

Covenant and the Bible Part 3

Last week we looked at the covenantal structure of the Ten Commandments and the book of Deuteronomy. It was obvious to see that the covenant given to Israel by God through Moses fit the form of a suzerain-vassal covenant from the Ancient Near East (ANE). God is the Great King (lord) and Israel is the vassal (servant) in this covenant.

I. Covenant Lawsuit

It is also obvious to see that over Israel's history from around 1400 BC to 586 BC that Israel ultimately failed to keep the covenant. Therefore, throughout Israel's history God raised up prophets to preach against Israel and call the nation to repentance. When the prophets would speak on God's behalf they would present Israel with a **covenant lawsuit**. The covenant lawsuit corresponds with the covenant structure embedded in Deuteronomy. As God raised up prophets during the OT times, they judged Israel according to their covenant with God (hence the term "lawsuit"). Thus, the prophets were holding Israel to stipulations of the covenant, which were indicative of their faithfulness to God. Below is the structure of the Covenant Lawsuit.

Covenant	Covenant Lawsuit
Title – Great King	Title – Judge
Historical Prologue	Historical Review
Stipulations	Indictments – Stipulations Broken
Witnesses	Witnesses – included in Indictments
Blessings	Promise of Blessing
Curses	Curses Invoked (famine or exile)
Oath	Oath to Carry Out Judgment

II. Deuteronomy 32 Covenant Lawsuit Structure

We see the first form of the covenant lawsuit structure already in chapter 32 of Deuteronomy. This chapter is known as the “Song of Moses”. It is fitting that since Moses was the covenant mediator and the first “prophet” of the covenant that he would write down the first covenant lawsuit handed to Israel. See the elements below:

1. Title – 32:1-4
2. Historical Review – 32:5-14
3. Indictments – 32:15-18
4. Witnesses – 32:1-2, 19
5. Curses – 32:20-29
6. Blessings – 32:30-38
7. Oath – 32:39-43

Deuteronomy 32:1-43 [Title] "Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak, and let the earth hear the words of my mouth. 2 May my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, like gentle rain upon the tender grass, and like showers upon the herb.

3 For I will proclaim the name of the LORD; ascribe greatness to our God! 4 "The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he. **[Historical Review]** 5 They have dealt corruptly with him; they are no longer his children because they are blemished; they are a crooked and twisted generation. 6 Do you thus repay the LORD, you foolish and senseless people? Is not he your father, who created you, who made you and established you? 7 Remember the days of old; consider the years of many generations; ask your father, and he will show you, your elders, and they will tell you. 8 When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God. 9 But the LORD's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage. 10 "He found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of the wilderness; he encircled him, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. 11 Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions, 12 the LORD alone guided him, no foreign god was with him. 13 He made him ride on the high places of the land, and he ate the produce of the field, and he suckled him with honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock. 14 Curds from the herd, and milk from the flock, with fat of lambs, rams of Bashan and goats, with the very finest of the wheat- and you drank foaming wine made from the blood of the grape. **[Indictments]** 15 "But Jeshurun grew fat, and kicked; you grew fat, stout, and sleek; then he forsook God who made him and scoffed at the Rock of his salvation. 16 They stirred him to jealousy with strange gods; with abominations they provoked him to anger. 17 They sacrificed to demons that were no gods, to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come recently, whom your fathers had never dreaded. 18 You were unmindful of the Rock that bore you, and you forgot the God who gave you birth. **[Witnesses]** 19 "The LORD saw it and spurned them, because of the provocation of his sons and his daughters. **[Curses]** 20 And he said, 'I will hide my face from them; I will see what their end will be, For they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faithfulness. 21 They have made me jealous with what is no god; they have provoked me to anger with their idols. So I will make them jealous with those who are no people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. 22 For a fire is kindled by my anger, and it burns to the depths of Sheol, devours the earth and its increase, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains. 23 "' And I will heap disasters upon them; I will spend my arrows on them; 24 they shall be wasted with hunger, and devoured by plague and poisonous pestilence; I will send the teeth of beasts against them, with the venom of things that crawl in the dust. 25 Outdoors the sword shall bereave, and indoors terror, for young man and woman alike, the nursing child with the man of gray hairs. 26 I would have said, "I will cut them to pieces; I will wipe them from human memory," 27 had I not feared provocation by the enemy, lest their adversaries should misunderstand, lest they should say, "Our hand is triumphant, it was not the LORD who did all this.'" 28 "For they are a nation void of counsel, and there is no understanding in them. 29 If they were wise, they would understand this; they would discern their latter end! **[Blessings]** 30 How could one have chased a thousand, and two have put ten thousand to flight, unless their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had given them up? 31 For their rock is not as our Rock; our enemies are by themselves. 32 For their vine comes from the vine of Sodom and from the fields of Gomorrah; their grapes are grapes of poison; their clusters are bitter; 33 their wine is the poison of serpents and the cruel venom of asps. 34 "' Is not this laid up in store with me, sealed up in my treasuries? 35

Vengeance is mine, and recompense, for the time when their foot shall slip; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and their doom comes swiftly.' 36 For the LORD will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants, when he sees that their power is gone and there is none remaining, bond or free. 37 Then he will say, 'Where are their gods, the rock in which they took refuge, 38 who ate the fat of their sacrifices and drank the wine of their drink offering? Let them rise up and help you; let them be your protection! [Oath] 39 "'See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand. 40 For I lift up my hand to heaven and swear, As I live forever, 41 if I sharpen my flashing sword and my hand takes hold on judgment, I will take vengeance on my adversaries and will repay those who hate me. 42 I will make my arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh- with the blood of the slain and the captives, from the long-haired heads of the enemy.' 43 "Rejoice with him, O heavens; bow down to him, all gods, for he avenges the blood of his children and takes vengeance on his adversaries. He repays those who hate him and cleanses his people's land."

The lawsuits we find in the OT prophets correspond to covenant structure of Deuteronomy. We see examples of this in Isaiah 1:1-20 and Amos 1:1ff.

III. Isaiah 1 Covenant Lawsuit Structure

The lawsuits we find in the OT prophets correspond to covenant structure of Deuteronomy. We see examples of this in Isaiah 1 and Amos 1. Below is the covenant lawsuit structure of Isaiah 1:

1. Title – 1:1
2. Address to Witnesses – 1:2
3. Historical Review # 1 – 1:2
4. Indictment # 1 – 1:3-5
5. Historical Review # 2 – 1:5-9
6. Address to Accused – 1:10
7. Indictment # 2 – 1:11-14
8. Judgment – 1:15
9. Promise of Blessing – 1:16-19
10. Oath to Carry Out Judgment – 1:20

Isaiah 1:1-31 [Title] The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. **[Address to Witnesses]** 2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the LORD has spoken: **[Historical Review # 1]** "Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. **[Indictment # 1]** 3 The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand." 4 Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged. **[Historical Review # 2]** 5 Why will you still be struck down? Why will you continue to rebel? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. **[Address to Accused]** 6 From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no

soundness in it, but bruises and sores and raw wounds; they are not pressed out or bound up or softened with oil. 7 Your country lies desolate; your cities are burned with fire; in your very presence foreigners devour your land; it is desolate, as overthrown by foreigners. 8 And the daughter of Zion is left like a booth in a vineyard, like a lodge in a cucumber field, like a besieged city. 9 If the LORD of hosts had not left us a few survivors, we should have been like Sodom, and become like Gomorrah. 10 Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom! Give ear to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah! [**Indictment # 2**] 11 "What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats. 12 "When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts? 13 Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations- I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly. 14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. [**Judgment**] 15 When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. [**Promise of Blessing**] 16 Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, 17 learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause. 18 "Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. 19 If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; [**Oath to Carry Out Judgment**] 20 but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

21 How the faithful city has become a whore, she who was full of justice! Righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers. 22 Your silver has become dross, your best wine mixed with water. 23 Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts. They do not bring justice to the fatherless, and the widow's cause does not come to them. 24 Therefore the Lord declares, the LORD of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel: "Ah, I will get relief from my enemies and avenge myself on my foes. 25 I will turn my hand against you and will smelt away your dross as with lye and remove all your alloy. 26 And I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city." 27 Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and those in her who repent, by righteousness. 28 But rebels and sinners shall be broken together, and those who forsake the LORD shall be consumed. 29 For they shall be ashamed of the oaks that you desired; and you shall blush for the gardens that you have chosen. 30 For you shall be like an oak whose leaf withers, and like a garden without water. 31 And the strong shall become tinder, and his work a spark, and both of them shall burn together, with none to quench them.