

The Covenant Debate

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Introduction: In our last teaching we discovered that the purpose of the “Good News” message was to sift Yisrael out of the Nations but also to draw all those whom YHWH was calling unto himself. We also came to understand how the Priesthood was changed and how Torah played an important role within the early Nazarene Assemblies. The message expressed to the early Assemblies was therefore that Salvation was by faith in Yahshua and that the Works of Torah according to Ya’acov were the evidence of that Salvation working in the lives of believers producing Character & good deeds.

There is however an even graver concept that is causing division among believers whether they are Christian or Yahudim (Jews) including Netzarim or Messianic & Hebrew Roots. It is therefore my desire to gain some understanding in the area of Covenant in what is commonly called the New Covenant or the Renewed Covenant & how these different groups may seek to understand it. Since we seek to establish the truth of Torah it is most important that the concept of Covenant & what has been revealed through Yahshua be explored therefore we need to become Bereans who search the scriptures to see if what is said is compliant to the Eternal Word of YHWH. Through these studies it is important that we know how to reason in a way that explains our stance and that is compliant with the Word of Elohim and does not bend to the whims of Doctrine.

What Truly is a Covenant:

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Many today confuse the word Covenant with Testament. A testament as in last will & testament from a Greek perception always gives maximum weight to the most recent therefore a new Testament makes null and void any previous. We could say a Testament is an agreement between parties that do not trust each other since they relate to disposal of property after death. From this understanding I hope we can begin to understand why many take this sort of approach to the Scriptures since they are suspiciously called the Old & New Testament but is this warranted.

Covenant however from a Hebrew perspective is far different. It is best defined as an ongoing relationship with no appointed end. Rather than being a legal document, a covenant is a commitment to develop a certain kind of continuing relationship. A Covenant being such an endless relationship & agreement relies on trust even after one party dies.

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It was actually Marcion a post-Apostolic church founder who was considered even by the Christian Church as a Heretic that coined the term Old & New Testament suggesting that the New replaced the Old since he thought the Elohim of the Yahudim (Jews) was an evil Elohim (God) of wrath, judgement and terror. The consequence of using these terms has resulted in an anti-Torah deception and a permissiveness of Covenant breaking that is commonplace.

Sadly the western mind is programmed to think linear therefore from one point to another but the Hebrew Mindset is rather cyclical therefore the word “Chadashah” as in the Brit Chadashah is best understood as a cycle of restoration or return to a previous state and therefore can be rendered as “renewed”. A more accurate Title for the supposed New Testament would be the “Renewed Covenant” or the “Restored Relationship”.

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We saw in our “Day of Atonement” Yom Kippur message that the teaching highlighted man’s desire to return to the state that Adam was in at the time that Yahweh walked with him in the Garden of Eden before man sinned. This was hoped to be achieved through the Sacrifices and this hope was revealed through the images such as trees on the walls of the Beyth Ha Mikdash (Solomon’s Temple) and the images of the Cherubim (Angels) guarding the Most Kadosh place (The Holy of Holies).

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This is in effect the same truth that is revealed in Hitgalut (Revelations) when Elohim will once again fellowship with Mankind when the New Yerushalayim descends to the Earth.

The Scriptural Covenants:

Based on the definition of an ongoing relationship we could conclude that all Scripture is one Covenant beginning from Bereshith (Genesis) & concluding with Hitgalut (Revelations). However within this ongoing relationship there are Covenants with each one adding to the previous and not nullifying the previous as the following states:

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Galatians 3:17 Now this I say, the Torah that came four hundred and thirty years later, does not annul a Covenant previously confirmed by Elohim in Messiah, so as to do away with the promise.

By definition Covenant means an ongoing relationship agreement with each addition adding to the Revelation until the final revelation is achieved.

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As it stands today we have the following Covenants:

1. The Edenic Covenant.
2. The Adamic Covenant.
3. The Noahide Covenant.
4. The Abrahamic Covenant.
5. The Sinai Covenant.
6. The Davidic Covenant.
7. The Renewed Covenant.

The Prophetic Picture in the Covenants:

The major truth hidden within the Covenants is the picture of Yahshua so we will consider the Covenant YHWH made with Abram to see how it reveals Yahshua and the Favour of Yahweh:

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Bereshith (Genesis) 15:9-12 So He said to him, “Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” 10 Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. 11 And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. 12 And it came to be when the Sun was going down and a deep sleep fell upon Abram, that see, a frightening great darkness fell upon him.

What is most important is to understand the process of cutting a Covenant. There would be two participants, the sacrificial animals and the Agreement. What is remarkable in the Covenant with Abram is how it reveals a Covenant of Favour (Grace) & trust in the following verses:

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Bereshith (Genesis) 15:17 And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces.

What we come to understand by this verse is that Abram did not participate by walking between the slaughtered animals which was the customary means of cutting a Covenant, but as it tells us in verse 12 Abram fell into a deep sleep and a

burning torch, the picture of YHWH passed between the slaughtered animals. What this is revealing is that YHWH was declaring that if he or Abram broke the Covenant then he would pay the price, which was death like that of the slaughtered animals and so we see the divine picture of a loving relationship between YHWH and Abram and a beautiful image of the Covenant of Favour (Grace) which saw its fulfilment in Yahshua giving his life on the Tree.

Understanding “the New” verses “the Renewed Covenant”:

To begin to appreciate the way people have understood what translators have termed the New Covenant we need to step back & look at the Theology:

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Christian Quote:

“Christ’s work on the Cross is the New Covenant by which man is reconciled to G_d. The New Covenant is the “Law of Christ” which includes the commands of his Apostles. Thus, the New Covenant is a gracious covenant. Those included in the covenant are reconciled to G_d by grace alone, apart from anything they do. Jesus purchased a people by his death on the cross so that all those for whom he died receive full forgiveness of sins and become incurable God-lovers by the Holy Spirit. They have thus become his new creation.

This sounds so wonderful but we now need to look to the parts of Scripture that are often quoted:

1. The Problem of the New Covenant

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Luke 22:20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

The problem with this quote is that the components of cutting a Covenant are not present. Yahshua is declaring himself to be the sacrificial slaughtering but the conditions of the Covenant are not established and no participants are confirming their acceptance to it. The result is that Theologians simply conclude that whatever was taught during Yahshua’s ministry and the Apostles are the conditions but conveniently ignore all those parts that clearly teach faithfulness to the Torah. What is interesting is that the Brit Chadashah (the New Testament) contains 1,050 commands based on the Tanakh (Old Testament).

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Secondly there is a problem with the Word New as it is “Chadash” Strong’s Number H2318 in Hebrew that can mean New or Renewed with the Geek word in the Brit

Chadashah (New Testament) being “Kainos” Strong’s Number G2537 also denoting “New” or “Renewed” or to make fresh again:

I will also site a few verses as examples to demonstrate its usage:

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- Tehillah (Psalm) 51:10 “Create in me a clean heart, O Elohim; and renew (chadash) a right spirit within me.”
- Tehillah (Psalm) 103: 4 “Who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed (chadash) like the eagle's.”
- MattithYahu (Matthew) 26:29 “I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew (Chadashah) with you in My Father’s kingdom.”
- Yochanan (John) 13:34 A (Chadashah) new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.
- Yochanan Aleph (1 John) 2:7 Brethren, I write no (Chadashah) new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning.

Yochanan (John) here seems to be Schizophrenic as both verses are about loving the brethren but one appears to contradict the other until we realize he is saying that Yahshua was refreshing or making like new an old Commandment.

Accordingly, the Word used is the same in all cases and according to the Blue letter Bible the Greek rendering of it can mean new, fresh, unused, and new especially in freshness.

Therefore the understanding of a Renewal of the Covenant makes perfect sense.

2. The Conditions of the Covenant

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Ibrim (Hebrews) 8:10 This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares YHWH (the Lord). I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts.

We know that this quote is from YermeYahu (Jeremiah) but when it says that YHWH will put his Laws in their minds & on their hearts what Laws is he talking about. Surely they are not those derived by willy-nilly picking through the Nazarene Writings and allowing each person to selectively decide by themselves what basic moral commands to adhere to since all now are supposedly led by the Ruach

(Spirit) of YHWH though failing in many areas to obey his word which is supposed to be Eternal as we read in:

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Tehillah (Psalm) 111:7-8 All His precepts are sure. 8 They stand fast forever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness. 9 He has sent redemption to His people; He has commanded His covenant forever: Set-apart and awesome is His name.

At the time of this writing the Nazarene writings were not fully established or canonised so the reading in Hebrews clearly points to the Torah of Mosheh since the writer possibly Sha'ul (Paul) is quoting YermeYahu (Jeremiah) when the only Torah or Law was that as written by Mosheh as dictated to him by YHWH. When Yahudim come into Messiah then they wonderfully sense that in Messiah the Covenant is truly written on their heart in all its fullness.

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CorintYah Beyth (2 Corinthians) 3:6 Our competence is from Elohim who has made us competent as servants of a renewed Covenant not of the letter but of the Ruach (the Spirit), for the letter kills but the Ruach (Spirit) gives life.

From this reading we need to understand that Sha'ul (Paul) is referring to the means by which the Torah was transmitted. With Mosheh it was engraved on stone Tablets which worked death in that it declared people guilty as it did not have in itself the life-giving power of the Ruach (Spirit) that the Renewed Covenant promised. Sha'ul (Paul) therefore is comparing how the Covenant is now written on hearts purified through the blood of Yahshua & empowered by the Ruach Ha Kodesh to create people who are righteous. What Sha'ul (Paul) said would have shocked Yahudim (Jews) as they regarded Torah as an instrument of life:

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Shemoth Rabbah 41:1 Elohim sat on high engraving for them tablets which would give life.

The statement of Sha'ul (Paul) is in no way disrespecting Torah but rather revealing the nature of man whose heart required a dramatic renewal which is what the Renewed Covenant is all about.

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3. The Better Covenant

Ibrim (Hebrews) 8:6-8 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on

better promises. 7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. 8 Because finding fault with them,

The question now arises as to how the Covenant is better:

1. **A better Ministry:** We have now a High Priest who is seated at the right hand of the throne of Majesty, a minister of the Sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which YHWH erected and not man & whose ministry is eternal.
2. **A better Sacrifice:** Ibrim (Hebrews) 9:12 **Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.**
3. **His Death Perfects the Sanctified:** For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

This verse in no way suggests what some might suggest that once saved always saved but rather reveals that his sacrifice is sufficient for all time for those whom he is calling and are walking on the path of sanctification and obedience to the will of YHWH.

Since we read in the above verses that the covenant was found to have fault because of them the Yisraelites therefore the perfect sacrifice was needed to purify hearts that now the Torah of YHWH could be written on the hearts of the Sanctified.

From the understanding of Covenant we should now be aware that the Change in the Covenant was to purify those receiving the Torah to write it on hearts that were purified therefore removing the enmity to Torah through the work of the perfect Kohen Ha Gadol (High Priest) Yahshua who offered the perfect Sacrifice being his own blood with the only part of the Covenant unchanged being the eternal Torah of YHWH which is now written on hearts and not on Stony hearts as promised by YHWH through Ezekiel.

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The Summary of the Matter

Just as the Menorah has seven branches with the “Shamash” the central branch being the source of light so the roots to the tree being Yisrael has seven Covenants being its root system with the central root being the Renewed Covenant of Yahshua the one that gives life or purpose to the other roots that the tree may remain strong and be itself full of life and bear much fruit.

When considering the Covenants it is good to see what Sha'ul (Paul) says when he is talking to the gentiles:

Romans 11: 18 Do not boast against the branches. And if you boast remember you do not support the root but the root supports you.

It is the Yahudi (Jewish) scriptures & the promises of Messiah that support you. All the Torah & the Covenants point to Yahshua and are the roots of our faith so you do not want to cut them off. Sha'ul uses the Metaphor of the Olive tree that we are all now grafted into. Sha'ul equates this family tree of Yahudim (Jew) & Gentile with Yisrael and the roots as the Covenants that reveal Yahshua since he is the Torah in the flesh.

The holistic vision of YHWH never changes so if we neglect all the wonderful heritage of the Covenants we lose the context. Yahshua as the Messiah fulfils all the promises originally given to Yisrael into which we are all now grafted & receiving the benefits.

Amein!