

Tehillim / Psalms 129 | ספר תהילים קכט

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Opression as a form of Rebuke and Lovingkindness

In this week's study from *Tehillim / Psalms 129:1-8*, the psalm opens saying, א שִׁיר הַמַּעְלוֹת רַבַּת צָרְרוּנִי 'Many times they have persecuted me from my youth up,' Let Israel now say, ב רַבַּת צָרְרוּנִי מִנְעוּרַי גַּם לֹא יָכְלוּ-לִי: 129:1 'Many times they have persecuted me from my youth up; Yet they have not prevailed against me. (NASB) In life, as the children of God, we will see persecution. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." (2 Timothy 3:12) The psalmist continues saying, ג עַל-גִּבִּי חָרְשׁוּ חַרְשֵׁים הָאָרִיכוּ לְמַעְנוֹתָם [לְמַעְנֵיתָם]: 129:2 'The plowers plowed upon my back; They lengthened their furrows.' ד יְהוָה צַדִּיק קָצַץ עֲבוֹת רְשָׁעִים: 129:3 'The plowers plowed upon my back; They lengthened their furrows.' ה יְהוָה צַדִּיק קָצַץ עֲבוֹת רְשָׁעִים: 129:4 'The Lord is righteous; He has cut in two the cords of the wicked. (NASB) Yeshua the Messiah said, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:10). Yeshua defines "persecution" as being reviled and having false things uttered against us. This is similar to what the psalmist is saying, but the Lord God turns the persecution into a future expectation of a blessing. One caveat regarding this blessing is that it is for persecution for "righteousness' sake." This is connected to our taking the Word of God into the world and living righteously before men and God. The psalm concludes saying, ו יִבְשׁוּ וַיִּסְגּוּ אַחֲרָיו כָּל שְׂנְאֵי צִיּוֹן: 129:5 'May all who hate Zion Be put to shame and turned backward; 129:6 Let them be like grass upon the housetops, Which withers before it grows up; 129:7 With which the reaper does not fill his hand, Or the binder of sheaves his bosom; 129:8 Nor do those who pass by say, 'The blessing of the Lord be upon you; We bless you in the name of the Lord.' (NASB) The idea is God's truth and His blessing comes forth from Zion, and so the one who hates Zion hates the place that bears God's name. This is paralleled to God's people upon whom the Lord has placed His name!

עברית	Hebrew	ארמי	Aramaic	ελληνικός	Greek
ספר תהלים פרק קכט	ספר תהלים פרק קכט	ספר טוביה פרק קכט	ספר טוביה פרק קכט	ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 129	ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 129
א שִׁיר הַמַּעְלוֹת רַבַּת צָרְרוּנִי מִנְעוּרַי יְאֹמֵר-נְאֻ יִשְׂרָאֵל: ב רַבַּת צָרְרוּנִי מִנְעוּרַי גַּם לֹא יָכְלוּ-לִי: ג עַל-גִּבִּי חָרְשׁוּ חַרְשֵׁים הָאָרִיכוּ לְמַעְנוֹתָם [לְמַעְנֵיתָם]: ד יְהוָה צַדִּיק קָצַץ עֲבוֹת רְשָׁעִים: ה יִבְשׁוּ וַיִּסְגּוּ אַחֲרָיו כָּל שְׂנְאֵי צִיּוֹן: ו יִהְיוּ כַּחַצְרֵי רֶגֶל יִבְשׁוּ: ז שְׂלֹא מְלֹא כַּפּוֹ קוֹצֵר וְחֻצְנוֹ מִעֵמֶר: ח וְלֹא אָמְרוּ הַעֲבָרִים בְּרַכְתָּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי-כֶם בְּרַכְנוּ אֶתְכֶם בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה:	א שִׁיר הַמַּעְלוֹת רַבַּת צָרְרוּנִי מִנְעוּרַי יְאֹמֵר-נְאֻ יִשְׂרָאֵל: ב רַבַּת צָרְרוּנִי מִנְעוּרַי גַּם לֹא יָכְלוּ-לִי: ג עַל-גִּבִּי חָרְשׁוּ חַרְשֵׁים הָאָרִיכוּ לְמַעְנוֹתָם [לְמַעְנֵיתָם]: ד יְהוָה צַדִּיק קָצַץ עֲבוֹת רְשָׁעִים: ה יִבְשׁוּ וַיִּסְגּוּ אַחֲרָיו כָּל שְׂנְאֵי צִיּוֹן: ו יִהְיוּ כַּחַצְרֵי רֶגֶל יִבְשׁוּ: ז שְׂלֹא מְלֹא כַּפּוֹ קוֹצֵר וְחֻצְנוֹ מִעֵמֶר: ח וְלֹא אָמְרוּ הַעֲבָרִים בְּרַכְתָּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי-כֶם בְּרַכְנוּ אֶתְכֶם בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה:	א שִׁירָא דַּתְאֲמַר עַל מְסִיקֵין מְסוּקִין דַּתְהוּמָא סְגִיעִין דַּעֵיקוּ לִי מִן טְלִיּוֹתֵי יִימַר כְּדוֹן יִשְׂרָאֵל: ב סְגִיעִין דַּעֵיקוּ לִי מִן טְלִיּוֹתֵי בְרַם לֹא יִכִּילוּ לַאֲבַאשָׁא לִי: ג עַל גּוּשְׁמֵי רַאדוֹ רַאדִּיא אֹרֵי-כּוֹ לְמֹרְדוֹתֵהוֹן: ד יְהוּה זְכָאָה קְצִיץ שׁוֹלְשֵׁי רִשִׁיעִיא: ה יִבְהַתוֹן וַיִּזְרוּ רּוֹ לַאֲחֹרָא כָּל סְנַאי דְצִיּוֹן: ו יְהוּיִן יְהוֹן כַּחצֵר אִיגְרִיא דְמִן קְדָם דִּצִּיץ אֲתִי רּוּחַ קְדוּמָא נְתִיב בֵּיה וְאַתִּיבִּשׁ: ז דְלֹא מְלֵי אִידִיָּה חֲצָד וְכַתְפִּיָּה מִעֵמַר: ח וְלֹא אֲמַרוּ דַּעֲבֵרִין מִתְמֵן בִּירְכַתָּא דִּיהוּה עֲלֵיכּוֹן וְלֹא יִתִּיבּוֹן לְהוֹן בְּרִיכָּ-נָא יִתְכוֹן בְּשֵׁמָא דִּיהוּה:	Πσα 129:1 ᾠδὴ τῶν ἀναβαθμῶν πλεονάκις ἐπολέμησάν με ἐκ νεότητός μου εἰπάτω δὴ Ἰσραὴλ 129:2 πλεονάκις ἐπολέμησάν με ἐκ νεότητός μου καὶ γὰρ οὐκ ἠδυνήθησάν μοι 129:3 ἐπὶ τοῦ νότου μου ἐτέκταινον οἱ ἁμαρτωλοὶ ἐμάκρυναν τὴν ἀνομίαν αὐτῶν 129:4 κύριος δίκαιος συνέκοσμεν αὐχένας ἁμαρτωλῶν 129:5 αἰσχυρνήτωσαν καὶ ἀποστραφήτωσαν εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω πάντες οἱ μισοῦντες Σιών 129:6 γενηθήτωσαν ὡς χόρτος δωμαίων ὃς πρὸ τοῦ ἐκσπασθῆναι ἐξηράνθη 129:7 οὐδὲ οὐκ ἐπλήρωσεν τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ ὁ θερίζων καὶ τὸν κόλπον αὐτοῦ ὁ τὰ δράγματα συλλέγων 129:8 καὶ οὐκ εἶπαν οἱ παράγοντες εὐλογία κυρίου ἐφ' ὑμᾶς εὐλογῆκαμεν ὑμᾶς ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου		

<p>Tehillim Psalms 129 129:1 ‘Many times they have persecuted me from my youth up,’ Let Israel now say, 129:2 ‘Many times they have persecuted me from my youth up; Yet they have not prevailed against me. 129:3 ‘The plowers plowed upon my back; They lengthened their furrows.’ 129:4 The Lord is righteous; He has cut in two the cords of the wicked. 129:5 May all who hate Zion Be put to shame and turned backward; 129:6 Let them be like grass upon the housetops, Which withers before it grows up; 129:7 With which the reaper does not fill his hand, Or the binder of sheaves his bosom; 129:8 Nor do those who pass by say, ‘The blessing of the Lord be upon you; We bless you in the name of the Lord.’ (NASB)</p>	<p>Toviyah Psalms 129 129:1A song that was uttered on the ascents of the abyss. Many are they who have oppressed me from my youth – let Israel now say – 129:2 Many are they who have oppressed me from my youth, yet they have not been able to do me harm. 129:3 Upon my body the plowers have plowed, they have made their furrow long. 129:4 The Lord is righteous; he has severed the bonds of the wicked. 129:5 They will be ashamed and withdraw: all those who hate Zion. 129:6 They will be like the grass of the rooftops, which, before it blossoms, the east wind comes blowing on it and it has withered. 129:7 Which the reaper does not fill his hand with, nor the sheaver his shoulder. 129:8 And those who pass by do not say there, “The blessing of the Lord be upon you,” nor will they answer, “We bless you in the name of the Lord.” (EMC)</p>	<p>Psalmoi Psalms 129 A Song of Degrees. 129:1 Many a time have they warred against me from my youth, let Israel now say: 129:2 Many a time have they warred against me from my youth: and yet they prevailed not against me. 129:3 The sinners wrought upon my back: they prolonged their iniquity. 129:4 The righteous Lord has cut asunder the necks of sinners. 129:5 Let all that hate Sion be put to shame and turned back. 129:6 Let them be as the grass of the house-tops, which withers before it is plucked up. 129:7 Wherewith the reaper fills not his hand, nor he that makes up the sheaves, his bosom. 129:8 Neither do they that go by say, The blessing of the Lord be upon you: we have blessed you in the name of the Lord. (LXX)</p>
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א שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת רַבַּת 129:1 צָרְרוּנִי מִנְעוּרַי יֵאמֶר-נָא יִשְׂרָאֵל: ב רַבַּת צָרְרוּנִי מִנְעוּרַי גַּם לֹא יִקְלוּ-לִי: *129:1 ‘Many times they have persecuted me from my youth up,’ Let Israel now say, 129:2 ‘Many times they have persecuted me from my youth up; Yet they have not prevailed against me. (NASB)* In life, as the children of God, we will see persecution. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” (2 Timothy 3:12) there is no doubt that persecution is a stark reality of life as part of our walk before God and His Messiah Yeshua. Just as Paul wrote, all who desire to live a godly life in the Messiah will be persecuted. We are also told Yeshua said if they persecuted Him they will also persecute His followers (John 15:20). Yeshua clearly states that the world will hate God’s people just as the world hated him. The reason this is so is because God’s people are not vain, arrogant, sensual and given to pleasure, ambitious for wealth, and covetous. The world would not oppose those who walk in the counsel of the ungodly or after the fleshly desires. This is the concept of not belonging to the world because who we are has been given from above. We do not walk in the way the world walks, and as a result, the world engages in persecution (John 15:18 *‘If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. 15:19 ‘If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. NASB)*). The world is driven by its love for sin and those who belong to the world are motivated by sin in their lives. The difference is the principles the Lord gives His people in the Torah, and the Lord Himself working in our lives motivating us by the love He has placed in our hearts for Him and for others. It is this discordance between the children of God and the way of the world that separates us from the world and causes those who belong to the world to have animosity against God’s people. (I

Peter 4:3-4) Studying the Torah, the letters of Paul, and the Gospels, we learn there is value in persecution in the sense that we see how the Lord is working in our lives. It is through persecution that drives us to the Lord in prayer and in His Word. This is what Paul calls surrendering for the cause of Christ and all that he had gained as loss (*Philippians 3:8*) such that he might share in the “*fellowship of [Christ’s] sufferings*” (*Philippians 3:10*). Paul even counted his chains as a favor that God had given to him (*Philippians 1:7*). James argued that trials test our faith, develop endurance in our lives, and help develop maturity (see *James 1:2-4*). The question though, is the testing of our faith from the Lord or is it from the evil one? This testing is paralleled to working steel in the forge and the tempering of the metal. The trials and persecution serve to strengthen the character of believers. A person who yields his life to persecution demonstrates that he is of superior quality as compared to his adversaries (*Hebrews 11:38*); but this is not to say that we are to lay down our lives for the slaughter if we are able to take a stand to defend our families. This is not a form of hatefulness but speaks of our duty to family and truth. The Lord who works in our hearts and lives through persecution, does so producing kindness and blessing in the face of evil opposition. Peter says of Yeshua, “*When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly*” (*1 Peter 2:23*). Through persecution we learn to trust in the Lord and we learn how to come together as faithful children of God to help one another in a supportive way. Trials and calamity leads us to love and comfort one another, to reach out to one another to show how the Lord is in fact working on our behalf. It is in these ways we press onward and continue on in the faith. It may be that David pressed on understanding these things. He had a group of loyal and faithful people who went with him during his times of trouble regardless of what he had done.

The Torah describes us as God’s people who are holy in the sense that we have a responsibility to a rigorous moral code. In the book of Shemot / Exodus we read Moshe saying “*You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt*” (*Shemot / Exodus 22:21*) It is here the people made a covenant with God to receive the instructions of God that urge us as His people to “*learn to do good; seek justice, and to correct oppression*” and *Tehillim / Psalm 82* proclaims our responsibility to “*Give justice to the weak and to maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.*” Note something here, Judaism is not about “*every person for his or herself.*” Judaism is also not about “*every ethnic group for itself.*” And most importantly, Judaism is not about shooting other people or blowing up houses or synagogues. This quote from Shemot / Exodus is the most telling about what Judaism is about, an all powerful God who calls a people that had been oppressed so much for so long. History explains how the Jewish people have lived and existed as “*strangers in the land.*” Therefore, inherent in the Judaism as taken from the descriptions of the Tanach is the history of Judaism that is described as having commonality with those who are oppressed. Therefore, we are to do what is right, just, and true towards all peoples. The Rabbis have the following to say concerning these things:

Chizkuni, Shemot / Exodus 22:21:1

כל אלמנה ויתום לא תענון, “*Do not oppress any widow or orphan.*” The word כל in this verse has to be understood as in *Exodus 20,10: לא תעשה כל מלאכה*, not as meaning: “*do not do ail the work,*” but as: “*do not do any work.*” Compare also *Exodus 20,4: תמונה*, “*do not make for yourself any likeness;*” it does not mean that you are only forbidden to make for yourselves likenesses of all] that is on heaven or earth.” The Torah mentions the proselyte as he has no family in Israel and therefore no one who can advise him or protect him. He belongs to the weakest members of society. Next the Torah mentions widows and orphans, who though natural born Israelites either have lost their protectors or had never had any.

Chizkuni looks at the statement not to oppress the widow or the orphan. This is paralleled to the proselyte, the ger who lives in the midst of Israel to join himself with the Lord and with Israel. Note he has no family and no one to advise him on how to live. It appears as if the proselyte has not been given instruction in the Mishnah to understand how he should live out his faith. The orphan and widow is found in a similar man-

ner, not having family or those who would advise them how to live or take care of them. The Lord cares about those who are all alone and in need. The Lord provides for the needs of the innocent, and gives us a community to join in order to have a family and friends.

Chizkuni, Shemot / Exodus 22:21:2

לֹא תַעֲנוּן, *the reason why the Torah used the plural mode when exhorting us not to exploit this group of people, something most unusual, is because so many people are in the habit of doing just that when they face weak people. The Torah includes therefore all the people who witness such exploitation and do not protest it, are included in this prohibition. This is why also the penalty for people guilty of this has been written in the plural mode. וַחֲרָה אַפִּי וְהִרְגַתִּי אֹתְכֶם*, “My anger will flare up and I will kill you;” (verse 23)

Chizkuni brings out an important point, the plural mode of the Hebrew word leads us to understand that we all have the capability of doing injustice to the weak, the poor, and the widow. Those who witness such behavior or activity are also included as having done this themselves. The Lord says that His anger will flare up against us if we do not repent and turn from this way. We are to function with innocence of heart, and purity in our relationships with others.

Rashi on Shemot / Exodus 22:21:1

לֹא תַעֲנוּן כֹּל אֵלְמָנָה וַיְתוּם לֹא תַעֲנוּן *YOU SHALL NOT AFFLICT ANY WIDOW, OR FATHERLESS CHILD — That is also the law regarding any person, but Scripture is speaking of what usually happens and therefore mentions these in particular, for they are feeble in defensive power (i. e. they have no one to protect them) and it is a frequent occurrence for people to afflict them (Mekhilta d’Rabbi Yishmael 22:21).*

Rashi states something similar, saying the affliction and oppression of the widow and fatherless happens often. Do you find it interesting how Rashi so long ago believes these things are a frequent occurrence to afflict the poor, the needy, and the widow? The fact that the Lord had to put this command in the Torah, provides us with a historical context of 1400 years BC of oppression and affliction going on, the nature of man is to sin. The Lord God of Israel set a very high standard for His people.

Sforno on Shemot / Exodus 22:21:1

לֹא תַעֲנוּן אִם עָנָה תַעֲנֵה אוֹתוֹ; *if, in the process of oppressing an orphan your intention was only to oppress him alone; if your “oppressing” him was in the nature of disciplining him in order to ultimately bestowing loving kindness on him after he responded to your rebuking him, your disciplining him is considered an act of loving kindness. [the author interprets verse 22 starting with the word אִם as an alternative, moderating what has been written in verse 21. Ed.]*

Sforno makes the point of oppression as a method of disciplining in order to ultimately bring a blessing upon a person (mercy, lovingkindness, chesed) as a result of the rebuke. This mercy is designed to lead one to repentance. It is a little difficult to understand how oppression can be used as a form of rebuke and loving kindness.

Tur HaAroch, Shemot / Exodus 22:21:1

כֹּל אֵלְמָנָה וַיְתוּם לֹא תַעֲנוּן, *“Do not oppress any widow or orphan.” The word כֹּל, “every,” is meant to include wealthy widows and well to do orphans. It teaches that contrary to appearances, such people are keenly aware of the loss of companionship and moral support they have sustained, and that cannot be compensated for simply by earthly possessions. The*

Torah addresses people generally, society, hence the word תענון, is in the plural mode. Ibn Ezra comments that the penalty for someone witnessing such oppression without protesting the behaviour of the party guilty of it, is the same as the person actually guilty of such oppression of the orphan and widow.

All of the commentaries agree, the command to not afflict any who are widows or fatherless (orphan) whether wealthy or not, the command remains as binding upon us all as God's Children. The point of Tur Haarocho commentary is that earthly possessions do not sustain a person. We need relationships. We are meant for relationships. This characteristic of God's people is worked out in the lives of the widow and the fatherless.

The psalmist continues saying, *ג על-גבי חרשו חרשים האריכו למענותם [למענותם]: ד יהוה צדיק קצץ עבות רשעים: 129:3 'The plowers plowed upon my back; They lengthened their furrows.'* 129:4 *The Lord is righteous; He has cut in two the cords of the wicked. (NASB)* David describes the kind of treatment that he is receiving, his persecution is as if one is plowing into his back deep furrows in order to plant their evil seeds. Yeshua the Messiah said, *"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* (Matthew 5:10). Yeshua defines "persecution" as being reviled and having false things uttered against us. This is similar to what the psalmist is saying, but the Lord God turns the persecution into a future expectation of a blessing. One caveat regarding this blessing is that it is for persecution for "righteousness' sake." This is connected to our taking the Word of God into the world and living righteously before men and God. The Talmud Bavli Sotah 11b has the following to say concerning *Tehillim / Psalms 129:3*.

Talmud Bavli Sotah 11b Part 8

And once the Egyptians would notice them, realizing that they were Jewish babies, they would come to kill them. But a miracle would occur for them and they would be absorbed by the earth. And the Egyptians would then bring oxen and would plow upon them, as it is stated: "The plowers plowed upon my back; they made long their furrows" (Psalms 129:3). After the Egyptians would leave, the babies would emerge and exit the ground like grass of the field, as it is stated: "I caused you to increase even as the growth of the field" (Ezekiel 16:7).

The rabbis describe the situation in Egypt when the Egyptians came to destroy the children of Israel. The Lord worked a miracle where the ground opened up, swallowed the children up for protection, and the Egyptians plowing the ground in order to find the children. Note how children going down into the ground is as one who has died. The children coming out of the ground is as one who was raised from the dead. This commentary from the Talmud speaks of the enemy who seeks to kill and destroy, to persecute, even to plowing into one's back, but the Lord turns this around for blessing with the future expectation of resurrection. Being persecuted for righteousness sake, this is something we do, not something that is ascribed to us spiritually only. The rabbis believe practicing righteousness has its rewards when persecuted for righteousness sake. The extent of the miraculous is so great, the miracle the Lord will perform for us is at the level of resurrection power. This should tell us something about the importance of living our lives for the Lord!

Another way the rabbis consider the verses in the Psalm, *ג על-גבי חרשו חרשים האריכו למענותם [למענותם]: ד יהוה צדיק קצץ עבות רשעים: 129:3 'The plowers plowed upon my back; They lengthened their furrows.'* 129:4 *The Lord is righteous; He has cut in two the cords of the wicked. (NASB)* is as follows:

Rabbeinu Bahya, Devarim / Deuteronomy 25:18:2

A Midrashic approach based on Tanchuma Ki Teytze 9 is that the words בך ויזנב represent an attack on the זנב, i.e. he cut off the foreskins of these people and threw them heavenwards saying: "take what you have chosen." The Amalekites did this to the individuals who, because of individual sins committed, had been excluded from the protective cover of the ענני

הכבוד, *the clouds of glory enveloping the main body of the Jewish people.*

Another Midrash in Tanchuma Ki Teytze 5 describes the meaning of the words: “remember what Amalek did to you” in the following terms: There are (here) two mentions of the word זכר “remember” in connection with Amalek. You are to remember what Amalek did to you, and to blot out the memory of Amalek. You are also to remember My promise to blot out Amalek (Exodus 17,14). The word: “the memory of you,” is comparable to the memory of ash זָכַרְנִיכֶם מְשָׁלִי אֶפֶר לְגַבִּי הַיָּמָר גְּבִיכֶם, [i.e. it is completely forgotten, if used in the negative sense; if you try and emulate Avraham this “memory” will be accounted something positive, meritorious for you. Ed.] G’d said to Israel: “be very careful with the two commandments involving ‘remembrance’ which I wrote here.” The one remembrance is written here and the other in Exodus 17,14 where G’d Himself promises to blot out the memory of Amalek. If you do what I tell you to do here you will be true descendants of Avraham your forefather who described himself as dust and ashes in Genesis 18,27. If not, prepare yourselves to be like the people of total insignificance described in the verse in Job and you will be enslaved as laborers in Egypt] burdened with חומר ולבנים, “clay and bricks.” In Psalms 129,3 the slavery in Egypt is also paraphrased as על גבי חרשו חורשים, “ploughmen ploughed across my back.” [The word גבי as well as the word חומר provides the link to the verse in Job 13,12 quoted. Ed. I find the message of the Midrash confusing as it appears to warn of matters which are already past history. The people addressed here are after the redemption from Egyptian bondage, Ed.]

The Midrash goes on in several paragraphs to describe that what happened to Amalek and especially to Agog their king as retribution for when Amalek had attacked the Jewish people in the desert. [The reader is referred to Tanchuma Ki Teytze sections 7-9. Ed.]

Rabbeinu Bahya speaks of a midrash on Amalek how the Amalekites scorned the command of God (circumcision) and to remember what they had done to Israel in the Torah. Amalek (עַמְלֵק) is a nation described in the Tanach that refers to the nation’s founder, a grandson of Esau; his descendant, the Amalekites; or the territories of Amalek in which they inhabited. The Tanach describes the Amalekites as a tribe which lived in ancient Israel and in the land called Moab. According to the Book of Bereshit / Genesis and 1 Chronicles, Amalek was the son of Eliphaz and the concubine Timna. Timna was a Horite and sister of Lotan. Amalek appears in the genealogy of Esau (*Bereshit / Genesis 36:12 and 1 Chronicles 1:36*) who was the chief of an Edomite tribe (*Bereshit / Genesis 36:16*). In the chant of Balaam in *Bamidbar / Numbers, 24:20*, Amalek was called the ‘*first of the nations,*’ which bears testimony as an early nation in antiquity. Rashi states, “*He came before all of them to make war with Israel.*” As being the first of the nations, note how he was first to come to make war against Israel. It seems from the very beginning, the nations were against God’s Ways. The First-century Roman-Jewish scholar and historian Flavius Josephus refers to Amalek as a ‘*bastard*’ (νόθος) in a derogatory sense. The Amalekites came against Israel through Bilam in Parashat Balak, and the midrash speaks of remembering what they did, as wanting to plough the backs of God’s people. Note the connection to plowing and sowing seeds of sin. Is this not what Bilam recommend to cause the Lord to come against Israel at Baal Peor? There is a connection between the enemy and the desire to so seeds of destruction in the form of sin and deception. In Judaism, the Amalekites came to represent the archetype enemy of Israel. In Jewish folklore the Amalekites are considered to be the symbol of evil. This concept has been used by some Hassidic rabbis such as the Baal Shem Tov to represent atheism or the rejection of God. In *Shemot / Exodus 17:14*, the Lord God of Israel promised to “*blot out the name*” of Amalek.

Tur HaAroch, Vayikra / Leviticus 21:20:1

או גבן, “or abnormally long eyebrows;” the word appears in conjunction with eyes, as in

שגובן בעיניו, *describing eyebrows so bushy that they cover one's eyes. The word is related to גב, "back," as in על גבי חרשו חורשים* (Psalms 129,3) *The Torah began by listing the kind of physical blemishes that consist of visibly missing or malfunctioning limbs or organs, limbs, etc., proceeding to examples of priests whose limbs are all there and functioning, but who suffer from blemishes making them appear ugly. This is followed by defects which were not congenital but the result of bone fractures, etc. At the end, we even hear about blemishes that affect the mind of a person such as knowing that one's reproductive organs, though not visibly blemished, suffered the kind of injuries which make the organ permanently dysfunctional.*

Tur HaAroch speaks of blemishes and something that makes a man appear ugly. It is interesting how this is paralleled to *Tehillim / Psalms 129:3-4*. This is the manner in which the enemy desires to inflict upon our lives, to disfigure us by sin. The commentary speaks of the enemy afflicting us in our mind as well due to something that is hidden. The Lord God of Israel however has set us free and is able to deliver us from the clutches of the enemy.

ה יבשו ויסגו אָחור פֶּל שְׁנָאֵי צִיּוֹן: ו יְהִיו כְּחֻצִיר גִּגוֹת שֶׁקִּדְמַת שְׁלֶפָה יִבֶּשׁ: 129:5 ז שְׁלֵא מְלֵא כִפּוֹ קוֹצֵר וְחֻצְנוֹ מְעַמָּר: ח וְלֹא אָמְרוּ | הֶעֱבְרִים בְּרִפְתַּי יְהוָה אֲלֵיכֶם בְּרַכְנוּ אֶתְכֶם בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה 129:5 *May all who hate Zion Be put to shame and turned backward; 129:6 Let them be like grass upon the house-tops, Which withers before it grows up; 129:7 With which the reaper does not fill his hand, Or the binder of sheaves his bosom; 129:8 Nor do those who pass by say, 'The blessing of the Lord be upon you; We bless you in the name of the Lord.'* (NASB) The concluding verses in the Psalm may be summarized by what the prophet Isaiah wrote in *Isaiah 49*.

Isaiah 49

49:1 Listen to Me, O islands, And pay attention, you peoples from afar. The Lord called Me from the womb; From the body of My mother He named Me. 49:2 He has made My mouth like a sharp sword, In the shadow of His hand He has concealed Me; And He has also made Me a select arrow, He has hidden Me in His quiver. 49:3 He said to Me, 'You are My Servant, Israel, In Whom I will show My glory.' 49:4 But I said, 'I have toiled in vain, I have spent My strength for nothing and vanity; Yet surely the justice due to Me is with the Lord, And My reward with My God.' 49:5 And now says the Lord, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, To bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him (For I am honored in the sight of the Lord, And My God is My strength), 49:6 He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.' 49:7 Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel and its Holy One, To the despised One, To the One abhorred by the nation, To the Servant of rulers, 'Kings will see and arise, Princes will also bow down, Because of the Lord who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who has chosen You.' 49:8 Thus says the Lord, 'In a favorable time I have answered You, And in a day of salvation I have helped You; And I will keep You and give You for a covenant of the people, To restore the land, to make them inherit the desolate heritages; 49:9 Saying to those who are bound, 'Go forth,' To those who are in darkness, 'Show yourselves.' Along the roads they will feed, And their pasture will be on all bare heights. 49:10 'They will not hunger or thirst, Nor will the scorching heat or sun strike them down; For He who has compassion on them will lead them And will guide them to springs of water. 49:11 'I will make all My mountains a road, And My highways will be raised up. 49:12 'Behold, these will come from afar; And lo, these will come from the north and from the west, And these from the land of Sinim.' 49:13 Shout for joy, O heavens! And rejoice, O earth! Break forth into joyful shouting, O mountains! For the Lord has comforted His people

And will have compassion on His afflicted. 49:14 But Zion said, 'The Lord has forsaken me, And the Lord has forgotten me.' 49:15 'Can a woman forget her nursing child And have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you. 49:16 'Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me. 49:17 'Your builders hurry; Your destroyers and devastators Will depart from you. 49:18 'Lift up your eyes and look around; All of them gather together, they come to you. As I live,' declares the Lord, 'You will surely put on all of them as jewels and bind them on as a bride. 49:19 'For your waste and desolate places and your destroyed land Surely now you will be too cramped for the inhabitants, And those who swallowed you will be far away. 49:20 'The children of whom you were bereaved will yet say in your ears, 'The place is too cramped for me; Make room for me that I may live here. 49:21 'Then you will say in your heart, 'Who has begotten these for me, Since I have been bereaved of my children And am barren, an exile and a wanderer? And who has reared these? Behold, I was left alone; From where did these come?' 49:22 Thus says the Lord God, 'Behold, I will lift up My hand to the nations And set up My standard to the peoples; And they will bring your sons in their bosom, And your daughters will be carried on their shoulders. 49:23 'Kings will be your guardians, And their princesses your nurses. They will bow down to you with their faces to the earth And lick the dust of your feet; And you will know that I am the Lord; Those who hopefully wait for Me will not be put to shame. 49:24 'Can the prey be taken from the mighty man, Or the captives of a tyrant be rescued?' 49:25 Surely, thus says the Lord, 'Even the captives of the mighty man will be taken away, And the prey of the tyrant will be rescued; For I will contend with the one who contends with you, And I will save your sons. 49:26 'I will feed your oppressors with their own flesh, And they will become drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine; And all flesh will know that I, the Lord, am your Savior And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.' (NASB)

Isaiah speaks of Israel as having been called and named from the womb. Through Israel the Lord would show forth His glory. Isaiah states, *49:7 Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel and its Holy One, To the despised One, To the One abhorred by the nation, To the Servant of rulers, 'Kings will see and arise, Princes will also bow down, Because of the Lord who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who has chosen You.'* (NASB) Isaiah speaks of this future expectation of God's blessing. The Lord says "all who hate Zion will be put to shame and turned back." This is paralleled to the Lord who saves us from our enemies, as he says in Isaiah *49:26 'I will feed your oppressors with their own flesh, And they will become drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine; And all flesh will know that I, the Lord, am your Savior And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.'* (NASB) The idea is God's truth and His blessing comes forth from Zion, and so the one who hates Zion hates the place that bears God's name. Isaiah speaks of the Lord being Israel's redeemer. The psalm states, *הַיְבִשׁוּ וְיִסְגּוּ אַחֲזֹר כָּל שְׂנְאֵי צִיּוֹן: ו יִהְיוּ כַפְזִיר גְּגוֹת שְׂקֵדֶמֶת שְׁלֵף יָבֵשׁ: ז וְשֵׁלֵא מְלֵא כְּפוֹ קוֹצֵר, 129:5 May all who hate Zion Be put to shame and turned backward; 129:6 Let them be like grass upon the housetops, Which withers before it grows up; 129:7 With which the reaper does not fill his hand, Or the binder of sheaves his bosom; 129:8 Nor do those who pass by say, 'The blessing of the Lord be upon you; We bless you in the name of the Lord.'* (NASB) Note how the Psalmist speaks of the wicked being as grass on the rooftops not having much root which are destroyed by simply the blowing of the wind. Of such persons, people will not come with a blessing. The parallel here is to the righteous of whom the Lord will reward for their perseverance in the faith. The Lord sends the One through whom He will save His people. This expectation is found within *Tehillim / Psalms 129*, and this is paralleled to God's people upon whom the Lord has placed His name! 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