



THE
TEHILLIM PROJECT

Mizmor 1

September 6, 2020

EMOTION

Pondering choices and defining success. Do we want a consistent source of sustenance that is an internal and wholesome success or temporal, empty success. We desire a success that is not based upon Western values.

CIRCUMSTANCE

When a person is making a foundational decision in life; when choosing between two paths, this Mizmor will help give a person the guidance to choose the path which leads to consistent, bountiful success.



Summary of Discussion

Rabbi Avigdor started the discussion by posing three questions:

1. Why is this psalm the one that starts them all?
2. What are the three different groups of persons?
3. What do the tree and straw analogies add to the psalm?

Discussion on Question #1 – Why This Psalm Starts the Psalms.

Rabbi Menashe stated this Mizmor is about a person's interior; what is important is not the person's exterior but rather what is moving a person from deep inside.

Mitch Chargo added that this psalm is about choices and it is the signal for the starting point that many of us have to make: Where to begin? What road/path to choose in life and in the many choices we make during life? Can we see the successful results from our choices? It makes sense to start the psalms with one that emphasizes thought and focus on our choices as we make them and after we make them. Mizmor 1 hits home right away with emphasis on an important choice such as choosing those with whom we surround ourselves (bad influences vs. good influences). Mizmor 1 also provides an immediate source of evaluating the results of our choices (tree analogy vs. straw analogy).

Richard Genirberg added that this psalm is a motivational psalm; we will be fueled and motivated if we year to study Torah.

Discussion on Question #2 – What are the Three Different Groups of Persons?

Ross Paskoff began by examining the three different groups – the wicked, the sinners, and the scorners. The wicked sin intentionally. The sinners sin unintentionally. The scorners live an empty life. There is a fourth group – those who desire Torah.

Rabbi Avigdor said the fourth group, those who desire Torah, is a broad category of people that covers everyone.

Rabbi Menashe said the fourth group, those who desire Torah, do not just desire Torah, but also meditate in Torah.

Rabbi Avigdor clarified the point and said the reference to "those who desire Torah" does not refer to the Torah scholar. Rather, it means that a person lives life with a purpose that is based in Torah.

Rabbi Menashe added that the reference is to the way a person lives life in way of the Torah.

Fred Cohen asked whether studying Torah day and night guarantees one to be a tzaddik? Rabbi Avigdor answered "no". A person could study Torah day and night, but never grow. Rather the person could be nasty or egotistical – the "donkey carrying books".

(Continued on Next Page)

Summary of Discussion

Discussion on Question #3 – What do the Tree and Straw Analogies Add to the Psalm?

Rabbi Avigdor expressed that the analogies revolve around the theme of “success”. The opposite of success is stories. A story is a one-time occurrence but doesn't reflect whom the person telling the story is innately. When people are truly successful, it is a constant stream of stories. The success that David is describing with the tree is constant success, whereas the wicked may have a success once in a while, which is empty like the straw.

Final Analysis:

What is the emotion permeating Mizmor 1?

Rabbi Avigdor summed up the emotion as related choices and how we want to define success. We want a consistent source of sustenance that is an internal and wholesome success versus temporal, empty success. We desire a success that is not based upon Western values.

Under what circumstances (or when) is it appropriate to say or recite Mizmor 1?

When a person is making a foundational decision in life; when choosing between two paths, this Mizmor will help give a person the guidance to choose the path which leads to consistent, bountiful success.