

Mizmor 014

Exposing Evil

Key Concepts

In this mizmor David exposes the presence of evil in the world. He argues that wickedness is the direct result of a failure to recognize the presence of G-d. If man is not accountable to G-d for his actions he is liable to give in to his selfish interests and urges.

Exploring the Mizmor

David composed the mizmor to be understood by Jews of the present day. We have seen mass political and cultural movements that appear on the scene from time to time in the interest of improving the lot of mankind, but end up failing to respect basic morality and human life. Sadly these movements affect large portions of the Jewish people as well as the nations of the world.

The mizmor has three parts. First, David challenges the people who have succumbed to immoral attitudes and wicked behavior. He then speaks about how these people are drawn to persecute the Jewish nation and rebukes them for their cruelty and unfairness. Finally, he expresses the hope that Hashem will initiate the process leading to a return to peace and righteousness in the world.

PART 1. CHALLENGE TO THE WICKED. David addresses the "villainous fool" who leads a mass political or cultural movement. This individual has set in place the framework by which Jews and non-Jews reject the idea of G-d. Those who follow him cannot resist the tide and they behave unthinkingly. If they would only pause and reflect a little more, they would realize that their entire system of thought is based on a fallacy.

(א) לַמְנַצֵּחַ לְדָוִד, אָמַר נָבֵל בְּלִבּוֹ אֵין אֱלֹקִים, הַשְּׁחִיתוּ הַתְּעִיבוּ עָלֶיךָ אֵין עֲשֵׂה
טוב: (ב) ה' מִשָּׁמַיִם הַשְּׁקִיף עַל בְּנֵי אָדָם לְרֹאוֹת הַיֵּשׁ מִשְׁכִּיל דֹרֵשׁ אֶת אֱלֹקִים: (ג)
הַכֹּל סָר יַחְדּוֹ נֶאֱלָחוּ אֵין עֲשֵׂה טוֹב אֵין גַּם אַחַד:

(1) For the musician, by David. The villainous fool says in his heart, "There is no G-d." They have acted corruptly and committed despicable acts. There is not one who does good. (2) From Heaven Hashem looks down upon mankind to see if there is an enlightened man seeking G-d. (3) But all have

turned away. They have gone foul together. There is no doer of good; there is not even one.

PART 2. REBUKE TO THE NATIONS. David cries out to the nations of the world who have turned their distorted world-view against Yisrael. They seek a victim and the people of Yisrael fall prey to their cruelty. Instead of appreciating the moral beacon of devotion to the Creator that Yisrael carries, they deride our commitment to the holiness of Hashem and the Torah.

(ד) הֲלֹא יָדְעוּ כָּל פְּעֻלֵי אֱוֹן אֲכָלֵי עַמִּי אֲכָלוּ לֶחֶם ה' לֹא קָרְאוּ: (ה) שָׁם פָּחַדוּ פָּחַד כִּי אֱלֹקִים בְּדוֹר צָדִיק: (ו) עֲצַת עֲנִי תִבְיָשׁוּ כִּי ה' מְחַסֶּהוּ:

(4) Don't they know, all the wrongdoers, the devourers of my people, devouring them like bread? They do not call upon Hashem. (5) There they will learn to fear [Him] for G-d resides in the midst of the righteous generation. (6) "You deride the counsel of the destitute that Hashem is its refuge."

PART 3. HOPE FOR THE FUTURE. David sings of the hoped for time when Hashem will show us the way forward and get us started again on the steps we need to take to deserve His active help in restoring us to what we were in days of old.

(ז) מִי יִתֵּן מִצִּיּוֹן יְשׁוּעַת יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשׁוּב ה' שְׁבוֹת עַמּוֹ יִגַּל יַעֲקֹב יִשְׂמַח יִשְׂרָאֵל:
(7) O, May Yisrael's rescue come from Tzion! When Hashem restores the exiles of His people, Yaakov will exult, Yisrael will rejoice.

Learning the Mizmor

PART 1: CHALLENGE TO THE WICKED.

(א) לְמַנְצֵחַ לְדָוִד

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

אָמַר נָבֵל בְּלִבּוֹ אֵין אֱלֹקִים
הַשְּׁחִיתוּ הַתְּעִיבוּ עֲלֵיךָ
אֵין עֲשֵׂה טוֹב:

The villainous fool, who promotes misguided political and cultural movements, **says in his heart** — **אָמַר נָבֵל בְּלִבּוֹ**, "There is no judgment of G-d — **אֵין אֱלֹקִים**

for me to worry about!" He has persuaded the people who follow him to reject basic morality. They **have acted corruptly** — **הִשְׁחִיתוּ** **and committed despicable acts** — **הִתְעִיבוּ עֲלֵיכֶּה**. Even when they can satisfy their desires in an ethical way, they prefer depravity. **There is not one** among his followers **who does** truly **good** — **אֵין עֹשֶׂה טוֹב** — and holds faithfully to time-honored moral standards.

(ב) ה' מְשַׁמֵּם הַשָּׁמַיִם עַל בְּנֵי אָדָם
לְרֹאוֹת הַיֵּשׁ מִשְׁכִּיל דָרֵשׁ אֶת אֱלֹקִים:

However, Hashem sees all. With His all-encompassing view He sees the detailed actions and thoughts of every person. **Hashem looks down from Heaven** — **ה'** **מְשַׁמֵּם הַשָּׁמַיִם** **upon mankind** — **עַל בְּנֵי אָדָם**. And so He is constantly looking **to see if there is an enlightened man** — **לְרֹאוֹת הַיֵּשׁ מִשְׁכִּיל** like Avraham Avinu, someone using his intelligence to sincerely **seek G-d** — **דָרֵשׁ אֶת אֱלֹקִים**, to understand what G-d wants from us.

From time to time Hashem probes for a response by afflicting men with illness and misfortune. Those who deny G-d's existence pretend that they only accept what they see with their senses. They say everything else is coincidence. But they readily accept the laws of nature even though they are just as invisible to the eye as the spiritual laws. If they would just reflect upon the meaning of our existence as Avraham Avinu did they would realize the fallacy of their thinking.

(ג) הִכַּל סָר
יַחְדּוֹ נֶאֱלָחוּ
אֵין עֹשֶׂה טוֹב
אֵין גַּם אֶחָד:

But instead of responding to Hashem's probing of mankind, **all** the foolish people **have turned away** — **הִכַּל סָר** from the good path; **they have gone foul together** — **יַחְדּוֹ נֶאֱלָחוּ**, encouraging each other to become further immersed into materialism. **There is no doer of good** — **אֵין עֹשֶׂה טוֹב** because an individual tempted to do good is embarrassed to be seen by others as being too virtuous. **There is not even one** — **אֵין גַּם אֶחָד** who will stand up and call his fellows to task.

PART 2: REBUKE TO THE NATIONS.

(ד) הלא ידעו כל פֹּעֲלֵי אֲוֹן
אֲכָלֵי עַמִּי אֲכָלוּ לֶחֶם
ה' לא קראו:

Don't they know — הלא ידעו, **all those wrongdoers** — כל פֹּעֲלֵי אֲוֹן of the nations, the **devourers of my people** — אֲכָלֵי עַמִּי, oppressing them and **devouring them like bread** — אֲכָלוּ לֶחֶם? Surely they must know that the power they have to persecute others comes from Hashem, and yet **they do not** take to heart the holy message carried by my people and **call upon Hashem** — ה' לא קראו.

(ה) שֵׁם פְּחָדוֹ פָּחַד
כִּי אֱלֹקִים בְּדוֹר צְדִיק:

Don't they know that **there** in their own lands where they feel masters of their fate **they will** ultimately **learn to fear** — שֵׁם פְּחָדוֹ פָּחַד the power of G-d, for they will inevitably learn **that G-d is revealed in the history of the righteous** nation — כִּי אֱלֹקִים בְּדוֹר צְדִיק, a nation that has survived thousands of years because it is devoted to the One true G-d.

(ו) עֲצַת עֲנֵי תַבִּישׁוּ
כִּי ה' מַחְסֵהוּ:

You nations of the world! **You deride the counsel of** Yisrael, **the poor** nation — עֲצַת עֲנֵי תַבִּישׁוּ, for relying on its *bitachon* **that Hashem is its refuge** — כִּי ה' מַחְסֵהוּ. You say to the Jews, "Where is your G-d? Let Him come to your aid."

PART 3: HOPE FOR THE FUTURE.

(ז) מִי יִתֵּן מִצִּיּוֹן יְשׁוּעַת יִשְׂרָאֵל
בְּשׁוּב ה' שָׁבוֹת עַמּוֹ
יְגַל יַעֲקֹב יִשְׁמַח יִשְׂרָאֵל:

May Yisrael's rescue come speedily from the One Who dwells in **Tzion** — מִי יִתֵּן **! מִצִּיּוֹן יְשׁוּעַת יִשְׂרָאֵל** Even if its sins make the current generation of Yisrael unworthy, may Hashem initiate the *Geulah* for the sake of Tzion and all those who were faithful to it. **When Hashem restores the exiles of His people** — בְּשׁוּב ה'

שְׁבוֹת עַמּוֹ, the core faithful of **Yaakov will exult**— יִגַּל יַעֲקֹב, and then the full nation of **Yisrael will rejoice** — יִשְׂמַח יִשְׂרָאֵל for they will return to the ways of their fathers.

Living the Mizmor

Listed below are some of the lessons that you can draw from this mizmor.

Lessons for Life - Your Attitude.

[14:1] GUARD YOUR HEART. – אָמַר נָבֵל בְּלִבּוֹ אֵין אֱלֹקִים, הִשְׁחִיתוּ הַתְּעִיבוּ – *“The villainous fool says in his heart, ‘There is no G-d.’ They have acted corruptly and committed despicable acts. There is not one who does good.”* It is not enough to behave properly. You must have a good attitude and *emunah* in Hashem; otherwise you will be like the villainous fool.

[14:7] ANTICIPATED JOY. – בְּשׁוֹב ה' שְׁבוֹת עַמּוֹ יִגַּל יַעֲקֹב יִשְׂמַח יִשְׂרָאֵל – *“When Hashem restores the exiles of His people, Yaakov will exult, Yisrael will rejoice.”* Have *bitachon* in the favorable outcome that Hashem has promised to those who are faithful to Him.

Lessons for Life - Your Behavior.

[14:3] STRENGTH OF CHARACTER. – הַכֹּל סָר יַחְדָּו נֶאֱלָחוּ אֵין עֹשֶׂה טוֹב אֵין – גַּם אֶחָד – *“But all have turned away. They have gone foul together. There is no doer of good; there is not even one.”* When your generation is being tested, stand up for what you believe in and do the right thing, even if it means going against everyone else.

Sources

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

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| ד - רד"ק, רשר"ה | א - אבן עזרא, רד"ק, בן-רמון, באר אברהם, |
| ה - רד"ק, רשר"ה, | רשר"ה, נר לרגלי |
| ו - רש"י, רד"ק | ב - אבן עזרא, בן-רמון, מצודות, מלבי"ם, רשר"ה |
| ז - רש"י, ספורנו, אלשיך, באר אברהם | ג - אבן עזרא, בן-רמון, אלשיך, נר לרגלי |

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