

God Loves Justice and Righteousness

- *Mishpat* and *sedeq*, justice and righteousness, as a phrase mean something different than when the words appear individually.ⁱ
 - In Hebrew, sometimes two independent words joined together with “and” express one conceptⁱⁱ— sometimes they appear side by side, and sometimes they appear in parallel verses.ⁱⁱⁱ
- *Mishpat* and *Sedeq* are used as a word pair around 80 times in Scripture,^{iv} including Psalm 33:5, which says that God “loves *sedeqah* and *mishpat*.”
- In order to see this one concept of “justice and righteousness,” we need to go back to the beginning—to the context of God’s *shalom*-filled design for the world.^v
 - The structure God put into His creation allowed everything in it, including humans, to prosper. Before sin entered the world and distorted everything, everyone had the opportunity to holistically thrive, enjoying the goodness He created.
- Doing “justice and righteousness” means honoring and expressing God’s intended order and His ways for life.
- Doing “justice and righteousness” means loving the things that lead to life and actively righting the wrongs that keep people from experiencing life as God created it to be.
- When God does “justice and righteousness,” it brings liberation and freedom.^{vi}
- This is why He expects His people to pattern their lives after His ways, because He wants them to experience the free, thriving life full of *shalom* in all their world and relationships.^{vii}
- Justice and Righteousness are what:
 - **God loves** (Ps. 11:7, 33:5, 37:28, 45:7, 99:4, 146:8; Pro. 15:9; Isa. 61:8; Heb. 1:9)
 - **God delights in** (Jer. 9:23-24)
 - **He expects His nation to do** (Deut. 16:20, Prov. 21:3, Isa. 56:1, Mic. 6:8, Amos 5:24)
 - **He expects His leaders to do** (Deut. 16:18, 2 Sam. 8:15, 1 Kings 10:9; Ps. 72; Jer. 7:5, 22:3, 15-16)
 - **Jesus will do** (Ps. 72, Isa. 11:1-5, Jer. 23:5-6, 33:15-16)
 - **Will be permanent when the Holy Spirit comes** (Isa. 32: 15-18)
- Justice and Righteousness are foundational to:
 - **God’s reign** (Ps. 89:14, 97:2, 98; Acts 17:31; 1 Peter 2:23; Rev 19:11)
 - **God’s chosen people** (Gen. 18:19)
 - **Jesus’ kingdom and reign** (Isa. 9:7, 16:5, 42:1-4; Ps. 72; Rom. 14:17)

Demystifying Biblical Justice

- The picture of this God who loves justice and righteousness as revealed in Scripture is not a God who loves to punish people, but a God who loves things like this:
 - Relationship
 - When we are completely loyal to Him
 - Freeing the oppressed from the oppressor
 - When we pattern our lives after His life-giving order
 - Deliverance, salvation, and victory
 - Creating a heavenly norm on earth
 - When people are given their rights
 - Restoring what's been lost, stolen, or broken
 - Environments where everyone can live in their fullness
 - Good, unselfish governance
 - Laws that reflect the value and dignity of the weak and poor
 - Rescuing the poor and defenseless

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- ⁱ Weinfeld, Moshe. *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995.; Goldingay, John. "Justice and Salvation for Israel and Canaan." *Reading the Hebrew Bible for a New Millennium: Form, Concept, and Theological Perspective*, ed. Wonil Kim. Vol. 1. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity International, 2000. 169-176.
- ⁱⁱ Arnold, Bill T., and John H. Choi. *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. New York, NY: Cambridge UP, 2003. 29-30.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Leclerc, Thomas. *Yahweh Is Exalted in Justice: Solidarity and Conflict in Isaiah*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001.
- ^{iv} Johnson, B. "Sādaq." Vol. 12 of *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Edited by G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren and Heinz-Josef Fabry. Translated by David E. Green. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998. 239-264.
- ^v Frey, Cristofer. "The Impact of the Biblical Idea of Justice on Present Discussions of Social Justice." In *Justice and Righteousness: Biblical Themes and Their Influence*, edited by Yair Hoffman, and Henning Reventlow, 91-104. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series*. Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1992. 91-104.
- ^{vi} Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel*.
- ^{vii} Scullion, J.J. "Righteousness (OT)." Vol. 5 of *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by David Noel Freedman et al. New York: Doubleday, 1992. 724-736.