

Lesson 9 - Jewish Concepts of Salvation

The topic of salvation (both Jewish and Christian) has come up in several lessons. We will take this lesson to discuss this topic directly.

A few texts from the prophets...

In order to introduce the question of "the nature of salvation in Judaism."

Isaiah 6: 8-10

Then I heard *the* voice of the Lord saying,

"Whom shall I send?

And who will go for us?"

And I said,

"I *am* here!

Send me!"

⁹ And he said, "Go and say to this people,

'Keep on listening and do not comprehend!

And keep on looking and do not understand!'

¹⁰ Make the heart of this people insensitive,

and make its ears unresponsive,

and shut its eyes

so that it may not look with its eyes

and listen with its ears

and comprehend *with* its mind

and turn back, and it may be healed *for* him."

Isaiah 55: 6-8

Seek Yahweh ₁ while he lets himself be found₁;

call him ₁ while he is₁ near.

⁷ Let *the* wicked forsake his way,

and *the* man of sin his thoughts.

And let him return to Yahweh, that he may take pity on him,

and to our God, for he will ₁ forgive manifold₁.

⁸ "For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts,

and your ways *are* not my ways,"

declares Yahweh.

Jeremiah 4: 1-2

4 If you return, O Israel," I declares J Yahweh,
"you return to me.
And if you remove your abominations from my I presence J,
and you do not wander,
2 and you swear, ' I As Yahweh lives J,'
in truth, in justice, and in righteousness,
then nations will be blessed by him,
and in him they will boast."

Jeremiah 31: 33-34

33 "But this is the covenant that I will I make J with the house of Israel after those days," I declares J Yahweh: "I will put my law in their inward parts and on their hearts I will write it, and I will be to them God, and they themselves will be to me people. 34 And they will no longer teach each one his neighbor, or each one his brother, I saying J, 'Know Yahweh,' for all of them will know me, from their I smallest J and up to their I greatest J," I declares J Yahweh, "for I will forgive their iniquity and their sin I will no longer remember

Micah 6: 6-8

What Does Yahweh Require?

6 With what shall I approach Yahweh,
and bow down to God on high?
Shall I approach him with burnt offerings,
with bull calves I a year old J?
7 Will Yahweh be pleased with thousands of rams,
with myriads of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
8 He has told you, O mortal, what is good,
and what does Yahweh ask from you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

I would ask people to reflect on the similarity between the above texts to the notion of "inward transformation" one sees in some central Christian texts, e.g.:

Matthew 5: 38-48

The Sermon on the Mount: Retaliation

38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' **39** But I say to you, do not resist the evildoer, but whoever strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other to him also.

40 And the one who wants to go to court with you and take your tunic, let him have your outer garment also. **41** And whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. **42** Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

The Sermon on the Mount: Love for Enemies

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor' and 'Hate your enemy.' **44** But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, **45** in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven, because he causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust. **46** For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not the tax collectors also do the same? **47** And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing that is remarkable? Do not the Gentiles also do the same? **48** Therefore you be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

I'd also suggest that, at some point (not necessarily this week) people reread Dickens' A Christmas Carol: Scrooge's "conversion" -- and the kind of joy he finds upon "awakening" from his serial nightmare -- epitomizes, I think, a lot of what the prophets mean by "salvation."