

Mizmor 026

A Personal Review

Key Concepts

In this mizmor David takes us along on a voyage of self-examination as he defends himself against those who have accused him of being unworthy. He then asks for Hashem's help in rising to an even higher moral and spiritual level. He concludes by asking for Hashem's future protection so that he will be able to publicly thank Him and praise Him.

Exploring the Mizmor

PART 1. SELF-EXAMINATION. David begins his review by asking Hashem to judge him kindly since his intentions have always been good. In fact, Hashem has protected him from stumbling in the past. But David realizes that there is still room for improvement. So he asks Hashem to help him analyze his behavior. Has he always been honest with himself? Has he avoided the company of people who might weaken his moral determination?

(א) לְדוֹד שְׁפִטְנֵי ה' כִּי אָנִי בְּתַמִּי הִלְכֹתִי וּבַה' בְּטַחֲתִי לֹא אֶמְעָד: (ב) בְּחַנְנֵי ה' וְנִסְנִי צָרָה כְּלִיּוֹתִי וְלִבִּי: (ג) כִּי חִסְדְּךָ לִנְגִיד עֵינַי וְהִתְהַלַּכְתִּי בְּאֱמֻנָתְךָ: (ד) לֹא יִשְׁבַּתִּי עִם מְתֵי שָׁוְא וְעִם נְעֻלְמִים לֹא אָבוֹא: (ה) שְׁנֵאתִי קְהַל מְרַעִים וְעִם רְשָׁעִים לֹא אָשֵׁב:

(1) *By David. Judge me, Hashem for I walked in my own innocence. I trusted in Hashem, [that] I would not stumble. (2) Examine me, Hashem. Test me; purify my conscience and my heart. (3) For Your kindness is before my eyes. I have walked in Your truth. (4) I have not sat down with idlers; I did not come into the company of hypocrites. (5) I hated a community of evildoers; I did not sit with the wicked.*

PART 2. FUTURE SELF-DEVELOPMENT. David declares his intent to grow further by doing *teshuvah* and seeking the company of people who would have a positive influence on him. He asks for Hashem's help in this.

(ו) אֶרְחַץ בְּנִקְיוֹן כַּפָּי וְאֶסְבְּבָה אֶת מִזְבְּחֶךָ ה': (ז) לְשִׁמְעַ בְּקוֹל תְּוֹדָה וּלְסַפֵּר כָּל נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ: (ח) ה' אֶהְבֵּתִי מֵעוֹן בֵּיתְךָ וּמִקוֹם מְשֻׁבָּן כְּבוֹדְךָ: (ט) אֵל תִּתְאַסֹּף עִם

חֲטָאִים נִפְשִׁי וְעַם אֲנָשִׁי דָמִים חָיִי: (י) אֲשֶׁר בִּידֵיהֶם זָמָה וַיִּמְיָנִם מִלְּאָה שְׁחָד:

(6) I will wash my hands with purity; I will circle around Your altar, Hashem, (7) to proclaim aloud gratitude and to tell of all Your wonders. (8) Hashem, I love the shelter of Your House and the dwelling place of Your glory. (9) Do not gather up my soul along with sinners, my life with men driven by money (10) in whose hands there is selfish scheming. Their right hand is filled with bribery.

PART 3. CONCLUSION. Finally David asks for Hashem's future protection so that he will be able to publicly thank Him and praise Him.

(יא) וַאֲנִי בְתַמִּי אֵלֶךְ פְּדֹנִי וְחַנּוּנִי: (יב) רַגְלִי עָמְדָה בְּמִישׁוֹר בְּמִקְהָלִים אֲבָרָךְ ה':

(11) As for me, I will walk in my innocence. Redeem me and favor me. (12) My foot has stood firmly on the straight path. I will bless Hashem in public assemblies.

Additional Thoughts

Mizmor 026 begins with David asking Hashem to judge him ("Judge me"), but David is really judging himself and asking Hashem to help him do it. The mizmor is an exercise in personal growth. As David points out, the key to growth is being honest with oneself.

Navigating Tehillim. At the close of the previous perek David was counting on his innocence and good intentions to protect him ("Let [my] innocence and uprightness protect me"). And so David begins the new mizmor with a claim of innocence ("for I walked in my own innocence"), but he then proceeds to ask Hashem to help him determine if he is really being honest with himself. He concludes that there is room for growth in his avodas Hashem and he looks to achieve this by frequenting the company of righteous people in Hashem's holy place.

Learning the Mizmor

PART 1. SELF-EXAMINATION.

(א) לְדָוִד

שָׁפַטְנִי ה' כִּי אֲנִי בְּתַמִּי הִלַּכְתִּי
וַיְבִה' בְּטַחְתִּי לֹא אֶמְעָד:

This is a mizmor composed by **David** — לְדָוִד. Despite the accusations of my enemies, I call upon You to **judge me, Hashem** — שָׁפַטְנִי ה'. I ask this **for I have walked in my innocence** — כִּי אֲנִי בְּתַמִּי הִלַּכְתִּי. You know that my motives have been honorable. In fact, I never consciously sought to gain personal advantage. Instead, **I** sincerely **trusted in** Your protection, **Hashem** — וַיְבִה' בְּטַחְתִּי, confident that with Your help **I would not stumble** — לֹא אֶמְעָד.

(ב) בְּחַנְנֵי ה' וְנִסְנִי

צָרְפָה כְּלִיּוֹתַי וְלִבִּי:

But I know I am not perfect and despite my good intentions I may have failed You in the past. And so I humbly ask that You **examine me, Hashem** — בְּחַנְנֵי ה' in order that I can understand my errors. **Test me** — וְנִסְנִי to see if by withstanding new challenges I am capable of further growth. Help me **purify my conscience and my heart** — צָרְפָה כְּלִיּוֹתַי וְלִבִּי to serve You better.

(ג) כִּי חִסְדְּךָ לִנְגַד עֵינַי

וְהִתְהַלַּכְתִּי בְּאִמְתְּךָ:

I cannot rest with my present level of moral development **for Your kindness is before my eyes** — כִּי חִסְדְּךָ לִנְגַד עֵינַי, and I realize that I owe You so much more than I can ever repay. I would be fooling myself if I thought that I had done enough. **I have walked in Your truth** — וְהִתְהַלַּכְתִּי בְּאִמְתְּךָ and I must continue to be honest with myself.

(ד) לֹא יִשְׁבְּתִי עִם מְתֵי שׂוֹא

וְעִם נְעֻלְמִים לֹא אָבוֹא:

I have always taken care not to associate with people who might discourage me from being serious about *avodas Hashem*. Even though it is not possible to avoid coming into contact with such people, **I have not sat down with idlers** — לֹא

וְשִׁבְתִּי עִם מְתֵי שׁוֹא, who make fun of anything earnest. **I also did not come into the company of hypocrites** — וְעַם נְעֻלְמִים לֹא אָבוֹא, whose apparent righteousness is only a pretense.

(ה) שִׁנְאַתִּי קֵהַל מְרָעִים
וְעַם רְשָׁעִים לֹא אֲשִׁב:

I hated any community of evildoers — שִׁנְאַתִּי קֵהַל מְרָעִים and I vigorously stayed away from them. I knew that the convictions of an individual can be easily swayed by exposure to a large group of like-minded people. Even when they gave me an honored seat at their table, **I did not sit with the wicked** — וְעַם רְשָׁעִים לֹא אֲשִׁב.

PART 2. FUTURE SELF-DEVELOPMENT.

(ו) אֶרְחַץ בְּנִקְיוֹן כְּפָי
וְאֶסְבְּבָה אֶת מִזְבֵּיִךָ ה':

I know that I must not enter Your house to serve You with hands that are sullied by selfishness. Therefore, before beginning my *avodah* to You, **I will wash my hands**, not with water, but **with my own purity** — אֶרְחַץ בְּנִקְיוֹן כְּפָי, that is, with my having cleansed myself through *teshuvah*. It is only then that **I will circle around Your altar, Hashem** — וְאֶסְבְּבָה אֶת מִזְבֵּיִךָ ה' to serve You.

(ז) לִשְׁמַע בְּקוֹל תוֹדָה
וּלְסַפֵּר כָּל נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ:

As I circle the altar I will **loudly proclaim** my **gratitude** to You — לִשְׁמַע בְּקוֹל תוֹדָה for saving me **and I will tell** others **of all Your wonders** — וּלְסַפֵּר כָּל נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ.

(ח) ה' אֶהְבֵּתִי מְעוֹן בֵּיתְךָ
וּמְקוֹם מְשֻׁכָּן כְּבוֹדְךָ:

Hashem, I love the shelter of Your House — ה' אֶהְבֵּתִי מְעוֹן בֵּיתְךָ, where I am in the company of people who encourage me in *avodas Hashem*, rather than make light of my conscientiousness. I love **the dwelling place of Your glory** — וּמְקוֹם מְשֻׁכָּן כְּבוֹדְךָ, where I can learn Your Torah and approach You in *tefillah*. I go there out of a conscious desire to be near You rather than out of habit.

(ט) אֶל תִּאָסֹף עִם חַטָּאִים נַפְשִׁי
וְעַם אֲנָשֵׁי דָמִים חָיִי:

Throughout my life I have tried to associate with righteous people. Let me never be put into circumstances where I am forced to associate with wicked people, who will pull me back from the high standards I have worked so hard to acquire. **Do not gather up my soul along with sinners** – אֶל תִּאָסֹף עִם חַטָּאִים נַפְשִׁי, nor **my life with men driven by money** – וְעַם אֲנָשֵׁי דָמִים חָיִי ...

(י) אֲשֶׁר בְּיַדֵּיהֶם זֶמָה
וַיִּמְיֶנּוּ מְלֶאכֶה שְׂחָד:

... **in whose hands there is scheming** to gain advantage over others – אֲשֶׁר בְּיַדֵּיהֶם זֶמָה. **Their right hand is filled with bribery** – וַיִּמְיֶנּוּ מְלֶאכֶה שְׂחָד, using their wealth and power to influence others to do their bidding.

PART 3. CONCLUSION.

(יא) וְאֲנִי בְּתַמִּי אֵלֶיךָ
פָּדֵנִי וְחַנּוּנִי:

As for me – וְאֲנִי, I am committed to avoiding self-serving thoughts and dishonest practices. **I will** continue to **walk in my** conscientious **innocence** – בְּתַמִּי אֵלֶיךָ, and so I ask You to come to my aid and protect me from unscrupulous people. Grant me Your mercy and **redeem me** – פָּדֵנִי from trouble and anxiety. **And** even if I should be proven unworthy, **favor me** – וְחַנּוּנִי with Your kindness.

(יב) רַגְלִי עָמְדָה בְּמִישׁוֹר
בְּמִקְהֵלִים אֲבָרְךָ ה':

In the past **my foot has stood** firmly **on the straight path** of Your Torah – רַגְלִי עָמְדָה בְּמִישׁוֹר and so I count on Your protection not to let me falter in the future. I hope to show my gratitude to You **in public assemblies** – בְּמִקְהֵלִים where **I will bless Hashem** – אֲבָרְךָ ה' in joy.

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.

Tefillos for Life - Your Relationship with Hashem.

[26:1] SINCERITY. – שְׁפִטְנֵי ה' כִּי אָנִי בְּתַמִּי הִלַּכְתִּי – “Judge me, Hashem for I walked in my own innocence.” Prepare yourself to be judged by Hashem. This means that even though your actions are not what they should be, at least you have been sincere with Hashem and honest with yourself about serving Him and doing what is right.

[26:11] – וְאָנִי בְּתַמִּי אֵלֶךְ – “As for me, I will walk in my innocence.”

[26:2] SELF-EXAMINATION. – בַּחֲנִנִי ה' וְנִסְנֵי צַרְפָּה כְּלִיּוֹתַי וְלִבִּי – “Examine me, Hashem. Test me; purify my conscience and my heart.” Ask Hashem to help you analyze the sincerity and honesty of your thoughts. Examine yourself to identify any hidden personal agenda that is undermining your eagerness to do the will of Hashem.

[26:3] HASHEM'S KINDNESS. – כִּי חֶסֶדְךָ לִנְגֹד עֵינָי – “For Your kindness is before my eyes.” Think about all the kindnesses that Hashem does for you every day and ask yourself about whether you can improve your efforts at showing gratitude by doing His will.

Lessons for Life - Your Behavior.

[26:4] BAD INFLUENCES. – לֹא יִשְׁבַּתִּי עִם מְתֵי שׂוֹא וְעִם נְעֻלְמִים לֹא אָבוֹא – “I have not sat down with idlers; I did not come into the company of hypocrites.” Avoid people who might weaken your resolve to always do what is right.

[26:5] – שִׂנְאֵתִי קֹהֵל מְרַעִים וְעִם רְשָׁעִים לֹא אֲשֵׁב – “I hated a community of evildoers; I did not sit with the wicked.”

[26:6] TESHUVAH. – אֶרְחֹץ בְּנִקְיוֹן כָּפָי – “I will wash my hands with purity.” Cleanse yourself through *teshuvah* so that you will be worthy of serving Hashem.

Tefillos for Life - Your Gratitude.

[26:7] PUBLIC THANKS. – לְשִׁמְעַ בְּקוֹל תוֹדָה וּלְסַפֵּר כָּל נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ – “to proclaim aloud gratitude and to tell of all Your wonders.” Demonstrate the enthusiasm of your gratitude by publicly proclaiming the wonders you have seen and experienced.

[26:12] – בְּמִקְהֵלִים אֲבָרְךָ ה' – “I will bless Hashem in public

assemblies."

Lessons for Life - Your Attitude.

[26:8] LOVE. – ה' אֶהְבֵּתִי מְעוֹן בֵּיתְךָ וּמְקוֹם מְשַׁכַּן כְּבוֹדְךָ – "*Hashem, I love the shelter of Your House and the dwelling place of Your glory.*" You should feel a sense of love and affection upon entering Hashem's house, for it is there you will be closer to Him.

Sources

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

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

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