

## ספר תהילים קטז | Tehillim / Psalms 116

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### The Voice of Prayer and the Presence of God

א אֶהְבֵּתִי כִּי-יִשְׁמַע | יְהוָה, In this week's study from *Tehillim / Psalms 116:1-19*, the psalm opens saying, *116:1 I love the Lord, because He hears My voice and my supplications. 116:2 Because He has inclined His ear to me, Therefore I shall call upon Him as long as I live. (NASB)* The Lord is merciful when He hears our prayers. The Psalmist continues saying, *116:3 The cords of death encompassed me And the terrors of Sheol came upon me; I found distress and sorrow. 116:4 Then I called upon the name of the Lord: 'O Lord, I beseech You, save my life!' 116:5 Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; Yes, our God is compassionate. (NASB)* The Lord preserves the simple (116:6), when we seek the Lord we return to His rest (116:7), and the Lord rescues us from death (116:8). The Psalmist says, *116:9 I shall walk before the Lord In the land of the living. 116:10 I believed when I said, 'I am greatly afflicted.' 116:11 I said in my alarm, 'All men are liars.' 116:12 What shall I render to the Lord For all His benefits toward me? 116:13 I shall lift up the cup of salvation And call upon the name of the Lord. (NASB)* The Lord is our salvation, He is the One in whom we find life. The Psalm continues saying, *116:14 I shall pay my vows to the Lord, Oh may it be in the presence of all His people. 116:15 Precious in the sight of the Lord Is the death of His godly ones. 116:16 O Lord, surely I am Your servant, I am Your servant, the son of Your handmaid, You have loosed my bonds. (NASB)* The psalmist speaks of fulfilling what we promise to the Lord. The Psalm concludes saying, *116:17 To You I shall offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving, And call upon the name of the Lord. 116:18 I shall pay my vows to the Lord, Oh may it be in the presence of all His people, 116:19 In the courts of the Lord's house, In the midst of you, O Jerusalem. Praise the Lord! (NASB)* The psalmist repeats the importance of fulfilling his vows in the midst of all his people. Why is the fulfilling a vow to be performed in the presence of the people?

| עברית  | Hebrew            | ארמי   | Aramaic           | ελληνικός  | Greek      |
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| ספר תהלים פרק קטז  | ספר תהלים פרק קטז | ספר טוביה פרק קטז  | ספר טוביה פרק קטז | ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 116   | ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 116 |
| א אֶהְבֵּתִי כִּי-יִשְׁמַע   יְהוָה אֶת-קוֹלִי תִחְנַנְנִי: ב כִּי-הִטָּה אָזְנוֹ לִי וּבִימֵי אֶקְרָא: ג אֶפְפוּנִי   חֲבָלֵי-מָוֶת וּמְצָרֵי שְׂאוֹל מְצָאוּנִי צָרָה וַיִּגְוֹן אֶמְצָא: ד וּבְשֵׁם-יְהוָה אֶקְרָא אָנָּה יְהוָה מִלְּטָה נַפְשִׁי: |                   | א רחמיית ארום ישמע יהוה ית קלי בעותי: ב ארום אצלי אוד-ניה לי וביומי אנא קרי: ג אקיפו יתי מרעי מותא ועיקתין דשיוול אשכחוני עיקתא ודבונא אשכח: ד ובשמא דיהוה איקרי בבעו יהוה שיזיב נפשי: |                   | 116:1 αλληλουια ἠγάπησα ὅτι εἰσακούσεται κύριος τῆς φωνῆς τῆς δεήσεώς μου 116:2 ὅτι ἐκλινεν τὸ οὖς αὐτοῦ ἐμοί καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις μου ἐπικαλέσομαι 116:3 περιέσχον με ὠδῖνες θανάτου κίνδυνοι ἄδου εὐροσάν με θλίψιν καὶ ὀδύνην εὖρον 116:4 καὶ τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου ἐπεκαλεσάμην ὧ κύριε ῥῦσαι τὴν ψυχὴν μου |            |

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| <p>ה חנון יהוה וצדיק ואלהינו<br/>מרחם: ו שמר פתאים יהוה<br/>דלותי ולי יהושיע: ז טובי נפשי<br/>למנוחתי כי יהוה גמל עלי: ח<br/>כי חלצת נפשי ממות את-עיני מן-<br/>דמעה את-רגלי מדחי: ט אתה-<br/>לך לפני יהוה בארצות החיים:<br/>י הקמנתי כי אדבר אני עניתי<br/>מאד: יא אני אמרתי בחפזי כל-<br/>האדם פזב: יב מה-אשיב ליהוה<br/>כל-תגמולוהי עלי: יג פוס-ישו-<br/>עות אשא ובשם יהוה אקרא: יד<br/>נדרי ליהוה אשלם נגדה-נא לכל-<br/>עמו: טו יקר בעיני יהוה המנותה<br/>לחסידי: טז אנה יהוה פי-אני<br/>עבדך אני עבדך בן-אמתה פתחת<br/>למוסרי: יז לך-אזבח זבח תודה<br/>ובשם יהוה אקרא: יח נדרי<br/>ליהוה אשלם נגדה-נא לכל-עמו:<br/>יט בפתרות   בית יהוה בתוככי<br/>ירושלם הללויה:</p> | <p>ה חננא יהוה וזכאה ואלהנא מרחם:<br/>ו טיר שרגויגיא יהוה אתמסכנית ולי<br/>חמי למפרוק: ז טובי נפשי לבית מנ-<br/>חייכי נוחיכי ארום מימרא דיהוה גמל<br/>טובא עלייכי: ח ארום פציתא נפשי<br/>מקטול ית עיני מן דמעתיא ית רגלי מן<br/>לאדחיא: ט אתהלך קדם יהוה בארע<br/>חייא: י המנית ארום אמליל בכינשת<br/>צדיקי אנא שבחית לחדא: יא אנא<br/>אמריית במערקי כל בני נשא מכדבין:<br/>יב מה אתיב קדם יהוה כל גמולן טבן<br/>דיליה גמילין הינון עלי: יג כסא<br/>דפורקניא אסובר לעלמא דאתי ובש-<br/>מא דיהוה אקרי: יד נדרי קדם יהוה<br/>אשלם אתני כדון ניסוי לכל עמיה:<br/>טו יקיר קדם יהוה מיתותא דמשת-<br/>לחא לחסידוי: טז בבועו יהוה ארום<br/>אנא עבדך אנא עבדך בר אמתך שרי-<br/>תא לשושלותי: יז לך קדמך אדבח<br/>דבח ניכסתא ובשמא דיהוה איקרי:<br/>יח נדרי קדם יהוה אשלם אתני כדון<br/>ניסוי לכל עמיה: יט בדרתא די בית<br/>מקדש אלהנא יי במצעך ירושלם<br/>הללויה שבחו אלהא:</p> | <p>116:5 ἐλεήμων ὁ κύριος καὶ<br/>δίκαιος καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν ἐλεᾷ<br/>116:6 φυλάσσω τὰ νήπια ὁ<br/>κύριος ἐταπεινώθην καὶ ἔσωσέν<br/>με 116:7 ἐπίστρεψον ἡ ψυχὴ μου<br/>εἰς τὴν ἀνάπαυσίν σου ὅτι κύριος<br/>εὐηργέτησέν σε 116:8 ὅτι ἐξείλατο<br/>τὴν ψυχὴν μου ἐκ θανάτου τοὺς<br/>ὀφθαλμοὺς μου ἀπὸ δακρῦων καὶ<br/>τοὺς πόδας μου ἀπὸ ὀλισθήματος<br/>116:9 εὐαρεστήσω ἐναντίον<br/>κυρίου ἐν χώρᾳ ζώντων 116:10<br/>αλληλοῦσα ἐπίστευσα διὸ ἐλάλησα<br/>ἐγὼ δὲ ἐταπεινώθην σφόδρα<br/>116:11 ἐγὼ εἶπα ἐν τῇ ἐκστάσει<br/>μου πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ψεύστης<br/>116:12 τί ἀνταποδώσω τῷ κυρίῳ<br/>περὶ πάντων ὧν ἀνταπέδωκέν<br/>μοι 116:13 ποτήριον σωτηρίου<br/>λήμψομαι καὶ τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου<br/>ἐπικαλέσομαι 116:14 ... 116:15<br/>τίμιος ἐναντίον κυρίου ὁ θάνατος<br/>τῶν ὀσίων αὐτοῦ 116:16 ὦ κύριε<br/>ἐγὼ δοῦλος σὸς ἐγὼ δοῦλος σὸς καὶ<br/>υἱὸς τῆς παιδίσκης σου διέρρηξας<br/>τοὺς δεσμούς μου 116:17 σοὶ θύσω<br/>θυσίαν αἰνέσεως 116:18 τὰς εὐχὰς<br/>μου τῷ κυρίῳ ἀποδώσω ἐναντίον<br/>παντὸς τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ 116:19 ἐν<br/>αὐλαῖς οἴκου κυρίου ἐν μέσῳ σου<br/>Ιερουσαλημ</p> |
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**Tehillim Psalms 116**

116:1 I love the Lord, because He hears My voice and my supplications. 116:2 Because He has inclined His ear to me, Therefore I shall call upon Him as long as I live. 116:3 The cords of death encompassed me And the terrors of Sheol came upon me; I found distress and sorrow. 116:4 Then I called upon the name of the Lord: ‘O Lord, I beseech You, save my life!’ 116:5 Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; Yes, our God is compassionate. 116:6 The Lord preserves the simple; I was brought low, and He saved me. 116:7 Return to your rest, O my soul, For the Lord has dealt bountifully with you. 116:8 For You have rescued my soul from death, My eyes from tears, My feet from stumbling. 116:9 I shall walk before the Lord In the land of the living. 116:10 I believed when I said, ‘I am greatly afflicted.’ 116:11 I said in my alarm, ‘All men are liars.’ 116:12 What shall I render to the Lord For all His benefits toward me? 116:13 I shall lift up the cup of salvation And call upon the name of the Lord. 116:14 I shall pay my vows to the Lord, Oh may it be in the presence of all His people. 116:15 Precious in the sight of the Lord Is the death of His godly ones. 116:16 O Lord, surely I am Your servant, I am Your servant, the son of Your handmaid, You have loosed my bonds. 116:17 To You I shall offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving, And call upon the name of the Lord. 116:18 I shall pay my vows to the Lord, Oh may it be in the presence of all His people, 116:19 In the courts of the Lord’s house, In the midst of you, O Jerusalem. Praise the Lord! (NASB)

**Toviyah Psalms 116**

116:1 I love, for the Lord will hear my voice, my prayer. 116:2 For he has inclined his ear to me, and I call [to him] throughout my days. 116:3 The sicknesses of death surrounded me, and the pains of Sheol found me; pain and sorrow I will find. 116:4 And in the name of the Lord I will call out: Please, O Lord, save my soul. 116:5 The Lord is gracious and righteous, and our God is merciful. 116:6 The Lord observes enticements; I became poor, and it was meet to redeem me. 116:7 Return, O my soul, to your place of rest, for the word of the Lord has repaid you with good. 116:8 For you have delivered my soul from being killed, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling. 116:9 I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living. 116:10 I have believed, therefore I will speak; in the assembly of the righteous I have sung much praise. 116:11 I said when I fled, “All the sons of men are liars.” 116:12 How will I repay in the presence of the Lord all his kind favors that are shown to me? 116:13 The cup of redemption I will carry in the age to come, and I will call on the name of the Lord. 116:14 I will repay my vows in the presence of the Lord, I will tell now his miracles to all his people. 116:15 Honorable in the presence of the Lord is the death that is sent to his pious ones. 116:16 Please, O Lord; for I am your servant; I am your servant, the son of your handmaiden, you have loosened my bonds. 116:17 To you I will sacrifice the sacrifice of slaughter, and call out in the name of the Lord. 116:18 I will repay my vows in the presence of the Lord, I will tell now his miracles to all his people. 116:19 In the courts of the sanctuary of our God, in your midst, O Jerusalem. Hallelujah! (EMC)

**Psalmoi Psalms 116**

Alleluia. 116:1 I am well pleased, because the Lord will hearken to the voice of my supplication. 116:2 Because he has inclined his ear to me, therefore will I call upon him while I live. 116:3 The pangs of death compassed me; the dangers of hell found me: I found affliction and sorrow. 116:4 Then I called on the name of the Lord: O Lord, deliver my soul. 116:5 The Lord is merciful and righteous; yea, our God has pity. 116:6 The Lord preserves the simple: I was brought low, and he delivered me. 116:7 Return to thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord has dealt bountifully with thee. 116:8 For he has delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. 116:9 I shall be well-pleasing before the Lord in the land of the living. Alleluia: 116:10 I believed, wherefore I have spoken: but I was greatly afflicted. 116:11 And I said in mine amazement, Every man is a liar. 116:12 What shall I render to the Lord for all the things wherein he has rewarded me? 116:13 I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. 116:14 I will pay my vows to the Lord, in the presence of all his people. 116:15 Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. 116:16 O Lord, I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast burst by bonds asunder. 116:17 I will offer to thee the sacrifice of praise, and will call upon the name of the Lord. 116:18 I will pay my vows unto the Lord, in the presence of all his people, 116:19 in the courts of the Lord’s house, in the midst of thee, Jerusalem.(LXX)



(דְּמִים אוֹתָם זָכַר לֹא-שָׁכַח צָעֲקַת עֲנִיִּים [עֲנָוִים]:) When Peter walked out upon the water he cried out to Yeshua for help, “*afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried [krazo], saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him*” (Matthew 14:30–31). The blind man in Jericho heard that Yeshua was passing by and he cried out to him for help, Luke 18:35-43 states, 18:35 *As Jesus was approaching Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the road begging. 18:36 Now hearing a crowd going by, he began to inquire what this was. 18:37 They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. 18:38 And he called out, saying, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ 18:39 Those who led the way were sternly telling him to be quiet; but he kept crying out all the more, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’ 18:40 And Jesus stopped and commanded that he be brought to Him; and when he came near, He questioned him, 18:41 ‘What do you want Me to do for you?’ And he said, ‘Lord, I want to regain my sight!’ 18:42 And Jesus said to him, ‘Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.’ 18:43 Immediately he regained his sight and began following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God. (NASB)* What we find here based upon the biblical text on the crying out to the Lord, in these cases, even though these were acts of desperation, these people were expressing their faith in the Lord God of Israel, in His goodness and power to deliver them in their time of need. The crying out to the Lord demonstrated their genuine humility, the surrendering of their circumstances to the Lord, a plea for mercy, the realization of their own personal helplessness, their faith in the Lord’s power, and an expression of their desperation for help. The crying out to the Lord is the admission of one’s need for God’s help, just as David said in Tehillim / Psalms 18:6 saying, “*In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.*” Sometimes it is difficult to admit that we cannot solve our own problems. It is at this point that we admit when a situation becomes desperate enough that we need the Lord’s help, we need to repent of our pride, don’t try to bargain with the Lord, but leave our trust and all of who we are in His hands. The reason being, apart from our faith, we have been driven to the point of despair or destruction and realize our unworthiness before the Lord to even seek His help and deliverance. This is what motivates us to cry out to the Lord because of what we read in Lamentations 3:21-26, 3:21 *This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. 3:22 The Lord’s lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. 3:23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. 3:24 ‘The Lord is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘Therefore I have hope in Him.’ 3:25 The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, To the person who seeks Him. 3:26 It is good that he waits silently For the salvation of the Lord. (NASB)* It is important to note that waiting upon the Lord is necessary to develop our faith. The point is that we know the Lord is merciful, and so we should not wait until the most desperate of times before seeking the Lord’s help and counsel.

ג אֶפְפוֹנִי | חֲבִלֵי-מָוֶת וּמְצָרֵי שְׂאוּל מְצָאוּנִי צָרָה וַיְגֹן אֶמְצָא: ד וּבְשֵׁם-יְהוָה, חַבּוֹן יְהוָה וַצְדִיק וְאֵלֵהֵינוּ מְרַחֵם: 116:3 *The cords of death encompassed me And the terrors of Sheol came upon me; I found distress and sorrow. 116:4 Then I called upon the name of the Lord: ‘O Lord, I beseech You, save my life!’ 116:5 Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; Yes, our God is compassionate. (NASB)* The Lord preserves the simple (116:6), when we seek the Lord we return to His rest (116:7), and the Lord rescues us from death (116:8). Notice what it means to call upon the name of the Lord. The Lord preserves His people, we return to His rest (שְׁלוֹם, peace) and He rescues us from death. This follows what Paul wrote to the Romans saying, “*Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.*” (Romans 10:13) According to Bereshit / Genesis 4:26, the Torah tells us the practice of calling on the Lord began long ago, by the third generation of mankind in the time when Adam’s grandson Enosh was born: The Scripture states, 4:26 *To Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. Then men began to call upon the name of the Lord. (NASB)* כו וּלְשֵׁת גַּם-הוּא יָלַד-בֶּן וַיִּקְרָא אֶת-שְׁמוֹ אֶנוֹשׁ אִזּוֹ הַיּוֹחַל, (לְקִרְאָ בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה: The name אֶנוֹשׁ means “a man” or “a mortal” indicating the mortality of man being frail and without God. Based upon the Masoretic Text, the name of Enosh (אֶנוֹשׁ) suggests that men began to realize both the emptiness and vanity of life apart from God as well as their own fragility and mortality. The practice of calling upon the Lord as it is revealed in the Torah is not meant to be performed as a ritual by rote. It is our calling upon the One we love, the Lord our Father in heaven and His Messiah Yeshua. Just as children calling to our parents, the Lord is always available to hear our call. This is why the Rabbis

in the Talmud Bavli Berekhot 5A making the claims that they do in regards to the recitation of the Shema.

### **Talmud Bavli Berekhot 5A**

א"ר יצחק כל הקורא ק"ש על מטתו כאלו אוהז חרב של שתי פיות בידו שנאמר (תהלים קמט, ו) רוממות אל בגרונם וחרב פיפיות בידם מאי משמע אמר מר זוטרא ואיתימא רב אשי מרישא דענינא דכתיב (תהלים קמט, ה) יעלוזו חסידים בכבוד וירננו על משכבותם וכתיב בתריה רוממות אל בגרונם וחרב פיפיות בידם. *The Gemara continues its treatment of the recitation of Shema upon one's bed. Rabbi Yitzhak said: Anyone who recites Shema on his bed, it is as if he holds a double-edged sword, guarding him from all evil, as it is stated: "High praises of God in their mouths, and a double-edged sword in their hands" (Psalms 149:6). The Gemara asks: From where is it inferred that this verse from Psalms refers to the recitation of Shema? Mar Zutra, and some say Rav Ashi, said: We derive it from the preceding verse, as it is written: "Let the pious exult in glory; let them joyously sing upon their beds." The praise of God from one's bed is the recitation of Shema. And it is written thereafter: "High praises of God in their mouths, and a double-edged sword in their hands."*

The rabbis of the Talmud speak of the Shema (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 6:4*) and the significance of the Shema saying that the one who recites the Shema is as if he holds a double edged sword that guards him from all evil. Why do the rabbis consider the recitation of the Shema in this way? Why do you think the rabbis place such emphasis upon the recitation of the Shema? The context for the Shema are the following verses: 6:4 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! 6:5 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6:6 'These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. 6:7 You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. 6:8 'You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. 6:9 'You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (NASB, ה: אָחַדְּךָ | יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ הַיּוֹם עַל-לְבָבְךָ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל-מְאֹדְךָ: ו וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ הַיּוֹם עַל-לְבָבְךָ: ז וְשָׁנַנְתָּם לְבְנֶיךָ וְדַבַּרְתָּ בָּם בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלֶכְתְּךָ בַּדֶּרֶךְ וּבְשֹׁכְבְךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ: ח וּקְשַׁרְתָּם לְאוֹת עַל-יָדְךָ: ט וְהָיוּ לְטֹטְפֹת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ: ט וְכִתְבְתָּם עַל-מַזְזוֹת בֵּיתְךָ וּבְשַׁעְרֶיךָ: Notice the context of the Shema, believing in the oneness of God and how we are told to hold onto the Lord, to love the Lord with all our heart and soul. The Word of God is to become a part of our lives that is said to be "upon our hearts," we are to diligently teach God's word to our children, speak of God's word when raising up and when laying down, and they are to become a part of our homes, to the very foundation of who we are, as the Scriptures say, God's word is written upon the doors of our homes and are to be placed upon our foreheads and as a sign on our hands. When the Talmud speaks of the Shema being a double-edged sword capable of protecting one from evil; this is the context of their statements. These instructions on the Shema speak of something that is more than a superficial recitation of the Shema. As the instructions in Parashat Tazria, the inspection of tzaraat as something more than simply a surface affliction as opposed to something that goes much deeper. Tzaraat is a disease that may only be healed by the help of the Lord, and in the Scriptures, we are told to seek the Lord with all of our mind, soul, and heart. These scriptures direct us to consider the deep spiritual insights in the affliction of the body to the sinfulness of the soul. The Shema was meant as a reminder to set the ways of God before our lives, establishing God's Word in our hearts, and diligently teach them to our children and apply God's word to our lives. This is the point of the rabbinic instruction on the Shema, the Talmud is not teaching a practice out of route but of a deep heart felt longing and love for the Lord God of Israel.

Calling upon the Lord is like drawing refreshing water from a deep well that never runs dry. When Peter was speaking to the people on the Temple mount, he quoted the prophet Joel as saying, "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (*Acts 2:21*). Peter was telling men that this prophecy was being fulfilled that very hour, and that the time had come when men could "call on the name of the Lord" and be saved. Peter went on to speak of Yeshua the Messiah and his sacrifice for the

people. Peter closed by saying “*that God hath made that same man (Yeshua), whom they had crucified both Lord and Messiah of Israel*” (Acts 2:36). Therefore, we call upon the name of Yeshua to be saved because he is our Lord, and has been given authority and power by our Father in heaven. This is what Paul told the Romans, “*Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*” (Romans 10:13). When the people heard the message of what the Messiah had done on the day of Shavuot, they were pricked in their hearts and they wanted to know what to do to be saved (Acts 2:38). Peter answered their question saying that they are to call upon the name of the Lord. Peter began speaking to the people saying, “*You men of Israel hear these words*” (Acts 2:22). So the idea is that one must hear the Word of God spoken. This again draws us back to the rabbinic comments upon the Shema and the protection of God’s word as a double-edged sword when we incorporate God’s Word into our lives. This is consistent with what we read the rabbis saying in the Talmud Bavli Berekhot 5A.

### **Talmud Bavli Berekhot 5A**

ואמר רבי יצחק כל הקורא קריאת שמע על מטתו מזיקין בדילין הימנו שנאמר (איוב ה, ז) ובני רשף יגביהו עוף ואין עוף אלא תורה שנאמר (משלי כג, ה) התעיף עיניך בו ואיננו ואין רשף אלא מזיקין שנאמר (דברים לב, כד) מזי רעב ולחומי רשף וקטב מרירי. *And Rabbi Yitzhak said: Anyone who recites Shema upon his bed, demons stay away from him. This is alluded to, as it is stated: “But man is born into trouble, and the sparks [reshef] fly [uf] upward” (Job 5:7). The verse is explained: The word fly [uf] means nothing other than Torah, as Torah is difficult to grasp and easy to lose, like something that floats away, as it is stated: “Will you set your eyes upon it? It is gone; for riches certainly make themselves wings, like an eagle that flies into the heavens” (Proverbs 23:5). The word “sparks” means nothing other than demons, as it is stated: “Wasting of hunger, and the devouring of the sparks [reshef] and bitter destruction [ketev meriri], and the teeth of beasts I will send upon them, with the venom of crawling things of the dust” (Deuteronomy 32:24). Here we see reshef listed along with ketev meriri, both of which are understood by the Sages to be names of demons.*

אמר רבי שמעון בן לקיש כל העוסק בתורה יסורין בדילין הימנו שנאמר ובני רשף יגביהו עוף ואין עוף אלא תורה שנאמר התעיף עיניך בו ואיננו ואין רשף אלא יסורין שנאמר מזי רעב ולחומי רשף. *Regarding this unclear verse, Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: If one engages in Torah study, suffering stays away from him, as it is stated: “And the sparks fly upward.” And fly means nothing other than Torah, and sparks means nothing other than suffering, as it is stated: “Wasting of hunger, and the devouring of the sparks,” equating devouring sparks with wasting hunger, as both are types of suffering. From here, we derive that through Torah, fly, one is able to distance himself, upward, from suffering, sparks.*

According to the rabbis, the recitation of the Shema upon one’s bed keeps demons away because a man is born into troubles and it is the Word of the Lord that sets us free from our troubles and from the evil one. This is consistent with the conclusions that the Study of God’s Word keeps suffering away from the man that does so. The one who determines to study God’s word distances himself from trouble and suffering that are the result of sin. So we see that one must hear the Word of the Lord, and after hearing the word, placing it upon our hearts, we are “*pricked in the hearts*” (Acts 2:37) to apply God’s Word to our lives. The Word of the Lord produces faith in our hearts. This is why the rabbis say that for those who study God’s Word they will see God (Talmud Bavli Berekhot 5A). Note what happened when Peter spoke the Word of God to the people, these people heard the message, believed, and then were told what to do to be saved. Peter said, “*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins*” (Acts 2:38). What did these people do when they “*called upon the name of the Lord?*” First they heard the Word of God, believed the Word of God, repented of their sins, confessed Yeshua as the Messiah, as the Son of God, and as Lord of their lives, and were baptized into the Messiah for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). The reason

these Scriptures are written in this way is because without repentance (Teshuvah) there is no forgiveness for sins. The ritual bath (mikvah / baptism) is the physical act, and Torah based instruction for finishing the process of repenting and turning one's life towards God's ways. Notice something here, one is rendering obedience to the "Lord of Lords" by doing these things. Yeshua said, "16:16 'He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.'" (Mark 16:16). This lays down the simple principle, obey the Lord and be saved.

The Aramaic Targum states the following,

## Aramaic Targum

### **Toviyah Psalms 116:3-8**

*116:3 The sicknesses of death surrounded me, and the pains of Sheol found me; pain and sorrow I will find. 116:4 And in the name of the Lord I will call out: Please, O Lord, save my soul. 116:5 The Lord is gracious and righteous, and our God is merciful. 116:6 The Lord observes enticements; I became poor, and it was meet to redeem me. 116:7 Return, O my soul, to your place of rest, for the word of the Lord has repaid you with good. 116:8 For you have delivered my soul from being killed, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling. (EMC)*

ג אקיפו יתי מרעי מותא ועיקתין דשיוול אשכחוני עיקתא ודבונא אשכח: ד ובשמא דיהוה איקרי  
בבעו יהוה שיזיב נפשי: ה חננא יהוה וזכאה ואלהנא מרחם: ו טיר שרגויגיא יהוה אתמסכנית ולי  
חמי למפרוק: ז תובי נפשי לבית מנחייכי נוחיכי ארום מימרא דיהוה גמל טובא עלייכי: ח ארום  
פציתא נפשי מקטול ית עיני מן דמעתא ית רגלי מן לאדחיא:

What we find here based upon the biblical text is the crying out to the Lord in these cases is by faith even when done in an act of desperation. The expression of faith in the Lord is characterized by waiting upon the Lord and trusting in His goodness and power to deliver us in His timing. The crying out to the Lord demonstrates our genuine humility, the surrendering of our circumstances to the Lord, a plea for mercy, the realization of our own personal helplessness, our faith in the Lord's power, and an the expression of our desperation for help. The crying out to the Lord is the admission of our need for the God's help.

The Psalmist says, *ט אַתְהִלְךָ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה בְּאַרְצוֹת הַחַיִּים: י הֶאֱמַנְתִּי כִּי אֲדַבֵּר אֲנִי עֲנִינִי מְאֹד: יא אֲנִי אֶמְרֵתִי*  
*116:9 I shall walk before the Lord In the land of the living. 116:10 I believed when I said, 'I am greatly afflicted.'*  
*116:11 I said in my alarm, 'All men are liars.'* *116:12 What shall I render to the Lord For all His benefits toward me? 116:13 I shall lift up the cup of salvation And call upon the name of the Lord. (NASB)* What are we able to render to the Lord for all of His benefits? A life that honors His holy name! We need the Lord's help to set us free from sin and the empowering of His Spirit to empower us to do so. Notice how the psalmist says that "I believed" (הֶאֱמַנְתִּי) when I said "I am greatly afflicted" (אֲנִי עֲנִינִי מְאֹד). The idea is that though he stated the facts, that he was greatly afflicted, his faith in the Lord and His deliverance was not in question. The Lord is our salvation, He is the One in whom we find life. The Aramaic Targum states,  
*ט אתהלקך קדם יהוה בארע חייא: י המנית ארום אמליל בכינשת צדיקי אנא שבחית לחדא: יא אנא אמרית*  
*במערקי כל בני נשא מכדבין: יב מה אתיב קדם יהוה כל גמולן טבן דיליה גמילין הינון עלי: יג כסא דפורקניא*  
*116:9 I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living. 116:10 I have believed, therefore I will speak; in the assembly of the righteous I have sung much praise. 116:11 I said when I fled, "All the sons of men are liars."* *116:12 How will I repay in the presence of the Lord all his kind favors that are shown to me? 116:13 The cup of redemption I will carry in the age to come, and I will call on the name of the Lord. (EMC)* The psalmist declares that he will walk before the Lord in the land of the living, indicating his hearts desire to walk with God all the days of his life. The Targum states that his faith causes him to declare God's praises in the assembly of the righteous. The rabbis translate the payment that



is made is the cup of redemption that is carried on into the age to come. This cup of redemption is powerful and all sustaining to bring the one who yields it, the one who places his whole trust in the Lord, who seeks the Lord and His kingdom bringing him into the world to come. In regards to the cup, Ein Yaakov has the following comments:

***Ein Yaakov (Glick Edition), Pesachim 10:24***

*(Ib. b) R. Avira expounded sometimes in the name of R. Ami, and at other times, in the name of R. Assi: “What is the meaning of the passage (Gen. 21:8) And the child grew and was weaned; i.e., in the future, the Holy One, praised be He! will make a banquet for the righteous on the day He will show kindness unto the children of Isaac. After they will have eaten and partaken of drink, a cup of wine will be given to Abraham on which to recite the Grace, and they will say to him: ‘Say the Grace.’ Abraham’s reply will be, ‘I shall not recite the Grace, because Ishmael went forth from me.’ They will give it [the honor of reciting grace] to Isaac, and he will say, ‘I am not fit to recite the Grace, because Esau went forth from me.’ They will then give it to Jacob, who will refuse, saying, ‘I am not fit to recite the Grace, because I married two sisters at one time, and this the Torah was destined to prohibit.’ They will then apply to Moses, saying, ‘You take it and recite the Grace,’ but Moses will say, ‘I shall not recite the Grace because I did not merit to enter the land of Israel neither alive nor dead.’ They will then say to Joshua, ‘You take it and recite the Grace,’ but he also will refuse, saying to them, ‘I shall not recite the Grace, because I did not merit to have a son,’ as it is written (I Chr. 7:27) Nun, his son, and Joshua, his son. So they will turn unto David and say to him, ‘You take it and recite the Grace.’ Whereupon he will say, ‘Yea, I shall recite the Grace and it befits me so to do,’ as it is said (Ps. 116:13) The cup of salvation will I lift up and on the name of the Lord will I call.’”*

Ein Yaakov speaks of the Holy One blessed be He as preparing a feast for the righteous on that great day that He shows kindness to His children. It is within this banquet that the people will have eaten and partaken in the cup of grace. The commentary continues saying that each of our fathers turn down the opportunity to recite the Grace. This speaks of the imperfections of mankind and specifically in the lives of our fathers, according to the commentary, each of our fathers lacked the right to recite the Grace of God as referred to in *Tehillim / Psalms 116:13* as the cup of salvation that is coupled to the calling upon the name of the Lord. The reason each person turned down the opportunity to say the Grace was because of some imperfection that had gone out from them. The symbology of the cup is further explained according to *Daat Zkenim on Shemot / Exodus 12:8, Part 1*.

***Daat Zkenim on Shemot / Exodus 12:8 Part 1***

*ואכלו את הבשר, “they are to eat the meat;” this is the reason why the people established the custom to take three unleavened loaves of bread on the evening when the meat of the Passover would be consumed. It was a reminder of the three measures of flour Avraham told Sarah to use when baking cakes for what turned out to be the three angels, one of whom predicted when she would give birth to Yitzchok. (Genesis 18:6) The date happened to be that of the first day of Passover, (in the future) as we know from the fact that on the same evening Lot welcomed two of these angels and served them unleavened bread. An alternate version of the significance of the three matzot on our seder dish is that they are to remind us of the three patriarchs. The reason why we break the middle one of these three matzot in half is that it symbolises G-d having split the sea of reeds in half to enable the Jewish people to cross it and escape the pursuit of Pharaoh and his army. We pronounce the special blessing over one half of this middle matzah, as related in the Talmud tractate Pessachim folio 115, as a reminder that it is called the “bread of the poor,” meaning that a poor man does not have a whole loaf of bread at his disposal. The reason why we perform two “dippings” on that night*

is to serve as a reminder that when becoming officially Jewish after performing the circumcision, both the people themselves and their livestock immersed themselves in a ritual bath. An alternate interpretation is that we had to dip the blood of the Pashal lamb and sprinkle it on the lintel and upright posts, mezuzot, of our homes, to insure that the firstborn Jews would not be killed on that night, as were those of the Egyptians. We recite a further reminder of this by quoting from the Book of Ezekiel, that our redemption was linked to our being kept alive by offering that blood (Ezekiel 16:6). One of the reasons why this ritual is performed on that night is to encourage the children at the table to ask why we perform so many strange acts during that evening instead of proceeding from kiddush to Motzi, breaking bread, directly. Normally, vegetables used to be eaten as a kind of dessert, whereas on this evening we commence with them. We never drink two cups of wine before eating bread, whereas on this evening we make a point of drinking two cups of wine before eating any bread (matzah). As soon as the child sees us pouring the second cup of wine he begins asking questions. The concoction known as charosset that we dip the bitter herbs in, is a reminder of the mortar that was used in the bricks, i.e. its color. It is composed of ground apples, commemorating an apple in Song of Songs 8:5 in which G-d is described allegorically as having overturned an apple tree at Mount Sinai, at the time when the Jewish people accepted the Torah, having thus aroused the Jewish people to respond with their famous *נעשה ונשמע*, “we will perform the laws of the Torah as soon as we will hear what they are.” It also contains different spices, resembling in appearance the straw that the Egyptians had withheld from them after Moses had asked Pharaoh for a short vacation to celebrate a religious festival. Our author cites different interpretations of the various items on the seder plate nowadays when we cannot celebrate the real thing, one being the egg the other a roasted bone, the one symbolizing the chagigah offering, offered by each pilgrim who came to Jerusalem on that festival, the other symbolizing the Paschal lamb, unfortunately also not available while we are in exile. The four cups of wine drank on that night are in commemoration of the four stages of the redemption. The respective words on the Torah are: *והוצאתי, והצלתי, וגאלתי, ולקחת אתכם לי*, “I will take you out, I will save you, I will redeem you, and I will acquire you as My people.” (Exodus 6:6-7) The fifth expression there, i.e. *והבאתי אתכם אל הארץ* “I shall bring you to the land, etc.” is actually the purpose of the whole redemption. As per the proverb “when a master releases his slave into freedom, and he gives him a cup of wine to drink, unless he also brings him to a house where he can enjoy that wine as a free man, the whole exercise was in vain.” While we have been deprived of our land being in exile, we do not drink the fifth cup indicating that we look forward, to doing so, the sooner the better. Another way of looking at the ritual of drinking the four cups: They symbolize four different redemptions. Each “cup” has been mentioned in our Scriptures as such, in Psalms 16:5 *ה' מנת חלקי וכוסי*, “the Lord is my allotted share and portion;” also in Psalms 23:5 *רוייה יסוכה*, “my cup is abundant.” The third time we find this reference to our “cup” in Psalms 116:13 *כוס ישועות אשא*, “I raise my cup of deliverance.” In that verse the reference is not to a single deliverance, but to multiple deliverances. Both refer to the deliverance in the days of the messiah and the world to come respectively. (Compare Jerusalem Talmud, tractate Pessachim, chapter 10, halachah 1. Yet another interpretation about why we drink four cups of wine on the night of the seder. It is a reminder of the four cups that Pharaoh’s chief of the butlers told Joseph about that he had seen in his dream (Genesis 40:11-13). Still another interpretation sees in the four cups a reference to the four cups of poison that G-d will force the gentile nations to drink in the future, which the prophet Jeremiah has spoken about in Jeremiah 25:15-18 These cups are also referred to in Psalms 75:9 as well as in Jeremiah 51:7 and in Psalms 11:6 as pointed out in the section of the Jerusalem Talmud we quoted earlier.



## Rabbinic Commentary

The Rabbinic Commentary (Midrash) on *Tehillim / Psalms 116* has 9 parts. Reading through the Midrash we will be looking at Part 2, 3, 5, and 7. Let's begin by outlining *Midrash Tehillim Chapter 116, Parts 2, 3, 5, and 7*.

### Outline of Midrash Tehillim / Psalms, Chapter 116, Part 2, 3, 5, and 7

#### Part 2

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the **דיבור המתחיל** (Dibur Hamathil) saying, “*Because He has inclined His ear unto me (Tehillim / Psalms 116:2).*”
- The **פתיחתא** (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*The ears of Him on high are open only to me, as is said, Ears have You opened for me (Tehillim / Psalms 40:7), and O my God, incline Your ear and hear (Daniel 9:18).*”
- The **משל** (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the **פתיחתא** (Petihta), the rabbis speak of what the ear that is attentive for the Lord.
- The **נמשל** (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the **משל** (mashal), with a discussion on listening for the Lord and calling upon the Lord on the holidays and the Shabbat.
- The Concluding phrase says, “*Therefore, will I call upon Him all my days, as when I read the order of the offerings, and read the appropriate Scriptural passages that marital the wonders You have done for me.*”

#### Part 3

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the **דיבור המתחיל** (Dibur Hamathil) saying, “*The cords of death compassed me (Tehillim / Psalms 116:3), cords of death allude to men who deserve the death penalty, who are hostages to death.*”
- The **פתיחתא** (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*In a different interpretation, these words are read, the bands of death, as in the phrase, a band of prophets (1 Samuel 10:10)...*”
- The **משל** (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the **פתיחתא** (Petihta), the rabbis speak of death that encompasses using various examples of death surrounding us.
- The **נמשל** (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the **משל** (mashal), with discussion on the bands of death and the Lord who is our righteous judge and deliverer.
- The Concluding phrase says, “*For at bad tidings, we say the blessing, Blessed be the true judge. Indeed, at all times we call upon Your name, as is said, Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will make mention of the Name of the Lord our God (Tehillim / Psalms 20:8).*”

#### Part 5

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the **דיבור המתחיל** (Dibur Hamathil) saying, “*Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints (Tehillim / Psalms 116:15).*”
- The **פתיחתא** (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*Ten things are called precious, Torah, as is said Wisdom is more precious than rubies (Mishley / Proverbs 3:15);*”
- The **משל** (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the **פתיחתא** (Petihta), the rabbis speak of Israel and the preciousness of His people.
- The **נמשל** (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the **משל** (mashal), with a discussion on the lovingkindness of God and the preciousness of man.
- The Concluding phrase says, “*Some say that man, also, is called precious, for it is said, I will make man more precious than fine gold, even man than the pure gold of Ophir (Isaiah 13:12).*”

**Part 7**

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying, “Another interpretation of Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.”
- The פתיחה (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “A parable of a king who sent a prefect to a place which he governed well.”
- The משל (mashal) “the parable,” goes on to explain the פתיחה (Petihta), the rabbis speak of a righteous man and the Lord’s will for men to govern their lives and others in righteousness, holiness, justice, and truth.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) “expansion on the parable” expands upon the משל (mashal), the rabbis expand upon the mashal by speaking of what happens at the end of life for the righteous.
- The Concluding phrase says, “A second company says, Go down, and be laid uncircumcised (Ezekiel 32:19). A third company says, You will lie down in sorrow (Isaiah 50:11).”

Midrash Tehillim 116, Part 2 opens with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying, “Because He has inclined His ear unto me (Tehillim / Psalms 116:2).” The homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “The ears of Him on high are open only to me, as is said, Ears have You opened for me (Tehillim / Psalms 40:7), and O my God, incline Your ear and hear (Daniel 9:18).” The entire midrash states the following:

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| <p><b>מדרש תהלים פרק קטז סימן ב</b></p> <p>ב כי הטה אזנו לי. אין האזנים של מעלה כרויות אלא לי, שנאמר אזנים כרית לי (תהלים מ ז), וכתוב הטה אלהי אזנך ושמע (דניאל ט יח). ובימי אקרא. בימים טובים שנתת לי ביום השבת ביום הכיפורים בסוכות בפסח בעצרת בראש השנה, הוי ובימי אקרא שאני קורא בסדר קרבנות וקורא בענינו של יום, במה שהפלת עמי.</p> | <p><b>Midrash Tehillim 116, Part 2</b></p> <p>2. Because He has inclined His ear unto me (Tehillim / Psalms 116:2). The ears of Him on high are open only to me, as is said, Ears have You opened for me (Tehillim / Psalms 40:7), and O my God, incline Your ear and hear (Daniel 9:18). And Therefore will I call upon Him all my days (Tehillim / Psalms 116:2) call upon Him on the holidays which You have given me, on the Shabbat day, on the Day of Atonement, on the Feast of Tabernacles, on the Feast of Passover, on the Feast of Weeks, on New Year’s Day. Therefore, will I call upon Him all my days, as when I read the order of the offerings, and read the appropriate Scriptural passages that marital the wonders You have done for me.</p> |
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The rabbis quote from the psalms saying the ears of Him (God) on high are open only to me. This speaks of the Lord God hearing the prayer of this person and answering his prayers. This reminds us of something Yeshua said in *Matthew 13:15* that is opposite to this saying, *13:15 For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.* (NIV) Based upon the Midrash, the faithful will call upon the Lord during these Moedim and the Shabbat and the Lord will hear. Yeshua speaks of the state of the people in their iniquity and their inability to see or hear the message of God. Based upon the Scriptures, the Lord had sent them Moshe and the prophets by whom they would know God’s will for their lives. Instead, they do not see (*they closed their eyes*) and they barely hear, and as a result do not understand, nor turn from their sin to be healed. Because of these things, the Lord left the people to the destituteness of their sinful lives, and the heart of the people to remain fat. Their ears are heavy, and their time of healing is past. Because of these things, the Lord says that He will not change their hearts or heal them. The idea is that the people are a people that despised the grace of God such that their day of mercy is over and so the Lord will not work in their hearts and heal them. They are fallen under a hardness and blindness. This is synonymous to not having the light and the Spirit will not strive with them and lead them into righteousness as he does for those who trust in the Lord. The midrash speaks of the feast of tabernacles, passover, and shavuot (weeks), and of the festive times when we remember the Lord God of Israel and all that He has done for His people when we call upon His name. The faithful are characterized by

the desire in following God's word and seeking the Lord according to His will. Midrash Tehillim 116, Part 2 concludes saying, "Therefore, will I call upon Him all my days, as when I read the order of the offerings, and read the appropriate Scriptural passages that marveled the wonders You have done for me." The conclusion is the servant of the Lord will call upon the Lord all the days of his life. *Tehillim / Psalms 27:4* states, "One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in His temple" The point is to seek the Lord all the days of our lives. We are called to ask for this one thing and then seek after this one thing. When we do this we will always find ourselves being led into God's presence, ministering to the Lord, beholding His beauty, and meditating upon Him all the days of our lives.

Midrash Tehillim 116, Part 3 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying, "The cords of death compassed me (*Tehillim / Psalms 116:3*), cords of death allude to men who deserve the death penalty, who are hostages to death." The homiletic introduction to the midrash states, "In a different interpretation, these words are read, the bands of death, as in the phrase, a band of prophets (*1 Samuel 10:10*)..." The entire midrash states the following:

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| <p><b>מדרש תהלים פרק קטז סימן ג</b><br/> ג אפפוני חבלי מות. הקיפוני בני אדם<br/> חייבי מיתה החבולים למות. דבר אחר<br/> חבלי מות. כמו חבל נביאים (ש"א<br/> שמואל א' י י), חבלי שאול (תהלים<br/> יח ו), הם חבלי רשעים. ומצרי שאול<br/> מצאוני. אלו המלכיות, שנאמר מיד<br/> שאול אפדם (הושע יג יד). צרה ויגון<br/> אמצא ובשם ה' אקרא. שאנו מברכין<br/> על הרעה ברוך דיין האמת, ולעור<br/> לם אנו קוראים בשמך, שנאמר אלה<br/> ברכב ואלה בסוסים ואנחנו בשם ה'<br/> אלהינו נזכיר (תהלים כ ח).</p> | <p><b>Midrash Tehillim 116, Part 3</b><br/> 3. The cords of death compassed me (<i>Tehillim / Psalms 116:3</i>), cords of death allude to men who deserve the death penalty, who are hostages to death. In a different interpretation, these words are read, the bands of death, as in the phrase, a band of prophets (<i>1 Samuel 10:10</i>), and The bands of the nether-world surrounded me (<i>Tehillim / Psalms 18:6</i>), bands referring to bands of wicked men. And the straits of the nether-world got hold upon me (<i>Tehillim / Psalms 116:3</i>), straits referring to the kingdoms, as in the verse, Will I ransom them (Israel) from the power of the nether-world? (<i>Hosea 13:14</i>). I found trouble and sorrow. Then I called upon the name of the Lord (<i>Tehillim / Psalms 116:3-4</i>). For at bad tidings, we say the blessing, Blessed be the true judge. Indeed, at all times we call upon Your name, as is said, Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will make mention of the Name of the Lord our God (<i>Tehillim / Psalms 20:8</i>).</p> |
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The rabbis speak of when the bands of wicked men surround us. The rabbis are contrasting the false words of men with the truth of God. The idea is when the wicked encompass us, their bad thoughts and actions will have an influence to cause us to do something we would not normally choose to do. The comment on the bands of the nether-world literally provides us with the imagery of the afterlife, the world of death and hell, those who are consigned to these regions are doomed and already judged to be guilty. Note the rabbis say, "Will I ransom them (Israel) from the power of the nether-world? (*Hosea 13:14*)" Here, it appears that all of Israel had become ensnared to the nether-world meaning they have given themselves over to unrighteousness and wickedness. Just as we see in the history of Israel, the world appears to also be in a decline on the number of those who would choose to live godly lives. Death is a departure from godliness, where many of God's people conform themselves to this world (*Romans 12:2*) and are entangled in the cares and entrapments of this world. Everyone is speaking falsehoods with his neighbor, flowering one another with their words while thinking evil towards them in their hearts. This may be why the rabbis say in the midrash, "The cords of death compassed me (*Tehillim / Psalms 116:3*), cords of death allude to men who deserve the death penalty, who are hostages to death." This being a hostage requires someone to be set free from the bonds of captivity. Solomon spoke this prayer on the building of the first Temple in Jerusalem according to *2 Chronicles 6:34-39*.

### **2 Chronicles 6:34-39**

6:34 *'When Your people go out to battle against their enemies, by whatever way You shall send them, and they pray to You toward this city which You have chosen and the house which I have built for Your name, 6:35 then hear from heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause. 6:36 'When they sin against You (for there is no man who does not sin) and You are angry with them and deliver them to an enemy, so that they take them away captive to a land far off or near, 6:37 if they take thought in the land where they are taken captive, and repent and make supplication to You in the land of their captivity, saying, 'We have sinned, we have committed iniquity and have acted wickedly'; 6:38 if they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, where they have been taken captive, and pray toward their land which You have given to their fathers and the city which You have chosen, and toward the house which I have built for Your name, 6:39 then hear from heaven, from Your dwelling place, their prayer and supplications, and maintain their cause and forgive Your people who have sinned against You. (NASB)*

Many Scriptures speak of the Lord delivering people into the hands of the enemy due to sin and having this rebelliousness towards the Lord coupled with unrepentant attitude. Take for example the following Scriptures:

**1 Kings 8:46-50** *"If they sin against you--for there is no one who does not sin--... you give them to an enemy, so that they are carried away captive... yet if they come to their senses... and repent, and plead with you in the land of their captors, saying, 'We have sinned... if they repent with all their heart and soul... then hear in heaven... and forgive your people... (NRS)*

**Judges 2:14** *...The Lord handed them [His people] over to raiders who plundered them. He sold them to their enemies all around, whom they were no longer able to resist. (NIV)*

**Nehemiah 9:27, 33, 36** *So you handed them [the chosen people] over to their enemies, who oppressed them. But when they were oppressed they cried out to you. From heaven you heard them, and in your great compassion you gave them deliverers, who rescued them from the hand of their enemies... In all that has happened to us, you have been just; you have acted faithfully, while we did wrong... But see, we are slaves today, slaves in the land you gave our forefathers... (NIV)*

**Tehillim / Psalms 106:40-41** *Therefore the Lord was angry with his people... He handed them over to the nations, and their foes ruled over them. Their enemies oppressed them and subjected them to their power. (NIV)*

God has told us that He will give us over to "captivity" if we continue to sin and live unrepentant lives. Notice something that Paul writes to the Ephesians in *Ephesians 4:26-27*, "Never let the sun set on your anger or else you will give the devil a foothold." Paul is not teaching a new spiritual principle or insight. He is only offering a specific insight into a general principle that has been laid out in the Tanach, that when God's people continue to sin, He will give them over to an enemy. This is a very Torah based principle. Regardless of these facts from the Scriptures, modern theologies have caused churches to completely deny even the possibility of this biblical spiritual dynamic. They are "sure" this could not happen because of Jesus. Paul write to the Corinthians saying in *1 Corinthians 11:11-12* "Now these things which happened to our ancestors are illustrations of the way in which God works, and they were written down to be a warning to us who are living in the final days of the present order. So let the man who feels sure of his standing be careful that he does not fall tomorrow." Paul suggests this principle continues on even to today. He said

to Timothy, *1 Timothy 4:1* “The Spirit says clearly that some men will abandon the faith in later times; they will obey lying spirits and follow the teachings of demons.” Peter wrote in his Epistle saying, *2 Peter 2:12, 19* “But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and killed, reviling in matters of which they are ignorant, will be destroyed in the same corruption with them... They... themselves are slaves of corruption; for whatever overcomes a man, to that he is enslaved.” (RSV) The point is, these Scriptures remind us how dangerous it is to neglect the spiritual aspect of our lives, and that we need to make haste to repent and turn from our sins. This includes taking care by who we choose as our friends as the midrash states, “The cords of death compassed me (*Tehillim / Psalms 116:3*), cords of death allude to men who deserve the death penalty, who are hostages to death.” These types of men will draw one down into the bondage they themselves are held captive by. Midrash Tehillim 116, Part 3 concludes saying, “For at bad tidings, we say the blessing, Blessed be the true judge. Indeed, at all times we call upon Your name, as is said, Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will make mention of the Name of the Lord our God (*Tehillim / Psalms 20:8*).” The righteous do not fear because our God is a righteous judge who hears our prayers, our difficulties, our struggles, and our desire to live for the Lord in the way that we are able.

Midrash Tehillim 116, Part 5 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints (*Tehillim / Psalms 116:15*).” The homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “Ten things are called precious, Torah, as is said Wisdom is more precious than rubies (*Mishley / Proverbs 3:15*);” The entire midrash states the following:

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| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>מדרש תהלים פרק קטז סימן ה</b></p> <p>ה יקר בעיני ה' המותה לחסידיו. עשרה דברים נקראו יקרים, התורה שנאמר יקרה היא מפנינים (משלי ג טו). ישראל שנאמר הבן יקיר לי אפרים (ירמיה לא יט). עושר שנאמר והון אדם יקר חרוץ (משלי יב כז). דעת שנאמר מר וכלי יקר שפתי דעת (שם משלי כ טו). נבואה שנאמר ודבר ה' היה יקר בימים ההם (ש"א שמואל א' ג א). תבונה שנאמר יקר רוח איש תבונה (משלי יז כז). סכלות שנאמר יקר מחכמה ומכבוד סכלות מעט (קהלת י א). צדיקים שנאמר ולי מה יקרו רעיך אל (תהלים קלט יז). חסד שנאמר מה יקר חסדך אלהים (שם תהלים לו ח). מיתת הצדיקים שנאמר יקר בעיני ה' המותה לחסידיו (שם תהלים קיו טו). ויש אומרים אף אדם נקרא יקר, שנאמר אוקיר אנוש מפז ואדם מכתם אופיר (ישעיה יג יב).</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Midrash Tehillim 116, Part 5</b></p> <p>5. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints (<i>Tehillim / Psalms 116:15</i>). Ten things are called precious, Torah, as is said Wisdom is more precious than rubies (<i>Mishley / Proverbs 3:15</i>); Israel, as it is described in the verse Ephraim a darling son unto Me (<i>Jeremiah 31:19</i>); riches, as is said, The substance of a diligent man is precious (<i>Mishley / Proverbs 12:27</i>); knowledge, as is said, The lips of knowledge are a precious jewel (<i>Mishley / Proverbs 20:15</i>); prophecy, as is said, And the word of the Lord was precious in those days (<i>1 Samuel 3:1</i>); understanding, as is said, That which is precious in the spirit of man is understanding (<i>Mishley / Proverbs 17:27</i>); folly, as is said, More precious than wisdom and honor is a little folly (<i>Ecclesiastes 10:1</i>); the righteous, as is said, How precious are Your friends unto me, O God (<i>Tehillim / Psalms 139:17</i>); lovingkindness, as is said, How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God (<i>Tehillim / Psalms 36:8</i>); and the death of the righteous, as is said, Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of the righteous, as is said, Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. Some say that man, also, is called precious, for it is said, I will make man more precious than fine gold, even man than the pure gold of Ophir (<i>Isaiah 13:12</i>).</p> |
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The rabbis open with *Tehillim / Psalms 116:15* on the preciousness of God's Righteous people (Saints) which leads into the comment in the homiletic introduction on ten things the Lord calls precious. While thinking upon this idea of ten things the Lord considers precious, it is possible to come up with a short list on our own based upon our knowledge of what the bible says, such as the following:

1. The Lord finds precious a cheerful giver. (*2 Corinthians 9:7* Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion,



*for God loves a cheerful giver. NASB)*

2. The Lord finds precious *“the world.”* (*John 3:16 ‘For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. NASB)* Note how the Lord wants to transform the world in His Son Yeshua the Messiah.
3. The Lord loves Justice. (*Tehillim / Psalm 11:7 For the Lord is righteous, He loves righteousness; The upright will behold His face, Tehillim / Psalm 37:28 For the Lord loves justice And does not forsake His godly ones; They are preserved forever, But the descendants of the wicked will be cut off. NASB)*
4. The Lord loves the righteous. (*Tehillim / Psalm 146:8 The Lord opens the eyes of the blind; The Lord raises up those who are bowed down; The Lord loves the righteous; NASB)*
5. The Lord loves His people. (*John 16:27 for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father; I John 4:15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 4:16 We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. NASB)*
6. The Lord finds precious the unbeliever. (*Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. NASB)*
7. The Lord loves those who love Him. (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 7:9 ‘Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments; NASB)*
8. The Lord loves those who obey His commands. (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 7:9 ‘Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments; NASB)*
9. The Lord loves those who pursue godliness. (*Mishley / Proverbs 15:9 The way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, But He loves one who pursues righteousness. NASB).*
10. The Lord loves those who fear Him. (*Tehillim / Psalm 103:11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. NASB)*

The ten things the rabbis say are called precious in God’s eyes are the following:

1. Torah, as is said Wisdom is more precious than rubies (*Mishley / Proverbs 3:15*);

2. Israel, as it is described in the verse Ephraim a darling son unto Me (*Jeremiah 31:19*);
3. Riches, as is said, The substance of a diligent man is precious (*Mishley / Proverbs 12:27*);
4. Knowledge, as is said, The lips of knowledge are a precious jewel (*Mishley / Proverbs 20:15*);
5. Prophecy, as is said, And the word of the Lord was precious in those days (*I Samuel 3:1*);
6. Understanding, as is said, That which is precious in the spirit of man is understanding (*Mishley / Proverbs 17:27*);
7. Folly, as is said, More precious than wisdom and honor is a little folly (*Ecclesiastes 10:1*);
8. The righteous, as is said, How precious are Your friends unto me, O God (*Tehillim / Psalms 139:17*);
9. Lovingkindness, as is said, How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God (*Tehillim / Psalms 36:8*);
10. The death of the righteous, as is said, Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of the righteous, as is said, Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. Some say that man, also, is called precious, for it is said, I will make man more precious than fine gold, even man than the pure gold of Ophir (*Isaiah 13:12*).

It is interesting to note that our list was slightly different than that of the rabbis. The rabbis focus upon the importance of the Torah and the people of Israel and then consider riches because this is a sign of God's blessings, knowledge and wisdom because this is related to the application of God's Word to one's life. Prophecy because the word of the Lord itself is precious. Folly because without making mistakes we would not grow closer to the Lord and to others. Righteousness because it is God's Way, and lovingkindness because it is the chesed (grace) of God. And the death of the righteous because precious is the one who lived his life for the Lord. The rabbis do not speak of the Lord loving this world or that the Lord would extend His grace to the world and to the lost soul as we read in the Apostolic Writings. The Torah does however give provision for the ger (non-Jewish person) to remain within the community of Israel by living one's life based upon the Torah. Midrash Tehillim 116, Part 5 concludes saying, "Some say that man, also, is called precious, for it is said, I will make man more precious than fine gold, even man than the pure gold of Ophir (*Isaiah 13:12*)." Note how the Lord is involving himself in making man into something precious, which is compared to the purity of gold that has been perfected in fire. This is the way the Lord works in our lives and is the what the Apostolic Writings describes as the Lord working in our lives by faith in Yeshua the Messiah.

Midrash Tehillim 116, Part 7 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying, "Another interpretation of Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." The homiletic introduction to the midrash states, "A parable of a king who sent a prefect to a place which he governed well." The entire midrash states the following:

**מדרש תהלים פרק קטז סימן ז**

ז דבר אחר יקר בעיני ה' המותה לחסידיו. משל למלך ששלח איפרכוס למקום אחד והנהיג בו יפה, השלים זמנו נתן לו איפרכיא אחרת, אותו שהיה יוצא מאצלן היו מקלסין אותו שהנהיגם יפה, ואותו שנכנס אצלם היו מקלסין אותו שהוא עתיד להנהיגם, כך הקב"ה שיגר צדיק בעולם להנהיג הדור והוא מנהיגו יפה, כשמסתלק מן העולם הבריות מצטערין עליו, שכל זמן שהצדיק ביניהם מכלה את הפורעניות מלבוא בעורלם, ומלאכי השרת שמחין עליו שהוא בא ושורה ביניהם, וכשהצדיק נפטר מן העולם שלש כתות של מלאכי השרת יוצאין לקראתו, כת אחת אומרת יבוא שלום (ישעיה נז ב), כת שניה אומרת ינוחו על משכבותם (שם שם ישעיה נ"ז), שלישית אומרת הולך נכוחו (שם שם ישעיהו נ"ז). וכשהרשע נפטר מן העולם, שלש כתות של מלאכי חבלה יוצאין לקראתו, כת אחת אומרת אין שלום אמר ה' לרשעים (שם ישעיהו מח כב), שניה אומרת רדה והשכבה את ערלים (יחזקאל לב יט), שלישית אומרת למעצבה תשכבון (ישעיה נ יא).

**Midrash Tehillim 116, Part 7**

7. *Another interpretation of Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. A parable of a king who sent a prefect to a place which he governed well. When his term ended, the king gave him another place. The place he was leaving praised him because he had governed it well; and the place he was going to praised him because he was going to govern it. Even so the Holy One blessed be He, sends a righteous man to govern a generation, and he governs it well, so that when he leaves the world mortals grieve for him, because as long as the righteous man was among them, he prevented divine punishment from coming upon the world; for their part, the ministering angels rejoice over him because he is coming to live among them. Indeed, when the righteous man leaves the world, three companies of ministering angels come out to meet him. One company says, He will enter into peace (Isaiah 57:2). Another company says, They will rest in their beds (Isaiah 57:2). A third company says, Each one will walk in his uprightness (Isaiah 57:2). But when the wicked man leaves the world, three companies of destroying angels come out to meet him. One company says, There is no peace, says the Lord, concerning the wicked (Isaiah 48:22). A second company says, Go down, and be laid uncircumcised (Ezekiel 32:19). A third company says, You will lie down in sorrow (Isaiah 50:11).*

The Rabis say another interpretation on the preciousness of the death of His saints may be explained by “*A parable of a king who sent a prefect to a place which he governed well. When his term ended, the king gave him another place. The place he was leaving praised him because he had governed it well; and the place he was going to praised him because he was going to govern it.*” In the context of the death of the saints we understand this to refer to a life lived in this world, and a life that will be lived in the world to come. According to the Torah, the Lord speaks to us saying, 20:22 *‘You are therefore to keep all My statutes and all My ordinances and do them, so that the land to which I am bringing you to live will not spew you out. 20:23 ‘Moreover, you shall not follow the customs of the nation which I will drive out before you, for they did all these things, and therefore I have abhorred them. (NASB)* These scriptures speak of the deep connection between the iniquity of the people and the land in which they live. Our righteous behavior has a direct influence upon the produce of the land (crops), the inhabitation, our neighbors, and our enemies. The Torah reveals to us the eternal nature of God’s Word, past, present, and future which was already established by God even before creation itself. The Torah was previously in existence and hence the standard, prohibiting all the horrible crimes that are enumerated in parshiyot Acharei Mot and Kedoshim and are binding upon all of God’s creation (all of mankind). The reason being, man was made in the image of God and therefore His standard for living is binding upon His creation. This does not mean that the Lord has forced a covenant upon all peoples. The Torah states that these laws were obligatory upon the Canaanites as well as the other nations, and were already in legal binding force before the Torah was given at Sinai. The Lord God is Righteous, Holy, and Just, and He expects the same from His creation (all of mankind). If the ultimate outcome of life is to spend an eternity with the Lord God of Israel, the one who lives his life in wickedness has no place in the world to come with a righteous and holy God. This life is meant to prepare us for the world to come. This is the perspective we should have as we live our lives each day. This seems to be what the rabbis are saying by the parable of the king who governed well in one place, the people praised him, and

the place that he was going the people praised him too as a result of hearing how he was a righteous ruler. This has direct application to our lives since we rule over our actions each day. The midrash continue saying that the Holy One blessed be He in a similar way sends a righteous man to govern a generation. When this man leaves this world, the generation mourns for him because he taught the people to live in righteousness and holiness, and with justice and truth. In doing so he helped to prevent divine punishment due to sin, and prevented the destruction of the world. On the other hand, the angels rejoiced because he was coming to dwell with them. Taking these things into consideration, when you depart this world, if it were at this very moment, would the angels in heaven rejoice at your coming to dwell with them? Would the Lord say welcome good and faithful servant as you approach heaven? The rabbis say *“Indeed, when the righteous man leaves the world, three companies of ministering angels come out to meet him.”* Midrash Tehillim 116, Part 7 concludes saying, *“One company says, There is no peace, says the Lord, concerning the wicked (Isaiah 48:22). A second company says, Go down, and be laid uncircumcised (Ezekiel 32:19). A third company says, You will lie down in sorrow (Isaiah 50:11).”* These concluding statements may be due to the righteous man leaving this world. The last comment on sorrow may be due to the righteous man having sorrow for this world and the generation that he is leaving. These things remind us the importance of obeying God’s commands. Fortunately the Lord did not leave us alone to keep these commands. Based upon the Apostolic Writings, by faith in the Messiah Yeshua, the Lord sends His Holy Spirit into our lives to guide and empower us enabling us to walk according to the Spirit in the way that He chooses, according to His commands. The Lord changes us from the inside out such that we will have a desire to walk in righteousness and holiness and truth. Freedom, Deliverance, Redemption, a change of heart, the desire to serve the Lord and others, a deep love and respect for the Lord God of Israel, all of this comes by faith in His Messiah Yeshua!

Heavenly Father,

Thank You Lord for Your mercy and the 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