

THE YALKUT SHIMBONI ON PSALMS: BOOK I

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of Midrash is to add levels of understanding to the material contained in the Bible.

Midrashic literature can be separated into two main divisions. Midrash Halakah is that portion of midrashic literature which is concerned with the regulation of life through law. Its primary purpose was to accomodate the laws of the 'Written Torah' to later times and to give the Torah a sense of completeness. 1

The second division of midrashic literature applies Holy Scripture to all conditions of life. It serves to bring comfort; it exhorts and edifies. This type is known as Midrash Haggadah.

The Midrash Haggadah contains religious truths, maxims which give moral advice, descriptions of Israel's greatness in the past and in the future, as well as legends and scenes from Jewish history. 2

For the rabbis of the Midrash everything in the Bible had to do with everything else contained therein. Thus verses from one section of Scripture are used freely in support of ideas explained in another section.

Midrashic material was often delivered in the synagogues or academies, especially on Sabbaths and festivals and also on important public or private occasions. 3

In this manner, Biblical heroes became prototypes for the behavior of the people. Likewise, the entire history of Israel became a continual revelation of God's love and justice. 4

The Yalkut Shimeoni, a section of which serves as the area of study in this thesis, is part of the Midrash Haggadah.

It is a compilation based on the books of the Hebrew Scriptures from such older works as were accessible to its author. These include not only the major portions of the haggadic literature from the ancient and geonic epochs, but also the haggadic literature which was composed as late as the twelfth century. The author collected various interpretations and explanations of Biblical passages and arranged them according to the sequences of those portions of the Bible to which they referred.⁵

The Yalkut is of particular value because it offers correct readings for those works which are still extant.⁶

The anthology consists of two parts. The first section is devoted to the Pentateuch and the second section deals with the remaining books. The talmudic order of arrangement of books is followed, except that the Book of Esther precedes the Book of Daniel.⁷

Although the author of the Yalkut cannot be determined with certainty, it is generally accepted that the work was composed in the first half of the thirteenth century by a man named Simeon who came from Frankfort on the Main. After his death the title of Darshan was given to him.⁸

This thesis deals particularly with the interpretations found within the Yalkut Shimeoni which comment on the First Book of the Psalter.

The research was done in an effort to show how the Psalms are treated by the Yalkut. Particular attention was given to the interpretation of the musical terms in the superscription to the various Psalms, to verses of the Psalms as they were made to apply to Biblical personalities and events, to insights into the life of David which are not explicitly stated in the Biblical account of his life, and to the various rabbinic attitudes toward God, the wicked and the righteous, prayer, and toward the other nation which the Yalkut draws from these Psalms.

Quotations from the text of the Yalkut Shimeoni used within this thesis are marked with the letters 'Y.S.' and numbered according to the sections of the Yalkut text.

I wish to acknowledge the guidance I have received in the preparation of this thesis. Dr. Leon J. Liebreich, who served as my advisor, was most helpful not only in the initial selection of the topic but also in the direction of the research in its various stages. In addition I wish to express my thanks to Miss Irene Simon and Miss Ellen Simon who labored most diligently above the call of duty in the final preparations of the manuscript.

Without the understanding, patience, and devotion of my wife Ann, this thesis would probably never have reached fruition.

CHAPTER I

MUSICAL TERMS IN THE SUPERScription TO THE VARIOUS PSALMS

Many different technical terms are used in the headings of the Psalms. These terms refer either to the style or thought of the poems, or to matters connected with their musical setting, or to their liturgical use.

The terms used are often unclear and vague, and one can only surmise their actual meaning.⁹

The midrash does not confine itself to explaining these terms in the light of their role in music. Each term is interpreted freely in the light of Jewish tradition.

Mizmor: Kirkpatrick translates this word as psalm. He states that it is a technical term meaning a piece of music using instrumental accompaniment. The term is usually preceded or followed by the name of the author.¹⁰

The midrash states that the term mizmor is one of the three varieties of praise. (Y.S., Ps. 4)

A further explanation of the word is given in the following:

When the term mizmor l'david appears, it indicates that first David played and then the ruah hacodesh rested upon him. When the term l'david mizmor is used it indicates that the ruah hacodesh rested upon David and then he played. (Y.S. 695)

Maskil: Although the exact meaning of the term is obscure, most scholars are of the opinion that the word indicates something more definite than the ordinary psalm. It is thought to mean a skilful

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psalm.

The midrash interprets the term more freely, using both the meaning of "to be wise" or "understand" and "to look towards" or
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"to be directed."

Maskil means spoken through an interpreter. (Y.S. 625)
The word maskil is to be taken in the light of the verse, "the path of life goeth upward for the wise." (Prov. 15:24) Whoever looks upward falls into the power of the path of life. Likewise it was said, "for the sons of Korach, maskil". (Ps. 44:1) When they looked upward, they escaped. Thus you find with Nebuchadnezzar that he said, "I, Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven. (Dan. 4:31) And in the case of the wicked, when they look up to heaven, The Holy One Blessed Be He forgives them; how much more so in the case of the sons of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. David said, "Even I will look upward." (Y.S. 718)

Maskil l' david indicates that David explained it himself.
l' david maskil indicates that an interpreter explained it.
(Y.S. 695)

Shiggayon: Kirkpatrick states that the word is derived from a verb meaning to wander and denotes a poem using wild, wandering
13
rhythms.

The midrash takes the word in the sense of words spoken in error as in the verse, "Who can discern errors?" (Ps. 19:13) (Y.S. 637)

Lam'natzeah: Scholars generally agree that this term means the precentor or conductor of the choir in the Temple. The term also indicates that the particular psalm was used as part of the Temple
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service.

The word natzeah may mean "lead", "glorify", "conquer", or "endure forever". These different meanings are used here in reference to God.

The word lam'natzeah could be read as l) to the one most

capable of glorifying, 2) whose glory endures forever and ever, or 3) who lets himself be won over by his creatures. (Y.S. Ps. 4)

Han'pilot: According to Kirkpatrick the term refers to a musical instrument, possibly a type of flute. 15

The midrash interprets the term figuratively, with no reference at all to its application as a musical instrument. The word is thought to be derived from the word nahalah meaning inheritance.

The first inheritance then is the land of Israel as in the verse, "In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers. But I said: 'How would I put thee among the sons, and give thee a pleasant land, the goodliest heritage of the nations!'" (Jer. 3:18-19a)". (Y.S. Ps. 5)

Thus the phrase el han'pilot is given the meaning of, "for him who causes to inherit" (Y.S. 629)

The word n'pilot by itself means two inheritances:

Because David inherited kingship both in this world and in the world to come. Therefore, because of these two portions David composed "upon n'pilot". (Y.S. 629)

The term is also interpreted in the light of the phrase mimataneh nahali-el (Num. 21:19).

The children of Israel took possession - nahalu - of The Holy One Blessed Be He as their God, and he took possession of them as his people.

The children of Israel were worthy of having the Torah given to them.

Therefore David wrote a Psalm about the two possessions (Y.S. Ps. 5)

The midrash also sees the word as a reference to the Temple in Jerusalem.

Just as one descends into a stream - nahal - unclean and comes out clean, likewise with the Temple, one enters with sins and comes out without sins (Y.S. Ps. 5)

In a further explanation of the word n'hilot, the Yalkut interprets it to mean grievous wound, nah'lah, as in the verse, "Woe is me for my hurt! my wound is grievous". (Jer. 10:19) (Y.S. Ps. 5)

The term ha n'hilot, according to the Yalkut, is also interpreted according to the numerical value of the letters in the word:

Heh equals 5 and refers to the 5 Books of Moses.
Mem equals 50 and refers to the 50 days between Passover and The Feast of Weeks.
Het equals 8 and refers to the 8 days to circumcision.
Yod equals 10 and refers to the 10 commandments.
Lamed equals 30 and refers to the 30 righteous men whom the world is never without. These men were as righteous as Abraham. In the verse referring to Abraham, "so shall thy seed be (Gen. 15:5)" the form of the verb "to be" has the numerical value of 30. (Y.S. 629)

Sh'minit: Scholars are of the opinion that the use of this word denotes that the musical setting of the piece was to be an octave lower, 16 or, on the lower octave.

The Midrash offers a variety of interpretations of the word only one of which has anything to do with music.

The Sh'minit is thought to be an eight string instrument. The ordinary instrument had seven strings. When the Messiah will come, they will use eight string instruments. (Y.S. 634)

When David entered the bath house and saw himself naked he said, 'woe is me that I stand naked without any precepts about me.'

When he reminded himself about his circumcision, his mind was set at ease and when he came out, he sang a hymn of praise concerning it. Therefore al ha sh'minit means on the eighth - concerning the precept of circumcision which is to be observed on the eighth day. (Y.S. 633)

The term refers to the four dispersions of Israel under the eight kingdoms, Babylonia, Chaldea, Media, Persia, Greece, Macedon, Ishmael, and Edom (Rome). (Y.S. 634)

Al hagittit: There is a difference of opinion as to the exact meaning

of the term as used in the superscription of the Psalm.
Kirkpatrick states that it may have reference to a Gittite instrument,
such as the harp which David brought from Gath, or it may refer to a
particular Gittite melody.
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Kirkpatrick feels that the true reading may be preserved by the
Septuagint which translates the phrase as 'over the winepress',
indicating that psalms with such superscriptions were sung at the end
of the vintage.
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The Midrash uses the latter interpretation in which gittit means
winepress.

For songs were not sung at harvest season nor at grape
gathering season, nor at the time of the olive harvest,
only at the season of treading on the winepress. (Y.S. 639)

All saw the winepress as a symbol of redemption:
Joel: "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe;
Come, tread ye, for the winepress is full (Joel 4:13)"
Isaiah: "In that day sing ye of her: 'A vineyard of
foaming wine!' (Isaiah 27:2)"
Asaph: "For the Leader, at the treading of the winepress,
A psalm of Asaph (Ps. 81:1)"
David: "For the leader at the treading of the winepress,
a psalm of David (Ps. 8:1)" (Y.S. 639)

Al mut labben: This term seems to present particular difficulty
to the scholars. The Septuagint reads the two words al mut as one
word almot, which means secrets, and translates the term as "con-
cerning the secrets of the son". Kirkpatrick offers the possible
meaning of, "dis for the son".
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The rabbis of the midrash also indicated a number of different
readings for the phrase. One suggestion was that instead of reading
al mut labben, the phrase was to be read olam natan b' libben as in

"He has set the world in their heart. (Eccl. 3:11)" (Y.S. 643)

Another meaning of the phrase was that he has set in their heart the fear of the angel of death. (Y.S. 643)

Al mut labben is also interpreted to mean concealed from the heart. (Y.S. 643)

The Holy One Blessed Be He made irregular the rewards for mitzvot in this world in order that Israel should observe them completely. When the Holy One Blessed Be He will give the rewards He will give a reward of faith and a reward of observance. Therefore David recited this Psalm, because God hid the reward for the mitzvot in order that the whole Torah should endure. (Y.S. 643)

The phrase al mut labben can also be translated as, "concerning the death of the son." In this case David's son whom he had with Bath Sheva is meant.

As long as David's son was alive, David knew that God's heart was set against him. When the son died, David knew that God's heart was not set against him (Y.S. 643)

Concerning the death of the son, that you decree on the son, In this case the son is Israel which is referred to as, "Israel, my son, my first born (Ex 4:22)." (Y.S. 643)

A variant reading suggested by the Yalkut is al ha-alamut—
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from the word elem meaning secret or forgetfulness. The word is thus interpreted as concerning the sins that a son commits unwittingly and atones for on the Day of Atonement (Y.S. 643).

Ayelet hashahar: This term is found particularly in the superscription to Psalm 22. According to Kirkpatrick the term has
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reference to the "hind of the morning." The dictionary offers several meanings for the word hind. One meaning is that section which is situated at the back. Another meaning is a female deer.

The interpretations of the Yalkut follow these definitions.

For him who leaps like a hind and gives light to the world at the time of darkness.

When does He give light? At night? Even though it is night there is the light of the moon, the stars, and the planets. When is it really dark? At dawn, the moon sets, the stars go in, and the planets go. There is no darker hour than that. At that hour The Holy One Blessed Be He brings up the dawn out of the midst of the darkness and gives light to the world. (Y.S. 685)

Why is the prayer of the righteous compared to a hind? To tell you that just as in the case of the hind, as long as it grows, its antlers form additional branches each year; so it is with the righteous, the longer they abide in prayer, the more will their prayer be heard. (Yoma 29a) (Y.S. 685)

What are ayelet - They are the horns of a hind which branch off this way and that way; likewise the light of the dawn is scattered in all directions. (Yoma 29a) (Y.S. 685)

Rabbi Hiyya and Rabbi Simeon b. Halaftha were walking in the early morning in the valley of Arbel and they saw the dawn coming up. Rabbi Hiyya said, 'Even so shall the deliverance of Israel break forth. For it is written, "Though I sit in darkness, the Lord is a light unto me." First it gives a little light, then it begins to sparkle, after that it multiplies.

Thus it was with Mordecai -

At first he sat in the king's gate

And then - When the king saw Esther the queen

And then - Haman took the robe and the horse

And then - They hanged Haman

And then - You write concerning the Jews

After that for the Jews there was light and joy.

(Y.S. 685)

Rabbi Judah b. Rabbi Simon said, 'In a house that has snakes in it, if a hind's horn is brought in, and the house is fumigated with it, immediately the snakes flee. Thus, when Esther came in, Haman fled.'

Rabbi Eda said: 'Why was Esther compared to a hind? To tell you that just as a hind has a narrow womb and is as desirable to her mate at all times as the first time, so was Esther precious to King Ahasuerus at all times as the first time. (Yoma 29a)' (Y.S. 685)

Rabbi Josi said: 'Why was Esther compared to the dawn?
To tell you that just as the dawn is the end of the whole
night, so the story of Esther is the end of all miracles.
But what of Hanukkah? We refer only to those included in
Scripture' (Yoma 29a) (Y.S. 685)

Why is Esther compared to the dawn? To tell you that just
as the dawn rises and the stars go down, so Esther in the
house of Ahasuerus gave light and Haman and his sons went
down. (Y.S. 685)

CHAPTER II

THE APPLICATION OF VERSES IN THE PSALMS TO BIBLICAL PERSONALITIES AND EVENTS

The Midrash frequently applies particular verses in the various Psalms to Biblical personalities and events.

These interpretations were used as material for homilies and sermons on various occasions. Therefore references to Biblical events or personalities served to bring home to the listener the message of the homily or sermon.

Reference to Biblical personalities will also form part of other sections of the thesis, under the various areas of Midrashic thought that are discussed. In this section, however, particular attention is given to the relation of a particular verse or group of verses to specific individuals or occurrences.

The events surrounding the creation of the world receive some comment from the rabbis of the Midrash.

In the Biblical description of creation the words hine toy equals marvet (death), and the words hine toy m'ed are equated with the yetzer hara. The yetzer hara was termed good for without it man would not marry, nor have children and the world would not endure. (Ps. 9:1) (Y.S. 643)

When God created his world, he sought to show to the angels the praiseworthy works of the righteous. As it is written (Ps. 8:5) "What is man that Thou art mindful of him?" (Y.S. 641)

The Holy One Blessed Be He said to Israel, 'Before I created you the ministering angels used to praise Me and say, "Blessed be the Lord, God of Israel (Ps. 41:14)"'

Then, when Adam came, the angels asked, 'is this the one whom we are praising?' The Holy One Blessed Be He said 'no, he is a thief.' When Noah came they said, 'is this the one'. The Holy One Blessed Be He said 'no, he is a stranger.'

Isaac arose. They said, 'is this the one?' The Holy One Blessed Be He said, 'no, because he loved the one I hated.' When Jacob came they asked 'is this the one?' The Holy One Blessed Be He said, 'Yes'. Thus Scripture says, "Your name will no more be called Jacob, but Israel (Gen 35:10)" And all Israel will be called by his name. As it is written (Isa. 49:3) "Israel in whom I will be glorified". (Y.S. 741)

God created the first man with deliberation. First He created his food supply and then He created him. The angels said, "What is man that Thou art mindful of him (Ps. 8:5)". Why has this trouble been created. If so, God said to them, "Sheep and oxen, all of them (Ps. 8:8)" why were they created. Why were "the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea (Ps. 8:9)" created. A tower full of good things and no guests-what pleasure has its owner in having filled it. The latter said, "O Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth (Ps. 8:10)" do what pleases you. (Y.S. 641)

From the events concerned with creation we turn to the events involving the first human created-Adam.

There are four Psalms which one would have expected Adam to compose, but which David composed:

- 1) "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof" (Ps. 24:1) Why would one have expected Adam to compose this? Because the earth and the fulness thereof were created for him.
- 2) "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Ps. 19:2) Why would one have expected Adam to compose this? Because he saw them (the heavens) first.
- 3) "A Psalm, A song for the Sabbath Day" (Ps. 92) Because the Sabbath saved him from destruction.
- 4) "For the leader upon githiot" (Ps. 5:1) Since he, Adam, was the first inheritor of the world (Y.S. 630)

Verses from Psalm 1 are applied to the events that occurred in the Garden of Eden and in the lives of Adam and Eve.

The Psalm speaks of the first man. Adam said, 'I would be happy, had I not walked in the counsel of the serpent; nor stood in the way of sinners; I would be happy had I not stood in the way of the serpent; nor sat in the seat of the scornful; I would be happy had I not sat in the seat of the serpent and the scornful.

R. Joshua of Siknin said in the name of R. Levi:

The serpent spoke slander against his Creator. The serpent asked Eve, 'why will you not eat from this tree?' She said to him, 'God commanded us neither to eat from it nor to touch it.' What did the serpent do? He took Eve and pushed her against it and she did not die. The Holy One Blessed Be He had said only, 'thou shalt not eat', and Eve had added to the commandment. The serpent said, 'He ate from this tree and created the world. If you will eat from it, you will create worlds as He did, as it is written (Gen. 3:5) "Ye shall be like God." But every craftsman hates his rival craftsman. (Y.S. 613)

The next group refer to Noah and the generation of the flood.

"Thou destroyest them that speak falsehood (Ps. 5:7)" This refers to the generation of the flood. Them and their speech. (Y.S. 631)

The tree planted by streams of water (Ps. 1:3) is compared to Noah's ark. (Y.S. 614)

"Happy is the man (Ps. 1:1)" refers to Noah as it is written, " (Gen. 6:9) Noah was a righteous man, " "That hath not walked in the counsel of the wicked" (Ps. 1:1) the wicked of three generations: the generation of Enosh, the generation of the flood, and the generation of the dispersion of the races of man. (Y.S. 614)

"But his delight is in the law of the Lord (Ps. 1:2)" These are the seven commandments which Noah and his sons were commanded to keep. (Y.S. 614)

"O ye sons of men" (Ps. 4:3) refers to the sons of Noah of whom it is written, "and Noah the husbandman began" (Gen. 9:19). (Y.S. Ps. 4)

"Behold he travaileth with iniquity conceiveth mischief and bringeth forth falsehood." (Ps. 7:15) This verse is related to Noah and the Ark when Falsehood sought admittance but could not enter without a partner. (Y.S. 638)

"Falsehood" was one of the strange type of beings which sought shelter in the Ark with Noah, his family and the other animals. He was denied admission because he had no companion, and Noah was taking in the animals in pairs only. "Falsehood" went in search of a

partner and met "Misfortune" with whom he was admitted to the Ark. When they left the Ark, "Falsehood" noticed that whatever he gathered together disappeared at once, all of it going to Misfortune as her part of the bargain.

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In their treatment of the Patriarchs, the rabbis of the Midrash emphasized the lives of Abraham and Jacob.

And in whatsoever he doeth he shall prosper (Ps. 1:3)
This is applied to Abraham (Y.S. 617)

For Thou dost bless the righteous (Ps. 5:13)
When Abraham came on the scene God made him the father of all blessings. Prior to that God had blessed His world. (Y.S. 632)

Thou dost encompass him with favor as with a shield (Ps. 5:13)
God blessed Abraham in his old age. (Y.S. 632)

What is man that Thou art mindful of him (Ps. 8:5)
This refers to Abraham as it is written (Gen. 19:29)
"and God remembered Abraham." (Y.S. 641)

The Lord trieth the righteous (Ps. 11:5)
This refers to Abraham as it is written (Gen. 22:1)
"And God tested Abraham." (Y.S. 654)

He that walketh uprightly (Ps. 15:2)
This is Abraham as it is written (Gen. 17:1) "Walk before Me and be upright." (Y.S. 665)

Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord (Ps. 24:3)
This alludes to Abraham of whom it is written (Gen. 22:2)
Get thee into the land of Moriah...upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.
Who shall stand in His holy place (Ps. 24:3)
Abraham as it is written (Gen. 19:27) "And Abraham arose early in the morning to the place." (Y.S. 697)

Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken (Ps. 37:5)
This refers to Abraham. "For I have known him to the end that he may command his children and his household after him. (Gen. 18:19)" (Y.S. 731)

Happy is the man (Ps. 1:1)

This verse applies to Abraham as it is written (Gen. 20:7)
 "Now therefore restore the man's wife; for he is a prophet."
 (Y.S. 614)

Sarah, Abraham's wife, is also thought of favorably.

And the son of man that Thou thinkest of him (Ps. 8:5)
 This refers to Sarah, as it is written (Gen. 21:1)
 "And the Lord remembered Sarah." (Y.S. 641)

Isaac is also spoken of in terms of righteousness.

He that worketh righteousness (Ps. 15:2)
 This is Isaac who handed himself over for slaughter. (Y.S. 665)
 Nor his seed begging for bread (Ps. 37:25)
 This refers to Isaac, as it is written (Gen. 12:10)
 "And there was famine in the land." (Y.S. 731)

Along with Abraham, Jacob found particular favor in the
 interpretations in the Midrash.

You have made him but little lower than the angels (Ps. 8:6)
 This is Jacob, as it is written (Gen. 30:39) "and the
 flocks conceived at the sight of the rods;" this teaches
 that he (Jacob) could give them everything but the souls
 (the breath of life).
 And he strove with the angel and prevailed (Gen. 32:29)
 (Y.S. 641)

Let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad (Ps. 14:7)
 Of all the Patriarchs why does Jacob rejoice. When
 Israel sins, Jacob feels it as in the Cave of Mahpelah
 as it is written (Hos. 5:3) "For now, Ephraim, that
 thou hast committed harlotry, Israel is defiled."
 Thus when rejoicing comes, Jacob rejoices in it more than
 the other Patriarchs, (Y.S. 663)

When redemption and deliverance comes to Israel,
 Jacob will rejoice more than the other Patriarchs
 as it is written (Ps. 14:7) "Let Jacob rejoice, let
 Israel be glad."
 For Jacob is like a man who gives his daughter in
 marriage. Who rejoices? Is it not the father of
 the bride? Jacob is considered to be the father of
 the people Israel. (Y.S. 663)

And speaketh truth in his heart (Ps. 15:2)
 This too is Jacob, as it is written (Micah 7:20)
 "Thou givest the truth to Jacob." (Y.S. 665)

Rejoice

*See
Guz. Legend*

The descendants of Jacob were the forerunners of the tribes of Israel, of whom the following comment is made.

They are taken in the devices that they have imagined (Ps. 10:2) This refers to the tribes (sons of Jacob). God said to the sons of Jacob, 'You sold your brother in the midst of eating and drinking. So it shall be that your children will be sold in Shushan, the capital, in the midst of eating and drinking.' As it is written (Esther 3:15) "The king and Haman sat down to drink." (Y.S. 648)

The inhabitants of the city of Sodom were not held up as examples for others to follow. Lot, Abraham's nephew was associated with these people, though not voluntarily.

Through the pride of the wicked, the poor is hotly pursued (Ps. 10:2) This refers to Lot who was slaved with the people of Sodom. (Y.S. 648)

Esau finds little favor in the comments of the Midrash.

To requite them with Thy hand (Ps. 10:14) Thou didst cause Thy Divine Presence and Holy Spirit to rest upon Isaac and said to Esau, "Behold, of the fat places of the earth shall be thy dwelling place, and by the sword shalt thou live." (Gen. 27:39-40) (Y.S. 651)

Behold my affliction at the hands of those who hate me (Ps. 9:14). And I hated Esau. (Y.S. 643)

The life and personality of Moses lent itself readily to Midrashic comments. Moses is described particularly in his relationship with God. It is also stressed that since Moses there has been none like him among the Jewish people.

Fifty gates of understanding were created in the world, and all were given to Moses at Sinai except one. As it is written (Ps. 8:6) "And Thou hast made him but little lower than the angels." (Y.S. 641)

Joshua ben Levi said, 'When Moses ascended to heaven the ministering angels said before God, 'What business

has one born of woman amongst us?' God answered, 'He has come to receive the Torah.' They said to Him, 'That secret treasure which has been hidden by Thee for 974 generations you want to give to mortal man, "What is man that Thou art mindful of him" (Ps. 8:5)' (Y.S. 641)

Moses' striving for and emphasis on ethical behavior is pictured in this remark.

In whose eyes a vile person is despised (Ps. 15:4)
Moses despised the plunder of Egypt and busied himself with the bones of Joseph. (Y.S. 665)

Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord (Ps. 24:3)
This alludes to Moses of whom it is written (Ex. 19:3)
"Moses went up unto God"
Who shall stand in His holy place (Ps. 15:3)
This alludes to Moses of whom it is written that God said (Deut. 5:28) "Stand thou here by Me."
He that hath clean hands and a pure heart (Ps. 15:4)
This alludes to Moses who said (Num. 16:15) "I have not taken one ass from them." (Y.S. 697)

The Yalkut also relates that God conquered the generation of the flood and the city of Sodom and was the loser for he conquered through destruction. Moses, on the other hand, also conquered and gained all those masses of people. (Y.S. Ps. 4)

Kohélet sought to be like Moses, but a voice from heaven went forth and said to him, (Eccl. 12:10)
"It is written uprightly, even words of truth",
"there arose not a prophet again in Israel like Moses."
(Deut. 34:10) (Y.S. 642)

Lord, Thou hast heard the desires of the humble (Ps. 10:17)
This refers to Moses who was called humble. (Y.S. 652)

In the interpretation of Psalm 8 we note various verses used to describe some significant detail in the lives of several well known Biblical personalities.

Thou hast made him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands (Ps. 8:7)
This is Joshua who said, (Joshua 10:12) "Sun, stand

thou still upon Gibeon;" (Y.S. 641)

Yea, and the beasts of the field (Ps. 8:8)
This refers to Samson. R. Hannina bar Pappa said,
'He showed them Samson capturing 300 foxes.'
(Y.S. 641)

Sheep and oxen, all of them (Ps. 8:8)
This refers to Solomon. As it is written (I Kings 3:63),
"And Solomon offered for the sacrifice of peace-
offerings which he offered unto the Lord, two and
twenty thousand oxen, and a hundred and twenty
thousand sheep," (Y.S. 641)

Yea, and the beasts of the field (Ps. 8:8)
God showed them Daniel descending into a pit of lions,
sitting on their necks, and was not ejected, (Y.S. 641)

The fowl of the air (Ps. 8:9)
This refers to Elijah who goes around the whole world
like a bird and it is written, (I Kings 17:6) "And
the ravens brought him bread and flesh," (Y.S. 641)
And the fish of the sea (Ps. 8:9)
This is a reference to Jonah as it is written, (Jonah 2:1)
"And Jonah was in the belly of the fish," (Y.S. 641)

Not all of the Biblical personalities chosen by the rabbis
were those who led virtuous lives or whose actions had in
some measure been meritorious. They also chose to comment on those
who were prototypes of evil and of the enemies of the people of
Israel.

Thou hatest all workers of iniquity (Ps. 5:6)
This is a reference to Doeg and Ahitophel whose
occupation was truth, but who turned it into
falsehood. Both were students of Torah. (Y.S. 630)

Thou destroyest them that speak falsehood (Ps. 5:7)
This is also a reference to Doeg and Ahitophel.
(Y.S. 631)

Let them fall by their own counsel (Ps. 5:11)
This is a reference to the people of the Tower of Babel
(Y.S. 632)

Hold them guilty, O God (Ps. 5:11)

This refers to Heliobudenezer and his destruction of the Temple. (Y.S. 632)

By the work of his hand the wicked is moved (Ps. 9:7)
This describes Pharaoh and Egypt. (Y.S. 643)

The nations are sunk down in the pit that they made
(Ps. 9:16)

This is Pharaoh.

In the net which they hid (Ps. 9:16)

This is a reference to Elson.

In their own foot taken (Ps. 9:16)

This refers to Semucheth. (Y.S. 643)

Thou hast destroyed the wicked (Ps. 9:6)

This is a reference to Iman for it is written, (Ps. 1:4)

"And they shall be called the border of wickedness."

(Y.S. 643)

Thou hast rebuked the nations (Ps. 9:6)

R. Levi said, "rebuked the nations" refers to

Amalek for it is written (Num. 24:20) "Amalek is the

first of the nations." (Y.S. 643)

Thou hast blotting out their name (Ps. 9:6)

For I will surely blot out the memory of Amalek. (Y.S. 643)

The enemy is come to an end (Ps. 9:7)

It is taught in the name of R. Eliezer that the

Holy One blessed Be His name an oath that of the

memory of Amalek there should not remain a child or

offspring so that they shall not say, "this tree is

Amalek's, this canal is Amalek's, this one is Amalek's,

as it is written, (Ps. 9:7) "Their memorial is destroyed."

(Y.S. 643)

God's name will not be complete and the throne will

not be complete until the seed of Amalek will be

destroyed from the world, as it is written, (Ec. 17:16)

"The hand of Amalek is against the throne of the Lord."

But when the memory of Amalek will perish, God's name

will be complete and His throne will be complete.

"Then O enemy, the waste places are come to an end

forever." (Ps. 9:7) What is written following

"But the Lord is enthroned forever, He has established

His throne for judgment." (Ps. 9:8) (Y.S. 643)

CHAPTER III

DAVID'S LIFE IN THE LIGHT OF THE MISHNAH

Tradition ascribes the composition of the Book of Psalms to King David. (Handwritten signature)

The Talmudic tractate which includes a section treating the question of authorship of the various Biblical Books states that David was the author of the Book of Psalms, and that he included in it the work of the elders Adam, Melchizedek, Abraham, Moses, Heman, Jeduthun, Asaph, and the three sons of Korah. Therefore the Book of Psalms was thought to be a collection of composite authorship.

Of the 150 Psalms in the Book of Psalms, seventy-three bear the superscription l'david. This superscription does not always indicate that the particular Psalm was written by David, but may be an indication that the Psalm is about David or written in the Davidic style.

Since David had such a close connection with the material contained in the Psalter, whether directly or indirectly, it seems only natural that individual verses of particular Psalms may furnish some insight into David's life, which we do not read in the other Biblical material which discusses David.

All songs and praises that David uttered were spoken in reference to himself according to R. Eliezer

R. Joshua said that they were spoken in reference to the Jewish community.

The sages said that those spoken in the singular refer to himself; those spoken in the plural refer to the community. (Y.S. 625)

The following selections furnish some insight into David's feelings about events in his personal life.

The first reference indicates that David wonders about his own reputation. Why is he not called by his own name, but called by the name of his father.

How long shall my glory be put to shame (Ps. 4:3)
How long will you strive after my glory in vain
and call me son of Jesse? (Y.S. Ps. 4)

Again the question of his background seems to disturb David.

Tremble, and sin not (Ps. 4:5)
David speaks to Israel, 'How long will you stir up trouble by saying David is impure, being a descendant of Ruth the Moabite.' (Y.S. Ps. 4)

David also fulfilled his role as a husband.

I am weary with my groaning, Every night I make my bed to swim. I melt away my couch with tears. (Ps. 6:7)
Even when he was ill, David fulfilled the eighteen conjugal rights. (Y.S. 635)

David faced opposition both from enemies from without and from those who were close to him.

There is none to deliver (Ps. 7:3)
There was no one among Saul's hosts who would plead for David. (Y.S. 637)

Reference is also made to Doeg and Ahitophel each of whom played a part in David's career. Doeg was a close friend of Saul. He spent his energy creating animosity between David and Saul for he harbored feelings of jealousy against David.

Ahitophel held a prominent position in David's court.

He served as David's counselor. Relations between the two men were somewhat strained. Ahitophel had supported Absalom in his rebellion. He had also been by passed when David assigned positions within his court.

26

These events gave rise to the following comments concerning

Doeg and Ahitophel.

David says, "Lest he tear my soul like a lion" (Ps. 7:3) refers to Doeg and Ahitophel who sit over me to tear me." (Y.S. 637)

The man of blood and deceit (Ps. 5:7)
Ahitophel permitted incest and blood when he counseled Absalom to "go into thy father's concubines (2 Sam. 16:21)" (Y.S. 631)

Doeg permitted incest. He annulled David's citizen rights and declared him an outlaw and as one dead, so that his blood was permitted and his wife was permitted. (Y.S. 631)

David's feelings as he faced his various enemies are described as follows.

Hear the right, O Lord (Ps. 17:1)
At the time when David said to Goliath, "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a javelin; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts." (1 Sam. 17:45) (Y.S. Ps. 17)

Attend my cry (Ps. 17:1)
When he fled from Saul in the cave
Give ear unto my prayer (Ps. 17:1)
In the barricade when he was afraid of Abner (Y.S. Ps. 17)

Thou hast put all things under his feet (Ps. 8:7)
This refers to David, all of whose enemies fell as it is written, (2 Sam. 22:43) "and I did beat them small as the dust of the earth." (Y.S. 641)

Although David did not lead a most virtuous life, the rabbis

of the Midrash expressed their feelings about him by showing his close contact with God.

They pointed out that David prayed even at times when he did not feel strong enough. They demonstrated that David's prayers did have merit and value.

David said to The Holy One Blessed Be He, 'When I have strength enough to stand up before Thee in prayer and bring forth my words, "give ear (Ps. 5:2)"

But when I do not have strength, consider what is in my heart, "consider my meditation (Ps. 5:20)."
(Y.S. 630)

R. Elai b. Erehiah said, 'Had it not been for the prayer of David, all Israel would have been sellers of rubbish as it is written, (Ps. 9:21) "Set terror over them, O Lord. Let the nations know they are but men." (They are Israel and the prayer is that God will bestow upon them worldly goods which will secure for them the esteem of the nations.) (Y.S. 643) /

David was Israel's shepherd, as it is written, (1 Chron. 1:2)

"Thou shalt shepherd My people Israel."

And who was David's shepherd? God. As it is written, (Ps. 23:1)

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." (Y.S. 690)

The consequences of a person's actions are shown in these interchanges between David and God.

Who shall sojourn in Thy Tabernacle (Ps. 15:1)

A man from the country came to the city and saw them selling a variety of cakes and he asked, 'Who can get his fill of these?' His friends said to him, 'Whoever has the coins.'

Thus David said to The Holy One Blessed Be He, 'Who shall sojourn in Thy Tabernacle? (Ps. 15:1) The Holy One Blessed Be He replied, 'He who obeys the commandments, walks upright and works righteousness.' (Y.S. 664)

Thou makest me to know the path of life (Ps. 16:11)

R. Yudan said, 'David said before The Holy One Blessed Be He, 'Thou makest me to know the path of life (Ps. 16:11)"

The Holy One Blessed Be He replied, 'Desirest thou life?'
 'Look to fear, for as it is written (Prov. 10:26) "The fear of the Lord prolongeth days."
 The Holy One Blessed Be He said, "Look to affliction for as it is written, "Reproofs of affliction are the way of life." (Prov. 6:23)' (Y.S. 670)

Why did David say in this Psalm "servant of the Lord" (Ps. 18)

To teach you that everyone who repents from a sin that is in his hand, The Holy One Blessed Be He adds to him and calls him an endearing name. Come and see the case of the sons of Korah-as long as they did not repent they were not called Sheshanim. After they repented they were called Sheshanim, as it is written, (Ps. 45:1) "For the Leader; upon Sheshanim, for the sons of Korah." Before they repented they were not called beloved, as it is written, (Ps. 45:1) "For the sons of Korah, maskil; a song of loves." So it was with David. Before he repented he was not called servant. When he repented, he was called "servant of the Lord (Ps. 18:1)" (Y.S. Ps. 18)

David said to The Holy One Blessed Be He, 'No one but Thee can pardon my sins; therefore
 "Let my judgment come forth from Thy Presence.
 (Ps. 17:2)" (Y.S. Ps. 17)

Our Rabbis taught; A king cannot sit in judgment nor can they judge him. R. Johanan said, 'David said, 'Master of the Universe, Thou art a king and I am a king. It is proper for a king to judge a king.' (Y.S. Ps. 17)

David said before The Holy One Blessed Be He, "Keep me as the apple of the eye." (Ps. 17:8)
 The Holy One Blessed Be He said to him, "Keep My commandments and live." (Prov. 4:4)
 R. Hiyah said that this can be compared to the story of two men each of whom had a vineyard. One lived in the Galil and his vineyard was in Judah, the other lived in Judah and his vineyard was in the Galil. Once they met each other and one said to his friend, 'Guard my vineyard in the Galil and I will guard your vineyard in Judah. If you neglect my vineyard I will neglect your vineyard.'
 Thus said The Holy One Blessed Be He, 'If you keep my laws (Torah), I will keep you, as it is written, (Deut. 11:22)

"If you will diligently keep all this commandment."
If you keep them, you will be kept. (Y.S. 671)

David also felt that the Psalms would play an important
role in keeping his memory alive after his death.

David's conception of life after death.
People are to read him and mention him in the
synagogues and schools as if he were alive. (Y.S. 613)

CHAPTER IV

THE CONCEPT OF GOD

Within the rabbinic tradition there has never been any doubt or question as to the existence of God. He revealed himself through Scripture.

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Jewish monotheism was reached through the belief that God's desire for righteousness is supreme in the history of the world.

28

These ideas were carried forth in the various examples cited from the Talmud, which put into concrete terms some of the views about God,

He that walketh uprightly (Ps. 15:2)

This refers to The Holy One Blessed Be He as it is written, (Deut. 32:2) "The Rock whose work is upright." Worketh righteousness (Ps. 15:2)

This also refers to The Holy One Blessed Be He as it is written, (Ps. 11:7) "The Lord is righteous, He loveth righteousness."

And speaketh truth in his heart (Ps. 15:2)

This too is The Holy One Blessed Be He as it is written (Gen. 10:10) "But the Lord God is the God of Truth." (Y.S. 665)

God does not forsake those that seek after him, no matter what their station in life may be.

And they that know Thy name will put their trust Thee (Ps. 9:11) since Thou hast not forsaken those that seek Thee. (Y.S. 643)

What is meant by He hath not forgotten the cry of the humble (Ps. 9:13)?

He does not forget the blood of Israel shed at the hand of the nations of the world and He does not forget the blood of the righteous who were killed during the days

of persecution like R. Akiba and his friends Ben Azzah,
R. Judah the Baker.

And in the future The Holy One Blessed Be He will seek
requital for the blood of R. Judah the Baker and of
Ben Kufya.

For once it was decreed that R. Judah the Baker be put
to death. Ben Kufya appointed himself judge and when
he came to be sentenced, he decreed that someone else
be slain in his stead and they severed the body.
Wicked tongues said that he had not been killed and it
was decreed that both be killed and both were killed.
And The Holy One Blessed Be He will seek requital
for their blood as it is written (Ps. 9:13), "For
He that avengeth blood hath remembered them;" (Y.S. 643)

Thou hast been the help of the fatherless (Ps. 10:14)
On behalf of Romulus and Remus, at the death of their
mother, God summoned a she-wolf to give suck to them,
and it gave suck to them until they grew up and built
two great huts in Rome. (Y.S. 652)

For the Lord is righteous, He loveth righteousness (Ps. 11:7)
No man loves his fellow craftsman. A sage however
loves his fellow sage, as for example R. Hiyya loved
R. Hoshaya.

The Holy One Blessed Be He also loves his fellow
craftsman as indicated by the verse, "For the Lord
is righteous, He loveth righteousness, (Ps. 11:7)
(Y.S. 655)

With God's blessings also comes protection.

When God blesses, He also protects like a shield those
whom He blesses. (Y.S. 632)

Man gives a gift to his friend. If it is stolen the
gift is of no avail.

God gives a gift and also protects it. (Y.S. 632)

God's earthly dwelling place was the Tabernacle and later
on the Temple. Yet, His presence is everywhere. The whole universe
is his domain.

The Lord is in His holy temple
The Lord, His throne is in heaven (Ps. 11:4)
R. Yannai said: 'A mortal king who enters his reception
room does not know what happens in the bed room.
This is not the case with The Holy One Blessed Be He.

He looks and sees all the inhabitants of the world,
but no eye can see Him. (Y.S. 653)

God does not desire to convict or condemn any human being.

God's inclination in judgment is always directed in man's favor.

God's attribute of justice is closely associated with His
30
attribute of mercy.

He will judge the world in righteousness (Ps. 9:9)
The Holy One Blessed Be He does not desire the
destruction of the wicked, for which artisan (creator) *question*
seeks the destruction of his casks. Therefore he *in code*
judges the nations of the world when they sleep from
the seas at night, in order that they may remain
in the world. (Y.S. 643)

Even though God rebukes those whom He loves, He is
asked not to rebuke them in anger. (Y.S. 635)

God's anger endures but a moment, and no creature is
able to determine it except the wicked Balaam. (Y.S. 638) *explanation*

The people of Israel always enjoyed special relationship with
God. This relationship was and is an intimate, reciprocal one.
God suffers with them in their suffering and is with them in
their distress. Israel is often chastised for their sins more
than the other nations of the world. This is taken as a sign
of the great love that the Almighty has for His people. It is
only through suffering that the greatest gifts from heaven come
31
to Israel.

When villainess is exalted among the sons of men (Ps. 12:9)
For the Lord will exalt the vineyard-k'rum-that is
despised in the world-that is Israel. As it is
written, (Isa. 5:7) "For the vineyard of the Lord of
Hosts is the house of Israel." (Y.S. 659) *explanation*

Beloved is Israel for The Holy One Blessed Be He
surrounded them with precepts (mitzvot): Tefillin
on head and arm, sizit on garments, and mezuzot

on the doorposts. (Y.S. 633)

When Israel performs the will of God, their work is done by others.

What would become of Torah, if man has to plow and sow, or in general have a worldly occupation? (Y.S. 615)

That I may tell of all Thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion,

That I may rejoice in Thy salvation (Ps. 9:15)

R. Abbahu said that this is one of the five verses in which the salvation of Israel is also the salvation of God. (Y.S. 643) *note*

Arise O Lord; O God, lift up Thy hand (Ps. 10:11)

R. Yudan said in the name of R. Judah that Israel said to The Holy One Blessed Be He, 'Troubles reach our lives like a man drowning in the water and he says to his friend, 'stretch out your hand and lift me up.' (Y.S. 650)

He will judge the world in righteousness (Ps. 9:9)
When He judges Israel, He judges them during the day, for when they sleep they are neglecting the commandments. As soon as he awakens from his sleep, he goes to the synagogue and recites the Shema, and prays, hears the Torah and hears the elders. (Y.S. 643)

The Lord is King forever and ever (Ps. 10:16)

When? When the nations are perished from His land (Ps. 10:16) *have*
(Y.S. 652)

But the Lord is enthroned forever (Ps. 9:8)

In that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord. (Y.S. 643)

The Divine Presence, shekhinah, according to the rabbis is only present for Israel and not the other nations of the world.

When the congregation of peoples surrounds you,
You cause your shekhinah to be restricted in the heavens.
(Y.S. 637)

The shekhinah rests on man not in levity, but in rejoicing connected with a religious act. (Y.S. 625)

Yet God shows no mercy to those who are enemies of his people and those who remain idol worshippers.

Arise O Lord, let not man prevail (Ps. 9:20)
 Let them not prevail because of their royal power,
 nor because of their security.
 Let the nations be judged in Thy sight (Ps. 9:20)
 Be their opposition. (Y.S. 643)

The Lord hath made Himself known, He hath executed
 judgment (Ps. 9:17)
 By the judgment He made in Egypt. As it is written,
 (Ex. 14:4) "And the Egyptians shall know that I am
 the Lord." (Y.S. 643)
 God is asked to turn His anger and wrath upon the
 nations that know Him not rather than upon Israel.
 (Y.S. 635)

The word of God can be trusted and endures as opposed to
 the word of man which is finite.

The words of the Lord are pure words (Ps. 12:7)
 And the words of mortals are not pure words.
 R. Tanhūm b. R. Hannilai said, 'It is the way of
 the world that if a mortal king enters a province
 and all the citizens of the province praise him,
 if their praise is pleasing to him he tells them,
 'Tomorrow I shall build for you public baths and
 bath-houses and a canal.' Then he falls asleep
 and does not rise. Where then is he and where
 are his words?
 The Holy One Blessed Be He is not so, The Lord
 is the true God, He is the living God. (Y.S. 658)

Man can prevail upon the Lord to change His verdicts.

God is happy when He is subdued. While man worries
 and is unhappy. (Y.S. Ps. 4)

CHAPTER V

THE WICKED AND THE RIGHTEOUS

It was in the spirit of the rabbinic tradition to praise the conduct of righteous, godly men, to demonstrate their worth and to endeavor in every possible way to justify the actions of the good. The Rabbis used exaggeration in the praise of these good deeds of the righteous.³²

In making reference to the actions of the wicked, they increase the scope of their guilt, adding to the wicked person other acts of misconduct and wrong-doing.³³

The Rabbis also felt very strongly that man is capable of making the choice between right and wrong. This is seen in the statement found in the Ethics of the Fathers where Rabbi Akiba states: "Everything is foreseen (by God), and freedom of choice is given (to man), and the world is judged with goodness, and all depends on the preponderance of good or ill doing."³⁴

The Rabbis felt keenly that the commandments of the Lord were a shield and a protection against sin.

The act of refraining from committing a sin is like doing a mitzvah. (Y.S. 611)

Whoever has the Tefillin on his head and arm, the zitait on his garment, and the mezuzah on his doorpost is in absolute security against sinning. (Y.S. 633)

The righteous person is happy when he can carry out the law and exalt God in the world. (Y.S. 625)

God is seen as destroying the wicked because of the righteous people. The righteous and the wicked cannot co-exist. (Y.S. 620)

On the other hand the thought is also expressed that the righteous and the wicked, the evil and the good balance each other in the world. (Y.S. 637)

Within each person there exist both a good impulse and an evil one. These two are often in conflict with one another.

I will give thanks unto the Lord with my whole heart (Ps. 9:2)
With the yezer tov and the yezer hara that there should be no struggle within my heart. (Y.S. 643)

Always oppose the good impulse to the evil impulse. If you conquer, well and good; if not- busy yourself with Torah-commune with your own heart (Ps. 4:5)
read the Shema-upon your bed (Ps. 4:5)
reflect on the day of death-and be still (Ps. 4:5)
(Y.S. Ps. 4)

Happy is he that considereth the poor (Ps. 41:2)
There was a little city and few men within it (Eccl. 9:14)
This little city is man. Few men within it are the organs of his body. A great king came against it- this is the Evil Inclination. And built great bulwarks against it. And there was in it a poor, wise man- this is the Good Inclination.
And why is the Good Inclination called a poor man? David said, 'because one does not listen to it. Good for me, for I listen to it. Therefore he said, 'Happy is he that considereth the poor.' (Y.S. 740)

The most unpardonable sin is the deliberate and wilful rejection of God's authority, the denial by the offender by word or action of God's rule over him.

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And the covetous vaunteth himself though he contemn the Lord. (Ps. 10:3)
R. Eliezer b. Jacob said, 'One who steals a measure of

wheat and grinds it and bakes it and sets the priest's share of the dough aside, if he then come to break the bread (bless it), this is not a blessing, but an insult. Of him Scripture states this verse. (Y.S. 648)

For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire (Ps. 10:3) The wicked do not profane except when they carry out their desires. Thus Nebuchadnezzar said, 'Of a truth it is that your God is the God of gods.' (Dan. 2:47) (Y.S. 648)

Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God, and say in his heart: 'Thou wilt not require?' (Ps. 10:13) There is no judgment and there is no judge. The Holy One Blessed Be He has left his world and has gone. (Y.S. 651)

The worst consequence of sin is its growing power over the sinner. It seems that trivial sins may lead to great ones.

He croucheth, he boweth down, and the helpless fall into his mighty claws. (Ps. 10:10) R. Hanina bar Pappa said, 'The wicked man does not fall until the measure of his wickedness is full. As it is said, "The shattering of the wicked shall be their fullness (Job 34:26)", and, "in the fullness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits (Job 20:22)"' (Y.S. 650)

The wicked are compared to dogs at a banquet of a king. They are ever greedy and never satisfied. (Y.S. 628)

One category of wrongs which received particular emphasis in Jewish tradition is the category of talebearing. Specific prohibitions against this type of behavior are to be found in the Holiness Code in the 19th chapter of the Book of Leviticus. Such offenses were considered even more serious if they were carried out with malicious intent to injure a man's reputation or to expose him to contempt or derision. This was referred to as lashon hara.

'the evil tongues'.

We find that in the time of Saul, the evil tongue killed four:
Doeg who spoke it, Saul who heeded it, Nob, the city of priests, of whom it was spoken, Abner ben Ner because he had the opportunity to protest and did not protest. (Y.S. Ps. 12)
R. Jehanan said in the name of R. Jose b. Zabra, 'Anyone who speaks evil talk, it is as if he denies the principles of religion. As it is written, (Ps. 12:5) "Our lips are with us: who is lord over us?"' (Y.S. Ps. 12)

The name Garden of Eden is given to the abode of blessed souls. It is the celestial counterpart of the earthly paradise in which Adam and Eve were placed. It is also applied to the final state of the righteous.

The miserable abode of the souls of the wicked is known as Gehinnom.

The wicked walk on every side (Ps. 12:9)
According to R. Judah the righteous walk around the wicked. At the time when the righteous come out of the Garden of Eden and see the wicked punished in Gehinnom, their souls will rejoice over them. Of this it is written, (Isa. 66:24) "They shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of men that have rebelled against me." At that time the righteous will give praise for the afflictions He brought upon them in this world as it is written, (Isa. 12:1) "I will give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, for Thou wast angry with me; Thine anger is turned away and Thou comfortest me." (Y.S. 659)

The wicked walk on every side (Ps. 12:9)
The verse should be read to mean that the wicked will walk around the righteous.
When the wicked come out of Gehinnom and see the righteous at ease in the Garden of Eden, their souls will wither as it is written, (Ps. 112:9) "The wicked shall see and be angered." (Y.S. 659)

The wicked shall return to the netherworld (Ps. 9:18)
None of the nations have a share in the world to come

according to R. Eliezer.

R. Joshua said that the addition of the words, 'the nations that forget God' (Ps. 9:18), means that only the wicked nations do not have a share in the world to come. (Y.S. 643)

The wicked shall have seven habitations in Gehenna: netherworld, destruction, Gehinnom, realm of silence, shadow of death, underworld, realm of forgetfulness. (Y.S. 655)

Judges are reminded to take their example from God the Supreme Judge of all creatures.

R. Shmuel b. Nahmani said in the name of R. Jonathan, 'Every judge who delivers a judgment in perfect truth causes the Divine Presence to dwell in Israel for it is written, (Ps. 82:1) "God standeth in the congregation of God." (Y.S. Ps. 12)

He will judge the world in righteousness (Ps. 9:9) At the time when The Holy One Blessed Be He judges the nations of the world, He will remind them of the merit of the righteous among them. (Y.S. 643)

The Lord trieth the righteous (Ps. 11:5) When a potter examines the product of his kiln, he does not examine defective vessels, because he cannot give them a single blow without breaking them; he examines perfect vessels, for even if he gives them several blows, they do not break. Likewise The Holy One Blessed Be He does not examine the wicked who are not able to stand. Whom does He examine-the righteous. (Y.S. 654)

R. Jose b. R. Hanina said, 'When a flax worker knows that his flax is of good quality, the more he beats it the more it improves and the more it glistens; but if it is of inferior quality, he cannot give it one knock without it splitting. Similarly the Lord does not test the wicked but only the righteous as it is written, (Ps. 11:5) "The Lord trieth the righteous." (Y.S. 654)

A righteous, God-fearing person may question God's actions, because it is said that he speaks in behalf of the people of Israel. (Y.S. Ps. 2)

The desires of the wicked come to naught, but not so the desires of Israel. (Y.S. Ps. 2)

The righteous in the world are not forgotten.

R. Abahu taught in the name of R. Elazar that every righteous person whom the idol worshippers killed, The Holy One Blessed Be He inscribes on His royal robe. And The Holy One Blessed Be He will say to them why did you kill so and so, they will claim ignorance and say to The Holy One Blessed Be He that we did not kill them. The Holy One Blessed Be He brings forth His royal robe and will judge them and will give the verdict for He has not forgotten the cry of the humble (Ps. 9:13). (Y.S. 643)

The consequences of man's evil extend far beyond his immediate generation.

The Holy One Blessed Be He said to the sons of Jacob, 'You sold Joseph as a slave. By your lives, every year you will read, "Slaves we were unto Pharaoh in Egypt (Deut. 26:5)"'

The problem of why the wicked prosper has concerned men through the ages.

What profit is it if we slay our brother (Gen. 37:26) Thus Israel said before the Lord, 'Master of the Universe, There was one house which was pleasant for Thee. Enemies rose up and destroyed it and insulted Thy name yet they still remain and it is destroyed. There were righteous men from whom Thou hadst pleasure. The wicked rose and slew them and insulted Thy name, yet they remain.' (Y.S. 648)

R. Isaac said, 'If you see a wicked man upon whom fortune is smiling, do not attack him, as it is written, (Ps. 10:5) "His ways prosper at all times;" And more than that, he is victorious in the court of law, as it is written, (Ps. 10:5) "Thy judgments are far above out of his sight;" And still more than that, he sees the discomfiture of his enemies, as it is written, (Ps. 10:5) "As for all his adversaries, he puffeth at them." (Y.S. 649)

If you see the wicked prosper, do not consider it evil. It is for the purpose of repentance. (Y.S. 628)

CHAPTER VI

PRAYER

The public and private prayers of the Jewish people show not only those ideals which they value most highly, but also their beliefs concerning the character of God and His relation to them, and their feelings toward Him.

39

Prayer is termed the worship of God in the heart. It has taken the place of the Temple sacrifices in Jewish history. So long as the Temple stood sacrifices were offered and in this manner atonement was made. Now these material offerings have been replaced by prayer.

40

Great stress is placed in Jewish tradition on the proper direction of thoughts and desires during the time of prayer.

41

The Talkut points this out in its comment on the verse, "Serve the Lord With Fear (Ps. 2:11) "wherein is expressed the thought that one's attitude during prayer should be an expression of happiness for the opportunity to pray; but at the same time one should not take the opportunity nonchalantly. (Y.S. 623)

From lips without deceit (Ps. 17:1). We do not stand to pray as a joke, or in a lightheaded manner, or with idle words, but through words of Torah and the commandments and good deeds. (Y.S. 643)

Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble; Thou wilt direct their heart, Thou wilt cause Thine ear to attend (Ps. 10:17).

R. Joshua b. Levi said, 'Whenever a man's lips are fluent in prayer, let him be assured that his prayer is heard, for it is said (Isa. 57:19) "I create fluent speech of lips."

R. Joshua b. Nahman said, 'When one prepares his heart for prayer, let him be assured that his prayer is being heard, for it is said (Ps. 10:17), "Thou wilt cause Thine ear to attend."' (Y.S. 652)

Prayer may be said in any clean and proper place; but preferably in the synagogue. The Talmud states that God is found in the synagogue; When ten men are praying together, the ⁴¹Shikhinah is in their midst.

The midrash expands on this idea in the following selection:

God said, 'pray in the synagogue of your city; if you cannot go, pray upon your bed; if you cannot go, pray upon your bed; if you cannot, meditate in your heart.' That is what is meant by the verse (Ps. 4:5), "commune with your own heart upon your bed." (Y.S., Ps. 4)

The importance of praying as part of a congregation is stressed by the following parable.

R. Huna says, 'Whoever prays at the rear of a synagogue is called wicked as it is written, (Ps. 12:9a) "the wicked walk on every side."'

Abaye says, 'This only applies where he does not turn his face toward the congregation. There was once a man who prayed at the rear of a synagogue, Elijah the prophet passed by and appeared to him in the guise of an Arabian merchant. Elijah said to him: 'Are you standing with your back to your Master?' And he (Elijah) drew his sword and slew him.' (Y.S. 659)

The one who leads the congregation in prayers fulfills a most important duty and responsibility. He is likened to David who also prayed on behalf his people.

O my God, in Thee have I trusted (Ps. 25:2)

R. Pinchas said in the name of R. Alexandri: David spoke to the Holy One Blessed Be He saying, "Master of the Universe, when I stand up before Thee in prayer, let my prayer not be rejected, for the eyes of Israel are turned to me, and my eyes are turned to Thee, so that if Thou hearest my prayer, it will be as if Thou didst also hear their prayer."

Similarly, you find that during a fast, when the whole congregation is fasting, only he who conducts the service descends to read the prayers before the Ark, for the eyes of the congregation are turned on him, and his eyes are turned toward The Holy One Blessed Be He, so that God also hears their prayer. (Y.S. 702)

Certain verses of the Psalms have reference to particular occasions in Jewish history and the association of such events with prayer.

The following verses of Psalm 5, according to the Talkut, have reference to prayers which the children of Israel offered in exile.

R. Judah took these verses to be the prayers of Israel in exile in the four kingdoms; Give ear to my words, O Lord (Ps. 5:2), in Babylon; consider my meditation (Ps. 5:2), in Media; hearken unto the voice of my cry (Ps. 5:3), in Greece; and unto Thee do I pray (Ps. 5:3), in Rome. (Y.S. 630)

The point is that prayer sustains Israel in every exile

Psalm 17 bears the superscription "A Prayer of David."

This psalm is one of three Psalms in the Psalter to begin with those words.

The midrash carried the connection between the Psalm and prayer one step further by relating verses of the Psalm to particular sections of the liturgy.

Hear the right, O Lord (Ps. 17:1)
This refers to the recitation of the Shema (Hear, O Israel)
Attend unto my cry; (Ps. 17:1)
This is the chanting of the Torah
Give ear unto my prayer (Ps. 17:1)
This refers to the Amidah
From lips without deceit (Ps. 17:1)
This refers to the Musaf service

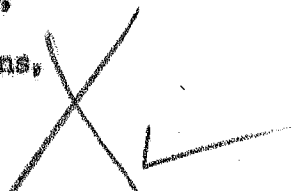
What is written following that: Let my judgment come forth from Thy presence; (Ps. 17:2)

The sounding of the Shofar takes place during the Musaf service.

R. Tahlipha said: Scripture says, "It is a day of blowing the horn unto you. (Num. 29:1) And ye shall prepare a burnt offering (Num. 29:2) Thus the blowing of the Shofar is associated with the Musaf service. (Y.S. Ps. 17)

Why did David utter the five phrases in this verse: Hear the right, O Lord, attend unto my cry; give ear unto my prayer from lips without deceit (Ps. 17:1) and after that say: Let my judgment come forth from Thy presence (Ps. 17:2)?

David said: 'Master of the Universe, if my judgment goes forth on the morning of the Day of Atonement, I will not be able to stand up, but after I have recited the Shema and uttered the four benedictions, (two preceding and two following the Shema) then let my judgment come forth from Thy presence (Ps. 17:2) (Y.S. Ps. 17)



A prayer of David (Ps. 17)

This is the prayer that man prays when he awakens from his sleep in praise of the reviver of the dead - Blessed art Thou, who revivest the dead. (Y.S. 643)

Prayer and its role in the life of the individual was also used as a means of distinguishing the righteous person from the wicked individual. This is brought out by the following comment on Psalm 37:21:

The wicked borroweth and payeth not; (Ps. 37:21)

This is a reference to idolaters who eat and do not offer a blessing.

But the righteous dealeth graciously, and giveth (Ps. 37:21)

This refers to Israel who eat and offer blessings. (Y.S. 730)

The close association between the Psalms and the liturgy is also indicated by the following passage.

R. Simeon bar Abba said: You find that from the beginning of the Psalter to this Psalm (Psalm 20) there are eighteen Psalms which correspond to the Eighteen Benedictions which a man prays every day.

And even as it is said to a man concluding the
Eighteen Benedictions, "May thy prayer be answered," 43
so it was said to David after he concluded eighteen
Psalms, "The Lord answer thee in the day of trouble
(Ps. 20:2)" (I.S. 679)

CHAPTER VII

THE OTHER NATIONS

The term 'other nations' is used here to include those nations who, throughout the history of Israel, stood in opposition to them, and took many of the generations into exile. Particular reference is made in the midrashic statements to this four *these* kingdoms, Babylon, Media, Greece, and Rome.

These kingdoms were responsible for the destruction of the Temple and for taking the Israelites into captivity.

The thought and hope is expressed that ultimately God will mete out His punishments upon those who seek to destroy His people. *are*

The other nations prosper while only observing seven mitzvot. Thus Israel's observance of the 613 mitzvot will surely bring an increase in their reward. (Y.S. 628)

Israel too, must carry out its responsibilities in keeping the covenant with God. Thus the midrash points out, in commenting on Psalm 3:3 that the nations of the world chide Israel for worshipping the Golden Calf shortly after they had heard the Ten Commandments. (Y.S. 625)

The other nations have ever tried to share in the rewards promised to Israel.

Many there are that say, 'O that we could see some good.' (Ps. 4:7)

The nations of the world (idol worshippers) want to share in the world to come with its benefits.

But the Jews have suffered affliction,

servitude and massacres and have given their
lives for the sanctification of God's name
(Y.S. Ps. 4)

The nations think that the good is theirs for the asking
without suffering.

How long shall my glory be put to shame (Ps. 4:3)
How long will you pursue Israel's glory
(Y.S. Ps. 4)

In that ye love vanity and seek after falsehood? (Ps. 4:3)
How long will you pursue vain things and say that
God has forgotten them (Israel) and forsaken them
and removed his shekhina from them (Y.S. Ps. 4)

The following verses refer particularly to one or more of the
four kingdoms who attacked Israel. In Psalm 8 when reference is
made to the grape harvest and winepress the midrash states that
the various types of harvest have reference to several of these
kingdoms.

Harvest refers to Babylon as in the verse,
"the daughter of Babylon is like a threshing
floor at the time when it is trodden (Jer. 51:33)"
Olive harvest refers to the Medes as it is written,
"And they hung Haman (Esther 7:10)".
The grape harvest refers to Greece as it is written,
"For I bend Judah for Me. I have filled the bow
with Ephraim (Zech. 9:13) (Y.S. 639)

Because of Thine adversaries (Ps. 8:3) alludes to
two kingdoms.
That thou mightest still the enemy and
the avenger (Ps. 8:3) alludes to two kingdoms.
Therefore this is a reference to the four
kingdoms who oppressed the Jews. (Y.S. 640)

Unto Thee the helpless committeth himself (Ps. 10:14).
The fourth kingdom (Rome) says to Israel: "Bring
your head tax." And Israel answers, "I have orphans
to feed." They (Rome) reply, "Have you ever heard it
said about me that I feed orphans? Go unto the God
of Jacob of whom it is written, 'a father of the
fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in His

holy habitation (Ps. 68:6)', that he feed the orphans and stand up for you." (Y.S. 651)

Under these various empires that succeeded one another in the dominion of their world, the Jews were made very much aware of the impotence of the small state of Judaea and its scattered sons over against the gigantic power of these vast empires. Rome was considered to be a power different from all its predecessors, mightier and more terrible than any of those that came before it.

Yet the Jews hoped for the defeat of their enemies and their own deliverance with God's help and assistance.

They stumble and perish at Thy presence (Ps. 9:4)
Israel said before the Lord, "Even if the only sin that they committed was that they entered Thy house and spoke irreverently against Thee, they shall stumble and perish. (Y.S. 643)

When mine enemies are turned back (Ps. 9:4) because of the shame that was ordained for them in the future. As Samuel said: "In the future (time to come) the nations will come and prostrate themselves before their gods, but they (their gods) have no power to save them. Afterwards they shall return to the Holy One Blessed Be He, to the Lord, but He will not answer them." (Y.S. 643)

Sing praises to the Lord, who dwelleth in Zion (Ps. 9:12). R. Yohanan said, "For what He has done in Zion. Since in the hour of this anger He did not spare His house, how much less will He be sparing when He comes to punish its destroyers

Although the enemies of Israel through the ages have disappeared physically from the world scene, remnants of their cultures still remain.

O thou enemy, the waste places are come to an end forever; (Ps. 9:7)
The enemies of Israel are come to an end, but their

waste places stand forever - that is Constantine
 built Constantinople, Philippus built Philippa,
 Antiochus built Antioch, Alexander built
 Alexandria, and Seleucus built Selucia.
 (Y.S. 643)

Caesaria and Rome also remain to this day. (Y.S. 643)

Israel remains precious to the Lord throughout the
 generations.

Shall not all the workers of iniquity know it,
 Who eat up My people as they eat bread,
 And call not upon the Lord? (Ps. 14:4)
 R. Samuel said the verse refers to the nations
 of the earth who destroyed the Temple. When the
 enemy entered the Temple they found lambs in the
 chamber of daily offerings, which they killed and
 devoured. They found the show bread arranged on
 the table and ate it.
 And call not upon the Lord (Ps. 14:4)
 Israel is holy to the Lord, the first fruit of
 his increase (Y.S. 662)

NOTES

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5. Ibid., vol. XII, p. 585
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7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. A. F. Kirkpatrick (ed.), The Book of Psalms (Cambridge: The University Press, 1957), p. xviii
10. Ibid., p. xix
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13. Kirkpatrick, op cit., p. xx
14. Ibid., p. xxi
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17. Ibid., p. xxv
18. Ibid., p. xxvi
19. Ibid., p. xxvi particularly note 3
20. Jastrow, op cit., vol. II, p. 1084

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29. Ibid., pp. 369-70
30. Ibid., p. 391
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32. Z. H. Chajes, The Students Guide Through the Talmud (New York: Philipp Feldheim, 1960) p. 162-163
33. Ibid., p. 164
34. G. F. Moore, Judaism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954) vol. I, p. 455 (footnote 7)
35. Ibid., p. 465
36. Ibid., p. 469
37. Ibid., vol. II, p. 149
38. Ibid., p. 391
39. Ibid., p. 212
40. Ibid., p. 218
41. Ibid., p. 223
42. Ibid., p. 222 note 2 which refers to Berachot 6a

43. S. Singer (trans.). The Authorized Daily Prayer Book
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