

# THE BIBLE PROJECT 2.0

Genesis 12-Exodus 24

## PRESSED INTO COMMUNITY

Israel is one huge conglomeration of a family that God seeks to become a nation. So he pursues a strategy to meld them together.



WHAT IS THE GOAL? GOD'S PROJECT

**God's project:** To create a world where his will is done, all creatures live in joyous concert and all fellowship fully with their Creator.

For that goal to be achieved God is establishing a model and a megaphone that will both demonstrate and proclaim his plan and his will for the world.

[PARENTHESIS: Observations on the historicity of the Patriarchs from John Bright:

Patriarchs, though not named outside of the Bible fit perfectly in the Middle Bronze Age 1996 - 1500 BC

1. Names fit perfectly – in a class known to be current in Mesopotamia & Palestine – Ebla, etc, include names Eber, Abram, Ishmael, Esau, Saul, David, Israel et al.
2. Numerous incidents recorded in Genesis fit the second millenium but not later eg: Sarah and her slave Hagar, expulsion of that child forbidden; Rachel's theft of Laban's gods, varied law of primogeniture which is explicitly forbidden later in Israel's history [Deut 21: 15-17
3. Mode of life and nature of wanderings fit well in the cultural and political milieu of the early second millenium. Semi-nomads in a land sparsely populated and politically not formed yet.
4. Towns mentioned are known archeologically to have existed: Shechem, Bethel, Jerusalem, Hebron and Beersheva.

John Bright, History of Israel (Fourth Edition), p. 92: "The evidence ... gives us every right to affirm that the patriarchal narratives are firmly based in history."

END PARENTHESIS]

### **BIG IDEA SUMMARY: Strategy for Unification involves six factors.**

BIG IDEA 1 God's Covenants both Old and New Testaments are Covenants of Grace.

BIG IDEA 2 Circumcision, Passover

BIG IDEA 3 Exceptionalism: another name for HOLINESS

BIG IDEA 4 Expectations and hope of a future destination

BIG IDEA 5 Suffering

BIG IDEA 6 Character training and discipline

THE Bible moves from a single man Abraham, with a single son, Isaac, to Jacob with "12" sons and inheritors (Gen 49) who with their children move down to Egypt—some 70 people plus Joseph, (Gen 46.27 and Ex. 1.5). By the time they leave Egypt there will be some 600 thousand (*eleph*) men, plus women and children. (Ex. 12:37) However you construe the number, there is a huge development. No longer are they a family, even a large family, but now a multitude. Will they be a mob? Or a Community?

Introduction: The historical development of a people who are the instrument by which God reclaims his creation into the BLESSING OF doing his will, living in concert with each other and the world, and fellowshiping directly with God.

### **BIG IDEA 1: GOD'S COVENANTS BOTH OT AND NT ARE COVENANTS OF GRACE.**

God always acts *first* to create his people and then he commands response which is obedience.

**THUS THE LAW OT/NT is as valid as the promise.**

**Grace has consequences: we keep his commands.**

**If salvation applies, so do God's requirements for obedience.**

God calls Abraham and blesses him. Then he commissions him to be a blessing to ALL "nations" that is, the Gentiles.

God saves Israel from slavery in Egypt and then he gives them the Ten Commandments and the rest of the Law.

Ephesians 2. 8-10—***Don't forget or disconnect verse 10.*** Look it up and write it in here:

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The Covenant of Grace includes both blessings and sanctions. Israel is not excused by failing to be obedient to the stipulations of the Covenant. The sanctions come upon them within the bound of the Covenant. Like we discipline our children, not to throw them out for their disobedience and/or rebellion, but to teach them 1) they belong to our family and 2) to obey in the future. Failure to discipline does not express either love or mercy, but, instead, that we do not care enough to return them into belonging.

How do they get from a gaggle of tribes, living as slaves, into a model and megaphone for God's Blessing?

- Clear identity
- Common experience
- Covenant Community
- Corporately accepted code of conduct

## **BIG IDEA 2: COVENANT SIGNS**

(2A) **CIRCUMCISION as a means to unify through a clear identity.**



**Stone represents the stone knife.**

For the rest of its OT history, Israel will continually contrast itself with “the uncircumcised.”

Begun in Genesis 17, Circumcision is commanded in Leviticus 12:3—first mention of the 8<sup>th</sup> Day. Circumcision of the whole people in Joshua 5 must have made a huge impression. (Why they had not been circumcised in the wilderness is puzzling.)

Interestingly, no further mention is made of circumcision throughout the rest of the OT—except the command to circumcise their hearts in Deut 10, Jeremiah 4 & 9.

Throughout the rest of the OT Israel distinguishes itself from its non Israelite neighbors by calling them the “Uncircumcised.” For example: Judges 14:6 (Samson), 1 Samuel 17:26 (David calls out Goliath; 1 Sam. 31.4, Saul does not want to die by an “uncircumcised Philistine. *Etc.* including: *Awake, awake, Zion, clothe yourself with strength! Put on your garments of splendor, Jerusalem, the holy city. The uncircumcised and defiled will not enter you again.* 1 Samuel 17:26 See a concordance or do a search in [www.Biblegateway.com](http://www.Biblegateway.com) for “circumcise” and “uncircumcised.”

A means to the end of marking God’s people as His own and unifying them into a blessing community. Later superseded as non-essential in the NT because of Christ’s work.

To be circumcised was to wear a permanent physical mark that God is significant to that person/family. Eg: Crucifix to a Roman Catholic; a fish symbol on door or car or pin; a dove may mark someone as a Pentecostal or charismatic.

To make or enter into a covenant literally means to cut the terms indelibly into blood. It always involved blood—**Genesis 15** animal sacrifice. And see also Exodus 24.

The symbolism is this: “If I don’t keep the stipulations of the covenant which apply to me, this is what will happen to me: I will be cut off—I deserve the curse, death.” (See Gen. 17.14 *Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.*”)

Jesus Christ fulfills that curse for us. Therefore circumcision is no longer either effective or acceptable as a spiritual benefit for Christians—it is not prohibited, but simply of no spiritual effect. Christ is our circumcision—he took the curse and was cut off. Colossians 2:11-12 *In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, 12 having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.*

Genesis 22 fits this pattern. The sacrifice of Isaac is the reverse of the knife ritual. Here God had asked Abraham to threaten the very promise of innumerable offspring by the knife—to cut off Isaac as if Isaac had not been circumcised. Could Abraham have known that God would stop him? Heb 11.17-19 states Abraham believed God could raise him [Isaac] from the dead if necessary to keep his promise. For what God had promised in Genesis 15 was that if he failed to keep his covenant to make a nation in his name, he [God] would be cut off. Therefore, he [God] was obligated by his own sworn word to provide a substitute—in Genesis 22 it was the ram caught in the thicket. In the NT, God can no longer escape his own oath, and he must himself be cut off in Christ as the substitute for a world which cannot be restored in any other way to fulfill the covenant made with Abraham—blessed to be a blessing.

But it cannot be emphasized enough: God makes no demands on Abraham until he has committed himself to give Abraham the blessing—circumcision **follows** God’s binding of himself to Abraham.

Circumcision discussion.

- Why did it become so important?
- What was the effect of circumcision on Israel and on the other peoples surrounding them?

For Israel their future is consecrated even by the act of circumcision. This act sets apart even the means of procreation by sanctifying the means God uses to fulfill his own mandate to be fruitful and multiply so that you will be a nation whose seed is like the stars in the sky.



## BIG IDEA 2B: PASSOVER

Even before Exodus gives us the story of the actual Exodus, God gives the Israelites the Feast of Passover to COMMEMORATE their actual liberation from slavery. (Ex. 12.14). A lamb was to be slaughtered and the blood put over the doorframe of each house. Only households which had blood on the doorframe would not suffer the death of the firstborn. Another example of the biblical principle of substitution.

Distinctive Worship—the last thing God wants is a group of people who worshipped like their pagan neighbors. Worship of the creature rather than the creator was not God's plan. Therefore, no images. No worship that attempts to manipulate the divine instead of glorifying the ONE TRUE GOD. Not even to consider that manipulation of the fertility cults by prostitution and child sacrifice.

## **BIG IDEA #3: EXCEPTIONALISM: ANOTHER NAME FOR HOLINESS**

SEE OT 6 STUDY:

### **Three boundaries create exceptionalism.**

1. Geographic
2. Cultural
3. Genealogical

## **BIG IDEA #4: EXPECTATIONS AND HOPE OF A FUTURE DESTINATION**

THE Boundaries were not only a visionary prospect; they also created the COMMUNITY that was a means to realizing the vision.



**PROMISED LAND like California to the gold rush**

The concept of a destination was a powerful uniter to the un-formed community of Israel. It was like the NEW WORLD to the Puritans. It was like the new [1948] state of Israel to the survivors of Holocaust and the oppressed Jews from around the world. It was the period of western expansion in the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century—Manifest Destiny.

## **BIG IDEA #5: SUFFERING—OPPRESSION/SLAVERY**



**Olive Press implies pressure which is what produces oil.**

THE experience of common suffering unites people. And if the period of suffering results in a common deliverance, that unity is even more effectively created. That's exactly what happened to Israel. The Exodus was the signal event in the history of the nation. Whatever else happens, they remember and celebrate the Passover and the crossing of the Red Sea.

We've experience that bonding: the bombing of Pearl Harbor for our parents' generation. The destruction of the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001, will be a day seared into our consciousness that united this nation against Islamist terror.

And of course, the new state of Israel is formed by the crucible of Nazi extermination attempts. NEVER AGAIN is a cry of Unification.

FINALLY, THE GREATEST UNIFYING FACTOR:

## **BIG IDEA #6: CHARACTER TRAINING AND DISCIPLINE**



**The precision mechanics are required for purpose to be achieved**

Exodus 20-23 is the part of the COVENANT which includes a code meant to give Israel a common pattern of conduct as well as bind them to their Suzerain God.

The Covenant contains more than requirements and is based not on simple legalism. It follows the pattern

with which the leaders of Israel would have become familiar: the contemporary Suzerainty treaties from the Hittites on. The GREAT KING assumes responsibility for the conquered king and the conquered king's people and offers to become protector and "friend" in return for allegiance, tribute and obedience.

Sinai is a Covenant which contains law because God has already assumed responsibility for Israel—he rescued them by his power and miracles from bondage from the greatest power the world had ever known—Egypt.

The Law is given, not in order that Israel might win God's favor or approval—they are already CHOSEN, APPROVED AND SAVED.

The LAW comes **after the exodus**, not before it. Now God is not asking them to save themselves, but only to fulfill their destiny. The Law is given as a means of forming a united people.

The elements of the treaty form from the ancient Hittites illustrate this truth and can be compared with the Abrahamic Covenant.

Both Abrahamic and Sinaitic Covenants have requirements. They are not entry requirements, but consequences of the admission of the people into God's plan. They represent God's Project in that they describe what a people would look like when they do GOD'S WILL.

Comparison with contemporary codes of other ancient peoples shows that Israel's covenant limited the damages and to a large extent humanized "punishments."

God's Covenant demanded obedience of those with whom he made Covenant. In one way to view it, obedience was the sign that a person was included, not the price of admission.



# Covenants Compared

Treaty Form	Abrahamic	Sinaitic
Preamble	I am the Lord your God Gen 17.1b	I am the Lord your God Ex. 20.2a
Historical prologue	I have made you the father of a multitude of nations Gen 17.5b <i>et al.</i>	Who brought you out of the land of Egypt ... Ex. 20.2b&c
Covenant Obligations of people	Walk before me and be blameless – Gen 17.1c	You shall have no other gods before me – fundamental obligation to the great king followed by other requirements – Ex. 20.3-17
Covenant Obligations of the King	Promises of seed, land & nationhood; to be God forever – Gen 17.2.4-8	Specific promises of conquest & blessing. Ex 23. 20-33
Sanctions	to be cut off for failure. Gen 17.14	Ex 20.5 & scattered through the law: 20.7, 23.7, 23.21 and other places as punishments
Consumation oath covenant cutting	Gen 17.22-27 as if to say “ <i>God do so to me and more also as I have done to the foreskin</i> ”	Ex 24.7-8: People promise –Moses sprinkles them with sacrificial blood – this is the blood you will owe if you keep not this covenant

## The Ten Commandments

### First five are about God

No other gods.

SIGNIFICANCE – THOUGHT/HEART – PRIORITY only God

No idols.

IMAGINATION—don’t make God small.

MISCONCEPTIONS

No misuse of God’s name.

Words –what you name things makes them so.

Remember the Sabbath

TIME God wants first place in your time. Devotions?

Honor Father & Mother

RELATIONSHIPS with parents model relationship with God.



## **Second Five Commandments are about human relationships**

You shall not murder	Protect all life; spiritual & mental “put downs”
You shall not commit adultery	Jesus reinterprets to make adultery a matter of the heart
You shall not steal	How many ways of stealing are there?
You shall not lie	What you write, say or think can create a falsehood
You shall not covet	Contentment required; generosity; Wanting stuff; Connect to Command 1

### **BIG IDEA: SUMMARY: Strategy for Unification involves five factors.**

### **BIG IDEA 1: GOD’S COVENANTS BOTH OT AND NT ARE COVENANTS OF GRACE.**

### **BIG IDEA 2: COVENANT SIGNS**

2A. CIRCUMCISION; 2B PASSOVER

### **BIG IDEA #3: EXCEPTIONALISM: ANOTHER NAME FOR HOLINESS**

### **BIG IDEA #4: EXPECTATIONS AND HOPE OF A FUTURE DESTINATION**

### **BIG IDEA #5: SUFFERING—OPPRESSION/SLAVERY**

### **BIG IDEA #6: CHARACTER TRAINING AND DISCIPLINE**

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### **Consider the following if you choose to prepare for week 8**

#### **Suggested Reading**

Exodus 18

Numbers 1, 2, 6, 10, 11, 13, 14, 17, 21, 25

Please write down and bring in questions that these studies raise for you. It’s important to write them so that your teachers can review your questions that are not raised in class time.

#### **MARKERS:**

Numbers 6

Numbers 14

Numbers 21

Aaron’s Benediction

People refuse to go into the Promised Land

Bronze serpent on a pole