

What is the “New Covenant”

See, a time is coming – declares יהוה – when I will make a new covenant with the House of Yisrael and the House of Yehudah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers, when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Mitzrayim, a covenant which they broke, though I espoused them – declares יהוה. But such is the covenant I will make with the House of Yisrael after these days – declares יהוה: I will put My Teaching into their inmost being and inscribe it upon their hearts. Then I will be their God, and they shall be My people. (Yirmiyahu 31:31-33)¹

What exactly is a “covenant?” A covenant – brit in Hebrew – means covenant, alliance, or pledge and is used 284 times in the Tanakh. It comes from the root word bara which means to create, shape, or form.

Brit is most often translated as covenant. A Biblical covenant is an agreement between two parties – generally between God and an individual or God and B’nei Yisrael. The very heart of Torah is the belief that God chose B’nei Yisrael and made a brit with them.

Now then, if you will obey Me faithfully and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all the peoples. Indeed, all the earth is Mine, but you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to B’nei Yisrael. (Shemot 19:5-6)¹

As can be seen, a brit, is an agreement made between God and man. God makes certain promises while at the same time requiring certain behavior from man in return.

As can be plainly seen, the new covenant spoken about in Yirmiyahu is an agreement between B’nei Yisrael and God. It is **not** a “New Testament” as Christianity would like us to believe.

There is absolutely no indication in Yirmiyahu that a new set of laws or a new set of “scripture” would be given during the Messianic Age. What Yirmiyahu is speaking about is a renewal of the original covenant given to B’nei Yisrael. The covenant is an agreement between God and B’nei Yisrael that B’nei Yisrael will obey the Torah and God will bless them.

The new covenant spoken about in Yirmiyahu is a renewal of the original covenant given to B’nei Yisrael. The term chadasha can mean “new” but it comes from the root chadash which means renewal. There will be a renewed national commitment to abide by God’s Torah. There will be a greater level of commitment by B’nei Yisrael which will in turn bring about blessings from God.

Yirmiyahu’s own words emphasize the fact that this “new” covenant is not an abrogation of the original covenant with B’nei Yisrael but is instead a renewal and a re-emphasis upon the original covenant given to our forefathers.

Thus said יהוה, Who established the sun for light by day, the laws of moon and stars for light by night, Who stirs up the sea into roaring waves, Whose name is יהוה צבאות: If these laws should ever be annulled by Me – declared יהוה – only then would the offspring of Yisrael cease to be a nation before Me for all time. (Yirmiyahu 31:35-36)¹

Thus said יהוה: As surely as I have established My covenant with day and night – the laws of heaven and earth – so I will never reject the offspring of Ya'aqov and My servant David; I will never fail to take from his offspring rulers for the descendants of Avraham, Yizhaq, and Ya'aqov. Indeed, I will restore their fortunes and take them back in love. (Yirmiyahu 33:25-26)¹

Where does Christianity get the idea that there was a promise of a “new covenant?”

For if that first covenant had been faultless, no place would have been sought for a second one. But he finds fault with them and says: “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will conclude a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers the day I took them by the hand to lead them forth from the land of Egypt; for they did not stand by my covenant and I ignored them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant I will establish with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their minds and I will write them upon their hearts. I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ...” (Hebrews 8:7-10)²

First, notice that Paul states that the first covenant was not faultless. This implies that the covenant between God and B'nei Yisrael was not a perfectly formed covenant which means that God made a mistake.

If someone believes what Paul is saying than that person absolutely does not follow the God of Yisrael – the God who gave the Torah to Moshe. God is perfect and cannot make mistakes so if we take Paul at his word then those who believe Paul's statement believe that God is imperfect and can make mistakes.

Furthermore, Paul states that “for they did not stand by my covenant and I ignored them, says the Lord” as if this is a quote from Yirmiyahu. While it does say that B'nei Yisrael did indeed break the covenant it does **not** say that God would then ignore B'nei Yisrael.

What Yirmiyahu states – and is reiterated by Paul – is that there will be a renewal of the covenant and God will turn to B'nei Yisrael just as B'nei Yisrael will turn to God.

Paul adds at the end of this quotation from Yirmiyahu:

When he speaks of a “new” covenant, he declares the first one obsolete. And what has become obsolete and has grown old is close to disappearing. (Hebrews 8:13)²

Again, Paul is speaking falsehoods. The covenant is eternal according to God Himself.

...There shall be one law for you and for the resident stranger; it shall be a law for all time throughout the ages. You and the stranger shall be alike before יהוה... (Bamidbar 15:15)¹

This is only one of many places throughout the Tanakh where the covenant is declared an eternal covenant.

We also see that the proof text used by Christianity to declare that their “New Testament” is in fact the covenant spoken of by Yirmiyahu completely neglects the remainder of the prophecy.

No longer will they need to teach one another and say to one another, “Heed יהוה”; for all of them, from the least of them to the greatest, shall heed Me – declares יהוה. For I will forgive their iniquities, and remember their sins no more. (Yirmiyahu 31:34)¹

This portion of the prophecy is also reiterated by Paul.

And they shall not teach, each one his fellow citizen and kinsman, saying, “Know the Lord,” for all shall know me, from least to greatest. For I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sins no more.” (Hebrews 8:11-12)²

This part of this prophecy states that God will forgive B’nei Yisrael’s sins and remember them no more. Yet, according to Christianity one must believe in Jesus’ supposed crucifixion and resurrection to be forgiven – for there is no forgiveness without blood. Obviously, based upon the prophecy from Yirmiyahu this is a false teaching of Christianity.

It is quite obvious that this part of the prophecy remains unfulfilled for it is not true that every man knows God. In fact, the entire prophecy from Yirmiyahu is unfulfilled. Thus, the “new covenant” has yet to be established.

In the Messianic Age, there will be a renewal of the brit between God and B’nei Yisrael. There will be no “new covenant” which will do away with the eternal covenant between God and B’nei Yisrael.

Those who attempt to use Yirmiyahu to “prove” that the Christian “New Testament” is the new covenant spoken about in Yimiyahu are completely wrong and misguided. If one simply looks at the prophecy in context and in its entirety it is quite obvious that this covenant has yet to be established.

=====

¹David Stein. *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2000.

²Gary Anderson, et. al. *Holy Bible: New American Bible*. Charlotte: Saint Benedict Press, 2005.