

Mizmor 020

May Hashem Answer You

Key Concepts

Mizmor 020 was originally composed when David sent Yoav with the army to confront the massive forces that Avshalom had assembled against David's kingdom (*Shmuel* II 18). On this occasion David chose not to accompany his army. He knew he would be more effective if he stayed in Yerushalayim and prayed for their success.

This mizmor is an expression of his *tefillah*, although he presented it in the form of a blessing to the men who were about to face the danger of bitter fighting and who would be desperately calling for Hashem's help. In the mizmor David emphasizes their dependence upon Hashem's response to their *tefillos*.

Navigating Tehillim (1). It is noteworthy that when David appeals for Hashem's help in meeting the challenge of overcoming Avshalom's army, he invokes the Name of Hashem as "the G-d of Yaakov" (20:2). Hashem had promised to protect Yaakov, saying "Behold, I am with you; I will guard you wherever you go" (*Bereishis* 28:15) and He kept His promise, as Yaakov later said, "He answered me in my time of distress" (*ibid.* 35:3). Similarly, in Mizmor 132 when David asks Hashem to remember his struggles, David refers to Him as "the Mighty Power of Yaakov". This is the Name Yaakov himself had invoked (*Bereishis* 49:24) because Hashem gave him the strength to overcome all the challenges that he faced in life.

Navigating Tehillim (2). Mizmor 020 was placed in the Book of Tehillim to serve as a universal means for Jews to appeal to Hashem for help in times of crisis. Even when Jews have become distant from Him, Hashem is eager to hear their *tefillos* and wants to respond to them. Thus, the mizmor is a fitting introduction to Mizmor 021 (A King's Gratitude) in which David celebrates the founding of the kingdom after many difficult struggles and *tefillos*.

Exploring the Mizmor

PART 1. PLEA FOR YESHUAH. David gives his blessing to Yoav and the troops as they go forth to confront Avshalom. He prays that Hashem's response to his *tefillah*

will be a complete *yeshuah* for his people, as they themselves would wish it.

(א) לְמִנְצִיחַ מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד: (ב) יַעֲנֵךְ ה' בְּיוֹם צָרָה יִשְׁגְּבֶךָ שֵׁם אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב: (ג) יִשְׁלַח עֲזָרְךָ מִקֹּדֶשׁ וּמִצִּיּוֹן יִסְעֶדֶךָ: (ד) יִזְכֹּר כָּל מִנְחֹתֶיךָ וְעוֹלֹתֶיךָ יִדְשֶׁנָּה סֶלָה: (ה) יִתֵּן לְךָ כָּל־בְּבֹרֶךְ וְכָל עֲצָתֶךָ יִמְלֵא: (ו) נִרְנְנָה בִישׁוּעָתֶךָ וּבְשֵׁם אֱלֹהֵינוּ נִדְגַל, יִמְלֵא ה' כָּל מִשְׁאָלוֹתֶיךָ:

(1) For the musician, a mizmor by David. (2) May Hashem answer you on the day of distress. May the Name of Yaakov's G-d protect you. (3) May He send your help from the Mikdash; may He support you from Tzion. (4) May He give consideration to all your minchah-offerings. May He accept your olah-offerings, Selah. (5) May He grant you according to your heart. May He fulfill your every plan. (6) We will sing joyously because of your deliverance, and we will gather around banners in the Name of our G-d. May Hashem fulfill all your requests.

PART 2. SONG OF VICTORY. David now describes what he will sing in honor of the victory in battle that he is confident will come. Here David's involvement becomes more personal as he presents the anticipated song of victory, realizing that it is a sign of Hashem's favor towards him personally. But even in victory he celebrates the Jewish people's dependence upon Hashem's response to heartfelt *tefillos*.

(ז) עֲתָה יָדַעְתִּי כִי הוֹשִׁיעַ ה' מְשִׁיחוֹ יַעֲנֵהוּ מִשָּׁמַי קֹדְשׁוֹ בְּגִבְרוֹת יִשַׁע יְמִינוֹ: (ח) אֵלֶּה בָּרָכָב וְאֵלֶּה בְּסוּסִים וְאַנְחֵנוּ בְּשֵׁם ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ נִזְכִּיר: (ט) הִמָּה פָּרְעוֹ וְנָפְלוּ וְאַנְחֵנוּ קָמְנוּ וְנִתְעוֹדַד:

(7) Now I know that Hashem continues to save His anointed one. He will continue to answer from His holy heaven, with the mighty victories of His right hand. (8) Some [depend] on chariots, and some on horses. We call out the Name of Hashem, our G-d. (9) They slumped and fell, but we stood up and were empowered.

PART 3. CONCLUSION. David concludes with the simple *tefillah* that summarizes what he has been saying. This powerful *tefillah* is a plea for Hashem to answer us immediately whenever we call upon Him.

(י) ה' הוֹשִׁיעָה הַמֶּלֶךְ יַעֲנֵנוּ בְּיוֹם קְרָאנוּ:

(10) Hashem save! May the King answer us on the day we call.

Learning the Mizmor

PART 1. PLEA FOR YESHUAH.

(א) לְמִנְצַחַ מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:

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

(ב) יַעֲנֵךְ ה' בְּיוֹם צָרָה

May Hashem answer you — יַעֲנֵךְ ה' when you call upon Him **on the day of distress** — בְּיוֹם צָרָה. No matter how difficult your situation becomes, you should call upon Hashem to help you. I am confident that He will respond to your tefillos.

יִשְׁגְּבֶךָ שֵׁם אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב:

May the Name of Yaakov's G-d be like a fortress to **protect you** — יִשְׁגְּבֶךָ שֵׁם אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב from danger, just as He protected Yaakov from Lavan and Esav.

Hashem had promised to protect Yaakov, saying Behold, I am with you; I will guard you wherever you go (Bereishis 28:15) and He kept His promise, as Yaakov later said, "He answered me in my time of distress." (ibid. 35:3)

(ג) יִשְׁלַח עֲזָרְךָ מִקְדָּשׁ

May He send your help from the Mikdash — יִשְׁלַח עֲזָרְךָ מִקְדָּשׁ where the Shechinah dwells. The true yeshuah will come only from Him. Don't rely on help from the kings of other nations.

וּמִצִּיּוֹן יִסְעָדֶךָ:

May He support you from Tzion — וּמִצִּיּוֹן יִסְעָדֶךָ. Tzion symbolizes the Torah, which is what brings a person closer to His Creator and which supports him so that he can come before Him in tefillah.

Yeshayah summarized the relationship between Tzion and the Torah in the following memorable words, בִּי מִצִּיּוֹן תֵּצֵא תוֹרָה וְדָבַר ה' מִירוּשָׁלַם, "For from Tzion will the Torah come forth, and the word of Hashem from Yerushalayim" (Yeshayah 2:3).

(ד) יִזְכֹּר כָּל מִנְחֹתֶיךָ
וְעֹלֹתֶיךָ יִדְשָׁנָה סֶלָה:

Since you will be physically far from the *Mikdash*, you will not be able to offer sacrifices to Hashem, but the *tefillos* you say in battle will serve as your offerings. **May He give consideration to all your minchah-offerings** — יִזְכֹּר כָּל מִנְחֹתֶיךָ, which express your plea for material well-being. **May He also accept your olah-offerings** — וְעֹלֹתֶיךָ יִדְשָׁנָה, which express your plea for His help in achieving spiritual growth so that you will be worthy of a *yeshuah*; **Selah** — סֶלָה.

(ה) יִתֵּן לְךָ כְּלָבְבְךָ
וְכָל עֲצָתֶיךָ יִמְלֵא:

I have total trust in your loyalty to me and to the Torah. **May Hashem guide you and grant you success according to the wishes of your heart** — יִתֵּן לְךָ כְּלָבְבְךָ. Furthermore, **may He fulfill your every plan** — וְכָל עֲצָתֶיךָ יִמְלֵא so that it does not result in unintended, harmful consequences.

(ו) נִרְנְנָה בִישׁוּעָתֶיךָ
וּבְשֵׁם אֱלֹהֵינוּ נִדְגַל

When you return successfully from battle **we will sing joyously because of your deliverance** — נִרְנְנָה בִישׁוּעָתֶיךָ, and **we will proudly gather around banners in the Name of our G-d** — וּבְשֵׁם אֱלֹהֵינוּ נִדְגַל .

יִמְלֵא ה' כָּל מִשְׁאָלוֹתֶיךָ:

May Hashem fulfill all your future requests — יִמְלֵא ה' כָּל מִשְׁאָלוֹתֶיךָ, even for those needs that you are not yet aware of.

PART 2. SONG OF VICTORY.

(ז) עֵתָה יִדְעֵתִי
כִּי הוֹשִׁיעַ ה' מְשִׁיחוֹ

Now I know — עֵתָה יִדְעֵתִי that I have found favor with Hashem and **that Hashem continues to save me, His anointed one** — כִּי הוֹשִׁיעַ ה' מְשִׁיחוֹ. This victory demonstrates that all the times when I escaped the clutches of Shaul were because of Hashem's goodwill towards me. The victory of Yoav and his army is my vindication. Since Hashem has chosen to anoint me, He has associated the honor of His Name with my destiny.

יַעֲנֵהוּ מִשָּׁמַי קֹדֶשׁוֹ
בְּגִבְרוֹת יְשַׁע יְמִינוֹ:

Even though I am only flesh and blood, surely Hashem **will continue to answer** His anointed one **from His holy heaven** — יַעֲנֵהוּ מִשָּׁמַי קֹדֶשׁוֹ, **with the mighty victories of His right hand** — בְּגִבְרוֹת יְשַׁע יְמִינוֹ.

(ח) אֱלֹהֵי בְרָכָב וְאֱלֹהֵי בְּסוּסִים
וְאַנְחֵנוּ בְּשֵׁם ה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ נִזְכִּיר:

Since I rely upon His help, I will trustingly make my appeal to Him whenever I am in need. **Some** nations depend **on** iron **chariots** — אֱלֹהֵי בְרָכָב, **and some** put their trust **in horses** — וְאֱלֹהֵי בְּסוּסִים; but we who have few chariots and horses are not discouraged. **We call out the Name of Hashem, our G-d** — וְאַנְחֵנוּ בְּשֵׁם ה' — אֱלֹקֵינוּ נִזְכִּיר because He is the source of our deliverance.

(ט) הִמָּה כָּרְעוּ וְנָפְלוּ
וְאַנְחֵנוּ קָמְנוּ וְנִתְעוֹדָד:

They who stood tall in their self-confidence **slumped and fell** — הִמָּה כָּרְעוּ וְנָפְלוּ, **but we** who were submissive to our G-d **stood up and were empowered** — וְאַנְחֵנוּ קָמְנוּ וְנִתְעוֹדָד to overcome them.

PART 3. CONCLUSION.

(י) ה' הוֹשִׁיעָה הַמֶּלֶךְ יַעֲנֵנוּ בְּיוֹם קְרֵאֵנוּ:

Hashem save us — ה' הוֹשִׁיעָה ! May the King answer us — הַמֶּלֶךְ יַעֲנֵנוּ on the day we call — בְּיוֹם קְרֵאֵנוּ.

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 Yeshuah .

[20:02] DISTRESS. – יַעֲנֵךְ ה' בְּיוֹם צָרָה – “May Hashem answer you on the day of distress.” No matter how difficult your situation in life becomes, you should call upon Hashem to help you. If those you love are in distress, pray

to Hashem to help them and respond to their *tefillos*.

[20:10] ANSWERING THE CALL. – הַמֶּלֶךְ יַעֲנֵנוּ בְיוֹם קְרָאֵנוּ – “*May the King answer us on the day we call.*”

Tefillos for Life - Your Relationship with Hashem .

[20:02] KEEPING THE PROMISE. – שֵׁם אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב – “*the Name of Yaakov’s G-d.*” Over the course of Yaakov’s life he faced many difficult challenges. But Hashem promised to protect Yaakov and He kept His promise. Therefore, you should humbly turn to Him to do the same for you.

Lessons for Life - Your Behavior.

[20:03] THE SOURCE OF HELP. – יִשְׁלַח עֲזָרְךָ מִקְדָּשׁ – “*May He send your help from the Mikdash.*” The true *yeshuah* will come only from Hashem. Don’t rely on help from the nations of the world.

[20:08] MILITARY POWER. – וַאֲנַחְנוּ בְשֵׁם ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ נִזְכִּיר – “*We call out the Name of Hashem, our G-d.*” Don’t rely on the force of arms to save you in time of distress. Turn to Hashem.

Tefillos for Life - Your Berachah .

[20:05] YOUR PLANS. – וְכָל עֲצָתְךָ יַמְלֵא – “*May He fulfill your every plan.*” If you are planning a worthy project, ask for Hashem’s help in bringing success.

Tefillos for Life - Your Gratitude.

[20:06] JOY IN VICTORY. – נִרְנְנָה בִישׁוּעָתְךָ – “*We will sing joyously because of Your deliverance.*” Express your gratitude to Hashem in public song.

Sources

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

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

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