

## ספר תהילים קכח | Tehillim / Psalms 128

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### Faith, Fasting, and Fear

In this week's study from *Tehillim / Psalms 128:1-6*, the psalm opens, א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת אֲשֶׁר־יִרְאֶה-יְהוָה: 128:1 *How blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, Who walks in His ways. (NASB)* The fear of the Lord is coupled to walking in His ways. We respect the Lord for His power and His watchful eyes on our lives. We know His promises and how He wants us to live for Him, and He told us what we should do. The Psalmist states, ב יִגִּיעַ כַּפְּיָךְ כִּי תֹאכַל אֲשֶׁר־יָדְךָ וְטוֹב לָךְ: 128:2 *When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, You will be happy and it will be well with you. (NASB)* The psalmist speaks of the fruit of our hands. This when coupled to the fear of the Lord and walking in His ways, the fruit of the hands will be that of righteousness, holiness, justice, and truth. This is why the psalmist states saying, ג אֲשֶׁתְּךָ | כְּגִפְּוֹן 28:3 *Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine Within your house, Your children like olive plants Around your table. 128:4 Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed Who fears the Lord. (NASB)* The one who fears the Lord will take time to be with his family spending time in relationship and taking time to be with wife and children. The blessing of the Lord comes in many forms, to work in the hearts of men, women, and children, to be fruitful, a delight, and as the psalm describes, olive plants around the table. The Psalm concludes saying, ה יְבָרְכֶךָ: 128:5 *The Lord bless you from Zion, And may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life. 128:6 Indeed, may you see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel! (NASB)* The blessing of children provides us with the future expectation of the Lord's blessing continuing on as we pass His truth and salvation to future generations.

עברית	Hebrew	ארמי	Aramaic	ελληνικός	Greek
<b>ספר תהלים פרק קכח</b>	<b>ספר טוביה פרק קכח</b>	<b>ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 128</b>			
א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת אֲשֶׁר־יִרְאֶה-יְהוָה: 128:1 <i>How blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, Who walks in His ways. (NASB)</i>	א שִׁירָא דִּתְהוּמָא טוֹבִיָּהוֹן דְּכָל דְּחִלִּיא דִּיהוּה דִּא-זְלִין בְּאוֹרְחַתִּיה: ב לִיעוֹת אִידָךְ אַרוֹם תִּיכּוֹל טוֹבְךָ בְּעֵלְמָא הַדִּין וְטַב לְךָ לְעֵלְמָא דִּאתִּי: ג אֲתַתְךָ הֵיךְ גּוֹפְנָא דְעַבְדַּת פִּירִין עַל שִׂידָא דְבִיתְךָ בְּנֵךְ הֵיךְ שְׁתִּילִיא דְזִיתִיא חֲזוֹר חֲזוֹר לְפַתּוֹרְךָ: ד הָא אַרוֹם הִיכִי-נָא מְתַבְרִיךְ גְּבֵרָא דְחִיל מִן קַדְמֵ יְהוּה: ה יְבָרְכִינְךָ יְהוּה מְצִיּוֹן וְתַחְמִי בְּטוֹבָא דִּירוֹשָׁלַם פִּלְשִׁמִּי חֲמִיָּה: ו וְרֵאֵה-בְּנִים לְבָנֶיךָ שְׁלוֹם עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל:	א שִׁירָא דִּתְהוּמָא טוֹבִיָּהוֹן דְּכָל דְּחִלִּיא דִּיהוּה דִּא-זְלִין בְּאוֹרְחַתִּיה: ב לִיעוֹת אִידָךְ אַרוֹם תִּיכּוֹל טוֹבְךָ בְּעֵלְמָא הַדִּין וְטַב לְךָ לְעֵלְמָא דִּאתִּי: ג אֲתַתְךָ הֵיךְ גּוֹפְנָא דְעַבְדַּת פִּירִין עַל שִׂידָא דְבִיתְךָ בְּנֵךְ הֵיךְ שְׁתִּילִיא דְזִיתִיא חֲזוֹר חֲזוֹר לְפַתּוֹרְךָ: ד הָא אַרוֹם הִיכִי-נָא מְתַבְרִיךְ גְּבֵרָא דְחִיל מִן קַדְמֵ יְהוּה: ה יְבָרְכִינְךָ יְהוּה מְצִיּוֹן וְתַחְמִי בְּטוֹבָא דִּירוֹשָׁלַם פִּלְשִׁמִּי חֲמִיָּה: ו וְרֵאֵה-בְּנִים לְבָנֶיךָ שְׁלוֹם עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל:	א שִׁירָא דִּתְהוּמָא טוֹבִיָּהוֹן דְּכָל דְּחִלִּיא דִּיהוּה דִּא-זְלִין בְּאוֹרְחַתִּיה: ב לִיעוֹת אִידָךְ אַרוֹם תִּיכּוֹל טוֹבְךָ בְּעֵלְמָא הַדִּין וְטַב לְךָ לְעֵלְמָא דִּאתִּי: ג אֲתַתְךָ הֵיךְ גּוֹפְנָא דְעַבְדַּת פִּירִין עַל שִׂידָא דְבִיתְךָ בְּנֵךְ הֵיךְ שְׁתִּילִיא דְזִיתִיא חֲזוֹר חֲזוֹר לְפַתּוֹרְךָ: ד הָא אַרוֹם הִיכִי-נָא מְתַבְרִיךְ גְּבֵרָא דְחִיל מִן קַדְמֵ יְהוּה: ה יְבָרְכִינְךָ יְהוּה מְצִיּוֹן וְתַחְמִי בְּטוֹבָא דִּירוֹשָׁלַם פִּלְשִׁמִּי חֲמִיָּה: ו וְרֵאֵה-בְּנִים לְבָנֶיךָ שְׁלוֹם עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל:	128:1 ὠδὴ τῶν ἀναβαθμῶν μακάριοι πάντες οἱ φοβούμενοι τὸν κύριον οἱ πορευόμενοι ἐν ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ 128:2 τοὺς πόνους τῶν καρπῶν σου φάγεσαι μακάριος εἶ καὶ καλῶς σοι ἔσται 128:3 ἡ γυνὴ σου ὡς ἄμπελος εὐθηνούσα ἐν τοῖς κλίτεσι τῆς οἰκίας σου οἱ υἱοὶ σου ὡς νεόφυτα ἐλαιῶν κύκλω τῆς τραπέζης σου 128:4 ἰδοὺ οὕτως εὐλογηθήσεται ἄνθρωπος ὁ φοβούμενος τὸν κύριον 128:5 εὐλογῆσαι σε κύριος ἐκ Σιων καὶ ἴδοις τὰ ἀγαθὰ Ἱερουσαλημ πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας τῆς ζωῆς σου 128:6 καὶ ἴδοις υἱοὺς τῶν υἱῶν σου εἰρήνη ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰσραὴλ	

<p><b>Tehillim Psalms 128</b>  128:1 How blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, Who walks in His ways. 128:2 When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, You will be happy and it will be well with you. 128:3 Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine Within your house, Your children like olive plants Around your table. 128:4 Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed Who fears the Lord. 128:5 The Lord bless you from Zion, And may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life. 128:6 Indeed, may you see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel! (NASB)</p>	<p><b>Toviyah Psalms 128</b>  128:1 A song that was uttered on the ascents of the abyss. How happy all who fear the Lord, who walk in his ways. 128:2 [Happy] the work of your hands, for you will eat [it]; happy are you in this age and you shall have good in the age to come. 128:3 Your wife is like a vine that bore fruit on the side of your house; your sons are like olive plants around your table. 128:4 Behold, because of this, blessed is the man who is reverent in the presence of the Lord. 128:5 The Lord will bless you from Zion, and you will see the welfare of Jerusalem all the days of your life. 128:6 And you will see the sons of your sons. Peace be upon Israel. (EMC)</p>	<p><b>Psalmoi Psalms 128</b>  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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In this week's study from *Tehillim / Psalms 128:1-6*, the psalm opens, אִשִּׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת אֲשֶׁר־כָּל-יְרֵא יְהוָה, 128:1 *How blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, Who walks in His ways.* (NASB) The fear of the Lord is coupled to walking in His ways. We respect the Lord for His power and His watchful eyes on our lives. We know His promises and how He wants us to live for Him, and within the Scriptures He has told us what we should do. The Psalmist appears to be referring to passages from the Torah, *Devarim / Deuteronomy 8:5-6*.

***Devarim / Deuteronomy 8:5-11***

8:5 *'Thus you are to know in your heart that the Lord your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son.* 8:6 *'Therefore, you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him.* 8:7 *'For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills;* 8:8 *a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey;* 8:9 *a land where you will eat food without scarcity, in which you will not lack anything; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper.* 8:10 *'When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you.* 8:11 *'Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today;* (NASB)

In Parashat Ekev, we are told how the Lord delivered Israel from Egypt and how the Lord was in the process of humbling His people so they would know that He is Lord and He is the One who sustains them (8:5). Moshe writes in the Torah that the Lord God disciplines us as a man does his son. The conclusion is therefore to perform "*Shomer Mitzvah*" keeping the commands, to walk in His ways, and to fear Him. The fear of the Lord is not as one walks in fear of his life, but as one who reveres the Lord (וְשָׁמַרְתָּ אֶת-מִצְוֹת יְהוָה לְלַמֵּךְ לְלַכֵּת בְּדַרְכָיו וּלְיִרְאַת אֱתוֹ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְלַמֵּךְ לְלַכֵּת בְּדַרְכָיו וּלְיִרְאַת אֱתוֹ יְהוָה (וּלְיִרְאַת) Him.) The rabbis have the following to say concerning these Scriptures on

**Chizkuni, Devarim / Deuteronomy 8:5 Part 1**

אלוקיך מיסרך ה', "the Lord your G-d chastens you. By not providing you with a food supply sufficient for a week or even longer, so that you will be afraid to rebel against Him for fear He might withhold your food, He has succeeded in making you a chastened nation." Only the feeling that one can exist independently of G-d results in one's rebelling against the Torah laws. He has taught you to be dependent on His largesse (noun: generosity) daily.

**Ibn Ezra on Devarim / Deuteronomy 8:5 Part 1**

you will know with your heart You will have a heartfelt (i.e., a fundamental) understanding. Because you listen to the Lord when He disciplines you — even though He may discipline you by famishing you, or by afflicting you with thirst along the way — your reward shall be that He will bring you into the good land.

**Rabbeinu Bahya, Devarim / Deuteronomy 8:5 Part 1**

אלוהיך מיסרך ה', "the Lord your G'd is disciplining you." Moses means that the denial of regular food and the strain imposed on the people by their journeying are examples of how the Lord subjected them to discipline, to tests of obedience and faith. The principal virtue of a Torah-true Jew is his faith in the Lord. The two examples of "afflictions" mentioned by Moses were designed to test this faith.

**Tur HaAroch, Devarim / Deuteronomy 8:5 Part 2**

אלוקיך מיסרך ה', "so is the Lord your G'd disciplining you." The temporary afflictions experienced by the Israelites in the desert are examples of G'd's using educational tools at His disposal. Solomon in Proverbs 29,17 phrases it thus: "Discipline your son and he will give you rest;" he continues with "and he will be a cause of delight to your soul." By first disciplining one's son, the goodies the father will provide will be so much more appreciated.

Chizkuni states the Lord provides only a small portion of food, not even sufficient for a week, so that we are afraid to rebel against him out of fear that He might withhold our food. The idea here is to cultivate a heart that seeks the Lord in all these things daily, for His provisions, because He is the one who sustains us. Chizkuni states this is so we are to become a chastened nation such that we do not believe in our hearts that we can exist independently from God and His Messiah. The moment we believe we are independent of the Lord comes rebellion against God's ways and sin. Ibn Ezra states we will know that we have understanding because we have listened to the Lord when He disciplines us. The purpose of God's discipline is to draw us near, and to cause us to enter into His promises. This comes back to the idea of chastening, calamity, bringing us to the point that we will listen and take to heart what the Lord wants us to do, to live our lives in service to Him. Tur HaAroch speaks of the lack of food as an educational tool at God's disposal. He causes times of hardship in order to discipline, to humble, and to eventually bring peace and delight to the soul. Rabeinu Bahya agrees with the other commentaries that the Lord causes a denial of food for the purpose of allowing His hand to move in the lives of His people. Note how this draws with it the concept of fasting.

Fasting is a willing abstinence of something for a period of time. Fasting is generally thought of as being from some or all food, drink, or both. Note how the denial of food is connected to the Lord working powerfully in our lives according to the Torah. In *Matthew 9*, John the Baptist's disciples visited Yeshua and asked him the question, *9:14 Then the disciples of John came to Him, asking, 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?' 9:15 And Jesus said to them, 'The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is*

taken away from them, and then they will fast. 9:16 'But no one puts a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and a worse tear results. 9:17 'Nor do people put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wineskins burst, and the wine pours out and the wineskins are ruined; but they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved.' (NASB) The basic premise is there is a time to fast and a time not to fast. Yeshua speaks of fasting and the bridegroom, and wine and the wineskins. Yeshua speaks of placing new wine into new skins because the wine ferments and expands, the wineskins need to be pliable as well. What is it about new wine, new wineskins, and fasting that are related? From the book of Esther, we read in *Esther 4:16* "... fast for me, and do not eat nor drink three days, night or day. My maidservants and I will also fast in the same way." The fast here is related to not ingesting any food or water. Note also that fasting is from sunset of one day to sunset of the next. The reason fasting is so important is that we live in an evil world. We are to guard our hearts, to be careful not to be lured into indulging in sin just like those who are among the nations. For example, we are not to be like Lot who chose to live near sin, of whom Peter wrote withstood the evil influences around him that came from living in Sodom and near Gomorrah (2 Peter 2:7-8).

The prophet Isaiah says the following concerning the fast:

### **Isaiah 58:2-10**

*58:2 'Yet they seek Me day by day and delight to know My ways, As a nation that has done righteousness And has not forsaken the ordinance of their God. They ask Me for just decisions, They delight in the nearness of God. 58:3 'Why have we fasted and You do not see? Why have we humbled ourselves and You do not notice?' Behold, on the day of your fast you find your desire, And drive hard all your workers. 58:4 'Behold, you fast for contention and strife and to strike with a wicked fist. You do not fast like you do today to make your voice heard on high. 58:5 'Is it a fast like this which I choose, a day for a man to humble himself? Is it for bowing one's head like a reed And for spreading out sackcloth and ashes as a bed? Will you call this a fast, even an acceptable day to the Lord? 58:6 'Is this not the fast which I choose, To loosen the bonds of wickedness, To undo the bands of the yoke, And to let the oppressed go free And break every yoke? 58:7 'Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry And bring the homeless poor into the house; When you see the naked, to cover him; And not to hide yourself from your own flesh? 58:8 'Then your light will break out like the dawn, And your recovery will speedily spring forth; And your righteousness will go before you; The glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. 58:9 'Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; You will cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.' If you remove the yoke from your midst, The pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness, 58:10 And if you give yourself to the hungry And satisfy the desire of the afflicted, Then your light will rise in darkness And your gloom will become like midday. (NASB)*

Isaiah indicates that the acceptable fast is not merely abstinence from food or water, but a decision to fully obey God's commands to care for the poor and oppressed. Notice how Isaiah says true fasting is to loose the bonds of wickedness and to be released from the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free (breaking the yoke), and to give our food to the needy, the hungry and homeless, and to take care of those who are naked. When we have this sort of mindset, the light of God's righteousness will shine forth from us. It is only then will the Lord answer when we call upon Him. Zechariah also repeats this message (7:5 'Say to all the people of the land and to the priests, 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months these seventy years, was it actually for Me that you fasted? 7:6 'When you eat and drink, do you not eat for yourselves and do you not drink for yourselves NASB). The opening chapter of the Book of Daniel (1:8 *But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself. NASB*) describes a partial Daniel Fast and its effects on the health and defilement of its observers. Fasting is an important spiritual discipline that is not just about what we take into our bodies but how we live our lives for the Lord

and our treatment towards others. It is tied to the principle of the connection between the body (Hebrew: basar, Greek: soma) and the soul (Hebrew: neshamah, Greek: pneuma). The Scriptures describe fasting in this manner, as having a deep spiritual meaning which illuminates our motives before God and men.

Yom Kippur is considered to be the most important day of the Jewish year and fasting as a means of repentance is expected of every Jewish man or woman above the age of bar/ bat mitzvah. This is the only fast day mentioned in the Torah (see *Vayikra / Leviticus 23:26-32*). It is very important to fast on this day, and the only exclusion is for those who would be in danger due to fasting (health reasons). Such as those who are ill or frail where endangering a life is against a core principle of Judaism. Those that do eat on this day are encouraged to eat as little as possible at a time and to avoid a full meal. For some, fasting on Yom Kippur is considered more important than the prayers of this holy day. If one fasts, even if one is at home in bed, one is considered as having participated in the full religious service. The second major day of fasting is Tisha B'Av, the day approximately 2500 years ago on which the Babylonians destroyed the first Holy Temple in Jerusalem, as well as on which the Romans destroyed the second Holy Temple in Jerusalem about 2000 years ago, and later after the Bar Kokhba revolt when the Jews were banished from Jerusalem, the day of Tisha B'Av was the one allowed exception. Tisha B'Av ends a three-week mourning period beginning with the fast of the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz. This is also the day when observant Jews remember the many tragedies which have befallen the Jewish people, including the Holocaust. Tisha B'Av and Yom Kippur are the major fasts and are observed from sunset to the following day's dusk.

The Psalmist states, *ב יגיע כפיה כי תאכל אשריה וטוב לה: 128:2 When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, You will be happy and it will be well with you. (NASB)* The Aramaic Targum states, *ב ליעות אידך 128:2 [Happy] the work of your hands, for you will eat [it]; happy are you in this age and you shall have good in the age to come. (EMC)* The psalmist speaks of the fruit of our hands. This when coupled to the fear of the Lord and walking in His ways, the fruit of the hands will be that of righteousness, holiness, justice, and truth. This is clearly the point in the process of Teshuvah which involves a return to the Torah as given to Moshe. Israel will not be redeemed until she returns to the Torah. The circumcised heart for Israel that *Devarim / Deuteronomy 30* talks about is not something that conflicts with the Torah, rather, a circumcised heart and keeping the Torah go hand in hand. Moshe is not the only one who said this. Ezekiel made the same point in chapters 36-37, the prophet says the following:

### ***Ezekiel 36:23-27***

*36:23 'I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord,' declares the Lord God, 'when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight. 36:24 'For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. 36:25 'Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 36:26 'Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 36:27 'I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. (NASB)*

According to Moshe and according to Ezekiel, a new heart and a new spirit for Israel, and the Spirit within us leads us to walk in God's statutes and compels us to be careful to obey his Torah (instructions). The Torah is a blessing and a standard for righteousness in our lives. Why would the Lord God Almighty do away with such a thing? When we change the way we view the Torah, so many passages fall into place. The cycle of Teshuvah definitely involves the return to Torah, just as it was given to Moshe on that day on Sinai in the wilderness. This is how the Psalmist is able to state, *ב יגיע כפיה כי תאכל אשריה וטוב לה: 128:2 When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, You will be happy and it will be well with you. (NASB)* The Apostle Paul wrote the Spirit of God living within a person is what produces the fruit of the Spirit. *"But the fruit of*

*the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*” (Galatians 5:22-23). This is the kind of fruit characterizing the life of those who have faith in the Messiah Yeshua. We are to be filled with love, we are to have joy, we are to have peace, we are to have patience, we are to be gentle and kind, we are to be filled with goodness, we are to have faith, we are to have meekness, and we are to have temperance. The question is though, what do we find in the average Christian today? Do we find the opposite? Love is the key to everything. This is coupled with self control, love is what holds everything together and why so much emphasis is placed upon love in the Apostolic Writings. It is love that surpasses human understanding and causes a person to be filled with the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:18-19). Love is detailed in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 when Paul wrote, “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.” Joy is the emotion that brings great delight or happiness, it is what brings satisfaction in life and to the heart. Joy gives strength just as the author of Hebrews wrote in 12:2 “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Notice how suffering is endured when we have the future expectation of joy and peace. The Lord gives us peace of heart which enables us to endure and persevere through the tough times. When we are living in the flesh, doing the works of the flesh, we are rebelling against God’s commands. When we come to our senses, perform Teshuvah, and seek God’s forgiveness, we are forgiven and we are given peace. The peace of God is not achieved through laying around on vacation, entertainment, drugs, alcohol, sex or wealth. The spiritual fruit of peace results from being justified by faith and applying God’s Word to our lives. Romans 5:1 states, “Therefore, since we have been justified [made right; declared innocent or guiltless] through faith [in what Christ accomplished for us on the cross], we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is only when we put our faith into practice, with the help of the Lord, do these things come to be, and fruit is produced in our lives.

It is because of these things, love, joy, and peace, the psalmist states saying, **ג אֲשֶׁתָּךְ | כְּגֵפֶן פְּרִיָּה בְּיַרְךָ** *128:3 Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine Within your house, Your children like olive plants Around your table. 128:4 Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed Who fears the Lord. (NASB)* The one who fears the Lord will take time to be with his family spending time in relationship and taking time to be with wife and children. The blessing of the Lord comes in many forms, to work in the hearts of men, women, and children, to be fruitful, a delight, and as the psalm describes, olive plants around the table. We maintain peace with God by believing and trusting Him and by not sinning. We maintain peace with our fellow man by not allowing strife to be a part of our relationships with other people, especially in our marriages. We maintain peace with ourselves by being happy with who we are the way God made us. This takes patient endurance on our part in the midst of injury, trouble, or provocation. For example, when someone consistently tries to make us angry, picking on us, we just let it go and maintain self control. This is what characterizes the Lord God our Father in heaven, just as we read in *Shemot / Exodus 34:5-7*.

***Shemot / Exodus 34:5-7***

*34:5 The Lord descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the Lord. 34:6 Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, ‘The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; 34:7 who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.’ (NASB)*

**ה וַיֵּרַד יְהוָה בְּעָנָן וַיִּתְנַצֵּב עִמּוֹ שָׁם וַיִּקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה: ו וַיַּעֲבֹר יְהוָה | עַל-פְּנֵיו וַיִּקְרָא יְהוָה**  
**יְהוָה אֵל רַחוּם וְחַנוּן אַרְךָ אַפַּיִם וְרַב-חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת: ז נִצַּר חֶסֶד לְאֲלֵפִים נִשְׂא עוֹן וּפָשַׁע וְחַטָּאת**  
**וְנִקְהָ לֹא יִנְקָה פְקֹד | עוֹן אָבוֹת עַל-בְּנֵים וְעַל-בְּנֵי בְנֵים עַל-שְׁלִישִׁים וְעַל-רְבָעִים:**

This long suffering enables us to be emotionally strong and forgive others just as Paul wrote in *Colossians 3:13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. (NASB)* This long suffering with others is coupled with gentleness, of being moderate, kind, and not harsh towards others. Paul again illustrates this in *1 Thessalonians 2:4-13.*

*1 Thessalonians 2:4-13*

*2:4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts. 2:5 For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed God is witness 2:6 nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority. 2:7 But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. 2:8 Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. 2:9 For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. 2:10 You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; 2:11 just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, 2:12 so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. 2:13 For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. (NASB)*

We are called to goodness, moral excellence, and virtue. The Lord God of Israel provides us with this kind of goodness put into practice as He treats us with long suffering, patience, and goodness each day. It is the goodness and mercy of God that leads us to repentance, and this is why we are called to be good towards others. Our bearing the testimony of God will have no power if we are not kind towards others. This is how Yeshua explained we are called to be a light in a dark world, and we must make up our minds that we are going to shine the truth of God into this world. (*Matthew 5:15, Luke 11:33*) All of these things are examples of faithfulness, which is the act of being faithful. Doing what Scripture says we are to do. Webster’s Dictionary defines faithful as “*maintaining allegiance; constant; loyal; marked by or showing a strong sense of duty or responsibility; conscientious; accurate; reliable; exact.*” Yeshua said in *Matthew 7:20* “*Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them.*”

The Psalm concludes saying, הַ יְבָרְכֶךָ יְהוָה מִצִּיּוֹן וְרָאָה בְּטוֹב יְרוּשָׁלַם כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ: וּ וְרָאָה-בְּנִים לְבָנֶיךָ, 128:5 *The Lord bless you from Zion, And may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life. 128:6 Indeed, may you see your children’s children. Peace be upon Israel! (NASB)* The Aramaic Targum states, הַ יְבָרְכִינְךָ יְהוָה מִצִּיּוֹן וְתַחֲמִי בְטוֹבָא דִירוּשָׁלַם כָּל יוֹמֵי חַיֶּיךָ: וּ וְתַחֲמִי בְנִין לְבָנֶיךָ, 128:5 *The Lord will bless you from Zion, and you will see the welfare of Jerusalem all the days of your life. 128:6 And you will see the sons of your sons. Peace be upon Israel. (EMC)* The blessing of children provides us with the future expectation of the Lord’s blessing continuing on as we pass His truth and salvation to future generations. The commentary Malbim and Metzudat David have the following to say concerning *Tehillim / Psalms 128:5.*

***Malbim on Tehillim / Psalms 128:5 Part 1***

*May the Lord bless you from Zion – You will yet merit to be blessed from Zion which is the blessing of the wholeness of Israel that comes out from Zion where the Lord commanded blessing for the whole people. You will receive this blessing from the whole and you will also*

*strive for the good of the whole. and see the good of Jerusalem – to see the good of Jerusalem and the success of the whole. Through this all the days of your life will be special, because you will devote all your days to the good of the whole, to see their happiness and good:*

***Metzudat David on Tehillim / Psalms 128:5 Part 1***

*May the Lord bless you – Because the Lord will bless from Zion the source of influx and all blessings:*

The rabbis speak of Zion as being the place through which blessings flow from the Lord God in heaven based upon what the psalmist is stating in *Tehillim / Psalms 128*. The blessing of the Lord comes in many forms, to work in the hearts of men, women, and children, to be fruitful, and a delight. The Midrash Tanchuman Bubar Nasso 29:1 states the following:

***Midrash Tanchuma Bubar Nasso 29:1***

*(Numb. 7:2:) THAT THE PRINCES OF ISRAEL DREW NEAR TO MAKE AN OFFERING. You find <the following>: when Moses proclaimed and said (in Exod. 35:5): TAKE FROM AMONG YOU AN OFFERING <FOR THE LORD>, what did the princes do? 126 They said: Moses did not know <enough> to tells us that the Tabernacle was being made. What did they do? They did not give a freewill offering. They said: These people are making the Tabernacle. Now he is telling us to give a freewill offering! The Holy One said: By your life, you should know that I do not need you (princes). What is written there (in Exod. 36:3)? AND THEY (i.e., the children of Israel) [STILL] BROUGHT FREEWILL OFFERINGS UNTO HIM IN THE MORNING, IN THE MORNING. 127 R. Johanan said: For two mornings they brought all the supplies (mela'khah) for the Tabernacle, and they were more than enough, as stated (in Exod. 36:7): FOR THEY HAD SUFFICIENT SUPPLIES (mela'khah), [MORE THAN ENOUGH FOR ALL THE WORK (mela'khah) TO MAKE IT]. (Exod. 39:43:) WHEN MOSES SAW ALL THE WORK (mela'khah), [ ...; THEN MOSES BLESSED THEM]. 128 And with what blessing did he bless them? He said to them: May the Divine Presence dwell in the work of your hands. In this world Moses has blessed them; but in the world to come, the Holy One will bless them, as stated (in Ps. 128:5–6): THE LORD WILL BLESS YOU FROM ZION. <HE IS> MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH. [MAY YOU SEE THE PROSPERITY OF JERUSALEM ALL THE DAYS OF YOUR LIFE,] AND MAY YOU SEE YOUR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN. PEACE BE UPON ISRAEL!*

The Midrash reiterates the idea that how we live and what we do each day should be for the glory of God. The rabbis say this is why Moshe blessed the people saying “*May the Divine Presence dwell in the work of your hands.*” The Lord works in our lives to do these things, to move in our hearts such that the light of God’s righteousness will shine forth from us. These things describe the Lord God who moves in our hearts for the purpose of our being faithful to His word. Let’s Pray!

**Rabbinic Commentary**

The Rabbinic Commentary (Midrash) on *Tehillim / Psalms 128* has 6 parts. Reading through the Midrash we will be looking at Part 1, 2, , 3, and 4. Let’s begin by outlining *Midrash Tehillim Chapter 128, Part 1, 2, 3, and 4*

## Outline of Midrash Tehillim / Psalms, Chapter 128, Part 1, 2, 3, and 4

### Part 1

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the **דיבור המתחיל** (Dibur Hamathil) saying, “*Happy is everyone that fears the Lord (Tehillim / Psalms 128:1).*”
- The **פתיחתא** (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*Rabbi Hayya son of Abba said in the name of Ulla, The man who enjoys the fruit of his labor fares better than he who fears the Lord.*”
- The **משל** (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the **פתיחתא** (Petihta), the rabbis describe a man being happier for enjoying the fruit of his hands as opposed to fearing the Lord.
- The **נמשל** (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the **משל** (mashal), explaining that when one eats of the fruit of his hands he will be happy, and that the fear of the Lord is not coupled with it going well with you.
- The Concluding phrase says, “*Happy will you be in this world; and it will be with you in the world to come. Take not that in connection with the fear of the Lord, the owrds it will be well with you do not occur.*”

### Part 2

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the **דיבור המתחיל** (Dibur Hamathil) saying, “*When you eat the labor of your hands (Tehillim / Psalms 128:2).*”
- The **פתיחתא** (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*Rabbi Hisda taught, Who is truly a disciple of the wise?*”
- The **משל** (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the **פתיחתא** (Petihta), the rabbis speak of being a true disciples and the one who declares his own meat terefah (unclean).
- The **נמשל** (Nimshal) “*expansion on the parable*” expands upon the **משל** (mashal), saying this is paralleled to the works of one’s hands as being unclean, leading to repentance and Teshuvah.
- The Concluding phrase says, “*Whenever gifts were sent from the house of the Patriarch to Rabbi Eleazar, he would not accept them, and when he was invited to the house of the Patriarch, he would not go saying, They do not wish me to live, for it is said, He that hates gifts will live (Mishley / Proverbs 15:27).*”

### Part 3

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the **דיבור המתחיל** (Dibur Hamathil) saying, “*Your wife will be as a fruitful vine (Tehillim / Psalms 128:3).*”
- The **פתיחתא** (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*When will your wife be a fruitful vine? When she is modest even in the innermost chambers of your house, then will Your children be like olive plants.*”
- The **משל** (mashal) “*the parable,*” goes on to explain the **פתיחתא** (Petihta), the rabbis explain this is paralleled to Sarah, Abraham’s wife, her attitude and behavior.
- 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, “*And He said, I will certainly return unto you, and, lo, Sarah your wife will have a son (Bereshit / Genesis 18:9-10).*”

### Part 4

- The Midrash introduces the Psalm with the **דיבור המתחיל** (Dibur Hamathil) saying, “*Rabbi Joshua son of Levi quoted the verse, Your wife will be as a fruitful vine, in the innermost chambers of your house; your children like olive plants (Tehillim / Psalms 128:3)*”

- The פתיחתא (Petihta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “and said, Like Olive plants upon which no grafts can be made will be your children to whom no suspicion of bastardy will attach.”
- The משל (mashal) “the parable,” goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta), the rabbis in this midrash speak of the wife being faithful to the marriage covenant.
- The נמשל (Nimshal) “expansion on the parable” expands upon the משל (mashal), saying this choice vine is synonymous to the expectation of the coming of the Messiah.
- The Concluding phrase says, “But some say this dream means that he will have a good name, for it is said The Lord called your name, a leafy olive tree, fair with goodly fruit (Jeremiah 11:16).”

Midrash Tehillim 128, Part 1 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying, “Happy is everyone that fears the Lord (Tehillim / Psalms 128:1).” The homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “Rabbi Hayya son of Abba said in the name of Ulla, The man who enjoys the fruit of his labor fares better than he who fears the Lord.” The Entire midrash states the following:

<p><b>מדרש תהלים פרק קכח סימן א</b>  א שיר המעלות אשרי כל ירא ה'. א"ר  חייא בר אבא משמיה דעולא גדול הנה-  נה מיגיעו יותר מירא שמים, דאלו גבי  ירא שמים כתיב אשרי כל ירא ה', ואלו  גבי נהנה מיגיע כפו כתיב, יגיע כפיך  כי תאכל אשריך וטוב לך, אשריך בעו-  לם הזה, וטוב לך לעולם הבא, ואלו גבי  יראת שמים לא כתיב ביה וטוב לך.</p>	<p><b>Midrash Tehillim 128, Part 1</b>  1. Happy is everyone that fears the Lord (Tehillim / Psalms 128:1). Rabbi Hayya son of Abba said in the name of Ulla, The man who enjoys the fruit of his labor fares better than he who fears the Lord. For note that of him who fears the Lord it is written Happy is everyone one that fears the Lord, whereas of the man that enjoys the fruit of his labor, it is written, When you eat the labor of your hands, happy will you be, and it will be well with you (Tehillim / Psalms 128:2). Happy will you be in this world; and it will be with you in the world to come. Take note that in connection with the fear of the Lord, the words it will be well with you do not occur.</p>
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The rabbis describe a man being happier for enjoying the fruit of his hands as opposed to fearing the Lord. King Solomon said in *Mishley / Proverbs 1:7*, (פ) 1:7 *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and discipline.* The Hebrew text states the fear of the Name (YHVH) is the head/beginning of knowledge (יִרְאַתַּת יְהוָה רֵאשִׁית דְּעֵת). Fear is not meant to paralyze our faith in the Lord. In *Tehillim / Psalm 19:9* we read that “the fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever.” Fear is a term of piety and not of dread and disparage of the One whom we serve. Yeshua states in *Matthew 10:28* saying, “fear the God who can destroy both soul and body in hell.” Yet in *Isaiah 11:3* we read the prophet saying the messianic shoot from the stump of Jesse would “delight in the fear of the Lord.”

**Isaiah 11:1-13**

11:1 Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit. 11:2 The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. 11:3 And He will delight in the fear of the Lord, And He will not judge by what His eyes see, Nor make a decision by what His ears hear; 11:4 But with righteousness He will judge the poor, And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked. 11:5 Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, And faithfulness the belt about His waist. 11:6 And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, And the leopard will lie down with the young goat, And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little boy will lead them. 11:7 Also the cow and

*the bear will graze, Their young will lie down together, And the lion will eat straw like the ox. 11:8 The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. 11:9 They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord As the waters cover the sea. 11:10 Then in that day The nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious. 11:11 Then it will happen on that day that the Lord Will again recover the second time with His hand The remnant of His people, who will remain, From Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, And from the islands of the sea. 11:12 And He will lift up a standard for the nations And assemble the banished ones of Israel, And will gather the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth. 11:13 Then the jealousy of Ephraim will depart, And those who harass Judah will be cut off; Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah, And Judah will not harass Ephraim. (NASB)*

Isaiah speaks of the anointed one of God, the Messiah, would have the spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and strength, of knowledge and fear, and would delight in the fear of the Lord. His judgment would not be according to the manner of men, seeing and hearing, but will have a knowledge by the Spirit of God. Isaiah says righteousness and faithfulness go hand in hand, and speaks of the future expectation of the creatures working together, those who are in opposition, the lion and the lamb, the boy and the cobra, and the sacredness of the holy mountain of God where all the nations of the earth would know of the Lord, His righteousness, holiness, and love. This is the context the midrash speaks of, fearing the Lord and the one who enjoys the fruit of his labors. The basic conclusion of the midrash is *“For note that of him who fears the Lord it is written Happy is everyone one that fears the Lord, whereas of the man that enjoys the fruit of his labor, it is written, When you eat the labor of your hands, happy will you be, and it will be well with you (Tehillim / Psalms 128:2). Happy will you be in this world; and it will be with you in the world to come.”* The one who fears the Lord will walk in His ways to do what is right, just, and true. This is what Paul meant by walking in the Spirit producing the fruits of the Spirit a biblical term that sums up nine attributes of a person living in accord with the Holy Spirit of God according to Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians. Paul wrote, *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” (Galatians 5:22-23)* These are contrasted with the works of the flesh which are related to sin and disobedience to the commandments of God.

Midrash Tehillim 128 Part 1 concludes saying, *“Happy will you be in this world; and it will be with you in the world to come. Take not that in connection with the fear of the Lord, the words it will be well with you do not occur.”* The rabbis explain that when one eats of the fruit of his hands he will be happy, and that the fear of the Lord is not always coupled with it going well with you. The reason being is due to the nature of our living for the Lord God of Israel according to His commands, walking in righteousness, holiness, justice, and truth, and the nations that rage against the Lord God in heaven and against His ways.

Midrash Tehillim 128 Part 2 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying, *“When you eat the labor of your hands (Tehillim / Psalms 128:2).”* The homiletic introduction to the midrash states, *“Rabbi Hisda taught, Who is truly a disciple of the wise?”* The entire midrash states the following:

<p><b>מדרש תהלים פרק קכח סימן ב</b></p> <p>ב יגיע כפיך כי תאכל. אמר רב חסדא איזהו תלמיד חכם הרואה טריפה לעצמו [ואמר רב חסדא איזהו שונא מתנות יחיה (משלי טו כז), זה שקורא טרפה לעצמו]. דרש מר זוטרא משמיה דרב חסדא כל תלמיד חכם שקורא ושונה, ומשמש תלמידי חכמים, ורואה טריפה לעצמו, עליו הכתוב אומר יגיע כפיך כי תאכל אשריך וטוב לך, רב זביד אמר זוכה ונוחל ב' עולמות, שנאמר אשריך וטוב לך, אשריך בעוה"ז, וטוב לך לעוה"ב, ר' אלעזר כי הווי משדרי ליה מבי נשיאה לא הוה שקיל, כי הווי מזמני ליה לא הוה אזיל, אמר לא ניחא להו דאיחי, שנאמר ושונא מתנות יחיה (משלי טו כז).</p>	<p><i>Midrash Tehillim 128, Part 2</i></p> <p>2. <i>When you eat the labor of your hands (Tehillim / Psalms 128:2). Rabbi Hisda taught, Who is truly a disciple of the wise? He who declares his own meat terefah. Rabbi Hisda also taught, What sort of man is referred to in the verse, He that hates gifts will live? (Mishley / Proverbs 15:27) He who declares his own meat terefah. Mar Zutra taught in the name of Rabbi Hisda, When a disciple of the wise reads Scripture, studies Oral Law, serves Scholars, and declares his own meat terefah, of him it may be said When you eat the labor of your hands, happy you will be, and it will be well with you. Rabbi Zebid added, And he merits possession of both worlds, for it is said, Happy will you be in this world; and it will be well with you in the world to come. Whenever gifts were sent from the house of the Patriarch to Rabbi Eleazar, he would not accept them, and when he was invited to the house of the Patriarch, he would not go saying, They do not wish me to live, for it is said, He that hates gifts will live (Mishley / Proverbs 15:27).</i></p>
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The rabbis in the משל (mashal) “the parable,” goes on to explain the פתיחתא (Petihta) saying a true disciple is the one who declares his own meat terefah (unclean). The Jewish Encyclopedia on clean and unclean reports in the Rabbinical and Hellenistic Literature the following.

***In Rabbinical and Hellenistic Literature (Jewish Encyclopedia)***

*The distinctions between clean and unclean animals, as described in the Scriptures, are more fully drawn in the Halakah. To chew the cud and to have split hoofs (Lev. xi. 3) are the marks of the clean tame quadruped (“behemah”), and the Talmudic traditions add that an animal without upper teeth always chews the cud and has split hoofs (see Aristotle, “Natural History,” ix. 50), the only exceptions being the hare and the rabbit, which, in spite of having upper teeth, chew the cud and have split hoofs, and the camel, which has, in place of upper teeth, an incisor on each side. Even the meat of the clean and the unclean animals can be distinguished. The meat of the former below the hipbones can be torn lengthwise as well as across, which, among unclean animals, is only possible with the flesh of the wild ass. These differences apply also to clean wild animals as against unclean wild animals. In order, however, to distinguish clean wild from clean tame animals attention must particularly be paid to the horns. The horns of the former must be forked, or, if not forked, they must be clear of splinters, notched with scales, and be (“round”), or, as others read, (“pointed”). It is important to distinguish the clean wild animals from the clean tame animals, because the tallow of the former may be used, while that of the latter is forbidden, and the blood of the clean wild animal must be covered up (Lev. xvii. 13), which is not the case with that of other animals (Hul. 59a, b).*

When we examine the meaning of clean and unclean, the Torah’s definition of “clean” has the meaning of something different when we come to the definition of clean versus unclean in the book of Leviticus. It is important for us to understand the meaning of clean and unclean, as it is used in the Torah and later in the prophets and the writings, and its application for us in the Apostolic Writings (New Testament). The expression of clean and its counterpoint unclean is one of the prominent themes of Leviticus. When we leave the Tanach and enter into the Apostolic Writings, we again find the definitions of clean and unclean, which becomes critical to our understanding of who we are as God’s people, which has been skewed by thousands of

years of theology. We find the issue of clean and unclean being discussed and debated heatedly between the scribes and the Pharisees, and so Yeshua needed to clarify cleanness and uncleanness, particularly in the area of ceremonial uncleanness as defined by Jewish tradition. This is important if we are going to understand how Yeshua differed from the scribes and the Pharisee, we need to understand how Judaism understands clean and unclean, by studying the background teachings on cleanness and uncleanness as it is introduced in Leviticus chapter 11. It is also important to understand how cleanness and uncleanness is related to holiness. Certainly, this is how the book of Leviticus contextually described clean and unclean. Therefore, if these things are true, and if we as God's people are committed to the concept of holiness in general, and to the reality of holiness in our lives, then we must understand the role which cleanness plays in regard to holiness according to the Torah. All of this speaks to us that these chapters in the Torah are important. We must understand what we are dealing with as we come to our study because clean and unclean is one of the great issues of the Bible. This is the point the Midrash on Tehillim 128 Part 2 is drawing out of the biblical text. The Rabbinical and Hellenistic literature describes clean and unclean in the context of halakha on how to discern the difference between the clean and unclean animals. The animals may be distinguished by the way in which they chew the cud and their bodies (split hooves). Note how the pig has split hooves, but does not chew the cud and so portrays the image of holiness (clean) on the outside, but is not so on the inside. The pig provides us with a picture of what it means to be deceptive in faith and way of life, just as Yeshua described in *Matthew 7* of those who stood before the Lord claiming to have known him. The rabbis go on to say that the meat of clean and unclean animals may also be distinguished. They say that the manner in which the flesh can be torn is a distinguishing factor. Notice how this may be paralleled to one who disciplines the body, humbling one's soul to the commandments of God. This may be why the rabbis in the midrash parallel the works of one's hands to being unclean, which the Torah directs us to repentance and Teshuvah. The midrash describes those who were wise are those who obey Torah. This is illustrated in the statement "*When a disciple of the wise reads Scripture, studies Oral Law, serves Scholars, and declares his own meat terefah, of him it may be said When you eat the labor of your hands, happy you will be, and it will be well with you. Rabbi Zebid added, And he merits possession of both worlds, for it is said, Happy will you be in this world; and it will be well with you in the world to come.*" When a wise man chooses to live his life for the Lord, it results in life. Living our lives for the Lord go hand in hand with seeking the Lord God our father in heaven and His Messiah Yeshua. Note how clean and unclean was the great issue dividing Jews and Gentiles. Clean and unclean was the critical factor that needed to be met head on (see *Acts 10 and 11*) before the ekklesia could become a congregation containing both Jew and Gentile. This is what Paul was speaking of when he describes the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles being torn down.

When we consider the definition of clean and unclean in *Vayikra / Leviticus 11*, cleanness and uncleanness has to do principally with food. But in addition to simply being a matter of foods, clean and unclean was also a matter of category. Cleanness is that which is defined by God and declared to be so by a priest. It is within this aspect of declaration, that one is in the proper state as having access to God. According to the Torah, the practical aspect of being declared unclean means that we have to stay back from the presence of God, from the midst of His people, and from his sanctuary. For example, according to *Vayikra / Leviticus 22*, a priest is not able to go about his priestly duties in a state of uncleanness. He must wait until he is ceremonially clean. Similarly, one may not approach God in his normal worship in an unclean state. Uncleanness restricts one's fellowship with God, and it restricts one's fellowship with men (the community). As a result of these things, we have the proper Torah based context to understand why the Israelite was called to detest that which is unclean. It is not enough for the Israelite to simply say I can eat this, and I cannot eat that. It is actually a matter of saying that I may eat this, and these are the things which I loath! The unclean thing is to be utterly loathed. This is taken from the example of Adam and Eve. Eve when in the garden looked at the forbidden fruit and it looked good to eat. She looked at the fruit as something desirable as opposed to being loathsome. The reason this is important is because the Lord God knows if we look upon something as desirable, sooner or later we are going to eat it (make it a part of ourselves). It is only when we look at the unclean as something utterly terrible and undesirable that we are not going to eat it (not make it a part of our lives). Again, this may be why the rabbis in the midrash parallel the works of one's hands to



nificance of what is on the inside, who the Lord is making us to be on the inside as His people. We are created in the image of God, and from this perspective flows the concept of personal dignity. Halakhah allows for the choosing of clothing and styles for the purpose of individual expression. We should dress modestly as part out of respect for ourselves but also out of respect for others. Kavod, dignity or respect, should be indicated by what and how we dress. The overly revealing clothing lacks both humility and modesty when its purpose is to draw attention to ourselves. The Talmudic and Rabbinic views on modesty are meant to empower us rather than to control us. The Talmud often is concerned with and limiting men from gazing upon a woman. Job spoke of this in *Job 31:1*, so modesty is not about control, but about empowering in the sense that it seeks to discourage the male objectification of women. There is a lot to be learned from the Torah and all of the Tanach on this topic of modesty as it is being described in the Scriptures, the midrash, and the rabbinic literature.

Midrash Tehillim 128 Part 3 concludes saying, “*And He said, I will certainly return unto you, and, lo, Sarah your wife will have a son (Bereshit / Genesis 18:9-10).*” The idea is the modest woman will teach this way of life to her children. The example given as a proof text is that of Sarah who was in the tent keeping modesty as opposed to being out in the world and not bringing respect to her family, her husband, and to the Lord God in heaven.

Midrash Tehillim 128 Part 4 opens with the Dibur Hamathil (דיבור המתחיל) saying, “*Rabbi Joshua son of Levi quoted the verse, Your wife will be as a fruitful vine, in the innermost chambers of your house; your children like olive plants (Tehillim / Psalms 128:3)*” The פתיחה (Petichta) the homiletic introduction to the midrash states, “*and said, Like Olive plants upon which no grafts can be made will be your children to whom no suspicion of bastardy will attach.*” The entire midrash states the following:

<p><b>מדרש תהלים פרק קכה סימן ד</b></p> <p>ד אמר ר' יהושע בן לוי אשתך כגפן פוריה בירכתי ביתך בניך כשתילי זיתים. מה זיתים אין בהם הרכבה, אף בניך לא יהיה בהם שום פסולת. הרואה גפן [טעונה] בחלום, אין אשתו מפלת נפלים, שנאמר אשתך כגפן פוריה. שורקה יצפה למשיח, שנאמר אוסרי לגפן עירה ולשורקה בני אתונו (בראשית מט יא). הרואה ענבים בחלום, לבנים בין בעתם בין שלא בעתם יפים, שחורים בעתם יפין, שלא בעתם צריכים רחמים, אכלן מובטח לו שהוא בן עולם הבא. הרואה זיתים בחלום זוטרי פרי ורבי עסקיה כזיתא, והני מילי פרי, אבל אילני הויין לו בנים מרובים, שנאמר בניך כשתילי זיתים. איכא דאמרי שם טוב יוצא לו שנאמר זית רענן יפה פרי תואר קרא ה' שמך (ירמיה יא טז).</p>	<p><b>Midrash Tehillim 128, Part 4</b></p> <p>4. Rabbi Joshua son of Levi quoted the verse, <i>Your wife will be as a fruitful vine, in the innermost chambers of your house; your children like olive plants (Tehillim / Psalms 128:3), and said, Like Olive plants upon which no grafts can be made will be your children to whom no suspicion of bastardy will attach. When in a dream a man sees a fruitful vine, his wife will not miscarry, for it is said, Your wife will be as a fruitful vine. When in a dream a man sees a choice vine, he may expect the coming of the Messiah, for it is said Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine (Bereshit / Genesis 49:11). When in a dream a man sees grapes, white grapes, either ripe or unripe, it will be well with him; that are unripe, when he is in need of mercy; if he dreams that he is eating grapes, however, he is certain of his heritage in the world to come. When in a dream, a man sees olives small olives then his business will flourish and grow like the olive tree. This is true only if he sees the fruit of the olive. If he sees olive trees, he will have many children, for it is said, Your children like olive plants. But some say this dream means that he will have a good name, for it is said The Lord called your name, a leafy olive tree, fair with goodly fruit (Jeremiah 11:16).</i></p>
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The idea here in the opening of Midrash Tehillim 128 Part 4 is the wife who is a fruitful vine in the innermost chambers of your house shows evidence for the kids not being the sons of another man. The reason this conclusion is so significant is due to the nature of the intimacy of the family, and specifically as the midrash states, the innermost chambers of the home. The family environment can become quite hurtful due to the familiarity of the family members, siblings, mom and dad, etc. The functional family forgives and

interacts with mercy and forgiveness towards each other. The dysfunctional family involves aggression that is typified by behaviors such as belittling, dominating, and insulting communication; criticism, lying, arguing, and controlling; ganging up on family members; and stress. Another aspect of a dysfunctional family is the lack of affection, the absence of verbal affirmations of love, physical affection, encouragement, and time spent together. Neglect is also a form of dysfunction which includes ignoring or not paying attention to one another and not feeling comfortable around some family members. These things may culminate into violence which encompasses physical harm and abuse. Most of us grow up with little emphasis placed upon our relationship with others. We are taught to place value on the opinion of others, and we are taught to ignore the power of pride in our lives. The reality is this, few of us were raised to honor who we are as the children of the Most High God. Most of us were raised to honor what others thought of us over and above the opinion of the Lord God our Father in heaven. Our culture conditions us to fall into line with the status quo and go with the opinion of others. As a result, our sense of self becomes dependent upon the image others have of us. Therefore, when someone we hold in esteem judges or rejects us, it hurts. As a result, we react and enter into a pattern of responding with equal hurt and pain. Either we wallow in it, or we dump it back onto them or some other unsuspecting victim. This is a problem because the opinion of others is biased. The reason being, no one can ever truly know us. They can only know us through their experience and point of view, they have not walked in our foot steps, have not experienced what we have experienced, and so their opinion is layered with bias. This is why we are told in the Scriptures to walk in the foot steps of the Messiah. This is also why it is absolutely important for us to cultivate our relationships, our families, our children, and our spouses. This may be the perspective of the midrash as the rabbis continue saying the following:

*When in a dream a man sees a fruitful vine, his wife will not miscarry, for it is said, Your wife will be as a fruitful vine. When in a dream a man sees a choice vine, he may expect the coming of the Messiah, for it is said Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine (Bereshit / Genesis 49:11). When in a dream a man sees grapes, white grapes, either ripe or unripe, it will be well with him; that are unripe, when he is in need of mercy; if he dreams that he is eating grapes, however, he is certain of his heritage in the world to come. When in a dream, a man sees olives small olives then his business will flourish and grow like the olive tree. This is true only if he sees the fruit of the olive. IF he sees olive trees, he will have many children, for it is said, Your children like olive plants. (Midrash Tehillim 128, Part 4)*

The vine analogy provides for us the imagery of something that was cultivated and well taken care of. A vine that produces much fruit is one that is fertilized, watered, and nurtured daily. The rabbis say, “*When in a dream a man sees a choice vine, he may expect the coming of the Messiah, for it is said Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine (Bereshit / Genesis 49:11).*” It is interesting how the rabbis connect the choice vine to the Messiah. This is why putting the Messiah as central in our lives and relationships is so important. We walk in his footsteps. Yeshua lived a humble life by living his life in obedience to God's Torah. The commands are meant for the purpose of humbling our lives to the rule of God in our lives, setting the Lord as the authority over our lives. In this state of humbleness, we live daily as we interact with others.

Midrash Tehillim 128 Part 4 concludes saying, “*But some say this dream means that he will have a good name, for it is said The Lord called your name, a leafy olive tree, fair with goodly fruit (Jeremiah 11:16).*” The reference to the Lord calling us a leafy olive tree with good fruit is a parallel to what Paul wrote, we were created for good deeds (*Ephesians 2:10*). This description is unique, remarkable, and characteristic of the idea with which Paul states the Lord God is making us who we are, and to the good works which follow being the children of God. The Lord must begin a work in us before we are able to do good works for Him (see *2 Corinthians 5:17*). The point is these good works the Lord has decreed have been taught from since the beginning in the Torah. This is Paul's meaning of having been fashioned from since the foundation of

the world. This illustrates for us that God’s salvation is not irrespective of works, they are to applied to our lives and to be careful to be attended to (be performed). Paul speaks of a divine mandate for God’s people, that if we are not living a life filled with good works, we have no reason to believe that we have been saved by the mercy of God or that the Lord God Himself is working in our lives. Let’s Pray!

Heavenly Father,

Thank You Lord for Your mercy and the great work that you are doing in our lives. We believe You are able to overcome all things, from saving us from our enemies, to the deliverance from sin, and even to work in our hearts to deeply, truly, and honestly seek you all the days of our lives. We recognize the weaknesses in our strength and resolve to serve You and to do what is expected, to be humble and to pray and to remain in Your word. Lord help us to have the strength to stand for truth and life, to have the desire to seek You in prayer and in Your Word, to have faith in Yeshua Your Messiah, and to love our neighbor each day. We thank You Lord for Your continued faithfulness to Your promises and to us. Help us to grow in our faith, to walk in the spirit, and apply these truths to our lives. We praise Your Holy Name and give You all of the honor, and the glory, and the praise forever and ever.

In Yeshua’s (Jesus’) Name we pray! Amen!

Be Blessed in Yeshua, Christ our Messiah!

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הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:  
Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,  
“Yeshua” King Messiah forever and ever

## Notes