

Mizmor 119

002 - The Testimonies

Key Concepts (Aleph 2)

How do we make the transition from an abstract Torah of ideals and laws into the reality of day-to-day experience? Hashem has given us the means to actually live a Torah life by incorporating into the Torah the major element called the Testimonies (עֲדוֹת). These are the narratives and mitzvos that bear witness to the Creation of the world and the historical events of our Jewish national experience.

Our forefathers who witnessed these events passed the oral record along with the written Torah to their children and grandchildren. After thousands of years the continued existence of our nation is itself part of this unique legacy.

Every Jew is charged with the responsibility of serving as a living link in the chain of Torah truth and carrying forward the gift that he has received from the generation that came before him. As the stories of the past are told and retold they give meaning not only to the events of the past but to the events that we experience every day.

Exploring the Mizmor

The second pasuk of the Aleph group conveys the critical nature of the Testimonies by again starting with the word אֲשֶׁרִי. With this word David affirms that Jews consider themselves fortunate for having been chosen to live a life of special holiness.

(ב) אֲשֶׁרִי נֹצְרִי עֲדוֹתַי בְּכָל לֵב יִדְרְשׁוּהוּ:

Fortunate are they who safeguard His testimonies. They seek Him with all their heart.

Our happiness at being able to live a Torah life is directly related to the עֲדוֹת that make it possible. We are privileged to be part of the grand chain that safeguards the עֲדוֹת by observing the mitzvos and studying the events of the past as they have been handed down to us.

We are fortunate that our positive attitude towards the entire Torah is built on the trust (bitachon) we feel towards the testimony of our forefathers. And so we study

the Torah to understand the will of Hashem and we do so with all our heart that contrasts with the attitude of doubt and skepticism that infects much of the world today.

Our study of the Torah is a constant search for new insights into the ancient words and a new understanding of what those words imply in the lives we lead today.

Learning the Mizmor

(ב) אֲשֶׁרִי נִצְרִי עֲדֹתַי
בְּכָל לֵב יִדְרְשׁוּהוּ:

Fortunate – אֲשֶׁרִי are **they who** have committed themselves to serve Hashem and to **safeguard His Testimonies** – נִצְרִי עֲדֹתַי. They do so by faithfully observing the mitzvos and actively involving their imagination in the narratives of the Torah, that is, by telling, listening, and doing. In their eagerness to understand the wishes of their Creator, **they seek Him with all their heart** – בְּכָל לֵב יִדְרְשׁוּהוּ and a readiness to believe in the truth of what they find.

Additional Insights

A series of insights illuminating this pasuk are presented below. The numbers identifying the insights refer to the listing of sources at the end of the article.

(1) Important opportunities to seek Hashem are the mitzvos associated with holy days of the year, such as Shabbos and the Yomim Tovim. Shabbos teaches us about Creation and the Yomim Tovim teach us about the circumstances surrounding the formation of our nation and the giving of the Torah.

(2) The Testimonies of the Torah demonstrate to us that Hashem governs the world and actively manages every aspect of nature and human history. He is deeply concerned about the doings of His people and shows His concern by reacting to their behavior with a system of rewards and punishments that is specifically designed to promote personal growth and morality.

(3) The Testimonies bear witness to the covenant between Hashem and the Jewish people. Each made a commitment to the other. David first introduced them to Tehillim in Mizmor 019 where he emphasized their trustworthiness and reliability: עֲדוֹת ה' נֶאֱמָנָה (19:8). He also pointed out that they are so

rich in intellectual depth that they make the simple wise (מְחַכְּמֵת פְּתִי).

Sources

The primary sources used for the additional insights illuminating this pasuk are listed below.

(3) רד"ק

(1) - רשר"ה

(2) - מלבים