

Mizmor 008**Splendor of the Universe****Key Concepts**

In this mizmor David sings to Hashem in praise and gratitude for the universe that He has created. Despite the vastness and the grandeur of His universe, Hashem has chosen this lowly earth as a focus of His presence (the *Shechinah*) and He has chosen to entrust mankind with His special attention.

Exploring the Mizmor

PART 1. THE NAME OF HASHEM. The grandeur of Hashem in heaven and earth is beyond human understanding. And so He is known to us only by His Name and the workings of the world that He created.

(א) לְמַנְצַחַּ עַל הַגִּתִּית מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד: (ב) ה' אֲדַנְיָנוּ מָה אֲדִיר שְׁמֶךָ בְּכֹל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר
תָּנָה הוֹדָךְ עַל הַשָּׁמַיִם: (ג) מִפִּי עוֹלָלִים וְיִנְקִים יִסְדָּתָ עַז לְמַעַן צוֹרְרֶיךָ לְהַשְׁבִּית
אוֹיֵב וּמְתַנְקִים:

(1) For the musician on the gittis instrument, a mizmor by David. (2) Hashem, our L-rd, How majestic is Your Name throughout the earth, that You placed Your majesty in the heavens. (3) Out of the mouth of young children and infants You have established strength because of those who torment You, to silence enemy and avenge.

Despite the immensity of the universe, Hashem has presented Himself to us in a humble form to teach us the value of humility. Thus, He has established His Name out of the mouths of little children learning His Torah in purity. He has grounded the purpose of Creation on the continuity of the generations of Jews learning Torah and performing *mitzvos*. That continuity depends on our ability to resist and overcome the atheists and heretics who deny Hashem's existence, i.e. "those who torment You."

PART 2. THE ROLE OF MAN. Despite the apparent insignificance of man in the vastness of Creation, Hashem has crowned man with honor and given him dominion over other creatures. Man's mark of honor is the soul which enables him to perceive right and wrong. His visible distinction over other creatures lies in the power of

speech, which allows him to communicate the teachings of the Torah.

(ד) כִּי אֶרְאֶה שָׁמַיִךְ מַעֲשֵׂי אֶצְבְּעֹתֶיךָ יָרַח וְכּוֹכָבִים אֲשֶׁר כּוֹנְנֹתָהּ: (ה) מָה אֲנוֹשׁ כִּי תִזְכְּרֵנוּ וּבֶן אָדָם כִּי תִפְקֹדְנוּ: (ו) וַתַּחֲסֶרְהוּ מַעֲט מֵאַלְהִים וְכָבוֹד וְהָדָר תִּעֲטֶרְהוּ: (ז) תִּמְשִׁילֵהוּ בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יָדֶיךָ כֹּל שֵׁתָה תַּחַת רַגְלָיו: (ח) צִנְה וְאַלְפִים כֻּלָּם וְגַם בְּהֵמוֹת שָׂדֵי: (ט) צִפּוֹר שָׁמַיִם וְדָגֵי הַיָּם עֲבַר אֶרְחוֹת יָמַיִם: (י) ה' אֲדַנִּינוּ מָה אֲדִיר שְׁמֶךָ בְּכָל הָאָרֶץ:

(4) When I look at Your heavens, the work of Your fingers; the moon and the stars, which You have set in place. (5) What is man, that You are mindful of him. And the son of mortal man that You have designated him. (6) Yet You have made him only a little less than the angels. You have crowned him with honor and splendor. (7) You have given him dominion over the works of Your hands. You have placed everything under his feet. (8) Sheep and cattle, as well as the beasts of the field. (9) Birds of the sky and the fish of the sea. He travels across the oceans [too]. (10) Hashem, our L-rd, how majestic is Your Name throughout the earth.

Learning the Mizmor

PART 1. THE NAME OF HASHEM.

(א) לְמַנְצֵחַ עַל הַגִּיתִית מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:

A song **for the musician** — לְמַנְצֵחַ, who will perform it on the musical instrument called "gittis" — עַל הַגִּיתִית. It is a **mizmor** composed **by David** — מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד. *The gittis was fabricated in the city of Gass in the land of the Plishtim.*

(ב) ה' אֲדַנִּינוּ

Hashem, our L-rd — ה' אֲדַנִּינוּ, Your Name of Hashem (spelled with four Hebrew letters) signifies that You are the eternal source of all existence. You reveal Yourself to Your creatures by Your Name, so that to us Your Name is You and You are Your Name.

מָה אֲדִיר שְׁמֶךָ בְּכָל הָאָרֶץ
אֲשֶׁר תִּנְה הוֹדֶךָ עַל הַשָּׁמַיִם:

I stand in awe! **How majestic is Your Name throughout the earth** — מָה אֲדִיר שְׁמֶךָ בְּכָל הָאָרֶץ ! The creatures of this world cannot possibly appreciate the

Shechinah that dwells in their midst. It would be more fitting **that You placed** — **אֲשֶׁר תָּנָה** the focus of **Your splendor** — **הוֹדָךְ** in the vast **heavens** — **עַל הַשָּׁמַיִם**, in comparison to which the entire earth is like a speck of dust.

(ג) מְפִי עוֹלָלִים וְיִנְקִים
יִסְדַּתָּ עוֹ

But You taught the world humility by choosing mankind for Your special attention. **Out of the mouths of young children and infants** — **מְפִי עוֹלָלִים וְיִנְקִים** **You have established** Your **strength** — **יִסְדַּתָּ עוֹ**. Despite the immensity of the universe, You have grounded the purpose of Creation on the continuity of the generations of Jews learning Torah and performing *mitzvos*.

לְמַעַן צוֹרְרֶיךָ
לְהַשְׁבִּית אוֹיֵב וּמִתְנַקֵּם:

You have chosen the innocence and purity of young children **because of those who torment You** — **לְמַעַן צוֹרְרֶיךָ** by denying You and by disregarding Your wishes. And You have acted **to silence** that **enemy** which seeks to **avenge** — **לְהַשְׁבִּית אוֹיֵב וּמִתְנַקֵּם** the intrusion upon their selfish ambitions in life.

(ד) כִּי אֶרְאֶה שָׁמַיֶךָ
מַעֲשֵׂה אֶצְבְּעֹתֶיךָ
יָרַח וְכּוֹכָבִים אֲשֶׁר כּוֹנְנֹתָ:

When I look at Your vast heavens — **כִּי אֶרְאֶה שָׁמַיֶךָ**, I am amazed at their immensity and their intricate precision, **the work of Your fingers** — **מַעֲשֵׂי אֶצְבְּעֹתֶיךָ**. I think how all this has been created by You. It didn't just happen by itself. Thus, I am overwhelmed by the splendor of the **moon and the stars, which You have set in place** — **יָרַח וְכּוֹכָבִים אֲשֶׁר כּוֹנְנֹתָ** in their cosmic orbits.

PART 2: THE ROLE OF MAN.

(ה) מָה אֶנּוֹשׁ כִּי תִזְכְּרֶנּוּ
וּבֶן אָדָם כִּי תִפְקְדֶנּוּ:

When I look out at the night sky and see all this, I ask: **What is a puny man** — **מָה אֶנּוֹשׁ**, **that You are mindful of him** — **כִּי תִזְכְּרֶנּוּ**? Why do You care so much about an insignificant creature that You have given Him the gift of the Torah? **And what is the son of mortal man** — **בֶּן אָדָם**, **that You have designated him** — **כִּי**

תִּפְקְדֵנוּ to represent You in the cosmos?

(ו) וַתַּחַסְרֵהוּ מֵעֵט מַאֲלֵהִים

Yet You have made him only a little less than the angels — וַתַּחַסְרֵהוּ מֵעֵט מַאֲלֵהִים, giving him the power of speech, which no other creature has, and giving him the power to stop the sun, as Yehoshua did.

וְכָבוֹד וְהָדָר תִּעֲטֶרְהוּ:

You have crowned him with honor and splendor — וְכָבוֹד וְהָדָר תִּעֲטֶרְהוּ. You have given him a sublime and immortal soul which no other creature has.

(ז) תַּמְשִׁילֵהוּ בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יָדֶיךָ

Despite man's apparent insignificance **You have given him dominion over the works of Your hands — תַּמְשִׁילֵהוּ בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יָדֶיךָ.** Even though man is himself the work of Your hands You have given him the privilege of acting as Your steward on earth, administering the world that You created.

כֹּל שֵׁתָה תַּחַת רַגְלָיו:

You placed everything under his feet — כֹּל שֵׁתָה תַּחַת רַגְלָיו. Just as the shoes he walks on are there to serve his needs, so is everything in Creation designed to provide man with what he requires to properly serve You.

(ח) צֹנֶה וְאַלְפִים בָּלֶם,

וְגַם בְּהֵמוֹת שָׂדֵי:

You placed under man's authority **sheep and cattle — צֹנֶה וְאַלְפִים** as well as **all other** domesticated animals — **בָּלֶם and also the beasts of the open field — וְגַם** בְּהֵמוֹת שָׂדֵי, which man can trap and use as he sees fit.

(ט) צִפּוֹר שָׁמַיִם וְדָגֵי הַיָּם

עֹבֵר אֲרָחוֹת יַמִּים:

Man can catch **the birds of the sky — צִפּוֹר שָׁמַיִם** and **the fish of the sea — וְדָגֵי הַיָּם**, which live in their own environments. **He also travels across the oceans — עֹבֵר אֲרָחוֹת יַמִּים**, and so even great distances are not an obstacle to him.

(י) ה' אֲדֹנָינוּ
 מִה אֲדִיר שְׁמֶךָ בְּכָל הָאָרֶץ:

All of this leads me to ponder again and again, **Hashem, our L-rd – ה' אֲדֹנָינוּ, how majestic is Your Name – מִה אֲדִיר שְׁמֶךָ throughout the earth – בְּכָל הָאָרֶץ !**

Living the Mizmor

Listed below are some of the thoughts you might have in mind when you say the words of the mizmor as *tefillos* expressing your gratitude to Hashem and as *tehillos* expressing your recognition of Hashem.

Tehillos for Life - Contemplation of Hashem.

[8:2] **SOURCE OF ALL EXISTENCE.** – ה' אֲדֹנָינוּ – “*Hashem, our L-rd.*” His Name of four letters signifies that He is the source of all existence.

[8:2] **BEYOND EARTHLY UNDERSTANDING.** – מִה אֲדִיר שְׁמֶךָ בְּכָל הָאָרֶץ – “*Hashem, our L-rd, How majestic is Your Name throughout the earth.*” His majesty is beyond the ability of earthly creatures to appreciate or comprehend.

[8:2] **VASTNESS OF THE HEAVENS.** – תָּנָה הוֹדָךְ עַל הַשָּׁמַיִם – “*You placed Your majesty in the heavens.*” His majesty is revealed in the awesome splendor of the moon and the stars.

[8:3] **HUMILITY AND WISDOM.** – מִפִּי עוֹלָלִים וַיִּנְקִים יְסֻדָּתָ עוֹ – “*Out of the mouth of young children and infants You have established strength.*” He shows His humility by revealing His power and His wisdom in the tiniest beings.

Tefillos for Life - Gratitude .

[8:5] **MINDFUL OF MAN.** – מִה אֲנוֹשׁ כִּי תִזְכְּרֶנּוּ – “*What is man, that You are mindful of him*” Despite the vastness of the universe, Hashem has given man a central role, only a little less in status than the angels.

[8:7] **DOMINION TO MAN.** – תַּמְשִׁילֶהוּ – “*You have given him dominion*” Man has been given dominion over all Hashem’s creatures, acting as the steward of Hashem on earth.

Sources

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

ו - רש"י, אבן עזרא, רד"ק, מצודות
ז - מצודות, נר לרגלי
ח - רש"י, מצודות
ט - אבן עזרא, רד"ק, מצודות
י - מצודות, נר לרגלי

א - רש"י
ב - רש"י, רד"ק
ג - רש"י, מלבי"ם, נר לרגלי
ד - מצודות
ה - רש"י, רד"ק, מצודות, נר לרגלי

© COPYRIGHT NOTICE

All rights to this document are reserved by the author. For further information contact Isaac Kirzner at isaac@kirzner.com