

## Mizmor 119

# 017 - Kindness

### Key Concepts (Gimel 1)

In the Aleph segment of the Mizmor David introduced the idea that the Torah and mitzvos share a unity of common purpose, which is serving our Creator. He then moved on to the Beis segment in which he approached the vast complexity of the Torah and its wisdom from the perspective of the eager student. He introduced the importance of a systematic program of learning all aspects of the Torah and mitzvos.

David now begins the Gimel segment in which he humbly asks Hashem to grant him an act of Divine kindness. He is hoping to receive from Hashem the ability to withstand all the obstacles and distractions that prevent him from fulfilling his personal mission.

### Exploring the Mizmor

(יז) גַּמַּל עַל עֲבֹדְךָ אֲחִיָּה וְאַשְׁמְרָה דְּבָרְךָ:

*Act with kindness toward Your servant that I may live and keep Your word.*

Here in the Gimel segment of the Mizmor David sees himself as Hashem's devoted servant. In this way he demonstrates that his motivation is pure and he feels justified in humbly asking Hashem to act with kindness towards him.

David hopes that through the kindness of Hashem he will be granted life and strength to enable him to do the will of his Creator. Here David emphasizes that he is not motivated by selfish considerations but by the sincere desire to learn Torah and observe the mitzvos.

### Learning the Mizmor

(יז) גַּמַּל עַל עֲבֹדְךָ

אֲחִיָּה וְאַשְׁמְרָה דְּבָרְךָ:

**Act with kindness toward Your servant** — גַּמַּל עַל עֲבֹדְךָ for that is how I see myself. Grant me health and strength so **that I may live and keep Your word** — אֲחִיָּה וְאַשְׁמְרָה דְּבָרְךָ without being unnecessarily distracted by the needs of daily

life.

## Additional Insights

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

(1) The word **גַּמַּל** generally refers to an action that is driven by a strong feeling, such as love or hate. In this case, David hopes that his devotion will invoke Hashem's love for him and so he will be deserving of Hashem's kindness.

(2) In the previous segment (119-16) David had expressed his determination not to forget the word of Hashem. This strong declaration forms the backdrop to his present plea for life.

(3) David emphasizes that he is not asking for life so that he can enjoy worldly pleasures but so that he will be able to keep the word of Hashem.

(4) David is asking Hashem to help him overcome the distractions that interfere with his devotion to the Torah, such as the effort needed to obtain the necessities of life and the burdens of ill health. He is also concerned with the demands of running the kingdom and fending off enemies.

(5) David has been acquiring Torah knowledge and he now asks for an opportunity to observe the mitzvos and the lessons that the Torah has taught him.

## Sources

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

(4) - ספורנו, אבן יחיאל

(5) - רשר"ה

(1) - מלבים

(2) - אבן עזרא

(3) - רד"ק