

”ברית מלח” או ”ברית נצח”?

אבנר רמו



In the Book of Samuel we hear King David saying:

כי-לא-כן ביתי עם-אל: כי ברית עולם שם לי, ערוכה בכל ושמרה

“For is not my house [established] with God? for an everlasting covenant He made with me, ordered in all things, and kept safe” (2 Sam 23:5; see also: Ex 31:16; Lev 24:8; Is 24:5; 55:3; Jer 32:40; 50:4; Eze 16:60; 37:26; Ps 105:10; 1 Ch 16:17).

However, the logic of this verse suggests that here the fourth word **ביתי** is a letter-deletion error of: **בריתי** - “my covenant.”

Yet in the Book of Chronicles we find:

הלא לכם לדעת, כי יהוה אלהי ישראל נתן ממלכה לדויד על-ישראל לעולם: לו ולבניו ברית מלח.

“Do not you ought to know that YHWH, the God of Israel, gave the kingdom over Israel to David forever, to him and to his sons [by] a covenant of salt” (2 Ch 13:5).

However, the logic of this verse and the comparison between these verses suggest that the words: **ברית מלח** are a letter-substitution error of: **ברית נצח** - “an everlasting covenant” (e.g. Jer 15:18; Am 1:11; Ps 13:2; 16:11; 49:20; 74:3; Job 34:36).

We also find in the Book of Numbers the words of God to Aaron:

כל תרומת הקדשים אשר ירימו בני-ישראל ליהוה-נתתי לך ולבניך ולבנותיך אתך לחק-עולם: ברית מלח עולם הוא לפני יהוה לך ולזרעך אתך.

“All the heave-offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer to YHWH, I gave you, and your sons and your daughters (that are) with you, as a due forever; it is an everlasting covenant of salt before YHWH to you and to your seed (that is) with you” (Num 18:19).

Unlike the common term **ברית עולם** the term: **ברית מלח עולם** does not appear anywhere else in the Bible, and we may suspect that here the word **מלח** - “salt” is superfluous, or that originally it was the word **נצח** - “everlasting” that was “modified” when the alternative word: **עולם** was inserted into this verse.

Similarly, we read in the Book of Leviticus:

וכל-קרבן מנחתך במלח תמלח, ולא תשבית מלח ברית אלהיך מעל מנחתך ;
“And all your meal-offering you shall season with salt; and you shall not omit salt of the covenant of your God from your meal-offering” (Lev 2:13).

However, the logic of this verse suggests that here the words: ברית אלהיך - “the covenant of your God” are superfluous.