

ספר תהילים נב | Tehillim / Psalms 52

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David's Psalm, the Eye of the Needle, a Rabbinic Context

This week's study is from *Tehillim / Psalms 52:1-9*, the psalm opens saying, בְּבוֹא | דָוָג הַאֲדָמִי וַיַּגֵּד לְשֹׁאֹל וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ בְּאַדוֹן אֶל-בֵּית אַחִימֶלֶךְ: בְּבוֹא | For the director of music. A maskil of David. When Doeg the Edomite had gone to Saul and told him: "David has gone to the house of Ahimelech." (NASB) Who is Doeg? Why did David need to flee from Saul? Whose house is the house of Ahimelech? In the history of David's life we learn about the mercy of God to preserve his people, and more specifically, to preserve David's life. He continues saying, גַּם מֵה-תִּתְהַלֵּל בְּרֻעָה הָגָבָר חֶסֶד אֶל כָּל-הַיּוֹם: 52:1 Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man? The lovingkindness of God endures all day long. (NASB) The Hebrew text ask "why do you give praise in evil." The unrighteous boast about their own wickedness and they do not recognize the lovingkindness of God who takes care of His people. David says, דְּ הוּא תְּחַשֵּׁב לְשׁוֹגֵג רַע מְלָטָשׁ עֲשֵׂה רַמִּיהָ: 52:2 Your tongue devises destruction, Like a sharp razor, O worker of deceit. 52:3 You love evil more than good, Falsehood more than speaking what is right. Selah. (NASB) The tongue is described as being a sharp razor working great evils. How does a razor work evil? He goes on to say, הַ אַהֲבָתְךָ רַע מְטוֹב שְׁקָר | מִדְבָּר אֶצְקָר סָלָה: וְ אַהֲבָתְךָ כָּל-זְבָּרִי-כָּלָע לְשׁוֹן מְרַמָּה: זָ גַם-אֶל יְתַצֵּחַ לְגַנְצָח יְחַתָּחֵב וַיְסַחֵּב: 52:4 You love all words that devour, O deceitful tongue. 52:5 But God will break you down forever; He will snatch you up and tear you away from your tent, And uproot you from the land of the living. Selah. (NASB) The devouring nature of words is a reference to words that destroy the soul, the heart, or the love of someone, and also words that command others to commit murder, to steal, and corrupt others. The mercy of God however results in the righteous not being afraid, 52:6 The righteous will see and fear, And will laugh at him, saying, 52:7 'Behold, the man who would not make God his refuge, But trusted in the abundance of his riches And was strong in his evil desire.' (NASB) The psalm speaks of those who trust in the Lord and in His abundant riches. What riches is he referring to? David concludes saying, חַ וַיַּרְא אֶצְקִים וַיַּרְא וְעַלְיוֹ יִשְׁחַקְוּ ט הַנִּהְנִה הַגָּבָר לְאִישִׁים אֱלֹהִים מְעוּזָה וַיְבַטֵּח בָּרְבָּעָשָׂר יְעַזּוֹ בְּהַנּוּתָו: י וְאַנְיִי | כַּזְיָה רְעֵנָנוּ בְּבֵית אֱלֹהִים בְּטַהֲרִי בְּחֶסֶד אֱלֹהִים עֹזָלָם וְעַד: יְא אַזְדָּה לְעֹזָלָם כִּי עֲשֵׂית וְאַקְבָּה שְׁמָךְ כִּי-טוֹב נָגֵד: 52:8 But as for me, I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the lovingkindness of God forever and ever. 52:9 I will give You thanks forever, because You have done it, And I will wait on Your name, for it is good, in the presence of Your godly ones. (NASB)

עברית	Hebrew	ארמי	Aramaic	ελληνικός	Greek
ספר תהילים פרק נב אַ לְמַנְצָחָה מְשַׁכְּפֵיל לְדוֹד: בְּ בְּבוֹא דָוָג הַאֲדָמִי וַיַּגֵּד לְשֹׁאֹל וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ בְּאַדוֹן אֶל-בֵּית אַחִימֶלֶךְ: גַּם- תִּתְהַלֵּל בְּרֻעָה הָגָבָר חֶסֶד אֶל כָּל- הַיּוֹם: דְּ הוּא תְּחַשֵּׁב לְשׁוֹגֵג כְּתַעֲרֵךְ מְלָטָשׁ עֲשֵׂה רַמִּיהָ: הְ אַהֲבָתְךָ רַע מְטוֹב שְׁקָר מִדְבָּר אֶצְקָר סָלָה: אַזְמָל חַרְיף עַבִּיד מִילִי מְלִשְׁינָותָא:	ספר טוביה פרק נב אַ לְשְׁבָחָא עַל שְׁכָלָא טְבָא עַל יְדָיו דָוָד: בְּ כְּדַאתִי דָוָג אַדוֹמָאָה וְתַנִּי לְשֹׁאֹל וְאָמַר לִיה אַתָּא דָוָד לְבֵית אַחִימֶלֶךְ: גַּם מָה תְּשַׁתְּבַח בְּלִישָׁ- נָא בִּישָׁא גִּיבָּר לְמִישָׁדִי אָדָם זְכָה חֶסֶד אֶל-הָאָכָל יוֹמָא: דְּ אַתְּרָגוּשָׁ- תָּא תְּחַשֵּׁב בְּלִיבְךָ בְּלִבְךָ לִישָׁנְךָ הִיךְ אַזְמָל חַרְיף עַבִּיד מִילִי מְלִשְׁינָותָא:	ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 52 52:1 εἰς τὸ τέλος συνέσεως τῷ Δανιδ ἐν τῷ ἔλθειν Δωρῆκ τὸν Ιδουμαῖον καὶ ἀναγεῖλαι τῷ Σαουλ καὶ εἰπεῖν αὐτῷ ἡλθεν Δανιδ εἰς τὸν οἶκον Αβιμελεχ τί ἐγκαυχᾶ ἐν κακίᾳ ὁ δυνατός ἀνομίαν ὄλην τὴν ἡμέραν 52:2 ἀδικίαν ἐλογίσατο ἡ γλῶσσά σου ὥσεις ξυρὸν ἡκονημένον ἐποίησας δόλον 52:3 ἡγάπησας κακίαν ὑπὲρ ἀγαθωσύνην ἀδικίαν ὑπὲρ τὸ λαλῆσαι δικαιοσύνην διάψαλμα			

ו אַהֲבָתְךָ כָּל־דְּבָרִי־כָּלָע לְשׁוֹן מֶרֶמֶה:
 ז גַּם־אֵל יִתְּצַח לְגַנְצָח יִתְּחַח וַיִּפְּחַח
 מְאַקְלָל וְשַׁרְשָׁךְ מְאַרְצָה חַיִם סְלָה: ח
 וַיַּרְאֵו צְדִיקִים וַיַּרְאֵו וְעַלְיוֹ יִשְׁחַח
 קו: ט הַבָּה הַגָּבָר לְאִישִׁים אֱלֹהִים
 מְעוֹזָו וְיִבְטָח בָּרָב עַשְׂרוֹ יָעַז בְּנָתוֹ
 י וְאַנְיִי | בְּנִית רַעֲנָן בְּבֵית אֱלֹהִים
 בְּתַחְתִּי בְּחַסְד אֱלֹהִים עֲזָלָם וְעַד: יא
 אָזְךָ לְעוֹלָם כִּי עֲשִׂית וְאַקְנָה שְׁמָךְ
 כִּי־טוֹב נָגֵד חַסִּיךְ:

ה רְחִימָתָא בִּישׁ מִן טְבָ שְׁקָרָא מְלֻמְלָא
 צְדִקָתָא זָכוֹתָא לְעַלְמִין: ו רְחִימָתָא כָּל
 מְלִי סְלֻעִמי וְתָא לְיִשְׁנָא דְּנִכְילָו: ז
 לְחוֹד אֱלֹהָא יִתְּרֻעֵנָךְ לְעַלְמִין יִתְּרֻנֵּנָךְ
 וַיַּטְלְלִינָךְ מְלֻמִּיתָב בְּמִשְׁכָנָא וַיַּתְלְשִׁינָךְ
 מִן אָרָע חַיִיא לְעַלְמִין: ח וְיחַמוּ צְדִיקִיא
 בְּפּוֹרֻעְנוֹתָא דְּרִשְׁעִיא וַיַּדְחַלוּ מִן קְדָם
 יְהָוָה וְאַמְטוֹלָתָה יִגְחָכוּ: ט וַיִּמְרֹון הָא
 גְּבָרָא דְּלָא שְׂוֵי מִירָא דִיהָה עוֹשָׁנִיה:
 סְבָר בְּעוֹתְרִיה עֲשִׂין יִתְּعַשֵּׂן בְּמִמּוֹנִיה: י
 וְאַנְיָה הִיךְ אַילָן זִיתָא עֲבוֹרָב בְּבֵית מִקְדָּשָׁי
 אֱלֹהָא סְבָרִית בְּחַסְדָא דָאַלְהָא לְעַלְמִין
 עַלְמִין: יא אוֹדָה קְדָמָךְ לְעַלְםָ אַרְוּם
 עֲבָדָת פּוֹרֻעְנוֹת דִינָי וְאַמְתִין שְׁמָךְ אַרְוּם
 טְבָ קְבָל חַסִּידִיךְ:

52:4 ήγάπησας πάντα τὰ ρήματα
 καταποντισμού γλῶσσαν δολίαν 52:5
 διὰ τοῦτο ὁ θεὸς καθελεῖ σε εἰς τέλος
 ἐκτίλαι σε καὶ μεταναστεύσαι σε ἀπὸ
 σκηνώματος καὶ τὸ ρίζωμά σου ἐκ γῆς
 ζώντων διάψαλμα 52:6 καὶ ὄψονται
 δίκαιοι καὶ φοβηθήσονται καὶ ἐπ' αὐτὸν
 γελάσονται καὶ ἔροῦσιν 52:7 ἴδού
 ἄνθρωπος ὃς οὐκ ἔθετο τὸν θεὸν βοηθόν
 αὐτοῦ ἀλλ᾽ ἐπήλπισεν ἐπὶ τὸ πλῆθος
 τοῦ πλούτου αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐδυναμώθη ἐπὶ
 τῇ ματαιότητι αὐτοῦ 52:8 ἐγὼ δὲ ὥσει
 ἐλαίᾳ κατάκαρπος ἐν τῷ οὔκῳ τοῦ θεοῦ
 ἥλπισα ἐπὶ τὸ ἔλεος τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς τὸν
 αἰῶνα καὶ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος 52:9
 ἐξομολογήσομαι σοι εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ὅτι
 ἐποίησας καὶ ὑπομενῶ τὸ ὄνομά σου ὅτι
 χρηστὸν ἐναντίον τῶν ὄσιών σου

Tehillim / Psalms 52

For the director of music. A maskil of David. When Doeg the Edomite had gone to Saul and told him: “David has gone to the house of Ahimelech.” 52:1 Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man? The loving-kindness of God endures all day long. 52:2 Your tongue devises destruction, Like a sharp razor, O worker of deceit. 52:3 You love evil more than good, Falsehood more than speaking what is right. Selah. 52:4 You love all words that devour, O deceitful tongue. 52:5 But God will break you down forever; He will snatch you up and tear you away from your tent, And uproot you from the land of the living. Selah. 52:6 The righteous will see and fear, And will laugh at him, saying, 52:7 ‘Behold, the man who would not make God his refuge, But trusted in the abundance of his riches And was strong in his evil desire.’ 52:8 But as for me, I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the lovingkindness of God forever and ever. 52:9 I will give You thanks forever, because You have done it, And I will wait on Your name, for it is good, in the presence of Your godly ones. (NASB)

Toviyah / Psalms Chapter 52

52:1 For praise; for good teaching; composed by David. 52:2 When Doeg the Idumean came and told Saul, and said to him, “David has come to the house of Ahimelech.” 52:3 How the mighty man will praise himself with a wicked tongue, to shed innocent blood; [but] the grace of God is all the day. 52:4 Your tongue will devise tumult in your heart, forming words of slander like a sharp knife. 52:5 You love evil more than good, lying more than speaking righteousness always. 52:6 You love all the words of destruction, the tongue of guile. 52:7 Also God will demolish you forever; he will shatter you and make you wander so that you cannot dwell in a tent; and he will uproot you from the land of the living forever. 52:8 And the righteous will see the punishment of the wicked, and they will be afraid in the presence of the Lord, and on his account they will laugh. 52:9 And they will say, “Behold, the man who did not make the word of the Lord his strength; he trusted in his riches; he was strong in his money.” 52:10 But I, like a luxuriant olive tree in the sanctuary of God, have trusted in the grace of God forever and ever. 52:11 I will give thanks in your presence forever, for you have accomplished the vindication of my case; and I will await your name, for it is good, before your pious ones. (EMC)

Psalmoi / Psalms 52

For the end, a Psalm of instruction by David, when Doeg the Idumean came and told Saul, and said to him, David is gone to the house of Abimelech. 52:1 Why dost thou, O mighty man, boast of iniquity in thy mischief? All the day 52:2 thy tongue has devised unrighteousness; like a sharpened razor thou hast wrought deceit. 52:3 Thou hast loved wickedness more than goodness; unrighteousness better than to speak righteousness. Pause. 52:4 Thou has loved all words of destruction, and a deceitful tongue. 52:5 Therefore may God destroy thee for ever, may he pluck thee up and utterly remove thee from thy dwelling, and thy root from the land of the living. Pause. 52:6 And the righteous shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him, and say, 52:7 Behold the man who made not God his help; but trusted in the abundance of his wealth, and strengthened himself in his vanity. 52:8 But I am as a fruitful olive in the house of God: I have trusted in the mercy of God for ever, even for evermore. 52:9 I will give thanks to thee for ever, for thou hast done it: and I will wait on thy name; for it is good before the saints. (LXX)

א לְמַנְצָחָ מִשְׁכִּיל לְדוֹד: ב בְּבוֹא | דֹואָג הַאֲדָמִי וַיַּגְדֵּל לְשָׁאוֹל וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ בָּא דֹוד אֶל־בֵּית אַחִימֶלֶךְ: For the director of music. A maskil of David. When Doeg the Edomite had gone to Saul and told him: “David has gone to the house of Ahimelech.” (NASB) Who is Doeg? Why did David need to flee from Saul? Whose house is the house of Ahimelech? Note that “Ahimelech” (אַחִי־מֶלֶךְ) is the juxtaposition of two words, “Akhi” (אַחִי) and “Melech” (מֶלֶךְ) meaning “my brother the king.” According to the Scriptures, 1 Samuel 21:7 tells us that Doeg was an Edomite, the chief herdsman to Saul, King of Israel. He is mentioned in the Scriptures as being responsible

for the deaths of a large number of priests because these priests helped David escape King Saul.

According to the narrative in *1 Samuel*, David was in fear of his life and did not want to go to a dinner invite from Saul and so asked Jonathan (King Saul's son) to seek the nature of the invite, whether Saul's heart was for or against him. Jonathan discovered that Saul wanted to kill David, and both Jonathan and David met in a field and spoke about what had happened during the dinner. Jonathan discovered that Saul's heart was against David to kill him. After parting from Jonathan, David fled from Saul's jealous anger and went to Nob. He visited Ahimelech, the High Priest, claiming to be on a mission from the king. Ahimelech fed David and his men with the bread of the presence, and gave David the sword of Goliath. Doeg was present and witnessed Ahimelech's service to David. (*1 Samuel 21*). Following these events, Saul asked about the whereabouts of David, and Doeg spoke up saying,

1 Samuel 22:9

22:9 Then Doeg the Edomite, who was standing by the servants of Saul, said, 'I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub. (NASB)

In the narrative, Doeg neglected to inform King Saul that David had pretended to be on a mission on behalf of the king. He did not inform the king that Ahimelech was deceived by David, and that Ahimelech provided support because he thought he was serving the king. King Saul had only half the story and then ordered the priests and the High Priest killed. Saul's officials refused to raise their hands against the anointed of God and so Saul turned to Doeg, who carried out the executions. Saul then proceeded to attack the city of Nob, the city of the priests, and the families of the priests. We learn that the men, women, and children were put to the sword. According to Scripture, only Abiathar escaped, and fled to join David. Note also on the death of Ahimelech, he was the great-grandson of Eli. Thus his death is seen as fulfilling part of the curse on the House of Eli that none of his male descendants would live to old age. (see *Jewish Encyclopedia article on "Ahimelech"*) David said to Abiathar,

1 Samuel 22:21-23

22:21 Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the priests of the Lord. 22:22 Then David said to Abiathar, 'I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have brought about the death of every person in your father's household. 22:23 'Stay with me; do not be afraid, for he who seeks my life seeks your life, for you are safe with me.' (NASB)

Note how the opening verse to *Tehillim / Psalms 52* states that David wrote it after Doeg the Edomite betrayed Ahimelech to Saul. These are the events in the storyline that led David to write what he did concerning the evil man Doeg and the mercy of God.

The Hebrew text for the opening verse of the psalm is very interesting, saying the following, א לְמִנְצָחָה מִשְׁפֵּל לְזֹעַד: ב בְּבוֹא | דָוָג הָאֲדָמִי וַיַּגֵּד לְשָׁאוֹל וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ בְּאַדוֹן אֱלֹהִים לְךָ: A maskil of David. When Doeg the Edomite had gone to Saul and told him: "David has gone to the house of Ahimelech." (*NASB*) Notice how Doeg goes to Saul saying בְּאַדוֹן אֱלֹהִים לְךָ where Ahimelech (אַחִימֶלֶךְ) is translated from two words "Ahi" (אָחִי) "my brother," and "Melek" (מֶלֶךְ) "the king." Over and over again David we read he states that Saul is the anointed one of God. The name of the priest and the telling about David visiting Ahimelech (my brother the king) is almost prophetic in the sense that Saul should have recognized that David was not out to get him, in fact David would have considered him as a brother in the sense of being as close as a brother if Saul had let their relationship develop. Instead, Saul's heart was filled with hatred towards David.

In the rabbinic literature, the rabbis consider Doeg to have died at the age of 34 years (*Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 69b*). He is also regarded by the rabbis as being a great scholar in his time and that a strong deception was given to him because he made everyone who talked to him "blush" (*Midrash Tehillim 52, Part*

4). The rabbis say that He was capable of bringing forth 300 different questions with regard to one point in the Law (*Mishnah, Seder Moed, Chagigah 15b*). The rabbis say however that he lacked inward piety and so the Lord mourned for him due to his outward pious acts (*Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 106b*). The rabbis say that he sounded the praise of David before Saul (*1 Samuel 16:18*), telling him David come to Ahimelech, for the purpose of provoking Saul to jealousy (see *expositions in Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 93b and Midrash Samuel 19*). They also say that Doeg influenced Saul with regard to David's marriage to Michal and stated that his marriage with Michael was invalid and caused Saul to marry her to another man. Doeg not only disregarded the sanctity of marriage, he also slew with his own hands the priests of Nob, after Abner and Amasa, Saul's lieutenants, had refused to do so. (*Midrash Rabbah Genesis 32, and Midrash Tehillim 52, Part 4*) The rabbis say that the Lord God sent three "angels of destruction" to Doeg were the first caused him to forget his learning, the second burned his soul, and the third scattered the ashes. (*Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 106b*) According to *Midrash Tehillim 52, Part 4*, Doeg tried to preserve the life of Agag, the king of the Amalekites-Edomites, by interpreting *Vayikra / Leviticus 22:28* into a prohibition against the destruction of both the old and the young in war. Doeg is also among those who have forfeited their portion in the Olam haba (world to come) by their wickedness. (*Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 10*) In regard to all of these things taken from the rabbinic literature, we can conclude that in the history of David's life we learn about the mercy of God to preserve his people, and more specifically, to preserve David even being surrounded by evil people like Doeg and Saul.

David begins his exposition in the psalm saying, ג מה-תתְהַלֵּל בָּרֶעָה הָגִבּוֹר חָסֵד אֱלֹהִים : 52:1 *Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man? The lovingkindness of God endures all day long.* (NASB) The Hebrew text ask "why do you give praise in evil." The Hebrew text states "why do you praise in evil" (מה-תתְהַלֵּל בָּרֶעָה). The sense of this word is "lehalal" as a verb "to praise, glorify, laud, commend," which may also be expressed as "lehitthalal" לְהַתְהַלֵּל meaning "to praise oneself, boast," which is the context in which we find David writing His Psalm. The Apostolic commentary on this topic is the following:

Colossians 3:15-17

3:15 *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.* 3:16 *Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.* 3:17 *Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.* (NASB)

1 Corinthians 10:30-11:1

10:30 *If I partake with thankfulness, why am I slandered concerning that for which I give thanks?* 10:31 *Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* 10:32 *Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God;* 10:33 *just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved.* 11:1 *Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.* (NASB)

Revelation 7:10-12

7:10 *and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.'* 7:11 *And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,* 7:12 *saying, 'Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.'* (NASB)

The Apostle Paul gives commentary on who receives praises and glory and honor forever. In *Colossians 3:17*, Paul says in everything we do, in word or in deed, we are to do in the name of the Messiah Yeshua, and give thanks through Him to God our Father. Thankfulness is a prominent biblical theme. Paul says in

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, “Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in the Messiah Yeshua.” He says give thanks in all circumstances. Thankfulness is a way of life for us, which is something that should naturally flow from our hearts and our mouths. Being thankful is a form of praise. Remember back a couple Psalms that the offering of thanksgiving is given in a way that brings glory to God in the way that we live our lives. In the Psalm David says that the unrighteous man praises himself in the evil that he does. The wicked man thinks about himself and not about others or the Lord in Heaven. Paul says in *1 Corinthians 10:31*, that “*Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God,*” and in the previous verse, he speaks of giving thanks for his food. The question is what foods did God create that we should be taking with thanksgiving that is related to the blessing and the praises of Yeshua and our Father in heaven? In Jewish tradition, there are blessings said during a wedding ceremony, and grace is given both before and after meals. In Jewish liturgy, the Berakhah is said before meals (see *Matthew 14:19*). The blessing before the meal is short, whereas, on a full stomach, one can really be thankful and give a longer blessing following the meal. For example, the Berakhah after the meal is the following:

“Blessed are You, Adonai our God, king of the universe, who feeds the whole world with Your goodness, grace, lovingkindness, and mercy. You give food to everything that lives, because your lovingkindness endures forever. In Your great goodness, we have never lacked food. For your great name’s sake, may we never lack it ever, since You nourish, sustain, and do good to all and provide food for all the creatures You created. Blessed are You, Adonai, giver of food to all.” (Sidur)

According to the Sidur, the following Berakhah includes thanks for the productivity of the land of Israel, the covenant, and the Torah, and quotes the Scriptural basis for the blessings saying from *Devarim / Deuteronomy 8:10* “*And you will eat and be satisfied, and you will bless Adonai your God for the good land which He has given you.*” (NASB) What we find here within the blessing, being thankful, and praising the name of the Lord for His provision, we are being drawn back into the Torah context of being thankful and blessing the Lord in His grace and mercy to save us and consequently provide for our needs. We are remembering the promises of God and His provision for our daily needs. Additional Berakhot drives forward this point, in the sidur we find prayers for the restoration of Jerusalem, the return of the Jewish people to Israel, and the coming of the Messiah. When the Scripture says that everything created by God is good, realize that this does not mean that everything God created was created for food. All things are created to bring glory to God, the evil thing, the unclean thing is created for the purpose of our choosing to do what is right and righteous before the Lord and thus bringing glory and praise to His name through obedience. There are no verses that abolishes the dietary laws. Obeying the dietary laws do not earn us the righteousness to enter heaven. Obeying the commandments is simply for the purpose of offering God a sacrifice of thanks, and bringing glory to His name through obedience to His word.

In *Revelation 7:10-12*, we read that all glory, blessings, and praises belong to the Lord and to His Messiah Yeshua. In the Psalm David says the unrighteous boast (give praise) about their own wickedness and they do not recognize the lovingkindness of God who takes care of His people. The Aramaic Targum states, ג מֵה תָשַׂתְבָּח בְּלִישָׁנָא בַּיְשָׁא גִּיבָּר לְמִישָׁדִי אָדָם זְכָה חֲסָדָא דְלֹהָא כָּל יוֹמָא: 52:3 *How the mighty man will praise himself with a wicked tongue, to shed innocent blood; [but] the grace of God is all the day.* (EMC) The Septuagint states, 52:2 ἀδίκιαν ἐλογίσατο ἡ γλῶσσά σου ὥσει ξυρὸν ἡκονημένον ἐποίησας δόλον 52:1 *Why dost thou, O mighty man, boast of iniquity in thy mischief? All the day.* (LXX) In both the Aramaic and Greek translations of the Psalms, the wicked man boasts (gives praise) to himself by reason of his own iniquity. They boast about their sin rather than being grieved because of their sins. The rabbis say that the wicked boast in their ability to shed innocent blood. It is interesting that in the first clause to this sentence, we find David speaking of the wicked who boast in their sin and of murder, and in the second clause we are told of the glory of God by His grace He gives all the day long. This may be drawing a context to David’s sin against BatSheva and Uriah, he had Uriah killed and the Lord God showed grace to David by not taking

his life by reason of his sin. For this reason David may be contrasting the evil desires to the grace of God. This is all the more reason why we should be thankful because God is worthy of our thanksgiving. It is only right to credit Him for “*every good and perfect gift*” that He gives (*James 1:17*). When we are thankful, our focus moves away from selfish desires and off the pain of current circumstances. Expressing thankfulness and praising His name helps us remember that the Lord is in control. Thankfulness, and praise is the only appropriate action on our part; it is both healthy and beneficial to us. It reminds us of the bigger picture, that we belong to the Lord God in heaven, and that we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing (*Ephesians 1:3*). Whether we have had a relatively easy life, or a very difficult life, we are to give glory to God for His great mercy because truly, if we take a cold hard look at our own lives, the mercy and grace that He has shown us, just like He showed David, we can say that we truly have an abundant life (*John 10:10*), and gratefulness, thankfulness, and praises is fitting.

David continues saying, ַד הָיוֹת תְּחַשֵּׁב לִשׁוֹנָךְ כַּתְעַר מֶלֶטֶשׁ עֲשֵׂה רַמְּמִיהָ: 52:2 *Your tongue devises destruction, Like a sharp razor, O worker of deceit.* 52:3 *You love evil more than good, Falsehood more than speaking what is right. Selah.* (*NASB*) The tongue is described as being a sharp razor working great evils. It is interesting here David says תְּחַשֵּׁב לִשׁוֹנָךְ speaking of the tongue using the verb from the root word חָוֹשֵׁב meaning “*to think*.” He says “*your tongue thinks*.” Does the tongue think for itself? *James 3:6* states that the tongue is a fire, a world of evil, it is a whole world of wickedness corrupting the entire body and is even set on fire from hell. Those are some very strong words to describe the depth of wickedness that is found in the tongue. The tongue has the power to kill, steal, and destroy by a command, by what is said in public or in private. The NASB translates this as the tongue “*devises destruction*” though the word destruction is not present. The Aramaic Targum states, ַד אַתְּרָגּוֹשָׁתָא חָהָשָׁב בְּלִיבְךְ לִשְׁונָךְ הַיְךְ אֶזְמָל חָרִיף עֲבִידָמִילִי מַלְשִׁינּוֹתָא: 52:4 *Your tongue will devise tumult in your heart, forming words of slander like a sharp knife.* (*EMC*) The Septuagint states, 52:2 ἀδικίαν ἐλογίσατο ἡ γλῶσσά σου ὥσει ἔνρὸν ἡκονημένον ἐποίησας δόλον 52:2 *thy tongue has devised unrighteousness; like a sharpened razor thou hast wrought deceit.* (*LXX*) The rabbis say that the tongue thinks or determines (תְּחַשֵּׁב) tumult (תְּהַגּוֹשָׁתָא) where tumult means “*confusion or disorder*.” Confusion or disorder the tongue thinks within the heart. The confusion or disorder follows from the wickedness, evil, fire of hell, that the tongue is being driven and the text suggests that this is found at the very depth of man, in his heart. This follows in line with Yeshua’s words saying from the heart the mouth overflows (*Luke 6:45*). Based on this text, the heart brings forth either good or evil, and the tongue speaks evil when a man’s heart is evil.

The English translation of this combination of words is that the tongue devises mischiefs. The word “*mischiefs*” means (a) *desire, cupidity* (*Mishley / Proverbs 10:3*) and (b) *fall, ruin, destruction, wickedness* (*Tehillim / Psalm 5:9, 38:12*). The meaning that is being drawn out here is that he (Doeg) has made his tongue to ruin others. Compare *Tehillim / Psalm 50:19* *You use your mouth for evil and harness your tongue to deceit.* (*NIV*) The particular thing referred to here is the fact that Doeg sought the ruin of others by providing “*information*.” Doeg was not telling a lie about what David had done, visiting Ahimelech. He “*informed*” Saul of what Ahimelech had done; he informed him where David had been. Doeg was providing the information needed to apprehend David. All this was “*designed*” to bring ruin upon David and his followers, and this illustrates the importance of recognizing Lashon Hara in our own lives by the information we share with others. Note something from the Narrative in the storyline of David, Saul, and Doeg. The Lashon Hara that Doeg performed actually spilled over and brought ruin on Ahimelech and those associated with him, the priests (*1 Samuel 22:17-19*), Lashon Hara has the possibility of spilling over into other peoples life for destruction. The parallel to the tongue is a sharp razor that cuts. David says such a person loves evil more than good, Falsehood more than speaking right. The prophet Isaiah says something similar in *Isaiah 7:20*, that slanders are like a sharp knife with which one stabs another. If one is speaking in secret, one could say that he or she is stabbing another in the dark. Working deceitfully means literally to make deceit. That is, it was by deceit that he (Doeg) accomplished his purpose. There was no open and fair dealing in what he did. Doeg took the power of the tongue, like a razor, and worked a great amount of evil that resulted in the death of the priests.

ה אַהֲבָתְךָ רֹעֶה מְטוּב שְׁקָר | מְדֻבֵּר אָזָק סָלָה: וְאַהֲבָתְךָ כָּל-דְּבָרִי-כְּלָע לְשׁוֹן מְרַמָּה: ז גַם-
 David goes on to say, וְאַהֲבָתְךָ כָּל-דְּבָרִי-כְּלָע לְשׁוֹן מְרַמָּה: ז גַם-
 52:4 You love all words that devour; O deceitful tongue. 52:5 But God will break you down forever; He will snatch you up and tear you away from your tent, And uproot you from the land of the living. Selah. (NASB) The devouring nature of words is a reference to words that destroy the soul, the heart, or the love of someone, and also words that command others to commit murder, to steal, and corrupt. David says that “you love evil from good, a lie from words of righteousness” (אַהֲבָתְךָ רֹעֶה מְטוּב שְׁקָר | מְדֻבֵּר אָזָק סָלָה). Here the translators are adding in words that speak of words that devour. The Aramaic Targum states, ז לְחוֹד אֱלֹהָא יְתַרְדֵּ וְרַחִימָתָא כָּל מַלְיָא סְלֻעָמִי וְתָא לִישְׁנָא דְנַכְּלוֹ: ז עַינְךָ לְעַלְמַנִּין יְתַבְּרִינְךָ וַיְטַלְלִינְךָ מַלְמִיחָב בְּמַשְׁכוֹנָא וַיְתַלְשִׁינְךָ מִן אָרֶץ חַיָּא לְעַלְמַנִּין: ח וַיְהִמּוּ צְדִיקִיא בְּפּוּרָעָנוֹתָא 52:6 You love all the words of destruction, the tongue of guile. 52:7 Also God will demolish you forever; he will shatter you and make you wander so that you cannot dwell in a tent; and he will uproot you from the land of the living forever. 52:8 And the righteous will see the punishment of the wicked, and they will be afraid in the presence of the Lord, and on his account they will laugh. (EMC) The Septuagint states, 52:4 ἡγάπησας πάντα τὰ ρήματα καταποντισμοῦ γλῶσσαν δολίαν 52:5 διὰ τοῦτο ὁ θεὸς καθελεῖ σε εἰς τέλος ἐκτίλαι σε καὶ μεταναστεύσαι σε ἀπὸ σκηνώματος καὶ τὸ ρίζωμά σου ἐκ γῆς ζώντων διάγαλμα 52:6 καὶ ὄφονται δίκαιοι καὶ φοβηθήσονται καὶ ἐπ’ αὐτὸν γελάσονται καὶ ἐροῦσιν 52:4 Thou has loved all words of destruction, and a deceitful tongue. 52:5 Therefore may God destroy thee for ever, may he pluck thee up and utterly remove thee from thy dwelling, and thy root from the land of the living. Pause. 52:6 And the righteous shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him, and say, (LXX) God’s righteousness, which, in accordance with the promise, takes the righteous under its protection. The righteous pray and seek the Lord to help him speak of God’s praises (Tehillim / Psalms 51:5). And based upon Tehillim / Psalms 49 and 50, we learned that God delights in the sacrifice of praise. This is paralleled to one who brings a burnt offering (זבחים) that is pleasing to Him, in comparison with which the flesh and the dead work of עולות (wrong, injustice, evil) The inward part of a man who commits dead works, is said to be broken and crushed because of his sinful nature, he is ungodly, he is hard, haughty, and glories in himself. It is interesting to note that the Talmud finds a significance in the plural זבח “sacrifice.” Joshua ben Levi (*Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 43b*) says, “At the time when the temple was standing, whoever brought a burnt-offering received the reward of it, and whoever brought a meat-offering, the reward of it; but the lowly was accounted by the Scriptures as one who offered every kind of sacrifice at once” (הקרבנות قولן). In this statement we see the understanding of the rabbis on the mercy of God towards the righteous. The wicked on the other hand the Lord will demolish forever and scatter and cause to wander so that such a person cannot dwell in a tent (Tehillim / Psalms 52:5[7]). This suggests that the one who uses his tongue to kill, will be unable to dwell in a tent with anyone else. This makes a lot of sense since anyone who is arguing and bickering constantly there is no way to live in unity (husband/wife) or as a family (brother/sister).

ח וַיַּרְאָו צְדִיקִים וַיַּרְאָו וְעַלְיוֹן הַנְּהָרָה לְאַ-יְשִׁים אֶלְהִים מְעוֹז וְיִבְטָה בְּרַב עַשְׂרוֹ יְעַז בְּהַזּוֹה: ט יְשַׁׁקְעָו: ת הַנְּהָרָה הַגָּבָר לְאַ-יְשִׁים אֶלְהִים מְעוֹז וְיִבְטָה בְּרַב עַשְׂרוֹ יְעַז בְּהַזּוֹה: 52:6 The righteous will see and fear, And will laugh at him, saying, 52:7 ‘Behold, the man who would not make God his refuge, But trusted in the abundance of his riches And was strong in his evil desire.’ (NASB) Here again we find David making comments about the one who trusts in his riches and parallels this to strong evil desires. Does this suggest that wealth is deceiving? What do the Scriptures have to say about the deceitfulness of wealth? The Scriptures say the following regarding wealth:

Survey of the Scriptures on Wealth

1. Wealth can bring many griefs – “For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.” (I Timothy 6:10)

2. Wealth looks like a help or security, but in reality becomes a master – “*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon.*” (Matthew 6:24)
3. Wealth can lead one to hostility with God – “*You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.*” (James 4:4)
4. Wealth can keep one from experiencing the fruit of God's kingdom – “*The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful.*” (Matthew 13:22)
5. Wealth can minimize one's treasure in heaven – “*Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. 'Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.'*” (Mark 10:21)
6. Wealth can lead one to conceit – “*Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.*” (1 Timothy 6:17)
7. Wealth can entice one to be unfaithful to God – “*If I have put my trust in gold or said to pure gold, 'You are my security,' if I have rejoiced over my great wealth, the fortune my hands had gained, if I have regarded the sun in its radiance or the moon moving in splendor, so that my heart was secretly enticed and my hand offered them a kiss of homage, then these also would be sins to be judged, for I would have been unfaithful to God on high.*” (Job 31:24-28)
8. Wealth can lead one to a life of ruin – “*The righteous will see and fear, And will laugh at him, saying, 'Behold, the man who would not make God his refuge, But trusted in the abundance of his riches And was strong in his evil desire.'*” (Tehillim / Psalm 52:6-7)
9. Wealth can blind one to the cold hard realities of life – “*The rich are wise in their own eyes; one who is poor and discerning sees how deluded they are.*” (Mishley / Proverbs 28:11) “*You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.*” (Revelation 3:17)
10. Wealth can cause one to forget God's provisions – “*When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud*

and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.” (Devarim / Deuteronomy 8:10-14)

11. Wealth can cause one to seek his or her own glory over God’s glory – “*These people say, ‘The time has not yet come to rebuild the Lord’s house.’” Then the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai: “Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?” Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways.” (Haggai 1:2-5)*
12. Wealth when handled inappropriately, it can lead one to unanswered prayers – “*They ask me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them. ‘Why have we fasted,’ they say, ‘and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?’” (Isaiah 58)*

These few references taken only from the Apostolic Writings demonstrate adequately the danger of amassing wealth and the desire to do so. Wealth can bring grief, can become a master, can lead to hostility, keep from experiencing the fruit of God’s kingdom. What are the fruits of God’s kingdom? Wealth can remove a portion of one’s reward from heaven and can even prevent one from entering heaven (*Mark 10:25*), can lead to conceit, to unfaithfulness, to ruin like we find here in the Psalm, to blindness, to forgetting God’s promises and provision, to seek one’s own glory and lead to unanswered prayers. These are only a few things the gospels and epistles have to say concerning wealth and we have not looked at the Tanach. The point that we can take away from David’s words, ח וַיֹּרֶא צָדִיקִים וַיַּירֶא וְעַלְיוֹ יִשְׁחַקְיוֹ ט הַנֵּה הַגָּבֵר לֹא־יִשְׂמַח: ט הַנֵּה הַגָּבֵר לֹא־יִשְׂמַח: 52:6 *The righteous will see and fear; And will laugh at him, saying,* 52:7 ‘*Behold, the man who would not make God his refuge, But trusted in the abundance of his riches And was strong in his evil desire.*’ (*NASB*) is that we are to seek the Lord God Almighty and His Messiah in everything. Now in the metaphor that Yeshua uses in *Mark 10:25*, he states that it is very difficult, it is impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven and it might be because of these things listed here. Thinking upon the eye of a needle, the “eye” is the section of a sewing needle formed into a loop for pulling thread, located at the end opposite the point. These loops are often shaped like an oval or an “eye,” hence the metaphor the “*eye of the needle*.” In Judaism, the Babylonian Talmud applies the aphorism to “*unthinkable thoughts*.” This application is used by the rabbis to explain that dreams reveal the thoughts of a man’s heart, which is the product of reason rather than the absence of it. The rabbis say, “*They do not show a man a palm tree of gold, nor an elephant going through the eye of a needle.*” (*Talmud Bavli Berakhot 55b*) If we consider this interpretation on the eye of the needle, where does the treasure of your heart lay? Have you ever had a dream of reaching out to the lost for the gospel of Christ? How about dreams of the end of days? Or trying to defeat the dragon because of false doctrine that is being taught? What about witnessing people bowing down to an idol of their own making and praying (in the dream) for the salvation of their souls? Have you ever had dreams like that? What does that say about your heart from the rabbinic context given above?

In another commentary, Midrash Rabbah on the Song of Songs uses the phrase to speak of God’s willingness and ability beyond comparison, to accomplish the salvation of a sinner, the rabbis say, “*The Holy One blessed be He said, open for me a door as big as a needle’s eye and I will open for you a door through which may enter tents and [camels?].*” Rav Sheishet of Nehardea applies the same aphorism and reasoning for which the sages of Pumbedita were evidently famous according to the statement, “*Are you from Pumbedita, where they push an elephant through the eye of a needle?*” (*Talmud Bavli Nezikin, Baba Metzia, 38b*). The idea is that this eye of the needle and its connection to the rich or wealthy, and to the application of the heart and unthinkable thoughts, there is a fascinating web connecting all of these concepts together which is consistent with the Psalm of David and the Apostolic Writings on this topic.

Yeshua’s use of “*The eye of a needle*” in *Mark 10:24-27* and *Luke 18:24-27*, we definitely can see the rabbinic understanding come out of his teaching. The impossibility of the man to enter heaven who is

self serving, self seeking, self sustaining, and self glorifying. Remember that this metaphor was used in response to the young rich man who had asked Yeshua what he needed to do in order to inherit eternal life. Yeshua replied that he should keep the commandments, to which the man stated he had done. Yeshua then responded, “*If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.*” Perfection is not in the sense of being poor, but in the sense of what we are learning here, to trust in the Lord to sustain us, to draw us near, to set our hearts on fire, to provide for our every need, to give us the ability to praise His name, and to offer the sacrifice of Thanksgiving by living an obedient life, with a humble heart, and prayer, etc. The young man became sad and was unwilling to let go of his wealth because he was suffering from the very thing David is speaking of here “*the man who would not make God his refuge, But trusted in the abundance of his riches.*” The psalm speaks of those who trust in the Lord and in His abundant riches. What riches is he referring to? What are the riches of God? Many times we hear or read in the Apostolic Writings of the “*spiritual blessings.*” What are the spiritual blessings that Paul speaks of? (see *Ephesians 1:1-14*)

ח וַיֹּאמֶר צְדִיקִים וַיֹּאמֶר עָלָיו יְשַׁהָּקָו: ט הַבָּה הַגָּבֵר לְאִישִׁים אֱלֹהִים מְעוֹזָו וַיְבַטֵּח כִּי יְשַׁהָּקָו בְּרַב עֲשָׂרוֹ יָעֹז בְּהַתּוֹתָו: י וְאַנְּבֵי | בְּנֵית רְעָנָן בְּבֵית אֱלֹהִים בְּתִחְתֵּי בְּחִסְד אֱלֹהִים עַזְלָם וְעַד: יא אָזְךָ לְעַזְלָם כִּי עֲשֵׂית: 52:8 But as for me, I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the lovingkindness of God forever and ever. 52:9 I will give You thanks forever, because You have done it, And I will wait on Your name, for it is good, in the presence of Your godly ones. (NASB) The green olive tree in the house of God sounds like David is drawing in the context of the Lord who is the perfect gardener who knows how to cultivate the one’s He loves. Along this line of thinking, in *Tehillim / Psalms 23*, David says that the Lord causes him to lie down in green pastures (בְּנֹאות דָשָׁא יְרִבִּיצָנִי עַל-מֵמִינָהוֹת יִנְגַּלְנִי: 23:2 *He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. NASB*) and to lay beside quiet waters. We find this context illustrates how the Lord is the perfect shepherd who takes care of His flock. Certainly David has these perspectives, and so he is able to say “*I will give You thanks forever, because You have done it, And I will wait on Your name, for it is good, in the presence of Your godly ones.*” Can you say the same, the Lord is mighty and He deserves all of the glory, all of the praise, and all of the worship? Let’s Praise His Holy Name simply for who He is, Halelluia!

Rabbinic Commentary

The Rabbinic Commentary (Midrash) on *Tehillim / Psalms 52* has 8 parts. Reading through the Midrash we will be looking at Part 1, 2, 5, and 6. Let’s begin by outlining *Midrash Tehillim Chapter 52, Part 1, 2, 5, and 6.*

Outline of Midrash Tehillim / Psalms, Chapter 52, Part 1, 2, 5, and 6

Part 1

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the **דיבור המתהיל** (Dibur Hamathil) saying “*For the leader. Maschil of David; when Doeg came and told Saul, David is come to the house of Ahimelech (Tehillim / Psalms 52:1).*”
- The **פתחתתא** (Petihta) “*These words are to be read in the light of the verse, Suffer not your mouth to bring your flesh into guilt (Ecclesiastes 5:5).*”
- The **משל** (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the **פתחתתא** (Petihta), the rabbis go on to discuss the opening words of the Psalm and its relation to the making a vow.
- The **نمשל** (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the **משל** (mashal), the rabbis expand upon the parable by one’s pledge to a vow to not keeping the vow, to slander, and sin.
- The Concluding phrase says “*And what caused his leprosy? The cause of it was that he slandered*

David, as is said When Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech."

Part 2

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the **דיבור המתהיל** (Dibur Hamathil) saying “*Another comment, The words When Doeg the Edomite came, etc, are to be read in the light of what Scripture says elsewhere, Death and life are in the power of the tongue (Mishley / Proverbs 18:21)*”
- The **פתיחהתא** (Petihta) “*the homiletic introduction*” to the Midrash says “*everything depends on the tongue.*”
- The **משל** (mashal) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the **פתיחהתא** (Petihta), the rabbis continue on their discussion of the tongue because Doeg used his tongue to create death and destruction.
- The **نمשל** (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the **משל** (mashal), the rabbis expand upon the discussion on the tongue by providing parables for illustration of the depravity of the tongue.
- The Concluding phrase says “*and Doeg, who was banished from the world, as is said, God will likewise break you forever (Tehillim / Psalms 52:7), that is, from the world to come. And what caused his banishment? Slander, as is said When Doebe the Edomite came and told Saul.*”

Part 5

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the **דיבור המתהיל** (Dibur Hamathil) saying “*Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul (Tehillim / Psalms 52:1).*”
- The **פתיחהתא** (Petihta) “*the homiletic introduction*” to the Midrash says “*And told Saul, that is, and embittered Saul. What did he say to him?*”
- The **משל** (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the **פתיחהתא** (Petihta), the rabbis speak on the point of embittering with the use of the tongue.
- The **نمשל** (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the **משל** (mashal), the rabbis expand upon this by drawing upon the Torah for examples.
- The Concluding phrase says “*Thereupon, David cried out and said, Why do you boast yourself of evil, O mighty man? The mercy of God endures continually (Tehillim / Psalms 52:3).*”

Part 6

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the **דיבור המתהיל** (Dibur Hamathil) saying “*Why do you boast yourself of evil, O mighty man? (Tehillim / Psalms 52:3)*”
- The **פתיחהתא** (Petihta) “*the homiletic introduction*” to the Midrash says “*that is, David said to Doeg, O that you, a mighty man, wealthy man and chief of the Sanhedrin, should occupy yourself with this evil thing, and speak with the evil tongue.*”
- The **משל** (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the **פתיחהתא** (Petihta), the rabbis continue to discuss Doeg’s use of his tongue to destroy others.
- The **نمשל** (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the **משל** (mashal), the rabbis expand upon the parable by opening that he is chief of the Sanhedrin.
- The Concluding phrase says “*A man has two hundred and forty eight parts, some erect, some prone, some capable of being either one or the other, the tongue however is imprisoned with the cheeks and the teeth surrounding it, and with many other restraints upon it. Yet no man can withstand it. If it were erect, think how much more vicious the tongue would be.*”

Midrash Tehillim 52, Part 1 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (**דיבור המתהיל**) saying “*For the leader. Maschil of David; when Doeg came and told Saul, David is come to the house of Ahimelech (Tehillim /*

Psalms 52:1.)" The homiletic introduction to the midrash states, "These words are to be read in the light of the verse, Suffer not your mouth to bring your flesh into guilt (Ecclesiastes 5:5)." The rabbis go on to say the following:

Rabbi Joshua son of Levi said, This verse speaks of men who pledge charity. Suffer not your mouth to promise rashly that you will give, and then, not give. Neither say before the messenger, that this, to the public messenger who comes and says to you, Give what you pledged, say not, It was an error, I knew not what I said. Wherefore, should God be angry at your voice, with which you proclaimed that you would give, yet did not give? And destroy the work of your hands, the few former deeds of charity which were to your credit, them you did destroy. (Midrash Tehillim 52, Part 1)

Here the rabbis are paralleling the introductory line to the psalm as to one who pledges charity falsely. They say do not be "rash" in giving and then turn from what has been spoken in pledge. God will be angry with such a person who does this. In addition to this, it says that if you do not give what you said you would give (i.e. "you proclaimed that you would give, yet did not give"), the work of your hands would be destroyed and the results of the previous giving will also be destroyed. The idea is if we do not follow through with our verbal oath, we will be untrustworthy, not only in God's eyes, but in the eyes of others.

According to the Torah, there are various types of oaths.

Types of oaths

False oaths: It is forbidden to swear falsely, as it says "And you shall not swear falsely in My name" (Vayikra / Leviticus 19:12). The one who swears an oath about a past or future event and is wrong has sworn a false oath, provided the event is something that it is possible (and not forbidden) for him to do or know about. This type of oath is called an "oath of expression" (*shevuas bitui*), as it says "Or if a person swears, expressing with his lips, for evil or for good" (Vayikra / Leviticus 5:3).

Vain oaths: It is forbidden to swear vainly, as it says "You shall not take the Name of Hashem your G-d in vain" (Shemot / Exodus 20:7, Devarim / Deuteronomy 5:11) There are four types of vain oaths: swearing that a well-known thing is or is not so; swearing not to observe a commandment; and swearing to do something that it is not possible to do. Swearing to observe a commandment is not forbidden, but such an oath is not valid.

Oaths about deposits: If anyone has someone else's real, movable property in his possession by deposit, loan, theft, extortion, or loss and it is demanded of him he is forbidden to deny it, as it says "You shall not deceive" (Vayikra / Leviticus 19:11). There is a further prohibition against swearing falsely saying, "And you shall not lie one to another" (Vayikra / Leviticus 19:11). If one swears such a false oath (about something that he would have been required to pay for had he admitted the truth) he must pay 5/4 of the amount and (if the Temple exists) must bring a sin-offering, as it says "If a person sins... and deceives another regarding deposited property or a pledge or theft, or extorts from another or finds lost property and denies it, and swears falsely... he must return what he stole or what he extorted or what was deposited with him or the lost thing that he found or whatever he swore falsely about, and pay it in full and add a fifth to it..." (Vayikra / Leviticus 5:21-24)

Oaths about testimony: If witnesses are asked by someone to testify about his claim to real, movable property, and their testimony alone would enable him to collect his claim, but they falsely swear (and deny in court) that they do not know anything about which they could tes-

tify for him, they must (if the Temple exists) bring a sin-offering, as it says “And if a person sins and hears a request to swear and he is a witness (or saw or knew something), if he does not tell he bears his sin.” (Vayikra / Leviticus 5:1).

Oaths administered by judges: If a monetary claim is made against someone and he denies part of it (rabbinically, even all of it), or if a single witness testifies against him, or if he is a depositor and maintains that there was a loss for which he is not responsible, he must swear in court, as it says “There shall be an oath of God between them” (Shemot / Exodus 22:10). Many other types of oaths regarding claims were instituted by the sages. If one swears any such oath falsely he has violated the prohibition regarding “oaths about deposits”. (Vayikra / Leviticus 11:4-20)

The rabbis say that an oath must be phrased so as to indicate that swearing “is” intended and that there is no punishment unless a Name or attribute of God is mentioned. If one is making an oath, it must be worded in such a way so that everyone is aware of what he is doing so he is not able to go back on his word. Swearing is expressed orally and one’s actions must follow through according to their word (their intentions). The Torah provides extenuating circumstances, for example, if the person swearing is not aware of the facts or is under duress he is not culpable. (Shemot / Exodus 3:1-6) If one is required to swear in a court of law, he is commanded to swear in God’s Name, as it says “*And in His Name you shall swear*”. (Devarim / Deuteronomy 10:20) and note the reason why when swearing, one lays his or her hand upon the Bible, in God’s name, one goes before a court of law here in the USA. (I believe this tradition has been removed from practice these days.) The idea is by swearing falsely or by mentioning God’s Name unnecessarily is a desecration of the Name, as it says “*And you shall not swear falsely by My Name and desecrate the Name of your God; I am the Lord;*” and it says “*For Lord will not cleanse the one who swears by His Name in vain*” (Vayikra / Leviticus 19:11). The act of swearing in the name of God can cause the body to come under guiltiness by reason that one is not following through on their word. How does swearing bring guilt upon the body? The significance of the midrashic parallel to the pledge is that the man who swears falsely is attempting to appear generous before others. He is attempting to be something that he is not and makes rash statements with his mouth regarding the pledge of charity or any other thing for that matter. This is the characteristic of a deceiver. We are not called as God’s children to be deceptive. When promising something such as charity, this could possibly have the effect of harm towards another who was depending or organizing his life based upon a pledge of charity that was promised. The rabbis go on to speak of a spiritual aspect of swearing falsely as they continue in the midrash saying the following:

Another comment on Suffer not your mouth to bring your flesh into guilt. Rabbi Benjamin said, This verse refers to pretenders to learning. Wherefore should God be angry at your voice? At the voice whereby you mouth your pretensions to learning. And destroy the work of your hands, that is, Those ideas of Torah at your command, into them you bring confusion. (Midrash Tehillim 52, Part 1)

The idea is that those who pretend to have much charity, also pretend to be men of learning, wise, etc. Rabbi Benjamin calls these types of people “*pretenders to learning.*” The one who pretends to have learning, or to be wise, the Lord will cause his idea of the Torah command to bring confusion to his life, to his understanding of Scripture, and its application for his life, etc, the list could go on. The concept that comes to mind are the proud, who boast of their knowledge of the Scriptures and are so arrogant to claim their knowledge is so great they have the ability to tear down someone else’s doctrine or theology. The problem with this kind of attitude is such a person believes they have the answers for everything, their understanding of Scripture is correct and everyone else’s is wrong, there is a lack of humility, and pride that looks down upon others. On the social networking websites I find a lot of this kind of thing going on throughout the discussions and quite honestly it gets very tiring and burdensome. The one who seeks to study the Torah, should do so for

the purpose of drawing near to the Lord, to deepen his or her spiritual life, to walk in the footsteps of Yeshua, and to be a sweet savor, or fragrance before the Lord, and to be a blessing to others, to love our Father in heaven, Yeshua His Son, and to love others, etc. If the purpose for studying the Torah is for any other reason than that, consider that the alternative may be that you are a “*pretender to learn.*” Consider this very carefully because this is a very significant and weighty thing before the Lord and others.

The midrash follows through on this concept with a parallel to Miriam and her accusations against Moshe.

The rabbis say, The words Suffer not your mouth to bring your flesh into guilt are addressing Miriam. As soon as she spoke against Moshe, she becomes leprous, for it is said Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moshe (Bamidbar / Numbers 12:1). And what happened to her? And behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow (Bamidbar / Numbers 12:10). Neither say before the messenger, before Moshe. Wherefore should God be angry at your voice, the voice that Miriam let escape from her mouth against Moshe the righteous. And destroy the work of your hands, that is, destroy the merit of her timbrel playing, of which it is said And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand (Shemot / Exodus 15:20). A different comment, Suffer not your mouth to bring your flesh into guilt (Ecclesiastes 5:5) refers to slander, for with your mouths men make their flesh suffer guilt; because of what they let escape from their mouths, they are smitten with leprosy. Neither say before the messenger (Ecclesiastes 5:5) that is, Suffer not your mouth to bring you before the priest, who it is said, is a messenger of the Lord of hosts (Malachi 2:7). For the leper must go to the priest, as is said This will be the Torah of the leper (metsora), that is, the motsira, the man who utters slander, he will be brought unto the priest (Vayikra / Leviticus 14:2). (Midrash Tehillim 52, Part 1)

The idea of our words bringing our body under guilt is drawn out from the story of Miriam and Moshe and Miriam's words. Remember Yeshua's words in *Matthew 12:36* when he said that every idle word that men speak, they will give account of in the day of the Lord. When Yeshua says we will give an account for every idle word “*Will believers, also have to give an account for every word they have said?*” How often do you think about this future moment in history when we will stand before our High Priest (Yeshua) for inspection? Should this cause us to consider our lives today and our walk before the Lord? Based upon the Scriptures, everyone will give an account for the words they have said. Slander is paralleled to Leprosy, and remember, based upon the Torah, the one who is the leper is to be brought to the priest for inspection, and similarly, the one who slanders is also to be brought to the priest for inspection. The Torah perspective is that if the one who is a leper, is inspected by the priest and found to be with leprosy, he is to be put out of the city/camp. Similarly, if the slanderer is inspected and found to be a slanderer, he is to be put out of the city/camp. This appears to be a parallel concept here because it is impossible to live at peace with a slanderer or gossip. Does this sound a lot like what we read in the book of Revelation, that says, *22:15 Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.* (NASB) and *22:15 Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.* (NIV) Note the people who loves and practice lying are the one's who practice falsehood, or slanderers. This appears to follow very closely to the person who pretends to take a vow, to give charity, to be learned or wise, the one who pretends is one who practices falsehood. The man who lives his life as a slanderer, he will be brought to our high priest Yeshua, and if found guilty, will be cast outside to be numbered with sorcerers, idolaters, immoral and murderers. Should this not make us take a couple steps back and examine our lives so that when we stand before the Lord He does not call us “*workers of lawlessness?*”

Midrash Tehillim 52, Part 1 concludes saying “*Wherefore should God be angry at your voice refers to the voice which you let escape from your mouth when you slander your neighbor. And destroy the work of your hands, the little knowledge of Torah at your command, that you destroy. Who was such a slanderer?*

Doeg. When he slandered David, he became leprous, for it is said, God will likewise break your forever and root you out of the land of the living forever (Tehillim / Psalms 52:7). What else can He will break mean except that Doeg become leprous, just as it is said of the leprous house, He will break the house (Vayikra / Leviticus 14:45). And what caused his leprosy? The cause of it was that he slandered David, as is said When Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech.” The rabbis say that the Lord will destroy the one who slanders his neighbor. Doeg was such a man who slandered his neighbor. The rabbis say that Doeg become leprous because of his slander like Miriam. The lesson that may be taken from this midrash is that Doeg, by his actions, has no part in the world to come. Doeg used his tongue to cause destruction, and such a person has no part with the Lord God Almighty. If we use our tongues today to slander, is our place in the Olam Habah (the World to Come) in jeopardy? This is a very significant question!

Midrash Tehillim 52, Part 2 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (**דיבור המתחיל**) saying, “*Another comment, The words When Doeg the Edomite came, etc, are to be read in the light of what Scripture says elsewhere, Death and life are in the power of the tongue (Mishley / Proverbs 18:21)*” The homiletic introduction to the Midrash states, “*everything depends on the tongue.*” The comments are on what kind of authority is given to the tongue, what is its power?

If a man desires to speak with an evil tongue, he speaks; if a man desires to speak with a good tongue, he speaks. Say not, because power was given to my tongue, behold, I will say what I want to. For the Torah long ago admonished Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking guile (Tehillim / Psalms 34:14). To your loss, you may say. God forbid. To your profit, for the Holy Spirit proclaims, whoso keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps his soul from troubles (Mishley / Proverbs 21:23). (Midrash Tehillim 52, Part 2)

The concept that is discussed here is whether the tongue acts or behaves as an entity of its own, or whether a man has power over the tongue? The midrash says that one is not to say that power is given to the tongue because I will say what I want to. A man speaks what he desires, whether good or evil. The point is that the tongue is not in and of itself a separate entity; the tongue speaks from the desires of the heart. The midrash quotes from the Aramaic Targum referencing *Tehillim / Psalms 34:14* and states that the Torah admonishes keeping the tongue from evil and the lips from speaking guile. David says in *Tehillim / Psalms 34*, יג מ- הָאִישׁ הַחְפֵץ חַיִם אֶחֱבָּ בָּמִים לְרֹאֹת טוֹב: יד נִצְרָ לְשׁוֹנָךְ מְרֻעָ וְשִׁפְתִּיקְ מְذֻבָּר מְרַמָּה:טו סָור מְרֻעָ וְעַשְׂתָּה-טוֹב 34:12 Who is the man who desires life And loves length of days that he may see good? 34:13 Keep your tongue from evil And your lips from speaking deceit. 34:14 Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it. 34:15 The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous And His ears are open to their cry. (NASB) The Apostle Peter also wrote the following in His epistle saying, 1 Peter 3:10 For, ‘The one who desires life, to love and see good days, Must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. 3:11 ‘He must turn away from evil and do good; He must seek peace and pursue it. 3:12 ‘For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, And His ears attend to their prayer; But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.’ (NASB) he appears to be drawing a parallel to *Tehillim / Psalms 34:12-16*. David says, that we must keep our tongue from evil and our lips from speaking deceit. We must turn from evil, to do good, and seek peace. This is the way our lives should be characterized as the children of God, running from evil and sin, turning our lives around, obeying the Lord, all because He has worked in us a good work in Yeshua the Messiah. The keeping of our tongue and lips from evil is profitable by reason of Solomon’s words in *Mishley / Proverbs 21:23*, keeping our tongue from evil keeps the soul from troubles.

The midrash continues saying the following:

Another comment on Death and life are in the power of the tongue (Mishley / Proverbs 18:21). Consider how vicious slander is, for a man cannot let slander out of his mouth with-

out denying the Root of the universe. And the proof? Rabbi Jose taught, it is in the verse, Who have said, with our tongue will we prevail; or are our own, who is lord over us? (Tehillim / Psalms 12:5), where the words who is lord over us? Prove that the slanderer denies the Root of the universe. The Holy One himself, blessed be He, cries out, if one dare speak thus, concerning slanderers, Who will rise up for Me against the evil doer? (Tehillim / Psalms 94:16) that is to say, Who can abide them, and who can stand them? Gehenna. But Gehenna says, I cannot stand them. Then the Holy One blessed be He, says to Gehenna, Then I from above, and you from below, as Scripture says, Upon you, you slanderous tongue, sharp arrows from the Mighty One above with coals of juniper from below (Tehillim / Psalms 120:4). The Holy One blessed be He, also said to Israel, If your desire is to be saved from Gehenna, stay away from slander, and you will gain life in the world to come, for it is said, Who is the man that desires life (Tehillim / Psalms 34:13), that is, life in the world to come? To gain it, keep your tongue from evil (Tehillim / Psalms 34:14).

The midrash claims that when one slanders, one is denying the Root of the universe. The Root of the universe is the Lord God Almighty. How does one deny the Lord when one slanders? What is it about slandering that causes one to be actively denying the Lord? The midrash takes *Tehillim / Psalms 12:5* saying that the one who slanders is taking matters into his own hands rather than trusting in the Lord. When we get angry at someone and say hurtful things, are we trying to take matters into our own hands to exact revenge on what was said or done to us? The act of slandering is so great, the midrashic understanding states that even Hell (Gehenna) itself can not stand such a person. According to the rabbis, there appears to be no place for such people. If one desires to stay away from Hell, one should stay away from slandering. This is an important concept since the last chapter of the book of Revelation describes those who are cast out, who are outside and not allowed into the New Jerusalem, into Heaven, are the liars, and as we are seeing, the slanderer is equal to the liar. The one who desires to have life in the world to come is to keep their tongue from evil. The reason being is the tongue has the power to kill, steal, and destroy. The tongue has the ability to cause all of the evil acts of the wicked, and the height of the tongue's power is pride and boasting.

The midrash continues with two parables to describe the wisdom of keeping the tongue from evil.

Parable #1

Our Masters said, It happened that a peddler who went around in the villages of Sepphoris used to go crying his wares, saying, Who would like the elixir of life. The daughter of Rabbi Yannai heard him and said to her father, a peddler is going around saying, who would like the elixir of life? Rabbi Yannai said to her, God and call him. She went and called him to rabbi Yannai, who asked him, What is this elixir of life which you sell? The peddler answered, Even you know not what this elixir is? Rabbi Yannai replied, nevertheless, declare it to me. The peddler said, Bring me a scroll of the Psalms. They brought it to him and he unrolled it, and showed rabbi Yannai what David said, namely, who is the man that desires life, etc. Keep your tongue from evil, etc. (Tehillim / Psalms 34:14). And what did rabbi Yannai do? He gave the peddler six coins. The disciples asked rabbi Yannai, Our master, did you not know this verse? And he answered, yes, but this man came and made me aware of its full meaning.

Parable #2

Another comment on Death and life are in the power of the tongue. A mere basket of figs. Yet if a man ate of them and said no blessing, Death in the power of the tongue. If he said a blessing, life in the power of the tongue. Another comment on Death ad life are in the power of the tongue. Everything depends on the tongue, even death and life. A man who gains

Torah, gains life, for Torah is called a tree of life, as is said, She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is everyone that holds her fast (Mishley / Proverbs 3:18). It is Torah that is healing for the tongue, as is said The tree of life heals the tongue (Mishley / Proverbs 15:4). But if a man is busy with an evil tongue, he forfeits his life. Behold, how vicious is slander. It is more vicious than murder, unchastity, or idolatry.

In the first parable, we read about a peddler selling an elixir of life. An elixir is a substance which supposedly prolongs life. Generally when one thinks of an elixir, one thinks of some liquid that one drinks. The parable however describes the elixir as some saying or truth. (*The interesting thing about this parable is that what we think about an elixir, as a liquid, is not a liquid based on the rabbinic perspective. The idea is that we may think we know what the Scriptures are saying in all instances, but we really need to examining the historical and cultural perspective in order to get the full picture.*) Rabbi Yannai asks to be told the answer (given the elixir), and the peddler asks for the scroll of the Psalms, he unrolls the scroll and looks to *Tehillim / Psalms 34:14* and declares to keep the tongue from evil. The full meaning is drawn out by the text from the psalms to keep the tongue from killing, stealing, and destroying.

The second parable speaks of a basket of figs. The righteous one who eats says a blessing, whereas the unrighteous one who eats does not say a blessing. Saying a blessing is life, withholding a blessing is death. Speaking a blessing brings life because the tongue in this instance contains words of life. The parallel is to the one who gains instruction (Torah), his lips will speak of the greatness of God. The rabbinic understanding on the Torah is that it is a tree of life, it is for making one happy, and it is for healing. How do you think the Torah (Law) can bring life, happiness, and healing in one's life? How often do we hear this kind of teaching today? Do you consider this an errant teaching; for example from Paul's writings in the Apostolic Writings?

Midrash Tehillim 52, Part 2 concludes saying, “*For he slandered Ahimelech before Saul, and the three of them, Saul, Ahimelech, and Doeg were slain, Ahimelech, as it is said You will surely die, Ahimelech (1 Samuel 22:16); Saul, as it is said so Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord (1 Chronicles 10:13); and Doeg, who was banished from the world, as is said, God will likewise break you forever (Tehillim / Psalms 52:7), that is, from the world to come. And what caused his banishment? Slander, as is said When Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul.*” The rabbis suggest that by Doeg’s slander, all three men were slain at that instant, Saul, Doeg, and Ahimelech. Based on the narrative, the only person who was slain was Ahimelech by the hand of Doeg. How were Saul and Doeg also slain? The reference is to the Olam Habah (the World to Come). By their actions their names were stricken from the book of life in heaven. The point that should be understood based upon this midrash is that Lashon Hara (לְשׁוֹן הַרָּע, “evil tongue”) is the halakhic term for derogatory speech about another person, however, it differs from defamation in that its focus is on the use of “*true speech*” for a wrongful purpose. Just like Doeg did with regard to Ahimelech. Doeg’s speech was considered to be Lashon Hara because he was speaking some truth about David in a negative way. This information was something that was not known publicly and is used to take a negative situation and make it worse. Statements that fit this description are considered to be lashon hara, regardless of the method of communication that is used, whether it is through face-to-face conversation, a letter, telephone, or email, or even body language. As the children of God, we need to be very careful not to spread gossip, whether it is done for harm or not.

Midrash Tehillim 52, Part 5 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דִּיבָּר הַמְתָּחֵל) saying, “*Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul (Tehillim / Psalms 52:1).*” The homiletic introduction to the Midrash says “*And told Saul, that is, and embittered Saul. What did he say to him?*” Why do you think that Doeg hated David so much that he was willing to cause Saul to be embittered towards him? The entire midrash states the following:

מדרש תהילים פרק נב סימן ג

ג דבר אחר בבוא דואג האדומי. זהו שאמר הכתוב (מכסה) [חכשה] שנאה במשאון תגלת רעתו בקהל (משלי כו כו), תנין ר' חייא מפה רסמין את החנפים מפני חילול השם, שנאמר ובסוב צדיק מצדקתו ועשה על (יחזקאל יה כד), ולמה נותן הקב"ה דרך רע לפניו, בשבייל לפרש מעשיו לבריות שלא רע בו דבר בשיביל העבירות ויהיו הבריות קוראות תגר נגד מדת הדין, בשבייל כך הקב"ה מפרשם מעשיו למי שהוא מהניף לחבירו, בוא ולמד מדווג שהיה ראש לסנהדרין, שנאמר אביר הרועים אשר לשאול (ש"א שמואל א' כא ח), ובשיביל מדת לשון הרע אף על פי שהיא בו תורה, פי"ר רسمו הכתוב שהוא בעל הלשון, כדי להודיע מעשיו לבריות, שלא יבא ליפרע ממנו, ויהיו קורין תגר לפניו מדת הדין, לפיכך כתיב בבואה דואג האדומי.

Midrash Tehillim 52, Part 3

3. Another comment. The words When Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, etc., are to be read in the light of what Scripture says elsewhere, Though his hatred cover itself with guile, his wickedness will be openly showed before the assemble (Mishley / Proverbs 26:26). Rabbi Hiyya taught, Hypocrites must be shown up in order to prevent desecration of the Name. Thus, it is said, But when the righteous turns away from his righteousness, he will be brought to commit an iniquity (Ezekiel 18:24). And why does the Holy One, blessed be He, open a way of iniquity to the hypocrite? In order to make his deeds plainly visible to men; otherwise, the punishment that befalls him on account of his guileful transgressions would cause men to raise a cry against the measure of God's justice. Hence, the Holy One blessed be He, makes plainly visible the deeds of any man who beguiles his fellow with hypocrisy. Come and learn this from what befell Doeg, who was a chief of the Sanhedrin, as is said Doeg the Edomite, the chieftest of the herdsmen that belonged to Saul (1 Samuel 21:8). Because of his habit of slander, however, even though he had knowledge of Torah, Scripture makes it plainly known that he was a slanderer. His deeds were made known to men, lest when God came to punish him, they might otherwise raise a cry against the measure of justice. Hence, Scripture says, Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul David is come to the house of Ahimelech.

The midrash quotes from *Mishley / Proverbs* that states the following, 26:26 *While their hatred may be concealed by trickery, their wrongdoing will be exposed in public. (NLT)* The idea is that wicked men do self serving things and hide their deception by tricking (defrauding) a person so as to gain the advantage. Many times it is for the purpose of gaining financial advantage, or to take their place of power or influence (note roman history). Rabbi Hiyya taught that the hypocrite must be shown for who he is so the Name of God is not profaned. Why does he say hypocrite? Because the hypocrite sits, listens, and pretends to be obedient to God's commands, whereas in truth, in private, he lives lawlessly. The midrash continues saying that the righteous will turn from his righteousness and be brought to iniquity, interpreting *Ezekiel 18:24* to mean that the Lord opens a way of iniquity for the hypocrite. It is interesting that this is interpreted to be for the purpose of making visible the hypocrite rather than for the purpose of drawing the righteous back to righteousness. Doeg apparently was not one who was given to a repentant heart like David. The midrash states, "*Come and learn this from what befell Doeg, who was a chief of the Sanhedrin, as is said Doeg the Edomite, the chieftest of the herdsmen that belonged to Saul (1 Samuel 21:8).*" Why does the midrash state that Doeg was the chief of the Sanhedrin? According to the Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 11 we read the following:

[Concerning the verse cited about David, said R. Jehudah in the name of Rabh: The whole verse is a slander, said by Doeg the Edomite. "Who is skillful as a player"--who knows how to profound questions; "mighty valiant man"--who knows how to answer questions; "a man of war"--who understands argument in the disputations of the Torah; "intelligent in speech" 1--he understands from one thing another one; "a person of good form"--who is able to give good reasons for Halakhas; "the Lord is with him"--the Halakha always prevails with him. To all the things mentioned above Saul said: "My son Jonathan possesses all the same qualities. But when he heard that the Halakha prevailed with him, a qualification which he himself did not possess (for concerning Saul it reads [I Sam. xv. 47]: "And whithersoever he turned himself, he caused terror," and about David it is written: "In whatsoever he turned to be he was successful" 2), he was dejected, and began to be jealous. But whence do we know that it

was Doeg who said so? From [ibid. xvi. 18]: “One of the servants”--the most distinguished of them and [ibid. xxvi. 8]: “And his name was Doeg the Edomite, the chief of the herdsmen that belonged to Saul.” (Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 11)

According to the Talmud, Doeg was skillful in asking profound questions, and knew how to answer profound questions, he was knowledgeable in the Torah, was able to make intelligent conversation, he as able to make himself appear great. He was chief of the herdsmen who had authority over other men, and his authority was great enough to cause Saul to listen and give a command to kill the priests of the Tabernacle, an almost unimaginable thing, to stand before God’s Tabernacle and take the life of a man. Midrash Tehillim 52, Part 3 concludes saying, *“Because of his habit of slander; however, even though he had knowledge of Torah, Scripture makes it plainly known that he was a slanderer. His deeds were made known to men, lest when God came to punish him, they might otherwise raise a cry against the measure of justice. Hence, Scripture says, Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul David is come to the house of Ahimelech.”* The point of the midrash might be that when one makes a habit of slandering, or gossiping, this becomes a part of one’s life that can have devastating spiritual consequences because of the parallels to deception, defrauding, lying, stealing, and killing. This story of Doeg, Saul, and David illustrates for us in a very significant way the issue of being a slanderer, a liar, and a gossip, which all can lead to murder. To what extent, how great, or how little have you lived your life in the practice of Lashon Hara? Does the Lord look at some types of Lashon Hara as greater verses other types that are lesser? What kind of impact does living like this have on your relationship with the Lord? Could it be compared to the one who commits murder in the presence of God? Think about this from the perspective that we have God’s Holy Spirit living within us. We are effectually living and walking in His presence on a day to day basis. For those who do this, and claim to believe in Yeshua the Messiah, what will the Great day of Judgment be like for them when they have to give an account for every idle word? (*Matthew 7*)

Midrash Tehillim 52, Part 6 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתהיל) saying *“Why do you boast yourself of evil, O mighty man? (Tehillim / Psalms 52:3)”* The homiletic introduction to the Midrash says, *“that is, David said to Doeg, O that you, a mighty man, wealthy man and chief of the Sanhedrin, should occupy yourself with this evil thing, and speak with the evil tongue.”* Here again we see the midrash saying that Doeg was mighty, wealthy, and chief of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin is a English Transliteration of the Hebrew סנהדרין, (Greek: Συνέδριον) means “sitting together,” “assembly” or “council.” The Sanhedrin was an assembly of twenty to twenty-three men appointed in every city in the Land of Israel. The Mishnah (*The Mishnah Sanhedrin 1:6*) describes the number of men to be twenty-three based on an exegetical derivation from the Torah, *“It must be possible for a “community” to vote for both conviction and exoneration (Numbers 35:24-5).”* The idea is that a court should not have an even number of judges to prevent deadlocks; thus 23. The Sanhedrin court dealt only with religious matters. The Great Sanhedrin was made up of a Nasi, who functioned as head or presiding president, but was not a member of the court, an Av Beit Din, the chief of the court, and sixty-nine general members. In the Second Temple period, the Great Sanhedrin met in the *“Hall of Hewn Stones”* in the Temple in Jerusalem. The court convened every day except festivals and Shabbat. In the late 3rd century, to avoid persecution, its authoritative decisions were issued under the name of Beit HaMidrash. Historically, the last binding decision of the Great Sanhedrin appeared in 358 CE, when the Hebrew Calendar was adopted. The Sanhedrin was dissolved after continued persecution by the Roman Empire and the raise of Christendom. The Sanhedrin is mentioned in the Gospels in relation to the Sanhedrin trial of Yeshua and several times in the Acts of the Apostles, including the Great Sanhedrin in chapter 5 where Gamaliel appeared, and in the stoning death of Stephen according to chapter 7. The Sanhedrin as a body claimed powers that lesser Jewish courts did not have. The Sanhedrin was the only court that could try the king, extend the boundaries of the Temple and Jerusalem, and were the ones to whom all questions of law were brought for a final decision. The significance of the statement that Doeg was chief of the Sanhedrin may be found in his having authority to cause Saul to command death to the priests. Doeg then took it upon himself to perform the executions himself because he had no regard for the Tabernacle or for the Lord (*or the leaders who are established by the Lord in His Tabernacle*).

The midrash states that though Doeg was chief of the Sanhedrin, he occupied himself with the evil thing and the evil tongue. The midrash continues saying:

Of evil, O mighty man? David asked Doeg, is this really might? That a man seeing his fellow on top of a roof push him off? Is this might? When can a man truly be called mighty man? When his fellow is about to fall into a pit, and he seizes his hand so that he does not fall in. Or, when he sees his fellow fallen into a pit, and he lifts him up out of it. But you saw Saul angry at me, and so you pissed on me. Of evil, O mighty man? You think evil is what men practice? No, they practice the mercy of God continually (Tehillim / Psalms 52:3). (Midrash Tehillim 52, Part 6)

According to the rabbis, living an evil life, having an evil tongue is not the qualities of a mighty man. This is paralleled to “*a man seeing his fellow on top of a roof push him off? Is this might?*” Taking advantage of someone, gossiping, slander, Lashon Hara, these are not the acts of a mighty man. The mighty man is one who obeys God and keeps a high value on life, like the rabbis say, “*When can a man truly be called mighty man? When his fellow is about to fall into a pit, and he seizes his hand so that he does not fall in. Or, when he sees his fellow fallen into a pit, and he lifts him up out of it.*” The mighty are the compassionate, those whose hearts are filled with love for one another and are willing to make sacrifices for a brother. Midrash Tehillim 52, Part 6 concludes saying, “*A man has two hundred and forty eight parts, some erect, some prone, some capable of being either one or the other, the tongue however is imprisoned with the cheeks and the teeth surrounding it, and with many other restraints upon it. Yet no man can withstand it. If it were erect, think how much more vicious the tongue would be.*” The midrash concludes with the statement about 248 body parts which are paralleled to the 248 positive commandments in the Torah. All of one’s body, all of who we are should be used to bring glory to God by walking in righteousness. The tongue on the other hand is a part of the body being imprisoned within the cheeks and the teeth yet no man can restrain it. By Doeg’s actions we can see how true James (James 3:6) words are that the tongue is a fire, a world of evil, it is a whole world of wickedness corrupting the entire body and is even set on fire from hell. These are very strong words to describe the depth of wickedness that is found in the tongue. Based upon Doeg’s example, the tongue has the power to kill, steal, and destroy by a command, by what is said in public or in private. The tongue is capable of “*devising destruction.*” The question is how destructive is your tongue? Do you uses your tongue for blessing or for cursing? Let’s Pray!

Heavenly Father,

We thank You for your mercies and the grace you show us each day. We know that the tongue is full of all kinds of evil, please have mercy on us for the words that we say that do not bring glory to Your name. Lord we know that our own righteousness is nothing but filthy rags and that we desire for Your righteousness, the righteousness that you credit to us because of our faith in the Messiah Yeshua. We ask Lord that you would increase our faith, and help us to bring glory to Your name! You have demonstrated the greatness of Your love for us in Your Son Yeshua the Messiah. Thank You Lord for sending Your son Yeshua that we may enter into the covenant of peace that You have promised to Your people. Help us to grow in our faith, to walk in the spirit, and apply these truths to our lives. We praise Your Holy Name and give You all of the honor, and the glory, and the praise forever and ever.

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

Be Blessed in Yeshua, Christ our Messiah!

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הָלֹלוּיָה לְאָדוֹנֵנוּ מָוּרָנוּ וּרְبֵינוּ יִשְׁוֹעָ מֶלֶךְ הַמֶּשֶׁיחַ לְעוֹלָם וְעוֹד:
Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,
“Yeshua” King Messiah forever and ever

Notes