GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS REVEALED:

ROMANS 1:17 AS AN EXPLICIT REFERENCE TO AN OLD TESTAMENT CONCEPT

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Paul launches his argument in Romans with his assertion that the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel. Likewise, Richard Hays launches his study of allusions and echoes in Paul’s writings with his assertion that this statement of Paul’s echoes the language of the Greek Old Testament. Hays hears in Paul’s language an echo of the hope expressed in Psalm 98 “that God’s eschatological vindication of Israel will serve as a demonstration to the whole world of the power and faithfulness of Israel’s God, a demonstration that will bring even Gentiles to acknowledge him.” This echo of OT language means, for those with ears to hear, that in the gospel message about Jesus Christ the promises of Israel’s scriptures are finally fulfilled. Hays is by no means the first to see a connection between Paul’s understanding of God’s righteousness and that of the Old Testament. For over a century now the question of how “righteousness” in Paul relates to “righteousness” in the OT and in Second-Temple Judaism has been explored extensively. But Hays approached this well-worn question from a literary

1 Rom 1:16–17: Οὐ γὰρ ἐπαισχύνομαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, δύναμις γὰρ θεοῦ ἐστιν εἰς σωτηρίαν παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι, Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἕλληνι. δικαιοσύνη γὰρ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ ἀποκαλύπτεται ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν...


3 Ibid., 37. He also finds echoes of Isa 51:4–5 and 52:10, which promise a “mighty act of deliverance” that “will be a manifestation of God’s righteousness (dikaiosynē) because it will demonstrate, despite all appearances to the contrary, God’s faithfulness to his covenant people.” In short, there is a “cluster of echoes emanating from the lament psalms and from exilic prophecy” in which “the prophetic promise of God’s righteousness comes precisely as the answer” to the question of Israel’s suffering, adversity, and exile (ibid.).

4 Needless to say, the bibliography on the question of Gottesgerechtigkeit bei Paulus is immense. For a recent survey, see Charles Lee Irons, The Righteousness of God: A Lexical Examination of the Covenant-Faithfulness Interpretation, WUNT 2.386 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 29–60. Two of the most significant examples include Hermann Cremer, Die paulinische Rechtfertigungslehre im Zusammenhange ihrer geschichtlichen Voraussetzungen (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1899), 2–3, who argues that Paul’s “proclamation of salvation from the δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ has as its support the entire Old Testament, … and his view of it pervades the whole Old Testament and is of fundamental importance for
perspective that was sensitive to how meaning can emerge from the interaction and intersection of multiple texts ("intertextuality"). Whereas others had focused on the meaning of “righteousness” language for Paul, Hays heard in this language an echo of the entire constellation of scriptural texts in which this language occurs—with all the promises, expectations, and hopes that these texts express.

Hays’s study is now widely—and rightly—acknowledged as a breakthrough. Yet this breakthrough, important as it may be, came at a cost. Because Hays studied a broad spectrum of echoes and allusions as a general phenomenon of Paul’s writings, his approach as a matter of principle said very little about what is happening at the level of explicit communication. This is particularly evident in his discussion of Rom 1:17, where Hays focuses on “the effect of the echo” and what it suggests “for hearers who share Paul’s sensitivity to the cadences of the LXX.” This immediately raises the question of why Paul would be so allusive—and therefore so elusive—at such a critical point in his argument.

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5 E.g., Ernst Käsemann, Commentaries of Romans, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 30, who argues that Paul’s language of God’s righteousness is “a fixed formula from Jewish apocalyptic.”

6 See, e.g., the introduction to the second edition of Francis Watson’s Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith (London: T&T Clark, 2016), where Watson, even though sharply disagreeing with some of Hays’s central arguments, still acknowledges that his own work “could not have been written without” Hays’s work (xxxv).

7 See Hays, Echoes, 26–27, where he identifies five possible loci of meaning (Paul, the original readers, the text itself, the present reader, the present community of interpreters) and announces his intention to “hold them all together in creative tension.”

8 Ibid., 37–38. This is based on the assertion that “Isaiah’s vocabulary echoes subliminally in Paul’s diction” (37).
Indeed, we may question whether “echo” is the most appropriate way to characterize this particular interaction between Paul’s text and the OT. An echo, like a mirage, tends to vanish as one approaches its apparent source. And yet Paul is clearly directing his readers to Israel’s scriptures in his assertions that his gospel was “promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures” (Rom 1:2) and that the righteousness revealed in that gospel is that “to which the Law and the Prophets testify” (Rom 3:21). This raises at least the possibility that Paul aims to engage the OT on a much more explicit level—and that his readers must do so also if they wish to make sense of Paul’s own writings.⁹ Paul is not merely echoing the OT, he is referring to it, gesturing toward it, pointing at it, inviting us to take a close look at what it says about the revelation of God’s righteousness in order to better understand the good news about Jesus Christ.

This paper will therefore explore how the interaction between Rom 1:17 and the OT might function at the level of explicit communication. While seeking to retain Hays’s methodological insights, and while largely confirming his understanding of the meaning of this “echo,” I will argue that this intertextual moment is better characterized as an explicit conceptual reference than as a subliminal echo. Specifically, I will suggest that Rom 1:17 refers to the concept of the revelation of God’s righteousness that is expressed most fully in the psalms of individual lament and in Isa 45:18–25. The first section of this paper will use Relevance Theory to sketch how such a conceptual reference can theoretically occur at the level of explicit communication, arguing that it will occur if and only if expectations of relevance require it. The second section will examine what sort of expectations of relevance are raised by the discourse of

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⁹ See also Roy E. Ciampa, “Approaching Paul’s Use of Scripture in Light of Translation Studies,” in Paul and Scripture: Extending the Conversation, ed. Christopher D. Stanley, Early Christianity and Its Literature 9 (Atlanta: SBL, 2012), 315: “Paul wants to introduce new expressions and enrich the vocabulary of those not familiar with biblical idioms while also giving enough commentary that they can be assimilated and adopted by those who were previously outsiders to this language.”
Rom 1:17 and its immediate context. The third section will explore the particular “enriched”
concept of the revelation of God’s righteousness that appears in these key OT texts. This paper
will then conclude by showing how this particular enriched concept uniquely meets the
expectations of relevance raised in the discourse of Rom 1:17 and is therefore likely that to
which Paul refers with his language of God’s righteousness being revealed in the gospel.

Relevance Theory and Conceptual References

At the close of his introductory chapter, Hays insists that the object of his exploration is
not what Paul meant when writing his letters.\(^\text{10}\) Rather, he wants to observe how scripture
generates “new figurations” through Paul, how the “Righteousness from Faith finds in Paul a
new voice.”\(^\text{11}\) Such an approach is certainly legitimate as a literary analysis and has in fact
resulted in many insights into the text. However, from a theological perspective it is difficult to
separate the authoritative claim of this text from the authority of its author. When Paul introduces
himself as a “servant of Christ Jesus” who is “called to be an apostle” and “set apart for the
gospel of God” (Rom 1:1), he claims (among other things) to be writing with some degree of
authority that comes from this call. So unless we ignore or reject this claim, we cannot
completely bypass considerations of the explicit communication intended by its author in this
text.

This first section will therefore attempt to bring the genuine insights that have come as a
result of the turn towards intertextuality into the sphere of explicit communication. It will do so
by using the account of “the pragmatics of explicit communication”\(^\text{12}\) offered by Relevance

\(^{10}\)Hays, *Echoes*, 33. He calls this “a matter of historical speculation.”

\(^{11}\)Ibid.

\(^{12}\)This phrase comes from the subtitle of Robyn Carston, *Thoughts and Utterances: The
Theory (RT) to explain how speakers or writers may refer to “enriched” concepts derived from the intertextual environment. In light of this, it will suggest that references to intertextually-enriched concepts are one way that an intertextual connection can function at the level of explicit communication.

Any study of a concept should begin by heeding James Barr’s advice “to avoid saying ‘concept’ unless we mean something other than ‘word.’” So we must begin by clarifying what we mean by “concept” and how it relates to the “words” we are seeking to interpret. Within RT, a concept is understood as any mental representation that is both enduring (i.e., capable of being recalled in new contexts) and communicable (i.e., capable of being publicly shared). Although concepts tend to be associated with certain linguistic signs and (as a corollary) linguistic signs (whether words or phrases) can be used to refer to these concepts, concepts and words are nevertheless not the same thing.

Semantic theory has long drawn a similar distinction between words and the range of senses they might communicate, insisting that it is the task of interpreters to disambiguate which sense best fits the context. But Robyn Carston has taken this a step further. Working within the framework of RT, she has suggested that this disambiguation is only one part of a much larger process of “ad hoc concept construction” that is an essential component of successful

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14 This is a modification of the description in Deirdre Wilson and Dan Sperber, *Meaning and Relevance* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012), 35–36.

15 Not all words encode concepts; linguistic signs such as “discourse connectives” (like “moreover,” “so,” “you see”) do not encode concepts but constrain the inferential process (see Robyn Carston, “Word Meaning, What is Said and Explicature,” in *What is Said and What is Not: The Semantics/Pragmatics Interface*, ed. Carlo Penco and Filippo Domaneschi, CSLI Lecture Notes 207 [Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications, 2013], 179–80).

communication. These *ad hoc* concepts are “not linguistically given, but are constructed online (on the fly) in response to specific expectations of relevance raised in specific contexts.” This eponymous “expectation of relevance” is, according to RT, what prompts listeners to bridge the gap between the underdetermined “what is said” and the more fully-realized “what is meant.” When listeners think someone is trying to tell them something, they assume that the speaker has given them enough linguistically-encoded information to figure out what that is. As a result, they naturally follow the “relevance-theoretic comprehension strategy,” which is to “construct interpretations in order of accessibility (i.e., follow a path of least effort)” and “stop when your expectation of relevance is satisfied.” Carston suggests that this same inferential process occurs when we seek to understand the concept to which a word or phrase refers at the level of explicit communication: we construct *ad hoc* concepts out of the raw material of *lexical* concepts until our expectation of relevance is satisfied. Carston characterizes *ad hoc* concepts and lexical concepts as follows:

An *ad hoc* concept recovered in the process of understanding an utterance need not be an entirely novel or one-off occurrence, though it may be. The basic characteristic of an *ad hoc* concept is that it is accessed in a particular context by a spontaneous process of pragmatic inference, as distinct from a concept which is accessed by the process of lexical decoding and so is context-invariant (that is, one that comprises the standing meaning of the word in the linguistic system).

For example, in the sentence, “You’ve had too much to drink,” the word “drink” would explicitly communicate very different things if spoken by a parent to a child to explain a trip to the restroom before a car trip than if spoken by one friend to another to explain a refusal to hand

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17 Carston, *Thoughts and Utterances*, 322.


over car keys. Indeed, in the utterance, “You’d better not drive home tonight; you’ve had too much to drink,” the lexical sense of the word “drink” in the second clause must be modified by being narrowed, or enriched, to mean specifically “drink alcohol” in order to be relevant to the first clause. In this way, the concepts associated with particular linguistic entities undergo modification when they are used in discourse, and these new *ad hoc* concepts are, like all concepts, both enduring and communicable.

This final point—that *ad hoc* concepts endure beyond the text in which they were modified—is critical for understanding how one text can refer to a concept that has been modified in another text. Central to RT is the view that speakers communicate primarily by directing attention to elements in the cognitive environment shared by the speaker and hearer. Thus, to the degree that a text is part of the cognitive environment shared by later speakers/writers and listeners/hearers, the modified concepts in that text are themselves a part of that same mutual cognitive environment. Words or phrases can therefore refer to these concepts just as they can to anything in the mutual cognitive environment. Of course, these words or phrases do not *always* refer to these enriched concepts; they still refer initially to the lexical concepts that are most directly associated with them. But if such a lexical concept fails to meet expectations

20 On “mutual cognitive environments” as key to the inferential process, see Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance*, 39–46.

21 This mutual cognitive environment can include the physical environment if speakers and listeners are in the same place, which is why RT is particularly suited to describe what happens in conversational discourse (note that Cotterell and Turner, *Linguistics*, 270–71, discuss RT in the context of the “special case of conversation”). However, as a unitary theory of communication, it suggests that what we see happening most clearly in conversational speech is actually a feature of communication considered generally. All communication involves the speaker referring to elements in the mutual cognitive environment and the listener inferring the speaker’s intention from these references. There is an inverse relationship between the degree to which cognitive environments are shared between speakers and hearers and the amount of semantic content necessary for communication to be successful.

22 It is possible, of course, for modified concepts to themselves undergo “lexicalization” if the modified concept comes to be associated with the word or phrase apart from its association with the text in which this modification occurs, thus adding a new lexical concept to the range of possible meanings of a word. For example, “the verb ‘drink’ has now acquired an additional lexical sense as a result of frequent
of relevance, and a modified concept from a known text that is associated with the same word or phrase does meet those expectations, listeners or readers will infer that it was that concept that the speaker or writer meant, explicitly, to bring to their minds.\textsuperscript{23}

It cannot be overstated that \textit{a reference to a previously-enriched concept only occurs when expectations of relevance require the reader to infer such an enriched concept}. If the unenriched lexical concept is able to satisfy this expectation, then no further enrichment need take place and no intertextual conceptual reference will occur.\textsuperscript{24} Listeners will infer enriched concepts from an intertextual environment \textit{only if necessary} to meet their expectation of relevance.

One final point must be made regarding concept modification: according to RT, both lexical and \textit{ad hoc} concepts can have lexical, logical, and encyclopedic entries.\textsuperscript{25} For example, the concept dog has a lexical entry associating it (in English) with the word “dog” and a logical entry as, perhaps, “a particular type of animal” or “a domesticated member of the canine species.” However, it also has encyclopedic entries such as “loyal,” “friendly,” or “sheds hair.” These encyclopedic entries are not incidental to the construction of \textit{ad hoc} concepts: first-century attitudes towards dogs (encyclopedic entries) are critical for understanding the \textit{ad hoc} concept to narrowing to the more specific sense ‘drink alcohol’” (Wilson and Carston, “Unitary Approach,” 255 n. 7). The point here, however, is that a modified concept need not be fully lexicalized (which may itself be a matter of degree) in order to be accessible to later speakers if the text in which it is modified remains a part of the mutual cognitive environment.

\textsuperscript{23}This is especially the case if the speaker or writer has already directed attention to the previous text via direct references or prior allusions, as this serves to bring the text—and its associated modified concepts—out of the shared background knowledge and into the foreground.

\textsuperscript{24}Observing this allows us to avoid committing the fallacy of “illegitimate totality transfer” that James Barr famously critiqued the mid-twentieth-century “biblical theology” movement as committing (Barr, \textit{Semantics}, 218). More recent scholars have also used Barr to critique current proposals for how we should understand Paul’s language of righteousness in light of the OT; e.g., Mark A. Seifrid, \textit{Justification by Faith: The Origin and Development of a Central Pauline Theme}, NovTSup (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 40 n. 136 (criticizing Stuhlmacher); and Irons, \textit{Righteousness of God}, 132 n. 59 (criticizing Cremer).

\textsuperscript{25}Sperber and Wilson, \textit{Relevance}, 87–90.
which Paul refers with the word κύων in Phil 3:2.\textsuperscript{26} Indeed, it may well be the case that what is required for a concept modified in a previous text to be relevant to the discourse of a later text is precisely the \textit{encyclopedic} enrichment of that concept.

One relatively clear example of this can be found in 1 Cor 3:13. In this verse, Paul tells how the work of various ministers of the gospel will become clear, “for the day [ἡµέρα] will make it known.” The word “day” here could refer to the general concept of \textit{day} (with the associated encyclopedic knowledge that it is light) as contrasted with \textit{night} (with the associated encyclopedic knowledge that it is dark). If the verse were to end there, the metaphor would be as clear as, well, \textit{day}: just as the darkness of night hides things, so the light of day causes them to be visible. But then Paul proceeds to give a quite different reason: “because it is revealed in fire.” While it is possible that the metaphor has switched,\textsuperscript{27} it is more likely that by referring to a day which involves a fire of testing Paul is referring to the OT concept of the Day of the Lord, specifically as it is encyclopedically-enriched in Mal 3:19.\textsuperscript{28} To be clear, Paul himself modifies the concept: evil \textit{people} are tested in Malachi; evil \textit{works} in 1 Corinthians. Still, Mal 3:19 adds a critical component to the encyclopedic understanding of the Day of the Lord: it will involve the testing of good and evil by fire. The lexeme “day” in 1 Cor 3:13 must refer to that enriched concept in order to be relevant to the surrounding discourse; it refers explicitly (not subliminally) to the enriched concept Day of the Lord that is found in Mal 3:19. By no means does “day”

\textsuperscript{26}“Watch out for those dogs, those evil doers, those mutilators of the flesh.” Note, of course, that the logical entry for \textit{dog} (a particular animal) drops out of the \textit{ad hoc} concept \textit{dog}* in this verse, which is constructed solely out of the encyclopedic entries for \textit{dog}.

\textsuperscript{27}A. T. Robertson and Alfred Plummer, \textit{A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians}, 2nd ed., ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1914), 63, still see the metaphor of day vs. night in play.

\textsuperscript{28}“Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble [LXX καλάµη, “straw”; cf. 1 Cor 3:12], and the day that is coming will set them on fire,’ says the Lord Almighty” (NIV). For the OT concept of the day of the Lord, see, e.g., Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18; Isa 13:6, 9; Ezek 30:3.
always refer to this concept, but in this one instance expectations of relevance prompt us to infer that concept.

To summarize: concepts are mental representations associated with words or phrases that are both enduring and communicable. They undergo ad hoc modification in order to be relevant to their use in discourse. Once so modified or enriched, later discourse can refer to these enriched concepts by raising expectations of relevance that only these enriched concepts can meet. Thus when Paul seeks to explain his gospel to the Romans, he has at his disposal not only the lexical concepts of the Greek language but also a set of more-fully-enriched concepts from Israel’s scriptures as well—and our ability to understand what Paul is intending to explicitly communicate will at times require us to become familiar with these enriched concepts.

**Righteousness and Relevance in Romans 1:17**

Just because Paul might make an explicit reference to a concept enriched in the intertextual environment does not mean he does. As argued above, any such reference should only be inferred if necessary in order to meet expectations of relevance. This second section will therefore briefly sketch what expectations of relevance are raised by the discourse and immediate context of Rom 1:17 that an enriched concept of God’s righteousness would have to meet.

For such a small word, the particle γὰρ raises expectations of relevance considerably high in Rom 1:16–17. While γὰρ can at times have an inferential use (“certainly,” “then”) or a clarifying use (“what I’m saying is”), in this context it almost certainly indicates a causal (“this happens because”) or evidential (“one knows this because”) relationship between the two verses, suggesting that verse 17 will somehow explain why verse 16 is the case. 

29 For the inferential of γὰρ, see BDAG s.v. 3 (190); for its clarifying use, see BDAG s.v. 2 (189–90).
heightened expectation of relevance for Rom 1:17: whatever it might mean that God’s righteousness is revealed in the gospel, we may expect that this will explain why and/or how the gospel can be God’s power for salvation to both Jews and Gentiles.

At this point, many scholars have sought to understand what Paul is saying in light of the OT understanding of God’s righteousness as his faithfulness to his covenant promises. They rightly note that, especially in Isaiah 40–55 and the Psalms, God’s righteousness is often associated with his act of salvation on behalf of his people. In terms of RT, by referring to a “righteousness of God” (v. 17) that is relevant to God’s saving action, Paul prompts his readers to infer the intertextually-enriched concept of God’s righteousness that is closely related to his propensity to save.


31 God’s righteousness “was simply the fulfilment of his covenant obligations as Israel’s God in delivering, saving, and vindicating Israel, despite Israel’s failure” (James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 342); God’s righteousness “must mean, and can only mean, God’s faithfulness to his single plan, the plan through which he will deal with the problem of human sin and put the whole world right at last” (N. T. Wright, *Justification: God’s Plan and Paul’s Vision* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009], 201; see also idem, *PFG*, 2:996).

32 Some even understand the former to be synonymous with the latter. See, e.g., Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 41: “particularly in the Psalms and Second Isaiah the logic of covenant grace is followed through with the result that righteousness and salvation become virtually synonymous”; and Douglas A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 702: “δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ is, as a result and in essence, the deliverance of God.” But note N. T. Wright’s warning that seeing “righteousness” as equivalent to “salvation” “fails to bring out the point to which Isaiah regularly appeals, which is that these are acts done because of YHWH’s prior commitment to Israel” (*PFG*, 800).
However, when we put it in those terms we see the inadequacy of this understanding of the concept of God’s righteousness. After all, Paul is drawing on this concept not just to make a general claim about God’s propensity to save or his faithfulness to his covenant promises but to make a specific claim about the saving effect of the gospel. Verses 16 and 17 do not just say that the salvation God accomplishes in the gospel proclamation is in keeping with his righteousness. Instead, they say that the gospel proclamation powerfully results in salvation for all who believe because it reveals God’s righteousness. If we grant that Paul is being as precise as his language will allow, it follows that he is drawing here on a much more highly-enriched concept—a concept of God’s righteousness that, when identified as what the gospel reveals, explains why the gospel is God’s power to save all who believe.

Is there any concept in the OT of God’s righteousness whose revelation will constitute God’s salvific power for the whole world? Such an enriched concept would certainly be relevant to the discourse of Rom 1:16–17. However, while the OT passages that are often cited as the source of Paul’s allusive language here hint at such a concept, they do not quite express it. Psalm 98:2, which declares that God “has revealed his righteousness in the eyes of the nations” exhibits the closest linguistic correspondence. But, as the next verse makes clear, the nations here are the spectators to God’s salvation on behalf of Israel. Of course, the fact that the nations witness

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34 In 98:3 the “ends of the earth” (כָל־אַפְסֵי־אָרֶץ, LXX πάντα τὰ πέρατα τῆς γῆς) see God’s salvation, but this salvation is characterized as his having remembered “his love and faithfulness to the house of Israel” (חַסְדּוֹ וֶאֱמוּנָתוֹ לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל, LXX τοῦ ἐλέους αὐτοῦ τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας αὐτοῦ τοῦ οἴκου Ἰσραήλ). See John Goldingay, Psalms, 3 vols., BCOTWP (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006–2008), 3:121, who also sees v. 3 as clarifying the fact that Israel is the recipient of this salvation; and Jörg Jeremias, Das Königturn Gottes in den Psalmen: Israels Begegnung mit dem kanaanäischen Mythos in den Jahwe-König-Psalmen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 135, who notes that the nations play a “minor role” (Nebenrolle) since this salvation is primarily for God’s covenant people (see also Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51–100, ed. Klaus Baltzer,)
this salvation likely brings them within the scope of God’s *ultimate* redemptive activity, and this implies that the revelation of God’s righteousness is somehow related to the worldwide scope of God’s salvation. But this psalm itself does not make clear what that relationship is. The other mention of God being about to “reveal” his righteousness (Isa 56:1) also fails to meet this expectation: it uses language of God’s “righteousness” being “revealed” to refer to God’s imminent salvation of his people, but it does not show how this is related to salvation for the nations. The “arrival” of “God’s righteousness” in Isa 51:4–5 does seem to affect the “nations” and the “islands,” who are included within God’s salvific activity somewhat more explicitly than in Psalm 98. But the verbal connections are not as strong in this verse (God’s righteousness “draws near,” but it is not “revealed”), and again the relationship between God’s righteousness and his global saving activity is not completely clear.

Still, the fact that Psalm 98 and Isaiah 51 do hint at some relationship between the revelation of God’s righteousness and his saving activity on behalf of all people is itself noteworthy. If, like Hays, we see Paul making semi-conscious allusions to OT texts, we need look no further than these texts that express some relationship between his righteousness and his (ultimately universal) saving activity. But if we see Paul making a tight argument that explicitly draws on concepts and their associated terms found in the OT in order to support the central

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trans. Linda M. Maloney, *Hermeneia* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005], who concur). Campbell’s interpretation of this psalm as referring to a universal deliverance that just happened to fulfill the promises made to God’s covenant people (*Deliverance of God*, 700–701) fails to give adequate attention to (1) the clear distinction between the already accomplished salvific act described in vv. 1–3 (note the Hebrew perfect verbs and Greek aorist verbs) and the future universal act of salvation in v. 9 (note the Hebrew imperfect יִשְׁפֹּט and the [likely] Greek future κρινεῖ); and (2) the similarity of language and imagery with other OT texts, especially Isa 52:10, that more clearly refer to God’s deliverance specifically of Israel (on which see Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:121; Jeremias, *Königtum Gottes*, 133–34).


36 Moreover, the LXX translates צְדָקָה here as ἔλεος. Likewise, Isa 46:13; 51:6, 8, only comment on *Israel’s* salvation.
claim of that argument, then we should look further. Indeed, it may be that these OT texts themselves refer to a more-enriched concept of God’s righteousness, and it therefore may be that Paul uses their language not to refer to these passages themselves but to refer to the concept that they themselves refer to with this language. This means that we will have to broaden our search beyond just those passages that reflect the language of Rom 1:17 to include other passages that more fully expand, or enrich, our understanding of how the revelation of God’s righteousness relates to salvation for Jews and for Gentiles.

The Revelation of God’s Righteousness in the Old Testament

As a whole, the Old Testament does not say much about God’s righteousness. Frank Crüsemann observed this forty years ago: while “righteousness” language appears throughout the OT, very few texts actually refer to God’s righteousness. Apart from a few scattered instances where God’s righteousness refers to God’s acts of deliverance, references to God’s righteousness are clustered in the Psalms and in the second half of Isaiah. In these texts, however, God’s righteousness constitutes a major theme. And what these texts do say about

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38 These are found in texts Crüsemann identifies as “pre-state,” namely, Judg 5:11 and Deut 33:20–21, with “aftereffects” in Mic 6:5 and 1 Sam 12:7 (ibid., 434–37).

39 Isa 42:21; 46:13; 51:5, 6, 8; 57:12; 59:16; Pss 5:9; 7:18; 31:2; 35:24; 36:7; 51:16; 71:2, 15, 16, 19; 88:13; 89:17; 97:6; 98:2; 103:17; 111:3; 119:40, 142; 143:1, 11; 145:7 (throughout this paper, references to the Psalms are to the chapter and verse of the MT). It is probably not a coincidence that these two books are the two which Paul cites most often in Romans. J. Ross Wagner, “Isaiah in Romans and Galatians,” in Isaiah in the New Testament, ed. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken, The New Testament and the Scriptures of Israel (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 117, counts “fifteen marked citations” and “perhaps a dozen additional allusions to Isaiah,” noting in a footnote that “the only other book that comes close to this total is Psalms with twelve citations” (117 n. 3).
God’s righteousness turns out to be surprisingly relevant to what Paul says about the revelation of God’s righteousness in Rom 1:17.

This next section will explore the revelation of God’s righteousness in the Psalms and in Isaiah 40–66. Instead of focusing on Psalm 98 and Isaiah 51, however, it will focus on the individual lament psalms and Isa 45:18–25. These texts are discussed less often in connection with Paul’s use of OT language of the “revelation” of “God’s righteousness” for the simple reason that that particular phrase does not occur in them. Nevertheless, I will suggest that these texts enrich the concept of the revelation of God’s righteousness in precisely the way necessary for it to be relevant to Paul’s argument in Rom 1:16–17. Specifically, they clarify its relationship to salvation for both Jews and Gentiles: the individual lament psalms show more clearly how the revelation of God’s righteousness relates to God’s salvation of his people, and Isa 45:18–25 shows more clearly how the revelation of God’s righteousness relates to God’s salvation of the nations. When read as a whole, what emerges is an enriched concept of God’s righteousness as what God reveals by saving Israel so that he might save the nations.

God’s Righteousness and God’s People: Individual Lament Psalms

While “righteousness” language occurs throughout the psalms, references to God’s righteousness occur most often in the psalms of individual lament. Moreover, Paul was

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41 Crüsemann, “Jahwes Gerechtigkeit,” 440, notes that 80 percent of instances of צדקה (the
certainly aware of these psalms, and his regular citations of them, indicate that he expects his readers to be aware of them as well. As such, these psalms provide a good starting point for our exploration of the concept of the revelation of God’s righteousness in the OT.

We begin with Crüsemann’s observation that references to God’s righteousness play two distinct roles in the psalms of individual lament: (1) the psalmist asks God to save him on the basis of God’s righteousness, and (2) the psalmist promises to proclaim God’s righteousness once this salvation is accomplished. The first occurs in Ps 31:2 (“deliver me in your righteousness”), Ps 143:1 (“answer me in your righteousness”), and again in 143:11 (“in your righteousness bring my soul out of distress”). The second occurs in Ps 22:32 (“they will come and declare his righteousness”).

Just looking at explicit formula citations, Paul cites individual lament psalms in his catena of citations in Romans 3 (Ps 5:9 in 3:13; Ps 10:7 in 3:14; and Ps 140:3 in 3:13); he cites Ps 62:12 in Rom 2:6; Ps 69:9 in Rom 15:3; and Ps 69:22–23 in Rom 11:9–10.

Ps 51:4 in Rom 3:4, although it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss exactly what point is being made about God’s righteousness there.


Note that in each of these instances the request is made for God to act “in your righteousness” (בדיעבדך). The preposition ב should be understood as a causal ב, which “marks the reason or originating force of an action” and “is sometimes hard to distinguish from simple circumstantial uses” (Bruce K. Waltke and Michael Patrick O’Connor, An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990], 198; cf. Gen 18:28: “Will you destroy the whole city because/on account of five?” [אני והשיטת תמבש את העיר]). For the causal use of the Greek ἐν in the LXX (likely influenced by Hebrew; note the lack of such a use in LSJ), see LEH 1:149; Takamitsu Muraoka, A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint (Leuven: Peeters, 2009) s.v. 11, 232. For this use in NT Greek see BDAG s.v. 9, 329. Hays, “Psalm 143 and the Logic of Romans 3,” 114, calls this an “instrumental” use, but “causal” is much more likely.
righteousness”) and Ps 51:16 (“my tongue will sing your righteousness”). Psalms 35 and 71 exhibit both. In Ps 35:24 the psalmist asks God to “judge me according to your righteousness” and then in verse 28 promises that his tongue will declare “your righteousness.” Likewise, in Ps 71:2 the psalmist asks God to save him “in your righteousness”; and then the psalmist promises in verse 15 to proclaim “your righteousness,” in verse 16 to publicly announce “your righteousness,” and in verse 24 to speak of “your righteousness” all day long.

It is clear that these psalms assume a close connection between God’s righteousness and God’s saving activity. But why does the psalmist think this righteousness will benefit him in particular? At times, such as in Psalms 7 and 35, the psalmist asserts his innocence and appeals to God’s fairness as a judge in vindicating the innocent and condemning the guilty.  

But not every psalm appeals to the psalmist’s innocence. Some state the opposite. Psalm 143:2 makes the striking assertion that no one can stand before God in judgment. Psalm 51 is even more clear. Its relatively-long superscription identifies this psalm as the psalm of David when he was confronted by Nathan over his sin with Bathsheba. And yet in verse 16 the psalmist still promises to declare God’s “righteousness” when he is delivered. The vow to praise God’s

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46 The Hebrew lexeme for “righteousness” in these psalms (Pss 7:9, 18; 35:24, 28) is צֶדֶק, while in the other instances we have looked at in the psalms of individual lament it is the lexeme צְדָקָה. Crüsemann, “Jahwes Gerechtigkeit,” 438–40, argues that the difference between the two lexemes is fundamental: צֶדֶק is virtually personified and seldom attributed to God, while צְדָקָה is often attributed to God, especially in the psalms of individual lament. This is certainly significant for Crüsemann’s tradition-historical investigation. However, the fact that both Psalm 7 and 35 use the lexeme צֶדֶק in the same way that other individual lament psalms use צְדָקָה would indicate a degree of overlap, and the distinction between the two lexemes is erased entirely when the LXX translates both with δικαιοσύνη. For these reasons, our study departs from Crüsemann’s by including these instances of God’s “righteousness” along with the others.


48 This superscription is present in both the MT and the LXX.

49 Hans-Jürgen Hermisson, Sprache und Ritus im altisraelitischen Kult, WMANT 19 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1965), 48, notes that this verse contains both a petition and a praise-vow.
“righteousness” when delivered from one’s enemies becomes a vow to praise God’s “righteousness” when delivered from “bloodguilt.” If this is remarkable in light of the statement in verse 6 that God is “shown to be righteous” in his words of condemnation, it is all the more remarkable in light of the appeals in Psalms 7 and 35. Those psalms appeal to God to show his “righteousness” by condemning the wicked. Here God’s “righteousness” is proclaimed when he does precisely the opposite.

And yet, even when the psalmist does not appeal to his own innocence, he does still appeal to some sort of special relationship to God. In Ps 143:12 he appeals to his status as God’s “servant,” and in Pss 22:11; 51:16; and 143:10 he appeals to God’s status as his God. This may indicate some sort of connection to God’s covenant with the people of Israel, the covenant which boils down to God’s promise that “I will be your God and you will be my people.” But if this covenant status plays a role it does so only implicitly. Much more explicit are the appeals to the psalmist’s trust in God. In Psalm 22 the psalmist’s enemies mockingly acknowledge this trust (v. 9), and the psalmist himself affirms that he has trusted in God since his birth (vv. 10–11). Likewise, in Ps 143 the psalmist “spreads out” his hands to God (v. 6), puts his trust in him (v. 8), and hides himself in God (v. 9). Finally, in Psalm 71 the psalmist confesses that God has been his “hope” and his “confidence” since his youth (v. 5) and that he has relied on God since his birth (v. 6). While God’s covenant-relationship with his people may certainly undergird and precede such trust, it is to this trust that the psalmist appeals explicitly.

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51 See, paradigmatically, Exod 6:7 (cf. Jer 7:22; 11:3—for this phrase used in prophetic discourse to refer to a new covenant, see Jer 30:22; Ezek 36:28).

52 Crüsemann, “Jahwes Gerechtigkeit,” 430, points out that the word “covenant” (ברית) rarely occurs in these texts. Of course, this may be because it is so fundamentally “presupposed” (as E. P. Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977], 420–21, argued regarding the concept of the covenant in Rabbinic writings).
Could the nations trust in this same way? Is God’s “saving righteousness” something to which they could appeal as well? Or would it be presumptuous for a Gentile to make the sort of request these psalmists are making? To put it another way, is this “righteousness” God’s faithfulness to save his covenant people, or is it his faithfulness to save anyone who trusts in him? The psalms of individual lament, written by God’s covenant people and for God’s covenant people, are (for the most part) not concerned with this question. But the thoroughly-covenantal context in which they were heard and prayed certainly does not encourage us to understand God’s righteousness as something that can be casually universalized.

Instead, the dual-role that references to God’s righteousness play in these psalms—that to which the psalmist appeals when requesting salvation and that which the psalmist promises to proclaim when this salvation is accomplished—urges us in the other direction, as this implies a close connection between the public recognition of God’s righteousness and the fate of his covenant people. The psalmist can appeal to God’s righteousness because the fact that God is righteous is never in doubt. The psalmist would never ask God to become righteous or to stop acting unrighteously. Still, the psalmist waits until his salvation is accomplished to declare God’s righteousness. Far from being a manipulative attempt to force God to act by withholding praise, the psalmist must wait, for in covenantally binding himself to this people God has also bound the public recognition of his righteousness to their situation. God’s righteousness is hidden from view as long as the psalmist is in a situation of distress and can only be declared when the psalmist is delivered. God’s righteousness itself is never in doubt, but God’s righteousness can be openly declared only when God finally does act to save his people.

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53 This is the best way to understand the “inference of conditionality” identified by Ellen F. Davis as a feature of these praise-vows (“Exploding the Limits: Form and Function in Psalm 22,” *JSOT* 53 [1992]: 100).
Thus, while the language of God’s righteousness being “revealed” does not occur in psalms of individual lament, the way these psalms do appeal to God’s righteousness opens up the conceptual space for precisely this idea. God is always righteous. But this righteousness will only be declared, made known, or revealed when he acts to save his people.

It is therefore unsurprising that the terms for God’s “righteousness” (צדק, LXX δικαιοσύνη) and his “salvation” (תְּשׁוּﬠָה, LXX σωτηρία) begin to appear in parallel in some of these psalms (e.g., 40:11; 71:15). In light of our observations so far, though, the relationship between these terms is best understood not as lexical, as if the words for “righteousness” have come to mean roughly the same thing as the words for “salvation,” but as logical, meaning that God’s righteousness is why he saves his people and this salvation is what reveals his righteousness.

In this way, even though they never assert it in as many words, the psalms of individual lament prompt us to understand the revelation of God’s righteousness as something that occurs when God saves his people. To be clear, this is not what “righteousness” lexemes mean in these psalms. Nor must all subsequent references to God’s righteousness necessarily be enriched in this direction. But a critically-important piece of encyclopedic knowledge concerning God’s righteousness clearly emerges from these psalms: God’s righteousness is revealed when he saves his people who trust in him.

God’s Righteousness and the Nations: Isaiah 45:18–25

While the psalms of individual lament show a clear connection between the revelation of God’s righteousness and the salvation of his people, they are less concerned with how this might

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54 On parallelism in Hebrew poetry and its significance for our understanding of the Old Testament use of “righteousness” language, see Irons, Righteousness of God, 65–68, with references.
affect other nations outside Israel.\textsuperscript{55} Indeed, since the OT as a whole is addressed to the people of Israel, it is not surprising that it most often focuses on Israel’s own destiny. Yet a few key texts (such as Gen 12:3) broaden this perspective to show how Israel’s own destiny is tied to the destiny of the nations. This is a particular theme of the book of Isaiah.\textsuperscript{56} Of these texts, one in particular shows a close connection between the revelation of God’s righteousness and the salvation of the farthest corners of the earth: Isa 45:18–25. Paul clearly knows this text, citing Isa 45:23 in Rom 14:11\textsuperscript{57} and alluding to it in Phil 2:9–11. As we will see, this text both refers to the enriched concept of God’s righteousness that is found in the psalms of individual lament and itself further enriches this concept by showing how the revelation of God’s righteousness affects the rest of the nations.

\textsuperscript{55} Although see hints in this direction in Ps 40:4 and Ps 22:28.


\textsuperscript{57} On this citation, see J. Ross Wagner, Heralds of the Good News: Isaiah and Paul “In Concert” in the Letter to the Romans, NovTSup 101 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 339.
Israel’s own salvation is what leads into this text in the first place. Verse 17 announces that “Israel has been saved by YHWH—an everlasting salvation!” The immediate contrast with the humiliation of the nations in verses 14–16 suggests that this is a salvation limited to Israel. Whatever larger horizons might be in view in verses 18–25, they come in the context of the particular salvation promised to Israel.

Verses 18–19, which introduce this section, emphasize and clarify this relationship between Israel’s salvation and these larger horizons. Verse 18 is linked to the previous verse explicitly in the Hebrew text, implying that the following section (vv. 18–25) provides the grounds and basis for the salvation of Israel in verse 17. This relationship is not explicitly marked in the Greek but likely would have been similarly assumed in light of the content of verses 18 and 19. This is because verses 18 and 19 affirm that God’s calling of Israel has a purpose, just as God’s creation of the world had a purpose. Verse 18, after introducing the God who is speaking by affirming his creative power, inserts an unexpected comment about the

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60 In Hebrew, this verse begins with the particle כִּי. It is best understood as evidential, meaning “for” (so Goldingay and Payne, *Isaiah 40–55*, 2:51; see also Isa 52:3). Paul, *Isaiah 40–66*, 268, sees this as an “emphatic כִּי,” but Goldingay and Payne, *Isaiah 40–55*, 2:51, remark that even such an asseverative כִּי “retains some causal link with what precedes.”

61 Goldingay and Payne, *Isaiah 40–55*, 50, suggest that “previous participial qualifications of the
purpose of creation: the earth was not created “formless” but instead was formed “to be inhabited.” 62 And verse 19, which continues the trend of linking God’s creative power with his power to redeem Israel (cf. 44:24; 45:11–13), connects a purpose for creation to a purpose for God’s calling Israel. 63 In this way, verses 18–19, coming right after a clear promise to save Israel, indicate that this salvation of Israel will accomplish God’s larger purposes for having called Israel in the first place.

This is important to keep in mind when we turn to the speech to the nations in verses 20–24a, for it suggests that these verses do not change the subject away from God’s particular salvation of Israel but instead show how this salvation fits into God’s larger purpose. Even though these verses pan out, so to speak, to depict how God’s salvation of Israel affects everyone else, Israel’s own salvation remains in the center of the frame. The speech to the nations is meant for Israel to overhear, 64 and this brief glimpse into God’s universal purpose for his salvation of his people serves to further comfort the people of Israel with the certainty of their own salvation.

name Yhwh such as those in v. 18a have prepared the way for what would follow, in polemical fashion.”

62 The Hebrew word for “formless” is תוהו, a word that might imply an allusion to the creation account of Gen 1:2: “Now the earth was formless and void [תוהו ותבאו].” See Baltzer, Deutero-Isaiah, 246. Benjamin D. Sommer, A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40–66 (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998), 142–43, argues that this passage denies chaos ever existing in creation and calls this a “polemic” against the priestly creation account; but Joseph Blenkinsopp, Isaiah 40–55: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary; AB 19A (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 259, sees this passage as agreeing with the Genesis account in that “Yahveh did not destine the earth to be an empty void.” Goldingay and Payne, Isaiah 40–55, 52, deny that there is any direct allusion to Genesis since both “are independently beginning from Babylonian ideas.” The possible verbal correspondence to Genesis 1 does not carry over into the LXX, since the terminology here is not that of LXX Genesis 1.

63 Contra John N. Oswalt, The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 218, who sees logic of this transition as “since the universe was created for the purpose of human habitation, it is incumbent on God to reveal that purpose to humans.” Better is R. N. Whybray, Isaiah 40–66, NewCentBC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 111, who concludes that YHWH’s speech has “a definite and reliable purpose no less effective than the purpose which he showed in creation.” Still, it is not any speech identified as purposeful in this passage but specifically God’s speech calling Israel to seek him.

In light of this, we should not see the resumed focus on salvation for Israel in verses 24b–25 as a reversion away from the more universal scope of 20–24a. Nor are these final verses an expression of that universal scope itself. Rather, they re-focus on the particular salvation of Israel that was never out of frame in the first place. Even when describing the wider consequences of Israel’s salvation, Israel’s salvation itself remains the point of this passage.

All of this raises the expectation that the speech to the nations in verses 20–24a will be relevant to the purpose of Israel’s salvation, showing how it affects everyone else. Initially, Israel’s salvation results in the defeat and humiliation of the nations, just as in the previous section (vv. 14–16). This speech is addressed to the “survivors of the nations,” implying that some global catastrophe has taken place. The nations have trusted in their own gods, and their folly in doing so has become abundantly clear. They are now summoned to answer for this idolatry, and they are confronted with the truth that there is no one comparable to Israel’s God (vv. 20–21). But then out of this confrontation comes an unexpected offer of salvation (v. 22). “All the ends of the earth” are summoned to “turn” to Israel’s God in order that they might “be


67 The Hebrew phrase is פְּלִיטֵי הַגּוֹיִם, the LXX ὁι σῳζόµενοι ἀπὸ τῶν ἐθνῶν (for σῳζω with a sense of “barely escape with one’s life,” see Jer 31:6 [LXX]; Gen 19:17; 1 Sam 19:11; cf. LEH, 2:466). In Hebrew, a פָּלִיט is a “survivor, escaped one, or fugitive” from a catastrophe, usually a military defeat (DCH, 6:694).

68 The most recent mention of the defeat of nations was at the beginning of chapter 45, where Cyrus, “YHWH’s anointed,” is enabled to “subdue nations.” Oswalt, Isaiah 40–66, 221, argues that this passage “seems to look forward to the time when the judgments associated with Cyrus (45:1–3, 14, 16) have already occurred.”
This seems to come out of nowhere, presenting what we may call a crisis of relevance: how is an offer of salvation to the nations relevant to the promise of salvation to Israel? How could Israel’s salvation result the salvation of the nations?

While verses 20–24a do not relate the nations’ offer of salvation to Israel or to Israel’s salvation, they clearly do relate it to the open declaration of God’s righteousness. Indeed, the offer of salvation to the nations in verse 22 comes directly after the declaration in verse 21 that Israel’s God alone is a “righteous God and savior.” As such, it is on the basis of God’s declaration of his righteousness that the ends of the earth are summoned to turn and be saved.

I submit that it is only by inferring the encyclopedic understanding of God’s righteousness as that which is revealed when he saves his people that verses 20–24a can meet the expectations of relevance raised in verses 18–19. This, of course, is the sort of encyclopedic enrichment we found in the psalms of individual lament. If we take references to God’s righteousness in this passage as references to this intertextually-enriched concept, then the declaration that only Israel’s God is righteous instantly becomes relevant to the surrounding discussion of Israel’s salvation. Israel in exile is in the situation of the lamenting psalmist, surrounded by enemies, at the gates of death. As such, God’s righteousness is hidden. But when

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69 The two Hebrew verbs (יָנָה and יָשֵׁע) are both plural imperatives, and when commands in verbal sequence are joined by a vav-conjunctive the final verb often expresses purpose or result. See Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), §3.5.3b, 92; Smith, *Isaiah 40–66*, 278; Goldingay and Payne, *Isaiah 40–55*, 57. The Greek verbs ἐπιστράφητε and σωθήσεσθε are joined by a simple καί, although NETS is right to take this as a substitution of parataxis for hypotaxis.

70 This has led some scholars to deny that this is an offer of salvation to the nations altogether: Whybray, *Isaiah 40–66*, 111, cannot accept that such a “most significant doctrinal innovation” could occur. But even those who argue that this passage does depict such a universal offer still admit that this is “astonishing and unexpected” (Childs, *Isaiah*, 355).


72 While space prohibits exploring it here, this is presumably how Isa 45:18–25 can function as the answer to the claim that God is “hidden” in Isa 45:15 (cf. Beuken, “Confession of God’s Exclusivity,”
God acts to save Israel, then God’s righteousness can be openly declared to the nations. And it is this open declaration of God’s righteousness that undergirds—or perhaps even constitutes—his offer to the nations to turn and be saved.

There are, however, two crucial differences between this declaration and what we found in the individual lament psalms. First, unlike in those psalms, there is no mention in this passage of Israel declaring God’s righteousness. Rather, it is God himself who declares his righteousness in v. 21. Since this declaration is bound to the salvation of his people, we can even say that Israel’s salvation is God’s declaration of his righteousness to the nations. In speech-act terms, God’s salvation of Israel functions as the *locution* which carries the *illocutionary force* of a declaration of his righteousness. Second, and more significantly, in Isaiah 45 this salvation itself and therefore the righteousness of God that it declares are *eschatological*—Israel’s salvation is “an everlasting salvation” in verse 17. If Israel is decisively and definitively saved, once and for all, then God’s righteousness is decisively and definitively declared, once and for all.

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73 We may note that even in the passages in which Israel is called to be a witness, such as 43:10–13, God still claims to be the one who speaks: “I have revealed and saved and proclaimed” (אָנֹכִי הִגַּדְתִּי וְהוֹשַׁﬠְתִּי וְהִשְׁמַﬠְתִּי, LXX ἀνῆγγειλα καὶ ἔσωσα, v. 12). Cf. Gelston, “Universalism,” 383–84.

74 Note how, in 43:12 (see above, n. 73), God’s act of “saving” is tied to his act of “declaring” and “proclaiming.”

75 For the distinction between the “illocution” (what is *done* when one speaks) and the “locution” (the speech itself), see J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, ed. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisà, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1975), 98–100. See also John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1969), 22–24. Obviously, to take an “act” like “saving Israel” as a “locution” would be to stretch Austin’s definition of “locution,” but an act like that may function as a “locution” as long as the act is understood as *intentionally communicative* (see Searle, *Speech Acts*, 43, 47, for the argument that recognition of intention is the fundamental requirement for the success of a speech-act). This intentionality is presumably why it is critical that God’s salvation of Israel be understood as a fulfillment of his ancient promises to do just that (see Isa 45:21).
As a result, in Israel’s salvation there is not only a revelation of God’s righteousness but a revelation of God’s unique righteousness. “A righteous God and a Savior, there is none but me,” proclaims verse 21. This unique righteousness, the fact that “there is no other,” is what results in the offer to “turn to me and be saved” in verse 22. This is the major innovation of this passage, the crucial encyclopedic enrichment it contributes to the concept of God’s righteousness.76 Because God’s salvation of Israel definitively reveals God’s unique righteousness, it summons everyone else to turn to Israel’s God and Israel’s God alone.77 Where else could they turn? Thus, in speech-act terms, the nations turning and experiencing salvation themselves is the intended perlocution of God’s revelation of his righteousness in his act of saving Israel.78 He definitively reveals his righteousness to the nations so that they will turn to him and be saved.

In short, this passage refers to the encyclopedically-enriched concept of God’s righteousness found in individual lament psalms (God’s righteousness is what is revealed when he saves his people). But it itself enriches that concept by affirming that this revelation of God’s righteousness is what summons the nations to turn and be saved. In this way, the revelation of God’s righteousness is the middle term between Israel’s salvation and the offer of salvation to the nations: by saving Israel God reveals his righteousness so that he might save the nations.

To be clear, this salvation does not eliminate the need for a response on the part of the nations. They are called to turn in order to be saved. Presumably, this means hoping and trusting in Israel’s God for their salvation—just like the lamenting psalmist claimed to have done. But

76 As mentioned above (p. 21, n. 55), certain individual lament psalms hint that God’s salvation of his people will prompt those who hear of it to trust in God as well, although they do not connect it explicitly to God’s revelation of his righteousness.

77 Beuken, “Confession of God’s Exclusivity,” 355: “By leading history through the present circumstances to Israel’s salvation, he has shown that he alone is God.”

78 For the distinction between the “illocution” and the “perlocution” (the consequential effects of the speech), see Austin, How to Do Things with Words, 101–103, 110–20 (cf. Searle, Speech Acts, 25–26, 42–47).
now such hope and trust is not presumptuous at all! For by saving God’s people who trusted in him—and thus revealing his unique righteousness—God has summoned all peoples to trust in him for their salvation as well. In the salvation of his people he has revealed his righteousness, and therefore this salvation functions as God’s own powerful summons to all nations to turn, trust, and be saved.

### God’s Righteousness Revealed in Paul’s Gospel

While the Old Testament does not say much about the revelation of God’s righteousness, it does say enough. The individual lament psalms say that it happens when God saves his people who trust in him. And Isa 45:18–25 says that it functions as a summons to the nations to turn and be saved. Neither of these statements define God’s righteousness. But they say important things about God’s righteousness, contributing to the encyclopedic enrichment of the concept.

In Rom 1:17, Paul also says—that is, explicitly communicates—something important about God’s righteousness. Specifically, he affirms that it is revealed in the proclamation of the gospel. By presenting this affirmation as an explanation for why the gospel is the power of salvation for everyone who believes, thereby raising expectations of relevance, he prompts us to infer the intertextually-enriched concept that alone can meet these expectations. If the suffering and salvation of Israel come to head in the death and resurrection of Israel’s Messiah, then it is the proclamation of this death and resurrection that reveals God’s righteousness. As such, this proclamation functions as God’s own powerful address to all the nations, an address that summons them to turn to Israel’s God and share in Israel’s salvation.  

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79 See 1 Thes 1:9, where the gospel proclamation has resulted in Gentiles “turning to God [ἐπεστρέψατε πρὸς τὸν θεόν] from idols” (cf. LXX Isa 45:22, which summons the nations to “turn to me and be saved” [ἐπιστράφητε πρὸς με καὶ σωθήσεσθε]).
But what does it mean for them to “turn to Israel’s God”? Does that include observing Torah? Against this, Paul insists that God’s righteousness is revealed “from faith unto faith.” Our analysis above found human trust correlated with God’s righteousness. This suggests that the citation of Hab 2:4 in the second half of Rom 1:17 serves as the scriptural warrant to focus on and expand the role of faith rather than to introduce it as something entirely new. The gospel message that reveals God’s righteousness elicits faith in those who hear it, and it is faith that, according to Hab 2:4 (not to mention Gen 15:6 and Ps 32:1–2), leads to righteousness and life.

Of course, identifying a conceptual reference in Rom 1:17 hardly exhausts Paul’s teaching about God’s righteousness. Nor does it give anything like a definitive answer to the question of what God’s righteousness actually is, which is to say, what is actually revealed when Paul proclaims his gospel. But our understanding of Romans and of Paul’s gospel as a whole should perhaps begin by recognizing that both how God’s righteousness would be revealed (by God saving his people) and the result of God’s righteousness being revealed (that the nations would turn to Israel’s God and be saved themselves) were, in Paul’s own words found in Rom 1:2, “promised beforehand through God’s prophets in the Holy Scripture.”

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80 Paul’s insistence that God’s righteousness is most fully manifest in the death of Christ in 3:21–26 might represent Paul’s own paradoxical enrichment of the concept. The fulfillment of Israel’s vocation by Israel’s Messiah also raises the obvious question of whether there remains any special role or function for the people of Israel as a whole (Paul will wrestle with this in 3:1–9 and again in chapters 9–11, ultimately answering with a resounding “Yes”).
BIBLIOGRAPHY


