

## ספר תהילים פה | Tehillim / Psalms 85

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### Forgiveness, Salvation, Restoration, Parallels in the Rabbinic Literature

In this week's study from *Tehillim / Psalms 85:1-13*, the Psalm opens saying, א לְמַנְצֵחַ | לְבְנֵי-קִרְחָ מְזֹרֵם For the director of music. Of the Sons of Korah. (NASB) The psalmist continues saying, ב רְצִיטַת יְהוָה, 85:1 O Lord, You showed favor to Your land; You restored the captivity of Jacob. (NASB) opening asking the Lord God to restore what once was, the captivity of Jacob is a reference to all of Israel. The author gets more specific saying, ג נְשִׂאתָ עֵזוֹן עַמְּךָ כְּפִסִּיתָ כָּל-חַטָּאתָם סָלָה: ד אָסַפְתָּ 85:2 You forgave the iniquity of Your people; You covered all their sin. Selah. 85:3 You withdrew all Your fury; You turned away from Your burning anger. (NASB) He says the Lord withdrew his fury and turned away his anger, how is this so if the people are now in captivity? However he continues saying, ה שׁוּבְנוּ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעֵנוּ וְהַפֵּר כַּעֲסֶךָ עִמָּנוּ: ו 85:4 Restore us, O God of our salvation, And cause Your indignation toward us to cease. (NASB) If one is receiving the punishment for his or her sins, is this considered the Lord turning His indignation against such a person? The psalmist continues saying, ז הֲלֹא-אַתָּה תָּשׁוּב תַחֲיֵנוּ וְעַמְּךָ יִשְׁמְחוּ-בְךָ: ח הֲרֵאנוּ יְהוָה חֲסָדֶךָ וְהִלְעוּלָם תִּאֲנֶנּוּ-בָנוּ תִמְשֹׁךְ אַפְּךָ לְדֹר וָדֹר: ט 85:5 Will You be angry with us forever? Will You prolong Your anger to all generations? 85:6 Will You not Yourself revive us again, That Your people may rejoice in You? 85:7 Show us Your loving-kindness, O Lord, And grant us Your salvation. (NASB) The restoration of Israel to the Land is synonymous to rejoicing before the Lord because it is the fulfillment of His promises. The psalm continues saying, י אֲשַׁמְעָה מֵה-יְדִבֵּר הָאֵל | יְהוָה כִּי יְדַבֵּר שְׁלוֹם אֶל-עַמּוֹ וְאֶל-חֲסִידָיו וְאֶל-יֹשְׁבֵי לְבָסְלָה: יא 85:8 I will hear what God the Lord will say; For He will speak peace to His people, to His godly ones; But let them not turn back to folly. 85:9 Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him, That glory may dwell in our land. (NASB) The psalm concludes saying, יב אָמֵת וְנֹאמָת נִפְגְּשׁוּ צְדָק וְשְׁלוֹם, יג גַּם-יְהוָה יִתֵּן הַטּוֹב וְאַרְצֵנוּ תִתֵּן יְבוּלָה: יד צְדָק לִפְנֵי הַלֹּהֵךְ וְיִשְׁעֵם לְדָרֶךְ פָּעַמְיוֹ: טו 85:10 Lovingkindness and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other. 85:11 Truth springs from the earth, And righteousness looks down from heaven. 85:12 Indeed, the Lord will give what is good, And our land will yield its produce. 85:13 Righteousness will go before Him And will make His footsteps into a way.(NASB)

עברית	Hebrew	ארמי	Aramaic	ελληνικός	Greek
ספר תהלים פרק פה	ספר תהלים פרק פה	ספר טוביה פרק פה	ספר טוביה פרק פה	ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 85	ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 85
א לְמַנְצֵחַ   לְבְנֵי-קִרְחָ מְזֹמֹר:	א לְמַנְצֵחַ   לְבְנֵי-קִרְחָ מְזֹמֹר:	א לשבחא על ידיהון דבני קרח תו-	א לשבחא על ידיהון דבני קרח תו-	85:1 εις τὸ τέλος τοῖς υἱοῖς Κορε	85:1 εις τὸ τέλος τοῖς υἱοῖς Κορε
ב רְצִיטַת יְהוָה אֲרָצֶךָ שְׁבַת שְׁבוֹת [שְׁבִית] יַעֲקֹב: ג נְשִׂאתָ עֵזוֹן עַמְּךָ	ב רְצִיטַת יְהוָה אֲרָצֶךָ שְׁבַת שְׁבוֹת [שְׁבִית] יַעֲקֹב: ג נְשִׂאתָ עֵזוֹן עַמְּךָ	ב רעיתא יהוה ארעך אתיב	ב רעיתא יהוה ארעך אתיב	σου ἀπέστρεψας τὴν αἰχμαλωσίαν	σου ἀπέστρεψας τὴν αἰχμαλωσίαν
כָּסִיתָ כָּל-חַטָּאתָם סָלָה: ד אָסַפְתָּ	כָּסִיתָ כָּל-חַטָּאתָם סָלָה: ד אָסַפְתָּ	ג שבתא	ג שבתא	85:2 ἀφήκας τὰς ἀνομίας	85:2 ἀφήκας τὰς ἀνομίας
כָּל-עֲבֹרֹתֶיךָ הַשִּׁבוֹתָ מִחֲרוֹן אַפְּךָ:	כָּל-עֲבֹרֹתֶיךָ הַשִּׁבוֹתָ מִחֲרוֹן אַפְּךָ:	חוביהון דעמך כסיתא כל חטאיהון	חוביהון דעמך כסיתא כל חטאיהון	τῷ λαῷ σου ἐκάλυψας πάσας τὰς	τῷ λαῷ σου ἐκάλυψας πάσας τὰς
ה שׁוּבְנוּ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעֵנוּ וְהַפֵּר כַּעֲסֶךָ	ה שׁוּבְנוּ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעֵנוּ וְהַפֵּר כַּעֲסֶךָ	ד כנישתא כל רוגזך תבתא	ד כנישתא כל רוגזך תבתא	85:3 κατέπαυσας πᾶσαν τὴν ὀργὴν σου	85:3 κατέπαυσας πᾶσαν τὴν ὀργὴν σου
עִמָּנוּ:	עִמָּנוּ:	ה וב לותנא אלהא	ה וב לותנא אלהא	85:4 ἐπίστρεψον ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς τῶν	85:4 ἐπίστρεψον ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς τῶν
		פורקננא ובטיל רוגזך עימנא מיננא:	פורקננא ובטיל רוגזך עימנא מיננא:	σωτηρίων ἡμῶν καὶ ἀπόστρεψον τὸν	σωτηρίων ἡμῶν καὶ ἀπόστρεψον τὸν
				θυμὸν σου ἀφ' ἡμῶν	θυμὸν σου ἀφ' ἡμῶν

<p>ו הַלְעוּלָם תִּצְנַן-בְּנוֹ תִּמְשֹׁךְ אֶפְרָיִם  לְדֹר וָדֹר: ז הֲלֹא-אַתָּה תִּשׁוּב תִּחְיֶינּוּ  וְעָמְדָה יִשְׁמְחוּ-בָךְ: ח הֲרָאֵנוּ יְהוָה  חֲסִידֶיךָ וְיִשְׁעֶיךָ תִּתֵּן-לָנוּ: ט אֲשַׁמְעָה  מִה-יִדְבַּר הָאֵל   יְהוָה כִּי יִדְבַּר שְׁלוֹם  אֶל-עַמּוֹ וְאֶל-חֲסִידָיו וְאֶל-יֹשְׁבוֹי לְכָל-  קְלָה: י אֵךְ   קָרוֹב לִירְאָיו יִשְׁעוּ  לְשֹׁכֵן כְּבוֹד בְּאַרְצֵנוּ: יא חֲסֵד-וְאַמֶּת  נִפְגְּשׁוּ צְדָק וְשְׁלוֹם נִשְׁקוּ: יב אֲמַת  מֵאָרֶץ תִּצְמַח וְצִדְקַת מְשֻׁמִּים נִשְׁקֶה:  יג גַּם-יְהוָה יִתֵּן הַטּוֹב וְאַרְצֵנוּ תִּתֵּן  יְבוּלָה: יד צְדָק לְפָנָיו יְהִלֵּךְ וְיִשְׂמַח  לְדַרְךָ פְּעָמָיו:</p>	<p>ו האיפשר די לעלמיא תתקיף בנא  תנגיד תנטור תוקפך לדור ודור: ז  הלא את תתוב תחיי יתנא ועמך יחד  דון במימרך: ח אחמי יתנא יהוה  טובך ופורקנך תיתיהב תיהב לנא: ט  אשמע מה ימליל אלהא יהוה ארום  ימליל שלם לעמיה ולחסידוי ולא  יחזרון לסאורא לסיאוסא: י ברם  קריב לדחלין מיניה פורקניה לאש-  ראה יקרא בארענא: יא טבוון וק-  שוט אורעין צידקא ושלמא אידבקו  ידבקון: יב קשוט מן ארעא רביית  וצידקא מן שמיא אודיק: יג לחוד  יהוה מימרא דיי יתן טבא וארענא  תתן איבה: יד צדקא קדמוי יהלך  ושוי לאורח טב איסתורוי:</p>	<p>85:5 μη εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ὀργισθήσῃ  ἡμῖν ἢ διατενεῖς τὴν ὀργὴν σου  ἀπὸ γενεᾶς εἰς γενεάν 85:6 ὁ θεός  σὺ ἐπιστρέψας ζώσεις ἡμᾶς καὶ  ὁ λαός σου εὐφρανθήσεται ἐπὶ σοί  85:7 δεῖξον ἡμῖν κύριε τὸ ἔλεός  σου καὶ τὸ σωτήριόν σου δόξης  ἡμῖν 85:8 ἀκούσομαι τί λαλήσει  ἐν ἔμοι κύριος ὁ θεός ὅτι λαλήσει  εἰρήνην ἐπὶ τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ  ἐπὶ τοὺς ὀσίους αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐπὶ  τοὺς ἐπιστρέφοντας πρὸς αὐτὸν  καρδίαν 85:9 πλὴν ἐγγὺς τῶν  φοβουμένων αὐτὸν τὸ σωτήριον  αὐτοῦ τοῦ κατασκηνώσαι δόξαν  ἐν τῇ γῆ ἡμῶν 85:10 ἔλεος καὶ  ἀλήθεια συνήντησαν δικαιοσύνη  καὶ εἰρήνη κατεφίλησαν 85:11  ἀλήθεια ἐκ τῆς γῆς ἀνέτειλεν  καὶ δικαιοσύνη ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ  διέκυψεν 85:12 καὶ γὰρ ὁ κύριος  δώσει χρηστότητα καὶ ἡ γῆ ἡμῶν  δώσει τὸν καρπὸν αὐτῆς 85:13  δικαιοσύνη ἐναντίον αὐτοῦ  προπορεύεται καὶ θήσει εἰς ὁδὸν  τὰ διαβήματα αὐτοῦ</p>
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<p><b>Tehillim / Psalms 85</b>                  For the director of music. Of the Sons of Korah. 85:1 O Lord, You showed favor to Your land; You restored the captivity of Jacob. 85:2 You forgave the iniquity of Your people; You covered all their sin. Selah. 85:3 You withdrew all Your fury; You turned away from Your burning anger. 85:4 Restore us, O God of our salvation, And cause Your indignation toward us to cease. 85:5 Will You be angry with us forever? Will You prolong Your anger to all generations? 85:6 Will You not Yourself revive us again, That Your people may rejoice in You? 85:7 Show us Your lovingkindness, O Lord, And grant us Your salvation. 85:8 I will hear what God the Lord will say; For He will speak peace to His people, to His godly ones; But let them not turn back to folly. 85:9 Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him, That glory may dwell in our land. 85:10 Lovingkindness and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other. 85:11 Truth springs from the earth, And righteousness looks down from heaven. 85:12 Indeed, the Lord will give what is good, And our land will yield its produce. 85:13 Righteousness will go before Him And will make His footsteps into a way.(NASB)</p>	<p><b>Toviyah / Psalms 85</b>                  85:1 For praise; composed by the sons of Korah; a psalm. 85:2 You delighted, O Lord, in your land; you brought back the captivity of the house of Jacob. 85:3 You forgave the sins of your people; you covered all their faults forever. 85:4 You withdrew all your anger; you turned from the harshness of your anger. 85:5 Turn to us, O God our redemption; and revoke your anger against us. 85:6 Can it be that you will act harshly against us forever? Will you prolong out your harshness for all generations? 85:7 Will you not again revive us? And your people will rejoice in your word. 85:8 Show us, O Lord, your goodness; and may your redemption be given to us. 85:9 I will hear what God, the Lord, will say; for he will speak peace to his people and to his pious ones, and they will not return to heathenism. 85:10 Truly his redemption is near to those who fear him, to make glory abide in our land. 85:11 Favor and truth meet, righteousness and peace have joined together. 85:12 Truth grew up from the land; and righteousness looked out from heaven. 85:13 Also the Lord will give what is good; and our land will give its produce. 85:14 Righteousness will walk before him; and he set his steps on a good path. (EMC)</p>	<p><b>Psalmoi / Psalms 85</b>                  For the end, a Psalm for the sons of Core. 85:1 O Lord, thou has taken pleasure in thy land: thou hast turned back the captivity of Jacob. 85:2 Thou hast forgiven thy people their transgressions; thou has covered all their sins. Pause. 85:3 Thou has caused all thy wrath to cease: thou hast turned from thy fierce anger. 85:4 Turn us, O God of our salvation, and turn thy anger away from us. 85:5 Wouldest thou be angry with us for ever? or wilt thou continue thy wrath from generation to generation? 85:6 O God, thou wilt turn and quicken us; and thy people shall rejoice in thee. 85:7 Shew us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation. 85:8 I will hear what the Lord God will say concerning me: for he shall speak peace to his people, and to his saints, and to those that turn their heart toward him. 85:9 Moreover his salvation is near them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land. 85:10 Mercy and truth are met together: righteousness and peace have kissed each other. 85:11 Truth has sprung out of the earth; and righteousness has looked down from heaven. 85:12 For the Lord will give goodness; and our land shall yield her fruit. 85:13 Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set his steps in the way. (LXX)</p>
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In this week’s study from *Tehillim / Psalms 85:1-13*, the Psalm opens saying, אָ לְמַנְצֵהוּ | לְבְנֵי-קִרְחָה מִזֶּזְ, מוֹרֵ: *For the director of music. Of the Sons of Korah. (NASB)* According to Parashat Korach, we learn that Korach, Datan, and Aviram were doomed to destruction and to be wiped from the face of the earth. According to the book of Psalms, we are told that the sons of Korach continued and therefore the line of Korach was not utterly destroyed. In the Psalms, the Psalmist poetry on immortality and comfort are attributed to “Bnei Korach” (לְבְנֵי-קִרְחָה) as well as other chapters authored by Assaf, who was also a descendant of Korach. Based upon the psalms, Korach’s family was not completely destroyed when the ground swallowed them

whole. The Torah tells us in the Book of Devarim / Deuteronomy that “*the sons of Korach did not die.*” (see *Bamidbar / Numbers 26:11-21*) So the question is what was the cause of their survival? How did they survive their doomed position? The rabbis according to the rabbinic literature offer us some explanation on what happened to the sons of Korach. The Midrash and the Talmud tell us that the sons of Korach did not fall all the way down into the bowels of the earth. We read based upon the Torah the following:

***Bamidbar / Numbers 16:23-27***

*16:23 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 16:24 ‘Speak to the congregation, saying, ‘Get back from around the dwellings of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.’ 16:25 Then Moses arose and went to Dathan and Abiram, with the elders of Israel following him, 16:26 and he spoke to the congregation, saying, ‘Depart now from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing that belongs to them, or you will be swept away in all their sin.’ 16:27 So they got back from around the dwellings of Korah, Dathan and Abiram; and Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the doorway of their tents, along with their wives and their sons and their little ones. (NASB)*

According to *Bamidbar / Numbers 16:1–2*, the Reubenite Ohn son of Peleth joined Korah’s conspiracy, however, according to the biblical text, he is missing from the account of the people going down to the earth. Interestingly enough, unlike Datan, and Aviram and their families, there is no indication as to what happened to Ohn ben Peleth and his family. Quite simply, he seems to have vanished from the story. The *Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 109b* noticed that Ohn was missing in the narrative and developed an amazing “*story behind the story*” the explanation of what took place.

***Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 109b***

*Rav said: Ohn, the son of Peleth, was saved by his wife. She said to him, “Why do you care whether the one [Moshe] remains master or the other [Korach] becomes master, you will still remain but a disciple.” He replied, “But what can I do? I have taken part in their counsel, and they have sworn me [to be] with them.”* (רב און בן פלת אשתו הצילתו אמרה ליה מאי) (ואשתבעי לי בהדייהו נפקא לך מינה אי מר רבה אנת תלמידא ואי מר רבה אנת תלמידא אמר לה מאי אעביד הואי בעצה

So the idea here is that the wife of Ohn convinced Ohn ben Peleth of the irrational behavior and the futility of participating in the uprising with Korach, Datan, and Aviram. The lesson is no matter how deep we have gotten ourselves into trouble (*they have sworn me [to be] with them, ואשתבעי לי בהדייהו*) we always have the opportunity to repent and turn from the former ways. The *Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 109b* continues saying the following:

***Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 109b***

*She said, “I know that they [kal Yisrael] are all a holy community,” as it is written, “... for the entire congregation are all holy, and the L-rd is in their midst.” (16:3) [So,] she continued, “Sit here and I will save you.” She gave him wine to drink, caused him to become intoxicated, and laid him down within [the tent where he passed out]. Then she sat down at the entrance of the tent and loosened [and uncovered] her hair. Whoever came [to summon him to join the rebellion] saw her and retreated.* (אמרה ליה ידענא דכולה כנישתא קדישתא) (נינהו דכתיב (במדבר טז, ג) כי כל העדה כולם קדושים אמרה ליה טוב דאנא מצילנא לך אשקיתיה (חמרא וארויתיה ואגניתיה גואי אותבה על בבא

The thing that Ohn ben Peleth wife did to her hair and the response shows the diverse socio-religious and symbolic value of the hair in Judaism. In the Talmud hair covering was not only a fashion or a custom, but

was objectified as a rule and regulation for women to follow as a religious obligation. The rabbinic literature of the Middle Ages further reinforced women's hair covering as an integral part of Jewish religious observance, therefore, by her lowering her hair, those who passed by would be perceiving something about her religious observance and turn away. His wife was essentially taking the shame upon herself for her husband in order to save his life. An so his wife caused her husband to drink wine and fall asleep, while Korach, Data, and Aviram were deep in the earth. As a result, Ohn ben Peleth entire family survived. Midrash Rabbah (Vilna), Parashat Korach, 18, uses this opportunity to praise Ohn's wife for saving her entire family saying, "The wisest of women - each one built her house' [Sefer Mishle 14:1] – this refers to Ohn's wife." The phrase in the midrash used to describe the rescue is as "a place fortified for them above Gehinom" where they were able to survive. The Midrash tells us that their voices could be heard saying, "Moshe is true and his Torah is true." These men were given the ability to rethink their positions and prejudices and so the sons of Korach were saved from death and from being wiped from the face of the earth. In this rethinking and proclamation of truth, they were able to climb out of the pit when they realized how wrong their father had been. They stated loud and honestly that Moshe was right and true and that they and their father were false and wrong. And so the Midrashic and Talmudic conclusion is that in honesty and truth, "the sons of Korach did not die." (Bamidbar / Numbers 26:11-21) This may be why the Aramaic Targum states, א לשבחה על :א: 85:1 ידיהון דבני קרח תושבחה: For praise; composed by the sons of Korah; a psalm. (EMC) The sons of Korach praised the Lord for having the truth revealed to them at the last moment which resulted in their salvation. This has a parallel to the thief on the cross type of situation. The point is though it is not good to wait until the last moment to embrace the truth, it is better to walk in the way of the Lord and be satisfied with His presence in our lives, than to live a life of sin and rebellion.

In Tehillim / Psalms 85, the psalmist continues saying, ב רציית יהנה ארצה שבת שבות [שבית] יעקב: 85:1 O Lord, You showed favor to Your land; You restored the captivity of Jacob. (NASB) asking the Lord God to restore what once was, the captivity of Jacob is a reference to all of Israel. What has occurred is the Lord has brought upon Israel the consequences of her sins, and thus has gathered the respect of her people. As a result of this, the rabbis say in the Mishnah Pirkei Avot 1:3, "Antigonos, man of Sokho, received from Shimon the Righteous. He would say, Do not be as servants who are serving the master in order to receive a reward, rather be as servants who are serving the master not in order to receive a reward; and may the fear of Heaven be upon you." אנטִיגוֹנוס איש סוכו קבל משמעון הצדיק. הוא היה אומר, אל תהיו כעבדים המְשֻׁמְשִׁין) אַתְּ הָרַב עַל מְנַת לְקַבֵּל פְּרָס, וַיְהִי מוֹרָא שְׁמַיִם (עֲלֵיכֶם: Rambam explains the Mishnah as teaching us we should not serve God so that He will do kindness and favors for us, but rather we should serve God out of love. According to this, the parable given in the Mishnah is very precise, not only does it say that the servant should not serve the master to receive benefits, but the servant should do it out of love for the master. Additional commentary on the Mishnah says the following:

**Tosafot Yom Tov on Mishnah Avot 1:3, Part 5**

*"and may the fear of Heaven be upon you." Rabbi Bartenura explained that "the one who serves out of fear is careful concerning negative commandments" and so [too] did Rambam explain. And according to what I wrote above, [this statement] is itself a condition of the one who serves from love. And that which they called God, may He be blessed, with the name, "Heaven," is to say that this fear should not be a fear of punishment, which is also a superficial service and it carries some personal interest. But [rather] the fear that they warned about is a fear (awe) of His greatness, may He be blessed. And this was taught by the name, "Heaven," since His greatness and power are apparent there though the creatures of the heavens and all of their multitudes and their movements, without a doubt. So does it appear to me.*

### **Rambam Mishneh Torah, Repentance 10:4**

*The First Sages said (Nedarim 62a), “Lest you will say, ‘behold I will study Torah in order that I will become rich, in order that I will be called ‘rabbi,’ in order that I will receive reward in the World to Come,’ [the verse comes to] teach [the opposite, when it] says (Deuteronomy 11:13), to love the Lord - everything that you do, you should only do out of love.” And the sages also said (Avodah Zara 19a), “Greatly desire His commandments, not the reward of His commandments.” And so would the greatest Sages especially command their most understanding and brightest students (Avot 1:3), “Do not be like slaves, that serve their master, etc.,’ but rather, because He is the Master, it is fitting to serve him.” That is to say, “serve Him out of love.*

The conclusion from both the Mishnah and the commentary is to serve the Lord God in heaven because of our love for Him, and not for the purpose of obtaining a reward. This is known as “*the fear of Heaven*,” to be careful concerning the negative mitzvot, but also to be careful not to be fearful simply because of punishment, because that is a superficial service and carries personal interests. All that we do is to be motivated out of love for the Lord and for others. This is why Yeshua said that all of the mitzvot hang upon the Love of God and Love for our neighbors. Therefore we should seek to motivate ourselves to love one another and to love the Lord God in heaven.

The sons of Korach in the Psalm get more specific saying, ג נְשֹׂאתָ עֲוֹן עַמְּךָ כְּסִיטָתְךָ כֹּל-הַטְּאֵתָם סָלָה: ד אָסַפְתָּ כָּל-עֲבֹרֹתָיִךְ הַשְׁיִבוֹתָ מִחֲרוֹן אַפְּךָ: 85:2 *You forgave the iniquity of Your people; You covered all their sin. Selah. 85:3 You withdrew all Your fury; You turned away from Your burning anger. (NASB)* He says the Lord withdrew his fury and turned away his anger, how is this so if the people are now in captivity? ג שִׁבְקֵתָא חֻבִּיּהוֹן דַּעֲמָךְ כְּסִיטָא כֹּל חֻטְאֵיהוֹן לַעֲלָמִין: ד כְּנִישְׁתָּא כֹּל רוּגְזָךְ תַּבְתָּא, 85:3 *You forgave the sins of your people; you covered all their faults forever. 85:4 You withdrew all your anger; you turned from the harshness of your anger. (EMC)* The Septuagint states, 85:2 ἀφῆκας τὰς ἀνομίας τῷ λαῷ σου ἐκάλυψας πάσας τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν διάψαλμα 85:3 κατέπαυσας πᾶσαν τὴν ὀργὴν σου ἀπέστρεψας ἀπὸ ὀργῆς θυμοῦ σου 85:2 *Thou hast forgiven thy people their transgressions; thou has covered all their sins. Pause. 85:3 Thou has caused all thy wrath to cease: thou hast turned from thy fierce anger. (LXX)* The word נָשָׂא means “to bear, to carry, to deliver (a speech, address, prayer), to suffer, to tolerate,” which is translated as to forgive; the Lord forgave the iniquity of His people by bearing their iniquity. It is interesting how this word is used meaning to bear, or carry, suggests a sort of elevating or lifting up. The point is that God is not lifting or elevating the sin, but rather He is lifting and elevating His ability to forgive. This is illustrated in the rabbinic commentary Akeidat Yitzchak.

### **Akeidat Yitzchak 54:83**

*At any rate, the comment “I will grant grace to whomsoever I shall decide to grant grace to,” is the reference to the instruction in the thirteen attributes as outlined in the Talmud Rosh Hashanah 17. Rabbi Yonathan comments there that if it had not been for that verse, I would not have been permitted to explain it in that vein. G’d instructed Moses how to pray, wore a tallit and showed Moses that whenever Israel sinned, he should likewise drape himself in such a prayer shawl and G’d would be willing to forgive Israel. Rabbi Yehudah says that G’d made a contract with Moses that he would not return empty handed from any entreaty incorporating mention of G’d’s thirteen attributes. This is the meaning of “Here I conclude a covenant in the presence of the people.” (34, 10)*

### **Akeidat Yitzchak 54:99**

*The tenth, eleventh and twelfth attributes “nosseh avon, va-fesha, ve-chata-ah,” i.e. commuting various types of sins to levels that deserve less severe punishment, is usually understood as follows. avon is the sin committed deliberately, pesha is the sin that is committed to*

*show one's rebellion against G'ds legislation, whereas chata-ah is a sin committed unintentionally. During the episode of the golden calf, all three kinds of sin were committed. At any rate, G'd did not employ these attributes to forgive, merely to delay the punishment due for those sins, i.e. nosse, "carries." The punishment was meted out at another place at another time.*

### **Akeidat Yitzchak 54:105**

*We feel that there should not be a comma, that the whole expression is a single attribute, which is used in conjunction with any of the attributes ten, eleven or twelve. It means that G'd tolerates certain sins from time to time, without granting total forgiveness, since true pardon cannot take place without simultaneous repentance. Baba Kama 50, states that he who claims that G'd overlooks things, (ignores a sin completely) will cause his own life to be ignored. Psalms 25,8,states that "G'd is good and straightforward," meaning that He teaches the ways of repentance to sinners even after they have sinned.*

Isaac ben Moses Arama (1420–1494) was a Spanish rabbi and author, he began as a principal of a rabbinical academy at Zamora; then he became a rabbi and preacher for the community at Tarragona, and later for those in Fraga in Aragon. He also led as head of the Talmudic academy in Calatayud. Upon the expulsion of the Jews in 1492, Arama settled in Naples, where he died in 1494. Arama is the author of the commentary titled Akeidat Yitzchak (Binding of Isaac). Akeidat Yitzchak states the obvious, the Lord will grant grace (mercy) to whomever he chooses. He comments on the types of sins, and that the Lord does not forgive merely for the purpose of delaying the punishment. Forgiveness is coupled with repentance, and the Lord overlooks some things, meaning that He does not bring judgment immediately for the purpose of allowing a man to recognize the error of his ways and turn from his wicked ways. Moshe seeks the Lord's forgiveness of the people according to Bamidbar / Numbers 14:19 in which Sforno explains in the following way.

### **Bamidbar / Numbers 14:19**

*14:19 Pardon, I pray Thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of Thy lovingkindness, and according as Thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.'*

(סלח-נא לענון העם הזה כגודל חסדך וכאשר נשאתה לעם הזה ממצרים ועד-הנה; (KJV)

### **Sforno on Genesis 32:11, Part 2**

*ומכל האמת, the good You did for me on account of the merit of my father and grandfather. Seeing that You have already seen fit to treat me well beyond my deserts, I beg of You to continue to do so. Our regular prayers reflect this sentiment when we use the expression כגודל חסדך, "in accordance with the greatness of Your kindness." Moses used this expression in Numbers 14:19 when praying for forgiveness of the people after the debacle with the spies.*

The expression כגודל חסדך illustrates for us what Moshe believed about the greatness of God, that His attribute of Khesed (grace, mercy) is what is called upon for forgiveness, and to recognize the significance of those who have gone before us, our parents, who raised us to be faithful to God's word. God's forgiveness is not dependent upon our own merits or the merit of our parents, the forgiveness is attributed to נשא to bear, or carry, elevating or lifting up, that God is lifting and elevating His ability to forgive. The Lord God in heaven is merciful and we can be confident in that aspect of His character.

The Author of the Psalm continues saying, *שובנו אליהי ישענו והפר כעסך עמנו: 85:4 Restore us, O God of our salvation, And cause Your indignation toward us to cease. (NASB)* The Aramaic Targum states, *Turn to us, O God our redemption; and revoke your anger against us. (EMC)* The Septuagint states, *μη εις τον αιωνα οργισθηση ημιν η διατενεις την οργην σου απο γενεα εις γενεαν 85:4 Turn us, O God of our salvation, and turn thy anger away from us.*

(LXX) If one is receiving the punishment for his or her sins, is this considered the Lord turning His indignation against such a person? The point is to persevere in seeking to do what is right, and to cultivate a heart that longs for the presence of God. Israel had been given the opportunity to draw near, but went astray after foreign gods. As a result, she received the consequences of her sins and the psalmist asks the Lord to restore Israel to the Land. The rabbis of the Mishnah offer advice on preventing these things from happening again saying according to the *Mishnah Pirkei Avot 4:11*.

### ***Mishnah Pirkei Avot 4:11***

*Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov says: One who does a single commandment acquires a single defender. One who does a single sin acquires a single prosecutor. Repentance and good deeds are like a shield against punishment. Rabbi Yochanan the shoemaker says: Every gathering that is for the sake of Heaven, its end is to endure. And every gathering that is not for the sake of Heaven, its end is not to endure.* (רבי אליעזר בן יעקב אומר, העושה מצוה אחת, קונה) לו פרקליט אחד. והעובר עברה אחת, קונה לו קטיגור אחד. תשובה ומעשים טובים, כתריס בפני הפרענות. רבי יוחנן הסנדלר אומר, כל כנסיה שהיא לשם שמים, סופה להתקים. ושאינה לשם שמים, אין סופה להתקים)

The one who does a single mitzvah acquires a defender. What does this mean? This suggests that by obeying God's word, we have a testimony that will stand and speak on our behalf. On the other hand, the one who commits a single sin acquires a prosecutor, where in similar fashion, the sin will stand up and speak of what we had done, our sins will not be hidden (see *Luke 12:3*). They conclude that Teshuvah and maasim tovim are like a shield against punishment. If Israel had offered Teshuvah and performed maasim tovim, she would not have had been led into captivity. This is sound advice for us, that we should continue seeking the Lord God in heaven daily in the Messiah Yeshua, and practice our faith by the application of Torah, to do what is just, and true, and right.

The psalmist continues saying, וְהִלְעוּלָם תְּאָנְנָה-בְּנֹו תְּמַשֶּׁה אַפָּךְ לְדָר וְדָר: ז הֲלֹא-אַתָּה תִּשׁוּב תִּחְיֶנּוּ וְעָמָה, 85:5 Will You be angry with us forever? Will You prolong Your anger to all generations? 85:6 Will You not Yourself revive us again, That Your people may rejoice in You? 85:7 Show us Your lovingkindness, O Lord, And grant us Your salvation. (NASB) The restoration of Israel to the Land is synonymous to rejoicing before the Lord because it is the fulfillment of His promises. The Aramaic Targum states, תנגיד תנטור תוקפך לדור ודור: ז הלא את תתוב תחיי יתנא ועמך ייחדון במימ", 85:6 Can it be that you will act harshly against us forever? Will you prolong out your harshness for all generations? 85:7 Will you not again revive us? And your people will rejoice in your word. 85:8 Show us, O Lord, your goodness; and may your redemption be given to us. (EMC) The Septuagint states, 85:5 μη εις τον αιωνα οργισθησῃ ἡμῖν ἢ διατενεῖς τὴν οργὴν σου ἀπὸ γενεᾶς εἰς γενεάν 85:6 ὁ θεός σου ἐπιστρέψας ζωώσεις ἡμᾶς καὶ ὁ λαός σου εὐφρανθήσεται ἐπὶ σοί 85:7 δεῖξον ἡμῖν κύριε τὸ ἔλεός σου καὶ τὸ σωτήριόν σου δώσης ἡμῖν 85:5 Wouldest thou be angry with us for ever? or wilt thou continue thy wrath from generation to generation? 85:6 O God, thou wilt turn and quicken us; and thy people shall rejoice in thee. 85:7 Shew us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation. (LXX) Note how the MT states that the purpose of restoration is to be able to rejoice in the Lord, the Septuagint states the same. The Targum states so the people can rejoice in the word of the Lord. Rejoicing in the word is possible when the promises of the Lord come true. The rabbis summarize the situation according to Ein Yaakov commentary on *Taanit 1:33*, and Rambam's *Mishneh Torah* on Repentance.

### ***Ein Yaakov on Taanit 1:33***

*R Ami said again : "Rain falls only for the sake of those who have faith in God; as it is said (Ps. 85:12) Truth springeth out of the earth and righteousness hath looked down from heaven." R. Yochanan said : "He who makes himself righteous (strives for righteousness) [here] below, is judged righteously (strictly) above; as it is said: "Truth springeth out of the*

*earth and righteousness hath looked down from heaven.” R. Chiya b. Abin, in the name of R. Huna, made the same inference from the following (Ps. 90:11) Which is like the fear of thee. Resh Lakish made the inference from the following (Is 64, 4) Thou acceptest him that joyfully worked righteousness, those that remembered Thee in Thy ways; behold, thou wast wroth, and we sinned upon them have we stayed of old, that we might be saved?*

### **Mishneh Torah, Repentance 2:10**

*(10) It is forbidden for a person to be cruel and not make amends; instead, a person should get appeased easily and get angry slowly. And at the moment when the sinner asks for forgiveness – forgive with a whole heart and a desirous soul. And even if he pained him and sinned against him many times, he should not take revenge or hold a grudge -- that is the way of the Children of Israel and their correct hearts. But the nations of uncircumcised heart are not so, but are rather (Amos 1:11) “and he kept his wrath for ever.” And similarly it is said about the Gibeonites, who did not forgive Israel, (II Samuel 21:2) “the Gibeonites are not of the children of Israel” [because they do not forgive, a sign of cruelty].* (י) אָסוּר לְאָדָם לְהִיּוֹת. אֲכַזְרִי וְלֹא יִתְפִּיֵס אֶלָּא יִהְיֶה נוֹחַ לְרִצּוֹת וְקִשָּׁה לְכַעַס וּבִשְׂעָה שְׂמֵבִקֵּשׁ מִמֶּנּוּ הַחוּטָא לְמַחֵל מוֹחֵל בְּלֵב שָׁלֵם וּבִנְפֶשׁ חַפְצָה. וְאִפְלוּ הֵצִיר לוֹ וְחָטָא לוֹ הִרְבֵּה לֹא יָקָם וְלֹא יִטַּר. וְזֶהוּ דְרַבְּכֵם שֶׁל גְּרַע יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלָבָם הַנִּכְוֹן. אָבֵל הָעוֹבְדֵי כּוֹכְבִים עָרְלֵי יָב אֵינּוּ כּוֹן אֶלָּא (וְעִבְרָתוֹ) [וְעִבְרָתוֹ] שְׂמֵרָה נִצָּח. וְכֵן הוּא (א) אֹמֵר עַל הַגְּבֻעוֹנִים לְפִי שְׁלֵא מְחֵלוּ וְלֹא נִתְפִּיֵסוּ וְהַגְּבֻעוֹנִים לֹא מְבַנִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵמָּה:

The point is that the faithful will seek the Lord God in heaven, and strive for the righteousness of God. Not only do those who have faith seek the righteousness of God, they also seek this with the joy of the Lord, the joy of knowing the Lord is pleased, as the rabbis say in the Targum, “*your people will rejoice in your word*” (Tehillim / Psalms 85:7). Rambam states that the Lord does not want a man to be cruel. This was the behavior of the people before the exile, they were cruel to one another, they did not seek to make amends, they were quick to get angry and find retribution (revenge). Rambam believes the Torah teaches us the Lord is looking for a man who is gentle, slow to anger, and quick to make amends, and to “*forgive with a whole heart and a desirous soul. And even if he pained him and sinned against him many times, he should not take revenge or hold a grudge...*” This is very similar to what Yeshua taught in Matthew 5:39 and Luke 6:29, “*But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.* (NASB) The prophet Isaiah states in Isaiah 32:17 *And the work of righteousness shall be peace; And the effect of righteousness quietness and confidence for ever.* (KJV)

The psalm continues saying, ט אֲשַׁמְעָה מֶה-יְדַבֵּר הָאֵל | יְהוָה כִּי יְדַבֵּר שָׁלוֹם אֶל-עַמּוֹ וְאֶל-חֲסִידָיו וְאֶל-יְשׁוּבוֹ, אֶל | קְרוֹב לִירְאָיו יִשְׁעוּ לְשֹׁפֵן כְּבוֹד בְּאַרְצָנוּ: 85:8 *I will hear what God the Lord will say; For He will speak peace to His people, to His godly ones; But let them not turn back to folly.* 85:9 *Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him, That glory may dwell in our land.* (NASB) The salvation of God is near to those who fear Him. Shney Luchot Habrit commentary has the following to say:

### **Shney Luchot HaBrit Eikev, Torah Ohr 60**

*We are told by Rabbi Ami in Taanit 8 that rain is granted to earth only on account of בעלי אמונה, people who keep promises made in business life. He supports this with the quotation from Psalms 85:12 “Justice looks down from Heaven.” The supply of rain is considered an act of צדקה. On the previous folio Rav Shilo, quoting Rav Hammuna said that rain is withheld only on account of עזי פנים, insolent people, people with a brazen forehead. The connection between the forehead and insolence is supported by several verses from the Bible.*

The rabbis say that justice looks down from heaven, and rain is supplied due to the righteous deeds of the people. Note the psalmist connection between the fear of the Lord and the glory of God dwelling in the land

and then the rabbinic commentary on righteous deeds. These things suggest that unrighteous deeds drive the presence of God away.

The psalm concludes saying, **יֵאָמֵר וְאֵמֶת נִפְגְּשׁוּ צְדָקָה וְשָׁלוֹם נִשְׁקוּ: יב אֵמֶת מֵאָרֶץ תִּצְמַח וְצְדָקָה מִשָּׁמַיִם, 85:10 Lovingkindness and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other. 85:11 Truth springs from the earth, And righteousness looks down from heaven. 85:12 Indeed, the Lord will give what is good, And our land will yield its produce. 85:13 Righteousness will go before Him And will make His footsteps into a way. (NASB)** According to the rabbinic understanding of the Torah, righteousness is what is known as the act of charity (צדקה). Notice what Shney Luchot HaBrit says concerning charity.

### ***Shney Luchot HaBrit, Ki Teitzei, Torah Ohr 146***

*The weapon of charity is also alluded to in a Biblical passage describing soldiers going into battle. Psalms 85:14 speaks of: צדק לפניו יהלך וישם לדרך פעמיו, “Charity goes before him as he sets out on his way.” We also have a verse in Exodus 30:12 ונתנו איש כופר נפשו, suggesting that a man can use his charitable gifts to help him overcome his bloodguilt, i.e. to save him from danger in war. The fact that only men over the age of twenty had to make this contribution is a clear indication that once one is of military age it may become a life-saver.*

The idea here is that charity (צדקה) is considered a weapon. Is this what the Apostle Paul meant when he wrote what he did in *Romans 12:20* “... *If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.*” (NIV)? This is very similar to what David and his men did before entering into battle, they would sanctify themselves. The point was so even in battle the presence of God could be felt empowering him to fight. This illustrates for us the extent at which we are to live for the Lord, in all situations and all circumstances, He should come first in our lives. This is why Yeshua said what he did in *Luke 9:26* and *Matthew 10:32* regarding being ashamed of him before men. We are called to be lights unto the world of the righteousness of God. Let’s Pray!

## **Rabbinic Commentary**

The Rabbinic Commentary (Midrash) on *Tehillim / Psalms 85* has 3 parts. Reading through the Midrash we will be looking at Part 1, 2, and 3. Let’s begin by outlining *Midrash Tehillim Chapter 85, Parts 1, 2, and 3*.

### **Outline of Midrash Tehillim / Psalms, Chapter 85, Part 1, 2, and 3**

#### **Part 1**

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the **דיבור המתחיל** (Dibur Hamathil) saying, “*For the leader. A Psalm of the sons of Korach. Lord, You have been favorable unto Your land, You have turned the captivity of Jacob (Tehillim / Psalms 85:1-3).*”
- The **פתיחתא** (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*These words are to be considered in the light of the verse, A land which the Lord your God cares for; the eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it (Devarim / Deuteronomy 11:12).*”
- The **משל** (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the **פתיחתא** (Petihta), the rabbis discuss the meaning of the eyes of the Lord being upon the Land that is coupled to His favor.
- The **נמשל** (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the **משל** (mashal), the rabbis conclude that it is by reason of God’s promises, precepts, and statutes that He looks to the Land of Israel and continues to return and return again, because the Lord is bring to completion his word.

- The Concluding phrase says, “*As Scripture says, Then will the land make her Shabbats find favor (Vayikra / Leviticus 26:34). Hence, You have been favorable unto Your land.*”

## Part 2

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying, “*You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people (Tehillim / Psalms 85:3).*”
- The פתיחתא (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*Can anything but the land wherein they dwell cause the iniquity of the people of Israel to be forgiven, since it is said, The people that dwell therein will be forgiven their iniquity (Isaiah 33:24)?*”
- The משל (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis discuss the idea that the land makes expiation for the sins of the people, for both the living and the dead.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the משל (mashal), the rabbis expand upon the mashal by discussing the concept that there is no sin in Israel.
- The Concluding phrase says, “*And it is also written, Who is a God like unto You, that pardons the iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? (Micah 7:18)*”

## Part 3

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying, “*You have taken away all Your wrath; You have turned Yourself from the fierceness of Your anger (Tehillim / Psalms 85:4).*”
- The פתיחתא (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*As Ezekiel said, Thus will My anger spread itself (Ezekiel 5:13), and as Hosea also said, I will heal their backsliding for My anger is turned away from him (Hosea 14:5).*”
- The משל (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis discuss the meaning of backsliding.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the משל (mashal), the rabbis expand upon the mashal the request of Korach’s children to forgive as opposed to all of Israel
- The Concluding phrase says, “*And what is Your answer? Will You receive us? Will You not quicken us again? (Tehillim / Psalms 85:7), even as Ezekiel says, Behold, I will open your graves, etc. (Ezekiel 37:12), and again, And I will put My Spirit in you, and you will live (Ezekiel 37:14).*”

Midrash Tehillim opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying, “*For the leader. A Psalm of the sons of Korach. Lord, You have been favorable unto Your land, You have turned the captivity of Jacob (Tehillim / Psalms 85:1-3).*” The homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*These words are to be considered in the light of the verse, A land which the Lord your God cares for; the eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it (Devarim / Deuteronomy 11:12).*” What is it about the land of Israel the Lord loves that is so important as compared to all other lands? The Rabbis cite from *Devarim / Deuteronomy 11:12* which states the following:

### ***Devarim / Deuteronomy 11:10-16***

*11:10 ‘For the land, into which you are entering to possess it, is not like the land of Egypt from which you came, where you used to sow your seed and water it with your foot like a vegetable garden. 11:11 ‘But the land into which you are about to cross to possess it, a land of hills and valleys, drinks water from the rain of heaven, 11:12 a land for which the Lord your God cares; the eyes of the Lord your God are always on it, from the beginning even to the end of the year. 11:13 ‘It shall come about, if you listen obediently to my commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul, 11:14 that He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early*

*and late rain, that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil. 11:15 'He will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied. 11:16 'Beware that your hearts are not deceived, and that you do not turn away and serve other gods and worship them. (NASB)*

Notice the context in which the land is given. The Lord God says that the Land the people are entering is not like the land of Egypt. The land consists of hills and valleys which requires the rain as compared to Egypt where one watered the garden with the foot using irrigation the artificial application of water to the land or soil which is used to assist in the growing of agricultural crops. The Land of Israel on the other hand is not like this because it requires rain from heaven. The Lord then qualifies the point with being careful to obey God's commands, to love the Lord and serve him with all their heart and soul and the Lord will give the rain in its seasons for the crops. He then warns the people to be careful to not turn away from the Lord to serve other gods. The entire midrash states the following:

<p><b>מדרש תהלים פרק פה סימן א</b></p> <p>א למנצה לבני קרח מזמור רצית ה' ארצך שבת שבות יעקב. זהו שאמר הכתוב ארץ אשר ה' אלהיך דורש אותה תמיד עיני ה' אלהיך בה (דברים יא יב), בה הופך ומתהפך ומסתכל ונותן עיניו בה, עד זמן שתרצה מעשיה להקב"ה והמ"צות שנצטוו ישראל עליה, אם הוציאו המעשרות, ועשו את השמיטים והיוב"לים, וכל מצות שנצטוו בה, אותה שעה מרצה מעשיה להקב"ה, וכן הוא אומר אז תרצה הארץ את שבתותיה (ויקרא כו לד), לפיכך רצית ה' ארצך.</p>	<p><b>Midrash Tehillim 85, Part 1</b></p> <p>1. For the leader. A Psalm of the sons of Korach. Lord, You have been favorable unto Your land, You have turned the captivity of Jacob (Tehillim / Psalms 85:1-3). These words are to be considered in the light of the verse, A land which the Lord your God cares for; the eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it (Devarim / Deuteronomy 11:12). That is, God turns to it, and turns again to it, and regards it, and keeps His eyes upon it until such time as its deeds and the performance of precepts concerning it, which were enjoined upon Israel, will find favor with the Holy One blessed be He. When they bring forth the tithes, and observe the years of release and of Jubilee, and observe all the other precepts which were enjoined concerning the land, in that hour the land will make its deeds find favor with the Holy One blessed be He. As Scripture says, Then will the land make her Shabbats find favor (Vayikra / Leviticus 26:34). Hence, You have been favorable unto Your land.</p>
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The Lord God in heaven, Creator of all things, chose the nation of Israel to be a unique people through whom He would work His power that would effect all of the world according to Parashat Lech Lecha (*Bereshit / Genesis 12*). The Torah calls Israel a holy people to the Lord your God and that the Lord your God has chosen to be a people for His own possession out of all the people who are on the face of the earth (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 7:6*). Israel was chosen to be witnesses of God's glory to a world that had fallen away from the Lord. He says "You are My witnesses, declares the Lord, and My servant whom I have chosen, in order that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me. I, even I am the Lord; and there is no Savior beside Me" (*Isaiah 43:10-11*). The Jewish people were chosen to demonstrate to the world that there was one true and living God. The God of Israel is a Savior God who desires to help Jews and Gentiles, men and women, rich and poor, avoid destruction by calling people to walk in His ways, according to His Torah, and to have faith in His Messiah Yeshua. The design was for Israel to be a witness to all nations that the Lord desires that mankind turn back to Him (to walk in His ways, truth, justice, mercy, and love) and come to the knowledge of His truth that will save them. If Israel were faithful to her calling, the Lord God promised to bless all the other nations through Israel, so the nations would know that the God of Israel is the true God. However, disobedience to the calling as stated in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 11:10-16*, the Lord promised to severely punish Israel so that the nations of the world would know that it's a terrible thing to disobey the God of Israel. Either way, through either obedience or disobedience, Israel would be a witness to the world that the God of Israel is faithful to His people, and seeks all men to come to Him.

Within the context of these things, the Lord chose Israel, and he chose a Land through which He would work His power. The Lord God gave Eretz Yisrael (the Land of Israel) which is strategically located to be in a central location of civilization and economic power, surrounded by strong and mighty nations. The prophet Ezekiel stated in *Ezekiel 5:5* ‘*Thus says the Lord God, ‘This is Jerusalem; I have set her at the center of the nations, with lands around her. (NASB)* Note how Israel connects the continents, Europe, Africa, and Asia. Due to this central location, Israel has had exposure to all the nations of the world. Based upon the Scriptures, Israel may be characterized as unique in the following way.

### **The Unique Characteristics of Israel according to the Scriptures**

1. The Land of Israel belongs to the Lord God in heaven. Note what the Lord says in *Vayikra / Leviticus 25:23* *The Land is Mine; for you are but aliens and sojourners with Me. (NASB)* The Land belongs to the Lord and therefore He is able to give it to whomever He wishes.
2. According to Parashat Lech Lecha, the Land of Israel was given by God to the descendants of Abraham. The Lord appeared to Abram and said, “*To your descendants I will give this land*” (*Bereshit / Genesis 12:7*). In addition, the Lord said to Abraham, “*I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. And I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God*” (*Bereshit / Genesis 17:7-8*).
3. The Torah tells us that Abraham had many sons, however, the Land of Israel was given to Isaac and not to Ishmael, or to any of the others sons of Abraham. The Torah tells us explicitly this fact when Abraham said to the Lord, “*Oh that Ishmael might live before You!*” But the Lord God said “*No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him*” (*Bereshit / Genesis 17:18-19*). The reason being, Isaac was the son of promise and Ishmael was not. The Lord rejected Abraham’s prayer for Ishmael because Ishmael was the son based upon the desire of the flesh and not that of faith in the promises of God. Years later the Lord God appeared to Isaac and said, “*to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham. And I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed*” (*Bereshit / Genesis 26:3-4*). We do not read the Lord saying this to Ishmael or any of the other sons of Abraham. As a result, Abraham gave gifts to his sons and sent them away, and he gave all that he had to Isaac. (see *Bereshit / Genesis 25:5-6*).
4. Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau, and we are told the Land was given to Jacob and not Esau. When Jacob was fleeing from his brother Esau, he dreamed the Lord said to him, “*I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. Your descendants shall also be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*” (*Bereshit / Genesis 28:13-14*). The Lord later appeared to Jacob and said to him, “*the land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give it to you, and I will give the land to your descendants after you*” (*Bereshit / Genesis 35:11-12*).
5. The Torah describes the boarders of Israel that was given by God. (*Bereshit / Genesis 13, 15, Shemot / Exodus 23*) The Lord said to Abraham, “*Now lift up your eyes and look from the*

*place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever... Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you.” (Bereshit / Genesis 13:14-17)* The Lord made a covenant with Abraham saying, *“To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates.” (Bereshit / Genesis 15:18-21)* These Scriptures seem to include the present day Israel, Judea and Samaria, Gaza, the Golan Heights, and all of Jerusalem, all has been given by the Lord to the people of Israel as a permanent inheritance.

6. Notice how the everlasting covenant includes the promises of the Land. The Lord God promised His covenant forever, the covenant He made with Abraham and Isaac. The Lord confirmed His covenant with Jacob, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, saying, *“To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion of your inheritance.” (Tehillim / Psalm 105:8-11)* The Scriptures describe the Lord’s commitment to Israel using the words, covenant, oath, confirm, commandment, a thousand generations, statute, everlasting covenant, etc. The Lord does not break His promises (*Hebrews 6:16-18*).
7. Israel’s sin, disobedience, and exile did not annulled God’s covenant with His People, nor did this permanently take away their right to the Land of Israel. Exile from the Land was only temporary. Note also the Lord says when they are in the land of their enemies, the Lord God will not reject them, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy them, breaking My covenant with them; for I am the Lord their God. But I will remember for them the covenant with their ancestors whom I brought out of the land of Egypt, in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God. I am the Lord (*Vayikra / Leviticus 26:44-45*).
8. Moshe spoke prophetically regarding a time of obedience and blessing within the Land, followed by a period of temporary disobedience and exile from the Land, which is then followed by spiritual restoration with the Lord and physical restoration to the Land. *Devarim / Deuteronomy 30:1-6, 30:1 ‘So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where the Lord your God has banished you, 30:2 and you return to the Lord your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, 30:3 then the Lord your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you. 30:4 ‘If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. 30:5 ‘The Lord your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. 30:6 ‘Moreover the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live. (NASB)*
9. Knowing that the Lord God will not break His covenant with the sons of Israel, even in spite of our sins, should be reassuring to every Believer. If the Lord broke His covenant with the Jewish people due to their sins, what about nineteen centuries of Christian history? Christianity has produced an endless succession of anti-Semitism, heresy, apostasy, greed, immorality, divisions, and ceaseless struggles for power and prominence. Professing Christians have even subjected fellow Christians to torture and death in the name of Jesus Christ.
10. According to the Scriptures, the Lord promised to regather the people to “their own land.” *“For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your*

*own land... And you will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers.” (Ezekiel 36:24, 28)*  
We also read in Scripture, *Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land* Jeremiah adds: *Behold days are coming declares the Lord, when it will no longer be said, As the Lord lives, who brought up the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt, but, As the Lord lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of the north and from all the countries where He had banished them. For I will restore them to their own land which I gave to their fathers (Jeremiah 16:14-15).*

11. The Lord God calls the restored Land Israel and not Palestine.
12. The Lord speaks through Ezekiel saying that this Land is specifically reserved for the Jewish people. *“You O mountains of Israel, you will put forth your branches and bear your fruit for My people Israel; for they will soon come. For behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you will be cultivated and sown. I will multiply men on you, all the house of Israel, all of it; and the cities will be inhabited and the waste places will be rebuilt” (Ezekiel 36:8-10).* 2500 years ago Ezekiel told us that In the Last Days the Jewish people would be restored to our Land. The Land would begin to prosper and the Jewish population would greatly increase. In the past century these prophetic words have been coming to pass.
13. Twenty-five hundred years ago the Lord also told us that the Jewish return to the Land would provoke a reaction from Israel’s neighbors. *Because the enemy has spoken against you “Aha” and “The everlasting heights have become our possession” ... Surely in the fire of My jealousy I have spoken against the rest of the nations, and against all Edom, who appropriated My land for themselves as a possession with wholehearted joy and scorn of soul, to drive it out as a prey (Ezekiel 36:2-5).* The surrounding nations claim possession of the Land of Israel for themselves, and try to drive out the Jewish inhabitants, however, the Lord God repudiates the claims of these nations.
14. Even though most of the Jewish people were temporarily exiled from our Land (there was always a remnant of Jewish people who remained within Israel), that doesn’t give anyone else the right to claim the Land of Israel. If a landlord has some bad tenants that he evicts from his property, he does not expect anyone else to enter his vacant property and claim it for their own. God is the landlord of the Land of Israel and the majority of the Jewish people were bad tenants. The Lord temporarily evicted the people from the Land. That does not give the Romans, the Byzantines, the Crusaders, the Ottomans or the Arabs the right to claim God’s holy Land for themselves.
15. The conflict over the Land of Israel will involve the entire world. In *Zechariah 12:2-3*, the prophet predicted, *12:2 ‘Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around; and when the siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be against Judah. 12:3 ‘It will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it. (NASB)*

As we can see, according to the Scriptures, the people and the Land are very important. Even in the Olam Haba (World to Come) the “New Jerusalem,” the “Twelve Gates” with the names of the “Twelve Tribes,” etc, speaks of a Israel centric relationship with God that continues on into eternity. That is serious food for thought!

The homiletic introduction to Midrash Tehillim 85, Part 1 states, *“These words are to be considered in*

*the light of the verse, A land which the Lord your God cares for; the eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it (Devarim / Deuteronomy 11:12)."* The midrash continues saying the following:

*That is, God turns to it, and turns again to it, and regards it, and keeps His eyes upon it until such time as its deeds and the performance of precepts concerning it, which were enjoined upon Israel, will find favor with the Holy One blessed be He. When they bring forth the tithes, and observe the years of release and of Jubilee, and observe all the other precepts which were enjoined concerning the land, in that hour the land will make its deeds find favor with the Holy One blessed be He.*

The midrash states that the Lord keeps His eyes upon Israel. This speaks of the area of modern Christian theology, the antisemitism and Replacement Theology that is inherently a part of the doctrines of the church today. The idea that God is finished with the Jewish people and has replaced Israel with the Church is greatly in error. According to the prophet Jeremiah, we are warned against having a theology that denies Israel's future national destiny and central role in the worship of God. Today however there is the belief that the non-Jewish people are somehow separate in their faith and the way they live out their faith (Bilateral Ecclesiology) as opposed to the gentile believer, this belief is coupled with the idea that the Jewish people have been lost, destroyed, replaced, superseded, permanently set aside or continually exiled from the Land.

Midrash Tehillim 85, Part 1 concludes saying, "*As Scripture says, Then will the land make her Shabbats find favor (Vayikra / Leviticus 26:34). Hence, You have been favorable unto Your land.*" The basic concept here is in regard to obedience. The midrash states that the Lord looks at Israel for her deeds and the performance of the precepts. The idea is that the one who loves the Lord will choose and struggle in life to live for Him. The Lord God in heaven is looking for this, and the test of faith is to believe in His Messiah Yeshua. Our faith in Yeshua does not do away with our calling to live for the Lord and to walk in His ways. Our faith in the Messiah should increase this effort by reason of the manner in which God works in our hearts in the giving of His Holy Spirit.

Midrash Tehillim 85, Part 2 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying, "*You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people (Tehillim / Psalms 85:3).*" The פתיחתא (Petihata) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, "*Can anything but the land wherein they dwell cause the iniquity of the people of Israel to be forgiven, since it is said, The people that dwell therein will be forgiven their iniquity (Isaiah 33:24)?"* The rabbis question whether the land makes expiation for the sins of the people, for both the living and the dead. This may come from the concept related by *Shney Luchot HaBrit, Re'eh, Torah Ohr 4*, which states the following

***Shney Luchot HaBrit, Re'eh, Torah Ohr 4:***

*On occasion, "sparks of holiness" burst out beyond the confines of the Temple precincts. When that happens it is a duty to return them to their proper place. This is the mystical dimension of the legislation that permits animals that have been consecrated as offerings outside ארץ ישראל to be brought to the Temple and to be offered on the altar there. When that (12,26) occurs, the "branch" is considered as having been restored to its trunk. The Torah describes the process as שם תעלה, "There you will elevate it." This means that such animals can be raised to a sacred level only in the Temple. Since holiness exists only in the Holy Land, we are commanded to "depart from evil," i.e. to destroy all the sites where the Gentiles have worshiped.*

The Land of Israel draws with it the biblical concepts of atonement, holiness, and consecration, etc. The Land is the place in which the Lord God of Israel has established His Name and a people to live according to His commandments. The idea is that those who lived outside of the Land are able to consecrate their animals for the Temple service, and then bring them to המקום (the Place) the Lord has established for the sacrifice. When the animal is sacrificed, it is said to be elevated, to be raised up, it literally goes up in smoke,

and the concepts of raising up and elevation lead us to think on holiness, the method of raising ourselves up out of the myer of the nations (from the ways of the nations), and it is in the Land that we are commanded to “depart from evil.” Departing from evil however is not limited to the Eretz Yisrael, but also to our homes, and our lives, and where we live, our interactions with others, etc, this is the meaning of living in truth, righteousness, justice, and love for one another.

The Entire midrash states the following:

<p><b>מדרש תהלים פרק פה סימן ב</b>                  ב נשאת עון עמך. מי נושא עון,                  הארץ אשר הם יושבים עליה,                  שנאמר העם היושב בה נושא עון                  (ישעיה לג כד), הרי החיים, המ-                  תים מניין, שנאמר וכפר אדמתו                  עמו (דברים לב מג), מי מכפר על                  עמו, אדמתו, אשריהם יושבי ארץ                  ישראל שאין להם חטא ועון לא                  בחיים ולא במתים, וכן הוא אומר                  נשאת עון עמך, וכתוב מי אל כמוך                  נושא עון ועובר על פשע (מיכה ז                  יח).</p>	<p><b>Midrash Tehillim 85, Part 2</b>                  2. <i>You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people (Tehillim / Psalms 85:3). Can anything but the land wherein they dwell cause the iniquity of the people of Israel to be forgiven, since it is said, The people that dwell therein will be forgiven their iniquity (Isaiah 33:24)? Behold, the living will be forgiven. The dead too? Yes. Since Scripture says Its earth makes expiation for His people (Devarim / Deuteronomy 32:43), we are to understand that what makes expiation for His people is its very earth. Happy are they, they that dwell in the Land of Israel, for neither when they are alive nor when they are dead is sin or iniquity in them. Thus Scripture says, You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people, You have pardoned all their sin for ever (Tehillim / Psalms 85:3). And it is also written, Who is a God like unto You, that pardons the iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? (Micah 7:18)</i></p>
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Isaiah 33:24-34:2 states, 33:24 *And no resident will say, 'I am sick'; The people who dwell there will be forgiven their iniquity. 34:1 Draw near, O nations, to hear; and listen, O peoples! Let the earth and all it contains hear, and the world and all that springs from it. 34:2 For the Lord's indignation is against all the nations, And His wrath against all their armies; He has utterly destroyed them, He has given them over to slaughter. (NASB)* The reason the peoples and the nations are determined for destruction is because of their sins. In the case of the nations, they do not know God's ways, and so Isaiah calls for the nations to draw near, to listen to the Lord, and to walk in His ways. The historic people of Israel on the other hand have heard and tasted of the mercy of God and yet they sin and turn from His ways. The midrash states that the living will be forgiven, but asks will the dead also be forgiven? The important aspect of forgiveness is related to one's having performed Teshuvah (repented) of their sins. The question is whether the dead are capable of repenting and turning from their sins? The answer to that question is “NO.” Yet the midrash states that the dead do receive forgiveness, “*Since Scripture says Its earth makes expiation for His people (Devarim / Deuteronomy 32:43), we are to understand that what makes expiation for His people is its very earth.*” The rabbinic reasoning is that the Land of Israel makes expiation. Why do you think the rabbis believe the Land provides expiation (forgiveness) for both the living and the dead? The reason is connected to the covenant promises and the blessings and curses that are spoken of at the end of sefer Vayikra / Leviticus and Devarim / Deuteronomy. To remain in Eretz Yisrael is to be in God's favor, and to have forgiveness and mercy, whereas to be outside of Israel, the rabbis parallel this to receiving the punishment for sin and not receiving forgiveness and mercy. The dead who are buried in the Land are said to be buried with their fathers, and being buried in the Land is synonymous to having received the forgiveness and mercy of God and the privileged to live out one's life and to be buried in the Land of Promise. This is why the rabbis say, “*Happy are they, they that dwell in the Land of Israel, for neither when they are alive nor when they are dead is sin or iniquity in them.*” This is consistent with the Psalm according to the midrash which states, “*Thus Scripture says, You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people, You have pardoned all their sin for ever (Tehillim / Psalms 85:3).*”

Midrash Tehillim 85, Part 2 concludes saying, “*And it is also written, Who is a God like unto You, that pardons the iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? (Micah 7:18)*” The

rabbis describe the Lord God in the following way.

***Maarechet Heidenheim on Pesach Haggadah, Urchatz 1***

*We acknowledge a human being's importance by the way that others serve him. This is not the case with the Holy One who shows His glory by the way he serves His children. We learn this from a passage "Who is like you among the mighty," which is understood to mean there are none that act like You do. (Shemot Rabbah 20:25) "What is the difference between mortal beings and the Holy One? How does a mortal king exhibit his glory? His servant attends to him and serves him. This is not the case with the Holy One who attends to and serves his children. A mortal king is bathed by his servants while the Holy One bathes (and purified) Israel, as is written: "I bathed you in water." (Ez. 16:9) God also anoints his children, as is written, "I anointed you with oil." (Ez. 16:9) God dressed them, as it is written: "And I clothed you with embroidered garments." (Ez. 16:9) A road is prepared for a mortal king while the Holy One made a path through the sea for His children. The servant carries the mortal king while the Holy one carries his children, "on the wings of eagles." Servants put shoes on the feet of the mortal king while with the Holy One, it is just the opposite: "I gave you sandals of dolphin leather." (Ez. 16:9) When a mortal king sleeps, his servants stand guard over him. Just the opposite with the Holy One, as it is written, "The guardian of Israel neither slumbers or sleeps." (Ps. 121)*

Isn't it interesting how the Lord is described here as serving His people, anointing them with oil, dressing them, clothing them, and carrying them on eagles wings, and the Lord stands guard over his people while they sleep. Who is like unto You or Lord? There is none like the Lord God Almighty and His Messiah Yeshua! We are truly blessed to have been called to faith in the Lord God in heaven and in His Messiah Yeshua!

Midrash Tehillim 85, Part 3 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying, "You have taken away all Your wrath; You have turned Yourself from the fierceness of Your anger (Tehillim / Psalms 85:4)." The homiletic introduction to the midrash states, "As Ezekiel said, Thus will My anger spread itself (Ezekiel 5:13), and as Hosea also said, I will heal their backsliding for My anger is turned away from him (Hosea 14:5)." The rabbis speak of the anger of God, and forgiveness from backsliding. The word backsliding draws with it the idea of having fallen and then gotten back up and returning to the Lord. Synonyms for backsliding include "relapse, lapse, regress, weaken, lose one's resolve, give in to temptation, go astray, leave the straight and narrow." Backsliding, is known as falling away, and is a term used within Christianity to describe a process by which an individual who has converted to Christianity reverts to pre-conversion habits and/or lapses or falls into sin. The concept of backsliding is when a person turns from the Lord God to pursue his or her own desire. In Christianity, within denominations which teach Arminianism, such as the Methodist Church and Pentecostal Holiness Church, as well as in the Roman Catholic Church, backsliding is a state in which any free willed believer is capable of adopting. Backsliding was a trait of Biblical Israel which would turn from the God of Israel to follow idols. Yeshua also spoke of backsliding according to his parable of the Prodigal Son. In this case, the son repented and returned to his father. In the midrash, the rabbis use Hosea 14:5 to say the Lord will heal the people's backsliding. The Lord will have an effect on the hearts of the people to turn from their evil ways and to return to the way of the Lord in truth and justice.

The entire midrash states the following:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>מדרש תהלים פרק פה סימן ג</b></p> <p>ג אספת כל עברתך השיבות מחרון אפך. וכן יחזקאל אמר והנחתי חמתי (יחזקאל ה יג), וכן הושע אמר ארפא משובתם וגו' (הושע יד ה), אמרו בני קרח עד מתי אתם אומרים שובו בנים שובבים (ירמיה ג יד), ישראל אומרים לך שוב אתה בתחלה, שנאמר שובה ה' עד מתי (תהלים צ יג), ואתה אומר לא כי אלא שובה ישראל בתחלה, לא אתה תשוב לעצמך, ולא אנו נשוב לעצמנו, אלא שנינו כאחד, שנאמר שובנו אלהי ישענו (תהלים פ"ה פסוק ה), מה אתה אומר הלעולם תאנף בנו, אם אנו עושין תשור בה אין אתה מקבלנו. הלא אתה תשוב תחינו, כשם שאמר יחזקאל (הנני) [הנה אני] פותח את קברותיכם [וגו'] (יחזקאל לו יב), וכתוב ונתתי רוחי בכם וחייתם (שם שם יחזקאל ל"ז יד).</p>	<p><b>Midrash Tehillim 85, Part 3</b></p> <p>3. <i>You have taken away all Your wrath; You have turned Yourself from the fierceness of Your anger (Tehillim / Psalms 85:4). As Ezekiel said, Thus will My anger spread itself (Ezekiel 5:13), and as Hosea also said, I will heal their backsliding for My anger is turned away from him (Hosea 14:5). When the sons of korach asked, How long will You be angry with us? You said, Return, O backsliding children (Jeremiah 3:14). However, when the children of Israel said to You, You return first, as is said, Return, O Lord; how long? (Tehillim / Psalms 90:13), You replied, No, but let Israel return first. Since You will not return alone, and since we will not return alone, let the two of us return as one, as is said, Return both of us, O God of our salvation (Tehillim / Psalms 85:5). And what is Your answer? Will You receive us? Will You not quicken us again? (Tehillim / Psalms 85:7), even as Ezekiel says, Behold, I will open your graves, etc. (Ezekiel 37:12), and again, And I will put My Spirit in you, and you will live (Ezekiel 37:14).</i></p>
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The rabbis open in the משל (mashal) “*the parable*,” discussing the פתיחתא (Petihta) that contains the concept of backsliding. The נמשל (Nimshal) expands upon the משל (mashal) by drawing a parallel to the request of Korach’s children to be forgiven as opposed to all of Israel being forgiven for her sins. According to the midrash, the children of Korach ask the Lord how long will He be angry with them, and the answer is the Lord says they should “*Return*” (Teshuvah) but does not give a time line on how long the Lord’s anger will continue. The Midrash states, “*However, when the children of Israel said to You, You return first, as is said, Return, O Lord; how long? (Tehillim / Psalms 90:13), You replied, No, but let Israel return first.*” The Lord is looking for the repentance of the individual, the community, and the entire nation. The point that seems to be drawn out in the midrash is that repentance and restoration is not a private, individualistic phenomenon. The individual belongs to a community of the Lord’s people. These people are then considered as a whole to be a single whole person. The health of the body then consists of the health of the individuals in the community. The individual therefore is to exist within a community as Hillel stated “*Do not separate yourself from the community*” (Mishnah Pirkei Avot 2:5) similar to what the author of the book of Hebrews wrote in Hebrews 10:23-25, which states, 10:23 *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; 10:24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 10:25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near. (NASB)* This suggests that the restoration and reconciliation of the individual in repentance leads to one being responsible to participate in the community of believers. The individual then has claim to the group blessings the Lord has promised upon His people, which is an incentive to repentance just as it says in Devarim / Deuteronomy 4:26-31.

**Devarim / Deuteronomy 4:26-31**

4:26 *I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you will surely perish quickly from the land where you are going over the Jordan to possess it. You shall not live long on it, but will be utterly destroyed. 4:27 ‘The Lord will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the Lord drives you. 4:28 ‘There you will serve gods, the work of man’s hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell. 4:29 ‘But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul. 4:30 ‘When you are in distress and all*

*these things have come upon you, in the latter days you will return to the Lord your God and listen to His voice. 4:31 'For the Lord your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them. (NASB,*  
 כו העידתי בכם היום את-השמים ואת-הארץ כי-אבד תאבדון מהר מעל הארץ אשר אתם עבדים  
 את-ה'ירדן שמה לרשתה לא-תאריכו ימים עליה כי השמד תשמדון: כז והפיץ יהוה אתכם בעמים  
 ונשארתם מתי מספר בגוים אשר ינהג יהוה אתכם שמה: כח ועבדתם-שם אלהים מעשה ידי אדם  
 עץ ואבן אשר לא-יראון ולא ישמעון ולא יאכלון ולא יריחון: כט ובקשתם משם את-יהוה אלהיך  
 ומצאת פי תדרשנו בכל-לבבך ובכל-נפשך: ל בצר לך ומצאוך כל הדברים האלה באחרית הימים  
 ושבת עד-יהוה אלהיך ושמעת בקלו: לא כי אל רחום יהוה אלהיך לא ירפה ולא ינחיתך ולא  
 (ישכח את-ברית אבתיך אשר נשבע להם:

These Scriptures are an incentive to repentance of both the individual, the community, and the nation of Israel. Moshe spoke prophetically of what the people will do, giving their lives and hands to the work of foreign gods. The Lord will scatter them to the nations, and when they see this they will remember what the Lord said which should lead to repentance. As the midrash says, repent first and then the Lord will begin the process of return. Note the interpretation of the midrash which states, “*Since You will not return alone, and since we will not return alone, let the two of us return as one, as is said, Return both of us, O God of our salvation (Tehillim / Psalms 85:5).*” The rabbis reference *Tehillim / Psalms 85:4 Restore us, O God of our salvation, And cause Your indignation toward us to cease. (NASB)* and the Aramaic Targum which states, *85:5 Turn to us, O God our redemption; and revoke your anger against us. (EMC)* The restoration and salvation of the people is coupled to the Lord turning towards the people, which only occurs when the people repent and turn from their sins. The midrash interprets this to say that the Lord will turn towards the people and will return with them to the Land, the God of Israel, and His people will return as one. Notice what Isaiah has to say concerning the exile and those who choose to join themselves with the Lord.

### **Isaiah 56:1-8**

*56:1 Thus says the Lord, 'Preserve justice and do righteousness, For My salvation is about to come And My righteousness to be revealed. 56:2 'How blessed is the man who does this, And the son of man who takes hold of it; Who keeps from profaning the sabbath, And keeps his hand from doing any evil.' 56:3 Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say, 'The Lord will surely separate me from His people.' Nor let the eunuch say, 'Behold, I am a dry tree.' 56:4 For thus says the Lord, 'To the eunuchs who keep My sabbaths, And choose what pleases Me, And hold fast My covenant, 56:5 To them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial, And a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off. 56:6 'Also the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, To minister to Him, and to love the name of the Lord, To be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the sabbath And holds fast My covenant; 56:7 Even those I will bring to My holy mountain And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.' 56:8 The Lord God, who gathers the dispersed of Israel, declares, 'Yet others I will gather to them, to those already gathered.'* (NASB)

Notice what Isaiah is saying concerning the one who preserves justice and righteousness in the Land. Even the foreigner will not be separated from the people of God. Isaiah also mentions the eunuch who does these things. He says that for the eunuch, the Lord will give him an everlasting name, and that his sacrifices will be pleasing unto the Lord. Note that a eunuch is not to go before the Lord because of the corruption of his testicles (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 23:1 "No man whose testicles have been crushed or whose penis has been cut off may participate in the assembly of the LORD. ISV*) But yet such a person, the Lord will establish and make his name great and give him an everlasting name, if he seeks to obey the Lord, and to live his life

according to His word. Midrash Tehillim 85, Part 3 concludes saying, “*And what is Your answer? Will You receive us? Will You not quicken us again? (Tehillim / Psalms 85:7), even as Ezekiel says, Behold, I will open your graves, etc. (Ezekiel 37:12), and again, And I will put My Spirit in you, and you will live (Ezekiel 37:14).*” Based upon these Scriptures, the Lord is looking for those who will join themselves with Him. This begins with faith in His Messiah Yeshua. Then we are called to walk in His ways. The question then is how does walking in His ways look like in my life today, and in the lives of the community of His people? Let’s Pray!

Heavenly Father,

We glorify Your Holy Name! We thank You for Your grace, love, and glory, and the mercies You show us each day. Thank You for the joy you have placed in our hearts to serve you and to live our lives for you. The Scriptures say that we can know that You are present in our lives. We thank You for the promises You have made and Your continued faithfulness to Your promises and to us. Thank You Lord for giving us the faith to believe in Yeshua the Messiah and for always calling our hearts back to You Lord! Please have mercy on us, forgive us for our sins. We thank You Lord for sending Your son Yeshua that we may enter into the covenant of peace that You have promised to Your people. Help us to grow in our faith, to walk in the spirit, and apply these truths to our lives. We praise Your Holy Name and give You all of the honor, and the glory, and the praise forever and ever.

In Yeshua’s (Jesus’) Name we pray! Amen!

Be Blessed in Yeshua, Christ our Messiah!

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הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:  
Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,  
“Yeshua” King Messiah forever and ever

## Notes