

What is New about the New Covenant?

We are often kindly reminded that we are in a New Covenant. In the minds of many, this is evidence of a new law and thus, case closed.

Since there is not one new commandment found in what is called the New Testament that cannot be found in the Old Testament, the supposed case for a “new law” with only “old commandments” appears weak at best.

That aside, and interestingly enough, when the prophets wrote about the New Covenant, they did not state that it would contain new law, but in fact the same law that Moses wrote, also called the Torah in Hebrew.

The prophets, in effect, taught:

“New covenant, same law.”

So, we have a choice. Do we believe what the prophets in the Bible wrote, or what mainstream doctrine teaches?

Before we explore that topic and point in more detail, it would serve well to define the word “*covenant*” in the first place.

What is a covenant?

While the Hebrew word *beriyt* means “*covenant*” the linguistic Hebrew background of the word is helpful in understanding its full meaning.

Beriyt comes from the parent root word “*bar*”, meaning grain.

Grains were fed to livestock to fatten them up to prepare them for slaughter.

Two other Hebrew words related to *beriyt*, and also derived from the parent root “*bar*”, can help us understand the meaning of “*beriyt*”.

The word “*beriy*” means fat and “*barut*” means meat.

Notice the common theme with “*bar*”, “*beriy*” and “*barut*”, they all have to do with the slaughtering of livestock.

The word “*beriyt*” is literally the animal that is slaughtered for the covenant ceremony.

The phrase “*make a covenant*” is found thirteen times in the Bible.

In the Hebrew text this phrase is “*karat beriyt*”.

The word “*karat*” literally means “*to cut*”.

When a covenant is made, a fattened animal is cut into pieces and laid out on the ground. Each party of the covenant then passes through the pieces signifying that if one of the parties fails to meet the agreement, then the other has the right to do to the other what they did to the animal (see Genesis 15:10 and Jeremiah 34:18-20).

For more on this, we recommend our teaching “[The Threshold Covenant](#).”

In short, a covenant is an agreement with two parties. This could simply be a promise or an oath by one or more of the parties. It could detail consequences or rewards based on those promises.

Some of the Major Covenants Found in Scripture

The Covenant through Adam (Genesis 2-3)

This is the first covenant Yehovah made with man. Adam was required to obey the terms of the covenant in order to not suffer the consequences of breaking it. It can be found in the opening chapters of Genesis where God makes some conditional promises to Adam.

Genesis does not explicitly detail it as a covenant, but all of the defining criteria of a covenant exists.

Hosea, in fact, later calls it a covenant:

Hosea 6:7

*But like Adam they transgressed the covenant;
there they dealt faithlessly with me.*

The heart of this covenant is really God’s command to Adam to not eat from “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2:16–17). That command sets forth God’s promise as well as the penalty if Adam disobeys.

God promises Adam life and blessing, but that promise is conditional upon Adam’s obedience to God’s command to not eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (Genesis 2:16–17) Adam’s penalty for disobedience would be physical and spiritual death as well as a curse on the ground so that Adam would have to work harder to grow crops. One of the results of Adam’s sin was that he would have to toil all of his days until his death (Genesis 4:17–19).

This is known by Paul as the Law of Sin and Death (see the Pauline Paradox Series for more information).

The legal consequence of breaking the Torah is death.

Adam's sin broke this covenant with God and left man in a fallen state, but God would soon make a second covenant of redemption with Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:14–24).

This covenant is not explicitly referred to as a covenant in Genesis, but it is a significant promise that God makes to mankind.

It is the first promise of redemption and the first promise of Christ's coming (Genesis 3:15).

Here, only three chapters into this remarkable book, Yehovah is already giving us hope of a Redeemer.

Our Creator's promise that the seed of the serpent would bruise the heel of the seed of Eve and the seed of Eve would bruise the head of the seed of the serpent, this is the foretelling that the Adversary would wound the Messiah on the cross, but that the Messiah would triumph over the adversary on that same cross.

Covenant through Noah (Genesis 9)

Genesis 9:11

I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

This covenant is unique in that it is a promise to the world, and it is unconditional. Yehovah simply mentions that water will never be used again to destroy the Earth. When the Earth is destroyed again, before being made new, He will use His fire to melt Heaven and Earth away.

2 Peter 3:13

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

Covenant through Abraham (Genesis 15)

Abraham is given several promises in the covenant through him:

- The promise of land
- The promise of descendants
- And the promise of blessing and redemption

The sign of this covenant is circumcision, forever:

Genesis 17:7,11

(7) And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring

after you.

(11) You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you.

Our Messiah stated that those who are of the children of Abraham (part of His covenant), then they would do the works of Abraham.

John 8:39

They answered him, “Abraham is our father.” (Yeshua) Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did,

The works of Abraham was not only circumcision, but in fact, the whole Torah.

Genesis 26:5

because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws. (and in Hebrew, that says *Torah*)”

Although the Torah was given at Sinai, it was given so it could be written down. Prior to Moses, the Torah was passed on orally. Obviously the oral system was not a sustainable solution, and it being written down would serve all of us better.

The point is that the Word of God, which includes the Torah, is unchanging from the beginning.

For example, this is how Cain and Abel knew when to make offerings, and what to offer.

Genesis 4:3-4

In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.

Another example is demonstrated through Noah’s knowledge of which animals were clean and unclean:

Genesis 7:2

Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and his mate, and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and his mate...

Although the first time we see the instruction of clean and unclean appear in the Scriptures being in the Torah, it was obviously present well before then, as is every commandment of God.

Covenant through Moses (Exodus 14:1-8)

The sign of this covenant is the Sabbath, forever:

Exodus 31:16

Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever.

This again does not mean the Sabbath is new. We were commanded to keep the Sabbath holy from the beginning when Yehovah, Himself, modeled resting on the 7th day.

By faith Israel entered into this covenant. They declared their loyalty to our Creator's covenant before Sinai.

Exodus 19:8

All the people answered together and said, "All that (Yehovah) the Lord has spoken we will do."
And Moses reported the words of the people to (Yehovah) the Lord.

As Habakkuk stated:

Habakkuk 2:4

but the righteous shall live by his faith

(also see Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38)

The covenant was entered into by faith, and when the words were received at Sinai, Israel was to live by that faith.

The Torah given at Sinai was not given to justify us before God, but provide us a way that we are to live in by faith for faith.

Thus, the righteousness of God is revealed through us, when we live out His covenant.

Romans 1:17

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

However, the House of Israel, which is a subset of Israel, broke covenant with Yehovah and they did not return.

They were subsequently divorced.

Jeremiah 3:8

She saw that for all the adulteries of that faithless one, Israel, **I had sent her away with a decree of divorce.** Yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but she too went and played the whore.

However, in the very same chapter, Yehovah declares that the House of Israel will once again be joined with the House of Judah, both being renewed in covenant once again.

This is the first mention of the New Covenant.

Jeremiah 3:18

In those days the house of Judah shall join the house of Israel, and together they shall come from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers for a heritage.

The promise of the New Covenant enters into the language of the prophets thereafter.

Jeremiah 31:31-33 are the most cited verses detailing the New Covenant.

In it we find:

- Israel broke the covenant
- Yehovah was their husband, but is no more (also see Jeremiah 3:8)
- Yehovah renews the covenant with the House of Israel and the House of Judah by putting His Torah in them once again.
- We will know Yehovah.
- We will no longer have to teach each other the Word.
- Israel's sins will be forgiven.

Jeremiah 31:31-33

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord (Yehovah) when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord (Yehovah). For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord (Yehovah): **I will put my law (TORAH) within them, and I will write it on their hearts.** And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord (Yehovah). For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

Though we are in the new covenant, not all of these promises have been fulfilled yet. For example, we are still teaching each other the Word of God. This will be fulfilled at the coming of our Messiah through the resurrection.

The most important thing to note is that the New Covenant is defined as the Torah being on our heart.

This means that we will want to do the Torah. Some teach that the New Covenant gave us a new law, but this is the exact opposite of what the prophets state.

Ezekiel 11:19-20

And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, **that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them.** And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

Ezekiel 36:26-27

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. **And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.**

Our Messiah entered us into the New Covenant and began the process of reuniting the House of Judah back with the House of Israel.

Luke 22:20

And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

(Also see 1 Corinthians 11:25)

Our Messiah also practiced and taught the Torah as our example. His death on the cross demonstrated our Creator's love for us, which causes us to want to love Him back by obeying His Torah.

1 John 5:1-3

Everyone who believes that Jesus (Yeshua) is the Christ (Messiah) has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. **For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.** And his commandments are not burdensome.

Hebrews 8 discusses the circumstances leading to the New Covenant in depth and it is a popular chapter.

Hebrews 8:1-13

Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain." But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, **since it is enacted on better promises.** For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.

For he finds fault with them when he says:

"Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord,
when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel
and with the house of Judah,
not like the covenant that I made with their fathers
on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.
For they did not continue in my covenant,
and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.
For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel
after those days, declares the Lord:
I will put my laws into their minds,
and write them on their hearts,
and I will be their God,
and they shall be my people.
And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor
and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,'
for they shall all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest.
For I will be merciful toward their iniquities,
and I will remember their sins no more."

In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete

and growing old is ready to vanish away.

Let's go through Hebrews 8, line by line.

Hebrews 8:1-2

Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man

The author of Hebrews is summarizing his main points found in the chapter earlier. Chapter 7 details that our Messiah has taken up His rightful place as High priest in the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:15-16;20-22). It also details how the law was transferred to him as the new mediator (Please note that in Hebrews 7:12 it is not that the law changed as it suggest in the English).

Hebrews 7:12

For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well.

The word for "change" as in "change of the priesthood" and also "change of law" means to "transfer" in the Greek.

It simply means that because the priesthood was transferred to the order of Melchizedek through our Messiah, then the law must transfer to His administration as well.

In fact, you can check this out for yourself. The first primary definition from Strong's means literally "transfer: from one place to another". So, nothing changed. So same law, different administration.

The order of Melchizedek is the priesthood that functions in the heavenlies. At one time it also functioned on earth prior the Levitical priesthood being established (Genesis 14).

We also learn that our Messiah operates in the Heavenly Tabernacle, not the Earthly tabernacle which is built by man.

Going on to verses 3 through 4.

Hebrews 8:3-4

For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law.

According to verse 4, our Messiah could not be a priest on Earth, because the priests on Earth offer gifts according to the Law of God. It still exists.

The priests on Earth only serve a copy or shadow of the true tabernacle in the heavenlies.

Hebrews 8:5

They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain."

Since our Messiah is our new High Priest in the heavenlies, He mediates the new covenant through that priesthood, a covenant built on better promises.

Please note, as this is very important, the difference between the New Covenant and the prior covenant are better promises by YHWH, not a better law.

The law is already perfect.

Psalm 19:7

The law (TORAH in Hebrew) of the Lord (Yehovah) is perfect

If you add to or take away from something that is perfect, it becomes less than perfect. This is why the Torah was never to be added to or subtracted from:

Deuteronomy 4:2

You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you.

Thus, the new covenant is based on better promises, not a new or better law.

We have already reviewed those better promises earlier in this teaching:

- Yehovah renews the covenant with the House of Israel and the House of Judah by putting His Torah in them once again.
- We will all know Yehovah.
- We will no longer have to teach each other the Word.
- Israel's sins will be forgiven.

Hebrews 8:6

For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.

Some look at this verse and immediately state, see, there was something wrong with the covenant, which was the Torah. This is why the new covenant needs a new law.

This already ignores the fact that the prophets stated that the New Covenant will comprise of the same law, the Torah. What we do find is that it has better promises.

The next verse makes it very clear what the problem was. Not the law for:

Hebrews 8:8

For he finds **fault with them** when he says:

The fault was with Israel, which is why they needed to be renewed back into covenant through the new covenant.

The fault was found with them, not the Torah.

He then repeats the promises of the new covenant"

Hebrews 8:8-12

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord,
when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel
and with the house of Judah,
not like the covenant that I made with their fathers
on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.
For they did not continue in my covenant,
and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.
For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel
after those days, declares the Lord:
I will put my laws into their minds,
and write them on their hearts,
and I will be their God,
and they shall be my people.
And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor
and each one his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’
for they shall all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest.
For I will be merciful toward their iniquities,
and I will remember their sins no more.”

In verse 9, we learn that the new covenant will not be like the covenant made with their fathers.

So what is different about this covenant?

The difference is that God’s people will not want to break the new covenant. They will want to keep the Torah because it will be written on their hearts.

It proceeds:

Hebrews 8:10

For they did not continue in my covenant,
and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.
For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel
after those days, declares the Lord:
I will put my laws into their minds,
and write them on their hearts,
and I will be their God,
and they shall be my people.

The problem is that the covenant was not followed before, but now it will be, as the Torah will be written on our hearts by the Spirit, CAUSING us to follow the Torah. Again, Ezekiel 36 saying the exact same thing.

Ezekiel 36:26-27

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. **And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.**

So, what is “new” about the New Covenant?

The House of Judah never came out of covenant with Yehovah. The House of Judah did not return with their whole heart, but they were not divorced like the House of Israel.

Jeremiah 3:6-10

The Lord (Yehovah) said to me in the days of King Josiah: “Have you seen what she did, that faithless one, Israel, how she went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and there played the whore? And I thought, ‘After she has done all this she will return to me,’ but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. She saw that for all the adulteries of that faithless one, Israel, I had sent her away with a decree of divorce. Yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but she too went and played the whore. Because she took her whoredom lightly, she polluted the land, committing adultery with stone and tree. Yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to me with her whole heart, but in pretense, declares the Lord (Yehovah).”

So, the New Covenant is not new for the House of Judah. The House of Judah is known today as Jews, which is derived from shortened slang from the two tribes that consists of the House of Ju-dah.

The problem that Ju-dah has is that they did not come back with their whole heart. The new covenant will solve for that, as we’ll see in a moment. On the other hand, the House of Israel was completely divorced, they became out of covenant, and thus they need to be back in covenant with Yehovah. They need to be renewed to covenant with Yehovah

The House of Israel consisted of 10 tribes that were assimilated into Assyria and they lost their identity, in all effect, becoming Gentiles.

There are also gentiles, like Ruth for example, that had no traced lineage to either the House of Israel or the House of Judah...instead, they are grafted in. For more on that subject, we recommend our teaching “[Grafted In](#).” For these types of Gentiles, like most of us, the covenant is completely new, as those in this group have not been in covenant with Yehovah, unlike the House of Judah and the House of Israel.

According to Jeremiah 31:33, the House of Israel is to be renewed back into covenant that the House of Judah never left (Jeremiah 3:6-10).

Jeremiah 31:33

For this is the covenant that I will make with the **house of Israel** after those days, declares the Lord (Yehovah): **I will put my law (TORAH) within them, and I will write it on their hearts.**

The House of Israel is renewed back into covenant, which includes the writing of the Torah on the Heart, which also solves for the problem Judah had while still being in covenant:

Jeremiah 3:10

Yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to me with her whole heart, but in pretense, declares the Lord. (Yehovah)”

For more on the House of Israel and the House of Judah being renewed back together as one in the New Covenant, we recommend the teachings “[The Lost Sheep](#)” and “[What is the Gospel](#).”

The difference with this covenant, unlike the covenant given to Israel's fathers, is that there is a promise that we will want to keep the Torah when He gives us a heart transplant (Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 36:26-27). And this leaves us with the last verse in Hebrews chapter 8.

Hebrews 8:13

In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

The previous covenant was written on stony hearts, and all His people need to come back into covenant whether renewed, or like the gentiles being brought into a new covenant with Yehovah.

In this sense, the new covenant is renewing His people back into covenant with Him by renewing them back into loving God and by following His Torah.

It is a new covenant for those gentiles that are grafted in (Romans 10) as the Torah is new for them...a renewed covenant for the House of Israel, and a change of heart for all, including the House of Judah.

It is a new covenant, but the same Torah.

The stony heart does not want His Torah and it breaks His covenant.

The heart of flesh loves Him and His Torah.

Which heart do you have?

We hope that this teaching has blessed you, and remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net