

## Mizmor Segment 119-033

### Heh: Following the Way

#### (Pesukim 33 - 40)

#### **Key Concepts of the Heh Segment**

In the Heh series of pesukim David asks Hashem's help in carrying out all of the detailed specifics of each mitzvah with insight and understanding. This requires careful preparation and study, followed by close attention and concentration during the actual performance of each mitzvah. David is filled with humility as he approaches this daunting task. He ends the Heh series by asking for the gift of a long life so that he will be able to fulfill his heart's desire

#### **Heh 1: Step by Step**

(לג) הוֹרֵנִי ה' דְּרֹךְ חֻקֶיךָ וְאַצְרְנָה עֵקֶב:

*Teach me, Hashem, the way of Your Chukim, and I will observe them through each step.*

David begins the Heh series by emphasizing his dependence on Hashem's help in actually performing the mitzvos. He is especially concerned with the Chukim since he is missing an adequate rational understanding of these statutes and therefore the technical requirements for observing them are all the more challenging to him. To deal with this challenge he hopes to deal with the mitzvos in a methodical manner, one step at a time.

#### **Heh 2: Heart**

(לד) הִבִּינֵנִי וְאַצְרָה תּוֹרַתְךָ וְאַשְׁמְרֶנָּה בְּכָל לֵב:

*Grant me the understanding to cherish Your Torah, so that I will keep it with a whole heart.*

Many people who are Torah observant, perform the mitzvos out of a sense of duty. But for David this was not enough. He felt the need to incorporate the Torah into his entire being and practice each of its mitzvos as the most important thing in his life. To achieve this exalted level of service to Hashem, he realized that he must have a deep intellectual understanding of what each mitzvah means. This understanding would enable him to emotionally appreciate the value of the mitzvah as a cherished experience. Only then could he achieve his goal, which was to live

the mitzvah with his whole heart.

### **Heh 3: Individuality**

(לה) הִדְרִיכֵנִי בְּנִתְיַב מִצְוֹתֶיךָ כִּי בּוֹ חֲפָצְתִּי:

*Lead me on a personal trail of Your mitzvos, for it is my true desire.*

Up to this point David has been speaking of doing the mitzvos from the point of view of a member of Klal Yisrael. The obligation and privilege of performing every aspect of every mitzvah in accordance with the universal Torah is inherent in being a Jew.

But the way each individual performs a mitzvah is inevitably affected by his unique personality and experiences of life. The challenge for each person is to go beyond the general requirements of the mitzvos and add the texture of his own special aptitudes and strengths. In each moment of the performance of a mitzvah, a person must add something of himself, recreating the mitzvah in his own image within the framework of its halachic requirements.

### **Heh 4: Inclination**

(לו) הִט לִבִּי אֶל עֲדוֹתֶיךָ וְאַל אֶל בָּצַע:

*Incline my heart toward Your testimonies and not to financial greed.*

Each person has a natural inclination to acquire possessions because doing so gives him a sense of increased personal power and potential. Many people respond to that inclination by amassing financial wealth or physical possessions. However, the benefits to be gained by such possessions are fleeting. Despite the illusions of happiness they present, such possessions often end up as being unfulfilling and even destructive.

David asks Hashem to help him in directing his acquisitive inclination to a greed for Torah knowledge. The detailed knowledge that he gains from learning Torah empowers him to perform the many mitzvos that are waiting for him. In this way he gains the sense of accomplishment that comes from fulfilling his mission in the world and he gains the ability to show his gratitude to his Creator.

**Heh 5: Perception**

(לו) הַעֲבֵר עֵינַי מִרְאוֹת שְׁוֵא בְדַרְכֶּךָ חַיִּי:

*Avert my eyes from false perceptions so that I may have life by following Your way.*

Even when person sincerely desires to follow the way of Hashem, he may find himself distracted by false and misleading appearances. A thinking person learns through bitter experience that what he is seeing often does not correspond to reality. Food which appears attractive is not always healthy or tasty. People and advertisements that seem inviting may paint a deceptive picture of integrity and morality even though fraudulence and sin lurk beneath the surface.

How does a person avoid being misled by deceptive sights and sounds? He must distinguish what he sees with what is implied by his imagination. This is not easy. It requires conscious effort and an educated mind. Above all it requires Hashem's help to separate illusion from reality and overcome the temptations of the senses.

The choices that a person makes can have a major impact on his future in this world and the next. And so David asks for Hashem's help in this tefillah, knowing that his life is dependent on it.

**Heh 6: Continuity**

(לח) הִקֵּם לְעַבְדְּךָ אֱמֶתֶךָ אֲשֶׁר לִירְאָתְךָ:

*Fulfill Your word to Your servant regarding fear of You.*

This pasuk reflects what David was to say on the last day of his life. As he lay on his death-bed he instructed his son Shlomo to follow the ways of Hashem: "*So that Hashem will uphold His word ... saying, "If your children will safeguard their way, to walk before Me sincerely, with all their heart and with all their soul, ... no man of you will be cut off from ... the throne of Yisrael."* (Melachim 1 2:4)

In effect, David was granted the privilege and responsibility of founding a royal dynasty that would extend through centuries and reach its ultimate fulfillment with the anointing of the Moshiach. However, David understood that the continuity of his glorious line and the ultimate fulfillment of his mission would depend upon the devotion of his children to the service of Hashem.

David's personal role in this historical drama was dependent upon his ability to inspire future generations through his deeds and his writings. It also depended upon his tefilos because he counted on Hashem's continued support through the generations. Although David's descendants would have to be responsible for their own actions, David prayed that Hashem would act to remove obstacles from their

path and provide opportunities for them to do what is right.

The sixth pasuk of the Heh series represents this tefillah. In it David asks Hashem to make it possible for the promise that He originally made to David to be fulfilled.

### Heh 7: Distractions

(לט) הַעֲבֵר חַרְפְּתִי אֲשֶׁר יִגְרָתִי כִּי מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ טוֹבִים:

*Remove my disgrace, which I have dreaded, for Your mishpatim are good [and I have sought to immerse my soul in them].*

As a dynamic leader, husband, and father David lived a complicated life. Despite his intense yearning for closeness with Hashem he was beset with many duties and distractions that interfered with the spiritual wholeness that was his life goal.

And so he found it necessary to plead with Hashem to help him by reducing the daily distractions and complications that affected him. When he thought about the perfection of the mitzvos and the Torah he found himself in dread of the external factors that were constantly cropping up. He knew it was his challenge to overcome them but he was deeply ashamed of his failings, which he considered his disgrace.

### Heh 8: Yearning

(מ) הִנֵּה תִנְאַבְתִּי לְפִקְדֵיךָ בְּצַדִּיקְתֶּךָ חַיִּינִי:

*See how I have yearned for Your Pikudim; grant me life through Your righteous justice.*

David closes the Heh series of pesukim with a plea for life so that he can immerse himself in doing the mitzvos. Hashem grants life to those who will appreciate its value and will use it wisely. And so David bases his plea on the strength of his yearning for the experience of a life of mitzvos. He describes the granting of life as an expression of the righteous justice of Hashem. It is only just that one who values the good will be rewarded with the means to continue doing what is good.

## **Learning the Heh Segment**

### Heh 1: Step by Step

(לג) הוֹרֵנִי ה' דָּרֶךְ חֻקֶיךָ  
וְאַצְרֶנָּה יַעֲקֹב:

**Teach me, Hashem, the way of Your Chukim – הוֹרֵנִי ה' דְרֹךְ  
וְאֶצְרְנָה – וְאֶצְרְנָה, חֻקֶיךָ, and I will observe them through each step – וְאֶצְרְנָה  
עִקְבֵי.**

*Additional Insights:*

(1) It is important to understand David's attitude of humility in approaching Hashem for help and guidance as he begins the Heh series of pesukim. The Gemara teaches (סוטה ה, א) that Hashem's presence is close to those of a humble spirit. It is only with such an attitude that a person is enabled to fulfill a mitzvah properly. (טיב התהלות)

(2) The word **עִקְבֵי**, heel or foot step, suggests every detailed step along the way (רש"י). Because the heel is the lowest point of the human body, **עִקְבֵי** also suggests the end or result (רד"ק, המאירי). Thus, David is asking Hashem to teach him how to stay on the performance path of each mitzvah until its very end without being distracted (אבן עזרא, רש"ה), or until the very end of his life (מצודות).

(3) Since the word **עִקְבֵי** suggests a result, it also implies a reward for performing mitzvos (אבן עזרא). Was David motivated by the reward? The Mishnah (Avos 4, 2) teaches that the true reward for performing a mitzvah is the opportunity to do another mitzvah and this may very well have been David's motivation here. (אלשיך)

**Heh 2: Heart**

**(לד) הַבִּינֵנִי וְאֶצְרְנָה תּוֹרַתְךָ  
וְאֶשְׁמְרָנָה בְּכָל לֵב:**

**Grant me the intellectual understanding – הַבִּינֵנִי to cherish each mitzvah of Your Torah – וְאֶצְרְנָה תּוֹרַתְךָ, so that I will keep all of the Torah – וְאֶשְׁמְרָנָה with my whole heart – בְּכָל לֵב.**

*Additional Insights:*

(1) Of all the mitzvos David is especially focused on the Testimonies. (ספורנו)

(2) As one understands the Torah in greater depth, he is enabled to seek and

grasp new depths and subtleties. This is all implied by the word **הַבִּינֵנִי** (דעת). (סופרים).

(3) David's desire for increased understanding of the Torah was not motivated by the need to gain a sense of achievement but to demonstrate his love for Hashem and that is why he referred to it as Your Torah. (רד"ק)

(4) The words **אֶצְרָה** (cherish) and **אֶשְׁמְרָנָהּ** (keep) represent two levels of observance. The first (**אֶצְרָה**) is elicited by appreciation of the Torah's inherent value. The second (**אֶשְׁמְרָנָהּ**) is elicited by applying to it all aspects of one's being, his whole heart. (מלבנים)

(5) The heartfelt emotion that one experiences in learning Torah is enhanced by the joy of understanding. (המאירי)

#### Heh 4: Individuality

(לה) הַדְרִיכֵנִי בְּנִתְיֵיב מִצְוֹתֶיךָ כִּי בּוֹ חֲפָצְתִּי:

**Lead me — הַדְרִיכֵנִי on my personal trail — בְּנִתְיֵיב of Your mitzvos — כִּי בּוֹ חֲפָצְתִּי, for it is my true desire —**

*Additional Insights:*

(1) David asks Hashem's guidance (**הַדְרִיכֵנִי**) so that he can understand the unique personal qualities that he himself can bring to bear in doing mitzvos. (מצודות)

(2) In the word **נִתְיֵיב**, David is referring to the minutiae of observances over and above the minimum observances required in performing mitzvos. These additional flourishes are an expression of his own personality. (אלשיך)

(3) David says **כִּי בּוֹ חֲפָצְתִּי**, for it is my true desire, because he knows that to earn Hashem's help he has to show that he really cares about doing what he can to do mitzvos in the best possible way. (טיב התהילות)

Heh 4: Inclination

(לו) הֵט לְבִי אֶל עֵדוּתֶיךָ  
וְאַל אֶל בְּצַע:

**Incline my heart toward Your testimonies – הֵט לְבִי אֶל עֵדוּתֶיךָ and not to financial greed – וְאַל אֶל בְּצַע.**

*Additional Insights:*

(1) David is drawn especially to the Testimonies because their source of gratification is inherent. This is because they openly bear witness to Hashem's goodness and kindness to Klal Yisrael. (מלבים)

(2) David favors the inclinations that give him immediate intellectual satisfaction, such as the Torah and mitzvos, as opposed to financial possessions whose value depends upon how they are used. (בן רמוך)

(3) The attraction to financial gains is referred to as **בְּצַע**, ill-gotten gains, because the love of money is inherently demoralizing and leads to fraudulent dealings. (המאירי)

Heh 5: Perception

(לו) הֶעֱבַר עֵינַי מִרְאוֹת שָׁוָא  
בְּדַרְכֶּךָ חַיִּי:

**Avert my eyes – הֶעֱבַר עֵינַי מִרְאוֹת שָׁוָא from false perceptions – מִרְאוֹת שָׁוָא and grant me life through following Your way – בְּדַרְכֶּךָ חַיִּי.**

*Additional Insights:*

(1) The word **מִרְאוֹת** in this context is not so much referring to the optical ability of the eyes as to the perception by the mind of what the eyes see. (המאירי)

(2) David is confident that by sanctifying his instruments of vision and perception he will have achieved the blessing of life. (טיב התהילות)

(3) David is hopeful of being saved from sin by restraining his perception of the temptations that lead to sin. In reward for avoiding sin, he is confident

that he will be granted the blessing of life. (רד"ק)

### Heh 6: Continuity

(לח) הַקֵּם לְעִבְדְּךָ אִמְרָתְךָ  
אֲשֶׁר לִירְאָתְךָ:

**Fulfill** Your promise of maintaining continuity of the royal line that You made **in Your word to me, Your servant – הַקֵּם לְעִבְדְּךָ אִמְרָתְךָ**, this promise **that was dependent upon** maintaining **the fear of You – אֲשֶׁר לִירְאָתְךָ**.

*Additional Insights:*

(1) David affirms that his intent in asking for the fulfillment of Hashem's promise is not for the sake of personal gain but **לִירְאָתְךָ** for the sake of the fear of Hashem, which will be enhanced by the unbroken line of devotion to Him. (מלבים)

(2) David is demonstrating the attitude that every father should have in praying from the depth of his heart that his own descendents will follow in Hashem's ways and fear Him. (טיב התהילות)

### Heh 7: Distractions

(לט) הַעֲבֵר חֲרָפְתִּי אֲשֶׁר יִגְרָתִּי  
כִּי מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ טוֹבִים:

**Remove my disgrace – הַעֲבֵר חֲרָפְתִּי**, which I have continuously **dreaded – אֲשֶׁר יִגְרָתִּי**, for **Your mishpatim are good – כִּי מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ טוֹבִים** and I have desperately tried to immerse my soul in understanding and performing them.

*Additional Insights:*

(1) David may also have been referring to most prominent sin of his life, the incident with Bas Sheva. Although he had teshuvah and was forgiven, he still saw it as a stain and disgrace which he wished he could erase. (רש"י, רד"ק)

(2) When David spoke about the goodness of the mitzvot he was also thinking about how they protect a person. He realized that as long as he is

dedicated to doing what is right his conscience is clear and he can be free of shame. (רשר"ה)

### Heh 8: Yearning

(מ) הִנֵּה תִאֲבָתִי לְפִקּוּדֶיךָ בְּצַדִּיקְתֶּךָ חַיִּי:

**See how I have yearned for Your Pikudim – הִנֵּה תִאֲבָתִי לְפִקּוּדֶיךָ;  
grant me life through Your righteous justice – בְּצַדִּיקְתֶּךָ חַיִּי.**

*Additional Insights:*

(1) David uses the word **תִּאֲבָתִי** to express such a powerful yearning that it makes him feel faint. When a person faints from the intensity of an emotion he needs to be revived and this is why the word **חַיִּי**, grant me life is so appropriate here. (אבן עזרא)

(2) David uses the word **בְּצַדִּיקְתֶּךָ** because it expresses the kindness of Hashem in conjunction with His justice. David needs that kindness because although he desperately yearns to perform the mitzvos, he may be unable to fulfill his desire. And so he relies on the kindness of Hashem which rewards a person for his intentions to do what is right. (מצודות)