

Whoever Sheds Human Blood, by Humans Shall Their Blood Be Shed

9: 1-7

DIG: This is the second covenant that God entered into with Noah and his heirs. Why does God repeat for Noah much of what He told Adam? What new instructions does he add? How is this covenant different than the previous one (6:13 to 7:5)?

REFLECT: Have you ever been through a difficult time and felt like it was time to get on with your life? I am sure that is how Noah and his family felt. Do you believe that Elohim is concerned about every aspect of your life? Do you believe that every activity, except sin, can be done for God's pleasure if you do it with an attitude of praise? Why or why not?

For over a very long year God had been silent. But now He blessed Noah and his sons (9:1a). The name Elohim is used here, because He is the God of creation. YHVH uses much of the same language that He did with Adam as the provisions of the covenant are given. **There were five aspects to this covenant.**

First: Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth (9:1b). This section begins and ends with this same word for word phrase. There are several interesting parallels between Noah and Adam. Because Noah is the new Adam, so once again the earth is to be filled with humanity. Like Adam, Noah stands as the representative head of the human race. This is a reaffirmation of the covenant with Adam after God had created Adam and Eve. He said: Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth (1:28). Adam would have children, but at this point the provision to be fruitful and increase in number will be fulfilled by Noah's three sons.

Secondly, there is now the fear of man in the animal kingdom. The fear and dread of you will fall upon all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air, upon every creature that move along the ground, and upon all the fish of the sea (9:2a). This was necessary to some degree because the animals, fish and birds became food for man. So God creates a fear of mankind in the animal kingdom, so sensing mankind, the animal could flee and live. God said: they are given into your hands (9:2b). Thus, mankind retained his authority over the animal kingdom, much to the chagrin of PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals). But the command to subdue the earth is not repeated here as it is in 1:28 because the authority now belongs to Satan. When man fell, the Adversary usurped his authority.

Thirdly, there was to be a change in the **human** diet. Until now **mankind** was strictly vegetarian and **animals** were raised for clothing, dairy products and sacrifices. But now **God** said: **Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything (9:3)**. There are no limits; all **animals** may now be eaten. If it **moves**, man could eat it. But with this permission, there was one restriction.

Fourthly, there was to be no eating of **blood**. **But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it, meaning the blood should be drained out before eating (9:4)**. This principle would be incorporated into the Torah. **For the life of the creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life (Leviticus 17:11; also see Deuteronomy 12:15-16 and 20-24)**. The life of an **animal**, spilled on the sacrificial **altar**, was accepted by **God** as a substitutionary death for the life of a guilty sinner, who deserved to die but who was permitted to live because of the sacrifice, whose **blood covered** his sins. **The blood** of animals could only figuratively cover sins, of course. The reality represented by the figure was the sacrifice of **the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, who has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Hebrews 9:26)**.¹⁶⁰

Fifthly, capital punishment was established as a result of the anarchy that had developed before the Flood (9:5-6). **And I will require the blood of anyone who takes another person's life. If a wild animal kills a person, it must die (9:5 NLT)**. But the sanctity of **blood** is now taken a step further. Lest anyone believes that **God** held life as being cheap and that the taking of a **life** was a small matter as a result of the Flood's destruction, **God's** covenant with **Noah** shows that life is sacred and that people should not kill each other. *This verse does not imply premeditation. As far as the Bible is concerned, it does not matter. Whether it was premeditated, or in a moment of passion, the Bible says that anyone who murders a fellow human must die (9:6a NLT)*. Or as the NASB translates it: **Whoever sheds human blood by human blood their blood be shed**. The Hebrew word for **sheds** is *shaphak*, and is used here for the first time in the Bible. It is often translated *pour out, poured out or pouring out*. It is frequently used of the *pouring out* of **God's** wrath (Psalm 69:24), but it can also be used of the *pouring out* of **the Ruach HaKodesh (Joel 2:28)**. It is used many times to refer to the *pouring out* of the **blood** of animals at the bronze altar of the Tabernacle or the Temple (Leviticus 4:30). It is the same word used by **Christ** on the cross, when **He** cried out: **I AM poured out like water and all My bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within Me (Psalm 22:14)**.

The power to carry out this judgment of **Elohim on a murderer** (and other laws governing those **human** activities that, if left unregulated, could lead to **murder**) was, therefore, delegated to **mankind** (see my commentary on **Exodus Dp - You Shall Not Murder**). This sets the stage for the Dispensation of Civil, or human, Government. Under **God's** covenant with **Noah**, the death penalty was mandatory for the crime of **murder**. *The purpose was and is not to deter crime, or not to reform anyone, but to punish the murderer. People today get distracted in the debate of rehabilitation. Does prison rehabilitate the murderer? Here, God says that is not the issue.* And why is there retribution for the shedding of **human blood**? **For God made human beings in His own image (9:6b NLT).**

This verse not only stresses the sanctity of **human** life, but also reminds us of **Jesus**, who was most perfectly pictured in the **image of God**. The innocent **blood of the Suffering Servant** would be *poured out* as **He** made **His life a guilt offering** for sin (**Isaiah 53:10**).

But why doesn't **Elohim** punish **murderers Himself**? Why delegate such an important job to an imperfect system run by imperfect people? We can be sure that when **God** does something like this, it is for our benefit. **The LORD** knows that we will take a far greater interest in maintaining justice and enforcing the laws if we have total responsibility for the system. Someone who owns their own business has greater buy-in than someone who simply works for a large firm. And as far as **God** is concerned, every great teacher knows the value of delegating responsibility. Even if the teacher can do something better than the student, it is important for the student to do things so they can learn. In other words, **Elohim** wants us to learn the value and skills of justice. **He** is a hands-on **Mentor**, but responsibility has been given to us and we are free to succeed or fail.¹⁶¹

Then we have a reaffirmation of the first provision as repeated in the first verse of this section. **As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it (9:7).** In the Hebrew this is clearly the use of alliteration. But the command to **subdue the earth** is not repeated here as it is in **1:28** because the authority now belongs to **the evil one**. When Adam fell, **the great dragon** usurped his authority. Therefore, man retains authority over the **animal** kingdom but not over **the earth**. **Jesus** calls **the Adversary**, "**The prince of this world**" (**John 12:31**); Rabbi Saul calls **him**: **The god of this age (Second Corinthians 4:4)**, while **Luke** and **John** tell us that **the Destroyer of souls** has authority over the kingdoms of the world (**Luke 4:5-6; First John 5:19**).

In essence, then, this covenant was established to ensure the stability of nature. It helped to guarantee the order of the world. People would also learn that civil, or human, law was necessary for the stability of life and that wickedness should not go unpunished as it had before. So civil, or **human**, government was brought in.¹⁶²