

Mizmor 021

A King's Gratitude

Key Concepts

In Mizmor 021 King David celebrates the first major step in the founding of his kingdom after a long period of struggle. In the mizmor he expresses his gratitude to Hashem and appeals for help in defeating the enemies that are preventing the kingdom from being firmly established throughout Eretz Yisrael.

Navigating Tehillim. The mizmor is a logical follow-up to Mizmor 020 in which David demonstrates the opportunity and privilege of calling upon Hashem in times of crisis when a yeshuah is desperately hoped for. In Mizmor 021 he teaches us how to react when the long-sought yeshuah comes.

One of the distinctive aspects of Mizmor 021 is its emphasis on David's role as king. Being a king means having great power and having the opportunity to achieve great things. But every king is vulnerable to the corruption of power. Mizmor 021 celebrates a high point in David's life, and he uses this occasion to avoid letting it go to his head. Although he has surmounted great obstacles to get where he is, he emphasizes that whatever strength he appears to have is Hashem's strength. David has been given the opportunity to succeed because of his bitachon (trust in Hashem) and it is with bitachon that he asks Hashem to help him in the future.

Historical Background

This mizmor was composed shortly after King Shaul died and David was accepted as king by the people of Yehudah (*Shmuel* II 2). Immediately upon assuming his role as king, David's fledgling kingdom came under attack by the armies of the Plishtim. The mizmor celebrates David's success in fighting them off. He was gratified by this major step in the establishment of his kingdom, but he knew that many challenges lay ahead.

Navigating Tehillim. The threats that David faced in overcoming the threats to his newly established kingdom are described in Mizmor 002.

Exploring the Mizmor

The mizmor has two parts, each of which addresses the relationship between Hashem and David, the king that He has anointed. In the first part David celebrates the *yeshuah* that he has just experienced. He acknowledges that although he is now a king, he knows that his power comes from G-d.

In the second part of the mizmor David appeals to Hashem for victory over his remaining enemies. But because of his close relationship with Hashem he no longer feels it necessary to refer to himself at all. Instead he simply appeals to Hashem to defeat all of Hashem's enemies, for after all David's enemies are also the enemies of G-d.

PART 1. CELEBRATING THE RELATIONSHIP. David celebrates his relationship with Hashem and acknowledges that he owes his achievements to Him. As a sign of David's complete submissiveness to Hashem he refers to himself simply as a king (verse 2). David concludes this part of the mizmor by stating why he was found worthy of Hashem's blessing. The reason is that the king trusts in Hashem (verse 8).

(א) לַמְנַצֵּחַ מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד: (ב) ה' בְּעֵזְרִי יִשְׁמַח מְלֹךְ, וּבִישׁוּעָתִי מִה יִגַּל מְאֹד: (ג) תִּצְאוֹת לִבּוֹ נִתְתָּה לּוֹ וְאַרְשֵׁת שְׂפָתָיו בִּל מִנְעַת סֵלָה: (ד) כִּי תִקְדָּמְנוּ בְּרִכּוֹת טוֹב תִּשְׁתִּי לְרֵאשׁוֹ עֶטְרַת פָּז: (ה) חַיִּים שָׁאַל מִמֶּנּוּ נִתְתָּה לוֹ אֲרָךְ יָמִים עוֹלָם וָעֶד: (ו) גָּדוֹל כְּבוֹדוֹ בִישׁוּעָתִי הוֹד וְהָדָר תִּשְׁיָה עָלָיו: (ז) כִּי תִשְׁתַּחֲוּ בְּרִכּוֹת לְעַד תִּתְחַדְּהוּ בְשִׂמְחָה אֶת פְּנֵיךְ: (ח) כִּי הִמְלִךְ בְּטַח בַּה' וּבְחֶסֶד עָלְיוֹן בִּל יִמוּט:

(1) For the musician, a mizmor by David. (2) Hashem, a king rejoices in Your strength, and in Your yeshuah how greatly does he exult! (3) You have granted him his heart's desire and You have not refused him the request of his lips, Selah! (4) Because You presented him with blessings of good. You placed on his head a crown of pure gold. (5) He asked You for life; You granted it to him, length of days forever and ever. (6) Great is his esteem because of Your yeshuah. You have conferred upon him majesty and splendor. (7) For You have set him [with] blessings forever. You have delighted him with the intense joy of Your Presence. (8) For the king trusts in Hashem and in the kindness of the Most High he will not falter.

PART 2. A PLEA FOR VICTORY. David now calls upon Hashem to destroy the remainder of His own enemies, which are also David's enemies.

(ט) תִּמְצָא יָדֶךָ לְכָל אֹיְבֶיךָ יִמְיִנֶךָ תִּמְצָא שְׂנְאֵיךָ: (י) תִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ כְּתַנּוּר אִשׁ לֵעֵת פְּנֵיךָ ה' בְּאֵפוֹ יִבְלַעַם וְתֹאכְלֵם אִשׁ: (יא) פְּרִימוֹ מֵאַרְצֵי תִּאֲבֹד וְזֶרַעַם מִבְּנֵי אָדָם: (יב) כִּי נָטוּ עָלֶיךָ רָעָה חֲשָׁבוּ מִזְמָה בִּל יוֹכְלוּ: (יג) כִּי תִשְׁתַּחֲוּ שְׂכָם בְּמִיתְרֵיךָ תִּכּוֹנֵן עַל

פְּנִיָּהֶם: (יד) רוּמָה ה' בְּעֶזֶד נְשִׂירָה וּנְזַמְרָה גְבוּרָתְךָ:

(9) May Your hand find all Your enemies; may Your right hand find those who hate You. (10) May You deal with them like a fiery furnace at the time of Your anger. May Hashem swallow them in His wrath and let a fire consume them. (11) Obliterate [Amalek's] works and their possessions from the earth, and their seed from mankind. (12) For they have planned evil against You; they have schemed [though] they are without the ability to execute. (13) Because You isolate them. With Your bow You aim directly at them. (14) Be exalted, Hashem, in Your strength! We will sing and chant the praise of Your might.

Learning the Mizmor

PART 1. CELEBRATING THE RELATIONSHIP.

(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) ה' בְּעֶזֶד יִשְׁמַח מֶלֶךְ:

Hashem, an earthly king rejoices in Your strength — ה' בְּעֶזֶד יִשְׁמַח מֶלֶךְ. His success comes from You. You have anointed him and endowed him with strength and the confidence he needs to defeat his enemies.

וּבִישׁוּעָתְךָ מַה יִּגָּל מְאֹד:

And in Your yeshuah how greatly does he exult — וּבִישׁוּעָתְךָ מַה יִּגָּל מְאֹד ! Because of his trust in You, the king rejoiced even before the yeshuah but now that it has come, he is filled with exultation!

(ג) תִּאֲוֹת לְבוֹ נָתַתָּה לוֹ

וְאַרְשֵׁת שְׂפָתָיו בִּל מְנַעַת סָלָה:

Without his having to even ask, **You have granted him his heart's desire** — תִּאֲוֹת לְבוֹ נָתַתָּה לוֹ, the fundamental ability to serve You. **And You have not refused him the request of his lips** — וְאַרְשֵׁת שְׂפָתָיו בִּל מְנַעַת, to be able to serve You at an ever higher level of purity and holiness, **Selah** — סָלָה !

(ד) כִּי תִקְדַּמְנוּ בְּרָכוֹת טוֹב

The king rejoices **because** — כִּי, even before he had any dreams of rising to such an exalted status, **You presented him with blessings of good fortune** — תִּקְדַּמְנוּ בְּרָכוֹת טוֹב when Shmuel anointed him. Your blessings are basis of all his success.

תָּשִׁית לְרֹאשׁוֹ עֲטָרַת פָּז:

You placed on his head a crown of pure gold — תָּשִׁית לְרֹאשׁוֹ עֲטָרַת פָּז as a sign of Your enduring confidence in the royal house of David.

(ה) חַיִּים שָׁאַל מִמֶּךָ נִתְּתָה לוֹ

The king **asked You for life** — חַיִּים שָׁאַל מִמֶּךָ; he asked to be spared from destruction at the hands of Shaul. **You granted it to him** — נִתְּתָה לוֹ.

אַרְךָ יָמִים עוֹלָם וָעֶד:

Once the immediate danger had passed, the king asked You for a long life and You granted him **length of days** — אַרְךָ יָמִים, to be extended **forever and ever** — עוֹלָם וָעֶד by worthy children to take his place.

(ו) גָּדוֹל כְּבוֹדוֹ בִּישׁוּעָתֶךָ

The king's **esteem** in Yisrael has grown and become **great** — גָּדוֹל כְּבוֹדוֹ **because of Your yeshuah** — בִּישׁוּעָתֶךָ. You have made the king prevail in battle against his enemies and a large part of the Jewish nation has accepted him as their king.

הוֹד וְהָדָר תִּשְׁנֶה עָלָיו:

You have conferred upon him — הוֹד וְהָדָר תִּשְׁנֶה עָלָיו **the holy majesty** — הוֹד of royalty, and as a result he has become feared and respected. In addition, You have conferred upon him the **splendor** — וְהָדָר of ethical and moral purity.

(ז) כִּי תִשְׁתַּיְתְּהוּ בְּרָכוֹת לְעַד

Why does the king rejoice? **Because You have set him** — כִּי תִשְׁתַּיְתְּהוּ **to be a source of blessings forever** — בְּרָכוֹת לְעַד, even beyond his own lifetime, so that future generations will bless their children to be like him.

תַּחֲדֵהוּ בְּשִׂמְחָה אֶת פְּנִיךָ:

Furthermore, even during his own lifetime **You have delighted him with the intense joy** of experiencing the light **of Your Presence** – תַּחֲדֵהוּ בְּשִׂמְחָה אֶת פְּנִיךָ.

(ח) כִּי הִמְלִיךָ בֵּיטַח בַּה'

All this came about **because** instead of trusting in his own wealth and might, **the king trusts in Hashem** – כִּי הִמְלִיךָ בֵּיטַח בַּה'. Thus, he has proved himself worthy of leading Hashem's nation.

וּבְחֶסֶד עֲלִיוֹן בַּל יִמוּט:

And because he trusts **in the kindness of the Most High** – וּבְחֶסֶד עֲלִיוֹן, he will be blessed and **will not falter** – בַּל יִמוּט.

PART 2. A PLEA FOR VICTORY.

(ט) תִּמְצָא יָדְךָ לְכָל אֹיְבֶיךָ

יִמְיִנְךָ תִּמְצָא שֹׂנְאֶיךָ:

May Your hand find all Your enemies – תִּמְצָא יָדְךָ לְכָל אֹיְבֶיךָ; **may Your right hand find those who hate You** – יִמְיִנְךָ תִּמְצָא שֹׂנְאֶיךָ.

(י) תִּשְׂיִתְמוּ כְּתַנּוּר אֵשׁ לְעֵת פְּנִיךָ

ה' בָּאֵפוֹ יִבְלַעַם וְתֹאכְלֵם אֵשׁ:

May You deal with them as one assembles wood **in a fiery furnace** – תִּשְׂיִתְמוּ כְּתַנּוּר אֵשׁ, **at the time of Your anger** – לְעֵת פְּנִיךָ. Then when they are all in one place, **may Hashem swallow them in His wrath** – ה' בָּאֵפוֹ יִבְלַעַם, **and let a fire consume them** – וְתֹאכְלֵם אֵשׁ.

David refers to Hashem's anger here in the third person (His wrath) because he is calling upon Hashem to suppress the attribute of mercy that appears most prominently to him when he addresses Hashem directly.

(יא) פְּרִימוֹ מֵאֶרֶץ תֵּאָבֵד

וְזֶרְעוֹ מִבְּנֵי אָדָם:

Amalek is Your most wicked enemy. **Obliterate their evil works and their possessions from the earth** – פְּרִימוֹ מֵאֶרֶץ תֵּאָבֵד, **and obliterate their seed**

from mankind – וְזָרַעַם מִבְּנֵי אָדָם.

(יב) כִּי נָטוּ עֲלֶיךָ רָעָה
חֲשָׁבוּ מְזֻמָּה בֶּל יוּכְלוּ:

For they have planned evil against You – כִּי נָטוּ עֲלֶיךָ רָעָה. Even though **they are without the ability to execute, they have schemed** against You – **חֲשָׁבוּ מְזֻמָּה בֶּל יוּכְלוּ**; for they hope to destroy Your anointed king.

(יג) כִּי תִשְׁתַּמּוּ שְׂכָם
בְּמִיתְרֶיךָ תִּכְוֶיֶן עַל פְּנֵיהֶם:

Why are they unable to do what they intend? **Because You isolate them – כִּי תִשְׁתַּמּוּ שְׂכָם** so that they are a target for destruction. **With the power of Your bow You aim directly at them – בְּמִיתְרֶיךָ תִּכְוֶיֶן עַל פְּנֵיהֶם.**

(יד) רוּמָה ה' בְּעֹזֶךָ
נִשְׁיָרָה וּנְזַמְרָה גְבוּרָתֶךָ:

Be exalted, Hashem, in Your strength – רוּמָה ה' בְּעֹזֶךָ. Continue to apply the strength that You used to save Yisrael! **We will** rejoice in Your strength; we will **sing and chant the praise of Your might – נִשְׁיָרָה וּנְזַמְרָה גְבוּרָתֶךָ.** Thereby Your Name will be sanctified in the world.

Living the Mizmor

Listed below are some of the lessons that you can draw from this mizmor, as well as some of the thoughts you might have in mind when you say the words of the mizmor as a *tefillah* to Hashem.

Tefillos for Life - Your Gratitude .

[21:2] STRENGTH. – ה' בְּעֹזֶךָ יִשְׂמַח מֶלֶךְ – “Hashem, a king rejoices in Your strength.” If you have succeeded in overcoming a challenge, celebrate your achievement in gratitude to Hashem, for what appears to be your strength is actually His strength.

Lessons for Life - Your Attitude.

[21:3] HEART'S DESIRE. – תַּאֲוֹת לְבוֹ נִתְּתָה לוֹ – “You have granted him his heart's desire.” Strive to be able to serve Hashem at an ever higher level of

purity and holiness.

[21:8] BITACHON. – **כִּי הַמֶּלֶךְ בֵּטַח בֵּה' וּבְחֶסֶד עָלִיוֹן בַּל יִמוּט** – “For the king trusts in Hashem and in the kindness of the Most High he will not falter.” Even if you have acquired wealth and power, don’t neglect your complete trust in Hashem. If you rely only upon Him you can hope to maintain your status and be able to continue to do good with your wealth.

Tefillos for Life - Your Berachah.

[21:5] A LONG LIFE. – **חַיִּים שָׁאַל מִמֶּךָ נְתַתָּה לוֹ אֶרְךְ יָמִים עוֹלָם וָעַד** – “He asked You for life; You granted it to him, length of days forever and ever.” Ask Hashem to grant you a long life so that you can live out your days in serving Him.

Tefillos for Life - Your Yeshuah.

[21:9] ENEMIES. – **תִּמְצָא יָדְךָ לְכָל אֹיְבֶיךָ יְמִינְךָ תִּמְצָא שֹׂנְאֶיךָ** – “May Your hand find all Your enemies; may Your right hand find those who hate You.” If you are threatened by evil men, ask Hashem to take action against them, for they are His enemies.

Tehillos for Life - Public Acclaim.

[21:14] STRENGTH. – **רוּמָה ה' בְּעֶזְךָ נְשִׁיכָה וּנְזַמְרָה גְבוּרָתְךָ** – “Be exalted, Hashem, in Your strength! We will sing and chant the praise of Your might!” Inspire others through song to recognize the power of Hashem.

Sources

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

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

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