

Tehillim / Psalms 125 | ספר תהילים קכה

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Do You have a Deep Desire to Pursue God?

In this week's study from *Tehillim / Psalms 125:1-5*, the psalm opens saying, א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת הַבְּטְחִים, *A Song of Ascents. 125:1 Those who trust in the Lord Are as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved but abides forever. (NASB)* It is very interesting how the psalmist declares, those who trust in the Lord are Mount Zion which cannot be moved but abides forever. What does it mean Zion abides forever? The psalmist continues saying, ב רְוַשְׁלָם הָרִים סְבִיב לָהּ וַיְהִי לָהּ וַיְהִי סְבִיב לְעַמּוֹ מִצְעָתָהּ וְעַד, *125:2 As the mountains surround Jerusalem, So the Lord surrounds His people From this time forth and forever. 125:3 For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest upon the land of the righteous, So that the righteous will not put forth their hands to do wrong. (NASB)* The mountains are understood as being solid and as a wall of protection to the people, with the Lord God in heaven being paralleled to its strength. The psalmist believes in the importance of doing what is right according to God's Torah has having benefits for the child of God. The benefit is in the Lord working in the life of the unrighteous person to protect the righteous from harm. This is further illustrated by what the psalmist states, ד הֵיטִיבָה יְהוָה לְטוֹבִים וְלִישָׁרִים בְּלִבּוֹתָם: *125:4 Do good, O Lord, to those who are good And to those who are upright in their hearts. (NASB)* The point is to be righteous in all of areas in our lives. We are to be innocent in our hearts in all that we do. The Psalm concludes saying, ה וְהַמַּטִּים עַקְלָקְלוֹתָם יוֹלִיכֵם יְהוָה אֶת-פְּעֻלֵי הָאָוֶן שְׁלוֹם עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל: *125:5 But as for those who turn aside to their crooked ways, The Lord will lead them away with the doers of iniquity. Peace be upon Israel. (NASB)* Notice how the psalm speaks of turning aside to one's works of iniquity (crooked ways). The psalmist states that for such a person, the Lord will lead them away with the doers of iniquity. This suggests that we are not given a "get out of jail" tick for free. We have a certain responsibility as the people of God to walk in God's Ways! This means we do not pursue wickedness, unrighteousness. We are called to be a people of Teshuvah (Repentance). The point is we should have within our hearts the desire to pursue the Lord God and His Messiah Yeshua.

עברית	Hebrew	ארמי	Aramaic	ελληνικός	Greek
ספר תהלים פרק קכה	ספר תהלים פרק קכה	ספר טוביה פרק קכה	ספר טוביה פרק קכה	ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 125	ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 125
א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת הַבְּטְחִים בִּיהוָה בְּהַר-צִיּוֹן לֹא-יִמוּט לְעוֹלָם יֵשֵׁב: ב רְוַשְׁלָם הָרִים סְבִיב לָהּ וַיְהִי לָהּ וַיְהִי סְבִיב לְעַמּוֹ מִצְעָתָהּ וְעַד-עוֹלָם: ג כִּי לֹא יִגּוּחַ שִׁבְט הַרְשָׁע עַל גּוֹרֵל הַצַּדִּיקִים לְמַעַן לֹא-יִשְׁלְחוּ הַצַּדִּיקִים בְּעוֹלָתָהּ יְדִיקָם: ד הֵיטִיבָה יְהוָה לְטוֹבִים וְלִישָׁרִים בְּלִבּוֹתָם: ה וְהַמַּטִּים עַקְלָקְלוֹתָם יוֹלִיכֵם יְהוָה אֶת-פְּעֻלֵי הָאָוֶן שְׁלוֹם עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל:	א שירא דאיתאמר על מסקיין מסוקין דתהומא צדיקיא דמתרחצין במימרא דיהוה היך תורא דציון לא יזדעזע לעלם יתיבת: ב ירושלם תוריא חזור חזור דילה ומימרא ושכינתא דיהוה חזור חזור לעמיה מן השתא ועד עלמא: ג ארום לא ינוח שבט רישעא שבטא דעשו רשיעא על פיצתא דצדיקיא מן בגלל דלא יושיטון צדיקיא בשקרא אידהון: ד אוטיב יהוה לטבין ולתריצין בלבבהון: ה ודסטיין בתר עוקמנותהון יולכינן ייי בגנהם חולקהון עם עבדי שקר שלמא על ישראל:	א שירא דאיתאמר על מסקיין מסוקין דתהומא צדיקיא דמתרחצין במימרא דיהוה היך תורא דציון לא יזדעזע לעלם יתיבת: ב ירושלם תוריא חזור חזור דילה ומימרא ושכינתא דיהוה חזור חזור לעמיה מן השתא ועד עלמא: ג ארום לא ינוח שבט רישעא שבטא דעשו רשיעא על פיצתא דצדיקיא מן בגלל דלא יושיטון צדיקיא בשקרא אידהון: ד אוטיב יהוה לטבין ולתריצין בלבבהון: ה ודסטיין בתר עוקמנותהון יולכינן ייי בגנהם חולקהון עם עבדי שקר שלמא על ישראל:	א שירא דאיתאמר על מסקיין מסוקין דתהומא צדיקיא דמתרחצין במימרא דיהוה היך תורא דציון לא יזדעזע לעלם יתיבת: ב ירושלם תוריא חזור חזור דילה ומימרא ושכינתא דיהוה חזור חזור לעמיה מן השתא ועד עלמא: ג ארום לא ינוח שבט רישעא שבטא דעשו רשיעא על פיצתא דצדיקיא מן בגלל דלא יושיטון צדיקיא בשקרא אידהון: ד אוטיב יהוה לטבין ולתריצין בלבבהון: ה ודסטיין בתר עוקמנותהון יולכינן ייי בגנהם חולקהון עם עבדי שקר שלמא על ישראל:	125:1 ᾠδὴ τῶν ἀναβαθμῶν οἱ πεποιθότες ἐπὶ κύριον ὡς ὄρος Σιών οὐ σαλευθήσεται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ὁ κατοικῶν Ἱερουσαλὴμ 125:2 ὄρη κύκλω αὐτῆς καὶ κύριος κύκλω τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν καὶ ἕως τοῦ αἰῶνος 125:3 ὅτι οὐκ ἀφήσει τὴν ῥάβδον τῶν ἀμαρτωλῶν ἐπὶ τὸν κληῖρον τῶν δικαίων ὅπως ἂν μὴ ἐκτείνωσιν οἱ δίκαιοι ἐν ἀνομίᾳ χεῖρας αὐτῶν 125:4 ἀγάθυνον κύριε τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς καὶ τοῖς εὐθέσι τῇ καρδίᾳ 125:5 τοὺς δὲ ἐκκλίνοντας εἰς τὰς στραγγαλιὰς ἀπάξει κύριος μετὰ τῶν ἐργαζομένων τὴν ἀνομίαν εἰρήνη ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰσραὴλ	ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 125 125:1 ᾠδὴ τῶν ἀναβαθμῶν οἱ πεποιθότες ἐπὶ κύριον ὡς ὄρος Σιών οὐ σαλευθήσεται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ὁ κατοικῶν Ἱερουσαλὴμ 125:2 ὄρη κύκλω αὐτῆς καὶ κύριος κύκλω τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν καὶ ἕως τοῦ αἰῶνος 125:3 ὅτι οὐκ ἀφήσει τὴν ῥάβδον τῶν ἀμαρτωλῶν ἐπὶ τὸν κληῖρον τῶν δικαίων ὅπως ἂν μὴ ἐκτείνωσιν οἱ δίκαιοι ἐν ἀνομίᾳ χεῖρας αὐτῶν 125:4 ἀγάθυνον κύριε τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς καὶ τοῖς εὐθέσι τῇ καρδίᾳ 125:5 τοὺς δὲ ἐκκλίνοντας εἰς τὰς στραγγαλιὰς ἀπάξει κύριος μετὰ τῶν ἐργαζομένων τὴν ἀνομίαν εἰρήνη ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰσραὴλ

<p>Tehillim Psalms 124 A Song of Ascents. 125:1 Those who trust in the Lord Are as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved but abides forever. 125:2 As the mountains surround Jerusalem, So the Lord surrounds His people From this time forth and forever. 125:3 For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest upon the land of the righteous, So that the righteous will not put forth their hands to do wrong. 125:4 Do good, O Lord, to those who are good And to those who are upright in their hearts. 125:5 But as for those who turn aside to their crooked ways, The Lord will lead them away with the doers of iniquity. Peace be upon Israel. (NASB)</p>	<p>Toviyah Psalms 124 125:1 A song that was uttered on the ascents of the abyss. The righteous who trust in the word of the Lord are like Mount Zion; it will not totter, it is inhabited forever. 125:2 Mountains are round about Jerusalem, and the word of the Lord is round about his people from this time and forever. 125:3 For the scepter of wickedness will not rest on the lot of the righteous, so that the righteous will not stretch out their hand to deceit. 125:4 Be good, O Lord, to the good, and to those upright in their heart. 125:5 But those who go astray following their perversity – the Lord will make them go to Gehenna; their portion is with the workers of deceit. Peace be upon Israel! (EMC)</p>	<p>Psalmoi Psalms 124 A Song of Degrees. 125:1 They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Sion: he that dwells in Jerusalem shall never be moved. 125:2 The mountains are round about her, and so the Lord is round about his people, from henceforth and even for ever. 125:3 For the Lord will not allow the rod of sinners to be upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous should stretch forth their hands to iniquity. 125:4 Do good, O Lord, to them that are good, and to them that are upright in heart. 125:5 But them that turn aside to crooked ways the Lord will lead away with the workers of iniquity: but peace shall be upon Israel. (LXX)</p>
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In this week’s study from *Tehillim / Psalms 125:1-5*, the psalm opens saying, אֲשִׁיר הַמַּעְלוֹת הַבְּטָחִים יֵשְׁבִי: : *A Song of Ascents. 125:1 Those who trust in the Lord Are as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved but abides forever. (NASB)* It is very interesting how the psalmist declares, those who trust in the Lord are as Mount Zion which cannot be moved but abides forever. What does it mean Zion abides forever? When we consider life itself, everything around us changes. From moment to moment loved ones get older, babies are born and grow, plants and trees grow and show change, we see changes in the seasons, and in our lives, and even theories come and go. We see inventions come go and are replaced with something else or something better. If we consider all of these things, we can count on change, getting older, our bodies break down, we die, these things are a fact of life. When we consider the psalmist’s comments on Mount Zion, we find the everlasting foundation and unchanging nature of God and His Messiah. In *Tehillim / Psalm 87:2-3* we read, “*The Lord loves the gates of Zion / more than all the other dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are said of you, city of God.*” According to this verse, Zion is synonymous with the city of God, and it is a place that the God of Israel loves. Zion is a reference to Jerusalem. Mount Zion is the high hill on which David built a city. It is on the southeast side of the city of Jerusalem. In the Scriptures, the word Zion occurs over 150 times. Based upon the biblical descriptions of Zion, it essentially means “*fortification*” as something that has been “*raised up.*” The Scriptures describe Zion as both the city of David and the city of God. As we read through the Tanach, we find a progression on the interpretation of Zion taking upon it a spiritual meaning. The first mention of Zion in the Tanach is *2 Samuel 5:7* saying, “*David captured the fortress of Zion—which is the City of David.*” Based upon what we read here, Zion was originally an ancient Jebusite fortress in the city of Jerusalem. After David’s conquest of the fortress, Jerusalem became a possession of Israel. The royal palace was built there, and Zion/Jerusalem became the seat of power in Israel’s kingdom. When King Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem, the meaning of Zion expanded further to include the temple area (see *Tehillim / Psalm 2:6, 48:2, 11–12, 132:13*). We understand this based upon *Jeremiah 31:6*, “*Come, let us go up to Zion, to the LORD our God.*” In the Tanach, Zion

is used as a name for the city of Jerusalem (*Isaiah 40:9*), the land of Judah (*Jeremiah 31:12*), and the nation of Israel as a whole (*Zechariah 9:13*). In the Apostolic Writings, Zion refers to God's spiritual kingdom. The author of the book of Hebrews says, we have come "to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (*Hebrews 12:22*). Note also that Peter, quoted *Isaiah 28:16*, saying the Messiah is the Cornerstone of Zion. "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame." (*1 Peter 2:6*)

The rabbis have the following to say concerning our psalm and Zion in the *Talmud Bavli Berekhot 58b*.

Talmud Bavli Berekhot 58b Part 4

אמר ליה הכי אמר ר' יוחנן מיום שחרב בית המקדש נגזרה גזירה על בתיהן של צדיקים שיחרבו שנאמר (ישעיהו ה, ט) באזני ה' צבאות אם לא בתים רבים לשמה יהיו גדולים וטובים מאין יושב ואמר ר' יוחנן עתיד הקדוש ברוך הוא להחזירן לישובן שנאמר (תהלים קכה, א) שיר המעלות לדוד הבוטחים ביי' כהר ציון מה הר ציון עתיד הקדוש ברוך הוא להחזירו לישובו אף בתיהן של צדיקים עתיד הקב"ה להחזירן לישובן חזייה דלא מיישב דעתיה א"ל דיו לעבד שיהא כרבו *Ulla said to Rav Hisda: You have nothing about which to sigh, as Rabbi Yohanan said as follows: From the day that the Temple was destroyed a decree was issued upon the houses of the righteous that they would be destroyed, as it is stated: "In mine ears said the Lord of hosts: Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant" (Isaiah 5:9). And Rabbi Yohanan said: In the future, in the end of days, the Holy One, Blessed be He, will restore them to their original locations and their inhabited state, as it is stated: "A Song of Ascents of David. They who trust in the Lord are as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved but abides forever" (Psalms 125:1). From this verse one may infer that just as in the future the Holy One, Blessed be He, will restore Mount Zion to its inhabited state, so too, in the future the Holy One, Blessed be He, will restore the houses of the righteous to their inhabited state, so you have no reason to sigh. Seeing that he was still not satisfied, Ulla said to him: It is enough for a servant to be like his master. Since God leaves His home, the Holy Temple, in ruins, one should not be distraught over the destruction of the houses of the righteous.*

The Talmud speaks of the unmovable nature of Mount Zion and of the Lord at a future time restoring this place to His people. They say this restoration will go to the righteous. The righteous will be like the master, our Father in heaven who is righteous and holy and just. Note also the Apostolic Writings teach us that those who remain in the Messiah Yeshua will abide forever. The Holy Temple remains in ruins because of the lack of these things in the hearts and lives of God's people. The hope and expectation however is of the Lord working in our lives and of the restoration of His people to that sacred place.

The commentary *Kol HaTor 2:37* states the following:

Kol HaTor 2:37

לז) הר ציון לא ימוט, לעולם ישב (תהלים ק"ה) – וכן צדיק לעולם בל ימוט (משלי י"א) וכמובא (*Ps. 125:1*) "Mount Zion never falters, but abides forever" -- Likewise, a righteous person never falters (*Prov.12:6*). As brought in the Midrash: whatever occurred to Yosef, occurred to Zion.

The commentary speaks of Mount Zion never failing and abiding forever, just as the righteous endure through all things with the help of God. Mount Zion as a geographical area is currently the center of much dispute. The Scriptures and the Rabbinic Literature are clear that, one day, Zion is the sole possession of the Lord God of Israel, and that he will one day restore Zion to the nation of Israel. We read the following in Scripture, "the children of your oppressors will come bowing before you; all who despise you will bow down at your feet, and will call you the City of the LORD, Zion of the Holy One of Israel" (*Isaiah 60:14*) and "Awake, awake, Clothe yourself in your strength, O Zion; Clothe yourself in your beautiful garments,

O Jerusalem, the holy city; For the uncircumcised and the unclean, Will no longer come into you” (Isaiah 52:1). Isaiah says the enemy will recognize the place the Lord has established His name and do so by paying homage to the people of God. The Aramaic Targum states, א שירא דאיתאמר על מסקיין מסוקין דתהומא 125:1 A song that was uttered on the ascents of the abyss. The righteous who trust in the word of the Lord are like Mount Zion; it will not totter; it is inhabited forever. (EMC) The establishment of God’s name in His people is illustrated by His people bearing the testimony of God. This is synonymous to trusting in the word of the Lord, and applying God’s Word to our lives.

ב ירושלים הרים סביב לה ויהנה סביב לעמו מעתה ועד-עולם: ג פי לא: The psalmist continues saying, *125:2 As the mountains surround Jerusalem, So the Lord surrounds His people From this time forth and forever. 125:3 For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest upon the land of the righteous, So that the righteous will not put forth their hands to do wrong. (NASB) The Aramaic Targum states the following, ב ירושלם טוריא חזור חזור דילה ומימרא ושכינתא דיהוה חזור חזור לעמיה מן השתא ועד עלמא: ג ארום לא ינוח שבט רישעא שבטא דעשו רשיעא על 125:2 Mountains are round about Jerusalem, and the word of the Lord is round about his people from this time and forever. 125:3 For the scepter of wickedness will not rest on the lot of the righteous, so that the righteous will not stretch out their hand to deceit. (EMC) The mountains are understood as being solid and as a wall of protection to the people, with the Lord God in heaven being paralleled to its strength. The psalmist believes in the importance of doing what is right according to God’s Torah as having benefits for the child of God. The benefit is in the Lord working in the life of the unrighteous person to protect the righteous from harm. The prophets Isaiah, Amos, Hosea, and Micah, all prophesied at about the same time, telling the people of Israel that if they considered themselves God’s special people living under His protection, then they should live according to His ways, being obedient to His Torah. The problem was they were not doing according to God’s Torah. Each of these prophets spoke of a future expectation of the ‘last days,’ a time when the people would obey God, trust in Him, and when He would take control in power and sovereign authority in men’s lives. Hosea 2:5 states, “the time will come when the sons of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their king, and in the end they will come in awe to the Lord and his goodness.” Amos 9:13-15 says, “The days are coming, the Lord declares, when the ploughman will overtake the reaper, and he who treads the grapes will overtake the sower; when the mountains are wet with new wine, and the hills grow soft with it. That will be when I bring back the exiles of my people Israel, to rebuild deserted cities and live in them, to plant vineyards and drink their wine, to make gardens and eat their fruit. And I will plant them in their own land. Never again shall they be uprooted from the land which I gave to them. The Lord, your God, has spoken.” In addition, Isaiah 2:1-4 at the beginning of his prophecies, speaks of what he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem saying, “In the last days the mountain of the Lord’s temple will be established as chief among the mountains, raised above the hills, and all nations will stream into it. Many peoples will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths’. The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations, settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war any more.” This vision is of the greatness and majesty of Zion, the place in which the Lord has established His Name. Isaiah speaks of his own nation, of what would be the situation when the Lord God acted and God’s people behaved as they should obeying His Torah from the correct motivation of heart. This vision includes all the families of earth being blessed. The response which Isaiah urged upon the people was “Come O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord.” When we consider the meaning of light and darkness in the Scriptures, to walk in God’s light is to walk according to His mitzvot (commandments) which was counter to the way they were currently behaving. He had a vision of a future state, something the Lord God would eventually do and the people were to live in obedient response. Micah 4:1-4 states, “Every man shall sit under his own vine and under his own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid for the Lord Almighty has*

spoken.” Micah states that God’s rule is not just the politics of who is in authority, but results in simple blessings for ordinary people. His response is different from Isaiah’s, which is opposite to “*Let us walk,*” an exhortation, but says instead, “*We will walk,*” which is indicative of a promise as he says, “*All the nations may walk in the name of their gods, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.*” In a world of many nations and many religions (gods), this is a pledge of loyalty to the Lord our God. Note again how walking in the name of the Lord our God is to do so according to His Torah! The giving of God’s Torah to His people is the ultimate triumph of God’s grace towards Israel! Mount Zion symbolizes the unique authority and relationship with God throughout the Scriptures. This is not only connected to His people, but also to the Gentiles who will come to worship the Lord God in heaven (*Isaiah 2*). The Gentiles will come to the mountain of the Lord to be taught by the Lord concerning His salvation and truth that leads to a life that serves and pleases God! This points to men being at peace with God and with one another, since the Torah mandates these things upon the lives of the people.

These things are further illustrated by what the psalmist states, **ד הִיטִיבָה יְהוָה לְטוֹבִים וְלִישָׁרִים בְּלִבּוֹתָם: 125:4** *Do good, O Lord, to those who are good And to those who are upright in their hearts. (NASB)* Notice how the psalmist asks the Lord to be good to those who are good and who are upright in heart, indicating our faith is a matter of how we live our lives for the Lord. Doing good and being upright in our hearts! The Aramaic Targum states, **ד 125:4 אוטיב יהוה לטבין ולתריצין בלבבהון:** *Be good, O Lord, to the good, and to those upright in their heart. (EMC)* The point is we are called to be righteous in all of areas in our lives. We are to be innocent in our hearts in all that we do. The Apostle Paul wrote to us the following:

2 Timothy 3:1-17

3:1 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. 3:2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3:3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, 3:4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 3:5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. 3:6 For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, 3:7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. 3:8 Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith. 3:9 But they will not make further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all, just as Jannes’ and Jambres’ folly was also. 3:10 Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, 3:11 persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me! 3:12 Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. 3:13 But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. 3:14 You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them 3:15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 3:17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (NASB)

Paul used the Torah to describe to us the last days (*2 Timothy 3:1*) that as we start approaching the end times, the love of many will grow cold and lawlessness and immorality will abound. He also says that men will become lovers of self and money, along with becoming unholy, blasphemers, unloving, unthankful, disobedient to parents, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, traitors, headstrong and lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. This sounds like a very serious decline in the moral state of the world. This is exactly what we are seeing today in this world, in our country, and in our local communities. The point is, as bad as the moral state of man is right now, it is going to get a lot worse in the coming years according to

the words of Paul. Paul wrote, *3:10 Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, 3:11 persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lys-tra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me! 3:12 Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (NASB)* Those who choose to live for the Lord will be persecuted.

In the Apostolic Writings, Yeshua says, “Neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship God, but in spirit and in truth.” (*John 4:21-23*) speaking of worshiping the Lord not in Samaria but in spirit; and not in Jerusalem but in truth. He also said, “This people honors me with their lips but their heart is far from me.” (*Matthew 15:8*). Our service and worship of the Lord is found within the motivation of our hearts. The Lord does look at our hearts, He also looks at our actions since our actions are the product of what is in our hearts.

These words Yeshua spoke, speak of presenting our bodies to God as a living and holy sacrifice. Paul wrote of this in the following way:

Romans 11:29-12:3

11:29 for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. 11:30 For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, 11:31 so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy. 11:32 For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all. 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! 11:34 For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? 11:35 Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? 11:36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen. 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. 12:3 For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. (NASB)

Notice how Paul speaks of the gifts, calling, and mercy of God that is connected to our presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice before God. Now what is this referring to and how might this be accomplished? Paul is speaking of the application of the Torah to our lives. The reason we know this is because Paul wrote of being a “living” sacrifice, since sacrifices usually resulted in the death of the animal. The Torah descriptions of the sacrifice was to lay on the altar the parts of the animal and the priest was to eat a portion of the sacrifice to bear the iniquity of the people. In *Romans 6* (verses *13, 16, 19*) Paul speaks of presenting our bodies, our members, to God like this, and in every case it is so that our members (*our arms, legs, tongues, eyes, ears, and sexual organs*) would become instruments of righteousness. So the sacrifice is not only living, it is moving about and doing things in this world. This is the definition of applying God’s words to our lives. The sacrificial portion of obeying God’s Torah is to humble our lives before God according to His Word. Note how Paul writes, “Present your bodies . . . holy and acceptable to God.” He defines this saying, “use your renewed mind to prove what is the will of God, what is good, acceptable and perfect.” So there is a connection between offering your body to God as an acceptable sacrifice to God, and doing the acceptable will of God. We know what the will of God is. His will is laid out in the Scriptures, in the Torah, where all of the scriptures are a commentary upon the Torah! Note in these Scriptures (*Romans 12:1*) there is a negative and positive command. The negative command is not to be conformed to this world. The positive command is to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. The renewing of the mind is achieved by studying God’s Word, placing His word upon our hearts. To not be conformed but being transformed is devoting our lives to the Lord, to His Word, and to being changed. Most people of faith tend to “coast along” in their relationship with God and spiritual growth. We are called to be transformed, which is an on-going

growth process, which involves Teshuvah and seeking the Lord daily. The occurrence of change in our lives is on a moral and ethical basis. Ethics and morality hold the highest place in Judaism. Therefore, when we seek to do the will of God, to live our lives for Him, we look at what the World is doing, and 9 times out of 10, it is related to moral and ethical living. Paul says, “*Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*” The focus is upon being cleansed on the inside (Teshuvah) and being transformed, our hearts motivating us to be transformed on the outside for all to see as a testimony to the Lord God in heaven.

It is the renewed mind that enables us to “*prove what the will of God is.*” The key word is “*prove.*” Note how a proof text is a rabbinic way of thinking (see the rabbis in the Midrashim). The proof speaks to us of testing and proving something at the intellectual and the textual levels. By examining our ways and our heart, we are able to access and approve the value of something when we see it. (*Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. NASB*) The point is about conforming our minds to right thinking. To treasure the Word of God, to always be thinking upon what is right, and to love one another. Note that this renewal process is not a logic lesson, but about the transformation which enables us to recognize what the Scriptures say and be able to reasonably apply God’s word in our lives.

The Psalm concludes saying, הַמְטִים עַקְלָקְלוֹתָם יוֹלִיכֵם יְהוָה אֶת-פְּעָלֵי הָאָוֶן שְׁלוֹם עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל: 125:5 *But as for those who turn aside to their crooked ways, The Lord will lead them away with the doers of iniquity. Peace be upon Israel. (NASB)* Notice how the psalm speaks of turning aside to one’s works of iniquity (פְּעָלֵי הָאָוֶן) (crooked ways). The psalmist states that for such a person, the Lord will lead them away with the doers of iniquity. This suggests that we are not given a “*get out of jail*” tick for free. We have a responsibility as the people of God to seek the Lord, to forgive others, and walk in God’s Ways! This means we do not pursue wickedness, unrighteousness, immorality, or evil. There are many scriptures which speak of the wicked perishing, and of God’s people having the capability to turn from righteousness and be condemned. Isaiah said there is no prosperity for the wicked (*Isaiah 48:22*), and that if their sins had not turned them away, their peace would have been always flowing and abundant. Sin has the ability to lead us away. Yeshua spoke of this in the following way:

John 15:5-24

15:5 *‘I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. 15:6 ‘If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. 15:7 ‘If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 15:8 ‘My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. 15:9 ‘Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. 15:10 ‘If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. 15:11 ‘These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full. 15:12 ‘This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. 15:13 ‘Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. 15:14 ‘You are My friends if you do what I command you. 15:15 ‘No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. 15:16 ‘You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. 15:17 ‘This I command you, that you love one another. 15:18 ‘If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. 15:19 ‘If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. 15:20 ‘Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. 15:21 ‘But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know*

the One who sent Me. 15:22 'If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. 15:23 'He who hates Me hates My Father also. 15:24 'If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. (NASB)

The basic premise is, no one born of God makes a practice of sinning. This is the danger of practicing sin, the heart being hardened to the point of no return. Many people tend to drift away from the Lord because of their sins. This is the danger and the reason for the warning given to us in the Torah about sin, because the sin in one's life can cause us to feel guilty and lead us away from the Lord. In Parashat Haazinu, the song of Moshe in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 32*, Moshe calls heaven and earth as witnesses, Moses exhorts the people saying, זִכֹּר יָמֹת עוֹלָם בֵּינוּ שָׁנוֹת דֶּר וְדֶר שָׂאֵל אָבִיךָ וַיְגִדְךָ וַיְקַנֶּיךָ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְךָ: הַ בְּהַנְחִיל עָלֵינוּ גּוֹיִם בְּהַפְרִידוֹ : רֵמֶמֶר יָמֵי קִדְמָה וְיִשְׁאַל אָבוֹתֶיךָ וְיַגִּידוּ לְךָ וְיִסְתַּדְּרוּ לְךָ וְיִסְתַּדְּרוּ לְךָ וְיִסְתַּדְּרוּ לְךָ: *“Remember the days of old, to Consider the years of the previous generations, and to ask your fathers and they will recount it to you and they will tell you how the Lord God was with them in the desert, made them a people, chose them as His own, and promised them a land filled with milk and honey.” (32:7-8)* The song also warns against the deception of wealth saying וַיִּשְׂמֵן יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּבְעֵט וַיִּבְעֵט שְׂמֵנָה עֲבִיתָ כְּשִׁיתָ וַיִּטֹּשׁ אֱלֹהֵי עֲשָׂהוּ וַיִּנְבֵּל צוּר יִשְׁעָתוֹ: *“Jeshurun grew fat and kicked, he has grown fat, thick, and round, he forsook God who made him and spurned the Rock of his salvation.” (32:15)* Moshe warns of the terrible calamities that would result due to disobedience which is juxtaposed to the blessings and the curses we had read in the previous Torah portions. Moshe describes what will happen when turning from God towards sin, the Lord will hide His face and look only for our repentance. The nations will come against the abstinent people, and after the people have come to their senses, the Lord God will avenge the blood of His servants, and be reconciled to His people and the Land. The Torah portion concludes with the Lord instructing Moshe to ascend Mount Nebo to view the Promised Land before dying on the mountain saying, *“For you shall see the land opposite you; but you shall not go there, into the land which I give to the children of Israel.” (32:52)* The reason being, Moshe did not sanctify the Lord by his actions and in his heart before the people. We are called to be a people of Teshuvah (Repentance). We are also called to be a people who sanctify the Lord by our actions and in our hearts before God and the world! This is what it means by our having within our hearts the desire to pursue the Lord God and His Messiah Yeshua. Do you have this deep desire to pursue God and His ways? Let's Pray!

Rabbinic Commentary

The Rabbinic Commentary (Midrash) on *Tehillim / Psalms 125* has 5 parts. Reading through the Midrash we will be looking at Part 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. Let's begin by outlining *Midrash Tehillim Chapter 125, Part 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5*.

Outline of Midrash Tehillim / Psalms, Chapter 125, Part 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5

Part 1

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying, *“They that trust in the Lord will be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever (Tehillim / Psalms 125:1).”*
- The פתיחה (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, *“Rabbi Johanan taught, From the day that the Temple was destroyed, it was decreed that the houses of righteous men should also be destroyed, as it is said, In My ears said the Lord of hosts, Of a truth many houses of the great and fair will be desolate, without inhabitant (Isaiah 5:9).”*
- The משל (mashal) *“the parable,”* goes on to explain the פתיחה (Petihta), the rabbis speak of the desolation of the house of Israel

- The **משל** (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the **משל** (mashal), saying those who trust in the Lord will remain as a solid foundation.
- The Concluding phrase says, “*That is, as the Holy One blessed be He, will restore Mount Zion, so the Holy One blessed be He, will restore the houses the houses of righteous men.*”

Part 2

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the **דיבור המתחיל** (Dibur Hamathil) saying, “*For the rod of the wicked will not rest upon the lot of the righteous (Tehillim / Psalms 125:3).*”
- The **פתיחתא** (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*Resh Lakish taught, A man is wedded to the kind of woman he deserves, and thus it is said of a wicked woman, The rod of the wicked will not rest upon the lot of the righteous.*”
- The **משל** (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the **פתיחתא** (Petihta), the rabbis speak not of our sins causing our calamity, but of the state of wickedness that leads to that end result.
- The **משל** (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the **משל** (mashal), saying the rod of the wicked will not rest upon the righteous, where the rod is that of judgement.
- The Concluding phrase says, “*The intention of these words, however, is to prove that no man had ever approached her with a wicked thought, as is proved by the verse The rod of the wicked will not rest upon the lot of the righteous.*”

Part 3

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the **דיבור המתחיל** (Dibur Hamathil) saying, “*For the rod of the wicked will not rest upon the lot of the righteous (Tehillim / Psalms 125:3).*”
- The **פתיחתא** (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*Rabbi Abba son of Kahan taught, The wicked finds no restful pleasure in the company of the righteous, but only in the company of the wicked.*”
- The **משל** (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the **פתיחתא** (Petihta), the rabbis speak of rest and peace before men.
- The **משל** (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the **משל** (mashal), saying the wicked will not be at rest in the presence of the righteous. Why do you think that is?
- The Concluding phrase says, “*Another comment, By the rod of the wicked is meant Potiphar’s wife; and by the lot of the righteous is meant the lot of Joseph.*”

Part 4

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the **דיבור המתחיל** (Dibur Hamathil) saying, “*Do good, O Lord, unto the good (Tehillim / Psalms 125:4).*”
- The **פתיחתא** (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*The verse means that the good man will come and receive, on behalf of the good, something good from the All Good.*”
- The **משל** (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the **פתיחתא** (Petihta), the rabbis speak of the One who is eternal and the source of all good, and the righteous receiving from the creator God.
- The **משל** (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the **משל** (mashal), saying the Torah is that which is good that the Lord has promised to His people
- The Concluding phrase says, “*Because Scripture says, Do good, O Lord, unto the good, it might be supposed that the Lord is good to all who do good things, and therefore the verse adds good to them that are upright in their hearts.*”

Part 5

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the **דיבור המתחיל** (Dibur Hamathil) saying, “*But as for those who note a turning aside unto crooked ways, the Lord will lead them away with the workers of*

iniquity (Tehillim / Psalms 125:5)."

- The פתיחתא (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, "Rabbi Joshua son of Levi taught, Any man who gossips about a lapse of disciples of the wise will fall into Gehenna, for it is said, But as for those who note a turning aside unto crooked ways, the Lord will lead them away with the workers of iniquity."
- The משל (mashal) "the parable," goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis speak of the wisdom of the wise
- The נמשל (Nimshal) "expansion on the parable" expands upon the משל (mashal), saying the application of God's word is wisdom, and use the example, of the application of Torah to stealing, where one must return what was stolen in order to be reconciled before God.
- The Concluding phrase says, "This trust applies to the repentance of the disciple of the wise for his bodily sins, but does not apply to sins which concern money until he returns the money to its rightful owner."

Midrash Tehillim 125 Part 1 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying, "They that trust in the Lord will be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever (Tehillim / Psalms 125:1)." The homiletic introduction to the midrash states, "Rabbi Johanan taught, From the day that the Temple was destroyed, it was decreed that the houses of righteous men should also be destroyed, as it is said, In My ears said the Lord of hosts, Of a truth many houses of the great and fair will be desolate, without inhabitant (Isaiah 5:9)." It is interesting how the rabbis parallel the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem to the houses of righteous men being desolate while the psalms speaks of those who trust in the Lord and abiding forever. The entire midrash states the following:

<p>מדרש תהלים פרק קכה סימן א א שיר המעלות הבוטחים בה' כהר ציון וגו'. אמר (רב) ר' [יוחנן] מיום שחרב בית המקדש נגזרה גזרה על בתיהם של צדיקים ליחרב, שנאמר באזני ה' צבאות אם לא בתים רבים לשמה יהיו (ישעיה ה ט). (א"ר) [ואמר ר'] יוחנן ועתיד הקב"ה להחזירם לישובן, שנא' מר שיר המעלות הבוטחים בה' כהר ציון לא ימוט לעולם ישב, מה הר ציון עתיד הקב"ה להחזירו [לישובן], אף בתיהם של צדיקים עתיד הקב"ה להחזירם [לישובן].</p>	<p>Midrash Tehillim 125, Part 1 1. They that trust in the Lord will be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever (Tehillim / Psalms 125:1). Rabbi Johanan taught, From the day that the Temple was destroyed, it was decreed that the houses of righteous men should also be destroyed, as it is said, In My ears said the Lord of hosts, Of a truth many houses of the great and fair will be desolate, without inhabitant (Isaiah 5:9). Rabbi Johanan added, however; The Holy One blessed be He, will restore their houses, as is said A song of ascents. They that trust in the Lord will be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever. That is, as the Holy One blessed be He, will restore Mount Zion, so the Holy One blessed be He, will restore the houses the houses of righteous men.</p>
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The rabbis say when the Temple of the Lord is destroyed in Jerusalem, the houses of righteous men will become desolate. This suggests the righteous are no longer occupying their homes. Could this also be a reference to houses of study (beit hamidrash)? What happened with the destruction of the Temple? Men left the study of the Torah to doctrines that were devoid of God's Torah in the early church. There are a few Scriptures that speak of the house becoming desolate.

1 Kings 9:1-9

9:1 Now it came about when Solomon had finished building the house of the Lord, and the king's house, and all that Solomon desired to do, 9:2 that the Lord appeared to Solomon a second time, as He had appeared to him at Gibeon. 9:3 The Lord said to him, 'I have heard your prayer and your supplication, which you have made before Me; I have consecrated this

house which you have built by putting My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually. 9:4 'As for you, if you will walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you and will keep My statutes and My ordinances, 9:5 then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever; just as I promised to your father David, saying, 'You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.' 9:6 'But if you or your sons indeed turn away from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, 9:7 then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them, and the house which I have consecrated for My name, I will cast out of My sight. So Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples. 9:8 'And this house will become a heap of ruins; everyone who passes by will be astonished and hiss and say, 'Why has the Lord done thus to this land and to this house?' 9:9 'And they will say, 'Because they forsook the Lord their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and adopted other gods and worshiped them and served them, therefore the Lord has brought all this adversity on them.' (NASB)

Here, Solomon finishes the Temple, he declares the greatness, majesty, and sovereignty of God's Name, and emphasizes the importance of keeping God's Mitzvot (commandments) and His statutes, and walking in God's ways, to not serve other gods or to worship them. Remember, the Lord has revealed Himself in the commands, and the significance of this, as His people, we are called to walk in His ways, to be as our Maker is in heaven, and His dwelling in our midst, empowering us to overcome sin in our lives. We humble our lives before God according to His Word! Within this context, those who turn from God's commands, the Lord will cast out of His sight and cause the house which was consecrated for God's Name will be desolate, a heap of ruins, a by word, and "everyone who passes by will be astonished and hiss and say, 'Why has the Lord done thus to this land and to this house?' 'And they will say, 'Because they forsook the Lord their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and adopted other gods and worshiped them and served them, therefore the Lord has brought all this adversity on them.'"

Isaiah the prophet also spoke of the desolation of the house of the righteous saying the following:

Isaiah 5:3-14

5:3 'And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge between Me and My vineyard. 5:4 'What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why, when I expected it to produce good grapes did it produce worthless ones? 5:5 'So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard: I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed; I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground. 5:6 'I will lay it waste; It will not be pruned or hoed, But briars and thorns will come up. I will also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it.' 5:7 For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel And the men of Judah His delightful plant. Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; For righteousness, but behold, a cry of distress. 5:8 Woe to those who add house to house and join field to field, Until there is no more room, So that you have to live alone in the midst of the land! 5:9 In my ears the Lord of hosts has sworn, 'Surely, many houses shall become desolate, Even great and fine ones, without occupants. 5:10 'For ten acres of vineyard will yield only one bath of wine, And a homer of seed will yield but an ephah of grain.' 5:11 Woe to those who rise early in the morning that they may pursue strong drink, Who stay up late in the evening that wine may inflame them! 5:12 Their banquets are accompanied by lyre and harp, by tambourine and flute, and by wine; But they do not pay attention to the deeds of the Lord, Nor do they consider the work of His hands. 5:13 Therefore My people go into exile for their lack of knowledge; And their honorable men are famished, And their multitude is parched with thirst. 5:14 Therefore Sheol has enlarged its throat and opened its mouth without measure; And Jerusalem's splendor, her multitude, her din of revelry and the jubilant

within her, descend into it. (NASB)

Isaiah also speaks of the houses of the righteous becoming desolate and abandoned. Notice how the context of desolation and abandonment, are related to the actions of the people, who seek bloodshed, who pursue alcohol in the mornings, who stay up late to drink wine that inflames them, and who do not pay attention to the deeds of the Lord. The people forsook the way of God, forsook His words, and entered into exile due to their lack of knowledge. Isaiah says the grave has enlarged its throat and opened wide its mouth without measure. Those who do these things will go into destruction. Note the importance of serving the Lord, walking in His ways, seeking the Lord daily, and working to do what is right, with the Lord's help to do so! So, which approach do you take in your walk with God? Complacency, disregard, or a "not important" attitude? Or one that is on fire for God, His Messiah Yeshua, and the ways of the Torah?

Isaiah 6:1-13

6:1 In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. 6:2 Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 6:3 And one called out to another and said, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.' 6:4 And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. 6:5 Then I said, 'Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.' 6:6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. 6:7 He touched my mouth with it and said, 'Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven.' 6:8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I. Send me!' 6:9 He said, 'Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on listening, but do not perceive; Keep on looking, but do not understand.' 6:10 'Render the hearts of this people insensitive, Their ears dull, And their eyes dim, Otherwise they might see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, Understand with their hearts, And return and be healed.' 6:11 Then I said, 'Lord, how long?' And He answered, 'Until cities are devastated and without inhabitant, Houses are without people And the land is utterly desolate, 6:12 'The Lord has removed men far away, And the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. 6:13 'Yet there will be a tenth portion in it, And it will again be subject to burning, Like a terebinth or an oak Whose stump remains when it is felled. The holy seed is its stump.' (NASB)

Here Isaiah sees a vision of heaven and angels and the holiness of God. His vision leaves him desolate and undone because he recognizes how he falls short of God's righteousness and holiness. The Lord commissions Isaiah to speak to Israel about her having forsaken the ways of God to serve other gods. The angel speaks of those who do so do not have eyes to see, ears to hear, or even the ability to perceive (understand) the message because of their sins. This is an important observation, sin has the capability to deceive one's own soul (neshamah). Because of these things, the desolation of houses, the abandonment of the houses of study are the result of sin leading the people way from the Lord towards self and fleshly desires.

Jeremiah speaks of the desolation of the houses in the following way:

Jeremiah 26:7-12

26:7 The priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the Lord. 26:8 When Jeremiah finished speaking all that the Lord had commanded him to speak to all the people, the priests and the prophets and all the people seized him, saying, 'You must die! 26:9 'Why have you prophesied in the name of the Lord saying, 'This house will be like Shiloh and this city will be desolate, without inhabitant'?' And all the

people gathered about Jeremiah in the house of the Lord. 26:10 When the officials of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king's house to the house of the Lord and sat in the entrance of the New Gate of the Lord's house. 26:11 Then the priests and the prophets spoke to the officials and to all the people, saying, 'A death sentence for this man! For he has prophesied against this city as you have heard in your hearing.' 26:12 Then Jeremiah spoke to all the officials and to all the people, saying, 'The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that you have heard. (NASB)

Jeremiah spoke the word of God to the people and they called for his death. Jeremiah spoke of sin and unrepentant sin leading to the destruction and desolation of the house of God. Many times the word of the Lord is not a popular message. This was the counterculture of sin in Jeremiah's time the people had taken hold of, this culture of sin and rebellion against the Word and the Ways of God. This is what is happening in the world today, a counterculture of disrespect, hatred, murders, immorality, idolatry, and rebellion against the ways of God. A counterculture is a subculture whose values and norms of behavior differ substantially from those of mainstream society, often in opposition to mainstream cultural mores. It is easy to see that the mainstream culture today is not one of Biblical or Christian values. Though society today does not always look with favor on those who are rampantly immoral, idolatrous, and murderous. There is an inherent knowledge these things are bad, the counterculture takes it upon one's life to popularize sin. As a result, the righteous struggle to strive with society, which leads to the desolate house that has been abandoned. The reason? The righteous move away to places of greater security and safety.

Yeshua also spoke of the desolation of the house, and his message was the same as the prophets.

Matthew 23:23-24:3

23:23 'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. 23:24 'You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! 23:25 'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. 23:26 'You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also. 23:27 'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. 23:28 'So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. 23:29 'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, 23:30 and say, 'If we had been living in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' 23:31 'So you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. 23:32 'Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers. 23:33 'You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell? 23:34 'Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, 23:35 so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 23:36 'Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. 23:37 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. 23:38 'Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! 23:39 'For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'' 24:1 Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to

Him. 24:2 And He said to them, 'Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down.' 24:3 As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?' (NASB)

Yeshua opens with a series of “woes” because of the hypocrisies in the faithfulness of the leadership in Israel. This hypocrisy is to the lack of justice, mercy, and love in the Lord, because these leaders choose to neglect the weightier parts of the Torah which are mercy and love towards others. This led to their being guilty of the sins of their fathers, to that of murder and even idolatry. Yeshua says because of these things, 23:38 *'Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! 23:39 'For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'' (NASB)* Notice how Yeshua is focusing upon the commands of God in relation to the extent of the peoples sins. Yeshua is teaching Torah, since he is drawing all of these things into the context of what is most important in the Torah, to show mercy and have love for one another. This is why the Torah is a part of the gospel message, we are called to live for the Lord having faith in God and His Messiah! Yeshua speaks of “*faithfulness*,” this is the point of Torah observance and walking according to the Spirit of God.

Midrash Tehillim 125, Part 1 states, *“Rabbi Johanan taught, From the day that the Temple was destroyed, it was decreed that the houses of righteous men should also be destroyed, as it is said, In My ears said the Lord of hosts, Of a truth many houses of the great and fair will be desolate, without inhabitant (Isaiah 5:9). Rabbi Johanan added, however, The Holy One blessed be He, will restore their houses, as is said A song of ascents. They that trust in the Lord will be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever. That is, as the Holy One blessed be He, will restore Mount Zion, so the Holy One blessed be He, will restore the houses the houses of righteous men.”* The midrash speaks of the desolation of the houses of the righteous due to the destruction of the Temple which resulted from the sin of the people. The most important point is the Love of God for His people, which leads Him to calling His people back, restoring their houses, and their places of worship. What the Lord is doing, is putting in the hearts of men the desire to seek Him and His ways. Yeshua said *“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” (John 14:15, NASB)* Yeshua having taught the Torah said the same thing the rabbis say, the greatest commands are loving the Lord God in heaven, having mercy towards others, and loving one another. All of the commands rest upon these things because to love God, have mercy, and loving one another, one would not commit a sin against God or others, as sin is defined as disobedience to the command. Note how these two greatest commands have an additive property in the sense that all of the commands are contained within these commands. Most of Christianity today however views these two greatest commands as having a subtractive property in the sense that with these two commands, all of the rest are null and void. It is obvious the commands are not done away with. The doctrinal problem in the church is a spiritual one of blindness and arrogance (lack of humility).

Midrash Tehillim 125 Part 2 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying, *“For the rod of the wicked will not rest upon the lot of the righteous (Tehillim / Psalms 125:3).”* The פתיחה (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, *“Resh Lakish taught, A man is wedded to the kind of woman he deserves, and thus it is said of a wicked woman, The rod of the wicked will not rest upon the lot of the righteous.”* The entire midrash states the following:

<p>מדרש תהלים פרק קכה סימן ב</p> <p>ב כי לא ינוח שבט הרשע. דריש ריש לקיש אין מזווגין לו לאדם אשה אלא לפי מעשיו, שנאמר כי לא ינוח שבט הרשע על גורל הצדיקים. א"ר יוחנן ממה שנאמר ברבקה בתולה (בראשית כד טז), איני יודע שאיש לא ידעה, אלא שאפילו אדם לא תבע בה, על שם כי לא ינוח שבט הרשע וגו'.</p>	<p>Midrash Tehillim 125, Part 2</p> <p>2. For the rod of the wicked will not rest upon the lot of the righteous (Tehillim / Psalms 125:3). Resh Lakish taught, A man is wedded to the kind of woman he deserves, and thus it is said of a wicked woman, The rod of the wicked will not rest upon the lot of the righteous. Rabbi Johanan taught, Since it is said of Rebekah And the damsel was a virgin (Bereshit / Genesis 24:16), is it not all too clear that no man had known her? The intention of these words, however, is to prove that no man had ever approached her with a wicked thought, as is proved by the verse The rod of the wicked will not rest upon the lot of the righteous.</p>
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In the opening phrases of the midrash, the rabbis make the statement from the Psalm saying the rod of the wicked will not rest upon the righteous, and paralleling this to a man who marries a woman he deserves. There is a rabbinic parable where there once was a pious man who was married to a pious woman; and they had no children. They said, “We are no profit to God,” and so they divorced one another. The man went and married a bad woman and she made him bad. The woman went and married a bad man, and she made him good. The moral of the story is not that the wife is often blamed for marital discord rather than the husband, but that we are to seek the will of God rather than taking matters into our own hands and then being deceived and led astray to destruction. King Solomon said lean not on your own understanding, and the reason being, our own understanding will lead us astray from the righteous ways of God because of the desires of the flesh. The Talmud Bavli Sota 2a however has a differing opinion on this matter.

Talmud Bavli Sota 2a

א"ר שמואל בר רב יצחק כי הוה פתח ריש לקיש בסוטה אמר הכי אין מזווגין לו לאדם אשה אלא לפי מעשיו שנא (תהלים קכה, ג) כי לא ינוח שבט הרשע על גורל הצדיקים אמר רבה בר בר חנה אמר ר' יוחנן וקשין לזווגן כקריעת ים סוף, שנאמר (תהלים סח, ז) אלהים מושיב יחידים ביתה מוציא אסירים בכושרות

Rav Shmuel bar Rav Yitzhak says: When Reish Lakish would introduce his discussion of the Torah passage of sota he would say this: Heaven matches a woman to a man only according to his actions, as it is stated: “For the rod of wickedness shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous” (Psalms 125:3), indicating that if one has a wicked wife it is due to his own evil conduct. Rabba bar bar Hana says that Rabbi Yohanan says: And it is as difficult to match a couple together as was the splitting of the Red Sea, as it is stated in a verse that speaks of the exodus from Egypt: “God makes the solitary individuals dwell in a house; He brings out prisoners into prosperity [bakosharot]” (Psalms 68:7). God takes single individuals and causes them to dwell in a house by properly matching a man to a woman. This is similar to the exodus from Egypt, which culminated in the splitting of the Red Sea, where He released prisoners into prosperity.

The Talmud states that a man and woman are matched in heaven for marriage. Resh Laquish suggests that men with unfaithful or otherwise bad wives deserve them because of their own evil actions. This leads us to understand the verse in the psalm, the rod of the wicked will not rest upon the righteous. The Talmudic idea is that before we were even created (born), the Lord had a plan for who we would marry. This seems to refute that a man’s deeds lead to the kind of wife he receives. The rabbinic opinion on marriage is that it may be possible to subdue the plan God has for us by our sins. So it is vitally important to seek the Lord for His will in the wives that we choose and for the forgiveness of sins in His Messiah Yeshua. In the Midrash Tanhuma Parashat Vayikra 36, Rabbi Jose says, “when a woman keeps chastely within the house, she is fit to marry a high priest and rear sons who will be high priests.” In the same midrash, Rabbi Phinehas son of

Hama haKohen said, “This means when she keeps chastely within the house. Just as the altar atones for the house, so does she atone for her house, as it says, Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within the sides of your house, Your sons, like olive saplings around your table.” This is similar to what the Apostle Paul wrote,

1 Corinthians 7:10-17

7:10 But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband 7:11 (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife. 7:12 But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her. 7:13 And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away. 7:14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy. 7:15 Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace. 7:16 For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife? 7:17 Only, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches. (NASB)

The similarity to the rabbinic teaching here by Paul is 7:14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy. (NASB)

Midrash Tehillim 125 Part 2 concludes saying, “Rabbi Johanan taught, Since it is said of Rebekah And the damsel was a virgin (Bereshit / Genesis 24:16), is it not all too clear that no man had known her? The intention of these words, however, is to prove that no man had ever approached her with a wicked thought, as is proved by the verse The rod of the wicked will not rest upon the lot of the righteous.” The desirability of keeping a healthy home rests upon each one of our motivations to serve the Lord God in heaven, to seek His ways, and to want His will for our lives, just as we read of the match making process occurring in heaven. The rabbinic conviction is that a wife has a significant influence upon the family, and likewise, with the husband there is the necessity to be a righteous man who seeks the will of God and wants the same for his family.

Midrash Tehillim 125 Part 3 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying, “For the rod of the wicked will not rest upon the lot of the righteous (Tehillim / Psalms 125:3).” The פתיחה (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “Rabbi Abba son of Kahan taught, The wicked finds no restful pleasure in the company of the righteous, but only in the company of the wicked.” The entire midrash states the following:

<p>מדרש תהלים פרק קכה סימן ג</p>	<p>Midrash Tehillim 125, Part 3</p>
<p>ג [כי לא ינוח שבט הרשע וגו']. רבי אבא בר כהנא אמר אין לו נייחא בצד חבורה של צדיקים, אלא בצד חבורה של רשעים, למה לא ינוח שבט הרשע. [ד"א כי לא ינוח שבט הרשע] זה אשתו של פוטיפר, על גורל הצדיקים זה יוסף.</p>	<p>3. For the rod of the wicked will not rest upon the lot of the righteous (Tehillim / Psalms 125:3). Rabbi Abba son of Kahan taught, The wicked finds no restful pleasure in the company of the righteous, but only in the company of the wicked. And the proof? The rod of the wicked will not rest upon the lot of the righteous. Another comment, By the rod of the wicked is meant Potiphar's wife; and by the lot of the righteous is meant the lot of Joseph.</p>

The midrash speaks of the wicked not finding peace in the company of the righteous, the reason being, they want to gratify their sins and want others to join in their sins. This is the difference between walking in the

counsel of the ungodly versus walking in the way of the righteous. The righteous want to do the things of God, whereas the unrighteous want to do things their own way, to gratify the flesh as opposed to the things of the spirit. Have you ever asked yourself, “*How do I know which pathway I’m walking on?*” whether in righteousness or in wickedness? The Torah is an evaluation tool to instruct us on whether we are walking in the counsel of the ungodly, or walking in the way of the righteous? Some good questions we might ask ourselves:

- What are my desires?
- What are my appetites?
- What do I really enjoy?
- What is the inclination of my heart?
- What is the bent of my heart?
- What do I gravitate toward?
- What captures my attention and my affections? Is it godly things, or is it the ungodly things?

Other questions may be, how I spend my money or how do I use my time? These are indicators of which path we have set our feet to walk upon. For example, what are my priorities? Am I choosing to build my life around eternal, godly principles, or am I spending my time and my life with things that do not really matter, with things that, while not evil in and of themselves perhaps, are not cultivating in me a heart to love God more. These things may be helping us to love the world more and its system. The unrighteous persons do not entertain these questions because they do not have a desire to serve God. Note that those who are wicked are not just those who are egregiously, overtly wicked, but include those who are without worship or even thought of the Lord God of Israel at all. Remember our lives are a way of worshiping the Lord and bringing glory to His name. The wicked live their lives in a way that is not centered around the Lord God and His Messiah Yeshua. This is what Scripture calls wicked and the way of the ungodly. The righteous put these things as central priority in their lives, and the unrighteous do not like it. This is why Rabbi Abba taught “*The wicked finds no restful pleasure in the company of the righteous, but only in the company of the wicked.*” Midrash Tehillim 125 Part 3 concludes saying, “*Another comment, By the rod of the wicked is meant Potiphar’s wife; and by the lot of the righteous is meant the lot of Joseph.*” The way of the wicked is in the desires of the flesh. This is why the rabbis parallel these things to Potiphar’s wife who wanted to have an affair with Joseph. We need a purity that comes only from the Lord in heaven. We can have this in Yeshua the Messiah if we ask for it!

Midrash Tehillim 125 Part 4 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying, “*Do good, O Lord, unto the good (Tehillim / Psalms 125:4).*” The פתיחה (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*The verse means that the good man will come and receive, on behalf of the good, something good from the All Good.*” The entire midrash states the following:

<p>מדרש תהלים פרק קכה סימן ד ד היטיבה ה' לטובים. יבא טוב ויק- בל טוב מטוב לטובים, יבא טוב זה משה, שנאמר ותרא אותו כי טוב הוא (שמות ב ב). מטוב זה הקב"ה, שנאמר טוב ה' לכל (תהלים קמה ט). ויקבל טוב זה תורה, שנאמר כי לקה טוב נתתי לכם (משלי ד ב). לטובים אלו ישראל, שנאמר היטי- בה ה' לטובים ולישרים בלבותם. היטיבה ה' לטובים. יכול לכל, ת"ל ולישרים בלבותם.</p>	<p>Midrash Tehillim 125, Part 4 4. <i>Do good, O Lord, unto the good (Tehillim / Psalms 125:4). The verse means that the good man will come and receive, on behalf of the good, something good from the All Good. The Good man will come, that is, Moshe will come, for it is said, She saw him that he was a good child (Shemot / Exodus 2:2); the All Good is the Holy One blessed be He, for it is said The Lord is good to all (Tehillim / Psalms 145:9); will receive something good, that is, the Torah, of which it is said, For I give you good doctrine (Mishley / Proverbs 4:2); on behalf of the good, that is, on behalf of the children of Israel, of whom it is said, Do good, O Lord, unto the good, and to them that are upright in their hearts. Because Scripture says, Do good, O Lord, unto the good, it might be supposed that the Lord is good to all who do good things, and therefore the verse adds good to them that are upright in their hearts.</i></p>
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The rabbis speak of the Lord doing good to those who are good. What does this suggest for us as the manner in which we should live our lives? Radak states the following concerning what David said in *Tehillim / Psalms 16:3* *I say of the holy people who are in the land, "They are the noble ones in whom is all my delight."* (NIV)

Radak on Tehillim 16:3 Part 1

To the holy ones who are in the earth : - The form of expression is like (that of לאִישׁ in) : "To a man (לאִישׁ) as thou art thy wickedness (may reach)" (Job 35:8). And because I love Thee I love those who are holy, and I do good to them.

Part 2

And excellent ones all my delight is in them : - To those who are most excellent of heart among all the children of men, and better than they - my delight is in them to do them good, because they keep and do Thy commandments. And for this reason he calls them holy and excellent. And, according to the former interpretation, they interpret for the holy ones (לקדושי) thus : "I am not worthy of Thy goodness, but for the holy ones Thy goodness is worthy." In my opinion the words to the holy ones depend upon Thou hast said to the Lord, meaning, after thou hast said to the Lord that He is thy Sovereign Lord, thou shouldst say also to the holy ones which are in the earth that thou wilt humble thyself before them, and yield them superiority over thyself, and learn from their works ; and all is with a view to perfection, that thou shouldst learn the love of God. And in this way our sages of blessed memory have said (Babli, Pesahim 22 b) : " 'Thou shall fear the Lord thy God' (Deut. 6:13) - i.e. to multiply the disciples of the wise." And he says, which are in the earth, meaning, Walk in the steps of the holy ones whom thou shalt find in thy way, and learn from their works. In my opinion נְשִׁקוּפִים (excellent ones) is not construct, for similar examples are to be found, as חַלּוֹנֵי נְשִׁקוּפִים (windows narrow), (I Kings 6:4) ; נְעִמְנִים נְשִׁקוּפִים (pleasant plants) (Is. 17:10) ; and such like. And the meaning of holy ones and excellent in whom is all my delight is that one should love them and walk in their ways - viz. of the holy ones which are in the earth ; the way of the holy ones, the servants of God, I love, but the way of the others, who serve another god, I hate ; and I say :

Job said that the Lord loves those who set their hearts to holiness and righteousness. Radak says those who do (perform) God's commands. The point is not to obey the commands by rote, but to do so because of our love for the Lord and by His mercy, and by the power of the Spirit of God that indwells us.

Midrash Tehillim 125 Part 4 concludes saying, “Because Scripture says, Do good, O Lord, unto the good, it might be supposed that the Lord is good to all who do good things, and therefore the verse adds good to them that are upright in their hearts.” The key phrase here is to those who are upright in their hearts. This is not about earning one’s salvation but about having the Holy Spirit of God leading us into His righteousness, justice, and truth because we are already a people who are saved!

Midrash Tehillim 125 Part 5 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying, “But as for those who note a turning aside unto crooked ways, the Lord will lead them away with the workers of iniquity (Tehillim / Psalms 125:5).” The homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “Rabbi Joshua son of Levi taught, Any man who gossips about a lapse of disciples of the wise will fall into Gehenna, for it is said, But as for those who note a turning aside unto crooked ways, the Lord will lead them away with the workers of iniquity.” The midrash speaks of the possibility of turning from God’s ways to the ways of wickedness and of the one who does so the Lord will lead him away with the workers of iniquity. Note how they say such a person will fall into Gehenna (hell), and such a person is the one who gossips. This is related to our faith producing faithfulness in our lives. So the question is, “Our salvation, is it dependent upon our faithfulness to God?” This is a very important question because of the nature of “faithfulness” before God that is related to how we live our lives, our seeking the Lord and His kingdom each day. The Talmud Bavli Sota 14a-36a states the following:

Talmud Bavli Sota 14a-36a

ואמר רבי חמא ברבי חנינא מאי דכתיב (דברים יג, ה) אחרי ה' אלהיכם תלכו וכי אפשר לו לאדם להלך אחר שכינה והלא כבר נאמר (דברים ד, כד) כי ה' אלהיך אש אוכלה הוא
 And Rabbi Hama, son of Rabbi Hanina, says: What is the meaning of that which is written: “After the Lord your God shall you walk, and Him shall you fear; and His commandments shall you keep, and unto His voice shall you hearken, and Him shall you serve, and unto Him shall you cleave” (Deuteronomy 13:5)? But is it actually possible for a person to follow the Divine Presence? But hasn’t it already been stated: “For the Lord your God is a devouring fire, a jealous God” (Deuteronomy 4:24), and one cannot approach fire.

Our walk before God is not an easy task; this is described by the Lord’s divine presence and His being a devouring fire that cannot be quenched. The easy thing to do is to sin and disregard the ways of God. The more difficult path is to walk in His ways in righteousness, holiness, and truth. This is why our walking before the Lord requires His help! The entire midrash states the following:

<p>מדרש תהלים פרק קכה סימן ה ה והמטים עקלקלותם יוליכם ה' אמר ריב"ל כל המספר אחר מטתן של תלמידי חכמים נופל בגיהנם, שנאמר והמטיים עקלקלותם יוליכם ה' את פועלי האון שלום על ישראל, אפילו בשעה ששלום על ישראל יוליכם ה' את פועלי האון. (תניא רבי ישמעאל אומר) [תנא דבי ר' ישמעאל] אם ראית ת"ח עובר עבירה בלילה אל תהרהר אחריו ביום שמא עשה תשובה שמא ס"ד אלא ודאי עשה תשובה (אימר) [והני מילי] דברים שבגופו אבל דברים שבממונו עד דמהדר ליה (למלוה) [למריה].</p>	<p>Midrash Tehillim 125, Part 5 5. But as for those who note a turning aside unto crooked ways, the Lord will lead them away with the workers of iniquity (Tehillim / Psalms 125:5). Rabbi Joshua son of Levi taught, Any man who gossips about a lapse of disciples of the wise will fall into Gehenna, for it is said, But as for those who note a turning aside unto crooked ways, the Lord will lead them away with the workers of iniquity. Peace be upon Israel, the verse concludes, but even when there will be peace upon Israel, nevertheless the Lord will lead them away with the workers of iniquity. It was taught in the school of Rabbi Ishmael, If you see a disciple of the wise commit a sin during the night, do not think ill of him during the day, for he may have repented. You say, He may have repented? What you should say is, He surely repented. This trust applies to the repentance of the disciple of the wise for his bodily sins, but does not apply to sins which concern money until he returns the money to its rightful owner.</p>
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In the midrash, the rabbis speak of the wisdom of the wise saying the application of God's word is wisdom, and use the example, of the application of Torah to stealing, where one must return what was stolen in order to be reconciled before God. Eternal life is God's gift to us. It is not something any of us deserve but the Lord does set certain conditions for us to receive this gift. Because of this, it is vitally important to our relationship with God and to our future that we understand this! There are verses in the Bible that tell us those who endure to the end will be saved (*Matthew 10:22, 24:13*) and if you hold fast to the word which is preached, then you'll be saved (*1 Corinthians 15:1-2*) which is a repetition of the Torah command to hold fast to the Lord, to the Word of God, and to the commands. In addition to this, the Apostolic Writings teach us that the unbeliever cannot receive spiritual things (*1 Corinthians 2:14*). This means that he cannot believe them of his own sinful nature which is enslaved to sin (*Romans 6:14-20*). Once we are created new (*2 Corinthians 5:17*), we are able to exercise our faith in God. This is important because it suggests that our believing is the work of God, at least at the beginning of our faith walk before God. Our believing is also dependent upon our remaining in God's Word and seeking the Lord God in heaven. The question though is whether a persons faithfulness is a by-product of the Lord working in his life or something he must work at? As we continue to live our lives for the Lord each day, we choose to continue to believe, but are we going to automatically be faithful and live our lives for Him simply because we have faith? The midrash suggests that it is possible for a person of faith, which is called a wise man, to turn aside unto crooked ways.

We have heard it said, *"salvation, eternal life, is God's gift by grace, His loving disposition of favor and acceptance toward us, as it says in Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."* Now salvation is God's gift, unearned and undeserved. Just as the Scriptures state, no one will ever be able to boast that he or she has earned or deserves the gift of eternal life. Salvation however does not stop at simple belief and grace. The question is whether we can we do things, or not do things, that disqualify us from receiving this gift of eternal life from God? The answer to this question is crucial to our relationship with God and to our future! Both the Torah (and all of the Tanach) and the Apostolic Writings reveal to us that God sets certain conditions for receiving salvation. Meeting these conditions will enable us to receive that gift, while disregarding and failing to meet them will disqualify us from receiving it. This is what the midrash is speaking of here. The Apostolic Writings speak of the authority for receiving eternal life is God's Word and His Messiah Yeshua. *Hebrews 5:8-9*, speaks of Yeshua as the author of our salvation, *"Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him."* This is amplified by Yeshua's statements in *Matthew 7:21* where he says, *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."* Yeshua makes it clear that merely acknowledging Him as Lord and Master, saying *"Lord, Lord,"* is not sufficient. Faith along doctrine misses the point and importance of being faithful to God! In order to inherit the Kingdom of God, we must do something. He says we must do the will of the Father. Yeshua wants us to understand that there is more to receiving eternal life than just belief system or a mental acceptance. Our conviction that He is our Savior must be more than just a warm, comforting thought or intellectual concept. Yeshua warns that simply calling on His name or recognizing Him as *"Lord"* is NOT enough. We see this illustrated in the story of the wealthy young ruler who asked what he must do to receive eternal life (*Matthew 19:16*). Yeshua's response was obedience to the Torah and to give up his wealth because it had become an idol. (Yeshua responded saying, *"If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments."*) Note that Yeshua did not answer that nothing is required other than believing in God or in Him. He told the young man he must obey the commandments of God to receive the gift of eternal life. This is plain and simple. The apostle James points out, belief is pointless unless it is backed up by action and obedience saying, *"You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe and tremble"* (*James 2:19*). If we think that belief is all we need for salvation, we are sorely mistaken. As James tells us, the demonic spirits fully believe in the existence of the one true God and they believe in the power of the name of Yeshua God's Messiah. They further know that Yeshua is the Son of God raised from the dead. The demons belief in this regard doesn't mean they are saved! James goes on to explain

that faith, belief, and trust in God, and obedience (faithfulness) go hand in hand saying, *“But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?”* (James 2:20-22). James thus explained the obedience of the faith which is necessary for our relationship with God to be a valid one. Without works as evidence of our faith, that faith is dead, worthless, and useless. The Lord God of Israel expects us to surrender our lives in return for the salvation that Yeshua provides for us as stated in *Luke 14:26-27* *“If you want to be my follower you must love me more than your own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, more than your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. And you cannot be my disciple if you do not carry your own cross and follow me”* (NLT) Our love and commitment to Yeshua and our Father in heaven must be more important to us than this life and the things in this life. We must be willing to bear the cross, to put to death our sins and be willing to preserve in faithfully following in Yeshua’s foot steps.

Midrash Tehillim 125 Part 5 concludes saying, *“It was taught in the school of Rabbi Ishmael, If you see a disciple of the wise commit a sin during the night, do not think ill of him during the day, for he may have repented. You say, He may have repented? What you should say is, He surely repented. This trust applies to the repentance of the disciple of the wise for his bodily sins, but does not apply to sins which concern money until he returns the money to its rightful owner.”* The midrash speaks of sin and repentance. Clearly the belief that all one has to do is believe and he will receive God’s gift of salvation, is a definite NO. His Word spells out certain conditions for us and is why the author of the book of Hebrews writes in *Hebrews 2:3* exhorts us, that we not *“neglect so great a salvation!”* So, let us study God’s Word for the purpose of bearing the testimony of God, to bring glory to His name. Because Yeshua said, *Luke 14:28-33* to be careful (with a warning) to consider carefully that accepting the gift of eternal life comes at the highest cost we can imagine. *“So no one can become my disciple without giving up everything for me”* (*Luke 14:33, NLT*). As Yeshua Christ gave His life for us, we must be willing to give our lives to follow 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