

ספר תהילים לו | Tehillim / Psalms 36

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Seeking God with Faith and Confidence

This week's study is from *Tehillim / Psalms 36:1-12*, can be divided into two major sections, part one describes the wicked and part 2 describes the character of God and the righteous who seek the Lord. The opening verses state: *For the choir director. A Psalm of David the servant of the Lord. 36:1 Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart; There is no fear of God before his eyes. (NASB)* According to David, transgression (פֶשַׁע) speaks to the heart of the ungodly that results in the ungodly not having the fear of God. Transgression continues to speak saying: *36:2 For it flatters him in his own eyes Concerning the discovery of his iniquity and the hatred of it. 36:3 The words of his mouth are wickedness and deceit; He has ceased to be wise and to do good. (NASB)* Notice how the ungodly, when their sin is found out, he does not find shame but is flattered. His response is more ungodliness and deceit. David says this kind of person: *36:4 He plans wickedness upon his bed; He sets himself on a path that is not good; He does not despise evil. (NASB)* The wicked have sin constantly upon their minds to do evil and not good. Having described the ungodly, David says: *36:5 Your lovingkindness, O Lord, extends to the heavens, Your faithfulness reaches to the skies. 36:6 Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; Your judgments are like a great deep. O Lord, You preserve man and beast. (NASB)* The Lord's grace extends to the heavens and David describes the grace of God saying: *36:7 How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings. 36:8 They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house; And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights. 36:9 For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light. (NASB)* David concludes his Psalm saying: *36:10 O continue Your lovingkindness to those who know You, And Your righteousness to the upright in heart. 36:11 Let not the foot of pride come upon me, And let not the hand of the wicked drive me away. 36:12 There the doers of iniquity have fallen; They have been thrust down and cannot rise. (NASB)* In this Psalm, David singles out pride as the sin of the ungodly who do not fear the Lord.

עברית Hebrew	ארמי Aramaic	ελληνικός Greek
<p>ספר תהלים פרק לו</p> <p>א לַמְנַצֵּחַ לְעֶבֶד-יְהוָה לְדָוִד: ב נְאֻם-פֶשַׁע לְרָשָׁע בְּקֶרֶב לִבִּי אִין-פִּתְחַד אֱלֹהִים לִנְגַד עֵינָיו: ג כִּי-הִתְחַלֵּק אֱלֹיו בְּעֵינָיו לְמַצָּא עֲוֹנוֹ לְשֹׂנְאֵ: ד דְּבַר־יִפְיוֹ אֲוֹן וּמְרָמָה חֲדָל לְהִשְׁפִּיל לְהִיטִיב: ה יְהוּיִן הֵיךְ מוֹזָא קִדָּם זַעֲפָא וּמְלֹאכָא דִיהוּה דְחִי:</p>	<p>ספר טוביה פרק לו</p> <p>א לשבחא לעבדא דיהוה לדוד: ב אמר מרדא לחייבא במציעות לבבי לית דחלתא דיהוה לקביל עינוי: ג ארום שעיע ליה בעינוי למשכח חובין למיסני אולפנא: ד מילי פומיה רישעא ונכילו פסק למשכל לאוטבא: ה רישעא חשיל חשיב על שיוויה יתעתד על אורח דלא טב ביש לא ירחק:</p>	<p>ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 36</p> <p>36:1 εις τὸ τέλος τῷ δούλῳ κυρίου τῷ δαυὶδ (2) φησὶν ὁ παράνομος τοῦ ἀμαρτάνειν ἐν ἑαυτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν φόβος θεοῦ ἀπέναντι τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτοῦ 36:2 ὅτι ἐδόλωσεν ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ τοῦ εὐρεῖν τὴν ἀνομίαν αὐτοῦ καὶ μισῆσαι 36:3 τὰ ῥήματα τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ ἀνομία καὶ δόλος οὐκ ἐβουλήθη συνιέναι τοῦ ἀγαθῶν 36:4 ἀνομίαν διελογίσαστο ἐπὶ τῆς κοίτης αὐτοῦ παρέστη πάση ὁδῷ οὐκ ἀγαθῇ τῇ δὲ κακίᾳ οὐ προσώχθισεν</p>

ה אָוֹן | יִחַשְׁבַּע עַל-מִשְׁכָּבוֹ? תִּיַצֵּב עַל-
 דְּרָךְ לֹא-טוֹב רָע לֹא יִמָּאָס׃ ו יְהִינָה
 בְּהַשְׁמִימִים חֲסִדְךָ אֲמוֹנָתְךָ עַד-שְׁחָקִים׃ ז
 צְדָקָתְךָ | כְּהַרְרֵי-אֵל מִשְׁפָּטָה תַּהוֹם רַבָּה
 אָדָם וּבְהִמָּה תוֹשִׁיעַ יְהוָה׃ ח מֵה-יִקָּר
 חֲסִדְךָ אֱלֹהִים וּבְנֵי אָדָם בְּצַל כְּנָפֶיךָ יִחַ-
 סִיּוֹן׃ ט יְרַוְּנוּ מִדְּשֵׁן בֵּיתְךָ וְנַחֵל עֲדֻנְיֶיךָ
 תִּשְׁקָם׃ י כִּי-עָמְדָה מְקוֹר חַיִּים בְּאֹרֶךְ
 נְרָאָה-אוֹר׃ יא מִשֶׁף חֲסִדְךָ לִידְעֶיךָ
 וְצִדְקָתְךָ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל׃ יב אֶל-תְּבוֹאֲנֵי
 רַגְלִי גִאָוָה וְיַד-רְשָׁעִים אֶל-תִּגְדְּנִי׃ יג
 שָׁם נָפְלוּ פְעָלַי אָוֹן דָּחוּ וְלֹא-יָקְלוּ קוּמ׃

Tehillim / Psalms 36

For the choir director. A Psalm of David the servant of the Lord. 36:1 Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart; There is no fear of God before his eyes. 36:2 For it flatters him in his own eyes Concerning the discovery of his iniquity and the hatred of it. 36:3 The words of his mouth are wickedness and deceit; He has ceased to be wise and to do good. 36:4 He plans wickedness upon his bed; He sets himself on a path that is not good; He does not despise evil. 36:5 Your lovingkindness, O Lord, extends to the heavens, Your faithfulness reaches to the skies. 36:6 Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; Your judgments are like a great deep. O Lord, You preserve man and beast. 36:7 How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings. 36:8 They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house; And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights. 36:9 For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light. 36:10 O continue Your lovingkindness to those who know You, And Your righteousness to the upright in heart. 36:11 Let not the foot of pride come upon me, And let not the hand of the wicked drive me away. 36:12 There the doers of iniquity have fallen; They have been thrust down and cannot rise. (NASB)

ו יהוה בשמי שמיא טובך הימנותך עד
 שחקי׃ ז צדקתך אלהא רמא היך טוריאי
 תקיפאי דינך עמיקין היך תהומא רבא בני
 נשא ובעירא תפרוק יהוה׃ ח כמה יקר
 יקיר טובך יהוה ובני נשא בטלל שכינתך
 ישׁ{ו}רון לרוחצן׃ ט יתרוויון מדהן בר-
 כתא דביתך ומבוע בסימותך תשקינן׃ י
 ארום עמך טיפי טופי מיין חיון בזיו בדיל
 נהור יקרך נחמי נהורא אורה׃ יא נגוד
 טובך על ידעך וצדקתך על תריצי ליבא׃
 יב לא תאירעינני ריגלא דגיוותנא וידיהון
 דרשיעיא לא תטלטלנני תטלטל יתי׃ יג
 תמן נפלו עבדי שקר ידחיון ולא יוסיפון
 למיקם׃

Toviyah / Psalms Chapter 36

36:1 For praise. Of the servant of the Lord, David. 36:2 Rebellion said to the sinner within my heart, "There is no fear of the Lord before his eyes." 36:3 Because he flatters him with his eyes to find sins, to hate instruction. 36:4 The words of his mouth are wickedness and deceit; he has ceased to be wise in doing good. 36:5 Wickedness plots on his bed; he will take his stand in a way not good; he will not reject evil. 36:6 O Lord, your goodness is in the heaven of heavens, your faithfulness reaches to the skies. 36:7 Your righteousness is as high as the great mountains; your judgments are as deep as the great abyss; you will redeem both the sons of men and beasts, O Lord. 36:8 How precious is your goodness, O Lord; and the sons of men will dwell securely in the shadow of your presence. 36:9 They will drink deeply of the plenteous blessings of your house; and you will let them drink of your pleasant fountain. 36:10 For with you are streams of living water; in the splendor of your glory we will see light. 36:11 Extend your goodness over those who know you; and your generosity over the upright of heart. 36:12 May the foot of the proud not reach me; and may the hands of the wicked not make me wander. 36:13 There fell those who commit falsehood; they will be struck down, and will not rise again. (EMC)

36:5 κύριε ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ τὸ ἔλεός σου καὶ ἡ ἀλήθειά σου ἕως τῶν νεφελῶν 36:6 ἡ δικαιοσύνη σου ὡσεὶ ὄρη θεοῦ τὰ κρίματά σου ἄβυσσος πολλῆ ἀνθρώπους καὶ κτήνη σώσεις κύριε 36:7 ὡς ἐπλήθυνας τὸ ἔλεός σου ὁ θεός οἱ δὲ υἱοὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐν σκέπη τῶν πτερύγων σου ἐλπιοῦσιν 36:8 μεθυσθήσονται ἀπὸ πλότητος τοῦ οἴκου σου καὶ τὸν χειμάρρουν τῆς τρυφῆς σου ποτιεῖς αὐτούς 36:9 ὅτι παρὰ σοὶ πηγὴ ζωῆς ἐν τῷ φωτί σου ὀψόμεθα φῶς 36:10 παράτεινον τὸ ἔλεός σου τοῖς γινώσκουσίν σε καὶ τὴν δικαιοσύνην σου τοῖς εὐθέσι τῇ καρδίᾳ 36:11 μὴ ἐλθέτω μοι πούς ὑπερηφανίας καὶ χεῖρ ἁμαρτωλῶν μὴ σαλεύσαι με 36:12 ἐκεῖ ἔπεσον οἱ ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν ἐξώσθησαν καὶ οὐ μὴ δύνωνται στήναι

Psalmoi / Psalms 36

For the end, by David the servant of the Lord. 36:1 The transgressor, that he may sin, says within himself, that there is no fear of God before his eyes. 36:2 For he has dealt craftily before him, to discover his iniquity and hate it. 36:3 The words of his mouth are transgression and deceit: he is not inclined to understand how to do good. 36:4 He devises iniquity on his bed; he gives himself to every evil way; and does not abhor evil. 36:5 O Lord, thy mercy is in the heaven; and thy truth reaches to the clouds. 36:6 Thy righteousness is as the mountains of God, thy judgments are as a great deep: O Lord, thou wilt preserve men and beasts. 36:7 How hast thou multiplied thy mercy, O God! so the children of men shall trust in the shelter of thy wings. 36:8 They shall be fully satisfied with the fatness of thine house; and thou shalt cause them to drink of the full stream of thy delights. 36:9 For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light we shall see light. 36:10 Extend thy mercy to them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart. 36:11 Let not the foot of pride come against me, and let not the hand of sinners move me. 36:12 There have all the workers of iniquity fallen: they are cast out, and shall not be able to stand. (LXX)

In this week's study from *Tehillim / Psalms 36:1-12*, David opens by describing the ungodly, the wicked man, and sin saying, **א לִמְנִיצָה לְעֶבֶד-יְהוָה לְיָוֹד׃ ב נְאֻם-פֶּשַׁע לְרָשָׁע בְּקִרְבִּי לְבִי אֵין-פֶּחַד אֱלֹהִים לְנַגֵּד** *For the choir director. A Psalm of David the servant of the Lord. 36:1 Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart; There is no fear of God before his eyes. (NASB)* According to David, transgression (**פֶּשַׁע**) speaks to the heart of the ungodly that results in the ungodly not having a fear of God. Notice how the Hebrew text is written, the Scripture states **נְאֻם-פֶּשַׁע לְרָשָׁע בְּקִרְבִּי לְבִי**, David uses the word **Pesha (פֶּשַׁע)**

to describe “*fear or fearfulness*” and that this Pesha (transgression) makes a declaration (נִאָם) to the wicked (לְרָשָׁע) in the nearness of his heart (בְּקִרְבֵי לִבִּי). Do you see the significance of this statement that David is making by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit? He is saying that sin speaks in the nearness of one’s heart. The root word for “*near*” is *krv* (קרב) refers to “*nearness*” or “*intimacy*” and this is the word in Hebrew that gives us the word *korban* (קרבן, sacrifice). A *korban* (sacrifice) is the means by which one draws near to the Lord. It is within this sense that sin draws near to ones heart, speaking to the ungodly to not fear the Lord. This reminds us of Parashat Bereshit that states in *Bereshit / Genesis 4:7*, וְהָלֹא אִם-תִּיטִיב שְׂאֵת, ז : וְאִם לֹא תִיטִיב לְפֶתַח הַטָּאָת רִבֵּץ וְאֵלֶיךָ תִּשְׁוֹקֶתוּ וְאַתָּה תִּמְשָׁל-בּוֹ: *“If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.” (NIV)* In the story of Cain and Abel found in Parashat Bereshit, the sons of Adam and Eve (see *Bereshit / Genesis 4*), we read that Abel was a shepherd and Cain was a farmer, and that there came a day when they made an offering to the Lord. According to the narrative, Abel’s offering was accepted and Cain’s was rejected. As Cain sat there, angry and depressed, the Lord appeared to him and asked him, “*Why are you angry and depressed? For if you do well you will not be so.*” He then gave Cain a warning, saying, “*If you do not do well, sin is crouching at your door; and its desire is to master you, but you must master it.*” Cain didn’t listen to the Lord, this is obvious since he did not bring a sacrifice of blood (*he gave produce from the land instead*) and so he did not listen to the word of the Lord in this instance regarding sin. The sin of anger mastered him, and he killed his brother. The Scriptures say that if we do not do what is right, sin is crouching at our door, and if we sit and dwell upon the things that we do not do right, sin is literally crouching at the door waiting to take more from our lives. Note also that when we are close to someone we say that they are our “*nearest and dearest,*” which is a phrase that usually denotes one’s family and friends. This terminology of intimacy is not out of place in David’s discussion of the intimacy experienced in the life of the wicked and sin (transgression). The interesting fact is that we are called to draw “*near*” to God, and there appears to always be something that is fighting to take first place in our lives as a substitute for the Lord.

The Aramaic Targum and the Septuagint say the following:

Aramaic Targum

Tehillim / Psalms 36:1-2

36:1 For praise. Of the servant of the Lord, David. 36:2 Rebellion said to the sinner within my heart, “There is no fear of the Lord before his eyes.” (EMC)

א לשבחא לעבדא דיהוה לדוד: ב אמר מרדא לחייבא במציעות לבבי לית דחלתא דיהוה לקביל עינוי:

Septuagint

Tehillim / Psalms 36:1

For the end, by David the servant of the Lord. 36:1 The transgressor, that he may sin, says within himself, that there is no fear of God before his eyes. (LXX)

36:1 εἰς τὸ τέλος τῷ δούλῳ κυρίου τῷ δαυὶδ (2) φησὶν ὁ παράνομος τοῦ ἁμαρτάνειν ἐν ἑαυτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν φόβος θεοῦ ἀπέναντι τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτοῦ

The rabbis translate David’s words saying מרדא לחייבא במציעות לבבי that “*Rebellion said to the guilty in the middle of his heart,*” translating very similar to the Psalm. The act of rebellion speaks to the guilty to not fear the Lord. The Septuagint states that “*The transgressor*” himself speaks to his heart and says

to himself that he can sin because “there is no higher authority whereby he is accountable to” since there is no fear of God. The Psalm states אֵין-פַּחַד אֱלֹהִים לְנֶגֶד עֵינָיו that there is no fear (פַּחַד, Pakhad) of God and it is interesting that David uses the word Pakhad rather than yare (יָרָא) to describe the fear of the Lord. It is interesting to note that this word (Pakhad) is not used in the Torah as compared to the word “yare.” The Hebrew word “yare” (see *Strongs H3372*) carries a number of meanings having both the meaning of being “terrified” or “afraid” along with the definition of having “reverence”, “awe”, or “respect.” In Greek, the word phobeō φόβος (see *Strongs G5399*) carries similar meanings of both “being afraid” and “having reverence or awe.” Based upon these definitions, we must take words in context in order to determine whether the word is being used in the sense of “fear” or of “reverence?” For example, in Parashat Va’etchanan (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 3:23-7:11*) we read in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 6:13* יִגַּד אֶת-יְהוָה (אֱלֹהֶיךָ תִירָא וְאִתּוֹ תַעֲבֹד וּבְשִׁמוֹ תִשָּׁבַע: that one should fear the Lord your God, which is clearly referring to having “awe, reverence, and respect.” By comparison, in *Bereshit / Genesis 26:24* the Lord God says do not fear, for I am with you. He is clearly saying that we shouldn’t be terrified. It should also be noted that there is a difference between fear (as in “fear and trembling”) and dread. In the book *Yirat Shamayim: The Awe, Reverence, and Fear of God Edited by Marc Stern; p.21 (Introduction)*, Rabbi Soloveichik, states that God requires “yirat shamayim,” the fear of heaven and not fear as in terror. The Bible never commands us to have pakhad (פַּחַד) for God, but only yare; and the Talmud teaches the idea of “yirat shamayim,” not “pakhad shamayim.” While Judaism does not advocate pakhad, “the whole Torah in its entirety is based upon the idea of yare.” With these things in mind, yare is translated fear while pakhad is more accurately translated as “dread.” The phrase yirat shamayim is “fear of heaven” as compared to pakhad shamayim, the “dread of heaven.” This simply provides the example of why pakhad is not used in the Torah, whereas the word “yare” is used. There is a component of being afraid in the word “fear;” and there’s not the complete sense of “dread” (pakhad) for God’s children. The interesting thing to note is David’s use of the word pakhad (פַּחַד) of the ungodly who do not fear God and continue in their sin. The wicked does not even have a dread of “what might happen” in the Olam Habah (the world to come). They reason that the Lord will not judge and their sins will not be called into account before a Holy God.

ג כִּי-הִקְלִיק אֵלָיו בְּעֵינָיו לְמַצָּא עֲוֹנוֹ לְשָׂנֵא: ד דְּבָרָי-פִּיו אָנֹן Transgression continues to speak saying 36:2 *For it flatters him in his own eyes Concerning the discovery of his iniquity and the hatred of it.* 36:3 *The words of his mouth are wickedness and deceit; He has ceased to be wise and to do good.* (NASB) It is interesting David uses the Hiphil Perfect 3rd Masculine Singular Verb “Hekhelik” (הִקְלִיק) saying that when his sin is found out, it is his portion or that it is smooth or flattering “unto him” (אֵלָיו) “in his eyes” (בְּעֵינָיו). This is interesting to note that the ungodly, when their sin is found out, they do not find shame but are flattered (they laugh). Sin is considered their portion in this life. Recently, I have read about a man who gave himself to living righteously according to God’s word and when something bad come upon him, he ended up stating that all of these things that he did, and this bad thing (cancer) comes upon my life, how can I believe in the God of the bible? (Story taken from a social networking site (Facebook).) His next comment was, “I missed out on so much fun in life because I tried to live righteously and not live life to the fullest!” What exactly does it mean to live life to the fullest? It is impossible to live a righteous life and travel, see the world, water ski, swim, mountain climb, ride four wheelers, dirt bikes, etc? Does a righteous life prevent one from living in these ways? Is his comment based on the idea that he has missed out on “his portion” of sin in this life because he chose to live a righteous life instead? Should our desire to live a righteous life be bent towards receiving something from the Lord in Heaven? The desire to live a righteous life should be motivated out of our love for the Lord God Almighty and Yeshua the Messiah and not purely out of a want or desire to receive something from the Lord in this life.

The Aramaic Targum and the Septuagint say the following:

Aramaic Targum

Tehillim / Psalms 36:3-4

36:3 *Because he flatters him with his eyes to find sins, to hate instruction. 36:4 The words of his mouth are wickedness and deceit; he has ceased to be wise in doing good. (EMC)*

ג ארום שעיע ליה בעינוי למשכח חובין למיסני אולפנא: ד מילי פומיה רישעא ונכילו פסק למ-
שכל לאוטבא:

Septuagint

Tehillim / Psalms 36:3-4

36:2 *For he has dealt craftily before him, to discover his iniquity and hate it. 36:3 The words of his mouth are transgression and deceit: he is not inclined to understand how to do good. (LXX)*

36:2 ὅτι ἐδόλωσεν ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ τοῦ εὐρεῖν τὴν ἀνομίαν αὐτοῦ καὶ μισησάι 36:3 τὰ ῥήματα τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ ἀνομία καὶ δόλος οὐκ ἐβουλήθη συνιέναι τοῦ ἀγαθῶναι

It is interesting the rabbis say “*he flatters him with his eyes to find sins, to hate instruction.*” The rebellion that is within looks for and searches to find sin and hates “*instruction*” (אולפנא) (<http://call.cn.huc.edu/>). Note that the rabbis do not use the word Torah to denote instruction and how the wicked hate instruction. The word used here is אולפנא referring to learning. In *Pesikta de Rav Kahana 345.9* דלית איפשר ניפק פרר— “*it is impossible for him to repeat the biblical passage without instruction.*” The Jerusalem Talmud Erubin (*Blendings*) 21b דיעה מן דיפן ר' יוסי אמר לה מן אולפן ר' said to him, it was from “*learning,*” said to him, it was from “*knowledge / opinion.*” From the Targum Neofiti we read in *Bereshit / Genesis 49:15* וחמא מן שירווא בית מקדש' דאתקרי בית מנוח' ארום טב הוה הוא וית ארעא דישראל ארום 49:15 *Is-sakar is an ass in the law; a strong tribe, knowing the order;[5] of the times; and he lieth down between the, limits of his brethren. And he saw the rest of the world to come that it is good, and the portion of the land of Israel that it is pleasant; therefore bowed he his shoulders to labor in the law, and unto him shall come his brethren bearing presents. (Pseudo-Jonathan)* The rabbis are saying that one needs instruction to repeat the Torah (or Scripture) and it is this kind of instruction or learning that the wicked hate. Note how the Jerusalem Talmud states that one man repeats from learning, another from his own opinion. The rebellion that is within hates instruction and it says that results in the mouth of the unrighteous being full of wickedness and deceit and the man ceases to be wise in doing good. The Septuagint states that the rebellion within acts treacherously (ἐδόλωσεν) before him so as to discover (find out) his iniquity and hate it. Isn't it interesting that based on the Greek translation, rebellion appears to act separately from the man in the sense of keeping him from seeing his own iniquity and hating what he does? Because of his rebellion, he does not understand good or how to live in righteousness and his rebellion in and of itself causes him to never learn how to be obedient to God's word.

ה יהויין היך מווא קדם זעפא ומלאכא דיהוה ה יוויין היך מווא קדם זעפא ומלאכא דיהוה 36:4 *He plans wickedness upon his bed; He sets himself on a path that is not good; He does not despise evil. (NASB)* The wicked have sin constantly upon their minds to do evil and not good. The Aramaic Targum and the Septuagint say essentially the same thing.

Aramaic Targum

Tehillim / Psalms 36:5

36:5 Wickedness plots on his bed; he will take his stand in a way not good; he will not reject evil. (EMC)

ה רישעא חשיל חשיב על שיווייה יתעתד על אורח דלא טב ביש לא ירחק:

Septuagint

Tehillim / Psalms 36:5

36:4 He devises iniquity on his bed; he gives himself to every evil way; and does not abhor evil. (LXX)

36:4 ἀνομίαν διελογίσασατο ἐπὶ τῆς κοίτης αὐτοῦ παρέστη πάση ὁδῶ οὐκ ἀγαθῇ τῇ δὲ κακίᾳ οὐ προσώχθισεν

As the children of God we are to abhor, reject, and despise evil.

David contrasts the ungodly by next describing the faithfulness of God saying יהוה בְּהַשְׁמִימִים חֲסִדָּךְ וְיְהוָה יִהְיֶה: 36:5 Your lovingkindness, O Lord, extends to the heavens, Your faithfulness reaches to the skies. 36:6 Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; Your judgments are like a great deep. O Lord, You preserve man and beast. (NASB) Notice something interesting here in *Tehillim / Psalms 36:5*, the verse can be divided into two parts.

Part 1

- יהוה בְּהַשְׁמִימִים חֲסִדָּךְ
- *Your lovingkindness, O Lord, extends to the heavens*

Part 2

- אַמּוּנָתְךָ עַד-שְׁחַקִּים
- *Your faithfulness reaches to the skies*

Here David contrasts the “lovingkindness” (grace) of God in Heaven (הַשְׁמִימִים), verses the “faithfulness” of God in the sky (שְׁחַקִּים). Is David trying to contrast something here? What can we say regarding this contrast? David appears to be separating God’s “Grace” in Heaven from His “Faithfulness” in the sky or the clouds or on Earth. The way David writes this sentence in the Psalm suggests that the mercy of God is very exalted; to the very heavens (הַשְׁמִימִים), as high as the highest object of which man can conceive, even to the Heaven where God’s throne sits. The mercy of the Lord is in the heavens being a description possible of the abundant and infinite mercy and grace that He extends to His people. For the ungodly, God’s mercy should lead them to repentance and to seek the Lord for the forgiveness of sins. Part 2 states that Your faithfulness reaches unto the clouds (skies) עַד שְׁחַקִּים (ad shechakim), His faithfulness, His blessings from the heavens, from the clouds, from the earth, are promised by God to his followers and therefore His faithfulness is to be extended unto all those places, to His people, the mercies He has promised according to the Scriptures. The faithfulness that reach “unto the clouds” provides us with the imagery of the clouds which are among the highest objects raising above the loftiest trees and mountains and thus gives the idea again as in Part 1 of the verse that God’s faithfulness is elevated or exalted above all else.

It is interesting that *Tehillim / Psalms 36:6*, the verse can be divided into two parts similar to 36:5.

Part 1

- צְדָקָתְךָ | כְּהַרְרֵי-אֵל
- *Your righteousness is like the mountains of God*

Part 2

- מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ תְּהוֹם רַבָּה אָדָם וּבְהֵמָה תוֹשִׁיעַ יְהוָה
- *Your judgments are like a great deep. O Lord, You preserve man and beast.*

Here David again elevates the righteousness of God to the mountains but here he says God's righteousness is like "the mountains of God" (כְּהַרְרֵי-אֵל). What are the mountains of God? Can you think of any examples from the Torah? According to the Book of Exodus, Mount Sinai (הַר סִינַי, Har Sinai) is the mountain at which the Ten Commandments were given to Moshe by God. It is interesting that performing a search on the word סִינַי (Sinai) results are produced mentioning the name in Shemot / Exodus, Vayikra / Leviticus, and Bamidbar / Numbers but not in the book of Devarim / Deuteronomy. In the Book of Deuteronomy, Moshe describes these events as having transpired at Mount Horeb. (*Note the Documentation hypothesis and the difference between the Yawehists and Elohist's arguments.*) Horeb was the name for the mountain complex of which Mount Sinai was one of the summits. Studying the Scriptures, the Mountain of God is said to be the mountain of Horeb, the mountain of Sinai and the mountain of Paran, all of which are names for the mountain of Sinai. The Wilderness or Desert of Paran is said to be the place where Abraham's servant Hagar and their first-born son Ishmael were sent into exile from Abraham's dwelling in Beersheba (see *Bereshit / Genesis 21*).

Bereshit / Genesis 21:19-22

Then God opened her [Hagar's] eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink. God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer. While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt.

Paran is mentioned in the Book of Bamidbar / Numbers as a place where the Israelites temporarily settled during the Exodus.

Bamidbar / Numbers 10:12

Then the Israelites set out from the Desert of Sinai and traveled from place to place until the cloud came to rest in the Desert of Paran.)

Paran is again mentioned in the opening lines of the Book of Devarim / Deuteronomy.

Devarim / Deuteronomy 1:1

These are the words Moses spoke to all Israel in the desert beyond the Jordan--that is, in the Arabah--opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth and Dizahab.

Devarim / Deuteronomy 33:2

He said: "The LORD came from Sinai and dawned over them from Seir; he shone forth from Mount Paran. He came with myriads of holy ones, from his right hand went a fiery law for them."

King David spent some time in the wilderness of Paran after Samuel died (*1 Samuel, 25:1*) and *1 Kings 11:17-18* states that when Hadad the Edomite fled from Edom to Egypt, he passed through Midian and Paran on the way to Egypt. This has led some commentators to suggest the possibility that Paran was a place on

the way to Egypt from Edom and Midian. It is not certain precisely where the wilderness of Paran is to be located and it is often associated with Mount Sinai. David appears to be drawing a parallel to the loftiness of the mountain of God and the righteousness of God. Remember the mountain of Sinai, no man or beast is to come approaching the mountain or he will die (*i.e. read Parashat Ki Tisa*). God's righteousness, no man may achieve the level of righteousness that God requires of us. Therefore we are to trust in His righteousness and not in our own.

David then states that the judgments (מִשְׁפָּטֵי) are like the great deep (תְּהוֹם רַבָּה), and the Lord preserves man and beast. It is interesting how David uses the word rabbah (רַבָּה) rather than gedolah (גְּדוּלָה) to describe the "greatness of the deep." The use of the word rabbah describes "many" and the judgment of God is many for those who do not obey his Torah. Here David appears to be paralleling the salvation of God with the flood of Noah. The waters covered the earth because of the judgment of God on sin and both man and beast died, yet He (God) preserved both man and beast from His judgment in Noah's ark. When David said "You preserve man and beast" he says literally, "YHVH will save" (תוֹשִׁיעַ יְהוָה) He is saving from destruction. The idea is, that the Lord keeps both man and beast alive. Life continues because He is the sustainer of all life. David utilizes the illustration of what he had just said about the "greatness" of God in His mercy, grace, faithfulness, and righteousness in His ability to sustain life as we know it today.

The Aramaic Targum and the Septuagint say the following:

Aramaic Targum

Tehillim / Psalms 36:6-7

36:6 O Lord, your goodness is in the heaven of heavens, your faithfulness reaches to the skies. 36:7 Your righteousness is as high as the great mountains; your judgments are as deep as the great abyss; you will redeem both the sons of men and beasts, O Lord. (EMC)

ו יהוה בשמי שמיא טובך הימנותך עד שחקי: ז צדקתך אלהא רמא היך טוריאי תקיפאי דינך
עמיקין היך תהומא רבא בני נשא ובעירא תפרוק יהוה:

Septuagint

Tehillim / Psalms 36:5-6

36:5 O Lord, thy mercy is in the heaven; and thy truth reaches to the clouds. 36:6 Thy righteousness is as the mountains of God, thy judgments are as a great deep: O Lord, thou wilt preserve men and beasts. (LXX)

36:5 κύριε ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ τὸ ἔλεός σου καὶ ἡ ἀλήθειά σου ἕως τῶν νεφελῶν 36:6 ἡ δικαιοσύνη σου ὡσεὶ ὄρη θεοῦ τὰ κρίματά σου ἄβυσσος πολλή ἀνθρώπους καὶ κτήνη σώσεις κύριε

The Aramaic Targum states literally "YHVH in the heaven of heavens is your goodness" (יהוה בשמי שמיא) (טובך) and the faithfulness of God reaches to the skies (הימנותך עד שחקי), the rabbis use the same words to describe David's words in their Aramaic translation. They continue saying טוריאי רמא היך תקיפאי "the righteousness of God is in the manner of a strong mountain." They say that the Lord redeems (תפרוק, ransoms) both the sons if men and beasts. The Septuagint has the basic interpretation of the modern translations today (NASB), the mercy of God is in the heavens and His truth (faithfulness) reaches to the clouds, His righteousness is as the mountains of God, etc.

ח מה-יקר חסדך אלהים ויגני אדם בצל כנפיה כן יקרה חסדך חיים באורה נראה-אור:
36:7 How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings. 36:8 They

drink their fill of the abundance of Your house; And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights. 36:9 For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light. (NASB) David describes the “lovingkindness” of God as being very “precious” (יִקָּר). Note that this word for lovingkindness is translated as the “grace” and “mercy” of God. The word used for “precious” (יִקָּר) is one that is applied to precious stones (*1 Kings 10:2, 1 Kings 10:10-11*) and the more costly kind of stones utilized in building, such as marble (*2 Chronicles 3:6*). The word יִקָּר is used for anything that is costly or valuable. Therefore, the grace, mercy, and lovingkindness of God is to be understood as being equal to the value set on the most rare, costly, and precious of things. The imagery that David uses in *Tehillim / Psalms 36:8-9*, drinking to one’s fill, the abundance of God’s house, the river of God’s delights, the fountain of life and the light that only the Lord himself shows forth are descriptions that come right out of the Torah and the wilderness journey. The Lord provided rivers of running waters for the children of Israel when they were thirsty. The Lord is known as the source of light and life and David describes the preciousness of God’s mercy within that context. The Aramaic Targum and the Septuagint agree on David’s use of the Torah to describe the mercy of God.

Aramaic Targum

Tehillim / Psalms 36:8-10

36:8 How precious is your goodness, O Lord; and the sons of men will dwell securely in the shadow of your presence. 36:9 They will drink deeply of the plenteous blessings of your house; and you will let them drink of your pleasant fountain. 36:10 For with you are streams of living water; in the splendor of your glory we will see light. (EMC)

ח כמה יקר יקיר טובך יהוה ובני נשא בטלל שכינתך יש {ו} רון לרוחצן: ט יתרוויון מדהן ברכתא דביתך ומבוע בסימותך תשקינן: י ארום עמך טיפי טופי מיינ חיין בזיו בדיל נהור יקרך נחמי נהורא אורה:

Septuagint

Tehillim / Psalms 36:8-10

36:7 How hast thou multiplied thy mercy, O God! so the children of men shall trust in the shelter of thy wings. 36:8 They shall be fully satisfied with the fatness of thine house; and thou shalt cause them to drink of the full stream of thy delights. 36:9 For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light we shall see light. (LXX)

36:7 ὡς ἐπλήθυνας τὸ ἔλεός σου ὁ θεός οἱ δὲ υἱοὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐν σκέπη τῶν πτερυγῶν σου ἐλπιοῦσιν 36:8 μεθυσθήσονται ἀπὸ πίότητος τοῦ οἴκου σου καὶ τὸν χειμάρρουν τῆς τρυφῆς σου ποτιεῖς αὐτοῦς 36:9 ὅτι παρὰ σοὶ πηγὴ ζωῆς ἐν τῷ φωτί σου ὁψόμεθα φῶς

Note how the rabbis say, according to the Septuagint, *36:8 They shall be fully satisfied with the fatness of thine house...* making a reference to the house of the Lord and the fat. It is interesting, according to Parashat Tzav, we read in *Vayikra / Leviticus 7:1* ‘Now this is the law of the guilt offering; it is most holy. (NASB) In the book of *Vayikra / Leviticus*, the five major Korbanot (offerings) are described as being “most holy” as we see here in *Vayikra / Leviticus 7:1* and the detailing of the guilt offering. There are two major components of the guilt offering:

1. Slaying of the animal taking its blood and sprinkling it upon the altar (7:2)
2. Offering all its fat upon the altar, including the fat on the tail, the fat that covers the entrails (7:3) and the fat that is upon the kidneys and the liver.

It is interesting that in Hebrew the word for “fat” is שומן meaning “fat, grease, fatness,” the root word for fat in the Hebrew bible is חלב “khelev” meaning “tallow, fat, lard” where the Hebrew root חלב may also have the meaning “milk” depending upon the context and its usage. It is interesting to study the command to offer the fat upon the altar for the Asham Korban (Guilt Offering) and why the fat is commanded to be offered upon the altar above the other types of meat in the body of the sacrificial animal. Fat is described in the bible as being the choicest part of the animal to be offered upon the altar for the Asham (guilt) offering before the lord, according to the verses found in *Shemot / Exodus chapters 23 and 29, Vayikra / Leviticus chapters 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 16, and 17, Bamidbar / Numbers chapter 18, Devarim / Deuteronomy chapter 32*. These verses specify the fat is the portion of the animal that are essential to be burned upon the altar before God. Additional verses from the Neviim (Prophets) attest to the importance of the fat of the sacrifices, (*Judges 3:22, 1 Samuel 2:15-16, and 15:22, 1 Kings 8:64, Isaiah 1:11, 34:6, 43:24, and 34:6, and Ezekiel 34:3, 44:7, and 44:15, 2 Chronicles 7:7, 29:35, and 35:14*). According to the scriptures, whether literally or figuratively, the fat is a reference to the richest or choice part of the animal and the rabbis choose to say that 36:8 *They shall be fully satisfied with the fatness of thine house...* indicating that the Lord Himself is the choicest part of life and spending time with Him.

David concludes his Psalm saying אֵל-תְּבוֹאֲנֵי רִגְלֵי גִּאְוֹנָה יָבִיב לִישְׁרֵי-לֵב: 36:10 *O continue Your lovingkindness to those who know You, And Your righteousness to the upright in heart. 36:11 Let not the foot of pride come upon me, And let not the hand of the wicked drive me away. 36:12 There the doers of iniquity have fallen; They have been thrust down and cannot rise. (NASB)* Note how David asks for the Lord to continue His lovingkindness, mercy, grace, to those who “know” Him and His righteousness to the upright in heart. David uses the word לִידְעֵיךָ (root yodea, ידע) to describe the kind of intimate relationship that God’s children have with Him. It appears that David concludes with asking the Lord to extend his lovingkindness and righteousness to the upright. This being the case, the foot of pride of the unrighteous will not come upon David, and that the wicked will not be able to drive David away. Those who work iniquity will fall, they will not be able to rise. The Lord is the sustainer and giver of all life and when the wicked fall by their iniquity, they will not be able to raise because they will not have the help of the Lord God Almighty. Based upon what David is saying, it appears that he is concluding the Psalm with a “faith” prayer. He is describing the events of that will occur to the wicked, as if his prayer had already been granted. He has a strong confidence in the Lord, in God’s faithfulness, mercy, and His promises. Lord, may we all have this kind of faith as we pray and seek You! Let’s Pray! .

Rabbinic Commentary

The Rabbinic Commentary (Midrash) on *Tehillim / Psalms 36* has 8 parts. Reading through the Midrash we will be looking at Part 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, and 8. Let’s begin by outlining *Midrash Tehillim Chapter 36, Part 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, and 8*.

Outline of Midrash Tehillim / Psalms, Chapter 36, Part 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, and 8

Part 1

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the דִּבּוּר הַמַּתְחִיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying “*To the Lord of victories, A Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord (Tehillim / Psalms 36:1).*”
- The פְּתִיחָה (Petihta) “*the homiletic introduction*” to the Midrash says “*The phrase Lord of victories is to be considered in the light of the verse Happy are you, O Israel, who is like you? A people*

saved by the Lord (Devarim / Deuteronomy 33:29)."

- The משל (mashal) *"the parable,"* goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis go on to expand upon how the Lord wages Israel's wars but the victory is ascribed to Israel.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) *"expansion on the parable"* expands upon the משל (mashal), the rabbis take examples from Moshe and the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, Deborah and Barak in Judges, and David and Goliath
- The Concluding phrase says *"Thereupon, the Holy One blessed be He, said to David, You ascribe the victory to Me, but I will ascribe the victory to you, saying for the man of victories, for David the servant of the Lord (Tehillim / Psalms 36:1)."*

Part 2

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying *"The transgression of the wicked utters its oracle, There is no fear of God before his eyes (Tehillim / Psalms 36:2)."*
- The פתיחתא (Petihta) *"the homiletic introduction"* to the Midrash says *"When David looked at Goliath the Philistine..."*
- The משל (mashal) *"the parable,"* goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis discuss David's words of the wicked who utter their words without fear of God.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) *"expansion on the parable"* expands upon the משל (mashal), the rabbis go on to expand upon the parable with the example of David and Goliath where Goliath did not have a fear of God when he reviled Israel.
- The Concluding phrase says *"You found that the Holy One blessed be He, also said to Israel, Your own wickedness will punish you when My fear is not in you (Jeremiah 2:19). Hence David said, The transgression of the wicked utters its oracle, There is no fear of God before his eyes."*

Part 3

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying *"For it flatters him in his eyes, to find an iniquity that will be hated (Tehillim / Psalms 36:3)."*
- The פתיחתא (Petihta) *"the homiletic introduction"* to the Midrash says *"The wicked glance about with their eyes and feel about with their hands and scheme at their hearts to find that special sin which the Holy One blessed be He, hates that they might commit it."*
- The משל (mashal) *"the parable,"* goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis discuss David's words regarding the wicked whose thoughts are always on performing evil deeds.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) *"expansion on the parable"* expands upon the משל (mashal), the rabbis go on to expand upon the parable to describe the wicked who forsake the good way and walk in the evil way.
- The Concluding phrase says *"So Solomon described the wicked as men who forsake the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness; who rejoice to do evil (Mishley / Proverbs 2:12). Hence, it is written he sets himself in a way that is not good."*

Part 4

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying *"Your loving kindness, O Lord is in the heavens; Your faithfulness reaches unto the skies (Tehillim / Psalms 36:6)."*
- The פתיחתא (Petihta) *"the homiletic introduction"* to the Midrash says *"Is the loving kindness of the Lord in the heavens?"*
- The משל (mashal) *"the parable,"* goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis discuss David's words concerning the lovingkindness of God in heaven.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) *"expansion on the parable"* expands upon the משל (mashal), the rabbis go on to expand upon the lovingkindness of God and whether it be in heaven or upon the earth.

- The Concluding phrase says *“Hence it is said Your loving kindness, O Lord, is in the heavens.”*

Part 6

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the **דיבור המתחיל** (Dibur Hamathil) saying *“For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light will we see light (Tehillim / Psalms 36:10).”*
- The **פתיחתא** (Petihta) *“the homiletic introduction”* to the Midrash says *“Rabbi Johanan said, It happened that a man lighted a lamp which went out, and each time he lighted it, it went out, until at last the man said, How long will I keep tiring myself with this lamp?”*
- The **משל** (mashal) *“the parable,”* goes on to explain the **פתיחתא** (Petihta), the rabbis begin directly with a parable of the man who lights a lamp and parallel the lighting of the lamp, walking in the light of the Lord, with being enslaved by the nations.
- The **נמשל** (Nimshal) *“expansion on the parable”* expands upon the **משל** (mashal), the rabbis go on to expand upon the parallel of the light, and enslaving by the nations giving examples from the book of Daniel, and Esther.
- The Concluding phrase says *“Moreover, a time will come when the mountains will lead in the singing of Israel’s songs, for it is said Kenaniah will be chief of the Levites, and will be first in song (1 Chronicles 15:22). The word Kenaniah is to be read that which was established by the Lord, for the word comes from the same stem as nakon (established), which occurs in the verse The mountain of the Lord’s house will be established (nakon).”*

Part 8

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the **דיבור המתחיל** (Dibur Hamathil) saying *“Another comment on O continue Your lovingkindness unto them that know You.”*
- The **פתיחתא** (Petihta) *“the homiletic introduction”* to the Midrash says *“Rabbi Isaac said, One generation passes away, and another generation comes (Ecclesiastes 1:4), One nation comes and another nation goes; But the land abides forever.”*
- The **משל** (mashal) *“the parable,”* goes on to explain the **פתיחתא** (Petihta), the rabbis discuss David’s words and the land of Israel.
- The **נמשל** (Nimshal) *“expansion on the parable”* expands upon the **משל** (mashal), the rabbis go on to expand upon the land of Israel and draw a parallel to the land as a reference to the Children of Israel.
- The Concluding phrase says *“After the Temple was destroyed, when the children of Israel went forth to war, they would say, There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your anger for my iniquities are gone over my head (Tehillim / Psalms 38:4).”*

Midrash Tehillim 36, Part 1 opens with the **דיבור המתחיל** (Dibur Hamathil) saying *“To the Lord of victories, A Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord (Tehillim / Psalms 36:1).”* The homiletic introduction to the Midrash states *“The phrase Lord of victories is to be considered in the light of the verse Happy are you, O Israel, who is like you? A people saved by the Lord (Devarim / Deuteronomy 33:29).”* The rabbis continue saying the following:

The Holy One blessed be He, wages Israel’s wars, but victory is ascribed to Israel. Thus, Scripture says, In all the signs and wonders and in all the mighty hand, and in all the great terror, which Moshe wrought (Devarim / Deuteronomy 34:11-12), here it is not written, Which the Lord wrought, but which Moshe wrought. (Midrash Tehillim 36, Part 1)

יוגו סיתפומהו תותואה לכל רמוא אוה נכו ,נהלש ןוחצנהו ,לארשי לש ןתמחלמ השוע ה"בקה
אלא ,ןאכ ביתכ ןיא 'ה השע רשא , (בי אי דל סירבד מש) השמ השע רשא יוגו הקזחה דיה לכלו

It is interesting the midrash speaks of the victories of the Lord and then provide an example that the victory that is the Lord's is ascribed to someone else. The proof text that is given of this is from *Devarim / Deuteronomy 34:10-12*.

Devarim / Deuteronomy 34:10-12

34:10 Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, 34:11 for all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent him to perform in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, all his servants, and all his land, 34:12 and for all the mighty power and for all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel. (NASB)

וְלֹא-קָם נְבִיא עוֹד בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל כְּמֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר יָדְעוּ יְהוָה פָּנִים אֶל-פָּנִים: יֵאָמֵר לְכָל-הָאֶתְנָת וְהַמּוֹפְתִים אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַח יְהוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם לְפָרְעֹה וְלְכָל-עַבְדָּיו וְלְכָל-אֶרֶצוֹ: יֵב וְלְכָל הַיָּד הַחֲזָקָה וְלְכָל הַמּוֹרָא הַגָּדוֹל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה מֹשֶׁה לְעֵינֵי כָל-יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Note how the Hebrew text is written וְלְכָל הַיָּד הַחֲזָקָה וְלְכָל הַמּוֹרָא הַגָּדוֹל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה מֹשֶׁה לְעֵינֵי כָל-יִשְׂרָאֵל “and all the hand of power; and all the great fear or terror that Moshe did/performed (הַשְּׂמַע הַשְּׂע) before the eyes of all of Israel.” The text states “asher oseh Moshe” (אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה מֹשֶׁה) “that Moshe did/performed” where the previous verses states that the Lord is who sent him to perform the signs and wonders. Based upon these Scriptures, the Lord empowered Moshe to perform the miracles in Egypt and the victory was ascribed to Moshe according in the last sentences of the Torah. In a similar manner, the rabbis use the example from *Judges 5:12*, the prophetess Deborah and Barak. The rabbis say the following:

Deborah said, Arise, Barak, and lead your captivity captive, you son of Abinoam (Judges 5:12). But could it be said to him Arise, Barak, and lead captivity captive, as if it were really his captivity? What could Deborah have meant by Arise except Arise, but you will not do battle for the battle is the Lord's, as is said This is the day in which the Lord has delivered Sisera into your hand (Judges 4:14), and also, They fought from heaven (Judges 5:20). And yet, when Barak was about to say, The victory is the Lord's, Deborah said, Lead your captivity captive. (Midrash Tehillim 36, Part 1)

הִיא קָרַב לַשׁ הַיְבֵשׁ יָכוֹן, (בִּי הַ מִּטְפוּשׁ) מֵעוֹנִיבָא וְבַיִשׁ הַבְּשׁוּ קָרַב מוֹק הַרְמָא הַרׁוּבֵד וְכוּ
, הַלְּמַחְלָמָהּ יִפֹּל, הַמַּחְלָמָה הַשְּׂעַת אֱלוֹ מוֹק, מוֹק וְהַמְּ אֱלָא, [דַּיִבֵּשׁ הַבְּשׁוּ קָרַב מוֹק רְמָא אוֹהַשׁ
מַשׁ) וּמַחְלָנִי מִימֵשׁ נִמְ רְמוֹא אוֹהַ וְכוּ, (דִּי דַּ מִּטְפוּשׁ מַשׁ) וְגוּ וְהַ נְתַנְ רְשָׁא מוֹיָהּ הַזֵּי יִכְ רְמָאנֵשׁ
דַּיִבֵּשׁ הַבְּשׁוּ רְמוֹא, הַבִּקָּה לַשׁ נׁוֹחֲצַנ רְמוֹל אֲב אוֹהַשְׁכוּ, (כִּי הַ מִּטְפוּשׁ

When reading the Midrash and the comments regarding Deborah and Barak, Deborah tells Barak to arise and “lead your captivity captive.” It is interesting that the Rabbis ask the question “But could it be said to him Arise, Barak, and lead captivity captive, as if it were really his captivity?” What does it mean to lead captivity captive? Note the context here regarding the battle and the section of the text from the midrash. The rabbis ask “what could Deborah have meant,” and then say “This is the day the Lord has delivered Sisera into your hand (Judges 4:14).” The rabbis then state that when Barak was about to say the victory is the Lord's, Deborah said, Lead your captivity. The rabbis comments here are under the same context of the midrash, that the Lord performs the miracles (fights the battle in this case) and ascribes the victory to someone else (i.e. Barak). The leading of captivity captive appears to be a reference to Barak who is leading, the victory is the Lord's but is ascribed to Barak. This is emphasized by the last line of the midrash that states Barak was about to declare the victory is the Lord's and Deborah states lead your captivity captive.

The phrase “*leads captivity captive*” also reminds us of the Apostle Paul’s words in *Ephesians 4:8-10*. It is interesting to read the context of *Ephesians 4:1-27* while paying close attention to who is being led captive?

Ephesians 4:1-27

4:1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, 4:2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; 4:3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4:4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. 4:7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. 4:8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. 4:9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? 4:10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: 4:14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: 4:16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. 4:17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, 4:18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: 4:19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. 4:20 But ye have not so learned Christ; 4:21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: 4:22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; 4:23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; 4:24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. 4:25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. 4:26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: 4:27 Neither give place to the devil.
(KJV)

Studying typical Christian commentary, the ones who were being led captive, it is taught that those who are saved are who were being led captive out of hell. Is that what Paul is saying here in *Ephesians 4*? Paul speaks of himself being a prisoner of the Lord in *4:1*. He appeals to the Ephesians to walk according to their calling, to be humble, meek, and to love one another, to be one in spirit with one another in peace. Paul speaks of one body and one Spirit, One Lord, one faith, one immersion (baptism), and one God and Father of all, and that the Lord has given each of us grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ (Χριστοῦ). In *Ephesians 4:8*, Paul says *4:8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (KJV)* What is interesting is that this phrase “led captivity captive” seems to follow the same idea from the midrash, that the Lord God Almighty is the one who is the victor, but the victory is ascribed to Yeshua the Messiah. Because of this, He has given gifts to us, which appear to be the gifts of the Spirit. Paul then leads into what appears to be a midrashic understanding of Yeshua ascending and descending saying:

Ephesians 4:9-10

4:9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? 4:10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) (KJV)

The ascending and descending reminds us of *Midrash Tehillim on 68:11*, Rabbi Nathan speaks of Moshe going up on Sinai, receiving the Torah from God, and then coming down to give gifts to humans. (Note also the *Midrash on Proverbs 30*, see the *Tehillim / Psalms 2 study on ascending and descending*) The ascending and descending that Paul is speaking would have been a well known teaching tool in the synagogues of his day, and what Paul is suggesting here is that Yeshua is the one that is greater than Moshe, since Yeshua descended and then ascended up above all heavens for the purpose of filling all things. (Note again the rabbis comments on *Midrash Proverbs 30:4*) Something also to consider, the leading of the captivity, the captive prisoners may well refer to the powers and principalities that have been put in their place as a result of Yeshua's death and resurrection. From a midrashic and Torah perspective, Paul is not necessarily making a reference to Yeshua (Christ) descending into Hell (Hades) which is what many of the church fathers believed (i.e. *Irenaeus, Origen, Tartullian, Chrysostom, Jerome, etc.*). Based upon Ephesians, it appears that Paul is making use of midrash to refer to Christ who leads captivity captive and who is greater than Moshe be descending and ascending higher than the highest heavens.

The rabbis continue speaking of David and the victories of the Lord that are ascribed to David saying:

So too, When David went down to meet Goliath, he said to the Philistines, That all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword or spear, for the battle is the Lord's (1 Samuel 17:47). And in their rejoicing and in their going out to dance, when th woman sang, saying Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands (1 Samuel 18:7), even then David said to the Holy One blessed be He, You wage war and Yours is the victory, as is said Yours, O Lord is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty (1 Chronicles 29:11). (Midrash Tehillim 36, Part 1)

וכן דוד כשירד לגלית, אמר וידעו כל הקהל הזה כי לא בחרב ובחנית יהושיע ה' (ש"א שמואל א' יז מז), וכשהיו הנשים משחקות ויוצאות לחול, היו מענות ואומרות, הכה שאול באלפיו ודוד ברבבותיו (שם שמואל א' יח ז), אמר דוד להקב"ה אתה עושה המלחמה ולך הוא הנצחון, שנאמר לך ה' הגדולה והגבורה והתפארת והנצח וההוד (דה"א דברי הימים א' כט יא)

Here again from the biblical text, we see how the Lord finds glory in and through the one whom He helps to bring victory. This is a great example of how our Father in heaven receives glory in His Son Yeshua the Messiah, the victories of the Lord may be understood in a parallel fashion in Yeshua the Messiah which brings glory to our Father in heaven. *Midrash Tehillim 36, Part 1* concludes saying “*Thereupon, the Holy One blessed be He, said to David, You ascribe the victory to Me, but I will ascribe the victory to you, saying for the man of victories, for David the servant of the Lord (Tehillim / Psalms 36:1).*” David says “*You ascribe the victory to me, but I will ascribe the victory to you,*” we can see a parallel in the life of Yeshua the Messiah. Judaism in the Midrashic literature contains the principles that we have been taught in the Apostolic Writings, the victories that we have in Christ, by faith in Yeshua the Messiah, we bring glory to our Father in heaven. Praise the Lord!

Midrash Tehillim 36, Part 2 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying “*The transgression of the wicked utters its oracle, There is no fear of God before his eyes (Tehillim / Psalms 36:2).*” The homiletic introduction (פתיחתא, Petihta) to the Midrash opens saying “*When David looked at Goliath the Philistine...*” The rabbis say the following regarding *Tehillim / Psalms 36:2*.

מדרש תהלים פרק לו סימן ב

ב [נאם פשע לרשע בקרב לבי אין פחד אלהים לנגד עיניו]. היה דוד מסתכל בגלית הפלשתי, וראה אותו גבור מזויין בכל מיני כלי זיין, אמר מי יוכל לזה, כיון שראה אותו שהוא מחרף ומגדף, אמר עכשיו אני יכול לו, שאינו מפחד מהקב"ה, שנאמר נאם פשע לרשע אין פחד אלהים לנגד עיניו. מיכן אתה למד שאין הקב"ה דן את הרשעים אלא בשעה שאין פחדו עליהן, וכן אתה מוצא שאמר הקב"ה לישראל תיסרך רעתך [וגו'] ולא פחדתי אליך (ירמיה ב ט), לכך היה אומר אין פחד אלהים לנגד עיניו.

Midrash Tehillim 36, Part 2

2. The transgression of the wicked utters its oracle, There is no fear of God before his eyes (Tehillim / Psalms 36:2). When David looked at Goliath the Philistine and saw that he was a mighty man armed with all kinds of weapons, he said, who can prevail against such as he? But when David saw him reviling and blaspheming, he said, Now I will prevail against him, for there is no fear of the Holy One blessed be He, in him, as is said The transgression of the wicked utters its oracle, There is no fear of God before his eyes. From this you learn that the Holy One blessed be He, punishes the wicked in the very hour when the fear of God is not upon them. You found that the Holy One blessed be He, also said to Israel, Your own wickedness will punish you when My fear is not in you (Jeremiah 2:19). Hence David said, The transgression of the wicked utters its oracle, There is no fear of God before his eyes.

The Scripture from *Tehillim / Psalms 36:2* speaks of when transgression (sin) speaks, there is no fear of God in the eyes of the wicked. The rabbis say that when David looked upon Goliath that he feared, however, when he saw that Goliath blasphemed the name of the Lord, the Philistine had no fear of God in his eyes, and David knew that he would prevail against him. The point of the parable is that when there is no fear of God, it is then that sin will find us out and we reap the consequences. What is the extent of sin in your life, how far has sin taken you in your life? Has it brought you to the point of disregarding the consequences or that the Lord will bring punishment once you have exhausted his patience for your repentance? The rabbis conclude saying, *“From this you learn that the Holy One blessed be He, punishes the wicked in the very hour when the fear of God is not upon them. You found that the Holy One blessed be He, also said to Israel, Your own wickedness will punish you when My fear is not in you (Jeremiah 2:19). Hence David said, The transgression of the wicked utters its oracle, There is no fear of God before his eyes.”* This is a good warning to bear in mind regarding sin.

Midrash Tehillim 36, Part 3 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying *“For it flatters him in his eyes, to find an iniquity that will be hated (Tehillim / Psalms 36:3).”* The homiletic introduction to the Midrash says *“The wicked glance about with their eyes and feel about with their hands and scheme at their hearts to find that special sin which the Holy One blessed be He, hates that they might commit it.”* The rabbis continue to describe what they mean regarding the wicked, their eyes and hearts desire to find the special sin that the Lord hates.

As Scripture says, Every abomination to the Lord which He hates, have they done (Devarim / Deuteronomy 12:31). Woe unto the wicked, all whose being is evil and deceit; not even with one another do they deal truthfully. The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit (Tehillim / Psalms 36:4); the wicked walks in iniquity and devises iniquity, as the next verse says, He devises iniquity upon his bed; he sets himself in a way that is not good (Tehillim / Psalms 36:5). (Midrash Tehillim 36, Part 3)

וכן הוא אומר כי כל תועבת ה' אשר שנא עשו (דברים יב לא), אוי להן להרשעים שהן כולן און ומרמה, ואין עושין אמת בין איש לחבירו. דברי פיו און ומרמה. ומהלכים באון, ומחשבים באון, וכן הוא אומר און יחשוב על משכבו יתיצב על דרך לא טוב

According to *Tehillim / Psalms 36:3*, the ungodly, when their sin is found out, they do not find shame but are flattered (they laugh). Sin is considered their portion in this life. The wicked set themselves in a way that is not good, the rabbis conclude saying *“When there are two ways open to the wicked, one toward good, and*

one toward evil, they forsake the good way, and walk in the evil way. So Solomon described the wicked as men who forsake the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness; who rejoice to do evil (Mishley / Proverbs 2:12). Hence, it is written he sets himself in a way that is not good.” The idea of selfishness is brought out within Midrash Tehillim 36, Part 3, in the sense that “all whose being is evil and deceit; not even with one another do they deal truthfully.” The midrash speaks of the entire “being” of a person being evil and deceit, thus they do not even deal truthfully with one another. That appears to be the center of pride and selfishness.

Midrash Tehillim 36, Part 4 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying “Your loving kindness, O Lord is in the heavens; Your faithfulness reaches unto the skies (Tehillim / Psalms 36:6).” The homiletic introduction to the Midrash says “Is the loving kindness of the Lord in the heavens?” The entire midrash says the following:

מדרש תהלים פרק לו סימן ד	Midrash Tehillim 36, Part 4
ד ה' בשמים חסדך אמונתך עד שחקים. וכי בשמים הוא החסד, והלא אינו אלא בארץ, שנאמר חסד ה' מלאה הארץ (תהלים לג ה), אלא מעשיהם של רשעים מסלקין את החסד לשמים, לכך נאמר ה' בשמים חסדך.	4. Your loving kindness, O Lord is in the heavens; Your faithfulness reaches unto the skies (Tehillim / Psalms 36:6). Is the loving kindness of the Lord in the heavens? Is it not on the earth, that is said The earth is full of the loving kindness of the Lord (Tehillim / Psalms 33:5)? The deeds of the wicked, however, force the loving kindness of the Lord back to the heavens. Hence it is said Your loving kindness, O Lord, is in the heavens.

Again we find this idea of ascending and descending, David says that the lovingkindness of the Lord is in the heavens, and the faithfulness of God reaches to the skies (Tehillim / Psalms 36:6). The midrash asks “Is it not on the earth, that is, The earth is full of the lovingkindness of the Lord (Tehillim / Psalms 33:6)?” How is the earth full of God’s lovingkindness? David says in Tehillim / Psalms 119:64 **סד תְּסַדֶּדֶּה יְהוָה מְלֵאָה** 119:64 *The earth is full of Your lovingkindness, O Lord; Teach me Your statutes. (NASB)* The earth is full of the grace of God. By His mercy He does not destroy us because of our sins. This may be how the rabbis understand the earth being full of the lovingkindness of God. The Midrash then states “The deeds of the wicked, however, force the loving kindness of the Lord back to the heavens.” What we see here is the lovingkindness of God descending and ascending based upon the righteousness of men here on the earth. Do you think was true back then? Do you think this is true today? Does God’s lovingkindness descend and ascend depending upon the righteousness of men? The deeds of the wicked (unrighteousness or unrighteous acts) is said to cause the lovingkindness of God to go back to the heavens or to heaven. Based upon Midrash Tehillim 36, Part 4, it appears that the lovingkindness of God is connected to the presence of God descending and ascending from heaven. In Parashat Vayetze (Bereshit / Genesis 28:10-32:2) we read of Jacob having a dream of angels ascending and descending upon a ladder that reached from heaven to earth and the Lord God standing at the top of the ladder. According to the book titled “The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature,” by C.E. Fonrobert and M.S. Jaffee, Cambridge University Press (May 28, 2007), pp.296, the authors state in Chapter 13, “The rabbinic historiography and representations of the past,” saying “One rabbinic story actually appears to comment on the removal of Israel from the ebb and flow of historical processes. Jacob’s ladder, we are informed, and the angels ascending and descending, are in fact a portrayal of the rise and fall of the nations of the world.” They go on to speak of the raise and fall of Babylonia, Media, Greece, and Edom, and then speak in the midrash on Jacob’s ladder saying, “He [Jacob] said to Him: Just as these have descended I too will descend? God told him: fear not, go up, for you will ascend but not descend!” What is interesting is the use of the “ascending and descending” imagery and the reference to the fall of the nations with respect to Midrash Tehillim 36, Part 4. It appears that these wicked nations, in their evil deeds, caused the lovingkindness of God to return to heaven and they perished. Now if we consider our own lives, if we live in unrighteousness, in sin, continually, would this not cause the lovingkindness of God to ascend back to heaven in our lives? Is this not something similar to what the Apostle John was saying in 1 John 1:6-8?

1 John 1:6-8

1:6 *If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 1:7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. (NASB)*

John says that if we walk in darkness, we have no fellowship with Him (Christ), on the other hand, if we walk in the Light, we have fellowship with Him and with one another. In addition to this, John says that if we walk in the Light, the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. This appears to follow a similar pattern of “ascending and descending” and how sin (the deeds of the wicked) cause the lovingkindness of God to go back to heaven.

Midrash Tehillim 36, Part 6 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying “*For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light will we see light (Tehillim / Psalms 36:10).*” The homiletic introduction to the Midrash says “*Rabbi Johanan said, It happened that a man lighted a lamp which went out, and each time he lighted it, it went out, until at last the man said, How long will I keep tiring myself with this lamp?*” The homiletic introduction opens with a parable with a man lighting a lamp. The man says “*How long will I keep tiring myself with this lamp? I will wait for the shining of the sun and go about in its light.*” In many instances the lamp and the light are a reference to God’s Torah. In this case could this be referring to our needing to wait upon the true source of light and truth (the Lord God and His Messiah Yeshua) in order to go about our lives? The rabbis parallel this parable to Israel enslaved in Babylon, Elam, Media, Persia, and Greece saying:

מדרש תהלים פרק לו סימן ו	Midrash Tehillim 36, Part 6
כך ישראל נשתעבדו במצרים, ועמד משה וגא- לם, וחזרו ונשתעבדו [בבבל, ועמדו דניאל חנניה מישאל ועזריה וגאלום, וחזרו ונשתעבדו] בעילם ובמדי ופרס, עמדו מרדכי ואסתר וגאלום, חזרו ונשתעבדו ביון, ועמדו חשמונאי ובניו וגאלום, חזרו ונשתעבדו באדום הרשעה, אמרו ישראל הרינו נתיגענו מהיותנו משתעבדין ונגאלין, וחז- רנו ונשתעבדנו, עכשיו אין אנו מבקשין לגאולת בשר ודם, אלא גואלנו ה' צבאות שמו קדוש יש- ראל, ואין אנו מבקשין (מעתה) שיאיר לנו בשר ודם מעתה, אלא שיאיר לנו הקב"ה, שנאמר כי עמך מקור חיים באורך נראה אור, וכתוב אל ה' ויאיר לנו (תהלים קיה כז)	... <i>Similarly, when the children of Israel were enslaved again in Babylon. The Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah rose up and redeemed them, but they were enslaved again in Elam, in Media, and in Persia. The Mordecai and Esther rose up and redeemed them, but they were enslaved again in Greece. Then the Hasmonean and his sons rose up and redeemed them, but they were enslaved again in Edom the wicked. Thereupon, the children of Israel said, We have grown weary of being enslaved and redeemed, only to be enslaved again. Now let us pray not for redemption through the flesh and blood, but through our redeemer, the Lord of hosts whose name is the Holy One of Israel. Now let us pray not that flesh and blood give us light, but that the Holy One blessed be He, give us light, as is said, Fro with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we will see light, and also the Lord is God, and He will give us light (Tehillim / Psalms 118:27).</i> ...

The midrash notes that Mordecai and Esther rose up and redeemed Israel, however, they were enslaved again in Greece. Following this cycle of freedom and enslavement, the children of Israel realized that their redemption is not through flesh and blood, “*but through our redeemer, the Lord of hosts whose name is the Holy One of Israel.*” The conclusion is that it is not flesh and blood that gives light but the Lord God Almighty whom gives us light, and truth, and life! The midrash continues saying:

According to Rabbi Simeon son of Lakish, the Holy One blessed be He, asked the children of Israel, Do you desire to share him in this world with the nations of the earth? And they replied, Master of the universe, Incline not my heart to any evil thing (Tehillim / Psalms

141:4). *Wherein evil? Because the nations of the earth are schemers, as the verse goes on to say Incline not my heart to making of schemes in wickedness with men who are skilled in iniquity. Indeed, we have no desire for the dainty portions which belong to the nations of the earth, as is said Let me not eat of their dainties. But what do we desire? Your precepts, as is said for with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we will see light, and again Nations will walk at Your light (Isaiah 60:3). Rabbi Oshaya taught in the name in rabbi Pinehas, In the age to come, Jerusalem will become a torch of light for all the nations as is said Nations will walk at Your light (Isaiah 60:3). Rabbi Samuel son of Nahmani said, Because the children of Israel had need of light in this world, they used the light of the sun by day and light of the moon by night; but in the world to come the children of Israel will not need the light of the sun nor of the moon, as is said The sun will be no more your light by day, neither for brightness will the moon give light unto you (Isaiah 60:19). Who will give them light? The Holy One blessed be He, of whom the verse goes on to say, The Lord will be unto you an everlasting light. (Midrash Tehillim 36, Part 6)*

ר' שמעון בן לקיש אמר כך אמר הקב"ה לישראל מבקשים אתם לספות עם אומות העולם בעור לם הזה, אמרו לפניו רבוננו של עולם אל תט לבי לדבר רע (שם תהלים קמ"ד), למה לפי שהם עוללות, שנאמר להתעולל עלילות ברשע את אישים פועלי און (שם שם תהלים קמ"א), אפילו במצות הנעימות שלהם אין אנו מבקשין, שנאמר ובל אלחם במנעמיהם (שם שם תהלים קמ"א), ובמה אנו חפצים, במצות שלך, שנאמר כי עמך מקור חיים באורך נראה אור, וכתוב והלכו גוים לאורך (ישעיה ס ג). אמר ר' שמואל בר נחמני על ידי שהיו ישראל משמשין בעולם הזה לאור החמה [ביום], ולאור הלבנה [בלילה], לפי שהן צריכין לאורה, אבל לעולם הבא אינן צריכין להם, שנאמר לא יהיה לך עוד השמש לאור יומם ולנוגה הירח לא יאיר לך (שם ישעיהו ס יט), ומי מאיר להן הקב"ה, שנאמר והיה לך ה' לאור עולם (שם שם ישעיהו ס')

It is interesting to read Rabbi Simeon's comments regarding the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying "For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light will we see light (Tehillim / Psalms 36:10)." He says that the Lord asked the children of Israel if they desired to share Him in this world with the nations of the earth. Their response was to not let their heart be inclined to any evil thing (Tehillim / Psalms 141:4). The reason being "Because the nations of the earth are schemers, as the verse goes on to say Incline not my heart to making of schemes in wickedness with men who are skilled in iniquity." This is just like what David is saying in Tehillim / Psalms 36 regarding the wicked. They continue and point out that they do not want "dainty portions" which belong to the nations. Our portion is much greater because our portion is of the Lord, our inheritance is the Lord God Almighty! The children of Israel speak of not want to eat their dainties, they would rather have the "precepts" of the Lord because the Lord is the fountain of life. The midrash states "in Your light we will see light, and again Nations will walk at Your light (Isaiah 60:3)" and goes on to say that "In the age to come, Jerusalem will become a torch of light for all the nations as is said Nations will walk at Your light (Isaiah 60:3)." It is interesting, they say in the "world to come" (לפי שהן צריכין לאורה), Jerusalem will be a light to the nations. Will there be nations in the world to come or one nation of God's people? Usually when thinking of eternity, we think that we will all be one nation in the world to come. Will we all divide into different nationalities who serve the Living God in the world to come? (Food for thought...)

In the Apostolic Writings, we read about the Ecclesia (ἐκκλησία) the biblical description of all believers who are in Yeshua the Messiah. The members of the Ecclesia (assembly or congregation) are God's messengers to bear witness to the truth of God. The members of the ecclesia are filled with the light of God that is to be shown forth to the nations according to Yeshua in Matthew 5:14 Ὑμεῖς ἐστε τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου. οὐ δύναται πόλις κρυβῆναι ἐπάνω ὄρους κειμένη: 'You are the light (φῶς) of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; οὐδὲ καίουσιν λύχνον καὶ τιθέασιν αὐτὸν ὑπὸ τὸν μόδιον ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τὴν λυχνίαν, καὶ λάμπει

πᾶσιν τοῖς ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ. 5:15 *'nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. οὕτως λαμψάτω τὸ φῶς ὑμῶν ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὅπως ἴδωσιν ὑμῶν τὰ καλὰ ἔργα καὶ δοξάσωσιν τὸν πατέρα ὑμῶν τὸν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.* 5:16 *'Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. (NASB)* Yeshua tells us the light that is within us is set on a hill that goes out into the world. According to Midrash Tehillim 36, Part 6, we read the following:

Rabbi Phinneas taught in the name of rabbi Reuben, a time will come when the Holy One blessed be He, will bring Sinai, Tabor, and Carmel together and will establish Jerusalem upon their very tops, for it is said The mountain of the Lord's house will be established in the top of the mountains (Isaiah 2:2). Moreover, a time will come when the mountains will lead in the singing of Israel's songs, for it is said Kenaniah will be chief of the Levites, and will be first in song (1 Chronicles 15:22). (Midrash Tehillim 36, Part 6)

Rabbi Phinneas taught that Jerusalem will be placed upon a mountain top, the Lord's house will be established in the top of mountains. If our bodies are the Temple of the Holy Spirit, and we are set upon the mountain tops to shine forth the light of God to all men. Isn't that an interesting rabbinic parallel to the Apostolic writings, and specifically to the words of Yeshua himself? The Apostle John tells us that Yeshua is the "light of the world" in the gospel of *John 1:1-9*. Yeshua acknowledged that He is the light saying Ἐγὼ 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, Ἔτι μικρὸν χρόνον τὸ φῶς ἐν ὑμῖν ἐστίν. περιπατεῖτε ὡς τὸ φῶς ἔχετε, ἵνα μὴ σκοτία ὑμᾶς καταλάβῃ: καὶ ὁ περιπατῶν ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ οὐκ οἶδεν ποῦ ὑπάγει. ὡς τὸ φῶς ἔχετε, πιστεῦετε εἰς τὸ φῶς, ἵνα υἱοὶ φωτὸς γένησθε. 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*). So, seeking Yeshua and believing in the light which is the truth, God's Messiah, His savior and redeemer, His word the Scriptures, we become the sons of God and of truth. Midrash Tehillim 36, Part 6 concludes saying "The word Kenaniah is to be read that which was established by the Lord, for the word comes from the same stem as nakon (established), which occurs in the verse The mountain of the Lord's house will be established (nakon)." The midrash teaches that the Lord is our redeemer, He is our light, He is the truth, and he is a much greater portion than the dainties of the nations.

Midrash Tehillim 36, Part 8 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying "Another comment on O continue Your lovingkindness unto them that know You." The homiletic introduction to the Midrash states "Rabbi Isaac said, One generation passes away, and another generation comes (*Ecclesiastes 1:4*), One nation comes and another nation goes; But the land abides forever." The rabbis open with generations and nations come and go but the land abides forever and make a reference to the land being Israel.

Midrash Summary on Land-Israel

1. *But the land abides forever; that is, the children of Israel, to whom it is said You will be a delight-some land (Malachi 3:12), abide forever.*
2. *Again, the word land refers to Israel in the phrase until the day of captivity of the land (Judges 18:30).*
3. *For how can one speak of a land's being led into captivity?*
4. *Therefore, by land are meant the children of Israel.*

In the Torah, the idea for a Land of Israel is revealed in parallel with the People of Israel. God's covenant

with Abraham included a promise that Abraham's descendants will inherit the area known as the Eretz Yisrael (Land of Israel). According to the biblical narrative, the transition into slavery (Genesis to Exodus) and the Lord God liberating the descendants of Israel from slavery and the People of Israel, the Torah teaches us that the end goal of the deliverance and journey in the wilderness is to inhabit (dwell or live in) the Promised Land. In addition to this, Israel's tenancy in the Land is conditional. The Land is given to the Children of Israel with the provision that they live up to certain moral and religious standards (see *Vayikra / Leviticus 18:26*). If these conditions are not met, there is a prophetic word that exile will result (see *Vayikra / Leviticus 26:32*). So there is a connection between behavior and residency in the Land of Israel. Note also that the indigenous peoples of Canaan lost their claim to the Land because of their ethical and religious failings, i.e. they served false gods (*Vayikra / Leviticus 18:24*), and the Rabbis decreed that non-idolatrous gentiles (i.e. ethical ones) were permitted to reside in the Land. Even though the Children of Israel live in the Land, the Lord God retains ownership. This is emphasized in the agricultural commandments to Israel in the Torah. The requirement to leave the corner of one's field for the poor (pe'ah), abstain from eating the fruits of a new tree (orlah), and let the land lie fallow every seventh year (shemitta), among other similar laws, all stress God's right to divvy out produce as He sees fit. Additionally, all sales and transfers of land were voided during the Jubilee year, a rule that emphasized that the Land is the Lord's permanently. The Land of Israel is described as a land flowing with milk and honey (*Shemot / Exodus 3:8*). The prophet Zechariah states that the Land is "*admat ha-kodesh*," a "*holy ground/land*" (*Zechariah 2:16*). Other traditions highlight the inherent sacredness of the Land by stating that the sanctity of the Land is dependent upon the commandments fulfilled there. According to the Mishnah (*Kelim 1:6*), we read that the Land of Israel is holier than all other lands because certain sacrificial produce, for example, the omer, the first fruits, and the two Loaves, which are produced from the Land of Israel and not from other lands. In other words, Israel was not commanded to obey the agricultural commandments because Israel is holier than all other lands, rather the agricultural commandments themselves hallow the Land. Midrash Rabbah on *Vayikra / Leviticus 13:2* states "*The Holy One, blessed be he, further took the measure of all lands and found no land but the Land of Israel that was truly worthy for the people Israel.*" Taking all of these things into consideration, in light of what Midrash Tehillim 36, Part 8 is saying, the Land is referring to Israel, implies that "*we are God's portion and He is ours.*" The land of Israel stands apart, is different, and designated by God; in a similar manner, we are also set apart, different, and designated by God and for this we should stand apart from the world, not that we are to separate ourselves but that our lives should characterize who we are, holy, and righteous before God. The Land of Israel is also described as the land "*of the book*," and are we not considered the "*people of the Book*" too? It is the land that the Lord considers gift-worthy to His people. The Lord has a different set of standards for this land, and in parallel fashion for us too. Thus, the uniqueness of the Land, the covenant relationship of the Land, and the people, it is no surprise that the rabbis say "*the word land refers to Israel.*" The expression of the land and Israel used throughout Jewish writings and what we find in the holy Scriptures, is a great reminder that we are holy because God is holy, He has promised us great things because we are God's portion and He is ours. Let's Pray!

Heavenly Father,

Truly You are worthy to be praised! Help us in all that we do to give thanks unto You Lord. We desire to live holy and righteous lives because You have separated us as holy unto Yourself in Your Son Yeshua the Messiah. We thank You Lord for sending Your son Yeshua that we may enter into the salvation You have provided according to Your righteousness. Thank you Lord for these writings so that we can think a little more deeply about our faith and who we are in the Messiah Yeshua. Help us to apply these truths to our lives so that we can dedicate our lives to You daily. We praise Your Holy Name and give You all of the honor, and the glory, and the praise forever and ever.

In Yeshua's (Jesus') Name we pray! Amen!

Be Blessed in Yeshua, Christ our Messiah!

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

Notes