

Mizmor 013

How Long Must I Wait?

Key Concepts

In this moving mizmor David visualizes himself speaking for his nation in a future time when the Jewish people are suffering in Exile. He begins by plaintively asking how long the nation must continue to wait before Hashem again returns us to His presence. He then pleads for Hashem to save us from the precarious state we now occupy. He asks Hashem to enlighten us so that we can contribute to our own *yeshuah* by doing what is right. Finally, he looks forward in joyful anticipation to the gratitude we will feel when we are delivered.

Navigating the Mizmor. This is the first occurrence of a mizmor in which David visualizes the nation in Exile, desperately waiting for the *Geulah*. This concept appears a number of times in *Tehillim*, especially in Mizmor 022 (Morning Star), which is probably the most bitter and the most heart-rending.

Exploring the Mizmor

PART 1. HOW LONG? David calls out to Hashem and asks how much longer we must remain in this bitter Exile.

(א) לְמַנְצַח מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד: (ב) עַד אֵנָה ה' תִּשְׁכַּחַנִּי נָצַח עַד אֵנָה תִסְתַּיר אֶת פְּנִיָּךְ מִמֶּנִּי: (ג) עַד אֵנָה אֲשִׁית עֲצוֹת בְּנַפְשִׁי יְגוֹן בְּלִבִּי יוֹמָם עַד אֵנָה יְרוּם אִיבֵי עָלַי:
 (1) *For the musician, a mizmor by David. (2) "Hashem, how long, will You forget me permanently? How long will You conceal Your presence from me? (3) How long must I devise strategies for the anguish in my heart throughout the day? How long will my enemy triumph over me?"*

PART 2. SAVE ME. David pleads with Hashem to show us how to bring the Exile to an immediate end.

(ד) הַבִּיטָה עֲנֵנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵי הָאֵרָה עֵינַי פֶּן אִישָׁן הַמָּוֹת: (ה) פֶּן יֵאמֵר אִיבֵי יִכְלְתֵנוּ צָרִי יְגִילוּ כִּי אֲמוֹט:
 (4) *"Look and answer me, Hashem, my G-d! Enlighten my eyes lest I sleep [the sleep of] death, (5) lest my enemy claim 'I have prevailed over Him!'*

[Lest] my tormentors rejoice when I falter."

PART 3. JOYFUL ANTICIPATION. David sings to Hashem in gratitude for the deliverance that he is sure will come.

(ו) וְאֲנִי בַחֲסֵדְךָ בְטַחֲתִי יִגַּל לְבִי בִישׁוּעָתְךָ אֲשִׁירָה לְה' כִּי גָמַל עָלַי:

(6) "But as for me, I trust in Your kindness. My heart will rejoice in Your deliverance. I will sing to Hashem for He has been good to me."

Learning the Mizmor

PART 1. HOW LONG?

(א) לְמַנְצַחַ מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:

This song has been prepared **for the musician** — לְמַנְצַחַ, who will perform it. It is **a mizmor** composed **by David** — מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד.

(ב) עַד אָנָּה ה' תִּשְׁכַּחֲנִי נֶצַח

עַד אָנָּה תִסְתִּיר אֶת פְּנִיךָ מִמֶּנִּי:

Hashem, how long — עַד אָנָּה ה' — **will I have to remain in exile?** How long will You allow the nations to think **You have permanently forgotten me** — תִּשְׁכַּחֲנִי נֶצַח ? And **how long** — עַד אָנָּה — **will You conceal Your presence from me** — תִסְתִּיר אֶת פְּנִיךָ מִמֶּנִּי ?

(ג) עַד אָנָּה אֲשִׁית עֲצוֹת בְּנַפְשִׁי

יְגוֹן בְּלִבִּי יוֹמָם

How long — עַד אָנָּה — **must I devise strategies** — אֲשִׁית עֲצוֹת בְּנַפְשִׁי — to escape **the anguish** — יְגוֹן — that is **in my heart throughout the day** — בְּלִבִּי — **יוֹמָם** even when I am busy with my affairs?

עַד אָנָּה יְרוּם אִיבִי עָלַי:

How long — עַד אָנָּה — **will I have to fear that my enemy will triumph over me** — יְרוּם אִיבִי עָלַי —

PART 2. SAVE ME!

(ד) הַבִּיטָה עֲנֵנִי ה' אֱלֹקֵי

Don't forget me! Don't conceal Your face from me! Instead, **look** — הַבִּיטָה at my suffering and **answer me, Hashem, my G-d** — עֲנֵנִי ה' אֱלֹקֵי !

הַאִירָה עֵינַי פֶּן אֵישׁוֹן הַמָּוֹת:

Enlighten my eyes — הַאִירָה עֵינַי to discover truly effective measures with which I can actually escape my enemies, **lest** I succumb to them **and sleep** the sleep of **death** — פֶּן אֵישׁוֹן הַמָּוֹת in the long night of Exile.

(ה) פֶּן יֹאמְרוּ אֹיְבֵי יַכְלֹתֵנוּ

Hashem, if not for my sake, save me for Your honor, **lest my enemy claim** — פֶּן יֹאמְרוּ אֹיְבֵי "I have prevailed over Him — יַכְלֹתֵנוּ !" Do it lest the *resha'im* (wicked) conclude that my devotion to You serves no purpose.

צָרִי יִגִּילוּ כִּי אָמוֹט:

Save me lest **my tormentors rejoice** — צָרִי יִגִּילוּ and be encouraged to persist in their evil ways **when** they see that **I falter** — כִּי אָמוֹט and tumble to the ground.

PART 3. JOYFUL ANTICIPATION

(ו) וְאֲנִי בְּחֶסֶדְךָ בְּטַחְתִּי

יִגַּל לְבִי בִישׁוּעָתְךָ

אֲשִׁירָה לְה' כִּי גָמַל עָלַי:

My enemies think no one will save me. **But as for me** — וְאֲנִי, **I trust in Your kindness** — בְּחֶסֶדְךָ בְּטַחְתִּי and so I am sure You will come to my aid. Then in place of my tormentors rejoicing when I falter, **my heart will rejoice in Your yeshuah** (salvation) — יִגַּל לְבִי בִישׁוּעָתְךָ. Then **I will sing** in gratitude **to Hashem** — כִּי גָמַל עָלַי, **for He has been good to me** — אֲשִׁירָה לְה'.

Living the Mizmor

Listed below are some of the thoughts that you might have in mind when you say the words of the mizmor as a *tefillah* asking for relief from your troubles and expressing your devotion to Hashem.

Tefillos for Life - Your Relationship with Hashem.

[13:2] HIS CONCEALMENT. – עַד אָנָה תִּסְתִּיר אֶת פְּנֵיךָ מִמֶּנִּי – “How long will You conceal Your presence from me?” Plead with Hashem to end this period of His concealment and bring the long-awaited *Ge’ulah* (Redemption) for all of *Klal Yisrael*.

[13:6] BITACHON. – וְאֲנִי בְחֶסֶדְךָ בְטַחֲתִי – “But as for me, I trust in Your kindness.” Declare with total sincerity your trust and confidence in Hashem’s kindness. Because of it He will surely bring the *Ge’ulah*.”

Tefillos for Life - Anguish.

[13:3] HOW LONG. – עַד אָנָה אֲשִׁית עֲצוֹת בְּנַפְשִׁי יְגוֹן בְּלִבִּי יוֹמָם – “How long must I devise strategies for the anguish in my heart throughout the day?” Plead with Hashem to end this period of anguish which overwhelms you so that it never leaves your mind, even when you are busy with your affairs.”

[13:6] ANTICIPATED JOY. – יִגַּל לִבִּי בִישׁוּעָתְךָ – “My heart will rejoice in Your deliverance.” Anticipate the joy and the gratitude you will feel when Hashem grants you a *yeshuah* from your troubles.”

Tefillos for Life - Your Berachah.

[13:4] LIFE. – הַבִּיטָה עֲנִנִי ה' אֱלֹקֵי הָאִיכָה עֲנִי פֶן אִישָׁן הַמּוֹת – “Enlighten my eyes lest I sleep [the sleep of] death.” Plead with Hashem not to bring your life to an end for there is much you need to do to fulfill your mission in His service.

Sources

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

ד – רש"י, רד"ק, מצודות, מלבי"ם
ה – מצודות, נר לרגלי
ו – רד"ק

א – רד"ק
ב – אבן עזרא, רד"ק, מצודות
ג – אבן עזרא, רד"ק, מצודות

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