

## Tehillim / Psalms 58 | ספר תהילים נח

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### Remaining Strong in our Faith

This week's study is from *Tehillim / Psalms 58:1-11*, the psalm opens saying, א לְמַנְצֵחַ אֵל-תִּשְׁחַת לְדָוִד הַ חֲמַת-לְמוֹ מִכְתָּם: *For the choir director; set to Al-tashheth. A Mikhtam of David. (NASB)* David asks, ה חֲמַת-לְמוֹ מִכְתָּם: *58:1 Do you indeed speak righteousness, O gods? Do you judge uprightly, O sons of men? (NASB)* The question David has is do the gods of the nations speak righteousness? What is unrighteous about an idol god and how does an idol god promote unrighteousness? What does “sons of men” mean in relation to David’s question regarding judging uprightly? Is his question rhetorical? He answers his question saying, ב הָאֱמָנִים אֵלִים צָדֵק תִּדְבְּרוּן מִיִּשְׁרָיִם תִּשְׁפֹּטוּ בְּנֵי אָדָם: ג אַף-בָּלָב עוֹלֹת תִּפְעֲלוּן בְּאָרְץ חַמְס יִדְיָכֶם תִּפְלִסוּן: ד זָרוּ רִשְׁעִים מִרְחֹם תְּעוּ מִבֶּטֶן דְּבָרֵי כָזָב: ה חֲמַת-לְמוֹ פְּדָמוֹת חֲמַת-נִחַשׁ: *58:2 No, in heart you work unrighteousness; On earth you weigh out the violence of your hands. 58:3 The wicked are estranged from the womb; These who speak lies go astray from birth. 58:4 They have venom like the venom of a serpent; Like a deaf cobra that stops up its ear, 58:5 So that it does not hear the voice of charmers, Or a skillful caster of spells. (NASB)* David says that he knows the heart of those who serve the idol gods, they work unrighteousness in the heart which manifests itself in violence in one’s hand. David appears to parallel Jacob and Esau, according to the Torah, to the wicked who are estranged from the womb. The wicked speak lies being full of venom and they do not listen which is parallel to the snake that doesn’t listen to the charmer. David seeks the Lord’s help saying, ז אֱלֹהִים הָרֹס-שִׁנֵּימוּ בְּפִימוּ מִלְתַּעוֹת כְּפִירִים נִתֵּן | יְהוָה: ח יִמָּאֲסוּ כְמוֹ-ט 58:6 *O God, shatter their teeth in their mouth; Break out the fangs of the young lions, O Lord. 58:7 Let them flow away like water that runs off; When he aims his arrows, let them be as headless shafts. 58:8 Let them be as a snail which melts away as it goes along, Like the miscarriages of a woman which never see the sun. (NASB)* He continues saying, י 58:9 *Before your pots can feel the fire of thorns He will sweep them away with a whirlwind, the green and the burning alike. (NASB)* David concludes his psalm saying, יא יִשְׂמַח צַדִּיק כִּי-תִזְהַר נָקָם פְּעַמָּיו יִרְחַץ בְּדַם הָרִשָׁע: יב וַיֹּאמֶר אָדָם אֶף-פָּרִי: *58:10 The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance; He will wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. 58:11 And men will say, ‘Surely there is a reward for the righteous; Surely there is a God who judges on earth!’ (NASB)*

עברית	Hebrew	ארמי	Aramaic	ελληνικός	Greek
	ספר תהלים פרק נח		ספר טוביה פרק נח	ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 58	
א לְמַנְצֵחַ אֵל-תִּשְׁחַת לְדָוִד מִכְתָּם:		א לשבחה על עקתא בזמן די אמר דוד		58:1 εις το τέλος μη διαφθείρης τῶ	
ב הָאֱמָנִים אֵלִים צָדֵק תִּדְבְּרוּן מִיִּשְׁ-		ב לא תחביל על יד דוד מכיך ושלמים:		Δαυιδ εις στηλογραφίαν ει ἀληθῶς ἄρα	
רִים תִּשְׁפֹּטוּ בְּנֵי אָדָם: ג אַף-בָּלָב		הברם הא ברם בקושטא שתיקין שת-		υιοι των ανθρωπων 58:2 και γαρ εν	
עוֹלֹת תִּפְעֲלוּן בְּאָרְץ חַמְס יִדְיָכֶם		קין צדיקי בעידן מצו חמי לכוון דצדקתא		καρδια ανομίας εργάξασθε εν τη γῆ	
תִּפְלִסוּן: ד זָרוּ רִשְׁעִים מִרְחֹם תְּעוּ		תמללון תריצותא תדנון ית בני נשא: ג		ἀδικίαν αι χεῖρες ὑμῶν συμπλέκουσιν	
מִבֶּטֶן דְּבָרֵי כָזָב:		ברם אוף רשיעי מה דין בליבא עילא		58:3 ἀπὸ μήτρας ἐπλανήθησαν ἀπὸ γαστρὸς	
		תעבדון בארעא חטוף אידיכון ידיכון		ἐλάλησαν ψεύδη	
		יתקנון:			

<p>ה חמת-למו פדמות חמת-נחש פמו-  פתי חרש יאטם אוננו: ו אשר לא-  ישמע לקול מלחשים חובר תברים  מחכם: ז אלהים הרס-שנימו בפיי-  מו מלתעות כפירים נתן   יהוה: ח  ימאסו כמו-מים יתהלכו-למו ידרף  חצו [חציו] כמו יתמללו: ט כמו  שבלול תמס יהלף נפל אשת בל-  חזו שמש: י בטתם יבינו סירתי-  כס אטד כמו-חי כמו-חרון ישערנו:  יא ישמח צדיק פי-תזה נקם פעמיו  ירחץ בדם הרשע: יב ויאמר אדם  אד-פרי לצדיק אד יש-אלהים שפ-  טים בארץ:</p>	<p>ד איתעבידו נוכראין רשיעיא מן  מען תען מן כריסא ממללי כדבותא  כדכובא: ה אירסא להון כגוון איר-  סא דחויא היך חורמנא חרשא דמ-  טמטם אדניה: ו די לא יקבל מילי  חרשיא אסירי נחשיא ומן רטוני רטן  הוא חכים: ז אלהא תרע ככיהון  בפומהון וניבי וככי בני אריון תתרע  יהוה: ח יתמסון בחוביהון היך מיא  יזלון להון ונגיד גיררוי אמטולהון  ויהון מתגזרין: ט היך זחיל תיבללא  די מאיס אורחיה היך נפולא ואשותא  די סמיין ולא חמון שמשא: י עד לא  יתעבדן רשיעיא רכיכי אקושן היך  אטדא עד דהינון רטיבין עד דהינון  כבוסרא בעלעולא ישיצינון: יא  יחדי צדיקא ארום חמא פורענותא  מנהון אסתורין ישזוג באדם רשי-  עא: יב ויימרון בני נשא ברם אית  אגר טב לצדיקא ברם אית אלהא  דדינוי מתיחן בארעא:</p>	<p>58:4 θυμὸς αὐτοῖς κατὰ τὴν  ὁμοίωσιν τοῦ ὄφεως ὡσεὶ ἀσπίδος  κωφῆς καὶ βουούσης τὰ ὦτα αὐτῆς  58:5 ἥτις οὐκ εἰσακούσεται  φωνὴν ἐπαδόντων φαρμάκου τε  φαρμακευομένου παρὰ σοφοῦ  58:6 ὁ θεὸς συνέτριπεν τοὺς  ὀδόντας αὐτῶν ἐν τῷ στόματι  αὐτῶν τὰς μύλας τῶν λεόντων  συνέθλασεν κύριος 58:7  ἐξουδενωθήσονται ὡς ὕδωρ  διαπορευόμενον ἐντενεῖ τὸ τόξον  αὐτοῦ ἕως οὗ ἀσθενήσουσιν  58:8 ὡσεὶ κηρὸς ὁ τακεῖς  ἀνταναιρεθήσονται ἐπέπεσε πῦρ  καὶ οὐκ εἶδον τὸν ἥλιον 58:9  πρὸ τοῦ συνιέναι τὰς ἀκάνθας  ὑμῶν τὴν ράμνον ὡσεὶ ζῶντας  ὡσεὶ ἐν ὄργῃ καταπίεται ὑμᾶς  58:10 εὐφρανθήσεται δίκαιος  ὅταν ἴδῃ ἐκδίκησιν ἀσεβῶν τὰς  χεῖρας αὐτοῦ νίψεται ἐν τῷ αἵματι  τοῦ ἁμαρτωλοῦ 58:11 καὶ ἐρεῖ  ἄνθρωπος εἰ ἄρα ἔστιν καρπὸς τῷ  δικαίῳ ἄρα ἔστιν ὁ θεὸς κρίνων  αὐτοὺς ἐν τῇ γῆ</p>
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This week's study is from *Tehillim / Psalms 58:1-11*, the psalm opens saying, א למנצח אל-תשחת לדוד For the choir director; set to Al-tashheth. A Mikhtam of David. (NASB) Here we find the words "Al-tashheth" (אל-תשחת) transliterated into the English language similar to *Tehillim / Psalms 57*. The word "Al" (אל) is an adverb meaning "don't, it is forbidden to; not, no," and the word "tashheth" (תשחת) is from the root word "Shakhat" (שחת) meaning "destruction." The opening phrase in the Psalm from the MT appears to be related to "not causing destruction" which is the wisdom of David (a Mikhtam of David). The Aramaic Targum states, א לשבחא על עקתא בזמן די אמר דוד לא תחביל על יד דוד מכיך ושלמים: 58:1 For praise; concerning the distress in the time when David said, "Do no harm"; composed by David, humble and innocent. (EMC) The opening words from the MT do not provide any additional information regarding the phrase "not causing destruction" as the previous psalm did with regard to David being in the cave when Saul went to relieve himself, David chose not to do harm to the man who was seeking his life. This psalm says simply do not cause destruction, the wisdom of David. The Aramaic Targum adds that this is concerning a time of distress when David said to do no harm, and this is considered humble and innocent lifestyle. The Apostle Paul said to the *Romans 13:10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.* (NASB) What does it mean to fulfill the law (Torah)? The phrase "fulfill the Torah" is actually a rabbinic idiom that is still in use today. The word "law" or "Torah" is understood from the sense of teaching, guidance, and instruction, rather than the "legal regulation." Commentators have often understood the Torah to refer to the first five books of the Bible but tend to look at the Torah purely from the perspective of being a legal regulation rather than a loving God giving His children instructions for living. According to the Scriptures, we also know that the word Torah may be used as a reference to the Scriptures in general. In Yeshua's time, and amongst Jews today, the Torah is a very positive thing, the Lord God gave

us His instructions for how to live. Therefore, the rabbis made it their goal to understand these instructions and to teach people to live by them just like we read in *Ezra 7:10*.

<p><b>Tehillim / Psalms 58</b>                  For the choir director; set to Al-tashheth. A Mikhtam of David.                  58:1 Do you indeed speak righteousness, O gods? Do you judge uprightly, O sons of men? 58:2 No, in heart you work unrighteousness; On earth you weigh out the violence of your hands. 58:3 The wicked are estranged from the womb; These who speak lies go astray from birth. 58:4 They have venom like the venom of a serpent; Like a deaf cobra that stops up its ear, 58:5 So that it does not hear the voice of charmers, Or a skillful caster of spells. 58:6 O God, shatter their teeth in their mouth; Break out the fangs of the young lions, O Lord. 58:7 Let them flow away like water that runs off; When he aims his arrows, let them be as headless shafts. 58:8 Let them be as a snail which melts away as it goes along, Like the miscarriages of a woman which never see the sun. 58:9 Before your pots can feel the fire of thorns He will sweep them away with a whirlwind, the green and the burning alike. 58:10 The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance; He will wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. 58:11 And men will say, ‘Surely there is a reward for the righteous; Surely there is a God who judges on earth!’ (NASB)</p>	<p><b>Toviyah / Psalms Chapter 58</b>                  58:1 For praise; concerning the distress in the time when David said, “Do no harm”; composed by David, humble and innocent. 58:2 In very truth are you silent, O righteous ones, in the time of strife? It is fitting that you speak righteousness, that you judge uprightly the sons of men. 58:3 But, O wicked, wherefore do you commit iniquity in the heart, wherefore do your hands establish crime on the earth? 58:4 The wicked have become strangers from birth; those who utter falsehood have gone astray from the womb. 58:5 Poison is theirs like the poison of the serpent; like the deaf adder that stops up his ears. 58:6 Lest it should accept the words of the wizards, the charmers of snakes; he is wiser than those who cast spells. 58:7 O God, smash their teeth in their mouth; and shatter the fangs of the lions’ offspring, O Lord. 58:8 Let them dissolve in their sins; like water, let them flow away; and he draws arrows at them, and they will be cut in pieces. 58:9 Like the crawling snail whose path is disgusting, like the abortion and the mole who are blind and have not seen the sun; 58:10 Before the soft wicked become as hard as thorns, while they are moist, while they are like unripe fruit, may he destroy them by the storm wind. 58:11 The righteous will rejoice, for he has seen retribution on them; he will wash his feet in the blood of the wicked man. 58:12 And the sons of men will say, “Truly there is a good reward for the righteous, truly there is a God whose judgments extend to the earth.” (EMC)</p>	<p><b>Psalmoi / Psalms 58</b>                  For the end. Destroy not: by David, for a memorial. 58:1 If ye do indeed speak righteousness, then do ye judge rightly, ye sons of men. 58:2 For ye work iniquities in your hearts in the earth: your hands plot unrighteousness. 58:3 Sinners have gone astray from the womb: they go astray from the belly: they speak lies. 58:4 Their venom is like that of a serpent; as that of a deaf asp, and that stops her ears; 58:5 which will not hear the voice of charmers, nor heed the charm prepared skillfully by the wise. 58:6 God has crushed their teeth in their mouth: God has broken the cheek-teeth of the lions. 58:7 They shall utterly pass away like water running through: he shall bend his bow till they shall fail. 58:8 They shall be destroyed as melted wax: the fire has fallen and they have not seen the sun. 58:9 Before your thorns feel the white thorn, he shall swallow you up as living, as in his wrath. 58:10 The righteous shall rejoice when he sees the vengeance of the ungodly: he shall wash his hands in the blood of the sinner. 58:11 And a man shall say, Verily then there is a reward for the righteous: verily there is a God that judges them in the earth. (LXX)</p>
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Looking at the Hebrew translation of *Romans 13:10* (האהבה לא תרע לרע על כן האהבה קיום התורה כלה:) we can see the translation of “to fulfill” or “fulfillment” is taken from the word קיום which means לקיים “to fulfil, carry out; hold; save” not to destroy. This word means to uphold or establish as well as to fulfill, complete, or accomplish. In rabbinic thought, the phrase “fulfill the Law” is often used as an idiom to refer to the proper interpretation of the Torah so that people can follow in God’s ways in the way that He

had intended. The difficulty today is that there are some interpretations that are designed to undermine the meaning of the Torah by misinterpreting it. Take for example, the mitzvah concerning adultery. One could interpret this command to say that this is specifically against one's spouse, and not about pornography, thus, looking at pornography is OK. When Yeshua declared lust as also being a violation of the command, he was clarifying the true intent of the Torah, looking at pornography is also adultery, thus, Yeshua clarified the true intent of the law in the sense of the rabbinic understanding of "to fulfill the Law." In a similar manner, the rabbinic understanding of "fulfilling the Law" is within this context. Another example of this is found in *Mishnah, Horayot 1:3*. (Note that the *Mishnah* is a composition of Jewish law that contains sayings from 200 BC to 200 AD.)

***Mishnah, Horayot 1:3***

*If the Sanhedrin gives a decision to abolish (uproot) a law, by saying for instance, that the Torah does not include the laws of Sabbath or idolatry, the members of the court are free from a sin offering if they obey them; but if the Sanhedrin abolishes only one part of a law but fulfills (lekayem) the other part, they are liable.*

***Mishnah, Pirke Avot, 4:14***

*Go away to a place of study of the Torah, and do not suppose that it will come to you. For your fellow disciples will fulfill it in your hand. And on your own understanding do not rely. (Here "fulfill" means to explain and interpret the Scripture.)*

Here we find another sense of the phrase "fulfill the Law," is given which means "to carry out a law," to actually do what it says. In the rabbinic rulings near Yeshua's time, we can find many examples of this usage, such as from *Mishnah, Sukkot 2:7*, "If this is how you act, you have never in your whole life fulfilled the requirement of dwelling in a sukkah!" Here, one rabbi is criticizing another's interpretation of the Torah, which caused him not to do what it really intends. Teaching that Christians are not obligated to obey the Torah is a gross error if the Apostolic writings are written from the rabbinic point of view of doing what the Torah really intends in the fulfillment of the Torah as opposed to its being destroyed or done away with. Another example from *Mishnah, Pirke Avot 4:9*, reads, "Whoever fulfills the Torah when poor will in the end fulfill it in wealth. And whoever treats the Torah as nothing when he is wealthy in the end will treat it as nothing in poverty." Again, the rabbis discuss "to obey" as opposed to the modern mindset that "fulfill" was meant to do away with.

In the Apostolic Writings, these two usages of "fulfill" appear to be key to understanding Yeshua's words in the passage in *Matthew 5* that begins with him speaking about "fulfilling the law."

***Matthew 5:19***

*Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (NASB)*

*Ἦός ἐάν οὖν λύσῃ μίαν τῶν ἐντολῶν τούτων τῶν ἐλάχιστων καὶ διδάξῃ οὕτως τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, ἐλάχιστος κληθήσεται ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν: ὃς δ' ἂν ποιήσῃ καὶ διδάξῃ, οὗτος μέγας κληθήσεται ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν.*

*לכן מי אשר יפר אחת מן המצוות הקטנות האלה וכן ילמד את בני האדם קטון יקרא במלכות השמים ואשר יעשה וילמד אותן הוא גדול יקרא במלכות השמים:*

Here we find two actions (i) "practicing" and (ii) "teaching others to do the same." These two are a parallel to the two idiomatic senses of "fulfill," while the words "break" and "teach others to break" are the idiomatic senses of "abolish." Yeshua's statement about fulfilling and abolishing the Torah is a parallel to

this sentence. Remember that parallelism was also a very common rabbinic method for emphasizing an idea in the Bible. By understanding the idiom we see that Yeshua was emphatically stating his intention, which was to explain God’s word and live by it, and not to undermine it. Based upon this analysis, to teach that the Torah is abolished or done away with is to undermine the true meaning of God’s word.

The question then is if the Torah is God’s instructions for how to live, then are Gentiles entirely excluded from its wonderful truths? In both Romans and Galatians, following Paul’s having spent time arguing over the halachah regarding how to observe the Torah and its relationship to salvation in Yeshua the Messiah, he answers this question by speaking about how the Gentiles can “*fulfill the Law*” according to *Romans 13:8-10* and *Galatians 5:14*.

**Romans 13:8-10**

*13:8 Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law 13:9 For this, ‘You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,’ and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ 13:10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. (NASB)*

**Galatians 5:14**

*5:14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ (NASB)*

The question “*is Paul using the idiomatic sense of ‘fulfill the Torah?’*” If Paul is using the idiomatic sense of “*fulfill the Torah,*” he is reiterating Yeshua’s key teaching about loving God and neighbor that says “*All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments*” (*Matthew 22:40*). These two commands are the summation of all the Torah. Love is the overriding principle that shapes how all laws should be obeyed, we obey God’s law because we love Him. Paul also seems to be using the idiomatic sense of “*fulfill the Torah*” to say that loving your neighbor is actually the living out of the Torah. When we love our neighbor, it is as if we have done everything God has asked of us. The point is that a person who is honest and praiseworthy in all his dealings with others has truly hit God’s goal for how he should live. He didn’t cancel the Law, he actually lived it to the utmost! Similarly, Paul is saying that when we love our neighbor, we have truly achieved the goal of all the mitzvot. The motivation for obeying God’s commands should be out of love, this is why the Apostle John wrote in his epistle in *1 John 5:1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. 5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. (NASB)*

In *Tehillim / Psalms 58*, David opens with a question saying, הַתִּמְת־לְמוֹ כְּדַמוֹת הַמֵּת-נְהַשׁ כְּמוֹ-כִּתּוֹן : 58:1 *Do you indeed speak righteousness, O gods? Do you judge uprightly, O sons of men? (NASB)* The question David has is “do the gods of the nations speak righteousness?” What is unrighteous about an idol god and how does an idol god promote unrighteousness? What does “*sons of men*” mean in relation to David’s question regarding judging uprightly? Is his question rhetorical? The Apostle Paul says the following in *2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1*.

**2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1**

*6:14 Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? 6:15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? 6:16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 6:17 ‘Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,’ says the Lord. ‘And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you. 6:18 ‘And I will be a father to*

*you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,' Says the Lord Almighty. 7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (NASB)*

The point that Paul is trying to make is an exhortation to pious persons to be weary of those who are deceitful and who are unrighteous (not obeying the command of God). Paul asks the question, of what agreement has the temple of God with idols? Nothing could be more of an abomination to a Jew than an idol in the temple of God. Here, no agreement is possible, the worship of two is incompatible. An idolater never worships the true God. Paul exhorts the believer to cleanse himself of all defilement of both flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord (7:1). The point is how could one keep the profession of faith and be under the influence of the Holy Spirit, while at the same time joining one's self to unrighteousness having communion with darkness, concord with Belial and with infidels? Paul quotes from Parashat Bekhukotai saying, "just as God said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people'" drawing upon the Torah to make his emphasis on the importance of who we are in the Messiah Yeshua, the Temple of God. In addition to this, righteousness is defined as believing in the Lord, in His Word, and obeying His commands (see *Revelation 12:17*). The Torah tells us to be careful to observe God's commands in the land which God has given us as we live on this earth. Notice how this applies to each of us, we have been given land to live upon, we are to live in the righteous ways of God as long as we are here on this earth. We read this in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 12:1-5*.

#### ***Devarim / Deuteronomy 12:1-5***

*12:1 'These are the statutes and the judgments which you shall carefully observe in the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess as long as you live on the earth. 12:2 'You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess serve their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. 12:3 'You shall tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and burn their Asherim with fire, and you shall cut down the engraved images of their gods and obliterate their name from that place. 12:4 'You shall not act like this toward the Lord your God. 12:5 'But you shall seek the LORD at the place which the Lord your God will choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come. (NASB)*

These Scriptures tell us that we are to destroy the places the nations served their gods, on the high mountains, and under every green tree. We are to destroy the sacred pillars, the Asherim, the graven images, and utterly remove the name of their gods from the land. In addition to this, we are told that we are not to act in the way the nations do to serve our God. We are to serve God the way He wants us to. *Devarim / Deuteronomy 12* goes on to say the following:

#### ***Devarim / Deuteronomy 12:30-32***

*12:30 beware that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How do these nations serve their gods, that I also may do likewise?' 12:31 'You shall not behave thus toward the Lord your God, for every abominable act which the Lord hates they have done for their gods; for they even burn their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. 12:32 'Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it. (NASB)*

*Devarim / Deuteronomy 12:30-31* states explicitly we are not to serve the Lord our God the way the nations served their gods. The unrighteousness of an idol god is that the idol is not the Lord God in heaven. Serving an idol god is a violation of the command of God and consequentially unrighteousness and sin. Serving God in the way the nations served their gods is also considered unrighteousness and sin.

The Aramaic Targum states, **ב הברם הא ברם בקושטא שתקיין צדיקי בעידן מצו חמי לכוון דצדקתא**

:58:2 *In very truth are you silent, O righteous ones, in the time of strife? It is fitting that you speak righteousness, that you judge uprightly the sons of men.* (EMC) The Septuagint states, 58:1 εἰς τὸ τέλος μὴ διαφθείρης τῷ Δαυὶδ εἰς στηλογραφίαν εἰ ἀληθῶς ἄρα δικαιοσύνην λαλεῖτε εὐθεῖα κρίνετε οἱ υἱοὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων 8:1 *If ye do indeed speak righteousness, then do ye judge rightly, ye sons of men.* (LXX) The Targum and the LXX are speaking of the “sons of men” and judging rightly. Based upon the history of Israel and of the nations (*specifically, Greek and Roman history on idolatry*) the worship of the idol gods involved indulging in sexual sin, adultery, and included the involvement of both male and female prostitution (*1 Corinthians 6:9*). Paul says those who know that unrighteousness will not inherit God’s kingdom. Those “sons of men” who partook in idolatrous worship were unable to judge rightly for the very reason of committing these sins before God. In addition to this, the hearts of those who indulge in these kinds of sin are manifested in the corruptness of their interactions with one another, their hearts are caught up all the day long in lust, they seek to destroy the innocent, lay in wait to catch someone to kill them, to financially ruin the poor for the purpose of their own profit, etc. *Jeremiah 2:5* states “*This is what the LORD says: “What fault did your ancestors find in me, that they strayed so far from me? They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves.”* (NIV) In their actions, in their knowledge and in their practice, the worshiping of idols, these men become utterly wicked, Jeremiah says they become worthless just like their idols are worthless.

ב האמנם אלים צדק תדבריו מישרים תשפטו בני אדם: ג אף-בלב עולת תפועלון  
 בארץ חמס ידכם תפלוסון: ד זרו רשעים מרחם תעו מבטן דברי כזב: ה חמת-למו כדמות חמת-נחש כמו-פחן  
 :58:2 *No, in heart you work unrighteousness; On earth you weigh out the violence of your hands.* 58:3 *The wicked are estranged from the womb; These who speak lies go astray from birth.* 58:4 *They have venom like the venom of a serpent; Like a deaf cobra that stops up its ear,* 58:5 *So that it does not hear the voice of charmers, Or a skillful caster of spells.* (NASB) David says that he knows the heart of those who serve the idol gods, they work unrighteousness in the heart which manifests itself in violence in one’s hand. David appears to parallel Jacob and Esau, according to the Torah, to the wicked who are estranged from the womb. According to the Torah, Esau was the first born and from the beginning he was red or ruddy, which interestingly is how the Scriptures describe David the son of Jesse when as a young man coming down from the mountain. It seems that being ruddy was an admired feature in the culture of the time since it was a sign of strength and health. This might also be why Isaac loved Esau over his son Jacob. Jacob was born second, and struggling with Esau to come out of the womb, he had his hand on Esau’s foot suggesting that the two brothers would be contentious with one another from the beginning. The point is that Esau was wicked from the beginning. He was unrighteous and sold his birthright for a bowl of soup. David says the wicked, their heart works unrighteousness, and the wicked in their unrighteousness measure out violence in their hearts with their hands. Esau was a hunter, he was a violent man trapping, hunting, and killing animals. (*Note, I’m not saying that hunting is wrong unless that is what consumes your life.*) The interesting point of the Psalm is that David says the wicked are estranged from the womb and speak lies from birth. Are the wicked made to be wicked from birth?

ד איתעבידו נוכראין רשיעיא מן מען תען מן כריסא ממללי כדבותא כדכובא:  
 58:4 *The wicked have become strangers from birth; those who utter falsehood have gone astray from the womb.* (EMC) The Septuagint states, 58:3 ἀπηλλοτριώθησαν οἱ ἁμαρτωλοὶ ἀπὸ μήτρας ἐπλανήθησαν ἀπὸ γαστρὸς ἐλάλησαν ψεῦδη 58:3 *Sinners have gone astray from the womb: they go astray from the belly: they speak lies.* (LXX) Both the Aramaic Targum and the Septuagint agree with the MT on the wicked going astray, the rabbis do not add any additional thoughts on the topic. These Scriptures reveal to us the seriousness of the problem of sin and the unrighteousness of man. We utterly need the Lord’s help to overcome sin, to turn from sin and to turn towards the Lord and His ways. In *Tehillim / Psalms 25:4* David requested for the Lord to “*Make me know Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths.*” (NASB) David says in *Tehillim / Psalms 58:4*, the wicked speak lies being full of venom and they do not listen which is parallel to the snake that doesn’t listen to the charmer, and this is paralleled to those who do so from birth. These Scriptures describe the nature of man, and the reason for our need to desperately seek the Lord God in heaven, and His

Messiah Yeshua, to save us from our sins. We desperately need a Savior, we need the Lord to change our hearts, our minds, our lives for His service and His glory.

David understands his need for God's help and seeks the face of the Lord in counsel and in prayer to deliver him from the unrighteous man who is seeking his life, מִלְתַּעוֹת כְּפִירִים, ז' אֱלֹהִים הָרֵם-שִׁנָּיִמוּ בְּפִימוּ מִלְתַּעוֹת כְּפִירִים, נִתְּן | יְהוָה: ח' יִמָּאֶסּוּ כְמוֹ-מִיָּם יִתְהַלְכוּ-לְמוֹ יְרֵךְ הַצֵּן [הַצֵּי] כְּמוֹ יִתְמַלְלוּ: ט' כְּמוֹ שִׁבְלוֹל תְּמָס יְהוָה נֶפֶל אֲשֶׁת : 58:6 O God, shatter their teeth in their mouth; Break out the fangs of the young lions, O Lord. 58:7 Let them flow away like water that runs off; When he aims his arrows, let them be as headless shafts. 58:8 Let them be as a snail which melts away as it goes along, Like the miscarriages of a woman which never see the sun. (NASB) David's description of how he wants the Lord to help him defeat his enemies is to break the fangs of the lions, to water that is lost by runoff, the arrows of the enemies being harmless, and the actions and lives of the wicked to be like miscarriages of a woman who never sees the sun. Anyone who has had a miscarriage understands the significance of David's words, miscarriage is an emotionally distressing situation. Miscarriage is a complex grief that leaves one particularly vulnerable and involves a number of other potentially significant losses and additional suffering which is not necessarily present with other types of bereavement, except a stillbirth which is a similar loss occurring after 20 weeks. Not only does one lose her baby, one also suffers from the effects of both a birth and a death. Miscarriage is unique in that there is very little remains to bury, because the baby's body has not formed properly or it is passed when using the toilet. Notice how this is paralleled to the wicked, the unrighteous, a thing that the Lord will do to those who refuse to be saved in His Messiah. Note also that when a miscarriage occurs, very often there is no identifiable body, thus, the loss is minimized and invalidated by others, which also leads to questions and feelings of grief. In the case of the wicked, nobody will grieve over their death. Their death will go unnoticed, paralleled to one who is passed in the toilet and invalidated, the reason being, they lived for themselves and they died for themselves, which is the very definition of unrighteousness. The Aramaic Targum and the Septuagint state the following:

## Aramaic Targum

### *Toviyah / Psalms Chapter 58:7-9*

58:7 O God, smash their teeth in their mouth; and shatter the fangs of the lions' offspring, O Lord. 58:8 Let them dissolve in their sins; like water, let them flow away; and he draws arrows at them, and they will be cut in pieces. 58:9 Like the crawling snail whose path is disgusting, like the abortion and the mole who are blind and have not seen the sun; (EMC)

ז' אֱלֹהֵי תִרְעַ כְּכִיחֹן בְּפֹמֵחֹן וְנִיבֵי וּכְכִי בְנֵי אַרְיוֹן תִּתְרַע יְהוָה: ח' יִתְמַסּוֹן בַּחֹבִיחֹן הֵיךְ מֵיָּא יִזְלוֹן לְחֹן וְנִגִּיד גִּירֵרוֹי אִמְטוֹלְחֹן וְיֵחֹן מֵתַגְזְרִין: ט' הֵיךְ זְחִיל תִּיבְלָלָא דִּי מַאִיס אֹרְחִיָּה הֵיךְ נְפֹולָא וְאִשׁוּתָא דִּי סִמְיִן וְלֹא חֵמוֹן שִׁמְשָׂא:

## Septuagint

### *Psalmoi / Psalms 58:6-8*

58:6 God has crushed their teeth in their mouth: God has broken the cheek-teeth of the lions. 58:7 They shall utterly pass away like water running through: he shall bend his bow till they shall fail. 58:8 They shall be destroyed as melted wax: the fire has fallen and they have not seen the sun. (LXX)

58:6 ὁ θεὸς συνέτριψεν τοὺς ὀδόντας αὐτῶν ἐν τῷ στόματι αὐτῶν τὰς μύλας τῶν λεόντων συνέθλασεν κύριος 58:7 ἐξουδενωθήσονται ὡς ὕδωρ διαπορευόμενον ἐντενεῖ τὸ τόξον αὐτοῦ ἕως οὗ ἀσθενήσουσιν 58:8 ὡσεὶ κηρὸς ὁ τακεῖς ἀνταναιρεθήσονται ἐπέπεσε πῦρ καὶ οὐκ εἶδον τὸν ἥλιον



The Aramaic Targum parallels the wicked to the crawling snail whose path is disgusting and slimy, to an abortion, and to a blind mole who cannot see. The description of the unrighteous man who goes about like a lion to destroy; this is very similar to the Peter's description of Satan, the deceiver, in *1 Peter 5:8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.* (NASB) In both the MT and the Aramaic Targum, the context of *Tehillim / Psalms 58:7 (6)* has David asking the Lord to do something in a future tense (a future expectation). The Septuagint states that God “has crushed” their death in their mouth, and then shifts to a future expectation, “they shall utterly pass away like water running through.” The rabbis who translated the Septuagint consider the destruction of the enemy as a complete, and as being yet to come. They also parallel the wicked to wax melting where the shape or form of the wicked is destroyed.

David goes on to say, *בְּטָרָם יִבִּינוּ סִירֵי־תִיבָם אָטָד כְּמו־חַי כְּמו־הָרוֹן יִשְׁעָרְנוּ: 58:9 Before your pots can feel the fire of thorns He will sweep them away with a whirlwind, the green and the burning alike.* (NASB) Previously David speaks of the teeth of lions, water runoff, arrows, snails, and miscarrying women, all in relation to the wicked. He then says “before your pots can feel the fire of thorns...” What is the fire of thorns? We also find this statement in *Tehillim / Psalms 118:12 They surrounded me like bees; They were extinguished as a fire of thorns; In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off.* (NASB) The fire of thorns may be a description of the rapidity with which a fire made of thorns burns. Note how the LXX and the Vulgate provide the translation, “they burnt out like a fire in thorns.” This may be a description of the sudden collapse of their rage as it is compared to a fire of thorns which blazes up fiercely and then rapidly dies down. The form of the preceding verses and the following line lead us to expect a climax in the description of their hostility rather than a description of their extinction. In addition to this, there is an additional spiritual meaning of thorns where thorns denote the falsehoods of the human desires. Take for example, in *Isaiah 32:13* we read, *עַל אֲדָמַת עֲמִי קוֹץ שְׁמִיר תַעֲלֶה כִּי עַל-כָּל-בְּתִי מְשׁוֹשׁ קִרְיָה עֲלִיזָה: 32:13 For the land of my people in which thorns and briars shall come up; Yea, for all the joyful houses and for the jubilant city.* (NASB) Note how “land” is written as אֲדָמַת and not as הָאָרֶץ suggesting the land may denote man who is full of falsehoods and evils. Note also in *Isaiah 33:11-12*, we read *יֵא תִהְיוּ חֲשֵׁשׁ תִלְדוּ קֶשׁ רֹחֲקָם 33:11 Ye conceive chaff, ye bear stubble, Your spirit! -- fire devoureth you. 33:12 And peoples have been [as] burnings of lime, Thorns, as sweepings, with fire they burn.* (YLT) Here in *Isaiah 33*, thorns denote falsehoods which consume truth and righteousness and Isaiah describes this as consuming chaff and stubble which is burned as thorns are burned. This suggests by consuming falsehoods one is causing truth and life to be removed. The text also suggests that the wicked are worthless and their destruction shall be sudden and complete. The pot may be a reference to what the righteous are preparing for food (life) and the wicked who are set on taking our lives. David says the Lord will sweep them away, both the green and the burning alike. The translators of the NASB seem to use a little poetic license in this verse since the words “whirlwind, green, and burning alike” are not in Ginsburg's MT. The point however is clear, the unrighteous, the wicked will perish and the Lord will be the one who does this for His people.

David concludes his psalm saying, *יֵא יִשְׂמַח צְדִיק כִּי-תִזָּה נָקָם פְּעַמָּיו יִרְחֹץ בְּדַם הָרָשָׁע: יב וַיֹּאמֶר אָדָם 58:10 The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance; He will wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. 58:11 And men will say, ‘Surely there is a reward for the righteous; Surely there is a God who judges on earth!’* (NASB) In this Psalm we read of the vengeance of God upon the enemies of His people. David says that the righteous will rejoice when he sees the vindication of God's honor, exemplified by the deliverance the Lord has provided. The arrogance, power, prosperity, and success of the wicked, are often a discouragement to the righteous. However, when the righteous see the judgments of God taking away the wicked, and the Lord's vengeance on them, the righteous will rejoice in the satisfaction that is found in their faith in God's providence, and in his justice, mercy, and righteousness. David makes a troubling statement saying “He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked,” which suggests there will be so great a slaughter of his enemies, that looking over the slain his feet will be washed

in the blood of the dead. The allusion is to a great slaughter of the unrighteous, those who seek to destroy God's people will in fact themselves be destroyed. The blood and the slaughter of the wicked reminds us of the Apostle John's words in the book of *Revelation 14* which says the following.

***Revelation 14:18-20***

*14:18 Then another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, 'Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe.' 14:19 So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. 14:20 And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles. (NASB)*

Here again we find the future expectation of the victory of the Lord over the wicked. The book of Revelation tells us that in Yeshua the Messiah we have victory. Like the rendering of the Septuagint in *Tehillim / Psalms 58:6*, the Lord has crushed their teeth (past tense), he has bruised the head of the serpent, and we wait on a future expectation of deliverance in this world and in the world to come. These Scriptures assure us that we serve a great God who is able to overcome anything. In addition to this, David's words speak to us that we are to be patient, to wait upon the Lord for His victory and His deliverance, to remain strong in our faith in Yeshua the Messiah the Lord's Savior and King, and to not waver in our faith due to the unrighteousness of this world. Let's pray asking the Lord to strengthen our faith and to help us to endure troubling times when they come!

**Rabbinic Commentary**

The Rabbinic Commentary (Midrash) on *Tehillim / Psalms 58* has 4 parts. Reading through the Midrash we will be looking at Part 1, 2, 3, and 4. Let's begin by outlining *Midrash Tehillim Chapter 58, Part 1, 2, 3, and 4*.

**Outline of Midrash Tehillim / Psalms, Chapter 58, Part 1, 2, 3, and 4.**

**Part 1**

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the **דיבור המתחיל** (Dibur Hamathil) saying “*For the leader; Al-tashheth. A Psalm of David; Michtam. What is politic for me? Silence, yet speak you righteousness (Tehillim / Psalms 58:1-2).*”
- The **פתיחתא** (Petihtha) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*Rabbi Isaac said, What is good policy for a man in this world?*”
- The **משל** (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the **פתיחתא** (Petihtha), the rabbis go on to discuss the opening sentence to the psalm asking about the man who is dumb in a fight, to be dumb in an argument about the Torah, and to be dumb about righteousness.
- The **נמשל** (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the **משל** (mashal), the rabbis expand upon the mashal drawing a parallel to David, Saul, and Abishai.
- The Concluding phrase says “*Another explanation of this verse is that David said to them, Have you pursued me with justice, as the Torah says, with justice you will pursue (Devarim / Deuteronomy 16:20)? Or, have you judged me in righteousness, as the Torah says, in righteousness you will judge your neighbor (Vayikra / Leviticus 19:15)? Have you acted thus? Do you judge with equity the sons of men? Hence the Psalm asks do you indeed speak as a righteous company?*”

## Part 2

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying “*Yes, in heart you work wickedness, you weigh out in the earth the violence of your hands. The wicked are estranged from the womb; the speakers of lies go astray as soon as they are born (Tehillim / Psalms 58:3-4).*”
- The פתיחתא (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*David said to them, the heart of a man was created to speak truth, as it is said And he speaks truth in his heart (Tehillim / Psalms 15:2).*”
- The משל (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis go on to discuss the idea of speaking truth, however, the wicked do not speak truth.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the משל (mashal), the rabbis expand upon the mashal by drawing a parallel to Jacob and Esau. Esau was wicked from the womb and there was not truth in his heart.
- The Concluding phrase says “*He aims his arrows, said David, as the arrow, when shot from the bow, smites and kills, so does the evil tongue, for it is said, Their tongue is an arrow shot out, it speaks deceit (Jeremiah 9:7). Arrows as they speak (Tehillim / Psalms 58:8), that is whenever they speak.*”

## Part 3

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying “*They are as a snail which oozes as it goes its way; and so will fall into fire and never see the sun (Tehillim / Psalms 58:9).*”
- The פתיחתא (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*Like the snail which oozes on its way so that its track is known, so the evil tongue oozes on its way makes itself known by its slime.*”
- The משל (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis go on to discuss the way of truth and the evil tongue.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the משל (mashal), the rabbis expand upon the evil tongue and say that the one who practices the evil tongue will be case into Hell.
- The Concluding phrase says “*But it is said of the righteous, Unto you that fear My name will the sun of righteousness arise with healing in its wings (Malachi 3:20).*”

## Part 4

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying “*A different reading, like the untimely births (nefel) of a woman that have not seen the sun (Tehillim / Psalms 58:9).*”
- The פתיחתא (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*Behold, you will be regarded like the untimely births a woman lets fall that never see the sun.*”
- The משל (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis go on to discuss the idea of not seeing the sun to animals who so nor see the sun.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the משל (mashal), the rabbis expand upon the mashal with parable on horse, a snake, and a frog.
- The Concluding phrase says “*The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance (Tehillim / Psalms 58:11). Only if you are thought worthy by the Master of the vineyard to destroy the briars in His vineyard, may you, the righteous, rejoice in their destruction.*”

Midrash Tehillim 58, Part 1 opens with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying “*For the leader; Al-tashheth. A Psalm of David; Michtam. What is politic for me? Silence, yet speak you righteousness (Tehillim / Psalms 58:1-2).*” The homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*Rabbi Isaac said, What is good policy for a man in this world?*” Note that in the Hebrew text from the midrash, it says אמר ר' יצחק

מה הוא אומנותו של אדם בעולם הזה “*what is the faith of man in this world.*” The midrash continues saying, “*To make himself out as dumb in a time of conflict. Lest it be thought that a man should also remain dumb in debate on Torah, the Psalm goes on to say Speak you righteousness. Lest it be thought that he may then become arrogant towards others, the Psalm goes on to say Debate with kindness the children of men.*” The rabbis say that it is better to pretend to be dumb in a conflict rather than to remain dumb in a debate on the Torah. Being dumb is paralleled to being arrogant towards others in one’s knowledge of the Torah. This is within the context of the opening verse of the Psalm, that righteousness speaks. The righteous are the one’s who study the Torah and put it into practice. But not only does one put the mitzvot into practice, one must also be humble and kind to others. According to Jewish tradition, the chief of the mitzvot is “*hashkamat bayt ha-midrash scharit v’aravit*” which means “*to daily attend the house of study, to occupy ourselves with the pursuit of the Torah and wisdom.*” The phrase “*La’asok b’divrey Torah*” is the blessing that tells us to be engaged in the words of Torah. The rabbinic expression “*v’talmud Torah k’neged kulam*” usually translated as “*...and Torah study is equivalent to all of the other mitzvot*” attests to the importance that Jewish tradition assigns to learning and studying the Torah. Do we have this kind of commitment today with regard to studying God’s Word, even, studying the Torah? Considering the Scriptures, keeping or guarding God’s word in our hearts, we strengthen ourselves against the enemy within. Studying the Torah, we are instructed to diligently pursue the best moral standards, to be good to one another, and to love God. In the rabbinic mind, the Torah takes precedence over all else. In fact, the rabbis say that the Torah predates the creation of the world, and that God used the Torah as a blueprint for creation (*Midrash Tanhuma, Bereishit 1:1*). Similarly, the Talmud depicts God as spending the first three hours of every day studying Torah (*Talmud Bavli Avodah Zarah 3b*).

The midrash continues saying the following:

*In another comment, the words Al-tashheth, etc. are read You will not destroy, shall you indeed be dumb towards righteousness? (Tehillim / Psalms 58:1). Consider these words in the light of what Solomon says, The way of man is perverse and strange (Mishley / Proverbs 21:8) that is, wicked men are perverse, for they do not stand by what they say; they say a thing and then twist it. So was Saul perverse. This is the thing he said one night to David, as Scriptures tell, He said to David, You are a righteous man because of me (1 Samuel 24:18). What did Saul mean by the phrase because of me? If the wheat is not bad, then the wheat is thought good; if you are thought a righteous man, it is because of me. I am he who made you a righteous man, because I went forth to seek your life. If I had found you, I would have slain you. But because I have fallen into your hand and you did not slay me, therefore You are a righteous man because of me. So too, in the righteous man is more excellent because of his neighbor (Mishley / Proverbs 12:26), his neighbor is taken to mean Saul to whom Samuel said The Lord has given it to your neighbor, even to David (1 Samuel 28:17); and the righteous is taken to mean David in whom Saul said, swear not therefore unto me by the Lord, that you will not cut off my seed after me, and David swore unto Saul (1 Samuel 24:22-23). (Midrash Tehillim 58, Part 1)*

Note that the rabbis are discussing the opening phrase of the psalm on the words “*Al-tashheth.*” The word “*Al*” (אל) is an adverb meaning “*don’t, it is forbidden to; not, no,*” and the word “*tashheth*” (תִּשְׁחֶת) is from the root word “*Shakhat*” (שָׁחַת) meaning “*destruction.*” The words “*you will/shall not destroy*” are brought into context of being dumb towards righteousness. What does it mean to be dumb towards righteousness and how can this be paralleled to destruction? The midrash states, *ישׁים עצמו כאילם בשעת מריבה*, to make one’s self dumb/mute/silent in the hour of a fight. Being dumb or silent towards righteousness can indeed cause destruction. In *Matthew 5:13*, the Scriptures say, “*You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless.*” (NLT) ὁμεῖς ἐστε τὸ ἅλας τῆς γῆς· ἐὰν δὲ τὸ ἅλας μωρανθῇ ἐν τίνι ἀλισθήσεται; εἰς οὐδὲν

ἰσχύει ἔτι εἰ μὴ βληθὲν ἔξω καταπατεῖσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων. (KATA MATΘAIION 5:13) In the Hebrew Bible, salt is both a disinfectant and preservative, but if the salt loses its integrity (its “*flavor*” to preserve) the result is uselessness. When Yeshua talked about salt being “*trampled under foot*,” he was referring to the connotation of being useless. When salt maintains its integrity the effects are long-lasting (permanent), but when salt loses its integrity, the result is the salt becomes useless. The Hebrew noun for salt is מֶלַח, and the denominative verb (*the verb that is derived from this noun*) is מָלַח, which means “*to salt*.” There is also a second meaning to this verb, which means to disperse in fragments. The idea here could be of pulverizing a block of salt, although the idea of pulverizing by this verb is not confined to salt. For example, the Hebrew word for rags is מְלָחִים, which is a cognate of the same root מ-ל-ח. For example, rags are made by “*ripping apart*” a piece of cloth. So the meaning is not restricted to literal salt. The idea then may be that the one who is dumb towards righteousness, within the context of our being the salt of the earth, according to Yeshua’s commentary, is to remain silent, destruction will follow. To remain silent to righteousness is to allow unrighteousness to rule and reign.

The rabbis parallel the concept of being dumb or silent to righteousness to Solomon’s words, “*Consider these words in the light of what Solomon says, The way of man is perverse and strange (Mishley / Proverbs 21:8) that is, wicked men are perverse, for they do not stand by what they say; they say a thing and then twist it.*” The concept here is how the wicked put a spin on the truth, and they do not follow through with their word. David and Saul are used to illustrate the wicked who do not follow through by their word (Saul) and the righteous who do (David). Saul tells David that he is a righteous man because he sought his life. A parable is taught saying מהו ממני, אם אין חטים רעות, יש חטים יפות, כך צדיק אתה ממני “*What did Saul mean by the phrase because of me? If the wheat is not bad, then the wheat is thought good; if you are thought a righteous man, it is because of me.*” The wheat being bad may only be determined by observation. If one does not observe the wheat being bad, then it is assumed the wheat is good. David did not appear to be corrupt because Saul was pursuing him, and his saving Saul’s life (not taking his life) is counted as being righteous, or as demonstrating his righteousness. The point of the comments of salt and of not being silent to righteousness is that the children of God can help preserve the moral order of society, being a voice of truth, voting in government, and staying out of trouble, calling others to repentance for sins, and being forgiving and merciful just as the Lord God in heaven is forgiving and merciful.

The midrash continues saying the following:

*When Saul heard these words, he rose up and went down to the wilderness of Ziph having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph (1 Samuel 26:3). Then David and Abishai came to the people by night; and behold, Saul lay sleeping within the barricade (1 Samuel 26:7). But do not the words lay and sleeping denote the same thing? The use of both words, however, implies that a sleep like a swoon was cast upon Saul and his people. Thus we read For they were all asleep; because a deep sleep from the Lord was fallen upon them (1 Samuel 26:12). Hence, it is said Saul lay sleeping. Then said Abishai to David, God has delivered up your enemy into your hand this day, etc And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not (al tashhitehu) (1 Samuel 26:8-9). Accordingly, al tashheth (Tehillim / Psalms 58:1) means Destroy not. David said, Destroy him not as the Lord lives, for if not, by the Lord, he will smite him (1 Samuel 26:10). Why did David utter the name of the Lord twice? Because he said to Abishai, As the Lord lives, I will smite you. Another explanation of the phrase As the Lord lives is that thereby David adjured Satan and rebuked him. So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul’s head, and David cried to the people, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, Answer you not Abner? (1 Samuel 26:12-14), by which he meant, What have you to answer now? Behold, the night before, you said to Saul of the events in the cave, if David had done anything to you, we would have entered the cave and at once destroyed him. Behold now the spear and the cruse of water. (Midrash Tehillim 58, Part 1)*

This part of David's life further illustrates David not being silent to righteousness. The Tanach states in *I Samuel 26:8-9*, ה וַיֹּאמֶר אַבִּישַׁי אֶל-דָּוִד סַגֵּר אֱלֹהִים הַיּוֹם אֶת-אִיבֹךָ בְּיָדְךָ וְעַתָּה אֶכְנֹו נָא בְּחַנִּית וּבְאַרְצֵי פְעַם אַחַת, 26:8 Then Abishai said to David, 'Today God has delivered your enemy into your hand; now therefore, please let me strike him with the spear to the ground with one stroke, and I will not strike him the second time.' 26:9 But David said to Abishai, 'Do not destroy him, for who can stretch out his hand against the Lord's anointed and be without guilt?' (NASB) The rabbis note the use of the words אֶל-תִּשְׁחִיתֵהוּ "do not destroy" as a parallel to the opening phrase of the psalm. In addition to this, they say "David adjured Satan and rebuked him," indicating that David confronted his "tempter" or "deceiver" and rejected the temptation to cause destruction, which is synonymous to being silent to righteousness. He could very easily have ordered that Saul be killed but he did not.

Midrash Tehillim 58, Part 1 concludes saying, "Therefore, David said, Will you indeed be dumb towards righteousness? You should have spoken the truth. Instead, you made yourself out to be dumb and did not declare my righteousness. Another explanation of this verse is that David said to them, Have you pursued me with justice, as the Torah says, with justice you will pursue (Devarim / Deuteronomy 16:20)? Or, have you judged me in righteousness, as the Torah says, in righteousness you will judge your neighbor (Vayikra / Leviticus 19:15)? Have you acted thus? Do you judge with equity the sons of men? Hence the Psalm asks do you indeed speak as a righteous company?" David's response to Abishai's comments to kill Saul, David declared how Abishai is dumb or silent to righteousness. Examples taken straight from the Torah are to pursue justice, and to judge your neighbor in righteousness. It is amazing how righteously David behaved towards Saul even having run from Saul for his life, and having so many opportunities to kill him. Taking a life for a man of war, may or may not be an easy thing to do. Today, sin finds its way into our lives very easily which sometimes do not have the immediate effect of killing or destruction. The point of the midrash is with regard to being silent to righteousness. It is only by the Lord's help, in Yeshua the Messiah, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, are we able to walk in righteous. Left to ourselves, we choose the unrighteous way, because of our sins. Heavenly Father, we ask that You would help us to know You, Your Son Yeshua, and Your ways so that we can live the kind of righteous life that You expect of us because You have made us holy and righteous. Help us to live holy and righteous lives, just like David demonstrated for us here in the midrash, help us to choose righteousness, for Your glory! Amen!

Midrash Tehillim 58, Part 2 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying "Yes, in heart you work wickedness, you weigh out in the earth the violence of your hands. The wicked are estranged from the womb; the speakers of lies go astray as soon as they are born (Tehillim / Psalms 58:3-4)." The homiletic introduction to the midrash states, "David said to them, the heart of a man was created to speak truth, as it is said And he speaks truth in his heart (Tehillim / Psalms 15:2)." The midrash continues saying the following:

*But you do not do so, for even in heart you work wickedness. You weigh out in the earth the violence of your hands (Tehillim / Psalms 58:3), that is, the hands were created to work goodness and justice, but your hands work violence and robbery. (Midrash Tehillim 58, Part 2)*

The rabbis continue in their discussion on how in the heart one works wickedness, and if wickedness is found within one's heart, it will become a part of his life on the outside. David says in the psalm, בְּאַרְצֵי תִּשְׁחִיתוֹן On earth you weigh out the violence of your hands, and the rabbis say that the hands were created to work goodness and justice. In the Torah, we learn that good works (maasim tovim) were not a means for somebody to "get saved" or to "become righteous," doing goodness and justice is a part of living in a covenant relationship with the Lord. According to the covenant, the Lord God our Father in heaven wants us to not be indifferent to doing good and walking in justice and truth. The apostle Paul said

***Ephesians 2:8-22***

*2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 2:9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. 2:11 Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called ‘Uncircumcision’ by the so-called ‘Circumcision,’ which is performed in the flesh by human hands 2:12 remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 2:14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 2:15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, 2:16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. 2:17 And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; 2:18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. 2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, 2:20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone 2:21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 2:22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. (NASB)*

Notice Paul’s conclusions here in *Ephesians 2:8-22*. We are saved through faith in the Messiah, not of works by our hands but of the work of the Messiah and by faith. However, we are also made (created) for good works in the Messiah Yeshua, which the Lord has prepared before hand (the Torah) so that we would walk in them. Paul is speaking to the non-Jewish believers, they who were called uncircumcised, being separated from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel (<sup>12</sup>ὅτι ἦτε τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ χωρὶς Χριστοῦ, ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῆς πολιτείας τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ξένοι τῶν διαθηκῶν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας, ἐλπίδα μὴ ἔχοντες καὶ ἄθεοι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ). Here the word πολιτεία, means “1) the administration of civil affairs 2) a state or commonwealth 3) citizenship, the rights of a citizen” the gentiles were not a part of Israel, they were not a member of the covenant. Now however, in the Messiah, the gentile is brought near by the blood of the Messiah. Paul says there was a dividing wall between Israel and the world, which he has abolished in his flesh, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to make the two into one new man, and thus establishing peace. He goes on to describe how Yeshua has brought peace to those who were far away and peace to those who were near. The way Paul describes what Yeshua has done in *Ephesians 2:15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace (NASB)* is very interesting. Previously he is speaking of the gentiles who are called by faith in Yeshua and to do good works. Here in *Ephesians 2:15*, he speaks of Yeshua abolishing in His flesh the enmity of the Law and the commandments, so that He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace. Paul is not speaking of making a Jew and a Gentile into one person. He is speaking of the two sides of a man, the spirit and the flesh, and the war within, the spirit wants to serve God, whereas the flesh wants to sin. Yeshua brought reconciliation in the sense that he has brought peace by empowering us to obey His commands. By giving us the power to obey His commands, the non-Jewish believer has fellowship within the community of Israel, as Paul says “fellow citizens” where Yeshua is the foundation, the corner stone, and the whole building being fitted together and is growing into a holy temple in the Lord. Paul is in agreement with the midrash on the idea that our hands were made to work goodness and truth. The Lord having already prepared the good works He has for us are described in His Torah. We are to walk in His Torah, to obey His commands by the power

of His Spirit.

The midrash continues saying the following:

*The words, The wicked are estranged from the womb; the speakers of lies go astray as soon as they are born mean that the righteous are sanctified even in the belly and the womb, as is said, Before I formed you in the belly, I knew you, and before you came forth out of the womb, I sanctified you (Jeremiah 1:5), and as Isaiah also said, The Lord has called me from the womb, from the bowels of my mother has He made mention of my name And he said to me, You are My servant (Isaiah 49:1-3). But the wicked come estranged and wicked from the wombs of their mothers, as is said, The wicked are estranged from the womb; the speakers of lies go astray as soon as they are born, that is, the wicked are known from the womb and from the belly of the wicked. Thus we know of the wicked Esau that even while he was in the belly of his mother, he strove with his brother Jacob, as it is said, The children struggled together within her (Bereshit / Genesis 25:22), that is, in the very belly of his mother, Esau struggled with his brother, and you, too, went astray from the belly. Their venom is like the venom of a serpent; like the deaf asp that stops her ear; which listens not to the voice of the charmers, or of the most cunning binder of spells (Tehillim / Psalms 58:5-6). David said further to them, do you know what the Holy One blessed be He, did to the serpent? He destroyed his feet and his teeth so that the serpent now eats dust. Even so will the Holy One blessed be He, deal with maligners, as the next verse says, teeth of the young lions, O Lord (Tehillim / Psalms 58:7). (Midrash Tehillim 58, Part 2)*

The midrash speaks of the idea that the wicked are estranged even from the womb. This suggests that the wicked have no choice, they are wicked from the womb. On the other hand, the righteous are sanctified from the womb (e.g. *Jeremiah 1:5*). The midrash repeats the wicked are estranged from the womb of their mothers, whereas the righteous struggle with the wicked in the womb if they are born together as is in the case of Jacob and Esau. The point of the midrash appears to be that man and/or the flesh desires to sin from birth. We need to seek the Lord for His help to overcome sin, to receive His salvation, and His empowering to overcome sin in our lives for His glory. The idea that the unrighteous, the wicked are estranged from the womb speaks of the miracle that God works to call us to Himself in Yeshua the Messiah. Midrash Tehillim 58, Part 2 concludes saying, *“David said, As water, when once it is poured out, may not be gathered together again, but runs off apace, so it is with maligners’ slander; once they utter their words of slander, the words can never be confined to speaker and hearer. He aims his arrows, said David, as the arrow, when shot from the bow, smites and kills, so does the evil tongue, for it is said, Their tongue is an arrow shot out, it speaks deceit (Jeremiah 9:7). Arrows as they speak (Tehillim / Psalms 58:8), tht is whenever they speak.”* Again this follows with the rabbinic understanding of the ungodly. As water is poured and runs off apace, this is a description of the wicked who know nothing but sin from the womb and who have no hope of salvation. David says the slanderer is the one who aims his arrows to kill, the evil tongue speaks deceit whenever they speak. The midrash does not end on a good note. This illustrates for us our need for the Lord to save us and the miraculous power of God to deliver us from a life of sin and rebellion that begins from birth. The midrash illustrates for us the problem of sin in wicked men. The power and miracle of God is what Yeshua has accomplished according to Paul in *Ephesians 2:15* by *abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace* .(NASB) Yeshua established peace in the members of one’s body by abolishing in His flesh the enmity of the Law and the commandments that causes a divide between the spirit and the flesh. What a wonderful God we serve and praise Him for sending His Son Yeshua the Messiah!

Midrash Tehillim 58, Part 3 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying *“They are as a snail which oozes as it goes its way; and so will fall into fire and never see the sun (Tehillim / Psalms 58:9).”* The homiletic introduction to the midrash states, *“Like the snail which oozes on its way so that its track is known, so the evil tongue oozes on its way makes itself known by its slime.”* The entire midrash states the following:



<p><b>מדרש תהלים פרק נח סימן ג</b></p> <p>ג כמו שבלול תמס יהלך נפל אשת בל חזו שמש. כשם ששבלול זה ממסמס והולך ור- שומו ניכר, כך לשון הרע ממסמס והולך והיזקו ניכר, מה עונשו נופל באשו של גיהנם, ואינו רואה בשימושו של עולם הבא, שנא- מר בל חזו שמש, אמר הקב"ה אתם אמרתם לשון הרע, אתם נופלים בגיהנם, ואש אוכ- לת אתכם, ואין אתם רואים שמש של עולם הבא, אבל הצדיקים וזרחה לכם יראי שמי שמש צדקה [ומרפא בכנפיה] (מלאכי ג כ).</p>	<p><b>Midrash Tehillim 58, Part 3</b></p> <p>3. <i>They are as a snail which oozes as it goes its way; and so will fall into fire and never see the sun (Tehillim / Psalms 58:9). Like the snail which oozes on its way so that its track is known, so the evil tongue oozes on its way makes itself known by its slime. What is the punishment for the evil tongue? It will fall into the fire of Gehenna, and not see the sun of the world to come, for the words and never see the sun mean that the Holy One blessed be He, said, Because you speak slander, you will fall into Gehenna, fire will devour you, and you will not see the sun of the world to come. But it is said of the righteous, Unto you that fear My name will the sun of righteousness arise with healing in its wings (Malachi 3:20).</i></p>
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The midrash draws a parallel of the snail that oozes to the evil tongue (לשון הרע). The Hebrew word used to describe the snail that oozes is the word “*memasmes*” מִמָּסִים from the root word מס meaning as a verb “*to melt, dissolve, thaw; weaken, discourage.*” The word shows the repeated sequence placing emphasis upon the melting and dissolving giving the sense of the oozing of a snail’s slime. Why do the rabbis parallel the oozing of a snail’s slime to the evil tongue? Note how *Tehillim / Psalms 52* describes the tongue in the following verses:

**Tehillim / Psalms 52:2-5 (NASB)**

- 2 Your tongue devises destruction,  
Like a sharp razor, O worker of deceit.
- 3 You love evil more than good, Falsehood more than speaking what is right. Selah.
- 4 You love all words that devour, O deceitful tongue.
- 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.

**Tehillim / Psalms 52:2-5 (KJV)**

- 2 The tongue deviseth mischiefs;  
like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.
- 3 Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness. Selah.
- 4 Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue.
- 5 God shall likewise destroy thee for ever,  
He shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling place,  
and root thee out of the land of the living. Selah.

According to this psalm, the word “*tongue*” and the word “*deceit*” are placed in parallel occurring in verses 2 and 4. The tongue devises destruction, loves evil, and is deceitful. In *Tehillim / Psalms 52:5* it says God will likewise destroy you forever. The idea is that the tongue destroys, whereas the snail that goes forth, the “*memasmes*” מִמָּסִים melting, dissolving, weakening, may be paralleled to destruction in the sense that when ice melts, its shape is destroyed. Metal can also melt and its shape also be destroyed and reformed. The tongue has the capability of reshaping or reforming (melting, dissolving) a person to whom the harmful words are spoken, that is the significance of the evil tongue. It is possible to reshape a persons heart for

destruction. The midrash asks “*What is the punishment for the evil tongue?*” The rabbis conclude the following:

*It will fall into the fire of Gehenna, and not see the sun of the world to come, for the words and never see the sun mean that the Holy One blessed be He, said, Because you speak slander, you will fall into Gehenna, fire will devour you, and you will not see the sun of the world to come. (Midrash Tehillim 58, Part 3)*

They say it will be cast into the fire of Hell and not see the world to come. In the Apostolic Writings, all the references to gehenna, except what is found in *James 3:6*, are spoken of by Yeshua himself, and there is an emphasis on the punishment of the wicked after death as being everlasting. The term gehenna is derived from the Valley of Hinnom, traditionally considered an illustration of the place of the final punishment of the ungodly. Gehenna is located just south of Jerusalem, it is referred to in *Joshua 15:8 and 18:16*, where this valley was considered a boundary between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. It was in this place that human sacrifices were offered to Molech; these altars were destroyed by Josiah (*2 Kings 23:10*). The valley was later declared to be “*the valley of slaughter*” by Jeremiah (*Jeremiah 7:30-33*). The valley was used as both a burial place for criminals and for burning garbage. Whatever its historical and geographic meaning, its usage in the Apostolic Writings and here in the Midrash are clearly a reference to the everlasting state of the wicked, and this seems to be the thought in the final resting place of the evil tongue. In *James 3:6* the damage accomplished by an uncontrolled tongue is compared to a fire which “*corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.*” In addition to this, Yeshua warned that a person who declares others a fool will be in danger of the fire of hell (*Matthew 5:22*) a very close parallel to the rabbis conclusions in Midrash Tehillim 58, Part 4. In *Matthew 5:29* Yeshua states that it is better to lose an eye than to be thrown into gehenna, with a similar thought regarding it being better to lose a hand than to go into gehenna (*Matthew 5:30*). In *Matthew 10:28* believers in Yeshua are told not to be afraid of those who kill the body, but rather to “*fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*” (KJV). A similar thought is mentioned in *Matthew 18:9*, where it is declared better “*to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.*” In *Matthew 23:15* Yeshua denounces the Pharisees who “*travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.*” In *Matthew 23:33* Yeshua denounces the Pharisees and the scribes, asking the question, “*How will you escape being condemned to hell?*” In *Mark 9:43, 45, 47*, the thought recorded in Matthew is about it being better to lose part of the body than to be cast into hell is repeated (e.g. *Matthew 5:22, 29, 30*). *Luke 12:5* contains a similar thought to that expressed in *Matthew 10:28*, that one should fear the one who can cast both body and soul into hell, far more than those who might kill them physically. The concepts that Yeshua taught about hell, the place of eternal punishment of the wicked, is in fact a distinct parallel to the rabbinic thought of his day. The evil tongue will be cast into hell, but not only the tongue, but the person too since from the heart of evil does the tongue speak.

Midrash Tehillim 58, Part 3 concludes saying, “*But it is said of the righteous, Unto you that fear My name will the sun of righteousness arise with healing in its wings*” (*Malachi 3:20, יְזַרְחָה לְכֶם יְרֵאֵי שְׁמִי וְזָרְחָה שֶׁמֶשׁ צְדָקָה וּמְרִפָּא בְּכַנְפֶיהָ וַיְצַדֵּקוּם וּפְשָׁתָם כְּעֶגְלֵי מִרְיָקָה*).” In *Malachi 3:20* (4:2 in English translation), the Hebrew text is interpreted as ‘sun’ (Shemesh) and then talks of the ‘wings’ (Kanaph) having healing. Looking at the history and the pagan gods of the day, it is interesting to note how each culture had ‘sun’ gods and most of these sun gods had wings. One example may be found in the Egyptian sun god (Ra). This Scripture from Malachi is an difficult passage in the sense of whether the prophet is referring to the “SUN”, righteousness, and healing in its wings? Examining the Hebrew text, the prophet Malachi may have been using a play on words here. The idea is that if the Hebrew word שֶׁמֶשׁ (shemesh) was pronounced “Shamash” this passage would read the “*Servant of righteousness.*” This passage reads differently when reading Shemesh as Shamash saying, “*But it is said of the righteous, Unto you that fear My name will the servant of righteousness arise with healing in its wings.*” The purpose for ending the midrash with this

verse from the book of Malachi may be that the rabbis see this possible interpretation of the prophets words. The rabbis also may be paralleling the one whose tongue works destruction and wickedness, whereas the servant of righteousness, his words will go forth to bring healing, peace, and gentleness. Isn't that an interesting conclusion of the midrash?

Midrash Tehillim 58, Part 4 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying “A different reading, like the untimely births (nefel) of a woman that have not seen the sun (Tehillim / Psalms 58:9).” The homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “Behold, you will be regarded like the untimely births a woman lets fall that never see the sun.” The entire midrash states the following:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>מדרש תהלים פרק נח סימן ד</b></p> <p>ד דבר אחר נפל אשת בל חזו שמש. [הרי אתם חשובים כנפלים שמפלת האשה שאינן רואים שמש לעולם, וכן הוא אומר או כנפל טמון לא אהיה כעוללים לא ראו אור (איוב ג טז). דבר אחר נפל אשת בל חזו שמש]. נופלין אתם כאישות הללו שאינן רואין את השמש, אלא חולדין בקרקע ויושבין שם. שלשה בריות משונות משאר בריות, האישות ונחש וצפרדע, האישות אלמלא רואה אור, אין כל בריה יכו לין לעמוד לפניו, הנחש אלמלא היו לו רגלים, היה רץ אחר הסוס במרוצה והורגו, הצפרדע אלמלא יש לו שיניים, אין כל בריה נכנס במים לפניו. בטרם יבינו סירותיכם אטד. היה לבית דין ללמוד מן הפועל הזה כשמוצא הקוץ בכרם בטרם שיגדל ויעשה לסירים ואטדים, כורת אותו במעדר. כמו חי. כל זמן שהוא בוסר. כמו חרון. כל זמן שהוא כחריות הללו שהן רכות, כמה דאת אמר שלשה סלי חורי (בראשית מ טז), מיד ישערנו. ישמח צדיק כי חזה נקם. אם אתם ראויין לבעל הכרם לכלות קוצי כרמו, ישמחו צדיקים בכלייתן.</p>	<p><b>Midrash Tehillim 58, Part 4</b></p> <p>4. A different reading, like the untimely births (nefel) of a woman that have not seen the sun (Tehillim / Psalms 58:9). Behold, you will be regarded like the untimely births a woman lets fall that never see the sun. Nefel is here read in the sense of the falling of an untimely birth, as in the verse, Or as a hidden untimely birth (nefel) I had not been; as infants that never saw light (Job 3:16). Another reading, And so fall below like moles that have not seen the sun, but burrow into the earth and there squat. Three creatures, the mole, the snake, and the frog, differ from all other creatures. The mole, if it could see, no creature could stand against it. The snake, if it had feet, it could overtake a horse in full stride and kill him. The frog, if it had teeth, no creature would enter the water for fear of it. Before your brier shoots harden into brambles (Tehillim / Psalms 58:10). David said, the court ought to learn from the workman. When he finds a brier shoot in a vineyard, he destroys it with his mattock before it grows up and becomes thorns and brambles. He cuts it down while it is soft (haron), as soft as fresh bread. Here, haron is read like hori in the phrase Three baskets of fresh bread (hori) (Bereshit / Genesis 40:16). The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance (Tehillim / Psalms 58:11). Only if you are thought worthy by the Master of the vineyard to destroy the briars in His vineyard, may you, the righteous, rejoice in their destruction.</p>
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The MT states, 58:8 *Let them be as a snail which melts away as it goes along, Like the miscarriages of a woman which never see the sun.* (NASB) The rabbis discuss the word nefel (נִפֵּל) and say that this is a reference to the falling of an untimely birth, as a hidden and untimely birth. The wicked will be regarded as the remains of a failed birth because their deeds are self centered and are not performed for the glory of God. The midrash parallels this to three creatures, the mole, the snake, and the frog. The rabbis say these three creatures differ from all others.

The first example given is of the mole, the midrash states that if the mole could see, no creature could stand against it. Why do the rabbis believe the mole has such strength? Moles have compact bodies, which gives them the ability to move quickly through tunnels. They have large front paws with broad, sharp, hard claws that face backwards and are used like a shovel for digging; and a short stubby tail that is sometimes used as a lever. Moles have a cone-shaped muzzle for probing for insects in the dirt. Their fur is capable of moving in both directions, minimizing resistance when they change direction inside a tunnel, and their eyes are small and partially covered in skin, protecting them from dirt. Most moles have no external ears. Moles

may, depending on the species, grow to be between 100 and 200 mm (4–8 in) in length. They live almost their entire lives underground, excavating a series of tunnels at various depths. They are active day and night in rapid cycles of work and rest. They dig tunnels near the surface in search of earthworms, grubs and other insects, and create deeper tunnels in which to live that are about 3 m (10 ft) below the surface. They are very vigorous and work constantly, as a result, moles have voracious appetites, and a single animal may consume more than its weight in food daily. The mole does all of these things in darkness, underground, and so the rabbis say that if a mole could see no creature could withstand it. The idea may be that if the mole were to perform *maasim tovim* (מעשים טובים) “good deeds,” the mole would exceed all others, even man, and especially exceeding that of the wicked man, simply by examining the work schedule of the mole. If we chose to work righteousness in the manner the mole performs its duties, what effect would we have on the world for the Messiah?

The next animal the rabbis compare a snake saying, “*The snake, if it had feet, it could overtake a horse in full stride and kill him.*” How does the snake having legs and the capability to overcome the stride of the horse to kill the horse compare to the one who is as the remains of a failed birth? According to the Torah in the creation account and the creation of Adam and Eve, the Nakhsh (נחש, Serpent) once spoke clearly and wisely, and he had legs to walk. After the deception of man, the snake now must crawl on the ground and eat the dust of the earth, he has no eyelids to protect it from the sun or dirt. The snake can also no longer speak. The snake must crawl upon the ground being in fear of who may crush its head. According to the Midrash on the Psalms, there is a deep meaning in *Tehillim / Psalms 58:5-6*, in David’s exegesis, the rabbis say, “*David said further to them, know you not that the Holy One blessed be He, did to the serpent (לנחש), He destroyed his feet (רגליו) and his teeth so that the serpent now eats dust. According to this same text, if the snake still had feet, it could overtake a horse in full stride and kill him.*” The rabbis new and observed that snakes drank milk and ate food that was left for them. The words of *Bereshit / Genesis 3:14* are significant, and the compilers of the Babylonian Talmud note the tradition that although the snake may eat “*the delicacies of the world (מעדני עולם)*” it will only have “*the taste of dust (טעם עפר)*.” (*Talmud Bavli Yoma 75a*). The serpent is described as one of God’s creation of the beast of the field; in the shrewdness, cleverness, and wise discourse, the serpent deceived Adam and Eve and brought death into this world. Similar are the wicked who use their tongues to cause great destruction. The horse is capable of out running a snake, but if it had legs, the snake in all of its deceit would run down a horse and bring destruction to the horse.

The third animal the rabbis compare a frog saying, “*The frog, if it had teeth, no creature would enter the water for fear of it.*” The imagery of the frog does not bring a Torah context like the imagery of the snake. However, if you have tried to catch a frog in the water, it becomes apparent how difficult it is to catch a frog in its natural environment as compared to land. If a frog had teeth, it would be quite dangerous and as the rabbis say, “*no creature would enter the water for fear of it.*” The parallel we find with the wicked, their evil tongue, plans for destruction and murders, unrighteousness, what part has the righteous with the unrighteous? The righteous should be weary of the wicked, to not be deceived by their unrighteous ways.

The midrash continues saying the following:

*Before your brier shoots harden into brambles (Tehillim / Psalms 58:10). David said, the court ought to learn from the workman. When he finds a brier shoot in a vineyard, he destroys it with his mattock before it grows up and becomes thorns and brambles. He cuts it down while it is soft (haron), as soft as fresh bread. Here, haron is read like hori in the phrase Three baskets of fresh bread (hori) (Bereshit / Genesis 40:16). (Midrash Tehillim 58, Part 4)*

Like the brier, the wicked do harm to both the worker and crop blocking the sunlight and growth. The concept is that the wicked man should be judged accordingly by the court to protect the righteous. The midrash suggests that the wicked will be recognized by their deeds before they become thorns and brambles to cause harm to both man and beast. The gardener cuts down the brier when it is soft as bread. Midrash Tehillim 58,

Part 4 concludes saying, “*The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance (Tehillim / Psalms 58:11). Only if you are thought worthy by the Master of the vineyard to destroy the briars in His vineyard, may you, the righteous, rejoice in their destruction.*” (אם אתם ראויין לבעל הכרם לכלות קוצי כרמו, ישמחו צדיקים) (בכלייתן) Note the conclusion stating that if you are counted worthy by the Master (Husbandman, לבעל) of the vineyard. The vineyard parables that we find throughout the Apostolic Writings, and in the rabbinic literature, regard God as the land owner. The Master (Husbandman, לבעל) of the vineyard, according to Midrash Tehillim 58, Part 4, is the Lord God Almighty. The vineyard itself may possibly be paralleled to the garden of Eden, since the rabbis ask whether one is counted worthy of God. There is a rabbinic parable that draws upon the vineyard analogy according to the Midrash on Proverbs.

*Rabbi Simeon ben Yochai (ca. AD 140) said: “Why was Israel likened to a vineyard? In the case of a vineyard, in the beginning one must hoe it, then weed it, and then erect supports when he sees the clusters forming. Then he must return to pluck the grapes and press them in order to extract the wine from them. So also Israel—each and every shepherd who oversees them must tend them as he would tend a vineyard. Where in Scripture is Israel called a vineyard? In the verse, ‘For the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the House of Israel, and the seedlings he lovingly tended are the men of Judah’ (Isaiah 5:7).” (Midrash Mishley 19:21).*

Here the rabbis discuss why Israel was likened to a vineyard. The idea is the Lord is the Husbandman of the vineyard, and based upon this week’s study in Midrash Tehillim 58, Part 4, are you counted worthy by the Lord to be a gardener in His vineyard? Note what we have been studying thus far in the midrash on Tehillim 58 concerning the wicked. The wicked use the evil tongue to bring destruction, they plot to trap the innocent and the poor, they are workers of iniquity, workers of injustice, and have unjust scales seeking the financial ruin of the righteous. Have you been caught doing these things and/or can your life be characterized as an unrighteous man? The point is to recognize that we all fall short of what God expects of our lives. We need His help, to make us to know His ways, to be able to serve him with pure hearts and in righteousness. The Lord has provided us a means for drawing near to Him, in His Messiah Yeshua. Having faith in the Messiah, has your life changed, is there evidence that God is working in your heart, by the power of His Holy Spirit? Are you counted worthy in His vineyard? Left to ourselves, we certainly would not be counted worthy, but with His help, He counts us worthy by the merit of His Son Yeshua the Messiah. Let’s Pray!

Heavenly Father,

We thank You for the insights from David’s Psalms and from the rabbis that help to strengthen our faith and remind us to stay on the straight and narrow path of righteousness and truth. Lord we ask that You would have mercy on us, forgive us for our sins, help us to live righteous lives, and remain true in our faith and consistent in our walk before us even in the midst of troubling times. Give us the strength to overcome sin, to have true hearts to seek Your righteousness, truth, and to have patience to wait upon Your deliverance. Help us to set out minds on those things that are wholesome and righteous with a desire to show mercy and love toward one another. We 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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הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:  
Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,  
“Yeshua” King Messiah forever and ever

## Notes