

ספר תהילים צט | Tehillim / Psalms 99

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Crediting Righteousness to Yourself?

In this week's study from *Tehillim / Psalms 98:1-9*, the Psalm opens saying, א יהוה מלך ירָגְזוּ עַמִּים יֹשֵׁב, *99:1 The Lord reigns, let the peoples tremble; He is enthroned above the cherubim, let the earth shake! (NASB)* In this psalm, David speaks of the authority and power of God, the people trembling, and His dwelling above the cherubim. Why does the psalmist speak of our Father dwelling above the cherubim? David continues saying, ב יהוה בציון גדול וְרָם הוּא עַל-כָּל-הָעַמִּים: ג יודו שְׁמֶךָ גְדוֹל וְנוֹרָא, *99:2 The Lord is great in Zion, And He is exalted above all the peoples. 99:3 Let them praise Your great and awesome name; Holy is He. (NASB)* What does it mean “the Lord is great in Zion?” Why are the people called out to praise His Name? David explains this saying, ד וְעַז מְלֶךְ מִשְׁפָּט אָהֵב אֶתְהָ כּוֹנֵנֵת, *99:4 The strength of the King loves justice; You have established equity; You have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob. (NASB)* Because the Lord brings righteousness, holiness, and justice with Him and give these things to His people. It is for this reason we are called to ו מִשָּׁה וְאַהֲרֹן | בְּכַהֲנָיו וּשְׁמוּאֵל בְּקִרְאֵי שְׁמוֹ קִרְאִים, *99:5 Exalt the Lord our God And worship at His footstool; Holy is He. (NASB)* David continues saying, ז בְּעַמּוּד עָנָן יְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהֵיהֶם שְׁמָרוּ יְעֻדְתֵּי וְחֻק נְתַן-לָמוֹ: *99:6 Moses and Aaron were among His priests, And Samuel was among those who called on His name; They called upon the Lord and He answered them. 99:7 He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud; They kept His testimonies And the statute that He gave them. (NASB)* He speaks of the Torah account of Moshe and Aaron calling upon the name of the Lord, exalting His name. He also speaks of the prophet Samuel calling upon the name of the Lord. In both cases, the Lord answered Moshe, Aaron, and Samuel because they kept His testimonies. What does it mean to keep the Testimony of God? Is this not synonymous to obeying God's Torah? David concludes his psalm saying, ח יהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶתְהָ עֲנִיתָם אֵל נִשְׂא הִיִּיתָ לָהֶם וְנִקַּם עַל-עֲלִילוֹתָם: ט רֹמְמוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לְהָר, *99:8 O Lord our God, You answered them; You were a forgiving God to them, And yet an avenger of their evil deeds. 99:9 Exalt the Lord our God And worship at His holy hill, For holy is the Lord our God. (NASB)* David says the Lord answered in the manner of forgiveness, and it is for these reasons we are to worship the Lord at His holy Hill in Jerusalem.

עברית	Hebrew	ארמי	Aramaic	ελληνικός	Greek
ספר תהלים פרק צט	ספר טוביה פרק צט	ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 99			
א יהוה מלך ירָגְזוּ עַמִּים יֹשֵׁב כְּרוּבִים תְּנוּט הָאָרֶץ: ב יהוה בְּצִיּוֹן גְּדוֹל וְרָם הוּא עַל-כָּל- הָעַמִּים: ג יודו שְׁמֶךָ גְּדוֹל וְנוֹרָא קְדוֹשׁ הוּא: ד וְעַז מְלֶךְ מִשְׁפָּט אָהֵב אֶתְהָ כּוֹנֵנֵת מִשְׁפָּט וְצַדִּיקָה בְּיַעֲקֹב אֶתְהָ עֲשִׂיתָ:	א יהוה מלך יזועון עמיא די שכיי נתיה שריא בני כרוביא יזעזע ארעא: ב יהוה בציון רבא ורמא הוא על כל עממיא: ג יהודון שמך רבא ודחילא קדישא הוא: ד ועור- שניה דמלכא דדינא רחים את את- קינתא תריצותא דינא וצדקתא ביי- עקב את עבדת:	99:1 ψαλμὸς τῷ Δαυιδ ὁ κύριος ἐβασίλευσεν ὀργιζέσθωσαν λαοὶ ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τῶν χερουβιν σαλευθήτω ἡ γῆ 99:2 κύριος ἐν Σιων μέγας καὶ ὑψηλός ἐστιν ἐπὶ πάντα τοὺς λαοὺς 99:3 ἐξομολογησάσθωσαν τῷ ὀνόματί σου τῷ μεγάλῳ ὅτι φοβερόν καὶ ἅγιόν ἐστιν 99:4 καὶ τιμὴ βασιλείως κρίσιν ἀγαπᾷ σὺ ἠτοίμασας εὐθύτητας κρίσιν καὶ δικαιοσύνην ἐν Ἰακωβ σὺ ἐποίησας			

<p>ה רוממו יהוה אלהינו והשתחוו להדם רגליו קדוש הוא: ו משה ואהרן בכהניו ושמואל בקראי שמו קראים אל-יהוה והוא יענם: ז בעמוד ענן ידבר אליהם שִׁמְרוּ עֲדֹתָיו וְחַק נִתֵּן-לָמוֹ: ח יהוה אלהינו אתה ענייתם אל נשאת הַיִּתְּ לָהֶם וְנִקְּם עַל-עֲלִילוֹתָם: ט רוממו יהוה אלהינו והשתחוו להר קדשו כִּי-קָדוֹשׁ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ:</p>	<p>ה שבחו קדם יהוה אלהנא וסגידו לבית מקדשיה קדיש הוא: ו משה ואהרן בכהנוי דמסרו נפשהון מטול עמא דיהוה ושמואל אמטולהון צלי קדם יהוה היך אבהת עלמא דצלו בשמיה מצלין קדם יהוה והוא עני יתהון: ז בעמוד ענני יקרא ממליל עמהון נטרו פיקודתא סהידותיה וקיים דיהב להון: ח יהוה אלהנא את עניית יתהון להון אלהא שביק הויתא לעמך אמטולהון ומיתפרע על עובדיהון: ט שבחו קדם יהוה אלהנא וסגידו לטור בית מקדשיה ארום קדיש יהוה אלהנא:</p>	<p>99:5 ὑψοῦτε κύριον τὸν θεὸν ἡμῶν καὶ προσκυνεῖτε τῷ ὑποποδίῳ τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ ὅτι ἅγιός ἐστιν 99:6 Μωσῆς καὶ Ααρων ἐν τοῖς ἱερεῦσιν αὐτοῦ καὶ Σαμουηλ ἐν τοῖς ἐπικαλουμένοις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐπεκαλοῦντο τὸν κύριον καὶ αὐτὸς ἐπήκουσεν αὐτῶν 99:7 ἐν στύλῳ νεφέλης ἐλάλει πρὸς αὐτοῦς ἐφύλασσον τὰ μαρτύρια αὐτοῦ καὶ τὰ προστάγματα ἃ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς 99:8 κύριε ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν σὺ ἐπήκουες αὐτῶν ὁ θεὸς σὺ εὐίλατος ἐγίνου αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐκδικῶν ἐπὶ πάντα τὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα αὐτῶν 99:9 ὑψοῦτε κύριον τὸν θεὸν ἡμῶν καὶ προσκυνεῖτε εἰς ὄρος ἅγιον αὐτοῦ ὅτι ἅγιος κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν</p>
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<p>Tehillim / Psalms 99 99:1 The Lord reigns, let the peoples tremble; He is enthroned above the cherubim, let the earth shake! 99:2 The Lord is great in Zion, And He is exalted above all the peoples. 99:3 Let them praise Your great and awesome name; Holy is He. 99:4 The strength of the King loves justice; You have established equity; You have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob. 99:5 Exalt the Lord our God And worship at His footstool; Holy is He. 99:6 Moses and Aaron were among His priests, And Samuel was among those who called on His name; They called upon the Lord and He answered them. 99:7 He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud; They kept His testimonies And the statute that He gave them. 99:8 O Lord our God, You answered them; You were a forgiving God to them, And yet an avenger of their evil deeds. 99:9 Exalt the Lord our God And worship at His holy hill, For holy is the Lord our God. (NASB)</p>	<p>Toviyah / Psalms 99 99:1 The Lord reigns, the peoples will tremble; he whose presence abides among the cherubim will shake the earth. 99:2 The Lord is great in Zion; and he is high over all the Gentiles. 99:3 They will confess his name, great and fearful; he is holy. 99:4 And you love the strength of the king of justice; you have established integrity; you have made justice and righteousness in Jacob. 99:5 Sing praise in the presence of the Lord our God, and bow down towards his sanctuary; he is holy. 99:6 Moses and Aaron are among his priests who gave their life for the people of the Lord, and Samuel prayed for them before the Lord, like the fathers of old, who prayed in his name; they would pray in his presence and he would answer them. 99:7 In the pillar of glorious clouds he would speak with them; they kept the commandments [of] his testimony, and the covenant that he gave to them. 99:8 O Lord our God, you answered them; you were a forgiving God for your people for their sake, and take vengeance for their deeds. 99:9 Sing praise in the presence of the Lord our God, and bow down towards the mount of his sanctuary, for the Lord our God is holy. (EMC)</p>	<p>Psalmoi / Psalms 99 A Psalm of David. 99:1 The Lord reigns; let the people rage; it is he that sits upon the cherubs, let the earth be moved. 99:2 The Lord is great in Sion, and is high over all the people. 99:3 Let them give thanks to thy great name; for it is terrible and holy. 99:4 And the king's honor loves judgment; thou hast prepared equity, thou hast wrought judgment and justice in Jacob. 99:5 Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy. 99:6 Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name; they called upon the Lord, and he heard them. 99:7 He spoke to them in a pillar of cloud; they kept his testimonies, and the ordinances which he gave them. 99:8 O Lord our God, thou heardest them; O God, thou becamest propitious to them, though thou didst take vengeance on all their devices. 99:9 Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his holy mountain; for the Lord our God is holy. (LXX)</p>
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In this week's study from *Tehillim / Psalms 98:1-9*, the Psalm opens saying, אִיְהוָה מֶלֶךְ יִרְגְּזוּ עַמִּים יִשָּׁב : 99:1 *The Lord reigns, let the peoples tremble; He is enthroned above the cherubim, let the earth shake! (NASB)* In this psalm, David speaks of the authority and power of God, the people trembling, and His dwelling above the cherubim. Why does the psalmist speak of our Father dwelling above the cherubim? There are various references in the Scriptures that speak of the Lord who dwells above the cherubim, such as what we find in *Shemot / Exodus 25:22, and Isaiah 37:16, and 40:22.*

Shemot / Exodus 25:22

25:22 "There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel. (NASB)

Isaiah 37:16

37:16 "O LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, who is enthroned above the cherubim, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. (NASB)

Isaiah 40:22

40:22 It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. (NASB)

According to the Torah, God's presence, is located between the two cherubim over the mercy seat. There the Lord God would meet with His people, "to speak there unto them" (*Shemot / Exodus 29:42*). The special seat of the Divine presence was to be the empty space above the mercy seat, between the two cherubim, and above the ark of the covenant. This may be where David received his Torah based understanding on the Lord who reigns, the peoples tremble, and the Lord as being enthroned above the cherubim. Isaiah states something similar, of the Lord being enthroned above the cherubim, and in *Isaiah 40:22*, parallels the earth and the tent of the heavens as being a dwelling place, which alludes to the Ohel Moed. The word cherubim is described in two books of the Tanach, Bereshit / Genesis and Ezekiel. In *Bereshit / Genesis 3:24* the cherubim guard the Garden of Eden, following Adam and Eve's banishment from the Garden, and are described as holding flaming swords. Ezekiel speaks of the cherubim in the following way.

Ezekiel 1:1-14

1:1 Now it came about in the thirtieth year; on the fifth day of the fourth month, while I was by the river Chebar among the exiles, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God. 1:2 (On the fifth of the month in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's exile, 1:3 the word of the Lord came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and there the hand of the Lord came upon him.) 1:4 As I looked, behold, a storm wind was coming from the north, a great cloud with fire flashing forth continually and a bright light around it, and in its midst something like glowing metal in the midst of the fire. 1:5 Within it there were figures resembling four living beings. And this was their appearance: they had human form, 1:6 Each of them had four faces and four wings. 1:7 Their legs were straight and their feet were like a calf's hoof, and they gleamed like burnished bronze. 1:8 Under their wings on their four sides were human hands. As for the faces and wings of the four of them, 1:9 their wings touched one another; their faces did not turn when they moved, each went straight forward. 1:10 As for the form of their faces, each had the face of a man; all four had the face of a lion on the right and the face of a bull on the left, and all four had the face of an eagle. 1:11 Such were their faces. Their wings were spread out above; each had two touching another being, and two covering their bodies. 1:12 And each went straight

forward; wherever the spirit was about to go, they would go, without turning as they went. 1:13 In the midst of the living beings there was something that looked like burning coals of fire, like torches darting back and forth among the living beings. The fire was bright, and lightning was flashing from the fire. 1:14 And the living beings ran to and fro like bolts of lightning. (NASB)

Ezekiel 1:22-24

1:22 Now over the heads of the living beings there was something like an expanse, like the awesome gleam of crystal, spread out over their heads. 1:23 Under the expanse their wings were stretched out straight, one toward the other; each one also had two wings covering its body on the one side and on the other. 1:24 I also heard the sound of their wings like the sound of abundant waters as they went, like the voice of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of an army camp; whenever they stood still, they dropped their wings. (NASB)

Ezekiel 10:3-8

10:3 Now the cherubim were standing on the right side of the temple when the man entered, and the cloud filled the inner court. 10:4 Then the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub to the threshold of the temple, and the temple was filled with the cloud and the court was filled with the brightness of the glory of the Lord. 10:5 Moreover, the sound of the wings of the cherubim was heard as far as the outer court, like the voice of God Almighty when He speaks. 10:6 It came about when He commanded the man clothed in linen, saying, 'Take fire from between the whirling wheels, from between the cherubim,' he entered and stood beside a wheel. 10:7 Then the cherub stretched out his hand from between the cherubim to the fire which was between the cherubim, took some and put it into the hands of the one clothed in linen, who took it and went out. 10:8 The cherubim appeared to have the form of a man's hand under their wings. (NASB)

Ezekiel 10:12, 14, 20-22

10:12 Their whole body, their backs, their hands, their wings and the wheels were full of eyes all around, the wheels belonging to all four of them. (NASB)

10:14 And each one had four faces. The first face was the face of a cherub, the second face was the face of a man, the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle. (NASB)

10:20 These are the living beings that I saw beneath the God of Israel by the river Chebar; so I knew that they were cherubim. 10:21 Each one had four faces and each one four wings, and beneath their wings was the form of human hands. 10:22 As for the likeness of their faces, they were the same faces whose appearance I had seen by the river Chebar. Each one went straight ahead. (NASB)

Ezekiel describes the cherubim as being in the presence and glory of God. Ezekiel's vision describes the cherubim as having six wings, and they function as part of holding up the temple in heaven. The text describes the glory of God as going up from the cherubim. *Ezekiel 10:20* describes the cherubim as being beneath the Lord in heaven, which suggests that the Lord is above all, the Lord is the one to be worshiped and praised, all things, everything takes second seat, a position below the Lord God our Father in heaven.

The Talmud Bava Batra 99a describes the cherubim on the kepret (הַכְּפֵרֶת) as being able to move according to the obedience of the Children of Israel.

Talmud Bava Batra 99a

But in another verse (*II Chronicles 3:13*) it says, "they faced [the walls of] the room"? When

the people of Israel fulfilled God's will, the cherubim would face each other; and when the people of Israel did not fulfill God's will, the cherubim would face the walls of the room.

While trying to understand what is meant by the cherubim facing each other where at times they faced the walls, depending upon the people's sins, think of the times when you were able to face someone else you were close to, and times when you needed to face away. What allows us to "face" someone? Companionship, peace, love, etc. What causes us to turn away? Shame causes us to turn our faces away from one another. In a similar manner, the Talmud describes the cherubim taking this approach, as being ashamed and facing away from one another when the people sin. So when the people sinned and the cherubim faced away from one another, they did not function on the keporet in the fashion the Lord wanted, and so the presence of God leaves. When the people repent and turn from their sin, the cherubim are said to turn back facing one another, and the presence of God returns.

Rambam's commentary the Guide for the Perplexed has the following to say concerning the Ezekiel account of the cherubim.

Guide for the Perplexed Part 3 1:1

(1) IT is well known that there are men whose face is like that of other animals thus the face of some person is like that of a lion, that of another person like that of an ox, and so on: and man's face is described according as the form of his face resembles the form of the face of other animals. By the expressions, "the face of an ox," "the face of a lion," "the face of an eagle" (Ezek, 1:10), the prophet describes a human face inclining towards the forms of these various species. This interpretation can be supported by two proofs. First, the prophet says of the Hayyot in general that "their appearance is this, they have the form of man" (ver. 5), and then in describing each of the Hayyot he attributes to them the face of a man, that of an ox, that of a lion, and that of an eagle. Secondly, in the second description of the Chariot, which is intended as a supplement to the first, the prophet says, Each hath four faces; the one is the face of a cherub, the second a man's face, the third a lion's face, and the fourth that of an eagle (ibid. x. W. He thus clearly indicates that the terms "the face of an ox" and "the face of a cherub" are identical. But cherub designates "a youth." By analogy we explain the two other terms--"the face of a lion" and "the face of an eagle" in the same manner. "The face of the ox" has been singled out on account of the etymology of the Hebrew term shor (ox), as has been indicated by me. It is impossible to assume that this second description refers to the perception of another prophetic vision, because it concludes thus: "This is the Hayyah which I saw at the river Chebar" (ibid. ver. 15). What we intended to explain is now clear:

(א) ידוע שמבני אדם - אנשים שצורת פניהם דומה לצורת אחד משאר בעלי החיים - עד שתראה איש כאילו פניו דומים לפני אריה ואחר כאילו פניו דומים לפני השור וכיוצא בהם; וכפי אלו הצורות הנוטות אל צורות פני בעלי החיים מכונים בני אדם. כן מה שאמר 'פני שור' ופני אריה ופני נשר' והם כולם 'פני אדם' נוטות אל אלו הצורות של אלו המינים. ויש לך בזה שתי ראיות האחת מהן - אמרו ב'חיות' בכלל "וזה מראיהן - דמות אדם להנה" ואחר כך תאר כל 'חיה' מהן שיש לה 'פני אדם' ופני נשר ופני אריה ופני שור'; והראיה השנית - מה שבאר ב'מרכבה' השנית אשר הביא אותה לבאר ענינים שלא נזכרו ב'מרכבה' הראשונה אמר ב'מרכבה' השנית "וארבעה פנים לאחד פני האחד פני הכרוב ופני השני פני אדם והשלישי פני אריה והרביעי פני נשר" - הנה באר שמה שאמר עליו 'פני שור' הוא 'פני הררוב' ו'כרוב' הוא הצעיר לימים מבני אדם - והוא ההקש בשני הפנים הנשארים; ואמנם לא אמר מלת 'פני שור' - להעיר גם כן מצד קצת גזרה כמו שרמזנו בו. ואי אפשר שיאמר אולי זאת השגת צורות אחרות? - מפני שהוא אמר בסוף זה הסיפור השני "היא (החיה אשר ראיתי תחת אלוקי ישראל בנהר כבר". כבר התבאר מה שהחילונו לבאר:

Rambam states that the cherubim according to Ezekiel had the appearance of a man, but their faces resem-

bled a particular animal. These cherubim incline towards the appearance of a particular animal in the sense that there is a particular attribute the vision is attempting to ascribe to each of the four cherubim that were seen in the vision. The ox and the lion have strength and authority. The eagle soars high above, and the man was created as the crown of God's creation having rule over all the living creatures. The description then of the glory of God ascending from the cherubim into the throne room, if we are able to find a parallel here in the context of these angels, created in the image of God, in the form of a man, but having a likeness of the ox, lion, eagle, and man, suggest the manner in which these angles live, having been given power from on high. The ox represents strength, the lion authority, the eagle in the heights, and man as the crown of God's creation. This seems to be an allusion to what the Lord has done for man, creating us in His image, with authority and power over this earth, when we study Torah and apply it to our lives, we sore above the nations, and yet we are men who were designed to live out our lives bringing glory to God. The Lord has endowed these angels with great power, just as He has enabled us giving us the power to make wealth (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 8:18*), we recognize the source of our abilities and give the credit to the Lord in heaven. This is the manner in which the cherubim functioned, they are creatures of great power and authority, and yet their entire lives are directed to the lifting up and bringing glory, honor, and praise unto the Lord God our Father in heaven. In a similar manner, we too are to bring glory and honor and praise unto the Lord God our Father in heaven by the way we live our lives.

David continues in his psalm saying, בִּיהוָה בְּצִיּוֹן גָּדוֹל יְרֵם הוּא עַל-כָּל-הָעַמִּים: ג יוֹדוּ שְׁמֶךָ גָּדוֹל וְנוֹרָא :
 99:2 *The Lord is great in Zion, And He is exalted above all the peoples.* 99:3 *Let them praise Your great and awesome name; Holy is He.* (NASB) What does it mean “*the Lord is great in Zion?*” Why are the people called out to praise His Name? Radak (רדק) (Rabbi David Kimhi, 1160–1235 AD), was a medieval rabbi, biblical commentator, philosopher, and grammarian. He has the following to say concerning the Lord being great in Zion.

Radak on Psalms 99:2 Part 1

The Lord is great in Zion – Then He will be great in Zion because there He will be magnified above all the nations when He executes judgment on the wicked. In the midrash Shachar Tov it says: The Lord is great in Zion, when He returns His Presence to Zion, in that moment He is great.

Note how Radak believes the phrase “*The Lord is great in Zion*” is referring to His being glorified in Zion above the nations in the sense that He brings judgment upon the wicked. A midrash on this phrase states that the returning of His presence to Zion is what makes Him great. Why do you think that is? The reason may be that the Lord is actively working in men's hearts to turn from sin and walk in His ways. His presence is dependent upon our seeking Him and His ways and His presence returning to Zion suggests Israel has repented and turned from her sinful ways and are seeking the Lord for His help. Radak continues saying the following:

Radak on Psalms 87:2 Part 1

The Lord loves the gates of Zion – It says ‘gates’ because the elders and the wise sit in the gates, as it says “...up to the gate, to the elders...” (Deuteronomy 25:7) and so too in the words of Boaz which describe the elders who were at the gate. (Ruth 4:11) Even though God loves all of the dwelling places of Yaakov, as it says “How goodly are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel!” (Numbers 24:6) nevertheless He loves the gates of Zion more because there the wise are occupied with the service of God.

Radak states that the greatness of God in Zion is related to the elders who sit at the gates of Zion. Those who sit at the gates are concerned with what is going on in the city. Looking at the word “*gates*” (πύλαι) in Hebrew שַׁעֲרִים. In the Tanach, the word “*gates*” is used in various ways, (i) gates function as a defense against

the enemy, (ii) the word gate may refer to an entire city and to the rulers or army of a city. In *Deuteronomy 16:5* it says ‘You are not allowed to sacrifice the Passover in any of your towns which the Lord your God is giving you; (NASB, הָ לֹא תוּכַל לְזַבֵּחַ אֶת-הַפֶּסַח בְּאַחַד שַׁעְרֵי אֲשֶׁר-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לָךְ; where “gates” is translated as “towns” in the commandment to not sacrifice the Passover in any of your towns which the Lord God is giving you. (*Deuteronomy 17:2* shows a similar use). The City Gate is a Place of Power and Authority!

Parashat Vayishlach (*Bereshit / Genesis 32:3-36:43*) offers some additional insights into the importance of the city gates. The Lord gives Jacob a new name “Israel” and Jacob returns and settles in Eretz Canaan. While in the land, Jacob settles down near the city of shechem (*Bereshit / Genesis 33:18*). While dwelling near Shechem, according to the Scriptures, Shechem the son of Khamor sees Dina, the daughter of Jacob, and desires to take her as a wife. א וַתֵּצֵא דִינָה בִת-לֵאָה אֲשֶׁר יִלְדָה לְיַעֲקֹב לְרָאוֹת בְּכַנּוֹת הָאָרֶץ: ב וַיֵּרָא אֹתָהּ שָׁכֵם בֶּן-חַמּוֹר הַחִוִּי נָשִׂיא הָאָרֶץ וַיִּקַּח אֹתָהּ וַיִּשְׁכַּב אִתָּהּ וַיַּעֲנֶנָּה: ג וַתִּדְבַק נַפְשׁוֹ בְּדִינָה בִת-יַעֲקֹב וַיֵּאָהֵב אֶת-הַנְּעָר וַיְדַבֵּר עִל-לֵב הַנְּעָר: ד וַיֹּאמֶר שָׁכֵם אֶל-חַמּוֹר אָבִיו לֵאמֹר קַח-לִי אֶת-הַיְלָדָה הַזֹּאת לְאִשָּׁה: ה וַיַּעֲקֹב שָׁמַע פִּי טְמֵא אֶת-דִּינָה בִתּוֹ וּבְנֵיו הָיוּ אֶת-מִקְנֵהוּ בַשָּׂדֶה וְהִחְרַשׁ יַעֲקֹב עַד-בָּאָם: ו וַיֵּצֵא חַמּוֹר אָבִי-שָׁכֵם אֶל-יַעֲקֹב לְדַבֵּר אִתּוֹ: ז וּבְנֵי יַעֲקֹב בָּאוּ מִן-הַשָּׂדֶה פְּשָׁמָעַם וַיִּתְעַצְבוּ הַגְּאֻנָּשִׁים וַיַּחֲרֻקוּ לָהֶם מָאֵד כִּי נָבְלָה עָשָׂה בִישָׁרְאֵל לְשָׁכֵם אֶת-בִּת-יַעֲקֹב Now Dinah וְכֵן לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה: ח וַיְדַבֵּר חַמּוֹר אִתָּם לֵאמֹר שָׁכֵם בְּנֵי חַשְׁקָה נַפְשׁוֹ בְּבַתְּכֶם תָּנוּ נָא אֹתָהּ לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה: 34:1 the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the daughters of the land. 34:2 When Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, he took her and lay with her by force. 34:3 He was deeply attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the girl and spoke tenderly to her. 34:4 So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, ‘Get me this young girl for a wife.’ 34:5 Now Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter; but his sons were with his livestock in the field, so Jacob kept silent until they came in. 34:6 Then Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him. 34:7 Now the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it; and the men were grieved, and they were very angry because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob’s daughter, for such a thing ought not to be done. 34:8 But Hamor spoke with them, saying, ‘The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter; please give her to him in marriage. (NASB) The sons of Jacob tell Shechem and Khamor that if they are circumcised, they will exchange their sons and daughters and they will be one people. (*Bereshit / Genesis 34:13-16*) Hearing this, Khamor and his son Shechem go to the “gate of the city” and tell the men of the city what they want to do, to be circumcised. Notice how this may be paralleled to conversion and circumcision and entering into the kingdom of heaven. Abraham was giving the promises of God prior to being circumcised, he believed by faith, and then lived out his life according to the mitzvot and chukim of God. On the other hand, these men at Shechem were involving themselves in a conversion ritual in order to become a part of Israel, or to become “acceptable” so they could take part in the blessing, but more likely their motivations were driven by greed and covetousness. So the people of Shechem died because of their sins, their lack of faith, and their reliance upon a conversion ritual to enter into the family of God. This was what the Apostle were afraid would happen with the new gentile believers in *Acts 15*.

It is then written that all of the city agreed (*Bereshit / Genesis 34:24-26*) desiring to acquire all of Israel’s wealth.

ספר בראשית פרק לד	<i>Bereshit / Genesis 34:24-26</i>
<p>כד וַיִּשְׁמָעוּ אֶל-חַמּוֹר וְאֶל-שָׁכֵם בְּנוֹ כָּל-יִצְחָאי שְׁעַר עִירוֹ וַיִּמְלּוּ כָּל-זָכָר כָּל-יִצְחָאי שְׁעַר עִירוֹ: כה וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי בְהִיּוֹתָם פָּאֵ-בַיִם וַיִּקְחוּ שְׁנֵי-בְנֵי-יַעֲקֹב שְׁמֹעוֹן וְלֵוִי אֲחֵי דִינָה אִישׁ חָרְבוּ וַיָּבֵאוּ עַל-הָעִיר בָּטַח וַיַּהַרְגוּ כָּל-זָכָר: כו וְאֶת-חַמּוֹר וְאֶת-שָׁכֵם בְּנוֹ הָרְגוּ לְפִי-חֶרֶב וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת-דִּינָה מִבֵּית שָׁכֵם וַיֵּצְאוּ:</p>	<p>34:24 All who went out of the gate of his city listened to Hamor and to his son Shechem, and every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city. 34:25 Now it came about on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of Jacob’s sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brothers, each took his sword and came upon the city unawares, and killed every male. 34:26 They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem’s house, and went forth. (NASB)</p>

Based upon this context, the gate of the city was known biblically as a place of power. The one who controls the gate is the one who has the power to allow someone in or out of the city. Sitting at the gates enabled one to know everything that was going on in the city, especially that of a walled city. In God's Kingdom, the gate is the only way whereby we gain access to the Lord. Yeshua said in *John 10:1* "I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. (NIV) Yeshua then states in *John 10:9* I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. (NIV) and in *John 14:6* Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (NIV) Note that these men of Shechem were following this gate analogy but were trusting in their ritual conversion as opposed to trusting in the Lord God of Israel, and in the context of the NT in Yeshua the Messiah. In Parashat Vayishlach, all of the men who entered in and went out through the gate of the city needed to be circumcised according to the agreement. Similarly today, we must have circumcised hearts in order to enter in through the gates to the Kingdom of Heaven. This is accomplished by faith in God's gate keeper, Yeshua the Messiah! These Scriptures direct us to the true gate, the door, the way, the truth, and the life, the only way to the Lord our Father who is in heaven. This is the significance of Radak's statement of the Lord who loves the gates of Zion because of the elders and the wise who sit in the place of authority, the righteous who seek the counsel of the Lord for their judgments. Note again, the righteous seek the counsel of God and trust in Him, whereas the unrighteous trust in themselves or in some deed which they count to themselves as merit.

The book of *Ruth 3:11* says 'Now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you ask, for all my people in the *city* know that you are a woman of excellence. (NASB, תַּיִתּוּמָה בְּתִי אֶל-תִּירְאִי כֹל אֲשֶׁר-תֹּאמְרִי, יֵא וְעָתָה בְּתִי אֶל-תִּירְאִי כֹל אֲשֶׁר-תֹּאמְרִי) equating "gate" with the "city." *Isaiah 14:31* also equates "gate" with "city." In these various instances the noun is used as a substitute for something with which it is closely associated. Take for example *Tehillim / Psalms 24:7* that states *24:7 Lift up your heads, O gates, And be lifted up, O ancient doors, That the King of glory may come in!* (NASB, זָאוּ שַׁעְרֵיךָ | רֹאשֵׁיכֶם וְהִנְשְׂאוּ, וְזָאוּ שַׁעְרֵיכֶם) whereas the LXX says "lift up your gates, O rulers." Here the rulers of the city control the gates and therefore the gates refer to the city. The power and protection of the city. Keeping this in mind, *Judges 16:1-3* has the following to say:

Judges 16:1-3

16:1 Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her. 16:2 When it was told to the Gazites, saying, 'Samson has come here,' they surrounded the place and lay in wait for him all night at the gate of the city. And they kept silent all night, saying, 'Let us wait until the morning light, then we will kill him.' 16:3 Now Samson lay until midnight, and at midnight he arose and took hold of the doors of the city gate and the two posts and pulled them up along with the bars; then he put them on his shoulders and carried them up to the top of the mountain which is opposite Hebron. (NASB)

According to *Judges 16:1-3* the men of the city were laying in wait for Samson to kill him at the gate of the city which illustrates the strength of the city. Samson then rose up at midnight and took the city gate and carried them to the top of the mountain. Samson was making a show of his strength and the empowering of God and how their strength was nothing compared to the Lord's power.

Radak also says the following:

Radak on Psalms 87:3 Part 1

Glorious things – This means glorious attributes, and is speaking of those that inhabit you. Or its explanation is that glorious virtues will be attributed to you, that you are elevated over all lands in many things. The settled world is divided into seven portions, and Jerusalem is in the center portion, which is in the center of the civilized world. Thus it says "...dwelling on the navel of the earth." (Ezekiel 38:12) Therefore its air is good, mingled from all airs, good for the health of the body and wisdom as it says "The fairest of branches, the joy of the

entire earth...” (Psalms 48:3) and our Sages said “the air of the land of Israel makes one wise.” (Baba Batra 158b)

Note how Radak connects the glorious things to those who inhabit the city. He speaks of the glorious virtues which are attributed to the people who are the sons of God by the way the Lord has worked in their lives and how they live their lives for the Lord God of Israel. This has the effect of elevating the people above the nations. Jerusalem is considered at the center of the civilized world because of the attributes of God and His ways (the Torah). Men do not run amok with wickedness but are commanded to be good to one another, to help a brother, and to love their neighbor and God. It is for these things the Lord is praised, and we are called to give praise unto the Lord God in heaven because of what He has done and who He is.

ד וְעַז מְלֶךְ מִשְׁפָּט אָהֵב אֶת־הַ כּוֹנֵנֶת מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל מִשְׁפָּט וְצִדְקָה | אֶת־הַ עָשִׂיתָ : 99:4 *The strength of the King loves justice; You have established equity; You have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob. (NASB)* Notice the psalmist writes עָשִׂיתָ אֶת־הַ saying “you have done” as a reference to the Lord causing righteousness and justice to be found in Israel. Because the Lord brings righteousness, holiness, and justice with Him and give these things to His people. It is for this reason we are called to ה רוממו יהוה אלהינו והשתחויו להדם רגליו קדוש הוא : 99:5 *Exalt the Lord our God And worship at His footstool; Holy is He. (NASB)* The Aramaic Targum states, ד ועושניה דמלכא דינא רחיים את, אתקינתא תריצותא דינא וצדקתא ביעקב את עבדת: ה שבחו קדם יהוה אלהנא וסגידו לבית מקדשיה קדיש הוא: 99:4 *And you love the strength of the king of justice; you have established integrity; you have made justice and righteousness in Jacob. 99:5 Sing praise in the presence of the Lord our God, and bow down towards his sanctuary; he is holy. (EMC)* The rabbis translate the MT to say the Lord makes justice and righteousness in Israel, and we sing in the presence of the Lord bowing towards His sanctuary, which is considered synonymous to רגליו להדם רגליו bowing down at his footstool.

ו מִשֶּׁה וְאַהֲרֹן | בְּכֹהֲנָיו וְשִׁמְוֵאל בְּקִרְאֵי שְׁמוֹ קְרָאִים אֶל־יְהוָה וְהוּא יַעֲנֵם: ז בְּעֵמֹד, 99:6 *Moses and Aaron were among His priests, And Samuel was among those who called on His name; They called upon the Lord and He answered them. 99:7 He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud; They kept His testimonies And the statute that He gave them. (NASB)* He speaks of the Torah account of Moshe and Aaron calling upon the name of the Lord, exalting His name. Note how the Targum translates this verse to say, ו משה ואהרן בכהנוי דמסרו נפשהון מטול עמא דיהוה ושמואל אמטולהון, צלי קדם יהוה היך אבהת עלמא דצלו בשמיה מצלין קדם יהוה והוא עני יתהון: ז בעמוד ענני יקרא ממליל עמהון: 99:6 *Moses and Aaron are among his priests who gave their life for the people of the Lord, and Samuel prayed for them before the Lord, like the fathers of old, who prayed in his name; they would pray in his presence and he would answer them. 99:7 In the pillar of glorious clouds he would speak with them; they kept the commandments [off] his testimony, and the covenant that he gave to them. (EMC)* The Targum translates Moshe and Aaron giving their lives for the people. What does that mean? The classical commentators have the following to say concerning the meaning of Moshe and Aaron giving their lives for the people.

Akeidat Yitzchak 88:14

Our conduct vis a vis G'd is based on the very same principles. Some people expect G'd to do their bidding, relying on their merit and presenting their claim to G'd. Once these merits have been exhausted, they appear before G'd pleading their case through prayer. Concerning these two groups of people, the Psalmist says “Moses and Aaron of His priests, and Samuel who called on His name,” meaning the former have deeds to their credit, the latter employed the venue of prayer. (Psalms 99:6)

Akeidat Yitzchak states that there are certain principles of the faith that people use to get the Lord to do their bidding. These principles he is speaking of is related to living and striving for righteousness, which is

credited as merit in the sense that by doing what is right, the Lord has no reason to turn away from answering one's prayer. Moshe and Aaron are said to have this kind of credit to their account going before the Lord on behalf of the people in prayer. Shney Lichot explains further the meaning of these verses.

Shney Luchot HaBrit Korach Torah Ohr 71

I have explained already that these three virtues have to be practiced both vis-a-vis G'd and vis-a-vis man. This is the meaning of ומצא חן ושכל טוב בעיני אלוקים ואדם, "and you will find favor and high esteem in the eyes of G'd and man" (Proverbs 3:4). This is what is meant that Samuel was טוב עם אלוקים ועם אנשים, that Samuel was "good to G'd and to men." This also explains what זרע אנ"י meant when she prayed to G'd that He should grant her שים, which our sages explained to mean that she asked for a son who would combine within himself the virtues of Moses and Aaron (Samuel I 1:11). We also find that Moses and Aaron are compared to Samuel in Psalms 99:6 "Moses and Aaron among His priests and Samuel amongst those who call on His name, and He answers them."

Sheny Lichot states that there are virtues that are to be practiced by both the Lord God in heaven and by man. The practice of righteousness on God's behalf is connected to His mercy, and to the Psalm saying that the Lord will make righteousness and justice to prevail in Israel. These virtues are given to man, and then the man is to have faith in the God of Israel and walk in His ways based on his faith and practice righteous living.

Sforno on Deuteronomy 32:3:1

אקרא 'כי שם ה' אקרא, If this is as I said, then you Israel who have received these words of wisdom, will appreciate that the thrust of my address is a prayer; a prayer that all of us, including myself, will experience the ultimate redemption after the last exile. [Moses includes this in his preamble in order to make sure that his listeners will not fail to see the forest by concentrating too much on the individual trees. Ed.] Our author first proceeds to quote examples of such formulations as Moses uses here meaning prayer. We find in Lamentations 3:55 קראתי 'שמך ה' מבור תחתיות, "I have called on Your Name from the depths of the Pit." Clearly, Jeremiah refers to his prayer. We read in Psalms 99:6 concerning the trio of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, that they were known as יענם וקראי שמו והוא יענם, "that whenever they prayed to G'd He would respond to them favorably." Moses therefore tells the people: "when I pray for the in-gathering of the exiles I want G'd to orchestrate this so that it is like the eagle rousing his young and carrying them to a new destination on the back of his wings." (verse 11) Moses continues, focusing in his prayer on the arrival of the Messiah by saying 'ה' בדרך ינחנו, G'd will do this all on His own, without anyone's assistance (verse 23). At the very end of his shirah, (verse 43) he exclaims 'ה' הרנינו גויים עמו, which is equivalent to the instruction in our verse here of 'ה' גודל לאלוקינו, render glory to our G'd.

Sforno opens with the words 'כי שם ה' אקרא "I will call upon the name of the Lord" connecting this to receiving the words of wisdom (Torah) and the redemption of His people from exile. The redemption of God is based upon the Lord God of Israel and not upon the people, this is described as Moshe and Aaron going before the Lord in prayer saying, "when I pray for the in-gathering of the exiles I want G'd to orchestrate this so that it is like the eagle rousing his young and carrying them to a new destination on the back of his wings." Both Moshe and Aaron go before the Lord with their own lives in their hands and seek the counsel of God on behalf the people. Sforno states "Moses continues, focusing in his prayer on the arrival of the Messiah by saying 'ה' בדרך ינחנו, G'd will do this all on His own, without anyone's assistance (verse 23)." Salvation and redemption coming at the hand of the Messiah is a function of the Lord God alone. The Lord

answered their prayers, and it is for this reason glory and praise are rendered unto the Lord.

Rashi on Numbers 16:7:1

לוי רב לכם בני לוי means, “It is a great (an important) thing that I have told you, ye sons of Levi”). But were they not fools in that although he so sternly warned them they nevertheless undertook to offer! They, however, sinned against their own souls (i.e., they were regardless of their lives) as it is said, (17:3) “the censers of these sinners against their souls”. — But Korah who certainly was a clever (lit., open-eyed) man, what reason had he to commit this folly? His mind’s eye misled him. He saw by prophetic vision a line of great men (more lit., a great chain) descending from him, amongst them the prophet Samuel who was equal in importance to Moses and Aaron together (cf. Psalms 99:6 *בקרואי* משה ואהרן בכהניו ושמואל בקראי 6), and he said to himself, “On his account I shall escape the punishment”. And he further saw twenty-four Mishmars (shifts of Levites who formed the Temple Choir) arising among his grand-children, all of them prophesying by the Holy Spirit, — as it is said, (I Chronicles 25:5) “All these (prominent musicians) were sons of Heiman” (Heiman was a descendant of Korah; cf. I Chronicles 6:18—23). — He said, “Is it possible that all this dignity is to arise from me and I shall remain silent (be myself of no importance)?” On this account he joined the others in order to attain to that prerogative, because he had indeed heard from the mouth of Moses that all else of them would perish and one would escape: “He whom the Lord will choose will be holy”. He mistakenly applied this to himself. But he had not seen correctly, for his sons repented of their rebellious attitude and therefore did not die at that time (cf. Numbers 26:11), and it was from them that Samuel and the Levitical singers were descended. Moses, however, foresaw this. *Tanchuma*.

Rashi contrasts sin to the righteousness of God. Men credit to themselves righteousness by their deeds, and mislead themselves to believe the Lord will work to their benefit because of their deeds. Rashi says the correct perspective is to rely upon the Lord for the accreditation of righteousness. Paul agrees saying in *Romans 4:24* but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness--for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. (NIV) We believe in our Father in heaven, the Lord God of Israel, who raised Yeshua to life from the dead. Having Faith in this powerful work of the Messiah causes one to receive the righteousness of God. Living our lives by faith causes righteousness to be credited to our lives by the way we live.

Darashos HaRan 9:10

It is, nonetheless, true, however, that the greater the man the less he requires of such meditation; and the lesser [the man], the more, less refined, mediation he requires. This is what was intimated by Moses our teacher, may peace be upon him, in this parshah (Deuteronomy 4:11): “And you drew near and stood at the foot of the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire until the heart of heaven: darkness, cloud, and mist.” The last three words are stressed to inform them that the profusion of Divine effluence at that exalted encounter required (in point of their frailty) many mediating agents tending to thickness. This is the intent of the numeration: “darkness, cloud, and mist.” The duplication here stresses the grossness of the mediating agents. And all this was needed for Israel, but not for Moses. For though when the Blessed One spoke with Moses there was a pillar of cloud between them, as indicated by the plain meaning of the verse, viz. (Exodus 33:9): “And it was when Moses came to the tent that the pillar of cloud descended and stood at the entrance to the tent...,” and (Psalms 99:6-7): “Moses and Aaron among His priests, and Samuel among those who call upon His name; they called upon the L-rd and He answered them. In a pillar of cloud He spoke to them...”, these verses seeming to indicate that most of G-d’s converse with Mo-

ses was mediated by a pillar of cloud — still, even if we say that this was so, this mediation was not so gross as to be referred to as “darkness, cloud, and mist.” The latter variety was necessitated by the relative frailty of Israel.

Darashos HaRan speaks of the greater and the lesser mediation on behalf of the one who sins. The commentary goes on to stress the significance of the wording in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 4:11* on the descriptions of the mountain of Sinai “*the mountain burned with fire until the heart of heaven: darkness, cloud, and mist.*” These things separated man from the Lord God in heaven. Even Moshe was separated by the pillar indicated by the meaning of *Shemot / Exodus 33:9*, the cloud stood at the entrance to the tent standing in between them as he called upon the name of God. This occurred for Moshe, Aaron, and Samuel all who called upon the Lord and He answered them from the cloud. The Lord worked in this way because of the frailty of Israel, because of her sins. The people need a mediator, and this was the reason the Torah speaks prophetically of another mediator coming, of a Messiah greater than Moshe. This Messiah is described according to Hebrews in the following way.

Hebrews 1:1-3

1:1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 1:2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. 1:3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (NASB)

Both Moshe, Aaron, and Samuel bore the testimony of God by the way they lived their lives. Yeshua the Messiah also bore the testimony of God, and according to Hebrews, he is the radiance of the glory of God. The rabbinic commentary also states that it is in a similar manner we take on the glory of God, according to the *Mishnah Pirkei Avot 3:2*.

Mishnah Pirkei Avot 3:2

Rabbi Chanina, the Deputy High Priest, says: Pray for the welfare of the government, for were it not for the fear of it, man would swallow his fellow alive. Rabbi Chananya ben Teradyon says: Two who are sitting together and there are no words of Torah [spoken] between them, this is a session of scorners, as it is said (Psalms 1:1): “[Happy is the man who has] not . . . sat in the session of the scorners.” But two who are sitting together and there are words of Torah [spoken] between them, the Divine Presence rests with them, as it is said (Malachi 3:16): “Then those who feared the Lord spoke one with another, and the Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him, for those who feared the Lord and for those who thought upon His Name.” I have no [Scriptural support for this] except [in a case of] two. From where [is there proof that] that even [when there is only] one [person studying Torah], the Holy One, blessed be He, determines a reward for him? As it is said (Lamentations 3:28): “He sits alone and is silent, since he takes [a reward] for it.”

The Mishnah states that when two sit together speaking and discussing God’s word, the glory of God descends upon them and God’s presence is in their midst. The Apostle Peter had similar conclusions with regard to being reviled for the sake of the name of the Messiah.

1 Peter 4:14

4:14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. (NASB)

The Targum translates that Moshe and Aaron gave their lives for the people, and Samuel prayed for the people where all three prayed in various instances in an intercessory manner, ו משה ואהרן בכהגוי דמסרו, נפשהון מטול עמא דיהוה ושמואל אמטולהון צלי קדם יהוה היך אבהת עלמא דצלו בשמיה מצלין קדם יהוה והוא: *Moses and Aaron are among his priests who gave their life for the people of the Lord, and Samuel prayed for them before the Lord, like the fathers of old, who prayed in his name; they would pray in his presence and he would answer them. 99:6* In the pillar of glorious clouds he would speak with them; they kept the commandments [of] his testimony, and the covenant that he gave to them. (EMC) They bore the testimony of God by keeping the ways of God in their lives and encouraging the people to do the same. So in essence, they functioned as a type of messiah in the sense of living for the Lord and guiding the people to seek the Lord God in heaven and His ways.

David concludes his psalm saying, ה יהוה אלהינו אַתָּה עֲנִיתָם אֵל נִשְׂא הַיִּתְּ לָהֶם וְנִקְּמָם עַל-עֲלִילוֹתָם: ט *O Lord our God, You answered them; You were a forgiving God to them, And yet an avenger of their evil deeds. 99:8* Exalt the Lord our God And worship at His holy hill, For holy is the Lord our God. (NASB) David says the Lord answered in the manner of forgiveness, and it is for these reasons we are to worship the Lord at His holy Hill in Jerusalem. The Lord God of Israel is described as “the avenger of evil deeds” yet He is merciful and forgave His people. The Lord desires mercy and provides a time for us to repent from sin and turn from our evil ways. Lord, please help us to recognize sin in our lives, to repent, and to turn from our evil ways. Amen! Let’s Pray!

Rabbinic Commentary

The Rabbinic Commentary (Midrash) on *Tehillim / Psalms 99* has 4 parts. Reading through the Midrash we will be looking at Part 1, 2, 3, and 4. Let’s begin by outlining *Midrash Tehillim Chapter 99, Parts 1, 2, 3, and 4*.

Outline of Midrash Tehillim / Psalms, Chapter 99, Part 1, 2, 3, and 4

Part 1

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying, “*The Lord reigns; let the peoples tremble (Tehillim / Psalms 99:1)*.”
- The פתיחתא (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*Rabbi Judah said in the name of Rabbi Samuel, As long as the children of Israel are in exile, the kingdom of heaven is not at peace; yet the nations of the earth dwell unperturbed.*”
- The משל (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis contrast what happens when Israel is in exile as opposed to when Israel has returned and dwells in the Land.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the משל (mashal), the rabbis conclude the greatness of God is due to His power to deliver Israel.
- The Concluding phrase says, “*Rabbi Johanan said, A verse in Scripture supports Rabbi Hanina, When the Lord will build up Zion, then He will appear in His glory (Tehillim / Psalms 102:17).*”

Part 2

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying, “*The King’s strength also loves judgment (Tehillim / Psalms 99:4)*.”
- The פתיחתא (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*You find that when a man is strong, he does not make use of the way of Judgment.*”
- The משל (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis contrast the difference between those who are strong and those who are weak.

- The נמשל (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the משל (mashal), the rabbis expand upon the mashal saying Judgment is for the weak, and it is interesting that the Lord prefers judgment.
- The Concluding phrase says, “*Accordingly, Rabbi Abbahu took the verse to mean, Even though God’s is strength, God loves judgment, and makes use of the way of judgment.*”

Part 3

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying, “*You have established equity (Tehillim / Psalms 99:4).*”
- The פתיחתא (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*Rabbi Alexandri took these words to mean, You have established order in Your world.*”
- The משל (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis speak of the equity the Lord establishes is found in His Torah.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the משל (mashal), the rabbis conclude that this equity is provided to both the righteous and the unrighteous (enemy).
- The Concluding phrase says, “*Accordingly, You bring about justice and righteousness in Jacob (Tehillim / Psalms 99:4) refers to the verse Now these are the judgments which you will set before them (Shemot / Exodus 21:1).*”

Part 4

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying, “*Moshe and Aaron among His priests (Tehillim / Psalms 99:6).*”
- The פתיחתא (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*Rabbi Yudan taught in the name of Rabbi Jose son of Hanina, and Rabbi Berechiah taught in the name of Rabbi Joshua son of Karha, In all the forty years that the children of Israel were in the wilderness, Moshe did not hesitate to minister as high priest, for it is said, Moshe and Aaron among His priests.*”
- The משל (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis speak of Moshe ministering to the Children of Israel during the 40 years in the wilderness.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the משל (mashal), the rabbis conclude that Aaron’s sons were separated forever to be priests unto the Lord.
- The Concluding phrase says, “*What is the point of mentioning Samuel with Moshe and Aaron? Even as Moshe and Aaron prayed for he congregation of Israel, so did Samuel. Hence, it is said, And Samuel among them that call upon His name; they called upon the Lord, and He answered them.*”

Midrash Tehillim 99, Part 1 opens with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying, “*The Lord reigns; let the peoples tremble (Tehillim / Psalms 99:1).*” The homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*Rabbi Judah said in the name of Rabbi Samuel, As long as the children of Israel are in exile, the kingdom of heaven is not at peace; yet the nations of the earth dwell unperturbed.*” Why do you think the rabbis say that when Israel is in exile, the kingdom of heaven is not at peace, while the nations of the earth dwell unperturbed? Everyman’s Talmud by Abraham Cohen, 1932, pg 58-59, summarizes the following from the rabbinic literature:

If, however, Israel is the chosen people, it is not for the purpose of receiving special marks of favoritism from God. Far from being in a better position than the other nations from the material point of view as the result of this choice, Israel bears a heavier responsibility and his liability to punishment is greater. ‘Israel is the retinue of the King and his duty is to imitate the King’ (Sifra to xix. 2). ‘Because God loved Israel He multiplied sufferings for him’ (Exod. R. I. I). ‘Three precious gifts did the Holy One. Blessed be He, bestow upon Israel, and all of them He gave only through the medium of suffering: they are Torah, the land of

Israel, and the World to Come (Talmud Bavli Ber. 5a). The main responsibility of Israel is the guardianship of the Torah, the Divine Revelation. Since the purpose of the world's creation was the glorification of God's name through the medium of the Torah, and Israel was to be its recipient, it follows that 'Israel was in the thought of God before the creation of the Universe' (Gen. R. I. 4), that 'Heaven and earth were only created through the merit of Israel' (Lev. R. XXXVI. 4), and 'As the world could not exist without the winds, so is it impossible for the world: to exist without Israel' (Talmud Bavli Taan. 36). No self-glorification is here meant, since the sayings refer only to Israel. (Everyman's Talmud by Abraham Cohen, 1932, pg 58-59)

The rabbis speak of the responsibility of Israel as being a guardian of the Torah and or the Divine Revelation. According to Scripture, (*Isaiah 2*) Israel was to go forth into the world and speak of the goodness of God, His mercy, grace, love, and what He has commanded in the Torah. According to Midrash Rabbah, heaven and earth were created on account of the merit of Israel and the world couldn't exist without Israel. The rabbinic concept of the existence of Israel is found in the responsibility she has for representing the Lord God in heaven. The Lord love's Israel and multiplies sufferings for the one whom He loves. This may be the reason why Rabbi Judah said in Midrash Tehillim 99, Part 1, "*As long as the children of Israel are in exile, the kingdom of heaven is not at peace; yet the nations of the earth dwell unperturbed.*" While Israel is in exile, the Lord is multiplying punishments due to her sins, and the nations measure up in relation to her current status and so they go unperturbed. Heaven however is not at peace until Israel repents and returns to the Land of Promise. The Talmud states that three gifts were given to Israel through suffering (Torah, the Land of Israel, and the Olam Haba). Israel is at the center of the Kingdom of God based upon both the rabbinic understanding and prophetically (see *Isaiah 2*).

Many people have heard the term the "*Kingdom of God*," but do we really understand what those words mean? In the Apostolic Writings, the central message of John the Baptist, Yeshua, and the disciples was the coming of the Kingdom of God that is coupled with repentance. The last question that Jesus was asked before He left the earth was, "*Lord, will you at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?*" (*Acts 1:6*) The coming Kingdom of God is the message the Lord wants to convey to every person on earth and the most important question is, will you be a part of it? At various locations throughout the Scriptures, we find a theme in the prophetic literature that follows what Zechariah states.

Zechariah 14:9

14:9 "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one." (NASB)

Zechariah speaks of a time when the Lord will be king over all the earth, suggesting that the nations will know the Lord, that there shall be one Lord in the sense that they will worship Him, and His name will be One suggesting there will be no other name mentioned. The prophet Daniel spoke of a similar situation describing a time when human governments will be put down and the kingdom of God will be established.

Daniel 2:44

2:44 "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." (NASB)

We also read passages from the book of Revelation which are very similar, Revelation 11:15 states the following:

Revelation 11:15

11:15 "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The

kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.” (NASB)

There will come a day when the Lord will reign over all. The rabbis say “Israel bears a heavier responsibility and his liability to punishment is greater. ‘Israel is the retinue of the King and his duty is to imitate the King’ (Sifra to xix. 2).” We are called today to imitate the King (the Lord). This imitation comes by reason of how we live our lives, and who we are on the inside. When the Lord reigns over the earth in the sense of His kingdom being established here on earth, what will be the responsibilities of all men who are alive during that time? (Righteousness, Holiness, Truth, obeying Torah, etc)

The entire midrash states the following:

<p>מדרש תהלים פרק צט סימן א</p> <p>א ה' מלך ירגזו עמים. ר' יהודה בשם ר' שמואל אומר כל זמן שישראל בגלות אין מלכות שמים בשלימות ואומות העולם יושבין בשלוה, אבל כשישראל נגאלין מלכות שמים שלימה ואומות העולם ירגזו, הוי ה' מלך ירגזו עמים. יושב כרובים תנוט הארץ. נוטה לכאן ולכאן, מה טעם ה' בציון גדול [ורם הוא על כל העמים]. אמר ר' יוחנן ה' בציון גדול ממה שעשה בציון על ביתיה לא הייס, כשיבוא ליפרע מן המחריבין על אחת כמה וכמה. אמר ר' חנינא ה' בציון גדול כשיחזיר שכינתו לציון אותה שעה הוא גדול בציון, אמר ר' יוחנן וקרא מסייעו לו לר' חנינא כי (נחם) [בנה] ה' ציון (תהלים קב יז) אותה שעה נראה בכבודו (שם שם תהלים ק"ב).</p>	<p>Midrash Tehillim 99, Part 1</p> <p>1. <i>The Lord reigns; let the peoples tremble (Tehillim / Psalms 99:1). Rabbi Judah said in the name of Rabbi Samuel, As long as the children of Israel are in exile, the kingdom of heaven is not at peace; yet the nations of the earth dwell unperturbed. When the children of Israel are redeemed, however, the kingdom of heaven will be at peace, but the peoples of the earth will tremble. Hence, The Lord reigns; let the peoples tremble. He is enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth stagger (Tehillim / Psalms 99:1) stagger this way and that way. Why? Because The Lord is great in Zion; and He is high above all the peoples (Tehillim / Psalms 99:2). Rabbi Johannan took the words The Lord is great in Zion to mean that God is great because of what He has done in Zion. His own house He has not spared; therefore, when He returns to punish the destroyers thereof, how much greater their punishment. But rabbi Hanina interpreted the words The Lord is great in Zion as follows, When the Lord causes His presence to return to Zion, then will He be great in Zion. Rabbi Johannan said, A verse in Scripture supports Rabbi Hanina, When the Lord will build up Zion, then He will appear in His glory (Tehillim / Psalms 102:17).</i></p>
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The midrash quotes the psalm saying, “Hence, The Lord reigns; let the peoples tremble. He is enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth stagger (Tehillim / Psalms 99:1) stagger this way and that way.” To stagger sounds as if one is drunk. To stagger around also sounds as if there is something that has not been revealed to the people, so it is as if they are fumbling around in the dark. Does this sound similar to Ephesian 3:5?

Ephesians 2:18-3:7

2:18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. 2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, 2:20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone 2:21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 2:22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. 3:1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles 3:2 if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you; 3:3 that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. 3:4 By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 3:5 which in other generations was not made

known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; 3:6 to be specific that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, 3:7 of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power. (NASB)

Paul is making a case for the gentile inclusion into the family and promises of God. He speaks of something being revealed of the Messiah of which he calls a mystery. He says for former generations this mystery was not made known, but now it has been revealed in his Apostles in the spirit, the gentiles are fellow heirs and members of the body of the Messiah and partakers in the promises in Yeshua through the gospel. Formerly the non-Jewish person was fumbling in the dark, where in the Messiah, they are no longer in the dark.

The Midrash continues saying, *“Because The Lord is great in Zion; and He is high above all the peoples (Tehillim / Psalms 99:2). Rabbi Johannan took the words The Lord is great in Zion to mean that God is great because of what He has done in Zion. His own house He has not spared; therefore, when He returns to punish the destroyers thereof, how much greater their punishment.”* As we read previously in the rabbinic literature summarized by *“Everyman’s Talmud,”* Israel received the weightier responsibility than the nations because the Lord had given her His Torah. Consequentially, there is also a higher liability to punishment due to sins. The nations not having been given the Torah, remain liable for sin, and the midrash states that the Lord who did not spare His children, will return to punish and destroy the nations, those who do not know Him, greater will be their punishment. The wonderful news in the Messiah Yeshua for the non-Jewish person, is the partaking in the promises of God and being fellow members of the family of God. As a result, the avenue of forgiveness is also available to the non-Jew as an adopted child of God through faith.

Midrash Tehillim 99, Part 1 concludes saying, *“Rabbi Johannan said, A verse in Scripture supports Rabbi Hanina, When the Lord will build up Zion, then He will appear in His glory (Tehillim / Psalms 102:17).”* The glorious power, wisdom, and goodness of God will be made known to all the world. The deliverance of God is paralleled to His glory and the building up of Zion. These things were carefully recorded in the Tanach, for the instruction and encouragement of succeeding generations. The description given in *Tehillim / Psalms 102:17* is of Israel’s restoration to their own Land, from a former manner of being dead, buried, and in the grave, which is paralleled to the exile. The gentiles will be converted, in which this conversion is called the *“new creation”* which is accomplished by faith according to Paul in his letters in the Apostolic Writings.

Midrash Tehillim 99, Part 2 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying, *“The King’s strength also loves judgment (Tehillim / Psalms 99:4).”* The homiletic introduction to the midrash states, *“You find that when a man is strong, he does not make use of the way of Judgment.”* The entire midrash states the following.

<p>מדרש תהלים פרק צט סימן ב</p> <p>ב ועז מלך משפט אהב. [אתה מוצא] מי שהוא עוז אינו תופש מדת הדין, אבל הקב"ה משפט אהב, שנאמר כי אני ה' אוהב משפט (ישעיה סא ח), אמר ר' אבהו ואעפ"י שהעוז שלו משפט אהב תופש מדת הדין.</p>	<p>Midrash Tehillim 99, Part 2</p> <p>2. <i>The King’s strength also loves judgment (Tehillim / Psalms 99:4). You find that when a man is strong, he does not make use of the way of Judgment. But the Holy One blessed be He, loves judgment, as is said, For I the Lord love judgment (Isaiah 61:8). Accordingly, Rabbi Abbahu took the verse to mean, Even though God’s is strength, God loves judgment, and makes use of the way of judgment.</i></p>
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The homiletic introduction states that when a man is strong he does not make use of the way of judgment, whereas the Lord God (the Holy One blessed be He) loves judgment? What does it mean *“the way of judgment?”* The rabbinic commentary on *Tehillim / Psalms 10:5 His ways prosper at all times; Your judgments are far beyond him; he snorts at all his foes. (KJV)* states the following:

Akeidat Yitzchak 34:60

When explaining Psalms 10:5 Rabbi Yoshua ben Korcha said that the verse “see how even the terrifying acts of G’d are planned with intelligence,” (Psalms 66:5) refers to the verse mentioned before. Our freedom of choice is not interfered with, and still G’d manages to set in motion chains of events that culminate in His purpose being fulfilled. Since the immediate cause of the Jewish exile was the population explosion, the Torah sketches in the history of events.

Akeidat Yitzchak states that the judgments of God are carefully planned. He speaks of the freedoms of choice which are coupled to judgment in the sense that though we have been given the freedom of choice, the Lord sets into motion events that lead to His will being fulfilled. He says the exile was the result of a population explosion, but it may be in this population explosion we find sin became a common practice amongst God’s people which led to her exile out of the Land. The Torah describes in a very exact manner the judgments of God and the events that will occur if one chooses by their liberty (and also that liberty found in the Messiah Yeshua), to live in sin (see sefer Vayikra, Parashat Bechukotai). Ein Yaakov states the following:

Ein Yaakov Berekhot 1:38

Further said R. Jochanan in the name of R. Simon b. Jochai : “It is permitted to quarrel with the wicked in this world, because it is said (Pr. 28, 4.) They that forsake the Torah praise the wicked, but those who observe the Torah contend with them.” We also have a Baraitha to the same effect. R. Dostai b. Mathun says: “It is permitted to quarrel with the wicked in this world ; as it is said (Pr. 28, 4.) They that forsake the Torah praise the wicked, but those who observe the Torah contend with them; and if some one should whisper to you saying: ‘Behold ! it is written (Ps. 37:1) Of David! Do not fret thyself because of the evil-doers.’ Tell him that he whose heart smites him [who has no clear conscience] says so, for the real meaning of the passage is: Do not compete with the evil-doers, i.e., to be among evil-doers; And neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity, to be like them. And it is also said (Pr. 23, 17.) Let not thy heart be envious against sinners, but in the fear of the Lord (remain) at all times.” Is that so? Behold! R. Isaac said: “If you see a wicked man upon whom fortune smiles, do not quarrel with him, for it is said (Ps. 10:5) Prosperous are his ways at all times; and moreover, he always wins by law, as it is said (Ib.) Far aloof (remain) Thy punishments from him; and moreover, he sees [revenge] in his enemies, as it is said (Ib.) All his assailants, he puffeth at them.” There is no difficulty [in understanding this] ; one deals with secular affairs and the other deals with divine affairs, and, if you wish, you may say both passages deal with divine affairs and there is no difficulty ; for one deals with a wicked man upon whom fortune smiles, and the other with the wicked man upon whom fortune does not smile ; and, if you wish, you may say both deal with a wicked man upon whom fortune smiles; yet there is no difficulty, for one deals with a perfectly righteous man and the other with one who is not righteous throughout ; for R. Huna said: “What means the passage (Habakuk 1:13) Wherefore wilt thou look upon those that deal treacherously : be silent when the wicked swallows us him that is more righteous than he? How can it be possible that a wicked man should swallow up a righteous man? Behold! It is written (Ps. 37:33) The Lord will not leave him in his hand, and it is written (Pr. 12, 21.) No wrong can come unawares to the righteous! We must therefore say: “One, more righteous than he is, the wicked person does destroy, but he cannot destroy the perfectly righteous man.” And, if you wish, you may say that when fortune smiles upon a man, it is different [and even one perfectly righteous should not fret at him].

Ein Yaakov begins with a commentary on quarreling with the wicked saying those who forsake the Torah of God praise the wicked. The judgment of God is in some ways mysterious in the sense that the wicked

prosper while the righteous are given hardships and trials. The commentary concludes with the Lord not leaving the righteous in the hands of the wicked, but will deliver him. When we consider the midrashic concept of, “*You find that when a man is strong, he does not make use of the way of Judgment,*” a strong man not making use of the way of judgment seems to be a reference to this strongman placing his trust in himself, rather than trusting in the Lord to deal out retribution for the evils that have been committed against the righteous. “*The way of Judgment*” may also be a way of contrasting man’s judgment which is rooted in revenge or sin, as opposed to God’s judgment which is rooted in righteousness. Midrash Tehillim 99, Part 2 concludes saying, “*Accordingly, Rabbi Abbahu took the verse to mean, Even though God’s is strength, God loves judgment, and makes use of the way of judgment.*” The Lord God of Israel making use of judgment is in the sense that He will repay in full the sins of the wicked, and the righteous will trust in His way of retribution, if not in this world, the payment for sufferings will be received in the Olam Haba (the World to Come).

Midrash Tehillim 99, Part 3 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying, “*You have established equity (Tehillim / Psalms 99:4).*” The homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*Rabbi Alexandri took these words to mean, You have established order in Your world.*” The entire midrash states the following.

<p style="text-align: center;">מדרש תהלים פרק צט סימן ג</p> <p>ג אתה כוננת מישרים. אמר ר' אלכסנדראי אתה כוננת ישרות בעולמך, יש לו לאדם דין עם חבירו, והוא נכנס עמו לדין, והן מקבלין עליהם מה שהדין יוצא ועושין שלום, הוי אומר אתה כוננת מישרים. אדם יוצא לדרך וראה חמורו של חבירו רובץ תחת משאו, הולך ונותן לו יד ומסייעו לטעון ולפרוק, והן נכנסין לפונדק והוא אומר כך פלוני אוהב אותי, ואני הייתי סבור שהוא שונאי, מיד מדברין זה עם זה ונכנס השלום ביניהם, מי גרם לזה שיעשו שלום ויעשו אוהבין, על ידי ששמר מה שכתוב בתורה כי תראה חמור שנאך רובץ [תחת משאו וחדלת מעזוב לו עזוב תעזוב עמו] (שמות כג ה), הדא הוא דכתיב דרכיה דרכי נועם וכל נתיבותיה שלום (משלי ג יז). משפט וצדקה ביעקב אתה עשית. ואלה המשפטים אשר תשים לפניהם (שמות כא א).</p>	<p>Midrash Tehillim 99, Part 3</p> <p>3. <i>You have established equity (Tehillim / Psalms 99:4). Rabbi Alexandri took these words to mean, You have established order in Your world. When a man has a claim against his neighbor, he appears with him before the Torah, and after both pledge themselves to accept what the Torah decides, they make peace. Hence, You have established equality. Or, When a man going along the way sees his enemy’s donkey fallen down under its burden, he goes forward, lends a hand, and helps his enemy in loading and in unloading. Then both men go into an inn, and the later says, So and so is my friend after all, and I thought that he was my enemy. They fall to talking with one another, and peace results between them. What was it that caused the two men to make peace and become friends? It was that the first man kept what is written in the Torah, If you see the donkey of him that hates you fallen down under its burden, you will forbear to pass by him, you will surely release it with him (Shemot / Exodus 23:5). Of Torah it is written Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace (Mishley / Proverbs 3:17). Accordingly, You bring about justice and righteousness in Jacob (Tehillim / Psalms 99:4) refers to the verse Now these are the judgments which you will set before them (Shemot / Exodus 21:1).</i></p>
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What does it mean that the Lord has established equity? Rabbi Alexandri states this is a reference to the Lord establishing order in our world. This almost sounds like a statement as a reference to the individual rather than to the world as referring to the earth or the nations. This is further clarified in the Midrash with a reference to two men who go to court because of a dispute, the Torah decides between these men to make peace. In another example, the Torah states that a man should help his brother if he has the need, such as in the enemy’s donkey having fallen down under the burden, we are told to lend a hand. The Torah command leads us to make peace between men. The covenant of God according to the Torah, should remind us to making peace and not war. This is very similar to what Yeshua taught in the parable of the good Samaritan according to *Luke 10:22-37*.

Luke 10:22-37

10:22 'All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. 10:23 Turning to the disciples, He said privately, 'Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see, 10:24 for I say to you, that many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see them, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear them. 10:25 And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' 10:26 And He said to him, 'What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?' 10:27 And he answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.' 10:28 And He said to him, 'You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.' 10:29 But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?' 10:30 Jesus replied and said, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. 10:31 'And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 10:32 'Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 10:33 'But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, 10:34 and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. 10:35 'On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.' 10:36 'Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands? 10:37 And he said, 'The one who showed mercy toward him.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Go and do the same.' (NASB)

Notice how Yeshua directs the people he is speaking to back to the Torah, and he works at properly interpreting and applying the Scriptures. The Rabbis say "Of Torah it is written Mishley / Proverbs 3:17 Her ways are pleasant ways And all her paths are peace. 3:18 She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, And happy are all who hold her fast. (NASB, יז דְרָכֶיהָ דְרָכֵי-נֵעִם וְכָל-גִּתְיֹבוֹתֶיהָ שְׁלוֹם: יח יֵצֵן-חַיִּים הִיא לַמְחַזְיָקִים) They speak of the Torah based upon Solomon's words as being a path that leads to peace and pleasantness. In the parable, Yeshua speaks of this path of peace and love of God and neighbor as having compassion on others and even taking of the fruits of your labor, money, to help another person, even if that person is an enemy. Yeshua directs our attention back to the Torah in this parable, and helps this young man to understand the Scriptures saying all things belong to the Lord, even our wealth, our health, and our ability to make money, all of these things are given from God and in the command to love God (the Shema, Devarim / Deuteronomy 6:4-10) and to love your neighbor (Vayikra / Leviticus 19:17-18) is within the context of our Father in heaven providing wealth to be used in this particular way as an expression of our faithfulness to God's Word.

Devarim / Deuteronomy 8:16-18

8:16 'In the wilderness He fed you manna which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do good for you in the end. 8:17 'Otherwise, you may say in your heart, 'My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.' 8:18 'But you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day. (NASB, טז הַמְאֲכִלְךָ מִן בְּמִדְבַר אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יָדְעוּ אֲבֹתֶיךָ לְמַעַן עֲנֹתְךָ וּלְמַעַן נִסְתָּךָ לְהִיטִבְךָ בְּאַחֲרָיִ, תד: יז וְאָמַרְתָּ בְּלִבְךָ כֹּחִי וְעֹצְמוֹ יָדַי עָשָׂה לִי אֶת-הַחֵיל הַזֶּה: יח וְזָכַרְתָּ אֶת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי הוּא הֵנִיחַ לְךָ כֹּחַ לַעֲשׂוֹת חֵיל לְמַעַן תִּזְכָּר אֶת-בְּרִיתוֹ אֲשֶׁר-נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְרָהָם כִּי־הֵנִיחַ:

Note the Scriptures state that the manna was given for the testing of the people so they would realize their strength is not of their own making, but solely by the hand of the Lord God of Israel. Midrash Tehillim 99, Part 3, concludes saying, “Accordingly, You bring about justice and righteousness in Jacob (Tehillim / Psalms 99:4) refers to the verse Now these are the judgments which you will set before them (Shemot / Exodus 21:1).” These judgments are meant to direct us to live our lives with justice, righteousness, holiness and truth. And, it is in the Messiah Yeshua we are able to accomplish what our Father in heaven wants for our lives.

Midrash Tehillim 99, Part 4 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying, “Moshe and Aaron among His priests (Tehillim / Psalms 99:6).” The homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “Rabbi Yudan taught in the name of Rabbi Jose son of Hanina, and Rabbi Berechiah taught in the name of Rabbi Joshua son of Karha, In all the forty years that the children of Israel were in the wilderness, Moshe did not hesitate to minister as high priest, for it is said, Moshe and Aaron among His priests.” It is interesting how the Midrash states Moshe functioned as the Cohen Hagadol. Is this consistent with the Torah descriptions of Moshe making Aaron the High Priest? The entire midrash states the following:

<p style="text-align: center;">מדרש תהלים פרק צט סימן ד</p> <p>ד משה ואהרן בכהניו. ר' יודן בשם ר' יוסי בר חנינא ור' ברכיה בשם ר' יהושע בן קרחה אומר, כל אותן ארבעים שנה שהיו ישראל במדבר, לא נמנע משה מלשמש בכהונה גדולה, שנאמר משה ואהרן בכהניו. אמר ר' ברכיה בשם ר' סימון מקרא מלא הוא, שנאמר ובני עמרם (משה ואהרן) [אהרן ומשה] ויבדל אהרן [להקדישו] קדש קדשים [וגו'] ומשה איש האלהים אבל בניו יקראו על שבת הלוי (דה"א דברי הימים א' כג יג יד), אמר ר' (יהודה) [אלעזר] בר יוסי כל שבעת ימי המילואים שימש משה בכהונה גדולה בחלוק בד לבן שאין בו אימרא. ושמואל בקוראי שמו. וכי מה ענין שמואל אצל משה ואהרן, אלא כשם שמתפללין משה ואהרן בשביל כנסת ישראל, כך שמואל, הוי ושמואל בקוראי שמו.</p>	<p>Midrash Tehillim 99, Part 4</p> <p>4. Moshe and Aaron among His priests (Tehillim / Psalms 99:6). Rabbi Yudan taught in the name of Rabbi Jose son of Hanina, and Rabbi Berechiah taught in the name of Rabbi Joshua son of Karha, In all the forty years that the children of Israel were in the wilderness, Moshe did not hesitate to minister as high priest, for it is said, Moshe and Aaron among His priests. Rabbi Berechiah in the name of Rabbi Simon said, however This point is fully made in Scripture in the passage The sons of Amram, Aaron and Moshe; and Aaron was separated, that he should be sanctified as most holy, he and his sons forever; to offer before the Lord, to minister unto Him. So, too, Moshe the man of God. His sons, however, are named among the tribe of Levi (1 Chronicles 23:13-14). Rabbi Eleazar son of Jose taught, On each of the seven days of consecration, Moshe, wearing a white linen garment that had no seam, ministered as a high priest. And Samuel among them that call upon His name (Tehillim / Psalms 99:6). What is the point of mentioning Samuel with Moshe and Aaron? Even as Moshe and Aaron prayed for he congregation of Israel, so did Samuel. Hence, it is said, And Samuel among them that call upon His name; they called upon the Lord, and He answered them.</p>
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The Midrash speaks of the various rabbis interpretation on the Cohen Hagadol (High Priest) referencing Aaron, Moshe, and Samuel, saying all of these men functioned as priest before God by calling upon the name of God. The rabbis recognize the Scriptures speak of Moshe’s sons being numbered among the Levites and not as a high priest according to 1 Chronicles 23:13-17.

1 Chronicles 23:13-17

23:13 The sons of Amram were Aaron and Moses. And Aaron was set apart to sanctify him as most holy, he and his sons forever, to burn incense before the Lord, to minister to Him and to bless in His name forever. 23:14 But as for Moses the man of God, his sons were named among the tribe of Levi. 23:15 The sons of Moses were Gershom and Eliezer. 23:16 The son of Gershom was Shebuel the chief. 23:17 The son of Eliezer was Rehabiah the chief; and Eliezer had no other sons, but the sons of Rehabiah were very many. (NASB)

The explanation is found in the conclusion of Midrash Tehillim 99, Part 4 which states, “*What is the point of mentioning Samuel with Moshe and Aaron? Even as Moshe and Aaron prayed for the congregation of Israel, so did Samuel. Hence, it is said, And Samuel among them that call upon His name; they called upon the Lord, and He answered them.*” The point seems to be for those who call upon the name of the Lord, He will answer them because they are seeking His counsel. Note that this is not a reference to speaking the sacred name (YHVH). Over and over again we are told in the Tanach how various men called upon the Name of the Lord. When the Lord God repeatedly identifies Himself by the name of YHVH, doesn’t He mean for us to know Him by that name? Seeking the Lord and “*calling upon the name*” does not necessarily imply we are to make an attempt to pronounce the sacred name. The MT writes the name with nikkud vowels for the purpose of pronouncing a circumlocution when publicly reading the name. Therefore, any attempt to pronounce the name through transliteration by use of the nikkud vowel marks are in error. On the other hand, in the Apostolic Writings, Yeshua said, “*Whatever you ask in My name...*” (see *John 14:13*). We might consider the use of His name “*Yeshua*” as a circumlocution in a sense, and for having faith in the King Messiah and the authority that is associated with that name. According to Yeshua, His name is key to approaching our Father in heaven. The power associated with His name is in the authority that is passed on to us in many capacities, including prayer and intercession, and casting out of demons, to healing, and overcoming sin. We have no power on our own, the authority and power is in Yeshua’s name because of who He is the King Messiah of God. Paul states everything we do, we are to do in the name of Yeshua (*Colossians 3:17*). If we call upon the name in the name of Yeshua, the Lord will answer us. Let’s Pray!

Heavenly Father,

We thank You for making access to You available in the name of Your Son Yeshua the Messiah. Please have mercy upon us for we are a sinful people. We truly seek to serve You all the days of our lives. Lord help us to have the strength to stand for truth and life, to have faith in Yeshua, a devotion to Your Word, and to love our neighbor each day. We thank You Lord for Your continued faithfulness to Your promises and to us. 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