

**JUSTICE AND
RIGHTEOUSNESS
IN SCRIPTURE
AN ABC MONOGRAPH**

DEFINITIONS

The Hebrew concepts of “justice” and “righteousness” flow from root terms

(a) ZEDQA[SHEPHET=JUSTICE]

(b) ZADIKUTHA [ZEDEQ=RIGHTEOUSNESS].

(a) SHEPHET is from the radical “to set up” and is exemplified in “setting up a tomb” as a *permanent* locus to be respected or in the “building of a stone sheepfold” to be “*in loco*” for generations. From this notion comes the idea of the “judge” as a professional or constant symbol of righteousness and “statute law” as its permanent embodiment. The swearing in of “judges” because they become for at least the duration of an administration a hallmark of justice is of great moment.

(b) ZEDEQ is a term that takes its original meaning from the idea of a “straight lance or pole”.

Hence righteousness is straight and sturdy.

The Hebrew ZADIQ as in Nehemiah 9.8 features God as ZADIQ or “one who fulfils His promises. Thus righteousness is linked with faithfulness of word and promise. This is of vital moment in the political framework. Righteousness relates to the

character of the person and through the person of the institution that person represents.

The Greek word for “Justice” is δικαίος and it is best described by Aristotle who believed it was a combination of διχλα and ισος (“two” and “equal”) from which source we get our idea of the scales of justice. Requisite to the application of justice is “skill” and “wisdom” as well as “fairness”.

Solomon’s discretion concerning the two women and their babies is a prime example.

The Greek word “righteousness” δικαιοσύνη simply adds a “SUNE” or “with” to the termination in this way extending the meaning to “imputing” or “sharing” justice or the fruits of righteousness. Hence we speak of “justification” or “imputed righteousness”. More generally its practice is enhanced by the application of Christ’s teaching and principles of righteousness

(a) EXAMPLES OF [JUSTICE]

1. GENESIS 18.19

GOD IS SOVEREIGN AND THE SHEET ANCHOR OF JUSTICE HAVING THE WHOLE WORLD IN HIS HAND

“Shall not the judge [HA-SHOPHET) of all the earth do right”[MISHPAT]. i.e. act aright and in

line with statute law as it reflects His righteous nature.

The case at appeal was the future of Sodom and its inhabitants. God promised to act to secure the righteous but gave no undertaking to preserve the city should it lack ten righteous. Abraham ended his prayers at what is a sort of minimum for a worship company [MINYAN]. There appears to have been no communal religious worship in Sodom.

2. JOB 8.3 Does God keep on wresting or subverting justice (where defense and punishment are issues) and is the constant perversion of righteousness what (goes) with Shaddai? *This expression might be rendered “God do so and more to you if you say God constantly perverts the right”.*
SYNOPSIS OF BILDAD’S SPEECH (8th)

‘Your sons may have sinned

You should keep praying

You would imagine God would have acted sooner

Think about papyrus it drops without water

Think about the spider’s web - intricate but swiftly destroyed

Think about a flourishing sapling - when destroyed it revives as if the destroyer never uprooted it! This disdain of the destroyer is significant and is possible because God will restore the “perfect” man!’

3. PSALM 82.3

JUSTICE FOR THE DISENFRANCHISED

Give right judgment [SHIPHTU] to the weak and the fatherless enable justice [ZEDEQ] to be done for the poor and those who suffer want. Rescue the powerless and abysmally poor [Lit to enable to slip away"]. Enable their *liberation* [Lit “snatch them”] from the hand of the noisy fraudulent ones.

4. PROVERBS 8.15

SOLOMON PREDICTS THE FUTURE

EMERGENCE OF JUSTICE BASED ON DIVINE PRINCIPLES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Planning power *Hebrew* hx[and the setting up of anything *Hebrew* hyvwt belongs to me. I am its “comprehension” or “mediate its explanation” and warrior strength belongs to me. By me kings will reign and august princes (who shall rise as the hope of the future) will have decreed justice. By me princes rule right and nobles -all the judges of righteousness. *The need for wisdom in ruling peoples goes without saying and the Spirit of God speaking in scripture is making bold to say that the One who uniquely personifies wisdom is Sovereign over kings.*

5. ISAIAH 9.7

JUST RULE YIELDS A STEADY STATE

“He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom establishing it with justice and righteousness from that time on forever”

Belonging to "the kind of greatness" the kind of government (cf. *Hebrew prefix m from nym*) He contends for there is no cutting off of such [rule] upon the throne of David and upon his kind of kingship to establish it and to sustain it (*Hebrew d[s – a verb which indicates the ongoing strength of a body well nurtured*) in the house of judgment and in the house of righteousness from now and through the age. **The jealousy** (*Hebrew tanq*) **of the Lord of hosts as a lover of His people will act to do all this sacrificially** (*Hebrew hc[)*) *This indicates the Lord will not tire of His governmental purpose and it cannot be frustrated by the politics previously prevalent..*

6. AMOS 5.24

VISION & PRAYER FOR GROWTH & WORLDWIDE EXPANSE OF JUSTICE

“Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never failing stream”(NIV).

Rather “Let justice [SHAPHAT] flow together like mighty waves and righteousness [ZEDEK] as a “perennial river” [ie “ever- existing” river] The nations call for the day of the Lord or judgment is answered by

what God wants to see both in this and in during that future age.

7. PROVERBS 4.18

THE PATH OF JUSTICE PROMOTES TRUE & FULLER ENLIGHTENMENT & EDUCATION

Do not go in the public ways of evil men; and do not keep going straight on in the way of the wicked. Reject it, do not pass into it, decline (*Hebrew hfc*) it and pass on your way. They do not sleep unless they have done evil, and they are robbed of sleep except they cause someone to fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence. The path of the righteous is as light-shining splendour of the sun-going on and shining until the full noon. (cf. 2 Peter 1.19) Just as the sovereign purposes of God take time to work out in History so the purposes of good statesmen and Christian leaders take time to gain a foothold and find acceptance and prevail.

“The mills of God grind slowly”.

8(A). ISAIAH 45.21

JUSTICE AND THE RESCUE OF THE NEEDY ARE CONTINUALLY INTERRELATED. AS THERE IS NO ULTIMATE ALTERNATIVE TO GOD (FOR LIFE ETERNAL) SO THERE IS NO VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO JUSTICE FOR QUALITY OF LIFE NOW.

"I am the LORD and there is none other. I have not spoken in secret. *God revealed to others and Moses wrote it in Genesis that God spoke in a series of edicts day on day. There was no other there but THE LORD in a classic dark place of earth. I have not given spoken revelation to Jacob's seed "to seek me" in vain. I am the LORD who speaks righteousness and makes just and straight things clear. Gather together and come together you who have been pressed and harassed, you who have escaped or slipped away from the nations. Those who carry the wood of an image and have prayed to a god who cannot save have no personal knowledge (of me). Explain and present your cause; yes let them be advised or seek counsel among themselves in meeting together. Who caused this that you have heard to be explained from ancient time? Is it not I the LORD. There is no other God without me – a just God and Messiah or Saviour. Remove me and there is none. Here the LORD shows to future generations that long ago He was setting out "the purpose of His creation". He was claiming "alone to be able to save" as illustrated by the history of Israel and Cyrus. He was claiming to "have spoken by the prophets" and claiming to be "alone planner author and maker of earth and heaven".*

8(B) ZECHARIAH 9.9

Rejoice greatly and wheel in the dance O daughter of Zion; shout O daughter of Jerusalem. Behold your king is coming to you maintaining the right or

administering reward and bringing salvation. He is gentle and rides upon an ass [rwmj] and a young or full grown colt [ry/] the son of a she ass [nta] or slow-stepper. This distinct and precise prophecy was fulfilled to the letter by the triumphal entry of Jesus to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday(cf. also Daniel 9.25 and the 173,880 days from 14.3.445BC to 6.4.AD32. The event is recorded in Matthew 21.1-7. What needs emphasis is the “joy” of that occasion-though blunted by the subsequent rejection and cry of “crucify” the event had huge potential and when the Redeemer returns to Zion as Zechariah also records in 14.3 it will also be on the Mount of Olives and the reception as recorded in Zechariah 12.10-14 will be one of repentance and sorrow at the long history of non-acceptance of Yeshua. The great lesson is that “just” rulers and leaders can receive popular acclaim but even the best administrations find support fall away and popularity can be halcyon and short-lived. Justice is often on the scaffold and wrong on the throne-but the moral is “Be patient” “Demonstrate care” and “Try again”

9. MICAH 6.8

TRIPLE LOCK ETHICS: law of the word, covenant mercy & keeping in step with God

He (the LORD) has taught you O Mankind what is better. What does the LORD continue searching or requiring from you?

- (1) But to do justice or offer as the law requires,
- (2) And to hold to covenant and care about mercy,
- (3) And to act humbly (or bow down) to walk with God.

This threefold obligation encompasses the actions of the righteous and their offering or approach to worship. Jews respect the basis of atonement as prescribed in law-""it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul". The word "doing" is not to say that our deeds replace the essential sacrifice! hc[["Do" or "Offer"]]calls in one breath for works and for His work-for accepting His desired sacrifice and doing those works that He has prepared for us to do. The second obligation requires entry into a relationship of covenant with God and faithfulness therein. The third requires conscious daily obedience in one's relationship with God.

(b)EXAMPLES OF(RIGHTEOUSNESS)

1. PSALM 23.3

THE PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

He keeps on turning my soul and His practice is to guide me back in the "winding or revolving paths" [*Heb ylgam*] of righteousness belonging to the "intention" of His name. *The paths that sheep tread on steep and inhospitable terrain are "winding paths". The Shepherd of Psalm 23 appears to adopt*

those paths. They are narrow and indirect but they are “tried and tested” and they are “safe”.

2. PSALM 40.9

RIGHTEOUSNESS IS COMMUNICABLE AND THE MEANS BY WHICH ITS BENEFITS ARE GIFTED NEEDS TO BE HERALDED.

“I announce the glad tidings of righteousness in the big assembly-I do not deal my lips.”

David was as aware as NT heralds that the core of righteousness lay in relationship to God and that in the Old Testament centered not primarily on obedience to the law and offerings but to the renewal of the heart and the blotting out of transgression together with the gift of the Holy Spirit and these demanded a right relationship to God.

3. PSALM 51.19

THE SACRIFICES OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN

Moses in Deuteronomy 33.19 predicts that nations will offer “the sacrifices of the righteous man” just as David in Psalm 51.19 speaks of this sacrifice as one “seen to go up to God” as “sacrifices of a righteous one” The Hebrew hlw[[l] up + [eye or seeing] is used of such sacrifice as being from “complete” and “seen to go up to God” (i.e. acceptable). James speaks of prayer as such a sacrifice [James 5.16]. So we learn that whether in the prophesied bringing of nations together in the latter days or in resettling the sinner in a

relationship with God as in Psalm 51 prayer is integral to righteousness.

4. PSALM 85.10

THE WAY OF CHRIST

THE AMALGAMATION OF JUSTICE AND KINDNESS TO THE POINT OF SUFFERING HAS EXTRAORDINARY POTENTIAL

Covenant love and truth [“grace” and “justice” Heb & Aramaic] or faithfulness strike an agreement: righteousness and peace have met in affection or loving kiss. *At the cross the covenant of God and the truth (justice of God) in Christ-the love of God in the gift of His Son which featured the bringing of "peace with God" and the imputation of righteousness set the scene for "new life" and centuries of "revival" which issue in a worldwide garnering of saints and the provision of life. The most amazing act of all history combines justice and mercy or grace in one frame and sets the scene for the approach to wrong worldwide.*

5. PROVERBS 11.18

RIGHTEOUSNESS IS SURE TO BE REWARDED

“He that sows righteousness reaps a sure reward”.

A woman or wife of grace hold up or retains honour and fierce men retain riches. The man of covenant mercy does well (*Hebrew lmg*) by his own life or soul but the fierce poisonous man (*Hebrew rzka*) brings sorrow or trouble to his own marriage or relatives. The noisy, violent man

carries out *long prepared and strenuous* (Hebrew *l/p*) deeds of deception but to him who sows righteousness the wages are truth or perpetuity or fidelity. As righteousness leads to life so the pursuer of evil belongs to death. *The wisest of men explains that however complex the web of iniquity and strenuous its plot the sowing of one's life and time and energy in good ground will reap without fail whereas the other will bring ruin.*

6. PROVERBS 14.34 (29-35)

VICE RUINS RIGHTEOUSNESS RESCUES

"Righteousness exalts a nation, sin is a reproach to a people"

(a)He who is "long of nose" is of great understanding. *This transliteration is somewhat humorous but it means that longsuffering relates to the appreciation of any situation of person.* **(b)He who is "short of Spirit" lifts folly high** *The expression means weak as to controlling his spirit and so soon angry* **A sound heart is the life of the flesh.** *The word "sound" is Hebrew *apr* which can be taken as an onomatopoeic word for the quick regular sound of stitches made by a skilled seamstress-it may also mean a "healed heart" one that is "comforted". The word *apr* is related to *hpr* which means "relaxed" so we can also say that the heart does best free of serious recurrent tensions.* **But jealousy is progressive decay to the bones. (c)He who injures or extorts the poor counts his maker of little worth. Our attitude to the poor is as our attitude to God. (d)In his wickedness the evil man is overturned or thrust away and the righteous has a refuge in his death. (e)In the heart of**

the one who understands himself Spirituality (or wisdom) rests and what is in the midst (bowels) of big bound fools will be made known.

(f) Righteousness raises up a body public or a republic (*Hebrew yg as a corpse from death*) and sin is a contempt or reproach to peoples (*Hebrew ma*)

(g) The king's favour is directed towards a servant of prudence (*Literal Hebrew lykc which means "one who looks diligently at"*) and his outpoured anger will be upon him who acts to cause shame.

7. PROVERBS 24.16

RIGHTEOUSNESS IS OFTEN KNOCKED BACK OR KNOCKED DOWN BUT NOT KNOCKED OUT

Do not destroy or lay waste the quiet home of the righteous! (*Hebrew zbr*) **For a righteous man may fall seven times and rise but the wicked will sink together in calamity** (*The righteous may fall or fail for a time to achieve an end in view [Hebrew lpn] whereas the wicked will fall from weariness or seduction [lvk] or from wholesale weakness*). *The moral is to persist in righteous ends*

8. ISAIAH 32.16

THE WORK OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IN A NUTSHELL-PEACE

Justice will dwell as in a tent in the wilderness (*Hebrew rbdm – the sandy area with green patches where flocks feed*) and righteousness remain or sit enthroned in the

Garden (Hebrew "Carmel"). *It is a picture of Paradise regained and of absence of encirclement and threat. The product of Righteousness's labour (Hebrew hv[]) will be peace (Shalom) and the ministry of righteousness rest beyond strife (Hebrew fqv) and confidence (Hebrew jfb) for an entire era. My people will dwell in a rest of peace (Shalom) -in secure dwellings and tranquil places of rest. This great promise attached to the time when Messiah comes is understandably awaited by ultra orthodox Jews who do not see this coming to pass by political arrangement or military belligerence. Though to hail it hails the forest and in lowliness the city will be brought low. Blessed are you sowers upon all waters, who send out the feet of the ox and the donkey. In former times the ox and ass were sent out in other lands to prepare the land under water for sowing rice and it would appear that rice crops will be cultivated in Messiah's time. That such abundance of water would turn parts of Israel into paddy fields is at present not in mind but times change and habits change with them.*

9. ISAIAH59.17

SOMETHING OF THE BENEFITS OF THE FIRST ADVENT AND THE JUDGMENT OF THE SECOND ARE SEEN IN ISAIAH ie justice in its two aspects

The LORD saw it and it was evil in His eyes for there was no (application) of justice. He was watching or will watch for there was no man. He will have been astonished that there was none to supplicate or make

peace *Hebrew* [gp and His arm brought His salvation and His righteousness sustains Him. He clothed Himself in righteousness as a coat of mail and a helmet (*the word "helmet" [bwk on His head He put on the garments of avenging blood as clothes, and He will wrap Himself in ardent zeal or love as an outer garment We see the zeal of Christ not His vengeance. According to their actions He will recompense fury to His persecutors and recompense [benefits?] to his personal enemies. and recompense[benefits?] to the islands.*

10. AMOS 5.24 (SEE PART 1)

11. MATTHEW 5.20

RIGHTEOUSNESS GLORIOUSLY AND GRATUITOUSLY AVAILABLE

“Except your righteousness exceed that of the scribes & Pharisees you will in no case enter the kingdom of heaven”. *The self righteousness of the religious establishment had its commentary in the separation of the “Essenes” from the Jerusalem elite but its true critique came with the model Christ exemplified. This righteousness was by investiture of Christ through the Holy Spirit. Paul (cf. Romans 10.5-6) described it as no uncertain experience. It was full of assurance that heaven was one’s home and hell could never be one’s destiny because its validity was divine grace and faith in the reality of the atoning death of Jesus Christ. As in*

Genesis 15.6 it was “imputed” or counted to the repentant sinner on account of the redeemer’s blood.

12. JOHN 16.8

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS COME IN POWER

Our Lord advised of three consequences to follow the coming of the Paraclete. The world would be more widely and deeply shaken out of its complacency. We do well to look carefully at the *περι* (*things surrounding; consequences, motives, aspects*) in the Greek text. Sin and its forgiveness, its consequences and motives God ward and man ward are presented to conscience and heart and mind by the Holy Spirit, so with righteousness and judgment.

1 The precise endemic problem with **sin** being that it was not seen as disbelief in Christ but breach of Moses law.

2 The precise problem with **righteousness** being that it had not been seen as “sharing in the nature & character of Christ” nor such doctrine taught.

3 The precise problem with **judgement** being that the world’s prince was drawn out of the shadows unmasked and defeated by Christ and mankind called from his into Christ’s kingdom Christ taught as disciples could “lift”, “deliberate” and “**carry**” *βασταζω* His teaching because the Holy Spirit as “the power of openness” or “the wind of truth” and the “guide who goes ahead” of the disciples would lead them into all the truth.

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