

Introduction

Part 3

The Significance of Not Believing Moses

These are very important questions in regards to our faith, “*What is the significance of believing in Moshe?*” “*Why is it so important for us to study/apply the Torah to our lives?*” and “*Why did God choose Moshe as a redeemer?*” These things sit at the root of the doctrinal and theological problems that we see going on in the Christian Church today! (i.e. New Apostolic Reformation (NAR), Hyper-grace, Word of Faith movement / prosperity gospel, etc.) We do not know too much about Moshe’s early life outside of what we read in the Torah. What we do know is Moshe was hidden away as a child, Pharaoh’s daughter drew him out of the Nile River to be her own, and he was raised in Pharaoh’s palace. He knew who he was, a child of the Hebrew people, and the life of royalty that he was raised in he had rejected! He stood up for what he believed in, illustrated by killing an Egyptian which led to his fleeing from Egypt to Midian. All of these things do not explain to us however exactly what the Lord God saw in Moshe that caused Him to choose him as a redeemer for His people. Jewish tradition according to *Midrash Rabbah Shemot / Exodus 2:2* sheds some light on this question.

Midrash Rabbah Shemot / Exodus 2:2

Our teachers have said: Once, while Moses our Teacher was tending [his father-in-law] Yitro's sheep, one of the sheep ran away. Moses ran after it until it reached a small, shaded place. There, the lamb came across a pool and began to drink. As Moses approached the lamb, he said, "I did not know you ran away because you were thirsty. You are so exhausted!" He then put the lamb on his shoulders and carried him back. The Holy One said, "Since you tend the sheep of human beings with such overwhelming love - by your life, I swear you shall be the shepherd of My sheep, Israel."

The Sages give a story in Midrashic form that describes after having killed the Egyptian, he fled to Midian and became a Shepherd. One day while grazing the flock, one little lamb had run away and so Moshe chased after the lamb, and having found the lamb, he also found himself at Horeb, the Mountain of God. When he found the lamb, it was drinking furiously at a brook because of his thirst. Moshe observed the lamb's behavior and stated "*had I known that you were so thirsty, I would have carried you to the water on my back!*" The Lord God Almighty having observed Moshe's behavior and response, God said that Moshe is worthy of being the leader (shepherd) of My people Israel. The outstanding quality of Moshe that caused him to stand out before God to become the redeemer of Israel was in Moshe's willingness to go out of his way to help another. It was his willingness to bear the burden of others. The great love, kindness, and mercy that Moshe had the Lord God knew these were the qualities of a leader.

This Midrashic story illustrates for us the high regard the Lord God has for mercy and kindness in our lives. These are the attributes that Yeshua demonstrated for us according to the example given us by Moshe. It is a significant observation while studying the scriptures how often the narratives in the Scriptures revolve around the Mountain of God narratives. For example, the Apostle Paul used Midrash often in his writings to the churches and he wrote commentary on the events surrounding the climax of the Sinai experience. Many

such references are to Paul's use of the miracles we read in the Torah, such as how Paul argued that the veil worn over Moshe's face concealed the "goal/end of the Torah" as to pointing / directing us to the Mashiach of God. Paul taught how faith leads to righteousness, and not the other way around (i.e. righteousness works of the law do not necessarily lead to faith). Eternal life comes by faith, and this is found in His redeemer Yeshua. Studying the Torah is foundational to our understanding Paul and his letters. In Paul's letter to the Corinthians, this becomes apparent.

In the narrative found in 2 Corinthians, Paul begins with the Torah portion Ki Tisa. This Torah portion relates to faith and faithfulness and the giving of the Torah at Sinai. This Torah portion describes the thing the Law cannot do for the people, the intercessor, and the mercy / grace of God towards His people. We are told in the Torah narrative that God had given Moshe all of the instructions on building the tabernacle, and the stone tablets which were written by the finger of God. (*Shemot / Exodus 31:18*) At this point Moshe descends the mountain. Just prior to this, the people were waiting for Moshe to return from the mountain, and because Moshe had been on the mountain for 40 days, the people become discontented. The people complained to Aaron and the people said to Aaron "Get up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moshe, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." (*Shemot / Exodus 32:1-2*) Then we read about the sin of the golden calf (Chet Ha'egel, 32:1-6). The people attempted to turn to other gods, to create a false religion, rather than wait upon God and His redeemer. While all of these things were happening at the foot of the mountain, the Lord God Almighty informed Moshe of the people and their behavior, and then had determined in His mind to destroy the people. It is at this point we see the first revelation of God's plan for salvation. Moshe appealed to the mercy / grace of God first and foremost (*Shemot / Exodus 32:11*) and then he appealed to God's reputation before the nations (*Shemot / Exodus 32:12*) and as a last resort, Moshe appealed to the promises God had made to their fathers (the patriarchs, *Shemot / Exodus 32:13*). Following Moshe having stood as an intercessor between the people and the Lord, we are told that the Lord God repented, meaning that He turned away from His plan

to utterly destroy Israel. (*Shemot / Exodus 32:14*) Moshe then descended the mountain with the tablets in hand, and when he saw what the people were doing, the construction of the golden calf, the people dancing and behaving the way they were sinning before God, Moshe threw down the tablets breaking them. The rabbis say it was at this point Midrashically the glory had departed from Israel. Moshe took the idol, ground it up into a fine dust, cast it over water and caused the people to drink. (*Shemot / Exodus 32:20*) He confronted his brother Aaron for this great sin, and then Moshe drew all of those people who were faithful to the Lord to himself. Following these events, Moshe ascended the mountain of the Lord for the purpose of interceding on behalf of the people. On the mountain Moshe confessed the sins of the people on their behalf, and even offered himself on their behalf stating “*if you will not forgive their sin, blot me out of the book that you have written.*” (*Shemot / Exodus 32:32*) The Lord God replied saying all who sin against Him would be blotted out of His book, and so He sent a plague against the people. During this process of Moshe seeking forgiveness before God on behalf of the people, the word grace (חן) occurs no less than six times. Moshe’s appeal to the Lord’s mercy / grace was followed by his request for the glory of God to be revealed to him. (See *Shemot / Exodus 33:18*) The Lord God agreed to reveal His glory to Moshe, and so we are told how that happened according to *Shemot / Exodus 34*. The Torah narrative then continues, Moshe carved out two new tablets, and God wrote His commands upon them. Then Moshe descended again to the people. But after having seen the glory of God, Moshe’s face radiated the glory of God after having stood in His presence. Because the people would stare, Moshe placed a veil over his face until the glory of God had faded. Moshe would remove the veil before speaking to the people and/or reading the commandments of the Lord to the people. (*Shemot / Exodus 34:35*) According to Midrashic tradition, the veil was worn for the sake of Moshe’s humility as Moshe was described as the humblest man alive. (*Bamidbar / Numbers 12:3*) It is at this point in the Torah narrative that Paul makes His commentary on the Torah to the Corinthians in *2 Corinthians 3*.

Paul’s use of the Torah narratives in his letters speaks to the continuity and importance of the Torah for God’s people for instruction,

doctrine, and learning. (2 Timothy 3:16) Paul references the prophets while speaking to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 3:3:

Jeremiah 31:31-34

31:31 'Behold, days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, 31:32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,' declares the Lord. 31:33 'But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,' declares the Lord, 'I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 31:34 'They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,' declares the Lord, 'for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.' (NASB)

Paul refers to the great promise of the New Covenant that was spoken of by Jeremiah. The idea of the Spirit of God writing upon the tablets of men's hearts speaks to what Jeremiah said, and to what Ezekiel said, "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 judgments." (See Ezekiel 36:26-27 כו וְנָתַתִּי לָכֶם לֵב חָדָשׁ וְרוּחַ חַדְשָׁה אֶתֶן בְּקַרְבְּכֶם וְהִסְרֹתִי אֶת-לֵב הָאֶבֶן מִבְּשָׂרְכֶם וְנָתַתִּי לָכֶם לֵב בָּשָׂר: כז וְאֶת-רוּחִי אֶתֶן בְּקַרְבְּכֶם וְעָשִׂיתִי אֵת אֲשֶׁר-בְּחַקֵּי תַלְכוּ וּמִשְׁפָּטֵי תִשְׁמְרוּ וְעָשִׂיתֶם: תָּם and 11:19-20) The Lord God of Israel doing these things through His Spirit by our faith in Yeshua was what gave Paul the confidence before the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:4). It was the power of God that is given to His people that gave Paul the ability to overcome sin in his life. This is what he wrote in 2 Corinthians 3:5-6 stating "not by the

letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”

The superiority of the New Covenant that is in Christ is in the giving of the Holy Spirit of God to each and every one of us who have faith in Yeshua as the Messiah of God. How the Spirit of God empowers us, changes us from the inside out, enables us to overcome sin, which means we are given the ability to obey God’s commands! It is the Lord who is doing this! This is set up such that “*in all things, to God be the glory*” as opposed to our ability to overcome on our own. This is how Paul argued the superiority of the New Covenant by contrasting it with the Old Covenant that was written upon stone at Sinai. Paul explained these things in the context of the Torah saying that Israel could not look upon the face of Moshe due to the glory of God that had shown forth. He says that this covenant was “*the ministry of death*” (ἡ διακονία τοῦ θανάτου) which is the description of man’s attempt to be obedient to the Torah on his own (i.e. without the indwelling Spirit of God, see *2 Corinthians 3:7 and Romans 10:4*). The way Paul describes these things is consistent with the Torah, and how one must submit his or her life and all that he or she is unto the Lord, asking the God of Israel into one’s heart, and believing in His Messiah!

The greater glory of the New Covenant is in the Torah fulfillment of God dwelling in our midst by His Spirit in our hearts. So Paul speaks of “*the ministry of condemnation*” and the “*ministry of the Spirit*” in the sense that the first is by man’s own attempt to keep Torah, and the latter is by God Himself entering into our lives and doing it for us! The evidence for the validity of the Torah today is found in the understanding that sin is still sin which is defined by disobedience to God’s commands. Paul’s letters speak at length to the importance of believing upon the Messiah and by doing so, receiving the Holy Spirit of God who empowers us to overcome sin in our lives. The overcoming is a work of God and is not something to be credited to ourselves! This is why Paul speaks of “*the glory of the Old Covenant is as it had no glory when compared to the unsurpassed glory of the New Covenant.*” (*2 Corinthians 3:10*) Because God Himself is entering into the lives of His people and empowering us to overcome the world! Paul then contrasts this boldness that He has because of the indwelling Spirit because of his faith in Yeshua, to the humbleness of

Moshe in covering his face (concealing his face). Moshe speaks Mi-drashically in the sense that the glory in Moshe's face had faded over time. Jewish tradition however states that Moshe had the glory shining from his face until the day of his death. Paul argued the temporary nature of the Old Covenant in the sense that the glory had been fading, and contrasted that to the New Covenant and the power that we are given from above to live our lives in such a way as to bring glory to God! Because of the hardness of men's hearts, Paul then speaks to one's mind becoming hardened or turned to stone in relation to understanding these truths and the importance of having faith in Yeshua the Messiah in the New Covenant. What Paul is speaking of is not the doing away with the Torah. He is speaking of God literally coming down from heaven in the form of the Holy Spirit, entering into our lives, empowering us such that we are able to live our lives for Him, for His glory, overcoming sin and death! This is why Paul wrote that Yeshua is the "end" (τέλος, telos, the end goal) of the Torah. (*Romans 10:4*) When man tries to keep the Torah commands on his own, he fails, and he realizes the need for a savior, the need for God in heaven, specifically for His mercy and grace! When we study the Torah along side of Paul's writings, it becomes apparent very quickly the errors in theology and doctrine that teach the Law is passed away! Paul wrote that when a person turns to the Lord, to Yeshua, the veil is taken away. (*2 Corinthians 3:16*) This means that there was something hidden in the Torah that is brought to light in the Messiah! The hidden thing is related to our relationship with God and the intimacy that we have by the indwelling of His Spirit.

The New Covenant life is marked by the power of God in the lives of His people! The Spirit of God imparts a new nature within us that enables us to overcome sin and death "by the Spirit of life in Yeshua the Messiah." (see *Romans 8:2-4*) These things reveal to us the significance of believing in the Moshe, and how this helps us to believe in Yeshua as the Messiah sent of God! These things speak to how the Lord makes us new within, a new creation as Paul wrote, which removes from us the principle of self justification that comes by personal effort. (see *2 Corinthians 5:17, Titus 3:5-6*) Notice something here, the Torah prescribes death as the penalty for sin (*Romans 5:12-21*). The Torah states "cursed be anyone who does not

confirm the words of this law by doing them” (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 27:26*), it identifies sin by defining it (*Romans 3:20, 7:7*), and the law is powerless to save. (*Romans 7:10, 8:1-11*). Yet, the Lord God by His Spirit enters into our lives empowering us to overcome sin! This is the freedom spoken of that comes by the Spirit of God. (*2 Corinthians 3:17*) In addition to this, the Spirit of God gives us freedom to access the presence of God (see *Romans 5:2*).

Throughout Paul’s writings we read how he contrasts the Torah to the gospel. These things are inherently Jewish from the sense of God’s mercy for His people through his indwelling Spirit. Remember also that the word “*Torah*” is a functional word that speaks of the power of God, the covenant, and His grace and mercy. We don’t hear that very often at the pulpit! Much of the moral, ethical, and radical faith truths are embedded in the words of Moshe and are Midrashically explained in the NT. The differences are not about the end or passing away of the Torah. These things are explained in a way which shows how God works in our lives to keep His Torah (i.e. to not sin). The relationship that we have in the Messiah establishes and solidifies our relationship with God. This New Covenant allows us access to the Presence of God. Moshe himself both demonstrated and taught the grace of God as it is contained in the gospel message. Yeshua and the disciples in the NT taught Torah, and it is a mistake to identify the Torah only with Moshe, the reason being, the Torah predates Moshe, going back to the creation, and post dates Moshe, going on to the end of time! (i.e. *Isaiah 40:8*) We live empowered by Yeshua the Messiah by faith, hope, love, and peace! The inner meaning of the Torah was identified by both Moshe, and expounded upon in the writings of the New Covenant. Yeshua both fulfilled Torah and brought it to each and every one of us through the power of the Spirit of God! Without the power of the Holy Spirit of God, we are unable to live free from sin, which is the definition of living in life verses death. When we follow after the Messiah, we follow in the way of the Lord God of Israel, we are following in the path of peace and truth, and it is the Lord God Almighty who is there every step of the way helping us, for His Glory!