

Mizmor 002

Defending the Kingdom

Key Concepts

This mizmor is a continuation of the first mizmor where David praises the Torah way of life for every individual Jew. Now he turns to the national level and the need to defend the Jewish people from the cruel nations that continue to threaten their existence. He emphasizes that Hashem has chosen a king to guide the nation and lead its armies. That king is David himself, with whom Hashem has established a warm relationship, like that of a father to a son.

Historical Background

Mizmor 002 was composed seven years after David had been anointed by Shmuel. These were difficult years because there were many who remained loyal to King Shaul and refused to accept David as king. But after finally gaining the loyalty of the entire nation, David faced a new threat. The Plishtim (Philistines) who had long been antagonists of the Jewish people decided to attack before David's kingdom was further consolidated. They were afraid of the power that a united Jewish nation could wield. They were especially concerned that they might end up being subservient to the moral authority of the Jews and the Torah.

Navigating Tehillim. When David first succeeded in suppressing the Plishtim and establishing his new kingdom, he composed a Mizmor (021) in celebration and gratitude.

Exploring the Mizmor

PART 1. THE FOOLISH FOE. The mizmor begins with a rhetorical question in which David wonders at the audacity and foolishness of his enemies.

(א) לָמָּה רָגְשׁוּ גוֹיִם וּלְאֻמִּים יִהְיוּ רִיק: (ב) יִתְיַצְּבוּ מַלְכֵי אֶרֶץ וְרוֹזְנִים נוֹסְדוּ יַחַד
עַל ה' וְעַל מְשִׁיחוֹ:

(1) Why are the nations assembling and why are the peoples talking foolishly? (2) Why are the kings of the earth taking a stand and why are the nobles conspiring in unison against Hashem and against His anointed?

The Plishtim were overconfident because they had recently defeated the Jewish armies under Shaul, killing Shaul and his sons. David now appeared as the Jewish king in Shaul's place and the Plishtim were convinced they could defeat him as well.

David used sarcasm in referring to the leaders of the Plishtim as "kings of the earth." In actual fact they did not have the stature or title of kings.

PART 2. DISCARDING RESTRAINTS. David mocks the enemy by visualizing them as oxen who want to get rid of their yokes. Their objective is be free of the perceived restraints on their behavior.

(ג) נִנְתָקָה אֶת מוֹסְרוֹתֵינוּ וְנִשְׁלִיכָה מִמֶּנּוּ עֲבֹתֵינוּ:

(3) [The Plishtim say,] "Let us remove their harness straps and let us cast off their ropes from ourselves." [But David responds:]

PART 3. THE WILL OF HASHEM. David now reinforces his rhetorical question of Part 1 by describing Hashem's reaction to the schemes of the Plishtim. Because they are going against the will of Hashem their schemes will surely fail.

(ד) יוֹשֵׁב בַּשָּׁמַיִם יִשְׁחַק, אֲדֹנָי יִלְעַג לָמוֹ: (ה) אִזּוּ יִדְבַר אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּאָפוֹ וּבְחֵרוֹנוֹ
יְבַהֲלֵמוּ: (ו) וְאֲנִי נִסְכַּתִּי מִלְּכִי עַל צִיּוֹן הַר קִדְשִׁי:

(4) He who sits in Heaven is laughing. Hashem is mocking them. (5) Then, He will speak to them in His anger and in His wrath He will confound them saying: (6) "I Myself have anointed My king upon Tzion, My holy mountain."

PART 4. DAVID TESTIFIES. David now speaks for himself and defends his position as king.

(ז) אֲסַפְּרָה אֶל חֹק ה' אֶמַר אֵלַי בְּנֵי אֲתָהּ אֲנִי הַיּוֹם יִלְדָתִיךָ: (ח) שָׂאֵל מִמֶּנִּי וְאֲתָנָה
גוֹיִם נַחֲלָתֶךָ וְאַחֲזָתֶךָ אֶפְסֵי אֶרֶץ: (ט) תִּרְעַם בְּשֵׁבֶט בְּרִזָּל כְּכֹלִי יוֹצֵר תִּנְפְּצֵם:

(7) [And so David says:] I must tell you that Hashem said to me, "You are My son. I have begotten you today. (8) Ask of Me and I will make nations your inheritance, and the ends of the earth your possession. (9) You will smash them with an iron sword; you will shatter them like a potter's vessel.

PART 5. EXHORTATION. Having assumed the authority and the power given to him by G-d, David exhorts the Plishtim to desist from their plans and accept the authority of G-d. He concludes with an important reminder that the Jewish people rely on Hashem's protection.

(י) ועתה מלכים השכילו הנסרו שפטי ארץ: (יא) עבדו את ה' ביראה וגילו ברעה: (יב) נשקו בר פן יאנף ותאבדו דרך כי יבער כמעט אפו אשרי כל חוסי בו:

(10) And now you kings, be intelligent. Accept my rebuke, you judges of the earth. (11) Serve Hashem in awe and rejoice, but do it with trembling. (12) Yearn for a pure loyalty, lest He grow wrathful, and [your] way be doomed, for in a brief moment His anger will flare up. Then fortunate will be all those that trust in Him.

Navigating Tehillim. This second mizmor ends with the same word (“ashrei”) that began the first mizmor, demonstrating that the two mizmorim are connected. The Gemara says that when David wanted to show a special affection for a mizmor he started and ended it with “ashrei” (Berachos 10a).

Learning the Mizmor

PART 1. THE FOOLISH FOE.

(א) למה רגשו גוים
ולאמים יהגו ריק:

Since the wicked people of the earth are doomed to perish (*Tehillim* 1:6), **why are** the enemy **nations assembling** — **למה רגשו גוים** to develop battle plans, **and** why are **the peoples talking foolishly** — **ולאמים יהגו ריק** about attacking G-d and the king He has anointed? Don't they realize they will surely fail?

(ב) יתנצבו מלכי ארץ
ורוזנים נוסדו יחד
על ה' ועל משיחו:

Why are **the kings of the earth taking** a united **stand** — **יתנצבו מלכי ארץ** and why are **the nobles conspiring in unison** — **ורוזנים נוסדו יחד**, **against Hashem and against His anointed** — **על ה' ועל משיחו** ? Don't they realize they are fighting against G-d Himself?

PART 2. DISCARDING RESTRAINTS.

(ג) נִנְתְּקָה אֶת מוֹסְרוֹתֵינוּ
וְנִשְׁלִיכָה מִמֶּנּוּ עֲבֹתֵינוּ:

“Let us remove their harness straps — נִנְתְּקָה אֶת מוֹסְרוֹתֵינוּ and let us cast off their ropes from ourselves — וְנִשְׁלִיכָה מִמֶּנּוּ עֲבֹתֵינוּ so that we will not have to serve them.”

PART 3. THE WILL OF HASHEM.

(ד) יוֹשֵׁב בַּשָּׁמַיִם יִשְׁחַק,
ה' יִלְעַג לָמוֹ:

He Who sits in Heaven is laughing — יוֹשֵׁב בַּשָּׁמַיִם יִשְׁחַק at them. His might is infinitely greater than that of mere human beings. Besides that, His throne, the seat of His glory, is symbolically in Heaven above. The Plishtim should realize that anyone in such a lofty position has the advantage. **Hashem is mocking them** — ה' יִלְעַג לָמוֹ for thinking they can nullify His words.

(ה) אָז יִדְבֵר אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּאַפּוֹ
וּבְחֵרוֹנוֹ יִבְהַלְמוּ:

Then, if they persist in developing their pointless schemes, **He will speak to them in His anger** — אָז יִדְבֵר אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּאַפּוֹ, and in His wrath He will confound them — וּבְחֵרוֹנוֹ יִבְהַלְמוּ, saying:

(ו) וְאַנִּי נִסְכַּתִּי מִלְּפָנָי,
עַל צִיּוֹן הַר קֹדְשִׁי:

“Why do you make plans to defeat David and depose him? Do you think you can stand up against My wishes? **I Myself have anointed** him as **My king** — וְאַנִּי נִסְכַּתִּי מִלְּפָנָי by the hands of Shmuel **upon Zion, My holy mountain** — עַל צִיּוֹן הַר קֹדְשִׁי.”

PART 4. DAVID TESTIFIES.

(ז) אֶסְפָּרָה אֶל חֶק,
ה' אָמַר אֵלַי

I shall now tell you what I am obliged — אֶסְפָּרָה אֶל חֶק to proclaim. **Hashem said to me — ה' אָמַר אֵלַי** through the nevi'im Nosson, Gad, and Shmuel:

בְּנִי אַתָּה, אֲנִי הַיּוֹם יִלְדָתִיךָ:

"I have designated **You**, David, as **My son — בְּנִי אַתָּה**. I have given you the role of serving Me as king over My nation Yisrael. On the day you were anointed I said, **'I have begotten you today'** — אֲנִי הַיּוֹם יִלְדָתִיךָ. On that day I granted you ruach hakodesh (the holy spirit), enabling you to compose and sing these mizmorim."

(ח) שְׂאֵל מִמֶּנִּי
וְאַתָּנָה גוֹיִם נַחֲלָתֶךָ
וְאַחֲזֶתֶךָ אֶפְסֵי אֶרֶץ:

"Since you are My son, **ask of Me — שְׂאֵל מִמֶּנִּי** for whatever you need and there is no limit to what I will grant to you. **I will make nations your inheritance — וְאַתָּנָה גוֹיִם נַחֲלָתֶךָ**, and the ends of the earth your possession — **וְאַחֲזֶתֶךָ אֶפְסֵי אֶרֶץ**."

(ט) תִּרְעַם בְּשֵׁבֶט בְּרֹזֶל
כְּכֹלֵי יוֹצֵר תִּנְפָצִים:

"As for the nations that rise up against you, **you will smash them with an iron sword — תִּרְעַם בְּשֵׁבֶט בְּרֹזֶל**; **you will shatter them like a potter's vessel — כְּכֹלֵי יוֹצֵר תִּנְפָצִים**."

PART 5. EXHORTATION.

(י) וְעַתָּה מְלָכִים הַשְּׂכִילוּ
הַיּוֹסְרוּ שִׁפְטֵי אֶרֶץ:

And now — וְעַתָּה, since my kingship is authorized from Hashem, I call upon **you kings to be intelligent — מְלָכִים הַשְּׂכִילוּ**. It is not in your power to revoke G-d's

decree. He has ordered that I should be king; **accept** my **rebuke** — הַנְּסֹרוּ and don't speak as you have been doing, you nobles, **the judges of the earth** — שֹׁפְטֵי אֶרֶץ.

(יא) עֲבֹדוּ אֶת ה' בְּיִרְאָה
וְגִילוּ בְרַעְדָּה:

Serve Hashem in awe — עֲבֹדוּ אֶת ה' בְּיִרְאָה. Instead of resenting His power over you, subjugate your will to His and **rejoice** — וְגִילוּ in serving Him, but do it **with trembling** — בְּרַעְדָּה in constant fear of His anger, should you neglect your duty.

(יב) נִשְׁקֹוּ בַר
פֶּן יֶאָנֶף וְתֵאבְדוּ דְרֹךְ
כִּי יִבְעַר כְּמַעַט אָפוּ

Yearn for a pure loyalty — נִשְׁקֹוּ בַר, to accept His kingdom completely without reservation, **lest He grow wrathful** — פֶּן יֶאָנֶף, and your **way be doomed** — וְתֵאבְדוּ דְרֹךְ. If that happens, you won't know which way to turn **for in a brief moment His anger will suddenly flare up** — כִּי יִבְעַר כְּמַעַט אָפוּ.

אֲשֶׁרִי כָּל חוֹסֵי בּוֹ:

You should follow my example and acknowledge Him willingly. Then **the praises of all those that trust in Him** — אֲשֶׁרִי כָּל חוֹסֵי בּוֹ will be clearly evident.

Living the Mizmor

Listed below are some of the lessons that you can draw from this mizmor, as well as some of the thoughts you might have in mind when you say the words of the mizmor as a *tefillah* asking for your needs, or expressing devotion to Hashem.

Lessons for Life - Your Attitude.

[2:7] TOTAL DEPENDENCE. — בָּנִי אַתָּה אֲנִי הַיּוֹם יִלְדָתִיךָ — "You are My son. I have begotten you today." Think of yourself as a newborn baby who is entirely dependent on the mother who has given birth to him and for whom he has done nothing. She is happy with him because of her quality of chesed

(lovingkindness) and his potential for the future.

[2:11] YIRAH. – עֲבֹדוּ אֶת ה' בְּיִרְאָה וּגִילוּ בְרַעְדָּה – “*Serve Hashem in awe and rejoice, but do it with trembling.*” When you experience great joy, such as in making a *simchah*, don't lose your sense of *yiras Hashem* (the fear of Hashem), that is, “rejoice ... with trembling.”

Tefillos for Life - Your Geulah.

[2:6] DAVID'S DYNASTY. – וְאֲנִי נִסְכַּחְתִּי מֶלֶכִּי עַל צִיּוֹן הַר קֹדֶשׁי – “*I Myself have anointed My king upon Tzion, My holy mountain.*” When you say the blessing “*Es Tzemach David*” in the daily *Shemoneh Esrei* have in mind that you are earnestly asking for the final *Geulah* (Redemption) and that this depends on the restoration of David's dynasty to rule over Yisrael in the same spirit with which David composed Tehillim.

Tefillos for Life - Your Yeshuah.

[2:9] CONFLICT. – תִּרְעַם בְּשֵׁבֶט בְּרֹזֶל – “*You will smash them with an iron sword.*” If you are facing a military conflict, plead with Hashem to help you by vanquishing your enemies.

Sources

The primary sources for the interpretation this mizmor have been *Rashi*, *Radak*, and *Metzudos*.