

Relevant Hebrew Words For Righteousness

In the Old Testament, there are four main words which are related to righteousness. These are the words “sedaqah”, “sedeq”, “sadaq” and “saddiq”. Note these words show righteousness and justice in many contexts in the Old Testament mean the same thing. In the following definitions, I have put those which specifically relate to God’s righteousness in bold type. I have added the other definitions to give you an idea of the range of meanings of the Hebrew words in varying contexts.

The Hebrew word “sedaqah” means “righteousness 1. righteousness in government (a) of judge, ruler, king (b) of law (c) **of Davidic King, Messiah** 2. **God’s attribute as sovereign in government, administering justice, punishment and vindication of His people** 3. righteousness, in a case or cause 4. righteousness equalling truthfulness in word or oath 5. righteousness as ethically right 6. righteousness as vindicated, justification, salvation (a) **of God...- His saving (delivering) righteousness** (b) of people, equalling prosperity 7. righteous acts (a) **of God – vindication of right, redemptive** (b) of man’s moral conduct”¹ or “1. blameless behaviour, 2. righteousness of the whole being 3. justice (of a human judge) 4. **justice (characteristic of God the divine Judge)** 5. righteousness (as a religious attitude), equalling godliness 6. righteousness (equalling behaviour which God expects man to show to God) 7. (God’s) justice...(a) what God expects for man’s conduct with man (b) what is reliable (c) **what God gives = salvation, deliverance** 8. (a) legal claims (b) **God’s acts of justice**”.²

The associated word “sedeq” means “rightness, righteousness; 1. what is right, just; 2. righteousness in government: (a) of judges, rulers, kings (b) of law (c) **of Davidic King, Messiah** (d) of Jerusalem as seat of just government (e) **of God’s attribute as sovereign** 3. righteousness, justice in a case or cause; **God judges according to righteousness** 4. rightness in speech 5. righteousness, as ethically right 6. righteousness as vindicated, justification in controversy with enemies and troubles, deliverance, victory, prosperity (a) **of God as covenant-keeping in redemption** (b) **in name of Messianic King (vindicating people’s cause and giving victory)** (c) of people as enjoying righteousness of salvation”³ or “1. (what is) right 2. (legal) rightness 3. justice, just, righteous 4. justice done to someone = success”.⁴

The Hebrew word “sadaq” means “be just, righteous; A. in Qal verb pattern: 1. have a just cause, be in the right 2. be justified 3. be just: **of God in His government in charging with sin** 4. be just, righteous in conduct and character: of men...B. in Hiphel verb pattern: 1. do justice in administering law 2. declare righteous, justify 3. justify, vindicate the cause of, save 4. make righteous, turn to righteousness”.⁵

¹ Brown, Driver and Briggs, page 842.

² Holladay, page 303.

³ Brown, Driver and Briggs, pages 841-842.

⁴ Holladay, page 303.

⁵ Brown, Driver and Briggs, pages 842-843.

The word “saddiq” means “1. just, righteous in government: (a) **of Davidic King** (b) of judges (c) of law (d) **of God in condemnation, redemption, keeping promises, in all His ways** 2. just in one’s cause, right; right in law, not under penalty, innocent of specific offence 3. just, righteous in conduct and character (a) towards God (b) in general ethically 4. righteous as justified and vindicated 5. right, correct, lawful”⁶ or “1. A thing examined and found to be in order, right 2. (legally: a person whose conduct is examined and found to unobjectionable): not guilty, innocent, in the right 3. (morally in the right): innocent, guiltless 4. just, righteous (character or conduct) 5. (religiously) righteous, godly 6. **said of God: in the right, righteous, just**”.⁷

Refer to Chapter “God the Perfect Judge” for details about the meanings of the Greek words for “righteous” and “righteousness”.

⁶ Ibid, page 843.

⁷ Holladay, page 303.