

ספר תהילים קכז | Tehillim / Psalms 127

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A Deep Commitment to the Lord in Faith and Faithfulness

א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת לְשִׁלְמָה In this week's study from *Tehillim / Psalms 127:1-5*, the psalm opens saying, *A song of ascents. By Shlomo 127:1 Unless the Lord builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the Lord guards the city, The watchman keeps awake in vain. (NASB)* This comment by Solomon is deep with meaning and importance for our lives today! If the Lord is not at the foundation of who we are, all that we do is in vain.

ב שְׁוֹא לָכֶם | מִשְׁפִּימֵי קוֹם מְאֻחָרִי-שָׁבֶת אֲכָלִי לֶחֶם הָעֲצָבִים כִּן יִתֵּן לִידִידוֹ שְׁוֹא: The Psalmist continues saying, *127:2 It is vain for you to rise up early, To retire late, To eat the bread of painful labors; For He gives to His beloved even in his sleep. (NASB)* Solomon speaks of the toiling in this life at a job, to raise early and go to bed late, taking few hours for sleep, rest, and restoration, that the one who does so reaps sorrow. Solomon's conclusion is that all good things come from the Lord, including the increase in wealth. He continues saying,

ג הִנֵּה נִחַלַת יְהוָה בְּנִים שְׂכָר פְּרֵי הַבֶּטֶן: *127:3 Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, The fruit of the womb is a reward. 127:4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth. (NASB)* Solomon exchanges the importance of blessing and wealth with the precious lives he places into our hands, our children, and wives, and those around us as being more important. The Psalm concludes saying,

ד כִּי־צִים בְּיַד-גְּבוּר כִּן בְּנֵי הַנְּעוּרִים: ה אֲשֶׁר־י הַגָּבֵר אֲשֶׁר מְלֵא אֶת-אֲשָׁפְתוֹ מֵהֶם לֹא יִבְשׁוּ כִי-יִדְבְּרוּ אֶת-אוֹיְבֵים בְּשַׁעַר: *127:5 How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; They will not be ashamed When they speak with their enemies in the gate. (NASB)* The one who has many children, Solomon says will not be ashamed. It is interesting how children may also be paralleled to discipleship, note how we are the children of God. So in a way, Solomon may be referring to those who speak and teach the Word of God making disciples of men.

עברית	Hebrew	ארמי	Aramaic	ελληνικός	Greek
ספר תהילים פרק קכז	ספר טוביה פרק קכז	ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 127			
א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת לְשִׁלְמָה אֶם-יְהוָה לֹא-יִבְנֶה בַּיִת שְׁוֹא עֲמְלוֹ בּוֹנֵיו בּוֹ אֶם- יְהוָה לֹא-יִשְׁמְרֶנּוּ עִיר שְׁוֹא שְׁקֵד שׁוֹמֵר: ב שְׁוֹא לָכֶם מִשְׁפִּימֵי קוֹם מְאֻחָרִי-שָׁבֶת אֲכָלִי לֶחֶם הָעֲצָבִים כִּן יִתֵּן לִידִידוֹ שְׁוֹא: ג הִנֵּה נִחַלַת יְהוָה בְּנִים שְׂכָר פְּרֵי הַבֶּטֶן: ד כִּי־צִים בְּיַד-גְּבוּר כִּן בְּנֵי הַנְּעוּרִים: ה אֲשֶׁר־י הַגָּבֵר אֲשֶׁר מְלֵא אֶת-אֲשָׁפְתוֹ מֵהֶם לֹא יִבְשׁוּ כִי-יִדְבְּרוּ אֶת- אוֹיְבֵים בְּשַׁעַר:	א שִׁירָא דֵאִיתָאמֵר עַל מַסְקִינַן מַסּוּקִין דְתִהוּמָא עַל יַד שְׁלֵמָה אִין מִימְרָא דִיהוּהָ לֹא יִבְנֵי קִרְתָא בִיתָא מִגַּן לַעַן אֲרִדִּיכְלוּי בִיה אִין מִימְרָא דִיהוּהָ לֹא נְטִיר קִרְתָא דִירוּשְׁלַם מִגַּן אֲתַעֵר נְטִיר: ב עַל מִגַּן תְּטַרְחוּן לַכוּן דְתִקְדְמוּן בְּצַפְרָא לְמַעַבְד לַכוּן חֲטוּף דִי מֵאחֲרִין דְתוּחֲרוּן וְתַתְּבוּן לְמַעַבְד זִנו דֵאֲכֻלִין מִזּוּנֵי דְמַסְכִּינִין דְלַעֲזוּ בְהוּן עַל יֵאוּת וְכִיוּן יִתּוּן יְהוּהָ לִרְחֻמֵיהָ דְמַכָּא: תִּיֵא אֲמַרִין רִשִׁי־ עֵיא לְצִדִיקָיא טַעוּת הוּא לַכוּן דֵאֲתוּן מִקְדָּמִין וּמִצְלִיין בְּצַפְרָא וּמוּחֲרִין לְמִיתַב בְּרַמְשָׁא לְמַלְעֵי בְּאוּרֵיתָא אֲכֻלִין לְחַמָּא לְצַעֲרָא מִתִּיבִין צִדִיקָיא בְּקוּשְׁטָא יְהִיב יִי לִרְחֻמֵיהָ אֲגַר שְׁלִים בְּכַפְנָא: ג הָא אַחְסַנְתָּ יְהוּהָ בְּנִין כְּשֵׁרִין אֲגַר עוּבְדִין טְבִין וְלֵדִי מַעָא: ד כְּגִירִין בְּאִידָא דְגִיבְרָא כִן הִיכְדִין בְּנִין דְעוּלִימָא אֲגַר עוּבְדִין טְבִין דְעַסְקִין בְּאוּרֵיתָא מִטְלִיוּתָא: ה טַב לִיהָ לְגַבְרָא דִימְלֵי בֵית מִדְרָשִׁיהָ מִנְהוּן לֹא יִבְהַתּוּן אֲרוּם יִנְצוּן עִם בְּעֵלֵי דְבִבְהוּן בְּתַרְעָא בֵית דִּינָא:	127:1 ὧδὴ τῶν ἀναβαθμῶν τῷ Σαλωμων ἐὰν μὴ κύριος οἰκοδομήσῃ οἶκον εἰς μάτην ἐκοπίασαν οἱ οἰκοδομοῦντες αὐτόν ἐὰν μὴ κύριος φυλάξῃ πόλιν εἰς μάτην ἠγρύπνησεν ὁ φυλάσσων 127:2 εἰς μάτην ὑμῖν ἐστὶν τοῦ ὀρθρίζειν ἐγείρεσθαι μετὰ τὸ καθῆσθαι οἱ ἔσθοντες ἄρτον ὀδύνης ὅταν δῶ τοῖς ἀγαπητοῖς αὐτοῦ ὕπνον 127:3 ἰδοὺ ἡ κληρονομία κυρίου υἱοῖ ὁ μισθὸς τοῦ καρποῦ τῆς γαστροῦς 127:4 ὡσεὶ βέλη ἐν χειρὶ δυνατοῦ οὕτως οἱ υἱοὶ τῶν ἐκτετιναγμένων 127:5 μακάριος ἄνθρωπος ὃς πληρώσει τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν αὐτοῦ ἐξ αὐτῶν οὐ καταισχυνθήσονται ὅταν λαλῶσι τοῖς ἐχθροῖς αὐτῶν ἐν πύλῃ			

<p>Tehillim Psalms 127 A song of ascents. By Shlomo 127:1 Unless the Lord builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the Lord guards the city, The watchman keeps awake in vain. 127:2 It is vain for you to rise up early, To retire late, To eat the bread of painful labors; For He gives to His beloved even in his sleep. 127:3 Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, The fruit of the womb is a reward. 127:4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth. 127:5 How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; They will not be ashamed When they speak with their enemies in the gate. (NASB)</p>	<p>Toviyah Psalms 127 127:1 A song that was uttered on the ascents of the abyss, composed by Solomon. If the word of the Lord will not build the city, its builders labor in vain; if the word of the Lord is not guarding the city of Jerusalem, its guard has stayed awake in vain. 127:2 In vain will you trouble yourselves to rise early in the morning to do robbery, who stay up late to do fornication, who eat the bread of the poor for which they labored honestly and truly; the Lord will give sleep to those who love him. Another Targum: The wicked say to the righteous, "It is wrong for you that you rise early and pray in the morning and stay up late in the evening to study the Torah, eating the bread of sorrow." The righteous reply, "Truly the Lord gives to those who love him a complete reward for hunger." 127:3 Behold, the legacy of the Lord is proper sons, children of the womb are a reward for good deeds. 127:4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are sons of the youth. 127:5 It is good for a man that he fill his academy with them; they will not be ashamed, for they will dispute with their enemies in the gate of the place of judgment.(EMC)</p>	<p>Psalmoi Psalms 127 A Song of Degrees. 127:1 Except the Lord build the house, they that build labor in vain: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman watches in vain. 127:2 It is vain for you to rise early: ye rise up after resting, ye that eat the bread of grief; while he gives sleep to his beloved. 127:3 Behold, the inheritance of the Lord, children, the reward of the fruit of the womb. 127:4 As arrows in the hand of a mighty man; so are the children of those who were outcasts. 127:5 Blessed is the man who shall satisfy his desire with them: they shall not be ashamed when they shall speak to their enemies in the gates. (LXX)</p>
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א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת לְשִׁלְמֹה
A song of ascents. By Shlomo
127:1 Unless the Lord builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the Lord guards the city, The watchman keeps awake in vain. (NASB)

This comment by Solomon is deep with meaning and importance for our lives today! I have seen it said, those who watch carefully to walk in God's righteous ways do so towards themselves rather than to Christ, and so their watching is in vain saying such a person relies upon his or her own vigilance as opposed to the Messiah. Is this the correct interpretation of the one who watches diligently to keep himself from falling? Is this what Yeshua meant when he said in *Matthew 26:41* *Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.* (NASB), or what Paul meant when he said in *1 Corinthians 10:12* *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.* (NASB) The Lord helps us to be watchful not to fall into the snare of the enemy. How often do we actually enter into temptation simply because we have failed to faithfully watch for the ways of the enemy? Consider what the Apostle James states in his book in the Apostolic Writings.

James 4:17-27

4:17 So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, 4:18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; 4:19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. 4:20 But you did not learn Christ in this way, 4:21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, 4:22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 4:23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 4:24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. 4:25 Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. 4:26 Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 4:27 and do not give the devil an opportunity. (NASB)

Note that the enemy comes to tempt us into sin, this is what James is referring to as giving the devil an opportunity. James speaks of not walking in the futility of mind having a darkened understanding and ignorance that causes one to be excluded from the life of God. His focus here is upon the “life of God” which His people are called to, which is a life of faithfulness. He provides examples saying such people give themselves over to sensuality (immorality), impurity, and greed, these things are counter to who we are in the Messiah Yeshua. James speaks of being renewed in the spirit of the mind, referencing the Neshamah, the living spirit within us, that part of us the Lord renews and creates new, which he then says is that which is created in the likeness of God, in righteousness, holiness, and truth. He emphasizes truth as opposed to deceit, and to not be angry and sin, to not let your anger continue with the sun going down, we are not to sleep on our anger, but to diligently repent and give up our anger to the Lord and forgive. James concludes if these things are not accomplished in us, we will give the devil and opportunity in our lives. Notice how this opportunity is not restricted by our faith in Yeshua, but is dependent upon our due diligence to follow the ways of God, to seek Him and His help, and the help of the Messiah. This is what it means to fail to watch, the divine warning that has been given to us in the Torah, and Yeshua reiterates saying, “*Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.*” (Matthew 26 v41) The watching that attains its end is dependent upon the Lord who guards us, our faith, and our faithfulness in the Lord which leads us into prayer and ascends to praise. This is the perplexity as to the nature of watchfulness and that place that it should occupy in the life of a believer. We are called to be watchful in due diligence according to the commands; this is the meaning of being faithful before God!

The concept of being diligent, laboring, and the Lord God in heaven is expounded upon by the rabbis in the following way.

Talmud Bavli Yoma 19b:14

The mishna continues: And they would engage him in different ways until the time to slaughter the daily offering would arrive. It was taught: They would not occupy him with a harp or a lyre, which may not be played on a Festival, but would sing with their mouths. And what would they say? They would say this verse: “Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain on it; unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman keeps vigil in vain” (Psalms 127:1). The message to the High Priest was that his service must be performed for the sake of Heaven for it to be accepted by God; otherwise his efforts would be in vain.

The Talmudic rabbis speak of how the priests occupy themselves daily for the service of the Lord. In the daily ritual, in music and song, officiating a Festival, and in singing, they sing Tehillim / Psalms 127:1, “*Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain on it; unless the Lord watches over the city,*

the watchman keeps vigil in vain.” The Talmud says this is a message to the High Priest, that the service must be performed for the sake of Heaven for it to be accepted by God, otherwise his efforts are in vain. In the Apostolic Writings, we are called priests of God (*1 Peter 2:9 But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God’s OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; NASB, see Revelation 1:6 also and the various verses from the Torah that speak of Israel being a nation of priests.*). The Torah speaks of us as a nation of priests in *Shemot / Exodus 19:6 and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel. (NASB)* Based upon these Scriptures, this Talmudic passage applies to our lives saying, all of our efforts, all that we do, is to be performed for the sake of Heaven. This is the same thing Paul wrote of in *Colossians 3:17-24*.

Colossians 3:17-24

3:17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. 3:18 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 3:19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them. 3:20 Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. 3:21 Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart. 3:22 Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. 3:23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, 3:24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. (NASB)

Paul says whatever we do, we are to do for the Lord all in the name of our Lord and Savior Yeshua the Messiah.

Ein Yaakov has the following to say concerning laboring in vain.

Ein Yaakov (Glick Edition), Yoma 1:20

We are taught in a Baraita : “They did not entertain him with music of a violin or harp, but with their mouths, and they read to him from Ps. 127, 1, Unless the Lord do build the house, in vain labor they that build it. The respectable men of Jerusalem forbore to sleep the whole night, so that the High-priest might hear their echoing noise and would not fall asleep.”

It seems Ein Yaakov interprets *Tehillim / Psalms 127:1* to say the Chasidim labor all night for the purpose of keeping the High Priest up all night too. Does this suggest the righteous men remain at the Temple singing and laboring for the Lord? Note what we read in *Luke 2:37* of the widow who never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. This suggests that whether day or night we are to apply our lives to the service of the Lord. That makes sense since, Paul exhorts the Ephesians in a similar way saying the following.

Ephesians 5:6-21

5:6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 5:7 Therefore do not be partakers with them; 5:8 for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light 5:9 (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), 5:10 trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. 5:11 Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; 5:12 for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. 5:13 But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. 5:14 For this reason it says, ‘Awake, sleeper; And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you.’ 5:15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 5:16 making the most of your time, because

the days are evil. 5:17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 5:18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, 5:19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; 5:20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; 5:21 and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. (NASB)

Paul warns to not be deceived, we are the children of the light (righteousness) having only formerly been the children of the darkness (unrighteousness). Note how Ein Yaakov states righteous men remain awake at night to do what is right laboring for the Lord. Paul speaks of being awakened in Christ so that His light will shine through us. Paul describes the unrighteous as doing their deeds during the cover of night time, and the righteous doing their deeds during day light. There is a strong parallel here to what we are reading in Tehillim / Psalms 127:1, א הָהֵי-מֵאָז וַיִּנּוּב וּלְמַעַן | אִנּוֹשׁ תִּיב הַנֶּבִי-אֵל | הָהֵי-מֵאָז הַמְלִיטְךָ תוֹלַעְמָה רִישׁ אֵ | אִנּוֹשׁ רִיעַ-רַמְשֵׁי-אֵל *A song of ascents. By Shlomo 127:1 Unless the Lord builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the Lord guards the city, The watchman keeps awake in vain. (NASB)* If we are not diligent in our laboring for the Lord, there is the opportunity to sin and giving place to the Devil in our lives (*James 4:27*).

Midrash Tanchuma states the following in regards to the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of God's people.

Midrash Tanchuma Buber, Pekudei 8:1

How many were skilled but could not erect the Tabernacle?31 Solomon said (in Prov. 31:29): MANY DAUGHTERS HAVE DONE VALIANTLY, <BUT YOU SURPASS THEM ALL>. Why? Because they built the Tabernacle but did not know how to set it up. Each and everyone took his work and went to Moses. Each and every one would say: Here is my hook. Here is my board. Here is my bolt. But the Holy Spirit rested upon Moses, and he erected the tabernacle. Still you should not say <that> Moses <did it>. Rather The Tabernacle arose by itself, as stated (in Exod. 40:17): THE TABERNACLE WAS ERECTED. And you should not speak of the Tabernacle < alone being automatically erected >, but also of the Universal House (i.e., the Temple).32 Had it not been for the Holy One helping, neither Solomon nor all Israel would have built it. Where is it shown? Where David says so (in Ps. 127:1): UNLESS THE LORD BUILDS THE HOUSE, [THE BUILDERS' LABOR ON IT IN VAIN]. Therefore, the Tabernacle was erected through work of miracles. As soon as that Tabernacle was erected, all Israel began to rejoice, as stated (in Cant. 3:11): O DAUGHTERS OF ZION, GO FORTH AND GAZE AT KING SOLOMON (rt.: ShLM), <i.e.> at the king to whom peace (rt.: ShLM) belongs, i.e., the Supreme King of Kings, the Holy One. (Ibid., cont.:) [IN THE CROWN WITH WHICH HIS MOTHER CROWNED HIM, for the < verse here> is calling the Tabernacle a crown. Just as this crown is described, so was the Tabernacle described (e.g., in Exod. 36:35): BLUE AND PURPLE.33

The Midrash speaks of the work of the Holy Spirit of God in the lives of God's people, that we do not understand what we are doing in this life without the help of the Holy Spirit of God. Note how the Midrash speaks of the Tabernacle erecting itself without Moshe's help. This is important because we do not credit the work of God in our lives to ourselves, but to the Lord Himself alone! This is the meaning of the Lord building and the laborer laboring in vain. This Tabernacle, this place of the dwelling of God's presence, was erected by miracles. Can the same be said of our bodies, the place of dwelling for God's Spirit? It was by a miracle the Lord delivered us, saved us, transformed us, and has us on the path we are following today. All the credit goes to the Lord. If the Lord is not at the foundation of who we are, all that we do is done in His service for His glory!

ב שְׂוֹא לָכֶם | מְשַׁבְּימֵי קוּם מֵאַחֲרֵי-שְׁבֶת אֲכָלִי לָחֶם הָעֵצָבִים כִּן יִתֵּן לְיָדֶיךָ
:שְׂוֹא 127:2 *It is vain for you to rise up early, To retire late, To eat the bread of painful labors; For He gives to His beloved even in his sleep. (NASB)* Solomon speaks of the toiling in this life at a job, to raise early and go to bed late, taking few hours for sleep, rest, and restoration, that the one who does so reaps sorrow. The reason being, working extra hours can take away from time with family, friends, and doing the Lord's work. Solomon's conclusion is that all good things come from the Lord, including the increase in wealth.

Several places in the Scriptures the Lord commands His people to bring Him their first fruits as an offering (see *Parashat Ekev Devarim / Deuteronomy 18:4*, and *Parashat Mishpatim Shemot / Exodus 23:19*). Note how as a farmer, the crops grow in the night as well as in the day. In this sense, as an agricultural society, Solomon describes the Lord giving to his beloved even in his sleep. These mitzvot generally refer to food offerings, but the same concepts apply to how we spend our time as well. When considering this command, the people were not commanded saying, "when you have a chance" or "when you get around to it," you may bring the first fruits. If the people were instructed to "fit" the Lord God into their lives, they would have never gotten around to it, they would have gotten busy and forgotten. The command specifies to bring the first fruits, and therefore the people needed to set time aside to do as the Lord wanted. This means sitting down and making a schedule to set aside time for the Lord so we do not get distracted. For example, when is the best time to read your Bible, to pray, or to serve others? We are not called to give the Lord God our "left overs." We are called to give the Lord our first fruits. Note how this also applies to scheduling the Lord in at the end of the day (i.e. 10-11 pm) when we are spent, tired, and settling down for rest and sleep. We are to give the Lord the best time, the best part of our schedule, so we may devote our full attention to Him and His work. Something connected to this is to not be so busy we cannot make time for the Lord or for others. Today with technology, it is easy to become busily distracted. This kind of busyness is moral laziness. The reason I call this a form of "moral laziness," it is because it is connected to self-importance or as an excuse to not be attentive to others. When we keep these things in mind, every moment is sacred as a time to touch other people's lives and to do what the Lord calls us to do. The reason this is so important, is because busyness is not a frenetic distracted lifestyle such as always looking at your cell phone or being on the Internet, etc. This type of lifestyle is moral laziness because it is something we choose to do that is designed to distract and be unattentative to the things of God and to others. Take for example what we read in *Luke 10:42*.

Luke 10:38-42

10:38 Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. 10:39 She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word. 10:40 But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me.' 10:41 But the Lord answered and said to her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; 10:42 but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.' (NASB)

Busyness is something we choose just as this story illustrates. Mary had chosen what was good, to seek the Lord in hearing the words of the Messiah Yeshua. Martha had become so preoccupied with her work, she did not choose the good thing and forgot that we should be attentive to God's Word. This reminds us that every moment belongs to the Lord God in heaven and as stated earlier, every moment of our lives is therefore sacred, something that is holy unto the Lord. It is found within our faithfulness to the Lord that we are stewards of the gifts God has given us. Because the Lord has given us gifts, we will one day be accountable for our investments (see *Matthew 25:14-30* and *2 Corinthians 5:10*). Because the Lord expects something of us, "fear and trembling" are what we're supposed to feel. (*Philippians 2:12*) The Torah teaches us that we are to handle holy things with great care, and how much more the things of our lives, the time that God gives us, and the gifts the Lord endows in our lives. In all of these things, we are also to remember that

God is “merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (*Shemot / Exodus 34, Tehillim / Psalm 86:15*). This causes us to come to the Lord humbly in the Messiah Yeshua confessing our sin and asking for help, and turning from our sinful stewardship. It is only then that we are forgiven (*1 John 1:9*) and the Lord will give us everything we need to steward the time entrusted to us (see *Luke 11:9, John 15:7, Philippians 4:19, and Hebrews 13:20–21*).

The Psalmist states, הַיְהִי נַחֲלַת יְהוָה בְּנִים שְׂכָר פְּרִי הַבֶּטֶן: 127:3 *Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, The fruit of the womb is a reward. 127:4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth. (NASB)* It seems Solomon is emphasizing the importance of family in the description of children, comparing the time that we spend laboring, to the time we spend with family. Solomon exchanges the importance of blessing and wealth with the precious lives he places into our hands, our children, and wives, and those around us as being more important. This is what Paul was teaching the Philippians saying the following:

Philippians 2:1-11

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. 2:9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 2:10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 2:11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (NASB)

Paul speaks of love and fellowship of spirit that is connected to affection and compassion on others. He says this is only accomplished when we do not live by selfish motives or empty conceit, but maintain love, unity of spirit, and intent of purpose to do as God commands us. We are not to look only at our own personal interests, but to the interests of others. The example is taken from the life of Yeshua, his humbling himself before our Father in heaven, obedient to the Torah and to the Lord unto his death, and being exalted by God in heaven and on earth. This parallel, if we do these things, the Lord will be glorified.

The Psalm concludes saying, ד כְּחֻצִים בְּיַד-גִּבּוֹר כֵּן בְּנֵי הַנְּעוּרִים: ה אֲשֶׁר־י הִגִּיר אֲשֶׁר מְלֵא אֶת-אֲשָׁפוֹתוֹ, 127:5 *How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; They will not be ashamed When they speak with their enemies in the gate. (NASB)* The one who has many children, Solomon says will not be ashamed. It is interesting how children may also be paralleled to discipleship, note how we are the children of God. So in a way, Solomon may be referring to those who speak and teach the Word of God making disciples of men. Making disciples means teaching God's ways to His people such that as Yeshua prayed, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” (*Matthew 6:9-10*) Note here how Yeshua speaks of the kingdom of God coming here on earth, and the will of God being performed on earth. What Yeshua is speaking of is a people who are dedicated to Him as disciples. To carry the message of God's promises, salvation, and righteous, holy, and just ways for living before our Father in heaven to all peoples here on earth. Yeshua said “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (*Matthew*

28:18-20) He speaks of having faith, repenting (baptism), and learning to obey his commandments. Making disciples includes all of these things, but yet today no emphasis is placed upon the importance of God's commandments in the lives of His people. Yeshua spent more than three years making disciples, teaching, and training His chosen twelve. He gave them many convincing proofs that He was the Son of God, the promised Messiah and they believed in Him. He spoke to the crowds in parables, and He drew the disciples aside privately to teach them the meaning of His parables and miracles. He also taught them that soon He would be returning to His Father following His death and resurrection (*Matthew 16:21, John 12:23-36, 14:2-4*). Yeshua made this promise to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in Me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father" (*John 14:12*). Placing our faith in Yeshua, the Lord sends His Holy Spirit to be with us and dwell within us (*John 14:16-17*). During the festival of Shavuot, this promise was fulfilled, the Lord sent His Spirit to dwell in His people. When this happened, they were empowered and given boldness to speak the Good News of faith in Yeshua and the power to overcome sin (i.e. to walk in the commands with success). Multitudes of peoples, especially those from the gentiles placed their faith in Yeshua the Messiah, and they also became disciples coming to faith and to the obedience of the faith (*Romans 15 and 16*). When strong persecution came from the leaders, they dispersed to other areas and continued to obey the Messiah's command to make disciples. Congregations were established throughout the Roman Empire, and eventually in other nations. Those who are characterized as disciples of Yeshua, will be assured of who he is in the Messiah and the salvation he provides (*John 3:16*). Such a person is empowered by the indwelling Holy Spirit to take the message of God's word, His messiah, and his commands to all the world (*John 14:26-27*). Such a person grows in the mercy and knowledge of God and His Messiah Yeshua (*2 Peter 3:18*), sharing the burden for the lost sheep of Israel and in the nations, of the men, women, and children Yeshua loves when he said, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field." (*Matthew 9:37-38*) Do you have this calling to reach out to others and speak of the promises and faithfulness of God? If not, how would you characterize your faith and faithfulness to the Lord today? Let's Pray!

Rabbinic Commentary

The Rabbinic Commentary (Midrash) on *Tehillim / Psalms 127* has 3 parts. Reading through the Midrash we will be looking at Part 1, 2, and 3. Let's begin by outlining *Midrash Tehillim Chapter 127, Part 1, 2, and 3*

Outline of Midrash Tehillim / Psalms, Chapter 127, Part 1, 2, and 3

Part 1

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the **דיבור המתחיל** (Dibur Hamathil) saying, "A song of ascents; of Solomon. Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it (*Tehillim / Psalms 127:1*)."
- The **פתיחה** (Petihata) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, "Rabbi Judah the Prince sent Rabbi Hiyya, Rabbi Jose, and Rabbi Ammi to visit cities in the Land of Israel, and to set up in them teachers of Scripture and instructors of Oral Law."
- The **משל** (mashal) "the parable," goes on to explain the **פתיחה** (Petihata), the rabbis speak of the importance of teaching and hearing the Word of God for the purpose of the Lord building up His people.
- The **נמשל** (Nimshal) "expansion on the parable" expands upon the **משל** (mashal), explaining that when one does not set up teachers so the people will hear the Word of God, it is as if one is causing a place and a people to enter into destruction.

- The Concluding phrase says, “Hence, it is written, *Except the Lord keep the city, the watchmen wakes but in vain (Tehillim / Psalms 127:1).*”

Part 2

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying, “*It is vain for you that you rise early, and sit up late, you that eat the bread of toil;*”
- The פתיחתא (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*but He will surely give to those who banish sleep from themselves (Tehillim / Psalms 127:2)*”
- The משל (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis speak one who raises early and goes to bed late.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the משל (mashal), saying the one who banishes sleep the Lord will give to as being in reference to those who labor for the Lord day and night.
- The Concluding phrase says, “*He will surely give life in the world to come to scholars’ wives who in this world banish sleep for their husband’s sake.*”

Part 3

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying, “*Lo, Children are a heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is His gifts (Tehillim / Psalms 127:3).*”
- The פתיחתא (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*As things go among mortals, a laborer must work for a householder must plow for him, or sow for him, or weed for him, or hoe for him, and only then does the householder give the laborer a coin or so, and let him go.*”
- The משל (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis speak of the gift of children and the one who labors for his family.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the משל (mashal), saying it is just as important to labor for the Word of God as it is for family.
- The Concluding phrase says, “*A man need only long for riches and God can give them to him, as is said, Both riches and honor come of You (1 Chronicles 29:12).*”

Midrash Tehillim 127 Part 1 opens with the דיבור המתחיל (Dibur Hamathil) saying, “*A song of ascents; of Solomon. Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it (Tehillim / Psalms 127:1).*” The פתיחתא (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*Rabbi Judah the Prince sent Rabbi Hiyya, Rabbi Jose, and Rabbi Ammi to visit cities in the Land of Israel, and to set up in them teachers of Scripture and instructors of Oral Law.*” The midrash opens with the importance on allowing the Lord God our Father in heaven to build the house which is accomplished by His Word going out and being taught to His people. The entire midrash states the following:

<p>מדרש תהלים פרק קכז סימן א</p> <p>א שיר המעלות לשלמה אם ה' לא יבנה בית שוא עמלו בוניו בו. ר' יהודה נשיאה שלח רבי חייא ורבי יוסי ור' אמאי מעבור קרייתא דארעא דישראל, מתקנא להון סופרים ומתניין, עלון לחד אתר לא אשכחו תמן לא סופר ולא מתניין, א"ל אייתי לן נטורי קרתא [אייתון לון סנטורי קרתא], אמרון לון אלין [אינון] נטורי קרתא, לית אלין אלא מחריבי קרתא, [א"ל] ומה אינון נטורי קרתא [א"ל] ספריין ומתניין, הה"ד אם ה' לא ישמר עיר שוא שקד שומר.</p>	<p>Midrash Tehillim 127, Part 1</p> <p><i>1. A song of ascents; of Solomon. Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it (Tehillim / Psalms 127:1). Rabbi Judah the Prince sent Rabbi Hiyya, Rabbi Jose, and Rabbi Ammi to visit cities in the Land of Israel, and to set up in them teachers of Scripture and instructors of Oral Law. They came to one city in which they found no teacher of Scripture and no instructor of Oral Law, and they said to the people, Fetch us the chief watchmen of the city. The people brought the watchman of the city. The people brought the watchmen of the city to the Rabbis, and the Rabbis said, Are these the watchmen of the city? In truth, they are the destroyers of the city. And when the people asked the Rabbis, Who then are the watchmen of the city? The rabbis answered, The watchmen of the city are the teachers of Scripture and instructors of Oral Law. Hence, it is written, Except the Lord keep the city, the watchmen wakes but in vain (Tehillim / Psalms 127:1).</i></p>
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The Scriptures declare God's thoughts and actions. We are told the following reasons why we are to remain in the Word of God.

Devarim / Deuteronomy 8:16-20

8:16 'In the wilderness He fed you manna which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do good for you in the end. 8:17 'Otherwise, you may say in your heart, 'My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.' 8:18 'But you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day. 8:19 'It shall come about if you ever forget the Lord your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I testify against you today that you will surely perish. 8:20 'Like the nations that the Lord makes to perish before you, so you shall perish; because you would not listen to the voice of the Lord your God. (NASB)

The reason we remember the Lord our God is because He is our strength, and it is by His hand that we have wealth and this reminder is so we do not become arrogant in our hearts to believe we have done all of these things by our own power and abilities. The Lord God our Father in heaven is the One who has blessed and gifted us with our abilities. Solomon speaks of the importance of God's Word in the following way:

Mishley / Proverbs 3:6-14

3:6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight. 3:7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and turn away from evil. 3:8 It will be healing to your body And refreshment to your bones. 3:9 Honor the Lord from your wealth And from the first of all your produce; 3:10 So your barns will be filled with plenty And your vats will overflow with new wine. 3:11 My son, do not reject the discipline of the Lord Or loathe His reproof, 3:12 For whom the Lord loves He reproveth, Even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights. 3:13 How blessed is the man who finds wisdom And the man who gains understanding. 3:14 For her profit is better than the profit of silver And her gain better than fine gold. (NASB)

We are to hold fast to the Lord, and to recognize who it is that gives us our wealth and abilities in life. (Romans 12:16, Philippians 1:27 and 2:5) When Solomon says to honor the Lord with our wealth, he is referring to helping others, and to give of our time. The Lord states that our thoughts are not His thoughts,

and so if our thoughts are not as God's, then we are to exchange our way of thinking, with the Lord's ways according to the inspired Word of God. Note what the Scriptures say concerning these things, Joshua wrote saying in *Joshua 1:8* *This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. (NASB)* David wrote, *Tehillim / Psalm 1:2* *But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. (NASB)* And in *Tehillim / Psalm 4:4* *Tremble, and do not sin; Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still. (NASB)* Thinking upon, meditating upon God's Word, making it a part of our daily lives, is so important, the evil one wants to keep us out of God's Word and to keep our relationship to God's Word superficial and secondary. Notice how the emphasis for remaining in the Word to apply God's Word to our lives is not seriously impressed upon people in the church today. Because God's Word is deemphasized as it is applied to our lives, there is a confusion and sickness today in believers. This is why the evil one is so adamantly at work to keep us out of the Word which is so essential to our ability to avoid the delusions of deceiver and the world system and to hear and respond to the call of God on our lives. Meditating upon the Word of God consists of reflecting, thinking, and contemplating God's Word, its meaning, and its application for our lives. David wrote in the Psalms speaking of these things saying:

- ***Tehillim / Psalm 63:6*** *When I remember Thee on my bed, I meditate on Thee in the night watches, (NASB)*
- ***Tehillim / Psalm 77:11*** *I shall remember the deeds of the LORD; Surely I will remember Thy wonders of old. (NASB)*
- ***Tehillim / Psalm 78:42*** *They did not remember His power, The day when He redeemed them from the adversary, (NASB)*
- ***Tehillim / Psalm 143:5*** *I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Thy doings; I muse on the work of Thy hands. (NASB)*

David felt meditating upon God's Word was very important. This is not the same as the eastern methods of meditation which involves the emptying of the mind. We are called to fill our minds and our lives with God's Word. The objective to our meditating upon the Word is worshipful, it is designed to focus on the Lord and His works (*Tehillim / Psalms 27:4 and 77:12*). Getting into the word of God, studying, meditating, it finds a place in our lives for communion with God. It is a means of feeding the spirit. As the midrash states, studying God's Word is for instruction in our lives. It is designed to improve our understanding of the Lord and His ways as it applies to our lives (*Tehillim / Psalms 49:3 and 119:27*). God's Word gives us motivation and encouragement. It is designed to motivate and inspire us in service and courage for the works God has called us to do (see *Joshua 1:7-8*). Most importantly, studying God's Word is transformational. It is designed to transform and change our lives.

Midrash Tehillim 127 Part 1 concludes saying, "*Hence, it is written, Except the Lord keep the city, the watchmen wakes but in vain (Tehillim / Psalms 127:1).*" The rabbis speak of the importance of teaching and hearing the Word of God for the purpose of the Lord building up His people explaining that when one does not set up teachers so the people will hear the Word of God, it is as if one is causing a place and a people to enter into destruction. It is important to realize we cannot divorce the Word of God from its application to our lives. If we are not living God's word, such a life is as a people entering into destruction. The objective for studying the Bible is for remembering, worship, instruction, motivation, and transformation. Just as the Psalmist who said, "*I will meditate on Thy precepts, and regard Thy ways*" (*Tehillim / Psalms 119:15*) as he sought the Lord saying, "*Make me to understand the way of Thy precepts, So I will meditate on Thy wonders*" (*Tehillim / Psalms 119:27*). We are not reading just a book with ink on paper, but that which is the very Word from God, authoritative, alive, and powerful. It should truly humble us to know that in the

Scriptures, the Holy One who is also the Almighty One, has spoken to us in these holy words. The purpose of reading and reflecting upon God’s Word is to draw near to the Lord, to respond to what the Lord has said, and apply the passages to our own lives.

Midrash Tehillim 127 Part 2 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying, “*It is vain for you that you rise early, and sit up late, you that eat the bread of toil;*” The פתיחה (Petihtha) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*but He will surely give to those who banish sleep from themselves (Tehillim / Psalms 127:2)*” The entire midrash states the following:

<p>מדרש תהלים פרק קכז סימן ב ב שוא לכם משכימי קום מאחרי שבת וגו' [כן יתן לידידו שנא]. אלו נשור תיהן של ת"ח שמנדדות שינה מעיניהן בעוה"ז ובאות לחיי העולם הבא.</p>	<p>Midrash Tehillim 127, Part 2 2. <i>It is vain for you that you rise early, and sit up late, you that eat the bread of toil; but He will surely give to those who banish sleep from themselves (Tehillim / Psalms 127:2) that is, He will surely give life in the world to come to scholars' wives who in this world banish sleep for their husband's sake.</i></p>
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The rabbis speak of the one who raises early and goes to bed late paralleling the one who banishes sleep on behalf of the Lord is synonymous to those who labor for the Lord all day and all night. The rabbis have the following to say concerning laboring for the Lord.

Mishnah Pirkei Avot 6:1

שְׁנוּ חֲכָמִים בְּלִשׁוֹן הַמִּשְׁנָה, בְּרוּךְ שֶׁבָחָר בָּהֶם וּבְמִשְׁנָתָם:
 רַבִּי מֵאִיר אָמַר כָּל הַעוֹסֵק בַּתּוֹרָה לְשִׂמְחָה, זוֹכֵה לְדַבְרֵי הַרְבֵּה. וְלֹא עוֹד אֶלָּא שֶׁכָּל הָעוֹלָם כְּלוֹ
 כְּדִי הוּא לוֹ. נִקְרָא רַע, אֶהוּב, אֶהוּב אֶת הַמְּקוֹם, אֶהוּב אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת, מְשַׂמֵּחַ אֶת הַמְּקוֹם, מְשַׂמֵּחַ אֶת
 הַבְּרִיּוֹת. וּמְלַבֵּשׁתוּ עֲנָוָה וְיִרְאָה, וּמְכַשְׂרֵתוּ לְהִיטֵי צְדִיק וְחֹסֵד וְיִשָּׁר וְנִאֲמָן, וּמְרַחֲקֵתוּ מִן הַחַטָּא,
 וּמְקַרְבֵתוּ לַיָּדֵי זְכוּת, וְנִהְיִין מִמָּנוּ עֲצָה וְתוֹשִׁיָּה בִּינָה וְגִבּוֹרָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (משלי ח) לִי עֲצָה וְתוֹשִׁיָּה
 אֲנִי בִּינָה לִי גִבּוֹרָה. וְנוֹתְנָת לוֹ מְלָכוּת וּמְמַשְׁלָה וְחִקּוֹר דִּין, וּמַגְלִין לוֹ רְוֵי תוֹרָה, וְנַעֲשֶׂה כְּמַעֲנִין
 הַמְתַּגַּבֵּר וּכְנֶהֱרָ שְׁאִינוּ פוֹסֵק, וְהָיִי צְנוּעַ וְאֶרְךָ רוּחַ, וּמוֹחֵל עַל עֲלֻבוֹנוֹ, וּמְגַדֵּלְתוֹ וּמְרוֹמְמֵתוֹ עַל כָּל
 הַמַּעֲשִׂים:

The Rabbis taught in the language (style) of the Mishnah: Rabbi Meir says: Anyone who involves himself in Torah for its own sake merits many things, and moreover the entire world is worthwhile for his sake; He is called “friend,” “beloved,” “lover of the Omnipresent,” “lover of [all] creatures,” “delighter of the Omnipresent,” “delighter of [all] creatures.” He is clothed in humility and reverence, and it prepares him to be righteous, devout, upright and trustworthy, and it distances him from sin, and draws him near to merit. We enjoy from him counsel and comprehension, understanding and strength, as it is said (Proverbs 8:14): “Mine is counsel and comprehension, I am understanding, mine is strength.” It gives him kingship and dominion, and [the ability to] investigate in judgment, and the secrets of the Torah are revealed to him, and he becomes like an ever-strengthening spring, and like a river that does not stop. He is modest and long-tempered, and forgives insult to him; And it enlarges him and raises him above all [that God] made.

In the Mishnah Pirkei Avot, Rabbi Meir speaks of laboring for the Lord by the study of the Torah. Such a person is said to have a love for God, and a love for all creatures, both man and beast. The one who studies the Torah and applies it to his life, is trustworthy, distances himself from sin, devout, upright, and provides good counsel when asked. Laboring in God’s Word is an important endeavor, but most of all, note how Rabbi Meir connects the dots to the world around such a person who studies for the purpose of the application to life. Further insights into the mind of the rabbis may be found in the Talmud Bavli Berekhot 35b.

Talmud Bavli Berekhot 35b

ר"ש בן יוחי אומר אפשר אדם חורש בשעת חרישה וזורע בשעת זריעה וקוצר בשעת קצירה ודש בשעת דישה וזורע בשעת הרוח תורה מה תהא עליה אלא בזמן שישראל עושין רצונו של מקום מלאכתן נעשית ע"י אחרים שנא' (ישעיהו סא, ה) ועמדו זרים ורעו צאנכם וגו' ובזמן שאין ישראל עושין רצונו של מקום מלאכתן נעשית ע"י עצמן שנא' (דברים יא, יד) ואספת דגנך ולא עוד אלא שמלאכת אחרים נעשית על ידן שנא' (דברים כח, מה) ועבדת את אויביך וגו' *Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai says: Is it possible that a person plows in the plowing season and sows in the sowing season and harvests in the harvest season and threshes in the threshing season and winnows in the windy season, as grain is separated from the chaff by means of the wind, and is constantly busy; what will become of Torah? Rather, one must dedicate himself exclusively to Torah at the expense of other endeavors; as when Israel performs God's will, their work is performed by others, as it is stated: "And strangers will stand and feed your flocks, and foreigners will be your plowmen and your vine-dressers" (Isaiah 61:5). When Israel does not perform God's will, their work is performed by them themselves, as it is stated: "And you shall gather your grain." Moreover, if Israel fails to perform God's will, others' work will be performed by them, as it is stated: "You shall serve your enemy whom God shall send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness and in want of all things" (Deuteronomy 28:48).*

אמר רבה בר בר חנה א"ר יוחנן משום רבי יהודה בר' אלעאי בא וראה שלא כדורות הראשונים דורות האחרונים דורות הראשונים עשו תורתן קבע ומלאכתן עראי זו וזו נתקיימה בידן דורות האחרונים שעשו מלאכתן קבע ותורתן עראי זו וזו לא נתקיימה בידן *Summarizing these statements, Rabba bar bar Hana said that Rabbi Yohanan said in the name of the tanna Rabbi Yehuda, son of Rabbi El'ai: Come and see that the latter generations are not like the earlier generations; rather they are their inferiors. The earlier generations made their Torah permanent and their work occasional, and this, Torah study, and that, their work, were successful for them. However, the latter generations who made their work permanent and their Torah occasional, neither this nor that was successful for them.*

What is interesting is how the rabbis speak of how the chaff is separated by means of the wind. Normally one does not need to point out the details on the separation process. The chaff being separated is taken from the translation of *בשעת הרוח* (and the seed in the time of the wind). As we know in the Hebrew bible and the development of the rabbinic understanding of *נפש*, *נשמה*, *רוח* the ruach come to be a reference to the Holy Spirit of God. What is significant is the chaff being separated by means of the Spirit of God illustrates the NT principle that Paul taught in relation to being transformed, renewed, and walking in the Spirit in relation to obeying God's Torah, and serving Him. In the Talmud Bavli Berekhot 35b, the rabbis speak of the one who labors at his work to plow, sow, reap, winnow, and separating the wheat from the chaff in relation to the study of the Torah. We can think of all the illustrations in the Scriptures in relation to the wheat and the chaff. For example, in David's words from *Tehillim / Psalms 1* we read the following:

Tehillim / Psalms 1:1-6

1:1 How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! 1:2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night. 1:3 He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers. 1:4 The wicked are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind drives away. 1:5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the

assembly of the righteous. 1:6 For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish. (NASB)

David speaks of the righteous who are blessed to not walk in the counsel of the wicked, and of how the wicked are driven like chaff in the wind. Could this be why the rabbis parallel the plowing, sowing, reaping, winnowing, and separating the wheat from the chaff in relation to the study of Torah? The rabbis of the Talmud state, diligently studying God's word and applying it to our lives causes others to work to feed and take care of us. Here they speak of foreigners (the nations) in reference to those who are not God's chosen. They say work and service to the Lord have their place, and one should put the Lord's Word before everything else. This sounds very similar to what Paul wrote to the Colossians.

Colossians 3:16-24

3:16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 3:17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. 3:18 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 3:19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them. 3:20 Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. 3:21 Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart. 3:22 Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. 3:23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, 3:24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. (NASB)

Note how Paul puts a spin on work and our service to the Lord. He says to do everything, in word or deed, in the name of Yeshua giving thanks to the Father (3:17). He reiterates this in 3:23 saying, *3:23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men (NASB)* He connects this to loving our spouse, being obedient to parents, and those who are in indebted. The key is to be with sincerity of heart fearing the Lord and not pleasing men. This point seems to be illustrated in the Talmud, which states, *The earlier generations made their Torah permanent and their work occasional, and this, Torah study, and their work, were successful for them. However, the latter generations who made their work permanent and their Torah occasional, neither this nor that was successful for them. (Talmud Bavli Berekhot 35b)*

Midrash Tehillim 127 Part 2 concludes saying, *“He will surely give life in the world to come to scholars’ wives who in this world banish sleep for their husband’s sake.”* So the idea here is the wives abandoned sleep to work on behalf of their husbands, allowing their husbands to devote themselves to the study of God's Word. This does seem a little counter-intuitive but illustrates the importance of staying in the Word of God to learn and to live for the Lord. This also illustrates the important role the husband has in the lives of his family to lead them in godliness, righteousness, justice, and truth.

Midrash Tehillim 127 Part 3 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying, *“Lo, Children are a heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is His gifts (Tehillim / Psalms 127:3).”* The פתיחה (Petihata) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, *“As things go among mortals, a laborer must work for a householder must plow for him, or sow for him, or weed for him, or hoe for him, and only then does the householder give the laborer a coin or so, and let him go.”* The entire midrash states the following:

<p>מדרש תהלים פרק קכז סימן ג</p> <p>ג הנה נחלת ה' בנים שכר פרי הבטן. מדת ב"ו פועל עושה עם בעל הבית, חורש עמו, וזורע עמו, מנכש עמו, מעדר עמו, מטבע אחד נותן לו והולך, אבל מי שאמר והיה העולם אינו כן אלא [אדם] תאב לבנים נותן לו, שנאמר נחלת ה' בנים. תאב לחכמה נותן לו, שנאמר כי ה' יתן חכמה (משלי ב ו). תאב לנכסים נותן לו, שנאמר והעושר והכבוד מלפניך (דה"א דברי הימים א' כט יב).</p>	<p>Midrash Tehillim 127, Part 3</p> <p>3. <i>Lo, Children are a heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is His gifts (Tehillim / Psalms 127:3). As things go among mortals, a laborer must work for a householder must plow for him, or sow for him, or weed for him, or hoe for him, and only then does the householder give the laborer a coin or so, and let him go. But unlike the householder is He by whose word the world came into being. For a man need only long for wisdom, and God can give it to him, as is said For the Lord gives wisdom (Mishley / Proverbs 2:6). A man need only long for riches and God can give them to him, as is said, Both riches and honor come of You (1 Chronicles 29:12).</i></p>
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The Midrash speaks of children being the ones who inherit the things of God. This places a high standard upon the life of children, and especially on the lives of the unborn which give us a hopeful expectation of the Lord's blessing and provision for our family. The laborer will earn his keep and his wages. The rabbis say children are a gift from God and the one who labors for his family is just as important as one who labors in the Word of God. The unsettling nature of American Culture and the underlying principles of the nations is to teach a lie that children, especially the unborn, are of little value, and then to pay for the murder of our unborn children? This unsettling feeling on the inside is not limited to the recent actions of the United States (i.e. gay marriage) but is a world wide on going phenomenon. This phenomenon is the devaluation of human beings, and the destruction of traditional families, values, and our children. In fact, the twisted nature of modern society has called on *Bamidbar / Numbers 5:11-31* as a proof text for the Lord God in heaven allowing a woman's choice to destroy the unborn (to have an abortion).

Bamidbar / Numbers 5:11-31

5:11 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 5:12 'Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'If any man's wife goes astray and is unfaithful to him, 5:13 and a man has intercourse with her and it is hidden from the eyes of her husband and she is undetected, although she has defiled herself, and there is no witness against her and she has not been caught in the act, 5:14 if a spirit of jealousy comes over him and he is jealous of his wife when she has defiled herself, or if a spirit of jealousy comes over him and he is jealous of his wife when she has not defiled herself, 5:15 the man shall then bring his wife to the priest, and shall bring as an offering for her one-tenth of an ephah of barley meal; he shall not pour oil on it nor put frankincense on it, for it is a grain offering of jealousy, a grain offering of memorial, a reminder of iniquity. 5:16 'Then the priest shall bring her near and have her stand before the Lord, 5:17 and the priest shall take holy water in an earthenware vessel; and he shall take some of the dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle and put it into the water. 5:18 'The priest shall then have the woman stand before the Lord and let the hair of the woman's head go loose, and place the grain offering of memorial in her hands, which is the grain offering of jealousy, and in the hand of the priest is to be the water of bitterness that brings a curse. 5:19 'The priest shall have her take an oath and shall say to the woman, 'If no man has lain with you and if you have not gone astray into uncleanness, being under the authority of your husband, be immune to this water of bitterness that brings a curse; 5:20 if you, however, have gone astray, being under the authority of your husband, and if you have defiled yourself and a man other than your husband has had intercourse with you' 5:21 (then the priest shall have the woman swear with the oath of the curse, and the priest shall say to the woman), 'the Lord make you a curse and an oath among your people by the Lord's making your thigh waste away and your abdomen swell; 5:22 and this water that brings a curse shall go into your stomach, and make your abdomen swell and your thigh waste away.' And the woman shall say, 'Amen. Amen.'

5:23 *'The priest shall then write these curses on a scroll, and he shall wash them off into the water of bitterness. 5:24 'Then he shall make the woman drink the water of bitterness that brings a curse, so that the water which brings a curse will go into her and cause bitterness. 5:25 'The priest shall take the grain offering of jealousy from the woman's hand, and he shall wave the grain offering before the Lord and bring it to the altar; 5:26 and the priest shall take a handful of the grain offering as its memorial offering and offer it up in smoke on the altar, and afterward he shall make the woman drink the water. 5:27 'When he has made her drink the water, then it shall come about, if she has defiled herself and has been unfaithful to her husband, that the water which brings a curse will go into her and cause bitterness, and her abdomen will swell and her thigh will waste away, and the woman will become a curse among her people. 5:28 'But if the woman has not defiled herself and is clean, she will then be free and conceive children. 5:29 'This is the law of jealousy: when a wife, being under the authority of her husband, goes astray and defiles herself, 5:30 or when a spirit of jealousy comes over a man and he is jealous of his wife, he shall then make the woman stand before the Lord, and the priest shall apply all this law to her. 5:31 'Moreover, the man will be free from guilt, but that woman shall bear her guilt.'* (NASB)

In the Apostolic Writings, Yeshua taught us that the Lord God our Father in heaven is the living creator God; *"God of the living and not of the dead."* (Luke 20:38, Mark 12:26-27). To entertain the idea that the Lord would support taking life as opposed to giving life is counterintuitive to the Torah itself. For example, in the creation account, the Lord God blesses the creatures He created and both man and woman, to be fruitful and multiple. This was the very first commandment in the bible, to be fruitful and multiply. The Lord's very first act was to bless to give life. The Lord places a high value upon the unborn, children, men and women. According to the Torah, having children is a blessing and not a curse, the Lord blesses us with children within the confines of a loving covenant relationship (marriage). In the rabbinic literature, the rabbis interpret children as a blessing of future generations, just as the Midrash speaks of children being the ones who inherit the things of God which speaks of the continuation of God's blessing upon His people. Take for example, many Jewish parents embrace the custom of blessing their children on Friday evening. The words of the blessing are taken from the priestly blessing (*Bamidbar / Numbers 6:24-26*) the Aaronic blessing which was originally given over all the people of Israel in the wilderness. So the idea that the Lord would provide a way for the destruction of life in the womb based upon the Torah and the rabbinic literature is not consistent.

Studying these verses from *Bamidbar / Numbers 5*, the situation is related to the woman breaking the covenant relationship with her husband and with God. Note how the scripture says the priest put the woman under the curse. If one is cursed, there is no life, and the baby, the blessing that is found in the covenant relationship, is lost. So what is going on here, from the Jewish context, is related to her unfaithfulness to God and to her husband. The inability to have children, and the loss of the baby, which are both parts of the curse being placed upon the woman, speak of both her and all her future generations that may come by this child as being lost because she chose to sin, to walk away from God and His ways, and to violate the covenant. These verses speak more about faith and faithfulness to God and to marriage than anything else, and speaks volumes about the sexually immoral and murderous culture that we live in today. The liberal left will grasp at straws to justify their actions by any means. The reason this is so important is that all that we do, everything, and who we are as believers basically boils down to our relationship with our Creator (*the Lord God of Israel*) and our relationships with others. Our modern culture wants to push its morals and unrighteousness not only on our children but also on each one of us! We have to push back and stand for righteousness, justice, and truth.

Midrash Tehillim 127 Part 3 concludes saying, *"A man need only long for riches and God can give them to him, as is said, Both riches and honor come of You (1 Chronicles 29:12)."* The context of the Torah draws into every aspect of our lives to a covenant relationship of righteousness (הַצְדִּיקָה), holiness (קְדוּשָׁה), and purity (טְהוּרָה, תְּמִימִים), which is coupled with truth and faithfulness (אֱמוּנָה) in our lives as God's children. The Midrash speaks of the man who longs for riches, and of the Lord who can give them to him. The Lord wants

to bless us richly, His word says so, and in receiving His blessing (not necessarily financial), we should be actively developing creative ways for putting our faith into action. This is the point of studying the Torah. We are called to “*work at our faith with fear and trembling,*” to push through life with faith, and to prove our faith, which is the meaning of Paul’s words in *Philippians 2:12*. This is why the rabbis place so much emphasis upon the importance of Studying God’s word and it’s application, as the example given in the Talmud Bavli Menachot 43b.

Talmud Bavli Menachot 43b

It was taught in a Baraita: Rabbi Meir said: a person must make 100 blessings each day, as it is written... (Deuteronomy 10:12) “And now Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you...” (בי, י מירבד) רמאנש מוי לכב תוכרב האמ דרביל מדא בייה רמוא ריאמ יבר היה אינת) (דמעמ לאוש דיהלא ה' המ לארשי התעו)

The rabbis in the Talmud teach the Lord expects us to make 100 blessings each day. The Lord chose this as a means for humbling our lives before Him and before others, so that we do not forget the Lord or who we are as His children. It is in the blessing, and being blessed that reminds us to be grateful to the Lord and to give praise to His Name. And we are able to pass this on to our children as they are a gift that is given to us from God! 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