

Prophets and the Covenant

'I will be your God and you will be my people.' This summarises the covenant between God and Israel.

'I will be your God' means something like:

'I will be the One you worship, who hears every true prayer, who guides and protects you, who has tender compassion on the needy, and who settles you, Israel, peacefully in the land I gave you...'

'You will be my people' means something like:

'Remember that I alone am God; do not 'fob me off' with empty rituals but give me your whole self; obey the Law I gave you - for this law leads to life; show compassion as I have shown you compassion...'

In fact, one of the best images of covenant is *marriage*. An ancient Jewish marriage vow (from 500 BC) goes like this: *'She is my wife and I am her husband this day and forever.'* In a time when written documents were few, the spoken word, a *solemnly* spoken word, meant exactly what it said. God made a covenant with Israel through Moses on Mount Sinai. God's Word would not be taken back.

Israel, unfortunately, did not live up to their side of the Covenant. They drifted into worshipping other gods. Rich Israelites oppressed poor Israelites. Instead of worshipping God wholeheartedly, people began to be 'two-faced' to God, going through the motions of worship but not loving God from the heart.

God did not abandon Israel as the covenant, in reverse, would demand (*'If you won't be my people, I won't be your God'*). God did something else. He sent prophets. He filled them with his Word and told them to proclaim it to a sinful people.



The words of the prophets were sometimes fierce and full of warning. But behind every word was love – the love that God still had for unfaithful Israel. If someone announces to a group of people 'Unless you change your way of life, you will all perish', he won't be seen as a very loving person. Some would tell him to be quiet and stop upsetting people. But if his message is true, then his words *are* loving. To say nothing and let people perish would be far less loving.

To do

1 Write the word next to its correct definition.

PROPHET

what the prophet must do

PROPHECY

the words of the prophet

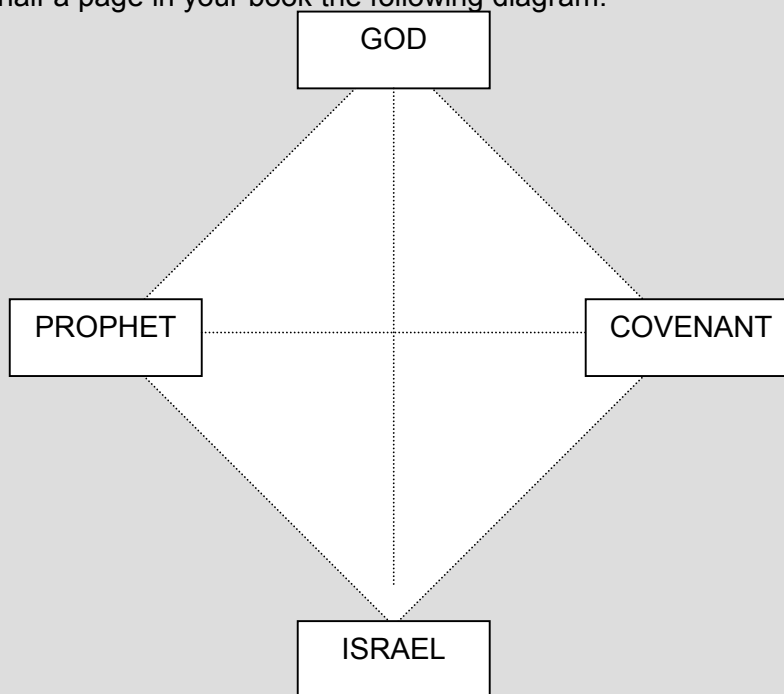
PROPHECY

a solemn friendship agreement with promises and duties

COVENANT

one who hears God's Word and proclaims it

2 Draw across half a page in your book the following diagram.



There are six lines of connection in this diagram.

- a) For each line, write a sentence that could connect what is in the two boxes.
e.g. **God and Israel** – *Out of love God specially chose Israel to be a holy nation.*
- b) Prophets were often unwelcome because they had 'hard truths' to tell.
What 'hard truths' do you think the world today needs to hear?
- c) False prophets in Israel often told 'soft lies' (what people wanted to hear) and so were very popular. For example, they proclaimed that peace and happiness were coming, when in fact trouble was approaching.
 - i) Do you think people are being told 'soft lies' today?
 - ii) From where are these 'soft lies' coming?