

ספר תהילים קכג | 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 הַמַּעְלֹת 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 מַסְקִינַן מְסֻקִין דְּתֵהוּמָא קְדַמְךָ זְקַפִּית יִת 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 כְעֵינֵי עֲבָדִים אֶל-יְדֵי אֲדוֹנֵיהֶם כְּעֵינֵי שְׁפָחָה אֶל-יְדֵי גַבְרֹתָהּ כִּן 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 כְעֵינֵי עֲבָדִים אֶל-יְדֵי אֲדוֹנֵיהֶם כְּעֵינֵי שְׁפָחָה אֶל-יְדֵי גַבְרֹתָהּ כִּן עֵינֵינוּ אֶל-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ עַד שְׁיִחְנֶנּוּ: ג חָנְנוּ יְהוָה חֲנֹנוּ כִּי-רַב שָׁבַעְנוּ בּוֹ: ד רַבַּת שְׁבַעָה-לָהּ שְׁפָחָה אֶל-יְדֵי גַבְרֹתָהּ כִּן עֵינֵינוּ אֶל-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ עַד שְׁיִחְנֶנּוּ: *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

<p style="text-align: center;">ספר תהלים פרק קכג</p> <p>א שִׁיר הַמַּעְלֹת אֲלֶיךָ נְשֹׂאתִי אֶת- עֵינֵי הַיֹּשְׁבֵי בַשָּׁמַיִם: ב הִנֵּה כְעֵינֵי עֲבָדִים אֶל-יְדֵי אֲדוֹנֵיהֶם כְּעֵינֵי שְׁפָחָה אֶל-יְדֵי גַבְרֹתָהּ כִּן עֵינֵינוּ אֶל-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ עַד שְׁיִחְנֶנּוּ: ג חָנְנוּ יְהוָה חֲנֹנוּ כִּי-רַב שָׁבַעְנוּ בּוֹ: ד רַבַּת שְׁבַעָה-לָהּ נַפְשֵׁנוּ הִלְעַג הַשְּׂאֲנָנִים הַבּוֹז לַגְּאִיוֹנִים:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ספר טוביה פרק קכג</p> <p>א שִׁירָא דֵאִיתְאֲמַר עַל מַסְקִינַן מְסֻקִין דְּתֵהוּמָא קְדַמְךָ זְקַפִּית יִת עֵינֵי דִיתִיב עַל כּוֹרְסֵי יְקָרָא בְשָׁ- מֵיָא: ב א כְּמָא דְמוֹדִיקִין עֵינֵי עַבְדִין מְגִיסָא מִיֵּדֵיָא דְרִיבּוֹנִיהוֹן וְהִיכְמָא דְמוֹדִיקִין עֵינֵי אֲמַתָּא מְגֵי- סָא מִיֵּדֵיָא דְרִיבּוֹנְתָהָא הַכְדִין מְדֵי- קָן עֵינְנָא קְדָם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵנָא עַד זְמַן דֵי יְחוּס עֲלֵנָא: ג חוּס עֲלֵן יְהוָה חוּס עֲלֵן אַרוּם סְגִי שְׁבַעְנָא בְּסִירוּתָא בְּסִרְנוּתָא: ד סוּגְעָא שְׁבַעַת לָהּ נַפְשָׁנָא תְּלַעּוּבָא דִישְׁל- וּוִינַן מְבַסְרָנָא וּגְיוּוֹתְנָיָא:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 123</p> <p>123:1 ᾠδὴ 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 ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς κύριε ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς ὅτι ἐπὶ πολὺ ἐπλήσθημεν ἐξουδενώσεως 123:4 ἐπὶ πλεῖον ἐπλήσθη ἡ ψυχὴ ἡμῶν τὸ ὄνειδος τοῖς εὐθηνούσιν καὶ ἡ ἐξουδένωσις τοῖς ὑπερηφάνοις</p>

<p>Tehillim Psalms 123 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>Toviyah Psalms 123 123:1 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>Psalmoi Psalms 123 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, נְשֹׂאתִי אֶת-עֵינַי הַיְשָׁבִי 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 הַמַּעֲלוֹת אֶלֶיךָ נְשֹׂאתִי 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 מזבח 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 מזבח 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 למזבח 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 אֲדוֹנָיָהֶם 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 הנה כְּעֵינֵי עֲבָדִים אֶל-יְד אֲדוֹנֵיהֶם כְּעֵינֵי שֹׁפְחָה אֶל-יְד גְּבֻרָתָהּ כֵּן עֵינֵינוּ אֶל-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ עַד שִׂיחֲנֵנוּ: ג חַנּוּן יְהוָה חַנּוּן כִּי-רַב שָׂבַעְנוּ בּוֹ: ד רַבַּת שֹׁבְעָה-לָהּ נַפְשֵׁנוּ הַלְעַג הַשְּׂאֲנָנִים הַבּוֹז לְאֲזִוּוֹתֵינוּ: 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 לְגֵאוֹנִים, “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!

Rabbinic Commentary

The Rabbinic Commentary (Midrash) on *Tehillim / Psalms 123* has 3 parts. Reading through the Midrash we will be looking at Part 1, 2, and 3. Let’s begin by outlining *Midrash Tehillim Chapter 123, Parts 1, 2, and 3*.

Outline of Midrash Tehillim / Psalms, Chapter 123, Part 1, 2, and 3

Part 1

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the דִּבּוּר הַמַּתְחִיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying, *“Unto You I lift*

up my eyes (Tehillim / Psalms 123:1)."

- The פתיחתא (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, *"You find that there is no part of the body with which David did not praise the Holy One blessed be He."*
- The משל (mashal) *"the parable,"* goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis speak of using the body to praise the Lord.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) *"expansion on the parable"* expands upon the משל (mashal), with a discussion on David using oil to anoint his head for the purpose of serving the Lord. What stops us from using all of our body in the service of the Lord?
- The Concluding phrase says, *"With his eyes, he praised God, My eyes are ever toward the Lord (Tehillim / Psalms 25:15), and Unto You I lift up my eyes, O You that are enthroned in the heavens (Tehillim / Psalms 123:1)."*

Part 2

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying, *"Therefore you are My witnesses, says the Lord, and I am God (Isaiah 43:12)"*
- The פתיחתא (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, *"that is, When you are My witnesses, I am God, and when you are not My witnesses, I am not God."*
- The משל (mashal) *"the parable,"* goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis discuss the purpose of serving the Lord God in heaven.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) *"expansion on the parable"* expands upon the משל (mashal), with discussion on how our service to the Lord, our humbling our lives enthrones God in heaven.
- The Concluding phrase says, *"If it were not for me, You would not be enthroned in the heavens."*

Part 3

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying, *"The Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you (Bamidbar / Numbers 6:25) with the gift of grace."*
- The פתיחתא (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, *"Likewise, Scripture says, Our eyes look unto the Lord our God, until He be gracious unto us (Tehillim / Psalms 123:2)..."*
- The משל (mashal) *"the parable,"* goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis speak of the grace of God.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) *"expansion on the parable"* expands upon the משל (mashal), stating that the grace of God is a gift.
- The Concluding phrase says, *"As Scripture says, Be gracious unto us, O Lord, be gracious unto us; for we are full sated with contempt."*

Midrash Tehillim 123, Part 1 opens with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying, *"Unto You I lift up my eyes (Tehillim / Psalms 123:1)."* The homiletic introduction to the midrash states, *"You find that there is no part of the body with which David did not praise the Holy One blessed be He."* The midrash speaks of David praising the Lord with all parts of his body. The Lord God in heaven deserves to be praised and He is worthy to receive our praise, the Psalms speak extensively in regards to the importance of praising the Lord.

Tehillim / Psalm 96:4 *"For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods" (NASB).*

Tehillim / Psalm 145:3 *"Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom" (NASB).*

2 Samuel 22:4 “I call to the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies” (NASB).

Revelation 4:11 “You are worthy, our LORD and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being” (NASB).

Bringing praises to our God, we are reminded of His greatness, the power, and the presence of God in our lives. Singing, exclaiming, or bearing the testimony of God all of these strengthen our faith.

The entire midrash states the following:

<p>מדרש תהלים פרק קכג סימן א</p> <p>א אליך נשאתי את עיני. אתה מוצא אין לך אבר ואבר שלא קילס להקב"ה בו כו' קילסו בראשו, דשנת בשמן ראשי (תה-לים כג ה), קילסו בעיניו, עיני תמיד אל ה' (שם תהלים כה טו), אליך נשאתי את עיני (שם קכג א) כו'.</p>	<p>Midrash Tehillim 123, Part 1</p> <p>1. Unto You I lift up my eyes (Tehillim / Psalms 123:1). You find that there is no part of the body with which David did not praise the Holy One blessed be He. With his head, he praised God, You have anointed my head with oil (Tehillim / Psalms 23:5). With his eyes, he praised God, My eyes are ever toward the Lord (Tehillim / Psalms 25:15), and Unto You I lift up my eyes, O You that are enthroned in the heavens (Tehillim / Psalms 123:1).</p>
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Note how the midrash speaks of the head and the eyes praising the Lord God of Israel saying, “With his head, he praised God, You have anointed my head with oil (Tehillim / Psalms 23:5). With his eyes, he praised God, My eyes are ever toward the Lord (Tehillim / Psalms 25:15).” From a rabbinic perspective, this would be consistent with using our minds (studying Torah) and keeping our eyes fixed upon the Lord and His words. David lifted his eyes to the Lord in prayer. “To You I lift up my eyes, O You who are enthroned in the heavens!” (Tehillim / Psalms 123:1) David wrote of the generation that seeks the Lord’s face. He spoke metaphorically to indicate that we have the ability to shut up our minds from the truth of God. We also have the ability to allow the Lord and His Spirit to enter into our lives and our hearts. Note what he says in Tehillim / Psalms 24:6-10, “This is the generation of those who seek Him, Who seek Your face--even Jacob. Selah. Lift up your heads, O gates, And be lifted up, O ancient doors, That the King of glory may come in! Who is the King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, The LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O gates, And lift them up, O ancient doors, That the King of glory may come in! Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah.” This psalm speaks of our hearts and minds being gates, and in order for the Lord God in heaven to enter into our lives, we must invite Him in. The invitation is consistent with our humbling our lives to the point of our submission to His will. Yeshua said something similar saying, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.” (Revelation 3:20) Note also the similarity in Yeshua’s statement from Luke 21:28 which states, “But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” Yeshua speaks of the end times and the expectation of the Lord’s redemption from this world of sin. This is the way we show our love for the Lord with all our strength, as well as our hearts and minds. These things describe us changing our whole posture to be open up with joyful expectation for the Lord to come. There are many examples from the Scriptures, Nebuchadnezzar raised his Eyes Toward Heaven where the Scriptures state, “But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom endures from generation to generation.” (Daniel 4:34). He said, “I raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me.” The Lord honored that one, simple act of humility and faith on his part. Then he blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him. We can give glory and praise to our God with the use of our physical bodies, with our hearts and minds, and with our deeds.

We live in a culture of comfort, entitlement and self-indulgence. The lives of God’s people in Yeshua the Messiah should declare a very different message. This is the meaning of bearing the testimony of God.

The testimony of our lives should be as the living sacrifice, where our whole bodies, both flesh and spirit are presented to God as holy and acceptable (*Romans 12:1*). Our culture says our bodies are just another means of self-seeking gain. The question is whether our hope for eternal life is nothing less than more of the same? Modern theologies would say our bodies are inconsequential to our call as ambassadors to proclaim what God is doing, reconciling the world to Himself. (*2 Corinthians 5:19*) When we study the Torah, we learn the Lord God fashioned man out of the dust of the ground to be a physical being (*Bereshit / Genesis 2:7*) and declared the peak of His creation to be very good (*Bereshit / Genesis 1:31*). If we truly believe this, then our bodies cannot be inconsequential. The Lord created us as physical and spiritual beings made in His image and gave us the mandate to cultivate the earth and fill it with His image (*Bereshit / Genesis 1:26-28*), then our bodies must have purpose. Note that we function in a similar manner as everyone else, we spend much of our short existence tending to our bodies through sleep, food and physical activity. Yet we are called to live in submission to God’s Word, which commands all our activity to be performed for the glory of God (*1 Corinthians 10:31*), by the Spirit and not the sinful nature (*Galatians 5:16-17*). What does this mean for believers in day-to-day life? This is related to God’s Torah!

Midrash Tehillim 123 Part 1 concludes saying, “*Unto You I lift up my eyes, O You that are enthroned in the heavens (Tehillim / Psalms 123:1).*” What does it mean to lift our eyes to the Lord? It means to acknowledge His sovereignty over our lives. We lift our eyes because He knows all and is the sustainer of all things. Isaiah lifted his eyes to the throne of God and saw Him “*high and lifted up*” in the temple (*Isaiah 6:1*). He is sovereign. He is the Master; we are the servants. He is the Creator; we are the creatures. He is the Heavenly Father; we are His children.

Midrash Tehillim / Psalms 123 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying, “*Therefore you are My witnesses, says the Lord, and I am God (Isaiah 43:12)*” The homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*that is, When you are My witnesses, I am God, and when you are not My witnesses, I am not God.*” The entire midrash states the following:

<p style="text-align: center;">מדרש תהלים פרק קכג סימן ב</p> <p>ב ואתם עדי נאם ה' ואני אל (ישעיה מג יב), כשאתם עדי אני אל וכשאין אתם עדי אין אני אל, כיוצא בדבר אתה אומר אליך נשאתי את עיני היושבי בשמים (תהלים קכג א), אלמלא אני לא היית יושב בשמים כו'.</p>	<p>Midrash Tehillim 123, Part 2</p> <p>2. <i>Therefore you are My witnesses, says the Lord, and I am God (Isaiah 43:12) that is, When you are My witnesses, I am God, and when you are not My witnesses, I am not God. Similarly, when you say, Into You I lift up my eyes, O You that are enthroned in the heavens (Tehillim / Psalms 123:1), you are saying If it were not for me, You would not be enthroned in the heavens.</i></p>
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It is interesting how the midrash states, “*When you are My witnesses, I am God, and when you are not My witnesses, I am not God.*” Are the rabbis speaking in the literal sense? Does the Lord God in heaven cease to be God when we are not His witness? If this is not the case, then what exactly are the rabbis talking about? These comments are based upon *Isaiah 43:12* אֲנֹכִי הַגִּדְתִּי וְהוֹשַׁעְתִּי וְהַשְׁמַעְתִּי וְאִין בְּכֶם זָר וְאַתֶּם עֲדֵי I alone foretold the triumph And I brought it to pass; I announced it, And no strange god was among you. So you are My witnesses —declares the LORD— And I am God. (NASB) Isaiah speaks of being God’s witness which is connected to there being no strange god among the people, and the declaration that the God of Israel is God. The concept here is of man not being a witness for the Lord is synonymous to the Lord not being God in his life or having authority over his ways. This draws in the context of idolatry and becoming like the thing that is worshiped, blind, deaf, dumb, and unable to move. The Talmud describes these things in the following way:

Talmud Bavli Chagigah 16a:17

And the Sages say: A person’s soul shall itself testify against him, as it is stated: “Guard the doors of your mouth from she who lies in your bosom” (Micah 7:5). What thing lies in a per-

son's bosom? You must say it is his soul. Rabbi Zerika said: The two ministering angels who accompany him, i.e., each individual, they testify against him, as it is stated: "For He will command his angels over you, to guard you in all your ways" (Psalms 91:11). And the Sages say: A person's limbs testify against him, as it is stated: "Therefore you are My witnesses, says the Lord, and I am God" (Isaiah 43:12), which indicates that each individual becomes his own witness and testifies against himself on the Day of Judgment.

Three words which over time developed the meaning of "soul" are present in the Tanakh as Neshamah, Nefesh, and Ruah. Tracing the development of these terms gives us some idea of the ancient Israelites' beliefs regarding the soul. The Sages speak of the dangers of the soul (neshamah) the natural and depraved part of our being, the base nature, which has the capacity for evil and unrighteousness (i.e. the flesh). They speak of guarding the mouth because what we say comes from our hearts. The soul is described as testifying against us. The soul appears to be that which leads a man to his actions, which is why the Sages describe "A person's limbs testify against him..." The word used for "soul" is related to a Hebrew word indicating breath. The word neshamah later become associated with the soul in Jewish thought, however, here the neshamah describes that thing which animates the body and brought man to live as a living creature. This living aspect of man, the thing which animated him, the breath of God does not have a personality. Similar, the Ruach (wind/spirit) of God was also known as a motivating force upon the lives of men as it says in *Bereshit / Genesis 6:3*, :ג וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה לֹא-יִדּוֹן רוּחִי בָאָדָם לְעֹלָם בְּשָׂגָם הוּא בָשָׂר וְהָיוּ יָמָיו מֵאָה וָעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה: 6:3 Then the Lord said, 'My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years. (NASB) God said "my breath (ruach) will not govern man forever since he is flesh." Here we see the Lord ending the association of the ruach with the mortal body at death. The word nefesh is often understood to mean person or living being. Note the term "nefesh" is found in *Vayikra / Leviticus 17:11*, יֵאָכֵל כִּי-נֶפֶשׁ הַבָּשָׂר בַּדָּם הוּא וְאֲנִי נֹתְתִיו לָכֶם עַל-הַמְזִבָּה לְכַפֵּר עַל-נֶפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם כִּי-הֵדָם, 17:11 הוּא בַנֶּפֶשׁ יְכַפֵּר: (NASB) Nefesh reflects a personal dimension, it is our self, our minds, who we are as a person. This is why we call the soul the unique, everlasting, intangible part of a person. Ecclesiastes 12:7 states at death, a person is described as "... the dust returns to the ground where it had been and the ruah returns to the God who had given it." This is the thing that connects us to the Lord God of Israel, and why when we live for Him, the rabbis say, "When you are My witnesses, I am God, and when you are not My witnesses, I am not God."

The Mekhilta d'Rabbi Yishmael 20:14 Part 1 states the following:

Mekhilta d'Rabbi Yishmael 20:14 Part 1

How were the Ten Commandments given? Five on one tablet and five on the other. "I am the L rd your G d," and opposite it "You shall not kill," whereby Scripture apprises us that spilling blood is tantamount to "diminishing" the likeness of the King. An analogy: A king of flesh and blood enters a province, sets up statues of himself, makes images of himself, and mints coins in his likeness. After some time, they upset his statues, break his images, devalue his coins — and "diminish" the likeness of the king. Likewise, Scripture equates spilling blood to "diminishing" the likeness of the King, as it is written (Genesis 9:6) "One who spills the blood of man ... (For in the image of G d did He make man.)" It is written "There shall not be unto you any other gods in My presence," and, opposite it, "You shall not commit adultery," whereby Scripture apprises us that idolatry is tantamount to adultery. As it is written (Ezekiel 16:32) "You are the (very essence of the) adulterous woman, who (though) living with her husband, (still) takes strangers," and (Hoshea 3:1) "And the L rd said again to me: "Go and love a woman beloved by her husband, and playing the harlot under him — just as the L rd loves the children of Israel, while they turn to other gods..." It is written "You shall not take the name of the L rd your G d in vain," and, opposite it, "You shall not steal," whereby we

are apprised that one who steals, in the end comes to swear in vain, as it is written (Jeremiah 7:9) “Shall one steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely (... and go after the gods of others, etc.?” And it is written (Hoshea 4:2) “swearing, lying, murdering, stealing, (committing) adultery...” It is written “Remember the Sabbath day to sanctify it,” and, opposite it, “You shall not testify (falsely),” whereby Scripture apprises us that one who desecrates the Sabbath thereby testifies before Him who spoke and brought the world into being that He did not create His world in six days and did not rest on the seventh day, and that one who keeps the Sabbath thereby testifies before Him who spoke and brought the world into being that He created His world in six days and rested on the seventh day, as it is written (Isaiah 43:10) “You are My witnesses, says the L rd ... that I am He. Before Me no god was created and there will be none after Me.” It is written “Honor your father and your mother,” and, opposite it, “You shall not covet,” whereby Scripture apprises us that whoever covets, in the end comes to beget a son who curses his father and honors one who is not his father. This is why the Ten Commandments were given, five on one tablet and five on the other. These are the words of R. Chanina b. Gamliel. The sages say: (They were given) ten on one tablet and ten on the other. As it is written (Devarim 5:19) “These things (the ten commandments) the L rd spoke ... And He wrote them on two tablets of stone.” And (Song of Songs 4:5) “Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle.” And (Ibid. 5:14) (“The tablets of) His hands are wheels of gold, set with emeralds.”

The rabbis say we are created in the likeness of God. This was taken from the creation account, the Lord God making man in His image (*Bereshit / Genesis 1:27*). The idea is having been made in the likeness of God, we are to imitate the things of God (i.e. walk in His ways). Similarly, when one commits murder, he diminishes the likeness of the King as it says in the commentary. The concept of having other gods in the place of the God of Israel is drawn into this context (idolatry). As a result Adultery is forbidden because it parallels idolatry. Adultery is unfaithfulness to a husband or wife, and idolatry is unfaithfulness to the Lord God in heaven. The Mekhilta states taking the name of the Lord in vain is opposite (synonymous) to stealing. *Jeremiah 7:9* states “*Shall one steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely (... and go after the gods of others?*” Note how all of these things are connected, the one who steals in the end swears falsely, the one who murders diminishes the image of the King, and the one who commits adultery is as one who commits idolatry. The rabbis say all of these things are related to honoring the name of the Lord by bearing His testimonies. The Shabbat is a witness and a testimony of God’s Work and therefore should be honored. The point is we are God’s witnesses and are called to walk in the footsteps of the Messiah Yeshua, who bore the testimony of God as His witness.

Midrash Tehillim 123 Part 2 concludes saying, “*If it were not for me, You would not be enthroned in the heavens.*” Do the rabbis really believe if it were not for us God would not be enthroned in the heavens? There is a connection to what we do here on earth that has a heavenly counterpart. This is why the Targum translation refers to the ascending to the altar as ascending from the abyss. 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. When we walk with the Lord and Yeshua the Messiah according to His Torah, we are walking with God in the heavenlies. This is the meaning of being seated with him upon His throne (*Revelation 3:21*).

Midrash Tehillim 123, Part 3 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתהיל) saying, “*The Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you (Bamidbar / Numbers 6:25) with the gift of grace.*” The homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*Likewise, Scripture says, Our eyes look unto the Lord our God, until He be gracious unto us (Tehillim / Psalms 123:2)...*” The rabbinic description here of the Lord causing his face to shine upon us with the gift of grace, and of raising our eyes to look unto the Lord our God until He is gracious unto us, are consistent with what we read in the Apostolic Writings. To raise our eyes unto the Lord, we seek His ways, to following His Messiah, and to humble our lives for His glory!

The entire midrash states the following:

<p>מדרש תהלים פרק קכג סימן ג ג יאר ה' פניו אליך ויחנך (במ־ דבר ו כה). במתנת חנם, וכה"א כן עינינו אל ה' אלהינו עד שיחננו (תהלים קכג ב), ואומר חננו ה' חננו כי רב שבענו בוז (שם שם תהלים קכ"ג ג).</p>	<p>Midrash Tehillim 123, Part 3 3. <i>The Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you (Bamidbar / Numbers 6:25) with the gift of grace. Likewise, Scripture says, Our eyes look unto the Lord our God, until He be gracious unto us (Tehillim / Psalms 123:2), and also, Be gracious unto us, O Lord, be gracious unto us; for we are full sated with contempt (Tehillim / Psalms 123:3). Another comment, And be gracious unto you to bring you forth from servitude to the kingdoms. As Scripture says, Be gracious unto us, O Lord, be gracious unto us; for we are full sated with contempt.</i></p>
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Judaism is not without the concept of the grace of God. We read in *Acts 13:42 As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people urged them to continue this message on the next Sabbath. 13:43 After the synagogue was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them and urged them to continue in the grace of God. 13:44 On the following Sabbath, nearly the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord...* (NIV) Note how these are gentile converts who were in the synagogue learning the Torah and seeking the God of Israel. They heard Paul and Barnabas teach and urged them to continue “in the grace of God.” “The Law” is a Christian term that is, unfortunately, used to refer to “the Torah” (the first five books of the Bible). In addition, in the Christian tradition, the Bible is divided into two major sections, (1) the Old Testament, and (2) the New Testament. As a result, the basic Christian understand is the Old Testament is the basis of Jewish faith, one which is very different from Grace. However, Torah is filled with references to the grace of God, and instructs us to be gracious and merciful towards others because of the Lord’s grace and mercy towards us. This is why it is so important for us to understand the Torah is derived from the root word for teaching or instruction. The translation as Law tends to come from the influence of replacement theology. The author of the Complete Jewish Bible felt it necessary to translate the Greek “*upo nomon*” which is classically rendered as “*under law*,” as “*in subjection to the system which results from perverting the Torah into legalism.*” This interpretation of the Torah as legalism was what Yeshua disputed with the Pharisees. Yeshua clearly stated that he did not come to abolish the Torah. Note also in *Galatians 4:4-5*, the Complete Jewish Bible reads, “*4:4 but when the appointed time arrived, God sent forth his Son. He was born from a woman, born into a culture in which legalistic perversion of the Torah was the norm, 4:5 so that he might redeem those in subjection to this legalism and thus enable us to be made God’s sons.*” David Stern also recognized what is going on in the first century context in relation to the Torah, it was not meant as a legalistic way of earning one’s salvation which is in so many Christian theologies of today. The point is, the Israelite whose righteousness is all in his efforts to obey Torah, without trusting in God, is in the same position as a non-Jew (gentile) who is self righteous in his abstention from a list of worldly things. We are to measure ourselves against Torah of which Yeshua amplified (raised to the next higher level) to see how we have fallen short of its standard and to throw ourselves on the mercy of God. It is important to understand, the Old and New Covenants are one continual revelation of the Messiah Yeshua (Jesus Christ) who leads his people into salvation and of upholding the righteous ways of God in our lives. The New Covenant is the continuation and fulfillment of the Old Testament (Tanach) faith, by virtue of its being the vine which joins together Jew and Gentile people of authentic faith into one Body for eternity. Consider the case of Abraham, the ancient father of Israel when thinking on the topic of Judaism and Christianity. The modern thinking was there was a great divide among the people in that time which created two separate religions. The early believers however never saw themselves in a distinctly different way, but saw themselves as faithful believers who were simply following the teachings of their rabbi Yeshua within the context of the Jewish teachings. This may be understood by the fact that the main dispute amongst the believers at that time was a matter of conversion to Judaism, and in what way the gentile believers should behave themselves as they followed in the faith. Everything we read in the Torah was building up and point to the work of God’s Messiah Yeshua. This is why we find in the Apostolic Writings the disciples claiming Yeshua was the fulfillment of the promises given by God. Paul’s references to the “Jewish religion” is the context he provides making an argument for a gentile in-

clusion. For example, the Pharisees asked Yeshua why His followers disobeyed the traditions of the elders in the washing of hands? (They did not wash their hands when breaking bread.) Matthew 15:2-3 states the Pharisees saying “Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread.” It is interesting how this is interpreted as breaking a commandment in the Torah. Yeshua recognized this and say, “Why do ye transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?” What we see here is the traditions of the elders made the Law of God to none effect.

If you asked the Average Christian “*Isn't it wonderful how God extended His grace to people in the New Testament?*” The answer would be receive an emphatic “*Yes it is!*” On the other hand, if asking the same person how wonderful the Lord God is by extending His grace to the people in the Old Testament, that same person would not react with such enthusiasm. The response would be with less positive because the idea of grace is not taught as being given to man from since the beginning. Most Christian theologies do not teach that the Law is setting for establishing God's grace, but that the Law is only a strict obligation that was placed on Israel and not the gentile believers. When thinking in this context, most Christians think of the book of Leviticus because it is there we find a description of the sacrificial services, and food restrictions (dietary laws), etc. The Torah however is much richer in meaning than simply this. For example, the Lord chose Abram and called him to leave his fathers house to a new land (Bereshit / Genesis 12:1, Parashat Lech Lecha). The Lord God did not choose Abram because he was particularly good or holy, nor because he and his wife were young and able to sire many children. The Lord God chose Abram merely because of Chesed (grace). Note that the word chesed does not appear in the description of the Lord calling Abram, the concept of His grace in choosing him is clear (i.e. *Romans 4:3-4*).

Romans 4:1-13

*4:1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found?
4:2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 4:3 For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.' 4:4 Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. 4:5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, 4:6 just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: 4:7 'Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, And whose sins have been covered. 4:8 'Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account.' 4:9 Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, 'Faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness.' 4:10 How then was it credited? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised; 4:11 and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them, 4:12 and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised. 4:13 For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. (NASB)*

The Lord not only chose Abram to be his own, but also promised to make of him a great nation in whom the entire earth would be blessed (*Bereshit / Genesis 12:2-3*). Can you see how God's grace was to be extended not only to one nation, Israel, but to many! We are able to see this in Abraham's children through Isaac and Jacob multiplied greatly (*Shemot / Exodus 1:7*). During a four hundred-year captivity in Egypt the family became a people and the people a nation. The Lord God had chosen Israel, but she was not yet in her own land. The new Pharaoh saw the Israelites as a menace, so he enslaved them (*Shemot / Exodus 1:9-10*). In their bondage the Israelites cried out to God and He answered them because of His grace. In the sacrificial system, we also find the grace of God. Many Christians approach Leviticus and the sacrificial system with an attitude of, “*Isn't that awful! It is all law and no grace. What a load of restrictions God has placed upon*

the Jewish people! I am glad I don't have to do all those things to have a relationship with God!" Midrash Tehillim 123 Part 3 concludes saying, *"Another comment, And be gracious unto you to bring you forth from servitude to the kingdoms. As Scripture says, Be gracious unto us, O Lord, be gracious unto us; for we are full sated with contempt."* The facts are, the sacrificial system was given by the grace of God. The reason being, it was through the sacrificial system the Lord God provided the means for dealing with sin. The offerings were a pathway for the lawbreakers, who knew God and were already in relationship with him because of his Chesed (grace). The offerings remind us of God's holiness and the unfaithfulness of the people who know him. 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!

הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:

Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,

"Yeshua" King Messiah forever and ever

Notes