

Mizmor 004

Loyalty and Commitment

Key Concepts

In this mizmor David declares his loyalty to Hashem and compares it with the betrayals and lies that emanate from his enemies. He rebukes them for their disrespect and for their lack of loyalty to him as their anointed king. He charges them with acting out of selfish interest, seeking to gain temporary advantage while disregarding the truth and the will of Hashem.

Exploring the Mizmor

David composed this mizmor while being hunted by Shaul Hamelech and his soldiers. Although David was anointed king in Shaul's place he found it difficult to gain the loyalty of Shaul's followers who were convinced that Shaul would remain in power.

The mizmor has three parts. First, David calls upon Hashem to hear his tefillah. He then turns to his adversaries and rebukes them for their disrespect to him. Finally, he turns to Hashem, declaring his loyalty and his bitachon in Hashem's protection.

PART 1. A PLEA TO BE HEARD. David cries out to Hashem asking for His sympathy in this time of distress.

(א) לְמִנְצַחַת בְּנִגְיֹנוֹת מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד: (ב) בְּקִרְאֵי עֲנֵנִי אֶלְקֵי צְדִקְי בְּצַר הַרְחִבְתָּ לִּי חֲנֻנִי וְשִׁמְעַתְּ תַפִּלָּתִי:

(1) For the musician, with musical accompaniment, a mizmor by David. (2) When I call out, answer me, my G-d of benevolence. You relieved me in distress. Be kind to me and hear my tefillah.

PART 2. REBUKE FOR DISLOYALTY. David turns to his adversaries and charges them with disloyalty and lack of integrity. He reminds them that he has been chosen by G-d and deserves their respect.

(ג) בְּנִי אִישׁ עַד מָה כְּבוֹדִי לְכַלְמָה תִּתְּאָהֱבוּן רִיק תִּבְקָשׁוּ כְּזָב סֵלָה: (ד) וַדַּעוּ כִּי הַפֶּלֶה ה' חָסִיד לוֹ ה' יִשְׁמַע בְּקִרְאֵי אֱלֹהֵי: (ה) רְגִזוּ וְאַל תִּחַטְּאוּ אִמְרוּ בְּלִבְבְּכֶם עַל מִשְׁכַּבְּכֶם וְדַמּוּ סֵלָה: (ו) זָבָחוּ זָבָחַי צְדָק וּבִטְחוּ אֶל ה':

(3) Sons of man, how long will [you put] my honor to shame? [How long] will you love empty talk, seeking falsehood? (4) But know that Hashem has set apart a devout person to be His, Hashem will listen when I call upon Him. (5) Tremble and don't sin; consider in your hearts, lying in bed, and be silent, Selah. (6) Offer sacrifices of righteousness and trust in Hashem.

PART 3. DECLARATION OF LOYALTY. David turns back to Hashem and declares his total commitment and trust in Him.

(ז) רבים אמרים מי יראנו טוב נסה עלינו אור פניך ה': (ח) נתתה שמחה בלבי מעת דגנם ותירושם רבו: (ט) בשלום יחדו אשכבה ואישן כי אתה ה' לבדך לבטח תנשיבני:

(7) Many say, 'Who will show us the good? Cast upon us the light of Your face, O G-d.' (8) You have put gladness in my heart from the time their grain and wine abound. (9) At peace, I will simultaneously lie down and fall asleep for I know that You alone are Hashem, to make me dwell secure.

Learning the Mizmor

PART 1. A PLEA TO BE HEARD.

(א) למנצח בנגינות מזמור לדוד:

This song has been prepared **for the musician** — למנצח — who will perform it **with musical accompaniment** — בנגינות. It is a **mizmor** composed **by David** — מזמור לדוד.

(ב) בקראי ענני אלקי צדקי,
בצר הרחבת לי, חנני ושמע תפלתי:

When I call out to You, answer me — בקראי ענני — **my G-d of benevolence** — אלקי צדקי. **You relieved me in my past distress** — בצר הרחבת לי. So now again **be kind to me and hear my tefillah** — חנני ושמע תפלתי.

PART 2. REBUKE FOR DISLOYALTY.

(ג) בני איש עד מה כבודי לכלמה

My fellow Jews, don't evade your responsibility as **sons of a noble man** — בני איש.

You are a people built on the foundation set by Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. **How long will you put my honor to shame** — **עַד מָה כְּבוֹדִי לְכַלְמָה** ? How long will you call me “Yishai’s son,” as though I have no admirable qualities of my own? Surely people of nobility like yourselves should treat others with respect if they deserve it.

תִּאְהָבוּן רִיק, תִּבְקְשׁוּ כֶזֶב סֵלָה:

How long **will you love** to waste your time with **empty talk** — **תִּאְהָבוּן רִיק** ? How long **will you seek falsehood** — **תִּבְקְשׁוּ כֶזֶב** like the Ziphim (I *Shmuel* 23) who initially pledged allegiance to me but then revealed my hiding place to Shaul? **Selah** — **סֵלָה**.

(ד) וַדַּעוּ כִּי הִפָּלָה ה' חֲסִיד לּוֹ,
ה' יִשְׁמַע בְּקִרְאֵי אֱלֹוֵ:

But think about this — **וַדַּעוּ: Just as Hashem has set apart** — **כִּי הִפָּלָה ה'** every **devout person to be His** — **חֲסִיד לּוֹ**, so He has set me apart and **Hashem will listen** to me **when I call upon Him** — **ה' יִשְׁמַע בְּקִרְאֵי אֱלֹוֵ**. Therefore you will not be able to defeat me.

(ה) רַגְזוּ וְאַל תִּחַטְּאוּ,
אִמְרוּ בְּלִבְבְּכֶם עַל מִשְׁכַּבְּכֶם, וַדְּמוּ סֵלָה:

Tremble — **רַגְזוּ** with fear before Hashem **and don't sin** — **וְאַל תִּחַטְּאוּ** by speaking falsehoods against me. At night when you are at ease, **lying in bed** — **עַל** **אִמְרוּ בְּלִבְבְּכֶם**, **consider in your hearts** — **אִמְרוּ בְּלִבְבְּכֶם** that Hashem hates lies. Whenever you are tempted to utter a falsehood, you should resolve **to be always silent** — **וַדְּמוּ סֵלָה**.

(ו) זָבַחוּ זִבְחֵי צְדָק,
וּבִטְחוּ אֶל ה':

Offer sacrifices of righteousness — **זָבַחוּ זִבְחֵי צְדָק** whereby you declare your sincerity and give up dishonesty. Why should you lie for Shaul, thinking to get a material reward? It is better to **trust in Hashem** — **וּבִטְחוּ אֶל ה'** and be under His protection.

PART 3. DECLARATION OF LOYALTY.

(ז) רַבִּים אֹמְרִים מִי יִרְאֶנּוּ טוֹב
נִסָּה עָלֵינוּ אֹר פָּנֶיךָ ה':

Hashem, there are **many** Jews who **say** — רַבִּים אֹמְרִים, "**Who will show us the good** — מִי יִרְאֶנּוּ טוֹב — things of the world?" They see the other nations enjoying material comforts, and they ask how they can share in the wealth. They pray to You for their desires to be satisfied and ask "**Cast upon us** — נִסָּה עָלֵינוּ **the light of Your face, O God** — אֹר פָּנֶיךָ ה'."

(ח) נִתְתָּה שְׂמֵחָה בְּלִבִּי
מֵעַת דָּגְגַם וְתִירוּשָׁם רַבּוּ:

But I am not like that. I don't envy the other nations because **You have put gladness in my heart** — נִתְתָּה שְׂמֵחָה בְּלִבִּי — to be happy with my portion in life. My joy is greater than that of the many who find happiness only **from the time their grain and wine abound** — מֵעַת דָּגְגַם וְתִירוּשָׁם רַבּוּ.

(ט) בְּשָׁלוֹם יַחְדּוֹ אֶשְׁכְּבָה וְאִישׁוֹן
כִּי אֶתָּה ה' לְבָדָד לְבִטָּח תּוֹשִׁיבֵנִי:

I am **at peace** — בְּשָׁלוֹם — for I am happy with my lot. I know You are protecting me, and so I have no trouble sleeping at night. I am confident that I have nothing to fear. Thus, **I will simultaneously lie down and fall asleep** — יַחְדּוֹ אֶשְׁכְּבָה וְאִישׁוֹן — at once. I will be at peace **for I know that You are Hashem** — כִּי אֶתָּה ה' — Who rules over all, and even when I am **alone** — לְבָדָד, **You** have the power to **make me dwell secure** — לְבִטָּח תּוֹשִׁיבֵנִי.

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 Relationship with Hashem.

[4:2] MAKING A REQUEST. — בְּצָר הִרְחַבְתָּ לִי חֲנֻנִי — "*You relieved me in distress. Be kind to me.*" When you ask Hashem for something, first express

your gratitude for His past kindnesses. Don't frame your request as something you deserve or that He owes you. Rather ask Him to do it as an act of pure kindness and graciousness

Lessons for Life - Your Behavior.

[4:2] ASKING A FAVOR. – קְרָאִי עֲנֵנִי אֱלֹהֵי צְדָקָי – “When I call out, answer me, my G-d of benevolence. You relieved me in distress. Be kind to me and hear my tefillah.” If you want to ask a favor from someone, don't start right in with your request. First, address the person courteously and make sure he is ready to give you his attention. Let him know you will appreciate anything he will do for you. This is especially important when the individual is someone to whom you owe respect.

[4:3] ADMONISHING. – בְּנֵי אִישׁ – “Sons of man.” When admonishing or rebuking someone, speak to him with respect, indicating that what he is doing is unworthy of him.

[4:3] MAINTAINING SILENCE. – תִּתְּקַח לִבְךָ מִלִּבְּךָ – “[How long] will you love empty talk, seeking falsehood?” Avoid empty talk, treachery, and falsehood. Be silent when you are tempted to utter sinful talk.

[4:5] וְדַמּוּ – “Be silent.”

[4:5] INTROSPECTION. – אִמְרוּ בְּלִבְבְּכֶם עַל מַשְׁפָּכֵיכֶם – “Consider in your hearts, lying in bed.” Before falling asleep at night, make an effort to think through your actions of the day to see if you have behaved badly.

Lessons for Life - Your Attitude.

[4:4] CHASIDUS. – הִפְלִיחַ ה' חֲסִיד לּוֹ – “Hashem has set apart a devout person to be His.” Develop an attitude of *chasidus* (being devout) , that is, going beyond what is strictly required. Only then can you expect Hashem to be forgiving in His attitude towards you.

[4:5] TREMBLING. – רַגְזוּ וְאַל תַּחֲטְאוּ – “Tremble and don't sin.” Develop an attitude in which you tremble in fear of behaving badly and angering Hashem.

[4:6] SINCERITY. – זָבַחוּ זִבְחֵי צְדָקָה – “Offer sacrifices of righteousness.” When correcting your behavior, think of it as a sacrificial offering that you are making to Hashem. Be sincere about your devotion and your motives.

[4:7] ENVY. – רַבִּים אֹמְרִים מִי יֵרְאֶנּוּ טוֹב – “Many say, ‘Who will show us the good?’” Don’t be envious of the good fortune of others. Hashem gives you what is appropriate for you and that may be different from the person you are envying.

[4:8] GOOD WILL. – נָתַתָּה שְׂמֵחָה בְּלִבִּי מֵעַת דָּגָנָם וְתִירוֹשָׁם רָבוּ – “You have put gladness in my heart from the time their grain and wine abound.” Be happy for the good fortune of another. Your positive attitude is an expression of your love for the other person.

[4:9] RESENTMENT. – בְּשָׁלוֹם יִחְדּוּ אֲשַׁכְּבָה וְאִישָׁן – “At peace, I will simultaneously lie down and fall asleep.” Don’t harbor resentment towards someone who has harmed you. Look to his doing *teshuvah* and being forgiven. Your goal should be a unity in peace.

Sources

The primary sources used in the interpretation of the *pesukim* of this mizmor are *Rashi* and *Metzudos*.

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