

## Special study on “covenant”

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1. Must the vows be PUBLIC (ceremony) for the covenant to be valid?  
**Num 30; Acts 23:12-16; Gen 28:20...31:13; 1Sam 1:11...12,13**
2. Must the vows be SINCERE in order for the covenant to be valid?  
**Dt 23:21-23; Ecc 5:4-6; Pro 20:25**
3. A vow may be RASH, but that does not invalidate it. Judges 11:30f
4. Is an “ENGAGEMENT” a covenant?
  - a. “covenant” - “1. an agreement between two or more persons to do or refrain from doing some act” ACD. “an agreement, usually formal, between two or more persons to do or not do something specified.” *Dictionary.com*. Note, “usually formal”; no mention of oath.
  - b. “engage” - “2. to bind (oneself) by a promise; pledge; specif. ... to bind by a promise of marriage; betroth...” W.NWD
  - c. An engagement is a covenant, but it is not the same as the marriage covenant. One is a promise to marry *in the future*. The other is a promise to *enter into and fulfill the obligations of marriage today*.
5. Does a covenant require an OATH?
  - a. “Covenant” - not all definitions mention oath as inherent to covenant
  - b. **Gen 15:5; 17:2-5**, but it was not until he offered Isaac that we read that God “swore” to do this, **22:16,17**. The Hebrew writer explains that the oath was to *provide assurance to the heirs of the promise*, not to make the promise valid, for God cannot lie, **Heb 6:13-18**
  - c. Israel was to “make no covenant” with the people of Canaan or their gods, **Ex 23:32; 34:12f**. Would it not be a “covenant” if they did not make an oath?
  - d. Several covenants were made where no oath is mentioned. That does not mean there was not one, but simply that none is mentioned many references to covenants: **Josh 24:15...24,25; 1Sam 18:3; 20:16,17; 23:18; 2Sam 3:12,13; 5:3; 1Ki 5:12; 20:34**; etc.
  - e. One thing is clear—a “covenant” does not require legal sanction to be valid.
6. Is an engagement the same as the Jewish “BETROTHAL”?
  - a. Jewish customs developed that serve to “solemnize” the promise, but basically both refer to a promise to marry.
  - b. Whatever customs later developed to “solemnize” the promise were not present in the original marriage (“from the beginning...” **Mt 19:4**) nor in some of the patriarchal marriages (**Gen 24**).