

**Shayla:** What is the Book of Life?

**Meforshim:**

The idea of the Book of Life (“Sefer ha ch’aim” in Hebrew) first appears at the time Moses pled with the Lord to not destroy the people utterly for worshipping the golden calf while Yahweh was giving Moses the Law on Mount Sinai.<sup>1</sup> Like the faithful shepherd he was, Moses stood with the people and basically said “What you do to them, do to me too.”

In his argument, Moses implied that he and the people were already in the book and that recalcitrant sin would get them erased from it. The Lord confirmed this by saying that only those who stubbornly remained in their sins would be erased. He further intimated that the Book would be a critical element “on the day I settle accounts.”

This concept of stubborn sin resulting in one’s name being blotted out of the Sefer ha Ch’aim was continued when God called on the people to choose life under the Law or death outside of it. The Lord made it clear that anyone who thought to himself “I will have peace even though I follow my own stubborn heart” was well on their way to destruction. He stated that He would not be willing to forgive such a recalcitrant person and that their name would be “blotted out” under heaven.<sup>2</sup>

Much may be learned about the Sefer ha Ch’aim from King David. When Hashem took King David’s baby in response to David’s adultery, deceit and murder, David took comfort in the knowledge that his baby was in heaven. As we will see shortly, entrance into heaven is contingent upon one’s name being in the Book of Life. Therefore David believed his baby was automatically written into the Book at conception.<sup>3</sup>

As Hashem had already said in Exodus, only our rebellion removes us. Since a child cannot be held accountable for its sins, a child who dies under that “age of accountability” automatically goes to heaven.

Afterward, in his psalm of repentance, King David asked the Lord to “blot out” his rebellion.<sup>4</sup> So not only our names (in essence our existence) but also our actions are recorded in the Book of Life. David also stated that God also records our day to day “wanderings” and our emotional trials.<sup>5</sup>

When wicked people say that there is no advantage to being holy or following the Lord God and Yahweh’s people encourage one another to continue in godly ways, the Lord takes notice and writes it down in His Book. On the day that He settles accounts, everyone will see first hand the advantage of obedience.<sup>6</sup> This fits with the Lord’s statement to Moses that it would be a critical element on the day He settles accounts.<sup>7</sup>

In a messianic psalm, David predicted that those who rejected the One struck by God would find their guilt compounded and that they would not share in Yahweh’s righteousness. He prophesied that these rebels would be erased from the Book of Life and not be recorded among the righteous. Thus we understand that those who do not appear in the Book of life will not enter into heaven and that the pivotal issue is acceptance of the Messiah.<sup>8</sup>

David went so far as to say that all our days are written in the Book and planned before a single one begins.<sup>9</sup> Transcendent Ehyeh asher Ehyeh,<sup>10</sup> through His foreknowledge, is able to predict everything we do and apparently has the entire record already in the Book. This fits neatly into

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 32:31-34; Deuteronomy 9:14

<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 29:18-21

<sup>3</sup> 2 Samuel 12:22-23

<sup>4</sup> Psalm 51:1-4

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 56:8

<sup>6</sup> Malachi 3:16-18 cp Matthew 25:34; Luke 12:4-5

<sup>7</sup> Exodus 32:34

<sup>8</sup> Psalm 69:24-28

<sup>9</sup> Psalm 139:14-17

<sup>10</sup> I will be because I will be; Exodus 3:14

Christ's statement that both the Kingdom and those who would inherit it were prepared "from the foundation of the world."<sup>11</sup>

This does not mean that we are simply living out the stories God wrote in his Book of Life. We still have free will. Paul explained that within the immanent framework we have the choice of accepting Christ or not. Transcendent and timeless God however, can look ahead and see who will make the right choice. Those that God foreknows will choose well are then predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son. Those who are predestined are called. As He knew they would, they respond obediently and are thus justified. Praise be the Lord, those who are thus justified will one day be gloried.<sup>12</sup> Small wonder that we call Him El Gadol Gibor Yare, the great, mighty and awesome God!

There is a sense in which we may consider the Book of Life a will and testament of the Lord Jesus. He validated it through His death on the Cross.<sup>13</sup> In other words His death made it possible to have one's name permanently in the Book and for us to know it now – well before the Day of Accounting.

When a person rebels against God, the Lord may pronounce a curse upon them, writing calamity into their particular chapter of the Book of Life.<sup>14</sup> Thus false prophets or false teachers, who not only personally rebel but also lead others astray, will not be recorded in the register.<sup>15</sup>

God does not want to do this. He does not want anyone to die.<sup>16</sup> The fact that everyone is automatically written into the Book of Life at conception and is only blotted out after a lifetime of rebellion proves this. Hashem wants everyone to be saved and has provided a way to ensure that we are in the Book of Life. There is only one way however, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>17</sup>

Peter also understood God's great patience and associated the Day of the Lord with the Day of Accounting. He taught that understanding this particular doctrine should result in holy conduct and godliness as we wait and earnestly desire the coming of the Day of God. He said that the doctrine of the Book of Life would allow us to live without fear, dwelling on His promise of redemption.<sup>18</sup>

Those who have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Master and submitted their lives to His rule are written in the Book of Life.<sup>19</sup> They are called the "assembly of the firstborn", or the "righteous".<sup>20</sup> Our primary source of joy and relief should therefore not be in the particular gifts that Yahweh has granted us, but in the fact that our names are written in the Book of Life. Every other consideration should be secondary to that one great fact.<sup>21</sup>

Daniel predicted that in the end terrible trials will occur. Only those who are found written in the book will escape.<sup>22</sup>

John continued this thought, saying that those who are "dressed in white clothes" would never have their names erased from the book of life and that their place in the Book of Life would be confessed before the Father.<sup>23</sup> Only they will be allowed to enter the New Jerusalem.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, those who are not found in the Book of Life will be slaughtered.<sup>25</sup> They will be subject to a spirit of delusion and will be deceived by the Antichrist.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Matthew 25:34

<sup>12</sup> Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2, 18-21

<sup>13</sup> Hebrews 9:16-17

<sup>14</sup> Jeremiah 22:28-30

<sup>15</sup> Ezekiel 13:9; Matthew 23:15 cp vv35-36

<sup>16</sup> Ezekiel 18:30-32

<sup>17</sup> 1 Timothy 2:3-6

<sup>18</sup> 2 Peter 3:9-13

<sup>19</sup> Philippians 4:3

<sup>20</sup> Hebrews 12:23

<sup>21</sup> Luke 10:20

<sup>22</sup> Daniel 12:1

<sup>23</sup> Revelation 3:5 cp Matthew 10:32-33

<sup>24</sup> Revelation 21:27

<sup>25</sup> Revelation 13:7-8

<sup>26</sup> Revelation 17:8; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12

As to when the Book of Life will be brought out and used, John said that it would not take place until after the Millennium. There are apparently other books also opened at this time but they remain unnamed. I do not believe them to be “volumes” of the Book of life because of the use of the word “another” as though the Book of Life is somehow intrinsically different from them. However, the most critical one is evidently the Book of Life.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Revelation 20:7-15