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A Glory Transformed
3: 6b-11

A glory transformed DIG: What does Paul mean when he says, "the text brings death, but the Spirit gives life?" How does the written text bring death? In what four ways is the Torah an instrument of death? What distinction is being made here between the Torah and the Spirit? Is the Torah itself fading away and gone? How was its glory transformed?

REFLECT: Where does Paul say we can find the power to live as ADONAI expects? What have you been taught concerning the Torah? Is it "old and obsolete?" Only for Jews? Confusing? When was the last time your pastor taught through a book of the Torah? In what sense is the Torah still relevant? How is it a blueprint for living in your life?

The distinction Paul is making is between the Torah without the Spirit, and the Torah with the Spirit.

In these verses **Paul** is comparing and contrasting **the Torah**, **which is a ministry of death (3:7)** and **declared people guilty (3:9a)** to **the ministry of the Spirit (3:8), which works to declare people innocent (3:9b). He** pictures two different ministries, or modes of operation, as **they** involve **the Torah of ADONAI** in the life of an unredeemed person or a redeemed person. The Good News is to be personally received in a person's life, which will result in forgiveness. But without the indwelling of **the Spirit**, then people are subject to their **old sin nature** which results in spiritual **death** and **condemnation**.

For the written text brings death, but the Spirit gives life (3:6b). This passage is often understood to teach that **the B'rit Chadashah** is more important than **the Torah**, implicitly giving the impression that **the Torah** in particular, and the TaNaKh in general are "old" and irrelevant. However, the Greek word for "law" or "Torah" or "nomos" is not used at all here or anywhere in **Second Corinthians**; so that if one is going to make such a statement about **the Torah** on the basis of this passage, one must limit the meaning of **Torah** to the elements given in the

passage. And here **Paul** talks only about **a written text** which was **engraved on stone tablets,** a perversion of **the Torah,** or legalism, which **is a ministry of death, declared people guilty,** and came with temporary **brightness** that was **already fading away.**

To illustrate **the Torah's glory, Paul** turned to a familiar event in **Isra'el's** history – **Moses** receiving **the Torah** on Mount Sinai. **Now if** the perversion of **the Torah**, **which is a ministry of death, by means of a written text engraved on stone tablets,** following only legalism, **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 (3:7).** It is clear that **Paul** found no fault with **the Torah (Romans 7:12)**, but **he** knew from **his** own experience that without the power of **the Spirit**, **the written text of the Torah** provided no way to attain **righteousness**. The trouble lay with the **old sin nature** (see the commentary on **Romans, to see link click Cc – The Reality of the Inner Conflict**), which can turn **the Torah** into **a ministry of death.**[98]

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for being so wise and wonderful. Praise **You** that our **old sin nature** is no match for **You**. **You** are so gracious to give **Your** holy **righteousness** to those who love **You**, then they are able to enter into **Your** holy heaven because of **Your** holiness. **He made the One who knew no sin to become a sin offering on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (Second Corinthians 5:21).** I praise and thank **You** for living within me to help and strengthen me to have the power to live for **You**. **Yeshua answered and said to him: If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him (John 14:23).** What a joy it is to know that **Your Holy Rauch** lives within me and is always available to guide the situation and to show me how to respond in all situations. **You** and **Your** kingdom are a treasure – **a very valuable pearl** worth more than all else **(Matthew 13:45-46)**. In **Your** holy **Yeshua's** name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

It is this **written text** that **Paul** contrasts with **the B'rit Chadashah**, which is accompanied by **the Spirit**, who **writes on** human **hearts**. **The B'rit Chadashah** spoken of here is that of **Jeremiah** (see the commentary on **Jeremiah Eo – I Will Make a New Covenant with the People of Isra'el**), and the distinction **Paul** makes is exactly the same that **Jeremiah** makes when **he** says that **the B'rit Chadashah** would **not be like the Covenant which God made with their fathers when He took them out of Egypt, but ADONAI would put His Torah**

within them and write it on their hearts (Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 8:6-13). Therefore, **Paul** cannot be saying that **the B'rit Chadashah** is **more glorious** than **the Torah,** because **the B'rit Chadashah** *includes* **the Torah** which **God puts within them** and **writes on their hearts.** According to **Hebrews 8:6, the B'rit Chadashah itself *has been made* Torah** (Greek: *nomotheteo*, meaning *to make law*, *to ordain by law*). **Paul** speaks of the **Torah as upheld by Messiah** (literally, *the Torah of Messiah*) in **Galatians 6:2**, and makes a similar allusion in **First Corinthians 9:21**; therefore, **the Torah** is still relevant to us today because it has been **written on our hearts**. The distinction **Paul** is making is between the **Torah** without **the Spirit** and **the Torah** with **the Spirit**.

Nevertheless, what **Paul** does say is startling enough. **Now if that which is a ministry of 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 (3:7).** How is it that **the Torah is a ministry of death**? Since **Paul himself** calls **the Torah holy (Romans 7:12)**, how can **he** say that it **kills**? **He** does not answer this question here, but assumes **the Corinthians** are already knowledgeable on the subject **(First Corinthians 9:19-23** and **15:56)**. But elsewhere, **he** explains that **the Torah** can be said to be **a ministry of death** in at least four different reasons:

1. **It** demands **death** as the penalty for **sin (Romans 5:12-21)**.

2. In defining transgressions **it increases sin (Galatians 3:21-23)**, 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 faith **(Romans 3:19-31, 7:1-25, 9:30** to **10:10**).

4 **It** does not have in **itself**, by the fact that **it** is **written on stone tablets**, the life-giving power of **the Spirit** which alone can make people **righteous (Romans 8:1-11; Acts 13:38-39)**.

One must understand the shock a non-Messianic Jew must experience in hearing **the Torah** called **a ministry of death**, **since in Jewish understanding the Torah is an instrument of life. 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 synagogues all over the world quotes **Proverbs 3:18, "It is a tree of life for 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**.



Here is **Paul's** explanation of how **the Torah, which is a ministry of death,** can at the same time be **a tree of life. But the Spirit, the Ruach Ha'Kodesh, the Holy Spirit of God, who lives in believers** (see the commentary on **Romans Ch – The Indwelling of the Ruach**) **gives life (3:6b)** to sinners who are **dead in their trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1 KJV).** But for non-Messianic Jews it is critical to understand that only **the Spirit of God gives life** to **the Torah itself**, that is, to **the written text**. Or, more precisely, it is when the unredeemed are filled with **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** given by **Yeshua Messiah** that **the Torah** becomes to them **a tree of life** and not **a ministry of death**.

Won't the working of the Spirit be accompanied by even greater glory (3:8)? In these verses **Paul** defends **his** office as **an apostle**. **He** claims that as **an apostle of Messiah**, **his** ministry is **more glorious** than that of **Moshe** – and not only that, but **more glorious** than at the very moment of **Moshe's** greatest **glory**, when **his face** shone so brightly as **he** descended from Mount Sinai **(Exodus 34:29-30**; compare to **Matthew 17:2)** after seeing **God's glory (Exodus 33:18** to **34:8)**, that **he** put **a veil over his face (Exodus 34:33** and **35)**. However, if one **acknowledges** that **the B'rit Chadashah** has come, bringing with it **the Messiah Himself** and **the** very **Ruach Ha'Kodesh**, whose **glory** obviously exceeds that of **stone tablets**, then one should see that the ministry of **its**

workers has **greater glory** than that of **Moshe's** ministry.[99] Unlike **the written text** carved in letters on **stone**, which could not enable a person to fulfill **its** own demands, **the Spirit**, given according to **the B'rit Chadashah**, actually enables people to walk in the way of **God's** mitzvot.

For if there was glory in what worked to declare people guilty, how much more must the glory abound in the ministry that brings righteousness (3:9)! The Torah was never given for the purpose of salvation, for there is no salvation through works of righteousness. **The Torah** produces **condemnation** and is a mirror that reveals how dirty our faces really are. But we cannot wash our faces without the mirror. The ministry of **the B'rit Chadashah** produces **righteousness** and changes lives to **the glory of God**. Mankind's greatest need is **righteousness**, and **God's** greatest gift is **righteousness** through faith in **Yeshua Messiah**. **For if the way in which one attains righteousness is through legalism, then Messiah's death was pointless (Galatians 2:21b).** The person who tries to live only by **the written text of the Torah** will find himself feeling more and more guilty, and this can produce a feeling of hopelessness. It is when we trust in **Messiah**, and live by faith in **God's** grace, that we experience acceptance and joy.[100] **Paul's** comparison of **his** ministry with **Moses** is mainly positive. **His** argument, in essence, is that one good thing was simply eclipsed by something better.

Given the transformative power of **the working of the Spirit (3:8)** or **the works of righteousness (3:9),** which supplies permanent atonement for and permanent forgiveness from sins, it is not a surprise for a figure like **Paul** to conclude: **for even what was glorious is not glorious when compared to the glory that surpasses it (3:10 TLV).** Ultimately, in view of what **the B'rit Chadashah** provides in terms of reconciliation, and **the Spirit** writing **God's Torah** into a transformed person – there is no **glory** in seeing people **condemned** to **death** and ultimately exiled from the presence of **YHVH**, unless they are repentant.

The B'rit Chadashah, of which **Paul** was a minister, is something which has a permanence to **it**, which **the** previous **ministry of condemnation** does not have. **For if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which is eternal (3:11 BSB). The Torah** and its ministry belonged to a vanishing order that began to fade immediately after its inception, as was typified by **the Divine glory** on **the face** of **Moses** – a **glory** that began to **fade away** as soon as **he** left **the Divine Presence**. On the other hand, **the B'rit Chadashah** and its ministry will always be **glorious** because it constitutes **God's**

final word to mankind.

While it is entirely proper to acknowledge how **Yeshua's** sacrifice for sinful humans has nullified **the ministry of condemnation** . . . **He has canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross (Colossians 2:14 NLT),** inaugurating **the B'rit Chadashah** with its permanent atonement and forgiveness. But too frequently what is overlooked here is what **Paul** actually describes as being **brought to an end (ESV),** in contrast to that which is **permanent (ESV),** is **the ministry of death** or **condemnation** apart from the indwelling of **the Spirit**. The standard of **God's** holiness in **the Torah** is still with us.

To that end, it is important to recognize that **Paul** did not imply that **the Torah itself** was **fading away**. **Torah** as an expression of the will of **YHVH** for human conduct is still valid. It is our blueprint for living. It is the **written text** that **Paul** contrasts with **the B'rit Chadashah**, which is accompanied with **the Spirit**, **who** writes **on human hearts**, **who gives life**, **who works to declare people innocent**, and **who lasts**. A year later, **Paul** would write to the believers in Rome: **Thus, my brothers, you have been made dead with regard to the Torah through the Messiah's body, so that you may belong to someone else, namely, the One who has been raised from the dead, in order for us to bear fruit for God. For when we were living according to our old nature, the passions connected with sins worked through the Torah in our various parts, with the result that we bore fruit for death. But now we have been released from this aspect of the Torah, because we have died to that which had us in its clutches, so that we are serving in the new way provided by the Spirit and not in the old way of outwardly following the** perversion of **the Torah**, or legalism **(Romans 7:4-6).** Therefore, **Paul** says the purpose of **God** in bringing **the B'rit Chadashah** of **the Spirit** was precisely that the righteous demands of **the Torah** might be fulfilled in those who walk by **the Spirit** (see the commentary on **Romans Cg – The Walk with the Ruach**).[101]