

## Mizmor 001

# The Message of The Torah

### Key Concepts

In this first chapter of Book of Tehillim, King David conveys the underlying message of the Torah to later generations. The Jew will achieve fulfillment only if he lives a life that is centered around learning Torah. But to achieve such a life he must overcome the many bad influences that can lead him astray. David likens the Torah life to the lush greenery of a growing tree. He contrasts this with the empty life of those who reject Torah values. The wicked are like straw, which is vulnerable to every passing wind and to ultimate destruction.

The basic unit of Tehillim is the mizmor (song). Thus, each of the 150 chapters of the book is identified as a separate mizmor. However, David does not begin using the word mizmor to introduce an individual song until the third mizmor (Chapter 3). With that mizmor he also begins the general practice of identifying the author and theme of the song. Most of the mizmorim were composed by David himself, guided by the Divine spirit which descended upon him from time to time. Towards the end of his life David undertook the monumental task of editing and assembling the 150 mizmorim into the form we have today. The mizmorim are commonly identified by the numbers 1 through 150. To facilitate cross-referencing mizmorim in the NAFSHI project, we have chosen to express these numbers in a three-digit format (001, 002, etc.).

**Navigating Tehillim.** David wove many basic themes of Judaism throughout the 150 mizmorim which make up the Book of Tehillim. To help the reader navigate the vast sea of concepts in Tehillim we have added Navigating Tehillim links such as this wherever they seemed appropriate. In Mizmor 001 David introduces us to the fulfillment that comes from a life that is centered around learning Torah. In Mizmor 016 he adds that such a life depends upon gratitude to Hashem and constant awareness of His presence.

### Exploring the Mizmor

**PART 1. MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE.** David HaMelech begins by reminding his listeners of the dangers that can arise from associating with wicked people. Such influences take a person away from the great satisfaction that Torah gives to those

who are committed to it.

(א) אֲשֶׁרִי הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא הִלֵּךְ בְּעֵצַת רְשָׁעִים וּבְדַרְךְ חַטָּאִים לֹא עָמַד וּבְמוֹשֵׁב לְצִים לֹא יָשָׁב: (ב) כִּי אִם בְּתוֹרַת ה' חִפְצוֹ וּבְתוֹרָתוֹ יִהְיֶה יוֹמָם וּלְיָלֵה:

*(1) Fortunate is the man who has not walked in the counsel of resha'im (wicked people), who has not spent time on the path of chata'im (sinful people), and who has not sat in the gatherings of scoffers. (2) Rather his only desire is for Hashem's Torah and he reflects on his Torah day and night.*

**PART 2. THE GOOD LIFE.** David likens the Torah life to the lush greenery of a growing tree. It has fulfillment in the present and can look forward to a promising future.

(ג) וְהָיָה כְּעֵץ שָׁתוּל עַל פְּלִגֵי מַיִם אֲשֶׁר פְּרִיו יִתֵּן בְּעֵתוֹ וְעָלְהוּ לֹא יִבּוֹל וְכָל אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה יִצְלִיחַ:

*(3) He is like a tree that has been planted beside streams of water, which yields its fruit in due season. His leaf does not wither and everything that he does is successful.*

**PART 3. THE EMPTY LIFE.** David contrasts the good life with the fate of those who reject Torah values. The wicked are like straw, which is vulnerable to every passing wind and to ultimate destruction.

(ד) לֹא כֵן הָרְשָׁעִים כִּי אִם כְּמֵץ אֲשֶׁר תִּדְפְּנוּ רוּחַ: (ה) עַל כֵּן לֹא יִקְמוּ רְשָׁעִים בְּמִשְׁפָּט וְחַטָּאִים בְּעֵדַת צַדִּיקִים: (ו) כִּי יוֹדַע ה' דַּרְךְ צַדִּיקִים וְדַרְךְ רְשָׁעִים תִּנְאַבֵּד:

*(4) Not so are the resha'im. They are like the straw that the wind blows away. (5) Therefore the resha'im will not be found guiltless in judgment, nor will the chata'im be included in the assembly of the tzaddikim, ... (6) for Hashem knows the way of the tzaddikim, but the way of the resha'im will perish.*

## Learning the Mizmor

### PART 1. MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE.

(א) אֲשֶׁרִי הָאִישׁ  
אֲשֶׁר לֹא הֵלֵךְ בְּעֵצַת רְשָׁעִים

**Fortunate** and praiseworthy **is the man** — אֲשֶׁרִי הָאִישׁ who has taken care to avoid bad influences. Such a man (אִישׁ) has sought fulfillment in life through activities that ennoble him. This means **that he has not walked** — אֲשֶׁר לֹא הֵלֵךְ where he might receive **advice from the resha'im** — בְּעֵצַת רְשָׁעִים who devote their lives to unworthy activities, such as building wealth for its own sake or gaining power over others.

וּבִדְרוֹךְ חַטָּאִים לֹא עָמַד

Since he has avoided engaging in discussions with them, he **has surely not spent time on the path** frequented by **sinful** people — וּבִדְרוֹךְ חַטָּאִים לֹא עָמַד. This path exposes a person to the possibility of sinful behavior, which is degrading even though the sin may be unintentional or inadvertent.

וּבְמוֹשָׁב לִצְיִים לֹא יָשָׁב:

And since he has avoided tarrying in places where he might meet an undesirable influence, **he has not sat in the gatherings of idlers and scoffers** — וּבְמוֹשָׁב לִצְיִים לֹא יָשָׁב who entertain themselves by mocking sincere people and worthy ideals.

(ב) כִּי אִם בְּתוֹרַת ה' חָפְצוֹ

He does not want to get drawn into the time wasting habits of idlers **because his only desire is for Hashem's Torah** — כִּי אִם בְּתוֹרַת ה' חָפְצוֹ. The more he learns, the more he remembers and understands.

וּבְתוֹרָתוֹ יִהְיֶה יוֹמָם וָלַיְלָה:

As he takes possession of its wisdom it becomes *his* Torah. **And** because he loves it, he **reflects on his Torah day and night** — וּבְתוֹרָתוֹ יִהְיֶה יוֹמָם וָלַיְלָה.

PART 2. THE GOOD LIFE.

(ג) וְהָיָה כְּעֵץ שְׂתוּל עַל פְּלִי מַיִם  
אֲשֶׁר פְּרִיו יִתֵּן בְּעֵתוֹ

A person who is immersed in learning Torah **is like a tree — וְהָיָה כְּעֵץ that has been planted beside refreshing streams of water — שְׂתוּל עַל פְּלִי מַיִם**. Such a tree **yields its fruit of Torah wisdom in due season — אֲשֶׁר פְּרִיו יִתֵּן בְּעֵתוֹ** with nothing wasted. Even the Torah scholar's random remarks will be not be wasted for his students will obtain wisdom from the way he uses language.

וְעָלְהוּ לֹא יִבּוֹל  
וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה יִצְלִיחַ:

His conversations are like the **leaf that does not wither — וְעָלְהוּ לֹא יִבּוֹל**. In fact, for such a person, **everything he does is successful — וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה יִצְלִיחַ** in giving value to others.

PART 3. THE EMPTY LIFE.

(ד) לֹא כֵן הַרְשָׁעִים  
כִּי אִם כַּמֶּץ אֲשֶׁר תִּדְפְּנוּ רוּחַ:

**Not so are the wicked — לֹא כֵן הַרְשָׁעִים** who should be avoided. They lack wisdom and there is nothing to learn from them. **Instead, they are like the straw — אֲשֶׁר תִּדְפְּנוּ רוּחַ — כִּי אִם כַּמֶּץ**.

(ה) עַל כֵּן לֹא יִקְמוּ רְשָׁעִים בַּמִּשְׁפָּט,  
וְחַטָּאִים בְּעֵדַת צְדִיקִים:

**Therefore the wicked will not be found guiltless in judgment — עַל כֵּן לֹא יִקְמוּ רְשָׁעִים בַּמִּשְׁפָּט nor will the sinful be included in the assembly of the tzaddikim — וְחַטָּאִים בְּעֵדַת צְדִיקִים ...**

(ו) כִּי יוֹדַע ה' דְּרֹךְ צְדִיקִים

**... for Hashem knows and appreciates the way of the tzaddikim — כִּי יוֹדַע ה'** **דְּרֹךְ צְדִיקִים**. And so He pays continuing attention to their needs. In contrast, He detests the wicked and pushes them aside.

## וְדַרְךְ רְשָׁעִים תֵּאבֵד:

Accordingly, **the way of the *resha'im* will perish** – וְדַרְךְ רְשָׁעִים תֵּאבֵד. They will not survive the Day of Judgment and will not be included in the assembly of the *tzaddikim*.

## Living the Mizmor

Listed below are some of the lessons that you can draw from this mizmor, as well as some of the thoughts you might have in mind when you say the words of the mizmor as a *tefillah* asking for your needs, or expressing your gratitude and devotion to Hashem.

### Lessons for Life - Your Behavior.

[1:1] **SEEK FULFILLMENT.** – אֲשֶׁרִי הָאִישׁ – “*Fortunate is the man.*” Seek your fulfillment in life through activities that ennoble you spiritually. These are the activities that make you an “*ish*” (the highest form of human being) rather than those that degrade you, like building wealth for its own sake or achieving power over others.

[1:1] **AVOID RISK OF SIN.** – וּבְדַרְךְ חַטָּאִים לֹא עָמַד – “*who has not spent time on the path of sinful people.*” Avoid situations in which you are vulnerable to sinful behavior, even if it is unintentional or inadvertent.

[1:1] **AVOID IDLENESS.** – וּבְמוֹשָׁב לִצִּים לֹא יָשָׁב – “*who has not sat in the gatherings of scoffers.*” Don’t expend your valuable time in idle conversation, mockery, and sarcasm.

[1:2] **LEARN TORAH.** – בְּתוֹרַת ה' חִפְצוֹ – “*Rather his only desire is for Hashem’s Torah.*” Devote yourself to the wisdom of Torah, not only to learn it but to make the Torah part of you.

### Tefillos for Life - Your Berachah.

[1:1] **BASIC NEEDS.** – אֲשֶׁרִי הָאִישׁ “*Fortunate is the man.*” [1:3] – וְהִיָּה כֶּעֶץ – וְהִיָּה כֶּעֶץ – “*He is like a tree that has been planted beside streams of water.*” Ask Hashem for sustenance, health and happiness.

[1:3] **SUCCESS.** – וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה יִצְלִיחַ – “*everything that he does is successful.*” Ask Hashem for success in your endeavors and initiatives.

[1:3] CHILDREN. – אֲשֶׁר פְּרִיו יִתֵּן בְּעֵתוֹ – “*which yields its fruit in due season.*” Ask Hashem for the blessing of good and healthy children to follow in your footsteps.

[1:6] VERDICT IN JUDGMENT. – כִּי יוֹדַע ה' דְּרֹךְ צַדִּיקִים – “*for Hashem knows the way of the tzaddikim.*” Ask Hashem to be counted among the *tzaddikim* and not among the *resha'im* so that your destiny will be that of the *tzaddikim*.

### **Lessons for Life - Your Attitude.**

[1:6] OPEN UP. – כִּי יוֹדַע ה' דְּרֹךְ צַדִּיקִים – “*for Hashem knows the way of the tzaddikim.*” Open yourself up to Hashem. Let Him in to your heart, so that He can actively know you.

## **Sources**

The primary source used in the interpretation of the *pesukim* of this mizmor was the commentary of Rashi. It is anticipated that interpretations from other sources will be incorporated in future revisions.