

Mizmor 018

A Lifetime of Devotion

Key Concepts

This mizmor is a song of celebration and gratitude that David composed toward the end of his life to thank Hashem for having stood by him throughout a lifetime of strife. The original version of this song appears in the Book of *Shmuel* II (Chapter 22) as part of his life story. David himself made some changes in the mizmor when he incorporated it in Tehillim to serve as an inspiration for future generations.

In the mizmor David shows how his entire life was dominated by his relationship to Hashem. No matter what he achieved, whether it was escape from danger, defeat of enemies, or being elevated to royalty and the leadership of a nation, it was all Hashem's doing.

When David speaks of overcoming his enemies, he does not mention them individually, except for King Shaul, his predecessor. Shaul stood out from the rest of his enemies because he was such a difficult adversary. Although his hatred of David was intense, Shaul was at heart a righteous man. David needed to demonstrate his own suitability to the position without directly attacking Shaul, who was still the king and had to be treated with deference.

Exploring the Mizmor

PART 1. INTRODUCTION. Here David identifies himself as the servant of Hashem because no matter where he went and no matter what he did, his thoughts were always of Hashem. He was a devoted servant to his Master. In a life filled with challenge, he never put his trust in his military or political skills, but only in Hashem.

(א) לְמַנְצֵחַ לְעֶבֶד ה' לְדָוִד אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר לֵה' אֶת דְּבָרֵי הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת בַּיּוֹם הַצֵּיל ה' אוֹתוֹ מִכָּף כָּל אֹיְבָיו וּמִיַּד שָׁאוּל:

(1) For the musician, by the servant of Hashem, by David, who spoke the words of this song to Hashem on a day that Hashem had delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Shaul.

PART 2. MY STRENGTH. David begins his song by declaring that his relationship to Hashem is what gives meaning to his life:

(ב) וַיֹּאמֶר אֶרְחַמֶּךָ ה' חֲזִקִי: (ג) ה' סִלְעִי וּמְצוּדָתִי וּמִפְּלִטִי אֵלֶי צוּרֵי אַחֶסֶה בּוֹ
מִגְּנִי וְקָרוֹן יִשְׁעֵי מִשְׁגָּבַי: (ד) מִהֶלֶל אֶקְרָא ה' וּמִן אֵיבֵי אֲנֹשֶׁעַ:

(2) He said: I will [sing of my] love for You, Hashem, for You are my Strength. (3) Hashem is my Rock, my Fortress, and my Rescuer. My G-d, my Rock, I rely on Him. He is my Shield, the Horn of my Deliverance, my Uplifter. (4) I call unto Hashem with praise. I am saved from my enemies.

PART 3. DESPERATE TIMES. David now recalls the times when he was in desperate need for help.

(ה) אֶפְפוּנֵי חֲבָלֵי מוֹת, וְנַחְלֵי בְּלִיעַל יִבְעֲתוּנִי: (ו) חֲבָלֵי שָׂאוֹל סִבְבוּנִי, קִדְמוּנִי
מוֹקְשֵׁי מוֹת: (ז) בַּצַּר לִי אֶקְרָא ה', וְאֶל אֱלֹקֵי אֲשׁוּעַ, יִשְׁמַע מִהִיכָלוֹ קוֹלִי, וְשׁוֹעֲתִי
לִפְנֵיו תְּבוֹא בְּאָזְנוֹ:

(5) Pangs of death encompassed me and the encampments of lawless men terrorized me. (6) Pains of the grave encircled me; snares of death confronted me. (7) In my distress I would only call upon Hashem and to my G-d I would cry. From His abode He would hear my voice. My cry to Him would reach His ears.

PART 4. TEFILLOS ANSWERED. David remembers how Hashem answered his tefillos by punishing his foes. To help us visualize Hashem's great power, David uses the symbolism of cataclysmic phenomena in nature.

(ח) וַתִּגְעַשׁ וַתִּרְעַשׁ הָאָרֶץ, וּמוֹסְדֵי הָרִים יִרְגְּזוּ, וַיִּתְגַּעְשׂוּ כִּי חָרָה לוֹ: (ט) עָלָה עָשָׁן
בְּאָפוֹ, וְאֵשׁ מִפִּי תֹאכַל, גְּחָלִים בְּעָרוֹ מִמּוֹנֵי: (י) וַיֵּט שָׁמַיִם וַיִּרְדּוּ, וַעֲרָפֶל תַּחַת רַגְלָיו:
(יא) וַיִּרְכַּב עַל כְּרוּב וַיַּעֲף, וַיֵּדָא עַל כַּנְּפֵי רוּחַ: (יב) יָשַׁת חֲשָׁךְ סִתְרוֹ, סִבִּיבוֹתָיו
סִפְתּוֹ, חֲשֻׁכַת מַיִם עָבִי שְׁחָקִים: (יג) מִנְגֵּה נִגְדּוֹ, עָבִיו עָבְרוּ, בָּרָד וְגִחְלֵי אֵשׁ: (יד)
וַיִּרְעַם בְּשָׁמַיִם ה', וַעֲלִיוֹן יִתֵּן קוֹלוֹ, בָּרָד וְגִחְלֵי אֵשׁ:

(8) The earth heaved and shuddered, the foundations of the mountains shook, they quaked when His wrath flared. (9) Smoke rose from His nostrils, a devouring fire [issued] from His mouth, [flaming] coals blazed forth from Him. (10) He bent the heavens down and descended, with thick darkness beneath His feet. (11) He mounted a malach [angel] and swooped down; He glided on the wings of the wind. (12) He made darkness His

concealment, surrounding His shelter. There was darkness from water of the clouds of heaven. (13) From out of the brilliant glow from before Him, His clouds passed across with hail and fiery coals. (14) Hashem thundered in the heavens, the Most High raised His voice with hail and fiery coals.

(טו) וַיִּשְׁלַח חֲצֵיו וַיִּפְיֹצוּם, וּבָרְקִים רַב וַיַּהַמּוּם: (טז) וַיִּרְאוּ אֶפְיָקֵי מַיִם, וַיִּגְלוּ מוֹסְדוֹת תִּבְלָה, מִגַּעְרֵתָדָה ה', מִנִּשְׁמַת רוּחַ אֲפָדָה: (יז) יִשְׁלַח מִמְרוֹם יִקְחֵנִי, וַיִּמְשְׁנֵי מִמַּיִם רַבִּים: (יח) יִצִּילֵנִי מֵאֵיבֵי עֶז וּמִשֹּׁנְאָי, כִּי אֶמְצֹו מִמְּנִי: (יט) יִקְדָּמוּנִי בְיוֹם אִידִי, וַיְהִי ה' לְמִשְׁעָן לִי:

(15) He sent forth His arrows and scattered them; He discharged lightning bolts and He terrified them. (16) The seabed became visible and the foundations of the earth were laid bare. By Your rebuke, Hashem, by the blowing of the breath of Your nostrils. (17) He sent His help from on high and took me, He drew me out of deep waters. (18) He saved me from my powerful foe and from my enemies, when they overpowered me. (19) They advanced to attack me on my day of disaster, but Hashem became my support.

PART 5. LESSONS LEARNED. David advises future generations that Hashem's rescue cannot be taken for granted. Man needs to follow the path of Hashem to be worthy of His favor.

(כ) וַיּוֹצִיאֵנִי לַמֶּרְחָב, יַחֲלֹצֵנִי כִּי חָפֵץ בִּי: (כא) יִגְמְלֵנִי ה' כְּצִדְקֵי, כְּבָר יָדִי יָשִׁיב לִי: (כב) כִּי שָׁמַרְתִּי דְרָכֵי ה', וְלֹא רָשַׁעְתִּי מֵאַלְקֵי: (כג) כִּי כָל מִשְׁפָּטָיו לִנְגִדִי, וַחֲקוּתָיו לֹא אָסִיר מִנִּי: (כד) וַאֲהִי תָמִים עִמוֹ, וְאַשְׁתַּמֵּר מֵעוֹנֵי: (כה) וַיִּשָּׁב ה' לִי כְּצִדְקֵי כְּבָר יָדִי לִנְגִד עֵינָיו:

(20) He brought me out to a wide-open space, He set me free for He was pleased with me. (21) Hashem rewarded me for my righteousness; He repaid me according to the cleanness of my hands. (22) For I have kept to Hashem's ways. I did no intentional evil before my G-d. (23) For [I have kept] all His rational laws (mishpatim) before me. And I did not put His unexplained statutes (chukim) away from my thoughts. (24) I was sincerely committed to Him and I guarded against my sin. (25) Hashem repaid me for my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands before His eyes.

PART 6. THE WAYS OF HASHEM. David turns to Hashem, declaring that He deals with man as man deals with Him. David then recalls that there are times when Hashem does the opposite of what people are expecting, and that is for good reason.

(כו) עִם חָסִיד תִּתְחַסֵּד, עִם גִּבֹּר תִּתְמַם וְתִתְמָם: (כז) עִם נָבֵר תִּתְבַּרֵּר, וְעִם עֲקֹשׁ תִּתְפַּתֵּל: (כח) כִּי אֶתָּה עִם עָנִי תוֹשִׁיעַ, וְעֵינַיִם רָמוֹת תִּשְׁפִּיל: (כט) כִּי אֶתָּה תִּנְאִיר נְרִי, ה' אֱלֹקֵי נְגִינָה חֲשָׁפִי: (ל) כִּי בְּךָ אֶרְץ גְּדוּד, וּבְאֱלֹקֵי אֲדָלְגָּ שׁוּר:
 (26) *With the devoted (the chasid) You act devotedly, with the blameless man You act faultlessly. (27) With the pure You act purely, and with the devious You act with twisted turnings. (28) For You save a humble people but You bring low haughty eyes. (29) For, it is You Who lights my lamp. Hashem, my G-d, illuminates my darkness. (30) For with You I rush an [enemy] camp, and with my G-d I leap over a wall.*

PART 7. IN PRAISE OF HASHEM. David now sings in praise of Hashem and His ways. Whatever Hashem does can be totally relied upon. David extends his praise of Hashem by describing how Hashem has given him all the resources he needs to follow in His ways and to overcome *resha'im*.

(לא) הָאֵ־ל תִּמְיִם דָּרְכּוֹ, אִמְרַת ה' צְרוּפָה, מָגֵן הוּא לְכֹל הַחֹסִים בּוֹ: (לב) כִּי מִי אֱלֹק מִבְּלַעֲדֵי ה', וּמִי צוּר זִוְלָתִי אֱלֹקֵינוּ: (לג) הָאֵל הַמְּאַזְרֵנִי חֵיֶל, וַיִּתֵּן תִּמְיִם דָּרְכָי: (לד) מְשׁוּנֵה רַגְלֵי כְּאֵילוֹת, וְעַל בְּמַתֵּי יַעֲמִידֵנִי: (לה) מְלַמֵּד יָדַי לְמַלְחָמָה, וְנַחֲתָה קַשְׁתִּי נְחוּשָׁה זְרוּעֹתַי:
 (31) *G-d's way is perfectly correct. Hashem's word is unadulterated. He is a shield for all who seek refuge in Him. (32) For who is G-d other than Hashem? Who is a Rock except for our G-d? (33) The G-d Who girds me with might; He makes my way perfect. (34) He sets my feet as the deer and lets me stand firmly upon my high position. (35) He trains my hands for combat so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.*

PART 8. A WARRIOR'S GRATITUDE. David turns directly to Hashem with gratitude and exultation as he tells of how Divine help enabled him to overcome his enemy in battle.

(לו) וַתִּתֵּן לִי מָגֵן יִשְׁעֶךָ, וַיִּמְיֵנֶךָ תִּסְעֵדֵנִי, וְעֵנְוֹתֶיךָ תִּרְבֵּנִי: (לז) תִּרְחִיב צַעְדֵי תַחְתֵּי, וְלֹא מַעְדוֹ קַרְסְלֵי: (לח) אֶרְדּוֹף אוֹיְבֵי וְאַשְׁיגֶם, וְלֹא אָשׁוּב עַד כְּלוֹתָם: (לט)

אֶמְחֶצֶם וְלֹא יִכְלוּ קוֹם יִפְלוּ תַחַת רַגְלִי: (מ) וַתֵּאָזְרֵנִי חֵיל לְמִלְחָמָה, תִּכְרִיעַ קַמִּי
תַּחְתִּי:

(36) You have given me the shield of Your protection. Your right hand supports me and Your humility has enlarged me. (37) You widened my stride beneath me, my feet did not slip. (38) I pursued my foes and caught them. I did not return until they were completely vanquished. (39) I struck them, they could not get up; they lay fallen at my feet. (40) You girded me with strength for battle; You subdued my adversaries before me.

PART 9. A KING'S GRATITUDE. David began speaking as a warrior. Now he speaks as a king and military leader, defeating entire armies, but only through Hashem's help.

(מא) וְאֵיבֵי נִתְתָּה לִי עֶרְף, וּמִשְׁנָאֵי אֶצְמִיתֶם: (מב) יִשְׁוּעוּ וְאִין מוֹשִׁיעַ, עַל ה' וְלֹא
עָנָם: (מג) וְאֶשְׁחַקֵּם כְּעָפָר עַל פְּנֵי רוּחַ, כְּטִיט חוּצוֹת אֲרִיקָם: (מד) תִּפְלֹטְנִי מֵרִיבֵי
עָם, תִּשְׁיַמְנֵי לְרֹאשׁ גּוֹיִם, עִם לֹא יִדְעֵתִי יַעֲבְדוּנִי: (מה) לְשִׁמְעֵ אֲזוֹן יִשְׁמְעוּ לִי, בְּנֵי
נֶכֶד יִכְחָשׁוּ לִי: (מו) בְּנֵי נֶכֶד יִבְלוּ, וַיִּחַרְגוּ מִמִּסְגְּרוֹתֵיהֶם: (מז) חֵי ה' וַבְּרוּךְ צוּרִי,
וַיְרוֹם אֱלוֹקֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: (מח) הָאֵל הַנוֹתֵן נִקְמוֹת לִי, וַיִּדְבֹּר עַמִּים תַּחְתִּי: (מט) מִפְּלֹטֵי
מְאִיבֵי, אֶף מִן קַמִּי תִרְוַמְנֵנִי, מֵאִישׁ חָמָס תִּצְלִינִי:

(41) You made my enemies turn their backs and flee from me; I decimated my foes. (42) They cried out [to their gods], but there was no one to save them. [Then] to Hashem, but He did not answer them. (43) I had ground them up like dust in the wind. I had trod them flat like mud of the streets. (44) You delivered me from warring nations. [In doing so,] You made me the head of nations. [As a result, a distant] people that I did not know has been made to serve me. (45) Upon hearing they obey me. Foreign peoples cower before me. (46) Foreign peoples wilt. They tremble with fear within their fortified enclosures. (47) Hashem, lives! Blessed is my Rock. The G-d of my rescue is exalted. (48) The G-d Who grants me vengeance and leads nations below me. (49) You rescue me from my foes. You even raise me above my adversaries. You rescue me from the man of violence.

PART 10. CONCLUSION. As the king of the Jewish people, he is grateful for having been anointed by Hashem. He expresses his hope that the royal house of David has been firmly established and that Hashem's favor will extend to his descendants for all time.

(נ) על כן אֹדֶד בְּגוֹיִם ה', וְלִשְׁמֶךָ אֲזַמְּרָה: (נא) מִגִּדִיל יְשׁוּעוֹת מִלְכּוֹ, וְעַשָּׂה חֶסֶד לְמַשִּׁיחוֹ, לְדָוִד וּלְזַרְעוֹ עַד עוֹלָם:

(50) Therefore, I shall give thanks to You among the nations, Hashem. I will sing praise to Your Name. (51) Who performs great victories of deliverance for His king. He does kindness to His anointed one, to David, and to his offspring, forever.

Learning the Mizmor

PART 1. INTRODUCTION.

(א) לְמַנְצֶחַ לְעַבְדְּ ה' לְדָוִד
אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר לֵה' אֶת דְּבָרֵי הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת

This song has been prepared **for the musician** — לְמַנְצֶחַ, who will perform it. It is a mizmor composed **by the servant of Hashem, by David** — לְעַבְדְּ ה' לְדָוִד, **who spoke the words of this song to Hashem** — אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר לֵה' אֶת דְּבָרֵי הַשִּׁירָה — הַזֹּאת.

בְּיוֹם הַצִּיל ה' אוֹתוֹ
מִכָּף כָּל אֹיְבָיו וּמִיַּד שָׁאוּל:

He composed the song towards the end of his life **on a day** — בְּיוֹם in which he recalled how **Hashem had delivered him** — הַצִּיל ה' אוֹתוֹ **from the hand of all his enemies** — מִכָּף כָּל אֹיְבָיו, **and from the hand of Shaul** — וּמִיַּד שָׁאוּל.

PART 2. MY STRENGTH.

(ב) וַיֹּאמֶר אֶרְחַמֶּךָ ה' חֲזִקִי:

He said — וַיֹּאמֶר: **I will sing to express my love for You, Hashem** — אֶרְחַמֶּךָ ה'.
You are my Strength — חֲזִקִי.

(ג) ה' סִלְעִי וּמְצוּדָתִי וּמִפְּלִטִי

Hashem is my towering Rock — ה' סִלְעִי to Whom I flee when I am beset by harmful forces. He is also **my Fortress** — וּמְצוּדָתִי built high up on the Rock. And He is **my Rescuer** — וּמִפְּלִטִי, Who brings me up into safety.

אֱלֹהֵי צוּרֵי אַחְסָה בּוֹ

He is **my G-d, my solid Rock** — אֱלֹהֵי צוּרֵי. **I rely on Him** — אַחְסָה בּוֹ to give me strength so that I am prepared for the battle with evil.

מִגִּנֵּי וְקֶרֶן יִשְׁעֵי מִשְׁגָּבַי:

And when I contend with evil He is **my Shield** — מִגִּנֵּי to protect me, **the Horn of my Deliverance** — וְקֶרֶן יִשְׁעֵי to strike at evil, and **my Uplifter** — מִשְׁגָּבַי to help me overwhelm my enemies.

(ד) מְהֵלֵל אֶקְרָא ה'

וּמִן אֵיבֵי אֲנִישָׁע:

I always **call unto Hashem with praise** — מְהֵלֵל אֶקְרָא ה' even when I am not in distress. Then, when troubles arise, **I am saved from my enemies** — וּמִן אֵיבֵי אֲנִישָׁע without even having to ask for help.

PART 3. DESPERATE TIMES.

(ה) אֶפְפוּנֵי חֲבָלֵי מָוֶת

וְנַחְלֵי בְלִיעַל יִבְעֵתוּנִי:

I remember the times of great distress. Those were times when **the pangs of death encompassed me** — אֶפְפוּנֵי חֲבָלֵי מָוֶת and the hostile **encampments of lawless men** — וְנַחְלֵי בְלִיעַל terrorized me — יִבְעֵתוּנִי.

(ו) חֲבָלֵי שְׂאוּל סָבְבוּנִי

קִדְמוּנֵי מוֹקְשֵׁי מָוֶת:

I felt as though I had already died so that **the pains of being in the grave encircled me** — חֲבָלֵי שְׂאוּל סָבְבוּנִי and **the snares of death confronted me** — קִדְמוּנֵי מוֹקְשֵׁי מָוֶת.

(ז) בְּצָר לִי אֶקְרָא ה'

וְאֵל אֱלֹהֵי אֲשׁוּעַ

יִשְׁמַע מִהֵיכְלוֹ קוֹלִי

וְשׁוּעָתִי לִפְנֵי תְבוּאָה בְּאֲזָנוֹ:

In my distress I would only call upon Hashem — בְּצָר לִי אֶקְרָא ה' and no

other, and to my G-d I would cry — **וְאֶל אֱלֹהֵי אֲשׁוּעַ**. From His abode in Heaven He would hear my voice — **יִשְׁמַע מֵהִיכָלוֹ קוֹלִי** whenever I called. My cry to Him would reach His ears immediately — **וְשׁוֹעֲתִי לְפָנָיו תָּבוֹא בְּאָזְנוֹ** and He would help me.

PART 4. TEFILLOS ANSWERED.

(ח) **וַתִּגְעַשׂ וַתִּרְעַשׂ הָאָרֶץ**
וּמוֹסְדֵי הָרִים יִרְגְּזוּ
וַיִּתְגַּעְשׂוּ כִּי חָרָה לוֹ:

And the earth heaved and shuddered — **וַתִּגְעַשׂ וַתִּרְעַשׂ הָאָרֶץ**, the foundations of the mountains shook — **וּמוֹסְדֵי הָרִים יִרְגְּזוּ**; they quaked when His wrath flared — **וַיִּתְגַּעְשׂוּ כִּי חָרָה לוֹ**.

(ט) **עָלָה עָשָׁן בְּאִפוֹ**
וְאֵשׁ מִפִּי תֹאכֵל
גְּחָלִים בְּעָרוֹ מִמֶּנּוּ:

Smoke rose from His nostrils — **עָלָה עָשָׁן בְּאִפוֹ**, a devouring fire issued from His mouth — **וְאֵשׁ מִפִּי תֹאכֵל**, flaming coals blazed forth from Him — **גְּחָלִים בְּעָרוֹ מִמֶּנּוּ**.

(י) **וַיִּט שָׁמַיִם וַיִּרֹד וַעֲרַפֵּל תַּחַת רַגְלָיו:**

He bent the heavens down — **וַיִּט שָׁמַיִם וַיִּרֹד** and swiftly descended to take revenge, with thick darkness — **וַעֲרַפֵּל** beneath His feet — **תַּחַת רַגְלָיו** so that the *resha'im* would be unable to see the threat until it was already upon them.

(יא) **וַיִּרְכַּב עַל כְּרוּב וַיַּעֲף**
וַיִּדָּא עַל כַּנְּפֵי רוּחַ:

As a symbol of the speed with which he descended to help His people, He mounted a heavenly *malach* (angel) and swooped down — **וַיִּרְכַּב עַל כְּרוּב וַיַּעֲף**. He glided on the wings of the wind — **וַיִּדָּא עַל כַּנְּפֵי רוּחַ**.

(יב) **יָשַׁת חֹשֶׁךְ סִתְרוֹ**
סְבִיבוֹתָיו סִכְתּוֹ

He made darkness His concealment — **יָשַׁת חֹשֶׁךְ סִתְרוֹ**, so that the unworthy

could not perceive Him. The darkness **surrounded His shelter** — סְבִיבוֹתָיו סָפְתוּ on earth, symbolized by the *sukkah*, within which the righteous are gathered in the light.

חֲשֵׁכַת מַיִם עָבִי שְׁחָקִים:

There was even darkness from clear water — חֲשֵׁכַת מַיִם, borne by **the clouds of heaven** — עָבִי שְׁחָקִים, just as the darkness of Hashem's anger came from the purity of His *kedushah*.

(יג) מִנְגֵה נִגְדוּ עָבִיו
עָבְרוּ בְרָד וְגַחְלֵי אֵשׁ:

From out of the brilliant glow — מִנְגֵה that came **from before Him** — נִגְדוּ to save me, there came the darkness of **His clouds** — עָבִיו, which **passed across** — עָבְרוּ to punish the *resha'im*, and the darkness was punctuated **with hail and fiery coals** — בְּרָד וְגַחְלֵי אֵשׁ like the eruption of a raging volcano.

(יד) וַיִּרְעַם בְּשָׁמַיִם ה'
וַעֲלִיּוֹן יִתֵּן קִלּוֹ בְּרָד וְגַחְלֵי אֵשׁ:

And Hashem thundered in the heavens — וַיִּרְעַם בְּשָׁמַיִם ה', the Most High raised His voice — וַעֲלִיּוֹן יִתֵּן קִלּוֹ accompanied by **hail and fiery coals** — בְּרָד וְגַחְלֵי אֵשׁ.

(טו) וַיִּשְׁלַח חֲצֵיו וַיִּפְּצֵם
וַבְּרָקִים רָב וַיִּהְיֶם:

He sent forth — וַיִּשְׁלַח His arrows of lightning — חֲצֵיו and **He scattered** the enemy — וַיִּפְּצֵם. **He discharged lightning bolts** — וַבְּרָקִים רָב and **He terrified them** — וַיִּהְיֶם.

(טז) וַיִּרְאוּ אֶפְיָקֵי מַיִם
וַיִּגְלוּ מוֹסְדוֹת תֵּבֵל מִגַּעַרְתֶּךָ ה'
מִנְשַׁמַּת רוּחַ אֶפְדֶּךָ:

The seabed became visible — וַיִּרְאוּ אֶפְיָקֵי מַיִם and **the foundations of the earth were laid bare** — וַיִּגְלוּ מוֹסְדוֹת תֵּבֵל, as in the Miracle at the Sea. All this was **by Your rebuke, Hashem** — מִגַּעַרְתֶּךָ ה' **by the blowing of the breath of Your nostrils** — מִנְשַׁמַּת רוּחַ אֶפְדֶּךָ to dry out the sea of troubles in which I was

drowning.

(יז) יִשְׁלַח מִמְרוֹם יִקְחֵנִי

יִמְשֵׁנִי מִמַּיִם רַבִּים:

He sent His help from on high — יִשְׁלַח מִמְרוֹם and took me — יִקְחֵנִי to safety. He drew me out of deep waters — יִמְשֵׁנִי מִמַּיִם רַבִּים.

(יח) יִצִּילֵנִי מֵאֹיְבֵי עֹז וּמִשָּׂנְאָי

כִּי אָמְצוּ מִמֶּנִּי:

He saved me from my powerful foe — יִצִּילֵנִי מֵאֹיְבֵי עֹז. And He saved me from my enemies — יִמְשֵׁנִי when they overpowered me — כִּי אָמְצוּ מִמֶּנִּי.

(יט) יִקְדָּמוּנִי בְיוֹם אִיְדִי

וַיְהִי ה' לְמִשְׁעֹן לִי:

They advanced to attack me — יִקְדָּמוּנִי on my day of disaster — בְיוֹם אִיְדִי, but Hashem became my support — וַיְהִי ה' לְמִשְׁעֹן לִי.

PART 5. LESSONS LEARNED.

(כ) וַיּוֹצִיאֵנִי לְמִרְחָב

יַחֲלִצֵנִי כִּי חֲפֵץ בִּי:

He brought me out to a wide-open space of freedom — וַיּוֹצִיאֵנִי לְמִרְחָב where I was no longer trapped. He set me free for He was pleased with me — יַחֲלִצֵנִי כִּי חֲפֵץ בִּי, His obedient servant.

(כא) יִגְמְלֵנִי ה' כְּצִדְקִי

כְּבָר יָדֵי יֹשֵׁיב לִי:

Hashem rewarded me — יִגְמְלֵנִי ה' for my righteousness — כְּצִדְקִי in contrast to the evil of my enemies. He repaid me according to the cleanness of my hands — כְּבָר יָדֵי יֹשֵׁיב לִי, unsullied by sin.

(כב) כִּי שָׁמַרְתִּי דְרָכֵי ה'

וְלֹא רָשַׁעְתִּי מֵאֲלֹקֵי:

For I have kept to Hashem's ways — כִּי שָׁמַרְתִּי דְרָכֵי ה', doing the right thing because I am His servant and I want to do His will, not because it seemed the

proper thing to do. **I did no intentional evil before my G-d** — **וְלֹא רָשַׁעְתִּי** — **מֵאֱלֹקֵי**, even when I was drawn to it.

(כג) **כִּי כָל מִשְׁפָּטָיו לִנְגִדִי**

For I have kept all His rational laws (*mishpatim*) **constantly before me** — **כִּי כָל מִשְׁפָּטָיו לִנְגִדִי**, even though I would not have been likely to forget them. I reviewed them regularly and did not rely on having studied them long ago.

וְחֻקֹּתָיו לֹא אָסִיר מִנִּי:

And I did not put His unexplained statutes (*chukim*) **away from my thoughts** — **וְחֻקֹּתָיו לֹא אָסִיר מִנִּי** — because I knew that I could not rely on my own reasoning to avoid violating them.

(כד) **וְאֶהֱי תָמִים עִמּוֹ**

וְאֶשְׁתַּמֵּר מֵעֹנִי:

I was sincerely committed to Him — **וְאֶהֱי תָמִים עִמּוֹ** — **and I guarded myself against** any tendency to justify **my sin** — **וְאֶשְׁתַּמֵּר מֵעֹנִי** — by bending the interpretation of the *halachah*.

(כה) **וַיָּשֶׁב ה' לִי כְצִדְקִי**

כְּבָר יָדִי לִנְגִד עֵינָיו:

Hashem repaid me — **וַיָּשֶׁב ה' לִי** — **for my righteousness** — **כְּצִדְקִי**, **according to the cleanness of my hands before His eyes** — **כְּבָר יָדִי לִנְגִד עֵינָיו**, as judged by Him and not by other men.

PART 6. THE WAYS OF HASHEM.

(כו) **עִם חָסִיד תִּתְחַסֵּד**

עִם גִּבֹּר תִּתְמָם:

Hashem, You repay measure for measure. **With the devoted person You act devotedly** — **עִם חָסִיד תִּתְחַסֵּד**, giving him more than he deserves. **With the blameless man You act faultlessly** — **עִם גִּבֹּר תִּתְמָם**.

(כז) **עִם נָבֵר תִּתְבָּרַר**

וְעִם עֵקֶשׁ תִּתְפַּתֵּל:

With the pure You act purely — **עִם נָבֵר תִּתְבָּרַר**, **and with the devious You act**

with twisted turnings — וְעַם עֲקֹשׁ תִּתְּפֹתֶל

(כח) כִּי אַתָּה עִם עֲנֵי תוֹשִׁיעַ
וְעֵינַיִם רְמוֹת תִּשְׁפִּיל:

But there are times when a just reward calls for the opposite of people's behavior:
For You save a humble people — כִּי אַתָּה עִם עֲנֵי תוֹשִׁיעַ, who see themselves as
undeserving; **but You bring low people with haughty eyes — וְעֵינַיִם רְמוֹת**
תִּשְׁפִּיל, who act as though they deserve the best out of life.

(כט) כִּי אַתָּה תִּאִיר נְרִי
ה' אֱלֹהֵי יַגִּיהַ חֹשֶׁכִּי:

For— כִּי when the world is shrouded in darkness, **it is You Who lights my lamp**
— **אַתָּה תִּאִיר נְרִי** to bring me help. **Hashem, my G-d, illuminates my darkness**
— **ה' אֱלֹהֵי יַגִּיהַ חֹשֶׁכִּי** to dispel the gloom of distress.

(ל) כִּי בְּךָ אֶרֶץ גְּדוּד
וּבְאֱלֹהֵי אֲדֹלָג שׁוּר:

For with my trust in **You — כִּי בְּךָ** **I** can overcome my own weakness and even
rush an enemy camp — אֶרֶץ גְּדוּד without fear, **and with my G-d I can leap**
over a wall — וּבְאֱלֹהֵי אֲדֹלָג שׁוּר to attack a fortress.

PART 7. IN PRAISE OF HASHEM.

(לא) הָאֵל תָּמִים דְּרָכּוֹ
אִמְרַת ה' צְרוּפָה

Despite His unlimited power to do as He pleases, **G-d's way is perfectly correct**
— **הָאֵל תָּמִים דְּרָכּוֹ** under every condition; He deals with each person justly and
exactly as he deserves. **Hashem's word is unadulterated — אִמְרַת ה' צְרוּפָה**,
without any elements of falsehood. He keeps His promises without fail.

מָגֵן הוּא לְכֹל הַחֹסִים בּוֹ:

Therefore, **He is a reliable shield for all who seek refuge in Him — מָגֵן הוּא לְכֹל**
הַחֹסִים בּוֹ and who commit themselves to observe His Torah.

(לב) כִּי מִי אֱלוֹהֵי מַבְלַעְדֵי ה'
וּמִי צוּר זִוְלָתִי אֶלְקֵינוּ:

For who is G-d other than Hashem — כִּי מִי אֱלוֹהֵי מַבְלַעְדֵי ה' ? Who can question His decrees? Only the One G-d Who created the world can establish its laws. **Who is a Rock except for our G-d** — וּמִי צוּר זִוְלָתִי אֶלְקֵינוּ ? Who can withstand His decrees if He has set our enemies against us? Only by observing His *mitzvos* and accepting Him as our G-d can we overcome them.

(לג) הָאֵל הַמְּאַזְרֵנִי חֵיל
וַיִּתֵּן תְּמִים דְּרָכָי:

Only He is **the G-d Who girds me with might** — הָאֵל הַמְּאַזְרֵנִי חֵיל for He is the Source of might. **And** because His way is perfect **He makes my way perfect** — וַיִּתֵּן תְּמִים דְּרָכָי.

(לד) מְשִׁוּהַ רַגְלֵי כְּאַיִלוֹת
וְעַל בְּמַתִּי יַעֲמִידֵנִי:

He sets my feet to run as swiftly **as the deer** — מְשִׁוּהַ רַגְלֵי כְּאַיִלוֹת when I pursue my enemies, **and lets me stand firmly upon my high** position — וְעַל בְּמַתִּי יַעֲמִידֵנִי.

(לה) מְלַמֵּד יָדַי לַמְּלַחְמָה
וַנִּחְתָּה קֶשֶׁת נְחוּשָׁה זְרוּעֹתַי:

He trains my hands for the tactics of combat — מְלַמֵּד יָדַי לַמְּלַחְמָה so that **my arms can even bend a stiff bow of bronze** — וַנִּחְתָּה קֶשֶׁת נְחוּשָׁה זְרוּעֹתַי.

PART 8. A WARRIOR'S GRATITUDE.

(לו) וַתִּתֵּן לִי מִגֵּן יִשְׁעֶךָ

You have given me what I need when I have to defend myself. **You have given me the shield of Your protection** — וַתִּתֵּן לִי מִגֵּן יִשְׁעֶךָ and so I emerge unscathed from every battle.

וַיְמִינֶךָ תִּסְעֵדֵנִי

And when I have to attack the enemy it is **Your right hand that supports me** — וַיְמִינֶךָ תִּסְעֵדֵנִי.

וְעִנִּיתָ תְּרַבֵּנִי:

And in condescending to watch out for me, **Your humility** — וְעִנִּיתָ **has magnified me** — תְּרַבֵּנִי, so that my limited forces are able defeat the more numerous foe.

(לז) תְּרַחֵב צַעְדֵי תַחְתִּי

וְלֹא מָעַדוּ קַרְסָלַי:

You widened my stride beneath me — תְּרַחֵב צַעְדֵי תַחְתִּי so that **my feet did not slip** — וְלֹא מָעַדוּ קַרְסָלַי in battle.

(לח) אֶרְדּוּף אוֹיְבֵי וְאֲשִׁיגֶם

וְלֹא אָשׁוּב עַד כְּלוֹתָם:

I pursued my foes — אֶרְדּוּף אוֹיְבֵי and caught them — וְאֲשִׁיגֶם. **I did not** find it necessary to **return** — וְלֹא אָשׁוּב **until they were completely vanquished** — עַד כְּלוֹתָם. Neither wind nor rain, neither heat nor cold forced me to interrupt my mission.

(לט) אֶמְחָצֶם וְלֹא יִכְלוּ קוּם

יִפְּלוּ תַחַת רַגְלִי:

Even when **I struck them** — אֶמְחָצֶם lightly, **they fell and could not get up** — יִפְּלוּ תַחַת רַגְלִי; **they lay fallen at my feet** — וְלֹא יִכְלוּ קוּם because of their own weakness.

(מ) וַתְּאַזְרֵנִי חֵיל לְמִלְחָמָה

תִּכְרִיעַ קִמִּי תַחְתִּי:

You girded me with strength for battle — וַתְּאַזְרֵנִי חֵיל לְמִלְחָמָה so that I could withstand the rigors of combat without tiring, **You subdued my adversaries before me** — תִּכְרִיעַ קִמִּי תַחְתִּי, weakening them so that I could more easily overcome them.

PART 9. A KING'S GRATITUDE.

(מא) וְאוֹיְבֵי נִתְּתָה לִי עֶרְף

וּמִשָּׁנְאֵי אֲצִמִיתָם:

You made my enemies turn their backs and flee from me — וְאוֹיְבֵי נִתְּתָה לִי

וּמְשַׁנְאֵי אֲצַמִּיתֶם – **I decimated my foes**; עֲרָף

(מב) יִשְׁוּעוּ וְאִין מוֹשִׁיעַ
עַל ה' וְלֹא עָנָם:

They cried out – יִשְׁוּעוּ to their false gods, **but no one** came to save them – וְאִין מוֹשִׁיעַ. Finally they cried out to Hashem – עַל ה', **but** since they had scorned Him in the past, **He did not answer them** – וְלֹא עָנָם.

(מג) וְאֶשְׁחָקֶם כְּעָפָר עַל פְּנֵי רוּחַ
כְּטִיט חוּצוֹת אֲרִיקֶם:

They ran in all directions; it was as though **I had ground them up** – וְאֶשְׁחָקֶם **like dust in the wind** – כְּעָפָר עַל פְּנֵי רוּחַ. They lost the ability to fight back; it was as though **I had trod them flat like mud of the streets** – כְּטִיט חוּצוֹת אֲרִיקֶם.

(מד) תִּפְלִטְנִי מֵרִיבֵי עַם
תִּשְׁיַמְנֵי לְרֹאשׁ גּוֹיִם
עַם לֹא יָדַעְתִּי יַעֲבֹדוּנִי:

You delivered me from warring nations – תִּפְלִטְנִי מֵרִיבֵי עַם that constantly threatened my existence. In doing so **You made me the head of nations** – תִּשְׁיַמְנֵי לְרֹאשׁ גּוֹיִם. As a result, **a distant people that I did not know has been made to serve me** – עַם לֹא יָדַעְתִּי יַעֲבֹדוּנִי.

(מה) לְשִׁמְעַ אֲזֹן יִשְׁמְעוּ לִי
בְּנֵי נֶכֶר יִכְחָשׁוּ לִי:

Upon hearing my orders **they obey me** – לְשִׁמְעַ אֲזֹן יִשְׁמְעוּ לִי even when I am not there to enforce my will. **Foreign peoples cower before me** – בְּנֵי נֶכֶר יִכְחָשׁוּ לִי.

(מו) בְּנֵי נֶכֶר יִבְלוּ
וַיִּחַרְגּוּ מִמְּסֻגְרוֹתֵיהֶם:

Foreign peoples wilt like a leaf and lose courage – בְּנֵי נֶכֶר יִבְלוּ. **They tremble with fear** – וַיִּחַרְגּוּ **within their fortified enclosures** – מִמְּסֻגְרוֹתֵיהֶם.

(מז) חִי ה' וּבְרוּךְ צוּרִי

Who has done all this? **Hashem, lives** — חִי ה' — **Blessed is my Rock** — וּבְרוּךְ צוּרִי. May He continue to protect me.

וַיְרוֹם אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעֵי:

The G-d of my rescue is exalted — וַיְרוֹם אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעֵי and will remain so. The oppressors should be afraid because His loftiness is forever!

(מח) הָאֵל הַנוֹתֵן נִקְמוֹת לִי

וַיַּדְבֵּר עַמִּים תַּחְתָּי:

Blessed is **the G-d Who grants me** the strength to take **vengeance** — הָאֵל הַנוֹתֵן נִקְמוֹת לִי upon my enemies. **He leads nations** to take their place **below me** — וַיַּדְבֵּר עַמִּים תַּחְתָּי.

(מט) מִפְּלִטֵי מְאִיבֵי

אֶף מִן קָמִי תִרְוֹמֵמֵנִי

You rescue me from my foes — מִפְּלִטֵי מְאִיבֵי; **You even raise me above my adversaries** — אֶף מִן קָמִי תִרְוֹמֵמֵנִי.

מֵאִישׁ חָמָס תַּצִּילֵנִי:

You rescue me from the man of violence — מֵאִישׁ חָמָס תַּצִּילֵנִי who hopes to kill me in whatever way he can because of his intense hatred of me.

PART 10. CONCLUSION.

(נ) עַל כֵּן אֹדֶד בְּגוֹיִם ה'

וּלְשִׁמְךָ אֲזַמְּרָה:

Therefore, because of this great deliverance, **I shall give thanks to You among the nations** who serve me, **Hashem** — עַל כֵּן אֹדֶד בְּגוֹיִם ה' because it is all Your doing. **I will sing praise to Your Name** — וּלְשִׁמְךָ אֲזַמְּרָה in their presence because through their defeat they have increased the grandeur of Your Name.

(נא) מִגְדִּיל יְשׁוּעוֹת מִלְכוֹ

I will acknowledge Hashem as the One **Who performs great victories of deliverance for His king** — מִגְדִּיל יְשׁוּעוֹת מִלְכוֹ.

וְעָשָׂה חֶסֶד לְמַשִּׁיחוֹ
לְדָוִד וּלְזַרְעוֹ עַד עוֹלָם:

He does so, not as a reward and not because He has anointed me king, but out of **kindness to His anointed one** — וְעָשָׂה חֶסֶד לְמַשִּׁיחוֹ, **to David** — לְדָוִד. And so may He do **to his offspring, forever** — וּלְזַרְעוֹ עַד עוֹלָם.

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.

Lessons for Life - Your Attitude.

[18:1] TOTAL DEVOTION. – לְמַנְצַח לְעַבְדֵי ה' לְדָוִד – “For the musician, by the servant of Hashem, by David.” Aspire to identify yourself as an *eved* (servant) of Hashem, following David’s example. This means no matter where you go, no matter what you do, your thoughts should always be of Hashem, your Master.

Tefillos for Life - Your Gratitude.

[18:1] TODAY. – בְּיוֹם הַצִּיל ה' אוֹתוֹ – “On a day that Hashem had delivered him.” Your gratitude to Hashem for all that He has done for you over the course of your life should be fresh and vibrant, as though it happened today.

[18:3] FORTRESS. – ה' סִלְעִי וּמְצוּדָתִי – “Hashem is my Rock, my Fortress.” As you express your total reliance on Hashem, form images in your mind of His fortress-like strength as it pertains to you personally.

Tefillos for Life - Your Relationship with Hashem.

[18:2] LOVE. – אֶרְחַמְךָ ה' חֲזָקִי – “I will [sing of my] love for You, Hashem, for You are my Strength.” As you express your love for Hashem in song, think how He provides you with the strength to face all challenges that life has to offer.

[18:4] UNCONDITIONAL BOND. – מִהֲלַל אֶקְרָא ה' וּמִן אֵיבֵי אוֹשַׁע – “I call unto Hashem with praise. I am saved from my enemies.” Think of your feeling of love towards Hashem as being unconditional, based on lifelong gratitude. Thus, you want to praise Him even when you are not in distress. His love for

you will then also be unconditional. He will save you from enemies without even having to ask for help.

Tehillos for Life - Public Acclaim .

[18:50] SANCTIFY THE NAME. – **עַל כֵּן אֶזְמַח בְּגוֹיִם ה' וְלִשְׁמֹךְ אֶזְמַח** –
 “Therefore, I shall give thanks to You among the nations, Hashem. I will sing praise to Your Name.” Share your experiences and your knowledge of Hashem with all people within the sound of your voice.

Sources

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

א - רש"י, רד"ק, רשר"ה, נר לרגלי	א - רש"י, רד"ק, רשר"ה, נר לרגלי
ב - רש"י, באר אברהם	ב - רש"י, באר אברהם
ג - מלבי"ם, רשר"ה	ג - מלבי"ם, רשר"ה
ד - מלבי"ם	ד - מלבי"ם
ה - מלבי"ם	ה - מלבי"ם
ו - מלבי"ם	ו - מלבי"ם
ז - רד"ק	ז - רד"ק
ח - רש"י	ח - רש"י
ט - רש"י	ט - רש"י
י - מצודות, נר לרגלי	י - מצודות, נר לרגלי
יא - נר לרגלי	יא - נר לרגלי
יב - רד"ק, נר לרגלי	יב - רד"ק, נר לרגלי
יג - רד"ק, נר לרגלי	יג - רד"ק, נר לרגלי
יד - מצודות	יד - מצודות
טו - מצודות	טו - מצודות
טז - רש"י, רד"ק, מצודות	טז - רש"י, רד"ק, מצודות
יז - רש"י, מצודות	יז - רש"י, מצודות
יח - מצודות	יח - מצודות
יט - רש"י	יט - רש"י
כ - מצודות, נר לרגלי	כ - מצודות, נר לרגלי
כא - רש"י, רד"ק	כא - רש"י, רד"ק
כב - מלבי"ם	כב - מלבי"ם
כג - רש"י, רד"ק, מלבי"ם, נר לרגלי	כג - רש"י, רד"ק, מלבי"ם, נר לרגלי
כד - רד"ק, מצודות, נר לרגלי	כד - רד"ק, מצודות, נר לרגלי
כה - מצודות	כה - מצודות
כו - רש"י, רד"ק, נר לרגלי	כו - רש"י, רד"ק, נר לרגלי
כז - רש"י, רד"ק, נר לרגלי	
כח - רש"י, רד"ק, נר לרגלי	
כט - רש"י, רד"ק, נר לרגלי	
ל - רש"י, רד"ק, נר לרגלי	
לא - רש"י, מצודות, רד"ק, נר לרגלי	
לב - רש"י, מצודות, רד"ק, נר לרגלי	
לג - רש"י, מצודות, רד"ק, נר לרגלי	
לד - רש"י, מצודות, רד"ק, נר לרגלי	
לה - רש"י, מצודות, נר לרגלי	
לו - רש"י, מצודות, רד"ק, מלבי"ם	
לז - רש"י, רד"ק	
לח - מלבי"ם	
לט - מצודות, מלבי"ם	
מ - רד"ק, נר לרגלי	
מא - רש"י	
מב - רש"י, נר לרגלי	
מג - רש"י, מלבי"ם	
מד - מצודות	
מה - רד"ק	
מו - רש"י, אבן עזרא, רד"ק	
מז - רש"י, נר לרגלי	
מח - רש"י, רד"ק	
מט - מצודות, רד"ק, נר לרגלי	
נ - מצודות, רד"ק, נר לרגלי	
נא - מצודות, רד"ק, נר לרגלי	

© COPYRIGHT NOTICE
All rights to this document are reserved by the author. For further information contact Isaac Kirzner at isaac@kirzner.com