

THESIS ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: THE FUNCTION OF THE SINAITIC COVENANT: AN EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF EXODUS 19:3-6.

Researcher: Lincoln Chinowaita

Faculty Advisor: Edward Eddie Moyo, PhD

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This study sought to determine the function of the Sinaitic covenant [SC] (Exod 19:3-6) within the Exodus context and even in the entire OT theology. Furthermore, the study sought to elucidate the covenant's theological implications to Israel and to God's people today. Another task of the study was to clarify the relationship of the SC to other biblical covenants and also to the Ancient Near Eastern treaties. This, in turn, clarifies God's intention to Israel; how the Sinaitic covenant benefits them, and further verifies whether it still benefits Christians today.

Unlike some schools of thought that treated the Sinaitic covenant as if it was a "new dispensation" of salvation by works; this study has established that the Sinaitic covenant was actually the renewal of the same covenant of grace that God had already established with Adam, Noah and Abraham. God established the Sinaitic covenant based on grace and faith alone. Within it are echoes of missiological and redemptive significance. That is to say, the Sinaitic covenant functions for missiological and

redemptive purposes. Israel was delivered from Egyptian bondage not only for the sake of their salvation, but also for the salvation of other nations.

The stipulations spelt out in Exodus 20 serve the purpose of guarding the covenantal relationship between God and His people, rather than as means of salvation by works. Again, the study reveals that the Ancient Near Eastern treaties had stipulations just like the Sinaitic covenant, and also other divine covenants had stipulations, including the Abrahamic covenant. Accordingly, Israel's continuous enjoyment of the covenantal benefits was dependent on their obedience. Furthermore, these Sinaitic stipulations still stand and are important for Christians today. Likewise, the covenant was established to serve three purposes; (a) as a reminder of gracious deliverance, (b) protection against the false worship which brings consequences, and (c) clarifying Israel's missiological mandate.

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THE FUNCTION OF THE SINAITIC COVENANT:
AN EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF
EXODUS 19:3-6

A thesis

presented in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies

by

Lincoln Chinowaita

May 2017

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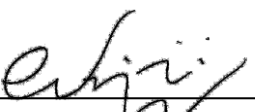
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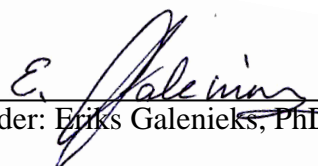
by

Lincoln Chinowaita


APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:




Advisor: Edward Eddie Moyo, PhD



Reader: Eriks Galeniaks, PhD



Programme Director, MABTS
Eriks Galeniaks, PhD



Dean, Theological Seminary
Sampson Nwaomah, PhD

AUA Main Campus

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Dedicated to the Seventh-day Adventist Church

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANE	Ancient Near East
<i>DOT</i>	<i>Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JSTOR</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NT	New Testament
<i>NIVAC</i>	<i>The NIV Application Commentary</i>
OT	Old Testament
SC	Sinaitic Covenant
T	Targum
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
V	Vulgate
<i>WSOTDIT</i>	<i>The Complete Word Study Dictionary</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

The Hebrew term for covenant בְּרִית occurs 82 times in the Pentateuch alone.¹ The history of covenants in the biblical account can be traced back to the time of the Patriarchs, beginning with the covenant established between God and Noah. Some other notable covenants in the OT include the one with Abraham, with Israel at Sinai and with David. Routledge also mentions that “covenants in form of international treaties were well known in the fourteenth/thirteenth centuries BC.”² Seemingly to say covenants were a practice in the ANE times.

As with the biblical covenants, Alexander and friends pointed out that “such concentration includes both interpersonal and divine-human relations.”³ It seemed God wanted to maintain a closer relation with His the people. At the same time, He wanted to make Himself known in their lives and experiences.

Among the divine-human covenants, the focus of this research mainly considers the SC as it is being introduced in Exodus 19:3-6. This SC at some point is called the Mosaic covenant. This pericope particularly presents an introduction of the

¹The word *b'rit* appears in the Pentateuch as follows; twenty-six times in Genesis, fourteen times in Exodus, ten times in Leviticus, five times in Numbers and twenty-seven times in Deuteronomy. See, James Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, American ed., s.v. “Covenant.”

²Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic Press, 2008), 161.

³T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, eds., *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch (DOTP)* (2003), s.v. “Covenant.”

entire SC. The covenant seemed to be expressed as mostly conditional in nature. It was at Mt. Sinai where God established His covenantal relationship with the children of Israel.

Waltke mentions that “at Mount Sinai Moses mediates God’s word that seals God’s covenant relationship with Israel and defines Israel as a nation set apart from other nations.”⁴ That is pointing to God’s intention of establishing a permanent relationship with Israel. Similarly, Alexander poses this; “Since the whole thrust of the Sinai covenant is the establishment of a special relationship between God and the Israelite nation, through which the people will continue to know and experience the divine presence, these instructions form an appropriate introduction to the covenant document.”⁵

On the same note concerning the SC, Barrick considered it as a much larger and complicated covenant.⁶ Because of its complexity and the confusion over its function and how it relates to the Abrahamic and other covenants; it is the most misunderstood covenant.⁷ Its complexity gives opportunity therefore to be a necessary subject to research on, in order to clarify the messages within it.

Consequently, Walther Eichrodt holds that the SC is the unifying factor of the OT and the centre of Israel’s religion.⁸ This seems to suggest that the SC runs down

⁴Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 409.

⁵T. Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to Promised Land: An introduction to the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2012), 6.

⁶William D. Barrick, “The Mosaic Covenant,” *The Masters Seminary Journal* 10/2(Fall 1990): 230, accessed 15 April 2016, <https://www.tms.edu/m/tmsj10o.pdf>.

⁷*Ibid.*, 231. The covenant is contained with laws, rituals, and a tabernacle that allowed humans to enter Yahweh’s presence.

⁸Walther Eichrodt, “Theology of the Old Testament,” *Old Testament Library*, translated, J. A. Baker (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster John Knox Press, 1961), 1:25-69.

throughout the entire OT and thereby is considered as the key theme of the OT. At the same time, this may also suggest its critical importance as it pertains to its function.

Sharing the same vein of thought, Herbert Wolf singles out the SC together with the Abrahamic covenant, as the major and distinct covenants due to their high theological import in the life, history, and common-wealth of God's people in the Pentateuch.⁹ Such implied significance seems to transcend into the larger sphere of both OT and NT.

The nature of the SC has led scholars to disagree on its function. Inquiry into this matter has resulted in divergent schools of thought. Dominant among these views, are the two propositions: the first one argues that the SC is a continuum of the Abrahamic which is based on faith and grace.¹⁰ The implication here is that the SC is to be linked to that of Abraham.

In support of this idea Walton mentions that “many interpreters distinguish the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants, considering them to be quite separate, but the position taken here is that at least from a canonical perspective- the Mosaic covenant is a confirmation and elaboration of that made with Abraham, not something new or different.”¹¹ The two covenants are viewed neither as uniquely different nor without any relationship, but as harmoniously related to each other. Seemingly to say, the SC is built from the Abrahamic covenant.

Another second school of thought which is contrary to the first view of a continuation is that which treats the SC as a “new dispensation” that is based on law

⁹Herbert Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, IL: Moody Press, 1991), 26.

¹⁰John P. Milton, *God's Covenant of Blessing* (Rock Island, IL: Augustana Press, 1961), 136.

¹¹John H. Walton, *God's Covenant: God's Purpose, God's Plan* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 49.

and works due to the legal material contained therein.¹² In support of this perception

Dow poses the following comments;

The reader is encouraged to keep in mind the fundamental truth that the promise concerning Israel's ethnic and national origination, as well as the incorporated promise of the Land, was always associated with the Abrahamic Covenant and never the Sinaitic Covenant. The ramifications of this truth are considerable. As the Sinaitic and Abrahamic Covenants have often been confounded together, and have even, not infrequently, been represented as being one and the same covenant, only differently dispensed; perhaps it may not be wholly useless, so subjoin the following marks of difference between them.¹³

Taking into consideration this view, suggests the SC as completely divorced and without any relationship with any other covenants, even the Abrahamic. It is probably viewed as a different covenant with its own approach, and more specifically for the children of Israel. On the other hand, this view differs from the previous scholarly view.

Such scholarly divergence of ideas brings in some theological discrepancies. At the same time, in view of the second idea, this position tends to pose doubt to the unity, truthfulness and the trustworthiness of the Scriptures. The implication of this discrepancy has potential of distorting the whole of biblical theology of salvation. Hence, undertaking this study becomes an essential endeavour.

Statement of the Problem

There are some divergent views among scholars with regards to the function of the SC. Since this covenant plays quite a significant theological role not only in

¹²Ahn Keumyoung, "The Sinaitic Covenant and Law in the Theology of Dispensationalism," (PhD diss., Andrews University, 1989), accessed 16 April 2016, <http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1004&context=kroeger>.

¹³Daniel Dow, "The Difference between the Sinaitic and Abrahamic Covenants," *Hartford*, accessed March 15, 2016, www.futureisraelministries.org. Seven points were highlighted on how the two differs. 1. These two Covenants differ in respect to time. 2. They differ in respect of their promises. 3. They differ in respect to conditionality. 4. They differ as it respects to surety. 5. They differ in respect to their extent. 6. They differ in respect to their duration. 7. They differ as it respects their accomplishment.

the Pentateuch, but in the entire Bible; there is need to explore issues behind its nature, purpose, relational aspects with other covenants, and ultimately, its theological function.

Purpose of Study

This thesis research seeks to investigate the function of the SC in order to clarify the relationship between this SC and other biblical covenants, as well as its relationship to the ANE treaties. Another objective of this research is to elucidate some of the theological implications of the function of SC, to ancient Israel and to God's people today. On the same note, it clarifies on God's intentions toward Israel and how this covenant relationship benefits them. Consequently, it verifies on, whether this covenant was intended to benefit Israel only or God's people throughout all ages?

Significance of the Research

The research is important because it renders opportunity to a greater extent to understand the essence of redemption as laid out in the SC. In the same manner, it helps Christians to have a better understanding that the Bible is built around a covenant relationship with God. It clarifies some of the areas which are normally misunderstood, especially on the Ten Commandments (Decalogue) as they relate to Christ's redemptive work and His mission in the NT.

This research is helpful for some Christians today, who happen to have little knowledge on the relationships of biblical covenants especially between the Sinaitic and the new covenant promise which is highlighted in Jeremiah 31: 31-34. Likewise, the research enables Christians to appreciate the significance of the SC. Similarly, it is

intended to persuade, if possible everyone to observe all its stipulations (Decalogue) within this covenant, accordingly.

Delimitations

Since the covenant motif is seen to be quite prominent in the OT; therefore, the research narrowed down the scope of focus to the SC. Thus, the focus of this study is limited to the SC as it is presented in Exodus 19:3-6 and the broader context within the Pentateuch. Some Inter-textual studies have been carried out, so as to have a much clearer view of this subject; investigating both the OT and the NT.

Methodology

In order to do justice to the meaning of text, this study utilizes theological exegetical method of interpretation. Consequently, in chapter one, the researcher presents the background which necessitated the need for considering this subject of study. It also reveals the purpose and how much significant is the research.

In chapter two, the historical background of the text (Exod 19:3-6) as it should be understood within the ANE context is analyzed. This also includes the Sinaitic context and the ANE Hittite treaties. In the same manner, in order to have a much clearer picture of the subject under study, other three biblical covenants which God established with His people are comparatively assessed. These three divine-human covenants are; the Adamic, the Noahic and the Abrahamic covenants. Some necessary comparisons are made for the sake of discovering the real truth about the function of the SC.

In chapter three, the literary contexts which include the broader and immediate context are presented. On the same note, in order to assess the styles used in writing, some elements such as the theme, literary structure and the genre also are analysed. In

view of some words and phrases within the text which seem to pose challenges in interpretation, some grammatical and syntactical analysis will be undertaken.

Likewise, some inter-textual studies are carried out for the purpose of investigating its significance in the whole biblical account.

Accordingly, in order to discover whether the SC is still relevant or not for Christian practice, some theological implications and application are explored in chapter four. Ultimately, a summary and some conclusions about the function of the SC are drawn.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter provides the historical-background of Exodus 19: 3-6 as it should be understood within its ANE context. Some ANE concepts which are fundamental to the understanding of this text are analyzed. In addition, a comparative study of three covenantal treaties which God instituted with His people as background that shapes light on the Sinaitic one under study. These covenants are: the Adamic, Noahic and the Abrahamic covenants. It is hoped that insights from such background are crucial for the understanding of the function of the SC.

Textual Background

The text of study (Exod 19: 3-5) presents God's purpose of making Israel His special treasure. It is in this text in the whole Pentateuch where God made His first divine declaration to assign Israel its responsibility to all other nations. In like manner, Dauermann echoes that this pericope is considerably central to the introduction of crucial chapters of the Pentateuch.¹ Such an idea poses the suggestion of the text being very important and valuable for the understanding of the Pentateuch.

However, some critical scholars have considered the text to have been taken from later sources and inserted to this narrative.² Such views have been brought about

¹Stuart Dauermann, *The Rabbi as the Surrogate Priest* (Eugene, OR: Pick Wick, 2009), 27.

²Here are some of the critical scholars: D. Patrick, "The Covenant Code Source," *JSTOR, Vetus Testamentum* 29 (1997): 149, accessed 04 April 2017, www.jstor.org/doi/xml/10.2307/1585347; W. Beyerlin, *The Origins of History of the Oldest Sinaitic Traditions* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), 10, 11.

due to the introduction of some new interpretation theories, especially the Wellhausen's documentary hypothetical theory.³ Accordingly, the passage under study (Exod 19:3-6) and the rest of the narrative discourse is classified to have originated from the *J* and *E* source.⁴ Using such a theory, no consensus among scholars has been reached in terms of ascribing a particular passage to a particular source.⁵ Because of that, this has contributed to a certain extent the disputes in terms of the interpretation of the text.

Historical Context

In this text (Exod 19:3-6), God converses with Moses concerning His desire to establish a covenantal relationship with the Israelites. Mount Sinai is at some point called Horeb (1 Kgs 19:8) or the 'mountain of God' (Exod 3:1). Within the ANE tradition, mountains were associated with places where the gods reside.⁶ Mount Sinai is traditionally understood to be situated toward the southern end of the Sinai

³John L. Mackay, *Exodus: A Mentor Commentary* (England: Christian Focus, 2001), 20; John J. Collins, *The Journal of Religion, University of Chicago* (1999): 490, accessed 16 March 2017, <http://www.bing.com/cr?IG>; According to Wellhausen, the Pentateuch was composed from four sources; *J- Yahweh, D-Deuteronomic, E- Elohist* and the *P- Priestly source*. But, Wellhausen lacked some solid foundation in terms the historical foundations of the cultural background of Israel. His methods of interpreting the bible seemed mainly based on the evolutionary theories which do not value the authenticity of biblical accounts. Temper Longman III and Raymond B. Dillard, eds., *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 54.

⁴Gerhard Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, ed. D. M. G. Stalker (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 187.

⁵The hypothetical source theory is considerably several competing theories which do not produce any meaning results. Changes always occur in ascribing a text to another source. John Barton and John Muddiman, eds., *The Oxford Bible Commentary: The Pentateuch (OBC)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 51.

⁶In the ANE mountains and rivers were associated with the religion, the appearance of the clouds on mountain tops was considered as the presents of the gods, at the same time since kings to a certain extent were considered as gods; the Hittite kings were named after the mountain names. Gwendolyn Leick, *A Dictionary of Ancient Near Eastern Mythology (DANEM)* (1991), s.v. "Mountain-gods." See ref, John L. MacLaughlin, *Ancient Near East* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2012), 97.

Peninsula.⁷ There are several views concerning the location of Mt. Sinai. Because of such discrepancies some critics have turned this as the basis of disqualifying the authenticity of the events;⁸ hence the truthfulness of Scripture is threatened.

The Sinai place is considered to be more of desert place which receives sparingly some little rainfall yearly. At the same time history suggests it to have been a place where nomads used to reside as they looked for pastures. It is also a land that connects Egypt with Syria, Palestine and Babylon.⁹

God seemed to have been deliberate to lead the children of Israel through the longer route, (Exod 13:17). The text (13:17, 18) supplies some relevant answer to the question; why taking the longer route? The reasons for such leading may be classified into four categories: historical, physical security, and spiritual enrichment through incarnation.

One of the historical reasons is promise-fulfilment. When God spoke to Moses from the burning bush, He gave him a sign; “When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain”¹⁰ (Exod 3:12). Since God had promised Moses before; the fulfilment was an affirmation and the vindication of His character.

⁷Avraham Negev, ed., *The Archaeological Encyclopaedia of the Holy Land, (AEHL)* 3rd, ed (1990), s. v. “Sinai.” The early Christians around the fifth century subscribed to the Jebel Musa. It is thought to have been discovered by Constantine. The other mountain which had been considered is Ras Safesh, a discovery of the nineteenth century. Several mountains have been suggested by different individuals, but no consensus has been reached. See, Randall Styx, “The Route of the Exodus, the Location of Mount Sinai and the Related Topics” *The Tyndale Biblical Archaeology* (November 2002): 3, 4, accessed 14 March 2017, https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/article_exodus_de-wit.html; David Bridger and Samuel Wolk, ed., *The New Jewish Encyclopaedia (NJE)* (1962), s.v. “Sinai.” 453; Larry Williams, *The Mountain of Moses* (NY: Wynnewood Press, 1990).67.

⁸Luigi Piccardi and W. Bruce Masse, eds., *Myth and Geology* (London: Geology Society, 2007), 141.

⁹Negev, *AEHL*, s.v. “Sinai.”

¹⁰All Biblical quotations are from the “New American Standard Bible,” unless indicated.

One physical reason was security: God led the Israelites through such a wilderness route to protect them from the attacks of the enemy (Exod 13:17-18).¹¹ Since they had been slaves in Egypt for quite some time, this would suggest they might have lacked some military stamina and experience. At the same time the shortest route was to lead them through the most powerful and toughest nation of their time, the Philistines.

Accordingly at Sinai, God reinforced their spirituality by regularizing His relationship with them, claims Douglas Redford.¹² More to this, at Sinai, God incarnated as an expression of His will to share space and time with humanity. Such incarnation setting at Sinai, sets precedence of the tabernacle's three areas of graded holiness on earth; the general camp for everyone, the mountain area for the seventy elders, and the Holy presence of God for Moses (Exod 24:9-18).

Sinai was the very place where Moses made his first encounter with God and God declared His intentions to deliver his people Israel from the Egyptian bondage (Exod 3:2-8). Similarly, it was again at this place that God had to pronounce His covenant with them, in the ANE context; hence there is need to analyse the ANE concept of covenant.

The Covenantal Concept in Ancient Near East

In the ANE, the concept of covenant was generally employed to describe various types of relationships. Weinfeld mentions that the usage of the covenant

¹¹Some important facts can be drawn from the life experiences of the Israelites as they departed from Egypt. It is most likely that the Philistines would have resisted the Israel's approach, if they had used the shorter route, which will in turn lead to their going back to Egypt. Even though God would have been able to deliver them, but the temptation of going back was more prevalent, since the route was of the dry land and nothing would block them on their returning. Steve Felker, "Why and How God Leads us," *Independent*, accessed, March 17, 2017, swiftcreekbaptistchurch.com.

¹²Douglas Redford, *The Pentateuch* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard, 2008), 227.

concept in ANE context defines the relationship between a deity and a people.¹³ Neusner et al, further indicates that “such distinct usage arose from Israelites’ distinctive conception of their deity whose demand for loyalty was exclusive.”¹⁴ This possibly means, Israel could not have any affiliations with any other religious god. To do so would mean, the contradiction and violation of the covenantal agreement, this would in turn call for some curses as stipulated.

Accordingly, in ANE, they were quite a number of kinds/types of covenants. Thompson highlighted two kinds of covenants (treaties a term used in ANE secular world) which are known to have been in ANE world: that is the kind of *parity* treaty and a kind of the *suzerainty* treaty.¹⁵ On the other hand, Metzger and Coogan added another one, which is a promissory/grant kind of covenant.¹⁶

The parity type of a treaty was a form of an agreement established between equal parties, whereas in a *suzerain* treaty it was between unequal parties (one was the master/lord yet the other party was the subject/*vassal*).¹⁷ On the other hand, in a promissory/grant type of treaty, there were some kind of similarity with the *suzerain* treaty (there was a master and a servant), but differences are also notable.

¹³Moshe Weinfeld, “Covenant,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica (EJ)*, completely rev. and reset ed. (1973-1976), 5:1021.

¹⁴Neusner, Jacob, Alan J. Avery-Peck, and William Scott Green, “Covenant,” *The Encyclopaedia of Judaism (EJ)*, completely rev. and reset eds. (NY: Continuum, 2002), 1:137-138. These treaties are characterized by a fixed structure and set of elements that are also found in the Hebrew Bible’s depiction of the covenant between Yahweh and the children of Israel.

¹⁵“The earliest extant document in which details of a treaty are given is probably the so called Stele and vultures, which records a treaty made between Eannatum of Lagash and a nearby city state of Umma. 2500 BC. In this treaty certain conditions were imposed by Eannatum to a defeated Umma.” J. A. Thompson, *The Ancient Near Eastern Treaties and the Old Testament* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1964), 9.

¹⁶Bruce M. Metzger and Michael David Coogan, *The Oxford Companion to the Bible (OCB)* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993), 139.

¹⁷Louis Lawrence Orlin, *Life and Thought in the Ancient Near East* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 91.

Consequently, a grant type of a treaty constitutes obligations of the master to the servant, whereas a *suzerain* constitutes obligations of the vassal to the *suzerain*.¹⁸ In a way, some kind of similarities are perceived between the ANE and the Israelite SC, even though, some differences are also notable as well. The preceding section analyses some formal similarities between the Hittites treaties of the ANE and the covenantal allusions in Exodus 19:3-6.

The Form of Hittite Treaty

From George E. Mendenhall's analysis between the ANE treaties and the SC; some striking similarities were discovered especially the Hittite *Suzerainty*.¹⁹ He highlights some six elements that punctuate the ancient treaties in the ANE:

1. *The Preamble* that identifies the author of the covenant, his titles and attributes, as well as his genealogy with emphasis on majesty and power.
2. *The Historical Prologue* that describes the past relations of the two parties, emphasizing benevolent deeds performed by the Hittite king for the benefit of the vassal. That made the vassal obligated to perpetual gratitude toward the great king for the favor already received.
3. *The Stipulations* that states in detail the obligations imposed upon the vassal.
4. *The Blessings and Curses Formula* listed for the vassal,
5. *Provision for deposit in the temple and periodic public reading* in order to familiarize the entire populace with the obligations and warm relationship with the mighty king.
6. *The list of gods as witnesses to the Treaty*: Just as legal contracts were witnessed by a number of people in the community, so the gods acted as witnesses to the international covenants.

¹⁸Moshe Weinfeld, "The Covenant of Grant in Old Testament and in Ancient Near East," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, (JSTOR) 90/2 (April-June 1970): 191, accessed 10 March 2017, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/598135>.

¹⁹George E. Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," *The Biblical Archaeologist*, JSTOR 17/3 (1954): 64, accessed 16 March 2017, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3209151>. Meredith G. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy: Studies and Commentary (CSDSC)* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1963); K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (Chicago: InterVarsity, 1966), 91.

This outline is in several ways similar to the SC in Exodus 19-24 and its second reference in Deuteronomy.²⁰ Merrill highlights that the using of a similar form, is for the purposes of presenting the truths from a known familiar garb, so that the unknown realities of God could be easily understood.²¹ In a way the following elements are evident, the preamble (Deut 1:1-9, 5:1-6), historical prologue (Deut 1:10-4:43), general covenant stipulations (Deut 4:44-11:32), specific covenant regulations (Deut 12:1-26:20), blessings and curses (Deut 27:1-29:1), and witnesses (Deut 4:26; 30:19; 31:28). Goodblatt et al in support points out on the book of Deuteronomy as a renewal of the SC.²²

The Role of the *Suzerain*

In the ANE, a suzerain kind of treaty defines the kind of relationship between the parties within an agreement. Along this view, a *suzerain* treaty was a kind of covenantal relationship between the lord/master and his *vassal* subject.²³ This kind of relational agreement was established at the basis of military power. In like manner, the conquering vaunted his superiority to which the defeated would in turn acknowledge it.²⁴

²⁰Foster R. McCurley, *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers: Proclamation Commentaries*, (PA: Fortress, 1979), 101-106; O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (NJ: R&R, 1980), 167-170.

²¹Eugene H. Merrill, *The Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008), 99.

²²David Goodblatt, Avirral Pinnick, and Daniel R. Shwartz, eds., *Historical Perspectives: From the Hasmoneans to Bar Kohba in the Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Leiden, NY: Brill, 2001), 88.

²³Robert I. Bradshaw, "The Covenant and Covenants of the Bible," (1998), *Independent*, accessed March 17, 2017, https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/article_covenant.html.

²⁴Rose Ann Benson and Stephen D. Ricks, "Treaties & Ancient Near Eastern Legal Terminology in the Book of Mormon," *Journal Book of Mormon Studies*, 14/1 (2005): 52, accessed 26 March 2017, publications.mi.byu.edu/phd-control/publications/jbms/14/1/S00007. Some discoveries of some documents contains the Hittite king Suppiluliumus who rule in Antonia (modern-day central Turkey) who wrote to Huzqanas, his subject; wanting him to acknowledge his superiority; see. H. D.

Accordingly, the *suzerain* assumes authority over the land and the people of the inferior, *vassal* nation.²⁵ The *suzerain* claims to rule as gods over their *vassals*. At the same time, the superior king (*suzerain*) was the one who imposes his obligations upon the inferior king.²⁶ At the same time, the stipulations were crafted and delivered by the *suzerain* without the consultation of the subject *vassal*. The reasons for the *suzerain* to do that were to guarantee allegiance, seek economical support, as well as to seek the protection of his subject from being attacked by other nations.²⁷

Some similarities are quite notable between the ANE *suzerain* treaty and the SC. In as much as the *suzerain* was superior to the *vassal*, the similar thing was between Israel and God. God is presented as the Sovereign ruler not for Israel alone, but of the whole universe. At the same time God expected loyalty from Israel (Exod 19:5a), just like the Hittite *suzerain* expected it also. But God expected Israel to be submissive to Him out of a willing obedient heart, yet with the *suzerain* obedience was demanded and forced.

In this type of a treaty, the *suzerain* king assumes ownership of land and people; also God in the SC is depicted as the owner of the whole earth (Exod 19:5b). In like manner, in as much as it was the responsibility of the *suzerain* to establish the treaty stipulations; the same scenario was with the SC; God is the one who instituted the covenantal stipulations.²⁸

Huffman, "Treaty Background of Hebrew *yadah*," *JSTOR* (Feb, 1966): 31, accessed 25 March 2017, www.jstor.org/action/doBasicSearch?Query.

²⁵Gordon D. Fee and Robert L. Hubbard Jr, eds., *The Eerdmans Companion to the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2011), 141.

²⁶Glenn S. Holland, *Gods in the Desert: Religions of the Ancient Near East* (Plymouth, UK: Littlefield, 2009), 135.

²⁷Thompson, 13.

²⁸Michael D. Morrison, *Who Needs the New Covenant? Rhetorical Function of the Covenant Motif in the Argument of Hebrews* (Eugene, OR: PickWick, 2008), 91.

However, despite all these similarities, it is also important to note that the SC was quite distinct from the *suzerain* treaty. In this manner, the God of Israel is portrayed as a gracious caring God (Exod 19:4), different from the tyrant oppressive *suzerain* king. Accordingly, *Yahweh*, the God of Israel, is the only true God who can offer true and genuine blessings and whose covenant is without alteration. Yet *suzerain* kings were, only but mortal beings, whose stipulations were subject to change for political or economical vantage. On the other hand, the SC presents spiritual, religious and ethical guidance;²⁹ suggesting that moral behaviour is more crucial than political gain.

The Role of the *Vassal*

The *vassal* was the inferior king/party, whose chief obligation was to pay allegiance to the superior king, lest curses from the stipulations befall him. In the treaty formulation, the *vassal* had no contributions to the invention of the stipulations, but she would participate in making an oath to the superior. If it happens that the *vassal* violates any of the stipulations, some consequences would bechance him.³⁰ Again, at some point the *vassal* was supposed to pay tribute, provide military support at the request of the *suzerain*, as well as to serve one lord.³¹

Accordingly, the children of Israel were expected to be loyal by to keeping the covenantal stipulations; such was expected of the *vassal* subject. But the difference is that in ANE treaties, the *vassal*'s loyalty to the *suzerain* was in fear of the

²⁹Robert Karl Gnuse, *The Old Testament and Process Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 176.

³⁰Dennis J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant: A Study in Form in the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963), 29–41. See also, Raymond Cohen and Raymond Westbrook, *Amarna Diplomacy: The Beginnings of the International Relations* (Baltimore, London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 48-50.

³¹Thomas L. Leclerc, *Introduction to the Prophets: Their Stories, Sayings and Scrolls* (NY: Paulist Press, 2007), accessed 28 March 2017, www.paulistpress.com.

consequences; yet for Israel God's people, loyalty was an expression of gratitude to God's gracious love.³² On the other hand, the *suzerain* was to serve one master just like Israel. If it happens that the *suzerain* is overpowered, then this leads to change of allegiance on the part of the *vassal*; yet for God, His ruler-ship cannot be exchanged or be threatened by any other power. Israel was elected to become God's special possession (Exod 19:5) forever.

The Function of the Hittite Treaties

The function of ANE treaties was to “induce loyalty and to reward that loyalty accordingly; thus they were politically, strategically, and economically motivated.”³³ The superior power or king wanted to maintain his control over his subject king. Treaties also were instrumental for the suzerain in maintaining some peaceful relations as well as alliance with other foreign rulers.³⁴

Accordingly, whenever a nation was conquered, a treaty agreement was established in order to give assurance of protection to the *vassal* from foreign nations. It was the responsibility of the *suzerain* to defend its vassal subjects from enemies, on the basis the agreement established.³⁵ The treaty agreement would function as a stamp of authority, for the *suzerain* to rule over his subject. Likewise, it functions to confirm

³²Gnuse, 176.

³³Ernest Wilson Nicholson, *God and His People: Covenant and Theology in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Edinburgh, 1986), 79.

³⁴D. T. Potts, ed., *Companions to the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East (CAANE)* (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 1:725.

³⁵Geoffrey W. Bromlley, “Covenant,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia (ISBE)*, completed rev. and reset ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1915-1988), 4:1043; Susanna Hast, *Sphere of Influence in International Relations: History, Theory and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2014), 33.

agreeable negotiations and as administrative documents as well.³⁶ In a similar way, treaty agreements were functional only between the agreeable parties and not outside.

Accordingly, as much as the Hittite treaty defines the relationship between the suzerain and the vassal; on the same note, the SC defines the relationship between God and Israel.³⁷ In a way, the SC was meant for Israel to acknowledge *Yahweh* as their Sovereign LORD; such also was to a certain extent true with Hittite *suzerain/vassal* treaties. On the other hand, the SC functions to extend God the knowledge of God to the whole human race, unlike the Hittite treaties which were limited.

Though some similarities are there in terms of functions between the Hittite treaties and the SC, but differences are also there, as highlight before. There are two crucial functions of the SC which seemed to be scarce in the Hittite treaties. Accordingly, the SC functions for setting apart Israel for missionary work and the redemption of humankind.³⁸ This suggests that the SC was motivated for the good will of all people. Such, was not the function of the Hittite treaty; for them the basic motivating factor was on personal gain of the treaty initiator, and no much concern for the subject.

Consequently, the issue of covenants is more prevalent in the Bible. There are individual, communities, national and tribal covenant; on the other hand, there are

³⁶Barry M. Bandstra, *Reading the Old Testament: Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Belmont, CA: Wardsworth, 2004), 176.

³⁷David H. Aaron, *Etched in Stone: The Emergence of the Decalogue* (NY: T & T Clark, 2006), 146.

³⁸Daniel I. Block, *Deuteronomy: The NIV Application Commentary (NIVAC)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 618; Irving Green, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth* (PA: The Jewish Society, 2004), 217.

divine-human covenants as well.³⁹ Such prevalence of covenants also presents a notion that covenants were commonly used in the ANE world. For an overview of the significance of the covenantal background of the function of the SC in Exodus 19:3-6, the researcher also analyzed the three covenants between God and His people: the Adamic, Noahic and the Abrahamic covenants.

The Adamic Covenant

When God created Adam and Eve (Gen 1:27) He gave them instructions/stipulations to live by (Gen 2:16, 17). He also warned them of the consequences of disobeying the instructions (Gen 2:17). Their enjoyment of perfect harmonious relationship with God and eternal life was based on perfect obedience. The prophet Hosea pointed to Israel to have broken the covenant just as Adam did (Hos 6:7). Such biblical text affirms on the covenant that was instituted at creation. Gulley calls this covenant “the creation covenant;”⁴⁰ that is the covenant before the fall. Similarly in this covenant, Adam and Eve had the freedom to make a choice; either to obey and live or to disobey and die.

The freedom of choice was endowed to humans, at creation; therefore, it was their choice which would determine their destiny.⁴¹ God had played His part in laying out the platform that if humans choose to abide with the given stipulations, they would enjoy the promises of eternal life, but if they choose the opposite, then consequences would follow them.

³⁹Graig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr, and David L. Petersen, eds., *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation (CRI)* (Leiden, NY: Brill NV, 2012), 648.

⁴⁰Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: God as Trinity* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 2011), 314.

⁴¹“The key part of the mental and emotional make-up of a human being is the wonderful gift of free will. To go along with the Free will, God gave humans the ability to think, weigh matters, make decisions, know right from wrong and weigh up the consequences of their actions.” C. T. Benedict, *One God in One Man* (Milton Keynes: Author House, 2007), 47.

On the contrary, humans chose to disobey and rebelled against their Creator, which resulted in having a broken relationship with God (Gen 3:6-9). In turn, the consequence of their disobedience befalls them (Rom 5:12). God had to intervene to initiate a post-fall covenant. This post-fall is known to be the covenant of grace in theological circles.⁴²

This post-fall covenant was initiated for the sake of reconciling humans back to a harmonious relationship with Him. It was the divinely initiated and not Adam's initiative. Again, the grace of God prompted Him to act on behalf of humanity. This was the first promise that was communicated to humans, the promise of a redeemer in Genesis 3:15. This text is considered in theological circles as the *protoevangelium* (the first Gospels).⁴³ It has been indicated that "God provided salvation as He provided life in the beginning, but it is up to humans to accept or reject salvation."⁴⁴

Similarly, in this post-fall Adamic covenant the issue of obedience remained a key issue. That is why in Genesis 4: 3-12 the two sons of Adam (Cain and Abel) as they presented themselves before God with sacrifices; Abel is considered as obedient, yet Cain as disobedient. Similarly, the people from the time of Adam till Noah failed to obey and that led to their destruction by the flood, save for Noah and his family.

The issue of disobedience also can be perceived within the SC, for the issue of obedience is a required component for salvation and maintaining a harmonious relationship with God. In as much as Adam disobeyed and was cast out from the Garden of Eden, the same happened to the children of Israel; as they disobeyed, they

⁴²James P. Stobaugh, *American History: Observations and assessments from the Early Settlement to Today* (Green Forest, AR: New Leaf Press, 2012), 157.

⁴³Mark Jones, *Why Heaven Kissed Earth: the Christology of the Puritan Reformed Orthodox Theologian, Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 84.

⁴⁴Gulley, *God as Trinity*, 315.

were led into captivity. This suggests that the breaking of a covenant always leads to some consequences or curses. In like manner, the same scenario was also with the ANE treaties.

Since there was a broken relationship between humanity and God, there was need for reconciliation. The Adamic post-fall covenant had a role to play for bringing good news to man. It functions to reconcile the two parties (God and humanity), at the same time functioning to break a new established relationship between Satan and humans.⁴⁵ In the same vein of thought, Hindson and Yates mentions about the vindication of God's character and His purpose of creating man. They highlighted that God intentionally wanted to restore His image in man which had been distorted.⁴⁶ Such aspects can also be realized with the SC.

The Noahic Covenant

Accordingly, from Adam God raised Noah. Noah came at a time when the earth was corrupted with evil, which prompted its destruction by water. Even though the whole world was full of corruption, evil thought and practices (Gen 6:3-7), but Scriptures say, "Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time, Noah walked with God" (Gen 6:9). Thus, Noah found favour before God (Gen 6:8); so He established a covenant with him, in order to save him, his family and other creatures (Gen 6:18-20), from the great tragedy of the flood.⁴⁷

⁴⁵Michael P. V. Barrett, *Beginning at Moses: A Guide to Finding Christ in the Old Testament* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador-Emerald International, 2001), 148.

⁴⁶Eddie Hindson and Gray Yates, *The Essence of the Old Testament* (Nashville, TN: Baker Academic, 2012), 56.

⁴⁷Robert F. Chochran Jr and David VanDrunen, *Law and the Bible: Justice, Mercy and Legal Institutions* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 37-38.

Particularly on this text (Gen 6:18), is where we find the word covenant (*b^eriy^t*) being explicitly highlighted for the first time, in the Pentateuch. This is where the Noahic covenant seemed to begin while more features are presented in Genesis 9.

Just like the Adamic covenant, the Noahic covenant “is conceived, devised, determined, established, confirmed and dispensed by God Himself.”⁴⁸ God conversed with Noah and initiated a covenant in order to save the world through him. This covenant was instituted for him, his descendants and the whole living creation of God (Gen 9:9-11). The idea that the covenant established for Noah and his descendants suggest that, this covenant encompasses the whole human race; for all humanity came from Noah after the flood.

Accordingly, on this covenant, God established a rainbow as a sign that He was not going to repeat the same scenario of destroying the creation by water (Gen 9:12-16). This covenant was an “everlasting covenant” (Gen 9:16). At the same time, it is thought to have been an unveiling of the everlasting covenant which originated from creation.⁴⁹ That is suggesting the continuation and permanence in existence of this Noahic covenant. Again, a promise is realized just like in the Adamic covenant. Here the rainbow was introduced as a sign for an unbroken promise to the whole creation.

With regards to this covenant, Kennard points out that “these blessings further connect Noahic covenant as a new beginning in which God’s salvation is like His creation, bringing order among the waters and chaos.”⁵⁰ This may suggest a portrayal of God’s revelation of His plan to restore humanity; a continuation of the post-fall

⁴⁸John Murray, *The Covenant of Grace* (London: Tyndale, 1954), 12.

⁴⁹Larry Edwards, *The Twelve Generations of the Creation* (MD: Xulon Press, 2006), 138.

⁵⁰Doglous E. Kennard, *Biblical Covenantalism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf Stock, 2015), 59; William Dyrness, *Themes in Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 131.

covenant of grace. In others words, God's appointing of Noah and the establishment of a covenant confirms the redemption plan and election for mission in the Noahic covenant.

The Noahic covenant narrative (Gen 9), had stipulations which were to be observed. In this covenant God commanded humanity to multiply (Gen 9:1-2); such instruction was given to Adam and Eve at creation (Gen 1:28). It is also in this covenant when animal food was introduced. Similarly, stipulation such as the avoidance of eating blood, the valuing human life (Gen 9:3-5) and others were explicitly highlighted.⁵¹ All these stipulations of animal foods, avoidance of animal blood and the valuing of human life are also highlighted in the immediate and broader context of the SC narrative (Exod 20: 13, Lev 11; and Lev 17:10-11). Such similarities of stipulations probably suggest the SC as a continuation of same covenant.

However, Kennard perceives the Noahic covenant as distinct from the Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenants.⁵² In a more similar way Simeon mentions this;

All other covenants held forth spiritual and eternal blessings to those who were admitted into them. Even the Mosaic covenant, which dwelt so much upon the enjoyment of the Promised Land, can by no means be considered as confining the prospects of the Jews to temporal happiness: for the presence of God amongst them was very distinctly promised them, together with the special manifestations of love and favour. But the covenant with Noah, promised only that the earth should not anywhere be destroyed by flood. It engaged indeed that there should be a constant succession of the seasons till the end of time: but it gave no intimation whatever of spiritual mercies.⁵³

On the contrary LayHaye and Hindson perceive the Noahic covenant as to have identical features just like all other OT and NT covenants. Similarly in this

⁵¹Michael C. Parsons, *Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 68.

⁵²Kennard, 59.

⁵³Charles Simeon, *Genesis to Leviticus: Horce Homilicae (HH)* (London: Hold Sworth & Ball), 1:86.

covenant, God's grace is expressed to the whole human race.⁵⁴ Likewise, VanderKam perceives them as one and the same covenant; reflecting on all of their similarities in terms of promises, stipulations and the election.⁵⁵

After the establishment of the Noahic covenant, his descendants also failed to keep the covenant. They thought of establishing a tower in order to save themselves, lest God would change His mind and bring the flood again (Gen 11: 24). God had promised to preserve their lives and not to repeat the destruction by water again. This was a complete rebellion against the established covenant. In a more similar way, this problem started with Adam and Eve and then repeated by Noah's descendants. Likewise, the children of Israel did the same; rebelling against the covenant (Exod 32:2-4). This challenge of rebellion seemed to recur; hence this also prompted God to call Abraham to further-up His mission to reconcile humanity with him.

Consequently, the Noahic covenant was established with the intention of restoring humanity and all creation to a perfect relationship with the Creator. Likewise, the covenant functions as a reminder of God's abundant love; on the other hand, it functions as a reminder that rebellion always brings consequence.

The Abrahamic Covenant

In this section, the Abrahamic covenant is analyzed with the intention to address the function of the SC in Exodus 19:3-6, which is the major focus of this

⁵⁴Tim LayHaye and Edward Hindson, eds., *The Popular Encyclopaedia of Bible Prophecy (PEBP)* (2003), s.v. "Covenant."

⁵⁵The election promises of Abraham are attributed to Noahic, yet at the same time the Noahic stipulations are pointed to the Mosaic laws. James VanderKam, *Jubilees*, Book of James VanderKam, *Anchor Bible Dictionary (ABD)*, ed. David Noel Freedman (NY: Doubleday, 1992), 601-2. See also, Bruce Longenecker, "Eschatology and Covenant: A Comparison of Ezra 4 and Romans 1-11," *JSTOT* (Sheffield, England: JSTOT Press, 1991), 55.

research. At the same time, in place of Abram there is Abraham; again in place of Sarai there is Sarah.

The three chapters in the book of Genesis (12; 15 and 17) have presented the background, institution and the essence of the covenant agreement that was established between God and Abraham. However, some of the scholars pose a notion of more than one covenant which God established with Abraham.⁵⁶ The suggested view of two covenants is deduced from the two chapters (Gen 15 and 17). But, the biblical evidence mentions of only one covenant, “the Lord’s covenant with Abraham.”⁵⁷ In both OT and NT, there is evidence of only one Abrahamic covenant on several texts (Exod 3:24; Acts 3:25). This simply means, though scholars may debate in terms of the number of covenants, but the testimony of the Scriptures settles the matter.

This Abrahamic covenant begins with the call and promises of God to Abraham, which are recorded in Genesis 12:1-3 and ends with the covenant sign practice of circumcision (Gen 17:11). Also a sign is presented in the Noachic covenant; a rainbow which was introduced as a sign of covenant keeping. The first three verses are pivotal to the biblical record concerning the covenant between God and Abraham, as well as foundational to all the covenants that follow hereafter. They contain the first record of promises of God to Abraham.⁵⁸ At the same time, they are critically

⁵⁶Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenants in God’s Unfolding Purpose* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2002), 89-91. Miguel De La Torre, *A Theological Commentary of the Bible: Genesis (TCB)* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 179.

⁵⁷The following texts highlighted on one covenant of Abraham (Exod 2: 24; Lev 26: 42; 1 Chr 16:16). See, Richard Bauckham, *The Bible and Mission: Christian Witness in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 27; Jeffrey Niehaus, “God’s Covenant with Abraham,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society (JETS)* 52/2 (June 2013): 252, accessed 20 March 2017, http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/56/56-2/JETS_56-2_249-271_Niehaus.pdf.

⁵⁸Keith H. Essex, “The Abrahamic Covenant,” *Masters Seminary Journal* 10:2 (Fall 1999), 194, accessed 19 March 2017, <http://www.galaxie.com/article/tmsj10-2-03>.

important for the understanding of the book of Genesis and even the whole Pentateuch.⁵⁹

In like manner, God promised Abraham to experience His blessings peradventure he has to adhere to the call. The initial stages of the covenant establishment begins when Abraham was in Ur of the Chaldeans, as God called him to go to a land which he wanted him to inherit. In this regard Abraham obeyed (Gen 12: 4-6) and he migrated to Canaan.

The call of Abraham was followed by a ritual ceremony (Gen 15: 7-21) of which God Himself gave the instructions on how this ritual was supposed to be performed. The two performed a ritual ceremony to ratify their covenantal agreement.⁶⁰ In this ratification process, God reminded Abraham about His previous act of grace (“I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees” [Gen 15: 7]). Such historical prologue can be identical to the one in the SC introduction, (“You have seen what I did to the Egyptian”⁶¹ [Exod 19:4a; 20:2]) which reminded Israel of God’s gracious deliverance. Such elements, suggest a close link between the two covenants, the Sinaitic and the Abrahamic covenant.

On the same note, during the ritual service, God (through the symbol of fire) passed between the two halves of the sawn sacrificial animals. Accordingly, the LORD made an affirmation to His promise, about giving him the land to inherit (Gen

⁵⁹Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15: Word Biblical Commentary (WBC) 1*, eds., David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barkert (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 268.

⁶⁰According the tradition in ANE during that time, the two parties who would be making an agreement had to pass through the two halves of the broken animal. It was signifying that anyone between them who would disregard this covenant agreement, the curses of agreement should make him to experience like the divided halves, simply to mean death was the penalty. John MacArthur, *Galatians: MacArthur New Testament Commentary (MNTC)* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987), 83.

⁶¹Jeffery J. Niehaus, “Covenant: Idea in the mind of God,” *JETS* 52/2 (June 2009): 230, accessed 20 March 2017, www.stsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/52/52-2.

15:18). Such ritual practice signified the serious consequences to whoever between them would violate the covenantal stipulations.

In as much as the ratification custom is concerned Ellen G. White presents this fact; “the Lord condescended to enter into a covenant with His servant, employing such forms as were customary among men for the ratification of a solemn engagement.”⁶² This also is in support of the similarities between the ANE treaties and the Abrahamic covenant. It appears that God even used those well known customs to present His truths. Abraham further went on to seal up this covenantal agreement through an instructed obligation of circumcision (Gen 17:9-11, 24). This practice of circumcision was to be carried out by him and his descendants as an everlasting covenant. In a similar way, a penalty for whosoever was going to disobey; was to be cut off (Gen 17:14).

The circumcision practice was also passed to the children of Israel during the pronouncing of the covenant (Lev12:3), just as it was instructed to Abraham. In support of this view, LaRondelle states; “the author of Exodus connected the patriarchs and the Exodus periods directly; for him, the Sinaitic covenant was theologically and historically a continuation of the Abrahamic promise.”⁶³

⁶²Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Ontario, Canada: Pacific Press, 2005), 137.

⁶³Hans K. LaRondelle, *Our Creator Redeemer: An Introduction to Biblical Covenant Theology* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2005), 750. In terms of the circumcision, this ritual had spiritual significance to it, which has to do with the circumcision of the heart (Deut 10:16; 30:6). That is the transformation of the heart in obedience to God’s Commandments through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 2:29). Thompson mentions that the circumcision was an outward expression of the inward lance transformation and a total surrender to the Almighty God. This circumcision ritual was replaced by baptism, with the same spiritual significance. J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1980), 215; Jonathan Neil Gerstner, *The Thousand Generation covenant: The Dutch Reformed Covenant Theology* (Leiden, NY: Brill, 1991), 13.

Presence of Stipulations

The Abrahamic covenant is perceived as a covenant with no stipulations and obligations; this calls for it to be considered as completely different from the SC.⁶⁴ In contrast, Kumar highlights on the presence of stipulations in the Abrahamic covenant; he argues from the point where God had a conversation with Isaac in Genesis 26:5 (“because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My Commandments, My statutes and My laws”).⁶⁵ Such biblical evidences imply to a greater extent, the availability of stipulations and regulations in the Abrahamic covenants. Again, the explicit need for obedience in Genesis 17:3, 9, 10, testifies the presence of obligations which probably could have been of similar in nature as those of the SC, because if stipulations were not present in this covenant, then the need for obedience would have not been communicated.

The Abrahamic Covenant Type

In as much as we have seen that in the ANE world they were several types of covenant treaties, the Abrahamic covenant has been debated as to where it belongs. Accordingly, Suggs et al suggest the Abrahamic covenant including the Noachic, to belong to the grant type of a covenant. They expound on the issues of God as the Master making promises to His servant/subject, Abraham; as well as God making the

⁶⁴Moshe Weinfeld, “The Covenant of Grant in Old Testament and in Ancient Near East,” *JSTOR* 90/2 (April-June 1970):192, accessed 18 March 2017, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/598135>.

⁶⁵Ashwani Kumar, “The Relationship of the Old Covenant to the Everlasting Covenant,” (MA Thesis, Andrews University, Silver Springs, MI, 2016), 12, accessed 19 February 2017, digitalcommons.andrews.edu/theses/. In the SC the Ten Commandments were written on the stone Tablets (Exod 32:15, 16; 34:28), yet in the new covenant they are written on the tablet of the believer’s heart (Heb 10:16). The same idea of the laws being in the believer’s heart is emphasized in Deuteronomy 11:18. This actually reflects that the SC stipulations are supposed to be observed in the same manner as they were expected in the old times. That is to reveal a continuation of the same covenant of grace that was initiated after the fall.

oath to ratify the covenant.⁶⁶ Thus, God obligated Himself to the servant to fulfil the promises; which is evident of a grant covenant as opposed to a suzerain treaty.

Weinfeld also supports this same view; referencing also on the promises, as well as the unconditional nature of the covenant. He points out again on the absence of obligations in the Abrahamic covenant. At the same time, he also elaborates on to some ancient discovered documents of ancient treaties which have some similar aspect such as in the Abrahamic covenant. Furthermore, he indicates that the Abrahamic grant covenant is different from the SC which is conditional; ascribing it to the grant type of treaty.

However, Couch highlighted that the Abrahamic and all other human-divine covenants resemble the Hittite *suzerain* with all its six elements. He argues his point highlighting the presence of stipulations as well as its relatedness to all other divine covenants.⁶⁷ Similarly, he adds on; “The Abrahamic covenant, then is determinative for the entire outworking of God’s program for both Israel and the nations, and is the key to biblical eschatology. All subsequent covenant revelation is the outworking of this covenant.”⁶⁸ That is to pose a notion of a similar framework of the SC and all other covenants.

The establishment of the covenant between God and Abraham was God’s free choice. This covenant is perceived by many scholars as a covenant of grace,⁶⁹ yet the

⁶⁶M. Jack Suggs, Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, and James R. Mueller, *The Oxford Study Bible: Revised English Bible with the Apocrypha (OSB)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 160.

⁶⁷Mal Couch, ed., “Covenant” *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology (DPT)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1996), 27.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Brain Albert Garrish, *Christian Faith: Dogmatics in Outline* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 109.

SC is considered to be a covenant of works.⁷⁰ Such differing views are a result of the way how one perceives each and every covenant with relations to stipulations; hence there is need to analyze the nature of the covenant of grace.

Covenant of Grace

The term grace is defined as “undeserved favour.”⁷¹ Again in the Hebrew Bible, the term covenant is more associated with such terms; *hēn* (Gen 6:8; 19:19; Exod 33:12) and *hesed*⁷² (Pss 25:6; 107:43, Isa 63:7). These two Hebrew words are defines God’s loving-kindness, mercy and favour; that is defining the grace of God.⁷³ Therefore, the grace of God is “divine favor manifested to a sinner who does not deserve it.”⁷⁴ Similarly, this covenant of grace is the divine plan to save humanity and reconcile him with his Creator, God.

Accordingly, the covenant of grace was extended to humankind from the fall of Adam and Eve.⁷⁵ God initiated the covenant of grace to Adam and Eve as a means initiate a harmonious and perfect relationship with Him. This covenant was declared

⁷⁰Mark Jones, 83; Lewis Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), 4: 162.

⁷¹I. J. Marshall, et al., “Grace.” *New Bible Dictionary (NBD)*, ed. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2010), 1:433-434. The term is considered to be so limited in terms human explanation especially when it comes to its description of God’s heart toward humankind. The mainly commonly used Hebrew word is “*hesed*.” For it expresses God’s personal familial love toward the human being. It is considerably used in associated with the covenant in the OT, at the same time English word such as mercy, steady fast love, kindness and compassionate are used interchangeably to express grace. Alexander and Baker, *DOTP*, s. v. “*hesed*”

⁷²Warren Baker, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament (WSOTDICT)* [Logos Bible Software] (Chattanooga, TN: AMG, 2003, 2002). 360, s.v. “*hesed*.”

⁷³Alexander and Baker, “Grace,” *DOTP*, 1:524-527.

⁷⁴W. H. Griffith Thomas, “Principles of Theology: Introduction to the Ninety- Nine Articles” (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 182.

⁷⁵Oliver Buswell, *Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 345.

by God to Adam, as a representative of humankind, without Adam's initiative, but God's.⁷⁶

Ellen G. White points out that "we should never have learned the meaning of this word "grace" had we not fallen. Grace is an attribute of God shown to undeserving human beings who have broken God's stipulations. We did not seek after it, but it was sent in search for us."⁷⁷ This suggests an attribute of God that was manifested in restoration for fallen beings.

The Abrahamic covenant is considerably perceived as a continuation covenant of grace from the Adamic covenant.⁷⁸ On the same note, this covenant is crucial and important in determining the whole essence of the biblical revelation.⁷⁹ In like manner Murray concurred:

It is this Abrahamic covenant, so explicitly set forth in Gn. xv and xvii; that underlies the whole subsequent development of God's redemptive promise, word, and action. ... The redemptive grace of God in the highest and furthest reaches of its realization is the unfolding of the promise given to Abraham and therefore the unfolding of the Abrahamic covenant.⁸⁰

This actually suggests that the Abrahamic covenant plays a significant role in the plan of salvation. Since it seemed to be of significance to the covenant of grace, it seemed crucial to analyze some of the factors that underline the covenant of grace.

⁷⁶J. Berkhof defines it as "*that gracious agreement between the offended God and the offending but elect sinner, in which God promises salvation through faith in Christ, and the sinner accepts this believingly, promising a life of faith and obedience*" (Italics original). Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 277.

⁷⁷God loves the sinless angels, who do His service, and are obedient to all His commands; but He does not give them grace. These heavenly beings know naught of grace; they have never needed it; for they have never sinned. Ellen G. white, *The Ministry of Healing* (Ontario, Canada: Pacific Press, 1942), 161.

⁷⁸John Von Rohr, *The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1986), 7.

⁷⁹John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1959), 139.

⁸⁰Murray, *The Covenant of Grace*, 4.

Murray mentions some factors which seems quite crucial to consider, as he discusses on this subject. In this regard he notes down factors such as; divine initiation, universal significance, condition of the covenant, permanence and everlasting covenant.⁸¹ These factors seem to be intertwined.

Divine Initiation

In consideration of this factor, the covenant of grace should be an initiation of God. In this regard, Hasel brings out this important aspect; “God’s choice of Abraham was not based on any inherent superiority within him which called for a reward.”⁸² God simply declared His promises of blessing Abraham and no strings were placed alongside these promises. In like manner, God’s choice to Israel was not based on anything good they had performed so as to prompt God to favour them (Deut 7:6-8), but it was out of loving-kindness, only by grace. Similarly, Israel’s deliverance was not on merit but through His free grace (Exod 19:4).

Accordingly, Burnside mentions on the calling of Abraham as the same with that of the children of Israel. He argues that “the covenant at Sinai is really a calling and a vocation. This is not surprising: the covenant with Israel’s ancestor, Abraham was also a product of a calling in Genesis 12:1-3 “to serve the people.”⁸³ This may imply that, God used the similar formula to call Abraham and later his descendants.

Condition

This factor seems to highlight more on the basis of the establishment of the covenant. With relations to the Abrahamic covenant Chafer explains it in this manner:

⁸¹Murray, *The Covenant of Grace*, 13-19.

⁸²Gerhard Hasel, *Covenant in Blood* (Oshawa, Ontario: Pacific Press, 1982), 37.

⁸³Jonathan Burnside, *God, Justice and Society: Aspects of Law and Legality in the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 43.

This was an unconditional covenant with Abraham. It was unconditional in that God in no way related its accomplishment to Abraham's conduct; or unfaithfulness. Jehovah was certainly interested in Abraham's conduct; but He in no degree made conduct a part of the basis of great undertaking stated in the covenant.⁸⁴

Keiser also affirms it, making reference to the ratification of the covenant. He illustrates on God walking between the broken halves of animal pieces (symbolized by flaming torch fire), while Abraham was asleep.⁸⁵ In the same scenario, Dean observes that "the meaning of this solemn covenant suggests that God pledged Himself, to the unconditional certainty of His plan to fulfil His promises to Abraham."⁸⁶

On the other hand, Gaebelein views the SC as the opposite of the Abrahamic covenant; which is conditional and also not a covenant of grace.⁸⁷ The same view is also supported by Chafer, who points out that "Israel deliberately forsook their position under grace, which had been their relation to God until that day, and placed themselves under law."⁸⁸ Scofield echoes the same sentiments, highlighting on the SC as a "new dispensation" of salvation through works.⁸⁹ Their persuasions are for consideration of the SC as a covenant of works; thus suggesting it a difference in nature from the Abrahamic covenant.

⁸⁴Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Salvation: God's Marvellous Work of Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Classics, 1991), 108.

⁸⁵Walter C. Keiser, *Christian and the "Old" Testament* (Pasadena, CA: William Cary Library, 1998), 72.

⁸⁶David Andrew Dean, "Covenant, Conditionality, and Consequences: New Terminology and a Case Study in the Abrahamic Covenant," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 57/2 (March 2014): 298, accessed 23 March 2017, www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs.

⁸⁷A. C. Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Vankampen, 1913), 1:162.

⁸⁸Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4:162.

⁸⁹Scyrus Ingerson Scofield, "Scofield Reference Bible, 1115" cited by Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 116.

However, Gulley tries to consolidate the perspectives which are mentioned by above. He perceives the SC and Abrahamic as one covenant; the SC as a renewal of the Abrahamic covenant and both being conditional. At the same time, considerably as one covenant of grace.⁹⁰ Thus differing from the view of an unconditional Abrahamic covenant and also differing from the idea of works of the SC.

In the same vein of thought, Edward echoes a crucial thought that there is no covenant without aspirations, on the same note laws presents the nature of the established relationship.⁹¹ It is important to note that Israel's deliverance came prior to the giving of obligations (Exod 19:4). In a similar way, this is can be perceived within the Abrahamic covenant; he was called first and then later engaged into some stipulations (Gen 17:1, 10, 14). This actually suggests that grace was expressed by God and stipulations seek man's response to the expressed grace.

On the same note, Abraham's life experience leaves a lot to be desired. Just to consider a few incidences; at some point he made some decisions that would put his marriage at stake (Gen 12: 11-19; 20:2-6), failing to be truthful in trying times; on another occasion, he also consented to take his maid as a wife. Such life experiences would not be expected of a man called of God. But, despite all those weakness and short comings God pursued on with fulfilling His promises through him, even though he suffered the consequences of His decisions. Such acts of God confirms about His grace.

⁹⁰Gulley, *God as Trinity*, 319.

⁹¹Georg Heinrich Edward, *The History of Israel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 104.

Everlasting Covenant

Dealing with the everlasting covenant; it is prudent to note that the words “everlasting covenant” appears on several occasions in the OT.⁹² Hafemann highlights this fact:

It is significant that the term for covenant in the Old Testament (*b^eriyt*) never occurs in the plural when describing God’s covenants with Israel. Rather, the biblical writers refer either to a specific covenant or to “the” covenant between God and his people. This is because the covenants of the Bible all embody the same fundamental covenant relationship.⁹³

This defines and affirms God’s unchangeable nature. God promised to establish an everlasting covenant with Abraham and his descendants (Gen 17:7). In the same way, He had previously established it with Noah. This may suggest a continuation in existence of the same covenant without limitation within a specific timeframe. Again, this probably suggests a notion that, all the biblical covenants are a perpetuation of one covenant. Hence, the Sinaitic and the new covenant are also included. This draws back to the idea of a single covenant of grace. In support of that, Bogue mentions of the plan of redemption that was laid before creation of humanity; that is a single covenant of grace which operates throughout human history.⁹⁴

Permanence of the Covenant

This factor tries to address this great crisis: whether the fulfilment or accomplishments of the covenant were solemnly dependent on man’s obedience or not? In this regard, Williamson presumes that the Abrahamic covenant was based on

⁹²These are some of the texts (Gen 9:16; Gen 17:7, 13, 19; Numb 18:19, 1 Chr 16:17; Ps 105:10, etc). *Ibid*, 313. In support of one covenant, see also Hafemann in his book; *The Promise of God and the Life of Faith* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001), 59: “There is one Unifying covenant relationship that runs throughout the various covenants of the Bible.”

⁹³Hafemann, *Covenant Relationships*, 21.

⁹⁴Carl W. Bogue, *Jonathan Edward and the Covenant of Grace* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1975), 103.

merit, due to the fact of his obedience to the set obligatory requirements which he kept. He argues on Abraham's obedience to take his child Isaac to sacrifice him, as God had commanded.

In addition to that, Williamson considerably endorses this fact; "Despite many renewals, this was a covenant that ultimately appeared to have failed. Israel failed to fulfil its obligations, hence jeopardizing the fulfilment of God's international agenda."⁹⁵ Going along with this thought is the assumption that, the failure of Israel to keep the covenantal stipulations resulted to the failure of the covenant. This may also pose a notion that the success and fulfilment of the covenantal promises was dependent on human obedience.

However, Jackson makes such a remark; "despite any failure on the part of the person or people with whom He covenanted with; but human failure is never permitted to abrogate the covenant or block its ultimate fulfilment."⁹⁶ This fact probably suggests that the failure of Israel did not nullify the covenant, at the same time Abraham's obedience did not determine the fulfilment of the covenant promises.

Murray adds on: "But the conditions in view are not really conditions of bestowal. They are simply the reciprocal responses of faith, love and obedience, apart from which the enjoyment of the covenant blessing and of the covenant relation is inconceivable."⁹⁷ Thus, considering human response of faith to the grace extended to him by God, which in turn leads to obedience; and obedience leads to the enjoyment of God's promises.

⁹⁵Williamson, 4.

⁹⁶Sis, Bennel Jackson, *To God Be the Glory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 109. Ron Graff and Lambert Dolphin, *Connecting with the Dots: A handbook of Bible Prophecy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 253.

⁹⁷Murray, *Covenant of Grace*, 19.

To sum up on this aspect, it seems quite open to observe that it is God who chooses; at the same time makes promises as well as fulfils them, without the aid of human hand. He is the one who chose Abraham, gave him promises and fulfilled the promises as well. He also did the same with the children of Israel.

Universal Significance

It is also important to note that the Abrahamic covenant was not simply concerned with him and his descendants alone but rather, it encompasses the whole human race, just like the Noahic covenant. In view of this Wells makes these submissions:

The covenant of grace was announced to Abraham in the promise made to him and to his seed, Christ, long before the giving of the covenant at Sinai. Its conditions were fulfilled by Christ during the incarnation, at a period long subsequent to the giving of that covenant; it was therefore independent of and superior to it. It was designed for the benefit of the whole human race; whereas the Sinaitic covenant was confined to a single nation, was limited in its application, imperfect in its provisions, and as for the Jews were concerned, a failure in its results.⁹⁸

In this line of thought is the persuasion that the Abrahamic covenant has no relationship to the SC, at the same note, one has universal significance, yet the SC was a national covenant which does not have any universal significance. With regards to that Jeon perceives it differently; he highlights on the fact that the SC was basically the continuity as well as the fulfilment of Abrahamic covenant.⁹⁹ Thus suggesting that the function of the Abrahamic and the SC is the same; this also may imply with the

⁹⁸Jo Bayley Wells, "The Epistle to the Galatians, vol I" 234, cited from *The Christian Observer* (London: Hatchard & Co, 1869), 305. For more information; Sam Storms and Justin Taylor, *For the Fame of God's Name* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 223.

⁹⁹Jeong Koo Jeon, *Covenant Theology* (Oxford: University Press, 2004), 131. The relationship of the SC, Abrahamic covenant as well as the new covenant has been discussed in detail not as revival covenants but as one unity. John D. Darr, *Christian Fruit-Jewish Foot: Theology of Hebraic Restoration* (Atlanta, GA: Golden Key Press, 2015), 300.

inclusion of the element of universal significance. Both covenants had concern of the salvation of the whole human race.

Accordingly, covenants were established for the rescue of humanity and the restoration of God's creation. To sum up on the whole aspect of the covenant of grace Hyde coins on this:

The covenant of grace began with the mother promise of Gen 3:15. It is one in essence throughout redemptive history.... It began in the Garden, after the fall, continued with Noah, ratified with Abraham and later Israel, and fulfilled in the New covenant. It is the good news that God saves sinners by His undeserved favour.¹⁰⁰

In support of such a view, a notion of one continuous covenant and also with similar purposes, objective as well as function is posed. In as much as God brought about hope to the human race through Adam, He also appointed Noah and Abraham for His purposeful mission; again in a similar way He set apart Israel for His mission, which in turn becomes the function of the covenant.

The Covenant of Faith

The word for faith which is frequently used in OT is "trust." In a biblical sense, Marshall et al defines it as "a complete reliance on God and full obedience to God."¹⁰¹ This probably suggests the idea of being committed to God. Consequently in line with this definition, if then faith goes along with obedience; this may also imply the necessity of keeping stipulations or regulations as an expression of loyalty. On the other hand it is part of the human's response to the divine grace.

¹⁰⁰Daniel R. Hyde, *The Good Confession: An Explanation of the Christian Faith* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 90.

¹⁰¹As to expand the understanding, faith is also known to be the relinquishing of all trust in one's own resources and putting or depending on God's mercy without any reservations. It is more of a common aspect in the NT. It is more of an attitude, an issue of the heart, but which can be confirmed by outward actions. Marshall et al, "Faith," *NBD*.

Paul the apostle in Hebrews 11:8, 9, does mention of Abraham as a man of faith; at the same time faith as the basis of pleasing God (Heb 11:6).¹⁰² Similarly, in Romans 4:3 he wrote that Abraham was justified by God through faith; reflecting on Genesis 15:6. Furthermore, Jeon argues that “Abraham’s justification by faith apart from receiving circumcision, the sign of the covenant, signifies that believers in the Old Testament were saved by God’s grace and justified not by the obedience of the law, but by faith alone.”¹⁰³ This may in a way, signify that faith is the basis for obedience.

In like manner when God requested Abraham to go and sacrifice his son Isaac (Gen 22:2-11), he did not question God, but rather he obeyed accordingly. James the apostle then makes these remarks:

Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works faith was perfected? ... so also faith without works is dead.” (Jam 2:21, 23, 26b).

The same statements have been echoed by Wesley that true and genuine faith is expressed through obedience to the moral law (the Ten Commandments).¹⁰⁴ With such, it also presents the connection between faith and works. Abraham’s faith was exhibited also through his works. At the same time it actually persuades to say; obedience is a requirement to faith.

Accordingly, the response of obedience by Abraham, which was an exhibition of his faith, affirms also that this covenant was a covenant of faith. Consequently, if

¹⁰²The obedience of Abraham, though not perfect, was a result of his faith in God’s gracious promises. Lawrence Cookie, *What or Who is it about?* (Lancashire, England: Rossendale, 2003), 349.

¹⁰³Jeong Koo Jeon, *Biblical Theology: Covenants and Kingdom of God in Redemptive History* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Sock, 2017), 67.

¹⁰⁴John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley: Wesley’s Standard Sermons* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1955), 59.

then obedience goes along with faith, it may suggest that God's appeal to the children of Israel (Exod 19:5) to keep His covenant, was an invitation for Israel to express their faith.¹⁰⁵ Instead of them exhibiting their faith in God like Abraham, they disobeyed God (Jer 34:13-14, 18-22); which led them later, to be taken exile in Babylon. In as much as the covenant of Abraham functions for his calling for mission, just like with Israel; at same time the covenants function also to the affirmation of faith.

Purpose of the Covenant

The covenant motifs in the Pentateuch seem quite common which may suggest that God was so purposeful in initiating them.¹⁰⁶ Making a closer look from the very first promises which were declared to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3), one may have some clues as to the purpose of the covenant. In the very last part of the promises (v. 3b “and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”) a purpose seemed to have been highlighted. Likewise in Genesis 17:4, 5, a similar promise had been repeated, that Abraham was to be a father of a multitude of nations. God intended to make Abraham an instrument of reaching out to people, in order for them to acknowledge and have the understanding of the true God.

Walton put across this important point about the purpose of a covenant:

It is to establish oneness between God and his people. The oneness which was interrupted by the entrance of sin must be reconstituted through the covenant of redemption. “I shall be your God and you shall be my people;” functioning

¹⁰⁵Wesley pointed out on genuine faith. He indicated on the crucial importance of obedience to the moral law as it relates to faith. He pointed out that faith and the observance of the law are intertwined and cannot be separated. The failure to observe the laws comes from the deepest ignorance of the nature, properties and the use of the law. At the same time proves someone's lack of knowledge of Christ. *Ibid*, 60.

¹⁰⁶Walter Houston: *The Pentateuch* (Gordon Lane, London: SCM Press, 2013), 71. There are individual as well as divine covenants right across the Pentateuch.

as the central unifying theme of the covenant, underscores the role of oneness as the essence of the goal of the covenant.¹⁰⁷

Accordingly, God wanted communion with His people; “I will be their God” (Gen 17:8). In the same vein, Wright indicates: “The creator God has a purpose, a goal, which is nothing, less than blessing the nations of humanity.”¹⁰⁸ This would mean God was willing to have fellowship with all humanity.

Such purposes seemed to have also been revealed to the children of Israel as God established His covenant with them at Sinai (Exod 19:5-6). In a way, Hamilton mentions that “Israel is to play a mediatory role between Yahweh and all the other nations.”¹⁰⁹ God was intentional in choosing Israel; for the purpose He had begun with Abraham; that is the missionary mandate which leads to the ultimate goal of salvation of humanity.

Likewise, in ANE world covenants were meant for maintaining dominance and control of power over the subordinate *vassal* by the *suzerain*, which seemed contrary to God’s purpose of establishing a covenant. The divine covenants were established for the purposes of accomplishing God’s divine plan to save humanity; this also is consistent with the SC.

The Covenantal Promises

The issue of covenants is quite frequent in the Pentateuch; and the same is with divine promises. In the Pentateuch, the great and first well placed divine promise

¹⁰⁷Walton, *Covenant: God’s Purpose*, 25.

¹⁰⁸Christopher J. H. Wright, *The God of Covenant*, eds., Jamie A. Grant and Alistair I. Wilson (England: Apolos, 2005), 54.

¹⁰⁹Hamilton, “*Exodus*,” 304.

is in Genesis 3:15.¹¹⁰ In this passage, God promised the seed of the woman who was to come and crush the head of the serpent; as it were pointing to the promise of Jesus Christ who was to come as a redeemer of humanity.

It seems God's covenant was accompanied with promises. Beginning with Adam, as highlighted before (the promise of the seed-Jesus Christ); with Noah, a promise not to repeat the destruction of the earth by water (Gen 9:11); and with the children of Israel (Exod 19:5, 6), the promise for them to be His special possession. In like manner, in the new covenant, Christ promised His presence always among disciples (Matt 28:19).

Accordingly, within each and every promise there is a universal implication to it. Likewise, God's promises to Abraham are associated with his covenant (Gen 12:1-3); these three texts are quite pivotal to the understanding of this covenant. Similarly, the following covenantal chapters (Gen 15 and 17) portray an expansion of the already pronounced promises. Consequently, the promises which were declared to Abraham can be classified into five categories. There is the land promise, the promise of a great name, the promise of great a nation, the promise of blessings of all nations and the promise of the divine presence. God was going to fulfil all these promises by and through Abraham and his descendants, who is Israel.¹¹¹

The Land Promise

God made the first promise to Abraham to give him the land to inherit (Gen 12:1), together with his descendants. This promise was repeatedly pronounced to Abraham during the establishment of the covenant (Gen 15:18; 17:8). In line with

¹¹⁰Joseph David Rhodes, *First Nativity: History & Theology of our Incarnate Lord and Saviour* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 37.

¹¹¹John Piper, "The Covenant of Abraham," *Independent*, 18 October 1981, accessed 30 March 2017, <http://www.desiringgod.org>.

that, Murray went on to say, “the deliverance of Israel from Egypt and the bringing of them into the land of promise is the fulfilment of the covenant promise to Abraham.”¹¹² God had proclaimed to them that their deliverance was actually merited on His promise to Abraham (Exod 6:8). This was a confirmation of the certainty of God’s promises; at the same time, proving the continuation of the Abrahamic covenant.

The Promise of a Great Name

God promised to make the name of Abraham great (Gen 12: 2b); an opposite scenario to the people of Babel. The people of Babel wanted to make for themselves a great name and God disrupted their ambitions.¹¹³ At this moment God Himself without any persuasion from Abraham promised to make his name great. That was to suggest the famousness of his name.

Accordingly, in relation to Abraham’s famous name, Aladetan perceives this promise to have been fulfilled during his life time and even to the present time. He mentions that the name Abraham is famous even amongst the current day dominant religions.¹¹⁴ A similar scenario can be viewed with the children of Israel, who also are the descendants of Abraham (“you shall be a special possession above all people” [Exod 19:5]). God was perpetuating his promise to Abraham, of his famousness.

¹¹²Murray, *Covenant of Grace*, 23.

¹¹³Nimrod and those who he led wanted to make themselves a great name, which was against God’s intention. God intervened and brought about several differing languages to stop their progress, so as to disturb their intentions and plan (Genesis 11:1-9).

¹¹⁴It has been stated that “Over four billion Christians, Muslims and Jews all over the world use the name of Abraham in prayers.” O. Y. Aladetan, *Over the Storm of Life; God’s Word & Covenant Promises Prevails* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), accessed 31 March 2017, www.authorhouse.co.uk.

The Promise of a Great Nation

God promised Abraham that he was to become a great nation (Gen 12:2). This promise was repeated again and again to him, yet without any child between Abraham and his wife Sarah.¹¹⁵ In the process of time God blessed Abraham and Sarah with a son Isaac, who became the father of Jacob (Israel). Then Jacob bore the twelve sons, who later became the Israelite nation. Hasel mentions that “from that small and seemingly insignificant number, the descendants of Jacob increased and became so populous that they developed into a great nation (Deut 26:5).”¹¹⁶ God fulfilled His promise to Abraham through his descendants, the Israelite nation.

The Promise of Blessings of all Nations

The promises of God to Abraham were not simply limited to him and his descendants alone, but were of universal significance (“And all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you” [Exod 12:3]). The blessings and promises which were proclaimed upon Abraham were to be inclusive of all humanity. This promise has been repeated on several occasions, just like the other promises.¹¹⁷

In the third stage of the covenant-making, God seemed to be more explicit on this promise (“you shall be a father of many nations” [Exod 17:4, 5]), which is repeated consecutively. Accordingly, this promise pointed out the crux of the matter;

¹¹⁵The greatness of the nation was to be realized through him and Sarah yet, they had no child. This led Abraham to consent to Sarah’s proposal (Gen 16: 2-5) to take her maid Hagar who bore Ishmael, yet God’s plan was not with Ishmael but Isaac, (Gen 12:7; 13:16; 15:5; 17: 6, 16,17). God fulfilled His promise at a moment when the situation was hopeless.

¹¹⁶Hasel, *The Covenant of Blood*, 48.

¹¹⁷God’s call to Abraham is in response to the rebellion of humanity, through his mercy that he had shown from the beginning, to Adam. Jeff Wisdom, *Through the Valley: Biblical-Theological Reflections on Suffering* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Sock, 2011), 42.

Abraham's responsibility to God.¹¹⁸ God's plan to fulfil mission of redemptive plan towards humanity was to be extended through Abraham and his descendents. In like manner this plan was expressed in the text of study in Exodus 19:3-6, when God pronounced the desire to set aside Israel as a special people.

The Promise of the Divine Presence

In as much as God was willing to bless Abraham; at the same time, He also wanted to be always present with His people. This promise is implied in the covenant-making in Genesis 17:7b ("to be God to you and to your descendants") and also in 17:8b ("I will be their God.") Such statements pose the idea of God's willingness to be always present in Abraham's life and to all people. The divine presence gives the assurance of protection (Gen 15:1), prosperity as well as the certainty of His promises, in terms of their fulfilment.¹¹⁹

The assurance of God's presence in Abraham and his descendants is more like the theme of the Pentateuch and even in the whole Bible. Such statements which say, "I am with you" or "I will be with you" have been repeated so often."¹²⁰ All these texts are in conjunction with the fulfilment of promise to the descendants of Abraham. Consequently, on these promises hinges the whole essence of human history and God's redemption plan for the humankind.¹²¹

¹¹⁸"Privilege always brings responsibility." Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament (WBC)* (Ontario, Canada: David C. Cook, 2007), 320.

¹¹⁹Kaiser, *Christian and the Old Testament*, 40.

¹²⁰The following texts have been cited (Gen 26: 3, 4; 28:15; 31:3; Exod 3:12; Deut 31:23; Josh 1:9; 3:7; 7:12; Isaiah 41:10; Jer 1:8 etc) Hasel, *The Covenant of Blood*, 46.

¹²¹Willem VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996), 114.

Summary

Yahweh established a covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai three months after their miraculous deliverance from Egypt. The analysis of the historical background behind the SC in Exodus 19:3-6, has attempted to assess the function of this covenant, in the light of the ANE and other biblical covenants.

Accordingly, this study has established that SC functions as a continuation of the Abrahamic covenant of grace and faith. In essence, it was a renewal of a single covenant that was already established, starting with the post-fall Adamic covenant, coming to the Noahic and then Abrahamic covenant; having the same purpose of reconciling people to a harmonious relationship with God.

However, scholars such as Scofield, Chafer and Gabelein suggested the idea of it functioning as a “new dispensation” of salvation by works. Wells in like manner highlights on the covenant as being established for the Israelite religious faith only. These scholars in support of this view pointed to the SC as a covenant of works and not of grace nor of faith. Their points of argument are mainly based on the SC having stipulations, yet others are considered not having stipulations, especially the Abrahamic covenant.

On the contrary, the findings of this study reveal that the ANE treaties and all the Pentateuchal covenants had stipulations just like the SC, including the Abrahamic covenant. Consequently, in terms of the Abrahamic covenant, the text (Gen 26:5) highlighted on the presence of stipulations in the Abrahamic covenant, though not explicitly spelt, but it is implied. These insights shade more light that stipulations (Commandments) were present within this covenant, similar to those of the SC.

Again, this study has shown that salvation in the SC was by faith; for the obedience to stipulations is an expression of faith, not the means of earning salvation.

The need for obedience is also highlighted not in the SC alone, but even in the Abrahamic (Gen 17:9-10) and other divine covenants; which means, faith is the basis of salvation in every divine covenants, including the SC. Consequently, this historical background proves that all divine covenants were initiated by God, which actually authenticates them as covenants of grace, including the Sinaitic one.

To sum up; with the evidences which are drawn up from this chapter, it is biblically reliable to consider the SC as a fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant; for the Israelites were the descendants of Abraham, to whom the promise of an everlasting covenant was made. Therefore, the SC functions as a continuation of the Abrahamic covenant, based on grace and faith for the salvation the human race. In essence, this covenant is part of the single covenant which stretches from the Adamic post-fall covenant and meets its complete fulfilment in Christ.

CHAPTER 3

EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS

This chapter is an exegetical analysis of the text under study (Exod 19:3-5). In this analysis several issues are addressed. The text is established, literary analysis of the text is done; the theme, the structure and the genre of the text is also undertaken. At same time, some grammatical and syntactical studies are examined; word studies and figures of speech are carried out. Furthermore, the literary context which involves broader and immediate context are investigated. Lastly, some inter-textual studies are done in order to figure out its connection and relevance to the whole biblical account. At the end of the chapter, a chapter summary is drawn.

Establishing the Text

3 וּמַשָּׁחָה עָלֶיהָ אֱלֹהֵי אֱלֹהִים וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה מִן־הַהָר לֵאמֹר כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַלֹּב וְתִגִּיד לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: 4 אַתֶּם רְאִיתֶם אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי לְמִצְרַיִם וְאֲשָׂא אֶתְכֶם עַל־כַּנְּפֵי נְשָׁרִים וְאַבָּא אֶתְכֶם אֵלַי: 5 וְעַתָּה אִם־שָׁמוּעַ תִּשְׁמָעוּ בְּקוֹלִי וְשִׁמְרֶתֶם אֶת־בְּרִיתִי וְהִלִּיתֶם לִי סִגְלָה מִכָּל־הַעֲמִים כִּי־לִי כָל־הָאָרֶץ: 6 וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ־לִי מִמְּלַכֶת כְּהַנְּגִים וְגוֹי קָדוֹשׁ אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר תְּדַבֵּר אֵלַי־בְּנֵי

Textual Variances

In this pericope under study, there are some textual variables which are drawn by the critical apparatus.¹ These variables may deserve some closer attention, in order

¹All variance are deduced from Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia critical apparatus (1997).

to discover whether they can pose some significant changes to the meaning of the text.

In Exodus 19:3a, whereas the MT renders אֵלֹהֵי יְהוָה “to God, “yet the *LXX* added $\tau\acute{o}\ \delta\acute{\rho}\omicron\varsigma$ ², which then can be translated as “towards the mountain of God or to the mountain of God.”³ Meanwhile, the idea of Moses meeting with God up the mountain is implied within all biblical primary sources; hence the *LXX* has explicitly highlighted it.⁴ This simply implies that the MT is to be relied upon.

Again, in 19:3b the *textus Graecus originalis*, the *codices manuscript Hebraici* and the *versio Syriaca consensus testium* have used the *Elōhîm* which is equivalent to the one used in the *LXX* *codices minusculis scripti* $\acute{o}\ \theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$, “God;” yet instead the MT, the T and the V used the Hebrew term “*yhwh*” which its Greek equivalent is $\kappa\acute{o}\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma$, “LORD.”

The use of the term *yhwh* from the MT seems to be more reliable using it in this text, because most of the primary sources are written in such a way and several texts (Pss 147:19; 78: 5; Mal 4:4) reflect back to it. Accordingly, the term was normally associated with God and His covenant people; distinguishing between the true God from other gods.⁵ Again, God revealed Himself to Moses as *yhwh* at their first encounter (Exod 6:4, 6) in a burning bush. Similarly, He introduces Himself by this same name at Mt Sinai; thus to affirm His previous revelation.

²*LXX (Septuaginta: Morphologically Tagged Edition)*, Exod 19:3a.

³William D. Mounce, *The Analytical Lexicon of Greek to the Greek New Testament* (ALGGNT) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993), 489, s.v. “ $\acute{o}\rho\omicron\varsigma$.”

⁴Noel D. Osborn and Howard Hatton, *A Handbook on Exodus (UBS)* [Logos Bible Software] (New York: United Bible Societies, 1999), 449.

⁵The name *yhwh* in the Bible appears in Gen 2:4 then it is fully express in God’s covenant with Abraham and also his descendents (Gen 12:8; 15:1; etc). W. E. Vine and Merrill F. Unger, White, William: *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words (CEDONTW)* [Logos Bible Software] (Nashville TN: Thomas. Nelson, 1996) 1:140.

On the other hand the repetition of the same idea using different words, also confirms a poetic genre within the text.⁶ This can be traced even within this pericope; in v. 3 the name Jacob and Israel are used, as they refer to the same person. This seems to be a common phenomenon within the Pentateuch that uses poetic style.

Accordingly in 19:3c, the codex vaticanus uses *τοῦ οὐρανοῦ* meaning “from heaven,”⁷ differing from the MT which says *רָמַת־רָמַת* from the mountain and the *LXX* which has the MT equivalent *τοῦ ὄρους* “from the mountain.” Again, the T and the V has the same (from the mountain) equivalent terms to *LXX* and MT. The use of *τοῦ οὐρανοῦ* seemed to change the meaning to the text, in this way the idea of Moses having an encounter with God at the mountain will then be distorted from the picture.⁸ Therefore, the text and even the whole Sinaitic narrative may be affected, especially in terms of its interpretation and its reliability as an inspired Word of God.

At the same time, consistence of the narrative would be affected because the dominant idea of Moses meeting with God at Mt. Sinai would be distorted on this point. Because of that, possibly that suggests that the MT has to be maintained, for it actually presents consistence with the text and the whole Sinaitic narrative.

Consequently in v. 4b, the *LXX* has *ὡσεὶ ἐπὶ* meaning “as if on, like on, or as on.”⁹ There is a shift from a metaphor to a simile put words such as “as if or like”.¹⁰ The change from a simile to a metaphor also does not change the meaning within the text,

⁶John I. Duharm, *Exodus: Word Biblical Commentary (WBC) 3* (Waco, TX: Word books, 1978), 261.

⁷*Ibid.*, 257.

⁸George Brooke, Handy Majman, and Loren T. Stuckernbruck, *The Significance of Sinai: Traditions about Sinai and Divine Revelation in Judaism and Christianity* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2008), 287.

⁹Mounce, *ALGGNT*, s.v. “ὡσεὶ.”

¹⁰Osborn and Hotton, 449.

so the MT is to be maintained as reliable as it is. Furthermore, in 19:5b, the *LXX* again has *λαὸς* meaning “people or nation,” of which it does not affect the meaning or bring some interpretational difficulties into the text. Therefore, it is more preferred to rely on the MT.

Textual Translation

And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called him from the mountain, and said, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and you tell the sons of Israel: You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I carried you on eagles wings, and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will diligently obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My treasured possession among all the nations; for the whole earth is Mine, And you, you shall become to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you are to speak to the sons of Israel.”

Literary Analysis

The text of study (Exod 19:3-6) is perceived as the key introductory text to the SC.¹¹ In like manner, Exodus 19:3 mark the beginning of a new pericope which in turn is followed by a string of dependent verbal clauses. In this episode God’s purpose of bringing the children of Israel to Mt Sinai was proclaimed by God Himself, verbally. The communication was between two parties; God on one end, then Moses and the children of Israel on the other end.

Accordingly, Dozeman realized some four parts to which this episode can be summarized on, which are; “the commissioning of Israel (v. 3), the call of Israel to see a past action of *Yahweh* (v. 4), the offer of covenant (v. 5a),

¹¹R. Alan Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary*, ed., D. J. Wiseman (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 144.

and the promise of reward (v. 5b-6).”¹² The opening (v. 3) and the closing (v. 6) phrases of this episode confirms it as a unit.¹³

Theme

The theme of this pericope probably can be drawn from the two verses (vv. 5-6). In these verses, God’s intention to establish a covenant to which Israel was to be reckoned as a unique possession is highlighted; at the same time Israel’s function and her expected behaviour as a treasured possession is also presented. Therefore, this can be summed up in this way; the theme focus of this pericope is on the “election of Israel” or to say “the covenant of election.”

Structure of the Text

The pericope of the SC (Exod 19-24) seemed to have some complications in terms of chronological order. Because of those elements of posing some disorderliness within the narrative,¹⁴ critical scholars find it as a point of argument to justify their views of subscribing the narratives to have originated from different sources.¹⁵ However, taking a closer look at the narrative, it actually portrays a particular style of writing to which the author used.

¹²Thomas B. Dozeman, *Commentary on Exodus* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans), 439.

¹³Dumbrell, *Faith of Israel*, 37.

¹⁴Some of the arguments posed by critics are on the variations of the use of third and first person within the narrative, referencing to God. At the same time the following passages (Exod 20:22-23:19; 23:12-19; 24:15b-31:18; 35-40 and Numb 1-10) are recognised by critics as later additions to the Sinai narrative; even the Decalogue is also implicated as secondary material. George W. Ramsey, *In Quest for the Historical Israel* (Eugene,OR: Wipf Stock, 1999), 59.

¹⁵The text of study (Exod 19: 3-6) has been considered as one of those inserted, but which have not been part of the rest of the narrative in the whole chapter 19. James L. Kugel, *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now* (NY: Free Press, 2008), 273. S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament (ILOT)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1961), 32.

Hoffmeier highlights some important facts in support of the unity of this pericope, in order to justify the authenticity of the messages. He alluded on the literary framework and chiasmic structure, which demonstrate the intelligence of the author of the text.¹⁶ This actually suggests the author could have been deliberate in using his style of writing, which is of chiasmic in nature. The chiasmic structure according to Sprinkle:

A. Narrative: the covenant offered (Exod 19: 3-25)

B. Laws (general) the Decalogue (Exod 20: 1-17)

C. Narrative: People's fear (Exod: 20: 18-21)

B.¹ Laws (specific): the book of the covenant (Exod 20: 22- 23:33)

A.¹ Narrative: the covenant accepted (Exod 24:1-18)¹⁷

Accordingly, the communication formula pattern between God and Moses in the text (Exod 19: 3-6) seemed to take the same pattern in the rhetorical story of the Plagues (Exod 7-11), though some differences can be noted in the nature of the events.¹⁸ The covenant message includes; a preamble (Exod 19:3), a historical introduction (Exod 19:4; 20:1-2), stipulations (Exod 19:5a), blessings (Exod 19:5b-6), a formal agreement (Exod 19:8; 24:3, 7), regulations (Exod 20:1-23:33), a ratification ritual (Exod 24:4-8).

This narrative presents several characters, but three are the principal characters; *Yahweh*, Moses and the children of Israel. Some of the characters which

¹⁶James K. Hoffmeier, *Ancient Israel in Sinai: The evidence for the Authenticity of the Wilderness Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 51.

¹⁷The chiasmic structure demonstrates the subordination of the laws to the Covenant, through being flanked in between narratives. Thus to reveal that the primary issue was the relationship; even though, it is impossible to separate between the laws and the covenant because the Covenant is also defined by the laws. J. M. Sprinkle, "Law and Narrative in Exodus 19-24," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society (JETS)* 47/2, 242 (June 2004): 235-52. Accessed 18 March 2017, www.etsjets.org.

¹⁸Alan J. Hauser, David J. A. Clines, and David N. Gunn, *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature* (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1982), 66.

can be realized within this narrative are: Aaron (Exod 19:24), priests (Exod 19:24), Nadab and Abihu (Exod 24:1, 9), the elders (Exod 24:1, 9, 14), Joshua (Exod 24:13) and Hur (Exod 24:14). There is great interaction mainly between the three principal characters. Accordingly, God is the source of information, Moses is the mediator between God and Israel and the people of Israel become the receivers or beneficiaries and respondents.

The arrangement of the covenantal elements in Exodus 19:3-6 is somewhat self-contained. This is indicated by the inclusion marked by the opening and closing remarks of vv. 3 and 6 respectively; “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel.” “These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.” Both remarks portray a “messenger-formula” that defines Moses’ prophetic role in this whole covenantal account. Muilenburg demonstrates that “the four verses are closely woven and the structure so-apparent that the exclusion of any line of the verse actually mars its unity and destroys its literary character.”¹⁹ Accordingly, he provides a sought of a structure (vv. 3b-6b) of the following nature:

3b Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel:

4a You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians
 4b and *how* I bore you on eagles' wings
 4c and brought you to Myself.

5a Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice
 5ab and keep My covenant
 5b then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples
 5c for all the earth is Mine

6a and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests
 6ab and a holy nation

¹⁹James Muilenburg, “The Form and Structure of the Covenantal Formulations;” VT 9 (1959): 353. Cited from James Muilenburg and Best Thomas F, *Hearing and speaking the Word: Selections from the Works of James Muilenburg* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984).

6b These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel²⁰

Three division levels were drawn out from the structure. The divisional levels are as follows; first level is v. 4a, b, c; the second is v. 5a, ab, b and the third level 6a, ab.²¹ According to Muilenburg, the words which are more stressed within this structural levels are; “and brought to Myself,” “you will become to me a treasured possession” and “holy nation.” Accordingly, the structure expresses the probable gist of this text, which is being “a holy nation”²²

Genre

The form of the SC is generally classified within the category of narratives, hence the SC (Exod 19:1–Num10:10).²³ Within this narrative are legal stipulations that define the covenantal relationship between God and His people. Although some of the legal materials describe civil relations, they are submerged and defined within God’s covenantal relationship with His people. This signifies the importance of both horizontal and vertical relations. Consequently, within this narrative, a poetic genre is observed, particularly on this text (Exod 19: 3-6).²⁴ Similarly, Durham perceives it as a poetic piece that was commonly used during the ancient times in the renewal of a covenant.²⁵ This actually authenticates the common use of poetic style in the ancient

²⁰James Muilenburg, “The Form and Structure of the Covenantal Formulations;” VT 9 (1959): 353. Cited from James Muilenburg and Best Thomas F, *Hearing and speaking the Word: Selections from the Works of James Muilenburg* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984).

²¹Richards, Briggs and Joel N. Lohr, *A Theological introduction to the Pentateuch: Interpreting the Torah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2012) 66.

²²Muilenburg, 352.

²³Dorsey, 72-73.

²⁴James K. Bruckner, *Exodus: New International Biblical Commentary (NIBC)* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), 171.

²⁵ Durham, *Exodus*, 3:261.

Hebrew times. On the other hand, the idea of the renewal of a covenant gives a reflection of the renewal probably of the Abrahamic covenant.

Accordingly, Holm indicates that “the most common characteristic shared by Ancient Near Eastern literature is the concept of parallelism.”²⁶ Ska also confirms and highlights on rare unique formulas and expressions within the text. He pointed out on parallel unique formulas in Exodus 19:3 (you shall say to the house of Jacob/you tell to the sons of Israel) and the expression in Exodus 19: 5c (among all the people/for the whole earth is mine).²⁷ Since it was a common style in ANE, then possibly Moses could have learnt such a style which he later used in his writings.

Grammatical Studies

In this text (Exod 19:3-6), several words and phrases require some syntactical attention in order to establish the intended function of the SC. At the same time certain figures of speech need to be analyzed and clarified.

Accordingly at Mount Sinai (v. 3), Moses played a mediatory role in the establishment of the covenant with Israel. The LORD engages Moses by using the “messenger-formula,”²⁸ “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of

²⁶Parallelism refers to “the repetition of one poetic line (or half-line) in the next line (or half line); that is, the repeated formulation of the same message such that subsequent encodings of it restate, expand, complete, contrast, render more specific, complement, or carry further the first message.” Tawny L Holm, *A Companion to the Ancient Near East*, ed., Daniel Snell (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 271.

²⁷Jeong Louis Ska, *The Exegesis of the Pentateuch: Exegetical Studies and Basic Questions* (Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 143.

²⁸The term “messenger-formula” is a style of presenting prophetic oracles that was used by prophets in delivering divine truths, by way of using such phrase; “thus says the Lord.” This formula was used as a way of validating the message as spoken word from the mouth of Yahweh. William Sanford Lasor, David Allan Hubbard, and Frederic William Bush, *The Old Testament Survey: The Message, form and Background of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 592; Johanness Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz Josef Fabry, eds., *Theology Dictionary of the Old Testament (TDOT)*, trans. David Green (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2001), 16: 498.

Israel” (Exod 19:3, 6). Moses became instrumental in bringing Yahweh’s covenantal message to the children of Israel.

Within the historical preamble (v. 4), there are three statements that describe the LORD’s gracious redemption of the Israelites from the Egyptian bondage. The historical facts include; (a) “You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians,” (b) “how I bore you on eagles’ wings,” and (c) “brought you to Myself.” At first, the LORD reminds the Israelites of the most important evidence regarding their redemption from Egyptian suffering. It seems such background clearly provides the bases upon which the covenant is anchored. Thus the covenant was also a reminder of God’s gracious deliverance.

Grammar and Syntactical Studies

Consequently, in this phrase אַתֶּם רְאִיתֶם אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי “you have *seen* what I *did*,” both verbs, on the part of Israelites (רְאִיתֶם), and on the part of the LORD (עָשִׂיתִי), are in *qal* perfect tense, that indicates accomplished realities. Similarly, the use of the pronoun אַתֶּם “you” in plural, in the person of the verb shows an emphasis. Such self-awareness on the part of Israel was significant towards entering into a covenant with their deliverer. Israel needs to always remember what the LORD had done in their deliverance from Egyptian bondage.

The Metaphor of Eagle’s Wings

Terence E. Fretheim defines this metaphor in this manner;

An imagery of growth and maturation, in which the mother eagle helps her young learn flying by pushing them out of the nest so that they learn using their wings. If they flounder, she swoops down under them and bears them up on her own strong wings.²⁹

²⁹Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 208.

Accordingly, in Exodus 19:4, the imagery of God is being viewed as a *mother eagle* to Israel. Within this metaphor are the “informative aspect and also the performative element”³⁰ of *Yahweh* to the people of Israel. This metaphor seems to function on describing the relational aspect on which the covenant was built. This actually would mean, it sets the basic for the interpretation of the text because it provides a picture to understand the basis upon which the covenant is established, that is on the basis of gracious deliverance.

This imagery is described in Deuteronomy 32: 10-12, illustrating the love of God towards Israel’s welfare even before their arrival at Sinai. Zannoni mentions that “the young, fledgling Israel was stirred out of Egypt and in its immature state was carried out and protected by God.”³¹ Such definition portrays God’s gracious nature in caring for His vulnerable people. Accordingly, God’s act of delivering Israel from Egypt; one of the great ancient super powers, presents His might power and sovereignty; on the other hand expressing God’s care and love for His people.

Likewise, the term used for God’s act in taking care of the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage (נָשָׂא) is a verb in *qal* imperfect from the Hebrew verb נָשָׂא “to carry or to lift” (Exod 19:4). The way how this word is used portrays a picture of a habitual or a usual practice of God in carrying His people. In light of that Hamilton echoed that “Scripture presents a picture of a God who is always carrying his people.”³² Seemingly to say, God had carried Israel from Egypt and will continue to carry her even in future. This possibly suggests God’s omnipresence among Israel, His people; which gave them the assurance of their protection.

³⁰Anne Moore, 99.

³¹Arthur E. Zannoni, *Tell me your Name: Images of God in the Bible* (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training, 2000), 32.

³²Hamilton, *Exodus*, 302.

In like manner, the phrase וָאֵלַי אֶתְּבָנֶנְךָ אֶלְיָ “and brought you to Myself” (v. 4b) seemed to have some significance to the kind of relationship God intended to have with Israel. The Hebrew particle preposition (אֵלַי) has a first person common suffix, of which the vowels have been lengthened to give more emphases on “to Myself.” This actually indicates that the LORD had delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage, in order to bring her to a much closer relationship with Him; which is “to His presence.”³³ This phrase actually conveys a message of God wanting to have fellowship or an intimate relationship with Israel and not a common relationship.

Israel’s Reciprocal Responsibility

In view of Exodus 19:5, the usage of the particle conjunction הַעַתָּה “Now then” (NAS), or “Now therefore” (RSV, KJV) at the beginning of the sentence (v. 5), clearly signals a transition from “cause to effect.”³⁴ Since v. 4 described Yahweh’s redemptive activities to Israel, v. 5 states the effect of God’s accomplished work. In other words, the presence of the conjunction (Now therefore) is highlighting the fact that what follows resulted from what came before.

In the same manner, Callaham echoed that, “this is wrapped by a conditional clause אִם-שָׁמְעוּ תִשְׁמְעוּ תְּשָׁמְעוּ בְּקוֹלִי “if you will ‘listen listen” to my voice work,” which is also an idiom that implies diligent obedience, not just mental awareness of sound.”³⁵ God expected Israel to be obedient to the covenant. The construction uses of the imperfect tense תִּשְׁמְעוּ preceded by the infinitive absolute שָׁמְעוּ which are from the same verb indicate a permanent obedience.

³³Mary Sylvia C. Nwachukwu, *Creation-Covenant Scheme and Justice by Faith: A Canonical Study of the Bible* (Rome, Italy: Gregorian University Press, 2002), 129.

³⁴Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 193.

³⁵Scott M. Callaham, *Modality and the Biblical Hebrew Infinitive Absolute* (Wiesbaden: Deutsche Morgenlandsche Gesellschaft, 2010), 94.

Again, the use of the particle conjunction אם “if” indicates a *protasis* of the בְּרִית “covenant” which is followed by its apodosis “then” referring to results. There is a combination of the infinitive absolute שָׁמַע and a finite verb תִּשְׁמָעוּ which are from the same root verb שָׁמַע as indicated before, which means “to hear, to obey or to listen”³⁶ Such a combination within a *protasis* signals the emphasis to the certainty action of the verb.³⁷ It would possibly mean obedience is certainly a need to the covenant agreement. Moberly also pointed on the *protasis* in the text that it is rather defining “the requirements of the position or vocation designated by the title of the apodosis.”³⁸ That is the requirement of Israel’s the status, as a treasured possession.

Accordingly, the shift from *protasis* to apodosis is also recognized by the presence of the *vav* (וַיִּשְׁמְרֶתֶם) followed by the perfect form of the verb. Such classic function of the *vav* was observed by Waltke and O’Connor as the “proposed original function of the *weqatalti* construction.”³⁹ Closer analysis of the text shows an intensified *protasis* “if you *diligently obey* ... and *keep*” (v. 5a) followed by an expanded *apodosis* of 3x “you shall” in vv. 5b and 6.

The emphasis in this text is not put on obedience rather, but on Israel’s realization of its special identity which obedience creates.⁴⁰ Again, Israel’s obedience was a response to what God had done for them, which was their deliverance and being

³⁶Warren Baker, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament (WSOTDICT)* [Logos Bible Software] (Chattanooga, TN: AMG, 2003), 1166, s.v. שָׁמַע.

³⁷Ronald J. Williams and John C. Beckman, *William’s Hebrew Syntax* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967-2007), 85.

³⁸R. W. L. Moberly, “At the Mountain of God: Story and Theology in Exodus 32-34” (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1983), 226, 227.

³⁹Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (IBHS) (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 525.

⁴⁰Richard S. Briggs and Joel N. Lohr, *A Theological Introduction to the Pentateuch: Interpreting the Torah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2012), 69.

brought to God's presence (Exod 19:4c). This also implies that the progression of Israel as God's special possession, for the given responsibility was to be realized through obedience.

Furthermore, by appealing for diligent obedience, God was actually making an invitation for Israel to make an appropriate response to the offer of their new identity.⁴¹ The principle of making a free choice was imbedded in the appeal for obedience.⁴² The children of Israel were supposed to make the right choice through obedience, for them to enjoy the blessings and benefits of being a "special possession."⁴³ Glenny and Smallmen also mentions on the election of Israel as unalterable, but the act of unfaithfulness on the part of Israel was rather, a denial of their God given position.⁴⁴ This may possibly mean a denial of faith. This simply suggests that Israel's obedience was in actual sense, an expression of faith and loyalty to God. Such obedience was expressed by Abraham as he accepted to sacrifice his son Isaac;⁴⁵ this also was God's expectation for Israel.

Word Studies

The Term יהוה

Within the text (v. 3), there are two names used referencing to God (*'Elōhîm* and *yhwh*). Among these two names the term *yhwh* has faced some greater debates upon its meanings, therefore there is need to investigate its meaning with relations to

⁴¹Thomas W. Mann, *The Book of the Torah* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 203.

⁴²Callahan, 95.

⁴³Durham, *Exodus*, 262.

⁴⁴W. Edward Glenny and William H. Smallmen, *Mission in a New Millennium: Change and Challenges in the World Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2000), 50.

⁴⁵Jonathan Burnside, *God, Justice and Society: Aspects of Law and Legality in the Bible*, 43.

the SC. This name is known to be a special, sacred personal name for God.⁴⁶ Again the meaning of this name is derived from the Hebrew verb *hāyāh* (to be) which can be translated as “He who is” or “He who will be.”⁴⁷ That is suggesting the idea of His omnipresence.

Likewise, in ancient Hebrew times the name was considered to be so sacred to be pronounced in reading; instead of pronouncing it, the term *ʾdōnāy* was used in its place.⁴⁸ Swanson also mentions that “the frequent appearance of this name is in relation to God’s redemptive work compounded with another word to describe the character of the Lord in greater detail.”⁴⁹ Consequently, this name is considerably used in the context of the chosen people with connections to the covenant.⁵⁰ This will actually imply the appearance of it within this pericope is deliberate and also affirms the same concept that the very God, who once communicated with Moses before (Exod 3:14), was the very God who was establishing a covenant with His people.

The Term בְּרִית

God initiated a בְּרִית, “covenant” at Mt. Sinai with the children of Israel. The Hebrew term בְּרִית, seemed crucial to understand its meaning, it is to the interpretation of the text. Accordingly, the term (*b^erît*) is translated as covenant and its Greek

⁴⁶Strong, *NSEDBW*, s.v. “*yhwh*.”

⁴⁷Tremper Longman III, “Jehovah,” *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary (BIBD)* ed., (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013), 1:903.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament) (DBLH)* [Logos Bible Software] electronic ed. (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 1:3378, s.v. “*yhwh*.”

⁵⁰The name *yhwh* in the Bible appears in Gen 2:4 then it is fully express in God’s covenant with Abraham (Gen 12:8; 15:1; etc)W. E. Vine and Merrill F. Unger, White, William: *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words (CEDONTW)* [Logos Biblical Software] (Nashville TN: Thomas. Nelson, 1996) 1:140.

equivalence *διαθήκην* is used in the *LXX*, as well as in the *NT*.⁵¹ In trying to define the term (*b^eriyt*), many scholars have come-up with several meanings and definitions;⁵² this actually calls for the need of close analysis to it, in order to understand the relationship that was established between God and Israel at Sinai.

The term *b^eriyt* is a feminine noun⁵³ which is derived from the verb *bārā*, meaning “to cut,” which suggests a meal ceremony or sacrifice.⁵⁴ In like manner, a meal was offered as a symbol for the agreement made between two parties.⁵⁵ Achtemeier highlights on covenant as “a formal agreement or treaty made between two parties with each assuming some obligations.”⁵⁶ This actually suggests the formal establishment of a relationship or the inauguration of relationship between God and Israel at Mt. Sinai. The kind of relational agreement that was formed at Mt. Sinai sealed a permanent intimate relationship between God and Israel, for the accomplishment of His redemptive purposes.

⁵¹Walter A. Elwell, “covenant,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (EDT)*, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001), 300.

⁵²Ludwig Koehler, “Problems in the Study of the Language of the Old Testament,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 1 (1956): 4-7, accessed 15 February 2017, <http://search.proquest.com/openview8cda7967=1818796>; J. Barton Payne, “Covenant,” in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopaedia of the Bible (ZPEB)* ed. Merrill Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 1:1002; H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1942), 2:488; W. F. Albright, “The Hebrew Expression for ‘Making a Covenant’ in Pre-Israelite Documents,” *BASOR* 121 (February 1951): 22, accessed 21 April 2017, <http://www.asor.org/pubs/nea/index.html>.

⁵³Francis Brown, with S. R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon, With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic (BDB)*, based on the lexicon of William Gesenius (1952), s.v. “*b^erît*.”

⁵⁴D. R. W. Wood, “*b^erît*,” *New Bible Dictionary (NBD)* [Logos Biblical Software] (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996), 234.

⁵⁵Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Banner of Truth Trust, 1949), 288.

⁵⁶Achtemeier, “covenant,” *HBD*, 190.

Covenantal Benefits

There are three promises that God presents to Israel as benefits of the covenant; (a) “you shall be My treasured possessions” *s^egullāh* (v. 5b) “a kingdom of priests” *mamlēkēt kōhēniym* (v. 6a), and (c) “a holy nation” *gōy qādōš* (v. 6b). In a way, these terms seemed to be more related to each other, in as much as Israel’s special role and identity is concerned. Consequently, Wright has established a chiasmic structure which explains more on the connection between the three phrases (Exod 19:5-6):

A. then you shall be My treasured possession.

B. among all the peoples,

B.¹ for the whole the earth is Mine

A.¹ and you shall become to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.⁵⁷

Accordingly, the two phrases (*mamlēkēt kōh^anīm* “kingdom of priests” and *gōy qādōš* “holy nation”) actually stand in apposition to the treasured possession with this structure. In fact, this suggests that the two phrases (*mamlēkēt kōh^anīm* and *gōy qādōš*) are explaining more about the *s^egullāh* (special possession). In a similar way, VanZyl expresses that “the three phrases are assumed to be closely related and to develop progressively from the first to the second and to the third in the intensity of their meaning.”⁵⁸

Before analyzing these three phrases, there is another phrase which also seem to have some significance in connection to the above phrases in v. 5c; כִּי-לִי כָּל-הָאָרֶץ; “for the whole earth is mine.” This phrase (v. 5c) is a casual clause, which comes, after God’s proposal of making Israel His treasured possession. The phrase then begins with a particle conjunction כִּי “for” or “because,” which in this sense presents the

⁵⁷Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative*, 255.

⁵⁸David C. VanZyl, “Kerygmatic Perspective of the Pentateuch, Old Testament,” *Essays 5* (1992): 268, accessed 6 April 2017, co.za/document/AJA10109919_467.

reason for the past action.⁵⁹ In this manner, God had chosen Israel because the whole earth belongs to Him. Thus God declared His sovereignty over the earth. This actually reflects back to origins, His creatorship (Gen 1:1). Accordingly Moore concurs, highlighting on that the sovereignty of *Yahweh* is not limited to Israel, but it is also universally.⁶⁰

On the other hand, this phrase (“for the whole earth is mine”) actually presents God’s relationship not to Israel alone, but also to other nations.⁶¹ In the same vein of thought, Briggs and Lohr mention that “even as God makes a declaration of unique devotion to Israel, Israel is reminded that God is devoted to all people.”⁶² Thus, God was interested with the salvation all nations; hence this prompted Him to set Israel apart as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, the sake of spreading the good news to other nations. This actual entails that the covenant establishment was God’s means through which other nations were to have the knowledge of God. Accordingly, these terms (“*s^egullāh*, *mamlēkēt kōh^anīm* and *gōy qādōš*”) deserve particular attention, both separately and collectively.

The Term מְלִאכָה

Particularly, the Hebrew term *s^egullāh* is related to the Akkadian terms *sakalu* “acquire property” and *skiltum* “personal property”⁶³ that is according to Harris and friends. The term has been used, twice in the Hebrew bible referring to royal

⁵⁹R. Laird Harris, Gleason I. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Workbook of the Old Testament (TWOT)* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1980), s.v. “*ki*.”

⁶⁰Anne Moore, *Moving Beyond Symbol and Myth: Understanding the Kingship of God* (Washington DC: Peter Land, 2000), 100.

⁶¹Fretheim, *The Pentateuch: Interpreting the Biblical Texts*, 203.

⁶²Briggs and Lohr, 70.

⁶³R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWBOT)* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), , 617, “*למל*”.

possession.⁶⁴ This word *s^egullāh*, is an absolute feminine singular noun. Similarly, the LXX has translated this word as *λαὸς περιούσιος*, with the same meaning as “special possession or a people belonging to God.”⁶⁵ In the same vein of thought Wilson presents the meaning of this Hebrew term (*s^egullāh*) as property, wealth, studiously preserved and something exceedingly prized.⁶⁶ In a way, this may simply suggest God wanted to make Israel his special possession.

Consequently, the term *s^egullāh* appears for the first time in the Hebrew Bible in this text (Exod 19:5).⁶⁷ The appearance of this term for the first time possibly may also pose a notion of the uniqueness of Israel’s new identity. This term was actually used in the secular ancient Hebrew times to refer to the king’s royal property or possession that designates his authority.⁶⁸ Consequently, this word *s^egullāh* is closely attached to the prepositional phrase which follows it, “from among all peoples” (v. 5b). This actually signifies Israel’s relationship to God was more than a general possession, but “a personal and precious possession which Jehovah had chosen for

⁶⁴In 1Chr 29: 3 and Ecc 2:6-8 it points to royal property. M. Silver, *Prophets and Markets: the Economy of Ancient Israel* (Boston, London: Kluwer Nijhoff, 1983), 72. Concerning Solomon’s *s^egullāh*, Holton have this to say; “What might have been in Solomon’s *segulah*? An exquisite vial of select and fragrant ointment... a tapestry of rare cloth wrought with intricate needlework... a breathtaking work of sculpted ivory... a sword wrested from the enemy on some distant battlefield, and stained with the king’s own blood... a jewel-encrusted vessel of gold unsurpassed in its workmanship... a priceless pearl from the depths of some foreign sea... rare and costly stones each of unique cut and colour... a ring of fine gold with a jewel that to look upon, it seems the luster of light is actually captive within it... We have no way of knowing what was in the actual *segulah*; it would no doubt far eclipse this description, but we just want to give ourselves an idea of what a *segulah* was like.” Allan Holton, “*s^egullāh*, God’s Special Treasure” October 3, 2011, *Independent*, assessed March, 25, 2017, <https://godspeculartreasurer.worlpress.com>.

⁶⁵Willem A. VanGemeren, “*s^egullāh*,” *Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (DOTTE)*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 3:224-225.

⁶⁶William Wilson, “Peculiar” *Old Testament Word Studies (OTWS)* (CA: Kregel, 1978), 305.

⁶⁷Bruckner, *Exodus*, 2:173.

⁶⁸Ellezer Schwald, *The Philosophy of the Bible as the Foundation of the Jewish Culture*, translated by Leonard Levin (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2008), 10.

Himself as His costly possession.”⁶⁹ Sharing the same vein of thought Alexander and Baker express that, “this means Israel would occupy a position of special value as well as special relationship with God.”⁷⁰ In other words the term specifies Israel’s uniqueness with relations to God and to other nations.

Similarly in v. 5c, God reveals Himself as the sovereign ruler of the whole earth (“for all the earth is Mine”). All the nations of the earth belong to God, but Israel was then to occupy a special position of responsibility for God’s cause. Which may imply God’s intention for choosing Israel was not solemnly for Israel alone, but for all the people. Wright echoes that “The *s^egullāh* was a status, but her role or her functions are explained further in v. 6.”⁷¹ On the same note, the new status of Israel, in a way presents the function of this SC; thus to set Israel apart for God’s purpose.

The Phrase מַמְלֶכֶת כֹּהֲנִים

The phrase *mamlēkēt kōh^anīm* in v. 6 has two words of which the first one *mamlēkēt* is the normal form of the Hebrew term *mamlākāh* meaning “kingdom, dominion or reign.”⁷² On other incidents if this term is used as an adjective, it would mean royal.⁷³ In the same way, the Hebrew term *kōhēn*, priest and its verb also is *kāhan*, meaning “to act or to serve as priest.”⁷⁴ Therefore in the biblical Hebrew

⁶⁹Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament (COT)* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 1:384.

⁷⁰T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, eds. *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch (DOT)* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 150.

⁷¹Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative*, 256.

⁷²James Strong, *The New Strong’s Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words (NSEDWB)* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 612. s.v. “*mamlākāh*.”

⁷³Baker, *WSOTDICT*, s.v. “*mamlākāh*,”

⁷⁴Strong, “*kōhēn*” *NSEDWB*, 1:545.

sense, *kōhēn* actually designates people or someone called to mediate between God and His people.⁷⁵

Accordingly, this combination *mamlēkēt kōh^anīm* again, just like the word *s^egullā* also appears for the first time in Scripture in this particular text,⁷⁶ at the same time, it is not found again anywhere else in the OT as it is.⁷⁷ The *LXX* renders the Greek term *βασιλειον ιεράτευμα* “royal priesthood.” In other words, the uniqueness of the term also calls for closer attention in order to have a proper meaning to the term.

Meanwhile, with relations to *mamlēkēt* Dumbrell notes that “when the word stands in a genitive relationship it refers not so much to domain which is ruled but to the office of kingship itself or to the function or worth of the office.”⁷⁸ At the same time the use of *kōhēn* (priest) in v. 6 has broader a meanings.⁷⁹ Some interpretational difficulties are caused on this phrase (*mamlēkēt kōh^anīm*) due to lack of some OT references.⁸⁰

Consequently, Longman III and Garland made some submissions of four potential Hebrew renderings on these words (*mamlēkēt kōh^anīm*);

- (1) *mamlēkēt* as an absolute in apposition to *kōhēn*, viz., “kings, ie., priests”;
- (2) *mamlēkēt* as a construct with the *nomen regens* expressing an attribute of the *nomen rectum*, “royal priesthood”;
- (3) *mamlēkēt* as a construct with the

⁷⁵VanGemenen, “*kōhēn*” *DOTTE*, 2:600.

⁷⁶R. Alan Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary (IC)* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1973), 2:145.

⁷⁷Bruckner, 173.

⁷⁸Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel*, 86.

⁷⁹In the ANE the term was used not only with reference to the Israelite priests, but even those who served other gods. But the basic meaning renders to someone giving serves to the deity in worship. Paul J. Achtemeier, “Priests” *Harper’s Bible Dictionary (HBD)* (Harper & Row, 1985), 821-821. See also, G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren and Heinz-Josef Fabry, “*kōhēn*” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament (TDOT)* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 7:60-65.

⁸⁰J. Robert Vannoy, *Covenant Renewal at Gilgal: A Study of 1Samuel 11:14-12:25* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1978), 76.

opposite term being the *nomen regens*, “priestly kingdom” or (4) an unexpressed “and” must be read here; kings (and) priests.⁸¹

Accordingly, making an analysis of the text, the emphasis is more on the whole nation rather, than on the individual. At the same time, the way the phrase (*mamlēkēt kōh^anîm*) has been expressed is more on the whole nation of Israel.⁸² Similarly, the term kingdom is more of a royal domain.⁸³ With such, this may imply “kingdom of priests” or “royal priesthood” seems to gain much favour, for it is more constant to the context. At the same time, the idea goes along with the one in Isaiah 61:6; “But you will be called the priests of the LORD.” In line with this reason McClain argues that;

This is to be no ordinary kingdom where men will rule upon earth in their own right, but rather a kingdom 'unto me,' that is, unto Jehovah. In other words, whatever else its characteristics may be, it is to be, first of all, God's kingdom.⁸⁴

In like manner Dunnam posits that, “The Israelites were to live entirely to serve God; as *priests* they were to bear the responsibility of mediating God’s grace to other nations of the earth.”⁸⁵ Similarly, Israel’s role was not of worldly political control; such has been suggested by Goldingay,⁸⁶ but for the honour of God. God had chosen Israel as a nation and set it apart, just in a similar way priests were consecrated for the

⁸¹Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, eds., *Genesis-Leviticus: The Expositor's Bible Commentary (EBC)* (Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan, 2008), 1:474,475.

⁸²Frank A. Gaebelin, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary (EBC)* ed. (Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan, 1990), 417. Charles A. Briggs, *Messianic prophecy: The Prediction of the Fulfilment of Redemption through the Messiah* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1891), 1:102.

⁸³Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel*, 38.

⁸⁴David McClain, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis: Historical and Literary Approaches* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 61.

⁸⁵Maxie Dunnam and Lloyd J. Ogilvie, *The Preacher's Commentary Series*, vol. 2: *Exodus*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 219.

⁸⁶“Israel now became a political entity with a palace in the historical books.” John Goldingay, *Key Questions about the Christian Faith: Old Testament Answers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Barozos Press, 2010), 80.

duties of worship.⁸⁷ Israel was to bring God’s knowledge to all nations and the ultimate purpose was for all nations to be in covenant with the God of Israel.⁸⁸ This actual point out that Israel’s appointed position was for her to be God’s instrument in reaching out to other nations.

The Phrase וְגוֹי קָדוֹשׁ

Accordingly, another phrase of importance is “Holy Nation” “*gôy qāḏôš*,” here the notion of holiness is highlighted. Youngblood states that “The Hebrew word for *qāḏôš* “holy” denotes that which is “sanctified” or “set apart” for divine service.”⁸⁹ In the same vein of thought, it depicts a thing or someone who is inherently sacred,⁹⁰ or possessing some essential divine attributes which differs from a fallen human being.⁹¹ This would suggest moral uprightness which is derived from God. The *LXX* utilized the Greek word ἅγιος in place of the Hebrew term *qāḏôš*.

In like manner Douglas and Tenney add that, “In the OT the adjective *holy* is a distinctly religious term and is used exclusively in relation to God. It may refer either

⁸⁷Nwachukwu, 132, The Priest’s responsibility was to intercede on behalf the people in order to reconcile them with God. At the same time the priest was supposed to live a consecrated live in harmony with the serves he would render to God. See. J. B. Torrance, *Trinity and Transformation: J. B. Torrance’s Vision of Worship, Mission and Society*, ed., Todd Speidell (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 217.

⁸⁸Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative*, 258.

⁸⁹Ronald F. Youngblood, F. F. Bruce, and R. K. Harrison, *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary (NNIBD)* eds. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1995). The Holiness of Jehovah is the originating cause of the creation of a holy people. Within the Sinaitic narrative (Ex 19-Num 10), a good section of (Lev 18-27) is devoted for this objective. John Peter Lange, Philip Schaff and Charles M Mead, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Exodus* (WA Logos Research Systems 2000), 68.

⁹⁰Baker, *WSOTDIT*, 976, s.v. “*qāḏôš*.”

⁹¹Swanson, *BDLH*, 7705, s.v. “*qāḏôš*.”

to God Himself or to what has been sanctified by him.”⁹² This suggests that biblical holiness has something to do in relations with God.

Accordingly, the word *gôy* is translated as nation, people or country. The term mainly *gôy* is used with reference to other nations and not commonly to Israel; but for Israel in particular, the word “.am” is commonly used (Deut 7:6).⁹³ However, the term is used in Genesis 12:2 and Genesis 18:18 in a plural form as *gôyim gāḏôl*, referencing to Abraham’s descendants.⁹⁴ This may pose that the use of it in the SC could probably mean a fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant, but now as a *gôy qāḏôš* (holy nation).

Consequently, the occurrence of the *holem wav* denotes that the word (*gôy qāḏôš*) is used as an attribute adjective; describing more about *s^egullāh* “treasured possession” (God’s people).⁹⁵ This actually may pose that God had set Israel apart for His divine purpose; therefore they were expected to live a holy life. In the OT holiness is more associated with the priests and their roles.⁹⁶ Israel was called to emulate God’s holiness through embracing God’s moral values which were stipulated

⁹²The word holy was found on the turban of the high priest, to designate his responsibilities which were associated with the tabernacle. J. D. Douglas and Merrill C. Tenney, “Holiness,” *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary (ZIBD)*, ed. rev. Moises Silva (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 615.

⁹³The term’s emphasis is relatively more on a paternal relationship. Strong, “.am,” *NSEDBW*, 1:76-77.

⁹⁴Peter Enns, *Exodus: The NIV Application Commentary (NIVAC)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 389.

⁹⁵Harmilton, *Exodus*, 294.

⁹⁶David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary (ABD)* (NY: Doubleday, 1996), 3:237.

in the covenant.⁹⁷ Israel's holiness was to be derived from God who elected them (Lev 19:2; 20:7),⁹⁸ since holiness cannot be a self generated attribute.

There is one common factor from the three covenantal outcomes mentioned in (Ex 19:5-6); that is the idea of Israel being set apart from any other surrounding nations. Each term articulates this notion, as well as the phrase of exclusion "from among all people" (v. 5b), drive this point home. Alexander and Baker concur with this fact.⁹⁹ This would mean Israel was supposed to live a different life style from any other, for the purposes of attracting all people to God. In the same vein of thought Wells states that, "The whole focal point of *Yahweh's* speech is a new description of Israel's function and character."¹⁰⁰

In summary; the establishment of the SC was meant to set Israel apart and take a priestly role of mediating between God and humanity; at the same time living an exemplary holy life. Likewise, the covenant functioned to set Israel for mission and for the work of redemption for the whole human race.

Figures of Speech

The expressions which can be noted are from God's introductory speech to Moses. Each speech considerably begins with "this is what you shall say" (Exod 19:3 and 20:22).¹⁰¹ In like manner, the use of first and second person pronouns, "I" and

⁹⁷James D. Newsame, *Exodus: Interpretation Bible Studies (IBS)* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 69.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹"The primary concern of the Sinaitic covenant is to; (i) clarify the type of nation that Yahweh intends Israel to be, (ii) set Israel apart to function as "a light to the nations," and (iii) conform Israel after God's Holy character (Lev 19:2) since He is their God. Israel's election as Yahweh's "special treasure" was a means to a much greater end." Alexander and Baker, *IDOTP*, 150.

¹⁰⁰Wells, *God's Holy People: A Theme in the Biblical Theology*, 268.

¹⁰¹Alexander, 65.

“you” entails a direct speech kind of communication between *Yahweh* and Israel, of which is a quite common phenomenon of all biblical narratives.¹⁰²

Likewise, the text repeatedly uses “you” in v. 4 and “to me” in v. 5; in the same way, they are emphatic in nature. This actually presents the kind of relationship which God was proposing to Israel, which is not less than a personal relationship (*s^egullāh*).¹⁰³ Such emphasis can also be realized in proclamation of the Decalogue.

Similarly, the pronoun “you” is in masculine “plural” which entails that the message was being addressed the whole group of the children of Israel. Briggs and Lohr in this consideration states that “there is less emphasis on the privileged communication between *Yahweh* and Moses, and more on that between God and his whole people.”¹⁰⁴ This actual reflected of that, God was interested with giving the whole nation of Israel a responsibility.

Literary Context

The book of Exodus seemed to be divided into major parts: first the history of deliverance from Egypt of God’s children, Israel, up to Mt. Sinai (Exod 1-18). Second to that is the story of God’s revelation (Exod 19- 40). In the same vein, the second part can also be divided into two sub-parts; which are the establishment of the covenant (Exod 19-24: 11) and the establishment of the Tabernacle (Exod 24:12- 40: 23). Further, the text of study seemed to summarize the whole scenario of events within the book of Exodus, even beyond; which may suggest it as the keynote of the book.

¹⁰²Briggs and Lohr, 265.

¹⁰³Wells, *God’s Holy People: A Theme in the Biblical Theology*, 55.

¹⁰⁴Briggs and Lohr, 68.

God took the initiative to establish a covenantal relationship while they were camping in the wilderness at the foot of Mt. Sinai. Israelites had experienced God's supreme providences, through the unusual crossing of the Red Sea (Exod 14), the transformation of bitter waters of Marah (Exod 15:22-25), the supply of Manna in the wilderness of Sin (Exod 16), the gashing out of the water from the Rock in Rephidim (Exod 17:1-7), and deliverance from the Amalekites (Exod 17:8-16). Each of the experiences highlighted here clearly reveals God's supremacy.

The covenant announcement at Sinai in Exodus 19:3-6 sets the tone of chapter 19, thus, making this text the theme verses of the whole chapter as suggested by William Dumbrell.¹⁰⁵ This text reflects on significant historical facts regarding God's gracious experiences to the Israelites. It also provides important insights about the future well being of the Israel. In order to understand this dual significance, the succeeding two sections explored both the immediate and the larger contexts of the text.

Broader Context

Exodus 19 marks the onset of the Sinai narrative, (Exod 19:1–Num10:10).¹⁰⁶ Outside this literary unit are insights that help in understanding the text under study. Some evidence from Exodus 2:24; 6:2-4 clearly indicates that deliverance of Israel from bondage was based on Abrahamic covenant (Gen 12; 15; and 17). God announces His intention to redeem the Israelites in Exodus 6:6-9 by using His title "I am the LORD" to punctuate the seven promises of deliverance.

¹⁰⁵Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 84.

¹⁰⁶David, A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi (LSOT)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1999), 72-73.

Hamilton notes seven “I will” promises of God that summarize God’s covenantal intention in Exodus 6:6-8 which he classified into three categories; *redemption* (3 times in v. 6), *adoption* (2 times in v. 7), and *settlement* (2 times in v. 8). God declares His name “I am the LORD” at both the opening in v. 6 and the closing in v. 8.¹⁰⁷ It seems upon fulfilment of the first three promises that concerned “redemption,” the LORD sought to fulfil the promises about “adoption” through the SC. Following this, He will then pursue their “settlement” towards their needed “rest.” This suggests the idea of continuity from the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 12; 15 & 17.

Besides this historical reference within the Pentateuch, Moses repeats the same covenant in Deuteronomy 4:44-29:1 at Moab, as a reminder of the first one at Sinai. This reference is regarded as Moses’ second covenant (Deut 29:1). The general word for law תּוֹרָה “*Torah*” in the OT does not appear in Exodus 19 & 20. It is used in Deuteronomy 4:44 as a collective term with reference to the complete covenant obligation. Walton shares the same line of thinking with Eichrodt who views the covenant as the hub of OT theology despite its rare usage in wisdom literature.¹⁰⁸

Since there are several covenants referred to, in the OT, Robertson acknowledges their differences, but also draw a thematic unity of them from Adam to Christ, as “organically and progressively related to one another towards God’s redemptive purposes.” Robertson further claims that “Jesus Christ is the mediator of each covenantal administration.”¹⁰⁹ This view appears to merge both the Sinaitic and

¹⁰⁷Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 156.

¹⁰⁸John H. Walton, *Covenant: God’s Purpose, God’s Plan* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 149.

¹⁰⁹O. Palmer, Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980), 50-51, 185.

the new covenants. In the NT, the use of διαθήκη for *b'êrît* points more to a covenant or legal compact than a “treaty” which is *syntheses*. This is why Philo prefers to use, *syntheke* for “treaty,” and reserved διαθήκη for the divine “testament.”¹¹⁰

Immediate Context

Within the narrative sequence of Sinai (Exod 19-34), God presented two significant and complementing divine-human relational realities: the covenant (Exod 19-24), and worship in Exodus 25-31. Upon their arrival and settling at Sinai (Exod 19:1-2), God offers His covenant proposal through Moses’ mediation to the children of Israel (Exod 19:3-6) who in response, accepts it and this agreement was sealed with blood (Exod 19:7-8; 24:7, 8).

In the same manner, God links the covenant idea with His identity, and the fact of gracious deliverance already accomplished; “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Exod 20:2). First, He delivered them from slavery (Exod 5-12). Second, He delivered them from the Red Sea that became their gateway to freedom (Exod 13:17-14:31). Third, He delivered them from starvation and thirsty in the desert prior to Sinai destination (Exod 15:22–17:7). All these acts of deliverance on the part of God, fulfils His gracious promise announced in Exodus 3:7-12; 6:6-8.

From Exodus 19:9-15, consecration preliminaries for the over-whelming presence of God (Exod 19:16-25) are done. According to Dumbrell, the thunders, lightings, thick clouds, earthquake, and trumpet blasts that accompanied God’s presence, “signified the interests and importance of Exodus 19:3-6.”¹¹¹In such an

¹¹⁰Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (TDNT)*, trans, Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), “διαθήκην.”

¹¹¹Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 80.

awful setting God pronounced the Decalogue (Exod 20; 2), and the covenant code (Exod 21-23). Both are punctuated by the *imperfect* לֹא “lo” signifying a “categorical permanent prohibition of binding validity for the present and the future.”¹¹² The SC was made with the elected people such that the law was not a means to establish a relationship with God, but a gift to an already redeemed community. The covenant was then ratified in Exodus 24:1-8.

Within the worship section of the covenant (Exod 25-31), are the seven speeches of the LORD (25:1; 30:11; 30:17; 30:22; 30:34; 31:1; and 31:12). It seems the Sabbath Commandment plays a significant role among the covenant stipulations and the sanctuary due to its strategic and timely references to it. For example, God crowns the instructions for Sanctuary building with the Sabbath message (Exod 31:12-17). The sequence is deterred through apostasy on the part of the Israelites (Exod 32-34), and it is renewed through Moses’ mediation based on the Abrahamic covenant (Exod 32:13). That led Moses to climb Mt. Sinai for another period of forty days (Exod 34).

In addition, the Sabbath message punctuates the onset of Sanctuary building construction (Exod 35:1-3). This may suggest unity of purpose between the Sabbath and the Sanctuary message which occupies a large space within the SC narrative. The link is strengthened if the Sabbath Commandment is viewed as the heart of the covenant, since it occupies the centre of the Decalogue which is placed within the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place of the Sanctuary. Both the Sabbath and the Sanctuary are emblems of sanctification (Exod 31:12-13). Both are identified with the Holy presence of the LORD and both sharing space and time with humanity (Gen 2:1-3; Exod 40:34-38).

¹¹²Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 197.

From the immediate context of the SC, there are clear reasons why God established His covenantal relationship with the Israelites; (i) reminder of gracious deliverance from bondage, (ii) fellowship with each other (Exod 23:12) and with God from His holy presence in the Sanctuary (Exod 25:8), (iii) sanctification of God's elected children (Exod 31:13), and (iv) assurance of ultimate rest through weekly Sabbath observance.

Inter-Textual Studies

There are several covenantal relationship series of God and His people within which the SC exists. Amongst these series are two major explicitly spelt covenants before the Sinaitic; the Noahic (Gen 9:8-17) and the Abrahamic (Gen 12; 15; 17) as it has been reflected in chapter two. There are also two covenants after it; the Davidic (2 Sam 7 and Jer 33:19-22), and the new covenant (Jer 31:31-34; Heb 8:7-13). This will translate into three major covenants within the Pentateuch and two covenants in the remaining entirety of both the OT and the NT. At the same time, not forgetting the two implied Adamic covenants, as highlighted in chapter two; one before the fall (Gen 2:15-17) and the post-fall covenant (Gen 3:14-19).

From a closer textual analysis, the SC seemed to have been built on the shoulders of the Abrahamic covenant (Exod 2:24; 3:16, 17; 6:2-8; Ps 105:8-12, 42-45; 106:45). God extended the promises made to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3), to the advantage of the SC (Exod 19:5-6). The theme of "holy nation" and "sense of mission" recurs in both covenants. This would suggest that the SC was a reinforcement of the relationship that already existed through Abraham. In support Dumbrell echoes that

“It is possible that Exodus 19:5 points to Exodus 3:13-15 and 6:5. A continuity of the patriarchal covenant is involved.”¹¹³

In like manner, at the inauguration of the Davidic covenant the past deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage is presented (2 Sam 7:6, 23). In addition, David gave warning to his son Solomon regarding the significance of the Mosaic Law (1 Kgs 2:3-4). At the same time Robertson has this to say, “The new covenant that was promised by Israel’s prophets (Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 37:24-26) represents the consummate fulfilment of the earlier covenants.”¹¹⁴ This may actually convey a message of the unity of purpose for the covenants. Although there are some variances between these covenantal relationships, there are also similarities that unite them. Robertson noticed that the unity of all covenants converges on the theme of redemption.¹¹⁵

Consequently, Israel’s election is seen to be emphasized throughout the OT. The term *s^egullāh* is found six times (Exod 19:5, Deut 7:6, 7; 14:2; 26:18; Mal 3:17 and Ps 135:4) in the OT, referencing to Israel’s election.¹¹⁶ Israel’s choice was not on their merit it was out of God’s graciousness and love (Deut 7:6, 7). Again, Psalm 135:4 speaks about Israel as a special people chosen by God. The style of parallelism used in Exodus 19:3b of mentioning Jacob and then Israel is also repeated here.¹¹⁷ At the same time Whitherup asserts this;

In his great love God intended the salvation of the human race. In preparation for this, in a special undertaking, he chose for himself a people to whom he would entrust his promises. With the race of Israel (Exod 24:8) he acquired a

¹¹³Dumbrell, *Faith of Israel*, 37.

¹¹⁴Robertson, 42.

¹¹⁵Ibid., 61.

¹¹⁶Nwachukwu, 131.

¹¹⁷John. L. Langston III, *Not far from the Dirt: A voiding Irrelevance in the Sight of the Holy God* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2007), 120.

people for himself, and to them he revealed himself in words and deeds, as the one true God.¹¹⁸

The idea of Priesthood or kingdom of priests runs throughout the biblical account. Likewise, God chose Aaron and his descendants for them to mediate for Israel (Num 8:14). Barth and Hannelotte has this to say, “God separated the priests or set them apart (Num 8:14), chose them (6:5, 8), and consecrated them, as he did Israel as a whole.”¹¹⁹ Banvick in the same vein of thought mentions of Israel to have represented the world before God just as the priests would do.¹²⁰ In other words, Israel was supposed to emulate the roles being portrayed by priests in fulfilling God’s mission of redemption to the human race.

Accordingly, in the NT the OT the kingdom of priests is also expressed as it pertains to all believers. Peter also uses the SC language (1 Pet 2:9) as he speaks to the Christian believers, who include all people of different nationalities¹²¹ He highlights on all the components (chosen people, royal priesthood and holy nation) which were ascribed to the children of Israel (Exod 19:3-5).¹²² Again, in the NT (Rev 1:6; 5:10) the redeemed are also called a kingdom of priests. This actually entails of the permanence of the SC as well its functioning throughout the redemption experience of God’s people, which is its goal.

¹¹⁸Ronald D. Whitherup, *The Word of God at Vatican 11: Exploring Dei Verbum* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014), 41.

¹¹⁹Karl Barth and Reiffen Hannelotte, *The Gottingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 153; G. J. Wenham, *Leviticus* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1979), 24.

¹²⁰J. H. Banvick, *Between the Beginning and the End: A Radical Kingdom Vision* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2014), 62.

¹²¹Mike Shreve, *Who AM I?* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2010), 169.

¹²²Jeannine K. Brown, Caris M. Dahl, and Wyndy Corbin, *Becoming Whole and Holy: An Integrative Conversation about Christian Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), 78.

The idea of holiness is highlighted before as “setting apart” for divine purposes. They are several things which are described in scriptures to have been set apart. Just to mention a few, time (“Sabbath”, Exod 20:8; Lev 23:3), Tabernacle utensils (Exod 30:25-27), individuals (Jer 1:5; 1Sam 7:1), in a similar way Levites were also set apart (Exod 19:22; 28:41; Lev 6:18, 27; 8:30; Num 6:11, 2 Chr 5:11, etc) and many other things were set apart. All that was set apart had a distinctive duty, function or purpose to accomplish the divine purposes.¹²³

In like manner, everything that God had made holy or set apart, was to be treated different (e.g. the oil and perfume of the tabernacle [Exod 30:31, 32; 37]); no human being was allowed to make anything similar to that. Each set aside thing had its own specific standards, which defines its identity. Such, was God’s expectation for His people Israel whom He had chosen for Himself. Israel was expected to live a holy life, in a manner that had been prescribed also to the priests.¹²⁴ The SC gives the details of how priests were supposed to live a sanctified life. In a similar way, the whole Israelite nation was to emulate a holy life for the cause of the redemption of every other nation.

The idea of being chosen does not denote utter isolation. Wright argues that; “the particularity of Israel here is intended to serve the universality of God’s interest in the world, Israel’s election serves God’s mission.”¹²⁵ The implication is that Israel’s being chosen as a unique possession was for the benefit of all people. Jesus also shares the same sentiments as He says, “for salvation comes from the Jews;”

¹²³Douglas W. Kennard, *Biblical Covenantalism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015), 264.

¹²⁴Staurt Dauerman, 33.

¹²⁵Wright, *The Mission of Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative*, 257.

(John 4:22.). He highlights on the factor of them being chosen for the redemption of all humanity.

Accordingly, the issue of holiness to the children of Israel is mentioned on several occasions. In the OT (Lev 11:44; 45; 19:2, Deut 14:2, 21; Ps 22:3; Isa 6:3; 57:15 etc) the need of holiness to God's people has been emphasized. Again in the NT, holiness is emphasized among the Christian believers (Matt 5:48). In like manner, the theme of holiness is considerably perceived as the major focus in the book of Leviticus.¹²⁶ This also suggests that God actually described to Israel what holiness was all about and how they could attain that moral uprightness, for it was dependent on their faith in God.

This attribute of holiness is accorded to God. Schreiner considers the events at Sinai to have revealed God's holiness.¹²⁷ At the same time, God is also recognized by the title "The Holy One of Israel." (2 Kgs 19:22; Ps 78:41). This poses that holiness cannot be detached from God. Similarly Thiessen states this important fact;

Holiness denotes the perfection of God in all that he is. It occupies the foremost rank among the attributes of God. It is the attribute by which God wanted to be especially known in Old Testament times (Josh 24:19; 1Sam 6: 20; Isa 40:25). It is emphasized by the bounds set about Mt. Sinai when God came down upon it.¹²⁸

The children of Israel were continually reminded of being holy just as God Himself is (Lev 19:2). Since holiness is *Yahweh's* attribute, this may probably imply God intended His character to be reflected in the lives of the Israelite nation. At the

¹²⁶Gray Harlan Hall, *Deuteronomy: The College Press NIV Commentary (TCPNIVC)* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2000), 239.

¹²⁷Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013), 35.

¹²⁸Henry C. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, rev. Vernnon D. Doerksen (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 84. "God's attribute of Holiness is central to all His other attributes. It can be understood as the modifier and descriptor of all that God is." Perry G. Downs, *Teaching for Spiritual growth: An Introduction to Christian Education* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 46.

same time if that character is portrayed, then this will attract all other nations to covenant with the true God of Israel. In essence, this mean Israel could have fulfilled her God given responsibility as a kingdom of priests; mediating between God and all other nations.

Summary

God's purposes and intention of establishing a covenant with the children of Israel at Mt. Sinai is presented in Exodus 19:3-5. Consequently, the exegetical analysis sought to unfold *Yahweh's* covenantal introductory speech to the Israelite nation, so as to draw up the function of the SC.

Accordingly, this exegetical analysis reveals that the SC was a covenant of grace and faith, not a covenant of works. This is exhibited through Israel's deliverance and also Israel's election; both happened not on merit, but rather through God's mercies and love for His people. Likewise, this chapter established the purposes of the SC; that is the reminder of gracious deliverance, protection from false worship and also the commissioning of Israel for God's redemptive purposes.

Again, this exegetical analysis clarifies on God's intentions to restore His image that has been distorted because of sin. This simply entails that the SC functions for the restoration of God's image which God had endowed on humanity at creation. This is quite evident with the nature of stipulations (the Ten Commandments) which reflects on God's true nature and character.

Another element to note is that the SC functions for Israel's election; this evident by the use of the term *s^egullāh* which reveals Israel's status and what this status calls for is explained by the two phrases (*mamlēkēt kōh^anīm* and *gōy qādōš*). Israel's status before, her missionary mandate and her life conduct are all explained in these Hebrew words.

In conclusion, evidence from this exegetical analysis draws up to this point; the SC functions to set Israel apart for God's missionary work and redemption purposes to the whole human race and not for the Israel's salvation alone. In this covenant, Israel is being commissioned as God's agent. In other words, the SC functions for redemption purposes and missionary emphasis to the whole world; this is also evident with the Abrahamic covenant.

CHAPTER 4

THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATION

This chapter discusses the theological implications of SC with regards to its function. Within this discussion, several issues are looked at as they emerge from text (Exod 19:3-6), its immediate and broader context within the Pentateuch; soteriology, Christology, ecclesiology, missiology, and eschatology.

The SC as it is introduced in Exodus 19:3-6 is one of the divine-human covenants in the Pentateuch. Walther Eichrodt holds that “the Sinaitic covenant is the unifying factor of the Old Testament and the centre of Israel’s religion.”¹ Sharing a similar vein of thought, Herbert Wolf pointed out that “this covenant together with the Abrahamic, are the major and distinct covenants due to their high theological import in the life, history, and common-wealth of God’s people in the Pentateuch.”² This may actually pose a notion of some deep theological significance within the text of study.

Soteriology

God’s gracious intervention in the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery and the salvation to all nations was the basis upon which the SC was built. This implies that SC is rooted in God’s love for saving His people as evidenced in these texts (Exod 19:4-6; 20:1-2). Dumbrell claims that “this divine act is the

¹Walther Eichrodt, “Theology of the Old Testament” *Old Testament Library*, vol. 1, translation. J. A. Baker (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1961), 25-69.

²Herbert Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 26.

theological centre of salvation in the Old Testament.”³This covenant was established with a people already redeemed and not in bondage. Actually, this means that the covenant was not intended to function as a means of earning salvation but as an expression of love. In line with that, Garr echoes that “salvation is purely a gift of God, not a reward for human behaviour. Salvation is solely a divine initiative which is generated from God’s sovereignty.”⁴

The children of Israel had not done anything good for God to deliver them and establish a covenant with them, but it was God’s gracious initiative. In line with this understanding, it should be noted that the SC was not a “new dispensation” as some schools of thought propose, instead recons the SC as it is a perpetuation of the Abrahamic covenant (Exod 2:24; 6:2-8) as Essex affirm and generally understands it as a covenant of grace and faith.⁵

A proper understanding of this background is important in order to clarifying some theological misconceptions regarding the function of the SC. This covenant contains some laws and obligations which were to be observed, of which some perceives it as a “new dispensation” of salvation by works of the Law.⁶ Instead, the law was given to a people who had been already redeemed or saved. In-fact, the covenant and all its stipulations were an expression of God’s grace and mercy.⁷ This

³Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 80-81.

⁴John D. Darr, *Christian Fruit: Jewish Root Theology of Hebraic Christian Restoration* (Atlanta, GA: Golden Key Press, 2015), 145.

⁵“The redemptive grace of God in the highest and furthest reaches of its realization is the unfolding of the promises given to Abraham and therefore the unfolding of the Abrahamic Covenant.” Keith Essex, “The Abrahamic Covenant” *The Master’s Seminary Journal*, 192 TMSJ (1999): 191-212, accessed 19 March 2017, <http://www.galaxie.com/article/tmsj10-2-03>.

⁶Issac Watts, David Jinnings, and Philip Doddridge, *The Works of the Reverend and Learned Isaac Watts*, vol 4 (New York: AMS Press, 1971), 22; Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), 61, 62.

⁷“Fourteenth Year” [Exod 19:3] *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)*, rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol Washington DC: 1976-1978), 1:594.

possibly highlights that salvation comes first and then it facilitates obedience to the law than vice versa.

Accordingly, Israel was supposed to obey, as a redeemed people God, not for them to be saved.⁸ Also Hill and Walton concurs and say, “Israel’s covenantal obedience was but a response of gratitude to the grace of God, not a burdensome duty by which they earned or merited God’s favour and redemption.”⁹ This actual mean that the covenant also functions to reveal to Israel as an already saved people, that they were to live a sanctified life; thus through obedience. At the same time, obedience is the expression of genuine faith, as it has been expressed in the text in Hebrews (“And without faith it is impossible to please Him” [Heb 11:6]).

Instead, sanctification has to do with the daily transformation of character in alignment to the will of God.¹⁰ Such transformation can only be exhibited through obedience to the law. That is why in Jeremiah the LORD says, “I will put My law within them, and on their hearts I will write it” (Jer 31:33). This also has been highlighted in Deut 30: 6 and even in NT (Heb 10:16); suggesting that salvation leads to obedience to the precepts of God which are imputed in the heart on a believer through faith. In a way, Israel was supposed to continuously live in the presence of God, demonstrating to the world His saving grace and character.

Similarly, Hill and Walton highlighted on the Decalogue as an expression of eternal perfect character of God which constitutes the basic principles to govern the

⁸“The precepts of the Decalogue are adapted to all mankind, and they were given the instruction and the government of all. Ten precepts, brief, comprehensive, and authoritative, cover the whole duty of man to God, and to all his fellow man; and all based upon the great fundamental principle of love.” Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 305.

⁹Andrew F. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 119.

¹⁰“True sanctification is a daily work, continuing as long as life shall last.” Frank Philips, *A Justified Walk* (Brushton, NY: Teach Services, 1998), 143; E. G. White, *Reflecting Christ* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2010) 94.

life of faith.¹¹ In other words, the SC functions to present God's eternal character which He intended His redeemed people to emulate in their life. In like manner, Jesus also informed His disciples about the believer's expression of love to Him ("If you love me keep my Commandments" [John 14:15]). This mean to keeping the moral law is not actually a means of earning salvation, but an acknowledgement of the relationship already in existence. Likewise, the redeemed people are supposed to express their love and total dependence to the redeemer.¹² Paul the apostle also wrote in the same vein expressing that "Love is the fulfilment of the law" (Rom 13:1).

However, some perceived all these laws as Israel's means of earning salvation.¹³ In contrast to this thought Darr highlights on the law as God's sign and expression of His grace and love, but not as means earning salvation.¹⁴ Veloso in the same view say that, "the Law was both the revelation of God's will and grace, and also the revelation of His holiness. It represented the character of God, His righteousness, perfection, goodness and truth."¹⁵ Thus defining the idea of living a holy life, that is much emphasized in the whole Scripture (Lev 11:44; 19:2 20:26; 1Pet 1:16), as God's expectation for His people.

¹¹Hill and Walton, 119; Isaiah Timothy, *Godly Life Practical: The Utmost Help for the Lowest* (Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2009), 88.

¹²Gulley, *God as Trinity*, 344.

¹³Michael Scott Horton, *Covenant and Salvation: Union with Christ* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 193; Gordon Wenham, *Law and Legal System in the Old Testament* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1978), 27.

¹⁴Darr, 146.

¹⁵Mario Veloso, "The Law of God" in *The Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, vol. 12, by Raoul Dederen, Nancy J. Vyhmeister, and George W. Reid eds. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 457-492. "The law as a revelation of God's will, the transcript of His character, must forever endure "as a faithful witness in heaven." White, *The Great Controversy* (Ontario, Canada: Pacific Press, 1950), 434. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013), 733.

Apart from that, the Sanctuary system with its services occupies the heart of the SC. It is a lesson study towards salvation of humanity. Thus the ordinances, the priestly roles and all daily Sanctuary practices, they were pointing to the eternal salvation of mankind. They were a means through which the children of Israel could learn about their Saviour, faith forgiveness, justification and sanctification; even Christians can even learn today.¹⁶ It actually implies that the gospel was proclaimed in the SC, as much as it is being proclaimed in the new covenant today. In like manner, Ball pointed out that salvation has ever been the same from the entrance of sin;¹⁷ that is through Christ, the only Saviour of humankind. This leads us to the next section in which Christ's role towards human salvation is clarified.

Christology

The Sanctuary message is rooted within the SC (Exod 25-40). The ceremonial laws and sacrificial practices were, but symbolically pointing to Christ's sacrifice as the atoning Saviour for the sins of human race (Luke 22:20). Sturges pointed on the SC sanctuary services as "connecting links whereby people of Old Testament times could look forward by faith to the coming of the Messiah."¹⁸

Accordingly, the children of Israel were chosen to become a kingdom of priests, in order to minister on behalf of God to other nations. Christ's ministry as a High Priest is also emphasized in several texts (Heb 5:5; 7:26; 8:1; 9:11 and many others). On the same note Rodriguez highlights that, "An understanding of the Sanctuary

¹⁶Thomas Hale and Stephen Thorson, *Applied Old Testament Bible Commentary* (Great Britain: David & Cook, 2007), 61. See, Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 142.

¹⁷Bryan W. Ball, *The English Connection: The Puritan Roots of Seventh-day Adventist Belief* (Cambridge, UK: The Luther worth Press, 2014), 131.

¹⁸Hubert F. Sturges, *More than a Promise: The Everlasting Covenant as Presented* (Ringgold, GA: Teach Services, 2006), 212.

typological significance is paramount towards an appreciation of Christ's high priestly ministry."¹⁹ In a way, it actually suggest that what Israel was set to accomplish as a kingdom of priests and the priestly role of the Levites, were but a replica of Christ's ministry. With reflections to the text (Exod 19:5-6) Enns points out that, all what Israel was supposed to achieve was fulfilled in Christ.²⁰

Consequently in the OT, Christ's salvific role was prefigured in the Sanctuary and the sacrificial system. At the same Christ's death considerably offers the blood for the new covenant (Luke 22:20). David Bird in the same vein of thought reflects on the SC by mentioning some profound elements;

The ministry before Christ's death involves promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision and the Jewish sanctuary services. These pointed forward to Christ and were for that time adequate, through the help God's Spirit, to enable sincere people to have faith in the promised Messiah through whom they could have forgiveness and eternal salvation.²¹

Accordingly, Ellen G. White states that "The types and the shadows of the sacrificial service, with the prophecies, gave Israel a veiled, indistinct view of the grace and mercy to be brought to the world by the revelation of Christ."²² Therefore in actual sense, the SC was but a summary of Christ's redemptive work on behalf of sinners. Making an analysis from the Pauline writings (Gal 3:24) Horton mentions the SC as the school master, pointing to Christ.²³ This possibly mean, the SC rituals were

¹⁹Angel Manuel Rodriguez, ed, "The Sanctuary" in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, vol. 12, 2000, 375-417.

²⁰Enns, 171.

²¹David Bird, *The Forgotten Jesus and the Sanctuary Song* (MD: Xulon Press, 2005), 33; R. Laird Harris, ed., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, (TWOT)* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 1:452-53.

²²Ellen G. White, *God's Amazing Grace*, 15.

²³Michael Horton, *Introducing The Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), 38.

a lesson book through which the Israelites learn about Christ and His work of redemption.

More to that, Moses was the mediator of the Sinai covenant; Jesus Christ is the Mediator of the new covenant (Heb 9:15). As much as Jesus He was sent by the Father to reconcile man back to God; He is also the surety of man's salvation.²⁴ Again Moses' mediation for Israel, the mediation of priests and also Israel's mediation to the whole world in the SC were symbolic to Christ's mediation for the whole human race. Therefore, Christ fulfils God's whole purpose of reconciling all humanity to Himself. In like manner, the Christian believers are supposed to play their role as witnesses for Christ.

Ecclesiology

At Sinai, God established a community of believers (holy nation [v. 6]) whose objective task was to reflect His character and advance His kingdom to other nations.²⁵ This would possibly mean that God established and commissioned His church at Sinai. In a way, the church "is certainly made up of humans, but it was not designed by humans."²⁶ Such was the nature of Israel. God established them as His own special people for worship. Likewise, Israel was called to become a kingdom of priests; just like priests were designated to lead out in worship. This simply means that the SC was initiated for the purposes of restoring true worship.

²⁴Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (NJ: P& R, 1997), 342.

²⁵Yahweh revealed holiness to be his chief attribute (Exod. 15:11; 1 Sam. 2:2; Isa. 6:3; cf. Rev. 4:8) and wanted his followers likewise to be holy. The command to "be holy as I am holy" (Lev. 11:44–45; cf. 1 Pet. 1:15–16) was for all Israelites, not just the priests. David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers and Astrid B. Beck, eds, *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible (EDB)* (2000), s.v. "Sinai."

²⁶D. A. Carson, "Why the Local Church is more Important than TGC, White Horse Inn, 9Marks, and Maybe even ETS", *An International Journal for Students of Theological Studies, Themelios* 40/1 (1 April 2015): 6, accessed 10 March 2017, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/themelios-40.1>.

Consequently through worship, the believers consecrate themselves to God and express God's nature, rather than self.²⁷ In essence, Israel was to be on the forefront just as priests; in leading other nations to the worship of the true God. It also implies that the SC functions to present truth and genuine worship. Since the Israelites were entangled with the false worship of Egyptian gods for quite a long time, it means their way of worshiping the true God should have been distorted; so God by establishing the SC intended to restore His true worship.

In the same way, 1Peter 2:9-10 reveals a continuation between the Christians and Israel of the OT. Thus, suggesting a unity between the church and Israel. Making a reflection on this text (1 Pet 2:9-10), Anderson points out that "like Israel, the church takes its place among nations as a people among peoples."²⁸ The Christian church did not introduce new methods in terms of worship and responsibility. The same responsibilities Israel of old had; such is true with the church in all generations.

Accordingly, one of the functions of the SC was to establish "a kingdom of priests, a Holy nation" for God (Exod 19:6). This possibly means that God's redeemed people are called first, to participate in God's holiness by believing Him and giving their Saviour all allegiance (Exod 19:5). Second, God's people were called for His service in serving people.

A Remnant People

The remnant concept is quite expressed in the Pentateuch and to a greater extent it is associated with the children of Israel.²⁹ There are several Hebrew words

²⁷Erickson, 977.

²⁸Braden P. Anderson, *Chosen Nation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 148.

²⁹W. E. Vine, "Remnant," *Vine's Concise Dictionary of the Bible (CDB)* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1980), 309.

used for the term remnant.³⁰ The term *š^e.ēriyṭ* (Gen 45:7) is a feminine noun meaning a remnant, a remainder or a residue,³¹ whereas the term *šā.ar* (Gen 7:23) is a verb meaning to remain, to spare or to be left over.³² Meyer defines this term as “what is left of a community after it undergoes a catastrophe.”³³ The survivors (considerably a small group) of the catastrophe would have survived because of God’s mercy and them being considered as faithful;³⁴ God delivers them in order to perpetuate His redemptive purposes through them.³⁵

Accordingly, Rodriguez highlights that “Israel as a corporate body was called a remnant in OT; a distinction based on religious fidelity.”³⁶ Similarly, Israel was chosen as a small nation (Deut 7:6, 7) from among many nations of the earth and had survived some catastrophes. They had survived from the great tragedy when the angel of the LORD killed all of the Egyptian first born, as well as on the Red Sea when Pharaoh and his armies perished; for He saved them so that they could perpetuate His purposes which was revealed at Sinai. Hasel highlights that, being a remnant was not by merit, but it was by God’s grace.³⁷ The same happened to Israel, their survival and their miraculous deliverance from Egypt, was through God’s favour.

³⁰The following are some of the Hebrew terms used for remnant; *רֵשָׁת* (Isa 10:20) and *יְתָר* (Jer 27:19-20).

³¹Baker, *WSOTDICT*, s.v. “*š^e.ēriyṭ*.”

³²*Ibid.*, s.v. “*šā.ar*”

³³Lester V. Meyer, “Remnant,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary (ABD)* (NY: Doubleday, 1996), 5:669-670.

³⁴Londman III, ed., “Remnant,” *BIBD*, 1:1408-1410.

³⁵Arthur F. Glasser, et al., *Announcing God’s Kingdom: The Story of God in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: 2003), 142; Catherine Clark Kroeger and Mary J. Evans, *The IVP Women’s Bible Commentary (IVPWBC)* (2002), 315.

³⁶Angel Manuel Rodriguez, *Toward a Theology of the Remnant* (Silver Springs, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2009), 27.

³⁷Hasel, *Theology of the Remnant*, 206.

Through the SC, God intended His remnant people to continuously reveal His love and saving grace to all other nations. In turn, Israel was supposed to remain faithful to Him as propagators of His kingdom. Furthermore, Rodriguez mentions that, a remnant was supposed to take part in mission and to preserve faith in God.³⁸ This is the reason why God established the SC and set Israel apart for His mission. The same missionary duty is also expected of the Christian church in the new covenant; the church that should inherit eternal life. Consequently the remnants in NT, are composed of those who keep the Commandments of God and have faith in Jesus (Rev 12:17; 14:12); for they shall preserve their faith and loyalty to God despite them facing persecution.

Missiology

Within the purpose of the SC as outlined in (Exod 19:4-6), is rooted the missiological role of Israel as the “royal priesthood.” Accordingly, the text of study is critically important to the understanding of Israel’s missionary duty to the entire world.³⁹ Block highlights that “Israel’s redemption and constitution as the people of *Yahweh* are set within the context of his missiological agenda.”⁴⁰ This probably suggests that mission is the crucial agenda and the core function of the SC. The purpose of God in choosing Israel was for bringing the knowledge of God to the whole human race.

The idea of the priesthood of all believers is quite elaborate in the NT (1 Pet 2:9, 10). Christian believers are also known as priests; not out of their own making,

³⁸Rodriguez, *Message Mission and Unity of the Church*, 31.

³⁹Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (England: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 225.

⁴⁰Daniel I. Block, *Deuteronomy: NIV Application Commentary, (NIVAC) ed.*, Terry Muck, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 618.

but through their union with Christ, who in turn vest them with a priestly status (Rev 1:6; 20:6). In a similar way, Israel's function applies even to the spiritual Israel as echoed in (1 Pet 2:9), "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may *proclaim* the excellence of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." It appears Peter more convinced with the fact that the Christian missionary role was just but similar to that of Israel's.

In this context Peter was addressing to Christian believers who were scattered all over among Gentile non-believers; just like Israel which lived among the nations. Though among foreign people, but their conduct was supposed to proclaim more about the God whom they worship. In a similar way, Jesus poses this notion by speaking to His disciples, "you are the salt of the world" (Matt 5:13-16). It actually presents the missiological duty of believers in saturating the world with the knowledge of God.

In the same way, the Israelites were to live a holy life in contrast to other nation in order to attract them to their God. By such, their holy characters actually do not reflect an inherent merit, but rather the divine choice.⁴¹ This would mean God's intention and His mission was not to be accomplished by the children of Israel by themselves, but God was to be present with them and accomplish His purposes through them. Just as it is with the Christian believers today, God wants to reach out to those who are not yet enlightened, but through human agent.

Therefore, the SC has been the commissioning means of God, for His missionary work to the whole universe through Israel; even the Christian church is

⁴¹Peter Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1976), 179.

also included. With this text (Exod 19:5) in picture, Durham mentions that “Israel is commissioned to be God’s people on behalf of the earth which is God’s.”⁴² This should be considered as the central statement of purpose concerning God’s election and redemption of Israel. The implication of priesthood is missiological due to its intercessory and proclamation aspects.

Accordingly, Israel’s life style was also well defined in the SC. Their life style was holistic in nature; it encompasses all aspects of human life. Thus, it involves physical, mental, social and also spiritual aspects. In the same way, all these aspects were to be their means of communicating God’s knowledge to other nations. Their way of life was to proclaim God’s love and His holy character.

In the same manner like Israel, the church is also supposed to be instrumental in spreading the eternal gospel, as Christ commissioned it in Matthew 28:18-20. The church is the present day spiritual Israel, to replicate God’s image to the world.

Eschatology

The ultimate purpose of the SC was to restore relational order between God and His people, thus the consummation of the inaugurated redemption. The deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage (Exod 19:4) symbolizes first, the rescue of humanity from sin, and second, the ultimate deliverance of God’s people into eternal life.⁴³ The Passover feast which started in Egypt (Exod 12:3-14), involves the destruction of the Egyptian first born and the deliverance of the Israelite nation prefigures the ultimate destruction of sinners and the salvation of God’s faithful

⁴²Durham, *Exodus*, 255.

⁴³Hans K. LaRondelle, *Christ, Salvation and the Eschaton*, eds., Daniel Heinz, Jiri Moskala and Peter M. Van Bemmelen (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 394.

saints.⁴⁴ This suggests that the Passover ritual was pointing to the future and not limited to the Egyptian event. Again, the Tabernacle with its *Shekinah* glory (Exod 19:20; 40:35-38; Num 9:15-23) was realized in reality with Christ's first advent (John 1:14).⁴⁵ At the same time, "it will be ultimately fulfilled in New Jerusalem, when God shall register His eternal presence with His people on earth, after the destruction of sin (Rev 21:3)".⁴⁶ God shall dwell eternally with His saints when the earth shall be made new.

Accordingly Longman III and Gerhard state that, "The covenant at Sinai covenant was a return to God's original promises in creation."⁴⁷ This has been reflected even in one of the phrase within the text of study ("for the whole earth is mine" [Exod 19:5c]). In this sense, God's establishment of the SC with Israel as a missionary agent, He was aiming at the restoration of humanity and the whole creation back to its original purpose. This actually suggests that the SC also functions to give assurance of the reality of eternal salvation and complete restoration of humanity.

Towards this realization, God offered the Sabbath Commandment as a gift inside the SC to serve three purposes; (a) commemoration of creation (Exod 20:8-11), (b) commemoration of redemption (Deut 5:12-15), and (c) foretaste of the ultimate rest that God will give to His redeemed children (Heb 4:1-11), hence its perpetual significance (Isa 66:22-23). The Sabbath was instituted at creation (Gen 3:1-3) as

⁴⁴Marcus Dods Augustine, *The Works of Aurelius Augustine* (Edinburgh: T and T Clarks, 1872), 313.

⁴⁵Gulley, *Creation, Christ and Salvation*, 421,422.

⁴⁶Henry M. Morris and Henry M. Morris III, *Many Infallible Proofs: The Evidences for the Christian* (Green Forest, AR: Master, 2010), 217; Donald Stamps, *The Fire Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 196. Vern S. Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (P & R, 1995). 76.

⁴⁷Longman III and Gerhard, *EBC*, 1:131.

God's sign of His sovereignty (Exod 20:8-11) over the world. The text of study (Exod 19:5c) also reflected on God's sovereignty, which is authenticated in the Decalogue by the presents of the Sabbath. On that note, this would mean the SC possibly functions to affirm God's sovereignty.

On the other hand, the whole Decalogue reminds of God's unchangeable character, from eternity to eternity (Ps 89:34).⁴⁸ This infect, signifies the relevance of the SC even to the Christian church today and forever. Jesus also pointed that "till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled." (Matt 5:18). He authenticated the permanence of the Decalogue, thereby revealing its significance for the believers.

Accordingly, the weekly Sabbath had some other significance apart from it being a reminder of God's sovereignty as creator; it was also related to the jubilee year (Exod 23:10-11, Lev 25:3-4).⁴⁹ The year of Jubilee points forward to the thousand years (Exod 20:6) of rest of the earth and of the saints in heaven, which actually commences at the second advent of Christ.⁵⁰ This also reflects on restoration which is the goal of God's redemption story. At the same time, the observance of the Sabbath points us to the eternal destiny of rest from sin. This also implies that the function of the SC covenant could be the same as that of the new covenant, because both have a goal of the restoration of humanity.

Consequently, there are several practices and rituals which were introduced by the SC that reflects to a greater extend some eschatological meanings. Christ's first

⁴⁸Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Ethics: The Contemporary Issues and Options* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2010), 267, 268.

⁴⁹Stephen Nelson Haskell, *The Cross and its Shadow* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1990), 249.

⁵⁰Gray Flannigan and Luther Glenn Williams, *The Media War Between Jesus Christ and Satan* (Oklahoma: Tate, 2007), 110.

advent was prefigured by the sanctuary and all its activities, as highlighted before; Paul the apostle also highlights that whatsoever was written in the past had a bearing to people living in the present time (Rom 15:4). Instead, this may imply that the SC had a function of establishing and maintaining hope for the fulfilment of eternal redemption of humanity.

Furthermore, the SC ritual of the Day of Atonement (Lev 16) also seems to have some eschatological significance and meanings. This ritual was conducted by the high priest and everyone was also supposed to participate. On this day the whole Israelite nation would confess and be reconciled to God; while the high priest would mediate for them in the most holy place. In the NT (Heb 9:11-15), Christ is considered as the slain goat and the High priest as well.⁵¹ In other words, the ritual pointed to Christ's death atoned for the sins of man,⁵² and also reflects on the pre-advent judgment that was to take place prior to the second advent of Jesus.⁵³ This also signifies that the SC was rather, a framework of the whole plan of redemption. It functions to present Christ's ministry in its totality; that is His earthly and heavenly ministry.

On the other hand, the scapegoat that was taken away to the desert (Lev 16:10-21), signifies the devil that would be left alone on earth, for a thousand years (Rev 20:1-3) while awaiting his final fate (Rev 20:9, 10).⁵⁴ In light of this, the SC also points to the future, where sin and the perpetrator of sin will be completely eradicated,

⁵¹Russell R. Standish and Collin D. Standish, *The Rapture, the End-Times and the Millennium* (Rapidan, VA: Hartland, 2004), 101.

⁵²Antony C. Thiselton, *The Thiselton Companion to Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William. B. Eerdmans, 2015), 273.

⁵³Walter J. Veith, *Truth Matters* (Delta, BC: Amazing Discoveries, 2007), 60.

⁵⁴Walter Ralston Martin, *The Truth about Seventh-day Adventism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1960), 72.

including those who remain in alliance with him. On the other hand, it points to future restoration of the whole creation in its perfect status; Christ shall be the sovereign King and LORD and all the redeemed shall rule as priests (Rev 20:6). Actually, the ceremonial practices within the SC, simply confirm some eschatology meanings of the covenant.

Summary

This chapter presented some theological implications of the SC and highlighted its key function within the Jewish commonwealth and the whole Scriptures. Accordingly, salvation is quite explicit in the SC; it was demonstrated by the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage. It is evident that deliverance leads to obedience as the expression of faith and an appreciation to God's mercy that was demonstrated by Christ, who is the mediator for humanity. Consequently, obedience automatically leads the transformation of character, which would attract other people to a harmonious relationship with God; thereby forming a community of believers. And this community of believers ought to live a faithful life as God's representatives on earth, for the sake of bringing God's knowledge to others.

The theological implications of the SC in this chapter reveals that the SC functions to present God's missiological agenda for His people, who are composed of the Israelite nation and all those who would acknowledge Christ as their personal Saviour. It defines these three elements about worship; that is the purpose of worship, the way to worship and whom to worship? In other words, the whole framework of God's redemptive plan is laid in the SC. The full package of Christ's ministry and His work of mediation between God and humanity are quite elaborate in this covenant. On the other hand, all Scriptures draw out its meanings and genuine interpretation from the framework of the SC.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study examined the function of the SC as it is presented in Exodus 19:3-6. The researcher scrutinized the issues behind biblical covenant as it was established from origin; that is before and after the fall of man. Thus for the sake of understanding the purposes of the covenant and thereby establish the function of the SC.

The SC is seen to have much greater theological significance not only in the OT, but in the whole Scriptures; yet it is also one of divine-human covenant which have faced several debates within the theological circles. This is because of its nature of many stipulations which led scholar to have divergent views and fail to come to a consensus with regards to its function. Therefore, this research has analyzed the historical background behind the SC, in view of the previously established covenants and the ANE treaties; the context in which this covenant was established. In like manner, an exegetical analysis of the text (Exod 19:3-6) is done, in order to unlock functions of the SC. Further, some theological implications and application of the text in its immediate and broader contexts were drawn out; thereby further clarifying the functions of the SC.

Summary

To sum up on this study, in response to the problem that has prompted this research, the exploration of the historical background behind the SC was made in chapter two. This chapter has clearly revealed that the SC was actually a continuation

of the Abrahamic covenant of grace and faith. At the same time, the study reveals that the SC did not function as a “new dispensation,” of establishing the Israelite religious faith of salvation by works, as suggested by Scofield, Chafer, Wells and many others; but rather, salvation is through faith in the SC.

Furthermore, the evidences from this study have shown that the ANE treaties had stipulations, the same also is perceived with the SC. This also is evident with other divine covenants, including the Abrahamic covenant which some thought to have no stipulations. This has been illustrated from the text (Gen 26:5), which highlights on Abraham to have kept the Commandments. There is actually no difference between the Abrahamic, the SC, and other divine covenants. Rather, they all serve the same purpose; which is the redemption of humankind.

Another issue which has been revealed is that the SC was a covenant of grace and faith; this is exhibited by the fact that this covenant was initiated by God; just like any other divine covenant. The initiation of this covenant was for missionary purposes and not for inducing loyalty like the ANE treaties. In essence, the SC does not stand alone as an independent covenant, but rather it is part of a single covenant that runs on successive stages throughout the human history, and meets its fulfilment in Jesus Christ.

In Chapter three, the exegetical analysis of the text (Exod 19:3-6) clearly draws up to the point that the SC functions for setting Israel apart for missionary duty and redemptive purposes to all humanity. This is evident through their deliverance and them being chosen as a treasured possession, kingdom of priests and holy nation. All these facts explain more about the SC as a covenant of grace and faith and not of works; for nothing came on Israel’s merit, but rather, it was through God’s mercies and love. At the same time, faith was to be expressed through obedience. That is to

say, the SC functions just like Abrahamic covenant; that is for missionary work and redemptive purposes. Again, this chapter reveals the purposes of this covenant; (a) as a reminder of gracious deliverance, (b) protection against the false worship which brings consequences and (c) clarifying Israel's missiological mandate.

Chapter four continually exhibits that redemption was a major preceding factor that necessitated the birth of the SC; just like any other divine-human covenants that God initiated. Like the Abrahamic, the SC was built on God's unconditional love, and faith alone as a necessary human response. The major reason for this covenantal relationship was for Israel to reflect God's character and advance His kingdom. By so doing, they too would be refreshed from special privileges of this unique relationship, as a special treasure. Therefore, God's missiological agenda and His redemptive purposes through Christ can be well understood in the light of the SC; for it is the whole framework of God's plan of redemption.

Other issues which have been revealed in the theological implications are that salvation is always the same throughout human history. For God has been always been concerned with restoring humanity back to His original purpose of creating them. At the same time, it reveals that God's laws, the Ten Commandments are bidding to every human generation throughout eternity, for they are a transcript of His character. Again, this study has established that, God has been and will continue to use the human agent to participate in their salvation and the salvation of others.

Conclusions

This research was accomplished through an exegetical analysis of the text Exodus 19:3-6, which involves the assessment of the ANE *suzerain* treaty, and a comparative study of other three biblical divine-human covenants which were

established prior to the SC. This approach actually has made contribution to the conclusions which are drawn, about the function of the SC.

After making all the necessary observations; here are the conclusions which are drawn out. One thing to note is that, there are similarities between ANE treaties and the SC, even in terms of function, but the SC stands quite distinct from ANE treaties. As for the ANE treaties, they were politically motivated, yet the SC and all other divine covenants were spiritually motivated.

Another second thing to note is that, the SC and all other divine covenants beginning with the Adamic up to the new covenant are but, a single covenant of grace that passes through successive stages and it culminates in Jesus Christ. Throughout all the different stages, there is but one major theme; that is the redemption of humanity.

In terms of the differences between the SC and other divine covenants, this can be perceived especially with the new covenant. The SC had ritual sanctuary practices which were a shadow; pointing to Christ. In actual sense, they are not differences rather, but were a typology of the anti-type, which is Christ; meaning the SC sacrifices and sanctuary ritual practices points to Christ, for they all have one purpose. In all other covenants which were initiated before Christ, the sacrificial rituals was a practice and it was point to the same thing; the death of Christ.

Similarly, in all other divine covenants, stipulations are present, including the Abrahamic covenant, for they all have aspirations, and obedience is also a requirement within them all. Having made these observations, it proves that the SC Commandments (moral law) were bidding in all covenants and are still relevant for the true Christian believers to observe. The failure to obey is rather a denial of faith and also an act of rebellion which brings about negative consequences.

Third, the SC is rather a continuation of the Abrahamic covenant of grace and faith, not a “new dispensation” of salvation by works. Salvation is always a gift of God and obedience to stipulations is an expression of loyalty, trust, and faith in God; not the means to obtain salvation. Infact, the SC had a goal of God of restoring God’s image in all humanity, through the emulation of God’s character by obedience to the Commandments. At the same time, any divine status call has with it some standards to be maintained, in order to successfully execute the God given responsibility.

Consequently, for one to have a more clear understanding of the function of the SC, a positive attitude towards stipulations is needed; having an understanding that the Commandments are for the good will of mankind and not a means of earning salvation. Rather, Commandments are to be observed by those who are already saved, in order to continuously enjoy the benefits of their salvation.

The forth point is that, this SC functions for missiological emphasis and redemption by grace of God’s people; this is what prompted God to set Israel apart as a treasured possession. In other words, the SC is part of the grand covenant of grace that was instituted by God from the onset when sin entered the human race; with the intent to reclaim humanity back to Himself.

Finally, it is important to note that the SC defines the role of Israel in God’s plan of salvation. It was not a new dispensation of salvation by works, for salvation has ever been by grace and faith alone. At the same time, God’s missionary and redemptive purposes are the key functions of this SC and all other divine-human covenants. Therefore, this covenant should not be considered as an independent covenant, but rather the same single covenant was initiated for the restoration of humanity. This covenant is relevant to all generations, for it cuts across the whole biblical account and all Christians are also invited to observe its principle stipulations

in Exodus 20:3-17. These are the conclusions which the researcher has deduced so far from this study and further studies may be needed on this subject.

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VITA

Personal Information

Surname: Chinowaita
First Name: Lincoln
Gender: Male
Nationality: Zimbabwean
Place of Birth: Mutare, Zimbabwe
Marital Status: Married
Occupation: Pastor
Language: English and Shona

Academic Qualifications

2017: Master of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies, Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi
2011: Bachelor of Arts in Theology Studies, Solusi University, Zimbabwe
1994: Ordinary Level Certificate, Chikwariro SDA Secondary School, Mutare
1990: Primary School Certificate, Chikwariro SDA Primary School, Mutare

Professional Certificate

2009: Certificate of Ordination to the Gospel Ministry
2014: Certificate Chaplains

Educational Institutions

2014-2017: Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi
2007-2011: Solusi University, Zimbabwe
1991-1994: Chikwariro SDA Secondary School, Mutare
1984-1990: Chikwariro SDA Primary School, Mutare

Employment Experiences

1997-1998: Kentry Metal Company
2015-2017 to date: District Pastor, Murehwa District
2012-2014: District Pastor, Chinhoyi District
2011-2012: District Pastor, Nyazura Seventh-day Adventist High School
2004-2007: District Pastor, Chivhu East District