

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

COVENANT DEEP DIVE STUDY — LEXICAL | DOCTRINAL | THREE-RELIGION

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TZEDAQAH AND THE COVENANT

A DEEP DIVE STUDY OF DEVARIM (DEUTERONOMY) 6:25

What Is Righteousness? Yahweh Defines It Himself

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This study is written for three audiences simultaneously: those within Judaism, those within Christianity, and those within Islam. It operates under one authority: the Written Tanakh. All rabbinic commentary, church tradition, and hadith are cited only when they corroborate the Written Text and are never treated as binding authority. The evidentiary standard throughout is Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15 — every major conclusion is established by two or three independent witnesses from the Written Tanakh. Hebrew transliterations appear in bold italic followed by their English meaning in parentheses on every occurrence. Yahweh and Elohim appear in bold throughout without exception. All scripture references and quotations appear in bold.

AUTHORITY NOTE

The sole governing authority of this institution is the Written Tanakh — the five books of Mosheh (Torah), the Prophets (*Nevi'im*), and the Writings (*Ketuvim*). All citations from secondary sources — Talmud, Midrash, Church councils, hadith, or any human commentary — are presented as corroborating witnesses only, and only where they confirm the Written Text. Where any secondary source contradicts the Written Tanakh, the Written Text governs absolutely.

TANAKH BOOKS CITED

HEBREW NAME	ENGLISH NAME	USAGE / COVENANT REFERENCE
<i>Bereishit</i>	Genesis	2:15 — shamar; 15:6 — tzedaqah and Avraham; 17:9 — covenant-keeping; 22 — emunah in action
<i>Shemot</i>	Exodus	31:14 — shamar and Shabbat; covenant framework passages
<i>Devarim</i>	Deuteronomy	Primary text: 6:25; witnesses: 4:2; 5:32; 8:1; 19:15; 24:13; 28:1
<i>Tehillim</i>	Psalms	119:172 — all commandments are tzedek (righteousness)
<i>Yeshayahu</i>	Isaiah	1:17 — covenant behavioral call; 58:6–7
<i>Yechezkel</i>	Ezekiel	18:5, 9 — comprehensive covenant definition of the righteous man
<i>Michah</i>	Micah	6:8 — what Yahweh requires of His people
<i>Amos</i>	Amos	5:24 — justice and righteousness as living covenant standard

PART I — THE TEXT

HEBREW, TRANSLITERATION, AND TRANSLATION

וְצִדְקָה תְהִיָּה-לָנוּ כִּי-נִשְׁמַר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת-כָּל-הַמִּצְוָה הַזֹּאת לְפָנַי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ
כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוִּינוּ

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 6:25

*U-tzedaqah tihyeh-lanu ki-nishmor la'asot et-kol ha-mitzvah ha-zot lifnei Yahweh Eloheinu
ka'asher tzivanu*

TRANSLATION COMPARISON

SOURCE	TRANSLATION
<i>Literal (from Hebrew)</i>	<i>“And righteousness will be to us, when we keep to do all this commandment before Yahweh our Elohim as He commanded us.”</i>
JPS 1985	<i>“It will be to our merit before the LORD our God to observe faithfully this whole instruction as He has commanded us.”</i>
Robert Alter	<i>“And it will be counted as righteousness for us when we keep to do all this commandment before the LORD our God as He has charged us.”</i>
Everett Fox	<i>“And there will be (a reckoning-of-)right-conduct for us, when we take-care to do all these commandments before YHWH our God, as he has commanded us.”</i>

TRANSLATOR NOTE: The JPS 1985 rendering *“to our merit”* introduces a transactional tone absent from the Hebrew. Alter and Fox more faithfully preserve the conditional promise-structure: keep the commandments — righteousness accrues. The Hebrew *tihyeh* (“it will be / it shall become”) is a future-tense covenant promise, not a present-tense transaction. **Yahweh does not barter — He covenants.**

PART II — STRUCTURAL CONTEXT

THE ARCHITECTURE OF DEVARIM 6

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 6 is one of the most theologically dense chapters in the entire Tanakh. It moves from the greatest commandment in all of Scripture — the Shema (vv. 4–5) — through a comprehensive covenant framework for how that love of **Yahweh** is to be transmitted, embodied, and

lived. Verse 25 is not a closing addendum; it is the climactic capstone that answers the central question of all covenant life: *What does righteousness look like?*

VERSES	MOVEMENT	COVENANT CONTENT
vv. 1–3	Introduction	Purpose of all commandments: life, prosperity, multiplication in the land before Yahweh
vv. 4–5	The Shema	“Hear, O Yisra’el: Yahweh our Elohim, Yahweh is one” — the foundation of all covenant relationship
vv. 6–9	Internalization	These words on your heart, your children, your hand, between your eyes, on your doorposts
vv. 10–15	Prosperity Warning	When Yahweh gives you cities you did not build — do not forget Yahweh who brought you out of Mitzrayim (Egypt)
vv. 16–17	Anti-Test Command	Do not test Yahweh as at Massah — diligently keep His commandments
vv. 18–19	Positive Frame	<i>“Do what is right (yashar ("straight/right")) and good (tov ("good/beneficial")) in the eyes of Yahweh your Elohim”</i>
vv. 20–24	Covenant History	When your son asks: “What are these testimonies?” — we were slaves in Mitzrayim; Yahweh brought us out with a mighty hand
v. 25	COVENANT VERDICT	<i>“And righteousness will be to us when we keep to do all this commandment before Yahweh our Elohim as He commanded us.” — Yahweh’s own definition of tzedaqah</i>

Critical structural observation: verse 25 is the direct answer to the son’s question that began in verse 20. The son asks: *“What is the meaning of these testimonies, statutes, and judgments that Yahweh our Elohim commanded you?”* (v. 20). The answer, completed in verse 25, is: *they are our righteousness*. This is not circular reasoning — it is the most direct statement in all of Scripture defining *tzedaqah* (“righteousness”) and establishing how it is produced. The question of every

generation — “What does it mean to be righteous?” — receives here a lexically precise, covenant-grounded, **Yahweh**-authorized answer.

PART III — LEXICAL ANALYSIS

FIVE COVENANT TERMS IN DEVARIM 6:25

The following five Hebrew terms carry the full covenant weight of this verse. Each is examined using BDB (Brown-Driver-Briggs Lexicon), HALOT (Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament), and Gesenius, under the **Devarim 19:15** two-or-three-witness research standard. No single lexicon alone; every key definitional claim is corroborated by independent sources.

TERM 1 — TZEDAQAH (תְּצַדִּיק) H6666 — RIGHTEOUSNESS

The word *tzedaqah* (“righteousness”) (תְּצַדִּיק) H6666 is derived from the root *tzadak* (“to be just / to be in the right”) (H6663). BDB defines H6666 as: *“righteous conduct, rightness — in the general ethical sense; in the special covenantal sense: conduct that fulfills covenant obligations.”* HALOT expands: *“right-doing, compliance with a norm.”* The norm here is explicit and bounded: the commandments of **Yahweh** as He commanded them. No more, no less.

Critical lexical point: *tzedaqah* (“righteousness”) in the Tanakh is almost never an abstract attribute of internal character. It is nearly always tied to **concrete action, relationship, and covenant context.** It is the condition that exists when a party fulfills their covenant obligations — relational and contractual, not merely moral in the abstract sense. Gesenius confirms: the root family consistently points to what is *straight, right, fitting* within a defined covenantal relationship.

The phrase *lanu* (“to us” / “for us”) is decisive: *tzedaqah* (“righteousness”) in **Devarim 6:25** accrues to the community of Yisra’el collectively. This is not private spiritual status. The individualistic “personal righteousness” divorced from community covenant faithfulness is a construct foreign to this text.

TERM 2 — TIHYEH (תִּהְיֶה) H1961 — IT WILL BE / IT SHALL BECOME

The verb *tihyeh* ("it will be / it shall become") (תִּהְיֶה) is the third-person feminine singular imperfect of *hayah* ("to be / to become / to happen") (H1961). The imperfect tense in Biblical Hebrew carries future or ongoing meaning. This creates a promise-structure in the verse: IF we keep — THEN righteousness WILL BE to us.

This is not merely descriptive. It is a binding covenant guarantee. Keep these commands before **Yahweh** our **Elohim**, and *tzedaqah* ("righteousness") will accrue. The IF/THEN structure mirrors the covenant blessing-and-curse framework throughout Devarim — culminating in the extended blessings and curses of Devarim 28. Yahweh does not describe a moral aspiration here. He makes a binding covenant promise!

TERM 3 — SHAMAR (שָׁמַר) H8104 — TO KEEP / GUARD / OBSERVE

BDB defines *shamar* ("to keep / guard / observe") (שָׁמַר) H8104 as "*to keep, watch, preserve, guard — with intense application to the covenant.*" HALOT: "*to watch over, keep, pay attention to, observe, obey.*"

This is the same word used in **Bereishit (Genesis) 2:15** — Adam was placed in the Garden "**to work it and to *shamar* ("guard/keep") it**"; in **Bereishit 17:9** — "**You shall *shamar* ("keep/observe") my covenant**"; and in **Shemot (Exodus) 31:14** — "**You shall *shamar* ("observe/guard") the Shabbat.**" The pattern is consistent: *shamar* ("**to guard**") is not passive compliance. It is active, diligent vigilance. A watchman *shomers* ("guards"). A guardian *shomers* ("guards"). **The one who keeps the covenant does so with the vigilance of someone protecting what is precious and irreplaceable.**

TERM 4 — ASAH (עָשָׂה) H6213 — TO DO / MAKE / EXECUTE

BDB defines *asah* ("**to do / make / accomplish / complete**") (עָשָׂה) H6213 as the broadest Hebrew verb of action. The pairing *shamar* ("keep/observe") + *asah* ("do/execute") is the covenant formula of full obedience throughout Devarim. This exact pairing appears in **Devarim 5:32, 8:1, 12:28**, and

28:1. It is one of **Mosheh**'s signature covenant-instruction formulas: keep the commands AND execute them.

Keeping and doing are covenant inseparables: knowing a commandment is insufficient; declaring it is insufficient. The Written Torah of **Yahweh** demands both internal covenant commitment (*shamar* ("guard/keep") and external covenant execution (*asah* ("do/make"). *asah* ("doing/making") eliminates intellectual acknowledgment without action. This is the full covenant-action framework in miniature.

TERM 5 — MITZVAH (מִצְוָה) H4687 — COMMANDMENT

“This whole commandment” — *kol ha-mitzvah ha-zot* — uses *mitzvah* ("commandment / charge") (מִצְוָה) H4687 in the singular but collective sense. BDB: “commandment — from **Yahweh** through **Mosheh**.” It refers to the entire body of **Yahweh**'s covenant instructions as a unified whole.

Critically, the verse closes with *ka'asher tzivanu* — “*as He commanded us*” — anchoring the *mitzvah* ("commandment") explicitly to Yahweh's authority alone. Not commandments as expanded by rabbinic tradition. Not commandments as filtered through church councils. Not commandments as interpreted by Islamic jurisprudence. The *tzedaqah* ("righteousness") of **Devarim 6:25** is produced by keeping **Yahweh**'s commandments as He gave them — the Written Tanakh standard, complete and sufficient.

PART IV — EVIDENTIARY WITNESSES

THE DEVARIM 19:15 TWO-OR-THREE-WITNESS STANDARD APPLIED

Under the evidentiary standard of **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15** — “*By the mouth of two witnesses or three witnesses shall a matter be established*” — the following four independent witnesses from the Written Tanakh corroborate the definition of *tzedaqah* ("righteousness") established in **Devarim 6:25**. This is not interpretation imposed from outside the Text; it is the evidentiary weight of the Text upon itself.

WITNESS 1 — DEVARIM (DEUTERONOMY) 24:13

“You shall surely restore the pledge to him when the sun goes down, that he may sleep in his cloak and bless you. And it will be righteousness (tzedaqah) for you before Yahweh your Elohim.” — Devarim 24:13

The **structure** of **Devarim 24:13** is identical to **Devarim 6:25**: a specific covenant action (returning the pledged garment) — the result is *tzedaqah* (“righteousness”) “for you before Yahweh.” This is Witness 1 under **Devarim 19:15**: righteousness is produced by covenant obedience to a specific commandment. The parallel is explicit. *tzedaqah* (“righteousness”) is not abstract; it is a concrete covenant act → covenant standing before **Yahweh**. This witness proves that **Devarim 6:25** is not an isolated formula — it is the consistent pattern by which **Yahweh** defines *tzedaqah* (“righteousness”) throughout the Written Torah.

WITNESS 2 — TEHILLIM (PSALMS) 119:172

“My tongue will sing of your word, for all your commandments are righteousness (tzedek).” — Tehillim 119:172

Here the commandments themselves are declared to **BE** righteousness. The cognate *tzedek* (“justice / rightness”) (H6664) — the masculine form of *tzedaqah* (“righteousness”) — confirms that the commandments and righteousness are not two different things. The commandments are not a path to righteousness; keeping them IS righteousness in action. This is a stronger statement than **Devarim 6:25** itself — a direct, unambiguous corroboration: the commandments of **Yahweh** are *tzedek* (“righteousness/rightness”) in concentrated form.

WITNESS 3 — YEchezkel (EZEKIEL) 18:5, 9

“If a man is righteous (tzaddik) and does (asah) justice and righteousness (mishpat u-tzedaqah)... he is righteous (tzaddik); he shall surely live, declares the Lord Yahweh.” — Yechezkel 18:5, 9

Yechezkel (Ezekiel) 18 is the most comprehensive single-chapter covenant definition of individual righteousness in the entire Tanakh. The prophet **Yechezkel** lists behavioral covenant actions — not oppressing the poor, not taking excessive interest, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked — and

declares: the man who does these things is *tzaddik* ("righteous"). The definition is entirely behavioral and covenantal. The righteous man does *asah* ("does/executes") *mishpat u-tzedaqah* ("justice and righteousness") — the same two covenant terms that define covenant standing throughout the Prophets (*Nevi'im*). This is Witness 3 under Devarim 19:15.

WITNESS 4 — MICHAH (MICAH) 6:8

“He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does Yahweh require of you but to do justice (mishpat), to love kindness (chesed), and to walk humbly with your Elohim?” — Michah 6:8

The prophet **Michah** frames this as what **Yahweh REQUIRES** — the same command-structure as **Devarim 6:25**. The *mishpat* ("justice") (H4941) and *chesed* ("covenant loyalty / steadfast kindness") (H2617) that **Yahweh** requires are not abstract virtues. They are the behavioral expression of covenant faithfulness — the same *asah* ("do/execute") pattern of **Devarim 6:25**. **Michah's** witness confirms the rule: **Yahweh** consistently defines *tzedaqah* ("righteousness") through specific behavioral covenant requirements, not through theological status, creedal declaration, or tradition alone.

PART V — WHAT THIS VERSE DISMANTLES

THREE MAJOR THEOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTIONS BROUGHT TO THE PLUMB LINE

Devarim 6:25, read against its Hebrew lexical foundation and confirmed by four independent Tanakh witnesses, dismantles three major theological constructions that have shaped — and in each case distorted — the understanding of *tzedaqah* ("righteousness") across the three Abrahamic traditions.

I — RABBINIC TRADITION AS THE SOURCE OF TZEDAQAH

The rabbinic tradition — codified in the Talmud and Oral Torah — has historically taught that the *“fence around the Torah”* (additional rabbinic commandments) constitutes part of covenant obedience. But **Devarim 6:25** specifies: *ka'asher tzivanu* ("as He commanded us"). The *tzedaqah*

("righteousness") belongs to what **Yahweh** commanded, not to what tradition added. **Devarim 4:2** closes this definitional gap: "*You shall not add to the word that I am commanding you, nor take from it.*" The Written Torah standard is sufficient and complete. *tzedaqah* ("righteousness") is produced by keeping **Yahweh's** commandments as He gave them — the Written Tanakh governs. The rabbinic tradition is a corroborating witness at best, never the source of *tzedaqah* ("righteousness").

2 — PAULINE IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS

The Pauline framework in the Brit Chadasha (New Testament) — particularly in Romans 3–4 and Galatians 3 — argues that righteousness is "*imputed*" or "*reckoned*" to the believer through faith in Yeshua, apart from works of the Torah. This construction draws on **Bereishit (Genesis) 15:6**: "*And Avraham believed Yahweh, and it was counted to him as tzedaqah.*" But **Devarim 6:25** — written under **Yahweh's** authority through **Mosheh** — defines *tzedaqah* ("righteousness") explicitly as the result of keeping commandments. The Tanakh governs; later theological construction cannot override it.

Moreover, Bereishit 15:6 does not stand alone. Avraham's *emunah* ("faithfulness / trust expressed through action") (H530) was expressed through covenant obedience throughout his life: leaving his land (**Bereishit 12**), entering the covenant (**Bereishit 15**), circumcision (**Bereishit 17**), offering **Yitzchak (Bereishit 22)**. *emunah* ("faithfulness") in the Tanakh is never intellectual assent alone — it is trust expressed through obedient action. The Pauline separation of *faith* from *works* cannot survive contact with the Written Tanakh lexical standard.

3 — RIGHTEOUSNESS DISCONNECTED FROM YAHWEH'S COVENANT FRAMEWORK

Both within certain streams of Christianity (antinomian theology — the doctrine that the Torah is abolished for believers) and within Islamic tradition (where righteousness is defined primarily through Quranic categories), there is a tendency to define righteousness *independently* of the specific covenant framework **Yahweh** established in the Written Tanakh. But **Yahweh** — and only **Yahweh** — holds the definitional authority. **Devarim 6:25 is unambiguous: *tzedaqah* ("righteousness") is covenant obedience to Yahweh our Elohim as He commanded.** This is the upstream standard. Every downstream religious definition of righteousness must be traced back to and measured against this text.

PART VI — THREE-RELIGION AUDIT

DEVARIM 6:25 SPEAKS TO ALL THREE SIMULTANEOUSLY

This is not a document written for one tradition and applied to others as an afterthought. The Written Tanakh is the foundational covenant text that gave rise to all three Abrahamic traditions. Yahweh spoke this word to Yisra'el through Mosheh. That word has never been rescinded, superseded, or replaced. It is the standard by which all three traditions are measured — simultaneously, without preference.

JUDAISM

Devarim 6:25 sits at the heart of the Shema tradition — the most sacred passage in Jewish liturgy (vv. 4–9). The Talmud (*Kiddushin* 40a–b) addresses the relative weight of Torah study versus action, concluding that action is greater. **Devarim 6:25** fully supports this verdict: *tzedaqah* ("righteousness") is produced by keeping AND DOING (*shamar* ("keep/observe") + *asah* ("do/execute")) — not by study alone, not by creedal affirmation, and not by tradition alone. This verse calls all within Judaism to return to the Written Torah as the governing standard for *tzedaqah* ("righteousness"), over against Talmudic addition and oral expansion. The tradition is a corroborating witness; the Written Text is the authority.

CHRISTIANITY

The Protestant Reformation built its doctrine of justification on *sola fide* (faith alone) partly as a reaction against ecclesiastical corruption and indulgence systems. This was a legitimate protest against certain abuses. But the Reformation did not resolve its doctrinal construction against the Hebrew lexical standard of **Devarim 6:25**. *tzedaqah* ("righteousness") is not produced by faith alone — it is produced by covenant obedience. This does not mean "learning" salvation in a transactional sense; it means recognizing that Yahweh alone defines righteousness, and He defines it as covenant faithfulness expressed through obedient action. Every Christian theology of justification must be brought back to this plumb line.

ISLAM

Surah 2:177 defines *al-birr* ("**righteousness / goodness**") as: belief in Allah and the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets; giving wealth to relatives, orphans, the poor, and travelers; establishing prayer; giving zakat; fulfilling covenants; patience in adversity. This is remarkably close in structure to the covenant behavioral framework of the Tanakh. But the Islamic definition is built within Quranic categories, without direct connection to Yahweh's specific covenant framework in the Written Tanakh. **Devarim 6:25** establishes that *tzedaqah* ("**righteousness**") is produced by keeping the specific commandments **Yahweh** gave in the Written Torah. The Quran's *al-birr* ("**righteousness**") is a downstream reflection of **Yahweh's** upstream definition. Islam's acknowledgment of the prophets is a corroborating witness — the foundation is the Written Tanakh.

PART VII — COVENANT VERDICT TABLE

SEVEN PILLARS OF THE TZEDAQAH STANDARD

COVENANT QUESTION	VERDICT — FROM THE WRITTEN TANAKH
What is tzedaqah in the Tanakh?	Tzedaqah is the covenant standing produced by keeping Yahweh's commandments as He commanded — not a theological abstraction, not an imputed doctrinal status, not a tradition-defined quality. It is the condition that results from covenant obedience expressed in action. The term is relational, covenantal, and communal.
How is tzedaqah produced?	By the paired covenant formula shamar ("keep/guard") + asah ("do/execute"). Knowing the commandments is insufficient. Declaring them is insufficient. <u>Yahweh's covenant demands both internal commitment and external execution.</u> Both elements are required — neither alone satisfies the standard.
Whose commandments define the standard?	<u>Yahweh's commandments alone — ka'asher tzivanu ("as He commanded us").</u> <u>Not rabbinic expansion.</u> <u>Not church tradition.</u> <u>Not Islamic jurisprudential addition.</u> The Written Tanakh is the

COVENANT QUESTION	VERDICT — FROM THE WRITTEN TANAKH
	<p><u>complete and sufficient standard. Devarim 4:2 forbids both addition and subtraction.</u></p>
<p>Is tzedaqah individual or communal?</p>	<p>Communal — lanu (“to us” / “for us”). The covenant people together bear the tzedaqah that comes from collective covenant faithfulness. Personal piety entirely divorced from covenant community life does not fulfill the full standard of Devarim 6:25.</p>
<p>Is this verse a promise or a command?</p>	<p>Both. It is a covenant promise with a conditional structure. The imperfect tihyeh (“it will be”) is Yahweh’s binding guarantee: keep the commandments — tzedaqah will accrue to you. Yahweh does not aspire. He covenants. The promise carries the full weight of Yahweh’s authority.</p>
<p>How does this verse reach all three religions?</p>	<p>Judaism: the Written Torah governs over rabbinic addition as the source of tzedaqah. Christianity: tzedaqah is covenant obedience, not imputed faith-status — sola fide cannot survive this text on its Hebrew lexical terms. Islam: Yahweh’s commandments in the Written Tanakh are the upstream source of all righteousness definitions across the Abrahamic traditions.</p>
<p>FINAL COVENANT VERDICT</p>	<p><i>Devarim 6:25 stands as the definitive, Yahweh-authored, Tanakh-grounded, lexically established definition of what righteousness is and how it is produced. It is not subject to revision by rabbinics, Pauline theology, or Islamic jurisprudence. Every theological construction that defines righteousness differently must be brought to this plumb line. The Word of Yahweh does not yield to tradition. Tradition yields to the Word.</i></p>

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