

Tehilim Perek 38

Welcome to NachDaily, covering the entire TANACH one perek at a time. I'm Rabbi Shaya Sussman, and today we'll be discussing Tehilim, chapter 38.

As we learn this perek, keep in mind that Dovid wrote these words for all of us. We should imagine these words applying to our own lives.

Most Meforshim point out that Dovid was referring here to the suffering which he experienced after he was punished for his sin with Bas Sheva. Nasson Hanavi rebuked him for his actions, and Dovid was anxious and distressed about what had occurred.

In the first part of the chapter, Dovid describes the physical pain and suffering that he went through as if arrows were being shot at him. He asked God to stop rebuking him. In verses 9 and 10, Dovid describes feeling depressed, emotionally numb, and uncomfortable in his own skin due to his aveiros.

In the second half of the chapter, he relates the attitude of his alleged friends towards him. Dovid feels that they were false, that they left him in his time of need and seem to be distant from him. Many of us know this feeling.

Dovid ends the perek by affirming his emunah in God.

"I am like a deaf man who doesn't hear, and a mute person who doesn't speak. My adversaries repay good with evil although I constantly admit and take responsibility for my wrong doings. God, please help save me!"

Verse aleph begins somewhat differently:

מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד לְהַזְכִּיר:

A psalm of David lehazkir.

The definition of "lehazkir" sheds light on the entire perek.

The Malbim explains that it literally means "to remind," because this capital reminded Dovid about his sins with Bas Sheva.

Rashi holds that this chapter serves as a reminder for Am Yisrael to say when it's experiencing troublesome times.

The Radak says that this perek serves as a reminder for any individual who is depressed and suffering from personal misdeeds.

There's a great Alshich Hakadosh on this. He explains that because this chapter is full of Dovid's pain and anguish, it really should have been written as a kina-lamentation. Dovid, however, asked himself what complaining about his yessurim and suffering would accomplish. He therefore opened the chapter with Mizmor L'Dovid lehazkir – a song of David to be a reminder.

Dovid turned his suffering into a song to Hashem! He decided to actually sing to God about his pain.

We can learn a great spiritual and psychological lesson from this. Why did Dovid say the word lehazkir – to remember? To remember what?

Perhaps we can say that Dovid was pointing us to our deeper natures, reminding us that we are truly whole and never lacking. We have perfect mental wellbeing within us no matter how depressed or anxious we feel. There is a deeper order to our psychological functioning.

Dovid was reminding us of our true nature. We are not our thoughts and our feelings. Our thoughts and feelings are experienced, but they are not who we are! Each of us is a neshama, soul, part of God, a manifestation of the formless Divine energy behind life.

When we see ourselves as perfectly healthy, it becomes much easier to deal with suffering. We become more resilient, relaxed, and gain greater insight into how to deal with our situations in life.

Let us merit remembering our true Godly nature, to deal with the hardships of life by seeing Divine energy in disguise.

Thank you for listening and have a wonderful day.

