

Righteousness before Messiah:

It would be easy (and in fact, it is very common) to read a typical translation of Romans 3:10-11 and believe that absolutely no one in the entire world (at the time Paul wrote Romans) had ever been righteous!

This apparently was not just Paul's opinion but the Almighty's as well!

Understanding Right:

Romans 3: 10-11:

10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

Note that the Apostle Paul doesn't just state that there is no righteous people, but clearly in beginning with 'As it is written', he was referring to the Hebrew Scriptures, to the Tanakh and therefore to a truth from God which applied to all peoples and all times. If this were true though, would it not also apply to Yeshua? Isn't Yeshua also a man who lived before Paul wrote these apparent quotes from the Tanakh?

Even worse, not only is absolutely no-one, including Yeshua righteous (according to most English translations of Romans; and taking these verses out of context; as well as without considering any possible Hebraisms in use here), but no-one even understands or seeks after God!

Given that many Christians would also be well indoctrinated with the understanding that there is absolutely no hope without the 'atoning blood of Christ', perhaps most would think these verses sound believable and not discordant.

So is this apparent statement¹ of the Apostle Paul really 'written' in the Tanakh, and is it really the inspired and infallible Word of the Almighty?

Let us consider a few scriptures from the Tanakh:

Look at Psalm 14 for example.

Psalms 14: 1, 3-4

*1 The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; **There is no one who does good.***

*3 They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; **There is no one who does good, not even one.***

4 Do all the workers of wickedness not know, who eat up my people as they eat bread, and do not call upon the Lord?

5 There they are in great dread; For God is with the righteous generation

Verse 1 doesn't just say though that there is no one who does good, that's only the last part of the verse. How does the verse start out? It is the fool who says there is no God – it is the fool who is wicked and **there is not one person who says this who is good.**

That is, this reference to on one doing good is ONLY speaking about fools!

Look carefully at v4. This further emphasizes that those who do not do good are the wicked. In other words, the statement is not universal; there are righteous (non-wicked) who do good. We then see in Ps 14:5 that they are in fact many, **a whole generation**, who are righteous.

The following are some more scriptures that attest to this:

Genesis 6:9

*These are the records of the generations of Noah. **Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God.***

Genesis 7:1

*Then the Lord said to Noah, "Enter the ark, you and all your household, **for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this time.***

¹ The serious issues with Romans 3:10-18 were raised by Frank Selch. He has made an in-depth study of this passage and others, which will soon be published in his latest book.

Exodus 23:7

Keep far from a false charge, **and do not kill the innocent or the righteous**, for I will not acquit the guilty.

Numbers 32:11-12

11 None of the men who came up from Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob; for they did not follow Me fully,

12 except Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua the son of Nun, **for they have followed the Lord fully.**'

1 Kings 14:8

"... and tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you--yet you have not been like **My servant David, who kept My commandments and who followed Me with all his heart, to do only that which was right in My sight;**

1 Kings 15:5

because **David did what was right in the sight of the Lord**, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the case of Uriah the Hittite.

2 Kings 23:25

Before him there was no king like him who turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him.

Psalms 97:10-12

10 Hate evil, you who love the Lord, Who preserves **the souls of His godly ones**; He delivers them from the hand of the wicked.

11 **Light is sown like seed for the righteous and gladness for the upright in heart.**

12 Be glad in the Lord, **you righteous ones**, and give thanks to His holy name.

Psalms 106:3

How blessed are those who keep justice, **who practice righteousness at all times!**

Proverbs 13:5-6

5 **A righteous man hates falsehood**, but a wicked man acts disgustingly and shamefully.

6 **Righteousness guards the one whose way is blameless**, But wickedness subverts the sinner.

Job 1:1

There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was **Job**; **and that man was blameless**, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil.

Jeremiah 20:12

Yet, O Lord of hosts, You who test the righteous, Who see the mind and the heart; let me see Your vengeance on them; For to You I have set forth my cause.

Psalms 32:11

Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, **you righteous ones**; and shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart.

There is however a passage in the Tanakh that states that there is no one who does good. It is Ecclesiastes 7:20 "**Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins.**"

Here we can see that people can be righteous even though there is no one who is always, in every moment or every day, good. Righteousness though is not about perfection, it's about a connection with God that brings a swift response of repentance upon the understanding that transgression has taken place.

Did the Apostle Paul know that there were in fact many righteous ones? According to Romans 1:17 he did, because here he endorses Habbakuk, and quotes Hab 2:4 '**...but the just [righteous] shall live by his faith[fullness]...'**

So when we revisit Romans 3:10-11, we may need to consider that some redacting (editing) has occurred, if we believe Paul's own admission that he was a Torah scholar and would have know his Hebrews Scriptures extremely well.

In fact, I believe that Paul, though a reformer, remained very much a part of the Judaism of his time, and in fact based almost all his writings on the ideology of the Sh'ma (see my 'The Apostle Paul: disciple or fraud' and 'The Mystery of Romans' for some details on this).

Therefore, as a believer in the One God of Israel, and a part of the eternal covenantal relationship that Israel has with the Almighty, Paul was ultimately trying to show how his gentile readers could join with Israel in worshipping the One God, through 'faith in Yeshua'.

So when we recognize that Romans 3:10-11 (including verses 12-18 as well), as we have it must be the result of some translation/transcribing or editing error and try to seek what scripture, if any the Apostle Paul may have originally used in this context, it seem more possible that Ps 143:2 was the scripture being referred to in Romans 3:10-11.

Ps 143:2 read *'Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight no one living is righteous.'* Frank Selch points out though that the Hebrew does not say *'in your sight'* but *'before your face'*. We can perhaps now recognize that in this context, that is, when compared with the righteous of the Almighty, no man's righteous comes close; it is cast into such a shadow as to make this a valid comparative statement.

To repeat there are a great many scriptures that indicate that there were righteous amongst the living, at least during the times of the Hebrew Scriptures.

The next verse (v11 *There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.*) is just as problematic.

Consider the cry of King David (Ps 27:8) *'When You said, "Seek My face", my heart said to You, "Your face, LORD, I will seek."*, and (Ps 40:16) *'Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; let such as love Your salvation say continually, "The Lord be magnified!"*.

Also Isaiah writes, *'With my soul I have desired You in the night, yes, by my spirit within me I will seek You early...'* Isa 26:9 and *'Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, you who seek the Lord...'* Isa. 51:1.

Note also that Romans 3:12 states that there is not a single person who does good as well as yet in 2 Kings 22:2 we read: *'And he (Josiah) did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.'*

When we read these passages from the Tanakh, we see that there have been many considered righteous or blameless before God and hence many who found favour in the Almighty's eyes and were considered 'saints' and 'saved', that is, assured of a place in the Coming Age.

So when we come to the time of Yeshua, had something of monumental significance happened just **before** Yeshua came on the scene so that man could no longer be righteous and blameless before God, if he was obedient to Torah and lived with a circumcised heart?

Apparently not. We read neither in history, nor in the pages of the NT that the Almighty had changed the rules. In fact, to further confirm that God had not changed His mind and changed His rules, let us briefly visit his 'covenants', the agreements he had made with man and with his Covenantal People, Israel.

Covenants:

Contextually it is important to consider that the Scriptures regarding righteousness quoted above were stated within a community who had a very special relationship with the Almighty through the Abrahamic covenant.

A covenant is an agreement that usually involves a commitment of some sort from both parties. Biblical covenants were also often sealed with blood, in some way to highlight the seriousness of the agreement². As an agreed relationship involving some terms of interaction, we can perhaps envision how a relationship may change in some ways, even over generations, as the people involved either move closer in their relationship or they move further away. Thus a covenant is a process.

Rabbi Irving Greenberg explains: *The covenant of Israel turns the Exodus into an ongoing process. ... If goodness will not be imposed by power, then the human must be educated toward perfection. The rabbis conceive of God as teacher and pedagogue--teaching Torah to Israel and to the world. ... Judaism proposes to achieve its infinite goals in finite steps. The covenant makes it possible to move toward ultimate perfection, one step at a time.*

There are inevitable compromises between the ideal and reality because a push to override all obstacles now would result in all the deformations of the revolutionary method. But is not compromise a sellout? No, covenantal compromises are legitimate because they are not the end of the process.

2 Sacrifices were regarded as a renewal of the covenant. See Ps 50:5 *"Gather to me my faithful ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!"*

Righteousness before Messiah

Each generation lives up to the Exodus principles to the extent possible in its generation and tries to advance a bit further, closer to the level of perfection. ... Here is how the ideal/real interaction works: In the Torah, some of the Exodus principles are practiced at once. The weak, the widow, the orphan, the outsiders are treated kindly and with justice. There is one law for the citizen and the outsider. Human life is precious; murder is the ultimate crime.

On the other hand, Israel, too, must make concessions to reality. ... Any covenant that respects freedom must allow for process.

For example: Despite the Exodus, slavery was not abolished at once. Hebrew slaves were liberated within six years and treated kindly in the interim. Canaanite slavery continued but with a restriction: If a slave was physically abused, the slave was set free. Over the course of centuries, slavery was further ameliorated and then abolished.

Another example: Human life is in the image of God, so it is sacred. Therefore, anyone who destroys human life deserves the ultimate sanction--to be put to death. In principle, capital punishment for homicide is required because it affirms the seriousness of murder and upholds the sanctity of life. However, death is ultimately contradictory to human value, so capital punishment was steadily restricted. For all practical purposes, capital punishment was abolished by the halakhah (Jewish law).

Because the goal of perfection cannot be achieved in one generation, the covenant is, of necessity, a treaty between all the generations... The covenant is binding, not just because it is juridical (that is, commanded) but because people continually accept its goal and become bound to its process. The present generation is neither the slavish follower of the tradition handed down by past generations nor an autonomous community free to tamper with past practices or to reject past goals. Each generation is a partner entering into the covenantal responsibility and process and thus joining the transgenerational covenantal community."

– extracts from http://www.myjewishlearning.com/holidays/Jewish_Holidays/Shavuot/Themes_and_Theology/Covenant_as_Process.shtml

As covenants are agreements between two parties, they presuppose some 'history', some previous interactions, and usually involve some restorative element. Often covenants are renewed or re-stated so as to improve the relationship even further or perhaps to bring in new factors or parties to the agreement.

One of the distinctions between the Noahide (Gen 9:8-17) and the Abrahamic covenants (Gen. 15:18, Gen 17), though was the Noahide was made with all humanity at the time, whereas the Abrahamic, was made with a specific sub-group of people though Abraham and his descendents through the line of Isaac (Gen 17:21; Gen 26:3-5; 26:24) and Jacob/Israel (Gen 27:28-29; Gen 28:14-15).

When we look though at the long term purposes of the Abrahamic covenant, we see that it was essentially a refinement (and therefore in a sense, a renewal), of the Noahide³ covenant with all humanity, because the Almighty's plan was that through His Covenantal People being a light unto the Nations, all the earth would ultimately be blessed.

We see that with the arrival of Isaac, and then of Jacob (renamed Israel), the Almighty reiterates His Abrahamic covenant and at the same time expands and develops the relationship via the covenantal conditions added. For example, we see that God explains to Jacob, that not only will the people of Israel be blessed in the Land of Israel, but that the Almighty will send them throughout all the earth to be a blessing to all mankind before ultimately bringing them back to Eretz Israel.

If we pause in this review of the history of the Covenantal People, Israel; we may well ask, did they therefore need a new covenant? Initially no, but after the time of slavery in Egypt, after this time of refinement through great suffering, with the arrival of Moses there was a need to re-establish, redefine and renew (that is, improve) the relationship (the covenant).

Note that the Abrahamic covenant is renewed with Israel at Sinai **before** the giving of the 2 Tablets or the Ten Commandments or 10 Words (Ex 19:8).

Ex 19: 5-8

"Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel. So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these

³ While scholars argue as to whether or not there was an Adamic covenant (According to Ben Sira, God made a covenant of life even with the first man (Ecclus. [Sirach] 17:12), clearly the Almighty had a plan that the first Adam failed to properly fulfil. Thus, all these future covenants were part of a process leading to the new creation where the second 'Adam' would bring to fruition the original plan of a perfect and lasting Kingdom of God.

words that the LORD had commanded him. All the people answered together and said, All that the LORD has spoken we will do..."

The Abrahamic covenant was a covenant of grace (based on the faithfulness of Abraham) and not a covenant of works (circumcision being a sign of the covenant enacted only after the agreement and relationship was established). Thus, its renewal⁴ with Moses at Sinai was also an act of grace.

It is quite clear in Exodus 6:2-8 that it is the Abrahamic covenant that God is speaking of when he informs Moses of the coming return to the land of Canaan:

Ex 6: 2-8 "God spoke to Moses and said to him, I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them. I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. Say therefore to the people of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD."

With the Mt Sinai event though we see an further advancement or improvement of the Abrahamic covenant though, in that, with Moses being born into the priestly line of Levi, the nature of the Land and it's people is changed to a land or kingdom of priests (Ex 19:6).

The 2 Tablets of the 10 Words clearly gave the foundational moral code in more explicit detail than it had been given before (the 10 Words were not exactly new – we see the Sabbath mentioned at the description of creation; we know that Abraham had rejected the pagan Gods and turned to the One True God; we know that marriage; fidelity; honesty; rejection of murder, etc were already understood to be characteristics of righteousness).

But given that the Covenantal People were now to be a kingdom of priests (to the Gentiles around them who were not priests) we would also expect details of priestly rules and regulations would be given as well. Note also that the original Abrahamic covenant (and it's various updates) can still remain in force, even if at some future time the Levitical Priesthood was removed and replaced by a more perfect one.

After all, even at this time Moses had called Israel to be "circumcised of heart" (Deuteronomy 4:29; 10:12), which has always been the condition that all the outward markers were to point to.

The Abrahamic covenant, having been renewed at Sinai, was renewed a further four times in the history of Israel: by Moses in the plains of Moab (Deut. 29: 1, 9); by Joshua before his death (Joshua 24:25); by the high priest Jehoiada after the idolatrous Queen Athaliah had been deposed, and young Jehoash proclaimed king (2 Kings 11:17); and finally by King Josiah after the book of the Torah had been found in the Temple and "all the words of the book of the covenant" had been read before all the people (II Kings 23: 2-3).

It is also important to recognize that the Abrahamic covenant is an eternal covenant, in which only the Almighty was committed to keeping (see Genesis 15). That is, it remains in force and binding regardless of the actions or failures of Israel. While the Almighty may bring curses upon them (see Deut 29,30), He promised to never totally forsake them.

The New Covenant:

Now, with the appreciation of how Israel's covenant with the Almighty (which began with the Father of Israel, Abraham), has been re-established, refined and renewed a number of times, consider this prophecy in Ezekiel 36:

⁴ *"Notice the similarity between Abraham's and Moses' ministries. Both were called to enter the Promised Land from the outside and to take possession of the covenant promises; both led an exodus; Abraham even went down to Egypt and was driven out and back to the Promised Land on different occasions. Both were called upon to circumcise their seed as a sign of the covenant (Exodus 4:24), judging by God's anger at Moses for not applying the covenant sanctions and thereby further establishing the continuity between the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants. Finally, both died before possession of the land was ensured. Thus, the Mosaic covenant is a resurrection of the Abrahamic. Dumbrell, however, presses with further proof of a continuity between the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants. He says, "The separation of Israel from her broad cultural environment (the Exodus'), her invitation to obey a covenant already existing, her call to be a light to lighten the Gentiles – the model for the world that her role would provide – all of this is confessedly Abrahamic in its tenor.*

As the continuity of the exodus narratives suggests (compare Exod. 3:13-15; 6:1-8), the Sinai covenant was in fact a particularization of Gen. 12:1-3 in the experience of Israel. Like Abraham, Israel was called outside of the land that would be hers. Like Abram, Israel would be a great nation (goy), occupying a "promised land." Like Abram, the world would find its source of blessing in this Israel." – 'The Mosaic Covenant' by Ray R Sutton (1992)

Ezek 36: 24-30

*" 24 **Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came.***

*23 **And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.***

*24 **I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land.***

*25 **I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.***

*26 **And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.***

*27 **And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.***

*28 **You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.***

*29 **And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. And I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you.***

*30 **I will make the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field abundant, that you may never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations."***

Two points to notice here.

This prophecy is to Israel and is clearly a renewal and refinement of their Covenant with the Almighty (see Deuteronomy 30:1-10) despite their failure at times to live up to the terms and expectations of the covenantal relationship. Notice that this refinement involves giving them a 'new heart' meaning a new attitude and openness to God's leading. Secondly though, there are some amazing specifics in the details here, in particular, that the Jewish people will be returned to the Land of Israel and that the land once desolate (as per the curse of the covenant in Deut 29) will again produce food in abundance. This prophecy appears to be being fulfilled before our very eyes!⁵

So now, having seen that being given 'new hearts and spirits' is a part of the on-going process of the Covenantal relationship that Israel has with the Almighty, we are ready to reconsider the 'New Covenant' of Jeremiah 31.

Jeremiah 31:31-34

31 "Here, the days are coming," says ADONAI, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Isra'el and with the house of Y'hudah. 32 It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers on the day I took them by their hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt; because they, for their part, violated my covenant, even though I, for my part, was a husband to them," says ADONAI. 33 "For this is the covenant I will make with the house of Isra'el after those days," says ADONAI: "I will put my Torah within them and write it on their hearts; I will be their God, and they will be my people. 34 No longer will any of them teach his fellow community member or his brother, 'Know ADONAI'; for all will know me, from the least of them to the greatest; because I will forgive their wickednesses and remember their sins no more." (CJB)

The term 'new covenant' (transliterated from Hebrew as 'brit chadash') could also be translated as 're-newed covenant' (see for example, The NET Bible footnotes Jeremiah 31:31: Or "a renewed covenant"). Regardless, the intent here, as in Ezekiel 36, is a further, though very significant, refinement or improvement of the original Abrahamic covenant.

This 'new covenant' is still with Israel despite their failure at times to maintain the terms of the covenant. This 'new covenant'; this improvement and development, does not, and can not remove or do away with the Abrahamic covenant and its refinements through the Sinai covenant, etc.

Some seem to have got hung up on Jeremiah's use of 'new' as if that meant some sort of replacement of something else that was 'old'. This is clearly not the case when seen in the proper context of Israel's covenantal relationship with the Almighty.

Consider the term 'new moon' (the Hebrew word for new moon being a derivative of the word for new/renew). When we see a 'new moon' it is not a different moon that has replaced the old moon from the previous month, but a 'renewing' of the cycle of life. Note also that in verse 32, where we read that this 'new' covenant is not like the covenant after the exodus from Egypt, the reason for the difference is not because Israel has been rejected, but because Israel 'violated' this covenant, but they will not violate this improvement.

⁵ See my article 'Israel's Return in Belief or Unbelief' at www.circumcisedheart.info

Some scholars have argued that the 'New Covenant' of Jeremiah was fulfilled with the return from Babylon. While there may have been a great number who made 'aliyah' (returned to Eretz Israel), whose hearts were truly circumcised, this improved covenantal relationship clearly did not last.

Some of the most brilliant scholars of recent times who have studied the times of Yeshua have seen many signs during that time of a spirit of the New Covenant relationship.

For example, Prof. David Flusser argues in 'Judaism and the Second Temple Period' that comments in the Damascus Document that refer to '*the converts of Israel, who left the land of Judah and lived in the land of Damascus*' (CD 6.5), and to '*all the men who entered the new covenant in the land of Damascus* (CD 8.21, and see also 10.19; 19.34; 20.21).' (page xii) relate to a Jewish sect that existed some 50+ years before the time of Yeshua.

Flusser also argues that the Essenes saw themselves as members of the New Covenant: "*The members of the Qumran community, on the other hand, believed themselves to be the only group faithful to the spirit and the letter of the covenant with God. They were, moreover, convinced that their own congregation, with its unique lifestyle and religious observance, is the new covenant of which Jeremiah prophesied. Thus their view that "futile are all those who do not know the covenant, and all those who scorn his word he shall cause to vanish from the world" (1QS 5.19).*" ('Judaism and the Second Temple Period' page 253).

Other scholars have argued that the times of Yeshua were indeed a 'New Covenant' time, based not only on the arrival of Yeshua, but also on the activities of the various Jewish sects: "*Finally God inspired the long-expected new covenant, an incredible vitality in Judaism that produced the Pharisees' wisdom and charity, the Sadducees' liturgical enthusiasm, the Zealots' deep commitment to social action and the Essenes' mystical purity.*" - Philip Culbertson, in '*The Pharisaic Jesus and His Gospel Parables*'.

The most important point in all this is that the New Covenant was really a step forward in God's agenda and relationship with the Jewish people, and while we may all await its full appearance with the arrival of the Coming Age, the Kingdom of God; it is most important to recognize that the movement of 'Christ-followers' does not have exclusive access to this covenantal relationship. That is, the overall context of this covenantal relationship is that it is a relationship of Israel with God and not the church or some Gentile denomination within the church.

If, when reading the NT we appear to read that this Abrahamic/Sinai/Mt Gerizim/New Covenant has been torn from the Jewish people and given exclusively to mostly Gentile and Hellenistic followers of 'Christ' (a Greek term for a Hebraic role and concept), we need to seriously question our reading and interpretation, because any such interpretation is in serious conflict with, and contradiction to the Tanakh's clear message to God's Covenantal people.

Many will of-course still object, and refer to certain NT scriptures, especially from the Epistle to the Hebrews. Here, I strongly recommend Frank Selch's 'The Covenant in Hebrews 8 & 9'⁶, where Frank demonstrates most emphatically that it is the 'new priesthood' which is primarily being referred to as having replaced the Levitical Priesthood, not any replacement of the Abrahamic or Mosaic covenant.

To highlight a little of Frank's excellent article, consider a typical translation of Hebrews 9:1 such as the ESV: "*Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness.*". The word covenant in this verse is not in any of the Greek versions. At least the King James Version puts the word 'covenant' in italics to indicate that it is an editorial addition. But when considered properly in context (including the fact that the 'first' if applied to covenant would be the Noahide or Abrahamic, and certainly not the Mosaic Covenant), it should be abundantly clear that this verse is referring to the 'first' **priesthood** NOT covenant.

Thus a better translation is given by Frank: Hebrews 9:1 "*Therefore, even the first (priesthood) had divine services that were established by Torah to serve The Sacred and the earthly.*" Please read Frank Selch's complete article to properly grasp the issues here.

Salvation and Yeshua:

Without going into detail on a topic I have dealt with in depth elsewhere, it is interesting now to reflect on what changed with the arrival of Yeshua. Appreciating now that righteousness and hence (individual) 'salvation' was possible within the covenantal relationship of Israel with God; we can see that Yeshua's statement that he only came for the 'lost sheep' of the House of Israel makes good sense. In other words, he was acknowledging that the 'sheep' who weren't lost had no

⁶ Available from www.theolivetreeconnection.com

need of a physician. His interaction with Zaccheus also makes this clear. When Zaccheus repents of his sins and commits to proper restitution to demonstrate his changed heart, Yeshua indicates that salvation has come to Zaccheus' household.

A challenging question then is "Was the crucifixion (sacrifice?) of Yeshua necessary?", the answer appears to be no. And yet, remembering that 'sacrifice is a means of renewal of the covenant' (Ps 50:5), perhaps the crucifixion was a pivotal sign of the introduction of the New Covenant after-all?

The Apostle Paul in Romans (the epistle we started with) makes it clear that the crucifixion and resurrection of Yeshua was a game changer that meant a new path had been opened for Gentile inclusion in the Kingdom as Gentiles and not proselytized Jews (Prof. Mark Nanos explains this brilliantly in *'The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter'* – I have written a brief overview of his position in my article *'The Mystery of Romans: A Torah and Shema Centric View'* at www.circumcisedheart.info).

Conclusion:

Returning to the original question and faulty interpretation/translation of Romans 3:10-11, it is hopefully clear now that for anyone in a relationship with God; whether Jewish and part of the Covenantal relationship with the Almighty; or a Gentile who has become a child of Abraham through the 'circumcision' of Yeshua (Col 2:11); can walk righteously before God in obedience to Micah's call (Micah 6:8) and Yeshua's reiteration in Matt 23:23.

Further consideration of this understanding of covenantal relationship leading to righteousness and salvation may also open Gentile minds to the possibility that though many Jews, as the Apostle Paul informs us, may be 'stumbling' in terms of not recognizing their Messiah, their 'salvation' is not dependent on this act of faith. Paul was confident that 'all Israel would be saved' (Isaiah 45, Romans 11:26).

If this thought stimulates or intrigues you towards further study, I have written in depth on this understanding in *'The Tripartite Salvation Paradigm'*.

Paul Herring
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www.circumcisedheart.info