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OU ISRAEL FACULTY

Torat Imecha  
**NACH YOMI**

## Building on the Foundation of Faith

בס"ד

In the coming days, we will transition from the study of Sefer Tehillim to that of Sefer Mishlei. These comprise the first two books of a three part set introducing the Ketuvim, the third section of Tanach. These first three works, Tehillim, Mishlei and Iyov, are known by the acronym Sifrei Eme"t, for the first letter of each sefer. This acronym reflects both the distinct content and style of these three works, which are poetic in nature and focus on fundamental aspects of living a Torah-true life. While in Sefer Tehillim we concentrated primarily on the relationship between man and G-d, in Sefer Mishlei the primary - albeit not exclusive - focus is on the relationship between man and his fellow.

Sefer Tehillim concludes with the verse כל הַנְּשָׁמָה תְהַלֵּל יְיָ הַלֵּלֵהּ - every living soul should praise Hashem. Radak explains that this verse is predicated on the content of the previous verses, in which the psalmist calls upon us to praise Hashem with an array of musical instruments. He suggests that in conclusion, this verse teaches that the sincere praise of the Neshama, the animating spirit residing within the body, in recognition of Hashem's works, is the greatest praise of all. Alternatively, Malbim suggests reading the

word נשימה as נשמה - with every breath we take we should praise Hashem for His great unceasing kindness and for the wonders we continually experience. Every breathing soul should live with a constant awareness of the miraculousness of our very existence. With the echoes of the beauty and depth of Tehillim resounding in our minds, this lofty demand seems quite reasonable; however, as we resume our daily activities, it fades into the recesses of our consciousness.

Perhaps this is why Tehillim is followed by Sefer Mishlei in our Tanach, despite the fact that this is a departure from the order instituted by Hazal in the Talmud (Bava Batra 14b). It brings to mind the explanation as to why the chronological narrative of Sefer Shemot is interrupted after Parashat Yitro, which details the awe-inspiring events of receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai, by the series of practical laws detailed in Parashat Mishpatim, following which the narrative resumes. The Giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai was a cataclysmic, highly charged metaphysical experience. The people were elevated to such an improbably high level of spirituality that according to the midrash, our souls were actually lifted from our bodies and we had to be revived and brought back to the physical

world. The Torah follows this encounter with a set of practical laws to teach us that in order to remain successfully committed to the ideals we embraced at Mount Sinai, we have to engage in constant application of those ideals in the real world. If they remain theoretical, they will soon be forgotten.

Similarly, throughout Sefer Tehillim we were raised to higher levels of consciousness of Hashem's constant Presence in the world. We felt His constant embrace as we faced the challenges and miracles of our ever-changing reality through the lens of the psalmist. How can we hold on to that lofty state of mind as we conclude the sefer? We transition from the divinely inspired words of David HaMelech to the wisdom of his son Shlomo, who advises us how to refine our character so that we make the right choices in our daily lives, choices that are in keeping with the ideals and values we so strongly identified with in Sefer Tehillim.

After outlining these goals in the opening pesukim of Sefer Mishlei, Shlomo exclaims, *יראת ה' ראשית דעת* - Fear of G-d is the beginning of knowledge; fools scorn wisdom and moral instruction. Malbim elaborates: Fear of G-d is a prerequisite for wisdom, for all knowledge stems from Him. Thus, it is only possible to achieve wisdom on a foundation of awe and reverence of Hashem, which in turn is predicated on Emunah, on belief in Hashem and His omnipotence. How fitting that Sefer Mishlei, with its goal of teaching the wisdom and understanding that will direct us to act in keeping with the principles of Torah, follows Sefer Tehillim, which laid the foundation of deepened Emunah and Bitachon in Hashem and in His constant manifestation in the world! ■

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**Mrs. Leah Feinberg** is a master educator who taught at the SKA High School for Girls in Hewlett for twenty-one years, also serving as Tanach Department chairperson and New Teacher Mentor. Leah is currently on the faculty of the OU Israel Center and has taught in all three cycles of the OU Women's Initiative Nach Yomi program

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