

## Mizmor 017

# Hear My Thoughts

### Key Concepts

This entire mizmor is in the form of a *tefillah* (prayer) to Hashem. David begins by examining his innermost thoughts, which he knows are open before Hashem. He realizes that if he deceives himself, his *tefillah* will not be acceptable. He then pleads for Hashem's support so that he does not stumble in following the pathway of true commitment. He pleads for Hashem's protection from the wicked people who want to kill him. He acknowledges his sins and begs to be allowed the opportunity to do *teshuvah* and live out a full life, crowned with worthy children. He concludes the *tefillah* for his share in the World to Come.

**Navigating Tehillim.** In Mizmor 012, which is also a *tefillah*, David deplored the hypocrisy of the treacherous men who threatened his life. In the present mizmor, which is effectively a continuation of that *tefillah*, he examines his own conscience to ensure that he himself is not guilty of the same hypocrisy which he has found so reprehensible in others.

### Exploring the Mizmor

**PART 1. A PLEA TO BE HEARD.** David calls out to Hashem to hear his *tefillah*. He says that he is opening up his innermost thoughts. He knows that if he deceives himself, his *tefillah* will not be acceptable. He ends this part with a plea for Hashem's support so that he does not stumble in following the pathway of true commitment.

(א) תִּפְלֶה לְדוֹד, שְׁמַעָה ה' צְדָקָה, הַקְשִׁיבָה רִנָּתִי, הֶאֱזִינָה תִּפְלִתִי בְּלֹא שִׁפְתֵי מִרְמָה: (ב) מִלִּפְתֵי מִשְׁפָּטִי יֵצֵא, עֵינֶיךָ תִּחְזִינָה מִיִּשְׂרָיִם: (ג) בְּחִנְתָּ לִבִּי, פָּקֵדְתָּ לִּילָה, צָרַפְתָּנִי בֵּל תִּמְצָא, זָמַתִּי בֵּל יַעֲבֹר פִּי: (ד) לִפְעֻלוֹת אָדָם בְּדַבֵּר שִׁפְתֶיךָ, אֲנִי שְׁמַרְתִּי אֲרָחוֹת פְּרִיץ: (ה) תִּמְנֹךְ אֲשָׁרִי בְּמַעֲגֻלוֹתֶיךָ, בֵּל נִמוּטוֹ פִּעְמִי:

(1) A *tefillah* by David. Hashem, hear [my] sincere [thoughts]; be attentive to my song; listen to my *tefillah* [that is] not from lips of deception. (2) Let my judgment go out from before You. Your eyes see uprightness. (3) You have examined my heart; You have visited by night. You have tested me and found no [hypocrisy]; my thoughts did not contradict the words of my

mouth. (4) When the actions of man [have been] against the word of Your lips, I have guarded against the ways of the offender. (5) Support my steps in Your pathways so that my feet do not trip.

**PART 2. A PLEA FOR PROTECTION.** David pleads for Hashem's protection from the wicked people who want to kill him.

(ו) אָנִי קָרָאתִיךָ כִּי תִעַנֶנִּי אֱ-ל, הַט אָזְנֶךָ לִי שְׁמַע אִמְרֹתַי: (ז) הִפְלֵה חֲסָדֶיךָ, מוֹשִׁיעַ חוֹסִים מִמַּתְקוֹמְמִים בַּיַּמִּינֶךָ: (ח) שְׁמַרְנִי כְּאִישׁוֹן בֵּית עֵין, בְּצֹל כְּנָפֶיךָ תִּסְתִּירֵנִי: (ט) מִפְּנֵי רָשָׁעִים זֶה שְׂדוּנִי, אֵיבֵי בְּנֵפֶשׁ יִקִּיפוּ עָלַי: (י) חֲלַבְמוֹ סָגְרוּ פִּימוֹ דָּבְרוּ בְּגִאוֹת: (יא) אֲשִׁירֵנוּ עִתָּה סָבְבוּנוּ, עֵינֵיהֶם יִשִּׁיתוּ לְנִטּוֹת בְּאַרְצְךָ: (יב) דָּמִינוּ כְּאַרְיֵה יִכְסוּף לְטָרוֹף וְכִכְפִּיר יֵשֵׁב בְּמִסְתָּרִים:

(6) I call to You because You will answer me, O G-d. Incline Your ear to me; hear my words. (7) Exercise Your kindnesses in a special way, to save with Your right hand those who seek refuge from aggressors. (8) Guard me like the apple of the eye; shelter me in the shadow of Your wings. (9) From those resha'im who rob me, my mortal enemies who encircle me. (10) They have covered [their heart] with their fat; their mouths speak with arrogance. (11) [Seeing] our steps they immediately surround us. They cast their eyes to spread over the land. (12) He is like a lion longing for prey; and like a young lion lurking in concealment.

**PART 3. A PLEA FOR LIFE.** David acknowledges that his enemies are actually Hashem's "sword," sent to punish him for his sins. However, he begs to be allowed the opportunity to do *teshuvah* and live out a full life, crowned with worthy children. He concludes the *tefillah* with a plea for his share in the World to Come.

(יג) קוּמָה ה' קִדְמָה פְּנֵיו הִכְרִיעֵהוּ פִּלְטָה נִפְשֵׁי מְרָשָׁע חֲרָבֶךָ: (יד) מִמֵּתִים יִדָּה ה', מִמֵּתִים מִחֶלֶד, חֲלָקִים בְּחַיִּים, וְצַפּוֹנָה תִּמְלֵא בְטָנָם, יִשְׁבְּעוּ בָּנִים וְהִנְיחוּ יִתְרָם לְעוֹלָלֵיהֶם: (טו) אָנִי בְּצַדֶּק אֶחְיֶה פָּנֶיךָ אֶשְׁבְּעָה בְּהַקִּיץ תִּמְוֹנָתֶךָ:

(13) Rise up, Hashem, confront him, and bring him to his knees. Rescue my soul from the rasha, [acting as] Your sword. (14) Hashem, [let me be] from among those who die by Your hand, who die of old age, whose portion is eternal life. With Your hidden reward, You fill their stomach. They are granted sons and they bequeath their abundance to their children. (15) For [my] righteousness let me behold Your face. Upon awakening [in the World

to Come] I will be gratified [to behold] Your image.

## Learning the Mizmor

### PART 1. A PLEA TO BE HEARD.

#### (א) תְּפִלָּה לְדָוִד

This mizmor is a **tefillah** composed by **David** — תְּפִלָּה לְדָוִד.

שְׁמָעָה ה' צֶדֶק, הַקְשִׁיבָה רִנָּתִי, הַאֲזִינָה תְּפִלָּתִי  
בְּלֹא שִׁפְתַי מִרְמָה:

**Hashem**, I beg You to **hear** my **sincere** thoughts — שְׁמָעָה ה' צֶדֶק, even if unspoken. **Be attentive to my** heartfelt **song** of devotion — הַקְשִׁיבָה רִנָּתִי. **Listen to my tefillah** — הַאֲזִינָה תְּפִלָּתִי in which I am opening up myself to You. My words do **not** come **from lips** — בְּלֹא שִׁפְתַי that have been used for **deception** — מִרְמָה, for otherwise You would reject them.

#### (ב) מִלְּפָנֶיךָ מִשְׁפָּטִי יֵצֵא

**Let my judgment go out from before You** — מִלְּפָנֶיךָ מִשְׁפָּטִי יֵצֵא. I welcome Your justice because I know that You judge me fairly and with mercy. I hope that my own self-evaluation through *tefillah* corresponds with Your evaluation of me.

#### עֵינֶיךָ תַחְזִינָה מִישָׂרִים:

I know that **Your eyes see uprightness** — עֵינֶיךָ תַחְזִינָה מִישָׂרִים for You look beyond a person's past deeds and consider his future potential, based on the *teshuvah* that he does.

#### (ג) בְּחִנּוּת לִבִּי פָקַדְתָּ לַיְלָה

**You have examined my heart** — בְּחִנּוּת לִבִּי. **You have visited** me **by night** — פָקַדְתָּ לַיְלָה when I was alone and so You know my innermost thoughts and yearnings.

#### צָרַפְתָּנִי בִל תִּמְצָא

#### זְמוֹתַי בִּל יַעֲבֹר פִּי:

**You have tested me** — צָרַפְתָּנִי with afflictions and difficulties, **and You found no** wrongful thoughts — בִּל תִּמְצָא; **my secret thoughts did not contradict the**

**words of my mouth** — זַמְתִּי בַל יַעֲבֹר פִּי. I have been honest with myself and with others.

(ד) לַפְעֻלוֹת אָדָם בְּדַבַּר שְׁפָתֶיךָ  
אֲנִי שָׁמַרְתִּי אַרְחוֹת פְּרִיץ:

I have not only resisted the *yetzer hara* (evil inclination), I have also avoided people who are bad influences. When **the actions of man** — לַפְעֻלוֹת אָדָם — have sought to influence me to sin **against the word of Your lips** — בְּדַבַּר שְׁפָתֶיךָ, **I have guarded against the ways of the offender** — אֲנִי שָׁמַרְתִּי אַרְחוֹת פְּרִיץ — and resisted him.

(ה) תִּמְצֵךְ אֲשָׁרִי בְּמַעְגְלוֹתֶיךָ  
בַּל נִמוּטוּ פְעָמַי:

**Support my steps in Your pathways** — תִּמְצֵךְ אֲשָׁרִי בְּמַעְגְלוֹתֶיךָ, **so that my feet do not trip** — בַּל נִמוּטוּ פְעָמַי. I do not want to fail You because of my weaknesses.

## PART 2. A PLEA FOR PROTECTION.

(ו) אֲנִי קָרָאתֶיךָ כִּי תַעֲנֵנִי אֱ-ל  
הֵט אָזְנוֹךָ לִי שְׁמַע אִמְרָתִי:

**I call to You** — אֲנִי קָרָאתֶיךָ, **because** I am confident that **You will answer me**, **O God** of power — אֱ-ל. Therefore, I ask that You **incline Your ear to me** — הֵט אָזְנוֹךָ לִי; **hear** and understand **my words** — שְׁמַע אִמְרָתִי — with all the supporting details that I am unable to specify.

(ז) הַפְּלֵה חֲסָדֶיךָ  
מוֹשִׁיעַ חוֹסִים מִמַּתְקוֹמְמִים בְּיַמִּינֶךָ:

**Exercise Your kindnesses in a special way** — הַפְּלֵה חֲסָדֶיךָ, **to save** — מוֹשִׁיעַ — **those who seek refuge** in You — חוֹסִים. Protect them **from aggressors** — מִמַּתְקוֹמְמִים — and save them **with Your right hand** — בְּיַמִּינֶךָ.

(ח) שְׁמַרְנִי כְּאִישׁוֹן בֵּת עֵין

**Guard me as** the eyelid protects **the apple of the eye** — שְׁמַרְנִי כְּאִישׁוֹן בֵּת עֵין. Let me be as precious to You as the apple of the eye is to me. Let me be Your instrument of light.

בְּצֵל כְּנָפֶיךָ תִּסְתִּירֵנִי:

Like a hovering eagle, **shelter me in the shadow of Your wings** — **בְּצֵל כְּנָפֶיךָ תִּסְתִּירֵנִי**. Let my enemies fear to attack me because they sense Your watchful presence.

(ט) מִפְּנֵי רְשָׁעִים זוּ שְׂדוּנִי

אִיבֵי בְּנֹפֶשׁ יִקִּיפוּ עָלַי:

Protect me **from those resha'im who rob me** — **מִפְּנֵי רְשָׁעִים זוּ שְׂדוּנִי**. Save me from **my mortal enemies** — **אִיבֵי בְּנֹפֶשׁ** who encircle me — **יִקִּיפוּ עָלַי**.

(י) חֲלַבְמוֹ סָגְרוּ

They have indulged themselves with luxuries and so **they have covered** — **סָגְרוּ** their heart and their eyes **with their fat** — **חֲלַבְמוֹ**. As a result they don't see Your works and they have no fear of You. They don't feel the need to seek sustenance from their Creator.

פִּימוֹ דְּבָרוֹ בְּגֵאוּת:

And **their mouths speak with arrogance** — **פִּימוֹ דְּבָרוֹ בְּגֵאוּת** because they have convinced themselves that their success is their own doing.

(יא) אֲשֶׁרִינוּ עֵתָה סָבְבוּנוּ

עֵינֵיהֶם יִשִּׁיתוּ לְנֹטוֹת בְּאַרְצִי:

The *resha'im* are on the prowl for me and my people. As soon as they pick up our trail and see the path of **our steps** — **אֲשֶׁרִינוּ** — **they immediately surround us** — **עֵתָה סָבְבוּנוּ** to hem us in. **They cast their eyes** — **עֵינֵיהֶם יִשִּׁיתוּ** on us, seeking a moment of weakness **to spread** their net **over the land** — **לְנֹטוֹת בְּאַרְצִי** and take it from us.

(יב) דְּמִינוּ כְּאַרְיֵה יִכְסוֹף לְטְרוֹף

וְכַכְפִּיר יֹשֵׁב בְּמַסְתָּרִים:

Every one of them is driven by the same motive. **He is like a hungry lion** — **דְּמִינוּ** **כְּאַרְיֵה**, which hunts in the wilderness, **longing for prey** — **יִכְסוֹף לְטְרוֹף**; **and like a young lion lurking in concealment** — **וְכַכְפִּיר יֹשֵׁב בְּמַסְתָּרִים**, but ready to spring when the victim passes by.

PART 3. A PLEA FOR LIFE.

(יג) קוּמָה ה' קִדְמָה פָּנָיו הַכְרִיעֵהוּ

**Rise up, Hashem — קוּמָה ה' — קִדְמָה פָּנָיו** before the *rasha* gets to me **and bring him to his knees — הַכְרִיעֵהוּ**.

פִּלְטָה נַפְשִׁי מִרָשָׁע חֲרֹבֶךָ:

**Rescue my soul from the *rasha* — פִּלְטָה נַפְשִׁי מִרָשָׁע**, even though he acts as **Your sword — חֲרֹבֶךָ** to carry out the punishment that You have decreed. Give me the opportunity to do *teshuvah* before the *rasha* strikes.

(יד) מִמָּתִים יָדָךְ ה', מִמָּתִים מִחֶלְדָּךְ,

חֶלְקֶם בְּחַיִּים

**Hashem**, let me not die a violent death. Let me be **from among those** blessed ones **who are allowed to die by Your hand — מִמָּתִים יָדָךְ ה'**. Let me be **from among those who die of old age — מִמָּתִים מִחֶלְדָּךְ**. **Their portion is eternal life — חֶלְקֶם בְּחַיִּים**.

וַצַּפוּנְךָ תִּמְלֵא בִטְנֵם

**With Your hidden reward — וַצַּפוּנְךָ** that You have set aside for those who fear You, **You fill their stomach — תִּמְלֵא בִטְנֵם**.

יִשְׁבְּעוּ בָנִים וְהִנִּיחוּ יִתְרָם לְעוֹלָלֵיהֶם:

**They are granted worthy sons — יִשְׁבְּעוּ בָנִים** and they **bequeath their abundance to their children — וְהִנִּיחוּ יִתְרָם לְעוֹלָלֵיהֶם**.

(טו) אֲנִי בְצַדִּיק אֶחְזֶה פָּנֶיךָ

As for me — **אֲנִי**, I hope to be among them so that in reward **for my righteousness** in This World — **בְצַדִּיק, I will behold Your face — אֶחְזֶה פָּנֶיךָ** in the World to Come.

אֶשְׁבְּעָה בְּהַקִּיץ תְּמוֹנֹתֶךָ:

**Upon awakening — בְּהַקִּיץ** to life in that future world, **let me be gratified — אֶשְׁבְּעָה** to behold **Your image — תְּמוֹנֹתֶךָ**, which is the spiritual image in which man was created.

## 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* and some of the lessons that you can draw from this mizmor.

### Tefillos for Life - Your Relationship with Hashem.

[17:1] SINCERITY. – הַקְשִׁיבָה רִנָּתִי, הֶאֱזִינָה תְּפִלָּתִי בְּלֹא שִׁפְתַי מְרָמָה – “Hashem, hear [my] sincere [thoughts]; be attentive to my song; listen to my tefillah [that is] not from lips of deception.” Be honest and sincere whenever you speak, but especially when addressing Hashem. If you are not totally open with Him, he knows it.

[17:2] – עֵינֶיךָ תַחֲזִינָה מִיִּשְׁרָיִם – “Your eyes see uprightness.”

[17:3] – צָרַפְתָּנִי בַל תִּמְצָא, זַמְתִּי בַל יַעֲבֹר פִּי – “You have tested me and found no [hypocrisy]; my thoughts did not contradict the words of my mouth.”

[17:6] CONFIDENCE. – אֲנִי קָרָאתִיךָ כִּי תַעֲנֶנִי אֵל – “I call to You because You will answer me.” If you have done *teshuvah*, be confident in approaching Hashem to hear your tefillos.

[17:15] ETERNAL LIFE. – אֲנִי בְצַדִּיק אֶחֱוָה פְּנֶיךָ אֶשְׁבְּעָה בְּהַקִּיץ תִּמְוֹנֶתְךָ – “For [my] righteousness let me behold Your face. Upon awakening [in the World to Come] I will be gratified [to behold] Your image.” Ask Hashem to grant you the privilege of life in the World to come.

### Lessons for Life - Your Behavior.

[17:4] BAD INFLUENCES. – אֲנִי שָׁמַרְתִּי אַרְחוֹת פְּרִיץ – “I have guarded against the ways of the offender.” Avoid interacting with people who do not observe the *mitzvos*.

[17:10] LUXURIES. – חִלְבָּמוֹ סָגְרוּ פִּימוֹ דְּבָרוֹ בְּגֵאוֹת – “They have covered [their heart] with their fat; their mouths speak with arrogance.” Avoid indulging in conspicuous luxuries. Such behavior breeds arrogance and makes you feel that you have no need to seek sustenance from Your Creator.

**Tefillos for Life - Your Berachah.**

[17:5] HELP WITH MITZVOS. – תִּמְדָּךְ אֲשֶׁרִי בְּמַעְגְלוֹתֶיךָ, בִּלְ נִמוּטוֹ פְּעָמַי – “Support my steps in Your pathways so that my feet do not trip.” Ask Hashem to help you in your desire to observe His *mitzvos*. Make the case that you do not want to fail Him because of your weaknesses.

[17:14] NATURAL DEATH. – מִמָּתִים יָדָךְ ה', מִמָּתִים מִחֶלֶד – “Hashem, [let me be] from among those who die by Your hand, who die of old age.” Ask Hashem that when it is time for you to leave this world it will be a natural death and that you will not be the victim of violence.

**Tefillos for Life - Your Yeshuah.**

[17:8] DIVINE PRESENCE. – בְּצֵל כְּנָפֶיךָ תִּסְתִּירֵנִי – “Shelter me in the shadow of Your wings.” Ask Hashem to let your enemies fear to attack you because they sense His watchful presence.

[17:9] SHELTER. – מִפְּנֵי רָשָׁעִים זֶה שְׂדוּנִי, אֵיבֵי בְּנִפְשׁ יִקִּיפוּ עָלַי – “[Shelter me] from those *resha'im* who rob me, my mortal enemies who encircle me.” Ask Hashem to protect you from evil men who are seeking to cause you harm.

**Tefillos for Life - Your Teshuvah.**

[17:13] DELAYED ATTACK. – פְּלִטָה נַפְשִׁי מִרָשָׁע חֶרֶבְךָ – “Rescue my soul from the *rasha*, [acting as] Your sword.” Ask Hashem to stop the *rasha* who is out to harm you. Ask that his attack be delayed to give you the opportunity to do *teshuvah*.

**Sources**

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

ט - רש"י	א - מצודות, נר לרגלי, רשר"ה
י - רש"י, נר לרגלי	ב - באר אברהם, נר לרגלי
יא - רש"י, רד"ק, נר לרגלי	ג - אבן עזרא, רד"ק, מצודות, מלבי"ם, נר לרגלי
יב - רש"י, אבן עזרא, נר לרגלי	ד - באר אברהם
יג - רש"י, נר לרגלי	ה - מצודות
יד - רש"י, מצודות	ו - רש"י, מלבי"ם, נר לרגלי
טו - רש"י, מצודות	ז - רש"י
	ח - רש"י, מלבי"ם, נר לרגלי

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