

Tehillim / Psalms 39 | ספר תהילים לט

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Does the Lord Inflict Punishment for the Purpose of Drawing us to Repentance?

This week's study is from *Tehillim / Psalms 39:1-13*, David opens the Psalm saying א לְמַנְצַח לְיָדַי For the director of music. For Jeduthun. A psalm of David. 39:1 I said, 'I will guard my ways That I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle While the wicked are in my presence. (NASB) Why do you think David says that he will guard his mouth as with a muzzle while in the presence of the wicked? He continues saying ג נְאֻלַּמְתִּי דוּמְיָה הַחֲשִׁיתִי מְטוֹב וּכְאֲבִי נֶעְכָּר: ד חֵם-לְבָי | בְּקִרְבִּי בְהִגְיִי תְבַעַר-אֵשׁ דְּבַרְתִּי 39:2 I was mute and silent, I refrained even from good, And my sorrow grew worse. 39:3 My heart was hot within me, While I was musing the fire burned; Then I spoke with my tongue: (NASB) While keeping silent, he even refrained from doing what is good. Has this ever happened to you before? David then states ה הוֹדִיעֵנִי יְהוָה | קֶצֶי וּמִדַּת יָמַי מַה-הִיא אֲדַעָה מַה-חֲדָל אָנִי: ו הִנֵּה טְפָחוֹת | נְתַתָּה יָמַי וְחֲלָדִי כְאִין נִגְדָה 39:4 'Lord, make me to know my end And what is the extent of my days; Let me know how transient I am. 39:5 'Behold, You have made my days as handbreadths, And my lifetime as nothing in Your sight; Surely every man at his best is a mere breath. Selah. 39:6 'Surely every man walks about as a phantom; Surely they make an uproar for nothing; He amasses riches and does not know who will gather them. (NASB) David appears to be asking the Lord to help him to realize that his life is short and to make something of his life. We cannot take wealth with us and when we die someone else takes the wealth that has been amassed. His conclusion is ח וְעַתָּה מַה-קִּוִּיתִי אֲדַנִּי תוֹחַלְתִּי לָךְ הִיא: ט מִכָּל-פְּשָׁעַי הֲצִילֵנִי חֲרַפְתָּ נָבָל אֶל-תְּשִׁימֵנִי: י נְאֻלַּמְתִּי לֹא אֶפְתָּה- 39:7 'And now, Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in You. 39:8 'Deliver me from all my transgressions; Make me not the reproach of the foolish. 39:9 'I have become mute, I do not open my mouth, Because it is You who have done it. (NASB) David concludes his Psalm saying יג שְׁמַעָה-תְּפַלְתִּי | יְהוָה וְשִׁוְעֵתִי | הֲאִזְיִנָה אֶל-דְּמַעְתִּי אֶל-תְּחַרְשׁ כִּי גַר אָנֹכִי עִמָּךְ תּוֹשָׁב כְּכָל-אֲבוֹתַי: יד הֲשַׁע מִמֶּנִּי וְאֲבָלִיגָה בְּטָרָם 39:12 'Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry; Do not be silent at my tears; For I am a stranger with You, A sojourner like all my fathers. 39:13 'Turn Your gaze away from me, that I may smile again Before I depart and am no more.' (NASB)

עברית Hebrew

ארמי Aramaic

ελληνικός Greek

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<p>ספר תהלים פרק לט</p> <p>א לְמַנְצַח לְיָדַי תוֹן [לְיָדוֹתוֹן] מִזֶּ-מִּזְמוֹר לְדָוִד: ב אֲמַרְתִּי אֲשַׁמְרָה דְרָכַי מִחֲטוֹא בְלִשׁוֹנִי אֲשַׁמְרָה לְפִי מִחֲסוֹם בְּעַד רִשְׁעִי לְנִגְדִי: ג נְאֻלַּמְתִּי דוּמְיָה הַחֲשִׁיתִי מְטוֹב וּכְאֲבִי נֶעְכָּר: ד חֵם-לְבָי בְּקִרְבִּי בְהִגְיִי תְבַעַר-אֵשׁ דְּבַרְתִּי בְלִשׁוֹנִי:</p>	<p>ספר טוביה פרק לט</p> <p>א לשבחה על מטרת בית מוקדשא על פומיה יידותון תושבחתא לדוד: ב אמרית אנטור אורחי מלמחטי בליש-ני אנטור לפומי זממא בדאית רשיעא לקיבלי: ג אתאלמית שתקית בטלית מן פתגמי אוריתא מטול היכנא כיבי ממרטיט:</p>	<p>ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 39</p> <p>39:1 εἰς τὸ τέλος τῷ Ἰδιθουν ᾠδὴ τῷ Δαυὶδ εἶπα φυλάξω τὰς ὁδοὺς μου τοῦ μὴ ἁμαρτάνειν ἐν γλώσση μου ἔθεμην τῷ στόματί μου φυλακὴν ἐν τῷ συστῆναι τὸν ἁμαρτωλὸν ἐναντίον μου 39:2 ἐκωφώθην καὶ ἐταπεινώθην καὶ ἐσίγησα ἐξ ἀγαθῶν καὶ τὸ ἄλγημά μου ἀνεκαινίσθη 39:3 ἔθερμάνθη ἡ καρδία μου ἐντός μου καὶ ἐν τῇ μελέτῃ μου ἐκκαυθήσεται πῦρ ἐλάλησα ἐν γλώσση μου</p>

<p>ה הוֹדִיעַנִי יְהוָה קִצְצִי וּמַדַּת יָמֵי מֵה־הִיא אֲדַעָה מֵה־חֲדַל אָנֹכִי: ו הַגִּבָּה טַפְּחוֹת נִתְתָּה יָמֵי וְחֻלְדֵי כְּאִין נִגְדָּה אֶךְ־כָּל־הַבָּל כָּל־אָדָם נִצָּב סֵלָה: ז אֶךְ־בְּצִלָּם יִתְהַלֵּךְ־אִישׁ אֶךְ־הַבָּל יִקְמִיוּן יִצְבֹּר וְלֹא־יֵדַע מִי־אֶסְפָּם: ח וְעִתָּה מֵה־קְנוּיֵי אֲדֹנָי תוֹחֵלְתִי לָךְ הִיא: ט מִכָּל־פְּשְׁעֵי הַצִּילֵנִי חֲרַפְתָּ נִבְלֵ אֶל־תְּשִׁימֵנִי: י נִאֲלַמְתִּי לֹא אֶפְתַּח־פִּי כִּי אֲתָה עֲשִׂיתָ: יא הִסְר מִעָלַי נִגְעָה מִתְגַּרְתָּ יְדָךְ אָנֹכִי כְּלִיתִי: יב בְּתוֹכָחוֹת עַל־עֹוֹן יִסְרַתְּ אִישׁ וְתִמָּס כְּעֵשׂ חַמּוּדוֹ אֶךְ הַבָּל כָּל־אָדָם סֵלָה: יג שְׁמַעָה־תְּפַלְתִּי יְהוָה וְשֹׁר־ עֲתִי הֲאֲזִינָה אֶל־דְּמָעֹתַי אֶל־תְּחַרֵּשׁ כִּי גַר אָנֹכִי עִמָּךְ תוֹשֵׁב כָּכָל־אֲבוֹתַי: יד הֲשַׁע מִמֶּנִּי וְאֲבִלְיָה בְּטָרָם אֲלֹךְ וְאִינָנִי:</p>	<p>ד רתח לבי בגושמי ברינני תדלק תבער אשתא מלילית בלישני: ה אודע לי אורח יתי ייי סופי ומישחתא דיומי מנא אינון אידע אימתי אפסוק מן עלמא: ו הא קלילין סדרתא יומי וגושמי כלמא לקבלך ברם כולא ללמא חשיבין ברם כולהון צדיקיא קיימין לחיי עלמא: ז ברם בדיוקנא דיהוה יתהלך מהלך גברא ברם למא משתגשין כניש ולא חכים מטול מנא מן כנשינון: ח וכדון מנא סברית יהוה אוריכותי לותך היא: ט מן כור להון מרדי פצי יתי חסודי סכלא לא תשוי עלי: י איתאלמית ולא אפתח פומי מטול די אנת את עבדתא: יא עדי אעדי מעלי מכתשך ממחת גבור רת ידך אנא שיציתי: יב במכסנור תא על חובא יתרדי את רדי בר נשא ומסיית היך עמר דאיתגרדים גוש מיה ברם למא כל בר נשא לעלמא: יג קביל צלותי יהוה ובעותי אצית ציילית אודנך ולדמעתי לא תשתוק ארום היך גיורא אנא גבך תותבא היך כולהון אבהתי: יד אשלי מיני ואזיל עד לא אהך ולא איתי:</p>	<p>39:4 γνώρισόν μοι κύριε τὸ πέρασ μου καὶ τὸν ἀριθμὸν τῶν ἡμερῶν μου τίς ἐστὶν ἵνα γνῶ τί ὑστερῶ ἐγώ 39:5 ἰδοὺ παλαιστὰς ἔθου τὰς ἡμέρας μου καὶ ἡ ὑπόστασις μου ὡσεὶ οὐθὲν ἐνώπιόν σου πλην τὰ σύμπαντα ματαιότης πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ζῶν διάψαλμα 39:6 μέντοιγε ἐν εἰκόني διαπορεύεται ἄνθρωπος πλην μάτην ταρασσονται θησαυρίζει καὶ οὐ γινώσκει τίτιν συνάξει αὐτὰ 39:7 καὶ νῦν τίς ἡ ὑπομονή μου οὐχὶ ὁ κύριος καὶ ἡ ὑπόστασίς μου παρὰ σοῦ ἐστὶν 39:8 ἀπὸ πασῶν τῶν ἀνομιῶν μου ῥῦσαί με ὄνειδος ἄφρονι ἔδωκάς με 39:9 ἐκωφώθην καὶ οὐκ ἤνοιξα τὸ στόμα μου ὅτι σὺ εἶ ὁ ποιήσας με 39:10 ἀπόστησον ἀπ' ἐμοῦ τὰς μάστιγάς σου ἀπὸ τῆς ἰσχύος τῆς χειρός σου ἐγὼ ἐξέλιπον 39:11 ἐν ἐλεγμοῖς ὑπὲρ ἀνομίας ἐπαίδευσας ἄνθρωπον καὶ ἐξέτηξας ὡς ἀράχνην τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ πλην μάτην ταράσσεται πᾶς ἄνθρωπος διάψαλμα 39:12 εἰσάκουσον τῆς προσευχῆς μου κύριε καὶ τῆς δεήσεώς μου ἐνώτισαι τῶν δακρύων μου μὴ παρασιωπήσης ὅτι πάροικος ἐγὼ εἶμι παρὰ σοὶ καὶ παρεπίδημος καθὼς πάντες οἱ πατέρες μου 39:13 ἄνες μοι ἵνα ἀναψύξω πρὸ τοῦ με ἀπελθεῖν καὶ οὐκέτι μὴ ὑπάρξω</p>
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<p>Tehillim / Psalms 39 For the director of music. For Jeduthun. A psalm of David. 39:1 I said, ‘I will guard my ways That I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle While the wicked are in my presence.’ 39:2 I was mute and silent, I refrained even from good, And my sorrow grew worse. 39:3 My heart was hot within me, While I was musing the fire burned; Then I spoke with my tongue: 39:4 ‘Lord, make me to know my end And what is the extent of my days; Let me know how transient I am. 39:5 ‘Behold, You have made my days as handbreadths, And my lifetime as nothing in Your sight; Surely every man at his best is a mere breath. Selah. 39:6 ‘Surely every man walks about as a phantom; Surely they make an uproar for nothing; He amasses riches and does not know who will gather them. 39:7 ‘And now, Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in You. 39:8 ‘Deliver me from all my transgressions; Make me not the reproach of the foolish. 39:9 ‘I have become mute, I do not open my mouth, Because it is You who have done it. 39:10 ‘Remove Your plague from me; Because of the opposition of Your hand I am perishing. 39:11 ‘With reproofs You chasten a man for iniquity; You consume as a moth what is precious to him; Surely every man is a mere breath. Selah. 39:12 ‘Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry; Do not be silent at my tears; For I am a stranger with You, A sojourner like all my fathers. 39:13 ‘Turn Your gaze away from me, that I may smile again Before I depart and am no more.’ (NASB)</p>	<p>Toviyah / Psalms Chapter 39 39:1 For praise; concerning the guard of the sanctuary, according to Jeduthun. A Psalm of David. 39:2 I said, I will keep my way from sinning by my tongue, I will keep a bridle for my mouth, while there is a wicked man before me. 39:3 I was dumb, I was quiet, I kept away from the words of Torah; because of this my pain contorts [me]. 39:4 My heart grew heated in my body; when I murmur, fire will burn; I spoke with my tongue. 39:5 Make known to me the way of my end; and the measure of my days, what they are; I would know when I will cease from the world. 39:6 Behold, you have ordained my days to be swift, and my body is as nothing before you. Truly all are considered to be nothing, but all the righteous endure for eternal life. 39:7 Truly in the image of the Lord man goes about; truly for nothing they are perplexed; he gathers and does not know why anyone gathers them. 39:8 And now, why have I hoped, O Lord? My waiting is for you. 39:9 From all my rebellions deliver me; do not put on me the shame of the fool. 39:10 I have become mute, and I will not open my mouth, for you have done it. 39:11 Remove your plague from me; I am destroyed by the blow of your mighty hand. 39:12 You punish a son of man with rebuke for sin; and you have dissolved his body like wool that has been nibbled away; truly every son of man is as nothing forever. 39:13 Receive my prayer, O Lord, and hear my supplication, and to my tears do not be silent; for I am like a foreigner with you, an alien like all my fathers. 39:14. Leave me alone, and I will depart, ere I go and exist no more. (EMC)</p>	<p>Psalmoi / Psalms 39 For the end, a Song of David, to Idithun. 39:1 I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I set a guard on my mouth, while the sinner stood in my presence. 39:2 I was dumb, and humbled myself, and kept silence from good words; and my grief was renewed. 39:3 My heart grew hot within me, and a fire would kindle in my meditation: I spoke with my tongue, 39:4 O Lord, make me to know mine end, and the number of my days, what it is; that I may know what I lack. 39:5 Behold, thou hast made my days old; and my existence is as nothing before thee: nay, every man living is altogether vanity. Pause. 39:6 Surely man walks in a shadow; nay, he is disquieted in vain: he lays up treasures, and knows not for whom he shall gather them. 39:7 And now what is my expectation? is it not the Lord? and my ground of hope is with thee. Pause. 39:8 Deliver me from all my transgressions: thou hast made me a reproach to the foolish. 39:9 I was dumb, and opened not my mouth; for thou art he that made me. 39:10 Remove thy scourges from me: I have fainted by reason of the strength of thine hand. 39:11 Thou chastenest man with rebukes for iniquity, and thou makest his life to consume away like a spider’s web; nay, every man is disquieted in vain. Pause. 39:12 O Lord, hearken to my prayer and my supplication: attend to my tears: be not silent, for I am a sojourner in the land, and a stranger, as all my fathers were. 39:13 Spare me, that I may be refreshed, before I depart, and be no more. (LXX)</p>
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א לְמַנְצֵחַ לַיְדוּתוֹן [לַיְדוּתוֹן] מְזֹמֵר This week’s study from *Tehillim / Psalms 39:1-13*, is titled saying מְזֹמֵר [לַיְדוּתוֹן] לְדָוִד: *For the director of music. For Jeduthun. A psalm of David. (NASB)* The Aramaic Targum states א לְדָוִד: *39:1 For praise; concerning the guard of the sanctuary, according to Jeduthun. A Psalm of David. (EMC)* and the Septuagint states *39:1 εις τὸ τέλος τῷ Ἰδοθουν ᾠδὴ τῷ Δαυιδ For the end, a Song of David, to Idithun. (LXX)* It is interesting that the Aramaic Targum states “concerning the guard of the sanctuary.” Why do you think the rabbis add the words that this Psalm is for the guard of the sanctuary? The reason may be related to the word לַיְדוּתוֹן (*Jeduthun*), according to Ginsburg’s Masoretic Text, in the marginal Mesorah (*the critical apparatus*) we find a Qere and Ketiv. (Note that the Qere-Ketiv is a method of preserving the written text by scribal tradition with regard to what is read. In such situations, the Qere is the technical orthographic device used to indicate the pronunciation of the words in the Masoretic text of the Hebrew Scriptures, while the Ketiv indicates their written form,

as inherited from tradition.) Ginsburg says that it is written לִידוּתוֹן “Liditun” and it is to be read לִידוּתוֹן “Lidutun.” Again, what do you think is the significance of this Qere and Ketiv? The significance is found while performing a word search on the word לִידוּתוֹן “Lidutun.” A search of the Hebrew bible shows that this word also occurs in *1 Chronicles 25:1-6*. (Note, standard lexicons will also show the various occurrences of the word, as well as the Strong’s Concordance.)

1 Chronicles 25:1-6

25:1 Moreover, David and the commanders of the army set apart for the service some of the sons of Asaph and of Heman and of Jeduthun, who were to prophesy with lyres, harps and cymbals; and the number of those who performed their service was: 25:2 Of the sons of Asaph: Zaccur, Joseph, Nathaniah and Asharelah; the sons of Asaph were under the direction of Asaph, who prophesied under the direction of the king. 25:3 Of Jeduthun, the sons of Jeduthun: Gedaliah, Zeri, Jeshaiiah, Shimei, Hashabiah and Mattithiah, six, under the direction of their father Jeduthun with the harp, who prophesied in giving thanks and praising the Lord. 25:4 Of Heman, the sons of Heman: Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel, Shebuel and Jerimoth, Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti and Romamti-ezer, Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir, Mahazioth. 25:5 All these were the sons of Heman the king’s seer to exalt him according to the words of God, for God gave fourteen sons and three daughters to Heman. 25:6 All these were under the direction of their father to sing in the house of the Lord, with cymbals, harps and lyres, for the service of the house of God. Asaph, Jeduthun and Heman were under the direction of the king. (NASB)

א וַיִּבְדֵּל דָּוִד וְשָׂרֵי הַצָּבָא לְעִבְדָּה לְבָנֵי אָסָף וְהֵימָן וַיְדוּתוֹן הַנְּבִיאִים [הַנְּבִיאִים] בְּכַנּוֹת בְּנָבְלִים
 וּבַמְצִלְתִּים וַיְהִי מִסְפָּרָם אֲנָשֵׁי מְלֹאכָה לְעִבְדָּתָם: ב לְבָנֵי אָסָף זָכּוּר וַיֹּסֵף וַנְּתַנְיָה וְאַשְׁרָאֵלָה בְּנֵי
 אָסָף עַל יַד-אָסָף הַנְּבִיא: ג לִידוּתוֹן בְּנֵי יְדוּתוֹן גְּדַלְיָהוּ וְצָרִי וַיִּשְׁעִיָּהוּ וְחִשְׁבִּיָּהוּ וּמַ-
 תְּנִיָּהוּ שֵׁשָׁה עַל יְדֵי אָבִיהֶם יְדוּתוֹן בְּכַנּוֹת הַנְּבִיא עַל-הַדּוֹת וְהַלֵּל לַיהוָה: ד לְהֵימָן בְּנֵי הֵימָן בְּקִנְיָהוּ
 מִתְּנִיָּהוּ עֲזִיָּאֵל שְׁבוּאֵל וִירִימוֹת חֲנַנְיָה חֲנַנִּי אֱלִיאָתָה גְּדַלְתִּי וְרַמְמַתִּי עֶזֶר יִשְׁבָּקֻשָׁה מְלוֹתִי הוֹתִיר
 מַחְזִיאוֹת: ה כָּל-אֵלֶּה בְּנִים לְהֵימָן חֲזָה הַמְּלֹךְ בְּדַבְרֵי הָאֱלֹהִים לְהָרִים קָרוֹן וַיִּתֵּן הָאֱלֹהִים לְהֵימָן בְּנִים
 אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר וּבָנוֹת שְׁלוֹשׁ: ו כָּל-אֵלֶּה עַל-יְדֵי אָבִיהֶם בְּשִׁיר בַּיִת יְהוָה בְּמַצְלְתִּים נְבָלִים וְכַנּוֹת
 לְעִבְדַת בַּיִת הָאֱלֹהִים עַל יְדֵי הַמְּלֹךְ אָסָף וַיְדוּתוֹן וְהֵימָן:

Brown-Driver-Briggs Lexicon

יְדוּתוֹן; 2Chronicles 5:12; 35:15; יְדוּתוֹן; יְדוּתוֹן proper name, masculine usually יְדוּתוֹן, יְדוּתוֹן
 Psalm 39:1; Psalm 77:1; Nehemiah 11:37; 1 Chronicles 16:38; chief of one of the three
 choirs of the temple (only Chronicles & Psalm-titles) 1 Chronicles 9:16; 1 Chronicles
 16:38,41,42; 1 Chronicles 25:3 (twice in verse); 1 Chronicles 25:6; 2Chronicles 5:12; the
 king’s seer 2 Chronicles 35:15; his descendants formed one of the perpetual temple choirs
 1 Chronicles 16:42; 1 Chronicles 25:1,3; 2Chronicles 29:14; Nehemiah 11:17. In Psalm-titles
 על יְדוּתוֹן Psalm 62:1; Psalm 77:1 (Qr); Psalm 39:1 (error for על), all = after the manner of (the choir of) Yeduthun (musical term according to RSOTJC
 422, 2nd ed. 143). — see also LagOr^{ii. 16ff.} and proper name אָסָף, הֵימָן (sub אֵיתָן), אָסָף (sub אֵיתָן). (<http://biblehub.com>, Access date: April 2, 2014)

According to Brown, Driver, and Briggs Lexicon and *1 Chronicles 25:1-6*, we learn that Jeduthun is a Levite of the family of Merari, and one of the three masters of music appointed by David. (see *1 Chronicles 16:41, 42, and 25:1-6*) His office was to preside over the music of the temple service. Jeduthun’s name

stands at the head of the 39th, 62nd and 77th Psalms, indicating probably that they were to be sung by his choir. Jeduthun was also a Levite whose son or descendant Obed-Edom was a gatekeeper at the time David brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem according to *1 Chronicles 16:1*. Heman and Jeduthun were also responsible for the sounding of the trumpets and cymbals and for the playing of the other instruments for sacred song. (*1 Chronicles 16:42*) What we do know from the scriptures is that David was well known as a musician as a young man, being summoned before King Saul to play and to bring him peace when the evil spirit would torment him setting him into numerous mood swings (*1 Samuel 16:14-23*). From all of his works found within the Psalm, it is reasonable to conclude that David was intimately familiar with and well trained in the inner workings of music from a compositional, lyrical, instrumental and performance standpoint. Another question is, how did a young shepherd boy become one of the most famous musicians and composers of Israel's history? The answer may lie in his association with one of the prominent Levites named Jeduthun. Jeduthun was one of the three primary singers and musical directors appointed by David to serve along with his Levite brethren at the Tabernacle, the tent in Zion and the later Temple in Jerusalem. There were three key individuals we find in the Scriptures: Jeduthun appears to be David's teacher. There also appears to be a relationship between the Levite singers and musicians indicated by the Levite Heman, the lead singer, was the grandson of Samuel the prophet according to *1 Chronicles 6:18 (6:33 KJV)*. David appears to be intimately familiar with the various characters within the Levitical musical system by the time he became king over Israel.

ב אַמְרָתִי אֲשַׁמְרָה דְרָכֵי מַחְטָא בְלִשׁוֹנִי אֲשַׁמְרָה לְפִי מַחְסוֹם בְּעַד רִשְׁעִי
 :1 I said, 'I will guard my ways That I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a
 muzzle While the wicked are in my presence. (NASB) David says אַמְרָתִי אֲשַׁמְרָה דְרָכֵי "I said, I will guard/
 keep my ways." According to Parashat Acharei Mot (*Vayikra / Leviticus 16:1-18:30*) we read the Lord God
 Almighty telling Moshe to instruct the sons of Israel to "keep/guard their ways."

Vayikra / Leviticus 18:1-5

18:1 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 18:2 'Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them,
 'I am the Lord your God. 18:3 'You shall not do what is done in the land of Egypt where you
 lived, nor are you to do what is done in the land of Canaan where I am bringing you; you
 shall not walk in their statutes. 18:4 'You are to perform My judgments and keep My statutes,
 to live in accord with them; I am the Lord your God. 18:5 'So you shall keep My statutes and
 My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the Lord. (NASB)

א וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לְאמֹר: ב דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: ג כִּמֹּ־
 עֲשֵׂה אֶרֶץ-מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁבַתְתֶּם-בָּהּ לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ וּכְמַעֲשֵׂה אֶרֶץ-כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְבִיא אֶתְכֶם שָׁמָּה לֹא
 תַעֲשׂוּ וּבְחַקְתֵּיהֶם לֹא תִלְכוּ: ד אֶת-מִשְׁפָּטַי תַעֲשׂוּ וְאֶת-חֻקְתֵי תִשְׁמְרוּ לְלַקֵּת בָּהֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:
 ה וּשְׁמֵרְתֶם אֶת-חֻקְתֵי וְאֶת-מִשְׁפָּטַי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אִתְּם הָאָדָם וְחֵי בָהֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה:

Note how the Lord tells Moshe אֶת-מִשְׁפָּטַי תַעֲשׂוּ וְאֶת-חֻקְתֵי תִשְׁמְרוּ לְלַקֵּת בָּהֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם 18:4 'You are
 to perform My judgments (אֶת-מִשְׁפָּטַי) and keep My statutes (וְאֶת-חֻקְתֵי), to live in accord with them; I am
 the Lord your God. (NASB) using the direct object identifier אֶת (et) to identify that which is to be kept or
 guarded, His judgments (מִשְׁפָּטַי) and his statutes (חֻקְתֵי). The Lord says תִשְׁמְרוּ לְלַקֵּת בָּהֶם "you are to keep/
 guard your ways in them" by his commands, and in doing so you do not do what is done in the land of Ca-
 naan, or in Egypt. It is interesting to note David's keeping or guarding his way in the presence of the wick-
 ed, he uses the words אֲשַׁמְרָה דְרָכֵי "I will guard/keep my way" using the word דרך meaning "way, route,
 path" which is the word that often describes "the way" of God (i.e. *Derech Hashem*) or a Drash which may
 refer to Midrash, a Hebrew word referring to a method of exegesis of a Biblical text. David is interpreting
 God's Torah, applying it to his life, and in doing so guarding his way in the presence of the wicked and this
 is accomplished by guarding his tongue. He says that he will "guard/keep" (אֲשַׁמְרָה) his lips with a "gag,

bridle, or muzzle” (מְחֹסוֹם). Note that a bridle is a device used for leading horses that constrains and restrains the animal (a horse) to move according to your will. He constrained or restrained his mouth so as not to say anything? Does this suggest that he keeping his mouth shut and did not do anything when the wicked did evil in his sight? Is David describing that he kept his mouth shut because he was ashamed of standing up for what was right? Have you ever been ashamed of doing what was right?

David continues saying - חֶם-לְבָי | בְּקִרְבִי בְּהִגִּי תְבַעַר - ג
 39:2 I was mute and silent, I refrained even from good, And my sorrow grew worse.
 39:3 My heart was hot within me, While I was musing the fire burned; Then I spoke with my tongue: (NASB)
 When he kept silent, he even kept from doing what was good (מְטוֹב, correct or right). Has this ever happened to you before? He says נְאַלְמָתִי דוּמְיָה הֶחְשִׁיתִי מְטוֹב וּכְאַבִי נֶעְפָּר “I was mute and silent, I refrained even from good, And my sorrow grew worse.” He was “dumb or bound” (נְאַלְמָתִי), “silent” (דוּמְיָה), he was “silent from doing good” (הֶחְשִׁיתִי מְטוֹב), and his “pain (mental and physical) sorrow was stirred up with troubles” (וּכְאַבִי נֶעְפָּר). He goes on to say that “his heart was hot” (חֶם-לְבָי) “his thoughts within were on fire” (דְּבַרְתִּי בְּלִשׁוֹנִי) (דְּבַרְתִּי בְּהִגִּי תְבַעַר-אֵשׁ) ט
 וְאַמְרָתִי לֹא-אֶזְכְּרֶנּוּ וְלֹא-אֶדְבֹר עוֹד בְּשִׁמוֹ וְהָיָה בְּלִבִּי כְּאֵשׁ בֹּעֶרֶת עֶצֶר
 20:9 But if I say, ‘I will not remember Him Or speak anymore in His name,’
 Then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire Shut up in my bones; And I am weary of holding it in, And I cannot endure it. (NASB) David describes his not saying anything as his pain/sorrows are stirred up with trouble because of his silence and not responding to doing what is right in the presence of the wicked. Both Jeremiah and David describe the work of God in our heart that burns if we do not obey the Lord in doing what is right. The Apostle’s Paul and Peter said the following regarding doing what is right and good in Galatians 6 and 1 Peter 2.

Galatians 6:6-10

6:6 The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him
 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.
 6:8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. 6:9 Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. 6:10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith. (NASB) ו המלמד בדבר יחלק מכל טובו למלמדהו: ז אל תתעו לא יתן אלהים להתל) בו כי מה שזרע האדם אתו יקצר: ח הזרע בבשרו יקצר כליון משברו והזרע ברוח יקצר מן הרוח חיי עולם: ט ואנחנו בעשות הטוב אל נחת כי נקצר בעתו אם לא נרפה: י לכן כאשר העת בידנו (נעשה נא את הטוב עם כל אדם וביותר עם בני אמונתנו)

1 Peter 2:19-25

2:19 For this finds favor; if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. 2:20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. 2:21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, 2:22 who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; 2:23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; 2:24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. 2:25 For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls. (NASB)

It is interesting that the Apostle Paul states “*hazorea bivsaro yiatsor kilyon mivrsaro, v’hazorea ba’ruach yiktsor min ha’ruach chai olam.*” (ח הזרע בבשרו יקצר כליון משברו והזרע ברוח יקצר מן הרוח חיי עולם): *6:8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. (NASB)* He equates doing what is good, to sowing in the spirit and reaping eternal life whereas the counterpart of that is if one sows to the flesh, one reaps corruption. Basically, one who gives into the flesh will reap dishonesty and immorality. Note that this is not simply a philosophical or theological thought exercise. If one gives into the fleshly desires, one is cultivating immoral decisions, which corrupts the spirit. The moral impurity corrupts the spirit and then leads to other immoral activities such as bribery, embezzlement (contentiousness), not doing what is right, and keeping silent when one should be speaking up in the right time, etc. Paul says that if you live by the Spirit, you will do what is right, and reap eternal life. Does eternal life depend upon our doing what is right? If we are abiding in the Messiah, will we choose what is right verses what is wrong? Calvinism says we do not have the option of choosing what is wrong. Is that correct based on what we have been studying? Paul said not to lose heart in doing good because in time we will reap the reward. The Apostle Peter is giving a discussion on suffering, the person who suffers unjustly (i.e. David) that one bears up under sorrows and seeks the Lord God. He is making a contrast between one who bears punishment for their sin, and the bearing of punishment because of injustice with patience (*reference to persecution*). If we endure injustice with patience, we find favor in God’s eyes. David endured injustice with patience. Peter says that Yeshua suffered for us setting the example, that when he was reviled (*verbally abused*) Yeshua did not respond with abuse. Yeshua continued to trust in the righteous judge, and he bore our sins upon the cross so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. According to Peter, keeping silent functions in a different manner than how David is describing in His Psalm. In Yeshua’s situation, the keeping silent is for the purpose of not bringing unrighteousness on account of bad language. David on the other hand kept silent because he had a fear of the unrighteous men whose presence he was afraid of. The example that Yeshua gives is that we should not be afraid no matter the circumstance, we are to trust Him who judges righteously.

David continues saying *ה 39:4 הוֹדִיעֵנִי יְהוָה | קִצְרֵי וּמַדַּת יָמַי מֵ-הֵיא אֲדַעַה מָה-הַדָּל אָנִי: ‘Lord, make me to know my end And what is the extent of my days; Let me know how transient I am. (NASB)* He says literally *מֵ-הֵיא אֲדַעַה מָה-הַדָּל אָנִי* “*what is it (let me know) what I am lacking.*” David appears to be asking the Lord to help him to realize what it is about his life that has caused him to remain silent before sinners? What is lacking or short in his life to cause this. What is lacking in David’s life (for example in the case of the sin with BatSheva?) Are there any things in your life that are lacking? He continues saying *ו הִנֵּה טִפְחוֹת | נִתְמָה יָמַי וְחַלְדֵי כְאִוֹן נִגְדָה אֶ-כָּל-הַבָּל כָּל-אָדָם נֹצֵב סְלָה: ז אֶ-בְּצָלָם | יִתְהַלֵּךְ-אִישׁ אֶ-הַבָּל יִהְיֶינָהּ יְצַבֵּר וְלֹא-יָדַע מִי-אֶסְפָּם: 39:5 ‘Behold, You have made my days as handbreadths, And my lifetime as nothing in Your sight; Surely every man at his best is a mere breath. Selah. 39:6 ‘Surely every man walks about as a phantom; Surely they make an uproar for nothing; He amasses riches and does not know who will gather them. (NASB)* The Scriptures literally states: “*Even as a shadow*” (אֶ-בְּצָלָם) “*a man walks*” (יִתְהַלֵּךְ-אִישׁ), “*even in vanity*” (אֶ-הַבָּל) “*it will crash in ruin*” (יִהְיֶינָהּ), “*he will collect/gather*” (יְצַבֵּר) “*and he does not know who will gather them*” (וְלֹא-יָדַע מִי-אֶסְפָּם). We cannot take wealth with us and when we die someone else takes the wealth that has been amassed. There is however something we can take with us when we die, do you know what that might be? (How about our thought life?) According to *Tehillim / Psalms 49* we are to take the following attitude toward wealth: “*Those who trust in their wealth and boast in the multitude of their riches, none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him*” (*Tehillim / Psalms 49:6-7*). We also cannot purchase our way into salvation, “*for the redemption of their souls is costly*” (*Tehillim / Psalms 49:8*). Yeshua warned us that money keeps some people out of heaven, saying “*It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven*” (*Matthew 19:23*). Personal wealth also cannot rescue us from death, “*Their inner thought [the thoughts of these wealthy people] is that their houses will continue forever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names*” (*Tehillim / Psalms 49:11*). While writing *Tehillim / Psalms 49*, he seems to have this Psalm in mind when he

said “For he sees that wise men die; likewise the fool and the senseless person perish, and leave their wealth to others” (Tehillim / Psalms 49:10). The following are a few additional references from the Scriptures that speak of wealth.

Additional References

Proverbs 11:28

Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf. (ESV)

Matthew 6:19-21

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (ESV)

Matthew 6:24

“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other; or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. (ESV)

Matthew 6:33

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. (ESV)

Luke 12:33

Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. (ESV)

1 Timothy 6:7-10

For we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. (ESV)

Hebrews 13:5

Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” (ESV)

These Scriptures teach us that trusting in money (wealth) will fail but righteousness will prosper. Laying up riches on this earth, thieves will come in and steal, which is consistent with David’s words “he will collect/gather” (יִצְבֵּר) “and he does not know who will gather them” (וְלֹא-יָדַע מִי-אֶסְבְּרָם). Use money to help others will amass treasure (rewards) in heaven. The Apostle Paul told Timothy “those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith...” The Torah also teaches us in Parashat Shoftim (Devarim / Deuteronomy 16:18-21:9) that the king is not to amass wealth or horses (Devarim / Deuteronomy 17:15-16, שׁוֹם טו תְּשִׁים עָלֶיךָ מָלְךְ אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בּוֹ מִקְרֹב אֲחֵיךָ תְּשִׁים עָלֶיךָ מָלְךְ לֹא תוּכַל לָתֵת עָלֶיךָ אִישׁ נָכְרִי אֲשֶׁר לֹא-

אָחִידָה הוּא: טז רַק לֹא-יִרְבֶּה-לוֹ סוּסִים וְלֹא-יִשְׁיב אֶת-הָעָם מִצְרַיִם לְמַעַן הַרְבּוֹת סוּס וַיְהִיָּה אָמַר לָכֶם לֹא תִסְפוּן:
17:15 *you shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses, one from among your countrymen you shall set as king over yourselves; you may not put a foreigner over yourselves who is not your countryman.* 17:16 *‘Moreover, he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor shall he cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, since the Lord has said to you, ‘You shall never again return that way.’* (NASB) What is interesting about the mitzvah in the Torah regarding the king, the one who multiplies horses is drawn in parallel to returning to Egypt. This Scripture suggests that amassing wealth will cause one to turn back toward Egypt, something that will result in following the ways of the Egyptians. Wealth can lead to ungodliness, unrighteousness, and sin. Something that is explicitly commanded against in Parashat Acharei Mot (*Vayikra / Leviticus 16:1-18:30*) in *Vayikra / Leviticus 18:3*,
18:3 *‘You shall not do what is done in the land of Egypt where you lived, nor are you to do what is done in the land of Canaan where I am bringing you; you shall not walk in their statutes.* (NASB)

ח וְעַתָּה מֵה-קְוִיתִי אֲדֹנָי תוֹחֲלֹתַי לָךְ הִיא: ט David says the One whom we are to trust is the Lord, 39:7 *‘And now, Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in You.* 39:8 *‘Deliver me from all my transgressions; Make me not the reproach of the foolish.* 39:9 *‘I have become mute, I do not open my mouth, Because it is You who have done it.* (NASB) It is interesting that he says that his trust and hope is in the Lord, seeking the Lord to deliver him from his transgressions. What does it mean to deliver from transgressions? He asks the Lord to deliver him from all his transgressions, recognizing, as in *Tehillim / Psalm 38:3-5*, his sins as the source of all his troubles and sorrows. David obviously thought that if his transgressions were forgiven, he was assured that his trouble would be removed. He says that he needs delivering (הַצִּילֵנִי) from all his crime (מְכַל-פְּשָׁעִי), the reason being that he does not want to be disgraced (הַרְפֹּת) by the foolish (criminals or villains, נְבָל). He is asking the Lord to not treat him as a sinner (or transgressor of His Torah) so the unrighteous have something to justify their own unrighteous deeds. In addition to this, it is interesting that he says *כִּי אֶתָּה פִּי כִּי אֶתָּה פִּי כִּי אֶתָּה פִּי* 39:9 *‘I have become mute, I do not open my mouth, Because it is You who have done it.* (NASB) Earlier he said: 39:2 *I was mute and silent, I refrained even from good, And my sorrow grew worse.* 39:3 *My heart was hot within me, While I was musing the fire burned; Then I spoke with my tongue:* (NASB) When he kept silent, he even kept from doing what was good (מְטוֹב, correct or right). Would the Lord cause David to not do what is good?

He continues saying 39:10 *‘Remove Your plague from me; Because of the opposition of Your hand I am perishing.* (NASB) It is interesting now that David is saying that the Lord has brought a plague (נִגְעָה) upon him. Would the Lord bring a plague upon His own people or upon David as he is asking the Lord to remove from him? Would the Lord bring a plague upon someone who trust and believes in Yeshua the Messiah for their salvation? If one is living in (continuing in) sin, that very well may be possible for the purpose of humbling and repentance. Let’s do a midrash on these verses from Parshiot Va’era (*Shemot / Exodus 6:2-9:35*) and Bo (*Shemot / Exodus 10:1-13:16*). Studying these portions of Scripture from the Torah reading, we find that the Lord is in the process of delivering Israel from bondage in Egypt and in the process bringing the plagues upon Egypt. The purpose is laid out in the book of Deuteronomy, in which Moses reviews the events of the past, and mentions the “*diseases of Egypt*” (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 7:15 and 28:60*). The Exodus plagues are divine judgments, and the theme of the divine punishment should lead to repentance. This theme comes from the prophets (see *Amos 4:6-12 and Ezekiel 20*). But something interesting from Parshiot Va’era and Bo is that in the opening verses of Parashat Va’era, we read the reiteration of the covenant promise 6:4 *‘I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they sojourned.* (NASB) and the promise that we will be His people and He will be

ז וְלִקְחֵתִי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעַם וְהִיִּיתִי לְכֶם לְאֱלֹהִים וַיִּדְעֻתֶם כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הַמוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם (מִצְרַיִם): The Lord tells Moshe and Aaron to go to the sons of Israel and to Pharaoh and bring the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt. The Lord declares that He will harden Pharaoh's heart so that His signs and wonders will be multiplied in Egypt declaring His glory and power (*Shemot / Exodus 7:1-4*). The Lord says to Moshe וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-אַבְרָהָם אֶל-יִצְחָק וְאֶל-יַעֲקֹב בְּאֵל שַׁדַּי וְשְׁמִי יְהוָה לֹא נִודַעְתִּי לָהֶם: ד וְגַם הִקְמַתִּי לָהֶם: *Shemot / Exodus 6:3 and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name, Lord, I did not make Myself known to them. 6:4 'I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they sojourned. (NASB)* The interesting point here is the Hebrew word used by God to describe that he had made Himself known to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is written in the Niphal verbal pattern נִודַעְתִּי (nodati) meaning "be made known or be / become known." According to the marginal Masorah on verse 6:3 there is a variant spelling in the Targum Onkelos, the Targum Jonathan, the Targum Zakanim, and the Targum Sori. Having a look at the Targum Onkelos, the variant spelling is written in the Hiphil verbal pattern as הוֹדַעִית (hodait) meaning "make known or declare, to perceive, understand, to be acquainted with." The same form of the word is used in *Jeremiah 11:18*, says ה וַיְהוָה הוֹדִיעֵנִי וְאֵדָעָה אֲזֵי הַרְאִיתֵנִי מַעַלְלֵיהֶם: "Moreover, the Lord made it known to me and I knew it; Then You showed me their deeds." (NASB) The Hiphil form in Jeremiah indicates that God (Hiphil, causatively) made it known to him (Jeremiah) the deeds of the people. In *Shemot / Exodus 6:3-4*, God is explaining that He revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as the "All Sufficient God" in the terms of the covenant. He made Himself known in the plagues that He brought upon Egypt when Pharaoh said "I know now that I have sinned before God." (*Shemot / Exodus 10:16*) So if we take this understanding from a midrashic sense on David's words saying יֵא הָסֵר מֵעַלַי נִגְעָה מִתַּגְרַת יְדָךְ 39:10 'Remove Your plague from me; Because of the opposition of Your hand I am perishing. (NASB) He understands that it is the Lord who has "made known" his sins within the covenant context. All of the problems that come upon him because of his sins are the result of the Lord admonishing him for his sins and thus he can trust the Lord God will keep him (*Tehillim / Psalms 39:7*) and he is able to call upon the Lord for help, and trust and believe that He will not forsake His people.

יב 39:11 בְּתוֹכָחוֹת עַל-עוֹן | יִסְרֹף אִישׁ וְתִמָּס כְּפֶעַשׂ חֲמוּדוֹ אֵךְ הַבֵּל כָּל-אָדָם סְלָה: *David goes on to say 39:11 'With reproofs You chasten a man for iniquity; You consume as a moth what is precious to him; Surely every man is a mere breath. Selah. (NASB)* The Aramaic Targum states יב במכסנותא על חובא יתרדי את רדי בר 39:12 *You punish a son of man with rebuke for sin; and you have dissolved his body like wool that has been nibbled away; truly every son of man is as nothing forever. (EMC)* The Septuagint sates 39:11 ἐν ἐλεγμοῖς ὑπὲρ ἀνομίας ἐπαίδευσας ἄνθρωπον καὶ ἐξέτηξας ὡς ἀράχην τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ πλὴν μάρτην ταρασσεται πῶς ἄνθρωπος διάψαλμα 39:11 *Thou chastenest man with rebukes for iniquity, and thou makest his life to consume away like a spider's web; nay, every man is disquieted in vain. Pause. (LXX)* The Lord takes what is precious to a man, his body, and the Scriptures say that He consumes like a moth, or dissolves the body like wool, or causes his life to consume away like a spiders web. The moth analogy suggests that the Lord is working something in private to nibble away at the precious thing (most likely the sin or life itself). The rabbis of the Aramaic Targum say that the Lord dissolves the body like wool. It is interesting to note that wool is a protein fiber because it comes from sheep, and based on the chemical properties of wool, it may be effected by acids (to cause decomposition), by alkalis (i.e. wool will dissolve in caustic soda solutions), and wool may also be affected by micro organisms such as mildew if it remains wet too long. So from the micro organism perspective, if the wool remains wet, which may be paralleled to sin, if sin remains too long, it will begin to be consumed and destroyed and dissolve away life and effect ones relationship with the Lord. The rabbis of the Septuagint state that the life of the sinner is similar to the consuming away of a spider's web. The spider's web is very fragile and even a slight touch can upset its pattern and destroy the web. The point is that sin causes life to be fragile, and the Lord is makes Himself known to His people by reproofs and chastening because of iniquity.

יג שְׁמֵעָה-תִּפְלְתִי | יְהוָה וְשׁוּעָתִי | הֶאֱזִינָה אֶל-דְּמֻעָתִי אֶל-תַּחֲרֹשׁ כִּי David concludes his Psalm saying

39:12 *'Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry; Do not be silent at my tears; For I am a stranger with You, A sojourner like all my fathers. 39:13 'Turn Your gaze away from me, that I may smile again Before I depart and am no more.'* (NASB) The Aramaic Targum states *יג קביל צלותי יהוה ובעותי אצית צילית אודנך ולדמעתי לא תשתוק ארום היך* 39:13 *Receive my prayer, O Lord, and hear my supplication, and to my tears do not be silent; for I am like a foreigner with you, an alien like all my fathers. 39:14. Leave me alone, and I will depart, ere I go and exist no more.* (EMC) The Septuagint states 39:12 *εἰσάκουσον τῆς προσευχῆς μου κύριε καὶ τῆς δεήσεώς μου ἐνώτισαι τῶν δακρύων μου μὴ παρασιωπήσῃς ὅτι πάροικος ἐγὼ εἰμι παρὰ σοὶ καὶ παρεπίδημος καθὼς πάντες οἱ πατέρες μου* 39:13 *ἄνεξ μοι ἵνα ἀναψύξω πρὸ τοῦ με ἀπελθεῖν καὶ οὐκέτι μὴ ὑπάρξω* 39:12 *O Lord, hearken to my prayer and my supplication: attend to my tears: be not silent, for I am a sojourner in the land, and a stranger, as all my fathers were. 39:13 Spare me, that I may be refreshed, before I depart, and be no more.* (LXX) In Tehillim / Psalms 39:14, David states *הֲשַׁע* from the word *שַׁע* (shaah) meaning “to look” which is in connection with the preposition *מִמֶּנִּי* “from me” and is translated as “Look away from me.” David asks for the Lord to look away so that he can smile again before he departs and is no more. It sounds as if he is asking the Lord to not inflict death upon him, that God’s looking upon him will cause him to die because of the nature of his sin. The context of the Psalm suggests that the Lord is pursuing David, to punish him for his iniquity, and it appears that David feels his iniquity is so great that he will die. Does the Lord do this today? Does the search us out and work in our lives to bring us to repentance and to draw us to Himself?

Rabbinic Commentary

The Rabbinic Commentary (Midrash) on *Tehillim / Psalms 39* has 4 parts. Reading through the Midrash we will be looking at Part 1, 2, and 4. Let’s begin by outlining *Midrash Tehillim Chapter 39, Part 1, 2, and 4*.

Outline of Midrash Tehillim / Psalms, Chapter 39, Part 1, 2, and 4

Part 1

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the *דיבור המתחיל* (Dibur Hamathil) saying “*For the leader. For Jeduthun. A Psalm of David. I said I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue (Tehillim / Psalms 39:1).*”
- The *פתיחתא* (Petihtha) “the homiletic introduction” to the Midrash says “*David’s meditation is to be considered in the light of what Scripture says elsewhere, A soft answer turns away wrath, the grievous words stir up anger (Mishley / Proverbs 15:1).*”
- The *משל* (mashal) “the parable,” goes on to explain the *פתיחתא* (Petihtha), the rabbis go on to expand upon David’s words saying that the evil tongue is more grievous than idolatry.
- The *נמשל* (Nimshal) “expansion on the parable” expands upon the *משל* (mashal), the rabbis speak about the Children of Israel and their sin at Har Sinai, how the people did wearied the Lord in word and not in deed, and how Jerusalem has fallen because of the tongue.
- The Concluding phrase says “*But does the Lord hate Israel, His heritage, because of her voice? Rather, does He not love her because of her voice, as is said, Let me hear the voice (Song 2:14)? The fact is that He loves her because of her voice and He hates her because of Her voice. Say then that Death and life are in the power of the tongue (Mishley / Proverbs 18:21).*”

Part 2

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the *דיבור המתחיל* (Dibur Hamathil) saying “*I said, I will*

take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue (Tehillim / Psalms 39:2)."

- The פתיחתא (Petihta) *"the homiletic introduction"* to the Midrash says *"It happened once that a king of Persia was about to die. As he grew exceeding weak, his physicians said, There can be no remedy for you until they bring you the milk of a lioness, which you must drink unto you are healed."*
- The משל (mashal) *"the parable,"* goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis go on to expand upon the words of David and the introduction with a parable regarding the obtaining milk from a lioness.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) *"expansion on the parable"* expands upon the משל (mashal), the rabbis speak about the power of the tongue over all of the various parts of the body.
- The Concluding phrase says *"Thereupon, all the parts said to the tongue, now do we confess to you that you rule all the parts. Of this it is written Death and life are in the power of the tongue (Mishley / Proverbs 18:21). And so David declared, I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue."*

Part 4

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying *"Another comment on For the leader. For Jeduthun. Jeduthun refers to the profession of judges and their judgments."*
- The פתיחתא (Petihta) *"the homiletic introduction"* to the Midrash says *"Therefore, the Psalms continues I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue so as not to pervert judgment; and another Psalm says, Even though princes sit and talk against me, Your servant does meditate in Your statutes (Tehillim / Psalms 119:23)."*
- The משל (mashal) *"the parable,"* goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis go on to expand upon the words of David regarding idol words and the study of Torah.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) *"expansion on the parable"* expands upon the משל (mashal), the rabbis say that the children of God are to speak the words of Torah rather than slander or idol words. Examples are given to illustrate this point.
- The Concluding phrase says *"David answered, By keeping your tongue from evil (Tehillim / Psalms 34:14) that is, from slander, of which it is said the lying lips are silenced which speak against the righteous (Tehillim / Psalms 31:19), lips which prevent you from ever saying, Oh how abundant is Your goodness, which You have laid up for them that fear You (Tehillim / Psalms 31:20)."*

Midrash Tehillim 39, Part 1 opens with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying *"For the leader. For Jeduthun. A Psalm of David. I said I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue (Tehillim / Psalms 39:1)."* The homiletic introduction (פתיחתא) to the Midrash says *"David's meditation is to be considered in the light of what Scripture says elsewhere, A soft answer turns away wrath, the grievous words stir up anger (Mishley / Proverbs 15:1)."* David says that he will heed his ways so that he does not sin with his tongue and the rabbis say that this may be understood by what was written elsewhere (הכתוב) and make a reference to how one speaks with another person regarding answering with soft words verses grievous words. The midrash then states *"An evil tongue is more grievous than idolatry."* (קשה לשון הרע). (יותר מעבודה זרה). Why do you think that an evil tongue is considered more grievous than idolatry? The rabbis take an *"extreme"* attitude towards the way one speaks to our fellows. Lashon Hara (the evil tongue) is considered to be one of the worst crimes against society. Why do you think the rabbis believe lashon hara is so evil, even greater than idolatry (serving other gods)? What did Yeshua think of Lashon Hara? How did He raise the bar (standard) regarding Lashon Hara? (Even our thought life will be brought before the Judge of Heaven and Earth, remember *"murder"* Matthew 5:21-30, 1 John 3:15, and *"lust/adultery"* Mathew 5:28). Yeshua warned us likewise saying that *"every careless word"* we speak will be brought before the great judgment (see Matthew 12:36). The midrash provides the answer regarding why lashon hara is con-

sidered more grievous than idolatry, saying the following:

In the wilderness, when the children of Israel sinned and made the golden calf, it was only after they had sinned with their mouths that the decree of their punishment was sealed, as is said, The Lord heard the voice of your words, and was angry (Devarim / Deuteronomy 1:34), and as is also said, As I live, says the Lord, surely as you have spoken in My ears, so will I do to you (Bamidbar / Numbers 13:28). Mark that the verse does not say, You have wearied the Lord with your deeds, but says, You have wearied the Lord with your words (Malachi 2:17).

כשחטאו ישראל במדבר ועשו את העגל, לא נחתם גזר דין עד שחטאו בפיהם, שנאמר וישמע ה' את קול דבריכם (דברים א לד), ואומר חי אני נאם ה' אם לא כאשר דברתם באזני (במדבר יד כח), הוגעתם ה' במעשיכם אין כתיב כאן, אלא הוגעתם ה' בדבריכם (מלאכי ב יז)

The rabbis say that at Har Sinai, the children of Israel sinned with the golden calf, it was not until after they sinned with their mouths that the decree of their punishment was sealed. Why do you think that is? In Parashat Ki Tisa (*Shemot / Exodus 30:11-34:35*), the Torah tells us that Moshe remained on the mountain for forty days (see *Shemot / Exodus 24:18*). After having been gone for forty days the people say in *Shemot / Exodus 32:1* א וַיִּרְא הָעָם כִּי-בִשְׁשׁ מִשָּׁה לָרֶדֶת מִן-הַהָר וַיִּקְהַל הָעָם עַל-אֶהֱרֹן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו קוּם | עֲשֵׂה-לָנוּ אֱלֹהִים לֹ: 32:1 Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron and said to him, 'Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.' (NASB) saying they did not know what was to be of him (Moshe). They demanded Aharon to make for them a god and upon seeing the idol it is interesting to note that they proclaimed "This is your god O Israel, who brought you out of Egypt" (וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלֶּהָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ). In *Shemot / Exodus 32:1-6* it is interesting to note the thing the people do with this golden calf. They ask for a god to be made with mans hands (וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו קוּם | עֲשֵׂה-לָנוּ אֱלֹהִים) and declare with their lips that this is the god that brought Israel out of Egypt (וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלֶּהָ) (אֱשֶׁר יָלַכְנוּ לְפָנֵינוּ) and declare with their lips that this is the god that brought Israel out of Egypt (אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הֵעֲלֵנוּ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם). Following the making of the golden calf, Aharon speaks with his lips saying "tomorrow will be a festival before Adonai" (וַיֹּאמֶר חַג לַיהוָה מָחָר) and note that he speaks using the name of God, the YHVH. The people raise the next day and it says the people sat, ate and drank, and raised to play (literally "to laugh," (לְצַחֵק וַיִּשָּׁב הָעָם לֶאֱכֹל וּשְׂתוֹ וַיִּקְמוּ לְצַחֵק). The people had table fellowship with this god of their own making, a form of intimate relationship. In *Devarim / Deuteronomy 1:34*, Moshe reiterates the Exodus journey and states 1:34 "Then the Lord heard the sound of your words, and He was angry and took an oath..." (NASB) The midrash goes as far to say that it was not by their deeds but by their words that caused the Lord to become angry. What is it about our words that outweigh our actions? The Apostle James said in *James 3:6* "And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell." (NASB) In the rabbinic literature, the evil tongue is described as being the source of all plagues and is worse than shedding blood, sexual immorality, and idolatry (*Mishnah Arachin 15b, Midrash Rabba Deuteronomy 6:8, Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer, 53, Bava Batra 164b*). It appears that the Apostle James (Yaakov / Jacob) held a similar opinion regarding lashon hara and the tongue, it is a world of unrighteousness and it is set on fire by hell. Note something interesting is that he describes the tongue as a world unto itself. A world within a world. Note the rabbinic understanding of our lives being a world because of the uniqueness of each individual. The rabbis say that anyone who embarrasses his friend in public is as though he has shed his blood and all of this is connected to the idea of "lashon hara." A possible reason why the rabbis say the evil tongue is the worst of sins, is because our words come from our heart which is the center of our being and our actions. The children of Israel saw the work of their hands and were glad in their heart and they said say "This is your god O Israel, who brought you out of Egypt." The midrash continues saying:

Similarly, it is written for Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen; because their tongue and their doings are against the Lord (Isaiah 3:8). And again, My heritage is become to me as a lion in the forest; she has uttered her voice against me; therefore have I hated her (Jeremiah 12:8). But does the Lord hate Israel, His heritage, because of her voice? Rather, does He not love her because of her voice, as is said, Let me hear the voice (Song 2:14)? The fact is that He loves her because of her voice and He hates her because of Her voice. Say then that Death and life are in the power of the tongue (Mishley / Proverbs 18:21).

וכתיב כי כשלה ירושלים ויהודה (בלשונה) [נפל כי לשונם ומעלליהם אל ה'] (ישעיה ג ח),
וכתיב היתה לי נחלתי כאריה ביער נתנה עלי בקולה [על כן שנאתיה] (ירמיה יב ח), וכי בקולה
שנאה, והלא בקולה אהבה, שנאמר השמיעני את קולך (שה"ש שיר השירים ב יד), אלא בקולה
אהבה ובקולה שנאה, אמור מעתה מות וחיים ביד לשון (משלי יח כא).

The midrash states that Jerusalem lay in ruins because of the tongue and their doings against the Lord quoting from the book of Isaiah. (*Isaiah 3:8* אֶל-יְהוָה לְמַרּוֹת 3:8 *For Jerusalem has stumbled and Judah has fallen, Because their speech and their actions are against the Lord, To rebel against His glorious presence. NASB*) Isaiah says because of their speech (Leshonam, לְשׁוֹנָם) and the way they walked (u'maalleyhem, וּמַעַלְלֵיהֶם) suggests the way one speaks follows through by the way one walks. The children of Israel had Aaron build them a golden calf, and the words of their lips indicated their desire and plan to walk in sin before the Lord at the mountain of Sinai in the desert. Their words were a form of premeditated sin; it was something the people had planned to do. The midrash concludes saying that the Lord loves His people by hearing their voices, saying because of her voice he wants to hear her praises, her song, her singing, etc. So from the biblical text, the Lord loves her because of her voice, and can be angry with her because of her voice. The idea is that death and life are in the power of the tongue (*Mishley / Proverbs 18:21*). Do we guard our tongues enough today in our lives and in society? Think about this for a moment: *"the harm done by speech is even worse than the harm done by stealing or by cheating, as in the case of losing money, the harm done by speech can never be repaired."* Our words go out and kill (*killing a person's heart*), steal (*robbing one of their joy*) and destroy (*the result of words that are able to permanently destroy relationships*). There are two mitzvot in the Torah that deal specifically with improper speech. *Vayikra / Leviticus 19:16* states that *"you shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among your people,"* and *Vayikra / Leviticus 25:17* that states *"you shall not wrong one another,"* which according to Jewish tradition refers to wronging a person with speech (i.e. lashon hara).

Midrash Tehillim 39, Part 2 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying *"I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue (Tehillim / Psalms 39:2)."* The homiletic introduction (פתיחתא, Petihta) to the Midrash says *"It happened once that a king of Persia was about to die. As he grew exceeding weak, his physicians said, There can be no remedy for you until they bring you the milk of a lioness, which you must drink unto you are healed."* Midrash Tehillim 39, Part 2 appears to be a really long parable regarding the king of Persia who was about to die. The Midrash says the following:

It happened once that a king of Persia was about to die. As he grew exceeding weak, his physicians said, There can be no remedy for you until they bring you the milk of a lioness, which you must drink unto you are healed. So the king sent his servants, who took much money with them, to Solomon, son of David. Then, Solomon sent and summoned Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, whom he aside, How can we get the milk of a lioness? Benaiah replied, Give me ten female goats. Then Benaiah and the king's servants went to a lion's den, which the lioness was giving suck to her whelps. The first day he stood afar, and threw one goat to her, which she devoured. The second day Benaiah came a little closer and threw another goat. And

thus he continued day by day. At the end of the ten days, he was close to the lioness, so that as he played with her he touched her dugs and took some of her milk and went on his way. Then the king's servants went back to Solomon; he dismissed them in peace, and they went on their way. While they were midway to their journey, the physician who was with the king's servants had a dream in which he saw the parts of the body arguing with one another. The feet were saying, Among all the parts, there are none like us. Had we not walked, he would not have been able to fetch any of the milk. The hands replied, saying, There are none like us. Had we not touched the lioness, he would not now be carrying any of the milk. The eyes said, We are of greater worth than any of you. Had we not shown him the way, nothing at all would have been accomplished. The heart spoke, saying, I am greater worth than any of you. Had I not given counsel, you would not have succeeded at all in the errand. But the tongue spoke up and said, I am better than you. Had it not been for speech, what would you have done. Then all the parts replied, saying, to the tongue, are you not afraid to compare yourself with us, you are lodged in a place of obscurity and darkness, you indeed in whom there is not a single bone such as there is in all the other parts? But the tongue declared, This very day, you are going to acknowledge that I rule you. As the physician woke up from his sleep, he kept the dream in his heart, and went on his way. He came to the king, and said, Here is the milk of a female which he went to get for you. Drink it. Immediately the king got angry with the physician and ordered that he be hanged. As he went out to be hanged, all the parts began to tremble. The tongue said to them, Did I not tell you this day, that there is nothing to you? If I save you now, will you admit that I rule you? They said, Yes. Then the tongue said to those who were about to hang the physician, bring me back to the king. They brought the physician back to the king, and he asked the king, why did you order to have me hanged? The king replied, because you brought the milk of a female to me. He asked the king, what does that matter to you? If will cure you. Besides, a lioness can be called a female. The king then took some of the milk, and drank, and was healed. And so since it was proved that the milk was the milk of a lioness, the physician was dismissed in peace. Thereupon, all the parts said to the tongue, now do we confess to you that you rule all the parts. Of this it is written Death and life are in the power of the tongue (Mishley / Proverbs 18:21). And so David declared, I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue. (Midrash Tehillim 39, Part 2)

The midrash begins with the physician saying that in order for the king to be healed, he must drink from the milk of a lioness. What is interesting about this is that the physician specifies specifically, that the king must drink the milk of a lioness. Why do you think the physician chose the milk of a lioness and not the milk of a goat, or of a cow? It could be that the physician saw the king's illness was so great, that he decided to put forward an impossible task so the king would eventually die and he would survive with his life. In ancient times, is it possible that the king's physician would be put to death if the king died of his illness? Could the impossible task, of milking a lioness be given simply because it would have been impossible to do? So the king of Persia went to Solomon seeking his wisdom on how to get milk from a lioness. Solomon sends his servant and the servant successfully milks a lioness and brings the milk to the king. As the physician was returning to the king of Persia, the midrash says he "*had a dream in which he saw the parts of the body arguing with one another.*" The arguing parts of the body reminds us of the Apostle Paul writing to the Corinthians regarding the various parts of the body of the Messiah in *1 Corinthians 12:4-27*:

1 Corinthians 12:4-27

12:4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. 12:5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. 12:6 There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. 12:7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 12:8 For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; 12:9 to another faith by

the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 12:10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. 12:11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills. 12:12 For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. 12:14 For the body is not one member, but many. 12:15 If the foot says, 'Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body,' it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 12:16 And if the ear says, 'Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body,' it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 12:17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 12:18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. 12:19 If they were all one member, where would the body be? 12:20 But now there are many members, but one body. 12:21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you'; or again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' 12:22 On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; 12:23 and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, 12:24 whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, 12:25 so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 12:26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. 12:27 Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. (NASB)

It is interesting in *1 Corinthians 12:15-23* speaks of the parts of the body with regard to the body of Messiah, referring to the body of believers and each is given a different function. Paul discusses what would happen if the foot says that he is not a hand and therefore not a part of the body. If the ear says he is not an eye, and so I am not a part of the body either; and if the whole body was an ear, where would be the sense of smell? What's interesting about this discussion is that Paul seems to be aware of the use of the parable in the midrash regarding the parts of the body arguing with one another to say "which is the greatest?" It is also possible that Paul knew of this midrash on *Tehillim / Psalms 39* regarding the various body parts that were arguing which was the greatest? Were the people in Corinth all desiring to be preachers, or teachers, or have the gift of healing, or speaking on tongues, etc? Is it possible that some of people were suggesting that there were different spirits giving different gifts? The point that Paul is trying to make with regard to the body is that no one person is greater than the next, each is to help his brother and none is to esteem himself as being greater than the other, etc. So the members of the body are to be good to one another as Paul says *12:26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. (NASB)* As a result, all of Christ's body is given honor. Midrash *Tehillim 39, Part 2* has a slightly different approach since the midrash is speaking on the *Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל)* saying "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue (*Tehillim / Psalms 39:2*)." In the physicians dream in the midrash, the feet, the hands, the eyes, the heart, and the tongue (speech) all spoke together praising themselves saying that each one was greater than the next. The tongue however boasted that he has rule over all the body. So when the physician arrives, he tells the king that he has the milk of a female. The king got angry, presuming this was not the milk of the lioness, and prepared to hang the physician. Before the physician was to be hanged, the body parts submitted and admitted to the tongue that he does indeed have the power of life and death. Note how the tongue causes to body to submit to its will, as in *Parashat Ki Tisa* regarding the people and their premeditated sin. Midrash *Tehillim 39, Part 2* concludes saying "Thereupon, all the parts said to the tongue, now do we confess to you that you rule all the parts. Of this it

is written *Death and life are in the power of the tongue (Mishley / Proverbs 18:21). And so David declared, I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue.*” David says that he will take heed to his ways so that he does not sin with his tongue. Taking heed of our ways, examining our ways is something every man should do to his actions, conduct, and conversation like David is suggesting. This is the ways of God, to choose to walk in faith, in his truth and not in error, in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless and in the path of holiness. We are to seek holiness and take heed not to embrace error or going into immorality. David says that I sin not with my tongue which is a world of iniquity. According to the *Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 37a* we read the following.

Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 37a

לפיכך נברא אדם יחיד, ללמדך שכל המאבד נפש אחת מישראל - מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו איבד עולם מלא, וכל המקיים נפש אחת מישראל - מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו קיים עולם מלא.

“For this reason was man created alone, to teach you that whosoever destroys a single soul, Scripture imputes (guilt) to him as though he had destroyed a complete world; and whosoever preserves a single soul, Scripture ascribes (merit) to him as though he had preserved a complete world.”

According to the rabbis in the *Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 37a*, each person is considered an entire world. We learn here that the tongue is also, in and of itself, a world of iniquity that is capable of all sorts of evils. The simple interpretation of this could be that we are to understand the tongue can lead us into a world of sin and rebellion. We are however called to live a moral life so that we might walk in the ways of God. Take another example, if we respect / honor people with our tongue (lips, words, etc), we are honoring one who is created in the image of God and honoring God in the process. If we disrespect our spouses, do we really believe the Scriptures and that God exists when treating so badly one who was and is created in the image of God? Also, if we consider this aspect from the Talmud regarding each man being a separate world, if we do not watch or guard our tongues, there is the possibility of “*creating evil worlds*” in the sense of procreation by reason of the tongue. Others will learn from our example, from what we say, and do likewise. Remember Yeshua said woe to you Pharisees and teachers of the Law ... you will make them twice the child of hell as you are? (see *Matthew 23:15*) Do you think this is what Yeshua was thinking about when he spoke those words?

Midrash Tehillim 39, Part 4 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying “*Another comment on For the leader. For Jeduthun. Jeduthun refers to the profession of judges and their judgments.*” The homiletic introduction to the Midrash states “*Therefore, the Psalms continues I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue so as not to pervert judgment; and another Psalm says, Even though princes sit and talk against me, Your servant does meditate in Your statutes (Tehillim / Psalms 119:23).*” The midrash continues with the general theme of Midrash Tehillim 39 regarding sinning not with the tongue and adds perverting justice (שלא לעוות את הדין), these things are connected to the tongue and man’s heart and thus the rabbis say “*A wholesome tongue is a tree of life (Tehillim / Psalms 15:4), tree of life meaning Torah. From this you learn that the Holy One blessed be He, gave the Torah to the children of Israel that they should not busy themselves with idle words, nor be busy with evil tongues.*” So one of the purposes of the Torah is to keep the words of this Law on our lips (*Joshua 1:8*) and in our hearts (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 11:18*) so we do not sin with our lips. The idea is to get God’s Word in our hearts so we do not have sin on our minds. This is a New Testament principle if you think about it.

As we have been learning in the midrash, there is a connection between what we say and what we do. Remember Isaiah said the people’s speech (Leshonam, לְשׁוֹנָם) is connected to the way they walked (u’maalleyhem, וַיַּמְעַלְלֵיהֶם) suggesting the way one speaks follows through by the way they walk. Note again that the children of Israel had Aaron build them a golden calf, and the words of their lips indicated their desire and plan to walk in sin before the Lord at the mountain of Sinai in the desert. It is interesting to note the

opposite effect in the way Eli kept silent about the way his sons lived in *1 Samuel* chapter 2.

1 Samuel 2:27-36

2:27 Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him, 'Thus says the Lord, 'Did I not indeed reveal Myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt in bondage to Pharaoh's house? 2:28 'Did I not choose them from all the tribes of Israel to be My priests, to go up to My altar, to burn incense, to carry an ephod before Me; and did I not give to the house of your father all the fire offerings of the sons of Israel? 2:29 'Why do you kick at My sacrifice and at My offering which I have commanded in My dwelling, and honor your sons above Me, by making yourselves fat with the choicest of every offering of My people Israel?' 2:30 'Therefore the Lord God of Israel declares, 'I did indeed say that your house and the house of your father should walk before Me forever'; but now the Lord declares, 'Far be it from Me for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me will be lightly esteemed. 2:31 'Behold, the days are coming when I will break your strength and the strength of your father's house so that there will not be an old man in your house. 2:32 'You will see the distress of My dwelling, in spite of all the good that I do for Israel; and an old man will not be in your house forever. 2:33 'Yet I will not cut off every man of yours from My altar so that your eyes will fail from weeping and your soul grieve, and all the increase of your house will die in the prime of life. 2:34 'This will be the sign to you which will come concerning your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas: on the same day both of them will die. 2:35 'But I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who will do according to what is in My heart and in My soul; and I will build him an enduring house, and he will walk before My anointed always. 2:36 'Everyone who is left in your house will come and bow down to him for a piece of silver or a loaf of bread and say, 'Please assign me to one of the priest's offices so that I may eat a piece of bread.' (NASB)

כז וַיָּבֹא אִישׁ-אֱלֹהִים אֶל-עֲלִי וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה הַגְּלָלָה נִגְלִיתִי אֶל-בֵּית אָבִיךָ בְּהִיוֹתָם בְּמִצְרַיִם לְבֵית פְּרַעֲזָה: כח וּבָחַר אֹתוֹ מִכָּל-שְׁבֵטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לִי לְכַהֵן לְעֹלוֹת עַל-מִזְבְּחֵי הַהַקְטִיר קִטְרֹת לְשֵׂאת אִפּוֹד לְפָנַי וְאֶתְנֶנָּה לְבֵית אָבִיךָ אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֵׁי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: כט לָמָּה תִבְעָטוּ בְּזֹבְחֵי וּבְמִנְחֹתַי אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי מֵעוֹן וְתִכְבְּדוּ אֶת-בְּנֵיךָ מִמֶּנִּי לְהַבְרִיאֲכֶם מִרְאשֵׁית כָּל-מִנְחַת יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעַמִּי: ל לָכֵן נָא-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אָמֹר אֶמְרֹתֵי בֵיתְךָ וּבֵית אָבִיךָ יִתְהַלְכוּ לְפָנַי עַד-עוֹלָם וְעַתָּה נָא-יְהוָה חֲלִילָה לִּי כִּי-מִכְבְּדֵי אֲכַבֵּד וּבְזֵי יִקְלוּ: לא הֲיֵנָּה יָמִים בָּאִים וּגְדַעְתִּי אֶת-זֶרְעֶךָ וְאֶת-זֶרַע בֵּית אָבִיךָ מֵהָיֹת זָקֵן בְּבֵיתְךָ: לב וְהִבְטַטְתָּ צֶר מֵעוֹן בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר-יִיטִיב אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא-יְהִיָּה זָקֵן בְּבֵיתְךָ כָּל-הַיָּמִים: לג וְאִישׁ לֹא-אֶכְרִית לָךְ מֵעַם מִזְבְּחֵי לְכָלֹת אֶת-עֵינֶיךָ וְלֹאֲדִיב אֶת-נַפְשֶׁךָ וְכָל-מִרְבֵּית בֵּיתְךָ יָמוּתוּ אֲנָשִׁים: לד וְזֶה-לָךְ הָאֹת אֲשֶׁר יָבֹא אֶל-שְׁנֵי בְנֵיךָ אֶל-חֶפְנֵי וּפִינְחָס בְּיוֹם אֶחָד יָמוּתוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם: לה וְהִקְיַמְתִּי לִי כֹהֵן נֹאמָן פֹּאֲשֶׁר בְּלִבָּבִי וּבְנַפְשִׁי יַעֲשֶׂה וּבְנִיתִי לוֹ בֵּית נֹאמָן וְהִתְהַלַּךְ לְפָנַי-מְשִׁיחִי כָּל-הַיָּמִים: לו וְהָיָה כָּל-הַנּוֹתֵר בְּבֵיתְךָ יָבֹא לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת לוֹ לְאֵגוֹרֹת כֶּסֶף וְכֶפֶר-לֶחֶם וְאָמַר סִפְחָנִי נָא אֶל-אֶחָת הַכֹּהֲנֹת לְאָכַל פֶּת-לֶחֶם:

כט לָמָּה תִבְעָטוּ בְּזֹבְחֵי וּבְמִנְחֹתַי אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי מֵעוֹן וְתִכְבְּדוּ אֶת-בְּנֵיךָ מִמֶּנִּי לְהַבְרִיאֲכֶם מִרְאשֵׁית כָּל-מִנְחַת יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעַמִּי: 2:29 'Why do you kick at My sacrifice and at My offering which I have commanded in My dwelling, and honor your sons above Me, by making yourselves fat with the choicest of every offering of My people Israel?' (NASB) Earlier in *1 Samuel* 2, we read the manner in which Eli's sons were behaving wickedly before the Lord. They would take from the choicest meats and sleep with the women at the entrance to the Tabernacle. His sons living in open sin before the people of Israel like this, isn't it interesting how long the Lord terries before bringing judgment upon them? The first thing listed in the Scriptures was that they did not handle and divide the meat of the sacrifice properly. Let's look at these verses more carefully.

1 Samuel 2:12-17

2:12 Now the sons of Eli were worthless men; they did not know the Lord 2:13 and the custom of the priests with the people. When any man was offering a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand. 2:14 Then he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. Thus they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. 2:15 Also, before they burned the fat, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, 'Give the priest meat for roasting, as he will not take boiled meat from you, only raw.' 2:16 If the man said to him, 'They must surely burn the fat first, and then take as much as you desire,' then he would say, 'No, but you shall give it to me now; and if not, I will take it by force.' 2:17 Thus the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord, for the men despised the offering of the Lord. (NASB)

יג וּמִשְׁפֵּט הַכֹּהֲנִים אֶת-הָעֵם כָּל-אִישׁ זִבְחַ זִבְחַ וּבָא נֶעַר הַפֶּהָן 2:13 and the custom of the priests with the people. When any man was offering a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand. (NASB) The boiling of the meat and taking a three pronged fork to remove the meat from the pot is said to be a custom or a judgment (וּמִשְׁפֵּט). There are no Torah commands on exactly how to separate the meats and so they come up with this custom. The Scriptures continued saying that Eli's sons would demand the meat before the fat was removed for burning on the altar. Note also in Parashat Tzav, the Torah command is very explicit on how the meat was to be handled (*Vayikra / Leviticus 7:29-34*). The fat was to be burned while the breast and right shoulder were to be given to the priest after they were roasted on the altar. The sons of Eli, however, had no regard for the Torah command. Hophni and Phinehas looked upon the sacrifices not as a means of worshiping God, but as something which was there for their own personal use and pleasure. Note also that the meat was their for their use, it was to be given to them, however, it was the manner in which they took of the meat and neglecting the fat that was a sin. They boldly took from the meat that was set apart for the Lord as holy. This was a blatant disregard for God's commands. Eli did not speak up against his sons and neither did he remove his sons from their office of service in the Tabernacle. By Eli's example, keeping silent resulted in bringing God's curse upon his family whereas in other cases, speaking words brought God's curse upon one's family. So based on these Scriptures, one way or the other, speaking or keeping silent may result in sin before the Lord. David says "Even though princes sit and talk against me, Your servant does meditate in Your statutes (*Tehillim / Psalms 119:23*)."
וכן הוא אומר (כי) [גם] [ישבו] "The rabbis quote from Tehillim 119, which opens saying the following:

Tehillim / Psalms 119:1-6

119:1 How blessed are those whose way is blameless, Who walk in the law of the Lord. 119:2 How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, Who seek Him with all their heart. 119:3 They also do no unrighteousness; They walk in His ways. 119:4 You have ordained Your precepts, That we should keep them diligently. 119:5 Oh that my ways may be established To keep Your statutes! 119:6 Then I shall not be ashamed When I look upon all Your commandments. (NASB)

א אֲשֶׁרִי תְמִימֵי-דָרְךָ הֵהֲלֵכִים בְּתוֹרַת יְהוָה: ב אֲשֶׁרִי נִצְרִי יַעֲדֹתִיו בְּכֹל-לֵב יִדְרְשׁוּהוּ: ג אַף לֹא-
פָעַלְו עוֹלָה בְּדַרְכָּיו הִלְכוּ: ד אַתָּה צִוִּיתָה פְקֻדֹתֶיךָ לְשֹׁמֵר מֵאֵד: ה אֲחֲלִי יִפְנוּ דַרְכֵי לְשֹׁמֵר חֻקֶיךָ: ו
אֲז לֹא-אַבוֹשׁ בְּהַבִּיטִי אֶל-כָּל-מִצְוֹתֶיךָ:

David says that blessing comes to those whose ways are blameless / innocent (תְּמִימֵי-דָרְךָ) and who walk in

the Torah of the Lord (הַתּוֹרָה בְּתוֹרַת יְהוָה), who observe His testimonies (עֲדוֹתָיו) and seek Him with all their heart. It is interesting to note that he says יִדְרְשׁוּהוּ from the root דרש meaning to seek, or interpret, which draws the context back to the Torah, the one who seeks God, seeks His words, to know, understand, interpret, and apply God's word to ones life. Are you doing this today in your life? David continues saying that this person does not work injustice or evil (לֹא-פָעַל עוֹלָה) because he walks in God's ways. He also says 119:4 *You have ordained Your precepts, That we should keep them diligently. (NASB)* This sounds a lot like what the Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians in *Ephesians 2:10* saying כי פעל אלהים אנחנו נבראים במשיח ישוע למעשים טובים אשר הכין האלהים מקדם למען נתהלך בהם: *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.” (NASB)* In *Ephesians 2:10*, we read that the Lord God Almighty, our Father in Heaven, has prepared for us before hand something that we are to walk in, Paul says these are מעשים טובים (מע"ט, *ma'asim tovim*) “good deeds.” This phrase “*ma'asim tovim*” (good deeds) is used throughout the rabbinic literature, in the midrashim (i.e. *to name only two places.*), and in the Talmud, etc. The *Talmud Bavli Avot 4:17* states וזו היא בחינת תשובה ומעשים טובים meaning “*self examination teshuvah with good deeds.*” This is an often used Talmudic expression denoting the mitzvot (as in the statement, “*One hour of teshuvah with good deeds in this world is better than all the life of the World to Come*”). The juxtaposition of these two things, Teshuvah which deals with repentance and turning from sin, and good deeds seems to be complimentary. When we turn from the path of unrighteousness, we are turning toward God and His ways and seeking to do good towards others, good towards the Lord, etc. The Rabbi's understanding of performance of the mitzvot is to be done so from the motivation to return the soul to its source (God). Paul's words suggest that God is crafting us to abide (live) in Yeshua the Messiah to do “good works” (*ma'asim tovim*) which brings the connection back to the Psalms and to the Torah as David says in *Tehillim / Psalms 119:3 They also do no unrighteousness; They walk in His ways. 119:4 You have ordained Your precepts, That we should keep them diligently. 119:5 Oh that my ways may be established To keep Your statutes! 119:6 Then I shall not be ashamed When I look upon all Your commandments. (NASB)* In the Midrash, the rabbis quote from *Tehillim / Psalms 119:23* saying:

Tehillim / Psalms 119:23-27

119:23 Even though princes sit and talk against me, Your servant meditates on Your statutes. 119:24 Your testimonies also are my delight; They are my counselors. 119:25 My soul cleaves to the dust; Revive me according to Your word. 119:26 I have told of my ways, and You have answered me; Teach me Your statutes. 119:27 Make me understand the way of Your precepts, So I will meditate on Your wonders. (NASB)

כג גם יִשְׁבוּ שָׂרִים בִּי נִדְבָרוּ עֲבָדָה יְשִׁיחַ בְּחֻקֶּיהָ: כד גם-עֲדוֹתֶיהָ שֶׁשְׁשַׁעֲנִי אֲנִשִּׁי עֲצָתִי: כה דְּבַקָּה לְעֶפֶר נַפְשִׁי חַיְנִי כְּדָבָרָה: כו דְּרַכִּי סִפְרָתִי וּתְעַנֵּנִי לְמַדְנִי חֻקֶּיהָ: כז דְּרָה-פְּקוּדֶיהָ הִבִּינִנִּי וְאֲשִׁיחָה בְּנִפְלְאוֹתֶיהָ:

David requests for the Lord to teach him His ways so that he can walk in them. David is so adamant in his request for learning God's ways he requests that the Lord “make” (פְּקוּדֶיהָ) him to know and understand His ways. It is interesting David's use of the word פְּקוּדֶיהָ is derived from the root (פִּקֹּד << פִּיקוּד) to command or be a captain over him with regard to making him know and understand His ways.

Midrash Tehillim 39, Part 4 continues saying the following.

ד נמיס טל קרפ מילהת שרדמ

מירבדב קסעתא אלש אתוקתש הרמשא אלא אפרמ רמוא אוה וכו, הרות ירבדב אלא, מילטב התא נאכמ, הרות וז, (ד וט ילשמ) מייח קע וושל אלא, הרותה תא לארשיל ה"בקה ותנ אלש דמל וושלב וקסעי אלו, מילטב מירבדב וקסעתי אלש, ינושלב אוטחמ יכרד הרמשא רמוא אוה וכו, ערה אלו, רבדמ אהת מב, (זו מירבד) מב תרבדו רמואו, ימ רמא דוד וכו, מילטב מירבדב אלו, ערה וושלב סדא ניא ול ורמא, אבה מלוע ייה תונקל הצור שיאה ימ ביתכד, אוה לוזב מהל רמא, תונקל לוכי ורמא, ייה יעב נאמ, (גי דל מילהת) מייח קפחה דנושל רוצנ מהל רמא, לוכי ימ מייח תונקל ול תונישלמ אלא ער ניא, (די שש מילהת שש) ערמ (טי אל מילהת שש) רקש יתפש הנמלאת רמאנש דיאריל תנפצ רשא דבוט בר המ, ענמנ אוהש הממ (כ א"ל מילהת שש ש).

Midrash Tehillim 39, Part 4

"... The verse means, however, with words of Torah. So, too, it is said A wholesome tongue is a tree of life (Tehillim / Psalms 15:4), tree of life meaning Torah. From this you learn that the Holy One blessed be He, gave the Torah to the children of Israel that they should not busy themselves with idle words, nor be busy with evil tongues. So the Psalm says I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue. So too, Scripture says, these words you will speak them (Devarim / Deuteronomy 6:7) that is, you will speak words of Torah, not slander, nor idle words. Likewise, David asked, Who wishes to have life in the world to come? And they replied, No man can have it. David replied, But it can be had, and at a low price, When scripture asks, Who is the man that desires life? (Tehillim / Psalms 34:13), the question means, who is he who wants life in the world to come? And they asked, But how can one have such life? David answered, By keeping your tongue from evil (Tehillim / Psalms 34:14) that is, from slander, of which it is said the lying lips are silenced which speak against the righteous (Tehillim / Psalms 31:19), lips which prevent you from ever saying, Oh how abundant is Your goodness, which You have laid up for them that fear You (Tehillim / Psalms 31:20)."

The rabbis say that God's Word, His Torah is to be kept on our lips, for the purpose of giving life. Note that they say that we are to speak words of "instruction" (Torah) rather than idle or slanderous words. The sin of lashon hara is so great, that David asks "who wishes to have life in the world to come?" and the answer is "by keeping your tongue from evil, from slander, and from lying lips." The Apostle James' emphasis in James 3 warns that judgment is real and that we all stumble. He says we are to humbly repent of impure speech. He says the tongue has the potential for great amount of evil rather than the potential for good, and the capacity for evil is so great that it is a world in and of itself. The tongue essentially spreads evil (see James 3:5-6). There seems to be a direct correlation to the midrash on Tehillim / Psalms 39. Midrash Tehillim 39, Part 4 concludes saying "David answered, By keeping your tongue from evil (Tehillim / Psalms 34:14) that is, from slander, of which it is said the lying lips are silenced which speak against the righteous (Tehillim / Psalms 31:19), lips which prevent you from ever saying, Oh how abundant is Your goodness, which You have laid up for them that fear You (Tehillim / Psalms 31:20)." In keeping our lips from evil words, we essentially keep our hearts on the straight and narrow path. Studying God's Word is the way to feed the Spirit and the way to renew our hearts, and of course, with the help of the Holy Spirit of God. Let's Pray!

Heavenly Father,

We glorify You and give You Praise! Truly You are worthy to be praised! Lord our lips were created for Your pleasure, to give glory and praise to You always. Please have mercy and forgive us for the sin of our lips. Lord help us to do what is right in the midst of this evil world. Empower us by Your Spirit to do what is right, to speak words of life to our friends and family, to pray for our leaders, or bothers and sisters, and to have wisdom for the purpose of seeking and growing nearer to You O Lord. Help us to know Your ways and to have a spirit filled - spirit led life. Hear our prayers Lord and help us to treat all men with justice and righteousness. Lord, we desire to live holy and righteous lives because You have separated us as holy unto Yourself. You have shown us how to do this by Your commandments and demonstrated this in Your Son Yeshua the Messiah. Help us to walk and abide in Christ as the Scriptures say we are supposed to

do. Thank You Lord for sending Your son Yeshua that we may enter into the salvation You have provided. Thank you Lord for these writings so that we can grow in our faith and know who we are in the Messiah Yeshua. Help us to grow by walking in the spirit and applying 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!

הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:
Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,
"Yeshua" King Messiah forever and ever