

Mizmor 015

Who is Worthy?

Key Concepts

In this mizmor David gives us a unique summary of the entire Torah. As the Gemara points out (*Makkos* 24a), David reduces the 613 *mitzvos* of the Torah to 11 fundamental principles. Here he introduces these principles, explaining that this is what it takes for a Jew to be worthy of serving Hashem in the *Mikdash*, the place where the *Shechinah* dwells.

Hashem placed mankind in this world together with the lower creatures, but He charged man with the duty of rising above his circumstances and distinguishing himself from the other creatures. However, as long as man remains immersed in the pleasures of this world, he is unworthy of being in the vicinity of the *Shechinah*, even for a short while.

Navigating Tehillim (1). In Mizmor 008 David describes man's special place in the universe as being superior to that of all other creatures. However, he is given this exalted position on condition that he remains worthy.

Navigating Tehillim (2). A common feature of many mizmorim is the importance of developing a closeness with Hashem, which is described as dwelling in His house or His tent. Here in Mizmor 015 (15:1) David examines himself and asks, "*Who is worthy of being in Your tent?*" In Mizmor 026 the desire to dwell in Hashem's house became part of David's spiritual development as he said, "*I love the shelter of Your House*" (26:8). In Mizmor 027 he incorporates that desire into his tefillah when he says, "*there is one thing I have asked of Hashem, and it is this that I will seek, that I dwell in the House of Hashem all the days of my life*" (27:4).

Exploring the Mizmor

PART 1. WHO IS WORTHY? David states the purpose of the mizmor in the form of a question:

(א) מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד ה' מִי יִגֹּר בְּאֶהְלֶךָ מִי יִשְׁכֵּן בְּהַר קֹדֶשְׁךָ:

(1) Hashem, who is worthy of being in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy mountain?

The holy mountain was initially Har Tzion, which was where David kept the *aron* (Ark) of Hashem. Later the *aron* was moved by *Shlomoh Hamelech* to Har HaMoriah, the site which was revealed to David as the location of the future Bais Hamikdash.

PART 2. THE 11 PRINCIPLES. David answers the question with a list of 11 fundamental principles, identified here as [1] through [11].

(ב) [1] הוֹלֵךְ תָּמִים [2] וּפִעַל צְדָק [3] וְדִבֵּר אֱמֶת בְּלִבּוֹ: (ג) [4] לֹא רָגַל עַל לְשׁוֹנוֹ [5] לֹא עָשָׂה לְרֵעֵהוּ רָעָה [6] וְחָרְפָה לֹא נָשָׂא עַל קָרְבּוֹ: (ד) [7] נִבְזָה בְּעֵינָיו נִמְאָס [8] וְאֵת יְרֵאֵי ה' יַכְבֵּד [9] נִשְׁבַּע לְהִרְעוֹ וְלֹא יָמַר: (ה) [10] כִּסְפוֹ לֹא נָתַן בְּנִשְׁאָה [11] וְשִׁחַד עַל נְקִי לֹא לָקַח ...

(2) [1] He walks in perfect innocence. [2] He does what is right. [3] He speaks the truth in his heart. (3) [4] He has no gossip on his tongue. [5] He does no harm to his fellow. [6] He does not embarrass his close relative. (4) [7] In his eyes, a person who is contemptible [because of his sins], is repulsive. [8] He honors those who fear Hashem. [9] He takes an oath to his own [physical] detriment and he does not retract it. (5) [10] He does not lend his money at interest. [11] “[If he is a judge] he does not take a bribe to favor an innocent [party].

PART 3. CONCLUSION. David concludes the mizmor (in the latter part of posuk 5) by assuring his listeners that those who practice these principles will have Hashem’s support:

... עֲשֵׂה אֵלֶּה לֹא יִמוּט לְעוֹלָם:

The one who does these [things] will never falter.

Learning the Mizmor

PART 1. WHO IS WORTHY?

(א) מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד

A **mizmor** composed **by David**.

ה' מִי יְגוֹר בְּאַהֲלֶךָ
מִי יִשְׁכֵּן בְּהַר קִדְשֶׁךָ:

Hashem, who is worthy of being in the courtyard of **Your tent** — ה' מִי יְגוֹר

בְּאֵהָלָךְ, which is the holy *Mikdash*, where Your *Shechinah* resides? **Who may dwell on Your holy mountain** — מִי יֵשֶׁבֶן בְּהַר קֹדְשֶׁךָ, where Your *Mikdash* stands.

PART 2. THE 11 PRINCIPLES.

(ב) הוֹלֵךְ תָּמִים

[1] **He walks in** the path of **perfect innocence**, observing the *mitzvos* of Hashem whole-heartedly and sincerely, without consciously interpreting their meaning to suit his own convenience.

וּפְעֵל צְדָק

[2] **He does what is right** towards others. He is careful that all his actions will be done with fairness, so that he does not cause harm or pain to another person against the *halachah*.

וְדַבֵּר אֱמֶת בְּלִבּוֹ:

[3] **He speaks the truth** not only with his mouth but **in his heart**, which is the essential part of a person. Not only do his actions in financial dealings conform to his verbal commitments, they also conform to the thoughts that he has in his heart.

(ג) לֹא רָגַל עַל לְשׁוֹנוֹ

[4] **He has no gossip on his tongue**. He is not like a spy who is eager to uncover secrets about people. He knows that even the truth can cause great harm.

לֹא עָשָׂה לְרֵעֵהוּ רָעָה

[5] **He does no harm to his fellow**. He faithfully observes all the prohibitions against harming another person, even when he himself has been the victim of deceptive practices.

וְחִרְפָּה לֹא נִשְׂאָה עַל קָרְבּוֹ

[6] **He does not** insult or **embarrass his close relative** or anyone else with whom he comes in contact.

(ד) נִבְזָה בְּעֵינָיו נִמְאָס

[7] **In his eyes, a person who is contemptible** — נִבְזָה בְּעֵינָיו — because of his sins, **is repulsive** — נִמְאָס, even if the wicked person is rich and powerful.

That applies even if the sinner is his own father. King Chizkayah irreverently dragged the remains of his dead idol-worshipping father Achaz on a bed of ropes —

Makkos 24a.

וְאֵת יְרֵאֵי ה' יִכְבֵּד

[8] He honors those who fear Hashem. In contrast to his feeling of disgust towards the rare wicked person with whom he comes in contact, he respects all those many who are occupied with learning Torah and doing good deeds.

נִשְׁבַּע לְהִרְעוּ וְלֹא יִמָּר

[9] He takes an oath to his own physical detriment — נִשְׁבַּע לְהִרְעוּ to fast, desist from material pleasures, and give money to charity. **He** stands firmly behind his oath and **does not retract it** — וְלֹא יִמָּר. The reason that he takes an oath is because he knows he is committing himself to something difficult and he uses the power of the oath to prevent his *yetzer hara* from discouraging him.

(ה) בְּסִפּוֹ לֹא נָתַן בְּנִשְׁפָּךְ

[10] He does not lend his money at interest, even when the borrower is fully agreeable to paying it. Nevertheless he knows he would be taking the money of his fellow unjustly.

The reason that David places great emphasis on this sin is because the world views it as a common practice and it does not have the negative connotation of robbery and theft. However, David does not add to the severity of the Torah's requirement, and therefore he does not object to taking interest from a non-Jew. The reason is that the restriction against taking interest is based on the principle of doing chesed to a fellow Jew. That requirement does not apply to a non-Jew unless the non-Jew also practices chesed with the Jew.

וְשֹׁחַד עַל נְקִי לֹא לִקַּח

[11] If he is a judge he does not take a bribe to favor an innocent party, all the more so to favor a guilty party. He also does not take advantage of an innocent party who wants to pay a bribe as insurance against an unfavorable verdict. Even though the bribe is not affecting the judge's ruling, it is wrong for him to accept it.

PART 3. CONCLUSION.

עֲשֵׂה אֵלֶּה לֹא יִמוּט לְעוֹלָם:

The one who does these things — עֲשֵׂה אֵלֶּה, including all the relevant positive and negative commandments, **will never falter** — לֹא יִמוּט לְעוֹלָם. Not only will he be eligible to be in the presence of the *Shechinah*, Hashem will support him whenever he is threatened with harm since he is fulfilling the purpose of his being

in this world.

Living the Mizmor

Listed below are some of the thoughts that you might have in mind when you say the words of the mizmor as a *tefillah* and some of the lessons that you can draw from this mizmor.

Tefillos for Life - Your Relationship with Hashem.

[15:1] A PLEA FOR GUIDANCE. – ה' מִי יָגוּר בְּאֶהֱלֶךְ – “*Hashem, who is worthy of being in Your tent?*” Ask Hashem to guide you in doing what is needed to please Him and maintain an ongoing closeness with Him.

Lessons for Life - Your Behavior.

[15:2] SINCERITY. – הוֹלֵךְ תָּמִים – “[1] *He walks in perfect innocence.* Observe the *mitzvos* of Hashem whole-heartedly and sincerely, without consciously interpreting their meaning to suit your convenience.

[15:2] FAIRNESS. – וּפְעַל צְדָק – “[2] *He does what is right.*” Act charitably toward your fellow man and make sure not to cause him harm or pain.

[15:2] TRUTH. – וְדַבַּר אֱמֶת בְּלִבּוֹ – “[3] *He speaks the truth in his heart.*” Let your spoken words conform to what is in your heart.”

[15:3] NO GOSSIP. – לֹא רָגַל עַל לְשׁוֹנוֹ – “[4] *He has no gossip on his tongue.*” Don’t reveal private information, even if true, and even if seemingly innocent.”

[15:3] NO HARM. – לֹא עָשָׂה לְרֵעֵהוּ רָעָה – “[5] *He does no harm to his fellow.*” Avoid actions that cause financial or emotional harm to others.”

[15:3] NO INSULT. – וְחִרְפָּה לֹא נִשְׂאָה עַל קָרְבּוֹ – “[6] *He does not embarrass his close relative.*” Don’t insult another person or embarrass him in any way. Treat him as though he were your close relative, with whom you want to maintain a long-lasting friendly relationship.”

[15:4] NO FLATTERING. – נִבְזָה בְּעֵינָיו נִמְאָס – “[7] *In his eyes, a person who is contemptible [because of his sins], is repulsive.*” Don’t flatter a sinful person, even if he is rich and powerful.”

[15:4] RESPECT. – וְאֶת יְרֵאֵי ה' יִכְבֹּד – “[8] *He honors those who fear Hashem.*” Be respectful towards individuals who are occupied with learning Torah and doing good deeds.”

[15:4] STAY COMMITTED. – נִשְׁבַּע לְהִרְעוֹ וְלֹא יָמַר – “[9] *He takes an oath to his own [physical] detriment and he does not retract it.*” If you make a vow to desist from a material pleasure, don't weaken your commitment.”

[15:5] NO INTEREST. – כִּסְפוֹ לֹא נָתַן בְּנִשְׁךָ – “[10] *He does not lend his money at interest.*” If you lend someone money, don't charge him interest.”

[15:5] NO BRIBES. – וְשֹׁחַד עַל נְקִי לֹא לָקַח – “[11] *He does not take a bribe to favor an innocent [party].*” If you have the duty of judging a situation don't accept a bribe of any kind, even if you are convinced it will not affect your judgement.

Sources

The primary sources used in the interpretation of the pesukim of this mizmor are listed below.

ג - [6] רד"ק	א - אבן עזרא, מצודות, נר לרגלי
ד - [7] רש"י, נר לרגלי	ב - [1] אבן עזרא, רד"ק, נר לרגלי
ד - [8] רש"י, נר לרגלי	ב - [2] אבן עזרא, רד"ק, נר לרגלי
ד - [9] אבן עזרא, רד"ק	ב - [3] רש"י, אבן עזרא, רד"ק,
ה - [10] רד"ק	נר לרגלי
ה - [11] אבן עזרא, נר לרגלי	ג - [4] אבן עזרא, רד"ק, נר לרגלי
ה - אבן עזרא, נר לרגלי	ג - [5] רד"ק, נר לרגלי

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