

ספר תהילים פה | Tehillim / Psalms 85

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Forgiveness, Salvation, Restoration, Parallels in the Rabbinic Literature

In this week's study from *Tehillim / Psalms 85:1-13*, the Psalm opens saying, א לְמַנְצֵחַ | לְבְנֵי-קִרְחָ מְזֹרֵם For the director of music. Of the Sons of Korah. (NASB) The psalmist continues saying, ב רְצִיטַתְּ יְהוָה, 85:1 O Lord, You showed favor to Your land; You restored the captivity of Jacob. (NASB) opening asking the Lord God to restore what once was, the captivity of Jacob is a reference to all of Israel. The author gets more specific saying, ג נְשִׂאתָ עֵזוֹן עַמְּךָ כְּפִסִּיתָ כָּל-חַטָּאתָם סְלָה: ד אָסַפְתָּ 85:2 You forgave the iniquity of Your people; You covered all their sin. Selah. 85:3 You withdrew all Your fury; You turned away from Your burning anger. (NASB) He says the Lord withdrew his fury and turned away his anger, how is this so if the people are now in captivity? However he continues saying, ה שׁוּבְנוּ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעֵנוּ וְהַפֵּר כַּעֲסֶךָ עִמָּנוּ: 85:4 Restore us, O God of our salvation, And cause Your indignation toward us to cease. (NASB) If one is receiving the punishment for his or her sins, is this considered the Lord turning His indignation against such a person? The psalmist continues saying, ו הֲלִעֲזוּלָם תִּאֲנַחֲ-בָנוּ תִמְשֹׁךְ אַפְּךָ לְדֹר וָדֹר: ז הֲלֵא-אַתָּה תִּשׁוּב וְעַמְּךָ יִשְׁמָחוּ-בְךָ: ח הֲרֵאנוּ יְהוָה חֲסִדֶּךָ 85:5 Will You be angry with us forever? Will You prolong Your anger to all generations? 85:6 Will You not Yourself revive us again, That Your people may rejoice in You? 85:7 Show us Your loving-kindness, O Lord, And grant us Your salvation. (NASB) The restoration of Israel to the Land is synonymous to rejoicing before the Lord because it is the fulfillment of His promises. The psalm continues saying, ט אֲשַׁמְעָה מֵה-יְדִבֵּר הָאֵל | יְהוָה כִּי יְדַבֵּר שְׁלוֹם אֶל-עַמּוֹ וְאֶל-חֲסִידָיו וְאֶל-יֹשְׁבֵי לְבָסְלָה: י אֵךְ | קְרוֹב לִירְאָיו יִשְׁעוּ אֲשַׁמְעָה מֵה-יְדִבֵּר הָאֵל: יא חֶסֶד-וְאֱמֶת נִפְגְּשׁוּ צְדָק וְשְׁלוֹם, 85:8 I will hear what God the Lord will say; For He will speak peace to His people, to His godly ones; But let them not turn back to folly. 85:9 Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him, That glory may dwell in our land. (NASB) The psalm concludes saying, יב אֱמֶת מֵאֲרִץ תִּצְמַח וְצְדָק מִשְׁמַיִם נִשְׁקָף: יג גַּם-יְהוָה יִתֵּן הַטּוֹב וְאַרְצֵנוּ תִתֵּן יְבוּלָה: יד צְדָק לִפְנֵי הַלֵּף 85:10 Lovingkindness and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other. 85:11 Truth springs from the earth, And righteousness looks down from heaven. 85:12 Indeed, the Lord will give what is good, And our land will yield its produce. 85:13 Righteousness will go before Him And will make His footsteps into a way.(NASB)

עברית	Hebrew	ארמי	Aramaic	ελληνικός	Greek
ספר תהילים פרק פה	ספר תהילים פרק פה	ספר טוביה פרק פה	ספר טוביה פרק פה	ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 85	ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 85
א לְמַנְצֵחַ לְבְנֵי-קִרְחָ מְזֹמֹר:	א לְמַנְצֵחַ לְבְנֵי-קִרְחָ מְזֹמֹר:	א לשבחא על ידיהון דבני קרח תו-	א לשבחא על ידיהון דבני קרח תו-	85:1 εις τὸ τέλος τοῖς υἱοῖς Κορε	85:1 εις τὸ τέλος τοῖς υἱοῖς Κορε
ב רְצִיטַתְּ יְהוָה אֲרָצֶךָ שְׁבַתְּ שְׁבוֹת [שְׁבִית] יַעֲקֹב: ג נְשִׂאתָ עֵזוֹן עַמְּךָ	ב רְצִיטַתְּ יְהוָה אֲרָצֶךָ שְׁבַתְּ שְׁבוֹת [שְׁבִית] יַעֲקֹב: ג נְשִׂאתָ עֵזוֹן עַמְּךָ	ב רעיתא יהוה ארעך אתיב	ב רעיתא יהוה ארעך אתיב	σου ἀπέστρεψας τὴν αἰχμαλωσίαν	σου ἀπέστρεψας τὴν αἰχμαλωσίαν
כָּסִיתָ כָּל-חַטָּאתָם סְלָה: ד אָסַפְתָּ	כָּסִיתָ כָּל-חַטָּאתָם סְלָה: ד אָסַפְתָּ	ג שבקתא	ג שבקתא	85:2 ἀφήκας τὰς ἀνομίας	85:2 ἀφήκας τὰς ἀνομίας
כָּל-עֲבֹרֹתֶיךָ הַשִּׁיבוֹת מִחֲרוֹן אַפְּךָ:	כָּל-עֲבֹרֹתֶיךָ הַשִּׁיבוֹת מִחֲרוֹן אַפְּךָ:	חוביהון דעמך כסיתא כל חטאיהון	חוביהון דעמך כסיתא כל חטאיהון	τῷ λαῶ σου ἐκάλυψας πάσας τὰς	τῷ λαῶ σου ἐκάλυψας πάσας τὰς
ה שׁוּבְנוּ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעֵנוּ וְהַפֵּר כַּעֲסֶךָ	ה שׁוּבְנוּ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעֵנוּ וְהַפֵּר כַּעֲסֶךָ	ד לעלמין: ד כנישתא כל רוגזך תבתא	ד לעלמין: ד כנישתא כל רוגזך תבתא	ἀμαρτίας αὐτῶν διάψαλμα 85:3	ἀμαρτίας αὐτῶν διάψαλμα 85:3
עִמָּנוּ:	עִמָּנוּ:	ה וב לותנא אלהא	ה וב לותנא אלהא	κατέπαυσας πᾶσαν τὴν ὀργὴν σου	κατέπαυσας πᾶσαν τὴν ὀργὴν σου
		פורקננא ובטיל רוגזך עימנא מיננא:	פורקננא ובטיל רוגזך עימנא מיננא:	ἀπέστρεψας ἀπὸ ὀργῆς θυμοῦ σου	ἀπέστρεψας ἀπὸ ὀργῆς θυμοῦ σου
				85:4 ἐπίστρεψον ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς τῶν	85:4 ἐπίστρεψον ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς τῶν
				σωτηρίων ἡμῶν καὶ ἀπόστρεψον τὸν	σωτηρίων ἡμῶν καὶ ἀπόστρεψον τὸν
				θυμὸν σου ἀφ' ἡμῶν	θυμὸν σου ἀφ' ἡμῶν

<p>ו הַלְעוּלָם תִּצְנַן-בְּנוֹ תִּמְשֵׁן אֶפְסָה לְדֹר וְדֹר: ז הֲלֹא-אַתָּה תִּשׁוּב תִּחְיֶנּוּ וְעָמְדָה יִשְׁמְחוּ-בָךְ: ח הֲרָאֵנוּ יְהוָה חֲסִידָה וְיִשְׁעָה תִּתֵּן-לָנוּ: ט אֲשַׁמְעָה מִה-יִדְבַּר הָאֵל יְהוָה כִּי יִדְבַּר שְׁלוֹם אֶל-עַמּוֹ וְאֶל-חֲסִידָיו וְאֶל-יְשׁוּבוֹ לְכֹ- סֵלָה: י אָה קָרוֹב לִירְאָיו יִשְׁעוּ לְשֹׁכֵן כְּבוֹד בְּאַרְצָנוּ: יא חֲסֵד-וְאַמֶּת נִפְגְּשׁוּ צְדָק וְשְׁלוֹם נִשְׁקוּ: יב אֲמַת מֵאָרֶץ תִּצְמַח וְצִדְקַת מְשֻׁמִּים נִשְׁקָה: יג גַּם-יְהוָה יִתֵּן הַטּוֹב וְאַרְצָנוּ תִּתֵּן יְבוּלָה: יד צְדָק לְפָנָיו יְהִלֵּךְ וְיִשְׂם לְדֶרֶךְ פְּעָמָיו:</p>	<p>ו האיפשר די לעלמיא תתקיף בנא תנגיד תנטור תוקפך לדור ודור: ז הלא את תתוב תחיי יתנא ועמך יחד דון במימרך: ח אחמי יתנא יהוה טובך ופורקנך תיתיהב תיהב לנא: ט אשמע מה ימליל אלהא יהוה ארום ימליל שלם לעמיה ולחסידוי ולא יחזרון לסאורא לסיאוסא: י ברם קריב לדחלין מיניה פורקניה לאש- ראה יקרא בארענא: יא טבוון וק- שוט אורעין צידקא ושלמא אידבקו ידבקון: יב קשוט מן ארעא רביית וצידקא מן שמיא אודיק: יג לחוד יהוה מימרא דיי יתן טבא וארענא תתן איבה: יד צדקא קדמוי יהלך ושוי לאורח טב איסתורוי:</p>	<p>85:5 μη εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ὀργισθήσῃ ἡμῖν ἢ διατενεῖς τὴν ὀργὴν σου ἀπὸ γενεᾶς εἰς γενεάν 85:6 ὁ θεός σὺ ἐπιστρέψας ζώσεις ἡμᾶς καὶ ὁ λαός σου εὐφρανθήσεται ἐπὶ σοί 85:7 δεῖξον ἡμῖν κύριε τὸ ἔλεός σου καὶ τὸ σωτήριόν σου δόξης ἡμῖν 85:8 ἀκούσομαι τί λαλήσει ἐν ἔμοι κύριος ὁ θεός ὅτι λαλήσει εἰρήνην ἐπὶ τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς ὀσίους αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς ἐπιστρέφοντας πρὸς αὐτὸν καρδίαν 85:9 πλὴν ἐγγὺς τῶν φοβουμένων αὐτὸν τὸ σωτήριον αὐτοῦ τοῦ κατασκηνῶσαι δόξαν ἐν τῇ γῆ ἡμῶν 85:10 ἔλεος καὶ ἀλήθεια συνήντησαν δικαιοσύνη καὶ εἰρήνη κατεφίλησαν 85:11 ἀλήθεια ἐκ τῆς γῆς ἀνέτειλεν καὶ δικαιοσύνη ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ διέκυψεν 85:12 καὶ γὰρ ὁ κύριος δώσει χρηστότητα καὶ ἡ γῆ ἡμῶν δώσει τὸν καρπὸν αὐτῆς 85:13 δικαιοσύνη ἐναντίον αὐτοῦ προπορεύεται καὶ θήσει εἰς ὁδὸν τὰ διαβήματα αὐτοῦ</p>
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<p>Tehillim / Psalms 85 For the director of music. Of the Sons of Korah. 85:1 O Lord, You showed favor to Your land; You restored the captivity of Jacob. 85:2 You forgave the iniquity of Your people; You covered all their sin. Selah. 85:3 You withdrew all Your fury; You turned away from Your burning anger. 85:4 Restore us, O God of our salvation, And cause Your indignation toward us to cease. 85:5 Will You be angry with us forever? Will You prolong Your anger to all generations? 85:6 Will You not Yourself revive us again, That Your people may rejoice in You? 85:7 Show us Your lovingkindness, O Lord, And grant us Your salvation. 85:8 I will hear what God the Lord will say; For He will speak peace to His people, to His godly ones; But let them not turn back to folly. 85:9 Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him, That glory may dwell in our land. 85:10 Lovingkindness and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other. 85:11 Truth springs from the earth, And righteousness looks down from heaven. 85:12 Indeed, the Lord will give what is good, And our land will yield its produce. 85:13 Righteousness will go before Him And will make His footsteps into a way.(NASB)</p>	<p>Toviyah / Psalms 85 85:1 For praise; composed by the sons of Korah; a psalm. 85:2 You delighted, O Lord, in your land; you brought back the captivity of the house of Jacob. 85:3 You forgave the sins of your people; you covered all their faults forever. 85:4 You withdrew all your anger; you turned from the harshness of your anger. 85:5 Turn to us, O God our redemption; and revoke your anger against us. 85:6 Can it be that you will act harshly against us forever? Will you prolong out your harshness for all generations? 85:7 Will you not again revive us? And your people will rejoice in your word. 85:8 Show us, O Lord, your goodness; and may your redemption be given to us. 85:9 I will hear what God, the Lord, will say; for he will speak peace to his people and to his pious ones, and they will not return to heathenism. 85:10 Truly his redemption is near to those who fear him, to make glory abide in our land. 85:11 Favor and truth meet, righteousness and peace have joined together. 85:12 Truth grew up from the land; and righteousness looked out from heaven. 85:13 Also the Lord will give what is good; and our land will give its produce. 85:14 Righteousness will walk before him; and he set his steps on a good path. (EMC)</p>	<p>Psalmoi / Psalms 85 For the end, a Psalm for the sons of Core. 85:1 O Lord, thou has taken pleasure in thy land: thou hast turned back the captivity of Jacob. 85:2 Thou hast forgiven thy people their transgressions; thou has covered all their sins. Pause. 85:3 Thou has caused all thy wrath to cease: thou hast turned from thy fierce anger. 85:4 Turn us, O God of our salvation, and turn thy anger away from us. 85:5 Wouldest thou be angry with us for ever? or wilt thou continue thy wrath from generation to generation? 85:6 O God, thou wilt turn and quicken us; and thy people shall rejoice in thee. 85:7 Shew us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation. 85:8 I will hear what the Lord God will say concerning me: for he shall speak peace to his people, and to his saints, and to those that turn their heart toward him. 85:9 Moreover his salvation is near them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land. 85:10 Mercy and truth are met together: righteousness and peace have kissed each other. 85:11 Truth has sprung out of the earth; and righteousness has looked down from heaven. 85:12 For the Lord will give goodness; and our land shall yield her fruit. 85:13 Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set his steps in the way. (LXX)</p>
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In this week’s study from *Tehillim / Psalms 85:1-13*, the Psalm opens saying, אָ לְמַנְצֵהוּ | לְבְנֵי-קִרְחָה מִזֶּזְ, מוֹרֵ: *For the director of music. Of the Sons of Korah. (NASB)* According to Parashat Korach, we learn that Korach, Datan, and Aviram were doomed to destruction and to be wiped from the face of the earth. According to the book of Psalms, we are told that the sons of Korach continued and therefore the line of Korach was not utterly destroyed. In the Psalms, the Psalmist poetry on immortality and comfort are attributed to “Bnei Korach” (לְבְנֵי-קִרְחָה) as well as other chapters authored by Assaf, who was also a descendant of Korach. Based upon the psalms, Korach’s family was not completely destroyed when the ground swallowed them

whole. The Torah tells us in the Book of Devarim / Deuteronomy that “*the sons of Korach did not die.*” (see *Bamidbar / Numbers 26:11-21*) So the question is what was the cause of their survival? How did they survive their doomed position? The rabbis according to the rabbinic literature offer us some explanation on what happened to the sons of Korach. The Midrash and the Talmud tell us that the sons of Korach did not fall all the way down into the bowels of the earth. We read based upon the Torah the following:

Bamidbar / Numbers 16:23-27

16:23 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 16:24 ‘Speak to the congregation, saying, ‘Get back from around the dwellings of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.’ 16:25 Then Moses arose and went to Dathan and Abiram, with the elders of Israel following him, 16:26 and he spoke to the congregation, saying, ‘Depart now from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing that belongs to them, or you will be swept away in all their sin.’ 16:27 So they got back from around the dwellings of Korah, Dathan and Abiram; and Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the doorway of their tents, along with their wives and their sons and their little ones. (NASB)

According to *Bamidbar / Numbers 16:1–2*, the Reubenite Ohn son of Peleth joined Korah’s conspiracy, however, according to the biblical text, he is missing from the account of the people going down to the earth. Interestingly enough, unlike Datan, and Aviram and their families, there is no indication as to what happened to Ohn ben Peleth and his family. Quite simply, he seems to have vanished from the story. The *Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 109b* noticed that Ohn was missing in the narrative and developed an amazing “*story behind the story*” the explanation of what took place.

Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 109b

Rav said: Ohn, the son of Peleth, was saved by his wife. She said to him, “Why do you care whether the one [Moshe] remains master or the other [Korach] becomes master, you will still remain but a disciple.” He replied, “But what can I do? I have taken part in their counsel, and they have sworn me [to be] with them.” (רב און בן פלת אשתו הצילתו אמרה ליה מאי נפקא לך מינה אי מר רבה אנת תלמידא ואי מר רבה אנת תלמידא אמר לה מאי אעביד הואי בעצה ואשתבעי לי בהדייהו)

So the idea here is that the wife of Ohn convinced Ohn ben Peleth of the irrational behavior and the futility of participating in the uprising with Korach, Datan, and Aviram. The lesson is no matter how deep we have gotten ourselves into trouble (*they have sworn me [to be] with them, ואשתבעי לי בהדייהו*) we always have the opportunity to repent and turn from the former ways. The *Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 109b* continues saying the following:

Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 109b

She said, “I know that they [kal Yisrael] are all a holy community,” as it is written, “... for the entire congregation are all holy, and the L-rd is in their midst.” (16:3) [So,] she continued, “Sit here and I will save you.” She gave him wine to drink, caused him to become intoxicated, and laid him down within [the tent where he passed out]. Then she sat down at the entrance of the tent and loosened [and uncovered] her hair. Whoever came [to summon him to join the rebellion] saw her and retreated. (אמרה ליה ידענא דכולה כנישתא קדישתא) (נינהו דכתיב (במדבר טז, ג) כי כל העדה כולם קדושים אמרה ליה טוב דאנא מצילנא לך אשקיתיה (חמרא וארויתיה ואגניתיה גואי אותבה על בבא

The thing that Ohn ben Peleth wife did to her hair and the response shows the diverse socio-religious and symbolic value of the hair in Judaism. In the Talmud hair covering was not only a fashion or a custom, but

was objectified as a rule and regulation for women to follow as a religious obligation. The rabbinic literature of the Middle Ages further reinforced women's hair covering as an integral part of Jewish religious observance, therefore, by her lowering her hair, those who passed by would be perceiving something about her religious observance and turn away. His wife was essentially taking the shame upon herself for her husband in order to save his life. An so his wife caused her husband to drink wine and fall asleep, while Korach, Data, and Aviram were deep in the earth. As a result, Ohn ben Peleth entire family survived. Midrash Rabbah (Vilna), Parashat Korach, 18, uses this opportunity to praise Ohn's wife for saving her entire family saying, "The wisest of women - each one built her house' [Sefer Mishle 14:1] – this refers to Ohn's wife." The phrase in the midrash used to describe the rescue is as "a place fortified for them above Gehinom" where they were able to survive. The Midrash tells us that their voices could be heard saying, "Moshe is true and his Torah is true." These men were given the ability to rethink their positions and prejudices and so the sons of Korach were saved from death and from being wiped from the face of the earth. In this rethinking and proclamation of truth, they were able to climb out of the pit when they realized how wrong their father had been. They stated loud and honestly that Moshe was right and true and that they and their father were false and wrong. And so the Midrashic and Talmudic conclusion is that in honesty and truth, "the sons of Korach did not die." (Bamidbar / Numbers 26:11-21) This may be why the Aramaic Targum states, א לשבחה על :א: 85:1 ידיהון דבני קרח תושבחה: For praise; composed by the sons of Korah; a psalm. (EMC) The sons of Korach praised the Lord for having the truth revealed to them at the last moment which resulted in their salvation. This has a parallel to the thief on the cross type of situation. The point is though it is not good to wait until the last moment to embrace the truth, it is better to walk in the way of the Lord and be satisfied with His presence in our lives, than to live a life of sin and rebellion.

In Tehillim / Psalms 85, the psalmist continues saying, ב רציית יהנה ארצה שבת שבות [שבית] יעקב: 85:1 O Lord, You showed favor to Your land; You restored the captivity of Jacob. (NASB) asking the Lord God to restore what once was, the captivity of Jacob is a reference to all of Israel. What has occurred is the Lord has brought upon Israel the consequences of her sins, and thus has gathered the respect of her people. As a result of this, the rabbis say in the Mishnah Pirkei Avot 1:3, "Antigonos, man of Sokho, received from Shimon the Righteous. He would say, Do not be as servants who are serving the master in order to receive a reward, rather be as servants who are serving the master not in order to receive a reward; and may the fear of Heaven be upon you." אנטִיגוֹנוֹס אִישׁ סוֹכוֹ קִבֵּל מִשְׁמֵעוֹן הַצְּדִיק. הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, אֶל תְּהִיוּ כְּעֹבְדִים הַמְשֻׁמְשִׁין (עַלֵּיכֶם: אֶת הָרֶב עַל מְנַת לְקַבֵּל פָּרֶס, אֶלָּא הָיוּ כְּעֹבְדִים הַמְשֻׁמְשִׁין אֶת הָרֶב שְׁלֹא עַל מְנַת לְקַבֵּל פָּרֶס, וַיְהִי מוֹרָא שְׁמַיִם: רַמְבַּם) Rambam explains the Mishnah as teaching us we should not serve God so that He will do kindness and favors for us, but rather we should serve God out of love. According to this, the parable given in the Mishnah is very precise, not only does it say that the servant should not serve the master to receive benefits, but the servant should do it out of love for the master. Additional commentary on the Mishnah says the following:

Tosafot Yom Tov on Mishnah Avot 1:3, Part 5

"and may the fear of Heaven be upon you." Rabbi Bartenura explained that "the one who serves out of fear is careful concerning negative commandments" and so [too] did Rambam explain. And according to what I wrote above, [this statement] is itself a condition of the one who serves from love. And that which they called God, may He be blessed, with the name, "Heaven," is to say that this fear should not be a fear of punishment, which is also a superficial service and it carries some personal interest. But [rather] the fear that they warned about is a fear (awe) of His greatness, may He be blessed. And this was taught by the name, "Heaven," since His greatness and power are apparent there though the creatures of the heavens and all of their multitudes and their movements, without a doubt. So does it appear to me.

Rambam Mishneh Torah, Repentance 10:4

The First Sages said (Nedarim 62a), “Lest you will say, ‘behold I will study Torah in order that I will become rich, in order that I will be called ‘rabbi,’ in order that I will receive reward in the World to Come,’ [the verse comes to] teach [the opposite, when it] says (Deuteronomy 11:13), to love the Lord - everything that you do, you should only do out of love.” And the sages also said (Avodah Zara 19a), “Greatly desire His commandments, not the reward of His commandments.” And so would the greatest Sages especially command their most understanding and brightest students (Avot 1:3), “Do not be like slaves, that serve their master, etc.,’ but rather, because He is the Master, it is fitting to serve him.” That is to say, “serve Him out of love.

The conclusion from both the Mishnah and the commentary is to serve the Lord God in heaven because of our love for Him, and not for the purpose of obtaining a reward. This is known as “*the fear of Heaven*,” to be careful concerning the negative mitzvot, but also to be careful not to be fearful simply because of punishment, because that is a superficial service and carries personal interests. All that we do is to be motivated out of love for the Lord and for others. This is why Yeshua said that all of the mitzvot hang upon the Love of God and Love for our neighbors. Therefore we should seek to motivate ourselves to love one another and to love the Lord God in heaven.

The sons of Korach in the Psalm get more specific saying, ג נְשֹׂאתָ עֲוֹן עַמְּךָ כְּסִיטָתְךָ כֹּל-הַטְּאֵתָם סָלָה: ד אָסַפְתָּ כָּל-עֲבֹרֹתָיִךְ הַשְּׂיבוֹתָ מִחֲרוֹן אַפְּךָ: 85:2 *You forgave the iniquity of Your people; You covered all their sin. Selah. 85:3 You withdrew all Your fury; You turned away from Your burning anger. (NASB)* He says the Lord withdrew his fury and turned away his anger, how is this so if the people are now in captivity? ג שִׁבְקָתָא חוּבִיּהוֹן דַּעֲמָךְ כְּסִיטָא כֹּל חֲטֵאִיהוֹן לַעֲלָמִין: ד כְּנִישְׁתָּא כֹּל רוּגְזָךְ תַּבְתָּא, ג 85:3 *You forgave the sins of your people; you covered all their faults forever. 85:4 You withdrew all your anger; you turned from the harshness of your anger. (EMC)* The Septuagint states, 85:2 ἀφῆκας τὰς ἀνομίας τῶ λαῶ σου ἐκάλυψας πάσας τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν διάψαλμα 85:3 κατέπαυσας πᾶσαν τὴν ὀργὴν σου ἀπέστρεψας ἀπὸ ὀργῆς θυμοῦ σου 85:2 *Thou hast forgiven thy people their transgressions; thou has covered all their sins. Pause. 85:3 Thou has caused all thy wrath to cease: thou hast turned from thy fierce anger. (LXX)* The word נָשָׂא means “to bear, to carry, to deliver (a speech, address, prayer), to suffer, to tolerate,” which is translated as to forgive; the Lord forgave the iniquity of His people by bearing their iniquity. It is interesting how this word is used meaning to bear, or carry, suggests a sort of elevating or lifting up. The point is that God is not lifting or elevating the sin, but rather He is lifting and elevating His ability to forgive. This is illustrated in the rabbinic commentary Akeidat Yitzchak.

Akeidat Yitzchak 54:83

At any rate, the comment “I will grant grace to whomsoever I shall decide to grant grace to,” is the reference to the instruction in the thirteen attributes as outlined in the Talmud Rosh Hashanah 17. Rabbi Yonathan comments there that if it had not been for that verse, I would not have been permitted to explain it in that vein. G’d instructed Moses how to pray, wore a tallit and showed Moses that whenever Israel sinned, he should likewise drape himself in such a prayer shawl and G’d would be willing to forgive Israel. Rabbi Yehudah says that G’d made a contract with Moses that he would not return empty handed from any entreaty incorporating mention of G’s thirteen attributes. This is the meaning of “Here I conclude a covenant in the presence of the people.” (34, 10)

Akeidat Yitzchak 54:99

The tenth, eleventh and twelfth attributes “nosseh avon, va-fesha, ve-chata-ah,” i.e. commuting various types of sins to levels that deserve less severe punishment, is usually understood as follows. avon is the sin committed deliberately, pesha is the sin that is committed to

show one's rebellion against G'ds legislation, whereas chata-ah is a sin committed unintentionally. During the episode of the golden calf, all three kinds of sin were committed. At any rate, G'd did not employ these attributes to forgive, merely to delay the punishment due for those sins, i.e. nosse, "carries." The punishment was meted out at another place at another time.

Akeidat Yitzchak 54:105

We feel that there should not be a comma, that the whole expression is a single attribute, which is used in conjunction with any of the attributes ten, eleven or twelve. It means that G'd tolerates certain sins from time to time, without granting total forgiveness, since true pardon cannot take place without simultaneous repentance. Baba Kama 50, states that he who claims that G'd overlooks things, (ignores a sin completely) will cause his own life to be ignored. Psalms 25,8,states that "G'd is good and straightforward," meaning that He teaches the ways of repentance to sinners even after they have sinned.

Isaac ben Moses Arama (1420–1494) was a Spanish rabbi and author, he began as a principal of a rabbinical academy at Zamora; then he became a rabbi and preacher for the community at Tarragona, and later for those in Fraga in Aragon. He also led as head of the Talmudic academy in Calatayud. Upon the expulsion of the Jews in 1492, Arama settled in Naples, where he died in 1494. Arama is the author of the commentary titled Akeidat Yitzchak (Binding of Isaac). Akeidat Yitzchak states the obvious, the Lord will grant grace (mercy) to whomever he chooses. He comments on the types of sins, and that the Lord does not forgive merely for the purpose of delaying the punishment. Forgiveness is coupled with repentance, and the Lord overlooks some things, meaning that He does not bring judgment immediately for the purpose of allowing a man to recognize the error of his ways and turn from his wicked ways. Moshe seeks the Lord's forgiveness of the people according to Bamidbar / Numbers 14:19 in which Sforno explains in the following way.

Bamidbar / Numbers 14:19

14:19 Pardon, I pray Thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of Thy lovingkindness, and according as Thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.'

(סלח-נא לענון העם הזה כגודל חסדך וכאשר נשאתה לעם הזה ממצרים ועד-הנה; (KJV)

Sforno on Genesis 32:11, Part 2

ומכל האמת, the good You did for me on account of the merit of my father and grandfather. Seeing that You have already seen fit to treat me well beyond my deserts, I beg of You to continue to do so. Our regular prayers reflect this sentiment when we use the expression כגודל חסדך, "in accordance with the greatness of Your kindness." Moses used this expression in Numbers 14:19 when praying for forgiveness of the people after the debacle with the spies.

The expression כגודל חסדך illustrates for us what Moshe believed about the greatness of God, that His attribute of Khesed (grace, mercy) is what is called upon for forgiveness, and to recognize the significance of those who have gone before us, our parents, who raised us to be faithful to God's word. God's forgiveness is not dependent upon our own merits or the merit of our parents, the forgiveness is attributed to נשא to bear, or carry, elevating or lifting up, that God is lifting and elevating His ability to forgive. The Lord God in heaven is merciful and we can be confident in that aspect of His character.

The Author of the Psalm continues saying, *שובנו אליהי ישענו והפר כעסק עמנו: 85:4 Restore us, O God of our salvation, And cause Your indignation toward us to cease. (NASB)* The Aramaic Targum states, *Turn to us, O God our redemption; and revoke your anger against us. (EMC)* The Septuagint states, *μη εις τον αιωνα οργισθηση ημιν η διατενεις την οργην σου απο γενεας εις γενεαν 85:4 Turn us, O God of our salvation, and turn thy anger away from us.*

(LXX) If one is receiving the punishment for his or her sins, is this considered the Lord turning His indignation against such a person? The point is to persevere in seeking to do what is right, and to cultivate a heart that longs for the presence of God. Israel had been given the opportunity to draw near, but went astray after foreign gods. As a result, she received the consequences of her sins and the psalmist asks the Lord to restore Israel to the Land. The rabbis of the Mishnah offer advice on preventing these things from happening again saying according to the *Mishnah Pirkei Avot 4:11*.

Mishnah Pirkei Avot 4:11

Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov says: One who does a single commandment acquires a single defender. One who does a single sin acquires a single prosecutor. Repentance and good deeds are like a shield against punishment. Rabbi Yochanan the shoemaker says: Every gathering that is for the sake of Heaven, its end is to endure. And every gathering that is not for the sake of Heaven, its end is not to endure. (רבי אליעזר בן יעקב אומר, העושה מצוה אחת, קונה) לו פרקליט אחד. והעובר עברה אחת, קונה לו קטיגור אחד. תשובה ומעשים טובים, כתריס בפני הפרענות. רבי יוחנן הסנדלר אומר, כל כנסיה שהיא לשם שמים, סופה להתקים. ושאינה לשם שמים, אין סופה להתקים)

The one who does a single mitzvah acquires a defender. What does this mean? This suggests that by obeying God's word, we have a testimony that will stand and speak on our behalf. On the other hand, the one who commits a single sin acquires a prosecutor, where in similar fashion, the sin will stand up and speak of what we had done, our sins will not be hidden (see *Luke 12:3*). They conclude that Teshuvah and maasim tovim are like a shield against punishment. If Israel had offered Teshuvah and performed maasim tovim, she would not have had been led into captivity. This is sound advice for us, that we should continue seeking the Lord God in heaven daily in the Messiah Yeshua, and practice our faith by the application of Torah, to do what is just, and true, and right.

The psalmist continues saying, וְהִלְעוּלָם תִּצְנַנְךָ-בְּנֹו תִמְשֶׁךָ אֶפְדָּ לְדָר וְדָר: ז הֲלֹא-אֲתָה תִשׁוּב תִּחְיֶנוּ וְעָמָה, 85:5 Will You be angry with us forever? Will You prolong Your anger to all generations? 85:6 Will You not Yourself revive us again, That Your people may rejoice in You? 85:7 Show us Your lovingkindness, O Lord, And grant us Your salvation. (NASB) The restoration of Israel to the Land is synonymous to rejoicing before the Lord because it is the fulfillment of His promises. The Aramaic Targum states, תנגיד תנטור תוקפך לדור ודור: ז הלא את תתוב תחיי יתנא ועמך ייחדון במימ", 85:6 Can it be that you will act harshly against us forever? Will you prolong out your harshness for all generations? 85:7 Will you not again revive us? And your people will rejoice in your word. 85:8 Show us, O Lord, your goodness; and may your redemption be given to us. (EMC) The Septuagint states, 85:5 μή εις τὸν αἰῶνα ὀργισθήσῃ ἡμῖν ἢ διατενεῖς τὴν ὀργὴν σου ἀπὸ γενεᾶς εις γενεάν 85:6 ὁ θεός σου ἐπιστρέψας ζωώσεις ἡμᾶς καὶ ὁ λαός σου εὐφρανθήσεται ἐπὶ σοί 85:7 δεῖξον ἡμῖν κύριε τὸ ἔλεός σου καὶ τὸ σωτήριόν σου δώσης ἡμῖν 85:5 Wouldest thou be angry with us for ever? or wilt thou continue thy wrath from generation to generation? 85:6 O God, thou wilt turn and quicken us; and thy people shall rejoice in thee. 85:7 Shew us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation. (LXX) Note how the MT states that the purpose of restoration is to be able to rejoice in the Lord, the Septuagint states the same. The Targum states so the people can rejoice in the word of the Lord. Rejoicing in the word is possible when the promises of the Lord come true. The rabbis summarize the situation according to Ein Yaakov commentary on *Taanit 1:33*, and Rambam's *Mishneh Torah* on Repentance.

Ein Yaakov on Taanit 1:33

R Ami said again : "Rain falls only for the sake of those who have faith in God; as it is said (Ps. 85:12) Truth springeth out of the earth and righteousness hath looked down from heaven." R. Yochanan said : "He who makes himself righteous (strives for righteousness) [here] below, is judged righteously (strictly) above; as it is said: "Truth springeth out of the

earth and righteousness hath looked down from heaven.” R. Chiya b. Abin, in the name of R. Huna, made the same inference from the following (Ps. 90:11) Which is like the fear of thee. Resh Lakish made the inference from the following (Is 64, 4) Thou acceptest him that joyfully worked righteousness, those that remembered Thee in Thy ways; behold, thou wast wroth, and we sinned upon them have we stayed of old, that we might be saved?

Mishneh Torah, Repentance 2:10

(10) It is forbidden for a person to be cruel and not make amends; instead, a person should get appeased easily and get angry slowly. And at the moment when the sinner asks for forgiveness – forgive with a whole heart and a desirous soul. And even if he pained him and sinned against him many times, he should not take revenge or hold a grudge -- that is the way of the Children of Israel and their correct hearts. But the nations of uncircumcised heart are not so, but are rather (Amos 1:11) “and he kept his wrath for ever.” And similarly it is said about the Gibeonites, who did not forgive Israel, (II Samuel 21:2) “the Gibeonites are not of the children of Israel” [because they do not forgive, a sign of cruelty]. (י) אָסוּר לְאָדָם לְהִיּוֹת. אַכְזָרִי וְלֹא יִתְפַּיֵס אֶלָּא יִהְיֶה נוֹחַ לְרִצּוֹת וְקִשָּׁה לְכַעַס וּבִשְׂעָה שְׂמֵבִקֵּשׁ מִמֶּנּוּ הַחוּטָא לְמַחֵל מוֹחֵל בְּלֵב שָׁלֵם וּבִנְפֹשׁ חַפְצָה. וְאִפְלוּ הַיָּצַר לוֹ וְחָטָא לוֹ הַרְבֵּה לֹא יָקָם וְלֹא יִטַּר. וְזֶהוּ דְרַבְּכֵם שֶׁל גְּרַע יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלָבָם הַנִּכּוֹן. אָבֵל הָעוֹבְדֵי כּוֹכְבִים עָרְלֵי יָב אֵינּוּ כּוֹן אֶלָּא (וְעִבְרָתוֹ) [וְעִבְרָתוֹ] שְׂמֵרָה נִצָּח. וְכֵן הוּא (א) אֹמֵר עַל הַגְּבוּעוֹנִים לְפִי שְׁלֵא מְחֵלוּ וְלֹא נִתְפַּיְסוּ וְהַגְּבֻעוֹנִים לֹא מְבַנִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵמָּה:

The point is that the faithful will seek the Lord God in heaven, and strive for the righteousness of God. Not only do those who have faith seek the righteousness of God, they also seek this with the joy of the Lord, the joy of knowing the Lord is pleased, as the rabbis say in the Targum, “*your people will rejoice in your word*” (Tehillim / Psalms 85:7). Rambam states that the Lord does not want a man to be cruel. This was the behavior of the people before the exile, they were cruel to one another, they did not seek to make amends, they were quick to get angry and find retribution (revenge). Rambam believes the Torah teaches us the Lord is looking for a man who is gentle, slow to anger, and quick to make amends, and to “*forgive with a whole heart and a desirous soul. And even if he pained him and sinned against him many times, he should not take revenge or hold a grudge...*” This is very similar to what Yeshua taught in Matthew 5:39 and Luke 6:29, “*But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.* (NASB) The prophet Isaiah states in Isaiah 32:17 *And the work of righteousness shall be peace; And the effect of righteousness quietness and confidence for ever.* (KJV)

The psalm continues saying, ט אֲשַׁמְעָה מֵה-יְדַבֵּר הָאֵל | יְהוָה כִּי יְדַבֵּר שָׁלוֹם אֶל-עַמּוֹ וְאֶל-חֲסִידָיו וְאֶל-יְשׁוּבוֹ, אֶל | קְרוֹב לִירְאָיו יִשְׁעוּ לְשֹׁפֵן כְּבוֹד בְּאַרְצָנוּ: 85:8 I will hear what God the Lord will say; For He will speak peace to His people, to His godly ones; But let them not turn back to folly. 85:9 Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him, That glory may dwell in our land. (NASB) The salvation of God is near to those who fear Him. Shney Luchot Habrit commentary has the following to say:

Shney Luchot HaBrit Eikev, Torah Ohr 60

We are told by Rabbi Ami in Taanit 8 that rain is granted to earth only on account of בעלי אמונה, people who keep promises made in business life. He supports this with the quotation from Psalms 85:12 “Justice looks down from Heaven.” The supply of rain is considered an act of צדקה. On the previous folio Rav Shilo, quoting Rav Hammuna said that rain is withheld only on account of עזי פנים, insolent people, people with a brazen forehead. The connection between the forehead and insolence is supported by several verses from the Bible.

The rabbis say that justice looks down from heaven, and rain is supplied due to the righteous deeds of the people. Note the psalmist connection between the fear of the Lord and the glory of God dwelling in the land

and then the rabbinic commentary on righteous deeds. These things suggest that unrighteous deeds drive the presence of God away.

The psalm concludes saying, **יֵאָמֵר וְאֵמֶת נִפְגְּשׁוּ צְדָקָה וְשָׁלוֹם נִשְׁקָו: יב אֵמֶת מֵאָרֶץ תִּצְמַח וְצְדָק מִשָּׁמַיִם, 85:10 Lovingkindness and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other. 85:11 Truth springs from the earth, And righteousness looks down from heaven. 85:12 Indeed, the Lord will give what is good, And our land will yield its produce. 85:13 Righteousness will go before Him And will make His footsteps into a way. (NASB)** According to the rabbinic understanding of the Torah, righteousness is what is known as the act of charity (צדקה). Notice what Shney Luchot HaBrit says concerning charity.

Shney Luchot HaBrit, Ki Teitzei, Torah Ohr 146

The weapon of charity is also alluded to in a Biblical passage describing soldiers going into battle. Psalms 85:14 speaks of: צדק לפניו יהלך וישם לדרך פעמיו, “Charity goes before him as he sets out on his way.” We also have a verse in Exodus 30:12 ונתנו איש כופר נפשו, suggesting that a man can use his charitable gifts to help him overcome his bloodguilt, i.e. to save him from danger in war. The fact that only men over the age of twenty had to make this contribution is a clear indication that once one is of military age it may become a life-saver.

The idea here is that charity (צדקה) is considered a weapon. Is this what the Apostle Paul meant when he wrote what he did in *Romans 12:20* “... *If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.*” (NIV)? This is very similar to what David and his men did before entering into battle, they would sanctify themselves. The point was so even in battle the presence of God could be felt empowering him to fight. This illustrates for us the extent at which we are to live for the Lord, in all situations and all circumstances, He should come first in our lives. This is why Yeshua said what he did in *Luke 9:26* and *Matthew 10:32* regarding being ashamed of him before men. We are called to be lights unto the world of the righteousness of God. Let’s Pray!

Heavenly Father,

We glorify Your Holy Name! We thank You for Your grace, love, and glory, and the mercies You show us each day. Thank You for the joy you have placed in our hearts to serve you and to live our lives for you. The Scriptures say that we can know that You are present in our lives. We thank You for the promises You have made and Your continued faithfulness to Your promises and to us. Thank You Lord for giving us the faith to believe in Yeshua the Messiah and for always calling our hearts back to You Lord! Please have mercy on us, forgive us for our sins. 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

