

Freedom from the Sinai Covenant

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There is a move in Messianic circles to affirm that the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31 is merely the Sinai Covenant renewed. This theological flaw stems from a failure to distinguish between the different connotations of the term “law.” Law can mean Brit (covenant) or Torah (teaching). In Jer. 31:33 both meanings occur. “But this is the Brit which I will make... I will put My torah within them...”

The Brit has changed, the Torah has not. Torah has abiding relevance and authority (Malachi 4:4). In Matthew 5:17-18 Yeshua says, “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.” In these statements Law means teaching and is synonymous with all the Word of God.

New, Not Renewed

Brit, however, has been replaced. God speaks of a new (Heb: chadashah), not a renewed (mechudeshet), Covenant. The word renewed does not appear. This is reinforced in Hebrews 8:8-12 which translates chadashah as kainos in Greek, meaning of a different nature.

The Sinai Covenant was one of works. Deuteronomy 27:26 says, “Cursed is he who does not confirm the words of this Law by doing them.” (See also Galatians 3:10, 12.) By contrast, the New Covenant is one of grace (Jer. 31:34). Because of it we have been redeemed from the curse (Gal. 3:13).

Romans 7:1-6 describes our relationship to the Covenant. Under the Sinai Covenant, we are married to the Law; under the New Covenant, we are married to Messiah. In order for this to happen, we are freed from the Law as Covenant (v.3), we are dead to the Law (v.4) and we are delivered from the Law (v.6).

What has Changed in the New Covenant?

The lawgiver has changed. Moses is no longer the steward. “For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king (Isaiah 33:22).” (See also I Corinthians 9:21.)

The Priesthood has Changed.

Instead of an Aaronic high priest there is one after the order of Melchizedek – Yeshua, the Son of God (Psalm 110:4). Heb. 7:28 says, “For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever.”

The Sacrifice has Changed.

Under the Sinai Covenant animal sacrifices were offered; under the New Covenant Messiah offered Himself (Ps. 40:6-8 and Heb. 10:11-12).
The administration has changed.

The Torah is administered under a new Brit. It is no longer written on stone tablets but on the tablets of the heart, by the Ruach haKodesh (II Cor. 3:3). This is what God means in Jer. 31:31-34. The First Covenant given at Sinai made way for the Second (New) Covenant as blossoms give way to fruit. The precept in Deut. 10:16, for example, is transmuted into promise in Deut. 30:6.

In the same way with the other conditions, God gives in the New Covenant what He required in the Old, as Heb. 7:19 says, “(for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope.”

Some Things have not Changed in the New Covenant

Torah has not changed. “Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven. (Ps. 119:89)” God’s provisions have not changed. We still need a sacrifice, a high priest to mediate on our behalf, an altar, a sanctuary, a covenant. All these are found in the person and work of Messiah Yeshua. “But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption (Heb. 9:11-12)”

The penalty for disobedience has not changed. Transgression of the New Covenant is more severely punished than transgression of the Old, according to Hebrews .10:28-29.

New Covenant in Embryo

The promises have not changed. The Law, which came 430 years after God’s covenant of promise with Abraham, cannot annul that covenant. This was the New Covenant in embryo; and it was unilateral, as described in Genesis 15:17-18, where only God took upon Himself all the terms and conditions (See Gal. 3:20.)

The Sinai Covenant was temporary and was abrogated to make way for the New. Both cannot exist. As it says in Gal. 5:1, Messiah set us free so that we could have freedom.
(AMEN!)