

**Correspondence on Salvation**  
between  
**Michael Rudolph & Daniel C. Juster**  
Delivered to Ohev Yisrael October 15, 2011

Some of you know that Dan Juster and I are collaborating on writing a Book, the title of which is “New Covenant Torah: The Law of Messiah Compiled as Mitzvot from a New Covenant Perspective.” In case you don’t know, you can keep up with our progress, and read parts of it as they become completed, on Tikkun’s web site <http://www.TikkunAmerica.org>.

Now you recall that two weeks ago I gave a message here at Ohev titled “Elephants in the Room: What Paul Really Meant about the Law.” It was a short verse-by-verse apologetic, defending the Apostle Paul’s seemingly anti-law statements in the New Testament epistles. Well after I delivered it, I got to thinking how much its content was relevant to the book I was writing. After all, the book is about God’s commandments – His Law – and my message was about how some of what Paul wrote seems to come against the Law – ergo the “elephants in the room.” So I restructured the message into a short article, and sent it to Dan for his advice on whether or not to include it in the book.

Dan wrote back that he thought the article was relevant and needed, but he took exception to one of its paragraphs where I made some remarks comparing salvation under Moses, with salvation today. Then I responded to Dan; Dan answered me; I answered him; and the exchange went on until Dan and I came into agreement.

Afterwards, when I looked over the thread of the correspondence, it occurred to me that sharing it with you would be educational on two levels. First, it deals with the theology of an important subject, which is works, grace, and salvation, in the Mosaic and New Covenants. Second, it is a window into how two writers of theology who are collaborating on a book confront each other, debate, seek compromise, and resolve differences.

My correspondence with Dan began when I sent him a draft of my unfinished Ohev message “Elephants in the Room,” and asked his opinion of a few of its points. He responded positively, and after I delivered the message, I re-worked it into an article and sent it back to Dan for his thoughts. The article included the following paragraph:

“When these words were given by God to Moses under the previous covenant, the context was salvation through obedience to the Law. Israel was being given the choice to obey the Law and live, or disobey and not live. Paul’s words paralleling Deuteronomy were spoken centuries later under the New Covenant, when our means for acquiring salvation was transferred from obeying the Law (including performing its requisite sacrifices) to having faith in Yeshua, the ultimate sacrifice. Paul was warning the Jews of Galatia to not look for salvation in the old way because it was no longer authorized. Besides, under the old way of pursuing salvation through obedience to the Law, even a single violation would result in the cursing referred to in Deuteronomy 30:19 that leads to death.”

Deuteronomy 30:19 says this:

*"I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;"*

**After reading the article, Dan responded:**

I think this is a great improvement [*meaning over the original draft*]. However, I would take issue with the statement on the last paragraph on page 5. As I argue in Jewish Roots, God never offered salvation on the basis of keeping the law. This is now the consensus of most pro-Jewish scholars. Rather, salvation is offered as a gift and as part of a covenant of grace and obedience to the Law. It is our response of gratitude that enables us to be obedient, and thereby to remain in that covenant of grace by seeking to live in obedience to God.

**Then I responded to Dan and said:**

I need to understand you better. You said:

*"Rather, salvation is offered as a gift and as part of a covenant of grace and obedience to the Law. It is our response of gratitude that enables us to be obedient, and thereby to remain in that covenant of grace by seeking to live in obedience to God."*

I understand and agree with the principle. However, I do not see it in the Mosaic Covenant where obedience is explicitly required. In that Covenant, God promises life and blessing for obedience, and death and cursing for disobedience. To accommodate your view though, I could say this instead:

*"When these words were given by God to Moses under the previous covenant, the context was 'covering over sin' through obedience to the Law and animal sacrifice. Israel's choice to either obey the Law and live, or disobey and not live, was a reference to salvation that, unbeknown to the Israelites at Mt. Sinai, would be granted in the future as a result of Yeshua's sacrifice. Paul's words paralleling Deuteronomy were spoken many centuries after Sinai under the New Covenant, when our path to salvation had been transferred from conducting animal sacrifices to having faith in Yeshua, the ultimate sacrifice. Paul was warning the Jews of Galatia to not seek covering over of their sins in the old way of obedience to the Law with attendant animal sacrifices, but rather to seek salvation in the new way which was through Yeshua. Not only was the old way no longer authorized, but under it, even a single violation would result in the cursing referred to in Deuteronomy 30:19 that led to death."*

If this substitute statement is not agreeable to you, perhaps you can give me an exact statement that would suit you, and I can decide whether to adopt it or to continue with my own statement, and add your dissent.

### **Then Dan replied:**

This is much better Mike. I would note that if you review the passages in Roots on the gracious nature of the Mosaic Covenant and Deuteronomy, something I learned from Samuel Shultz (The Gospel of Moses) and Walter Kaiser some 40 plus years ago, we can never say that works was a means of salvation, either individually or corporately. We entered the relationship through the exodus (salvation) and then, by saying “yes” to the covenant, Israel was saved. The walk in obedience was necessary to maintain covenant blessing, and a certain level of disobedience could lead one to being cut off. The way you state this now is fine, but do review that first part of Roots.

### **Then I wrote back to Dan:**

Dan, I will review Jewish Roots, but meanwhile I want to understand you further. What you are saying is that the Israelites were granted corporate salvation through the exodus from Egypt, and that individual Israelites could lose (i.e. be cut off from) by being disobedient to the Torah. I have always understood the term “cut off” to mean being removed from membership in Israel (which would certainly have affected individual salvation in that day), but there were relatively few kinds of disobedient acts that resulted in being cut off. However, the words in *Torah* that equate obedience with life, and disobedience with death, seem to refer to all the commandments; therefore there must have been many ways to arrive at “death” – many more ways than the ways of being cut off. How do you answer this?

On the other hand, there does seem to be something of this theory (i.e. Israel’s corporate salvation) that is consistent with Romans 11: I see two case possibilities:

#### Case 1

Jewish newborns start their lives on the domestic olive tree (corporately saved) and are broken off (i.e. become individually unsaved) if they reject Yeshua after their age of understanding and accountability. This, unfortunately, is the condition of most Jewish people. Gentiles, on the other hand, begin off the tree (i.e. individually unsaved) and are grafted in (i.e. become individually saved) if they receive Yeshua after their age of understanding and accountability. Jews who are broken off find themselves in the same unsaved condition as unsaved Gentiles but, according to Scripture, can be grafted back into their tree (i.e. regain their salvation) if they accept Yeshua. If this scenario is correct, it suggests the possibility that a Jewish-born child need never be in an unsaved condition, provided that his belief and faith in Yeshua is uninterrupted from the moment of his birth to his age of understanding and accountability. We rely on God’s compassion and mercy for the salvation of young non-Jewish children.

#### Case 2

When the Jewish establishment rejected Yeshua (or possibly earlier when Israel corporately breached the Mosaic Covenant), Israel lost its corporate salvation. As a consequence, by the time Romans was written, all Jews began their lives unconnected to their olive tree and had to be grafted-in in exactly the same way as the Gentiles. This continues until today.

I lean toward Case 1 because Romans 11:17-18 says:

*“And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.”*

The branches referred to are Jews, so the words “*some of the branches were broken off*” implies that some had not previously been broken off; this infers that new-born Jews begin their lives connected to the tree.

I would very much appreciate your taking the time to analyze my thoughts in the first paragraph, and also on Cases 1 & 2.

**Dan then replied:**

Mike, let me start from a different perspective. The overwhelming consensus of scholars today (but weaker when I was in graduate school) was that The Torah presents a theology called “Covenant Nomism.” This means that the salvation of Israel was a result of God's gracious election and not their good works. It included the individual. The focus was not on life after death, but the corporate salvation of the nation. The pattern of the Exodus and the election of Israel becomes an image for the individual as well in the N. T.

For Israel to remain in covenant blessing they must walk in intended obedience. They can fall short and there is forgiveness if there is sacrifice for falling short. Israel can lose its covenant blessing and be exiled. The prophets then bring a distinction between the remnant that is faithful and those that go astray. This leads to the idea of having a good end re: life after death. It is those who walk out the covenant of grace by obedience and do not rebel against it and fall into idolatry and injustice.

The New Covenant is a “Covenant Nomism” as well. To remain in the covenant, we are called to an obedient life. The benefits of the sacrifice of Yeshua and the Spirit provide much greater grace. The corporate dimension is also not lost, as the promise of Jeremiah 31 is of the whole nation being forgiven and walking in God's ways.

Again, I think reading the section in Roots on the Mosaic Covenant will clarify this for you.

There is no earning of salvation by good works, but there is an evaluation of one's life by one's faithfulness to the covenant, and this includes good works. However, since one is already elect, it is not something that is earned, as it would be in a process where there is a declaration by God that he or she has measured up and is thus saved. This is foreign to the Bible. Does this help?

**After reading over Dan's explanation several times I responded:**

Thank you. It helps. You did not, however, respond to whether you agree with my Case1 scenario, which was:

“All Jews start off on the domestic olive tree (corporately saved) and are broken off (i.e. become individually unsaved) at some point if they reject Yeshua. Gentiles, on the other

hand, begin off the tree (i.e. unsaved) and are grafted in (i.e. become saved) if they receive Yeshua. Jews who are broken off find themselves in the same unsaved condition as unsaved Gentiles, but they can be grafted back into their tree (i.e. regain their salvation) if they accept Yeshua. If this scenario is correct, it would hold open the possibility that a Jewish child who, from birth to maturity never rejected Yeshua, might never have been in an unsaved status.”

**Dan promptly sent back:**

Yes, I think this is generally correct.

**Then I followed up with this:**

Dan, one more thing: Keeping commandments does not always infer works. It is a matter of mind-set. Yeshua said, “If you love me, keep my commandments.” It may have been the same for the Israelites under Moses. Keeping the commandments was obligatory, but even if someone kept them scrupulously, if he did not have a heart connection for God, he would not have been marked for salvation. That way of thinking would mean that salvation was always achieved through love of God as evidenced by works of obedience – not through works alone. Do you concur?

**And Dan replied:**

Yes, I agree with this.

**CONCLUSION:**

So that is the correspondence I wanted to share with you. I have already said why I thought this was important for you to experience, which is (1) the subjects of salvation, grace and works are important to understand, and (2) it is a window into a real-life discussion by two of your leaders who are friends, but who are willing to confront each other, debate with each other, and compromise when appropriate, in order to resolve differences, and produce a useful product for the Kingdom. As for the several theological theories and speculations you were let in on, most are not Dan’s and my hard and fast conclusions. Hopefully though, that which was said will cause you to think through the issues yourselves, study the relevant Scriptures, and develop your own convictions.

There is yet another reason for this message, and that is to make you aware of this not-often-known way in which your congregation Ohev Yisrael, and your apostolic covering, Tikkun International, are involved in theological work to serve the Messianic Jewish movement broadly. And although it is service of a different kind, I would be remiss not to also mention the national influence your elder Scott has through his work as Regional Director in the UMJC. All of these important works are made possible by you – the members of Ohev Yisrael – who maintain your congregation’s ministries and infrastructure, support it and your leaders through your prayers and tithes, and who are yourselves Ohev’s, Tikkun’s, and the UMJC’s, next tier of national leaders.

I thank you for the privilege of sharing this with you, and invite you to follow the progress of Dan’s and my book as chapters of it are regularly posted on Tikkun’s web site.