

Tehillim / Psalms 43 | ספר תהילים מג

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The One who pleads on our behalf

This week's study is from *Tehillim / Psalms 43:1-5*, the Psalm opens with David asking the Lord to vindicate him saying *43:1 Vindicate me, O God, and plead my case against an ungodly nation; O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man!* (NASB) When David asks the Lord deliver him from an ungodly nation, what nation is he referring to? He goes on to state the Lord is his strength (*ב- כִּי-אֲתָהּ | אֱלֹהֵי מְעוּזֵי לְמָה זָנַחְתָּנִי לְמָה-קָדַר אֶתְהַלֵּךְ בְּלַחֲץ אוֹיֵב:) 43:2 For You are the God of my strength; why have You rejected me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? NASB*) He appears to parallel the oppression of his enemy to the Lord rejecting him. He continues saying *43:3 O send out Your light and Your truth, let them lead me; Let them bring me to Your holy hill And to Your dwelling places.* (NASB) David asks that the “light” of God goes forth and he states “let them lead me” (הַמָּה יִנְחֹנֵנִי). Who is it he is referring to, the light? What is the meaning of God sending forth His light? He is asking to be led to the holy mountain and God’s dwelling place. Why are mountains and high places considered dwelling places of the Lord God Almighty or of the gods of the nations? He continues saying *ד וְאֶבֹאֶהָ | 43:4 Then I will go to the altar of God, To God my exceeding joy; And upon the lyre I shall praise You, O God, my God.* (NASB) How important is it to go before the Lord and to the Altar with joy according to the Torah? David concludes his Psalm saying *ה מַה- 43:5 Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.* (NASB) Notice how David seems to speak to his soul in the third person. Is there a difference between the soul and the spirit? Our help is in the Lord and in His presence in our lives.

עברית Hebrew

ארמי Aramaic

ελληνικός Greek

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<p>ספר תהלים פרק מג</p> <p>א שְׁפֹטֵנִי אֱלֹהִים וְרִיבָה רִיבֵי מְגוּי לֹא-חֲסִיד מְאִישׁ-מְרָמָה וְעוֹלָה תְּפַלְטֵנִי: ב כִּי-אֲתָהּ אֱלֹהֵי מְעוּזֵי זֵי לְמָה זָנַחְתָּנִי לְמָה-קָדַר אֶתְהַלֵּךְ בְּלַחֲץ אוֹיֵב: ג שְׁלַח-אוֹרְךָ וְאֶמְתָּךְ הַמָּה יִנְחֹנֵנִי יְבִיאֹנֵנִי אֶל-הַר-קְדְּשֶׁךָ וְאֶל-מִשְׁכְּנֹתֶיךָ: ד וְאֶבֹאֶהָ אֶל-מִזְבֵּחַ אֱלֹהִים אֶל-שְׁמַחַת גִּילֵי וְאוֹדְךָ בְּכִנּוֹר אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵי: ה מַה-תִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה וּמַה-תִּהְיֶה עָלַי הוֹחֵלִי לְאֱלֹהִים כִּי-עוֹד אוֹדְנֹו יִשׁוּ-עַת פָּנָי וְאֵלֶיךָ:</p>	<p>ספר טוביה פרק מג</p> <p>א דון יתי יהוה אלהא בדין קשוט ועלך למנצי מצותי מן עמא דלא זכאי חסיד מן גבר נכיל וטלומא תשובינני: ב ארום ארי אנת הוא אלהא עושני למה שבקתני אנשיתני למה חכיר בקיב־לא אזיל בדחוק בעיל דבבא: ג שדר נהורך והמנותך הינון אינון ידברונני יעלון יתי לטור בית מוקדשא ומדרשי בית שכינתך: ד ואעול לקרבא קורב־ניה למדבח אלהי יהוה לות אלהי די מי־ניה חדות בעותי ואודי קדמך בכינורא יהוה אלהי: ה מה תתמכין נפשי ומה תרגישי עלי אוריכי לאלהא ארום תוב אשבחינני אודי קדמוהי בפורקניה דמן קדמוי די ארום הוא אלהי:</p>	<p>ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 43</p> <p>43:1 ψαλμός τῷ Δαυὶδ κρῖνόν με ὁ θεός καὶ δίκασον τὴν δίκην μου ἐξ ἔθνους οὐχ ὀσίου ἀπὸ ἀνθρώπου ἀδίκου καὶ δολίου ῥύσαι με 43:2 ὅτι σὺ εἶ ὁ θεός κραταιώμα μου ἵνα τί ἀπώσω με καὶ ἵνα τί σκυθρωπάζων πορεύομαι ἐν τῷ ἐκθλίβειν τὸν ἐχθρόν μου 43:3 ἐξαπόστειλον τὸ φῶς σου καὶ τὴν ἀλήθειάν σου αὐτά με ὠδήγησαν καὶ ἤγαγόν με εἰς ὄρος ἁγίόν σου καὶ εἰς τὰ σκηνώματά σου 43:4 καὶ εἰσελεύσομαι πρὸς τὸ θυσιαστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν τὸν εὐφραίνοντα τὴν νεότητά μου ἐξομολογήσομαί σοι ἐν κιθάρα ὁ θεὸς ὁ θεός μου 43:5 ἵνα τί περιλῦπος εἶ ψυχὴ καὶ ἵνα τί συνταράσσεις με ἔλπισον ἐπὶ τὸν θεόν ὅτι ἐξομολογήσομαι αὐτῷ σωτήριον τοῦ προσώπου μου ὁ θεός μου</p>

<p>Tehillim / Psalms 43 43:1 Vindicate me, O God, and plead my case against an ungodly nation; O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man! 43:2 For You are the God of my strength; why have You rejected me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? 43:3 O send out Your light and Your truth, let them lead me; Let them bring me to Your holy hill And to Your dwelling places. 43:4 Then I will go to the altar of God, To God my exceeding joy; And upon the lyre I shall praise You, O God, my God. 43:5 Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God. (NASB)</p>	<p>Toviyah / Psalms Chapter 43 43:1 Judge me, O Lord with true judgment; it is for you to argue my case with a people that is not righteous; from the deceitful and oppressive man you will save me. 43:2 For you are God, my strength; why have you abandoned me? why do I go about in gloom at the oppression of the enemy? 43:3 Send your light and your faithfulness; they will guide me, they will bring me to the mount of the sanctuary and the academies, the place of your presence. 43:4 And I will come to make his sacrifice at the altar of my God the Lord; to my God from whom is the joy of my gladness; and I will give thanks in your presence with the lyre, O Lord my God. 43:5 Why will you be lowly, O my soul, and [why] will you rage against me? Wait for God, for again I will praise him[13] for the redemption that comes from his presence, for he is my God. (EMC)</p>	<p>Psalmoi / Psalms 43 A Psalm of David. 43:1 Judge me, o God, and plead my cause, against an ungodly nation: deliver me from the unjust and crafty man. 43:2 For thou, O God, art my strength: wherefore hast thou cast me off? and why do I go sad of countenance, while the enemy oppresses me? 43:3 Send forth thy light and thy truth: they have led me, and brought me to thy holy mountain, and to thy tabernacles. 43:4 And I will go in to the altar of God, to God who gladdens my youth: I will give thanks to thee on the harp, O God, my God. 43:5 Wherefore art thou very sad, O my soul? and wherefore dost thou trouble me? Hope in God; for I will give thanks to him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God. (LXX)</p>
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Bereshit / Genesis 13:5-9

13:5 Now Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. 13:6 And the land could not sustain them while dwelling together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to remain together. 13:7 And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram’s livestock and the herdsmen of Lot’s livestock. Now the Canaanite and the Perizzite were dwelling then in the land. 13:8 So Abram said to Lot, ‘Please let there be no strife between

you and me, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers. 13:9 'Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me; if to the left, then I will go to the right; or if to the right, then I will go to the left.' (NASB)

ה וגם-ללוט ההלך את-אברם הנה צאן-ובקר ואהלים: ו ולא-נשא אתם הארץ לשבת יחדו פי-הנה רכושם רב ולא יכלו לשבת יחדו: ז ויהי-ריב בין רעי מקנה-אברם ובין רעי מקנה-לוט והפנעני והפרזי אז ישב בארץ: ח ויאמר אברם אל-לוט אל-נא תהי מריבה ביני ובינה ובין רעי רעי פי-אנשים אחים אנחנו: ט הלא כל-הארץ לפניך הפרד נא מעלי אם-השמאל ואימנה ואם-הימין ואשמאילה:

Based upon the Torah, the men of Abraham and Lot were quarreling over land for their cattle. The men are striving or arguing with one another. In this sense David is asking the Lord to strive for his case, to argue on his behalf in the presence of the nations. Note that this is an ungodly nation, the Hebrew simply provides a negative term saying “*lo khasid*” (לא-חסיד) meaning “*not righteous*” or “*not pious.*” It is important to note that the root word for “*khasid*” (חסיד) is “*khesed*” (חסד) meaning “*grace,*” or “*lovingkindness.*” David’s understanding on the deliverance of the Lord is rooted in the covenant context. The nation he is asking the Lord to argue on his behalf against is an ungodly and wicked nation, one that is not in a covenant relationship with the Lord. When David asks the Lord to deliver him from an ungodly nation, what nation is he referring to? We might consider the following references from Parshiot Beshalach (*Shemot / Exodus 13:17-17:16*), Shoftim (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 16:18-21:9*), and Ki Tetze (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19*):

Shemot / Exodus 17:5-7

17:5 Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 17:6 'Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.' And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. 17:7 He named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the Lord, saying, 'Is the Lord among us, or not?' (NASB)

ה ויאמר יהוה אל-משה עבר לפני העם וקח אתה מזקני ישראל ומטה אשר הכית בו את-היאר קח בידך והלכת: ו הנני עימד לפניך שם | על-הצור בחרב והכית בצור ויצאו ממנו מים ושתה העם ויעש כן משה לעיני זקני ישראל: ז ויקרא שם המקום מסה ומריבה על-ריב | בני ישראל ועל נפתם את-יהוה לאמר היש יהוה בקרבנו אם-אין:

Devarim / Deuteronomy 21:1-7

21:1 'If a slain person is found lying in the open country in the land which the Lord your God gives you to possess, and it is not known who has struck him, 21:2 then your elders and your judges shall go out and measure the distance to the cities which are around the slain one. 21:3 'It shall be that the city which is nearest to the slain man, that is, the elders of that city, shall take a heifer of the herd, which has not been worked and which has not pulled in a yoke; 21:4 and the elders of that city shall bring the heifer down to a valley with running water, which has not been plowed or sown, and shall break the heifer's neck there in the valley. 21:5 'Then the priests, the sons of Levi, shall come near, for the Lord your God has chosen them to serve Him and to bless in the name of the Lord; and every dispute and every assault shall be settled by them. 21:6 'All the elders of that city which is nearest to the slain man shall wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley; 21:7 and they shall answer

and say, 'Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it. (NASB)

א כי-ימצא חלל באדם אשר יהיה אלהיך נתן לך לרשתה נפל בשדה לא נודע מי הפהו: ב ויצאו זקניה ושפטיה ומדדו אל-הערים אשר סביבת החלל: ג והיה העיר הקרבה אל-החלל ולקחו זקני העיר והוא עגלת בקר אשר לא-עבד בה אשר לא-משכה בעל: ד והורדו זקני העיר והוא את-העגלה אל-נחל איתן אשר לא-יעבד בו ולא יזרע וערפו-שם את-העגלה בנחל: ה ונגשו הכהנים בני לוי כי הם בחר יהיה אלהיך לשרתו ולברך בשם יהיה ועל-פיהם יהיה כל-ריב וכל-נגע: ו וכל זקני העיר והוא הקרבים אל-החלל ירחצו את-ידיהם על-העגלה הערופה בנחל: [מפטיר] ז וענו ואמרו ידינו לא שפכה [שפכו] את-הדם הזה ועינינו לא ראו:

Devarim / Deuteronomy 25:1-3

25:1 'If there is a dispute between men and they go to court, and the judges decide their case, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked, 25:2 then it shall be if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, the judge shall then make him lie down and be beaten in his presence with the number of stripes according to his guilt. 25:3 'He may beat him forty times but no more, so that he does not beat him with many more stripes than these and your brother is not degraded in your eyes. (NASB)

א כי-יהיה ריב בין אנשים ונגשו אל-המשפט ושפטום והצדיקו את-הצדיק והרשיעו את-הרשע: ב והיה אם-בן הכות הרשע והפילו השפט והפיהו לפניו כדי רשעתו במספר: ג ארבעים יכנו לא יסוף פן-יסוף להפתו על-אלה מכה רבה ונקלה אחיד לעיניך:

According to Parashat Beshalach (*Shemot / Exodus 13:17-17:16*) the Scriptures state that the Children of Israel quarreled with God and tested the Lord asking whether the Lord was among them because there was not water. As a result, Moshe named the place "Massah and Meribah." In Parashat Shoftim (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 16:18-21:9*) we read about the command regarding the slain man (murder). According to the command, the heifer is brought to a valley with running water, its neck is broken, and the men who belong to the nearest city wash their hands over the heifer stating they did not kill this man. The Scriptures state that the levites who are to judge over these things are to decide every dispute (כל-ריב). In Parashat Ki Tetze (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19*) we read that a dispute (ריב) between two men to be taken to the court and the judges will decide the case and justify the righteous and condemn the wicked. Within each of these cases, from a Torah perspective, the pleading or arguing over a dispute is performed in an orderly manner and within the covenant context. Righteous and holy men sit as judges before God and hear the case. Therefore, when David asks for the Lord to plead his case against an ungodly nation, was he referring to men of Israel? This very well may be the case since he is asking for justice and vindication rather than deliverance.

David contrasts asking the Lord to plead for him on behalf of an unrighteous nation, to the Lord delivering him from the deceitful and unjust man. Yeshua the Messiah said on the sermon on the mount, those who are gentle will inherit the earth. The Greek word used for "gentle" (πραεῖς) has the meaning to be "humble, meek, gentle, and submissive." These qualities of gentleness show to be a response to faith and maturity, faith that God controls the events of life. A peacemaker provides us with further meaning on what it means to be gentle. A peacemaker does not have within his heart pride to overpower someone but trusts in the Lord and seeks to make peace with all men. Yeshua goes on to say those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, they will be satisfied, and the parallel is to those who are pure in heart will see God. In these Scriptures, one's soul is that which is thirsting and hungering for righteousness. Within the Torah context, the covenant relationship with the Lord and the Holy Spirit working in our lives we should have a desire for righteousness, this desire should fill up our entire life. Just as we seek to find food and drink for our bodies in this world, we also should have a desire to seek after righteousness to give food and drink for our souls. Our food and drink is found in the Lord and for our the Spirit, in the Word of God.

ב כִּי-אַתָּה | אֱלֹהֵי מַעוֹזַי לָמָּה זָנַחְתָּנִי לָמָּה-קָדַרְתָּ David indicates this saying the Lord is his strength (אֱלֹהֵי מַעוֹזַי לָמָּה זָנַחְתָּנִי לָמָּה-קָדַרְתָּ) *43:2 For You are the God of my strength; why have You rejected me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? NASB*) He appears to parallel the oppression of his enemy to the Lord rejecting him. According to a previous Psalm (*Tehillim / Psalms 9*), David states that the Lord abides forever and He has established His throne forever. Note that David says “*Le’olam*” (לְעוֹלָם) meaning as an adverb “*for ever, unfailingly, eternally,*” the Lord is eternal and therefore His judgment or His ruling will hold forever.

Tehillim / Psalms 9:7-10

9:7 But the Lord abides forever; He has established His throne for judgment, 9:8 And He will judge the world in righteousness; He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity. 9:9 The Lord also will be a stronghold for the oppressed, A stronghold in times of trouble; 9:10 And those who know Your name will put their trust in You, For You, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You. (NASB)

ח וַיְהִי לְעוֹלָם יֵשֶׁב כּוֹנֵן לְמִשְׁפַּט כְּסָאוֹ: ט וְהוּא יִשְׁפֹּט-תִבְלַל בְּצַדִּיק יִדְוִן לְאַמִּים בְּמִישְׁרִים: י וַיְהִי יְהִי לְעוֹלָם יֵשֶׁב כּוֹנֵן לְמִשְׁפַּט כְּסָאוֹ: ט וְהוּא יִשְׁפֹּט-תִבְלַל בְּצַדִּיק יִדְוִן לְאַמִּים בְּמִישְׁרִים: י וַיְהִי יְהִי לְעוֹלָם יֵשֶׁב כּוֹנֵן לְמִשְׁפַּט כְּסָאוֹ: יא וַיִּבְטְחוּ בָּךְ יוֹדְעֵי שְׁמֶךָ כִּי לֹא-עֲזַבְתָּ דְרָשֶׁיךָ יְהִי:

These scriptures are telling us that we can find refuge in the Word of God and in the Lord God Almighty Himself. He is our strength and a place of hope during the desperate times of life. Those who seek the Lord know His name (וַיִּבְטְחוּ בָּךְ יוֹדְעֵי שְׁמֶךָ), those who know the name of God, trust in Him because they know He will never fail them. The result of God’s righteous judgment, His everlasting justice that has been established, He will be praised forever, *9:11 Sing praises to the Lord, who dwells in Zion; Declare among the peoples His deeds. (NASB)* How often today do people believe the Lord has forsaken them and in turn they themselves forsake the Lord? To know the name of God, is this a proof text for the Sacred Name movement? To know the Name of God is to know him according to his historical interaction with mankind. This calls to remembrance all that He has done and so we can focus upon His actions, who He is, a Holy and Righteous Judge. Thus, each day, we can call to memory how the Lord has worked in each of our lives, including that which is written of our fathers in the Scriptures. All who know the Lord in this sense will put their trust in Him because He is actively working in the life of the believer. A person may have a sense of being forsaken like David is saying here in *Tehillim / Psalms 43:2* or *Tehillim / Psalms 22:1*, but he was never forsaken. This is implied in *Tehillim / Psalms 37:28*, the Lord “*forsaketh not His saints; they are preserved forever.*”

ב אַרוֹם אַרִי אַנְתָּ הוּא אֱלֹהֵי עוֹשְׁנֵי לָמָּה שִׁבַּקְתָּנִי אַנְשִׁיתִנִי לָמָּה חָכִיר בְּקִי׃ The Aramaic Targum states *43:2 For you are God, my strength; why have you abandoned me? Why do I go about in gloom at the oppression of the enemy? (EMC)* The Septuagint states *43:2 ὅτι σὺ εἶ ὁ θεός κραταίωμα μου ἵνα τί ἀπόσω με καὶ ἵνα τί σκυθρωπάζων πορεύομαι ἐν τῷ ἐκθλίβειν τὸν ἐχθρόν μου 43:2 For thou, O God, art my strength: wherefore hast thou cast me off? And why do I go sad of countenance, while the enemy oppresses me? (LXX)* The obvious fact is that if we are oppressed by our enemies we are going to be depressed. When we realize that we cannot save ourselves, we seek the Lord and this may be the entire purpose of having trouble in this life. So we are continually reminded to turn to the Lord and to seek His face. With this perspective, we can honestly state that all things work together for good (*Romans 8:28*); this very well may be the perspective that the Apostle Paul had when writing the letter to the Romans.

ג שְׁלַח-אוֹרְךָ וְאַמְתָּךְ הַמָּה יִנְחֹנֵנִי בִּיאוֹנֵי אֶל-הַר-קְדִישְׁךָ וְאֶל- David continues in his Psalm saying *43:3 O send out Your light and Your truth, let them lead me; Let them bring me to Your holy hill And to Your dwelling places. (NASB)* David asks that the “*light*” of God goes forth and he states “*let them lead me*” (הַמָּה יִנְחֹנֵנִי). Who is it he is referring to, the light? What is the meaning of God sending forth His light? We might be able to gain some insight into this based upon what the prophet Isaiah said in *Isaiah 58*.

Isaiah 58:3-59:2

58:3 'Why have we fasted and You do not see? Why have we humbled ourselves and You do not notice?' Behold, on the day of your fast you find your desire, And drive hard all your workers. 58:4 'Behold, you fast for contention and strife and to strike with a wicked fist. You do not fast like you do today to make your voice heard on high. 58:5 'Is it a fast like this which I choose, a day for a man to humble himself? Is it for bowing one's head like a reed And for spreading out sackcloth and ashes as a bed? Will you call this a fast, even an acceptable day to the Lord? 58:6 'Is this not the fast which I choose, To loosen the bonds of wickedness, To undo the bands of the yoke, And to let the oppressed go free And break every yoke? 58:7 'Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry And bring the homeless poor into the house; When you see the naked, to cover him; And not to hide yourself from your own flesh? 8:8 'Then your light will break out like the dawn, And your recovery will speedily spring forth; And your righteousness will go before you; The glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. 58:9 'Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; You will cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.' If you remove the yoke from your midst, The pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness, 58:10 And if you give yourself to the hungry And satisfy the desire of the afflicted, Then your light will rise in darkness And your gloom will become like midday. 58:11 'And the Lord will continually guide you, And satisfy your desire in scorched places, And give strength to your bones; And you will be like a watered garden, And like a spring of water whose waters do not fail. 58:12 'Those from among you will rebuild the ancient ruins; You will raise up the age-old foundations; And you will be called the repairer of the breach, The restorer of the streets in which to dwell. 58:13 'If because of the sabbath, you turn your foot From doing your own pleasure on My holy day, And call the sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, And honor it, desisting from your own ways, From seeking your own pleasure And speaking your own word, 58:14 Then you will take delight in the Lord, And I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; And I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father; For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.' 59:1 Behold, the Lord's hand is not so short That it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull That it cannot hear. 59:2 But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear. (NASB)

Isaiah begins speaking of fasting for the purpose of getting a response from the Lord, so the Lord will hear and save the nation. He says that the fasting of the people are for "contention, strife, and to strike with a wicked fist." Who would fast for these things or with that in mind? Their fasting is for the purpose of making their voice be heard on high and the people go about swaying, bowing the head, and laying upon sackcloth and ashes. According to Isaiah, these things are not the purpose of fasting and in fact fasting for the purpose of "loosening the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke of slavery, to let the oppressed go free, to divide your bread with the hungry, to give the poor a place to live, and to cloth the naked." Isaiah says only 8:8 'Then your light will break out like the dawn, And your recovery will speedily spring forth; And your righteousness will go before you; The glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. (NASB) In addition to this, Isaiah says 58:10 And if you give yourself to the hungry And satisfy the desire of the afflicted, Then your light will rise in darkness And your gloom will become like midday. (NASB) The light that goes forth are the righteous deeds that we do for others and for the Lord. Living righteously, doing good to the poor and being innocent before the Lord our God, these are the things Yeshua the Messiah taught us when he said what he did in *Matthew 19:13-15*.

Matthew 19:13-15

19:13 Then some children were brought to Him so that He might lay His hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them. 19:14 But Jesus said, 'Let the children alone, and do

not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.’
19:15 *After laying His hands on them, He departed from there. (NASB)*

Yeshua said that the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these (children). If we consider the child, he is innocent and he is completely dependent upon his parents for support and life, food, clothes, being taught to read, understanding the Lord, prayers, having relationships with others, family, and for making him clean from dirty diapers, etc, and for all intents and purposes the baby is considered “poor;” because he came into this world with nothing. We are to be in like manner, to be innocent, to take care of the poor, and to provide for those in need. The text in Isaiah concludes saying 59:1 *Behold, the Lord’s hand is not so short That it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull That it cannot hear. 59:2 But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear. (NASB)* The light that David is speaking of in the Psalm, his asking the Lord to send forth His light and truth, this is the very thing that Isaiah is speaking of. David says “*Let them bring me to Your holy hill And to Your dwelling places*” indicates that he is expecting the Lord to work in the hearts of his enemies to be kind to the poor and innocent, which he considers himself to be, and to bring him to the holy Hill of the Lord. The “*holy Hill*” was chosen by David, according to 2 *Chronicles 3:1-2*, because the Lord had appeared to him there.

2 Chronicles 3:1-2

3:1 Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. 3:2 He began to build on the second day in the second month of the fourth year of his reign. (NASB)

David asks the Lord to speak to the hearts of his enemies so they would bring him to the holy mountain of God’s dwelling place. Why are mountains and high places considered dwelling places of the Lord God Almighty or of the gods of the nations? According to the Scriptures, high places were utilized as places of worship. These were either elevated pieces of ground, raised altars in the valley, or a place located on the top of a mountain. According to the Torah, in Parashat Massei (*Bamidbar / Numbers 33:52*) and Parashat Bechukotai (*Vayikra / Leviticus 26:30*), high places were dedicated to idol worship by the nations and especially among the Moabites (*Isaiah 16:12*). These places often included an altar along with a sacred object such as a stone pillar or wooden pole to identify the deity of worship. In the Torah, the “*High Place*” is translated from the Hebrew word בַּמָּה (bamah, plural בַּמֹּת bamot). In the synagogue, the “*High Place*” from which the Torah is read is called the “*bemah*.”

Not all high places were dedicated to idol worship. They played a major role in Israel’s worship, for example the earliest mention of the site of worship is found in *Bereshit / Genesis 12:6-8* where Abram built an altar to the Lord at Shechem and Hebron. Abraham also built an altar in the region of Moriah and was willing to sacrifice his son there (see *Bereshit / Genesis 22:1-2*). This is the location that is traditionally believed to be the same place where the Lord spoke to David and King Solomon later built the Temple in Jerusalem. Note also that Jacob set up a stone pillar to the Lord at Bethel (*Bereshit / Genesis 28:18-19*), and Moshe met God on the mountain of Sinai (*Shemot / Exodus 19:1-3*) which also would be considered a high place. Reading on in the books of the prophets, Joshua set up stone pillars after crossing the Jordan (*Joshua 4:20*) and considered this a high place of worship because the Israelites “*came up from*” the Jordan onto higher ground. The high places were visited regularly by the prophet Samuel (see *1 Samuel 7:16*). High places are again mentioned as sites of Canaanite idol worship (*Judges 3:19*) which extended into the period of Elijah (see *1 Kings 18:16-40*). According to the Torah, the Lord chose only one high place where the sacrifice was authorized, and that was the temple in Jerusalem (*2 Chronicles 3:1*). The Lord God commanded that all other high places to be destroyed and it was King Josiah who finally destroyed them according to *2 Kings 22-23*.

In the Tanach, the בַּמָּה (bamah) is mentioned 117 times as the high places which are essentially the centers for Canaanite idol worship that Israel was commanded to tear down. However, these places became

idols that subtly seduced God's people year after year and we read in the biblical history that they seemed to be unable to stay away. What about today? Are the followers of Christ still tempted by the high places? Let's ask the question this way, what kind of idols exist today that tempt believers? How about materialism, sex, and selfishness? What we can learn from the ancient idol worship at these high places is that these were a reoccurring (repetitive) problem and it was very seductive for the people of Israel. The fact that the high places are mentioned 117 times should lead us to study this more in-depth. According to *1 Kings 14:23*, the Canaanites "*built for themselves high places and sacred pillars and Asherim on every high hill and beneath every luxuriant tree.*" It would have been interesting to see how polluted the land of Israel was at that time with idol worship. Before Israel crossed the Jordan into the promised land, Moshe exhorted the people to "*demolish all their high places ... or they will become as pricks in your eyes and as thorns in your sides*" (see *Bamidbar / Numbers 33:52, 55*). What particularly was so dangerous about these Canaanite deities? Let's look at a deities that were worshiped.

Summary of Canaanite Deities

- **EI** - supreme head of the Canaanite pantheon of gods, supposedly the father of creation.
- **Baal** - lord of earth and rain (Baal was prayed to for successful harvest in a dry land).
- **Ashtoreth** - goddess of fertility. Canaanite farmers visited her shrines to mate with cult prostitutes to guarantee crop fertility.
- **Dagon** - principal deity of the Philistines. Dagon means grain in Hebrew and Ugaritic and is associated with the wheat harvest. In *1 Chronicles 10: 8-10*, when the Philistines found King Saul's dead body on Mount Gilboa, they "*fastened his head in the house of Dagon.*"
- **Molech** - Ammonite deity to whom children were sacrificed. At Gezer, archaeologists have found clay jars containing the charred bones of babies.
- **Chemosh** - a Moabite deity, "*honored with horribly cruel rites like those of Molech, to whom children were sacrificed in the fire*" (Unger's Bible Dictionary).

These are only six of the 26 major Canaanite gods and goddesses. The High places were not harmless shrines, God's people were also seduced to sin and murder at these altars. Isaiah rebuked them: "*Are you not children of rebellion ... who inflame yourselves among the oaks, under every luxuriant tree, who slaughter the children in the ravines?*" (*Isaiah 57:4-5*). In addition to this, King Solomon succumbed to the high places by his Canaanite wives and built high places for Chemosh and Molech on the mountain east of Jerusalem. These Canaanite gods are involved with human sacrifice. How could Solomon have been so deceived to commit human sacrifice and the murder of the innocent?

Today we don't construct idolatrous clay figurines of Baal or attend worship services for Asherah, but our temptations are just as seductive and perhaps even more subtle than these high places in these ancient days. People today may avoid the obvious "*high places*" such as theft, child abuse or explosive anger. However, we tend to be casual about other sins such as covetousness, envy, worry, pride, sexual sin, gossip, strife, and dishonoring your mother and father to name a few. (*Galatians 5:19-21*). Would you consider these modern versions of the "*high places?*" Some things to think about and consider in our own lives, is to ask "*Have I given myself permission to adopt a casual attitude towards sin?*" The Lord commanded to

drive out the inhabitants of the land of Canaan because of their wickedness, not because of the righteousness of Israel (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 9:5*). The Lord told Israel to take drastic measures, to utterly destroy these places. Yeshua said to gouge out the eye and cut off the hand that sins (*Matthew 5:30*). Israel on the other hand took a casual attitude with the idolatrous high places for 800 years because they were intermingling with the local nations. Solomon is a great example of this as he grew older and acquired more and more wives, his wives turned his heart away from the Lord and towards the gods of the nations (*1 Kings 11:4*). If we take a casual attitude towards sin, we will begin to consider these high places of worship in our lives over the Lord God Almighty and Yeshua the Messiah. As we entertain the worldly high places in our hearts, our hearts will be drawn further and further from the Lord, our love for Yeshua, our Father in heaven, and our love for others will slip away. We need to guard our hearts very carefully and there are so many things today that can draw us away and entice us.

David continues saying **ד וְאֲבוֹאָהּ | אֶל-מִזְבֵּחַ אֱלֹהִים אֶל-אֵל שְׂמַחַת גִּילִי וְאֹדֶד בְּכִנּוּר אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵי:** *43:4 Then I will go to the altar of God, To God my exceeding joy; And upon the lyre I shall praise You, O God, my God. (NASB)* How important is it to go before the Lord and to the Altar with joy according to the Torah? Reading through the Torah, in Parashat Re'eh, *Devarim / Deuteronomy 12* appears to parallel the Psalm study thus far. The following is a summary of *Devarim / Deuteronomy 12*:

Summary of Devarim / Deuteronomy 12

- State explicitly these are the rules you must obey and be careful to follow in the land the Lord is giving you. **א אֵלֶּה הַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁמְרוּ:** (על-הָאָדָמָה: **לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָתַן יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֵיךָ לָךְ לְרִשְׁתָּהּ כָּל-הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר-אַתָּם חַיִּים**)
- Drive out the nations from the land and destroy all of their high places where they worship their gods. **ב אֲבַד תִּאֲבֹדוּן אֶת-כָּל-הַמִּקְדָּשִׁים אֲשֶׁר עָבְדוּ-** **שָׁם הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר אַתָּם יֹרְשִׁים אֶת-אֱלֹהֵיהֶם עַל-הַהָרִים הַרְּמִים וְעַל-הַגְּבְעוֹת** (וְתַחַת כָּל-עֵץ רַעְנָן)
- Worship the Lord God the way it is described in the Torah and not in the way the nations serve and worship their gods. **ד לֹא-תַעֲשׂוּן כִּן לַיהוָה.** **ה כִּי אִם-אֶל-הַמִּקְדָּשׁ אֲשֶׁר-יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מִכָּל-שְׂבִיטֵיכֶם לְשׂוּם אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:** (אֶת-שְׂמוֹ שָׁם לְשַׁכֵּנוֹ תִדְרָשׁוּ וּבָאתָ שָׁמָּה)
- Bring your sacrifices to the place the Lord chooses, and do so with joy. **ו וְאֲכַלְתֶּם-שָׁם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וּשְׂמַחְתֶּם בְּכָל מַשְׁלַח יְדְכֶם אֶתְּם וּבְחִיכֶם אֲשֶׁר** (בְּרִכָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ)
- The Lord will choose a special place (הַמִּקְדָּשׁ) to establish His name.
- Do not eat meat with the blood in it, pour it out on the ground. **ז רַק הַדָּם.** (לֹא תֹאכְלוּ עַל-הָאָרֶץ תִּשְׁפְּכוּ כַּמַּיִם: **יח כִּי אִם-לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ תֹאכְלוּ**)
- Be filled with joy in the sight of the Lord your God, be joyful in all you do. These are connected to the Sacrifices. **יח כִּי אִם-לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ בּוֹ אֶתָּה וּבְנֶה וּבְתֵךְ וְעַבְדְּךָ וְאִמְתְּךָ וְהַלְוֵי אֲשֶׁר בְּמִקְדָּשׁ אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ בּוֹ אֶתָּה וּבְנֶה וּבְתֵךְ וְעַבְדְּךָ וְאִמְתְּךָ וְהַלְוֵי אֲשֶׁר בְּמִקְדָּשׁ אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ בְּכָל מַשְׁלַח יְדְךָ:**

- It is repeated the Lord will choose the special place (הַמְקוֹם), bring the sacrifices to this place, do not eat meat with blood in it, and do not serve the Lord like the nations serve their gods.
- Do not be trapped by asking questions about their gods saying “*How do these nations serve their gods? We’ll do it the same way.*” The Lord hates this and all the evil the nations have committed in worshipping their gods.
 לַהֲשִׁמֵר לְךָ פֶּן-תִּנְקַשׁ אֶת־רִיבֵיהֶם אֶת־רִיבֵי הַשְּׂמַדִּים מִפְּנֵיךָ וּפֶן-תִּדְרֹשׁ לְאֱלֹהֵיהֶם
 לֵאמֹר אֵיכָה יַעֲבֹדוּ הַגּוֹיִם הָאֵלֶּה אֶת־אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וְאָעֲשֶׂה-כֵן גַּם-אֲנִי: לֹא לֹא-תַעֲשֶׂה
 כֵּן לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי כָל-תּוֹעֵבֹת יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר שָׂנֵא עָשׂוּ לְאֱלֹהֵיהֶם כִּי גַם אֶת-בְּנֵיהֶם
 (וְאֶת-בְּנֹתֵיהֶם יִשְׂרְפוּ בְּאֵשׁ לְאֱלֹהֵיהֶם:)

Note in the first verse of *Devarim / Deuteronomy 12* in the Hebrew Scriptures we read these are to be obeyed so that you may live upon “*ha’adamah*” (הָאֲדָמָה) “*the land.*” What is important to note about this is that Moshe uses the word “*ha’adamah*” (הָאֲדָמָה) rather than “*ha’eretz*” (הָאֶרֶץ). The difference in word usage suggests these Scriptures apply for everyone, not just in the land of Israel. According to Parashat Lech Lecha (*Bereshit / Genesis 12:1-17:27*) the Lord calls Abram to a new land. In these Scriptures we learn that the Lord desires for us to be obedient to His call on our lives. The Lord God’s call on Abrams life was to go out from his land, from his father’s house, and from his people (וְיֵאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם לְךָ-לְךָ מֵאַרְצְךָ וּמִמְלוֹכְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל-הָאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֶרְאֶךָ (וּמִמְלוֹכְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל-הָאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֶרְאֶךָ) to a land that He will show him. The Lord promised to bless Abram and make him into a great nation (וְאָעֲשֶׂה לְךָ לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל) and that those who bless him the Lord will bless, and those who curse him the Lord will curse (וְאִבְרַכְתָּה מְבַרְכֶיךָ וּמְקַלְלֶיךָ אָאֵר). In God’s call on Abram we read that the Lord promises in Him all the families of the earth will be blessed (וּנְבָרְכוּ בְּךָ כָּל מִשְׁפְּחוֹת הָאֲדָמָה). In the Hebrew text we find the same Hebrew word “*ha’adamah*” (הָאֲדָמָה, Earth) is used to indicate that all of the families of the Earth will be blessed. The reason this word is used is to indicate that all will be blessed and does not restrict the blessing to only those who are in the land of Israel. The word *adamah* means ground based on its use in Parashat Bereshit, and was the reason the first man was named “*Adam*” because he was made from the ground. The Scriptures here state “*all of the families of the ground*” taking from the meaning that God created man from the dust of the earth (וַיִּיצֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם עֹפָר מִן-הָאֲדָמָה) in *Bereshit / Genesis 2:7*. The Targum Onkelos states that all the “*seed of the earth*” will be blessed (וַיִּתְבָּרְכוּן) or the seed of the ground; it is in this way that all the peoples of the earth are being referenced. The Hebrew Scriptures reveal the Lord’s plan to extend the covenant to all peoples at a future time. It is within these few verses, the Abrahamic Covenant, from *Bereshit / Genesis 12:1-4*, that all other covenants find their basis. The Mosaic covenant in the Torah expands upon the covenant of the Promised Land (Israel) establishing a dwelling place (הַמְקוֹם), the Mishkhan (Tabernacle), where the Lord God makes His name known. In Parashat Re’eh, those who live upon the earth, “*ha’adamah*” (הָאֲדָמָה), are to obeyed these commands. The importance of these commands is to not walk in wickedness in our lives, not to follow the way of the nations, not to serve the Lord God the way the nations do and the Scripture states explicitly:

Devarim / Deuteronomy 12:8-9

12:8 “You shall not do at all what we are doing here today, every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes; 12:9 for you have not as yet come to the resting place and the inheritance which the Lord your God is giving you. (NASB)

We are told to be careful that we do not live doing whatever we feel is right in our own eyes. This Scripture holds significant weight in light of what the Lord has done in Yeshua the Messiah (we are to remain / abide

in Him). Part of the command in the Torah, according to *Devarim / Deuteronomy 12*, is to go before the Lord with joy and thanksgiving. This is consistent with David's words in *Tehillim / Psalms 43:4* as he wrote: **וְאָבֹאֶה | אֶל-מִזְבֵּחַ אֱלֹהִים אֶל-אֵל שְׁמַחַת גִּילִי וְאוֹדֶה בְּכִנּוֹר אֱלֹהִים אֲלֹהֵי:** *43:4 Then I will go to the altar of God, To God my exceeding joy; And upon the lyre I shall praise You, O God, my God. (NASB)* Going before the Lord with joy and thanksgiving, serving the Lord, seeking Him for our help and salvation, and destroying the ways of the nations, not serving the Lord the way the nations serve their gods. These are the things we do to remain in Mashiach (Messiah) because honestly, can we live in sin and have fellowship with darkness and say we have fellowship with Yeshua and our Father in heaven? (see *1 john 1*)

ה מֵה-תְּשׁוּחָתִי | נַפְשִׁי וּמֵה-תַהֲרִמִּי עָלַי הוֹחִילִי לְאֱלֹהִים כִּי-עוֹד אוֹדְנוּ *43:5 Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God. (NASB)* David seems to be speaking to his soul in the third person or he may be speaking to each of us. The point that he is making is to trust in the Lord no matter whether circumstances seem to suggest that the Lord has forsaken us. There are times when it is easy to trust in God's love, to rejoice in his salvation, and to sing because He has been good to us. There are other times however when that is not so easy. Times when life is hard, when sorrow fills the heart, and we wonder if the Lord is even there for us like David is doing here in the Psalm. In these times of suffering and struggle, can we still trust in God's love? Can we rejoice? Can we sing with gladness to him? *Tehillim / Psalms 13* tells us that we can. Reading through *Tehillim / Psalms 13*, verses 5-6, suggest that David was going through a time of blessing. However, based upon the entire psalm, David is feeling forgotten by God (*13:1*), he is struggling with anguish and sorrow every day (*13:2*), and he is seeing his enemies appear to prevail over him and he's wondering how long this will go on (*13:2-4*). In the midst of his desperation, David pauses to confess his trust and joy in the Lord and he sings to celebrate God's goodness. He accomplishes this by thinking back to times when the Lord has rescued him in the past (*13:5*). He remembers that the Lord has been good to him (*13:6*). Remembering what the Lord has done in our own lives and according to the Scriptures gives us confidence to trust and believe in the Lord to rescue us from our troubles. David remembers what is true about the Lord and what is true regardless of the situation he is currently in. The Lord God is a God of "unfailing love" (*13:5*). This unfailing love is what was revealed to us in Yeshua the Messiah. Yeshua said that if we have seen him we have seen the Father in heaven (*John 14*). If we have Yeshua in our lives, we have the help of the countenance of our Father in heaven. Let's Pray!

Rabbinic Commentary

The Rabbinic Commentary (Midrash) on *Tehillim / Psalms 43* has 1 part. Reading through the Midrash we will be looking at Part 1. Let's begin by outlining *Midrash Tehillim Chapter 43, Part 1*.

Outline of Midrash Tehillim / Psalms, Chapter 43, Part 1

Part 1

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the **דִּבּוּר הַמַּתְחִיל** (Dibur Hamathil) saying " *Yet You are the God of my strength (Tehillim / Psalms 43:1-2).* "
- The **פְּתִיחָה** (Petihta) "the homiletic introduction" to the Midrash says " *Before You redeemed them, our fathers in Egypt did not ascribe strength to You with such words as The Lord is my strength and song (Shemot / Exodus 15:2).* "
- The **מָשָׁל** (mashal) "the parable," goes on to explain the **פְּתִיחָה** (Petihta), the rabbis go on to expand upon David's words regarding how God is his strength.
- The **נִמְשָׁל** (Nimshal) "expansion on the parable" expands upon the **מָשָׁל** (mashal), the rabbis speak of the Lord who is David's strength and then go on to describe how the Lord has been his strength.

national Israel from her enemies and they do not believe he has setup the kingdom of David. The Talmudic concept of *הַמוֹשִׁיעַ* (Hamashia) who will lead and rescue Israel from her enemies is derived from the Tanach and the root word “yasha” (ישע) meaning “to save.” “Yasha” (ישע) is also the root word for Yeshua (ישוע) which by the nature of his name provides us with a connection back to the Talmudic concept of “Hamashia,” Yeshua the Messiah is savior and deliverer. We find the name of Yeshua throughout the Tanach and the following are a few examples. *Shemot / Exodus 15:2* ב עֲזִי וְזַמְרַת יְהוָה-לִי לִישׁוּעָה זֶה אֱלֹהֵי וְאַנְוָהוּ אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי 15:2 *The Lord is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation; This is my God, and I will praise Him; My father’s God, and I will extol Him. (NASB), Isaiah 26:1* א בְּיוֹם הַהוּא יוֹשֵׁר הַשִּׁיר-הַזֶּה 26:1 *In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: ‘We have a strong city; He sets up walls and ramparts for security. (NASB), Isaiah 49:8* ח אָמַר יְהוָה 49:8 *Thus says the Lord, ‘In a favorable time I have answered You, And in a day of salvation I have helped You; And I will keep You and give You for a covenant of the people, To restore the land, to make them inherit the desolate heritages; (NASB), Isaiah 52:7* ז מָה-נְאוּוּ עַל-הַהָרִים רַגְלֵי מְשִׁמֵּעַ שְׁלוֹם מְבַשֵּׂר טוֹב מִשְׁמִיעַ יְשׁוּעָה 52:7 *How lovely on the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who announces peace And brings good news of happiness, Who announces salvation, And says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’ (NASB), Isaiah 59:17* יז וַיִּלְבַּשׂ צְדָקָה כְּשָׂרָן וְכוּבַע יְשׁוּעָה בְּרָאשׁוֹ וַיִּלְבַּשׂ בְּגָדֵי נָקָם תְּלַבְּשֵׁת וַיַּעַט 59:17 *He put on righteousness like a breastplate, And a helmet of salvation on His head; And He put on garments of vengeance for clothing And wrapped Himself with zeal as a mantle. (NASB), Isaiah 60:18* יח לֹא-יִשְׁמַע עוֹד חֲמָס בְּאַרְצְךָ שָׂד וְשִׁבְרַת בְּגְבוּלֶיךָ וְקִרְאֵת יְשׁוּעָה חוֹמֹתֶיךָ וּשְׁעָרֶיךָ תִּהְיֶה: 60:18 *Violence will not be heard again in your land, Nor devastation or destruction within your borders; But you will call your walls salvation, and your gates praise. (NASB), Habakkuk 3:8* ח הַבְּנֵהָרִים חָרָה יְהוָה אִם-בְּנֵהָרִים אָפָה 3:8 *Did the Lord rage against the rivers, Or was Your anger against the rivers, Or was Your wrath against the sea, That You rode on Your horses, On Your chariots of salvation? (NASB), and Tehillim / Psalms 119:155* קנה רחוק מרשעים ישועה כי-חקיקה לא דרשו: 119:155 *Salvation is far from the wicked, For they do not seek Your statutes. (NASB)* The point is that the salvation of God directs our attention to the Lord God Almighty, our Father who is in heaven. He is the One who provides his salvation in the Messiah Yeshua.

In *Shemot / Exodus 15:2* it states *עֲזִי וְזַמְרַת יְהוָה-לִי לִישׁוּעָה זֶה אֱלֹהֵי וְאַנְוָהוּ אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי* “my strength and song ‘Yah’ He will be to me my salvation.” The Lord God is our salvation, our *ישועה*. The remainder of the scriptural occurrences of *ישועה* (Yeshua) speaks of God’s salvation such as in *Isaiah 52:7*, salvation is like the feet of him who brings good news and announces peace and proclaims “Your God reigns!” The walls and gates are referred to as our salvation in *Isaiah 60:18* as a reference to security, and to chariots, the mighty strength of God who is our salvation, the salvation of Israel (*Habakkuk 3:8*). There is no salvation (*ישועה*) for the wicked, God’s salvation is far from them (*Tehillim / Psalms 119:155*). In Parashat Beshalach, Moshe’s response to the people’s fear was יג וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-הָעָם אֶל-תִּירְאוּ הַתִּינָצְבוּ וַרְאוּ אֶת-יְשׁוּעַת יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר-יַעֲשֶׂה לָכֶם הַיּוֹם כִּי אֲשַׁר רְאִיתֶם אֶת-מִצְרַיִם הַיּוֹם לֹא תִסְפוּ לִרְאֹתָם עוֹד עַד-עוֹלָם: 14:13 *But Moses said to the people, ‘Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. (NASB)* The people did not yet understand the power of God to deliver them. Is this what David is thinking when he states according to the Aramaic Targum ב ארום ארי אנת הוא אלהא עושני למה שבקתני אנשיתני למה חכיר 43:2 *For you are God, my strength; why have you abandoned me? Why do I go about in gloom at the oppression of the enemy? (EMC)* He says the Lord God is his strength but questions whether the Lord has abandoned him. In Parashat Beshalach, the people did not trust the Lord until they saw His power first hand. The midrash states that David was not like Israel at the Red Sea saying the following:

But I, I am not like them. Even though You have not yet redeemed me, I ascribe strength unto You. For I say, You are the God of my strength. Then why have You cast me off? I not only ascribe strength to You, but I say O Lord, my Strength and my Stronghold (Jeremiah 16:19). Then, Why do I go mourning under the oppression of the enemy? (Tehillim / Psalms 43:2). (Midrash Tehillim 43, Part 1)

אני איני כן, אלא עד שלא גאלתני אני נותנת לך עוז, הוי כי אתה אלהי מעוזי. למה זנחתני. ולא זו בלבד, אלא ה' עזי ומעוזי (ירמיה טז יט). למה קודר אתהלך בלחץ אויב

The midrash makes a good observation, David ascribes strength to the Lord even though He has not been delivered from His enemies. Do you give God the glory and recognize His strength to help and deliver from troubles before the Lord has answered your prayer? David recognized the power and strength of God prior to his being delivered. He also recognized the importance of living in that power and strength and to seek the Lord for help continually. This is a very important concept that is driven forward in the Apostolic Writings. A few examples are given according to the epistle to the Ephesians and 1 Peter.

Ephesians 1:18-20

*1:18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 1:19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His **power** toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the **strength** of His might 1:20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places (NASB)*

Ephesians 6:10

*6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the **strength** of His might. (NASB)*

1 Peter 4:9-19

*4:9 Be hospitable to one another without complaint. 4:10 As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 4:11 Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the **strength** which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 4:12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; 4:13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. 4:14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 4:15 Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; 4:16 but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name. 4:17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 4:18 And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner? 4:19 Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right. (NASB)*

The Apostle Paul in *Ephesians 1:19*, speaks of the greatness of the power of God to those who believe and this is evidenced by the working of the “*strength*” of His might. Paul repeats in *Ephesians 6:10* to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. What is the strength of His might and what does it mean to be

strong in the Lord in the strength of His might? Peter says (*1 Peter 4:11*) that we serve by the strength that God supplies. What strength is needed to serve the Lord. Note that by serving others we are serving the Lord. Peter goes on to say that we serve in the strength of God so that in all things He (God) may be glorified through Yeshua the Messiah to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Peter continues saying that trials come for our testing and that we are to rejoice in the midst of these things because we are suffering with Christ. The exhortation here is with regard to grumbling and complaining and the power of God. Paul says “*do all things without grumbling or disputing*” (*Philippians 2:14*) because complaining is a form of “*lashon hara*” (evil speech). Grumbling is also a sign of weakness in faith. David illustrates the person with strong faith having confidence that the Lord is in control and working all things together for good for those who trust in Him (*Romans 8:28*).

Thinking on this idea of doing all things without grumbling or disputing and praising God for all things; it is interesting to note that Judaism teaches there is even a blessing for when one hears bad news. This is found in the phrase “*Blessed is the true judge*” (“*Baruch dayan emet,*” פְּרוּךְ אֱתָהּ אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְלֵךְ, (הָעוֹלָם דִּין הָאֱמֶת) which recognizes the Lord has performed an action. The source for this statement is found in the Talmud.

Talmud Bavli Berachot 60b

The great Sage Rabbi Akiva once arrived at a city. Upon arrival, he sought a place to lodge; however, no one provided him with one. He said, “All that God does, He does for the good!” and he went to sleep in a field. In the field he had with him a rooster, a donkey and a lamp. A wind came and blew out the candle. A cat came and ate the rooster. A lion came and ate the donkey. Rabbi Akiva said, “All that God does, He does for the good!” It turned out that an army came and captured the city.

Talmud Bavli Berachot 54a

Whatever measure God calculates for you, if it is good or bad, you should thank Him.

The idea is that negative things happen for a reason and the Lord is in control. The Apostles understood this Talmudic concept and wrote about it in the Apostolic Writings. Because of this story, we are taught by the apostles that we should always thank God for both the good and the bad things that happen in our lives. The Mishnaic Sages teach that “*One should thank God for the bad, just as he blesses God for the good, as the verse says, ‘You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul and with all of your means.’*” (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 6:5*) Here the Hebrew word for “*means*” (מְאֵדָה, meodecha) also translates as “*measure.*” The Talmud explains this passage as saying that one blesses God for the good with joy, likewise one should bless God with a complete heart, (*Talmud Berachot 60b*) a complete mind and willingly bless God for the not so good that befalls one. (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 222:2–3*) In a similar manner, the Apostle Paul urges us to not to “*grumble, as some of them did [in the wilderness], and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction*” (*1 Corinthians 10:10-11*). Isn’t that an interesting Apostolic parallel to the rabbis?

The midrash continues saying the following:

For from what did You redeem our fathers in Egypt? Was it not from the oppression with which the Egyptians oppressed them, of which God said, Moreover, I have seen the oppression (Shemot / Exodus 3:9)? For me, too, life is nothing but oppression by an enemy. Then why must I go about by myself mourning under the oppression of the enemy? Did You not send redemption at the hand of two redeemers to that generation, as is said He sent Moshe His servant, and Aaron whom He had chosen (Tehillim / Psalms 105:26)? Send two redeemers like them to this generation. O send out Your light and Your truth; let them lead me (Tehillim / Psalms 43:3), Your light being the prophet Elijah of the house of Aaron, of which it

is written *The seven lamps will give light in front of the menorah (Bamidbar / Numbers 8:2); and Your truth being the Messiah, son of David, as is written, The Lord has sworn in truth to David; He will not turn from it, of the fruit of your body will I set upon your throne (Tehillim / Psalms 132:11). Likewise, Scripture says, behold I will send you Elijah the prophet (Malachi 3:23) who is one redeemer, and speaks of the second redeemer in the verse Behold My servant whom I uphold (Isaiah 42:1). (Midrash Tehillim 43, Part 1)*

כמה גאלת את אבותינו ממצרים מן הלחץ שהיו לוחצין אותן, וכן הוא אומר וגם ראיתי את הלחץ (שמות ג ט), וגם אני אין לי אלא לחץ אויב, ולמה קודר אתהלך, ולא שלחת הגאולה לדור ההוא, אלא על ידי שנים גואלים, שנאמר שלח משה עבדו אהרן אשר בחר בו (תהלים קה כו), וגם לדור הזה שלח שנים כנגדן. שלח אורך ואמתך, אורך זה אליהו הנביא מבית אהרן, דכתיב ביה אל מול פני המנורה יאירו שבעת הנרות (במדבר ח ב), ואמתך זה משיח בן דוד, דכתיב נשבע ה' לדוד אמת לא ישוב (תהלים קלב יא), וכן הוא אומר הנה אנכי שולח לכם את אליהו הנביא (מלאכי ג כג), הרי אחד, והשני הן עבדי אתמך בו (ישעיה מב א)

The rabbis move on to speaking about redemption. They ask “*For from what did You redeem our fathers in Egypt?*” They say “*Was it not from the oppression with which the Egyptians oppressed them?*” They also say that the Lord brought redemption by the hand of two redeemers, Moshe and Aaron. They go on to draw a parallel with Moshe and Aaron to Elijah and the Messiah son of David. Note the connections being made between Elijah the prophet, the Messiah son of David, and Moshe in the midrash.

According to the Apostolic Writings, the Soferim (Scribes) sent men to question John the immerser (Baptist) asking him whether he was (i) Elijah (*John 1:21*) or (ii) the prophet (*John 1:21*) that Moshe wrote about in the Torah? When Philip found Nathaniel, he said “*We have found Him of whom Moshe in the Torah and also the prophets have written, Yeshua of Netzeret, the son of Joseph*” (*John 1:45*). The priests and Levites also come and asked whether he was the prophet that was to come as it was written in the Torah. John responded saying *καὶ ὠμολόγησεν ὅτι Ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμὶ ὁ Χριστός.* “*I am not the Messiah (משיח, Christ, Χριστός, Anointed one).*” John goes on saying that he is the one referred to in *Isaiah 40:3* “*A voice is calling, Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.*” (*NASB*) It is interesting that the priests and the Pharisees then ask John *τί οὖν βαπτίζεις εἰ σὺ οὐκ εἶ ὁ Χριστός οὐδὲ Ἠλίας οὐδὲ ὁ προφήτης* “*why do you baptize (βαπτίζεις, cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water, to wash one’s self, bathe) if you are not the Messiah (משיח, Christ, Χριστός, Anointed one), Eliyahu (Elijah, Ἠλίας), or the Prophet (προφήτης)?*” The understanding of the priests and Pharisees was that the Messiah and Prophet was whom God was going to rise up according to the Torah (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 18:15-22*). The Messiah would be the one who would lead people to the mikvaot (to the mikvah or baptism) in repentance from sin. The Mikvah brings the idea of personal repentance and turning towards God’s ways away from a life of sin. These statements on John reveal to us that in the 1st century, the priests, Pharisees, and the disciples of Yeshua understood *Devarim / Deuteronomy 18:15-22* to be a Messianic expectation of the coming of Yeshua the Messiah. In addition to this, *Acts 3:22-23* provides a direct connection to this Parashat Shoftim (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 16:18-21:9*) and this interpretation.

Yeshua performed many miracles, healing the sick, casting out demons, cleansing those with Tsaraat, and feeding thousands of people. As a result, the people began to ask whether this was “*the prophet*” who was to come into the world (*John 6:14*). Israel in the days of the first century had a messianic expectation based upon the Torah and what Moshe had written (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 18*). Peter identified Yeshua as the prophet that Moshe had written of (*Acts 3:22-23*) while speaking to the Sanhedrin. Stephen declared Yeshua as the promised Messiah saying “*This is that Moshe who said to the children of Yisrael, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear.’*” (*Acts 7:37-38 and Devarim / Deuteronomy 18*).

Studying Parashat Metzora (*Vayikra / Leviticus 14:1-15:33*) we learn about the ritual of cleansing

from Tsaraat (*Vayikra / Leviticus 14:1-32*), occurs outside the camp involving the sprinkling of blood, cedar wood, hyssop, scarlet thread, and a live pigeon along with a seven day cleansing period. The person then goes through the ritual of purification and is anointed in similar fashion as the priest, like Aaron and his sons; blood and olive oil are placed on the right earlobe, the right thumb, and the right big toe. Now it is important to understand that the person who is quarantined outside of the camp, he is not allowed to enter into the camp (city of Jerusalem), therefore he would be unable to notify the priest himself. He must request for a priest by sending word for the priest to come outside and meet with him. By this reasoning, we can learn about the work of the Messiah in this command to “*show one’s self to the Cohen*” (*Vayikra / Leviticus 13-14*). The work of the Messiah, as the Cohen, is looking and searching for those who are lost, those who are outside of the community. According to the Talmud on the laws of Tsaraat, the Messiah is looking for the lost at the city gates.

Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 98b

“Rab said: The world was created only on David’s account . Samuel said: On Moses account; Rabbi Johanan said: For the sake of the Messiah. What is his [the Messiah’s] name? — The School of Rabbi Shila said: His name is Shiloh, for it is written, until Shiloh come. The School of Rabbi Yannai said: His name is Yinnon, for it is written, His name shall endure forever: e’er the sun was, his name is Yinnon. The School of Rabbi Haninah maintained: His name is Haninah, as it is written, Where I will not give you Haninah. Others say: His name is Menahem the son of Hezekiah, for it is written, Because Menahem [‘the comforter’], that would relieve my soul, is far. The Rabbis said: His name is ‘the leper scholar,’ as it is written, Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him a leper, smitten of God, and afflicted.”

תלמוד בבלי סנהדרין דף צה.ב

אמר רב: לא אברי עלמא אלא לדוד. ושמואל אמר: למשה. ורבי יוחנן אמר: למשיח. מה שמו? דבי רבי שילא אמרי: שילה שמו, שנאמר (בראשית מ"ט) עד כי יבא שילה. דבי רבי ינאי אמרי: ינון שמו, שנאמר (תהלים ע"ב) יהי שמו לעולם לפני שמש ינון שמו. דבי רבי חנינה אמר: חנינה שמו, שנאמר (ירמיהו ט"ז) אשר לא אתן לכם חנינה. ויש אומרים מנחם בן חזקיה שמו, שנאמר (איכה א') כי רחוק ממני מנחם משיב נפשי. ורבנן אמרי: חיורא דבי רבי שמו שנאמר (ישעיהו נ"ג) אכן חליינו הוא נשא ומכאבינו סבלם ואנחנו חשבנו נגוע מכה אלהים ומענה.

The Talmud describes the rabbi’s asking the question, “*when will the Messiah come?*” and “*By what sign may I recognize him?*” The Talmud states that the world was created only on David’s account drawing a connection to David’s everlasting throne and his seed who will sit upon that throne. Samuel asks the question “*The Messiah – what is his name?*” Note how the Talmud states “... דבי רבי ...” “*the house of rabbi ...*” indicating the various schools of thought on the topic. The Sages say, the Messiah is the “*Leper Scholar,*” drawing their conclusion from the Scriptures (*Isaiah 53*) “*surely he has borne our grief’s and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him a leper, smitten of God and afflicted ...*” (*Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 98b*). The Sages believe the Messiah would be a Cohen that would bear our grief, carry our iniquity and sorrows (*these concepts are deeply rooted in the Torah on the role of the Cohen, see Parashat Kit Tisa*), and be smitten of God and afflicted. It is highly likely the Chief priests and elders in Yeshua’s day had these same interpretations in the first century. Based upon the Apostolic Writings, the lawyers and leaders in Yeshua’s day were unwilling to recognize their own Messianic expectations in rabbinic thought and the various messianic prophecies in the Tanach. They also refused to recognize the Maasim Tovim (Good works) Yeshua was performing, e.g. the healing of people stricken with Tsaraat.

According to Midrash Tehillim 43, Part 1, the rabbis speak of two redeemers, Moshe and Aaron, and parallel this to the Lord’s light and truth. They say the “*light*” is the prophet Elijah of the house of Aaron

and draw a parallel to the Menorah and the seven lamps that give light in the front of the Menorah. God's "truth" is the Messiah son of David and their proof text is the Lord saying to David "of the fruit of your body I set upon your throne (Tehillim / Psalms 132:11)." They again state:

Likewise, Scripture says, behold I will send you Elijah the prophet (Malachi 3:23) who is one redeemer, and speaks of the second redeemer in the verse Behold My servant whom I uphold (Isaiah 42:1). וכן הוא אומר הנה אנכי שולח לכם את אליה הנביא (מלאכי ג כג), הרי אחד, והשני (Isaiah 42:1). הן עבדי אתמך בו (ישעיה מב א) (Midrash Tehillim 43, Part 1)

The rabbis quote from *Malachi 3:23 (4:5)* and *Isaiah 42:1* making reference to Elijah and the Messiah.

Malachi 4:1-6

4:1 'For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze,' says the Lord of hosts, 'so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.' 4:2 'But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall. 4:3 'You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing,' says the Lord of hosts. 4:4 'Remember the law of Moses My servant, even the statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel. 4:5 'Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. 4:6 'He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.' (NASB)

Isaiah 42:1-8

42:1 'Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. 42:2 'He will not cry out or raise His voice, Nor make His voice heard in the street. 42:3 'A bruised reed He will not break And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; He will faithfully bring forth justice. 42:4 'He will not be disheartened or crushed Until He has established justice in the earth; And the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law.' 42:5 Thus says God the Lord, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread out the earth and its offspring, Who gives breath to the people on it And spirit to those who walk in it, 42:6 'I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you, And I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, As a light to the nations, 42:7 To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the dungeon And those who dwell in darkness from the prison. 42:8 'I am the Lord, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images. (NASB)

The prophet Malachi wrote that "But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings," the "sun of righteousness" reminds us of Midrash Tehillim 41, Part 4 which states "Another comment, The day of evil is the day of great judgment, the day of which it is written, behold the day comes, it burns as a furnace (Malachi 3:19). But what verse follows? But unto you that fear My name will the sun of righteousness arise with healing in its wings (Malachi 3:20). What is alluded to in the words sun of righteousness, and healing? The righteousness which you wrought for the poor will stand up and shine for you on the day of great judgment and give you healing." The rabbis are drawing a conclusion of the "righteous deed of considering the poor" is capable of delivering one from Gehenna (Hell). They say the righteous deed itself will stand up on the day of judgment and shine as the sun. According to *Matthew 13* Yeshua says something very similar.

Matthew 13:41-43

13:41 'The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, 13:42 and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 13:43 'Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear. (NASB)

Note the context in which Yeshua is speaking, the Son of Man will send for His angels to gather His people and to remove all of those who are stumbling blocks and who commit lawlessness and these angels will throw them into the furnace of fire (Gehenna / Hell). Yeshua continues saying *13:43 'Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear. (NASB)* This is a close parallel to the way the rabbis are describing the sun that will shine forth on behalf of the righteous. What is more important to understand here is the effect of righteous deeds on being sent to Hell. In rabbinic thought, one aspect of receiving blessing from the Lord and His mercy towards us is understood in the phrase “*Zechut Avot*,” the Merit of our Fathers. The idea is that because our ancestors so dutifully obeyed God’s Mitzvot, the Lord is more willing to look past our own sins. In other words, we benefit from the good deeds of those who came before us. Not only that, Judaism teaches that we benefit from the righteous deeds of the matriarchs as well. The Sages also teach that not only are the merit of the patriarchs effective, but also included are our own grandfathers, grand mothers, fathers, and mothers, etc. The Gemara states that *Zechut Avot*, the merit of the Patriarchs, protects us, has been exhausted Talmud Bavli Shabbat 55a, and others say that it has not been exhausted. Note that there are always varying rabbinic opinions in the Talmud and the commentaries.

The merit of the Patriarchs

Talmud Bavli Shabbat 55a

“And since when has the merit of the Patriarchs been exhausted? — Rab said, Since the days of Hosea the son of Beeri, for it is written, (And now) will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand. (Hosea 2:12. ‘and none’, i.e., their merit) Samuel said. Since the days of Hazael, for it is said, And Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz; (2 Kings 13:22) and it is written, But the Lord was gracious unto them, and had compassion upon them, and had respect unto them, because of the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence until now. (2 Kings 13:22. ‘Until now’ implies, but no longer.) R. Joshua b. Levi said: Since the days of Elijah, for it is said, And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening oblation, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, O Lord, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art HaShem in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. (1 Kings 18:36. Here too this day implies a limitation.) R. Johanan said: Since the days of Hezekiah, for it is said, Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with judgment and with righteousness for henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform this. (Isaiah 9:6. ‘The zeal, etc.’ implies, but not the merit of the Patriarchs, this being exhausted by now.)”

Tosafot writes in Brit Avot that the merit has not been exhausted:

Vayikra / Leviticus 26:40-45 If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; And [that] I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them

into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land. The land also shall be left of them, and shall enjoy her Sabbaths, while she lieth desolate without them: and they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity: because, even because they despised my judgments, and because their soul abhorred my statutes. And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I [am] HaShem their God. But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God: I [am] the Lord.

The merit of the Matriarchs

Talmud Bavli Rosh HaShana 11a

“R. Eliezer said: Whence do we know that the Patriarchs were born in Tishri? Because it says, And all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto King Solomon, at the feast in the month Ethanim; that is, the month in which the mighty ones (ethanim) of the world were born. How do you know that this word ethan means ‘mighty’? — Because it is written, Thy dwelling-place is firm (ethan), and it also says, Hear, ye mountains, the Lord’s controversy, and ye mighty rocks (ethanim) the foundations of the earth. It also says, The voice of my beloved, behold he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills, [where] ‘leaping upon the mountains’ means, for the merit of the patriarchs, and ‘skipping upon the hills’ means, for the merit of the matriarchs.”

Based upon the teachings of the Sages, each generation should earn merits as a legacy toward future generations. Because of the merit of our fathers, the Lord is more willing to forgive us and if we are forgiven then we secure our place in the world to come. Has this concept of Zechut Avot been inherited into Messianic Judaism or Christianity today? The idea of “Merit” has in fact been brought forward into the Apostolic Writings by the connection to the works (maasim tovim) of Yeshua the Messiah. Today we essentially believe the same thing, relying upon the merit of Yeshua, his righteous deeds, his death, burial, and resurrection, the Lord our Father in Heaven forgives us and we secure our place in the Olam Haba (the World to Come). This is quite a complicated picture of the Messiah that we can draw out of the Midrash on the two redeemers, the one who God sends first (Elijah) and the One whom God sends second (the King Messiah).

Midrash Tehillim 43, Part 1 concludes saying the following:

Hence, O send out Your light and Your truth. Let them lead me. Let them bring me unto Your holy mountain, and to Your dwelling places (Tehillim / Psalms 43:3), even as it is written, elsewhere about the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt, You will bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance (Shemot / Exodus 15:17), so, in the age to come, they will go up Your holy mountain and to Your dwelling places, as it is said Then will I go unto the altar of God (Tehillim / Psalms 43:4). Wherefore will I come into Your house? With burnt offerings give thanks to You. Even so, Asaph said, so we Your people and sheep of Your pasture will give You thanks forever; we will tell of Your praise to all generations (Tehillim / Psalms 79:13). (Midrash Tehillim 43, Part 1)

לכך נאמר שלח אורך ואמתך המה ינחוני ביאוני אל הר קדשך ואל משכנותיך, כשם שכתוב להלן ביציאת מצרים תביאמו ותטעמו בהר נחלתך (שמות טו יז), כך לעתיד לבא יבואו על הר קדשך ואל משכנותיך, שנאמר ואבואה אל מזבח אלהים, במה אבוא ביתך, בעולות אשלם לך נדרי (תהלים סו

(יג), מה יש לי לעשות, לתת לך הודיות, וכן אסף אמר ואנחנו עמך וצאן מרעיתך נודה לך לעולם לדור ודור נספר תהלתך (שם תהלים עט יג).

The midrash states “*send Your light and Your truth, let them lead me.*” The light and truth are paralleled to Elijah and Moshe. Each of these symbols are significant and communicates to the reader the characteristics of God and His representatives. The light of God’s word lights our path to see and how we should walk before God (*Tehillim / Psalms 119:105, “it is a lamp unto our feet”*). Lamps give light to a dark world and truth sets one free. Putting together these symbols of light and truth to Elijah, Moshe, and the King Messiah son of David, these three witnesses gives testimony of how God’s Spirit gives light to and illuminates humanity in a darkened world (*Matthew 5:14-16, Hebrews 6:4-5, John 1:4-9, Isaiah 9:2*). According to the Scriptures, Moshe is described as a lawgiver. He was called by God to deliver His Torah to Israel (*Malachi 4:4*). The Lord also used Moshe as Israel’s physical leader, a type of deliverer and a representative (*Shemot / Exodus:4:16*). The Lord used him to confront the king of Egypt and demand that Pharaoh let His people go. When Pharaoh refused, God performed miraculous deeds through Moshe. In the Apostolic Writings, Yeshua was transfigured and appeared along side of both Moshe and Elijah (*Matthew:17:1-5*). The prophet Malachi addressed both Moshe and Elijah’s service. “*Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord*” (*Malachi:4:4-5*). Elijah is often considered the most important prophet of the Tanach, and with good reason (*Malachi:4:5*). Elijah prayed and the Lord shut up the heavens for 3 1/2 years (*1 Kings 17:1, James 5:17*). The Lord also devoured with fire those who commanded Elijah to appear before King Ahaziah (*2 Kings 1:10*). Through these two men, Moshe and Elijah, the Lord revealed Himself and His ability to redeem Israel, to save Israel from her enemies. Can you see how our lives are set on fire by the power of God, to live according to His word, and to live in faith and abide in the Messiah Yeshua? These Apostolic concepts are very Jewish and deeply rooted in Judaism.

The rabbis of the midrash ask that the light and truth of God lead them to His holy mountain and to His dwelling places. The purpose is so that Israel may be planted in the holy mountain of God, their inheritance. If we consider that a plant derives its nutrients from the ground it is planted in, if Israel is planted in the holy mountain of God, she would derive her life sustaining vitamins and minerals, the essential nutrients from the Lord God Himself. Have you been rooted in the holy mountain of God? Can you think of an example of how we are rooted into the holy mountain of God in Yeshua the Messiah? (see *Daniel 2:45*)

The purpose of being planted in the holy mountain of God is “*so, in the age to come, they will go up Your holy mountain and to Your dwelling places, as it is said Then will I go unto the altar of God (Tehillim / Psalms 43:4).*” (כך לעתיד לבא יבואו על הר קדשך ואל משכנותיך, שנאמר ואבואה אל מזבח אלהים) Note that the midrash states “*le’atid la’ba*” (לעתיד לבא) meaning “*in the time to come.*” This is not a reference to the “*Olam Habah*” (the world to come). This reference to the “*time to come*” is to the “*Merit of our Fathers*” (Zechut Avot). By living according to God’s ways (according to the Torah) we are passing down an inheritance to our children. The Lord will bless us and not destroy us or cause troubles to come upon us. Zechut Avot is the doctrine by which we benefit from the good deeds of those who came before us and we can think about this from the sense that if our fathers did not live righteously, we would not be here today because God would have caused their family line to cease to exist. This, is the reason in Judaism one studies the stories about the Avot (Fathers) and attempt to apply these Scriptural lessons from the Fathers to our own lives. We do not try to compare ourselves to them, rather, the stories permit us to learn about ourselves and grow by spiritually. In Judaism we see how Zechut Avot is mentioned constantly. The mentioning of our forefathers, that they were “*Tzadikim*” (Righteous ones), does not change the fact that we sinned but recognizes the act of living righteous lives before God and that act is what leads to our being here on earth. This same concept is brought forward in the Apostolic Writings in Yeshua the Messiah. Our Faith in Yeshua the Messiah does not negate the fact that we sin, but recognizes the that we need a savior and that we need to rely upon the merit of Yeshua, and the Lord God our Father in heaven to strengthen us to live obedient lives

each day. Studying the life of Yeshua teaches us about Him and about our own weaknesses and strengths, our limitations by which the Lord helps us to overcome for His glory. Let's Pray!

Heavenly Father,

We thank You for David's words and for the words of the rabbis that help us to understand the Bible, our lives and our faith. We glorify You and give You Praise because You have always kept Your promises! We thank You Lord for the merit of Yeshua so that we may have eternal life. Help us to be people of faith and that our lives would reflect our faithfulness to You. We ask that You would empower us by Your Spirit to walk in Your ways and to follow Yeshua the Messiah and to produce good fruit. Help us to walk and abide in Christ as the Scriptures say we are supposed to do (*John 14:15-17*). Thank You for helping us to realize that observing the Torah is not a form of salvation by our own hands but the way in which we express our love for You. Thank you for helping us to grow in our faith and know who we are in the Messiah Yeshua. Help us to apply these truths to our lives each day. 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