Formation and the Word

Models of how Scripture/ God’s word functions formationally
Israelite Model

- National formation and the ‘Word’
- Exodus 20; Deut 5: “The Ten Words”
- Foundational elements of Israel as a nation
- Covenantal basis for Israel’s relationship with her God
- Covenant and law (Exod 20-24)
Theological Significance

- Israel is related to Yahweh in legal, covenant terms
- God is Great King; Israel is vassal
- Important at start of Israelite monarchy to remember who the true king is - Judges 8:23
  But Gideon told them, “I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. The Lord will rule over you.”
Exodus 20:2

I am the LORD your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.
(A Theological Interlude)

- Starting point of all the “Ten Words”
- Jewish tradition - first of the 10
- 1. Personal: I---you. LORD (covenant name)
- 2. Starts with promise - commitment precedes commandment
- 3. Committed in spite of man’s condition (Romans 5:6, 8, 10)
Exodus 20:2

- 4. Character of God- keeps commitments
- 5. Jealous God
- 6. God commits in advance: agapé

Exodus 20:2 is the claim of authority on behalf of God to indicate why Israel should hold the following expectations.
Analysis (Israelite Model)

- Source of the revelation?
- Mediator of the revelation?
- Recipient of the revelation?
- Content of revelation?
- Context of revelation?
  - Surrounded by blessing (20:2)
  - Predicated on a relationship
Response to authority

• **The ideal**: Exod 24:6 Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he sprinkled on the altar. 7 Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, “We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey.”

• 8 Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, “This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.”
Response to authority

- **The actual:** Judges 2:10-23
- ‘Sine-wave’ theology of history
- Centrality of the covenant: (v. 20)-
  “Because this nation has violated the covenant that I laid down for their forefathers and has not listened to me....”
Jeremiah 7

• This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: 2 “Stand at the gate of the Lord’s house and there proclaim this message: “Hear the word of the Lord, all you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship the Lord.

• Source and intermediary noted

• Preached at the center of Israelite society
Specifics

• 7:3 This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place. 4 Do not trust in deceptive words and say, “This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord!”

• What are the ‘deceptive words’
“the temple of the Lord”

• Temple as totem or rabbit’s foot
• Protection deriving from the place not the person
• Worship directed toward the address rather than the resident
Authentic life under authority

- Jer 7:5 If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, 6 if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, 7 then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your forefathers for ever and ever. 8 But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless.

- Trusted the outward covenant life without inner reality
Living a sham

• Jer 7:9 "Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, 10 and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, “We are safe”—safe to do all these detestable things?"
Other examples

- Amos 5:21 “I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. 22 Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. 23 Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. 24 But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!”
Horizontal and vertical

- Justice and righteousness

  God

  |__ Human
  |   |
  Human
  |
  |
  Humanity

Matt 5:23-24; 18:15-17
Centrality of congruity

- Inner and outer must agree
- Formation must permeate, not just be on the surface
- Acts 5:1-11 Ananias and Sapphira
- Inner corruption trumps outward piety
- It is the corruption, not the piety, which is contagious and spreads
- It needs to be eradicated (cf. Lev 13-14)
- True formation is more than skin deep