

Establishing the Covenant

Happy Sabbath to all.

Tonight I would like to talk a bit about the Covenant that Yah has established with His people over the generations, culminating in this final stage of human history.

The first time the term appears, it is in this verse, which reads, “But with thee [Noah] will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons’ wives with thee.” (Gen 6:8) In Hebrew, that word is *berith*, and it is used in the sense of a formal agreement, an alliance, a pledge or an alliance in a sense similar to marriage or treaties between nations. Interestingly, it comes from a root word that has the meaning “to cut.” Depending on the context, and the form of the word, it can also mean to create, or to bring forth.

Now, we have three ideas which, on their face, don’t seem to have much to do with each other... we have an agreement, we have a cutting, and we have a creation. What could those things have in common? One might say, “Circumcision,” and that would certainly fit... but that is only an example “in the flesh” of the greater principle here – although it is (as it turns out) a fitting and relevant example.

In the very first verse of the sacred writings, Genesis 1:1, we read, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” It then goes on to tell us the details, that He called forth light, and separated it from the darkness, (verses 2, 3) and then He created a “firmament” dividing the celestial waters and forming the earth “out of the water and in the water.” (2Pet 3:5)

The process of creating the physical universe was one of dividing the raw materials that were called into existence, and setting bounds around them to give them form. Yahweh took, then, some of the earth, and separated it into another definite form, breathing His life into it to create the first man. To create a helper and companion from this man, Yahweh separated a portion of that man from him, gave it a form, and made it distinct from Adam.

I hope that you see the pattern that is presented clearly and repeatedly in Scripture. Yahweh creates, Yahweh forms, by separating, by cutting-off, a portion, and giving it form and purpose. In English, we have the phrase “to carve out.” If we are given a block of stone, or wood, we can carve a definite form out of it, and make a walking-stick, or a flute, or a brick for a building.

Perhaps one of the reasons why Yahweh specifies that His people are to avoid “graven” (carved) images – specifically – is because the process of “carving out” a god from wood or stone is particularly offensive to Him. After all, it would be a direct perversion of the true manner of establishing His intended creations. Yahweh carved us out of the earth, and now His rebellious creatures are carving their own gods out of the earth and its materials.

So then, why is it that this term forms the same root as that for a covenant? The answer becomes clear if one would read about the establishment of the covenant that Yah had with Israel.

We read, for example, “For thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth, to be thine inheritance, as thou spakest by the hand of Moses thy servant, when thou broughtest our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord Yahweh.” (1Kings 8:53) And, “For thou art an holy people unto Yahweh thy God; Yahweh thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.” (Deu 7:6)

And the result, for the people’s response, was, “Thus shall ye separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness; that they die not in their uncleanness, when they defile my tabernacle that is among them.” (Lev 15:31)

This has not changed in the New Covenant either, that Yah has established with the Israel of which we are a part. It is written, “And before Him shall be gathered all nations [at the time of Judgment]; and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth His sheep from the goats.” (Mat 25:32)

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:” (1Pet 2:9) Perhaps you know this already, but it is worth mentioning here that the word “peculiar,” which often means “strange” in modern usage, in this verse means, “particular possession.” In other words, we are a chosen generation, a royal and holy priesthood, who have been separated from others to be Yah’s particular people, distinct from all others.

The nature of that separation is one of our most distinct characteristics. The rebellious and nominally religious would hate this idea, but the very thing that keeps us distinct, that maintains our form and character, is the set of bounds we have been given. I do not fall apart back into dust and molecules, because I have a skin, a boundary. It surrounds my body and keeps the organs “inside,” that is, separate from “outside,” or everything else. My skin itself consists of cells, each of which has a “cell wall” that keeps it from being just a mound of shapeless gel. The principle is consistent on multiple levels, from the firmament separating the waters to the tiny living structures from which our bodies are made.

As I said before, in the creation of a covenant, or in the creation of anything as Yah does it, there are two steps to its establishment: “The process of creating the physical universe was one of dividing the raw materials that were called into existence, and setting bounds around them to give them form.”

Human beings, and all entities and objects that exist separate unto themselves, depend on their boundaries. On a spiritual level, we are given boundaries – the Ten Commandments, and the guidance of the Spirit – to keep us “distinct” from sin, and separate from the world. In other words, we cannot have a covenant without such boundaries, or there is no distinct form for that which is “carved out.” In still simpler terms, our distinct nature depends upon our obedience to, and harmony with, those distinctions that Yah makes between righteousness and sin, between obedience and rebellion.

With regard to Church membership, the modern manifestation of Yah's covenant with His people, we have errors on both extremes. The most common extreme we find involves those who study with us, liking the doctrines, pressing close against the "boundaries" that make us who we are – for, remember, it is the boundaries that determine where and how we have been "carved out" from the world.. However, they do not enter into the "skin" to be one Body, to be a part of the network of organs and members that make us a single spiritual unit. Yahweh the Almighty is One, and He has likewise called His people to be One. (Deu 6:4, John 17:22)

On the other hand, we have the less common extreme of those who seek membership or unity without interest or concern for the Church's boundaries and doctrines. This is also a disregard for Yah's covenant. A worldly man may marry a woman for her beauty, for her outward appearance, but a spiritual man will not take a wife without first coming to know her character, her nature. This is what makes for a lasting union. Similarly, those who are only seeking "a church" to fulfill their social needs or in order to fulfill some misunderstanding of Yah's requirements for fellowship, they attempt to "enter into" the Body without respecting its skin, which would result in an open wound.

But how is it for us who are IN the Covenant?

Of course, we have seen the importance of unity, and have gladly submitted to baptism and sustained fellowship. We have come to love and respect the boundaries that Yah has used to give us our form and purpose, thus we care about doctrines He has given us, and in so doing maintain and develop the perfect Christ-like character. In so doing, we have avoided both the extremes I have mentioned above; but having entered into the Body, we find that there is still further light. There is still a greater application we must make of this principle, if we are to be found perfect before the Father in that Day.

What is that layer? What is that further light that gives the covenant its meaning? That may be asked in another, simpler question: Why?

Why did Yah separate the light from the darkness? Why did He separate the firmament from the firmament, creating the physical universe? Why did He create the earth, and then divide Adam from the elements to become a creature unto himself? Why did He then divide Adam to create Eve, his wife? Why does He separate His people from the heathen? Why does He then command us to "come apart and be separate" from the world, with its sins and its policies?

For all these things, there was only one motive, and it is the reason why our "boundaries," the distinguishing nature of the covenant, can be summarized as a single principle. "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the Law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law." (Rom 13:8-10)

It is for love alone that Yahweh separates one “thing” from another, so that they are distinct unto Him. It is so that He may express His love in a visible way. The Father and Son are distinct, One coming forth from the Other, so that they may share glory, and love, as a testimony to the entire universe of Their Holy Spirit. Being separated from the earth, and from our sins, we have but one purpose, and that is to love as we have been loved, to show that love in our faith, in our obedience, and in our testimony, for love is the foundation of the covenant with Adam, with Noah, with Israel, and with Yahshua’s genuine followers. We have been “carved out,” separated out, for this particular purpose.

But now, we are not only separated out to have love upward, to our Father in Heaven. That is the first and greatest commandment, certainly, but see how Paul summarizes the commandments, to “love thy neighbour as thyself.” We know how to show love to our Father, by holding Him in supreme regard, to shun anything (any idol) that would replace Him in our affections, by understanding the sacred nature of His Name and character, and by drawing near to Him when we are invited upon His appointed times.

But the rest, the majority, of the 10 Commandments involve our behavior among one another. How do we identify those who are in the Covenant? “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” (John 13:35)

Now, remember, love does not mean just good feelings and a sense of affection; these are present in the normal course of affairs, but love is a commitment, a dedicated choice. This is why our Father gives us not only His Word as the establishing of the Covenant, but also a visible sign, circumcision, baptism, and so on. This is so that the world, and we ourselves, know that we are resting on solid ground, on a sure foundation, and we have a “witness” in the real world of this commitment.

Those who are IN the Covenant are covenant-ed to Love Himself, for it is the very reason why we both exist, and have been given this particular form, as a human being individually, and as the Bride of Christ in a corporate sense. We have been “carved out,” we have been given a “covenant” that establishes the truth of this concept.

The Covenant with Noah, going back to first example, was to separate Him from the earth and its people... because those people were about to be destroyed. In this generation, before another great cleansing, Yah wishes to make a covenant with each family, and thereby with each human being. That is, He seeks to establish the Covenant (and I say THE Covenant, not A Covenant, because there is only one legitimate Covenant) with each husband, and each father; (Numbers 1:1, 2) and if there are no husbands or fathers existing in a home – or none who would accept such a carving-out, then Yah makes a covenant with each individual, even down to the widows and orphans. (Jer 49:11)

What I say, then, is that to truly receive this Covenant of which we have become a part, to truly establish this Covenant in our hearts, we must acknowledge the purpose, the reason for that

carving-out itself, and the principle behind every doctrine, every teaching that comes to us from the Spirit of Wisdom. We are committed to love for Yahweh, and for one another, and if we have committed to this as Yah has committed His love to us, then no challenge, no distance, no differences in language, or culture, or any other apparent barrier, will prevent this from being obvious to those who look upon us.

Let us, therefore, become educated. Let us take knowledge that there can be no ignorance, no neglect, where this is concerned. Let us know that it is our duty to stand firmly for one another, in prayer, in encouragement, in (as we discussed a couple of weeks ago) rebuke and reproof if necessary. Let us show love for one another, so that even the observers from other worlds will see it plainly, so brightly does Yah's love shine within us.

Let us show the difference between love and sin, between duty and neglect, so that we may both learn ourselves, and educate others, and in that Day we shall be acknowledged as true children, and separated one final time for a glorious and everlasting inheritance.

Creation 7th day Adventism
flyinglecreature@hotmail.com