



The Surpassing Glory...

Paul's Midrash of the Veil of Moses

by John J. Parsons

This week's reading from the *New Testament* (2 Cor. 3:1-18) concerns the Apostle Paul's "midrash" or commentary on the events surrounding the climax of the Sinai experience, namely, the giving of the Ten Commandments to Moses. In order to establish his apostolic authority to the Corinthians, Paul argued that the veil worn over Moses' face concealed the "end of the law" (i.e., its eventual abolishment), since eternal righteousness would be given in the New Covenant, as was foretold by the prophets and fulfilled by Yeshua the Messiah. In order to see how Paul made his case, we first need to review the original account in Exodus and then consider Paul's comments in light of that narrative. So first let's review the giving of the tablets at Sinai and then we will consider the application of Paul's midrash to the Corinthians....

The Tablets at Sinai

As our Torah portion this week (Ki Tisa) relates, Moses was up on Sinai, receiving the final instructions for building the portable sanctuary (i.e., the Tabernacle). Betzalel and Oholiav were named the chief artisans for the building project, and God reminded Moses to observe the Sabbath day. After this, God gave Moses the Tablets of the Ten Commandments: "And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God" (Exod. 31:18).

All seems well at this point until we read the following verse: "When the people saw that Moses was *delayed* (בַּעֲשׂוֹ) to come down from the mountain, they gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, "Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him" (Exod. 32:1-2). What follows is the account of *chet ha'egel*, the "original sin" of the Jewish people (32:1-6). During this national tragedy, the people attempted to establish a counterfeit religion to guide them. First, while they "waited in the camp" as God's newly redeemed people, they coerced Aaron - the great leader of Israel who was Moses' mouthpiece before Pharaoh - to create an idol (i.e., *egel masekhah*: מַסֵּכָה עֵגֶל, or a "molten calf"). They must have reasoned that an idol made by the hand of



someone of the stature of Aaron would lend credibility to their pretense of having faith in the LORD. It is worth noting that it was *the people* - not Aaron - who said, “these are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt” (32:4). Aaron, however, “fashioned the calf with a graving tool,” built an altar before it, and made a proclamation that the following day would be a “feast to the LORD.” The midrash states that Aaron did this to buy time, since he believed that Moses would return by the following day. The next morning, however, Moses still had not returned, and the people clamored to offer “peace offerings” upon the altar. They ate and drank, and then “rose up to play” (32:6).

The Shattered Tablets...

While all this was happening at the foot of the mountain, the LORD informed Moses of the people’s betrayal and threatened to annihilate them (32:7-10). Moses immediately made three appeals to the LORD on behalf of Israel. First he appealed to God’s program of salvation itself (32:11); then he appealed to God’s reputation among the nations (32:12), and finally he appealed to God’s promises made to the patriarchs (32:13). Because of Moses’ three appeals, the LORD “repented” (*nacham*), or turned away, from his plan to utterly destroy the Israelites (32:14).

Moses then descended the mountain with the two tablets of testimony (שְׁנֵי לְחֵט הָעֵדוּת) in his hands, which the Torah adds, were “tablets written on both sides; on the front and on the back they were written; the tablets were “the work of God” (מַעֲשֵׂה אֱלֹהִים), and the writing was “the writing of God” (מִכְתָּב אֱלֹהִים), engraved on the tablets” (32:15-16). When Moses saw the calf and the dancing, however, he smashed these precious tablets in anger (32:19). (The midrash states that Moses actually dropped the tablets because the glory had departed from Israel and they suddenly became too heavy to hold.) Moses then took the idol they had made and burned it with fire, ground it to powder, and threw its dust into water which he made the people drink (32:20). He then confronted his brother Aaron who explained he was attempting to pacify the people and to buy some time before Moses returned (the sages note that Aaron was regarded as innocent of this crime as evidenced by his later appointment as the first High Priest of Israel). When Moses saw the nakedness and unrestraint of the people continuing, however, he stood at the gate of the camp and rallied for all those who were loyal to the LORD to come over to him. The entire tribe of Levi surrounded him and Moses ordered them to execute the instigators of the idolatry. The Torah adds that because of their loyalty, the Levites were to be ordained as ministers in the Tabernacle (32:25-29). According to Jewish tradition, Moses smashed the tablets on Tammuz 17, a date that later marked further tragedy for the Jewish people (for more on this date, see the Hebrew4Christians web site).



The Intercession of Moses

The following day Moses said to the people, “You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement (*kapparah*) for your sin” (32:30). According to Jewish tradition, Moses ascended the mountain and remained there for another forty days and nights (i.e., from Tammuz 18 until Av 29). Upon the mountain Moses confessed the sin of the people and asked the LORD for forgiveness. He even offered to die on behalf of the people: “If you will not forgive their sin, blot me out of the book that you have written” (32:32). The LORD replied that all who sinned against Him would be “blotted out of his book,” and He then sent a plague that destroyed those who were not judged by the Levites earlier. God then sent Moses back down and was told to lead the people away from Sinai back to the promised land. God would send His angel before the people, though He Himself would not go “in their midst” (33:1-3). “Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey -- but I will not go up among you, lest I consume you on the way, for you are *am k’she oref* (עַם-קָשֵׁה-עֲרֹף) - a stiff-necked people” (33:3). The LORD continued, “Say to the Israelite people, ‘You are a stiff-necked people. If I were to go in your midst for one moment, I would destroy you. Now, then, leave off your finery, and I will consider what to do to you’ (33:5). In other words, the “Tabernacle project” was called off and God would not dwell among the people... When the people heard this they mourned and removed their finery (33:6). Moses then returned to his tent, which was situated far away from the camp, and there the Pillar of Cloud (עַמּוּד הָעָנָן) descended to meet with him “panim el panim” (פָּנִים אֶל-פָּנִים), an idiom that means personally, “as a man speaks to his friend” (33:11). It should be noted that panim el panim does not literally mean “face to face,” since the narrative later states that no one can see God’s face and live to tell about it (33:20).

During what I’ve called the “passion of Moses” (Exod. 33:12-19), the word grace (חֵן) occurs no less than six times. Moses’ appeal for God’s grace was followed by his request for the revelation of the LORD’s glory (33:18). The LORD agreed to reveal His glory to Moses, though Moses would be unable to see His face, “for man shall not see me and live” (33:20; cp. John 1:18; 1 John 4:12). Moses’ successful intercession had touched God’s heart, causing Him to change from a mode of strict judgment (*middat ha-din*) to one of mercy and forgiveness (*middat ha-rachamim*). This was a “gospel” moment at Sinai.... The Glory of the LORD is found in His Name YHVH (יְהוָה), the Compassionate Savior and Redeemer of Israel.



A Second Set of Tablets

The LORD then told Moses to carve a new set of tablets and to meet him on the top of Mount Sinai the following day (34:1-4). According to Jewish tradition, this was on Elul 1 (i.e., Rosh Chodesh Elul). The shofar was sounded and an announcement went out through the camp that Moses was going back to receive a second set of tablets. The people began to fervently pray for forgiveness. The LORD then descended in the cloud “and stood with him there” (וַיִּתְיַצֵּב עִמּוֹ שָׁם), as He called out the Name of the LORD (34:5). “The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation” (34:6-7). Upon hearing this, Moses bowed his head and worshipped, and then he said, “If now I have found grace (חַן) in your sight, O Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us, for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance” (34:9).

יְהוָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי רַחוּם וְחַנוּן אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם וְרַב־חַסֵּד וְאֱמֵת
 נִצֵּר חַסֵּד לְאַלְפִים נִשְׂא עוֹן וּפְשָׁע וְחַטָּאת
 וְנִקָּה לֹא יִנְקָה פֶקֶד עוֹן אָבוֹת עַל־בָּנִים
 וְעַל־בְּנֵי בָנִים עַל־שְׁלִשִׁים וְעַל־רְבָעִים

“The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.”

The LORD then renewed the covenant with Moses and said, “Behold, I am ‘cutting a covenant’ (כָּרַת בְּרִית). Before all your people I will do marvels, such as have not been created in all the earth or in any nation. And all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the LORD (מַעֲשֵׂה יְהוָה), for it is an awesome thing that I will do with you” (34:10). God then said he would drive out the nations before the Israelites and warned them to make no covenants with them. The Jews were to tear down their pagan altars and destroy their Asherah poles. “For the LORD, who name is ‘Jealous’ (כִּי יְהוָה קַנָּא שְׂמוֹ), is a jealous God” (34:14). The people were to abstain from any form of idolatry (34:17) and keep the prescribed festivals and Sabbath days (34:18-26).



Moses was then instructed to write these words down as terms of the (renewed) covenant (34:27). “So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights. He neither ate bread nor drank water. And he (i.e., God) wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments” (34:28; cp. 34:1). According to Jewish tradition, during these forty days - from Elul 1 to Yom Kippur - the shofar was blown every day to remind the people to pray for Moses and for Israel.

Moses’ Veiled Face

When Moses finally came down from Mount Sinai with the second set of tablets, he did not know that “the skin of his face shone (קָרַן עוֹר פָּנָיו) because he had been talking with God” (34:29). (Incidentally, the verb translated “shone” here is *karan* (קָרַן), which was mistranslated by Jerome (i.e., author of the Latin Vulgate) as a form of the noun *keren*, which means a “horn.” So rather than meaning, “to emit rays” (i.e., shine), Jerome understood it to mean “to grow horns” (*cornuta*), and this explains why various artists rendered Moses with “horns” jutting out of his head.) When the people saw him, however, they drew back in fear, but Moses called them over and reassured them. He then reported all that the LORD had commanded while he was on Mount Sinai (34:30-32). “And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil (i.e., *masveh*: מַסְכָּה) over his face” (34:33). Thereafter it became Moses’ practice that whenever he went to speak “before the LORD” (לִפְנֵי יְהוָה), he would remove the veil, but whenever he would speak to the people, he would put the veil back on (34:34-35). Note that according to Bachya, Moses would remove the veil when he delivered commandments from the LORD to the people, and when he was finished speaking to them, he would place the veil back over his face (34:35). According to midrash, the radiance on Moses’ face was a reflection of the Divine Light God created on the first day - a light that was 60,075 times brighter than the sun.

According to Me’am Le’oz, the people were afraid of the radiance from Moses’ face because of their sin with the idol. Earlier they had seen the divine Glory as a Pillar of Cloud by day and a Pillar of Fire by night, and they were not afraid. At the Sea of Reeds, after God destroyed the Egyptian army, the people sang, “This is my God, and I will enshrine Him (Exod. 15:2), indicating their reverential awe but not terror. However, after the sin of the Golden Calf, the people were afraid to look at the radiance of Moses’ face.

In Jewish tradition, the veil was worn for the sake of Moses’ *humility*. Moses was described as “the humblest man who ever lived” (Num. 12:3), and therefore the veil was used to disguise his honor before the people. Moses did not want the people to think there was anything special about him, and that is why he removed the veil when he taught the



Torah to the people. The people would then assume that the radiance was the result of God's Torah, and not from any supposed merit of his own. According to the sages, Moses retained this radiance until the day he died, as it is written: "His radiance did not diminish and his juices did not leave him" (Deut. 34:7).

Paul's Midrash of the Veil

As I mentioned at the beginning of this entry, the Apostle Paul argued that the veil Moses wore after receiving the second set of the Ten Commandments concealed the "end of the law" (i.e., its eventual abolition), since abiding righteousness would be given in the New Covenant (בְּרִית הַדְּרִשָּׁה) as was foretold by the prophets and fulfilled by Yeshua the Messiah. In other words, the veil was intended to "cover up" the original glory of Sinai (represented by the first set of tablets) while also containing the future glory of ...

By way of background, it should be noted that Paul wrote his second letter to the Corinthians primarily to establish his authority as a true messenger of God and the Messiah. Apparently Paul's critics at Corinth had charged that he was not a genuine apostle, since he had altered his plans to visit the assembly sometime after his first letter was delivered. Paul defended his decision and then attempted to explain the nature of true apostleship.

"For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in the Messiah. Are we starting to recommend ourselves again? Or do we, like some, need letters of recommendation either to you or from you?" (2 Cor. 2:17-3:1). The proof of Paul's apostolic authority was revealed in the changed lives of the Corinthians themselves, who were "living letters of recommendation" regarding Paul's ministry. "You show that you are a 'letter' from Messiah delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (3:3). Paul's statement here recalls the great promise of the New Covenant delivered by the prophet Jeremiah:

"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31:31-33).



Paul's reference to the Spirit writing upon the "tablets of human hearts" also recalls the words of the prophet Ezekiel: "And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules" (Ezek. 36:26-27, see also 11:19-20). It was the fulfillment of the New Covenant, in other words, that gave Paul his confidence before the LORD (2 Cor. 3:4). It was the power of God, given by the Holy Spirit, that made Paul sufficient to be God's ambassador of the New Covenant, "not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Cor. 3:5-6).

The Surpassing Glory of the New Covenant

Paul then went on to argue for the superiority of the New Covenant by contrasting it with the older covenant "written upon stone" at Sinai. While Paul acknowledged that the giving of the Ten Commandments was attended with great glory - so much so that the Israelites could not even gaze upon Moses' face because of its glory - nonetheless the covenant itself was "the ministry of death" (ἡ διακονία τοῦ θανάτου) that was intended to be brought to an end (2 Cor. 3:7, cp. Rom. 10:4). If this ministry of death came with glory, how much more glory is revealed in the ministry of the Spirit (ἡ διακονία τοῦ πνεύματος)? "For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation (τῇ διακονίᾳ τῆς κατακρίσεως), the ministry of righteousness (ἡ διακονία τῆς δικαιοσύνης) must far exceed it in glory (3:9). Indeed, the glory of the old covenant is as if it had no glory when compared to the unsurpassable glory of the new covenant (3:10). Since the old covenant was being abolished, or "rendered inoperative" (the Greek word [καταργούμενον] is used to refer to being unemployed or put out of service), and the new covenant was powerful and abiding, the apostle had "great boldness" as a minister of God (3:11-12). Indeed, Paul's boldness here is quite remarkable, since he was claiming that his authority exceeded even that of Moses himself! (Of course Paul derived his boldness from Yeshua, who clearly taught that His authority was greater than that of Moses. For more on this, see "The Heart of the Law and the Law of the Gospel.")

Paul states that his boldness (παρρησία) is in marked contrast to the practice of Moses, who put a veil over his face to conceal that the "brightness" of the older covenant was fading away (3:13). Apparently Paul has in mind a midrash that taught that Moses' shining face began to fade over time, even though later Jewish tradition maintained he retained his radiance to the day of his death. The fading glory of Moses' face indicated that the covenant which he mediated was temporary and to be replaced by a better covenant (Heb. 8:6). Moses' attempt to keep the confidence of the people high was unsuccessful, however, since (ironically) the veil impaired the truth that the glory was



fading, and this resulted in “their minds becoming hardened” or turned to stone. “Their minds were made stonelike; for to this day the same veil remains over them when they read the Old Covenant (הַבְּרִית הַיְשָׁנָה); it has not been unveiled, because only by the Messiah is the veil taken away (3:14). When a person returns (ἐπιστρέφω) to the LORD, however, the veil is taken away (3:16). How so? By understanding that Yeshua is the “end (τέλος) of the law for righteousness for everyone who believes” (Rom. 10:4). This was hinted at in the case of Moses himself, who turned to the LORD after the sin of the Golden Calf and understood the LORD (YHVH) as the Savior. When the Spirit of God reveals the truth, the Messiah appears on all the pages of the Torah and the prophets (John 5:39, 46; Luke 24:27, 44; Matt. 13:52, etc.).

New covenant life is marked by a different set of principles than the principles of adherence to a written law code. The Spirit of the LORD imparts a new nature within us that enables us to transcend the “law of sin and death” by means of the “law of the Spirit of life in Yeshua the Messiah” (Rom. 8:2-4). We are “new creations” in the Messiah and no longer subject to the principle of self-justification obtained through personal effort (2 Cor. 5:17; Titus 3:5-6). The righteousness of God (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ) “has been manifested apart from the law, though the law and the prophets bear witness to it” (Rom. 3:21-22). Salvation comes from the LORD, not from works of righteousness that we have done. “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Yeshua the Messiah (John 1:17).

The law prescribes death as the penalty for sin (Rom. 5:12-21). “Cursed be anyone who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them” (Deut. 27:26). Moreover, the law defines transgressions (Rom 4:15; 5:13) and identifies sin (Rom. 3:20; 7:7). The law is powerless to save (Rom. 7:10; 8:1-11). It is a “perfect mirror” that reveals our inward condition (for more on this, see “*Why then the Law?*”, “*Olam HaTorah*,” and “*The problem of Torah*” on the Hebrew4Christians web site). “For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20). The law was given in glory, since that glory represents the Justice and Righteousness of God (אֱלֹהִים), but the glory of the law was untouched by the greater glory of God’s grace and faithful love (יְהוָה).

Our Freedom in Messiah

“The LORD is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Cor. 3:17). This is the “freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Rom. 8:21). Of course this freedom is not the liberty to do whatever we want, since “by what a man is overcome, that is he enslaved” (2 Pet. 2:19). As Yeshua said, “whoever commits sin is



the slave (δοῦλός) of sin” and went on to say that “if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:34-36). True freedom is moral and spiritual rather than physical. Negatively stated, it is freedom from the power of sin’s dominion within the heart; positively stated, it is the ability of the will to choose according to the light of moral and spiritual truth. That is why the new covenant promises that the law - the moral law that is clearly restated in the New Testament - would be written upon the heart of the believer. “I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts” (Jer. 31:33).

True Inner Transformation

More radically, the Spirit of the LORD gives us freedom to access the Presence of God (Rom. 5:2). Because of Yeshua, we are now free to come “boldly before the Throne of Grace,” without the need for the elaborate rituals the law prescribed. We can come into the “Holy of Holies” made without hands and there speak with God, *panim el panim* - personally, “as a man speaks to his friend” (Heb. 4:16; Exod. 33:11; John 15:15; James 2:23). God has given us the Spirit of His Son so we can call upon the LORD as Abba, Father (Gal. 4:6). This great liberty the Spirit of God gives allows us to behold the glory of the LORD, without the need of a veil - neither the veil to cover our shame nor the veil that once separated us from God’s holy presence. As Paul puts it, “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29). In other words, true inner transformation comes exclusively through the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Just as the proximity to the divine Presence caused Moses’ face to shine, so the follower of Yeshua can experience a similar transformation by the indwelling Holy Spirit...

This is the great message of the gospel itself, and the consequences of getting this wrong are the highest imaginable (Gal. 1:8-9). As wonderful as the Torah is, it is nothing but death itself apart from the salvation given in Yeshua (on the other hand, with Yeshua the meaning of the Torah comes alive and is made real in our hearts). As Paul warns us, “If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing (ἀπολλυμένοις). In their case the “god of this world” (i.e., Satan) has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Messiah (אור כבוד בְּשֵׁרַת הַמָּשִׁיחַ), who is the image of God... For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Yeshua the Messiah” (2 Cor. 4:3-6). The light of Yeshua is the Light of the world...



Old Covenant		New Covenant
(בְּרִית יְשׁוּעָה)		(בְּרִית חַדְשָׁה)
Static – Written on stone	➔	Dynamic – Written on hearts
Glorious	➔	More Glorious
Was to end	➔	Will never end
Ministry of Death	➔	Ministry of Life
Ministry of Condemnation	➔	Ministry of Reconciliation
Powerless to save	➔	Powerful to Save
Outer Form (flesh)	➔	Inner Reality (spirit)
Law of Moses	➔	Law of Messiah
Law of sin and death	➔	Law of the Spirit of Life
Law of works (<i>mitzvot</i>)	➔	Law of Faith (<i>emunah</i>)
Shadow	➔	Substance
Many sacrifices	➔	One Sacrifice
Yearly atonement	➔	Eternal Atonement
Earthy Tabernacle	➔	Heavenly Tabernacle

“Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.” (Matt. 13:52)

The Integrity of the Message

The integrity of the Gospel message is at stake in this discussion, and therefore we must be absolutely certain we understand the truth about these matters. We cannot “adulterate” or mix the message of the gospel with the terms of the older covenant given at Sinai. In yet another analogy, Paul says that a widow is released from her obligation to her deceased husband and is therefore free to remarry another: “Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law (ὁμεῖς ἐθανατώθητε τῷ νόμῳ) through the body of Messiah, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God” (Rom. 7:4). In terms of this analogy, a “return to the law” is like a form of spiritual *adultery*, since it betrays the new covenant that God has given to us who believe (Rom. 7:1-4).

The most important mitzvah of ALL of Scripture is to trust in Yeshua as your LORD and Savior, since He alone is the one who gives us true spiritual life. “Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed



by the law of Moses (Acts 13:38-39). Yeshua is the way (הַדֶּרֶךְ), the truth (הָאֵמֶת), and the life (הַחַיִּים); no one comes to Father apart from Him (John 14:6, Acts 4:12). As Yeshua said, “The Father judges has given all judgment to the Son, so that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father” (John 5:23-24). “Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:12). If you get this one wrong, you’ve lost it all (for more on this, please read “The Most Important Mitzvah”).

You are invited to enter into this “greater rest” by exercising faith in God’s promises (Heb. 4:1-3). This is the “law of faith” (חֻקַּת הָאֵמֶת) that *precedes* and underlies all that was given at Sinai to the Jewish people. “Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts through unbelief.” Again, there remains a Sabbath for the people of God (Heb. 4:9), a greater “rest” from attempting to please God based on our own merits (Heb. 4:10, Titus 3:5-6). We do not labor to find favor with God through acts of our own personal merit, but rather we trust in the acceptance and love of God given to us in Yeshua. Paradoxically we “labor” to enter into this rest by exercising genuine faith in God’s salvation in His Son (Heb. 4:11, Phil. 2:11-12). As Yeshua taught, “This is the work of God, that you believe in the One whom the Father has sent” (John 6:28-29).

In all things Yeshua receives the preeminence, friends, including the glory of our personal and corporate salvation. We do not merit salvation; it is the gift of God (Col. 1:18, Eph. 2:10-11). Much more could be said about these matters, but this will have to suffice for now. Be jealous for the purity of the gospel message, and beware of anyone who attempts to seduce you into thinking that you must somehow add to the finished work of our Savior. May the LORD God of Israel protect you from the lies and schemes of Satan. True spiritual life comes from trusting that Yeshua (alone) is the “end of the law for righteousness” for everyone who believes (Rom. 10:4).



Marc Chagall, *Exodus*, c. 1966



Addendum:

Extending Paul's Midrash

The apostle Paul seemed to associate the “glow” of Moses’ face with the giving of the covenant that led to *condemnation* (2 Cor. 3:7). In other words, the radiance of Moses’ face represented the holiness of God and his absolute moral perfection as the Lawgiver. Another way to understand the radiance of Moses’ face might be according to the revelation of the Lord as the Savior... Let me explain my reasoning.

Recall that Moses went up the mountain a *second* time - *after experiencing brokenness* and confession (prefigured by the shattering of the first set of tablets) - and it was only then that God revealed that the meaning of His Name as “mercy, grace, longsuffering, faithfulness,” and so on (Exod. 34:6-7). Notice that the Torah reveals that it was *after* this revelation that Moses’ face began to shine with the glory of God, and it was *after* this that God gave him a new set of tablets representing the *New Covenant* with the people. When Moses went down the mountain with the “good news,” however, the people backed away from the glory they saw in his face, and Moses was therefore forced to wear a veil. In other words, the people could only bear to look at Moses if God’s glory was covered or veiled – and this demand of theirs induced a state of *willful blindness*. Metaphorically speaking, the people put a veil over their hearts...

Indeed, traditional Judaism still wants the “first set of tablets” and therefore willfully obscures from view the need for a new set (i.e., New Covenant) that is given based on confession, brokenness, and God’s revelation as Savior (YHVH). It still *wants* to veil the need as it reads the Torah! The rabbis make the assumption that the Jew *can* fulfill the terms of the original covenant and therefore obtain merit or favor before God. However, as Paul stated, the Jewish people will only be able to behold the true glory of the LORD if the Messiah takes away the veil from their eyes. Once the veil is removed, they will clearly see the truth of Yeshua and the New Covenant in the pages of the Torah... Furthermore, unlike Moses who - in concession to the weakness of the flesh - concealed God’s glory by wearing a veil, we are to live our lives “unveiled” before others, steadfastly radiating the glory God as it is revealed in the truth of Yeshua and the New Covenant.



A Closing Thought...

When considering the contrasts between “the law and the gospel,” it is vital to remember that we are discussing something inherently Jewish. The ideas of grace, salvation, faith, and so on are all 100% Jewish concepts given throughout the Jewish Scriptures -- both in the Tanakh and in the New Testament writings. “Two mountains, two covenants,” yes - but *both* are Jewish... There is a unity of revelation in Scripture, and the LORD God of Israel is the same today, yesterday, and forever. Keeping this in mind will guard you from the egregious errors of Replacement Theology.

But we also need to remember something else whenever this discussion comes up. “Torah” is a *function-word* of the underlying covenant. Much of the moral and spiritual truth of the Torah of Moses is embedded (and even amplified) in the New Covenant Scriptures. What is different is not so much the Torah (the New Testament writers do not negate the moral or spiritual law at any place), but rather the means by which we are in relationship with God. God gave us an new *brit* (“agreement” or “contract”) by which we can access His Presence by means of an older and more fundamental priesthood that was fulfilled in Yeshua. This is the priesthood after the order of *Malki-Tzedek* (מַלְכֵי-צֶדֶק), and we see the future *korban* principle evidenced by Moses -- *before Sinai* -- when he instructed Israel to sacrifice the Passover lamb. Moses himself understood the gospel, as Yeshua taught, and wrote about its meaning (i.e., the Akedah of Isaac; the Red Heifer, the various laws of sacrifice, etc.). It is simply a mistake to identify “Torah” with the teachings of Moses alone, however... God’s Torah both *predates* Moses and is *fulfilled* by Yeshua. We now live under the Torah of the Messiah (תּוֹרַת הַמָּשִׁיחַ), which is the Torah of Faith, Hope, and Love... The inner meaning of the Torah of Moses has been perfectly fulfilled in Yeshua our Lord, and now we are enabled - by the power of the Holy Spirit - to likewise fulfill it within our own lives.

In all these matters, follow the path of peace (Heb. 12:14). Shalom chaverim...



Practical Addendum: Tallit and Head Coverings



In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul gave an ordinance (παράδοσις) regarding the use of head coverings while meeting together in organized worship: "I want you to understand that the head of every man is Messiah, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Messiah is God. Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered (i.e., κατὰ κεφαλῆς ἔχων, lit. "wearing down from his head") brings shame to his head, and every woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled (ἀκατακάλυπτος) brings shame to her head - there is no difference between her and a woman who has had her head shaved.... For a man indeed should not have his head veiled (i.e., κατακαλύπτω, covered up or concealed), because he is the image and glory of God, and the woman is the glory of man" (1 Cor. 11:3-5,7). Paul's teaching on this question is a remarkable illustration of the how the new covenant changes our existential posture before God. Under the former covenant given at Sinai, Jewish oral law and tradition enjoined men to pray with their heads covered by means of a *tallit* (prayer shawl), both as a sign of respect toward God, and because of the inherent unworthiness to speak face to face with the LORD. Paul rejected this custom for followers of the Messiah because they are given access to the very Holy of Holies in the Messiah to there commune with the LORD face to face: "And we all, with unveiled face (avnakekalumme,nw| prosw,pw|), reflecting the glory of the Lord (פְּבוֹד יְהוָה), are being transformed (i.e., μεταμορφώω, the same word used describing the transfiguration of Yeshua in Matt. 17) into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18).



Habakkuk 2:4

Chavakuk perek Bet, pasuk Dalet

הִנֵּה עֹפֵלָה לֹא־יִשְׁרָה נַפְשׁוֹ בּוֹ
וְצַדִּיק בְּאִמּוּנָתוֹ יַחִיָּה

The righteous shall live by faith in God...

יַחִיָּה	בְּאִמּוּנָתוֹ	וְצַדִּיק	בּוֹ	נַפְשׁוֹ	לֹא־יִשְׁרָה	עֹפֵלָה	הִנֵּה
yee-che-yeh'	be'e'-moo'-nah'-toh'	ve'-tza'-deek'	boh'	naf'-shoh'	loh'-yah'-she-rah	oo'-pe'-lah	hee'-nei'
הִנֵּה - v "to live, revive" qal impf 3ms □□□'	בְּ - pfx; "in, by" אִמּוּנָה - n fs "faith, trust, steadfastness" יְ - 3ms sfx fr> אָמַן - "confirm"	וְ - "and, but, so" צַדִּיק - adj "righteous, just, pious" fr> צָדַק	בְּ -pfx "in, by" יְ - 3ms sfx	נַפְשׁ - n "soul" ms cstr יְ - 3ms fr> נָפַשׁ "breathe"	לֹא - adv "no" יִשְׁרָה - v "make straight, level, upright" qal perf 3fs הִיָּשְׁרָה	עֹפֵלָה - v "to swell, puff, swell" pual prf 3fs (passive) הִפְּעֵלָה	הִנֵּה - interj "behold look at! lo!"
[he] will live	by his faith [in God]	but the righteous	in him	his soul	[it is] not upright	it is puffed up	lo / behold

הִנֵּה עֹפֵלָה לֹא־יִשְׁרָה נַפְשׁוֹ בּוֹ וְצַדִּיק בְּאִמּוּנָתוֹ יַחִיָּה

"Behold, the soul that is puffed up is not upright within him,
but the righteous one shall live by his faith [in God]." (Hab. 2:4)

ἐὰν ὑποστείληται οὐκ εὐδοκεῖ ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἐν αὐτῷ
ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεώς μου ζήσεται (LXX)

Sefer Chavakuk:

הִנֵּה עֹפֵלָה לֹא־יִשְׁרָה בּוֹ
וְצַדִּיק בְּאִמּוּנָתוֹ יַחִיָּה

For audio, see the Hebrew for Christians website.