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# RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD AND MAN IN THE PROPHETS

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## Introduction

“The righteousness of God” is an important theme in the Old and New Testaments about which there is great debate.<sup>1</sup> It is concerned with the way lost men and women can be right with God (Carson 1992).<sup>2</sup> Throughout the history of the church scholars have articulated various positions of the righteousness of God or justification. The topic is related to the law, Jewish and Christian relations, the relationship between the testaments and other crucial issues. The debate has been most intense in the New Testament and particularly the Pauline epistles (Thielman 1994; Cranfield 1975; Dunn 1992; Kaseman 1980; Longnecker 1976; Sanders 1983).

This paper proposes to explore the concept of “righteousness” and “the righteousness of God” in the prophets from the eighth to the fifth century B.C.

At least three reasons could be cited for engaging in this study. One, the Apostle Paul states that the law and the prophets bear witness to the righteousness of God as he expounds it (Rom. 3:21). Two, a re-examination of the prophets’ view on the issue ought to contribute to the ongoing debate in New Testament and Church History scholarship on the righteousness of God. Three, it is possible that righteous and the righteousness of God in the two testaments is multifaceted and the failure to recognize the legitimacy of each element has contributed to the impasse.

## Issues Related To Righteousness – Hermeneutical and Methodological

There are a number of hermeneutical and methodological issues which impact how scholars deal with righteousness in the prophets. These issues include a number of

elements which are usually combined by scholars.<sup>3</sup> First, many scholars do lexical studies of the semantic field related to righteousness.<sup>4</sup> For instance, there is debate about the meaning of the derivatives of the Hebrew *s-d-q*. Some scholars maintain that there is a difference in the nuance of the masculine (*sedeq*) and feminine (*sedeqah*)-nouns.<sup>5</sup> Others disagree.<sup>6</sup>

Second, some scholars use revised versions of the documentary hypothesis, form criticism, tradition history criticism, redaction criticism, and other approaches which sometimes possess underlying pre-suppositions of the biblical text contrary to the historic orthodox positions. Graf proposed and Wellhausen popularized the documentary hypothesis which advocated that the Pentateuch consisted of four formerly independent literary works which were merged at different historical times. The documents are: JEDP. Even though the theory in its classical form has been revised and seriously challenged in some circles, there are those who conduct their research with some of the major postulates of the documentary hypothesis in view. Others hold to the major postulates of form, tradition history, redaction, and other forms of criticism. It is not that these methodologies lack any value; they certainly contribute to highlighting particular phenomena of the text or the stages of composition. The problem is that sometimes scholars claim that mere hypotheses are axioms, such as the postulates of Second and Third Isaiah.<sup>7</sup>

Another example is N. H. Snaith, who articulates a position of righteousness which incorporates pre-suppositions of the documentary hypothesis and the faulty linguistic theory which James Barr criticizes in his book *The Semantics of Biblical Language*. Aspects of Snaith's view are influenced by the Graf-Wellhausen theory which propounds the ethical monotheism of the eighth century prophets and that the prophets were innovators.

Snaith contends that the canonical prophets initiated the 'distinctive ideas' of the Old Testament and the righteousness of God is one of the ideas which distinguished Israel from the other nations. He argues that the prophets Amos, Hosea, Micah and the writer of Isaiah 1-39, linked holiness and righteousness, contributed to an early ontology of God, and claimed that Jehovah demands right conduct of his worshippers.

Snaith makes the following observations: a) the eighth century prophets made a special link between holiness and righteousness; b) the association of holiness and righteousness by the eighth-century prophets was distinct from the Greek concept in origin, emphasis, and content; c) the eighth-century prophets began dealing with the matter of God's ontology, which was further developed by Jeremiah and, particularly, the so-called Second Isaiah. Moreover, righteousness is theocentric, is more

than ethical (Snaith 1946, 63-64), and in the post-exilic era referred to the vindication by God of those who could not secure their own rights (Snaith 1946, 51-67).

Third, some scholars adopt the historical reconstruction of Israelite religion proposed by Alt and Noth (Alt 1966; Noth 1972; von Rad 1966).<sup>8</sup> Alt and Noth proposed radical reconstructions of Israelite history which conflicted with the view postulated by the biblical text. The views of Graf, Wellhausen, Alt and Noth have impacted the manner in which the prophetic books have been interpreted (Westermann 1969; Mays 1983, 5-17; Paul 1991; Wolff 1977).

The documentary hypothesis in its classical and revised formulations, and the historical reconstruction of Alt and Noth were and are influential. Nevertheless, this writer has serious problems with some aspects of these positions which diametrically oppose the Bible. As indicated above, other scholars have presented more biblically based positions (Bright 1982; Harrison 1969; Long 1994).

Fourth, there is debate about the relationship between righteousness in the Old and New Testaments. Snaith postulates that Paul's use of *dikaïosuné*, ('righteousness') for *sdq* is more a salvation term than an ethical term, and refers to "the divine activity in which God gives effect to His redeeming work in Christ" (Snaith 1946, 168). On this view he proposes the abandonment of the Pauline doctrine of justification as primarily forensic and judicial (Snaith 1946, 167).

J. J. Scullion contends that the New Testament and sixteenth century Reformation debate about righteousness should not be read into the Old Testament (Freedman 1992, s.v. "Righteousness"). His point is valid to some extent since scholars need to appreciate the history of salvation (*Heilsgeschichte*) as it unfolds the plan of God; there is continuity and discontinuity between the testaments. However, in practice, Scullion is essentially opposed to the emphasis on forensic righteous in Paul and the Reformers and minimizes this teaching in the Old Testament.

A more biblical and balanced view of righteousness is articulated by James H. Ropes (1903, 211-227). Ropes postulates that righteousness in the OT and NT is used essentially in a similar way, except that the latter deals with Christ. He argues that the term conveys three connotations: a) moral excellence; b) vindication of a man with a righteous cause; c) God's vindication of the man when God shows mercy (Ropes 1903, 218).

## **The Phenomenon of Human Sinfulness**

While the Old Testament affirms the dignity of man, there is also a strong emphasis on human sinfulness. The Old Testament underscores

the view that humans possess dignity based on their creation in the *imago Dei* and initiatives by God to restore people to himself. The prophets maintain this tension and place more emphasis on the sinfulness of humanity.<sup>9</sup> For instance, each of the prophets refers to sin in one form or another in the life of the covenant people, and/or a non-Israelite nation or nations.<sup>10</sup> Injustice and/or rebellion by the covenant people or the other nations is indicted in Amos, Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Ezekiel. Unfaithfulness is indicted in Hosea and Malachi. In Jonah, there is the disobedience of a prophet and the gross wickedness of the Ninevites. The prophet Isaiah acknowledged that both he and the people among whom he dwelt were of “unclean lips” (6:5). Indeed, in the prophets as in the rest of the Old Testament, sin has various negative connotations.<sup>11</sup>

## **Righteousness: A Multifaceted Concept**

### **Righteousness and Moral Excellence**

In the prophets righteousness sometimes refers to moral excellence of those described as righteous (*sadiq*). The adjective could refer to people, a nation, and God.<sup>12</sup> In terms of the people, it does not refer to absolute sinlessness; especially when the nature of sin briefly examined above is borne in mind. However, it is speaking about a human standard of morality equivalent with the English concept of justice.<sup>13</sup> When righteousness refers to God, the term speaks of his fairness in all relationships and at times is associated with his holiness (Isa. 6:5; Bray 1993, 215-218; Snaith 1946, 51-58).

### **Righteousness as Relational**

Another element of righteousness in the prophets is the relational component (Kuyper 1977, 233-252; Bromiley 1988). This component is usually in a covenant context either with God or fellow humans. In this context righteousness is faithfulness to covenant stipulations.<sup>14</sup> Contrary to the views of many critical scholars, the prophets conducted their ministries aware of the Noahic covenant (Gen. 9: 8-18), Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 15: 1-6), Sinaitic covenant (Ex. 19: 1-25) and Davidic covenant (II Sam. 7: 8-17). Their knowledge was obtained through antecedent scripture or oral tradition. When these four covenants are taken in their literary, historical, and theological contexts, much light is shed on the teaching of the prophets as it pertains to righteousness.

For example, in a number of the prophets there are indictments against non-Israelite nation(s), for example, Amos (1: 3-2: 3), Obadiah (1: 1-15), Jonah (1: 2-3; 3: 1-4), Nahum (1: 2-3: 19), Habakkuk (2: 2-20),

Zephaniah (2: 4-15), Isaiah (13: 1-23: 18), Jeremiah (46: 1-51: 64) and Ezekiel (25: 1-32: 32). The indictments include social injustice, pride, and treachery as indicators of human unrighteousness. The indictments are made by Yahweh the sovereign and just Lord of the universe, the one who established the covenant with Noah. This covenant was universal in scope and classified as everlasting (Gen. 9: 16; *berit lolam*).

In a similar manner the indictments against Israel and Judah are best understood within the framework of the covenants God made with Abraham, the people of Israel at Sinai, and with David. These covenants bestowed upon Israel a special status as the people of God. In the covenant with Abraham, God committed himself to make a great nation from Abraham's descendants, provide them with land, and bless the nations through Abraham. The Sinai covenant was instituted as a gracious act of God, subsequent to the gracious and powerful act of God's deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage. The people were told that by trusting God they would have life, yet this covenant is clear about blessings for faithfulness and judgment for unfaithfulness (Deut. 28; Lev. 26).

Meanwhile, in the Davidic covenant, God promised to bless David's reign, to provide him with an everlasting dynasty and correct his children when they transgressed against God. In the Book of Amos (2: 4-2: 16) Judah and Israel are indicted by Yahweh for transgressions of a predominantly social nature. It seems that God indicated his subjects for violations of his covenants. God's chosen people failed to fulfill a norm which required them to protect the weak, poor, and marginalized from legal and economic exploitation.

Similarly, Isaiah indicts Israel and Judah for social injustice which was a covenant violation (1: 2-5: 30). He affirms Yahweh's decree of a devastating destruction which overflows with righteousness (10: 22). It is therefore clear that the judgment of the Lord relates to his righteousness. Isaiah 51:7 teaches that the people who know God's righteousness have his law in their hearts and ought not to permit themselves to be intimidated by humans. The people relate to God through his law or covenant.

Hosea and Micah also deal with righteousness. Hosea contended that the people were unrighteous because they were unfaithful to Yahweh in their pursuit of other gods (4: 1-13: 6). The nation of Israel was like an adulterous wife to a faithful husband (1: 24: 19). Micah indicated the people because of social injustice and the righteous character of God (1: 2-2: 13).

An examination of righteousness in Ezekiel reveals a strong emphasis on ethics, ritual, and individualism (Ezek. 18: 5-9). His view of the righteous person though somewhat different, is not antithetical to that of

Hosea, Amos, Micah and Isaiah. Ezekiel's difference lies in two areas. First, he stresses the righteousness of the individual Israelite over against that of the nation as a corporate entity. As Kelly writes, "In general, before the Exile righteousness is seen in corporate or national terms, and after the Exile individual righteousness comes to the fore" (Bromiley 1988, 193). Second, his reference to ritual acts as contributing to righteousness appears to contradict the views of Amos, Isaiah, and Micah who seem to repudiate ritual in their emphasis on righteousness (Amos 5: 21-23; Isa. 1: 10-15; Mic. 6: 6, 7).

However, Ezekiel and the above mentioned prophets are closer to one another than it first appears when their views are understood in their historical and theological contexts. First, like the pre-exilic prophets, Ezekiel is best understood in a covenant context which views righteousness in relational terms. All that he called the post-exilic Jewish community to do was prescribed in the Sinai covenant which generally provided the theological backdrop for the prophets. Similarly, in Ezek, 16: 44-52 Sodom and Samaria are declared more righteous than Judah (cf. Jer. 3: 11). The point being made is that though the former two were corrupt, Judah was even worse. The standard used to assess was some sort of a covenant relationship (Gen. 38: 26; I Sam. 24: 17).

Second, Ezekiel's emphasis on individual righteousness could be viewed as having continuity and discontinuity with the pre-exilic prophets. Ezekiel was not referring to persons who were morally perfect but those who trusted God and demonstrated this by obedience to his covenant (Deut. 6: 25; 24: 13). For instance, 3: 20, 21 indicates that a righteous man could turn from his righteousness to do evil, or he may heed a warning and not turn from his righteous actions (18: 24). A similar principle occurs in 18: 21-23 where if the wicked turns away from his wickedness and does righteousness his sin would not be counted against him. So a common denominator of the righteous in Ezekiel and the other pre-exilic prophets mentioned above is their faith in God expressed by repentance and obedience.

Third, the apparent contradiction concerning the place of rituals in the life of the righteous person in Ezekiel and the above mentioned prophets could be adequately explained within the context of their respective historical situations. The pre-exilic prophets realized that the people of God felt that the observance of rituals absolved them from the social responsibilities which were no less required by the covenant. In their emphasis on the deficiency of the people, the pre-exilic prophets appeared to have minimized or repudiated rituals. The apparent repudiation was a rhetorical or communication device to shock the people and hopefully get them to correct their error. On the other hand,

Ezekiel was not teaching that ritual observances in themselves made the Israelites righteous. They were righteous as they trusted Yahweh and kept his covenant which included ritual observances.

In the above cases the non-Israelite nations and the people of Israel were unrighteous by their failure to live up to a covenant norm. The covenants were different for the two major categories of humanity. The non-Israelite nations were apparently related to God by the Noahic covenant. Yahweh was creator and sovereign judge of the universe. He was also gracious to this group of humanity as illustrated in the Book of Jonah (3 and 4), when the decree of judgment was reversed after the Ninevites believed God (3: 5-10).

For the pre-exilic prophets, if the people of God trusted him, repented and observed the covenant, they would have been considered righteous (Amos 5: 4, 6, 14, 15, 24; Hos. 5: 15-6: 3; Isa. 1: 18-20; Mic. 1: 2-2: 13). These and similar instances illustrate an aspect of Yahweh's righteousness. The people did not believe and repent, so God, faithful to the covenant, judged them as he had previously warned (Lev. 26: 14-46; Deut. 28: 15-68).

This judgment of God is an act of his righteousness since he observes the stipulations of the covenant. This aspect of God's righteousness conflicts with that of Gerhard von Rad. For von Rad the righteousness of God is restricted to his deliverance of his people. Von Rad states that there is nothing of the righteousness of God in Amos and Hosea (1962, 370-76). This conclusion is based on a truncated concept of Yahweh's righteousness; it fails to see that Yahweh is himself righteous (Tenney 1975, s.v. "Righteousness"). The fact is that the prophets affirm that Yahweh is himself righteous in some places (Isa. 24: 6; Jer. 12: 1; Lam. 1: 18; Zep. 3: 5; Zech. 9: 9) and illustrate it in other places.

For the post-exilic prophet Malachi, the righteous were those who trusted and served Yahweh within the context of the covenant (3:16-18).

In addition to people within the nation being considered righteous, there are occasions when Israel as an entity is classified as righteous. For example, looking to the future deliverance of God when the people would once again trust their redeemer, Isaiah stated, "Open the gates, that the righteous nation which keeps faith may enter in" (Isa. 26: 2). Habakkuk expressed concern that a righteous God planned to use the faithless Chaldeans to judge a Judah who was more righteous than the former (Patterson 1991, 169-172). Like the text in Ezekiel 16:52, righteousness should not be viewed in absolute terms. Within the context, Judah is more righteous than the Chaldeans because the latter probably infringe some covenant norm to a greater degree than Judah.

## **Righteousness Includes Faith in Yahweh**

Above it was observed that righteousness in the prophets is also associated with faith or trust in Yahweh. This point is related to covenant but needs further elaboration. People are described as righteous when they failed to receive their due in a relationship and depended on God for their deliverance (Bromiley 1988, s.v. "Righteousness"; Freedman 1992, s.v. "Righteousness"). These persons included the poor, devout, and marginalized in Israelite society, who were forensically innocent and sometimes were denied their rights before the local courts in the gates (Isa. 3: 10; 5: 23; 29: 21; 57: 1; Jer. 20: 12; Ezek. 13: 22; Amos 2: 6; 5: 12; Hab. 1: 4). Among this group was the prophet Jeremiah who was persecuted by the people in Judah because of his unpopular message (Jer. 20: 12).

The covenant required the kings, leaders, and judges to seek the interests of socially and economically weak persons who were in the right. However, unrighteous kings, judges, and business persons disregarded the covenant norm when they turned their backs on God. Therefore, the poor and devout usually trusted God for deliverance and vindication of their rights.

In Habakkuk 2: 4 there is a strong emphasis on the relationship between the righteous and faith and/or faithfulness. The context of the passage could help in its interpretation. The prophet questioned God's plan to use a more wicked nation to judge his people Judah. God responded that the unrighteous Chaldeans would be judged at an unspecified future time. However, he who waits for God to vindicate him (the righteous) shall live by faith and/or faithfulness. It seems that within the context either "faith" or "faithfulness" is possible. Indeed, there is no reason why both are not appropriate.

## **Righteousness and Salvation**

A significant element of righteousness in the prophets is that it is associated with Yahweh's saving action on behalf of his people (von Rad 1962, 370-371; Freedman 1992, s.v. "Righteousness"; Bromiley 1988, 193; Ropes 1903, 218).<sup>15</sup> This element of righteousness is strongest in Isaiah 40-66, but not restricted to this pericope. In Isaiah, God's righteousness, saving activity on behalf of his people, creatorship, and universal sovereignty are interrelated. God summoned Cyrus to victory in order that Israel may be free to be re-established in her land as God promised (41: 5; 44: 28; 45: 1; Freedman 1992, s.v. Righteousness). The Lord will prosper the work of the first, and uphold his people in righteousness. The righteousness (vindication) and salvation of Zion will shine brightly for the nations to see (62: 12). In this poetic text,



righteousness is synonymous with salvation.

The righteousness of God as saving activity also emerges in some of the other prophets. In a text of future restoration God says he will betroth Israel in righteousness, justice, steadfast love, mercy, truth, and they will know the Lord (Hos. 2: 19, 20; 1: 21, 22). In Micah, God posed the rhetorical question about what wrong he did to the people of Israel for them to be so wayward. He then proceeded to remind them of his saving acts on Israel's behalf in history, namely, the exodus and curse of Balaam (6: 3-5). In Jeremiah the people of Israel acknowledged the future saving act (vindication) of Yahweh on her behalf because he will judge Babylon by the Medes (51:10). Zechariah predicted the restoration of the exiled people of God to Jerusalem in faithfulness and righteousness (8: 8).

The righteousness of God as his saving acts is based on the covenant with Israel. Yahweh is righteous because he maintained his covenant with his people in spite of their unfaithfulness. When they were apostate he sent them into exile, while he himself remained faithful to the covenant. He promised them a new covenant and subsequently redeemed them (Jer. 31: 31-34; Bromiley 1988, 193).

Moreover, Yahweh's covenant with and saving acts on behalf of Israel had redemptive implications for all nations (Isa. 42: 5-9). This text represents God as the creator of the world and sustainer of its inhabitants. Yahweh called Israel in righteousness and preserved that nation. He gave Israel for a covenant to the nations.<sup>16</sup> The basis is that Yahweh desired to receive the glory due to his name.

### **Righteousness as a Forensic Act**

Some of the prophets articulate the concept of righteousness as a declarative judicial act. The judicial concept is deduced on the basis of context, syntax, and vocabulary.<sup>17</sup> Isaiah pronounced woe on those who declared the wicked not guilty for a bribe and deprived the innocent of his right (5: 23; 10: 1, 2). The judicial nuance is also clear in the so-called "rib passages" in Isaiah. All the nations are urged by Yahweh to gather together with their witnesses in an effort to determine who is the true God. The witnesses are to "justify them," that is, the nations and gods they serve. Israel is the servant of the Lord and his witness. Everyone is to make a decision as to who is the real or supreme god (42: 9). Also, Israel is called to set forth her case before God so that the nation may be proved right (42: 26). All the children of Israel shall be justified in the Lord (45: 25).

There are additional references in Isaiah which emphasize the forensic sense (50: 8; 53: 11; Freedman 1992, s.v. "Righteousness"). Isaiah 50:

8, 9 expresses the certainty of God's help the servant has in the face of human opposition. The servant stated that he would not be put to shame because the one who justifies him is near. Since God justifies and helps him, no one can declare him guilty. Westermann is correct when he makes the observation that Paul cites this passage in a similar context in Romans 8: 31 and Isaiah's usage is parallel to some of the cases in the Book of Psalms (1969, 231).

Isaiah 53: 11 is crucial in articulating the forensic sense of righteousness. The suffering servant became an offering for sin and subsequently had his days prolonged. Yahweh then declared that "my righteous servant shall make many righteous because he bore their iniquities." On the basis of the substitutionary death of the servant of the Lord, he was able to make "righteous" (causative) many (Westermann 1969, 267).<sup>18</sup>

Jeremiah 3: 11 and Ezekiel 16: 15, 52 lend themselves to a forensic sense. First, in the Jeremiah text, God promises to be merciful to his children if they acknowledged their guilt (3: 13). Guilt is closely associated with a forensic context. Second, in the two texts, the parties indicted are not ontologically righteous because it is underscored that each was sinful, though some more than others. Third, as pointed out earlier, the Ezekiel and Jeremiah passages could be viewed in a covenant context. In Jeremiah, Judah is viewed as an unfaithful wife who violates the covenant of marriage (3: 1-5). The guilty parties violated some norms associated with relationships. The forensic element and covenant contexts are not diametrically opposed to each other.

## Conclusion

Righteousness in the prophets consists of a number of components which may be distinguished from one another but are interrelated. The following five elements may be identified. First, righteousness sometimes refers to moral excellence. Second, righteousness has a relational emphasis. Third, righteousness is frequently associated with faith. Fourth, righteousness is sometimes linked with God's saving activity. Fifth, righteousness sometimes has a forensic element.

Scholars dealing with righteousness and the righteousness of God in the Old Testament need to keep this multifaceted view in mind. This multifaceted concept has implications for the view in the New Testament. The context of the occurrences of righteousness ought to be carefully studied to determine which elements the writers employ. Unless this is done, someone like Paul would be accused of contradicting himself and his writings would appear incoherent.

## NOTES

1. "The righteousness of God" is viewed by some scholars as equivalent to "justification by faith."
2. The book consists of a number of essays dealing with the topic of righteousness or justification. The focus of this book is primarily the New Testament.
3. Issues of hermeneutics and methodology are complex and contribute directly to the conclusions that scholars reach on every doctrine derived from Scripture. The scope of this paper can only briefly illustrate a few instances in how hermeneutics and methodology are likely to influence the conclusions scholars reach on righteousness in the prophets. For further study see: Thiselton (1992); Morgan and Barton (1988); Osborne (1991); Jeanron (1988); McKenzie and Haynes (1993).
4. This lexical approach investigates derivatives of the roots s-d-q (righteous), m-s-p-t (justice), r-h-m (mercy), h-s-d (steadfast love) and other lexemes which are used in parallel with s-d-q.  
The Hebrew root s-d-q is frequently translated δικαιοσύνη by the Septuagint. Moreover, the Greek New Testament uses δικαιοσύνη and δικαιοσύνη θεου to refer to "righteousness" or "the righteousness of God." The Latin *iustitia* and *iustitia Dei* are used in the Vulgate to translate the Hebrew and Greek terms respectively. Gerhard von Rad argues that the Vulgate *iustitia* and the German word *Gerechtigkeit* refer to "man's proper conduct over against an absolute ethical norm, a legality which derives its norm from the absolute idea of justice" (1962, 370-371).
5. A. Jepsen and H. H. Schmid make a distinction between the two words. Jepsen suggests that *sedeq* refers to right order in the community; while *sedeqah*, refers to order in creation. The righteousness of God is his saving design in action (1965, 76, 81).  
Schmid follows Jepsen. For Schmid, *sedeq* concerns proper order while *sedeqah* means the proper order of the world. According to Schmid, *sedeq* relates to order in six spheres: law, wisdom, nature, cult, kingship and war (1968, 67, 179).
6. Among those who make no distinction between *sdq* (m) and *sedeqah* (f) are: K. H. Fahlgren, W. G. E. Watson, G. von Rad, N. H. Snaith, and J. J. Scullion.  
Scullion argues that *sedeq* and *sedeqah* are translated by a variety of terms in the RSV depending on the literary contexts but the range of usage for the masculine and feminine is essentially the same (Freedman 1992). For him righteousness is primarily "proper order, proper comportment" and

- God's saving action, though he concedes that the *s-d-q* is used forensically in Isaiah 43: 9, 26; 45: 25. Scullion contends that the forensic usage of justification is a minor theme in the prophets, for example, he does not even deal with Habakkuk 2: 4 which is quoted in the New Testament three times (Rom. 1: 17; Gal. 3: 11; Heb. 10: 38).
7. For the articulation or critique of some of these views see Westermann (1969) and R. K. Harrison (1969).
  8. Gerhard von Rad and many critical scholars accept this position. A major problem with this position is that the issues of dating books and their theology are further compounded. For two alternative proposals to the Alt and Noth reconstruction of Israelite history see Bright (1982) and Long (1994).
  9. For more detailed discussions of sin in the Old Testament see Smith (1993); de Vries (1962, 361-376); Milne (1975, 3-33); Knierim (1966); Porubcan (1963).
  10. C. R. Smith classifies the various words for sin in the Old Testament in three groups: generic terms; metaphors; and opposites (1953, 15-22).
  11. After discussing various lists of words proposed by various scholars, Ralph Smith states, "...sin in the Old Testament is error, failure, rebellion against God. It is disobedience, folly, unfaithfulness. It is greed, oppression, violence, pride, and immorality. Sin is wrongdoing, bad deeds, and evil" (1993, 279).
  12. For example, see Isa. 3: 17; 5: 23; 26: 2; 29: 21; 45: 21; 57: 1; Jer. 12: 1; 20: 12; 23: 5; Lam. 1: 18; 4: 13; Ezek. 3: 20, 21; 13: 22; 18: 5, 9, 20, 24, 26; Hos. 14: 9; Amos 2: 6; 5: 12; Hab. 1: 4, 13; Zep. 3: 5; Zech. 9: 9; Mal. 3: 18.
  13. This nuance is consistent with the Latin *iustitia* and German *Gerechtigkeit* (Ropes 1903, 218).
  14. The theological context of the prophets is debated by scholars. In spite of the many proposals it seems reasonable to argue that covenant is a major theme. See Hasel (1991, 77-81), for information on the debate about the intellectual background of Amos in particular but with implications for some of the other prophets.
  15. There are other recent scholars who postulate that Yahweh's righteousness is centered in his saving action. H. G. Reventlow contends that justification is centered around world order in which God's action intervenes, changes, and renews the world (1971, 37). Crusemann postulates that the righteousness of God describes his action in the history of Israel which varied in different historical contexts. Crusemann divides the history of Israel into

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pre-monarchy, monarchy, and exilic periods. The saving activity of God described in the respective eras was the following: a) military success; b) order in the cult and rescue of individuals in distress; and c) future action, (1976). Scharbert suggests that God's righteousness is primarily his saving intervention on behalf of the oppressed or exploited pious. Scharbert states, "It is to be noted that the OT regards legal decisions primarily as liberating decisions in favor of the oppressed, exploited, unjustly accused, and less as sentences pronounced on the justly accused. This is important for making any judgment about the righteousness of God" (*Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 12: 408).

16. The content of the covenant is salvific: a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.
17. See Scullion, "Righteousness," 726.
18. See Westermann, Isaiah, 40-66: A Commentary, 267.

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