

פרשת

ויגש

Parashat Vayechi

*Genesis 47:28-50:26, 1 Kings 2:1-12,
Luke 4:31-5:11*

The Right Perspective for Walking with God

In this week's Torah portion, Parashat Vayechi, we read the following, *Bereshit / Genesis 50:15* *When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, 'What if Joseph bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong which we did to him!'* *50:16* *So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, 'Your father charged before he died, saying, 50:17 'Thus you shall say to Joseph, 'Please forgive, I beg you, the transgression of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong.' And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.' And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. 50:18* *Then his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, 'Behold, we are your servants.'* *50:19* *But Joseph said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? 50:20 'As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. 50:21 'So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.'* *So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. (NASB)* It is interesting how Joseph's brothers did not go to him personally, but sent messengers instead. Only after the initial message was brought, and we read that Joseph wept when hearing the message, are we told his brothers came and fell down before him seeking his forgiveness. His brothers were

worried when Jacob died that Joseph would seek retribution for what they had done to him so many years prior. They devised a plan to seek His mercy and sent messengers with a message. The Scriptures teach us that a righteous man forgives. Joseph's brothers however lie in an attempt to save their lives. Rashi provides an extensive interpretation on what is going on here in the reasoning of his brothers. Rashi on Bereshit / Genesis 50:15 Part 2 states the following, *“לו ישטמנו” means PERHAPS HE WILL HATE US. The word has many different meanings...There is an example of לו used in the sense of “perhaps”, — in our verse — “Perhaps he will hate us”, but there is no other example of its usage in this sense in Scripture. Here it corresponds in sense with the word אולי, “perhaps”, as for example in (Genesis 24:5) “אולי the woman will not be willing to follow me” which means “perhaps she will not etc.” As a matter of fact אולי has all the meanings of לו, for there are examples of אולי denoting a petition as for instance (2 Samuel 16:12) “Perhaps (אולי) the Lord will look upon mine eye”, (where the context shows that this involves a kind of petition that God should do this); (Joshua 14:12) “Perhaps (אולי) the Lord will be with me [and I shall drive them out]”, (involving also a petition that God should do this), where אולי has a similar meaning to לו in (Genesis 30:34) “Would (לו) it might be according to thy word”. Then again the word אולי has the meaning of “if”; for example, (Genesis 18:24) “Perhaps (אולי) there are fifty righteous [wilt Thou destroy etc.]” (which is equivalent to “if there are fifty... wilt thou destroy?”.)* What Rashi is telling us is unrepentant sin leaves us asking questions of “perhaps” and “what if,” without the assurance of peace before God. The concept of “assurance” of our faith (*Hebrews 10:22*) is a sense of deep peace and consolation before God. Assurance however is something that is cultivated in our lives as we grow closer to and walk with God according to His Word. Joseph's brothers neglected this aspect of their faith in their lives before God. Note how their lack of faith is demonstrated in Rashi's words on Bereshit / Genesis 50:16, Part 2 in which he says, *“אביך צוה THY FATHER DID COMMAND — They altered the facts (they stated something that was false) for the sake of peace, for Jacob had given them no such command because Joseph was not suspect in*

his sight (Yevamot 65b).” Rashi’s interpretation (on Bereshit / Genesis 50:17 Part 1) he goes on to say that the messengers were to argue for the forgiveness of his brothers because they are the servants of God, what they had done was the will of God to save all peoples from this great famine. This causes Joseph to recognize the Lord’s hand at work, and to not take matters into our own hands because the Lord is working out His plan for our lives. The same reasoning may be applied to each one of us in regards to everything that happens in our lives. This is why Yeshua raised the standard of forgiveness, to forgive even our enemies, regardless of whether one is a servant of God or not, under the idea that one may be serving God’s will and not know it. Taking this perspective will help us to continue to walk in God’s ways of righteousness, justice, mercy, and truth. Choosing what is right, walking in the spirit, and living our lives according to God’s Word!

As we conclude the study on the first book from the Torah (Bereshit / Genesis) a question we may have is what does it mean to “*walk with God?*” In the Tanach, there are several people described as “*walking with God,*” beginning with Enoch according to *Bereshit / Genesis 5:21-24*, which states *5:21 Enoch lived sixty-five years, and became the father of Methuselah. 5:22 Then Enoch walked with God three hundred years after he became the father of Methuselah, and he had other sons and daughters. 5:23 So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. 5:24 Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him. (NASB)* Based upon what the Scriptures say, Enoch walked with God and the Lord removed him from this world. This teaches us that we, the children of God are “*in*” the world, but we are not “*of*” the world. Noah also was described as “*a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God*” (*Bereshit / Genesis 6:9*). The prophet Micah provides us with a glimpse into what the Lord desires for us saying, *Micah 6:8 “He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?” (NASB)* Do you think these descriptions of the men who “*walked with God*” is an activity reserved for a select few? The Lord God of Israel desires for all of His children to walk with Him. When the Torah speaks of “*walking,*” it often refers to a lifestyle which is in line with the ways of God as opposed to walking in the ways of the world (*2 Kings 8:27, Ephesians*

2:2, *Colossians 3:7*). If this is the case, why do the modern theologians today so vehemently teach against God's Torah as a way of life for His people? In the Apostolic Writings, the phrase "*walking with God*" is often paralleled to "*walking in the Spirit*" (see *Galatians 5:16 and Romans 8:4*). To walk with the Lord God of Israel means that we choose to live our lives according to God's Word to bring glory to His Name, regardless of personal cost. According to David in the psalms, walking with the Lord also means we do not walk with evil people as companions (see *Tehillim / Psalm 1:1-3*). This is what is understood as the narrow path we are set upon in seeking God's kingdom, as opposed to the broad way which leads to destruction (*Matthew 7:13-14, the way of the world*). In other words, as God's people, we choose to not live our lives to please our sinful desires (*Romans 13:14*). We seek first God's kingdom and seek to eliminate everything that does not enhance our walk with Him (*Hebrews 12:2*). This is why Paul said what he did in *1 Corinthians 10:31* "*So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*" (NASB) As a result of these things, it is not difficult to identify the one who walks with the Lord, because God's ways according to His word, are reflected in his thoughts, his actions, his motivations, and his life choices because such a person spends time with the Lord and in His Word. In this week's Torah Portion, note how Jacob speaks of his fathers Abraham and Isaac walking before the Lord God of Israel. What is the significance of their having done this? Let's reflect upon how we should be living our lives as we discuss this topic further.

In this week's Torah portion, we are looking at *Bereshit / Genesis 48:10-22*.

Bereshit / Genesis 48:10-22

48:10 Now the eyes of Israel were so dim from age that he could not see. Then Joseph brought them close to him, and he kissed them and embraced them. 48:11 Israel said to Joseph, 'I never expected to see your face, and behold, God has let me see your children as well.' 48:12 Then Joseph took them from his knees, and bowed with his face to the ground. 48:13 Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left, and

Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right, and brought them close to him. 48:14 But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger; and his left hand on Manasseh's head, crossing his hands, although Manasseh was the firstborn. 48:15 He blessed Joseph, and said, 'The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, 48:16 The angel who has redeemed me from all evil, Bless the lads; And may my name live on in them, And the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; And may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.' 48:17 When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on Ephraim's head, it displeased him; and he grasped his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. 48:18 Joseph said to his father, 'Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn. Place your right hand on his head.' 48:19 But his father refused and said, 'I know, my son, I know; he also will become a people and he also will be great. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.' 48:20 He blessed them that day, saying, 'By you Israel will pronounce blessing, saying, 'May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!'' Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh. 48:21 Then Israel said to Joseph, 'Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers. 48:22 'I give you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow.' (NASB)

י וְעֵינֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּבָדוּ מִזְקֵן לֹא יוּכַל לְרִאוֹת וַיִּגַּשׁ אֹתָם אֱלֹוֹ
וַיִּשָׁק לָהֶם וַיְחַבֵּק לָהֶם: יא וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-יוֹסֵף רְאֵה
כְּפָנַי לֹא כָלְתִי וְהִנֵּה הִרְאָה אֹתִי אֱלֹהִים גַּם אֶת-זַרְעִי: יב
וַיֹּצֵא יוֹסֵף אֹתָם מֵעַם בְּרַכְּיוֹ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ לְאַפְּיוֹ אֶרְצָה: יג וַיִּקַּח

יוסף את-שניהם את-אפרים בימינו משמאל ישראל ואת-
 מנשה בשמאלו מימין ישראל ויגש אליו: יד וישלח ישראל
 את-ימינו וישת על-ראש אפרים והוא הצעיר ואת-שמאלו
 על-ראש מנשה שכל את-ידיו פי מנשה הבכור: טו ויברך
 את-יוסף ויאמר האלהים אשר התהלכו אבתי לפניו אברהם
 ויצחק האלהים הרעה אתי מעודי עד-היום הנה: טז המ-
 לאף הגאל אתי מכל-רע יברך את-הנערים ויקרא בהם שמי
 ושם אבתי אברהם ויצחק וידגו לרב בקרב הארץ: [שלישי]
 יז וירא יוסף כי-ישית אביו יד-ימינו על-ראש אפרים וירע
 בעיניו ויתמוך יד-אביו להסיר אתה מעל ראש-אפרים על-
 ראש מנשה: יח ויאמר יוסף אל-אביו לא-כן אבי פי-זה
 הבכר שים ימינה על-ראשו: יט וימאן אביו ויאמר ידע-
 תי בני ידעתי גם-הוא יהיה-לעם וגם-הוא יגדל ואולם אחיו
 הקטן יגדל ממנו וזרעו יהיה מלא-הגוים: כ ויברכם ביום
 ההוא לאמור בך יברך ישראל לאמר ישמך אלהים כאפרים
 וכמנשה וישם את-אפרים לפני מנשה: כא ויאמר ישראל
 אל-יוסף הנה אנכי מת והיה אלהים עמכם והשיב אתכם אל-
 ארץ אבותיכם: כב ואני נתתי לך שקם אחד על-אחיה אשר
 לקחתי מיד האמרי בחרבי ובקשתי:

טו ויברך את-יוסף, *Bereshit / Genesis 48:15-16*, Jacob states in
 ויאמר האלהים אשר התהלכו אבתי לפניו אברהם ויצחק האלהים הרעה
 אתי מעודי עד-היום הנה: טז המלאך הגאל אתי מכל-רע יברך את-הנערים
 ויקרא בהם שמי ושם אבתי אברהם ויצחק וידגו לרב בקרב הארץ:
48:15 He blessed Joseph, and said, 'The God before whom my fathers Abra-
ham and Isaac walked, The God who has been my shepherd all my life
to this day, 48:16 The angel who has redeemed me from all evil, Bless
the lads; And may my name live on in them, And the names of my fa-
thers Abraham and Isaac; And may they grow into a multitude in the
midst of the earth.' (NASB) Note how Jacob opens his blessing saying
 ויהיה אלהים עמכם אשר התהלכו אבתי לפניו which may be translated as “*the God*
that they, my fathers, walked before Him” saying that the Lord is the
 One before whom he had walked. The Lord is his shepherd, his re-

deemer, and the One who saved him from all evil. With this said, Jacob declares that his name (Israel) will live on in the children, along with the names of his fathers Abraham and Isaac. This places an important emphasis upon his words in relation to living up to one's name and family. Jacob was establishing the standard upon which his fathers had lived their lives, which is to live by faith and righteousness before the Lord. Sforno comments upon this in the following way.

Sforno on Bereshit / Genesis 48:15 Part 3

האלוקים אשר התהלכו אבותי לפניו, as if he had addressed G'd in a preamble to the blessing, saying: "You are the G'd before Whom my fathers walked steadfastly, etc.; please do what I ask for the sake of their merit."

Sforno states that these verses are to be interpreted as being addressed to the Lord God of Israel and to his grandsons. He asks that they live their lives for the Lord for the sake of the merit of their fathers. Jacob is telling his children to live for the Lord for the name sake of their fathers and their family. This is a very important concept, because we are known by the family and the people we keep. Repeatedly in the Scriptures, we are instructed to live for His (God's) name sake according to the Scriptures. For example, God guides us for His name's sake (*Tehillim / Psalms 23:3*), He forgives our sins for His name sake (*Tehillim / Psalm 25:11*), He leads us for the sake of His name (*Tehillim / Psalm 31:3*), He delivers us from sin for His name's sake (*Tehillim / Psalm 79:9*), He deals with us out of His goodness for His name's sake (*Tehillim / Psalm 109:21*), and He lets us live for His name's sake (*Tehillim / Psalm 143:11*). The point is, the Lord God does what He does for His sake and not ours. We exist as God's people, alive and thriving in His kingdom, in order to embody his name. When the Lord acts for His name's sake, He is acting in accordance with His character and to uphold the honor of His word, because of the glory that He has laid upon his people. This is why Jacob and the rabbis emphasize the importance of Jacob's words calling upon his grandchildren to live for the Lord and for the sake of his name living on through them.

Radak has the following to say concerning *Bereshit / Genesis 48:15*:

Radak on Bereshit / Genesis 48:15 Part 2

אשר התהלכו אבותי לפניו, *I have already explained on Genesis 17:1 that this wording includes serving G'd in one's heart as well as with deeds. The root of all religious service is in the heart. [when it is only the from the lips outward it is a sham. Ed.] We must not understand Yaakov as claiming credit for himself or boasting, that he himself had served G'd, although it is a fact that he had served the Lord; he meant to give credit to his fathers, suggesting that if G'd had been at his side this had been largely due to the merits of both his father and grandfather. המלאך, having first spoken about G'd having assisted him, and creating the impression that G'd, personally, had done so, he now mentions the intermediary always used by G'd to do His work. We know from Psalms 34:8 חונה מלאך ה' סביב ליראיו ויחלצם "G'd's angel camps around those who fear Him and He rescues them," that His agents called מלאכים are close at hand whenever the righteous are in danger. This is why Yaakov at this time referred to הגואל אותי מכל רע, the one sent by G'd to rescue him, protect him, and bless him, יברך את הנערים, will function similarly and protect Joseph's sons. We know that such angels had been in evidence protecting Yaakov first from Lavan, then from Esau, and again when the Emorites launched an attack after Yaakov's sons had killed the males of Shechem and looted the town.*

Note how Radak connects serving the Lord being accomplished in the heart which is connected to our deeds. To only give the Lord “*lip service*” from the heart is what he calls a “*sham*” (*noun: a thing that is not what it is purported to be, adjective: bogus; false*). In addition to this, notice how Radak says “*We must not understand Yaakov as claiming credit for himself or boasting*” he explains that the credit goes to both the Lord God in heaven, and to his intermediary (המלאך, angel, messenger). Radak concludes saying, “*This is why Yaakov at this time re-*

ferred to רע מכל אותי הגואל המלאך, *the one sent by G'd to rescue him, protect him, and bless him,* יברך את הנערים *will function similarly and protect Joseph's sons.*” How significant is this interpretation in relation to Yeshua the Messiah, the one sent of God to save His people?

The Jewish commentary Akeidat Yitzchak has the following to say:

Akeidat Yitzchak 100:11

Noah was a similarly motivated person. “Noah walked with G'd.” (Genesis 6:9) Of the ancestors, collectively, the Torah testifies “your forefathers walked in front of Me.” (Genesis 48:15)

Akeidat Yitzchak connects Noah to being motivated to walk with God, and having been so motivated, he walked before the Lord as a righteous man. This speaks of men who took it upon themselves to prepare their hearts to seek the Lord. The Scriptures provides us with much precedent on the need for man to prepare his heart before the Lord to seek the God of Israel all the days of his life. Midrash Tehillim 108, Part 1 states saying, *“Scripture also says, Then the priests, the Levites, arose and blessed the people; and their voice was heard of the Lord, and their prayer came up to His holy habitation, even unto heaven (2 Chronicles 30:27). David said, Accordingly, behold, I will prepare my heart so that the Holy One blessed be He, will hear my prayer. Hence it is said, My heart is prepared, O God; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises (Tehillim / Psalms 108:2).”* This illustrates for us the importance of preparing our hearts daily. In *2 Chronicles 12:14*, we read *“And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD”* (וַיַּעַשׂ: הָרַע כִּי לֹא הֵכִין לְבָבוֹ לְדַרוֹשׁ אֶת־יְהוָה:). The Tanach states directly that Rehoboam did evil because he did not prepare his heart to seek the Lord. If you think about it, relatively few people set out determined to do evil. They don't wake up in the morning asking themselves saying, *“today how can I transgress God's commands to do evil?”* Instead, sin is more subtle than that, a person falls into sin because he or she has not prepared his or her heart to seek the Lord. This passage in *2 Chronicles 12:14* speaks of Rehoboam, the king of Israel, who was the grandson of David. He inherited the throne when he was 41 years old, at the death of his father Solomon. In the beginning of his reign, his heart was sen-

sitive to the Lord because we are told that he listened to the Lord at the word of a prophet from God according to *2 Chronicles 11:1-4*.

2 Chronicles 11:1-4

11:1 Now when Rehoboam had come to Jerusalem, he assembled the house of Judah and Benjamin, 180, 000 chosen men who were warriors, to fight against Israel to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam. 11:2 But the word of the Lord came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying, 11:3 ‘Speak to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, saying, 11:4 ‘Thus says the Lord, ‘You shall not go up or fight against your relatives; return every man to his house, for this thing is from Me.’ ‘ So they listened to the words of the Lord and returned from going against Jeroboam. (NASB)

Studying the history of Israel, we learn that Rehoboam’s seeking the Lord God of his fathers only lasted for three of the 17 years of his reign (*2 Chronicles 11:17*). Does this sound familiar? It certainly does to me. During the time I have been alive, I have known a few people who genuinely loved the Lord at one time and were excited about the things of God, yet they grew cold and, in many cases, completely abandoned the Lord and the things that were once so important to them. How can this be? Could this be because they did not daily prepare their hearts to seek the Lord? The word “*prepare*” means “*to make (something) ready for use or consideration*” (synonyms: *make/get ready, put together, draw up, produce, arrange, assemble, construct, compose, formulate*). Notice the definition to prepare means to make something ready for use. When we prepare our hearts, we are making our hearts ready for the Lord to use. This phrase “*to prepare our hearts*” conveys the idea of a deliberate effort over a prolonged period of time. The Hebrew word that was translated “*prepare*” in *2 Chronicles 12:14* is הִכִּין is from the root word כּוּן meaning “*to be firm, be stable, be established, to fix.*” The preparation of our hearts is to fix it upon one thing, to seek the Lord God of Israel and His kingdom.

According to David, we read the following, *Tehillim / Psalm 10:17*

“LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart.” (NASB) The concept here is that the Lord God of Israel is also involved in preparing our hearts. Part of the preparation and seeking the Lord is in trusting in Him and depending upon Him for the strength to make our hearts not subject to change or variation. Note David’s words that say humility is a key part of preparing the heart. The desire of the humble heart is to have a heart that is prepared for seeking the Lord God in heaven. *Mishley / Proverbs 16:18* states, *“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.” (KJV)* The basic conclusion may be that when a person falls from their position in the Lord, they have fallen from humbly depending upon Him. For such a person, the humble heart is forsaken or neglected and the seeking of the Lord forgotten, where shortly thereafter is the fall. In addition, our imaginations and memory function as an important part of preparing our hearts. David said in *1 Chronicles 29:18*, *“O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee.” (KJV)* David believed remembering the Lord was a vital part of the preparation process. In *1 Chronicles 29:4-7*, we read of the expense of the construction of the Temple, David prayed that the Lord would use the memory of this event to prepare the people’s hearts. In the Torah, the Lord warned the children of Israel not to forget the mighty works He had performed for them lest they turn away from following Him (see *Devarim / Deuteronomy 4:9, 4:23, 6:12, 8:11-14, and 8:19*). Moshe linked our memory to remaining true to the Lord. This is why the preparation of our hearts is so important, and once the heart is prepared, as the midrash says, *“Hence it is said, My heart is prepared, O God; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises (Tehillim / Psalms 108:2).”* We prepare our hearts to remember the work of God in our lives, to continue to seek the Lord God in heaven, and to seek His kingdom in our lives for His glory. All of these things coupled together lead us to prepare ourselves for service, and so that He can use our lives to serve in His kingdom. Because of all of these things we too can say *“My heart is prepared, O God; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises!”*

Radak goes on to say in his commentary:

Radak on Genesis 17:1 Part 3

התהלך לפני, as rendered by Onkelos, “serve Me” by carrying out what I command you (in order to become perfect). This is also that meaning of the word התהלך in Genesis 24:40 as well as in Genesis 48:15 It is a reference to serving the lord in thought and deed. All service of the Lord is rooted in man’s heart. This is why King Chiskiyah in Kings II 20:3 in his prayer says: אני ה’ דבר נא את אשר התהלכתי לפניך באמת ובלבב שלם, “please o Lord remember how I have served you in truth and with a pure heart, etc.” Chiskiyah first refers to his serving G’d with his heart, before mentioning that he had performed deeds which constituted service of the Lord also, when he said והטוב בעיניך עשיתי, “and I have done what is pleasing in Your eyes.” At this juncture G’d commands Avram that He will require additional service from him, service to be performed on his own body. He had already proven that his heart was pure. He had also already perfected his personality traits to the extent that his mind and intelligence had suggested such improvements. This form of service to be performed on his body was something that his mind and reason would reject as illogical. G’d demanded this only in order for the people whom Avraham would produce would be recognizable by the circumcision of their body as unique, as wearing the mark of G’d. Even though many of the gentiles do circumcise themselves also, they do not do so in response to a command by G’d. Only the special seed of Avram, i.e. Yitzchok was included in this command. Also Yitzchok’s special seed was included in that command, [i.e. according to our author Ishmael’s children and Esau’s children as well as the sons Avraham had by Keturah would not have been included in this commandment. Because of these considerations G’d commanded the circumcision before Yitzchok would be born or even conceived. Any convert, not alive at that time but joining the Jewish people and

its faith are therefore described as being בני אברהם “descendants, sons of Avraham,” [This is an additional meaning of the name change from Avram to Avraham, foretelling him that he would become the spiritual father of all future converts. Ed.]

Note how Radak concludes *“All service of the Lord is rooted in man’s heart,”* and that serving the Lord God in our hearts leads serving the Lord by our deeds (how we live). Also, the service of the heart, and what the Lord expects of us according to His word, Radak says *“This form of service to be performed on his body was something that his mind and reason would reject as illogical.”* Isn’t this the basic premise for modern theologies in relation to the Law of God today? Radak’s comments are in relation to the command of circumcision

The Torah states according to *Shemot / Exodus 25:1-8* saying,

Shemot / Exodus 25:1-8

25:1 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 25:2 ‘Tell the sons of Israel to raise a contribution for Me; from every man whose heart moves him you shall raise My contribution. 25:3 ‘This is the contribution which you are to raise from them: gold, silver and bronze, 25:4 blue, purple and scarlet material, fine linen, goat hair, 25:5 rams’ skins dyed red, porpoise skins, acacia wood, 25:6 oil for lighting, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, 25:7 onyx stones and setting stones for the ephod and for the breastpiece. 25:8 ‘Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them. (NASB), (א) וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: (ב) דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּקְחוּ-לִי תְרוּמָה מֵאֵת כָּל-אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִדְבְּנוּ לְבָבוֹ תִּקְחוּ אֶת-תְּרוּמָתִי: (ג) וְזֹאת הַתְּרוּמָה אֲשֶׁר תִּקְחוּ מֵאֲתָם זָהָב וְכֶסֶף וְנְחֹשֶׁת: (ד) וְתַכְלֵת וְאַרְגָּמָן וְתוֹלַעַת שָׁנִי וְיָשׁ וְעִזִּים: (ה) וְעֹרֹת אֵילִם מְאֻדָּמִים וְעֹרֹת תְּחָשִׁים וְעִצֵּי שִׁטִּים: (ו) שֵׁמוֹן לְמַאָר בְּשָׁמִים לְשֵׁמוֹן הַמִּשְׁחָה וְלִקְטֹרֶת הַסִּי-מִים: (ז) אַבְנֵי-יִשְׁשֵׁם וְאַבְנֵי מְלֵאִים לְאַפָּד וְלַחֶשֶׁן: (ח) וְעֵשׂוֹ (ל) מִקְדָּשׁ וְשִׁכְנָתִי בְּתוֹכָם:

Note how the Lord speaks to sons of Israel to raise a Terumah (contribution) according to how each person's heart moves them. Note how the rabbinic commentary interprets these verses:

Sefer HaChinuch (16 cent.)

Know, my child, that any commandment that God requires of humankind comes only out of God's desire to benefit us... God's command to build the Tabernacle, for us to offer therein our prayers and sacrifices, comes not out of God's needs to dwell in an earthly dwelling among humankind, but rather [out of God's awareness that we need] train our own selves.

Malbim (19th cent. Eastern Europe)- Commentary on Exodus 25:8

...Each one of us needs to build God a Tabernacle in the recesses of our hearts, by preparing oneself to become a Sanctuary for God and a place for the dwelling of God's glory.

The rabbis say that this commandment of God to construct the Tabernacle is for our benefit. How so? So that we could train ourselves to offer prayers and sacrifices before the Lord. In the Targum on *Tehillim / Psalms 50*, David says that the Lord does not take bulls out of their flocks because he owns the cattle on a thousand mountains, He does not require sacrifices because He is hungry (*50:8-13*) as compared to the rabbis translation into the Aramaic Targum that speaks of the Lord not rebuking his people because they were unable to offer sacrifices due to the sanctuary being laid waste on the Temple Mount. Due to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, the rabbis are saying that God does not cause the people to be guilty for their lack of bringing an offering before Him. This describes living in obedience to the word of the Lord with respect to what we are able to do within the context of an absent Temple. These comments go to show that we are called to obedience, and to have a high regard for God's word because these things direct us to God's will and plan which was to bring His Mes-

siah Yeshua into this world for the purpose of salvation from sin. The purification of the soul on the inside, the sacrifice of Yeshua purifies us from within, purifies the soul whereas the Temple sacrifices purified the body externally. The significance of this statement is found in the rabbinic translation (Targum) in *Tehillim / Psalms 50:14-15* which speaks of subduing the evil impulse. Note what the Lord God says in the story of Cain and Abel from *Bereshit / Genesis 4:4* *Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering; 4:5 but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. 4:6 Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? 4:7 'If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.'* (NASB) The Lord speaks to Cain about sin and he says, if we do not do well, sin is crouching at the door and its desire is for you. In addition, he says, “*but you must master it.*” Notice how the Lord speaks of the mastery over sin in our lives, in the sense that we do not allow sin to be all consuming in our lives. The rabbinic translation of “*Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving*” is accomplished by subduing the evil impulse which is a direct parallel to *Bereshit / Genesis 4:4-7*. The Apostle Paul writes we are to put our bodies to death (*Galatians 5:24*) which is called “*crucifying the flesh with its passions and desires.*” (see also *Matthew 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23, Romans 6:6, Ephesians 4:22, Colossians 3:5*) The act of offering a sacrifice of praise is lived out in our lives as a pleasant aroma before God. This is what it means when the rabbis speak of training ourselves in their commentaries as it is related to the Tabernacle of God. We train ourselves to stay away from sin, and to go before the Lord with the attitude of repentance and seeking His kingdom. *Malbim commentary on Shemot / Exodus 25:8* speaks of the need for each of us to build a Tabernacle in our hearts, as place that is prepared for the Lord to dwell. We literally become a sanctuary for the Lord and become a place for His glory to dwell. Does this not sound very similar to what the Apostle Paul taught in 1 and 2 Corinthians and elsewhere? Our prayer should be “*Oh Lord prepare me to be a sanctuary Pure and holy, tried and true And in thanksgiving, I'll be a living Sanctuary for you.*”

Notice how the Midrash states, *“Therefore, I will prepare your throne, as is said, And your house and your kingdom will be made sure forever before you; your throne will be prepared forever (2 Samuel 7:16).”* In regards to the Tabernacle, how can the throne of God remain forever, as an earthly throne is destroyed? The Tabernacle in the heart is eternal, by reason that we will one day dwell with the Lord in the body forever. The midrash continues saying, *“I will sing, yes, I will sing praises, even with my glory (Tehillim / Psalms 108:2). David said I will sing on account of the glory which You have given me, as is said, Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that You have brought me hither (2 Samuel 7:18) that is, brought me to my kingship. Hence, my glory. Therefore, I have not been sleeping, but have awakened the dawn with psaltery and harp, as it is said, Awake, psaltery and harp; I will awake the dawn (Tehillim / Psalms 108:3). David went out, Never has dawn come upon me and found me asleep. For I want to awake the dawn.”* The idea here is that David opens his day with psalm and praise unto the Lord. According to the Psalms, David writes as a man in turmoil saying that the enemy has pursued his soul (*Tehillim / Psalm 143:3*), his heart is appalled (*Tehillim / Psalm 143:4*). Based upon these verses, it is difficult to believe David woke up each day in mid-morning all warm and cozy. These words describe a battle where his enemy is in motion. The best way to start the day, everyday, is with the prayer. Do you begin your day with God? If you can't say *“yes”* to that simple question, then can you really say with confidence that you are *“walking with God?”* We all battle the same things which include laziness, disinterest, and the temptation to skip my time with the Lord in prayer. Remember that Yeshua taught there was a special blessing to those who met with the Lord secretly *“in the closet.”* Because of these things, getting started may be difficult, but once started, spending time in the *“Divine Presence”* is greatly fulfilling. Regular devotions and prayer are a must in order to have a proper and healthy spiritual relationship with the Lord.