

COVENANT RENEWAL

EXODUS 34:10-28

Moses has gone back up Mt. Sinai with the blank stone tablets and God revealed Himself to His prophet to the extent He desired to do so. With the possible exception of Adam and the Lord's disciples who followed Him during the three years of His ministry, no one in history was privileged to know Yahweh to the extent Moses was privileged to do so.

Yahweh responded to Moses' intercession for the Israelites.

Exodus 34:9 ⁹He said, "If now I have found favor in Your sight, O Lord, I pray, let the Lord go along in our midst, even though the people are so obstinate, and pardon our [בְּנֵי] iniquity and our [בְּנֵי] sin, and take us as Your own possession [בְּנֵהָלָ]."

Moses petitioned Yahweh to be with the Israelites as they journeyed to the Promised Land, to pardon their sin, and to allow them to be counted as God's people. Possession, בְּנֵהָלָ, means to take property as a permanent possession. Many translations use the word "inheritance," but in this context "possession" seems to be the better choice. The TANAKH reads, "take us for your own." The word inheritance implies the person received something that belonged to someone else and that property is bestowed upon the recipient out of the good graces of the donor. That is not the situation here; nobody owned Israel before God created them to be a people. They are uniquely His possession unless and until He disowns them, and He isn't going to do that. Moses asked Yahweh to recognize Israel as His possession which implies divine guidance, protection, and favor. Even though the Israelites are stiff-necked and rebellious, Moses asked

Yahweh to forgive them and to reestablish their Covenant relationship despite their behavior. It is also noteworthy that Moses did not disassociate himself from the people. He included himself in terms of the iniquity and sin committed by the Israelites. Our, *נו*, is a pronominal suffix meaning our or us.

Yahweh agreed with Moses' request and He began the process of reinstating the Covenant.

Exodus 34:10 ¹⁰Then God said, "Behold, I am going to make a covenant. Before all your people I will perform miracles which have not been produced in all the earth nor among any of the nations; and all the people among whom you live will see the working of the LORD, for it is a fearful [*יִרָא*] thing that I am going to perform with you.

Yahweh was ready to reinstitute the Covenant that was broken by the idolatry of the Israelites. This is not a new Covenant with new stipulations; it is the first Covenant reinstated with some few minor modifications. This chapter relates the typical covenant procedures for that period of time. The parties to the Covenant are identified in a prologue beginning in Exodus 34:6 as Yahweh and the Israelites. Blessings and curses are identified. No formal ratification witnesses were identified, but Yahweh doesn't need witnesses to swear to His veracity and faithfulness. The documents, the stone tablets, containing the Covenant stipulations were prepared and both parties would have a copy of them.

God once again said the people were Moses' people, "your people," He said, but this time it is not a negative statement. Moses was highly favored of God and it was his privilege to lead the Israelites. As befitting a people Yahweh created for His own purposes, He is going to do incredible works among them

such that the world will have no choice but to take notice. We must always remember that Israel has a divine purpose in history. Through them, God revealed Himself to the world and His plan for history as it pertained to both Jew and Gentile. It wasn't Israel that was going to do anything extraordinary; it was Yahweh who was going to do extraordinary things through Israel. The implication is the world would know it was Yahweh and not Israel who was accomplishing these extraordinary things.

The miraculous things Yahweh was going to do through Israel would strike fear into the hearts of the Canaanites. In reality, it wasn't only the things He was going to do in the future with Israel, but it was also the incredible miraculous work He already did on their behalf in Egypt and in the wilderness. He miraculously provided for them by providing them food and water where there wasn't any. Their clothing did not wear out during those decades in the wilderness and they did not suffer foot problems during the long march around the Sinai. Israel's defeat of Sihon and Og during the final leg of the wilderness wandering to Canaan also frightened the Canaanites. The people in the Middle East were stunned and frightened. Fearful, *יָרָא*, means to fear, to respect, to reverence, or to be afraid. In this context, it is not referring to reverence; it is referring to fright. We know this fear spread throughout the area because Rahab referred to it forty years later.

Joshua 2:8-11 ⁸Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, ⁹and said to the men, "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land

have melted away before you. ¹⁰“For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. ¹¹“When we heard *it*, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.

Deuteronomy 2:25²⁵‘This day I will begin to put the dread and fear of you upon the peoples everywhere under the heavens, who, when they hear the report of you, will tremble and be in anguish because of you.’

Deuteronomy 8:4 ⁴“Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years.

Yahweh promised to drive the Canaanites out of the land before the Israelites, but He also presented the beginning of a warning.

Exodus 34:11 ¹¹“Be sure to observe what I am commanding you this day: behold, I am going to drive out the Amorite before you, and the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite.

Yahweh identified the operative principle for Israel’s ability to enjoy blessings under the Covenant and that was obedience to the Covenant stipulations. Later, Yahweh would amplify this principle in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 by specifically identifying the blessings Israel and the Jewish people would receive for obedience and the curses that would be experienced for disobedience.

God stated He was going to fulfill His promise to the Israelites, a promise that began with Abram, to put them in a land He was going to give them. In order for them to live peacefully and fruitfully in that land, the people who would be their enemies had to be removed. Otherwise, they would not have the

peace they were being promised. The Israelites would be God's instrument for removing them, but the battle was His and He would insure the victory. This promise was part of Yahweh's original call to Moses to go to Egypt and free the Israelites from slavery.

Genesis 17:8 ⁸"I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

Exodus 3:16–17 ¹⁶"Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, "I am indeed concerned about you and what has been done to you in Egypt. ¹⁷"So I said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, to a land flowing with milk and honey.'"

This promise was mentioned a number of other times in the Pentateuch which emphasizes the importance Yahweh has placed on Israel and the land which is a factor even today in world affairs.

According to Exodus 23:23, the Canaanites were not going to be removed from the land by displacing them into other nations. Yahweh said, "I will completely destroy them." This wasn't simply an issue of removing a people from the land in order to give that land to someone else. This was a spiritual battle having significance far beyond the simple question concerning who lives where. The iniquity of the pagan Canaanites, which at paganism's core is rebellion against God, was apparently getting worse and worse, yet God, in His grace and mercy, was giving them time to turn to Him. In the end, He knew they

wouldn't and He was going to exercise His wrath against them and give their land to the Israelites.

Yahweh didn't have anything against these people for no reason. They were people made in the image of God just as the Israelites were. What He had against them was their rebellion and that is something He won't tolerate from anyone, Canaanites or otherwise. In this time and place, they were the people He was going to judge and punish with destruction. They were not the first rebellious people to experience His wrath and they won't be the last.

The Israelites were not to go into the land and make a covenant with any of the people already living there. Their Covenant was with Yahweh; they needed no other covenant with no other people. They were not supposed to make pacts with people who are in rebellion against God. We've already seen how quickly the Israelites turned back to worshiping pagan gods, and we've discussed the fact they never really eliminated paganism from their hearts and minds. Yahweh was issuing a rather stern warning here not to do something like that again. It would be particularly dangerous to enter into alliances with pagans who were living right there among them in the same land.

Exodus 34:12 ¹²"Watch yourself that you make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, or it will become a snare [מִזְקָה] in your midst.

It is spiritually dangerous business to become entangled with pagans. Working to change their hearts and minds from the outside is one thing but working with them on the inside is treacherous. The end result is almost always

spiritual degradation that moves the believer down to the level of the pagan. Snare, מִקְלָשׁ, is a trap of some sort which is baited in order to lure the desired prey into the trap. In this case, the word is used in a figurative sense relating to a moral pitfall or something that lures a person into disaster and ruin. Yahweh was telling Moses if the Israelites entered into alliances with those pagans in the land He was giving them, they would be brought down to the moral and spiritual level of the pagan and they would experience destructive results. These destructive results could be the consequences of engaging in pagan sin such as losing one's son by sacrificing him to Chemosh or Molech, a sin in which even Solomon participated (1 Kings 11:7, 33). Disastrous results could also result in destruction at the hands of Yahweh which were at times temporal, temporary judgments, or at other times more long-lasting consequences such as when Assyria destroyed Israel and Babylon destroyed Judah.

In terms of application, we aren't to do that in this age either. Ignoring serious breaches of biblical truth and doctrinal error in order to join with the broad elements of Christendom or churchianity in ecumenical cooperative enterprise is detrimental to the health of the Bible believing, true church organism called the Body of Christ. When that type of mutual cooperation takes place in the name of "unity," the lowest common denominator seems to become the standard. High standards become subjugated to or even consumed by the lower standards.

The Israelites were instructed to not only avoid making compacts with the pagans, but to proactively destroy their places of worship.

Exodus 34:13–14 ¹³“But *rather*, you are to tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and cut down their Asherim [אֲשֵׁרִים] ¹⁴—for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous [קַנָּא], is a jealous God—

Asherah was a pagan fertility goddess. Whether or not she represented the mother/child cult is somewhat speculative although likely, and she was thought to be the consort of Baal. Asherah poles were constructed of wood or stone, or they were living trees. Often, the Asherah worship sites were on high places. Some commentators don't believe this is a reference to the specific goddess but instead a general reference to any carved, erected symbol of a pagan fertility cult. I'm skeptical of that assertion; the text says Asherah which refers to both the poles and the goddess those poles represent. I don't see any evidence those concepts need to be divorced from one another and the very next verse prohibits worshiping any other god.

This prohibition was presented again in Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 16:21–22 ²¹“You shall not plant for yourself an Asherah of any kind of tree beside the altar of the LORD your God, which you shall make for yourself. ²²“You shall not set up for yourself a sacred pillar which the LORD your God hates.

We know the Israelites failed to heed this command. Gideon's father had a shrine to Baal with an Asherah beside it (Judges 6:25). During Josiah's reforms, he removed the Asherah from the house of the Lord, which had been a direct violation of Deuteronomy 16:21, and he burned it at the brook Kidron (2 Kings

23:6). The worship of Asherah obviously went on for a long time in Israel's history. Gideon lived early in the nation's history and Josiah was one of the last kings before the Babylonian destruction of Judah. This was a continual problem.

The command forbidding Israelite participation in any act of idolatry was repeated. They were to destroy all the pagan religious accoutrements and abolish their places of worship. They were not to worship pagan gods.

Theoretically, once all the pagans were destroyed, the idols torn down and the pagan worship places demolished, the Israelites would not have paganism right in front of their face to be the snare Yahweh knew it would turn out to be. That didn't happen. The Israelites did not take possession of all the land they were supposed to conquer nor did they destroy all the pagans when they had the chance. This was not due to inability; it was due to disobedience. Judges 1:27-36 revealed the extent of their failure to drive the pagans out of the land. As a result, Yahweh judged them for their disobedience by allowing the pagans to stay in the land as a hindrance to them.

Judges 2:1-3 ¹Now the angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you, ²and as for you, you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.' But you have not obeyed Me; what is this you have done? ³"Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but they will become as *thorns* in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you.'"

What does it mean when it is said Yahweh is a jealous God? Jealous, *קנא*, means to be jealous or zealous. The TANAKH translates this word "impassioned" which reflects the sense of the word in this context better than jealous does. All

the English translations, however, use the word “jealous.” In the Old Testament, this word is only used of Yahweh and it refers to His state of mind as it relates to the worship of false, pagan gods. In Deuteronomy 4:24, His zealous nature is linked with a consuming fire and in Deuteronomy 6:15 with the Lord’s anger being kindled by the worship of false gods. Stuart translates the verse: “You must worship no other god, because Yahweh is jealous for His name. He is a jealous God.”¹ I think the meaning would be clearer to English speakers if the word “zealous” was used. We tend to attach interpersonal, male/female, romantic, relationship issues to the word “jealous” which renders this verse a little more difficult to place in its proper context regarding God’s relationship with Israel. That’s not out of place in this context given the fact Israel is referred to as Yahweh’s spouse, but I think “zealous” would express the meaning better as it relates to worshiping false gods. “This is the only verse in the Old Testament in which mention is made of his being jealous for his name, the meaning of which expression is simply that he guard’s his name’s significance—it points to his nature, character, and uniqueness as the only true God—and will not allow it to be profaned by idolatry or any other misuse.”² Only the Creator God is worthy of worship.

¹ Douglas K. Stuart, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Exodus*, gen. ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 724.

² Douglas K. Stuart, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Exodus*, gen. ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 724.

God knew exactly what would happen when, not if, the Israelites failed to obey His instructions for driving them out of Canaan, and He warned them not to fall prey to the seduction of Canaanite idolatry.

Exodus 34:15–16 ¹⁵otherwise you might make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they would play the harlot [זָנְיָה] with their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and someone might invite you to eat of his sacrifice, ¹⁶and you might take some of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters might play the harlot with their gods and cause your sons *also* to play the harlot with their gods.

Harlot, זָנְיָה, means to fornicate or to prostitute. In this context, it is used figuratively to refer to engaging in an improper relationship with pagan gods. If we remember that Israel was considered to be the wife of Yahweh then we can understand how idolatry can be pictured as an abandonment of one's husband in order to engage in prostitution with other gods. The book of Hosea paints this picture for us. The use of this word also seems to connect with the fact the Canaanite gods were fertility cults. There is a lot of sexual connotations attached to pagan religion. These various concepts work together to connect the idea of playing the harlot with abandoning Yahweh for false gods. People cannot serve two masters as the Lord reminded us in Matthew 6:24. He was speaking about serving God and wealth, but the principle is the same. People cannot serve false gods of any type and serve Yahweh at the same time. Money can be a false god and fertility idols were obviously false gods. Worshiping either one of those or worshiping other things is harlotry in God's sight. Prostitutes are not faithful to any person; they do what they do for what they can get out of it which is monetary gain. We are to be pure just as He is pure (1 John 3:3); con-

sorting with other gods defiles a person and makes him impure just as a harlot is impure.

Amazingly, and shockingly but not surprisingly, the Israelites didn't even wait until they got into the land to commit this offense at Shittim. Did we ever mention the Israelites were an obstinate and stiff-necked people?

Numbers 25:1–3 ¹While Israel remained at Shittim, the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab. ²For they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. ³So Israel joined themselves to Baal of Peor, and the LORD was angry against Israel.

Eating the meat from sacrificial animals was considered to be participating in the worship of the god to which the animal was sacrificed. The Israelite men were going in to the women of Moab and worshiping their fertility cult gods. There is a progression identified here that God said would lead the Israelites away from worshiping Him and into worshiping the false gods of the fertility cults. First, friendship with these pagans would lead to playing the harlot, that is, worshiping false gods with their pagan friends and paramours. Then they would make sacrificial offerings to those false gods and eat the meat of those sacrifices. The interaction with the pagan culture would lead to intermarriage with their women. Their wives would continue to worship their pagan gods and cause the Israelite men who were involved with those women to also worship their gods.

King Solomon provided us with the perfect example of how this process worked to subvert the heart of even this king who started his reign so well and so poorly ended it. The progression Yahweh warned the Israelites against several

hundred years before Solomon lived was clearly evident in the King's life. The nation as a whole engaged in the same sort of spiritual regression for centuries.

1 Kings 11:1–8 ¹Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, ²from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel, “You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods.” Solomon held fast to these in love. ³He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away. ⁴For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father *had been*. ⁵For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites. ⁶Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not follow the LORD fully, as David his father *had done*. ⁷Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon. ⁸Thus also he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.

There is an application in this that should be fairly obvious. We shouldn't get so caught up in the people and the things of the world that those people and things of the world become so attractive to us that we participate in them. We need to avoid false teachers. Far too many fundamentalist, Bible believing Christians are listening to Word of Faith teaching on so-called “Christian” television and radio and are being subtly influenced by the false doctrines taught there. As a result, those things are brought into the church. Just about any church you walk into has been influenced by this false doctrine. Yoga in churches has introduced many Christians to demonic Eastern religious dogma. Universal salvation is creeping into churches. If Solomon can fall prey to these kinds of things, we can too. We must be vigilant and faithful. We have the Word

of God to guide us and we need to heed it. Solomon and the Israelites are perfect examples of what can happen when we are not faithful to do that. There are consequences for us when we depart from the Word of God even though we are eternally secure in Christ Jesus in terms of justification salvation. Disobedience and unfaithfulness result in temporal consequences and possibly in the loss of rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Yahweh issued the command to refrain from worshiping a molten god.

Exodus 34:17 ¹⁷“You shall make for yourself no molten [מִטְּכָה] gods.

This command uses a different word than the second of the Ten Commandments which prohibited the making of any likeness whether it was of a creature or whether they were trying to make a likeness of Yahweh. Molten, מִטְּכָה, means an image, molten metal, or a covering. It generally referred to an idol formed of molten metal and poured into a cast. This is the word used in Exodus 32:4 to describe the golden bull idol Aaron crafted. In that case, it could have been a solid gold cast or a gold covered wooden form. This definition allows for either one. Since it was burned and ground into a powder, it seemed more likely it was a wooden form of a bull covered with gold plate. It seems rather obvious this command was issued in response to the rebellion at Mt. Sinai. The second Commandment covers this kind of idol so this command adds a clarifying note to it that is more specific and refers to the problem they already experienced.

At this point in the book, much of what follows repeats what has been already written earlier in the book. Where that occurs, we won't go back over it again except to add some explanatory notes not covered in prior lessons.

Next, the commands to observe the Feasts and the Sabbath are repeated. This must have been a way to show the people the first Covenant was not the problem; the people were the problem.

Exodus 34:18 ¹⁸“You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread. For seven days you are to eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in the month of Abib you came out of Egypt.

Next, He reiterated the law of the firstborn.

Exodus 34:19–20 ¹⁹“The first offspring from every womb belongs to Me, and all your male livestock, the first offspring from cattle and sheep. ²⁰“You shall redeem with a lamb the first offspring from a donkey; and if you do not redeem *it*, then you shall break its neck. You shall redeem all the firstborn of your sons. None shall appear before Me empty-handed.

This law recognized the fact God spared the firstborn in Egypt on the night of the tenth plague when the firstborn of everyone in Egypt who were not protected by the blood were slain. In this way, the night of the Passover was ever before them and the Feast was a celebration of their deliverance on that night. Of course, it is still celebrated today. By redeeming the firstborn, they were allowed to remain where they were supposed to be—at home. They had to present an offering to the Lord in order to redeem the firstborn. I'm sure every parent presented the appropriate sacrifice on behalf of their son and every farmer and herder their livestock in order to prevent the death of any unredeemed

newborn which must have been the consequence, or at least the threatened consequence, for any failure to redeem them.

Next, the Sabbath observance was repeated with an added condition.

Exodus 34:21 ²¹“You shall work six days, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even during plowing time and harvest you shall rest.

In an agriculturally based economy, sowing one's crop and reaping the fruit of it some months later is of the utmost importance. Just in case the farmers thought they could violate the Sabbath to do these very important tasks, the Lord specifically included those periods of time in His command to observe the Sabbath.

The next two of the three Feasts that required mandatory attendance were identified; all the men were required to attend. The men were the heads of the family unit and therefore represented their family whether their family was all there or not. Women and children were not required to attend, but the accounts of these things suggest at least some families, probably a large number, were there as a unit. Nehemiah 8 indicates women and children were present which was at the time of Trumpets and Tabernacles.

Exodus 34:22–23 ²²“You shall celebrate the Feast of Weeks, *that is*, the first fruits of the wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the turn of the year. ²³“Three times a year all your males are to appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel.

The three Feasts they had to attend each year were Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.

The next verse is a promise of divine protection for their land when they go to the Tabernacle or the Temple to attend the Feasts.

Exodus 34:24 ²⁴“For I will drive out nations before you and enlarge your borders, and no man shall covet your land when you go up three times a year to appear before the LORD your God.

Yahweh once again confirmed He, not an angel, would be leading the Israelites into the land and He would drive out the Canaanites before them. This was not going to be done supernaturally in the sense God would miraculously destroy them or force them out by the power of His Word in the same way He created the world or would cause the walls of Jericho to fall down. The Israelites would be the instrument He would use to drive them out, but He would perform miracles through them and use them to fight the necessary battles and accomplish His will. Once He did that and the people were settled in the land, He would bless them with security. Not only would invaders and nomadic thieves be kept out, they wouldn't even dare to think about going in. These blessing were ultimately contingent on obedience.

Leviticus 26:3 ³If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments so as to carry them out ...

Deuteronomy 28:1–2 ¹“Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. ²“All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the LORD your God:

Conversely, if they violated the Covenant stipulations, curses would be imposed.

Leviticus 26:14–16 ¹⁴But if you do not obey Me and do not carry out all these commandments, ¹⁵if, instead, you reject My statutes, and if your soul abhors My ordinances so as not to carry out all My commandments, *and so break My covenant*, ¹⁶I, in turn, will do this to you ...

Deuteronomy 28:15 ¹⁵“But it shall come about, if you do not obey the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:

The blessings were many, but so were the curses and we know Israelite unfaithfulness eventually culminated in the imposition of the curses which included being unsafe in the land.

Leavened bread was not to be used in the sacrificial rites and the Passover Lamb was to be eaten that evening. If anything was uneaten, it was not to be eaten the next day. In the first Passover in Egypt, any leftover over meat was burned the next morning. In Exodus 23:15, this Feast was called the Feast of Unleavened Bread. In the New Testament, the two are considered one Feast and the names are interchangeable. This merger of the two Feasts apparently began to occur right from the start.

They were to bring the very best to offer to the Lord; bringing anything less was unacceptable.

Exodus 34:26 ²⁶“You shall bring the very first [רֵאשִׁית] of the first fruits of your soil into the house of the LORD your God. “You shall not boil a young goat in its mother’s milk.”

The very first, רֵאשִׁית, not only means the first of something, it also means that which is superior in value to all others in the same class or kind. The TANAKH translates this as “the choice first fruits ...” The Lord expected the best of the first

harvest of the crop to be devoted to Him. In terms of the covenantal promises God made to Israel to bless them for adhering to the Covenant stipulations, it is implied in the act of giving Him the best that He in turn promises a high quality, abundant harvest to follow. In terms of application, giving our best is still an operative doctrine today. We need to bring our best to the Lord whether that is our finances or our abilities that may be used in ministry to serve Him and glorify His name. We aren't necessarily promised temporal blessings for faithful giving, but we are promised spiritual blessings in the form of rewards for serving the Lord in whatever way we personally accomplish that which includes giving Him our best in whatever form.

The second part of this verse has been very confusing to exegetes for a very long time. This was discussed in connection with Exodus 23:19, and I decided it was connected to pagan fertility rituals. There are a number of other ideas out there though which serves to illustrate the fact we really don't know the purpose for this command. Geisler conducted some research and found a number of reasons various theologians have presented to explain this verse some of which are foolish: it was an idolatrous practice which was also possibly intended to make the land more productive. Some thought it was cruel to boil a kid in the means used to sustain it, that is, in its mother's milk. Others believed it showed contempt for the parent/child relationship, or that it symbolically profaned the

Feast of Ingathering. Some thought it was too luxurious or epicurean.³ At any rate, the connection to the fertility cults makes the most sense.

That was the last of the commands that were revealed to have been given to Moses during this stay on top of Mt. Sinai. The prophet was on Mt. Sinai a total of forty days and nights just as he was the first time. He received the revelation of God to an extent not revealed before this time, the giving of these few commands to typify the renewal and reinstatement of the Covenant, and the writing of the Commandments on the two tablets of stone. It obviously didn't take forty days to receive these commands. Moses spent most of the time interceding for the Israelites. In Deuteronomy, Moses indicated he was interceding for Israel and God answered the prophet's intercessory prayer.

Deuteronomy 9:18¹⁸"I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sin which you had committed in doing what was evil in the sight of the LORD to provoke Him to anger.

Deuteronomy 10:10¹⁰"I, moreover, stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights like the first time, and the LORD listened to me that time also; the LORD was not willing to destroy you.

Moses was told to write down the words of all the commands Yahweh gave him that encompassed the particulars of the Mosaic Covenant.

Exodus 34:27–28²⁷Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel."²⁸So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did not eat

³ Norman L. Geisler, "The Relation of Purpose and Meaning in Interpreting Scripture" *Grace Theological Journal* 5, no. 2 (Fall, 1984): 232.

bread or drink water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.

This command goes back to Exodus 20 when the Ten Commandments were first revealed, and it isn't restricted to the commands given in this chapter. By writing them down at the hand of the prophet, Yahweh insured His commands were available in the Scriptures in perpetuity and, in fact, we obviously still read them today. According to those words, God made this Covenant with the Israelites who were in the process of being formed into the nation of Israel God created them to be.

Once again, Moses was on the mountain with Yahweh for forty days and forty nights and he neither drank water nor ate bread.

Who wrote the Ten Commandments on the second set of tablets? The interpreters of the NASB apparently thought Moses wrote them. The NASB capitalizes the personal pronouns that refer to God but, in this verse, they used a lower case "h" in the word "he" to identify the one who engraved the tablets. Most expositors recognize the fact God engraved this second set of tablets because the Scriptures reveal He did it; the Bible says Yahweh wrote them.

Exodus 34:1 ¹Now the LORD said to Moses, "Cut out for yourself two stone tablets like the former ones, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets which you shattered.

Deuteronomy 10:2, 4 ²I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets which you shattered, and you shall put them in the ark.' ... ⁴"He wrote on the tablets, like the former writing, the Ten Commandments which the LORD had spoken to you on the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly; and the LORD gave them to me.

Cassuto thought the grammar in Exodus 34:28 rendered the meaning unclear in terms of who engraved the words on the tablets and that may be correct. These other Scriptures, however, make it perfectly clear that Yahweh engraved those words on the tablets.