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The Need for Justification
3: 21-23

The need for justification DIG: What was the purpose of the Levitical sacrifices in the Torah? Why do we no longer need them? How does God's plan demonstrate fairness to all humanity? What does the TaNaKh say about sinning? Does everyone miss the mark? Can believers miss the mark? If we miss the mark, then what can we do (First John 1:9)?

REFLECT: How do people try to earn their salvation? What is the link between believing and behaving? How does this affect how you act on a daily, hourly, and minute-by-minute basis? When did you first realize salvation was a free gift provided by ADONAI? Does the fact that salvation is apart from works and comes only through faith bother you? Why? Why not?

We all have the need for justification because "All have sinned" at some level,
"and come short of earning the glory of God's praise."



Job asked the most important question that's possible to ask: **How can man be justified before God (Job 9:2)?** Because **YHVH** is the kind of **God He** is, **Job** wondered how a person could ever hope to approach **Him**, much less become

righteous and acceptable before **Him**. Can a mere human being have a right relationship with a **God** who is holy, infinite and mighty?[74] **Paul** answers that question here in **Romans 3:21-23**.

Justification is apart from the Torah: But now, quite apart from Torah. What this phrase means is that **God's righteousness** has nothing to do with our **obeying the Torah** and its 613 **mitzvot**, but goes back to the underlying truth of obedience by **faith**. **God's way of making people righteous in His sight has been made clear (3:21a).** It is by **faith** alone, not works. It is unthinkable that **YHVH** instructed the **Jewish** people to perfectly **obey** 613 **mitzvot** that were impossible to keep, and for which the penalty of violation was death. The **God** of **love** does not play cruel games!

It is true that when the **Jewish** people fell short of keeping **the Torah** they **sinned**. But **the Torah** itself includes a procedure for dealing with **sins**, provided they were not committed **with a high hand,** that is, rebellion (see the commentary on **Jude, to see link click Aq – They Have Taken the Way of Cain, Rushed into Balaam's Error, and have been Destroyed by Korah's Rebellion**). The procedure was the Levitical sacrificial system, and in fact the greater part of the Five Books of **Moses** is devoted to it. The system offered forgiveness to a repentant person who brought the required sacrifice in **faith** (see the commentary on **Hebrews Bu – A Better Sacrifice**). Thus, at the time **the Messiah** died, **the Torah** provided a framework within which each person might be **saved** (see the commentary on **Hebrew Cj – Faith in Action**), provided he **trusted ADONAI** in everything and in no way relied on his own self-righteousness.[75]

*Dear Heavenly **Father, You** are perfectly **righteous** and also perfectly loving. **Your** wisdom in balancing both is amazing! **You** planned and set the pattern for **sins** to be forgiven by the offerings thru which the person's **sin** was transferred to the animal that died in **the sinner's** place. **He is to lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, so that it will be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf (Leviticus 1:4)**. Since **You** are perfectly holy, **You** cannot tolerate any **sin**, and so **He made the One who knew no sin to become a sin offering on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (Second Corinthians 5:21).***

*Praise **Your** love that was willing to be **the Lamb of God (John 1:29)** to die in the place of all. How wonderful **Your** sacrifice! How sad that many will not receive **Your gift** of **love**. They know about **You** in a mentally approving way, but not in a heart*

*commitment of **love** to follow **You**. They think that mere knowledge is enough to save them – but knowledge alone is not enough. Heart-filled **love** is what **You** have always desired. As **Yeshua** puts it: **You shall love ADONAI your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment (Matthew 22:37-38).** I **love** you dear **Father**. In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

It is important to understand that **the Torah** did not set an impossible standard. **Moses** declared at Mount Sinai: **For this mitzvah that I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you** to understand**, nor is it beyond your reach. The mitzvah** that **ADONAI** was commanding **Bnei Isra'el** to follow was **not in the heavens,** that **they** should say: **Who will go up for us to the heavens and get it for us, and have us hear it so we may do it? Nor is it across the sea, that you should** say: **Who will cross over for us to the other side of the sea and get it for us, and have us hear it so we may do it? No, the word is very near to you – you** can speak **it** because **it** is **in your mouth and you** know **it** because **it** is **in your heart to do it (Deuteronomy 30:11-14; Romans 10:6-8).** Rather, **the Torah** sets a standard of **faith**, **trusting** in **God**, and of following its system of repentance and sacrifice for obtaining forgiveness from **YHVH** and restoring a condition of being considered **righteous** in **His** sight.

Justification is built on revelation: Although the Torah and the Prophets give their witness to it as well (3:21b). Throughout **the Torah**, **ADONAI's** holiness and moral integrity are proclaimed, as also is the truth that humans cannot attain **God's** standard of **righteousness** by striving for **it**. As **Isaiah 64:5** puts it: **All our righteousness,** those whose we achieve by mere human effort without genuine reliance on and **trust** in **YHVH are filthy rags.**

Moreover, not only do the Scriptures attest to **God's** way of making people **righteous**, but non-Messianic Judaism is aware of it also. **The eleventh-century Midrash to Psalm 44:1 says, "When the children of Isra'el went out from Egypt, they could not offer any works of their hands whereby they might be redeemed. And so, it was not because of the works of their fathers, nor was it because of their own works, that the sea was divided before them; rather, it was only so that God might make a name for Himself in the world."**

The Siddur, the Jewish prayer book, quotes **Dani'el 9:18** in the preliminary morning prayers, "Sovereign of all worlds! Not because of our righteous acts do we lay our

supplications before You, but because of Your abundant mercies." And then continues by describing this verse in the spirit of **Ecclesiastes**, "What are we? What is our life? What is our piety? Our righteousness? Our helpfulness? Our strength? Our might? What shall we say before you, **ADONAI**, our **God** and **God of our fathers**? Are not all the mighty men as nothing before you, the men of fame as though they had never existed, the wise as if without knowledge, and those with understanding as if without discernment? For most of their works are void, and the days of their lives are vanity before **You**, and the preeminence of man over beast is nothing for all is vanity."

So, like Paul, even the rabbis have recognized human inability to meet God's standard for righteousness, even with the guidance of the Torah that YHVH gave.[76]

Justification is acquired by faith: And it is an imputed **righteousness that comes from God.** Imputation means *to reckon or charge to another's account*. Therefore, all of **Messiah's righteousness** is transferred to your spiritual bank account at the moment of **faith** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Bw – What God Does for Us at the Moment of Faith**). At that time, what is true of **Messiah** is true of you, minus **His** deity. The result is positional **righteousness**; in other words, you are **justified**. This imputed **righteousness** is obtained **through the faithfulness of Yeshua the Messiah (3:22a).**

But **the faithfulness** in **Yeshua Messiah** that the B'rit Chadashah teaches is much more than a simple affirmation of certain truths about **Him**. Even the demons acknowledge many facts about **Him**. One of **the demons** who possessed **a man in Gerasenes' territory, seeing Yeshua from a distance, ran and fell on his knees in front of Him and screamed at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Yeshua, Son of God Ha'Elyon (Mark 5:6-7)? The demon** who gave **the slave girl** the power **of divination followed behind Sha'ul and the rest of his** friends **and kept screaming, "These men are servants of God Ha'Elyon. They are telling you how to be saved" (Acts 16:17)!** Therefore, saving **faith** is placing oneself totally in submission to **the Lord Yeshua Messiah**, and it has certain essential elements that the B'rit Chadashah clearly teaches.

Saving **faith** in **Yeshua Messiah** involves *the exercise of the will*. **Paul** told the believers in Rome: **By God's grace, you, who were once slaves to sin, obeyed from your heart the pattern of teaching to which you were exposed (6:17).** From a human standpoint, salvation begins with a person's willful **obedience** in

turning from **sin** to follow **the Lord Yeshua Messiah**.

Saving **faith in Yeshua Messiah** involves *the emotions*, because, as in the verse just mentioned above, it must come from **the heart** as well as from the mind. On the one hand, a person cannot be **saved** by good feelings about **Messiah**, and many people throughout the ages and in our own day have substituted good feelings about **Yeshua** for saving **faith through Him**. But on the other hand, a person whose life is transformed by **Messiah** will be affected by his emotions in the deepest possible way.

Saving **faith in Yeshua Messiah** involves *the intellect*. No one can think his way into the Kingdom of **God**, but neither can he receive **Yeshua Messiah** as **Lord** and **Savior** without some comprehension of the truth of the gospel. **So, trust comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through a word proclaimed about the Messiah (10:17).**

Justification is provided for all: The provision of salvation and the **justification** it brings is granted **to all who continue trusting.** Anyone will **be saved** who **believes** in **Yeshua Messiah** as **Lord** and **Savior**. **For it makes no difference whether one is a Jew or a Gentile (3:22b). For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two, one, and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility** (see the commentary on **Acts Cn – Paul's Advice from Jacob and the Elders at Jerusalem**). Just as everyone apart from **Messiah** is equally **sinful** and rejected by **YHVH**, everyone who is **in Messiah** is equally **justified** and accepted by **Him**.[77]

There is no distinction among those who are **saved**, because there is no distinction among those who are lost, **since all have sinned** (the Greek word *hamartano* corresponds to the Hebrew word *chet*, meaning *missing the mark, like an archer who shoots off-target*) at some level, **and come short of earning the glory of God's praise (3:23).** The Greek phrase, **have sinned** is constative aorist, presenting a panoramic view of the human race as doing nothing except committing **sin**. **In Judaism, *the Yetzer Hara* (or evil inclination) can be loosely correlated to this concept of the sin nature or old self.** This principle, that everyone is a **sinner**, is taught in the TaNaKh.

This is the start of the Romans Road to salvation: This is a way of explaining the Good News of salvation using verses from the book of **Romans**. It is a simple yet powerful method of explaining why we need salvation, how **God** provided

salvation, how we can receive salvation, and what are the results of salvation. We start by saying: **For all have sinned and come short of earning the glory of God's praise (3:23).**

That includes you and me, doesn't it? Most people feel that being good gets you into heaven and being bad keeps you out. That simply is not true; **for all have sinned**. What would you say **sin** is? I think we can agree that we are both sinners; now let's define **sin**. Some have said, "I'm not perfect," or "I have made some mistakes." But what do you think the Bible means by **sin**? Well, the Bible says that **everyone who keeps sinning is violating Torah . . . indeed, sin is violation of Torah (First John 3:4).** Have you ever disobeyed your parents? Have you ever misused the name of **God**? Have you ever told a lie? This is what **sin** is. It's breaking **God's Torah**.

There is no one who doesn't sin (First Kings 8:46a).

For there isn't a righteous person on earth who does [only] good and never sins (Ecclesiastes 7:20).

ADONAI's arm is not too short to save, nor is His ear too dull to hear. Rather, it is your own crimes that separate you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you , so that He doesn't come near (Isaiah 59:1-2).

All of us are like someone unclean, all our righteous deeds are like menstrual rags (Isaiah 64:5a).[78] This applies equally to pagans who have never heard anything of **God** (see **Ak – The Pagan Gentile**), to good, moral people (see **Ao – The "Good" Person**), and to the religious **Jew** (see **At – The Religious Jew**).

The question of why this is true, and how it comes about, that everyone **sins** (in other words, original **sin**) is discussed by **Paul** later in his letter (see **Bm – The Consequences of Adam**). But the truth of this verse, which epitomizes Bad News (see **Aj – The Universal Need of Mankind**), is basic to understanding the **sinful** nature of mankind, and the Good News that **God** offers the only solution to the problem **through the faithfulness of Yeshua the Messiah.**

Ponder the achievement of **ADONAI**. **He** doesn't condone our **sin**, nor does **He** compromise **His** standard. **He** doesn't ignore our rebellion, nor does **He** relax **His** demands. Rather than dismiss our **sin**, **He** assumes our **sin** and, incredibly,

sentences **Himself**. **God's** holiness is honored. Our **sin** is punished. And we are **justified** in **His** sight. **YHVH** is still **YHVH**. **The wages of sin is** still **death (6:23)**. And we are made perfect.[79]