<u>Mizmor 025</u> A Personal Tefillah

Key Concepts

The mizmor is an elaborately constructed *tefillah* in which David pleads with Hashem to save him from his enemies and help him through his other troubles. David realizes that because of his past sins he may be unworthy. Therefore, he presents three considerations which he hopes will lead to a favorable response from Hashem.

First of all he declares his total personal **commitment** to Hashem. There is nothing more important to David than his relation with G-d. So even if his past actions have not matched the level of his commitment, he hopes his continuing devotion alone will merit favorable consideration.

Secondly, David declares his abiding **bitachon** in Hashem. When one individual trusts another, the one who is trusted will not want to embarrass the trusting one by failing to come to his aid. Such failure will show the world that the trusting person was mistaken in his trust.

Thirdly, David does **teshuvah** and ask that his sins be forgiven. He realizes that his past failure to do Hashem's will may be a result of a lack of understanding Hashem's expectations. Therefore he declares his intent of studying Hashem's Torah and humbly asks for guidance in acquiring the necessary knowledge and wisdom. In conjunction with doing *teshuvah* David renews his commitment to Hashem and his trust in Him.

It is only after completing the process of *teshuvah* and renewal that David approaches Hashem with an impassioned plea for help out of his difficulties.

David presents these considerations in a reasoned argument distributed over 22 verses. The number 22 corresponds to the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet and so the pesukim are arranged in an alphabetic scheme based on the first letter of each posuk.

Exploring the Mizmor

<u>PART 1. COMMITMENT AND BITACHON</u>. David begins by declaring his total commitment to Hashem. He then expresses his trust in Hashem's coming to his aid. He asks that he not be shamed (his trust violated) by the victory of his enemies.

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(א) לְדָוִד אֵלֶיךּ ה' נַפְשִׁי אֶשָּׂא: (ב) אֱלֹקֵי בְּדָּ בָטַחְתִּי אַל אֵבוֹשָׁה אַל יַעַלְצוּ אֹיְבַי לִיי (ג) גַּם כַּל קֹוִידָּ לֹא יֵבשׁוּ יֵבשׁוּ הַבּוֹגִדִים רֵיקַם:

(1) By David. I lift my soul to You, Hashem. (2) My G-d, in You I have trusted. Let me not be shamed. Let my enemies not gloat over me. (3) Let all those who look with hope to You also not be shamed. Let the betrayers be shamed [and turned] back empty-handed.

PART 2. TESHUVAH AND FORGIVENESS. To make it possible for David to do teshuvah properly, He asks Hashem for guidance in understanding His ways. With better knowledge of the Torah and the *mitzvos* David is confident that he will be better able to do Hashem's will in the future. He then pleads with Hashem to treat him with mercy so that his *teshuvah* will be accepted. In conjunction with this plea he praises the goodness and fairness of Hashem that makes it possible for sinners to find forgiveness through *teshuvah*. Finally, he concludes this part by asking Hashem to be forgiven his sin.

(ד) דַרַכִידָ ה' הודיעני אַרחותיד לַמִּדָנִי: (ה) הַדְרִיכַנִי בַאֲמְתַּדְ וַלַמְדָנִי כִּי אַתַּה אַלֹקי יִשָּׁעִי אוֹתָךָ קּוִיתִי כַּל הַיּוֹם: (ו) זָכֹר רַחֲמֵיךָ ה' וַחֲסֶדֵיךָ כִּי מֵעוֹלָם הָמַה: (ז) חַטּאות ַנְעוּרֵי וּפָשַעֵי אֵל תַּזָכֹּר כָּחַסְדָּדְ זָכַר לִי אַתַּה לְמֵעַן טוּבָדָ ה': (ח) טוב וְיַשַּׁר ה' עַל כֶּן יורה חַטַאִים בַּדָרַד: (ט) יַדַרֶד עַנוִים בַּמִּשְׁפַּט וִילַמֵּד עַנוִים דַרְכּוֹ: (י) כַּל אַרחות ה' ַחָסֶד וָאָמֶת לַנֹצָרֵי בָרִיתוֹ וַעֲדֹתֵיוֹ: (יא) לְמַעוֹ שְׁמַדְ ה' וַסַלַחָתַּ לַעֲוֹנִי כִּי רַב הוא: (4) Make Your ways known to me, Hashem. Teach me Your paths. (5) Direct me in Your truth. And teach me for You are the G-d of my deliverance. I have put my hope in You at all times. (6) Recall Your mercies, Hashem, and Your kind acts, for they have been from time immemorial. (7) Don't recall the sins and offenses of my youth. In keeping with Your kindness recall for me [my worthy deeds] for the sake of Your goodness, Hashem. (8) Hashem is good and upright. Therefore He guides sinners on the way. (9) He guides the humble in justice and He teaches His way to the humble. (10) All the paths of Hashem are kindness and truth for those who preserve His covenant and His testimonies. (11) Hashem, because of Your Name, absolve me of my serious transgression even though it is great.

Navigating Tehillim. In his striving for teshuvah David looks for Hashem's help in learning to live the Torah way of life (verse 4). He says, "Make Your ways known to me, Hashem; teach me Your paths." In the conclusion of Mizmor 016 David made this quest his primary focus when he said, "Teach

me the way to true life".

<u>PART 3. RENEWAL OF COMMITMENT AND BITACHON</u>. David renews his commitment to Hashem and praises Him for guiding those who are devoted to Him. He concludes with a statement of total *bitachon*.

(יב) מִי זֶה הָאִישׁ יְרֵא ה' יוֹרֶנּוּ בְּדֶרֶךְ יִבְחָר: (יג) נַפְשׁוֹ בְּטוֹב תָּלִין וְזַרְעוֹ יִירַשׁ אָרֶץ: (יד) סוֹד ה' לִירֵאָיו וּבְרִיתוֹ לְהוֹדִיעָם: (טו) עִינַי תָּמִיד אֶל ה' כִּי הוּא יוֹצִיא מֵרֶשֶׁת רַגַּלַי:

(12) Whichever man fears Hashem, He will guide him in the way that he should choose. (13) His soul will abide in goodness and his offspring will inherit the land. (14) The mystery of Hashem is for those who fear Him. And He makes known His covenant to them. (15) My eyes are always toward Hashem for He removes my feet from the snare.

<u>PART 4. PLEA FOR A YESHUAH</u>. David asks for a personal *yeshuah* (deliverance) from his difficult situation. Recognizing that he may be unworthy of a *yeshuah*, David concludes by asking that his nation Yisrael not be prevented from being saved.

(טז) פְּנֵה אֵלַי וְחָנֵּנִי כִּי יָחִיד וְעָנִי אָנִי (יז) צָרוֹת לְבָבִי הַרְחִיבוּ מִמְצוּקוֹתַי הוֹצִיאֵנִי (יח) רְאֵה עְנְיִי וַעֲמָלִי וְשָׂא לְכָל חַטּאותָי (יט) רְאֵה אוֹיְבַי כִּי רָבּוּ וְשִׂנְאַת חָמָס שְׁנֵאוּנִי (כ) שָׁמְרָה נַפְשִׁי וְהַצִּילֵנִי אַל אֵבוֹשׁ כִּי חָסִיתִי בָדְּ: (כא) תֹם וָישֶׁר יִצְרוּנִי כִּי קּנִיתִידְּ: (כב) פָּדָה אֱלֹקִים אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכּּל צַרוֹתַיוּ:

(16) Turn to me and have pity on me for I am alone and impoverished. (17) The anxieties of my heart have multiplied. Take me out of my difficulties. (18) See my suffering and my toil, and forgive all my sins. (19) See my enemies for they have increased. And with a vicious hatred they despise me. (20) Protect my soul and rescue me; let me not be shamed for I take refuge in You (21) Let [my] innocence and uprightness protect me. I have put my hope in You. (22) O G-d, redeem Yisrael from all its troubles.

Additional Thoughts

Mizmor 025 is a personal *tefillah* to Hashem, which is very different from the public celebration of the inauguration of the *Bais Hamikdash* in Mizmor 024. However, Mizmor 025 opens with the phrase "I will lift my soul" which reminds us of the phrase "Lift up your heads, O gates" at the end of Mizmor 024. Perhaps the gates of

the *Bais Hamikdas*h are being compared to a person who is asked to open himself up and make a commitment to admit Hashem into his heart and soul.

Learning the Mizmor

PART 1. COMMITMENT AND BITACHON.

This song is a mizmor composed **by David** — לָדָוֹד. **I lift my soul** — נְבְּשִׁי אֶשָּׁא, offering my very being in devotion **to You Hashem** — 'אֵלֶידָ ה'. All my strivings in life are directed only to You.

My G-d, in You I have faithfully trusted — אֱלֹקֵי בְּדָּ בָטַחְתִּי and people have identified me as Your servant.

Even if I am still unworthy **let me not be shamed** — אַל אֵבוֹשָׁה by defeat because my weakness will reflect on You. **Don't let my enemies gloat over me** — אֵל יַעַלְצוּ אֹיָבֵי לִי.

It is not for me alone that I ask. For when You help me, **all** of my people **who look** with hope to You — פָל קֹנֶיף will be encouraged. They will then **also not be** shamed — נֵּם לֹא יֵבשׁוּ when the enemy mocks them.

Instead, **the** evil **betrayers will be shamed** — בֵּשׁוּ הַבּוֹגְיִדִים for they will be turned back **empty-handed** — הֵיקָם from their destructive purposes.

PART 2. TESHUVAH AND FORGIVENESS.

(ד) דְּרָכֶידְּ ה' הוֹדִיעֵנִי

Since I am totally committed to You, I want to do *teshuvah* and serve You properly. So **make Your ways** of righteousness **known to me, Hashem** — 'דְּרֶבֶּיִּךְ הֹיֹדִיעני.

ארחותיד למְדניי

Teach me Your prescribed **paths** of behavior — אֹרְחוֹתֶּיֹךָ לַמְּדֻנִי so that all of my *middos* are in accordance with Your will.

ה) הַדְרִיכֵנִי בַּאֲמִתֶּדְּ וְלַמְּדֵנִי (ה) פִּי אַתָּה אֵלֹקֵי יִשְׁעִי

Direct me — הַּדְּרִיכֵנִי in the practice of *mitzvos* that are incorporated **in** the Torah, which is **Your truth** — בַּאֲמִתֶּדָ. **And teach me** — וְלַמְּדֵנִי to absorb that truth into my behavior, **for** then I will be worthy of seeing **You** as **the G-d of my deliverance** — בְּי אֲתָּה אֱלֹקִי יִשְׁעִי.

אותד קוִיתִי כַּל הַיּוֹם:

I have put my hope in You at all times — אוֹתְדָּ קּוִּיתִי כָּל הַיּוֹם and so I am open to grasping Your wisdom.

'ו) זְכֹר רַחֲמֶיךּ ה' יַחֲסָדֶידְ כִּי מֵעוֹלָם הַמָּה:

Deal kindly with me now as You have in the past, for the world cannot exist without Your kindness. **Recall** for me now **Your mercies, Hashem** — 'אָבֹר רַחֲמֶידָּ, and don't punish me for the sins which I committed under the influence of my troubles. And recall **Your kind acts** — וְחֵסְיֶדִילְּ, for they have been with me from time immemorial — בִּי מֵעוֹלָם הֵמֶּה. Your very Creation of this world was an expression of Your kindness.

(ז) חַטאות נְעוּרֵי וּפְשָׁעֵי אַל תּזְכּר

While You recall Your mercies of the past, please don't recall **the** minor **sins of my youth** — אַטּאוֹת נְעוּרָי for I was too immature to understand what I was doing. Don't let my youthful ingratitude prevent You from responding to my heartfelt appeal. But especially, **don't recall the serious offenses** — וֹפִשַׁעֵי אֲל תִּזְכֹּר of

my later years.

ּכְּחַסְדְּדָּ זְכָר לִי אַתָּה לִמַעַן טוּבִדָּ ה':

In keeping with Your kindness — לְּחֵלְיּדְּדְּ, I ask that You recall for me — יְּבָּה only my worthy deeds. Do this not for my sake, but for the sake of Your goodness, Hashem — 'לְּמֵעֵן טוּבְדְּ ה' because if You are too demanding there will be no one left who is worthy of Your goodness.

'ח) טוֹב וְיָשָׁר ה' עַל כֵּן יוֹרָה חַטָּאִים בַּדָּרֵדְּ

Good and upright is Hashem — 'טוֹב וְיָשֶׁר ה'. He shows His goodness by incorporating the whole concept of teshuvah into Creation for the benefit of mankind. And He shows His fairness by granting forgiveness to those who do teshuvah with sincerity. Therefore He guides sinners who are on the way — עַל of teshuvah.

(ט) יַדְרֵדְּ עֲנָוִים בַּמִּשְׁפָּט וִילַמֵּד עֲנָוִים דַּרְכּוּ:

He guides the humble people who submit to *teshuva*h, instructing them in the demands of justice — צְּרָרֶדְּ עֲנָוִים בַּמִשְׁפָּט. And He teaches those humble people by rewarding them when they turn to His way — וִילְמֵּד עֲנַוִים דַּרְכּוֹ.

י) כָּל אָרְחוֹת ה' חֶסֶד וֶאֱמֶת לִנצָרִי בִרִיתוֹ וְעֵדתָיוּ:

All the paths of Hashem — 'בָּל אָרְחוֹת ה' follow a balance of kindness and truth — חֶׁסֶד וְאֶמֶת. Hashem grants an understanding of this balance to those who guard His covenant — לְנִצְרֵי בְרִיתוֹ with their faith, as well as to those who preserve His testimonies — וְעֵדֹתְיוֹ, which are the mitzvos that testify to the wonders He has performed.

'יא) לְמַעַן שִּמְדָּ ה' וְסָלַחְתָּ לַעֲוֹנִי כִּי רַב הוּא:

Hashem, because of the truth of Your Name, which is 'good and upright' — לְמֵעַן 'ה', absolve me of my most serious transgression even though it is great — וְסָלַחְתָּ לַעֲוֹנִי כִּי רַב הוּא.

PART 3. RENEWAL OF COMMITMENT AND BITACHON.

Whichever man sincerely fears Hashem — 'מֵי זֶה הָאִישׁ יְרֵא ה', let him not be discouraged, even when he is confused about what to do next, for Hashem will guide him in the way that he should choose — יוֹרֶנוּ בָּדֶרֶךְ יְבְחֶר.

His soul will abide in goodness — נַפְשׁוֹ בְּטוֹב תָּלִין in the World to Come, and his offspring will inherit the land — וְזַרְעוֹ יִירָשׁ אָרֶץ in This World, for he will pass on his wisdom to them.

(יד) סוד ה' לִירֵאָיו (יד) הבריתוֹ לְהוֹדִיעַם:

The mystery of Hashem pertaining to the study of Creation and the World to Come is revealed only to a select few of those who fear Him — סוֹד ה' לִירֵאָיוֹ and who scrupulously observe His mitzvos. But He makes known to them the basic interpretation of His covenant — וֹבְרִיתוֹ לְהוֹדִיעֶם through rational analysis.

My eyes are always directed toward Hashem — 'אֵינֵי תָּמִיד אֶל ה' and I feel myself to be continually in His presence. For — לי through my awareness of Him, He helps me control my yetzer hara and He removes my feet from the snare of sin — הוא יוֹצִיא מֵרֶשֶׁת רַגְלִי.

PART 4. PLEA FOR A YESHUAH.

Hashem, turn to me and cast the light of Your goodwill upon me. I beg You to

take pity upon me — פְּנֵה אֵלֵי וְחָנֵּנִי, for although I appear to have the royal power of a king, at heart I am alone and impoverished — בִּי יָחִיד וְעָנִי אָנִי. I feel powerless because I know that I am nothing without Your favor.

The anxieties felt by my heart due to my harships have multiplied — צָּרוֹת לְבָבִי הֹרְחִיבוּ. Take me out of my difficulties — מִמְצוּקוֹתֵי הוֹצִיאֵנִי for they prevent me from devoting myself to Your service!

Direct Your attention to **see my suffering** – רְאֵה ׁ עָנְיִי and my tiring labor – מו all of which I must endure to deal with the challenges I face. **And** so in consideration of my pain, **forgive all my sins** – יְשָׁא לְכָל חַטּאוֹתָי and ease my suffering. Then I will be better able to devote myself to Your service.

Direct Your attention to **see** the harm done by **my enemies** — רְאֵה אוֹיְבֵי, for while I worked to earn Your favor, **they have increased** — יֹבי in number. **And** at the same time, **with a vicious hatred they despise me** — יְשִׂנְאַוֹּנְי

Protect my soul and rescue me — שָׁמְרָהֹ נַפְּשִׁי וְהַצִּילֵנִי. Don't let me be shamed by their victories over me — אֵל אֵבוֹשׁ, for I take refuge in You — בָּיּ

Let my continued innocence and uprightness protect me — תְּבֹּר יִּצְרוּנִי against my enemies in contrast to their unwarranted hatred. For — לִּבְּי despite all of my difficulties I have put my hope in You — קּיִּתִּיך. Accordingly, instead of my innocence and uprightness being a drawback in dealing with an unscrupulous enemy, let them be of help to me.

Even if I am unworthy and my *tefillah* for personal victory over my enemies remains unfulfilled, let my faults not reflect upon my nation, which is surely worthy of being saved. Therefore, I ask You **O G-d, redeem Yisrael** פְּרֵה אֱלֹקִים אֶת from all its troubles — מִכּל צָּרוֹתָיוּ. If You save them, they will surely serve You wholeheartedly.

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* asking for your needs, or expressing your devotion to Hashem.

<u>Tefillos for Life - Your Relationship with Hashem.</u>

[25:1] COMMITMENT. – אֱלֶיךּ ה' נַפְּשִׁי אֶשָּׂא – "I lift my soul to You, Hashem." Commit yourself totally to the service of your Creator by concentrating all of your mental and emotional resources on the words of your tefillos to Him.

[25:16] PITY. - פְּנֵה אֵלֵי וְחָנֵנִי כִּי יָחִיד וְעָנִי אָנִי – "Turn to me and have pity on me for I am alone and impoverished." Plead with Hashem to grant you His favor because you have no one to help you out of your present difficulties. Even if you feel that you have been challenged with a unique trouble and that nobody is suffering as you are, don't be discouraged but turn to Hashem.

<u>Tefillos for Life - Your Yeshuah.</u>

[25:2] **BEING SHAMED**. – אֱלֹקֵי בְּדָּ בְּטַחְתִּי אֵל אֵבוֹשָׁה אֵל יַעֵלְצוּ אֹיְבִי לִי - "My G-d, in You I have trusted. Let me not be shamed. Let my enemies not gloat over me." Ask Hashem to keep you from being shamed before those who wish to harm you because your enemies are His enemies and your defeat will be a reflection on the One in Whom you have trusted.

[25:3] **FUTURE DELIVERANCE**. – גָּם בָּל קוֵיך לֹא יֵבשׁוּ – "Let all those who look with hope to You also not be shamed." Ask Hashem not to limit His deliverance to you, but to grant it to all who have bitachon in Him throughout

the coming years.

<u>Tefillos for Life - Your Teshuvah.</u>

[25:4] TORAH. – דְּרֶבֶּידְ ה' הּוֹדִיעֵנִי אֹרְחוֹתֶידְ לְמְדֵנִי - "Make Your ways known to me, Hashem. Teach me Your paths." Ask Hashem to help you learn and understand the Torah.

[25:7] **EARLY SINS**. – חַטאות נְעוֹרֵי וּבְּשָׁעֵי אֵל תְּזְכֹּר – "Don't recall the sins and offenses of my youth." Ask Hashem to treat your early sins as though they never happened, for you were carried away by the foolishness of youth.

[25:11] **RECENT SINS**. – לְּמֵעוֹ שִׁמְדְ הֹ' וְסֶלְחְתָּ לְעֵוֹנִי כִּי רָב הוּא – "Hashem, because of Your Name, absolve me of my serious transgression even though it is great." Confess the seriousness of your sins and ask Hashem to forgive you. If your sincere He will surely do so because of His Name ("good and upright.)" Bear in mind that your sins are painful to Hashem. Therefore if you feel anguish about the effect upon Him of the greatness of your sins, that would be a reason for Him to absolve you of them.

<u>Tehillos for Life - Contemplation of Hashem.</u>

[25:8] GOOD AND UPRIGHT. – טוֹב וְיָשֶׁר ה' עֵל כֵּן יוֹרֶה חַטָּאִים בַּדָּרֶדְ – "Hashem is good and upright. Therefore He guides sinners on the way." You can trust Hashem to do what is right and to do what is best for you, because He cares for your well-being and gives you the help you need, if you ask for it.

[25:9] COMMITMENT. - יַּדְרֵךְ עֲנָוִים בַּמִּשְׁפָּט וִילִמֵּד עֲנָוִים דַּרְכּוֹ - "He guides the humble in justice and He teaches His way to the humble."

[25:14] THE MYSTERY. – סוד ה' לירָאָיו וּבְרִיתוֹ לְהוֹדִיעָם – "The mystery of Hashem is for those who fear Him. And He makes known His covenant to them." Hashem's Torah has infinite depths, which are revealed to those who are worthy.

<u>Lessons for Life - Your Attitude.</u>

[25:9] HUMILITY. - יַּדְרֶבּוֹים דַּמְשְׁפָּט וִילַמֵּד עֲנָוִים דַּרְכּוֹ - "He guides the humble in justice and He teaches His way to the humble." By practising humility you will become worthy of acquiring the wisdom of the Torah. The best example for this is Moshe Rabbeinu, who excelled in humility and in knowledge of the Torah, which he taught to his nation.

Lessons for Life - Your Behavior.

[25:13] GOOD CHILDREN. – נְפְשׁוֹ בְּטוֹב תָּלִין וְזַרְעוֹ יִירָשׁ אָרֶץ – "His soul will abide in goodness and his offspring will inherit the land." There is a connection between the goodness with which you conduct your home and the effect upon your children, so that they will follow the way of Hashem and become worthy of inheriting the land of life.

Tefillos for Life - Your Geulah.

[25:22] **REDEMPTION**. – פְּדֵה אֱלֹקִים אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכּׁל צְרוֹתָיוּ – "O G-d, redeem Yisrael from all its troubles." Even if you are not worthy, plead with Hashem to save your nation.

Sources

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

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