

ספר תהילים סג | Tehillim / Psalms 63

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Thirsting for the Lord in Heaven

In this week's study from *Tehillim / Psalms 63:1-11*, the psalm opens saying, **א** מְזִמּוֹר לְדָוִד בְּהִיטוֹתוֹ *A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah. (NASB)* What was David doing in the wilderness in Judah? David begins his Psalm with a discussion on the soul that thirsts for the Lord. It could be a reference to the way Israel thirsted during their wilderness journey, they thirsted both for water and for the Lord God Almighty, **ב** אֱלֹהִים | אֵלֵי אַתָּה אֲשַׁחֲרֶךָ צָמְאַה לָּךְ | נַפְשִׁי כְּמַה לָּךְ בְּשָׂרִי בְּאַרְצ־צִיָּה וְעַיִף *O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, In a dry and weary land where there is no water. 63:2 Thus I have seen You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory. (NASB)* Note how he parallels the flesh that thirsts for water to the soul that thirsts for the glory of God, to see the Lord in His Sanctuary. The Psalm continues saying, **ד** כִּי-טוֹב חֶסֶדְךָ מִחַיִּים שְׂפָתַי יִשְׁבְּחוּנָךְ: *63:3 Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips will praise You. (NASB)* David says God's mercy (chesed, חֶסֶדְךָ) is better than life. What does it mean the mercy of God is better than life? He continues saying, **ה** כְּמוֹ *63:4 So I will bless You as long as I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name. 63:5 My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, And my mouth offers praises with joyful lips. 63:6 When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches, 63:7 For You have been my help, And in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy. 63:8 My soul clings to You; Your right hand upholds me. (NASB)* He contrasts those who do not seek the Lord, but live to cause destruction and to take life. Those who seek to destroy will be consigned to the depths of the earth. **ו** וְהָמָּה לְשׂוֹאָה *63:9 But those who seek my life to destroy it, Will go into the depths of the earth. 63:10 They will be delivered over to the power of the sword; They will be a prey for foxes. (NASB)* David concludes his Psalm saying, **ז** וְהַמֶּלֶךְ יִשְׂמַח בְּאֱלֹהִים יִתְהַלֵּל *63:11 But the king will rejoice in God; Everyone who swears by Him will glory, For the mouths of those who speak lies will be stopped. (NASB)*

עברית	Hebrew	ארמי	Aramaic	ελληνικός	Greek
ספר תהלים פרק סג	ספר תהלים פרק סג	ספר טוביה פרק סג	ספר טוביה פרק סג	ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 63	ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 63
<p>א מְזִמּוֹר לְדָוִד בְּהִיטוֹתוֹ בְּמִדְבָּר יְהוּדָה: ב אֱלֹהִים אֵלֵי אַתָּה אֲשַׁחֲ- רֶךָ צָמְאַה לָּךְ נַפְשִׁי כְּמַה לָּךְ בְּשָׂרִי בְּאַרְצ־צִיָּה וְעַיִף בְּלִי-מַיִם: ג כְּמוֹ בְּקֹדֶשׁ חַזִּיתִיךָ לְרֵאוֹת עֵנָה וּכְבוֹדְךָ: ד כִּי-טוֹב חֶסֶדְךָ מִחַיִּים שְׂפָתַי יִשְׁ- בְּחוּנָךְ:</p>	<p>א תושבחתא לדוד בעידן מהוי במדברא די בתחום שבט יהודה: ב אלהא תוקפי אנת אקום אקדים בצפרא קדמך צהיית לך לוותך נפשי רגיג מרגג לך לוותך בסרי בארעא צדיא צהיא ומשלהיא מדלית מוי: ג היכנא באתר קודשא חמיתך זכי יתי למחמי עושנך ויקרך: ד ארום טב הוא חסדך דתעבד לצדיקיא לעלמא דאתי מן חיי דיהבתא לרשיעיא בעלמא הדין בגין כן סיפותי ישבחונך:</p>	<p>63:1 ψαλμὸς τῷ Δαυὶδ ἐν τῷ εἶναι αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ τῆς Ἰουδαίας ὁ θεὸς ὁ θεὸς μου πρὸς σὲ ὀρθρίζω ἐδίψησέν σοι ἢ ψυχὴ μου ποσαπλῶς σοι ἢ σὰρξ μου ἐν γῆ ἐρήμῳ καὶ ἀβάτῳ καὶ ἀνύδρῳ 63:2 οὕτως ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ ὠφθην σοι τοῦ ἰδεῖν τὴν δύναμίν σου καὶ τὴν δόξαν σου 63:3 ὅτι κρεῖσσον τὸ ἔλεός σου ὑπὲρ ζωάς τὰ χεῖλη μου ἐπαινεσοῦσίν σε 63:4 οὕτως εὐλογῆσω σε ἐν τῇ ζωῇ μου ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου ἄρῳ τὰς χεῖράς μου</p>			

<p>ה הַיְכָנָא אַבְרַכִּינְךָ בְּחַיֵּי בַעֲלֵי- ו כְּמוֹ חֶלֶב וְדֹשָׁן תִּשְׂבַּע נַפְשֵׁי וְשִׁפְתַי רְנָנֹת יִהְלָל-פִּי: ז אִם-זִכְרְתִּיךָ עַל- יְצוּעֵי בְּאֲשֻׁמְרוֹת אֶהְגֶּה-בָּךְ: ח כִּי- הָיִיתָ עֲזָרְתָה לִּי וּבְצַל כְּנָפֶיךָ אֲרַגֵּן: ט דָּבָקָה נַפְשִׁי אֶתְרִיךָ בִּי תִמְכָּה יְמִינֶךָ: י וְהִמָּה לְשׂוֹאֵה יִבְקָשׁוּ נַפְשִׁי יִבְאוּ בְּתַחְתִּיּוֹת הָאָרֶץ: יא יִגְרֶהוּ עַל-יְדֵי-חֶרֶב מְנַת שְׁעָלִים יִהְיוּ: יב וְהִמְלִיךְ יִשְׁמַח בְּאַלְהֵים יִתְהַלֵּל כָּל- הַנְּשַׁבַּע בּוֹ כִּי יִסְכַּר פִּי דוֹכְרֵי-שְׂקָר:</p>	<p>ה היכנא אברכינך בחיי בעל- מא הדין בשום מימך אפרוס ידי בצלו לעלמא דאתי: ו היך תרב ודהן תסבע נפשי וסיפון דתושבחן ישבח פומי: ז אין אידכרתיך על דרגושי במטרתא ארנן במימרך: ח ארום הויתא סעיד לי ובטלל שכי- נתך אבוע: ט אדבקת נפשי בתר אורייתך בי במימרי סעדת ימינך: י והינון לקבורתא יתבעון נפשי ייעלון בארעית ארעא: יא ידחלוניה מטול מחת סייפא מוהבית תעלייא יהוין: יב ומלכא יחדי במימר אלהא ישבח כל די מקיים במימריה ארום יסרניק יסדמיק פומהון ד<מ>מללי שיקרא:</p>	<p>63:5 ὡσεὶ στέατος καὶ πιότητος ἐμπλησθεῖη ἡ ψυχὴ μου καὶ χεῖλη ἀγαλλιάσεως αἰνέσει τὸ στόμα μου 63:6 εἰ ἐμνημόνευόν σου ἐπὶ τῆς στρωμνῆς μου ἐν τοῖς ὄρθοις ἐμελέτων εἰς σέ 63:7 ὅτι ἐγενήθης βοηθός μου καὶ ἐν τῇ σκέπῃ τῶν περύγων σου ἀγαλλιάσομαι 63:8 ἐκολλήθη ἡ ψυχὴ μου ὀπίσω σου ἐμοῦ ἀντελάβετο ἡ δεξιὰ σου 63:9 αὐτοὶ δὲ εἰς μάτην ἐζήτησαν τὴν ψυχὴν μου εἰσελεύσονται εἰς τὰ κατώτατα τῆς γῆς 63:10 παραδοθήσονται εἰς χεῖρας ῥομφαίας μερίδες ἀλωπέκων ἔσσονται 63:11 ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς εὐφρανθήσεται ἐπὶ τῷ θεῷ ἐπαινεσθήσεται πᾶς ὁ ὀμνῶν ἐν αὐτῷ ὅτι ἐνεφράγη στόμα λαλούντων ἄδικα</p>
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In this week's study from *Tehillim / Psalms 63:1-11*, the psalm opens saying, א מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד בְּהִיּוֹתוֹ א
: א Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah. (NASB) The Aramaic Targum
states, 63:1 A psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness in the territory of the tribe of Judah. (EMC) The Septuagint states, 63:1 ψαλμὸς τῷ Δαυὶδ ἐν
τῷ εἶναι αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ τῆς Ἰουδαίας A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Idumea. (LXX)
What was David doing in the wilderness in Judah? According to *1 Samuel 23*, we are told what David was
doing in the wilderness of Judah.

1 Samuel 23:10-29

23:10 Then David said, 'O Lord God of Israel, Your servant has heard for certain that Saul is seeking to come to Keilah to destroy the city on my account. 23:11 'Will the men of Keilah surrender me into his hand? Will Saul come down just as Your servant has heard? O Lord God of Israel, I pray, tell Your servant.' And the Lord said, 'He will come down.' 23:12 Then David said, 'Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?' And the Lord said, 'They will surrender you.' 23:13 Then David and his men, about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah, and they went wherever they could go. When it was told Saul that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the pursuit. 23:14 David stayed in the wilderness in the strongholds, and remained in the hill country in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God did not deliver him into his hand. 23:15 Now David became aware that Saul had come out to seek his life while David was in the wilderness of Ziph at Horesh. 23:16 And Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David at Horesh, and encouraged him in God. 23:17 Thus he said to him, 'Do not be afraid, because the hand of Saul my father will not find you, and you will be king over Israel and I will be next to you; and Saul my father knows that also.' 23:18 So the two of them made a covenant before the Lord; and David stayed at Horesh while Jonathan went to his house. 23:19 Then Ziphites came up to Saul at Gibeah, saying, 'Is David not hiding with us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon? 23:20 'Now then, O king, come down according to all the desire of your soul to do so; and our part shall be to surrender him into the king's hand.' 23:21 Saul said, 'May you be blessed of the Lord, for you have had compassion on me. 23:22 'Go now, make more sure, and investigate and see his place where his haunt is, and who has seen him there; for I am told that he is very cunning. 23:23 'So look, and learn about all the hiding places where he hides himself and return to me with certainty, and I

will go with you; and if he is in the land, I will search him out among all the thousands of Judah. ' 23:24 Then they arose and went to Ziph before Saul. Now David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the Arabah to the south of Jeshimon. 23:25 When Saul and his men went to seek him, they told David, and he came down to the rock and stayed in the wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard it, he pursued David in the wilderness of Maon. 23:26 Saul went on one side of the mountain, and David and his men on the other side of the mountain; and David was hurrying to get away from Saul, for Saul and his men were surrounding David and his men to seize them. 23:27 But a messenger came to Saul, saying, 'Hurry and come, for the Philistines have made a raid on the land.' 23:28 So Saul returned from pursuing David and went to meet the Philistines; therefore they called that place the Rock of Escape. 23:29 David went up from there and stayed in the strongholds of Engedi.

Tehillim / Psalms 63

A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah. 63:1 O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, In a dry and weary land where there is no water. 63:2 Thus I have seen You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory. 63:3 Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips will praise You. 63:4 So I will bless You as long as I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name. 63:5 My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, And my mouth offers praises with joyful lips. 63:6 When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches, 63:7 For You have been my help, And in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy. 63:8 My soul clings to You; Your right hand upholds me. 63:9 But those who seek my life to destroy it, Will go into the depths of the earth. 63:10 They will be delivered over to the power of the sword; They will be a prey for foxes. 63:11 But the king will rejoice in God; Everyone who swears by Him will glory, For the mouths of those who speak lies will be stopped. (NASB)

Toviyah / Psalms 63

63:1 A psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness in the territory of the tribe of Judah. 63:2 O God, you are my strength; I will arise in the morning in your presence; my soul thirsts for you, my flesh yearns for you, in a barren and weary land, without water. 63:3 Thus I have seen you in the holy place; purify me to see your strength and your glory. 63:4 For better is the favor that you show to the righteous in the age to come than the life you have given to the wicked in this age; therefore my lips will praise you. 63:5 Thus will I bless you in my life in this age; in the name of your word I will spread my hands in prayer in the age to come. 63:6 My soul will be satisfied as with fat and oil, and my mouth shall sing [with] lips of praise. 63:7 If I have remembered you on my bed, in the night-watch I will meditate on your word. 63:8 For you were a helper to me, and in the shade of your presence I will be glad. 63:9 My soul has followed close behind your Torah; your right hand has supported me. 63:10 But they will seek my soul for the grave; they will enter the lowest part of the earth. 63:11 They will fear him on account of the blow of the sword; they will be the portion of jackals. 63:12 And the king will rejoice in the word of God; all who swear by his word will sing praise, for the mouth of those who speak deceit will be stifled. (EMC)

Psalmoi / Psalms 63

A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Idumea. 63:1 O God, my God, I cry to thee early; my soul has thirsted for thee: how often has my flesh longed after thee, in a barren and trackless and dry land! 63:2 Thus have I appeared before thee in the sanctuary, that I might see thy power and thy glory. 63:3 For thy mercy is better than life: my lips shall praise thee. 63:4 Thus will I bless thee during my life: I will lift up my hands in thy name. 63:5 Let my soul be filled as with marrow and fatness; and my joyful lips shall praise thy name. 63:6 Forasmuch as I have remembered thee on my bed: in the early seasons I have meditated on thee. 63:7 For thou hast been my helper, and in the shelter of thy wings will I rejoice. 63:8 My soul has kept very close behind thee: thy right hand has upheld me. 63:9 But they vainly sought after my soul; they shall go into the lowest parts of the earth. 63:10 They shall be delivered up to the power of the sword; they shall be portions for foxes. 63:11 But the king shall rejoice in God; every one that swears by him shall be praised; for the mouth of them that speak unjust things has been stopped. (LXX)

In *1 Samuel 23:10-29*, we learn that David is seeking the counsel of God on whether Saul will come to Keilah to destroy the city on his account, whether the men will turn him over to Saul, and whether Saul will even come. The Lord's response is Yes, he will come. As a result, David and his men leave and traveled to the strongholds in the wilderness, in the mountains of Ziph. We read about the covenant Jonathan made with David, and the Ziphites told Saul where David was and that they would deliver him into Saul's hands. The Scriptures say that the Ziphites went to Saul, after telling him the whereabouts of David, *23:24 Then they arose and went to Ziph before Saul. Now David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the Arabah to the south of Jeshimon. (NASB)* Saul went to Maon, and they got as close as Saul being on one side of a mountain whereas David and his men were on the other side. A message came that caused Saul to leave to take care of the Philistines. It is interesting how the Scriptures say, "but God did not deliver him into his hand" (*1 Samuel 23:14*). Are these Scriptures speaking of God delivering David into Saul's hands, or Saul into David's hands? David's army of men never come into contact with Saul's army of men. If the Lord would have allowed the two to meet, it would have been a problem for David and his words when he said that he will not lay a hand upon the Lord's anointed. It seems the Lord helped to preserve David's resolve to not cause harm to fall upon Saul, even though Saul sought his life to destroy him. The Lord answered David that Saul was coming to destroy him, and this answer was not used by David as a justification to lay a hand upon Saul. It seems that David has shown Saul a great amount of mercy. This might be paralleled to the mercy the Lord shows us and continues to do for us each day.

David stands as an example for each of us to live our lives showing mercy towards others, because the Lord God our Father in heaven has shown us and almost unlimited amount of mercy too. According to the Apostolic Writings, Yeshua taught his disciples, to obey him by doing acts of kindness and righteousness for his sake and for the sake of others, and not to glorify ourselves but to do these things to glorify God. When we are faithful and serve the least or the weakest, and even the worst of people, we are serving him. Is this not an image and picture of what David did? He was good to Saul, he was good to his enemy. In *Shemot / Exodus 12:3*, we read about Moshe who led the nation of Israel for 40 years in the wilderness, he saw the face of God, and he was a very humble man. He was more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth. Based on this text, both humility and leadership work hand in hand. David acted in humility before Saul, he also did not take the opportunity to kill Saul even though Saul was pursuing him. David was in a wilderness journey fleeing from Saul. The constant pursuit and fleeing from Saul have had to have led to David being thirsty, not just for food and drink, but for the Sanctuary and peace of God.

As a result of these things, David begins his Psalm with a discussion on the soul that thirsts for the Lord. This could be a reference to the way Israel thirsted during their wilderness journey, they thirsted both for water and for the Lord God Almighty, and the wilderness provides that kind of illustrative interpretation for David's opening thoughts in the Psalm, ב אלהים | אלי אפה אשחרך צמאה לך | נפשי כמה לך בשרי בארץ- ג כן בקדש חזיתיך לראות עיני וכבודך: *63:1 O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, In a dry and weary land where there is no water. 63:2 Thus I have seen You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory. (NASB)* The Aramaic Targum and the Septuagint state the following:

Aramaic Targum

Toviyah / Psalms 63:2-3

63:2 O God, you are my strength; I will arise in the morning in your presence; my soul thirsts for you, my flesh yearns for you, in a barren and weary land, without water. 63:3 Thus I have seen you in the holy place; purify me to see your strength and your glory. (EMC)

ב אלהא תוקפי אנת אקום אקדים בצפרא קדמך צהיית לך לוותך נפשי רגיג מרגג לך לוותך בסרי
 בארעא צדיא צהיא ומשלהיא מדלית מוי: ג היכנא באתר קודשא חמיתך זכי יתי למחמי עושנך
 ויקרך:

Septuagint

Psalmoi / Psalms 63

63:1 O God, my God, I cry to thee early; my soul has thirsted for thee: how often has my flesh longed after thee, in a barren and trackless and dry land! 63:2 Thus have I appeared before thee in the sanctuary, that I might see thy power and thy glory. (LXX)

ὁ θεὸς ὁ θεός μου πρὸς σὲ ὀρθρίζω ἐδίψησέν σοι ἡ ψυχὴ μου ποσαπλῶς σοι ἡ σὰρξ μου ἐν γῆ ἐρήμῳ καὶ ἀβάτῳ καὶ ἀνύδρῳ 63:2 οὕτως ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ ὤφθην σοι τοῦ ἰδεῖν τὴν δύναμίν σου καὶ τὴν δόξαν σου

The Targum and Septuagint translations agree with the MT, that David says his soul thirsts for the Lord. In all three texts, David also says, “*my flesh yearns for You*” (MT) or “*how often has my flesh longed after thee.*” (LXX) How does the flesh yearn for the Lord? Does the flesh yearn for the Lord? What does yearning for the Lord mean? Generally speaking, the flesh yearns for sin. According to the Apostle Paul, in *Romans 7*, the flesh desires sin, while the inward man, the soul and spirit desire the things of the Lord. The *Talmud Bavli, Yoma 76a* comments on *Devarim / Deuteronomy 8:3* saying the following:

And He afflicted you, and suffered you to hunger, and fed you with manna... in order to make you know that man does not live by bread alone (8:3) Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai was asked by his disciples: Why didn't the manna come down for Israel once a year? He replied: I shall give a parable. This thing may be compared to a king of flesh and blood who had an only son, whom he provided with maintenance once a year, so that he would visit his father once a year only. Thereupon he provided for his maintenance every day, so that he called on him every day. The same with Israel. One who had four or five children would worry, saying: Perhaps no manna will come down tomorrow, and all will die of hunger? Thus they were found to turn their attention to their Father in Heaven.

For forty years, the Children of Israel were sustained by “*bread from heaven.*” The purpose was to instill in them the recognition that all things come from God. Regardless of how much a person toils to earn his livelihood, he receives no more, and no less, than what has been allotted him from above. The challenge for Israel then was to retain this recognition of the all sustaining power of God after entering the land and making the transition to “*bread from the earth*” as opposed to the “*bread from heaven.*” Therefore, even when we are nourished by bread which we have worked for by “*the sweat of our brow,*” (see *Devarim / Deuteronomy 8:18*) we must remember that, in truth, our sustenance comes from the Lord God in heaven, and that we never receive more or less than what is allotted to us from the Lord above. When David says, “*my flesh yearns for You*” (MT) or “*how often has my flesh longed after thee*” (LXX), he may be thinking of the testimony of God found in the Torah regarding the manna, the bread that come from heaven, his flesh longs for the provision from the Lord. His body is tired of toiling, not toiling in the sense of working for salvation, but for relying upon himself to live, as compared to relying upon the Lord above who truly sustains us in our daily lives, giving us the ability to work in order to provide for our families, for the purpose of confirming the covenant that He had promised to our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 8:18*) In addition, David may be paralleling the flesh that thirsts for water (in the wilderness illustration) to the soul that thirsts for the glory of God, and to see the Lord in His Sanctuary. These words may be taken to refer to the one who desires to serve the Lord, performing maasim tovim for the glory of God. This is consistent with the Apostle Paul’s words to the Colossians in *Colossians 1:9-10*.

Colossians 1:9-10

1:9 For this reason also, since the day we heard of it we have not ceased to pray for you and

to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 1:10 so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; (NASB)

1:9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 1:10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; (KJV)

Notice how Paul prays for the Colossians, that the Lord would give them knowledge and understanding of His will, he calls this “*spiritual wisdom*” so that they could walk in a manner that was worthy of the Lord, walking in a way that is pleasing to the Lord, to bear good fruit in every good work. Walking in a worthy manner will increase one’s knowledge of God. (see *1 John 2:6*) John said in *1 John 2:6*, that “*He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.*” (NASB) or as the NIV translates, “*Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.*” Living as Yeshua did, performing maasim tovim, producing good fruit, all of these things lead to our understanding the Lord God in heaven in a greater capacity because we live as He lives, in righteousness, holiness, truth, and justice, we are able also to recognize the differences between truth, righteousness, holiness, and justice in our lives and in the lives of others. David’s words in *Tehillim / Psalms 63:1 O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, In a dry and weary land where there is no water. 63:2 Thus I have seen You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory.* (NASB) show the connection between the soul that thirsts, the flesh that yearns, and the seeing of the glory and the power of God. If you want to see the glory and power of God working in your life, then begin walking as Yeshua walked, and living as Yeshua lived.

David continues in his Psalm saying, כִּי-טוֹב חַסְדְּךָ מִחַיִּים שְׂפָתַי יִשְׁבְּחוּנָךְ: 63:3 *Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips will praise You.* (NASB) David says God’s mercy (chesed, חַסְדְּךָ) is better than life. What does it mean the mercy of God is better than life? The Aramaic Targum states, ד ארום טב 63:4 הוא חסדך דתעבד לצדיקיא לעלמא דאתי מן חיי דיהבתא לרשיעיא בעלמא הדין בגין כן סיפותי ישבחונך: *For better is the favor that you show to the righteous in the age to come than the life you have given to the wicked in this age; therefore my lips will praise you.* (EMC) The Septuagint states, 63:3 ὅτι κρείττον τὸ ἔλεός σου ὑπὲρ ζωᾶς τὰ χεῖλη μου ἐπαινέσουσίν σε 63:3 *For thy mercy is better than life: my lips shall praise thee.* (LXX) David says that the Lord’s mercy, his grace is better than life. The simple point of what David is saying is that the Lord, His mercy is for man and for life. Life itself is not about simply eating and drinking. Life also isn’t simply about walking, talking, or moving about, to make lots of money, or to just procreate. There is more to this life than those things. Prosperity in the midst of these things cannot satisfy the soul. We are the objects of God’s mercy, so that we can live our lives for Him and for others. The Lord’s mercy is for the forgiveness of sins, for peace, and hope. It is the Lord who satisfies and brings fullness of life in the sense that He is our source of true life, peace, and hope. The Aramaic Targum brings this point forward in the translation saying that better is the mercy (favor) shown to the righteous in the age to come (לעלמא דאתי) than the life that has been given to the wicked in this age. Note the Aramaic Text that states בעלמא הדין “*in this age of judgment*” suggesting that in this age, the righteous are shown mercy, whereas the wicked are shown judgment. Because the Lord forgives and shows mercy, we can praise His holy name! And because we have personally seen the glory and power of God at work in our lives, we can give Him praises. When Moshe desired to see God’s glory, he was granted a revelation of His goodness (*Shemot / Exodus 33:18*). So here we find God’s strength connected to his mercy (*Tehillim / Psalms 63:2-3*), similar to what we read in *Tehillim / Psalms 62:11 Once God has spoken; Twice I have heard this: That power belongs to God; 62:12 And lovingkindness is Yours, O Lord, For You recompense a man according to his work.* (NASB) The mercy of God is everlasting upon those who fear him.

David continues in his Psalm saying, הַן אֲבָרְכֶךָ בְּחַיֵּי בְשִׁמְךָ אֲשֶׁא כִפְּי: ו כְּמוֹ חֶלֶב וּדְשֵׁן תִּשְׂבַּע נַפְשִׁי וְשִׂפְתַי רִנְנוֹת יְהוָה-פִּי: ז אִם-זִכְרְתִידָה עַל-יְצוּעַי בְּאֲשִׁמְרוֹת אֶהְיֶה-בָּךְ: ח כִּי-הָיִיתָ עֲזָרְתָה לִּי וּבָצַל כַּנְּפִידָה אֲרַגֵּן: ט

63:4 *So I will bless You as long as I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name.* 63:5 *My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, And my mouth offers praises with joyful lips.* 63:6 *When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches,* 63:7 *For You have been my help, And in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy.* 63:8 *My soul clings to You; Your right hand upholds me.* (NASB) The Aramaic Targum and the Septuagint say the following:

Aramaic Targum

Toviyah / Psalms 63:5-9

63:5 *Thus will I bless you in my life in this age; in the name of your word I will spread my hands in prayer in the age to come.* 63:6 *My soul will be satisfied as with fat and oil, and my mouth shall sing [with] lips of praise.* 63:7 *If I have remembered you on my bed, in the night-watch I will meditate on your word.* 63:8 *For you were a helper to me, and in the shade of your presence I will be glad.* 63:9 *My soul has followed close behind your Torah; your right hand has supported me.* (EMC)

ה היכנא אברכינך בחיי בעלמא הדין בשום מימריך אפרוס ידי בצלו לעלמא דאתי: ו היך תרב ודהן תסבע נפשי וסיפון דתושבהן ישבה פומי: ז אין אידכרתוך על דרגושי במטרתא ארנן במימרך: ח ארום הויתא סעיד לי ובטלל שכנינתך אבוע: ט אדבקת נפשי בתר אורייתך בי במימרי סעדת ימינך:

Septuagint

Psalmoi / Psalms 63:4-8

63:4 *Thus will I bless thee during my life: I will lift up my hands in thy name.* 63:5 *Let my soul be filled as with marrow and fatness; and my joyful lips shall praise thy name.* 63:6 *Forasmuch as I have remembered thee on my bed: in the early seasons I have meditated on thee.* 63:7 *For thou hast been my helper, and in the shelter of thy wings will I rejoice.* 63:8 *My soul has kept very close behind thee: thy right hand has upheld me.* (LXX)

63:4 οὕτως εὐλογήσω σε ἐν τῇ ζωῇ μου ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου ἄρῶ τὰς χεῖράς μου 63:5 ὡσεὶ στέατος καὶ πιότητος ἐμπλησθεῖν ἢ ψυχῇ μου καὶ χεῖλη ἀγαλλιάσεως αἰνέσει τὸ στόμα μου 63:6 εἰ ἐμνημόνευόν σου ἐπὶ τῆς στρωμνῆς μου ἐν τοῖς ὄρθοις ἐμελέτων εἰς σέ 63:7 ὅτι ἐγενήθης βοηθός μου καὶ ἐν τῇ σκέπῃ τῶν πτερύγων σου ἀγαλλιάσομαι 63:8 ἐκολλήθη ἡ ψυχῇ μου ὀπίσω σου ἐμοῦ ἀντελάβετο ἡ δεξιὰ σου

It is interesting how the Aramaic Targum translates the text to say “*in the name of your word.*” This is a very important concept because what we find amongst the topics in the Torah, the commands concerning vows (נְדָרִים) and oaths (שְׁבוּעוֹת) made to the LORD (*Bamidbar / Numbers 30:2-3*). The sages of blessed memory make a distinction between these by saying that a vow (נְדָר) represents a promise to do something (*or to refrain from doing something, vow of the Nazir*), whereas an oath (שְׁבוּעָה) represents a sworn testimony that something is true (or false). Among Orthodox, it is customary to say “*bli neder*” (בְּלִי נְדָר) in order to make the assertion to clarify one is trying to avoid making a vow. Bli neder means, “*I’ll do my best to keep my word to you on this, though understand that I am not taking a vow...*” For example, before Yom Kippur, the Kol Nidrei service is intended to absolve legal liability for failing to keep personal vows. The Aramaic phrase kol nidrei (כּוֹל נִדְרֵי) means “*all my vows.*” The Torah command on a vow states that the man who takes a vow or an oath “*shall not break his word*” (לֹא יַחַל דְּבָרוֹ). Note also the word translated “*break*” comes from the root chalal (חָלַל) bringing with it the meaning to profane or make unholy. This is the same

root used in the phrase chillul Hashem (חִלּוּל הַשֵּׁם) which means to desecrate or make unholy the Name of the LORD as it says in *Vayikra / Leviticus 22:32* “*And you shall not profane (חִלּוּל) My holy name; but I will be sanctified (קִדְּשׁ) among the children of Israel: I am the Lord who sanctifies you*” Note the difference or contrast between Chillul HaShem to break your word, as opposed to keeping your word is a form of kiddush HaShem (קִדְּוֵשׁ הַשֵּׁם), “*sanctifying the Name of the LORD.*” The Torah links both vows and oaths with the soul (nefesh, נֶפֶשׁ). An oath is considered a “bond” or a binding obligation upon the soul (“*a bond on his soul,*” אֶסֶר עַל-נַפְשׁוֹ). Based on this statement we find a connection between our words and our souls. According to *Bereshit / Genesis 2:7*, the Scriptures describe the creation of man saying, “*Then the LORD God formed (יָצַר) the man of dust from the ground and breathed (נָפַח) into his nostrils the breath of life (נְשַׁמַּת הַיִּי), and the man became a living soul (נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה).*” The word yetzer (formed) refers to something molded, like pottery fashioned by the hand of a potter. In a similar manner, as a potter keeps a shape in his mind (a preconceived shape) while he is forming the clay object, so to the Lord God had the intent of forming man in a particular image. The rabbis use the analogy of a glassblower who creates a glass vessel. Just as a glassblower blows into a tube to form a vessel from molten glass, so is the breath (נְשַׁמָּה) that comes from the LORD functions as spirit (רוּחַ) that forms the human soul (נֶפֶשׁ) (<http://www.aish.com>). The Aramaic Targum states that God breathed into Adam the ability to think and to speak. In other words, thought and speech are two primary characteristics of the image (tzelem) and likeness (demut) of God. Our ability to speak and to use words is directly connected to the “*breath of God*” within us. By this interpretation, if we break our word we deface the image of God. Is this why the rabbis according to the Aramaic Targum translate David’s words to say in *Toviyah / Psalms 63:5* *Thus will I bless you in my life in this age; in the name of your word I will spread my hands in prayer in the age to come. (EMC)?* The interpretation and translation into the Aramaic Targum is that David blesses the Lord “*in the name of your word,*” because in the very words we use and formulate we show forth the image of God.

The LORD God of Israel is faithful and true (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 7:9, Tehillim / Psalm 12:6, Matthew 24:35*). He always keeps His word, this is why it says in the name of your word, because He is faithful and true by His word. Because of these things, He also wants us to be faithful and true as well. Notice how Yeshua Himself is called the Word of God (דְּבַר הָאֱלֹהִים). Based upon the Torah context, Yeshua was an image bearer of our Father in heaven. His words carried deep meaning, sanctity, and Yeshua says in *John 15:3* “*You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.*” (NASB) Just as God’s words are trustworthy, true, and life-giving, so too were Yeshua’s words because He taught God’s Torah and obeyed the Torah to the greatest detail. The sages say that the words we speak, whether good or bad, call for a response in the realm of the spirit. This is hinted at by the Hebrew word for “*thing*” (דְּבַר), which also means “*word.*” Yeshua warned us to abstain from making any kind of vow or oath since our word alone should be enough according to *Matthew 5:33-37*. The words of the heart are the “*things*” (*devarim*) that define the course of one’s life. Our ability to think and to use words, bring with it the image and breath of God according to the Torah. By this perspective, we understand that our “*prayers,*” our words, may be considered an offering unto the Lord. When Yeshua taught, he also spoke of the “*good and evil treasures of the heart*” that produce actions that are expressed in our words (*Luke 6:45*). Our inward motive determines our thinking, which in turn affects the way we act and the way we use our words. As a result, Yeshua warned us saying, “*I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless (ἀργὸν) word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned*” (*Matt. 12:36-37*). Even our salvation is based on the confession of the truth (*Romans 10:9 and Colossians 4:6*). Because of these things, we should focus on using communication as a means of expressing the love and grace of God rather than harm towards others. We need to guard our tongues to stay away from lashon hara (evil speech) by focusing on what is worthy, lovely, and of good report (*Mishley / Proverbs 13:3, Philippians 4:8*). We should take David’s example as he prayed saying, “*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer*” (*Tehillim / Psalms 19:14*). Notice what both the Torah and the Psalms (*specifically, the Aramaic Targum*) is teaching us. The Torah is teaching

us that the human soul came directly from God's innermost being in the same way that a breath issues forth from a person's lungs and chest cavity. The Torah's description of the rest of creation, on the other hand, was created with the word, which is at a lower level as compared to the forming of man and breathing into him. The rest of creation emanates from God's Power, the power of His word, but man was created according to His own image. When the Targum states 63:5 *Thus will I bless you in my life in this age; in the name of your word I will spread my hands in prayer in the age to come.* (EMC) the rabbis are connecting all of these concepts, praising the faithfulness of the Lord, in the name of His word, the promises that He keeps that are found within His word, in His Torah, and the hopeful expectation of being with the Lord in the age to come.

David then contrasts those who do not seek the Lord, but live to cause destruction and to take life. Those who seek to destroy will be consigned to the depths of the earth. י וְהִמָּה לְשׂוֹאָה בְּקִשּׁוֹ נַפְשִׁי יָבֹאוּ בְּתַהֲתִיּוֹת. 63:9 *But those who seek my life to destroy it, Will go into the depths of the earth.* 63:10 *They will be delivered over to the power of the sword; They will be a prey for foxes.* (NASB) The concept of “the depths of the earth,” may be taken from Parashat Korach and the company of Datan, Aviram, and Korach going down to the grave alive. They went down to the depths of the earth alive. Those who seek to kill, steal, and destroy, they will go down to the depths by the hand of God, the parallel here may be drawn into a Torah context. They lived by the sword and will die by the sword. The Aramaic Targum and the Septuagint state the following:

Aramaic Targum

Toviyah / Psalms 63:10-11

63:10 *But they will seek my soul for the grave; they will enter the lowest part of the earth.*

63:11 *They will fear him on account of the blow of the sword; they will be the portion of jackals.* (EMC)

י וְהִינּוֹן לְקִבּוּרְתָא יִתְבַּעוֹן נַפְשִׁי יִיעֲלוֹן בְּאַרְעֵית אַרְעָא: יא יִדְחִלוּנִיָּה מִטּוֹל מַחַת סִיפָא מוֹהֲבִית תְּעֲלִיָּא יְהוּיִן:

Septuagint

Psalmoi / Psalms 63:9-10

63:9 *But they vainly sought after my soul; they shall go into the lowest parts of the earth.*

63:10 *They shall be delivered up to the power of the sword; they shall be portions for foxes.* (LXX)

63:9 αὐτοὶ δὲ εἰς μάτην ἐζήτησαν τὴν ψυχὴν μου εἰσελεύσονται εἰς τὰ κατώτατα τῆς γῆς

63:10 παραδοθήσονται εἰς χεῖρας ῥομφαίας μερίδες ἀλωπέκων ἔσονται

The rabbis translate these verses in a similar fashion, they will go down to the grave, described as the lowest part of the earth. There is an interesting rabbinic hermeneutic that is found here on *Tehillim / Psalms 63:9*. In the *Talmud Bavli Niddah, 31*, “the rabbis taught that during the first three months of pregnancy, the child lies in the lower part of the uterus; during the next three it occupies the middle part; and during the last three it is in the upper part; and that when the time of parturition comes, it turns over first, and this causes the birth pains.” The beginning, intermediate, and ending states of the infant in the womb reveals this rabbinic hermeneutic on the significance of “the upper and lower regions.” The lower regions are for the more inferior form, whereas the upper regions are for the superior forms. This may be a kabbalistic concept that comes out of the structure of the Sephirot (סְפִירוֹת), the emanations of God, and interpretation of the world. As we mentioned in the study of the Rabbinic commentary in *Tehillim / Psalms 62*, Kabbalah teaches there

are ten levels which are associated with the four different “Worlds” or planes of existence (from the Zohar). This interpretation, particularly that of the Sephirot (סְפִירוֹת) is designed to link the Infinite Divine Ein Sof (without end) with our finite, physical realm. These concepts that are developed suggest that there are different levels of spiritual growth that allow us to draw nearer to the Lord God in heaven. In the analogy on the child, the concept of lower portion of the womb for the fetus, and the upper region of the womb for the fully developed baby, may be drawn into the context of David’s psalm on those who seek his soul, to kill him, will descend to the lowest part of the earth. The wicked are in a state of fetal growth, they are underdeveloped, they cannot survive if they were birthed at this point in their lives, their inferior in their spiritual state of wickedness and therefore are consigned to the lowest depth of the earth when they die. David is saying that they are given over to the sword, the wicked have nothing and are inferior, worth nothing more than for slaughter by the sword and cast off into an unknown community grave. A place that is consigned for both man and beast. Can you see and understand the rabbinic hermeneutic at work here in the words of David according to the rabbinic literature?

David concludes his Psalm saying, : יב וְהַמֶּלֶךְ יִשְׂמַח בְּאֱלֹהִים יִתְהַלֵּל כָּל-הַנִּשְׁבָּע בּוֹ כִּי יִסְכַּר פִּי דוֹבְרֵי-שָׁקֶר. : 63:11 *But the king will rejoice in God; Everyone who swears by Him will glory, For the mouths of those who speak lies will be stopped. (NASB)* The Aramaic Targum and the Septuagint state the following:

Aramaic Targum

Toviyah / Psalms 63:12

63:12 And the king will rejoice in the word of God; all who swear by his word will sing praise, for the mouth of those who speak deceit will be stifled. (EMC)

יב ומלכא יחדי במימר אלהא ישבח כל די מקיים במימריה ארום יסרניק יסדמיק פומהון ד <מ>מללי שיקרא:

Septuagint

Psalmoi / Psalms 63:11

63:11 But the king shall rejoice in God; every one that swears by him shall be praised; for the mouth of them that speak unjust things has been stopped. (LXX)

63:11 ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς εὐφρανθήσεται ἐπὶ τῷ θεῷ ἐπαινεσθήσεται πᾶς ὁ ὀμνύων ἐν αὐτῷ ὅτι ἐνεφράγη στόμα λαλούντων ἄδικα

David says that everyone who swears by Him will glory. The rabbis say that the king will rejoice in the “word of God.” We who place our faith in Yeshua the Messiah will glory in Him, in His words, in His life, death, and resurrection. In the Messiah, we have been elevated to a greater spiritual state, we have a direct connection to the Father in heaven, through the Son, Yeshua the Messiah. As a result of these things, we are to persevere in our walk before Him, to live with love for others, and constraining our ways to God’s ways, for the Glory of Yeshua, and of the Father in heaven. Let’s Pray!

Rabbinic Commentary

The Rabbinic Commentary (Midrash) on *Tehillim / Psalms 63* has 2 parts. Reading through the Midrash we will be looking at Part 1 and 2. Let’s begin by outlining *Midrash Tehillim Chapter 63, Part 1 and 2*.

Outline of Midrash Tehillim / Psalms, Chapter 63, Part 1 and 2.

Part 1

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying “*A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah. O God, You are my God, earnestly will I seek You (Tehillim / Psalms 63:1-2).*”
- The פתיחתא (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*Elsewhere this is what Scripture says, Lord, in trouble have they sought You, silently they poured out a prayer when Your chastening was upon them (Isaiah 26:16).*”
- The משל (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis comment upon David earnestly seeking the Lord during his time of distress.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the משל (mashal), the rabbis expand upon the mashal by contrasting that this was not a time when David was king, but when he was in the wilderness of Judah, that he sought the Lord in his distress.
- The Concluding phrase says, “*Thus again David said, I called upon the Lord in distress (Tehillim / Psalms 118:5), and also, What time that I am afraid, I will trust in You (Tehillim / Psalms 56:4), and again it is good for me that I have been afflicted, in order that I might learn Your statutes (Tehillim / Psalms 119:71). Hence, it is said, A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah. O God, You are my God, earnestly will I seek You.*”

Part 2

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying “*O God, You are my God, earnestly will I seek You (Tehillim / Psalms 63:2).*”
- The פתיחתא (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*Elsewhere this is what Scripture says, I love them that love me, and those that seek me earnestly will find me (Mishley / Proverbs 18:17).*”
- The משל (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis describe the one who seeks the Lord is the one who loves the Lord. And the Lord loves the one who loves him. There is a two-way, push-pull type of relationship, the love of one towards another goes hand in hand with receiving love back.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the משל (mashal), the rabbis expand upon the mashal by saying that the Lord loves those who love him back and describe David in the wilderness, though he had nothing, he still loved God and sought to draw near unto Him.
- The Concluding phrase states, “*Hence, a dry and thirsty land where no water is is a land where our souls thirst for words of Torah, but where it is not permitted us to drink, as is said When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst; I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them (Isaiah 41:17).*”

Midrash Tehillim 63, Part 1 opens with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying “*A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah. O God, You are my God, earnestly will I seek You (Tehillim / Psalms 63:1-2).*” The homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*Elsewhere this is what Scripture says, Lord, in trouble have they sought You, silently they poured out a prayer when Your chastening was upon them (Isaiah 26:16).*” As we had studied earlier, David and his men leave and traveled to the strongholds in the wilderness, and the Psalm opens by describing David while he was in the wilderness of Judah. The wilderness of Judah is also described as “*the Judaeen Desert*” (מְדִבְרַת יְהוּדָה). This is a desert in Israel and the West Bank which lies east of Jerusalem and descends to the Dead Sea. The region stretches from the north-eastern Negev to the east of Beit El (Bethel), and is marked by terraces with escarpments. The region ends at a steep cliff dropping to the Dead Sea and the Jordan Valley. The Judaeen Desert is crossed by numerous

wadis (rivers) from northeast to southeast and has many ravines, most of them very deep ranging from 1,200 feet in the west to 600 feet in the east. Rainfall in the Judaea region varies from 400–500 millimeters (16–20 inches) to 600 millimeters (24 in). The climate changes significantly from Mediterranean in the west to a desert climate in the east, with grassy plains in the middle. The wilderness of Judah is also at times referred to as *ישׁימון* Yeshimon, meaning desert or wilderness, (*Strong's Concordance* 3452) (*Bamidbar / Numbers* 21:20, 23:28, *Devarim / Deuteronomy* 32:10, *1 Samuel* 23:19, 23:24, 26:1-3, *Tehillim / Psalms* 68:7, 78:40, 106:14, 107:4, *Isaiah* 43:19-20) The entire midrash states the following:

<p>מדרש תהלים פרק סג סימן א</p> <p>א מזמור לדוד בהיותו במדבר יהודה. זהו שאמר הכתוב ה' בצר (פקדונך) [פקדוך] צקון לחש מוסרך למו (ישעיה כו טז), אימתי ישראל מבקשין להקב"ה בעת צרתם, שנאמר בצר לי אקרא ה' (תהלים יח ז), [וכן דוד כשנכנס לצרה היה מבקש להקב"ה, שנאמר ברחו מפני אבשלום בנו (שם תהלים ג א)], ואומר בבוא הזיפים ויאמרו לשאול (שם תהלים נד ב), ואומר בבוא דואג האדומי (שם תהלים נב ב), ואומר בברחו מפני שאול במערה (שם תהלים נז א), ואף כאן בהיותו במדבר יהודה, מזמור לדוד במלכו אינו אומר, אלא בהיותו במדבר יהודה, וכן הוא אומר מן המצר קראתי יה (תהלים קיח ה), ואומר יום אירא אני אליך אבטח (שם תהלים נו ד), ואומר טוב לי כי עוניתי למען אלמד חקיך (שם תהלים קיט עא), לכך מזמור לדוד בהיותו במדבר יהודה.</p>	<p>Midrash Tehillim 63, Part 1</p> <p>1. <i>A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah. O God, You are my God, earnestly will I seek You (Tehillim / Psalms 63:1-2). Elsewhere this is what Scripture says, Lord, in trouble have they sought You, silently they poured out a prayer when Your chastening was upon them (Isaiah 26:16). When do the children of Israel seek the Holy One blessed be He? In the time of their distress, for it is said In my distress I called upon the Lord and cried unto my God (Tehillim / Psalms 18:7). Thus David also, whenever he found himself in distress, sought the Holy One blessed be He, as is said, A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son (Tehillim / Psalms 3:1); and again When the Ziphites came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us? (Tehillim / Psalms 54:2); and again When he fled from Saul in the cave (Tehillim / Psalms 57:1). So here, also, A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah. The verse does not say A Psalm of David, when he was a king, but when he was in the wilderness of Judah. Thus again David said, I called upon the Lord in distress (Tehillim / Psalms 118:5), and also, What time that I am afraid, I will trust in You (Tehillim / Psalms 56:4), and again it is good for me that I have been afflicted, in order that I might learn Your statutes (Tehillim / Psalms 119:71). Hence, it is said, A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah. O God, You are my God, earnestly will I seek You.</i></p>
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The opening verse of the Psalm *A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah. O God, You are my God, earnestly will I seek You (Tehillim / Psalms 63:1-2)*, is paralleled to what Scripture says elsewhere in the Neviim (Prophets) section of the Tanach in *Isaiah 26* saying that Israel sought the Lord silently in prayer when He had brought chastening upon them. The section of Scripture from *Isaiah 26* says the following:

Isaiah 26:13-21

26:13 O Lord our God, other masters besides You have ruled us; But through You alone we confess Your name. 26:14 The dead will not live, the departed spirits will not rise; Therefore You have punished and destroyed them, And You have wiped out all remembrance of them. 26:15 You have increased the nation, O Lord, You have increased the nation, You are glorified; You have extended all the borders of the land. 26:16 O Lord, they sought You in distress; They could only whisper a prayer, Your chastening was upon them. 26:17 As the pregnant woman approaches the time to give birth, She writhes and cries out in her labor pains, Thus were we before You, O Lord. 26:18 We were pregnant, we writhed in labor; We gave birth, as it seems, only to wind. We could not accomplish deliverance for the earth, Nor were inhabi-

tants of the world born. 26:19 Your dead will live; Their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, For your dew is as the dew of the dawn, And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits. 26:20 Come, my people, enter into your rooms And close your doors behind you; Hide for a little while Until indignation runs its course. 26:21 For behold, the Lord is about to come out from His place To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; And the earth will reveal her bloodshed And will no longer cover her slain. (NASB)

יג יהוה אלהינו בעלוננו אדנים זולתה לבד-בך נזכיר שמה: יד מתים בל-יהיו רפאים בל-יקמו לכן פקדת ותשמידם ותאבד בל-זכר למו: טו יספת לגוי יהוה יספת לגוי נכבדת רחמת כל-קצוי-ארץ: טז יהוה בצר פקדוה צקון לחש מוסרה למו: יז כמו הרה תקריב ללדת תחיל תזעק בתכליה כן היינו מפניה יהוה: יח הרינו חלנו כמו ילדנו רוח ישועת בל-נעשה ארץ ובל-יפלו ישבי תבל: יט יהיו מתיה נבלתי קומון הקיצו ורננו שכני עפר כי טל אורת טלה וארץ רפאים תפיל: כ לך עמי בא בחדרה וסגר דלתיה [דלתה] בעדה חבי כמעט-רגע עד-יעבור- [יעבר] -נעם: כא פי-הנה יהוה יצא ממקומו לפקד עון ישב-הארץ עליו וגלתה הארץ את-דמיה ולא-תכסה עוד על-הרוגיה:

Isaiah states in *Isaiah 26:13* that others have become masters over Israel. Other masters have ruled Israel besides the Lord God in heaven because of the sin of the people. Those who caused this to happen to Israel are dead, the Lord has brought His judgment and those responsible are gone never to be seen again. The people cried out to the Lord, and Isaiah says that their cry was like a pregnant woman crying out, when giving birth however there was no baby but only wind (כמו ילדנו רוח). Isaiah says that Israel was unable to accomplish deliverance for the earth. The context changes to the dead living, corpses rising, and the earth giving birth to departed spirits. Isaiah then states that the Lord is coming to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity because of their bloodshed. Based upon these verses from Isaiah, deliverance comes only by the hand of God. Man cannot raise himself (*26:14*), however when the Lord comes, He is capable of raising the dead (*26:19*), and He is able to cause something unbelievable to happen, He can cause the earth to birth (bring forth) the dead, the departed spirits. The Lord is able to do the miraculous. What the rabbis appear to be saying with regard to David's wilderness journey in Judah, is that we are to seek the Lord, even in the midst of chastisement, when we know we are being punished because of our own disobedience. This appears to be emphasized within the context of the Isaiah text, of serving two masters, we are not to be angry with God because of our own sins. We are to seek Him even in the midst of our sin, to turn from our sins, Teshuva (repentance) and turning to the Lord God in heaven.

Thinking on this concept of having a master, in this world, Everyone has a master. Yeshua said, *"No one can serve two masters," (Matthew 6:24)*, He said that for such a person, *"He will hate the one and love the other."* What is implied in Yeshua's words is that everyone has a master. Many people think they are free and have no master saying, *"I'm my own boss."* Others think it is possible to divide our loyalties in this life. Some examples in our modern day is those who desire to serve the Lord on the Shabbat, while in synagogue but during the week serve themselves. Subdividing our lives, compartmentalizing after all is what secular society is all about right? Take for example the following scenario, *"When I am in church, synagogue, or with people who are believers, I serve God. When I am studying, I serve the school. When I am working, I serve my company or my boss and so on."* In the case of school, accepting and believing in secular teaching about the Lord God. At work, doing what your boss asks even though it is unethical to do so or dealing unethically while at work. Are these forms of divided loyalties? Yeshua said that *"No one can serve two masters."* Why? The reason is because the nature of humanity is to love one thing more than another. This is reflected in several ways, take for example the idea of monogamy. Polygamous marriages do not work because one spouse will be loved more than the others. Take the Torah example of Jacob, Leah, and Rachael. We are told that Jacob loved Rachael more than Leah. God saw this and blessed Leah with children, more so than Rachael. Whenever we make a choice about anything, be certain it is in purity and in truth. The reason being is that we are expressing our devotion to one thing (or one option) over another. In Yeshua's example of serving two masters, He said, *"You cannot serve God and mammon."* (24)Οὐδέεις

δύναται δυσὶ κυρίοις δουλεύειν: ἢ γὰρ τὸν ἓνα μισήσει καὶ τὸν ἕτερον ἀγαπήσει, ἢ ἐνὸς ἀνθέξεται καὶ τοῦ ἑτέρου καταφρονήσει: οὐ δύνασθε θεῶ δουλεύειν καὶ μαμωνᾶ, *Matthew 6:24*) In His example, what does he mean by the word mammon? The word mammon is a Greek word that is transliterated into English, “*mamona*” (μαμωνᾶ). Thayers Greek Lexicons define mammon as the following:

“*μαμωνᾶς (G L T Tr WH), incorrectly Μαμμωνᾶς (Rec. (in Matt.)), μαμωνᾶ (Buttmann, 20 (18); Winer’s Grammar, § 8, 1), ὁ, mammon (Chaldean ܡܡܘܢܐ, to be derived, apparently, from ܡܢܐ; hence, what is trusted in (cf. Buxtof, Lex. chald. talmud. et rabbin. col. 1217f (especially Fischer edition, p. 613f); according to Gesenius (Thesaurus i., 552) contracted from ܡܡܘܢܐ, treasure (Genesis 43:23); cf. B. D., under the word; Edersheim, Jesus the Messiah, 2:269)), riches: Matthew 6:24 and Luke 16:13 (where it is personified and opposed to God; cf. Philippians 3:19); Luke 16:9, 11. (lucrum punice mammon dicitur, Augustine (de serm. Dom. in monte, 1. ii. c. xiv. (sec. 47)); the Sept. translated the Hebrew ܡܡܘܢܐ in Isaiah 33:6 θησαυροί, and in Psalm 36:3 () πλοῦτος.)*”

The word mammon is of Aramaic origins. Mammon is something that is trusted in, “*riches, money, possessions, or property.*” Mammon is not simply money, mammon can be a reference to any earthly good with a stress that is placed upon the materialistic character. Yeshua asks all of us, “*Who is your master? God or mammon?*” Israel was living in sin, they were given over to masters other than the Lord. If you are living in sin, not attempting to turn from your sin and seeking the Lord, but living in sin, would the Lord turn you over to that sin to be a master over your life? (See more on this in the *Tehillim / Psalms 62 Part 2 study*) Let us examine the issue more closely. One way to determine who or what one loves the most is to examine who you are loyal to. In other words, when presented with a choice between God and something or anything else, what do you choose? Let’s generate some examples. Do you choose to attend Church or Synagogue, or do you choose to sleep in, run errands, do chores on the Shabbat, go to work, play sports, watch sports, etc? (Note that sports for many men is a form of an idol god because it is all consuming in one’s life.) This same question may be asked regarding prayer, reading the bible, serving others, giving alms, and financially supporting ministries, missions, helping the poor, etc. Do you choose do these things, the things of God, or something else? Another way to determine one’s master, whether God or mammon, is to examine what it is one worries about? What do you fret over? How do you look? How much money do you make in a year? How big is your house? Where do you live? What kind of car do you drive? Your social status? Your popularity? The list can go on and on. Yeshua lays open the vanity of all these types of worries when He says not to worry even about what you eat, drink, or what you wear. The point is that if the Lord God is your master, you will not need to worry about what you eat, or drink, or even what you wear. He will provide for your needs. We should seek to please God and not man.

The midrash continues saying the following:

When do the children of Israel seek the Holy One blessed be He? In the time of their distress, for it is said In my distress I called upon the Lord and cried unto my God (Tehillim / Psalms 18:7). Thus David also, whenever he found himself in distress, sought the Holy One blessed be He, as is said, A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son (Tehillim / Psalms 3:1); and again When the Ziphites came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us? (Tehillim / Psalms 54:2); and again When he fled from Saul in the cave (Tehillim / Psalms 57:1). So here, also, A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah. The verse does not say A Psalm of David, when he was a king, but when he was in the wilderness of Judah. (Midrash Tehillim 63, Part 1)

The question by the rabbis is “*when do the children of Israel seek the Holy One blessed be He?*” They answer “*in the time of their distress.*” Do you seek the Lord God only in your time of distress? The midrash

continues saying that David sought the Lord in his time of distress, when he fled from Absalom, when the Ziphites were willing to give him over to Saul, when he fled from Saul in the cave, and when he was in the wilderness of Judah. David provides us with the example that when we are in distress, we are to continue to seek the Lord God in heaven. During the days of David's fleeing from Saul, the Scriptures do not say that he (David) had sinned. If David would have been presumptuous to blame God for his troubles, that God was punishing him for a sin, it would have been wrong to blame the Lord for Saul's actions. In the case of Absalom, the falling away of his son to take the throne from his father David, may have been the result of David's unfaithfulness with Bathsheba. Nonetheless, David did not blame God for his troubles. This provides us with another example for our lives, we are to seek the Lord, in the midst of our troubles, regardless of whether we deserve what is coming, or not. Many people today blame the Lord for their misfortune. That very well maybe the case, but be certain to continue seeking the Lord, and seek also to turn from the sin that has led to these circumstances.

Midrash Tehillim 63, Part 1 concludes saying, *“Thus again David said, I called upon the Lord in distress (Tehillim / Psalms 118:5), and also, What time that I am afraid, I will trust in You (Tehillim / Psalms 56:4), and again it is good for me that I have been afflicted, in order that I might learn Your statutes (Tehillim / Psalms 119:71). Hence, it is said, A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah. O God, You are my God, earnestly will I seek You.”* David speaks of being afflicted for the purpose of learning God's statutes. In *Tehillim / Psalms 119:71-72*, (עָוֹב-לִי כִי-עֲנִיתִי לְמַעַן אֶלְמַד חֻקֶיךָ: עֹב טוֹב-לִי תוֹרַת פִּי מֵאֲלֹפִי) David says, it is good for me (טוֹב-לִי) or necessary and very beneficial; that I have been afflicted. He repeats what he said before in *Tehillim / Psalms 119:67*. In general, when one is afflicted, it is viewed as evil, but here David says God's affliction is beneficial. This kind of answers the question of *“why do the godly suffer?”* The prevailing idea amongst many people is that if one obeys the Lord, he will have a good life with relatively little trouble. Everyone expects minor illnesses, but major health issues are disturbing to one's faith. To accentuate the problem, some religious leaders have made a profit of people by insisting that God never wants anyone to be sick; they assert that all sickness is of the devil. The attitude of Job's three friends is still with us who proposed the idea that if there is major trouble, God must be punishing the suffering one, either for overt sin, or for skeletons in the closet. This may not always be the case. That is something that needs to be personally investigated, prayed about, and seeking forgiveness, and turning from sin that may be ongoing. On the basis of *Tehillim / Psalms 119:71*, suffering may be for the purpose of keeping one humble, as is the case for the Apostle Paul (*2 Corinthians 12:8*), or as David says, to learn God's statutes. The three key words in the psalm are *“afflicted”* (עֲנִיתִי), *“learn”* (אֶלְמַד), and *“statutes”* (חֻקֶיךָ). As we read in *Tehillim / Psalms 63*, David being in the wilderness of Judah, he suffered many kinds of affliction, he was afflicted physically; he had known danger, hunger, and the lack of certain necessities, when he was hunted like an animal by Saul and his army. David also knew domestic affliction, being ridiculed by his brother and rejected by his wife. Another example may be taken from the beginning of the Scriptures on David, when he was sent by his father to take supplies to his brothers who were in Saul's army, his brother greeted him with the mocking question, *“With whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness?”* (*1 Samuel 17:28*) therefore, David also suffered some embarrassment. Later on, when he was king, David decided to bring the ark of God to Jerusalem. It was such a joyous occasion, that he danced before the Lord. However, when his wife, Michal, saw him doing so, as she looked out of the window, *“she despised him in her heart”* (*2 Samuel 6:16*). David knew a lot about domestic affliction, receiving trouble from his own family.

In addition to these things, David also suffered emotionally, for example, the broken heart he must have felt when he learned that his son, Amnon, had raped his daughter, Tamar. Then the situation was compounded by his son Absalom killing Amnon. This led to Absalom trying to take the throne and then ultimately his death. David knew bereavement on the death of his sons. At the end of his life, another one of David's sons (Adonijah) tried to take his throne away from him as he lay on his death bed, then he ordered that Solomon be made king. Therefore, David definitely knew emotional affliction. Taking these things into consideration, it is amazing that David said, *“It is good for me that I have been afflicted!”* (*Tehillim / Psalms*

119:71-72)

David said that affliction was good for him, “*that I might learn thy statutes.*” According to the psalms, David knew God’s word, His Torah, because he said in *Tehillim / Psalms 119:11*, “*Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee*” and “*With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth*” (119:13), and “*I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches*” (119:14). The knowledge of God’s word was applied to his life in the sense that he continued to seek the Lord for help, and he continued to live in righteousness, justice, and truth towards others. This was accomplished because he had stored or hid God’s word in his heart. By doing this the word becomes available to call upon in our daily experience.

The trouble today is that many people put very little Scripture into the practice. Most knowledge of the bible is purely intellectual, while almost none is experiential. In other words, many people learn God’s word but do not apply it to their lives or every day living, or at least have difficulty in doing so. The Apostle Paul wrote in *1 Corinthians 9:9* *For it is written in the Law of Moses, ‘You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.’ God is not concerned about oxen, is He? (NASB)* He was quoting from Parashat Ki Tetzei, *Devarim / Deuteronomy 25:4* *‘You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing. (NASB)* The interpretation is that the Israelites were not to put a muzzle on the ox that they used on the threshing floor; in other words, if the animal worked, he should be allowed to eat. The application is that all who work should be paid for their work. The Torah is quoted in *1 Corinthians 9* in the midst of a discussion where Paul was asserting that he and Barnabas had the authority to be supported by those they taught, because the Torah taught such in Parashat Ki Tetzei. If we study the Torah in this way, seeking for its application in our lives, it would come alive for us (become very real), which is its intended purpose, for us to apply God’s instruction to our lives. David says that when affliction comes it is good, because he is learning God’s statutes, His instructions, His Torah. When affliction comes our way, it may be for that very purpose.

Midrash Tehillim 63, Part 3 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying “*O God, You are my God, earnestly will I seek You (Tehillim / Psalms 63:2).*” The homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*Elsewhere this is what Scripture says, I love them that love me, and those that seek me earnestly will find me (Mishley / Proverbs 18:17).*” The rabbis parallel David’s words to Solomon in *Mishley / Proverbs 8:17*. The parallel is to those who seek the Lord are wise, since the Proverb of Solomon is on wisdom.

Mishley / Proverbs 8:12-23

8:12 ‘I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, And I find knowledge and discretion. 8:13 ‘The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverted mouth, I hate. 8:14 ‘Counsel is mine and sound wisdom; I am understanding, power is mine. 8:15 ‘By me kings reign, And rulers decree justice. 8:16 ‘By me princes rule, and nobles, All who judge rightly. 8:17 ‘I love those who love me; And those who diligently seek me will find me. 8:18 ‘Riches and honor are with me, Enduring wealth and righteousness. 8:19 ‘My fruit is better than gold, even pure gold, And my yield better than choicest silver. 8:20 ‘I walk in the way of righteousness, In the midst of the paths of justice, 8:21 To endow those who love me with wealth, That I may fill their treasuries. 8:22 ‘The Lord possessed me at the beginning of His way, Before His works of old. 8:23 ‘From everlasting I was established, From the beginning, from the earliest times of the earth. (NASB)

The entire midrash states the following:

<p>מדרש תהלים פרק סג סימן ב ב אלהים אלי אתה אשחרך. זהו שאמר הכתוב אני אוהבי אהב ומשחרי ימצאונני (משלי ח יז), התורה אמרה אני אוהבי אהב, כל מי שהוא אוהבי אני אהב אותו. דבר אחר כל מי שאהב אותי אני אהב אותו, דוד על ידי שאהב אותי אני אהבתיהו, ועל ידי ששיחרנני אני שחרתיהו ונמצאתי לו, לכך אלהים אלי אתה אשחרך. צמאה לך נפשי כמה לך בשרי [בארץ ציה] ועיף בלי מים, זו אדום. [אמר ר' יהושע בן לוי אמר משה המוליכך במדבר הגדול והנורא נחש שרף ועקרב וצמאון אשר אין מים (דברים ח טו), נחש זה בבל, שרף זה מדי, עקרב זה יון, וצמאון אשר אין מים זה אדום]. נחש יש לו חבר, שרף יש לו חבר, [ועקרב יש לו חבר], וצמאון אשר אין מים אין לו חבר, כך לזו הרשעה אין לה חבר, לכך נאמר ציה ועיף בלי מים, נפשנו עיפה לדברי תורה ואין אנו מוציאה, שנאמר העניים והאביונים מבקש שים מים ואין [לשונם בצמא נשתה] אני ה' אענם אלהי (כל הארץ) [ישראל] לא אעזבם (ישעיה מא יז).</p>	<p>Midrash Tehillim 63, Part 2 2. <i>O God, You are my God, earnestly will I seek You (Tehillim / Psalms 63:2). Elsewhere this is what Scripture says, I love them that love me, and those that seek me earnestly will find me (Mishley / Proverbs 8:17). The Torah says, I love them that love me; who loves me, I love him. Another interpretation, who loves Me, I love him. David, because he loved Me, I loved him; and because he sought Me earnestly, I sought him earnestly, and was found by him. Hence, it is said, O God, You are my God, earnestly will I seek You. My soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is (Tehillim / Psalms 63:2). The thirsty land where no water is Edom. Rabbi Joshua son of Levi taught that when Moshe said, The Lord, the God who led you from the great and dreadful wilderness, wherein were serpents, fiery serpents, and scorpions, and thirsty land where no water is (Devarim / Deuteronomy 8:15), by serpents he meant Babylon; by fiery serpents, Media; by scorpions, Greece; and by thirsty land where no water is, Edom. There is a charm against the serpent; there is a charm against the fiery serpent; there is a charm against the scorpion; but there is no charm against a dry and thirsty land where no water is. So, too, there is no charm against this wicked kingdom. Hence, a dry and thirsty land where no water is a land where our souls thirst for words of Torah, but where it is not permitted us to drink, as is said When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst; I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them (Isaiah 41:17).</i></p>
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Note Solomon's words in *Mishley / Proverbs 18:17*, the fear of the Lord is to hate evil, pride, arrogance, the evil way and the perverted mouth. Wisdom hates these things. Those who walk in these ways are not wise. It is interesting how the unrighteous believe themselves to be wise in their evil dealings, but in truth, there is no wisdom in such things. Solomon says that to have wisdom is power, because by wisdom, justice is brought unto the people. Solomon continues saying that riches and honor belong to wisdom, and the wealth of wisdom is better than gold and treasures. The midrashic application is to *Mishley / Proverbs 8:17* 'I love those who love me; And those who diligently seek me will find me (NASB), where seeking the Lord is synonymous to seeking wisdom. These Scriptures even describe that wisdom was the beginning of God's ways; wisdom is from everlasting, from ancient times before creation. The midrash continues saying the following:

The Torah says, I love them that love me; who loves me, I love him. Another interpretation, who loves Me, I love him. David, because he loved Me, I loved him; and because he sought Me earnestly, I sought him earnestly, and was found by him. Hence, it is said, O God, You are my God, earnestly will I seek You. My soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is (Tehillim / Psalms 63:2). (Midrash Tehillim 63, Part 2)

It is interesting that the Midrash states that the Torah says I love them that love me. Where does it say that phrase in the Torah? The rabbis say that this may also be interpreted as David loving God and searching for the Lord. His soul thirsted for the Lord. Does your soul thirst for the Lord like David's soul? The Torah text the rabbis may be referring to might be from *Devarim / Deuteronomy 5:10* with regard to the Lord loving

those who love Him.

Devarim / Deuteronomy 5:6-22

5:6 'I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 5:7 'You shall have no other gods before Me. 5:8 'You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. 5:9 'You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, 5:10 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. 5:11 'You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain. 5:12 'Observe the sabbath day to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. 5:13 'Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 5:14 but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant or your ox or your donkey or any of your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you, so that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. 5:15 'You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to observe the sabbath day. 5:16 'Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God has commanded you, that your days may be prolonged and that it may go well with you on the land which the Lord your God gives you. 5:17 'You shall not murder. 5:18 'You shall not commit adultery. 5:19 'You shall not steal. 5:20 'You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. 5:21 'You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field or his male servant or his female servant, his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.' 5:22 'These words the Lord spoke to all your assembly at the mountain from the midst of the fire, of the cloud and of the thick gloom, with a great voice, and He added no more. He wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me. (NASB)

These verses appear to be a combination of *Shemot / Exodus 20* on the Ten Commandments, and *Shemot / Exodus 34* on the Lord showing Himself to Moshe on Sinai.

Shemot / Exodus 34:5-8

34:5 The Lord descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the Lord. 34:6 Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; 34:7 who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.' 34:8 Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship. (NASB)

Moshe repeats and summarizes the commands adding that the Lord God shows mercy to those who love Him and keep His commandments. Interestingly, these words proceed the Shema in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 6*, the command to love the Lord with all your heart, mind, and strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself, which the rabbis and Yeshua uses as a summary of all of Torah. In these words from *Devarim / Deuteronomy 5:10*, to love the Lord God, and obey His commands, the obedience to the commands leads to showing love to your neighbor (or to another person) because we would not kill, steal, or covet and take from our neighbor if we loved them. Yeshua the Messiah appears to reiterate these Torah commands in the statements that he made in *John 14: 20-25*.

John 14:20-25

14:20 *'In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. 14:21 'He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.'* 14:22 *Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, 'Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?'* 14:23 *Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. 14:24 'He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me. 14:25 'These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. (NASB)*

Notice how Yeshua is describing His relationship with the Father in heaven. He says, 14:20 *'In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. 14:21 'He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.'* (NASB) Notice how Yeshua is speaking of his being one with the Father, that the Father's will is His will. He qualifies his statements saying that *"He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me."* Yeshua is obviously teaching from the Torah, and is in agreement with the Torah. When He healed people (Lepers) he told them to go and bring that sacrifices before the Lord God in the Temple as prescribed in the Torah as a testimony unto Moshe. (see Matthew 8:2-4, Mark 1:40-44, and Luke 5:12-14) Yeshua agreed with the Torah command, and He was not changing the Torah command. Yeshua goes on to say that the person who keeps the commands of His Father, loves God's Messiah, and both Yeshua and the Lord God our Father will make their abode in him. Yeshua's words are very reminiscent of *Devarim / Deuteronomy 5:10* which say *"but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."* (NASB) The midrash that states *My soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is (Tehillim / Psalms 63:2)*, the one who thirsts for the Lord will seek Him, draw near to Him, and obey His commands. The Torah, the Rabbis, and Yeshua are all in agreement here.

The midrash continues saying the following:

The thirsty land where no water is Edom. Rabbi Joshua son of Levi taught that when Moshe said, The Lord, the God who led you from the great and dreadful wilderness, wherein were serpents, fiery serpents, and scorpions, and thirsty land where no water is (Devarim / Deuteronomy 8:15), by serpents he meant Babylon; by fiery serpents, Media; by scorpions, Greece; and by thirsty land where no water is, Edom. There is a charm against the serpent; there is a charm against the fiery serpent; there is a charm against the scorpion; but there is no charm against a dry and thirsty land where no water is. So, too, there is no charm against this wicked kingdom. (Midrash Tehillim 63, Part 2)

Note how the rabbis describe the thirsty land where there is no water is the land of Edom. The land of Edom is paralleled to the unrighteous and wicked Esau, and in a more general sense, to all those who are unrighteous and wicked. The unrighteous thirst and do not know what they thirst for, and so they fill their lives with evil deeds in an attempt to find satisfaction. This is evidenced by the rabbinic interpretation of these verses, Rabbi Joshua son of Levi said that this refers to the wilderness that had no water, and contained serpents, fiery serpents, and scorpions. These three creatures are paralleled to Babylon, Media, and Greece, respectively, the wicked nations that served other gods and sought to destroy or enslave Israel. In addition, they say there is a charm against these creatures (or nations). It may be that the charm is a reference to God's deliverance at the hand of a prophet or king of Israel. On the other hand, there is no charm against a dry and thirsty land where there is no water, which is to say there is no charm against a wicked kingdom. The idea here may be that these wicked nations attacking Israel, is the imagery that we get from the serpent,

fiery serpent, and scorpion. A nation can be defeated, hence the “charm.” On the other hand, the wicked nation, who is composed of wicked men, the wicked hearts of men, there is no “charm.” There is no way to perform a work, or with many words, reason, or wisdom, that can be given to a wicked man to change him from the inside. The wisdom of the unrighteous is different from the wisdom of God. They perpetually deceive themselves in presuming to be wise as opposed to God’s Wisdom found in the Scriptures. It is only by the power of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit that has the capability of changing one from the inside out. We can’t can only be a light to the nations, or to the unrighteous person.

Midrash Tehillim 63, Part 2 concludes saying, “Hence, a dry and thirsty land where no water is a land where our souls thirst for words of Torah, but where it is not permitted us to drink, as is said When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst; I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them (Isaiah 41:17).” The rabbis say, “our souls thirst for words of Torah, but where it is not permitted us to drink.” Why do you think they are not allowed to drink the words of Torah? It might be this is a reference to being in exile (Babylonian) and in Babylon they did not have the Torah, the synagogues, beit midrashim (houses of study), and the weekly teaching of the Torah. The rabbis quote from *Isaiah 41* as a proof text the Lord will not leave them.

Isaiah 41:14-42:1

41:14 'Do not fear, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel; I will help you,' declares the Lord, 'and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel. 41:15 'Behold, I have made you a new, sharp threshing sledge with double edges; You will thresh the mountains and pulverize them, And will make the hills like chaff. 41:16 'You will winnow them, and the wind will carry them away, And the storm will scatter them; But you will rejoice in the Lord, You will glory in the Holy One of Israel. 41:17 'The afflicted and needy are seeking water, but there is none, And their tongue is parched with thirst; I, the Lord, will answer them Myself, As the God of Israel I will not forsake them. 41:18 'I will open rivers on the bare heights And springs in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water And the dry land fountains of water. 41:19 'I will put the cedar in the wilderness, The acacia and the myrtle and the olive tree; I will place the juniper in the desert Together with the box tree and the cypress, 41:20 That they may see and recognize, And consider and gain insight as well, That the hand of the Lord has done this, And the Holy One of Israel has created it. 41:21 'Present your case,' the Lord says. 'Bring forward your strong arguments, The King of Jacob says. 41:22 Let them bring forth and declare to us what is going to take place; As for the former events, declare what they were, That we may consider them and know their outcome. Or announce to us what is coming; 41:23 Declare the things that are going to come afterward, That we may know that you are gods; Indeed, do good or evil, that we may anxiously look about us and fear together. 41:24 Behold, you are of no account, And your work amounts to nothing; He who chooses you is an abomination. 41:25 'I have aroused one from the north, and he has come; From the rising of the sun he will call on My name; And he will come upon rulers as upon mortar, Even as the potter treads clay.' 41:26 Who has declared this from the beginning, that we might know? Or from former times, that we may say, 'He is right!?' Surely there was no one who declared, Surely there was no one who proclaimed, Surely there was no one who heard your words. 41:27 'Formerly I said to Zion, 'Behold, here they are.' And to Jerusalem, 'I will give a messenger of good news.' 41:28 'But when I look, there is no one, And there is no counselor among them Who, if I ask, can give an answer. 41:29 'Behold, all of them are false; Their works are worthless, Their molten images are wind and emptiness. 42:1 'Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. (NASB)

The context from *Isaiah 41*, in the conclusion of the midrash appears to follow as a proof text of there being no charm for the wicked nation, who is composed of wicked men, the wicked hearts of men. *Isaiah* speaks

of Jacob’s inability to save himself. Men can winnow, toil, perform works, or speak with many words, but without the Spirit of God, there is no changing the wicked man from within. Isaiah says however, *But you will rejoice in the Lord, You will glory in the Holy One of Israel. (41:16)*. Isaiah goes on to tell us that the Lord will answer the people Himself, He will give them to drink and quench their thirst, he will cause springs to break forth in the valleys. The wisdom of the unrighteous is that one can perform a work to gain favor and salvation. The wisdom of the righteous know salvation is in the Lord, and by our Love for Him, we obey His commandments. Our good works show forth the wisdom of God and bring glory to His name. It is only by the power of God Himself, and the power of the Holy Spirit that has the capability of changing us from the inside out. Therefore, we should seek the Lord as David sought the Lord saying, *“O God, You are my God, earnestly will I seek You (Tehillim / Psalms 63:2).”* Let’s Pray!

Heavenly Father,

We thank You simply for the fact that You are God and full of mercy. We thank You for revealing Your truth and righteousness to us, and we thank You for David’s words which bring out these important discussion points which help us to look more closely to our lives. Thank You for giving us the faith to believe in Yeshua the King Messiah! Please have mercy on us, forgive us for our sins, help us to live righteous lives, and to set our minds on those things that bring glory to Your Name. 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!

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

Notes