
בְּרִית

Covenant

At the very beginning of the story of the Bible, G-d shows Himself to be the G-d Who makes promises! In the story of Noah, we find the first time that the word “covenant” is used in the Bible. G-d talks to Noah and He says: “But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife, and your sons’ wives with you.” What exactly is a “covennat?”



The Hebrew word for covenant is בְּרִית, pronounced *berit*. It means to tie something together, and was used in ancient Israel to refer to the promises that people made with each other, as well as the promises G-d made with Israel. When someone makes a promise to another person, they “tie themselves to the promise,” that is, they are “bound” to it. This is the idea of “coveannt.” G-d made a promise to Noah and called it a “covenant.” In our day, we refer to the ceremony of circumcision by the word *berit*, because circumcision is the sign of the *covenant* which G-d made with us through Abraham.

What was the promise that G-d made with Noah and his family? We can find out exactly by reading Genesis 9:9-11:

“Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark, even every best of the earth. And I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth.”

G-d made a promise that He would never again destroy the earth with a flood of water, but that He would maintain the life of both mankind and all the animals. This was a wonderful promise because it was necessary for the Messiah to come. Since the Messiah would be a man Himself, it was important for mankind to be able to continue to live upon the earth. In the promise that G-d made with Noah, He promises to protect mankind from one generation to another.

Usually when G-d makes a covenant He also gives us a reminder of it—something we can always see and remember the covenant He has made. For the covenant He made with Noah He gave the rainbow as the reminder. Everytime we see a rainbow in the sky, we should remember that G-d is the One Who makes covenants and keeps them!