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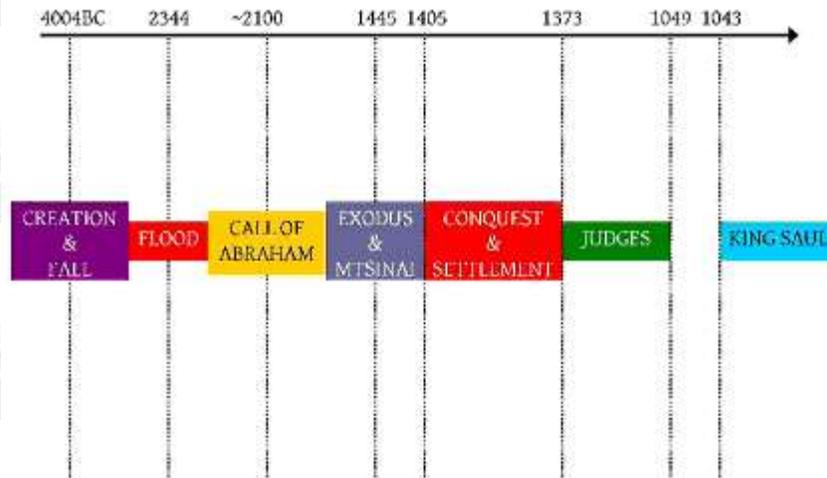
C0744 – December 5, 2007 – The Mosaic Covenant

We've been working with the Book of the Twelve, most people know them as The Minor Prophets. I don't like that title because it tends to deprecate their canonical status. In fact, I've noticed these aren't taught very often and I wonder whether that has anything to do with the linguistic influence of calling them Minor. Somehow that works in our mind to deprecate their importance so they've been neglected. And that deprecation of status is not unheard of in church history. Luther had two levels in the canon. Modern day Pauline Dispensationalists like the late Miles Stanford tend to fall into this trap too by elevating Paul's epistles to the point that they are the interpretive center and everything else is sort of quasi-the word of God. It's dangerous to do that. All Scripture is God breathed and profitable for teaching, rebuke, correction, for training in righteousness that the man of God be thoroughly equipped (2 Tim 3:15-17), and that includes The Minor Prophets. They are only minor in the sense that they contain less content than The Major Prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah or Ezekiel, but the content is equally inspired, equally the word of God, equally authoritative.

What the Jews did, because they were so small in content and because they kept them on individual scrolls, was, when the OT canon was finally closed with Malachi around 420AD, Ezra put them in a single scroll so they would be easier to keep up with. So, they became known among the Jews as The Book of the Twelve and I want to stick to that designation. In the Twelve you have 67 chapters in all and about 62% of the verses are prophetic, that's a lot of prophecy compared to most other books of Scripture. They are a part of the Prophets in the Traditional Hebrew Bible. They had three sections; Law (Torah), Prophets (Nabim) and Writings (Kethubim) and Jesus respected these divisions. To get to the meaning of this book we have to understand the context. Context is all important in interpreting Scripture. Why is that?

Because context is where we get meaning. Think about where you get meaning in life. Where does meaning come from? Well, that depends on the nature of reality doesn't it? What is reality, what is my basic environment? Where did I come from? These are big questions but they set the context for finding meaning. If you answer those sets of questions one way you get one answer but if you answer then another way you get another answer. It all depends on how you answer those kinds of questions because those questions give an explanation for the nature of reality and from there I can get to who I am, where I came from, all that. In other words, however I answer those questions will determine the context in which I interpret myself and what meaning there is for my life. So, when you come into history as a little baby, so cute, an adorable little person, and grow up into a young man or woman you're just standing in the stream of history and you don't know what's come before. You don't know when you are. And you begin asking questions. How did the universe get here? How old is the universe? How did I get here? When am I? Who am I? We ask these questions because we're reaching out to greater and greater spheres of context so we can get meaning. So, we don't just charge into The Book of the Twelve at 100mph. If you do that you don't establish the context and you don't get the meaning. That's why we're doing all this biblical history. It's setting the context so we get the meaning. You never do mystical bible study where you open the bible and put your finger on a verse and that's God's will for you that day. That's mysticism. I always say to people who play that card, "Well I hope your finger doesn't land on Hosea 1:2, "Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry." Am I really going to go down to the red light district on Saturday night to find a wife? C'mon, that's not God's will for your life. And it's not God's will because it's not God's method of discovering His will. It's a method of mysticism, bypassing the mind and that's not God's method. God never says "Throw out your mind." No, he says "Think." And I'm really asking you to think here, "When are we in history when we look at The Twelve?"

So far we've looked at two phases of history. I like to break the OT down into two phases; World History in Gen 1-11 and Israel's History in Gen 12-Acts 1. So we move from the general to the specific.

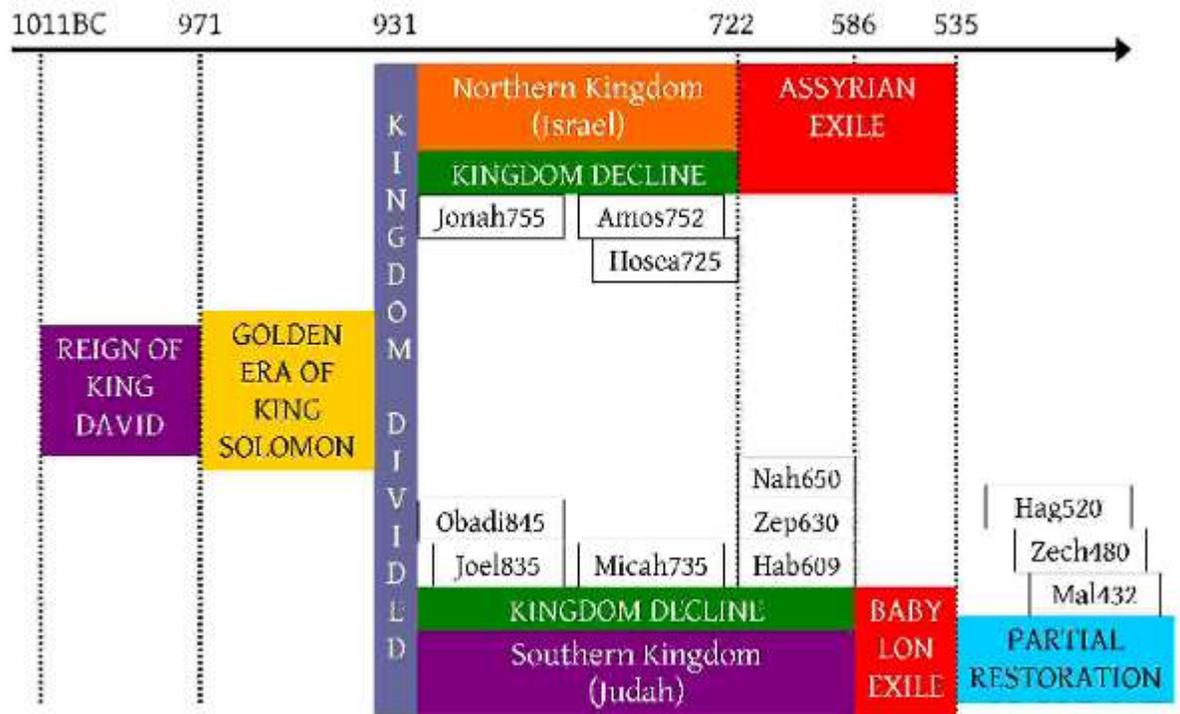


Starting with the general we have four events in **World History**, this is where God is working with every people group, not any one people in particular and it starts with the historical event of **Creation**. This is the foundation, this is the ultimate context, everything goes back to Creation because that's when God made man and nature. Everything is set up there, the whole shape of history is set up there and so that determines where history is going. Have you ever noticed that? One's view of origins determines the conclusion. If you start with a ball of gas then you end with a ball of gas, the big crunch they call it in evolutionary circles. If you begin with creation you end with a new creation. Origins is all determinative. It marks out from the beginning where everything is going. Then we looked at the **Fall** and this is the introduction of sin into the creation, sin that affects man and nature, it damages every aspect of man and the ground rebels so that we live in an abnormal world, this is why we have sin, death, suffering and pain. Life is difficult and there's a reason for that, we rebelled against God and there are consequences to that. Then we have the **Flood** and this marks out that sin is serious, it's seriously offensive to God so that man can get so corrupt and so evil that God says "That's it, I'm not putting up with this any longer, I'm judging" and that judgment comes on man and nature because both are damaged by sin. But at the same time God judges He's also saving. He saves man and nature and this is the portrait of the ark. By this point in history the biblical worldview is clear. God is good, man and nature are under sin, God judges and saves man and nature. It's not difficult intellectually, it may be difficult to accept because we don't like God's ethical evaluation of us. But the Bible explains that too, we're sinful and at enmity with God so we don't like coming to the light. We don't like to be held responsible so there's this deliberate evasion going on. We want to avoid Him. At all costs, at great

expenditure of human energy we suppress His in presence in our lives unless of course He does a work in our lives so that we respond to His gracious call of salvation. Then we have the **Noahic Covenant** and here God comes into a contract with all flesh, man and nature. In other words, what God is saying is I'm not going to judge to that degree in that way again and man and nature take another hit in terms of the fact that God cursed nature again but still it's limited. It's not as bad as it could be. Then we turn from World History in general to **Israel's History** in particular with the **Call of Abraham**. This is a major shift and this is where we focused our attention last week. What we have here is God calling out a pagan man to develop a counter-culture. What happened was, as long as God worked with all men, all men twisted and distorted the key truths of Scripture and if that kept happening eventually there would be no truth left at all and that would mean the plan of salvation goes down the drain. Of course there's someone behind all that, a sinister being we call Satan. But God had already said, "Alright, I'm going to bring a man into this world, born of a woman and He's going to solve this problem of sin". We find that as early as Gen 3:15 and Satan goes right after that, he's trying to ruin that promise but God counters here by calling out Abraham. Abraham is the beginning of a counter-culture. A movement that will stand in contrast to the surrounding pagan culture. And so, from here until Acts 1 the Bible deals in an exclusive sense with this unique people that God called out for the purpose of keeping the truth from being lost. They will be the conduit of revelation, to keep Scripture pure and the conduit of redemption, to bring the Messiah into the world. And so God made a covenant with Abraham, it's an "I will..." covenant. That is, God is obligating Himself to Israel and that's the point we wanted to bring home last week, that it doesn't matter what Israel does, no matter what her behavior, good or bad, love God or hate God, God has made a contract with Israel and Israel alone so that no matter what she does God will do for her what He's promised. And basically we said He promised her three things:

1. I will give you a Land
2. I will give you a Seed
3. I will make you a Worldwide Blessing

These promises are important because when you come down to The Book of the Twelve, way down here in history, you wonder, "What's going on?"

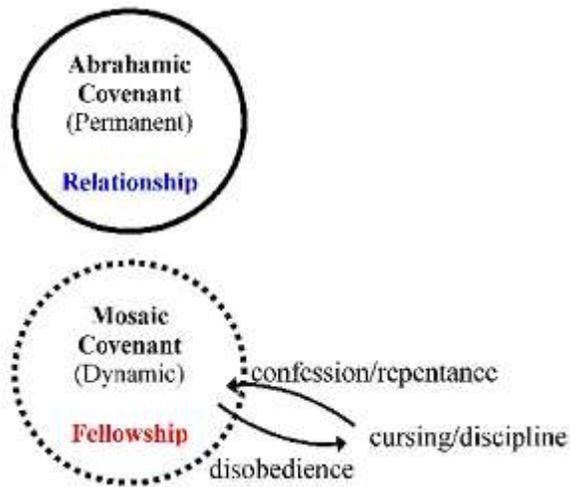


I read about these promises to restore Israel in the latter days, I read about cursing on other nations for their treatment of Israel. Why? Because what these prophets are doing is showing the outworking of the Abrahamic Covenant. And when we see those promises of restoration to the land and the worldwide blessing Israel will experience we remember something crucial about our God. That He is faithful. If God does not do what He says then we're in big trouble because we are a part of the Church and He's made promises to us too. And if He doesn't keep His promises to Israel can we really trust Him to keep His promises to us? Of course not. We can't permit any kind of interpretation of Scripture that changes the terms of the contract. See, what people want to do is say "Yeah, God made promises to the Jews but they're the Christ-killers and because they killed the Christ God cut them off. God's no longer obligated to the Jews. And the Church is the new Israel because we accepted Christ and now we realize that the land promises made to Israel are just metaphorical ways for talking about heaven." And that's essentially what's going on out there in many churches, they try to short-end these covenant promises by saying the promises to Israel are fulfilled in the church and the land is just heaven. But this is a contract. When you read a contract do you read it metaphorically? When was the last time you read a metaphorical legal document. See, it's silly because the covenants are legal contracts, they are contractual agreements and "Boy, I wish I could interpret my contracts allegorically" but try that one with the mortgage company, "No,"

they'll insist you make your payment. Look at all the foreclosures going on. You think those people would like to go in and say "Hey, wait a minute here; I thought this variable rate business was just a metaphor." They'd like to but no one would take it seriously. And that's the same issue when we come to these covenants, they are made with Israel not with the Church and we interpret them normally not metaphorically, they are contractual agreements and in them they promise an eternal land for Israel and you can't just allegorize that away. This is a contract, a legal agreement between God and Israel. And you can't just change the terms because you don't like those people any more. God said "I will..." and that's permanent. That's guaranteed. And if He doesn't do it just like it says in the legal documents then He's not faithful and that has serious ramifications. So, the bottom line is that's why we find these promises of a future restoration of Israel in the Book of the Twelve. That's the first key, the Abrahamic Covenant. Read them with that in mind.



Now, by virtue of the Abrahamic Covenant God and Israel share a permanent Father-Son relationship. God will not cast Israel off completely. Once a son always a son. But, a Father-Son relationship does have dynamics. It's not static. There is fellowship and being out of fellowship depending on obedience or disobedience. No amount of disobedience can break the Father-Son relationship (top circle) but it can greatly hinder the Father-Son fellowship, closeness and intimacy (bottom circle). So, I think the Father-Son motif is the best for understanding the relationship of the two covenants (the Husband-Wife motif is also helpful). The Abrahamic looks at the permanent relationship between Father and Son (top circle) while the Mosaic looks at the dynamics of fellowship between Father and Son (bottom circle). Remember, this is all national, it's not looking at things from an individual point of view. The nation of Israel is God's son in this motif. So that, we can build on our diagram from last week by adding the following:

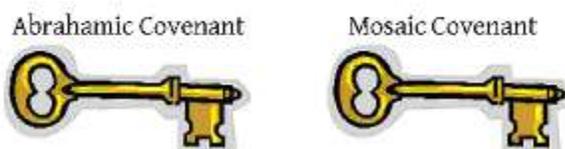


The bottom circle is not enclosed like the top circle because the nation could be in or out of fellowship depending on their obedience or disobedience. In which case, if they were disobedient then they remained in the top circle, they still had a permanent relationship with God but they did not remain in the bottom circle, they were not in fellowship with God and thus they underwent divine cursing or discipline. The discipline is designed to stimulate confession of sin/repentance at which time they would be restored to fellowship. There's a parallel to this to the life of the believer so I really want you to grasp this diagram. The nation of Israel is an archetype of the Church Age believer. What God does with the nation in the OT He does with the individual believer in the NT. And we want to look at the outworking of those dynamics tonight under the Mosaic Covenant.

MOSAIC COVENANT

This is the second key to the Twelve. The Abrahamic Covenant does not explain everything. There are large sections which talk about Israel breaking the covenant and coming under God's discipline. How do we understand that in light of God's permanent promises in the Abrahamic? If it doesn't matter what Israel does then why is God disciplining her? So, there are two keys to unlocking the Twelve.

KEYS TO THE TWELVE



This is the second covenant made exclusively between God and Israel. Remember, Dr Albright said, ‘only the Hebrews made covenants with their gods or God’. Well, here’s another one. Historically, the Abrahamic Covenant was established with Abraham then he had a son named Isaac and the covenant was confirmed to him and he had a son named Jacob and the covenant was confirmed to him and Jacob had 12 sons and they went down to Egypt. There they were enslaved for 400 years to the Egyptians and then the historic event of the Exodus where God set Israel free and then they traveled to Mt Sinai. The year was about 1445BC and this is where they received the Mosaic Covenant. Turn over to Exod 19. This is when they arrived at Mt Sinai and God spoke these words to Moses. Note the “if...then...” language, underline it if you’re not too afraid to mark up your Bible, verse 5, “Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; ⁶and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.” ⁷So Moses came and called the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which the LORD had commanded him. ⁸All the people answered together and said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do!” And Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD. Alright, so there’s a verbal agreement here. But it’s an “if...then...” agreement. That language is key to this covenant. So, God obligated Himself to the nation of Israel in the Abrahamic Covenant but Israel obligated themselves to God in the Mosaic Covenant.

I want you to turn over to Lev 26. We’re not going to go through all the terms in the contract, in total there were 613 things Israel said they would do. What we want to look at is the “if...then...” dimensions of this covenant. If you bless Me then I will bless you...if you curse Me then I will curse you. These blessings and cursings are outlined in Lev 26 and Deut 28, two key chapters in the Bible. Then we want to go over to some passages in the Twelve to see the outworking of these blessings and cursings and how they finally come down to a time when the nation confesses and the Abrahamic Covenant is fulfilled. The chapter can be divided up quite easily, it’s very structured.

- I. Mosaic Covenant (26:1-39)
 - A. Blessings (26:1-13)
 - B. Cursings (26:14-39)

1. 1st Degree (26:14-17)
2. 2nd Degree (26:18-20)
3. 3rd Degree (26:21-22)
4. 4th Degree (26:23-26)
5. 5th Degree (26:27-39)

II. Abrahamic Covenant (26:40-46).

- A. Confession/Repentance (26:40-43)
- B. Restoration (26:44-46)

In Lev 26:1-13 the **blessings** are outlined. If they obeyed God's commandments then God promised an abundance of **agricultural produce** (26:4-5, 10), **homeland security** (26:5-8), **numerical increase** (26:9), and **His presence** among them (26:11-12).

Leviticus 26 'You shall not make for yourselves idols, nor shall you set up for yourselves an image or a *sacred* pillar, nor shall you place a figured stone in your land to bow down to it; for I am the LORD your God. ²'You shall keep My sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary; I am the LORD. ³'If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments so as to carry them out, ⁴then I shall give you rains in their season, so that the land will yield its produce and the trees of the field will bear their fruit. ⁵'Indeed, your threshing will last for you until grape gathering, and grape gathering will last until sowing time. You will thus eat your food to the full and live securely in your land. ⁶'I shall also grant peace in the land, so that you may lie down with no one making *you* tremble. I shall also eliminate harmful beasts from the land, and no sword will pass through your land. ⁷'But you will chase your enemies and they will fall before you by the sword; ⁸five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, and your enemies will fall before you by the sword. ⁹'So I will turn toward you and make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will confirm My covenant with you. ¹⁰'You will eat the old supply and clear out the old because of the new. ¹¹'Moreover, I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you. ¹²'I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people. ¹³'I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt so that *you* would not be their slaves, and I broke the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect.

However, if they did not obey God's commandments then God would send among them **cursings**. These come in five degrees. We might call these five levels of divine discipline or chastening. The goal is that Israel would confess her iniquity and return to the Lord. During the first degree God would send upon them **sudden terror, sickness, sowing but not reaping, military raids from surrounding nations and hateful rulers** (26:14-17).

Leviticus 26 'But 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: I will appoint over you a sudden terror, consumption and fever that will waste away the eyes and cause the soul to pine away; also, you will sow your seed uselessly, for your enemies will eat it up. ¹⁷I will set My face against you so that you will be struck down before your enemies; and those who hate you will rule over you, and you will flee when no one is pursuing you.

If they still did not obey God's commandments then He would send upon them the second degree of cursing (one curse): **lack of rain** which led to agricultural and economic downfall (26:18-20).

Leviticus 26 'If also after these things you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. ¹⁹I will also break down your pride of power; I will also make your sky like iron and your earth like bronze. ²⁰Your strength will be spent uselessly, for your land will not yield its produce and the trees of the land will not yield their fruit.

If they still refused to obey God would implement the third degree of cursing (two curses): **child death** and **cattle destruction** due to ravaging beasts (26:21-22).

Leviticus 26 'If then, you act with hostility against Me and are unwilling to obey Me, I will increase the plague on you seven times according to your sins. ²²I will let loose among you the beasts of the field, which will bereave you of your children and destroy your cattle and reduce your number so that your roads lie deserted.

If they still refused to obey God then He would send the fourth degree of cursing (three curses): **pestilence, military raids, and severe food shortages** (26:23-26).

Leviticus 26 ‘And if by these things you are not turned to Me, but act with hostility against Me, ²⁴then I will act with hostility against you; and I, even I, will strike you seven times for your sins. ²⁵‘I will also bring upon you a sword which will execute vengeance for the covenant; and when you gather together into your cities, I will send pestilence among you, so that you shall be delivered into enemy hands. ²⁶‘When I break your staff of bread, ten women will bake your bread in one oven, and they will bring back your bread in rationed amounts, so that you will eat and not be satisfied.

If after all this they still refused to obey God then He would send the fifth degree of cursing (four curses): severe famine so that they would **eat the flesh of their sons and daughters, desolation of the land** and cities, **military defeat, and exile.**

Leviticus 26 ‘Yet if in spite of this you do not obey Me, but act with hostility against Me, ²⁸then I will act with wrathful hostility against you, and I, even I, will punish you seven times for your sins. ²⁹‘Further, you will eat the flesh of your sons and the flesh of your daughters you will eat. ³⁰‘I then will destroy your high places, and cut down your incense altars, and heap your remains on the remains of your idols, for My soul shall abhor you. ³¹‘I will lay waste your cities as well and will make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not smell your soothing aromas. ³²‘I will make the land desolate so that your enemies who settle in it will be appalled over it. ³³‘You, however, I will scatter among the nations and will draw out a sword after you, as your land becomes desolate and your cities become waste. ³⁴‘Then the land will enjoy its sabbaths all the days of the desolation, while you are in your enemies’ land; then the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths. ³⁵‘All the days of *its* desolation it will observe the rest which it did not observe on your sabbaths, while you were living on it. ³⁶‘As for those of you who may be left, I will also bring weakness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies. And the sound of a driven leaf will chase them, and even when no one is pursuing they will flee as though from the sword, and

they will fall. ³⁷They will therefore stumble over each other as if *running* from the sword, although no one is pursuing; and you will have *no strength* to stand up before your enemies. ³⁸But you will perish among the nations, and your enemies' land will consume you. ³⁹So those of you who may be left will rot away because of their iniquity in the lands of your enemies; and also because of the iniquities of their forefathers they will rot away with them.

Israel went on to experience all five degrees of cursing. Though there were a few revivals along the way but generally speaking it was a downward trend and eventually they would end in Exile.

But, at any rate, Israel could evaluate their circumstances and tell where they were with respect to their Father. Now, verses 40-46 are very interesting because it starts to get into the relationship between the Mosaic Covenant and the Abrahamic Covenant, in which we see that for God to fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant Israel must "make amends for their iniquity" (end of v 41 and v 43). While Israel is in exile she will become humble and make amends for her iniquity. That is, she will repent. Then and only then will God fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant. So, this means there is a condition for the Abrahamic Covenant being fulfilled. That condition is the national confession/repentance of Israel (cf Mat 3:1; 4:17; 23:39; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31).

Leviticus 26 'If they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their forefathers, in their unfaithfulness which they committed against Me, and also in their acting with hostility against Me— ⁴¹I also was acting with hostility against them, to bring them into the land of their enemies—or if their uncircumcised heart becomes humbled so that they then make amends for their iniquity, ⁴²then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham as well, and I will remember the land. ⁴³For the land will be abandoned by them, and will make up for its sabbaths while it is made desolate without them. They, meanwhile, will be making amends for their iniquity, because they rejected My ordinances and their soul abhorred My statutes. ⁴⁴Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy them, breaking My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God. ⁴⁵But I will remember for them the

covenant with their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God. I am the LORD.’”

⁴⁶These are the statutes and ordinances and laws which the LORD established between Himself and the sons of Israel through Moses at Mount Sinai.

So, God is not going to cast off this people completely, despite her disobedience to the Mosaic laws. If they confess their sin and return to the Lord then God will fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant. This is the condition that Israel must meet in order for God to fulfill it. However, God will ensure that they meet this condition by giving her no where else to turn. In the end, during the Tribulation Israel will have no friends. She will be totally alone and the whole world will be against her. This leaves her no option but to turn to the Lord. Thus, God, will precipitate through His divine discipline of Israel, her confession and repentance and then He will fulfill His Abrahamic Covenant.

So, let's sum up what we've said so far. The Abrahamic Covenant spelled out God's obligations as a Father to the nation of Israel, His Son. That is, Israel, I am your Father forever. The Mosaic Covenant spelled out Israel's obligations to God as His Son. That is, "God, I am your Son and I will obey you." As Israel's Father God would discipline His Son for disobedience but if the Son confessed and repented of the disobedience God would restore the nation to fellowship and fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant.

Now, turn over to the Book of the Twelve to Amos; Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah. After Joel and before Obadiah, that's where you'll find Amos. We just want to look at a few passages to confirm what we're saying, that the Mosaic Covenant is a key to understanding these prophets. Amos was a prophet to the northern kingdom and this was about 752BC. They would go into exile to Assyria just 30 years later, so we're late in the game, already in the 5th degree of cursing. They've been out of it spiritually for a long time. Amos 5:26-27, "You also carried along Sikkuth your king and Kiyun, your images, the star of your gods which you made for yourselves." These are their idols, their idolatry, verse 27, "Therefore, I will make you go into exile beyond Damascus," says the LORD, whose name is the God of hosts." Cause-effect. Cause, you disobeyed, you committed all this idolatry, effect I will make you go into exile. That comes right out of Lev 26:30-33.

Drop down to Amos 7:7-17. This is the Lord telling Amos what to tell the northern kingdom, “Thus He showed me, and behold, the Lord was standing by a vertical wall with a plumb line in His hand. ⁸The LORD said to me, “What do you see, Amos?” And I said, “A plumb line.” Then the Lord said, “Behold I am about to put a plumb line In the midst of My people Israel. I will spare them no longer.” So, what the Lord is saying is that He’s going to test Israel as a plumber checks a structure to see if its vertical or not. The standard the Lord will use is the Mosaic Law and obviously they are not measuring up. ⁹“The high places of Isaac will be desolated And the sanctuaries of Israel laid waste. Then I will rise up against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.” So, this is all 5th degree of cursing that comes from Lev 26:30-33. God is doing exactly what He said He would do. ¹⁰Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent *word* to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, “Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel; the land is unable to endure all his words. ¹¹“For thus Amos says, ‘Jeroboam will die by the sword and Israel will certainly go from its land into exile.’ ” ¹²Then Amaziah said to Amos, “Go, you seer, flee away to the land of Judah and there eat bread and there do your prophesying!” See, it’s always like this, people don’t want to hear the word of God unless it’s a positive message. ¹³“But no longer prophesy at Bethel, for it is a sanctuary of the king and a royal residence.” That’s where the word of God should be. And the iron of the situation is that God was the king, not this puppet guy Jeroboam. ¹⁴Then Amos replied to Amaziah, “I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet; for I am a herdsman and a grower of sycamore figs. ¹⁵“But the LORD took me from following the flock and the LORD said to me, ‘Go prophesy to My people Israel.’ ¹⁶“Now hear the word of the LORD: you are saying, ‘You shall not prophesy against Israel nor shall you speak against the house of Isaac.’ ¹⁷“Therefore, thus says the LORD, ‘Your wife will become a harlot in the city, your sons and your daughters will fall by the sword, your land will be parceled up by a *measuring* line and you yourself will die upon unclean soil. Moreover, Israel will certainly go from its land into exile.” Suffice it to say it wasn’t a good idea to attack the Lord’s prophets. Now, turn to Micah 6. I want to look at a prophet to the southern kingdom about the same time Amos was prophesying to the northern kingdom because they were at different places in their degree of apostasy. This is 735BC and the south wouldn’t go into exile for another 240 years, in 586BC. So, we’re still not to the 5th degree of cursing here. Most of this is in the 1st, some in the 4th and a warning about the 5th. Verse 13, “So also I will make *you* sick, striking you down, Desolating

you because of your sins.” That’s 1st degree of cursing from Lev 26:16. ¹⁴“You will eat, but you will not be satisfied,” That’s 4th degree cursing directly from Lev 26:26, “And your vileness will be in your midst. You will *try to remove for safekeeping*, But you will not preserve *anything*, And what you do preserve I will give to the sword. ¹⁵“You will sow but you will not reap. You will tread the olive but will not anoint yourself with oil; And the grapes, but you will not drink wine.” That’s all 1st degree cursing directly from Lev 26:16 again. ¹⁶“The statutes of Omri And all the works of the house of Ahab are observed; And in their devices you walk. Therefore I will give you up for destruction And your inhabitants for derision, And you will bear the reproach of My people.” The destruction due to their idolatry is all 5th degree cursing in Lev 26:30-33. There are lots of other passages. I just wanted to show you some of them. The point is that large portions are the outworking of the Mosaic Covenant, that’s your second key and the prophets are not revolutionaries. That’s what the liberals always try to say, that these guys were coming in with new doctrines trying to revolutionize society. They were not doing that, they were prosecuting attorneys; they were trying to get the people to return to the Lord and obey the Mosaic Law so they could be blessed. So, those are the two keys, the Abrahamic Covenant which explains the restoration passages and the Mosaic covenant which explains the cursing passages.

4. The Laws Exceeded Sinful Human Capability

God said, “I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They have done well in all that they have spoken. ²⁹ ‘Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!’” (Dt 5:28-29) God said it was good that they had the desire to keep all His commandments but He knew that the sinful heart of the Israelites would not be able to. The rest of the OT describes the dynamics of this relationship and the outworking of the blessings and the cursings described in Lev 26 and Dt 28. Throughout the OT God would be shown to be faithful to His covenant obligations to Israel and Israel would be shown to be unfaithful to her covenant obligations. In this respect, God and Israel shared the relationship of the faithful husband to the unfaithful wife.

5. Suzerainty-Vassal Treaties

Scholars have discovered that the Mosaic covenant follows the pattern of ancient suzerain-vassal treaties. A suzerain-vassal treaty was made between a greater king and a lesser king. In the case of the Mosaic Covenant God was the suzerain and Israel His vassal. When Israel broke the Mosaic Covenant Treaty by rebelling against God and worshipping idols, God would initiate court procedures to indict the nation and announce judgment. The witnesses of these court procedures was the angelic realm. These court proceedings are called the “rib (pronounced ‘reev’) format”. Isaiah, Hosea, and Micah all convey their messages under this format. Many people are confused about the OT prophets and much of their writings. When we read them we have a difficult time understanding what they are doing or talking about. I’m going to give you a hint here about how to understand the prophets. The prophets are God’s prosecuting attorneys. They are prosecuting the nation for breaking the Mosaic Covenant. For example, turn to Isa 1:2 and lets see the rib format.

6. The Rib Format

- I. Court Procedure (1:2a-4)
 - A. Call to witnesses (1:2a)
 - B. Introduction of the case (1:2b-4)
 - C. Judicial proof of God’s faithfulness and Israel’s unfaithfulness (1:2b-4)
- II. Indictment (1:5-23)
- III. Judgment (1:24-31)

We see the same procedure in Hos 4:1-3 and Mic 6:1-15. So, what the OT prophets are doing is presenting God’s case against Israel to demonstrate that God is not obligated to bless the nation and if He wants He can implement the fifth degree of cursing and send them into exile. As we will see in a moment this happened twice in the OT history of Israel. And all I’m trying to do here is give you a handle on the larger scope of the OT and what is happening. I want you to be able to pick up your Bible and read these OT books and get an idea of what is going on. These prophets go on and on about judgment on nations and this and that and what I really want to get across today is not “what is Israel’s history” but “why does Israel’s history look the way it does”. How do I interpret Jewish history? Why does Israel’s history flow the way it does? And the only way you can understand this flow is by looking at how Israel is doing with the Mosaic Laws.

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