



FEED MY SHEEP

PUBLISHED BY DR. JAMES W. BRUGGEMAN
STONE KINGDOM MINISTRIES
P. O. Box 5695
ASHEVILLE, NC 28813 U.S.A.

See my blog at www.Stone-Kingdom.net

Issue #236

October 2018

Jacob's covenant with Laban *Part 8—The Covenants of the Bible*

In last month's mailing, I included a chart entitled "General Characteristics and Features of Covenants." I hope you will keep it handy as I will be referring back to it numerous times in the many parts of this study still to come. (For those who desire not to be limited to a monthly four-page study, you can always order the entire series of 48 lectures—nearly one hour each. See the flier enclosed with this mailing.) Now let us continue our cursory examination of the outline chart.

Since "cutting the covenant" sacrifice was a sacred and solemn affair, it required a sacred place, hence the reference on the outline to the sanctuary of the covenant. In the biblical context, whether it was the temple or the tabernacle in the wilderness, the altar was the place of sacrifice.

Number 4: The next characteristic of a covenant is that it needs to be *authenticated*. If you swear out an affidavit, it has to be notarized. And what does the notary do to the affidavit document after he or she has signed it? They emboss their notary seal on the page, don't they? It is a witness, an authentication that it was *you* who made this statement on whatever the date is. Thus in our outline, under #4, we have (a) the seal of the covenant, (b) the sign of the covenant and (c) the token of the covenant.

Once the covenant ceremony or ritual itself was concluded, the parties to the covenant and their friends would *celebrate* the new relationship with a banquet or a meal of some sort. That is number 5 in the outline. I am certain many of you are thinking of wedding banquets, and that is totally appropriate because weddings are one of the few places in our American culture where a covenant with many of its ancient features is still recognizable as a covenant ceremony. I will pre-

sent much more on weddings later. I put the word "communion" in there and we will certainly be delving into the significance of that word in the covenant studies to come.

Number 6 is the *memorial* to the covenant. I suggest that there is some overlap between this feature and feature number 4, the seal of the covenant. You see, a sign or a witness in number 4 is as a means of authenticating the covenant, whereas here in number 6, the very same thing can be a memorial to the covenant.

For example, when God put the rainbow in the sky after the flood, He said it was a token of the covenant. So on the one hand, it was a sign to humanity of the authenticity of God's promise; but at the same time, it was a reminder to us of the promise God made in the Noachic covenant—which we shall address in due time. In other words, it fits under both sections in our outline.

But not all the points can belong in both categories. Under "Memorial of/to the covenant," we find letter *a*: purpose. What is the purpose of a memorial? It is to remind the parties of their commitment to the covenant. When they see the memorial and remember the commitment they made, it serves to renew and reinforce their determination to keep the terms of their commitment.

Then, specifically, what are the *means* of remembering? In 6-b-i, we see a memorial dinner/supper. Married couples celebrate their wedding anniversary with a special meal. It serves to renew and reinforce their commitments to one another. Of course, on the 25th and 50th wedding anniversaries, it often becomes a huge affair as the couple are honored by their offspring and other family members and friends with a grand celebration.

Another means of causing parties to remember their covenants, especially in the biblical context, was to plant trees. When Abraham and Abimelech concluded their covenant at Beersheba, Abraham planted a grove of trees there as a memorial. Another common means of memorializing a covenant was to erect a monument. It could be as simple as a heap of stones, or it could be something more structurally sound and architecturally pleasing.

I immediately think of Jacob and Laban, which we shall get to shortly. You will notice on the outline that I suggested the Great Pyramid as an example of a more formal structure. Some readers might be wondering what that ancient wonder of the world has to do with any covenant. Well, have you considered Isaiah 19:19? Many Bible students believe it is specifically referring to the Great Pyramid.

Isaiah 19:19 In that day shall there be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the LORD.

20 And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the LORD because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a saviour, and a great one, and he shall deliver them.

There is a tremendous amount of information in those two verses. Back in 1999, when Ron Oja was teaching at our Stone Kingdom—Atlanta Fellowship for a weekend, he spent two or three hours just on the pyramid. We still have that material available which is part of an audio album of five CDs of continuous teaching by Ron. The album is called *Sign Language for the Spiritually Deaf*. It is available for \$22. Also, my late and good friend, Bible archeologist, Ray Capt, has written two books on the Great Pyramid. B-132: *Study in Pyramidology*, 264 pgs., \$15 & B-131: *Great Pyramid Decoded*, 96 pgs., \$9. Add \$5 shipping for first item and \$0.50 shipping for each *additional* item.

The seventh characteristic of covenants has to do with its duration and a related feature: was it revocable or irrevocable? Certain of the divine covenants are said to be *everlasting*, a word which most of us know is a poor translation in many cases. The words usually translated *everlasting* or *eternal* do not mean that in the ancient Hebrew and Greek. The words *olam* in Hebrew and *aion* in Greek refer to a long and usually indefinite period of time, but certainly not endless. [For a detailed study, order my two lectures: CD #s 263 & 264 How Long Is “Forever?”—The Doctrine of the Ages, Parts 1, 2. \$15 ppd.]

We see on the chart that certain covenants by God are listed as being irrevocable while others were obvi-

ously temporary and revocable. We list the Mosaic covenant among the temporary covenants. A word or two of explanation here is necessary. Most Christians are incorrectly taught and are therefore confused about the Mosaic covenant. Most people make no distinction between the various portions called *the law* in the Mosaic covenant. I won't take the time to prove it here, but many of you know that God's laws were in existence long before Moses, and what Moses did was merely to codify them and write them down.

The blood sacrifices and their associated ceremonies and rituals were added because of transgressions and it is this portion of the Mosaic covenant that is temporary. That is the part that is abolished with the coming of Christ. However, the Ten Commandments, and their subsidiary statutes and judgments, were not done away with. They were not abolished. Jesus Himself proved the point when He stated this:

Matthew 5:17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Each of those three verses is proof enough, but even the last one is proof on its own because Jesus is referring to the time when the kingdom of heaven has come, and He clearly infers that there will be people with differing ranks or status in the kingdom. Some will be greater; some lesser, do you see that? And Jesus says that those who have taught anyone to break even the least of these commandments will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But think about it, if the law has been done away with since the cross, then Jesus' statement makes no sense at all. Clearly, this verse reiterates precisely what verses 17 and 18 prove; namely, that the law has not been abolished or destroyed. I pray that is clear to you.

The final characteristic in our outline, feature #8 of covenants, concerns how a covenant is established and maintained, and we list (a): by calling. In other words, a person or group is *called* by God to enter into a covenant. The next step, (b), is the actual ceremony where one performs the activities, utters the words of promise, seals the deal, and so forth to actually *enter into* the covenant. Then (c): one *keeps* the covenant for as long as one has agreed to. That concludes our

quick look at the outline of the general characteristics and features of covenants. We will now take up the case of the covenant between Jacob and his father-in-law, Laban. This need not take too long. I will summarize the story to set the stage for the short passage which deals with the covenant.

Jacob, you will recall, had to flee from his father, Isaac's house because Jacob's twin brother, Esau, was so angry he would have killed him. Jacob journeys all the way back to Padanaram, where he finds employment *and more* at the house of his uncle Laban, the brother of Jacob's mother, Rebekah. "And more," is a reference to the wives and children and wealth that Jacob obtains during his 20 years with Laban. Jacob is smitten immediately with love for Laban's daughter, Rachel. He agrees to work seven years for Laban in return for permission to marry her. Laban, though, pulls a fast one. On the wedding night, Laban substitutes Rachel's older sister, Leah, in place of Rachel in the wedding tent.

You might wonder why Jacob didn't notice the difference on the wedding night. Does anybody have any ideas on that? The only two things I could think of were: 1: women in the Orient in those times wore veils over their faces. And 2, and I have no proof of this. It is only thrown out as a possibility, although I personally think it is highly unlikely; and that is that Jacob had one too many "Beersheba's" that night. But frankly, you would have to be absolutely falling down drunk—you would have to be in a severe state of inebriation before you could not tell the difference between Rachel and Leah.

The sisters no doubt had some family resemblance, but they were not identical twins. In fact, the Bible indicates that there was something about Leah's eyes which distinguished her from Rachel. However, even when women wear veils, about the only thing visible is their eyes. So ultimately, I do not know the answer to the question of why Jacob could not tell the difference between the sisters on the wedding night. In any event, the custom was that Leah was now Jacob's wife as well, and Laban—who as we have already seen, was somewhat of a cheat—now considered that the seven years agreement of labor for Rachel had just been transferred to Leah, and that if Jacob really wanted Rachel that badly, well, he could just tack on another seven years of labor for her.

If you are thinking that Jacob had to wait 14 years before he was allowed to wed Rachel, that was not the case. They became husband and wife right away, but Jacob was basically an indentured servant for the next 14 years. During that time, Jacob learned a lot about

the sheep and cattle trade and God prospered the flocks and herds of Laban for Jacob's sake. After the 14 years were up, Jacob evidently kept on working for Laban, and Laban continued to try to cheat him. But Jacob apparently learned some things about animal genetics that Laban didn't know. And as a result, Jacob's flocks grew both physically stronger and in greater numbers than Laban's flocks did. After this went on for a period of time, Jacob realizes that Laban is getting continually more hostile towards him. So Jacob brings it up to his wives. Laban's daughters themselves admit that daddy has not been all too kind in recent months, so they tell Jacob that they wouldn't mind leaving also. "Whatever you think is best, honey," they tell him.

{*Hear the theme song in your mind now...*} "So they packed up their b'longin's and they moved to Beverlee...Hills, that is. Swimmin' pools and movie stars." ... Oops, wrong story. Sorry, Jethro! Thought I'd throw a little levity in the situation there. But there was nothing funny about what happened next. Jacob with his four wives, and all their children—totaling 11 now—and all their menservants and maidservants, and all their flocks and herds, and all of them with all their possessions—which you can imagine—were quite considerable now—with all of that in tow, Jacob actually fled from Laban's ranch, and got a good three-day head-start before Laban found out they had gone.

To make matters worse, Rachel had stolen some of Laban's little statues, little idols, which were Laban's gods, and she had not told Jacob about her little heist. Laban gathers his men and pursues Jacob. Apparently, it was on the seventh day that Laban catches up with Jacob and company. He is ready to visit holy hell upon them, as it were, but God warns Laban in a dream that he had better not. Well, Laban complains to Jacob that he could have at least let him say good-bye to his daughters and grandchildren.

In reply, Jacob essentially says "Look, I worked hard for you for 20 years and I worked *honestly* for you; yet, you tried to cheat me at every turn. If it had not been for the God of my fathers looking out for me, you would have sent me away empty-handed, so ...*what* were you saying?"

Now this scene is occurring far from Laban's ranch. They are at Mt. Gilead. Laban did not come after Jacob being accompanied with all his *other* grandchildren and flocks and herds from the Laban ranch. He expected there might be some violence of which *he* just might possibly be the cause. So the only grandchildren here on the scene are Jacob's 11 sons and one or more daughters. The only animals are

Jacob's animals which he had every legal right to, per his earlier agreement with Laban. Yet listen, as Laban has the gall to say:

Genesis 31:43 And Laban answered and said unto Jacob, *These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and these cattle are my cattle, and all that thou seest is mine: and what can I do this day unto these my daughters, or unto their children which they have born?*

Can you believe the nerve of Mr. Laban here? Nonetheless, Laban knows that he had better not mess with Jacob lest he provoke the ire of Jacob's God. So he probably figures the best he can get out of this is to come to some kind of arrangement where, from his point of view, Jacob *won't bother him* any more. So Laban says to Jacob:

44 Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee.

45 And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar.

46 And Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones; and they took stones, and made an heap: and they did eat there upon the heap.

47 And Laban called it Jegarsahadutha: but Jacob called it Galeed.

48 And Laban said, This heap is a witness between me and thee this day. Therefore was the name of it called Galeed;

49 And Mizpah [watchtower]; for he said, The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.

50 If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take *other* wives beside my daughters, no man is with us; see, God is witness betwixt me and thee.

51 And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold this pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee;

52 This heap be witness, and this pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm.

53 The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us. And Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac.

54 Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread: and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount.

55 And early in the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them: and Laban departed, and returned unto his place.

So that is an example of a covenant between two men. Let's now analyze it in light of the elements in our outline. How many of those features are in this covenant? Well, we have the two parties to the covenant, so #1 is there.

#2, the words of the covenant would seem to consist of verses 50 and 52. Laban is seemingly almost threatening Jacob that he had better not harm his daughters, Leah and Rachel, and furthermore, that he better not take any more wives. And we have to ask...or else what? But Laban seems to leave that in the hands of Jacob's God, Yahweh. Furthermore, Laban declares that the heap of stones would be a point beyond which neither he nor Jacob would cross to do the other harm. Each was agreeing to stay on his own side of the heap of stones.

#3 on our outline, the blood of the covenant. In verse 54, Jacob slaughters an animal. This may have been the meal referred to in verse 46, also. So that accounts for #5 as well, the celebration meal. #4 on our outline refers to the seal or sign or witness; i.e., the authentication of the covenant—a very important part of a covenant.

Jacob erected both a pillar and a heap of stones as a sign and witness of the covenant. It also serves as the memorial monument in #6 in our outline. #7 is the duration of this covenant. We would assume that both parties agreed it was irrevocable and everlasting in the sense that it would last the rest of their lives. Finally, as you look at #8 on the outline, we see that Laban called Jacob to enter into covenant with him. Jacob did *enter in*, and it seems that both men *kept* the covenant the rest of their lives. So in this example, we find that all eight elements of a covenant are found in one manner or another in this covenant between Jacob and Laban.

When we continue our study, we will find that, as we move forward in Hebrew history, the customs of two Hebrew men making covenant preserved these basic elements, but they also added some very specific *and highly significant* rituals to the overall ceremony.

(To be continued.)

Feed My Sheep is a part of the teaching ministry of Dr. James W. Bruggeman and it is sent out freely. However, we reserve the right to discontinue sending it at any time to any one. The donations and tithes of those who are blest, taught and fed by this publication make it possible for us to continue in ministry. Gifts can be sent to PO Box 5695, Asheville, NC 28813. Thank you.