

8-24-24 Message to Roeh Israel Abilene
Torah Portion: Deut 7:12 – 11:25 *Ekev* (“as a result”)
Haftarah: Isaiah 49:14 – 51:3
Suggested Acheron K’tuvim: Eph 2:1-10

Under the Law Part Part 15 – Justification

Central question: How are we justified before G-d?

Today we are in parasha *Ekev*. This parasha takes its name from the second Hebrew word in the passage. “*Ekev*” can be translated as “because”, or also, “as a result”. This is the 6th word in the English translation, below.

Deut 7:12-13

12 "Then it shall come about, **because** you listen to these judgments and keep and do them, that the Lord your God will keep with you His covenant and His lovingkindness which He swore to your forefathers. 13 And He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock, in the land which He swore to your forefathers to give you.

12

הָאֵלֶּה	הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים	אֵת	תִּשְׁמָעוּן	עַקֵּב	וְהָיָה
these	judgments,		ye hearken to	if	Wherefore it shall come to pass,
<u>428</u>	<u>4941</u>	<u>853</u>	<u>8085</u>	<u>6118</u>	<u>1961</u>

אֶת־	לָךְ	אֱלֹהֶיךָ	יְהוָה	וְשָׁמַר	אִתָּם	וַעֲשִׂיתָם	וְשָׁמַרְתֶּם
	unto thee	thy God	the Lord	that shall keep	them,	and do	and keep,
<u>853</u>	<u>3807a</u>	<u>430</u>	<u>3068</u>	<u>8104</u>	<u>853</u>	<u>6213</u>	<u>8104</u>

לְאֲבֹתֶיךָ:	וְשָׁבַע	אֲשֶׁר	הַחֶסֶד	וְאֵת־	הַבְּרִית
unto thy fathers:	he sware	which	the mercy	and	the covenant
<u>1</u>	<u>7650</u>	<u>834</u>	<u>2617</u>	<u>853</u>	<u>1285</u>

13

פְּרִי־	וַיְבָרֶךְ	וַיְהַרְבֵּךְ	וַיְבָרֶכְךָ	וַיֶּאֱהָבֶךָ
the fruit of	he will also bless	and multiply thee:	and bless thee,	And he will love thee,
<u>6529</u>	<u>1288</u>	<u>7235</u>	<u>1288</u>	<u>157</u>

וַיִּצְהָרְךָ	וַתִּירָשֶׁךָ	דָּגָנְךָ	אֲדָמָתְךָ	וּפְרִי־	בִטְנְךָ
and thine oil,	and thy wine,	thy corn,	thy land,	and the fruit of	thy womb,
<u>3323</u>	<u>8492</u>	<u>1715</u>	<u>127</u>	<u>6529</u>	<u>990</u>

אֲשֶׁר־	הָאֲדָמָה	עַל	צֹאנְךָ	וְעִשְׂתֶּרֶת	אֲלֹפֶיךָ	שִׁגְר־
which	the land	in	thy sheep,	and the flocks of	thy kine,	the increase of
<u>834</u>	<u>127</u>	<u>5921</u>	<u>6629</u>	<u>6251</u>	<u>504</u>	<u>7698</u>

וְשָׁבַע	לְאֲבֹתֶיךָ	לָהֶם	לָךְ:
he sware	unto thy fathers	to give	thee.
<u>7650</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>5414</u>	<u>3807a</u>

We see in the first line of today's parasha that the blessings flowing to us from the covenant relationship with G-d are tied to our paying attention to the instructions of G-d and following them. And that leads me into today's topic.

We continue today in the Under the Law series. Last week I began with the introduction of the concepts of justification and sanctification, and demonstrated some unfortunate misapplications of scripture by some

honored Christian theologians, which have led directly to what I believe is an errant theology which compresses the concept of sanctification into the concept of justification inappropriately.

Last week I told you that there is a process we see in scripture which takes us from being in a condition of sin and cursing into a condition of righteousness and blessing. I described the steps as:

Sin (Lawlessness – violations of Torah)

Judgment

Punishment

Repentance and return to righteousness conduct

Restoration

Blessing

I told you that the modern normative church has seemed to re-define the concept of sin, making it a bit fuzzy. Then Christian theologians seem to jump right over the steps of judgment through restoration by claiming “the blood of Jesus.” Then they insist that G-d bless the normative church because they are now the new “Israel,” and G-d’s promises to Israel are now theirs. They seem to forget the entire “grafting-in” process described in Romans 11. And they seem to overlook the fact that when Israel sinned, and began to distance itself from G-d, His

blessings and protective covering were removed, and judgment followed.

I related how an honored teacher in a large Christian church spoke of the concept of “sanctification” as being “growth,” but he was not all that clear regarding precisely how a believer should grow in faith. He suggested people go to the local Christian book store and find some books on spiritual growth. He seemed to ignore the value of the Bible (in particular the Tanach) as a primary resource for what it means to live a sanctified life.

To properly understand the differences between justification and sanctification, we should examine each of these concepts in some detail, and in doing so, we can fashion for ourselves a proper theological framework for living our lives, and growing in sanctification and holiness.

It is important that we first pass through the door of justification to even enter into a truly sanctified life.

Titus 2:11-14

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

And because we have been justified, we will want to follow His instructions if for no other reason than we love Him, and wish to subject our lives to His ways.

Titus 3:4-9

4 But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, 5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. 8 This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I

want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men.

At the end of this age, there will be a day of judgment, and at that time two things will be determined before the throne of judgment. First, is your name written in the book of life (justified)? Secondly, what deeds of righteousness did you do in accordance with a holy life (sanctified)?

John 5:24-29

24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. 25 "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live. 26 "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; 27 and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. 28 "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, 29 and shall come forth; those who did the

good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.

If a person has a few good deeds (keeping Torah with a proper heart) and some other deeds which are not righteous, the judgment fire will still preserve those good deeds for his reward. But even if a person has no good deeds, but he still has the right heart of devotion to G-d and has accepted the sacrifice of Yeshua as payment for his sin, his reward in the World to Come will be lost, but he himself will be in that kingdom.

1 Cor 3:10-15

10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But let each man be careful how he builds upon it. 11 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. 14 If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. 15 If any man's work is burned up, he

shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.

Good deeds, done without first laying a foundation of a true devotion to G-d, are worthless before the throne of judgment. They are the equivalent of sin (Lawlessness), because they were done to glorify the one doing them, and not the L-rd.¹

Matt 6:1

6 "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.

Matt 7:20-23

20 "So then, you will know them by their fruits. 21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. 22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many

¹ Yeshua rebuked those who do deeds only to be seen by others in Mt. 23:5.

miracles?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'

These passages show us that there is a relationship between justification and sanctification, and that “good deeds” done outside of the doorway of justification are worthless before the judgment throne.

So, with that groundwork laid, let’s examine the doorway of justification.

Justification is not a process. It is an event. That single event might have unfolded over a period of hours or days, but almost every person who has entered that door can point back to a time when it was open to him, and he eagerly ran through it.

Outside the door of justification, a person stands rightly convicted of sin and separated from G-d’s kingdom.

1 Cor 6:9-11

9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor

homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.

Since the concept of “righteousness” is clearly tied to the door of justification, we need to learn more about that, as well. Righteousness is tied directly to the keeping of the Torah.

Ezek 18:4-9

4 "Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins will die. 5 "But if a man is righteous, and practices justice and righteousness, 6 and does not eat at the mountain shrines or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, or defile his neighbor's wife, or approach a woman during her menstrual period — 7 if a man does not oppress anyone, but restores to the debtor his pledge, does not commit robbery, but gives his bread to the hungry, and covers the naked with clothing, 8 if he does not lend money on interest or take increase, if he keeps his

hand from iniquity, and executes true justice between man and man, 9 if he walks in My statutes and My ordinances so as to deal faithfully — he is righteous and will surely live, "declares the Lord God.

Rom 7:12-13

12 So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

Yeshua clearly stated that the opposite poles in lifestyles are the righteous, and sinners.

Mark 2:16

17 And hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

As did John, who was making clear the definition of sin as being devoid of Torah's instructions. And he even gave an example from Genesis.

1 John 3:2-12

2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. 4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. 5 And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. 6 No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. 7 Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 8 the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. 11 For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; 12 not as Cain, who was of the evil one, and slew his

brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

And finally, Yeshua spoke to John on Patmos regarding the distinctions between filthiness (sin), righteousness and holiness.

Rev 22:10-13

10 And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. 11 "Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and let the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and let the one who is holy, still keep himself holy." 12 "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.

The normative Church seems to consistently teach that once a person repents from sin, and accepts the sacrifice of Yeshua as payment for those sins (justification), then he is "declared righteous." The Bible Expository Dictionary says:²

² from The Bible Exposition Commentary. Copyright © 1989 by Chariot Victor Publishing, and imprint of Cook Communication Ministries.

In justification, God declares the believing sinner righteous; He does not make him righteous. (Of course, real justification leads to a changed life, which is what James 2 is all about.) Before the sinner trusts Christ, he stands GUILTY before God, but the moment he trusts Christ, he is declared NOT GUILTY and he can never be called GUILTY again!

I believe this paragraph is generally correct, but is in error in two important points. First, I do not believe that one who comes to faith is “declared righteous”³ in the way that a person who is walking well the paths of Torah is “righteous.” As we have seen above, righteousness is not conferred, it is the product of a holy lifestyle.

But there *is* a conferral by G-d upon the believer as he passes through the door of justification. That person is *redeemed* (bought with a price). He stands before the Judge with his guilt washed away, and paid for by the King Himself. It is as if the believer has never before sinned, and is “born from above.” When we continue to sin after walking through that doorway, repentance brings a fresh cleansing and a restoration of the “washed” status.

³ I have heard Christians explain that this is a subset of righteousness called “positional righteousness.” I think they are trying to reconcile this obvious discord in the meaning of the true concept of lifestyle righteousness, which is the way that the term is used throughout Scripture.

1 John 1:8-9

8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Peter urged believers to be holy as G-d is holy in their daily lives, because of their redemption by the blood of Yeshua.

1 Peter 1:14-20

14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." 17 And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth; 18 knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.

Isaiah spoke of a future time when the redeemed of the L-rd will come to Jerusalem, walking on the Highway of Holiness.

Isa 35:4-10

4 Say to those with anxious heart, "Take courage, fear not. Behold, your God will come with vengeance; The recompense of God will come, But He will save you." 5 Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. 6 Then the lame will leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb will shout for joy. For waters will break forth in the wilderness And streams in the Arabah. 7 And the scorched land will become a pool, And the thirsty ground springs of water; In the haunt of jackals, its resting place, Grass becomes reeds and rushes. 8 And a highway will be there, a roadway, And it will be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean will not travel on it, But it will be for him who walks that way, And fools will not wander on it. 9 No lion will be there, Nor will any vicious beast go up on it; These will not be found there. But the redeemed will walk there, 10 And the ransomed of the Lord will return, And come with joyful shouting to Zion, With everlasting joy upon

their heads. They will find gladness and joy, And sorrow and sighing will flee away.

Thus, none of these who are coming are called “righteous” for they come from various lifestyles – spanning a wide spectrum of fidelity to G-d’s ways. Not all were righteous, but all are redeemed.

The second theological difficulty I find in that passage from the Bible Dictionary is the assertion, that once a person has been declared not guilty, “he can never be called GUILTY again!”

This concept is a popular one in Christian theology, and goes by the phrase, “Once saved, always saved.” I don’t find that the premise fits with Scripture.

It is certainly true that once we are in the hand of G-d, no one can snatch us away. But we still have free will. We have the power to jump from His hand.

Col 1:19-23

19 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fulness to dwell in Him, 20 and through Him to reconcile all things to

Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. 21 And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, 22 yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach — 23 if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

Heb 6:4-7

4 For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame.

It seems clear that once one has made the choice to reject G-d's gift of redemption, and jump from His hand, that person then does indeed once again become soiled with sin, and is in fact, guilty.

I don't know where the line of demarcation lies between a doubting and denying season in a person's life (which permits repentance and return), and the point where the rejection of G-d is so complete as to reach the "point of no return." I am happy that I do not have the responsibility of judgment on that issue. G-d is the righteous judge. He will get it right.

Now that we have had a chance to solidify our theology a bit, we can explore justification.

An oft-quoted passage of Scripture, jamb-packed with great theological truths, makes it clear that justification is something that G-d has done for us, but that we need to respond to that wonderful gift with an offering of our lives to Him and to do that which He has planned for us to do to be holy, and to advance His kingdom.

Eph 2:1-10

2 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world,

according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, that no one should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

The concept of justification is illustrated by mankind's court proceedings regarding criminal accusations.

If a person is accused of a crime, there are two clear defensive pathways.

1. I did not commit that crime. 2. I engaged in an act that otherwise

would be criminal, but I was justified in doing what I did by additional facts.

In G-d's courtroom, we all stand charged with sin.⁴ G-d makes no errors, so nobody can deny the facts before the judge. Likewise, we lack the defense of justified conduct, otherwise G-d would not be hearing the case, for He already knows all the facts.

In the case of the person who has not passed through the doorway of justification, all that remains is to pass sentence – and that is death.⁵

But in the case of the person who *has* passed through the doorway of justification by faith, and whose name is written in the Book of Life, that person is shuttled away from the dock of the guilty into another area. The judgment of “redeemed by the blood” is effective to take that person out of the judgment, and he only stands before the throne to receive a reward for all his deeds.⁶

Some in the normative church reject the liturgy of the Jewish people, just as they reject the Jewish people at large. I find much good theology reflected in the Siddur and wish to end today's segment with a passage

⁴ Romans 3:23

⁵ Romans 6:23

⁶ Mat 5:17-21

taken from the Ashkenazi Siddur. It is a prayer said regularly on a couple of days each week by the Orthodox. It captures, in my view, the very essence of the heart that leads one to pass through the door of justification.

There is none like You, gracious and merciful Adonoy, our God; there is none like You, Almighty, slow to anger, abundant in kindness and truth. Deliver us with Your great mercy, save us from storm and rage. Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; do not consider our stubbornness, our wickedness and our sinfulness. Turn from Your fierce anger and let Your mind be changed concerning the evil [intended] for Your people. Remove from us the scourge of death, for You are merciful; for such is Your way— to bestow undeserved kindness in every generation. Spare Your people, Adonoy, and save us from Your wrath; remove from us the scourge of plague, and harsh decree, for You are the Guardian of Israel. Righteousness is Yours, my Master, while shame is ours. How can we complain? What can we say? What can we speak? and how can we justify ourselves? Let us search into our ways and examine them, and return to You; for Your right hand is extended to receive those who repent. We beseech You Adonoy!—deliver us. We

beseech You Adonoy!—grant us success; We beseech You Adonoy! — answer us on the day we call. For You, Adonoy, we have waited, For You, Adonoy, we have hoped, For You, Adonoy, we yearn. Do not be silent, and do not allow us to be tormented; for the nations have said, “Their hope is lost.” Let every knee and all who stand erect prostrate themselves only before You.⁷

⁷ Siddur Ashkenaz, Weekday, Shacharit, Post Amidah, Tachanun, For Monday and Thursday. Translation based on the Metsudah linear siddur, by Avrohom Davis, 1981