

The Two Covenants of the Torah

By James Scott Trimm

Many of us have missed an important truth. The New Covenant has been in the Torah all along! And this amazing truth is a major key in understanding the writings of Paul. There are in fact two covenants in the Torah and two Mosaic Covenants.

The first Mosaic Covenant was made at Mt. Sinai at Horev.

The Second Mosaic Covenant was made at Mt. Nebo at Mo'av. This was a second covenant which YHWH made with the people of Israel through Moses which was made shortly before the death of Moses and the entry of Israel into the Land. This covenant was made near the end of the Torah:

These are the words of the covenant which YHWH commanded Moshe to make with the children of Yisra'el in the land of Mo'av, beside the covenant which He made with them in Horev.
(Deut. 28:69 (29:1))

Note that this Covenant at Mo'av was made *besides* the Covenant made at Sinai.

Rashi makes an important comment about the significance of this word "besides":

besides the covenant [Namely,] the curses [which appear] in Lev. (26: 14-39), which were proclaimed at [Mount] Sinai.
(Rashi on Deut. 28:69)

Rashi sees that these are two different covenants and that the word besides is intended to distinguish the Covenant at Sinai, characterized by "the curses" with this new Covenant made at Mo'av which is characterized not just by curses (Deut. 29:16-29) but by blessings as well

This covenant was centered around repentance (30:2, 8) and its rewards included a promise of a regathering of Israel from among the nations (30:3-4) a circumcised heart (30:2, 6) Israel would be his people and He would be their Elohim (29:13); a promise of land (30:5) and life (30:6, 15, 19).

This Covenant also includes Torah observance:

if you shall hearken to the voice of YHWH your Elohim, to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this Book of the Torah; if you turn unto YHWH your Elohim with all your heart, and with all your soul.
(Deut. 30:10)

Jeremiah and the New Covenant

In Jeremiah 11, the prophet Jeremiah was sent by YHWH to the people of Israel saying:

Hear you the words of this covenant, and speak unto the men of Y'udah ,
and to the inhabitants of Yerushalayim:
and say you unto them: Thus says YHWH, the Elohim of Yisra'el:
Cursed be the man that hears not the words of this covenant,
which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth
out of the land of Egypt,...
(Jer. 11:2-4a)

Here Jeremiah is quoting from the Torah (Deut. 27:26) and to the curse that was upon those who would fail to give heed to the covenant given at Sinai. He is warning the people of Judah that this curse is about to come upon them.

Ultimately Jeremiah prophesied to Israel that this curse would come upon them in the form of the seventy year Babylonian captivity:

9 behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, says YHWH, and I will send unto N'vukhadretzar the king of Bavel, My servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about; and I will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and a hissing, and perpetual desolations. ...
11 And this whole land shall be a desolation, and a waste; and these nations shall serve the king of Bavel seventy years.
12 And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Bavel, and that nation, says YHWH, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it perpetual desolations.
(Jer. 25:9, 11-12)

6 then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth.'
7 So the cohanim and the prophets and all the people heard Yirmeyah speaking these words in the House of YHWH.
(Jer. 26:6-7)

But Jeremiah also prophesied to the people that at the end of this seventy year curse, he would bring them back into the land:

10 For thus says YHWH: After seventy years are accomplished for Bavel, I will remember you, and perform My good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.
(Jer. 29:10)

In connection with this return Jeremiah speaks of a New Covenant:

31 (30) Behold, the days come, says YHWH, that I will make a renewed covenant with the House of Yisra'el, and with the House of Y'udah;

32 (31) not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; forasmuch as they broke My covenant, although I was a husband over them, says YHWH.

33 (32) But this is the covenant that I will make with the House of Yisra'el after those days, says YHWH, I will put My Torah in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their Elohim, and they shall be My people;

34 (33) and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying: 'Know YHWH'; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says YHWH; for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more.

(Jer. 31:31)

(Throughout this article I will refer to this covenant as the “New Covenant” as it is commonly called, however the Hebrew is better understood as I have translated it above, as “renewed covenant”.)

But one important thing that many of us have missed is that this “New Covenant” *is* the Covenant made at Mo'av. As we have already seen, there are two Mosaic Covenants in the Torah. The first Covenant was made at Sinai but there is also a second “new” covenant in the Torah which was made at Mo'av. When we compare these two covenants it is clear that the Covenant at Mo'av is the New Covenant:

Covenant at Mo'av

These are the words of the covenant which YHWH commanded Moshe to make with the children of Yisra'el in the land of Mo'av, *besides the covenant which he made with them in Horev.*

(Deut. 28:69 (29:1))

And shall return unto YHWH your Elohim, and hearken to His voice according to all that I command you this day, you and your children, *with all your heart*, and with all your soul;...

And YHWH your Elohim will circumcise *your heart*, and the heart of your seed, to love YHWH your Elohim with *all your heart*, and with all your soul, that you may

New Covenant

Behold, the days come, says YHWH, that I will make a renewed covenant with the House of Yisrael, and the House of Y'udah; *not according to the covenant that I made with their father in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt*; forasmuch as they broke My covenant, although I was a husband over them, says YHWH.

(Jer. 31:31-32)

But this is the covenant that I will make with the House of Yisra'el after those days, says YHWH, I will put My Torah in their inward parts, *and in their heart* will I write it;... (Jer. 31:22a)

...and I will put My fear *in their hearts*, that they shall not depart from Me.

(Jer. 32:40b)

live.

(Deut. 30:2, 6)

that He may establish you this *day unto Himself for a people, and that He may be unto you a Elohim*, as He spoke unto you, and as He swore unto your fathers, to Avraham, to Yitz'chak and to Ya'akov.

(Deut. 29:12 (29:13))

that then YHWH your Elohim will turn your captivity, and have compassion upon you, and will return and *gather you from all the peoples, where YHWH your Elohim has scattered you*. If any of you that are dispersed be in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there will YHWH your Elohim gather you, and from there will He fetch you.

(Deut. 30:3-4)

And YHWH your Elohim *will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed*, and you shall possess it; and He will do you good, and multiply you above your fathers.

(Deut. 30:5)

...and I will be their Elohim, and they shall be My people;

(Jer. 31:33b)

and they shall be My people, and will be their Elohim;

(Jer. 32:38)

Behold, I will *gather them out of all the countries, where I have driven them* in My anger, and in My fury, and in great wrath;...

(Jer. 32:37a)

and I will bring them back unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely;...

(Jer. 32:37b)

Now if the Covenant at Mo'av is the New Covenant, then the Covenant at Sinai is an "Old Covenant". Both the Old Covenant and the New Covenant are in the Torah. But this "New Covenant" is Torah based, as the Covenant itself states "...you shall hearken to the voice of YHWH your Elohim, to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this Book of the Torah..." (Deut. 30:10). This New Covenant is an "everlasting covenant" (Jer. 32:40) which gives us "life" (Deut. 30:6, 15, 19). An everlasting covenant which gives life, must by implication, give "everlasting life".

Daniel and the New Covenant

At the end of this seventy year curse we reach the time of Daniel chapter nine. Here Daniel has been studying these prophecies of Jeremiah and he knew the seventy years were over:

2 in the first year of his reign I Daniel meditated in the books, over the number of the years, whereof the word of YHWH came to Yirmeyah the prophet, that He would accomplish for the desolations of Yerushalayim seventy years.

(Dan. 9:2)

Daniel knew that the curses mentioned in the Torah had come upon Israel:

13 As it is written in the Torah of Moshe, all this evil is come upon us; yet have we not entreated the favour of YHWH our Elohim, that we might turn from our iniquities, and have discernment in Your truth.
(Dan. 9:13) (see Lev. 26:14; Deut. 28:15)

Daniel also knew that the Torah tells us that if after these curses come upon us, we still do not repent, Elohim would punish us seven times more:

18 And if you will not yet for these things hearken unto Me, then I will chastise you seven times more for your sins.
(Lev. 26:18, see also verses 21, 24, 28)

In Daniel 9 Daniel prays for mercy for Israel, because he knows Israel has failed to repent, and he knows that seven times seventy is 490 years, and he does not want Israel to now fall under a 490 year curse. Unfortunately Gavri'el (El is Severe) comes with Elohim's reply. Israel would indeed fall into a 490 year curse:

24 Seventy weeks are decreed upon your people and upon your set-apart city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sin, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Set-apart.

25 Know therefore and discern, that from the going forth of the word to restore and to build Yerushalayim unto Messiah, a prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks, it shall be built again, with broad place and moat, but in troublous times.

26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself; and the people of a prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood; and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

27 And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the offering to cease; and upon the wing of detestable things shall be that which causes appalment; and that until the extermination wholly determined be poured out upon that which causes appalment.'

(Dan. 9:24-27)

This 490 year curse was made up of seventy "weeks". The Hebrew word here for "weeks" actually only refers to "a period of seven" and does not have to refer to seven days, in fact here it refers to blocks of seven year periods. These are not just any seven year periods, these are seven year cycles of the Sabbath of the land. It was the failure to keep these Sabbaths of the land each seventh year that was the final straw resulting in the seventy year curse:

to fulfil the word of YHWH by the mouth of Yirmeyah, until the land had been paid her sabbaths; for as long as she lay desolate she kept

sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.
(2Chron. 36:21)

483 years into this 490 years the Messiah comes along and is “cut off, but not for himself”:

26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself; and the people of a prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood; and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.
(Dan. 9:26)

Why does the Messiah come seven years before the end of the 490 year curse?

Because the Land must have its seventh year Sabbath (2Chron. 36:21). In order for the curse to end, the people of Israel would have to repent and turn back to Torah. Since the decisive issue had been the Sabbath of the Land, this repentance would need to manifest itself by the keeping of the Sabbath of the Land, but in order to do this, the people would need a seven year head start, they would have to start keeping a complete Sabbath of the Land cycle 483 years into the 490 year curse if they were to enter the New Covenant at the end of the 490 years. Thus YHWH in his infinite mercy was to send Messiah after 483 years to call the people to repentance.

Ramban: Messiah and the New Covenant

Ramban (Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman) (1194-1270 C.E.) wrote one of the most authoritative Torah commentaries in Rabbinic Judaism. His comments connecting the Covenant of Mo'av with the “New Covenant” of Jeremiah 31 and connecting these with the “days of the Messiah” that I am giving his lengthy comments on Deut. 30:6 in total, along with some interspersed comments of my own:

And YHWH your Elohim will circumcise your heart (Deut. 30:6)

It is this which the Rabbis have said, "If someone comes to purify himself, they assist him" [from on High]. The verse assures you that you will return to Him with all your heart and He will help you.

This following subject is very apparent from Scripture: Since the time of Creation, man has had the power to do as he pleased, to be righteous or wicked. This [grant of free will] applies likewise to the entire Torah period, so that people can gain merit upon choosing the good and punishment for preferring evil. But in the days of the Messiah, the choice of their [genuine] good will be natural; the heart will not desire the improper and it will have no craving whatever for it. This is the "circumcision" mentioned here, for lust and desire are the "foreskin" of the heart, and circumcision of the heart means that it will not covet or desire evil.

Note that Ramban sees the ultimate fulfillment of the Covenant at Mo'av as taking place "in the days of the Messiah".

Man will return at that time to what he was before the sin of Adam, when by his nature he did what should properly be done, and there were no conflicting desires in his will, as I have explained in Seder Bereshit.

This recalls to mind the words of Paul "For if because of the error of one [Adam], death reigned, much more those who receive the abundance of favor and of the gift and of righteousness will rein in life by way of one, Yeshua the Messiah." (see Rom. 5:14-19;; 1Cor. 15:22, 45).

It is this which Scripture states in [the Book of] Jeremiah 31:30], Behold, the days come, says YHWH, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers ..etc. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Eternal, I will put my Law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it.

Here Ramban identifies the Covenant of Mo'av with Jeremiah's "New Covenant".

This is a reference to the annulment of the evil instinct and to the natural performance by the heart of its proper function. Therefore Jeremiah said further, and I will be their Elohim, and they shall be My People; and they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying: 'Know YHWH; 'for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them

Now, it is known that the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth and it is necessary to instruct them, but at that time it will not be necessary to instruct them [to avoid evil] for their evil instinct will then be completely abolished. And so it is declared by Ezekiel, A new heart will I also give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will cause you to walk in My statutes . (Ezekiel 36:26)

Here Ramban ties the New Covenant to the gift of the Ruach HaKodesh.

The new heart alludes to man's nature, and the [new] spirit to the desire and will. It is this which our Rabbis have said : "And the years draw nigh, when you shall say: I have no pleasure in them; these are the days of the Messiah, as they will offer opportunity neither for merit nor for guilt," for in the days of the Messiah there will be no [evil] desire in man but he will naturally perform the proper deeds and therefore there will be neither merit nor guilt in them, for merit and guilt are dependent upon desire. (Ramban on Deut. 29:6)

Yeshua and the New Covenant

Now the 483 year period mentioned in Daniel begins with “the word to restore to build Yerushalayim” (Dan. 9:25) which was the Artaxerxes decree (Ezra 7:11-16) given in 457 B.C.E.. The 483 year period ends with the appearance of Messiah on the scene (Dan. 9:25). If we add 483 years to 457 B.C.E. we come to 27 C.E. (although $457 + 27 = 484$ one must subtract a year whenever crossing the line between BCE and CE on the timeline, since there is no zero point year on the calendar.) Now there is good evidence that Yeshua was born, not in 1 C.E. but in 3 B.C.E.. At the age of thirty (in 27 C.E.) Yeshua first began his ministry (Luke 3:23).

Shortly after Yeshua began his ministry he returned to his home synagogue in Nazareth where he did the haftorah reading (Luke 4:16-20). He stood and read from Isaiah 61:1-2:

- 1 The spirit of the Adonai YHWH is upon me; because YHWH has anointed me to bring good tidings unto the humble; He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the eyes to them that are bound;
 - 2 To proclaim the year of YHWH's good pleasure, and the day of vengeance of our Elohim; to comfort all that mourn;
- (Is. 61:1-2)

Then Yeshua proclaimed “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your ears.” (Luke 4:21).

The “year of YHWH's good pleasure” in which the captives have liberty proclaimed to them is the seventh year Sabbath of the Land. The Anointed one is the Messiah as depicted in Daniel 9:24-27.

Moreover the haftorah readings were originally instituted at a time when it was illegal to read the Torah in public. As a result the weekly Torah readings were substituted by readings from the Prophets which were intended to bring to mind the corresponding Torah readings. After it became legal again to read the Torah in public, the haftorah readings were retained. The Torah reading which this haftorah reading is supposed to call to mind is Nitzavim (Deut. 29:9-30:20) which is the Covenant of Mo'av.

Yeshua was telling the synagogue that these passages were being fulfilled.

Is. 60:22 tells us that YHWH will either "hasten" the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel, or let it come about "in its [due] time", all depending on the New Covenant requirement of repentance (Deut. 30:1-6.) This offer to repent began in the days of Yochanan the immerser (John the Baptist), as we read in Mt. 11:12:

Only from the days of Yochanan the immerser until now
the Kingdom of Heaven is constricted and the forceful despoil it.

[Mt. 11:12 from the DuTillet Hebrew ms.]

and in Luke 16:16 we read:

The Torah and the prophets were until Yochanan
henceforth the Kingdom of Eloah is announced
but everyone treats it with violence.

[Lk.16:16 from Old Syriac & Peshitta Aramaic]

Yochanan had been announcing, "Repent you of your lives, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near to come" (Mt. 3:2 DuTillet.) And as soon as his work began, Yeshua proclaimed, "Turn you, turn you, in repentance: for the Kingdom of Heaven is near."(Mt. 4:17 DuTillet = Mk. 1:14-15) Now the word for "near" here in the DuTillet and ShemTob Hebrew versions is karavah, in the Aramaic of the Old Syriac and Peshitta the Aramaic equivalent appears. The phrase "Kingdom of Elohim" is a variation of the phrase in the Tanak "Kingdom of YHWH" (1Chron. 28:5; 2Chron. 13:8) a term used to describe the Kingdom of Israel. After studying the "Kingdom of Elohim" with the Messiah for forty days (Acts 1:3) the emissaries wanted to know if the Kingdom would be restored to Israel "at this time", Yeshua answers that it is not for them to know the time (Acts 1:6-7). The truth is that the Kingdom of Elohim is the restored Kingdom of Israel (see Jer. 23:5-6; Is. 9:6-7; 11 with 1Chron. 28:5; 2Chron.13:8.) The Hebrew text of Mt. 3:2 & 4:17 = Mk. 1:14-15 does indicate that the Kingdom was right there, available, if they would just repent.

Yeshua continued to proclaim this offer throughout his career (Mt. 12:28 = Lk. 11:20; Mk. 12:34; Lk.10:9, 11; 17:21) even sending out his emissaries with the same proclamation (Mt. 10:7.) This is the meaning of the passage, "...if you are willing to receive it [the New Covenant], he [Yochanan] is Elijah who is to come." (Mt. 11:14 see 11:12).

Despite the fact that the New Covenant was being offered as early as the service of Yochanan (John) the immerser, repentance was required for it to be realized (Mt. 3:2-3; Mt.4:17 = Mk. 1:14-15; Dt. 30:1-6). However, from the time of Yochanan forward, the Kingdom was being rejected, "plundered" and "treated with violence" (Mt. 11:12 DuTillet; Lk. 16:16 Old Syriac & Peshitta.) Yeshua compared this rejection to those who would not dance for flute players (Mt. 11:12, 16-19.)

At Yeshua's so-called "Last Supper" which was a Passover Seder, Yeshua holds up the third cup of the Passover Seder known as the "cup of redemption" and said:

Drink you all of it, for this is my blood of the New Covenant,
which is shed for many to atone for sinners. And I tell you,
hereafter I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until that day
when I drink it with you in the Kingdom of my Father which
is in heaven.

(Matt. 26:27-29)

Here Yeshua tells us that the “cup of redemption” which represents the blood of the Passover lamb, represents his own blood which will be the ratifying blood of the New Covenant.

The New Covenant Offer Extended

It would seem that the New Covenant offer was extended beyond the crucifixion. In his discourse at the Temple in Acts 3:12-26 Kefa repeated the Kingdom offer saying:

19 Repent therefore, and be restored so that your sins be blotted out and times of rest come to you from the presence of YHWH,
20 And he send to you him who was prepared for you, Yeshua the Messiah,
21 Who it is required for heaven to receive until the fullness of the times of all those things that Eloah spoke by the mouth of his set-apart prophets of old.
(Acts 3:19-21)

Thus it would appear that if the people of Israel had entered a national repentance, even then, the Messiah would have returned to restore the Kingdom to Israel right then and there.

This Kingdom offer seems to have continued throughout the entire Acts period, until it expired at the end of the Book of Acts. In Acts 28 "Paul called the leaders of the Jews together... to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the Kingdom of Eloah, persuading them concerning Yeshua..." (Acts 28:17, 23). once again a corporate repentance did not occur "... some disbelieved. So they did not agree among themselves." (Acts 28:24b-25a). At this time Paul made known that the Kingdom offer had ended saying "...the salvation of Eloah has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!" (Acts. 28:28)

Paul and the New Covenant

This new understanding of the nature of the New Covenant sheds new light on the teachings of Paul which so many have misunderstood.

In Romans 2:27-29 Paul contrasts those with the “circumcision of the heart by the spirit” with those who have a circumcision “in the flesh [alone] ... by the letter [only]”. Of course the “circumcision of the heart by the spirit” is an element of the New Covenant of Moab. Paul is contrasting this with the Siniatic Covenant alone which is “in the flesh [alone]...” and “...by the letter [only]....”

In Romans 7:6 Paul contrasts “the renewal of the spirit” of the New Covenant” with the “oldness of the writing” of the Siniatic Covenant alone. In this section of Romans (Romans 7-8) Paul contrasts the two Mosaic Covenants. He calls the Covenant of Mo’av

the “Torah of Eloah” which he contrasts with the “law of sin” (7:25) He calls walking by the Siniatic Covenant alone as “of the flesh” but the New Covenant as “of the spirit” (8:4-5) He associates the Siniatic Covenant alone with “death” but the Covenant of Mo’av with “life” (8:6) just as the Torah also does (Deut. 30:6, 15, 19).

In Romans 10:4-8 Paul contrasts the “righteousness that is by the Torah” (10:5) which he characterizes by quoting Lev. 18:5 with the “righteousness that is by faith” (10:6-8) which he characterizes by quoting from the Covenant at Mo’av (Deut. 30:11-14):

6 And the righteousness that is by faith, [he] thus says: Do not say in your heart: who has ascended to heaven and brought down the Messiah?

7 And who has descended to the depth of She'ol and brought up the Messiah from among the dead?

8 But what does it say? The answer is near to you, to your mouth and to your heart, which is the word of faith that we proclaim.

Paul goes on to say that this same covenant is the “word of faith that we proclaim” (10:8). Paul goes on to identify this covenant at Mo’av with the covenant of Messiah by which we are saved:

9 And if you confess with your mouth our Adon Yeshua, and you believe in your heart that Eloah raised him from the dead, you will have life.

10 For the heart that believes in him is made righteousness, and the mouth that confesses him has life.

11 For the scripture has said that anyone who believes in him will not be humiliated.

12 And in this it does not discriminate, either against Jews or against Aramaeans, for YHWH of all of them is one who is rich with all who call on him.

13 For all who will call on the name of YHWH have life.

(Rom. 10:9-13)

In 2Corinthians 3:3-6 Paul refers to the “New Covenant” (3:6) when he contrasts the “letter” of the Torah which is “written on tablets of stone” with the “spirit” of the Torah which is written “on tablets of the heart of flesh”. Paul says “the letter kills but the spirit gives life”. Here again Paul is comparing the Siniatic Covenant alone with the New Covenant of Mo’av.

In Galatians 3 Paul alludes to the two Covenants. He tells us that Messiah redeemed us from the “curse of the law” (3:10-13) just as we noted earlier that Rashi tells us that the word “besides” in Deut. 28:69 distinguishes the Covenant of Mo’av from the “curse” of the Law.

In Galatians 4:21-31 Paul plainly compares the two covenants of Torah saying “for these are the two covenants, one from Mount Sinai genders bondage...”

Hebrews is filled with references to these two covenants as well. The author of Hebrews (whom I believe to be Paul) tells us that chapter 8:1f begins “the main point of what we are saying” and then quotes all of Jer. 31:30-33 (31:31-34) regarding the “New Covenant” in Hebrews 8:8-11. Throughout this book Paul compares “the first [covenant]” with the second [covenant] (8:6, 7, 13; 9:1, 15; 10:9). Paul points out that this second covenant differed from the first covenant. While the first covenant had been ratified by the blood of bulls, the second covenant was actually ratified by the blood of Messiah. Moreover while the Greek text of Hebrews states:

For the priesthood being changed,
there is made of necessity a change also of the law.
(Heb. 7:12 KJV)

However the Torah cannot be changed (see Deut. 4:2; 12:32 & Matt. 5:17). The Hebrew text of Hebrews, however, actually reads:

It is saying that according to which there is a repetition
of the office of the priesthood of necessity, it is saying
there is a repetition of the Torah.
(Heb. 7:12 HRV)

The Torah was not “changed” by the New Covenant of Mo’av, but it was repeated with better promises. The fact that the “second” or “new” covenant of Hebrews is the Covenant made at Mo’av is further reinforced by the fact that Paul draws a strong parallel in Hebrews 3:7-4:10 between the “rest” we enter into and the entry into the Land which took place at the death of Moses at the end of the forty years immediately after the making of the Covenant of Mo’av.

It is beyond the scope of this article to fully explore all of the ramifications of this important truth to the writings of Paul. Nearly every word that Paul writes becomes pregnant with deeper meaning when we read them in light of this truth. We find that amazingly Paul is saying much the same things that Rashi and Ramban were saying about the curse of the law and the new covenant.

It all Comes Back to Mo’av

Finally we find an amazing prophecy found, not in the canon, but in one of the books known as the “Apocrypha”. In 2 Maccabees 2:1-8 we read:

- 1 One finds in the records that Jeremiah the prophet ordered those who were being deported to take some of the fire, as has been told,
- 2 and that the prophet after giving them the law instructed those who were being deported not to forget the commandments of the Lord, nor to be led astray in their thoughts upon seeing the gold and silver statues and their adornment.
- 3 And with other similar words he exhorted them that the law should not depart from their hearts.

4 It was also in the writing that the prophet, having received an oracle, ordered that the tent and the ark should follow with him, and that he went out to the mountain where Moses had gone up and had seen the inheritance of God.
5 And Jeremiah came and found a cave, and he brought there the tent and the ark and the altar of incense, and he sealed up the entrance.
6 Some of those who followed him came up to mark the way, but could not find it.
7 When Jeremiah learned of it, he rebuked them and declared: "The place shall be unknown until God gathers his people together again and shows his mercy.
8 And then the Lord will disclose these things, and the glory of the Lord and the cloud will appear, as they were shown in the case of Moses, and as Solomon asked that the place should be specially consecrated."
(2Macc. 2:1-8 RSV)

Here there is an allusion to Jeremiah and the new covenant which places the Torah in our hearts. This becomes tied again to Mo'av where Moshe had made the Covenant of Mo'av just before his death on Mount Nebo. According to this book the Tabernacle, the altar of incense and the Ark of the Covenant are all hidden inside Mount Nebo at Mo'av and at the time of the regathering (another allusion to the New Covenant of Mo'av) they will reveal their own position to the world. All of this will end where it began, we will finally enter the New Covenant Kingdom right there at Mo'av!

Conclusion

There are two covenants in the Torah, and the Torah is very much a part of both of them. Both Rashi and Paul tell us that the covenant of Mo'av or "new covenant" is distinguished from the "curse" of the first covenant. Both Ramban and Paul tell us that the New Covenant is tied to the work of Messiah, involves a change of a persons heart and inner desires and involves the implanting of the Spirit of YHWH to guide us in an inner desire to observe Torah. This Covenant has been offered to Israel collectively on at least three occasions: upon entering the Land (Deut. 29-30); upon returning to the Land (Jer. 29:10; 31:30f) and at the first coming of Messiah (Mt. 26:27-29). While Israel may not collectively enter this covenant until Messiah returns, we as individuals may enter it early, becoming citizens of a Kingdom not yet established. This profound understanding of the nature of the New Covenant will radically improve our understanding of Scripture. This article is not the end of that process, it is only intended to serve as a modest beginning.

Unless otherwise noted all Scripture quotations are taken from the Hebraic Roots Version Scriptures (<http://www.messianic.co.za>)

The Hebrew/English parallel edition of Hebrews is available at:
<http://www.netzarimpublishing.com>

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