

Mizmor 007

Shigayon - A Song of Errors

Key Concepts

King David composed this mizmor in gratitude when he realized how Hashem had helped him in his flight from King Shaul and had not held his unintentional errors of judgment against him. In the mizmor David emphasizes the distinction between innocent errors and vindictive behavior. The mizmor is referred to as a *shigayon*, which is a type of song, accompanied by an instrument with that name. The origin of the word *shigayon* is related to *mishgeh* 'error.'

Historical Background

This mizmor is one of many composed during the period of David's life when he was a fugitive, being hunted by King Shaul. During this period Shaul was intent upon killing David, mistakenly believing him to be a revolutionary. However, many people of the tribes of Yisrael supported Shaul and refused to consider the possibility that Hashem chose David to be anointed king in his place.

On one occasion, when Shaul was pursuing David, he inadvertently entered a cave in which David and a few loyal followers were hiding. David had the opportunity to kill Shaul but chose to surreptitiously cut off a corner of Shaul's garment instead (I *Shmuel* 24:5). Although he meant well, he later realized his mistake in showing a lack of respect to an anointed King of Yisrael.

On another occasion, David found Shaul asleep next to his spear in a campsite. David again spared Shaul's life, but this time he took the spear and a water flask (I *Shmuel* 26:12). In both cases, Shaul was moved by David's self-restraint and promised to abandon his vicious pursuit, but soon forgot his good intentions and returned to the hunt.

In this mizmor, David refers to Shaul as his enemy. However, he did not want to name him directly for Shaul was a basically righteous man anointed by G-d. In referring to Shaul, David chose the fictitious name Chush (derived from Kushi the name of a dark-skinned people) as a form of subtle criticism of Shaul's obstinacy. Just as a Kushi's skin does not change in its coloration, so Shaul did not change in his hatred of David even though there was good reason for him to see the truth of David's peaceful intentions. Thus, it says, "Can a Kushi change his skin color, or a

leopard its spots?" (*Yirmiyahu* 13:23).

Exploring the Mizmor

PART 1. DECLARATION OF INNOCENCE. David recalls how he prayed to be saved from Shaul, who was pursuing him. He vigorously asserts that it was never his intent to disrespect Shaul and he hopes his actions toward Shaul will not be held against him.

(א) שְׁגִיּוֹן לְדוֹד אֲשֶׁר שָׁר לֵה' עַל דְּבָרֵי כּוּשׁ בֶּן יִמִּינִי: (ב) ה' אֱלֹקֵי בְּדָ חֲסִיתִי הוֹשִׁיעַנִי מִכָּל רֹדְפֵי וְהַצִּילֵנִי: (ג) פֶּן יִטְרֹף כְּאַרְיֵה נִפְשֵׁי פִרְק וְאִין מִצִּיל: (ד) ה' אֱלֹקֵי אִם עָשִׂיתִי זֹאת אִם יֵשׁ עֹל בְּכַפִּי: (ה) אִם גָּמַלְתִּי שׁוֹלְמֵי רָע וְאַחֲלַצָּה צוֹרְרֵי רִיקָם: (ו) יִרְדֹּף אוֹיֵב נִפְשֵׁי וַיִּשָּׂג וַיִּרְמַס לְאַרְצָ חָזִי וַיִּכְבֹּדֵי לְעֶפֶר יִשְׁכֹּן סֶלָה:

(1) A shigayon by David, which he sang to Hashem, concerning Chush ben Yemini. (2) Hashem, my G-d, I have sought refuge with You to save me from all my pursuers and rescue me. (3) Lest he tear my soul apart like a lion. He would dismember me and there would be no rescuer. (4) Hashem my G-d, if I have done this, if there is injustice in my hands, (5) if I have repaid friendship with evil — but I spared my unprovoked tormentor! — (6) then let my enemy pursue me and overtake me, let him trample my life down to the ground, lay my soul forever in the dust.

PART 2. CALL FOR JUSTICE. Confident of his innocence David calls upon Hashem to take action against his tormentors. He asks to be judged according to his sincerity and that Hashem's declared purpose of appointing David king be fulfilled. As for the many people of his own nation who are supporting Shaul against him, he asks that Hashem resist their arguments and not pass judgment in their favor.

(ז) קוּמָה ה' בְּאַפָּךָ הַנִּשְׂא בְּעִבְרוֹת צוֹרְרֵי וְעוֹנֵה אֵלֵי מִשְׁפָּט צוּיֹת: (ח) וַעֲדַת לְאֻמִּים תִּסּוּבְבָךָ וְעֲלֶיךָ לְמָרוֹם שׁוּבָה: (ט) ה' יִדִּין עַמִּים שְׁפִטְנֵי ה' כְּצִדְקֵי וַכְּתָמֵי עֲלֵי: (י) יִגְמַר נָא רָע רְשָׁעִים וַתִּכְוֶנוּ צְדִיק וּבַחַן לְבוֹת וּכְלִיוֹת אֱלֹקִים צְדִיק:

(7) Rise up, Hashem, in Your anger. Raise Yourself because of the excessive rage of my tormentors. Invoke for me the judgment which You have issued. (8) [If] the assembly of the nations [tribes] of Yisrael surrounds You, rise up on high and return to Your heavenly place of judgment. (9) Hashem, judge the nations [tribes]. Judge me, Hashem, according to my righteousness and my underlying sincerity. (10) Let the evil of the wicked finish [them] and sustain the one who is righteous, [You] searcher of hearts

and minds, righteous G-d of judgment.

PART 3. DECLARATION OF BITACHON. David declares his steadfast bitachon (trust) in Hashem's justice. He is confident that his wicked tormentors will be brought down by the very weapons and stratagems they have been using against him.

(יא) מְגִנִּי עַל אֱלֹקִים מוֹשִׁיעַ יִשְׂרָאֵל לִבִּי: (יב) אֱלֹקִים שׁוֹפֵט צְדִיק וְאֵל זֵעִם בְּכָל יוֹם:
 (יג) אִם לֹא יָשׁוּב חֲרָבוֹ יִלְטוּשׁ קִשְׁתּוֹ דָּרָךְ וַיְכַוְנֶנָּה: (יד) וְלוֹ הִכִּין כְּלֵי מָוֶת חֲצִי
 לְדֹלְקִים יַפְעַל: (טו) הִנֵּה יַחְבֵּל אָוֶן וְהָרָה עֵמָל וַיִּלְדֵּשׁ שָׁקֶר: (טז) בּוֹר כָּרָה וַיַּחְפְּרֶהוּ
 וַיַּפֵּל בְּשַׁחַת יַפְעַל: (יז) יָשׁוּב עֵמָלוֹ בְּרֵאשׁוֹ וְעַל קִדְקָדוֹ חָמְסוֹ יִרֹד: (יח) אַוֶּדָה ה' ה'
 כְּצִדְקוֹ וְאַזְמָרָה שֵׁם ה' עֲלִיּוֹן:

(11) My security is with Hashem. He saves the upright of heart. (12) G-d judges the righteous person, and [the one] who angers G-d every day. (13) If he does not repent, but sharpens his sword and he bends and aims his bow, (14) the deadly weapons he has prepared, [will be used] against him. His arrows will be deployed against those who burn. (15) Behold, he conceives iniquity, he is pregnant with evil schemes, he gives birth to falsehood. (16) He has dug a pit. He has dug it deep; he will fall into the deep pit which he has made. (17) His effort will recoil upon his own head. his violence will descend upon his own skull. (18) I thank Hashem according to His righteousness and I sing praises to Hashem's Name, Most High.

Learning the Mizmor

PART 1. DECLARATION OF INNOCENCE.

(א) שְׂגִיּוֹן לְדָוִד אֲשֶׁר שָׁר לָהּ'
 עַל דְּבַרֵי כוּש בֶּן יַמִּינִי:

This is a shigayon [song], composed **by David** — שְׂגִיּוֹן לְדָוִד, **which he** joyfully **sang to Hashem** — אֲשֶׁר שָׁר לָהּ', **concerning** his relationship with **Chush ben Yemini** — עַל דְּבַרֵי כוּש בֶּן יַמִּינִי. *Chush is another name for King Shaul, who was a Yemini, that is, a member of the tribe of Binyamin.*

(ב) ה' אֱלֹקֵי בְּךָ חָסִיתִי
הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי מִכָּל רֹדְפֵי וְהַצִּילֵנִי:

Hashem, my G-d, with You I have sought refuge — ה' אֱלֹקֵי בְּךָ חָסִיתִי. I have demonstrated my total trust in You by restraining myself from taking revenge upon Shaul when I had him in my power. Instead, I pleaded with You to **save me from all my pursuers** — הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי מִכָּל רֹדְפֵי and **rescue me** — וְהַצִּילֵנִי if I am captured. I had no intent to harm Shaul; I hoped merely to be saved.

(ג) פֶּן יִטְרֹף כְּאַרְיֵה נַפְשִׁי

I was in great fear of Shaul **lest he tear my soul apart like a lion** — פֶּן יִטְרֹף כְּאַרְיֵה נַפְשִׁי. Shaul was as powerful as a lion, the king of animals. By charging me with treason, he was effectively tearing my soul apart.

פִּירַק וְאִין מַצִּיל:

I was afraid that in his anger **he would dismember me** — פִּירַק, and **there would be no rescuer** — וְאִין מַצִּיל. I feared that no one would come to my rescue because my actions would be seen as treason.

(ד) ה' אֱלֹקֵי אִם עָשִׂיתִי זֹאת
אִם יֵשׁ עוֹל בְּכַפִּי:

Hashem my G-d — ה' אֱלֹקֵי, You have total knowledge of all mysteries. If I have been intentionally disrespectful to Shaul, then I will readily accept the penalty. I swear that **if I have done this** — אִם עָשִׂיתִי זֹאת treasonous thing, **if there is injustice in my hands** — אִם יֵשׁ עוֹל בְּכַפִּי, I am prepared to suffer the consequences.

(ה) אִם גָּמַלְתִּי שׁוֹלְמֵי רָע

If I have repaid friendship with evil — אִם גָּמַלְתִּי שׁוֹלְמֵי רָע, let me be judged guilty. I had been at peace with Shaul; I married his daughter and fought his battles with the Plishtim. What did I do to him that he should viciously turn on me? I have not behaved toward him as he did toward me.

וְאַחַלְצָה צוֹרְרֵי רִיקָם:

On the contrary, **I spared my unprovoked tormentor** — וְאַחַלְצָה צוֹרְרֵי רִיקָם.

Although Shaul is unjustifiably pursuing me, his life is still dear to me. When I had the opportunity of killing him in the cave, I restrained myself and only cut off a corner of his robe to show him that he had been at my mercy. When I came upon Shaul sleeping in his camp, Avishai, one of my generals encouraged me to take his life but I refused. I just took his spear and water flask.

(ו) יִרְדֹּף אֹיֵב נַפְשִׁי וַיִּשָּׂג

But if I am to blame for what I did, **then let my enemy successfully pursue me and overtake me** — יִרְדֹּף אֹיֵב נַפְשִׁי וַיִּשָּׂג. Until now Shaul and his followers have been pursuing me without success. But if I am guilty of such wrongdoing, let them now succeed in overtaking me.

וַיִּרְמֹס לְאַרְצָה חַיִּי
וַיִּכְבֹּדֵנִי לְעֶפְרָת יִשְׁכֹּן סֶלָה:

When he overtakes me, **let him trample my life down to the ground** — וַיִּרְמֹס לְאַרְצָה חַיִּי as he shames my name. Let him **lay my soul forever in the dust** — וַיִּכְבֹּדֵנִי לְעֶפְרָת יִשְׁכֹּן סֶלָה.

PART 2. CALL FOR JUSTICE.

(ז) קוֹמָה ה' בְּאַפְּךָ
הַנִּשְׂאָ בְּעֵבְרוֹת צוֹרְרֵי

Rise up, Hashem, in Your controlled anger — קוֹמָה ה' בְּאַפְּךָ, against my tormentors. I ask that You **raise Yourself** — הַנִּשְׂאָ and act for me **because of the excessive rage of my tormentors** — בְּעֵבְרוֹת צוֹרְרֵי.

וְעוֹרָה אֵלַי מִשְׁפָּט צוֹיֹת:

I humbly call upon You to **invoke for me** — וְעוֹרָה אֵלַי the **judgment which You have issued** — מִשְׁפָּט צוֹיֹת, that I am destined to ascend the throne of Yisrael.

(ח) וְעֵדֶת לְאֻמִּים תִּסּוּבְּךָ

And even if **the assembly of the nations** [tribes] **of Yisrael** lends support to my tormentors **and surrounds You** — וְעֵדֶת לְאֻמִּים תִּסּוּבְּךָ with pleas to act against me, don't listen to them.

וְעֹלֶיךָ לְמַרוֹם שׁוּבָה:

Rise up above their arguments — וְעֹלֶיךָ and don't execute judgment against me. Instead **return to Your heavenly place of judgment** — לְמַרוֹם שׁוּבָה.

(ט) ה' יִדִּין עַמִּים

For when You, **Hashem, judge** those among **the tribes** of Yisrael — ה' יִדִּין עַמִּים, who have been working against me, I will emerge as the righteous one if only You will not hold my errors against me.

שִׁפְטֵנִי ה' כְּצִדְקִי וּכְתַמִּי עָלַי:

Judge me, Hashem — שִׁפְטֵנִי ה' — **according to my righteousness** — כְּצִדְקִי **and my** underlying **sincerity** — וּכְתַמִּי עָלַי rather than according to the result of any unintentional sin.

(י) יִגְמֹר נָא רַע רְשָׁעִים

וּתְכוֹנֵן צַדִּיק

And now, **let the evil of the wicked finish** them off — יִגְמֹר נָא רַע רְשָׁעִים. Their purposeful wickedness is not comparable to the unintentional mistakes that a sincerely righteous person may have made. Thus, I pray that You identify **and sustain the one who is righteous** — וּתְכוֹנֵן צַדִּיק.

וּבַחֵן לְבוֹת וּכְלִיֹּת

אֱלֹקִים צַדִּיק:

Only You can do this, for You are the **searcher of hearts and minds** — וּבַחֵן לְבוֹת — **וכְלִיֹּת**. Many show themselves to be righteous but are not. Only You can properly evaluate the degree of a person's guilt or innocence.

You are the **righteous G-d of judgment** — אֱלֹקִים צַדִּיק, Who treats each person not only in accordance with his behavior but also his thoughts. Nevertheless, You don't hold him accountable for every negative thought that passes through his mind, but only those thoughts that lead to actual wicked deeds.

PART 3. DECLARATION OF BITACHON.

(יא) מְגַנִּי עַל אֱלֹקִים
מוֹשִׁיעַ יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵב:

My security is with Hashem — מְגַנִּי עַל אֱלֹקִים, Who makes allowance for people's sincerity and honest devotion. **He saves the upright of heart** — מוֹשִׁיעַ יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵב rather than holding them to account for the results of their unintended actions.

(יב) אֱלֹקִים שׁוֹפֵט צַדִּיק
וְאֵל זַעַם בְּכָל יוֹם:

I know that **G-d judges the righteous person** — אֱלֹקִים שׁוֹפֵט צַדִּיק without favor. Furthermore, He judges the wicked person **who angers G-d every day** — וְאֵל זַעַם בְּכָל יוֹם.

(יג) אִם לֹא יָשׁוּב
חָרְבוּ יִלְטוּשׁ
קִשְׁתּוֹ דָּרְדָּר וַיְכַוְנֶנָּה:

If the wicked person does not do teshuvah — אִם לֹא יָשׁוּב, but continues to **sharpen his sword** — חָרְבוּ יִלְטוּשׁ and continues to **bend and aim his bow** — קִשְׁתּוֹ דָּרְדָּר וַיְכַוְנֶנָּה with the intention of keeping the righteous person under the constant threat of death, the offender will suffer in the end.

(יד) וְלוֹ הֵכִין כְּלֵי מָוֶת
חֲצִיו לְדֹלְקִים יִפְעַל:

The result will be that **the deadly weapons he has prepared** will be used **against him** — וְלוֹ הֵכִין כְּלֵי מָוֶת, and **his arrows** — חֲצִיו, which he made for use against the innocent, **will be deployed against those who burn** — לְדֹלְקִים יִפְעַל with enthusiasm to hunt innocent men.

(טו) הִנֵּה יַחְבֵּל אָוֶן
וְהָרָה עֲמָל
וַיֵּלֶד שָׁקֶר:

Behold — הִנֵּה, the wicked person puts in a lot of energy planning and developing his evil stratagems, but it is a like a lengthy, but futile birth process. First **he conceives iniquity** — יַחְבֵּל אָוֶן; then **he is pregnant with evil schemes** — וְהָרָה עֲמָל; and finally **he gives birth to** [brings forth] **falsehood** — וַיֵּלֶד שָׁקֶר. In the end he will be frustrated because he will not get the result that he anticipated. His evil scheme will not succeed and will turn out to his detriment.

(טז) בּוֹר כָּרָה וַיַּחְפְּרֶהוּ
וַיִּפֹּל בְּשַׁחַת יַפְעָל:

He has dug a pit — בּוֹר כָּרָה to trap an innocent victim. In his eagerness to spring his trap **he has dug it deep** — וַיַּחְפְּרֶהוּ. However, while he is busily digging it, **he will fall into the deep pit** — וַיִּפֹּל בְּשַׁחַת, **which he has effectively made** — יַפְעָל for himself. [David foresaw that Shaul would die by the sword that he wanted to use against David.]

(יז) יָשׁוּב עֲמָלוֹ בְּרֹאשׁוֹ
וְעַל קִדְקִדּוֹ חֲמָסוֹ יֵרֵד:

His arduous effort to harm others will recoil upon his own head — יָשׁוּב עֲמָלוֹ בְּרֹאשׁוֹ and he will be frustrated that it is all for naught. Even worse, **his violence will descend upon his own skull** — וְעַל קִדְקִדּוֹ חֲמָסוֹ יֵרֵד. He will suffer the harm that he intended for others.

(יח) אֲוֹדָה ה' כְּצִדְקוֹ
וְאֲזַמְּרָה שֵׁם ה' עֲלִיּוֹן:

I want to thank Hashem according to His righteousness — אֲוֹדָה ה' כְּצִדְקוֹ, which I have personally witnessed and experienced. But as I learn how His treatment of me is only a small part of how He judges the wicked and saves their intended victims, I am all the more appreciative of His deeds **and so I sing praises to Hashem's Name, Most High** — וְאֲזַמְּרָה שֵׁם ה' עֲלִיּוֹן.

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* to Hashem.

Tefillos for Life - Your Relationship with Hashem.

[7:2] RELY ON HASHEM. – ה' אֱלֹקֵי בְךָ חֲסִיתִי – “Hashem, my G-d, I have sought refuge with You.” If you rely only on Hashem alone, He will answer your *tefillos*.

Lessons for Life - Your Behavior.

[7:2] TURNING TO INTERMEDIARIES. – בְךָ חֲסִיתִי – “I have sought refuge with You.” Don’t turn to intermediaries, for your help is from Him alone.

[7:4] INTROSPECTION. – אִם עָשִׂיתִי זֹאת אִם יֵשׁ עוֹל בְּכַפִּי – “If I have done this, if there is injustice in my hands.” Examine your inner thoughts to question your motives and your actions. Don’t automatically assume that you are justified in everything you did. *See also Mizmor 004.*

Tefillos for Life - Requests .

[7:7] VANQUISH ENEMIES. – הִנָּשָׂא בְעֵבְרוֹת צוֹרְכֵי – “Raise Yourself because of the excessive rage of my tormentors.” If you are contending with a bitter enemy, ask Hashem to help you by vanquishing them. *See also Mizmor 002.*

[7:9] JUDGE ACCORDING TO MERITS. – שִׁפְטֵנִי ה' כְּצִדְקֵי וּכְתִמֵּי עָלַי – “Judge me, Hashem, according to my righteousness and my underlying sincerity.” Ask Hashem to look at your good deeds and at your faults when judging you.

[7:10] VANQUISH ENEMY BY SELF-DESTRUCTION. – יִגְמַר נָא רַע רְשָׁעִים – “Let the evil of the wicked finish [them].” Ask that people who want to harm you should be disabled through their own actions, without the need for your active involvement.

Lessons for Life - Your Attitude.

[7:10] OPEN UP. – וּבַחַן לְבוֹת וּכְלֵיֹת אֱלֹקִים צְדִיק – “searcher of hearts and minds, righteous G-d of judgment.” Open yourself up to Hashem. Let Him in

to your heart, so that He can actively know you.

[7:16] DEFEAT OF ENEMIES. – בּוֹר כָּרָה וַיַּחַפְּרֵהוּ וַיַּפֵּל בְּשַׁחַת יַפְעַל – “He has dug a pit. He has dug it deep; he will fall into the deep pit which he has made.” Don’t give in to fear and worry of what your enemies might do to you. Hashem will arrange for their self-destruction.

Tefillos for Life - Gratitude .

[7:18] DEFEAT OF THE WICKED. – אֲוֹדָה ה' כְּצִדְקוֹ – “I thank Hashem according to His righteousness.” Thank Hashem for protecting you by defeating the wicked.

Tehillos for Life - Praise .

[7:18] SUPERIOR TO ALL. – וְאֲזַמְרָה שֵׁם ה' עֲלִיּוֹן. – “I sing praises to Hashem’s Name, Most High.” Praise Hashem as being superior to all powers.

Sources

The primary sources used in the interpretation of the verses of this mizmor are listed below.

א - רש"י, אבן עזרא, רד"ק, מצודות	י - רש"י, רד"ק, מצודות
ב - רד"ק, נר לרגלי	יא - רד"ק, מצודות, נר לרגלי
ג - רש"י, מלבי"ם, נר לרגלי	יב - רש"י, אבן עזרא, רד"ק,
ד - רש"י, מצודות, נר לרגלי	יג - רד"ק, מצודות
ה - רש"י, רד"ק, מצודות	יד - אבן עזרא, רד"ק, מצודות
ו - אבן עזרא, מצודות, נר לרגלי	טו - מלבי"ם
ז - אבן עזרא, רד"ק, מלבי"ם	טז - רד"ק, מצודות, מלבי"ם
ח - רש"י, רד"ק, מצודות, מלבי"ם	יז - רד"ק, מצודות, נר לרגלי
ט - רד"ק, מלבי"ם, נר לרגלי	יח - רד"ק, נר לרגלי

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