

12-7-24 Message to Roeh Israel Abilene – *VaYetse* (and [Yacov] went out)
Torah Portion: Gen 28:10 – 32:2
Haftarah: Hosea 11:7-4:9
Suggested Acheron K'tuvim: Rom 11:19-32

Under the Law Part 21 – Mosaic Covenant

Central question: Do you understand the progression of entering into the various levels of a covenant relationship with G-d?

Today we are in parasha *VaYetse*, which means “and went out.” It takes its name from the third word of the passage in English, and the first word in the original Hebrew.

Gen 28:10-12

10 Then Jacob **departed** from Beersheba and went toward Haran. 11 And he came to a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head, and lay down in that place. 12 And he had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

וַיֵּצֵא	יַעֲקֹב	מִבְּאֵר שֶׁבַע	וַיֵּלֶךְ	חֲרָנָה:	10	
And went out	Jacob	from Beer-sheba,	and went toward	Haran.		
<u>3318</u>	<u>3290</u>	<u>884</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>2771</u>		
וַיִּפְגֹּעַ	בַּמָּקוֹם	וַיֵּלֶן	שָׁם	כִּי-	11	
And he lighted	upon a certain place,	and tarried all night,	there	because		
<u>6293</u>	<u>4725</u>	<u>3885</u>	<u>8033</u>	<u>3588</u>		
בָּא	הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ	וַיִּקַּח	מֵאֲבָנֵי	הַמָּקוֹם	וַיִּשֶׂם	
was set;	the sun	and he took	of the stones of	that place,	and put	them for
<u>935</u>	<u>8121</u>	<u>3947</u>	<u>68</u>	<u>4725</u>	<u>7760</u>	<u>9999</u>
מִרְאֲשֵׁתָיו	וַיִּשְׁכַּב	בַּמָּקוֹם	הַהוּא:			
his pillows,	and lay down to sleep.	in place	that			
<u>4763</u>	<u>7901</u>	<u>4725</u>	<u>1931</u>			
וַיַּחְלֹם	וַהֲנֶה	סֹלָם	מִצָּב	אֶרֶץ	וְרֹאשׁוֹ	12
And he dreamed,	and behold	a ladder	set up on	the earth,	and the top of it	
<u>2492</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>5551</u>	<u>5324</u>	<u>776</u>	<u>7218</u>	
מִגֵּיעַ	הַשָּׁמַיְמָה	וַהֲנֶה	מִלְאֲכֵי	אֱלֹהִים	עֲלִים	
reached to	heaven:	and behold	the angels of	God	ascending	
<u>5060</u>	<u>8064</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>4397</u>	<u>430</u>	<u>5927</u>	
וַיֵּרָדִים	בּוֹ:					
and descending	on it.					
<u>3381</u>	<u>871a</u>					

Before I resume the covenants teaching, I wish to clarify why I don't believe the word "ladder" in verse 12 is the best translation. The Hebrew word is *selam*, and it is legitimately translated as "ladder" or even "staircase."

OT:5551 סֹלָם **cullam** (sool-lawm'); from OT:5549; a stair-case:

According to Strongs Concordance, his word is derived from a primitive root, *salal*, which means to “mound up” and “exalt.”

OT:5549 לָלַח **calal** (saw-lal'); a primitive root; to mound up (especially a turnpike); figurative, to exalt; reflexively, to oppose (as by a dam):

I find a very similar, even more primitive, root to *salal*, which conveys a bit more of the “exalted mound” and that is the Hebrew word *sela*, which carries with it the concept of a lofty fortress.

OT:5553 עָלָה **cela** (seh'-lah); from an unused root meaning to be lofty; a craggy rock, literally or figuratively (a fortress):

The visual image portrayed by this word seems to me to have far more “substance” than any ladder might. I prefer that for another reason, as well.

I believe that David understood what Yacov saw as his rock and tower of deliverance in today’s parasha, and applied it to his own life. David composed this song to the L-rd after being delivered from King Saul, who sought his life. David used the same root word, *sela*, to describe the source of his deliverance.

2 Sam 22:2-3

"The Lord is my **rock** and my fortress and my deliverer; 3
My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the
horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge; My
savior, Thou dost save me from violence.

וּמִצְדָּתִי	סֶלֶעִי	יְהוָה	וַיֹּאמֶר	²
and my fortress,	my rock,	is	The Lord	And he said,
<u>4686</u>	<u>5553</u>	<u>9999</u>	<u>3068</u>	<u>559</u>
			לִי:	וּמִפְּלִטָּיִ
			my	and deliverer;
			<u>3807a</u>	<u>6403</u>

I, much like King David, do not believe my Savior is a flimsy ladder,
nor even a narrow staircase. Those visual images are not satisfying to
me.

I believe that my Savior is a strong tower, a high craggy rock, and a
fortress who is my refuge and deliverer. He is the One upon Whom the
angels of heaven ascend and descend.

As we continue our series in covenant relationships, we can first conduct a short review.

When one is outside the body of faith, he is a gentile (Heb. *goy*) or a stranger to the covenant (Heb. *nahar*).

The entry level of covenant relationship is exhibited by Noah, where he turned his back on pagan things, chose G-d as his G-d, and simply lived as much of a godly life as he understood. This is the time when someone walks through the doorway of justification (redemption) by faith. Those who go this far are within the body of faith, regardless of their disregard of the remainder of Torah. These are known as *ger toshav* (sojourning stranger).

The next level of covenant relationship is exhibited by Avram, before he was circumcised. G-d came to him personally, and made a covenant with him that is everlasting. Avram recognized G-d as the One true G-d, and followed His instructions to the degree he knew them. Avram was just beginning to walk-out G-d's instructions. He did what he knew G-d wished to be done, and that was reckoned to him as righteousness.¹

¹ Gen 15:6

Those at this level are still known as *ger toshav*, for they have not yet entered into the deeper covenant relationship which comes at the next level.

But G-d was not finished with Avram. He had more in store for him and for his spiritual descendants (Heb. *zera*). So, this level really forms a ramp-up to the next level.

After circumcision, and a name change from Avram to Abraham, he reached a higher level of covenant relationship. Now, his descendants will have the right to live in the Promised Land, which is granted to them as an eternal inheritance. G-d now defines Himself with a new term, “G-d of Abraham.” And all those who are gathered into the family of Abraham, who accept circumcision (physical and spiritual), and also commit to act in a way consistent with what they know of G-d’s ways, will be known as the “People of G-d.” These are called a *ger tzadik* (righteous sojourner).

The concept of spiritual descendants changes a bit at this level. At the lower levels, not all who claim faith in G-d are granted permission to have an inheritance to dwell in the Promised Land. Neither are they

required to follow Torah. But they are still urged by the Spirit of G-d to do as much of what G-d has instructed as they know.

The Abrahamic covenant level remained the highest achievable level of covenant relationship for any person from Abraham until Moses. Before Moses, G-d would reveal to individual people, as the circumstances required, sufficient amounts of His instructions to allow them to do what He instructed at that time. But the wholeness of Torah still remained generally unknown to mankind.

With the introduction of the fuller revelation of Torah at the Exodus from Egypt, the Mosaic Covenant level was initiated. Those of the mixed multitude² who had joined themselves to Israel at the Noahic and Abrahamic levels in Egypt were given the opportunity, and the responsibility, to enter into the next level of covenant relationship.

Mosaic Covenant

With the coming of this level of covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant became a ramp-up to the Mosaic Covenant level. That is because

² Exodus 12:38

joining with Israel by circumcision before Moses carried with it a lower responsibility, but after Moses, a far higher one – that of keeping Torah. After Moses, the Abrahamic Covenant became an entry doorway, much as the Noahic Covenant was, at the lower levels of relationship.

This is why the term *ger tzadik* applies to those who have entered the Abrahamic Covenant level. After Moses, circumcision has become more than merely a sign in the flesh, and the connection with Abraham.

It is the outward evidence of the circumcised heart that a person must have to enter into this level of covenant relationship, and is evidence of a deeper connection with G-d. Truly, the heart is the most important part of the equation. Without the correct heart, circumcision is meaningless.

Circumcision of the flesh demonstrates a cutting off and casting away of that which is a characteristic of pagans. Circumcision of the heart is the intentional cutting off and casting away of ungodliness in favor of sanctification.

Circumcision is a rite of passage as well. For a Jewish newborn, he is not considered part of Israel until he is circumcised. Then he is given his Hebrew name, and is officially counted among the People.

For non-Jews who wish to become fully part of Israel, circumcision is a part of that process as well. Some call the process “conversion” and I guess that term makes sense. The person who enters into the Abrahamic Covenant doorway is leaving the people group into which he was born, and becoming part of the Jewish people. There are a number of steps in that process, but circumcision is the next-to-last step. The final step is the mikvah. The person submerges into the waters of the mikvah as his former self, but arises from those waters a new person, to is to walk in “newness of life.” When the person arises from the waters, he is also given a new name – a Hebrew name – which signifies the completeness of that change of life. His new walk by necessity includes Torah.

Paul spoke of this as well, as he reminded us that the mikvah is a passage to a new life of holiness. He said that arising from the waters was the equivalent of being resurrected from the dead, and being given a new opportunity to live – but this time a holy life.

Rom 6:1-11

6 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; 7 for he who has died is freed from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Let's look at the level of joinder to the Jewish people that exemplifies this level of covenant. The joinder of Ruth has set the standard for all who follow in her footsteps, and this pattern has been in use from this time forward regarding those who would wish to join the Jewish people from other nations.³

Ruth 1:6-18

6 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the land of Moab, for she had heard in the land of Moab that the Lord had visited His people in giving them food. 7 So she departed from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. 8 And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me."⁴ 9 May the Lord grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband." Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. 10 And they said to her, "No, but we will surely return with you to

³ One of the requirements for "conversion" is that the person must be refused three times, so that their heart might be tested. Joining the Jewish people has great benefits, but it also carries with it great responsibilities and great hardships, since Satan hates this people group more than any other.

⁴ This is the first refusal.

your people." 11 But Naomi said, "Return, my daughters. Why should you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? 12 "Return, my daughters!⁵ Go, for I am too old to have a husband. If I said I have hope, if I should even have a husband tonight and also bear sons, 13 would you therefore wait until they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters; for it is harder for me than for you, for the hand of the Lord has gone forth against me." 14 And they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

15 Then she said, "Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods; return after your sister-in-law."⁶ 16 But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. 17 Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the Lord do to me, and worse, if

⁵ This is the second refusal.

⁶ This is the third refusal.

anything but death parts you and me."⁷ 18 When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

I find that there are many in the family of faith who are existing at the Noahic or even Avramic covenant levels, but who resist (or flatly refuse) to join to the Jewish people in the Mosaic covenant. I also have heard teachings in the normative church that being a “believer in Jesus” automatically elevates a person to the level above the Mosaic covenant level. It would seem that Yeshua Himself would differ with that theology. He used the example of “mother and brothers” to illustrate that point.

Matt 12:46-50

46 While He was still speaking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him. 47 And someone said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You." 48 But He answered the one who was telling Him and said, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" 49 And

⁷ Ruth added to her confession of loyalty and joinder an oath to G-d, and that settled the question. Naomi could offer no further argument in the face of that oath.

stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said,
"Behold, My mother and My brothers! 50 "For whoever does
the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and
sister and mother."

How do we know what G-d's will is? He has already given us that
answer. It is Torah. And it is also clear that Torah is not done away with
by Yeshua.

Matt 5:17-20

17 "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the
Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. 18 "For
truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the
smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until
all is accomplished. 19 "Whoever then annuls one of the least
of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be
called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and
teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of
heaven. 20 "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness
surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter
the kingdom of heaven.

Paul knew that entry into the Mosaic covenant by the doorway of the Abrahamic covenant had far-reaching consequences, and was not a requirement for entry into the kingdom. Further, if you think that you must first be circumcised in order to be in the kingdom, you have rejected the very point of Yeshua's sacrifice – to give you the doorway of Noah – redemption without works being added (even circumcision).

Gal 5:2-7

2 Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. 3 And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. 4 You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. 5 For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.

A misinterpretation of this passage has led to much confusion, and those who insist that it stands for the proposition that the Torah is done-away-with do violence to the intent of Paul in this passage.

Let's look at the distinctives of this level of covenant relationship:

With whom is this Covenant made? Israel and those sojourning with them (Exodus 19:3-6, mixed multitude Ex 12:38), a subset of the Abrahamic covenant.

How long does this covenant last? It is not listed as everlasting (*brit olam*), but the instructions of G-d (commands of Torah) are listed as everlasting.

What are the benefits of this level of covenant? A treasured people, kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

What are the requirements associated with this level of covenant? Prior to this covenant, only the Sabbath was declared as Holy. But now, Israel as a people group are given the command to be holy (Ex 19:6, Lev 11:44-45, 19:2, 20:26, 21:6-8, Num 6:5, 15:40, Deut 23:14). Holiness is achieved by following G-d's instructions in Torah.

Most of the commands given through Moses are divided into two categories: justice commands (*mishphatim*) and holiness commands (*chukim* and *mitzvot*).

We are to attach tzitzit to the corners of our garments throughout our generations, to remind those of us in this covenant level to follow G-d's instructions, and thus be holy.

Num 15:37-41

37 The Lord also spoke to Moses, saying, 38 "Speak to the sons of Israel, and tell them that they shall make for themselves tassels [Heb. *tzitzit*] on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and that they shall put on the tassel of each corner a cord of blue. 39 And it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the Lord, so as to do them and not follow after your own heart and your own eyes, after which you played the harlot, 40 in order that you may remember to do all My commandments, and be holy to your God. 41 I am the Lord your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt to be your God; I am the Lord your God."

So, it would be impossible for any person to rightly declare that they are one of G-d's holy family, but at the same time declaring that the Torah is done-away-with.

I find that there are many in the family of faith who have entered into the beginning parts of the Noahic covenant, and who have become a bit stuck there. This is because of the lack of some proper teaching in the normative church, which has led to some erroneous theology.

Some in the normative church have certainly distanced themselves from most pagan practices and ungodliness. But have they truly been grafted-in to the rich root of the cultivated olive tree? Maybe their branch has been removed from the wild olive tree, but are they partaking of the rich sap of the cultivated tree? How can some in the normative church deny that the cultivated olive tree (Israel) even exists, and partake of the sap of that tree (learning how to live a life of holiness as passed-on from Abraham forward?)

Replacement theology has found fertile ground in the normative church of today. That way, the normative church can believe they are heirs to the promises that G-d only gave to Israel. That way, they can declare that Torah is gone. That way they can avoid the responsibility of living a holy lifestyle, in accordance with the instructions G-d gave through Moses and the Prophets.

Paul sternly taught against this theology.

Rom 11:19-32

19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." 20 Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; 21 for if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you. 22 Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. 23 And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again. 24 For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more shall these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?

25 For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of

the Gentiles has come in; 26 and thus all Israel will be saved;
just as it is written,

"The Deliverer will come from Zion,
He will remove ungodliness from Jacob."

27 "And this is My covenant with them,
When I take away their sins."

28 From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for
your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are
beloved for the sake of the fathers; 29 for the gifts and the
calling of God are irrevocable. 30 For just as you once were
disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because
of their disobedience, 31 so these also now have been
disobedient, in order that because of the mercy shown to you
they also may now be shown mercy. 32 For God has shut up
all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all.

It is the mission of our congregation to open the doorway of covenants at
the higher level, so that all who would like to enter, will find the way
clear to do so, but offering no condemnation to those who do not.