Midrash Tehillim / Psalms 108

Midrash Tehillim 108, Part 1

1. A song, a Psalm of David. My heart is prepared, O God; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises (Tehillim / Psalms 108:1-2). Elsewhere, this is what Scripture says, And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications (Daniel 9:3). But is not prayer the same as supplications? The distinction between them is this. Righteous men first incline themselves toward the Holy One blessed be He, so that He will listen to their prayers. And so our Rabbis taught, A man must begin to pray only in a mood of humility, not in a mood of frivolity, nor in a mood of lightness, nor in a mood of banter, so that the Holy One blessed be He will listen to his prayer.

For in saying, Then David the king went in, and sat before the Lord (2 Samuel 7:18), does Scripture mean that sitting is permitted in the presence of the Holy One blessed be He? Does not a man pray only in standing position, as it is said, Then stood up Pinchas, and prayed (Tehillim / Psalms 106:30)? How, then, can it be said, Then David sat before the Lord? What the verse implies, however, is not that he sat, but that he had his heart set to pray. Indeed, as he asked at once, Who am I O Lord God, and what is my house? (2 Samuel 7:18), his humility means that he had prepared his heart for prayer, as is said, You will prepare their heart, You will cause Your ear to attend. (Tehillim / Psalms 10:17). Rabbi Samuel son of Nahmani taught, When you prepare your heart for prayer, you may be assured that your prayer will be heard by the Holy One blessed be He, for it is said, You will prepare your heart, You will cause their ear to attend, and again, If the people will pray unto the Lord, You in heaven will hear their prayer (1 Kings 8:45). Scripture also says, For Ezra had prepared his heart (Ezra 7:10) and The king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him (Ezra 7:6).

So, too, you find that Hezekiah who prayed for Israel it is said, Hezekiah had prayed for them, saying, The good Lord pardon (2 Chronicles 30:18), but before he prayed, he had prepared his heart, as is said, He prepared his whole heart to seek God,
the Lord, the God of his fathers (2 Chronicles 30:19). And because he prepared his heart, the Holy One blessed be He, listened to his prayer, and healed the people (2 Chronicles 30:20). Scripture also says, Then the priests, the Levites, arose and blessed the people; and their voice was heard of the Lord, and their prayer came up to His holy habitation, even unto heaven (2 Chronicles 30:27). David said, Accordingly, behold, I will prepare my heart so that the Holy One blessed be He, will hear my prayer. Hence it is said, My heart is prepared, O God; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises (Tehillim / Psalms 108:2).

Midrash Tehillim 108, Part 2

2. Another interpretation of My heart is prepared, O God. David said, I will prepare my heart as incense. Therefore, it is written, Let my prayer be prepared as incense before You (Tehillim / Psalms 141:2). The Holy One blessed be He, answered David, You have prepared for your prayer. Therefore, I will prepare your throne, as is said, And your house and your kingdom will be made sure forever before you; your throne will be prepared forever (2 Samuel 7:16). I will sing, yes, I will sing praises, even with my glory (Tehillim / Psalms 108:2). David said I will sing on account of the glory which You have given me, as is said, Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that You have brought me hither (2 Samuel 7:18) that is, brought me to my kingship. Hence, my glory. Therefore, I have not been sleeping, but have awakened the dawn with psaltery and harp, as it is said, Awake, psaltery and harp; I will awake the dawn (Tehillim / Psalms 108:3). David wne ont, Never has dawn come upon me and found me asleep. For I want to awake the dawn. Hence, he said, I will awake the dawn, and also At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto You (Tehillim / Psalms 119:62). At midnight I will rise ot give thanks unto You (Tehillim / Psalms 119:147). I will give thanks unto You, O Lord, among the peoples (Tehillim / Psalms 108:4). For what reason? Because Your mercy is great above the heavens (Tehillim / Psalms 108:5) mercy on my behalf which reaches unto heaven. For I was fearful because of my sin, and You did conform me, and showed me mercy. Even thus Scripture says, And David comforted BatSheva his wife, and she bore a son, and he sent comfort by the hand of Nathan the prophet, and he called his name Jedidiah (Beloved of the Lord) (2 Samuel 12:24-25).