

Mizmor 010

When Evil Prospers

Key Concepts

David asks how it can be that Hashem tolerates the *resha'im* (wicked people). They are under the impression that they can get away with anything and so they have no compunctions about causing suffering to the innocent. David then calls upon Hashem to rise up and show His justice now. Finally, he paints a picture of a better world in which the *resha'im* have been laid low and are no longer the role models they are today.

Navigating Tehillim. Mizmor 037 (A Tapestry of Enlightenment) offers another lesson in how to react to the presence of *resha'im* in the world. David reminds us that their apparent prosperity won't last. In contrast, the people with *bitachon* will be rewarded with security and happiness.

Exploring the Mizmor

David did not compose this mizmor in response to a specific situation; he designed it as a *tefillah* to be said by any person who is in distress because of the *resha'im* in the world. David begins the mizmor by appealing to Hashem to stop tolerating *resha'im*. He then goes on to demonstrate the perverted attitude of the *resha'im* and the ways they bring agony to mankind.

PART 1. WHY ARE THE WICKED TOLERATED? David appeals to Hashem to show His presence more openly. Wicked people can only survive as long as Hashem does not take action against them. In making his case David proceeds to describe the villainy of the *resha'im*, which can only be occurring because it is tolerated by Hashem.

(א) לָמָּה ה' תַּעֲמֹד בְּרַחוּק תַּעֲלִים לְעֵתוֹת בְּצָרָה: (ב) בְּגִאוֹת רָשָׁע יִדְלַק עֵינִי יִתְפָּשׂוּ
בְּמִזְמוֹת זֹו חֲשָׁבוּ: (ג) כִּי הִלֵּל רָשָׁע עַל תַּאֲוֹת נַפְשׁוֹ וּבִצֵּעַ בִּרְדֵּי נֶאֱפָח:

(1) Why, Hashem do You stand at a distance? [Why] do You hide in times of trouble? (2) In the arrogance of the rasha (wicked man) he hunts down the poor. May [he and his accomplices] be caught in the very schemes they have contrived. (3) For the rasha compliments [himself] for his desires. And the robber blesses [himself], mocking Hashem.

PART 2. IMMUNE FROM JUDGMENT. David charges the *rasha* with acting as though he will not have to give an accounting for his behavior. The *rasha* rejects the possibility of a higher power:

(ד) רָשָׁע כְּגִבָּה אָפוּ בַל יִדְרֹשׁ אֵין אֱלֹקִים כָּל מְזֻמּוֹתָיו: (ה) יַחֲלוּ דְרָכָיו בְּכָל עֵת מָרוֹם מְשַׁפְּטִיד מְנַגְדּוֹ כָּל צוּרָרָיו יִפִּיחַ בָּהֶם: (ו) אָמַר בְּלִבּוֹ בַל אָמוּט לְדוֹר וָדוֹר אֲשֶׁר לֹא בָרַע:

(4) The *rasha*, in his conceit says “No [one] will seek [me].” “There is no G-d” [is the basis of] all his scheming. (5) His ways are always successful. Your judgments on high [are far removed] from him. His human adversaries, he puffs at them. (6) He says in his heart, ‘I will not falter, from generation to generation, which will be without adversity.’

PART 3. VILLAINY IN ACTION. David continues in the presentation of his case against the *rasha*. Because the *rasha* feels free of restraint, he perpetrates one wicked deed after another. Thus, he takes advantage of those who don't have the ability to resist. And since the oppressor generally operates behind the scenes David speaks of him as lurking in ambush.

(ז) אָלָה פִּיהוּ מְלֵא וּמְרֻמוֹת וְתוֹךְ תַּחַת לְשׁוֹנוֹ עֵמֶל וְאָנוּ: (ח) יֵשֵׁב בְּמֵאֲרֵב חֲצֵרִים בְּמִסְתָּרִים יַהֲרֹג נָקִי עֵינָיו לְחַלְכָּה יִצְפְּנוּ: (ט) יֶאֱרֹב בְּמִסְתָּר כְּאֲרִיָּה בְּסִכְהָ יֶאֱרֹב לְחַטּוֹף עָנִי יַחְטוֹף עָנִי בְּמִשְׁכּוֹ בְּרִשְׁתּוֹ: (י) יִדְכֶּה יֶשֶׁחַ וְנִפֹּל בְּעֲצוּמָיו חַל כְּאִים: (יא) אָמַר בְּלִבּוֹ שִׁכַּח אֵל הַסִּתִּיר פָּנָיו בַּל רָאָה לְנִצָּח:

(7) His mouth is filled with promises, but words of deception and hidden malice are under his tongue, [causing] pain and distress. (8) He waits in ambush in the open spaces; in hidden places he murders the innocent. His eyes spy out the meek. (9) He lurks in hiding like a lion in his lair; he waits in ambush to snatch a poor man. He grabs the poor man when he draws his net. (10) He stoops and lies low. The unguarded victims fall to his power. (11) He says in his heart ‘G-d has forgotten. He has hidden His face; He will never see.’

PART 4. A PLEA FOR DIVINE ACTION. David now calls upon Hashem to take direct action against the *resha'im*:

(יב) קוֹמָה ה', אֵל נִשְׂא יָדָךְ אֶל תִּשְׁפַּח עֲנוּיִם: (יג) עַל מָה נֵאָחַר רָשָׁע אֱלֹקִים אָמַר

בְּלִבּוֹ לֹא תִדְרֹשׁ: (יד) רָאֵתָה כִּי אֵתָה עֹמֵל וְכַעַס תִּבְּיֵט לְתַת בְּיַדְךָ עָלַיְךָ יַעֲזֹב
 חִלְקָה יְתוֹם אֵתָה הֵייתָ עוֹזֵר: (טו) שָׁבֵר זְרוּעַ רִשָּׁע, וְרַע - תִּדְרֹשׁ רִשָּׁעוֹ בִּל תִּמְצָא:
 (12) Arise, Hashem. G-d, lift Your hand, don't forget the humble. (13) Why
 does the rasha insult G-d? Because he says in his heart, "You will not
 seek." (14) [But] You see! For You take notice of wrongdoing and anger. To
 dispense [punishment] is in Your power. The helpless victim relies upon
 You. The orphan, You were his Help. (15) Break the power of the rasha and
 [as for his] evil, [when] one looks for his evil it will not be anywhere to be
 found.

PART 5. VISION OF THE FUTURE. David concludes with a vision of the world as it
 will be once Hashem reveals His power.

(טז) ה' מֶלֶךְ עוֹלָם וְעַד אֲבָדוּ גוֹיִם מֵאֶרֶץ: (יז) תִּאֲוֹת עֲנִוִּים שָׁמַעְתָּ ה' תִּכְנִן לְבָם
 תִּקְשִׁיב אֲזָנְךָ: (יח) לְשַׁפֵּט יְתוֹם וְדָךְ בִּל יוֹסִיף עוֹד לְעַרְץ אֲנוּשׁ מִן הָאָרֶץ:
 (16) Hashem is King eternally. Nations have perished from His land. (17)
 You have heard the desires of the humble, Hashem. You will guide their
 heart. You will make Your ear attentive, (18) to take up the cause of the
 orphan and the downtrodden. [The rasha] will no longer continue to
 terrorize any earthly mortal.

Learning the Mizmor

PART 1. WHY ARE THE WICKED TOLERATED?

(א) לָמָּה ה' תִּעֲמֹד בְּרָחוֹק

Why, Hashem — לָמָּה ה', don't You come to the aid of the innocent victims of the
 wicked? Why **do You stand at a distance** — תִּעֲמֹד בְּרָחוֹק? Why do You make it
 seem as though You don't see what is happening?

תִּעֲלִים לְעֵתוֹת בְּצָרָה:

Why **do You hide** — תִּעֲלִים Your presence **in times of trouble** — לְעֵתוֹת בְּצָרָה
 when the weak are being oppressed? Why don't You make the *resha'im* sense Your
 presence so that they will be afraid to take advantage of the weak? Why do You
 allow them to think they can get away with what they are doing?

(ב) בְּגֵאוֹת רָשָׁע יִדְלַק עֵינִי

Since You have permitted the *rasha* to do what he wants, he is filled with his own self-importance and disregards the rights of others. **In the *rasha's* arrogance — בְּגֵאוֹת רָשָׁע, he openly hunts down the poor — יִדְלַק עֵינִי, who are most vulnerable.**

יִתְפָּשׂוּ בְּמִזְמוֹת זֹו חֲשָׁבוּ:

May the *rasha* and all his accomplices be caught — יִתְפָּשׂוּ in the very schemes they have contrived — בְּמִזְמוֹת זֹו חֲשָׁבוּ to snare the poor. Their treachery will then be apparent to all.

(ג) כִּי הִלַּל רָשָׁע עַל תְּאוֹת נַפְשׁוֹ

For the *rasha* has no interest in the welfare of others. Rather he compliments himself — כִּי הִלַּל רָשָׁע for satisfying his desires — עַל תְּאוֹת נַפְשׁוֹ. He sees his momentary satisfaction as an achievement because a greedy person is usually never satisfied, always wanting more.

וּבִצַּע בִּירְדָּ נֵאֶץ ה':

And the robber blesses — וּבִצַּע בִּירְדָּ himself for having successfully plundered the property of others. He relies only upon himself and thereby mocks Hashem — נֵאֶץ ה'.

PART 2. IMMUNE FROM JUDGMENT.

(ד) רָשָׁע כְּגִבָּה אָפוּ בַל יִדְרֹשׁ

The *rasha* in his conceit — רָשָׁע כְּגִבָּה אָפוּ, says to himself, "There is no power that will seek — בַל יִדְרֹשׁ to challenge my actions!"

אֵין אֱלֹקִים כָּל מִזְמוֹתָיו:

"There is no G-d — אֵין אֱלֹקִים to hold me accountable" is the underlying basis of all his scheming plans — כָּל מִזְמוֹתָיו.

(ה) יַחֲלִי וְדַרְכָּיו בְּכָל יֵת

Since the *rasha* is not being held to account for his crimes, **his ways are always successful — יַחֲלִי וְדַרְכָּיו בְּכָל יֵת. He fails to consider that such a high success rate is in itself an unnatural phenomenon and should be treated as a sign of trouble ahead.**

מָרוֹם מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ מִנְגִדוֹ

He ignores the fact that You are taking stock of his every action. In fact, he sees **Your judgments** as being remotely **on high** — מָרוֹם מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ. As they are far removed **from him** — מִנְגִדוֹ, he thinks he does not face punishment.

כָּל צוֹרְרָיו, יִפְיַח בָּהֶם:

As far as **all his human adversaries** — כָּל צוֹרְרָיו are concerned, **he just puffs at them** — יִפְיַח בָּהֶם ! He doesn't worry about having to pay for his crimes.

(ו) אָמַר בְּלִבּוֹ בֵּל אָמוּט

לְדֹר וָדֹר אֲשֶׁר לֹא בָרַע:

The *rasha* thinks he will remain in his strong position indefinitely, and so **he says in his heart** — אָמַר בְּלִבּוֹ, "I will not falter — בֵּל אָמוּט. My family will continue in power forever, **from generation to generation** — לְדֹר וָדֹר, all of **which will be without adversity** — אֲשֶׁר לֹא בָרַע."

PART 3. VILLAINY IN ACTION.

(ז) אָלֶה פִּיהוּ מְלֵא

וּמְרֻמוֹת וְתֹדֶן

In his selfishness he has no qualms about cheating others by making promises that he cannot keep. **His mouth is filled with oaths** — אָלֶה פִּיהוּ מְלֵא, swearing to deliver upon his every commitment. But his powers of persuasion are a facade, which are built upon lies. **And** so his oaths are **words of deception and hidden malice** — וּמְרֻמוֹת וְתֹדֶן to manipulate his listeners into falling for his schemes.

תַּחַת לְשׁוֹנוֹ עֵמֶל וְאֵוֹן:

But deep within his heart, **under his tongue** — תַּחַת לְשׁוֹנוֹ, his real intention is to cause **pain and distress** — עֵמֶל וְאֵוֹן.

(ח) יֵשֵׁב בְּמִאֲרָב חֲצִירִים

בְּמִסְתָּרִים יַהַרְגֵנָּקִי

He is so confident of success that **he waits in ambush** — יֵשֵׁב בְּמִאֲרָב, even **in the open spaces** — חֲצִירִים of settled areas. Then, **in hidden places** — בְּמִסְתָּרִים **he murders the innocent** — יַהַרְגֵנָּקִי, who have done nothing to him to warrant such

cruelty.

עֵינָיו לְחַלְכֵּה יִצְפְּנוּ:

While pretending to look elsewhere, **his eyes** — עֵינָיו **spy out the meek** — לְחַלְכֵּה יִצְפְּנוּ, who in their innocence have not guarded themselves against aggressors.

(ט) יֶאָרֵב בַּמְסֻתָּר כְּאַרְיֵה בְּסֻכָּה

Instead of learning Torah or otherwise contributing to society, **he lurks in hiding like a lion in his lair** — יֶאָרֵב בַּמְסֻתָּר כְּאַרְיֵה בְּסֻכָּה, hoping to suddenly leap out and catch a defenseless victim unawares.

יֶאָרֵב לַחֲטוּף עֲנִי

He may also be likened to a hunter who **waits in ambush** — יֶאָרֵב after setting a trap. The *rasha* is so habituated to robbery that he does not bother to find a rich victim to make it worth his while. He is ready **to snatch an unwitting poor man** — לַחֲטוּף עֲנִי, who thinks he is not a target because he has few possessions to steal.

יַחֲטֹף עֲנִי בְּמִשְׁכוֹ בְּרִשְׁתּוֹ:

Then **he snatches the poor man** — יַחֲטֹף עֲנִי **when he draws his net** — בְּמִשְׁכוֹ בְּרִשְׁתּוֹ. He has no compunction about taking advantage of someone who is already suffering financial hardship.

(י) יִדְכֶּה יִשְׁחַ

וְנִפֹּל בְּעֲצוּמָיו חַל כְּאֵיִם:

He stoops and lies low — יִדְכֶּה יִשְׁחַ to avoid alerting his intended victims to the danger they are in. **Then the unguarded victims fall prey to his power** — וְנִפֹּל בְּעֲצוּמָיו חַל כְּאֵיִם. His concern is only to avoid being detected by his victims. He has no fear of G-d.

(יא) אָמַר בְּלִבּוֹ שָׁכַח אֱלֹהִים

He says in his heart — אָמַר בְּלִבּוֹ: "Surely **G-d has forgotten** — שָׁכַח אֱלֹהִים about the world He created and is no longer concerned with the doings of its creatures."

הַסִּתִּיר פָּנָיו בַּל רָאָה לְנִצָּח:

And the *rasha* convinces himself that this is not just a temporary lapse: [Hashem]

has hidden His face — הַסְתִּיר פָּנָיו from the sight of those who are being persecuted. **He will never** look to **see** — בַּל רָאָה לִנְצַח whether people like me are committing crimes.

PART 4. A PLEA FOR DIVINE ACTION.

(יב) קוּמָה ה'
אֵל נִשָּׂא יָדְךָ

Arise, Hashem — 'קוּמָה ה'! Your world needs You! Without You, the world cannot continue to exist. **G-d, raise Your hand** — אֵל נִשָּׂא יָדְךָ to show Your power! Let the wicked, who deny You, fear Your anger.

אַל תִּשְׁכַּח עֲנֻיִים:

Don't forget the humble — אַל תִּשְׁכַּח עֲנֻיִים and the poor who have selflessly devoted themselves to You and yet have been persecuted by the *resha'im*!

(יג) עַל מָה נִאָּץ רָשָׁע אֱלֹקִים
אָמַר בְּלִבּוֹ לֹא תִדְרֹשׁ:

Why does the rasha feel free to **insult G-d** — עַל מָה נִאָּץ רָשָׁע אֱלֹקִים by intentionally violating Divine law? **Because he says in his heart** — אָמַר בְּלִבּוֹ: "You will not seek — לֹא תִדְרֹשׁ to punish anything I do."

(יד) רְאֵתָה כִּי אַתָּה עֹמֵל וְכַעַס תִּבְיֵט

But Hashem, **You do see** — רְאֵתָה! **For You** — כִּי אַתָּה surely **take notice of** all evil, whether it is self-indulgent **wrongdoing** or intentionally **anger-provoking** behavior — עֹמֵל וְכַעַס תִּבְיֵט.

לָתֵת בְּיָדְךָ
עֲלֶיךָ יַעֲזֹב חִלְכָּה

To dispense — לָתֵת punishment to the *resha'im* and stop their viciousness **is in Your power** — בְּיָדְךָ. **The helpless victim relies** only **upon You** — עֲלֶיךָ יַעֲזֹב חִלְכָּה, for he trusts in Your teachings of peace and does not take steps to protect himself.

יְתוּם אַתָּה הֵייתָ עוֹזְרִי:

The victim is right to rely on You, for You have proven Yourself in the past to be the

Defender of the weak. Even **the orphan** — יתום who is too young to appreciate Your goodness, **You were his Help** — אַתָּה הָיִיתָ עֹזֶר.

(טו) שֶׁבַר זְרוּעַ רָשָׁע

Break the power of the rasha — שֶׁבַר זְרוּעַ רָשָׁע so that others will not see him as their role model and will avoid following his evil ways. Then the *rasha* will be isolated.

וְרַע תִּדְרוֹשׁ רָשָׁעוֹ בַּל תִּמְצָא:

And as for his **evil** — וְרַע, even though it is now widespread, once You break the power of the *rasha*, people will no longer follow his example. Then when **one looks for his evil it will not be anywhere to be found** — תִּדְרוֹשׁ רָשָׁעוֹ בַּל תִּמְצָא.

PART 5. VISION OF THE FUTURE.

(טז) ה' מֶלֶךְ עוֹלָם וָעֶד

אֲבָדוּ גוֹיִם מֵאֶרֶצוֹ:

It will then have been demonstrated to all that Hashem **is King** — ה' מֶלֶךְ, Who actively and **eternally** — עוֹלָם וָעֶד rules over His world. We shall see that the **nations** who contest His rule of law **have perished**, especially **from His holy land** — אֲבָדוּ גוֹיִם מֵאֶרֶצוֹ.

(יז) תִּאֲוֹת עֲנוּיִם שָׁמַעְתָּ ה'

In that glorious time the world will know that **You have heard the desires of the humble, Hashem** — תִּאֲוֹת עֲנוּיִם שָׁמַעְתָּ ה' as expressed by their *tefillah* to You, even if their exhausted condition makes them unable to put it into words.

תִּכְיֶן לִבָּם

תִּקְשִׁיב אָזְנְךָ:

You will guide their heart — תִּכְיֶן לִבָּם to serve You by living a modest life, without resorting to excess. And **You will make Your ear attentive** — תִּקְשִׁיב אָזְנְךָ to their words as soon as they have the strength to utter them.

(יח) לְשֹׁפֵט יתום וְדָדִךְ

You will then respond to their needs, **to take up the cause of the orphan and the downtrodden** — לְשֹׁפֵט יתום וְדָדִךְ, who are now being oppressed by the *rasha*.

בַּל יוֹסִיף עוֹד לְעֵרֵץ אָנוּשׁ מִן הָאָרֶץ:

Once You have judged the *rasha* and he sees the price to be paid for his crimes, **he will no longer continue** – **בַּל יוֹסִיף עוֹד** **to terrorize any earthly mortal** – **לְעֵרֵץ אָנוּשׁ מִן הָאָרֶץ**, no matter how weak.

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 devotion to Hashem.

Lessons for Life - Your Attitude.

[10:2] **ARROGANCE.** – **בְּגִאוֹת רָשָׁע יִדְלַק עָנִי** – “*In the arrogance of the rasha he hunts down the poor.*” Take special care to avoid arrogance, which is the attitude of the wicked. Because of it they feel free to victimize innocent people.

[10:4] **HASHEM IS ALWAYS THERE.** – **אֵין אֱלֹקִים כָּל מְזֻמּוֹתָיו** – “*There is no G-d [is the basis of] all his scheming.*” Don’t fall into the trap of the wicked who disregard the presence of Hashem when they wish to do what they know He abhors.

[10:5] **PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED.** – **יַחֲלוּ דְרָכָיו בְּכָל עֵת** – “*His ways are always successful.*” Don’t let yourself be misled or demoralized by the apparent success of the wicked, no matter how convincing it looks. They succeed because they are not restrained by conscience or morality, but they will pay a heavy price for their crimes.

Tefillos for Life - Your Relationship with Hashem.

[10:1] **DISTANCE.** – **לָמָּה ה' תַּעֲמֹד בְּרָחוֹק** – “*Why, Hashem do You stand at a distance?*” Plead with Hashem not to remain distant from you, especially if you are in trouble and are desperate for His help.

[10:12] **URGENCY.** – **קוּמָה ה', אֵל נִשָּׂא יָדְךָ אֶל תְּשַׁכַּח עֲנִיִּים** – “*Arise, Hashem. G-d, lift Your hand, don't forget the humble.*” Plead with Hashem to act immediately to bring the *yeshuah* for which you have been praying so long.

Tefillos for Life - Your Yeshuah.

[10:2] SELF-DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED. – יתְפָּשׁוּ בַּמְזֻמּוֹת זֶה חֲשָׁבוּ – “May [the resha'im] be caught in the very schemes they have contrived.” Ask that people who want to harm you be disabled through their own actions, without the need for your active involvement.

[10:15] DISABLING THE WICKED. – שִׁבְרֵ זְרוּעֵ רָשָׁע – “Break the power of the rasha.” Plead with Hashem to bring the evil power of resha'im to an end so that their victims are freed from their cruelty.

[10:18] – בַּל יוֹסִיף עוֹד לְעַרְץ אָנוּשׁ מִן הָאָרֶץ – “[The rasha] will no longer continue to terrorize any earthly mortal.”

Tefillos for Life - Contemplation of Hashem.

[10:16] ETERNITY. – ה' מֶלֶךְ עוֹלָם וָעֶד – “Hashem is King eternally.” Hashem rules the world for all time and any appearance of imbalance in the scheme of things will ultimately be resolved.

Sources

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

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

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