

## ספר תהילים ד | Tehillim / Psalms 4

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### An Evening Prayer

This week's study is from *Tehillim / Psalms 4: 1-9*. The Psalm begins by stating this is “*For the choir director, on stringed instruments. A Psalm of David.*” The opening verse appears to indicate David’s distress saying בְּקִרְאֵי עֲנֵנִי | אֱלֹהֵי צְדָקָי בַּצָּר הִרְחַבְתָּ לִּי חֲנֻנִי וְשָׁמַעַתְּ תַּפְלִתִּי: 4:1 *Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me in my distress; Be gracious to me and hear my prayer.* (NASB) The Scripture literally says “*I cried out, answer me God of my righteousness of strength.*” He declares the Lord God to be his strength and his righteousness and asks that his prayer be heard. David asks of those who persecute him how long will his honor (glory, כְּבוֹדִי) be insulted (לְקַלְמָה) by them who love vanity (תְּאֻהָבוֹן רִיק) and seek lies (תִּבְקְשׁוּ כָזָב). David then contrasts those who love vanity, seek lies, and give dishonor with the righteous, God sets apart the godly man for Himself and that the Lord hears when he calls to Him (וַיִּדְעוּ כִּי-הִפְלִיחַ יְהוָה חֲסִיד לֹא יִהְיֶה יֹשְׁמַע בְּקִרְאֵי אֱלֹהֵי:). The godly or righteous man will tremble in the fear of the Lord and not sin. David says אֲמָרוּ בְּלִבְבְּכֶם עַל-מִשְׁכַּבְּכֶם וְדַמּוּ סֵלָה “*say in your heart upon your dwelling place and be silent, Selah*”. He then states זָבַחוּ זִבְחֵי-צְדָקָה וּבְטַחוּ אֶל-יְהוָה: “*sacrifice a sacrifice of righteousness and trust upon the Lord.*” The “*sacrifice of righteousness*” was he speaking of going and performing the sacrifice in the Mishkhan (Tabernacle). Did David consider trusting in the Lord “*Maasei-HaTzedikim*” (מעשה הצדקים) a “*work of righteousness?*” In the context of these Scriptures, is the “*sacrifice of righteousness*” equal to being still and trusting in the Lord, not taking actions into your own hands? David goes on to say that “*many are saying, who will show us any good*” indicates that he may be quoting from the men that are with him while he fled from Absalom. David asks the Lord to lift up his face (presence) upon them. The Lord is the one who puts joy (שְׂמֵחָה) in our hearts, a greater joy than when we are blessed in the abundance of things, such as having an abundance of grain and new wine. The final verse in *Tehillim / Psalm 4* states בְּשָׁלוֹם יִחְדָּו אֲשַׁכְּבָה וְאֵישׁוֹן כִּי-אֲתָהּ יְהוָה לְבָדָד לְבִטָּח תּוֹשִׁיבֵנִי: 4:8 *In peace I will both lie down and sleep, For You alone, O Lord, make me to dwell in safety.* (NASB) The concluding verse indicates that this may have been a prayer in the evening when he lays down to sleep and thus may be the reason this Psalm is labeled as an evening prayer of trust in God.

עברית Hebrew	ארמי Aramaic	ελληνικός Greek
ספר תהלים פרק ד	ספר טוביה פרק ד	ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 4
א לְמִנְצַחַת בְּנִגְיָנוֹת מְזֻמֹּר לְדָוִד: ב בְּקִרְאֵי עֲנֵנִי   אֱלֹהֵי צְדָקָי בַּצָּר הִרְחַבְתָּ לִּי חֲנֻנִי וְשָׁמַעַתְּ תַּפְלִתִּי: ג בְּנֵי-אִישׁ עַד-מָה כְּבוֹדִי לְקַלְמָה תְּאֻהָבוֹן רִיק תִּבְקְשׁוּ כָזָב סֵלָה: ד וַיִּדְעוּ כִּי-הִפְלִיחַ יְהוָה חֲסִיד לֹא יִהְיֶה יֹשְׁמַע בְּקִרְאֵי אֱלֹהֵי:	א לשבחא על נגינתא תושבחתא לדויד: ב בעידן צלותי קבל מיני אלוה [אלהא] צדקותי בעידן עקתא אפתיתא לי חוס עלי וקבל צלותי: ג בני נשא [בני אינשא] מטול מה איקרי לאיתכנעותא תרחמון סריקותא [סריקא] תבעון כדיבותא [כדכובא] לעלמין:	4:1 Eις τὸ τέλος, ἐν ψαλμοῖς· ᾠδὴ τῷ Δαυΐδ. - 4:2 EN τῷ ἐπικαλεῖσθαί με εἰσήκουσάς μου, ὁ Θεὸς τῆς δικαιοσύνης μου· ἐν θλίψει ἐπλάτυνας με. οἰκτεῖρησόν με καὶ εἰσάκουσον τῆς προσευχῆς μου. 4:3 υἱοὶ ἀνθρώπων, ἕως πότε βαρυκάρδιοι; ἵνατί ἀγαπάτε ματαιότητα καὶ ζητεῖτε ψεῦδος; (διάψαλμα).

<p>ה רגזו ואל-תִּחַטְּאוּ אִמְרוּ בְּלִבְבְּכֶם עַל-מִשְׁפַּכְכֶם וְדַמּוּ סֵלָה: ו זָבַחוּ זִבְחֵי-צַדִּיק וּבִטְחוּ אֶל-יְהוָה: ז רְבִים אִמְרִים מִי-יִרְאֶנוּ טוֹב נִסָּה- עָלֵינוּ אֹר פְּנִידָה יְהוָה: ח נִתְתָּה שְׁמִחָה בְּלִבִּי מֵעַת דְּגַנֶּם וְתִירוֹשָׁם רְבוּ: ט בְּשָׁלוֹם יִחַדּוּ אֲשַׁכְּבָה וְאִישׁוֹן כִּי-אֲתָה יְהוָה לְבָדָד לְבִטָּח תּוֹשִׁיבֵנִי:</p>	<p>ד וידעו ארום [ארי] פריש יהוה זכאה [חסידא] ליה יהוה יקבל צלותיה דדוד במקרי לותיה [במקרייה ליה]: ה זעו מיניה ולא תחטון אמרו בעותכון בפומכון ושילתכון בלבכון [בלבכון] וצלו על שיוויכון ואדכרו יומי מיתותא לעלמין: ו כבשו יצריכון ויתחשיב לכון כנכסת צדקא וסברו על יהוה: ז סגיעין דאמרין מן יחמינא טבא נשא [נסי] עלנא ניהור סבר אפך יהוה: ח יהיבתא חדותא בלבי עידן דעיבורהון וחמריהון סגיא [סגיעו]: ט בשלמא כחדא אשכוב ואידמוך מן בגלל דאנת הוא יהוה בלחודי [לבלחודי] בסיברא [לרוחצן] תותבנני:</p>	<p>4:4 καὶ γινώτε ὅτι ἔθναμάστωσε Κύριος τὸν ὄσιον αὐτοῦ· Κύριος εἰσακούσεται μου ἐν τῷ κεκραγῆναι με πρὸς αὐτόν. 4:5 ὀργίζεσθε, καὶ μὴ ἁμαρτάνετε· ἃ λέγετε ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν, ἐπὶ ταῖς κοίταις ὑμῶν κατανύγητε. (διάψαλμα). 4:6 θύσατε θυσίαν δικαιοσύνης καὶ ἐλπίσατε ἐπὶ Κύριον. 4:7 πολλοὶ λέγουσι· τίς δείξει ἡμῖν τὰ ἀγαθὰ; Ἐσημειώθη ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς τὸ φῶς τοῦ προσώπου σου, Κύριε. 4:8 ἔδωκας εὐφροσύνην εἰς τὴν καρδίαν μου· ἀπὸ καρποῦ σίτου, οἴνου καὶ ἐλαίου αὐτῶν ἐπληθύνθησαν. 4:9 ἐν εἰρήνῃ ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ κοιμηθήσομαι καὶ ὑπνώσω, ὅτι σύ, Κύριε, κατὰ μόνας ἐπ’ ἐλπίδι κατώκισάς με. (LXX)</p>
<p><b>Tehillim / Psalms 4</b> For the End, a Song of David among the Psalms. 4:1 Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me in my distress; Be gracious to me and hear my prayer. 4:2 O sons of men, how long will my honor become a reproach? How long will you love what is worthless and aim at deception? Selah. 4:3 But know that the Lord has set apart the godly man for Himself; The Lord hears when I call to Him. 4:4 Tremble, and do not sin; Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah. 4:5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And trust in the Lord. 4:6 Many are saying, ‘Who will show us any good?’ Lift up the light of Your countenance upon us, O Lord! 4:7 You have put gladness in my heart, More than when their grain and new wine abound. 4:8 In peace I will both lie down and sleep, For You alone, O Lord, make me to dwell in safety. (NASB)</p>	<p><b>Toviyah / Psalms Chapter 4</b> 4:1 For praise, with melodies. A hymn of David. 4:2 At the time of my prayer, accept [it] from me, O God of my righteousness; at the time of distress, you relieved me; pity me and accept my prayer. 4:3 O sons of men, why is my glory for humiliation? You will love vanity; you will seek falsehood forever. 4:4 And they will know, for the Lord has separated the righteous man for himself; the Lord will accept the prayer of David when he calls to him. 4:5 Tremble for him, and do not sin; utter your petition with your mouth and your request in your heart; and pray upon your beds and remember the days of death forever. 4:6 Subdue your impulses and it will be reckoned to you as a righteous sacrifice; and hope in the Lord. 4:7 Many say, “Who will show us good?” Lift on us the light of your countenance, O Lord. 4:8 You have placed joy in my heart when their grain and their wine has increased. 4:9 In peace I both lay down and sleep, because you alone are the Lord; in security you will make me dwell. (EMC)</p>	<p><b>Tehillim / Psalms Chapter 4</b> For the End, a Song of David among the Psalms. 4:1 When I called upon him, the God of my righteousness heard me: thou hast made room for me in tribulation; pity me, and hearken to my prayer. 4:2 O ye sons on men, how long will ye be slow of heart? wherefore do ye love vanity, and seek falsehood? Pause. 4:3 But know ye that the Lord has done wondrous things for his holy one: the Lord will hear me when I cry to him. 4:4 Be ye angry, and sin not; feel compunction upon your beds for what ye say in your hearts. Pause. 4:5 Offer the sacrifice of righteousness, and trust in the Lord. 4:6 Many say, Who will shew us good things? the light of thy countenance, O Lord, has been manifested towards us. 4:7 Thou hast put gladness into my heart: they have been satisfied with the fruit of their corn and wine and oil. 4:8 I will both lie down in peace and sleep: for thou, Lord, only hast caused me to dwell securely. (LXX)</p>

The first thing that catches our attention from *Tehillim / Psalms 4* is in verse 2, all three English translations from the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts state “O God of my righteousness” (אֱלֹהֵי צְדִיקִי). When David speaks of his righteousness he does so understanding that his righteousness is that which comes from God. He is righteous because God is righteous and because he desires to do God’s will. David understands as a result of his sinful deeds all of these things are coming upon him and so in himself he has no intrinsic righteousness before the Lord. David’s right standing before God depends completely upon the Lord and



his father, “love vanity” (תִּצְהָבוּן רִיק) and “seek lies or falsehood” (תִּבְקְשׁוּ כִזָּב), these men are in the act of deliberate deception from the truth. David appears to be addressing his enemies directly admonishing them to turn from their evil ways, from their deliberate misrepresentation of the truth, and to turn back to the Lord God Almighty. It is interesting that in their helping Absalom to dishonor his father (David) they are equally dishonoring God. In helping someone else to dishonor their parents such a person is violating the commandment to honor your mother and father, therefore we have the responsibility to honor all parents in this world.

David contrasts this saying “but recognize that the Lord singles out the godly one for Himself” (וְדַעוּ כִּי-הִפְלִיחַ יְהוָה חֶסֶד לּוֹ), he is informing his enemies that their rebellion against him is rebellion against the Lord Himself. David having been installed as king over Israel by the prophet of God is assurance that he is God’s chosen king and the statement that “The Lord will hear when I call to Him” (יְהוָה יִשְׁמַע בְּקִרְאֵי אֱלֹהֵי) indicates that David believes he is a “righteous one” before God because the Lord is his righteousness. Despite his past sins, he believes that God’s grace towards him regarding his relationship with the Lord is firm and established.

He then warns the men saying רַגְזוּ וְאַל-תִּתְהַטְּאוּ “tremble and sin not,” telling the men they should be “trembling” and “quaking” because of the awesomeness of the Lord our God. The fear of the Lord induces reverence and awe and should cause a person not to sin, the very idea of sinning should cause us to tremble. The kind of sin that David is referring to is that of “seeking lies,” “loving vain things,” and “violating the commandment to honor your father and mother” (*Shemot / Exodus 20*). In the fear and trembling of the knowledge of God,” he warns these men to “think within your hearts while in your beds and be silent” (אִמְרוּ בְּלִבְבְּכֶם עַל-מִשְׁפַּכְבְּכֶם וְדַמּוּ) meaning that quiet, honest reflection will reveal the truth of David’s words to his enemies. The word v’damu (וְדַמּוּ) is an imperative telling these men to be completely still, unmoving, and realize the gravity of what they have done.

David then says in verse 6 יִבְחֹו זִבְחֵי-צֶדֶק וּבְטַחֻוּ אֶל-יְהוָה “offer the sacrifice of righteousness and trust in the Lord.” It is interesting that “offering the sacrifice of righteousness” and “trusting in the Lord” are placed in parallel here within the text. These two clauses imply the question “is the offering of the sacrifice of righteousness the result of having trusted in the Lord?” Apostolic commentary on this topic, according to Romans and Galatians, seems to indicate that this is the case.

**Romans 4:3**

τί γὰρ ἡ γραφή λέγει; Ἐπίστευσεν δὲ Ἀβραὰμ τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην. 4:3 For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’ (NASB)

**Galatians 3:6**

καθὼς Ἀβραὰμ ἐπίστευσεν τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην. 3:6 Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. (NASB)

**Genesis 15:6**

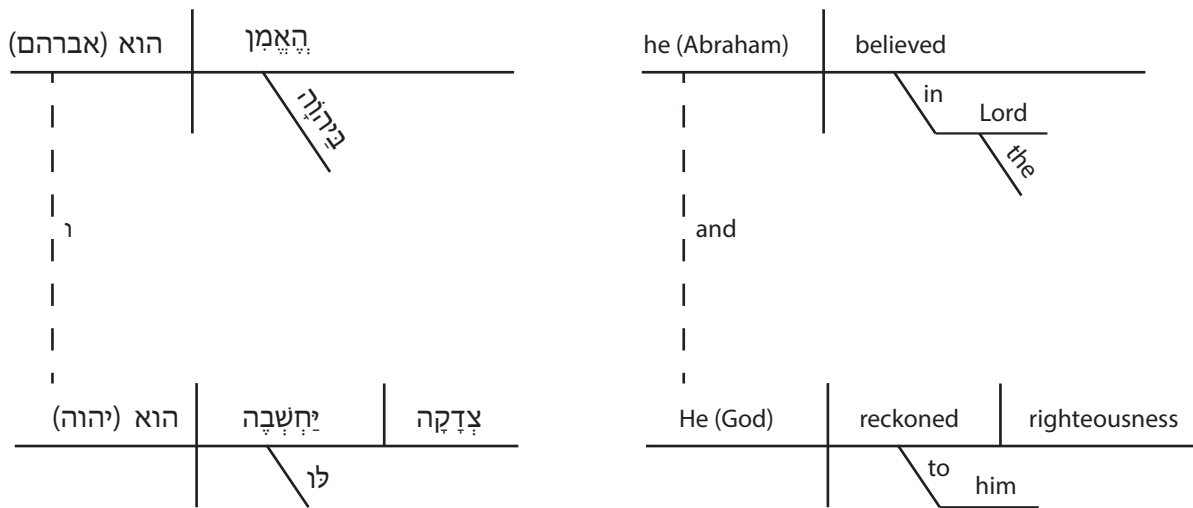
וְהָאֱמִן בַּיהוָה וַיַּחְשְׁבֶהָ לוֹ צְדָקָה: 15:6 Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. (NASB)

**Targum Onkelos on Bereshit / Genesis 15:6**

וַיַּיְמִין בְּמִמְרָא דִּי וַיַּחְשְׁבֶהָ לֵיהּ לְזִכְוִי: “And he believed in the Memra (Word) of the Lord and was regarded to him victory/merit/benefit.”



The verse the Apostle Paul is referring to in Galatians and Romans is from Sefer *Bereshit* / *Genesis 15:6* which states: *וְהֵאֱמַן בַּיהוָה וַיַּחְשְׁבֶהָ לוֹ צְדָקָה: 15:6 Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. (NASB)* where *וַיַּחְשְׁבֶהָ* means “to consider, enumerate, regard, or esteem.” To help us understand this verse from *Bereshit* / *Genesis 15:6*, let’s diagram the sentence according to its grammatical construction (subject, verb, etc). Diagraming sentences from the Hebrew and English bibles is a valuable asset in biblical hermeneutics. Diagraming also helps us to engage ourselves in the study of God’s Word, helps us to more fully understand the meaning of Scripture, and helps to facilitate memorization of the Scriptures. The verse in *Bereshit* / *Genesis 15:6* consists of two clauses connected by the conjunction “and.” The first clause of the sentence, the subject is Abraham, he believed (verb) in the Lord, and the second clause, He/God (subject) counted (verb) it as righteousness (in direct object) to him. Abraham’s faith in the Lord was “numbered, counted, and regarded” as righteousness to him by the Lord God Almighty. Remember studying *Tehillim* / *Psalms 2* that the number or counting of something has deep roots in covenant language. The Lord God “numbering / counting” Abraham to be righteous by his faith in the promises, this is closely connected to the covenant that God made with Abraham earlier when He called him out from his father’s house to the land of Canaan in Parashat Lech Lecha (*Bereshit* / *Genesis 12*). Similarly, according to the Covenant we have that is established in Yeshua the Messiah, we are counted as righteous because we believe in the One whom God had sent to save us from our sins! In *Galatians 3:6* it appears that the Apostle Paul is quoting from *Bereshit* / *Genesis 15:6*, Abraham believed in the promises of the Lord and it was credited to him as righteousness. Paul also wrote to the Romans the same thing in verse 4:3 the righteousness of Abraham was a result of his faith in the Lord. Do these Scriptures tell us here in *Tehillim* / *Psalms 4:6* that David believes the very nature of “trusting upon the Lord” (*וַיִּבְטְחוּ אֶל-יְהוָה*) is rooted in the covenant he has with the Lord and is the very thing that occurs when bringing an atoning sacrifice before God? Trust must be placed upon the Lord that He would forgive us of our sins and Yeshua is in fact our righteousness!



In *Tehillim* / *Psalms 4:7* the skeptics taunt that there is nothing good טוב מִי-יִרְאֵנוּ *4:6 Many are saying, 'Who will show us any good?'* and David responds to their doubts with an appeal that God would reveal Himself. The response: *נְסֹה-עֵלֵינוּ אֹר פְּנֵי יְהוָה: "Let the light of Your face shine upon us Lord"* seems to draw a parallel from the Torah and the Aaronic blessing from *Bamidbar* / *Numbers 6:25-26* that states: *פָּנֵינוּ אֵלָיִךְ וַיִּשֶׂם לָךְ שְׁלוֹם: 6:25 The Lord make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you; 6:26 The Lord lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace.'* (NASB) In *Bamidbar* / *Numbers 6:25*, the word יָאֵר comes from the root word אֹר mean-

ing “light.” In the Psalm David is paralleling the presence of God with security, the kind of security that causes his enemies to behold the goodness of God and flee from His presence. Throughout the Scriptures, the presence of the Lord, the “*face of his presence*” was closely connected to the deliverance of His people and the covenant relationship we have with the Lord God Almighty. Take for example in Parashat Va’era (*Shemot / Exodus 6:2-9:35*), it is written that God appeared (physically manifesting before the people) by the first word of the Parashah וָאֵרָא Va’era “and I appeared” indicating the Lord appeared unto Moshe, and that the very presence of God and His power is made available to deliver His people from slavery. This is exactly what David is calling upon from the Lord in *Tehillim / Psalms 4*. The Lord God spoke to Moshe saying וָאֵרָא אֶל-אַבְרָהָם אֶל-יִצְחָק וְאֶל-יַעֲקֹב בְּאֵל שְׁדֵי וְשְׁמִי יְהוָה לֹא נִודַעְתִּי לָהֶם: 6:3 and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name, Lord (YHVH), I did not make Myself known to them. (NASB) The way the text is written, the Lord God Almighty is revealing Himself in a new way to His people. In the opening verses we read the reiteration of the covenant promise וְגַם הִקְמַתִי אֶת-בְּרִיתִי 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 our God וְלִקְחֹתִי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעָם וְהָיִיתִי לְכֶם לֵאלֹהִים וַיְדַעְתֶּם כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם (הַמּוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם מִתַּחַת סִבְלוֹת מִצְרַיִם: The Lord tells Moshe and Aaron to go to the sons of Yisrael and to Pharaoh and bring the sons of Yisrael out of the land of Mitzrayim (Egypt). Based upon the context of *Tehillim / Psalms 4*, David was thinking on the covenant relationship he has with the Lord that enabled him to come into his presence and וְזָבְחוּ זִבְחֵי-צְדָק וּבְטַחוּ אֶל-יְהוָה “offer the sacrifice of righteousness and trust in the Lord.”

Thinking a little more on the topic of the “*presence*” (face) of God, in Parashat Mishpatim (*Shemot / Exodus 21:1-24:18*) the Hebrew Scriptures say *Shemot 24* וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת-הַדָּם וַיִּזְרַק עַל-הָעָם וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה 24:8 So Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, ‘Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.’ 24:9 Then Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, 24:10 and they saw the God of Israel; and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself. (NASB) This text is interesting because here we read that God revealed Himself in human form (note the feet imagery). It is particularly interesting breaking down this verse וַיִּרְאוּ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַתַּחַת רַגְלָיו כְּמַעֲשֵׂה לְבַנַּת הַסַּפִּיר וּכְעֵצָם הַשָּׁמַיִם לְטַהַר it says the people saw the God of Yisrael and “under His feet” (וַתַּחַת רַגְלָיו) gives us a picture of human shape. It is also interesting that the sea of sapphire is described as being a “*clean heavens*” (הַשָּׁמַיִם לְטַהַר). The Aramaic Targumim (translation) of this verse on *Shemot / Exodus 24:10* is shown below:

**תרגום אונקלוס ספר שמות פרק כד פסוק י**

וַחֲזוּ יְת יְקָר אֱלֹהָא דְיִשְׂרָאֵל וַתַּחֲתוּ כּוּרְסֵי יְקָרֵיהּ כְּעוּבַד אַבְנֵי טַבָּא וְכַמְחַזִּי וְכַמְחַזִּי “וכחזו” שְׁמֵיא לְבָרֵיהּ:

**תרגום פסבדו יונתן ספר שמות פרק כד פסוק י**

וזקפו נדב ואביהוא ית עיניהון וחמון ית איקר אלקא דישראל ותחות אפיפו רין דריגלוי דמייצע תחות כורסייה הי כעובד אבן ספירינון מידכר שיעבודא דשעבידו מצראי ית בני ישראל בטינא ובליבנין והוואן נשיא בטשן ית טינא עם גובריהון הות תמן ריבא מפנקתא מעברתא ואפילת ית עוברא ואתבטש עם טינא נחת גבריא וועבד מיניה לבינתא ואסקיה לשמי מרומא ואתקניה גלוגדק תחות אפיפורין דמרי עלמא זיויה הי כעובד אבן טבא והי כתקוף שפר שמיא כד הינון ברירין מן ענניא

**תרגום ניופתי ספר שמות פרק כד פסוק י**

וחמון ית איקר שכינתה דיי "אלהא דישראל" ותחות אפיפודן"אפיפודין" דרגלוי כעובד לבן דסנפרינון וכחזוי שמיא כד אינון נקיין מן עננא "הוון נקיין מן ענניא":

The Targum Onkelos says *“and they saw the glory of the God of Israel”* using the word *“וַחֲזוּ”* means literally *“to see.”* The *אֲצִילֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל* *“nobles of the sons of Yisrael”* saw God and did not die. Now the Masoretic text clarifies what had happened in verse 11 saying *וַיֵּאָלְּמוּ אֲצִילֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יָא וְאֵל-אֲצִילֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יָא 24:11 Yet He did not stretch out His hand against the nobles of the sons of Israel; and they saw God, and they ate and drank. (NASB)* and so the people gazed upon God and God did not strike them dead, and they ate and drank (the people had table fellowship indicating that they communed with God). The way this portion of the text is described, it is difficult to misinterpret the meaning as something other than the people literally seeing the Lord God Almighty (His feet). The text identifies the people having seen God (הָאֱלֹהִים) and particularly the feet of God. Note that in these Scriptures the people did not see God’s face (פָּנָי). Studying the Hebrew word for “face” in the Tanach we learn that this word is used to indicate that God Himself is present. The use of God’s face (פָּנָי) through the Scriptures is never used of a representative of God but only as a reference to the very presence of God Himself. For example in *2 Samuel 17:11* *וְעַצְמִי הָאֶסֶף יֶאֱסֹף עָלַי כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל מִדָּן וְעַד-בְּאֵר שֶׁבַע פְּחוּל אֲשֶׁר-עַל-הַיָּם 17:11 ‘But I counsel that all Israel be surely gathered to you, from Dan even to Beersheba, as the sand that is by the sea in abundance, and that you personally go into battle. (NASB)* Here the text translates as *“you personally go into battle”* where the phrase *“you personally”* is written as *וּפְנִיָה* meaning *“and your face.”* In *Devarim / Deuteronomy 4:37* *לֹא וַתַּחַת פִּי אָהַב אֶת-אֲבֹתַי וַיִּבְחַר בְּזַרְעוֹ אַחֲרָיו 4:37 ‘Because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them. And He personally brought you from Egypt by His great power, (NASB)* Here in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 4:37* it is written that *“He (God) personally”* brought Yisrael out of Mitzrayim (Egypt). The Hebrew text says literally *“with His face”* (בְּפָנָיו). In *Parashat Ki Tisa, Shemot / Exodus 33:13-15* *אִם-נָא מִצָּאֲתִי חֵן בְּעֵינַיִךָ הוֹדַעְנִי נָא אֶת-דַּרְכֶּךָ וְאִדְעָה לְמַעַן אֲמַצָּא-חֵן בְּעֵינַיִךָ וְרָאִה פִּי עֲמָה הַגּוֹי הַזֶּה: יד וַיֹּאמֶר 33:13 ‘Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your sight, let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your sight. Consider too, that this nation is Your people.’ 33:14 And He said, ‘My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.’ 33:15 Then he said to Him, ‘If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here. (NASB)* Here Moshe requests or asks for the presence of the Lord to go with them. God said *“and said my face will go with you and give you rest”* translating *“face”* again as *“presence”* (פָּנָי). Moshe goes on to say that if your *“face/presence”* פְּנִיָה does not go with them do not lead them from there. Studying *Shemot / Exodus 24*, the text does not say they saw the *“presence or face”* of God, the text appears to indicate feet imagery that God is revealing Himself in human form. Essentially God was giving the people a physical manifestation of Himself sitting upon His throne in Heaven and the revelation of His presence is closely coupled to the covenant relationship they have that is made in blood. (Note how prior to this Moshe sprinkled the blood of the Covenant, see *Shemot / Exodus 24:8*.)

Looking closer at the Aramaic translation, Targum Onkelos says *וַחֲזוּ ית יקר אלהא דישראל* that the people saw the *“glory”* יקר of the God of Yisrael. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan states *וזקפו נדב ואביהוא* that the people saw the *“glory”* of the God of Yisrael, and Targum Neofiti states *וחמון ית איקר שכינתה דיי “אלהא דישראל”* saying that the people saw the *“glory of the Lord’s*

*dwelling place the God of Yisrael.*” It is interesting that the Targum (translations) add the word יָקָר or אִיקָר meaning “glory, honor, or majesty.” Comparison with the Hebrew text, the people saw God but according to the Aramaic translation they saw His glory and the glory of His dwelling. This suggests that the Targum translations have been influenced by later rabbinic thinking that the Almighty is unapproachable and cannot be seen by man. The rabbis translated the Hebrew text to say the people saw the “*place of His dwelling*” or of “*the glory of God*” rather than actually seeing God (הָאֱלֹהִים). The Masoretic text provides us with straightforward language that Moshe, Nadav, Avihu, and Aaron along with the 70 elders of Yisrael ascended the mountain and saw God. Looking closer at the Masoretic Text, verse 24:10 says וַיִּרְאוּ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל 24:10 and they saw the God of Israel; and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself. (NASB) the verb וַיִּרְאוּ as spelled occurs 63 times in the Tanakh is from the root word רָאָה meaning “to see, look, behold” which occurs 126 times in the Tanakh. Verse 24:11 however says וְאֵל-אֲצִילֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא שָׁלַח יָדוֹ וַיִּחְזְזוּ אֶת-הָאֱלֹהִים 24:11 Yet He did not stretch out His hand against the nobles of the sons of Israel; and they saw God, and they ate and drank. (NASB) using the verb וַיִּחְזְזוּ that is different from the previous verse וַיִּרְאוּ. The word וַיִּחְזְזוּ means “to watch” or “look at” has the meaning of seeing with the sense of perceiving or being aware of what is happening. The word וַיִּחְזְזוּ is from the root word חָזָה also having the meaning of seeing and perceiving in the physical sense, they physically saw God. The people did not see God merely with their mind or soul. This was not an etherial or spiritualization of seeing God, they actually physically saw God and lived and ate and drank (had table fellowship) before the Lord. We know this based upon various Scriptural uses of the word חָזָה coupled with the word for physical “eyes” (see Tehilim / Psalms 11:7, 17:15, and 58:9-11, Mishley / Proverbs 22:9 and 29:20, Yeshayahu / Isaiah 33:20 and 57:8). In Isaiah 33:17-20 יִזְכְּרוּ בְּיַפְיֹת תְּחִיבֹתֶינָה עֵינֵינוּ תְּרַאֲיֵנָה אֶרֶץ מְרֻחָקִים: יח לְבָבָהּ יִהְיֶה אִמָּה אִימָה אִימָה אִימָה סִפֵּר אִימָה שִׁקְלָה אִימָה סִפֵּר אֶת-הַמְּגִדָּדִים: יט אֶת-עַם נֹעֵז לֹא תִרְאֶה עִם עֲמֻקֵי שְׂפָה מְשֻׁמוֹעַ גִּלְעָג לְשׁוֹן אֵין בֵּינָה: כ חָזָה צִיּוֹן קִרְיַת מוֹעֲדֵנוּ עֵינֵינוּ תְּרַאֲיֵנָה יְרוּשָׁלַם נִנְה שְׂאֲנָן אֵהֵל בַּל-יִצְעָן בַּל-יִסַּע יִתְדֹתָיו לְנִצָּחַ וְכָל-חֲבָלָיו בַּל-יִנְתְּקוּ: we read “your eyes” (עֵינֵינוּ) is the subject of the verb “to see.” In addition to this, the verb רָאָה meaning “to see, look, behold” is also used for those who have a prophetic vision. The verbs חָזָה and רָאָה are also used here in Isaiah 33:17-20 in a parallel form (see 33:17 and 33:20) תְּחִיבֹתֶינָה עֵינֵינוּ תְּרַאֲיֵנָה (33:17 Your eyes will see the King in His beauty; They will behold a far-distant land, 33:20 Look upon Zion, the city of our appointed feasts; Your eyes will see Jerusalem, an undisturbed habitation, A tent which will not be folded; Its stakes will never be pulled up, Nor any of its cords be torn apart. (NASB)) showing the similarities in their uses within the Hebrew language. Considering this short survey on the “face” or “presence” of God, David was most assuredly thinking upon the Torah and the saving power of God that is coupled with His presence and the covenant relationship that he has with God, all of these things assure him that God is with him and his enemies should realize this truth. Can you see how Yeshua sending the Holy Spirit of God to dwell within us (John 15:26) is consistent with the presence of God going with us, being with us, helping us, bringing to remembrance the things of God, and enables us to live for God every day of our lives? Over and over again in Scripture we read how God His presence will go with us and this is exactly what we have in the covenant relationship that is established in Yeshua God’s Messiah!

When David speaks he asks for the “*light of His (God’s) presence*” to shine upon him. This reminds us of Yeshua’s words when He proclaimed that He is the light saying Ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου “I am the light of the world” in John 8:12. He also said that εἶπεν οὖν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Ἐτι μικρὸν χρόνον τὸ φῶς ἐν ὑμῖν ἔστιν. περιπατεῖτε ὡς τὸ φῶς ἔχετε, ἵνα μὴ σκοτία ὑμᾶς καταλάβῃ: καὶ ὁ περιπατῶν ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ οὐκ οἶδεν ποῦ ὑπάγει. ὡς τὸ φῶς ἔχετε, πιστεύετε εἰς τὸ φῶς, ἵνα υἱοὶ φωτὸς γέννησθε. Ταῦτα ἐλάλησεν Ἰησοῦς, καὶ ἀπελθὼν ἐκρύβη ἀπ’ αὐτῶν. “A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light,



lest darkness overtake you, he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light” (John 12:35-36). As the light of the world, Yeshua brought the truth of God, the very presence of God into the world and revealed to us our Father who is in Heaven. In the covenant that Yeshua established (in His blood) He makes atonement and today stands in the presence of God as intercessor on our behalf and sending to us the Holy Spirit. The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives provides for us the light of God’s presence in our lives. The light of this world is God’s Messiah Yeshua, His light points us in the forward direction and leads us in the straight and narrow path that God wants for us to travel upon. This was the purpose and design of the Messiah’s work, in order for scripture to be fulfilled in our lives, and in order for us to obtain salvation and atonement before God, we must place our faith in Yeshua with the understanding that the eating and drinking of His flesh (σάρκα) and blood (αἷματος) God is incorporating the work of what He has done into our lives, the atonement that He has brought for us in Yeshua the Messiah has become the Salvation of our God. As a result of these things, Yeshua tells us that we are to be a light unto the world for the Glory of God. Yeshua’s words are the words of our Father in Heaven (John 7:16). Yeshua declared that He came down from heaven to do the will of the Father (John 6:38). In addition to this, Yeshua said in John 8:28 εἶπεν οὖν [αὐτοῖς] ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Οταν ὑψώσητε τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, τότε γνώσεσθε ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι, καὶ ἀπ’ ἐμαυτοῦ ποιῶ οὐδέν, ἀλλὰ καθὼς ἐδίδαξέν με ὁ πατήρ ταῦτα λαλῶ. “I do nothing of myself but as My Father taught me, I speak these things.” Yeshua says ἐδίδαξέν με ὁ πατήρ ταῦτα λαλῶ that He is here “to teach what the Father speaks.”

In *Tehillim / Psalms 4:7* the skeptics taunt David that there is nothing good טוב יִרְאֲנוּ מִי-יְרֵאָנוּ 4:6 Many are saying, ‘Who will show us any good?’ and David responds to their doubts with an appeal to God and His covenant that He would reveal Himself as the Lord has revealed Himself in the past within the pages of the Torah, נֹסֶה-עֲלֵינוּ אֹר פְּנֵיךָ יְהוָה: “Let the light of Your face shine upon us O Lord.” Today we can appeal to the covenant that we have with God and rest assured that the Lord hears us and will answer us in our times of trouble.

David says, in the knowledge of the covenant of God and His presence, נָתַתָּה שְׂמֵחָה בְּלִבִּי “You put joy in my heart” David finds joy and contentment in the Lord, it is the Lord who places this joy into his heart. He has no resentment, jealousy, or hatred for his enemies but instead he finds the source of his joy is in the Lord. The joy that he has in the Lord is so great that it does not even compare to מֵעַת דְּגַנָּם וְתִירוֹשָׁם רָבו “from when their grain and wine abound.” The joy that God places in our hearts and the light of His presence in our lives makes the world’s goods all seem empty in comparison. As a result of this, David says בְּשָׁלוֹם יִחַדְוּ אֲשַׁכְּבָה וְאִישׁוֹן פִּי-אַתָּה יְהוָה לְבָדָד לְבַטָּח תּוֹשִׁיבֵנִי “In peace together I lay down and sleep, for You Lord alone cause me to dwell in security.” It is in the covenant of God, in the joy of His Salvation, that David is able to lay himself down at night and sleep. Only the Lord God can give us true peace. Interestingly David says בְּשָׁלוֹם יִחַדְוּ אֲשַׁכְּבָה “in peace together I lay down,” together with who? This may indicate David is appealing for unity and peace in the Lord God, in the covenant relationship that he has and these enemies say they have in the Lord God of Israel. It is his desire that all his people draw near to the Lord and walk in the light of His presence. It is only in this way that lasting peace can be established, since it is the Lord alone that causes us to dwell in security. Only God can provide security in our lives and peace in the hearts of all of mankind. This is only accomplished in and through the covenant that God has established. Do you want to have this kind of assurance, and covenant relationship with God? You can today, right now, come say the following prayer with me and begin living a life that is wholly devoted to the Lord and His Messiah Yeshua. Let’s pray!

### Christian Commentary

The International Critical Commentary on the Psalms begins describing *Tehillim / Psalms 4* as an

evening prayer. David is confident that God has answered his prayer (4:2-3), he tells his adversaries that the Lord has shown extraordinary kindness to him and warns them to tremble and not sin (4:4-5). He urges his followers to offer the correct sacrifices, to trust in the Lord, and to pray for prosperity and the priestly benediction (4:6-7), and then proclaims his own gladness and peace going to sleep in safety (4:8-9). Scholars opinion on dating of *Tehillim / Psalm 4* is based upon four things, (i) the Aaronic benediction that is taken from *Bamidbar / Numbers 6:24-26*, David being familiar with the benediction from the Torah along with its use in liturgy in the synagogue is suggested by his statement in 4:7 (ז רבים אמרים מי-יראנו טוב נסה-עלינו) “*Lift up the light of Your countenance upon us*” and the opening word in 4:9 (ט בְּשָׁלוֹם) “*in peace.*” (ii) The blessing of Moshe from *Devarim / Deuteronomy 33* is also familiar to David by the phrases זְבַח־יְצִדְקָה comparing *Tehillim / Psalms 4:7*, and also comparing *Tehillim / Psalms 4:8* with *Devarim / Deuteronomy 33:28* on וְתִירוֹשָׁם the grain and new wine.

<p><b>פרשת וזאת הברכה ספר דברים פרק לג פסוק יט</b>          יט עַמִּים הֲרִי-קָרְאוּ שָׁם יִזְבְּחוּ זְבַח־יְצִדְקָה כִּי שָׁפַע          יַמִּים יִנְקוּ וּשְׁפָנֵי טְמוּנֵי חוֹל:</p>	<p><b>Devarim / Deuteronomy 33:19</b>          33:19 ‘They will call peoples to the mountain; There they will offer righteous sacrifices; For they will draw out the abundance of the seas, And the hidden treasures of the sand.’ (NASB)</p>
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(iii) On the basis of *Tehillim / Psalms 4:3* that uses the phrase בני איש “*men of high degree*” as compared to the phrase בני אדם “*men of low degree*” and (iv) The historical perspective. It appears the commentary does not attribute this Psalm to David. They say that the situation described by *Tehillim / Psalm 4* is entirely different from that of *Tehillim / Psalm 3*. The commentary says that the person writing the Psalm is a ruler and probably not a king, who is sustained by the people but oppressed by men of station and influence. These men lie, make empty and baseless misrepresentation of him, and change his position from honor to that of reproach. Charles Briggs says that this does not represent the experience of David during the rebellion of Absalom because his enemies were not men of rank saying that it was the common people that were against David. Charles Briggs, author of the International Critical Commentary on the Psalms, states that the experience of the Psalm is that of a reformer and the language favors a priest. Scriptural examples are given from *Ezra 4* where Zerubbabel and Jeshua were opposed at the court of Persia by lies and slanders which had no basis in fact, their honor was muddied by attacks and their work was halted and that this follows better the conditions laid out in the Psalm.

There are four stanzas in *Tehillim / Psalms 4*.

- Str. 1: *Tehillim / Psalm 4:2-3*
- Str. 2: *Tehillim / Psalm 4:4-5*
- Str. 3: *Tehillim / Psalm 4:6-7*
- Str. 4: *Tehillim / Psalm 4:8*

Stanza 1, David calls upon the Lord and God answers him. He declares that the Lord is the God of his righteousness and so he can pray with confidence. This is supported by the fact on how God has worked in his past, he can pray with confidence that the Lord God will answer him. He says that he is constrained on every side but it is the Lord who removes the restraint and gives him room to move and freedom. These men of rank are the ones who constrain David on every side and they have the power to decrease his honor and to cause him distress. The reason these men do this thing is because they are themselves false and dishonorable men. Stanza 2, David tells his adversaries that God has shown him extraordinary kindness by

separating him as a godly man. He says that the Lord hears him when he calls to Him. This is coupled with the warning to tremble and not sin, these men need to realize their sinful ways and take the steps necessary to turn from their evil ways and return to the truthful way of the Lord God Almighty. David points out the wicked way of the ungodly, they seek out lies, love vain things, and love to dishonor others. David says to think upon and consider these things when lying upon your bed, be still, and do not act upon your wicked thoughts. Stanza 3, David addresses those who are discouraged who follow him. They are the men of low degree over against those sons of men (בני איש) who are of a high degree. He says to offer the sacrifice of righteousness and to trust in the Lord God Almighty. Briggs states in his commentary referencing others that these offerings of righteousness are a reference to the normal sacrifices in accordance with the Law and custom and not that “of righteousness” offered in a right spirit, or symbolic of righteous acts. David seeks the “light of the countenance of God” in place of the vain thing and the lie that his adversaries seek against him. The light of the Lord’s face shining upon His people will show favor, peace, and prosperity, these things David seeks directly from God Himself. Stanza 4, David proclaims the gladness, peace, and safety of God, in that God has placed gladness into his own heart. The joy that God gives is greater than that of the joy that comes during the harvest season (new wine and corn). As a result of God’s joy he is able to lay down and go to sleep in peace.

### Rabbinic Commentary

The Midrash on *Tehillim / Psalms 4* has 13 parts. Reading through this week’s Midrash we will be looking at Part 9. Let’s begin by outlining Midrash Tehillim Chapter 4 Part 9.

#### Outline of Midrash Tehillim / Psalms, Chapter 4, Part 9

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) “*the beginning word*” “*Tremble and sin not, commune / say in your heart*” upon your bed and be still forever (*Tehillim / Psalms 4:5*).
- The פתיחה (Petilhta) “*the homiletic introduction*” to the Midrash says “*David said to the children of Israel, How long will you sin and stir up trouble by saying there is no blemish in David, he is a descendant of Ruth the Moabite.*” (דוד לישראל עד מתי אתם חוטאים ומתרגזים ואומרים פסול הוא, (מרות המואביה הוא בא).
- The משל (mashal) “*the parable*” is the question “*From what sort of marriage bed do you come? From the prohibited marriage of a man to two sisters. Regard your own descent, and be still forever.*”
- The נמשל (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the meaning of the phrase “*tremble and sin not,*” and the meaning of “*be still.*”
  1. Make your tempter tremble and he will be unable to make you sin. A parallel is drawn to the “ritual bath” (Mikvah) and the Lord God of Israel making us clean.
  2. Being still means to refrain from sin. The refraining from sin is the offering of sacrifices of righteousness. The refraining from sin is synonymous with building an altar and offering a burnt offering and making other sacrifices upon it. Note how the idea of the spiritualization of “*building of an altar and offering a burnt offering*” is developed after the destruction of the second Temple.
  3. The rabbis say the man who recites the Shema (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 6:4*) in

the synagogue in the morning has done what he should, and that he must also recite the Shema upon his bed or he has not done what he should. The reciting of the Shema is purposed to drive away demons from one's house according to this Midrash.

4. The rabbis state that when a man recites the blessing of redemption, he must go immediately to reciting the eighteen benedictions.
  5. Rabbi Zeera says the slaughtering of the sacrifice must come immediately following the laying of the hands upon the head of the sacrifice and the blessing of the bread must come immediately following the washing of the hands.
  6. The rabbis say that the eighteen benedictions must follow the blessing of redemption and that when a man slaughters a sacrifice immediately following the laying on of hands that no fault will mar the sacrifice, and when a man pronounces the blessing over the bread immediately following the washing of hands, Satan will bring no accusations against him during the meal.
  7. It is then said that when a man says the eighteen benedictions immediately after the blessing of redemption, Satan will bring no accusations against him in the course of the day.
  8. Rabbi Khiyya says that the sacrifice of righteousness is to be read in light of the verse from *Vayikra / Leviticus 18:30*.
- The Concluding statements have Rabbi Nathan saying in the name of rabbi Akha that in Scripture in the verse “*Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord,*” is as though the Lord has said reach your hands out to do righteous deeds, and trust me to give you your reward.

Midrash Tehillim, Chapter 4, Part 9 is relatively long and contains quite a few interesting points concerning the phrase “*tremble and sin not.*” The *דיבור המתחיל* (Dibur Hamathil) “*the beginning word*” directs our attention to the verse from *Tehillim / Psalms 4:5* saying “*Tremble and sin not, commune / say in your heart*” upon your bed and be still forever. The *פתיחה* (Petihtha) “*the homiletic introduction*” to the Midrash says “*David said to the children of Israel, How long will you sin and stir up trouble by saying there is no blemish in David, he is a descendant of Ruth the Moabite.*” (דוד לישראל עד מתי אתם חוטאים). The Midrash seems to be directing us to the issue of sin and how to keep ourselves from sinning and how to keep the accuser (Satan) from making an accusation against us before God. I believe the *משל* (mashal) “*the parable*” is the question near the opening of Part 9 that says “*From what sort of marriage bed do you come? From the prohibited marriage of a man to two sisters. Regard your own descent, and be still forever.*” The marriage bed that consists of a man and two sisters, is paralleled with sin in our lives. We are wedded to the Lord God, we are made for righteousness, do our lives consist of a marriage between sin and righteousness? The *נמשל* (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” touches on various topics, to understand a persons sinful life with respect to being tempted by a tempter and the rabbinic dictate of prayer in the morning and the evening. Part 1 concludes with directing our attention to *מעשה צדקים* (maasei tzedikim) “*the works of righteousness,*” and states the Lord says to reach out our hands to do righteous deeds and he will give us our reward. The most interesting things to discuss come out of the *נמשל* (Nimshal) expansive sections of this week's Midrash.

Throughout *Midrash Tehillim 4, Part 9*, we find references to the “Eighteen Benedictions.” The eighteen benedictions, also known as *Tefillah* “*prayer,*” the “*Shemoneh Ezreh*” or “*the Amidah.*” The eighteen benedictions are prayers that are said while standing facing Jerusalem and are mostly said silently when performed on an individual basis. The Amidah is used during Sabbath services and holy days as well as in the daily synagogue service. A copy of the Shemoneh Ezreh can be find in any traditional prayer book



(Siddur) and is available from multiple sources that can be found online. The following is a summary of the Eighteen Benedictions taken from the “*Sabbath Amidah*” from *Zion CS, 2004*.

1. **God of History:** *“O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall declare your praise. Blessed art thou, O lord our God and God of our fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob, the great mighty and revered God, the most high God, who bestows lovingkindness, and the Master of all things; who remembers the pious deeds of the patriarchs, and in love will bring a redeemer to their children’s children for your Name’s sake.”*
  
2. **God of Nature:**
  - **During the Ten Days of Repentance say:** *“Remember us unto life, O king, who delights in life, and inscribe us in the book of life, for your own sake, O living God. O King, Helper, Savior and Shield. Blessed art thou, O Lord, the Shield of Abraham. You, O Lord, are mighty for ever, you revive the dead, You are mighty to save.”*
  - **From the day after Simchat Torah until the Eve of Passover, say:** *“You cause the wind to blow and the rain to fall.”*
  - *“You sustain the living with lovingkindness, revive the dead with great mercy, support the falling, heal the sick, free the bound, and keep Your faith to them that sleep in the dust. who is like You, Lord of the mighty acts, and who resembles You, O King, who orders death and restores life, and causes salvation (Yeshua) to spring forth?”*
  - **During the Ten days of Repentance say:** *“Who is like You, Father of mercy, who in mercy remembers your creatures unto life?”*
  - *“Yes, You are faithful to revive the dead. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who revives the dead.”*
  
3. **God who sanctifies:** (Responsive reading) *“We will sanctify Your Name in the world even as they sanctify it in the highest heavens, as it is written by the hand of Your prophet. And they call to one another and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory. Those over against them say, Blessed. Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His place. And in Your Holy Words it is written, saying The Lord shall reign for ever, Your God O Zion, unto all generations. Praise Ye the Lord. Unto all generations we will declare Your greatness, and to all eternity we will proclaim Your holiness, and Your praise, O our God, shall no depart from our mouth for ever, for You are a great and holy God and King. Blessed art thou, O Lord the holy God.”* **(During the days of Repentance conclude the Blessing:** *“the holy King.”*)
  
4. **Prayer for understanding:** *“You favor man with knowledge, and teach mortals understanding. Favor us with knowledge, understanding and discernment from You. Blessed art thou, O Lord, gracious Giver of knowledge.”*
  
5. **Prayer for repentance:** *“Cause us to return, our Father, unto Your Torah; draw us near, our King, unto Your service, and bring us back in perfect repentance unto Your presence. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who delights in repentance.”*
  
6. **Prayer for forgiveness:** *“Forgive us, our Father, for we have sinned; pardon us, our King, for we have transgressed.”* (On Fast Days, Selichot (סליחות) are inserted here.) *“for You do pardon and forgive. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who is gracious, and does abundantly forgive.”*

7. **Prayer for deliverance from affliction:** *“Look upon our affliction and plead our cause, and redeem us speedily for Your name’s sake; for You are a mighty Redeemer. Blessed art thou, O Lord, the Redeemer of Israel.”* **On fast days the Reader says:** *“Answer us, O Lord, answer us on this day of the fast of our humiliation, for we are in great trouble. Turn not to our wickedness; conceal not your face from us, and hide not Yourself from our supplication. Be near, we beseech You, unto our cry; let Your lovingkindness be a comfort to us; even before we call unto You answer us, according as it is said, And it shall come to pass that, before they call, I will answer; while they are yet speaking, I will hear; for You, O Lord, are He who answers in time of trouble, who delivers and rescues in all times of trouble and distress; the holy King.”*
8. **Prayer for Healing:** *“Heal us, O Lord, and we shall be healed; save us and we shall be saved; for You are our praise. Grant a perfect healing to all our wounds; for You, almighty King, are a faithful and merciful Physician. Blessed art thou O Lord, who heals the sick of Your people Israel.”*
9. **Prayer for Deliverance from want:** *“Bless this year unto us, O Lord our God, together with every kind of the produce, for our welfare; give (From December 4th until Passover: Dew and rain for) a blessing upon the face of the earth. O satisfy us with your goodness, and bless our year like other good years. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who blesses the years.”*
10. **Prayer for reunion of Israel:** *“Sound the great horn for our freedom; raise the ensign to gather our exiles, and gather us from the four corners of the earth. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who gathers the dispersed of Your people Israel.”*
11. **Prayer for the righteous reign of God:** *“Restore our judges as in former times, and our counselors as at the beginning; remove from us sorrow and sighing; reign over us, O Lord, You alone, in lovingkindness and tender mercy, and clear us in judgment. Blessed art thou, O Lord, the King who loves righteousness and judgment.”* **(During the Ten Days of Repentance say: “the King of Judgment.”)**
12. **Prayer against slanderers:** (added later at Yavneh) *“And for slanderers let there be no hope, and let all wickedness perish as in a moment; let all Your enemies be speedily cut off, and the dominion of arrogance uproot and crush, cast down and humble speedily in our days. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who breaks the enemies and humbles the arrogant.”*
13. **Prayer for the righteous and proselytes:** *“Toward the righteous and the pious, toward the elders of Your people the house of Israel, toward the remnant of their scribes, toward true proselytes, and toward us also may Your tender mercies be stirred, O Lord our God; grant a good reward unto all who faithfully trust in Your Name; set our portion with them for ever, so that we may not be put to shame; for we have trusted in You. Blessed art thou, O Lord the stay and trust of the righteous.”*
14. **Prayer for the rebuilding of Jerusalem:** *“And Jerusalem, Your city, return in mercy, and dwell therein as You have spoken; rebuild it soon in our days as an everlasting building, and speedily set up therein the throne of David. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who rebuilds Jerusalem.”*
15. **Prayer for the Messianic King:** *“Speedily cause the offspring of David, Your servant, to flourish, and lift up his glory by Your divine help because we wait for Your salvation all the day. Blessed art*

*thou, O Lord, who causes the strength of salvation (Yeshua) to flourish.”*

16. **Prayer for the hearing of prayer:** *“Hear our voice, O Lord our God; spare us and have mercy upon us, and accept our prayer in mercy and favor; for You are a God who hears and answers prayers and supplications; from Your presence, O our King, turn us not away empty;”* **(On fast days the Reader says:** *“Answer us, O Lord, answer us on this day of the fast of our humiliation, for we are in great trouble. Turn not to our wickedness; conceal not your face from us, and hide not Yourself from our supplication. Be near, we beseech You, unto our cry; let Your lovingkindness be a comfort to us; even before we call unto You answer us, according as it is said, And it shall come to pass that, before they call, I will answer; while they are yet speaking, I will hear; for You, O Lord, are He who answers in time of trouble, who delivers and rescues in all times of trouble and distress; the holy King.”*) *“for You hear and answer in mercy to the prayers of Your people Israel. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who hears and answers prayer.”*
17. **Prayer for the restoration of Temple service:** *“Accept, O Lord our God, Your people Israel and their prayer; restore the service to the inner sanctuary of Your house; receive in love and favor both the offerings of Israel and their prayer; and may the worship of Your people Israel be ever acceptable unto You.”* **(Add on the New Moon, Feast of unleavened Bread, and Feast of Tabernacles add:** *“Our god and God of our fathers! May our remembrance ascend, come and be accepted before You, with the remembrance of our fathers, of Messiah the son of David Your servant, of Jerusalem Your holy city, and of all Your people the house of Israel, bringing deliverance and well being, grace, lovingkindness and mercy, life and peace on this day of”* **(On the following days say:** The New Moon, The feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Tabernacles.) *“Remember us, O Lord our God, thereon for our well-being; be mindful of us for blessing, and save us unto live: by Your promise of salvation and mercy, spare us and be gracious to us; have mercy upon us and save us; for our eyes are bent upon You, because You are a gracious and merciful God and King.”*) *“And let our eyes behold Your return in mercy to Zion. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who restores Your divine presence to Zion.”*
18. **Thanksgiving for God’s unfailing mercies:** **(While the reader says the following paragraph the congregation recites in an undertone:** *“We give thanks unto You for You are the Lord our God, and the God of our fathers, the God of all flesh, our Creator and the Creator of all things in the beginning. Blessings and thanksgiving be to Your great and holy Name, because You have kept us in life and have preserved us’ so may You continue to keep us in life and preserve us. Gather our exiles to Your holy courts to observe Your statutes, to do Your will, and to serve You with a perfect heart; seeing that we give thanks unto You. Blessed be the god to whom thanksgiving is due.”*) *“We give thanks unto You for You are the Lord our god and god of our fathers for ever and ever; You are the rock of our lives, the Shield of our salvation through every generation. We will give thanks unto You and declare Your praise for our lives which are committed unto Your hand, and for our souls which are in Your charge, and to Your miracles, which are daily with us, and for Your miracles, which are daily with us, and for Your wonders and Your benefits, which are wrought at all times, evening, morning and noon. You are all good, whose mercies fail not; You are the merciful Being, whose lovingkindness never ceases, we have ever hoped in You.”* **(On Chanukah and Purim the following is added:** *“We thank You also for the miracles, for the redemption, for the mighty deeds and saving acts, wrought by You, as well as for the wars which You waged for our fathers in days of old, at this season.”*)

19. **Grant Peace:** *“Grant peace, welfare, blessing, grace, lovingkindness and mercy unto us and unto all Israel, Your people. Bless us, O our Father, even all of us together, with the light of Your countenance; for by the light of Your countenance You have given us, O Lord our God, the Torah of life, lovingkindness and righteousness, blessing, mercy, life and peace; and may it be good in Your sight to bless Your people Israel at all times and in every hour with thy peace. Blessed are You, O Lord, who blesses Your people Israel with peace.”*

The addition of prayer 12 (*the prayer against slanderers*) to the Shemoneh Ezreh brings the count of blessings to 19 instead of the 18, as indicated by its Hebrew name “*Shemoneh Ezre*” meaning eighteen. The prayer against slanderers was added at Yavneh according to the *Talmud Bavli in Tractate Barachot 33a*. This prayer was aimed at “*Christians*” according to Rabbi Jeffery Cohen, author of the book “*Blessed Are You: A Comprehensive Guide to Jewish Prayer...*” It is said that these prayers developed during the early formative period of the synagogue and bear the marks of the time of the Maccabees and following that of the destruction of the second Temple. At the time of the destruction of the second Temple, Judaism moved to the city of Yavneh. Gamliel II (80-120 CE), head of the Yavneh Academy, requested Simon of Phakola to arrange the benedictions into a fixed order and declared that these prayers are to be recited three times a day. This was accepted universally in Judaism as a ritual duty (see the *Talmud Bavli Berakot 33a and Megillah 17b*). The ritual duty of the Shemoneh Ezreh as it was determined at Yavneh can be seen in the Midrash for this week on its recitation following the blessing of redemption resolving a person from all accusations of the accuser (Satan).

The Shemoneh Ezreh can be divided into three groups. Group 1 consists of the first three benedictions, they recount the attributes of God and can be traced back to the early Chasidim. Group 2 is the middle 12 or 13 prayers that express the messianic hope of the people and is of a later Pharisaic origin. Group 3 is the concluding three benedictions known as the “Thanks” prayers. These are believed to be derived from elements in the priestly ritual of the Temple. The *Talmud Bavli Barachot 34a* states that the arrangement of the Shemoneh Ezreh was determined in terms of the servant appearing before his master, he first greets his lord with compliments, then presents his request, and finishes with an expression of thanks.

The development of the ritual duty of the Shemoneh Ezreh in the post Temple (Tannaim) era is closely connected to the separation of Christianity from Judaism. According to History, the separation of the sect of Judaism known as “Christianity” or the sect of the Nazarim (*Acts 24:5*) was gradual over time and occurred at differing rates and there is not much agreement among scholars to the precise cause of the rift and dates for this rift by scholars are between the middle of the first century CE to the middle of the fourth century CE. One thing that can be said though is the addition of the 12th prayer in the Shemoneh Ezreh may most likely have been a significant motivating factor for leaving the Synagogue especially following the ruling at Yavneh on the daily requirement for the recitation of the Eighteen Benedictions. There are two versions of the Eighteen benedictions, one version comes from Jerusalem tradition and the other from the Babylonian tradition. They are preserved in different forms in various prayer book manuscripts and liturgical fragments. The oldest witness to the Babylonian version scholars believe to be “*Seder R Amram*” that was constructed from fragment texts by Finkelstein. The oldest Jerusalem witness is taken from fragment manuscripts that were preserved at the Cairo Geniza (T-S K27.33b). The Hebrew text for the Geniza fragment can be found in Schechter’s paper titled “*Geniza Specimens*” *Jewish Quarterly Review, OS 10, 1898, p.654-659*. The interesting part of the Eighteen Benedictions is found in the addition of the 12th prayer and I quote this from the T-S K27.33b document.

*“For the apostates let there be no hope, and may the kingdom of the arrogant be quickly uprooted in our days; and may the Nazarim and Minim instantly*



*perish; may they be blotted from the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous. Blessed are you Lord humbler of the arrogant.” (T-S K27.33b, Cambridge University Library)*

This section that was added (the 12th prayer) curses the “Minim” and the “Nazarim” together. Scholars believe that the term “Nazarim” is a reference to early Christians taken from the way believers were known in the Scriptures as the “sect of the Nazarenes” (*Acts 24:5*). The 12th benediction is directed specifically towards the Minim and also the Nazarim in Schechter’s Geniza fragment and reads saying “*may they instantly perish.*” In the rabbinic literature the term “Minim” is regarded as a “heretic.” The linking of the Minim with the Nazarim indicates the rabbis are declaring in Judaism that the followers of Yeshua the Nazarene are heretics. The term “Minim” has been dated to be extant before the destruction of the Second Temple and may have been used as a reference to the Sadducees when they were in control of the High Priesthood. The first group of prayers from the Eighteen included praising God for the resurrection may have been a test for the Sadducee whether he was a Minim (heretic). The Sadducee would have had trouble praising God for the resurrection.

What we do know is that at the time of the destruction of the second Temple, Judaism moved to the city of Yavneh under Gamliel II (80-120 CE) who was head of the Yavneh Academy. Gamliel II requested Simon of Phakola to arrange the benedictions into a fixed order and declared that these prayers are to be recited three times a day and are to be used during the synagogue service. It is most likely this event that led to the separation of the early believers (the Nazarim) from the synagogue leading to the establishment of the church as a separate body, distinct and separate from Judaism. The theological “imprimatur” (official approval) is then given for the parting of ways and is reinforced politically by Christian Emperors of Rome and of Byzantine who eventually legislated to separate Jews from Christians and to rule on the subordinate status of the Jews. Take for example the Council of Nicaea (325 CE) that was convened to settle a dispute over the Scriptures and to condemn Arianism by developing the Nicene Creed on the Trinity. Constantine, in one of his first acts, banned Jewish proselytism as a dangerous petition to the Church. This ban on proselytism altered the status of the Jew who at that time had enjoyed equality with Pagans and Christians under the Edict of Milan. Then by 388 CE Christian populations were setting fire to Synagogues, such as the Synagogue in Callinicum in Mesopotamia. The local authorities asked for the Synagogue to be rebuilt and for the arsonists to be punished. The Bishop of Milan however said the burning of the Synagogue was pleasing to God and that the local authorities have no right to intervene. So the moving away from the synagogue, led to anti-Semitism and a great amount of persecution of the Jewish people. Anti-Semitism that is rooted in anger and not in the love of Christ as the Scriptures say our lives should be characterized as followers of Yeshua the Nazarim. When David was persecuted and driven out of the city of Jerusalem by his enemies, he warned them by contrasting the righteousness of God with the deeds of those who are unrighteous and ungodly, who love vanity, seek lies, and give dishonor. The godly or righteous man will tremble in the fear of the Lord and not sin. On the other hand, godless men seek to destroy the lives of others in their vanity and lies. David says אָמְרוּ בְּלִבְבְּכֶם עַל-מַשְׁכַּבְּכֶם וְדַמּוּ סֵלָה “*say in your heart upon your dwelling place and be silent, Selah.*” He then states: וְיָבִחוּ זִבְחֵי-צֶדֶק וּבְטָחוּ אֶל-יְהוָה: “*sacrifice a sacrifice of righteousness and trust upon the Lord.*” The sacrifice of righteousness is not hurting others (i.e. the burning of synagogues and being angry and hateful towards men). The sacrifice of righteousness that God accepts is to live in righteousness and justice, to love the Lord our God with all of our hearts, all of our minds, and all of our souls (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 6:4-10*) and to love others, whether they be our enemies or our friends, we are to love them with Christ’s love and forgive them their sins that they commit against us. Let’s pray!

Heavenly Father,

We thank You for this Psalm of David and for the covenant relationship that You have established in Your Messiah Yeshua. Lord we know, according to the Scriptures, that throughout history you were working to save us from our sins. Thank you for the encouraging words from David's life that help us to know You better and to trust in You alone. We praise Your holy Name and thank You Lord for the fullness of Your mercy and grace You provide for us each day. Words can not describe the awesomeness of Your glory and for the greatness of Your presence in our lives by the power of Your Holy Spirit. Thank You for Your love and Your provision, Your portion that You have given Your only Son for the forgiveness of sins. Help increase our faith and live each day having faith and trust in You. Help us to honor You in the way we live our lives for Your glory. Help us to walk in righteousness and draw closer to You each day and fill us with Your presence. Please forgive us of our sins, we believe You sent Your only Son to die on our behalf and three days later He was raised from the grave. Thank you for revealing these truths to our hearts. Thank You for everything You have done for us. 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 I 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