

Mizmor Segment 119-025

Daled: Finding the Way

(Pesukim 025 - 032)

Key Concepts of the Daled Segment

In the Daled series of pesukim David asks Hashem's help in finding his way through the many mitzvos so that he will be able to see how they all fit together. Each of the pesukim addresses a different aspect of the challenges that any person faces in understanding what needs to be done and what to have in mind while it is being done.

Daled 1: Materialism

(כה) דְּבַקָּה לְעֶפֶר נַפְשִׁי חֲיִי כְּדָבָרְךָ:

My soul clings to the dust [of material existence]. Grant me spiritual life in keeping with Your word.

Man was created from the dust of the earth to symbolize the material forces that he needs to overcome to achieve his spiritual potential. Although his physical needs are continually pulling him down, man has the ability to transcend his nature and find the way to a meaningful spiritual life even while remaining connected to his roots in the material world.

David begins the Daled series with a plea for Divine help in overcoming his physical limitations. He knows it is possible because the Torah promises us that we can aspire to a spiritual bond with our Creator even while we continue to cling to the dust from which we were made.

Daled 2: Reckoning

(כו) דָּרַכִּי סִפְרָתִי וַתַּעֲנֵנִי לְמִדְּנֵי חֻקֶּיךָ:

I have reviewed my ways and You have responded to me, teach me Your chukim.

A person should regularly meditate upon the meaning of his life, making a reckoning of his thoughts and his behaviors. When he does this he should do so in full awareness that he has no secrets from his Creator. So in effect his meditation is a dialog with Hashem in which he reveals to Hashem his current state of

self-awareness. This revelation is in the form of a request for help and guidance. If he is honest with himself the thoughts that come into his mind reflect his understanding of Hashem's response.

During the course of this tefillah to Hashem, a person should reveal his needs and desires. He should declare his awareness that Hashem is the only Power that can fulfill them. Although it is a mitzvah to learn Torah, a person depends upon Hashem's kindness to grant him access to the mysteries of Torah knowledge, especially the chukim (decrees) whose full rationale is hidden from him.

Daled 3: Depths

(כו) דָּרַךְ פִּקּוּדֶיךָ הַבִּינֵנִי וְאֶשְׁיַחָהּ בְּנִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ:

Let me understand the way of Your Pikudim, that I may meditate upon Your wonders.

The Pikudim, which David introduced in Aleph 4 (119-04), are mitzvos that are fulfilled by means of our sincere thoughts of trust, belief, gratitude, love, and reverence. Because such mitzvos are essentially abstract, they require more mental effort and therefore they are easy to neglect. David spoke again of Pikudim in Beis 7 (119-07), where he described the close attention he knew the Pikudim deserved.

Even when people have the opportunity to perform the Pikudim, such as when they are reciting Tehillim or standing in prayer before Hashem they instinctively mouth the words superficially. They don't make the extra effort to plumb the depths of meaning that are inherent in the way Hashem has structured our lives and our world and to how that should affect our behavior.

It is true that such deeper thoughts don't readily come to mind because the concrete problems of our lives crowd them out. However, David recognized that with extra effort and the help of Hashem, it is possible to develop a way of thinking by which deeper meaning comes to mind more readily and the wonders of our complex world become easier to focus on. He asked Hashem to help him understand the appropriate way of approaching the Pikudim.

Daled 4: Despair

(כת) דָּלָפָה נַפְשִׁי מִתּוֹגָה קִיַּמְנִי כְּדַבְּרֶךָ:

My soul is weeping out of despair. Revive me in keeping with Your word.

David is frustrated by his failure to find the way to a better understanding of Hashem's mitzvos. His yearning to understand is so intense that he weeps in despair. He is bewildered and feels that this failure is preventing the intimate

connection to Hashem that is so important to him. And so he begs Hashem to revive his spirit and help him make that leap of understanding.

Daled 5: Perversity

(כט) דָּרְךָ שֶׁקֶר הִסַּר מִמֶּנִּי וְתוֹרַתְךָ חֲנִנִּי:

Remove [the attraction of] a false way from me and grant me [insight into] Your Torah.

David appeals to Hashem to help him resist the attraction of false concepts and ideas. He is concerned that the culture of other nations can influence his thinking and draw him away from the true Torah perspective.

He is also concerned with the challenge of correctly interpreting the Torah and mitzvos. He knows that a person having difficulty with a specific Torah concept may be tempted to come up with an original approach that deviates from the basic Torah framework. This is what has happened to false prophets.

David prays to Hashem to help him recognize and resist false patterns of thinking. He knows that once a person has found an idea that seems to work he is reluctant to give it up. And so David realizes that extra help from Hashem may be needed to remove their attraction.

David asks that the kindness of Hashem will continue to favor him with a clear insight into the teachings of the Torah. In this way he and his people will be able to overcome the challenges of perverse ideas in the future.

Daled 6: Commitment

(ל) דָּרְךָ אֱמוּנָה בְּחַרְתִּי מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ שְׁוִיתִי:

I have chosen the way of truth I have placed Your Mishpatim [before me].

David came to realize that a person can perform mitzvos effectively only if he sees each mitzvah as an essential part of a complete way of life that represents the will of Hashem. He also realized that a person must make a conscious commitment to the truth of that way. Although David had pursued a rational understanding of the Pikudim he came to the conclusion that any attempt to defend the truth of each mitzvah as it is being performed is a self-defeating exercise.

A person should glory in his faith and trust in Hashem as a background to all mitzvos. He should think of the positive value and meaning of each mitzvah as he performs it, but without feeling that he has to justify it on its own merits.

Even the Mishpatim, whose rationale makes instinctive sense, should be performed

because they are an essential element of the whole body of perfect service to Hashem.

Daled 7: Understanding

(לא) דְּבַקְתִּי בְּעֵדוּתֶיךָ ה' אֵל תְּבִישָׁנִי:

I have clung to Your testimonies, Hashem, put me not to shame.

David has invested all of his abilities in studying the mitzvos of the Torah. He realizes that success in learning depends upon constant review and so he has firmly attached himself to the body of knowledge, especially the Testimonies which are intimately connected to the direct involvement of Hashem with the life of the nation.

All of his efforts would be a laughing stock if he failed to come away with a meaningful understanding of everything that he has observed. And so he pleads with Hashem to help him close the gap between rote learning and in-depth understanding of what he has absorbed. He asks not to be put to shame by his lack of understanding.

Daled 8: Zerizus

David now concludes the Daled series by expressing a renewed sense of zerizus (energetic enthusiasm) in his approach to mitzvos. He owes his new optimism to the help Hashem has been giving him all along. He realizes that he is not alone and that he is now enabled to pursue the opportunities to do mitzvos with confidence and empowerment.

(לב) דְּרַךְ מִצְוֹתֶיךָ אֲרוּץ כִּי תִרְחִיב לִבִּי:

I will eagerly pursue Your mitzvos, for You broaden my heart.

David had begun the Daled series with a plea for Hashem's help in escaping his material roots in order to achieve his spiritual role in life (Daled 1). With that he hoped to be able to meditate upon the meaning of his existence, especially the mysteries of Torah knowledge expressed in the Chukim for which no rationale is apparent (Daled 2).

David had then asked for Hashem's help in finding meaning in the abstract Pikudim, which involve a man's thoughts of trust, belief, gratitude, love, and reverence (Daled 3). David then went on by asking for a revival of his spirit that has been frustrated by his failure to find the way to a better understanding of the mitzvos (Daled 4).

This was followed by David's plea to help him resist the attraction of false

concepts and ideas (Daled 5). David then rose above narrow perspectives by putting everything he has been learning within the context of a complete way of life representing the will of Hashem (Daled 6).

Finally, David asked Hashem to help him achieve an in-depth understanding of everything he has learned (Daled 7).

Learning the Daled Segment

Daled 1: Materialism

(כה) דָּבַקָה לְעֹפָר נַפְשִׁי
חַיִּי כְּדַבְרְךָ:

By necessity **my soul clings to the dust** of its material existence — דָּבַקָה לְעֹפָר —
נַפְשִׁי. Even so, **grant me spiritual life in keeping with Your word** — חַיִּי כְּדַבְרְךָ.

David acknowledges his involvement in the necessities of physical existence. Even so he is hopeful that a spiritual life close to Hashem remains possible and so he humbly asks for Hashem's help in achieving spiritual fulfillment.

Additional Insights:

(1) Dust also symbolizes death since that is where the body is ultimately interred. David visualizes his present state as one of death and he asks Hashem for a life that transcends death. (אבן עזרא)

(2) When David says כְּדַבְרְךָ, he may be referring to the pasuk in Parshas Haazinu in which Hashem says אָנִי אֶמִית וְאַחֲיָה , "I put to death and I give life". (רד"ק)

(3) Alternately, David may be referring to the promises made through the navi Nassan כִּי יִמְלֹאוּ יָמֶיךָ וְשָׁכַבְתָּ אֶת אֲבוֹתֶיךָ , "When your days are complete and you lie with your forefathers" (Shmuel 2 7:12). (רד"ק)

(4) When David says his soul clings to the dust, he is suggesting that even while the body lives and is not yet buried in the dust, his soul is interred within the material limitations and desires of his body and so he asks Hashem to grant him spiritual life. (מלבי"ם)

(5) When David says his soul clings to the dust, he is referring to his

conscious effort at maintaining humility and devoting himself to the service of Hashem. He hopes that by avoiding arrogance and conceit he will earn the goodwill of Hashem and will be rewarded with life. (נר לרגלי)

Daled 2: Reckoning

(כו) דָּרַכִּי סִפְרֹתַי וַתַּעֲנֵנִי
לְמַדְנִי חֻקֶּיךָ:

In Your presence **I have reviewed my ways** – דָּרַכִּי סִפְרֹתַי and examined my failings. **You have** already **responded to me** – וַתַּעֲנֵנִי with insights into Your Torah and so I continue to immerse myself in learning. I ask that you **teach me** the mysteries of **Your chukim** (decrees) – לְמַדְנִי חֻקֶּיךָ.

Additional Insights:

(1) David declares that when he was afflicted with troubles because of his sins, he confessed his sins to Hashem and was forgiven. Therefore, he believes there is no further reason for Hashem to withhold from him knowledge of His chukim. (נר לרגלי)

(2) David declares to Hashem that his earthly needs and desires have prevented him from absorbing the mysteries of the Torah, but now asks Hashem to answer him and teach him the chukim. (המאירי)

(3) David declares that in his yearning to achieve perfect devotion to Hashem he he has examined his inner most thoughts and Hashem has helped him to find the truth. (בן רמור)

Daled 3: Depths

(כז) דָּרַךְ פְּקוּדֵיךָ הַבִּינֵנִי
וְאֶשְׁיַחָהּ בְּנִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ:

Let me understand the way of approaching the deeper meaning of **Your Pikudim** – דָּרַךְ פְּקוּדֵיךָ הַבִּינֵנִי – **that I may meditate upon Your wonders** – וְאֶשְׁיַחָהּ בְּנִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ that are inherent in the design of Creation.

Additional Insights:

(1) The abstract qualities of the Pikudim are hidden from the eye and

therefore they are described as wonders. (אבן עזרא)

(2) Among the many wonders of Creation is the unique character that Hashem has implanted in each person. In our relationship with other human beings it is important to try to recognize the special qualities of each person and deal with that individual as an expression of the One Who created him. (מלבים, דעת סופרים)

(3) The word וְאֶשְׁיָחָה may also be translated as "I will discuss." David promises Hashem that if he is granted a greater depth of understanding, he will use it to share the wisdom of Hashem's mitzvos with other people. (ספורנו)

(4) When a person studies a complex Torah subject he should not let the technical aspects prevent him from thinking about the inner meaning of the text as it affects his life and his way of thinking about his Creator and other people. (טיב התהלות)

Daled 4: Despair

(כח) דָּלְפָה נַפְשִׁי מִתְנוּגָה קִימְנִי כְּדַבְּרְךָ:

My soul is weeping out of despair – דָּלְפָה נַפְשִׁי מִתְנוּגָה – at my failure to understand Your mysteries. Revive me in keeping with Your word – קִימְנִי כְּדַבְּרְךָ.

Additional Insights:

(1) The word דָּלְפָה is commonly used to refer to the dripping of tears. It is as though the spirit of the soul is being drained away. David looks to Hashem to revive his spirit. (אבן עזרא)

(2) David is in tears out of frustration at his failure to grasp the full of meaning of the Pikudim. (בן רמון)

(3) David pleads for Hashem to revive his spirit as He promised those who return to Him in sincere teshuvah. He feels confident that he will then be able to fulfill his responsibility in serving Hashem. (נר לרגלי)

(4) Despite David's feeling of inadequacy in meeting Hashem's expectations, he turns to Him to plead for a yeshuah. This is a lesson to all of us not to be discouraged by the difficulties we must inevitably face from time time. We

must continue to hope and pray for His yeshuah. (טיב התהלות)

Daled 5: Perversity

(כט) דָּרְךְ שֶׁקֶר הִסַּר מִמֶּנִּי
וְתוֹרַתְךָ חֲנִנִּי:

**Remove the attraction of a false way from me – דָּרְךְ שֶׁקֶר הִסַּר מִמֶּנִּי
and grant me insight into Your Torah – וְתוֹרַתְךָ חֲנִנִּי.**

Additional Insights:

(1) David asked Hashem to give him the heart (energy and intellectual ability) to understand the Torah. (רד"ק)

(2) David asked Hashem to guide his thinking so that as he labors to understand the Torah, he will find the true Torah concepts that he is searching for. (מלבים)

(3) David asked Hashem to grant him a degree of insight into the Torah that is even greater than the effort he puts into it, assuming that he is doing his best with the faculties that he has. (נר לרגלי)

(4) If someone wants to acquire a closeness to Torah he should distance himself from falsehood. This is because the inherent quality of Torah is truth (תורת אמת). The reasoning also applies in reverse. Torah is an instrument that enables a person to avoid false concepts. (אבן עזרא, טיב התהלות)

Daled 6: Commitment

(ל) דָּרְךְ אֱמוּנָה בְּחַרְתִּי
מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ שׁוֹיְתִי:

**I have chosen the way of truth – דָּרְךְ אֱמוּנָה בְּחַרְתִּי. I have placed
Your Mishpatim before me – מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ שׁוֹיְתִי.**

Additional Insights:

(1) David rejected the way of perversity and falsehood in Daled 5. With that preparation he feels ready to make a complete commitment by choosing the way of truth. (אבן עזרא, רד"ק)

(2) In Gimel 4 (119:20) David spoke of having a yearning and love of the mitzvos. Now he says this is not enough. A person must begin with a total commitment and faith in the underlying truth of the Torah and in Hashem's promise that every tzaddik will find his ultimate reward in the World to Come. Otherwise a person's love for mitzvos may be blunted by the constant challenges that life presents (e.g. seeing success among the wicked and misfortune among the righteous). (מלבים)

(3) An alternate meaning for the word שוֹיֵתִי is "I have equated." David has committed himself to the principle of equally respecting every mitzvah despite the circumstance. For example, the Mishpatim are faithfully executed and justice is served whether the amount of money involved is large or small. Every mitzvah expresses the will of the Creator and accordingly it deserves attention. (בן רמוך, אבן יחי"א)

(4) The two parts of the pasuk represent interdependent concepts of faith and action. Total faith (Emunah) is needed for effective action in the performance of mitzvos. At the same time, through careful attention to the details in performing every mitzvah a person will enhance his Emunah and achieve perfection in his commitment to the truth of the Torah way of life. (טיב התהלות)

Daled 7: Understanding

(לא) דְּבַקְתִּי בְּעֵדוֹתֶיךָ
ה' אֵל תְּבִישְׁנִי:

I have clung to Your Testimonies – דְּבַקְתִּי בְּעֵדוֹתֶיךָ and studied them with all my ability. **Hashem, don't put me to shame** – ה' אֵל תְּבִישְׁנִי by denying me Your help in understanding their depth of meaning.

Additional Insights:

(1) David is asking that he not be shamed by a failure to understand what he he has tried so much to learn. (רד"ק)

(2) David is asking that since he presents the public image of a righteous person he not be shamed by being made to suffer in this world. (מלבים)

(3) David is saying that the Testimonies have given him courage to face the

future because they demonstrate Hashem's commitment to mankind. David asks that he not be deceived in his trust. (רשר"ה)

Daled 8: Zerizus

(לב) דָּרַךְ מִצְוֹתֶיךָ אֲרוּץ
כִּי תִרְחִיב לִבִּי:

I will eagerly pursue Your mitzvos – דָּרַךְ מִצְוֹתֶיךָ אֲרוּץ, for You broaden my heart – כִּי תִרְחִיב לִבִּי.

Additional Insights:

(1) David is especially motivated by his renewed understanding of the broad conceptual framework in which all the mitzvos fit. This is the **דָּרַךְ מִצְוֹתֶיךָ**.

(מלבים)

(2) By freeing himself from the distractions of daily material life (see Gimel 4), David has become free to experience the intellectual joy of the mitzvos in their full breadth. (בן רמוך)

(3) David is also motivated to pursue the mitzvos with zerizus because of Hashem's promise of a blessed eternal life. (מצודות)