

**THE OLD TESTAMENT**  
**⇒NON-COVENANT ASPECTS⇐**  
**⇒OF THE OLD TESTAMENT⇐**

We have already seen that the Old Testament gives us information about several covenants. The making of what we have called the “Old Covenant”, that is the covenant with the tribe or nation of Israel, together with its terms and conditions, is largely described in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. How much of the rest of the Old Testament relates to this covenant?

The answer to this is not always clear, but let us look at some examples. God speaking through Amos said to Israel: “You only have I known of all the nations of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” (Amos 3:2). Similarly we have: “For crime after crime of Judah I will grant them no reprieve, because they have spurned the law of the Lord and have not observed His decrees.” (Amos 2:4). Amos was one among the prophets who saw God’s dealings with the tribe of Israel in terms of the special relationship they had as a result of the covenant, even if the covenant was not specifically mentioned.

The coming of prophets was not something unexpected in the covenant. It was specifically mentioned in the book of Deuteronomy: “I will raise up for them a prophet like you”. (Deuteronomy 18:14-22).

Amos and most of the other prophets speak about other nations surrounding Israel. Since those nations were not part of the covenant relationship with God, we are able to say that the prophets were not restricted to the covenant in their messages.

Another example of parts of the Old Testament which do not fall into the covenant can be seen in those many expressions of a personal religion which transcend the non-personal relationship laid down in the national laws of the covenant. The well-known words: “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall lack nothing”, express this insight into the personal relationship of an individual with his maker which is not found in the covenant legislation. (Psalm 23:1). And of course there are many other examples, particularly in the Psalms. It is this which makes the Psalms in particular a source of inspiration for the individual even today.

So while the covenants are central to the Old Testament, there is a wider picture, which must not be neglected in considering it as a whole.