

## ספר תהילים קכד | Tehillim / Psalms 124

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### The God of Life, not the God of Death

א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת לְדָוִד לְלוֹי׃ הַיְהוָה שְׁהֵיָה לָנוּ יְאֹמֵר-נָא יִשְׂרָאֵל׃  
*A song of ascents. Of David 124:1 'Had it not been the Lord who was on our side, Let Israel now say, (NASB)* The psalmist asks the question, had the Lord not been on our side, to get us thinking about what life would be without the Lord. The Psalm continues saying,  
 ב לְלוֹי׃ הַיְהוָה שְׁהֵיָה לָנוּ בָקוּם עָלֵינוּ אָדָם׃ ג אֲזִי חַיִּים בָּלְעוּנוּ בְּחַרוֹת אָפֶם בָּנוּ׃  
*124:2 'Had it not been the Lord who was on our side When men rose up against us, 124:3 Then they would have swallowed us alive, When their anger was kindled against us; (NASB)* The concept being put forward here is that Evil men do not understand justice, and for such persons, the fellow man is in danger of being consumed in the flames of one's sin. The Psalm describes this in the following way,  
 ד אֲזִי הַמַּיִם שְׁטַפוּנוּ נַחֲלָה עָבַר עַל-נַפְשֵׁנוּ׃ ה אֲזִי עָבַר עַל-נַפְשֵׁנוּ הַמַּיִם, הַיַּיְדוּנִים׃  
*124:4 Then the waters would have engulfed us, The stream would have swept over our soul; 124:5 Then the raging waters would have swept over our soul.'* (NASB) Water is one of the most common and powerful concepts of being overwhelmed by a force that is not controllable but powerful even to the moving of mountains. The raging waters of their fury would have overwhelmed our very life of David and his people. The Lord however is in the midst of His people, and they are able to say,  
 ו בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה שֶׁלֹא נִתְּנָנוּ טָרֶף, לְשֵׁנֵיהֶם׃ ז נַפְשֵׁנוּ כְּצַפּוֹר נִמְלְטָה מִפֶּחַ יוֹקְשִׁים הִפַּח נִשְׁבֵּר וְאֲנַחְנוּ נִמְלְטָנוּ׃ ח עֲזָרְנוּ בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה עֲשֵׂה שְׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ׃  
*124:6 Blessed be the Lord, Who has not given us to be torn by their teeth. 124:7 Our soul has escaped as a bird out of the snare of the trapper; The snare is broken and we have escaped. 124:8 Our help is in the name of the Lord, Who made heaven and earth. (NASB)* Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 2: 25 *Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 2:26 and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will. (NASB)* The idea is the Lord grants us mercy for the purpose of leading us back into repentance.

עברית	Hebrew	ארמי	Aramaic	ελληνικός	Greek
<b>ספר תהילים פרק קכד</b>	<b>ספר טוביה פרק קכד</b>	<b>ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 124</b>			
א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת לְדָוִד לְלוֹי׃ הַיְהוָה שְׁהֵיָה לָנוּ יְאֹמֵר-נָא יִשְׂרָאֵל׃ ב לְלוֹי׃ הַיְהוָה שְׁהֵיָה לָנוּ בָקוּם עָלֵינוּ אָדָם׃ ג אֲזִי חַיִּים בָּלְעוּנוּ בְּחַרוֹת אָפֶם בָּנוּ׃ ד אֲזִי הַמַּיִם שְׁטַפוּנוּ נַחֲלָה עָבַר עַל-נַפְשֵׁנוּ׃ ה אֲזִי עָבַר עַל-נַפְשֵׁנוּ הַמַּיִם הַיַּיְדוּנִים׃ ו בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה שֶׁלֹא נִתְּנָנוּ טָרֶף לְשֵׁנֵיהֶם׃ ז נַפְשֵׁנוּ כְּצַפּוֹר נִמְלְטָה מִפֶּחַ יוֹקְשִׁים הִפַּח נִשְׁבֵּר וְאֲנַחְנוּ נִמְלְטָנוּ׃ ח עֲזָרְנוּ בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה עֲשֵׂה שְׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ׃	א שִׁירָא דִּיתְאִמַּר עַל מַסְקִיָּן מַסּוֹר־ קִין דְּתַהוּמָא עַל יַד דּוּד אִילּוּלֵי יְהוּוּה דְּהוּוּה בְּסַעֲדָנָא יִימְרוּן כְּדוּן יִשְׂרָאֵל׃ ב אִילּוּלֵי מִימְרָא דִּיהוּוּה דְּהוּוּה בְּסַעֲדָנָא כְּד קַם עֵלְנָא בְּרַ נְשׁ חַיִּיבָא׃ ג הָא בְּכַן כְּד חַיִּין בִּלְעוּ שְׁלַעְמוּ יִתְנָא כְּד תְּקִיף רוּג־ זְהוּן בְּנָא׃ ד הָא בְּכַן מִיָּא דִּימָא שְׁטַפוּ יִתְנָא מְרַעִית עֵבְרָא עַל נַפְשָׁנָא׃ ה הָא בְּכַן עֵבַר עַל נַפְשָׁנָא מַלְכָּא דְּמַתִּיל לְמוּי דִּימָא זִידוּנִיָּא׃ ו בְּרִיךְ שְׂמָא דִּיהוּוּה דְּלֵא מַסְרְנָא הִיךְ תְּבִירָא לְשִׁנְיָהוּן מְזוּנָא ז לְכַכִּיָּהוּן נַפְשָׁנָא הִיךְ כְּצִיפְרָא אִישְׁתִּיזְבַּת מִפְחֵי קוּלָּא קוּלָּא תְּקִלָּא פַּחָא קוּלָּא אִיתְבְּר וְאַנְן אִישְׁתִּזְבִּינְן׃ ח סַעֲדָנָא בְּשׁוּם מִימָרָא דִּיהוּוּה דְּעֵבַד שְׂמִיָּא וְאַרְעָא׃	124:1 ὡδὴ τῶν ἀναβαθμῶν εἰ μὴ ὅτι κύριος ἦν ἐν ἡμῖν εἰπάτω δὴ Ἰσραὴλ 124:2 εἰ μὴ ὅτι κύριος ἦν ἐν ἡμῖν ἐν τῷ ἐπαναστήναι ἀνθρώπους ἐφ' ἡμᾶς 124:3 ἄρα ζῶντας ἂν κατέπιον ἡμᾶς ἐν τῷ ὀργισθῆναι τὸν θυμὸν αὐτῶν ἐφ' ἡμᾶς 124:4 ἄρα τὸ ὕδωρ κατεπόντισεν ἡμᾶς χεῖμαρρον διήλθεν ἡ ψυχὴ ἡμῶν 124:5 ἄρα διήλθεν ἡ ψυχὴ ἡμῶν τὸ ὕδωρ τὸ ἀνυπόστατον 124:6 εὐλογητὸς κύριος ὃς οὐκ ἔδωκεν ἡμᾶς εἰς θήραν τοῖς ὀδοῦσιν αὐτῶν 124:7 ἡ ψυχὴ ἡμῶν ὡς στρουθίον ἐρρῦσθη ἐκ τῆς παγίδος τῶν θηρευόντων ἡ παγίς συνετρίβη καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐρρῦσθημεν 124:8 ἡ βοήθεια ἡμῶν ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου τοῦ ποιήσαντος τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν			

<p><b>Tehillim Psalms 124</b>  A song of ascents. Of David 124:1 ‘Had it not been the Lord who was on our side,’ Let Israel now say, 124:2 ‘Had it not been the Lord who was on our side When men rose up against us, 124:3 Then they would have swallowed us alive, When their anger was kindled against us; 124:4 Then the waters would have engulfed us, The stream would have swept over our soul; 124:5 Then the raging waters would have swept over our soul.’ 124:6 Blessed be the Lord, Who has not given us to be torn by their teeth. 124:7 Our soul has escaped as a bird out of the snare of the trapper; The snare is broken and we have escaped. 124:8 Our help is in the name of the Lord, Who made heaven and earth. (NASB)</p>	<p><b>Toviyah Psalms 124</b>  124:1 A song that was uttered on the ascents of the abyss, composed by David. Had it not been for the Lord who was our help – let Israel say now 124:2 Had it not been for the word of the Lord who was our help, when a son of man rose against us 124:3 Then they would have swallowed us while alive, when their anger grew strong against us. 124:4 Then the waters would have washed us away, sickness would have passed over our soul. 124:5 Then the king would have passed over our soul, he who is likened to the malicious waters of the sea. 124:6 Blessed is the name of the Lord, who has not handed us over as dead meat to their teeth. 124:7 Our soul is like a bird saved from the traps of the fowlers; the trap broke, and we have been saved. 124:8 Our help is in the name of the word of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. (EMC)</p>	<p><b>Psalmoi Psalms 124</b>  A Song of Degrees. 124:1 If it had not been that the Lord was among us, let Israel now say; 124:2 if it had not been that the Lord was among us, when men rose up against us; 124:3 verily they would have swallowed us up alive, when their wrath was kindled against us: 124:4 verily the water would have drowned us, our soul would have gone under the torrent. 124:5 Yea, our soul would have gone under the overwhelming water. 124:6 Blessed be the Lord, who has not given us for a prey to their teeth. 124:7 Our soul has been delivered as a sparrow from the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are delivered. 124:8 Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. (LXX)</p>
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In this week’s study from *Tehillim / Psalms 124:1-8*, the psalm opens saying אִשִּׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת לְדָוִד לְיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה שָׁהֵיָה לָנוּ יְאֹמֵר-נָא יִשְׂרָאֵל: *A song of ascents. Of David 124:1 ‘Had it not been the Lord who was on our side,’ Let Israel now say, (NASB)* The psalmist asks the question, had the Lord not been on our side, to get us thinking about what life would be without the Lord. The psalmist is reflecting on the protections that were afforded Israel because they had the Lord on their side. The Hebrew name of God, YHVH (יהוה), is rendered with the circumlocution Lord in this verse. YHVH means “the existing One” and is the proper name of the one true God. At this time, Israel was surrounded by nations who worshiped many gods, yet the psalmist reminds the people that it is because they had the One True God, the One who had always existed, on their side that they were saved from their enemies. Note today the nation of Israel still is surrounded by nations that worship other gods. The Muslim god is not the God of Israel. Here in *Tehillim / Psalms 124:1*, the psalmist opens by proclaiming the invitation, “*This is Israel’s song*” encouraging all the people to raise up and give sincere thanks to the Lord God their Saviour. If the Lord had not taken their side, with their limited strength they would have been powerless to free themselves; their adversaries, would have torn and scattered them. The psalm opens calling God’s people to celebrate the things that could have gone so differently had the Lord God not been on our side. If we are not careful, some things in our lives may be taken for granted with very little thought of mind about how the Lord God has intervened so much in all our lives. There are times however when it does not appear as if the Lord has intervened. An example when it appeared as if the Lord did not intervene, was when Joseph’s brothers intended to kill him, God didn’t appear to intervene (*Bereshit / Genesis 37:18-20*). When his brothers threw him into a pit, God didn’t appear to intervene. When Joseph was sold into slavery and sent to Egypt, God didn’t appear to intervene. Why did the Lord God seem to work in the background and not intervene for Joseph? What we learn from the

Scriptures was that the Lord may have actually intervened through his brother Reuben so the other brothers did not kill Joseph (*Bereshit / Genesis 37:22*). Later, when Joseph was falsely accused and thrown into prison for living a righteous life, we again do not see the Lord God intervening. Why? The reason may be a matter of faith, to continue in the faith in the midst of our perception and our impatience. Later we read when Joseph tells his brother “*As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today*” (*Bereshit / Genesis 50:20*). The lesson here is the Lord God may not appear to intervene for a time in our lives because He has something very special in mind. He also may answer the request for His intervention in a far superior way than what we are seeking. Either way, we can know this for sure, something Paul taught to the Romans saying, “*for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose*” (*Romans 8:28*).

The reason for the appearance of the lack of intervention of the Lord is due to the conviction of the Spirit of God in our lives that is meant to bring us to repentance. The Lord grants us His forgiveness when we trust in Him and His Messiah Yeshua. Without the Lord’s mercy (*Chesed*) and His Spirit, we would carry out the desires of the body and be by nature the children of wrath (*Ephesians 2:3*). The Lord however is abounding in mercy because of the Love that He has for us (in our unique creation, the Lord forming us by His hands and breathing life into us, and *Ephesians 2:4-5*). We know, based upon what the Scriptures say, the Lord does intervene on our behalf, in our lives, even though he appears to be silent. The Scriptures are full of those who prayed for the Lord to intervene and He did. Intercessory prayer is made available for every believer. Many times Israel cried out to the Lord to save them, and He supernaturally intervened. This provides us with the expectation of the Lord doing the same for us, of Him working miracles on our behalf, even to the working in the hearts of the wicked (unrighteous). One of the most important reasons the Lord intervenes is so that He is glorified. If we pray in Yeshua’s name and it is answered, Yeshua’s name is glorified. If the Lord intervenes for us, perhaps even in ways that exceeded our prayers, He is praised. We are told in the Apostolic Writings, that He loves to glorify His Son (*John 17*) and so we find in the Apostolic writings the name of the Messiah Yeshua as being the fulcrum, the central point through which we are to ask for the Lord God of Israel to intervene on our behalf. When the Lord seems to be distant or not answering prayer, or not intervening on our behalf, this may be a sign for us to shift our focus not just away from the reasons why, but toward the divine relationship with the Lord in heaven, to draw near in His Word, in prayer, and in deed (obeying His Torah).

The Psalm continues saying, ב לולִי יְהוָה שָׁקֵיחַ לָנוּ בְּקוֹם עָלֵינוּ אָדָם: ג אֲזַי חַיִּים בְּלָעוּנוּ בְּחָרוֹת אַפָּם בְּנוּ: 124:2 ‘*Had it not been the Lord who was on our side When men rose up against us, 124:3 Then they would have swallowed us alive, When their anger was kindled against us; (NASB)*’ The concept being put forward here is that Evil men do not understand justice, and for such persons, the fellow man is in danger of being consumed in the flames of one’s sin. It is important also to understand, the Lord, not man, is in control of the destiny of men and nations. The Lord God of Israel rules in the kingdoms of men and disposes of them according to his divine standard (*Tehillim / Psalm 22:28, Mishley / Proverbs 14:34, Daniel 2:21 and 4:17*). The idea is each man has in his own life his own kingdom, where he is the ruler and king. This is why we are called to give to the Lord sovereign authority over our lives to humble our hearts and to walk in His ways. The Lord God is able to work in the lives of both the righteous and the unrighteous. Those who think that nations stand or fall because of a “*strong national defense*” are woefully ignorant of biblical principles. It is not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord. (*Zechariah 4:6*) When we consider the idea that the Lord is able to work in the lives of all men, we understand that mankind is accountable before the Lord regardless of who you are. The book of Jonah demonstrates that ancient peoples who were outside of that Mosaic covenant relationship with the Lord were nonetheless accountable to the moral code that is laid out in the Torah. In the book of Jonah, the Lord looked down upon Nineveh and observed the wickedness of this people (*Jonah 1:2*). The definition of sin is the transgression of God’s law (*1 John 3:4, Romans 4:15*), the Ninevites were obviously subject to God’s requirements. Note how this powerful truth is in direct conflict with the modern theology which contends that those who are “*outside of the church*” are not subject to the Law of God (morality, marriage, etc.). Note also that the Torah of God is designed to regulate human morality, i.e. *1 Corinthians 7:1, Hebrews 13:4*.

### **1 Corinthians 6:13-7:1**

*6:13 Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. 6:14 Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power. 6:15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! 6:16 Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her. For He says, 'The two shall become one flesh.' 6:17 But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. 6:18 Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 6:20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. 7:1 Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. (NASB)*

### **Hebrews 13:4**

*13:4 Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge. (NASB)*

The Torah was designed to provide a way to understand what an adulterous relationship is, and the limits of sexual sin as it is related to the family of God! Understand, the nature of wicked men is contentious and is bent on not obeying the truth. The wicked have aligned themselves in obedience to unrighteousness. Their being contentious is against the truth, to quarreling with the Lord against His word, finding fault in everything. Disobedience is synonymous to not yielding one's self to the truth of God. The truth becomes a stumbling block, this is why we are told the Messiah Yeshua is a stumbling block and a rock of offense because He is truth! Faith is elusive to such persons just as Paul wrote, *Romans 6:17*, "But God be thanked that you were the servants of sin; but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." The unrighteous however obey unrighteousness instead of yielding to God's truth of the Torah which is coupled as a part of the gospel message. They are under the power and dominion of sin, and are slaves to their lusts and corruptions.

The Psalm continues saying, אָזִי הַמַּיִם שֶׁטְפוּנוּ נִחְלָה עָבַר עַל-נַפְשֵׁנוּ: ה' אָזִי עָבַר עַל-נַפְשֵׁנוּ הַמַּיִם הַזֵּי, 124:4 Then the waters would have engulfed us, The stream would have swept over our soul; 124:5 Then the raging waters would have swept over our soul.' (NASB) Water is one of the most common and powerful concepts of being overwhelmed by a force that is not controllable but powerful even to the moving of mountains. The raging waters of their fury would have overwhelmed our very life of David and his people. The wicked are described as the raging waters. Their unbelief and opposition to the truth, and their slavish subjection to lust, are the foundation of all wickedness. Note how the deeds of the unrighteous are connected to the punishment of wicked men which are indignation and wrath. For example, the indignation and wrath of God. It is the anger of God that will render wicked men miserable. They will be the subjects of divine punishment and wrath. This may be paralleled to the story of Jonah and the Ninevites. Yeshua warns the men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, someone greater than Jonah is here. The men of Nineveh repented while the Jewish people of that generation remained hardened toward the Lord God of Israel. Another example may be taken from the evil eye, whether the eye is good or evil. If the eye blocks the light (righteousness) where no light (righteousness) enters into the body, the body then is full of darkness resulting in stumbling around and not knowing the way or path to take. In addition, if the eye is unclear so that it distorts the light, then the perception given is false. Unrighteousness and sin has the capacity to distort the truth that will lead to a worse problem of believing the distortion to be the true reality. This is a greater blindness because it is a more dangerous darkness than blindness. Yeshua was providing us with a moral lesson where the eye was used as a moral reference which is common in Jewish writings starting with

***Bereshit / Genesis 3:7***

*3:7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. (NASB)*

The usage here is in that sense giving reference to the spiritual eye through which spiritual light enters and illuminates the whole person. Yeshua is contrasting the person who sees things from a clear, godly perspective as opposed to the person who sees things from an evil perspective. A similar analogy to this is found in *2 Corinthians 4:3-4* when Paul says that the gospel is “veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” Such a person does not understand because they cannot see moral truth. Those who are involved in immorality are involved in a greater danger to be deceived. Those who are spiritually blind revel in that darkness and give themselves over to the pursuit of evil. This type of person is easy to recognize, but there is little hope for them until they recognize their own evil. Others who are spiritually blind recognize they have a problem and realize they need like to see more freely, to be set free from their bondage. The psalmist realizes we are in the hand of the King (Yeshua the Messiah) who sits enthroned in the unapproachable glory of the heavens and rules over all things, and is the Judge who decides all things. The psalmist states the wicked are like the waters that has swept over the soul, raging to overcome and sweep us away.

In *Bereshit / Genesis 3:7* the Scriptures state, ותפקחנה עיני שניהם וידעו כי עירמם הם ויתפרי עליה תאנה 3.7 *Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they perceived that they were naked; and they sewed together fig leaves and made themselves loin cloths. (NASB)* Rashi has the following to say concerning what took place in Masoretic Text.

***Rashi on Bereshit / Genesis 3:7 Part 1***

ותפקחנה וגו' לענין ההכמה דבר הכתוב, ולא לענין ראיה ממש, וסוף המקרא מוכיח: [AND THE EYES OF BOTH OF THEM] WERE UNCLOSED — Scripture speaks here with reference to intelligence (the mind's eye) and not with reference to actual seeing; the end of the verse proves this for it states,

***Part 2***

וידעו כי עירמם הם אף הסומא יודע כשהוא ערום! אלא מהו וידעו כי עירמם הם? מצוה אחת היתה בידם ונתערטלו הימנה (בראשית רבה):  
*AND THEY KNEW THAT THEY WERE NAKED* — Even a blind person knows when he is naked! What then does “and they knew that they were naked” signify? One charge had been entrusted to them and they now knew they had stripped themselves of it (*Genesis Rabbah 19:6*).

***Part 3***

עלה תאנה הוא העץ שאכלו ממנו, בדבר שנתקלקלו בו נתקנו (סנהדרין ע'), אבל שאר העצים מנעום מלטול עליהם ומפני מה לא נתפרסם העץ? שאין הקב"ה חפץ להונות בריה, שלא יכלי-מוה ויאמרו זהו שלקה העולם על ידו מדרש רבי תנחומא:  
*FIG LEAVES* — This was the tree of which they had eaten; by the very thing through which their ruin had been caused was some improvement effected in their condition (*Sanhedrin 70b*). The other trees however prevented them from taking of their leaves. And why is not the name of the tree clearly mentioned? Because the Holy One, blessed be He, never wishes to grieve anything He has created: hence its name is not mentioned in order

*that it might not be put to shame by people saying, "This is the tree through which the world suffered" (Midrash R. Tanchuma 1:4:14).*

Rashi states that their eyes were unclosed, this is a reference to the mind's eye and not to actually seeing the state of their bodies. Everyone knows they are naked, but here they had the realization of their nakedness which is related to sin and shame. Eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil resulted not in their ability to see more clearly, but that of having been awakened to sin and shame? The wicked, the unrighteous do not understand their deception, but are fully given to their sins and their own deception.

The concept here in the psalm is whether we have been given over to be devoured by our enemies? The psalmist states, בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ תְּנִינוּ טָרֵף לְשֵׁנֵיהֶם: 124:6 *Blessed be the Lord, Who has not given us to be torn by their teeth. (NASB)* The Lord God of Israel does not deliver us over to be devoured or torn by the enemy. Sin however does deliver us over to be both devoured and destroyed. The Lord however is in the midst of a people who are called to repentance, and they are able to say, זֶנְפֵּנוּ כְּצִפּוֹר נִמְלְטָה מִפֶּחַח 124:7 *Our soul has escaped as a bird out of the snare of the trapper; The snare is broken and we have escaped. 124:8 Our help is in the name of the Lord, Who made heaven and earth. (NASB)* Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 2: 25 *Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 2:26 and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will. (NASB)* The idea is the Lord grants us mercy for the purpose of leading us back into repentance. Midrash Mekhilta d'Rabbi Yishmael 14:30 Part 1 states the following:

#### ***Mekhilta d'Rabbi Yishmael 14:30 Part 1***

*(Exodus 14:30) "and the Lord saved Israel on that day": As a bird held in a man's hand, so that if he pressed its hand but a little he would choke it, as it is written (Psalms 124:6-8) "Our soul (at the splitting of the sea) escaped as from the hunter's snare. The snare broke and we escaped. Our help is in the name of the Lord, Maker of heaven and earth." Or: As a man releasing a fetus from a cow's womb, as it is written (Devarim 4:34) "Or has a God ever done miracles to come and take for Himself a nation from the midst of a nation, etc."? Why "a nation from the midst of a nation"? \_\_As a man releasing a fetus from a cow's womb, viz. (Ibid. 20) "and you did the Lord take, and He brought you forth from the iron furnace, etc."*

The concepts of being delivered, being set free, and escaping from the enemy are paralleled to God's mercy where He delivered His people from the enemy. The enemy here is described as a melting pot, an iron furnace which has the capability to mold and shape metal. Note how the midrash speaks of the Lord pulling His people from the furnace, which leads to the interpretation that the Lord is molding his people into the shape that He chooses. The deliverance from the enemy is also paralleled to giving birth, delivering a baby following pregnancy. Pregnancy is a miracle of God, just as what happened in the splitting of the red sea to save His people, so it is said *"Our help is in the name of the Lord, Maker of heaven and earth,"* the creator is our help.

Midrash Tanchuma Buber, Vayetzei 23:2 states the following:

#### ***Midrash Tanchuma Buber, Vayetzei 23:2***

*Another interpretation (of Ps. 142:6 [5]): I CRIED UNTO YOU, O LORD. < The verse > speaks about Jacob. When he set out from his father's house, what does it say (in Gen. 28:20)? IF GOD IS WITH ME.... He raised his eyes to the Holy One < and > said (in Ps. 142:6 [5], cont.): YOU ARE MY REFUGE. He said to him (in Gen. 28:15): SEE, I AM WITH YOU.... (Ps. 124:6 [5], cont.): MY PORTION IN THE LAND OF THE LIVING. Now Jacob was hoping to return to the land of Israel. Jacob said: With permission I went out. If I do not get permission, I am not returning. The Holy One said: Do you want permission? Permission*

*you have. (Gen. 31:3, cont.): RETURN UNTO THE LAND OF YOUR PARENTS. Did you come for anything but the tribes? See, you have them.*

Notice how the midrash interprets Jacob seeking the Lord for direction, whether to return to the Land of Israel, or remain where he is in Haran? The midrash speaks of the Lord being with us because our portion is in the land of the living. This is an important concept here because what we are taught in Christian theology that to die is somehow better than life, because we are going to a better place. Note that this idea of death being better or leading to something better is not a biblical concept. The Passover is the quintessential example of the Lord blessing in this life, holding onto the God of Israel for life in this world, as opposed to seeking death and the world to come. Jewish Liturgy Pesach Haggadah Hallel, Second Half of Hallel Composed in (c.280 - c.360 CE) by Mendes, London, 1862, states the following:

***Liturgy Pesach Haggadah Hallel, Second Half of Hallel***

לא לָנוּ, ה', לא לָנוּ, כִּי לְשִׁמְךָ תֵּן כְּבוֹד, עַל חֲסִדְךָ עַל אֲמֹתֶךָ. לָמָּה יֹאמְרוּ הַגּוֹיִם אֵיחָה נָא אֱלֹהֵיהֶם. וְאֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּשָׁמַיִם, כֹּל אֲשֶׁר חָפֵץ עָשָׂה. עֲצַבְיֵיהֶם כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב מַעֲשֵׂה יָדַי אָדָם. פֶּה לָהֶם וְלֹא יִדְבְּרוּ, עֵינַיִם לָהֶם וְלֹא יֵרְאוּ. אֲזִנָּיִם לָהֶם וְלֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ, אֵף לָהֶם וְלֹא יִרְיחוּן. יָדֵיהֶם וְלֹא יִמְיִשוּן, רַגְלֵיהֶם וְלֹא יִהְלְכוּ, לֹא יִהְיוּ בְּגֵרוֹנָם. כְּמוֹתָם יִהְיוּ עֲשִׂיהֶם, כֹּל אֲשֶׁר בְּטַח בָּהֶם. יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּטַח בֵּי, עֲזָרָם וּמִגְנָתָם הוּא. בֵּית אֱהָרֹן בְּטַחוּ בֵּי, עֲזָרָם וּמִגְנָתָם הוּא. יִרְאִי ה' בְּטַחוּ בֵּי, עֲזָרָם וּמִגְנָתָם הוּא. יִי זַכְרֵנוּ יִבְרָךְ. יִבְרָךְ אֶת בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, יִבְרָךְ אֶת בֵּית אֱהָרֹן, יִבְרָךְ יִרְאִי ה', הַקְטַנִּים עִם הַגְּדֹלִים. יִסַּף ה' עֲלֵיכֶם, עֲלֵיכֶם וְעַל בְּנֵיכֶם. בְּרוּכִים אַתֶּם לֵי, עֲשֵׂה שְׁמַיִם וְאָרֶץ. הַשְּׁמַיִם שְׁמַיִם לֵי וְהָאָרֶץ נָתַן לְבְנֵי אָדָם. לֹא הִמָּתִים יִהְלְלוּ יְהוָה וְלֹא כָּל יְרֵדֵי דוֹמָה. וְאֲנַחְנוּ נִבְרָךְ יְהוָה מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם. הַלְלוּיָהּ.

*Ps. cxv. — Not unto us, O Eternal! not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for the sake of thy mercy and thy truth. Wherefore should the nations say, Where now is their God? Our God is in the heavens; He hath made whatsoever he pleased. But their idols of silver and gold are the work of human hands. They have mouths, but speak not: they have eyes, but see not. They have ears, but hear not: they have nostrils, but smell not. They have hands, but feel not: they have feet, but walk not; neither is there any utterance in their throat. May those who make them and every one who trusteth in them become like them. Israel, trust thou in the Eternal, he is thy help and shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the Eternal, he is your help and shield. Ye who venerate the Eternal, trust in the Eternal, he is your help and shield. The Eternal who hath ever been mindful of us, will bless us, he will bless the house of Israel, he will bless the house of Aaron. He will bless those who venerate the Eternal, both small and great. May the Eternal increase you more and more, you and your children. Blessed are ye of the Eternal, who made heaven and earth. The heavens are the heavens of the Eternal: but the earth hath he given to the children of men. The dead praise not the Eternal, nor they who descend into the silent grave. But we will bless the Eternal henceforth, and for ever. Halleluyah.*

אֶהְבֵּתִי כִּי יִשְׁמַע ה' אֶת קוֹלִי תַחֲנוּנָי. כִּי הִטָּה אָזְנוֹ לִי וּבִימֵי אֶקְרָא. אֶפְפוּנֵי חֲבִלֵי מִנֹּת וּמְצָרֵי שְׂאוּל מְצָאוּנֵי, צָרָה וַיִּגּוֹן אֶמְצָא. וּבִשְׁם ה' אֶקְרָא: אֲנָא ה' מִלְטָה נַפְשִׁי. חֲנוּן ה' וְצַדִּיק, וְאֱלֹהֵינוּ מִרַחֵם. שְׁמַר פְּתָאִים ה', דְּלוֹתַי וְלִי יְהוֹשִׁיעַ. שׁוּבֵי נַפְשִׁי לְמִנוּחֵיכִי, כִּי ה' גָּמַל עָלַיכִי. כִּי חֲלַצְתָּ נַפְשִׁי מִמָּוֶת, אֶת עֵינַי מִן דְּמָעָה, אֶת רַגְלֵי מִדְּחַי. אֶתְהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי ה' בְּאַרְצוֹת הַחַיִּים. הִיאֲמַנְתִּי כִּי אֲדַבֵּר, אֲנִי עֲנִיתִי מְאֹד. אֲנִי אֲמַרְתִּי בְּחַפְזִי כֹּל הָאָדָם כֹּזֵב.

*Ps. cxvi. — It is pleasing unto me that the Eternal hath graciously heard my voice, and my supplications. For he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I invoke him whilst I live. Should the struggles of death compass me, the pangs of the grave seize me, were trouble and sorrow to overtake me, I would then call upon the name of the Eternal; saying, O Eternal! I*

*besech thee, deliver my soul! The Eternal is gracious and righteous; yea, our God is merciful. The Eternal preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he saved me. Return my soul to thy serenity, for the Eternal hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I yet will walk before the Eternal in the land of the living. I firmly believed, and therefore will I declare that when greatly afflicted, I rashly said, All men are liars.*

Yeshua said that he had come to give us life and life more abundantly. (*John 10:10*) Yeshua did not say that he come so that we could have a better life in the world to come. The liturgy for the Pesach haggadah hallel speaks of giving praises and glory unto the king of the universe for the sake of His mercy and truth. The rabbis declare the power of God as the creator of life who is in the heavens, and compares the Lord to the idols of men who are blind, deaf, dumb, and unable to move, those who seek idols will be like them, whereas those who seek the Lord God Almighty will be like Him. The Lord God of Israel is the creator of life, he is the living God! He is not the God in whom we look forward to death and the world to come. He is the God in whom we look forward for life and prosperity, for righteousness and justice, holiness and truth. The Lord is our help and shield, and He wants to bless us, those who seek Him and His ways. The hallel quotes the psalm and then of the Eternal One who is the God of the living and not the dead, the one who sustains us in the land of the living, in this life. The Scriptures speak of looking forward to being with the Lord in the sense that He dwells in our midst right here and right now! If you are living in sin, this expectation will never come to pass. The Scriptures speak of our having the expectation of His presence in the here and now, in this world, and we are called to speak of Him and his Messiah Yeshua to all the nations in this world. This is the joy that we have, and the reason we care called to preserver in this life for the glory of God! Let's Pray!

## Rabbinic Commentary

The Rabbinic Commentary (Midrash) on *Tehillim / Psalms 124* has 1 part. Reading through the Midrash we will be looking at Part 1. Let's begin by outlining *Midrash Tehillim Chapter 124, Part 1*.

### Outline of Midrash Tehillim / Psalms, Chapter 124, Part 1

#### Part 1

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the **דיבור המתחיל** (Dibur Hamathil) saying, “*A song of ascents; of David. If it had not been the Lord who was for us, Israel would say (Tehillim / Psalms 124).*”
- The **פתיחתא** (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*Read these words in the light of the verse, And Jacob lay down In That Place to sleep (Bereshit / Genesis 28:11).*”
- The **משל** (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the **פתיחתא** (Petihta), the rabbis speak of the Lord being with His people Israel and the proof when Jacob lay down and saw the angels ascending and descending at Bethel.
- The **נמשל** (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the **משל** (mashal), paralleling when Israel sleeps the Lord protects saying while Jacob was in Haran, he never slept.
- The Concluding phrase says, “*It is the verse, Yet You are holy, O You that are enthroned upon the praises of Israel (Tehillim / Psalms 22:4) that is, upon the praises of the Patriarch Israel.*”

Midrash Tehillim 124 Part 1 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (**דיבור המתחיל**) saying, “*A song of ascents; of David. If it had not been the Lord who was for us, Israel would say (Tehillim / Psalms 124).*” The **פתיחתא** (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*Read these words in the light of the verse, And Jacob lay down In That Place to sleep (Bereshit / Genesis 28:11).*” The Rabbis speak of ascending within



the context of Jacob laying down in Bethel fleeing his brother Esau. The idea of ascension may be connected to the dream Jacob had of the ladder from heaven and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the ladder. The entire midrash states the following:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>מדרש תהלים פרק קכד</b></p> <p>א שיר המעלות לדוד לולי ה' שהיה לנו יאמר נא ישראל. (ישראל סבא) כתיב וישכב במקום ההוא (בראשית כח יא), (אמר ריב"ל) [ר' יהודה ור' נחמיה, ר' יהודה אמר כאן שכב, אבל כל י"ד שנה שהיה טמון בבית עבר לא שכב, ור' נחמיה אמר] כאן שכב אבל כל עשרים שנה שהיה בבית לבן לא שכב, ומה היה אומר, [ר' יהושע בן לוי אמר] ט"ו שיר המעלות שבספר תהלים, [מאי טעמיה שיר המעלות לדוד לולי ה' שהיה לנו יאמר נא ישראל, ישראל סבא], (רבי ישמעאל) [ר' שמואל] בר נחמני אמר כל ספר תהלים היה אומר, מה טעם, ואתה קדוש יושב תהלות ישראל (תהלים כב ד), ישראל סבא.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Midrash Tehillim 124, Part 1</b></p> <p>1. <i>A song of ascents; of David. If it had not been the Lord who was for us, Israel would say (Tehillim / Psalms 124). Read these words in the light of the verse, And Jacob lay down In That Place to sleep (Bereshit / Genesis 28:11). On the implications of this verse, Rabbi Judah and Rabbi Nehemiah differed. Rabbi Judah said, There, at long last, he lay down, but during all the fourteen years Jacob had hidden in the house of Eber, not once had he lain down to sleep, Rabbi Nehemiah said, There he lay down for the last sleep he would have in a long time, for during all the twenty years Jacob was to spend in the house of Laban not once was he to lie down to sleep. And what would Jacob recite? According to Rabbi Joshua son of Levi, Jacob would recite the fifteen songs of ascents in the Book of Psalms. And Rabbi Joshua's proof? It is the verse, If it had not been the Lord who was for us, Israel would say, that is, the Patriarch Israel would say. According to Rabbi Samuel son of Hakhmani, Jacob would recite the entire Book of Psalms. And the proof? It is the verse, Yet You are holy, O You that are enthroned upon the praises of Israel (Tehillim / Psalms 22:4) that is, upon the praises of the Patriarch Israel.</i></p>
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According to Rabbi Judah and Rabbi Nehemiah, Jacob lay down for the last time before making his travel to Haran and to stay in the house of Laban. Why do you think the rabbis parallel the idea that in all the time Jacob was with Laban that he did not sleep? How does this relate to the Midrash? Consider how Laban treated Jacob. Jacob had heard that Laban's sons were saying, "Jacob has taken everything our father owned and has gained all this wealth from what belonged to our father." (Bereshit / Genesis 31:1) After Jacob grew exceedingly wealthy in cattle, some of Laban's sons become jealous and accuse him of stealing their inheritance. But despite Laban's harsh work environment, the Lord God had proven Himself faithful to Jacob (Bereshit / Genesis 31:4-13). As Jacob moved eastward (Bereshit / Genesis 29.1), he was under the providential hand of God. Moreover, as he was away from home and in conditions that were not hospitable, Laban had lied about Jacob's first wife substituting his older daughter for the younger, and changing his wages over and over again. What we see from these Scriptures is the spiritual position of all believers today as they live in this world, but do not behave as this world does (John 17:6-11). As Jacob was, we too live in dangerous territory who are called to live for the Lord and to serve Him each day. (1 Peter 2:11) King Solomon spoke of not sleeping having fallen into the hands of one's neighbor in the following way.

**Mishley / Proverbs 6:1-19**

6:1 My son, if you have become surety for your neighbor, Have given a pledge for a stranger,  
6:2 If you have been snared with the words of your mouth, Have been caught with the words of your mouth,  
6:3 Do this then, my son, and deliver yourself; Since you have come into the hand of your neighbor, Go, humble yourself, and importune your neighbor.  
6:4 Give no sleep to your eyes, Nor slumber to your eyelids;  
6:5 Deliver yourself like a gazelle from the hunter's hand And like a bird from the hand of the fowler.  
6:6 Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise,  
6:7 Which, having no chief, Officer or ruler,  
6:8 Prepares her food in the summer And gathers her provision in the harvest.  
6:9 How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep?  
6:10 'A little sleep, a little slumber,

*A little folding of the hands to rest' 6:11 Your poverty will come in like a vagabond And your need like an armed man. 6:12 A worthless person, a wicked man, Is the one who walks with a perverse mouth, 6:13 Who winks with his eyes, who signals with his feet, Who points with his fingers; 6:14 Who with perversity in his heart continually devises evil, Who spreads strife. 6:15 Therefore his calamity will come suddenly; Instantly he will be broken and there will be no healing. 6:16 There are six things which the Lord hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: 6:17 Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, And hands that shed innocent blood, 6:18 A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that run rapidly to evil, 6:19 A false witness who utters lies, And one who spreads strife among brothers. (NASB)*

King Solomon said having given a pledge for a neighbor we are bound to do according to what we have said we would do. There is a form of bondage of becoming a surety for another person, and so Solomon said *6:3 Do this then, my son, and deliver yourself; Since you have come into the hand of your neighbor, Go, humble yourself, and importune your neighbor. 6:4 Give no sleep to your eyes, Nor slumber to your eyelids; (NASB)* There will be no peace, which is described as “no sleep to the eyes.” Solomon’s recommendation is to work really hard to pay off your debts. The one who will not work, or who lays down as a sluggard will remain in poverty. This one who is the sluggard is as one who is wicked, worthless, walks with a perverse mouth, and has perversity in his heart. Notice something concerning what we see today in relation to those who feel they are owed something known as entitlements. Have you noticed how most discussions around “entitlements” is political, highly charged, and nasty. The minute lawmakers try to reduce any specific “entitlement program,” they are accused of being nothing short of evil. Falling into the “*I deserve!*” trap, results in what Solomon is speaking of, working less, contributing less, all under the idea of “*Where’s the value in all of that?*” type of attitude. This is the self-centered, narcissistic world that we live in which encourages this attitude of entitlement. This attitude is doing great harm to the testimony of Christians in addition to creating a proud, lazy people who expect to be served instead of to serve. The Apostle Paul wrote about this saying the following:

### ***Philippians 2:1-8***

*2:1 Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, 2:2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. 2:3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 2:4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. 2:5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 2:6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 2:7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 2:8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (NASB)*

Paul speaks of being selfless and filled with love, united in spirit with humility of mind in regards to ourselves. This speaks contrary to the entitlement attitude. Attitudes of entitlement have overwhelmed so many and it is actually a clear manifestation of the enemy. The entitled person, his character is defined by selfish ambition and pride with the attitude that I am to be exalted and respected, without showing respect himself for others in a servant like attitude. Entitlement is usually a simple, subtle desire or expectation that we don’t give much thought to. This is why it’s so important to allow God to search our hearts and to reveal selfish motives, attitudes and issues that bring forth death instead of life. This is why Paul wrote, *2:4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. 2:5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, (NASB)* The entitlement attitude puts a person on the throne of superiority as others are scrutinized and ridiculed if they don’t measure up. This is the spirit of the evil

one and we need to allow the Holy Spirit to reveal that deadly heart issue in the heart. We must seek daily to consider others more important than ourselves.

The midrash speaks of Jacob being “*hidden in the house of Eber for fourteen years*” and only afterwards he went to Haran. It is interesting how the midrash states that he was hidden as opposed to studying Torah with Eber. The rabbis consider Jacob as representing “*da’at*” (knowledge). Da’at Torah (דעת תורה) meaning “*Knowledge of Torah*,” is a concept in Haredi Judaism according to which Jews should seek the input of rabbinic scholars not just on matters of Jewish law, but on all important life matters, on the grounds that knowledge of the Torah aids everything in life. The idea is there is a more hidden away in the Torah that is applicable for our lives than we think. The parallel here in the Midrash is that Jacob went to Laban but was not revealed anything of the things of Torah, these were still hidden.

The Torah provides for us reasons to obey God’s commands and the significance of listening to God’s Word and applying it to our lives. *Devarim / Deuteronomy 11 and 28* are devoted to describing the rewards and punishments the Lord will bring upon those who obey or disobey Him. In the rabbinic literature, the rabbis made the theme central by choosing the following text as part of the second paragraph of the Shema to be said each morning and evening:

***Devarim / Deuteronomy 11:13-21***

*11:13 ‘It shall come about, if you listen obediently to my commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul, 11:14 that He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early and late rain, that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil. 11:15 ‘He will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied. 11:16 ‘Beware that your hearts are not deceived, and that you do not turn away and serve other gods and worship them. 11:17 ‘Or the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you, and He will shut up the heavens so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its fruit; and you will perish quickly from the good land which the Lord is giving you. 11:18 ‘You shall therefore impress these words of mine on your heart and on your soul; and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. 11:19 ‘You shall teach them to your sons, talking of them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road and when you lie down and when you rise up. 11:20 ‘You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, 11:21 so that your days and the days of your sons may be multiplied on the land which the Lord swore to your fathers to give them, as long as the heavens remain above the earth. (NASB)*

The blessing of God comes when we choose to serve the Lord God with all of our heart, mind, and soul. When we strive to seek the Lord all the days of our lives, He abundantly blesses us. These passages clearly demonstrate the abundant reward is a product of obedience to God’s mitzvot. There are some people who have great difficulty with this section of the Bible (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 11*), since there are many cases of people who do good and fulfill commandments and yet who suffer, and of bad people who have been known to prosper in their wickedness. Nevertheless, we do not have to doubt what the Torah says, with certainty we know God’s response to obedience and disobedience regarding His commandments. The Scriptures state that we should obey God’s commandments because it would be unwise not to. As a result, Moshe says this to the Israelites:

***Devarim / Deuteronomy 4:5-8***

*“See, I have imparted to you laws and rules, as God has commanded me, or you to abide by in the land which you are about to invade and occupy. Observe them faithfully, for that will be proof of your wisdom and discernment to other peoples, who on hearing of all these laws will say, ‘Surely, that great nation is a wise and discerning people.’ For what great nation is there that has a god so close at hand as is the Lord our God whenever we call upon Him?”*

*Or what great nation has laws and rules as perfect as all this Teaching that I set before you this day?"*

Notice how obeying the Lord God in heaven is the proof of our wisdom and discernment as God's people. The way we live our lives demonstrates the teachings of God in our lives (to bear His testimonies) and this is an indicator the Lord dwells in our midst. This is why the commands define the ethical life, the Torah affirms that God's commandments are ethical and moral because the Lord God of Israel is a moral God. The reason being, the commandments establish for people the true standard of morality. For example, it states in *Tehillim / Psalms 19:8-10*, "*The teaching of God is perfect, renewing life; the decrees of God are enduring, making the simple wise. The commandments of the Lord are just, rejoicing the heart; the instruction of God is lucid, making the eyes light up. The fear of God is pure, abiding forever; the judgments of God are true, righteous altogether*" The Commandments are also part of our Covenant Relationship with God. The promise to obey God is expressed in the covenant (brit) that our ancestors made with the Lord at Mount Sinai. In the Torah the Lord promised to enter into a long-term relationship with the children of Israel. This relationship included giving them a homeland and rewarding them with physical prosperity that is contingent upon the commands and the heart that is established to seek the Lord. Ancient Israel said, "*all that God has commanded, we will do and we will hear/obey*" (*Shemot / Exodus 24:7*). Today we ask, "*If our ancestors voluntarily agreed to enter into God's covenant, why are we obligated by it as well?*" Moshe had already anticipated this objection when he spoke to the second generation of Israelites who had not been a part of the Sinai experience saying in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 5:2-4*, "*God made a covenant with us at Horeb. It was not with our ancestors that God made this covenant, but with us, the living, every one of us who is here today. Face to face God spoke to you on the mountain out of the fire.*" The Israelites and their descendants for all generations were expected to see themselves as if they themselves had stood at the mountain and obligated themselves to fulfill the covenant of God. This is the point of believing by faith and applying God's Word by faith for His glory! The fact of the matter is these who were about to enter into the Promised Land were standing at the mountain of Sinai as children, they did hear the covenant God made with His people and the response of their parents to God's promises and His commands. Today, by faith we are able to have virtually stood at the foot of the mountain just as these people have and agree with the covenant the Lord has made with our fathers and with us.

In addition to these things, the commandments also serve as a way to sanctify God's Name, meaning that we are sanctifying His reputation to make it holy and unique. According to the Torah, the Lord gave Israel His mitzvot as part of the covenant agreement, therefore the commitment to follow and obey them is reflected not only upon the child of God, but upon the Lord God Himself as well. Good behavior, according to the Scriptures, brought honor upon God, whereas bad behavior profaned God's Name and reputation. Note what it says here in *Vayikra / Leviticus 22:31-33*.

### ***Vayikra / Leviticus 22:31-33***

*"You shall faithfully observe My commandments: I am God. You shall not profane My holy name, that I may be sanctified in the midst of the Israelite people—I the Lord who sanctify you, I who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God, I am the Lord"*

The Lord describes having sanctified the people by bringing them out of Egypt. Egypt is typified as the land of sin, the occult, bondage, slavery, etc. This separation from these evil things is coupled to the Lord providing a way for atonement, for forgiveness, for life, and freedom, to be set free from the bondage of sin and the occult. This sanctification process is bringing us into holiness and righteousness. The Scriptures commends all of God's people to do what is right, to perform the commandments, because God's reputation is at stake. Sanctifying God's name is a powerful motivation to do what is right. The Hebrew word for "holy" (kadosh, קדוש) literally means, "set apart" or "like no other." This is why the Torah states obeying the mitzvot, God's people become a nation that is unique and set apart from all the other nations in the world. Since we have agree to obey God's commands, we are called God's treasured people. This theme

permeates the Bible, which is emphasized at the Mountain of Sinai

***Shemot / Exodus 19:3-6***

*“Moses went up to God, and God called to him from the mountain saying, ‘Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob and declare to the children of Israel: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Me. Now then, if you will obey Me faithfully and keep My covenant, you shall be My most treasured possession among all the nations. Indeed all of the earth is Mine, but you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation’”*

The Torah defines the meaning of “*holy*” as special and unique from among all others. It is important to note how God’s people are holy, the Lord has sanctified us, and so we are called to a life of holiness, to seek His righteousness and holiness. If we are not doing this, if we do not have this desire, are we truly His people? Obeying the commandments are the way we show our adoration of our Father in heaven. The Torah describes the Lord God of Israel as the lover of the Jewish people, and His having given them His Torah was a sign of that love. This is illustrated in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 7:6-11*.

***Devarim / Deuteronomy 7:6-14***

*7:6 ‘For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. 7:7 ‘The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 7:8 but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 7:9 ‘Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments; 7:10 but repays those who hate Him to their faces, to destroy them; He will not delay with him who hates Him, He will repay him to his face. 7:11 ‘Therefore, you shall keep the commandment and the statutes and the judgments which I am commanding you today, to do them. 7:12 ‘Then it shall come about, because you listen to these judgments and keep and do them, that the Lord your God will keep with you His covenant and His lovingkindness which He swore to your forefathers. 7:13 ‘He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock, in the land which He swore to your forefathers to give you. 7:14 ‘You shall be blessed above all peoples; there will be no male or female barren among you or among your cattle. (NASB)*

These Scriptures describe the people as a great treasure, as consecrated (set apart), as few whom the Lord chooses and a multitude in whom he will cause them to become because of their faithfulness. The Love of God is so great, He keeps his “*gracious*” covenant (*covenant of grace*) to the thousandth generation of those who love Him and keep His commandments. Note the common theme here, our love is connected to our keeping His commandments. The Hebrew language contains the verb *mitzvah* (to command) and the word *shomer* (to keep) which is connected to the word *shema* (to listen). The implications of these words throughout the Torah are astonishing, things of which not everyone are aware of. These words have led many Christians to misunderstand the nature of Judaism, where very few Christian thinkers today fully appreciate the concept of the *mitzvah* and the idea that the Lord God of Israel chose to reveal Himself in the form of the *mitzvot* (commandments, Laws). The most appropriate word that is a counterpart of *mitzvah*, is the word *shema* meaning “*to listen*.” This word occurs in the book of Deuteronomy along 92 times (its root word). This word *shema* (to hear/listen) is what the Lord wants from us as a response to His Words. For example, in the book of Bereshit / Genesis, we find the meaning of *Shema* in the following way:



of God. The Apostle Paul wrote of the Torah saying, *“I delight in God’s Torah... I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s Torah.”* (Romans 7:22,25) Our Love for God and the Torah are inseparable. If one keeps and obeys the Torah, he is showing his adoration and love to our Father in heaven. If one loves God he will keep and obey His Torah. This is why Yeshua said *“If you love me, obey my commands.”* (John 14:15, 23) We can see this concept in many passages if we understand the Hebrew parallelisms that are based from a Torah perspective! 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