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Today's Messianic Movement

2:14 to 4:6



As J. K. McKee relates in his commentary on **Second Corinthians**, there are significant statements appearing in **Second Corinthians Chapter 3**, which bear understandable importance for today's Messianic movement, as they involve Jewish evangelism and common Jewish resistance to the Good News of **Yeshua Messiah**. **Second Corinthians 3:14** depicts the common predicament of Jewish people often being closed to the Gospel: **Their minds were made stonelike; for to this day the same veil remains over them when they read the Old Covenant; it has not been unveiled, because only by the Messiah is the veil taken away.** For the apostle **Paul** writing in the First Century, much of this was just the result of a stubbornness and close-mindedness which needed to be overcome. But for many today, both Gentiles and Messianic Jews, this close-minded obstinance has been compounded by a complicated history of relations between the Jewish Synagogue and a largely Gentile Christian Church that has often wanted little or nothing to do with its faith heritage and connections with Judaism. The Messianic community has emerged to resolve some of these problems.

While there are deep emotions and experiences which can be invoked, when today's Messianic people approach **Second Corinthians Chapter 3** - there are also significant

theological discussions and debates that one will encounter, which many of today's Messianic people, unfortunately, do not tend to handle very well. Many Christian readers of **Second Corinthians Chapter 3** draw the conclusion that **Paul** teaches that the Old Covenant - widely classified to be **the Torah** - was a veil of condemnation and death that was abolished by the work of **Jesus Christ**. Consequently, any one purporting to be a believer in **Jesus** should not even consider following **its** commandments and instructions. However, when one pays close attention to the statements made within the text of **Second Corinthians Chapter 3**, a much different picture is presented than the one of the "Old Covenant law" needing to be superseded by "New Covenant grace."

Even though it is common for one to hear a great deal of talk about the differences between the New Covenant and the Old Covenant, too frequently what "the Old Covenant" specifically composes or represents falls short of its real meaning. The term "ancient covenant" (Greek: *tes palaias diathekes*) only appears once in the entire Bible, in **Second Corinthians 3:14**. Most people who see **Paul's** statement there, simply assume that "the reading of the ancient covenant" means "reading the Old Testament," either **the TaNaKh** or perhaps just **the Torah of Moses**. Some might think that only those people who read **these Scriptures** cannot see **the Messiah** whose life is recorded in the New Covenant. But we need to remember that when Paul made this statement there was no "New Covenant" written (see the Commentary on **Galatians**, to see [link click Ae - Dates of Books in the B'rit Chadashah](#)).

While today's Messianic Gentiles and Messianic Jews often use terms like Old and New Testament in a haphazard fashion because these are familiar terms used by scholars and laypersons alike. However, neither the TaNaKh nor the B'rit Chadashah make up a "covenant," but are simply the inspired words of **God** delivered through **His** human vessels. Not only that, it cannot be overlooked that the terminology "ancient, or old covenant" is not used again until the late Second Century AD, in the writing of Melito of Sardis, a gap of around 140 years. Could it be that **Paul** had used "ancient covenant" to mean something a little different than merely what was written in the TaNaKh? We have to make a strong effort to understand what the "ancient covenant" is, as specifically defined by **Paul**. It is true that many contemporary non-believing Jews have hardened **hearts** and minds when they read the "ancient covenant," meaning many contemporary non-believing Jews have some kind of inability to see **the Messiah**. Is "the Old Covenant" really the Torah? Or, in contrast to "the New Covenant" of permanent forgiveness and reconciliation, is "the Old Covenant" **the ministry of death and condemnation**?

Everyone who has come to faith in **Yeshua Messiah**, being cleansed of his or her sins and

spiritually regenerated, has tasted of the New Covenant. This is a reality after the cross and is accessible to all those who cry out to **the Lord**. Indeed, it involves a permanent forgiveness and cleansing from sins and a supernatural writing of **God's Torah** on **the hearts** of those who seek **Him**. Therefore, **the Torah** cannot be divorced from the B'rit Chadashah believer. The expressed intention of the New Covenant as prophesied and anticipated in the TaNaKh (see the commentary on [Jeremiah Eo - I Will Make a New Covenant with the People of Isra'el](#)) is that **the Lord** will **put His Torah in their minds and write it on their hearts (Hebrews 8:10b)**, speaking of inscribing **His Teaching onto the hearts** of the saved **by the power of the Ruach** so that they would have the ability to obey and keep it! This in no way abolishes **the Torah**, but reemphasizes its importance for those who intend to be holy.

Therefore, in this commentary, I take the position that what **Paul** is describing from **2:14** to **4:6** is a comparison between the lives of **the unredeemed** and the lives of **the redeemed**. **The ancient text (3:14)** or **the written text (3:7)** depicts **the ministry of death and condemnation**. This is how **the Torah** functions for those who are *not* in **Messiah**, who have a **veil** lying over their **hearts**, and who fail to have **God's Spirit** write **His Instruction** on their **hearts**. **The ministry of the Spirit and righteousness** is how **the Torah** functions for those who are in **Messiah**, who have had the veil over their hearts removed, and who live according to the freedom from **condemnation (Romans 8:1)** that they have in **Him**. Within **Paul's** discussion in Second Corinthians, he will compare and contrast what he labels as **the ministry of death (3:7)** or **condemnation (3:9a)**, with **the ministry of the Spirit (3:8)** or **righteousness (3:9b)**. **Those who are not spiritually regenerated and are condemned as sinners, are subject to the effects of the former; while born again believers, who have recognized Yeshua as the Messiah of Isra'el, are the obvious beneficiaries of the latter.**

Much of **the Torah's Instruction** undeniably regards what will happen to people who violate the mitzvot of **ADONAI** (see the commentary on [Romans Bm - The Consequences of Adam](#)). For many people who read **the Torah**, and realize that they stand as condemned sinners before a **holy** and **righteous God**, this causes them to turn toward **Him**, utterly broken because of their human failures, and claim the covering of **Yeshua Messiah** so that they can be reconciled and redeemed (see the commentary on [Romans Ax - The Universal Solution: Justification](#)). **The veil**, that is to be removed, is the barrier that exists between an unredeemed sinner and a **Perfect God**. Unfortunately for many people, be it "the religious Jew" (see the commentary on [Romans At - The Religious Jew](#)), or "the good person" (see the commentary on [Romans Ao - The Good Person](#)), they can be so stubborn that they remain unconvinced of their need for **Yeshua Messiah** in their lives, so that **the**



ministry of death and **condemnation** can be nullified.⁸⁶