

Sinai Covenant and the Portable Eden

Recap – Rescue and Wilderness Wanderings

- See these two threads running throughout the Bible.

The 2nd half of the book of Exodus (19-40) ...

- Opens with Moses leading the Israelites to the foot of mount Sinai ..
- Where God invites Israel into a covenant relationship (Ex. 19-24)

Travelled for 49 days and on 50th Moses goes up onto Mountain - Pentecost

Covenant = “Marriage contract”

- Taking the relationship to the next level ...

And here we reach another key moment in the biblical story line ...

- Because this is picking up and developing God’s promise to Abraham.

God’s Covenant Promises

- Remember in the book of Genesis God promises
- That through Abraham family (Genesis 12, 15, 17) ...
- God will somehow restore God’s Blessing to all Nations

Exodus 19:5–6 ⁵ Now **IF YOU OBEY ME FULLY** and **KEEP MY COVENANT, THEN** out of all nations you will be **MY TREASURED POSSESSION.**

In what way?

Although the whole earth is mine, ⁶ you will be for me a **KINGDOM OF PRIESTS** and a **HOLY NATION.**⁷

God is wanting to forge a special people ...

- Through whom he can restore his blessing to the nations.
- Therefore, he is calling them to become God’s representative / [Eikon] ...
- Through which he can Extend his Rule & Reign throughout the earth.
- And show all the other nations what He is truly like.

The people eagerly accept the offer (Sing us Up) ...

Exodus 19:8 ⁸ The people all responded together, “We will do everything the LORD has said.”

So, God's presence appears right on the top of Mount Sinai ...

- In the form of clouds and lighting and thunder.
- Going back to Abram in Genesis 15 – smoking pot and blazing torch.
- [Bush = Seneh – Sinai = Sînay] – both on Mountain of God.

And Moses goes up as their representative ...

- And God opens with the basic Terms of the Covenant (Ex. 20-23) ...
- The famous 10 commandments – Decalogue = 10 words [Ex. 34:28; Deut. 4:13; 10:4]
- Copies x 2
- 10 words are linked to creation narrative ...

God creates the universe by his word – 10 x “God’ said ...”

- By 10 words he brought about the universe.
- By 10 words he brings about the birth of a Nation of Israel
- The entire creation hangs on the word of God.
- Israel as a nation hangs on the word of God.

So, the 10 words are the basic terms of the agreement ...

- How Israel and God are going to relate to each other. [son + kings + servants]
- How relate to one another.
- Treat each other in a Genuinely Human Way.
- Relate to Nations
- Relate to the Earth – Good stewards of the Earth’s resources.

This points forward to ...

1 Peter 2:9⁹ But you are a chosen people, a ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, a HOLY NATION, God’s SPECIAL POSSESSION, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

After this comes another collection of commands (42 Judgments) ...

- That fills out the first 10 in more detail ...
- That will eventually be expanded to 611 or 613 ...
- Torah = תּוֹרָה = Instructions – Teachings – Law

There are instructions about ...

- Worship, Social justice (how they are to live together).
- All shaping Israel into a nation of Justice and Generosity ...
- That is different from the other nations ...

- Showing the world what God's true humanity is supposed to look like.
- With them strategically being position between ...
- The two great super powers of the world (Egypt & Mesopotamia)

Moses once again writes down all the laws ...

Exodus 24:3³ When Moses went and told the people all the Lord's WORDS [Ex. 20:2-17] and JUDGEMENTS [Ex. 21-23], they responded with one voice, "Everything the Lord has said we will do."

God then take the relationship to the next step and says ...

Exodus 25:8⁸ "Have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them."

Which develops another aspect of God's Covenant Promises ...

- Remember, after humanity's rebellion in the garden ...
- It was access to God's presence that was lost.

But now it is through the family of Abraham ...

- That God's presence is become once again accessible (Restoration of Presence).
- Through this covenant relationship.
- First with Israel and then somehow, one day to all nations.
- Expand the Garden & bear my image into it.

What then follows ...

- Are seven chapters of detailed architectural blueprints (Ex. 25-31)
- About this Sacred Tent called the Tabernacle ...

There is an outer courtyard with an alter ...

- And then at the centre there is a tent ...
- That has an outer room and an inner room.

Inside the inner room that is called the Most Holy of Place/ Holy of Holies

- Is a golden box, called the Ark of the Covenant [Pact]
- And there is angelic creatures over the top of it.
- Cherubim woven into the curtain. (Ex. 26:1)
- Echoing back to Genesis 3
- Temple: Wing touch sides and other wing touch each other (1 Kings 6:27)

It is the "Hot Spot of God's Presence

- Ex. 3 + Gen. 32 + Gen 15

Graded levels of Holiness

- Level 1 – Court – Israelite
- Level 2 – Holy Place – Priest
- Level 3 – Holy of Holies – High Priest

Mount Sinai

- Level 1 (foot) Israelites
- Level 2 (Aaron & 70 elders) Up the Mountain
- Level 3 (Moses alone) Top of Mountain

There are lots of details in these chapters ...

- And it is important to know that every piece has some kind of symbolic value.
- Pointing back to the Cosmic Temple.

CREATION ACCOUNT

- Structured around a Series of Seven Acts of Creation.
- Each of these acts is Marked by the Divine Speech, “And God said ...”
- (Ge 1:3, 6, 9, 14, 20, 24, 26; cf. vv. 11, 28, 29).

TABERNACLE ACCOUNT

- Divided into Seven Acts
- Each Introduced by the divine speech, “And the LORD said ...”
- (Ex 25:1; 30:11, 17, 22, 34; 31:1, 12).

CREATION ACCOUNT

Proverbs 3:19–20 ¹⁹ By **WISDOM** the Lord laid the earth’s foundations, by **UNDERSTANDING** he set the heavens in place; ²⁰ by his **KNOWLEDGE** the watery depths were divided ...

TABERNACLE ACCOUNT

- Chosen Bezalel – filled him with ...
- Wisdom, understanding & knowledge (Ex. 31:1-3)

CREATION ACCOUNT

- Gen. 2:15 – Adam & Eve to “work” and take “care” of.

TABERNACLE ACCOUNT

- Num. 3-7 – The Priests to do the “work” and take “care” of.

CREATION ACCOUNT

- Guarded by Cherubim (Gen. 3:24)
- Entered from the **EAST** (Gen. 3:24)

TABERNACLE ACCOUNT

- Guarded by Cherubim (Ex. 25:18)
- Entered from the **EAST** (Num. 3:38)

CREATION ACCOUNT

- God rested on the seventh day, the Sabbath. (Genesis 2:1–3)

TABERNACLE ACCOUNT

- Last instruction – remember the Sabbath (Ex 31:12–18)

CREATION ACCOUNT:

- Genesis 1:31 ³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.
- + Blessing (Gen. 1:28)

TABERNACLE ACCOUNT

- Exodus 39:43 ⁴³ Moses inspected the work and saw that they had done it just as the LORD had commanded.
- Moses blessed them.

CREATION ACCOUNT

- Tree of Life (Gen. 2:9)

TABERNACLE ACCOUNT

- Menorah – Lampstand (Ex. 25:31-35)

All of the flowers, the angels, the golden jewels ...

- It all echo's back to the garden of Eden ...
- The place where God and humans lived together in intimacy.

So the Tabernacle is like a **Portable Eden**, so to speak.

- Points forward to the **Temple (picture)** to **Jesus** ^[John 1:4] **(words)** ...
- To the **Church** ^[Acts 2:36-47] to **New Creation** ^[Rev. 21-22]
- It is the place where God and Israel can **live together in peace**.
- At least in theory.

Cause in Ex. 32-34 we see something goes really really wrong.

- Israel Breaks the Covenant.

Exodus 32:1–6 ¹ When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, “Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don’t know what has happened to him.”

² Aaron answered them, “Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me.”

³ So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. ⁴ He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, “These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.” ⁵

When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, “Tomorrow there will be a festival to the LORD.”

⁶ So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.

Now, God’s presence is right there on top of the Mountain ...

- They can see it.
- And here they are below, already breaking the first two commands of the covenant.
- That they just agreed to ...
- No other God and No idol!

Remember

Exodus 19:8 ⁸ The people all responded together, “We will do everything the LORD has said.”

What follows is really important.

- God knows what is happening down below.
- And he first invited Moses into his own anger and pain ...
- And he tells Moses ...

Exodus 32:7–10 ⁷ Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go down, because **YOUR** people, whom **YOU** brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt.

⁸ They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, 'These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.'

⁹ "I have seen these people," the Lord said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people. ¹⁰ Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation."

But Moses intercede ...

Exodus 32:11–14 ¹¹ But Moses sought the favor of the Lord his God. "Lord," he said, "why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand?"

¹² Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people.

¹³ Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.' "

¹⁴ Then the Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.

Though he does bring his judgement on those who instigated the idolatry.

- By striking them with a plague (Ex. 32:35)
- He forgives the nation as a whole ...
- And promises to renew his covenant.

And it is right here for the first time in the story ...

- That God describes his Character to Moses.

Exodus 34:6–7 ⁶ "The Lord, the Lord, the **COMPASSIONATE** and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in **LOVE** and **FAITHFULNESS**, ⁷ maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty **UNPUNISHED ...**"

We have this tension that God is full of Compassion ...

- Yet, does not leave the guilty unpunished.

And above all, God is Faithful to his Promises.

- Even though he knows what he is committing himself ...
- To a people who is utterly faithless.

So, after renewing the covenant with Israel ...

- God commissions Moses to go ahead and build the Tabernacle (Ex. 35-30)
- One again we get five long chapters describing in detail ...
- The construction of the Tabernacle ...
- And it all comes together in the final chapter ...
- Where the tabernacle is finished ...

Then in Ex. 40:34 it says ...

³⁴ Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

Our hopes are high, Moses goes right up to enter the tent ...

- And he can't!
- He actually can't go in and that is how the book ends.

It is really surprising and then also not really if you think about it.

- You can now see how much Israel's sin has damaged the relationship with God.

The book opened, remember ...

- With Pharaoh's evil threatening Israel and God's covenant promise.

But now as the book ends, Israel has become its own worse enemy!

- Now it is their sin that is threatening the future of the covenant.

And so the question as the book closes is ...

- How is God going to reconcile the conflict between ...?
- His holiness and his goodness and his presence ...
- With the sinful corruption of his own covenant people.

The solution to the problem is what the book of Leviticus is all about.!