

Word Study of Psalm1 “Blessed” אֲשֶׁרִי

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INTRODUCTION

Within the psalms, the expression of human words to and about God, one obtains instruction in various ways regarding worshipping God. One is taught these expressions in song, dance, rejoicing, the giving of thanks, confession of sins, grief, expressing anger, making requests of God, the proclamation of God's Name broadly, and others. As well, one finds precious means for personal and corporal exercise.

For this idea, providing consideration to the utilization of אֲשֶׁרִי will recognize its usage in the Holy Scriptures to other passages related or unrelated. This study will consist of the inspection of the historical tradition, Scriptural usage, direct contextual significance, and exegetical implication of אֲשֶׁרִי in the Tanakh. Consequently, this thesis will contend that Psalm 1 expresses that one's rootedness in God's instruction possesses the key to success in life, the fear of the Lord, according to the Scriptures.

I. GENERIC USAGE OF אֲשֶׁרִי (HISTORICAL/DIACHRONIC/SCRIPTURAL)

In expressions of etymology אֲשֶׁרִי is transliterated 'ešer, Strong's 835). It's historical use from a primitive root meaning 'esh, eh'-sher; from H833; happiness; only in masculine plural construction as interjection, how happy!—blessed, happy.¹

The usage of אֲשֶׁרִי has twenty-seven occurrences within the Tanakh when translated *blessed* and eighteen times when translated *happy*. Considering this number of occurrences, one finds a distinction in its meaning in Psalms 1 where אֲשֶׁרִי is rendered “happiness, blessed of.”² Here, both Psalm 1 and 2 delineate distinctive means to achieve “happiness” (אֲשֶׁרִי, Ps. 1:1; 2:12; notice the inclusio). Both psalms are also unified by a related gathering, specifically teaching in how to realize that happiness. However, the didactic genre is conceivably richer in

¹ Strong's Exhaustive Concordance: New American Standard Bible. Updated ed. La Habra: Lockman Foundation, 1995. <http://www.biblestudytools.com/concordances/strongs-exhaustive-concordance/>.

² F. Brown, S. Driver, and C. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2017), 80; ref.835.

Ps.1— Ps. 2 clearly petitions its listeners to be “wise” (2:10, הַשְׁכִּילוּ) and chart a progression that will amalgamate the veracity declared by the psalm. By comparing the psalms in this way, this idea grows procedural for all that develops: the theme of happiness, as procured by obedience and submission (as commanded in the Torah) to divine rule through God’s adopted “son” (2:7-12); the Davidic kings would hereafter be the “sons” of God, mirroring the close relationship concerning the divine King and human kings.

II. CONTEXTUAL SETTING AND EXEGETICAL MEANING

The contextual setting of Psalm 1 in its fundamental use of the word אֲשֵׁרִי is an expression of a succinct contrast of the way of righteousness and the way of the wicked ending with a summary of the two ways. Further, in contrasting both Psalm 1 and 2, Psalm 1 presents the “two ways” on the individual’s level (one who deals in righteousness), whereas Psalm 2 does so on the level of nations, where God’s chosen king’s primary duty was rooted in God’s Word (Deuteronomy 17:18-20). “The wise refuse to find their fellowship and joy with the wicked. Instead, their delight and joy are in the Torah.”³ Numerous scholars agree that Psalm 1 announces a wisdom theme that apprises the all-inclusive Psalter.

Related to אֲשֵׁרִי is the Hebrew word *ashrai* rendered as “the praises” (a plural noun) or “praiseworthy” (a substantive adjective). It can also mean “enriched”— “Enriched is the man who has not walked after the advice of the wicked.” The implication is the solitary righteous one of 1-3 juxtaposes with the countless wicked ones in 1:1; that is, the righteous individual is to stand out and away from the multitude. “I never sat in the company of revelers, never made merry with them; I sat alone because your hand was on me, and you had filled me with indignation” (Jeremiah 15:17). “Only the redeemed man can worship God acceptably. Only

³ Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King and His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 252.

the renewed man can worship God acceptably and embrace the truth as God has revealed in His Word.”⁴

III. CONCLUSION

The key to the Psalm 1 realizes one's saturation in the word of God. One must “delight” in the Lord. This view is the description of the righteous person who takes joy and pleasure in God's word because of the inherently valuable qualities within. The antithesis delights in other value objects, such as gold and other various riches, a secure dwelling place, or a man's delight in a woman. “The Sermon on the Mount concludes with three illustrations in the Jewish “Two Ways” genre, already modeled in Deuteronomy 30:15-20, the right path that leads to life.”⁵ Here, one finds the message of Jesus and God’s kingdom’s wealth where one seeks first, rather than the riches of the world. “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given thee as well.” Therefore, אֲשֶׁר־יִשְׁמַח is the expression of one who meditates on the Word of God and willingly submits wholeheartedly to the sovereign will of God. “Those who meditate on the Torah will have a stability that will weather every storm, whereas the wicked will perish in the judgment.”⁶

⁴ A. W. Tozer, *The Essential Tozer Collection: The Pursuit of God, The Purpose of Man, The Crucified Life* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2013), 89.

⁵ G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 30.

⁶ Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King and His Beauty*, 252.

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