

Notes: February 27 2016

Start: 10 AM

**Order of service:**

1. Meet and Greet
2. Introduction (if new people)
3. Ma Tovv
4. Open in Prayer for service
5. Liturgy – Sh'ma +
6. Announcements
7. Praise and Worship Songs
8. Message
9. Aaronic Blessing
10. Kiddush
11. Oneg

Children's Blessing:

Transliteration: *Ye'simcha Elohim ke-Ephraim ve hee-Menashe*

English: *May God make you like Ephraim and Menashe*

Transliteration: *Ye'simech Elohim ke-Sarah, Rivka, Rachel ve-Leah.*

English: *May God make you like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah.*

Introduction: Challenging Scriptures Continued - 2 Corinthians 3:6

In past sermons I have addressed what I call challenging Scriptures, that when read outside of the Jewish mindset from which they were penned and ultimately inspired by the one who created all, are taught in a manner that is contrary to what was written.

In the past, whether during Bible study on Tuesday evenings on as part of my Shabbat message we have looked at

Romans 5:12-21

Galatians 3:28-29

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

1 Corinthians 15:51-56

Romans 8:2

To name a few.

Unfortunately there are many more passages that believers have been taught to believe one way, while the text really conveys something different.

As I promised last week we will look at a verse that has been misunderstood and misapplied by many people for many, many years.

**2Co 3:6** Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. (KJV)

A verse that is used to condemn Torah while further justifying that the Law of Messiah is different, in essence

corroborating a passage such as Romans 6:14:

**Rom 6:14** For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. (KJV)

Yet in the past I have shared with you that this verse is not talking about Torah but rather the traditional observances that lead to legalism, which perverts the foundational meaning of Torah, for which a better understanding of this verse is...

**Rom 6:14** For sin will not have authority over you; because you are not under legalism but under grace.

If Sha'ul were truly taking a negative position on Torah, then why would he have written just a few verses later, to a primarily Jewish audience, yet was likely read by non-Jews as well...

**Rom 7:12** So the Torah is holy; that is, the commandment is holy, just and good.

When we read Sha'ul's letters we must first remember that they are written to a specific community and addressing specific issues within that community. Yet, the foundation of what he is writing, that is the foundation of his beliefs are strikingly consistent.

His views don't change because of the community he is writing to, so why do people isolate verses that he has written without looking at the body of what he has written, in order to establish a foundational perspective of what Sha'ul actually believes?

Isolationism as a nation is not a good thing when you are dealing with a globally changing world that is only getting smaller and therefore greatly impacts this nation.

Likewise, isolating Scripture is not good either, because it causes misunderstanding and misapplication that leads to perceived contradiction.

In the past I have told you the problem isn't the Scriptures it is the doctrines and theology. In essence "how Scripture is understood and applied"

So, I say all this to get us to 2 Corinthians 3:6:

Sterns translates this verse...

**2Co 3:6** He has even made us competent to be workers serving a New Covenant, the essence of which is not a written text but the Spirit. For the written text brings death, but the Spirit gives life.

Before we look further at this verse, let's look at some additional context in Sha'ul's letter prior to his penning this verse:

First, Sha'ul is informing his readership in Corinth, of their challenges:

**2Co 1:8** For, brothers, we want you to know about the trials we have undergone in the province of Asia. The burden laid on us was so far beyond what we could bear that we even despaired of living through it.

That what they are about to read is in essence straight forward...

**2Co 1:13** There are no hidden meanings in our letters other than what you can read and understand; and my hope is that you will understand fully,

**2Co 1:14** as indeed you have already understood us in part; so that on the Day of our Lord Yeshua you can be as proud of us as we are of you.

**2Co 1:15** So sure was I of this that I had planned to come and see you, so that you might have the benefit of a second visit.

Wanting to visit them, but ultimately unable to do so, Sha'ul conveys his thoughts to them in this letter.

Likely in response to Sha'ul's first letter to the Corinthians...

**2Co 1:23** I call God to witness — he knows what my life is like — that the reason I held back from coming to Corinth was out of consideration for you!

**2Co 1:24** We are not trying to dictate how you must live out your trust in the Messiah, for in your trust you are standing firm. Rather, we are working with you for your own happiness.

If you remember, the first letter was harsh and offered a great deal of correction. Sha'ul is not softening his position, but is trying to encourage this congregation that their intent is not to lord over them, but rather encourage growth.

The intent of Sha'ul's letter...

**2Co 2:17** For we are not like a lot of folks who go about huckstering God's message for a fee; on the contrary, we speak out of a sincere heart, as people sent by God, standing in God's presence, living in union with the Messiah.

Which leads us in to chapter 3 and the verses leading up to verse 6:

**2Co 3:1** Are we starting to recommend ourselves again? Or do we, like some, need letters of recommendation either to you or from you?

**2Co 3:2** You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone.

**2Co 3:3** You make it clear that you are a letter from the Messiah placed in our care, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on stone tablets but on human hearts.

**2Co 3:4** Such is the confidence we have through the Messiah toward God.

**2Co 3:5** It is not that we are competent in ourselves to count anything as having come from us; on the contrary, our competence is from God.

What is Sha'ul doing in verse 3?

He actually tells us in verse 6:

**2Co 3:6** He has even made us competent to be workers serving a New Covenant, the essence of which is not a written text but the Spirit. For the written text brings death, but the Spirit gives life.

When looking at this verse, do people look at verse 3 for additional understanding, or do they isolate this verse?

More times than not, Scripture tends to be viewed in a vacuum, isolated from the verses that apply context.

On our study in Romans, we just finished the first half of Romans 8 and addressed the issue of Romans 8:2:

**Rom 8:2** Why? Because the Torah of the Spirit, which produces this life in union with Messiah Yeshua, has set me free from the "Torah" of sin and death.

And how this verse is typically understood...

Yeshua gave a good *Torah* of the Spirit which produces life, in contrast with the bad Mosaic Law that produces only sin and death.

This I would consider to be the incorrect answer when understanding this verse...

Such an interpretation not only contradicts Sha'ul's arguments in chapters 3 and 7, but is implicitly antisemitic as well.

The right answer is that the *Torah* of the Spirit is the Mosaic Law properly apprehended by the power of the Ruach ha Kodesh in believers, what Sha'ul elsewhere calls "the *Torah*'s true meaning, which the Messiah upholds" and (is usually rendered, "the law of Christ," [Gal 6:2](#)).

The second "*torah*" is written in lower-case and put in quotation marks, because it is "sin's '*torah*' " ([Rom 7:21-23](#)), in other words, not a God-given *Torah* at all but an anti-*Torah*. More specifically, it is the Mosaic Law improperly understood and perverted by our old, sinful nature into a legalistic system of earning God's approval by our own works which Sha'ul addressed in Romans 3.

I am not saying that those who take such a position are anti-semitic, but rather the origins of this thinking stems from anti-semitic views, dating back centuries.

In essence, the view has moved forward in time, yet what inspired that view may not have. People don't have to be blatantly anti-semitic to have this view, but their impression is in essence influenced by what they have been taught.

What Sha'ul is doing in Romans is rather complex. He is building upon a previous thought. Romans 8:2 in essence is a continued thought from Romans 7:25:

**Rom 7:25** Thanks be to God [*he will!*] — through Yeshua the Messiah, our Lord! To sum up: with my mind, I am a slave of God's Torah; but with my old nature, I am a slave of sin's "Torah."

Wherein in chapter 8, Sha'ul goes into what was missing from Torah...

**Rom 8:3** For what the Torah could not do by itself, because it lacked the power to make the old nature cooperate, God did by sending his own Son as a human being with a nature like our own sinful one [*but without sin*]. God did this in order to deal with sin, and in so doing he executed the punishment against sin in human nature,

**Rom 8:4** so that the just requirement of the Torah might be fulfilled in us who do not run our lives according to what our old nature wants but according to what the Spirit wants.

That power being the Ruach ha Kodesh residing in us.

That the struggle is between the old nature and the new nature:

**Rom 8:7** For the mind controlled by the old nature is hostile to God, because it does not submit itself to God's Torah — indeed, it cannot.

**Rom 8:8** Thus, those who identify with their old nature cannot please God.

**Rom 8:9** But you, you do not identify with your old nature but with the Spirit — provided the Spirit of God is living inside you, for anyone who doesn't have the Spirit of the Messiah doesn't belong to him.

And is ultimately overcome through the power of the Ruach ha Kodesh.

Now, getting back to 2 Corinthians 3:6...

**2Co 3:6** He has even made us competent to be workers serving a New Covenant, the essence of which is not a written text but the Spirit. For the written text brings death, but the Spirit gives life.

Sha'ul in this verse is actually doing something rather subtle. In referencing the New Covenant, provides us with greater understanding. Yet, most believers don't pay attention to this subtle Jewish tactic.

Do you remember when I have told you that if part of a verse is quoted, what are you supposed to do?

You are supposed to go to the verse referenced and not just look at that verse but the entire passage, in context.

Recently I conveyed this in a sermon – The Gospel of Psalm 22.

Yeshua conveys the beginning of Psalm 22 while on the execution-stake...

**Psa 22:1** *[For the leader. Set to "Sunrise." A psalm of David:]* My God! My God! Why have you abandoned me? Why so far from helping me, so far from my anguished cries?

If you were to go to Psalm 22 and read the entire passage as Yeshua was conveying to those who were there and would listen, they would have received insight of what would further happen upon His death. He provided a means of comfort for them, while experiencing great anguish.

The same can be done with 2 Corinthians 3:6...

Sha'ul references the New Covenant in this verse.

Where is the New Covenant mentioned in Scripture?

**Jer 31:31 (31:30)** "Here, the days are coming," says Adonai, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Isra'el and with the house of Y'hudah.

**Jer 31:32 (31:31)** It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers on the day I took them by their hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt; because they, for their part, violated my covenant, even though I, for my part, was a husband to them," says Adonai.

**Jer 31:33 (31:32)** "For this is the covenant I will make with the house of Isra'el after those days," says Adonai: "I will put my Torah within them and write it on their hearts; I will be their God, and they will be my people.

**Jer 31:34 (31:33)** No longer will any of them teach his fellow community member or his brother, 'Know Adonai'; for all will know me, from the least of them to the greatest; because I will forgive their wickednesses and remember their sins no more."

What about Ezekiel 36...

**Eze 36:24** For I will take you from among the nations, gather you from all the countries, and return you to your own soil.

**Eze 36:25** Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your uncleanness and from all your idols.

**Eze 36:26** I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit inside you; I will take the stony heart out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

**Eze 36:27** I will put my Spirit inside you and cause you to live by my laws, respect my rulings and obey them.

Sha'ul wasn't conveying a negative view towards Torah, but was emphasizing the power given to anyone who believes that Yeshua is Messiah.

The challenges that Sha'ul addressed in his first letter, he is now conveying a strong and encouraging message that is based on the power of this New Covenant.

He goes on to write...

[2Co 3:7](#) Now if that which worked death, by means of a written text engraved on stone tablets, came with glory — such glory that the people of Isra'el could not stand to look at Moshe's face because of its brightness, even though that brightness was already fading away —

[2Co 3:8](#) won't the working of the Spirit be accompanied by even greater glory?

[2Co 3:9](#) For if there was glory in what worked to declare people guilty, how much more must the glory abound in what works to declare people innocent!

[2Co 3:10](#) In fact, by comparison with this greater glory, what was made glorious before has no glory now.

[2Co 3:11](#) For if there was glory in what faded away, how much more glory must there be in what lasts.

[2Co 3:12](#) Therefore, with a hope like this, we are very open —

[2Co 3:13](#) unlike Moshe, who put a veil over his face, so that the people of Isra'el would not see the fading brightness come to an end.

Sha'ul talks only about a **written text** which was **engraved on stone tablets**, which **worked death**, which **worked to declare people guilty**, and which came with temporary **brightness** that was **already fading away**.

It is with this **written text** on stone tablets that he contrasts to the **New Covenant**, which is accompanied by the **Spirit**, who writes **on human hearts**, who **gives life**, who **works to declare people innocent**, and who **lasts**.

He makes his point with a *kal v'chomer* argument ([Mat 6:30](#)), stated in three different ways ([2Co 3:7-8](#), [2Co 3:9](#), [2Co 3:11](#); compare [Joh 1:17](#) and [Rom 7:6](#)).

But there is more to the *Torah* than a written text, so that what Sha'ul says here about a written text does not necessarily apply to all that the *Torah* is. (See paragraph below on the New Covenant.)

Nevertheless, what Sha'ul does say is startling enough. How is it that **the written text** of the *Torah* **brings death**? Since Sha'ul himself calls the *Torah* "holy" ([Rom 7:12](#)), how can he say that it kills? He does not answer this question in his letters to the Corinthians but assumes they are already knowledgeable on the subject, both in the present chapter and at [1Co 9:19-23](#), [1Co 15:56](#). But elsewhere he explains that the *Torah* can be said to bring death for at least four reasons:

(1) It prescribes death as the penalty for sin ([Rom 5:12-21](#)).

(2) In defining transgression it increases sin ([Gal 3:21-31](#)), which leads to death.

(3) It provides an opportunity for sinful people to pervert God's holy *Torah* into legalism, that is, a dead system of rules intended to earn God's favor even when followed without trusting God ([Rom 3:19-31](#) [Rom 7:1-25](#) [Rom. 9:30-10:10](#) ; see also [1Co 9:19-23](#)).

(4) It does not have in itself (in its **written text engraved on stone tablets**, [2Co 3:7](#)) the life-giving power of the Spirit which alone can make people righteous ([Rom 8:1-11](#), [Act 13:38-39](#)).

Just how important is it to look at all of Sha'ul's writings in order to fully understand what he is conveying.

One must understand the shock a Jew experiences in hearing the *Torah* called an instrument of death, since in Jewish understanding the *Torah* ministers not death but life. Yeshua was well aware of Jewish regard for the *Torah* as an instrument of life ([Joh 5:39](#)). In the Midrash Rabbah Rabbi L'vi is cited as saying,

"God sat on high, engraving for them tablets which would give them life." (Exodus Rabbah 41:1)

The prayer recited every time the *Torah* scroll is returned to the ark after being read in the synagogue quotes [Pro 3:18](#) :

"It is a tree of life to those who take hold of it."

Proverbs is speaking about wisdom; but since the *Torah* contains God's wisdom, the *Siddur* applies those words to the *Torah* itself.

It is the Ruach ha Kodesh that brings forth life.

He breathed life into us – Genesis 1:2 and He brings forth life in His Word as conveyed by Sha'ul.

So when people try to convey to you that Torah is not relevant...

take them to this verse – 2 Corinthians 3:6 and ask them.

“Where is the New Covenant mentioned elsewhere?”

(You will likely get an answer of Hebrews 8, for which you can ask where else is it quoted?)

Hopefully leading them to Jeremiah 31, by which you can ask them:

“Which Torah (law) is written upon your heart, as promised by the New Covenant, that is made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, a divided Kingdom that sinned against God but will be restored and reunited as one Kingdom under this New Covenant for which you have been grafted into and are therefore no longer foreigners and aliens of God?”

See what they say about that.