

## Tehillim / Psalms 120 | ספר תהילים קכ

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### There is always the opportunity for Repentance

א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת אֶל-יְהוָה בְּצָרָתָהּ לִי In this week's study from *Tehillim / Psalms 120:1-7*, the psalm opens *120:1 In my trouble I cried to the Lord, And He answered me. (NASB)* How often have you prayed and you know without a doubt that the Lord had answered your prayer? The prayer David ask of the Lord is the following, *120:2 Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, From a deceitful tongue. (NASB)* The deceitful tongue is synonymous to the deceitful heart, the evil inclination (Lashon Hara). David asks also saying, *120:3 What shall be given to you, and what more shall be done to you, You deceitful tongue? (NASB)* Is David speaking of the punishment that is due the deceitful tongue? Has deception become second nature to you to the extent that it is what goes through the narratives of the heart on a daily basis, seeking how to deceive? Have you ever sought to be cleansed of sin in the sense that one day we will stand before our Father in heaven, and you do not want to look around with deception, lust, covetousness, or some other sin remaining in the heart? David speaks of these things in the following way, *120:4 Sharp arrows of the warrior, With the burning coals of the broom tree. (NASB)* The deceitfulness of sin is paralleled to the arrows of the enemy, and the burning of the broom tree. Studying the concept of the broom tree, long burning coals may be manufactured from the broom bush, and this may be paralleled to the effects of sin on our lives. David concludes saying the following, *120:5 Woe is me, for I sojourn in Meshech, For I dwell among the tents of Kedar! 120:6 Too long has my soul had its dwelling With those who hate peace. 120:7 I am for peace, but when I speak, They are for war. (NASB)* Sin in our lives functions in a way that is constantly at war with the spirit, whereas, the spirit the Lord gives to a man is that of peace and joy.

עברית	Hebrew	ארמי	Aramaic	ελληνικός	Greek		
ספר תהלים פרק קכ	ספר טוביה פרק קכ	ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 120	א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת אֶל-יְהוָה בְּצָרָתָהּ לִי קָרָאתִי וַיַּעֲנֵנִי: ב יְהוָה הֲצִילָה נַפְשִׁי מִשִּׁפְתַּי-שֶׁקֶר מִלְּשׁוֹן רַמְיָהּ: ג מֵה-יִתֵּן לָךְ וּמֵה-יִסְיֵף לָךְ לְשׁוֹן רַמְיָהּ: ד חֲצִי גִבּוֹר שְׁנוֹנִים עִם גִּחְלֵי רַתְּמִים: ה אוֹיֵה לִי כִי-גִרְתִּי מִשֶּׁה שְׁכַנְתִּי עִם-אֲהָלֵי קְדָר: ו רַבַּת שְׁכַנְהָ-לָה אֲנִי-שְׁלוֹם וְכִי אֲדַבֵּר הַמָּה לְמַלְחָמָה:	א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת אֶל-יְהוָה בְּצָרָתָהּ לִי קָרָאתִי וַיַּעֲנֵנִי: ב יְהוָה הֲצִילָה נַפְשִׁי מִשִּׁפְתַּי-שֶׁקֶר מִלְּשׁוֹן רַמְיָהּ: ג מֵה-יִתֵּן לָךְ וּמֵה-יִסְיֵף לָךְ לְשׁוֹן רַמְיָהּ: ד חֲצִי גִבּוֹר שְׁנוֹנִים עִם גִּחְלֵי רַתְּמִים: ה אוֹיֵה לִי כִי-גִרְתִּי מִשֶּׁה שְׁכַנְתִּי עִם-אֲהָלֵי קְדָר: ו רַבַּת שְׁכַנְהָ-לָה אֲנִי-שְׁלוֹם וְכִי אֲדַבֵּר הַמָּה לְמַלְחָמָה:	א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת אֶל-יְהוָה בְּצָרָתָהּ לִי קָרָאתִי וַיַּעֲנֵנִי: ב יְהוָה הֲצִילָה נַפְשִׁי מִשִּׁפְתַּי-שֶׁקֶר מִלְּשׁוֹן רַמְיָהּ: ג מֵה-יִתֵּן לָךְ וּמֵה-יִסְיֵף לָךְ לְשׁוֹן רַמְיָהּ: ד חֲצִי גִבּוֹר שְׁנוֹנִים עִם גִּחְלֵי רַתְּמִים: ה אוֹיֵה לִי כִי-גִרְתִּי מִשֶּׁה שְׁכַנְתִּי עִם-אֲהָלֵי קְדָר: ו רַבַּת שְׁכַנְהָ-לָה אֲנִי-שְׁלוֹם וְכִי אֲדַבֵּר הַמָּה לְמַלְחָמָה:	א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת אֶל-יְהוָה בְּצָרָתָהּ לִי קָרָאתִי וַיַּעֲנֵנִי: ב יְהוָה הֲצִילָה נַפְשִׁי מִשִּׁפְתַּי-שֶׁקֶר מִלְּשׁוֹן רַמְיָהּ: ג מֵה-יִתֵּן לָךְ וּמֵה-יִסְיֵף לָךְ לְשׁוֹן רַמְיָהּ: ד חֲצִי גִבּוֹר שְׁנוֹנִים עִם גִּחְלֵי רַתְּמִים: ה אוֹיֵה לִי כִי-גִרְתִּי מִשֶּׁה שְׁכַנְתִּי עִם-אֲהָלֵי קְדָר: ו רַבַּת שְׁכַנְהָ-לָה אֲנִי-שְׁלוֹם וְכִי אֲדַבֵּר הַמָּה לְמַלְחָמָה:	א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת אֶל-יְהוָה בְּצָרָתָהּ לִי קָרָאתִי וַיַּעֲנֵנִי: ב יְהוָה הֲצִילָה נַפְשִׁי מִשִּׁפְתַּי-שֶׁקֶר מִלְּשׁוֹן רַמְיָהּ: ג מֵה-יִתֵּן לָךְ וּמֵה-יִסְיֵף לָךְ לְשׁוֹן רַמְיָהּ: ד חֲצִי גִבּוֹר שְׁנוֹנִים עִם גִּחְלֵי רַתְּמִים: ה אוֹיֵה לִי כִי-גִרְתִּי מִשֶּׁה שְׁכַנְתִּי עִם-אֲהָלֵי קְדָר: ו רַבַּת שְׁכַנְהָ-לָה אֲנִי-שְׁלוֹם וְכִי אֲדַבֵּר הַמָּה לְמַלְחָמָה:

<b>Tehillim Psalms 120</b>	<b>Toviyah Psalms 120</b>	<b>Psalmoi Psalms 120</b>
<p>120:1 In my trouble I cried to the Lord, And He answered me. 120:2 Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, From a deceitful tongue. 120:3 What shall be given to you, and what more shall be done to you, You deceitful tongue? 120:4 Sharp arrows of the warrior, With the burning coals of the broom tree. 120:5 Woe is me, for I sojourn in Meshech, For I dwell among the tents of Kedar! 120:6 Too long has my soul had its dwelling With those who hate peace. 120:7 I am for peace, but when I speak, They are for war. (NASB)</p>	<p>120:1 A song that was uttered on the ascents of the abyss. In the presence of the Lord, when I was in distress, I prayed, and he received my prayer. 120:2 O Lord, deliver my soul from lips of deceit, from a deceptive tongue. 120:3 What does he give to you, O slanderer? And what does he add to you, O defamer, deceptive tongue? 120:4 The arrows of a warrior, sharp as lightning from above, with coals of broom that burn in Gehenna below. 120:5 Woe is me, for I have settled down with the oasis-dwellers; I have dwelt with the tents of the Arabs. 120:6 More than these, my soul abides with Edom, the hater of peace. 120:7 I am peaceful, for I will pray; [but] they are for war. (EMC)</p>	<p>A Song of Degrees. 120:1 In mine affliction I cried to the Lord, and he hearkened to me. 120:2 Deliver my soul, O Lord, from unjust lips, and from a deceitful tongue. 120:3 What should be given to thee, and what should be added to thee, for thy crafty tongue? 120:4 Sharp-ened weapons of the mighty, with coals of the desert. 120:5 Woe is me, that my sojourning is prolonged; I have tabernacled among the tents of Kedar. 120:6 My soul has long been a sojourner; 120:7 I was peaceable among them that hated peace; when I spoke to them, they warred against me without a cause. (LXX)</p>

In *Tehillim / Psalms 120:1-7*, the psalm opens אֶל-יְהוָה בִּצְרָתָהּ לִי קָרָאתִי וַיַּעֲנֵנִי: *In my trouble I cried to the Lord, And He answered me. (NASB)* How often have you prayed and you know without a doubt that the Lord had answered your prayer? Prayer is a great blessing, and we are promised that our Heavenly Father is always listening, but often it takes some work to recognize His answers. If we consider the two ends on this discussion, (i) either God hears you or (ii) He doesn't. If the Lord does not hear our prayers, then of course there is no point in praying. But if He does (and He does!), we have to figure out how to recognize His answers, and faithfully move forward. Regardless of whether we feel the Lord hears our prayers or not, we are to continue to move forward in the way of righteousness, holiness, and truth. When we feel He is not listening, maybe we need to experience some personal growth. A few good questions to ask ourselves when this situation occurs are, "Am I pure in my intentions during prayer?" "Are my motives worthy?" And, "Am I willing to do what He asks of me?" If the answer to each of these is yes, you can trust that the Lord hears your prayers. Remember also the Lord of the universe isn't under obligation to say "yes" to every prayer. That is a good thing, considering some of the things we request! In addition, sometimes answers come in subtle or unexpected ways.

According to the Scriptures, Job led a righteous life and he maintained the correct motivations for what he did, yet disaster came his way. While Job was trying to understand what was happening to him and why, he prayed the following prayer.

**Job 30:20-31:23**

*30:20 'I cry out to You for help, but You do not answer me; I stand up, and You turn Your attention against me. 30:21 'You have become cruel to me; With the might of Your hand You persecute me. 30:22 'You lift me up to the wind and cause me to ride; And You dissolve me in a storm. 30:23 'For I know that You will bring me to death And to the house of meeting for all living. 30:24 'Yet does not one in a heap of ruins stretch out his hand, Or in his disaster therefore cry out for help? 30:25 'Have I not wept for the one whose life is hard? Was not my soul grieved for the needy? 30:26 'When I expected good, then evil came; When I waited for light, then darkness came. 30:27 'I am seething within and cannot relax; Days of affliction confront me. 30:28 'I go about mourning without comfort; I stand up in the assembly and*

*cry out for help. 30:29 'I have become a brother to jackals And a companion of ostriches. 30:30 'My skin turns black on me, And my bones burn with fever. 30:31 'Therefore my harp is turned to mourning, And my flute to the sound of those who weep. 31:1 'I have made a covenant with my eyes; How then could I gaze at a virgin? 31:2 'And what is the portion of God from above Or the heritage of the Almighty from on high? 31:3 'Is it not calamity to the unjust And disaster to those who work iniquity? 31:4 'Does He not see my ways And number all my steps? 31:5 'If I have walked with falsehood, And my foot has hastened after deceit, 31:6 Let Him weigh me with accurate scales, And let God know my integrity. 31:7 'If my step has turned from the way, Or my heart followed my eyes, Or if any spot has stuck to my hands, 31:8 Let me sow and another eat, And let my crops be uprooted. 31:9 'If my heart has been enticed by a woman, Or I have lurked at my neighbor's doorway, 31:10 May my wife grind for another; And let others kneel down over her. 31:11 'For that would be a lustful crime; Moreover, it would be an iniquity punishable by judges. 31:12 'For it would be fire that consumes to Abaddon, And would uproot all my increase. 31:13 'If I have despised the claim of my male or female slaves When they filed a complaint against me, 31:14 What then could I do when God arises? And when He calls me to account, what will I answer Him? 31:15 'Did not He who made me in the womb make him, And the same one fashion us in the womb? 31:16 'If I have kept the poor from their desire, Or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail, 31:17 Or have eaten my morsel alone, And the orphan has not shared it 31:18 (But from my youth he grew up with me as with a father, And from infancy I guided her), 31:19 If I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing, Or that the needy had no covering, 31:20 If his loins have not thanked me, And if he has not been warmed with the fleece of my sheep, 31:21 If I have lifted up my hand against the orphan, Because I saw I had support in the gate, 31:22 Let my shoulder fall from the socket, And my arm be broken off at the elbow. 31:23 'For calamity from God is a terror to me, And because of His majesty I can do nothing. (NASB)*

It is interesting how Job also felt as if the Lord did not or would not answer his prayers. Job couples the concept of sexual sin (see 31:6-12) to hearing from the Lord. The idea is the desire of the eyes in combination with the heart leads to actions, and those actions are what Job's friends are claiming have led to his calamity. Job speaks of having taken care of the widow and the poor person (31:16) and clothed those who are in need of clothing (31:19), and yet while doing all of these things in service to the Lord, the God of Israel brought calamity against not only him but his family as well, his children had died. This is a difficult thing to accept by some due to the modern theology that God is love, and He would not cause hardship or pain to come upon a person. Job said that he was innocent, and based upon the narrative of the book of Job, he was indeed innocent and a righteous man, and for both of these things, the Lord used him as an example of righteousness, that in the midst of his hardship, pain, and calamity, he did not blaspheme the Lord, and he maintained his faith. The point is, no matter what the circumstances, we are called to persevere in our faith, meaning we are to remain faithful to the Lord. This is why Yeshua did not place a condition upon what he said in regards to prayer, that we are to continue to seek the Lord in the midst of our troubles and believe we will receive what we ask for.

**Mark 11:24** *Therefore I say unto you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you. (NASB)*

**Mark 11:24** *Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. (KJV)*

Yeshua states that ALL believing prayer WILL receive the believed result. This Scripture also implies that unbelieving prayer MAY NOT receive. There is always hope in God's mercy.

The prayer David asks of the Lord is the following, ב יהוה הצילה נפשי משפת-שקר מלשון רמיה: .

120:2 *Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, From a deceitful tongue. (NASB)* The deceitful tongue is synonymous to the deceitful heart, the evil inclination (Lashon Hara). David asks also saying, *גַּם מִה-יִתֵּן לְךָ וּמִה-יִסִּיף לְךָ לְשׁוֹן רְמִיָּה:* 120:3 *What shall be given to you, and what more shall be done to you, You deceitful tongue? (NASB)* Is David speaking of the punishment that is due the deceitful tongue? Has deception become second nature to you to the extent that it is what goes through the narratives of the heart on a daily basis, seeking how to deceive? Have you ever sought to be cleansed of sin in the sense that one day we will stand before our Father in heaven, and you do not want to look around with deception, lust, covetousness, or some other sin remaining in the heart? According to the Scriptures, deceiving others is strictly forbidden: *“The Holy One, blessed be He, hates a person which says one thing with his mouth and another in his heart.” (Talmud Bavli Pesachim 113b)* We are not to be double minded. Defrauding by the seller overcharging or the buyer underpaying is also condemned, this is the example of having unjust scales, where the Mishnah (Bava Metzia 4:10) states: *“As there is wronging in buying and selling, there is wronging with words. A man must not ask: ‘How much is this thing?’ if he has no intention of buying it.”* Note how there is something about the person asking for a price when he is not really interested in buying that is related to having unjust scales. Yeshua said in *Matthew 7:1 Judge not, that ye be not judged. 7:2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. 7:3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? (KJV)* Here Yeshua suggests that the concept of unjust scales may also be applied to the one who is judging someone else due to their sins. This is consistent with the Lord wanting justice and truth for our lives, the very thing David is seeking the Lord for deliverance from in *Tehillim / Psalms 120:2*. An often quoted rabbinic saying (*Talmud Bavli Shabbat 55a*) states, *“Truth is the seal of the Holy One, blessed be He.”* In Rashi’s explanation, he describes this saying as referring to the Hebrew word for truth, *emet*, which is formed from the first letter of the alphabet, *alef*, the middle letter, *mem*, and the final letter, *tav*. He says the God of truth is found wherever there is truth and His absence is felt wherever there is falsehood. Jeremiah the prophet similarly says, *“The Lord God is truth” (Jeremiah 10:10)* and the Psalmist declares, *“Thy Torah is truth” (Tehillim / Psalms 119:142)*. David also states, *“And speaketh the truth in his heart” (Tehillim / Psalms 15:2)*, one explanation by the Jewish commentators is the God-fearing man should keep his promise even if he only made it in his heart, even if it was no more than a promise he had kept to himself without revealing it to the one to whom he made it.

David writes of something similar in *Tehillim / Psalms 10:1-12*.

### ***Tehillim / Psalms 10:1-12***

*10:1 Why do You stand afar off, O Lord? Why do You hide Yourself in times of trouble? 10:2 In pride the wicked hotly pursue the afflicted; Let them be caught in the plots which they have devised. 10:3 For the wicked boasts of his heart’s desire, And the greedy man curses and spurns the Lord. 10:4 The wicked, in the haughtiness of his countenance, does not seek Him. All his thoughts are, ‘There is no God.’ 10:5 His ways prosper at all times; Your judgments are on high, out of his sight; As for all his adversaries, he snorts at them. 10:6 He says to himself, ‘I will not be moved; Throughout all generations I will not be in adversity.’ 10:7 His mouth is full of curses and deceit and oppression; Under his tongue is mischief and wickedness. 10:8 He sits in the lurking places of the villages; In the hiding places he kills the innocent; His eyes stealthily watch for the unfortunate. 10:9 He lurks in a hiding place as a lion in his lair; He lurks to catch the afflicted; He catches the afflicted when he draws him into his net. 10:10 He crouches, he bows down, And the unfortunate fall by his mighty ones. 10:11 He says to himself, ‘God has forgotten; He has hidden His face; He will never see it.’ 10:12 Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up Your hand. Do not forget the afflicted. (NASB)*

David seeks this same question of whether the Lord hears his prayer or not, asking why the Lord seems to stand afar off in times of trouble. The unrighteous man boasts in his wicked and unrighteous heart saying there is no God who brings justice. This type of wickedness is what Radak describes in his commentary on

**Radak on Tehillim / Psalms 10:8 Part 1**

*He sitteth in the places of ambush of the villages: - The villages are the open towns which are upon the highways : as “her towns (lit. her daughters) and her villages” (Jos. 15:45) ; “the villages that Kedar doth inhabit” (Is. 42:11). Similarly we find (Zech. 2:8) “Jerusalem shall dwell as open regions.”*

**Part 2**

*In the secret places doth he murder the innocent : - for usually the wicked does not do his wicked work openly, but he sits in ambushes and secret places that he may beware of the sons of men so that they may not see him. But he cannot beware of the All-seeing God !*

**Part 3**

*His eyes lie in wait for the hapless : - לחלכה is equivalent to חלך with the addition of he ; and its interpretation : “for the poor.” He says : that the eyes of the wicked are on the look out for the poor, to take him. And יצפנו (lie in wait for) is an intransitive verb, as if he meant “ he sets his eyes in a hidden place (צפון), and from thence looks out over the roads.”*

Radak speaks of the unrighteous as hiding in secret places for the purpose to leap out and murder the innocent. Murder may come in many forms. One way to bring down the innocent is by the way of charging interest, this increases the burden to pay back a debt. If interest is too high and payments go beyond the means of the one who is in debt, it is impossible to become debt free. This may lead to slavery, as in the case of the one who is in debt selling himself in order to pay off his debt, or in the sense that one spends all of his means to pay off his debt not having enough even for food to feed his family. Radak says the eyes of the wicked are on the poor to take him down, and he lays in wait to do so, even by the means of an indirect method of bringing him down in any way that he is able.

In *Devarim / Deuteronomy 7:12-8:10*, Moshe told the Children of Israel that if they obeyed the Lord God of Israel, He would remain faithful to the covenant, He would bless them with fertility and agricultural productivity, and would ward off sickness. Moshe directed the people to destroy all of the seven nations in the Land of Canaan, those whom the Lord has delivered to them, and to utterly destroy their places of worship not serving their gods. Moshe tells the people not to fear these nations because they were numerous, but to recall what the Lord God did to Pharaoh and the Egyptians and the wonders by which the Lord has liberated them. The God of Israel would do the same to the peoples whom they feared, and would send a plague against them. The Torah states the Lord Himself would dislodge those peoples little by little, so that the wild beasts would not take over the land. Moshe directed the people to burn the images of their gods, not to covet nor keep the silver and gold on them, nor to bring an abhorrent thing into their houses. In *Devarim / Deuteronomy 8:1-9:3*, Moshe warned the Israelites not to forget the Lord God, not to violate His commandments, and not to grow haughty and believe that it was by their own power that had won their wealth, but to remember the Lord had given them the power to prosper. (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 8:18*) Moshe warns that if they forgot the Lord and followed other gods, then they would certainly perish like the nations that are being driven out and displace from the land. Moses warned the Israelites that they were to dispossess nations greater than they, but God would go before them as a devouring fire to drive out the land's inhabitants. This blessing the Lord gives to His people speaks of the importance of our having the correct motivation to walk in God's Ways, according to His commandments (i.e. to follow in the footsteps of the Messiah.) In doing so our Father in heaven will recognize us as His children, and do the things that He says He will do for us. The enemy will be dispossessed, and the Lord Himself will be involved in doing so.

David speaks of these things in the following way, *דָּ חֲצֵי גִבּוֹר שְׁנוּנִים עִם גְּחָלֵי רְתָמִים: 120:4 Sharp arrows of the warrior; With the burning coals of the broom tree. (NASB)* The deceitfulness of sin is paralleled

to the arrows of the enemy, and the burning of the broom tree. Studying the broom tree and fire reveals long burning coals may be manufactured from the broom bush. We read of the broom bush in *1 Kings 19:4-5*.

### ***1 Kings 19:4-5***

*19:4 But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom-tree; and he requested for himself that he might die; and said: "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." 19:5 And he lay down and slept under a broom-tree; and, behold, an angel touched him, and said unto him: "Arise and eat." (JPS)*

Elijah had run because all of the prophets of the Lord were being killed and his life was in danger. We are told that he sat down beneath a broom tree and requested that his life would end. Why the choice of a broom tree to lay under? Was this the predominant species of tree in the region he had fled to? Is there a deeper meaning behind the broom tree under which he slept? Was it believed the broom tree was the bush the Lord spoke to Moshe through? Was the broom tree the burning bush mentioned in the Torah? Did Elijah sit under the broom tree for the purpose of hearing from the Lord? Regardless of the meaning of the broom tree, David in his psalm and the Rabbis in the Talmud describe the broom tree as having a special kind of wood that is long burning.

### ***Talmud Bavli Shabbat 37b***

אמר רבה בר בר חנה אמר רבי יוחנן קטמה והובערה משהין עליה חמין שהוחמו כל צורכן ותב- שיל שבישל כל צורכו ואפי' גחלים של רותם ש"מ מצטמק ויפה לו מותר שאני הכא דקטמה אי *Rabba bar bar Hana said that Rabbi Yohanan said: With regard to a stove that he swept out or covered with ashes before Shabbat and subsequently reignited on Shabbat, one may leave hot water that was already completely heated and cooked food that was already completely cooked upon it, even if the coals were from the wood of a broom tree, which are very hot and long-burning. If so, conclude from this that even if food shrivels and improves while on the stove, it is permitted. The Gemara rejects this: Here, in this case, it is different because he covered it with ashes. Therefore, it is permitted to leave it on the stove. The Gemara asks: If so, what was the purpose of saying this halakha? The Gemara answers: Mention of the case where he covered it with ashes and it reignited on Shabbat was necessary. The Gemara challenges that explanation: This case is identical to the previous one. Why did Rabbi Yohanan find it necessary to repeat what was already said? The Gemara responds that there is a novel element in his statement. It was necessary to teach the case of coals from the wood of a broom tree. Even in a case of especially hot coals it is permitted.*

The rabbis are speaking of cooking food on the Shabbat and the broom tree that produces coals that may remain lit on into the Shabbat. This idea is coupled to obeying God's word, keeping His command of the Sabbath rest. The Rabbis in the Talmud go on to use the broom bush in an example of keeping Torah or not keeping Torah according to the *Talmud Bavli Chagigah 12b*.

### ***Talmud Bavli Chagigah 12b***

אמר ר"ל כל העוסק בתורה בלילה הקב"ה מושך עליו חוט של חסד ביום שנאמר יומם יצוה ה' חסדו ומה טעם יומם יצוה ה' חסדו משום ובלילה שירה עמי ואיכא דאמרי אמר ר"ל כל העוסק בתורה בעוה"ז שהוא דומה ללילה הקב"ה מושך עליו חוט של חסד לעוה"ב שהוא דומה ליום *With regard to the aforementioned verse, Reish Lakish said: Whoever occupies himself with Torah at night, the Holy One, Blessed be He, extends a thread of kindness over him by day, as it is stated: "By day, the Lord will command*

*His kindness,” and what is the reason that “by day, the Lord will command His kindness”? Because “and in the night His song,” i.e., the song of Torah, “is with me.” And some say that Reish Lakish said: Whoever occupies himself with Torah in this world, which is comparable to night, the Holy One, Blessed be He, extends a thread of kindness over him in the World-to-Come, which is comparable to day, as it is stated: “By day, the Lord will command His kindness, and in the night His song is with me.” א”ר לוי כל הפוסק מדברי תורה ועוסק בדברי שיחה מאכילין אותו גחלי רתמים שנאמר (איוב ל, ד) הקוטפים מלוח עלי שיח ושרש רתמים With regard to the same matter, Rabbi Levi said: Anyone who pauses from words of Torah to occupy himself with mundane conversation will be fed with the coals of the broom tree, as it is stated: “They pluck saltwort [maluah] with wormwood [alei siah], and the roots of the broom tree [retamim] are their food” (Job 30:4). The exposition is as follows: Those who pluck, i.e., pause, from learning Torah, which was given upon two tablets, luhot, which sounds similar to maluah, for the purpose of siah, idle chatter, are punished by having to eat coals made from “the roots of the broom tree.” And from where do we derive that Ma’on is called heaven? As it is stated: “Look forth from Your holy Ma’on, from heaven” (Deuteronomy 26:15).*

In Chaggigah 12b, the rabbis speak of the importance of studying the Torah and say the one who occupies himself with Torah during the night, the Lord extends kindness over him by day. The night, the darkness, is paralleled in the Scriptures to unrighteousness. The idea here may be that for the one who applies himself to studying the Torah rather than choosing unrighteousness, this illustrates one’s devotion to the Lord and His Word. The Talmud states, “by day, the Lord will command His kindness,” where the light is paralleled to righteousness. Naturally the righteousness of God is commanded during the light of day. This world (night) is full of sin, and the world to come (day) is full of righteousness, holiness, justice, and truth. The point is we are to take time (pause) to consider, and to contemplate the words of the Torah. If one chooses to occupy himself with mundane conversation will be fed the coals of the broom tree. Note the lingering nature of the coal, its ability to produce coals that remain for a long time. This implies suffering going to those who do not take the time to draw near to the Lord in His Word. These things may be paralleled to the effects of sin on our lives. The disregard for the God’s Word will lead to great suffering as a result of the sin in one’s life.

David concludes saying the following, ה אֹיְבָה לִי כִּי-גִרְתִּי מְשַׁךְ שְׁכֵנֹתַי עִם-אֶהְלִי קֶדְרָה: ו רַבַּת שְׁכֵנְהָ-לָה, אֲנִי-שְׁלוֹם: ז אֲנִי-שְׁלוֹם וְכִי אֲדַבֵּר הַמָּה לְמִלְחָמָה: 120:5 Woe is me, for I sojourn in Meshech, For I dwell among the tents of Kedar! 120:6 Too long has my soul had its dwelling With those who hate peace. 120:7 I am for peace, but when I speak, They are for war. (NASB) Sin in our lives functions in a way that is constantly at war with the spirit, whereas, the spirit the Lord gives to a man is that of peace and joy. Meshech (מֶשֶׁחַ) is named as a son of Japheth in *Bereshit / Genesis 10:2* and *1 Chronicles 1:5*. Another Meshech is named as a son of Aram in *1 Chronicles 1:17*. Aram is located east of Israel, and were the enemy of Israel, this is illustrated by David’s words saying that he sojourned in Meshech and dwelled in Kedar, and that his soul was too long with those who hate peace. Aram was the Hebrew designation for the nation of Syria, therefore the Arameans is a reference to Syrians. Note the English translations of *2 Kings 7:6* (biblehub.org) where the translators substituted the word Syrian for the Hebrew word Aramean. The borders of Aram encompassed a broad region immediately to the northeast of Israel, extending to the Euphrates River and including Mesopotamia. Among the major cities inhabited by ancient Arameans were Damascus (*Bereshit / Genesis 14:15*) and Hamath (*Bamidbar / Numbers 13:21*). Much later, Syrian Antioch was built and is mentioned in the Apostolic Writings (*Acts 11:19 and 13:1*). Note also when Abraham sought a wife for his son Isaac, he sent a servant to the land of Aram to find Rebekah (see *Bereshit / Genesis 24:10 and 25:20*). Laban, Jacob’s father-in-law, was called an Aramean in *Bereshit / Genesis 31:10*. Jacob himself was also called “a wandering Aramean” in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 26:5*, since both his mother and his grandfather were from Mesopotamia and therefore considered Arameans.

During the reign of King David, the Arameans of Damascus came to the help of another group of Syr-

ians. David defeated them, and the Arameans were forced to pay tribute (see *2 Samuel 8:5-6*). Later, the Arameans joined forces with the Ammonites in war against Israel (*2 Samuel 10*). The Israelites defeated Aram again and kept them in subjugation which is described during the reign of King Solomon (see *1 Kings 4:21*). Following the death of Solomon, the Arameans were a thorn in Israel's side. They fought against Israel during King Ahab's time, and Israel won (see *1 Kings 20*). Another battle with the Arameans however, led to the death of Ahab (*2 Chronicles 18:34*). The Arameans raided Israel (*2 Kings 6:8*) and later laid siege to the capital, Samaria (*2 Kings 6:24*). Elisha prophesied the atrocities that the Arameans would commit (*2 Kings 8:12*). The Arameans fought King Joram of Israel and wounded him (*2 Kings 8:28*), and they fought King Joash of Judah and wounded him (*2 Chronicles 24:23-25*). In addition, the eventual fall of Jerusalem at the hands of Babylon was aided by the Arameans (see *2 Kings 24:2*). The history of Israel reveals the Arameans were at war with Israel for a very long time, and David says these peoples do not love peace but war. Something to note, David says, *120:7 I am for peace, but when I speak, They are for war. (NASB)* Though these people chose war over peace, there were some Syrian's who sought the God of Israel. In *2 Kings 5*, we are told of Naaman the Syrian who had leprosy. Naaman, was a commander of the army of the king of Aram, he was an enemy of Israel, however he humbled himself enough to seek the help of the God of Israel. Naaman learned that the God of Israel is merciful to all those who call upon Him, even those who determined in their hearts to make war against God's people, there is always the opportunity to repent, to turn from their sins, and to seek the God of Israel. This is a wonderful demonstration of God's mercy and His power to forgive. Let's Pray!

## Rabbinic Commentary

The Rabbinic Commentary (Midrash) on *Tehillim / Psalms 120* has 7 parts. Reading through the Midrash we will be looking at Part 1, 3, 4, 6, and 7. Let's begin by outlining *Midrash Tehillim Chapter 119, Parts 3, 7, 10, 43, and 55*.

### Outline of Midrash Tehillim / Psalms, Chapter 120, Part 1, 3, 4, 6, and 7

#### Part 1

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the **דיבור המתחיל** (Dibur Hamathil) saying, *"A song of the goings up. When I was in trouble I called upon the Lord, and He answered me."*
- The **פתיחתא** (Petihata) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, *"What will your falseness profit you, or what good can it do you?"*
- The **משל** (mashal) *"the parable,"* goes on to explain the **פתיחתא** (Petihata), the rabbis speak of David's request of the Lord to deliver him from his enemies.
- The **נמשל** (Nimshal) *"expansion on the parable"* expands upon the **משל** (mashal), with a discussion on how the Lord is reliable to deliver with examples from the Torah.
- The Concluding phrase says, *"Scripture says also, Who is this that keeps ascending out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke? (Song 3:6) that is, Who is this that is helped to ascend steadily out of the wilderness? So, too, when the children of Israel come down, they do not make one descent at a time, for it was said to them, You will come down lower and lower (Devarim / Deuteronomy 28:43), and also How has the Lord cast down from heaven unto the earth, the beauty of Israel (Lamentations 2:1). On the other hand, when the children of Israel go up, they will go up many heights at once. Hence, it is said, A song of the goings up."*

#### Part 3

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the **דיבור המתחיל** (Dibur Hamathil) saying, *"What will it profit you, or what will be added unto you, you false tongue? (Tehillim / Psalms 120:3)"*



- The פתיחתא (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*What will your falseness profit you, or what good can it do you?*”
- The משל (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis discuss how the tongue sins.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the משל (mashal), with discussion enumerating the various sins a man commits.
- The Concluding phrase says, “*The people spoke against God and against Moshe (Bamidbar / Numbers 21:5). And how did the Lord act towards them? The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people. Why serpents? Because it was a serpent that spoke evil, as is said, They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; vipers’ venom is under their lips (Tehillim / Psalms 140:4). And so I made those evil tongues children of Israel into the dust that I had decreed for the serpent, Dust will you eat (Bereshit / Genesis 3:14).*”

#### Part 4

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying, “*What will it profit you, or what will be added unto you, you false tongue? (Tehillim / Psalms 120:3).*”
- The פתיחתא (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*The evil tongue is called triple-slaying.*”
- The משל (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis say the tongue is capable of slaying (murder).
- The נמשל (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the משל (mashal), with discussion and examples on how the tongue is capable of slaying.
- The Concluding phrase says, “*Thus, Moshe said to Israel, You will not be afraid of the terror by night (Tehillim / Psalms 91:5) that is, of the terror of the kingdom of Esau; and he went on to say, Nor of the arrow that flies by day, that is, the arrow of the scribes of Esau. Hence it is said, Sharp are the arrows of the mighty.*”

#### Part 6

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying, “*My soul has long dwelt with him that hates peace (Tehillim / Psalms 120:6).*”
- The פתיחתא (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*Is there any man who hates peace? Esau hates peace.*”
- The משל (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis speak of the man who hates peace.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the משל (mashal), by describing the one who hates peace as the wild boar.
- The Concluding phrase says, “*Evil beasts can refer only to the boar, for it is said, The wild boar out of the wood does root it up, and the wild beasts of the field devour it (Tehillim / Psalms 80:14), and the boar is none other than wicked Esau.*”

#### Part 7

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying, “*I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war (Tehillim / Psalms 120:7).*”
- The פתיחתא (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*What is meant by I am for peace?*”
- The משל (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis speak of the messiah defeating the nations.

- The נמשל (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the משל (mashal), saying that the messiah replies he will attack the nations with peace.
- The Concluding phrase says, “*Like the troubled sea, the wicked do not seek peace; but they devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land (Tehillim / Psalms 35:20). Wherefore? Because the wicked do not seek peace. Hence it is said I am for peace; but when I speak they are for war.*”

Midrash Tehillim 120, Part 1 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying, “*A song of the goings up. When I was in trouble I called upon the Lord, and He answered me.*” The פתיחה (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*What will your falseness profit you, or what good can it do you?*” The Midrash is about the lying tongue and opens asking the question of what does it value us to lie? The entire midrash states the following:

<p><b>מדרש תהלים פרק קכ סימן א</b></p> <p>א שיר המעלות אל ה' בצרתה לי וגו'. אמר ירמיהו שירו לה' הללו את ה' (ירמיהו כ יג), למה ועל איזה דבר, כי הציל [את] נפש אביון מיד מרעים (שם שם ירמיהו כ'), כשהקב"ה גואל את ישראל לא הם מודים בלבד אלא הכל מודים, תחלה גאלם ממצרים וקלסוהו הכל, שנאמר ויחזד יתרו וגו' ויאמר [יתרו] ברוך ה' וגו' עתה ידעתי וגו' (שמות יח ט י יא), חנניה מישאל ועזריה הוציאן מכבשן האש וקלסוהו שנאמר ענה נבוכדנצר ואמר בריך אלההון די שדרך משך ועבד נגו וגו' (דניאל ג כח), הרי לשעבר, ולעתיד כשיוצאין מן הצרות ומן הגלות אומר שבה, שנאמר שיר המעלות, שיר המעלה אין כתיב כאן אלא שיר המעלות כשישראל עולים אינם עולין מעלה אחת, אלא למעלות הרבה הן עולין, וכה"א אתה תעלה מעלה מעלה (דברים כח מג), וכתוב מי זאת עולה (שה"ש שיר השירים ג ו), מי זאת המתעלה מן המדבר, וכשהם יורדין אינם יורדין ירידה אחת, אלא ואתה תרד מטה מטה, וכה"א השליך משמים ארץ וגו' (איכה ב א), וכשעלו מעלות מעלות הם עולים, לכך נאמר שיר המעלות.</p>	<p><b>Midrash Tehillim 120, Part 1</b></p> <p>1. <i>A song of the goings up. When I was in trouble I called upon the Lord, and He answered me. Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips and from a deceitful tongue (Tehillim / Psalms 120:1). Jeremiah said, sing unto the Lord, praise you the Lord (Jeremiah 20:13). Why? On what occasion? Because, as the verse concludes, He has delivered the soul of the needy from the hand of evil doers. And when the Holy One blessed be He, delivers the children of Israel, not only will they praise Him, but all men will praise Him. Thus long ago, when God delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the Egyptians, all men praised God, as is said, And Jethro rejoiced, and Jethro said, Blessed be the Lord, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods (Shemot / Exodus 18:9-11). When God delivered Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah out of the fiery furnace, all men praised God, as is said Nebuchadnezzar spoke and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego who has sent His angel, and delivered His servants that trusted in Him (Daniel 3:28). These are instances out of the past, but in the future as well, when the children of Israel get free of their troubles and go up out of the exile, men of all nations will sing His praise, for it is said, A song of the goings up. Another comment, Note that the verse does not read, A song of a going up, but A song of the goings up, that is to say, when the children of Israel go up, they will go up not one height at a time, but will go up many heights at once. As Scripture says, Going, we will go up, and possess it (Bamidbar / Numbers 13:30). Scripture says also, Who is this that keeps ascending out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke? (Song 3:6) that is, Who is this that is helped to ascend steadily out of the wilderness? So, too, when the children of Israel come down, they do not make one descent at a time, for it was said to them, You will come down lower and lower (Devarim / Deuteronomy 28:43), and also How has the Lord cast down from heaven unto the earth, the beauty of Israel (Lamentations 2:1). On the other hand, when the children of Israel go up, they will go up many heights at once. Hence, it is said, A song of the goings up.</i></p>
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The rabbis discuss the topic of the lying tongue and the deceitful tongue based upon David's words in the psalm (Tehillim / Psalms 120:1). The midrash references Jeremiah 20:13, to sing to the Lord. This is connected to the Lord delivering the soul of the needy from the hand of the evil doer. This is important because it describes what our aspirations should be, to turn from sin, to seek Justice, Righteousness, Holiness, and Truth. Job 1:1 states: **א איש הָיָה בְּאֶרֶץ-עֵוֹן אִיּוֹב נִשְׁמוֹ וְהָיָה | הָאִישׁ הַהוּא תָם וְיִשָּׁר וְיִרָא אֱלֹהִים וְסָר מִרָע:** Job “*was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil.*” (וְסָר מִרָע) Here the Masoretic text

uses the word וָרָע (Verb Qal Perfect 3<sup>rd</sup> Mas. Sing.) This phrase is most important (“*turning away from evil*”) because it should challenge each of us. This Hebrew word is an action verb giving us the indication of something Job was doing continually, the action of turning, actively seeking to turn from sin. Based upon the first verse in the book of Job, we are told he was a righteous man, and what characterized him as being righteous was his making a habit of turning “*from evil*” (מָרָע). He did not dwell in “*evil*” constantly, but sought to turn from that way of life. Do you seek to turn from your evil ways? Are you in the habit of turning away from sin in your life, or do you dwell in the same sins consistently? Note in our spiritual life, we are always moving forward in one direction or another. Sin may be described as being caught in a river. If we do nothing, we will move along with it and be taken wherever it leads us. The only way to go in the direction we want to is to be actively working against the current, to forcefully move forward in the direction the Lord God of Israel wants us to move. This is why studying His Torah is so important for bringing us back to the way of life. This is the description of our dealings with sin in this life, the evil inclination (Yetzer Hara) is always pulling us towards the unnatural way of life, to sin. We must purposefully move away from sin to walk in God’s ways, and this is what is being described here in the book of Job, and what the rabbis are trying to say in regards to the midrash, “*He has delivered the soul of the needy from the hand of evil doers. And when the Holy One blessed be He, delivers the children of Israel, not only will they praise Him, but all men will praise Him.*” If we are not actively “*turning away from sin*” then we will by default be turning towards it. In light of that, ask yourself: in which direction are you moving right now? Are you being carried along towards sin, or like Job are you actively “*turning away from evil?*” This is the difference between walking in the Spirit and walking in the flesh.

The midrash continues with examples saying,

*When God delivered Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah out of the fiery furnace, all men praised God, as is said Nebuchadnezzar spoke and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego who has sent His angel, and delivered His servants that trusted in Him (Daniel 3:28). These are instances out of the past, but in the future as well, when the children of Israel get free of their troubles and go up out of the exile, men of all nations will sing His praise, for it is said, A song of the goings up. Another comment, Note that the verse does not read, A song of a going up, but A song of the goings up, that is to say, when the children of Israel go up, they will go up not one height at a time, but will go up many heights at once. As Scripture says, Going, we will go up, and possess it (Bamidbar / Numbers 13:30). (Midrash Tehillim 120, Part 1)*

The rabbis speak of examples from the Scriptures of the men of faith whom the Lord rescued from their troubles, and even death. *Isaiah 11:2* states “*The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.*” (NASB) The words of the prophet Isaiah and the rabbis in the midrash speak of a spiritual journey we are involved in as we walk with God, it is a journey of letting go of ourselves and submitting our lives to God’s ways. The song of praise spoken of in the midrash is related to the mighty ways in which the Lord has delivered His people, and as we grow in wisdom through our trials, we ascend many heights, as these concepts are paralleled to the temple mount, obedience, walking in God’s ways, and the presence of the Lord in our midst.

Midrash Tehillim 120, Part 1 concludes saying, “*Scripture says also, Who is this that keeps ascending out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke? (Song 3:6) that is, Who is this that is helped to ascend steadily out of the wilderness? So, too, when the children of Israel come down, they do not make one descent at a time, for it was said to them, You will come down lower and lower (Devarim / Deuteronomy 28:43), and also How has the Lord cast down from heaven unto the earth, the beauty of Israel (Lamentations 2:1). On the other hand, when the children of Israel go up, they will go up many heights at once. Hence, it is said, A song of the goings up.*” The midrash speaks of those who ascend from the wilderness and the one who helped them to ascend out of the wilderness. The wilderness journey is described as wanton sinfulness. The

entire reason the people of Israel wandered for so many years was due to their rejection of God's Word, and chose to not listen and obey. The midrash suggests the Lord is the One who helped the people ascend out of the wilderness. The people however when they descend (turn to sin), they do so not one step at a time, they come falling down lower and lower as the rabbis mention according to *Devarim / Deuteronomy 28:43*. It is only when we seek the Lord that we are able to overcome.

Midrash Tehillim 120, Part 3 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying, "What will it profit you, or what will be added unto you, you false tongue? (*Tehillim / Psalms 120:3*)" The homiletic introduction to the midrash states, "What will your falseness profit you, or what good can it do you?" The rabbis speak again of the false tongue. The entire midrash states the following:

<p><b>מדרש תהלים פרק קכ סימן ג</b>  ג מה יתן לך ומה יוסיף וגו'. מה אתה נהנה ומה אתה מועיל הוא חוטא ולא לו, אמר הקב"ה ללשון הגנב גונב לאכול אף על פי שכתוב לא תגנוב (שמות כ טו), גונב לשעה, שנאמר לא יבוזו לגנב וגו' (משלי ו ל), וכתוב לא תנאף (שמות כ יד), ונאף ועושה תאות נפשו לשעה, שנאמר נאף אשה חסר לב (משלי ו לב), אף על פי שמשחית נפשו עושה תאותו לשעה ואתה הלשון כלום הועלת לנפ- שך והרגת אומר לך מה אני עושה לך ללשון הרע כשם שעשית לעולם מתחלה והלשנת על אדם והוא הנחש, כך אני עושה לך, ונחש המדבר, דכתיב וידבר העם באלהים ובמשה (במדבר כא ה), מה עשה להם וישלח ה' בעם (נחשים) [את הנחשים] השרפים (שם שם במד- בר כ"א ו), ולמה נחש, אלא הוא המל- שין, שנאמר שננו לשונם כמו נחש וגו' (תהלים קמ ד), ואף אני כך אני עושה להם כשם שאמרתי לנחש ועפר תאכל וגו' (בראשית ג יד).</p>	<p><b>Midrash Tehillim 120, Part 3</b>  3. What will it profit you, or what will be added unto you, you false tongue? (<i>Tehillim / Psalms 120:3</i>) What will your falseness profit you, or what good can it do you? The tongue sins, but not for its own advantage. The Holy One blessed be He, says to the tongue, When a thief steals, he steals to eat. Though it is written, You will not steal (<i>Shemot / Exodus 20:13</i>), a thief will steal for the need of the moment, as it is said Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry (<i>Mishley / Proverbs 6:30</i>). And though it is written You will not commit adultery (<i>Shemot / Exodus 20:13</i>), a man will commit adultery and for the moment satisfy his appetite, as is said, He that commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; he that does it destroys his own soul (<i>Mishley / Proverbs 6:32</i>). Though the adulterer destroys his own soul, yet for the moment he satisfies his lust. But you, O tongue, what good have you done yourself by your slaying? I will tell you, O evil tongue, how I am going to act towards you. Even as you have acted towards the world from the beginning, as a serpent you spoke evil to Adam, so will I act towards you. You were also the serpent tongue of the wilderness, when, as it is written, The people spoke against God and against Moshe (<i>Bamidbar / Numbers 21:5</i>). And how did the Lord act towards them? The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people. Why serpents? Because it was a serpent that spoke evil, as is said, They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; vipers' venom is under their lips (<i>Tehillim / Psalms 140:4</i>). And so I made those evil tongues children of Israel into the dust that I had decreed for the serpent, Dust will you eat (<i>Bereshit / Genesis 3:14</i>).</p>
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The rabbis speak of the tongue and the soul, contrasting these by examples of the thief that steals because of hunger, and the man who commits adultery and lacks understanding. Committing adultery is among the עֲשֵׂר־הַדְּבָרִים aseret ha-devarim, "the ten words, or utterances" (the ten commandments), which is written along side with murder. The Scriptures have the following to say concerning adultery.

*Shemot / Exodus 20:14* "Thou shalt not commit adultery." (KJV)

*Vayikra / Leviticus 20:10* "And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death." (KJV)

**Devarim / Deuteronomy 5:18** “Neither shalt thou commit adultery.” (KJV)

**Jeremiah 7:9** “Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not;” (KJV)

**Jeremiah 23:14** “I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah.” (KJV)

**Jeremiah 29:23** “Because they have committed villany in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbours’ wives, and have spoken lying words in my name, which I have not commanded them; even I know, and am a witness, saith the LORD.” (KJV)

**Hosea 4:2** “By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.” (KJV)

It is clear that the Torah, Prophets, and Writings (Tanach) speaks of adultery as being quite heinous. Found throughout the Apostolic Writings (NT, see all four Gospels, the Book of Acts, many of the Epistles and the Book of Revelation), the disciples quote from the Tanach with many passages that condemn adultery. In Galatians adultery is mentioned alongside of many other sins of the flesh which modern culture does not consider to be very heinous. Note how the one who commits adultery with a woman, the one involved in sexual sin, is guilty of stealing another man’s wife. For this he is said to be a man who lacks understanding. The thief steals for his survival, but a man who commits adultery does so out of his own lusts. As a result, he destroys his own soul. Not just in the consequences for his sin, that his life may be forfeit due to the husband wanting to take his life, and that the Torah speaks of the man who does this is to die, but that this man entangles himself into the lust of the flesh, corrupting his soul, his heart, his mind, bringing a great difficulty upon himself to turn from this way of life. This corruption and depravity is said to bring eternal destruction. It is in this context that the tongue is paralleled, the midrash states, “*But you, O tongue, what good have you done yourself by your slaying?*” The tongue is paralleled to murder, and the deceitful tongue is paralleled to bringing eternal destruction upon one’s soul based upon the midrash. The rabbis continue in their discourse saying the following:

*I will tell you, O evil tongue, how I am going to act towards you. Even as you have acted towards the world from the beginning, as a serpent you spoke evil to Adam, so will I act towards you. You were also the serpent tongue of the wilderness, when, as it is written, The people spoke against God and against Moshe (Bamidbar / Numbers 21:5). (Midrash Tehillim 120, Part 3)*

Examples from the Torah illustrate the significance of the evil tongue, the serpent spoke to deceive, and the people spoke to rebel against the ways of the Lord. The corruption of the heart, the mind, the soul is paralleled to the tongue because as a man speaks, he does so from his heart (Luke 6:45)

Midrash Tehillim 120 Part 3 concludes saying, “*And how did the Lord act towards them? The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people. Why serpents? Because it was a serpent that spoke evil, as is said, They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; vipers’ venom is under their lips (Tehillim / Psalms 140:4). And so I made those evil tongues children of Israel into the dust that I had decreed for the serpent, Dust will you eat (Bereshit / Genesis 3:14).*” Note how the tongue has the capacity to bring us down to death, to dust itself. The midrash parallels the serpent to the evil tongue, the illustration is the people rebelled in their hearts which followed through by their words and their actions. Note in the parallel to adultery, because

there are honest ways for satisfying a man's desires (other than taking another man's wife), this man therefore "lacks understanding." The one who commits adultery (noeph) with a woman, the Hebrew naaph, "to commit adultery," is followed by an accusative lacking wisdom (*Mishley / Proverbs 6:32*), as in *Vayikra / Leviticus 20:10* and *Jeremiah 29:23*. The lack of understanding is "to be devoid of anything," or "to lack something." The expression, which occurs in *Mishley / Proverbs 7:7* and *9:4*, refers to the fleshly condition as being stupid, illustrating the point to which lust has reduced him. Lust has displaced right reason making the man devoid of judgment, without intelligence, senseless and stupid. We on the other hand are called to righteousness, holiness, justice, and truth, all of which calls for wisdom on our parts, to turn from sin, and to put a bridle on our tongues.

Midrash Tehillim 120, Part 4 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתהיל) (Dibur Hamathil) saying, "What will it profit you, or what will be added unto you, you false tongue? (*Tehillim / Psalms 120:3*)." The homiletic introduction to the midrash states, "The evil tongue is called triple-slaying." The entire midrash states the following:

מדרש תהלים פרק קכ סימן ד	Midrash Tehillim 120, Part 4
<p>ד מה יתן לך ומה יוסיף לך לשון רמיה. לשון הרע קורין אותו שלישי, ולמה שהורג ג' הורג עצמו והמקבלו, ומי שנאמר עליו, וכן אתה מוצא בדואג שהרג [שלשה הרג] עצמו שאין לו חלק לעולם הבא, והרג לאחזימלך הכהן שנאמר ואת נוב עיר הכהנים הכה לפי חרב (ש"א שמואל א' כב יט), והרג שאול ששמע לו וקבל ממנו, שנאמר וימת שאול ושלשת בניו וגו' (שם שמואל א' לא ו), וכן מלכות הרשעה בלשונה היא מכה כנחש, שנאמר קולה כנחש ילך וגו' (ירמיהו מו כב), נמשל הלשון לחץ, ולמה, שאם ישלוף האדם החרב שבידו להרוג את חברו, הוא מתחנן לו ומבקש הימנו רחמים, מתנחם ההורג ומחזיר החרב לנרתיקו, אבל החץ כיון שירה אותו והלך, אפילו מבקש להחזיר אינו יכול להחזיר, לכך נאמר חצי גבור שנונים [עם גחלי רתמים], הרוותם הזה מי שמדליקו גחליו אינם כבות. ומעשה היה בב' בני אדם שבאים במדבר וישבו תחת רותם אחד, לקטו עצים מרותם ובשלו להם מה שיאכלו, ואכלו לחם, לאחר שנה באו למדבר באותו מקום הרוותם, ומצאו אפר ממה שהדליקו, אמרו הרי י"ב חדש יש לנו משעברנו ואכלנו במקום הזה, מששו באפר והלכו עליו, וכוונת רגליהם מן הגחלים שתחת האפר, לפי שאין נכבות, לכך נמשל לשון הרע כגחלי רתמים, שנאמר חצי גבור שנונים וגו'. וכן הרשע הזה הורג בני אדם בלשון, כשם שהחץ הזה אינו יודע בו עד שהגיע אליו, כך לשון הרע אינו יודע עד שחציו של מלכות עשו באין פתאום ואין אדם יודע עד שהן מוציאים אותה מלה להריגה, או לאיסורין, לפי שאדם היה נתון במקומו וכותבין עליו להיכן שהוא והורגין אותו, לכך נאמר חצי גבור שנונים, וכן משה אמר לישראל לא תירא מפחד לילה (תהלים צא ה), מפחדם של מלכות עשו, מחץ יעוף יומם מן לבלרין שלהם, לכך נאמר חצי גבור שנונים</p>	<p>4. What will it profit you, or what will be added unto you, you false tongue? (<i>Tehillim / Psalms 120:3</i>). The evil tongue is called triple-slaying. Why? Because it slays three, the one who owns it, the one who listens to it, and the one of whom it speaks. And so you find in the story of Doeg that it slew three. It slew Doeg himself, for he has no portion in the world to come; it slew Ahimelech the priest, for it is said, And Nob the city of the priests (Doeg) smote with the edge of the sword (<i>1 Samuel 22:19</i>); it also slew Saul, who listened to it and accepted its words, for it is said, So Saul died, and his three sons. And the wicked kingdom slays with its tongue as does a serpent, for it is said, The voice thereof will go like a serpent (<i>Jeremiah 46:22</i>). The tongue is like an arrow. Why? Because if a man takes his sword in hand to slay his fellow, who thereupon pleads with him and begs for mercy, the would be slayer can repent and return the sword to its sheath. But an arrow once the would be slayer aims and lets it go, he cannot bring it back even if he wants to bring it back. Hence, it is said, Sharp are the arrows of the mighty, like coals of broom (<i>Tehillim / Psalms 120:4</i>), for a broom shrub once set on fire makes coals that cannot be extinguished. Once it happened that two men going through the wilderness sat down under a broom shrub, gathered some fallen twigs of the broom, broiled them themselves what they wanted to eat, and ate their victuals. A year later when they came back into the wilderness to the place of the broom shrub and found the ashes of the fire which they had kindled, they said, It is now twelve months since we came through here and ate in this place. Thereupon, they raked up the ashes, and as they walked over them, their feet were burnt by the coals under the ashes, for they were still unextinguished. Hence, the evil tongue is said to be like coals of broom, as in the verse Sharp are the arrows of the mighty, like coals of broom (<i>Tehillim / Psalms 120:4</i>). A wicked man can slay other men with his tongue. Like an arrow which a man is unaware of until it reaches him, so is the evil tongue. A man is unaware of it until its arrows from the kingdom of Esau come suddenly upon him. A man remains unaware of it until suddenly a sentence of death or imprisonment is released against him. For a while the man is given over to his own affairs, the scribes libel him wherever he may be and so slay him. Hence it is said, Sharp are the arrows of the mighty. Thus, Moshe said to Israel, You will not be afraid of the terror by night (<i>Tehillim / Psalms 91:5</i>) that is, of the terror of the kingdom of Esau; and he went on to say, Nor of the arrow that flies by day, that is, the arrow of the scribes of Esau. Hence it is said, Sharp are the arrows of the mighty.</p>

The rabbis continue their discussion on the evils of the tongue (לשון הרע). The apostle James wrote in his epistle describing the tongue as “a fire” and “a world of iniquity.” The tongue as a burning fire is untempered and it sets others on fire. The tongue that is described as a world of iniquity was made by God to sing His praises, but men have used it as an instrument of unrighteousness. Though it is the littlest part of the body, it has a world of sin within it because from the heart a man seeks, and we know there is no good thing within a man’s heart. This is why Paul wrote what he did in *Romans 7:18* “For I know that good itself does not dwell in me ...” He describes the desire to do what is good is not within him, there is no ability to do good. It is only by the power of God that he is able. The rabbis say the tongue is called a triple slayer, “Because it slays three, the one who owns it, the one who listens to it, and the one of whom it speaks.” The midrash goes on to illustrate this interpretation saying the following:

*And so you find in the story of Doeg that it slew three. It slew Doeg himself, for he has no portion in the world to come; it slew Ahimelech the priest, for it is said, And Nob the city of the priests (Doeg) smote with the edge of the sword (1 Samuel 22:19); it also slew Saul, who listened to it and accepted its words, for it is said, So Saul died, and his three sons. And the wicked kingdom slays with its tongue as does a serpent, for it is said, The voice thereof will go like a serpent (Jeremiah 46:22). (Midrash Tehillim 120 Part 4)*

Yeshua said, “There is no good tree which produces bad fruit... The good man out of the good stored up in his heart, brings forth what is good.” (*Luke 6:43-45*) Doeg (דוֹעַג) being a non-Jew, an Edomite, was chief herdsman to Saul, King of Israel, and is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible in 1 Samuel, chapters 21 and 22, where he is depicted as responsible for the deaths of a large number of priests. The evil tongue suggested the death of the priests, and Doeg acted upon the words of Saul to slay the priests. This is one of the reasons why the midrash states, “The tongue is like an arrow. Why? Because if a man takes his sword in hand to slay his fellow, who thereupon pleads with him and begs for mercy, the would be slayer can repent and return the sword to its sheath. But an arrow once the would be slayer aims and lets it go, he cannot bring it back even if he wants to bring it back. Hence, it is said, Sharp are the arrows of the mighty, like coals of broom (*Tehillim / Psalms 120:4*), for a broom shrub once set on fire makes coals that cannot be extinguished.” This is a great description of the tongue and the reason why it is so important for us to be careful what we say and how we say it. Once our words are released, there is not going back, the damage is done, just as the arrow is released from the bow. Another example is given in the midrash saying the following, “A year later when they came back into the wilderness to the place of the broom shrub and found the ashes of the fire which they had kindled, they said, It is now twelve months since we came through here and ate in this place. Thereupon, they raked up the ashes, and as they walked over them, their feet were burnt by the coals under the ashes, for they were still unextinguished. Hence, the evil tongue is said to be like coals of broom, as in the verse Sharp are the arrows of the mighty, like coals of broom (*Tehillim / Psalms 120:4*).” What is interesting about this explanation is how our words may create coals that burn within one’s heart and smolder for a very long time not going out. Have you ever experienced this sort of thing, due to a rash statement, a bad decision to say something that you did not mean, and a year or more later the person you spoke to is still holding onto what you said because it was so hurtful? This is the power of our words, we have the power to destroy an entire world by the words we say, just as the midrash states “A wicked man can slay other men with his tongue.” The idea of the arrows coming upon a man unaware until it reaches him, and that being the arrows from the kingdom of Esau are paralleled to the tongue, our words, and the heart of man. We do not know what a wicked man will say, or the timing at which he will speak, but depending upon to whom he speaks may cause great destruction.

Midrash Tehillim 120 Part 4 concludes saying, “Thus, Moshe said to Israel, You will not be afraid of the terror by night (*Tehillim / Psalms 91:5*) that is, of the terror of the kingdom of Esau; and he went on to say, Nor of the arrow that flies by day, that is, the arrow of the scribes of Esau. Hence it is said, Sharp are the arrows of the mighty.” The point is our trust is in the Lord who has the power to work in the hearts of men. Note something here the Scriptures recognize the good that King Cyrus of Persia did for the Jews,

historically. Not just in allowing them to return to Judah, but in funding the considerable cost of rebuilding the Jerusalem temple. For example, *Isaiah 41:2* (41:2 *‘Who has aroused one from the east Whom He calls in righteousness to His feet? He delivers up nations before him And subdues kings. He makes them like dust with his sword, As the wind-driven chaff with his bow. NASB*) refers to Cyrus as the righteous man from the east, and see also *Isaiah 44:28-45:4*.

**Isaiah 44:28-45:4**

44:28 *‘It is I who says of Cyrus, ‘He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire.’ And he declares of Jerusalem, ‘She will be built,’ And of the temple, ‘Your foundation will be laid.’ 45:1 Thus says the Lord to Cyrus His anointed, Whom I have taken by the right hand, To subdue nations before him And to loose the loins of kings; To open doors before him so that gates will not be shut: 45:2 ‘I will go before you and make the rough places smooth; I will shatter the doors of bronze and cut through their iron bars. 45:3 ‘I will give you the treasures of darkness And hidden wealth of secret places, So that you may know that it is I, The Lord, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name. 45:4 ‘For the sake of Jacob My servant, And Israel My chosen one, I have also called you by your name; I have given you a title of honor **Though you have not known Me.** (NASB)*

The Lord God of Israel has the power to work in men’s hearts for the good of His people and therefore we are not to fear men, but to trust in the Lord God in heaven for our salvation and deliverance.

Midrash Tehillim 120 Part 6 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying, *“My soul has long dwelt with him that hates peace (Tehillim / Psalms 120:6).”* The homiletic introduction to the midrash states, *“Is there any man who hates peace? Esau hates peace.”* The entire midrash states the following:

<p><b>מדרש תהלים פרק קכ סימן ו</b></p>	<p><b>Midrash Tehillim 120, Part 6</b></p>
<p>ו רבת שכנה לה נפשי וגו'. וכי יש אדם שונא שלום, עשו שונא השלום, וכה"א ונ-תתי שלום בארץ (ויקרא כו ו), אימתי יהיה כן, והשבתי חיה רעה מן הארץ (שם שם ויקרא כ"ו), ואין חיה רעה אלא חזיר, שנא-מר יכרסמנה חזיר מיער (תהלים פ יד), זה עשו הרשע.</p>	<p>6. <i>My soul has long dwelt with him that hates peace (Tehillim / Psalms 120:6). Is there any man who hates peace? Esau hates peace. Scripture says, I will give you peace in the land (Vayikra / Leviticus 26:6). When will there be peace? The verse goes on to answer, After I will cause evil beasts to cease out of the land. Evil beasts can refer only to the boar; for it is said, The wild boar out of the wood does root it up, and the wild beasts of the field devour it (Tehillim / Psalms 80:14), and the boar is none other than wicked Esau.</i></p>

The rabbis speak of dwelling with those who hate peace. The question is *“How should we react towards those who hate us, curse and mistreat us?”* Yeshua taught to treat others the way you want to be treated, *Luke 6: 27-31* *“But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. And just as you want people to treat you, treat them in the same way.”* The rabbis say that *“Evil exists because it is so much more powerful than good. Is there a lover in the world who loves with the intensity that a hater hates? Is there a light as bright as darkness is black? Has there ever been an act of kindness unleashed with the force and vigor contained in an act of cruelty?”* Cruelty is implanted into the heart of a man because of hatred. When we read *Romans 9:13*, *“Just as it is written: ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.’”* We find here an early commentary by Paul on the Lord God loving and hating people. It is important to remember that the Lord hates the way of the wicked. Esau despised the covenant of God and lived only for the moment. Note how this seems to parallel the one whose heart hates peace and knows only hatred. The Midrash states, *“When will there be peace? The verse goes on to answer, After I will cause evil beasts to cease out of the land.”* The obvious



conclusion from the midrash is the reference to the beasts of the Land, the Lord will cause them to cease (die) due to their sins. The rabbis refer to Esau as the one who is not at peace. The prophet Malachi has the following to say concerning Esau.

### **Malachi 1:1-8**

*1:1 The oracle of the word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi. 1:2 'I have loved you,' says the Lord. But you say, 'How have You loved us?' 'Was not Esau Jacob's brother?' declares the Lord. 'Yet I have loved Jacob; (וְאֶת־יַעֲקֹב אָהַבְתִּי יְהוָה וְאֶת־אֶחָיו עֵשָׂו) 1:3 but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness.' (וְאֶת־עֵשָׂו שָׂנֵאתִי) 1:4 Though Edom says, 'We have been beaten down, but we will return and build up the ruins'; thus says the Lord of hosts, 'They may build, but I will tear down; and men will call them the wicked territory, and the people toward whom the Lord is indignant forever.' 1:5 Your eyes will see this and you will say, 'The Lord be magnified beyond the border of Israel!' 1:6 "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?" says the Lord of hosts to you, O priests who despise My name. But you say, 'How have we despised Your name?' 1:7 'You are presenting defiled food upon My altar. But you say, 'How have we defiled You?' In that you say, 'The table of the Lord is to be despised.' 1:8 'But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?' says the Lord of hosts. (NASB)*

Note also the word used for hate in *Malachi 1* is a Hebrew idiom which refers to loving less. This is evident from *Bereshit / Genesis 29:30* (29:30 So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and indeed he loved Rachel more than Leah, and he served with Laban for another seven years. NASB, ל וַיְבֹא גַם אֶל-רָחֵל וַיֵּאָהֶב גַּם-אֶת-רָחֵל) The phrase loved Rachel more than Leah is used as the equivalent of Leah was hated. This type of idiom is being used by Yeshua in *Matthew 10:37*.

### **Matthew 10:37-42**

*10:37 'He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. 10:38 'And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. 10:39 'He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it. 10:40 'He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. 10:41 'He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. 10:42 'And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.' (NASB)*

Yeshua speaks of loving more as opposed to loving less. Do we love sin more than we love the Lord? This is what Yeshua was referring to, the one who receives the prophet, righteous man, or gives a cup of water will receive his reward. These are righteous acts that we do or do not do. This is in the context of taking up the cross and following Yeshua, suggesting that we are to die to sin and live for the Lord. Midrash Tehillim 120 Part 6 concludes saying, "Evil beasts can refer only to the boar, for it is said, The wild boar out of the wood does root it up, and the wild beasts of the field devour it (Tehillim / Psalms 80:14), and the boar is none other than wicked Esau." The rabbis used the boar as a reference to the unclean thing, just as the prophet Malachi is referring to the people who offer unclean (imperfect) beasts to the Lord upon the altar. All of these things may be paralleled to our lives being offered before the Lord, whether we prefer sin or the ways

of the Lord?

Midrash Tehillim 120 Part 7 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying, “*I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war (Tehillim / Psalms 120:7).*” The homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*What is meant by I am for peace?*” The entire midrash states the following:

<p><b>מדרש תהלים פרק קכ סימן ז</b> ז אני שלום וכי אדבר וגו'. מהו אני שלום, כך אמר הקב"ה למשיח תרועם בשבת ברזל וגו' (שם תהלים ב ט), א"ל רבש"ע לאו אלא בשלום אני פותח לדבר לגוים, לכך נאמר אני שלום וכי אדבר וגו'. אמר ישעיהו שלום שלום לרחוק ולקרוב וגו' (ישעיה נז יט), אמר הקב"ה אני ידי פשו- טות לבעל תשובה איני מחזיר בריה מי שנתן לי לבו בתשובה, לכך נאמר שלום שלום לרחוק ולקרוב, וכל מי שיבא אצלי אני בא אצלו ומרפא אותו, שנאמר ור- פאתיו (שם ישעיהו נ"ז), והרשעים כים נגרש (שם ישעיהו נ"ז כ), כך הם הר- שעים אינם מבקשים שלום, שנאמר כי לא שלום ידברו וגו' (תהלים לה כ), למה כי אינם מבקשים שלום, לכך נאמר אני שלום וכי אדבר וגו'.</p>	<p><b>Midrash Tehillim 120, Part 7</b> <i>7. I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war (Tehillim / Psalms 120:7). What is meant by I am for peace? That the Holy One blessed be He, said to the Messiah, You will break them, the nations, with a rod of iron; you will dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel (Tehillim / Psalms 2:9), and that the Messiah replied, No, O Master of the Universe. When I speak to the nations, I will begin by speaking of peace. Hence, it is said I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war. Isaiah said, Peace, peace, to him that is far off and to him that is near, says the Lord, and I will heal him (Isaiah 57:19) that is, the Holy One blessed be He, said I, My hands reach out to the penitent. I turn back no man who gives me his heart in repentance. Hence, Peace, peace, to him that is far off and to him that is near. If any man comes towards Me, I will go towards him, and I will heal him, as is said, I will heal him. But the wicked are like the troubled sea (Isaiah 57:20). Like the troubled sea, the wicked do not seek peace; but they devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land (Tehillim / Psalms 35:20). Wherefore? Because the wicked do not seek peace. Hence it is said I am for peace; but when I speak they are for war.</i></p>
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The Rabbis speak of the one who is for peace is a reference to the Messiah who will break down the nations with a rode of iron. The Messiah's response to this claim is “*No, O Master of the Universe. When I speak to the nations, I will begin by speaking of peace. Hence, it is said I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war.*” This seems to suggest the Messiah's rule being not established by physical force, or maintained by military defenses. The Messiah's kingdom will be peaceful and peace-bringing. This is spoken of in the words from David, Isaiah, and Micah (Compare *Tehillim / Psalm 72:7, Isaiah 2:4, 9:4-7, and Micah 5:10-11*). The Messiah will speak peace unto the heathen. He will extend this peace to all the world, teaching the ungodly to receive his spiritual rule, to compose their differences, to lay aside their arms, and to live as one united family (Note how Paul interprets the Messiah's role in *Ephesians 2:17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near NIV*). The midrash continues saying, “*Isaiah said, Peace, peace, to him that is far off and to him that is near, says the Lord, and I will heal him (Isaiah 57:19) that is, the Holy One blessed be He, said I, My hands reach out to the penitent. I turn back no man who gives me his heart in repentance. Hence, Peace, peace, to him that is far off and to him that is near. If any man comes towards Me, I will go towards him, and I will heal him, as is said, I will heal him. But the wicked are like the troubled sea (Isaiah 57:20).*” Note how the midrash connects the one being far off to the one being near, and the repentant man being at peace before the Lord. The rabbis are making a reference to the man who lives in sin (far away) and the one who lives in righteousness (those who are near). See the context here what Paul is trying to say:

**Ephesians 2:8-16**

*2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 2:9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we*

*would walk in them. 2:11 Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called 'Uncircumcision' by the so-called 'Circumcision,' which is performed in the flesh by human hands 2:12 remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 2:14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 2:15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, 2:16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. (NASB)*

Paul speaks of this enmity in the Law of the commandments, referring to Parashat Ekev (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 8*) to separate from the nations and destroy their places of worship and not inquire of their form of worship, and not to serve the Lord our God in the way they served their gods. Paul draws a parallel to the one who lives in sin, being far away, to those who do not know God, the gentiles, and those who walk in righteousness and who do know God, Israel. He states that we were all created for good works (*maasim tovim*) referring to the Torah as the way of life for the Jew and Gentile, saying the Gentiles were formerly “*in the flesh*” called the uncircumcised, are now called to walk in the Spirit, the circumcised. Paul is not teaching against the Torah, he is confirming it, since the Gentile believers have left their way of paganism to serve the God of Israel in righteousness and truth.

Midrash Tehillim 120 Part 7 concludes saying, “*Like the troubled sea, the wicked do not seek peace; but they devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land (Tehillim / Psalms 35:20). Wherefore? Because the wicked do not seek peace. Hence it is said I am for peace; but when I speak they are for war.*” Sin causes a man to be restless, and the one who enjoys their sin will reject not only God’s Word but also His people who choose to turn from sin and not be joined to unrighteousness. The only way for us to raise out of sin is to seek the Lord God of Israel and His righteous ways in the Messiah Yeshua. Then asking the Lord to fill us with His Spirit to empower us to overcome sin, and to live for Him. Let’s Pray!

Heavenly Father,

Thank You Lord for Your mercy and the great work that you are doing in our lives. We believe You are able to overcome all things, from saving us from our enemies, to the deliverance from sin, and even to work in our hearts to deeply, truly, and honestly seek you all the days of our lives. We recognize the weaknesses in our strength and resolve to serve You and to do what is expected, to be humble and to pray and to remain in Your word. Lord help us to have the strength to stand for truth and life, to have the desire to seek You in prayer and in Your Word, to have faith in Yeshua Your Messiah, and to love our neighbor each day. We thank You Lord for Your continued faithfulness to Your promises and to us. 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