

Mizmor 003

A Father's Anguish

Key Concepts

When his son Avshalom organized a rebellion against the throne, David's reputation was torn to shreds by slanderous accusations and he was forced to flee Yerushalayim with only a small group of loyal supporters. In this mizmor David prays for victory against Avshalom's huge army. He also prays that the victory should not come at a serious cost in human life since his adversaries included his own family and his fellow Jews.

The previous mizmor (002) dealt with a major threat to David's rule from another nation (the Plishtim). Here the threat is much closer to home, coming from within the kingdom itself, and even worse, from within David's own family. Because of the slanderous accusations against him, David has found himself an object of scorn and hatred. Worst of all is the accusation that Hashem has abandoned him because of his sins.

However, David has sincerely repented his sins and he is confident that Hashem has forgiven him. Thus, he has complete *bitachon* (trust) that he will survive this present tragic situation.

Historical Background

Achitofel, the royal adviser, had counseled Avshalom to take 12,000 men and hunt David down at night while he was still sleeping off the effects of his tiring escape from Yerushalayim. They would surprise David's men and be able to kill David alone.

However, Achitofel's clever counsel was undermined by David's friend Chushai who argued to Avshalom that David would not be sleeping with the rest of the people. Chushai's advice was for Avshalom to wait until he had assembled a large army and that they would then be able to defeat David's small troop by force of arms. In actuality, Achitofel's advice was good; if it had been followed, Avshalom's men would have found David sleeping and would have been able to kill him. However, Hashem guided events so that Achitofel's advice was disregarded and David was saved.

When Achitofel saw that his advice was not being followed he hanged himself, knowing that he would be killed for treason. Chushai then reported all this to

David, who included it in his mizmor (see posuk 6). He sang that he lay down and slept without realizing the danger he was in. If the advice of Achitofel had been followed, he would never have woken up because he would have been killed that night. However, he did wake up because Hashem supported him. (See II Samuel 17:1-22)

Navigating Tehillim. David's conflict with Avshalom is also the subject of Mizmor 055, which describes how David overcame the despondency that he felt as a result of this demoralizing experience.

Exploring the Mizmor

PART 1. A CRY OF ANGUISH. David begins the mizmor with a cry of anguish, knowing that his main antagonist in the current situation is his own son.

(א) מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד בְּבָרְחוֹ מִפְּנֵי אַבְשָׁלוֹם בְּנוֹ: (ב) ה' מָה רַבּוּ צָרֵי רַבִּים קָמִים עָלַי: (ג)
רַבִּים אֹמְרִים לְנַפְשִׁי אֵין יְשׁוּעָתָה לוֹ בְּאַלְקִים סֵלָה:

(1) A mizmor by David as he fled from his son, Avshalom. (2) Hashem, how many are my tormentors! Many are rising up against me. (3) Many are saying of my soul, "There is no salvation for him from G-d," Selah!

Note: The word "Selah" may be translated as meaning "forever." It is also used to indicate a natural pause in the mizmor, to give everyone time to meditate on what has been said.

PART 2. BITACHON. David pulls himself together and expresses his bitachon (trust) that Hashem will answer his *tefilllos* and continue to protect him.

(ד) וְאַתָּה ה' מָגֵן בְּעַדִּי כְּבוֹדִי וְיִמְרִים רֵאשִׁי: (ה) קוֹלִי אֶל ה' אֶקְרָא וַיַּעֲנֵנִי מִהָרָה
קִדְשׁוֹ סֵלָה: (ו) אֲנִי שָׁכַבְתִּי וְאִישָׁנָה הִקִּיצוּתִי כִּי ה' יִסְמְכֵנִי: (ז) לֹא אִירָא מִרַבְּבוֹת
עַם אֲשֶׁר סָבִיב שְׁתוֹ עָלַי:

(4) But You Hashem are a shield for me, [Who restores] my honor, and Who raises my head." (5) [With] my voice I call out to Hashem and He answers me from Tzion, His holy mountain. (6) I lay down and slept; I awoke [with confidence] for Hashem sustains me. (7) I will not fear the tens of thousands of people, who have deployed to battle against me all around.

PART 3. CONCLUDING TEFILLAH. David concludes the mizmor with a stirring call to Hashem to come to his aid and that of his nation.

(ח) קוּמָה ה' הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי אֱלֹקֵי כִי הִפִּיתָ אֶת כָּל אֹיְבֵי לְחֵי שְׁנַי רְשָׁעִים שִׁבְרָתָ: (ט) לֵה' הַיְשׁוּעָה עַל עַמְּךָ בְּרִכְתְּךָ סֵלָה:

(8) Rise up Hashem, save me my G-d! For You strike all my enemies on the cheek; You smash the teeth of the resha'im. (9) The yeshuah is Hashem's, Your blessing is on Your nation, Selah.

Learning the Mizmor

PART 1. A CRY OF ANGUISH.

(א) מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד
בְּבָרְחוֹ מִפְּנֵי אַבְשָׁלוֹם בְּנוֹ:

A mizmor composed by David — מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד as he fled — בְּבָרְחוֹ from his son Avshalom — מִפְּנֵי אַבְשָׁלוֹם בְּנוֹ.

(ב) ה' מָה רַבּוּ צָרֵי
רַבִּים קָמִים עָלַי:

Hashem, how many are my tormentors ! — ה' מָה רַבּוּ צָרֵי. Most of the Jewish people are supporting Avshalom's rebellion. Some are the family and friends of Shaul HaMelech who are angry that I have taken the crown away from Shaul's tribe of Binyamin. And there are the many — רַבִּים supporters of Avshalom who rise up against me — קָמִים עָלַי because they think I am depriving Avshalom of his natural right to be king.

(ג) רַבִּים אֹמְרִים לְנַפְשִׁי
אֵין יְשׁוּעָתָה לּוֹ בְּאֵלֹקִים סֵלָה:

Also, there are many — רַבִּים who say I am unworthy of being king. They say of my soul — אֹמְרִים לְנַפְשִׁי, "There is no yeshuah (salvation) for him from G-d — אֵין יְשׁוּעָתָה לּוֹ בְּאֵלֹקִים because he sinned with Bas Sheva and he was to blame for the death of her husband Uriah in battle. Just as David has begun to fall, he will surely continue to do so. Selah — סֵלָה !"

PART 2. BITACHON.

(ד) וְאַתָּה ה' מִגֵּן בְּעַדִּי

But You Hashem are a shield for me — וְאַתָּה ה' מִגֵּן בְּעַדִּי to protect me from all those who want to depose me. By foiling the plans of my enemies You even shield me from having to engage in battle myself.

כְּבוֹדִי וּמְרִים רֹאשִׁי:

Hashem, in place of my present shame as a desperate fugitive, I count on You as the One Who restores **my honor** — כְּבוֹדִי **and raises my head** — וּמְרִים רֹאשִׁי so that I won't be shamed before my enemies. I will surely return to my former position with head held high because when You save me they will know that You forgave my sins.

(ה) קוֹלִי אֶל ה' אֶקְרָא

וַיַּעֲנֵנִי מִהַר קִדְשׁוֹ סֵלָה:

I hope that my personal participation in the coming battle will even be unnecessary because of the power of *tefillah*. I am confident that when with **my voice** — קוֹלִי **I call out to Hashem** — אֶל ה' אֶקְרָא, **He will answer me** — וַיַּעֲנֵנִי **from** Tzion, **His holy mountain** — מִהַר קִדְשׁוֹ, where the Ark of the Covenant is kept. Although I have had to flee Yerushalayim, I am not worried for Hashem will answer me from afar just as He answers me from near. I know I will be able to rely on His answer forever, **Selah** — סֵלָה, and I will never again be a refugee on the run.

When David fled from Yerushalayim, the Kohanim who were loyal to him took the Ark from the city, but David told them to return it because tefillos to Hashem are not restricted by location (Shmuel II 15:25).

(ו) אֲנִי שָׁכַבְתִּי וְאִישָׁנָה

הֲקִיצוֹתִי כִּי ה' יִסְמְכֵנִי:

I lay down and slept — אֲנִי שָׁכַבְתִּי וְאִישָׁנָה not even realizing the danger I was in. But Hashem protected me and when **I awoke** — הֲקִיצוֹתִי the danger had passed. When I learned what had happened, I knew I need not fear of Avshalom's army because **Hashem would support me** — כִּי ה' יִסְמְכֵנִי.

(ז) לֹא אִירָא מִרְבֹּבוֹת עַם
אֲשֶׁר סָבִיב שְׁתוֹ עָלַי:

Now that I know *Hashem* is protecting me, **I will not fear the tens of thousands of people** — לֹא אִירָא מִרְבֹּבוֹת עַם — accompanying Avshalom, **who have deployed to battle against me all around** — אֲשֶׁר סָבִיב שְׁתוֹ עָלַי.

PART 3. CONCLUDING TEFILLAH.

(ח) קוּמָה ה' הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי אֱלֹקֵי
כִּי הִכִּיתָ אֶת כָּל אֹיְבֵי לִחֵי
שִׁנֵּי רִשְׁעִים שְׁבִרְתָּ:

Hashem, since I have trusted in You it is only right that You should answer my plea. **Rise up Hashem** — קוּמָה ה' — and **save me, my G-d** — הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי אֱלֹקֵי ! **For** in the past **You have** always **struck all my enemies on the cheek** — כִּי הִכִּיתָ אֶת כָּל — אֹיְבֵי לִחֵי in humiliating blows; **You** even **smash the teeth of the wicked** — שִׁנֵּי רִשְׁעִים שְׁבִרְתָּ, the very teeth they gnashed at me. I pray that You continue to help me.

(ט) לֵה' הִישׁוּעָה
עַל עַמּוֹךְ בְּרִכְתּוֹךְ סְלָה:

When You save me I will gratefully praise You, saying that **yeshuah belongs to Hashem** — לֵה' הִישׁוּעָה — and no man can be saved without Him. And I will be grateful that **Your blessing is on Your nation** — עַל עַמּוֹךְ בְּרִכְתּוֹךְ — forever, **Selah** — סְלָה, although they are now arrayed against me. Even though they have caused me great distress I am glad they did not die in this war. I was not looking for their destruction, just for my salvation.

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 your gratitude and devotion to *Hashem*.

Tefillos for Life - Your Anguish .

[3:2] EMOTIONAL PAIN. — ה' מַה רַבּוּ צָרֵי — “*Hashem, how many are my*

tormentors!” – When misfortune strikes, don’t deny the pain you are experiencing. Accept it as the will of Hashem, knowing that even pain is good, for there is a plan and purpose behind it.

[3:3] INSULTED. – רַבִּים אֹמְרִים לְנַפְשִׁי אֵין יְשׁוּעָתָהּ לוֹ בְּאַלְקִים – “*Many are saying of my soul, ‘There is no salvation for him from G-d.’*” When you are disappointed by the lack of respect or consideration that other people show towards you, turn to Hashem and put your trust in Him. You can be sure that He knows your true value as a human being and loves you.

[3:4] – וְאַתָּה ה' מִגֵּן בְּעָדַי – “*But You Hashem are a shield for me.*”

Tefillos for Life - Your Relationship with Hashem .

[3:5] RELEASE FROM PAIN. – קוֹלִי אֶל ה' אֶקְרָא וַיַּעֲנֵנִי מֵהַר קְדָשׁוֹ – “[*With*] *my voice I call out to Hashem and He answers me from Tzion, His holy mountain.*” When you experience emotional pain, use your voice to call upon Hashem and He will comfort you.

Tefillos for Life - Your Refuah .

[3:6] SLEEP. – אֲנִי שָׁכַבְתִּי וַאֲישָׁנָה הִקְיִצוּתִי כִּי ה' יִסְמְכֵנִי – “*I lay down and slept; I awoke [with confidence] for Hashem sustains me.*” If you have problems sleeping, plead with Hashem to help you so that you will wake up refreshed.

Tefillos for Life - Your Gratitude.

[3:6] SLEEP. – אֲנִי שָׁכַבְתִּי וַאֲישָׁנָה הִקְיִצוּתִי כִּי ה' יִסְמְכֵנִי – “*I lay down and slept; I awoke [with confidence] for Hashem sustains me.*” If you have slept well, thank Hashem for helping you wake up refreshed.

[3:8] PROTECTION. – כִּי הִכִּיתָ אֶת כָּל אֹיְבֵי לִחִי, שָׁנִי רַשָּׁעִים שִׁבְרָתָּ – “*For You strike all my enemies on the cheek; You smash the teeth of the resha'im.*” Thank Hashem for the occasions when He restrained those who wanted to harm you.

Lessons for Life - Your Attitude.

[3:7] DANGER. – לֹא אִירָא מֵרַבְבוֹת עָם – “*I will not fear the tens of thousands of people.*” Even if you are surrounded by danger don’t be afraid

for Hashem is always with you.

Tefillos for Life - Your Yeshuah .

[3:9] WELFARE OF OTHERS. – לַה' הַיְשׁוּעָה עַל עַמֶּךָ בְּרִכְתֶּךָ – “*The yeshuah is Hashem’s, Your blessing is on Your nation.*” When you ask Hashem for a *yeshuah*, have in mind other Jews.

Sources

The primary sources for the interpretation of the pesukim of this mizmor are listed below.

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|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| א - רד"ק, ספורנו | ו - מצודות, מלבי"ם |
| ב - אבן עזרא | ז - רש"י, ספורנו, מצודות |
| ג - רש"י, ספורנו, מצודות | ח - מצודות |
| ד - אבן עזרא, מצודות, מלבי"ם | ט - רד"ק, ספורנו |
| ה - אבן עזרא, ספורנו, מצודות, מלבי"ם | |

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