

# Just Us

## Exodus 34:10-14

### Pierre Cannings

#### I. Just God vs. 10-11

##### a. I will Make a Covenant

- i. Covenant - A “covenant” is an agreement enacted between two parties in which one or both make promises under oath to perform or refrain from certain actions stipulated in advance. As indicated by the designation of the two sections of the Christian Bible—Old Testament (= covenant) and New Testament—“covenant” in the Bible is the major metaphor used to describe the relation between God and Israel (the people of God). *As such, covenant is the instrument constituting the rule (or kingdom) of God, and therefore it is a valuable lens through which one can recognize and appreciate the biblical ideal of religious community*
- ii. Mercifully, God agreed to full covenant restoration by means of a remaking of the Sinai covenant—a reinstatement, not a revision. This was decidedly not a new covenant, as God had already made clear in v. 1 by referring to “the words that were on the first tablets,” This is also clear in v. 28 by his reference to “the words [commandments]” and in the ten sample commandments that are quoted in vv. 14–26, as sample repetitions of commandments already given in the original covenant statement of chaps. 20–23
- iii. This was, rather, a divine *restoration* of a broken covenant, one that had been made temporarily null and void by Israel’s corporate return to idolatry (and therefore automatically polytheism, since there was no monotheistic idolatry in the ancient world) as described in chap. 32. The covenant needed to be reinstated if it was to be of help to Israel, and Yahweh showed his merciful and patient nature as described by himself so magisterially in vv. 6–7 by taking the responsibility upon himself to reinstate it for the benefit of his once and now again covenant people. Therefore God used the present tense statement, “I am making a covenant with you.” He was making the same Sinai covenant once again, but he was indeed *making* it anew, remaking it, not just reminding the people of the content of it
- iv. In keeping with the sort of identification of parties to the covenant normally found in a covenant preamble, God identified himself in v. 6 (“the LORD, the LORD” [“Yahweh, Yahweh”]) and also identified Israel explicitly as the other party (“your people ... the people you live among,” v. 10; also “God of Israel,” v. 23; “covenant with Israel,” v. 27). *As regards the prologue (a brief accounting of the relationship of the parties to each*

other), God's description of himself in vv. 6–7 constitutes the sort of thing found in a covenant prologue, as does Moses' description of Israel in vv. 8–9. The stipulations are represented by the ten key sample laws in vv. 14–26, and these are introduced as well by summary commands to obey the covenant in vv. 11–12. The sanctions are indicated by such promises of blessing as that of v. 10 ("I will do wonders ... awesome is the work that I ... will do for you"), the driving out of the Canaanites (vv. 11, 24), and the enlargement of territory and protection from enemies (v. 24). Implied curses appear within v. 12 ("they will be a snare among you"), v. 14 ("a jealous God" [meaning one who will punish if disobeyed]), and v. 15 ("they will invite you and you will eat ...").

b. I will Perform Miracles

i. Perform Miracles

1. The term *nīpla'ôt*, as the parallel term to *gēdōlôt*, also refers to the expression of God's sovereignty, of which miracles are only one aspect. In prose *nīpla'ôt* indicates God's salvation of his people in the Exodus from Egypt and the conquest of the land (Exod 34:10; Judg 6:13). These saving acts are at times bound up with miracles (Exod 3:20; Josh 3:5; Neh 9:17). Poetry also contains references to the act of redemption and the miracle of the Exodus (Mic 7:15; Pss 78:4, 11, 32; 106:7, 22).
2. The promise of wonders reestablishes the sequence of signs, wonders, and marvels mentioned twenty times in Exod 3:12–34:10. This use of נִפְלְאוֹת marks the renewal of the covenant and is the last use of these words in Exodus. This ongoing covenantal action of Yahweh places stronger expectations on Israel.
3. extraordinary deeds" that will command the attention of the peoples all about them. נִפְלְאוֹת provides a rhetorical link with Exod 3:20, where Yahweh promises his נִפְלְאוֹת in the Egypt of Pharaoh, there too as a proof of his Presence (see above). The deeds yet to be done are, however, to be more remarkable still: they have not before been created (בְּרָא), and thus nobody will have conceived in advance of them that such things could be.

ii. Not Produced on Earth

1. Nor Nations
2. All People

iii. It is a fearful thing

1. Feared- Awesome, honored, terrible

c. I am going to drive out

i. Amorite

1. The term "Amorites" in the Old Testament refers either to a specific people group in Palestine or generally to non-Israelite peoples living in the land before the Israelites. The origin of the

Amorites goes back to 3000 BC. The biblical writers describe the Amorites as inhabitants of the northern part of Canaan, Syria, and the Transjordan area especially during the conquest and settlement of the Israelites in the land. They appear to have been weakened after the monarchy was established in Israel (2 Sam 21:2; 1 Kgs 9:20). The Amorites ruled most of the Transjordan during the time of the conquest, and were a major obstacle for the Israelites in their endeavor to settle the promised land

ii. Canaanite

1. The Israelites, under Joshua, entered W Palestine from across the Jordan, gaining control of the hill-country first and defeating a series of Canaanite kings. For the Hebrews, the conquest of Canaan was the fulfilment of an ancient promise to their forefathers (Gn. 17:8; 28:4, 13–14; Ex. 6:2–8). They were to dispossess the peoples of the land as expelled by God, and to destroy those who remained (*cf.* Dt. 7:1, 2ff.); this was in consequence of divine judgment on long centuries of persistent wickedness by these peoples (Dt. 9:5, *cf.* Gn. 15:16), and not from any merit on Israel's part

iii. Hittites

iv. Perizzite

1. The Perizzites apparently occupied a portion of the Israelites' promised land, living in the forests east of the Jordan River (Josh 17:15). Yahweh names the Perizzites among the 10 people groups whose land will pass to Abram's descendants (Gen 15:20). Joshua affirms that Yahweh will drive out seven nations from the promised land, including the Perizzites (Josh 3:10).

v. Hivites

1. people group mentioned specifically in the Old Testament as living in the northern and central portions of Canaan between the time of Joshua and the united monarchy. Possibly the same people group as the Horites
2. When the narrative of Exodus referring to God's promise to Abraham to grant the land of Canaan to Israel, the text often refers to the Hivites, among the other Canaanite tribes (Exod 3:8; 33:2; 34:11).
3. Deuteronomy echoes the promise to hand over the land of the Hivites to Israel (Deut 7:1) and adds a command for Israel to annihilate them (Deut 20:17).
4. The book of Joshua echoes the account in Deuteronomy: God will drive out the Hivites, and Israel is to annihilate them (Josh 3:10, 9:1, 11:3, 12:8, 24:11). However, the Hivites in Gibeon feared for

their annihilation and disguised themselves to make a treaty with Israel (Josh 9:3–15).

5. Judges offers a theological explanation for the Hivites and other Canaanites remaining in the land, suggesting that God left them there to prepare Israel for warfare. Rather than fighting, Israel intermarried with the Hivites and other Canaanites and began worshiping their gods (Judg 3:1–6). The writers of Joshua—Kings seemed to view this intermarriage and apostate worship as the cyclical cause of Israel’s failure to thrive as a people from the time they entered the promised land to the time they went into exile

vi. Jebusites

1. The city of Jebus was an entrenched stronghold from which the Jebusites attacked the Hebrew people. Jebus was in the hill country of what would later be known as Judah (Num 13:29; Josh 11:3). Early in Joshua’s conquest of the Land, news of his military successes reached future targets. Five kings, led by “Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem,” joined forces and attacked Joshua’s ally, the large city of Gibeon (Josh 10:3–5). Jerusalem and the Jebusites are linked explicitly in Josh 15:8
  2. The Jebusites were so entrenched in the land that the Israelites never successfully dislodged them from their territories (Josh 15:63; Judg 1:21). This situation seems to have persisted through the 40-year reign of Israel’s first king, Saul, whose capital, Gibeah, was only 5 miles from Jebus. Details from the biblical narrative combine to indicate that the Jebusites were either too powerful for Saul to defeat or amicably aligned with him
- d. This verse picks up much of the language of 23:23 (“My angel will go ahead of you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites and Jebusites, and I will wipe them out”) and 23:28 (“I will send the hornet ahead of you to drive the Hivites, Canaanites and Hittites out of your way”), since it is part of the introduction to the restatement of the covenant through various samplings from or restatements of selected verses in 20:2–23:33. The warning here follows closely the theme of 23:32–33, which reads, “Do not make a covenant with them or with their gods. Do not let them live in your land, or they will cause you to sin against me, because the worship of their gods will certainly be a snare to you.” The present verse likewise warns against making a covenant
  - e. One needs only to look at the religious situation in the days of the Judges or in Josiah’s time (2 Kgs 22–23) or in Ezekiel’s (Ezek 8:9ff.) to see how frequently and thoroughly the Israelites turned away from orthodox faith and toward Canaanite idolatry

## II. Just You vs. 12-14

- a. Observe
  - i. Observe – to keep watch

1. Israel must guard against any covenantal alliance with these peoples as a dangerous means of entrapment. They must extirpate from the land the altars, sacred pillars, and sacred poles of these peoples, thus removing even the possibility of any compromise in their worship of and loyalty to Yahweh
  2. Obey what I command you today” is nothing less than a demand for complete adherence to the complete Sinai covenant as it is reinstated by a merciful God on this occasion.
- ii. Commandments- God’s Orders
- b. Watch
- i. Watch
  - ii. No Covenant
    1. With the inhabitants
    2. The word “treaty” is used here misleadingly by the NIV to translate the same Hebrew word rendered as “covenant” in the NIV of 23:32. Both verses, in fact, are prohibiting the same thing: any sort of covenant with either the people of the land of Canaan or their false gods. No covenant other than the one Yahweh was giving his people could be entered into by them; their reliance upon him for blessing and benefit must be absolute and exclusive
    3. If they made any sort of covenant relationship with other gods or with the Canaanites, who worshiped other gods, they would violate the terms of his covenant and suffer the terrible consequences. Some individuals choose to follow a given religious path by reason of careful, systematic investigation of the evidence and an evaluation of all other options. But most people do not do any such thing. Rather, they imitate what others do, responding to invitations, formal or informal, to join others around them in whatever religious practices seem dominant. If the Israelites made the mistake of binding themselves in any sort of covenant with any Canaanite group, or all the Canaanite groups, they could expect the natural consequence: a comfortable social and political interaction, followed by a comfortable willingness to consider the validity and efficacy of the Canaanite lifestyle, including its worship practices, followed by an embracing of Canaanite religion.
  - iii. Will become a Snare- a trap
- c. Tear Down
- i. The religious objects and symbols of Canaanite religion were to be destroyed. A modern-day sociologist or anthropologist shudders at this, but the theological and sociological depth of the text is justified and is understandable from a biblical worldview (cf. Acts 5:3–6). Possible relationships with Canaanites or their gods would be destructive. Their sacred poles (cf. 23:4), Asherim, served as symbols of fertility and even

gods. They were constructed beside the people's religious shrines and tents and constituted an essential element of who they were.

- ii. A subtle but certain syncretism through cultural assimilation that eventually leads to spiritual harlotry will be the result. If Israel was so easily seduced into spiritual adultery *in the desert*, how much more may she succumb to it in the pagan cultures of the urban and agricultural centers of Canaan.
- iii. This introductory sequence is appropriately brought to a climax by the first of a series of Yahweh's requirements designed to present a broad summary of covenant obligation with a particular bearing on the necessity of maintaining undiluted loyalty to Yahweh in the setting of the new land to which Israel is going. This requirement is linked specifically to the sin with the golden calf by the use of the word *מסכה* "shaped metal," the term used to describe the calf in 32:4 and 8
- iv. This verse continues from v. 14 and draws out the religious dangers of making a treaty for any reason. Such an act would lead to making a covenant with the people of the land. The author-editor is fully aware of the dangers of cultural assimilation and religious syncretism in Canaan. If a covenant were cut sacrificial meals would be prepared and shared with the Canaanites in their religious festivals. Yahweh had outlined his own set of sacrifices and festivals that would enable his people to share and serve him, not foreign gods. The unique aspects of Israel's sacrificial system are developed more fully in Lev 1–8. Its goal was to turn the hearts and minds of Israel toward Yahweh only.

### III. No One Else

#### a. He is Jealous

- i. Yahweh's very name is 'Jealous'" Loyalty to Yahweh must be absolutely undiluted. There is to be no worship of any other god of any kind, and Israel simply must avoid any covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which they are going; such alliances may lead to a fraternization that could begin with the eating of sacrifices made to other gods and end with intermarriage and the embrace of other gods by Israel's children.
- ii. This is the only verse in the Old Testament in which mention is made of his being jealous for his name, the meaning of which expression is simply that he guards his name's significance—it points to his nature, character, and uniqueness as the only true God—and will not allow it to be profaned by idolatry or any other misuse