit his swollen cheeks on a tree called *Edodoi*. You would hit your cheeks

on the tree three or four times, two times on each side, then leave the place without looking back. This was a covenant between the patient and the tree, and the sick would talk to the tree, "please tree, support me" and the tree would do that. In situations where a girl got pregnant and got confronted, she would guess on someone, considering where the boy came from. If the boy was wealthy, the lady would mention him as the one responsible for the pregnancy. The family would accept and a ritual was conducted. If the woman got another baby, it was considered that the man was responsible for the first pregnancy, but if she doesn't get pregnant anymore, that showed she lied about it. That lady would never get pregnant till she was taken through the ritual once more (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1).

5.9.20. Cattle herding

The Iteso people kept animals as their domestic economy. Much as their animal size could not match the Maasai or the Kalenjin in Kenya and the Banyankole in Uganda, the Iteso people kept cows, sheep, and goats as part of their domesticate animals. These animals described their economic strength used in dowry payments, and at the same time as food. The cattle herding covenant facilitated the community in achieving shared natural resources that were available to the community, but under specific or private ownership. This was the most common agreement among the Iteso people. As Lawrence puts it, all such contracts were entered and witnessed by at least two witnesses, it could be written or verbal, and the period and salary of the herdsmen were not necessarily mentioned in the agreement. Lawrence quoted one of the herding agreements that was entered as shown below in Appendix 7 (i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1).

D.C 14/54: D.N.C 36/54: P (case code): Mulagangabo Vs Ewango

> "Mulagangabo herded thirty-seven head of cattle for nine years for Ewango's brother who died. He was awarded one bull in the clan court for this service but claimed a further three head. The sub-county court of Kyere rejected this claim. On appeal, in the county court, Mulagangabo produced a written contract unwitnessed. He could produce no proof of validity. The county court judge Serrarera rejected the document because it was spelled in

the Luganda fashion. The D.N.C accepted the document, but D.C on revision, upheld the findings of the county court on the grounds that, the document unless admitted must be witnessed. Preferably by at least two witnesses" (Lawrence, 1957:235).

It was also obvious or unless specified that all milk was disposed of by the herdsman. All off springs of the stock belonged to the owner (Lawrence, 1957-235). This contract agreement also had other legislations to protect it.

5.9.21. House Building Agreement

This covenant was entered to facilitate construction activities within the community. It could be entered verbally or in writing but must be witnessed by at least two. In this covenant, the contractor was liable to pay all the money paid to him, if he did not finish work on time and the builder was equally liable to pay any balance at the end of work or pay a penalty if he fails to pay on time. A case addressing a building contract is addressed below, showing that building contracts were done among the Iteso people. Unsettled claims were escalated to legal structures if not mutually finalized as shown below. Quotation: *D.C. 11/51: D.N.C 4/51: Y. (case cod) Kigumekyalmazi:* V. D. Ekumeuiap before a court of law.

"This was a claim for payment of sh. 150 or some lesser amount for bricks made according to a verbal agreement, but the contract was never completed. The evidence showed that *Kigumekyalmazi* had only spent about three days on making the bricks, and that their quality was poor. The claim was entirely dismissed" (Lawrence (1957-236). Lawrence observes that such contracts majorly referred to permanent houses built on the promises of local beer or a good meal, preferably a chicken meal.

To date, the Iteso people still conduct community joint effort when constructing a temporary house or weeding works. In general, the Iteso people observed covenant relationship in most of

their labour related jobs. Every job had terms and conditions which if violated, would go either to the elder's Council or to legal courts.

5.9.22. Sales/Agwelakin

There were several sales covenants done among the Iteso people. They include livestock – **Cattle.**

Whenever a cow was being sold, there were to be no witnesses. Sales that did not need witnesses included; sale of land houses and crops. Interesting among the Iteso, is the fact that such sales as lands, houses and crops needed no witnesses, more so when some things like cattle were sold at home where no permits for travel were issued. At this point, trust seems to have been on the higher side than at marriage.

The Iteso administration structure provided for one extended family head, who officiated in all land allocations, and everyone respected him. He acted as undisputable witness in all land issues. Land was also owned through inheritance, gift within the larger family or by entering into a new ground that is not allocated to any. The eldest son who is responsible for distribution of the same to the brothers.

5.9.23. Pledges /Abanya

Pledges were common transactions entered by the Iteso people, one to another. There were several types of pledges that were accepted among the Iteso people. A person could take an item from a neighbor, and pledge to settle the bill or its cost at an agreed arrangement. This included land, crops, houses, female children, cattle and loans.

At least two witnesses were required for any pledge to be binding. Pledges could be honored in installments, with the first owner having the right to repossess the item(s) if, at the end of the period, the pledge had not been honored. A witness and other evidence were allowed in court, but under normal circumstances, two witnesses were required. A person who did not fulfill the

promise as agreed faced the wrath of the elders in a court of law or at the elders' council. Such people also lost their trust among the elders, and in any other time of need, would not find them favoured by anybody. See the quotation below presented before a court of law to settle a covenant violation.

D.C. Rev 6/52: D.N.C. 122/51. Serene county 112/51. Bugondo sub-county >>/51. M. Ogabe vs K. Okiror. "Okiror sued Ogabe for repayment of a debt sh.300. The loan was witnessed by one man only. The evidence showed that other members of the same party agreed to buy a bicycle at Jinja. There was, therefore, likely reason for the loan, and Ogabe did apparently buy a bicycle. All courts ruled that the debt was valid and must be paid" (Lawrence, 1957-240).

5.9.24 Peace Covenant- Bukusu Verses Iteso

The Iteso people are known for being warriors just like the Turkana of Kenya and the Karamojong of Uganda. Elder Samson Olubai, senior retired chief and a political leader (aged 89 at the time of the interview), recounts the characteristics of the Iteso and other communities and cites an event that led to the naming of Mumias town in western Kenya. According to Elder Olubai, there was a persistent war between the Wanga and Luo communities, with the latter led by Lwanda Magere and the former led by Shiundu. The two communities could not settle their differences. Olubai states that Shiundu finally settled in hiring Iteso warriors to help them fight the Magere team, which they successfully did. On their way home, Shiundu hosted the Iteso warriors. When they were eating and celebrating, a baby boy was born and was named Mumia of the Wanga for the remembrance of the relationship between the Iteso and the community of the Wanga people. The name Mumia came from the Swahili word *Mia* meaning a hundred. This name was not an official name, but a name describing the bravery of the Iteso while fighting the Luo. It is said that one *Etesot* warrior killed a hundred Luo, hence the name *mumia* meaning "of the hundred".

There was no elaborate covenant in the engagement to denote the responsibilities of either the Iteso or the Wanga, but they lived in peace. Long after the experience above and given that the

Iteso were also hunters and gatherers, they got into a long-standing animal conflict with the Bukusu community.

5.9.25. Community Covenants

The Iteso people did engage a lot in community covenants that were geared at achieving lasting peace. Some known community covenants between the Iteso and other communities include the peace covenant between the Iteso of Western Kenya and the Sabaot community of Mt. Elgon region. This covenant that was sealed by cutting a dog into two pieces was meant to indicate that there will never be a war between the two communities. Similar covenants are mentioned to have been entered in Soroti, hence leading to the meaning of the name Soroti from the word *Asorit* which literally means *anger.*

It is held that, at this point, the two communities agreed to end their anger against each other and live in peace that has lasted to date. This research will explore much about this covenant in comparison to similar covenants among the Hebrews. Just as the Hebrew, people had and still practice covenant relationships with their God as a religious covenant, the Iteso people had and still practice a covenant relationship with their Deities.

It is expected that this research will provide exposure to many other covenants that will be relevant to the whole research, for the benefit of the readers of this work (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1).

5.9.26. Religious Covenants

The Iteso people were religious in nature, though vaguely. They believed in God *Akuj* who controlled the universe. As Lawrence puts it, Edeke, the god of calamity was most revered because of his revengeful episodes. All calamities in the land were associated with the god Edeke. Because of this, the Iteso people made serious covenants with Edeke. These covenants between god Edeke and the Iteso people, required among other things, that offerings be offered on the altar *abila* that was constructed in every homestead (Lawrence1957:182). They also

practiced the superior/inferior covenant relationship in their region. The death of animals and the withering of crops would call for porridge or other means of appeasing God to be used. Plows may be blessed by putting the plow in front of an altar and throwing seeds on it (Lawrence, 1957:182) (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1).

5.9.27. Traditional Iteso Covenants and Marriage

5.9.27.0. Introduction:

This section discusses specific Iteso covenants related to marriage, where marriage among the Iteso attracts a list of steps towards its consummation. Some of these steps include youth maturity, significant indications, and observance of marriage stipulations.

5.9.27.1. Marriage Covenant preliminaries

The Iteso people embraced certain deliberate preliminaries that led to a marriage covenant. Some of these preliminaries included and were not limited to:

(I). Awareness. Marriage being what it is, was not and is not an extremely private affair though not meant for everyone. As earlier mentioned parents could on themselves and very privately take both selfish, and genuine intentions in desiring that one of their own ends up in creating a relationship from a particular family, for their children. It can be selfish because one parent can desire the wealth of another parent, even if he knows that his child is not well mannered to maintain a covenant relationship such as marriage.

This preliminary can lead to a covenant marriage if it is well approached. Many marriages among the Iteso young people took place through this preliminary.

(ii) The second most sacred preliminary was that the father went to the home of the family with the girl and lit a fire outside, before the owners came out from sleep. If the male owner of the house realized that indication, he went back to the room, and informed the wife that so and so has lit a fire outside in our compound. What do we tell him? Then the mother, if in favor of the intended relationship, tells the father, “tell him we will answer him. Let him go back in peace”.

But if the move is not favored by both, the family head will right away tell the visitor to put off his fire, for the request has not been approved. This preliminary can finally lead to a covenant relationship between two families. (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1)

5.9.27.2. Maturity

Marriage among the Iteso people was both a process and an act. An act in the sense that young people could spot a girl in the village, watch over her movements and way-lay her one evening and carry her to the boy's home, and marriage is done. Even in an act like that of way-laying, certain covenants would still be carried out, because marriage was a deity-interested institution, and that non-compliance to certain processes would lead to the divine reaction which always came with negative effects.

Much as other processes would continue, but marriage would have already been done by bringing in the girl. *Evanit* covenant was inevitable as a covenant of bonding to the new family was mandatory and would still be carried out even in a way-layed marriage. The next approach to marriage was through a process that involved parents' relationships. As discussed earlier, this approach did not give the covenanters' full evaluation time to each other, since parents would be the ones who did the preliminary preparation.

The marriage covenant process begins as soon as the boy demonstrates that he is of age, and that the parents have the same feelings that their son is ready for marriage. This is characterized by the second observable relationship by either of the two young people, two families having a boy on one side and the other one having a girl on the other side, making close and serious contact.

The boy on his own can take an interest in a girl and informs his parents or it can also be initiated by the parents of the boy having agreed with the parents of the girl. (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1)

5.9.27.3. Official Indications

When the first stage begins, the boy sends his close friend to the girls' home to make it known that there is an interest from this specific family to begin the process of a covenant relationship in the next home, aimed at marriage. The father then sends two of his friends in a bid to secure

consent for dowry negotiation. This is then followed by the boy's father, in the company of members of the *Ekek-(family)* that he comes from, going to enter an initial agreement. These two stages represent an elaborate introduction and a historical prologue part of the Hittite covenant process, because at this stage, the boy's father goes with his relatives to display their ability to own the young girl and maintain a relationship with the newly acquired community. A ceremony is significant in this occasion, which signifies the first entry into a covenant relationship. Drinking and eating is an indication of joy and acceptance of the whole idea of a relationship. This is all at a betrothal level, at which marriage is sealed (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1).

5.9.27.4. Marriage Stipulations

If at this point the boy impregnates the girl, then he bears the responsibility as the girl is not allowed to marry any other person, and if he refuses, he then pays a fine. If the girl gets pregnant through another third-party person, the father bears the fine. If death terminates the betrothal and he remains single, the parents of the departed girl return the dowry.

If the parents cannot return the dowry for the reasons like of inability, the father to the departed girl, may substitute the departed wife with another one of his daughters. This process is long, to ensure that the covenant does not give room for any reverse.

After all the above-mentioned procedures were certified as true indications of marriage readiness, then the last bit follows, whereby the girl is escorted by her friends, and spends in the boy's mother's house. The following morning, skin from a cow is spread at the door of the mother's house and two ladies bathe the girl who is made to sit on the skin.

A stick from a special tree called *eparas* is used to strike at the back of the girl with ghee smeared all over her body. While being struck by a piece of a stick, the two women pronounce blessings of productivity to the lady, after which she is escorted to her boyfriend's house where marriage is consummated. The ritual at the mother's door, is meant to clear any doubt in the new

woman to be, that she is fully accepted into the new home and with the blessings pronounced, she is fully integrated into the family. (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1)

5.9.27.5. Marriage Covenant Preparedness

Marriage covenant preparedness was key to the family of the boy. Wealth of animals to be paid as dowry was sought in advance, before such commitment was desired. If for any reason the boy and a girl chose to stay as wife and husband before parents were ready, a day to be called *asut* was prepared as a day of confession and dowry negotiation. Some of the preparedness included borrowing a cow from a clansman or a friend to be mentioned or be presented during the negotiation. This was a key preparedness that was required to facilitate the anticipated marriage covenant (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1).

5.9.28. Types of Marriage Covenants among the Iteso Community

Introduction: The Iteso people had definite marriage covenants that surrounded the Iteso community. These covenants protected and gave continuity to marriages. According to the respondents Appendix 2, 3, 4, Qn 1. Some of these covenants included and not limited to:

5.9.28.1. Akitani or Child Betrothal (Appendix 7 i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1)

This covenant was entered between two families with the intention and hope that the two children, boy and a girl, will be agreeable to the family's proposal to have them married.

In this kind of marriage where a family, particularly a father, can spot a girl in a family that he considers of good moral traits, enters into a betrothal with the parents of the young girl, to the extent of paying dowry, it is however considered that if at the end it doesn't work and the girl or boy marries elsewhere, then the paid dowry is returned.

This covenant begins its process quite early but finally all protocals will be observed. (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1)

5.9.28.2. Apuseru or Ekirumane/Inheritance

This is a covenant that is entered to facilitate a relationship among the Iteso people, in favor of the widow that has been left young, and the family is not ready to lose her because of her performance. This is a situation where one of the Ekek male members inherits a widow. The husband then, is only required to pay one bull *Lokakurmi* to the father of the widow and is allowed to inherit the widow. The bull is meant to seal the covenant. (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1)

5.9.28.3. Surrogate Marriage

The Iteso people valued relationships to the extent that, if a relationship was good, it could be continued through the substitution of another girl in the event of loss through death, and the addition of dowry to keep the marriage going on. The surrogate marriage took place when a wife died and the father was not able to pay back the dowry, he'd then give his other daughter as a substitute (*Akitutukin*). Appendix 2. Qn1

This kind of marriage among the Iteso also occurs when the first wife is barren. The husband pays two cows *Loidokokino* and no ceremony is approved on this one. Bride price among the Iteso is an integral bit of the marriage covenant. It is the link between continuity and breakage of marriage, in the sense that if marriage is broken, it is returned. (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1)

5.9.28.4. Dowry

Today among the Iteso people, the bride price is predetermined from 13 heads of cows to money and other traditional items. For example, the following items were very significant: - kerosene was estimated at twenty liters, salt one gallon, sugar one gallon, one headscarf, one heavy jacket, gumboots, and a walking stick. This was not the early cost of a bride. The lowering and raising of the bride's prize have always varied over time.

All the above-mentioned items were meant to appease the father for the good work he did, upto where the girl was at the time of marriage. It was believed that all these foodstuffs were to compensate for the food the father missed while on the hunt mission with the mother, and the covering was meant to bring warmth against the rain, cold, and mud during the mother's hunt out. All were part of the marriage covenant seal. The process of acquiring the bride price was done procedurally. (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1)

The family of the bride comes to the family of the boy, to ascertain and approve the existence of cows to be paid, and after this is confirmed, then a day will be set for the animals to be taken to the bride's family. It is only after this process has been sealed, that the marriage ceremony will be arranged on a specified day.

On the marriage day, beer, dance, and all sorts of joyful expressions will be set for the occasion. On this day, the relatives up to the boy's home escort the bride. As Laurence puts it, on the day the bride is escorted, two things will happen. One, those who will escort the girl will demand that they be given gifts like ornaments, clothes, chickens or goats before they release the girl to the hands of the boy.

The second one was that, after the girl has been released to the hands of the boy, the second resistance will come in. At this point, the girl will demand that she be given a special gift that she will accept, before she is touched by the boy. This resistance was deliberate just to create an impression to the boy, that it is not just an easy move and that she is not cheap as such, but that she is very important (Lawrence, 1959: 94). It was only after this stage in the processes that the bride was fully surrendered to the bridegroom. Other customs that were seriously observed among the Iteso that guarded other covenants included deaths, burials and memorial ceremonies.

Marriage among the Iteso people was only made official after the marriage covenant had been entered. Bride price was, and still is central to this covenant. The bride price played out both in

marriage and in the dissolution of marriage. Bride price was purely based on negotiation outcome, and any time the bride price was fixed; the indication was to deny the bride groom an opportunity to marry the bride. Payment by instalment, which is still practiced today, was meant to provide room for even the poor to be able to marry and secondly, it was meant to sustain a healthy relationship. Lawrence (1957:202) bride price in Uganda took a different turn when there was rinderpest outbreak that reduced the bride-price from 25-30 cows to one cow and thirty goats and even less.

As Lawrence (1957:202) discusses the price has kept on changing value to date. A newly married girl (*apese*) was paid for higher than a previously married woman (*akobo*). Among the Iteso as mentioned earlier, getting children at home without getting married officially did not reduce the value of a bride, but if she ever got married, then it could reduce her price.
Virginity did not count when it comes to bride price. It was also wrong and prosecutable for any person to exceed the legally and approved bride price i.e. if the bride-groom paid more to the father-in-law beyond the sealing, such bride-grooms were punished with a fine of 50 shillings then, and those who received excess were fined 150 shillings. If one of the persons mentioned above was either a responsible individual in the society say a chief or so, he/she paid a fine of 200 shillings. It also meant that one would pay within the minimum and the maximum limits approved, but not beyond (Lawrence, 1957:201) (Appendix 3 Qn.1).

5.9.28.5. Divorce & Covenants

Among the Iteso, divorces were not a common phenomenon but if it happened, then the bridegroom had to return the bride price to the parents of the bride. Under divorce and covenant relationships, it was made known in advance to the bridegroom, that in the event of marriage dissolution, the price was to be returned.

There were two points of power where divorce could be affected. The first one was through mutual consent before the council of elders. If the two agreed without indications of further

claims of dowry and other benefits that come with divorce, then the council of elders would sanction a divorce (Lawrence, 1957:212). The other center where marriage could be terminated was in court (Appendix 7 i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1). In another case recorded by Lawrence as (D. Cs Revision 32/51: k. Atosi vs M. Asiso), Abosi attempted to divorce his wife because she could not accept the Seventh-Day Adventist religion. She was a Roman Catholic. All courts refused to allow divorce on these grounds and in addition, ruled that if he refused to allow her to live with him, he must bear the cost of building a house for her elsewhere" (Lawrence, 1957, 203).

The case could not hold the test of religious liberty. Marriage was equally protected among the Iteso people, though with the legal arm and the strong arm of the council of elders. Among the early Iteso, as early as 1925 there were up to 27 legislations protecting divorce occurrences. Other cases that could attract a penalty as a result of the breaking of a relationship covenant were adultery and fornication which had 34 legislations and inheritances, wills and guardianship - which had 43 legislations.

5.10. Clan and Inter-clan Covenants Among the Iteso

5.10.0. Introduction: Bramwell Omakada referred to as the Iteso cultural teacher and a member of the Iteso council of elders in the county of North Teso (Kenya), explains some of the Iteso cultural practices that include:

5.10.1 Akivan:

This comes from the word *Akivan-van*. The word comes from the practice of removing the remaining pieces of a slaughtered chicken's feathers, by fire flames after plucking the clearly visible feathers. This act that is done to a chicken is here used in a tradition where newly married women are taken through a cleansing covenant meant to orient and initiate her into womanhood. *Ekivane* is the process through which *akivan* is done. Elder Omakada narrates that among the Iteso, cultural practices which expressed a covenant process that led to a covenant relationship, was the tradition of *akivan.* This tradition meant to transform a newly married woman in the

family into a new family, was meant to make her forget her former culture and adopt the husband's culture but through pain.

A newly married woman was confronted by young men close to the husband's age and was thoroughly caned by the young men using a specific cane from a particular tree called *Eparas.* Some of the virtues intended to be inculcated into the new woman, which can be associated with the ANE covenant elements were that; she must not be lazy, not be rude, not be mean, not be deliberate in mistakes (*Epali),* not to double deal or be immoral (*Akirosia*), not be disrespectful. It was considered that this culture graduated the woman into womanhood from girlhood. By this culture, the newly married woman could never think of divorce as it is easily done today. It was her opportunity to respond that she will observe the painfully entered agreement to the latter, which ended her plight that early morning. Appendix 7 (i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1)

5.10.2. Evasit

When a curse arising from covenant stipulations violation was realized among the Iteso people, certain processes were in place to cleanse the victim. One of the cleansing processes arising from violations of stipulations of the marriage covenant among the Iteso, is the *Ekivane* as explained above. The violation of this stipulation leads to a curse, leading to a cleansing process called *Evasit. Evasit* comes in as a process of cleansing a woman from the curse incurred. These curses that include diseases that cannot be treated like muscular atrophy (emaciation), etc. could now meet their cure in the tradition of *evasit.*

This culture practiced even today, is believed that it is as a result of a woman having violated some of the family taboos/stipulations outlined, during the *evanit* covenant making, including but not limited to eating foods forbidden to women, or foods cooked in a forbidden pot. Violation of this tradition results in curses whereby a woman ended up thinning up, emaciating, and reducing in size significantly despite the availability of food.

This phenomenon in a woman may also indicate that the woman did not fully bond to the new family culture during the *Akivan* initiation described above. In the Iteso marriage covenant relationships, this tradition bears significant consequences to the offending woman, just like the violators of the covenant stipulations among the Hittites and the Hebrew covenants in reference to the curses prescribed.

In this covenant under the procedure used to administer it, the lady accepted to observe all forbidden foods, and or use of un-authorized pots in cooking, and it was sealed with ritual of throwing cow dung or goat droppings removed from specific regions of the animal (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1).

5.10.3. Aramar/Akilot Akanin (Washing Hands)

Aramar or *Akilot akanin* is derived from the practice of washing hands to denote that it is over. *Akilot akanin* means washing hands, and *Aramar* from the word *akiram* means to beat the drum, or something that will produce a response tone. It comes with the meaning of it being over and over forever. It brings in the reason for reconciliation because it is over. All things are new, and life must begin afresh and continue. It is an Iteso cultural tradition referred to as *kumbukumbu* (Kiswahili) or a 'memorial'. This culture was occasioned by the realization, that there was a need to come together as a family, to re-evaluate the process through which the departed relative was handled during death and burial. In this tradition, apologies are presented to the offended, and appreciation is extended to the hard-working ones. It is also a day when one of the family members is assigned to take care of the family left by the departed one. This does not mean leviratic inheritance but meant to provide care and leadership to the left family. His property is also re-assigned or distributed to close relatives, his debts paid, and a bull is slaughtered (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1).

5.10.4. Ekutet/Exuming.

The word *ekutet* comes from the word *akikut* meaning to exhume or dig out somebody, e.g. of a dog or a person already buried. This is a tradition where the dead are exhumed and liberated from the pain of death. In this cultural tradition, a lot of references are directed to the dead.

The assumption is that the challenges perceived in the family like sickness, disorder, and such problems are caused by the one who died and feels disrespected by the living. In this cultural practice, the dead are exhumed, and the bones placed in shrub thickets within the family land, preferably not very far from home.

How then does this tradition become a covenant? Among the Iteso people, the dead are actually not dead, they live but in a different form. It is understood that the dead are alive and participate in an active life with conscious beings.

In this regard, any violation of the stipulations held with the living, are also held with the dead, and violating them attracts negative reactions from those who are dead but live in a different form. This is a covenant that is held by the living, that the dead shall be relieved of the grave burdens at some time, and any delays in doing so calls for such reactions.

When it is noticed that the dead are complaining, then a process is instituted, and the body is exhumed and kept among the living. This is one of the most tempting violations even to Christian believers among the Iteso people.

As explained by Omakada, even the most faithful Christians could be lured to engage in this practice as a means of appeasing the dead, should curses of diseases and misfortunes abound in the family. (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1)

5.10.5 Akisuk Imwatuk

The word *akisuk* comes from the Iteso traditional style of dance that includes jumping up and down. *Imwatuk* on the other side is a name given to twin-born children. The words would therefore mean the celebration that comes with the type of dance to celebrate the twins, but with the motive of finding peace with the spirits of the dead.

When twins are born to a family among the Iteso people, it is considered a bad omen to the family, and a cleansing ritual must be conducted. When an occurrence is considered a bad omen among the Iteso people, it means that the occurrence is offensive to the gods. It is also important to keep in mind, that gods can only be offended by violations of established rules of life.

When this happens, gods react negatively, bringing social disorders and diseases. The Iteso people then at this point organize a procedure to reverse the reaction through sacrifices. This tradition presents a cultural covenant of relationships with the dead who are believed to control the living. (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1)

5.10. 6. Ekitai (Inter-clan)

The word *ekitai* comes from the Iteso practice of working together. If for one reason a community member did not know that the next family was hosting *ekitai*, the neighbors would call on the way saying *mutaa, kobu kaato ekitai* (*come let us go to the unity work*) and such a call was never resisted.

This cultural practice was highly celebrated and well agreed upon among the Iteso and is still observed to date. It was motivated by some factors. First, it was a source of great fellowship among the neighbors and brought the kind of unity the society adored most. Unity is a societal component that binds the society together.

Among the Iteso, this phenomenon is a product of peace with gods. They believed that, even to accept the call was as a result of obeying the Iteso gods. The opposite was also considered as disobeying gods. Everyone responded to this call lest famine strike your home and you lack community support. Secondly, it brought responsibility such that everyone considered food and food crops as belonging to all of them and one would not pass by, seeing animals or thieves destroying food or food crops.

During plowing, planting, weeding and even harvesting, the community came together to work together, eat and drink together and enjoy the joy of fellowship as agreed or communally covenanted.

This covenant kept the covenant bound together. Those who did not attend to this work program did not only enjoy the benefits that came with it but would also be punished by not attending to his work when his turn came. This kind of relationship was highly honored by everybody. Appendix 7 (i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1)

5.10.7. Aporiaun Ikoku

This tradition is believed to have come all the way from the time when Moses was picked by Pharaoh's daughter and made the son of Pharaoh. (Exodus 2:1-10) The word *Aporiaun* means picking and bringing home something and particularly somebody, not originally yours or belonging to your family. When a family experienced the continued loss of children through death, the next pregnancy was closely monitored, with the view that the mother or the father was responsible for the deaths through some family curses, and that the family would end up without a child. An agreement is then entered between two mothers, to help this woman who seems to have offended gods at some point in her life, to get a child.

At the point of delivery, the newborn child was taken to the road, and put by the roadside to be picked up by a different lady, who will take the baby to her home. At some point, the baby will be returned to the mother to be brought up by the mother on behalf of the one who picked the child.

This agreement was significant in the sense that the mother raised her own child on behalf of the one who picked the child. Such children are once called Etyang-male/Atyang-female. (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1)

5.10.8. Akipudun-Ikoku

Akipudun means to show the child out for the first time since birth. This term is only used when referring to getting something out of the house, even if it is about food for the visitors. In this particular scenario, the newborn child is the subject. *Ikoku* (child) means child. It is the Iteso traditional and customary practice where a newborn baby was officially brought out for people to see and given a name, shaved for the first time and the mother now allowed to touch and allowed to handle house utensils. All these traditions aimed at keeping the society more cohesive, were the conditions set forth to protect the community. Violations of these norms were treated as violation of clan covenants in themselves, with all elements of a covenant available.

There were always introductions in these cultural events, the leaders of these events gave historical backgrounds to the audience before the practice begun, there were stipulations to be strictly observed with painful consequences to the violators, there were curses and blessings to all these occurrences, there were blessings pronounced, and there were witnesses in all occurrences. Lawrence describes the "Iteso and culture", and sites some examples that can be used in this study to analyze the cultural activities among the Iteso, as marriage among the Iteso people was one of the most observed avenues of covenant making. They embraced polygamy in a mild way, though women were not allowed to have more than one husband.

As soon as the boy spotted a girl, it was necessary to seek parental consent. The boy sought consent from the father when he felt that his time to marry had come, and later, the girl equally sought for consent from the parents when considering marriage with a boy. Whenever a boy decided to marry, it was clear that some norms were to be observed. Some of these prohibitions included the following: no one was allowed to marry within his or her *Ekek/clan* up to the 3rd and 4th generation. This requirement was not a condition to be demanded by the first wife, whenever the husband wanted to marry a second wife. Marrying one's father's wife as long as she is not one's own mother was not prohibited. This type of relationship is still entered in a covenant manner even to date. It will be appreciated that among the Iteso communities, marriage was one

of the most sacred rites that is entered through covenants both traditionally and religiously. In this covenant, two families with no blood relationship can begin a relationship that will end in the creation of a clan, and a genealogy (Appendix 7: i Qn 1, ii Qn 1, iii Qn 1, iv Qn 1).

5.11. Iteso Covenant Symbols

5.11.0. Introduction

The Iteso people were very symbolic in their practical agreements. Some of the symbols represented great thoughts in terms of relationships, while some stood as reminders of the agreement entered. An example of a symbol that represented thoughts includes *Ekosilet* (*an animal hair*), which was a grass type that carried the wisdom, knowledge of the real marriage experience. It contained the message to all young people that to complete the whole journey of marriage needs wisdom and real knowledge of marriage dynamics. Other such covenant symbols include:

Atenus/Drum- Used in communication in different styles to mean specific messages e.g. *Imwatuk*-Twin children celebration. *Aluti* - like a drum, but goes far and is mostly used in war or celebrations. *Akwara*-war weapon. When a man dies, one of the family's selected persons to inherit a widow would put a spear at the door of the late to show that the house is already inherited. *Akim, Apuru*- (Fire and smoke). The fire was lit to mourn a departed member of the family, *Amaran ketom*-elephants rib used in marriage covenants, *Eparas* and *Ekimeng*-types of trees used in marriage covenants as a symbol of a blessing, *Emukule*-blessing in marriage covenant e.g. *Evasit*, blood was expected on it (*emukule*/skin) the first morning of the marriage covenant to demonstrate virginity. *Aking'ol*- a cooking stick was used to send a message of feeding the family. It was also given to a newly married woman when going to her new home to use as a counter medicine for sickness, *Ekisu*-special tool used to grind g-nuts for covenant celebrations, *Akitukeare*- a pot with two openings used in the covenant celebrations of twin children to drink busaa/alcohol *Ekisala* (A special four or three-legged stool) sat on by an elder when giving special instructions. This stool is not used by unauthorized people.

5.11.1. Local brew/busaa- This staff also called *ebusaa* or *busaa* was a common drink in all traditional functions including covenant processes. Neighbors enjoyed inviting each other for this drink every evening, as a sign of unity and recognition. Almost all covenant processes culminated in a generous drink of *busaa*. *Busaa* was an alcohol brew used in many covenants including appeasing the ancestors. *Emuria*/special crawling Grass- was a symbol of marriage to call for the productivity of the new family.

5.11.2. Ejamu/(Skin)

Marriage purity was seriously considered, for the respect the bride earned during marriage ceremonies among the Iteso people. When the bride got to her own house of marriage matrimony the first time, a well-done skin from a cow was given to her for use the first night during their marriage consummation. The skin selected was one done to suit the interest of the matrons. The purpose was to confirm if the bride was a virgin before marriage. The couple would be given the skin to use for the night, and if blood was found on it in the morning, then the lady was considered a virgin. During the marriage covenants, a skin bore a testimony to the faithfulness of the girl and that earned her more respect in the family. When the inheritance covenant was carried on, a skin- was also used as a chair during a ceremony of inheritance, a sign of a good herdsman.

5.11.3. Akojoo *(*Animal Bones) – During the covenant of *akivan,* a bone was very significant to the marriage strength of that family. During the Akigwan covenant tradition where the newly married girl is initiated into the family, the Elephant rib is used as explained above, as a sign of stability in the family. As a clan woman now belonging to *Ekek*, the young woman is asked to carry a boy child on her back, and an Elephant rib is put around the back and the blessings are pronounced.

This rib was also put in between her thighs as one way of marriage right, accompanied by vows that would make sure that she will never leave that home for another home. “If you leave here,

you will be white forever, you will count husbands, you will be scratching your body forever", It was an elephant rib that was smeared with oil, put between thighs then take the vows. Elephant ribs were used in swearing candidates into the new status and pronouncing blessings during initiation ceremonies. APPENDIX 5. Qn.10

5.11.4. Drum - Moments of joy and jubilation were many among the Iteso people. All ceremonies, covenant processes, etc. were all accompanied by dance and exciting moments. As Lowrance indicates, The Iteso people were home to traditional instruments for music. Lawrence (1957:153-171).

All Iteso traditional covenants were never devoid of dances and celebratory activities. Drums were key objects of celebrations. Different types were employed to send different signals such as the climax of the dance and the ending note of the song. All these instruments were used in reference to the Ancestors who joined and appreciated the dance. (APPENDIX 5. Qn 10)

5.11.5. Horn - These were significant instruments used in different functions. They were used for communication and playing music. Animal horns were mostly used to draw community attention to a particular purpose or indicator. Horns could be blown to indicate war, call for a celebration, and even to a particular communal activity. All these functions drawn down through a horn signal were covenantal in nature, because failure to respond to the call, meant violation of the agreed course of responsibility and could attract reprimand.

5.11.6. A spear - When a spear is placed outside the door, it showed that that house had a man. No one would come requesting to inherit the lady of that home. 5.15.6. A spear being a symbol of war and a weapon at the same time, created an impression that the house to which it was impaled was well secured, needing no other man and that any interference would be strongly defended. (Appendix 8: vi, 7 (i)Qn 10, (ii) Qn 10, (iii) Qn 10, (iv) Qn 10)

5.11.7. Ekimeng' (tree): The Iteso people had trees that served different purposes. Some of them were cursing trees and some of them were blessing trees. Those trees that were meant to be curse were not common trees and could be known to few people.

When a function was to take place, those trees that were used to bless people would be taken to accompany the occassion. *Ekimeng'* branch of a tree was highly regarded for the functions such as those that needed blessings. This branch of a tree was a sign of blessings. When going to take dowry to the in-laws in particular, the animals were escorted and whipped using this branch of a tree. Animals moved to in-laws as dowry and needed goodwill and blessings to wherever destination they would end up, were blessed by this branch of a tree.

Since dowry was always paid, one proceeded to pay the dowry of a family member whose dowry had not been paid, upon receiving this newly brought-in dowry. For this to happen without some of them dying so soon, *Ekimeng* was the stick believed to be the source of blessings for the animals. At all times, this branch of a tree was viewed as ordained for blessings on any occasion, as the trees were also known to carry curses during traditional covenant processes.
When the recipients of the animals did not see this branch of a stick in the hands of those escorting the cows, they knew that not all was in goodwill. (Appendix 8: vi, 7 (i)Qn 10, (ii) Qn 10, (iii) Qn 10, (iv) Qn 10)

5.11.8. Animal skin was used for sitting and also showed one is a farmer. This was a very significant symbol among the Iteso people. During the Akivan covenant, a newly married woman sat on the animal skin in the process of blessing pronouncements. Traditional headscarves were made of skins such as *echimwa* skin which is a wild beast caught and slaughtered. Animal skins as a decoration and a show of might also covered shields. When a covenant was conducted, the choice of the animal to which the skin was removed symbolized the use of the power found in the strength of that animal. (Appendix 8: vi, 7 (i)Qn 10, (ii) Qn 10, (iii) Qn 10, (iv) Qn 10)

5.11.9. Brown Ugali – The traditional meal for the Iteso people was brown *Ugali* and green vegetables. Much as they kept cows and other animals, *Ugali* was key to them. This was made of millet flour, mixed with dried cassava roots and sometimes with sorghum. Cowpeas (*eboo eng'esing'es*) were used in a newborn that was taken out for the first time. The significance was that there used to be people considered to be having bad eyes. Eyes that are bewitching to the child. If for any reason, one of those coming to the ceremony had such eyes, upon eating the vegetable called *eboo* or *engesinges* they would be stripped of their powers to harm the child.
This was a symbol of divine presence in the meeting, to defend the child. (Appendix 8: vi, 7 (i)Qn 10, (ii) Qn 10, (iii) Qn 10, (iv) Qn 10)

5.11.10. Echodit **-** (rod) When a wife got married into a family, a long branch of a tree from the *ekimeng'* tree was put across the road next to the home. This tree, known for blessing certain functions as explained above, was also used to bless the new coming woman. She was expected to cross or jump over the branch as she entered the home and receive all the family blessings. This very function represented another negative function, that if this wife wanted to run away, that is when curses fell on her. It was meant to stop her from going back/divorcing. It is put across the road for her to jump over when entering, and not allowed to go back because the branch of the tree is not there anymore for her to walk out with.

The presence of the branch on the road or during the dowry payment was a symbol of blessings and good will, while its absence was a symbol of a curse and lack of good will from those conducting the function. (Appendix 8: vi, 7 (i)Qn 10, (ii) Qn 10, (iii) Qn 10, (iv) Qn 10)

5.11.11. Ekosilet **(animal hair)**– It's a type of grass that was tied on her legs to speak strength over her marriage. This grass is known for its resilience to drought and stability on the ground. The Iteso people understood marriage to be a very challenging experience that need resilience on the part of the wife. To bring up children was largely the responsibility of women, in terms of looking for food during starvation, seasons and when men have gone to war.

When this grass is tied to the leg of a newly married woman, the message was so clear that she has a responsibility to stand firm. Words of blessings were pronounced in reference to the strength of the grass, that she will not break the covenant of marriage because of a lack of resilience. (Appendix 8: vi, 7 (i)Qn 10, (ii) Qn 10, (iii) Qn 10, (iv) Qn 10)

5.11.12. **Emuria** ***(climbing grass)*** **–** Much as the Iteso people did not devorce a woman for the rasons of childlessness; the Iteso people wished their families numerical growths. They demonstrated their desire to have a growing family and a strong one through a symbolic object called *Emuria*. This was demonstrated through the climbing grass, which is tough to cut and grows steadly. This grass was cut and tied to the lady's fingers, to show the family's growth and strength expected.

The woman would be allowed to carry a boy on her shoulders, to show how important the baby was to the community. This grass carries the Iteso slogan of multiplication in terms of population to date. The Iteso greetings of *Emuria-koliae*, used today among the Iteso people as greetings, originate from this belief that *Emuria* crawls as it grows undisturbed by any external forces, so should the children of this newly married wife to the family. (Appendix 8: vi, 7 (i)Qn 10, (ii) Qn 10, (iii) Qn 10, (iv) Qn 10)

5.11.13. A broom – A broom was a very emotional emblame in marriage covenants among the Iteso peole. It presented a message that as she has come, one day she will leave but through death. When it comes that she leaves through death, her people will not have the chance to be as free as they used to be again in that home, by taking the same broom back home.
Coming with it signified that she has left their home clean, and nothing has remained that will take her back there, when she is alive in terms of a divorce. Among the Iteso people, and as explained earlier, upon the death of the wife in the home, one cow would be provided to be eaten by the people of the deceased, as an indication that their relationship with the people of that family through their sister or daughter, is gone.

The next step that followed was to get back the broom that was brought during the marriage ceremony, back to the people of the deceased. The broom signified her presence from their home, and its withdrawal signified the end of the relationship through her.

As a sign of initiation to marriage life, the lady would use the broom to sweep her house the following morning, showing she was no longer a girl. She has swept all her youth away. It would also be important to emphasize that if by bad lack, the lady died, some of the items returned back to the home of the deceased, is a broom declaring that all is over in terms of the marriage covenant relationship. (Appendix 8 vi, 7 (i)Qn 10, (ii) Qn 10, (iii) Qn 10, (iv) Qn 10)

5.11.14. Calabash – The joy of a family among the Iteso people, lay totally on the virtues of a wife brought to that home through marriage. If the wife was mean, one who frowns on people, visitors did not come to that home. So, when the gods who visited homes through the ceremonies of visitors who visited, starved, provoking their anger.

One of the most serious stipulations that came with the wrath of gods was that of welcoming visitors who were majorly the clansmen. The most basic welcoming item of any Iteso woman, that she cannot say is missing in the house was and still is water. For this reason, a calabash was presented to the newly married wife by her parents to take to her new home. In every home, it was used used for fetching water.

Feeding the clan was a responsibility of a wife at home. To do that demonstrated total acceptance of the people one is married to, and that she will give water to the people of this clan ungrudgingly should they visit, and yet there is totally nothing to share as a meal.

Water should not miss. If this girl died for any reason, all these items would be returned back to their home, broom, calabash etc. (Appendix 8 vi, 7 (i)Qn 10, (ii) Qn 10, (iii) Qn 10, (iv) Qn 10)

5.11.15. Akilong (bathing) **-** Marriage among the Iteso people had the largest number of covenant symbols. This was so because of the importance of the institution called marriage. The Iteso people also recognized that people were products of the routines they were born into, called culture. This element called culture affected a person's behavioral character, and upon joining the two young people together, some of these routines needed to be neutralized through such new covenants.

The covenant of bathing gave the new wife a new name, and a new look in the village. This name was given depending on what character she portrayed after the ceremonies, and the blessings having been pronounced to the newly married wife. Bathing was a symbol of being born again and a new name acquired. (Appendix 8: vi, 7 (i)Qn 10, (ii) Qn 10, (iii) Qn 10, (iv) Qn 10)

5.11.16. Akigwan Ceremony – During this ceremony, the lady would be covered with a leso/bedsheet as explained above. When she died, all these things would be collected and taken back to her parent's home. They would also demand a cow, and after this, their relationship was considered dissolved because their own was gone.

If for any reason the man had children outside of official marriage, or the girl had children, then animal feces was used for uniting kids outside wedlock with the ones born at home at this time. *Busaa* /alcohol was also poured on the ground to appease the ancestors. During this ceremony, a siphon is used in taking the local brew, and is not shared unless with a spouse. A cock was also symbolic of the family owner, whose voice was the only one recognized at home at this time forward. The local brew served as a catalyst between processes of the covenant entered (Appendix 8: vi, 7 (i)Qn 10, (ii) Qn 10, (iii) Qn 10, (iv) Qn 10).

5.11.17. Echadut (leadership road). Every community recognizes the existence of power invested in certain individuals in every society. Power, as most of them have different symbols,

the Iteso people had their symbol of power. This was seen as a significant indication of power granted to an individual in a clan or a community. Omakada (Dec 2021) argues that the significance of this symbol could not be ignored by any member of the community, governed by the leader. The traditional power among the Iteso people, was hidden in the shadow of gods. Echadut is power but manifested in different forms as shown below. (Appendix 8: vi, 7 (i)Qn 10, (ii) Qn 10, (iii) Qn 10, (iv) Qn 10)

5.11.18. Ebela/Egaat **-** When leaders are chosen among the Iteso people, the official rode of power given to them is from a tree called *Eparas.* His tree that was also used in disciplining the erring onesand children, was a natural tree that grows in the field. Its bark was used to tie things as robes are used to bind things. It was a flexible branch of a tree that was occassionally used in making traditional gates, which would be smeared even to make traditional doors.

This tree acts as a symbol of unity that would be advanced by the leader. It is a representation of the office they hold and is given after the oath of office. This oath indicates that the leader would receive respect from the subjects, as the subjects expect integrity and true service. This process forms the covenant of leadership between the people and the leader. It would be remembered that gods, in the form of ancestors are a part of the process, and any violation of the covenant codes would be highly reprimanded. (Appendix 8: vi, 7 (i)Qn 10, (ii) Qn 10, (iii) Qn 10, (iv) Qn 10)

5.11.19. Ekwasiet (Animal Tail) **-** Made from the bull's tail and done well to be waved when pronouncing a blessing to an individual. When divorce is to be approved among the Iteso people, symbols dominated the process. A woman was made to seat at the center of the house, made to carry symbolic items on the head that included a cooking stick (*aking'ol*). She was made to go out backward, symbolizing that she cannot come back to that home for marriage.

Another symbolic event among the Iteso people, included one whereby the brothers of the lady married, would visit her where she is married. This visit called *asut*, was well received by the

family where the lady is married. This visit symbolized that the lady was protected from any bodily harm by her husband or any family member. (Appendix 8: vi, 7 (i)Qn 10, (ii) Qn 10, (iii) Qn 10, (iv) Qn 10)

5.12. 0. Benefits Brought About by the Practice of *Aitutuket* in Relationships

Introduction:

As earlier discussed, the traditional Iteso people had their culture impeded and tied to the traditional covenants that made a difference between them and the neighboring communities. The strict adherence to the traditional covenant life, separated them from other communities. Like the Jews living in Palestine and practicing their traditional livelihood, the Iteso maintained a simple governance that led to their unique lifestyle. This sign could be seen in the Iteso Society as explained in the following submissions: (Appendix 8vii, 7 IQn 6, ii Qn 6, iii Qn 6, iv Qn 6)

5.12.1 Akimorikina (Unity)

A *kimorikina;* was a call to unity that characterized the Iteso people. Akimorikina was needed in many instances, including during community work, times of war, times of celebrations and mourning, individual needs, and many other avenues for which unity was required. The practice of covenant relationship was indispensable among the Iteso people, owing to their social fabric entailing working together in every aspect of the society.

To achieve this level of unity required some structures to be found in a covenant arrangement. Some of the factors that contributed to this achievement can be easily traced in the traditional covenant stipulations, oaths, curses, and the promises of hope in prosperous life to those who observed the covenant practice. This achievement explains the spirit that influenced their movement from one point to the other without losing members. Disobeying the established leadership from the nuclear family head of *ekek* or the head of the Clan *ekitegere*, would mean not only punishment by the visible leadership, but also by the unseen powers of the dead. It led

to the obedience that could be rare in modern Iteso society and human society. (Appendix 8vii, 7 IQn 6, ii Qn 6, iii Qn 6, iv Qn 6)

5.12.2 Ayongara (Respect):

The biggest challenge of society today both to the Iteso and humanity at large, is the loss of respect that has led to covenant infidelity. The biblical teaching on 'love your neighbor as you love yourself' is fundamental to covenant relationship, (Math 22:39), in the sense that love emits respect, and respect spares infidelity to a fellow person. Achieving maximum respect for one another requires some guidelines provided for in the covenant structure.

Respect was an automatic product of covenant living, because its opposite was not only painfully disapproved by the visible people, but more painful by the offended gods. Among the Iteso age sets, respect was observed from the young to the old.

A child in a seated position while an elderly stood, walking on the road with an elderly person carrying luggage while the young did not assist, shouting about where the elderly were, and even washing hands at mealsbefore the elderly washed, was not only offensive to the living, but more so to the dead who were perceived as witnesses and supervisors to all covenants (Appendix 8vii, 7 IQn 6, ii Qn 6, iii Qn 6, iv Qn 6).

5.12.3. Victory in war: The Iteso people were traditionally warriors, and confronted enemies without fear. Going to war was perceived as a sign of possessing manly power and the approval by the gods of war. Several agreements were to be entered with strict adherence. *Eyapo loka ejie* (war swearing/covenant) was one such covenant entered between the warriors and the clan elder in the presence of the community, clans' men, and the villagers who are the beneficiaries of the war's success.

This very important and risky venture required high discipline that could only be achieved through a covenant relationship. Covenant relationship comes with obeying, which is a key component in military science. Victory in war realized by the Iteso people must have been

associated with the order, discipline obedience, and loyalty that come in the package of a covenant relationship.

This is not only realized in a military setting, but even in a family setting. The Iteso somehow practiced polygamy, this brought about large families that brought about social dynamics and thus needed such structures as covenant relationships to manage them (Appendix 8: vii, 7 IQn 6, ii Qn 6, iii Qn 6, iv Qn 6).

5.12.4. Political Stability – Political stability is what has misplaced many countries, and this cannot be dissociated with infidelity in covenant relationships as defined and explained in this work. Feelings of shortchanges, agreement insecurity, and effects of evil thoughts are continually responsible for the current state of affairs in the world. It is becoming apparent that practicing honest covenant relationships is an impossible thought in any organization.

A practice that was easy and straight today requires technology to manage. Closed Circuti Television Cameras (CCTVs) are mounted everywhere to monitor fidelity, but the more it achieves the worse for society. The political world today is disgruntled and confused because of departing from the path of fidelity, which means nothing but covenant relationship.

The Iteso people did not embrace much political bickering as seen in today's political arenas since most positions were held by the elderly and fell almost automatically at an age bracket. This pattern being influenced by the covenant orders, did not entertain much competition from the less-aged people. It was easy to appoint a leader or a competitor because of the age limitation covenants played. Due to this approach to political activities, covenant elements did great to influence the direction of politics in the community (Appendix 8vii, 7 IQn 6, ii Qn 6, iii Qn 6, iv Qn 6).

5.12.5. Economic Stability: Traditional Iteso covenants did a great influence on the growth of the Iteso economy. The covenant of community work (*ekitai)* played a big role in food

production. It led to community fellowships that enhanced healthy relationships. Covenant relationships among the Iteso people brought wisdom in the way of addressing issues, and this led to sobriety that culminated in wealth creation. It brought respect and peace to the community, and a sense of responsibility. A respondent testified and said that:

> "The good thing that I found when marrying is that I spoke to my wife and followed all the procedures required which has led me to a happy life because I followed all procedures. I got to know that there is a meaning if you have been given the land you cannot tamper with the boundary. Whatever has been given to you, don't extend. If you want to add with your own means, it is up to you". (AGI.R1-4). Other respondents said: "The good thing I saw in the covenant relationship was that it helped me see a good girl. It helps people fulfill promises 2. Helps people respect the law, Love, work hard, and leads to wealth, No ukora/trickery. It brings unity among people and helps in solving problems. Helps people to take responsibility. It brings togetherness in the community and Respect. During tough times, people come together and talk about it and solve the problem. Being respectful to other people's flock gives trust. Family respect and respect to the husband as the head of the family was upheld. Removes aggression against each other's property e.g. cows etc. The clan's stipulations do not allow for such unity of purpose in the family. It has promoted peace. Children will respect the elders." Ending relatives' intermarriage would reduce the rate of curses in the community. Dowry payment brings peace and blessings to the family shows us the importance of staying in harmony. It helps the bachelors in the community to get a wife through inheritance or other arrangements. It reduces the rate of calamities in the community. It generally promotes peace as compared to the current Generations, where there's no respect for leaders." Appendix. (AGI-4R1-4).

The idea of covenant economy being the backbone of the Jewish economy and reflected among the Iteso people, is a sure way of destroying poverty, since everyone will be found enhancing economic production in one way or the other. (Appendix 8: vii, 7 IQn 6, ii Qn 6, iii Qn 6, iv Qn 6)

***5.12.6. Living in Peace*:** Peace was the underpinning objective of the covenant relationship, aimed at building a future generation that is peaceful and building the Iteso unity. Cases and arrests, which destroy the community, were minimal. One would see the benefit of staying within a covenant fence, as he enjoys the assurance of his property security like boundaries untouched. To bring more blessings to all and in the community were the joy of staying within the limits of covenant relationships. It was a good way of providing advice to the community. (Appendix 8: vii, 7 IQn 6, ii Qn 6, iii Qn 6, iv Qn 6)

***5.12.7. Marriage Institutional Stability*:** Respect in a marriage institution was significant in the Iteso covenant institutions. In marriage, the objective was that security for the newly married woman was achieved. This would help the family be able to create the next generation. It was meant to protect the integrity of the family and the Iteso families. Togetherness was key. Strengthened the relationship between the two parties. (Appendix 8: vii, 7 IQn 6, ii Qn 6, iii Qn 6, iv Qn 6)

***5.12.8. Promote the Iteso Culture*.** The Iteso people are strong observers of their cultural values, and covenant practices are some of their cultural values. Practicing covenant relationships in many different areas of life both in a structured and non-structured way carried the Iteso traditions from generation to generation. Much as it faces technical challenges that present these traditions as outdated, a covenant relationship is still a coveted practice among the Iteso people. The Iteso people of Amukura presented a continued covenant relationship, embedded within the modern civilization that has moved them forward without regrets. The Iteso culture still carries with it respect for the elderly, use of *busaa* in family and clan functions, community labor for the production of food, etc. and they have not found themselves irrelevant to the current civilization (Appendix 8: vii, 7 IQn 6, ii Qn 6, iii Qn 6, iv Qn 6).

***5.12.9. Leadership Integrity*:** The Iteso people cherished leadership integrity within their society. Leaders who did not portray leadership integrity were despised and looked down upon by the

electorate. That explains the reason why when leadership opportunities arose, a meeting was called to make a leadership covenant. In a meeting where approval was made to approve one candidate, issues of integrity were seriously considered. One would not be allowed to become a leader when his parents were involved in witchcraft, meaning that a leader was supposed to come from a clean lineage. (Appendix 2, 3, 4, 5. Qn 1)

The Iteso people still believe that the integrity that comes out of any leader is a product of a covenant relationship and not a purely legal framework. Without the fear of God, to them, integrity is null and void. While this is true that the fear of God leads to perfect integrity, balancing between true religious covenant relationships in the ambitious society today that fights faith and practice from all directions.

The most interesting part of the whole affair is that humanity appears to fear gods more than the True God, who created these very gods. The Iteso for example would rather choose to fear their gods through their ancestors, the dead perceived to be living than God. To make covenant relationships relevant, would then mean that the work of religion has to be enhaced since humanity tends to obey more when under the fear of a deity. (Appendix 8: vii, 7 IQn 6, ii Qn 6, iii Qn 6, iv Qn 6)

5.13. Covenant Relationship Challenges

5.13.0 Introduction

Amidst the benefits that came with the covenants, there are indications that covenants came with some disadvantages. Some of these disadvantages included (i) Forced relationships. It is apparent that many marriages were not a product of a positive relationship between the two young people contemplating marriage. It can as well be summarized that, all marriages conducted before independence in Kenya were forced marriages. Most of the victims of this forced marriage were girls who could be married through a relationship established by parents or eloped by an organized gang of young people.

Covenants led to forced marriages that led to no love in that marriage, since those who contemplated marriage did not participate in the choices of whom they wanted to marry. (Appendix 8: viii, 7 (i) Qn7 (ii) Qn (iii) Qn 7 (iv) Qn7). Good as it is, the Iteso people found that this approach to social relationships denied individuals participation in social meetings, because of the nature of their behavior in the sense of too many laws and punitive measures e.g., lustful members of the society received very punitive penalties. Those who married relatives attracted very unfortunate families by giving birth to defected children etc. The practice also led to forced marriages that led to no love in that marriage, since some marriages were family-to-family and not a boy to girl relationships. "It led to punitive life of no permission to act as you wish, but at the wishes of the covenant".

2. Leads to excess carefulness in whatever you do, probably denying one the freedom of thinking. 3. Time-wasting following procedures instead of just going straight to what you want. Challenges of culture integration because of rigidity to one's traditions. If one went against the covenant, you would give birth to abnormal children, hence living at the mercies of the covenant and fear. Getting married to a lady or a guy was not your choice.

It limited one from doing some of the things that you thought of in person like time wasting and cultural differences. It led to poor relationships and negligence to the covenant breaker. Judgments were viewed against the offender alone, hence an expression of biasness. Covenants favored only those who adhered to them. Those who failed in upholding the standards for any natural reasons were not easily understood. One was forced to marry a woman whom he didn't want. In Leadership, one would be told to step down for the other, due to age considerations. It brought curses to an individual or the community at large. (Appendix 8: viii, 7 (i) Qn7 (ii) Qn (iii) Qn 7 (iv) Qn7)

5.13.1. Aitutuket Offenders

Being what covenants brought into the livelihood of the Iteso people, covenants became the most feared practice that received very punitive punishments among the Iteso people. The offenders of *Aitutuket* suffered significant losses including loss of life through death. The offenders would be brought before the clan for questioning and be warned not to repeat the mistakes. If she/he repeats, then curses would befall him/her.

This curse would include death, banishment, physical pain, and many other sorts of punishments. Punishments however, depended on the gravity of the offense and the type of the covenant. Depending on the gravity of the offense, such people were taken before the clan chairperson and not to the civil powers, and if convicted, such were banished from their homes to other villages. If convicted, and if he knew that the offense is true, the offender had a chance to apologize and ask for forgiveness and be forgiven.

Before reaching the leaders of the clan, the father pronounced a curse by washing his hands saying, 'Because you have refused to listen to me, the world will now teach you. If you repeated the same mistake, the father would give two people and the leaders would give two people to beat him saying, 'Because you refused to listen to my advice, let the outsiders deal with you'.

Immorality: When one was caught with someone's wife, the individual would be beaten up. After which, the family of the cheating man and the owners of the wife would meet and agree. The man would be fined with one bull a cock and one ram. If you refused to pay, trouble would follow you. If the woman ran away, she would end up being a prostitute. If a man is in the house, he would put a spear outside the house as a sign of his presence. That meant no other man would go to that house. If one was caught with another man's wife, his chances of survival were minimum. When the husband of that woman dies, the cheating guy would not be allowed to view the body and if he did, he would die within a year. Someone's wife was a bad poison." In some cases, if a man was impotent (*Ekolip*) and the community confirms it, the woman would be

secretly advised to look for an option within the family, so that if she got kids, they would resemble the family members. The impotent man in some areas used to come home shouting while bragging in his statements. This was mainly done to notify any man in the house to leave, the owner is almost home (Appendix 7: (i) Qn4 (ii) Qn4 (iii) Qn 4 (iv) Qn4).

***5.13.2. Violence*:** In a situation where a boy mishandled a woman and the lady leaves, he would be made to meet the elders early in the morning to explain why the lady left. In a marriage setup, the couple would be brought before the elders and a small uniting ceremony would be prepared for the clansmen. One would be fined if he/she goes against the covenant. He was even fined to give out money. If one refused, he would go through a dark moment. This experience came with demands of policy implementation that are usually not easy and may lead to resistance among the youth.

It is a common phenomenon that if a human being is subjected to high pressure, tendencies of violence become the outcome. Implementing the discipline would at most lead to enmity and lasting hatred. Much as this was not reported as what resulted from implementing covenant relationship disciplines, it has met resistance in the mix of modern civilization and demands for human rights and demonstrations (Appendix 7 (i) Qn4 (ii) Qn4 (iii) Qn 4 (iv) Qn4).

5.13.3. Witchcraft. Offenses such as witchcraft, adultery and such levels of offensive wrongdoings were punished by banishment. This required the offender to leave his/her home of origin and move to far places. This punishment much as it kept society at minimal levels of similar offenses, also frustrated the innocent like children and wives, who did not participate in the offense. The chasing of a woman depended on the clan type.

If a man wanted to chase his wife for similar offenses, it was not on him to do it at will, but the clan had to confirm if the offense was worth the discipline. A woman was a clan's property, hence certain procedures for handling the matter had to be followed (Appendix 7: (i) Qn4 (ii) Qn4 (iii) Qn 4 (iv) Qn4).

***5.13.4 Early Pregnancy*:** The Iteso people punished offenders extremely. If a girl gets pregnant at home before marriage, she would be taken to an ant hill and made to sit on it naked and get bitten by termites. She'd feel the pain that would make her never repeat the same.

This approach to the young teenagers exposed them to all sorts of ridicule in society and devalued them to mere prostitutes. This girl never got another opportunity to redeem their faces but remained social rejects despite the burden of childbearing. The Iteso people of today harsh as this stipulation was, society was kept decent in terms of moral standards. This seemed to be very harsh and today's society may not accept it (Appendix 7: (i) Qn4 (ii) Qn4 (iii) Qn 4 (iv) Qn4).

***5.13.5 Relatives' Marriage*:** For the relatives who got married, they would be taken to the deep forest, and a small house (Open) would be built there in the forest. The couple would be asked to get in and the house set on fire. They'd run away not to get burnt, as the eyewitnesses shout calling them devils. The offenders would be brought before the clan for questioning and warned not to repeat the mistakes. If she repeats, then curses would befall him. (APPENDIX 2,3,4,5. Qn. 4)

This punishment did not really appear a punishment as such compared to all other punishments administered, since reports of people burning in the small houses were not there. This punishment acted as a cleansing because when they left the small houses running, each one went to a different direction and did not get married again. It was however a humiliating experience that none wanted to go through (Appendix 7 (i) Qn4 (ii) Qn4 (iii) Qn 4 (iv) Qn4).

5.14. Appeals:

5.14.0. Introduction: Several Cases Had Chances for Appeals Against the Rullings

5.14.1. Land Demarcation

In a case where one party was not satisfied, he would reach out to the elders complaining as to why there's no equality in the sharing, and it would be sorted amicably. The boundary was dismantled, and a new boundary was drawn.

Whenever a person wanted to buy land, he sought information from one neighbor, who would inform him of the goodness of that land or where good land could be found. One would get information about an existing item before he came to make an agreement over it. This information came from a friend who knew the buyer so well. The buyer would then meet the seller and then the village elder. The village elder would then go to the assistant chief where documentation begins. Then to the District Officer where there would be a meeting to secure consent towards payment in the land's office.

The sale of land was a family matter. A family was consulted before selling land, and the size of the family was considered lest the boys be stranded at some point. Before the man of the house sold a family property, he would get the family informed, and proper consultation between the family was done and agreed over the same before the exercise takes place. When making the payment, the buyer would hand over the money to the son. The son would then hand it to the mother, then the mother hands it over to the father, the father would finally give it back to the mother to keep. The mother was the one who kept the money on behalf of the family.

If the mother wanted to use the money for whatever, she had to seek permission from the father. If a married lady died and left children behind, the children would not visit their grandmother or uncle, till they plan for a grand entry. *Busaa* was prepared and people took after eating, they would be escorted back home, and the same style of eating followed. When your parents gave land, normally it would depend mostly on how you had been related. Some went to an extent of giving you a small piece of land due to the characters you had shown them. The beneficiary would not increase that parcel, and if you did, there would be consequences.

5.15.1 Similarities between the Iteso Covenant and the Christian Covenants of Today

The Iteso covenants looked similar in some instances to the Christian covenants though processes could differ. Significant issues and differences that can be identified would include the deity, reverence remained different though the traditional Iteso held an instinct of Yahweh in his Reverence. Areas of similarities include the following (Appendix 7 iv Qn 16):

5.15.2. Marriage – weddings. Marriage was and is still a cherished institution in all societies. Though divorce rates are increasing every day, a family remains the only institution entered voluntarily. Both Christians and traditional Iteso people still view marriage as an institution of sacred responsibility. Both of them have protective measures to a marriage institution in terms of providing no permission to immorality. In Christian marriages, weddings constitute the celebration of a concluded marriage covenant. The Iteso people in their traditional way, enjoy the aspect of a marriage celebration in a more significant manner with symbols and great promises of good fortune to the newly wedded couple. (Appendix 7 iv Qn 16)

5.15 .2. Both give advice to the community. One of the objectives of Christianity as an institution is to provide the most needed education, guidance, and hope to society. This objective finds its central place in covenant relationships that unite the society into a common focus. Covenant relationship by itself is advice, a tool of hope to the future generation, educational content, and guidance to society. (Appendix 7 iv Qn 16)

5.15.3. Both sides advocate for peace. Jesus Christ, who is the head and founder of the Christian faith, is described as the prince of peace and hailed by billions of human beings as such. The Hebrew Bible as a whole, discusses the idea of peace as an item that characterizes one who is in possession of the Holy Spirit. (Gal. 5:22). (Thes 3:16). This position in both the Christian and the traditional Iteso people meet at the center of human and divine interest.

The Iteso Traditional Covenant relationship structure speaks more to peace as opposed to disorder ever witnessed where there is no order. Much as the disadvantages mentioned above suggest disruption of peace by way of punitive punishments, the peace advocated for by the

covenant relationship and the achievements made, demonstrate that the Iteso covenant relationship is a tool to achieve peace. (Appendix 7: iv Qn 16)

5.15.4. Both undertake an elaborate naming process. When Jesus Christ was born, His name was already designated but still, the Bible states that after the purification days were over, He was called Jesus (Luke 2: 21). The Holy Bible attaches significant meaning to a name, giving its interpretation that is relevant to his/her character. Christians don't give their children names of those characters who did not have a good record in the Bible, thinking that their children may inherit the characters of the name bearers.

The Iteso people do not show any deviation from the Christian perceptions in naming. The Traditional Iteso people undertook an elaborate naming process that involved both the living and the dead in a covenant arrangement. Those names whose bearers bore irreputable characters are not named into the next generation among the Iteso peole. The same fear of character contamination is held by the Iteso just the Christians do. (Appendix 7: iv Qn 16)

5.16. Recommendations Regarding the use of *Aitutuket*

A covenant relationship forms the backbone of the social integrity most desired by many and contains the responsibility fabric. In the eyes of the respondents, it was recommended that this practice should be practiced even more today than ever, since it brought some sense to people's relationships including family units.

Encouragements for adherence to covenants as entered with honesty need to be made loud, since it's a way of instilling discipline. Education about respect to covenants is introduced in all levels of learning, to traditionalize the practice. It should be practised to encourage unity. Among the Iteso people, advice should be provided on the importance of continuing to support the Iteso culture of upholding covenant relationships. Deliberate Advocacy for respect in society needs to be enhanced through social instruments on covenant relationships and encourage cultural practices.

"Let us strengthen our relationship by educating young people through meetings, writing, and organizing traditional festivals to provide education to the population. Meetings should be encouraged to teach people about the Iteso culture. (Appendix 9 (ii), Appendix 7 (i) Qn 16, (ii) Qn 16, (iii) Qn 16, (iv) Qn17)

5.17. The Iteso Covenant Structure

5.17.0 Introduction: The Iteso people, like the Old Testaments people, did observe a certain form of a covenant structure.

This structure gave guidance to what was expected in the covenant agreement. According to the work edited by Webster, Okalany, Emudong, and Okuda (1973:130-140), the Iteso people had a very elaborate legal structure that kept checking on the offenders of covenant relationships. Penalties and punishments followed the offenders, and agreements were entered in a structured way. Covenants among the Iteso varied depending on the type of covenant. The structure for a peace covenant was not to be the same as the sale covenant.

Most of the Iteso covenants were structured in the order of leadership roles, with the purpose of attaching some authority in its implementation. The head of a subsection e.g. a family head, a clan's head or an administrative leader, could convene the meeting with a purpose of making a covenant. The covenanting parties, sometimes and mostly so, came with their family members to the venue just in case the venue was not in their home. These family members would act as witnesses in cases like when making a boundary covenant. Other witnesses would include other members of the extended family, neighbors and local administrators, without forgetting on the presence of gods. Any of the approaches above was at the request of the covenanting parties.

The council of elders if needed in the process, provided the needed guidance backed by the history of such covenants. Respect was accorded to the elders and they're such that when the chair is talking, no one was allowed to intervene. The structure was then as follows: (Appendix 7: (i) Qn 3 (ii) Qn3, (iii) Qn3, (iv) Qn 3, Appendix 8)

***5.17.1. Venue*:** For the Iteso people, a venue is significant since it comes with reference to the dwelling place of gods. As narrated by Omakada and Chief Olubai, a meeting to institute a covenant was important for several reasons including security, gods abode, and trees of good fortune. Some of the trees of good fortune included *Etekw, Ekimeng', Ebule, Ebechel, Ekaereret*. It was believed that this category of trees had blessings suitable for a covenant process, such as marriage covenants. On the contrary, some trees were not approved.

According to Omakada, the Iteso traditional teacher, trees such as *Esong'ororo* were used in a meeting that pronounced curses to the covenant violators, hence not commonly used for covenants meant to enhance a relationship. Other trees not used in a covenant process to accommodate a covenant meeting included, *Etit*, believed to retard progress, *Ekobwai*-belived to make things hard. The covenant-meeting convener was careful not to err on the choice of the venue. Each venue depended on the type of a covenant. (Appendix 7(i) Qn 1& 3)

***5.17.2. Meetings*.** In a marriage covenant for example, the meeting was occasioned by the realization that their daughter had gone into marriage with some boy, confirmed by the family members of the girl. In a meeting called *evasit*, the father of the girl in the company of his family members, book an appointment to visit the home of the boy. In this meeting, an introduction is made from both sides begging with the boy's side. The boy's family does a formal welcoming and introduces his people in the meeting. This is done by the father of the boy. The visiting family follows the same procedures of introduction and in this introduction; the father of the girl spells out clearly why they have come and what outcome is expected. The host father in his welcome speech alludes to his suspension as to why he has received the guest, and his readiness to the demands of the guests. At this point, the rest are observers. (Appendix 7(i) Qn 1& 3)

***5.17.3. Agreement*:** A moment then comes, where a select committee is appointed from both sides, comprising of representatives of the two families, the chair of the meeting, the secretary of the meeting and two mediators from both sides.

The common figure is five from each side, excluding the fathers. The work of the mediators is to consult with the two fathers in settling an argument about the price to be paid as dowry. During this time of negotiation, the rest of the group is welcomed to a room for beer entertainments. It then follows that though covenant processes differed one from the other depending on the type of a covenant, a smooth path was sought for in all covenant processes. The Iteso's so called preamble in the Hittite covenant, seems to have a step further in some covenants than in the Hittite political covenants (Appendix 7(i) Qn 1& 3)

The Preamble: Though different from the Old Testament structures, the central point in the initial stage is familiarity to each other. That the people who enter into an agreement in this arrangement, introduce each other, and that the agenda of the meeting is made plain at this point. Not all covenants however require a select committee. Covenants such as sale covenants simply needed the two making a covenant, the witnesses and other elements of covenants, and the introduction did not need to set a select committee. Common features here included eating, drinking *Busaa* (Local brew), speeches, all under a tree of choice called *etem.* (Appendix 7(i) Qn 1& 3)

***5.17.4 Agenda*:**

The covenant agenda among the Iteso people, was always made known by the chairman of the meeting. At this point, the chairman, after a formal introduction clarifies the purpose of the meeting. In a marriage covenant, the agenda was made clear, that it is *Asut* - (dowry negotiation day) or *Akitub emanyit* (payment of the final dowry). In a reconciliatory tone, the chairman labored to impress the sense of agreement to the members present for the smooth ending of the process. This part of the covenant that is most pronounced in the Hittite covenant structure under

historical prologue, is also seen in the Iteso covenant structure. In this section, the reason for the covenant is narrated by the first interested party in the hearing of the other party, and in the presence of the witnesses. In one case sited by Lawrence in his book above, (1957) there was an agreement to buy a bicycle that was well explained and agreed before it was bought. This practice though most pronounced in the Ancient Near Eastern communities, is also practiced among the Iteso people. (Appendix 7(i) Qn 1& 3)

5.17.5. Regulations **-** In the Iteso covenants, regulations were part of the whole process. As discussed by Lawrence in his book and supported by Omakada in his narrations that, when a Herding covenant was made, it was to be made clear whether or not the milk was to be used by the owner of the herd or the herd's man. The same was to be made clear about the off springs of the herds, on how many would go to the owner and how many would go to the herdsman. In marriage covenants, several rules were made clear, these included the relationship distance between the son and the mother-in-law, where they were not allowed to shake hands with each other.

Several explanations have been given to rationalize this practice of not shaking hands, including the fact that full coverage of the body was not achieved hence that practice served to protect privacy. The question that has not been addressed is why the practice has transcended modern civilizations where full body coverage has been achieved. Several covenants had different regulations, though all were made to protect the relationships as shown in the research appendices. (Appendix 7(i) Qn 1& 3)

5.17.6. Witnesses or no Witnesses: **-** Among the Iteso people, some covenants needed witnesses, and some did not. According to Lawrence, most sales covenants did not need witnesses as it did with the herds' covenants. However, it is also found that most of the serious covenants like marriage and boundary agreements, needed witnesses. Although some agreements did not need

witnesses as such, this was only for the physical witnesses, but divine agencies (gods) witnessed all agreements.

It is also noted that these divine agencies witnessed the simplest conversations, such that dishonesty was not entertained due to the reactions of the gods. An elder (Olubai) in the qualitative interviews, testified that dishonesty was the cause for some illnesses in the families. Although not listed as the sun god, or the rain god, gods were unnoticed members in all covenants, and all conversations were influenced by their presence. (Appendix 7(i) Qn 1& 3)

5.17.7. Curses and Blessings: **-** Some of the curses that defaulters of covenants faced included jail and fines, banishment and murder. Those who upheld the covenant stipulations enjoyed the benefits of it. However, one general curse was expected from the ancestors who were considered to be more offended when a covenant witnessed by them is violated. Some of these curses included death, accidents, madness and the general family confusion. When a family flourished economically, curses were withheld by the gods. (Appendix 7(i) Qn 1& 3)

5.17.8. Covenant between the Iteso and the sabaots: **-** Among the Iteso people, some covenants were only complete with the symbol of accomplishment. For example, the Iteso war with the Sabaots was ended with the slaughter of a dog. When a man separated with his wife for some time and successful reconciliation was done, then upon returning, the wife came back with a chicken that was slaughtered on arrival and eaten between the two of them. This symbol of peace covenant was only complete with a chicken symbol. It may be right to suggest that a higher percentage follows.

5.18. Analysis of the Characteristic Features/elements of the Traditional Iteso Covenant

5.18.0 Introduction:

The discussions engaged on the subject of covenant relationships, have generated the need for some analysis of the characteristical features of traditional covenant relationships. This analysis will lay some emphasis on specific areas of interest to the study for future studies. They include:

5.18.1. Etem*:*

The Iteso in general identified trees where they conducted important meetings such as covenant-making meetings. These were big trees like *ebule*. The choice of these trees was guided by the size and the capacity to host many people for different functions.

These trees were also known for housing the ancestors who were needed in covenant-making meetings. It was publicly known that when elders were seen gathered under such trees, it would be easy to hear someone saying "*kaato akitub akiro*". Literally meaning let us go and cut words (make judgments). In the presence of gods, people were very selective in the use of words lest they offend gods. This aspect took care of the Hittites' several elements at once. These elements included a list of gods as witnesses; all conversations were under the control and witness of gods, who could respond to the violators instantly through unexpected collapse to death and other unexpected sicknesses.

Under this tree also called *etem*, the level of an introduction made, included a historical prologue as done by the Hittites discussed above - where the chairman explained in the introduction who the concerned was, the introduction of the agenda and reason for coming was also done at this stage. The meeting included the physical witnesses and the divine witnesses as the need would be. Covenant meetings were always conducted under a chairman, depending on the nature of the covenant on the table.

5.18.2. Alimor/Introduction

This aspect of the covenant process was called on by the chairman, allowing every invited participant to identify themselves, leaving the two official parties to be introduced by the chairman. The introduction was not only meant to the seating audienc,e but for the ancestors too. When their names were mentioned, and these names were the names of the departed loved ones living in their heaven called *Kide,* then they were happy and joined the meeting with joy. This bit constituted the order that would be followed throughout the meeting. Significant at this site was the presence of gods and the blessings they brought into the meeting. This is not any far from the Hebrews and the Hittites, particularly when the idea of the sanctuaries was considered. These trees acted as sanctuaries of worship.

5.18.3. Ikisila /Regulations

The significant purpose of the Iteso covenant rules also called stipulations (*ikisila*), was to protect the decision that had been reached upon and pronounced as a covenant. Every covenant had its stipulations. Boundaries for example, had rules that were protected by the gods. To make these rules strong and undisputed, the punishment was affected from two centres. These were curses from the gods and the punishment prescribed by the council of elders.

The double supervision approach of these covenant regulations also indicated the importance attached to the specific covenant. A few witnesses could enter some covenants like the labor covenants, as long as the laborer secured permission from the parents, in case of those still under the care of their parents. Severe curses were attached to boundary covenant violations, that included; madness and other curses such as poverty. The idea of stipulations to protect both the covenant and the owner of the covenant, cuts across all cultures and times.

5.18.4. Luketeunak/Witnesses

As earlier mentioned, the Iteso covenants were witnessed by both visible and invisible witnesses. Those who signed the documents were visible witnesses. They gave testimonies when

called to do so. The invisible witnesses were the gods whose homes were under the specific treas also called *etem*. The extent to which the invisible witnesses made their observation of human activities was such wide, that even children would warn others on the road that "what you are doing is watched over by the gods". This meant that it was easy to offend the physical witnesses than the gods. Invisible witnesses were a power that no competitor could dare.

5.18.5. Ilami/Curses

All calamities whether natural or caused, were viewed as curses among the Iteso people and associated with a violation of some covenant /irresponsible utterance to the elderly, or abusive address to the elderly, killing, falsely witnessing to someone and breaking of certain stipulations witnessed and supervised by the gods. This behavior brought curses to the offenders. Curses among the Iteso people were a full procedure that involved specific clans designated to curse people. A clan called *Ikamarinyang*, were officially known and hired to curse those who violated certain standards laid down in the society said above. If a person killed someone for example, and this murderer refused to pay a fine, the people of the murdered, will pick some items from the home of the murderer and take them to *Ikamarinyang*. At around 3:00am, the *Ikamarinyang* would wake up, sit on the four or three-legged stool, and begin to say words of curses while mentioning the name of the offender and the kind of punishment the offender should get.

Bramwell, the Iteso cultural teacher, says that such words as "may your house be shut to the last generation, *komerasi idwe kon ibiler* (may your children be mad) would be uttered at such an hour while holding the items that were picked, and sure enough, the same would happen. This practice of cursing is not mentioned among the Hittite covenant practices but was most commonly used among the Iteso people. The belief was that the gods to the detriment of the offender would pick the words uttered by the priest of the Ikamarinyang called Lokadwaran.

The procedure used to curse people among the Iteso people, by itself caused a lot of fear to the people. These fears created a lot of discipline among the people, and no one thought of violating

stipulated conducts. Comparing the physical punishment and the punishment advanced by gods, one would choose the one administered physically, because of the ripple effects of the gods' reactions to the offender. The Hittites and the entire ANE traditions lack in this approach to social discipline that ordered the society.

5.18.6. Asulweny/Blessings

Blessings were equally part and parcel of the covenant practices among the Iteso people. The beneficiaries of these virtues were those who obeyed the covenant stipulations. In the same way as cursing, blessings could also be administered to the loyal ones. Elders would pronounce words of blessings to the newly married couple, young obedient people, newly elected leaders, and many others who deserved it. This approach was administered by the gods, and not by physical presentation of gifts or protection as commonly done in the ANE blessing. It gave the individuals places of identity and reference in society, since their blessings came from some known structure.

5.18.7. Akites /Symbols

Symbols were an accompanying element of the Iteso traditional covenants that were meant to keep a constant reminder to those who engaged in a covenant relationship. As earlier discussed, most, if not all of the traditional Iteso covenants had symbols. The usage of different types of symbols ranging from trees, hides, animal parts, stones, etc. represented different strengths symbolized by the symbols selected.

This practice is highly reflected in both the ANE and Hebrew communities. There was no power in the symbols themselves, but the power that was depended on, was from the gods that watched over the covenant relationship. Just as it was with the Noahic rainbow, the power to stop the rain's destruction was not in the bow, but with God who gave the symbols. The difference between the Iteso and the Hebrew symbol lay on the power behind it.

5.18.8. Epuchit /Celebration

Covenants were great occasions depending on the covenant itself. Marriage covenants for example, were always highly attended and characterized by alcohol and slaughter of chicken. It would not be kept private because of the joy that filled the neighbors. A lot of cooking, traditional ululation and dance was the order of the day. All these activities impressed upon the young people that there was no turning back. Other covenants followed the same pattern, though every covenant had its own scoop.

These celebrations did not only demonstrate that the living were happy, but that even the ancestors were also happy and joined in the approval of the covenant. Exodus 19:1-6 alludes to the celebratory mood of the sons of Jacob after they affirmed that they were ready to keep God's covenant without any reservation. Whether there was eating and drinking or not, is not made very clear in the text but that the mood was high, is observable.

5.19. The Traditional Iteso Covenant Relevancy to Society Today

Today's society has largely drifted to a legal system, hence reducing the covenant significance in society. Much as that has become the situation, things have not become any better. They have actually moved from bad to worse. These covenants still speak to the Iteso communities today, just as in the past, in a way of a constant reminder whenever relationships disintegrate due to covenant infidelity. The solutions used today, do not have as much strength as those provided in the traditional covenants.

5.20. Chapter Conclussion:

Conclusion: The use of covenants to enhance relationships seems to have been a medium through which the ancient communities depended upon. The Iteso people coined covenants in every relationship that there was, and no wonder they remained united to date. Although their covenants were not as strong as the Hebrew covenants, these components seem to have created a governing system by themselves, which guided the Iteso society in their social, economic,

religious and political relationships. It can be said of the covenant relationship, that, yes the society still needs them even today for the smooth running of the society. It is significant to note that the ANE covenants employed the same specific covenant elements as the Iteso did. The structure comprising of curses, blessings, stipulations, witnesses - (Physical and devine), present in all investigated people-groups as cutting across. This demonstrates that covenants retain the same theme in all cultures. Deviations can be found in the areas such as introduction, Historical prologue, covenant storage, occasional reading etc depending on sucumstances, culture environment and social civilizetion.

The current situation among the Iteso communities where infidelity to covenant relationships is a challenge, could be attributed to the social enlightenment and technology, that have ignored these traditional systems. The legal framework and democratic civilizations in the world, seem to have influenced the Iteso society to the extent that legal options seem to overtake the traditional Iteso covenant achievements attained before.

The discipline levels having gone down and seemingly receiving legal backing through protracted court battles marred by corruption, seem to have given an advantage to social rote as opposed to the achievements by traditional Iteso covenants in terms of social fabrics. This study revealed that the Iteso people regarded their traditional covenants, and as backed up by the ancestors who sometimes administered discipline of curses to the offenders as the source of social unity, integrity and strength.

These have however been challenged by the levels of freedom that have come with the watering down of the values mentioned above. This discussion, therefore, begs for the comparison between the traditional Iteso covenant achievements, and the Hebrew covenant practices and achievements.

CHAPTER SIX

COMPARISON OF THE HEBREW AND THE TRADITIONAL ITESO COVENANT RELATIONSHIPS

6.0. Introduction

Covenants played a major role in society's inter-commitments within and without facilitating the desired social fabric, which enhanced unity and human dignity. Both to the Iteso and the Hebrew of the ANE societies, covenants were instrumental in creating a harmonious interrelationship between people themselves, people and the neighboring societies, people and the outside world, and people with their deity. Covenants facilitated both the political, religious, economic and social relationships in both the Iteso and the ANE Hebrew worlds. This facility was however appreciated in different cultural traditions, different levels of civilizations, and different times in history that affected people's attitudes and behaviors.

In so doing, also affected people's relationships. This section of the study will separate the differences and similarities between the traditional Iteso covenants and the ANE Hebrew covenants that led to the social-relational phenomenology observed, with the aim of establishing some theological insights that will help strengthen relationships that are marred by covenant infidelity, among the Iteso and the general population today.

6.1. Covenant Characteristics' Comparison.

The main visible pillars of the ancient near eastern Hebrew covenants included, and not limited to; (i) The Suzerain and the vassal figures who were the main actors in every covenant process, where the Suzerain acted as the owner of the covenant and the Vassal acted as the inferior recipient, and or the main beneficiary of the covenant.

This characteristic was phenomenological in political, religious, and social covenants. What featured most in the Suzerain-Vassal covenants in the political and religious covenants of the ANE Hebrew world, was the flamboyant feature of kings and the deities who were the Suzerain,

that gave the terms and conditions of the covenant. Although sometimes the Vassals revolted against their Suzerains at the risk of perishing as discussed in chapter two above, the Vassals were actually viewed and considered as slaves to their masters, the Suzerains. This characteristic accompanied all covenants made by the Hittites, and even all religious covenants done between Yahweh and His created beings from Eden to the current Christian religious relationships.

To the contrary, the Iteso people appear to have had a different approach in their covenant managements. The Iteso community embraced a level of democracy in most of their covenants at similar stages. In all agreements made among the Iteso people, although a family or a clan's leader led in the covenant process, the council of elders seated together under *Etem* tree, pronounced the covenant as binding, and none of the participants and the facilitator acted as the Suzerain. Every covenant was owing to the ancestors more than to the leaders present in the covenant making process, and this affected all types of covenants.

The power of the covenant among the ANE Hebrew people rested with the king, actually considered as the owner of the covenant, while among the Iteso people, the power of the covenant rested with the parties involved on a level ground, witnessed by the ancestors who were the unseen witnesses. It will appear that the Iteso people had a Suzerain-Vassal covenant arrangement, given that the gods', decisions were not contradicted just as it was with the ANE Hebrew people.

This argument will however be challenged by the fact that the Iteso gods did not give direct covenant requirements, as did the Hebrew deity, as His representatives - the prophets and other people like Moses did. Rather, it is to be found that the Iteso gods seem to have depended on the covenants made by men and got themselves to intrude with claims and demands.

This phenomenon leaves a gap between the ANE Hebrew and the Iteso practice of covenant relationship, in the sense that the space covered by the Suzerains, did not find enough coverage among the covenanting parties among the Iteso.

Covenants among the Iteso appear to depend on the equal-rights basis than the inclined-rights basis. Some of the claims attached to the gods among the Iteso, almost demonstrate a strong imagination of the people while seeking to know why certain things happened, and on failing to get a solution, would attach these social challenges like death to the reaction of gods. The Iteso covenants were therefore characterized by decisions made by the elders, following a logical sequence and by observing what the former elders did on the same issue, and in reference to the suspected reaction of the ancestors. The elders' participation in the outcome of the covenant included critical evaluation of the pros and cons of the covenant, bringing in the element of objectivity and democratic participation in the process, as opposed to the Suzerain-Vassal arrangement.

(ii) Curses: Every covenant among the Iteso people came with an attachment of curses on the occasion that its promises were violated. It was very clear that the unseen witnesses who participated in the process came in handy to the aid of the innocent who was humiliated by the covenant violator. Although society did punish the offenders by inflicting pain on them, the ultimate punishment was still to come from the ancestors through death, accidents, sicknesses, abnormality etc. This element compares equally with the Hebrew covenant element that brought the wrath of God to the covenant stipulation violators. (Deuteronomy 21:23; Exodus 20:5-6; 1 Samuel 17:43; Exodus 18:20; Jeremiah 31:29-30)

(iii). Blessings: Every success among the Iteso was associated with some good works done by the beneficiary at some point, either to the living and approved by the dead, or directly by the dead. The covenanters were all promised blessings if they obeyed the stipulations of the covenant and fulfilled the promises made by the covenanters. Blessing would come through good will to the generations of the covenanters, by way of the success of their offsprings' ascension to positions of leadership etc.

(iv)Celebrations: The Iteso covenants were never devoid of celebrations and entertainments. One of the most cherished drinks that marked success of the covenant process was the one alcohol called *Busaa*. This drink being alcoholic, made the celebration noisy and jubilant. In some covenants where animal shading of blood was necessary, eating characterized covenant making, and made it memorable.

(v) *Etem:* This being the place where the covenant took place, it was inevitable that elders met and sat under a shelter to put things in order. In the later days, it is acceptable that *Etem* may not necessarily be under a tree as before. Halls and board rooms have also been used as *Etem*. *Etem* was a significant point of reference even in the later days, as elders will quote the covenant venue as the particular *Etem.*

6.2 Traditional Iteso Covenant and the ANE-Hebrew Elements Comparison

Like the ANE Hebrew covenants, the Iteso traditional covenants had several elements. As discussed in chapter five above, the Iteso traditional covenants had a number of elements including an elaborate introduction of the subject by the chairperson of the discussion/covenant. This is an equivalence of the Hittite's preamble.

(ii). The introduction of the Iteso covenant, was an elaborate one that it contained a historical background where the owner of the covenant gave the reasons for the covenant. At this stage, the covenant owner or the one who initiates in boundary formation covenant for example, the father gave the history of his children and introduced them one by one according to the birth position. The elder son gets a bigger share of the land and the last-born son gets an equal share like the rest. An additional share is extended to the last-born son for being the one who will take care of the parents during their old age including their burial sites. This level of introduction was more than the Hittite and the applied Hebrew Historical prologue.

(iii). Like the Hittite stipulations, the Iteso people had equal number of what they called *ikisila* (rules) in their traditional covenants. Some of the stipulations (*ikisila*) included (a) no overstepping the covenant established boundary in boundary covenants, (b) No committing adultery with someone's covenant wife in marriage covenants. (c) No immoral act between relatives in family covenants (d) No eating foods cooked in cooking pots used in cooking some particular animal meat - (in covenant celebrations) (e) If a brother had an immoral relationship with his brother's wife to an extent of going to bed with her, an act that was strongly forbidden, then the immoral brother was not allowed to visit his brother in case the brother fell sick.

It was believed that if the immoral brother did an act of visiting his sick brother, then the sick brother would ultimately die, no doubt. In most covenants, witnesses were key participants in the traditional Iteso covenant-making. Like the ANE Hebrew covenants, the witness of a deity was of a significant and consequential outcome. Both the physical and the unseen witnesses played an important role in the process of the Iteso traditional covenants.

(v) Curses followed the wrong doers. Those who violated the stipulations did not only get the punishment from the rulings of the council of elders, but also got curses including their future generations.

(vi). In an equal measure, those who observed the laid down stipulations did not only get the good will approval of the council of elders, but also counted the success of their livelihoods and that of their generations as a blessing, out of their loyalty to the covenants and dictates of the gods who were behind success of the successful ones.

(vii). As demonstrated in the Jacob-Laban covenant relationship, the text presents significant symbols with clear meaning as part of the covenant. V44 presents Laban calling Jacob into a covenant exercise, and makes a heap of stones to be a witness between the two of them. In this covenant, Jacob is presented as taking a stone setting it up as a pillar. Jacob is more instrumental

in this symbolic act of the covenant, as he further orders his brethren who could be Jacob's sons to collect more stones, make a heap and eat a meal at the heap.

Binding Statements were uttered at the heap (v48) where Laban says that "…*This heap is a witness between me and thee this day"*. At the same time, the name of the heap is pronounced as *Galeed*; and *Mizpah* meaning *the Lord watch between me and thee when we are absent one from the other.* (V49). Symbols were significant elements of an Iteso traditional covenant. Some of those symbols could be displayed openly in the house, to display the covenant entered as discussed above.

(viii) There never missed an aggressive ululation at the end of covenant pronouncement and during feasting as an indication of covenant achievement. People celebrated with joy on covenant issues in marriage and the rest of the covenants.

(ix) Local brew was a drink that demonstrated a true welcome by the host. This drink marked the assurance of the host's joy of the visitors.

(x). While other animal flesh was enjoyed, the Iteso celebration that was not celebrated with chicken meat and black food from finger millet, mixed with dried cassava flour, was yet to be appreciated.

As much as disciplined relationships are the desired products of covenants, the origin and or the desire to include a covenant to establish a relationship, are seen as originating from the negative effects of life. In the Hebrew Bible, the emphasis to enter a covenant relationship was the fall of man into sin (Gen 1-3). That separated man from his maker, hence a need for a reunion that had to come by way of a covenant. In all traditional Iteso covenant relationships, including boundaries, peace, marriage covenants, etc., the background will be seen as stemming from some negative life effects, which sought for a lasting solution. Covenants then come as a cure to

suspicion of a former mistake-repeat, which must have existed before a covenant relationship is desired, or before a relationship calls for a covenant.

Although the Genesis scenario surgests an existance of a covenant in Eden, The New Testament preachers insisted that the sin equation was resolved before the foundation of the world was layed (2Tim 1:9, Eff 1:4, 1Pet 1:20, Math 25:34 RSV). These texts expose God as one who does not change, but one who pursues His thoughts unrevised. Evil still remains the reason as to why covenant relationship is manifested. Most of the ANE Hittite covenants were expressions of power and the desire to subdue, and that causes the problem of losing power already acquired.

This seems to be a common denominator among ANE Hebrew, Hittites and the traditional Iteso covenants. There is little to be captured about the ANE Hebrew or Hittite covenant relationship outside controlling power among the Hittites, and reconciliation among the Hebrew people.

There seems to have not been much emphasis on the covenants to other varieties of relationships, as it appears in the Iteso relationships. This characteristic expression of relationship among the Hittites defines them as a people whose main activity was war and territorial expansion. While the Iteso covenants aimed at a continuation and maintenance of a calm society and a social status quo, the ANE Hittite and the general Mesopotamian covenants did much in war.

As a subsection of the Ancient near Eastern communities, the Hebrew people are equally seen making covenants that aim at making peace when relationships go sore, while there seems to be no much involvement of covenants as a standard of relationships in the general view of life.

The distribution of land demonstrated in Joshua 13-22, seems to have been a one-time elaborate event and from thence, the rest of the Hebrew life is marred with wars and captivities, denying them the experience of established covenant relationships among themselves.

The concept of relating in a covenant arrangement seems to have involved the Hebrews and their God, more than one to the other as expressed among the Iteso people, whose traditional

covenants were more of one to the other, as opposed to the Hebrew and the Hittite people. The Suzerain-Vassal covenants can easily be seen in the formulae of the Jews and their God, than in the traditional Iteso covenants that dwelt mostly between the people themselves, and not the people and their god.

Among the Iteso people, the gods were witnesses who acted as sources of punishment, rather than the one who by themselves, initiated a covenant and want to call a people into it, as it is the case with the ANE Hebrew and the Hittites. The rapid political movements that characterized the people of Haram Naharaim may have occasioned this, and the nature of these movements may have denied them the privilege of continuing with practices such as covenant relationships.

As opposed to the Iteso flowing life, all covenants mentioned above enjoyed perfect continuity, which established the community into the covenant relationship culture, which brought social unity to a primitive society. It is evident that Yahweh's intervention in a small community of tribes and more so in the family of Jacob seems to have brought in a new practice of covenant relationship in Mesopotamia.

As much as Gentry and the allies argue on the originality of covenants and apportioning that originality to the book of Genesis 1-3, Its explosion from a community that claimed divine influence in their belief in it, made *berit* a reason for hope. By this explosion, Mesopotamia as a region got to know of an enhanced existence of a superior covenant relationship that had provisions for forgiveness when entangled in a covenant stipulation violation by way of substitute punishment, to be known as the Temple sacrificial system.

The provision of sacrifices and other means of forgiveness as opposed to the Hittite instant punishments for offenders appears to be a game changer in covenant relationships.

The Iteso people didn't seem to have had an elaborate forgiveness system to covenant violators, and this made the ANE Hebrew covenant superior, and resonated with the natural fallen human nature needing a second chance to improve.

6.3. The Theology of the Covenants Compared

As rightly discussed in chapter three above, (3.7) the OT covenant theology can be summarized in a ten-point discussion that will compare with the traditional Iteso covenants.

6.3.1. ברת (Berit)

As argued by Von-Rad (1965:129-130) that the use of the Hebrew word **ברית**(*berit*) may or may not fully encompass the practical and the theological meaning of a covenant, since all it has is a simple meaning of an agreement between two parties. It then calls for another dimension of thought, for one to capture the true meaning and what the word covenant comes with.

To that extent the traditional Iteso covenant resonates fully, and makes the same meaning as carried by the word **ברת (***Berit*). According to Von-Rad quoted above, the Hebrew word **ברת (***berit*) arbitrarily carries a makeshift meaning of an agreement, including the ceremonial bit, and may also bring in the idea of communion /fellowship between partners.

He points out terms like *credo* (creed) which in their contents carried covenant manifestation, annals, epochs and epics in different times and places manifested covenant characteristics, revealing a deeper sense of a covenant that is contained in the Hebrew word **ברת** (*berit*). The question then, that follows is, when one uses the word Berit in an argument that is meant to be all-inclusive in terms of all components of a deficient word *berit*, does he/she therefore really bring out the complete theology of the word *berit*, as used in both the Hebrews and the traditional Iteso traditions? The answer may be 'NO'.

If the word *berit* stops at agreeing on a commonality or on forming a common way of looking at working together, then other elements seen in a covenant, demand that their inclusiveness in the meaning of the covenant/*berit* requires an addendum.

The Iteso word *Aitutuket*, finds its counterpart in the meaning and usage of **ברת** (*berit*), *ishiul* (Hittite) among the Hittites, but may not find the same among the Hebrew and the Hebrew

theology as developed in the OT. This argument is sustained by the practical usage of the word *berit* in the arrangement of the *Suzerain-Vassal* formula of a covenant, and in this matter**,** **ברת**(*Berit)* is even more clear in the Hittite covenants than in the Iteso and the Hebrew covenant, in the sense that while the Hittite covenants are more of the master and slave arrangements, the Hebrew **ברת** (*berit)* goes beyond the the boundaries or limits to which the word ends in meaning and practice among the Hittites and the Iteso, in the way of *doing it* or *seeing it*, to an extent of providing a solution or an alternative when the two *see it* or want to *do it* differently.

Such provisions to allow the two who see it differently to keep going together, include the practice as found within the meaning of the words mercy (*Hesed*), substitute or sacrifice, forgiveness which although practiced among the Iteso in a very minimum scale, highly encouraged and strongly demonstrated in Yahweh's dealing with the Hebrews in terms of a relationship.

This variation from the Iteso meaning and practical usage of **ברת** , makes the Hebrew covenant relationship superior and more meaningful than the Iteso covenant relationship practice. According to Johannes Botherweck (1975:254-270), the etymology of the word *berit* is not found on the top surface of any plate of knowledge. The possible reason could be, that the word has had its practice since time immemorial. When an item is the only one used across the period, there might not be a reference point to grow from, and that makes the item a history of itself.

Johannes stresses that the derivations that are available are that the word *berith* is a feminine noun from *brh* meaning to "eat, dine" as found in 2Samuel 3:35, 12:17. His argument is that *berit* is not an equivalent of the covenant, but a ceremony that accompanied a covenant. It then poses a challenge on whether the word restricted itself to the covenant meal or meals for every occassion. Johannes Botterweck and Riggren contend that the word berit has its background in three communities naming them as the Akkadians, the Hebrews and the Hittitites. These communities may have lacked a word from their own tribes, because the word probably already existed before these communities came to organize themselves into a federation to be identified with a language, rich to change the existing words and their meaning.

The Two scholars trace the word *berith* from the *Akkadian, - birit*, with the meaning of "between, among" which word corresponds to the Hebrew preposition occurring in connection with *berith* (*Ubben*) meaning, Covenant between e.g X and Y. This development assumes that the word *berit* which is a preposition, has transformed into an adverb and transitioned into a noun. This is however challenged to couple *berit* "between" with *ben/uben,* (the covenant between X and Y) which then becomes a tautology (repetition) that is not sensual.

This condition in a language history, may be associated to the fact that both communities appearing to share some common grounds in practice, may have lived together in one place hence the insignificant deviations in language pronunciations and meaning.

According to Johannes, the safest way to take in the word *berit* is to associate *berith* with the akk *birith* "clasp" or "*fetter*", which then receives support from the Hittite terms for a treaty, such that the Hittite-*ishiul* and the akk *riksu* both meaning to bond or bound, all again mean treaty, Ezekiel 20:37 (NLT) that reads *ma'asoreth habberith*. In the struggle for the etymology of the word *berith*, the *Akkadian* word *biritu* corresponding to the word *riksu*, when matched with the Hebrew word *berith* and the Hittite word *ishiul*, all give the same impression and meaning of the word bond. Johannes (1975:254-270). Johannes continues to argue that the Hebrew – *berith*, the akk – *riksu* and the Hittite *Ishiul*, all do not convey the meaning of the word agreement or settlement between two parties, because according to him, *berith* carries with it the notion of impassion/liability or obligations. He further contents that *berith* is not voluntarily offered, but rather commanded to the partner "*tsivvah beritho*), "He has commanded his covenant" Ps 111:9, Judges 2:20. (RSV)

Their argument suggests that whichever community used the word *berit* in their relationships, must have been an impostor, since the word walks side by side with commandments and laws. They stress that the word *berit* is the opposite of a mutual agreement, hence synonymous to commandments and law. This might equally receive resistance because the commandment and the law expressed in the form of stipulations do not necessarily constitute the total meaning of

the word since covenant stipulations are only one of the many components and elements of a covenant.

The position suggested by the two scholars intimidates all the other elements of a covenant, including the God/god Himself, because of taking one element and raising it above the rest. Johannes argues that *riksa irkus* (*akk*) and *Ishiul Ishiya* (Hittile), all occur in the context of commandments imposed by soldiers as it is in 2Kings 11:14. Johannes' argument is that a covenant is an instrument by which a set of laws is imposed on people.

This position can however be argued down, considering the pronouncements where God put life and death for man's choice Deut 30:15-20. Blessings or curses Deut 11:26-29. The allusions in the texts above demonstrate that a covenant is an offer, where the right of choice is presented. In the context of Johannes, it is agreeable that *berit* still has the potential of being a binding agreement between two parties, regardless of the terms and conditions, whether they are imposed or voluntary covenant. The etymology of *berith* is dynamic according to time and need.

As Johannes states, the covenant at Sinai was obligatory for David and Abraham to receive promissory covenants of the kingdom/dynasty and land for Abraham. The two covenants, David and Abraham express no explicit condition (Johannes, 1975:267-270). Going back to Von Rad, yes the word may not carry the whole meaning of a covenant/agreement, but from the combination of Hebrew, the Hittite, and the Akkadians, the word bond expressed in the local language of the three languages well fit into the desired meaning of a covenant, hence a covenant relationship discussion.

6.3.2. Parity covenants.

As contended by Von-Rad and Begrich, the word **ברית***berit* presents an exclusive meaning of an agreement between two parties, and there is no room for parity covenants in **ברית (***berit)*. It only leaves it presenting a deviation from the traditional Iteso covenant. Most of the Iteso traditional covenants if not all, except for a few, do not demonstrate superiority or inferiority as in the Suzerain-Vassal covenants. It is observable however that the responsibility and accountability to

each other as punishable or as blessed by the gods, who also stand as witnesses and appear to be supervisors of the covenant fidelity do not observe the superior and the inferior pattern. Gods in the traditional Iteso covenants do not present as owners of the covenant. Perity covenants indicated among the Hittite community seem to agree with the Iteso covenants and not with the Hebrew covenants. Much as the Hittite perity covenants are few and appease the privileged, just for the equally powerful parties, it is not the central practice as it is with the Iteso.

6.3.3. Hexateuch

While the Hexateuch presents a covenant purely "devoid" of any parity element, (Von Rad, 1962:129), the traditional Iteso covenants manifest both parity and *berit* Suzerain-Vassal elements in their reality. In land boundary for example, the Iteso land boundary covenant has it that both parties lay equal claims on the boundary, and in marriage covenants, the husband assumes absolute power and owner of the covenant. The theory of the Hexateuch gives such meaning of **ברית שלום** (*berit shalom)* limiting it to a mere agreement of peace as seen in Joshua 9, 1 king 20:34, Samuel 11:1. In all the agreements in the texts above, the decisions to act were all in the hands of the superior.

6.3.4. ברת שלום (berit shalom)

Then comes the addition of the word שלום (*Shalom*) in the Hebrew covenants, describing a relationship that is confirmed and designated by the word *shalom*. Since **ברית שלום** (*berit Shalom)* brings in the sense and meaning of being impaired, the un-holiness and a state of harmonious equilibrium, the (Berit shalom) balancing of all claims and needs between parties as described by Von-Rad, then a new meaning of making a covenant with the benefit of relational intactness, orderliness, and rightness between the two parties is achieved (Deut. 9:9, 11, 15) and synonymizes the word covenant to the word commandments as another significant feature in the Hebrew covenant (Von-Rad, 1962:130). This characteristic feature of שלום *shalom* in a covenant, leaves the traditional Iteso covenants as a Pentateuch covenant of commandment, denying it the benefit of **שלום** (*shalom)*.

The theology of the O.T covenants seem to have been one that grew continually. As discussed in chapter two above, God seems to have maintained His intentions even after sin infected the creation right from Eden, where promises were first given. One could easily see that even the Hittite covenants were geared towards an objective that wanted the Suzerains see their territories expanded more, and established in their future. To that end, it resonates with the Hebrew theology of covenants in the absence of **שלום** (*shalom*) which also pointed to the future, when at last the Divine intentions of a perfect human life is achieved.

6.3.5. Promise

The Hebrew covenants encompassed a component referred to as "promises", that described Yahweh as a Suzerain that did not only focus on the relationship that ends with what is seen today, but ending with what is not visible and even not understood in the eyes of the covenanting partner into the future. This component created a life to be lived in the far future, and a world yet to be seen, and thus raising hopes that were guaranteed and assured by what was fulfilled presently. This hope of the promise yet to be fulfilled, kept the Hebrews united in a common purpose because the promises given to Abraham were to be fulfilled to the whole generation of Abraham's descendants. It therefore meant that all Israelites lived in a common anticipation of a brighter future, contained in the promises.

The most convincing aspect of these promises was that the promises were things that could be quantified and be seen. (Gen 12). To Abraham was promised: (i). Land. This was fulfilled to his descendants in Canaan, Joshua (13-22). (ii) Multitude of descendants to be as many as stars. This promise was fulfilled in Egypt, before leaving for the promised land. (iii) The next promise given to Abraham in a covenant package, was the promise of becoming the children of God and God becoming their God with a *shalom*, and many other promises that can be enlisted. Looking at all these promises that were definite and actual promised to Abraham, the Traditional Iteso covenants lacked on these once. However, the Iteso believed that whatever they had or acquired,

was from the ancestors, although this could be described as an attachment or claims which could not be quantified or be translated from one promise to a reality and be tangible.

Under the package of promises, it is observable that the traditional Iteso covenants' promises were not material promises that could be exclusively from the gods but were claims on what another Deity has put in place. Israel lived intact, united and unique because of the satisfaction brought about by the burning hope that the promises would bring.

6.3.6. Father-son relationship

The effect of a covenant relationship with God, could be seen in the way the Israelites lived in a violent community, without expressing an equal social level of violence that existed in the times of the Israelites in Mesopotamia. A covenant described the power of influence that came with relating with God in a covenant way. This behavioral characteristic of those who got into a covenant relationship with the God of Abraham that is described by Eichrodt, (1961) saying that "God broke into the lives of people in His dealing with them, and moulded them according to His will that He grants them knowledge of his being" (Eichrodt, 1961:37-38) is a unique effect of a covenant, that is opposed to the Iteso covenant effect and to a human behaviour.

The Iteso traditional covenants instilled fear in people rather than changing the character of a person. It did not attract but instead stigmatized, and love was a missing and important element. The Iteso therefore remain informed that a true covenant holds to itself the power to change human character, and remain different in the corrupt society if it cannot change the society it is in.

6.3.7. Declaration of God's will

As discussed above, God subjected the characters of His people to a standard, which then expressed His will to His people. Looking at His will as compared to the gods of the Iteso people, the Hebrew Deity in His covenant demonstrates His love for humanity, because His will is to own His people, being a God who promises great things and fulfils them as promised.

In the Hebrew covenants, God declares His will, and this describes His intentions in the relationship desired. “You will be my people” In subjecting the character of his people to a standard, Yahweh was declaring His will to His people, and revealing himself to the people of His choice in history and experience.

The declaration that “you shall be my people and I will be your God”, is a clear revelation of His will to identify with His people. As quoted above, belonging to Yahweh as the covenant Suzerain in this manner, would lead to a life with a goal and a meaningful history. On the contrary, the Iteso traditional covenants contained stipulations that expressed a god who always thought of punishments more than blessings. The Iteso therefore are informed of a better choice of a God, whose intentions and will is positive to His people. The Hebrew deity in His desire to change the character of His people, is for the purposes of living with Him in eternity.

6.3.8. Human position before a deity

Since Israel responded positively to the covenant, call by Yahweh, Israel became stronger than before and more formidable to confront any political challenge in the region. The Iteso people equally believed that their gods fought with them successfully at all times, though again, this is a claim as compared to the fall of Jericho in a blow of a trumpet. (Joshua 6:1-27) but still, the Iteso people felt secure in the hands of their ancestors than when left alone. The human position before God, then, is a dignified and elevated position by virtue of the fact that Yahweh is supreme and rules supremely. The Iteso then stand a chance of dignity in God, than with the ancestors.

6.3.9. Initiation of a new order

In a covenant relationship with God, a human being changes his way of looking at things. His patterns of thoughts are influenced by the high scope of being created by a relationship, such as one that involves God. His ways are ordered afresh, with more confidence than before. The pride that comes with association with God changes the whole of human complexity, as opposed to the Iteso traditional covenants that debase human powers with fear and intimidation. It is therefore

the privilege of the Iteso people, to see a higher option in associating with the Hebrew God for better covenant relationship results.

6.3.10. Divine revelation

In the discussion above, the knowledge of God does not come by way of a classroom discussion, but when He takes one who embraces a covenant relationship through an experience, and as He presents an in-depth experience to a person, these experiences reveal to the person who God is, and what He is capable of doing to humanity and the rest of His creation. The Iteso idea of a covenant lacks this aspect of a revelation to the covenanters, since the Iteso covenants are mostly meant to establish a covenant relationship between people, and where god is involved, fear and terror is part of the claims of this power.

6.3.11. (i) Comparative Tables-Hebrew and the Iteso (Characterizetion)

Berit	**Hb**	**Iteso**
Perity	**No**	**Yes**
Hexeteuch	**Yes**	**Yes**
Berit Shalom	**Yes**	**Yes**
Promise	**Yes**	**No**
Father-son relationship	**Yes**	**No**
Declaration of Divination	**Yes**	**No**
Human position by God	**Yes**	**No**
New covenant	**Yes**	**No**
Divine revelation	**Yes**	**No**

ANE Hebrew Covenant Elements	**Traditional Iteso Covenant Elements**
HEBREW	**ITESO**
Preamble	Introduction
Historical prologue	Elaborate Introduction
Stipulation	Stipulations/Ikisila
Witnesses-physical	Physical witnesses/Luketeunak
Divine Witnesses.	Divine witnesses/Amusabwan.
Blessings	Blessings/Asulweny
Curses	Curses/Ilami
Symbols	Symbols/Akites.
Far-reaching promises.	Far reaching promises
N/A	Ululation/Ekaree
N/A	Busaa/local brew
N/A	Chicken feast/Millet food/

6.3.12. Covenant Objectives and Philosophy

The next generation in marriage for example, was the clear vision encompassed in the traditional Iteso covenants. Given that all societies acted primitively as it grew into the modern democracy and civilizations, and that violence was part of the social order, it was inherent to the society then, that the continuity of generations faced a danger of extinction. In Kenya today, there are societies that got extinguished for reasons like bordering civil wars, which denied the society family stability. Covenants in this scenario, provided immunity to the family and that kept the family in place. The security for the newly married woman, which was and still is a basis for the nuclear family institution for society's continuity at large, was provided. This would help the family be able to create the next generation. This same objective is observed among the ANE Hebrew covenants exemplified in all dimensions.

Behind all thes success, was the idea of the existence of a deity or a system of religion that provided a backstop, and influenced human behavior. The underlying objective therefore in the Iteso traditional covenants, was continuity and protection of the same. All factors including peace, unity social respect, family protection, etc, that were products of observing covenant relationships, were aimed at achieving continuity.

With the modern challenges among the Iteso people and the society at large, it becomes apparent that covenant relationships, much as they face serious challenges caused by post-modernism and unguided democracy, there is a need to reconsider the use of traditional covenants in the Iteso relationships. This calls for a need to strengthen the covenant type of relationship, Education for the young people through meetings, writing, and organizing traditional festivals to provide education to the population. Meetings should be encouraged to teach people about the Iteso culture.

It is a social need today to introduce the subject of covenants and covenant relationships within the formal education system, in a much better way than as provided, so that the young generation

can grow appreciating it for the betterment of society's relationships. Relationship Education needs to be strengthened for young people through meetings, writing, and organizing for traditional festivals to provide education to the population. Meetings should be encouraged to teach people about the Iteso culture.

The main objective of the covenant relationship among the Iteso people was to; **(i)** avoid infighting among the covenanters. This was protected by the vows and the words of the elders in the meeting. The presence of the gods in the process was significant. Any violation of the covenant stipulations was regarded as an offense against the gods, and curses would follow. This conditional approach to a relationship produced a kind of peace that lasted as long as the covenant was meant to last.

(ii). Peace with the gods was an objective to be achieved in covenant making among the Iteso people of the ancient days. After a covenant had been entered, it appears that the protection of its effectiveness was left at the security of the gods for the realization of the peace, unity, and cohesion objective.

(iii). Communal solidarity was an automatic outcome of a covenant relationship. Because covenant standards were closely observed equally from one corner of the society to the other, the community, regardless of the geographical location of an Iteso member, lived in the binding codes of the covenant across regions.

(iv). Social order was among the desired objectives. The council of elders and the witnesses who participated in the covenant enactment properly checked trespasses and disorderly behaviors.

(v). Security of thought, property and human life were among the objectives that the society enjoyed in the primitive age of the world's livelihood. It is observable that, although the practice came with punitive and extremity in certain social freedoms, the society enjoyed a lot of social relative prosperity, which formed the Iteso covenant philosophy. Little deviates from the Hebrew covenant relationship or none at all, since both the Iteso and Hebrew wanted to achieve the same objectives.

Summary: The comparison made above constitutes the main variations and similarities found between the Hebrew theology on covenants, and the traditional Iteso covenant relationships. The characteristics of the Iteso covenants appear to be highly influenced by their cultural activities. The uses of alcohol (busaa), and the use of local black foods and chicken, are clear indications of the cultural and environmental influence. Covenant infidelity does not happen in the absence of cultural influence. It then exonerates the comparative partner from the blame of deficiency, since every culture is superior only to itself, and cannot be compared to another. The following were compared, and the differences were observed:

Characteristics, elements, the theology of covenants, perity covenants, exeteuch covenants, covenant promises, father son aspects, declaration of God's will, human position before deity, initiation of new order, divine revelation and finally, the objectives and philosophies. The analysis made above indicates that the Hebrew theology of covenants, put the Hebrew covenants on a higher scale than the Iteso understanding and practice of covenants. The aspect of infidelity seems to be highly anticipated, hence ascribed to high penalties in both sides.

Conclusion: The Hebrew and the near East covenant practices which reflect the will of God, represent the harmonious way God intended His human race to live. It then plays out intuitively to all human family, that there is a need to live covenantly, even where covenants have not been structured. This intuitive characterization of a human being is responsible for the Iteso and the human society to embrace covenant life, even in their traditional and primitive ways. In the same way, it equally seems intuitive to all human beings that infidelity against any form of structured covenant, living or unstructured covenant life infidelity is offensive. This then begs for an answer to a question; what is the cause of infidelity?

The findings in chapter four and five above tend to suggest some possible courses of un-ending infidelity among human beings. (i) *Comparison*:- Genesis 31:1presents the concerns of Laban's sons, that surgests suggests a comparative envy. The sons' argument is that, what Jacob has now

is all from their father and comperatively, they now have nothing as all they had has gone with Jacob. Most infidelities experienced among people, is as a result of comparing wealth, family, power control etc. Among the Iteso people, boundaries are broken, and immorality is rampant, breaking stable families because of comparisons.

(ii) *Envy*: Genesis 31:5-13 is a conversation between Jacob and his women on the recent change of face between Laban and Jacob. The discussion indicates that the change in wages ten times, was occasioned by the blessings experienced by Jacob out of Laban's own wealth. Jacob conotends that he paid for all the destroyed animals of Laban out of his own (Gen 31:39), indicating that although Jacob's wealth increased, Laban did not lose that which belonged to him, but envy swallowed him and extended to his sons.

(iii) *Desire for control*: At Mt. Gilead, Laban still mentions that the daughters, the children, the flock, and all that Jacob had, belonged to him. (Gen 31:43) His desperate call for a covenant in verse 44, is nothing else but the feeling of losing control of all the wealth, including Jacob's everything.

(iv) *Iniquity/Sin*: In Gen 4:1-8 is a conversation leading to the death of Abel. Verse 7 indicates that sin is always crouching at man's door to do harm when under the influence of sin. As in the same Laban's countenance fell, so did Cain's countenance fall under the influence of sin to kill. Both Cain and Laban were filled with envy, though God pronounces Cain's condition as under the wooing of sin, Laban's and his children is no excemption. Strong's concordance (#2403) difines the Hebrew word **התה** (*hhatah*) to mean miss the mark or to fail, defines man as indeficient of moral rights by nature. The apostal Paul emphasizes this deficiency in man when he argues that man cannot do what he wants but instead always finds himself/herself doing that which he/she regrates doing (Rom 7:1-25). Infidelity then finds its route and origin in a natural human wickedness. Paul provides that through Christ, this challenge can be managed (Rom 7).

The whole solution goes back to the new covenant earlier advocated bt Prophet Jeremiah in his writings to the exiled. (Jer 31:31)

Solution: It seems so clear that the problem of infidelity arising out of the five points above, will find a solution when the sin problem is addressed. The prophets over and over again insisted that the solution to the sin disease was a new heart (Ezekiel 18:31, 36:26, Jer24:7, 32,39). The New Testament preachers did not miss out on this same theme of a new heart and a new spirit, that is not under the law (Rom 6:2-4, 6-7, Gal 2: 1-21). Infidelity then, which proceeds from a sinful heart engulfs all humanity. The institution of stipulations, much as it achieves by way of fear, does not eradicate infidelity in man.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE OLD TESTAMENT COVENANTS AND AITUTUKET

7.0. Introduction

Theological threads accompanying covenant relationships among the Hebrew people define the Hebrew covenant relationship as more of religious activity than all other segments of social matrices like political, economic, social, etc. The promises contained in the Hebrew covenant relationship between the Hebrews and their deity transcends time and age, giving it a more attractive value than the Iteso covenant relationship, that only attracts discipline and pain. The whole life of the Hebrews hung on their dependence on the covenant demands and promises. For the Iteso people to achieve this level and enjoy all the benefits, is a transformation that comes with a change of faith and practice.

Whether the Iteso people can learn from this and benefit equally is a deep turn of life, which will require a change of faith as did the proselyte Jews. However hard this might be, it remains a fact that trust in their gods will enhance their faithfulness to their covenants. The Iteso hence remains informed of the benefits of trusting in the true God, as far as covenant relationship is concerned.

This chapter presents lessons learnt from the Hebrew covenant relationships, which can inform the Iteso community on covenant relationship and infidelity.

Some of these lessons include family values, secrets of the heart, Deities and the covenants, cooperate decisions, dangers of covenant infidelity, Lessons from the Book of Lamentations 1:20, Political leadership formations, culture and covenant relationships, Infidelity and children, divine influence, forgiveness in covenant violations, human conditions- sin effects, promises, and salvation themes among others. It is perceived that these lessons will enrich the Iteso covenant relationships, in avoidance of covenant infidelity.

7.1. Theological insights

The issues arising from Ancient Near East and Hebrew societies that can inform the Iteso traditional covenant practices include:

(*i) Family values:*

The introduction of the narrative in Genesis 31, describes a family culture that is not grounded on social value systems. Laban is presented in the scriptures as one who was not a stranger to the religion of his uncle Ibrahim, though his actions describe a culture that respected no boundaries and rights in the way he treated Jacob and even his daughters (Genesis 31:5-7,14-16 (RSV))

The Hebrew tradition that kept Israel unique in the entire Mesopotamia, was a wave that engulfed the whole region to an extent that other communities admired the God of Israel. One of the fundamental statements of ethics in Israel was "respect your father and mother…." This statement extended to include all elderly people in society. Leviticus 19:32 (RSV) strongly informs the young to respect the elderly among them. The text included standing up in the presence of the elderly and showing respect for the aged… Leviticus 19:32, and Exodus 20:12 (RSV) talked of honoring parents with a promise of long life.

Elihu, son of Barachel the Buzite, confessed to the elders and said in a meeting "I am young in years and you are aged. Therefore, I was timid and a fraid to declare my opinion to you. I allowed years to speak…." Job 32:6-7. King Rehoboam consulted the elders… 1Kings 12:6 and Job 12:12, declares that wisdom is with the aged. Rachel's pleading to her father not to be displeased by her not standing, did not only speak of her being in the custom of women (Gen 31:35), but was also an indication that she was expected to stand when seeing her father, according to the tradition that she knew (Lev19:32). But she chose to violate the long-standing tradition and created her own custom of not standing before her father according to custom. Infidelity does not just stop at the structure. Some covenants are intuital in nature, but still make covenant demands.

It was therefore unacceptable for the sons of Laban to talk about their uncle, who is now their brother-in-law and relatively older than them in an intimidating manner. This act of the sons and the act of Rachel, all constitute a characterization of a derailed family value system. Whatever that was, it is clearly indicated that the sons of Laban had lost family and societal values as demonstrated in the utterances.

It also points to the fact that, much as sharing family information with the family members is important, caution should however be exercised to restrain from sharing information with a negative impression to the children, who may have not been party to the initial stages of the information source.

Covenants are binding engagements that affect the current and the future generations, hence needing cautionary handling. What comes out between the family of Jacob and the family of Laban is an indication of two different character displays. The Bible does not display anywhere in the Genesis 31 narrative, whether Jacob's children were part of the confrontation between Jacob and Laban's sons, nor does it display the reaction from Jacob's wives to their father on the mistreatment claims. Jacob's wives seem to have taken the character of Jacob by not confronting the elderly at all points.

Until Jacob calls them to the field for a consultation, the narrative is silent about the ladies at home. What the ladies raise in the field recorded in Gen31:14-15, as having lost everything and that nothing is left for them, suggests that they lived in a prison all this while not knowing what to do. They consider themselves strangers in their own land. Genesis 15:13 and Exodus 22:21 present two approaches to the way of handling strangers. To the Israelites, God who knew what goes on in the human mind, while in a strange land informs His elected community, that it is out of bounds for them to mistreat a stranger. The reason God gives is not that He will punish them for that, but that out of their own experience in Egypt, they should fulfill the second commandment well known to them but expounded more by Jesus in the NT (Math 22:39-40).

Jesus helped the Pharisees know that loving God alone was not enough, because one could not see God physically, but that loving God was supposed to be manifested in their love for physical beings. To Abraham, God declares that his descendants will be strangers in the land that is not theirs (Gen 15:13) and that while there, they will be oppressed and enslaved. These texts hint to what Jacob's wives went through.

On the contrary, Jacob is a busy man with his employers' assignments. He is oppressed and complains not. His children are neither part of the family war nor are they heard defending their father against Laban's infidelities to their father. Paul, in his teaching to the Ephesians, declares that strangers have no God, and hence have no hope. (Eff 2:12). These two experiences speak of two different families with two different backgrounds that affected their character, two different representations of deities, hence presenting an option to the Iteso people.

While Jacob is careful with whatever his family consumes, Laban's children know who their father's thieves are. They can even plan evil against their father's enemies who have enriched themselves with their father's wealth. While Jacob does not want his children to hear what he tells his wives, and so takes them to the bush to discuss issues with such far-reaching consequences, means there is no privacy in Laban's house. Jacob's family seems to have followed the Deuteronomic and Prophetic traditions and teachings on children to parental relationships. Isaiah 54:13 hints to the source of silence in Jacob's house while there was noise in Laban's house.

Deuteronomy 5:23, states that children who follow God's teachings will do well. The presentation of the two families in the narrative of Genesis 31, gives the Iteso people a direction on family life and securing children from family intoxication by way of family differences.
A covenant relationship is a product of an endeavor to inculcate the right covenants in the minds of both children and adults. Jacob seems to have scored high on matters of family management, that the Iteso have a reference.

Though the Iteso people through their traditional approaches to discipline, created fear in their children as a means of securing their respect to the parents and the elderly, the Hebrews used teaching of the word of God on their children as a way of developing their characters.

The Iteso people are informed that respect for the elderly is a source of order in the society, without which the family covenant relationships collapse. In poor family management therefore, infidelity can rock the family as none cares. No respect to the elderly, may lead to no respect to agreements and commitments.

(ii) Attitude reveals the hidden secrets of the heart and mind

Laban lived within the environment of spiritual teachings advanced through parables, as demonstrated in the Hebrew bible. Genesis 31:2, 5 display Laban's hidden character seen on his face. The book of Exodus 20:13 discourages murder in the strictest sense. To make the Sinaic covenant stipulation clearer and in a spiritual sense, (Exodus 20:13), Jesus explained the meaning of this stipulation by quoting the same text in the Old Testament, arguing that the popular understanding of the "Do not murder" stipulation that required two witnesses to prove, was a limited interpretation. The true interpretation according to Jesus is that what Laban expressed to Jacob through unfair countenance, was an act warranting judgment but hidden in an attitude. Math (5:21-22). Other emphases in the Old Testament include (Proverbs 17:22, 15:13 Psalms 5:17). It is also to be found that the commandment to love God with all thy heart, soul, and might, was to introduce the idea of undividedness in observing a covenant relationship. (Deuteronomy 6:5, 8:14)

To give a more spiritual meaning, Jesus even revealed that for those who believe and would like to give offerings/gifts of worship to God, their offerings/gift would only be meaningful if they left the gift on the altar and sought reconciliation before proceeding in to worship. (Math 5:21-23). Laban's countenance does not only present a threatening face to Jacob, but further goes beyond the known values of society. The Hebrew bible discourages bad attitudes towards each other, and this could be because of the covenant relationship that required honesty. It is also to be

seen, that Laban's fall of countenance was a protective gear to scare those whose rights he trode down upon, making demands. This character suppressed Jacob and his daughters from their rights.

The New Testament preachers made emphases on the subject of attitude in a more emphatic manner, because of its damage to covenant relationships. In Philippians 2:14-15, and 4:8-9, Paul urges the faithful to do all things without murmuring and disputing, that they may be blameless and harmless. Attitudes do not work with covenant relationships, just as it does not work in any relationship. The climax of the Genesis 31 narrative indicates that bitterness and self-defence affect all parties and can express themselves when subjected to high pressure. Until they are dropped in the way Laban dropped and sought a new covenant, infidelity in covenants will continue.

At Mount Gilead, both Jacob and Laban expressed their bitterness against covenant infidelity, with solid claims to each other. This expression demonstrates the value attached to the covenant relationship, and that these reactions only serve to demonstrate the frustrations of the losses and damages, that come with covenant relationship violations.

Important as this reaction demonstrates, covenant relationships need to be protected by all communities where love, peace, and togetherness are desired. Bitterness and revenge feelings do not support covenant relationships. Bitterness only serves to enhance grudges between the parties. The Iteso people will transform their covenant relationships if they emulate the Hebrew covenant practices, more so where the involvement of Yahweh is seen.

Jacob seems to have maintained his faith and teachings as taught to him by his father Isaac. Genesis 22 displays Isaac being offered as a sacrifice, and Jacob may have listened to this story replayed by Isaac to him. Jacob may have learned the character of humility, though in his youth, he did not live a life influenced by his father's history. Jacob's character in Laban's home is unique and totally transformed.

Whether this is due to his experience with Esau, or the amount of guilt that finally settled on his head after realizing that he had cheated on his father, is a matter of discernment. Though late, but what someone learned at a tender age may delay but will finally come to show. Jacob may have not comprehended the exact position he occupied in God's plans, but as time went by, he got it through pain. The attitude displayed by Laban can be accepted as a true manifestation of how the gods of Mesopotamia brought him up.

The Iteso people have an option of whom they want to influence their characters. Is it the God of Jacob or the god of the Iteso who too well knows that he cannot do what the God of Jacob can do? The god of Laban taught Laban that treachery equally pays, but at the end of the long journey, it might not pay but honesty pays. His freedom to keep changing his worker's salaries without a guilty consciousness was an indication that the god he worshiped had no issue with treachery. He may have been worshiping the god whose achievement was a result of the proceeds of dishonesty. The right choice of a deity is key to a covenant relationship in all ways.

(iii) The influence of deities on covenant relationships:

Every society demonstrates being under the influence of a deity. The Hittites, the Babylonians, the Assyrians, and the Egyptians discussed in chapter two above, are all seen being under the influence of their pantheons in all human activities. Among the Iteso people, *Akuj or edeke*-(*god*) was always seen controlling and influencing covenant relationships through the ancestors, who were perceived as the dead living among the living.

The ancestors understood to be living on the eastern side of the compass were believed to be present in every human activity, including covenant processes. This is more typical of the Hebrew God than any other religious grouping. The Hebrew holy literature books contained in the Pentateuch are dedicated to Yahweh and His relationship with the Israelites. Across the Hebrew bible, Yahweh is seen controlling the minds and decisions of those who confess Him as

their God. This phenomenon indicates that covenant relationships included the authority of God/gods across history at different levels.

The influence exerted upon covenant parties, depended on the recipients and that faithfulness to the commitment demanded by the covenant, which was somehow equal to the commitment to their God/god. This aspect of covenant processes seems to be the determining factor in covenant fidelity.

In the Laban-Jacob covenant relationship, we see Laban under the subjection of a divine influence in his behavior. Genesis 31:24, 29, is loudly spoken that God turned His influence to Laban in a dream, warning him not to speak to Jacob at all either good or bad. The confession of Laban that God visited him and that this visit influenced his reaction to Jacob, presents the power of divine influence in a covenant relationship.

The same influence follows the encounter in Mount Gilead, where Laban, and not Jacob initiates a covenant in the name of God, trusting that God's authority over Jacob is sufficient to minimize his worries about his departing daughters. (Gen 31:49-50). Laban's call for God to witness is a serious confession by Laban, that he trusts in Yahweh more than his gods that were stolen by Rachel. Verse 49 uses the *word* (Yahweh)-The Lord, while verse 50 uses the word **אלהים**(*e-lo him-God*) meaning that Laban is not referring to his gods, but to Yahweh, the God of Jacob whom he saw in a night dream (v24,29). He is actually using the word Lord God in the same sentence as used in the O.T.

The Iteso people then need to be more committed to their God, as they enter into a covenant relationship if covenant infidelity is to be minimized. The Power of Yahweh demonstrated in the Hebrew Bible is so amazing to the extent of what the Jews displayed in their life with the evil forces that surrounded them in Palestine. The discussion in chapter two and three above, reveal that Israel lived in the middle of a very polytheistic influence.

The Assyrians who worshiped the god of war, the Egyptians who worshiped the gods of fertility, and the Babylonians who worshiped Marduk, were all communities that had both economic and social influence. How the Israelites maintained their monotheism in the middle of such a big influence of polytheism, can only be explained by the power of Yahweh who remained alive in their minds. The outcome of their choice of Yahweh was to maintain a covenant relationship that made them unique in the region. Their children remained put in their traditional relationship with their parents. Their economic strength remained admirable to the neighborhood. Their relationship within and with their deity was steady though across challenges.

What energy the Israelites had to maintain a level eye on their God through a covenant relationship. The Iteso people have a choice to make on the influence they want to go with, into the journey of covenant relationship for the betterment of their society.

(iv) Cooperate decisions:

The traditional Iteso people do not consider women as co-partners in the family life journey. There are things a woman could be involved in, and there are those things that are masculine by tradition. Choosing what direction the family takes is not one of those decisions that women are involved in, among the Iteso people. Unless they are answering a question or prescribed by a covenant stipulation, example being that, there are those who conduct the *ekutet* covenant, their participation is partial. Jacob could have chosen to pack and go, given that God had assured him of His company on the way, without informing or letting His wives know. Genesis 31.4-16 gives Jacob a family life credit, for taking a deliberate move to include and involve his wives in the decision to move.

A decision with consequences such as this, that includes the dissolution of a covenant relationship between him and his uncle, could not have succeeded on Jacob's decision alone. Psalms 133:1, may have not been a straight saying to the people of Israel, that dwelling together brings joy. Working together as a family in covenant relationships, makes the relationship stronger.

It can be assumed here that even the children of Jacob were privy to the plans to move. There is no record of any of the children of Jacob, either responding to Laban's children or resisting to move.

Jacob's explanation seems to have been sufficient to convince them to move. One would wonder what could have happened had Jacob's children or wives resisted moving with Jacob. What could have happened if Jacob's wives resisted going with him? If Jacob was a careless man with words and his plans leaked into Laban's family earlier, even before Laban left for sheep sheering, what could happen?

Jacob answered all these questions in the privacy of his traditions. He was brought up in the tradition of boundaries between him and the elderly. His grandfather dealt carefully between him and his wife when sacrificing Isaac, his father. Jacob's early childhood training was sufficient for him to face the future with ease.

The Iteso people will learn that family leadership is an engraved science that comes much from parental examples painted in children during their growth experience. The effect of these lessons is the attention given to parents by their children, which constitutes family unity. Children learn permanent lessons by what they see their parents doing, than what they are taught by an external teacher and that is what guided the family of Jacob.

Chaos would have been the experience of Jacob in Laban's home every day that saw Jacob's salary was changed. When after working in the sun, fighting wild animals trying to protect Laban's flock from wild beasts, destruction and all he earned at the end of the toil was a harsh "No!" to him marrying Rachel. This treatment of Jacob is not just a one-time-off intimidation, but its repeated ten times to him. It is not done in a style that would have created the impression of "maybe it is a mistake that will not be repeated again" like today it is a shout, and tomorrow a denial, but one mistreatment ten times. This could have brought a pain in Jacob's feelings, that could have disrupted peace in Laban's family, but it was never seen even once. Jacob patiently

waited upon his God for the next move, and when the Lord visited, he involved his women. (Gen31:3-4) Jacob's calmness is a virtue to be emulated by all Iteso people and the society of all people at large.

(v) Covenant infidelity.

The Hebrew word transliterated *ormah*, phonetic spelling: (*or-maw'*) original word **(ארמאה)** pronounced *treachery* in English, would be translated to mean treason or violation of allegiance or faith or confidence (Marrion Webster dictionary). Its synonyms include deceit/infidelity/lying or unfaithfulness, which would well match the Hebrew word transliterated *hathal*, original~*haw-thal* used in Genesis 31:7 for the English word "deceived" and "changed"~transliterate *chalaph* (RSV) as having the meaning of *changed* (passing away).

The Aramaic word **האלאפ** (*chalaph*), presents an emphasis to the gravity of what Laban was continually doing to Jacob. The vocabulary used by Jacob to describe the depth of pain that he was going through as described in the words halach and *chalaph*, are stretched and *ormah*, moderates Laban's actions that bring the impression that Laban actually overturned the covenants of employment between him and Jacob, killed (*chalaph*) Jacob ten times by way of treason (*ormah*), and made it a habit ignoring Jacob's feelings. It is only when God observed all these and decided to intervene, that Jcob got relief (Strong's Concordance, 2498).

The impression created by Jacob in describing his experience, only matches the reason why he decided to do as he did with the divine call that he got from God, and that this experience explains why God chose to intervene. It also informs the Iteso people that for a relationship to be entered through a covenant, reasons are alongside its importance and value. Its commitment violation equals murder of the other party.

Jacob found the culture of covenant infidelity very strange and painful, and his culture of respecting covenant relationships inherited from his parents, met stiff resistance that cost him ten

times the damages of covenant relationship infidelity. Hoping things would change, Jacob persevered for 20 years (Gen 31:41) just to harvest the harsh confrontation from Laban's sons. Although Jacob behaved likewise in the treatment of his brother Esau, his culture did not entertain the character of covenant relationship infidelity, and hence caused his fleeing from the land of his ancestors to the ground with strange symbols. It then plays out that infidelity revenges itself. Because God condemns infidelity, God has a way of sending sense back to the offender, without throwing him out in a way that will inconvenience His intentions.

The Iteso people will find a lesson in this experience, that comes because of neglect and disobedience. Besides finding justice here on earth, the narrative in Genesis 31 presents another source of justice that comes with complete compensation. The challenge that resides with the Iteso divine compensation is that the Iteso god has no source of compensation to the oppressed. Yahweh watches over his people (Psalms 121:5-8) Is written as if it was meant for Jacob and it reads that "*The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: He shall preserve thysoul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth and even for ever more*" This assurance from the Lord, needs to lodge in every Iteso man and woman, as they face the challenges of infidelity. That indeed there is a God in heaven, who keeps a level eye upon His people and provides all solutions to their challenges.

(vi) The book of Lamentations 1:20

The book of Lamentations 1:20 presents a circumstance under wich remorse remains the only option if a relationship is to continue. The Lamenter says:

> "Behold O Lord, for I am in distress; My soul is in tumult; My heart is wrung within me because I have been very rebellious. In the street the sword berieves me; In the house, it is like death." (Lamentations 1:20 (RSV)).

Times such as the ones described in the verse above came to Laban's history, and by the path of his life, his response was similar.

> "Then Laban answered and said to Jacob "The daughters are my daughters, the children are my children, the flock are my flock, and all that you see is mine: but what can I do this day to these my daughters, or to their children whom they have born?" (Genesis 31:43 (RSV)).

Genesis (31:43). As discussed in chapter two and five above, covenant violators never found it easy within and without their people. The Hebrew God found a way of saving His covenant violators through the Levitical system of substitute through temple sacrifices.

Having known the pain that came with covenant violation, He also ordered for the six official houses of refuge, distributed across all the cities of Israel for such offenders. (Joshua 20:1-10). The law provided for accidental offenders, who would have faced instant death. (Exodus 21:13). Laban did not fail to see this opportunity as the only way to keep seeing his children alive. The Hebrew bible is full of such laments. Isaiah 66:2 states that,

> "All these things my hand has made and so all these things are mine says the Lord but this is the man to whom I will look, he that is humble and contraitin spirit and trembles at my word" Isaiah 66:2a

God promises to re-look into his situation when He says:

> "But to those who have not become contrite even to this day, have feared or walked in my law or my statutes which I have set before you and before your fathers." Isaiah 66:2b

Shall probably not find the grace of God. The Iteso people shall find avenues to redeem their covenant offenders, who unknowingly find themselves on the opposite side of the covenant relationship.

(*vii) Political and leadership formation*

The Hebrew political covenants kept Israel united, and by these covenants, they remained in power over a long spell of time. This informs the Iteso that their political organization can be

strengthened by employing some, and not all the Hebrew political covenant skills, in areas such as obedience to the leader here referred to as the Suzerain, loyalty to the ruling authority etc. This may not be conducted in a similar way the Hebrew did, but to the tune that unity, loyalty and obedience is achieved.

The Iteso people, whose political structure aligned well with their traditional covenants where the contestant, was unanimously appointed by the community, seems to have had the same principles with the Hebrew structure - Israel was always represented by one leader chosen among themselves, to lead them against the opponents as in the appointment of David by the elders. The current political democracy in Kenya has created competition that has challenged the traditional political arrangements geared by the traditional covenants. It however remains the most superior means of leadership selection that comes with order and satisfaction as opposed to the scrambling for power, as advanced by the current structural democracies. The Iteso people still owe, their traditional political system may not allow for the same to be practiced among the Iteso covenant political framework, for the achievement of unity during and after elections as done by the Hebrews.

The Iteso people still have an opportunity to learn from the Hebrew patterns of leadership, that God is still supreme in terms of leadership establishments. 2Samuel 7, still speaks to the Iteso that dynasty is still in God's arrangement of leadership, as discussed above. When leadership has been put in place, it only pays to recognize it as the divine arm of order on earth. The same concept was highly advocated for by the apostle Paul. (Rom:13).

(viii). Intercultural effects to covenant relationship

The land of Paddan Aram, which was part of the land of Aram Naharaim, is the local ground setting of the book of Genesis 31. It is also identified by Abraham as "the land of my birth" (Genesis 24:4, 25:20). If this becomes the land where Abraham hailed from, then the idea of Jacob's ancestors originating from Mesopotamia will be accommodated, because Aram

Naharaim was the whole land of Mesopotamia. Due to migrations, Abraham may have moved from Paddan Aram to Ur of the Chaldeans, later. This movement may be responsible for the changed character of Abraham and his offspring, portrayed in the life of Jacob, though challenged by some dishonest behavior describing a normal fallen being.

Though lost by nature, Jacob's tolerance of his uncle changing his salary ten times without expressing documented bitterness until threatened by Laban's sons, is an identity of a unique cultural background, to the God of Beersheba-Canaan. Laban, the brother to Rebekah, the wife of Abraham, is identified with the pagan religion of idolatry, where Jacob fled to after taking Esau's birth-right and lying to Isaac, their father, that he was Esau. Laban and his family, represent this society's cultural behavior in their relationships with each other.

Laban's character also represents the society's covenant relationship, tradition, and how the organization handled this bit of connection. It therefore poses a question of doubt whether cultural background can affect someone's observance to covenant relationship. It is quite clear that Abraham's character did not change when he moved to Ur, but that even as he administrated between himself and his son Lot, Abraham demonstrated remorse, which characterized his community and their culture of no confrontation, hoping that God would compensate where such confrontation would result in losses. (Gen 13).

The Iteso may therefore be informed of their acquired characters that may affect the original Iteso character, which may be reflected in the covenant relationships. The Hebrew book of Nehemiah 13 demonstrates how Nehemiah dismantled the Hebrew families that were formed from a mixture of other non-Hebrew origins, in fear of cultural erosion, which would affect covenant relationships long cherished. The Iteso may then learn that cultural mixture affects culturally cherished behaviour.

(ix). The effects of Character formation in children

The text presents a deep religious tradition that both societies appreciated. The people of Paddan Aram were polytheistic, and life depended on the direction of gods, as demonstrated by Laban in his search for his stolen teraphims.

The biggest challenge to the people of Aram, is how much their religion influenced their character in covenant relationships. Hostility and confrontation defined the people of Aram more than the people of Beersheba. On the other side, Jacob was a deep worshiper and believer of Yahweh, as demonstrated by his belief in the dream conversations with Yahweh's angels on behalf of Yahweh. These two societies faced challenges unique to their backgrounds, but Jacob's character reflected a different influence altogether.

Rebekah, the wife of Isaac, encouraging Jacob in his failures and directing Jacob to flee to her brother's home, may have been convinced that Jacob's character would fit into the feelings of her people and where she came from. Laban's character then finds a home in Rebekah, who tries to protect her son from what she knows as the origin. The challenge comes in, because Jacob is more of his paternal heritage than maternal influence, and the God of his paternal origin wins over the gods of Paddan Aram.

This circumstance denotes that character can be passed on, but a deep foundation can negate it, more so under the influence of a great God like Yahweh. It is common practice among the Iteso people to send children to be brought up by uncles and grandmothers. As much as character formation background promises strength of character, God did not entertain cultural mixture, particularly between the Hebrews and the Gentiles, for the very fact of character erosion. Jacob hard life in his uncle's home is a demonstration of character clash that the Iteso people should learn from and avoid sending children to be raised by any other, other than themselves.

(x). Divine influence:

It has come out from the discussions, that covenants in all cultures of society assumedly have always had a divine influence, either positively or negatively. The Iteso beliefs, have it that their fallen ancestors, venerated as they are, still have a great influence on the living, hence being referred to as gods. This belief leaves the Iteso people being polytheistic, hence heavily dependent on the dead to determine the direction of things within the living. The issue that the Iteso people will need to consider, is whether the influence they believe to be coming from the ancestors, is all they need, or whether they need the ANE-Hebrew God more than their ancestors, in terms of covenant relationships.

The Hebrew covenants present a relationship that is all about not only removing infidelity among people, but also working for the whole livelihood of those who enter into a covenant relationship with Him. The Hebrew God in His covenants, works more on making His partner escape the wrath of covenant infidelity through the provisions of sacrifices (Leviticus 1:1-2). Houses of refuge (Numbers 35:9-19), and many other means of reconciliations that were considered. The effect of the Hebrew Deity made it possible for the covenant partner to keep enjoying the relationship, even when issues of compliance to the stipulations arose. For those who had run to the houses of refuge, it was provided, that at a certain period in time, the victims would find themselves free and back in normalcy.

This same principle applied to the slaves in the concept of Jubilee (Leviticus 25) where the slaves have an opportunity to go back. The Iteso people have an opportunity to see the bounty blessings provided by the Hebrew Deity and join Yahweh for the maximum benefit of a covenant relationship.

(xi). Forgiveness option/grace /mercy

Both the Iteso and the Hittite covenants did not express a clear provision for forgiveness, and if one existed among the Iteso, it was too burdensome to a commoner. The Hebrew covenant

provides for full support from the Suzerain, where the Suzerain found that the Vassal could not measure up to the requirements of the covenant. (Gen 15:12-18)

This provision challenges the traditional Iteso covenant relationship, where the offender met with the wrath of the Suzerain in full coupled with curses. One may want to reason that, even though God provided escape options, He still punished offenders, yes however, what had gone in to save the offender from getting into the offense was in excess.

The same forgiveness runs in Yahweh's theme of relationships to the NT, where salvation comes to the world through Christ, who is an offering given by God to humanity free of charge. (John 3:16). The Iteso people need to see how they can institutionalize some provisions like processes of forgiveness, as part of the covenant relationship package. When it is still left at the mercy of the offended to determine whether to forgive or not, human weakness is then given a leeway, to create fear of confession and seeking forgiveness. The Hebrew God provided an elaborate means of facilitating forgiveness, to keep our society in order.

(xii). Human condition/sin effect

The Hebrew Bible narrates that man was created perfect and blameless, but upon involving themselves in sin, they became vulnerable to sin and the imagination of their thought was only evil continually (Gen 3:1-17, 6:5). This new status acquired by man, affected man in all character and behavioral patterns of relationships. The Greek word for sin transliterated by strong's concordance as *hamartia*, brings in the true condition of man. Strong's discuses the word hamartia as a self-originating power and self empowered and means forfeiture/missing the mark or simply failure. Rom (5:12-21) RSV Strongs (#266). The intrusion of sin into man's life streem, makes man naturally anable to obay stipulations. As contained within the meaning of the Greek word *parabasis* meaning *transgression/ going aside/overstepping / deviation/ willful disregard or going beyond a drown line or overstepping*, Strongs (#3847), Rom (5:14) RSV, man becomes disabled to obedience, and this affects covenant observance deeply. All covenants have been foud to servive under the protection of stipulations. If man therefore, wanting to do

well becomes a challenge naturally, a significant approach that will include faith in Jesus becomes inevitable in order to sustain a covenant relationship (Rom 7:25 (RSV)).

The Hebrew covenant relationship stands to create in man a new way of looking at things, correcting the attitude from inside, and creating a new person in reference to the righteousness of God. As quoted above, through the covenant relationship, God works in man from within, to create a new man as He reveals Himself to man.

This aspect of character change in man, by engaging in a covenant relationship, brings the best results in any relationship. The Iteso people will need this aspect in a relationship of any nature, since covenant infidelity is always associated with wrong habits that lead to wrong characters, and by entering into a covenant with Yahweh, the society will change.

(xiii). Promises

Promises were at the Centre of the Hebrew covenant relationship. The restoration of fallen humanity that happened in Eden, after sin plunged the completely human society and the creation at large into chaos, needed a process that came with time. Hence as discussed in chapter two above, the concept of covenant relationships that started in Eden was a process of a promise of restoration. It follows that all interludes found in Israel's life, were demonstrations of how God wanted His people to know that His promises are true and sure, hence, to Abraham, He promised what He finally fulfilled; the tribe of Judah and Benjamin.

He promised that after 70 years, they will go back but to Daniel, God promised resurrection of the dead, which was a sign of the promise given in Gen through Revelation, that restoration of humanity to Divine image is on the way. (Daniel 9,12). The Iteso people and their pantheon, cannot offer such a far-reaching promise to her people. The Iteso people have the opportunity of considering this type of covenant arrangement, for their benefit both in this life and in the life to come.

(xiv). Salvation theme

Besides other benefits found in the Hebrew covenant, the ultimate objective of a covenant relationship with Yahweh, is the *Parousia* victory that the Christian community is waiting for. This theme is reflected in all OT utterances that deal with promises.

As demonstrated above, the Hebrew covenant arrangement was a growing one. From Adam to Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David and to the exilic prophets that include Habakkuk, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, the theme of the second coming is loud, and does not hide. Daniel for example (Dan 12:1-3), is shown and explained the resurrection of the saints at the end of the world, a vision that was shown to Habakkuk (Hab 3).

After Daniel is assured of the resurrection, the day of Parousia, he is told to rest in peace. He is sent to the grave with a promise that the day is coming, when he will be resurrected. This reminds the Iteso people, that the end of a covenant relationship is not just here on earth, but salvation in Christ Jesus. That we are being introduced to a more covenant relationship that is yet to come, better than this that we struggle to achieve with sinful natures.

The Iteso people are likely to miss out in the salvation plan, if they persist in their covenant arrangement that does not promise salvation. Since their covenant relationship takes them to the ancestors who have no idea of the Salvation plan, and that they know they have no heaven to take people apart from *Kide*, (a place where all the dead go), the Iteso people have a risk of missing the grand fulfillment of all promises. Because of the Iteso belief that the dead do not really die, and that they change their living format from the physical being to the spirit form, which spirit is full of violence. This belief denies them the benefit of what is behind the covenant relationship, although they practice it. This discussion then acts to introduce the Biblical God of Abraham, Noah, David, and the rest of the believing biblical characters to the Iteso people for the full benefit of what covenant relationship is up to.

Conclusion: There are several lessons learnt from the Hebrew covenant relationships that can help the Iteso community in their covenant relationships. This chapter has unearthed significant lessons that include; family values, attitude exposure of the inside infidelity, the influence and effect of the Deity in a covenant relationship, cooperate decision ,covenant infidelity, remorse in covenant infidelity, , political and leadership influence in covenant relationship, culture and covenant relationship, effects of infidelity in children, Divine influence in covenants, forgivenes in covenant violations, sin and human condition, promises and salvation themes among others.

In consideration of what can be seen as the effect of covenant relationships among the Hebrews, which include strong unity that was and is experienced, strong economic power, preservation of culture and traditions, strong religious and social values included. The eradication of covenant infidelity though challenging, owing to the human and sin influence, presents to be minimal among the Hebrews compared to the Iteso people. It will be appreciated that the Iteso community will benefit from the findings listed and discussed above.

CHAPTER EIGHT
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.0 Introduction

Relationships are practices that are found in many ways uniting different species of creatures. Animals, birds, insects present observation of some laws of relationships that unite them. Simple phenomenology suggests that all living creatures have a relational pattern, and that the control center of this pattern is with the creator - God. Whether this pattern is a form of a conscious or unconcious covenant, is a matter left to their creator. It remains a fact that relationships are matters most influenced by forces beyond the related, and this leaves the whole arrangements of relationships and the covenants that sustain it, under divine influence.

The Iteso traditions present a highly effective covenant relationship culture that seems to engulf the wholistic life of an indigenous Iteso person. Covenant relationship among the Iteso has defined their social, political, religious, economic and institutional practices. The practice has created patterns that have guided the society to greater heights, though much can still be done to strengthen it. Marriage institution for example, carries most of the covenant relationship ties that have kept the Iteso people focused and intentional in their institutional and social life.

This section observed certain theological insights that can help the Iteso people in their covenant relationships as presented in the conclution bellow.

8.1 Conclusion

This research had five specific objectives that included:

(i) Analyzing the main elements of the Hebrew covenant relationship: It was found that though some elements were missing in some covenants, there were elements that cut across all covenants. These common elements included the Preamble that served as the opening speech of the Suzerain to the audience, and particularly the Vassal. This speech set to stage the relationship that is going to be bound by the covenant. It included the Suzerain's authority, the anticipated covenant, declaration of the covenant owner, summary of the Suzerain's influence, Title,

geneology, divine attributes among others. This was a very significant speech, meant to create confidence in the Vasal partner.

(ii) The next element was found to be the historical prologue, which gave the history of relationship between the Suzerain and the Vasal. This background was given by the Suzerain with the same purpose of creating confidence with the Vasal.

(iii) Stipulations or rules were the next elements in the Hebrew covenant that protected the whole covenant relationship. These rules were punitive enough to scare the subjects from covenant violations.

(iv) Curses. The next stipulation was the curses that were administered through the deities. This was meant to protect the violators from infidelity because they would be seen. (v) Blessings were the next of the elements meant to motivate the partner obedient to the Suzerain, among others. Other elements that could easily miss in other covenants as discussed in chapters two and three include public reading, storage, etc.

It was found that these elements constituted the firm foundation of the Hebrew and the ancient Near East communities including the Hittites. The close observation of these elements defined loyalty, unity, and the peace that was enjoyed by the communities. On the contrary, violations were heavily punished, leaving behind memories and so the need for compliance. The level of infidelity was minimal, probably because of these elements. The Iteso community has the latitude of seeing how their covenant relationships can be strengthened.

The next specific objective was to analyze the characteristical features of the traditional Iteso covenant relationships. The study found that the characteristical features of the traditional covenants included: A tree called *Etem* that served as the meeting place. This tree was not just any, but specific, once also viewed as the abode of gods. There seemed to be an agreement to be approved as the agenda of the day. Alchohol, to be called *ebusaa*, never missed as entertainment after the agreement is entered. Celebrations and sacrifices accompanied certain covenants among the Iteso Covenant features. Like the Hittites and the Hebrews, all five and more elements were

found in the Iteso covenants as discussed. The Iteso covenants were also found to enjoy the same security of the elements as did the ANE.

How the Hebrew covenants would inform the Iteso traditional covenant was the fourth objective, and as discussed in chapter seven, several lessons were observed, that if considered in the day-to-day life of the Iteso people would make a difference. Family values were key among the covenant relationships that would strengthen the Iteso traditional covenants.

The last objective was to find theological lessons that would strengthen the traditional iteso covenants. Chapter seven covered these objectives and developed indepth theological insights that will be shared with the Iteso people of Amukura Busia county, as a sample population to enrich the Iteso traditional covenants.

Covenants then demonstrate a feature need, found among all communities. As much as they could be named differently due to cultural differences, the function remained the same. As seen in the third objective, as demonstrated in chapter six, there was found slight variations between the Hebrew and the Iteso covenant relationships, which did not change the main covenant element.

The social fabric of the 21st century is such that, it lacks a relational grip, leading it to social bleeding day in day out, in terms of honesty and truthfulness. The covenants that united the society have been perceived as primitive, needing replacement. Nevertheless, the unfortunate comes in when the replacement, comes with human desire to satisfy that whiich the fallen human nature craves for. Unguided children freedom, Women liberation rights dubbed “it is our time”, all fighting men’s authority to guide the family and the society, ranks top in the social rot that is observed today. Corruption in the name of “being clever than them”, that has rendered the whole world population slaves of the few in advantaged positions, is a product of a society that has rubbished her ethics whic defines her moral strength.

The challenge is whether the society is ready to recant her current cherished moral decay, embrace covenant life in order to regain her relational bonds, while saving herself from the pain

of covenant infidelity, that comes with post-moderninsm. A society without social covenants is a society in a suicide corner. The world leadership needs to re-think on whether it is ready to go into a suicide corner, or redeem itself by returning to covenant life. The Hittite political covenants have demonstrated that human beings relate well to achieve unity and peace, through covenants that are bound by clear and well-articulated stipulations. Civilization as a parallel instrument of social growth in terms of integrity and positive relationships cannot be achieved in the absence of covenant characteristics. This research has demonstrated that as much as society has grown in terms of civilization, a level of covenant components must be maintained in all relationships. Modern civilizations hidden in democracy without covenant elements in a relationship, are the culprits of social decay observed in all human institutions, that includes marriage, religion, politics, and all levels where more than one person agrees on a common interest with another.

The Iteso people will need to consider that all relationships need covenants, however simple they may be. Hebrew covenants metamorphized into many levels when they linked them to their deity, and grew from simple covenants with few stipulations, to the same covenant but enhanced by many stipulations, totaling 6013 comprising of the decalogue, ceremonial and civil laws. The Iteso may equally need to enhance their covenants for longevity, either by way of embracing positive civilization, or by creating other laws to protect the current stipulations.

Other unique characteristics to the Hebrew covenants, include their use of covenant formulas to remind and affirm to the recipients of the covenant relationships of what their Suzerain did to them, and who He is to them. The Hebrew theology is a thread that runs through the Hebrew history and adds great value to the Hebrew covenant relationship. The power of the Hebrew covenant lies on the impact created by the life changing effect, when God breaks in to the lives of His people, molding them from within by way of His special revelation to them.

This aspect moves the Hebrew covenant relationship, from being an external agent of obedience characterized by pain inflicted to the covenant violators, to being an internal agent of change characterized by humility and unforced instinct of obedience to covenant stipulations, enhanced

by reference to their Deity. The physical actions of love and mercy expressed to the Hebrews by their Deity, which included the successful migration from Egypt to Canaan, the fall of the walls of Jericho, the crossing of the Rered Sea and the river Jordan, among many acts of good will, overwhelmed the hearts of the Hebrews. Hence confirming to them, that obedience to the covenant rule came with benefits unfit to ignore. This side of the Hebrew covenants superseded the Iteso reason of observing covenant relationship orders, leading them to becoming negligent of the requirements needed to uphold covenants in a relationship.

The Iteso people need to reconsider their relationship to their deity, before they strengthen their human relationship. On the other hand, the Jacob-Laban relationship is a true manifestation of a fallen human relationship character. Though challenging and subject to many interpretational speculations, the Jacob deity influence in the relationship cannot be ignored.

The God of Jacob is seen influencing restrain in both Jacob and Laban in the whole drama. They were both under divine influence not to harm each other, in the event of their high emotional outbursts. The Iteso covenants, though constituted with several gods, lack the life-changing effect compared to the Hebrew deity.

Looking at the traditional Iteso covenant relationship, one will see a long list of such covenants, indicating that the Iteso people lived a whole covenant lifestyle. They symbolized every such covenant, to ensure that meaning was not lost.

Michael Horton concludes the literary discussion on covenant relationships among both the Iteso and the ANE social life when he states,

> “We live in a world of broken promises. A fragile web of truthful communication and practical commitments connects us to one another, and when any part of that web comes under significant stress, the trust on which our relationships depend can easily break. Self-interest—that is, outright violation of our commitments ("what we have done," in the prayer of confession)— isn't all that tugs on this web; often the pursuit of things that are in themselves worthy but subordinate goods "what we have left undone") tug on it as well. Either way, we transgress the law of love”.

This statement emphasizes on the fragility of the society where covenants, whichever nature of covenants they are, are not under pressure. No doubt in modern society, not exempting the Iteso society, the general population today suffers from covenant breach, leading to social unrest caused by the pressure of infidelity mounted on its practice. The human society, both among the people of the ancient Hebrew world and the Iteso has had a need of covenant relationship, indicated by the presence of this practice across history. He further states that:

> "As Jesus reminds us, there is an inseparable connection between the' two tables" of the Law: love of God (the vertical dimension) and love of neighbor (the horizontal). In the fall of humanity in Adam, recapitulated in the history of Israel, human relationships fray as a result of prior infidelity to their covenant Lord. Yet before, during, and after humankind's broken promises, the promise-making and promise-keeping God is present and will not let the web fall apart) (Horton, 2006:9).

The statement by Horton is the hope of the world in terms of relationships that are covenantal in nature. As demonstrated in the Jacob Laban relationships, covenant infidelity strained a relationship that was both by blood and by employment codes. As an employer, Laban lost it when he engaged in salary cheats. The cost of such infidelity is never cheap but goes as far as losing one's very own child as Laban did. Horton was right when he further said that "God's very existence is covenantal: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit live in unceasing devotion to each other, reaching outward beyond the Godhead, to create a community of creatures serving as a giant analogy of the Godhead's relationship.

Created in the image of the Triune God, we are by nature outgoing, interdependent relationship establishers, finding ourselves in the other and not just in ourselves. Unlike the persons of the Trinity, we at one time did not exist. But when God did decide to create, his decree was not that of a lonely monarch, but of a delighted Father, Son, and Holy Spirit establishing a creaturely, finite analogy of their eternal giving and receiving relationship. We were not just created and

then *given* a covenant; we were created *as* covenant creatures—partners not in deity, to be sure, but in the drama that was about to unfold in history. As covenant creatures by nature, every person has a relationship with God, but there can be no doubt: everyone has a relationship with God, and that relationship is covenantal. Since that is true, it stands to reason, that we would want to know more about the nature of that relationship. Horton (2006:10-11). For human society to enjoy the benefit of God's intention in creating them, there stands a standard that cannot be ignored, without negative consequences, and that is the standard of faithfulness to all covenant relationships, and that this applies to all relationships - be it that of human to human, human to the rest of the creatures including animals, and between human and God.

The early chapters of the Hebrew Bible paint a picture of a human life well started and ordered by a divine intelligence that suggests an honest, faithful, and obedient human society. After creating Adam and Eve on the sixth day, the Hebrew bible says that "God looked at everything He had made and He was very pleased" (Gen 1:30 NLT) and this drove God into a special celebration, where He set aside the Seventh day as a Memorial Day, for the great work He had done, blessed the day, set it apart and stopped working because He had finished it all. (Gen 2:1-3). This perfect work of creation included the created human beings with the assignment of ruling the rest of the creation. Sincerity and honesty ruled the human mind, and society was expected to grow in a way of relating to each other faithfully.

As stated in chapter two above, even to the time of the Israelite's entry to Canaan, the society still manifested traits of honesty to each other, such that there was not much need for an elaborate covenant needed to affirm a decision and a promise, though sin had already introduced covenant infidelity to the human society. Without social genuineness, the human race suffers from all sorts of untruthfulness and its consequences. The Iteso people are not exempt from the challenges of social-relational infidelity, even in relationships that are bound by covenants. The observance of the covenant in a relationship is a needed social revival of the day and time.

8.2. Recommendations

1. More studies need to be conducted to ascertain the depth of influence the Iteso covenants have influenced the society. Much as the Iteso covenant relationship practices like punishments, marriage procedures etc., have faced out in the current society, there is still much that the society needs to find a way of re-introducing them to the society as presented in the lessons above. This can be actualized through further research of the Iteso people by way of the Ethnographical method, which will expose more details about the Iteso people and their hidden treasures.

2. Educate the Iteso society on the importance of observing the traditional covenants, since they form the foundation for human fidelity in covenant relationships. This aspect rests with the elite and the religious leaders, who should present the Biblical God to the Iteso people, with the view of transforming and moving the Iteso covenant relationship to the next level. This level will enable the Iteso people update their covenant relationships and benefit from the promises of Yahweh to those who embrace His covenant relationship.

3. Introduce the subject of Traditional Iteso Covenants in learning institutions to help in the early formation of the concept in young people. The Iteso covenant relationship structures and practices can well be integrated into our learning processes, for the full benefit of the future generations. Because elders are disappearing one after the other through death, yet these traditions have not been handed over to the next generations, the chances of losing these valuable practices are high.

4. Encourage the use of a council of elders in solving covenant relationship - related issues as a means of making it affordable and available, to avoid courts which can be expensive and prohibitive. In this approach, education on traditional Iteso covenants can reach the grassroots. The council of elders is still a working tool in many avenues and could be empowered to educate more on the subject of covenant relationship.

5. Use sports as an avenue of reaching the young, with the valuable message of how important covenant relationships are. Sports today carry the largest population of young people, who should be the custodians of these practices. This avenue can be explored, to see the possibilities of utilizing its avenues in advancing this knowledge.

REFERENCES

Aaron, J. (1988). *Insights on the Scripture*. New York, USA: Watchtower Bible Tracts Publishers.

Adeyemo, T. (2010). *African Bible Commentary*, Nairobi: World Alive Publishers

Akoto, D. D. (2014). *A Contemporary Mosaic Approach*. Nigeria: AuthorHouse Nigeria.

Alexander, T. D, & Baker, D.W. (2002). *Dictionary of The Old Testament Pentateuch*, Downers Grove Illinois: Intervarsity Press England.

Allen, C. M. (1987). *Eerdmans Bible Dictionary: An Old Testament Theology*. Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA.

Allen, M. (2017). *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*. SAGE Publications India.

Allen, R. (2008). *Cornerstone Bible Dictionary*. Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers.

Amanda, J. (1980). *'Will You Covenant to Marry Me? A Preliminary Look at a New Type of Marriage.'* Publius, Vol. 10 (4), pp. 71-81.

Anderson, W. (1999). *Contours of Old Testament Theology*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress.

Beckman, G. (1996). *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*. 2nd ed. Atlanta: Scholars Press.

Berry J. D. (2016)., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, Bellingham: Lexham Press,

Biblical Exegesis: 'An introductory overview: Introduction/Definition.' (No date). Scribd. Available at: https://www.scribd.com/document/483707352/Biblical-Exegesis (Accessed: 07 June 2023).

Botterweck, G. J., & Helmer, R. (1975). *Theological Dictionary of The Old Testament* W. Germany: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co

Brown, K. (No date). 'Covenant Marriage: A New Alternative for Traditional Families.' *Journal of Comparative Family Studies,* Vol. 31(3).

Bryce, T. (2005). *The Kingdom of the Hittites*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bryce, T., & Birkett-Rees, J. (2016). *Atlas of the Ancient Near East: From Prehistoric Times to the Roman Imperial Period*. New York: Routeledge.

Burns, E. M. (1991). *World Civilizations* A. 9th ed. New Delhi: Goyal Saab.

Burns, R., & Lerner, M. (1986). *'World Civilizations'*. New York: Norton and Company.

Butrick, G. A. (1952). *The interprators Bible* Vol.1. USA: Abingdon press

Carson, D. A., France R.T., Motyer, J. A. & Welhem, G. J. (1994). *New bible commentary*, Nottingham: IVP.

Christiansen, E. J. (1995). *The Covenant in Judaism And Paul* Netherlands: E. J. Brill, Laiden

Clements, R. E. (1978). *The OT theology,* Sankenfeld: John knock press USA (1978), *The meaning of Hesed in the Hebrew Bible*: Published on 3/29/2002, Harvard Semitic Museum.

Collins, B. J. (2007). *The Hittites and their world*. Washington, DC: Library of Congress Catalogue

Dumbrell, W. J. (nd), *Covenant and Creation*, Cape Town: Oxford University Press S.A

Eichrodt, W. (1961). *Theology of the Old Testament, Vol. One*, Britain: SCM press Ltd

Eichrodt, W. (1961). *Theology of the Old Testament.* Vol 1I. Philadelphia: Westminster Press.

Ellicott, C. J. (1905). *Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers- The Book of Genesis*, Available at https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/ebc/genesis.html.

Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988), 530–531. *Covenant In: Baker encyclopaedia of the Bible* Grand Rapids: Baker Book House. Vol (1), pp 530-531.

Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). *Covenant In: Baker encyclopaedia of the Bible* Grand Rapids: Baker Book House. Vol. (1), pp 530–531.

Emily, A., Schultz., E. A., & Robert, H. L. (2012). *Cultural Anthropology*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Exegetical method Bryant - Presby. Available at: https://www.presby.edu/doc/academicresources/Exegetical-Method-Bryant.pdf (Accessed: 26 September 2023).

Exegetical method (No date). Bryant - Presby. Available at: https://www.presby.edu/doc/academicresources/Exegetical-Method-Bryant.pdf (Accessed: 07 June 2023).

Felix Just, S. J. (nd) *Biblical exegesis: An introductory overview, Biblical Exegesis: Methods of Interpretation*. Available at: https://catholic-resources.org/Bible/Exegesis.htm (Accessed: 25 September 2023).

Finegan, J. (1969). *Light from the Ancient Past Volume. I*. Princeton: University press.

Finegan, J. (1976). *Light from the Ancient Past* Volume. II. Princeton: University press.

Freedman, D. N. (2000). *Dictionary of the Bible.* Michigan: Eardman publication co. USA

Gaebelein, F. E. (1990). *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Corporation

Galvin, K. M. (2010). *Making Connections*. England: Oxford University Press.

Gentry, P. J., & Wellum, J. S. (2012). *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, Wheaton: Crossway Press.

Gordon, M. (1980). '*Covenant, Polity, and Constitutionalism*'Source: Publius, Vol. 10(4):71-81.

Gorman, M. J. (2009). *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*, Grand Rapid: Baker academic, USA

Halley's, H. H. (1965). *Halley's Bible Handbook*, Michigan: Halley's Bible hand book publishers Zondervan publishing House USA.

Hartman, D., & Borowitz, E. (2012). *Contemporary Covenant Thought*. Boston: Academic Studies.

Henry's, M. (1991). *Commentary on the bible,* Virginia: Mat Donald publishing company M.C. lean, Virginia (KSA).

Hinson, D. F. (1997). *Old Testament Introduction: History of Israel*. London: United society for Christian Literature.

Horowitz, D. L. (2000). *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. London: California University Press.

Hurley, J. B. (1981). *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*. Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press.

James, B. (1981) *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*. Inter-varsity press, Great Britain.

James, O. R. R. (1915). *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (Vol 1-V) The Howard Severance Company, Chicago USA

John, V. R. (1965). *'Covenants and Assurance in early English Puritanism'* Church History Vol 34. (2):195-203.

Journal of Comparative Family Studies, (nd) Vol. 31 (3):385-394)

JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3329747. Accessed 27 Oct. 2022.

Katherine R. B., & Scott L. F. (2000). *Covenant Marriage, A New Alternative for Traditional Families.* Comparative Family Studies, 31(3), pp. 385-394.

Kathleen, M. G (1996)., *Making Connections,* USA: Roxbury publishing company

Kirwen, M. C. (2015). *African Culture, Cycle of Community and Communal Activities*. Nairobi: MIAS Publishers

Kurian, J. G. (2000). *'Ethnicity and Gender in Non-Traditional Family Forms: Studies of Families Pushing Normative Boundaries'* Stable URL http://www.jstor.org/stable/41603705 SUMMER 385-394

Lawrence, J. C. (1957). *The Iteso.* New York: Oxford University Press, New York, Toronto, USA. Longman, and Enns, P 2008 '*The Dictionary of The Old Testament*' *Wisdom, Poetry and Writings.* Intervarsity Press, Nottingham, England.

Lope, R. (2004)., *Israelite covenants in the light of Ancient M casterin covenant* (part 1 & 2)

Lopez, R., (2003). *Israelite Covenants in the Light of Ancient Near Eastern Covenants* (Part 1of 2). CTS, 9(2).

Lovid, R. W. (1980). 'Journal of religions', Go No 1 (Jan 1980) pp 1-16, Published, Chikago: The university of Chicago Press.

Lovin, R. W., (1980). *Covenantal relationships and political legitimacy*. Journal of Religions, 60 (1), pp. 1-16.

Mathews, K. A. (2005). *B.P Nashville*: Broad Man and Holman Publishers. Vol. (1).

Mathews, A. K., (2005). Genesis 11:27–50:26 New American Commentary Vol. 1B. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

McCarthy, M., & Dennis, J. (1965). '*Covenant in the Old Testament: The Present State of Inquiry*' The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 27, No. 3 (JULY 217-240).

Mendenhall, G. E. (1954). '*Covenant forms in Israelite tradition*'. *The biblical Archaeologists*. Pub by: The American schools of Oriental Research." Vol 17 No.3 Sept 1954 pp 50

Mieroop, M. V. D. (2007). *A History of the Ancient Near East*, ca. 3000-323 BC. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Moore, T. M. (2002) *Iwill be your God*., Philipsburg, U.S.A: P& R Publishing company,

Nichol, F. D. 1978 Seventh-day *Adventist Bible Dictio*nary, Review and Herald Publishing Association, USA.

Okalany, W. J., Omudong, P. D., & Egimu (1973). *The Iteso during the Asonya*'. Nairobi: East African Publishing House

Osmer, RR, (2008). *Practical Theology, An introduction*, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. U.K.

Peckham, J.C. (2021). *Divine Attributes,* Baker Publishing Group U.S.A

Pritchard, J.B. (1958). *The Ancient Near East Vol1, An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*Ney Jersey: Princeton University Press U.S.A

Redford, D. B., (2003). *The Wars in Syria and Palestine of Thutmose III*. Leiden: Brill.

Riemer, N. (1980). 'Covenant and the Federal Constitution.' *Publius*, Vol. (10):4, pp. 135–48.

Rosier, R.S. B. (2000). *'Covenant Marriage: A New Alternative for Traditional Families'*

Schultz, E. A. & Lavenda, H. R. (2012). *Cultural Anthropology,* New York: Oxford University, Press, USA.

Scott, B. (1997). *The Feasts of Israel*. New Jersey: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry Publishing House.

Sherman, R. (2015). *Covenant Community and The Spirit,* Michigan: Baker A cademic- a group of Baker Publishing Group.

Sherri, B., & Moloney, F. J. (2017). *Interpreting the Gospel and Letters of John*, W. B. Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing House U.S.A

Siegfried, H. H. (1979)., *Bible Dictionary*, Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Associetion, USA.

Siegfried, H. (1960). *Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Dictionary*. Hagerstown: Review & Herald Publishing.

Stuart, D. (2009). *Old Testament Exegesis*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, U.S.A.

Thompson, J. A. (1964)., *Ancient near Eastern Treaties and the Old Testaments*, Illinois: The Tyndel Press, Great Britain

Thompson, J. A., (1964). *Ancient near Eastern Treaties and the Old Testaments'*. Illinois: Tyndale Press,

Tumbull, C. M. (1976). *Man in Africa*. Jersey: Redwood Limited publishers.

Von-Rad, G. 1965 *Old Testaments Theology Vol. 11*, New York: Harper & Row Publishers

Von-Rad, G., (1965). *Old Testaments Theology* Vol. 11. New York: Harper & Row Publishers.

Von-Rohr, J., (No date). *Covenant and Assurance in Early English Puritanism. Church History*, 34(2), pp. 195-203.

Wallace, H. N, & McKenzie, S. L (1963). *Covenant themes in Malachi*, The Catholic Biblical quarterly, Vol. 45, (4):549-563.

Waltke, B. K, (2007). *An Old Testament Theology*, Michigan: Zondervan, Grand Rapids, U.S.A

Walton, H. J., & Victor, V.H. (1997). *Bible Background Commentary*, USA: Intervarsity Press

Walton, J. H. (2006). '*Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, Michigan: Downers Grove Baker Academic a division of Baker publishing Group USA.

Wardle, L D. (1987), '*The Constitution as Covenant*', Brigham Young University Studies, Vol. 27, (3):11-28.

Westermann, C. (1967). *Handbook of the Old Testaments*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House

Willard, M. & Swartley (2006). *Covenant of Peace*, Michigan: William Eerdmans Publishing U.K

Wiseman D. J, (2010). *New Bible Dictionary*. Nottingham: Intervarsity Press, England

Woude, A. S. V. D., (1986). *The world of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. Legal protocals - Research Licenses

(Government Research regulatory bodies Authorizations)

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: **303887**

Date of Issue: **15/May/2021**

RESEARCH LICENSE



This is to Certify that Mr.. Japheth Okware Ochorokodi of St. Paul's University, has been licensed to conduct research in Busia on the topic: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE HEBREW CONCEPT OF ??? ?? ? IN GENESIS 31:1- 55 AND THE CONCEPT OF AITUTUKET IN TRADITIONAL ITESO AGREEMENTS: THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS FOR ITESO COVENANT RELATIONSHIPS for the period ending : 15/May/2022.

License No: **NACOSTI/P/21/10140**

303887

Applicant Identification Number

Director General
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Verification QR Code

NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.

(i)

Research Authorization



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EARLY LEARNING AND BASIC EDUCATION

Telephone: 055-22152
Fax:055-22152
When replying please quote
Email:cdebusia@gmail.com

COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
BUSIA COUNTY
P.O. BOX 15 - 50400
BUSIA (K)

Ref No.
MOEST/BSA/CED/TR/RCT/4/6/(280))

10th September, 2021

Sub-County Director of Education
TESO SOUTH

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

This office is in receipt of letter from NACOTSI authorizing research on ***"A Comparative study of the Hebrew Concept of ?????? in Genesis 31:1-55 and the concept of Aitutuket in traditional Iteso agreements: Theological insights for Iteso covenant relationships"*** in your sub-county for the period ending **15th May, 2022.**

This is to inform you that **Mr. Japheth Okware Ochorokodi** has been authorized to conduct the research. Kindly accord him the necessary assistance.

BUSIA COUNTY
P. O. Box 15
BUSIA (K) - 50400

AWUOR T.A.
COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
BUSIA COUNTY

APPENDIX 2- MAPS



The physical geography of the Near East Bryce & Birkett-Rees, (2016:10)

(i) : The Ancient Near East



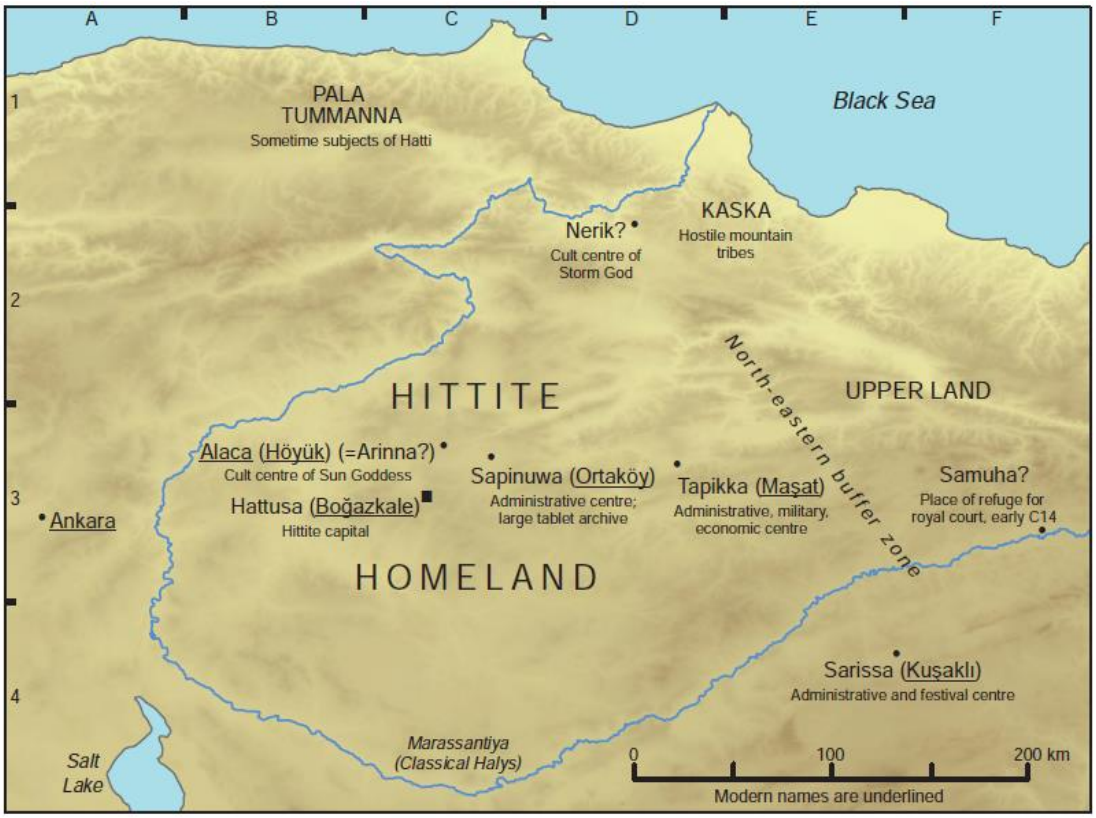
Selected Neolithic sites in the Near East Bryce & Birkett-Rees, (2016:24)

(ii)



Mid-14th Cent. Late Bronze Age Anatolia, North Syria, and Northern Mesopotamia (Trevor Bryce & Jessie Birkett-Rees, 2016:114).

(iii)



The Hittite homeland (Trevor Bryce & Jessie Birkett-Rees, 2016:115)

(iv)

APPENDIX 3

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH - PRELIMINARIES:

AITUTUKET AMONG THE ITESO PEOPLE AMUKURA SUBLOCATION (BUSIA COUNTY)

(i). Introduction

The Biblical account of covenant relationships and the in-depth study of the ANE (Hebrew and the Hittites) covenant relationship in the previous chapters ,led to the Anthropological study of the covenant relationships that existed among the Iteso people of Amukura as a select sample. The methodology suited for this study was Ethnography as discussed by Osmer. Osmer (2008:50-51) As indicated in chapter one, this chapter, and while using Ethnographical method of study in social sciences addressed the Iteso traditional practices of covenant relationships, with the view of comparing it with the ANE world practices of the same. It included interviews, group discussions and observations as testimonies by four different age groups that included ages 30-40, 41-50, 51-70, and 71-100.

(ii). Development of Instruments

The development of the preferred research instruments, was influenced by the selected methodology to be used in the research. The work of Bloor and Wood, Bowling (1997) and Kirklees Council, was consulted widely when developing these tools. These research tools included four parts that were used to capture all desired information. Data about the participant's background, including date of interview, name of the participant, county, location, sub-location, gender, age, profession, experience, religious affiliation and age brackets. This instrument was filled by all participants.

(iii). Methodology

As described by Osmer. R. R, Ethnographical study encompasses the systematic study of people and cultures, designed to explore cultural phenomena, where the researcher observes the society from the point of view of the subject under study, here referred to as covenant relationships. This method prefers that the researcher is also expected to examine observable patterns, behaviors,

customs and their ways of life. Osmer (2008:51). To fulfil the requirements of this methodology, the interview questions were structured in a way that brought out the Iteso cultural phenomena in reference to the Iteso *Aitutuket* life, observable customs, and behavior patterns of *Aitutuket* life as shown in the research body.

Data Collection Appendix 4.

Semi-structured tools

In this research, I borrowed from Bloor and Wood who appreciate the semi-structured presentation of tools used in data collection. This approach gives the respondent room to give his/her own stories in their own words and context. It is also used to identify points of view, beliefs, attitudes and experience. Bloor and wood (2006:104), Bowling (1997:336).

(i). Structured tools

This type of tool that expects short straight answers, was also used in this research to awaken the respondent's minds to the research interview questions. Just as semi-structured questions allow the respondent to go beyond the simple expected response, this method was useful to me in the sense that I wanted to know if the respondent knew the subject matter at the finger-tips. The interview questionnaire required a yes or no answer in this part of the interview. The questions were read and translated in to vernacular for the respondent's sake.

(i). Focus group tool

According to Bloor and wood, a focus group and as the words denotes, is a series of group discussion with different groups of individuals facilitated by a researcher. Bloor & Wood (1997:352-354). In order to facilitate this research, I facilitated several groups that included those in different age brackets and gender. Each group came to the prepared venue ready for the interview in their set time. It was well spelled out in the invitation letter and during the interview, on the level of responsibilities in the research, and benefits that came with the exercise. The benefits included provisions for Lunch, Transportation and a meeting place cost. According to

Bowling, this method is less inhibitive hence making it of choice to the research process. Bowling (1997:336).

(ii). Observation

I used this approach in my research to make more clarification and as Bowling says, this approach is used to understand ideas in a clearer way, than what the respondents can say. Bowling (1957: 336). Iteso traditional covenants have artefacts that needed literal physical observation, rather than merely hearing. Some of the artefacts were more binding than words could express.

(iv). Justification

As defined by Osmer, Ethnographical study is a social science exercise that brings in members of the society with the interest of observing their life patterns. Ethnography was therefore the method of choice to give concrete results in this research, as defined in chapter one. The instruments were therefore developed to include the main elements of the methodology and objective 3 and 4 that influenced research question 3 and 4 outlined in chapter 1.4 and 1.5.

(V). Permits/Approvals

An application to the research controlling body (NACOSTI) was made and successfully granted. (Appendix 1(i). This being a requirement, it was meant to set the first step towards qualitative research. For compliance purposes, the same permit was presented to other lower relevant government offices, including the county educational officer (Busia County), and upon presenting the NACOSTI permit to the county director of education, (Busia County), the county director of education wrote another approval (appendix 1). (ii) To be given to the sub-county director of education and the local administration.

(vi). Respondent Recruitment

An official visit was made to the local chief of the Amukura location, who delegated the responsibility to the assistant chief to provide the assistance that I need. On this visit, plans were laid down to create four groups of respondents, arranged by the order of their ages as follows:

Age	Participants
30-40	**20**
41-50	**15**
51-70	**10**
71-100	**5**

Table 1

Each group had a leader coordinating a team. The groups formed above constituted the focus groups for the interviews and discussions. This was then followed by the exercise of training the group leaders, on how the whole exercise would be conducted including the venues, dates, times and consent on the training day. The invitation letters were distributed, targeting 50 participants, 2 research assistants who were carefully selected to suit the exercise. The two assistants were of both male and female gender with university education, and with experience in similar exercises. One local administrator, (assistant chief) was of much assistance to create order in the exercise. The next step was the training, which was done to orient the participants with the research process.

(vii). Sessions

The sessions were conducted two hours each within 2 days, distributed into two sessions per day, to accommodate four sessions with one in the morning, and one in the afternoon as follows:

Date	Time	Age	Sample size
Day 1	10:00am-12:00pm	30-40	20 participants
	2:00pm-4:00pm	41-50	15 participants
Day 2	10:00am-12:00pm	51-70	10 participants
	2:00pm-4:00pm	71-100	5 participants

Table 2

Before the session began, all participants were required to hand in the consent document (appendix) showing that they agreed with the terms and conditions of the research as outlined in the invitation letter (appendix).

APPENDIX 5

(i). STUDY SAMPLE POPULATION: FOCUS GROUP OF 20 PARTICIPANTS AGES 30-40

Gender	Location	Sub-location	Religious Affiliation	Occupation	Age
Male	Amukura	Teso South	Catholic	Farmer	35
Female	Amukura	Amukura	Catholic	Security office	35
Male	Amukura	Amukura	ACK	Farmer	40
Female	Amukura	Kochek	Catholic	Farmer	40
Female	Amukura	Amukura	Catholic	Farmer	40
Male	Amukura	Amukura	Catholic	Farmer	38
Male	Amukura	Amukura	Christian	Business	34
Male	Amukura	Amukura	Christian	Teacher	30
Male	Amukura	Amukura	Christian	Farmer	36
Male	Amukura	Amukura	Christian	Farmer	31
Male	Amukura	Amukura	Christian	Farmer	31
Male	Amukura	Amukura	Christian	Teacher	31
Male	Amukura	Amukura	Christian	Farmer	33
Male	Amukura	Amukura	Christian	Farmer	37
Male	Amukura	Amukura	ACK	Farmer	31
Female	Amukura	Amukura	Christian	Farmer	33
Male	Amukura	Amukura	Christian	Security office	35
Male	Amukura	Atuket	Christian	Farmer	35
Female	Amukura	Amukura	Christian	Farmer	37

Male	Kotur	Kidera	Christian	Farmer	31
Female	Amukura	Atuket	Christian	Administration	39

(ii). STUDY FOCUS GROUP OF 15 PARTICIPANTS AGES 40-50

Gender	**Location**	**Sub-location**	**Religious Affiliation**	**Occupation**	**Age**
Female	Amukura	Amukura	Protestant	Farmer	33
Female	Amukura	Amukura	Catholic	Farmer	49
Female	Amukura	Amukura	Catholic	Mkulima	42
Female	Amukura	Amukura	Protestant	Farmer	40
Female	Amukura	Aturet	Protestant	Farmer	44
Female	Amukura	Aturet	Protestant	Farmer	44
Male	Amukura	Amukura	Protestant	Farmer	48
Male	Amukura	Amukura	Protestant	Community worker	50
Female	Amukura	Amukura	Christian	Farmer	45
Female	Amukura	Aturet	Salvation Army	Farmer	46
Male	Amukura	Amukura	Protestant	Farmer	44
Male	Amukura	Amukura	Catholic	Farmer	41
Male	Amukura	Amukura	Catholic	Teacher	43
Male	Amukura	Amukura	Christian	Farmer	41
Female	Amukura	Kochek	Christian	Farmer	44

(iii). STUDY SAMPLE FOCUS GROUP OF 10 PARTICIPANTS AGES 50-70

Title	Location	Sub-location	Christian Affiliation	Occupation	Age
Male	Amukura	Amukura	Christian	Farmer	56
Female	Amukura	Amukura	ACK	Farmer	55
Male	Amukura	Amukura	Catholic	Farmer	63
Male	Amukura	Amukura	Christian	Farmer	52
Male	Amukura	Amukura	Catholic	Farmer	68
Male	Amukura	Amukura	ACK	Farmer	60
Female	Amukura	Amukura	Catholic	Farmer	61
Male	Amukura	Amukura	Catholic	Farmer	53
Male	Amukura	Amukura	Catholic	Farmer	58
Male	Amukura	Amukura	Christian	Farmer	53

(iv). STUDY SAMPLE FOCUS GROUP OF 5 PARTICIPANTS AGES 70 -100

Title	Location	Sub-location	Christian Affiliation	Occupation	Age
Male	Amukura	Aturet	Pentecost	Business	73
Male	Amukura	Amukura	Christian	Farmer	75
Male	Amukura	Amukura	Catholic	Farmer	80
Female	Amukura	Amukura	Pentecost	Farmer	75
Male	Lwandanyi	Chebukuyi	ACK	Retired Evangelist	73

APPENDIX: 6

RESPONDENTS AND THEIR RESPONSES

(i). Interview Guide

The interview *questions* were both structured and Semi-Structured in nature and were both closed and open ended. The first interview tool had structured questions, requiring a Yes/No answer, While the subsequent tools all had semi-structured questions, requiring discussions. They began with yes / no questions, and gradually moved to leading questions, and finally to essay questions. The interviews tested on the following areas of *Aitutuket*: Question 1-2. tested on knowledge and contact of *Aitutuket*, Qn 3-4 tested on the Practical use and Attitude towards the concept of *Aitutuket.* Qn 5-6 tested on the desire levels to discourage or encourage the usage of *Aitutuket*, Qn. 7 tested on the recommendation to have *Aitutuket* given more popularity and Qn. 8-10 tested on advocacy desires. As expected by the researcher the interview revealed more on the elements to be found in social, economic, political and religious covenants. The duration of the interview was between two hours to three hours.

(ii). Section one of the interview questions/guide

Summary of Respondents Age Brackets According to each Question

AGE	**30-40**		**41-50**		**51-70**		**71-100**	
QUESTION NUMBER	**YES**	**NO**	**YES**	**NO**	**YES**	**NO**	**YES**	**NO**
1	19	1	14	1	4	6	5	0
2	19	1	15	0	10	0	5	0
3	19	1	15	0	9	1	5	0
4	9	11	9	6	2	8	5	0
5	19	1	15	0	10	0	5	0
6	20	0	14	0	10	0	5	0

7	20	0	15	0	10	0	5	0
8	19	1	15	0	10	0	5	0
9	15	5	1	14	9	1	1	4
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS	20		15		10		5	

(iii). Summary of Respondents to section one of the interview questions

QUESTION	YES	NO
1	42	8
2	49	1
3	48	2
4	25	25
5	49	1
6	49	Did not mark
7	50	Did not mark
8	49	1
9	26	24

(iv). Thematic Framework (Indexing)

Ritchie and Lewis describe "Thematic Framework" to mean the central component of the method used to classify and organize data according to key themes, concepts and emergent categories. This approach to qualitative data analysis and study leaves the process dependent on the type of research undertaken, to have its own thematic framework. According to them, each study has a distinct thematic framework, comprising of a series of main themes subdivided by succession of related subtopics. Ritchie and Lewis (2013:220) For the successful analysis of this data, I chose to break the received data using the Thematic framework approach as proceeded bellow.

APPENDIX: 7

DATA PRESENTATION: (Focus Group Discussion sessions)

(i). AGE GROUP 30-40

AG:Age group

R:Respondent in the Data presentation and analysis

Qn. 1. Mention some of the known covenants '*Aitutuket*' that you know among the lteso people of Amukura village.

Aitutuket was an agreement made by the elders from two families for the good of the two people in Marriage. Relatives would not get married, but if they did, they wouldn't live a happy life, hence there could be no agreement as such. Paying of dowry involved two families, that is; the lady's family and the man's family. It was also a known agreement that church leaders could also meet, sit and agree on what can lead the church to move forward. They cannot by themselves do everything without agreeing with the lower people. It was also agreed that, whatever the father agreed would be taken as the final word and that the mother, children, and everyone else, were obliged to agree. A specific tree designated as the meeting place for meetings was the courtroom. It was called *Etem*

A covenant is a commandment that cannot be broken.

1. Siblings cannot marry each other.

2. An elder cannot display his private parts to the children.

Boundaries: This was sealed by planting of sisal under a vow that characterized a covenant. Three parties, who all held the sisal and slowly planted it, did the planting.

1.) The three parties were the seller, the buyer and a witness. Whosoever uprooted the sisal wouldbe cursed.

2. Leadership - This was done when they had more than two people contesting for a given position. Elders would have a special sitting and agree on the way forward. The agreement was formal, and violating it would mean violating the dictates of the ancestors who witnessed. 3. Chiefs also had agreements done between people within his area and people would agree.

Treatment. *Evwanit* ceremony. It happened when there was continuous sickness in the family. It took place in the following manner; A lady would go to their home, a cow will be slaughtered, and the woman made to carry meat on her head, with a piece of the colon hanging on her back. The intestines containing animal waste would be drip all over her back. If she had a young baby, she'd be carry the baby on her back all the way to her home. 2. Naming. exhuming the dead.

Ekitai - This was done through faming. The community would go and help each other cultivate their lands. This was a social agreement, participated by all concerned members. Those who failed to attend to the call were punished by denying them food at the time of their need. 2. If a woman died before completing some dowry payments, there was not going to be a burial ceremony.

Inheritance -'*Ekurumane'* Involved women inheritance. This was done in a very formal way that its violation would result negatively on the violators.

Akitutukin - If a woman died and she was known to be responsible, the sister would be brought as a replacement. It was also practiced in that, when two parties fought and one died in the process, they would go and inter-marry as a sign of covering the enmity. This brought unity among the members.

There was an agreement in that, if twins are born, males would be named after the uncles, (Amai), and the females will be named after the aunties, (aja). The names of the responsible people would be used. Evil people were not named e.g. thieves, night runners witches were not named. This was done by the council of elders and *busaa* never missed, *ugali* and meat were there.

Ebela: If a child was born and sickness persisted, a stick to be called *ebela* was gotten. This stick was used to escort the wife/mother to their home carrying finger millet up to their home and this stick was roughly crushed (*akikisikis*)to get some chips, that would be mixed with animal oil and the be smeared on the child, and the child would be healed. *Ebela* sickness was caused by a broken stipulation by the people from the mothers' side, causing sickness to the

child. 2. Akou: this was a cow given when a woman died, without which no burial was conducted.

Summary: *1. Atikokin. 2.Egwasit. 3. Emanyit. 4. Ebela. 5. Eukor* and land subdivision. 6. *Ekirumane*. 7.Brothers marriage. 8. *Akou* 9. *Imwatok*. 10 A ramar (Kumbukumbu). 11. *Akilongar* after death.

Qn. 2. How were they implemented? Explain the process in point form.

As explained when mentioned in Question One above.

Qn. 3. Explain the following terms (If they were found among the *Aitutuket* above during their implementation). Introduction of *Aitutuket* – This term was complemented by the Iteso word *Alimor*. *Alimor* is the English word for the introduction. The chairman of the Aitutuket introduced everyone by name and the portfolio that brought him there. 2. Historical prologue - A brief history of the two parties was entertained by the chairman as each spoke about himself. 3. Curses- curses were part and parcel of every covenant as they believed that the language of the ancestors was to bless or curse 4. Blessings- Just like curses were, so were the blessings part and parcel of the covenant process. 5. Witnesses- Yes, some covenants needed witnesses while some didn't. 6. gods – gods were ever present in every covenant process. 7. Custody- Not much was kept in the form of documents as much was curried by the witnesses by memory. 7. periodical reading- there was no periodical reading of the covenant though some covenants could be quoted in subsequent meetings of a covenant nature. Other practices by the Iteso during the covenant process included the agenda or the agreement itself. Curses were always pronounced as a result of violating stipulations.

About marriage. A girl who would be married is one who respected the family. This marriage could be conducted way after the two have already stayed as wife and husband. Marriage among the Iteso meant dowry payment and not coming to stay per se. The boy would inform his family about him being ready to pay dowry in an official seating. After agreeing with the father then his clansmen would form a seating to plan for the same. One member of the

family would be sent (*Okeju*) to the girl's home informing them of their intentions. The boy to marry would be called *Omanya.*

The boy would not accompany the rest of the team for dowry payment. On the dowry payment day, some special stick known as *Ekimeng'* would be used. The stick would go in a pair. One would remain at the girl's home to show that one of the daughters is already bought or paid for, and one would be brought back together with the ropes, to show that a boy has fully married in this home. A cock would be given from the girl's home to be taken to the boy. Animals' ropes, the stick and a cock would be taken back to the boy's home.

The stick would be hanged in the father's house, meaning the father has accepted the girl at home. *Aparas* tree was used for cursing and *akimeng* for blessings.

When time to marry came and the boy wanted to marry, the boy is the one who initiated the move by going to the father to ask him for assistance. During dowry payment, an old man would throw his walking stick across his herd, then walk towards the herd where the stick was and drive out the herd that range out for dowry payment. Among the animals, there's always one that's so stubborn. That animal would be chosen to lead the rest as they leave the compound. It gets the elders' blessings to lead the rest well.

After a girl's marriage, young boys would be sent to her home pretending to be delivering some of her clothes, when the main agenda was to confirm if the home had grass. Availability of grass meant cows exist in that home. It would tell if the lady had gotten married in a good home that would pay dowry or not.

Atikokin: Family leaders met and discussed the matter at hand touching on the bereaved family on how the family will be appeased. If they agreed, they would take reports to their families. Then if it was through natural death, the family of the lost wife would talk to one of their daughters, to go and assist her late sister's children, though the boy knew that he was brought a wife. It was the same procedure if one killed someone. The family of the bereaved would go for negotiation.

When relatives got married, the elders would organize a ceremony called (*Akitiak/akisur*). A hut made of something like dry maize plantation was built in the bush, then

the two parties would be taken to the place. They set the house using (*amela*) on fire then the two took off as people screamed calling them, *Ikacudak* (evil people). In a situation where the two might have had children, they would stay at the mother's home. No claiming. And if the two got back together, they wouldn't have a stable family. Their children would be of misfortune. Such people would end up being disowned by the family.

Qn4. Briefly Explain how *Aitutuket* offenders were treated among the Iteso people of Amukura.

Such people were taken before the clan chairman and not to the civil powers, and if convicted, such were banished from homes to other villages.

If convicted, and if he knew that the offence is true, the offender had a chance to apologize and ask for forgiveness and be forgiven.

Before reaching the leaders of the clan, the father pronounced a curse by washing his hands saying, 'because you have refused to listen to me, the world will now teach you'. If you repeated the same mistake, the father would give two people and the leaders would give two people to beat him saying, 'because you refused to listen to my advice, let the outsiders deal with you'.

Qn. 5. How many times have you used *Aitutuket*, and in which situations? Mention them.

Land demarcation. In a case where one party was not satisfied, he would reach out to the elders complaining as to why there's no equality in the sharing and it would be sorted amicably. The boundary was dismantled and a new boundary was drawn.

Whenever a person wanted to buy land, he sought for information from one neighbor who would inform him of the goodness of that land or where a good land could be found. One would get information about an existing item before he came to make an agreement over it. This information came from a friend who knew the buyer so well. The buyer would then meet the seller and then to the village elder. The village elder would then go the assistant chief where documentation begins. Then to the D.O. where there would be a meeting to secure a consent towards payment in the lands office.

Sale of land was a family matter. A family was consulted before selling land and the size of the family was considered lest the boys be stranded at some point.

Before the man of the house sold a family property, he would get the family informed and proper consultation between the family was done and agreed over the same before the exercise takes place. When making payment, the buyer would hand over the money to the son. The son would then hand it to the mother, then the mother hands it over to the father, the father would finally give it back to the mother to keep. The mother was the one who kept the money on behalf of the family. If the mother wanted to use the money for whatever, she had to seek for permission from the father.

If a married woman died and left children behind, the children would not visit their grandmother or uncle's till they plan for a grand entry. *Busaa* was prepared and people ate and after eating, they would be escorted back home and the same style of eating followed.

When your parents gave land, normally it would depend mostly on how you had been relating. Some went to an extent of giving you a small piece of land, due to the characters you had shown them. The beneficiary would not increase that parcel, and if you did, it had consequences.

Qn. 6. What were the benefits or achievements of this approach (*Aitutuket*) to your relationships?

It brought wisdom and wealth.

It brought respect and peace in the community.

lt brought a sense of responsibility.

The good thing that I found when marrying is that I spoke to my wife and followed all the procedures required and has led me to a happy life because I followed all procedures.

I got to know that there is a meaning if you have been given your land you cannot tamper with the boundary. Whatever has been given to you, don't extend. If you want to add with your own means, it is up to you.

The good thing I saw in the covenant relationship was that it helped me see a good girl.

It helps people fulfill promises 2. Helps people respect the law.

Achieve peace, Love, work hard and leads to wealth, No u*kora*/trickery.

Qn. 7. What were the challenges experienced in this approach to relationships?

It denied individuals participations in social meetings because of their behavior..

If you were lustful, the penalty was very punitive.

Those who married relatives attracted very unfortunate families by giving birth to wrong children etc.

Led to forced marriages that led to no love in that marriage.

It led to punitive life of no permission to act as you wish, but at the wishes of the covenant. 2. Leads to extra carefulness on whatever you do probably denying on the freedom of thinking. 3. Time wasting following procedures instead of just going straight to what you want.

Challenges of culture integration because of rigidity to one's traditions.

Disagreements in the society, and in meetings in situations where one didn't respect the agreements.

If you went against the covenant, you would give birth to abnormal children.

Getting married to a woman or a guy was not your choice.

It limited you from doing some of the things that you thought of in person yet it made one

Time wasting.

Cultural differences.

Qn. 8. What solutions to the challenges would you recommend to the Iteso society in order to strengthen relationships in the society?

Qn. 9. Demonstrate the practical usage of *Aitutuket* in at least one covenant e.g. for peace, marriage, acquisition of property etc.

As explained in the discussion above.

Qn. 10. Present some of the Iteso symbols/artefacts used in a covenant making process. At least five in each category.

Atenus/Drum-communication in different styles to mean something else e.g. *Imwatuk*. *Aluti* - Like a drum but goes far but mostly in war or celebration e.g. *Akwara*-war, when a man dies, one of the family elected person to inherit would put a spear at the door of the late to show that the house is already inherited. *Akim*, *Apuru*, *Amaran ketom*, *Aparas Ekimeng*, *Emukule*-blessing in marriage e.g. Evasit, blood was expected on it the first morning of marriage to

demonstrate virginity. *Aking'ol*, *Ekisu*, *Akitukeare*, *Ekisala*, *Aking'ol*-given to a newly married woman when going to her new home to use as a count er medicine for sickness.

Local brew- was for appeasing the ancestors.

Grass- was a symbol of Marriage.

Skin - was used as a chair during a ceremony i.e., inheritance, a sign of a good herdsman. It also got used in confirming if a lady was a virgin before marriage. The couple would be given the skin to use for the night and if blood was found on it in the morning, then the lady was considered a virgin.

Bones - Used for traditional ritual (*akigwan*).

Drum - For music during celebrations.

Horn- used for communication and playing music.

Chair (*Ekisala*) - this chair was used mainly used by senior people in the community.

Spear- Was placed outside the door to show that house had a man. No one would come to inherit the lady of that home.

Qn. 11: Briefly describe what were the key features of the Iteso covenant.

A group of people must attend and sit in a meeting called *Etem*. *Etem* was the official court-hall where agreements/covenants were done or made. Speeches were made in an orderly way beginning with the one with the interest. He would justify why and how the interest was developed. In this meeting, it was assumed that the dead were unseeingly present.

Local brew should be available.

Eating.

Peace.

Qn. 12. In your own assessment do you feel the society of today needs *Aitutuket*?

Ending relatives inter-marrying would reduce the rate of curses in the community.

Dowry payment brings peace and blessings in the family.

Shows us the importance of staying in harmony.

It helps the bachelors in the community to get a wife through inheritance or other arrangements.

It reduces the rate of calamities in the community.

Qn. 13. What were the similarities between the Iteso covenant and the Christian covenants of today.

Marriage - paying dowry, weddings.

Both give advice to the community.

Both sides advocate for peace.

Both advocate for naming.

Qn14. What were the underlying objectives of the relationships archived through a covenant.

Living in peace.

To build a future generation that's peaceful.

Qn. 15. What would happen if there were no *Aitutuket* in Amukura

It would have created a bad reputation, like fighting and many other unfortunate characters.

Too many indiscipline cases.

Families would be scattered.

Qn. 16. Give recommendations about the use of *Aitutuket*

It should be practiced since it has brought some sense in people's families.

Encourage everyone to adhere to covenants.

It's a way of instilling discipline.

(ii). AGE GROUP 40-50:

Qn. 1. Mention some of the known *Aitutuket* you know among the Iteso of Amukura.

Akipukokin. When you give someone your animals to take care of, your reward was a cow and not money. Elders sat and said that can we give that man to take care of our cow? Let us go and ask him. If it was agreed, then it was done on an agreement. It could be a cow per year or whichever way you agreed. If the agreement was breached, either the animals would die. That is, if the owner refuses to acknowledge the agreement, or you would face other family calamities. In this situation, to appease the ancestors, the family of the complainant would go and appease the

spirits on a specific tree called *Emoris* with a spear then the calamities would end. The person performing the ritual would not look back as he left the rituals site.

Abanya – When a person felt that he was over pressed by some burdens of this life, he would go to his colleague and request for a cow or so that he may sell it and solve his problems. Again, elders met and sat to determine the request. If it was agreeable to give him a property, then that was done on an *Aitutuket* arrangement. An agreement was done when someone borrowed an item. It involved the community elder, the lender and the borrower. Witnesses were invited.

Emanyit - (A*suti*) When it was noticed that one's daughter is missing; a meeting of elders is called and resolution is made to visit the possible home where the daughter is. This was called *Asut.* This is the act of following a daughter who is married before the marrying family comes to the parents of the girl. It is meant to close doors between the two families and enter in to an agreement for the good of the young family. This took place when a girl got married without the husband visiting her father's home. The father would get a few friends then visit where she was married. When he visited, they always sat down and agreed on the way forward.

In the past, there came circumstances that a girl could get married without telling her parents, and the parents of the boy also kept silent about it. If the family of the girl got to know, the father of the girl took her brother and the boys who called this girl their sister and went to the boy's home. It was done by a select group of brothers and uncles. When they arrived and the boy agrees that he has married, and the father of the boy says his son is married, a ceremony followed and all those who went were given a gift, ranging from a goat to cocks. The father was given a cock. This was to identify that the daughter has come here.

Dowry payment - When a man was ready to pay dowry, he would approach his father who invited his team for further discussion. The clan would help in contributing cows for dowry. After meeting, a letter would be sent to the girl's home by a messenger(*Okeju*). He would deliver the letter after which the girl's family would also respond. On the dowry payment day, the team moving with the cows goes first, then other negotiators escorting them would follow. When they arrived at the girl's home, the two teams would sit somewhere under a tree and negotiate for the

dowry before any other programs took place. The negotiation team involved about 5 people from each side.

After they came into an agreement, the team would then be invited into the house.
It was also believed that the first wife was a community property, hence they would pay dowry for you. The second wife was a personal leisure so one would pay dowry by himself. Sometimes, animals were taken to a girl's home in advance without the girl knowing the purpose. They would later kidnap her and take her to the boy's home hence she was now married.

Some parents started by being family friends and one would take cows to the other family '*akipukokin*'. The animals were not just taken to be looked after, it was an advance dowry payment. The two families would share the interest and agree. The girl would be taken by the boys' team then a ritual would be performed. This ritual was called *Akigwan*. Some oil was smeared on her to say that she cannot go back. After the ritual, the lady would not go back to their home. If for any reason that girl died, the girl's family would still meet and say, our relationship was very good. We will still take another daughter to that family because of the former relationship (Historical prologue) This was arrived at a discussion in an *Etem*. In this meeting, a historical review was made referring to the past relational history. Some marriages depended fully on the parent's relationship.

Agwelakin Amana.

If an elder or a man of his home found that where he lived had become narrower, he went to someone who according to him would sell him land. They used animals to buy. An agreement was entered between the two in the presence of witnesses. It happened in a situation where one realized his land had become small, he'd approach his friends to confirm if they could sell some piece to him. They never used money in most cases. Land was exchanged with the cows and land would be demarcated using sisal as a way of agreement sealing. All agreements were done in view of the fact that gods were witnessing. A sisal planted was never removed by anyone. The two held the sisal and a leader while vowing against tempering with it hence sealing the covenant.

Qn2. How were they being implemented? Explain the process in point form.

All: As explained above

Qn.3. Explain the following terms (if they were found in the *Aitutuket* above during their implementation). Introduction of *Aitutuket*, Historical prologue, curses, blessings witnesses, gods, custody of *Aitutuket*, periodical reading. (ELEMENTS) – all explained as found among the Iteso)

As explained above.

Qn.4. How were the *Aitutuket* offenders treated among the Iteso?

When one was caught with someone's wife, the individual would be beaten up. After which the family of the cheating man and the owners of the wife would meet and agree. The man would be fined with one bull a cock and one ram. If you refuse to pay, trouble would follow you. It the woman ran away, she would end up being a prostitute.

If a man is in the house, he would put a spear outside the house as a sign of his presence. That meant no other man would go to that house.

If one is caught with another man's wife, his chances of survival were minimum. When the husband of that woman dies, the cheating guy would not be allowed to view the body and if he did, he would die within a year. If you were caught, you surely died. If the owner of the wife died, the cheating man was not allowed to go and see him. If he went, he would surely die. Someone's wife was a bad poison.

In some cases, if a man was impotent (*Ekolip*) and it's confirmed by the community, the woman would be secretly advice to look for an option within the family so that if she got kids, they would resemble the family members.

The impotent man in some areas used to come home shouting while bragging in his statements. This was mainly done to notify any man in the house to leave the owner is almost home.

Akiirar, an agreement on leasing land or selling. This brought the elders together, then an agreement would be made based on the size and demarcations would be put in place where one uproots or extends the boundary at the risk of a curse. This would lead to misfortunes poverty, which would lead to seeking help from the ancestors.

Akipukokin. This involved cows or goats. One would ask someone if he would accept to keep some animals for him for a period of time. An agreement was entered in the presence of witnesses and it so happened. The agreement included a payment of a cow for cows and a goat for a goat. If you refused to return back the flock as agreed, curses will follow you according to the agreement. There were two types of curses. One from ancestors and one that was made by the complainant by taking a spear and pining it at a specific tree by the offended whom comes back home without looking backwards while calling the name of the offender and pronouncing curses. The tree was called *Esingororot/Emasait*. He never looked at where the spear was until he died.

When someone got infected by this disease, he was instructed to go hit his swollen cheeks on a tree called *Edodoi*. You would hit your cheeks on the tree three or four times, two times on each side then leave the place without looking back. This was a covenant between the patient and the tree and the sick would talk to the tree that please tree, support me support me and the tree would do that.

In a situation where a lady had been giving birth and the kids died, her next baby would be called *Etyang*. The baby's ear would be pierced and some hair left in the middle of the head. This was done as an appreciation to the gods.

In situations where a girl got pregnant and got confronted, she would guess on someone considering where the boy came from. If the boy was wealthy, the lady would mention him as the one responsible for the pregnancy. The family would accept and a ritual was conducted. If the lady got another baby it was considered that the man was responsible for the first pregnancy, but if she doesn't get pregnant anymore that showed she lied about it. That lady would never get pregnant till she was taken through the ritual once more.

Left-handed people were considered an asset in the family. They provided treatment when someone had a twisted neck. The left-handed individual would slap him or her and the neck got better.

Qn.5. How many times have you used *Aitutuket*, mention them. What's good about it?

Qn. 6. What were the benefits or achievements of this approach (*Aitutuket*) to your relationships.

It brings unity and respect among people.

Helps in solving problems. Helps people to take responsibility.

It brings togetherness in the community

Respect

During tough times, people come together and talk about it and solve the problem.

Being respectful to other people's flock given on trust.

Family respect and respect to the husband. Removes aggression against each other's property e.g. cows etc. The clan's stipulations do not allow for such.

Qn7. What were the challenges experienced in the approach to relationships?

It led to poor relationship and negligence to the covenant breaker. Judgements were viewed against the offender alone hence an expression of biasness.

Covenants favored only those who adhered to it.

Covenants brought up family break ups due to disagreements.

Qn.8. What solutions would you recommend to the Iteso community in order to strengthen relationships?

People should respect covenants and learn its importance that if I have accepted something, that is the end of it.

Qn. 9. Demonstrate the practical usage of *Aitutuket* in at least one covenant (It can be one for peace, marriage, acquisition of property etc.)

All. As discussed above.

Qn.10. Present some of the Iteso artifacts or myths used in *Aitutuket*.

Ekimeng' tree was a sign of blessings. It was used in escorting animals meant for dowry. Animal's skin was used for sitting and also showed one is a farmer.

Brown ugali made of millet flour.

Cowpeas (*eboo*) was used in a new born was taken out for the first time.

Aluti (Horn) - used for communication.

Euderu was used for carrying the exhumed bones.

Local brew, *busaa*

Emukule. Blessings

Qn. 11. Briefly describe what were the key features of Iteso covenant.

Animal dung was used for uniting kids outside wedlock and the ones born at home. It was also poured on the ground to appease the ancestors.

Siphon used in taking the local brew. A cock and the local brew itself.

Qn. 12. Do you find the society today in need of the covenants? Why?

All

Yes, it generally promotes peace.

Qn. 13. What are some of the similarities between the Iteso covenant and the Christian covenants.

Baptism of the new born and traditional naming of the baby.

Praying. Paying dowry.

Qn14. What was the underlying objective, philosophy behind the Iteso covenant relationships.

To build the Iteso unity.

No cases and arrests, which builds the community and the government.

One will see the benefit of staying within a covenant.

To bring more blessings to all and in the community.

A good way of advising the community.

Respect in marriage i.e.no relatives marriage.

Promote the Iteso culture.

Qn.15. What would happen if there were no *Aitutuket* in Amukura?

Qn.16. What recommendations would you offer to the current society about *Aitutuket*?

They should respect covenants.

It should be practiced to encourage unity.

(iii). AG3: 50-70yrs –

Qn1. Mention some of the Known covenants '*Aitutuket*' that were known in Amukura.

Emanyit - Iteso people used to pay a total of 12 cows and 6 goats as dowry. There was something called *Asut*. This was given to the clan members from the woman's side. They also had something referred to as *Epir-Katoto.* All marriage decisions were made under a tree called *Etem* which served as the venue for covenant making processes

The girl was kidnapped while going to fetch water. Parents used to choose who to get married to. They started by being family friends with a strong bond between them, then the girl would be escorted to the boy's home willingly after the parents agreed, then lastly, she'd be escorted after the full dowry was paid. The ones that got no Dowry paid in advance were the ones who got kidnapped.

Out of the parent's relationship, they used to secretly spy how the girl or the boy behaved. Then the father would send his boy to go visit the girl's home or they were encouraged to mingle without knowing the parent's intentions. In the process, the parents would ask the kids what their views were on the girl or the boy. This process continued till the two got married. Spying helped them know each other's characters inside out to avoid future issues.

One would take his cow to a friend who'd be taking care of them, he'd be milking and keep multiplying the cows. After sometime, the owner of the cow would come requesting his friend to allow her daughter get married to his son. The team would agree and consider the marriage then the cows would remain as dowry.

AG3.R 9: *Asuti* meant the two clans had agreed. *Asuti* was done by visiting where the girl was married, where they would be gifted with cows, sheep and even money. This showed they had agreed. The clansmen would sit under a tree (Etem) as they discuss everything concerning that marriage.

For those girls who were kidnapped, the father of the boy would visit the girl's parents telling them not to go out looking for their girl. In some situations, a messenger, *Okeju* would be sent to deliver the message. They always agreed on the way forward.

Alomakin, the old man would not eat at the daughter in-laws place without a ceremony done. The daughter in-law will prepare food and the local brew for the father in-law and the team. On the other hand, the father in-law will get a gift. If he's well off, a cow would be given out as a gift. From this period on wards their relationship would be free, the father in-law would be able to visit and eat at his son's house without any problem. They will only be barred from any contact like handshake. This is considered a covenant to show the old man can eat at his daughter in-law's house.

Akiirar. It involved two parties either individuals or the whole community.

Akigwan ateran. This was done a day after a girl got married. Women and men would come together. The boy would be called then asked if he is married. So the boy would confirm and the girl would wake up in the morning with a broom from her house. She'd introduce herself fully to give the family a clear understanding of where she comes from. Preparations would be made for the *Akigwan* ceremony. She'd be put to sit at the door with her co-wives in the clan, then she'd be given a pot to go fetch water from the river. She'd be escorted by them together with a young boy whose work is to tease her as the rest pour water on her. She'd break the pot and the rest would accuse her of breaking her mother in-laws pot. Then she'd be covered with a bedsheet with her fellow women giving moral support. Strong young men would be on standby with canes. The ritual proceeds as the girl would be caned by the boys to welcome her to the new clan. Her body was fully smeared with the cow's dung.

If this lady leaves this home, she'd never have peace in any other marriage. She'll be moving from one home to the other till she decides to come back.

Leadership was given based on what one had. If one had wealth he was given the chance to lead because they believed he was able to feed people at his place. Example is seen in the current Iteso leadership i.e. the availability of the Iteso leader *Olosuban*. Agreements in leadership brought peace.

Egwelet - It was mainly done by elders. The elders were the ones who checked someone's land before considering it for purchase. Land was sold with a reason.

Akitolom ikokiok- This was done to the orphans by the uncles. They would not visit each other nor interact freely before having the ritual performed. A ceremony is prepared to appease the dead so they won't have any problems in their relationship with the uncles.

It was one way of wiping away the tears, showing them happiness and good relationship. So, this ceremony was a great covenant.

Akipore - Food was cooked in a pot. Ugali used to be made from millet flour. A mother would prepare a good traditional stew mixed with milk and cow fats. This meal was prepared to make a man strong and healthy. The agreement was that a woman had to feed his man well as the man was to provide.

Egwasit - When a woman gets attacked by calamities back to back, the lady would be sent to their parents for some rituals. A cow would be slaughtered, some of the meat roasted and some boiled. Some of the meat would be given to the woman to carry. She'd carry the meat on her head with some intestines hanging on her back dripping. She'd walk to her home. On arrival, the meat plus the colon would be cooked together with some vegetables. *Egwasit* was only done to calm down the spirits of calamities and the ancestors would be very happy.

The cow sacrificed on this day was given by the family and not the boy. During the ceremony preparations they'd look for the intestines and fetch it from one end. In any case the intestines bursts, the whole cow would be left and declared unsuitable for the ritual. A new cow would be demanded because they consider it bad luck. If the process goes well, the community would be happy and ululations would be heard. The meat would be shared equally among everyone.

During this ceremony, the lady would be carrying her kid on her back where the meat would be as well. In situations where the baby is older, they allowed him/her to hold on to the mother's shoulders as they walk back to their home.

During this ritual, if one doesn't have a cow he was allowed to go borrow from a friend. Old people used to be fed very well during this ceremony. The meat was well shared because it was known to be the community ceremony. If one decides not to share, the calamities would always be being there. The ancestors would be happy and the sickly family would get back to normal.

Qn. 2. How were they being implanted? Explain the process in point form.

General. As explained above.

Qn. 3. Explain the following terms if they were found in the *Aitutuket* above during their implementation: Introduction of *Aitutuket*, Historical prologue, curses, blessings, witnesses, gods, custody, periodical reading, of entering into a covenant if they are found in the *Aitutuket*.

All as explained

Before marriage, all the necessary steps were mandatory to help understand the family's background. In case the family had a bad history, it would be known.

Asuti - This is where people from the girl's side would visit the man's home if they delay to come and inform them about the girl's whereabouts. At this point, they came with strongly armed men just in case a fight erupted. They would grab the cows, chicken, goats and anything else they saw being valuable to them.

The second phase of *Asuti* was done after the team visits the boy's home. They had a talk and the uncle was given a goat. The boys would be given chicken.Before marriage, a man would be sent to go investigate the girl's home '*Aoke*'. He would climb one of the trees watching how visitors are welcomed in that home, how the family treats people and how they are fed. The same will happen to the boy's home. A man will be sent to watch over the same then reports will be provided. If anything, negative was noticed, no marriage would take place. And if there's positive feedback then marriage would take place.

On the 1st morning of the girl's marriage, she'll wake up sweep the house. This showed she has swept off her youth and confirming to the family she's now a married woman.

Qn. 4. Briefly explain how *Aitutuket* offenders were treated in Amukura.

In a situation where the boy mishandled a lady and she leave, he would be made to meet the elders early in the morning to explain why the lady left.

In a marriage set up, the couple would be brought before the elders and a small uniting ceremony would be prepared for the clansmen.

One would be fined if he/she goes against the covenant. He was even fined to give out money. If he refused one would go through a dark moment.

If one is a witch, she'd be chased away. The chasing of a woman depends on the clan type. Not all clans let their women go just like that. A woman was a clan property hence procedures were met.

If a girl gets pregnant at home, she would be taken to an ant hill and made to sit on it naked. She'd feel the pain that would never make her repeat the same.

For the relatives who got married, they would be taken to dead of the forest, and a small house (Open) would be built. The couple would be asked to get in and the house set on fire. They'd run away not to get burnt as the eyewitness's shout calling the devils.

Qn. 5. How many times have you used *Aitutuket* in your relationships and in which situations? Mention

As explained.

Qn. 6. What were the benefits of your relationship with *Aitutuket*?

Unity of purpose in the family.

It has promoted peace.

There's respect.

Qn. 7. What were the challenges experienced in *Aitutuket*?

One was forced to marry a woman whom he didn't want. In Leadership one would be told to step down for the other due to age considerations.

It led to bad debts.

Qn. 8. What solutions would you be recommended to the Iteso in order to strengthen their relationships in the community.

Transparency should be advocated.

Good consultation and dialogue.

Qn. 9. Demonstrate the practical usage of *Aitutuket* in at least one covenant. (It can be one for peace Marriage, property). Present some of the Iteso artifacts n symbol used in *Aitutuket*

Aluti (horn) and drums- these were used for communication.

Big bull's skin was well kept and used by ladies to sit on.

A bull's horn was hanged at the entrance of the house. Those were horns from the biggest bull in the family. It was done as an encouragement to the children to keep animals.

A pot with two mouths was used during a blessing ceremony of the twins.

Local brew.

Cooking stick was used for cooking.

Qn. 10. Present some of the Iteso artifacts/symbols

Qn. 12. In your own assessment do you think we need covenants in our society?

Yes. Generation changes, there's no respect about leaders in today's society.

Qn. 13. What are the similarities between the traditional covenants and the Christian way of life?
Both advocate for respect and peace.

Marriage rights were practiced on both sides.

Both go against bad habits.

Qn. 14. What was the underlying objective behind the Iteso covenants.

To promote the Iteso culture and promote peace.

One would not be allowed to become a leader when his parents were involved in witchcraft.

Qn. 15. What would happen if there were no *Aitutuket* in Amukura

Qn.16. What recommendations would you offer to the society based on *Aitutuket*?

People should be advised on the importance of continuing supporting the Iteso culture.

Advocate for respect in the society.

Encourage cultural practices.

Religious Covenants

Some clans believed their God existed in a tree and they would pray facing it. They prayed facing the East because they believed the Iteso God came from and the East.

Leaders were looked at from both ends considering all the qualities before they got appointments.

They existed in clans which had a role in the society like rainmakers. They were chosen by the clan and had great power.

Ikatanyu Clan. Akituk- Were responsible for cursing wrong doers.

(iv). AG 4 70-100yrs –

Qn. 1. Mention some of the Known covenants '*Aitutuket*' that you know among the lteso people of Amukura village.

Long ago when a person was killed, the two parties meet to discuss the way forward. The meeting was headed by an individual from a different clan. They would take one bull and a ram for the two sides to share. To make the relationship look better, the family of the guilty one will give the other party a girl as a uniting factor. And since the bull was slaughtered, that cemented everything as a done agreement. The family of the killer has no rights to dominate the agreement discussions. They were supposed to repent in order not to carry the curses.

*Akiraa Euko*r - Putting a boundary. It was done by the elders who played a role in the process. Whoever became hard-headed in the process would face the wrath of the gods. The stubborn ones were taken before the elders who would settle any complaints and indiscipline associated with the agreement.

Agreement over work. Before giving someone any job or employment. One would consider getting an oak from the parents of the boy and the agreement would not take place without their consent.

So that, in case there's breach of an agreement, it was easy to handle since witnesses were there.

Agreement between the elders. When one had no cows to pay dowry, he would be helped by the fellow clansmen through an agreement. This case was pure trust. No refund was expected but the 1st born of the man would be named after the person who gave out the cattle.

Emanyit- An old man would visit his friend's home and light fire at his friends' home. The owner of the home will come out and talk to his friend. Now at that point, the friend will explain his interest. He'll ask for food. The owner of the house would go back and talk to the wife about the same, then go and he'll get their feedback. After some time he'll receive a bull or a cow from his friend which will be slaughtered and the liver be taken to the cow giver. Out of such relationships, they always found a way to make things stronger by getting their boys or daughter married into the family.

If a man agrees with a lady, the boy's family will go appreciate the girl's family by taking 12 cows, 6 goats and some money. Before paying dowry, a letter would be sent to the family not to look for their girl because she'll be in safe hands. The letter contained two shillings which was meant for the letter reader. Then a team of the lady's sisters would be sent to deliver some food including ready-made *ugali* which the man was not allowed to eat. If one eats, his marriage would collapse.

Evwanit - This was done to show the lady has been accepted in the family and the lady had also accepted being in that family. They'll smear the lady's body with cow oil and if she dares leaves her home, she'll never give birth neither will she get married again. Sending a woman away was not a one-person decision, it was done by the clan. The clan would send the lady away due to some misconduct.

After paying dowry, the stick that was used to escort the cows with would be brought back home with a cock from the lady's home. That stick would be hanged at the door to show that lady was legally married.

Evwasit - Was all about calamities. It was also to appease the gods and request them to heal the family.

Egwanit- Was done to bless a married woman.

Naming - it was done by the elderly women in the community. They would do it in different ways. One, they'll let the mother of the child carry the baby. A name will be mentioned if the baby suckles, it will be a way of accepting the name. And if he refused to suckle it was well assumed the baby has refused the name. After naming, if the baby kept crying overnight, this was considered inappropriate like two ancestors were competing to be named after. They'll take two cocks and be named after the ancestors. The two cocks would be thrown up and one that comes down first would not be considered. The baby will be named after the cock that remained up there. There was no name dictation by the parents. This was a continuity of the clan.

Eating new food - This happened after the harvest. No product would be used before the ceremony was conducted. Normally, the ceremony brought the community together.

They would prepare millet flour for *Ugali* preparations, an animal to be slaughtered and some local brew. In the process when the meals are ready, they'll throw food on the ground while calling the ancestors names. This united the living and the dead, and the dead would definitely bless the soil since their spirits where made happy.

When a mother in-law and son bumped into each other, they wouldn't see each other face to face. In this situation they'll bring the traditional brew. It will be taken and spit on each other showing they have seen each other. This was done to allow them meet or even travel in the same vehicle or be in the same house. No more hiding or running from each other, though no handshaking was allowed. They would go to an extend of sharing one siphon which will be handed by the mother-in-law to the son.

Ekirumane- This was done after a husband dies. The elders would choose who to inherit the lady. They advocated for one from the family to inherit the lady. The agreement comes where the sitting will take place so that one person is chosen and that individual would prepare a ceremony for the same. It took some keen considerations. A ram would be slaughtered for this ceremony.

Qn. 2. How were they being implemented? Explain the process in point form.

All- As explained when identifying.

Qn. 3. Explain the following terms in reference to the process of entering into a covenant if they were found in the *Aitutuket* above.

Introduction, historical background, curses, blessings, witnesses, etc. were all found in the traditional Iteso covenant process.

All programs were managed by the elders. They would plan everything before the whole clan is called upon. The agreements involved blessings, curses and appease.

In case a boy has requested to feed his parents at his place, the father would ask his team to escort him to the boy's home. They would plan on gifts and then visit his son's home for the event.

Qn. 4. Briefly explain how the *Aitutuket* offenders were treated in Amukura.

The offenders would be brought before the clan for questioning and be warned not to repeat the mistakes. If she repeats, then curses would befall him.

In a situation where the boy mishandled a lady and she leave, he would be made to meet the elders early in the morning to explain why the lady left.

In a marriage set up, the couple would be brought before the elders and a small uniting ceremony would be prepared for the clansmen.

One would be fined if he/she goes against the covenant. He was even fined to give out money. If he refused one would go through a dark moment.

If one is a witch, she'd be chased away. The chasing of a woman depends on the clan type. Not all clans let their women go just like that. A woman was a clan property hence procedures were met.

If a girl gets pregnant at home, she would be taken to an ant hill and made to sit on it naked. She'd feel the pain that would never make her repeat the same.

For the relatives who got married, they would be taken to dead of the forest, and a small house (Open) would be built. The couple would be asked to get in and the house set on fire. They'd run away not to get burnt as the eyewitness's shout calling the devils.

Qn. 5. How many times have you used *Aitutuket* in your relationships and in which situations? Mention them.

As many as have been discussed above.

Qn. 6. What were the benefits or achievements of this approach (*Aitutuket)* to your relationships?

Unity and togetherness. Children will respect the elders.

Qn.7. What were the challenges faced?

It brought curses to an individual or the community at large.

Qn. 8. What solutions to the challenges would you recommend to the Iteso society.

To keep respecting the covenants and practice more of the Iteso *Aitutuket.*

Qn. 9. Demonstrate the practical usage of *Aitutuket* in at least one covenant. (It can be one for peace, marriage, or acquisition of property).

As explained in Qn. 1 above.

Qn. 10. Present some of the artifacts or symbols used in the *Aitutuket*.

Ekimeng'- Was used to offer blessings. Echodit- a lady would walk over it during marriage. There's a fine paid as part of the dowry. This relates to that time when paying dowry, the girl would run trying to block the cows.

Ekosilet – It's a type of grass that was tied on her legs to speak strength over her marriage.

Emuria - Was tied on the lady's fingers to show the family growth. The lady would be allowed to carry a boy on her shoulders to show how important the baby was to the community.
Amaran -Elephant rib Was put in between her thighs as one way of marriage right accompanied with vows that would make sure that she will never leave that home for another home. "If you leave here, you will be white forever, you will count husbands, you will be scratching your body forever", It was an elephant rib that was smeared with oil, put between thighs then take the vows.
Broom - was a sign of initiation to marriage life. So the lady would use the broom to sweep her house the following morning, showing she's no longer a girl. She has swept all her youth away.
Calabash - used for fetching water. That she will give water to the people of this clan. If this girl died for any reason, all these items would be returned back to their home, broom, calabash etc.
Skin- Used when pronouncing blessings to the newly married wife during *akilong (bathing)*. This is the time this girl is given the new family name depending on what character she has portrayed.

After the *Akigwan* ceremony - The lady would be covered with a *leso* (shawl). When she dies, all these things will be collected and taken back to her parent's home. They would also demand for a cow, after this their relationship was considered done because their own was gone.

Qn. 11. In your own observation, did the Iteso people have a covenant relationship?

All. Yes.

Qn 13. Briefly explain some of the key Features of the Iteso covenant.

Some of the features were traditional trees preperations. In every clan, there was a tree known to be an acourt tree. When there was a covenant to be celebrated, visible preperations could be

carried out. *Busaa* alchohol was mostly preperad, elders would assemble, eating and drinking was usual, sacrifices, ululation would be heard at some point either to celebrate the covenant or as a sign of drunkerdnnes, hence celebration continued.

Qn 14. What are some of the covenants that tied the Iteso people

Qn 15. In your own assessment, do you find the society people in need of a covenant in their relationships? Yes, and very much

Qn 16. What are some of the similarities between the Iteso covenants and some of the Christian practices.

Marriage, Naming, use of blood.

Qn.17. What recommendations would you offer to the current society?

Let as strengthen our relationship Education to the young people through meetings, writing, organizing for traditional festivals to provide education to the population.

Meetings should be encouraged to teach people about the Iteso culture.

Qn. 18 What was the underlying objective philosophy.

In marriage, the objective was that security for the newly married woman was provided. This would help the family be able to create the next generation.

It was meant to protect the integrity of the family and the Iteso families.

Togetherness was key.

Strengthen the relationship between the two parties

APPENDIX 8

ANALYSIS

Covenant history and philosophy. The Iteso people seem to have embraced and lived a covenant life throughout their period of existence. As discussed by Lawrence and supported by the research findings, the Iteso people practiced covenant relationships in areas like boundaries, marriages, that kept them united throughout their existence**.**

(i). Existence of Covenants: Covenants among the Iteso existed and was highly regarded as a social tool in all social life. As demonstrated in Table one above, the knowledge and existence of traditional covenants among the Iteso was found to be evident, right from age 30 through age 100 and as the years diminished to early times compared to the current times, the covenants present a higher appreciation then, than today. The society then seems to have enjoyed the benefits of a covenant relationship even in the absence of tight government agencies like police observed today. Boundaries were respected and marriages stayed stronger than today because of the binding power of the Iteso traditional covenants. In this research, all respondents of all age groups acknowledged that the traditional Iteso covenants existed and practiced.

(ii). Knowledge about Covenants: The explanations given by different respondents, clearly demonstrated that the knowledge of the Iteso traditional covenants was not a preserve of a specific age group alone. Whenever a covenant was conducted, accept for direct participation like in the covenant of *Ekutet*, where the Iteso people exhumed their ancestors, and that only elderly ladies were involved at the grave side, information about what was happening was not hidden to the rest of the age sets and gender.

(iii). Covenant features: There were and still exist specific traceable features that were ever seen when conducting the Iteso covenant to establish a relationship.

(iv). Types of Covenant: The Iteso people present a relationship pattern that was full of covenant relationships. Marriage as an institution, is presented in this research as having several covenants even more than politics as portrayed in the Hittite covenants.

(v). Covenant influence: The influence of covenants to the Iteso relationships came out strong as many of their involvements were sealed by a covenant. The major factor in their relationships

being the reaction of the ancestors to their faithfulness and commitment to the covenants. It came out clearly in the research, that, the Iteso people lived with their ancestors, whose influence to the covenant commitment was strong, though not visible.

(vi). Violation of *Aitutuket* stipulations: The offenders of *Aitutuket* among the Iteso people suffered significant losses including loss of life through death. *The offenders would be brought before the clan for questioning and be warned not to repeat the mistakes. If she/he repeats, then curses would befall him/her*.

(vii). Covenant benfits: Covenants came with many benefits. According to the respondents, some of the benefits included: Unity and togetherness. Families stood united and in the fear of the curses. Children will respect the elders. (AG3.R 1) 1. Unity of purpose in the family. Dec 2021 (AG4 R6). One man, the head of the family and in this case the father gave direction in all matters including those he consulted the wife. When he had given direction, all other thoughts collapsed and one purpose was followed by all.

(viii). Covenant disadvantages

Amidst the benefits that came with the covenants, respondents also indicated that covenants came with some disadvantages. It led to poor relationship and negligence to the covenant breaker. Judgements were viewed as targeting the offender alone hence an expression of biasness. Covenants favored those who adhered to it. It also contributed to dishonesty on the part of the offenders when they sought means of escaping the punishment.

(ix). Solution to Covenant challenges

The solutions to the challenges sited above could be solved by respecting the covenants and practices of the Iteso *Aitutuket*. Though sometimes people resorted in to covenant infidelity in order to secure freedom from punishments, this did not go far since curses could not be cured by dubious means. Instead, more punishment was added from the ancestors.

Transparency should be advocated for. Members of the Iteso society were encouraged to be transparent as much as possible to avoid punishments.

It was necessary to consult widely in order to avoid making mistakes in areas like marriages. Good consultation and dialogue helped avoids mistakes.

People should respect covenants and learn its importance that if I have accepted something, that is the end of it.

(x). Covenant artefacts/symbols

The Iteso people were very symbolic in their practical agreements. Some of the symbols represented great thoughts in terms of relationships, while some stood as reminders of the agreement entered. An example of a symbol that represented thoughts includes *Ekosilet*, which was a grass type that carried the wisdom knowledge of the real marriage experience. It contained the message to all young people that to complete the whole journey of marriage, one had to be as heard as the grass (*Ekosile*). Symbols that represented memories included *Ekimeng*, *Echodit* etc. Ekimeng represented blessings and that on the day of marriage, and the girl was blessed while Echodit represented the place where the girl took her final step to the boy's home, never to return again to their home.

APPENDIX 9
COVENANT PRESENTATION

(i). Significant covenantal ties among the Iteso people

The Iteso people believed strongly on the influence of the ancestors in their society. This belief permeated in to their relationships, and made every relationship covenantal in nature. Violation of a covenant relationship among the Iteso, ideally meant confronting the gods in their wraths, who lived in the name of the ancestors, then the fellow human beings that formed part of the society they lived in. It was a better option to surrender revenge to the gods (ancestors), who were seen as the true supervisors of covenants, than to deal with a covenant offender directly. Immersed in this view, it comes out clearly that no covenant was perceived as weak, unless the concerned ancestor could be considered weak, and this never was in any case.

Covenants like "marriage covenants" were also tied to many other covenants that strengthened the family institution. As explained above, covenants like *evasit, Ekurumane, Dowry* and many others, tied the family institution among the Iteso making it stronger than any legal system could do. Marriage covenants tied the Iteso people, obligating them to their gods as the reference point.

(ii). Recommendations

Let us strengthen our relationship Education for the young people through meetings, writing, organizing for traditional festivals to provide education to the population. Meetings should be encouraged to teach people about the Iteso culture.

The subject of covenants be introduced in formal education, so that the young generation can grow appreciating it for the betterment of the society relationships.