Midrash Tehillim

Midrash Tehillim / Psalms 52

Midrash

Midrash Tehillim, Part 1

1. For the leader. Maschil of David; when Doeg came and told Saul, David is come to the house of Ahimelech (Tehillim / Psalms 52:1). These words are to be read in the light of the verse, Suffer not your mouth to bring your flesh into guilt (Ecclesiastes 5:5). Rabbi Joshua son of Levi said, This verse speaks of men who pledge charity. Suffer not your mouth to promise rashly that you will give, and then, not give. Neither say before the messenger, that this, to the public messenger promise rashly that you will give, and then, not give. Neither speaks of men who pledge charity. Suffer not your mouth to bring your...
minds, they are smitten with leprosy. Neither say before the messenger (Ecclesiastes 5:5) that is, Suffer not your mouth to bring you before the priest, who it is said, is a messenger of the Lord of hosts (Malachi 2:7). For the leper must go to the priest, as is said This will be the Torah of the leper (mesora), that is, the mosira, the man who utters slander, he will be brought unto the priest (Vayikra / Leviticus 14:2). Wherefore should God be angry at your voice refers to the voice which you let escape from your mouth when you slander your neighbor. And destroy the work of your hands, the little knowledge of Torah at your command, that you destroy. Who was such a slanderer? Doeg, When he slandered David, he became leprous, for it is said, God will likewise break your forever and root you out of the land of the living forever (Tehillim / Psalms 52:7). What else can He break mean except that Doeg become leprous, just as it is said of the leprous house, He will break the house (Vayikra / Leviticus 14:2). And what caused his leprosy? The cause of it was that he slandered David, as is said When Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech.

Midrash Tehillim 52, Part 2

2. Another comment, The words When Doeg the Edomite came, etc, are to be read in the light of what Scripture says elsewhere. Death and life are in the power of the tongue (Mishley / Proverbs 18:21), everything depends on the tongue. If a man desires to speak with an evil tongue, he speaks; if a man desires to speak with a good tongue, he speaks. Say not, because power was given to my tongue, behold, I will say what I want to. For the Torah long ago admonished Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking guile (Tehillim / Psalms 34:14). To your loss, you may say. God forbid. To your profit, for the Holy Spirit proclaims, whose keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps his soul from troubles (Mishley / Proverbs 21:23). Another comment on Death and life are in the power of the tongue (Mishley / Proverbs 18:21). Consider how vicious slander is, for a man cannot let slander out of his mouth without denying the Root of the universe. And the proof? Rabbi Jose taught, it is in the verse, Who have said, with our tongue will we prevail; our are our own, who is lord over us? (Tehillim / Psalms 12:5), where the words who is lord over us? Prove that the slanderer denies the Root of the universe. The Holy One himself, blessed be He, cries out, if one dare speak thus, concerning slanderers, Who will rise up for Me against the evil doer? (Tehillim / Psalms 94:16) that is to say, Who can abide them, and who can stand them? Gehenna. But Gehenna says, I cannot stand them. Then the Holy One blessed be He, says to Gehenna, Then I from above, and you from below, as Scripture says, Upon you, you slanderous tongue, sharp arrows from the Mighty One above with coals of juniper from below (Tehillim / Psalms 120:4). The Holy One blessed be He, also said to Israel, If your desire is to be saved from Gehenna, stay away from slander, and you will gain life in the world to come.

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come, for it is said, Who is the man that desires life (Tehillim / Psalms 34:13), that is, life in the world to come? To gain it, keep your tongue from evil (Tehillim / Psalms 34:14). Another comment on Who is the man that desires life? Our Masters said, It happened that a peddler who went around in the villages of Sepphoris used to go crying his wares, saying, Who would like the elixir of life? The daughter of Rabbi Yannai heard him and said to her father, a peddler is going around saying, who would like the elixir of life? Rabbi Yannai said to her, God and call him. She went and called him to rabbi Yannai, who asked him, What is this elixir of life which you sell? The peddler answered, Even you know not what this elixir is? Rabbi Yannai replied, nevertheless, declare it to me. The peddler said, Bring me a scroll of the Psalms. They brought it to him and he unrolled it, and showed rabbi Yannai what David said, namely, who is the man that desires life, etc. (Tehillim / Psalms 34:14). And what did rabbi Yannai do? He gave the peddler six coins. The disciples asked rabbi Yannai, Our master, did you not know this verse? And he answered, yes, but another master, did you not know this verse? And he answered, yes. Thus Cain said of murder, My punishment is more great than I can bear (Bereshit / Genesis 4:13); Joseph exclaimed of unchastity, how then can I do this great wickedness? (Bereshit / Genesis 39:9). Moshe said of idolatry, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin (Shemot / Exodus 32:31). But it is written of slander, The Lord will cut off the tongue that speaks great things (Tehillim / Psalms 15:4). Yet if a man ate of them and said no blessing, Death comes to him who speaks it, him who accepts it, and him of whom it is spoken. Whose history proves this? Doeg’s. For he slandered Ahimelech before Saul, and the three of them, Saul, Ahimelech, and Doeg were slain, Ahimelech, as it is said You will surely die, Ahimelech (1 Samuel 22:16); Saul, as it is said so Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord (1 Chronicles 10:13); and Doeg, who was banished from the world, as is said, God will likewise break you forever (Tehillim / Psalms 52:7), that is, from the world to come. And what caused his ban-

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ishment? Slander, as is said When Doeb the Edomite came and told Saul.

Midrash Tehillim 52, Part 3

3. Another comment. The words When Doeb the Edomite came and told Saul, etc., are to be read in the light of what Scripture says elsewhere, Though his hatred cover itself with guile, his wickedness will be openly showed before the assembly (Mishley / Proverbs 26:26). Rabbi Hiyya taught, Hypocrites must be shown up in order to prevent desecration of the Name. Thus, it is said, But when the righteous turns away from his righteousness, he will be brought to commit an iniquity (Ezekiel 18:24). And why does the Holy One, blessed be He, open a way of iniquity to the hypocrite? In order to make his deeds plainly visible to men; otherwise, the punishment that befalls him on account of his guileful transgressions would cause men to raise a cry against the measure of justice. Hence, Scripture says, Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul David is come to the house of Ahimelech.

Midrash Tehillim 52, Part 4

4. Doeg the Edomite. Why was he called the Edomite? Because people living in the city of Nob and beyond were known as Edomites, and so he was called after the name of the area in which his city was located. Rabbi Samuel son of Nakhmani maintained, Doeg called himself the Edomite (ruddy) as is said Now he was ruddy (admoni), and withal of beautiful eyes (1 Samuel 16:12). And Doeg was not alone in his envy of David, all the children of Doeg’s clan, the Ziphites, Nabal and Carmelite, and the men of Keilah, were envious of him. Rabbi Abba son of Kahan maintained, Doeg was called the Edomite (bloody one) because he so turned maters as to have decreed the shedding of the blood (dam) of Nob, the city of the priests as is said Doeg the Edomite turned, and he fell upon the priests and he slew on that day four score and five persons (1 Samuel 22:18). Rabbi Nakhmani said, Doeg was called the Edomite because he decreed
the shedding of the blood of David for he said to Saul concerning David, he deserves to die (1 Samuel 20:31), meaning that David’s blood was to be shed, and that David’s wife could marry another man. Son of Karppara said, Doeg was called the Edomite because he forbade Saul to shed the blood (dam) of Agag. For Doeg said, it is written in the Torah You shall not kill it and its young (Vayikra / Leviticus 22:28); yet you are about to kill young and old, children and women, in one day. Therefore, Doeg was called the Edomite, because through Doeg’s decree Saul was adjudged blood-guilty. Rabbi Isaac said, Doeg was called the Edomite because he used to redden (maadim) with shame the faces of all who argued the Torah with him. Whenever a man debated with him, Doeg, with his arguments, would reduce him to silence. Rabbi Khanina said, Doeg was called the Edomite, because like Edom which seeks vengeance and bears a grudge in its heart, so Doeg sought vengeance and bore a grudge in his heart against David.

Midrash Tehillim 52, Part 5

5. Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul (Tehillim / Psalms 52:1). And told Saul, that is, and embittered Saul. What did he say to him? He said this, Ahimelech has made David king while you are still living, for though inquiry may not be made of the Urim and Thummim on behalf of any man except the king, or members of the court, or one upon whom the needs of many people depend, yet inquiry has been made of the Urim and Thummim on behalf of David. When Doeg told him this, a spirit of bitter envy entered into Saul. Whence do we know this? Because Saul said to Ahimelech, You have given him bread, ad a sword (1 Samuel 22:13), and as if this were not enough for you, you have also inquired of God for him. Therefore, you will surely die, Ahimelech (1 Samuel 22:16). As soon as Ahimelech saw that the face of Saul was seething with anger at him, Ahimelech answered the king, and said, and who among all your servants is so trusted as David, who is the king’s son in law (1 Samuel 22:14)? Therefore, impute nothing to me either because of the giving or because of the inquiring. Indeed, was this the first time that David called upon me? Be it far from me (1 Samuel 22:15). This was not the first time, for it is my custom to inquire on behalf of David. Therefore, let not the king impute anything unto his servant, nor to all the house of my father. But Saul said to him, So. All along you inquired for David, and yet you say you are not deserving of death? As soon as Saul caused the sentence of death to be issued against Ahimelech, the king said unto the guard that stood about him, turn and slay the priests of the Lord (1 Samuel 22:17). But the guards did not heed him. As Solomon said, whoso keeps the commandment shall know no evil thing (Ecclesiastes 8:5) it was Avner and Amasa who acting as guards would not permit themselves to touch the priests, as is said, But the servants of the king would not (1 Samuel 22:17). When Saul saw that the guards did not obey him,
he said to Doeg, Why do you stand still? You did smite the priests at Nob with your tongue. Rise now and smite them with the sword, as is said, The king said to Doeg, turn and fall upon the priests (1 Samuel 22:18). Immediately, Doeg stood up and smote them, as is said, He slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod. Behold, what might there was in Doeg. No man in the whole world helped him; by himself he slew them. And not these priests alone, but also Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword (1 Samuel 22:19). Thereupon, David cried out and said, Why do you boast yourself of evil, O mighty man? The mercy of God endures continually (Tehillim / Psalms 52:3).

Midrash Tehillim 52, Part 6

6. Why do you boast yourself of evil, O mighty man? (Tehillim / Psalms 52:3) that is, David said to Doeg, O that you, a mighty man, wealthy manand chief of the Sanhedrin, should occupy yourself with this evil thing, and speak with the evil tongue. Of evil, O mighty man? David asked Doeg, is this really might? That a man see and his fellow on top of a roof push him off? Is this might? When a man truly be called mighty man? When his fellow is about to fall into a pit, and he seizes his hand so that he does not fall in. Or, when he sees his fellow fallen into an pit, and he lifts him up out of it. But you saw Saul angry at me, and so you pissed on me. Of evil, O mighty man? You think evil of mercy is on her tongue (Mishley / Proverbs 31:26), occupy yourself with slander, with an evil tongue. Of evil, O mighty man? David asked, come and see how vicious is an evil tongue. A man has two hundred and forty eight parts, some erect, some prone, some capable of being either one or the other, the tongue however is imprisoned with the cheeks and the teeth surrounding

ןודא כיון اللبن מגحان. בשאמר (ןודא שמעה lain) אוסף (ןודא שמעה lain) המילים (ןודא שמעה lain) בולש קים ומבלה בחרב. שאמרו זקנים את המילים (ןודא שמעה lain) שלвоз שלפתיו או נושא את פנים (ןודא שמעה lain) שאפר בן מאיר ב što Pis: שאפר בן מאיר he said to Doeg, Why do you stand still? You did smite the priests at Nob with your tongue. Rise now and smite them with the sword, as is said, The king said to Doeg, turn and fall upon the priests (1 Samuel 22:18). Immediately, Doeg stood up and smote them, as is said, He slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod. Be behold, what might there was in Doeg. No man in the whole world helped him; by himself he slew them. And not these priests alone, but also Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword (1 Samuel 22:19). Thereupon, David cried out and said, Why do you boast yourself of evil, O mighty man? The mercy of God endures continually (Tehillim / Psalms 52:3).
it, and with many other restraints upon it. Yet no man can withstand it. If it were erect, think how much more vicious the tongue would be.

Midrash Tehillim, Part 7

7. You love evil more than good (Tehillim / Psalms 52:5). David said to Doeg, You desire evil for Saul more than you desire your own good. For had Saul not accepted slander from you, he would not have been punished. There is a kind of man who tells lies to and from you, he would not have been punished. There is a kind of desire your own good. For had Saul not accepted slander

7. You love evil more than good (Tehillim / Psalms 52:5).

Midrash Tehillim, Part 8

8. Rabbi Simeon son of Abba said in the name of rabbi Jokhanan, The Holy One blessed be He, let Abraham see Torah, Gehenna, and offerings, and the yoke of the kingdoms. Whence do we know that God let Abraham see Torah? Because in the words of a flaming torch (Bereshit / Genesis 15:17), torch clearly refers to Torah, of which it is said, All the people saw the thundering, and the torches (Shemot / Exodus 20:15). And Gehenna? A smoking furnace (Bereshit / Genesis 15:17) refers to Gehenna, of which it is said, For behold the day comes, it burns as a furnace (Malachi 3:19), and also The Lord whose furnace in Jerusalem (Isaiah 31:9). And offerings? Scripture speaks of a heifer three years old (Bereshit / Genesis 15:12), dread referring to Babylon, darkness to Greece, great to Me-

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(Isaiah 51:1); the rock is Abraham, for in the next verse it is said, Look unto Abraham your father (Isaiah 51:2).