

**Question:**

There have been many questions as it pertains to Adonai's covenants so the next few weeks of Ask The Rabbi will be used to clarify and thus answer many questions.

**Response:**

There is considerable confusion regarding Adonai's covenants within the community of believers (the church). The confusion encompasses who have these covenants been made with, who do they apply to and what is their relevance today. The purpose here is to provide some clarity and perspective to the confusion that exists today. Before going into detail, we must first understand some terminology.

What is a covenant?

From a biblical perspective, it is an agreement between Adonai and his people in which Adonai makes certain promises and requires certain behavior from His people in return. Honoring and keeping the covenant with Adonai would lead to blessings and provisions, while breaking the covenant with Adonai would lead to judgment and curses. I will expand on this definition as we look at the covenants that Adonai has made. Within the framework of Adonai's covenants there would be a sign identifying the covenant.

The Hebrew word used in relation to covenant is b'rit. On our web site, you will likely find the term B'rit Hadoshah which means New Covenant. You will not find a word in Hebrew that translates directly into the term testament.

You will also hear the term testament ("old testament" and "new testament") used in connection with Adonai's promises.

In that the word testament doesn't exist in Hebrew...what exactly is a testament?

It is a term derived to be a legal document, created while the person is still living with the intention of providing instructions to survivors after their death. It is primarily used for the transference of property from the deceased person to a surviving family member, friend or organization.

As mentioned above, the term testament isn't from a Hebrew word, but derived from the Greek word diathede. This word is defined to mean contract, covenant or testament.

When we define covenant and testament, even though today they are considered to be and used interchangeably, they are very different. When Adonai made a covenant, it was to establish a relationship between Himself and His creation, based upon mutual commitments and involved promises, obligations, and rituals. The intent of Adonai's covenants are to ultimately lead to the restoration for His creation, mankind. Not all covenants required death, in order for them to be enacted.

There are two types of covenants that Adonai has made - Universal and non-Universal, and can be found throughout Torah and the Tenach as a whole. We will look at all of these covenants made by Adonai, but our primary focus for this article will be on the non-Universal covenants Adonai made with Avraham and include Yitz'chak (Isaac), Ya'akkov (Jacob), Moshe (Moses) and David. This article wouldn't be complete without the New Covenant.

## Universal Covenants

Adonai made universal covenants that whether you are Jewish or not, directly affect you. The impact of these covenants are still felt today. They are for all of mankind, His creation. For the purpose of this article there are two Universal covenants:

1. The Adamic Covenant
2. The Noahic Covenant

Many, believe there is a third universal covenant, the Edenic Covenant. My reasoning for not having this same view is provided below.

These Universal covenants were made with all mankind, all nations prior to their establishment. They predated the covenants that Adonai would make with Israel.

## Adamic (Mankind) Covenant

There are those who have taught of the Adamic Covenant as being in two parts: the Edenic Covenant (innocence) and the Adamic Covenant (grace). Two covenants - one before man's fall and one after man's fall. In this manner, I would have to disagree with this extremely common view. It isn't that there were two different covenants or two covenants in one, but rather one covenant made with mankind in Eden and the results / consequences for not keeping Adonai's instruction.

"Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, in the likeness of ourselves; and let them rule over the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the animals, and over all the earth, and over every crawling creature that crawls on the earth." So God created humankind in his own image; in the image of God he created him: male and female he created them. God blessed them: God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea, the birds in the air and every living creature that crawls on the earth." Then God said, "Here! Throughout the whole earth I am giving you as food every seed-bearing plant and every tree with seed-bearing fruit. And to every wild animal, bird in the air and creature crawling on the earth, in which there is a living soul, I am giving as food every kind of green plant." And that is how it was." Genesis 1:26 - 30

Based on our definition of covenant, Adonai gave mankind the following:

- Created in the image of Adonai
- Were given the responsibility to take care of the garden
- Were given dominion to rule over the entire Earth, including the animals kingdom
- Were given every seed bearing plant and tree for food. (with the exception of one)
- Were instructed to inhabit all the Earth, to be done through reproduction
- Were vegetarians

Adonai's lone instruction for mankind was:

- "Adonai, God, gave the person this order: "You may freely eat from every tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. You are not to eat from it, because on the day that you eat from it, it will become certain that you will die." Genesis 2:16 - 17

In all that Adonai had done, He only had one primary instruction, "one don't" - to refrain from eating of the fruit of one tree, that being the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

There was only one instruction given by Adonai. Why?

There was no need for a vast list of instructions, because the reality of what was good and evil was not instilled into Adonai's creation. The knowledge of good and evil were acquired by mankind through our act of disobedience. This happened after our creation. Adonai didn't intend for us to have this knowledge, or else He would have provided it. This moment in time is extremely significant. There is a bigger picture scenario that will play out and will be addressed in a future article.

We can look at this one tree that was set apart from all others in the garden as the origin of tithing. Everything that Adonai created belongs to Him. However, He gave it all to us, but asks for a portion to remain His, sanctified, set apart. That one tree was off limits.

The results of mankind's transgression were as follows: (Genesis 3:14 - 24)

The one who instigated and deceived the man and woman was punished: Adonai, God, said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all livestock and wild animals. You will crawl on your belly and eat dust as long as you live. (v.14)

In addition to his punishment, continual confrontation and ultimate defeat: I will put animosity between you and the woman, and between your descendant and her descendant; he will bruise your head, and you will bruise his heel." (v.15)

This is the first promise from Adonai regarding Messiah. Out of this tragedy, Adonai promises that one would be born from the woman, who was deceived by the serpent, and would destroy our adversary the deceiver (Ha Satan).

As a result, for her part in this tragedy: To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pain in childbirth. You will bring forth children in pain. Your desire will be toward your husband, but he will rule over you." (v.16)

Adam was given the instruction directly from Adonai and therefore should have known not to eat, yet he still did. In addition, it was his responsibility to convey this to his wife, yet she still did as the serpent said. There is also more to this story than many currently understand. That is also for another article.

To Adam he said, "Because you listened to what your wife said and ate from the tree about which I gave you the order, 'You are not to eat from it,' the ground cursed on your account; you will work hard to eat from it as long as you live. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat field plants. You will eat bread by the sweat of your forehead till you return to the ground for you were taken out of it: you are dust, and you will return to dust." (v.17 - 19)

Even in their disobedience, Adonai still made provision for them, by clothing them:

The man called his wife Havah (life), because she was the mother of all living. Adonai, God, made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. (v.20)

This can be construed as the first sacrifice, whereby Adonai made a covering for mankind as a result of our transgression.

The final outcome of their disobedience was expulsion from Eden. Even greater still was that they had experienced spiritual death. Their innocence was gone, with the revelation of what was good and evil. Even though they were still physically alive, a part of them died at this time. In time, they would also experience a physical death, for which was never intended by Adonai.

Adonai, God, said, "See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil. Now, to prevent his putting out his hand and taking also from the tree of life, eating, and living forever" therefore Adonai, God, sent him out of the garden of 'Eden to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So he drove the man out, and he placed at the east of the garden of 'Eden the k'ruvim and a flaming sword which turned in every direction to guard the way to the tree of life. (v.21 - 24)

The results of not keeping this covenant with Adonai, a life that was to be without curse, has led to a life full of strife and struggle:

- Enmity between Satan and the Woman and her descendants.
- Painful childbirth for women.
- Marital strife between husband and wife.
- The ground is cursed to the point where produce that once was abundant, now man had to work hard to produce food.
- Introduction of thorns and thistles.
- Survival is now a struggle.
- Death introduced.
- Death will be the inescapable fate of all living things.

I have used a personal tense (our, us, we) when referring to Adam (mankind) in that regardless of who the specific people were (Adam and Eve or You and Me), the outcome would have still been the same. A deception occurred, a transgression happened and today we are experiencing the consequences of our actions. Today, are we not enticed by the things that we can't have, rather than the things we have complete access to?

Sound familiar?

Some will argue that this characteristic is a result of "original sin". However, the same thing happened when we were still innocent and without the knowledge of good and evil.

## Noachic Covenant

Many years had passed since Adonai created mankind. As a result of mankind's transgression and our acquisition of knowing what was good and evil, Adonai's creation chose evil. It had gotten so bad that Adonai regretted his creation of mankind.

"Adonai saw that the people on earth were very wicked, that all the imaginings of their hearts were always of evil only. Adonai regretted that he had made humankind on the earth; it grieved his heart. Adonai said, "I will wipe out humankind, whom I have created, from the whole earth; and not only human beings, but animals, creeping things and birds in the air; for I regret that I ever made them." Genesis 6:5 - 6

"The earth was corrupt before God, the earth was filled with violence. God saw the earth, and, yes, it was corrupt; for all living beings had corrupted their ways on the earth. God said to Noach, "The end of all living beings has come before me, for because of them the earth is filled with violence. I will destroy them along with the earth." Genesis 6:11 -13

Adonai found one person for whom He would start again - Noach and his family.

"But Noach found grace in the sight of Adonai Here is the history of Noach. In his generation, Noach was a man righteous and wholehearted; Noach walked with God. Noach fathered three sons, Shem, Ham and Yefet." Genesis 6:8 - 10

Through a great flood, everything that Adonai had created, ultimately becoming corrupt was destroyed. The exception being, what / whom was on the ark that Adonai had instructed Noach to build.

"But I will establish my covenant with you; you will come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife and your sons' wives with you." Genesis 6:18

As a result of this purging by Adonai, through Noach, he brought forth new order for mankind by establishing a set of moral laws that would become the foundation for non-Jewish believers in Messiah, regarding their responsibilities. Within Judaism the Rabbis considered gentiles who lived according to the Noachide Laws were regarded as "righteous gentiles" and considered assured for a

place in olam haba (the world to come). This premise was based on those living outside the land of Israel yet chose to follow God. This is based on certain aspects of Torah only applying to those who reside in the land. Within Messianic Judaism the issue of gentiles coming to faith in the Jewish Messiah was the issue of the day. The discussion centered around whether they were to become Jewish through circumcision and be accountable to all of Torah (written and oral). The decision is accounted in Acts 15:19 - 21:

"Therefore, my opinion is that we should not put obstacles in the way of the Goyim who are turning to God. Instead, we should write them a letter telling them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from fornication, from what is strangled and from blood. For from the earliest times, Moshe has had in every city those who proclaim him, with his words being read in the synagogues every Shabbat."

There is additional teaching required to fully understand this passage, but for the purpose of this article, let me state that the Noachide laws are a starting point for all non-Jewish believers. Growth in maturity as a believer in Messiah is based on the last verse (5:21) that refers to Moshe (referring to Torah) being taught in the synagogues every Shabbat.

After the rain had stopped and the waters subsided, Noah and his family came out of the ark, built an altar and offered up sacrifices to Adonai:

"Noah built an altar to Adonai. Then he took from every clean animal and every clean bird, and he offered burnt offerings on the altar. Adonai smelled the sweet aroma, and Adonai said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, since the imaginings of a person's heart are evil from his youth; nor will I ever again destroy all living things, as I have done. So long as the earth exists, sowing time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night will not cease." Genesis 8:20 - 22

Adonai promises to Noah are:

1. Never to curse the ground again as a result of mankind's sinful nature.
2. Never to destroy all living things again.
3. The seasons will not cease
4. Never to flood the earth again (Genesis (9:12 - 17)

Noah's obligations can be found in what are known as the Noachide laws. So, what exactly are the Noachide Laws?

There are a total of seven Noachide Laws. Six of them reaffirm Adonai's first covenant with mankind.

1. Prohibited from Idolatry - Establishing other things to be gods and worshiping them as gods. This can be understood within the universal covenant that Adonai made with mankind.
2. Prohibited from Immoral Sexual Relations - "This is why a man is to leave his father and mother and stick with his wife, and they are to be one flesh." Genesis 2:24
3. Prohibited from Stealing - "Adonai, God, gave the person this order: "You may freely eat from every tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. You are not to eat from it, because on the day that you eat from it, it will become certain that you will die." Genesis 2:16 - 17
4. Prohibited from Eating Blood - "Every moving thing that lives will be food for you; just as I gave you green plants before, so now I give you everything only flesh with its life, which is its blood, you are not to eat." Genesis 9:3 - 4
5. Prohibited from Blasphemy - "To Adam he said, "Because you listened to what your wife said and ate from the tree about which I gave you the order" Genesis 3:17

What is Blasphemy? Behavior of disrespect; the act of depriving something of its sacred character, in this instance, not adhering to Adonai's instruction regarding the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Something that is sacred is set apart from everything else.

6. Prohibited from Murder - "Whoever sheds human blood, by a human being will his own blood be shed; for God made human beings in his image." Genesis 9:6
7. Establishing a Legal System to maintain Justice and Order through Accountability - "I will certainly demand an accounting for the blood of your lives: I will demand it from every animal and from every human being. I will demand from every human being an accounting for the life of his fellow human being." Genesis 9:5

Many of these instructions were part of the first covenant Adonai made with mankind, and therefore reaffirmed. In addition to the above, Noah and his family were given the same instruction that Adam was given:

"God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth." Genesis 9:1

You will notice a pattern with each covenant, in that they will build upon the previous covenant, not abolishing or replacing them. The common misconception is that when Adonai creates a new covenant, it replaces the previous covenant. This view has led to errors in understanding that have carried on throughout the generations.

Adonai's covenant with Noah also included another promise and a sign to seal it. The promise - Adonai would never again flood the earth again.

"I will establish my covenant with you that never again will all living beings be destroyed by the waters of a flood, and there will never again be a flood to destroy the earth." Genesis 9:11

The Sign - "Here is the sign of the covenant I am making between myself and you and every living creature with you, for all generations to come: I am putting my rainbow in the cloud it will be there as a sign of the covenant between myself and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds over the earth, and the rainbow is seen in the cloud; I will remember my covenant which is between myself and you and every living creature of any kind; and the water will never again become a flood to destroy all living beings. The rainbow will be in the cloud; so that when I look at it, I will remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of any kind on the earth." God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between myself and every living creature on the earth." Genesis 9:12 - 17

When we see a rainbow, it signifies that Adonai is remembering His covenant with Noah.

Additional information can be found regarding the Noachide laws in the Talmud, also known as the "Oral Law":

"Our Rabbis taught: seven precepts were the sons of Noah commanded: social laws; to refrain from blasphemy, idolatry; adultery; bloodshed; robbery; and eating flesh cut from a living animal." (Tractate Sanhedrin 56a)

"These commandments may be regarded as the foundations of all human and moral progress. Judaism has both a national and a universal outlook in life. In the former sense it is particularistic, setting up a people distinct and separate from others by its peculiar religious law. But in the latter, it recognizes that moral progress and its concomitant Divine love and approval are the privilege and obligation of all mankind. And hence the Talmud lays down the seven Noachian precepts, by the observance of which all mankind may attain spiritual perfection, and without which moral death must inevitably ensue. That perhaps is the idea underlying the assertion (passim) that a heathen is liable to death for the neglect of any of these. The last mentioned is particularly instructive as showing the great importance attached to the humane treatment of animals; so much so, that it is declared to be fundamental to human righteousness." (Footnote from Sanhedrin 56a)

From Sanhedrin 56b:

'Social laws.' Were then the children of Noah bidden to observe these? Surely it has been taught: The Israelites were given ten precepts at Marah, seven of which had already been accepted by the children of Noah, to which were added at Marah social laws, the Sabbath, and honoring one's parents; 'Social laws,' for it is written, There [at Marah] he made for them a statute and an ordinance; 'the Sabbath and honoring one's parents'. for it is written, As the Lord thy God commanded thee! — R. Nahman replied in the name of Rabbah b. Abbuha: The addition at Marah was only in respect of an assembly, witnesses, and formal admonition. If so, why say 'to which were added social laws'? — But Raba replied thus: The addition was only in respect of the laws of fines. But even so, should it not have been said, 'additions were made in the social laws'? — But R. Aha b. Jacob answered thus: The Baraitha informs us that they were commanded to set up law courts in every district and town. But were not the sons of Noah likewise commanded to do this? Surely it has been taught: Just as the Israelites were ordered to set up law courts in every district and town, so were the sons of Noah likewise enjoined to set up law courts in every district and town! — But Raba answered thus: The author of this Baraitha [which states that social laws were added at Marah] is a Tanna of the School of Manasseh, who omitted social laws and blasphemy [from the list of Noachian precepts] and substituted emasculation and the forbidden mixture [in plants, ploughing, etc.]. For a Tanna of the School of Manasseh taught: The sons of Noah were given seven precepts. viz., [prohibition of] idolatry, adultery, murder, robbery, flesh cut from a living animal, emasculation and forbidden mixtures. R. Judah said: Adam was prohibited idolatry only, for it is written, And the Lord God commanded Adam. R. Judah b. Bathyra maintained: He was forbidden blasphemy too. Some add social laws. With whom does the following statement of Rab Judah in the name of Rab agree: viz., [God said to Adam,] I am God, do not curse Me; I am God, do not exchange Me for another; I am God, let My fear be upon you? — This agrees with the last mentioned