

## ספר תהילים ככג | Tehillim / Psalms 123

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### Lifting our Eyes to the Lord God in Heaven

In this week's study from *Tehillim / Psalms 123:1-4*, the psalm opens saying, א שִׁיר הַמַּעְלוֹת אֲלֶיךָ. *A Song of Ascents. 123:1 To You I lift up my eyes, O You who are enthroned in the heavens!* (NASB) This psalm is introduced speaking of "a song of ascending unto you." Based upon this text, this was a song that was composed to the Lord God in heaven for ascending the Temple mount in Jerusalem. The idea is as God is enthroned in heaven, the one who ascends fixes his eyes upon the Lord in the anticipation of communing with the Lord in the place He has established His name. The Targum translates saying, א שִׁירָא דֵאִיתְאֲמַר עַל מַסְקִינָא מְסֻקִין דְתִהוּמָא קְדָמְךָ זְקִפִית ית עֵינֵי דִיתִיב עַל כּוֹרְסֵי יְקָרָא בְשָׁמַיָא. *123:1 A song that was uttered on the ascents of the abyss. Before you I have lifted up my eyes, you who sit on a throne of glory in heaven.* (EMC) Why do the rabbis speak of the ascents of the abyss? The Psalmist continues saying, ב הִנֵּה כְעֵינַי עֹבְדִים אֶל-יְדֵי אֲדוֹנָיְהֶם כְּעֵינַי שְׂפָתָהּ אֶל-יַד גְּבַרְתָּהּ פֶּן עֵינֵינוּ אֶל-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ עַד. *123:2 Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, As the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, So our eyes look to the Lord our God, Until He is gracious to us.* (NASB) This verse speaks of the servant looking towards her master for work and guidance. In a similar way we are to do the same to the Lord God in heaven. The Psalm concludes saying, ב הִנֵּה כְעֵינַי עֹבְדִים אֶל-יְדֵי אֲדוֹנָיְהֶם כְּעֵינַי שְׂפָתָהּ אֶל-יַד גְּבַרְתָּהּ פֶּן עֵינֵינוּ אֶל-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ עַד שְׂיִחְנֶנּוּ. *123:3 Be gracious to us, O Lord, be gracious to us, For we are greatly filled with contempt. 123:4 Our soul is greatly filled With the scoffing of those who are at ease, And with the contempt of the proud.* (NASB) Being filled with contempt is what happens for those who are scoffed at. 2 Peter 3:3 warns us that "in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires." We know from Scripture that scoffing will only increase as we near the time for Yeshua's return (2 Timothy 3:1-5). Scoffers have always been and will always be present in the world. But there is coming a day when all people will acknowledge the Messiah of God as Lord. On that day there will no longer be any scoffers.

**עברית      Hebrew      ארמי      Aramaic      ελληνικός      Greek**

עברית	Arabic	Greek
<b>ספר תהילים פרק ככג</b>	<b>ספר טוביה פרק ככג</b>	ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 123
א שִׁיר הַמַּעְלוֹת אֲלֶיךָ נְשֹׂאתִי אֶת- עֵינַי הַיֹּשְׁבִי בַשָּׁמַיִם: ב הִנֵּה כְעֵינַי עֹבְדִים אֶל-יְדֵי אֲדוֹנָיְהֶם כְּעֵינַי שְׂפָתָהּ אֶל-יַד גְּבַרְתָּהּ פֶּן עֵינֵינוּ אֶל-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ עַד שְׂיִחְנֶנּוּ: ג חָנְנוּ יְהוָה חָנְנוּ כִּי-רַב שָׂבְעָנוּ בּוֹז: ד רַבַּת שְׂבָעָה-לָהּ נַפְשֵׁנוּ הַלְעַג הַשְּׂאֲנָנִים הַבּוֹז לְגֵאֵיוֹנִים:	א שִׁירָא דֵאִיתְאֲמַר עַל מַסְקִינָא מְסֻקִין דְתִהוּמָא קְדָמְךָ זְקִפִית ית עֵינֵי דִיתִיב עַל כּוֹרְסֵי יְקָרָא בְשָׁ- מֵיָא: ב א כְּמָא דְמוֹדִיקִין עֵינֵי עַבְדִין מְגִיסָא מִיֵּדֵי דְרִיבּוֹנִיהוֹן וְהִכְמָא דְמוֹדִיקִין עֵינֵי אֲמַתָּא מְגִי- סָא מִיֵּדֵי דְרִיבּוֹנְתָהּ אֲמַתָּא מְגִי- קָן עֵינָא קָדָם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵנָא עַד זְמַן דִּי יְחֹס עֲלֵנָא: ג חֹס עֲלֵן יְהוָה חֹס עֲלֵן אַרְוֹם סְגִי שְׂבַעְנָא בְּסִירּוֹתָא בְּסִרְנוֹתָא: ד סוֹגְעָא שְׂבַעַת לָהּ נַפְשָׁנָא תְּלַעּוּבָא דִישְׁל- וּוִינָא מְבַסְרָנָא וּגְיוֹתְנָנָא:	123:1 ὠδὴ τῶν ἀναβαθμῶν πρὸς σὲ ἦρα τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς μου τὸν κατοικοῦντα ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ 123:2 ἰδοὺ ὡς ὀφθαλμοὶ δούλων εἰς χεῖρας τῶν κυρίων αὐτῶν ὡς ὀφθαλμοὶ παιδίσκης εἰς χεῖρας τῆς κυρίας αὐτῆς οὕτως οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ ἡμῶν πρὸς κύριον τὸν θεὸν ἡμῶν ἕως οὗ οἰκτιρήσαι ἡμᾶς 123:3 ἔλεησον ἡμᾶς κύριε ἔλεησον ἡμᾶς ὅτι ἐπὶ πολὺ ἐπλήσθημεν ἐξουδένωσης 123:4 ἐπὶ πλεῖον ἐπλήσθη ἡ ψυχὴ ἡμῶν τὸ ὄνειδος τοῖς εὐθηνούσιν καὶ ἡ ἐξουδένωσις τοῖς ὑπερηφάνοις

<p><b>Tehillim Psalms 123</b>  A Song of Ascents. 123:1 To You I lift up my eyes, O You who are enthroned in the heavens! 123:2 Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, As the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, So our eyes look to the Lord our God, Until He is gracious to us. 123:3 Be gracious to us, O Lord, be gracious to us, For we are greatly filled with contempt. 123:4 Our soul is greatly filled With the scoffing of those who are at ease, And with the contempt of the proud. (NASB)</p>	<p><b>Toviyah Psalms 123</b>  123:1 A song that was uttered on the ascents of the abyss. Before you I have lifted up my eyes, you who sit on a throne of glory in heaven. 123:2 Behold, as the eyes of menservants, on one side, watch at the hands of their masters; and as the eyes of maidservants, on the other side, watch at the hands of their mistresses; thus our eyes watch in the presence of the Lord our God for the time when he will show compassion to us. 123:3 Have compassion on us, O Lord, have compassion on us; for we have had too much of contempt. 123:4 Our soul has had too much of scorn, for the arrogant and proud are at ease. (EMC)</p>	<p><b>Psalmoi Psalms 123</b>  A Song of Degrees. 123:1 Unto thee who dwellest in heaven have I lifted up mine eyes. 123:2 Behold, as the eyes of servants are directed to the hands of their masters, and as the eyes of a maidservant to the hands of her mistress; so our eyes are directed to the Lord our God, until he have mercy upon us. 123:3 Have pity upon us, O Lord, have pity upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt. 123:4 Yea, our soul has been exceedingly filled with it: let the reproach be to them that are at ease, and contempt to the proud. have diligently sought thy good. (LXX)</p>
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In this week's study from *Tehillim / Psalms 123:1-4*, the psalm opens saying, אֲשִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת אֵלֶיךָ, אֶת-עֵינַי הַיֹּשְׁבִי בַשָּׁמַיִם: *A Song of Ascents. 123:1 To You I lift up my eyes, O You who are enthroned in the heavens!* (NASB) This psalm is introduced speaking of “a song of ascending unto you.” (אֲשִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת) Based upon this text, this was a song that was composed to the Lord God in heaven for ascending the Temple mount in Jerusalem. The Temple Mount, in Hebrew Har Habayit (הַר הַבַּיִת), known in the Torah as Mount Moriah, is the most holy spot in all the world. It is the location of both the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem. Here, the Lord God Almighty commanded Abraham, to bind his son Isaac. It is a fundamental principle of Judaism that a third Temple will be rebuilt. The Temple Mount is unlike any other place on earth, for it is הַמְּקוֹם (the Place) the Lord God chose to rest His presence and to make Himself known to man. As a result, we find many expressions in the Torah such as “the place that I will choose” and “the place that I will show you.” It is believed this is the location the Tree of Life was located. From the beginning of time, this location was set aside and sanctified by God. When the Holy Temple stood, the experience of being there was to be in the presence of God. All people, Jews and Gentiles alike, were able to come and partake in a relationship with God through the services laid out in the Torah. People from all walks of life came to recharge their spiritual batteries and come away renewed and invigorated by the reality of our constant, vibrant and intimate relationship with the Creator. According to the Torah, the holiness of the Temple Mount was unlike anything in the world. The level of sanctity and holiness in our lives are still in place, we are obligated to conduct ourselves accordingly, with the utmost reverence, and in accordance with Biblical standards. This is what it means to sanctify our lives.

“Sanctification” is a translation of the Greek word *hagiasmos* (ἁγιασμός), and the Hebrew word קִדְּשׁ meaning “holiness” or to “set apart.” This is a process of setting ourselves apart. As we grow to maturity, we are able to apply God’s Word to our lives, its practical application as we become more like the Lord as we walk in His ways. To “sanctify” something is to set it apart for special use; to “sanctify” a person is to make him holy. This is what was on the mind of the person who ascended the mountain of the Lord (the Temple mount) to go before God and worship. Yeshua the Messiah had a lot to say concerning sanctification in *John 17*.

**John 17:1-26**

*17:1 Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, 17:2 even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. 17:3 'This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. 17:4 'I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. 17:5 'Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. 17:6 'I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. 17:7 'Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; 17:8 for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me. 17:9 'I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; 17:10 and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. 17:11 'I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are. 17:12 'While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled. 17:13 'But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. 17:14 'I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17:15 'I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. 17:16 'They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17:17 'Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. 17:18 'As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 17:19 'For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. 17:20 'I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; 17:21 that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. 17:22 'The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; 17:23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. 17:24 'Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. 17:25 'O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; 17:26 and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.'* (NASB)

Notice how Yeshua speaks of glorifying the Father in heaven, and he asks the Father to glorify him. As our example, we too are to bring glory to our Father in heaven. He also speaks of our knowing he has been sent from the Father in heaven. He says that He is not in the world, and so too we are not to be of this world. He prays the Lord would keep us from the evil one. What does it mean to be kept from the evil one? Is this related to being persecuted, or our enemy coming against us? He asks the Lord to “keep us from the evil one” which suggests keeping us from sin. When we come to Yeshua, we come to holiness and righteousness. When going to the evil one, this describes one drawing near to lies, deceit, sin, unrighteousness, wickedness, etc. In *John 7:16* the Lord says, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of it,” and he says this before He he says “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth” (*17:17*). From a Torah perspective, sanctification is a state of separation unto God; all believers enter into this state by faith and the mikvah before ascending the Temple mount. Paul wrote in *1 Corinthians 1:30* saying “You are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” (ESV) The sanctifica-

tion that occurs by faith is something that is done in the heavenlies. This is an intricate part of who we are as God's people and is related to our connection to the Messiah (*Hebrews 10:10*).

The psalm says, *שִׁיר הַמַּעְלוֹת אֲלֵיךָ נִשְׂאָתִי אֶת-עֵינַי הַיֹּשְׁבִי בַשָּׁמַיִם: א* *A Song of Ascents. 123:1 To You I lift up my eyes, O You who are enthroned in the heavens! (NASB)* The idea is as God is enthroned in heaven, the one who ascends fixes his eyes upon the Lord in the anticipation of communing with the Lord in the place He has established His name. The Targum translates saying, *א שירא דאיתאמר על מסקיין מסוקין, 123:1 A song that was uttered on the ascents of the abyss. Before you I have lifted up my eyes, you who sit on a throne of glory in heaven. (EMC)* Why do the rabbis speak of the ascents of the abyss? Ezekiel speaks of “ascents” in *Ezekiel 40:6 40:6 Then he went to the gate which faced east, went up its steps and measured the threshold of the gate, one rod in width; and the other threshold was one rod in width. (NASB)*, the prophet sees the gateway of the temple, and the angel “going up its steps” (ascending) to measure them. Ascents are described as ascending stairs to approach the Lord God in heaven.

The Talmud describes the abyss in the following way.

### ***Talmud Bavli Sukkah 49a Part 1***

שכל מזבחה שאין לו לא כבש ולא קרן ולא יסוד ולא ריבוע פסול לעבודה רבי יוסי בר יהודה אומר *For any altar which does not have the ascent, the horn, the base and a square shape is invalid for the service. R. Jose b. Judah adds, Also the circuit*

### ***Part 2***

אמר רבה בר בר חנה א“ר יוחנן שיתין מששת ימי בראשית נבראו שנאמר (שיר השירים ז, ב) חמוקי ירכיך כמו חלאים מעשה ידי אמן חמוקי ירכיך אלו השיתין כמו חלאים שמחוללין ויורדין עד התהום מעשה ידי אמן זו מעשה ידי אומנותו של הקב“ה תנא דבי ר’ ישמעאל (בראשית א, *Rabbah b. Bar Hana said in the name of R. Yohanan: The pits were created during the six days of creation, for it is said, “The roundings of your thighs are like the links of a chain the work of the hands of a skilled workman” (Song of Songs 7:2): “The rounding of your thighs” refers to the pits; “like the links of a chain (חלאים)” implies that they are carved out (מחוללים) and descend to the abyss; “the work of the hands of a skilled workman” means that they are the skillful handiwork of the Holy One, blessed be He. The school of R. Ishmael taught: Bereshit; read not bereshit but bara shit.*

### ***Part 3***

תניא ר’ יוסי אומר שיתין מחוללין ויורדין עד תהום שנאמר (ישעיהו ה, א) אשירה נא לידידי שירת דודי לכרמו כרם היה לידידי בקרן בן שמן ויעזקהו ויסקלהו ויטעהו שורק ויבן מגדל בתוכו וגם יקב חצב בו ויטעהו שורק זה בית המקדש ויבן מגדל בתוכו זה מזבחה וגם יקב חצב בו אלו השיתין *It has been taught, R. Yose says The cavity of the pits descends to the abyss, for it is said, “Let me sing of my beloved, a song of my lover for his vineyard. My beloved had a vineyard on a very fruitful hill. And he dug it, and cleared it of stones, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also hewed out a vat therein” (Isaiah 5:1). “And planted it with the choicest vine” refers to the Temple; “and built a tower in the midst of it” refers to the altar; ‘and also hewed out a vat therein’, refers to the pits.*

### ***Part 4***

תניא א“ר אלעזר בר צדוק לול קטן היה בין כבש למזבחה במערבו של כבש ואחת לשבעים שנה פרחי כהונה יורדין לשם ומלקטין משם יין קרוש שדומה לעיגולי דבילה ובאין ושורפין אותו בק- *It has been taught: R. Elazar b. Zadok (במדבר כח, ז) בקדש הסך נסך שכר לה*

*said: There was a small empty space between the ascent and the altar, on the west side of the ascent, and once in seventy years the young of the priesthood used to descend there and gather up from there the congealed wine which looked like round cakes of pressed figs, and they would come and burn it in a state of sanctity as it is said, “In the holy place you shall pour out a drink-offering of strong drink to the Lord” (Numbers 28:7)*

Notice how the Talmud connects the “ascent” to the altar of the Lord. The rabbis describe the “pits” being created during the six days of creation. The pit is described as having chains descending into the abyss, and the Lord is the One who created these things. The pit is described as a place of captivity which descends to the abyss. It is difficult to determine why the abyss is mentioned here along side the altar of the Lord. The descriptions of the Temple, then the altar, and the space inside is described as the pit. It is said that the priests would descend to gather up the wine and then ascend to pour it out upon the altar. It could be the Targum translation may be referring to this aspect of the wine libation as it is related to the ascending onto the mountain, and up unto the altar for atonement. It could also be the rabbis describe the earth as being a place of suffering, and the one standing next to the altar as being near to God in the heavenlies.

ב הִנֵּה כְּעֵינַי עֲבָדִים אֶל-יְיָ אֲדֹנָיָהֶם כְּעֵינַי שְׂפָחָה אֶל-יְיָ גְבוּרָתָה כִּן עֵינַיִנוּ, *123:2 Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, As the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, So our eyes look to the Lord our God, Until He is gracious to us. (NASB)* This verse speaks of the servant looking towards her master for work and guidance. In a similar way we are to do the same to the Lord God our Father in heaven. There is a parallel to the marriage relationship. Not one of master and slave, but where the husband sustains a relation to his wife, the parent to his child, the citizen to his country, each of which include distinctive duties to be discharged growing out of a particular relation. Thinking on the Master of the universe, the Lord appoints the place and position of a man that involves his duties and responsibilities. These relations are all Divinely appointed, such that every duty is a command, and the Word of God is regarded as commanding those duties to his servants, which the relation he bears to them involves and imposes. Our purpose therefore is to inquire into the duties of the Master according to the Word of God. The Lord God chose as Master to be the friend of his servant. Friendship implies good will, kindness, and a desire for the welfare of the servant. Note what we read in *Bereshit / Genesis 24:12*.

#### ***Bereshit / Genesis 24:10-15***

*24:10 Then the servant took ten camels from the camels of his master, and set out with a variety of good things of his master's in his hand; and he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor. 24:11 He made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at evening time, the time when women go out to draw water. 24:12 He said, 'O Lord, the God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today, and show lovingkindness to my master Abraham. 24:13 'Behold, I am standing by the spring, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water; 24:14 now may it be that the girl to whom I say, 'Please let down your jar so that I may drink,' and who answers, 'Drink, and I will water your camels also' may she be the one whom You have appointed for Your servant Isaac; and by this I will know that You have shown lovingkindness to my master.' 24:15 Before he had finished speaking, behold, Rebekah who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor, came out with her jar on her shoulder. (NASB)*

The servant of Abraham believed in the God of Abraham and prayed seeking God's will and involvement in finding a wife for Isaac. As the servant of Abraham, and having faith in the God of Abraham, Eleazar believed there were certain privileges as being able to expect the Lord God in heaven to help him with. We do not serve an unfeeling tyrant or a heartless oppressor. The Lord God in heaven is merciful, loving, and kind, patient to wait upon our repentance, and long-suffering in putting up with a sinful people. The translators introduction to Maimonides Guide to the Perplexed states the following:

### ***Maimonides Guide to the Perplexed Introduction***

*In the final chapters the author describes the several degrees of human perfection, from the sinners who have turned from the right path to the best of men, who in all their thoughts and acts cling to the Most Perfect Being, who aspire after the greatest possible knowledge of God, and strive to serve their Maker in the practice of “loving-kindness, righteousness, and justice.” This degree of human perfection can only be attained by those who never forget the presence of the Almighty, and remain firm in their fear and love of God. These servants of the Most High inherit the choicest of human blessings they are endowed with wisdom they are godlike beings.*

The servant who loves the Lord strives to serve their Maker in the practice of “*mercy/grace/lovingkindness, righteousness, and justice.*” These are the fundamental principles taught in the Torah. Maimonides calls this the highest degree of human perfection, and the reason being, men who live by these principles will be at peace with one another because they remain firm in their fear and love of God.

The Psalm concludes saying, ב הַיְהִי כְעֵינֵי עֲבָדִים אֶל-יְד אֲדוֹנֵיהֶם כְּעֵינֵי שֹׁפְחָה אֶל-יַד גְּבֻרָתָהּ כִּן עֵינֵינוּ, אֶל-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ עַד שְׂחִיחָנוּ: ג חַנּוּן יְהוָה חַנּוּן כִּי-רַב שָׁבַעְנוּ בּוֹ: ד רַבַּת שֹׁכְעָה-לָהּ נַפְשֵׁנוּ הַלְעַג הַשְּׂאֲנָנִים הַבּוֹז אֶל-יְהוָה: 123:3 *Be gracious to us, O Lord, be gracious to us, For we are greatly filled with contempt. 123:4 Our soul is greatly filled With the scoffing of those who are at ease, And with the contempt of the proud.* (NASB) Being filled with contempt is what happens for those who are scoffed at. 2 Peter 3:3 warns us that “*in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires.*” We know from Scripture that scoffing will only increase as we near the time for Yeshua’s return (2 Timothy 3:1-5). Scoffers have always been and will always be present in the world. But there is coming a day when all people will acknowledge the Messiah of God as Lord. On that day there will no longer be any scoffers.

The word translated “*scoffer*” in English is a noun meaning “*someone who jeers or mocks or treats something with contempt or calls out in derision.*” This word combines bitterness with ridicule. The “*scoffer*” or “*mock*er” has pride such that he is filled with contempt to mock others. A scoffer is one who not only disagrees with an idea, but he also considers himself the person to express his opposing ideas. He considers someone else’s opinion foolishness. In the Tanach, scoffers are those who choose to disbelieve God and His Word. They say in their hearts, “*There is no God*” (Tehillim / Psalm 14:1), and make it their ambition to ridicule those who follow in God’s ways. The Scriptures have a lot to say about scoffers (Mishley / Proverbs 19:29, 29:8, Acts 13:41). Solomon says in Mishley / Proverbs 3:34 that the God of Israel “*scoffs at the scoffers, yet He gives grace to the afflicted.*” David states clearly in Tehillim / Psalm 1:1 providing us clear instruction on how to deal with scoffers saying, “*How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers.*” (NASB) Based upon the Psalms, the progression of unbelief begins with listening to ungodly counsel and ends with sitting in their counsel (the counsel of the scoffers). The Lord warns us not to entertain the company of those who actively ridicule our faith, or we risk having that faith destroyed. Solomon says in Mishley / Proverbs 13:20, “*Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.*” (ESV) In this life we are not able to completely escape the presence of scoffers. At one point or another in our lives we will run into such persons. They were present from since the creation (i.e. Noah), when Yeshua was here on earth, and we continue to hear from them today. Yeshua told His disciples, “*If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.*” (John 15:18–19) As a result of this, we should “*always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks ... to give the reason for the hope that you have*” (1 Peter 3:15). However, when we cease to be the influencer’s and start to become the influenced, it is time to “*shake the dust off our feet.*” (Matthew 10:14, Mark 6:11, Luke 10:11) Peter warns us in 2 Peter 3:3 saying, “*in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires*” We see something similar in Jude 1:18 that they were saying to you, “*In the last time*

*there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts.’ 1:19 These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. (NASB) Based upon what is written in the Apostolic Writings, scoffing will increase as we near the return of Yeshua the Messiah. (2 Timothy 3:1-5) The Scriptures tell us that scoffers have always been and will always be present in the world. There is coming however, a promised day when “at the name of Yeshua every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Yeshua the Messiah is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:10-11). On that day every mouth will be shut and there will no longer be any scoffers. Those who reject the Lord and his ways will accept the truth, and scoffing will be forever silenced.*

When dealing with a scoffer, it is important to examine our assumptions. Often our reaction to a situation or a person is built around our assumptions relating to it. We have to be careful we do not build a narrative in our minds that are not real. The question we should ask ourselves, “*Is the situation really as it appears?*” or “*Am I you assuming things that may not be true?*” and “*Do those assumptions really matter?*” When we examine our assumptions we give ourselves a better chance of being able to see a situation for what it really is and then being able to remove the negative attitude out of it. It is difficult sometimes to control our attitudes towards others. *Rabbeinu Bahya on Devarim / Deuteronomy 32:1* (‘*Give ear, O heavens, and let me speak; And let the earth hear the words of my mouth. NASB*) has the following to say.

### ***Rabbeinu Bahya, Devarim / Deuteronomy 32:1 Part 2***

*Solomon informed us in this verse that a righteous person and a wicked person are absolute opposites of one another. Whereas words spoken by the righteous reflect his wisdom, the words spoken by the wicked person reflect the opposite. This is what is meant by Psalms 1,3: “he is like the tree planted beside streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose foliage never fades;” the tree produces leaf and fruit. This is a natural phenomenon, a law of nature which became part of trees alluded to already on the third day of creation when G’d gave the directive to earth: תדשא הארץ, “the earth is to produce vegetation, etc.” The leaf itself performs a useful function in that it protects the fruit against heat by the shade it provides. Nonetheless, the fruit is what counts. Similarly, the righteous is the person, the fruit who counts, he too has “leaves,” similar to the leaves on the tree. His everyday conversation dealing with mundane matters are described as his leaves, whereas his words of Torah are described as his fruit. Just as the leaves on a tree perform an important function, so does even the mundane conversation of the righteous.*

*When our sages in Avodah Zarah 19 interpreted the words “and his leaves do not wither;” (Psalms 1,2) they said that it means that the casual conversations of the righteous are of similar value to the value of the leaves for the fruit of the tree, [for all the above reasons Solomon mentioned here that the mouth of the wise yields up wisdom]. The word ינוב is used in connection with agricultural produce such as in Isaiah 27,6 ומלאו פני תבל תנובה, “and the face of the world will be covered with fruit.” We also find that word in Lamentations 4,9 as referring to the produce of the field. This is also the subject under discussion in Isaiah 57,19 בורא ניב שפתים, “the One Who creates the fruit of the lips.” Speech may be perceived as the “fruit of the lips.” The righteous trains himself so carefully to utter only words of wisdom that wisdom becomes integral to his personality, he personifies it. It is similar to the fruit which represents the essence of the tree.*

*The words: “the tongue of the perverted shall be cut off,” describe the wicked person who is the opposite of the righteous, something which is discernible first and foremost in the way he uses his tongue. Seeing that this wicked person indulges in so much slander, libel, etc., Solomon curses him saying that his tongue ought to be cut off. It is the way of the Torah to attach blessings to the righteous and curses to the wicked. This is why we have the famous saying זכר צדיק לברכה ושם רשעים רקב, “the memory of the righteous is a source of blessing, whereas the name of the wicked will rot.” (Proverbs 10,7) It is well known that the virtue*

*of humility is associated with wisdom, whereas arrogance is a characteristic of the wicked. Just as wisdom is “the fruit” of the righteous, so arrogance is “the fruit” of the wicked. This is why Solomon says (Proverbs 14,3) “in the mouth of the fools is a rod (branch) of pride, but the lips of the wise protect them.” The source of arrogance is in the heart of the fool and its branch becomes manifest in his mouth. The prophet Isaiah 11,10 illustrated this when he spoke of הוטר describing it as a “branch,” i.e. “a branch comes forth from the trunk of Yishai.” Branches cannot grow unless there is a trunk to support them. There is no point in describing the emergence of such a branch unless it is going to bear fruit. The fruit of such branches of the foolish, the wicked, are words of arrogance, scorn. David paraphrases the same sentiment in Psalms 123,4 הַלְעַג הַשְׂאֲנָנִים, הַבוֹז לְגֵאוּנִים, “the scorn of the complacent, the contempt of the haughty.” In other words, the fool gets so used to being arrogant that arrogance becomes second nature to him. Seeing that he “branch” of arrogance is so often in his mouth, it is a foregone conclusion that it will bear fruit, i.e. that he cannot restrain himself from saying things which reveal his arrogance to all his listeners. On the other hand, the wise are protected by their very lips against their mouths saying things they should not say.*

*Basically, the logic in all this is that the righteous is drawn to preoccupy himself with matters of the soul, matters which are of eternal value and meaning; the wicked, on the contrary, is preoccupied with transient values, matters which sooner or later cease to exist and have meaning. It is a well known fact that the very definition of the word “body” means that it is something “earthy,” will revert to dust, whereas the soul is something which came from heaven. As long as man is alive in this terrestrial life, he is drawn equally toward earth and heaven. He is drawn towards heaven due to his soul, and towards earthy matters due to his body. Therefore, when Moses cautioned the people to keep the Torah and its commandments, he used as witnesses heaven and earth, both of which are conceptually close to man. This is why he said:*

This commentary states that even the mundane conversations of the righteous produce fruit for the kingdom of God. The commentary states, *“The righteous trains himself so carefully to utter only words of wisdom that wisdom becomes integral to his personality, he personifies it. It is similar to the fruit which represents the essence of the tree.”* We are to be about the business of putting into memory all of the things of God, this becomes the essence of who we are as God’s people. The rabbis say, *“It is well known that the virtue of humility is associated with wisdom, whereas arrogance is a characteristic of the wicked. Just as wisdom is “the fruit” of the righteous, so arrogance is “the fruit” of the wicked.”* The idea is that arrogance so often has the capacity to lead us away from the things of the Lord. This is why we are told the righteous is drawn to preoccupy himself with the matters of the soul, matters which have eternal value and meaning. This is why Yeshua taught us to store up treasures in heaven (*Matthew 6:20*). Let’s Pray!

Heavenly Father,

Thank You Lord for Your mercy and the great work that you are doing in our lives. We believe You are able to overcome all things, from saving us from our enemies, to the deliverance from sin, and even to work in our hearts to deeply, truly, and honestly seek you all the days of our lives. We recognize the weaknesses in our strength and resolve to serve You and to do what is expected, to be humble and to pray and to remain in Your word. Lord help us to have the strength to stand for truth and life, to have the desire to seek You in prayer and in Your Word, to have faith in Yeshua Your Messiah, 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!

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הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:

Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,

“Yeshua” King Messiah forever and ever

## Notes