Midrash Tehillim

Midrash Tehillim / Psalms 56

Midrash

Midrash Tehillim 56, Part 1

1. For the One that triumphed, upon Jonath elem, rehokim. A Psalm of David; Michtam; when the Philistines took him in Gath (Tehillim / Psalms 56:1). These words are to be read in the light of what Scripture says elsewhere, What god is there in heaven or on earth, that can do according to Your works, and according to Your mighty acts (Devarim / Deuteronomy 3:24). Daniel also said, He delivered and rescued, and He worked signs and wonders in heaven and in earth (Daniel 6:28). According to Rabbi Phinehas, David said this, God did more for me than for all others. And His triumph was greater than all other triumphs. What did God do for David? When David was waiting upon Achish, Achish’s body guard who was a brother of Goliath the Philistine. What is meant by the mouth of Achish the argument by which David was delivered from the brother of Goliath the Philistine. What is meant by the stipulation was met, so that you have no case whatever against David. And Achish let David go, and did not have him executed. The stipulation was met, so that you have no case whatever against David. And the stipulation was met, so that you have no case whatever against David. And Achish let David go, and did not have him executed. Now was that not a great triumph? Therefore, David said, For the On that triumphed; upon Jonath elem, a speechless dove (Jonath elem), David stood and could not give answer to the body guard until the Holy One blessed be He, put into the mouth of Achish the argument by which David was delivered from the brother of Goliath the Philistine. What is meant by rehokim? It means that David’s mighty men were at that time far (rehok) from him. And Michtam? Because of this incident, David became humble (mach) and upright (tam). David said, Now therefore, I pray you, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant, etc. For as much as the Lord delivered you into my hand today (1 Samuel 26:19-23). In these words David was alluding to what Moshe had taught, If a thief be found breaking in, and he be struck so he dies, there will be no blood guiltiness for him (Shemot / Exodus 22:1), and thus was saying, You, Saul, are with me in the cave, and your life is forfeit according to Torah, and your blood is forfeit. And David was also alluding to the words You will not stand idly by the
blood of your neighbor (Vayikra / Leviticus 19:16). That is, if a man comes at you to slay you, and you overcome him, tarry not and say not, Shall I be guilty of his blood? But taking no counsel of your heart, slay him then and there. As the proverb says, Slay him before he slays you. And thus in saying, And some bade me kill you (1 Samuel 24:11), David means, According to the Torah, it is permitted me to slay you. But it spared you. By this David meant, The modesty in you leads me to spare you. For by the word cover (hasek) in Saul went in to cover his feet (1 Samuel 24:4) Scripture suggests that Saul in relieving himself had arranged his barments about him like a booth (sukkah). David meant, The modesty in you leads me to spare you. For by this you did intend for me, you see how I acted towards you.

Midrash Tehillim 56, Part 2
2. Be merciful unto me, O God, for a man pants after me (Tehillim / Psalms 56:2). Pants after plainly connotes oppresses, for the verb in the verse Hear this, O you that pant after the needy (Tehillim / Psalms 56:2), is read, oppress in the Aramaic Targum. So, too, pant in They that lie in wait for me pant (Tehillim / Psalms 53:3), is read, oppress in the Aramaic Targum, which says, They that scorn me oppress me. Thus, David was saying, If Saul had not oppressed me, I would not have had to flee to Achish. Though Great ones fight against me, O Most High, even so, In the day that I am afraid, I will put my trust in You (Tehillim / Psalms 56:4).

Midrash Tehillim 56, Part 3
3. In God, I will praise His word (Tehillim / Psalms 5), herein, God is referred to as He who metes out judgment. Nevertheless, David goes on to say, In God do I trust, I will not be afraid; what can flesh do unto me? They gather (yaguru) themselves together, they hid themselves, herein the stem gur is taken as a form of the harvest (Mishley / Proverbs 6:8). In God, I will praise His word, in the Lord, I will praise His word (Tehillim / Psalms 56:11). What is the difference in the meaning between In God and in the Lord? Rabbi Nehorai explained that where God (Elohim) is used, Scripture is speaking of Him as meting out justice, as in the verse, You shall not revile God (Shemot / Exodus 22:27), or, as in the verse, The master of the house will come near unto God (Shemot / Exodus 22:8) in both verses, God is understood to mean judge; but where Lord (YHVH) is used, Scripture is speaking of Him as meting out mercy, as in the verse, The Lord, the Lord merciful and gracious (Shemot / Exodus 34:6). Accordingly, David said to the Holy One blessed be He, If You mete out judgment against me, I accept You by saying In God, I will praise His word; and if You mete out mercy to me, I accept You by saying In the Lord, I will praise His word.

Midrash Tehillim 56, Part 4
4. Your vows are upon me, O God; I will render thank offerings unto You (Tehillim / Psalms 56:13). Rabbi Phinehas taught in
the name of rabbi Levi, and rabbi Johanan taught in the name of
rabbi Menachem the Galilean, that in the time to come all prayers
will cease except the prayer of thanksgiving, and this will never
cease except the prayer of thanksgiving, and this will never cease.
And in the time to come, all offerings will cease except the thank
offering, and this will never cease. Of this Scripture says, So stood
the two companies of them that gave thanks in the house of God
(Nehemiah 12:40), the words the two companies of them that give
thanks alluding to the prayer of thanksgiving and to the thank of-
fering. For You have delivered my soul from death (Tehillim /
Psalms 56:14) that is, I did not die at the hands of Saul from death.
Have You not delivered my feet from stumbling? So that I was not
doomed through the counsel of Ahithophel, and so that I may walk
before God in the light of the living, in the land of Israel. Or, by
the light of the living is meant the great light in the Garden of Eden.