

Teaching 1 of 11

A Promise Made with One Nation

Before we ask if a law is for us, we ask who it was given to.

“Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel.”

Exodus 19:3

Imagine your neighbor signs a deal to buy a house. Then a letter comes to you saying you owe money on it. You would say, “Wait. I did not sign that deal.” That simple picture helps us understand the Law of Moses.

God spoke to one people

διαθήκη

diathēkē (dee-ah-thay-KAY)

A covenant: a binding promise between two sides.

God freed Israel from Egypt, led them to Mount Sinai, and made a covenant with them there. The Greek word is διαθήκη *diathēkē*: a binding promise between two sides. Moses said it plainly: “The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb” (Deuteronomy 5:2). “Us” was Israel.

The Sabbath was Israel’s sign

Every covenant has a sign. A wedding has a ring. Noah had the rainbow. The Sinai covenant had the Sabbath.

It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel.

Exodus 31:17

God even gave the reason: “You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt” (Deuteronomy 5:15). That was Israel’s history, a family sign for one family.

The tithe was built for a nation

Israel’s tithes fed the Levites, who had no land (Numbers 18:21), paid for feasts in Jerusalem (Deuteronomy 14:22-27), and every third year fed the poor (Deuteronomy 14:28-29). That system needed a temple, a priest tribe and a land of crops. It was built for Israel.

The Law was good, and a new deal was promised

Paul called the Law “holy and righteous and good” (Romans 7:12). But a good thing can be for a certain time, the way a crib is good for a baby. Even in the Old Testament God promised a change:

I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.

Jeremiah 31:33

The old covenant was written on stone. The new one would be written on hearts.

Faith came first

Abraham lived hundreds of years before Moses. He had no Ten Commandments, no Sabbath law, no tithe system. “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness” (Romans 4:3). The Law came 430 years later and did not cancel that promise (Galatians 3:17). The path to God was always by believing Him.

So we still read the Old Testament and learn about God from it. But we read it as a story that leads to Jesus, not as a contract we must sign.

Remember this

The Law of Moses was a covenant God made with Israel, and the Sabbath was its sign. Even then, God promised a new covenant that would be written on our hearts.