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A LEXICAL ANALYSIS OF פָּרָס IN ISAIAH 40-55

BY ELIZABETH HARTLEY PRUITT

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF

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ABSTRACT OF
A LEXICAL ANALYSIS OF צִדֵּק IN ISAIAH 40-55

by Elizabeth Hartley Pruitt

Isaiah 40-55 is acknowledged by most scholars as the primary Old Testament background for Paul's understanding of justification and his use of δικαιосσύνη θεου. It is therefore important to have a firm grasp of the use of the צִדֵּק word group in Isaiah 40-55 and its relationship to other terms in its semantic domain. To that end, this paper seeks to engage in an analytical lexical study.

First, several important preliminary issues are introduced to the reader, including the authorship and unity of the text and the methodology of semantic studies. The semantic range of meaning for צִדֵּק is then outlined, which helps to illumine the terms' breadth of nuances, and then the semantic field is discussed, which further helps to refine of the meaning of צִדֵּק and Isaiah's word choice over other terms in the same field. Finally, some issues of debate are introduced, which will be highlighted throughout the lexical study and resolved in the conclusion.

The lexical study proper is organized around three important contexts: trial scenes, covenant contexts, and passages where צִדֵּק and salvation are closely related. Isaiah 45:18-25 is then analyzed separately, as it includes all of these elements and helps to bring together various nuances of צִדֵּק.

This study provides several helpful conclusions. For one, the masculine and feminine noun forms of צִדֵּק have no significant difference in meaning in Isaiah 40-55. Also, one of the most important conclusions of this study is that the sense and referent of צִדֵּק must be distinguished in order to rightly understand its meaning and its relationship

to other words in its field. Very often צדק functions co-referentially with other terms such as אמת, ישר, and משפט in order to describe different facets of the Lord, his covenant faithfulness, salvation, or judgment.

Finally, the questions of whether צדק is a creational term or a covenantal term, and whether it denotes conformity to a norm or is primarily relational in meaning, are both shown to be false alternatives. The more basic of sense of צדק is creational, but when applied to the Lord's dealings with his covenant people, Israel, it is naturally also covenantal. Likewise, the more basic sense of צדק describes the conformity to a norm, but within the context of the covenant, this norm is a relational norm between the Lord and Israel. Similarly, the question of whether צדק is primarily a status term or an ethical term is undercut because both are necessarily in view: Israel's status is based on her (or the Servant's) righteous life posture toward God and his covenant, and their status, in turn, enables them to live righteous lives of faith and obedience.

For Anna Gallant,
who has been my friend, mentor,
and delight during these seminary years.

בְּכָל־עַתָּה אֶהְיֶה הַרְעָה

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ABBREVIATIONS

BDB	F. Brown, S.R. Driver, C. Briggs, <i>Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
ESV	English Standard Version
KB	L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, <i>A Dictionary of the Hebrew Old Testament in English and German.</i>
LXX	Septuagint (Greek version of the OT)
MT	Masoretic text
NASB	New American Standard Bible
<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i>
NIV	New International Version
RSV	Revised Standard Version
<i>TLOT</i>	<i>Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
<i>TWOT</i>	<i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i>

Section 1—Introduction

One of the most important and contentious issues in New Testament theology is the precise meaning of δικαιοσύνη θεου and justification in Paul. Although scholars time and again affirm the necessity of going back to the Old Testament usage of the צדק word group, particularly in Psalms and Isaiah, in order to ascertain Paul's meaning, studies have too often been influenced by Greek language and thought or Hebrew thought, rather than starting with the Hebrew language itself. According to James D.G. Dunn, "‘righteousness’ is a good example of a term whose meaning is determined more by its Hebrew background than by its Greek form."¹ Also, according to Mark Seifred, "studies of righteousness language generally have been guided by the theological or ethical questions of interpreters."² It will be the purpose of this paper to examine the meaning of the צדק word group in Isaiah 40-55 in an effort to properly explore what most scholars believe to be the background of Paul's theology of justification. It is important to keep in mind that lexical studies are invaluable pieces of the larger puzzle of exegesis and biblical theology, but they are not ends in themselves. Therefore, this paper will not draw any definitive conclusions on Isaiah's influence on Paul's use of δικαιοσύνη θεου, but it should help provide the groundwork and road map to continue in that direction.

¹ *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 341.

² "Righteousness Language in the Hebrew Scriptures," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism: Volume 1—The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Seifred (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 421.

Chapter 1—Introduction to the Book of Isaiah

Until the past century of biblical interpretation, the unified authorship of the book of Isaiah was generally presumed. This view seems to most accurately account for the book's literary, geographical, and historical contexts. On the literary level, the book opens by ascribing its contents to the eighth century prophet Isaiah, who ministered to the kingdom of Judah (1:1). Moreover, the content of his message is coherent and unified. For example, the Zion motif permeates the entire book with unique predominance. Also, God is consistently referred to as "The Holy One of Israel." Thematic unity does not prove authorial unity, since later authors could easily pick up the themes and language of previous authors, and since redacting editors could smooth out the finished composition, but it does provide evidence against literary disunity. More complex literary unity will be discussed in the following chapter.

The geography described in Isaiah is also Palestinian. For example, the species of trees, seasons, topographical features, and even proper names referred to in the disputed chapters of 40-55 suggest that the author is writing from Judah and not Babylon.³

The historical context is a bit more complicated, but it too supports a unified authorship from an eighth century Palestinian provenance. Whereas the audience of chapters 1-39 is clearly an eighth century Palestinian audience being warned of impending judgment, the audience of 40-55 changes to a projected audience of the Babylonian captivity. However, the historical and social context of the authorial

³ J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), 27.

perspective remains in eighth century Palestine, as evinced primarily by the author's generalized descriptions.⁴ There is a marked difference between the detailed descriptions of the exile by Ezekiel and Jeremiah and the general, stereotypical descriptions of Isaiah. The author of Isaiah does not provide eyewitness details of one who has already experienced the events of the exile and captivity. Mention of Babylon itself is also scant (four times) and vague, save for the important prophetic identification of Cyrus.⁵ That the author prophesies to future generations and not merely about them is indeed unique within biblical prophecy, but each prophet and biblical author within the canon of Scripture offers their own unique feature(s), and to question these is absurd and reductionistic. Thus the literary, geographical, and historical context seems to suggest that the author of chapters 40-66 was the same eighth century Palestinian prophet of chapters 1-39, who shifts prophetic address from his contemporary audience of about 739-700 BC (1-39) to the future exilic audience of about 545-535 BC (40-55) and finally to his third audience of about 520-500 BC, who had returned to Judah from the exile (56-66).⁶

This traditional view of unified authorship was first seriously challenged in the late eighteenth century,⁷ and is now almost universally presumed in academia.⁸

Christopher Seitz refers to the literary and authorial division of Isaiah as "the greatest

⁴ Brevard Childs suggested that these generalizations were purposeful efforts of the final redactors to suppress the historical settings of chapters 40-55 and 56-66 in an effort to present a more unified composition, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 325-330.

⁵ Motyer, 28.

⁶ John N. Oswalt, "Righteousness in Isaiah: A Study of the Function of Chapters 56-66 in the Present Structure of the Book" in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), 3.

⁷ Eichhorn first proposed a secondary authorship of Isaiah 40-66 in 1783 (cf., Döderlein, 1789). In 1892, Bernhard Duhm proposed that Isaiah 56-66 were composed by an additional third author, which has been maintained in most academic circles today, John L. McKenzie, *Second Isaiah: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), xv.

⁸ For example, Claus Westermann opens his commentary saying, "The time of Deutero-Isaiah's activity lay for certain between the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 and the downfall of the Babylonian empire in 539" (emphasis added), *Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 3.

historical-critical consensus of the modern period.”⁹ Part of the appeal of the multiple authorship theory is the denial of the possibility of fulfilled prophecy, the most striking of which is the identification of Cyrus as the one who would defeat Babylon (44:28; 45:1).¹⁰ However, the burden of proof remains on the side of the critic, because fulfilled prophecy is assumed throughout Scripture as a given, feasible phenomenon for a sovereign God and even a criterion for validating true prophecy.¹¹ Moreover, the denial of predictive prophecy undercuts Isaiah’s predominant polemic against the impotence of idols to accurately foretell the future, unlike the unique sovereign ability of the Holy One of Israel to do so, which validates his messenger. However, even conservative scholars who affirm prophecy, such as Seitz, deny Isaiah’s authorial unity on literary grounds. For example, the book’s direct address to each of the three audiences suggests to some scholars that it was written by two or more authors in successive periods of Israel’s history. The style also changes throughout the book, especially between chapters 1-39 and chapter 40ff.¹² Practically no one denies the change in style throughout Isaiah, and

⁹ Christopher R. Seitz, *Reading and Preaching the Book of Isaiah* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 14.

¹⁰ McKenzie argues that even if such precise prophecy were possible, it would not be comprehensible to Isaiah’s contemporary audience because Isaiah does not provide any explanatory introduction regarding Cyrus, xvi. However, Isaiah’s eighth century audience does not need a detailed explanation of who exactly Cyrus will be in order to make sense of his prophecy. They know that he will fulfill God’s purpose by enabling the restoration and rebuilding of the temple (44:28) and by subduing the nations and kings who oppose Israel (45:1). Isaiah’s audience could easily infer that Cyrus was a political leader whom God would use to rescue Israel from her enemies and bring her back to her land. In fact, any more detail than was given might even have been *more* confusing to a generation thrice-removed from the promised events!

¹¹ Franz Delitzsch offers a harsh warning against critical scholars who allow their preconceived skepticism of the supernatural to discredit holy writ: “That school of criticism, indeed, which will not rest till all miracles and prophecies, which cannot be set aside exegetically, have been eliminated critically, must be regarded by the church as self-condemned,” *Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: APA, n.d.), 1328.

¹² For example, Rendtorff notes that although the title “Holy One of Israel” is used throughout Isaiah, it is used in distinctly different ways. In Deutero-Isaiah, it is always and only used in contexts promising salvation, and never in judgment contexts, *Canon and Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 162. The different use of repeated language should not be surprising, however, given the different contexts into which the prophet was speaking. In general, there is much more mention of salvation in 40-66 than in 1-39 and there is much more mention of judgment in 1-39 than in 40-66. This is because Isaiah’s contemporary audience of 1-39 was facing judgment, not salvation, and his projected audience of 40-55 was looking forward to the promised salvation.

furthermore no one is scared of the ramifications, for change in style should be expected as the themes, purpose, and audiences also change.

There has been a recent interest in the literary unity of Isaiah, even among scholars who deny its authorial unity. Their interest lies in the unified message of redacting authors and editors who purposed to expand and refine a cohesive message. Whereas early critical scholarship asserted that the three divisions were independent compositions, recent studies have argued for their successive dependence, and attributed their cohesion primarily to their own theological conformity, rather than to later redacting editors. Similarly, there has been a growing emphasis on the analysis of the text as it has been received in the canon of Scripture. This canonical approach affirms the historical-critical conclusions, but moves beyond them in a theological direction. Although a rightful appreciation for the final form of the text is a positive move in biblical interpretation, an unbalanced emphasis on the final canonical form of the text seems to elevate the literary context of the text far above its historical and social contexts, rendering the latter almost entirely out of reach and ultimately unnecessary.

In conclusion, the evidence seems to support that the entire book of Isaiah was written and edited by the prophet who bore that name and who ministered to the southern kingdom of Judah during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (1:1), setting the date of composition roughly between 740-700 BC.¹³ This will be the working assumption throughout this paper, but, like all necessary presuppositions, it will be open to modification as the research unfolds.

¹³ Although I believe that the vast majority of the text was written at this early date, I do not wish to preclude the work of later, inspired editorial emendations to the text.

The purpose of the book of Isaiah is three-fold with respect to its three respective audiences. Chapters 1-39 are addressed to Isaiah's contemporary audience as a warning of God's impending judgment upon Judah and the nations. Chapters 40-55 offer comfort and hope of the Messiah and salvation to the future exilic generation, and chapters 56-66 provide comfort and direction to the returning exiles. Thus, Isaiah is both forthtelling and foretelling, finding deep relevance even in Isaiah's generation, who would need to understand how God could remain faithful to his covenant promises of redeeming a people for himself.

Chapter 2—Introduction to the Lexical Study of צדק

2.1. Methodology

Semantics is the branch of linguistics that studies the meanings of words. The past century of biblical exegesis has witnessed great controversy and advancement in semantic analysis. Beginning with Hermann Cremer's *Biblico-Theological Lexicon of the New Testament Greek* in 1867 and climaxing with Gerhard Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (TDNT)* in 1933, biblical words and roots were thought to have developed technical meanings unique to their biblical usage, which directly corresponded with the concept or reality to which they referred. While this method may be appropriate for the most technical of biblical terms (e.g., ברית and βαπτίζω), it largely misunderstands the relationship between words, meanings, and thought-systems, and it minimizes the importance of the literary contexts of words. In his 1915 work, *Course in General Linguistics*, Ferdinand de Saussure turned the tide of linguistics from an emphasis on the diachronic meaning of words to their synchronic meanings, and in 1961, James Barr applied these principles of word study method to biblical exegesis in his work *The Semantics of the Biblical Language*, thus offering a revolutionary criticism. He argued that the traditional diachronic method had exploited the “thought structure” and the “linguistic structure” of words by starting with the former and allowing it to define the latter. For example, it was widely held that Hebrew thought was more concrete than Greek thought, which was thought to be more abstract. This led many theologians to import concrete meanings into Hebrew words without any linguistic justification. Barr

suggested that neither words nor thoughts determined each other, but that they were “reciprocally interactive.”¹⁴

The word study method of Cremer and Kittel also risks committing exegetical fallacies such as root fallacy and illegitimate totality transfer, and it often underemphasizes the range of meaning for a word and overemphasizes the conclusions and importance of the word.¹⁵ Similarly, etymological or diachronic analysis should be utilized with caution. While it is sometimes helpful to note the origin of a word and its development through history, particularly if it is rare or a *hapax legomenon*, it is often irrelevant or even misleading for common biblical words.¹⁶

Rather than allowing the presumed thought pattern of the Hebrew people to determine the meaning of their language, and rather than reducing the meaning of words to an innate meaning of their root or conflating its meaning to contain all possible meanings within its lexical range, it is imperative to determine the meaning of individual uses of words within their literary contexts. This is not to say that words and roots have no general meaning at all outside of their literary contexts, but that the meaning of a word in a *particular* context has a *particular* meaning, inseparable from that context.

In addition, it is important to identify how the word is functioning in relationship to what it refers. Distinguishing between the sense and reference of terms will be very important throughout this study. Also, whereas a proper noun is fully referential and most concrete nouns are mostly referential, adjectives and adverbs are often partly or

¹⁴ *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 23-25.

¹⁵ Mosés Silva, *Biblical Words and their Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 24-32. See also D.A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 27-64.

¹⁶ Silva, 35-52.

non-referential.¹⁷ Furthermore, it is important to note the paradigmatic and syntagmatic relationships of a word. Within paradigmatic relationships, it is helpful to observe whether the terms are proper or improper synonyms, and whether one word includes the other. Again, it is important to note if paradigmatic words have the same referent but different senses, i.e., if they are co-referential. Such relationships are often misunderstood as being synonymous, or having the same sense as well as referent. Analysis of paradigmatic terms is helpful in determining the choice of a word and its distinctiveness in a given context over another in the same semantic field. Syntagmatic relationships enable the proper identification of paradigmatic relationships in that the immediate context helps to define the use of the word.

For this paper, I will only briefly discuss the etymological and diachronic history of צדק, since it is frequently used throughout the Old Testament and Isaiah. I will then make a brief inventory of the range of meaning of צדק in the Old Testament, followed by an inventory of other words in the same semantic field that share a paradigmatic relationship with צדק. After addressing several important issues of debate, I will begin the lexical study proper by analyzing the use of צדק in various key passages organized by the specific contexts of the law court, covenant, and salvation, seeking to determine the precise meaning of צדק in each passage. I will then draw together some important conclusions on Isaiah's use and understanding of צדק.

¹⁷ Silva, 107.

2.2. The Etymological and Diachronic History of צדק

The origin of צדק is not very important for the present study, since secular words were often filled with theological meaning in Scripture, and—perhaps more importantly—since there is such a wealth of synchronic use of צדק throughout the Old Testament. The available evidence seems inconclusive whether the origins of צדק are “to be straight” or “to be hard.” Cognates are used in Akkadian, Aramaic, Arabic, Ugaritic, Ammonite, and Phoenician with various meanings of “truth,” “legitimate,” “right,” “loyalty,” and “judgment.” In the Hebrew, it seems to have developed the idea of either status or behavior conforming to a norm, which can be applied to many things, including justice, law, morality, or relationships.¹⁸

Postexilic writers used צדק extensively. The Qumran community utilized צדק to describe the “Teacher of Righteousness” figure extant in their literature. They also used צדק to refer to right behavior that conforms to the requirements of the community. Since they believed that their rules were of divine origin, they were first a reflection God’s righteousness to which man must properly respond, namely in righteous obedience.¹⁹ According to B. Przbylski, the masculine and feminine nouns developed distinct nuances of meaning in Qumran, the masculine denoting human activity and the feminine denoting God’s saving activity.²⁰ An identification of צדק with charity and almsgiving found its roots in the Old Testament (Dan. 4:27), and flourished in later writings (*Ecclesiasticus* 7:10; 3:30; 24:12; *Tobit* 4:10; 12:9).²¹ The apocryphal books also began a significant

¹⁸ TWOT 1879, TLOT 1046, NIDOTTE 7405.

¹⁹ Gerhard von Rad. *Old Testament Theology: The Theology of Israel’s Historical Traditions*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd Ltd., 1962), 383; cf., David J. Reimer, “צדק” NIDOTTE (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 766.

²⁰ *Righteousness in Matthew and His World of Thought* (1980), 32. Cited in Reimer, 769.

²¹ Reimer, 767.

trend of defining צדק in terms of moral behavior in conformity to the Mosaic law, a trend which reached its climax in the rabbinic literature.

2.3. The Range of Meaning of צדק in the Old Testament

In order to most accurately discern the use of צדק in Isaiah 40-55, it is first important to note its range of meaning in the entire Old Testament. The root צדק occurs in nearly every Old Testament book, and two-thirds of its total usage is concentrated in Psalms, Proverbs, Isaiah, and Ezekiel, with Isaiah alone boasting 81 of the total 523 occurrences of the root.²² The noun forms (צִדְקָה and צֶדֶק) have seven primary meanings: 1) what is right and just with regards to measurements and weights, i.e., fairness, 2) righteousness in judicial and governmental contexts, including God's sovereign justice and vindication, 3) justice in or for a cause, 4) rightness or truth in speech, 5) ethical rightness, 6) righteousness of the law, and 7) vindication, deliverance, victory, salvation, or prosperity.²³

The verb forms also have various meanings, particularly in the *qal* and *hiphil* themes. In the *qal* theme, צדק can mean 1) to have a just cause or to be in the right, or 2) to be justified in one's plea. These two meanings are primarily status terms. With reference to God, it can also mean 3) to be just in charging sin, and in reference to man, it can mean 4) to be just or righteous in conduct or character. These two meanings are

²² *TLOT*, 3:1049.

²³ Most lexica separate the masculine and feminine nouns, but with little difference in meaning, Brown, Francis, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1906), 841.1-6; 842.1-6. KB adds "communal loyalty, conduct loyal to the community," to the masculine and feminine noun forms, *A Dictionary of the Hebrew Old Testament in English and German* (Leiden: Brill, 1953), 1004-1006. The edition revised by Baumgartner and J. Stamm provides the gloss "to be communally faithful, beneficial" for the root צדק, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 1046. While this may be a valid and well-attested usage in a handful of passages, *TLOT* goes too far to gloss the entire root with such a meaning.

primarily active terms, describing God's activity in judging or man's activity in right living.

In the *hiphil* theme, צִדֵּק has the following meanings: 1) to do justice in the administration of the law, 2) to declare one righteous, to justify 3) to make one righteous, and 4) to vindicate or save. Not surprisingly, all of these meanings are causative. The first meaning describes the causation of judicial justice; the subject causes justice to be done by rightly interpreting and administering the law. The second meaning is related to the first two status meanings in the *qal*, namely one's standing in reference to their plea and the court. In this meaning, the subject causes the litigant to be in right standing and vindicated in their plea. The third meaning in the *hiphil* has status implications as well, but it also overlaps with the fourth meaning in the *qal*, describing man's conduct and character. If one is "made righteous," or "caused to be righteous," then they are either righteous in action and consequently in their declared status, or they are declared righteous, not by virtue of their own conduct, and then they are made righteous in action. As we will see below, the two are closely connected. The fourth meaning in the *hiphil* is necessarily causative. By definition (linguistically and not theologically), one cannot be the subject of their own salvation or deliverance. They can escape or they can triumph, but technically, someone else must cause them to be saved.

The occurrence of צִדֵּק is much more scarce in other themes, none of which surface in Isaiah. It only occurs in the *niphal* once to denote a right condition of the holy place in Deut. 8:14. The use of צִדֵּק in the *piel* is similar to that of the first and second meanings in the *qal* and the causative force of the *hiphil*, namely the justification of one's

self, plea, or others. In the *hithpiel*, צִדֵּק is used once in Gen. 44:16 to refer to absolving oneself from suspicion of guilt.²⁴

The adjective form (צִדִּיק) has five primary meanings: 1) righteous or just in judicial and governmental contexts, which includes the righteousness of the judge, king, the Law, and God, and which corresponds primarily to the first *hiphil* definition, 2) just or right in one's cause, which corresponds primarily to the first two status meanings in the *qal*, 3) just or righteous in conduct and character, which corresponds to the third and fourth meanings in the *qal* and the third meaning in the *hiphil*, 4) the status or state of being justified and vindicated by the Lord, which corresponds to the first two status meanings in the *qal* and the second and third status-causative meanings in the *hiphil*, and 5) right, correct, or lawful, which corresponds generally to most of the verbal meanings.²⁵

2.4. Paradigmatic Relationships with צִדֵּק

There are many terms in the same semantic field as צִדֵּק. This section will primarily concern itself with those utilized by Isaiah. Terms such as אֱמֶת, יֵשֶׁר, and מִישׁוֹר denote rightness, justice and truth. The noun אֱמֶת means truth, faithfulness, or stability. Isaiah primarily uses אֱמֶת to refer to truthfulness (16:5, 43:9, 48:1, 59:15). The verb יֵשֶׁר means to be pleasing, straight (in the right path) or ethically upright. Isaiah uses יֵשֶׁר in the *piel* to denote straight paths and right ways of conduct (40:3; 45:13). The masculine noun מִישׁוֹר can also mean straightness, in addition to equity, justice, general rightness (11:4; 33:15; 42:16), and Isaiah uses נִכוּחַ to denote equity and uprightness (26:10). The noun מִשְׁפָּט can also mean right, as in the rights of the needy, but Isaiah uses it extensively

²⁴ BDB 842; KB, 1003-4.

²⁵ BDB 843; KB, 1001-1003.

and exclusively for justice and judgment, save the possible translation “ordinance”²⁶ in 58:2. Similar to the idea of “being in the right” is נָקִי, which can mean “innocent” or “desolate.” Isaiah uses it once to describe the innocence of blood (59:7), and once in the *niphal* to describe the desolation and emptiness of Zion (3:26), which is the word’s primary meaning.

Isaiah also uses other terms to denote faithfulness. He uses אָמֵן to refer to nursing, establishing, turning to the right, truth, and believing (7:9; 30:21; 60:4; 65:16), and he uses the *niphal* participle to describes that which is faithful and sure (1:21; 55:3). He also uses the phrase אָמֵן אֱמֻנָה in 25:1 to mean “faithful and sure.”

Isaiah uses various words to denote salvation, such as נָשַׁע, תְּשׁוּעָה/יְשׁוּעָה, נָשָׂא, פָּדָה and גָּאֵל. His favorite word to describe the Lord’s act of delivering and liberating Israel from bondage is יָשַׁע. He uses the feminine noun to denote eternal salvation (45:17), as attained by turning to the Lord (45:22), but it is primarily used of physical immediate salvation of Jerusalem (37:35) or his people from military threat and defeat (37:20), both of which are in the *hiphil* theme. It is also often used with reference to the Lord’s “arm” or “hand,” which further stresses the physical aspect of deliverance that Isaiah wishes to evoke (33:2). Isaiah also uses the noun forms יְשׁוּעָה and תְּשׁוּעָה to describe physical, eternal, and spiritual salvation (26:1; 45:17; 51:6,8) and the inability for Israel to deliver herself from her enemies (26:18). He also uses פָּדָה in the *niphal* to describe the redemption of those in Zion who repent (1:27), and he uses the *qal* passive participle in prophecies describing the sure return from exile of those who have been redeemed (35:10; 51:11). Isaiah also uses the verb גָּאֵל to describe the Lord’s redemption of Israel from bondage (43:1; 52:9),

²⁶ So the NASB; cf., “commands” in the NIV.

and he uses the *qal* participle as a title for the Lord as “the Redeemer” in numerous passages and several times in conjunction with מוֹשִׁיעֶךָ (“your Savior”) (41:14; 49:26; 60:16). These words that denote salvation and deliverance closely overlap with צִרָךְ in many passages. As the ensuing study will show, the nature of this overlap is primarily referential rather than semantic.

Isaiah also uses terms of salvation to denote efforts to save oneself, or the inability of human military allies to save Israel. Although Isaiah uses נָצַל for deliverance from military threat, he also uses it in contexts describing the impotence of earthly leaders and idols to deliver (36:14; 47:14). Similarly, although פָּלַט can mean “deliver” in the sense of rescuing one from physical or spiritual peril, Isaiah only uses it once to describe the way in which the wicked carry off their prey like lions (5:29). Moreover, verbs that in their active forms mean “escape,” often in the passive forms have the sense of delivering oneself, or putting one’s trust in someone other than the Lord to rescue them. For example, Isaiah uses מָלַט in the *niphal* to foretell of the peril of those who put their hope in earthly powers to deliver them (20:6), but he also uses it of God’s deliverance of his captive people (49:24-25).

Chapter 3—Other Important Introductory Issues

3.1. The Difference in the Semantic Fields between the Masculine and Feminine Nouns

Scholars disagree whether or not the masculine (צֶדֶק) and feminine (צִדְקָה) noun forms are identical in meaning. There are several good arguments for a distinction between either the innate meaning of the terms or the distinct employment of the terms by Isaiah, but the evidence seems to most solidly point against any such significant distinction.

The majority of scholars, including Box, North, Wade, Rendtorff, Achtemeier, Snaith, and Zeisler believe that there is no significant difference between צֶדֶק and צִדְקָה. The two are used synonymously throughout the Old Testament (e.g., 2 Sam. 22:21, 25; Ps. 18:20, 24).²⁷ The LXX translates both noun forms almost exclusively with δικαιοσύνη.²⁸ Moreover, the grammars and lexica do not see a significant distinction in meaning, so the burden of proof rests heavily on those who do.

George A.F. Knight observes that of the 27 uses of צִדְקָה in Isaiah, they all refer to something that man does, whereas צֶדֶק is reserved for the activity of God.²⁹ Similarly, James Muilenburg believes that צֶדֶק is reserved for the actions of God, but צִדְקָה is the

²⁷ Reimer, 746.

²⁸ Although one could argue that the translators of the LXX had no masculine options with which to render צֶדֶק, John W. Olley believes that their translation shows that they saw no distinction between the genders, “Righteousness” in the Septuagint of Isaiah: A Contextual Study (Missoula, MT: SBL, 1979), 65.

²⁹ “Is Righteousness Right?” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 41 (1988): 5.

result of God's righteousness in the redeemed life of his people.³⁰ However, a quick glance at the text reveals that Isaiah seems to use the feminine for the righteousness of God (45:23; 59:17), his saving activity (1:27; 5:16; 59:1-17), his Messiah and Servant (11:5; 61:10), and his judgments (58:2) as often as he uses it for man's righteousness (56:1; 60:1; 61:1).³¹ It also seems unlikely that the Qumran community would develop the opposite interpretation, namely that צדק referred to human activity and that צדקה referred to divine action.

In addition to distinguishing between the actions of God and man, some scholars believe that צדק is used more as an abstract principle, whereas צדקה is used for concrete acts. According to Bo Johnson, Hebrew feminine nouns usually "represent some concretion of a corresponding masculine substantive, and sometimes bear a (concrete) individualized sense in relation to a corresponding collective masculine form."³² In passages where צדק seems concrete, it is really just a personification of the abstract ideal (e.g., Ps. 85:11; Hos. 2:21).³³ Moshe Weinfeld argues that the feminine noun's association with concrete actions led to its evolved meaning of charity and almsgiving.³⁴ While such a development seems to have eventually occurred in צדק language, Weinfeld provides no evidence suggesting that the feminine noun in particular developed this meaning. He also seems to be approaching, if not committing, a fallacy of anachronism.

³⁰ John J. Scullion, "Sedeq-sedaqah in Isaiah cc. 40-66 with special reference to the continuity in meaning between Second and Third Isaiah," *Ugarit-Forschungen* 3 (1971): 338.

³¹ J.A. Zeisler further notes that of the 111 occurrences of the feminine noun in the Old Testament (excluding its reference to things), it only refers to man 49 times, or 44%, which is hardly a majority, much less a grammatical or lexical principle! *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul: A Linguistic and Theological Enquiry* (Cambridge: University Press, 1972), 32.

³² Cited by Seifred in "Righteousness Language," 428.

³³ "Justice and Righteousness," in *Justice and Righteousness*, ed. Henning Reventlow (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 236.

³⁴ "Justice and Righteousness'—משפט וצדקה—The Expression and its Meaning," *Justice and Righteousness: Biblical Themes and their Influence*, ed. Henning Graf Reventlow and Yair Hoffman. (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 237.

Moreover, most grammarians, including Joüon and Muraoka³⁵ and Gesenius, do not support the thesis that the feminine noun is generally the concretion of the abstract masculine. Gesenius even suggests that the feminine noun is more often abstract.³⁶ Still, Seifred claims that צֶדֶק usually refers to the abstract notion of “right order” or “that which is morally right,” whereas צִדְקָה usually denotes something concrete, such as a righteous act or vindicating judgment.³⁷ His argument is strengthened by Isaiah’s exclusive use of צֶדֶק in the context of שָׁפַט (14 times). However, he also notes that צִדְקָה appears twenty-six times with מִשְׁפָּט when preceded by a *waw*, whereas צֶדֶק only appears with מִשְׁפָּט without a *waw* (9 times).³⁸ Seifred’s findings may suggest a stylistic preference for Isaiah’s choice of gender; e.g., he may not like the way צֶדֶק sounds with the *waw*. Seifred’s findings, therefore, do not warrant the conclusion that there is any difference in meaning between the genders.

Another argument for distinguishing between צֶדֶק and צִדְקָה is that it seems unlikely for two different words to mean the exact same thing or to share the exact same field of meaning.³⁹ Several explanations can adequately account for the two forms. First, because language evolves, different forms that originally had different meanings can merge over time and lose their distinctives. Secondly, every language has perfect, or nearly perfect synonyms. In English, “ooze” and “seep” have no significant differences. It should therefore not be surprising to see perfect synonyms in the Hebrew Bible,

³⁵ *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1991), §134.e.

³⁶ Wilhem Gesenius asserts that although the majority of abstract nouns are feminine, abstract nouns are “regarded in Hebrew as either masculine or feminine,” whereas most languages use the neuter gender for abstract nouns, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), §80.a.

³⁷ “Righteousness Language,” 428. Seifred believes that the distinction between the masculine and feminine nouns is helping in discerning the issue of punitive divine justice, which will be discussed below, *Ibid.*, 429.

³⁸ “Righteousness Language,” 428.

³⁹ Alfred Jepsen, cited in Seifred, “Righteousness Language,” 428.

particularly considering the length of time that the language had to develop by the eighth century and considering that צָדֵק and צִדְקָה are built on the same root. Finally, numerous other nouns in Hebrew also have both masculine and feminine forms, with no significant difference in meaning between the genders. For example, יְשׁוּעָה and יִשׁוּעַ have no significant difference in meaning, and Isaiah uses both with no apparent distinction.⁴⁰

Knight also capitalizes on the tendency in Ancient Near Eastern languages to use the masculine gender for terms referring to the sky and the feminine language for terms referring to the earth. Thus, he considers Isaiah 45:8 the crux passage in deciding his thesis.⁴¹ However, Hebrew does not seem to utilize gender in the way Knight suggests, and unless he can demonstrate that other (or even all) Hebrew terms follow this Near Eastern pattern, his appeal to them is fruitless. The masculine words river (נָהָר), canal (אֵי and אֵיבָל), wadi (נַחַל), world (עוֹלָם), vineyard (כֶּרֶם), clod of earth (רִנֵּב), and tree (עֵץ) prove that the masculine gender is commonly used of things pertaining to the earth. The exegesis of 45:8 below will further demonstrate the weakness of Knight's thesis.

Some scholars, such as Zeisler, who see no significant difference in the meaning between צָדֵק and צִדְקָה, do recognize a subtle distinctive pattern of the masculine noun being used more often in legal contexts. Paul Volz also sees the masculine as primarily forensic and soteriological, but translates both as *heil* in Isaiah 40-55.⁴² The following exegesis will have to discern whether or not Isaiah's choice of the masculine or feminine noun is based on its legal context. Before turning to the exegesis, however we may conclude that there is no lexical distinction between the two terms, i.e., there is nothing innately different between the words as commonly used in Hebrew Scripture. It remains

⁴⁰ BDB, 447.

⁴¹ "Is Righteousness Right?" 5.

⁴² Scullion, 337.

possible that Isaiah uses the terms differently on his own accord, but that will require a closer examination.

3.2. The Proper Context of צדק

Before approaching the following exegesis, we need to be familiarized with several important debated issues regarding the proper context of צדק. The first is whether צדק is a covenantal term or a creational term. Second, and similarly, is the question of whether צדק is a relational term or a term denoting conformity to a norm. The third issue along this trajectory is whether צדק is a status term (one is declared righteous) or an ethical term of behavior (one is righteous or one made righteous). These issues seem to be false alternatives, but they should not be easily written off as such because they will help elucidate and refine the meaning and use of צדק and provide the necessary backdrop of scholarly debate before we enter into the arena of exegesis, where they will again rear their disgruntled heads.

As to whether צדק is a covenantal term or a creational term, it seems clear, at least at this point, that it is most basically a creational term, but specifically a covenantal term when applied to Israel, her behavior and status within the covenant, and the Lord's faithfulness to his covenant promises in delivering his people. It is important to realize that the issue at stake is one of emphasis: few scholars argue that צדק is *exclusively* a creational term or *exclusively* a covenantal term. When צדק is used of inanimate objects (e.g., Deut. 25:15), צדק is clearly within a creational context. Technically, one could say that creation itself is a covenant, and even the Trinity's interrelationship is an eternal covenant, so that every thing and every person at every time is somehow related to the covenant, either within or outside of it. At issue, however, is God's covenant in calling a

people to himself, most specifically in Abraham and then nationally established in the Mosaic covenant. On the other hand, צדק cannot be considered exclusively as a creational term. When specifically denoting Israel's behavior in conformity to the charter of the covenant, i.e., the Law, or when denoting God's saving actions for his covenant people, צדק is clearly operating within the covenantal realm. Furthermore, the essence of covenant, since the fall, has been the restoration of creation through God's chosen seed. Thus, to propose that צדק primarily functions in a covenantal context in Isaiah does not limit God's global plan of redemption, but rather is the means to that end. Then why does Isaiah emphasize God's role as Creator? Because as such, He is able to in turn restore the covenant that the people breached.⁴³ In this way, creation and covenant have a reciprocal and inextricable relationship.

Those who argue that צדק is primarily a creational word rather than a covenantal word often do so on the basis that צדק is seldom mentioned in contexts with the word בריה. Seifred, for one, argues that covenant is not a fundamental theme of scripture or even a pervading concept, particularly in contexts with צדק. His statistics are convincing: of the 527 occurrences of צדק and the 283 occurrences of בריה, they only appear together "in any significant way" in seven passages.⁴⁴ Seifred admits that these statistics are "particularly striking" considering their shared fields of meaning and that they are both relational and ethical terms.⁴⁵ Seifred also maintains that although בריה is used less frequently in the Psalms and prophetic books than elsewhere in Scripture, and although צדק is used much more frequently in the Psalms and prophetic books, the latter has not

⁴³ N.T. Wright, *Paul: in Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 24.

⁴⁴ Isa. 42:6; 61:8-11; Hos. 2:16-20; Ps. 50:1-6; 111:1-10; Dan. 9:4-7; and Neh. 9:32-33.

⁴⁵ "Righteousness Language," 423.

simply taken the place of *בריה*. Further, the relationship of covenant is not maintained or broken on account of one's righteousness or unrighteousness with respect to it. Rather, he explains, Scripture uses familial language to denote fidelity or infidelity within the covenant community, whereas *צדק* is often contrasted in more general terms with *רשע*. Still, all acts of covenant-faithfulness are acts of righteousness, but not all acts of righteousness are acts of covenant-faithfulness, so the two are connected, but not synonymous. Thus, even God's righteousness is not necessarily his covenant-faithfulness, but the latter is always part of the former.⁴⁶ Seifred also argues that there is a much closer connection between *צדק* and *משפט*, which occur closely together 142 times.⁴⁷

In response, it seems that Seifred is falling prey to the false dichotomy mentioned above. He also seems to suppose that the idea of righteousness is only present when the word itself is present, which cannot be true. I think that Seifred would agree, for example, that the idea of God is certainly present in the book of Esther, although the word itself is missing. Moreover, it seems very possible that the concept of covenant was in fact so pervasive in Scripture and so ingrained in the minds of Israel and such a fundamental tenet of the faith that it was assumed in every context and could fall into the background much like other basic tenets of the faith.⁴⁸ As far as the close connection between *צדק* and *משפט*, this should not be surprising, as both righteousness and justice are

⁴⁶ Ibid., 424.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 425.

⁴⁸ Oswalt, "Righteousness," 183. Knight offers the parallel example of Christian baptism, which is a fundamental concept on which the Christian's faith is based, but it is often treated as an assumed reality, which does not require constant repetition, even in contexts of regeneration and membership in the church, "Is Righteousness Right?" 5. Even more basic is the concept of grace, which is so basic to both the Old and the New Testaments that it is often only implicit.

integral aspects of the covenant, which is mentioned less frequently simply because of its assumed place in the lives of Isaiah and his audience.

Scholars also argue that צדק must be primarily a creational term because it is ascribed to people before God's national establishment of the covenant on Sinai (e.g., Noah, Abraham, and Job). This argument wrongly assumes that צדק was based solely on keeping the Law, and that the Law was not revealed in any part prior to the Mosaic covenant. Rather, it seems more likely (as we will see below) that צדק was based on one's right relationship to the Lord and to the covenant. Moreover, although the Law was not formally written on tablets of stone, God had not withheld his will from his people before Sinai. For example, God promises to bless Abraham, "because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws... (Gen. 26:5)." But what about Noah, who was declared righteous before God established his covenant with him,⁴⁹ and Job, who seems to have been outside of the covenant community? First, their faith and obedience showed that they had a right attitude toward God and consequently his covenant. Also, Genesis and Job were written well after their lifetimes by Israelites who naturally would have described the righteousness of Noah and Job in terms of the covenant.

Still, צדק is not always a covenantal term in the strictest sense. For example, God's righteousness cannot be described in terms of the covenant with his people in eternity past, yet still his righteousness is certainly eternal. Likewise, צדק cannot be a creational term in the context of eternity past, in which the creation (and covenant) were but plans of his eternal decree. As for eternity future, Reimer asks, "if righteousness

⁴⁹ Gen. 6:9; 7:1.

refers to behavior that is consistent with the covenant, in what sense does it ‘endure forever?’⁵⁰ Precisely in the sense that the covenant will endure forever (Gen. 17:19; Isa. 55:3; Jer. 32:40; Ezek. 37:26), and it will be characterized not least of all by perfect conformity to the obligations of the covenant.

In conclusion, it seems best to understand צדק as a creational term in its broader sense, and as a covenantal term as it is specifically applied to God’s dealings with his covenant people, Israel. Since this narrower sense is the context and focus of Isaiah 40-55, we can safely anticipate in the following lexical study that Isaiah will use the term primarily as a covenantal term.

The second important issue is whether צדק is a relational term or a term denoting conformity to a norm. Again, it seems like a false alternative to imply that צדק must be one or the other. It would be better, as many scholars suggest, to view the basic and most general meaning of צדק as conformity to a norm, which often expresses itself in relationships.⁵¹ However, when צדק is applied to inanimate objects such as weights and measures, some scholars go too far by asserting that צדק is still relational because the weights and measures are conforming to a norm within the relationship of business.⁵² Just as creation is the more basic context of צדק, conformity to a norm seems to be the more basic concept of צדק. Still, it should not be surprising if the primary use of צדק in Scripture is relational, especially if it is primarily employed in a covenant context.

⁵⁰ 756.

⁵¹ Whether the “norm” of the relationship is internal or external to the relationship, צדק can still be understood as a relational term, because even the external norm is applied *within* the relationship, which is the important concept in view, contra Seifred, “Righteousness Language,” 419.

⁵² So Lester J. Kuyper, “Righteousness and Salvation,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 30/3 (1977): 234.

Zeisler aptly describes the correlation between relationship and covenant saying, “When Israel thought of relationship (our term) she thought of covenant (her term).”⁵³

Cremer is properly credited as the impetus to regard צדק as a relational term denoting the present activity of God’s justice. The common notion that צדק primarily denoted conformity to a norm was based on arguments such as its use in most other Northwest Semitic language groups and its use in Greek thought patterns, which viewed righteousness as an ideal or absolute ethical norm to measure individuals.⁵⁴ As a linguist, Cremer looked beyond the Greek thought patterns to the Hebrew thought pattern, which viewed righteousness relationally.⁵⁵ Gerhard von Rad followed suit, saying

There is absolutely no concept in the Old Testament with so central a significance for all the relationships of human life as that of צדקה. It is the standard not only for man’s relationship to God, but also for his relationship to his fellows.⁵⁶

However, Cremer and von Rad both seem to contradict their denial of any normativity in the relationship. Cremer seems to do so by doubletalk, referring continually to “the certain claims upon conduct” within all relationships, which must be satisfied in order to persist.⁵⁷ What are these “claims” if not norms? Von Rad says at one point that the relationship itself is the norm,⁵⁸ but later qualifies himself by saying that צדקה refers to the actions of the relationship and not a norm.⁵⁹ If not contradictory, these arguments are at least confusing, and it seems best at this point to avoid viewing “norm” as the type of four letter word it has not proven itself to be.

⁵³ 38.

⁵⁴ Seifred, 420.

⁵⁵ James D.G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 200. Note, however, that Cremer allowed the Hebrew thought pattern to influence his lexical analysis rather than allowing the language itself to inform the Hebrew thought pattern.

⁵⁶ 370.

⁵⁷ Cited in von Rad, 371.

⁵⁸ 371.

⁵⁹ 373.

Many scholars, such as Ernst Käsemann and von Rad, strongly believed that any punitive element in צדק is a contradiction in terms because if צדק is a relational term, then it is primarily about covenant fidelity and thus salvation.⁶⁰ Punitive judgment of the wicked is necessarily secondary to salvation or even outside of the scope of God's צדק completely. Rather than look for a sense of retributive punishment in the meaning of צדק, it seems better to look for a sense of צדק in retributive punishment. While God's צדק is not always expressed as punitive judgment, it is also not always expressed as salvation. Rather, punitive judgment and salvation are co-referential terms describing the צדק of God.

That צדק is often in a parallel relationship with words such as אמת and שלום may also support its relational use in that peace and truth are vital for the sustenance of the covenant community and are upheld when the members fulfill the demands of the covenant community. Achtemeier even suggests that when the righteous are contrasted with the wicked, the wicked are not so because they violate the norms of the community, but because they destroy the community itself by neglecting its demands.⁶¹ Achtemeier's argument seems strained to an unnecessary limit by her seeming insistence that the "demands" of a relationship are not its "norms" and that the wicked are so because of the cause of their actions, namely the destruction of the community, and not their actual breaching of the demands/norms of the relationship. Perhaps it would be better to argue that since "wicked" itself is a relational term denoting someone's

⁶⁰ von Rad, 377.

⁶¹ Elizabeth Achtemeier, "Righteousness in the OT," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George A. Buttrick, et al., 4 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 4:81.

relationship to the covenant (ie., their status), צדק is likewise a relational description of one's stance and place vis-à-vis the covenant.⁶²

The story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38 is often cited as evidence that צדק is a relational term, since Tamar's unethical behavior is considered to be "more righteous (38:26)" than Judah's relatively greater sin of withholding his sons from his daughter-in-law, and thus violating the Mosaic Law.⁶³ Carl Grasessar Jr. states, "It is hard to imagine what could show more clearly that "righteousness" is a relationship word than a 'more righteous' harlot."⁶⁴ Seifred claims that this story does not support a relational meaning of צדק because Tamar's righteousness is based on a previously-fixed norm of the community, namely the Mosaic Law (Gen. 38:8; cf, Deut. 25:5-10).⁶⁵ However, as Achtemeier pointed out, the effect on the community is precisely what makes most uses of צדק relational. Seifred also argues that the trial context of this story precludes a relational meaning,⁶⁶ but according to Grasessar, even law court language is relational because the verdict is not a claim on the litigants' characters, but on their relationship to the case on trial and the community.⁶⁷

As the ensuing lexical study will elucidate, it is best to understand צדק as a relational term when it is applied to God and to people, and particularly in the context of the covenant. Because this is the context of Isaiah 40-55, we will find that צדק has an unmistakable sense of relationship.

⁶² Moreover, because "sin" in general is not an abstract concept or an entity in itself but the relationship of one's heart and will against God, righteousness conversely is a relational attitude of the heart, John A. Bollier, "The Righteousness of God: A Word Study" *Interpretation* 8/4 (1954): 407.

⁶³ Comparative language is also used in 1 Samuel 24:17 to describe David as being "more righteous" than Saul because he fulfilled the obligation to the relationship, Dunn, 342.

⁶⁴ "Righteousness, Human and Divine" *Currents in Theology and Mission* 10/3 (1983): 134.

⁶⁵ "Righteousness Language," 420.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Graesser, 135.

The third important debated issue to introduce is the meaning of צדק when applied to God's people, specifically whether it denotes their status or their behavior vis-à-vis the covenant. Another way of posing the question is whether a person is forensically declared righteous or actually made righteous in behavior and consequently (and secondarily) status. In general, most Protestants emphasize the former, while Roman Catholics emphasize the latter. Zeisler helpfully explains how צדק can be simultaneously moral and forensic:

Forensic rightness normally is rightness in God's sight, i.e., by his definition of rightness, and so it is not surprising that it is often hard to disentangle this from the ethical meaning. It is precisely rightness in God's sight that is the basis of ethics...

...Righteousness is seen to exist from moment to moment, depending on one's present relation to God and his will. How a man stands *now* determines whether he lives or dies, this is the forensic side. But how he stands before God is determined by how he stands in relation to God's will, this is the ethical side.⁶⁸

As the lexical study below will further elucidate, צדק can refer to one's status or behavior vis-à-vis the covenant, and its meaning and emphasis in each context will depend on the exegesis.

It is also important to remember that righteousness means different things when referring to God and to man, especially when using forensic language. They may both be righteous in their mutual conformity to the demands of the covenant relationship, but just as it means different things for a judge to be righteous than for the litigants to be righteous, God's righteousness is also quite different from that of his people.

⁶⁸ 22, 35. Cf Norman H. Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), 59; von Rad, 378. Unfortunately, Zeisler distinguishes between the forensic (legal) uses of צדק and those denoting activity (non-legal), which is also an unfounded dichotomy, Seifred, "Righteousness Language," 422 n. 35.

Wheeler Robinson, C.H. Dodd, and Ludwig Köhler, for example, believe that צדק is exclusively forensic and completely separate from morality and holiness.⁶⁹ N.T Wright believes that in the context of justification, צדק is strictly a declarative term—it identifies those within the covenant, and does not have anything to do with how they attained their status. He adds that this declaration of righteous status subsequently also makes them righteous, although that is tertiary to the main point of justification.⁷⁰ Many scholars agree that צדק is primarily a status term, particularly in regards to justification, but they insist that the status is either based on or maintained by right conduct. That the verb forms of צדק are largely or even completely in forensic contexts, while the noun and adjective forms hold a wider range of meaning help to support this thesis. The prophets, and not least of all Isaiah 1-39 and 56-66, are sometimes accused of moralizing the meaning of צדק. However, it is better to understand the prophets' emphasis on morality as a warning to a desperately unfaithful generation to live in accordance with their covenant status. In other words, one should not extract the prophets' emphasis on morality from the historical and literary context of calling Israel, who was on the precipice of judgment, back to her covenant obligations. It is also important to understand that if anything was the basis of Israel's salvation and status in addition to God's glory and her election, it was Israel's appeal to God's righteousness and deliverance, which is (in New Testament terms) an attitude of faith.

Many scholars who argue for the multiple authorship of Isaiah do so on the grounds that Isaiah 1-39 (and 56-66 to a lesser degree) use צדק to denote behavior much

⁶⁹ Zeisler, 37.

⁷⁰ "The Shape of Justification" *Biblical Review* 17/2 (2001): 8.

more than Isaiah 40-55.⁷¹ Rendtorff⁷² and Oswalt⁷³ both offer excellent discussions of how Isaiah 56-66 actually synthesizes the antinomy of the moral use of צדק with “judgment” in 1-39 and its forensic use with “salvation” in 40-55. In 1-39, the primary motive for right behavior is impending judgment. In 40-55, right behavior is laid to wait on the back burner while Isaiah foretells of the coming salvation of Israel seemingly irrespective (or even in spite) of her behavior. If 1-39 left the door open to think that moral uprightness was possible by human effort alone, Isaiah 56-66 closes it by claiming that just as salvation is a gift from God (40-55), so also is righteous conduct.⁷⁴ Likewise, if the end of chapter 55 left the door open to think that obedience and election were incompatible, 56-66 neatly brings the two together.⁷⁵ Thus, starting right away with 56:1, Isaiah 56-66 combines מִשְׁפָּט, יְשׁוּעָה, and צִדְקָה, and offers the key to understanding that the salvation promised in 40-55 does not remove the moral obligations of the covenant that Israel failed to uphold, but it motivates and enables them to finally live a life in congruence with their covenant membership. This is the gospel of Isaiah, namely that their behavior was inadequate and warranted judgment (1-39), but God promised salvation (40-55), which in turn would yield covenant-keeping behavior by God’s grace (56-66).⁷⁶ The relationship between the three uses צדק of can be illustrated as such:

⁷¹ It is important to remember at this junction that ethical righteousness in Scripture is not moral perfection, but the obedience and loyalty to the covenant that yielded repentant hearts and faithful pleas for YHWH’s acceptance and salvation, David Hill, *Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 94.

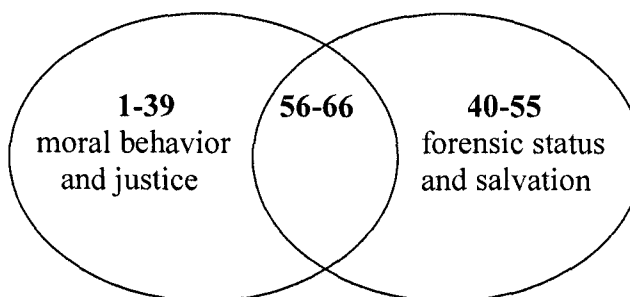
⁷² 162ff.

⁷³ 188.

⁷⁴ Oswalt, “Righteousness,” 190. Psalms 111-112 helpfully illustrate the fulcrum between divine and human צדק, the former describing God’s mighty works, and the latter describing man’s response of piety, Reimer, 756.

⁷⁵ This is one of the finest arguments for the unity of authorship of Isaiah, namely that the book did not “develop” and come together over time and under the mastery of brilliant editors, but that a single author had an entire coherent picture of salvation in his head before he even penned the first word.

⁷⁶ The relationship between judgment and salvation is also important to understand for the meaning of צדק. Judgment in the Bible is primarily God’s handing his people over to their sins. The destruction and exile



This introductory discussion yields several important implications for the meaning of צדק when applied to God and to his people. First, if צדק is found to be a covenantal and relational word, it must also be primarily a corporate word, pertaining to the entire community of God's people.⁷⁷ According to Dunn, "Righteousness is not something which an individual has on his or her own independently of anyone else, as could be the case in the Graeco-Roman concept...righteousness is something one has precisely in one's relationships as a social being."⁷⁸ Second, if צדק is found to be a status term in judicial contexts, then one must ask whether it is transferable from God to man. It is true that the behavior of righteousness is not some self-contained form that can be passed around like a wrapped gift. The Lord can and does make his people righteous, but he does not give them his own righteousness any more than a judge gives the vindicated party his own role and ability to judge. However, the question of whether the status of righteousness is transferable from the Servant or from the Lord to Israel remains to be seen. Moreover, if God's righteousness is his own, the question of whether it is a divine attribute or activity is undercut because it is necessarily both: He is righteous in character because he acts righteously in relationship to his covenant people by saving them and

foretold in 1-39 was only a picture of this larger judgment. This is why the full realization of Israel's salvation did not coincide with her return from Babylon, because God's judgment was still upon her in the sense that she was still given over to her sins and without Messiah.

⁷⁷ Ziesler, 39.

⁷⁸ 200.

punishing their enemies, and He acts righteously because his character is righteous.

Thus, Israel's frequent appeal to God's righteousness is an appeal to His identity, character, and promises.

In conclusion, we may provisionally state that within the context of the covenant, which is its primary use in Isaiah, צדק seems to describe both God's faithfulness in fulfilling the demands of his covenant relationship with Israel, and also Israel's subsequent status and behavior in relationship to God and the covenant community.

Section 2—Lexical Study of צַדִּיק in Isaiah 40-55

The following lexical study will analyze all of the uses of the צַדִּיק word family in Isaiah 40-55. The only exception is that the use of בְּצִדִּיק in 45:13 will be discussed with its very similar use in 42:6. The following research is organized according to three important contexts: law court scenes and accusatory language, covenant contexts, and passages having to do with salvation. Finally, 45:18-25 will be analyzed separately, as it contains elements of all three contexts.

Chapter 4—Analysis of the Meaning of צדק in Law Court Contexts

In approaching Isaiah's use of צדק in law court contexts, it is important to understand the historical-cultural background of the Israelite trial system. According to Christopher Wright, their judicial system consisted primarily of three⁷⁹ groups of people: the witnesses, the parties in dispute (both the plaintiff, who brings the charge against the defendant, and the defendant, who is the accused) and the judge, who must listen to both litigants and make a fair decision based on the evidence. The judge then vindicates the innocent or right party by declaring them to be righteous, i.e., in right standing before the court. Most often, God is portrayed as the kingly judge, and Israel is either the plaintiff who brings charges against her oppressing enemies, or she is the defendant, who is charged for breaking the covenant.⁸⁰

Achtemeier points out that the communal relationships and the restoration of the community are the greatest good in the Israelite judicial system, and that the judge has the primary role of “protecting, helping, and restoring” the entire community.⁸¹ Therefore, the judge is impartial only to the parties before him/her, but he is necessarily

⁷⁹ Seifred believes that the three-party model is an anachronistic importation of Western law form. Instead, he argues, the Israelite courtroom consisted only of two parties. When God enters the dispute on behalf of one party, he overpowers the other party, defeats and punishes them, thus winning justice for his own party. In this way, he also establishes his own cause. While this picture of the judicial scene may be accurate and helpful in some passages, we will see below that they do not accord for God's righteousness as judge or Israel's righteousness in all of the law court scenes of Isaiah 40-55. “The ‘New Perspective on Paul’ and its Problems,” 15. Seifred also cites Ps. 98, which talks about God coming to bring salvation to Israel and judge the nations.

⁸⁰ *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 303-304.

⁸¹ 81.

partial to the justice, the Law, and the well-being of the community. This picture is supported by the fact that the king most often acted as judge, and the primary role of the king was to preserve the shalom of the community by protecting and helping the needy and defenseless. Even in the majority of law court contexts, which could not all be officiated by the king, it was the elders of the community who tried cases and neighbors who bore witness to the trial. The decision of the disputed case was directly in the hands of the community, who usually would know both parties well, and thus were more personally invested in the outcome of the trial than the modern western law system.⁸²

4.1. 41:2—צֶדֶק

² מִן הָעֵיר מִמִּזְרַח צֶדֶק יִקְרָאֻהוּ לְרַגְלֹו יִתֵּן לַפָּנִי גִוִּים
וּמַלְכִּים יִרְדּוּ יִתֵּן כְּעָפָר חֲרָבֹו כִּקֵּשׁ נֶדֶף קִשְׁחוֹ:

*Who stirred up (one) from the east, (whom) **victory** meets wherever he goes? He delivers up nations before him and he tramples kings. He makes (them) like dust with his sword, like chaff that is driven out with his bow.*

This use of the masculine noun form is within the paragraph context of 41:1-4. The language of 41:1 indicates that this is a trial context with the Lord's charge to "be silent" and to let the people "draw near" and "speak" and "come together" for the "judgment (מִשְׁפָּט)." In 41:2-3, He asks the assembly who it is that has raised up the victor to defeat the enemy nations, and in 41:4, he answers that it is He.

The first interpretive difficulty in this passage is the identity of the "one from the east" in 41:2. Early interpreters, including the targumim, church fathers, and Calvin, believed that Abraham was in view, because of the use of צֶדֶק. Most scholars now agree

⁸² Christopher Wright, 302-303.

that the referent is Cyrus, who, unlike Abraham, was a warrior who brought easy victory to Israel.⁸³

The primary interpretive difficulty for the use of צֶדֶק in this passage is how it functions in relationship to the *qal* imperfect יִקְרָאֵהוּ. Once the syntax is understood, the meaning of צֶדֶק should be more clear.⁸⁴ It is possible to allow צֶדֶק to modify the caller, “who in victory calls him,” which is the preference of BDB.⁸⁵ It is also possible to render צֶדֶק as the subject, in which case it could be translated “Righteousness” as a personification of the Lord himself, (so Motyer⁸⁶), or it could denote the “victory” described in 41:2-3: “whom victory meets at every step,” in which case the suffix is subsumed in the relative pronoun. According to Koehler-Baumbartner, קרא in the *qal* can have the sense “to meet someone, encounter, happen to someone,”⁸⁷ and when used with לְרַגְלוֹ, the phrase forms an idiom that means “to meet wherever one goes.”⁸⁸ Therefore, based on the lexical evidence and the syntax, צֶדֶק should be understood as the subject of יִקְרָאֵהוּ. As for the meaning of צֶדֶק, it should be understood as “victory” rather than “righteousness” in general or as a personification of the Lord, given the idiomatic meaning of יִקְרָאֵהוּ לְרַגְלוֹ and the following description of this צֶדֶק, namely that the Lord will “give up the nations” to his servant, who will “trample” their kings, destroying them with his sword and bow, all of which specifically describe victory.

⁸³ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: chapters 40-66* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 81. This passage offers another excellent argument for an early composition. If Isaiah 40-55 was written after the Persian conquest had begun (545 BC), then many of Babylon’s own prophets may have been able to anticipate Cyrus’ victory and thus “validate” their prophecy. This passage draws attention to the dramatic and unique ability of God to predict what others could not possibly have imagined, *Ibid.*, 103.

⁸⁴ Westermann attributes the odd syntax to Isaiah’s reluctance to calling Cyrus by name (64), but this seems improbable since he does not shy from his name later (44:28; 45:1).

⁸⁵ 842.6.d.

⁸⁶ 310.

⁸⁷ 1131.a.

⁸⁸ 1186.b.

The NAS and NIV read “whom he calls in righteousness,” but it seems unlikely that צַדִּיק is functioning adverbially here since he does not use the typical בִּ- prefix as in the similar phrase of 42:6 קָרָאתִיךָ בְצַדִּיק (“I have called you in righteousness”) and 45:13 הִעִירְתִּהוּ בְצַדִּיק (“I have stirred him up in righteousness”).⁸⁹ The LXX offers another reason why צַדִּיק should not be interpreted adverbially. It translates צַדִּיק with the accusative δαυειδου, and although the accusative occasionally functions adverbially,⁹⁰ it is most likely serving as the direct object here because the feminine accusative pronoun αὐτήν is used in 41:2 and 4 to refer to the one called. This suggests that the translators of the LXX took צַדִּיק as the action of God with the first clause, “Who raised up righteousness from the east, called it to his feet...” Unless righteousness is the personification of Cyrus (which is very unlikely), this interpretation leaves Cyrus out completely and makes the subject of הִעִיר God’s righteous activity, which is only later revealed in terms of Cyrus.

The Masoretes seem to have placed צַדִּיק in the following clause with יִקְרָאֵהוּ rather than הִעִיר because the disjunctive accent, *zaqep parvum*, separates צַדִּיק from the preceding clause, מִן הָעִיר מִמְּזֶרֶחַ. The BHS editors likewise added an additional space between מִמְּזֶרֶחַ and צַדִּיק to show their support of this break. This supports the conclusion that צַדִּיק is the subject of יִקְרָאֵהוּ and is not being used adverbially.

Although this paragraph is concerned with the physical defeat and victory achieved by Cyrus, some scholars suggest that צַדִּיק is not limited to this connotation

⁸⁹ Isaiah seems to rarely, if ever, use nouns adverbially. His preference by far is to use a prefixed preposition. Further examples of his use of his adverbial use of צַדִּיק with בִּ- include 11:4; 59:4 (masculine); and 1:27; 63:1(feminine). This pattern does not definitively prove that Isaiah is not using צַדִּיק adverbially in 41:2, but it does make it much less likely.

⁹⁰ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1996), 200.

here.⁹¹ God did not raise Cyrus up merely for the sake of judgment, as he had with Sennacherib, but also for deliverance, justice, and restoration. Cyrus is triumphing for the cause of Israel's salvation, not their judgment. This leads many interpreters to understand the meaning of צָדִיק here as having more to do with salvation than justice.⁹² However, one must not impose more on the term than is clear in text. While Cyrus' "victory" is markedly different than that of Sennacherib, it is still primarily "victory" that is in view, the soteriological implications of which are more safely derived from the context.

4.2. 41:26—צָדִיק

מִי־הֵיחֵד מֵרֵאשׁ וְנִדְעָה וּמִלְפָּנִים וְנֹאמַר צָדִיק אֱלֹהִים
אֵין־מִגִּיד אֱלֹהִים אֵין מִשְׁמִיעַ אֱלֹהִים אֵין־שֹׁמֵעַ אֱמֹרֵיכֶם:

*Who declared (it) from (the) beginning that we might know and from the former times that we might say, “(He is) **right**”? Surely there was none who declared it, surely there was none who heard your words.*

In this trial scene, the Lord calls forth the false gods to prove their validity by predicting the future and acting powerfully (41:21-24). He then proves his own sovereignty based on the fulfillment of his predictions⁹³ (41:25-27), and concludes that indeed the idols and their works are mere delusions (41:28-29).

⁹¹ Scullion, 340.

⁹² Ibid. Delitzsch, however, translates צָדִיק as “justice” to describe the Lord’s defeat of the nations through Cyrus, which communicates the other elements of God’s victorious activity, namely his right action and his faithfulness to his people (230), which, though essential aspects of his righteousness, are not primarily in view here.

⁹³ Some scholars, particularly those who deny the possibility of predictive prophecy, believe that Isaiah’s primary point in this passage is not that the Lord can predict the future, but that he can accurately assess the past, and that his words and deeds are congruent throughout history, unlike the gods of Babylon. Some scholars even support this thesis by insisting that other religions recorded predictions that came true, Westermann, 91. While past word and deed seems to be the primary focus of 43:9, predictive prophecy seems to be the focus here in 41:26. See also Robert Vasholz, “Isaiah Versus ‘the Gods’: a Case for Unity,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 42.2 (1980): 389-394.

The subject of the adjective צָדִיק must be supplied, and could refer to God himself (“He is right”) or his prediction (“it is right”⁹⁴). It seems most likely that God is the subject, but either way, his rightness is based on the verification of his prediction, and both stand in stark contrast to the silent impotence of the idols. Similarly, צָדִיק could mean “right” in the sense that his prediction was correct, which then validated him as the true God, or “in the right” as a forensic verdict in favor of the Lord, by virtue of the evidence of his prediction. Again, this is actually only a statement of order. God’s prediction was true, which vindicated his right standing over and against the idols.

There are several good reasons why צָדִיק means “right” or “correct” in this passage. First, it has the best lexical support.⁹⁵ Second, the passage is fundamentally about the predictive ability of the Lord. The implications, namely that YHWH is the only true God, are based on this first fundamental principle, but they should not be confused with it. If a math student affirms that two plus two equals four, it primarily means that he is correct. He is also “vindicated” or “in the right” against those who think that two plus two does not equal four, but that standing is the result of his proven correctness. The two are integrally connected, but there is an important difference in emphasis. Third, although the LXX translates the צָדִיק word group almost exclusively with the δικαιο- word group (over 460 times out of 523 occurrences [90%]), it translates צָדִיק in this passage with ἀληθῆ, which is never used of forensic righteousness.

Several capable scholars argue that צָדִיק means “in the right.” Delitzsch does so by appealing to the Arabic *siddik*, which means “genuine.”⁹⁶ However, his appeal to other languages for a word so richly attested in Hebrew is unnecessary, and besides, this

⁹⁴ Westermann, 82.

⁹⁵ BDB 843.5; KB, 1002.1.

⁹⁶ 240.

evidence seems to better favor the sense of validated truth. More convincing is Isaiah's typical way of communicating the truthfulness of a statement or prediction with אמת, as he does in the very similar passage 43:9 (וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֱמֶת). Still, all authors freely interchange synonyms for stylistic reasons of their own, and it may be that Isaiah's choice of אמת in 43:9 is due to the proximity of וַיִּצְדֹּק in the preceding parallel verse. Whitley's translation completely skips over the lexical meaning of צדק and goes straight to the implication: "that we may say he has a claim to deity," thus saying far more than the original text allows and insulting the readers' intelligences by stating what is implicitly clear.⁹⁷

4.3. 43:9—וַיִּצְדֹּק

כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם נִקְבְּצוּ יַחְדָּו וַיֵּאסְפוּ לְאֵלִים מִי כָהֵם יִגִּיד
זֹאת וְרֵאשֻׁנוֹת יִשְׁמְעֵנּוּ יִתְּנוּ עֲדֵיהֶם וַיִּצְדֹּק וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ
וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֱמֶת:

*All the nations have gathered together so that the people may assemble. Who among them can declare this and proclaim (to us) the former things? Let them bring their witnesses **that they might prove them right** and let them hear and let them say, "It is true."*

This *qal* imperfect exhibits a clear legal use of צדק (43:8-13). The judicial context is indicated by the Lord's injunction to "bring out the people," who are "deaf" and "blind," and to let them "gather together" and "assemble" (43:8-9a).⁹⁸ He challenges them to prove themselves by the "former things" of their past by bringing witnesses who can attest to their words and deeds (43:9). He then identifies his people Israel as his own witnesses, who have seen the Lord's sovereignty over predictive prophecy and salvation

⁹⁷ 474.

⁹⁸ Westermann believes that the עַר and חֲרָשִׁים are Israelites, which highlights his grace in calling them his witnesses, 121. However, it seems more likely that verse 8 describes the people gathered and challenged in verse 9. Not until verse 10 does the Lord turn to Israel and, in contrast, identify them as his own witnesses.

history, which vindicates Him as the only true God (43:10-13). In this passage, the Lord's rightful divinity is based on his deliverance and fulfilled promises of the past, more so than his knowledge of the future (43:12).⁹⁹

The immediate context of Isaiah's use of וַיִּצְדִּקוּ is the challenge to the blind and deaf people to "proclaim to us the former things." If their witnesses can say, "it is true," then they will be proved right, or justified in their claim. Most commentators and lexica support this meaning.¹⁰⁰ Olley notes that there is a slight difference in meaning possible between being *shown* to be in the right and receiving the *verdict* of being in the right,¹⁰¹ but the former results in the latter and the latter assumes the former, so the difference is fairly insignificant.

Because the jussive and the *qal* imperfect usually share the same form,¹⁰² it is difficult to ascertain whether וַיִּצְדִּקוּ is carrying the same jussive force as the preceding verb, יִתְּנוּ, in the sense of "let them prove them right," or if the imperfect is being used with a modal nuance,¹⁰³ in the sense of "so that they may prove them right/justified." The latter seems to be the most likely interpretation because bringing in the witnesses (the injunction) is what would enable their favorable verdict, which is in the sovereignty of the court and outside of the defendants' control. This is also how the translators of the LXX interpreted this passage, who rendered the jussive יִתְּנוּ with the third person imperative ἀγαγέτωσαν, and the imperfect וַיִּצְדִּקוּ with the passive subjunctive δικαιωθήτωσαν.

⁹⁹ Childs, 335.

¹⁰⁰ BDB 842.2.; William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1988), 303.1; Oswalt, 142; Motyer, 334; Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 148.

¹⁰¹ 52.

¹⁰² Joüon-Muraoka §46.a.

¹⁰³ Joüon-Muraoka §113.1.

4.4. 43:26—הַצִּדִּיק

הַזְכִּירֵנִי נִשְׁפָּטָה יַחַד סֵפֶר אֶתָּה לְמַעַן הַצִּדִּיק:

Put me in remembrance, let us argue together, set forth your (case) in order that you may be proved right.

Grammatically, this use of the *qal* imperfect is very similar to that of 43:9, save that it is 2ms¹⁰⁴ instead of 3mp. The imperfect is in a purpose clause with לְמַעַן. The LXX translators also translate הַצִּדִּיק with the passive subjunctive δικαιωθήσῃς.

The context and participants of this passage (43:25-28) are also very different from the previous passage. Now the people of Israel are on trial, not as God's witnesses, but to set before the Lord their own case. The preceding literary context recounts how God's proven righteousness in the past (43:16-21) was met with unfaithfulness by his people, his own witnesses (43:22-24). Still, God forgives their sin and desires for them to put him in remembrance (הַזְכִּירֵנִי),¹⁰⁵ to argue with Him, and to present their case that they may be proved right. Their prospects of being able to prove themselves right are slim considering the evidence of their own unfaithfulness and the unfaithfulness of Adam and every covenant mediator before them (43:27), which suggests that the Lord's statement is sarcastic, with the implication that Israel obviously cannot prove themselves right. Rather, 44:1 offers assurance that the Lord himself will vindicate his faithless people, thus beginning to solve the conundrum that will finally be unlocked in 52:13-53:12.

¹⁰⁴ Its singular number is collective, referring to all of Israel.

¹⁰⁵ Olley posits that there may be a word play between אָזְכֶּר in verse 25 and הַזְכִּירֵנִי in 26, which are adjoining terms. Whether or not such a word play exists, the contrast between God's grace in forgetting the sins of his people and their unfaithfulness to remember Him is striking.

4.5. 50:8—מִצְדִּיקִי

קְרוֹב מִצְדִּיקִי מִי־רִיב אֲתִי נִעְמְדָה יַחַד מִי־כַעַל מִשְׁפָּטִי
יָגֵשׁ אֵלַי:

He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is the master of my judgment? Let him draw near to me.

The context of this verse is not a formal trial, but it uses accusative language, which will be fruitful for our present discussion. Isaiah uses this *hiphil* participle in a dispute between the Servant and those who accuse him (50:7-9). In the preceding paragraph, the Servant describes his obedience to the Lord (50:4-5) and his resoluteness in the face of his enemies' attacks (50:6). However, these attacks do not ultimately put the Servant to shame because Lord helps him (50:7) by vindicating him before his enemies (50:8a), who cannot contend with him or condemn him as guilty, but will soon meet destruction (50:8b-9).

Most translations and commentators agree that מִצְדִּיקִי means, "He who vindicates me" in this passage.¹⁰⁶ This is clear from the following verse, which uses the antonym נִרְשָׁעֵנִי, "condemn" or "declare guilty."¹⁰⁷ The Lord's help and vindication have more to do with pronouncing the Servant's innocence than with saving him from his enemies. The enemies will eventually pass away (50:8), but for the present time, the Servant must endure their abuse, knowing that he is innocent and in the right and that the Lord is near to him.¹⁰⁸ The forensic context suggests that the meaning of קְרוֹב here has to do with whose side the Lord is on, rather than temporal or physical proximity.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ E.g., ESV, NASB, RSV, NIV; Motyer, 400. Similarly, many commentators read, "justify," so Oswalt, 326 and Delitzsch, 323.

¹⁰⁷ Delitzsch, 323.

¹⁰⁸ The Servant's confidence in the Lord was made clear in 49:4 and is emphasized here by his three rhetorical questions, whose answers are an implicit and resounding "no one!", Childs 395.

¹⁰⁹ Motyer, 400; Westermann, 231; Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 326.

In conclusion, we may say that the law court model in Isaiah 40-55 was primarily a three-party system whose participants vary depending on the contexts, within which are various uses of צדק, including “victory,” “correct,” “in the right/justified,” “innocent,” and “vindicate.” There are five more occurrences of צדק in a trial setting (45:19-25), which will be very helpful for this study. These will be analyzed fully in chapter six after we have studied the use of צדק in settings of covenantal and salvation language.

Chapter 5—Analysis of the Meaning of צדק in Covenant Contexts

Not much needs to be said in way of introduction, given the lengthy introduction above. Within these passages pertaining to the covenant, we will examine how צדק functions in relation to God, man, the covenant, and other important covenantal terms such as ברית, תורה, שלום, חסד, and נחלה.

5.1. 41:10—צדקי

אֶל־חֵירָא כִּי עִמָּךְ־אֲנִי אֶל־תִּשְׁתַּע כִּי־אֲנִי
אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲמַצְחֶיךָ אֶף־עֲזָרְחֶיךָ אֶף־תִּמְכָּחֶיךָ בְּיָמֶיךָ צִדְקִי:

Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will also help you, I will also uphold you with my right hand of righteousness.

This masculine noun is in a divine speech to Israel (41:1-20). Its covenantal context is signaled by language of election and the promise of the Lord's presence. The immediate literary context is an intimate exhortation to the Lord's elect servant, Israel, not to fear their oppressors, but to have hope in God's promises of strength, protection, and righteousness (41:8-10). He calls them, "Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend," and assures them of his promises saying, "I have chosen you and not cast you off; fear not, for I am with you..." The string of three prophetic perfects in 41:10 along with the particle אֶף¹¹⁰ communicate the Lord's

¹¹⁰ This particle could be functioning rhetorically with the sense of "yes" (so Motyer, 312) or emphatically with the sense of "even," or as the means of addition with the sense of "also" (Williams, §384-6). The latter seems to best fit the context.

tenacity in his covenant faithfulness towards Israel. He also reiterates throughout his speech that Israel is not to fear (41:10,13,14).

BDB defines the use of צִדְקָי here as “righteousness as vindicated, justification in controversy with enemies and troubles, deliverance, victory, prosperity,” and specifically “of God as covenant-keeping, in redemption.”¹¹¹ The preposition בְּ prefixed to יִמִּין is also applied to צִדְקָי since they are in construct, which means that צִדְקָי describes the way in which the Lord will uphold Israel. This includes the sense of “salvation,” and could easily be discussed below in the analysis of salvation contexts, but it also includes an important foundational covenant context. It has the sense suggested by BDB of God’s covenant faithfulness, which is expressed in his redemption of Israel from her oppressors and also in his promise to be with them and to be their God and in his strengthening and helping them. Therefore, scholars who render צִדְקָי as “saving,”¹¹² or “deliverance”¹¹³ limit its meaning here too much.¹¹⁴ The phrase בְּיָמִינוֹ יֵשַׁע is used elsewhere to specify the saving might of the Lord (e.g., Ps. 20:7), and if that were the sole or primary meaning here, it seems that Isaiah would have used this specified phraseology. The RSV is also too limiting and loses the meaning of uprightness or covenant veracity with their translation of “victorious.” Rather, “righteousness” is the best translation, with the understanding that it is specifically the Lord’s covenant faithfulness and the subsequent implications and blessings that are specifically in view.

¹¹¹ 841-2.6a.

¹¹² Westermann, 67.

¹¹³ Olley, “*Righteousness*” in the *Septuagint of Isaiah*,” 105. Olley is quick to point out that the deliverance is based on the covenant, but this rendering is still less preferable to “righteousness,” which communicates both salvation and covenant faithfulness.

¹¹⁴ The Psalms often refer to the Lord’s right hand as the instrument of salvation (e.g., 18:35; 60:5; 98:1; 108:6), but this does not mean that this is its only function.

Isaiah often uses the term יָמִין in contexts that emphasize the Lord's sovereignty over his creation (48:13). That the cosmic scope of the Lord's sovereignty might be in view in this covenantal context cuts across the debate of whether צֶדֶק is primarily a creational or covenantal term. Here, it is clearly both. Similarly, יָמִין is often used to describe the Lord's strength and power in deliverance (Ex. 15:6,12; Ps. 20:6), and is also used in contexts that affirm his uprightness and faithfulness in his promises (62:8). Of course, the protection and salvation of God's people necessarily involves the judgment of her oppressors, and thus punishment is usually not far removed from צֶדֶק, as in this passage. Elsewhere, the term even refers primarily to the Lord's judgment on the wicked (Hab 2:16; Lam. 2:3-4). Delitzsch describes בִּימֵין צֶדֶק in this passage saying

The justice or righteousness is regarded pre-eminently on its brighter side, the side towards Israel; but it is also regarded on its fiery side, or the side turned towards the enemies of Israel. It is the righteousness which aids the oppressed congregation against its oppressors.¹¹⁵

Frederic Putnam helpfully notes that the Lord's יָמִין refers to all that can be attributed to Him, including his attributes and actions.¹¹⁶ Thus, the יָמִין צֶדֶק in this covenant context refers to the Lord's covenant faithfulness and the subsequent implications of salvation, protection, and punishment.

5.2. 42:6—בְּצֶדֶק

אֲנִי יְהוָה קִרְאתִיךָ בְּצֶדֶק וְאֶחֱזַק בְּיָדךָ וְאֶצְרֶךְ וְאֶתְּנֶה
לְבְרִית עִם לְאוּרֵי גוֹיִם:

*I am the Lord; I called you **in righteousness** and I will hold you by the hand and I will watch over you and I will give you as a covenant (for) the people (and) as a light (for) the nations.*

¹¹⁵ 234.

¹¹⁶ "יָמִין," NIDOTTE, 2:468.

The literary context of this masculine noun is the second paragraph of the first Servant Song, and it is filled with evocations of God's covenantal dealings (42:5-9).¹¹⁷ The paragraph begins with the Lord attesting to his power as Creator (42:5). This is not only a polemic against the false gods, but also an integral part of who He is as Israel's covenant God and an illustration of how the covenantal and creational contexts of עֶדֶת are not antithetical, but often inseparable. He then reintroduces his Servant, whom he has called "in righteousness" and promised to "keep" (42:6). He has also "called" his Servant to fulfill Israel's vocation to be a "covenant for the people" and a "light for the nations" (42:6; cf., Ex 19:6) and to restore the sight of the blind and to free the prisoners (42:7; cf., 61:1). The Lord then concludes this oracle by declaring that his name and glory are above the idols' and that the former things have now given way to the new things that he has just foretold, not least of all the promise of the Servant.

What is strikingly missing in this passage is the community of Israel. In her place is the Servant, who fulfills her priestly vocation to the nations and is even given as a covenant to them (לְבְרִית עָם). This same language is also refers to the Servant in 49:8-9: God will "keep" him and give him "as a covenant to the people," and he will release the prisoners. Thus, the messianic Servant represents and embodies the ideal Israel, God's servant.

Motyer identifies a deliberate link in the similarities between the call of the victorious one (Cyrus) in 41:2 and the call of the Servant here, which contrasts Cyrus with the messianic Servant. This is possible, since Isaiah's original readers would likely

¹¹⁷ Some scholars believe that the servant in view here is Cyrus and that the messianic Servant figure does not surface until chapters 49-55. This is supported by the link to 45:13, which refers to Cyrus (45:1), but the mission of the Servant figure of 42:6ff is more holistic than the strictly political mission of Cyrus described in 45:13 and elsewhere.

have distinguished between Cyrus (who was not an Israelite) and the messianic Servant figure (who was even the ideal Israelite and representative). Motyer states, “The contrast between the destroying conqueror and the beneficent servant begins here, but each has his individual place in the righteousness of God.”¹¹⁸ However, the syntax is quite different in each passage. A clearer link exists between 42:6 and the calling of Cyrus in 45:13,¹¹⁹ where *צִדֵּק* is also used with the prefix *בְּ* and also follows an attestation to God’s creational power.

As for the prefix *בְּ*, von Rad believes it is always used in an “oddly” spatial way with *צִדֵּק*, like a physical sphere where elect people are incorporated in order to carry out special purposes. It seems more likely that the preposition functioning instrumentally¹²⁰ or adverbially¹²¹ to describe the way in which the Lord has called his Servant. BDB defines its use here as “God’s attribute as sovereign...calling his servant.”¹²² According to Delitzsch, *בְּצִדֵּק* here refers to “the stringency with which He acts, in accordance with the will of his holiness.” Given the human condition, this holiness would manifest itself as a will of wrath were it not for the “counsels of salvation,” but because of the Lord’s steadfast covenant love, his *חֶסֶד*, when He calls his Servant *בְּצִדֵּק*, he calls him for the salvation of those who turn to him and the demise only of those who reject him.¹²³

¹¹⁸ 322.

¹¹⁹ Because *בְּצִדֵּק* is used in almost the exact same way in both 42:6 and 45:13, a separate discussion of the latter is not entirely necessary. BDB defines both similarly, the only difference being the referent. In 42:6, the Lord is referring to the messianic Servant, whereas Cyrus is in view in 45:13.

¹²⁰ Williams §243.

¹²¹ Ibid. §252; cf. §377.

¹²² 841.2.e.

¹²³ Delitzsch, 245.

5.3. 42:21—צִדְקוֹ

יְהוָה חָפֵץ לְמַשׁן צִדְקוֹ וַיְגַדֵּל תּוֹרָה וַיְאָדִיר:

The Lord was pleased for the sake of his righteousness to make the Torah great and to make it glorious.

This verse refers to the Lord's צִדְקָה in the midst of a denunciation against Israel for their unfaithfulness. Its covenant context is due primarily to the relationship between the Lord's צִדְקָה and תּוֹרָה. In the larger context of the paragraph, the perspective of the speaker seems to shift from the Lord calling to his deaf and blind servant, Israel (42:18-20), to the prophet's description of the Lord's desire to magnify his Law (42:21) and Israel's tragic condition as a people whom the judgment of God has given over to be plundered and looted for their failure to obey the Law (42:22-25).

BDB defines the use of צִדְקָה in this passage as “righteousness as vindicated, justification in controversy with enemies and troubles, deliverance, victory, prosperity...of God as covenant-keeping, in redemption,” and categorizes its use here with other passages pertaining to salvation.¹²⁴ John J. Scullion identifies the connotation of צִדְקָה here to belong to the same semantic domain as the covenantal uses of אֱמֶת and חֶסֶד.¹²⁵ The Lord magnified the Law “for the sake of” his righteousness, just as He also acts for the sake of his fidelity and steadfast love. Therefore, צִדְקָה is functioning in this verse primarily, albeit not exclusively, as a divine attribute (his faithfulness to his covenant promises), which is inseparable from the *manifestation* of צִדְקָה (his acts of saving grace).¹²⁶

¹²⁴ E.g., 41:10; 45:8; 51:5; Ps. 40:10; 119:123, BDB 841-2.6.

¹²⁵ 340.

¹²⁶ Olley prefers to define צִדְקָה in more ethical than soteriological terms and as “God’s ordering of the world,” in which the Law plays a vital part, “The Translator of the Septuagint of Isaiah and

Although תּוֹרָה often refers to God's word in general, or the Pentateuch, in this verse it seems to refer specifically either to the Mosaic Law, i.e., Israel's covenant charter, or to the Mosaic covenant generally because Israel is described as disobeying תּוֹרָה just a few verses later (42:24). That the Lord's magnification of his Law served any salvific purpose for a people who treacherously disregarded it may initially seem contradictory. In fact, some scholars believe that 42:21a is a later gloss because it seems out of place in this paragraph.¹²⁷ However, it is vital to understand this paragraph in its larger literary context, as the introduction to a new section describing Israel's redemption (42:18-44:28). As such, this verse does indeed make sense, for by magnifying the תּוֹרָה, God's glory is also magnified in two ways, which correspond to two important meanings of תּוֹרָה. With reference to the requirements of the Mosaic תּוֹרָה, Israel's transgressions are magnified and, consequently, the grace of the Lord's salvation, which is in keeping with his covenant promises, is magnified above all. The broader meaning of תּוֹרָה as the Mosaic covenant in general (and the Scripture included therein) also magnifies God's glory by highlighting God's gracious and faithful disposition towards his covenant people.

There is also, unsurprisingly, a universal aspect of the magnification of תּוֹרָה, for in so doing, the Lord proclaims his will and his salvation to the world (Deut. 4:6-8), who are also guilty of breaking the requirements of the Law and in need of salvation. Oswalt observes, "Not to make his Torah available to the world would be the most thoroughly

'Righteousness',” *Bulletin of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies* 13 (1980), 60.

¹²⁷ Westermann, 111.

unrighteous thing God could do. Ultimately, then, righteousness in a fallen world means grace.”¹²⁸

5.4. 48:1—בְּצִדְקָה

שְׁמַעְזֹאת בֵּית־יַעֲקֹב הַנִּקְרָאִים בְּשֵׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל
וּמִמֵּי יְהוּדָה יֵצְאוּ הַנִּשְׁבָּעִים בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה וּבֵאלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
לֹא בְּאֱמֶת וְלֹא בְּצִדְקָה:

*Hear this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel and (who) came from the waters of Judah, who swear by the name of the Lord and confess the God of Israel, (but) not in truth and not **in righteousness**.*

The context of this feminine noun is a divine speech introducing the Lord’s new promises and ascribing Israel’s¹²⁹ refinement to the preservation and magnification of God’s glory. Its immediate context specifically accuses Israel of their insincere profession of allegiance (48:1-2). That this is a covenant context is clear from the language (יְהוָה, יִשְׂרָאֵל, הַנִּקְרָאִים, בֵּית־יַעֲקֹב). In fact, Israel’s confidence in their covenant status, despite their insincere faith, is what warrants the Lord’s rebuke.

Some scholars, such as Westermann, believe that the rebuke of 48:1 is a gloss because it seems out of place amidst in a passage whose primary purpose is “to help Israel to step out on the way home.”¹³⁰ However, the Lord continues to accuse Israel throughout the pericope (48:2,4,5b,8b), and his accusation is actually an integral facet of his argument, namely that Israel was punished for her infidelity so that God’s glory would not be sacrificed on the alter of the baals and so that she would be refined and purified. Moreover, even though Israel’s punishment was just, and even though it was

¹²⁸ 133.

¹²⁹ Delitzsch points out that God is specifically referring to the southern kingdom of Judah in exile, based on the language used (“waters of Judah,” “holy city”), 297. I will refer to this group as “Israel” throughout to minimize confusion of audiences and because the text itself uses the terms interchangeably.

¹³⁰ Westermann follows Duhm’s argument almost completely, 196.

for her good and God's glory, it was restrained for the sake of the Lord's covenant promises, that they might not be "cut off" from the Lord.

BDB identifies the sense of *בְּצִדְקָה* here as "righteousness=truthfulness."¹³¹ Given the context of Israel's insincere worship, we may also identify the sense of uprightness in *בְּצִדְקָה*. The combination of these two senses could be understood as integrity or sincerity, although "righteousness" is a fine translation that can communicate both within the context. Delitzsch favors this sense of sincerity in *בְּצִדְקָה*, describing the phrase *לֹא בְּאֵמֶת* *בְּצִדְקָה* as "without their state of mind... or mode of action corresponding to their confession, so as to prove that it was sincerely and seriously meant."¹³² Whitley misses the mark by defining *בְּצִדְקָה* as "reality,"¹³³ which, though corresponding well with the truthfulness of righteousness, fails to communicate the ethical uprightness of integrity (or lack thereof) that is also in view.

5.5. 48:18—*וְצִדְקָתְךָ*

לֹא הִקְשַׁבְתָּ לְמִצְוֹתַי וְיָהִי כְנֶהֱרַ' שְׁלוֹמְךָ וְצִדְקָתְךָ כְּגִלִּי הַיָּם:

If only you had paid attention to my commandments. Then your peace would have been like a river and your righteousness like waves of the sea.

The feminine noun in this passage refers to the righteousness that could have been Israel's had they not forfeited it by their disobedience. The beginning of the chapter also uses *צִדְקָה* to describe proper and sincere human conduct (48:1),¹³⁴ Israel's lack of which led to God's (restrained) judgment for the sake of their refinement and for his glory

¹³¹ 842.4.

¹³² 297.

¹³³ 473.

¹³⁴ According to Scullion, 48:1 the only occurrence in Isaiah 40-55 where *צִדְקָה* refers to proper human conduct, "Righteousness (OT)," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D.N. Freedman, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:729.

(48:9-11). The Lord's sovereignty as Creator is then affirmed (48:12-13) and Israel is called to listen to the Lord's proclamation of the future hidden things, namely the calling of his instrument, which could refer to either Cyrus or the messianic Servant (48:14-17). Verse 18 begins the lament over Israel's disobedience, which lost her the covenant blessings of peace, righteousness, descendants, and security. The Lord then commands Israel to leave Babylon and proclaim the Lord's salvation, likening it to the Exodus and the miraculous provisions thereafter (48:21).

Some scholars believe that צדקה refers to salvation in this passage, since this is a common use in Isaiah 40-55.¹³⁵ Others believe that it refers to right behavior.¹³⁶ However, because וצדקה is listed in verses 18-19 along with other covenant blessings, it seems more likely to describe the result of covenant-keeping behavior and salvation, rather than the behavior itself or the forensic declaration.¹³⁷ Specifically, it has to do the constant identification of Israel's membership vis-à-vis the covenant, which includes both their forensic status and their corresponding behavior. Just as God's צדק manifests itself toward Israel in salvation, Israel's צדק manifests itself in status and behavior.

The relationship between צדקה and שלום cannot be determined from the parallel structure of the verse, since the nature of the parallelism must be determined by the meaning of the words employed. שלום has a wide range of meaning, including "completeness," "prosperity," and "general well-being," but according to BDB, its use

¹³⁵ E.g., Westermann, 203.

¹³⁶ E.g., Oswalt, who bases his argument on the fact that other passages that compare צדק to water have ethical connotations (e.g., Amos 5:24), *Commentary*, 282. However, the passage in Amos compares righteousness to an איתן נחל ("ever-flowing river") and not נליו הים. Moreover, water is used throughout Scripture to communicate a myriad of ideas. For example, נליו הים (as in this passage) is also used to describe God's terrifying judgment on sin (e.g., Jer. 51:42; Ezek. 26:3), which is certainly no covenant blessing!

¹³⁷ Delitzsch describes צדקה and שלום here as "a divine gift, not merited by Israel, but only conditional upon that faith which gives heed to the word of God, especially to the word which promises redemption, and appropriates it to itself," 304.

here describes “peace with God, esp. in covt. relation.”¹³⁸ Although this is one way of describing salvation, it more specifically describes the result of salvation. One might suggest that because 48:19 utilizes synonymous parallelism, equating כָּחֹל with כְּמַעֲתִי and וְצִנְאֵי מַעֲיָד with זֶרְעֶךָ, then the parallel structure of 48:18 is also synonymous. This is further supported by the common chiasmic syntax of both parallelisms. However, Hebrew poetry does not work that way, and the difference between נָהָר (“river”) and גִּלְי הַיָּם (“waves of the sea”) further suggests that צְדָקָתְךָ and שְׁלוֹמְךָ are not completely synonymous here. How then should their relationship be described? One helpful clue is that “river” and “waves of the sea” share a conceptual domain (natural bodies of water), but are different in important ways and used throughout Scripture to describe different things. Whereas נָהָר is often used to describe something flowing in abundance (Ps. 105:41; Isa. 66:12), גִּלְי הַיָּם is often used to describe a powerful steady force that only God can change (Ps. 65:7; 89:9; 107:29; Isa. 51:15). Thus, while both are the resultative characteristics of the reign of God, שְׁלוֹם denotes the abundant well-being of the covenant community and צְדָקָה describes the powerful and steadfast security of membership therein, both in status and behavior.¹³⁹

5.6. 54:14,17—בְּצִדְקָה and וְצִדְקָתָם

¹⁴ בְּצִדְקָה תְּכַוְּנִי רַחֲמֵי מַעֲשֶׂךָ כִּי־לֹא תִירָאִי וּמִמֶּחֱתָה כִּי לֹא־תִקְרַב אֵלַיְךָ:

¹⁷ כָּל־כְּלִי יִוצֵר עָלֶיךָ לֹא יִצְלַח וְכָל־לִשׁוֹן תִּקְוִים־אֶתְךָ לְמִשְׁפָּט תִּרְשָׁעִי זֹאת נִחְלַת עֲבָרֵי יְהוָה וְצִדְקָתָם מֵאֵתִי

¹³⁸ 1023.4.b.

¹³⁹ Oswalt describes this relationship well saying, “They express two sides of a single reality. On the one hand, the person who is concerned to know and do what is right in the sight of God has a single goal and motive that unites all of life. On the other hand, the person whom God has made whole has been delivered from the cruel dominance of self-will that ultimately corrupts everything it touches. The promise of God is that he will establish his people in righteousness,” *Isaiah*, 428.

“In righteousness you shall be established, you shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near to you.”

“Every weapon that is formed against you shall not succeed and you shall condemn every tongue (that) rises against you in judgment; this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord and their vindication is from me,” declares the Lord.

Because these feminine nouns are used within the same paragraph (54:11-17), we will treat them together, in turn. This passage is preceded by the promise that barren Israel will bear many prosperous children (54:1-3), and that the Lord is her Maker and Husband and Redeemer (54:4-8) and has promised never to remove his steadfast love (חֶסֶד) or covenant of peace (שְׁלוֹמִי וְבְרִית) from her (54:9-10). The covenant language and themes continue into verses 11-17, as the Lord promises to beautify their city (54:11-12), teach and grant peace (שְׁלוֹם) to their children (54:13), and establish them in righteousness and justice (54:14a), far from oppression and strife (54:14b-17).

The prominent placement of בְּצִדְקָה at the beginning of verse 14 corresponds with its semantic function as Israel’s foundation. According to BDB, בְּצִדְקָה is being used here to describe “executed justice and righteousness.”¹⁴⁰ That “oppression” and “terror” will be far from them confirms this meaning (54:14), along with the proximity to the promise of peace for their children (54:13). Isaiah also uses צִדְקָה with שְׁלוֹם in passages such as 32:17 and 60:17 to describe executed justice and right order.

Westermann defines the meaning of צִדְקָה in terms of God’s new plan of salvation rather than the typical connotation of deliverance in response to Israel’s lament.¹⁴¹ While this is true, Westermann stops short of homing in on the specific use of צִדְקָה here, namely the execution of justice, which is one important aspect of the future salvation, but

¹⁴⁰ 842.1.a.

¹⁴¹ 269-70.

not synonymous with it. Why then did Isaiah not use *משפט*, which more often denotes “justice”? Could this be evidence for multiple authorship? First, *צדק* and *משפט* are often used together and even synonymously in Isaiah (e.g., 1:27; 5:16; 59:9,14). Second, while *בצדקה* probably has a more specific meaning than “salvation,” it may not be as narrow as “justice.” Rather, it seems to also overlap with *שלום*, inasmuch as it also describes the right order of the covenant community that is naturally built and sustained on a foundation of justice. The *hithpolel* verb *הכונני* also suggests an element of permanence and steadfastness, and although *צדק* and *משפט* will both characterize the future city of Zion (33:5), *צדק* is most often used in contexts describing the permanent salvation of the city of Zion (e.g., Isa. 46:13; 51:6,8; Dan. 9:24). Moreover, *משפט* is often reserved for “judgment” in Isaiah (e.g., 4:4; 28:16; 34:5; 41:1), which the prophet possibly did not want mistakenly inferred in this passage.¹⁴² In conclusion, *צדקה* seems to overlap in meaning with *משפט* more than usual in this passage, but not completely.

The use of *וצדקתם* in 54:17 is quite different. Instead of referring to the steadfast, foundational right order of a community, it refers to the righteous status God will give to Israel. BDB offers a general gloss of “righteousness as vindication, justification, salvation, etc...of God” and categorizes this passage with others that pertain to salvation,¹⁴³ which is helpful for placing the term in the foyer of its basic meaning, but not for finding its specific room. One helpful clue is the 3mp suffix, identifying the *צדקה* as belonging to “the servants of the Lord.” Although this specific form is unique in Scripture, elsewhere, when *צדקה* is attributed to Israel, it either denotes their uprightness

¹⁴² God’s *צדק* refers to his deliverance of Israel far more often than his judgment on the nations, for which *משפט* is more commonly employed, Graesser, 139.

¹⁴³ 842.6.a.

as an ethical quality,¹⁴⁴ their status in the covenant,¹⁴⁵ their identification with YHWH as their Lord and source of salvation and status,¹⁴⁶ or the blessings of salvation.¹⁴⁷ Many versions and commentators translate צדקה as “vindication.” In addition to the lexical support for this sense, it also fits the preceding context well, which describes the Lord’s sure protection of Israel as their inheritance and blessing. Motyer strongly disagrees saying, “vindication is an absurd translation of righteousness,” and describes צדקה here as the Lord’s validation of the status given to Israel by the Servant and his acceptance of them.¹⁴⁸ In other words, צדקה is a picture, not of God’s saving activity, but of the resulting effect of his saving activity on the people, and this picture consists of their correlative upright behavior and status, which marks them out as YHWH’s special possession and warrants the blessings of salvation. While Motyer rightly identifies as a picture of Israel’s resulting heritage, this verse, and its immediate context, are not primarily concerned with the resulting *status* of God’s saving work, but specifically with the defense, justification, and protection that God’s saving work has afforded them.

This understanding of וְצִדְקָתָם is part of what the previous parallel clause calls their “inheritance (נחלה),” which some scholars interpret synonymously with וְצִדְקָתָם.¹⁴⁹ Rather, the two overlap much as צדק and מִשְׁפָּט overlapped above. Here, both terms denote covenantal blessings, but צדקה has more to do with the resulting vindication of God’s saving work granted to Israel, whereas נחלה emphasizes the specific covenant blessing of

¹⁴⁴ E.g., Deut. 9:5; 1 Sam. 26:23; Ps. 37:6; Isa. 57:12; 58:8; 62:2; Ezek. 3:20; 18:24.

¹⁴⁵ E.g., Gen. 15:6; Deut. 24:13; Job 33:26 (Elihu is speaking, but our concern here is how the language is used); throughout Prov.

¹⁴⁶ E.g., Jere. 23:6; 33:16.

¹⁴⁷ E.g., Ps. 24:5.

¹⁴⁸ 451.

¹⁴⁹ E.g., North and Bonnard in Olley, “*Righteousness*” in the Septuagint of Isaiah, who believes that וְצִדְקָתָם refers to the order and peace with which Israel will be blessed, 108.

the promised inheritance and rest in the land. Thus, וְצִדְקָתָם here is best translated “and their vindication.”¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ So also Delitzsch, 378.

Chapter 6—Analysis of the Meaning of צדק in Key Passages Involving Salvation

Few people would dispute that צדק shares a more intimate relationship with salvation terminology in Isaiah 40-55 than anywhere else in Scripture, save perhaps the Psalms. However, few people agree on exactly what that relationship entails, particularly with respect to God's righteousness. Some scholars, such as Dunn, speak in terms of God's צדק "developing" the understanding of salvation because God's righteousness primarily entails the fulfillment of his covenant obligations, even in the face of Israel's infidelity. God had promised to remain faithful to the demands of the covenant despite Israel's own failure to do so (e.g., Deut. 30:1-7; Ps. 89:30-34). Thus, his צדק would necessarily involve deliverance and salvation. In Isaiah 40-55, Dunn says, "The logic of covenant grace is followed through, with the result that righteousness and salvation become virtually synonymous."¹⁵¹ However, Israel was sinful and in need of salvation from the start; her unfaithfulness merely met its grotesque climax after the Davidic-Solomonic reigns. In fact, Deborah uses צדקה to describe the Lord's saving deeds in Judges 5:11, which shows that צדק had long since contained a salvific connotation.¹⁵² According to von Rad, "No radical transformation or development of the ancient idea of Yahweh's righteousness is discernable."¹⁵³

Not only was the soteriological connotation of צדק not an evolution in redemptive history, but the two families of terms (צדק and ישע) are not rightly understood as

¹⁵¹ *New Perspective*, 200.

¹⁵² 1 Sam. 12:7 also uses צדקה of the Lord's righteous deeds of deliverance.

¹⁵³ 372.

synonymous. They may come very close in some passages, and they may often refer to the same reality, but they maintain distinct perspectives. Again, it is important to distinguish the different senses of these words from their common referent. To illustrate, imagine a child who asks her father if he loves her a lot, and he responds, “Sweetheart, I would die a thousand deaths for you.” In this context, to love someone deeply and to be willing to die a thousand deaths for them communicate the same realities. However, they are still distinctly different. Deep love describes the emotion, whereas willingness to die a thousand deaths describes the implications of those emotions, leaving the emotions obvious but implicit. Likewise, צדק and salvation terminology often refer to God’s saving acts, but righteousness is often the cause of salvation. In addition to a causal relationship, they also relate as hyponyms, i.e., God’s צדק includes salvation, but it is not limited to it.¹⁵⁴ This differs from the overlapping meaning between God’s צדק and terms such as שלום and משפט because justice and peace are not fully dependent on God’s righteousness, whereas salvation is. The difference can be illustrated as such:



Thus, salvation is the *form* that God’s righteousness takes in much of Isaiah 40-55¹⁵⁵ and an application of God’s צדק, which had long been needed and anticipated, and was now

¹⁵⁴ Silva, 127.

¹⁵⁵ A.B. Davidson describes this relationship well saying, “Salvation is, so to speak, the clothing, the manifestation of Jehovah’s righteousness,” *The Theology of the Old Testament* (New York: Scribners Sons, 1910), 397.

finally on the brink of realization, first in the foretaste of the restoration from exile, and finally in the fulfillment of the coming of the Messiah-Servant.¹⁵⁶

6.1. 45:8—צֶדֶק and יִצְדָּקָה

הֲרַעֲפוּ שָׁמַיִם מִמֶּעַל וּשְׁחִקִים יִלְּוּ צֶדֶק תִּפְתַּח אֶרֶץ
וַיִּפְרוּ יֵשַׁע וַצְדָּקָה תִּצְמַח יַחַד אֲנִי יְהוָה בְּרֵאתִיו:

*Trickle heavens from above and let (the) clouds rain of **righteousness**;
let the earth open and let salvation bear fruit;
and let **righteousness** cause them to grow together;
I am the Lord and I have created it.*

The Lord himself employs these nouns in a context concerning salvation (יֵשַׁע), which follows a description of his raising Cyrus in order that Israel will know Him as the only true God and Creator (45:1-7). He continues to use creation language in 45:8 by describing צֶדֶק and יֵשַׁע in terms of showering rains and sprouting vegetation. He then warns against those who would challenge his sovereignty (45:9-10), reaffirms his unique role as God and Creator (45:11-12), and concludes this pericope as He began, with the calling of Cyrus (45:13).

This verse is one of the *cruces interpretum* and key fighting arenas regarding the distinction or nondistinction in meaning between the masculine and feminine nouns. Both nouns seem to be used to refer to the same righteousness, with which the Lord desires to flood all of creation. Although BDB defines the masculine and feminine nouns separately, it defines their use here similarly, צֶדֶק being used to describe “righteousness as vindicated, justification in controversy with enemies and troubles, deliverance, victory, prosperity...of God as covenant-keeping, in redemption,”¹⁵⁷ and יִצְדָּקָה being used to

¹⁵⁶ See also Ziesler, 41.

¹⁵⁷ 841-2.6.a.

describe “righteousness as vindicated, justification, salvation, etc. of God.”¹⁵⁸ However, those who believe that the masculine noun usually refers to God’s righteousness whereas the feminine noun usually refers to human righteousness, or the result of God’s righteousness in the sphere of creation, capitalize on the gender variation here. The masculine noun is used in reference to the heavens pouring forth rain, which symbolizes its divine origin. On the other hand, the feminine noun is used in reference to the earth subsequently responding to the rains by bearing fruit, which symbolizes the creaturely response to the God’s צדק. Knight further supports this thesis by appealing to other Ancient Near Eastern languages, which usually use the masculine gender to describe things of the sky (such as שָׁמַיִם and שָׁחֲקִים), where the deity reigns, and the feminine gender to describe things of the earth (such as אֶרֶץ), where humans live.¹⁵⁹ As we have seen, however, this classification does not apply to Hebrew and is only coincidental in this passage. Moreover, the masculine form יָשַׁע is used instead of the feminine form יִשְׁעָה¹⁶⁰ along with צָדָקָה as coming forth from the earth.¹⁶¹ It is also possible that this verse is a short hymn,¹⁶² which would suggest that the masculine and feminine noun forms were both employed for metric or phonetic reasons.

As for the relationship between צדק, צדקה, and יָשַׁע, it seems that righteousness and salvation are again co-referential and describe similar, but not synonymous, pictures of

¹⁵⁸ 842.6.a.

¹⁵⁹ E.g., Knight, “Is Righteousness Right?” 5-6.

¹⁶⁰ Like צדק, the masculine and feminine forms of יָשַׁע have no significant difference in meaning, BDB 447.

¹⁶¹ The versions and commentators disagree whether וַיִּצְדָּקָה should be translated with וַיִּפְרִי-יָשַׁע or with the following clause. The conjunctive accent suggests that וַיִּצְדָּקָה should be read with the following clause, and BHS shows their support of this interpretation by separating the words. That the verb is plural (וַיִּפְרִי) does not require both nouns to be its subject because when the subject follows the verb, their number and gender do not have to match, particularly if the subjects are inanimate or compound (Williams, §228-230). Either way, the verse is describing both righteousness and salvation growing together, which would presumably imply that both are bearing fruit.

¹⁶² Westermann, 163.

redemption and its effectual manifestation in creation. That they will grow and bear fruit precludes their direct identification with one another. Since the focus of the pericope is on God's future promised restoration through Cyrus, it is likely that righteousness and salvation describe that promised redemption, which will in turn result in bearing more fruit. However, these terms should not be flattened to only mean "deliverance" in the sense of Cyrus' work or even the Servant's. The cosmic language used in this hymn suggests that they mean something bigger, which Oswalt rightly describes as "the clearest expression of God's essential character, to do right,"¹⁶³ and which James Muilenburg deems "divine activity that brings about the triumph of righteousness."¹⁶⁴ The tight connection between God's creation and salvation also supports the thesis that his צדק is rightly described as both a creational and covenantal term. Thus, צדק here describes the saving activity of God, which is the manifestation of his covenant-faithfulness to his people and creation.

6.2. 46:12-13—צדקתי and מצדקה

¹² שִׁמְעוּ אֵלַי אֲבִירֵי לֵב הָרְחוּקִים מִצְדָּקָה:

¹³ קִרְבֹּתִי צְדָקָתִי לֹא תִרְחָק וְחֲשׂוֹעֹתַי לֹא תֵאָחֲזַר וְנִתְּנִי
בְּצִיּוֹן חֲשׂוֹעָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל תִּפְאָרְתִּי: ס

*Listen to me, (you) who are stubborn of heart; (you) who are far **from righteousness**.*

*I bring near **my righteousness**; it is not far off, and my salvation will not delay; I will put in Zion salvation for Israel, my glory.*

These feminine nouns are set within the conclusion of an oracle denouncing idols (46:1-2,5-7) in contrast with the Lord's proven sovereignty in prediction and purpose

¹⁶³ 206.

¹⁶⁴ In Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 206.

(46:8-11). One of the most difficult interpretive issues is whether *מִצְדִּיקָהּ* refers in some way to God's salvation, as *צִדִּיקָהּ* does in the following verse, or to man's upright behavior. Its proximity to verse 13 suggests that there may be an intentional linking contrast between the people who are far from God's saving grace and the promise that God's saving grace is at hand; that which the stubborn do not have but desperately need is finally near to them and coming without delay.¹⁶⁵ One could argue that the two phrases of the invocation are synonymously parallel ("stubborn of heart" and "far from righteousness"), which would suggest that *הִרְחוּקִים מִצְדִּיקָהּ* has to do with man's unfaithfulness. Likewise, the invocation of 46:8 is directed to the "transgressors," which might support an ethical connotation of *מִצְדִּיקָהּ*. However, the invocation of 46:3 is directed to Israel with no mention of their transgression. Moreover, the second clause of 46:12 could well be a result of the first clause, i.e., Israel's stubborn hearts are the reason why they are so far from God's righteousness. In addition, if Westermann is correct to propose that 45:18-46:13 is one continuous song¹⁶⁶, then 45:24 may help to identify *מִצְדִּיקָהּ* as the Lord's: "Only in the Lord, it shall be said of me, are righteousness and strength." According to this verse, *מִצְדִּיקָהּ* cannot refer to Israel's righteousness. In addition, 46:12 seems to describe the distance between the stubborn and the Lord's salvation and not the distance between the stubborn and their own righteousness from which they have turned. Moreover, the tone of this passage is not a charge for sinful Israel to turn away from sin and toward righteousness (either their own *or* the Lord's). Rather, the indicative promise that the Lord himself will bring righteousness and

¹⁶⁵ So Westermann, 184.

¹⁶⁶ 185.

salvation (46:13) suggests that the focus here is on God's righteousness, not Israel's lack thereof.

If *מִצְדִּיקָהּ* refers to God's righteousness, then it could still refer to Israel's rejection of the Lord, as Delitzsch explains, "they have despaired of the true, loving fidelity of Jehovah, and have no wish for any further knowledge of it,"¹⁶⁷ but this is still essentially Israel's lack of righteousness explained in terms of rejecting God's righteousness, in which all lawbreaking language may be couched. According to many scholars, 46:12 means that the stubborn only think that God's righteousness and salvation are far from them because of their blindness, when in fact they are already at hand.¹⁶⁸ Rather, *מִצְדִּיקָהּ* probably means that the stubborn really are far from the righteousness and salvation that God wants to give them. In addition, the "nearness" of God's righteousness and salvation described in 46:13 should be understood as temporally near, as *לֹא תִאָּחֵר* ("shall not delay") suggests, and as the future-orientation of the passage suggests.

BDB defines *צִדְקָתִי* in the same way as in 45:8: "righteousness as vindicated, justification, salvation, etc. of God."¹⁶⁹ The only other occurrences of the feminine noun with the 1cs suffix outside of Isaiah is in Gen. 30:33, to refer to Jacob's honesty and in Deut. 9:4 to refer to Israel's (hypothetical) righteousness. Within Isaiah, this form (with an additional *waw*) is only used to refer to God's righteousness, and only in conjunction with his his enduring salvation (51:6,8; 56:1). It could not be more clear, then, that *צִדְקָתִי* is God's own righteousness and not the effect of his righteousness in creation, as those

¹⁶⁷ 290.

¹⁶⁸ Oswalt qualifies his position by identifying deliberate ambiguity and several levels of meaning in this passage saying, "May the author not have used this word at this point precisely because of its multiple levels of meaning?" *Isaiah*, 238. This seems quite possible, but difficult to determine for certain.

¹⁶⁹ 842.6.a.

who propose that the masculine noun refers to God's righteousness and the feminine noun refers to the manifestation of his righteousness among his people.

Motyer defines God's צדק here as "all that accords with his will, character and purposes, everything that is 'right with God'," ¹⁷⁰ but the meaning of צדק in this passage is not so abstract. God's eternal attribute of righteousness is not "coming near" to Israel "without delay" any more so than his other eternal attributes of omnipotence or truthfulness or infiniteness. Rather, it is the manifestation of the attribute of his righteousness that is near to Israel, which may still be understood as "righteous," along with his salvation. As another example, God's love is also coming to Israel, not as an abstract attribute of God's eternal nature, but manifested in the form of his plan of redemption through Cyrus and ultimately through his Servant.

6.3. 51:1,5,6,7,8—צדק, וצדקתי, וצדקתי, וצדקתי, and וצדקתי

¹שמעו אלי רדפי צדק מבקשי יהוה הביתו
אל-צור חצבתם ואל-מקבת בור גקרתם:

⁵קרוב צדקתי יצא ישעי ורעי עמים ישפטו אלי אינם
יקוו ואל-רעי ייחלון:

⁶שאו לשמים עיניכם והביטו אל-הארץ מתחת כרשמים
כעשן נמלחו והארץ כבגד תבלה וישביה כמורכן ימותון
וישועתי לעולם תהיה וצדקתי לא תחת: ס

⁷שמעו אלי ורעי צדק עם תורת בלבם אל-תיראו
חרפת אנוש ומגדפתם אל-תחתו:

⁸כי כבגד יאכלם עש וכצמר יאכלם סס וצדקתי לעולם
תהיה וישועתי לדור דורים: ס

¹Listen to me (you) who pursue **righteousness**, (you) who seek the Lord;
Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug.

⁵**My righteousness** is near, my salvation has gone out and my arms will judge the
peoples; the coastlands hope for me and for my arm they wait.

⁶Lift up to the heavens your eyes and look to the earth beneath, for the heavens will

¹⁷⁰ 370.

vanish like smoke and the earth will wear out like a garment and in like manner the inhabitants will die;

*but my salvation will be forever and **my righteousness** will not be demolished.*

⁷*Listen to me, (you) who know **righteousness**, people (who have) my Law in their heart; do not fear (the) reproach of man and do not be dismayed at their reviling.*

⁸*For like a garment a moth will eat them and like wool a worm will eat them; **but my righteousness** shall be forever and my salvation to all generations.*

This pericope contains three masculine and two feminine noun forms of צֶדֶק, four of which are concentrated in the final four verses. The first masculine noun is part of the opening invocation to “you/ones who pursue righteousness (רָדְפֵי צֶדֶק),” which is followed by another participial clause: “you/ones who seek the Lord.” That both clauses refer to the same group of people does not mean that צֶדֶק is necessarily synonymous with seeking the Lord. They could be co-referential terms describing the same group of people from different and true perspectives. Likewise, the similar invocation of 51:7 (שֹׁמְרֵי צֶדֶק), which has connotations of law-keeping, does not mean that צֶדֶק must also have such connotations in 51:1. In fact, it would not be surprising to find that the Lord is describing different aspects of his covenant people in each invocation. They pursue the Lord and his righteousness (51:1), they have internalized his Law (51:7), they have experienced God’s wrathful judgment (51:17), and they are afflicted (51:21).

The translators of the LXX seemed to interpret צֶדֶק as ethical righteousness by using the neuter adjective τὸ δίκαιον substantively instead of the more abstract noun δικαιοσύνη, which is used in 51:5,6, and 8.¹⁷¹ When the LXX uses δίκαιος substantively, the masculine gender almost¹⁷² always refers to people (e.g. 3:10; 5:23a; 29:21; 53:11; 57:1), whereas the neuter is reserved for more abstract referents, such as the rights of people (5:23b; 47:3) or right (ethical) acts (64:4; 59:4). The use of both the masculine

¹⁷¹ Olley believes that the translators of the LXX interpreted צֶדֶק ethically, but that the original Hebrew is primarily soteriological, “*Righteousness*” in the *Septuagint of Isaiah*, 102.

¹⁷² The LXX also uses the masculine gender to refer to vindication in 54:17.

and neuter in 5:23 is particularly revealing of the translators' distinction between the neuter and masculine adjectives. The LXX may have understood the use of צדק as being predominantly ethical in 51:5,6, and 8 as well, all of which also mention יְשׁוּעָה, and all of which have a lcs suffix, clearly denoting that it is the Lord's righteousness in view. However, they did not seem to interpret its use in 51:1 with as strong of an ethical connotation as its use in 51:7, where they translated צדק with ἀρετή.

Then what specific aspect of Israel is the Lord emphasizing in the phrase הָרַפִּי צֶדֶק? The preceding and following contexts are helpful in this regard. Although 51:1 begins a new paragraph, most scholars agree that it is a continuation of the preceding oracle and that the group addressed in 51:1 is the same group addressed in 50:10, who are characterized above all by their trust in the Lord.¹⁷³ The next verse contrasts those who turn to the Lord in trust with those who guide themselves with their own understanding. Then, the Lord commands הָרַפִּי צֶדֶק to look to the "rock" and "quarry" from which they were taken (51:1), which according to 51:2 is probably Abraham and Sarah, who trusted in the Lord and his righteousness and were greatly blessed and multiplied (51:3). By trusting in the Lord's צדק, Abraham and Sarah were trusting in his faithfulness to his covenant promises to them. Given the preceding and following emphases on trusting the Lord rather than oneself, it seems reasonable that צֶדֶק could denote a general heart orientation away from oneself and idols and towards the Lord and his salvation and promises, who is worthy of their trust. Pursuing the Lord and his righteousness in this way certainly includes pursuing his will, and thus it involves an ethical element, but the Lord does not fill this aspect out until 51:7.

¹⁷³ Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 334. Westermann even places 50:10-11 after 51:1 and then resumes with 51:4ff, apparently skipping over 51:2-3 all together, 232.

Another masculine noun occurs in 51:5. BDB defines its use here the same as in 45:8: “righteousness as vindicated, justification in controversy with enemies and troubles, deliverance, victory, prosperity...of God as covenant-keeping, in redemption.”¹⁷⁴ Almost all scholars agree that 51:5,6, and 8 are some of the clearest soteriological uses of צִדִּיק. However, צִדִּיק is again not completely synonymous with יִשְׁעִי. Whereas יִשְׁעִי specifically denotes the salvation of God’s people, צִדִּיק has a two-fold meaning of judgment of the wicked and salvation of God’s people, the former being necessary for the latter. The parallel structure of the verse helps to determine this meaning. In the first two clauses of 51:5, צִדִּיק and יִשְׁעִי share some sort of parallel relationship. Both are imminent.¹⁷⁵ The remainder of the verse links the coming judgment or justice of God (יִשְׁפֹּטוּ)¹⁷⁶ with the hopeful expectation of his people (יִחְלִיו/יָקוּי), which will both be enacted by the Lord’s “arms.” Although יִשְׁעִי is not mentioned in this final clause, Israel awaits the Lord’s “arm” of salvation elsewhere (33:2; 50:2; 52:10; 53:1), so the idea is implicit. Therefore, this verse seems to connect God’s צִדִּיק with the two-fold judgment that includes punishment of the wicked and salvation of the righteous, and his יִשְׁעִי more specifically with the deliverance that the coastlands eagerly await.

Motyer characterizes צִדִּיק as a divine attribute which manifests itself in the divine action of יִשְׁעָה saying

Here, *righteousness* and *salvation* are parallel; the latter being what the Lord does; the former, the quality of that which infills it. The saving work satisfies

¹⁷⁴ 841-2.6.a.

¹⁷⁵ יָצָא should be understood as a prophetic perfect, Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 336.

¹⁷⁶ The NIV translates יִשְׁפֹּטוּ here as “will bring justice,” which is possible lexically (KB 1623.1.4.a; 1625.1.2), and which complements the sense of וּמִשְׁפָּטִי in the preceding verse. However, although יִשְׁפֹּטִי means “justice” in 51:4, its use is markedly different. In 51:4, it is associated with the Law and it is set for a “light to the peoples,” whereas in 51:5, it is associated with salvation and seems to be a specific act of God because it is enacted by his arms, rather than a general right ordering established for missiological purposes.

every standard of the Lord's righteous nature, meets every legal claim and discharges every debt before the eternal law.¹⁷⁷

While God's righteousness and salvation are accurately described this way in general, this passage seems to overlap the two more than usual. Here, צִדְקָי seems to involve more than God's eternal nature of being true to himself. It also involves being true to his promises. It denotes that aspect of his general righteous nature that in particular pertains to his imminent righting of wrongs, which will result in the punishment of the wicked and the salvation of his people, and which may be understood as his covenant faithfulness.

However, Motyer rightly chastens those who equate צִדְקָי with salvation completely¹⁷⁸ or render it as "deliverance," thus limiting its meaning to God's actions, and specifically those directed towards his people.¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, "deliverance" may suggest that only the rescue from Babylonian captivity is in view, when in fact even the coastlands¹⁸⁰ await the Lord's coming righteousness and salvation.¹⁸¹

The third occurrence of צִדְקָי in this passage is a feminine noun in 51:6, and it also shares a parallel relationship with וְיִשׁוּעָה. Here, the eternity of God's righteousness and salvation are contrasted with the vanishing heavens and earth. The present concern is not the nature of this cosmic dissipation, but the nature of God's צִדְקָה, which will "not be dismayed (לֹא תִחַה).” According to BDB, תִּחַה is being used figuratively to mean “abolished, annihilated,”¹⁸² so the basic point is that God's righteousness and salvation will last forever. Again, וְיִשׁוּעָה and וְצִדְקָתִי are closely related, but not synonymous.

¹⁷⁷ 405.

¹⁷⁸ E.g., Westermann translates both צִדְקָי and יִשׁוּעָה as “salvation,” 232.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ While אֲרָצִים could refer to Jews in the diaspora, it is predominately used to refer to very distant lands (e.g., 41:5; 42:4; 49:1; 66:19) and often the inhabitants of those lands, who are often gentiles warranting judgment (e.g., 23:6; 40:15; 59:18), BDB 15-16.

¹⁸¹ Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 336. Delitzsch is correct to note that this prophecy is addressed specifically to Israel and not the nations, but that does not mean that the nations are not also in view in this passage.

¹⁸² 369.1.

Rather, they communicate the same meanings as they did in 51:5, since nothing in this verse signals a different use.

The masculine noun in 51:7 is a very different use of צֶדֶק because it does not only describe God's coming righteousness, but takes a more specifically ethical character here with תּוֹרָתִי, thus homing in on the broader invocation of 51:1 (וְרָפִי צֶדֶק). Olley believes that the meaning of תּוֹרָתִי is imperative for a proper understanding of צֶדֶק here because if it refers to the Mosaic Law or even teaching in general, then צֶדֶק should be interpreted more as an ethical quality than if it refers to the revelation of God's will in general, in which case it should be interpreted more broadly.¹⁸³ Regardless of the exact meaning of תּוֹרָתִי, however, this phrase describes the internalization of God's will for his people, and thus has an ethical connotation.

However, 51:7 is embedded in a passage describing salvation and trust in God's promises, so צֶדֶק cannot be interpreted as ethical behavior alone, but rather that behavior which characterizes the people of the covenant, who do not merely obey God out of sheer mandate, but internalize his תּוֹרָה because their hearts are so intimately directed towards Him, and away from their own pursuits, idols, or even ability, that they know righteousness. They do not merely know what to do in order to maintain their status in the covenant; they know and understand the means by which they were brought into that covenant, namely God's grace, and they know the proper response to that salvation, namely upright behavior. Delitzsch describes יָדְעֵי צֶדֶק as follows

[those] who know from their own experience what righteousness is as a gift of grace, and as conduct in harmony with the plan of salvation, i.e. to the nation, which bears in its heart the law of God as the standard and impulse of its life.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ 99.

¹⁸⁴ 329.

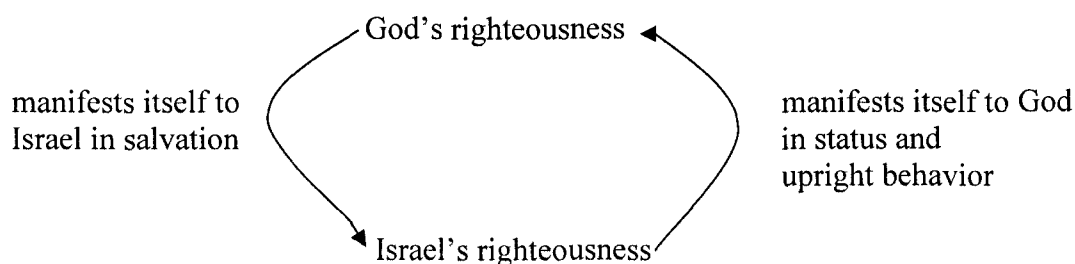
But is this just an explanation of “ethical righteousness” shrouded in covenantal language? No. The covenantal garb is not expendable to תּוֹרָה, or salvation, or any of God’s promises. Doing God’s will must be understood in terms of the covenant, and the covenant must be understood in terms of grace, for it was grace alone that brought them into the covenant, and grace alone that sustains their place therein.¹⁸⁵

The common Protestant understanding of the relationship between salvation and the תּוֹרָה is one of order. God graciously brings the sinner into the covenant, thus granting them salvation and empowering them with the ability to obey his commands. Israel had been brought into the covenant by no efforts of their own (Deut. 7:7-8; 9:4), but according to this passage, those who have internalized the Law and have been empowered to obey its demands are promised salvation. Such promises have been misunderstood in some theological camps to suggest that Israel’s salvation was really dependant upon her ability to keep the Law, but such an interpretation overlooks the rich nature of salvation, which includes both Israel’s initial entrance into the covenant and her final and holistic salvation on the ultimate Day of the Lord, to which their physical deliverances (from Egypt and from Babylon) are foretastes.

Understanding the meaning of this second clause and the relationship between תּוֹרָה and salvation helps to refine the meaning of יָדָעַי צְדָקָה. That the phrases are listed together to describe the same group of people suggests that knowing righteousness includes knowing God’s will. The focus of this verse seems to have narrowed from the general heart orientation of trust described in 51:1 to a specific consequence of that

¹⁸⁵ This passage combines the typical use צְדָקָה in Isaiah 40-55, which is primarily soteriologically-focused, with its primary use in Isaiah 1-39, which is primarily ethically-focused. Thus, contra Rendtorff’s thesis, 56:1 may not be the first combination of these meanings, Reimer 766.

orientation, namely conformity to the will of the one who is trustworthy. Still, it is not merely *doing* righteousness that is in view here (as it is in 58:2), but *knowing* righteousness. According to Motyer, יָדַע involves closeness with the Lord, which is in the trajectory of the syntactically parallel invocation of 51:1. He writes, “Knowing righteousness goes far beyond ‘knowing what is right.’ It is not merely conforming or consenting to the will of God but denotes intimate union with the totally righteous life of God.”¹⁸⁶ God brings his righteousness near to man, and man in return brings his righteousness nearer to God, a spiraling pattern that continues *ad infinitum*. This cyclical phenomenon not only describes the intimacy between God and man, but it also helps to refine and distinguish the righteousness of God and of man: God’s righteousness, in the realm of the covenant, is his covenant faithfulness towards his people, which manifests itself to their enemies in destruction and to Israel in salvation. Israel’s salvation results in both their vindicated status and their upright behavior, which are both reflections of God’s righteousness. Therefore, although God’s righteousness and man’s righteousness are markedly different, they continually reflect each other. This can be illustrated as such:



In this way, the use of יָדַע in this passage has stronger ethical connotations than any other occurrence in Isaiah 40-55, and yet it is still inextricably bound to grace and salvation within a covenant setting.

¹⁸⁶ 407.

The feminine noun in 51:8 seems to function exactly as it did in 51:6, which carried the same meaning as 51:5. It is again described with *וְיִשׁוּעָתִי* as eternal, which in this case stands in contrast to reproaching and reviling men, who will be consumed like a moth-ravaged garment. The order of *וְצַדִּיקָתִי* and *וְיִשׁוּעָתִי* are reversed, and righteousness is promised to be *לְעוֹלָם* as salvation was in 51:6, but the meaning seems identical to that of 51:5-6, namely the Lord's impending righting of all wrongs, which will manifest itself in the destruction of the wicked and the salvation and blessing of his people.

6.4. 53:11—*צַדִּיק* and *יְצַדִּיק*

מִעֲמַל נַפְשׁוֹ יֵרְאֶה יִשְׁבֵּעַ בְּרִעְתּוֹ יְצַדִּיק צַדִּיק עַבְדִּי
לְרַבִּים וְעוֹנָהֶם הוּא יִסְבֵּל:

*Out of (the) anguish of his soul he will see and be satisfied;
by his knowledge shall **the righteous one**, my servant, **make many to be accounted
righteous**; and their iniquity he will bear.*

This verse helps to conclude the fourth Servant Song and describes how the messianic Servant will bear the sins of Israel so that they may be declared righteous before the Lord. Ronald Bergey notes the paronymic repetition of seven of the words in this fourth stanza (53:11c-12). Also, of the twenty-eight words in this stanza, twenty are repeated from previous verses, which suggests that this stanza forms the climax of the poem. Of the repeated words, only *צַדִּיק* and *חֵלֶק* do not occur previously in the poem, which might suggest emphasis or importance.¹⁸⁷ The relationship between the adjective *צַדִּיק* and the noun *עַבְדִּי* could either be appositional (“the righteous one, my servant”) or attributive (“my righteous servant”). Delitzsch believes that *צַדִּיק* is an attributive adjective, and although in Hebrew adjectives usually follow the noun they modify, he

¹⁸⁷ “The Rhetorical Role of Reiteration in the Suffering Servant Poem (Isa 52:13-53:12),” *JETS* 40/2 (1997): 187.

believes that the reversed order here is a means of emphasizing the adjective.

Grammatically, however, it is much more likely that the adjective is functioning in apposition with the noun it precedes.¹⁸⁸

Some scholars interpret צַדִּיק as a divine appellation and עֲבָדִי as the direct object of יִצְדִּיק.¹⁸⁹ Westermann even interprets עֲבָדִי as the subject and יִצְדִּיק as an “internal causative,” rendering the phrase, “my servant will show himself to be righteous (and so stand) as righteous before the many.”¹⁹⁰ This translation is not the most natural rendering of the Hebrew syntax, and the prefix ל־ is probably functioning as an untranslated demarcation of the direct object of the transitive verb יִצְדִּיק.¹⁹¹ In addition, it is the justification of the people that is in view, which is clear from the following phrase (“and their iniquity *he* will bear”) and also the 3mp suffix of וַיִּנָּחֶם.

Because צַדִּיק often has a soteriological meaning in Isaiah 40-55, some scholars, such as McKenzie¹⁹² and Oswalt,¹⁹³ believe that צַדִּיק is synonymous with “deliverer” here.¹⁹⁴ While salvation is an important nuance of צַדִּיק in Isaiah 40-55 and in this passage in particular, it is the vicarious suffering on behalf of Israel, God’s servant, that is specifically in view. The Servant’s role as the representative of Israel, who was supposed to be a faithful servant of the Lord and who was supposed to live up to her calling of righteousness, is highlighted in this soteriological passage. The Servant does not merely rescue Israel from her trouble, like Cyrus, who was more generally a “deliverer.” The

¹⁸⁸ Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 14.3.3c., c.f., Motyer 441-2 and Childs 419.

¹⁸⁹ Dahood, in Olley, “*Righteousness*” in the *Septuagint of Isaiah*, 48.

¹⁹⁰ Westermann, 268.

¹⁹¹ Waltke-O’Connor, 11.2.10g; Joüon-Muraoka §125.k.

¹⁹² 131.

¹⁹³ 404.

¹⁹⁴ Some scholars believe that the adjective is redundant here and, given its proximity to יִצְדִּיק, consider it a scribal error of dittography, McKenzie, 131.

Servant even does much more than deliver Israel from her sin. He represents her as the ultimate Servant and as the ultimate Righteous One, who represents Israel in his vicarious death and victory, thus granting them the righteous status earned by his own suffering.¹⁹⁵ He himself was vindicated and declared righteous by God in order that Israel may share in that justification.¹⁹⁶ Therefore, “deliverer” is a weak and inadequate translation of צַדִּיק in this passage. Instead, it should be rendered “Righteous One,” with the connotation of salvation and status.

This interpretation of the adjective צַדִּיק also accords well with the forensic meaning of the *hiphil* imperfect יַצְדִּיק. According to BDB, יַצְדִּיק means “justify, vindicate the cause of, save.”¹⁹⁷ Specifically, יַצְדִּיק communicates the type of action and the result of the action (“make many to be accounted righteous”). Childs explains, “Although the verb can be translated in several ways, the two senses of declarative and causative seem to flow together from the force of the larger context.”¹⁹⁸ This interpretation seems to account best for the lexical evidence and literary context. Some scholars, however, interpret רַבִּים as an indirect object by virtue of the preposition לִּ-, which often means “to” or “for.” Motyer, for example, translates the construction “bring/provide righteousness for the many.”¹⁹⁹ BDB seems to support this interpretation with the following definition: “to denote the object of a vb...with *hiphil*...to give righteousness to.”²⁰⁰ Motyer admits that this is an extremely unusual use of the *hiphil*, which is almost always followed by a

¹⁹⁵ Some scholars, such as Zeisler and Orlinsky, deny any vicarious meaning in this song because they believe that such a theology did not develop until later, but Olley rightly observes that such a claim is *a priori*, “Righteousness” in the Septuagint of Isaiah, 49.

¹⁹⁶ BDB defines צַדִּיק here in this way as “righteous, as justified and vindicated by י, esp. servant of י, 843.4.

¹⁹⁷ 842.3.

¹⁹⁸ 419; c.f., ESV, RSV.

¹⁹⁹ 441.

²⁰⁰ 511.3.a.

direct object.²⁰¹ Moreover, לִּי need not always be translated, especially if it constrains the proper translation of the verb. Rather than a “directional” indicator, it seems better to understand the prefix לִּי as a *dativus commodi* (a dative of advantage), identifying the party who is advantaged by the verb, namely “the many (רַבִּים).”²⁰²

Delitzsch believes that the preceding phrase “through his knowledge” is the “medium of setting right.”²⁰³ Some scholars redefine בְּרַעְיוֹ as “his suffering,” based on an alleged homonym from an Arabic cognate. This second meaning was advanced by J.A. Emerton, who retracted his claims after encountering C. John Collins’ convincing argument against the proposal of multiple homonyms of רָעָה , which has the sense of “knowledge” throughout Scripture.²⁰⁴ Certainly it is the Servant’s suffering that is the primary means of justification, but the sense of “knowledge” for בְּרַעְיוֹ here is not a problem at all because the referents are the same. In other words, it is the Servant’s knowledge of his experience with suffering that enables the many to be justified. Thus, the two are not unrelated or conflicting means of justification; they are co-referential terms. Motyer further explains that knowledge was a necessary attribute of the Servant and a fitting descriptor here: “If he had not known exactly what was needed and known how to do it nothing would have been achieved.”²⁰⁵ Moreover, if רָעָה had a homonym that meant “suffering” (or “sweat” or anything else), then the LXX translators either were

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Joüon-Muraoka §133.d.

²⁰³ 366.

²⁰⁴ “Homonymous Verbs in Biblical Hebrew: An Investigation of the Role of Comparative Philology” (Ph.D. diss., University of Liverpool, 1988), 693-728.

²⁰⁵ 441.

unaware of it or did not identify it as such in this passage, where they translated בְּרַעְיוֹ with τῇ συνέσει, which of course has no hint of suffering.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁶ BDAG, 970.

Chapter 7—Analysis of the Meaning of צֶדֶק in 45:18-25—Righteousness and Salvation in a Covenant and Trial Context

This passage is extremely important for the current study because it combines various critical exegetical issues and interpretive contexts, and it will help us to draw some conclusions. This passage consists of four paragraphs and begins with the assertion of the Lord's sovereignty as Creator and truthfulness in self-revelation (45:18-19). He then calls the surviving idolaters of the nations to come to trial, to present their own case, and to evaluate the truth of the Lord's prediction (45:20-21). He then calls everyone to turn to Him in worship and allegiance and to be saved (45:22-23). He concludes by affirming the exclusivity of the Lord's righteousness and strength, with the result that those against Him will be "ashamed" whereas Israel will be "justified" and "glory" (45:24-25). This passage, according to Childs, "brings to a climax the theme of the unexpected salvation wrought by God through Cyrus."²⁰⁷

7.1. 45:19—צֶדֶק

לֹא בִסְתֵר דִּבַּרְתִּי בְּמָקוֹם אֲדָרָן חֹשֶׁךְ לֹא אָמַרְתִּי לְזָרַע
יִעֲקֹב תִּהְיוּ בִקְשׁוֹנֵי אֲנִי יְהוָה דִּבֵּר צֶדֶק מִנִּיד מִשְׁרִים:

*I did not speak in secret, in some land of darkness;
I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, "Seek me in vain."
I the Lord speak **righteousness**; I declare what is upright.*

²⁰⁷ 355.

Most versions and commentators translate this masculine noun as “truth,”²⁰⁸ while the NASB renders it “righteousness.” Part of the difficulty in determining its meaning is that *מִישָׁרִים* is most often understood as “upright,” which would seem redundant if *צֶדֶק* meant “righteousness.” According to BDB, *צֶדֶק* in this passage means “righteousness...of God’s attribute...in his promise,”²⁰⁹ and *מִישָׁרִים* means “uprightness, equity...of speech...in Yahweh’s promises.”²¹⁰ Both have to do with the validity and truthfulness of the Lord’s promises, which is clear from the preceding context. God did not hide himself or his plans from the world, but he openly and honestly revealed himself.²¹¹

The following verses also help to understand the meaning of *צֶדֶק* and *מִישָׁרִים*. They compose the familiar trial scene of challenging false gods who cannot speak about the past or future in truth. They cannot attest to the righteousness of their past words and actions, nor the validity of their predictions. The Lord can attest to both. He has acted righteously in the past, and the promises he made in the past have been validated before Israel, his witness. Thus, he proves himself to be the only true God. This being the context of 45:19, the meaning of *צֶדֶק* and *מִישָׁרִים* clearly have to do with the Lord’s upright actions and true promises, but do they emphasize both aspects equally? Lexically, both words have to do with God’s promises, but *מִישָׁרִים* specifically has to do with his speech,

²⁰⁸ ESV, NIV, RSV; Motyer, 365; Olley, “The Translator of the Septuagint of Isaiah and ‘Righteousness,’” 449.

²⁰⁹ 841.2.e.

²¹⁰ 449.2.

²¹¹ The meaning of *תִּהְיוּ* in this verse could have a bearing on the meaning of *צֶדֶק* and *מִישָׁרִים* since the terms are contrasted. Most versions and commentators render it “void,” but “emptiness” or “chaos” are also possible (so Westermann, 173), in which case *צֶדֶק* should perhaps be understood “right order.” BDB defines the use of *תִּהְיוּ* here as figurative of “what is empty, unreal,” rendering this construction, “seek me emptily, to no purpose” (1062.2), the opposite of which is a god who reveals himself to a people who otherwise could not know Him, a god who speaks true promises and a god who, when sought, is sure to be found.

while צֶדֶק specifically has to do with his righteousness. This may suggest that צֶדֶק should be rendered “righteousness” and מִישְׁרִים should be rendered “truth.” This is the interpretation of the LXX, in which צֶדֶק is translated as δικαιοσύνη and מִישְׁרִים as ἀλήθειαν. Throughout the Old Testament, אֱמֶת most often refers to the uprightness of speech, particularly the uprightness of pronounced judgment (e.g., Jere. 9:5; Zech. 8:16). In Isaiah, מִישְׁרִים is used of straight paths (26:7) and upright speech (33:15). However, Isaiah prefers to use אֱמֶת for “truth,” particularly in trial contexts, which suggests that צֶדֶק and מִישְׁרִים might have slightly different meanings than “truth.” It seems best, therefore, to render צֶדֶק as “righteousness” with the understanding of God’s faithfulness to his covenant promises, which consequently proves them to be true. The meaning of מִישְׁרִים is similar, but not identical. It should be understood as the Lord’s truthfulness and integrity in his spoken promises and translated as “uprightness.”

Olley²¹² and Westermann²¹³ render צֶדֶק as “salvation,” which is far too limiting in this context. Certainly, salvation is one of the primary promises of God’s righteousness, but it is not the only one. Rather, the emphasis in this verse is on God’s self-revelation through his spoken word, which is clear not least of all in the four speaking words within this single verse (מְגִיד, דָּבָר, אֱמֶת, דִּבְרָתִי). While 45:18 emphasized that God’s power as Creator is the criteria for knowing Him as the only true God, 45:19 emphasizes that his spoken revelation to his people is the criteria for his sole divinity.²¹⁴

²¹² “Notes on Isaiah,” 450.

²¹³ 172.

²¹⁴ Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 217.

7.2. 45:21—אל־צָדִיק

הַגִּידוּ וְהַנִּישׁוּ אֶף יוֹעֲצוּ יַחְדָּו מִי הַשְׁמִיעַ זֹאת מִקֶּדֶם
מִאֵי הַגִּידָה הַלּוֹא אֲנִי יְהוָה וְאֵין־עוֹד אֱלֹהִים מִבְּלִעְדִּי
אֶל־צָדִיק וּמוֹשִׁיעַ אֵין זֹלָתִי:

*Declare and set forth (your case), indeed let them consult together.
Who announced this long ago? Who declared it from old? Was it not I, the Lord?
And there is no other god besides me, a **righteous** God and a Savior;
there is none except me.*

This adjective occurs in the midst of a challenge against the idols and is sandwiched between two attestations of monotheism. Although the adjective צָדִיק modifies אֱלֹהִים elsewhere in Scripture,²¹⁵ this is the only instance where it is in construct with אֵל. Its form is similar to אֶל־שֶׁרִי, which suggests to some scholars that it may be a title.²¹⁶ However, it seems unlikely that a title would be paired with a substantival participle (וּמוֹשִׁיעַ) or that it would be used only once in Scripture.²¹⁷ The focus in this verse is again on God's promises and faithfulness in the past, which constitutes his "case"²¹⁸ and is the evidence that warrants the verdict of his exclusive divinity.²¹⁹

Motyer believes that צָדִיק describes the Lord's "acting in a way that satisfies his own moral holiness."²²⁰ This definition is in the trajectory of "conformity to a norm," but it does not go as far as the context suggests. Delitzsch comes closer saying

He is just because he is a being who acts most stringently according to the demands of His holiness, and wherever His wrath is not wickedly provoked, sets in motion His loving will, which is ever concerned to secure the salvation of men.²²¹

²¹⁵ E.g., Ezra 9:15; Ps. 7:9; Dan. 9:14, and Ps. 116:5.

²¹⁶ Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 222-23.

²¹⁷ Psalm 7:9 comes close: אֱלֹהִים צָדִיק.

²¹⁸ "Case" is supplied in most translations as the implied direct object of הַגִּידוּ וְהַנִּישׁוּ.

²¹⁹ Motyer writes, "Note that it is no longer deity as such that is the issue but where a saving God can be found (365)," which seems like two different ways of saying the same thing.

²²⁰ 366.

²²¹ 285.

Yet, the primary emphasis in this verse is on God's faithfulness in the past over and against the idols' lack of a "case." Therefore, צדִּיק more specifically refers to God's covenant faithfulness in his past words and deeds, which establishes Him as the one true God. Its relationship to the participle מוֹשִׁיעַ also supports this meaning. Many systematicians wrongly describe this relationship antithetically: God is just and *yet* a Savior. A.B. Davidson is correct to view the two terms as causative: God is righteous and *therefore* a Savior.²²² If his righteousness were merely conformity to his own holiness, this connection would be lost, but because his righteousness in relationship to Israel is the conformity to the demands of the covenant, his saving action naturally flows from his righteousness.

7.3. 45:23—צדקה

כִּי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי וְצָא מִפִּי צִדְקָה דָּבָר וְלֹא יָשׁוּב כִּי־לִי
חֲכָרָע כָּל־בֶּרֶךְ תִּשָּׁבַע כָּל־לָשׁוֹן:

*By myself I have sworn, from my mouth **righteousness** has gone out, a word, and it shall not return.
That to me every knee shall bow and every tongue shall swear (allegiance);*

This verse continues the universal invitation of salvation in 45:22. This is a radical step in Isaiah 40-55, for instead of announcing judgment on idolaters, the Lord invites them to turn to Him and be saved. The dividing wall between Israel and the nations is crumbling, and the demarcation of God's people is no longer ethnic or geographical, but is determined by the willingness to bow before the Lord and confess his name.²²³

²²² Cited in Kuyper, 240.

²²³ Childs, 355.

Most versions and commentators supply the preposition “in,” interpreting צִדְקָה adverbially, as a description of the way in which God’s word has gone out, namely with the Lord’s righteous character, purpose, and power. Although this is possible, Isaiah typically uses the preposition בְּ- with the feminine noun to describe the action of a verb, such as in 1:27; 5:16; 48:1; 54:14; and 63:1, just as he does with the masculine verb.²²⁴ Without the preposition, the feminine noun could also function attributively in apposition with דְּבַר to mean “righteous word,”²²⁵ but the attributive noun in apposition usually follows the noun it modifies.²²⁶ The Masoretes seem to have understood דְּבַר as the subject of both verbs, יֵצֵא and יִשָּׁיב, based on the disjunctive *tebir* and *típha* accents, but that would require צִדְקָה to function adverbially, which we have noted is unlikely. The editors of BHS separated צִדְקָה and דְּבַר with an additional space, which suggests that they possibly understood צִדְקָה to be the subject of יֵצֵא and דְּבַר to be the subject of יִשָּׁיב. Some commentators also interpret צִדְקָה as the subject of יֵצֵא, although they do not match in gender. According to Joüon-Muraoka, 3fs nouns sometimes take a masculine verb, particularly if the verb precedes the noun, as it does here, and although this is an exception to the rule, it may be the best interpretive option.²²⁷ Regardless of the exact function of צִדְקָה, it is integrally connected to דְּבַר, either referring directly to the word itself or to the way in which the word has gone out.

Because צִדְקָה describes the Lord’s word, which he swore by himself, many scholars translate it as “truth.”²²⁸ While the truthfulness of the Lord’s word certainly seems to be in view in this passage, particularly since it is a trial scene, the uprightness of

²²⁴ See the above discussion on 41:2.

²²⁵ Olley, “Notes on Isaiah XXXII 1, XLV 19, 23 and LXIII 1,” *Vetus Testamentum* XXXIII. 4 (1983), 450.

²²⁶ Williams, §66.

²²⁷ §150.c.

²²⁸ Westermann, 174.

his word also seems to be in view. For God's word to be "true" does not mean that it is right. The idolaters could claim many "true" statements about themselves and about their past works, but that does not make them right (e.g., child sacrifice!). Moreover, God's word is upright and therefore not retractable: "it shall not return."²²⁹ The reliability of God's word has been confirmed and no one can thwart its veracity and purpose, which is to draw his people from the ends of the earth to worship Him. This meaning follows directly from the meaning of the Lord's spoken word in 45:19, which was true and upright.

Some scholars believe that צדקה primarily means "vindication" or "deliverance," as is common in Isaiah 40-55,²³⁰ but the focus of this passage seems to be on the truthfulness and uprightness of the Lord's word on trial. Whitley proposes a unique interpretation of צדקה as "essence" in passages that emphasize monotheism, such as this one. He translates, "For I have sworn that a divine essence goes forth from my mouth a dynamic word..."²³¹ As is clear from his liberty in interpreting דבר as "dynamic word," his liberty in translating צדקה as "divine essence" seems both vague and out of the possible range of צדקה. Although Whitley has carefully analyzed the meaning of צדקה in its literary context and probably has a clear grasp on what the author means, his translation goes beyond the word's capacity and what the author actually said, which is dangerous methodology. In other words, he is injecting the text with meaning that needs to remain in study Bible footnotes.

²²⁹ One might even argue that also has a sense of purposefulness or power, given the similar construction (יָצָא נֶפֶשׁ) in 55:11, which focuses on the effectual determination of God's will. However, the context is markedly different, and even the construction יָצָא נֶפֶשׁ is part of a relative phrase in 55:11 that modifies

דְּבָרִי.
²³⁰ E.g., Olley, *Righteousness*, 55.

²³¹ 473-4.

7.4. 45:24—צִדְקוֹת

אֶף בִּיהוָה לִי אָמַר צִדְקוֹת וְעַי עָדִי יָבוֹא וַיִּבָּשׂוּ כָּל
הַנִּחָרִים בּוֹ:

*“Only in the Lord,” it will be said of me, “(are) **righteousness** and strength.”
To him shall come and be ashamed all of the ones who are incensed against him.*

This final paragraph identifies the Lord as the sole bearer of צִדְקוֹת. If 45:22-23 opened the door to universalism, this verse shuts it. The Lord’s invitation of salvation to the ends of the earth and even to those who “carry wooden idols” is not unconditional. Those who remain “incensed against him” will not share in Israel’s justification and glory (45:25). Westermann again renders צִדְקוֹת as “salvation,”²³² and Snaith and North render it “victory.”²³³ Whitley prefers “divine power.”²³⁴ However, these definitions refer to either abstract or general realities rather than specific events, as BDB defines its use here as “righteous acts...of God...redemptive.”²³⁵ The plural feminine form of צִדְקָה is rare, with only a few other occurrence in Isaiah, none of which refer to God’s צִדְקוֹת. When attributed to mankind, it refers to their righteous deeds of obedience or justice (Isa. 64:5; Ps. 11:7; 103:6),²³⁶ but when attributed to the Lord, it nearly always refers to the Lord’s saving deeds (Judges 5:11; 1 Sam. 12:7; Ps. 40:11; 51: 14; 71:15,16,24; Dan:16; Mic. 6:5), which seems to be its use here. Oswalt explains its meaning well saying

Here the plural ‘righteousnesses’ suggests abundance of righteousness, the sum total of all of God’s righteous words and actions. In particular...these are to be understood as his saving actions. What will convince the world of God’s sole lordship? It is his power in deliverance, his absolute faithfulness to his promises, the utter reliability of all he has said.²³⁷

²³² 176.

²³³ Olley, *Righteousness*, 55.

²³⁴ 474.

²³⁵ 842.7.a.

²³⁶ It is also used in Jer. 51:10 of man’s justification.

²³⁷ 225.

Delitzsch also believes that the plural form denotes “abounding (superabundant) righteousness,”²³⁸ and Motyer likewise calls it “a plural of amplification, meaning full or true righteousness.” However, Motyer limits צדקות to an inner quality of God, while עו refers to its external manifestation,²³⁹ which does not accord with its usage elsewhere and is not suggested by the context. Throughout Isaiah, עו is used to refer to God’s mighty arm of redemption (62:8) and is often employed in contexts of salvation (12:2; 49:5), which is the natural complement to the acts of salvation denoted with צדקות. The Lord’s righteousness in his saving deeds and the surfeit of those deeds seem to be the two-fold distinctive meaning of צדקות in this verse.

7.5. 45:25—יצדקו

בִּיהוָה יִצְדָּקוּ וְיִתְהַלְּלוּ כָּל־יְרֵב־עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל:

In the Lord all the offspring of Israel will be justified and glory.

This *qal* imperfect form of צדק is slightly different from those in 43:9 and 43:26, which meant “to be proved right” in a judicial context. Here, יצדקו has more to do with the righteous status granted to those who have been proven to be in the right. In other words, יצדקו denotes the effect of being proven right, namely justification. BDB defines its use here as “to be justified, in one’s plea.”²⁴⁰ According to Olley, בוש in the preceding verse is often used in forensic contexts to describe the party who is shown to be in the wrong, the appropriate opposite of which would be the party shown to be in the right, or vindicated. Olley admits that (unlike 43:9 and 43: 26), יצדקו goes beyond forensic language “with a strong emphasis on God accomplishing his purposes of bringing about

²³⁸ 286.

²³⁹ 367.

²⁴⁰ 842.2.

order.”²⁴¹ Many scholars go too far beyond the forensic meaning and translate יִצְדָּקִי as “shall find salvation,”²⁴² which lacks the forensic tone of “justified.” Although they rightly move beyond a bare forensic meaning, they wrongly leave the forensic meaning behind altogether. Similarly, Delitzsch reads “will become righteous,”²⁴³ which also lacks the necessary forensic tone of יִצְדָּקִי. In order to retain “righteous” in the translation, one would either have to render it “to be proved righteous,” which implies that Israel deserved their status (and was essentially self-justified²⁴⁴), or “to be reckoned righteous,” which leaves the door open for understanding justification as merely forensic with no real transformation of the acquitted sinner.²⁴⁵

The following *hithpael* imperfect וְיִתְהַלְּלוּ also helps to home in on the precise meaning of יִצְדָּקִי. Most versions and commentators render וְיִתְהַלְּלוּ as “and shall glory,” and BDB fleshes this out as “of glorying, making one’s boast in (-בְּ, on the grounds of) .”²⁴⁶ Thus, וְיִתְהַלְּלוּ denotes Israel’s proper response of praise for their justification. If Israel were merely proved to be right, praise would be far less warranted, but if she is justified in the sense that she is declared and made righteous by the Lord’s grace, despite her own lack of merit, then her praise and glory in the Lord can never be outrun.²⁴⁷

²⁴¹ 55.

²⁴² So Westermann (174), North, who translates “triumph,” (Olley, 55), and Joachim Jeremias, (Olley, 57).

²⁴³ 286.

²⁴⁴ The repeated בִּיהוָה in verses 24 and 25 emphasizes that Israel’s justification is not in herself or in idols, but only in the Lord, Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 225.

²⁴⁵ Other translational options are far less appealing. Scullion translates יִצְדָּקִי as “shall be prosperous,” (340) which does not fit the trial or soteriological context at all. Whitley interprets יִצְדָּקִי here as “imbued with divine power,” which is consistent with his vague definition of צְדָקָה in 45:23 and 24, and he offers the following translation (from leftfield): “in Yahweh shall be divinely inspired and will glory all the seed of Israel,” 474.

²⁴⁶ 239.2; ESV, RSV, NASB; Also “praise,” so Motyer, 367; Oswalt, 220; and “boast,” so Young, 218.

²⁴⁷ Olley claims that the syntax and vocabulary of the LXX is far different than the MT saying, “Whereas for MT it is possible to see צָדָק and הָלַל as in some way parallel, for LXX they appear antithetical (58).” However, the syntax is almost exactly the same, and nothing in the Greek suggests that the translators of the LXX viewed צָדָק and הָלַל as antithetical. Moreover, the terms used in the LXX are the standard Greek equivalents, with the exception of the use of ἐνδοξαοθήσονται, which suggests that the translators of the

Therefore, according to the lexical and contextual evidence, it seems best to render יִצְדָּקוּ as “shall be justified.”

LXX interpreted וַיְהַלֵּל as being praised rather than offering praise, which is still not in opposition to יִצְדָּקוּ, but is simply a different (and erroneous) result.

Section 3—Conclusions

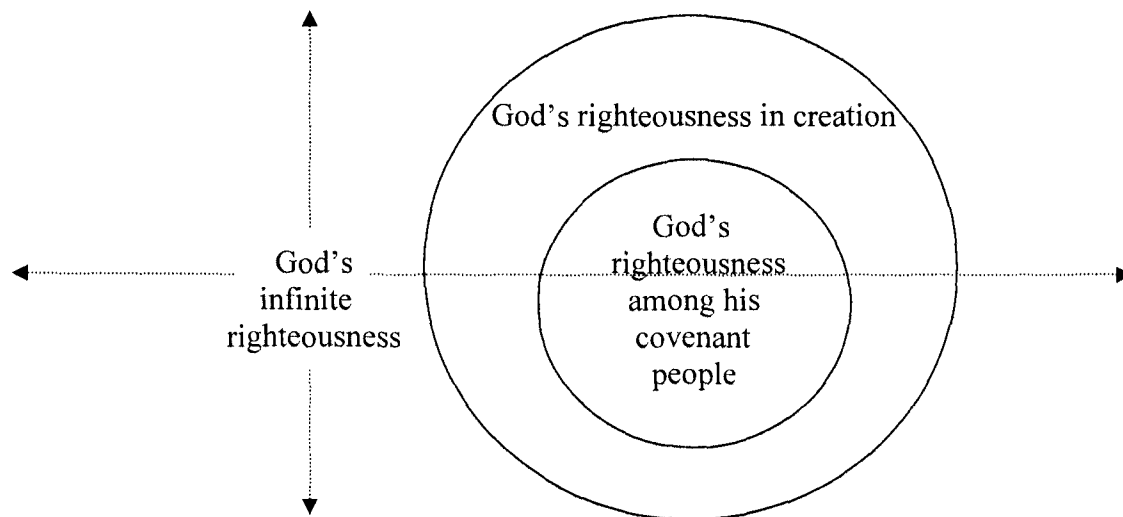
Having examined the use of צדק language in Isaiah 40-55, we are now able to readdress some important issues of debate including the alleged distinction between the masculine and feminine nouns and the proper contexts and meaning of the word group.

As this study has shown, Isaiah uses the feminine and masculine nouns with no significant distinction. This is most clear from passages such as 45:8 and 51:5,6,8, where he uses both nouns to refer to his saving righteousness, and also in 45:19 and 23, where he uses both nouns to refer to the faithfulness of God's promises. In addition, the claim of Johnson and Weinfeld that the feminine noun is concrete, whereas the masculine noun is usually more abstract is also unfounded, since Isaiah uses the feminine noun to denote such abstract qualities as faithfulness, integrity, and justice (45:19, 23; 48:1; 54:14). The claim that the masculine noun more often refers to God's actions whereas the feminine noun more often refers to man's actions or the manifestation of God's righteousness in creation is also ungrounded. Rather, both nouns seem to be used equally to describe both God and man, as the following chart illustrates:

	Masculine	Feminine
God's righteousness	41:10 42:6 42:21 45:8 45:19 51:5	45:8 45:23 45:24 46:12 46:13 51:6 51:8
Man's righteousness	51:1 51:7	
Result of God's righteousness in man		48:18 54:17

Even though, in Isaiah 40-55, man's righteousness (in his trust of the Lord and internalization of the Law) is only represented by the masculine noun and the result of his righteousness is only represented by the feminine noun, this is not conclusive evidence of a distinct pattern of usage, since the pool of evidence in Isaiah 40-55 is so limited. The majority of the noun forms in Isaiah 40-55, however, refer to God's righteousness, and from this pool of evidence, we can safely assert that Isaiah uses the masculine and feminine noun with no apparent significance.

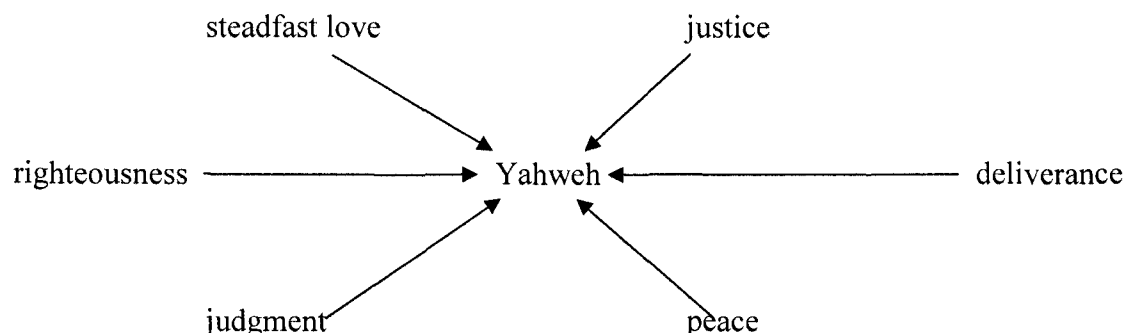
The second issue that this lexical study has helped to elucidate is whether צִדִּיק is a creational or covenantal term. It should be even clearer now that this is a false alternative and that צִדִּיק is most basically a creational term, but often more specifically a covenantal term, particularly in contexts between Yahweh and his people. As a prophet, Isaiah was a covenant enforcer, whose primary role was to act as the Lord's mouthpiece to warn and encourage Israel. Naturally, therefore, most instances of צִדִּיק in Isaiah 40-55 are covenantal. Yet even those passages that are most saturated with covenant language are still within the greater context of creation, as Isaiah never loses sight of the cosmic purposes of the covenant. For example, 42:6 and 45:13 are both preceded by affirmations of the Lord's sovereign work of creation. Likewise, 45:8 uses creational language in order to communicate soteriological promises. The following illustration may help to better conceptualize the relationship between God's righteousness with respect to his covenant people, all of creation, and his infinite righteousness:



This illustration shows that the covenantal context of God's righteousness is within the larger creational context of his righteousness, and that God's infinite righteousness extends far beyond both.

Scholars who argue that צדק is predominately a creational term suggest that it consequently cannot mean "covenant faithfulness" when God is the subject. While there are clearly passages where the צדק of God should not be translated this way, it very often does refer to God's covenantal faithfulness or to the manifestation of that faithfulness in salvation (e.g., 41:10; 42:21; 45:19, 21; 46: 12-13; 51:5, 6, 8; 48: 8; 45:19). However, scholars who strongly assert the covenantal context of צדק often misunderstand its relationship to salvation terminology and treat them as perfect synonyms. As this study has shown, צדק relates to salvation terminology in various ways. In some passages, they are nearly synonymous in meaning (45:8; 46:12-13). In other passages, צדק involves salvation and judgment (51:5,6,8). In other passages, it refers foremost to God's faithfulness to his covenant and promises, which will result in salvation, but is not always in the forefront of the text (41:10; 42:21; 45:19, 23). Sometimes it even refers to the

accuracy and validity of God's past promises and deeds (41:26). Most often, צדק refers to a particular aspect of God's covenant faithfulness, and in passages where it is closely connected to salvation, it often functions co-referentially. The following illustrates how צדק has its own distinctive sense while referring to the same reality as other terms:

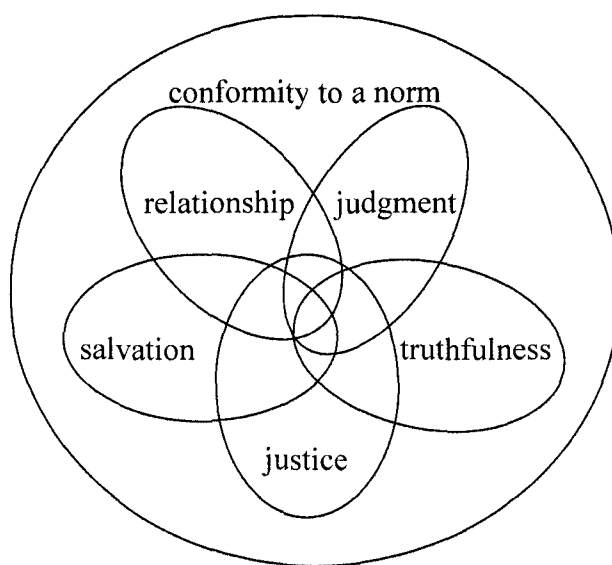


Scholars who believe that salvation is too limiting of a sense for צדק are partially correct. In this study, we have found that צדק is not perfectly synonymous with salvation, and to translate it as such invariably misses a crucial nuance of צדק. However, these critics often limit the scope of salvation too narrowly. If salvation is properly understood as the cosmic and holistic redemption of all creation, and if it is understood as physical and corporate redemption in addition to spiritual and individual redemption, and if it is understood to either include or presume punitive retribution, and if it is understood in terms of continual and eternal restoration and jubilee, then the sense of צדק does in fact overlap a great deal with salvation terminology in many passages.

Therefore, the question of whether צדק is a creational or covenantal term should be replaced by the question of what realm God's צדק is being used. The similar question of whether צדק and salvation are synonymous should likewise be replaced by a proper

sensitivity to their distinct senses in contexts where they are likely functioning co-referentially.

A third important issue is whether צדק primarily denotes conformity to a norm or if it is primarily a relational term. This again is a false dichotomy. Rather, conformity to a norm should be understood as the more basic meaning of צדק, which is relational in certain contexts. In covenantal contexts, which dominate Isaiah 40-55, צדק is naturally a relational term because God is acting righteously with respect to his covenant people and the promises made to them. The various connotations that צדק takes in these covenant contexts only make sense relationally, i.e., God's faithfulness, deliverance, justification, judgment, justice, and blessing are not only the conformity to an abstract norm or principle. They show God's conformity to the specific covenant made with his people. However, God also acts righteously, even in covenantal contexts, for the sake of his own glory (48:11), so although צדק is predominantly used relationally in Isaiah 40-55, it is not exclusively a relational term. The following illustration shows how צדק overlaps with other terms within the basic meaning of conformity to a norm:



Closely related to this issue is the relationship between punitive justice and צדק. At the very least, צדק presupposes the judgment of Israel's oppressors and of sin more generally. If salvation were possible without judgment, then the sacrificial system was a grotesque waste of time, and, more importantly, our Lord Jesus' death and resurrection was in vain. At issue, however, is whether or not such judgment is included within the meaning of צדק. Those who strongly affirm the relational quality of צדק often deny that it could include any retributive meaning. Although none of the occurrences of צדק in Isaiah 40-55 seem to definitively include an aspect of retributive judgment, it is possible that its use within Isaiah 1-39 includes this sense, particularly in consideration of its frequent relationship with שפט (נ). That the purpose of Isaiah 40-55 is primarily to announce Israel's salvation suggests that retributive punishment is not in the forefront of Isaiah's focus. In fact, God's grace is highlighted in that Israel still deserves judgment, but she will receive only salvation, because the judgment that she deserves will be laid upon the Servant instead (53:4-12). Therefore, punitive judgment of Israel or her enemies is not a primary focus of Isaiah 40-55, but since it is possible, and even likely, that it includes this meaning in Isaiah 1-39, a definitive conclusion is safely outside the scope of this study.

A fourth issue that this lexical study has helped to understand better is whether צדק describes one's status vis-à-vis the covenant or one's behavior prior to or within the covenant. Again, the two senses are integrally connected. They are connected causally in that Israel's behavior, i.e. her faithful obedience in relationship to the covenant, affirms, if not secures, her status therein. Her justified status (in the present) then produces the ethical fruit of righteous behavior, which will then secure her future justification. These are not merely *a priori* assumptions on the text; they are central to

the entire soteriological biblical message. In Isaiah 40-55 alone, this relationship of both elements is clear. In 48:1, we noted that *בְּצִדְקָהּ* has the sense of upright behavior and truthfulness, or integrity, Israel's lack of which betrayed her lack of faith, warranting the judgment of exile. The Lord laments that Israel had not been faithful to his commandments, for if she had been, she would have received the blessings of the covenant, not least of all is the status of righteousness, as described in 48:18 (*וּצְדִיקָתָהּ*).

It is also clear from this study that we must steer clear from polarizations when discussing both senses. There is a great deal of fluidity in both nuances. When *צִדְקָה* is used to denote status, it sometimes refers to one's soteriological standing before God (45:25) and at other times it refers to one's status as the Lord's protected, blessed people (54:17). Likewise, even when *צִדְקָה* refers to behavior, it ranges in meaning from the general posture of trust in the Lord (51:1) to the internalization of the Law (51:7). But even the latter, more ethically-focused meaning has to do with the knowledge of the Law rather than cold obligation to its requirements. In other words, *צִדְקָה* is never used legalistically in Isaiah or elsewhere in the Old Testament. Israel's righteous behavior is the proper response to the Lord's righteous, saving acts, and it is the fruit of her vindicated status.

There remains the question of whether the verb forms of *צִדְקָה* in judicial contexts are always forensic, declarative terms of status. The *hiphil* naturally takes a declarative, forensic sense in trial scenes (50:8), but the *qal* imperfect could refer to proving one's own case (41:9, 26) or having one's case vindicated and thus being justified (45:25). It is also notable that although most forensic uses of *צִדְקָה* occur in trial scenes, this sense is not bound by such contexts, as the forensic use of 53:11 illustrates.

Unfortunately, the question of whether צדק is a transferable status cannot be decisively answered by this selective study. That would require a more thorough examination of God's righteousness throughout Scripture, or at least throughout Isaiah, to gain a proper biblical perspective. Isaiah 53:11, however, is helpful insofar as it brings the importance of representation further into the debate. The messianic Servant and צדיק does not merely exchange his status with those whom he justifies; he represents them before the bar of God. Thus, it is because he is united to Israel through representation that they are given his status of righteousness. They partake in his status just as he partook in their status ("[He] was numbered with the transgressors [v. 12]"). However, it is not clear if that status is rightly understood apart from the Servant, i.e., whether it is rightly *their own* status. That question awaits further research.

Through this study, we have seen the richness of the צדק word family in Isaiah 40-55. It speaks of God's loving faithfulness, truth, grace, and power, and it helps us to understand the breadth and glory of salvation. Let us now be encouraged by the promises and work of our צדיק God, and let us seek to gratefully appropriate the reality of our blessed salvation.

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