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C0723 – June 27, 2007 – Ex 34:6-35:3 – God Renews His Covenant

We're in the section where God renews the covenant with Israel. God made the covenant, Israel broke the covenant and now Moses intercedes and God renews the covenant.

Last time Moses saw and heard God while in the cleft of the rock and God was about to proclaim His name YHWH before Moses when we asked the question "Why did God proclaim these attributes and not others?" And the basic answer is "Israel would need to recall these specific attributes in their future trials." So this is not an arbitrary list at all. It turns out that this verse became a favorite one to recall among godly Jews who used the faith-rest drill (Num 14:18; Deut 4:31; Neh 9:17; Ps 86:15; 103:8; 108:4; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Rom 2:4).¹ So, that's why I introduced the faith-rest drill here. The faith-rest drill is a problem solving device in the Christian life. It has three steps; doctrine, you grab some portion of Scripture, faith, you believe that portion of Scripture, you mix faith with the doctrine and the result is rest, inner tranquility despite trials that fall around you. So, the formula for the faith-rest drill is; Doctrine + Faith = Rest. In Sunday School we're going to develop this some more because the next class I teach is designed to increase your faith. To do this I'll take an indirect approach. Sometimes the shortest way home is the longest way around. So, I'll be developing a rationale for believing. I want to show you that God is a coherent speaker and indirectly this is going to develop our faith.

So, let's look at the particular doctrine God is revealing here in His name that will provide the basis for Israel's faith when the troubles hit during their future history in the Conquest and Settlement under Joshua and then later when the Kingdom Divides, Falls and they are Exiled in Assyria and Babylon. It's there they are really going to need these attributes of God in order to be have inner peace.

Verse 6, “Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; ⁷who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.” What does all this mean? First, you want to notice one thing about all these words. They are all very personal and the name YHWH is God’s Personal name. God is not a force but a Person. Second, these are all aspects of God’s goodness. In Exod 33:18 God said “I will make all My goodness pass before you” and so these things are all aspects of God’s goodness. The first aspects of YHWH’s goodness are **compassion and grace**. These are linked to form the concept of “abundantly gracious”. The idea is that God’s compassion leads Him to give even when we don’t deserve it. Remember, Israel, they have obstinate hearts. They are a stiff-necked people. They broke the contract before Moses even came down the mountain and God almost wiped them out. But God is “abundantly gracious”. He’s going to give them a second chance even though they don’t deserve it. The second aspect of YHWH’s goodness is **slowness to anger**. We’ve been studying how we are supposed to be slow to anger in James 1:19ff and we find out here this is how God is toward us. If you can’t see this in history you’re blind. When I think about this world and how anti-God the world is I marvel God has not destroyed it because I know if I were God I would have. But God is **slow to anger**. “In our idiom, we would say He has ‘a very long fuse.’”ⁱⁱ He shows grace, grace, grace, grace and then He shows judgment. We’ve seen this before with the pre-flood world. There was 120 years of grace and then judgment (Gen 6:3). Israel would see this pattern in her future history as the sovereign nation of Israel from 1445-605BC. They enjoy grace in the land and then judgment in exile. As a part of the Church we’re in the grace phase now but in the future Tribulation its judgment. So, the day of grace is only so long and then there’s judgment and the theme of Grace before Judgment is all over the Bible. But the grace far outweighs the judgment and this is conveyed by the fact that God is **slow to anger**. The third aspect of YHWH’s goodness is two-fold. He abounds in **lovingkindness and truth**. First, **lovingkindness** is from the Hebrew word *hesed* and refers to “covenantal love”. He’s loyal to His covenant. It’s a steadfast, continual, loyal love based on His contractual promises. God is always loyal to His word. He also abounds in **truth**. The Hebrew word for **truth** here means

“faithfulness”. “This very important concept in biblical doctrine gives clear evidence of the biblical meaning of “faith” in contradistinction to the many popular concepts of the term. At the heart of the meaning of the root is the idea of certainty”ⁱⁱⁱ or stability. It was used of pillars that hold up a structure. Faith is certainty, stability, dependability and “this is borne out by the NT definition of faith found in Heb 11:1. The basic root idea is firmness or certainty.”^{iv} So, the word faith is closely associated with truth. Faith is tied up with truth and this is what a lot of people don’t realize because in our English language when someone says faith they mean absence of facts or evidence. But that’s not what the Bible means by faith. Faith is not the absence of facts. Faith is certain knowledge of the facts. Faith is evidence. Since God is true or faithful this means He’s dependable, we can depend upon Him. He’s always loyal, He’s steadfast, He always does what He says He will do. The fourth aspect of His goodness is that He **keeps lovingkindness for thousands**. This contrasts with punishing to the third and fourth generation in verse 7. The point is that His love far outweighs His wrath and this is why Moses asks YHWH to pardon Israel’s iniquity in verses 8-9. This is just as true in the OT as it is in the NT. God’s love outweighs His wrath. Why people who read the Bible continue to say “The God of the OT is a God of wrath and the God of the NT a God of love” I’ll never know. They are one and the same God in both testaments and the evidence is in favor of love in both testaments. The fifth aspect of His goodness is that He **forgives iniquity, transgression and sin**. In the Qal stem this means “to take away, to carry”. He “takes away” their **iniquity, transgression and sin**. **transgression** means “to cross a boundary”. It refers to breaking a known command. It is ruthless rebellion against authority. **sin** means “to miss the mark” and is broader than a transgression. Anything that misses the mark of God’s character is **sin**. Thus, all transgression is sin but not all sin is transgression. Lastly, **iniquity** refers to punishment for guilt incurred by sin and transgression. God “forgives” all this (not apart from sacrifice of course).

Note the close of verse 7 **yet He will by no means leave *the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.***” That is, those who do not approach Him by sacrifice, their iniquity will be punished yet this punishment is far outweighed by His forgiveness. In the end we see that God’s **goodness** is a multi-faceted description of His Personal nature.

2. Moses' Request for Pardon (34:8-9)

In light of YHWH's revelation of Himself Moses worships and prays.

Exodus 34:8-9 Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship. 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 iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your own possession."

Verse 8, **Moses** responded with two actions. One he **bowed low to the earth** because God made man from the earth. Two, he **worshipped** because the one true God is to be worshipped. In other words, he takes on a prayer posture and verse 9 is the prayer. It seems that Moses prays according to the new revelation he had received about YHWH. YHWH is a compassionate, gracious, loving, forgiving God. On that basis he asks God to go along in Israel's midst to the Promised Land despite her obstinacy and to pardon her iniquity, that is, the iniquity of the Golden Calf and to take them as His own possession among all the nations. Moses is still concerned about their going up with such a blemish on their record and the Lord's warning that He would destroy them if He went up in their midst and Moses' fear that God will take another nation as His possession; all things undesirable.

3. The Ordinances Repeated to Moses (34:10-28)

God's response to Moses' prayer is a continuation of the renewal of the covenant. God re-writes the Ten Commandments on two stone tablets and He repeats several of the previous ordinances for Moses to record.

Exodus 34:10-28 Then 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 thing that I am going to perform with you. 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. 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 in your midst. ¹³“But *rather*, you are to tear down their altars and smash their *sacred* pillars and cut down their Asherim ¹⁴—for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God— ¹⁵otherwise you might make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they would play the harlot 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. ¹⁷“You shall make for yourself no molten gods. 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. 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. ²¹“You shall work six days, but on the seventh day you shall rest; *even* during plowing time and harvest you shall rest. 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. 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. ²⁵“You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread, nor is the sacrifice of the Feast of the Passover to be left over until morning. ²⁶“You shall bring the very first 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.” ²⁷Then 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 bread or drink water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.

Verse 10, **Behold, I am going to make a covenant.** This is actually a renewal of the prior covenant which was broken. This is the Mosaic Covenant. **Before all your people I will perform miracles which have not been produced in all the earth nor among any of the nations;** This assures Moses that God will make them His possession and not another nation. As such they will enjoy God's **miracles** as evidence that the God of Israel is the one and only true God, the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe. **and all the people among whom you live will see the working of the LORD, for it is a fearful thing that I am going to perform with you.** By **all the people among whom you live** God means the surrounding nations, those who will eventually live outside the borders of the Promised Land. By saying **a fearful thing** He means works that will evoke fear. These fear-evoking works will be manifested in the "conquest of the Promised Land". Despite this promise Israel failed to believe His promise fully and they never enjoyed full conquest of the Promised Land. In other words, they failed to continually follow the faith-rest drill. But the total conquest of the Promised Land is a Promise of God under the Abrahamic Covenant and will ultimately take place at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. ¹¹**"Be sure to observe what I am commanding you this day:** As we can see from this verse and others Israel's enjoyment of the Promised Land is conditioned on her obedience. In other words, the Land is her' by divine right but the enjoyment of the land is conditioned on obedience. God will assure this obedience by means of the New Covenant. **behold, I am going to drive out the Amorite before you, and the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite.** The inhabitants of the Promised Land will be removed by God Himself. 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 in your midst.** Israel had come into a covenantal relationship with God. To make a covenant with **the inhabitants of the land** would indicate failure to trust in God for every provision. Israel would be so blessed by God she would have no need to import anything and she would be the number one exporter. She would be totally self-sufficient, depending solely on God for all her needs. ¹³**"But rather, you are to tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and cut down their Asherim.** You can only imagine the national

ripples this would have caused. But when it comes to worship there is only one true God. Not to tear down and smash and cut them down would amount to syncretism, mixing pagan beliefs with God's words. God hates syncretism. Some might argue, "But its art. We shouldn't destroy art." But God says **tear them down** and **smash** them. They are a reflection of HVP. They were dedicated to the worship of other gods. Also they were to **cut down their Asherim**. **Asherim** were wooden poles that stood at Canaanite places of worship and were associated with the goddess Asherah. Asherah was the female goddess of fertility. Her husband was Baal but some inscriptions indicate the Jews made her the wife of YHWH. The Babylonians referred to her as Ishtar and the Greeks accepted her under the name Aphrodite. Both David and Solomon had wives who worshipped Asherah. Jezebel also worshipped Asherah. Both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms were judged for syncretism. Today syncretism is a huge problem in Christianity. Christians are combining elements of other pagan religions like Mormonism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam as well as secular philosophies like Evolutionism, Postmodernism, Existentialism, Pragmatism, etc... People like to pick and choose what they like from various religions or philosophies but God hates syncretism. When you combine elements from various religions and philosophies you get logical inconsistencies and Scripture is a unified coherent system of thinking and living. So, syncretism is self-contradictory. It is idolatrous. Verse 14 gives the reason they must tear down and smash their altars and pillars, —**for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God**— In other words, it will result in idolatry. Allusion is made here to the first of the Ten Commandments from Exod 20:3. Note another name of God here, **Jealous** (Heb *qanna*). The central meaning of this word relates to the marriage relationship. Since in marriage the two become one flesh faithfulness to one another is implied and jealousy becomes proper within the marriage relationship. This marriage analogy is being used here between God and Israel. In the OT God is depicted as Israel's husband (Exod 20:5). Israel was expected to be a faithful wife to God. The worship of other gods constituted spiritual adultery and this is the picture here in verse 14. They should not worship any other god, for, by virtue of their husband-wife relationship, God had a right to expect faithfulness and to be **jealous**. Later in Israel's history her idolatry is portrayed as adultery and God's wrath was kindled. Further, if they don't tear down the altars and smash the pillars and cut down their Asherim, verse 15 **you might make a covenant with the inhabitants of**

the land and they would play the harlot with their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and someone might invite you to eat of his sacrifice,¹⁶**and 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.** The constant barrage of idols might make them enter into covenants with the inhabitants of the land and this would result in idolatry. When covenants were made in the ancient world the two parties would have a meal. This often resulted in a big orgy. Sometimes covenants were sealed by marriages between a king and the other king's daughter(s) or maidens. The practice of covenant making and marrying became rampant under King Solomon who had 700 wives and 300 concubines. Idolatry inevitably followed. Idolatry is insidious and so they were to separate themselves from the world system. Satan is always trying to make inroads into our thinking so as to lead us into idolatry (1 John 5:21). This is why we are supposed to guard ourselves against idols. It's not a passive activity. It's takes mental sweat and continuous evaluation of the world system, what we hear, what we see, what we experience, through the lens of Scripture. We have to develop a full-orbed Christian worldview to be able to detect and reject idolatrous systems. Paul based his argument for believers not marrying unbelievers on similar grounds. I find it amazing today that any Christian parent would even consider blessing a marriage between their Christian son or daughter and a non-believer. As Paul said, "What does righteousness have to do with unrighteousness" (2 Cor 6:14)? The influence of immoral religious practices is subtle, pervasive, and unrelenting. Intermarriage is the quickest route to compromise with false religion and immoral behavior.^v And let me add, "You don't marry or date to convert someone!" Most Christians stuck in a non-biblical relationship try this excuse. "I'm trying to witness to them." You don't need to date someone or marry them to witness to them. That's not a valid excuse. In fact, dating anyone isn't even biblical. Dating is the training ground for divorce. Courtship is the biblical model. ¹⁷**"You shall make for yourself no molten gods.** They had already done this with the golden calf. Our flesh wants to make gods so we can control them. Any god we make is under our control. What our flesh does not want is a God that we can't control, a God that controls us.

ⁱ *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

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- ii Earl D. Radmacher, Ronald Barclay Allen and H. Wayne House, *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary* (Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers, 1999), Ex 34:6.
- iii R. Laird Harris, Robert Laird Harris, Gleason Leonard Archer and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999, c1980), 051.
- iv R. Laird Harris, Robert Laird Harris, Gleason Leonard Archer and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999, c1980), 051.
- v Earl D. Radmacher, Ronald Barclay Allen and H. Wayne House, *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary* (Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers, 1999), Ex 34:16.

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