The Holy Assembly
And The
Everlasting Covenant

Jeff A. Benner
THE HOLY ASSEMBLY
AND THE
EVERLASTING
COVENANT

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INTRODUCTION

My Personal Introduction to This Subject

I was raised in a main stream denominational church and throughout my Religious education I was instructed in the doctrines of the Church. The first time that these doctrines were challenged was when a member of a prominent cult showed me scriptures that revealed that I was in a church that taught false doctrine concerning the deity of Jesus Christ. This bothered me because although I understood the doctrines of my church I could not back them up using the scriptures. I began to wonder if what I had been taught was really the truth. I decided that I needed to find the truth myself and I began to diligently search the scriptures to see what they said about the deity of Jesus. After many months of study I found my answer, Jesus truly was and is God in the flesh. With that knowledge, I have taken the opportunity to witness to Members of this cult by using the scriptures. But, as I was to find out, God was not finished with my studies in the scriptures, there was a great deal more to learn.

Several years later I was married and began attending my wife's church. This church was of a different denomination and I soon found that many
of their doctrines differed from the church that I was raised in. I again began to study the various doctrines of the two churches seeking after the truth. It was through these studies that the Lord gave me a desire to study his word like I had never before experienced. I began to dig deep into the scriptures and the more I dug the more I learned about God and the more I realized I had much to learn.

In my search through the scriptures I studied the books of the Bible, people, events, objects and places. These studies took me from Genesis to Revelation. The more I read and studied I began to notice many similarities between the Old and New Covenants. One example of this is the bread of life. John 6:32,33 tells us that the bread that fell from Heaven, while Israel was traveling through the wilderness, is a picture of Jesus who is the real bread of life. I also found many similarities between Israel and the Church and between the covenant of the First Covenant (Old Testament)\(^1\) and the covenant in the New Covenant\(^2\).

Each time I came across one of these similarities, I wrote them down in my notebook. Over the years I had accumulated a great number of

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\(^1\) The term "Old" implies a passing away of the covenant, this book attempts to show that it is not old or passing away. The word "testament" is better understood as "covenant".

\(^2\) The new covenant is actually a renewal of the first. The Hebrew and Greek words translated as "new", can also mean "renewed".
these and decided it was time to do a serious study on what I had been discovering. This book is a result of that study.

The most interesting discovery I found as I studied the similarities between the Old and New Covenants was that I began learning many things about Israel, the Church, and God and his covenants which I had never been taught nor read about before. At first this scared me. I felt that I was becoming a radical and I felt that no one would believe this. It was at this time that the Lord led me to a man who was able to help me. I was sharing with him what I had discovered in the Bible and he put me in touch with a group of believers who met in my area called Messianic believers. Messianics are Jews and Gentiles who see the Bible as one book about God's people and not two books about two different people and see Yeshua\(^3\) as the Messiah. Messianic Believers desire to learn and teach that the roots of Christianity are in the First Covenant and the Jewish people. As I talked with one individual in the group I found that what I had been learning in my studies were in fact what they teach. This confirmed to me that what I had been learning in my personal studies was the truth.

\(^3\) The original Hebrew name of the Messiah which is Iesus in Greek and Jesus in English.
The Hebrew And Greek Languages

The majority of the Bible is recorded in two languages. The First Covenant was written in Hebrew (with the exception of some passages in Ezra and Daniel which are written in Aramaic, a dialect of Hebrew), While the New Covenant was written in Greek\(^4\).

We can look at these two languages as Islands, each separated from the other. The words, styles of writing and sentence forms in the Hebrew scriptures are different than those in the Greek scriptures. We can study Hebrew words in the First Covenant or Greek words in the New Covenant but we rarely compare how words of one language are related to the other. But there is a bridge between these two Islands. This bridge is called the Septuagint.

The Hebrew language has been in existence for over 3500 years. Throughout this entire time, the Hebrew language has been a spoken language, unlike all the other ancient languages that have become extinct. During the days of the First Covenant, Hebrew was the language of the nation of Israel. In the fourth century BC the Jews who were exiled into other lands began to adopt the language of the culture they lived in such as Greek and

\(^4\) There is evidence that much of the New Covenant was originally written in Hebrew but only the Greek copies have been found thus far.
Aramaic. When the Jews were allowed to return to the land of Israel some migrated to Israel and the Hebrew language once again became the language of the Jewish people living in Israel. We can see this same sequence of events in this century. From about the second century up until this century the majority of the Jews lived outside of the land of Israel and again adopted the language of the area they were living, Russian, German, Italian, etc. Although the Jews learned and used the languages of the land, they continued to teach and learn Hebrew in the synagogues for the purpose of prayer and study of the Bible. When the state of Israel was reestablished in 1948, those Jews who migrated back to Israel from distant lands began using the Hebrew language and once again became the language of the land of Israel.

The Jews that were scattered around the known world during the exile predominately spoke Greek and Aramaic. The Bible\(^5\) was written in Hebrew and therefore not accessible to the Greek and Aramaic speaking Jews. Jewish scholars translated the Bible into Greek, called the Septuagint\(^6\), and called the Targum in Aramaic. Both the Targum and the Septuagint are helpful tools in understanding how the Jewish Scholars interpreted

\(^5\) The Bible only consisted of the Tenack at that time as this was prior to the writing of the New Covenant.

\(^6\) The word Septuagint means Seventy in Greek and is often abbreviated as LXX, the Roman numerals, which add up to Seventy.
the Hebrew scriptures, but for this study we are only interested in looking at the Greek Septuagint since this is the language of the New Covenant. Much of the Septuagint translation is a word for word translation. This means that each Hebrew word was translated into an equivalent Greek word. With the Septuagint, we now have the ability to compare the Hebrew words in the First Covenant with the Greek words in the Septuagint. We can then take those Greek words used in the New Covenant and compare them with its Hebrew equivalent.

Let us use one phrase as an example. Genesis 1:2 says; "and the spirit of God was hovering over the waters". The word Spirit is the Hebrew word "ruach" and God is the Hebrew word "elohiym". The Septuagint translates "ruach elohiym" into "pneuma (Spirit) Theos (God)". When the New Covenant was written into Greek, the authors continued to use the Greek phrase "pneuma Theos". So when Yeshua was baptized we read in Matthew 3:16; "and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove". In the Greek the phrase "Spirit of God" is "pneuma Theos". By using the Septuagint we can now translate this into Hebrew which is "ruach elohiym".

Not only can we translate the Greek into Hebrew, we can also take our definitions of Greek words, from the First Covenant. For example the Greek word righteousness is "dikaios". We usually take this word to simply mean being right with God.
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If we translate this word into Hebrew using the Septuagint we have the Hebrew word "tsedikah". Now we can look at the definition of righteousness from the First Covenant. The First Covenant gives us a better definition of righteousness, which we will look at later in this book. As we will see, the First Covenant definition of righteousness is far different than that which the church teaches.

The Church's teachings on words in the Bible are usually based on their usage in the New Covenant Greek words only. Then these definitions are used to interpret the First Covenant Hebrew words. But this is the opposite of how it should actually be done. After all, the writers of the New Covenant were educated in the scriptures (the First Covenant only at that time). When they used a word like righteousness, they were drawing upon the First Covenant for its meaning. Therefore, the Greek New Covenant words have their foundations in the Hebrew First Covenant.

The first part of this book deals with the First Covenant. We will be examining some Hebrew words to understand their definitions based on the First Covenant. In the second part of this book, we will be looking at some Greek words that are related to the Hebrew words we looked at in the first part. With this method we will be able to bridge the gap between the First and New Covenant languages.
Church Doctrines

Approximately 90% of the doctrines of the church are based on the letters of Paul in the New Covenant only and therefore causing three problems in Church doctrine. First, the First Covenant is not taken into consideration when Biblical doctrine is studied. The church considers the First Covenant as obsolete, irrelevant, antiquated and therefore, not worth the in depth study that the New Covenant is given. Because of this, the Bible cannot be fully understood without seeing the influence that the First Covenant has on the New Covenant.

Secondly, the gospels themselves are looked upon in much the same way as the First Covenant since the teachings of Yeshua are based on the First Covenant. Many of our churches believe that once Yeshua died on the cross, the law, and the First Covenant, were done away with. This means that the three and one half years that Yeshua taught is meaningless today.

Thirdly, the apostles wrote these letters to individuals and churches. What was the purpose of the letters? The majority of the letters were written to address specific problems within the churches. I believe this is why most of the Sunday sermons are on how to correct problems within the churches and in the lives of its members. What did the Apostles

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7 Interestingly, everything that Yeshua taught is directly from the First Covenant.
use to teach the churches correct doctrine? The First Covenant scriptures, the very scriptures we often ignore.

Today we have thrown out the First Covenant foundations and only accepted the teachings of the letters in our churches.

The Deception Of Satan

"See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on [Messiah]." (Colossians 2:8)

Through the past 2,000 years Satan has deceived many in the churches to believe in a different Bible and different teachings than that which is outlined in the scriptures. Many of the teachings in the church are based on human traditions and not on the Bible. Examples of this are the holidays, or holy days, which the church celebrates, such as Christmas and Easter. But, as we will see in this book, God never commanded us to observe these days, which by the way have their roots in pagan worship. But God did command us to keep certain days holy (holidays) as an everlasting ordinance throughout all generations, Jews and Gentiles alike. This and other subjects will be discussed throughout the pages of this book.
Yeshua was faced with this type of problem 2,000 years ago. The Jews of his day were obeying the traditions of men rather than the commands of God (Mark 7:8). It happened then and it is happening again.

Nothing New In The New Covenant

The New Covenant is not a new teaching for a new church. The New Covenant is a continuation of the teachings of the First Covenant for the people of God, both Jew and Gentile alike. The New Covenant is mostly a commentary on the First Covenant. Every teaching in the New Covenant can be found in the First Covenant. In fact there are 343 quotes of the First Covenant in the New Covenant. This is an average of 1.3 quotes per chapter. There are about 3 times this many references to the First Covenant in the New Covenant. This brings the total number of quotes and references in the New Covenant to around 1,500 which is an average of 4 quotes and references per chapter and 55 quotes and references per book. The remaining portions of the New Covenant are teachings based on these First Covenant quotes and references.

A Word Of Caution

I must warn you that much of what you read here will be contrary to what is being taught in the
churches. But I assure you, that the principles outlined in this book are not only my personal beliefs but are also the beliefs of a rapidly growing movement of God.

If you find yourself saying you do not believe the teachings of this book, then I challenge you to do your own study. If you do not believe what I am bringing out in this book, ask yourself why. Too many people are spoon-fed their beliefs from the pulpit and not from personal study.

We often believe what we believe because we are told this is what we are to believe. Do your own study to prove me wrong, don't just rely on someone else's opinion.

*Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.* (1 Peter 3:15)

**Translations**

I strongly encourage you to study your Bible using lexicons and Interlinear. You can see the original words from the original languages in the Bible. Better yet, learn Hebrew and Greek, it is not as difficult as you may think.

When you look at the scriptures in the original language you can see exactly what word the original author used. The problem with a translation is that you are at the mercy of the translator who tells you what he thinks the original word means
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based upon his predetermined theology. We will see some examples of this later.
PART ONE
THE FIRST COVENANT
1 - What Is A Covenant?

When was the last time you heard a message at church on the covenants of God? The covenants of God are the cornerstone of the Bible and yet very few in our churches are familiar with its meaning or its application in our relationship with God.

Commitment

I believe that one of the reasons our culture has avoided words such as "covenant" is because it is a commitment. Our society today in general does not like commitments. Years ago it was not uncommon for one to be born, marry, and die in one community, attending one school, one church and hold one job within that community. Because of this there was a great sense of commitment. This commitment could be seen in how the family cared for its members; wife, children, parents, grandparents, etc. Also an employer cared for his employees and the employees took care of the employer in return. We respected our government and its flag and fought with our lives to protect them.

We can see from the current events that this is no longer the case. Today, we have just as many divorces as we have marriages. Older members of
the family who can no longer take care of themselves are placed in homes for the elderly so they are not a burden on the rest of the family. In today’s big business, employees are only numbers to the employer and the employee will leave the employer the moment a better offer is found. The respect for our government has fallen to the point where the American flag is being burned. The crime rate in our country shows the disrespect we have for our nation's laws and authority. The only commitment that we commit to today is to our own desires and happiness.

We will do what is necessary and go wherever is needed to make us happy. The most tragic loss is that we, as a nation, have forgotten the God of the Bible, the God who created us and gave us life. We are no longer a people who serve God and our fellow man, instead we serve ourselves.

Many in our Churches, worship God, pray to him and read from his word, but we have excluded him from the rest of our life. We do not have the commitment to God that God has asked from us. God gave his people his eternal word, the Bible, which contains the body of laws that God has asked his people to obey. Within the these laws are special holy days to remind us of who he is and who we are in him. The problem is that the law is found in the First Covenant, which Christians are to quick to say, "was for the Jews and is not for us in the New Testament age". It is the purpose of this book to see
if this statement is true or if it is a lie from Satan to keep us from having a close and intimate relationship with God.

The Six Parts To A Covenant

A basic understanding of what a covenant is, will help as we study the covenants of the Bible and how they relate to us. There are several covenants mentioned in the Bible and most of them have six basic parts in common, they are; the parties, promises, conditions, duration, sign and dedication.

Let us look at how each of these parts of the covenant fit together.

The Parties

A covenant is an agreement or treaty between two people or groups of people.

The Promises

Each party declares his promises to the other party.

The Conditions

Each party is responsible to fulfill his promises. If one fails to keep his promise (breaks the covenant), the other is no longer bound to the covenant.
The Duration

The length of time that the covenant is binding upon each party.

The Sign

Often there is a visual object used as the sign of the covenant. When the parties of the covenant look upon the sign, they are reminded of the covenant. This may be an object or the covenant contract itself.

The Dedication

A dedication is performed, often in the form of a ceremony. This often involves the shedding of blood.

The Need For A Covenant

The first two chapters of Genesis give us the account of God's creation of the world. This creation was created perfectly and without sin. In this perfect paradise man communed with God on a personal and intimate level. The third chapter of Genesis tells us about the destruction of that perfect paradise. Man succumbs to the temptation of the serpent and disobeys God's command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Man's punishment for his disobedience was expulsion from the paradise, and an end to the personal and intimate
relationship with God (spiritual death) and the physical death of the body.

God is a merciful God. This means that God desires to forgive man of his sins and bring him back into that perfect, personal and intimate relationship they shared before the fall. But on the other hand, God is a just God. This means that if man disobeys God, punishment is required. God's redemptive plan for mankind provides for both justice and mercy. The covenants of God, which we will be discussing in this book, are the means by which God conveys his redemptive plan to mankind.

Our Bible is divided into two parts, the First and New Covenants. The First Covenant is the story about God's covenant with man and the New Covenant is the continuing story and renewal of this covenant relationship between God and man.

Relevancy Of The First Covenant Today

Ask the average Christian to define the differences between the First and New Covenants and he will probably say: “The 'Old Testament' is the 'law' God gave to the Jews. They were required to observe the Saturday Sabbath, observe holidays like the Passover feast and the Day of Atonement, perform sacrifices, abstain from certain foods, etc. When 'Jesus' died on the cross he did away with the 'law'. The 'New Testament' on the other hand was written for the Christians and teaches that we are
under Grace and are not required to keep the 'law' of the 'Old Testament'. Although the 'Old Testament' still has good stories with certain truths for us today, it is by the 'New Testament' that we live by”.

As we will see, our Christian theology of the First and New Covenants differ from what the Bible actually teaches. The purpose of this book is to show the truth of the relationship between the First and New Covenants. We will look at the covenants and the law of God in both the First and New Covenant, and see what they have to say.

There is a saying that says; "The New Covenant is in the First Covenant concealed and the First Covenant is in the New Covenant revealed". The entire Gospel message can be taught from only the First Covenant scriptures. In fact, this is just what the writers of the New Covenant did. They only had the First Covenant to teach the Gospel since the New Covenant had not yet been written. As I mentioned, the First Covenant is quoted in the New Covenant, a total of 343 times. Every teaching in the New Covenant can be found in the First Covenant. Paul believed the First Covenant scriptures to be very important as he said, "I believe everything that agrees with the law and that which is written in the Prophets" (Acts 24:14).

Do the New Covenant scriptures supersede the First Covenant scriptures? Or do they agree with each other, especially when it comes to the law in First Covenant? As we will see, the New Covenant
teaches more about the law than we ever thought. If the teachings of the First Covenant and the law are valid today, why aren't our churches teaching it?

The Desecration Of The Covenant And Laws

Everything that belongs to God is holy. This includes; his people, covenants and laws. There is one enemy of God who detests all that is holy and will do everything in his power to make it unholy. Everything that God consecrates, Satan wants to desecrate. The Bible has many examples of Satan's desecration of God's people, covenants and law throughout the First and New Covenants. Later chapters will deal with this desecration. By the time Yeshua came, Satan had almost completely desecrated all that was made holy. Would it not also be part of Satan's plan to desecrate all that is holy in our time?

The Marriage Covenant

We will begin our study of covenants with the first two covenants of the Bible, the marriage covenant and the flood covenant. Although these covenants are not directly related to God's redemptive plan for mankind, the marriage covenant will give us an example of how a covenant is intended to work. It will also give us an
opportunity to see how Satan has desecrated it. Although the Genesis account of the creation of the man and woman does not call this union a covenant, the prophet Malachi understood it as such when he wrote "the wife of your marriage covenant" (2:14). Let us now look at this covenant.

The parties

The covenant of marriage is between a man and a woman, as it says in Genesis 2:20-22; "But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while Adam was sleeping, God took one of Adam's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man".

The promises

In the wedding vows, each member of the party gives their promises to the other. These promises usually include; love, care and obedience.

The conditions

Marriage is meant to be an unconditional covenant. This means that there are to be no conditions placed on the covenant. Yeshua said in Matthew 19:6; "Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate".
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The duration

A marriage is binding on each party as long as the two live, as is said in our wedding ceremonies today; "Till death us do part". Paul said in 1 Corinthians 7:39; "A woman is bound to her husband as long as she lives".

The sign

Each culture is a little different, but for us we use a ring as the sign of the covenant. The ring is a daily reminder of the promises made in the covenant.

The dedication

There are two parts to the dedication of the marriage. The first is the ceremony performed before an assembly of people. The second is the consummation of the marriage, which makes the two into one flesh. Genesis 2:23,24 is a picture of this dedication; The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife." Even the marriage covenant includes the shedding of blood. The blood flows from the woman to the man when the marriage is consummated.

This marriage covenant was designed and authored by God to be a lasting covenant between a man and a woman. But what has happened to this
covenant relationship today? It has been violently desecrated with Satan as the designer of this desecration. Let us take another look at the six parts of the marriage covenant looking at the changes Satan has made.

The parties

Even this part of the covenant is being desecrated with the growing number of homosexual unions. Also, there are many today that do not even enter the covenant of marriage, but instead "live together" with no commitment to the other person.

The promises

The promises, or vows, are often forgotten immediately after the ceremony. By looking at today's divorce rate, almost as high as the marriage rate, we can see that these promises are not taken seriously.

The conditions

Marriages today are a conditional covenant. If for any reason the two parties do not wish to remain together, a divorce is granted. Often the excuses used are; "We no longer have the same goals", "We grew apart in love and desires", "We just didn't get along".

The duration

When the marriage no longer fulfills the needs of the individual, the marriage is ended.
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The sign

The wedding ring has become a status symbol of wealth, the more the money the bigger the ring. Also, rings are often replaced several times throughout ones life through divorce and re-marriage.

The dedication

Due to second marriages and premarital relations, it is rare today for two people to come together who have not consummated with someone else previously.

God intended the marriage covenant to be a holy institution between two people, but as we can see, Satan successfully desecrated this covenant. In later chapters we will look at the covenant God made with his people then we will look at its similar desecration by Satan, not only in the days of the First and New Covenants, but today as well.

The Flood Covenant

After the fall of man, sin began to increase to such escalating proportions that God decides to destroy all life on the earth, sparing the lives of Noah (who was found by God to be a righteous man) and his family. God's second covenant with man was given to Noah after this worldwide flood. (Genesis 8:18,20; 9:8-17)
So Noah came out [of the ark], together with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives. Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it.

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: "I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you— the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you—every living creature on earth. I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth."

And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth. "So God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth."
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In the passage above, we can see all six parts of the covenant.

The parties

The covenant is between God and Noah, Noah's descendants and all living creatures.

The promise

God promises he will never again destroy all life on the earth with a flood.

The duration

This is an everlasting covenant, which will last for "all generations to come".

The sign

God puts the rainbow in the sky as a reminder to himself and to us that he made this covenant. Even to this day we can look up into the skies after a rain and see the sign of this covenant and remember his promise.

The conditions

No conditions are placed on this covenant. No matter what man does, God will fulfill his promise in the covenant.

The dedication

The dedication of this covenant actually precedes the covenant. When Noah came out of the ark he "built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed
burnt offerings on it" (Genesis 8:20). Again we have the shedding of the blood with the sacrifices of the animals.

There are two reasons I have included this covenant here. First, it demonstrates the six parts of a covenant helping us to better understand what a covenant is. Secondly, there is one key word used here that is also used in the other covenants that we will be looking at. That word is the Hebrew word "olam" which means "eternal" or a continuous existence. "Olam" often refers to God himself as in Genesis 21:33 where Abraham "called upon the name of the LORD, the Eternal (olam) God". The covenant between God and Noah states that this covenant is an eternal (olam) covenant. God has promised that this covenant will never end.

Chapter Summary

- A covenant is a commitment between two parties.
- There are six parts to a covenant, the parties, promises, conditions, duration, sign and dedication.
- God uses the covenant to bring about redemption to all mankind.
- Everything that God consecrates, Satan wants to desecrate.
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- The marriage covenant is a picture of our covenant with God.
- Satan has desecrated the marriage covenant.
- The flood covenant is an eternal covenant.
God Calls And Blesses Abraham

After the flood, Noah and his family began to repopulate the world. Just as in the days of Noah, sin began to increase and once again man forgot about the God who created him and began to seek after other gods. God chose one man, Abraham, to be the father of his people. It is through this man and his descendants that God chooses to reveal his plans for the redemption of mankind.

Abraham lived in the land of his fathers when God gave him the following instruction; "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you." (Genesis 12:1)

Over the span of many years, God gave Abraham many blessings and promises.

"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. ...To your offspring I will give this land (Canaan)". (Genesis 12:2,3,7)

"Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring,
forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted". (Genesis 13:14-17)

After many years of Abraham's wanderings through the land of Canaan, God makes his covenant with him (Genesis 17:1-14).

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless. I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers."

Abram fell facedown, and God said to him "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you and kings will come from you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendents after you; and I will be their God."

Then God said to Abraham, "As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. This is my covenant with you and your
descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner - those who are not your offspring. Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant."

The Six Parts Of The Covenant

Let us look at this covenant, breaking it down into its six parts.

The parties

God said, "I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come". The covenant is not only with Abraham, but also with all of his descendants.

The promise

God said; "I will make you very fruitful", "I will make nations of you", "kings will come from
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you", "I will be your God and the God of your descendants", "I will give [Canaan] as an everlasting possession" and "I will be their God".

The conditions

The only requirement put on Abraham and his descendant for the covenant was that; "Every male among you shall be circumcised".

The duration

God said; "I will establish my covenant as an everlasting (olam)\(^8\) covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come".

The sign

The sign of circumcision is a lifelong reminder to the circumcised that they have taken part in the covenant. It is also a sign of obedience to God. Anyone who chooses not to partake of the sign is showing disobedience to God and His covenant and therefore will be cut off from the people and from the covenant with God.

The dedication

The dedication is the act of circumcision performed on all the males in Abraham's household.

\(^8\) Going back to the covenant God made with Noah we remember that the Hebrew word "olam" is used to show that his covenant will last for an eternity. The same Hebrew word "olam" is used here.
immediately following the giving of the covenant. Again we have the shedding of the blood as a part of the dedication of the covenant.

**Isaac**

Looking back at Genesis 17:2 we read that God will confirm his covenant with Abraham and his descendants. God went to each of Abraham's descendants and confirmed his covenant with them beginning with Abraham's son Isaac.

> That night the LORD appeared to [Isaac] and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants for the sake of my servant Abraham." (Genesis 26:24)

**Jacob**

Again God confirms his covenant with Isaac's son Jacob.

> There above [the stairway] stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are living. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and
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your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." (Genesis 28:13-14)

Israelites

Jacob, also called "Israel", had twelve sons. They became the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. Due to a great famine throughout the land of Canaan (Genesis 46:26), Jacob and his sons moved to Egypt. The descendants of Jacob continued to live in Egypt where they became; "fruitful and multiplied greatly and became exceedingly numerous, so that the land was filled with them" (Exodus 1:7). The king (Pharaoh) of Egypt became fearful of Israel's size and enslaved them. After 400 years of slavery and bondage in Egypt, God chose Moses to be the deliverer of Israel. Through Moses, God confirms his covenant with the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

"Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land I
swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD." (Ex 6:6-8)

Through a series of ten plagues that God brought upon Egypt, the Pharaoh released the Israelites from the bondage. God then led them to Mount Sinai.

Other Nations Join Israel

While the nation of Israel was still enslaved in the land of Egypt, God sent 10 plagues on Egypt to cause them to release Israel.

[The LORD said to Moses] "Give an order now to bring your livestock and everything you have in the field to a place of shelter, because the hail will fall on every man and animal that has not been brought in and is still out in the field, and they will die." Those officials of Pharaoh who feared the word of the LORD hurried to bring their slaves and their livestock inside. But those who ignored the word of the LORD left their slaves and livestock in the field. (Exodus 9:19-21)

This is the sixth of the ten plagues that God brought on Egypt before Israel's deliverance. Here we see that there were some Egyptians who feared and believed God and brought their animals in to protect them. Once Israel is delivered out of Egypt we read.
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The Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Succoth. There were about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children. Many other people went up with them. (Exodus 12:37,38)

In this passage we see that "Israelites" and "other people" journeyed out of Egypt. These "other people" are people belonging to nations other than Israel who have joined Israel and may very well include some of those officials of Pharaoh mentioned in Exodus chapter 9. These "other people" were also at Mount Sinai for the giving of the covenant as God instructed all people to come to the foot of the mountain and we also read that all people (including the "other people") agreed to obey God.

The Covenant Given At Mount Sinai

For the next year, Israel camps near Mount Sinai. It is here that God reveals his complete covenant with the descendants of Abraham. Exodus 19:1 to 24:8 give all the details of the covenant. Each of the six parts of a covenant can be found within these verses.

Is the covenant given to Israel at Mount Sinai a renewal of the covenant originally given to Abraham or is it a new and different covenant? God's word shows that the covenant God gives Israel at Mount Sinai are a renewal of the covenant for two reasons. First God told Abraham that the
covenant he was making with him is also for his descendants and he will confirm his covenant with them (Genesis 17:2) which, as we have seen he did with Isaac, Jacob and the nation of Israel in Egypt. The second reason is from a statement by King David.

*He remembers his covenant forever, the word he commanded, for a thousand generations, the covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac. He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant*. (1 Chronicles 16:15-17)

**The parties**

The **LORD** said to Moses, "I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you,"... On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the **LORD** descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. (Exodus 19:9,16-19)
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The two parties, God and Israel, have come together for the giving of the covenant. God has descended on Mount Sinai and Israel has come to the foot of the mountain to meet with God.

The promises

“Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites. So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the LORD had commanded him to speak. The people all responded together "We will do everything the LORD has said." Moses brought their answer back to the LORD. (Exodus 19:5-8)

In this passage, both parties declare their promises to each other. God promises Israel that they will be his treasured possession and that he will be their God and they will be his people. We can also add to these original promises given to Abraham that they will be the inheritors of the Promised Land. Israel also declared their promise to God that they will obey all that he asks of them.

At the conclusion of the giving of the covenant, both parties affirm their promises to each other.

Worship the LORD your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away
sickness from among you. And none will miscarry or be barren in your land. I will give you a full life span. I will send my terror ahead of you and throw into confusion every nation you encounter. I will make all your enemies turn their backs and run. (Exodus 23:25-27)

[Israel] responded, "We will do everything the LORD has said, we will obey." (Exodus 24:7)

The conditions

God is bound to his promises only on the condition that Israel keeps their promises to obey him. Just as our earthly fathers lay down the rules of the home and the punishments for disobedience of those rules, God, our heavenly father also lays down the rules, or commands, and punishments for disobedience of those commands to His children.

What has God required Israel to obey? Exodus 20:1 to 23:19 outlines the commands God gave to Israel. These commands can be broken down into eight different sections; they are.

- The Ten Commandments
- Hebrew servants
- Personal injury
- Property protection
- Social Responsibility
- Justice and mercy
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- The Sabbath
- The Three annual festivals

The eight sets of commands identified above, lay the foundation for all the other commands, which God will give Israel over the next 40 years. Those who lived a life obedient to the commands of God would be blessed, while those who lived a disobedient life would be cursed. In the next chapter, we will discuss these commands and how they affect Israel's relationship with God.

The duration

*My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant.* (Genesis 17:13)

*He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant.* (1 Chronicles 16:17)

God can never break his promises within the covenant. If the covenant were only dependent upon God, then this covenant would last for an eternity. But, as we have seen the condition of the covenant requires that Israel obey His commands. The duration of Israel's covenant relationship with God is dependent upon their obedience to him. As we will see later, Israel has a tough time keeping their promise, but God is very patient and full of grace. Leviticus 26:3-45 shows us just how patient God can be. I have condensed this rather large passage down to just a few sentences so we can see the patience of God.
If you keep My commandments then I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people. But if you do not obey Me I also will set My face against you. If you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers then I will remember My covenant.

The sign

Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said. ... Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. (Exodus 24:4,7)

After God presented the covenant to Israel, he commanded Moses to write it all down. This would be the "contract" of the covenant. It was to be a reminder to each party of the promises that they made to each other. This book which Moses wrote was called the "Book of the Covenant". Israel kept this book as the sign of the covenant.

There are many other signs of the covenant, but we cannot go into all of these here. But, let us look at one as it will be examined closer throughout this book. The Passover Feast was to be a celebration held each year on its anniversary of God's redemption of Israel.

Circumcision remains as a sign of the covenant that was given to Abraham. It is interesting that from the giving of the law at Mount Sinai to its conclusion in Deuteronomy, there are
only three references to circumcision. Two of these are commanding Israel to circumcise their hearts (Deuteronomy 10:16; Deuteronomy 30:6). The third is only used as a time reference for the cleanliness of a woman after childbirth (Lev 12.3). The significance of this will be discussed later.

**The dedication**

Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said. (Exodus 24:4-8)

> He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he sent young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the LORD, Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey."

Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."

At the conclusion of the giving of the covenant the parties again come together for the dedication of the covenant with God on the mountain and the people gathered at the foot of it. Moses constructed an altar where offerings of animals
were made. The blood from these offerings were sprinkled on the altar and Moses reads the "Book of the covenant" then sprinkles the blood on the people. Again we see the shedding of blood sealing the covenant.

Chapter Summary

- God chooses Abraham and his descendants to give his eternal covenant for the redemption of man.

- This covenant was confirmed to his son Isaac, Isaac's son Jacob (Israel) and the nation of Israel.

- God delivers Israel from bondage and brings them to Mount Sinai to teach them his covenant.

- The six parts of the covenant given to Israel.
  - The parties; God and Israel
  - Promises; God will care for Israel and Israel will obey God.
  - Conditions; Israel must obey God.
  - Duration; Everlasting.
  - Sign; The law, Passover and others.
  - Dedication; A blood sacrifice.
3 - The Holy Assembly

In Biblical days, a person’s name was more than just a means of identification as it is today. A person’s name was who they were. A child was often named after a character trait of that child. A good example of this is the twins Jacob (ya'acov) and Esau (esav). Jacob's name means heel, and he was given this name because during delivery he was grasping the heel of Esau. Esau means red, which may have been the color of his hair. A person could also be named after an event, such as, in the case of Moses (moshe). Moses means "drawn from the water" which is how he was found. It was not uncommon for a name to be changed later in life if there were a change in the character of the person or if a major event occurred within that person’s life.

Names were not the only means of identifying with a person, titles were often used giving a description of who they were. Yeshua for example, had many descriptive titles; Messiah, Son of God, Son of man, Yeshua of Nazareth, Emmanuel, Savior, Lamb of God, King of kings, and many others. By looking at the descriptive titles of a person or nation we are given a picture of their character. Let us look at some of the names and titles, which were applied to Israel.
A People Set Apart

I have set you apart from the nations to be my own. (Leviticus 20:26)

The Hebrew word used in this passage for "set apart" is "badal". It is used in Genesis 1:18 where God separated the light from the darkness. Just as God separates the light from the darkness, God has also separated Israel from the other nations. Through the rest of this chapter and the next chapter we will see how God has set apart Israel from the other nations.

A Holy People

Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am the LORD your God. Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the LORD, who makes you holy. (Leviticus 20:7,8)

Another Hebrew word meaning, "to set apart" is the verb "kadash". Kadash is more specific in its application in that it means, "to set apart for a special purpose", in this case to serve God. This is the meaning of our English word "consecrate". Since this passage indicates that the people are to consecrate themselves, we can see that God also requires action from the people. In the passage above, God explains that the people are to "set
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themselves apart" by keeping his decrees and following them.

The Hebrew word "kadosh" is the noun form of the verb "kadash". Kadosh, translated as "holy" in the above passage, is a combination of these two actions, being set apart and obedience to God.

The progression of becoming holy according to the above passage follows this pattern: God sets Israel apart from the other nations, by giving them his decrees for them to keep, Israel consecrates themselves by keeping those decrees, then God makes them holy.

A Community Set Apart

The Hebrew word "edah" means a gathering of people. The KJV always translates this word as "community", while the NIV will translate it as "community" or "assembly". When "edah" is used of Israel, it always refers to all of the descendants of Jacob (Israel), the entire nation of Israel. In the following verses are examples of how the word "edah" is used.

The whole Israelite community (edah) set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin. (Exodus 16:1)

Moses assembled the whole Israelite community (edah) and said to them, "These are the things the LORD has commanded you to do". (Exodus 35:1)
"Take a census of the whole Israelite community (edah) by families". (Numbers 26:2)

Since God has set the entire nation of Israel apart from all the other nations, we could say that the community (edah) of Israel are those whom God has set apart (badal).

The Holy Assembly

Another Hebrew word used for a gathering of people is "qahal". Again the KJV is consistent in translating this word as "assembly", but the NIV may translate it as "assembly" or "community". The Assembly⁹ of Israel are those within the community (edah) who have consecrated themselves by keeping God's decrees and are therefore made holy by God. Here are a few verses using the word "qahal".

When they become aware of the sin they committed, the Assembly (qahal) must bring a young bull as a sin offering and present it before the Tent of Meeting. (Leviticus 4:14)

The heavens praise your wonders, O LORD, your faithfulness too, in the Assembly (qahal) of the holy ones. (Psalms 89:5)

⁹ Since the English words "assembly" and "community" are practically identical in meaning, the word "Assembly" will be capitalized to distinguish this word as the word for those within the community who have obeyed the covenant of God.
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The difference between the Assembly and the community is based on an individual's relationship with God. All the people within the community have been set apart by God. They were all delivered out of Egypt, crossed the Red Sea and were given God's decrees, but there are some within the community who rejected God and his covenant. Those who remain faithful to God and his covenant are part of the Assembly of Israel. Those who are in the Assembly of Israel, are also a part of the community of Israel, but not everyone in the community of Israel is part of the Assembly of Israel. Although the whole community is set apart (badal) by God, only those who keep God's covenant are part of the Assembly and are made holy (kadosh), this then is the Holy Assembly (qahal kadosh).

Descendants Of Abraham

Abraham was given the name Abram at birth, which means "exalted father". When God gave him the covenant God changed his name to Abraham, which means "father of many". As we have seen, the people of Israel are the descendants of Abraham.

O Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, you descendants of Abraham my friend. (Isaiah 41:8)

In Hebrew the adjective comes after the noun.
Israel

God also changed Jacob's name to Israel meaning "God rules". The descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob became known as Israel or the children of Israel (often translated as Israelite). There were six hundred thousand men (Ex 12.37), an estimated three to six million men, women and children, who came out Egypt at the exodus. As God had promised Abraham, his descendants had become a large nation.

Hebrews

Abraham was the first to be called a Hebrew (Genesis 14:13). The Hebrew word for "Hebrew" is "eevriyt" which literally means the "crossing ones". Genesis 12:6 says that Abraham "traveled through the land". The word "traveled" is the Hebrew word "avvar" which means to "cross over" and is the root word for the name "eevriyt". Abraham crossed the Jordan River into the land his descendants would cross over into many years later and which would become known as "the land of Israel".

A Hebrew is one who has joined the Holy Assembly, whether born of Israel or another nation, for they have all "crossed over" from death (outside of the covenant) to life (inside of the covenant). Reminiscent of Yeshua's (The Hebrew name for Jesus) words in John 5.24; "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent
me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."

The Chosen People

God has chosen Israel, the descendants of Abraham, to be a holy people. Set apart from the rest of the nations to be a people belonging to him. We do not know why, only that he did. It was not because of their size or their strength, but only because it was his will. It will be through this nation which he has chosen to bring about the redemption of all men.

A Holy Nation

"Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation". (Exodus 19:5-6)

The People Of God

"I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God." (Exodus 6:7)

"I will walk among you and be your God and you will be my people." (Leviticus 26:12)
The Children Of God

This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son. (Exodus 4:22)

You are the children of the LORD your God. (Deuteronomy 14:1)

Sheep

For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "I myself will search for my sheep and look after them." (Ezekiel 34:11)

Brothers

If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward your poor brother. (Deuteronomy 15:7)

All of Israel is descended from Jacob and are, therefore, brothers within the community, but they are also the children of God making them brothers in the LORD. As we will see later, those who are not physically descended from Jacob, but join the community are still considered brothers because they are children of God.
Putting The Names Together

As we can see by looking at the names and titles of Israel, we have a good picture of who Israel is. They are.

- A Community Set Apart
- The Holy Assembly
- Descendants of Abraham
- Children of Israel
- The chosen people
- A Holy nation
- The people of God
- Children of God
- Sheep
- Brothers

God chose the descendants of Abraham and set them apart from the rest of the nations and made them his holy people and to be his own son bestowing on them His blessings, inheritance and protection.

Chapter Summary

- Israel is a community set apart, that is; a nation chosen by God and separated from all the other nations.
Israel is also a Holy Assembly, that is; the collective of individuals who love and obey God.
In chapter two we discussed God's covenant condition that Israel obey him. For the next forty years, God gives Israel his "law". The word "law" is actually a misinterpretation of the Hebrew word "torah" which will be discussed in a moment.

**What Is The Torah?**

God began giving his Torah to Israel when they arrived at Mount Sinai and continued for the next forty years during their journey in the wilderness. Exodus chapter 20 to Deuteronomy chapter 31 covers this time period. Moses recorded all of God's Torah in a book (Exodus 24:4, Deuteronomy 31:24) called "the Book of the Torah" (Deuteronomy 31:26).

Within the Torah are all the laws, commands, regulations and ordinances of God. Let us look at each of these parts of the Torah as we will be seeing them again later.
Laws (mishpat)

Laws\textsuperscript{11} are the judgments of civil government. One example of a law in the Torah is found in Exodus 21:1,2:

"These are the laws (mishpat) you are to set before them: If you buy a Hebrew servant, he is to serve you for six years. But in the seventh year, he shall go free without paying anything."

Commands (mitzvah)

Commands are the dos and don'ts as in the Ten Commandments,


Regulations (mishmeret)

Regulations are the religious requirements including sacrifices, worship and priestly duties. "At the Tent of Meeting the Gershonites were responsible for the care of the tabernacle and tent, its coverings, the curtain at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting" (Numbers 3:25) The phrase "responsible for the care" is the Hebrew word "mishmeret". This is a regulation regarding the care of the Tent of Meeting also known as the tabernacle, a mobile temple.

\textsuperscript{11} When the English has the word "law" it is usually the Hebrew word Torah. When the English has the word "laws" it is usually the Hebrew word Mishpat.
Ordinances (huqah)

Ordinances are the festivals and a few specific commands. Every one of the ordinances (huqah) identified in the Torah are also identified as an everlasting ordinance. Some of these everlasting ordinances will be seen several times through this book. One example of an everlasting ordinance is found in Leviticus 23:41;

"Celebrate [the Feast of Tabernacles] as a festival to the LORD for seven days each year. This is to be a lasting ordinance (huqah) for the generations to come."

The word "lasting" in this verse is the Hebrew word "olam" which means "eternal" or "everlasting". This is the same Hebrew word used for the everlasting (olam) covenant God made with Noah. We will be seeing this word quite a bit through this book.

Torah And Law

When the English translators translated the original Hebrew texts into English, they used the English word "law" to translate the Hebrew word "torah". Because of this translation of the word, many misconceptions about the "torah" have been introduced. "Law" is not a good translation for "Torah" and when we use the word "law" we assume a certain meaning of what God's law is based on our
understanding of the English word "law" rather than the Hebrew word Torah.

The word "Torah" is derived from the root word "yarah" meaning "to point". The noun "moreh" is derived from this root by changing the "y" to an "o" and adding an "m" in front. A "moreh" is a teacher, usually the father of the home, one who points out a direction. The noun "torah" is also derived from this root by changing the "y" to a "o" and adding a "t" in front. "Torah" is the teachings of the teacher/father; the way pointed out by the teacher.

Torah is a set of teachings from the father to his children. Violations of these instructions are disciplined in order to foster obedience and train his children. Notice how the word "Torah" is used in the following passages.

"Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's [Torah]." (Proverbs 1:8)

"My son, do not forget my [Torah], but keep my commands in your heart". (Proverbs 3:1)

God's Torah is his teachings and instructions to his children in the same manner.

"Blessed is the man you discipline, O LORD, the man you teach from your law [Torah]" (Psalms 94:12)

The purpose of Torah is to teach and bring the child to maturity. If the Torah is violated out of
disrespect or defiant disobedience, the child is punished. If the child desires to follow the instructions out of a loving obedience but falls short of the expectations, the child is commended for the effort and counseled on how to perform the instructions better the next time. Unlike Torah, law is a set of rules from a government and binding on a community. Violations of the rules require punishment. Within law, there is no room for teaching.

The Torah As A Way Of Life

The Torah is a way of life. The Torah instructed all aspects of Israel's life. From birth to death, God's Torah teaches his people how to live a holy life. The Torah covers such areas as; community structure, medicine, diet, health, clothing, housing, morality, ceremonies, holy days, worship, relationships between family and neighbors and the list is practically endless. The Torah was not to be a book, which sat on the shelf, it was to be a living word, which instructed Israel every day. It was not only for the priests or King, but also for each and every individual for his personal growth.

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the [Torah] of the LORD, and on his
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[Torah] he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. (Psalms 1:1-3)

The Torah was to be taught to the community of Israel on a regular basis.

[The Levites] taught throughout Judah, taking with them the Book of the [Torah] of the LORD; they went around to all the towns of Judah and taught the people. (2 Chronicles 17:9)

It was also the responsibility of the parents to teach this Torah to their children.

Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land that the LORD swore to give your forefathers, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth. (Deuteronomy 11:19-21)

God's desire for Israel was that his Torah would be the center of their life, thoughts and actions. As we read through the First Covenant, we see that God is continually reminding Israel to listen to and obey his Torah.

The LORD will again delight in you...If you obey the LORD your God and keep his commands and decrees that are written in this Book of the [Torah]
and turn to the LORD your God with all your hearts and with all your soul. (Deuteronomy 30:9,10)

Assemble the people - men, women and children, and the aliens living in your towns - so they can listen and learn to fear the LORD your God and follow carefully all the words of this [Torah]. (Deuteronomy 31:12)

The Psalmist describes the attitude that the man of God should have towards the Torah when he said "The [Torah] from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold" (119:72). The Torah is not meant to be a drudgery of requirement (as the word law implies) but a joy and a delight to the people.

The Blessings And Curses Of The Torah

Contained within the Torah are God's blessings and curses. Those who obey are blessed with a good, long, peaceful life, while those who disobey are cursed with pain and strife.

"Joshua read all the words of the [Torah] - the blessings and the curses - just as it is written in the Book of the [Torah]." (Joshua 8:34)

For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless
you in the land you are entering to possess. (Deuteronomy 30:16)

See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse - the blessing if you obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you today, the curse if you disobey the commands of the LORD your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known. (Deuteronomy 11:26-28)

Cursed is the man who does not uphold the words of this [Torah] by carrying them out. (Deuteronomy 27:26)

If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God: You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country. The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock - the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed. You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out. However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you; You will be cursed in the city and cursed in
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The country. Your basket and your kneading trough will be cursed. The fruit of your womb will be cursed, and the crops of your land, and the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. You will be cursed when you come in and cursed when you go out. (Deuteronomy 28:1-6, 15-19)

The Purpose Of The Torah

God gave his Torah to his people for several reasons. To establish a government system, to make the nation separate from the other nations, to set boundaries for the people, a means to show obedience and love to God, a means to show disobedience (sin) to God and to promote a healthy lifestyle. Let us look at each of these in closer detail.

Government Regulations

Every nation must have a structure in place for the purpose of governing the people. This government, consisting of a leader and officials, enacts laws to protect the people and enforce punishments when the laws are not adhered to. Without this, the nation will fall into anarchy and crumble. When God delivered his children from Egypt, a new nation was created. Immediately following the crossing of the Red Sea and the deliverance from the Egyptian chariots, Moses and Israel sang a song to God (Exodus 15). The song praises and thanks God for their deliverance from the Egyptians. The last sentence in this song says;
"The LORD will reign for ever and ever." Israel recognized God as their King. The Torah is the "teachings" and "laws" of the King to his people, Israel.

To make the nation of Israel holy, as we discussed earlier, Israel was to be a "holy nation", set apart from the other nations. God said in Leviticus 20:26; "You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to by my own". How is Israel to be set apart from the other nations? The answer is in the Torah. Many of the requirements found within the Torah are common to the surrounding nations, but some are very unique. Within these unique requirements are the dietary and ceremonial practices. As long as these practices were obeyed, Israel was uniquely different than the other nations because their practices were contrary to the Torah. By this method, Israel was forced to separate themselves from all the other nations and their practices such as; idolatry and immorality. Therefore, as mentioned in the first chapter, a person is not only made holy by God separating them from the other nations, but the individual must set himself apart by keeping God's Torah.

To set boundaries

The laws of a nation or the teachings of a father, set the boundaries for the people or family in order to keep order. A nation or family without boundaries is ruled by chaos where the individual
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decides what is right or wrong. The Torah is the
standard of measure used to determine what is right
or wrong.

To show obedience

Once the Torah is given, obedience is
required. If one chooses not to obey the Torah and
has a rebellious heart, he is either cast out of Israel or
put to death, depending on the severity of the
disobedience. If one chooses to obey the Torah with
an obedient heart, then he is blessed by God.

See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a
curse - the blessing if you obey the commands of
the LORD your God that I am giving you today;
the curse if you disobey the commands of the
LORD your God and turn from the way that I
command you today by following other gods.
(Deuteronomy 11:26-28)

To show love for God

Love the LORD your God with all your heart and
with all your soul and with all your strength.
These commandments that I give you today are to
be upon your hearts. Impress them on your
children. Talk about them when you sit at home
and when you walk along the road, when you lie
down and when you get up. (Deuteronomy 6:5-7)

And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your
God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to
walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the
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LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. (Deuteronomy 10:12)

How was Israel to show love to God? By keeping his commands and serving him as outlined in the Torah. King David summed it up when he said "Oh, how I love your [Torah]! I meditate on it all day long" (Psalms 119:97).

To show sin

The Torah is the target for obedience to God. It should be the goal of the individual to hit the center of the target. The Hebrew word "hatat" means to "miss the mark" as in Judges 20:16; "Among all these soldiers there were seven hundred chosen men who were left-handed, each of whom could sling a stone at a hair and not [hatat]". Hatat is also translated as "sin". When the individual aims for the Torah and misses, he has "missed the mark", or, sinned.

To promote a healthy lifestyle

The Torah promotes good health, good morals and good relationships. The dietary requirements within the Torah have been proven by modern science to be healthy practices. The moral requirements produce love and kindness toward your fellow man. Not long ago, our nation held to a high standard of morality. Today our nation has attempted to remove the teaching of morality within our families, schools and workplace, resulting in a destructive incline of crime and immorality.
The Eternal Torah

Was the Torah given to Israel, a new Torah from God? Or a reminder of his Torah given before Israel came to Mount Sinai? Is it possible that this Torah was given previously to Abraham, Noah or even Adam? We cannot give a yes or no answer to these questions because the bible does not specifically answer this, but we can look at the book of Genesis and say that at least portions of the Torah were known to Adam, Noah and Abraham.

Let us look again at the blessing of Abraham, discussed in chapter 2, to determine why God blessed Abraham.

*I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because Abraham obeyed me and kept my requirements (mishmeret), my commands (mitzvot), my decrees (huqah) and my [Torah].* (Genesis 26:4,5)

We can see that even Abraham kept God's Torah over 400 years before Israel came to Mount Sinai. Notice that the Hebrew words used here is the same as those we looked at earlier. According to this passage Abraham kept the same type of Torah which God gave Israel. He kept the same judgments (mishmeret), do's and don'ts (mitzvot) and everlasting ordinances (huqah), God's Torah.
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Throughout the Book of Genesis we see example after example of God's commands being kept and broken. These same commands can be found in the Torah given to Israel. In most cases, we can read of an individual's response to the command, but the command itself is not recorded. With this in mind, we cannot say for certainty when the command was given.

Let us look at some of the commands found within the Torah then look at cases in the book of Genesis where they are obeyed or disobeyed.

**Murder**

*You shall not murder.* (Exodus 20:13)

This command is first given at Mount Sinai with the giving of the 10 commandments, but was first broken in Genesis.

*While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.* (Genesis 4:8)

You cannot punish a man for an action unless that action has been determined to be wrong and the command not to do that action is communicated to the people. If my son takes a piece of candy from a store without paying for it, I cannot punish him unless I have not previously taught him that this is a wrong action.

In order for God to punish Cain for taking the life of his brother, he had to have been taught at one point by either God or, his father Adam (who would have been instructed by God) that murder is a sin.
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Altars

"Make an altar of earth for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, your sheep and goats and your cattle. Wherever I cause my name to be honored, I will come to you and bless you. If you make an altar of stones for me, do not build it with dressed stones, for you will defile it if you use a tool on it. And do not go up to my altar on steps, lest your nakedness be exposed on it." (Exodus 20:24,26)

This is the first command given in the Bible for the construction and regulations concerning the building and use of altars. Compare the similarities of the above passage with the ones below from the book of Genesis.

Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. (Genesis 8:20)

The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him. From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west of Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD. (Genesis 12:7,8)

That night the LORD appeared to [Isaac] and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bless
you..."Isaac built an altar there and called on the name of the LORD. (Genesis 26:24,25)

Then God said to Jacob, "Go up to Bethel and settle there, and build an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau." (Genesis 35:1)

Moses built an altar and called it The LORD is my Banner. (Exodus 17:15)

Above are five incidents where each passage contains a portion of the command given in Exodus 20; Sacrifices of burnt offerings are placed on the altar, altars are erected where the name of God is honored, and the altar is erected where the presence of God and his blessings appear.

**Tithes**

I give to the Levites (the priests of Israel) as their inheritance the tithes (a tenth) that the Israelites present as an offering to the LORD. (Numbers 18:21)

Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram...Then Abram gave him a tenth (tithe) of everything. (Genesis 14:18,20)

This stone that I (Jacob) have set us as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth. (Genesis 28:22)
Abraham and Jacob understood the command to tithe their possessions to God and his priests just as God commanded Israel in the Torah.

**Sacrifices and Offerings**

When you sacrifice a thank offering to the LORD, sacrifice it in such a way that it will be accepted on your behalf. (Leviticus 22:29)

[Jacob] offered a sacrifice there in the hill country. (Genesis 31:54)

When [Jacob] reached Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. (Genesis 46:1)

**Animal offerings**

"All the firstborn are mine.... Whether man or animal. They are to be mine, I am the LORD." (Numbers 3:13)

If he offers an animal from the flock as a fellowship offering to the LORD, he is to offer a male or female without defect ....All the fat is the LORD's. (Leviticus 3:6,16)

The two Torah commands above can be seen in Abel's sacrifice.

Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. (Genesis 4:4)

Abel's offering must have been presented in obedience to the command as it was accepted by
God as verse 4 concludes with; "The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering".

**Food offerings**

A *tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD. (Leviticus 27:30)*

*Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. (Genesis 4:3)*

Evidently Cain's offering was done in disobedience because verse 5 tells us; "but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor".

The Bible does not explain why he looked with favor on one but not the other. If God did not outline the requirements for the giving of offerings prior to this, he could not have held either of them accountable for their offerings. Therefore, Cain and Abel must have known what the requirements were for the offerings. Prior to the giving of the commands concerning sacrifices and offerings to Israel at Mount Sinai, there is no mention of sacrificial requirements. We can assume that, since Cain was held accountable for his disobedient sacrifice, the requirements were known prior to Mount Sinai but the actual presentation of the command was not recorded in the book of Genesis.

**Clean and unclean**

"These are the regulations concerning animals, birds, every living thing that moves in the water
and every creature that moves about on the ground. You must distinguish between the unclean and the clean, between living creatures that may be eaten and those that may not be eaten." (Leviticus 11:46,47)

Leviticus chapter 11 is a complete list of all the clean and unclean animals. Although this is the first time the distinction is made between the clean and the unclean, it is not the first time they are mentioned.

The LORD said to Noah..."Take with you seven of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate, and two of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate." (Genesis 7:1,2)

Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. (Genesis 8:20)

Blood

Any Israelite or any alien living among you who hunts any animal or bird that may be eaten must drain out the blood and cover it with earth, because the life of every creature is its blood. That is why I have said to the Israelites, "you must not eat the blood of any creature, because the life of every creature is its blood; anyone who eats it must be cut off." (Leviticus 17:13,14)

Compare this with the following passage.
"But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it. (Genesis 9:4)

Sabbath

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work. (Exodus 20:8-10)

This command to observe the Sabbath is given at Mount Sinai with the giving of the 10 commandments. This command was given previously as we see in Exodus 16:23 during Israel's journey from Egypt to Mount Sinai.

[Moses] said to them, "This is what the LORD commanded: 'Tomorrow is to be a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD."

This passage gives a clear indication that God did give commands to his people prior to Mount Sinai.

The Torah Is Eternal

In all the passages above we can see evidence that the commands concerning; murder, altars, tithes, sacrifices and offerings, clean and unclean animals, abstaining from the eating blood and the Sabbath were in existence long before Israel arrived at Mount Sinai. The observance of Torah commands in the book of Genesis are few compared to great
number of commands found in the Torah. But we can see hints of Torah keeping also in the book of Genesis, such as; Honor your Father and Mother, do not steal, do not worship false gods, and many others. There is no way of saying with certainty just how many commands and requirements of the Torah were kept during the time of the book of Genesis, but it is possible that much of the Torah was given to man before the nation of Israel ever existed. We did see that Abraham kept all of God's Torah, is it not also possible that Adam and Noah also kept God's Torah? With this in mind, we could then say that the Torah given to Israel was actually a renewal of the Torah.

The Bible does tell us that the Torah with its laws, commands and regulations are eternal.

"I remember your ancient (olam) laws" (Psalms 119:52)

"Long ago I learned from your statutes that you established them to last forever (olam)." (Psalms 119:152)

"All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal (olam)." (Psalms 119:160)

Placing The Torah In The Heart

The Torah is not a document to be placed on a shelf and feared, it is God's instructions to his people. God did not desire a people who obeyed his
Torah out of fear, but rather, a people who put his Torah in their hearts and obeyed him because they love him.

When God gave His Torah to Israel, He instructed them to take this Torah and place it within their heart.

*Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.* (Deuteronomy 11:18)

*My son, do not forget my [Torah], but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity. Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.* (Proverbs 3:1-3)

*Keep my commands and you will live; guard my [Torah] as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers, write them on the tablet of your heart.* (Proverbs 7:2-3)

If the Torah is not written on the heart, then the Torah is only an obligation, a set of rules that one must live by and therefore a burden. But once the Torah is written on the heart, that person will keep the Torah with love, joy and gladness.

*I desire to do your will, O my God, your [Torah] is within my heart.* (Psalms 40:8)

*Teach me, O LORD, to follow your decrees; then I will keep them to the end. Give me understanding, and I will keep your [Torah] and*
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obey it with all my heart. Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight. (Psalms 119:33-35)

Love And The Torah

I touched on this when we discussed the purposes of the Torah, but I will go into greater detail. Love and Torah are inseparable. If one keeps and obeys the Torah, he is showing his love to God.

Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. (Deuteronomy 6:5-6)

Love the LORD your God and keep his requirements, his decrees, his laws and his commands always. (Deuteronomy 11:1)

So if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today - to love the LORD your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, then I will send rain on your land in its season. (Deuteronomy 11:13)

If you carefully observe all these commands I am giving you to follow - to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways and to hold fast to him - then the LORD will drive out all these nations before you. (Deuteronomy 11:22)

For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his
commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. (Deuteronomy 30:16)

Observance of the Torah is not only the means by which one show love to God, but it is also the means by which one shows love to his neighbor. Many of the commands in the Torah deal with the relationships with the family, fellow Israelites and foreigners.

Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt. Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD. (Leviticus 19:17-18)

Obedience and disobedience of the Torah is more than just keeping or breaking the Torah, it is the condition of the heart of the individual or the nation as a whole. No one in the First Covenant was able to keep all of the Torah perfectly, yet men such as Abraham, Moses and King David were considered righteous, not because they kept the Torah perfectly but because their heart desired to obey God and his Torah.

The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart. (1 Samuel 16:7)
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*The LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts.* (1 Chronicles 28:9)

Grace And The Torah

We often think of Grace as a New Covenant word. The grace, "hen" in Hebrew, of God existed long ago. We see God's grace throughout the First Covenant, such as Noah who was saved from the floodwaters by the grace of God.

Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. (Genesis 6:8)

God chose Israel to be his people, not because of their greatness or size, but simply out of grace. It should be noted that God delivered Israel out of bondage before he gave them his Torah. This tells us that grace comes before observance of the Torah.

Righteousness And Wickedness

You will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not. (Malachi 3:18)

Righteousness (tzedikah) and wickedness (rasha) are opposite in meaning. From this passage alone, we can see that the righteous serve God and the wicked do not. How was Israel commanded to serve God? By keeping his Torah.
And if we are careful to obey all this Torah before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness. (Deuteronomy 6:25)

Not only are those who obey Torah righteous, but the Torah itself is righteous.

And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of Torah I am setting before you today? (Deuteronomy 4:8)

If keeping the Torah is righteousness, then wickedness is violation of the Torah.

If a man or woman living among you in one of the towns the LORD gives you is found doing evil (rasha, wickedness) in the eyes of the LORD your God in violation of his covenant, and contrary to my command has worshiped other gods. (Deuteronomy 17:2,3)

Chapter Summary

- Law is a set of rules established by a government for the people, violation is punished.
- Torah is the instructions of a father to his children, disobedience is disciplined.
- The Torah consists of; teachings, laws, commands, regulations and decrees.
- The Torah is a way of life, a culture.
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- The Torah is used for teaching individuals, family, community and other nations.
- Within the Torah are the blessings and curses for obedience and disobedience.
- The purposes of the Torah are;
  — To provide for a government
  — To make the nation holy
  — To set boundaries
  — A means to show obedience to God.
  — A means to show love to God.
  — A means to show sin
  — To promote a healthy lifestyle
- The Torah is eternal.
- Many of the commands of the Torah are observed in the book of Genesis.
- God tells Israel to write his Torah on their hearts.
- God's people show their love to God by keeping his Torah.
- God gives grace to Israel even before the gives them his Torah.
- Righteousness is obedience to the Torah; wickedness is disobedience to the Torah.
The next two chapters will cover Israel's holy days, which are; The Weekly Sabbath and the Seven yearly feasts. Leviticus chapter 23 begins with the following statement; "The LORD said to Moses, 'Speak to the Israelites and say to them: these are my appointed feasts, the appointed feasts of the LORD, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies'". The chapter continues with a brief description of all these holy days beginning with the Sabbath Day.

"There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, a day of sacred assembly. You are not to do any work; wherever you live, it is a Sabbath to the LORD. (Leviticus 23:3)

What Is The Sabbath?

The first recorded command to observe the Sabbath is the fourth commandment given by God to Israel while at Mount Sinai.

*Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or*
maid servant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. (Ex 20:8-11)

The commandment above gives five characteristics of the Sabbath.

- It is a day of rest from work for people and animals.
- It will be on the 7th day of the week.
- The day is to be kept holy (set apart for special purpose).
- The day is blessed by God.
- It is a commemoration of creation.

The word "Sabbath", "shabbat" in Hebrew, comes from the root verb "shabat" which means "to cease from work or activity". The Sabbath is a 24 hour day\(^\text{12}\) of ceasing from work, a day of rest. Special honor was given to the Sabbath day as it is the only day which was given a name, all other days of the week were called by its place in the week, such as; the first day, the second day, etc.

\(^\text{12}\) The Jewish definition of a day is from sundown to sundown, therefore the Sabbath begins on sunset Friday evening and ends at sunset on Saturday.
The Sabbath day is to be kept holy. As we have seen previously, the word holy means "to be set apart for a special purpose". The Sabbath is set apart from all the other days of the week. Not only does God set this day apart from all the others, but man is also to set it apart as a holy day.

God blesses the Sabbath day. As we will see later in this chapter, God also blesses those who keep the Sabbath day. The fourth command states that the Sabbath day is both blessed and made holy by God. When did God first bless and make holy the Sabbath day? This brings us to the last attribute of the Sabbath.

The fourth commandment connects the seventh day Sabbath with the seventh day of creation, making the Sabbath a commemoration of creation.

*By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. (Genesis 2:2-3)*

The word "rested" above, is the Hebrew word "Shabat" the root of "Shabbat/Sabbath".

The Sabbath day was first blessed and made holy by God on the day that he himself rested from his labors of creation. The fourth commandment is a commemoration of this day of rest.
Did the command to observe and remember the Sabbath begin with Israel at Mount Sinai or was it given at the very beginning with Adam? The scriptures do not say, but we know that the original command to observe the Sabbath was given at some point prior to Israel's arrival at Mount Sinai and after they crossed the Red Sea as we see in Exodus 16.23.

[Moses] said to them, "This is what the LORD commanded: 'Tomorrow is to be a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD."

If from the beginning God made the Sabbath day holy, would he not have commanded his children (Adam and Eve) to keep this day holy? The Sabbath day was observed before Mount Sinai and even possibly in the Garden of Eden before sin entered the world. On the seventh day of creation, God rested. Of course God does not need rest, he was setting a pattern for the benefit of his creation. Six days are for working but the seventh day is a day of rest, a Sabbath. God recognized that all creation needs a rest. Not only do our bodies need to rest one day out of each week, but so do the animals. God also commanded to give the land a rest every seven years (Leviticus 25:4). God who created man, knew that a man's body required one day in seven to rest. If this rest is so necessary, would God not have given that command in the beginning when
Adam served in the Garden (Genesis 2:15) or at least after the fall? Also, as the seventh day was set apart as holy from the beginning, would he not have required Adam to observe that holy day also?

If we combine all the facts identified above, the need for a day of rest, the blessing of the Sabbath in the beginning and the observance of the Sabbath before the commandment was recorded, we could make a strong case that the Sabbath day has always been a very special day to God and man.

The Sabbath Covenant

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy.

Observe the Sabbath, because it is holy to you. Anyone who desecrates it must be put to death; whoever does any work on that day must be cut off from his people. For six days work is to be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day must be put to death. The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the
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Not only is the Sabbath day one of the 10 Commandments, but it is also a covenant between God and his people. Just as we did with the other covenants, let us break this covenant down into its six parts.

The Parties

This covenant is between God, the creator, and Israel, the created.

The Promise

As mentioned earlier, God blessed this day and those who kept this day holy as God commanded were in turn blessed by God.

"If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD's holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the LORD , and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob." The mouth of the LORD has spoken. (Isaiah 58:13-14)

"Blessed is the man who does [what is right], the man who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath without desecrating it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil." (Isaiah 56:2)
Just as the Sabbath day is blessed and made holy, those who keep the Sabbath day are blessed and made holy as well. God also promises joy to those who will keep his Sabbath day for without God there is no true joy in life.

God is asking that on this one day, His people put aside their own desires and give honor to him. In this way they are made holy by God as it says in Exodus 31:13; "You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy."

The Conditions

The one condition that God puts on Israel in this covenant is that they keep His Sabbath day holy.

The Duration

Exodus 31 tells us that Israel is to celebrate it "for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever". Three key words in this passage tell us the duration of this covenant.

- For the generations to come.
- It is a "lasting covenant". (The Hebrew word translated as lasting is again "olam" meaning everlasting or eternal).
- It is a sign "forever". (Again the Hebrew word "olam")
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This covenant is eternal. Just as the Covenant God made with Noah is an everlasting covenant, the Sabbath covenant is also an everlasting covenant.

The Sign

The Exodus 31 passage tells us that the Sabbath day is the sign of this covenant. This is confirmed again in the book of Ezekiel.

"Also I gave them my Sabbaths as a sign between us, so they would know that I the LORD made them holy. I am the LORD your God; follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Keep my Sabbaths holy, that they may be a sign between us. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God." (Ezekiel 20:12)

Those who keep the Sabbath acknowledge that God is the creator of the universe.

The Dedication

God himself dedicated the command when he rested on the seventh day. The dedication of this covenant is to be remembered on each Sabbath forever.

Chapter Summary

- The Sabbath is a day of rest on the seventh day, to be kept holy by man and blessed by God.
Jeff A. Benner

- The Sabbath is a commemoration of creation.
- The first Sabbath-rest was God's rest on the seventh day of creation.
- The Sabbath is also an everlasting covenant for his people.
Continuing with Leviticus chapter 23 we find the seven Feasts of the Lord, which Israel is commanded to observe. They are,

- Passover
- Feast of Unleavened Bread
- Feast of Firstfruits
- Feast of Weeks
- Feast of Trumpets
- Day of Atonement
- Feast of Tabernacles

Each of the seven feasts shares similar characteristics. Each are a commemoration of God's act of redemption of his people and the events of Israel's exodus from Egypt. Each feast is a living observable picture of the original events.

Not only are these feasts commemorations of past events, but are also yearly reminders, or pictures, to teach the people about God and his mighty hand. They are a continual reminder of his love and grace which he poured out on his people, not only at the time of the exodus but for each
current generation who also receive the redemption of God from death.

Each of the feasts, with the exception of one, are identified as a lasting ordinance (olam huqah). Again we have the same Hebrew word "olam" as discussed in chapter 4.

The Passover

The LORD’s passover begins at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month. (Leviticus 23:5).

The first Passover was observed the night before Israel left Egypt.

The LORD said..."each man is to take a lamb for his family... Slaughter them at twilight. Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast...On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn... The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. (Exodus 12:1,3,6-8,12,13)"

Then God instructs Israel to commemorate this event each year as an everlasting ordinance.

"[The Passover] is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it
as a festival to the LORD - a lasting ordinance (olam huqah). (Exodus 12:14)

Each year Israel observes the Passover with a meal of lamb, bitter herbs and unleavened bread, all of which are symbols of God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt. The lamb symbolizes the sacrifice of a lamb and its blood for the redemption of the firstborn. The bitter herbs symbolize the bitterness of slavery which Israel endured for 400 years and the unleavened bread symbolizes the haste in which they left Egypt, because there was no time to let yeast rise, the bread was made without yeast (leaven).

The Feast Of Unleavened Bread

On the fifteenth day of that month (Nisan) the LORD's Feast of Unleavened Bread begins; for seven days you must eat bread made without yeast. (Leviticus 23:6)

Immediately following the Passover was the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This was a seven-day feast commemorating the day Israel left Egypt.

"Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread, because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt. Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come". (Exodus 12:17)
Again we see that this Feast is to be celebrated as an eternal ordinance for the generations to come.

**The Feast Of Firstfruits**

The LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When you enter the land I am going to give you and you reap its harvest, bring to the priest a sheaf of the first grain you harvest... This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live. (Leviticus 23:9,10,14)

Again we see that this Feast is to be celebrated as an everlasting ordinance for the generations to come. We also see added here that the feast is to be celebrated "Wherever you live". The feasts are not only to be observed throughout all time, but throughout the whole earth.

This feast is a celebration of God's gift of the land and of its harvest.

**The Feast Of Weeks**

"From the day after the Sabbath, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, count off seven full weeks. Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new grain to the LORD. This is to
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be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live." (Leviticus 23:15,16, 21)

Again we see that this feast is to be celebrated as an "everlasting ordinance, wherever you live".

This feast is also a harvest festival which is to be celebrated seven weeks (hence the name - feast of weeks) after the Feast of Firstfruits. Jewish tradition holds that the Torah was given to Israel on Mount Sinai seven weeks after the deliverance from Egypt, therefore the feast of weeks is also a celebration to commemorate the giving of the Torah to Israel.

The Feast Of Trumpets

The LORD said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites: 'On the first day of the seventh month you are to have a day of rest, a sacred assembly commemorated with trumpet blasts. (Leviticus 23:23,24)

This feast is the only feast that the scriptures do not identify as an everlasting covenant, but since all the other six feasts are everlasting ordinances, we can conclude that this one is also.

Whenever Israel was called to assemble before the Lord or for war, the trumpet was blown. The first time the trumpet was blown for the assembling of Israel was when they first arrived at Mount Sinai and God blows the trumpet.
Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. (Exodus 19:18-19)

This feast is to commemorate the holy assembly when God's covenant was received.

The Day Of Atonement

The LORD said to Moses, "The tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. Hold a sacred assembly and deny yourselves, and present an offering made to the LORD by fire. Do no work on that day, because it is the Day of Atonement, when atonement is made for you before the LORD your God... This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live. (Leviticus 23:26-28, 31)

Again this feast is to be celebrated as an "everlasting ordinance wherever you live".

The Day of Atonement is a commemorative holy day of God's act of grace and forgiveness to his people (Israel and the other nations). The covenant God made with his people at Mount Sinai requires that his people obey him. God knew that not one of them could do that completely and therefore he provided a means to cleanse the assembly of their
sins through the sacrifice of a goat to cover the sins in order that he might forgive them.

"on this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, before the LORD, you will be clean from all your sins." (Leviticus 16:30)

The Feast Of Tabernacles

The LORD said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites: 'On the fifteenth day of the seventh month (Tishri) the LORD's Feast of Tabernacles begins, and it lasts for seven days...This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. Live in booths for seven days: All native-born Israelites are to live in booths so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites in booths when I brought them out of Egypt.'" (Leviticus 23:33,34,41,42)

After Israel left Mount Sinai they spent forty years wandering in the wilderness. During this time they lived in tents called booths or tabernacles while God taught Israel his Torah. This feast is to be observed as an everlasting ordinance to remind Israel of the forty years in the wilderness. As the forty year wanderings were a result of Israel's sin with the golden calf, this feast is also a reminder to obey God and his Torah.
Conclusion

We can see two major purposes for the weekly Sabbaths and the seven yearly feasts. First, as we have discussed earlier, God's people are set apart from the other nations through God's commands. The Sabbaths and feasts are one of the ways that God has made them different than the other nations. Secondly, the Sabbaths and feasts are symbols and pictures of God's acts of creation, grace, redemption and forgiveness of his people. When the weekly Sabbath is observed and the holy days are celebrated throughout the year, Israel is continually reminded of God's love, grace and covenant which he has given to his people.

Chapter Summary

- The seven Feasts of the Lord are,
  - A commemoration of God's redemption of Israel
  - Yearly reminders of God's love, grace and mercy
  - An everlasting ordinance to be kept forever
Within the First Covenant we find three different kinds of people, they are natives, aliens and foreigners. Each of these three groups are different in their relationship to Israel and the covenant with God. In this chapter we will be looking at several passages which show this relationship. Let us look at the first Passover which shows each of these people groups relationship to this festival.

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "These are the regulations for the Passover; No foreigner is to eat of it. Any slave you have bought may eat of it after you have circumcised him, but a temporary resident and a hired worker may not eat of it....The whole community of Israel must celebrate it. An alien living among you who wants to celebrate the LORD's Passover must have all the males in his household circumcised; then he may take part like one born in the land. No uncircumcised male may eat of it. The same Torah applies to the native-born and to the alien living among you." (Exodus 12:43-49)
The Natives

Natives (ezra in Hebrew) are those who are descended from the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. From discussions in the previous chapters, plus the passage quoted above, we see that the natives are part of the community of Israel, the chosen people of God.

It is with Israel that God has given his covenant, and not with any other nation.

[The LORD] has revealed his word to Jacob, his laws and decrees to Israel. He has done this for no other nation; they do not know his laws. (Psalms 147:19,20)

Has any god ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation, by testings, by miraculous signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes? (Deuteronomy 4:34)

The Foreigners

The Exodus 12 passage pretty much sums it up when it says "No foreigner is to eat [the Passover]". Foreigners (nackriy in Hebrew) are those who are not born in the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and are not part of God's covenant or the
community of Israel. These people would be of other nations who worship other gods.

**The Aliens**

Is God's covenant then a restricted membership to Israel only? Absolutely not. Any foreigner who wishes to join the community of Israel may do so, by accepting the covenant and taking on the sign of the covenant, circumcision. These foreigners are now considered aliens (ger in Hebrew) and are to be treated as one native-born. Continually throughout the Torah, God reminds Israel that they were once aliens in another land and that they are to treat aliens properly.

*The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.* (Leviticus 19:34)

In the Exodus 12 passage above we see that an alien must be circumcised, and they are considered as part of the community of Israel.

The aliens are not only to be treated as a native-born but are also expected to obey God and his Torah just as Israel.

"*You are to have the same laws (mishpat) for the alien and the native-born. I am the LORD your God.*" (Leviticus 24:22)
"The community is to have the same rules (huqah) for you and for the alien living among you; this is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. You and the alien shall be the same before the LORD: The same Torah and regulations (mishpat) will apply both to you and to the alien living among you." (Numbers 15:15,16)

This is one of the everlasting (olam) ordinances we discussed in chapter 4. The Torah itself states that the aliens are to keep the same Torah as Israel forever.

Israel Is A Light To The Nations

Going back to the promise which God made with Abraham, he said, "All the peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Genesis 12:3). God desires that all people on the earth come to him through his covenant with Israel.

"I, the LORD, have called you [Israel] in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles". (Isaiah 42:6)

"I will also make [Israel] a light for the Gentiles that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." (Isaiah 49:6)

The Hebrew word for Gentiles is "gofi" and means nations. God is telling Israel that his
redemptive plan for the salvation of all nations will come through them. Throughout the First Covenant, we see some Gentiles entering the assembly, but it is not until many years later where we see Israel bringing in the Gentiles by the thousands in the New Testament fulfilling this prophecy. This will be discussed in part two of this book.

What Is The Light?

See, I have taught you decrees (hok - Hebrew word related to huqah) and laws (mitzvot) as the LORD my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees (hoq) and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." What other nation is so great as the have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him? And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees (hoq) and laws (mitzvot) as this body of Torah I am setting before you today? (Deuteronomy 4:5-8)

As mentioned previously, Israel shows their love to God by keeping his Torah. When the other nations see this love of God and his Torah, they will be marveled at their close relationship, which of course they do not have with their false gods, and
they will desire to have that same relationship with the God of Israel.

And many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the LORD Almighty and to entreat him." This is what the LORD Almighty says: "In those days ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, 'Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.'" (Zechariah 8:22-23)

**Aliens Entering The Community Of Israel**

Previously we looked at the "other nations" which joined Israel at Mount Sinai. Throughout the First Covenant we see people of "other nations" joining Israel in the covenant with God. Let us look at one of these examples.

Ruth, a Moabite, is the daughter-in-law of Naomi, an Israelite. Naomi has lived in Moab with her husband and sons all of whom have passed away, and Naomi decides to leave for her home, Israel. Ruth follows her mother-in-law and tells her.

"Don't urge me to leave you [Naomi] or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. (Ruth 1:16)

Once in Israel, Ruth meets Boaz, who is to become her husband. He tells her'
"May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge." (Ruth 2:12)

Ruth was not only an alien who has joined Israel but she becomes the grandmother of King David and her descendant is the Messiah Yeshua.

**God's Love And Grace To The Aliens**

Let no foreigner who has bound himself to the LORD say, "The LORD will surely exclude me from his people."... For this is what the LORD says:... "foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to serve him, to love the name of the LORD, and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant - these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations." (Isaiah 56:3,6)

There is no exclusion from God or his covenant, but equality for those willing to follow him and obey his Torah.
Chapter Summary

- Natives are those physically descended from Jacob.
- Foreigners are those not descended from Jacob.
- Aliens are foreigners who choose to live with Israel and enter the covenant with God.
- The Torah applies to the aliens also.
- Israel, by keeping the Torah, are a light to the other nations (foreigners).
- God's grace and love is given to the aliens as well.
The Holy Assembly and the Everlasting Covenant

8 - The Desecration Of The Covenant

God has provided Israel with the perfect plan for a covenant relationship between Israel and himself. If the covenant is kept by Israel, God promises to grant perfect peace, harmony and safety to Israel. As we know, this was not to be the case. The nation of Israel was eventually conquered by other nations and taken into exile. So what happened?

God is Holy, and all that belongs to God is holy, or consecrated, meaning to be set apart for his self. We can be certain, that whatever God has consecrated (made holy), Satan attempts to desecrate (make unholy) including God's covenant, people, Torah and Holy Days.

Satan has used three methods to desecrate that which has been consecrated. They are; idolatry, legalism, and deception. Satan has used idolatry to turn Israel away from God and his covenant and bring them to the worship of other gods. Legalism is the keeping of the covenant and Torah out of obligation rather than a hearts desire to show love to God. Deception is used to change the intent or meaning of the covenant and Torah so that the
people believe that they are keeping the covenant when in fact they are not.

In this chapter, we will look at how Satan has used both idolatry and legalism in the First Covenant to desecrate God's covenant. In a later chapter, when we get to the New covenant, we will look at how he uses deception.

Desecration Of The Community

God commanded Israel to be holy. This requires that Israel set themselves apart from the other nations by following God's Torah.

They rejected his decrees and the covenant he had made with their fathers and the warnings he had given them. They followed worthless idols and themselves became worthless. They imitated the nations around them although the LORD had ordered them, "Do not do as they do," and they did the things the LORD had forbidden them to do. (2 Kings 17:15)

God knew that if Israel mingled with the other nations, they would eventually begin to adopt their pagan religion, culture and gods. To prevent this, God gave his Torah to separate Israel from the other nations. Israel disobeyed those boundaries set forth in the Torah and mingled with the other nations, and consequently became separated from God, instead. This desecration of the community was brought about by the desecration of the Torah.
The Desecration Of The Torah

When Israel first arrived at Mount Sinai, God spoke the 10 commandments to them. Shortly thereafter, God called Moses up onto the mountain. While he is gone, Israel immediately turns away from this Torah.

The people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come make us gods who will go before us. (Exodus 32:1)

Within days of God telling Israel "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3) and "You shall not make for yourself an idol" (Exodus 20:4), we see Israel is turning away from God and making an idol. We can see this same story repeated over and over again throughout the entire First Covenant.

God is a just God requiring punishment for disobedience, but on the other hand, God is a merciful God and forgives their sins when they repent. Leviticus chapter 26 verses 3 through 45 give a detailed description of God's justice and mercy. I have condensed this passage to demonstrate the grace that God shows to his people.

If you keep My commandments, I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people. But if you do not observe all these commandments I will set My face against you, and you shall be defeated by your enemies. If you
do not obey Me, then, I will punish you seven times more for your sins. But if you confess your iniquity and the iniquity of your fathers, then I will remember My covenant.

Over and over again through the First Covenant we see Israel breaking the covenant, then repenting and receiving forgiveness from God. As this cycle continues, generation after generation, we begin to see God's justice being poured out on Israel.

"It is because your fathers forsook me," declares the LORD," and followed other gods and served and worshiped them. They forsook me and did not keep my Torah. But you have behaved more wickedly than your fathers. See how each of you is following the stubbornness of his evil heart instead of obeying me. So I will throw you out of this land". (Jeremiah 16:11-13)

By breaking the Torah, Israel has broken their promise to obey God. This disobedience of the Torah brings about the desecration of the covenant.

The Desecration Of The Covenant

The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant. (Isaiah 24:5)

"They have returned to the sins of their forefathers, who refused to listen to my words. They have followed other gods to serve them. Both
The Holy Assembly and the Everlasting Covenant

the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken the covenant I made with their forefathers." (Jeremiah 11:10)

Israel's disobedience had come to such a level that God says.

"I will bring on them a disaster they cannot escape. Although they cry out to me, I will not listen to them". (Jeremiah 11:11)

Eventually Israel is conquered by other nations, taken from their promised land, and have become captives in exile in other nations.

The Desecration Of The Holy Days

Within the body of the Torah, are the holy days which God commanded to be observed, the Sabbath and the yearly feasts.

Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations - I cannot bear your evil assemblies. (Isaiah 1:13)

Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land, saying, "When will the New Moon be over that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath be ended that we may market wheat?" Skimping the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales. (Amos 8:4-5)
Here we see that the holy days were no longer being kept out of love, but instead, out of a legalistic obligation. Israel kept the Sabbath because they had to, but it appears that they despised it and could not wait until the next day when they could do their work. Even the work they performed was dishonest, and in violation of the Torah.

"Also I gave them my Sabbaths as a sign between us, so they would know that I the LORD made them holy. '"Yet the people of Israel rebelled against me in the desert. They did not follow my decrees but rejected my laws - although the man who obeys them will live by them - and they utterly desecrated my Sabbaths. So I said I would pour out my wrath on them and destroy them in the desert. But for the sake of my name I did what would keep it from being profaned in the eyes of the nations in whose sight I had brought them out. Also with uplifted hand I swore to them in the desert that I would not bring them into the land I had given them - a land flowing with milk and honey, most beautiful of all lands - because they rejected my laws and did not follow my decrees and desecrated my Sabbaths. For their hearts were devoted to their idols. Yet I looked on them with pity and did not destroy them or put an end to them in the desert. I said to their children in the desert, "Do not follow the statutes of your fathers or keep their laws or defile yourselves with their idols. Keep my Sabbaths holy, that they may be a sign between us. Then
you will know that I am the LORD your God. But the children rebelled against me: They did not follow my decrees, they were not careful to keep my laws - although the man who obeys them will live by them - and they desecrated my Sabbaths. So I said I would pour out my wrath on them and spend my anger against them in the desert. But I withheld my hand, and for the sake of my name I did what would keep it from being profaned in the eyes of the nations in whose sight I had brought them out. Also with uplifted hand I swore to them in the desert that I would disperse them among the nations and scatter them through the countries. Because they had not obeyed my laws but had rejected my decrees and desecrated my Sabbaths, and their eyes lusted after their fathers' idols. (Ezekiel 20:12)

The Heart Of Israel

We previously read that God told Israel to put his Torah on their hearts. Their are many examples in the First Covenant of individuals who did place the Torah in their hearts, such as King David and Elijah. These men were blessed by God for their obedience, but Israel as a whole did not put the Torah on their hearts and the results of this was very devastating to the nation of Israel.
The Holy Assembly Lives On

Even though the community sinned greatly against God, there remained a group of Israelites who remained faithful to God with a clean and pure heart. This group revered the covenant and followed God's Torah. This minority is the remnant of Israel. This remnant remained as the Holy Assembly. The Holy Assembly can never be desecrated because, as we showed in chapter three, the word qahal always refers to those who have a love for God and his covenant, and keep his Torah and remains holy.

"I [the LORD] reserve seven thousand in Israel - all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him." (1 Kings 19:18)

In that day the remnant of Israel, the survivors of the house of Jacob, will no longer rely on him who struck them down but will truly rely on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel. A remnant will return, a remnant of Jacob will return to the Mighty God. (Isaiah 10:20-21)

A remnant of people, set apart for God, always remains of those who kept the Torah within their hearts, even when all else within the nation have turned away from God. The First Covenant is full of people who have remained faithful to God such as Obadiah, Zechariah, Josiah and Daniel. Even though God finally punished Israel for their disobedient heart, his grace and mercy
continues to be poured out on Israel and, as we shall soon see, he will again forgive them of their sins and renew his covenant with them.

Chapter Summary

- Satan uses idolatry, legalism and deception to desecrate God's Covenant, people and Torah.
- The community of Israel mingled with other nations and began to adopt their pagan practices and gods.
- Israel's violation of the Torah caused their removal from the Promised land.
- Israel's observance of the Torah, Sabbath and Feasts became Legalistic.
- A remnant, the Holy Assembly, remained in the nation of Israel.
Even though Israel turned away from God's covenant, time and again, God continues to be faithful to them. In Jeremiah we see that God's grace for Israel continues as he makes another promise to Israel.

"The time is coming." Declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my Torah in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." (Jeremiah 31:31-34)
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In the above passage we read; "[The New Covenant] will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers". There are two ways of looking at this new covenant. Either God has cancelled the first covenant in order to bring in the new covenant or this new covenant is a "renewal" of the first one. The second possibility appears to be the proper way of looking at this new covenant. For reasons which will follow.

The Marriage Covenant With Israel

Also in the above passage we read; "they broke my covenant though I was a husband to them". The covenant made with Israel at Mount Sinai was in fact a marriage covenant between the husband, God, and the bride, Israel. Isaiah chapter 54 shows this marriage relationship.

"Your Maker is your husband - the LORD Almighty is his name - the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth. The LORD will call you back as if you were a wife deserted and distressed in spirit - a wife who married young, only to be rejected," says your God. "For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back. In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you," says the LORD your Redeemer. "To me this is like the days of Noah,"
when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again. Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the LORD, who has compassion on you. (Isaiah 54:5-10)

Also, if we look at God's calling out of Israel in the book of Exodus we will see some verbs showing the marriage between God and Israel.

"Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD." (Exodus 6:6-8)

Looking at the underlined verbs above, we can see a picture of a husband's relationship to his wife. The husband will bring her out of her parents home, free her from her parents authority, redeem her from her past, take her to be his own, bring her into his home and give to her his own possessions.
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If God had actually cancelled the "marriage covenant", he would have been divorcing his bride/wife, Israel. I do not believe that the God who said "I hate divorce" (Malachi 2:16) would divorce his own wife, Israel. If God made a new marriage covenant with Israel, he would be remarrying his first wife. This does not sound like the God of the Bible. Although, the Isaiah 54 passage states that God did abandon Israel for a brief moment (7) he did not remove the covenant (10). God did not end the first covenant or divorce Israel. How then can God make a new covenant?

The Hebrew word for new in this passage is hadash. Hadash can either be translated as new or renew. For example, a new moon is not really a new moon but rather a renewed moon. The new covenant can be looked at in this same manner, as a renewed covenant.

Therefore, this renewed covenant will be different than the original covenant made with Israel at Mount Sinai. This passage does not give us all the details of this renewed covenant, but there is enough information in this passage to get an idea of how this new covenant is different.

Using the six parts to a covenant, let us examine the Jeremiah 31 passage and see what we can glean from it.
The Parties

Nothing new or different here. This covenant is between God and Israel just as the original was at Mount Sinai.

The Promises

First of all, God says; "I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." God is going to wipe the slate clean, all the past sins of Israel will be forgiven with the coming of this renewed covenant. God also promises; "I will be their God and they will be my people" (33). This promise was originally given to Abraham (Genesis 17:7) and confirmed to Israel (Exodus 29:45, Leviticus 26:12, 2 Samuel 7:24). This promise of the covenant is the same as the original.

The Conditions

The original condition given to Israel at Mount Sinai was that the covenant would depended upon Israel's obedience to God. Since Israel failed to meet the conditions of that covenant, possibly God has changed the conditions in this new covenant. This is hinted at when it says; "[The new covenant] will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers ... Because they broke my covenant". God is making the change because they could not meet the conditions of the original. Evidently, the
conditions will change with this new covenant. We will look at this possibility in part two of this book.

**The Duration**

Jeremiah 31 does not tell us the duration, but the next chapter does.

"I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me". (Jeremiah 32:40)

The duration is the same, the renewed covenant is also an everlasting covenant. The one difference in the new covenant is that God says, "they will never turn away from me". Since the condition has changed, It appears that the new condition will provide Israel with the ability to keep the new covenant under the new terms.

**The sign**

From the Jeremiah 31 passage we can see that at least one of the original signs remains, the Torah. There is a difference in the renewed covenant. In the original covenant, God commanded Israel to put his Torah on their hearts, but here God will put it in their hearts for them. Israel was not able to meet the conditions of the original covenant because their hearts turned away from God as we saw in previous chapters, but here we see God's mercy in his renewing provision for his people.
Ezekiel 11:19 gives a little more detail on how this will be accomplished.

*I will give them an undivided heart, and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh: Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God*.  

Israel will be able to keep God's Torah because he will give them a new spirit and a new heart and this new heart will have his Torah written on it and the new spirit will enable them to keep his Torah.

**The Dedication**

For the dedication we will have to wait and see in the next chapter how this renewal of the covenant is dedicated.

**Conclusion**

When does this new covenant begin? To answer this we need to go to the New Covenant. The second part of this book will take a closer look at the renewal of God's covenant with his wife Israel.
Chapter Summary

- God promises to renew his covenant with Israel.
- The new covenant will not be like the original covenant.
- The six parts of the renewed covenant according to Jeremiah 31 are,
  - The parties; between God and Israel
  - Promises; God will forgive Israel and will care for her and he will write his Torah on their hearts.
  - Condition; The reason for the new covenant is because Israel could not keep the original condition. Jeremiah does not explain the conditions of the new covenant.
  - Duration; Everlasting
  - Sign; The Torah remains.
  - Dedication; Unknown at this time
In the last chapter we looked at Jeremiah's prophecy of the coming New Covenant. The Jeremiah passage is quoted in the New Covenant book of Hebrews, not as a prophecy, but as the fulfillment of it.

"The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." (Hebrews 8:8-12)

In a moment, we will look at when this new covenant prophecy was fulfilled. First I want to examine a couple of words in the above passage.
The first is the word "new" in the "new covenant". Here we have the Greek word "kainos" which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word "hadash", which we looked at in the last chapter. Does this Greek word also support the concept of "renewed" as does "hadash"? There are several passages we can look at to show this, but I think 2 Corinthians 5:17 is a good one, it says; "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new (kainos) creation; the old has gone, the new (kainos) has come!" When someone comes to Christ, is he recreated? Or given a completely new body? Of course not, this passage would read better if we translated kainos as renewed; "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a renewed creation; the old has gone, the renewed has come!" Even the New Testament supports the idea that the New Covenant is a renewal of the original covenant.

The second word is "laws". The Greek culture had no concept of the Hebrew Torah, and therefore had no word equivalent for the word Torah. The Greek writers of the New Covenant used the Greek word "nomos", which means law, to translate the Hebrew word "Torah". The chapter on the Torah will discuss this further, but for now we should recognize that "nomos" is "Torah" and I will use the word "Torah" in its place as I did in part one of this book.
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The New Covenant Fulfillment

Yeshua sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover."...[During the supper, Yeshua] took bread, gave thanks, and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you, do this in remembrance of me." 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". (Luke 22:8,19,20)

During the time of Yeshua, the Passover meal had become an elaborate ceremony to celebrate the redemption of Israel from Egypt by the hand of God. This ceremony is done much the same today as it was in the days of Yeshua. The supper would have occurred in the evening at sundown. After the Passover supper, Yeshua was arrested, tried, convicted, sentenced and executed, all before nine o'clock the next morning. The events I have briefly described here, which I will expand on, led to the redemption of Israel and the forgiveness of their sins as prophesied in Jeremiah 31. Let us now examine the renewal of this covenant.

The Parties

"I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah." (Jeremiah 31:31 & Hebrews 8:8)


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*God has brought to Israel the Savior Yeshua, as he promised.* (Acts 13:23)

God was not finished with Israel. They failed to keep the first covenant. God in his grace and mercy gives Israel a better covenant, a renewal of the original.

We will be looking at Yeshua's ministry and the beginning of the "church". It is not what most of us have been lead to believe. To begin with, the covenant was with the Jews, Yeshua was a Jew, Yeshua's ministry was to the Jews, Yeshua's disciples were Jews, the first ten years of the "church" consisted of Jews alone. In fact, the church was not a Gentile church, as many believe, but a sect of Judaism. This will be examined closer in a later chapter.

**The Promises**

*I will put my Torah in their minds and write them on their hearts, I will be their God, and they will be my people.... I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.* (Jeremiah 31:33,34 & Hebrews 8:10,12)

The three promises found here are,

- God will be Israel's God, and they will be his people.
- God will forgive Israel.
- God will write his Torah on Israel's heart.
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The first promise states that he will be their God and Israel will be his people. This promise is the same as in the first covenant, for God said in Leviticus 26:12; "I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people". This first covenant promise is the same in the new covenant. Leviticus 26:12 is quoted in 2 Corinthians 6:16 showing that the very promise from the first covenant is carried over into the renewed covenant connecting the two covenants together. The second promise is that God will forgive all of Israel's sins. This promise is accomplished through the work of Yeshua's ministry and through his sacrifice on the cross.

Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins". (Matthew 26:28)

God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. (Acts 5:31)

The third is God will write his Torah on Israel's mind and heart. This promise will be covered in chapter 12. Remember in the first covenant, God required Israel to put his Torah on their own minds and heart. They failed to do this most of the time. Now God promises to do this for them.
These promises we have just looked at are God's promises to Israel. What is Israel's promise to God? In the first covenant, Israel promised to obey God. Nowhere in the New Covenant do we find Israel or anyone else for that matter declaring a promise to God in reference to the new covenant. Does this mean that Israel has no requirement in keeping the covenant? I don't think so. A better answer would be that since this covenant is a renewal of the original, the original promise to obey God is still in effect. After all, God's promises have not been eliminated, only added to, not taken away. Let us see if Israel is still required to obey God.

Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!"..."We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him." (Acts 5:29)

Once made perfect, [Yeshua] became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him. (Hebrews 5:9)

The man who says, I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Yeshua did. (1 John 2: 4-6)

Yes, God's people are to continue to obey God. Anyone who chooses a life of disobedience is
not part of God's people or the covenant, just as it was in the first covenant.

**The Conditions**

In the first covenant the promises were given on the condition that the Torah be kept. It was recognized that no one was able to keep the whole Torah completely, so when sin was recognized in the community or individual, a sacrifice was made to God asking for forgiveness. They knew that salvation could not come from the Torah because no one could keep it. Salvation comes from God alone. The individual's response from the heart to the Torah determined the entrance into the assembly of God's holy people. If the person's heart was to keep the Torah, they were a part of the assembly. If the person's heart yearned against the Torah, they were cut off from the assembly and the covenant. Such is the case for all the community, Jews and Gentile alike.

The renewed covenant still depends on the individual's obedience to God. The difference in the renewed covenant is that God has written his Torah on their hearts. We now have the ability to obey. Not by our own effort, but by the help of the Holy Spirit, who he has given us (See Ezekiel 11:19 and 36:26,27).

Israel was required to keep all of God's Torah in order to remain in the first covenant. Israel was not able to keep this promise to keep the Torah. Yeshua (the mediator of the new covenant) came to fulfill the requirements of the Torah for Israel.
"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. (Matthew 5:17)

Just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:18,19)

Yeshua not only kept the Torah for them (since they couldn't), he also took the punishment for their disobedience of the Torah, and therefore they are no longer under the curse of the Torah.

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Torah by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." (Galatians 3:13)

We must understand that although Yeshua removed the curse of the Torah, he did not remove or abolish the Torah as was shown previously in Matthew 5:17. Yeshua also said in John 14:15, "If you love me, you will obey what I command". Paul also said in Romans 3:31, "Do we, then nullify the Torah by this faith? Not at all, we uphold the Torah." In chapter 12 we will discuss the relevancy of the Torah within the new covenant, but for the purpose of this discussion we must understand that even though
the curse is removed, the Torah remains and all believers are to obey. A command such as; "You shall not kill" is just as relevant in the renewed covenant as it was in the first covenant.

Because of Yeshua's sacrifice on the cross, we can say that the conditions of the covenant to keep the law were fulfilled by Yeshua. We then have an unconditional promise in the new covenant.

Deuteronomy 27:26 said, "Cursed is the man who does not uphold the words of this Torah by carrying them out". When Yeshua was sacrificed he took on himself the curse for disobedience of the Torah even though he himself kept it.

Having canceled the written code, with its regulations that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross (Colossians 2:14)

The Greek word used for written code is "cheirographon" which is two words put together to make the one word meaning "handwriting". This word is only found once, here in this passage. Notice that this passage does not say that the Torah has been taken away, instead it says that the handwriting against us has been taken away. The Torah was never against anyone, so what handwriting was against us? The only thing that was against God's people was the curses for disobedience of the Torah, therefore, the curses were against Israel. Yeshua's sacrifice on the cross
removed those curses. This will be discussed at greater detail in chapter 12.

**The duration**

The first covenant given to Israel is an everlasting covenant. If it is everlasting, then it remains today just as the everlasting covenant with Noah and its sign of the rainbow, remains today. The covenant between God and Israel remains to this day as the renewed covenant. Even the new covenant is identified as an everlasting covenant.

*May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Yeshua.* (Hebrews 13:20)

*I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me.* (Jeremiah 32:40)

**The sign**

The "contract" of the covenant that we looked at in chapter two, is the Torah. As we will see in chapter 12, the Torah also remains to this day.

*You show that you are a letter from Christ the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.* (2 Corinthians 3: 3)

In the renewed covenant, God gave his Spirit to his people, the Spirit then writes his Torah on
their heart. With this Torah now written on our hearts, rather than just on a stone tablet, we have the desire to do his Torah out of love, rather than obligation.

Also mentioned in chapter two as one of the many signs of the covenant was the annual feast of the Passover. Yeshua used this sign also as the sign of the renewal of the covenant, which was made by his sacrifice. The bread and wine which Yeshua gave his disciples at his last Passover meal (Last Supper) were the signs he used for the new covenant and he told his disciples to remember him through these signs of the Passover meal.

_The Lord Yeshua, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." (1 Corinthians 11: 23-26)_

The dedication

Just as the first covenant was a covenant of blood, so is the new covenant. At the dedication of the first covenant, Moses sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice onto the people. In the renewed covenant, it is the blood of the ultimate sacrifice, the perfect man Yeshua Christ.
One of the soldiers pierced Yeshua's side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. (John 19:34)

The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called, may receive the promised eternal inheritance - now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant. (Hebrews 9:13-15)

To Yeshua the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. (Hebrews 12:24)

The First Covenant Before Yeshua

Those who disobeyed the Torah were required to offer sacrifices to atone for their sins. Hebrews 9:22 states that "without the shedding of blood their is no forgiveness of sins." Leviticus chapters 1 to 7 give all the details for the offering of sacrifices. After the description of each sacrifice we read "and they will be forgiven". This act had to be
consistently renewed each year, for a complete covering was not yet revealed.

Israel knew they could not keep the Torah, so God provided the sacrificial system as a visible symbol to see God's forgiveness. I would then ask, if the sacrifice can remove sin, what was the purpose of Yeshua's sacrifice? Let me answer that question at the end of this section.

We read in Hebrews 10:4, "It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." How is it possible that Israel's sins are forgiven when the blood of the animal cannot take away the sins? The answer is on the cross and the ultimate sacrifice of Yeshua.

_Such a high priest meets our needs - one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself._ (Hebrews 7:26-27)

In the above passage, it says that Yeshua was "sacrificed for their sins"; That is, the sins of the priests. All of Israel who lived under the covenant with God and died were taken to "Abraham's Bosom" (Luke 16:22) and held there until Yeshua's sacrifice which would then forgive them of their sins as promised.
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"For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." (Jeremiah 31:34)

She will give birth to a son. And you are to give him the name Yeshua, because he will save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21)

Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. (Hebrews 9:26)

When Yeshua came out of the grave, "he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men." (Ephesians 4:8) Yeshua's sacrificed removed the sins of Israel who then could be released from the grave, and since his sacrifice was "once for all", his sacrifice also removed all future sins of Israel. The same grace that we experience today is the same grace given to those under the First Covenant.

Our previous question was; If the sacrifice of animals could remove sin, what was the purpose of Yeshua's sacrifice? The animal sacrifices did not take away the sins of the people. They were only symbols of the coming redemption of all of Israel, past, present and future through Yeshua. Without the sacrifice of Yeshua there would be no forgiveness today or in the past.

For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through
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The obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:19)

God recognized that the animal sacrifices were not required for the forgiveness of sin for he said.

For I desire mercy (the Hebrew word here, hesed, means love), not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings. (Hosea 6:6)

God’s ultimate redemption plan for Israel and the forgiveness of their sins is through the sacrifice of Yeshua, not in animal sacrifices. Yeshua’s sacrifice removed all sin, once for all, throughout all eternity, past, present and future.

[Yeshua] did not enter by means of the blood of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption...Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance - now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant. (Hebrews 9:12,15)

The First Covenant After Yeshua

Although the new covenant is a renewal of the first, we can look at the original and its renewal as two covenants coexisting side by side. Most
people believe that when the new covenant came, the first was removed, but this is not the case.

*By calling this covenant "new", he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.* (Hebrews 8:13)

We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away. But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. (2 Corinthians 3:13-16)

Hebrews 8 says that the first covenant is obsolete, (meaning not needed because it has been renewed) and we know that it has not been removed because it says that it is "aging and will disappear", future tense.

Those who keep God's covenant but do not believe in the Messiah, live under the first covenant, whereas those who keep God's covenant and do believe in the Messiah live under the renewed covenant.

There are those in Israel who still live under the First Covenant not recognizing the sacrifice of Yeshua as their means of forgiveness, and have taken the Torah of God and put it in their hearts and
keep it faithfully. Will these people also receive the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Yeshua?

"All of Israel will be saved... As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. (Romans 11:26,28-32)

We must determine what "Israel" means in the passages above. Romans 9:6 says, "not all of Israel is Israel". This appears to be contradictory, but if we read it in light of our past discussions on the community of Israel and the assembly of Israel, we can see that those who are faithful to the covenant and the Torah are of the assembly of Israel. But those who reject or despise the covenant and the Torah may still be a part of the community of Israel but are cut off from the assembly of Israel and the covenant. Therefore we could read Romans 9:6 as; "Not all of Israel (the community) is Israel (the assembly).

Therefore, those who are still living under the first Covenant are part of the assembly of Israel and are saved by the Grace of God and his promise to Abraham. These people, who do not accept the new covenant do not have the Holy Spirit to guide them
making the way difficult since they must write the Torah on their hearts themselves.

Chapter Summary

- Yeshua's sacrifice is the ushering in of the renewed covenant.

- The six parts of the renewed covenant according to the New Covenant are,
  - The parties; remains between God and Israel.
  - Promises; God promises to forgive Israel and continue to care for her, to write his Torah on their hearts for them. Israel is still required to obey God.
  - Conditions; Yeshua took the curse for Israel's disobedience to the Torah, removing the condition of the covenant.
  - Duration; Remains as everlasting.
  - Sign; the Torah and Passover remain.
  - Dedication; The blood sacrifice of Yeshua on the cross.

- The sins of Israel while under the first covenant were ultimately forgiven by the blood of Yeshua and not the sacrifices performed while under the first covenant.

- The first covenant still remains for those who do not accept the sacrifice of Yeshua.
In part one of this book we looked at the names and titles of God's People Israel. They were,

- A People set apart
- A Holy People
- A Community set apart
- A Holy Assembly
- The Descendants of Abraham
- Israel
- The Chosen People
- A Holy Nation
- The people of God
- Children of God
- Sheep
- Brothers

Each of these names and titles can be found in the New Covenant and attributed to the believers. Not to a new church of Gentile believers, but to Israel and the Gentiles who enter into the covenant with them. Let us look at these names and titles and see how they are used in the New Covenant.
A People Set Apart

Depart, depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing! Come out from it and be pure, you who carry the vessels of the LORD. (Isaiah 52:11)

Here we have a First Covenant passage commanding Israel to be separate from the other nations. This passage is quoted in part by Paul.

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? ..."Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God. (2 Corinthians 6:14 - 7:1)

In this passage, Paul is inferring that the command for Israel to be separate from the unbelievers is still a requirement for Israel. By quoting the First Covenant passage, Paul is connecting Israel in the first covenant with Israel in the new covenant. Paul even carries this concept of separation into the act of not touching anything unclean as commanded in the Torah.
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Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. (Romans 12:2)

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world - the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he was and does - comes not from the Father but from the world. (1 John 2:15-17)

Just as Israel was a people set apart from the world in the Old Testament, They are still to be set apart from the world in the New Testament.

A Holy People

I am the LORD who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy. (Leviticus 11:45)

Just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written; "Be holy, because I am holy." (1 Peter 1:15,16)

Here again we have a New Covenant passage quoting a First Covenant passage. This First Covenant command is for Israel in the New Covenant as well.
A Community Set Apart

The Hebrew word used in the First Covenant for the community of Israel is "edah". When we looked at this word in Chapter 3 we saw that this word applied to all of Israel, all those born in the line of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The Septuagint translated the Hebrew word "edah" into the Greek word "synagogue". By the New Covenant period, this word came to be used for the places of worship and study of the Jewish people as it is today.

The First Covenant concept of community was carried over into the synagogues of the New Covenant period. Each town had a synagogue or community of Jews who met on each Sabbath for worship and study. In one case it is used exclusively of a gathering of believers.

My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Yeshua Christ, don't show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting (synagogue) wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in... (James 2:1,2)

A Holy Assembly

The second Hebrew word used in the First Covenant for a gathering of Israel is "qahal". The First Covenant Septuaigint translated this word into
the Greek word "ekklesia". We can also see this qahal-ekklesia relationship in the New Covenant.

[Moses] was in the assembly (Greek: ekklesia) in the desert, with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai. (Acts 7:38)

The New Covenant writers continued to use the Greek word ekklesia, used in the Septuagint for the assembly of Israel. When we look at the word ekklesia in the New Covenant, we find that it is used over 100 times for the assembling of the believers. Ekklesia is usually translated as the "Church" in English translations. Many people believe that the Church is new and unique to the New Covenant. As we can see this Greek word was used long before Christ in the Old Testament Septuagint to identify the "ekklesia of Israel" or using the New Covenant English translation of the word; the "Church of Israel". By using the word ekklesia, the New Covenant writers are identifying themselves as the "Holy Assembly" those who have set them themselves apart from non-believers by keeping God's Torah.

Christ loved the church (ekklesia) and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church (ekklesia), without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. (Ephesians 5:25-27)
Remember when we looked at the word holy in the first part of this book? We saw that those who were holy are those who kept the Torah. Was not this God's desire for Israel from the very beginning? Israel failed to make themselves holy and blameless before the Lord, but God did not give up on them. He sent his own Son to earth to be holy for them. He then gave them the Holy Spirit and wrote his Torah on their hearts. Since the word "church" is usually thought of as a new people of God by most people, I will, just as I did with the word Torah, use the word assembly in its place since this word is more consistent with the Old Testament definition.

The Descendants Of Abraham

*If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

*(Galatians 3:29)*

This promise given to Abraham is for all who have faith in that promise just as Abraham did. Going back to our chapter on the covenant with Abraham we remember that God promised Abraham He would be his God and the God of his descendants and that he would make him into a great nation and with an everlasting inheritance. Those who put their faith in Yeshua are also heirs of this promise and are therefore descendants of Abraham. Does this mean that Israel is now rejected as God's people? No.
Therefore, the promise came by faith so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring - not only to those who are of the Torah but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, he is the father of us all. (Romans 4:16)

Israel

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men) - remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. (Ephesians 2:11-12)

Here we see that Gentiles, known as foreigners in the First Covenant were excluded from citizenship with Israel and therefore excluded from the covenant with God, but all that has changed with the coming of the Messiah.

But now in Christ Yeshua you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. ... Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Yeshua himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined
together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (Ephesians 2:13,19)

Through Christ and his sacrifice, Gentiles become fellow citizens with Israel and are able to enter into the covenant with God. Although the word Israel still applies to the nation of Israel, the Gentiles can join Israel as part of the assembly. There is a teaching within today's churches that the church has become the new Israel by replacing Israel of the First Covenant. This is not true. In chapter 15 we will look at this relationship between Israel and Gentiles. But for now recognize that the church is the Holy Assembly of Jews and Gentiles together.

Hebrews

While the name "Israel" is for those who are physically descended from Jacob, the name "Hebrew" applies to the descendants of Abraham. Since all believers, Jews and Gentiles, are descendants of Abraham (Gal 3:7), then all believers, Jews and Gentiles, are Hebrews. When we looked at the Meaning of "Hebrew" in the first part of this book, we found that it meant "the crossing ones". Yeshua mentions this "crossing over".

I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will
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not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. (John 5:24)

A Chosen People

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. (Ephesians 1:4)

Therefore, as God's chosen people holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion.... (Colossians 3:12)

But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. (2 Thessalonians 2:13)

Israel has been the chosen people and this has not changed. The Gentiles, who have joined the Assembly, join Israel as fellow citizens and become part of the chosen people.

A Holy Nation

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God. (1 Peter 2:9)

This passage is also a quote from the First Covenant, which was a title given to Israel. God
only chose one nation out of all the other nations and that is Israel. All other nations were invited to join Israel and their covenant with the one true God. Here we see that the title, Holy Nation, continues in the New Covenant for those who are in the covenant with God. (Exodus 19:5,6)

The People Of God

For we are the temple of the living God, As God has said; "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." (2 Corinthians 6:16)

This is a quotation of Leviticus 26:12 where this promise is for Israel. In Paul's letter to the Corinthians he is telling them that this promise is also for them.

In the First Covenant God chose Israel to be his people, but God clearly tells Israel that all the nations were to be allowed into the nation of Israel and also be a part of God's people. Those who except Christ are fellow citizens of God's house with Israel as Ephesians 2 has stated. The "Replacement Theology" taught in many churches says that God rejected Israel as his people (divorced?) And made a new group of people out of the Christian Church to be his people. Scripture in no way supports this view, but rather shows that the nation of Israel and all other people who wish to join them and God's Covenant are all fellow citizens.
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For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile - the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him. (Romans 10:12)

This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Yeshua. (Ephesians 3:6)

All of God's people are of one body. All people are welcome into this body.

Nazarene

This is one name that is new to the New Covenant for the assembly of believers. The book of Acts says that those who followed Yeshua were called Nazarenes, because Yeshua was from Nazareth. The Jewish Religion (Judaism) is made up of many different sects (similar to our denominations). At the time of Yeshua, there were at least 26 different sects (denominations) within Judaism. Although each sect varied in their views and beliefs of the scriptures, they were all considered a part of Judaism and were fellow Jews. A few of these sects are mentioned in the New Covenant such as the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Zealots. One of the newer sects of Judaism was known as the Nazarenes.

We have found this man (Paul) to be a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews all
over the world. He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect. (Acts 24:5)

The believers did not consider themselves as a separate religion, but actually a sect within Judaism. This is evident in the fact that they continued meeting in the Jewish synagogues.

As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures. (Acts 17:2)

As soon as it was night, the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish Synagogue. (Acts 17:10)

Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. (Acts 19:8)

The believers of the New Covenant consisted of Jews who continued to believe in the one true God of Israel and the Scriptures. The only difference between the believing Jew and unbelieving Jew is in the acceptance of the Messiah Yeshua who is taught, even in the Old Testament scriptures.

Children Of God

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! (1 John 3:1)
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*Just as Israel was called the Children of God as in so also are the New Covenant Believers, children of God. (Deuteronomy 14:1,)*

**Sheep**

*For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your soul. (1 Peter 2:25)*

**Brothers**

In Acts 2:24 we have a believing Jew (Peter) calling non-believing Jews, brothers, and In 2 Corinthians 1:1 we have a believing Jew (Paul) calling a believing Non-Jew (Timothy) brother. All who lived under the covenant (the first and the renewed) are brothers in the LORD, and brothers as descendants of Abraham.

**Conclusion**

All of the names and titles that applied to the Holy Assembly of Israel in the First Covenant are also used in the New Covenant for the believers of Yeshua the Messiah. The New Covenant is not the story of a new group of people chosen by God to be his holy assembly, but the continuing saga of Israel - God's chosen people and the Gentiles who join Israel in the covenant with God. This can be seen in the
fact that the same names and titles are used for those in the First Covenant and those under the Renewed Covenant in the New Testament. Many First Covenant passages applying to Israel are quoted in the New Covenant. These passages in the New Covenant do not say that there is a new Israel, rather it is reminding Israel of whom they are.

Chapter Summary

- All the names and titles applied to Israel in the First Covenant continue as the names and titles of Israel in the New Covenant.

- In the New Covenant we see Gentiles Joining Israel with the two groups coming together as one people of God.

- A new name given to the Holy Assembly in the New Covenant is the Nazarene Sect of Judaism.
When Christians are asked; "Is the Law (Torah), as found in the Old Testament, to be kept by New Covenant believers today"? A variety of answers are given such as the following. "No, we are under grace and not the law". "The only law we have to keep in the New Covenant is to love God and man". "The laws given by God in the First Covenant were for the Jews, the laws given by Yeshua in the New Covenant are for the Christians". Are these answers biblical? What does Yeshua and the New Covenant writers say about the law (Torah)? Let me first say that it would be impossible for us to say that Christians do not have to keep any laws. For example, "You shall not kill!" is just as valid of a command for us today as it was when the command was given to Moses. There are many other examples of First Covenant commands that are valid commands today, so the question is which First Covenant commands are valid today.

The Word Torah In The New Covenant

In the first part of this book we looked at the Hebrew word Torah. When the Jews translated the First Covenant Hebrew into Greek in the Septuagint they had to choose a Greek word which was closest
in meaning to the Hebrew word Torah. Unfortunately there was no exact word to match the meaning of the concept of the Torah. The only Greek word that came close was "nomos"

When the New Covenant writers wrote the New Covenant, they continued to use the Greek word nomos for the Hebrew word Torah. Let us compare the Old and New Covenant uses of these two words.

Deuteronomy 31:26 - The Book of the Torah
Galatians 3:10 - The Book of the Nomos

1 Kings 2:3 - Written in the Torah of Moses
1 Corinthians 9:9 - Written in the Nomos of Moses

Joshua 24:26 - The Torah of God
Romans 7:22 - The Nomos of God

When the word nomos was translated into English, it was translated as "law". We could say that the original meaning of Torah has been "lost in the translation".

With this in mind, we know that where the Greek word nomos is used, we know that it is speaking of the Torah, and for this reason I will use the word Torah whenever the text of the scriptures or my writings are speaking of the Torah.
The Culture Of The Torah

It is important to understand what Torah meant to Israel at the time of Yeshua and the New Covenant writers. In this way we will have a better idea of how the people responded to the various statements in the New Testament about the Torah.

You could say that Israel lived Torah. What I mean by this is that every aspect of a Jew's life was based on the commands and regulations set by the Torah. This included; the weekly Sabbath, yearly feasts, diet, clothing, shelter, school, worship, work, family relationships, government, friendships, travel, livestock, harvests, planting, medicine, births, burials, weddings and the list is almost endless. Yeshua, his Apostles and all of Israel lived their entire lives in this culture of Torah. Did Yeshua or the Apostles teach anything contrary to the Torah, contrary to their very culture?

For us today, in our western culture, a statement like "The Torah is done away with" means very little to us, but a statement like that to a Jew in the first century would be like saying "your culture, heritage, way of life, even your very life is worthless". The fact is, the statement above was never said or even implied by Yeshua or any of the New Covenant writers. If you look at each time the word nomos is used in the New Covenant you will see that the writers never condemned the Torah, but rather supported the Torah.
The Three Different Types Of Laws In The Torah

Three of the Hebrew words used for the various parts of the Torah as we looked at in chapter four are; mitzvah, mishmeret and huqah. Each of these also has their Greek word counterpart just as Torah does in nomos. Each of these Hebrew words were translated in the Septuagint and also used in the New Covenant in the following ways.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrew</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mitzvah</td>
<td>Entole</td>
<td>Command</td>
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<td>Mishmeret</td>
<td>Dogma</td>
<td>Regulations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Huqah</td>
<td>Dikaioma</td>
<td>Ordinances</td>
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The Eternal Torah

When God promised the New Covenant to Israel he said. "I will put my Torah in their minds, and write it on their hearts" (Jeremiah 31:33) and quoted in Hebrews 8:16). Here we see that God's plans in the new Covenant included his Torah. The Greek word nomos (Torah) is used about 200 times in the New Covenant. Not one of these 200 occurrences ever says that the Torah has been abolished or taken away. Rather the New Covenant affirms the existence of the Torah. Here are just a few of these passages.
"It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Torah". (Luke 16:17)

Do we, then, nullify the Torah by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the Torah. (Romans 3:31)

So then, the Torah is holy... (Romans 7:12)

We know that the Torah is good if one uses it properly. We also know that Torah is made not for the righteous but for the ones without Torah. (1 Timothy 1:8,9)

But the man who looks intently into the perfect Torah that gives freedom, and continue to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it - he will be blessed in what he does. (James 1:25)

"Do not think that I (Yeshua) have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Torah until everything is accomplished". (Matthew 5:17,18)

I would like to take a close look at this last passage as it gives a clear picture of how Yeshua related to the Torah. Yeshua said he did not come to destroy "the Torah and the Prophets". The phrase "Torah and the Prophets" is the name given to what we call the "Old Testament". The Torah refers to the
first five books of the Bible and the Prophets are the remaining books of the "Old Testament".

Yeshua then said, "I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." Yeshua is saying that he did not come to abolish the First Covenant books. The Greek word used for "abolish" means "to do away with". He said he came instead to fulfill the First Covenant. The Greek word for "fulfill" means "to fill" or "to complete". There are two parts of the First Covenant that Yeshua came to complete.

- Yeshua came to complete the Torah. Before Yeshua, no man could fill the Torah, meaning to keep it completely. By fulfilling all of the requirements of the Torah he could be the lamb sacrifice for our redemption. The only way to be perfect is to keep the Torah 100%.

- He also came to complete or fill the prophecies of all the prophets in the First Covenant about the Messiah. Yeshua came to fulfill the requirements of the Torah and fulfill the prophecies about him in the books of the prophets.

He then said; "I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Torah until everything is accomplished". Has Yeshua completed all of the prophecies spoken about him? No, not until his Second Coming will all of the prophecies of him be
completed. Since the prophecies are not yet complete, neither will the Torah pass away.

If Yeshua did not abolish the Torah, we should then be able to see this continuation of the Torah in the New Covenant. Let us look at just one. In Chapter 4 we looked at commands found in the Torah which were being kept in the book of Genesis. One of those commands was.

"you must not eat the blood of any creature, because the life of every creature is its blood; anyone who eats it must be cut off." (Leviticus 17:14)

We found this Torah command also in the book of Genesis.

"you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it". (Genesis 9:4)

We can also see this very command in the New Covenant.

"It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. (Acts 15:19-20)

In the New Covenant the Gentiles are told to abstain from the blood of animals. This command is found in Genesis (before the giving of the Torah), in the Torah (Leviticus) and in the New Covenant
This command is eternal just as the Torah stated.

*This is a lasting ordinance (olam huqah) for the generations to come, wherever you live: You must not eat any fat or any blood.* (Leviticus 3:17)

This command is clearly everlasting even into the New Covenant. If this is the case what about all the other commands which are called everlasting like the Sabbath and Feasts (which will be covered in the next two chapters). What about the Torah itself which is called everlasting?

"All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal (olam)." (Psalms 119:160)

**Love And Torah**

"A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. (John 13:34)

"If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love". (John 15:10)

Some will say that when Yeshua said, "A new command I give you", he is saying that he is replacing the First Covenant Torah with the following command; "love one another". There are three problems with this statement. First, as we read earlier, Yeshua said he did not come to destroy the Torah. 2) Yeshua did not say "a new Torah I give
you". If Yeshua were in fact doing away with the Torah, he would have been doing away with the entire Jewish culture. Rather he said he is giving them "a new command". 3) Last, this is not really a "new command". Yeshua is actually quoting the Torah command in Leviticus 19:18 to "Love your neighbor as yourself". Yeshua is actually "renewing" this command because many have forgotten it.

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the Torah. The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the Torah. (Romans 13:8-10)

Is this passage telling us that the only command we have to keep is "love"? Just as Yeshua is the "fulfillment" of the Torah, love is the fulfillment of the Torah. If you keep the Torah, you will love. Love is not an emotion it is an action. What is that action? Keeping the Torah, for Torah is love. Yeshua was asked a question by a fellow teacher of the Torah on this very matter.

One of the teachers of the Torah came and heard them debating (Yeshua and the Sadducees). Noticing that Yeshua had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments
(entole), which is the most important?" "The most important one," answered Yeshua, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord you God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." "Well said teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." (Mark 12:28-33)

The scriptures are very clear, if we love God then we will want to keep his commands found in the Torah. The greatest problem Yeshua faced was that many of the people and teachers were keeping the Torah out of obligation not love (legalism). Yeshua is teaching them that God desires that his people keep his Torah out of a love for him. This was discussed in chapter four when we saw that Israel showed their love to God by keeping his Torah. This Torah-love relationship continues into the New Covenant.

We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys
his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Yeshua did. (1 John 2:3-6)

The last line in this passage said we "must walk as Yeshua did". Do we really know how Yeshua walked? The gospels are very clear, Yeshua's walk was the Torah. The Torah is the standard of measure to determine a person's nearness to perfection. In order for Yeshua to be perfect he would have had to keep the Torah 100%.

Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. (1 John 3:24)

It has given me great joy to find some of you children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us. And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another. And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love. (2 John 4-6)

Yeshua The Torah Giver

"If you love me, you will obey what I command. ... Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. ... If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching". (John 14:15,21,23)
Is "love" the only command Yeshua taught? Not at all, throughout Yeshua's ministry he taught from the Torah. Yeshua taught Israel how to keep the whole Torah, the way it was meant to be, in love and not obligation. We must also remember that Yeshua is God. We usually look at God as the giver of the Torah in the First Covenant, but Yeshua is God making him the Torah giver. Therefore, when Yeshua said "obey my teachings" he is not only referring to his teachings as a man, but also as God. 1 John 5:3 confirms this when it says; "This is love for God: to obey his commands".

Is Keeping (Obeying) Torah Legalism?

Everyone keeps some of the Torah. For example; "You shall have no other gods besides me", "You shall not murder", "You shall not steal", "You shall not commit adultery" (Ex 20, Deuteronomy 5). Is keeping these Torah commands legalism? I do not think so. Then there are Torah commands in the First Covenant that are not part of the 10 Commandments such as the following which can be found in Leviticus 19.

- Do not lie.
- Do not practice divination or sorcery.
- Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity, use honest scales and honest weights.
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- Rise in the presence of the aged.
- Shows respect for the elderly and revere your God.

Is keeping these Torah commands legalism? Again, I do not think so.

Is the keeping of the seventh day Sabbath, Passover or the Feast of Tabernacles legalism? What if one chooses not to eat Pork as commanded in the Torah? Do you believe keeping these are legalism only because they are Torah? What is the difference between these Torah commands and the ones listed above? Many keep Christmas and Easter or go to church on Sunday; are they considered a legalist?

Let's take a look at some examples of people who kept the Torah in the New Covenant. Was Yeshua a legalist? He kept every one of the commands found in the Torah. He had to since he had to remain sinless his entire life in order to be the "lamb without blemish" that would be sacrificed to atone for our sins. No, Yeshua was not a legalist.

What about the Jewish teachers who Yeshua and John the Baptizer often criticized? The teachers strove to keep the Torah just as Yeshua did. So what was the problem with these teachers? The difference between them and Yeshua was not that they were keeping the Torah, but rather where their heart was while keeping the Torah. God looks at the heart of the man not the actions he takes. "The LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts" (1 Chronicles 28:9). Yeshua
kept the Torah with a heart of love to God, while some of the teachers kept the Torah out of obligation and pride, not out of a desire to show love to God. These teachers could be called legalist because their heart was not on God, but rather on their own prideful selves and looking at how good they are keeping the Torah. Not all teachers though can be lumped into one category of legalists, for there were many who were keeping the Torah out of love as Yeshua was teaching.

Legalism then is not keeping Torah, but keeping it out of obligation rather than love.

Another aspect of Legalism is your motive for keeping the Torah. Those who keep the Torah to earn their salvation are legalist because they are trying to earn salvation by their own deeds and not Yeshua'.

Know that a man is not justified by observing the Torah, but by faith in Yeshua Christ. So we, too have put our faith in Christ Yeshua that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the Torah, because by observing the Torah no one will be justified. (Galatians 2:16)

Those who trust in Yeshua as the only means of salvation and keep the Torah to show their love to God cannot be called a legalist. James 2:20 calls keeping the Torah - works and "faith without works is dead".

If you keep the 10 commandments, are you trying to earn your salvation. No, I don't think so.
You are saved by faith in Yeshua, but you desire to follow His commands because you want to show your love to him as Yeshua said; "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

This heresy of salvation through keeping the Torah is mentioned in 1 Timothy where Paul is saying that this is an improper use of the Torah.

*We know that the Torah is good if one uses it properly.* (1 Timothy 1:8)

Words like Torah and works are often misunderstood and are considered negatives. We all observe parts of the Torah and do works. If we are not, then there is something wrong. Whether you observe the 10 commandments or observe the Passover or help the little old lady down the street by mowing her lawn, you are doing Torah and works. This, is what we as Christians are called to do.

**Faith And Works**

Are works only taught in the First Covenant and faith only taught in the New Covenant? Absolutely not, Habakkuk 2:4 says; "the righteous will live by faith". We already know that God commanded Israel to live by the Torah (works) but we can also see that they are to live by faith also. As we shall soon see, we are also told to live by works in the New Covenant. Faith and Works are inseparable, just as Grace and Torah are inseparable.
Obedience of the Torah is works. We are commanded to do works but we are also told that no amount of works can save us. If we say that we are saved by grace and do not do the works of the Torah, we are dead. If we do the works of the Torah without the grace of God in our lives, we are also dead. Grace and Torah (works) must be equally balanced in our lives. You cannot have one without the other.

"You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only." (James 2:24)

"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." (James 2:26)

**Grace And Torah**

All Christians will agree that "we are saved by grace and not the keeping of the Torah". Is Grace a new teaching in the New Covenant? As we saw in the first part of the book, the Hebrew word "hen" means grace. We know this because "hen" was translated into the Greek word "charis" which is translated into English as "grace". So we saw that God gave grace to Israel. If Torah existed side by side with grace in the First Covenant, then cannot Torah and grace exist side by side in the New Covenant?

No one in the First Covenant or in the New Covenant could ever keep the Torah 100%. We know that there are those in the Old and New
Covenants who received eternal life. Many will say that those in the Old Testament were saved by the sacrifices that were performed as described in the Torah. But Hebrews 10:4 tells us that it "is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take way sins". Only by the blood of Yeshua can anyone be saved, whether in the First or New Covenant because Yeshua's sacrifice was "once for all" and he did "take away the sins of the world" (John 1:19).

How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death so that we may serve the living God! For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance - now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant. (Hebrews 9:14-15)

The gift of grace is salvation given to those that could not keep the Torah and do not deserve salvation, which is given through the blood of Yeshua. Throughout all time it has only been by the Grace of God that men are saved, in the First as well as the New Covenant.

**Righteousness And Wickedness**

In chapter four, we looked at the definitions of righteousness and wickedness found in the First
Covenant. The Hebrew word for righteousness is tzedikah, which was translated into the Greek word dikaios in the Septuagint and is used throughout the New Covenant. Also the Hebrew word for wickedness is rasha which was translated into the Greek word adikia in the Septuagint which is also used in the New Testament. In the word adikia you might recognize a form of the Greek word dikaios with an "a" in front of it. When an "a" is at the beginning of a word it takes the word behind it and turn it into an opposite. So a-dikia actually means unrighteous.

*So then, the Torah is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. (Romans 7:12)*

Just as in the First Covenant, we see that the Torah and its commands are righteous. And we can also see that those who keep this Torah are also righteous.

*For it is not those who hear the Torah who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the Torah who will be declared righteous. (Romans 2:13)*

*Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous. (1 John 3:7)*

Since Righteousness is keeping Torah (just as it was in the Old Testament) then unrighteousness (wickedness) is not keeping Torah.
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The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness (adikia) of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness (adikia). (Romans 1:18)

And so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness (adikia). (2 Thessalonians 2:12)

New Covenant Observers Of The Torah

Yeshua

In order for Yeshua to have been the perfect lamb for the sacrifice, he had to be without sin. The Torah is the standard by which God measures sin. Therefore, Yeshua kept all of the Torah, 100%. If we look at Yeshua's life we would see a lifestyle which was centered on the Torah. All of Yeshua's teachings to the Jews and his disciples were also based on the Torah.

Peter

[Peter] saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied, "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." This
happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven. (Acts 10:11-16)

Because of Peters insistence that he has never eaten anything unclean, clearly shows that Peter still recognized the dietary commands of the Torah. Many have said that God has removed the dietary requirements through this vision to Peter. But this is not the case. Did Peter eat of the unclean animals? No, the sheet was taken back up to heaven after Peter refused three times to eat. The purpose for this dream had nothing to do with clean and unclean animals, but with a Jews relationship with Gentiles. This vision will be examined closer in Chapter 15.

Believing Jews

They said to Paul: "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the Torah". (Acts 21:20)

The Greek word used for thousands is translated in other places as many thousands or ten thousand. In either case, there was a very large number of Jews who were believers and all of them were zealous for the Torah, meaning that they diligently kept the Torah and would not compromise it. Some of these believers were also Pharisees.

Paul to the Jews

Paul was a devout follower of the Torah, he was a Pharisee of Pharisees (Acts 23:6). He obeyed
the Torah and he taught the Torah, this is contrary to what is often taught in the "churches". Never did Paul ever imply that one did not need to obey the Torah. Let us first examine the passages that demonstrates that he did keep the Torah.

[The believing Jews] have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs. What shall we do? They will certainly hear that you have come, so do what we tell you. There are four men with us who have made a vow. Take these men, join in their purification rites and pay their expenses, so that they can have their heads shaved. Then everybody will know there is not truth in these reports about you, but that you yourself are living in obedience to the Torah. (Acts 21:21-24)

Reports came to the believing Jews that Paul was teaching the Jews to turn away from Moses, meaning that they do not need to keep the Torah. The believing Jews requested Paul to join the four men who were taking a vow (Nazarite vow as outlined in Numbers 6:13,14). This would show that he is still obedient to the Torah proving that the reports were false accusations. We see in verse 26 that Paul agrees to this request. Throughout Paul's writings, to both the Jews and the Gentiles, he always upholds the Torah.
I believe everything that agrees with the Torah and that is written in the Prophets. (Acts 24:14)

I have done nothing wrong against the Torah of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar. (Acts 25:8)

Do you not know, brothers - for I am speaking to men who know the Torah - that the Torah has authority over a man only as long as he lives? (Romans 7:1)

So then, the Torah is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. (Romans 7:12)

I delight in God's Torah... I myself in my mind am a slave to God's Torah. (Romans 7:22,25)

When Paul was preaching to the Jewish Bereans in Acts 17:11 they examined the scriptures (Torah and the Prophets) daily to ensure that Paul was teaching the truth, and they were considered of noble Character because of this practice. If Paul had been teaching anything different than the Torah which is taught in the Scriptures, they would have seen this and exposed his untruthful teachings.

Paul to the Gentiles

Clearly the believing Jews kept the Torah, including Paul. But did the Jews or Paul ever teach the Gentiles that they did not need to follow the Torah? In Paul's letters to the Gentiles he confirmed the validity of the Torah for the Gentiles in Rome and Corinth and he never taught against it.
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Do we, then, nullify [destroy, abolish] the Torah by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold [stand on, establish] the Torah. (Romans 3:31)

For everything that was written in the past [The Torah and the Prophets] was written to teach us. (Romans 15:4)

In the passages above, Paul is teaching the believers in Rome that the Torah was written for them to stand on and learn from.

It is written in the Torah of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned? Surely he says this for us, Doesn't he! Yes, this was written for us. (1 Corinthians 9:9)

In this passage, Paul has taken one of the commands from the Torah and is teaching to the Gentile believers in Corinth the intent of this command to learn how to apply it in their lives. This shows the relevancy of the Torah in their own walk as Gentile believers.

Although Paul always taught the Torah to the Gentiles, he did teach them a freedom within the Torah through Christ. It was this freedom in the Torah that brought about the accusations that Paul was teaching against the Torah. This freedom in the Torah will also be discussed in a later chapter.
New Covenant Teachings And The Torah

Does the New Covenant ever teach that the commands or regulations found in the First Covenant Torah do not need to be kept in the New Covenant? Clearly the answer is no. There are passages that are often used to imply this concept, but if carefully examined with an open mind and heart we will see that this is not the case.

Before we go any further there is one thing that needs to be understood about the epistles. Depending on who and what problem Paul was addressing will depend on what type of language he uses. One of the heresies that came into the Assembly in the first century was that keeping the Torah alone saved the believers. When Paul wrote to these assemblies (churches) he used words and phrases that appear "anti-Torah" but are in fact "anti-salvation through Torah". The Galatians were one of these churches, which were teaching this heresy. Paul puts down their observance of Torah and lifts up Yeshua sacrifice as the only means for salvation. Contrasting the book of Galatians is James letter which was directed to a people who were believing that the Torah was not necessary. In the case of the book of James, the keeping of Torah is stressed. I would like to point out that no where in the New Covenant does any writer ever say the Torah is taken away. Keeping this in mind let us examine three passages used by the church to support the concept that the Torah does not need to be kept.
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For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under Torah, but under grace. (Romans 6:14-15)

Under the First Covenant, Israel which included Yeshua, were under the law as it says in Galatians 4:4-5; "When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under Torah, to redeem those under Torah, that we might receive the full rights of sons". Israel was under Torah because of the curses of the Torah that would come upon Israel for disobedience. Yeshua came under Torah, and by keeping the Torah he did not have the curse of the Torah over him. But he took on the curse of the Torah for us.

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Torah by becoming a curse for us, for it is written; 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree'" (Galatians 4:13)

This passage shows us that we are free from the curses of the Torah, which were hanging over us, but have salvation by the grace of God apart from the Torah.

All who rely on observing the Torah are under a curse (Galatians 3:10)

The Judaizers who were trying to teach the Gentiles that they needed to be circumcised were also teaching that keeping the Torah could only save you. Although the New Covenant, especially Paul, teaches that we need to be obedient to the Torah, he
is continually reminding the believers that the Torah cannot save us, because if we are disobedient to the Torah only one time, the curse of death is on us (Rom 7:9-11). Therefore it is only through Christ that we can be saved, apart from the Torah. Does this mean that the Torah is removed, certainly not, for as we will see at the end of this chapter, the purposes of the Torah are still to teach and instruct us in how to conduct our lives as God's people.

*Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole Torah. You who are trying to be justified by Torah have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. (Galatians 5:3)*

First, does this passage say that Torah does not need to be kept? No. Second, let us remember that the sign of the first covenant was circumcision. Those who chose to join in the covenant between God and Israel were required to be circumcised. The Jews who were requiring the Gentiles to be circumcised were requiring them to take on the sign of the first covenant and with it comes the requirement to keep the whole Torah to show their obedience to God. The new covenant, being different does not require circumcision as the sign. Also under the new covenant, we are given freedom in the keeping of the Torah since the curse has been removed.

The Jews who are requiring circumcision are reverting back to the first covenant with its curses
and are not excepting the grace that God has provided in the new covenant.

If we read the next verse, we will see Paul's purpose for this statement, "You who are trying to be justified by the Torah have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace" (Gal 5:4). The Judaizers are trying to teach a salvation by works (Torah), which is impossible. Salvation can only come from God.

**The Torah In The New Covenant**

One of the concepts that Yeshua was teaching was that the "Spirit" (intent) of the Torah is more important than the "letter" of the Torah. For example; the Torah says that you will not reap the edges of your fields, this is for the poor (Lev 19:9). But if I do not have a field, does this command apply to me? Yes, the spirit of the command is to feed the poor and I can do that with canned goods in my cupboard. By feeding the poor with these cans, I am keeping the Spirit of the Torah. Now that we understand the "spirit" of the Torah, do I still have to do the "letter" of the Torah? Of course, if it is possible and right to do so. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:21; "I am not free from God's Torah", If I did own a field, I could not glean the edges of it, but leave it for the poor. At the beginning of this chapter we recognized that Christians are required to keep Torah, such as in the 10 Commandments.
But should we limit it to just this list of commands? Let us examine some of the First Covenant commands found in the Torah and see if they are taught in the New Covenant. Leviticus chapter 19 gives a list of various commands, let us compare these with the New Testament.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Torah in the First Covenant</th>
<th>Torah in the New Covenant</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy (2)</td>
<td>Be holy in all you do; for it is written: &quot;Be holy, because I am holy.&quot; (1 Peter 1:15,16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each of you must respect his mother mother and father (3)</td>
<td>Honor your father and mother (Eph 6:2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observe my Sabbaths (3)</td>
<td>There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God. (Heb 4:9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not turn to idols or make gods of cast metal (4)</td>
<td>Keep yourselves from idols (1 John 5:21)</td>
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<tr>
<td>When you sacrifice a fellowship offering to the LORD... If any of it is eaten on the third day, it</td>
<td>Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be</td>
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</table>
is impure and will not be accepted. Whoever eats it will be held responsible because he has desecrated what is holy to the LORD, that person must be cut off from his people. (5-8)

When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. (9-10)

Do not steal (11)

Do not lie (11)

Do not deceive one another (11)

All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor. (Gal 2:10)

Do not steal (Rom 13:9)

Do not lie to each other (Col 3:9)

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor. (Eph 4:25)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Command</th>
<th>Scripture Reference</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do not swear falsely</td>
<td>Let your &quot;Yes&quot; be &quot;Yes&quot; and your &quot;No&quot;, &quot;No&quot;. (Mat 5:37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not defraud your neighbor or rob him.</td>
<td>Do not defraud (Mark 10:19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not hold back the wages of a hired man</td>
<td>The worker deserves his wages (1 Tim 5:18)</td>
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<td>overnight.</td>
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<td>Do not curse the deaf</td>
<td>Bless and do not curse (Rom 12:14)</td>
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<td>Do not put a stumbling block in front of the</td>
<td>Make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way. (Rom 14:13)</td>
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<td>blind (14)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Do not show partiality to the poor or</td>
<td>If you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the Torah as Torah breakers. (James 8:9)</td>
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<tr>
<td>favoritism to the great, but judge your</td>
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<tr>
<td>neighbor fairly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do not go about spreading slander among your</td>
<td>Slander no one (Titus 3:2)</td>
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<td>people.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do not do anything that endangers your</td>
<td>Love does no harm to its neighbor. (Rom 13:10)</td>
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<td>neighbor's life.</td>
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Do not hate your brother in your heart. (17)

Anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgement. (Mat 5:22)

Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt (17)

Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning (1Tim 5:20)

Do not seek revenge (18)

Do not take revenge (Rom 12:19)

Love your neighbor as yourself (18)

Love your neighbor as yourself (Mat 5:43)

Keep my decrees (19)

Obey my command (John 14:15)

Torah Commands Not Found In The New Covenant

There are many different church denominations today and there are many differences of opinions on doctrines throughout all of them. The churches debate predestination vs. Free will, infant baptism vs. Adult baptism, the real presence vs. Symbolic presence of Christ's body and blood in communion, and the list goes on. But there is one
doctrine that every denomination agrees on, that is tithing. Why? Nowhere in the New Covenant are we told to give tithes. The only place in the Bible, which commands the giving of tithes, is in the Torah.

A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD. (Leviticus 27:30)

I agree that believers need to tithe, but I do not do it because my church tells me, but because God, through his Torah, tells me to do it.

Just because tithing is not found in the New Covenant, does it mean that we do not need to obey it? At the beginning of this chapter, I mentioned that the church agrees that some of the Torah is valid today, but the question was which parts? Most would say, only those commands that are found in the New Covenant, but as we have just read this is not necessarily the case. It appears that the church and individuals pick and choose which commands are required to be kept based on which ones best fit with there needs and desires. This can cause a great deal of problems, and it has. The only answer can be that God decided along time ago what commands he wanted his people to keep, and this has never changed. God gave his Eternal Torah to his people, to be kept eternally by his people.

There are other commands found in the Torah that are not mentioned in the New Covenant which no believer would question their validity for
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today. One of them is the third of the 10 commandments.

You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God. (Exodus 20:7)

Why do we agree that this command is valid today? Most would say that this is one of the 10 commandments and those are for all time. What about the fourth commandment to keep the seventh day holy? If the church says that we do not need to keep the seventh day holy then the 10 commandments are not for all time. The truth is that the 10 commandments and the Torah are for God's people throughout all time. The next chapter will discuss the seventh day Sabbath.

The Purpose Of The Torah

In the first part of the book, we looked at the six reasons God gave Israel the Torah. They were,

- Government Regulations
- To make the nation of Israel holy
- To set boundaries
- To show obedience
- To show sin
- To show love to God
- To promote a healthy lifestyle
Jeff A. Benner

Do these reasons remain in the New Covenant? Do we still need the Torah? Let us take a look at each of these and see what the New Testament teaches us.

**Government Regulations**

*Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Timothy 1:17)*

*God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Timothy 6:15)*

God is still our King, and as pointed out earlier, a king is no king without his law and our King still requires our obedience to his Eternal Torah

**To make holy**

*To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified [set apart] in Christ Yeshua and called to be holy. (1 Corinthians 1:2)*

*Do not be yoked together with unbelievers, For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?...Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing and I will receive you. (2 Corinthians 6:14,17)*

*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world. (Romans 12:2)*
The Holy Assembly and the Everlasting Covenant

We are called to be different than the world, set apart and holy. Only by following God's Torah is this possible.

To set boundaries

Many churches today that do not teach the Torah or the commands of God have become much like the world around them. They have no boundaries. They permit many of the sins of the world in the church. Even the divorce rate and the unwed pregnancy rate are mere reflections of this world. The churches need to learn that God has set his boundaries and we are not to cross them.

To show obedience

*The man who looks intently into the perfect Torah that gives freedom, and continue to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it - he will be blessed in what he does.* (James 1:23)

One, who truly loves God, will desire to obey him.

To show sin

*Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the Torah; rather, through the Torah we become conscious of sin.* (Romans 3:20)

Paul is not referring to an old Torah, which is no longer valid, but a present Torah, which makes us aware of sin. Some people have even held the
idea that it is sinful to keep the Torah, but Paul deals with this issue also,

*Is the Torah sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the Torah.* (Romans 7:7)

In our attempts to obey the Torah, we recognize the fact that we cannot keep it perfectly, just as Israel saw in the First Covenant. We then recognize the sin in our lives and realize that we cannot come to God on our own, but need a Savior to save us from our sins.

*So the Torah was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.* (Galatians 3:24)

**To show our love to God**

*If you love me, you will obey what I command.* (John 14:15)

This was already discussed, but it is an important part of the Torah, without it, we would have no way of showing God how much we love him. To simply say "I love God" means nothing unless it is supported with action. The Bible tells us that this action is to do his Torah.

**To promote a healthy lifestyle**

Israel escaped many of the diseases and epidemics that the other nations suffered because of their obedience to the commands of God. Many of
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the Torah commands deal with a clean and healthy lifestyle, which are considered normal practices today by the majority of the world. Many third world countries today would eliminate many of the diseases and pestilence if they would turn to these commands of the Torah. Just the simple act of washing the hands which is found many times in the Torah, will remove bacteria and viruses, preventing them from entering the body when eating.

To make the Jews jealous

There is one additional purpose of the Torah for the believers in the new covenant.

Again I ask: Did [Israel] stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. (Romans 11:11)

The word envious can be translated jealous. Today there are many Jews who do not believe in the Messiah Yeshua and keep the Torah because they recognize that they are required to, not out of a hearts desire to follow God but as a religious obligation. When Gentiles begin to keep the Torah out of a love for God and a desire to follow him and his Torah, the Jews will become jealous and ask, "Why are these Gentiles keeping our Torah better than us and with a desire that we do not have?" They will begin to ask why and how the Gentiles do
this and they will have the opportunity to show them that it is through the Messiah Yeshua.

**Chapter Summary**

- The Torah continued as the way of life for Israel during the New Testament period.
- The Torah is everlasting and the New Covenant continues to refer to the Torah in the present and not in the past.
- The means by which we show our love to God is by obeying his commands.
- Keeping the Torah is not legalism, but rather how and why one keeps the Torah can be legalism.
- Faith and Works, Grace and Torah, are inseparable, you cannot have one without the other.
- The definitions of Righteousness and wickedness must come from the First Covenant, because that is where the New Covenant writer received their definition. Righteousness still means keeping Torah and wickedness still means not keeping Torah.
- Yeshua, Peter and Paul all kept Torah.
- Much of the Torah commands can be found in the New Covenant.
Some of the Torah commands cannot be found in the New Covenant, but this does not mean that they do not need to be kept. Tithing is one example of a command of the Torah not found in the New Covenant, but is recognized as a valid command for today.

The purposes of the Torah as seen in the First Covenant, remain in the New Covenant.

One new purpose of the Torah is to make the Jews jealous and bring them to the Messiah.
Yeshua And The Sabbath

He [Yeshua] went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. (Luke 4:16)

We discussed the desecration of all that God has made holy. The New Testament Gospels record the confrontation between Yeshua and the teachers of the Torah regarding the keeping of the Sabbath. It is from these passages that many today have been given the impression that Yeshua was teaching that the Sabbath, as stated in the fourth commandment, did not need to be observed. In reality, Yeshua was teaching the people that the observance of the Sabbath in his day had become a legalistic day of rest.

Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to accuse Yeshua, they asked him. "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath? He said to them, "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a man that a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." Then he said to the man,
"Stretch out your hand." So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. (Matthew 12:10-13)

The question we need to ask here is, "Did Yeshua break the Sabbath command by healing?" We know that the definition of sin is breaking the Torah. If Yeshua had broken the Torah by violating the command of the Sabbath, then he would have sinned and would then be a blemished sacrifice. But we know that Yeshua was sinless, therefore he could not have violated the Sabbath command. Yeshua's accuser then must have had a false concept of the Sabbath.

Many years before the birth of Yeshua, the Jews began to define the word "work" when applied to the Sabbath. They came up with a set of "oral laws" stating what specifically could and could not be done on the Sabbath. In doing this, they made the observance of the Sabbath a legalistic observance. There are certain activities that could be called "work" which must be done on the Sabbath. The feeding and watering of animals must be done, some chores in the household must be done. The best way to determine if the "work" can be done on a Sabbath is to ask two questions; "Can this work be done on another day or do I need to do it today?" The second is "Will this work bring glory to God or to myself?" As we will see, Yeshua observed the Sabbath but not in the way that the Pharisees expected it to be observed.
The Sabbath Rest Continues

For somewhere he has spoken of the seventh day in these words: 'And on the seventh day God rested from all his work.' And again in the passage above he says, 'They shall never enter my rest.' It still remains that some will enter that rest, and those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their disobedience. Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. There remains, then a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us. Therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience. (Heb 4:4-11)

The above passage is speaking of two different types of rest. They are the Sabbath-rest and the Promised land-rest. God promised Israel rest when they would enter into the Promised Land.

"Since you have not yet reached the resting place and the inheritance the LORD your God is giving you. But you will cross the Jordan and settle in the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, and he will give you rest from all
your enemies around you so that you will live in safety." (Deuteronomy 12:9,10)

But because of Israel's disobedience they never received that rest in the Promised Land.

Do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried me, though they had seen what I did. For forty years I was angry with that generation, I said, "They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they have not known my ways." So I declared on oath in my anger, "They shall never enter my rest." (Psalms 95:8-11)

It appears that the writer of Hebrews was trying to get the point across to his readers that just because we have a rest in God, does not mean that the Sabbath-rest is done away with. "There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people" (Hebrews 4:9). Hebrews 4:10 said "anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his". The writer is pointing out that rest in God also means a rest from labor for one day just as he did on the seventh day of creation.

It is interesting that two arguments for the change in the Sabbath today in the churches are; "the rest is not a rest from one day but a rest in God" and second; "It does not matter which day you rest as long as you take one day and rest". Hebrews 4 clearly shows that both of these statements are false. This will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 16.
The Sabbath Covenant Is Everlasting

Let us not forget that the Sabbath Covenant given in Exodus 31:16 is an everlasting covenant for the Children of Israel. Some will argue that this Sabbath covenant is for the Jews only, but let us also not forget the command found in the Torah.

"The community is to have the same rules for you and for the alien living among you; this is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. You and the alien shall be the same before the LORD: The same laws and regulations will apply both to you and to the alien living among you."
(Numbers 15:15,16)

The word alien above is used for those not born in the line of Jacob but choose to join in the assembly with Israel and the covenant with God. Chapter 15 will also look at this in more depth.

Since the Sabbath command is part of God's Torah, we must remember that the Torah is eternal; Psalms 116:160 "All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal."

Was The Sabbath Changed To Sunday?

We have already discussed two reasons why many believers believe that we do not need to keep the Seventh Day Sabbath, which were; It doesn't matter which day is set aside as the Sabbath, and our rest is in God not a Sabbath day. There is another
popular view in the churches today. When Yeshua rose from the dead on Sunday (the first day of the week), he changed the Sabbath from the Seventh Day (Saturday) to the First Day (Sunday). There are three scriptures used to support the view that the Sabbath had been changed to Sunday, they are; Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:2, and Rev 1:10. Let's take a look at each of these to see what they are saying.

On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. (Acts 20:7)

Here it would appear that the Christians met on Sunday, the first day, for communion, which is part of the worship service. But if you read the passages following this, you will see that Paul is leaving for a journey the following day and probably wanted to meet with everyone before he left. You will also notice that the breaking of the bread is referring to a meal and not communion because he says "they broke bread and ate" (vs 11) which is a common way of referring to any meal. It would appear that the Christians were having a special gathering for Paul to say good-bye and hear him before he left.

There is one other interesting bit of information that we need to understand in this passage. We read that Paul spoke on the first day Sunday) until midnight because he was leaving the next day. We forget that Jewish days are different then our days. A Jewish day begins at sundown, therefore the first day of the week (Sunday) began
on our Saturday at sundown. If Paul were speaking until midnight, the gathering would have been on what is our Saturday night, with Paul leaving the following day, which would be our Sunday morning not Monday morning. Let us look at this passage again in the context of the whole story.

*On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight, There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were meeting. Seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead. Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. "Don't be alarmed," he said He's alive!" Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate. (Acts 20:7-11)*

Within Judaism there is a service held on Saturday evening called havdalah. This is a service to conclude the Sabbath Day. Evidently Paul and his followers are observing this practice. Also notice that Paul is not going to "church" on Sunday, but is heading out on a journey. Now let us look at the next verse used to support a Sabbath day change.

*On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no*
collections will have to be made. (1 Corinthians 16:2)

In 1 Corinthians 16 there is no mention as to where this offering was to be set aside, at the worship service or at their homes. This passage does not give any evidence to support a change of the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday.

It was also a practice within Judaism not to handle money on the Sabbath, therefore, the handling of this money would have been on a day other than the Sabbath. If the Sabbath was on the first day (Sunday), the money would have been collected on another day to prevent violating this custom. But since the money was collected on Sunday we can assume that the Sabbath was not on the first day.

The last verse used is,

On the Lord's day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet. (Revelation 1:10)

Sunday has often been called the Lord's day. The term "Lord's day" is a possessive tense just as if I said, "this is John's book". English is the only language that uses this structure. All other language would say "The book of John" or "the day of the Lord." In fact the original Greek scriptures say; "the day of the Lord" in Rev 1:10. The book of Revelation is about the coming of the Lord and John saw many
visions of this day. John is saying "I was in the Spirit on the Day of the Lord".

As we have seen, there is no scripture that clearly says that the early church ever met on Sunday in place of the Seventh Day Sabbath, on the contrary, there are many scriptures that clearly state that they did meet on the Sabbath.

If there were a change in the requirements for observing the fourth commandment from the First Covenant to the New Covenant, would not this change have been clearly mentioned in the New Covenant? I believe that the three scriptures used to support such a change in the command do not show that this change occurred. On the other hand, there is much more support in the New Covenant about continuing the observance of the fourth commandment.

Paul And The Sabbath

As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures. (Acts 17:1-3)


Throughout the book of Acts we see Paul and the other Apostles entering the Synagogues on the Sabbath day.
As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue (in Antioch), the people invited them to speak further about these things the resurrection of Yeshua Chris] on the next Sabbath. When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God. On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. (Acts 13:42-44)

It is interesting to note here that Paul never told those interested in hearing more about the Gospel to come to their meeting (church service) on the next day (Sunday). The Assembly of believers (Church) in Antioch had been established long before this according to Acts 1:26. Evidently the Assembly of believers did not meet on Sunday because he told those of the synagogue to come back on the next Sabbath to learn more. I am sure that if the Assembly of believers were meeting on Sunday, he would have invited them there to learn more.

**Conclusion**

When we look at the Sabbath day, we see that from the very beginning of creation, God set the Sabbath day aside as a holy day of rest. Both Israel and God recognized it as a very important day throughout the entire First Covenant. It was placed
within the list of the top 10 commandments of God. Yeshua kept the Sabbath, as was his custom, Paul also kept the Sabbath as was his custom. The book of Hebrew reminds us that the Sabbath rest continues to this day. And no scripture reference has been written to nullify this great day.

Chapter Summary

- Yeshua entered the synagogues on the Sabbath as was his custom.
- The Sabbath-rest continues in the New Covenant.
- The Sabbath covenant is everlasting.
- No scripture supports the removal of the seventh day Sabbath.
- Paul entered the synagogues on the Sabbath as was his custom.
14 - The Feasts Of The Lord

Just as in the case with the Sabbath, the Church says that we do not need to keep the Feasts of the Lord. No scripture can be found declaring that the feasts are abolished, yet there are scriptures showing that the feasts of the Lord were observed by the believers in the book of Acts.

At this point, we need to look at another passage, which is often used to imply the abolishing of, not only the Sabbath, but also the feast days.

*Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.* (Colossians 2:16,17)

Does this statement say that the festivals, celebrations or Sabbaths of the Torah do not need to be kept? No, it simply states that we are not to judge anyone for what days they keep.

An example of judging another when it comes to the Sabbath would be like one person saying, "You work on the Sabbath by fixing your neighbors car". And the other responds with, "I am doing this as a free service to help him and give glory to God, but you just lay on the couch all day
doing nothing, you may be resting as commanded but you are not making the day holy". Here we have two people judging each other on how they keep the Sabbath. The above passage is condemning this type of judging.

Since the Torah is a shadow of the Christ that was to come, are we to believe that once Christ has arrived the shadow disappears? Once an object that casts the shadow is seen, does the shadow of the object disappear? The Torah points us to Christ and is therefore a shadow, but the shadow remains, Torah remains.

Even in this passage we can see that the shadow remains because it says that the feasts and Sabbaths "are a shadow", it does not say "was a shadow." The passage indicates a present observance of the Sabbath and feasts and not a past observance. We also need to see that when it says "a shadow of the things that were to come" is not a correct translation of the Greek. The NASB Translation does a better translation for it says "a shadow of the things to come". Here we can clearly see that the Sabbath and Feasts are (present tense) a shadow of things to come (future tense).

Let us now see what the New Covenant, specifically after Christ's ascension, says about each of these feasts. Did the believers observe the keeping of the feasts?
**Passover**

When Yeshua took his Last Supper with his disciples, he was partaking of the Passover meal. During the meal he took the bread and wine, and gave it to his disciples, he then said, "Do this in Remembrance of me." We need to ask, when he said "Do this", is he only speaking of the bread and wine, or is he speaking about the entire Passover meal? When we partake of the bread and wine of the meal we are to remember him?

> When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. (1 Corinthians 11:20,21)

In verses 20 to 34, Paul gives us some instructions on observing the "Lord's Supper". We can see that Paul is not only referring to the taking of bread and wine only, but of a meal. Some have called this a "Love Feast", the scriptures do not specifically name this feast. But since it is being called the "Lord's Supper" we can assume it is referring to the same supper Yeshua ate of before his crucifixion, which was the Passover.

The Passover meal, along with all the other meals held on the holy days are to be worship services to God. The Passover meal is only a meal to physically feed the body, but also a meal full of teachings to spiritually feed the spirit. In the above
passages, we see a problem in the Corinthians method of keeping the "Feast", they are eating it as though it was a meal to enjoy the food, forgetting that they are there to honor God.

The Feast Of Unleavened Bread

Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast - as you really are. For Christ our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast. (1 Corinthians 5:7-8)

Yeast is a picture of sin. As commanded in the Torah all the yeast is removed from inside the home before the Feast of Unleavened Bread. No yeast is used during this feast for cooking. Each of the seven feasts is used as teaching tools by God to teach his people about him. During the Feast of Unleavened Bread we are taught to remove sin from our homes. Paul is reminding the believers of this instruction and instructs them to remember this while keeping the feast. This feast is mentioned two other times in the book of Acts.

He proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. (Acts 12:3)

We sailed from Philippi after the Feast of Unleavened Bread. (Acts 20:6)

The believers still recognized the feasts as a part of the believer's calendar.
The Feast Of Firstfruits

This feast is a day where the firstfruits of the harvest are given to God. Although this feast is never mentioned in the New Covenant, we can see that it is used as an instructional tool.

*But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.* (1 Corinthians 15:20)

*He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.* (James 1:18)

*They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb.* (Revelation 14:4)

The harvest of the fields is a picture of the end time harvest of all the believers. The passages above are speaking of the firstfruits of that end time harvest. Here we see the "reality" of the feast that is the shadow.

The prophecy of the feast of firstfruits was fulfilled in Christ when he rose from the dead. As 1 Corinthians 15:20 says; "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."
The Feast Of Weeks

Of the seven feasts, this feast is without question observed by the believers. The Greek name for this feast is Pentecost.

*When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.* (Acts 2:1)

We still observe Pentecost in our churches today, but it is believed that we are observing a holy day which began here in Acts 2:1. This holy day did not begin here, but all the way back in the book of Exodus, within the Torah God gave to Israel.

This feast is also mentioned two other times in the New Covenant.

*Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus to avoid spending time in the province of Asia, for he was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem, if possible, by the day of Pentecost.* (Acts 20:16)

*But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost.* (1 Corinthians 16:8)

Again we see the feasts being used as a part of the calendar.

The Jewish tradition during this time was that Israel and all the nations with them, received the Torah from God (Ex 20), each in their own native language on the first Feast of Weeks. We also read in Exodus 20 that the presence of God appeared on the top of the mountain in the form of fire. The Torah was then given to them on tablets of stone. Compare
this with the events in Acts chapter 2. Here we see, on the Feast of Weeks, fire descending on the believers. The believers then began to speak in the native language of the Jews who were listening. As prophesied in Jeremiah 31, the Spirit of God came upon the believers and the Torah was written on their hearts, rather than on tablets of stone.

The Day Of Atonement

There is only one mention of this feast within the New Covenant.

Much time had been lost, and sailing had already become dangerous because by now it was after the Fast. (Acts 27:9)

This feast had become known as "the Fast" because this day is to be a day of fasting as commanded in Leviticus 23:27. Here again we see it as a part of the believers' calendar.

The Feast Of Trumpets

This feast is not mentioned in the book of Acts or in the Epistles. We should understand that just because it is not mentioned, does not mean that it was not kept or observed.
The Feast Of Tabernacles

Although the book of Acts or the epistles do not mention this feast as well, there is one First Covenant passage which does refer to the observance of this feast in the last days.

*Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.* (Zechariah 14:16)

Conclusion

God provides for us a life cycle to keep us focused on him. Within his Torah is a guideline of times set aside to remember his goodness. He gives us a vivid reminder of days gone by to look back on and to glean from. God makes the feast visual so they come to life. They are generally long festivals that the whole family and community get involved in. This cycle is designed to keep us in his word and to remember from were we came and were we are going.

We must remember that God commanded that the Sabbath and each of these feasts to be kept throughout all Generations as an everlasting ordinance. God set the week, month and yearly cycles with all its holy days, to be kept by his people forever and there is no scripture that changes or eliminates these holy days.
Chapter Summary

- The New Covenant writers still recognized the feasts as part of their calendar.
- The New Covenant writers still recognized the keeping of feasts as can clearly be seen with Pentecost and the Feast of Unleavened bread.
In the first part of the book, we discussed the congregation and assembly of Israel in the First Covenant. In chapter nine we discussed how the words congregation and assembly have been carried into the New Testament as the synagogue and Church. What is Israel's relationship to the "church" in the New Covenant? How do the Gentiles fit into this "church"?

As discussed earlier, the word "church" is a translation of the Greek word "ekklesia" that means "assembly". This word is a translation of the Hebrew word "qahal" also meaning "assembly". I will be using the word assembly rather than church so that there will be no confusion that the assembly of the New Covenant is only a continuation of the assembly which began in Exodus.

Before we look at the Gentiles role in the assembly in the New Covenant, we need to see Israel's relationship to the assembly in the New Covenant. Many believe that Israel as a nation did not believe in Yeshua and that they crucified him. Because of this, God rejected Israel and removed them as his chosen people and in turn chose the Gentiles to build a new "assembly". This view is not supported in the scriptures.
Yeshua And The Ruling Jews

Within Judaism of the first century, there were many different groups of Jews, there were Common Jews and the Ruling Jews. The rulers would include the Sadducees, Pharisees, Lawyers (Teachers of the Torah), Chief Priests and the temple officials. The Common Jew would then be those who were being led or taught by the rulers.

Within the group of rulers there were those who disagreed with the teachings of Yeshua and those who agreed. The Pharisees and lawyers (Teachers of the Torah) are always thought of as those who opposed Yeshua, but this was not always the case.

When Yeshua saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. Then a teacher of the Torah came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." (Matthew 8:18,19)

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Yeshua at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." (John 3:1,2)

Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said... (Acts 15:5)
Later we will look at the role of some of these leaders and teachers in the arrest and conviction of Yeshua. But let us first look at the common Jews response to Yeshua and his teachings using the gospel of Matthew.

**Yeshua And The Common Jew**

And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowd was amazed and said, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel." (Matthew 9:33)

Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. (Matthew 13:2)

When Yeshua heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. When Yeshua landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick. As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food." Yeshua replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish, they answered." "Bring them here to me," he said. And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the
two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children. (Matthew 14:13-21)

In this last passage, notice the determination of the people to listen to Yeshua. Yeshua left in a boat and the crowds followed him on foot. They stayed with him to the evening and had no food with them and knew that food was nowhere near by as they had traveled a great distance from the towns. These people who were very determined, to hear the messages of Yeshua were five thousand men, not including the women and children.

Yeshua left there and went along the Sea of Galilee. Then he went up on a mountainside and sat down. Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them. The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel. Yeshua called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way."
His disciples answered, "Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?" "How many loaves do you have?" Yeshua asked. "Seven," they replied, "and a few small fish." He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, and when he had given thanks, he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and they in turn to the people. They all ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. The number of those who ate was four thousand, besides women and children. (Matthew 15:29-38)

Here again we see the determination of the people. For three days, four thousand men, not including women and children followed him. They did not even have any food with them. Yeshua was afraid that they would collapse from a lack of food. This could not have just been a large crowd of people who were only curious, these people were willing to go hungry just to hear more of what Yeshua had to teach.

As Yeshua and his disciples were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed him. (Matthew 20:29)

The disciples went and did as Yeshua had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Yeshua sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the
trees and spread them on the road. (Matthew 21:6-8)

Why were there so many people gathered in this area? Did they not have jobs to go to? Who were these people? These people were Jews! They were gathering for the Passover celebration. People from outlying areas flocked to the Temple to celebrate the feast that commemorated the deliverance from Egypt. All of these Torah keeping Jews were following Yeshua and witnessing his miracles. They knew of a coming Messiah and eagerly listened to every word he spoke. These people knew the scripture and would not be easily deceived.

Are these crowds of people who followed Yeshua throughout the land of Israel the same people who were yelling crucify him and mocking him at his trial? Let us look at the scriptures and see.

**The Arrest And Crucifixion Of Yeshua**

Yeshua's Last Supper with his disciples, his arrest, trial, execution and death on the cross all occurred on the day of Passover. The Passover day began at sundown and continued until sundown the following day. The Jewish Passover consisted of a religious service during a meal in the home that is headed by the father or Rabbi. After Yeshua and his disciples finished the Passover meal, they went to the Garden of Gethsemane. It was here that a crowd came up to Yeshua (Luke 22:47) consisting of the
Chief Priests, officers of the temple guards and the Elders (Luke 22:52). This crowd, comprised of the rulers, arrested Yeshua. Yeshua is then taken to Pontius Pilate by the Chief Priests, Elders and the Teachers of the Torah for his trial (Luke 22:66, 23:1). When Pilate asks "the crowd" what he should do with Yeshua, we can see that it was the rulers and not the common Jews who shouted "Crucify, Crucify" (John 19:6). When Pilate asked, "shall I crucify your King?" It was the Chief Priests who answered "We have no king but Caesar". Pilate then handed Yeshua over to the Chief Priests to be crucified (John 19:15-16).

All of this had taken place throughout the night and into the early morning hours. The general population of Jerusalem would not even be aware of all that had transpired. It was still early in the morning when Yeshua was being taken to the site of the crucifixion. By this time some of the common Jews began to realize what was happening. Since the Passover meal the previous evening would last late into the night, most of the people would still be sleeping at the time that Yeshua was being led to the cross. There is only one scripture reference of people witnessing Yeshua's march to the cross, Luke 23:27 says; "A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him." Yeshua was put on the cross at the third hour (Mark 15:25) which is nine o'clock in the morning.
It is the chief priests and their officials who through the night and early morning hours brought Yeshua to trial and the cross even before the majority of the people knew what happened. People were in their homes completely unaware of the events that had transpired through the night. It was not until Yeshua was on the road to the site of his crucifixion that some people began to realize what had happened to their teacher.

After realizing what had happened, the Common Jew mourned over Yeshua's crucifixion. After Yeshua rose from the dead he met with two people on the road to Emmaus who expressed their feelings about the death of Yeshua.

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Yeshua himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?" "What things?" He asked. "About Yeshua of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be
sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. (Luke 24:13-21)

The sadness that was felt by these two individuals would probably be similar to most of the common Jews.

Did God Reject His People?

The question that we must ask then: Did God reject his people Israel because of the actions of the chief priests? Paul answers this question.

I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. (Romans 11:1,2)

Even the First Covenant shows that God has not rejected his people.

I took you from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners I called you. I said, "You are my servant"; I have chosen you and have not rejected you. (Isaiah 41:9)

The book of Acts also supports the view that God had not rejected them for as we will see, thousands of Jews entered into the New Covenant which God promised to Israel in Jeremiah 31.

When the twelve Apostles began to teach the good news about Yeshua around Israel, thousands
of Jews accepted and believed that Yeshua was indeed the promised Messiah and did rise from the dead. During the feast of Weeks (Pentecost), Peter preaches to a large crowd and says; "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say" (Acts 2:14). He then proceeds to explain the truth about Yeshua. At the end of his message we read,

> Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. (Acts 2:41)

As we continue through the book of Acts we see more and more Jews believing that Yeshua truly was the Messiah and that he rose from the dead.

> And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:47)

> But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand. (Acts 4:4)

> Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. (Acts 5:14)

> The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith. (Acts 6:7)

> [The assembly] was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord. (Acts 9:31)
All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord. (Acts 9:35)

Many people believed in the Lord. (Acts 9:42)

Up to this point all of the thousands who have accepted the Lord Yeshua were only Jews. I will clarify this in a moment, but first let's recognize that we are not speaking about a few Jews who believed but a very large number. In Acts 2 we saw 3,000 and in Acts 4 we see this grow to 5,000 men. Since women and children are not numbered, we could easily be talking about 20,000 to 30,000 Jews, men women and children, accepting Yeshua as the Lord.

The Gentiles Enter The Assembly

So how do we know that all of these numbers are only Jews and not Gentiles?

Acts chapters 10 and 11 explain the process by which God used to begin bringing Gentiles into the assembly. Going back to the book of Genesis, one of the promises that God gave Abraham was that "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Genesis 12:3). It was God's plan, from the beginning, to bless all the nations (Gentiles) through Abraham. The promise that said "through" Abraham, meaning his seed, all the nations will be blessed. The Jews, the descendants of Abraham, will be the vessel used by God to bring them into the assembly and into the covenant with him. In Acts 10
the beginning of the fulfillment of this prophecy.

We also need to understand the Jews attitude toward Gentiles up to this point. Peter explains the Jews view of association with Gentiles in Acts 10:28; "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him". No Jew could witness to a Gentile to bring him into the assembly because it was against their law. The Greek word here for law is not "nomos" but the word "athemitos" meaning "against the law". This is not the Torah (nomos) law but the oral law or also called "the traditions of the elders". This concept came into Judaism from the belief that anyone who ate from the list of unclean animals listed in Leviticus 11, as the Gentiles do, was unclean. Since the Jews believed that Gentiles were unclean, they believed that they could not associate with them. It is with this issue that God teaches Peter his truth concerning clean and unclean foods.

Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter, Kill and eat." Surely not Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." The
voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven. (Acts 10:9-16)

This vision is not removing the dietary commands of the Torah, it is to teach the Jews what is really meant by clean and unclean. If we go back to the command forbidding the eating of certain animals we see something very interesting.

You may eat any animal that has a split hoof completely divided and that chews the cud. There are some that only chew the cud or only have a split hoof, but you must not eat them. The camel, though it chews the cud, does not have a split hoof; it is ceremonially unclean for you. (Leviticus 11:3,4)

This command does not say that the animal in and of its self is unclean. It says that it is ceremonially unclean for one who is in the covenant with God to eat of it. In Acts 10, God is telling the Jews that the animals were created as clean animals. Therefore, if a Gentile eats of the "unclean" animals, he is not unclean because the animal is not "unclean" to him, only to those who are in the covenant with God. Peter confirms this when he said,

[Peter] said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that
The issue in Acts 10 is not a change in the diet commands of the Torah, but a change in a Jews relationship with Gentiles. Because of the "tradition" that Jews could not associate with a Gentile, the Jews could not go to the Gentiles to teach them about the covenant with the one true God. So God uses this vision to teach Peter that their law of non-association was wrong. Now a Jew is free to enter a Gentiles home to teach. This is exactly what happens next.

While God was giving this vision to Peter, God told Cornelius, a Gentile, to send men to bring back Peter. If the men had come to Peter requesting him to go to a Gentiles house, Peter would have refused because of their law forbidding association with Gentiles. Peter learned that no man is unclean because of what he eats. So when the men came to take Peter to Cornelius, he "came without raising any objection" (Acts 10:29).

Peter proceeded to teach the good news about Yeshua Christ to Cornelius and the large gathering of people in his home and the Holy Spirit came upon all of them that heard the message and they began to speak in tongues. When this happened Peter and the other Jews who came with him "were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles" (Acts 10:45).
When Peter returned to Jerusalem the believing Jews "criticized him and said, 'You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.'" (Acts 11:2,3). Peter then explained the vision from God and his meeting with Cornelius and said; "So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us (the Jews), who believed in the Lord Yeshua Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?" (Acts 11:17). Then the believing Jews said, "So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18).

This event occurred approximately five to ten years after Yeshua ascended into heaven. Since the believing Jews were amazed that even the Gentiles were receiving the Holy Spirit, we are lead to believe that this was the first time that Gentiles had come into the assembly of believers.

In the First Covenant, God said,

"I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." (Isaiah 49:6)

Paul quotes this passage in Acts 13:47 and explains that it was God's plan that the Jews are to be the light to the Gentiles. Beginning with Acts 10, this light is now going out to the Gentiles. From this point on we see the assembly growing in great numbers with both Jews and Gentiles alike. A key point that we must recognize that in the book of Acts, it was the Jew who brought the gospel to the
Gentiles and not the other way around as some are taught.

*The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed.* (Acts 11:21)

A great number of people were brought to the Lord. (Acts 11:24)

At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed. (Acts 14:1)

*They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples.* (Acts 14:21)

*So the assemblies were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.* (Acts 16:5)

Many of the Jews believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men. (Acts 17:12)

*[The believing Jews] said to Paul: "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the Torah".* (Acts 21:20)

In this last passage we see that there were a very large number of Jews who believe and are also zealous for the Torah. The Greek word which is translated "thousands" in this passage is the Greek word "myriai" which means "thousands upon thousands" or a very large unidentifiable number.
In chapter two, we looked at the various names and titles of God's people in the First Covenant. In Chapter nine, we looked at the various names and titles of God's people in the New Covenant. We saw that they were the same. Israel was chosen by God in the First Covenant to be his people and provisions were made within the Torah to allow aliens (Gentiles) into the assembly. We have now seen that Israel is still God's chosen people and are still the assembly of Israel. Provisions have also been made to allow the Gentiles to enter the assembly in the New Covenant. The First and New Covenants are not divided into Jew and Gentile covenants or Jew and Gentile Assemblies. Instead the First and New Covenants are the continuing story of God's covenant with his people, Israel and those Gentiles who join with them.

Long ago God prophesied that the Gentiles would be entering the assembly with Israel in great numbers. This began with Abraham as I mentioned. God promised Abraham that all the nations would be blessed through him. God's plan for the future included a time when the Gentile nations would enter into his covenant.

*All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, O LORD; they will bring glory to your name.* (Psalms 86:9)
"Shout and be glad, O Daughter of Zion. For I am coming, and I will live among you." Declares the LORD. "Many nations will be joined with the LORD in that day and will become my people. (Zechariah 2:10,11)

"And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to serve him, to love the name of the LORD, and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant - these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations." (Isaiah 56:6,7)

Even Yeshua recognized that the message of salvation to the nations of the earth would come through Israel, the Jews, as the light to the Gentiles.

For salvation is from the Jews. (John 4:22)

**The Grafting In Of The Gentiles**

You who are Gentiles by birth...you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise... You have been brought near through the blood of Christ... Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household... (Eph 2:11-22)
Although Gentiles are not born in the line of Jacob (Israel) Gentiles who accept Christ become fellow citizens with Israel in God's Household.

[Christ] redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Yeshua, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit. ... The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ.... If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Gal 3:14,16,29)

Let us look at a passage which shows how the people of Israel (the Jews) and the Gentiles are joined together as fellow citizens. A couple of phrases to be understood in the following passages are the natural and wild branches of the olive tree. Yeshua is the trunk, the natural branches are the Jews and the wild branches are the Gentiles.

If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if
God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.

Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree! (Rom 11:17-24)

The people of God are like a tree. Yeshua is the trunk of the tree while his people are the branches coming out of the tree. In the Old Testament, God chose the nation of Israel as his people - the branches. Many times in the First Covenant, God said that if someone did not follow his commands they would be "cut off from his people". Those who had a disobedient heart and turned from God and did not follow his commands, were "cut off from his people", his branch was "cut off" from the trunk. When the Gentiles, the wild olive branches, are grafted into the trunk, they are part of the tree. All of the branches on the tree, the natural (Israel) and the wild (Gentiles), are one body in the household of God and all are descendants of Abraham.
For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile - the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. (Romans 10:12)

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Yeshua. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:28,29)

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free - and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. (1 Corinthians 12:12,13)

At this point, I would like to look at one of the arguments to support the view that the Gentiles do not need to keep the Torah. We have looked at many passages where Paul is clearly supporting the keeping of the Torah. Many claimed that he is speaking to the Jews only and that as Jews they are required to continue in the Torah. If we want to say that Jews must keep the Torah but the Gentiles do not, then we are splitting the body of Christ into two groups. But the above passages say that there will be no difference between the Jews and Gentiles. Therefore, if the Jews must keep the Torah, then the Gentiles must also. This is also supported by the passage in the First Covenant, which we have
looked at several times, that states that the same Torah for Israel will also be for the aliens (Gentiles).

The Gentiles And The Torah

In chapter 11 we discussed the validity of the Torah in the New Covenant. Now if we look back at chapter 4 we see one of the everlasting ordinances within the Torah.

"The community is to have the same rules for you and for the alien living among you; this is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. You and the alien shall be the same before the LORD: The same laws and regulations will apply both to you and to the alien living among you." (Numbers 15:15,16)

Now if the Torah is everlasting, and the command above is everlasting, then the Torah is not only for the Jew but also for the alien (non-Jew). Let us remember that the Torah was given at Mount Sinai to his people, and all who enter the covenant with God are his people no matter from what nation they were born to.

One passage that is often used to show that the Gentiles were not obligated to keep the Torah as the Jews were, is Acts 15. Let us look at this passage and see what it says.

Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: "Unless you are
circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." ... Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. ... When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the assembly and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them. Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the [Torah] of Moses." (Acts 15:1-5)

There are two issues that some of the Jews were teaching to the new Gentiles entering into the covenant; The Gentiles have to be circumcised to be saved, and; They must also keep the Torah.

Peter addresses the assembly and addresses the first issue.

The apostles and elders met to consider this question. After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been
The Holy Assembly and the Everlasting Covenant

*able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Yeshua that we are saved, just as they are." (Acts 15:6-11)*

In this passage, Peter is specifically addressing the issue of salvation. Peter explains that it is only by the grace of God that one can be saved and not by circumcision or the keeping of the Torah. Does this mean that circumcision and Torah are removed and no longer required to be kept? Let us first look at the issue of circumcision.

Paul addressed this problem in his letter to the Galatians.

*Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole Torah. (Galatians 5:3)*

Looking back at Chapter 3, we looked at the first covenant between God and Israel. In Genesis, chapter 17, we saw that if anyone wanted to enter the covenant with God, they had to take on the sign of the covenant, which is circumcision. Also, in the covenant was the condition God put on Israel. Israel was required to keep and obey all the commands of God.

Circumcision is not the sign of the new covenant. Anyone who says that you need to be circumcised are still living under the requirements of the first Covenant and under the first covenant you received Gods promises only if you kept the whole Torah. Under the New Covenant we receive
God's promises because Yeshua kept the Torah for us. This does not mean that the Torah has been taken away, only curses of the covenant have been taken away by Yeshua's sacrifice.

Therefore, we can see that these Jews who are teaching that circumcision is required of the Gentiles for salvation, are teaching a bondage to the first covenant and its requirements for the blessings. Paul is teaching that our salvation is in the faith of Yeshua the Messiah and his sacrifice under the renewed covenant. Back in chapter 11 we also saw that the Torah was never for salvation but to point out sin so that we may know that we need salvation from God.

Going back to Acts 15, James then addresses the relationship between the Gentiles and the Torah.

"It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. (Acts 15:19-20)

Is James saying that these four commands are all that the Gentiles are required to keep of the Torah? This cannot be a complete list for there are many commands that we know that the Gentiles must keep, such as; "You shall have no other god's before me" and "You shall honor your father and mother" and "You shall not murder" (Exodus 20:3,12,13). If James was giving a complete list, why
weren't these in the list? I believe that the Gentiles in Antioch (which is where this problem originally arose), were already taught and were keeping portions of the Torah, such as the ten commandments. I believe that the four commands listed above addressed specific problems in their particular assembly at Antioch.

Torah is meant to be an instruction guide to a healthy and godly lifestyle and not a burden. Each believer is responsible for keeping the Torah to the degree that God has called him to. For example; a man who has been raised from childhood in the commands of the Torah would be expected to have a greater understanding and level of obedience then a gentile who has never heard of the Torah before becoming saved. These four commands are a starting point for these new Gentile believers. Once they controlled these four commands, I believe that they would have moved on to more instruction. This is the freedom we have in the Torah.

Freedom In The Torah

The freedom in the Torah gives the Gentiles the chance to learn the Torah one step at a time and not become overburdened. Remember that Yeshua took away the curses of the Torah allowing for this freedom. Those who have been raised with a Torah lifestyle his entire life, such as Paul, is held to a higher accountability in the Torah. But a new
believer, who has never heard of the Torah, will need to make certain changes in his lifestyle in order to meet the requirements of the Torah. The goal of course is to continue to learn the Torah and as learning increases so does obedience to the Torah. But this freedom is not a license to do evil.

You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather serve one another in love. (Galatians 5:13)

In Acts 15, we have a group of new believers who are being instructed to keep a degree of the Torah (Acts 15:20). But this is not the end of their instruction for the next verse says.

For Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath.

The apostles knew that these new believers would be in the synagogues every Sabbath to hear Moses who is the teacher of the Torah, to continue their education in the Torah.

Chapter Summary

- Many of the common Jews followed Yeshua and his teachings.
- Even some of the teachers and rulers followed Yeshua.
The Holy Assembly and the Everlasting Covenant

- The Chief Priests and temple officials arrested, tried, condemned and executed Yeshua.
- Most of the common Jews had no idea what was happening to their teacher. Those that did see him being led to the cross wept.
- God did not reject his people.
- The Apostles preached the Good News about Yeshua's resurrection and thousands upon thousands of Jews believed.
- Cornelius was the first Gentile to believe.
- Now Thousands of Jews and Gentiles entered the Assembly.
- The Gentiles are expected to begin keeping the Torah and increase as they mature and learn more about Torah from the synagogues.
16 - The Desecration Of The Covenant

The Desecration Of The First Covenant During Yeshua's Day

In chapter 7 we looked at what the First Covenant said about the desecration of the first covenant in Israel. During the time of Yeshua we see the desecration of the covenant and we also have a good idea how the covenant was being observed in his day. Let us look at what Yeshua had to say about their commitment to the covenant.

The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Yeshua and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were "unclean," that is, unwashed. (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.) So the Pharisees and teachers of the Torah asked Yeshua, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the
elders instead of eating their food with 'unclean' hands?" (Mark 7:1-5)

In the Torah there are many commands requiring the washing of hands, feet and clothes. Although the washing of hands before eating is a good cleanliness practice, there is no command in the Torah requiring it. This command is from the "tradition of the elders" known today as the Talmud.

He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.' You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men." And he said to them: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! For Moses said, 'Honor your father and mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death,' But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that." (Mark 7:6-13)

Yeshua points out that the Pharisees and the teachers of the Torah have placed more of an emphasis on the "traditions" then on God's
commands. The command to give offerings (Corban) is in the Torah, but these Jews have taken the command and twisted it to meet their desire to violate another command, which they do not want to observe.

Yeshua is not condemning the "tradition" to wash their hands before eating he is simply using this as a tool to make a point. Yeshua had taught his disciples to listen to, and obey, what the Pharisees and the Teachers of the Torah tell them, which would include the washing of hands.

Then Yeshua said to the crowds and to his disciples: "The teachers of the [Torah] and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. (Matthew 23:1-3)

The Desecration Of The Holy Assembly

In chapter 8 we looked at the desecration of the community of Israel in the First Covenant. But we recognized that the assembly could not be desecrated since the holy assembly was made up of those who did not desecrate the covenant, but the Holy Assembly has been desecrated today.

By translating the Greek word "ekklesia" as "church", instead of "assembly" as it should be, we have created a new people of God called the "church". One of the teachings in the churches today
is that the assembly of Israel has been rejected by God and has been replaced by the "church" as God's new chosen people of the New Covenant. We have come to view Judaism and Christianity as two separate religions, with Judaism being a false religion. The bible teaches that "Christianity" is rooted in Judaism and the only true difference between the two is that many of the Jews are still waiting for the Messiah. It is our job to teach them the truth. They do not need to "convert" to Christianity, they only need to acknowledge that Yeshua is their Messiah.

Since the body of God's people is one, not only can we see the desecration of the assembly by the Gentiles, but also by the Jews who have left their heritage and the Torah by assimilating into the secular world and the churches. This is clearly a ploy of Satan to further the elimination of God's chosen people.

The "church" has also forgotten that we are "citizens with Israel", "the descendants of Abraham", "a chosen nation", and part of the "assembly of Israel". It is interesting that the most common name for the believers today is "Christian". This word is only used three times in the New Testament. There are many other names given to the believers in the book of Acts, like "the way" which was in reality a sect of Judaism and not a separate religion.

By separating ourselves from the Jews, we have alienated ourselves from our "brothers". By
doing this, we have desecrated the Holy Assembly. That was not even possible in the first covenant.

The Desecration Of The New Covenant

Over the 1500 years following the giving of the covenant at Mount Sinai, the covenant was desecrated and twisted to the point that it no longer resembled the original. Is it not possible then, that after 2,000 years after the giving of the new covenant that it too has been desecrated and twisted to the point that it too, no longer resembles the original? Let us remember that Satan wants to desecrate whatever God has consecrated, this is seen in the First Covenant and he has succeeded in the new covenant as well.

Back in the first chapter, we discussed the lack of commitment in our society today. This lack of commitment is not only to our families, employers, employees but also to our churches and to our God. The bulk of the teachings today in our churches is grace and love and ignoring works and obedience.

The covenant between God and his people is not taught or understood by the average church member today. Covenants are considered First Covenant teachings and not relevant to today. Our commitment to God begins and ends with an hour or two on Sunday and an occasional Bible reading in the week. We teach and live by "comfortable
Christianity" putting no requirements on its members.

Even the word covenant has been replaced with the word testament in some translations. The word Testament simply means a "will", but this does not accurately convey the meaning of Covenant that is a binding agreement between two parties and sealed with blood. Our Old and New "Testaments" should be called the First and New (or renewed) Covenants.

The Desecration Of The Torah

In the First Covenant Satan succeeded in twisting the way the people kept the Torah by introducing them to a legalistic form of keeping the Torah. Satan has taken this one step further in the New Covenant and succeeded in teaching that there is no Torah.

Just as the church says that the Christians have replaced the Jews as God's chosen people, the church also says that Grace has replaced the Torah. If the Torah is only found in the First Covenant and grace is only found the New Covenant, then, we would expect to find the word "Law" only used in the First Covenant and the word "Grace" only in the New Covenant. In reality, these two words are used about the same in both. Law (Hebrew Torah and Greek Nomos) is used 223 times in the First Covenant and 194 times in the New Covenant.
Grace (Hebrew ḥesed and Greek Charis) is used 147 times in the First Covenant and 155 times in the New Covenant.

Grace is taught in the First Covenant just as Torah is also taught in the New Covenant (even more times than grace). If you look up all 194 occurrences of the Greek word nomos you will never find it being used in a negative way or imply that it is abolished. As we have seen in chapter 11, the scriptures are very clear, the Torah was, is and will be.

If we throw out the Torah we also throw out the king. Every king has a set of rules and regulations for his kingdom to obey. God the King has given his Torah for his people in his Kingdom to obey. When we say there is no Torah we take away all authority from the King. Can a king rule without rules? No, we call a kingdom with no rules - anarchy.

Yeshua warned his disciples what the last days would be like,

Many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness (anomos), the love of most will grow cold. (Matthew 24:11)

One of the Greek words for wickedness is the word "anomos" which as we pointed out earlier means "no Torah" or "violation of Torah". Who are the false prophets? They are those who are teaching that there is no Torah and the love of those who
have no Torah will grow cold. Let us remember what Yeshua told us, "If you love me, you will keep my commands" (John 14:15).

Another Greek word closely related to anomos is anomia (the adjective form of the word) which means the same as anomos. Anomos and anomia are used quite a few times, but since they are translated as wickedness in most translations, their true meanings are covered up. Let us look at some of these passages and translate anomos and anomia correctly (These passages are from the New King James Version).

"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice violation of Torah!' (Matthew 7:23)

"The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice violation of Torah, (Matthew 13:41)

"Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and violation of Torah. (Matthew 23:28)

"Blessed are those whose violation of Torah are forgiven, And whose sins are covered; (Romans 4:7)

I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of the violation of Torah leading to more violation of
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Torah, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. (Romans 6:19)

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with violation of Torah? And what communion has light with darkness? (2 Corinthians 6:14)

For the mystery of the violation of Torah is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. (2 Thessalonians 2:7)

Whoever commits sin also commits violation of Torah, and sin is violation of Torah. (1 John 3:4)

The Desecration Of The Sabbath

We have already discussed the Sabbath in great deal in a previous chapter, but let us look at how the Sabbath is kept today in our churches.

Throughout the last 2,000 years we can see an evolution of the Sabbath. Even in this century, we have seen some of this evolutionary process. By the third and fourth centuries, Sunday replaced the Sabbath day of rest for the Christians. It is not my purpose here to go into the details about this change, there are many good books on this subject. I just want to give an overview of how the Christian Sabbath evolved from Saturday to Sunday. There are two main reasons for this change. To be separate
from the non-Jewish believers and; To bring the pagans into the church. Let us recognize that it is Satan's desire and his plans that are ultimately responsible for bringing about this desecration of God's holy day, but it is the church that has allowed the desecration.

**To be separate from the Jews**

The book of Acts shows that the first century believers observed the seventh day Sabbath. In the second century the Jews and the believers began to split apart. The non-Jewish believers began to separate themselves from the Jews by being less Jewish and the Jews began to separate themselves from the non-Jewish believers by becoming more Jewish. One of the dividing walls that was constructed between the two was the Sabbath day. The Christians began meeting on the first day of the week (Sunday), while the Jews continued to meet on the seventh day (Saturday).

**To bring in the pagans**

Around the fourth century, the Roman Church, in its desire to "Christianize" the whole empire, declared all people "Christians". These "Christians" still wanted to hold on to their pagan holy days and customs. One of which was their worship of the Sun god, which was done on the day of the sun, or as we know it today; "Sun"day. The worship of the sun god began with the Babylonian Empire many centuries before Christ. The Roman
Church, in order to appease the pagans, declared that Sunday would be the day of worship for all Christians.

The Sabbath today

The Average Christian when asked why we do not "keep the seventh day Sabbath holy" (Exodus 20:8-10), will give a variety of answers. Here are the most frequently used answers (excuses).

• Every day is a Sabbath.
• You can make any day of the week you want a Sabbath.
• We don't know which day is the seventh day.
• Our Sabbath-rest is in God.
• The Sabbath was for the Jews.
• Yeshua changed the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday.

Let us examine each of these "answers".

Every day is a Sabbath

God himself defined what the Sabbath day is.

_Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work._ (Exodus 20:9-10)
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The Sabbath is a day that no work is to be done. If every day is a Sabbath day, then we could not work on any day.

**You can make any day of the week you want a Sabbath.**

This is in direct conflict with the fourth commandment that specifically states that the Sabbath is to be on the "seventh" day.

**We don't know which day is the seventh day.**

Look at any calendar. The first column on the left is the first day of the week. What day is that? Sunday. Look at the last column on the right, this is the seventh day of the week. What day is that? Saturday. Webster's dictionary says that "Saturday" is "the seventh day of the week". Even our culture today (as does most others) recognizes Saturday as the seventh day of the week.

Remember that the Sabbath day was both blessed and made holy by God at creation. The Sabbath is very special to God. I do believe that God would ensure that we would know what day it was on.

**Our Sabbath-rest is in God**

We discussed this in greater detail in chapter 12. God does promise rest to his people in the First Covenant, but is a Sabbath-rest?

*The LORD replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." (Exodus 33:14)*
Yeshua also promised rest to his people, but is this a Sabbath-rest?

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

God promises rest to his people, but this is not the Sabbath-rest that God commanded his people to observe. Remember that the Sabbath means a day without work for the purpose of resting and worshiping. And as Hebrew 4:9 states; "There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God."

The Sabbath was for the Jews

All of the Torah was originally given to Israel (and the other nations who left Egypt with Israel) at Mount Sinai, including the 10 Commandments. No believer today would argue that the command "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God" (Exodus 20:7) was only for the Jews. We recognize that the 10 commandments are valid today, except the fourth command to observe the seventh day Sabbath. How can we say nine of the Ten Commandments are valid today but not the fourth?

Yeshua changed the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday

This is probably the most common answer given to explain why we do not keep the seventh day Sabbath today.
No scripture in the New Covenant speaks of a change of the Sabbath. We saw in chapter 12 that Yeshua, the apostles and Paul kept the Sabbath. The truth is that the Roman Church officially changed the day many centuries ago. Here is an excerpt from three of the Catholic Catechisms.

Question: Why do we observe Sunday Instead of Saturday?
Answer: "We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church, in the Council of Laodicea (A.D. 336) transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday."
   - Peter Geiermann, The Converts' Catechism of Catholic Doctrine, 2nd Ed. 1910 p. 50

Question: Have you any other way of proving that the church has power to institute festivals or precepts?
Answer: "Had she not such power, she could not have done that in which all modern religionists agree with her; - she could not have substituted the observance of Sunday the first day of the week, for the observance of Saturday the seventh day, a change for which there is no scriptural authority."
"From this we may understand how great is the authority of the church in interpreting or explaining to us the commandments of God - an authority which is acknowledged by the universal practice of the whole Christian world, even of those sects who profess to take the Holy Scriptures as their sole rule of faith since they observe as the day of rest not the seventh day of the week commanded by the Bible, but the first day, which we know is to be kept holy only from the tradition and teaching of the Catholic Church."

- Henry Gibson, Catechism made easy (no. 2) 9th ed. Vol 1 pp 341,342

Up until the middle of this century, it was commonly understood within the church that the Sunday Sabbath was the day of rest and no work was performed in obedience to the commandment. In the last 50 years (since the end of World War II) our culture began to be more self centered and less God centered. In this selfishness, we have changed the Sunday Sabbath even further. We may attend
Church in the morning for an hour or two, but the rest of the day may be spent watching football or mowing the lawn. Even in the last 20 years we have seen a great decline in church attendance and many "Christians" look at church attendance as optional.

We are to be set apart from the world

God's people are called to be set apart from the world. But over the centuries Christians have become more and more like the pagan or atheistic world. Sunday is a good example. The church may recognize Sunday as the day of rest from work, but so does the world. If a business in the community is going to be closed on one day, what day is that? In most every case it is Sunday. Is this because the owner of the business wants to go to church? Probably not, he recognizes that he cannot work everyday and does need a rest from his work and Sunday is recognized as the day that this nation rests.

God set the seventh day (Saturday) aside as a day of rest, a day to be holy or set apart for God. How does the world view Saturday? This is the day for parties, fun and play, for the seeking after our own pleasures rather than God.
The Desecration Of The Feasts Of Israel

I mentioned earlier that the Roman Church accepted the holy days of the pagan culture in order to appease them and bring them into the "church". The two major "Christian" holidays we have today came from this pagan culture. They are Christmas and Easter.

Here again we see Satan who has succeeded in deceiving the church into believing that the feasts set by God himself are no longer required to be kept, and instead we have embraced the feasts which were originally established in pagan cultures long before Yeshua was born.

Let me first explain that I do not object to observing Christmas or Easter, but these holy days are not in the Bible. These holy days can be observed in a Christian home with a Christian atmosphere, which is pleasing to God. We must also recognize that God did command certain days to be feast days and he expects us to keep them.

Again I will emphasis that it is not my intention to go into any detail here, but to examine a few facts about the origins of our "Christian" holy days. There are many good books available that do go into detail on these holy days if one chooses to investigate this further. I only want to point out that what we consider "holy" may in fact have its origins in the "unholy".
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Easter

The word "Easter" comes from the word "Ishtar". Ishtar was the goddess of war and fertility of the Babylonian Empire. She is also the wife of the Sun god, Nimrod. Much of our traditions surrounding Easter is rooted in the worship of the goddess Ishtar. The sunrise service was originally observed hundreds of years before Christ. It was observed on the morning of the summer equinox in honor of this goddess. Two of the symbols of fertility associated with Ishtar were eggs and rabbits.

Christmas

The Winter Solstice is on December 22nd. On this day the sun reaches its lowest point and the 25th was recognized as the day that the sun began to rise higher and was known to the Babylonians as the day the "sun god" (Nimrod) was born. Another fertility symbol of the goddess Ishtar is the evergreen tree. The Yule log and the eating of ham were both originally observed as traditions associated with the god Nimrod and his wife Ishtar.

God Calls His People Out Of Babylon

"Come out of [Babylon], my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes". (Revelation 18:4-5)
The Christian holy days are rooted in the Babylonian worship of pagan gods. God is calling us out of this false religious system and calling back into his religious system which he instituted thousands of years ago at Mount Sinai. When we are faced with the decision of whether or not we should observe Christmas and Easter rather than the Holy Feasts of Israel, let us remember the words of Yeshua.

"You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! (Mark 7:9)

Will we continue to observe the traditions of our church while continuing to ignore the commands of God?

Chapter Summary

• The Holy Assembly has been split into two parts, the believing Gentiles (the Church) and the Jews.

• In general, the church as no commitment to God outside of "Church". The covenant relationship is not taught.

• The Church says "there is no Torah".

• The Sabbath has been replaced by the first day (the day of the Sun god).
• The feasts are no longer observed and are replaced with holy days rooted in paganism.
• God's people are being called out of this counterfeit religion designed by Satan.
CONCLUSION

The Bible is a story about God who chose a nation of people to reveal himself, his covenant and plan of redemption for the fallen world. God calls this nation to be a light to the world that all people of the earth may enter into this covenant with God. The First Covenant outlines the institution of this covenant and the history his people, Israel. The New Covenant is not an elimination of either the covenant or Israel, but the continuing saga of Israel's relationship to God and the fulfilling of the prophecy of the light of Israel reaching all the nations of the earth with the Gospel of the redemption through Yeshua the Messiah.

I have heard a much different story in the churches. It has been said that the New Covenant must be understood before one can understand the First Covenant. I have even heard some ask why we have the First Covenant in our Bibles, because they see no purpose in it. This is the opposite of the truth. The Torah is the foundation which God laid down first. The rest of the First Covenant, the writings and the prophets, deal with the relationship between Israel and the keeping of the Torah. When Yeshua came he continued to instruct Israel in how to live a life according to the Torah. The New Covenant epistles continue the instruction on how to live a life
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according to the Torah through Yeshua Christ. So, in order to truly understand the New Covenant one must understand the roots of the Bible, the Torah.

It has been my hope that by reading this book you will see that the Bible teaches that there is one Israel, composed of the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the Gentiles who are grafted into this nation. Both groups are one in the household of God. The Torah is not a law to be feared but the living document by which God's people live by, not for salvation, but to show our love and obedience to God and to other people in the hope that they may desire the same relationship with God. The Bible is about the one true God, one covenant, one Torah, and one people.

Throughout the Bible we see people who have lived a life according to Torah; Abraham, Moses, King David, King Josiah, Yeshua, the twelve apostles and Paul. These men devoted their lives to obedience to God and his Torah. Shouldn't we follow their example? Yeshua kept the Torah, Paul followed Yeshua's example and we are also told to follow in Yeshua's steps (1 Peter 2:21). The decision is yours.