

THE NEW COVENANT

What is it?

A covenant is often described as "An agreement between two or more parties outlining mutual rights and responsibilities." The Old Testament lists several covenants between individuals such as David and Jonathan; King David and Abner; King Solomon and Shemei, one of his subjects, but our interest is in the Covenant with Yahweh. The common word for covenant in Hebrew is berith; in Greek it is diatheke, meaning "last will and testament," both are understood as covenants.

It is Yahweh Who initiates His covenants; first with Noah, (Gen. 9:8-17), then Abram (Gen. 15 and 17), and later with Abraham's descendants, the Israelites of Exodus (19-24). It is this covenant which holds our interest, for it is the same covenant Yahweh made years ago with ancient Israel which the present-day Jews give lip-service, but do not fully keep. Yahweh emphasizes He will make a new Covenant with the house of Israel (10 tribes) and the house of Judah, (2 tribes). Note that in giving the house of Israel the law at Sinai, Yahweh considered Himself Israel's husband (Ezek. 16:8).

THE NEW COVENANT

The book of Hebrews has the most to say about the New Covenant:

"For if that first covenant had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith Yahweh, when I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith Yahweh." (Heb. 8:7-9 AV)

Comprehending Israel's failure at Mt. Sinai is the key to knowing what the New Covenant was to correct. History provides a record of Israel's failure in keeping the Old Covenant. Within 40 days Israel broke the Covenant they had made with Yahweh (Exodus 24). Moses was yet on Mount Sinai receiving the tables of stone upon which were inscribed the Ten Commandments, the basics of the Covenant. Before Moses returned, Israel had succumbed to their old pagan ways in Egypt and returned to the worship they had known in Egypt (Exodus 32). Aaron was caught up in the excitement and fashioned the golden calf to represent the deity which had by a series of miracles brought them out of Egypt. In spite of the protection from awesome plagues Yahweh had wrought on delivering Israel from Egypt, the miracles of the manna, the quail, the quavering trumpet blasts, the fiery, smoking mountain—all of this was forgotten. Never has any nation ever had such miracles performed for their benefit, yet, to no avail. Forgotten too, was the command not to have any deities before them and Almighty Yahweh, or any worldly likeness of any kind, (Exodus 20:3-4). The influence of Egypt was so strong Israel felt a compulsion to have a talisman or object they could see, touch and worship to help keep them in sight of and contact with the one they worshiped. They were declaring the true Elohim, Yahweh, was represented by their man-made idol. They were trying to get a "handle" on religion patterned after Egyptian worship.

ISRAEL'S FAULT

Israel saw nothing wrong with having an idol they could look at and give credit to this deity as the one that brought them out of the land of Egypt. Moses had been upon the mount for some time; long enough to make the people feel abandoned and without a leader. The golden calf was tangible and familiar evidence of their worship. To this Yahweh says, *"There is a way that seemeth right to man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death."* (Proverbs 16:25)

Aaron was amenable to their desires, even declaring certain feast days of his own devising (Exodus 32:4-5). He evidently saw nothing wrong with Israel's activities. Everything was carried out to honor Yahweh. The image was to represent Him and was a reminder that He was among them. The feast Aaron declared was for the true Yahweh, and the play that followed was for all Israel to rejoice before Him. It was not according to the way Moses had taught, but the people felt they were pleasing Yahweh by adding what appeared good in their own eyes.

What exactly was Israel's fault? Yahweh said He would make a New Covenant to correct the fault that was with the people. The fault was with THEM! Simply put, Israel did not have the heart to obey. Israel could not differentiate between the true Elohim Yahweh and the pagan concepts of Egypt which they had just left. The people lacked knowledge of Yahweh. They did not understand the ways of Yahweh and how He wanted to be worshiped. They needed a heart to obey and a mind to understand His ways. Hosea says it best:

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy Elohim, I will also forget thy children." {destroyed: Heb. cut off} (Hosea 4:6 AV)

Much like the people today, Israel determined that whatever they themselves decided in their worship of Yahweh was acceptable with Him. They preferred the familiar worship of Egypt. They could not comprehend that worship contrary to Yahweh's wishes displeased Him. Deviation from true worship angers Him! Yahweh has chosen the days, the times, and how He wishes to be worshiped. The biggest "Christian" celebrations of Easter and Christmas are nowhere commanded in the Bible. Neither is Sunday, Halloween, New Years or Lent, but people observe these days with just as much authority as ancient Israel worshiped the golden calf. These pagan celebrations have been baptized and given new meanings and functions in the churches, and are supposedly to worship Yahweh.

CARNAL, FLESHLY MIND

Paul contends the problem is the human spirit, the human attitude or mind. This is what we are to overcome, for the fleshly mind is at enmity with Yahweh and not subject to the law of Yahweh:

"For to be carnally minded [is] death; but to be spiritually minded [is] life and peace. Because the carnal mind [is] enmity against Yahweh for it is not subject to the law of Yahweh, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please Yahweh." (Rom 8:6-9 AV)

The mind of unconverted man is not subject to Yahweh's law and rebels at obedience. Because carnal, fleshly man rejects the way of Yahweh, spurns His knowledge and truth, he is unable to obey Yahweh. Israel was no exception. They needed the laws of Yahweh to guide them:

"Not every one that saith unto me, Master, Master, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Master, Master, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" (Mat 7:22 KJV)

No matter how many miracles one might observe, even of the most dramatic and convincing type, such as ancient Israel witnessed for 40 years, there is no guarantee the people will remain faithful. The Israelites witnessed more miracles and signs by Yahweh than any other people on the face of the planet, but it did not last. Miracles by themselves do not bring understanding or obedience. Miracles help draw attention, which is why the early Apostles were able to perform fantastic miracles in the book of Acts. It was not the miracles or the speaking in tongues which convinced the people in Acts chapter two, but the message Peter brought plus the influence of the Holy Spirit that day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit from Yahweh through Yahshua opened up the hearts and minds of the people. By making His Holy Spirit available to mankind through His Son Yahshua, Yahweh changes the heart and attitudes of people.

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith Yahweh; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them an Elohim and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know Yahweh: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." (Hebrews 8:9-13 AV)

When one has Yahweh's Holy Spirit, the carnal nature is overcome. No longer does one have the fleshly, stubborn nature to twist, pervert, substitute, question or rebel at Yahweh's word. When humankind is given Yahweh's Spirit, a desire to learn of Yahweh's ways follows. One has in both heart and mind the goal to learn more and the desire to obey. It is then mankind takes on the very nature of Yahweh and Yahshua. One is in complete harmony and attitude with both Father and Son.

WHO IS IN THE NEW COVENANT?

Note that the new Covenant is made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. Nothing is mentioned in making any Covenant with Gentiles. Neither do we find the new Covenant is made with the "church" (Greek ekklesia—meaning "the called out ones"). Paul boldly states the Covenants are with his kinsmen Israel:

Who are Israelites; whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of Elohim, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom is Messiah as concerning the flesh, who is over all, Elohim blessed for ever. Amen. But it is not as though the word of Elohim hath come to nought. For they are not all Israel, that are of Israel:" (Rom. 9:4-6 ASV)

Note that Paul says the Israelites are the favored people today! It is not the Jews, but it is Israel. To them belongs the Adoption into sonship with Yahweh. They are to attain the glory of a glorified body. The Promises of the covenants go to Israel. Israel is to be teachers of the Law both now and in the Kingdom! Israel is to make Yahweh known to the world!

In His wisdom, Yahweh is calling out a people today to be a dedicated group to Him. Known as *the called out ones*, this sanctified group is given the will to obey. They really do not fully understand why they should obey in all things, but they have the will or obsession to obey from the heart:

"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith Yahweh, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them." (Hebrews 10:16 AV)

BE GRAFTED INTO THE TREE

Yahweh made His covenant with Israel and Judah. But He also makes provision for Gentiles to be grafted into the Abrahamic olive tree. Paul goes to great lengths to demonstrate the goodness of Yahweh's tender mercies in removing some of the unworthy branches from the tree, and replacing these branches with Gentiles! From the two-branched tree of Judah and Israel, Yahweh is replacing those He has removed with Gentiles:

"I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? By no means! but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy." (Romans 11:11 AV)

Although the Lost Ten Tribes known as Israel never returned from the Assyrian captivity, that neither deters nor changes Yahweh's grand overall plan for mankind. He emphasizes that to Israel belongs the adoption, the glory and Covenants as well as the giving of the law, the service and promises. Paul makes the point that not all Israelites he refers to are born from Israelite parents. He is now calling out certain people to replace Israelites and become the Israel Yahweh is seeking. Paul says they are not all Israel which are of Israel, Romans 9:6. A Gentile can become an Israelite through faith in Yahshua!

Yahweh offers His Covenant and promises blessings and opportunities beyond our wildest dreams. We have nothing to offer in return except a full commitment of obedience. Even obeying Him completely is not of our own power, but the strength comes from Him. He offers us everything promised to Abram in Genesis 12:1-3; 15; 17; and 22. A new Covenant was promised in the Old Testament, a Covenant built upon better promises. Gentiles can become Israelites and obtain eternal life. Paul writes that if we are of the faith, we are children of Abraham, Galatians 3:6-7.

CAN WE BE ISRAEL?

If we are to possess these promises mentioned above, how do we fit into the picture? We must become Israelites! Paul said they are not all Israel that are of Israel. Gentiles (non-Israelites and lost Israelites) are being called to become the true, active Israelites Yahweh seeks today. Because Israel was stiff-necked and had rejected Yahweh's laws and way of life, Yahweh is now calling individual Gentiles to replace the stubborn, stiff-necked Israelites. This can be seen from Romans 11 where the olive tree's branches of Judah and Israel are being replaced with Gentiles:

"For if thou wast cut out of that which is by nature a wild olive tree, and wast grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree; how much more shall these, which are the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery, lest ye be wise in your own conceits, that a hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved: even as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer; He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: And this is my covenant unto them, When I shall take away their sins." (Romans 11:24-27 ASV)

Paul often refers to the "called out ones" as the elect or the election. This usually refers to the Gentiles or "lost Israelites," Yahweh has opened the door to those who have willing hearts to become the Israel He is seeking. Whether we are Jews, or of the lost tribe of Israel or Gentiles, we are being called to become His people. Paul gives an even clearer example of this in writing to the Ephesians:

"Wherefore remember, that once ye, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision [Jews], in the flesh, made by hands; that ye were at that time separate from Messiah, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without Yahweh in the world. But now in Messiah

Yahshua ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Messiah. For he is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition," (Ephesians 2:11-14 ASV).

It is important to notice those who are being called today include both the Jew and Gentile, as well as Israelite. Gentiles are to be circumcised in mind and heart and are expected to keep Yahweh's law. The initial converts to Peter's stirring message to those observing Pentecost in Acts 2 were all Jews.

The true believer is no longer alienated from Israel, but can be grafted into the olive tree and become an Israelite through baptism into Yahshua Messiah. Through baptism we become Yahweh's sons and daughters. Many today miss the point that we are grafted into the olive tree that represents the true ancient Israelites, the people who were given the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai. Since then both Jew and Israelite have hardened their hearts and are not in full accord with Yahweh. Paul refers to the true believer who is serving Yahweh as a New Testament Israelite:

"And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of Yahweh." (Galatians 6:16 AV)

BECOMING ONE STICK

Most religionists teach of an underlying animosity between two special groups of Bible-believers, One is known as "the church," and the other is known as "the Jews." Somehow the message comes across that Yahweh failed in His attempt to teach His way of life to the house of Israel anciently through Moses by sacrifices and offerings. Animal sacrifices and the shedding of blood did not bring obedience, nor did it change the heart of the people. The people consistently took up the worship of the heathen, ignoring the warnings of Moses to be faithful to Yahweh.

It is in the New Testament we learn that animal sacrifices are set aside by the offering of Yahshua's life for the sins of the world. Through repentance and baptism we are given the Holy Spirit which will change our heart and attitude to be in harmony with the minds of Yahweh and Yahshua. Now we offer up spiritual gifts of obedience to Yahweh. We accept the ransom price He paid and strive to walk in His footsteps. We obey Yahweh from the heart.

AN ERRONEOUS TEACHING

"Replacement Theology alleges Yahweh has given up on the Jewish people and has now busied himself with "the Church." He has abandoned or set aside His plan for the Jews and Israel and is now supposedly calling out a Gentile people as the "chosen ones." The Abrahamic promise given to Israel back in Exodus 19-24 is now supposedly offered to Gentiles:

"But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for Elohim's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:" (1 Peter 2:9 ASV)

The Bible teaches there is one way to enter the New Jerusalem, which is through one of the 12 gates named for each of the tribes of Israel:

"Having the glory of Yahweh: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel." (Revelation 21:9-12 AV)

Those having the right to the tree of life are those that observe the Ten Commandments. They enter the city by one of the gates named for the 12 tribes of Israel:

"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." (Revelation 22:14 AV)

There is but one way to enter the New Jerusalem and be in the Kingdom. It must be through one of the gates named for Israel. There is no other entrance. The churches are puzzled by the fact the New Jerusalem has no open door for the "Church"! The entire program of the New Covenant centers around our Savior, Yahshua.

It is through baptism into Yahshua's saving name that we are given the Holy Spirit. This earnest (down payment) of the indwelling Spirit is now to grow and change us to the image and stature of the Savior. We are sealed with His name until the day of our redemption. (Ephesians 4:30) When the Savior returns, whether living or dead, we will be changed from flesh and bone to spirit bodies and become immortal.

Now our sacrifices are spiritual. Obedience is from the heart. We overcome our human nature and consider things from Yahweh's perspective.

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