

Series: The Names of God
Title: Jehovah-Tsidkenu
Text: Jeremiah 23:5,6

Introduction

THE NAME *Jehovah-Tsidkenu* means Jehovah our Righteousness. It appears in Jeremiah's prophecy of a "righteous Branch" and a future "King."

Chapter 23 says, "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteous Savior. "So then, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when people will no longer say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,' but they will say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the descendants of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.' Then they will live in their own land." ([Jeremiah 23:5-8](#))

Verse 5 says, "and this is his name whereby he shall be called, Jehovah our Righteousness."

The kingdom of Judah was on the verge of collapse when Jeremiah gave this prophecy. A hundred years before, the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom were taken captive by the Assyrians and never returned to the Promised Land. Judah hadn't learned anything from Israel's lesson. Judah's sins were even bolder than those of her sister to the north.

God raises up Jeremiah as a prophet to warn Judah about the coming judgment because of her rebelliousness. Jeremiah's ministry begins during the reign of the good king named Josiah. Sadly, Judah's history was a repeat of the period of the Judges. God would raise up righteous kings to succeed the wicked kings, but it failed to stop Judah's downward spiral.

Josiah instituted sweeping national reforms, which began a spiritual revival. But, it abruptly ended with Josiah's untimely death. Sadly, his successors swept them all away, and conditions worsened spiritually, morally, and materially. Oppression, violence, and political corruption continued to escalate, and still, God's warnings went unheeded. The people mocked the prophets until, as 2 Chronicles 36:16 puts it, "the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy."

In 2 Kings, the Lord said, "Nevertheless, the LORD did not turn away from the heat of his fierce anger, which burned against Judah because of all that Manasseh had done to arouse his anger. So the LORD said, "I will remove Judah also from my presence as I removed Israel, and I will reject Jerusalem, the city I chose, and this temple, about which I said, 'My Name shall be there.'" ([2 Kings 23:26-27](#))

Judah's day of grace had already expired. Maybe Josiah's untimely death was God's deliverance sparing him from having to witness the final demise of the nation. When Jeremiah preached about the coming captivity of Judah, he counseled them to submit to Babylon because Babylon was the instrument of God's judgment. God used Babylon to humble Judah and cause the people to cry out to God and follow the Lord's ways again.

Jeremiah prophesied that Israel would return from captivity and be restored to the Promised Land, and Jehovah would raise up to David a Righteous Branch, a King who would reign and prosper and do judgment and justice in the earth. The Righteous Branch would bring peace and security to Israel, and be called Jehovah our Righteousness.

The similarity between God the Righteous Branch and Judah's last king, "Zedekiah," which means the Righteousness of Jehovah, is quite striking. His name had originally been *Mattaniah*, which means the gift of Jehovah. But strangely enough, his name was changed to Zedekiah by the king of Babylon. Even in judgment, God was declaring to Judah his Righteousness.

Israel had steadily and determinedly spiraled downhill away from God. God said, "They turned their backs to me and not their faces; though I taught them again and again, they would not listen or respond to discipline." ([Jeremiah 32:33](#))

They despised Jehovah Jireh's provision of redemption and would not turn to Jehovah Rophe for healing. They refused to sanctify themselves before Jehovah M'Kaddesh, and each day they became more corrupt and vile. Ezekiel sees the elders in the Temple worshiping animals and abominable beasts (Ezek. 8:10, 11). They forsook Jehovah Shalom and lost their peace. The nation was being torn apart by internal dissension and violence and outward aggression and conquest.

During these times and the reign of Zedekiah, the prophecy of Jehovah Tsidkenu was given. "'The days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will fulfill the good promise I made to the people of Israel and Judah. "'In those days and at that time, I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line; he will do what is just and right in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteous Savior.' ([Jeremiah 33:14-16](#))

All of Judah's kings should have been God's representatives, as the name of Judah's last king, Zedekiah, suggests, "Jehovah the Righteous One." But it was a title that really applied to God's Messiah. It is the Messiah who is the Righteous Branch who will sit on the throne of David. It is the Messiah who will redeem, heal, cleanse, peace and make Israel righteous.

The kingdom the Messiah establishes will be spiritual rather than political, and its chief characteristic Righteousness.

I. MEANING AND USE OF "TSEDEK"

The word *tsidkenu* is derived from *tsedek*--Righteousness. The Hebrew word cannot be adequately translated by any one English word. It indicates God's dealings with us in righteousness, justification, and acquittal. It focuses on our outward obligations and relationships. "Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity. Use honest scales and honest weights, an honest ephah and an honest hin. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt." (Leviticus 19:35-36)

Deuteronomy 25:15 says, "You must have accurate and honest weights and measures, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you." (Deuteronomy 25:15)

The ancient Romans represented justice by a person with a pair of balanced scales in her hand. Job pleaded, "let God weigh me in honest scales, and he will know that I am blameless—" (Job 31:6)

Modern orthodox Jews still see God weighing their good deeds against the bad. The process begins on New Year's Day, and on the Day of Atonement, it ends; and judgment is sealed for the year. The ten days between New Year's and the Day of Atonement are spent in charity, prayer, and fasting, trying to tip the balances in a person's favor, although there is never any certainty as to which way it may have gone.

The word *tsedek* is also used of a complete weight or measure toward God in the spiritual sense. God commanded Israel to walk in the paths of Righteousness and to offer the sacrifices of Righteousness, putting their trust in the Lord (Psalm 4:5).

Righteousness is used in the sense of rendering justice and making right. The judges and officers of Israel were to judge the people with righteous judgment (Dent. 16:18). Isaiah pictures Jehovah as looking for Righteousness in judgment but finding the cry of the oppressed (5:7).

The word is used hundreds of times in the Scriptures as right, righteous, Righteousness, and just, justify, and declare innocent.

II. THE SOURCE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Jehovah is Himself perfect in Righteousness; He is the Perfectly righteous One. Isaiah says, "El-Tsadiq is the righteous God; there is none to compare with Him" (45:21). He is the Rock whose work is perfect; all of His ways are just. The Psalmist says, "His Righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and His testimonies are righteous forever" (Psalm 119:142, 144). Righteousness and justice are the very foundations of His throne (Psalm 89:14; 97:2). In all His dealings, God is righteous.

In contrast to God's perfect Righteousness is our lack of Righteousness and the sinfulness of our ways. In Job 15:14, Eliphaz asks Job, "What *is* man, that he could be pure? And *he who is* born of a woman, that he could be righteous?" (Job 15:14 NKJV)

The Psalmist sees Jehovah looking in vain from heaven to see if there be any that understand and do good. And the verdict is: "There is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Psalm 14:3). The apostle, Paul, quotes that very passage in the New Testament, saying, "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:20), and he concludes that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Israel is reminded that they are a stiff-necked and sinful people. The prophet Isaiah regards as filthy rags what he had once considered his own personal righteousness (Isaiah 64:6). Paul had been so proud of the Righteousness of the Law, but now he considered it as refuse (Philippians 3:4-9).

The Old Testament saints would say, "O Lord, righteousness *belongs* to You, but to us shame of face, as *it is* this day—to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those near and those far off in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of the unfaithfulness which they have committed against You. "O Lord, to us *belongs* shame of face, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, because we have sinned against You." (Daniel 9:7-8 NKJV)

The Old Testament clarifies that righteousness acceptable to God is impossible to attain by man alone because of inherent sin. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9 NKJV)

David said, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin, my mother conceived me." (Psalms 51:5 NKJV)

Job says, How then can man be righteous before God? Or how can he be pure *who is* born of a woman?

(Job 25:4 NKJV)

Jehovah cannot overlook humanity's unrighteousness, and He "will by no means clear the guilty." In Exodus 23:7, God says, "I will not justify the wicked" (Exodus 23:7). No one is capable in himself of righteousness acceptable to God. A fallen creation cannot rise to the standard of perfect obedience.

So how then can a person be acquitted of their unrighteousness and become righteous before God? Only Jehovah could provide such a righteousness. It was clearly understood by the spiritually discerning even in Old Testament times that only God Himself could provide such a righteousness.

Isaiah says, "Surely, shall one say, in Jehovah have I righteousness . . . to him shall men come. . . In Jehovah shall all the seed of Israel be justified . . ." (Isaiah 45:24, 25). "He is near that justifies me; who will contend with me?" (Isaiah 50:8). He further predicts that no weapon formed against Israel will prosper; every tongue rising up in judgment against her will be condemned because her Righteousness is of Jehovah (Isaiah 54:17). God could declare the guilty innocent and the unrighteous righteous if an innocent one bore their guilt and unrighteousness.

Isaiah spoke of a Servant who would be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. Upon Him, Jehovah would lay the iniquity of us all and make His soul an offering for sin. The Servant is called "my righteous servant," who should justify many by "bearing their iniquities."

Zechariah identifies him as the Servant who is the Branch (Zech. 3:8-10). And that Branch is the righteous Branch of David and the King of Jeremiah 23:5 who is also Jehovah Tsidkenu God our Righteousness.

God gave us a glimpse of His grace from the beginning. Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for Righteousness (Genesis 15:6). Psalm 85:2 says, "You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people; You have covered all their sin. Selah" ([Psalms 85:2 NKJV](#))

III. CHRIST, OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

The provision of Righteousness was fully realized in Jesus Christ, our Jehovah Tsidkenu. He was the suffering, righteous Servant of Jehovah. He was worthy of being substituted for Israel and for us. As the Righteous Branch, Jesus identified with Israel and represented us before God. In Him, we have met our obligations to God.

Yet as Jehovah, our Righteousness, Christ is distinct from us and not involved in our guilt. Jesus is Himself the Righteous One.

In his great sermon at Pentecost, Peter accuses his hearers of denying the Holy One and the Just or Righteous (Acts 3:14). Hebrews says, "But to the Son, He says: "YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER; A SCEPTER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IS THE SCEPTER OF YOUR KINGDOM." ([Hebrews 1:8 NKJV](#))

In human nature, Jesus lived up to the perfect standard of God's divine Law. His righteousness was of the same complexion and character as the righteousness of God." Still more, as one with the Father, His Righteousness was the perfect manifestation of the Righteousness of God.

And then He is made Righteousness to us. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and Righteousness (I Corinthians 1:30). He did this by paying the penalty for sin in His death for us upon the cross. "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." ([2 Corinthians 5:21](#))

And Peter adds: " For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. (1 Peter 3:18)

What we could not do for ourselves, Christ did for us. Jesus is the Lawgiver; therefore, the Law had no claim upon Him. Jesus perfectly obeyed the Law for us and became "the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes." (Romans 10:4)

"In His death for us as a perfect and worthy sacrifice, He took our guilt and paid our penalty. So, His Righteousness is given to us as a free gift through faith.

Israel's great error was seeking to establish a righteousness of its own rather than submitting to the Righteousness of God (Romans 10:3). In Romans 3, Paul establishes the unrighteousness of man, and he presents the righteousness of God as His grace in redemption toward us. He closes with, "Christ did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus." (Romans 3:26)

In Philippians 3:9, Paul applies the argument to his own experience and places all his hopes on being "found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith." (Philippians 3:9)

In Romans 5, Paul again argues that as our identity with Adam brings us under sin and death, our identity with Christ makes us the recipients of the free gift of His Righteousness and life (Romans 5:16-19).

Conclusion

The practical effect of the gift of His Righteousness is to put our feet on the path of Righteousness so we can conform to God's will. All of God's ways are Righteous. He loves Righteousness and hates iniquity.

We must become a new person in Christ, created in Righteousness (Ephesians 4:24). Jehovah-tsidkenu is a life-transforming work in the name of Christ, who is our righteousness. Jehovah-tsidkenu, Christ, is our Righteousness!