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☰ Working Title	The Making of a Covenant
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☰ with Allan H	
☰ with Ron B	

Intro:

Having completed our back-track to Abraham and his covenant, let's move forwards again in time to the Sinai Covenant. We have said that the Sinai Covenant was added or placed by the side of the Abraham Covenant. So it appears that on occasion covenants can sometimes operate side-by-side. At times several

covenants can operate side-by-side so let's be sure that we do not confuse the covenants.

The purpose of the Sinai Covenant

▼ So, what was the purpose or purposes of the Sinai Covenant.

- It served as a restraint on outward sin

where there is no revelation the people cast away restraint

▼ Proverbs 29:18 ASV

Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint;
But he that keepeth the law, happy is he. (Proverbs
29:18 ASV)

- it served to quantify or measure sin; making clear to the individual the measure or "exceeding sinfulness of his sin". In that sense, it served to show the helplessness of our human condition. And the utter hopelessness of ever 'qualifying' for acceptance with God.

▼ Romans 7:9–13 NKJV

I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.
And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death.
For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.
Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.
¶ Has then what is good become death to me?
Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, **so that**

sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful. (Romans 7:9–13 NKJV)

- And it served, as we see in the book of Deuteronomy, as a tenancy agreement for the tenants of God's land.

▼ The Decalogue - the 10 words

In Paul's letter to the saints in Rome he reveals that there is a wider context for God's expectations of men and women and the 'work' of the law is written on the hearts of all peoples.

▼ Romans 2:14–15 NKJV

for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, **although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts,** their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) (Romans 2:14–15 NKJV)

The other nations (ie the Gentiles) may not have the 'words of the Law' but they all have the 'work of the Law' written in their hearts...

Later, Paul goes on to reveal that above all the blessings that the people of the Sinai Covenant were to enjoy, the greatest was that they had received the 'words' of God

▼ Romans 3:1–2 NKJV

What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision?
Much in every way! **Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.** (Romans 3:1–2 NKJV)

They had the explicit 'words of the Law' and consequently had no excuse for claiming ignorance of God's will.

▼ Deuteronomy 29:29 ASV

The secret things belong unto Jehovah our God;
but **the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever,**
that we may do all the words of this law.
(Deuteronomy 29:29 ASV)

God does not hold us accountable for what we don't know unless we have chosen not to know what he has declared. The explicit law made it clear what they must 'do'.

▼ Amos 3:1–2 ASV

¶ Hear this word that Jehovah hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up out of the land of Egypt, saying,
You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities. (Amos 3:1–2 ASV)

For those who had clearer knowledge, the consequences of their failure would be increased. The covenant people would be held accountable for 'all their iniquities'.

▼ ct. Jonah 4:9–11 ASV

And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death.
And Jehovah said, **Thou hast had regard for the**

gourd, for which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night:
and should not I have regard for Nineveh, **that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand (36000!) persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand**; and also much cattle? (Jonah 4:9–11 ASV)

The clearer knowledge of God and his will was to be greater blessing... and a greater burden

▼ The Conscience bearing witness

All peoples have an instinct or moral sense. It may be almost buried under centuries of darkness but men and women have a sense of what is 'fair' unless their consciences have become completely de-sensitised, they know how people ought to behave towards them and consequently they know how they ought to behave towards others.

Individuals may make brave (or foolish) claims that they are without law and therefore free but, at heart, we all know this is untrue.

A unique covenant in a unique setting

▼ To whom? Wycliffe

Given to a specific group of people and NOT scattered into the public domain

▼ Exodus 20:1–7 ASV

- ¶ And God spake all these words, saying,
- ¶ I am Jehovah thy God, **who brought thee out of the land of Egypt**, out of the house of bondage.
- ¶ Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
- ¶ Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any

likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them; for I Jehovah thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing lovingkindness unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

¶ Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain; for Jehovah will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. (Exodus 20:1–7 ASV)

The 10 Words were not broadcast into the whole world; they were addressed to a very exclusive group of people, God's people, God's own nation. As a result of this covenant, ("God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth: "Genesis 14:19 ASV - Melchizedek) would become 'Jehovah, Israel's God'.

▼ cf: Exodus 20:12 ASV

¶ Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee.
(Exodus 20:12 ASV)

In its precise terms, this could only ever apply to the people of Israel. Does that mean that non-Israelite children have no obligation towards their parents? Not at all, but it is significant to see how Paul actually 'changes this commandment' when he is writing to non-Israelites).

▼ Ephesians 6:1–3 NKJV

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

“Honor your father and mother,” which is the first

commandment with promise:

“that it may be well with you and **you may live long on the earth.**” (Ephesians 6:1–3 NKJV)

The particular promise to a particular people in a particular destination has gone and in its place we have a promise of longevity on the earth.

▼ The Book of Deuteronomy as a tenancy agreement

This 'second' giving of the Law is a renewing of the Covenant with the emphasis being reminded that their conquest and ruling the 'promised land' will depend upon them keeping the tenancy agreement of the 10 words.

▼ Deuteronomy 6:1–3 ASV

¶ Now this is the commandment, the statutes, and the ordinances, which Jehovah your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it; that thou mightest fear Jehovah thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.

Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as Jehovah, the God of thy fathers, hath promised unto thee, in a land flowing with milk and honey. (Deuteronomy 6:1–3 ASV)

we could pursue this 'conquest-based-on-covenant-keeping' into the book of Joshua and see its outworking there but remain at Sinai and its implications.

A 'classical' conditional covenant

Moses the deliverer now becomes Moses the Mediator of a Covenant between God and the people who have been redeemed from the bondage of Egypt.

1. God brought them **out**,
2. then he brought them **to** himself at Sinai
3. and, conditional upon their covenant-keeping, he would bring them **into** the promised land.

The scene is set.

▼ Exodus 19:3–6 ASV

And Moses went up unto God, and Jehovah called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel:

Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

Now therefore, **if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be mine own possession from among all peoples**: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. (Exodus 19:3–6 ASV)

We note again, that this is addressed to a people who have already 'experienced' redemption. Egypt and its dark history was behind them; it is no longer a threat. For the first time in living memory this people group is genuinely free to make its own choices. Now they are free to choose their own master.

This classical 'if-then-else' pattern puts the choice into their own hands. This is always the pattern.

▼ Romans 10:14–17 NKJV

¶ How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!"

But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "LORD, who has believed our report?"

So then **faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.** (Romans 10:14–17 NKJV)

▼ This is biblical synergy.

1. God initiates and empowers.
2. Man believes
3. God completes the circle.

▼ Exodus 24:3 ASV

And Moses came and told the people all the words of Jehovah, and all the ordinances: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, **All the words which Jehovah hath spoken will we do.** (Exodus 24:3 ASV)

at this response Moses creates a hand-written copy of the covenant and its demands. It will be one of the two copies of the Law.

- The people's copy in Moses' handwriting: this copy will become known as the 'Book of the Covenant'
- God's copy written in stone in God's own handwriting

People, book and altar

▼ There is now a curious interlude. Moses, himself, creates a simple altar and erects 12 stone pillar to represent the 12 tribes of Israel. 12 individual representatives joined in an unbroken circle of service at the altar that Moses has built.

1. Moses instructs the young men to conduct a whole-burnt offering and a peace offering; forms of offerings that were much older than the Sinai Covenant itself.
2. The blood from the sarifices is caught in a basin and Moses, himself, sprinkles half of it on the altar and its burning sacrifices.
3. He then takes up the people's copy that he himself has writtten, the Book of the Covenant, and reads it to the assembled crowds

For the third time the enthusiasm of the people is expressed in a unanimous assent to the terms of the covenant.

4. Moses, himself, now sprinkles the remainder of the blood onto the people themselves...

5. and according to the epistle to the Hebrews ...onto the Book of the Covenant

▼ Hebrews 9:19–20 NKJV

For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, **he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people,** saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you. (Hebrews 9:19–20 NKJV)

▼ the only memorial

It is a sobering reflection, that if we had visited this spot a year later the only evidence of the extraordinary happenings there would have been a rough altar with its twelve sentinel stone pillars; a silent testimony to the fact that this at this moment in history in this place this people became inseparably linked with the worship and service of God, and to a sacred text.

▼ the outcome of this ritual

According to the terms that God had instituted this motley group of refugees had no become a nation, God's nation...

▼ Exodus 19:5–6 ASV

Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be mine own possession from among all peoples: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and **a holy nation**. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. (Exodus 19:5–6 ASV)

The original Hebrew word for 'holy' meant something separated for a particular purpose. Although all the nations of the earth owe allegiance to God this nation had become, uniquely and exclusively 'God's kingdom'. In this nation, God's kingly rule would be worked out. From this moment on and as long as this covenant might last, God and this people would 'belong' to each other, exclusively, for a purpose.

Israel's marriage covenant

Later, the prophet Ezekiel described this moment in terms of a marriage contract;

▼ Ezekiel 16:8 ASV

Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, **I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord Jehovah, and thou becamest mine.** (Ezekiel 16:8 ASV)

This was the moment when the nation became the bride of Jehovah. And God never forgot these moments although the marriage was to have a stormy history.

▼ Jeremiah 2:2–3 ASV

Go, and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, **I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals; how thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.**

Israel was holiness unto Jehovah, the first-fruits of his increase: all that devour him shall be held guilty; evil shall come upon them, saith Jehovah. (Jeremiah 2:2–3 ASV)

It was Jeremiah who saw that first covenant as a betrothal and marriage who later expressed the promised hope of another covenant against the backdrop of terrible failure;

▼ Jeremiah 31:31–32 ASV

¶ Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:
not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith Jehovah. (Jeremiah 31:31–32 ASV)

From the moment of this Sinai Covenant Israel's spiritual promiscuity would be called 'adultery' by her prophets and becomes one of the great parables in which God declares his faithful love and his people's persistent faithlessness.

In Chapter 5 of The Better Covenant, we saw that the Sinai Covenant or Ten Commandments was a local application of a universal moral law. Only the nation of Israel signed up to this particular expression of unchanging devotion and morality but in every time and nation mankind has known the truth of these principles upon which these commandments hang. We may not be able to quote the Ten Commandments but the 'work of the law' is written in the hearts of all mankind, everywhere.

And we saw that by the terms of this covenant that God and Israel were joined as in a marriage and Israel's betrayal of the covenant would be regarded as spiritual adultery.