

ספר תהילים יז | Tehillim / Psalms 17

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For those who take Refuge at Your Right Hand

This week's study is from *Tehillim / Psalms 17:1-15*. The Psalm begins saying תְּפִלָּה לְדָוִד “A prayer of David and he prays asking the Lord to hear his cry, to give ear to his prayer, and that his prayer is not done so with deceitful lips (שְׁמָעָה יְהוָה | צְדָק הַקְּשִׁיבָה רִנָּתִי הַאֲזִינָה תְּפִלָּתִי בְּלֹא שִׁפְתַי מִרְמָה). David calls for the judgment of God to come forth from his presence and to examine him (17:2). He says that the Lord has tested his heart, come to him by night, and found nothing, and that he has purposed his mouth to not transgress (ג. בְּחִנְתָּ לְבָי | פָּקַדְתָּ לַיְלָה צָרְפַתְנִי בַל-תִּמְצָא זִמְתִּי בַל-יַעֲבֹר-פִּי:). He says that based on the deeds of men, by the word of Your lips, I have kept from the paths of the violent (17:4) suggests that he believes the Torah is the word of God and that keeping God's word has kept him from evil. ה תָּמָד אֲשֶׁרִי בְּמַעֲגָלוֹתַי בַּל-נִמְוָטוּ. 17:5 *My steps have held fast to Your paths. My feet have not slipped. (NASB)* The Lord will answer those who seek Him (17:7) and show His favor in His Salvation מִמֵּתְקוֹמָמִים 17:7 *Wondrously show Your lovingkindness, O Savior of those who take refuge at Your right hand From those who rise up against them. (NASB)* The wicked are described as those who have and unfeeling heart and speak in their pride (17:10), they surround the people of God and determine to cast God's people to the ground (17:11). The wicked are like a lion that is eager to tear and lurking int he hiding places (17:12). David asks the Lord saying 17:13 *Arise, O Lord, confront him, bring him low; Deliver my soul from the wicked with Your sword (NASB)* to deliver him with His sword. What is David referring to when he asks to deliver him with the “Sword of God?” He concludes his prayer psalm saying 17:14 *From men with Your hand, O Lord, From men of the world, whose portion is in this life, And whose belly You fill with Your treasure; They are satisfied with children, And leave their abundance to their babes. 17:15 As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake. (NASB)* In righteousness he will behold the face of God. What a great reason to live in righteousness before the Lord!

עברית Hebrew	ארמי Aramaic	ελληνικός Greek
ספר תהלים פרק יז	ספר טוביה פרק יז	ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 17
א תְּפִלָּה לְדָוִד שְׁמָעָה יְהוָה צְדָק הַקְּשִׁיבָה רִנָּתִי הַאֲזִינָה תְּפִלָּתִי בְּלֹא שִׁפְתַי מִרְמָה: ב מְלַפְנֶיךָ מִשְׁפָּטִי יֵצֵא עֵינַיִךָ תַּחֲזִינָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל: ג בְּחִנְתָּ לְבָי פָּקַדְתָּ לַיְלָה צָרְפַתְנִי בַל-תִּמְצָא זִמְתִּי בַל-יַעֲבֹר-פִּי: ד לִפְעֻלוֹת אָדָם בְּדָבָר שִׁפְתֶיךָ אָנֹכִי שְׁמַרְתִּי אֲרָחוֹת פְּרִיץ:	א צלותא לדוד קבל יהוה פגיעתי בעותי בצדקא אצית שבוחי תיצלי אודנך לצלותי בדלא סיפוותי ניכלא: ב מן קדמך דיני יפוק עינך תהוין חמין תריצותא: ג בחנתא לבבי אסערתא עלי בליליא סננתא בחנת לי לא אשכחתא שחיתא חשבית בישותא בישתא לא עברת ית פומי:	17:1 προσευχή του δαυιδ εισάκουσον κύριε τῆς δικαιοσύνης μου πρόσχεσ τῇ δεήσει μου ἐνώτισαι τῆς προσευχῆς μου οὐκ ἐν χεῖλεσιν δολίοις 17:2 ἐκ προσώπου σου τὸ κρίμα μου ἐξέλθοι οἱ ὀφθαλμοί μου ιδέτωσαν εὐθύτητας 17:3 ἐδοκίμασας τὴν καρδίαν μου ἐπεσκέψω νυκτός ἐπύρωσάς με καὶ οὐχ εὐρέθη ἐν ἐμοὶ ἀδικία

<p>ה תַּמָּה אֲשֶׁרִי בְּמַעְגְלוֹתַי בְּלֹ- נְמוּטוֹ פְּעָמַי: ו אֲנִי קָרָאתִיךָ כִּי-תִעַנֵּנִי אֵל הַט-אֲזַנְךָ לִי שְׁמַע אֲמַרְתָּ: ז הַפִּלֵּה חֲסְדֵיךָ מוֹשִׁיעַ חֹסִים מִמַּתְקוֹמָמִים בִּימִינֶךָ: ח שְׁמַרְנִי כְּאִישׁוֹן בֵּת-עֵין בְּצֵל כְּנַפֵּיךָ תִּסְתִּירֵנִי: ט מִפְּנֵי רְשָׁעִים זו שְׂדוּנֵי אִבֵּי בְּנִפְשׁ יִקִּיפוּ עָלַי: י הִלְבַּמוּ סָגְרוּ פִּימוֹ דִּבְרוּ בִּגְאוּת: יא אֲשֶׁרִינוּ עֲתָה סִבְבוּנִי [סִבְבוּנוּ] עֵינֵיהֶם יִשִּׁיתוּ לְנִטּוֹת בְּאָרְצְךָ: יב דְּמִינוּ כְּאֲרִיָּה יִכְסּוּךָ לְטָרוֹף וְכִכְפִּיר יֵשֵׁב בְּמִסְתָּרִים: יג קוּמָה יְהִנֵּה קִדְמָה פְּנֵיו הִכְרִיעֵהוּ פְּלִטָּה נִפְשֵׁי מְרַשָּׁע חֲרָבֶךָ: יד מִמַּתִּים יָדֶךָ יְהִנֵּה מִמַּתִּים מִחֶלֶד חֲלָקֶם בְּחַיִּים וְצַפִּינֶךָ [וְצַפּוּנֶךָ] תִּמְלֵא בְּטַבָּם יִשְׁפְּעוּ בְּנִים וְהִנִּיחוּ יִתְרָם לְעוֹלָמֵיהֶם: טו אֲנִי בְּצַדִּק אֶחְזָק פְּנִיךָ אֲשַׁפְּעָה בְּהַקִּיץ תִּמְוַנְתֶּךָ:</p>	<p>ד ברם אכסנתא על עובדיהון לבני נשא במימר סיפוותך אנא נטרית אורחות חציפא: ה סעיד אסתוורי בהליכתך דלא יזועון יזדעזעון רגלי: ו אנא קרית יתך מטול דקביל ארום תקבל צלותי אלהא צלי אודנך קביל צלותי לותי שמע מילולי: ז פריש טבוותך זכוותך פריקהון דסוברי פרע להון מן מאן דקיימין עליהון באידא דימינך: ח נטר יתי כגילגול היך כבת <בבת> גלגל די במציעות עינא בטלא בטלל דשכינתך תטמור יתי: ט מן קדם רשיעיא אילין דמחבאלין יתי בעלי דבבי ברעות נפשהון מחזרן עלי: י עתרהון סגא שומנהון כסאו כסיו פומהון מלילו ברברב <נ>ותא: יא אסתורנא השתא חזרו לנא עלנא עיניהון משוון למפשט בארעא: יב דמותיה היך אריא דמרגג למתבר וכשחלא דיתיב בטומריא: יג קום יהוה אלהא אקדם אפוי חמטיה פצא נפשי מן רשיעא דאתחייב קטול בסייפך: יד וצדיקיא דמסרין נפשיהון מטולתך יהוה למיתותא ומשתצון בארעא חולקהון בחיי עלמא וטשיותך טביא טבא יתמליין כריסהון יסבעון בנין וישבקון שיריהון יתריהון לטליהון: טו אנא בקושטא אחמי סבר אפך אשבע בעידן דאתער מן איקר פרצופך:</p>	<p>17:4 ὅπως ἂν μὴ λαλήσῃ τὸ στόμα μου τὰ ἔργα τῶν ἀνθρώπων διὰ τοὺς λόγους τῶν χειλέων σου ἐγὼ ἐφύλαξα ὁδοὺς σκληράς 17:5 κατάρτισαι τὰ διαβήματά μου ἐν ταῖς τρίβους σου ἵνα μὴ σαλευθῶσιν τὰ διαβήματά μου 17:6 ἐγὼ ἐκέκραξα ὅτι ἐπήκουσάς μου ὁ θεὸς κλίνον τὸ οὖς σου ἔμοι καὶ εἰσάκουσον τῶν ῥημάτων μου 17:7 θαυμάστωσον τὰ ἔλέη σου ὁ σφῶζων τοὺς ἐλπίζοντας ἐπὶ σὲ ἐκ τῶν ἀνθεσθηκότων τῇ δεξιᾷ σου 17:8 φύλαξόν με ὡς κόραν ὀφθαλμοῦ ἐν σκέπη τῶν πτερυγῶν σου σκεπάσεις με 17:9 ἀπὸ προσώπου ἀσεβῶν τῶν ταλαιπωρησάντων με οἱ ἐχθροὶ μου τὴν ψυχὴν μου περιέσχον 17:10 τὸ στέαρ αὐτῶν συνέκλεισαν τὸ στόμα αὐτῶν ἐλάλησεν ὑπερηφανίαν 17:11 ἐκβάλλοντές με νυκτὶ περιεκύκλωσάν με τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν ἔθεντο ἐκκλίνειν ἐν τῇ γῆ 17:12 ὑπέλαβόν με ὡσεὶ λέων ἔτοιμος εἰς θήραν καὶ ὡσεὶ σκύμνος οἰκῶν ἐν ἀποκρύφους 17:13 ἀνάστηθι κύριε πρόφθασον αὐτοὺς καὶ ὑποσκέλισον αὐτοὺς ῥῦσαι τὴν ψυχὴν μου ἀπὸ ἀσεβοῦς ρομφαίαν σου ἀπὸ ἐχθρῶν τῆς χειρός σου 17:14 κύριε ἀπὸ ὀλίγων ἀπὸ γῆς διαμέρισον αὐτοὺς ἐν τῇ ζωῇ αὐτῶν καὶ τῶν κεκρυμμένων σου ἐπλήσθη ἡ γαστήρ αὐτῶν ἐχορτάσθησαν υἰῶν καὶ ἀφήκαν τὰ κατάλοιπα τοῖς νηπίοις αὐτῶν 17:15 ἐγὼ δὲ ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ ὀφθῆσομαι τῷ προσώπῳ σου χορτασθήσομαι ἐν τῷ ὀφθῆναι τὴν δόξαν σου</p>
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The Psalm begins saying תְּפִלָּה לְדָוִד “A prayer of David.” Only two times does a Psalm begin with the words תְּפִלָּה לְדָוִד “A prayer of David.” in Tehillim / Psalms 17 and 86. David prays asking the Lord to hear his cry, to be attentive in listening (הַקְשִׁיבָה) and give ear to his prayer, that his prayer is not done so with deceitful (מְרָמָה) lips (מְרָמָה) (שְׁפָתַי בְּלֹא שִׁפְתֵי מְרָמָה). The Aramaic text states א צלותא לדוד קבל יהוה פגיעתי בעותי בצדקא אצית שבוחי תיצלי אודנך לצלותי בדלא סיפוותי ניכלא: 17:1 A prayer of David. Accept, O Lord, my entreaty; in righteousness hear my praise; you will incline your ear to my prayer, since my lips are without guile. (EMC) and is in agreement with the Hebrew text, and so is the Greek translation (LXX), David is honestly seeking the Lord in prayer for help, he is not

trying to deceive the Lord into helping him overcome his enemies.

<p>Tehillim / Psalms 17 A Prayer of David. 17:1 Hear a just cause, O Lord, give heed to my cry; Give ear to my prayer, which is not from deceitful lips. 17:2 Let my judgment come forth from Your presence; Let Your eyes look with equity. 17:3 You have tried my heart; You have visited me by night; You have tested me and You find nothing; I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress. 17:4 As for the deeds of men, by the word of Your lips I have kept from the paths of the violent. 17:5 My steps have held fast to Your paths. My feet have not slipped. 17:6 I have called upon You, for You will answer me, O God; Incline Your ear to me, hear my speech. 17:7 Wondrously show Your lovingkindness, O Savior of those who take refuge at Your right hand From those who rise up against them. 17:8 Keep me as the apple of the eye; Hide me in the shadow of Your wings 17:9 From the wicked who despoil me, My deadly enemies who surround me. 17:10 They have closed their unfeeling heart, With their mouth they speak proudly. 17:11 They have now surrounded us in our steps; They set their eyes to cast us down to the ground. 17:12 He is like a lion that is eager to tear, And as a young lion lurking in hiding places. 17:13 Arise, O Lord, confront him, bring him low; Deliver my soul from the wicked with Your sword, 17:14 From men with Your hand, O Lord, From men of the world, whose portion is in this life, And whose belly You fill with Your treasure; They are satisfied with children, And leave their abundance to their babes. 17:15 As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake. (NASB)</p>	<p>Toviyah / Psalms Chapter 17 17:1 A prayer of David. Accept, O Lord, my entreaty; in righteousness hear my praise; you will incline your ear to my prayer, since my lips are without guile. 17:2 From your presence my judgment shall come forth; your eyes will behold honesty. 17:3 You have tested my heart; you have visited me at night; you have purified me [and] not found corruption. [If] I thought of evil, it has not passed my mouth. 17:4 Truly you have rebuked the deeds of the sons of men by the word of your lips; I have kept [myself from] the ways of audacity. 17:5 Support my steps in your path, lest my feet be shaken. 17:6 I have called you because you will receive my prayer, O God; incline your ear, receive my prayer. 17:7 Display your goodness, O redeemer of those who hope; from those who rise up against them by your right hand. 17:8 Guard me like the circle that is in the middle of the eye; in the shadow of your presence you will hide me. 17:9 From the presence of the wicked, those who harm me; my enemies, in the desire of their soul, surround me. 17:10 Their wealth has increased, their fat covers [them], their mouth has spoken arrogantly. 17:11 Our steps now have surrounded us; their eyes are fixed to extend throughout the land. 17:12 He resembles a lion who yearns to tear, or a jungle-cat that dwells in secret places. 17:13 Arise, O Lord, forestall him, strike him down; deliver my soul from the wicked man who deserves death by your sword. 17:14 And the righteous who hand over their souls on your account, O Lord, to death in the land, their portion is in eternal life, and their bellies will be filled with your good store; children will be satisfied, and they will leave their surplus to their children. 17:15 I in truth will see your countenance, I will be satisfied at the time that I awake, from the glory of your face. (EMC)</p>	<p>Psalmoi / Psalms 17 A prayer of David. 17:1 Hearken, O Lord of my righteousness, attend to my petition; give ear to my prayer not uttered with deceitful lips. 17:2 Let my judgment come forth from thy presence; let mine eyes behold righteousness. 17:3 Thou has proved mine heart; thou hast visited me by night; thou hast tried me as with fire, and unrighteousness has not been found in me: I am purposed that my mouth shall not speak amiss. 17:4 As for the works of men, by the words of thy lips I have guarded myself from hard ways. 17:5 Direct my steps in thy paths, that my steps slip not. 17:6 I have cried, for thou heardest me, O God: incline thine ear to me, and hearken to my words. 17:7 Shew the marvels of thy mercies, thou that savest them that hope in thee. 17:8 Keep me as the apple of the eye from those that resist thy right hand: thou shalt screen me by the covering of thy wings, 17:9 from the face of the ungodly that have afflicted me: mine enemies have compassed about my soul. 17:10 They have enclosed themselves with their own fat: their mouth has spoken pride. 17:11 They have now cast me out and compassed me round about: they have set their eyes so as to bow them down to the ground. 17:12 They laid wait for me as a lion ready for prey, and like a lion's whelp dwelling in secret places. 17:13 Arise, O Lord, prevent them, and cast them down: deliver my soul from the ungodly: draw thy sword, 17:14 because of the enemies of thine hand: O Lord, destroy them from the earth; scatter them in their life, though their belly has been filled with thy hidden treasures: they have been satisfied with uncleanness, and have left the remnant of their possessions to their babes. 17:15 But I shall appear in righteousness before thy face: I shall be satisfied when thy glory appears. (LXX)</p>
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According to *Tehillim / Psalms 17:2*, David calls for the judgment of God to come forth from his presence and to examine him (*17:2*). Based upon what David is saying here in *Tehillim / Psalms 17:2*, how should we be living our lives knowing and expecting judgment to come from God? Will judgment come from God now that we are in Yeshua the Messiah (Christ)? The Apostle Peter spoke extensively on the topic of judgment in *2 Peter 3:7-18*. Let's read what the Apostle Peter has to say concerning judgment in *2 Peter*.

2 Peter 3:7-18

3:7 But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. 3:8 But do not let this one fact escape your

ground. (NASB) This parallels *Tehillim / Psalms 17* when David calls for the judgment of God to come forth from his presence (ב מְלִפְנֵי מְשַׁפְּטֵי יֵצֵא עֵינֶיךָ תְּחַזְיֶנָּה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל). “The LORD our God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God” (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 4:24 and Hebrews 12:29*). God uses His fire to purify and cleanse the believer and also to bring devastating judgment upon the world (to the unrighteous, the wicked, the ungodly). In *2 Peter 3* the great day of the Lord is accompanied by the consuming fire of God. Examples throughout all of Scripture may be found on the judgment that comes forth from His presence being manifest as a consuming fire, for example, in *Bereshit / Genesis 3:24*, Adam and Chavah (Eve) were barred from the tree of life by a flaming sword which turned about every way. In *Bereshit / Genesis 19:24*, the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah with brimstone and fire because of their sin. Their sin was so great that God’s wrath was poured out upon that place “before” the great day of the Lord as indicated in *2 Peter 3*. In Egypt from the book of *Exodus (9:24)* the Lord rained down hail and fire mingled with hail, that if anyone was caught out in the open they died. In *Vayikra / Leviticus 10:1-2*, Nadav and Avihu went before the Lord with strange fire and there went fire from the Lord and consumed them. In *Bamidbar / Numbers 16:35*, the men of Korach raised up against God’s anointed and against Moshe and they brought censers to burn incense before the Lord and it says that Fire come forth from before the Lord and consumed them. In *1 Kings 1:10-12*, Elijah prayed before the people and the prophets of Baal over the altar of God and fire come down from heaven and consumed everything, including the altar and everything on it. In the Apostolic Writings, Yeshua spoke very graphically of “Hell” (Gehenna) and a fire that will never be quenched (*Mark 9:34*). He told parables of the rich man who died and was “in torment in this flame” (*Luke 16:24*). Yeshua also said on the great day of the Lord, He will say “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (*Matthew 25:41*). The Apostle Paul wrote that Yeshua would come “in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God” (*2 Thessalonians 1:8*). Jude mentioned, “others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire...” (*Jude 1:23*). John wrote, “and whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (*Revelation 20:15*). All of Scripture speaks of the “fire” of God that results from His judgment which proceeds from His presence in the midst of sin. In *Tehillim / Psalms 17*, David calls for God’s judgment א תִּפְלֶה לְדוֹד שְׁמֵעָה יְהוָה | צְדָק הַקְּשִׁיבָה רִנָּתִי הַאֲזִינָה תִּפְלֶתִי בְּלֹא שִׁפְתַי מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל: ב מְלִפְנֵי מְשַׁפְּטֵי יֵצֵא עֵינֶיךָ תְּחַזְיֶנָּה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל: A Prayer of David. 17:1 Hear a just cause, O Lord, give heed to my cry; Give ear to my prayer, which is not from deceitful lips. 17:2 Let my judgment come forth from Your presence; Let Your eyes look with equity. (NASB) David requests for the Lord to let “his judgment” (מְשַׁפְּטֵי) come forth “from his presence” (מְלִפְנֵי) without fear. The reason being, he has rested in the Lord’s salvation. His prayer is made without deceitfulness and in truth. In Yeshua the Messiah, we have the salvation of God and do not need to fear the judgment of the Lord or that great day when that time comes.

David goes on to say 17:3 א בַּחֲנֹת לִבִּי | פְּקֻדָּתְךָ לִילָה צָרַפְתָּנִי בַל-תִּמְצָא זַמְתִּי בַל-יַעֲבֹר-פִּי: ג בַּחֲנֹת לִבִּי אֲסַעֲרָתָא עֲלֵי בַלִּילָיָא סַנְנַתָּא בַּחֲנֹת לִי לֹא אֲשַׁכַּחְתָּא שְׁחִיתָא חֲשַׁבִּית בִּישׁוּתָא בִּישְׁתָּא לֹא עֲבַרְתָּ ג בַּחֲנֹת לִבִּי אֲסַעֲרָתָא עֲלֵי בַלִּילָיָא סַנְנַתָּא בַּחֲנֹת לִי לֹא אֲשַׁכַּחְתָּא שְׁחִיתָא חֲשַׁבִּית בִּישׁוּתָא בִּישְׁתָּא לֹא עֲבַרְתָּ: [If] I thought of evil, it has not passed my mouth. (EMC) Interestingly, the rabbis translate *Tehillim / Psalms 17:3* to say that the Lord testing and finding nothing, is synonymous with the Lord testing and “purifying” (בַּחֲנֹת) like one does to remove base-metals from silver during the refining process. David purposed that his “mouth would not transgress” or that if he had “thought of evil, it has not passed his mouth” meaning that he has not spoken evil. David has chosen to live his life based upon God’s Word, this is antithetical to the ways or deeds of men whose paths are violence and pride (*Tehillim / Psalms 17:4*). He believes the Torah is the word of God and remaining in God’s word has kept him from evil. The Apostle Paul spoke of the way in which believers are to live their lives before God in *1 Thessalonians chapter 4*. Note that in *2 Peter*, the Apostle Peter has made a reference to *1 Thessalonians 5* regarding the great “day

of the Lord” and of how we are supposed to live. In context, *1 Thessalonians 4*, Paul speaks on how one is to live in Christ the Messiah. Let’s read the text from the Apostolic Writings.

1 Thessalonians 4:1-18

4:1 Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. 4:2 For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. 4:3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4:4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 4:5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; 4:6 and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. 4:7 For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. 4:8 So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you. 4:9 Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; 4:10 for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more, 4:11 and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, 4:12 so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need. 4:13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. 4:15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 4:16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 4:17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. 4:18 Therefore comfort one another with these words. (NASB)

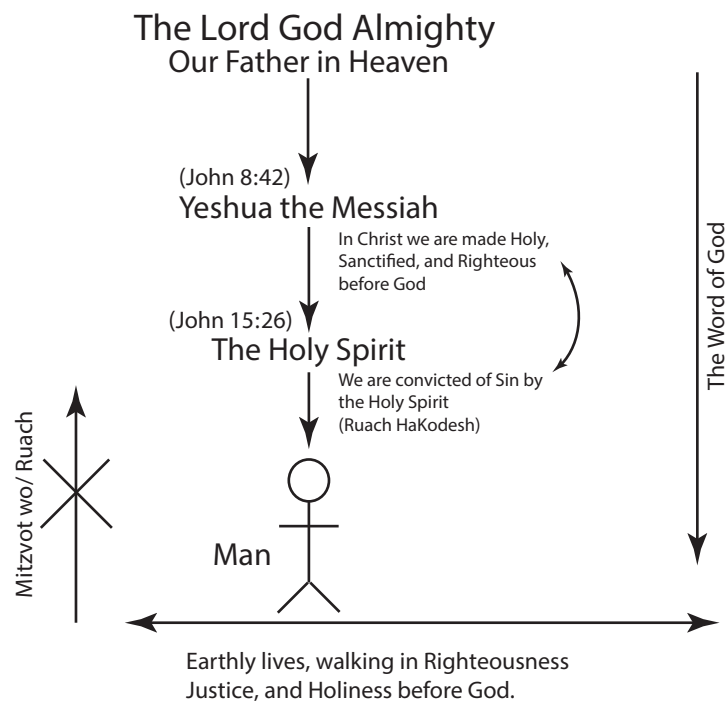
¹Λοιπὸν οὖν, ἀδελφοί, ἐρωτῶμεν ὑμᾶς καὶ παρακαλοῦμεν ἐν κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ, ἵνα καθὼς παρελάβετε παρ’ ἡμῶν τὸ πῶς δεῖ ὑμᾶς περιπατεῖν καὶ ἀρέσκειν θεῷ, καθὼς καὶ περιπατεῖτε, ἵνα περισσεύητε μᾶλλον. ²οἴδατε γὰρ τίνας παραγγελίας ἐδώκαμεν ὑμῖν διὰ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ. ³τοῦτο γὰρ ἐστὶν θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ ἁγιασμός ὑμῶν, ἀπέχεσθαι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ τῆς πορνείας, ⁴εἰδέναι ἕκαστον ὑμῶν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σκεῦος κτᾶσθαι ἐν ἁγιασμῷ καὶ τιμῇ, ⁵μη ἐν πάθει ἐπιθυμίας καθάπερ καὶ τὰ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ εἰδότα τὸν θεόν, ⁶τὸ μὴ ὑπερβαίνειν καὶ πλεονεκτεῖν ἐν τῷ πράγματι τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ, διότι ἔκδικος κύριος περὶ πάντων τούτων, καθὼς καὶ προεῖπαμεν ὑμῖν καὶ διεμαρτυράμεθα. ⁷οὐ γὰρ ἐκάλεσεν ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς ἐπὶ ἀκαθαρσία ἀλλ’ ἐν ἁγιασμῷ. ⁸τοιγαροῦν ὁ ἀθετῶν οὐκ ἄνθρωπον ἀθετεῖ ἀλλὰ τὸν θεὸν τὸν [καὶ] διδόντα τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ τὸ ἅγιον εἰς ὑμᾶς. ⁹Περὶ δὲ τῆς φιλαδελφίας οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχετε γράφειν ὑμῖν, αὐτοὶ γὰρ ὑμεῖς θεοδίδακτοὶ ἐστε εἰς τὸ ἀγαπᾶν ἀλλήλους; ¹⁰καὶ γὰρ ποιεῖτε αὐτὸ εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἀδελφούς [τούς] ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ. παρακαλοῦμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, περισσεύειν μᾶλλον, ¹¹καὶ φιλοτιμεῖσθαι ἡσυχάζειν καὶ πράσσειν τὰ ἴδια καὶ ἐργάζεσθαι ταῖς [ιδίαις] χερσὶν ὑμῶν, καθὼς ὑμῖν παρηγγείλαμεν, ¹²ἵνα περιπατῆτε εὐσημημόνως πρὸς τοὺς ἔξω καὶ μηδενὸς χρεῖαν ἔχητε. ¹³Οὐ θέλομεν δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, περὶ τῶν κοιμημένων, ἵνα μὴ λυπήσθε καθὼς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα. ¹⁴εἰ γὰρ πιστεύομεν ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἀπέθανεν καὶ ἀνέστη, οὕτως καὶ ὁ θεὸς τοὺς κοιμηθέντας διὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἄξει σὺν αὐτῷ. ¹⁵Τοῦτο γὰρ ὑμῖν λέγομεν ἐν λόγῳ κυρίου, ὅτι ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι εἰς τὴν παρουσίαν τοῦ κυρίου οὐ μὴ φθάσωμεν τοὺς κοιμηθέντας; ¹⁶ὅτι αὐτὸς ὁ κύριος ἐν κελεύσματι, ἐν φωνῇ ἀρχαγγέλου καὶ ἐν σάλπιγγι θεοῦ, καταβήσεται ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ, καὶ οἱ νεκροὶ ἐν Χριστῷ ἀναστήσονται πρῶτον, ¹⁷ἔπειτα ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι ἅμα σὺν αὐτοῖς ἀρπαγησόμεθα ἐν νεφέλαις εἰς ἀπάντησιν τοῦ κυρίου εἰς ἀέρα: καὶ οὕτως πάντοτε σὺν κυρίῳ ἐσόμεθα. ¹⁸Ὡστε παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους ἐν τοῖς λόγοις τούτοις.

The Apostle Paul begins speaking on “*how one ought to walk and please God*” and states that is what you

do but that you are to excel still more in your walk before the Lord. The will of God Paul states is our sanctification, ³τοῦτο γὰρ ἐστὶν θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ ἁγιασμός ὑμῶν, ἀπέχεσθαι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ τῆς πορνείας, 4:3 *For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality;* the most important aspect of our sanctification is to abstain from sexual immorality. Notice how this is something that we do, this is known in Judaism as “*Shomer Mitzvah Shomer Nafsho*” taken from *Mishley / Proverbs 19:16* ([:מִצְוֹת] יוֹמֵת דְּרָכָיו בּוֹזֵה נַפְשׁוֹ שֹׁמֵר מִצְוָה שֹׁמֵר נַפְשׁוֹ 19:16 *He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul; but he that despiseth his ways shall die. KJV*). Here, the Jewish thinking on the mitzvot (commandments) is that the mitzvot are not burdensome things but rather opportunities to express gratitude to God for the gift of life. The one who keeps or observes (shomer) the commandment of the Lord guards his own life, for the keeping of the commandment aligns the soul (nefesh) with life. On the other hand, the one who despises his ways will die. The word translated as “despise” comes from the word Bozah (בוֹזֵה), a verb that means to accord little worth to something. The one who is heedless of his ways or otherwise unconcerned about the high calling of obedience aligns the soul with error and the end thereof is death (*Mishley / Proverbs 14:12*). In summary, we have a duty to care about our lives, being “*Shomer Mitzvah*” is a form of wakefulness, where we consciously attend to our actions in light of God’s expressed will for our lives. This is what the Apostle Paul was saying here in *1 Thessalonians 4*, the will of God is that we abstain from sexual immorality. So the question that presents itself from this discussion is “can we live lives that are not Shomer Mitzvah and remained saved in the Messiah?” How about rephrasing the question of whether one can live a sexually immoral life and how that affects our salvation? (see *1 Corinthians 6:9*). The will of God, throughout the Scriptures, for believers concerning proper sexual behavior is very clear, namely, that we are to abstain from sexual immorality. The Apostle Paul’s previous exhortation was that the Thessalonians are to strive to excel more (4:1–2). From this text, Paul appears to know his readers desired to do God’s will, but he also realized they needed to know more specifically what that will encompasses. The culture of Thessalonica was a permissive culture and the prevailing religion of the region was in homosexual and heterosexual immorality (temple worship with prostitutes). Paul considered abstention from sexual immorality to be the first priority in the Thessalonians’ devotion to God by sanctifying their bodies for Him. Every imaginable sexual vice was rampant in and around Thessalonica; therefore, Paul was especially concerned that the Thessalonians could easily fall back into their former way of life. So he gave them the direct, uncomplicated command to abstain from sexual immorality (*1 Thessalonians 4:3*). Abstain means that one must withdraw (separate, isolate) one’s self away from any thought or behavior that violates the principles of God’s Word and results in any act of sexual sin. In the Greek text, sexual immorality (πορνείας, porneias) is a term used to describe any form of illicit sexual behavior (see *John 8:41, Acts 15:20, 29, 21:25, 1 Corinthians 5:1, 6:13, 18, 2 Corinthians 12:21, Galatians 5:19, Ephesians 5:3, Colossians 3:5, Revelation 2:21, 9:21*). Any sexual activity that deviates from the monogamous relationship between a husband and a wife is immoral by God’s standard (according to the Torah). The Lord blesses the sexual relationship in marriage, “*Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled*” (*Hebrews 13:4*), and the Lord is not pleased with sexual activity outside of marriage, the Scriptures say “*for fornicators and adulterers God will judge*” (*Hebrews 13:4, Romans 1:24–32, 2:2*). Paul’s teaching on the subject of sexual morality extends beyond the physical acts of immorality, as his later teachings to the Ephesians and the Colossians illustrate “*But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.*” (*Ephesians 5:3*) “*For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.*” (*Colossians 3:3, 5*)

In *1 Thessalonians 4:7*, Paul said ⁷οὐ γὰρ ἐκάλεσεν ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς ἐπὶ ἀκαθαρσίᾳ ἀλλ’ ἐν ἁγιασμῷ. 4:7 *For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. (NASB)* In these passages, the Greek word used is ἀκαθαρσία meaning “1) uncleanness 1a) physical 1b) in a moral sense: the impurity

of lustful, luxurious, profligate living 1b1) of impure motives.” In the Hebrew translation of the Apostolic writings, the word טמא meaning “ritual uncleanness, defiled” and the word used for sanctification in the Greek text is ἁγιασμός meaning “1) consecration, purification 2) the effect of consecration 2a) sanctification of heart and life.” In Ephesians, Colossians, and Thessalonians, the same word for impurity and consecration is used whose meaning extends beyond acts of sexual sin to include how we live, what we do (our actions, what we place into our bodies, i.e. like for example what we eat), and our thought life (unclean thoughts), etc. The teaching of Paul falls in line with Yeshua’s teaching on sexual sin when he said “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:27–28, 15:19, Mark 7:21–22). Paul also said “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, The two shall become one flesh.” But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.” (1 Corinthians 6:15–20) The important point concerning Tehillim / Psalms 17, examining these Scriptures from the Apostolic writings, and what we read in the Aramaic Targum לא אשכחתי לי לא אשכחתי 17:3 You have tested my heart; you have visited me at night; you have purified me [and] not found corruption. [If] I thought of evil, it has not passed my mouth. (EMC) David states that God had visited him at night, and he has purified him and not found corruption. The Lord God Almighty has made him pure. Today we are sanctified in Yeshua, but we are also called to live sanctified lives before God. This may be illustrated in the following way:



According to the Scriptures, the Lord God Almighty (Our Father in Heaven), sent His Son Yeshua (the Word of God) to make atonement and bring peace between man and God. In Yeshua, because of what He has

done, we are made holy, we are sanctified, and we are made righteous before God. Yeshua, upon his return to Heaven, sends the Holy Spirit to dwell in each of us, and we are convicted of sin by the holy spirit and this is because of the holiness and righteousness of God. As a result of this, we live our lives in righteousness, justice, and holiness before God here on earth, both physically and spiritually. The Word of God confirms this in our lives. This is the process through which God the Father works, through His Son, through the Holy Spirit, in our lives. Shomer Mitzvah occurs (we establish the Torah, see *Romans 3:31*) because the Lord dwells within us. We do not obey God, observe the mitzvot (Shomer Mitzvah), in order to reach back to heaven, to add merit to our salvation, our salvation is established in Yeshua the Messiah. The question then is if we are not living in righteousness, holiness, and justice in this life, if our lives are dominated by sin, then does such a person have a relationship with God through His Son and by the Holy Spirit that dwells within? If righteousness, holiness, and obeying God is not going on here and now in your life, then your relationship with God needs to be re-examined! David said in *Tehillim / Psalms 17:5*, ה תַּמָּה אֲשֶׁרִי בַל-נִמוּטוּ פְּעָמָי: 17:5 *My steps have held fast to Your paths. My feet have not slipped. (NASB)* Our feet will hold fast and not slip when we take the appropriate steps to walk away from sin and with the help of the Lord God Almighty by the power of the Holy Spirit because of Yeshua the Messiah! Looking at the illustration, we have a vertical relationship with our Father in Heaven because of the Son. If our lives do not measure up horizontally on this earth, then there must be a problem somewhere in the vertical direction, and the problem is not on God's end but on ours. This is related to the passages from the Apostolic Writings and from the Psalm and the Torah text. In the Apostolic Writings we learn the Greek word used of physical uncleanness is ἀκαθαρσία (akatharsia) and for impurity is ἀγιασμός (agiasmos). ἀγιασμός (agiasmos) is translated in Hebrew as טמאה (tameh) a reference to “ritual uncleanness or defilement.” Our bodies being the dwelling place of God, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, how important is ritual purity today? Have we lost the meaning of purity for our lives because of our culture or because of tradition? With regard to God's word, it is interesting that the prophet Samuel said in *1 Samuel 15:22*, כב וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמוּאֵל הֲחִפֵּץ לַיהוָה בָּעֹלֹת, 15:22 *Samuel said, ‘Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. (NASB)* To obey is better than sacrifice and to heed God's Word is better than the fat of rams. How far should we go to obey God's Word?

We read throughout the Scriptures that God is a merciful God and shortly following the settlement of the Promised Land in the book of Judges, the people were not following the commandments of God. They lived according to what they thought was right in their own eyes. They did not sacrifice in Shiloh at the Tabernacle like they were supposed to. They were serving the Baals and the Asherim and forsook the Lord God of their fathers. David said in *Tehillim / Psalms 17:7*, ז הַפִּלֵּה חֲסָדֶיךָ מוֹשִׁיעַ חוֹסִים מִמֵּתְקוֹמֵמִים בְּיַמִּינֶךָ: 17:7 *Wondrously show Your lovingkindness, O Savior of those who take refuge at Your right hand From those who rise up against them. (NASB)* The Aramaic Targum states ז פריש טבוותך זכוותך פריקהון דסוברי פרע להון מן מאן דקיימין עליהון באידא דימינך: 17:7 *Display your goodness, O redeemer of those who hope; from those who rise up against them by your right hand. (EMC)* The Septuagint states 17:7 θαυμάστωσον τὰ ἔλεή σου ὁ σῶζων τοὺς ἐλπίζοντας ἐπὶ σὲ ἐκ τῶν ἀνθεστηκότων τῇ δεξιᾷ σου 17:7 *Shew the marvels of thy mercies, thou that savest them that hope in thee. (LXX)* In *Devarim / Deuteronomy 7:7-8* Moshe said “The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the Lord loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.” The Apostolic Writings we read the apostles commentary on the salvation of God for those who seek Him in the book of Hebrews that states “For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much

John 3:4 states that sin is lawlessness. In Greek, the word for lawlessness is *anomia* (ἀνομία). *Nomos* is the Greek word for the Hebrew word “Torah” and means “law.” Lawlessness is being without the law, so sin is defined as anything that does not follow the instructions of the law. *Romans 3:23* states ²³τὰ γὰρ ὀψώνια τῆς ἀμαρτίας θάνατος, τὸ δὲ χάρισμα τοῦ θεοῦ ζωὴ αἰώνιος ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν. *6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NASB)*, all fall short of God’s perfect righteousness. Try as we might, we cannot keep the instructions of the Torah perfectly at all times. As a result, the law stands in opposition to us. When we fail to keep the Torah, we are in a state of sin and the wages of sin is death according to *Romans 6:23*. This is the Torah’s aspect of condemnation. The Lord God Almighty however does not leave us in a state of condemnation. He brings us eternal life by directing us to the Messiah (*Galatians 3:24*). The Torah does not give eternal life, but it leads us, directs us to our Savior. Once we are saved, our obedience to the commands of the Torah shows our love for God (see *1 John 5:3*) and stores up rewards in heaven (*Matthew 5:19*). This is the aspect of the law that gives life, it leads us to the Messiah and then gives us a quality of life, a way of life for a holy people who are saved in the Messiah. This is how a life that has been redeemed, that has been saved, lives in obedience to the Word of the Lord. This dual aspect of the Torah, of life and of death, is paralleled to the double-edged sword. The Word of God judges the thoughts and attitudes of our hearts (*Hebrews 4:12*). If we are in Messiah, we are safe from the condemnation of the Torah and free to walk in the way of God for quality of life, love for God, and blessings in this world and the world to come. The all-powerful sword of the living God is able to cut through every defense our enemy can raise down to the very division of bone and marrow as it says in *Hebrews 4:12*. When wielded by a servant of God, nothing can withstand its ability to cut straight to the core of a matter and uncover the truth. That means we must submit our lives to God and to His Word. Allow God’s word to work upon our heart and our spirit. As the people of God, it is our responsibility to use His Word to discern the truth and to follow the truth. Therefore, God’s Word therefore shows us things that are wrong in our lives (*2 Corinthians 10:4-5*). Thus, the sword that David is referring to in *Tehillim / Psalms 17:13* קוּמָה יְהוָה קְדָמָה פְּנֵיו הַכְרִיעֵהוּ פְּלִטָה נַפְשִׁי מִרְשָׁע הַרְבָּה: *17:13 Arise, O Lord, confront him, bring him low; Deliver my soul from the wicked with Your sword (NASB)* is the Word of God.

David concludes his prayer in *Tehillim / Psalms 17* saying יְדָ | יְהוָה מִמֵּתִים מְחַלֵּד הֶלְקָם בְּחַיִּים וְצַפִּינָה [וְצַפִּינָה] תִּמְלֵא בִטְנָם יִשְׁבְּעוּ בָּנִים וְהַנְּיחוּ יִתְרָם לְעוֹלָלֵיהֶם: טו אֲנִי בְצַדִּיק אֶחְיֶה פְּנֵיךָ אֲשַׁבְּעָה בְּהַקְיִץ: *17:14 From men with Your hand, O Lord, From men of the world, whose portion is in this life, And whose belly You fill with Your treasure; They are satisfied with children, And leave their abundance to their babes. 17:15 As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake. (NASB)* In *Tehillim / Psalms 11* David said: כִּי-צַדִּיק יְהוָה צְדָקוֹת אֱהַב יֶשֶׁר יִחַזוּ פְּנֵימוֹ: *11:7 For the Lord is righteous, He loves righteousness; The upright will behold His face. (NASB)* The judgment of the wicked comes because of the righteousness and justice of God. If we live our lives according to God’s ways, according to the Scriptures, if we do good to those who persecute us and pray for those who do evil to us, then we are truly the sons of our Father in Heaven. If we leave judgment and punishment to the Lord, then our hope is truly and wholly give to Him who is able to deliver us from all troubles, our hope is truly in Yeshua God’s Messiah, and our lives are truly changed purely for the glory of God. Let’s pray!

Christian Commentary

The *International Critical Commentary on the Psalms (ICCP)*, Driver, Plummer, and Briggs, 2005, states that *Tehillim / Psalms 17* is a prayer for divine interposition in behalf of the righteous (*17:1-2*). The psalmist requests to be tested by God in mind and conducted and he has been approved (*17:3-4*). He has kept God’s divine ways and avoided wicked deeds (*17:4-5*). He invokes God with confidence (*17:6*) and he prays again that his Savior may show kindness and keep him as the pupil of the eye (*17:6-8*), that he

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may be sheltered from his greedy and arrogant enemies (17:8-10), those who surround him to prey upon him (16:11-12). He again asks God to intervene between him and his enemies and provide deliverance by slaying the wicked (17:13-14). The penalty of the wicked may be visited on them to the third generation, but that he himself may enjoy the divine presence (17:14-15). It is believed this psalm is rightly termed a תפלה, a prayer. The commentators *Driver, Plummer, and Briggs* believe this is “probably” original since the editor of the psalm or any subsequent editor should have singled out this Psalm as a prayer rather than a multitude of others. This psalm resembles *Tehillim / Psalms 16* in words and phrases.

1. שמרגי, 17:8 = 16:1
2. Communion with God at night, 17:3 = 16:7
3. The use of אל in prayer, 17:6 = 16:1
4. The verb תמך, 17:5 = 10:5
5. The reference to the hand of God as protecting and defending, 17:7, 14 = 16:8
6. The contrasted portions of the poet and the wicked, 17:14-15 = 16:2-6
7. The longing for the divine presence, 17:15 = 16:11 is the same as that of 49:2, cf. *Isaiah 38:11*, although the phrase of the latter and the conception are different.
8. There is a reference to the use of פנים and תמונה of God, 17:15 to *Bamidbar / Numbers 12:8*.

The commentators state that the conception of truthfulness (17:1) and the testing the mind (17:3) show the higher ethical conception of the Persian period. They state proof of this saying the phrase הפלה חסד (*showing of grace*) 17:7 = 4:4, בצל כנפיה, verse 17:8 = 36:8 57:2 63:8, cf. 61:5 91:4 which are all post-exile Psalms, that these references imply the existence of the temple and probably the cherubic throne. The pupil of the eye 17:8 = *Devarim / Deuteronomy 32:10*. The commentators conclude that this psalm must belong to the Persian period subsequent to the restoration and prior to the reform of Ezra, a time of greater peril than that of *Tehillim / Psalms 16*, and later than Zerubabel. The Psalm was originally the prayer of an individual. Editors have generalized and made it into a congregational prayer.

The lips of the psalter which utter the prayer are sincere, entirely truthful. He desires to see a visible manifestation from God that He has vindicated him. *Tehillim / Psalms 17:3* indicates that he has had a personal divine visitation. YHVH has not remained far off on His throne in Heaven, but has come down in spiritual presence to the bed of the psalmist. There is no evil in the mind after the most searching examination. The phrase “My mouth transgresses not” is to show a separation between the mind and the deeds of man, external actions, supplements the previous clause and is still connected with the test by night. It most likely refers to secret utterances, rather than words spoken publicly to other persons. The intent of the psalmist was that his deeds should be according to the world which come forth from the lips of God. Having set forth the righteousness of his mind, as attested to by divine inspection, he now turns to a justification of his conduct. In *Tehillim / Psalms 17:4-6*, the psalmist is saying antithetically, making a contrast between the deeds of those who commit robbery or murder or both, whereas regarding his deeds “My steps hold fast to Your tracks,” those prescribed by God in the Deuteronomic laws. The context suggests the complement of the previous clause, the steps hold fast on the positive side and do not slip from the divine tracks on the other. The Scriptures say that the right hand of God is often the instrument of judgment and blessing, but also the place of safety as in 16:8 and 11. The similarity of *Tehillim / Psalm 16 to 17* indicate that the right hand of God has the same meaning here. *Tehillim / Psalms 17:11-12* describe the actions of the enemies. We have the enemy purposed to encamp in the land and so to besiege the people, a very natural and appropriate progression in the activity of the enemy. “To cast down to the earth” show the acts of the violence of the besieging army ravaging for prey, seizing it with violence, and abusing it without pity.

Rabbinic Commentary

The rabbinic commentary (Midrash) on *Tehillim / Psalms 17* has 14 parts. Reading through this week's Midrash we will be looking at Parts 1, 3, 5, and 14. Let's begin by outlining Midrash *Tehillim Chapter 17 Parts 1, 3, 5, and 14*.

Outline of Midrash Tehillim / Psalms, Chapter 17, Parts 1, 3, 5, and 14

Part 1:

- The Midrash, part 1, opens with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) “*A prayer of David. Hear the right, O Lord, attend unto me cry (Tehillim / Psalms 17:1).*”
- The פתיחתא (Petihta) “*the homiletic introduction*” to the Midrash says “*The words are to be read in the light of the verse ‘the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord (Mishley / Proverbs 15:8)’*”
- The משל (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis speak of Balak and Balaam to explain the sacrifices of the wicked.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the משל (mashal), the rabbis discuss what it is about the sacrifice of the wicked that the Lord does not like.
- The Concluding phrase says “*Wherein do I take delight? In prayer, as the verse goes on to say, The prayer of the upright is His delight (Mishley / Proverbs 15:8).*”

Part 3:

- The Midrash, part 3, opens with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) “*Another comment, The words Let my judgment come forth from Your presence (Tehillim / Psalms 17:2)...*”
- The פתיחתא (Petihta) “*the homiletic introduction*” to the Midrash says “*David spoke to the Holy One blessed be He, there is no one but You who can pardon sin.*”
- The משל (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis provide parables to help understand why the Lord God Almighty is the only one who can pardon sin.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the משל (mashal), the rabbis discuss the forgiveness of sins and the Lord God who is able to do so.
- The Concluding phrase says “*David said to the Holy One blessed be He, Master of the universe, since there is no one other than You, who can pardon, Let my judgment come forth from Your presence.*”

Part 5:

- The Midrash, part 5, opens with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) “*Another comment on Let my judgment come forth from Your presence.*”
- The פתיחתא (Petihta) “*the homiletic introduction*” to the Midrash the rabbis draw a parallel of judgment coming from the presence of God to the Sanhedrin.
- The משל (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the parables given by the rabbis look at judgment of God and deeds of loving kindness that provide merit with regard to the judgment of God.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the משל (mashal), the rabbis discuss the gifts one gives to God, honoring the Lord, and appearing before the Lord in the appointed times.

- The Concluding phrase says “ *Finally, by pleasures in In Your right hand there are pleasures, David was referring to this world; and by for evermore he was referring to the world to come.*”

Part 14:

- The Midrash, part 14, opens with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) “*In another comment the words are read, As for me, I will behold Your presence in loving-kindness, Come and see how great is the strength of loving-kindness!*”
- The פתיחתא (Petihta) “*the homiletic introduction*” to the Midrash says “*Merely because of the one small coin a man gives to the poor, he gets the right to behold the face of the Shekinah.*”
- The משל (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis provide examples of beholding the manifest presence of God.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the משל (mashal), the rabbis discuss how it can be that David beheld the presence of the Lord God Almighty.
- The Concluding phrase says “*Because the wicked live in prosperity in this world, even though they deny the Holy One blessed be He, and vex Him, and because the righteous suffer in this world, even though they are willing to die for the hallowing of the name of their Creator, therefore David said, I will not be of those who vex You, but of those who labor in the Torah of which it is written Justice, justice, will you follow (Devarim / Deuteronomy 16:20). Hence David said, As for me, I will behold Your presence in justice.*”

Midrash Tehillim Part 1 opens (דיבור המתחיל, Dibur Hamathil) on the verse “*A prayer of David. Hear the righteous, O Lord, attend unto me cry (Tehillim / Psalms 17:1).*” The Midrash then states א תפלה (משלי טו ה) [תועבת ה'] (תועבה) רשעים זבח הכתוב זבח רשעים (תועבה) [תועבת ה'] (משלי טו ה) where rabbis say that this verse of David calling out to God to hear the righteous is to be read in light of a verse from Proverbs that speak on the sacrifice of the wicked being an abomination to the Lord. Why is the sacrifice of the wicked an abomination to the Lord? David prays asking the Lord to hear his cry, to be attentive in listening (הקשיבה) and give ear to his prayer, that his prayer is not done so with deceitful (מרמה) lips (שְׁמֵעָה יְהוָה | צִדְקַת הַקְּשִׁיבָה) (מרמה). The Aramaic text states א צלותא לדוד קבל יהוה פגיעתי בעותי בצדקא (רנתי האזינה תפלתי בלא שפתי מרמה). The Aramaic text states א צלותא לדוד קבל יהוה פגיעתי בעותי בצדקא 17:1 A prayer of David. Accept, O Lord, my entreaty; in righteousness hear my praise; you will incline your ear to my prayer, since my lips are without guile. (EMC) and is in agreement with the Hebrew text. David said that in his righteous acts asking the Lord to hear his prayer. Prayer can be a form of worship and praise. Throughout Scripture, especially in the Psalms, prayer is used as a form of worship and praise. How does God regard our worship today? Looking closely at Mishley / Proverbs 15:8, the Scripture says ה 15:8 תִּבְחַר רְשָׁעִים תֹּעֲבַת יְהוָה וְתִפְלַת יְשָׁרִים רְצוֹנוֹ: The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, But the prayer of the upright is His delight. (NASB) Notice how we gain some insight from the verse in Mishley / Proverbs 15:8, sacrificing and prayer are given as two examples of acts of worship. Note that the Hebrew text translates literally as “*the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord and prayer of the upright is His will!*” The sacrifice of the wicked is an “abomination” (תועבת) and the prayer of the righteous is His “Will” (רצון). The wicked person is “*He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, Even his prayer is an abomination.*” (Mishley / Proverbs 28:9, ט) יִמְסִיר אָזְנוֹ מִשְׁמַע תּוֹרָה גַּם-תִּפְלְתוּ תֹעֲבָה: This kind of person does not have a heart for the Lord, note that this is not someone who is specifically a “criminal” by earthly standards, but that it is someone who does not have a heart for the Lord. Accordingly there is no surprise that the Scripture in Mishley / Proverbs 28:9 goes on to say that his prayer is an abomination (תועבת). In Isaiah’s time, the Lord described Israel’s worship saying “*This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have*

יג וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי יְעֹזֵר כִּי נִגְשׁ הָעַם הַזֶּה בְּפִי וּבִשְׁפָתָיו כַּבְּדוּנִי, (*Isaiah 29:13*, removed their heart far from me”) The outward appearance of worship was present, but their hearts were not; they were insincere in coming before God and therefore He would not accept it. In the unrighteous person, God is not glorified in anything he does. The KJV states that even the “*plowing of the wicked, is sin.*” (*Mishley / Proverbs 21:4*). The Hebrew text states רֹמֵם עֵינָיִם וְרַחֲב־לֵב נֵר רְשָׁעִים using the word נֵר meaning lamp or light, so the light of the wicked, their deeds, are sin. That thing that shines forth from the wicked (their light) is nothing but sin. The point is that wicked in their work, teaching, building, all that they do is done without regard to God’s glory and without a sense of dependence upon Him. Those who do not acknowledge their sin, will therefore not look to the Lord God Almighty and His Messiah for salvation. In the midrash the rabbis speak of Balak and Bilaam (Balaam, בְּלַעַם) to explain the sacrifices of the wicked and how the Lord did not respond to their request that was made in the blood of bulls. Their request is made deceitfully for the purpose of harming God’s people. On the other hand, David could in all honesty pray and seek the Lord because his prayer is not done so with deceitful (מְרֻמָּה) lips (שִׁפְתַי מְרֻמָּה) or a deceitful heart. The Lord delights in the prayer of the upright. The Midrash concludes stating “*Wherein do I take delight? In prayer, as the verse goes on to say, The prayer of the upright is His delight (Mishley / Proverbs 15:8).*” The Lord desires to take care of His people, but we must seek Him for our help. Scripture says in *2 Chronicles 7:14-15*, יד וַיִּפְנְעוּ עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר נִקְרָא-שְׁמִי עֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּתְפַּלְלוּ וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ פָנַי וַיִּשְׁבּוּ מִדַּרְכֵיהֶם הָרָעִים וְאֲנִי אֶשְׁמַע מִן-הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶסְלַח וְיִפְנְעוּ עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר נִקְרָא-שְׁמִי עֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּתְפַּלְלוּ וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ פָנַי וַיִּשְׁבּוּ מִדַּרְכֵיהֶם הָרָעִים וְאֲנִי אֶשְׁמַע מִן-הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶסְלַח: *7:14 and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land. 7:15 ‘Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to the prayer offered in this place. (NASB)* What an awesome call and pleading from the Lord for His people to humble themselves, pray, seek His face, and turn for their wicked ways.

Midrash Tehillim 17, Part 3 opens on *Tehillim / Psalms 17:2* “*Another comment, The words Let my judgment come forth from Your presence.*” The פתיחתא (Petihta, “the homiletic introduction” to the Midrash) says “*David spoke to the Holy One blessed be He, there is no one but You who can pardon sin.*” The rabbis say that only God (The Holy One blessed be He) is able to pardon sin (אמר דוד לפני הקב"ה אין) and therefore it is written to let judgment come forth from the Lord. We then read that Rabbi Levi taught on the judgment that comes forth from the Lord and the angel (messenger) of the Lord, let’s read this section of the midrash.

Midrash Tehillim 17, Part 3

Rabbi Levi taught, When the Holy One blessed be He, sent an angel to the children of Israel to go before them, what did He say? Behold, I send an angel before you (Shemot / Exodus 23:20), and then added, Take heed of him, and harken unto his voice; be not rebellious against him; for he will not pardon your transgressions; for My name is in him (Shemot / Exodus 23:21). According to Rabbi Levi, what can My name is in him mean but that every courier angel of the Holy One blessed be He, bears a kind of seal graven in his heart. Thus Scripture, in saying The chariots of God thousands of angels; the Lord is among them (Tehillim / Psalms 68:18), implies that the name of the Holy One blessed be He, is a part of the name of each angel, as in the names of Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, Raphael.

אמר ר' לוי בשעה ששלח הקב"ה מלאך לישראל לילך לפניהם, מה כתיב שם, הנה אנכי שולח מלאך לפניך (שמות כג כ), וכתוב בתריה, השמר מפניו [וגו', כי שמי בקרבן] (שם שם שמות כ"ג כא), אמר ר' לוי מה כי שמי בקרבן, טבלרין של הקב"ה חקוקין על לבן של מלאכים, כמין איסטרטיגוס, הדא הוא דכתיב רכב אלהים רבותים אלפי שנאן ה' במ סיני בקדש (תהלים סח

Here rabbi Levi says that the Lord sends an angel to the children of Israel to go before them referencing *Shemot / Exodus 23:20*, and states that you are to take heed of him and to listen to his voice, and do not be rebellious because he will not pardon your transgressions because the Name of the Lord is in him (*Shemot / Exodus 23:21*). It is interesting that according to the Scriptures, and the rabbis statements here in the midrash, the angel the Lord sends forth before the people is not as forgiving as the Lord God Almighty Himself. The reason that is given is that the angel bears the seal of God upon his heart, and the rabbis state that this is why the word God (אל) is in the name of each of His angels *Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, Raphael* (מיכאל, גבריאל, אוריאל, רפאל). The interesting point is that the angels of heaven do not have the power to forgive sins, only God Himself. This is interesting because in the Apostolic Writings, Yeshua says that “*the Son of Man*” also has the authority on earth to forgive sins. This is different from the angels and suggests for us that the Messiah would come as someone more than simply a messenger of God. This is stated in three of the gospels:

Matthew 9:6 “*But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins -- then He said to the paralytic, “Get up, pick up your bed and go home.” (NASB)* ¹⁰“*ἵνα δὲ εἰδῆτε ὅτι ἐξουσίαν ἔχει ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἀφιέναι ἁμαρτίας τότε λέγει τῷ παραλυτικῷ, Ἐγερθεὶς ἄρον σου τὴν κλίνην καὶ ὑπάγε εἰς τὸν οἶκόν σου.*”

Mark 2:12 “*But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins -- He said to the paralytic, (NASB)* ¹⁰“*ἵνα δὲ εἰδῆτε ὅτι ἐξουσίαν ἔχει ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀφιέναι ἁμαρτίας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς λέγει τῷ παραλυτικῷ,*

Luke 5:24 “*But, so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, -- He said to the paralytic-- “I say to you, get up, and pick up your stretcher and go home.” (NASB)* ²⁴“*ἵνα δὲ εἰδῆτε ὅτι ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐξουσίαν ἔχει ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἀφιέναι ἁμαρτίας εἶπεν τῷ παραλελυμένῳ, Σοὶ λέγω, ἔγειρε καὶ ἄρας τὸ κλινίδιον σου πορεύου εἰς τὸν οἶκόν σου.*”

In addition to this, following the resurrection, Yeshua gives the disciples the Holy Spirit and then he also gives them the power to forgive sins according to *John 20:19-23*.

John 20:19-23

20:19 So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.” 20:20 And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 20:21 So Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” 20:22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. 20:23 “If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.” (NASB)

¹⁹Οὔσης οὖν ὀψίας τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ τῇ μιᾷ σαββάτων, καὶ τῶν θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων ὅπου ἦσαν οἱ μαθηταὶ διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων, ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἔστη εἰς τὸ μέσον καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς, Εἰρήνη ὑμῖν. ²⁰καὶ τοῦτο εἰπὼν ἔδειξεν τὰς χεῖρας καὶ τὴν πλευρὰν αὐτοῖς. ἐχάρησαν οὖν οἱ μαθηταὶ ἰδόντες τὸν κύριον. ²¹εἶπεν οὖν αὐτοῖς [ὁ Ἰησοῦς] πάλιν, Εἰρήνη ὑμῖν: καθὼς

ἀπέσταλκέν με ὁ πατήρ, καὶ γὰρ πέμπω ὑμᾶς. ²²καὶ τοῦτο εἰπὼν ἐνεφύσησεν καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς, Λάβετε πνεῦμα ἅγιον: ²³ἂν τινῶν ἀφήτε τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἀφέωνται αὐτοῖς, ἂν τινῶν κρατῆτε κεκράτηνται.

If only God can forgive sins and we read that Yeshua has the ability to forgive sins, how are we to understand the meaning of the Scriptures when Yeshua says to the disciples that “*If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained?*” How are we to understand this verse? According to the Tanach, the Lord God carries out three specific functions that only He is able to do.

1. He forgives sins (many references).
2. He heals diseases (*Bamidbar / Numbers 12:9-15, Devarim / Deuteronomy 24:8-9*).
3. **Tehillim / Psalms 103:2-5** “*Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the Pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good as long as you live so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.*” ג הסליח לְכָל-עֲוֹנוֹתַי הִרְפָּא לְכָל-תַּחֲלָאִיָּכִי: ד הגואל מִשַּׁחַת חַיִּיָּכִי הַמְעַטְרָכִי חֶסֶד וְרַחֲמִים: ה הַמְשַׁבֵּיעַ בְּטוֹב עֲדָנָי תַּתְחַדֵּשׁ פְּנֵיָי נְעוּרָיָי: **Isaiah 43:25** “*I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.*” כה אָנֹכִי אָנֹכִי הוּא מַחֵה פְשָׁעַיִךְ לְמַעַנִּי וְחַטֹּאתֶיךָ לֹא אֶזְכֹּר: **Micah 7:18-19** “*Who is a God like thee, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger for ever because he delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion upon us, he will tread our iniquities under foot.*” יח מִי־אֵל כַּמֹּד נִשְׂא עֶוֹן וְעֵבֵר עַל-פְּשָׁע לְשֹׂאֲרֵית נִחְלָתוֹ לֹא-יִחַדֵּיק לְעַד אִפּוֹ כִּי-יִפְּץ חֶסֶד: הוּא: יט יָשׁוּב יִרְחַמֵּנוּ יִכַּבֵּשׁ עֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ וְתִשְׁלִיךְ בְּמַצְלוֹת יָם כָּל-חַטֹּאוֹתֵם: **1 Kings 8:39** “*then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and act, and render to each whose heart thou knowest, according to all his ways (for thou, thou ONLY, knowest the hearts of all the children of men);*” לט וְאִתָּה תִשְׁמַע הַשָּׁמַיִם מְכוֹן שְׁבִתְךָ וְסִלְחַת וְעִשִׂיתָ: וְנָתַתָּ לְאִישׁ כְּכֹל-דְרָכָיו אֲשֶׁר תַּדַּע אֶת-לִבָּבוֹ כִּי-אִתָּה יִדְעֶתָ לְבַדְּךָ אֶת-לִבָּב כָּל-בְּנֵי הָאָדָם:

The three functions only the He is able to do is to forgive sins, heal diseases, and know the hearts of men. When the disciples were given the Holy Spirit of God, they were able to go forth and heal in Yeshua’s name and to forgive sins. They did not know the thoughts of the hearts of men. On the other hand, Yeshua, according to the gospels, knew the heart of man (see *Matthew 9:4, Luke 6:8, and John 2:24*). In addition to this, at Yeshua’s birth, he was given his name “Yeshua” because he would save his people from their sins according to the angel sent from the Lord in *Matthew 1:18-23*. This explains why his Apostles went around teaching that Yeshua is the One who enables Israel to repent and personally forgives the nation of their sins:

- **Acts 3:26** ‘*For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways.*’ (NASB) ²⁶ὁ θεὸς τὸν παῖδα αὐτοῦ ἀπέστειλεν αὐτὸν εὐλογοῦντα ὑμᾶς ἐν τῷ ἀποστρέφειν ἕκαστον ἀπὸ τῶν πονηριῶν ὑμῶν.
- **Acts 5:29** *But Peter and the apostles answered, ‘We must obey God rather than men.*
- **5:30** *The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. 5:31 ‘He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. 5:32 ‘And we are witnesses of these*

things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.’ (NASB)
²⁹ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ Πέτρος καὶ οἱ ἀπόστολοι εἶπαν, Πειθαρχεῖν δεῖ θεῷ μᾶλλον ἢ ἀνθρώποις.
³⁰ὁ θεὸς τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν ἤγειρεν Ἰησοῦν, ὃν ὑμεῖς διεχειρίσασθε κρεμάσαντες ἐπὶ ξύλου:
³¹τοῦτον ὁ θεὸς ἀρχηγὸν καὶ σωτῆρα ὑψωσεν τῇ δεξιᾷ αὐτοῦ, [τοῦ] δοῦναι μετάνοιαν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν. ³²καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐσμεν μάρτυρες τῶν ῥημάτων τούτων, καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ὃ ἔδωκεν ὁ θεὸς τοῖς πειθαρχοῦσιν αὐτῷ.

- **Acts 26:15** ‘And I said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. 26:16 ‘But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; 26:17 rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, 26:18 to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.’ (NASB) ¹⁵ἐγὼ δὲ εἶπα, Τίς εἶ, κύριε; ὁ δὲ κύριος εἶπεν, Ἐγὼ εἰμι Ἰησοῦς ὃν σὺ διώκεις. ¹⁶ἀλλὰ ἀνάστηθι καὶ στῆθι ἐπὶ τοὺς πόδας σου: εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ ὤφθην σοι, προχειρίσασθαι σε ὑπρέτην καὶ μάρτυρα ὧν τε εἶδές [με] ὧν τε ὀφθήσομαί σοι, ¹⁷ἐξαιρούμενός σε ἐκ τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἐθνῶν, εἰς οὓς ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω σε ¹⁸ἀνοίξαι ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν, τοῦ ἐπιστρέψαι ἀπὸ σκοτόντος εἰς φῶς καὶ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ Σατανᾶ ἐπὶ τὸν θεόν, τοῦ λαβεῖν αὐτοὺς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν καὶ κληρὸν ἐν τοῖς ἡγιασμένοις πίστει τῇ εἰς ἐμέ.

Based on the teaching of the disciples from the book of Acts, Yeshua has the ability to forgive sins and he has come to personally save his own from their iniquities. In other words, Yeshua does not merely pardon a person from his or her sins but actually grants forgiveness by saving sinners through his death and subsequent resurrection. According to the rabbis in *Midrash Tehillim 17, Part 3*, only God can forgive sins on earth. According to the Scriptures, the Lord God Almighty provides for each and every one of us His Word, that took bodily form to make atonement for sins on our behalf. The Midrash concludes saying that “*David said to the Holy One blessed be He, Master of the universe, since there is no one other than You, who can pardon, Let my judgment come forth from Your presence.*” Forgiveness, mercies, grace, love, all of these things are the very nature of God Himself, He is the perfect judge, a loving and merciful God, rightly so David asks that judgment come forth from His presence.

In *Midrash Tehillim 17, Part 5*, the rabbis continue on the topic of judgment coming forth from the Lord stating in the *דיבור המתהיל* (Dibur Hamathil) “*Another comment on Let my judgment come forth from Your presence.*” In part 5 of the midrash, the rabbis draw a parallel of judgment coming from the presence of God to the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin (סַנְהֶדְרִין) is the highest court of ancient Israel during the Second Temple Period that ruled on administrative, judicial, and religious issues. The word Sanhedrin means “*sitting together*” and therefore is derived the meaning of “*assembly*” or “*council.*” The assembly of the Sanhedrin consisted of twenty to twenty three men appointed in every city in the land of Israel. In *Mishnah Sanhedrin 1:1*, the number 23 is derived from the exegesis of *Bamidbar / Numbers 35:24-25*, the minimum size for a community is 10 men which is derived from *Bamidbar / Numbers 14:27* for the 10 spies sent into the Promised Land. The great Sanhedrin consisted of a leader called the Nasi, sometimes this position was held by the Kohen HaGadol (High Priest), a chief justice (Av Beit Din), and sixty nine general members. During the second Temple period, the Great Sanhedrin met in the Hall of Hewn Stones in the Temple in Jerusalem. The court convened every day except on the moedim and during Shabbat. The Sanhedrin is mentioned in the Apostolic Writings (in the gospels) in relation to the trial of Yeshua and in the Acts of the Apostle on the death of Stephen.

The *Talmud Bavli, tractate Sanhedrin*, identifies two classes of rabbinic courts called the Sanhedrin,

the Great Sanhedrin (בית דין הגדול) and the Lesser Sanhedrin (בית דין הקטן). Each city in Israel could have its own lesser Sanhedrin of 23 judges, but there could be only one Great Sanhedrin of 71, which among other roles acted as the Supreme Court, taking appeals from cases decided by lesser courts. The numbers of judges were predicated on eliminating the possibility of a tie and the last to cast their vote was the head of the court. By the end of the Second Temple period, the Sanhedrin reached its pinnacle of importance, legislating all aspects of Jewish religious and political life within the parameters laid down by Biblical and Rabbinic tradition. After the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, the Sanhedrin was re-established in Yavneh with reduced authority. The imperial Roman government and legislation recognized it as the Palestinian Patriarchate, the ultimate authority in Jewish religious matters. The seat of the Patriarchate moved to Usha under the presidency of Gamaliel II in 80 CE. In 116 it moved back to Yavneh, and then again back to Usha. It moved in 140 to Shefaram under the presidency of Shimon ben Gamliel II, and to Beit Shearim and Sephoris in 163, under the presidency of Judah I. Finally, it moved to Tiberias in 193, under the presidency of Gamaliel III (193–230) ben Judah haNasi, where it became more of a consistory, but still retained, under the presidency of Judah II (230–270), the power of excommunication.

In *Midrash Tehillim 17, Part 5*, the rabbis say “*And David answered, Master of the universe, You did write in Your Torah, you will take no gift (Shemot / Exodus 23:8), and the members of the Sanhedrin are afraid to take a gift from me and then pass judgment on me. But as for You, it is Your will to take a gift, and then to Let my judgment come forth from Your presence. And the proof that the Holy One blessed be He takes a gift? The verse He takes a gift out of the bosom of a wicked man to pervert the ways of judgment (Mishley / Proverbs 17:23). And what are the gifts that God takes from the wicked in this world? Repentance, prayer, and charity. Hence, David said, Let my judgment come forth from Your presence.*” (אמר ליה) דוד רבונו של עולם כתבת בתורתך ושוחד לא תקח (שמות כג ח), והן מתיראין ממני ליקח שוחד ולדונני, אבל אתה רצונך שתקח שוחד מלפניך משפטי יצא, ומנין שהקב"ה לוקח שוחד, [שנאמר] ושוחד מחיק רשע יקח (משלי A discussion proceeds that the Sanhedrin does not receive gifts because of the possibility of bribery, whereas the Lord God in heaven receives the gifts of “*Repentance, Prayer, and Charity (Righteous deeds).*” Are these three things considered bribes for the Lord to rule in one way or another? Is Ma’aseh HaTorah (מעשה התורה) “*works of the Torah/Law*” a form of bribery for God? The conclusion of part 5 of the midrash states “*Another comment, By path of life in You show me the path of life, David meant the Torah, A tree of life to them that lay hold upon her (Mishley / Proverbs 3:18); by fullness of joy David meant the text of Scripture, the Mishnah, the Talmud, the traditional laws, moral lessons, subtle interpretation of Biblical laws, and the subtleties of rabbinic enactments. Nay more! You also make Your presence to shine upon me, as is said In Your presence, Finally, by pleasures in In Your right hand there are pleasures, David was referring to this world; and by for evermore he was referring to the world to come.*” The rabbis say that David meant by “*the paths of life*” he was referring to the Scriptures, the Mishnah, the Talmud, the Traditions, Moral lessons, Interpretations of the Biblical laws, and rabbinic enactments, are the pathway to life. Looking at these statements, we don’t always agree upon all of the rabbinic rulings, but the important point to take away is living in obedience to God’s Word (the Scriptures) is the path of life and peace before God. This is why we read the rabbis saying the Torah is the path of life, the Scriptures truly are a way of life for us! The Mishnah, the Talmud, the traditions, interpretations, enactments, etc all are part of the rabbinic way of living out the word of God in Judaism. The most important thing to remember is while living out Scripture in our lives, we do so to honor God in His word, not as a form of bribery or working of merit for justification, but being obedient to His word as the children of God and a Holy People (note *1 Samuel 15:22*).

Midrash Tehillim 17, Part 14 opens with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying “*In another comment the words are read, As for me, I will behold Your presence in loving-kindness, Come and see how great is the strength of loving-kindness!*” And the homiletic introduction to the Midrash (פתיחתא, Petihta)

states “Merely because of the one small coin a man gives to the poor, he gets the right to behold the face of the Shekinah.” How does giving a small coin to the poor give one the right to behold the face of the manifest presence of God (Shekinah)? Two scriptures from *Mark 12:41-44* and *Luke 21:1-4* may shed some light on this question.

Mark 12:41-44

12:41 And He sat down opposite the treasury, and began observing how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. 12:42 A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. 12:43 Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, ‘Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; 12:44 for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on.’ (NASB)

⁴¹Καὶ καθίσας κατέναντι τοῦ γαζοφυλακίου ἐθεώρει πῶς ὁ ὄχλος βάλλει χαλκὸν εἰς τὸ γαζοφυλάκιον· καὶ πολλοὶ πλούσιοι ἔβαλλον πολλά· ⁴²καὶ ἐλθοῦσα μία χήρα πτωχὴ ἔβαλεν λεπτὰ δύο, ὃ ἐστὶν κοδράντης. ⁴³καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἡ χήρα αὕτη ἢ πτωχὴ πλεῖον πάντων ἔβαλεν τῶν βαλλόντων εἰς τὸ γαζοφυλάκιον· ⁴⁴πάντες γὰρ ἐκ τοῦ περισσεύοντος αὐτοῖς ἔβαλον, αὕτη δὲ ἐκ τῆς ὑστερήσεως αὐτῆς πάντα ὅσα εἶχεν ἔβαλεν, ὅλον τὸν βίον αὐτῆς.

Luke 21:1-4

21:1 And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. 21:2 And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins. 21:3 And He said, ‘Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; 21:4 for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on.’ (NASB)

¹Ἀναβλέψας δὲ εἶδεν τοὺς βάλλοντας εἰς τὸ γαζοφυλάκιον τὰ δῶρα αὐτῶν πλουσίους. ²εἶδεν δὲ τινα χήραν πενιχρὰν βάλλουσαν ἐκεῖ λεπτὰ δύο, ³καὶ εἶπεν, Ἀληθῶς λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἡ χήρα αὕτη ἢ πτωχὴ πλεῖον πάντων ἔβαλεν· ⁴πάντες γὰρ οὗτοι ἐκ τοῦ περισσεύοντος αὐτοῖς ἔβαλον εἰς τὰ δῶρα, αὕτη δὲ ἐκ τοῦ ὑστερήματος αὐτῆς πάντα τὸν βίον ὃν εἶχεν ἔβαλεν.

Here in the Gospel of Mark and Luke, the Greek word γαζοφυλάκιον is used that is translated as “treasury” in the NASB translation. The definition for the word γαζοφυλάκιον is as follows “(1) a repository of treasure, especially of public treasure, a treasury It is used to describe the apartments constructed in the courts of the temple, in which the not only the sacred offerings and things needful for the service were kept, but in which the priests, etc, dwelt: Neh. 13:7; of the sacred treasury in which not only treasure but also public records were stored, and the property of widows and orphans was deposited. Josephus speaks of treasuries in the women’s court of Herod’s temple. In the N.T. near the treasury seems to used of that receptacle mentioned by the rabbis to which were fitted thirteen chests or boxes, i.e. trumpets, so called from their shape, and into which were put the contributions made voluntarily or paid yearly by the Jews for the service of the temple and the support of the poor.” Here the word “treasury” seems to be a receptacle that was used to collect money from the people (the tithe of 10% as defined in the Torah) the purpose was that it is the responsibility of the people, according to the Torah, to help others financially and to place the money into the hands of the priesthood for the support of the priests and for assisting the poor of the land. The woman according to the text is described as a “poor widow” meaning that she was a working woman who made her living by herself having lost her husband. According to the Gospels She was not wealthy having only two copper coins and yet Yeshua describes her small gift as greater than all the monies given by those who had

more wealth and gave more in terms of quality and appearance of their gift rather than from their heart. The Midrash (פתיחתא, Petihta) states “*Merely because of the one small coin a man gives to the poor, he gets the right to behold the face of the Shekinah.*” Because the poor woman gave out of her poverty, she gave with greater faith than those who give out of wealth. The Scriptures say that “*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 6:24)* The giving of the gift by the poor woman was not only a gift of finances but a gift of herself, of her time and effort to the Lord. According to *Matthew 5:8*, Yeshua said μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῆ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται. 5:8 *‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* (NASB) (ה אֲשֶׁרִי בָרִי לְכַבּ פִּי־הֵם יִחְזוּ אֶת־הַאֱלֹהִים:) In these Scriptures, Yeshua is saying that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness will be satisfied, the Lord God is the One who brings satisfaction. Those who are pure in heart will see God. Inner purity is the place from which righteous deeds flow. *Tehillim / Psalms 24:3-5* states ג מִי־יַעֲלֶה בְּהַר יְהוָה וּמִי־יָקוּם בְּמִקְוֹם קִדְשׁוֹ: ד נְקִי כַפָּיִם וּבֵר לְכַבּ אֲזָשָׁר 24:3 *Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who may stand in His holy place? 24:4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood And has not sworn deceitfully. 24:5 He shall receive a blessing from the Lord And righteousness from the God of his salvation.* (NASB) The purity of the heart and the reward of a pure heart is the thirst and hunger for more and more of the righteousness of God. Because of this woman’s righteous act, giving all that she had, two copper coins into the treasury, her gift was greater than all the rest because what she did was from a pure heart. The Rabbis saying in the Midrash that one small coin a man gives to the poor gives him the right to behold the face of the Shekinah, they must have been thinking on the poor who give from their poverty because of the purity and righteousness of their heart and motivation to do so because of God’s command. (Think on this when observing the mitzvot!) The pure heart involves the inward commitment to seek the Lord God Almighty, this is how giving to the poor one small coin enables one to see the Shekinah glory of God. According to Yeshua in *Matthew 5:8*, the blessedness of the person who has a pure heart is that they will see God. Studying the Scripture we know that God is a spirit and therefore invisible to the eyes of men (*John 1:18, 4:24, Colossians 1:15, 1 Timothy 1:17*). In Parashat Ki Tisa, the Lord instructed Moshe that he cannot see His face for no man can see God and live (*Shemot / Exodus 33:20*). In parashat Yitro (*Shemot / Exodus 24:9-10*) the Scriptures say that Moshe, Aharon, Nadav and Avihu, and the seventy elders of Israel saw the God of Israel. And in *Tehillim / Psalms 17:15* it says אֲנִי בְּצַדִּיק אֶחְיֶה פָּנֶיךָ אֶשְׁבָּעָה בְּהַקִּיץ תִּמְוַנְנֶה: טו 17:15 *As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake.* (NASB) Seeing God and beholding His face are all connected to the purity of heart and the righteousness things that we do in the innocence and purity of heart before God. The blessedness that is attached to righteousness and the purity of heart is that a person will come to know God (to see Him) perfectly and completely. The concluding phrase of part 14 of the midrash says “*Because the wicked live in prosperity in this world, even though they deny the Holy One blessed be He, and vex Him, and because the righteous suffer in this world, even though they are willing to die for the hallowing of the name of their Creator, therefore David said, I will not be of those who vex You, but of those who labor in the Torah of which it is written Justice, justice, will you follow (Devarim / Deuteronomy 16:20). Hence David said, As for me, I will behold Your presence in justice.*” David concludes with beholding the Lord (His presence) in justice, that is derived from the same word צדק for righteousness. The Lord revealed His righteousness and justice in bringing His son to bear our sins. This is the revelation of the Father on Heaven, that His Son Yeshua died and rose again so that we too will have the power to live in righteousness and justice before Him, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Praise the Lord what a wonderful God we serve! Let’s pray!

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for helping us to understand that it is only by Your great salvation, Your Mercy, and Your Grace that we are able to stand before you! David concludes saying *“You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.”* Truly there is joy and peace in Your presence. Standing in You and in Your Son Yeshua we are made righteous and will not be moved. We thank you Lord for sending us Your Son Yeshua who paid the covenant price for the forgiveness of our sins. We believe that in Your Son Yeshua, we have a firm foundation, we are unmovable, and have the hope of eternal life. Help us to trust in You Lord as we wait patiently for You and Your presence each day. We believe in the Righteous work Yeshua did in His life and upon the cross to make atonement for our sins. Help us to live and dedicated our lives to You, fill us with Your presence Lord and thank You for revealing these truths to our hearts. 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!

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