Never Again Will There Be a Flood to Destroy the Earth
9: 8-17

Never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth DIG: What aspects of this Noahic covenant are forever? Which are unconditional? What is its sign? What purpose does this sign serve? From elsewhere in the Bible, what do you know about other signs or seals of covenant commitments between God and His people? What does this covenant teach about the sanctity of life? How might this be especially important to Noah and his sons when they came out of the ark?

REFLECT: What symbolic rainbow have you experienced recently? In what area of your life does this passage bring you comfort? Where does it challenge you?

This **covenant**, this relationship, is established with two groups. First it is established with *mankind*. **Then God said to Noah, "I now establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you" (9:8-9).** This is the fulfillment of **His** promise in **6:18.** Secondly, it includes *the animal kingdom*. **Elohim** said: **I now establish My covenant 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 the earth (9:10).** The word **covenant** *appears seven times* in this section **(9:8, 11-13, 15-17).**

Then **God** spells out the promise of the **covenant** with **Noah**. **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 (9:11). There will never again be a** universal **Flood**. However, the Bible teaches that after **Jesus** comes back to rule and reign from Jerusalem for a thousand years **(Revelation 20:2)**, **the heavens will disappear with a roar** and **the elements will be destroyed by fire (Second Peter 3:10).** At that time, there will be **a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth** will

have **passed away (Rev 21:1).**

Out of the covenant with Noah the rabbis developed the Seven Noachide Laws of Judaism. While Jews believe they receive salvation through the Torah, according to rabbinic theology, Gentiles receive salvation through the Seven Noachide Laws. These laws are the basis of Gentile salvation in Judaism, short of converting to Judaism.

There are seven basic categories. First there is justice. This involves establishing courts of law. It is imperative to pursue social justice and prohibit the miscarriage of justice. The second Noachide Law is blasphemy. This means not taking God's name in vain and prohibits curses directed toward God. Thirdly, there is idolatry. This prohibits the worship of idols or planets. The fourth Noachide law is immorality, which prohibits adultery, incest, sodomy and bestiality. The fifth law is homicide, prohibiting both murder and suicide. The sixth is theft, which prohibits the taking of another's property. The seventh law is the prohibition of eating the flesh of a living animal. It also prohibits the eating of any parts severed from a living animal. But, as usual, the rabbis were much more detailed with these seven laws.

In rabbinic thinking there are 613 commandments in the Torah for the Jews, and these seven categories for the Gentiles. The rabbis divided these into negative and positive commandments. The first category is justice and in rabbinic thinking it covers 20 of the 613 commandments. The second Noachide Law is blasphemy, which covers 8 of the 613. The third category, idolatry, covers 10 of the 613. The fourth category in the Noachide Law was immorality, and it covers 10 of the 613 laws of Moses. The fifth category has to do with homicide, and it has no categories because whatever would be classified under homicide has already been listed under the first category of justice or the next category of theft. The sixth Noachide Law of theft covers 16 of the 613. The seventh category has to do with eating the severed limbs of a living animal and covers two of the 613.

Then **Elohim** focuses on **the sign** of **the covenant**. **He** 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 (9:12).** It is certainly heartbreaking that although many admire the beautiful **rainbow**, few any longer relate it with **God's** promise, let alone believe that there ever was a universal **Flood**! But just as circumcision would later become **the sign of the covenant** with Abraham **(17:11)**, and just as the Sabbath would become **the sign of the covenant** with Isra'el at Mount Sinai **(Exodus 31:12-17)**, so also **the rainbow** is **the sign of the covenant** with **Noah 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 (9:13). Before **the Flood**, the upper air contained only invisible water *vapor,* and therefore no **rainbow** was possible. With the new hydrological cycle following **the Flood**, the former vapor canopy was gone. It is physically impossible now for enough water ever to be raised into the atmosphere to cause a universal **Flood**. When a storm has done its worst and the clouds are finally exhausted of most of their water, then there always appears a rainbow, and so **Elohim** would have us remember again **His** great promise after **the** great **Flood**.[163] The Hebrew word for **bow** here is *keshet,* meaning *battle bow or a bow of war.* Later in the TaNaKh **God** referred to judgment storms by using the terms for bows and arrows. But here it is as if **God** hung up **His** *bow of war* on **the clouds** as a **sign** of peace.[164]

Whenever I bring rain **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 (9:14-15).** Here is another incidental reference to the

universality of **the Flood**, since otherwise all land animals surviving a mere local flood would not have come under the terms of **God's covenant** with **Noah**.[165]

This is an unconditional divine promise. **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 (9:16).** So in the same way that the **blood** on the doorposts in Egypt **(Exodus 12:1-13)** served as **a sign** that judgment would be averted, the same is true here. Whenever **Elohim** would see **the rainbow**, **He** would remember **His everlasting covenant** and even though mankind was still sinful, judgment would be averted. **The sign** was well suited to fulfill the prime function of all **covenant** signs, which is *reassurance*. Like the later **sign** of circumcision, it was the seal **(Romans 4:11)** of an accomplished fact.[166]

So God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant I have established between Me and all life on the earth" (9:17). In the ancient Near East, **covenant** treaties were made after wars as a step toward embarking on peace. Similarly, **Elohim**, after judging sin, made a **covenant** of peace. It would certainly strengthen Isra'el to see **God's** pledge in the skies and reassure them that **He** keeps **His** promise of grace.[167]

Outside of **Genesis** and the **covenant** with **Noah**, **the rainbow** is found in three other places in the Bible: **Ezeki'el 1:28** where it is part of the Sh'khinah glory (see the commentary on **Isaiah, to see link click Ju – The Glory of the LORD Rises Upon You**), **Revelation 4:3** where it is also part of the Sh'khinah glory and, finally, when **the Lord Jesus Christ himself** comes back to claim authority over the world **(Revelation 19:1-16)**, where, instead of a crown of thorns (which **He** wore on the cross), **He** will be **robed in a cloud, with** *the* **rainbow above His head (Revelation 10:1).** The Hebrew uses the definite article, *the* **rainbow**. This can scarcely refer to any other **rainbow** but **My rainbow**, *the* sign of the everlasting **covenant** between **God** and **mankind**.