

Mizmor 119

021 - Hypocrisy

Key Concepts (Gimel 5)

Unfortunately there are people who choose to deliberately violate some aspects of Hashem's mitzvos for their own convenience and comfort. As bad as that is, they aggravate the effect of their behavior by making a pretense of being fully observant. They do this by publicly distorting the meaning of the mitzvos so that they can claim to be in full compliance.

The hypocrisy of such people has a tragic effect on weak-minded individuals who are ready to accept a spurious interpretation of the halachah. For this reason, David condemns the hypocrites as being accursed (אַרוּרִים). The effect of their hypocrisy can be far-reaching and David calls attention to it so that others will be forewarned and will guard themselves against the danger of being corrupted.

Exploring the Mizmor

(כא) גְּעַרְתָּ זְדִים אַרוּרִים הַשְּׂגִים מִמִּצְוֹתֶיךָ:

You have rejected the accursed deliberate sinners who deviate from [the intent of] Your mitzvos.

In this pasuk David calls down Hashem's rebuke upon the hypocrites who distort His Torah for their own ends. In effect, he warns his listeners to avoid falling into the trap of intentional distortions in the law.

Learning the Mizmor

(כא) גְּעַרְתָּ זְדִים אַרוּרִים

הַשְּׂגִים מִמִּצְוֹתֶיךָ:

You have rejected — גְּעַרְתָּ the accursed deliberate sinners — זְדִים אַרוּרִים who consciously deviate — הַשְּׂגִים from the intent of Your mitzvos — מִמִּצְוֹתֶיךָ because of an erroneous interpretation of what Hashem has declared.

Additional Insights

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

(1) The word **השגים** refers to a deviation from the right path based on an erroneous interpretation of what that path really is. It is based on the root **שגה** and differs from words based on the root **שגג** that imply an error through carelessness. The deliberate sinners justify their sins using an erroneous interpretation of Hashem's will. As bad as their sins are, they are not as pernicious as the erroneous interpretation that they use to justify it. That is why David calls them **אָרוּרִים**.

(2) Another way of understanding this pasuk is that it refers people to who deliberately neglect the study of the halachah because they don't want to put in the effort that it requires. As a result of that conscious neglect they fail to perform the mitzvos properly. This failure cannot be ascribed to innocent error because it is owed to their deliberate failure in learning the Torah as they should.

Sources

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

(1) - רשר"ה

(2) - רד"ק, מצודות