

Tehillim



Psalms, Chapter 5

(The following material is compiled predominantly from an anthology of Orthodox Jewish commentary, written and arranged by Rabbi Avroham Chaim Feuer from the *Artscroll Tanach Series Tehillim Volume 1*. Additional insights from a Nazarene Israelite perspective have been added by Jason Jordan. The translation of the TaNaK [Old Testament] used in this work is by Rabbi Avroham Chaim Feuer, Rabbi Nsson Scherman and Meir Zlotowitz.)

Introduction

In the previous Psalms, King David rebuked the masses who followed his son Absalom. He admonished them for adopting alien, gentile values and called them to repent. In this Psalm he describes the ideologies of the revolt, in particular Achitophel, his former advisor, whose crime surpassed the masses. Achitophel's sin exceeded that of imitating foreign ways, by taking the most authentic Torah concepts and grotesquely distorting and manipulating them to serve his own ends. Instead of studying Torah for the sake of pursuing pure truth and filling himself with love and awareness of Elohim, Achitophel began to learn it only for the sake of having an outward appearance of brilliance while inwardly elevating himself to power and glory. He studied with a motive to impress people and in so doing never accepted the Torah's authority or discipline. This conduct resembled another arch enemy of David, Doeg the Edomite, who was also a great scholar. Outwardly he had an appearance of excelling in Torah, but inwardly he hated David with a Passion.

Doeg the Edomite

Doeg was a chief herdsman of Saul, the former king of Israel. ***“Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before YHWH; and his name was Doeg the Edomite, the chiefest of the herdmen that belonged to Saul.” (1 Samuel 21:7)***

When King David fled from Saul, he went to the High Priest Ahimelech, who fed him and his men showbread (*1 Sam. 21:1-9*). Doeg witnessed the encounter and relayed it back to Saul. To receive food, King David deceived Ahimelech that he was on a secret mission from Saul. Doeg deliberately withheld this piece of information, sealing the fate of the High Priest and the whole priestly assembly. Thinking that they had all betrayed the king, Saul ordered them all to be put to death, but his own men refused to

carry out the order fearing YHWH. So Doeg stepped in and brutally killed Ahimelech and his entire priestly company. Saul subsequently attacked the city of Nob, the current home of the priesthood and their families, killing every man, woman and child.

King David later showed remorse for what he had done. *1 Samuel 22:22*; ***“And David said unto Abiathar, I knew it that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul: I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house.”***

Doeg died at the early age of thirty-four (Sanh. 69b). He was regarded as a great Torah scholar in his day, but he lacked inward piety. According to Sanhedrin 106b, YHWH was “anxious concerning his end and mourned for him.” (i.e., Elohim wanted him dead as soon as possible and wept over the severity of his judgment)

Doeg's unfortunate qualities were his malice, jealousy, and defamatory tongue. He praised David before Saul in order to provoke his jealousy, ascribing David with qualities that Saul lacked (Sanh. 93b). *1 Samuel 16:18*; ***“One of the servants answered, “I have seen a son of Jesse of Bethlehem who knows how to play the harp. He is a brave man and a warrior. He speaks well and is a fine-looking man. And YHWH is with him.”*** He carried a grudge against David, whose opinion prevailed over his own in determining the site for the Temple at Jerusalem (Zeb. 54b), and he had almost succeeded in proving that David, as a descendant of Ruth the Moabite, could not, according to Torah, belong to the congregation of Israel. He also declared David's marriage with Michal to be invalid, and persuaded Saul to marry her to another.

Doeg slew with his own hands the priests of Nob, after Abner and Amasa, Saul's lieutenants, had refused to do so. As it often happens with those who strive for something to which they are not entitled, he lost that which he possessed (Gen. R. xx.). YHWH sent the three "angels of destruction" to Doeg; the first caused him to forget his learning, the second burned his soul, and the third scattered the ashes (Sanh. 106b; differently, Yer. Sanh. x. 29a). According to some he was slain by his own pupils when they found that he had forgotten his learning; others maintain that he was slain by David when he informed him of the death of Saul and Jonathan.

Doeg is among those who have forfeited their portion in the future world by their wickedness (Sanh. x. 1; compare ib. 109b).

Proverbs 18:21 “That I (YHWH) may cause those who love me to inherit a substance of value.” This verse assures those who study Torah that it will be an inheritance of value. Doeg and Archithophel's Torah study did not become their inheritance, because they were too proud to receive it from teachers and they were focused on the lure of riches and fame. After the four opening verses, which detail the sincerity of one who calls out to YHWH with a pure heart, this Psalm shifts gear and condemns the insincere, in particular those who have a perception of being Torah scholars, but inwardly are not.

The Torah promises riches and honour and mourns because of the impoverishment of Torah scholars, but in periods where scholars are destitute it is to allow them not to become ruined by the lure of money. Each generation of Israelites have a particular trial, and in the grander scheme of things an obviously harder trial is sometimes the

most beneficial. Whilst the trial of poverty seems harsh, affluence can have a greater detrimental effect on the vigilance and sincerity of one's service to YHWH.

Verse 1-4; "For the Conductor; on the Nechilot. A song of David. To my sayings give ear, YHWH, perceive my thoughts. Heed the sound of my outcry, my King and my Elohim, for to You alone do I pray. YHWH, at dawn hear my voice, at dawn I will prepare myself for You, and I anticipate."

"For the Conductor..." The Conductor would direct the choir to play according to the type of offering that was brought and he could even read the person bringing the offering to such a degree that the music would perfectly suit his situation and personality. As the person bringing the offering approached, he would listen to the music, which increased his capacity to draw near to YHWH. ***Ecclesiastes 5:1; "Guard your steps when you go to the House of Elohim. And draw near to listen rather than to give the slaughtering of fools, for they do not know that they do evil."***

"...on the nechilot." This is the name for a collection of musical instruments used by the Levitical choir. Every Psalm had a unique musical accompaniment, which complimented the mood of the song with an appropriate melody which assisted in conveying the message of the Psalm. The music that the Levitical choir played at the time of King David and Solomon was the most sophisticated and extraordinarily powerful music ever known to man.

The root word of "nechil" is "stream," suggesting that the sound this instrument made imitated a swarm of bees. The strings had a droning effect, achieved by a swift strumming of the strings. In this Psalm's case it is speculated that the sound took on the noise of a horde of enemy soldiers attacking Israel. This seems fitting because this Psalm portrays a time where Israel is attacked.

"To my sayings give ear..." Since I have the ability to express my wants to you verbally, please hearken to my defense and my attack physically. The tribe of Judah had a unique blessing over the other tribes of Israel. They were assured that their prayers would always penetrate through the highest heavenly gate. ***Deuteronomy 33:7; "Listen YHWH to the call of Judah."***

"...perceive my thoughts..." When fear and worry do render me mute and incapable of speech please answer the yearning I have for Your help within my heart. Please perceive a developed thought that I am ready to express. When we speak to YHWH, he hears us on two levels - thought and word. This is why we should train ourselves to think about what we are saying when we worship or pray to YHWH.

"Heed the sound of my outcry..." Heed is an intensive form of action based on intense listening. An "outcry" implies being far off and calling for help. "Give ear" to what I am saying means, 'listen to what I say close to You,' but "heed" contains anxiety and yearning for YHWH to hear more and more. ***Isaiah 32:3*** contains both these principles. ***"...and the ears of listeners shall pay heed."***

"...my King and Elohim for to You alone do I pray." You are my King and sovereign alone. As a servant cries out to his master, King David cries out to the only one who administers judgment and can rescue him.

"YHWH, at dawn hear my voice, at dawn I will prepare myself for you." The early morning, before one gets involved in mundane affairs of the world, is the best time to pray (Radak). The very first act of the day should be to get up early and engage in

service to YHWH. Never should we precede our morning prayers with our own personal pursuits. Service to Elohim in this way shows that He is foremost in a person's life.

Dawn is the time when YHWH metes out justice to the wicked. *Psalms 101:8; "Morning by morning I shall destroy all of the wicked of the land..."* It is also a time when he shows mercy. *Psalms 92:3; "...to tell of Your acts of kindness in the morning..."*

The Mishnah relates that the devout men of old would meditate for a full hour in developed thought to ready themselves for prayer.

"...I anticipate." I hopefully wait for YHWH to exact punishment. The Talmud relates that one who prays at great length and is confident that he is worthy of having his prayers fulfilled will be left with heartache, because who can withstand a full heavenly investigation. King David chooses his words carefully because he is not confident of his own personal merits, but instead invokes the four letter heavenly name, YHWH, which is the Heavenly Father's Divine attribute of Mercy Name.

Dawn is a special time of mercy. King David has no merit other than praying at the time of mercy using the Father's name of Mercy.

Verses 5-7; "For You are not an Elohim who desires wickedness, no evil sojourns with You. The roisterers may not stand firm before Your eyes, You despise all evildoers. Doom speakers of deception: the bloodthirsty and deceitful man YHWH abhors."

"For You are not an Elohim who desires wickedness, no evil sojourns with You." King David is confident because YHWH has no desire for evil and so he aligns himself with the Father's will, knowing that He will eventually destroy evil doers.

"...No evil sojourns with You." Where there is Elohim there is no evil. Nothing evil can emanate from YHWH who is the source of pure good. Evil begins when man seeks to limit YHWH's sphere of influence.

"The roisterers may not stand firm before Your eyes, You despise all evildoers." The roisterers are those who are confused and disorientated. Although Doeg and Achitophel studied the minutest details of Torah, their hearts remained full of roistering wildness. They studied that which should have produced good and instead they perverted it to produce evil.

Evildoers have a perpetual inability to stand firm before YHWH because they are mentally unbalanced.

"Doom speakers of deception..." This refers to those who will not even rise for the Final Judgment. The Mishnah teaches that three kings and four commoners forfeited their share in the World to Come. The commoners were: Bilaam, Doeg, Achitophel and Gehazi. Gehazi was a servant of the prophet Elisha who After Elisha had cured Naaman the Syrian commander of leprosy, Gehazi dishonestly obtained a reward for the cure.

“...the bloodthirsty and deceitful man YHWH abhors.” Achitophel advised Absalom to kill his own father and defile his own father’s concubines. Doeg was in charge of massacring the entire priestly family of Nob and advised Saul to take David’s wife, Michal away from him.

Verses 8-10; “As for me, through Your abundant kindness, I will enter Your House; I will prostrate myself toward Your Holy Sanctuary in awe of You. YHWH, guide me in Your righteousness, because of my watchful enemies, Make Your way straight before me. For in their mouth there is no sincerity, their inner thought is treacherous, their throat an open grave, their tongue they equivocate (are evasive).”

“As for me, through Your abundant kindness, I will enter Your House; I will prostrate myself toward Your Holy Sanctuary...” The wicked will be pushed out of view and because I yearn for Your abundant kindness, I will draw close to You in Your Set-Apart sanctuary. Your Set-Apart sanctuary refers directly to the Holy of Holies, the resting place of the Ark of the Covenant.

“...in awe of You.” The heathen enters his temple to prostrate himself before his wooden idols out of fear so that nothing evil will befall him. YHWH on the other hand receives worshippers who come out of love and yearn for his kindness.

“YHWH, guide me in Your righteousness, Direct me onto the path of righteousness and justice and save me from stumbling. My enemies watch me carefully, hoping that I will betray You and cause You to desert me.

“...because of my watchful enemies, Make Your way straight before me.” Because of their evil intentions, David begs YHWH for special providence to safeguard him from errors which his detractors could exploit maliciously.

“For in their mouth there is no sincerity, their inner thought is treacherous...” King David’s enemies feign outward friendship while in their hearts they are bitter foes.

“...their throat an open grave, their tongue they equivocate (are evasive).” King David’s enemies sought to take the fruit of his labour like an open grave swallows a corpse. Doeg’s Torah learning lacked depth because it only remained on his lips, consequently it was used for evil.

Verse 11-13; “Declare them guilty, O Elohim, of their own schemes they will topple, for their many sins cast them away, for they have rebelled against You. And all who take refuge in You will rejoice, forever they will sing joyously, and You will shelter them, and those who love Your Name will exult; in You; when You, YHWH, will bless the righteous, enveloping him with favour like a shield.”

“Declare them guilty, O Elohim, of their own schemes they will topple, for their many sins cast them away, for they have rebelled against You.”

Bring my enemies to justice, convict them of their guilt and cast them down from their high position. As a result of their own schemes they will be punished measure for measure.

Because Doeg and Achitophel strayed after their eyes to desire that which was not theirs; what they sought was not given them, and even what they had was taken away.

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 106b) says that King David prayed that Doeg should forget all of his Torah learning before he died. The request was honoured as it says, ***“He shall die for lack of Instruction.” (Proverbs 5:23)***

The more Scripture one knows the more one knows the breadth of possibilities that are availed through the act of prayer. In other words, the more one studies Torah, the more one knows how and what to pray for and what options there are (so to speak). One with a thorough knowledge of the Word can pursue various critical angles or lines of reasoning with the Heavenly Father. Abraham’s plea that Sodom be spared (though it was refused) and Moshe’s plea to save Israel from destruction are prime examples of two Torah heavyweights wrestling along Torah observant lines with YHWH.

“And all who take refuge in You will rejoice, forever they will sing joyously, and You will shelter them...” When the wicked topple, all who trust in YHWH will be glad (Rashi). Material joys never last; they quickly fade away and disappear. This is the meaning of “a trend,” a temporary collective desire to acquire something along a specific path. YHWH is eternal and His joy never ends or fades away.

“...and those who love Your Name will exult; in You; when You, YHWH, will bless the righteous, enveloping him with favour like a shield.” The joy of the righteous will come to pass when YHWH will bless them and surround them with His presence like a shield. The righteous shall all receive crowns and garments of glory. The wearing of a kipper is a precursor to wearing a heavenly crown. In the middle-ages some Jews wore precious stones sown into their head coverings. The wearing of a Tallit, defined by the presence of tzitzit, an unobtrusive head covering and kosher Mezuzot on the doorposts of one’s dwelling are physical representations of the heavenly covering that YHWH envelopes us with.