

Mizmor 012

Against Hypocrisy

Key Concepts

As in the previous two mizmorim, David is fleeing from King Shaul and pleads with Hashem to save him. He feels overwhelmed and embittered by the treachery of his countrymen. It seems as though there is no one left upon whom he can rely. David especially deplores the hypocrites who use their power of speech to gain advantage over others. He compares that with the purity and integrity of the word of Hashem.

Navigating Tehillim. One of the most hypocritical and treacherous enemies that David contended with during this period was Doeg the Edomi. The destructive results of his falsehoods are described in Mizmor 052. David's process of self-examination to restore his bitachon in the face of the treachery around him is explored in Mizmor 011. A powerful tefillah to ask Hashem for immediate action against the resha'im (wicked men) is presented in mizmor 010.

Exploring the Mizmor

PART 1. A PLEA TO BE SAVED. David speaks directly to Hashem to be saved from Shaul and his supporters. He appeals to Hashem to take action against the resha'im, such as Doeg, who have been inciting Shaul against him. He deplores the hypocrisy of human beings in general and remarks on how they use their power of speech to gain advantage over others.

(א) לְמַנְצֵחַ עַל הַשְּׁמִינִית מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד: (ב) הוֹשִׁיעָה ה' כִּי גָמַר חֲסִיד כִּי פָסוּ
אֲמוּנֵיִם מִבְּנֵי אָדָם: (ג) שָׁוְא יְדַבְּרוּ אִישׁ אֶת רֵעֵהוּ שִׁפְתַי חֲלָקוֹת בְּלֵב וְלֵב יְדַבְּרוּ:
(1) *For the musician on the sheminis, a mizmor by David. (2) "Save [me], Hashem for there is no longer any devout man. For truthful people have disappeared from among men. (3) Men tell lies one to the other. They speak flattering talk with a duplicitous heart."*

PART 2. A CALL FOR JUSTICE. David declares his earnest hope that Hashem will punish the guilty. He remarks on the falseness of what evil men say with their lips and their tongues. Such men act as if they are answerable to no one. David is especially concerned that if such men are behaving badly toward him, they will use

their powers of deception against the poor and the weak.

(ד) יִכַּרְתַּהּ ה' כָּל שִׁפְתֵי חֲלָקוֹת לְשׁוֹן מְדַבֶּרֶת גְּדֻלוֹת: (ה) אֲשֶׁר אָמְרוּ לְלִשְׁנֵנוּ נִגְבִּיר שִׁפְתֵינוּ אֲתֵנוּ מִי אֲדוֹן לָנוּ: (ו) מִשֹּׁד עֲנִיִּים מֵאֲנַקַּת אֲבִיוֹנִים עֲתָה אֶקוּם לֵאמֹר ה' אֲשִׁית בְּיַשֵּׁעַ יַפִּיחַ לוֹ:

(4) *May Hashem cut down flattering lips, the tongue that speaks grandiosely. (5) [May Hashem cut down] those who have said, "By means of our tongues we will prevail! Our lips are under our own control, who can be master over us." (6) Because of the plundering of the poor, because of the cry of the needy, Hashem will say, "I will now rise up, I will grant a deliverance [to save each one from the resha'im] who set a trap for him."*

PART 3. RENEWAL OF BITACHON. David compares the hypocrisy of the resha'im with the purity and integrity of the word of Hashem, upon whose promise he depends. Once he reminds himself of the absolute truth of Hashem, his confidence in ultimate deliverance is restored. Hashem will surely protect the innocent and defend David from all his enemies.

(ז) אֲמָרוֹת ה' אֲמָרוֹת טְהוֹרוֹת כְּסוֹף צְרוּף בְּעֵלִיל לְאָרֶץ מְזַקֵּק שִׁבְעַתָּיִם: (ח) אֲתָה ה' תִּשְׁמְרֵם תִּצְרְנוּ מִן הַדּוֹר זֶה לְעוֹלָם: (ט) סָבִיב רְשָׁעִים יִתְהַלְכוּן כָּרֶם זֵלוֹת לְבָנֵי אָדָם:

(7) *For the words of Hashem are pure words, like refined silver, clear to the world refined seven times. (8) You, Hashem, will guard them, You will always protect each one from such a generation. (9) The resha'im are walking all around, when baseness is exalted among the sons of men.*

Learning The Mizmor

PART 1. A PLEA FOR HELP.

(א) לְמִנְצַחַ עַל הַשְּׁמִינִית
מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:

For the musician who will perform it **on the** eight-stringed **sheminis** harp — **לְמִנְצַחַ עַל הַשְּׁמִינִית**, this is **a mizmor** composed **by David** — **מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד**.

(ב) הוֹשִׁיעָה ה' כִּי גָמַר חָסִיד
כִּי פָסוּ אֱמוּנִים מִבְּנֵי אָדָם:

Save me, Hashem — הוֹשִׁיעָה ה' — **I depend on You alone for there is no longer any devout man** — כִּי גָמַר חָסִיד — **to come forward and do a kindness for me. No one is willing to confront Shaul and defend me before him. For truthful people have disappeared from among men** — כִּי פָסוּ אֱמוּנִים מִבְּנֵי אָדָם. Instead of defending me, people lie about me to Shaul. Even my kinsmen, the Zifim, have betrayed me and have reported to Shaul that I was hiding with them.

PART 2. A CALL FOR JUSTICE.

(ג) שָׁוְא יְדַבְּרוּ אִישׁ אֶת רֵעֵהוּ
שִׁפְתַּי חֲלָקוֹת בְּלִב וְלִב יְדַבְּרוּ:

Men tell lies one to the other — שָׁוְא יְדַבְּרוּ אִישׁ אֶת רֵעֵהוּ — **Flattering talk** — שִׁפְתַּי חֲלָקוֹת, **they speak with a duplicitous heart** — בְּלִב וְלִב יְדַבְּרוּ. It is as if they had two hearts. With one heart they pretend to be at peace with me, while deep down hatred is buried in their true heart.

(ד) יַכֶּרֶת ה' כָּל שִׁפְתֵי חֲלָקוֹת
לְשׁוֹן מְדַבֶּרֶת גְּדֻלוֹת:

May Hashem cut down — יַכֶּרֶת ה' — **all who speak with flattering lips** — כָּל שִׁפְתֵי חֲלָקוֹת. **May He cut down the tongue that speaks grandiosely** to deceive and cheat — לְשׁוֹן מְדַבֶּרֶת גְּדֻלוֹת.

(ה) אֲשֶׁר אָמְרוּ לְלִשְׁנֵנוּ נִגְבִּיר
שִׁפְתֵינוּ אֲתֵנוּ מִי אֲדוֹן לָנוּ:

May Hashem cut down **those who have said** — אֲשֶׁר אָמְרוּ, **"By means of our tongues we will prevail** — לְלִשְׁנֵנוּ נִגְבִּיר — **over anyone who stands in our way! We will be able to deceive them! Our lips are under our own control** — שִׁפְתֵינוּ אֲתֵנוּ — **and we will say only what is to our advantage! Since nobody knows what is in our hearts, who can be master over us** — לָנוּ מִי אֲדוֹן לָנוּ?"

(ו) מִשְׁדַּע עֲנִיִּים מֵאַנְקַת אֲבִיוֹנִים
 עֲתָה אֶקוּם יֹאמֶר ה'
 אֲשִׁית בְּיִשְׁע יִפְיחַ לוֹ:

But **because of the plundering of the poor** — מִשְׁדַּע עֲנִיִּים, **because of the cry of the needy** — מֵאַנְקַת אֲבִיוֹנִים, may Hashem say, "I will now rise up — עֲתָה — אֶקוּם יֹאמֶר ה' to help them. I will grant a deliverance — אֲשִׁית בְּיִשְׁע to save each of them from the *resha'im* who set a verbal trap for him — יִפְיחַ לוֹ."

PART 3. RENEWAL OF BITACHON.

(ז) אֲמָרוֹת ה' אֲמָרוֹת טְהוֹרוֹת
 כְּסֹף צָרוּף בְּעֵלִיל לְאָרֶץ מְזַקֵּק שִׁבְעָתַיִם:

When Hashem has promised to rise up, I am sure He will take action. For **the words of Hashem are pure words** — אֲמָרוֹת ה' אֲמָרוֹת טְהוֹרוֹת. They are not like the dishonest words of the *resha'im* but are unadulterated. They are **like refined silver** — כְּסֹף צָרוּף, which is **clear to the entire world** — בְּעֵלִיל לְאָרֶץ, after having been **refined** over and over again, **seven times** — מְזַקֵּק שִׁבְעָתַיִם or more.

(ח) אֲתָה ה' תִּשְׁמְרֵם
 תִּצְרְנוּ מִן הַדּוֹר זֶה לְעוֹלָם:

You, Hashem — אֲתָה ה', will surely **guard them** — תִּשְׁמְרֵם, You will always **protect each one** of them **from such a generation** of *resha'im* — תִּצְרְנוּ מִן הַדּוֹר — **זֶה לְעוֹלָם** as we are now tragically living through.

(ט) סָבִיב רְשָׁעִים יִתְהַלְכוּ
 כָּרָם זֵלוֹת לְבָנֵי אָדָם:

Such protection is necessary because **the resha'im are walking all around** — סָבִיב רְשָׁעִים יִתְהַלְכוּ looking for opportunities to harm the *tzadikim* of the generation. This is what happens when society gives stature and power to *resha'im*, that is, **when baseness is exalted among the sons of men** — כָּרָם זֵלוֹת לְבָנֵי אָדָם.

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.

Tefillos for Life - Your Relationship with Hashem.

[12:2] RELIANCE. – הוֹשִׁיעָה ה' כִּי גָמַר חָסִיד כִּי פָסוּ אֲמוּנִים מִבְּנֵי אָדָם –
 “Save [me], Hashem for there is no longer any devout man. For truthful people have disappeared from among men.” People I rely on may disappoint me, no matter how upright they appear to be. Therefore I will place my total *bitachon* in You alone. My guiding principle is to please You and do what is right.

Lessons for Life - Your Behavior.

[12:5] FALSEHOOD. – אֲשֶׁר אָמְרוּ לְלִשְׁנֵנוּ נִגְבִּיר – “[May Hashem cut down] those who have said, ‘By means of our tongues we will prevail!’” Base your relationships on truth, not on falsehood and deception.

[12:9] BASENESS. – כָּרַם זִלוֹת לִבְנֵי אָדָם – “When baseness is exalted among the sons of men.” Don’t succumb to prevailing practices of falsehood and hypocrisy in business and the professions. Just because others are doing it doesn’t make it right.

Tefillos for Life - Your Yeshuah.

[12:6] DELIVERANCE. – עֲתָה אֶקוּם יֹאמֵר ה' אֲשֶׁית בְּיָשַׁע יַפְיחַ לוֹ – “Hashem will say, ‘I will now rise up, I will grant a deliverance [to save each one from the *resha'im*] who set a trap for him.’” Turn to Hashem to save those who have been victimized by the *reshai'im* of the world.”

Tehillos for Life - Contemplation of Hashem.

[12:7] TRUTH. – אֲמֵרוֹת ה' אֲמֵרוֹת טְהוֹרוֹת כְּסָף צָרוּף – “For the words of Hashem are pure words, like refined silver.” The words of the Torah that Hashem has given to mankind are absolutely reliable because they come from the Source of truth. Their purity is made all the more evident in comparison with the falsehood and hypocrisy that characterizes men.

Sources

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

ו - רש"י, רד"ק
ז - רש"י, רד"ק, מצודות
ח - מצודות
ט - רד"ק

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

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