

Tehillim / Psalms 96 | ספר תהילים צו

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Does the Existence of Idol gods suggest they are real?

In this week's study from *Tehillim / Psalms 96:1-13*, the Psalm opens saying, **א** שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ, **א** *96:1 Sing to the Lord a new song; Sing to the Lord, all the earth.* **ב** שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה כָּל-הָאָרֶץ: **ב** *96:2 Sing to the Lord, bless His name; Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day.* (NASB) The opening verse speaks of our being given the ability for creativity, to create music to bring glory to the Lord God of Israel. The psalmist continues saying, **ג** סִפְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם כְּבוֹדוֹ כְּלַל-הָעַמִּים, **ג** *96:3 Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples.* **ד** כִּי גָדוֹל יְהוָה וּמְהֻלָּל מְאֹד נִרְאָה הוּא עַל-כָּל-אֱלֹהִים: **ד** *96:4 For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods.* (NASB) Does this suggest that there are other gods in this world that exist? The psalm answers this question saying the following, **ה** כִּי | כָּל-אֱלֹהֵי הָעַמִּים אֱלִילִים וַיהוָה שָׁמַיִם עָשָׂה: **ה** *96:5 For all the gods of the peoples are idols, But the Lord made the heavens.* (NASB) The gods are a reference idols and the creation of men. The Lord however is the creator of all, **ו** הוֹדוּ-וַהֲדָר לְפָנָיו עֹז וְתַפְאֵרֶת בְּמִקְדָּשׁוֹ, **ו** *96:6 Splendor and majesty are before Him, Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.* **ז** אֲשִׁירֶה לַיהוָה מִשְׁפָּחוֹת עַמִּים הֵבִי לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד וְעֹז: **ז** *96:7 Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.* **ח** הֵבִי לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד וְעֹז: **ח** *96:8 Ascribe to the Lord the glory of His name; Bring an offering and come into His courts.* **ט** הִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לַיהוָה בְּהַדְרַת-קֹדֶשׁ חִילוֹ מִפְּנֵי כָּל-הָאָרֶץ: **ט** *96:9 Worship the Lord in holy attire; Tremble before Him, all the earth.* **י** אֲמַרוּ בְּגוֹיִם | יְהוָה מְלֹךְ אֶרֶץ-תְּכַבֵּד בְּלֹא-תַמוּט יָדָיו עַמִּים בְּמִישְׁפָּרִים: **י** *96:10 Say among the nations, 'The Lord reigns; Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved; He will judge the peoples with equity.'* **יא** יִשְׂמְחוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְתַגַּל הָאָרֶץ יִרְעַם הַיָּם וּמְלֹאָיו: **יא** *96:11 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; Let the sea roar, and all it contains;* **יב** יַעֲלֹז שָׂדֵי וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ אֲזַ יִרְנְנוּ כָּל-עֵצֵי-יַעַר: **יב** *96:12 Let the field exult, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy* (NASB) The psalm concludes saying, **יג** לְפָנָי יְהוָה | כִּי בָּא כִּי בָּא לְשִׁפֹּט הָאָרֶץ, **יג** *96:13 Before the Lord, for He is coming, For He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness And the peoples in His faithfulness.* (NASB) The psalm concludes with a messianic theme, the return of the Lord to judge the earth.

עברית	Hebrew	ארמי	Aramaic	ελληνικός	Greek
ספר תהלים פרק צו	ספר טוביה פרק צו	ספר טוביה פרק צו	ספר טוביה פרק צו	ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 96	ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 96
א שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה כָּל-הָאָרֶץ: ב שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה בְּרִכּוֹ שְׂמוֹ בִּשְׂרוּ מִיּוֹם-לְיוֹם יְשׁוּ-עֲתוֹ: ג סִפְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם כְּבוֹדוֹ כְּלַל-הָעַמִּים נְפִלְאוֹתָיו: ד כִּי גָדוֹל יְהוָה וּמְהֻלָּל מְאֹד נִרְאָה הוּא עַל-כָּל-אֱלֹהִים:	א שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה כָּל-הָאָרֶץ: ב שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה בְּרִכּוֹ שְׂמוֹ בִּשְׂרוּ מִיּוֹם-לְיוֹם יְשׁוּ-עֲתוֹ: ג סִפְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם כְּבוֹדוֹ כְּלַל-הָעַמִּים נְפִלְאוֹתָיו: ד כִּי גָדוֹל יְהוָה וּמְהֻלָּל מְאֹד נִרְאָה הוּא עַל-כָּל-אֱלֹהִים:	א שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה כָּל-הָאָרֶץ: ב שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה בְּרִכּוֹ שְׂמוֹ בִּשְׂרוּ מִיּוֹם-לְיוֹם יְשׁוּ-עֲתוֹ: ג סִפְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם כְּבוֹדוֹ כְּלַל-הָעַמִּים נְפִלְאוֹתָיו: ד כִּי גָדוֹל יְהוָה וּמְהֻלָּל מְאֹד נִרְאָה הוּא עַל-כָּל-אֱלֹהִים:	א שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה כָּל-הָאָרֶץ: ב שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה בְּרִכּוֹ שְׂמוֹ בִּשְׂרוּ מִיּוֹם-לְיוֹם יְשׁוּ-עֲתוֹ: ג סִפְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם כְּבוֹדוֹ כְּלַל-הָעַמִּים נְפִלְאוֹתָיו: ד כִּי גָדוֹל יְהוָה וּמְהֻלָּל מְאֹד נִרְאָה הוּא עַל-כָּל-אֱלֹהִים:	96:1 ὅτε ὁ οἶκος ὑποδομεῖτο μετὰ τὴν αἰχμαλωσίαν ᾠδὴ τῷ Δαυὶδ ἄσατε τῷ κυρίῳ ᾠσμα καινόν ᾠσατε τῷ κυρίῳ πᾶσα ἡ γῆ 96:2 ἄσατε τῷ κυρίῳ εὐλογήσατε τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ εὐαγγελίεσθε ἡμέραν ἕξ ἡμέρας τὸ σωτήριον αὐτοῦ 96:3 ἀναγγείλατε ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς λαοῖς τὰ θαυμάσια αὐτοῦ 96:4 ὅτι μέγας κύριος καὶ αἰνετὸς σφόδρα φοβερὸς ἐστὶν ἐπὶ πάντα τοὺς θεούς	96:1 ὅτε ὁ οἶκος ὑποδομεῖτο μετὰ τὴν αἰχμαλωσίαν ᾠδὴ τῷ Δαυὶδ ἄσατε τῷ κυρίῳ ᾠσμα καινόν ᾠσατε τῷ κυρίῳ πᾶσα ἡ γῆ 96:2 ἄσατε τῷ κυρίῳ εὐλογήσατε τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ εὐαγγελίεσθε ἡμέραν ἕξ ἡμέρας τὸ σωτήριον αὐτοῦ 96:3 ἀναγγείλατε ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς λαοῖς τὰ θαυμάσια αὐτοῦ 96:4 ὅτι μέγας κύριος καὶ αἰνετὸς σφόδρα φοβερὸς ἐστὶν ἐπὶ πάντα τοὺς θεούς

<p>ה כִּי-אֱלֹהֵי הָעַמִּים אֲלֵי- לִים וַיְהִי שָׁמַיִם עָשָׂה: ו הוֹד- וַיִּקְדֹּר לְפָנָיו עֹז וַתִּפְאֶרֶת בְּמִקְדָּשׁוֹ: ז הָבוּ לַיהוָה מִשְׁפָּחוֹת עַמִּים הָבוּ לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד וְעֹז: ח הָבוּ לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד שְׁמוֹ שְׂאוּ-מִנְחָה וּבְאוּ לְחַ- צְרוֹתָיו: ט הִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לַיהוָה בְּהַ- דְּרַת-קִדְשׁ חֵילוֹ מִפְּנֵי כָּל-הָאָרֶץ: י אָמְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ אֱ- תִפְוֹן תִּבְל בְּל-תִּמּוֹט יָדִין עַמִּים בְּמִישְׁרָיִם: יא יִשְׁמְחוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וַתִּגַּל הָאָרֶץ יָרַעַם הַיָּם וּמְלֵאֵו: יב יַעֲלֹז שְׂדֵי וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-בוּ אֲז יִרְנְנוּ כָּל-עֲצֵי-יָעַר: יג לְפָנֵי יְהוָה כִּי כָּא כִּי כָּא לְשֹׁפֵט הָאָרֶץ יִשְׁפֹּט תִּבְל בְּצַדִּק וְעַמִּים בְּאֲמוֹנָתוֹ:</p>	<p>ה ארום כל דחלת עממיא טעור- תא ויהוה שמיא עבד: ו שבחא ושיבהורא קדמוי עושנא ותושב- חא ואודיצותא בבית מקדשיה: ז הבו איהבו זמר קדם יהוה יחוסי עמיא הבו איהבו קדם יהוה איקר ועושנא: ח הבו איהבו קדם יהוה איקר ורוממו שמיא תסוברו ושו- ברו תיקרובתא ועולו לקדמוי לד- רתוי: ט סגודו קדם יהוה בשי- בהורת קודשא רתויתו מן קדמיה כל יתבי ארעא: י אמרו בעמיא בעממיא יהוה מלך לחוד תקין תבל דלא תתמוטט תזוע ידין עמיא בתירוצא: יא יחדון חיילי דשמיא וידוצון צדיקי ארעא יכלי ימא ומ- לייה: יב יביע יבוע תושבחה חקל וכל די ביה הבכנ אדין ישבחון כל אילני חורשא: יג קדם יהוה ארום אתא ארום אתא למידן ארעא ידון תבל בצדקתא בזכו ועמיא ועממיא בהימנותיה:</p>	<p>96:5 ὅτι πάντες οἱ θεοὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν δαιμόνια ὁ δὲ κύριος τοὺς οὐρανοὺς ἐποίησεν 96:6 ἐξομολόγησις καὶ ὠραιότης ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ ἀγιωσύνη καὶ μεγαλοπρέπεια ἐν τῷ ἁγιάσματι αὐτοῦ 96:7 ἐνέγκατε τῷ κυρίῳ αἱ πατριαὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν ἐνέγκατε τῷ κυρίῳ δόξαν καὶ τιμὴν 96:8 ἐνέγκατε τῷ κυρίῳ δόξαν ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ ἄρατε θυσίας καὶ εἰσπορεύεσθε εἰς τὰς αὐλὰς αὐτοῦ 96:9 προσκυνήσατε τῷ κυρίῳ ἐν αὐλῇ ἀγία αὐτοῦ σαλευθήτω ἀπὸ προσώπου αὐτοῦ πᾶσα ἡ γῆ 96:10 εἶπατε ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ὁ κύριος ἐβασίλευσεν καὶ γὰρ κατώρθωσεν τὴν οἰκουμένην ἣτις οὐ σαλευθήσεται κρινεῖ λαοὺς ἐν εὐθύτητι 96:11 εὐφραινέσθωσαν οἱ οὐρανοὶ καὶ ἀγαλλιέσθω ἡ γῆ σαλευθήτω ἡ θάλασσα καὶ τὸ πλήρωμα αὐτῆς 96:12 χαρήσεται τὰ πεδία καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτοῖς τότε ἀγαλλιάσονται πάντα τὰ ξύλα τοῦ δρυμοῦ 96:13 πρὸ προσώπου κυρίου ὅτι ἔρχεται ὅτι ἔρχεται κρῖναι τὴν γῆν κρινεῖ τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐν δικαιοσύνη καὶ λαοὺς ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ αὐτοῦ</p>
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<p>Tehillim / Psalms 96 96:1 Sing to the Lord a new song; Sing to the Lord, all the earth. 96:2 Sing to the Lord, bless His name; Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day. 96:3 Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples. 96:4 For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods. 96:5 For all the gods of the peoples are idols, But the Lord made the heavens. 96:6 Splendor and majesty are before Him, Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary. 96:7 Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. 96:8 Ascribe to the Lord the glory of His name; Bring an offering and come into His courts. 96:9 Worship the Lord in holy attire; Tremble before Him, all the earth. 96:10 Say among the nations, ‘The Lord reigns; Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved; He will judge the peoples with equity.’ 96:11 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; Let the sea roar, and all it contains; 96:12 Let the field exult, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy 96:13 Before the Lord, for He is coming, For He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness And the peoples in His faithfulness.(NASB)</p>	<p>Toviyah / Psalms 96 96:1 Sing in the presence of the Lord a new psalm; sing praise, angels of the height, sing praise in the presence of the Lord, all righteous of the earth. 96:2 Sing praise in the presence of the Lord, bless his name; proclaim his redemption from day to day. 96:3 Tell of his glory among the Gentiles, of his wonders among all the peoples. 96:4 For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; and he is more to be feared than any god. 96:5 For all the things feared by the Gentiles are idols; but the Lord made the heavens. 96:6 Praise and splendor are in his presence; strength and praise are in his sanctuary. 96:7 Make music in the presence of the Lord, O races of peoples; ascribe glory and strength in the presence of the Lord. 96:8 Ascribe glory in the presence of the Lord, and exalt his name; carry and bring an offering and enter his presence in his courts. 96:9 Bow down before him in the splendor of holiness; tremble in his presence, all inhabitants of the earth. 96:10 Say among the Gentiles, “The Lord reigns”; also the world is made firm that it will not totter; he will judge the peoples uprightly. 96:11 The forces of heaven will rejoice and the righteous of the earth will exult; the sea will shout and all its fullness. 96:12 The field and everything in it will pour forth praise; then all the trees of the forest will sing, 96:13 In the presence of the Lord, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth; he will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with his faithfulness. (EMC)</p>	<p>Psalmoi / Psalms 96 When the house was built after the Captivity, a Song of David. 96:1 Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. 96:2 Sing to the Lord, bless his name: proclaim his salvation from day to day. 96:3 Publish his glory among the Gentiles, his wonderful works among all people. 96:4 For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised: he is terrible above all gods. 96:5 For all the gods of the heathen are devils: but the Lord made the heavens. 96:6 Thanksgiving and beauty are before him: holiness and majesty are in his sanctuary. 96:7 Bring to the Lord, ye families of the Gentiles, bring to the Lord glory and honour. 96:8 Bring to the Lord the glory becoming his name: take offerings, and go into his courts. 96:9 Worship the Lord in his holy court: let all the earth tremble before him. 96:10 Say among the heathen, The Lord reigns: for he has established the world so that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people in righteousness. 96:11 Let the heavens rejoice, and the earth exult; let the sea be moved, and the fullness of it. 96:12 The plains shall rejoice, and all things in them: then shall all the trees of the wood exult before the presence of the Lord: 96:13 for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth; he shall judge the world in righteousness, and the people with his truth. (LXX)</p>
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א שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה שִׁיר הַדָּשׁ, וְשִׁירוּ לַיהוָה כָּל-הָאָרֶץ: ב שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה בְּרָכוּ שְׁמוֹ בַּשָּׁמַיִם מִיּוֹם-לְיוֹם יְשׁוּעָתוֹ: 96:1 Sing to the Lord a new song; Sing to the Lord, all the earth. 96:2 Sing to the Lord, bless His name; Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day. (NASB) The opening verse speaks of our being given the ability for creativity, to create music in order to bring glory to the Lord God of Israel. We find many Scriptures which speak to this effect, such as in the book of *Joel 2:23*.

Joel 2:23

O children of Zion, be glad, Rejoice in the LORD your God. For He has given you the early rain in [His] kindness, Now He makes the rain fall [as] formerly— The early rain and the late—

Joel provides reason to be joyful before the Lord, He gives rain in its season so crops will grow and both the land and family will live. The psalm speaks of the salvation of God that He provides from day to day (מִיּוֹם-לְיוֹם יְשׁוּעָתוֹ). This salvation is found within the rain He provides, or to the Lord's work in staying off the enemy and causing peace to reign in our lives between men. The rabbis recognize that it is the Lord who gives man the ability for creativity and for the desire to draw near to the Lord. The Lord God in heaven is the one who works in the hearts of both the wicked and the righteous. This is explained in the short sentence according to the *Talmud Bavli Berachot 33:23*.

ברכות לג

הכל בידי שמים חוץ מיראת שמים

Talmud Bavli Berachot 33:23

Everything is in the hands of Heaven, except fear of Heaven

The Lord is involved to the extent of having all things in His hands, and therefore the rabbis conclude all things (everything) is in the hands of Heaven except the fear of Heaven. Here heaven is a circumlocution for the Name of God. The fear of God is placed upon man to keep him humble and to recognize the Lord's hand in one's life. One such example that should be recognized is the gift the Lord gives to men and women such as creativity. King Solomon didn't ask for wealth but for wisdom and the Lord God gave it to Him. The Lord has given each one of us certain gifts of creativity. Therefore, it is up to us to discover them and then to utilize them for His glory. The Lord doesn't ask us to do something that He hasn't given us the ability to do, the basic conclusion then is that each of us have been endowed by our Creator to have specialties in differing areas. One Scriptural example may be taken from Paul's letter regarding the Body of the Messiah and the spiritual gifts, each one varying from the other. According to the Torah, these gifts were meant for a particular purpose, they are intended to glorify God. For example, the Torah states the following in *Shemot / Exodus 35:30-33*.

Shemot / Exodus 35:30-33

35:30 Then Moses said to the sons of Israel, 'See, the Lord has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. 35:31 'And He has filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding and in knowledge and in all craftsmanship; 35:32 to make designs for working in gold and in silver and in bronze, 35:33 and in the cutting of stones for settings and in the carving of wood, so as to perform in every inventive work. (NASB)

According to the Torah, Bezalel was given special abilities and talents to work in a creative manner on the construction of the tabernacle of God. These creative abilities included intelligence, knowledge, and skill in his craft. As a result, the Lord God expected Bezalel to utilize these abilities and so He *"inspired him to teach, both him and Oholiab the son of Ahisamach of the tribe of Dan. He has filled them with skill to do every sort of work done by an engraver or by a designer or by an embroiderer in blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, or by a weaver, by any sort of workman or skilled designer"* (*Shemot / Exodus 35:34-35*). The Lord gave him the gift of his skill to create, and along with that intelligence and knowledge to teach (instruct) others in these creative gifts. This is similar to what we find here in the psalm which speaks of: שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה כָּל-הָאָרֶץ: א 96:1 *Sing to the Lord a new song; Sing to the Lord,*

all the earth. (NASB) The act of singing a new song is performing the skill of creativity, but like all skills, these things come with practice and patience. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians saying the following:

Ephesians 2:10

2:10 “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works (maasim tovim), which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (NASB)

According to Paul, we all were created for the purpose of maasim tovim (good works) which are meant to glorify God by what we do. Note that we were created to glorify God by what we do! Just as with Bezalel, we are God’s workmanship and we were created for the purpose of glorifying God in good works. These works being “*prepared beforehand*” is a reference to God’s Torah, because we are told “*that we should walk in them.*” This is the whole purpose and meaning behind what Paul meant when he said that we should do good things for Christ. That’s why the ekklesia is called the Body of Christ. We are to be His hands, feet, voice, and eyes, etc here on this earth (*1 Corinthians 12*). We are to be a body doing what the Messiah would be doing if He was here in His physical presence on earth, and we all know that He obeyed God’s Torah for the purpose of bringing glory to His Name! He led by example, and this is why Paul said He is the Head (*Colossians 1:18*) and we are to be His Body and as His body, we are to be doing what He has sovereignly appointed us to do. We are created as His workmanship to be involved in the lives of others for the glory of God. Solomon sought for wisdom and not wealth, and what was the reason for Solomon’s choice for wisdom? The Scriptures say that he asked for wisdom for the purpose of being able to properly lead Israel in the way of the Lord. Both his motivation and heart were right with the Lord in his choice for what the Lord should do for him.

1 Kings 3:12

3:12 “Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you.” (NASB)

He could have asked for wealth, he could have asked for power, but he asked for wisdom and a discerning mind and the Lord God honored that request saying that there would be “*none like you*” who would be so wise as him, either before or after him “*so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days*” (*1 Kings 3:13*). Since Solomon asked for something more valuable than riches, the Lord God promised to give him a long life (*1 Kings 3:14*) and “*both riches and honor*” (*1 Kings 3:13*) in addition to his request..

The psalmist continues saying, ג ספרו בגוים כבודו בכל-העמים נפלאותיו: ד פי גדול יהוה ומהלל מאד, נורא הוא על-כל-אלהים: 96:3 *Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples. 96:4 For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods. (NASB)* The Aramaic Targum states, ג אישתעיו בעממיא איקריה בכל עממיא פרישותיה: ד ארום רב יהוה ומשבח, לחדא ודחיל הוא על כל אלהא: 96:3 *Tell of his glory among the Gentiles, of his wonders among all the peoples. 96:4 For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; and he is more to be feared than any god. (EMC)* It is interesting to note an ancient translation of the Psalm (Targum) interprets the MT as going into the Nations, to the Gentiles and evangelizing speaking of the glory and the greatness of God. This should cause the non-Jewish person to seek the Lord God in heaven. The way the psalm is written in the MT saying “*...He is to be feared above all gods,*” does this suggest that there are other gods in this world that exist? When the Lord gave his people the Ten Commandments, the first commandment implies the existence of other gods saying, “*You shall have no other gods before me*” (*Shemot / Exodus 20:3, Devarim / Deuteronomy 5:7*). In *Shemot / Exodus 23:32–33* Israel is told not to make a covenant with or worship other gods. What is interesting is that there is no suggestion that the gods of Israel’s neighbors do not exist. In *Devarim / Deuteronomy 4:19* the Israelites are forbidden from worshipping “*the sun, the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven ... [which] the Lord your god has allotted to all the peoples everywhere under heaven.*” This was the way in which the Lord commanded the people not to worship other gods. The command is written not necessarily because

those gods do or do not exist, but because they were the powers that ruled over the other peoples (nations), not Israel. The Lord God Himself, the creator of all, is directing us to worship Him and none other. Similarly, this draws to memory the Scripture from *Devarim / Deuteronomy 10:17*.

Devarim / Deuteronomy 10:17

10:17 'For the Lord your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe. (NASB, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וַיְאָדֹנֵי הָאֲדֹנִים הָאֵל הַגָּדֹל הַגִּבֹּר וְהַנּוֹרָא אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יִשָּׂא פָנִים וְלֹא יִקַּח שֹׁחַד)

The question then is, “*What does it mean that God is the God of gods and Lord of lords?*” Does this give credence to the existence of other gods? We know there is only one Lord and God over all, the Scriptures clearly describe the Lord God in heaven as the one true God. This is the way the Apostle Paul describes the Lord God in relation to idols according to *1 Corinthians 8*.

1 Corinthians 8:1-6

8:1 Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies. 8:2 If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know; 8:3 but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him. 8:4 Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one. 8:5 For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, 8:6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him. (NASB)

Paul is speaking about food that is sacrificed to idols, and he states that there is no such thing as an idol in the world and that there is no God but one. Then he says *8:5 For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, (NASB)* apparently contradicting himself. The point is according to the Torah, man is also called a god in the sense of passing judgment upon another with regard to justice, righteousness, and mercy. Paul also affirms the One true God, our Father in heaven, and the One whom we were created for, and faith in the Messiah in whom all things were created and exist.

Sometimes however, the Scriptures reference other gods and lords. For example, in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 10:17* the Lord is described as above the other gods and lords. The emphasis is on Lord God’s supremacy and His greatness and might, as being strong and unmovable as the mountains. When we read the Scriptures that say the Lord is God of gods, this is in reference to the Lord God of Israel who is more powerful and greater than any of the so called gods of the nations. Again, these verses do not teach the existence of other gods, but that the gods of the nations are only wood and stone, and cannot speak, hear, or see. Rather, the Lord God of Israel says, “*I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God*” (*Isaiah 45:5*). The prophet Isaiah also said in *Isaiah 43:11* ‘*I, even I, am the Lord, And there is no savior besides Me. 43:12* ‘*It is I who have declared and saved and proclaimed, And there was no strange god among you; So you are My witnesses,*’ declares the Lord, ‘*And I am God. 43:13* ‘*Even from eternity I am He, And there is none who can deliver out of My hand; I act and who can reverse it?’* (NASB) The Lord alone is worthy of worship (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 10:21*), therefore idols have no power just as Paul wrote, “*All the gods of the nations are worthless*” (*1 Chronicles 16:26, Tehillim / Psalm 96:5*). *Tehillim / Psalm 97:7* adds, “*All who worship images are put to shame, those who boast in idols.*” These and many other passages note that there is only one God we are to worship any other god is an exercise in futility because they do not exist or the god is simply a deceiving spirit.

The term “*Lord of lords*” is a reference to God’s greatness over and above all other leaders or anyone

who holds a place of authority and power. In the Apostolic Writings, the phrase “*Lord of lords*” is used also in reference to Yeshua the Messiah. Paul teaches about Yeshua to Timothy in *1 Timothy 6:15* saying “*he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords.*” (ESV) *Revelation 17:14* also speaks of Yeshua’s return, saying, “*He is Lord of lords and King of kings.*” *Revelation 19:16* also adds, “*On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: king of kings and lord of lords.*” It is interesting in the title “*Lord of lords*” we are given a description of the unique power of God which provides insight into the nature of His Messiah as well. The Lord God of Israel, our Father in heaven is the One called “*Lord of lords*” in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 10:17* and the Apostolic Writings title the Son of God (Yeshua the Messiah) as the one having authority and power over all speaking of him also as the King of kings and Lord of lords. The Lord God in heaven is powerful, and so is His Messiah Yeshua. This is why in the Acts of the Apostles, we are told in *Acts 4:12* ‘*And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.*’ (NASB) Saying the Lord is all powerful draws a parallel to His creation and His having power over all the earth, even to its depths. We kneel before the Lord because we recognize the power of God and His ability to save us and to overcome anything, absolutely anything! Note how the rabbis relate the Lord, His power to create and form the dry lands, to our worship and adoration of the Lord, our bowing down and kneeling before Him, our Maker.

The psalm answers this question of whether there are many gods saying the following, הַ כִּי | כָּל-אֱלֹהֵי, 96:5 *For all the gods of the peoples are idols, But the Lord made the heavens.* (NASB) The gods are a reference to idols and simply the creation in the imagination of men, just as Paul wrote to the Corinthians in *1 Corinthians 8* “...even if there are so called gods...” A Commentary written by Rabbi Tevele Bondi, published in Frankfort der Mein in 1898, has the following to say concerning idol worship (*Maarechet Heidenheim on Pesach Haggadah Megid*).

Maarechet Heidenheim on Pesach Haggadah, Magid, In the Beginning Our Fathers Were Idol Worshipers 1

The author of the Haggadah now returns to the four questions. We began answering these questions with, “We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt and the Lord freed us from Egypt with a mighty hand” This is a day of contrasts representing slavery and freedom. The author then left the main topic of the Haggadah in order to present the Midrash of the four children, since it relates to the commandment of telling the story of the Exodus. Having completed this explanation, we now return to matters that relate to the symbols of slavery and freedom. We began with matzah, a symbol of slavery, to remember that we were subjugated by the Egyptians. Why were we enslaved? The Haggadah now explains: because we worshiped idols. The Haggadah says, “Long ago our ancestors worshiped idols...” Yet didn’t our ancestors also worship idols in Egypt? Why do we speak of Abraham as a worshiper of idols? The Haggadah continues, “And the Omnipresent brought them close to His service.” You might feel that the fact that our ancestors worshiped idols in Egypt is an accusation against them, so the Haggadah quotes the book of Joshua: “And I brought forth your father Abraham...” Even though Abraham worshiped idols with his father, Terah, he was worthy of redemption. When Abraham recognized the unity of God, he willingly risked martyrdom in the fiery furnace. What happened to Abraham was repeated in future generations. When the Israelites in Egypt saw God’s signs and wonders, even though they were blemished by idolatry, they cast off their impure garments and became believers who maintained their faith at risk to their lives. They rejected the attributes and deeds of Egypt, tied the Passover lamb to their bed posts so that the Egyptians could see. They circumcised themselves so that the blood of circumcision and the blood of the Passover offering mixed together. Is there any martyrdom greater than this? (They risked their lives in the face of the Egyptians and even shed their own blood.) The Israelites were enslaved to the Egyptians and yet they were willing to cast off the yoke of slavery and risk their lives. Only then did they slaughter the Passover lamb and roast it. In this way the Israelites emulated the actions of Abraham. Because of their acts of faith, they

were worthy of being redeemed from Egypt. That is why, "God brought them near."

Rabbi Tevele is interpreting the Pesach Haggadah, relating the story of the Exodus because of Pesach, and states that Abram was worthy of redemption, even though he worshiped idols. Abraham risked being burned in fire by recognizing that there is only one God. This was done as an example for future generations. Israel in Egypt witnessed God's miracles and though they were blemished by idolatry, they cast off their impure garments and became believers who maintained their faith at the risk of their own lives. These are very important concepts here, the people cast off their impure garments and maintained their faith. What does that mean? The people performed Teshuvah, turning from their sins, and walking in the way of God. The concept of circumcision is brought into context, along with the sacrifice, and all of these things are brought together with regard to casting off the yoke of slavery. It was only then the passover lamb was slaughtered, and it is said that in this way they emulated the actions of Abraham because of their acts of faith. Do you emulate the actions of Abraham by your acts (works) of faith? Isn't a believer today supposed to be an emulator of Abraham just as Yeshua the Messiah was? Note what Yeshua states in *John 8:28-45*.

John 8:28-45

8:28 So Jesus said, 'When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. 8:29 'And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.' 8:30 As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him. 8:31 So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, 'If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; 8:32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.' 8:33 They answered Him, 'We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free'?' 8:34 Jesus answered them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. 8:35 'The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. 8:36 'So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. 8:37 'I know that you are Abraham's descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. 8:38 'I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father.' 8:39 They answered and said to Him, 'Abraham is our father.' Jesus said to them, 'If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham. 8:40 'But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. 8:41 'You are doing the deeds of your father.' They said to Him, 'We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God.' 8:42 Jesus said to them, 'If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. 8:43 'Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word. 8:44 'You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. 8:45 'But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. (NASB)

Yeshua speaks of faith in His word and the deeds of Abraham whose descendants will live as he lived by his faith. Remember, living by faith is synonymous to works of righteousness. We are defined by what we do, how we live for the Lord. This is how we are known by others, in the way that we love one another. There is no way of separating the concept of faith and works, as the Apostle James wrote in his book in the Apostolic Writings. The psalm states, *כִּי | כָּל-אֱלֹהֵי הָעַמִּים אֱלִילִים וַיְהִי ה' שָׁמַיִם עָשָׂה*; *For all the gods of the peoples are idols, But the Lord made the heavens. (NASB)* The people preferred their own desires and wealth over the things of God. These gods are a reference to idols in the creation or imagination of men, in the sense that men set up idols in their hearts which stand against the truth. Yeshua said 8:34 "... 'Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.'" (NASB) Those who commit idolatry are

also slaves to their idols. They become the very thing they worship. (*Tehillim / Psalm 115:8*)

The people of God in the wilderness however walked in the light of God's presence each day. They were taught the Word of the Lord at the hand of Moshe (הַשֵּׁמֶ-דִּיבָה) and yet they did not appear to have real fellowship with the Lord in heaven. The people longed for their former lives of bondage and sin. Do you long for the former life, do you long for sin? Do you think this happens today amongst some found in our congregations? Have you ever really thought about this before?

The *Mishnah Pirkei Avot 4:2* states,

Mishnah Pirkei Avot 4:2

Ben Azzai says: Run to do an easy mitzvah, and flee from sin; since one mitzvah leads to another mitzvah, and one sin leads to another sin; since the reward for a mitzvah is another mitzvah, and the reward for one sin is another sin. [חֲבֹכַח הַלֵּק הוֹצֵמֵל קֵר יוֹה, רִמּוֹא יֵאֲזַע וְב, הַרּוּמ רַכְשׁוֹ. הוֹצֵמ רַכְשׁוֹ. הַרְבַּע תַּרְרוּג הַרְבַּעוּ, הוֹצֵמ תַּרְרוּג הוֹצֵמֵשׁ. הַרְבַּעָה וְנִמ חַרּוּבוּ,] הַרּוּמ הַרְבַּע, הַרְבַּע .

One command leads to another, which is similar to saying one righteous deed, when done for the glory of God and for His Name's sake, leads to our desire to do another because we love Him. Similarly, the nature of sin is that one sin leads to another. The rabbis say that the reward for a command is another command, saying essentially that the reward for a righteous deed is the desire for another righteous deed. The reason being there is joy in the performance of a command for the glory of God and the Lord will cause us to want to do more for His kingdom. And comparatively, the reward for sin is another sin because sin feeds the flesh and the body desires sin. So by this reasoning, a righteous man will continue on for the better, to more and more righteous deeds, whereas, the unrighteous man will continue on in more and more unrighteousness. This is what the Talmud teaches regarding sin and righteousness. The words of the rabbis are very reminiscent of what is written according to *Revelation 22:10-17*.

Revelation 22:10-17

22:10 And he said to me, 'Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. 22:11 'Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy.' 22:12 'Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. 22:13 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.' 22:14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. 22:15 Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying. 22:16 'I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.' 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost. (NASB)

John writes of the One speaking to him in revelation saying, *Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy*. Note how John writes the one who is righteous continue to “practice” righteousness. This again is what we do, and describes how we are defined by what we do and how we live for the Lord. If you are bound up in sin, there is no hope without the power of God to overcome. Therefore, it is very important to seek the Lord's help in the Messiah to overcome sin in our lives and to walk in God's ways.

The Apostle John said in *1 John 1:7-9* that, the blood of Yeshua His Son cleanses us from all sin, how-

ever, if one walks in sin (*practices sin, walks in darkness*), there is no fellowship with God or His people. Does the blood of Christ cleanse when one practices walking in darkness (in sin)? The point is that you may find yourself living in the midst of the congregation of God, but do you truly desire to turn from your sins, to seek His face for forgiveness and simply to draw near (*Mark 9:43-49*), and to be led by the command, by the hand of God, and in the power of His Holy Spirit? This is a call for personal reflection and examination; the blood of Yeshua cleanses from sin only if we truly seek Him and His truth, in Teshuvah (Repentance)! On a spiritual level, one receives the forgiveness of sins in the Messiah Yeshua. But it isn't simply a matter of believing in the sacrifice and then going on to live life as if there was no sacrifice. One must also have a repentant heart, to seek the Lord for the forgiveness of sin, and to turn from sin (*to go and sin no more, John 8:11*). The Torah principle at work here is the manner in which one is seeking the Lord for forgiveness, that is coupled with sacrifice, and turning from sin (Teshuvah, repentance). Each piece must be in place.

The Lord is the creator of all. He is all powerful and able to overcome anything that may be facing us in our lives as the psalmist states, ו הוד-והדר לפניו עז ותפארת במקדשו: ז הבו ליהנה משפחות עמים הבו, ו ליהנה כבוד ועז: ח הבו ליהנה כבוד שמו שאו-מנחה ובאו להצרותיו: ט השתחוו ליהנה בהדרת-קדש חילו מפניו כל-הארץ: י אמרו בגוים | יהוה מלך אר-תפון תבל כל-תמוט ידן עמים במישרים: יא ישמחו השמים ותגל הארץ: יב יעלו שדי וכל-אשר בו אז ירננו כל-עצי-יער: *96:6 Splendor and majesty are before Him, Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary. 96:7 Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. 96:8 Ascribe to the Lord the glory of His name; Bring an offering and come into His courts. 96:9 Worship the Lord in holy attire; Tremble before Him, all the earth. 96:10 Say among the nations, 'The Lord reigns; Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved; He will judge the peoples with equity.' 96:11 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; Let the sea roar, and all it contains; 96:12 Let the field exult, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy (NASB)* The Aramaic Targum states the following:

Toviyah / Psalms 96:6-12

96:6 Praise and splendor are in his presence; strength and praise are in his sanctuary. 96:7 Make music in the presence of the Lord, O races of peoples; ascribe glory and strength in the presence of the Lord. 96:8 Ascribe glory in the presence of the Lord, and exalt his name; carry and bring an offering and enter his presence in his courts. 96:9 Bow down before him in the splendor of holiness; tremble in his presence, all inhabitants of the earth. 96:10 Say among the Gentiles, "The Lord reigns"; also the world is made firm that it will not totter; he will judge the peoples uprightly. 96:11 The forces of heaven will rejoice and the righteous of the earth will exult; the sea will shout and all its fullness. 96:12 The field and everything in it will pour forth praise; then all the trees of the forest will sing (EMC)

ו שבחא ושיבהורא קדמוי עושנא ותושבחה ואודיצותא בבית מקדשיה: ז הבו איהבו זמר קדם יהוה יחוסי עמיה הבו איהבו קדם יהוה איקר ועושנא: ח הבו איהבו קדם יהוה איקר ורוממו שמיה תסוברו ושוברו תיקרובתא ועולו לקדמוי לדרתו: ט סגודו קדם יהוה בשיבהורת קודשא רתויתו מן קדמיה כל יתבי ארעא: י אמרו בעמיה בעמיה יהוה מלך לחוד תקין תבל דלא תתמוטט תזוע ידן עמיה בתירוצא: יא יחדון חיילי דשמיא וידוצון צדיקי ארעא יכלי ימא ומלייה: יב יביע יבוע תושבחה חקל וכל די ביה הבכנ אדין ישבחון כל אילני חורשא:

There is very little variation between the rabbinic translation (Targum) as compared to the psalm of David in the MT. The psalmist speaks of Gods splendor, majesty, strength, and beauty, and goes on to describe how each of these attributes are applied to His people.

1. The families of the peoples are to:
 - Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

- Ascribe glory to the presence of God
 - Exalt His name in the splendor of holiness.
 - Tremble before the Lord.
 - Speak of the Lord before the nations.
2. The Lord reigns, the world is established by Him, and He will judge the people with equity.
 3. The natural creation will exult the Lord God in heaven.

It is interesting how the psalmist ascribes anthropomorphic attributes to the trees saying the forest will sing for joy. This is similar to what is written in *Luke 19:37-40* “As he was drawing near already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.” He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.” (ESV) The psalm speaks of the Lord coming to judge the people and the earth which is coupled with the joy of His majesty and splendor. The joy of the coming judgment arises from the fact that Israel regarded a judge as a champion of the oppressed and not as a pedantic interpreter of statutes, as we find today in the secular courts. Note how men are called gods in the Torah which are interpreted to mean “judges” which is coupled to the covenant.

Shemot / Exodus 22:8-9

22:8 ‘If the thief is not caught, then the owner of the house shall appear before the judges, to determine whether he laid his hands on his neighbor’s property. 22:9 ‘For every breach of trust, whether it is for ox, for donkey, for sheep, for clothing, or for any lost thing about which one says, ‘This is it,’ the case of both parties shall come before the judges; he whom the judges condemn shall pay double to his neighbor. (NASB, ז אִם-לֹא יִמָּצֵא הַגֵּנֵב וְנִקְרַב בְּעַל-הַבַּיִת אֶל-הָאֱלֹהִים אִם-לֹא נָשַׁח יָדוֹ בְּמִלְאֲכַת רֵעֵהוּ: ח עַל-כָּל-דָּבָר-פְּשַׁע עַל-שׂוֹר עַל-קָמֹר עַל-שֵׂה עַל-שִׁלְמָה עַל-כָּל-אַבְדָּה אֲשֶׁר יֹאמַר כִּי-הוּא זֶה עַד הָאֱלֹהִים יָבֵא דָבָר-שְׁנִיָּהֶם אֲשֶׁר יִרְשִׁיעַן אֱלֹהִים (יִשְׁלַם שְׁנַיִם לְרֵעֵהוּ:)

Notice how we are told that if a thief is not caught, the owner of the house is to appear before God (Elohim, אֱלֹהִים) and this is within the context of going before men to receive judgment. Note how Moshe describes a judge in the Torah, he calls them gods (Elohim, אֱלֹהִים). This is important if we consider Judah’s statement, כִּי כְמוֹהָ פָּרַעֲוָה “because you are like Pharaoh,” where Pharaoh is consider a god, and even the son of the gods in the Egyptian culture and religion. The point to pay attention to is how Moshe wrote God (Elohim, אֱלֹהִים) to describe men, he is telling us that it is by God’s appointment that men have been given divine authority to execute judgment in His (God’s) name. These Scriptures indicate that each judge is a representative of the Lord God in heaven, bearing both the name, the character, and the authority of God, in order to administer justice. This suggests that the judge is to bear the name and the image of the Father in heaven. The psalmist reminds us that though we bear the image of God, we are still mortal and will die and give account of our lives before the Most High God in heaven (*Tehillim / Psalms 82:5-7*). What is being emphasized here is that judgment is being meted out with justice and that the sinner will die at the hands of justice, if a person persists in their wickedness.

In the psalm, the people are told to rejoice because of the splendor and majesty of God and of the coming of the day of judgment of both the people and the earth. The judgment of the people is coupled to the covenant and joy in the sense that his people are to remember the wondrous works of the Lord (*1 Chronicles 16:12-14*), and the covenant which He made with the patriarchs to give them the land of Canaan (*1 Chronicles 16:15-18*), and confirms his exhortation by pointing out how the Lord, in fulfillment of His promise, had mightily and gloriously defended the patriarchs (*1 Chronicles 16:19-22*). The Lord is going to do this

same thing for His people and therefore we do not fear the judgment day because the Lord will defend us and stand on our behalf in the Messiah. We are told all the peoples are to praise Him as the only true and almighty God (*1 Chronicles 16:23-27*), and all peoples do homage to Him with sacrificial gifts (*1 Chronicles 16:28-30*); and that His kingdom may be acknowledged among the heathen, even inanimate nature will rejoice at His coming to judgment (*1 Chronicles 16:31-33, Tehillim / Psalms 96:11-12*).

The psalm concludes saying, יג לְפָנַי יְהוָה | פִּי בָא פִי בָא לְשֹׁפֵט הָאָרֶץ יִשְׁפֹּט-תִּבְלַב בְּצִדְקַת וְעֲמִים בְּאֱמוּנָתוֹ. *96:13 Before the Lord, for He is coming, For He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness And the peoples in His faithfulness.*(NASB) The psalm concludes with a messianic theme, in the sense that the Lord is coming (returning) to judge the world meaning that He will come to redeem His people. Note how the Lord comes to judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in His faithfulness. This suggests that judgment comes to those who are not faithful to the Lord. Have you lived your life in faithfulness to the Lord God in heaven and His Messiah Yeshua? If your life has shown some slackness of these qualities, the Lord is calling you to Teshuvah and to return to His ways, and faith in Him. Let's Pray!

Rabbinic Commentary

The Rabbinic Commentary (Midrash) on *Tehillim / Psalms 96* has 2 parts. Reading through the Midrash we will be looking at Part 1 and 2. Let's begin by outlining *Midrash Tehillim Chapter 96, Parts 1 and 2*.

Outline of Midrash Tehillim / Psalms, Chapter 96, Part 1 and 2

Part 1

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying, “*Sing unto the Lord a new song; sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, praise His name (Tehillim / Psalms 96:1-2).*”
- The פתיחתא (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*Rabbi Abbahu taught, The three times that the word sing is used in this Psalm correspond to the three prayers during which the children of Israel sing in Song...*”
- The משל (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis speak of three songs that are to be sung.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the משל (mashal), the rabbis correlate these things to prayer and the creative work of God.
- The Concluding phrase says, “*... sing in Song unto the Lord, praise His name corresponds to the evening prayer when the Holy One blessed be He, is praised because He brings on the evening twilight.*”

Part 2

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying, “*For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised (Tehillim / Psalms 96:4).*”
- The פתיחתא (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*He rolls forth light out of darkness and darkness out of light.*”
- The משל (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis open with a statement that the gods of the nations are nothing.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the משל (mashal), the rabbis expand upon the mashal saying that the gods of the nations bring the people misery, whereas the Lord God in heaven brings blessing, peace, and joy.
- The Concluding phrase says, “*Then The heavens will be glad, and the earth will rejoice (Tehillim /*

Psalms 96:11) at the deliverance of Israel. And The field will exult (Tehillim / Psalms 96:12), The fields of Eden will exult in the rejoicing of the righteous.”

Midrash Tehillim 96, Part 1 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying, “Sing unto the Lord a new song; sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, praise His name (Tehillim / Psalms 96:1-2).” The homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “Rabbi Abbahu taught, The three times that the word sing is used in this Psalm correspond to the three prayers during which the children of Israel sing in Song...” The rabbis recognize the occurrence of the word “sing” as speaking to three prayers in which Israel sings unto the Lord.

א שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ נְשִׁירוּ לַיהוָה כָּל-הָאָרֶץ: ב שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה בְּרָכוּ שְׁמוֹ בַּשָּׁרׁוּ מִיּוֹם-לְיוֹם יְשׁוּעָתוֹ:

Tehillim / Psalms 96:1-2

96:1 *Sing to the Lord a new song; Sing to the Lord, all the earth.* 96:2 *Sing to the Lord, bless His name; Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day. (NASB)*

Aramaic Targum

א שִׁבְחוּ קֳדָם יְהוָה תּוֹשִׁבְחָתָא חֲדָתָא שִׁבְחוּ אַנְגְּלֵי מְרוּמָא שִׁבְחוּ קֳדָם יְהוָה כָּל צְדִיקֵי אַרְעָא: ב שִׁבְחוּ קֳדָם יְהוָה בְּרִיכּוּ שְׁמֵיהּ בְּשָׁרוֹן מִיּוֹמָא לְיוֹמָא פּוֹרְקִנְיָהּ:

Toviyah / Psalms 96:1-2

96:1 *Sing in the presence of the Lord a new psalm; sing praise, angels of the height, sing praise in the presence of the Lord, all righteous of the earth. (EMC)*

The entire midrash states the following:

<p>א נְמִיס וְצ קֶרַפּ מִלְהַת שְׂרַדְמ לַכּ יְהִל וְרִישׁ א וְהִבָּא רִ"א. [וּמִשׁ וְכָרַב יְהִל וְרִישׁ קָרָאָה לְקַמֵּשׁ תּוֹלְפַת יָג דַּגְנַכּ וְלִלְה תּוֹרִישׁ יָג יְהִל וְרִישׁ. מוּי לַכּבּ הַ"בְּקָהּל] לְאַרְשֵׁי יוֹס [לְאַרְשֵׁי יוֹס לְקַמֵּשׁ הַלְפַת דַּגְנַכּ, שְׂדַח רִישׁ מוּי לַכּבּ שְׂדַחַמ אֹוְהַשׁ, הַ"בְּקָהּל תִּירַחַשׁ לַכּ יְהִל וְרִישׁ. תִּישְׂאַרְבּ הַשְׁעַמ דִּימַת יָאֵב לַכּשׁ, הַחֲנַמָּה תְּלַפַת דַּגְנַכּ, קָרָאָה וְרִישׁ. תּוֹרוּאַמְהוּ שְׁמֵשׁהּ מוּיֵב וְאַר מְלוּעַ וְהַשׁ תִּיבְרַע תְּלִיפַת דַּגְנַכּ, וּמִשׁ וְכָרַב יְהִל מִיבְרַע בִּירַעַמ אֹוְהַשׁ הַ"בְּקָהּל יְכִרְבַּמּ</p>	<p>Midrash Tehillim 96, Part 1 1. <i>Sing unto the Lord a new song; sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, praise His name (Tehillim / Psalms 96:1-2). Rabbi Abbahu taught, The three times that the word sing is used in this Psalm correspond to the three prayers during which the children of Israel sing in Song unto the Lord a new song corresponds to the morning prayer during which the children of Israel sing praises to the Holy One blessed be He, because He renews daily the work of creation; sing in Sing unto the Lord, all the earth corresponds to the afternoon prayer, because during the day all the inhabitants of the earth enjoy the sun and its beams; and sing in Song unto the Lord, praise His name corresponds to the evening prayer when the Holy One blessed be He, is praised because He brings on the evening twilight.</i></p>
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The rabbis recognize the occurrence of the word “sing” as speaking to three prayers in which Israel sings unto the Lord. According to the midrash, the three occurrences of “sing” refers to (i) the morning prayers, (ii) the afternoon prayer, and (iii) the evening prayer.

For the morning prayer, the entire interpretation is as follows, “Rabbi Abbahu taught, The three times that the word sing is used in this Psalm correspond to the three prayers during which the children of Israel sing in Song unto the Lord a new song corresponds to the morning prayer during which the children of Isra-

el sing praises to the Holy One blessed be He, because He renews daily the work of creation.” The morning prayers for the new day are meant to help us to begin our days with a sensitivity for the Lord God, to seek Him to guide us in this new day. The morning prayer is the shacharit prayer which is recited some time between sunrise and midday. This prayer time lasts on average a half an hour. The Shacharit is preceded by several pages of preliminary blessings and prayers according to the Sidur. After these things, one reads the Hodu, a set of verses that praise the Almighty including and *Tehillim / Psalms 30 and 67*. This part of the prayer time is to acknowledge the Lord as creator and Lord over all, followed by our commitment to obey His will. The next section consists of “*Verses of Praise*,” a series of Psalms (*Tehillim / Psalm 145–150*), which is preceded by a blessing (*Baruch She’amar*) and followed by one (Yishtabach, *ישׁתבַּח*, meaning “*God be praised*”). This draws us to become more aware of the mighty deeds of the Lord in heaven at the beginning of the day and reminds us that His power is available for us this day. Then we recite of the Shema, preceded by two blessings and followed by one. This reminds us of the oneness of God and His ultimate authority over all. Next is the Amidah. The Amidah reminds us we are standing before the Lord God in heaven asking for our needs. The Amidah is followed by penitential prayers, a brief reading from the Torah scroll on Mondays and Thursdays (and some other festive days), the “*Song of the Day*,” followed by the “*Ein k’Elokeinu*” and “*Aleinu*” hymns.

Shacharit–Morning Prayers
Recited immediately upon awakening:

Modeh Ani Lefanecha
Melech Chai Vekayom
Shehechezarta Bi Nishmati
Bechemla
Raba Emunatecha

I offer thanks to You,
living and eternal King,
for You have mercifully restored my soul within me;
Your faithfulness is great.

Recited after ritually washing the hands:

Baruch Ata Ado-nai
Elo-hanu Melech Haolam
Asher Kidishanu Bemitzvotav
Vetzivanu Al Netilat Yadayim

Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d,
King of the universe,
who has sanctified us with His commandments,
and commanded us concerning the washing of the hands.

Recited before the morning prayers:

Haraynee Mekabel Alai
Mitzvat Asai
Shel Ve’ahavta
Lerayacha kamocho.

I hereby take upon myself
to fulfill the commandment of
loving your fellow as yourself.

For the afternoon prayer, the entire interpretation is as follows, “sing in Song unto the Lord, all the earth corresponds to the afternoon prayer, because during the day all the inhabitants of the earth enjoy the sun and its beams.” The afternoon prayer is meant to draw us to the Lord at noon day. Life has the tendency to draw us away with the busy things, work, phones, children, etc, and the Minchah is meant to draw our hearts back to the Lord in the midst of these things. The rabbis say Elijah the Prophet was answered only during the Minchah prayer since that is the time we make the greatest sacrifices (giving up the things we want to do to spend time in prayer). The Minchah prayer takes on average 15 minutes. The Minchah includes passages related to the daily afternoon service in the Holy Temple, Ashrei (*Tehillim / Psalm 145*), then leading to the nineteen-blessing amidah (silent prayer) recited standing while facing Jerusalem. It concludes with brief penitential prayers (omitted on festive days and occasions) and the “Aleinu” hymn. When there are ten men, the kaddish is recited, and the leader repeats the amidah aloud while the rest answer “Amen.” For special days (e.g. Shabbat, holidays, fast days), there are special variations. Sometimes the Torah is read. Sometimes certain prayers are added.

Weekly Amidah

My L-rd, open my lips, and my mouth shall declare Your praise. Blessed are You, Lord our God and God of our fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob, the great, mighty and awesome God, exalted God, who bestows bountiful kindness, who creates all things, who remembers the piety of the Patriarchs, and who, in love, brings a redeemer to their children's children, for the sake of His Name. O King, (You are) a helper, a savior and a shield. Blessed are You Lord, Shield of Abraham. You are mighty forever, my Lord; You resurrect the dead; You are powerful to save. He sustains the living with loving kindness, resurrects the dead with great mercy, supports the falling, heals the sick, releases the bound, and fulfills His trust to those who sleep in the dust. Who is like You, mighty One! And who can be compared to You, King, who brings death and restores life, and causes deliverance to spring forth! You are trustworthy to revive the dead. Blessed are You Lord, who revives the dead. You are holy and Your Name is holy, and holy beings praise You daily for all eternity. Blessed are You Lord, the holy God. You graciously bestow knowledge upon man and teach mortals understanding. Graciously bestow upon us from You, wisdom, understanding and knowledge. Blessed are You Lord, who graciously bestows knowledge. Cause us to return, our Father, to Your Torah; draw us near, our King, to Your service; and bring us back to You in whole-hearted repentance. Blessed are You Lord, who desires penitence. Pardon us, our Father, for we have sinned; forgive us, our King, for we have transgressed; for You are a good and forgiving God. Blessed are You Lord, gracious One who pardons abundantly. O behold our affliction and wage our battle; redeem us speedily for the sake of Your Name, for You God are the mighty redeemer. Blessed are You Lord, Redeemer of Israel. Heal us, O Lord, and we will be healed; help us and we will be saved; for You are our praise. Grant complete cure and healing to all our wounds; for You, Almighty King, are a faithful and merciful healer. Blessed are You Lord, who heals the sick of His people Israel. Bless for us, Lord our God, this year and all the varieties of its produce for good; and bestow blessing upon the face of the earth. Satisfy us from Your bounty and bless our year like other good years, for blessing; for You are a generous God who bestows goodness and blesses the years. Blessed are You Lord, who blesses the years. Sound the great shofar for our freedom; raise a banner to gather our exiles, and bring us together from the four corners of the earth into our land. Blessed are You Lord, who gathers the dispersed of His people Israel. Restore our judges as

in former times, and our counselors as of yore; remove from us sorrow and sighing, and reign over us, You alone, O Lord, with kindness and compassion, with righteousness and justice. Blessed are You Lord, King who loves righteousness and justice. Let there be no hope for informers, and may all the heretics and all the wicked instantly perish; may all the enemies of Your people be speedily extirpated; and may You swiftly uproot, break, crush and subdue the reign of wickedness speedily in our days. Blessed are You Lord, who crushes enemies and subdues the wicked. May Your mercies be aroused, Lord our God, upon the righteous, upon the pious, upon the elders of Your people, the House of Israel, upon the remnant of their sages, upon the righteous proselytes and upon us. Grant ample reward to all who truly trust in Your Name, and place our lot among them; may we never be disgraced, for we have put our trust in You. Blessed are You Lord, the support and security of the righteous. Return in mercy to Jerusalem Your city and dwell therein as You have promised; speedily establish therein the throne of David Your servant, and rebuild it, soon in our days, as an everlasting edifice. Blessed are You L-rd, who rebuilds Jerusalem. Speedily cause the scion of David Your servant to flourish, and increase his power by Your salvation, for we hope for Your salvation all day. Blessed are You Lord, who causes the power of salvation to flourish. Hear our voice, Lord our God; merciful Father, have compassion upon us and accept our prayers in mercy and favor, for You are God who hears prayers and supplications; do not turn us away empty-handed from You, our King, for You hear the prayer of everyone. Blessed are You Lord, who hears prayer. Look with favor, Lord our God, on Your people Israel and pay heed to their prayer; restore the service to Your Sanctuary and accept with love and favor Israel's fire-offerings and prayer; and may the service of Your people Israel always find favor. May our eyes behold Your return to Zion in mercy. Blessed are You Lord, who restores His Divine Presence to Zion. We thankfully acknowledge that You are the Lord our God and God of our fathers forever. You are the strength of our life, the shield of our salvation in every generation. We will give thanks to You and recount Your praise, evening, morning and noon, for our lives which are committed into Your hand, for our souls which are entrusted to You, for Your miracles which are with us daily, and for Your continual wonders and beneficences. You are the Beneficent One, for Your mercies never cease; the Merciful One, for Your kindnesses never end; for we always place our hope in You. And for all these, may Your Name, our King, be continually blessed, exalted and extolled forever and all time. And all living things shall forever thank You, and praise Your great Name eternally, for You are good. God, You are our everlasting salvation and help, O benevolent God. Blessed are You Lord, Beneficent is Your Name, and to You it is fitting to offer thanks. Bestow peace, goodness and blessing, life, graciousness, kindness and mercy, upon us and upon all Your people Israel. Bless us, our Father, all of us as one, with the light of Your countenance. For by the light of Your countenance You gave us, Lord our God, the Torah of life and loving-kindness, righteousness, blessing, mercy, life and peace. May it be favorable in Your eyes to bless Your people Israel, at all times and at every moment, with Your peace. Blessed are You L-rd, who blesses His people Israel with peace. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable before You, Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer. My God, guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking deceitfully. Let my soul be silent to those who curse me; let my soul be as dust to all. Open my heart to Your Torah, and let my soul eagerly pursue Your commandments. As for all those who plot evil against me, hasten to annul their counsel and frustrate their design. Let them be as chaff before the wind; let the angel of the Lord thrust them away. That Your beloved ones may be delivered, help with Your right hand and answer me. Do it for the sake of Your Name; do it for the sake of Your right hand; do it for the sake of Your Torah; do it for the sake of Your holiness. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable before You, Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer. Before reciting the following verse one should bow, and in this bowed position, take three steps backward. While still bowing, he

should turn his head to his left saying, “He who makes peace in His heavens”; bow forward, saying, “may He”; turn his head to his right, saying, “make peace for us”; and finally bow forward, saying, “and for all Israel; and say, Amen”. He who makes peace in His heavens, may He make peace for us and for all Israel; and say, Amen. May it be Your will, Lord our God and God of our fathers, that the Bet Hamikdash be speedily rebuilt in our days, and grant us our portion in Your Torah.

For the evening prayer, the entire interpretation is as follows, *“and sing in Song unto the Lord, praise His name corresponds to the evening prayer when the Holy One blessed be He, is praised because He brings on the evening twilight.”* The time for reciting Maariv (the evening prayers) extends throughout the night. Nevertheless, the sages were concerned that people would delay the recitation of the biblically mandated nighttime Shema which is recited as part of the maariv until the last moment, and risk forgetting to say it altogether. They therefore instituted that maariv should be prayed before halachic midnight.

The third of the three daily prayers is called the Maariv prayer and is recited after dark. The prayer is believed to be instituted by the Patriarch Jacob. When considering the Jewish calendar where the day begins with the preceding nightfall, the maariv, the evening prayer, is actually seen as the first of the day's prayers. The words of prayer involve the body in the service of God, uplifting and refining the body so that it is more attuned to the spirit. In the initial stage of this process the body is still in spiritual darkness, so maariv is the first of the day's prayers. The Maariv may be recited upon the appearance of three medium stars in the night sky until dawn. The words of prayer involve the body in the service of God. As with all prayers, face Jerusalem from wherever you are. Wash your hands and open your prayer book. Maariv opens with the recitation of the Shema and the *“blessings of Shema,”* two before and two after, followed by the nineteen-blessing Amidah recited standing while facing Jerusalem. It concludes with the *“Aleinu”* hymn. The entire prayer lasts approximately ten minutes.

Setting aside three times to pray each day, to communicate with the Lord God Almighty is meant to draw our lives to begin with the Lord (morning), to be reminded of the Lord (afternoon), and to conclude with our hope in the Lord to sustain and protect us each day (evening). The Talmud Bavli gives two reasons why there are three basic prayers de-rabbanan (*“from our Rabbis”*) since the early Second Temple period on, to recall the daily sacrifices at the Temple in Jerusalem, and/or because each of the Patriarchs instituted one prayer: Abraham the morning, Isaac the afternoon and Jacob the evening. (*Talmud Bavli Berachoth 26b*) According to the Talmud Bavli Taanit 2a, tefillah (prayer) is a Biblical command, *“You shall serve God with your whole heart.”* (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 10:10*) Based upon this verse, what service is performed with the heart? This is a reference to the service of tefillah. Prayer is therefore referred to as Avodah sheba-Lev (*“service that is in the heart”*). It is not time-dependent and is mandatory for both men and women. Our Messiah Yeshua also emphasized the importance of prayer, and likewise, we too should heed the call of God to a life of prayer according to the Torah!

Midrash Tehillim 96, Part 2 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying, *“For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised (Tehillim / Psalms 96:4).”* The homiletic introduction to the midrash states, *“He rolls forth light out of darkness and darkness out of light.”* The homiletic introduction brings to memory the ninth of the Ten Plagues to be visited on Egypt, the plague of Darkness, *Shemot / Exodus 10:23* *“No person could see his brother; nor could any person rise from his place, for three days; but for the children of Israel, there was light in all their dwellings”* (NASB). The physical plague of darkness had its root in a spiritual darkness, the spiritual darkness of Egypt which can be defined as the absence of God's revealed presence. In discussing the spiritual significance of this plague the Midrash cites the gods of the nations which are like gelalim (dung) which are unclean.

The entire midrash states the following:

<p>מדרש תהלים פרק צו סימן ב</p> <p>ב כי גדול ה' ומהולל מאד. שהוא גולל אור מפני חושך וחושך מפני אור, ומי עושה כן הקב"ה, אבל כל אלהי העמים אלילים (תהלים צ"ו פסוק ה'), ולמה נקראו אלילים, אמר ר' יוסי אלילי למו לעובדיהו, מהו גי' לולים, שטמאים כגללים, מהו פסי' לים, פסולים ונפסלים, מהו תועבה, תועה בה, מהו עצבים, שמתעצבים במ עובדיהו, אבל ה' שמים עשה, הוד והדר לפניו, הם מלאכי השרת, לפיכך הבו לה' משפחות עמים הבו לה' כבוד ועוז, לעתיד לבוא. שאו מנחה. דכתיב לך יובילו מלכים שי (תהלים סח ל). השתחוו לה'. דכתיב יבוא כל בשר להשתחות לפני אמר ה' (ישעיה סו כג), אותו היום אמרו בגוים ה' מלך (תהלים צ"ו פסוק י), דכתיב והיה ה' למלך על כל הארץ (זכריה יד ט). אף תכון תבל. בצדק. בל תמוט. שאין הרשעים מצוין בעולם. ידין עמים במישרים. שאין האומות נידונין לפניו אלא במישור, וכשאין בהם במה להשען יאבדו. אז ישמחו השמים ותגל הארץ. בישור-עתן של ישראל. (יעלוץ) [יעלוז] שדי. זה גן עדן, בשמחתן של צדיקים.</p>	<p><i>Midrash Tehillim 96, Part 2</i></p> <p>2. <i>For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised (Tehillim / Psalms 96:4). He rolls forth light out of darkness and darkness out of light. Who is the one that does this? The Holy One blessed be He, whereas All the gods of the nations are things of naught (elilim) (Tehillim / Psalms 96:5). Why are they called elilim? Rabbi Jose said, Because they bring woe (elelay) to those who serve them. Why are they called gillulim? Because like rolls of dung (gelalim), they are unclean. Why are they called pesilim? Because they are hacked out (pesulim), they are mere botches (nifsalim). Why is any god of heathen nations called toebah? Because on account of it a man goes astray (toeh bah). Why are the gods of heathen nations called asabim? Because on their account their worshipers are brought to grief (mitasbim). But the Lord made the heavens (Tehillim / Psalms 96:5). Honor and majesty are before Him (Tehillim / Psalms 96:5-6) that is, the ministering angels are before Him. Therefore, Ascribe unto the Lord, you kindreds of peoples, ascribe unto the Lord glory and strength (Tehillim / Psalms 96:8) in the time to come, for Bring an offering, and come into His courts refers to the occasion spoken of in the verse, Because of Your Temple at Jerusalem will kings bring presents unto You (Tehillim / Psalms 68:30). O worship the Lord (Tehillim / Psalms 96:9) then, as it is written All flesh will come to worship before Me, says the Lord (Isaiah 66:23). On that day, Say among the nations that the Lord reigns (Tehillim / Psalms 96:10), as is written And the Lord will be King over all the earth (Zechariah 14:9). The world also is established (Tehillim / Psalms 96:10), The world will then be established in righteousness. It will not be moved, for then the wicked will not be present in the world. He will judge the peoples equitably. The peoples will be judged by Him in all equity, Only if there be nothing among them to lean upon, will they perish. Then The heavens will be glad, and the earth will rejoice (Tehillim / Psalms 96:11) at the deliverance of Israel. And The field will exult (Tehillim / Psalms 96:12), The fields of Eden will exult in the rejoicing of the righteous.</i></p>
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The midrash speaks of different types of darkness saying “*He rolls forth light out of darkness and darkness out of light.*” The Chassidic rabbis explain the difference between the different forms of darkness in the following way:

1. The classical understanding of darkness is associated with Gehenna in which the darkness behaves as a curtain. For example, when a curtain is drawn across a window it obstructs the sunlight and leaves the room in darkness. This is the illustration of the darkness of Gehenna, where God’s presence is entirely removed. (*Sefer Maamarim Melukat v. 4 page 44; Sefer Haerkim Chabad v. 2 p.582*)
2. The celestial dark on the other hand is a reference to the creation account, it is primordial; it predates all light. When the Lord God chose to reveal himself his glory radiated outwards so that His light would become visible, however, beyond the light of God’s glory was still dark. The idea is that when one is

outside of the light, the glory of God, one finds himself in the darkness, and when looking toward the Lord is looking towards the light. (*Likutei Torah p. Haazinu p. 73a; Sefer HaMaamarim 5666; Sefer Maamarim Melukat v. 2 p. 285. See Lubavitcher Rebbe's footnote to Shaar Hayichud V'haemunah ch. 10 (published in Lessons of Tanya)*)

Therefore, in the homiletic introduction which states, “*He rolls forth light out of darkness and darkness out of light,*” the classical understanding of darkness conceals God’s light, whereas the celestial darkness reveals God’s glory, who He is as contained within the light (righteousness, holiness, and justice, etc). So the light rolling forth out of darkness may be a reference to the Lord God revealing Himself to us, and the darkness out of the light, may be our desire to draw near to Him. These two forms of spiritual darkness, when experienced on the human level, elicit two very different reactions. The classical understanding of darkness is the concealment of light. For the “*new man,*” if he sins, he is abstracted as being in spiritual darkness who yearns for Godliness because his condition craves the light. For the celestial darkness, on man’s level, has a negative spiritual affect in the sense that he is unregenerate, he has not been made new in the Messiah, he has been exposed to this type of darkness for a very long time and does not know the virtues of Godliness (righteousness, holiness, and justice, etc). These concepts sound a lot like what the Apostle Paul was teaching to the Corinthians in his epistles to the Corinthians and John in His epistles (*1, 2, 3 John*).

Note how the midrash draws in these concepts.

All the gods of the nations are things of naught (elilim) (Tehillim / Psalms 96:5). Why are they called elilim? Rabbi Jose said, Because they bring woe (elelay) to those who serve them. Why are they called gillulim? Because like rolls of dung (gelalim), they are unclean. Why are they called pesilim? Because they are hacked out (pesulim), they are mere botches (nifsalim). Why is any god of heathen nations called toebah? Because on account of it a man goes astray (toeh bah). Why are the gods of heathen nations called asabim? Because on their account their worshipers are brought to grief (mitasbim).

The basic rabbinic understanding on the light and the darkness, Israel is in the light because God’s presence dwells in their midst. The nations are in the celestial darkness, they are outside of God’s glory, and so the nations develop their own gods, which leads them into greater levels of darkness and wickedness and ultimately to the darkness that is associated with Gehenna. The midrash speaks of the gods of the nations as אֱלִילִים (idols), as being nothing, as bringing woe, as dung (כגללים), as unfit (פסולים), and as being disqualified (ונפסלים). It is on account of idols the nations go astray, they are not looking towards the light of the Lord God in heaven, and for this they are brought to grief and in the end descend into Gehenna. These false gods keep the nations in darkness, and due to their extended period of being in darkness (from birth), there is no desire to draw towards the light of God’s truth.

The Lord God Almighty on the other hand is described in the following manner:

Honor and majesty are before Him (Tehillim / Psalms 96:5-6) that is, the ministering angels are before Him. Therefore, Ascribe unto the Lord, you kindreds of peoples, ascribe unto the Lord glory and strength (Tehillim / Psalms 96:8) in the time to come, for Bring an offering, and come into His courts refers to the occasion spoken of in the verse, Because of Your Temple at Jerusalem will kings bring presents unto You (Tehillim / Psalms 68:30). O worship the Lord (Tehillim / Psalms 96:9) then, as it is written All flesh will come to worship before Me, says the Lord (Isaiah 66:23). On that day, Say among the nations that the Lord reigns (Tehillim / Psalms 96:10), as is written And the Lord will be King over all the earth (Zechariah 14:9). The world also is established (Tehillim / Psalms 96:10), The world will then be established in righteousness. It will not be moved, for then the wicked will not be present in the world. He will judge the peoples equitably. The peoples will be judged by Him in all

equity, Only if there be nothing among them to lean upon, will they perish.

The midrash speaks of all peoples giving ascribing glory and strength to the Lord God in heaven. The psalms speak of worshiping the Lord, and all peoples (all flesh) will come to worship before the Lord, and it will be said among the nations, the Lord reigns, and the Lord will be King over all the earth and it will be at this time the world will be established in righteousness and at peace. The rabbis say that at this time the wicked will not be present in the world. Midrash Tehillim 96, Part 2 concludes saying, “*Then The heavens will be glad, and the earth will rejoice (Tehillim / Psalms 96:11) at the deliverance of Israel. And The field will exult (Tehillim / Psalms 96:12), The fields of Eden will exult in the rejoicing of the righteous.*” The midrash speaks of a time when there will be peace and the wicked will not be present world wide. This appears to be a messianic expectation of the return of the Lord in power and majesty whereby all the peoples of the earth recognize the authority and power of God. The question is this really occurring? Is the world making a greater progression towards this goal? Is that what we are seeing? What I have been seeing is a progression towards greater and greater wickedness, with gay marriage being approved of and immorality being flaunted publicly.

However, in these last days before the Messiah’s coming, more and more redeemed believers in Yeshua are discovering a new-found love for the Jewish people and the land of Israel. At the same time, more people in the church are awakening to the need to return to the roots of our faith by adhering to a more Torah-centered lifestyle and spiritual walk. Praise the Lord for that! It then follows that some are coming to the fundamental truth the Testimony of Yeshua according to the Torah of God, and that redeemed believers are actually redeemed in Israel and are either biological or “*grafted in*” descendants of Abraham. As such, many people are beginning to see how the promises God made to Abraham and his descendants apply to them in the sense of the necessity of being grafted in to Israel, and not as being something other and separate. This is the differences between realizing who we are in the Messiah and taking hold of, grasping the things of God and integrating them into our lives, taking on a more Jewish approach to serving the Lord in heaven, as opposed to believing we are something wholly different, separate (replacement), and developing our own traditions that stand contrary to the eternality of God’s commands. With these revelations often comes a new found zeal and enthusiasm and so we must be careful not to fall into false teachings in the Hebrew roots movement, and to test everything. The Lord God our Father in heaven is drawing His people to the way, as Yeshua had taught according to the Torah of God. The world does not appear to be progressing towards the righteousness as is described in the Midrash. This would require a work of God at the hand of His Messiah, and this is what is happening on an individual basis. The key is to be prepared for what is ahead and for the return of the Messiah. The way to be prepared is to do the following:

- Repent of sin (Note, sin is breaking the Torah commandments, *1 John 3:4*). Bring your life into conformity to the Torah (*God’s instructions in righteousness as revealed in the Torah and as explained according to the rest of Scripture*) to the greatest degree possible in your daily walk and seek the Lord God in heaven and His Messiah Yeshua for help in doing so. This is the Lord’s desire for us in these last days, see *Revelation 12:17 and 14:12*. Those who do not submit to God’s Word will suffer judgment along with the wicked (*Revelation 18:4*). The return to Torah obedience, will also be helping to fulfill biblical prophecy as both the midrash and the Scriptures speaks of concerning all of the nations ascribing glory, power, honor, praise, and worship to the Lord God of Israel.
- Love the Lord God of Israel and Yeshua the Messiah with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength by keeping his Torah commandments (see *John 14:15, 1 John 2:3-6*). In doing this you will receive the promises of blessing according to the Torah and be a recipient of his divine protection and provision during the hard times to come.
- Recognize that if you are a faithful and blood bought believer in Yeshua the Messiah, you are a part of redeemed Israel (*Ephesians 2:11-19 and Galatians 3:29*), and you are grafted into the olive tree of Israel (*Romans 11:13-24*). Embrace your new identity as a one new man and a son of Abraham!

- Understand how the restoration of Israel in the Land is a necessary precursor to Yeshua’s second coming (see *Acts 1:6-8 and 3:21*). Support Israel and pray for the peace of Jerusalem.
- Ask yourself what you can do to help fulfill Yeshua’s command to gather in the lost sheep of the house of Israel (*Matthew 10:6 and Acts 1:6-8*)?
- Educate yourself according to the Scriptures on what it means to be redeemed as a part of the family of God an Israelite. Start by studying how Yeshua, the disciples, and Paul taught from the Torah and how they were promoting a life of Torah obedience (*Romans 3:31 and 7, Galatians 5*). Then share these truths of your transformation and new found life in the Messiah to as many people as possible.

Let’s Pray!

Heavenly Father,

We ascribe glory, power, and praise to Your Name! Lord we desire to seek and serve You the rest of our lives. In the midst of persecution, Lord help us to have the strength to stand for truth and life, to have faith in Yeshua and a devotion to Your Word. We thank You Lord for Your continued faithfulness to Your promises. Thank You Lord for giving us the faith to believe in Yeshua the Messiah and for always calling our hearts back to You! Please have mercy on us, forgive us for our sins. 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