

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter XXV: Tzav (Lev. 6:1–8:36)

Essay 5. Four groups who are required to give thanks

Among the sacrifices discussed in this week's parasha is the thanksgiving offering. Through a detailed analysis of Psalm 107, this essay discusses four groups of people whom the Talmud requires to give thanks to G-d: those lost in the wilderness (v. 4–9), prisoners (v. 10–16), the sick (v. 17–22), and sailors (v. 23–32). The complete Psalm reads as follows, with the underlined text being quoted in the essay:

1: Give thanks to the L-rd, for He is good; His kindness is eternal! 2: Thus let the redeemed of the L-rd say, those He redeemed from the hand of adversity, 3: whom He gathered in from the lands, from east and west, from the north and from the sea.

4: Those who erred in the wilderness, in the wasteland; they found no settled place. 5: Hungry and thirsty, their spirit failed. 6: They cried out to the L-rd in their adversity; from their troubles, He rescued them [יִצִּילֵם] [yatzilem]. 7: He guided them a direct way to reach a settled place. 8: They should give thanks to the L-rd for His kindness, His wondrous deeds for mankind; 9: for He has satisfied the thirsty, filled the hungry with all good things.

10: Those who dwell in deepest darkness, bound in cruel irons, 11: because they defied the word of G-d, spurned the counsel of the Most High. 12: He humbled their hearts through suffering; they stumbled with no one to help. 13: They cried out to the L-rd in their adversity; from their troubles, He saved them [יֹשִׁיעֵם] [yoshi'em]. 14: He brought them out of deepest darkness, broke their bonds asunder. 15: They should give thanks to the L-rd for His kindness, His wondrous deeds for mankind; 16: for He shattered gates of bronze, He broke their iron bars.

17: Fools, because of their sinful way, and their iniquities, had to answer. 18: All food was loathsome to them; they reached the gates of death. 19: They cried out to the L-rd in their adversity; from their troubles, He saved them [יֹשִׁיעֵם] [yoshi'em]. 20: He gave an order and healed them; He delivered them from the pits. 21: They should give thanks to the L-rd for His kindness, His wondrous deeds for mankind. 22: They should offer thanksgiving sacrifices, and tell His deeds in joyful song.

23: Those who go down to the sea in ships, ply their trade in the mighty waters; 24: they have seen the works of the L-rd and His wonders in the deep. 25: By His word He raised a storm wind that made the waves surge. 26: Mounting up to the heaven, plunging down to the depths, disgorging in their misery, 27: they reeled and staggered like a drunken man, all their wisdom was swallowed up. 28: They cried out to the L-rd in their adversity, and from their troubles, He brought them out [יֹצִיאֵם]. 29: He reduced the storm to a whisper; the waves were stilled. 30: They rejoiced when all was quiet, and He brought them to the port they desired. 31: They should give thanks to the L-rd for His kindness, His wondrous deeds for mankind. 32: They should exalt Him in the congregation of the people, acclaim Him in the assembly of the elders.

33: He turns the rivers into a wilderness, springs of water into thirsty land, 34: fruitful land into a salt marsh, because of the wickedness of its inhabitants. 35: He turns the wilderness into pools, parched land into springs of water. 36: There He settles the hungry; they build a place to settle in. 37: They sow fields and plant vineyards that yield a fruitful harvest. 38: He blesses them and they increase greatly; and He does not let their cattle decrease, 39: after they had been few and crushed by oppression, misery, and sorrow. 40: He pours contempt on great men and makes them lose their way in trackless wastelands; 41: but the needy He secures from suffering, and increases their families like flocks. 42: The upright see it and rejoice; the mouth of all wrongdoers is stopped. 43: The wise man will take note of these things; he will consider the kindness of the L-rd.

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מזמור "יאמרו גאולי ה' " וכו' הקושיות שפנפלו בזה המזמור ושינוי הענינים רבו מהרבה, וכמה מהם הרגישו בהם המפרשים ז"ל ותרצו לפי דרכם ואף אנו נענה חלקנו.

A Psalm: "Thus let the redeemed of the L-rd say," etc.¹ The difficulties that arise in this Psalm and the changes in its themes are very numerous, and many of them have been noticed by [the rabbis] of blessed memory, who provided answers according to their way. We too will answer with our share.

מתחלה קשה מה הם שתי טעמים שאומר הכתוב, "כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו". ועוד, "אשר גאלם מיצר", וקשיב "מדבר" ו"חולה" ו"ים" דלא שיהו "מיצר", והיה לו לומר "אשר גאלם מצרה". ועוד כיון דקרבו תודה הוא בכלן למה לא כתבו רק בחולה ויזכרו זכאי תודה". ועוד למה הכתוב נקט סדרן מדבר, חבוש, חולה, וים, והתלמוד סדרן ים, מדבר, חולה, וחבוש. ועוד מה רוצה לומר "ונפלאתיו לבני אדם" שנאמר בכלן, הלא ב"יודו לה' חסדו" סגי. ועוד מהו טעם השנוי "נצילים", "יושיעם", "יושיעם", "יוציאם".

Question 1: **First, it is difficult to understand the two reasons mentioned in the text: "Give thanks to the L-rd, for He is good; His kindness is eternal."**² Isn't this redundant?

Question 2: **Also, "those He redeemed from the hand of adversity."**³ It is considered a difficulty by the commentators, because those lost in the "wilderness,"⁴ the sick,⁵ and sailors at "sea"⁶ are not relevant to this term, "from the hand of adversity," which implies someone acting against them. I.e., only in the case of a prisoner, who "dwells in deepest darkness, bound in cruel irons," can we understand that there is someone acting against him, and that "the hand of the adversity" refers to the one holding him captive. But for one lost in the wilderness, one who is sick, and the sailor, what is the meaning of "the hand of adversity"? **It could have said "those He redeemed from adversity,"** which would have more accurately encompassed all four categories.

Question 3: **Also, since the thanksgiving offering applies to all of [these people], why is it only mentioned in relation to the sick, "They should offer thanksgiving sacrifices"?**⁷

Question 4: **Also, why does the Scripture list them in the order of those lost in the wilderness, prisoners, the sick, and sailors at sea?** In discussing those obligated to give thanks to G-d, the Talmud arranges them in the order of sailors at sea, those lost in the wilderness, the sick, and prisoners.⁸

¹ Ps. 107:2.

² Ps. 107:1.

³ Ps. 107:2.

⁴ Ps. 107:4.

⁵ Ps. 107:17–20.

⁶ Ps. 107:23.

⁷ Ps. 107:22.

⁸ Berachot 54b.

Question 5: Also, what does it want to impart when it says, “His wondrous deeds for mankind,” which is said for all of them?⁹ Isn’t the first part of each of those verses, “They should give thanks to the L-rd for His kindness” enough?

Question 6: Also, what is the reason for the change of verbs from “He rescued them [יִצִּילֵם] [yatzilem] from their troubles” for those lost in the wilderness,¹⁰ “He saved them” [יִוֹשִׁיעַם] [yoshi’em] for prisoners,¹¹ “He saved them” [יִוֹשִׁיעַם] [yoshi’em] for the sick,¹² and “He brought them out” [יֹצִיאֵם] [yotzi’em] for the sailors.¹³

וּלְתַרְזַעַל עַל רֵאשִׁוֹן רֵאשִׁוֹן יֵשׁ לֹמֵר שְׁכַוֹנֹת הַפְּסוּקִים בְּדוֹקָא, אָמַר "אֲשֶׁר גָּאֵלֵם מִיַּד-צָר" וְלֹא אָמַר "מִצָּרָה" כְּדֵי לְרַמֹּז גֹּדֶל חֲסָדֵי ה', כִּי זֶה הִ"צָר" אֵינּוּ רוֹצֵה לֹמֵר אוֹיֵב כְּמוֹ שֶׁחָשְׁבוּ הַמְּפָרָשִׁים, שֶׁאֵז וְדָאֵי לֹא יִתְכַּן אֶלָּא בְּחִבּוּשׁ. אֶלָּא זֶה הִ"צָר" הוּא הִ"צָר" הַצּוֹרֵר, הַשֹּׁטֵן שֶׁמְקַטְרֵג בְּשַׁעַת הַסְּפָנָה, וּבְהִכֵּי נִיחָא שְׁבָכִילֵם יֵשׁ שַׁעַת הַסְּפָנָה וְהַשֹּׁטֵן מְקַטְרֵג עֲלֵיהֶם, וְלִהְיֵי קְאָמַר "מִיַּד-צָר" דּוֹקָא וְלֹא אָמַר "אֲשֶׁר גָּאֵלֵם מִצָּרָה".

Answer to Question 2: To solve the first question first, it can be said that the intention of the verses is specific. It said, “those He redeemed from the hand of adversity,” and did not say, “from adversity,” in order to hint at the great kindnesses of G-d, for the “adversary” does not mean “an enemy,” as the commentators thought, for then certainly it would apply only to prisoners. Rather, this “adversity” is “the Adversary,” the oppressor Satan, who accuses us during an hour of danger.¹⁴ With this understanding, it is fine, for all of them have an hour of danger, and the Satan accuses them. Thus, it says “from the hand of adversity” specifically, and doesn’t say “those He redeemed from adversity.”

וְהַכְּפֹל שֶׁל "כִּי-טוֹב כִּי לַעֲוֹלֹת חֲסָדֹי", עֵינֵינוּ לְקַמֵּן בְּפִרְשָׁה הַבָּאָה עַל "אֵל אֲמוּנָה וְאִין עֲוֹל" וְכוּ'.

Answer to Question 1: Regarding the apparent duplication of, “for He is good; His kindness is eternal,” see later in the coming parasha, Shemini, essay 4, on the verse, “a faithful G-d, never false, true and upright indeed.”¹⁵

"וּמִאֲרָצוֹת קְבָצִים מִמִּזְרַח וּמִמְעַרְב" וְכוּ' קִשָּׁה מָה עָנְנָן לְכַאֵן פְּסוּק זֶה, וּמֵהוּ זֶה הַקִּיבוּיָן.

Question 7: Regarding “whom He gathered in from the lands, from east and west,”¹⁶ a question is how is this verse related, and what is this gathering? The four groups being discussed aren’t being gathered from the four corners of the world.

⁹ Ps. 107:8, 15, 21, 31.

¹⁰ Ps. 107:6.

¹¹ Ps. 107:13.

¹² Ps. 107:19.

¹³ Ps. 107:28.

¹⁴ Gen. Rabbah 91:9.

¹⁵ Deut. 32:4.

¹⁶ Ps. 107:3.

ונש' לומר משום דאמרינו "דרשו ה' בהמצאו" וכו' לא קשה הא ביחיד שאין תפלת היחיד נשמעת בכל עת. והכי נמי אמרינו לעולם יקדים אדם תפלה לצרה, ומשום שהתפללו בלשון רבים משום הכי נענו, דאמרינו בברכות פרק ד' לעולם לישתתף אינש בהדי ציבורא, כלומר יתפלל תפלותיו בלשון רבים. אם הנה חולה בתוך ביתו צריך שיבקש עליו רחמים, עם שאר חולי ישראל, וכן בתפלת הדרך צריך שיאמנה בלשון רבים, כי כמה חולכי דרכים יש בעולם בשעה זו, וכן כלם. זהו, "ומארות קבצם" כלומר אף על פי שכל אחד אינו יודע רק מהגם שנעשה לו, עם כל זה גם כזה בשעה זו עשה לכמה חולים אחרים, או חבושים, או חולכי דרכים אחרים, וקבץ תפלותם ונעשו בתפלות הרבים, מפני שהתפללו בלשון רבים.

Answer to Question 7: **It can be said that because it is said on the verse, “seek the L-rd while He can be found,”¹⁷ that this is not difficult, for this is talking about an individual, and the prayer of an individual is not heard at all times.¹⁸ It is also said, “a person should always offer up prayer before trouble actually arrives,”¹⁹ and because they prayed in plural form, because of this, they were answered, as it is said in tractate Berachot, 4th chapter (29b–30a), “A person should always associate himself with a congregation,” as if to say that they should pray in the plural form. If a person is sick in his home, he should ask for mercy for his relative along with the other sick people of Israel. Similarly, in the Traveler’s Prayer, they should recite it in the plural form, because there are many travelers in the world at this time, and the same applies to all of [the prayers].**

This is the meaning of “whom He gathered in from the lands,” as if to say that although each individual knows only the miracle that was done for him, even so, at that moment, a similar miracle was done also for other sick people, or for prisoners, or for other travelers on other paths, in all corners of the world. Their prayers were gathered together and became like the prayers of the many, because they prayed in the plural form.

ומתחיל מהולכי מדברות, "תעו במדבר" וכו', אבדו הדרך ועוד אין להם מזונות, "רעבים גם צמאים . . . ויצעקו אלה", והקב"ה ענה בשמים אלה, "ונדריכם בדרך ישרה" וכו', ועוד, "כשהביע" וכו', ולכן, "יודו לה' תסדו ונפלאותיו לבני אדם". ולמאי אצטריך "ונפלאותיו לבני אדם" דאי למילף דצריך לאודוני באפי עשרה, כבר אנו למדים אותו מן "וירוממוהו בקהלים" וכו' דכתיב לבסוף. ואי משום שצריך תמיד לזכור הגם, כבר שמענו זה בתחלת המזמור בפסוק "הדו לה' כ"י טוב פי לעולם תסדו", אלא נדאי בא להשמיענו איזה חידוש, דאמרינו בפרק י' דפסחים קשים מזונותיו של אדם יותר מן הגאולה, ועוד בפרק ה' דשבת אמרינו תדע, דמתרחיש ניסא ולא איברו מזוני. וזהו, "יודו לה' תסדו", תסדו הגדול שעשה עמם, ועוד, יגידו לבני אדם אם שמעו מימיהם פלא גדול כזה שיברו מזוני.

[Psalm 107] discusses four groups, and begins with travelers in the wilderness, “Those who erred in the wilderness,”²⁰ they lost the way and still have no food; “they were hungry and thirsty . . . and they cried out to the L-rd,”²¹ and the Holy One, Blessed be He, answered

¹⁷ Isaiah 55:6.
¹⁸ Rosh Hashana 18a.
¹⁹ Sanhedrin 44b.
²⁰ Ps. 107:4.
²¹ Ps. 107:5–6.

them in these two ways: “He guided them a direct way to reach a settled place,”²² and also, “for He has satisfied the thirsty, filled the hungry with all good things.”²³ Therefore, “They should give thanks to the L-rd for His kindness, His wondrous deeds for mankind.”²⁴

Answer to Question 5: **But why do we need the mention of “His wondrous deeds for mankind”? If it is to teach that one should thank in front of ten, i.e., with a minyan, we already learn that from, “They should exalt Him in the congregation of the people, acclaim Him in the assembly of the elders,”²⁵ as it is written at the end of the Psalm.**

If it is because we must always remember the miracle performed for him, we have already heard this at the beginning of the Psalm, in the verse, “They should give thanks to the L-rd for He is good, for His kindness endures forever.”

Rather, it certainly comes to inform us of this novelty, that it is said in the 10th chapter of tractate Pesachim (118b), “[The task of providing] a person’s food is more difficult than the redemption.” Also, in the 5th chapter of tractate Shabbat (53b), it is said, “Know that miracles happen, but food is not created.” This is the meaning of, “They should give thanks to the L-rd for His kindness,” the great kindness that He did with them. Also, they should tell mankind if they heard of a great wonder such as this, food being created.

אחר זה בחבוש, "ישבי חשך" וכו', וגם הם "יודו לה' חסדו ונפלאותיו" וכו', וגם זה הוא פלא גדול לספר לבני אדם, משום דאיתא בזהר על פסוק "ונשלוכו אתו הברה", לעולם יפיל איניש עצמיה לגובא דאריותא ולא יתמסר בידא דשנאוי, לפי שמשל הבריות יוכל להנצל על ידי גס או זכות אבות, אבל אם נמסר ביד אדם שהוא בעל בחירה קשה להנצל. ומי שהוא חבוש הוא ביד אדם בעל בחירה ועם כל זה ניצול בחסד ה', אם כן, יגיד נפלאותיו לבני אדם ונקא.

After this, for prisoners, we read: “Those who dwell in darkness,”²⁶ and they too “should give thanks to the L-rd for His kindness, His wondrous deeds for mankind.”²⁷ This is also a great wonder to tell to mankind, because it is written in the Zohar (I:185a) regarding the verse, “They threw him into the pit,”²⁸ that one should always throw himself into a pit of lions and not be delivered into the hand of those who hate him. This is because for every person, he may be saved through a miracle or through the merit of his ancestors, but if he is delivered to the hand of a person, who has free will, it is hard to be saved.²⁹ A prisoner is in the hand of a person with free will, yet he is saved by the kindness of G-d. If so, he should tell of [G-d’s] wonders, specifically to mankind, that they should know that G-d can even counter a person’s free will.

²² Ps. 107:7.

²³ Ps. 107:9.

²⁴ Ps. 107:8.

²⁵ Ps. 107:32.

²⁶ Ps. 107:10.

²⁷ Ps. 107:15.

²⁸ Gen. 37:24.

²⁹ Zohar I:185a, Vayeshev 131. Our copy reads, “A man should throw himself into a fire or a pit full of serpents and scorpions, and not be delivered into the hands of those who hate him.”

אחר זה מדבר בחולה ואף בכאן אמר, "ונפלאוֹתיו לבני אדם", לפי שמי שהוא חולה מתחלה מבקש מבני אדם שיִרפאוהו, וכשרואה עצמו בדוחק גדול שהרופאים אומרים שאין ביָדם כח לרפאתו אז עושים תפלה בעדו, אם כן כִּשְׁנֵי־רפא נגיד לבני אדם, דהיינו שלא יחשבו כי חכמתם ובקיאותם גרמה להם להחיותו, רק זהו חסד ופלא שאחר שהיה נטוי למיתה הציִלהו הבורא. וכאן אמר "ויזבחו זבחי תודה" מה שלא אמר כן בשלושה אחרים, משום דסלקא דעתא לומר שהחולה אינו בכלל אותם שחייבים להודות, שהרי כשכתב הקב"ה קרבן תודה בתורה לא היה בכלל זה חולה שנתרפא, דאמרינן במדרש שחזקיהו חדש עמידת החולי. ואף בימי דוד לא היה חולה שנתרפא בעולם, אלא שדוד אמר ספר תהלים ברוח הקדש, כמו כמה מזמורים שאמרום לעתיד, ומפני שהוא דבר חידוש, כתיב ביה, "ויזבחו זבחי תודה".

After this, the Psalm speaks about the sick, and even here it says, "They should give thanks to the L-rd for His kindness, His wondrous deeds for mankind,"³⁰ because for one who is sick, initially he asks men to heal him, and when he sees himself in great distress, that the doctors say that it is not in their power to heal him, then they pray for him.

If so, when he recovers, he should tell mankind, that is, that they should not think that it was their knowledge and expertise that caused them to restore his life, only this is a kindness and wonder, that after being threatened with death, the Creator saved him.

Answer to Question 3: Here, it is said, "They should offer thanksgiving sacrifices,"³¹ which is not said for the three other cases. This is because it might have been thought that the sick are not among those who are obligated to give thanks. After all, when the Holy One, Blessed be He, wrote the commandment of the thanksgiving offering in the Torah, a sick person who was healed was not included. As it is said in the Midrash, Hezekiah innovated the healing of illness.³² Even in the days of David, there was never a sick person who was healed. Rather, David spoke the Book of Psalms by the Holy Spirit, such as several Songs that he said for the future. Because this was something new, he wrote in [this psalm], "They should offer thanksgiving sacrifices."

אֵלָא דְקִשָּׁה אִידָּא אֶפְשָׁר שְׁלֵא נִתְרַפָּא חוּלָה עַד חִזְקִיָּהוּ וְהֵלֵא קִרָּא כְּתִיב "וַיֹּאמֶר אִם־שָׁמוּעַ תִּשְׁמַע" וְכוּ' "כָּל־הַמְחִלָּה אֲשֶׁר־שָׁמַתִּי בְּמִצְרַיִם" וְכוּ', וְאָמְרוּ ו"ל וְאִם אֲשִׁים "אֲנִי ה' רַפְּאֵךְ", דְּשָׁמַע מִיָּנָה יֵשׁ חוּלִי וְרַפּוּאָה בְּעוֹלָם, וְעוֹד קוֹדֵם חִזְקִיָּהוּ הָיָה סֶפֶר רַפּוּאוֹת בְּעוֹלָם דְּאָמְרִינָן בְּפִסְחִים גְּזוּ סֶפֶר רַפּוּאוֹת, וְהוּדוּ לוֹ. וְדוּחֵק לֹא מֵרַחֵם שְׁהִרְפּוּאוֹת הָיוּ עַל חוּלֵי אַבְרָהִם לֹא עַל חוּלָה שְׁנִפְּל לְמִיטָּה, דְּאִין זֶה בְּמִשְׁמַעוֹת הַכְּתוּבִים וְהַמְדַרְשִׁים.

However, it is difficult to understand how it is possible that a sick person was not healed until the time of Hezekiah, for isn't it written in Scripture: "He said, 'If you will diligently listen to the voice of the L-rd your G-d, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians; for I am the L-rd who heals you.'"³³ [The rabbis], of blessed

³⁰ Ps. 107:21.

³¹ Ps. 107:22.

³² Gen. Rabbah 65:9.

³³ Ex. 15:26.

memory, said, “If you do not listen, I will place [the disease upon you]. Nevertheless, [know that I will heal you,] ‘for I am the Lord, your Healer.’”³⁴

We hear from this that there was illness and healing in the world, and also before Hezekiah there was a Book of Healing in the world, as it is said in tractate Pesachim, “[Hezekiah] stole the Book of Cures, and they acknowledged him.”³⁵ It is necessary to say that the remedies were for illnesses of the limbs and not for a sick person who fell upon his bed, for this is not in the meaning of the verses and the Midrashim.

וגיש לומר דבפרק קמא דראש השנה אמרינו שנים שעלו למטה ונחליים שנה, מפני מה זה התפלל ונענה וזה התפלל ולא נענה, זה שהיה קודם גזר דין נענה וזה שהיה לאחר גזר דין לא נענה. ופליגא דר' יצחק דסבירא ליה יפה צעקה לאדם בין קודם גזר דין בין לאחר גזר דין ועיי"ש. ואין הכי נמי שמתחלה היו חולים ומתרפאים אבל זה היה קודם גזר דין, אבל לאחר גזר דין עד שבא חזקה לא היה מתרפאים. ואתי שפיר שחולי חזקה היה לאחר גזר דין שהרי הנביא אמר לו "צו לביתך כי מת אתה ולא תחיה", וקשה דהיה לו לומר "תמות ולא תחיה" ומהו זה הלשון של "כי מת אתה" אם היה עדיין חי. אלא ונדאי רוצה לומר הואיל שפבר נגמר דינך פאלו אתה מת ובנדאי אתה מת שהרי אין שום חולה לאחר הגזר דין שמתרפא לעולם. אמר לו כך מקובלני מבית אבי אבא, אפילו חרב סדה מונחת על צנארו של אדם, אל ימנע עצמו מן הרחמים, פלומר דיפה צעקה לאדם בין קודם גזר דין בין לאחר גזר דין.

It can be said that in the first chapter of Rosh Hashanah it is stated:

Rabbi Meir would say: **Two [people] take to [their] beds, and their illness is the same . . . this [one] is saved [from death], while that [one] is not saved. . . . Why is it that this [one] pray and he was answered, and that [one] prayed and was not answered? . . .** Rabbi Elazar said: **This [one prayed] before [his heavenly] decree [was issued, and he] was answered, and that [one prayed] after [his heavenly] decree [was issued, and he] was not answered.**

Rabbi Yitzchak disagreed, as he held: Crying out [in prayer] is good for a person, both before [his] decree [has been issued] and after [his] decree [has been issued].

- Rosh Hashanah 18a

It is indeed so that initially, people were ill and could be healed, but this was before their decree was issued. However, after the decree was issued, until the time of Hezekiah, people could no longer recover. It makes sense that the illness of Hezekiah occurred after the decree was issued, since the prophet told him, “Give a charge to your house, for you are dead, and will not live.”³⁶ This is difficult to understand, for he could have said, “You will die, and will not live.” What is this language of “you are dead,” if he was still alive? Rather, he certainly wanted to say: Since your decree is issued, it is as though you are dead, and certainly you are dead, as there is never a sick person who has recovered after his decree is issued. [Hezekiah] said [to Isaiah], “I have received a tradition from the house of my father’s father, [i.e., from

³⁴ Sanhedrin 101a.

³⁵ Mishnah Pesachim 4:9; Pesachim 56a.

³⁶ Isaiah 38:1; II Kings 20:1.

King David]: Even if a sharp sword rests upon a person's neck, he should not prevent himself from [praying for] mercy."³⁷ This is as if to say, "Crying out [in prayer] is good for a person, both before [his] decree [has been issued] and after [his] decree [has been issued]."

וְצָרִיךְ טַעַם לְמַה הוּצָרָךְ לֹאמַר שֶׁהִיָּה מְקוּבָּל מִבֵּית אָבִי אָבִיו דֵּהִינּוּ דְּוֹד וְלֹא אָמַר כִּף מְקוּבָּלֵנִי סַתָּם, וְהֵיכָן מְצִינּוּ שֶׁדְּוֹד יִכְרִיעַ דִּיפָּה צָעָקָה לְאָדָם אַף לְאַסֵּר גִּזְרֵי דִין. וְיֵשׁ לֹאמַר דְּבִפְרָק קַמָּא דְעֵבֹדָה זָרָה אֶמְרִינּוּ לֹא הִיָּה דְּוֹד רָאוּי לְאוֹתוֹ מְעַשֶּׂה אֲלֵא שְׂאָם סָטָא יַחֲיד אוֹמְרִים לוֹ כִּלְךְ אֲצֵל יַחֲיד וְתוֹעִיל הַתְּשׁוּבָה, וְזִהוּ, "נִשְׂאָם הַגְּבֵר הַקָּם עַל", שֶׁהַקָּים עוֹלָה שְׁל תְּשׁוּבָה ע"כ.

We need a reason why it was necessary [for Hezekiah] to say that this was something he had received from the house of “my father’s father,” meaning from David, and not simply to say, “This is what I have received.” Where do we find that David decided that crying out in prayer is good for a person, even after his decree has been issued?

It can be said that in the first chapter of Avodah Zarah, it is stated:

It was not proper for David [to act as he did] in that incident [involving Bathsheba], except that if an individual sinned, one says to him: Go to that individual [who sinned, King David,] and repentance will be effective. This is [what is meant by] “[The utterance of David son of Jesse,] the utterance of the man set on high [עַל] [al],”³⁸ that he raised the yoke [עוֹלָה] [ulah] of repentance [as he served as an example of the power of repentance].

- Avodah Zarah 4b–5a

וּבְמִדְרַשׁ יְלִקוּט מְלָכִים עַל פְּסוּק "מִכְתָּב לְחִזְקִיָּהוּ" אֶמְרִינּוּ וְז"ל, חִזְקִיָּהוּ חִדֵּשׁ עֲמִידַת הַחֹלִי, אָמַר לְפָנָיו, רַבּוֹן הָעוֹלָמִים הִעֲמַדְתָּ אוֹתוֹ עַד יוֹם מוֹתוֹ אֵינּוּ עוֹשֶׂה תְּשׁוּבָה, אָבֵל מִתּוֹךְ שֶׁאָדָם חוֹלָה וְעוֹמֵד הוּא עוֹשֶׂה תְּשׁוּבָה שְׁלִימָה, אָמַר לוֹ הַקָּב"ה סִיף דְּבַר טוֹב תְּבַעַת וּמִמָּה הוּא מִתְחִיל ע"כ"ל.

In the Midrash Yalkut Shimoni, Kings on the verse, “A poem by Hezekiah, King of Judah, when he recovered from the illness he had suffered,”³⁹ it is said, and this is its language:

Hezekiah innovated the healing of illness. He said before [G-d]: “Master of the Universe, You would sustain a person until the day of his death, [and] he would not repent. But because a person is ill and recovers, he repents completely.” The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to him: “As you live, you have demanded a good thing, and it will begin with you.”

- Yalkut Shimoni on Prophets 243:1⁴⁰

³⁷ Berachot 10a.

³⁸ II Sam. 23:1.

³⁹ Isaiah 38:9.

⁴⁰ See also Gen. Rabbah 65:9.

וְכִּי אָמַר חֲזַקְיָה לְפָנֵי הַקֶּבֶ"ה, הֲלֹא דָוִד דִּהְיִינוּ אֲבִי אֲבָא לֹא הִנֵּה רָאוּי לְאוֹתוֹ מַעֲשֵׂה, וְלָמָּה חָטָא לְהַקִּים עוֹלָה שֶׁל תְּשׁוּבָה. וְהֲלֹא אֲנִי רוֹאֶה שְׂאֵם אֶתְּהָ מַעֲמִיד אֶת הָאָדָם עַד יוֹם מוֹתוֹ אֵינוֹ עוֹשֶׂה תְּשׁוּבָה, אֲלֵא מִתּוֹךְ שֶׁהוּא חוֹלֶה וְעוֹמֵד אֲזַ עוֹשֶׂה תְּשׁוּבָה שְׁלִימָה. אִם כֵּן עַל פְּרָחֶךָ לּוֹמֵר יָפֵה צָעֲקָה לְאָדָם בֵּין קוֹדֵם גְּזֵר דִּין בֵּין לְאַחֵר גְּזֵר דִּין, דָּאֵי לֹא הִכִּי לֹא הִיָּתָה תְּשׁוּבָה שְׁלִימָה בְּעוֹלָם. וְלָמָּה חָטָא דָוִד, אֲלֵא נִדְּאֵי אֲפִילוּ חֲרַב סָדָה מוֹנֶסֶת עַל צַנְאוֹרוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם אֵל מְנַעַע עֲצָמוֹ מִן הַרְחָמִים. וְאֶתִּי שְׁפִיר מַה שֶׁשָּׁלַח לוֹ הַקֶּבֶ"ה לְחֲזַקְיָהוּ "כִּהֵאֱמַר ה' אֱלֹהֵי דָוִד אֲבִיךָ שֶׁמַּעֲתִי אֶת־תְּפִלָּתְךָ", כְּלוֹמֵר בְּשִׁבִיל דָוִד שֶׁמַּעֲתִי תְּפִלָּתְךָ וְכוּ'.

Thus, Hezekiah said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: “Wasn’t David, who was my father’s father, unworthy of that act, and why did he sin to raise the yoke of repentance? But I see that if You sustain a person until the day of his death, he does not repent. Rather, when a person is sick and recovers, then he repents completely. If so, you must necessarily say that crying out in prayer is good for a person, both before his decree has been issued and after his decree has been issued. If not so, there would not be complete repentance in the world. Why did David sin; rather, certainly even if a sharp sword rests upon a person’s neck, he should not prevent himself from [praying for] mercy.” Thus, it’s fine what the Holy One, Blessed be He, sent to Hezekiah: “Thus said the L-rd, the G-d of your [grand]father David: I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears. I hereby add fifteen years to your life,”⁴¹ as if to say, because of David, I have heard your prayer.

וְעִדְיִין יֵשׁ לְתַרְזֵן הַמְדַרְשׁ שְׁלֵא יִהְיֶה סוֹתֵר הַגְּמָרָא דִּילּוֹ, דְּבִפְרָק ז' דְּמַצִּיעָא אֲמַרִּינוּ עַד אֲלִישֶׁע לֹא הָוָה אֵינִישׁ דְּחָלַשׁ וְאִיתְּפַח, אֶתְּהָ אֲלִישֶׁע בְּעָא רַחֲמֵי וְאִיתְּפַח, וּמִהַמְדַרְשׁ נִרְאָה שֶׁחֲזַקְיָה חֲדָשׁ עֲמִידַת הַחוֹלִי. וְרִאִיתִי מִי שֶׁמִּירְזֵן שְׁרַפּוּצָא אֲלִישֶׁע לֹא הִיָּתָה רְפוּאָה גְּמוּרָה, שֶׁהִיָּה מִתְּפַחֵשׁ וְהוֹלֵךְ עַד שְׁמַת, וְדִיִּיק מִדְּכִתִּיב "חֲלָה אֶת־חֲלִיוֹ אֲשֶׁר גְּמוּת בּוֹ" דִּהְיִינוּ חוֹלָאִים תְּכּוּפִים זֶה לָזֶה, וְזֶה לֹא יִתְכּוֹן שְׁהָרֵי אַף בְּחֲזַקְיָה מִצִּינוּ "בְּחֲלָתוֹ וְנִחֵי מִחֲלִיו", וְאֲמַרִּינוּ בְּמִדְרָשׁ אֲמַר רַבִּי שְׁמוּאֵל בְּרַ נַחֲמָנִי מִלְּמַד שֶׁהִיָּה בֵּין חוֹלִי לְחוֹלִי, חוֹלִי כְּבָר מִשְׁנִיָּהֶם עַכ"ל. אֲבָל אִם נִדְּקָדַק בְּלִשׁוֹן הַגְּמָרָא אֵין שׁוּם סְתִירָה, דְּקָאֲמַר, עַד אֲבָרְהָם לֹא הָוָה זְקִנָּה אֶתְּהָ אֲבָרְהָם בְּעָא רַחֲמֵי וְהָוָה זְקִנָּה. וְכּוֹ יַעֲקֹב בְּעָא רַחֲמֵי וְהָוָה חוֹלִישָׁא. וּבְאֲלִישֶׁע לֹא קָאֲמַר בְּעָא רַחֲמֵי וְהָוָה רְפוּאָה, אוֹ וְהָוָה מִיתְּפַח, רַק קָאֲמַר בְּעָא רַחֲמֵי וְאִיתְּפַח, דְּמַשְׁמַע הוּא בְּעֲצָמוֹ נִתְּרַפָּא וְלֹא בְּקִשׁ רַחֲמִים אֲפּוּלֵי עֲלָמָא, עַד דְּאֶתְּהָ חֲזַקְיָה וְחֲדָשׁ עֲמִידַת הַחוֹלִי.

We still need to explain the Midrash, so that it does not contradict our Gemara. In the 7th chapter of tractate Bava Metzia (87a), it is said that until Elisha, there was no man who became sick and recovered. Elisha came and requested mercy, and then the person recovered. However, the Midrash seems to suggest that Hezekiah innovated the healing of illness. I have seen someone explain that the healing of Elisha was not a complete healing, as he continued deteriorating until he died. This is a precise understanding from what is written, “he had been stricken with the illness of which he was to die,”⁴² which are recurring illnesses, and this is not relevant, since even in Hezekiah’s case, we find he was sick and was healed. It is said in the Midrash that Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmani said that this teaches that he was

⁴¹ Isaiah 38:5.

⁴² II Kings 13:14.

between one illness and another, there was a third illness, and with that he was sicker than the other two.⁴³

But if we check the Gemara, there is no contradiction, for as it says:

Until Abraham, there was no old age. One who wanted to speak to Abraham [would mistakenly] speak to Isaac [and vice versa, one who wanted to speak] to Isaac [would] speak to Abraham [as they appeared identical]. Abraham requested mercy, and there was old age.

Until Jacob, there was no illness [leading up to death; rather, one would die suddenly]. **Jacob came and requested mercy, and there was illness** [allowing one to prepare for his death].

Until Elisha, one did not fall ill and then heal [as everyone who fell ill would die]. Elisha came and requested mercy and he recovered [ואתפח] [*ve'itpach*].

- Bava Metzia 87a

For Elisha, it doesn't say "he requested mercy and there was healing [רפואה] [*refuah*]," or that "there was resting [מיתפח] [*mitpach*]," it only says that he recovered [ואתפח] [*ve'itpach*], which means that he himself was healed, and he didn't request mercy for the entire world, until Hezekiah came and innovated the healing of illness.

וימה שאמרו הש"ס, לא הנה איגיש דחליש וכו', צריך לומר דלישנא דחליש מורה שנוטה למות, דהיינו לאחר הגזר דין כנראה מפירושו של רש"י ו"ל שם "בעא רחמי נהנה חולשא", שיחלה האדם קודם מותו ויצנה לביתו, נהנה חולשא רוצה לומר חולי אשר ימות בו, ואף לא הנה איגיש דחליש ואיתפח רוצה לומר לא היה אדם שיחלה וינטה למות שייתפח, עד דאתא אלישע ובקש רחמים על עצמו דוקא, וחזקנה חדש עמידת החולי על כל העולם פלו, לפי שפא בטענת אבי אביו דוד שלא חטא אלא כדי להורות תשובה לרבים דהיינו לכל העולם פלו, ומשום הכי לא נתחדש עמידת החולי לחזקנה לבדו אלא לכל העולם.

As far as what the Gemara said, "there was no man who became sick [חליש] [*chaleish*] and recovered," it needs to be said that the language of "*chaleish*" teaches that he was on the verge of death, which is after his decree was issued. This is as it appears from the explanation of Rashi, of blessed memory, where the Gemara states that until Jacob, there was no illness [leading up to death; rather, one would die suddenly], and Jacob came and "requested mercy, and there was illness," that prior to death a person could give a charge to his house. "Illness came" means a sickness from which one would die, and "there was no man who became sick and recovered" means that there was no man who became ill and on the verge of death who was healed, until Elisha came and requested mercy specifically upon himself. Hezekiah innovated the healing of illness for the entire world, because he came with the claim of "my father's father," David, that he only sinned in order to teach repentance to many, which is to all of the people. Because of this, healing sickness wasn't innovated for Hezekiah alone, rather to the entire world.

⁴³ Yalkut Shimoni on Prophets 243.

אסר זה מדבר ב"יורדי הים" ואף בכאן אמר "ונפלאותיו לבני אדם", דאמרינו בפרק ה' דבתרא, ותו יתיב ר' יוחנן וקא דריש, עתיד הקב"ה להביא אבנים טובות ומרגליות שלשים על שלשים, ומעמידן בשערי ירושלים, לגלג עליו אותו תלמיד וכו', לימים הפליגה ספינתו ביים, חזא מלאכי השרת דקא מנסרי אבנים טובות ומרגליות שהם שלשים על שלשים, אמר להו: הני למאי? אמרו ליה שעתיד הקב"ה להעמידן בשערי ירושלים. אתא לקמיה דר' יוחנן, אמר ליה: דרוש רבי, ולך נאה לדרוש, פאשר אמרת פן ראיתי וכו'. אם פן "יורדי הים" דכתיב בהו "המה ראו מעשי ה'" וכו', נגידו לבני אדם נפלאותיו שראו אבנים טובות כל פה גדולות, כדי שיאמינו לדברי חז"ל.

After this, the text speaks about “those who go down to the sea,” and even here it says, “They should give thanks to the L-rd for His kindness, His wondrous deeds for mankind,” for as it is said in the 5th chapter of tractate Bava Batra:

Rabbi Yochanan sat and taught: In the future, the Holy One, Blessed be He, will bring precious stones and pearls that are thirty by thirty [cubits] . . . and set them in the gates of Jerusalem. A certain [unnamed] student sneered at him, [saying]: Now we do not find [precious stones even] of [the size of] an egg of a dove, [and yet] all of this we will find?

After a while, his ship went to sea; he saw ministering angels sitting and sawing precious stones and pearls that were thirty by thirty [cubits] He said to [the angels]: What are these for? They said to him that in the future, the Holy One, Blessed be He, will place them in the gates of Jerusalem.

[Later, the student] came before Rabbi Yochanan [and] said to him: [Please] interpret, my teacher, it is fitting for you to interpret, as you said, I have seen. [Rabbi Yochanan] said to him: Worthless man, if you had not seen, you would not have believed. You are mocking the statement of the Sages. [Rabbi Yochanan] set his eyes upon him, and he turned into a pile of bones.

- Bava Batra 75a

If so, “those who go down to the sea,” about whom it is written, “they have seen the works of the L-rd and His wonders in the deep,”⁴⁴ they should tell mankind His wonders, that they saw precious stones so enormous, in order that they should believe the words of the sages, of blessed memory.

⁴⁴ Ps. 107:24.

והטעם שְׁבִהוּלְכֵי מִדְּבָרוֹת אָמַר "יִצְיָלִים", מִשּׁוּם דְּאִמְרִינוּן בְּפֶרֶק ג' דְּסוּטָה הַגִּיעַ לְפָרִישַׁת דְּרָכִים נִיצוּל מִכָּלֵם, וְהֵם שְׁ"תֵעוּ בְּמִדְבָּר" כִּיּוֹן שְׁהִדְרִיכֶם "בְּדֶרֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל" שְׂיִיף בְּהוּ לְמִימַר "יִצְיָלִים". בְּחֻבוֹשׁ וְחוֹלָה אָמַר "יּוֹשִׁיעִים", שְׁמִילַת יִשׁוּעָה כְּתוּב רַד"ק (בְּשׁוּרֵשׁ שׁוּעַ) שְׁרֻצוֹנוֹ לֹמַר שׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלָּה, וּבְאֵלוֹ הִיָּה סְלִקָא דְעֵתָא לֹמַר שְׁהִקֵּב"ה לֹא יִשְׁמַע תְּפִלָּתְכֶם, מִפְּנֵי שְׁדָבָר פְּשוּט הוּא שְׁקוּדָם שְׁקוּרָאִים אֵל ה', וְאִף לְאַחַר שְׁנִזְעָקוֹ וְקָרָאוּ לוֹ, הֵם מִשְׁתַּדְּלִים עַל יַד בְּשָׂר וְדָם, עַל יַד אֲנָשִׁים קְרוֹבִים לְמַלְכוּת וְנוֹתְנִים שׁוֹחֵד. וְאִף הַחוֹלָה רַץ אַחַר הָרוֹפְאִים, וּבִטְחוֹנָם בְּה' אֵינּוּ בִּיטְחוֹן גָּמוּר. וְאִפְלוּ הִכִּי שׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלָּתְכֶם, וְלָכֵן כְּתוּב בְּהוּ "יּוֹשִׁיעִים". וּבְ"יּוֹרְדֵי הַיָּם" אָמַר "יּוֹצִיאֵם" מִפְּנֵי שֶׁלֹּא דִי אִם יִצְיָלִים מֵאוֹתָהּ הַסְּעָרָה שְׁמָא יִנְדָּמְנוּ לָהֶם רוּחוֹת אַחֲרוֹת, וְלָכֵן לֹא נִקְרָאוּ נִיצוּלִים עַד שְׂיִצְאוּ מֵהֵימָן, כִּי בְּפִתְעָא פְתִאוּם הֵימָן חוּזְרִי וְהוֹלְדִי וְסוּעֵר עֲלֵיהֶם.

Answer to Question 6: The reason that for travelers in the wilderness it is said, “He rescued them,” is because of what is said in the 3rd chapter of tractate Sotah:

There is a parable of a man who is walking in the blackness of night and the darkness, and he is afraid of the thorns, and of the pits, and of the thistles, and of wild animals and of the bandits, and he does not know which way he is walking.

If a torch of fire [analogous to a mitzvah] comes his way, he is safe from the thorns and from the pits and from the thistles, but he is still afraid of wild animals and of the bandits, and still does not know which way he is walking.

Once the light of dawn [analogous to Torah study] rises, he is safe from the wild animals and from the bandits, but he still does not know which way he is walking.

If he arrives at a crossroads [and recognizes the way], he is rescued from all of them.

- Sotah 21a

These are “those who erred in the wilderness,” since he guided them “a direct way to reach a settled place,” which is relevant to why it says about them that “He rescued them.”

For the prisoner and the sick person, it said, “and He saved them,” as the RaDaK wrote that the word “salvation,” with the root שׁוּעַ, means to say “Who hears [שׁוֹמֵעַ] prayer.”⁴⁵ With these words, you may think to say that the Holy One, Blessed be He, would not hear their prayers, because it is obvious that before they call upon G-d, and even after they cry out and call to Him, [the prisoners] endeavor to achieve their freedom through human intermediaries, through people close to the monarchy, and they give bribes, and even the sick person will run after doctors, and thus it appears that their trust in G-d is not an absolute trust. Even so, He hears their prayers, and therefore it is written regarding them “and He saved them.”

For “those who go down to the sea,” it said, “He brought them out,” because it is not enough to save them from that particular storm, lest other winds occur. Therefore, they are not considered saved until they have exited the sea, because suddenly, the sea can return and rage upon them.

⁴⁵ Rabbi David Kimchi (1160–1235), (“RaDaK”), Provençal rabbi, biblical commentator, grammarian and philosopher. His Sefer HaShorashim identifies the roots of Hebrew words, and discusses their meaning.

ועל השפנות הסדר של התנא מסדר המזמור נראה לתת טעם, שהכתוב נקט הסדר מה שהיה תחלה בעולם, והתנא היה בארץ ישראל ונקט הסדר מארץ ישראל דשכיח יותר. והתחיל בהולכי מדברות ש"תעו במדבר" "רעבים גם צמאים" וכו', שנה היה ישמעאל דכתיב ביה "ותלך נמתע במדבר באר שבע" ואחר כך "ויכלו המים" וכו' "וינזעקו אליה" "והצילם.

Answer to Question 4: **Regarding the change in the order of the Tanna in Berachot 54b, from the order of the Psalm, it seems to offer a reason, that the Scripture takes as the order which was first in the world, i.e., in chronological order, as will be discussed. But the Tanna was in the Land of Israel, and took the order that was more common in the Land of Israel.**

[The Psalm] began with those traveling in the wilderness, that “those who erred in the wilderness,” “hungry and thirsty,” which was Ishmael, as it was written about his mother and him, “And she wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba,”⁴⁶ and afterward, “when the water was gone,”⁴⁷ and “they cried out to the L-rd,”⁴⁸ and He rescued them.

אחר זה בא יוסף שהנה חבוש בבית האסורים דכתיב ביה "קץ שם לחשך" וכו' "אכן אפל וצלמנות" זמן ניתן ליוסף כמה שנים יעשה בבית האסורים. ועוד אמר קרא "ענו בכבל (רגליו) [רגליו] ברזל באה נפשו", וזהו "ישבי חשך וצלמנות אסירי עני וברזל", ולמה היה חבוש, "פיהמרו אמריאל נעצת עליון נאצו", שדבר לשון הרע על אחיו כמו שאמרו ו"ל על דפה שספר עליהם שקוריו לאחיהם עבדים, "לעבד נמפר יוסף", ועל שחשודים בעריות "נתשא אשת-אדניו את-עיניה" וכו'. ואף על פי שהיו שונאים אותו לא היה לו לשנוא אותם, כי זו היתה "נעצת עליון", כמו שאמרו ו"ל למה "נישנאו אתו" כדי שיקרע הים בפניהם, פסים, פס ים. אי נמי "נעצת עליון נאצו" בשביל שפטח על שר המשקים ולא בטח על הקב"ה לשוב שם שתי שנים יותר, ולבסוף, "כשלו ואין עזר" כי "לא-יזכר שר-המשקים את-יוסף וישפחהו", אז, "וינזעקו אליה" "והצילו.

After this, Joseph came, who was incarcerated in the prison. It is written about him, “He sets an end to darkness, and searches out to the furthest bound, the stones of thick darkness and of the shadow of death.”⁴⁹ In the Midrash, it is written, “He set a time for Joseph, how many years he would spend in the darkness in prison.”⁵⁰ Also, Scripture said, “His feet were subjected to fetters; an iron collar was put on his neck”⁵¹—this is an example of “Some lived in deepest darkness, bound in cruel irons.”⁵²

Why was he imprisoned, “because they defied the word of G-d, spurned the counsel of the Most High,”⁵³ that he spoke slander upon his brothers. As [Rashi] of blessed memory said, “because of the slander which he related about them that they called their brothers slaves, ‘Joseph was sold for a slave.’ (Ps. 105:17).”⁵⁴ Also, because they were suspected of

⁴⁶ Gen. 21:14.

⁴⁷ Gen. 21:15.

⁴⁸ Ps. 107:6.

⁴⁹ Job 28:3.

⁵⁰ Gen. Rabbah 89:1.

⁵¹ Ps. 105:18.

⁵² Ps. 107:10.

⁵³ Ps. 107:11.

⁵⁴ Rashi on Gen. 37:2, based on Gen. Rabbah 84:7.

sexual immorality, “his master’s wife cast her eyes upon Joseph and said, ‘Lie with me.’”⁵⁵ I.e., both are example of measure-for-measure punishment. **Even though they hated him, he should not have hated them, because this was “the counsel of the Most High,”** as [the Rabbis] of blessed memory said, **why is it that “they hated him”?**⁵⁶ **So that the sea would split for them,** and the ornamentation [פסים] [*passim*] of his tunic [also referred to as “the coat of many colors”]⁵⁷ can be read as two separate words, *pas yam*, strips in the sea.⁵⁸

Alternatively, “they spurned the counsel of the Most High”—because he trusted in the chief cupbearer⁵⁹ and did not trust in the Holy One, Blessed be He, he sat there in the prison two additional years, and in the end, “they stumbled with no one to help,”⁶⁰ because “the chief cupbearer did not think of Joseph; he forgot him.”⁶¹ Then, “they cried out to the L-rd,” and He rescued him.⁶²

אחר זה בא חזקיהו שחטא שלא עסק בפרקיה ורביה ומי שאין לו בנים חשוב כמת, וזהו, "אֲוֹלִים מִדְּרָךְ פִּשְׁעֵם", דומיא למה שחטא שחשוב כמת, אמר לו "מת אתה ולא תחיה", "קל-אכל" וכו', "ויגיעו עד-שער מנת" כמו שאמר לנביא, כך מקובלני וכו' אפילו חרב סדה וכו', "וינזעקו" וכו' ו"יושיעם: ישלח דברו וירפאם" ישלח לו הקב"ה נבואת ישעיה לומר "ראיתי את-דמעתך" וכו'.

After this came Hezekiah, who sinned by not engaging in procreation,⁶³ and one who has no children is considered as if he is dead. This is why it says, “Fools, because of their sinful way, and their iniquities, had to answer,”⁶⁴ to what is it similar that sin is considered as though being dead? He said to him, “for you are dead, and will not live”⁶⁵—“all food was loathsome to them; they reached the gates of death,”⁶⁶ as he said to the prophet, “I have received a tradition from the house of my father’s father, [i.e., from King David]: Even if a sharp sword rests upon a person’s neck, he should not prevent himself from [praying for] mercy.” “And they cried out to the L-rd in their adversity, and He saved them from their troubles. He gave an order and healed them,” that the Holy One, Blessed be He, sent him the prophecy of Isaiah, saying, “I have seen your tears; I hereby add fifteen years to your life.”⁶⁷

⁵⁵ Gen. 39:7.

⁵⁶ Gen. 37:4.

⁵⁷ Gen. 37:3.

⁵⁸ Gen. Rabbah 84:8.

⁵⁹ Gen. 40:14.

⁶⁰ Ps. 107:12.

⁶¹ Gen. 40:23.

⁶² To parallel Ps. 107:13, in the case of a prisoner, the *Zera Shimshon* should have here used the verb יושיעו, “and He saved him.”

⁶³ Berachot 10a.

⁶⁴ Ps. 107:17.

⁶⁵ Isaiah 38:1; II Kings 20:1.

⁶⁶ Ps. 107:18.

⁶⁷ Isaiah 38:5. The parallel text in II Kings 20:5 reads, “I have seen your tears; I am going to heal you.”

אחר זה בא יונה דכתיב ביה "וימצא אָנְיָה" וכו' "ותשליכני מצולה בלבב ימים ונהר יסבבני", ואומר במדרש שראה כמה נפלאות בפועל הדג במצולות ים. וזהו, "יורדי הים באניות" "המה ראו מעשי ה' ונפלאותיו במצולה: ויאמר ונעמד רוח סערה" כמו שאמר הכתוב "וה' הטיל רוח-גדולה אל-הים" "יעלו שמים ירדו תהומות" וכו' "וכל-חכמתם תתבלע". דהיינו כל החכמה שהיה להם להקל הספינה היתה נבלעת ולא היתה מועלת כלום, ונעק אל ה' והוציא, וכאן הוסיף וא"ו ואמר "וימצוקתיהם" מה שאין פן באחרים שאמר "ממצוקותיהם" לבד, בשביל שהיו ליונה שתי הצלות, אחד שמתחלה היה בדג נקבה והיה מצטער והטילו בדג זכר כדי שיהיה שם יותר בריוח, ועוד אחר כך שהטילו ליבשה.

After this came Jonah, as it is written about him, “and he found a ship,”⁶⁸ etc., “You cast me into the depths, into the heart of the sea, the floods engulfed me”⁶⁹ and the Midrash says that he saw many wonders in the belly of the fish in the depths of the sea.⁷⁰ This is what is meant: “Those who go down to the sea in ships”—“they have seen the works of the L-rd and His wonders in the deep. By His word He raised a storm wind,”⁷¹ as Scripture writes, “He cast a mighty wind upon the sea,”⁷² “mounting up to the heaven, plunging down to the depths . . . all their wisdom was swallowed up.”⁷³ That is, all of the wisdom they had to lighten the ship was swallowed up, and was completely ineffective, but he cried out to G-d, and He saved him. Here, a *vav* is added as the prefix meaning “and,” and it is said, “and from their troubles [וממצוקותיהם], He saved them,”⁷⁴ which is not so for the other cases, that for them it said only, “from their troubles [ממצוקותיהם], He saved them.”⁷⁵ This addition of the prefix “and” is because Jonah had two salvations: One salvation was that initially it was a female fish, and he was suffering as it was very constrictive, and He cast him into a male fish, in order that there would be more room for him, and also afterward, the second salvation was that He cast him onto dry land.⁷⁶

Thus, we see that the Psalm followed chronological order: Ishmael, representing the traveler in the wilderness; Joseph, who was imprisoned; Hezekiah, who became ill; and Jonah, who went down to the sea in a ship.

⁶⁸ Jonah 1:3.

⁶⁹ Jonah 2:4.

⁷⁰ Midrash Tanchumah, parashat Vayikra 8.

⁷¹ Ps. 107:24–25.

⁷² Jonah 1:4.

⁷³ Ps. 107:26–27.

⁷⁴ Ps. 107:28.

⁷⁵ Ps. 107:6, 13, 19.

⁷⁶ Jonah 2:1 refers to a male fish, *dag*, where Jonah spent 3 days. Jonah 2:2 then says that Jonah prayed from the belly of the *dagah*, a female fish, and verses 3–10 praise G-d for saving him. Then verse 11 state that G-d spoke to the *dag*, a male fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land. Thus, perhaps one could interpret verse 1 as meaning Jonah spent a total of 3 days inside of a fish, and verse 2 means that he started out in a female fish, prayed and was transferred to a male fish where he had more room, and finally in verse 11, the male fish vomited him out onto dry land. Yalkut Shimoni on Prophets 550:2 states the opposite, that Jonah started in a male fish where there was plenty of room, and then G-d arranged for Jonah to be transferred to a female fish, who because of pregnancy was uncomfortable and spit Jonah out onto dry land.

אָמַנְם הַתַּנָּא כְּמוֹ שֶׁיִּדְוַע שְׁהַתַּנָּאִים הָיוּ בְּאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל, דָּבַר בַּהֲנוּהָ, וְנִקְטַת תַּחֲלָה "יִוְרְדֵי הַיָּם" כִּי אֵי אֶפְשָׁר לָנוּ שְׂלֵא לִירַד לַיָּם שְׁהָרֵי חֵלְקוֹ שֶׁל זְבוּלוֹן הָיָה יָם דְּכַתִּיב "זְבוּלוֹן לַחֹף יָמִים יִשְׁפֹּן" וְאֶמְרִינוּ בְּמַגִּלָּה שְׁאָמַר לוֹ הַקָּב"ה הַפֶּל יִהְיֶה צְרִיכִין לָהּ עַל יְדֵי חֵילְזוֹן דְּכַתִּיב "וּשְׁפָנֵי טְמוּנֵי חוֹל". וְ"וּשְׁפָנֵי" זֶה חֵילְזוֹן שֶׁהוּא דָּבַר סְפוּן לְתוֹךְ הַיָּם כְּמוֹ שְׁפָרֵשׁ רַש"י שֶׁם בְּרִישׁ מַגִּילָה.

However, the Tanna of the Talmud, as we know that the Tannaim were in the Land of Israel, spoke in the present tense. He initially chose the wording “those who go down to the sea,” because it is impossible for us not to go down to the sea, as the portion of Zebulun was the sea, as it is written, “Zebulun shall dwell by the seashore,”⁷⁷ and it is said in tractate Megillah (6a) that the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to him, “everyone will need you because of the *chilazon*,” as it is written, “and the hidden hoards of the sand.”⁷⁸ Jews are commanded that when they wear four-cornered garments, they should have fringes at the corners, including a thread of *techeilet*, sky-blue.⁷⁹ The source of the dye is identified as the *chilazon*, believed by many to be the *Murex trunculus* snail. The “hidden” is referencing the *chilazon*, which is something hidden within the sea, as Rashi explained there at the beginning of tractate Megillah.

אַחַר זֶה אָמַר הוֹלְכֵי מִדְּבָרוֹת, כִּי מִי שֶׁהָיָה רוֹצֵה לִילֵף לְבָבֵל לְלִמּוּד תּוֹרָה הָיָה צְרִיךְ לְלַקֵּת דְּרָף מִדְּבָרוֹת, וְכֵן מִי שֶׁהָיָה רוֹצֵה לִילֵף לְאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

After this, the Tanna mentioned those who wander in the wilderness, because one who wished to go from the Land of Israel to Babylon to study Torah had to travel by way of the wilderness, and similarly anyone wanting to go from Babylon to the Land of Israel.

וְאַחַר זֶה אָמַר חוֹלָה כְּדֹאמְרִינוּ בְּכַתּוּבוֹת מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהִנְנָה הִיפָּה בּוֹדֵק, וְשִׁינוּי נֶסֶת וְשִׁינוּי אֲוִיר גּוֹרְמִים לְבֵא לִידֵי חוּלֵי.

After this, the Tanna mentioned the sick person, as it is said in tractate Ketubot, that a man may not generally force his wife to move without her consent, even if it’s moving from a bad residence to a pleasant residence, “because a pleasant residence tests” the individual, i.e., one who is used to a bad residence might still not want to move to a nicer residence, and a change in habits or a change in the air can cause one to become ill.⁸⁰

וְאַחַר זֶה אָמַר חֲבוּשׁ, כִּי לְאַחַר שֶׁבָּאנוּ בְּגָלוֹת יַד הָאוּמוֹת תִּקִּיפָה עָלֵינוּ, וּבְעֵי לְאוֹדוּנֵי בְּאֶפֶי עֲשָׂרָה לְפָרְסֵם הִנֵּס וְדִלְיָהוּוּ תְּרֵי רַבְּנָן, דְּאֶמְרִינוּ בְּפֶרֶק קַמָּא דְּבִרְכוֹת בְּשָׁנִים שְׁעוֹסְקִים בְּתוֹרָה, תְּרֵי מִפְתָּכֵן מִלְּיָהוּ בְּסִפְרֵי הַזְּכוּרוֹת, כְּדֵי שֶׁיִּהְיֶה לְזַכְרוֹן תְּמִיד זֶה הִנֵּס שְׂלֵא יִשְׁכַּח מִמֶּנּוּ, וְנוֹדָה לֵה' כְּדֵי שֶׁיַּעֲשֶׂה עִמָּנוּ נְסִים אֲחֵרִים.

After this, the Tanna mentioned the prisoner, because after we came to exile, the hand of the nations was strong upon us, and it was necessary to give thanks in the presence of ten

⁷⁷ Gen. 49:13.

⁷⁸ Deut. 33:19.

⁷⁹ Num. 15:38: “Speak to the Israelite people and instruct them to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments throughout the ages; let them attach a cord of blue to the fringe at each corner.”

⁸⁰ Mishnah Ketubot 13:10; Ketubot 110b.

men to publicize the miracle, and two of them must be Sages.⁸¹ As it is said in the 1st chapter of tractate Berachot, regarding two people who are engaged in Torah, “For two, their words are written in the Book of Remembrance,” in order that this miracle of the Redemption from exile should be forever remembered and not forgotten, and we will acknowledge G-d in order that he will perform other miracles for us.

ובצווי קרבן תודה מצאנו רמז לאלו הארבעה והרמז הוא בראשי תיבות ס'ל'ת ל'סם ס'מז ל'קריב: ס'ייב ל'יתן תודה לה' חולה מ'דבר ס'בוש מצולות י'ם ק'ריבה ר'פואה י'ציאה ב'ריקה, כלומר אלו הארבעה סייבים ליתן תודה לה', על אשר נמן קריבה להולכי מדבר, שמתעה בדבר ונתרחק ממקומו ועתה נתקרב, החולה הנה לו רפואה, יורדי הים יצאו ממנו וזהו יציאה, והסבוש ברח ונגמלט וזהו בריקה.

For the commandment of the thanksgiving offering, we find a hint to these four categories of people, and the hint is in the acronyms: “With cakes of leavened bread he shall bring an offering [ס'ל'ת ל'סם ס'מז ל'קריב] with the sacrifice of his peace-offerings for thanksgiving.”⁸² These 14 letters stand for the following: These are **obligated [ס'ייב] to give [ל'יתן] thanks [תודה] to G-d [לה']**: The **sick person [חולה]**, the one lost in the **wilderness [מדבר]**, the **prisoner [סבוש]**, and the one at risk of the **depths of the sea [מצולות ים]**. They must offer thanks for: proximity [קריבה], healing [קריקה], bringing out [יציאה], and escape [בריקה].

That is as if to say: These four are obligated to give thanks to G-d: for those to whom He gave proximity [קריבה] to a settled place for travelers in the wilderness, who erred on their way and who became distanced from their place, but now they are brought near to it; for the sick person, there is healing [קריקה]; those who go down to the sea will exit from it, and this is “bringing out” [יציאה]; and the prisoner flees and escapes, and this is “fleeing” [בריקה].

וענינו יש לדקדק בדברי רז"ל שאמרו ארבעה צריכין להודות ולא אמרו סייבים להודות. ויש לומר דהואיל ששקר ההודאה צריכה להיות באפי עשרה וכו' משום הכי לא קאמר סייבים, דמי יימר דמזדקקו ליה, וכשאינו מוצא עשרה אין לו שום חוב אלא צריכים, דדוקא בשמוצא עשרה צריד להודות.

Still, one must check the words of [the rabbis] of blessed memory, who said that four must [צריכין] give thanks, but did not say they are obligated [סייבים] to give thanks. It can be said that since the main form of thanksgiving must be done in the presence of ten men, because of this they did not say “obligated,” for who says those ten will be available to him. When he cannot find ten, he has no obligation, only they are required. But certainly, when he finds ten, he needs to give thanks.

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⁸¹ Berachot 54b: “Abaye said: And he must [offer] thanks before ten [people], as it is written, ‘Let them exalt Him also in the congregation of the people [and praise Him in the assembly of the elders]’ (Ps. 107:32). Mar Zutra said: Two of them [must be] Sages, as it is stated: ‘And praise Him in the assembly of elders.’”

⁸² Lev. 7:13.