

Hosea 4

Justice and Righteousness

Hosea Chapter 4 Intro

- ▶ In this chapter , the prophet again reverts to his castigation of the people of his generation for their sins (Radak). His words are directed specifically to the citizens of the kingdom of Israel (10 Northern Tribes), and he points a finger particularly at the **Kohanim and the false prophets who have led the people astray** (Abarbanel). According to Rashi, the Kohanim were not the leaders of the revolt against the ways of Hashem but rather its victims.

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Reading Hosea 4:1-19

Key Verses 1-2, 6

- ▶ **Hos 4:1** Hear the word of Adonai, Bnei-Yisrael! For Adonai has a dispute with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, no covenant loyalty, and no knowledge of God in the land. CJB
- ▶ **Hos 4:2** Curse, deceive, murder, steal, commit adultery! They practice violence, and bloodshed follows bloodshed. CJB
- ▶ **Hos 4:6** My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Since you rejected knowledge, I will also reject you from being My kohen. Since you forgot the Torah of your God, just so I will forget your children. CJB

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Trei Asar Commentary page 36

The Almighty has the following contention to express to the inhabitant of the Land of Israel; I gave you the Land of Israel on condition that you pursue **righteousness and justice**, and I promised that if you do so I will keep a watchful eye over you throughout the year. However, you have violated the conditions of our agreement and I will therefore hide My face from you and bring destruction upon the land (Radak).

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No one acts honestly nor speaks truthfully in the land, and justice and righteousness are thus all but nonexistent. Although there are still righteous people among the nation they are but a small minority, engulfed beneath the tidal wave of corruption, and their presence is not even discernable within the abundance of falsehood. Since the people do not deal with each other honestly, they certainly do not practice benevolence beyond the letter of the law.

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Thus, there is no knowledge or pursuit of Hashem's ways of **Justice and Righteousness**. In addition, no one seeks Hashem and the philosophical knowledge and awareness of His existence.

Galatians 5:19-26, Galatians 6:7-9; James 2:1-10

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Hebrew H6666

- ▶ צִדְקָה
- ▶ ṣ^edāqāh/Tzadech: A feminine noun meaning righteousness, blameless conduct, and integrity. The noun describes justice, right actions, and right attitudes, as expected from both God and people when they judge. God came speaking justice and righteousness as the divine Judge (Isa_63:1; Jer_9:24 [23]; Mic_7:9); the Lord's holiness was made known by His righteousness in judgments (Isa_5:16; Isa_10:22). Human judges were to imitate the divine Judge in righteousness and justice (Gen_18:19; 2Sa_8:15; Psa_72:3; Isa_56:1).

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- ▶ H6666
- ▶ הַקְדָּוָה
- ▶ The word describes the attitude and actions God had and expected His people to maintain. He is unequivocally righteous; righteousness is entirely His prerogative. His people are to sow righteousness, and they will receive the same in return (Hos_10:12).
- ▶ He dealt with His people according to their righteousness and blamelessness (2Sa_22:21; Eze_3:20). Faith in God was counted as righteousness to Abraham (Gen_15:6); and obedience to the Lord's Law was further evidence of faith that God considered as righteousness (Deu_6:25). Returning a poor man's cloak was an act of obedience that was considered righteous and just before the Lord (Deu_24:13).
- ▶ Jacob declared that his integrity (honesty, righteousness) would speak for him in the future to Laban (Gen_30:33). The lives of people are to reflect righteousness and integrity (Pro_8:20; Pro_15:9); even old age may be attained by living a life of righteousness (Pro_16:31).

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- ▶ The concept of social justice was expressed in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East by means of a *hendiadys*.¹ The most common word-pair to serve this function in the Bible is ¹

“**justice and righteousness**”, or צדקה ומשפט, “righteousness and justice” Tzadek u’mispat. However, alongside this expression, we find צדק ומישור or צדק ומישרים, “**righteousness and equity**”, word-pairs which are found in poetic passages, and therefore appear primarily in parallelism

READ (see [Isa. 11:4](#), [33:15](#), [45:19](#); [Ps. 9:9](#), [58:2](#), [98:9](#), and compare [Prov. 1:3](#), [2:9](#)).

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- ▶ Similarly, we find the word-pair צדק//אמונה or צדק//אמת, “righteousness and truth”
- ▶ READ ([1 Kgs 3:6](#); [Isa. 11:5](#), [59:4](#); [Ps. 85:12](#), [66:13](#); [Zech. 8:8](#)),

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- ▶ They can be defined more precisely in context, as we shall see below.
- ▶ A. The term משפט וצדקה (mishpat tzadek) can refer to a character trait granted by God to the king: “O God, endow the king with your justice (משפטיך), the king’s son with your righteousness (צדקתך), that he may judge your people rightly (בצדק), your lowly (poor) ones, justly (במשפט)” ([Ps. 72:1-2](#)). God thus is said to grant the king *justice and righteousness*,
- ▶ Justice and righteousness are considered a sublime, divine ideal in [Psalm 33:5](#): God is said to love righteousness and justice. (Cf. the tenth blessing in the Eighteen Benedictions of Jewish daily prayer: “Blessed are you, O Lord, the king who loves justice and righteousness” [אוהב צדקה ומשפט]).

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- ▶ Cont.
- ▶ In another biblical verse, we find an explicit parallel between משפט וצדקה, “**justice and righteousness**”, on the one hand, and מישרים, “equity”, on the other: “... it was you who established equity (מישרים), you who performed ‘**justice and righteousness**’ (משפט וצדקה) in Jacob” ([Ps. 99:4](#)). From this verse we can also learn of the royal aspect of justice and righteousness.
- ▶ God is said to establish justice and righteousness and equity in Jacob after he begins his reign and is exalted over all the peoples ([Ps. 99:1-2](#))
- ▶ the establishment of equity, justice and righteousness is followed by the giving of decrees and laws through Moses and Aaron (v. [7](#)).

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- ▶ Cont.
- ▶ B. משפט וצדקה, is considered a social ideal, along the lines of mercy and kindness. Thus, for example, in [Isaiah 16:5](#) the establishment of the Davidic throne with kindness and truth is connected with the demand for justice and righteousness: “A throne shall be established with *kindness.chesed* (חסד) and on it shall sit in *truth/emet* (אמת) a ruler that seeks *justice/mishpat* (משפט) and is zealous for *righteousness/tzadik* (צדק) in the tent of David”
- ▶ Elsewhere, the prophet says that King David’s throne was established with justice and righteousness ([Isa. 9:6](#)). The fact that the establishment of a throne with *justice and righteousness* is synonymous with its establishment with *mercy and kindness* can be derived from the book of Proverbs as well. In [Proverbs 20:28](#) a throne is said to be maintained with chesed חסד, kindness, while elsewhere the throne is established with צדק, righteousness ([Prov. 25:5](#), cf. [16:12](#))

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- ▶ Cont.
- ▶ Kindness and truth and mercy **חסד ואמת ורחמים** are found often in the Bible in conjunction with justice or with righteousness ([Ps. 33:5](#), [89:15](#); [Jer. 9:23](#); [Hos. 2:21](#), [12:7](#); [Mic. 6:8](#)).
- ▶ C. The practical application of **משפט וצדקה** accords with the usage of the term in an ideal sense: It refers to just dealing in the social sphere, particularly when the pair **משפט וצדקה** is found in conjunction with the concept of **דרך**, “way” (derech) of life. Indeed, in the first instance of the biblical use of the term **צדקה ומשפט** ([Gen. 18:19](#)), we find the term in conjunction with the word **דרך**. “So that they keep the way (דרך) of YHWH by dealing with righteousness and justice”.

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- ▶ Cont.
- ▶ Other verses also speak of the way, or path, of justice and righteousness: see e.g. “... guarding the *paths* (אורחות) of justice, protecting the way (דרך) of those loyal to him. You will then understand what is just (צדק), righteous (משפט), and equitable (מישרים), every good course (מעגל)” ([Prov. 2:8-9](#)).
- ▶ “The path of equity (מישרים) for the righteous man; O just one, you make smooth the course (מעגל) of the righteous” ([Isa. 26:7](#)); “They do not care for the way of integrity, there is no justice in their course (במעגלתם). They make their *paths* crooked, no one who walks in them cares for integrity. That is why justice (משפט) is far from us, and righteousness (צדקה) does not reach us” ([Isa. 59:8-9](#)).
- ▶ “He leads me in the paths of righteousness” ([Ps. 23:3](#))
- ▶ Weinfeld, M. (1995). *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East*. Jerusalem; Minneapolis, MN: The Magnes Press; Fortress Press.

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- ▶ **Jas 2:1** My brothers, practice the faith of our Lord Yeshua, the glorious Messiah, without showing favoritism.
- ▶ **Jas 2:2** Suppose a man comes into your synagogue wearing gold rings and fancy clothes, and also a poor man comes in dressed in rags.
- ▶ **Jas 2:3** If you show more respect to the man wearing the fancy clothes and say to him, "Have this good seat here," while to the poor man you say, "You, stand over there," or, "Sit down on the floor by my feet,"
- ▶ **Jas 2:4** then aren't you creating distinctions among yourselves, and haven't you made yourselves into judges with evil motives?
- ▶ **Jas 2:5** Listen, my dear brothers, hasn't God chosen the poor of the world to be rich in faith and to receive the Kingdom which he promised to those who love him?
- ▶ **Jas 2:6** But you despise the poor! Aren't the rich the ones who oppress you and drag you into court?
- ▶ **Jas 2:7** Aren't they the ones who insult the good name of Him to whom you belong?
- ▶ **Jas 2:8** If you truly attain the goal of Kingdom Torah, in conformity with the passage that says, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well.
- ▶ **Jas 2:9** But if you show favoritism, your actions constitute sin, since you are convicted under the Torah as transgressors.
- ▶ **Jas 2:10** For a person who keeps the whole Torah, yet stumbles at one point, has become guilty of breaking them all. CJB

Hosea 4:6

- ▶ Hos 4:6 My people are destroyed for want of knowledge. Because you rejected knowledge, I will also reject you as cohen for me. Because you forgot the Torah of your God, I will also forget your children.
- ▶ Trei Asar pg 39-40
- ▶ My nation has been rendered silent (Rashi; Mahari Kara) from any words of wisdom, for they are bereft of the knowledge of My ways, which comes from the Torah. For you the Kohanim who were entrusted with the responsibility of transmitting My wisdom to the nation, have spurned My knowledge, and refused to learn it yourselves or teach it to others.
- ▶ The Torah was entrusted in your hands. Kohanim for you to teach it to the entire nation. Yet you have forgotten and neglected it, refusing to teach it or instruct the people in accordance with its statutes.
- ▶ This was an indictment against the priests, whose duty it was to act as guardians of God's law/Torah and to furnish religious instructions (Archeological Study Bible)

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- ▶ Mal 2:7 A Cohen's lips should safeguard knowledge, and people should seek Torah from his mouth, because he is the messenger of Adonai-Tzva'ot.
- ▶ Mal 2:8 But you turned away from the path, you caused many to fail in the Torah, you corrupted the covenant of Levi," says Adonai-Tzva'ot.
- ▶ Mal 2:9 "Therefore I have in turn made you contemptible and vile before all the people, because you did not keep my ways but were partial in applying the Torah."
- ▶ James 1:22-25
- ▶ Ephesians 4
- ▶ Matthew 23 - Yeshua's rebuke to the leadership is still applicable to today's leadership in the Body of Messiah as well. Yeshua was part of the Pharisee group (School of Hallel vs Shumai) and knew them well and was reminding them of their responsibilities as leaders of Israel. Here we see him operating as a Prophet with His rebuke. They were the leaders/teachers of Israel. John 3:1-10 (Read)