

An Update on Ephesians 2:11-18 and the Dividing Wall:

Update: *It has been around a decade since I first wrote this article. Since then Uriel Ben Mordechai has made some great strides in re-translating much of the New Testament from the earliest extant Greek manuscripts such as P-46. His translation of this passage is significantly different. I will add and discuss after my original comments.*

My original thoughts from 2012:

In Ephesians 1:1, Paul is speaking to both Jew and Gentile who now 'love God'. In Eph 2:11 though, he changes who he is addressing, to specifically address the Gentile believers who have become saints.

Here Paul speaks of a dividing wall or wall or partition. So, what was it that made this dividing wall, this "wall of separation" or "barrier of enmity" (enmity - a feeling or condition of hostility; hatred; ill will; animosity; antagonism)?

I submit that it was two issues brought about by the introduction of 'Oral Torah', the vast rules and regulations added to the original written Torah and its ordinances. This is not to say that this large body of rulings is all bad. Rather, it appears that when Yeshua argued against the 'traditions of men'¹ he was illustrating how the Pharisees twisted what was good and appropriate for their own ends and so in being hypocrites were not adhering to the heart-directed and spirit-enabled desire to seek and obey Yehovah.

Take, for example the issue of 'circumcising a male child on the 8th day' vs not working on the Sabbath. (Jn 7:23). The 'Oral Torah' had established the principle that if a child's eighth day from birth fell on a Sabbath, then the circumcision took precedence and the man performing the circumcision was permitted to carry his medical implements (i.e. to do work), through the town on the Sabbath.

If however, the child was ill on the child's eighth day after birth, and the first day the child was well enough to be circumcised was the Sabbath the circumcision should not now be performed on the Sabbath. This rule was sensible and considerate and found a good compromise or solution to two potentially conflicting ordinances of Moses.

Yeshua does not appear to condemn this 'rule' at all, but rather to point out that those living by it were really hypocrites if they then tried to condemn Yeshua for healing, not just part of a man (the act of circumcision), but healing the whole man.

Here we see that it is the attitude of the heart that matters. Yeshua was not abolishing this rule for Jewish believers but illustrating the mindset that leads to this rule being followed but for the 'right' reasons (it the same way that Yehovah blesses the 'cheerful' giver. 1 Cor 9:7).

¹ And he said to them, Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, "This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men. (Mark 7:6-8

These issues then, that were evident were:

- 1) flesh (circumcision vs un-circumcision – the physical difference and barrier), and
- 2) the Torah (obedience to God's commands versus ignorance of God's commands, leading to a lack of obedience – the difference in actions).

By becoming part of the Body of our Messiah; by becoming His brothers and sisters, we become spiritually circumcised thus removing the 'flesh' issue.

By accepting 'Messiah's laws' we accept the 'completed Torah' and remove the barrier of the second issue because we now grow in knowledge of God's instructions and hence in Godly actions.

Thus, it is the enmity or separation that is abolished NOT the Torah.

Now if you turn to Eph 2:11-18 and read your versions, you may find that it appears to suggest instead that it was the Torah that was the barrier and therefore it was the Torah that was removed.

But look at everything else in this passage – how could the annulling or removal of the Torah reconcile Jews to Gentiles – surely, without the Torah they are no longer Jews! They (observant Jews) certainly wouldn't think so!

So here is a version translated from a number of Greek texts by Frank Selch:

“For he is our peace; the one making the both one; destroy the enmity in his flesh and the dividing wall which separates -, putting an end (to) the law of commandments in dogmatics; in order to create in himself one out of two into one (brand-) new man – making peace. And reconciling both in one body to God through the cross putting to death the enmity.”

Important Note:

What neither Frank nor I were aware of when Frank did this translation a decade ago, and I first wrote about it, was that the Greek word translated as 'dogmatics', was not in the earliest extant Greek manuscripts. The phrase 'ordinances (or commandments) in dogmatics' was a later addition.

Here's how Uriel references this corruption:

“There were a number of significant textual additions made to this section in later centuries, that were **NEVER** recorded in **P-46**, like the added Greek **“ehn dohg-MAH’sseen”** for *“contained in ordinances,”* and **“kay’NOHN”** for *“new”* as in *“new man...”*, along with the total butchery of the translation of **“teen EHK’thrahn tee sahr’kee ahv’tu”** into *“in His flesh [OF JESUS] the enmity...”* that the text was twisted into something that was never written.”...

Matthew Janzen has a good insight on the 'dividing wall':

“... Paul alludes to a "middle wall of partition" between Jew and Gentile. This was a literal wall that Paul uses in a figurative sense to make his point. The Jews decreed, (they made a

dogma), which stated that if a Gentile crossed over the wall separating the Court of the Jews from the Court of the Gentiles surrounding the temple, that they would be immediately killed. This was not a commandment of Yehovah. In fact, Yehovah never even commanded such a wall to exist. That dogma created a hatred between the two peoples which Messiah destroyed creating one new man and so, making peace.”²

So we understand the term ‘*the law of commandments in dogmatics*’ to mean the removal of the ‘traditions of men’ NOT any part of the Holy Scriptures, especially NOT the 10 Words.

Alternatively, just consider for a moment that here in Ephesians 2 the Apostle Paul did mean the 10 Words and all that defines the Jewish people as God’s chosen, was done away with to create the new man, why then does Paul go on to say in v19-22 that we (Gentiles) are now no longer strangers but fellow citizens of the household of God, etc. a household built on the apostles and prophets who spoke for and in the Hebrew Bible.

Paul is consistent here with Romans in alluding to our being grafted into God’s people, not removing their identity.

Alternatively, if the 10 Words are no more, then we are not ‘fellow’ citizens, we have not joined anything, we have started an entirely new religion so we might as well throw away the Hebrew Scriptures (which is of course what most of Christendom has done, and this is at least consistent with their error), or make it all allegory or ‘spiritual’ (i.e let’s have a ‘Christ’ of faith - you chose your ‘faith’ and your flavour!).

Uriel Ben Mordechai:

Uriel’s translation with some of his explanation for his version.

EI Eh-FEH’soh 2:11-17 [amplified] from P-46:

[v.11] For this reason, remember that once-upon-a-time, you — being non-Jews on account of lineage, referred to individually as ‘one WITHOUT a Brit-Milah’ by those who through human hands are referred to individually as ‘one WITH a Brit-Milah’ — [v.12] you were, under the influence of that particular period, unconnected to a Mashiach [elect]; isolated; apart from citizenship with Israel and unfamiliar with the agreements of that promised favor [in our Torah], having no hope and without a [true] G-d within this world. [v.13] Nevertheless, you who were at that time far away shall be drawn near by way of a Mashiach [elect] — Yeshua — precipitated by [or considering, or further to] the violence [or bloodshed, or premature death] associated with Mashiach [elect]. [v.14] In fact, he [i.e., Mashiach elect] will represent our “shalom;” the one who will cause the both of us [i.e., both you gentiles and b’nei Israel] to become unified. And at that point, upon repudiating the Soreg belonging to the Cheil [i.e., that low wall and the accompanying

² <http://ministersnewcovenant.org/>

segregation zone] — that threat of hostile action [i.e., death, if trespassed by non-Jews] — by taking advantage of his corporate status [as an appointed Mashiach], [v.15] that enactment [or decision to erect a Soreg and Cheil] — warranted by the commandments [ref. to Ba'Midbar 1:51 which decreed the death penalty to a foreigner] — will be repealed [i.e., revoked, or rescinded], so that subsequent TO [or emanating from] IT [i.e., that act of revocation], he can establish from these two [i.e., from the Jew and non-Jew], a single common [or communal] class of humanity, with the result of bringing about [final and lasting] shalom. [v.16] Also with which people [i.e., with the Jew and non-Jew], IT [i.e., the rescinding of the death penalty attached to trespassing the Soreg and Cheil] should also restore all concerned parties in the end, into a united [or single] cooperative [or corporate body] for [or serving] G-d. The point is, this execution [of Mashiach] will put an end to [or condemn] that hostile threat [i.e., of death when the Soreg was trespassed by non-Jews] emanating FROM IT, [v.17] and then He [i.e., Ha'Shem] will come to announce good news; 'Shalom to you who are afar [i.e., to the Gentiles], as well as shalom to those near [i.e., to the Jews].'

Uriel's Explanatory Notes:

Eph 2:15 does indeed refer to the Torah? See the text of **Ba'Midbar (Numbers) 1:51: וְהִזָּר הַקָּרֵב יִמָּת:**

"...and the foreigner [aka the erev-rav, or the gentile who lives amongst Jews, who visits the Temple, or the Mishkan in this case] who gets anywhere near the Mishkan, gets the death penalty."

So our wise Sages got together and said to themselves, "Why should we be cruel to the gentiles, who only want to innocently come and worship Ha'Shem in His Temple, but don't understand the purity issues involved that our Torah enumerates upon, because they don't read Hebrew and didn't receive the Torah as we did? Shouldn't we warn them, that if they are not Leivi'im or the Kohein Gadol, or even from amongst the Tribes of Israel, that if they wander past a certain point and get too close to the Mishkan, that Ha'Shem demands they be given the death penalty? Let us be kind to them, and warn them about what the Torah says. We can do this by building a Soreg and a Cheil, and we will put up signs to warn them NOT to come any closer, or else."

*Instead of looking upon the **Soreg and Cheil** as a negative, they should have all along been looking upon it as a positive that saved their lives, and instead, this is ONE FENCE they should be thanking the Rabbis for!*

To read about the **Soreg and Cheil** see <https://templeinstitute.org/illustrated-tour-the-temple-mount/>,

*So, knowing that **Sha'ul**, who visited the Temple 10,000 times, and had intimate first hand knowledge and experience with this **Soreg v'Cheil**, and that he certainly knew that the reason it existed was **because of the commandment in the Torah at Ba'Midbar 1:51**, why WOULD'N'T he write about it, and about its future status to the Gentiles and Hellenized Jews at **Eh-FEH'soh**?*

From this text, we learn that in the Olam Ha'Bah, when Mashiach takes office for the very first time as Mashiach, one of his first executive orders, after offering a sin-offering on behalf of Jews and Gentiles assembled at the Temple, will be the rescinding of the enactment that handed down the death penalty for any non-Jew who approaches the Temple to worship, because it will, in those days no longer be needed.

And while it is true on technical grounds that Ha'Shem never commanded us to build the Soreg and Cheil, it seems to have been a no-brainer to build it, to warn unclean Jews and foreigners not to go

any further, or face death, mandated by the Torah itself."

My latest thoughts and comments on Uriel's translation:

Uriel makes the important point that there was a Torah prohibition with respect to Gentiles entering the central area of the Temple.

Uriel, perhaps in-part based on the perfectly valid pre-supposition that the Torah cannot be changed by Yeshua or the Apostle Paul, is instead arguing that the proper rendition of this passage refers to the Coming Age, the Olam HaBah when this rule will be rescinded. Where I would argue that he is wrong is not in any change of Torah, but a change of status for faithful Gentiles.

I remain convinced that Yeshua's actions, his life, death and resurrection have resulted in his circumcision being the 'circumcision' of all Gentile believers in him and thus these Gentiles now qualify to enter through this 'dividing wall' into the Temple proper. The Torah has not changed but the status of Yeshua's Gentile followers has.

They now have equal status with their faithful Jewish brothers and sisters. I have tried to explain this in a number of other articles.

Below is such an excerpt:

In Genesis 17, physical circumcision is a 'token' of the commandment, a representation of the Abrahamic covenant. Thus as a token or representation is does not preclude the possibility of some other token also having the same effect.

Look at what the Apostle Paul states in 1 Corinthians 7:18-19: *"Was someone already circumcised when he was called? Then he should not try to remove the marks of his circumcision. Was someone uncircumcised when he was called? He shouldn't undergo b'rit---milah (circumcision). **Being circumcised means nothing, and being uncircumcised means nothing; what does mean something is keeping God's commandments**"* – CJB

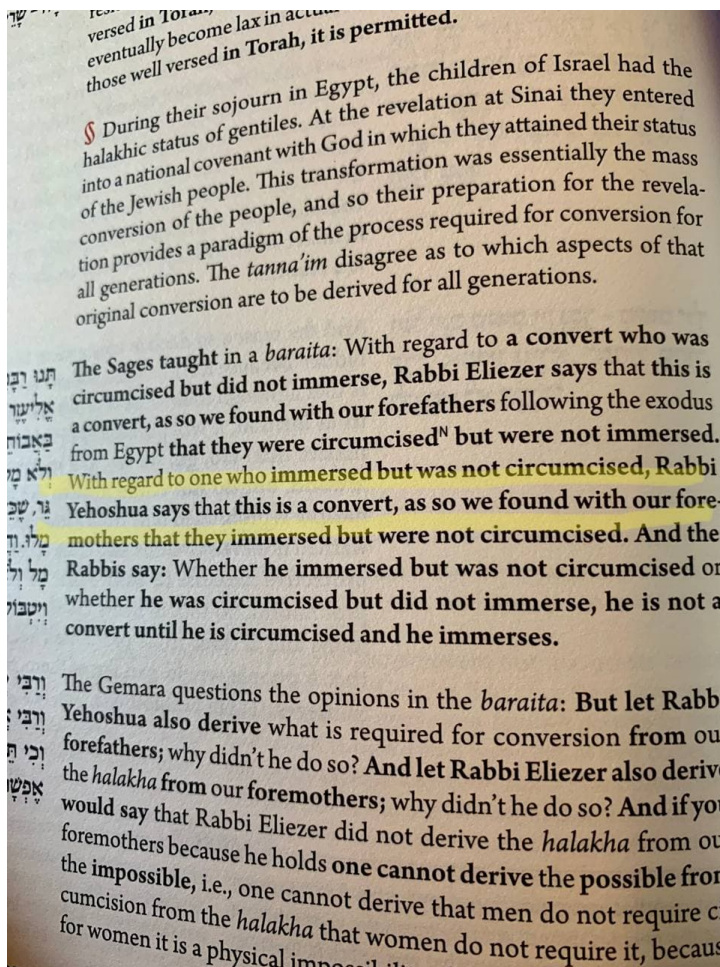
While Paul is using the Hebraism of parallelism in verse 19, he is also stating that he didn't see physical circumcision as a commandment of God. So he is not changing the commandments but his whole approach is to show that another 'token' is acceptable for entering into the Abrahamic covenant.

As I stated in my Circumcision article³, I believe that when Paul writes in Colossians 2:11--12 *"Also it was in union with him that you were circumcised with a circumcision not done by human hands, but accomplished by stripping away the old nature's control over the body. **In this circumcision done by the Messiah, you were buried along with him by being immersed; and in union with him, you were also raised up along with him by God's faithfulness that worked when he raised Yeshua from the dead.**"* (CJB), that **Yeshua's circumcision is our (Gentiles) 'circumcision'**.

³ 'Circumcision – a Step of Obedience' – at www.circumcisedheart.info

Remember⁴ that ‘circumcision’ is the removal of a covering. Yeshua has overcome the ‘Yetzer HaRa’, the ‘old nature’s control over (the flesh or) the body’ through laying down his life for his fellow man, so that we too can bury our ‘evil inclination’ with him and be raised with him to our new status as children of God; as members of Abraham’s family and as ‘new creations’.

This argument that circumcision is not necessary is also put forward by some other Jewish Rabbis⁵. For example, a respected rabbi among the Tannaim whose name was Rabbi Yeshua (yes, seriously), is recorded in the Talmud as believing that conversion of Gentiles does not require circumcision. He was overruled by a majority of his rabbi group, but it is nonetheless worth noting.



Therefore, regardless of what Rabbi’s and Jewish scholars may argue, there was legitimate debate among the early sages as to whether or not circumcision is required for gentiles who convert.

Doubtless Rabbi Yehoshua was not alone in his opinion. And not his argument is put forward without even considering the ‘grafting in’ effect of Messiah Yeshua.

Rabbi Sha’ul’s (the Apostle Paul) take is a little different and nuanced as he is not arguing for conversion with or without circumcision, but a grafting into the commonwealth of Israel and becoming sons (and daughters) of Avraham (without becoming Jewish).

It is without doubt that one of the obvious and repeated themes of the Apostle Paul’s writings is his argument that Gentile followers of Yeshua **now** (not just in the Coming Age) enjoy equal status with the faithful Jewish followers.

So while I personally find much of Uriel’s translation convincing, and consistent I think that the message is that the ‘dividing wall’ is no longer relevant to the Gentiles as they also are now children of Avraham⁶.

⁴ see footnote 6 on Page 2 – quote from Moshe Kempinski

⁵ Thanks to Bruce Barham for this insight. I have paraphrased his comments. <https://www.torahofmessiah.org/>

⁶ It is also perhaps of some relevance that since 70 CE the Temple has not been standing and the Soreg

(dividing wall) not really relevant at this time (though we do expect the Temple to be rebuilt).