

Mizmor 029

Preparing for Avodah

Key Concepts

The mizmor is in the form of an inspirational song for the people who are preparing to serve Hashem in the *Beis HaMikdash* (Temple). The song urges David's listeners to be humble in their *avodah* (service) as they reflect on the awesome might and perfection of the Creator.

To demonstrate the unlimited might of Hashem, the mizmor speaks of the thunderous roar that is heard during violent storms and earthquakes. David refers to these frightening and majestic sounds as utterances of the voice of Hashem. In this sense, the voice of Hashem was heard at the Creation of the world, at the Exodus from Mitzrayim (Egypt) and during the Revelation at Sinai.

The Name of Hashem appears 18 times in the mizmor as a reference to the *avodah* that would ultimately be adopted in the *Shemoneh Esrei*, consisting of 18 core *berachos* (blessings). The expression "voice of Hashem" is repeated seven times, recalling the seven days of Creation.

Navigating Tehillim. Mizmor 029 is a celebration of the glory of Hashem as revealed in spectacular physical events, such as the Creation of the world and *Yetzias Mitzrayim* (Exodus). This theme is also reflected in Mizmor 024. Both of these *mizmorim* are designed to be performed publicly in the *Beis HaKnesses* (Synagogue) during the grand procession in which the Torah is conveyed to the Ark (Mizmor 029 on weekdays and Mizmor 024 on Shabbos and festivals). The ultimate revelation of Hashem's glory is in the living Torah, which is the object of these ceremonies and which is acclaimed explicitly in Mizmor 019.

Exploring the Mizmor

PART 1. A CALL FOR HOMAGE. David begins by calling upon his listeners to draw inspiration from the *kedushah* (holiness) achieved by their forefathers (*Avos*), and to follow their example in giving honor to the Creator. The moral perfection of Hashem is the ultimate measure of His might and this is what the *Avos* sought to emulate.

(א) מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד, הָבוּ לַה' בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים, הָבוּ לַה' כְּבוֹד וְעֹז: (ב) הָבוּ לַה' כְּבוֹד שְׂמוֹ

הַשִּׁתַּחֲוּוּ לֵה' בְּהַדְרַת קֹדֶשׁ:

(1) Give [homage] to Hashem, O you sons of the mighty. Give [homage] to Hashem [for His] glory and might. (2) Give [homage] to Hashem [for] the honor of His Name. Bow down to Hashem [for] the splendor of [His] holiness.

PART 2. SEVEN DAYS OF CREATION. David now calls forth stirring impressions of the voice of Hashem as it was heard at critical times during the history of the world, beginning with Creation.

(ג) קוֹל ה' עַל הַמַּיִם אֶל הַכְּבוֹד הַרְעִים ה' עַל מַיִם רַבִּים: (ד) קוֹל ה' בַּפֶּתַח קוֹל ה' בְּהַדָּר: (ה) קוֹל ה' שֹׁבֵר אֲרָזִים וְיֹשֵׁבֵר ה' אֶת אֲרָזֵי הַלְּבָנוֹן: (ו) וַיִּרְקֵדִם כְּמוֹ עֵגֶל לְבָנוֹן וְשָׂרִין כְּמוֹ בֶן רְאֵמִים: (ז) קוֹל ה' חֹצֵב לְהַבּוֹת אֵשׁ: (ח) קוֹל ה' יַחִיל מִדְּבַר יַחִיל ה' מִדְּבַר קֹדֶשׁ: (ט) קוֹל ה' יַחֲלֵל אֵילוֹת וַיַּחֲשֵׁף יַעֲרוֹת וּבִהִיכְלוּ כָּלוּ אִמֵּר כְּבוֹד:

(3) The voice of Hashem is over the waters. The G-d of glory is thundering, Hashem is over the mighty waters. (4) The voice of Hashem is in power. The voice of Hashem is in splendor. (5) The voice of Hashem breaks the cedars. Hashem shatters the cedars of Lebanon. (6) He makes them prance about like a calf, Lebanon and Siryon [cavort] like young re'eimim. (7) The voice of Hashem carves out flames of fire. (8) The voice of Hashem convulses the wilderness. Hashem convulses the wilderness of Kadesh. (9) The voice of Hashem convulses the female deer; herds fill the forests. In His Mikdash they will all proclaim together, 'Glory!'

PART 3. CONCLUSION. In the two concluding *pesukim* of the mizmor, David offers encouragement to those who have come to serve Hashem in His house. The Torah is Hashem's true strength and is ultimately more significant than any of the physical displays of Hashem's might. Hashem will surely grant peace and security to His people so that they can devote themselves to fulfilling His will, as expressed by the Torah.

(י) ה' לַמְּבוּל יֹשֵׁב וַיֹּשֶׁב ה' מִלְךָ לְעוֹלָם: (יא) ה' עֵז לְעַמּוֹ יִתֵּן ה' יִבְרַךְ אֶת עַמּוֹ בְּשָׁלוֹם:

(10) Hashem sat enthroned at the Flood; Hashem will sit enthroned as King forever. (11) Hashem is giving the strength [of the Torah] to His nation and

Hashem will bless His nation with peace.

Learning the Mizmor

PART 1. A CALL FOR HOMAGE.

(א) מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד:

This **mizmor** was composed **by David** – מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד.

הָבוּ לַה' בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים

Give homage to Hashem – הָבוּ לַה', **O you sons of mighty men** – בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים, our forefathers Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. They demonstrated great moral strength by overcoming their base inclinations and rising to *kedushah* (holiness). In so doing they established the model of righteous behavior for mankind. It is therefore only fitting that you, their descendants, praise Hashem for the perfection of His ways.

הָבוּ לַה' כְּבוֹד וְעֹז:

Give homage to Hashem by recognizing His **glory** – הָבוּ לַה' כְּבוֹד. His glory is that He is the First Being, Who always existed. He is the Cause of all other beings. **And** recognize His **might** – וְעֹז for He is the Creator of all existence.

(ב) הָבוּ לַה' כְּבוֹד שְׁמוֹ
הַשְׁתַּחֲוִי לַה' בְּהַדְרַת קֹדֶשׁ:

Give to Hashem the honor due to His Name – הָבוּ לַה' כְּבוֹד שְׁמוֹ immediately whenever you hear it. To demonstrate your total submissiveness, **bow down to Hashem** – הַשְׁתַּחֲוִי לַה' in the *Beis HaMikdash* (Temple), which represents **the splendor of His holiness** – בְּהַדְרַת קֹדֶשׁ.

PART 2. THE VOICE OF HASHEM.

(ג) קוֹל ה' עַל הַמַּיִם
אֶל הַכְּבוֹד הַרְעִים

The voice of Hashem is heard in the thunder **over the waters** – קוֹל ה' עַל הַמַּיִם of a violent rainstorm. We are reminded that it is **the G-d of glory** that is **thundering** – אֶל הַכְּבוֹד הַרְעִים.

ה' עַל מַיִם רַבִּים:

It was the voice of Hashem that created the world, beginning on the first day of Creation when His spirit hovered over the waters. Indeed, **Hashem was** thundering **over the mighty waters** — ה' עַל מַיִם רַבִּים.

(ד) קוֹל ה' בַּכַּף

The voice of Hashem is revealed in the exercise of His **power** — קוֹל ה' בַּכַּף, which He uses to punish the *resha'im* (wicked), as we have seen at the splitting of the Yam Suf.

קוֹל ה' בְּהַדָּר:

The voice of Hashem is seen **in splendor** — קוֹל ה' בְּהַדָּר, as when the Torah was given at Har Sinai and the intensity of Hashem's voice was calibrated to the ability of each person to absorb it.

(ה) קוֹל ה' שֹׁבֵר אֲרָזִים

The voice of Hashem breaks the pride of the haughty individuals who are like the tall **cedars** — קוֹל ה' שֹׁבֵר אֲרָזִים that give no fruit.

וַיִּשְׁבֵּר ה' אֶת אֲרָזֵי הַלְּבָנוֹן:

Hashem shatters — וַיִּשְׁבֵּר ה' the prideful illusions of empty people who exploit their noble ancestry for personal advantage. Such people are like **the cedars of Lebanon** — אֶת אֲרָזֵי הַלְּבָנוֹן, which have the good fortune to grow in ancient forests. Their renowned lineage is no defense against the judgment of Hashem.

(ו) וַיִּרְקִידֵם כְּמוֹ עֵגֶל

In His anger **He makes them** [those tall cedars] **prance about like a calf** — וַיִּרְקִידֵם כְּמוֹ עֵגֶל, for despite their arrogance the *resha'im* flee in fear.

לְבָנוֹן וְשִׁרְיֹן כְּמוֹ בֶן רְאֵמִים:

And He even shakes up the ones who think of themselves as secure like the ancient mountains, such as **Lebanon and Siryon** — לְבָנוֹן וְשִׁרְיֹן. They are jolted from their foundations by earthquakes so that they appear to cavort **like young re'eimim** — כְּמוֹ בֶן רְאֵמִים.

(ז) קול ה'
חִצְב לְהַבּוֹת אֵשׁ:

The voice of Hashem — קול ה' — carves out flames of fire — חִצְב לְהַבּוֹת אֵשׁ in the form of lightning bolts that accompany the thunder and in the form of volcanic eruptions that accompany earthquakes. The fire that we see represents the instruments of punishment for the *resha'im*.

(ח) קול ה' יַחִיל מִדְבָּר

The voice of Hashem convulses the wilderness — קול ה' יַחִיל מִדְבָּר as a woman in labor convulses to give birth. It was there in the Midbar that the Bnei Yisrael underwent a spiritual rebirth before being permitted to enter Eretz Yisrael.

יַחִיל ה' מִדְבָּר קִדְשׁ:

Hashem convulses the wilderness of Kadesh — יַחִיל ה' מִדְבָּר קִדְשׁ, the region in the Midbar from which the *meraglim* (spies) were sent out and from which the people could have entered the Promised Land immediately had they not sinned.

(ט) קול ה' יַחֲוִל אֵילוֹת
וַיִּחַשֵּׁף יַעֲרוֹת

The voice of Hashem convulses the female deer — קול ה' יַחֲוִל אֵילוֹת which inhabit the wilderness, and facilitates their giving birth. Thus, the deer **herds fill the forests — וַיִּחַשֵּׁף יַעֲרוֹת** that have been emptied by the falling trees. So does the voice of Hashem facilitate the birth of Yisrael as a nation.

וּבְהִיכְלוֹ כָּלֹ אִמְרַ כְּבוֹד:

In contrast to the worldwide commotion created by the voice of Hashem in nature, there is serenity **in His Sanctuary — וּבְהִיכְלוֹ** among all who serve Hashem. **In unison they will all proclaim together, "Glory!" — כָּלֹ אִמְרַ כְּבוֹד**.

PART 3. CONCLUSION.

(י) ה' לַמַּבּוּל יֵשֵׁב
וַיֵּשֶׁב ה' מֶלֶךְ לְעוֹלָם:

Despite the unlimited power of the voice of Hashem, it will not destroy the world. For **Hashem sat enthroned at the Flood — ה' לַמַּבּוּל יֵשֵׁב** and made a promise to preserve the world. But the *reshai'm* will be destroyed while **Hashem will sit**

enthroned as King forever – וַיֵּשֶׁב ה' מְלֶכְךָ לְעוֹלָם.

(יא) ה' עֹז לְעַמּוֹ יִתֵּן
ה' יְבָרֵךְ אֶת עַמּוֹ בְּשָׁלוֹם:

When the nations asked about the sound that they heard, they were told Hashem is giving the Torah to His people. **For Hashem is giving the strength of the Torah to His nation – ה' עֹז לְעַמּוֹ יִתֵּן and Hashem will bless His nation with peace – ה' יְבָרֵךְ אֶת עַמּוֹ בְּשָׁלוֹם** so that they will be able to devote themselves to learning Torah and serving Hashem, without fear of attack by the nations.

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 - Public Acclaim.

[29:1] THE AVOS. – הָבוּ לַה' בְּנֵי אֱלֹים, הָבוּ לַה' כְּבוֹד וְעֹז – “Give [homage] to Hashem, O you sons of the mighty. Give [homage] to Hashem [for His] glory and might.” Give public honor to the Creator, calling upon the *kedushah* achieved by our Avos.

[29:2] – הָבוּ לַה' כְּבוֹד שְׁמוֹ הַשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לַה' בְּהִדְרַת קֹדֶשׁ – “Give [homage] to Hashem [for] the honor of His Name. Bow down to Hashem [for] the splendor of [His] holiness.”

Tefillos for Life - Contemplation of Hashem.

[29:3] THUNDERING. – קוֹל ה' עַל הַמַּיִם אֶל הַכְּבוֹד הַרְעִים ה' עַל מַיִם רַבִּים – “The voice of Hashem is over the waters. The G-d of glory is thundering, Hashem is over the mighty waters.” When you hear the sound of thunder you are hearing the voice of Hashem.

[29:7] LIGHTNING. – קוֹל ה' חָצַב לְהַבּוֹת אֵשׁ – “The voice of Hashem carves out flames of fire.” When you see the flash and hear the crack of lightning you are witnessing the power of Hashem.

[29:11] HARMONY OF PEACE. – ה' עֹז לְעַמּוֹ יִתֵּן ה' יְבָרֵךְ אֶת עַמּוֹ בְּשָׁלוֹם – “Hashem is giving the strength [of the Torah] to His nation and Hashem will

bless His nation with peace. " Look to the Torah to appreciate the grandeur of Hashem. The harmonious relationships among all the parts of the Torah and among all the parts of the natural world correspond to the blessing of peace which Hashem offers to Yisrael.

Sources

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

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

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