

Genesis 9:8-17ⁱⁱ

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

ⁱⁱ About the First Reading: Genesis 9:8-17

Both Jewish and Christian tradition attribute the writing of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, to Moses. Modern scholars now recognize that the Pentateuch is composed of several strands of tradition preserved and edited over centuries of Jewish history. The story of the flood is itself an ancient one, shared by several Near Eastern cultures, but the biblical account has its own unique theological perspective.

Through Noah, God makes the first covenant, a covenant with all humans and animals and every generation. The sign of the covenant, the rainbow, is a sign of peace, showing that God’s wrath was over and the stability of the natural order was guaranteed. This first covenant demonstrates the trustworthiness of God who makes promises and keeps them.