

Mizmor 034

Reflecting Upon a Miracle

Key Concepts

David composed this mizmor after disguising himself as a babbling derelict to elude Avimelech the king of the Plishtim. The officers of Avimelech suspected that David was their old enemy, but because of David's effective disguise, Avimelech set him free. David recognized this experience as an important demonstration of "hashgachah pratis" (Hashem's individual attention). His disguise would never have deceived Avimelech if it were not that Hashem wanted him to escape.

In composing this mizmor David wanted to praise Hashem for saving him. He also wanted to reflect upon his miraculous experience and invite others to learn from it and from their own experiences.

Historical Background

When the incident with Avimelech occurred, David was a fugitive, fleeing from King Shaul. Traveling alone, he had escaped to Gass in the land of the Plishtim, where he hoped to hide out until Shaul's anger cooled. The officers of Avimelech suspected that David was their old enemy, but because of David's effective disguise, Avimelech set him free.

These events are documented in I *Shmuel* 21, where Avimelech is referred to by his real name, Achish. The name Avimelech is actually a royal title, like Pharaoh.

Navigating Tehillim (1). David's arrival in Gass, Avimelech's capital city, occurred after a short stay in Nov, where he had been given help by the *Kohen Gadol*. That event was secretly observed by Doeg the Edomi, and became the subject of Mizmor 052 (Tragic Talk).

Navigating Tehillim (2). After departing Gass, David travelled on to Adullam, Moav, Keilah, and the wilderness of Ziph. In Ziph he was betrayed to Shaul and forced to flee again to the land of the Plishtim, giving rise to Mizmor 011 (*Chizuk* for a Fugitive).

Exploring the Mizmor

The pesukim of the mizmor are arranged in alphabetical sequence, based on the first letter of each posuk. This is an indication of the importance of the mizmor and the

essential concepts that it contains. [The letter “vav” is missing from the sequence but an extra posuk with the letter “peh” is added at the end to symbolize the substitution of merciful redemption (*pidyon*) for harsh judgement.]

PART 1. INTRODUCTION. David introduces the mizmor by briefly reviewing the event that triggered David’s outpouring of gratitude.

(א) לְדָוִד בְּשִׁנוֹתָו אֶת טַעְמוֹ לִפְנֵי אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ וַיִּגְרָשֶׁהוּ וַיֵּלֶךְ:

(1) *By David, after disguising his speech in the presence of Avimelech, [who] banished him from his presence and [David] went on his way.*

PART 2. GRATITUDE. David praises Hashem and expresses confidence that his experience will be an inspiration for others in a similar situation. David invites his listeners to share an appreciation of his miraculous experience and to realize that Hashem helps all who fear Him.

(ב) אַבְרָכָה אֶת ה' בְּכָל עֵת תִּמְיֵד תִּהְיֶה לְפִי: (ג) בַּה' תִּתְהַלֵּל נַפְשִׁי יִשְׁמְעוּ עֲנוּיִם וַיִּשְׂמְחוּ: (ד) גִּדְלוּ לֵה' אֶתִּי וְנִרְוַמְמָה שְׁמוֹ יַחְדָּו: (ה) דַּרְשֵׁתִי אֶת ה' וְעֲנֵנִי וּמִכָּל מַגּוּרֹתַי הֲצִילֵנִי: (ו) הִבִּיטוּ אֵלָיו וְנִהְרֻוּ וּפְנִיָהֶם אֶל יַחְפְּרוּ: (ז) זֶה עָנִי קָרָא וְה' שָׁמַע וּמִכָּל צָרוֹתָיו הוֹשִׁיעוֹ: (ח) חֲנֹה מִלְאָךְ ה' סָבִיב לִירְאָיו וַיַּחַלְצֵם:

(2) *I will bless Hashem at all times; His praise will always be in my mouth. (3) My soul takes pride in Hashem. Let the humble people hear and be glad. (4) [David addresses the listeners:] Declare the greatness of Hashem with me. Together let us recognize His Name as sublime [for] (5) I sought Hashem and He answered. He rescued me from all my terrors. (6) Others have looked to Him and received light. Their faces were not shamed. (7) This poor man [David] called and Hashem heard. And from all his troubles He saved him. (8) The angel of Hashem encamps [protectively] around those who fear Him and He frees them.*

PART 3. LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE. David calls upon his listeners to reflect upon the meaning of his experience. That means they should absorb its significance and learn from their own experiences of life. To do this they must be receptive to the truth and act on what they have learned.

(ט) טַעְמוּ וּרְאוּ כִּי טוֹב ה' אֲשֶׁרִי הַגֹּבֵר יַחְסֶה בּוֹ: (י) יִרְאוּ אֶת ה' קִדְשׁוֹ כִּי אֵין מַחְסוֹר לִירְאָיו: (יא) כְּפִירִים רָשׁוּ וְרַעֲבֵי וְדָרְשׁוּ ה' לֹא יַחְסְרוּ כָּל טוֹב:

(9) *Examine and see that Hashem is good. Fortunate is the man who takes refuge in Him. (10) Fear Hashem, [you,] His holy ones. for there is no deprivation to those who fear Him. (11) Young lions are in want and hunger, but those who seek Hashem will not lack any good.*

In Mizmor 034 David teaches the importance of learning from experience, using his own experience with Avimelech as a case study. In a key phrase he advises his listeners, “*taamu ur’u*”, which may be loosely translated as “taste and see,” that is, examine your experiences and understand their significance. Tasting something is the last chance a person has to reject harmful food before swallowing it.

The root “*ta’am*” also appears in the first *posuk*, where it refers to sanity or intelligent speech: “when he disguised his speech.” In each case we see that “*ta’am*” refers to the ability a rational person has to examine his world and make sense of it. A madman lives in his own fantasy world and his words don’t reflect reality. Thus, he cannot be relied on and Avimelech naturally rejected such a person.

This ability to discern the truth is essential because we often fool ourselves into accepting our own fantasies as the correct interpretation of events. David reminds us not to fall into that trap – “*taamu ur’u*”.

PART 4. PRESCRIPTION FOR A WORTHY LIFE. David instructs his listeners in the basic elements of a life that is lived in reverence for Hashem. Such a life requires self-control in speech, thought, and action. It involves the active pursuit of perfection in one’s own moral make-up and in one’s relationships with others.

(יב) לְכוּ בָנִים שְׁמְעוּ לִי יִרְאַת ה' אֶלְמֹדְדָכֶם: (יג) מִי הָאִישׁ הַחֹפֵץ חַיִּים אֲהֵב יָמִים
לְרֵאוֹת טוֹב: (יד) נֹצֵר לְשׁוֹנֵד מִרַע וְשֹׁפֵתִיד מִדַּבֵּר מִרָמָה: (טו) סוֹר מִרַע וְעֹשֶׂה טוֹב
בְּקֶשׁ שְׁלוֹם וְרֹדְפָהּ:

(12) Come, children, listen to me [and] I will teach you the fear of Hashem.
(13) Who is the man who wants life, cherishes days of seeing good? (14) Guard your tongue from evil, your lips from speaking deceit. (15) Turn away from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it.

Navigating Tehillim (3). We have seen that in Mizmor 015 David reduces the 613 *mitzvos* of the Torah to 11 fundamental principles. Now he reduces those further to three important principles of self-control in speech, thought, and action.

PART 5. CONSEQUENCES. David assures his listeners of the reward for earning Hashem’s goodwill and reminds them of the harsh fate in store for those who reject Him. However, he adds that Hashem is always prepared to forgive those who do *teshuvah*.

(טז) עֵינַי ה' אֶל צְדִיקִים וְאֲזִנּוּ אֶל שׁוֹעֲתָם: (יז) פָּנֵי ה' בְּעֹשֵׂי רַע לְהַכְרִית מֵאָרֶץ
זָכָרָם: (יח) צָעֲקוּ וְה' שָׁמַע וּמָכַל צְרוּתָם הַצִּילָם: (יט) קְרוֹב ה' לְנֹשֶׁבֵרֵי לֵב וְאֵת
דֹּפְאֵי רוּחַ יוֹשִׁיעַ: (כ) רַבּוֹת רַעוֹת צְדִיק וּמְכַלֵּם יַצִּילָנוּ ה': (כא) שְׁמֵר כָּל עֲצֻמוֹתָיו

אַחַת מֵהֵנָּה לֹא נִשְׁבְּרָה: (כב) תִּמּוֹתַי רָשָׁע רָעָה וְשִׁנְיָי צָדִיק יִאֲשָׁמוּ: (כג) פְּוֹדָה ה' נִפְשׁ עֲבָדָיו וְלֹא יִאֲשָׁמוּ כָּל הַחֹסִים בּוֹ:

(16) The eyes of Hashem are toward the righteous and His ears to their cry.
 (17) The face of Hashem is against evildoers, to cut off their memory from earth. (18) If they have cried out, He rescues them from all their troubles.
 (19) Hashem, is near to the brokenhearted and He saves the crushed in spirit. (20) Many are the adversities of a righteous man. Hashem will rescue him from all of them. (21) Hashem guards his bones, not one of them was broken. (22) The wicked man's evil plot will kill [him] and the haters of the righteous man will be held accountable. (23) Hashem redeems the soul of His servants, all who take refuge in Him will not bear any guilt.

Additional Information

R' Avraham Ben-Ramoch. In this issue of Mizmor 034 we introduced interpretations from the commentary on Tehillim by R' Avraham Ben-Ramoch, who flourished in Spain during the 15th century. (He was a contemporary of R' Yosef Albo, author of the *Sefer Haikarim*.) R' Ben-Ramoch writings were lost for many centuries but were discovered in the last century in the archives of Oxford University, the Russian National Library, and the Escorial Library of Spain. The text was assembled and edited by Rav Shmuel Yerushalmi (translator of *Yalkut Me'Am Loez*) and Rav Shmuel Chaim Halperin. The edited Ben-Ramoch *perush* on Tehillim is available in an edition from *Machon Be'er Avrohom*, published in 2009.

Learning the Mizmor

PART 1. INTRODUCTION.

(א) לְדָוִד

בְּשִׁנּוֹתָיו אֶת טַעְמוֹ לִפְנֵי אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ
 וַיִּגְרֹשֶׁהוּ וַיֵּלֶךְ:

This is a mizmor **by David** — לְדָוִד. David composed the mizmor **after disguising** — לִפְנֵי — **his speech** — אֶת טַעְמוֹ **in the presence of Avimelech** — אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ, the king of the Plishtim. Avimelech could not believe that the babbling derelict facing him was actually David, **and banished him** — וַיִּגְרֹשֶׁהוּ from his presence. Thereupon David **went** — וַיֵּלֶךְ on his way and was inspired to write this mizmor.

PART 2. GRATITUDE.

(ב) אֲבָרְכָה אֶת ה' בְּכָל עֵת

I will bless Hashem — אֲבָרְכָה אֶת ה' and express my gratitude to Him **at all times** — בְּכָל עֵת, for there is never a time when I don't feel close to Him. I feel this way even when times are difficult, because I know that everything that happens to me is for a worthy purpose — even madness has a purpose.

תָּמִיד תְּהִלָּתוֹ בְּפִי:

There will **always** be **praise of Him in my mouth** — תָּמִיד תְּהִלָּתוֹ בְּפִי because Hashem is always at my side, protecting me in every circumstance. Even when I think I am familiar with all His miracles, there is always something new that I was not aware of.

(ג) בַּה' תִּתְהַלֵּל נַפְשִׁי

Despite my lowly state as an impoverished fugitive, **my soul**, which is my conscious mind, **takes true pride in** the knowledge that **Hashem** — בַּה' תִּתְהַלֵּל is my Protector and that I have been found worthy of serving Him. My mind can reach its fulfillment only through Hashem, for He is the Source of everything that I am.

יִשְׁמְעוּ עֲנֻיִם וַיִּשְׂמְחוּ:

Let the humble, downtrodden **people hear** — יִשְׁמְעוּ עֲנֻיִם about what happened to me and let them **be glad** — וַיִּשְׂמְחוּ, knowing that even apparent misfortune such as I experienced can be a blessing. They should learn to readily accept being scorned by men whose measure of success is material wealth. Instead, the achievement of eternal values should be their true concern.

(ד) גִּדְלוּ לַה' אִתִּי

[David addresses his listeners:] Join me in praising Hashem. I call upon you to **declare the greatness of Hashem with me** — גִּדְלוּ לַה' אִתִּי even though everyone perceives the greatness of Hashem in a different way, depending on his personal experiences.

וַנְרוֹמְמָה שְׁמוֹ יַחְדָּו:

But in truth, the reality of Hashem is far above any attribute that we can ascribe to Him. So **let us recognize His Name as sublime** — וַנְרוֹמְמָה שְׁמוֹ and let us do

that **together** — יחדו because His Name cannot be affected by our individual differences.

(ה) דַּרְשֵׁתִי אֶת ה' וְעֲנֵנִי

No matter how difficult your circumstances, I encourage you to call upon Hashem as I did. Even when I faced Avimelech I silently **beseched Hashem** — דַּרְשֵׁתִי אֶת ה' to save me **and He answered me** — וְעֲנֵנִי.

וּמִכָּל מְגוּרוֹתַי הִצִּילָנִי:

In fact, He **rescued me from all my terrors** — וּמִכָּל מְגוּרוֹתַי הִצִּילָנִי, not only the fear of Avimelech, but that of Shaul. Once I realized that Hashem was by my side I was no longer troubled by fear of any potential enemy.

(ו) הִבִּיטוּ אֵלָיו וְנִהְרֻוּ

וּפְנֵיהֶם אֵל יַחְפְּרוּ:

I was encouraged to turn to Hashem because I have seen that **others have looked to Him** — הִבִּיטוּ אֵלָיו in the past **and received light** — וְנִהְרֻוּ when He took them from the darkness of misery into the brightness of relief. I saw that **their faces were** radiant with joy in the fulfillment of their hopes and they were **not embarrassed** — וּפְנֵיהֶם אֵל יַחְפְּרוּ by disappointment.

(ז) זֶה עָנִי קָרָא וְה' שָׁמַע

וּמִכָּל צָרוֹתָיו הוֹשִׁיעוּ:

So **this poor man** — זֶה עָנִי [David is referring to himself] followed their example and **called** — קָרָא, and Hashem **heard** — שָׁמַע. **And He saved him from all his troubles** — וּמִכָּל צָרוֹתָיו הוֹשִׁיעוּ.

(ח) חֲנֵה מִלְאָךְ ה'

סָבִיב לִירְאָיו וַיַּחֲלִצֵם:

Know that such a *yeshuah* is not limited to my case. In fact the protective **angel of Hashem encamps** — חֲנֵה מִלְאָךְ ה' to do battle wherever there are enemies positioned **around those who fear Him** — סָבִיב לִירְאָיו. The angel serves in every situation to protect G-d fearing people **and he frees them** — וַיַּחֲלִצֵם from danger.

PART 3. LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE.

(ט) טַעֲמוּ וּרְאוּ כִּי טוֹב ה'

Examine with your mind **and see** with your eyes **that Hashem is good** — טַעֲמוּ וּרְאוּ. Just think about how He protects you from your enemies. See how His laws keep you from food that is unhealthy and from behavior that is destructive. Are not the good things in the world hundreds of times more numerous than the bad things?

אֲשֶׁרִי הַגִּבֹּר יַחְסֶה בּוֹ:

Therefore, **fortunate** indeed **is the man who takes refuge in Him** — אֲשֶׁרִי הַגִּבֹּר יַחְסֶה בּוֹ because that man will reap the benefits of Hashem's goodness. He is called a 'man' — גִּבֹּר because Hashem asks of him that he practice his 'masculine' qualities of 'mastering' his own weaknesses and exerting control over his material instincts.

(י) יִרְאוּ אֶת ה' קְדָשָׁיו

Fear Hashem — יִרְאוּ אֶת ה', you who are **His holy ones** — קְדָשָׁיו. You are called holy because you keep yourself apart from the pull of material temptation. But don't be concerned that your self-restraint will be detrimental to you.

כִּי אֵין מַחְסוֹר לִירְאָיו:

On the contrary, you should continue to practice self-control and devote yourself to lofty pursuits, **for there is no deprivation** — כִּי אֵין מַחְסוֹר **to** be suffered by **those who fear Him** — לִירְאָיו. First of all, this is because they have learned to appreciate their blessings and secondly because Hashem provides them with their needs.

(יא) כְּפִירִים רָשׁוּ וְרָעִבוּ

There are people who are like **young lions** — כְּפִירִים that are driven by their appetites and count on their strength and skill to satisfy them. And even such people **are** at times still **in want and hunger** — רָשׁוּ וְרָעִבוּ because their greed leads them into unhealthy habits and unwise risks.

וְדַרְשֵׁי ה' לֹא יַחְסְרוּ כֹל טוֹב:

But those who seek Hashem — וְדַרְשֵׁי ה', looking only to Him for guidance and trusting in His help to gain their livelihood, **will not lack any good** — לֹא יַחְסְרוּ

כָּל טוֹב. They will lead a healthy lifestyle and with Hashem's blessing they can expect to live a calm and serene existence.

PART 4. PRESCRIPTION FOR A WORTHY LIFE.

(יב) לְכוּ בְּנִים שְׁמְעוּ לִי
יִרְאַת ה' אֶלְמֹדְכֶם:

You may be wondering what it takes to be considered someone who reveres Hashem and to be worthy of His protection. Don't assume you know all there is to know. **Come, children** — לְכוּ בְּנִים of Hashem, **listen to me** — שְׁמְעוּ לִי for I have acquired this understanding through my own experience and my closeness to Him. **I will now teach you the fear of Hashem** — יִרְאַת ה' אֶלְמֹדְכֶם, but first I will ask you a question:

(יג) מִי הָאִישׁ הַחֹפֵץ חַיִּים
אֶהָב יָמִים לְרֵאוֹת טוֹב:

Who among you **is the man who wants** a fulfilled life — מִי הָאִישׁ הַחֹפֵץ חַיִּים of serving Hashem in this world and a blissful life in the World to Come, but who also **cherishes** his **days of seeing good** — אֶהָב יָמִים לְרֵאוֹת טוֹב with cheerfulness and joy in the world around him?

(יד) נֹצֵר לְשׁוֹנֵךְ מִרַע

If you have answered, 'Yes, I want life,' here is what you must do: First of all avoid sinful speech and sinful thoughts. To avoid sinful speech, **guard your tongue from** all kinds of **evil** — נֹצֵר לְשׁוֹנֵךְ מִרַע, whether it be speaking ill of another or speaking any kind of falsehood.

וּשְׁפָתֶיךָ מִדִּבֵּר מִרְמָה:

To avoid sinful thoughts, let what is in your mind be consistent with what comes out in your lips. And so, keep **your lips from speaking deceit** — וּשְׁפָתֶיךָ מִדִּבֵּר מִרְמָה.

(טו) סוּר מִרַע

Besides avoiding sinful speech and thoughts, be careful of all of your physical actions: **Turn away from evil** — סוּר מִרַע by taking extra precautions so that you are insulated from risking an evil outcome. Shun everything that can draw you to evil.

וְעֲשֵׂה טוֹב

But it is not enough to keep away from evil. Develop the personal *middos* that lead you to **do good** — וְעֲשֵׂה טוֹב — for your fellow man. And remember that it is not sufficient merely to desire what is good, don't rest until you have brought it about.

בְּקִשׁ שְׁלוֹם וְרַדְּפֵהוּ:

And besides your attention to *mitzvos* and *middos*, **seek** the **perfection** — בְּקִשׁ שְׁלוֹם — of wisdom in yourself and in peaceful relationships among all people. Look for opportunities to preserve peace and **pursue it** — וְרַדְּפֵהוּ — by going out and getting the guidance of *talmidei chachomim*.

PART 5. CONSEQUENCES.

(טז) עֵינֵי ה' אֶל צְדִיקִים

וְאָזְנוּ אֶל שׁוֹעֲתָם:

If you do all this, you will surely be rewarded, for **the eyes of Hashem are especially directed toward the righteous** — עֵינֵי ה' אֶל צְדִיקִים — to protect them from mishap. **And His ears respond to their cry** — וְאָזְנוּ אֶל שׁוֹעֲתָם — when they call for His help in overcoming the challenges of life.

(יז) פְּנֵי ה' בְּעֵשִׂי רָע

לְהַכְרִית מֵאָרֶץ זְכָרָם:

Hashem's concern affects not only the righteous, but the wicked. **The face of Hashem** — פְּנֵי ה' — is turned in anger **against evildoers** — בְּעֵשִׂי רָע, **to cut off their memory from earth** — לְהַכְרִית מֵאָרֶץ זְכָרָם — so that they cannot harm the righteous and so that future generations will not learn from their evil ways.

(יח) צָעֲקוּ וְה' שָׁמַעַ

וּמִכָּל צָרוֹתֵם הִצִּילָם:

However, Hashem is merciful and if the wicked do *teshuvah*, they will also be counted among the righteous. **If they have cried out** — צָעֲקוּ — in sincere *teshuvah*, **Hashem listens** — וְה' שָׁמַעַ, **and He rescues them from all their troubles** — וּמִכָּל צָרוֹתֵם הִצִּילָם, even beyond the specific difficulties that triggered their cry of pain.

(יט) קרוב ה' לנשברי לב

Hashem, in His mercy, **is near to the brokenhearted** – קרוב ה' לנשברי לב, who have rejected their sinful ways, and He responds to their cries.

ואת דכאי רוח יושיע:

If because of their sense of guilt, they are so **crushed in spirit** – **ואת דכאי רוח** that they cannot bring themselves to ask for His help, **He saves** – **יושיע** them anyway because He understands their sincerity.

(כ) רבות רעות צדיק

Many are the adversities – רבות רעות that a **righteous man** – צדיק may experience, but this should not cause him to lose hope. He should be aware that Hashem may be testing his faith and that the challenge is for his benefit. Hashem may also want others to learn from the example of the righteous man who has surmounted his difficulties.

ומכלם יצילנו ה':

In any case, despite many misfortunes, the righteous man can be assured that ultimately **Hashem will rescue him from all of them** – ומכלם יצילנו ה'.

(כא) שמר כל עצמותיו

אחת מהנה לא נשברה:

Even when the righteous man is enduring misfortune, **Hashem is guarding all his essential bones** – שמר כל עצמותיו and organs. As long as his bones are intact the healing process will not be unduly long and painful. After he has recovered he will realize with gratitude that not **one of them was broken** – אחת מהנה לא נשברה.

(כב) תמותת רשע רעה

In contrast to the righteous man who will ultimately be saved even if it takes a while, the **wicked man's evil plot will** act against him and **kill** him quickly – תמותת רשע רעה. This is because he will unexpectedly fall into his own trap.

ושנאי צדיק יאשמו:

And the haters of the righteous man, who take pleasure in seeing him suffer, **will be held accountable** for that offense – ושנאי צדיק יאשמו, even if they have

not yet committed serious crimes.

(כג) פוֹדֶה ה' נַפְשׁ עֲבָדָיו
וְלֹא יִאֲשָׁמוּ כָּל הַחֲסִים בּוֹ:

Hashem redeems the soul of His servants — פוֹדֶה ה' נַפְשׁ עֲבָדָיו in exchange for their *teshuvah* and good deeds, and so the righteous man will escape the traps set for him by the wicked. And in contrast to those who hate the righteous man, **all who take refuge in Hashem will not bear any guilt** — וְלֹא יִאֲשָׁמוּ כָּל הַחֲסִים בּוֹ because they will not be drawn to inadvertent sin.

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*, expressing your devotion to Hashem.

Tefillos for Life - Your Gratitude.

[34:2] CONTINUING GRATITUDE. – אֲבָרְכָה אֶת ה' בְּכֹל עֵת תְּמִיד תִּהְלֶתוּ בְּפִי: – *"I will bless Hashem at all times; His praise will always be in my mouth."* There should never be a time when you are not grateful to Him. You should feel that everything that you experience is miraculous.

[34:3] THE SOURCE. – בֵּה' תִּתְהַלֵּל נַפְשִׁי: – *"My soul takes pride in Hashem."* Recognize that everything good that happens to you is from Hashem, the Source of all good. Take nothing for granted.

Tehillos for Life - Public Acclaim.

[34:3] THE HUMBLE. – יִשְׁמְעוּ עֲנוּיִם וַיִּשְׂמְחוּ – *"Let the humble people hear and be glad."* Share your feeling of joy and gratitude with those who are capable of suppressing their own pride to acknowledge their debt to Hashem.

[34:4] GREATNESS. – גִּדְלוּ לַה' אִתִּי וְנִרְוַמְמָה שְׁמוֹ יַחְדָּו – *"Declare the greatness of Hashem with me. Together let us recognize His Name as sublime."* The greatness of Hashem can best be recognized in a group of like-minded people who inspire each other with their enthusiasm.

Tefillos for Life - Your Relationship with Hashem.

[34:5] **SEEKING.** – דַּרְשֵׁתִי אֶת ה' וְעֲנֵנִי וּמִכָּל מְגֹרֹתַי הֲצִילֵנִי – “*I sought Hashem and He answered. He rescued me from all my terrors.*” When you have a need of Hashem’s help, your primary focus should not be on your request but upon your relationship with Hashem. You should seek to be closer to Him and the solution to your problems will inevitably result.

[34:6] **SEEING THE LIGHT.** – הִבִּיטוּ אֵלָיו וְנִהְרָו וּפְנֵיהֶם אֵל יַחְפְּרוּ – “*Others have looked to Him and received light. Their faces were not shamed.*” Don’t be discouraged at not feeling the closeness of Hashem. Just as others have looked to Hashem and were granted access to His light, so will you. You will not be disappointed if you are sincere.

[34:7] **POVERTY.** – זֶה עָנִי קָרָא וְה' שָׁמַע – “*This poor man [David] called and Hashem heard.*” No matter how successful you have been in life or how strong you are, when you approach Hashem think of yourself as abjectly poor. Everything you have is His. Without Him you have nothing and therefore you are totally dependent upon Him.

[34:9] – אֲשֶׁרִי הַגֹּבֵר יַחְסֶה בּוֹ – “*Fortunate is the man [of might] who takes refuge in Him.*” He knows this might belongs to Hashem.

Lessons for Life - Your Attitude.

[34:8] **FEAR.** – חַנּוּהַ מַלְאָךְ ה' סָבִיב לִירְאָיו – “*The angel of Hashem encamps [protectively] around those who fear Him.*” As long as you fear only Hashem, He will see that you are protected. There is no reason to fear an attacker for he has no power to harm you unless it is the will of Hashem.

[34:9] **REALITY.** – טַעֲמוּ וּרְאוּ כִי טוֹב ה' – “*Examine and see that Hashem is good.*” Examine your experiences of life honestly and you will realize how good Hashem has been to you.

[34:10] **DEPRIVATION.** – יִרְאוּ אֶת ה' קְדוֹשָׁיו כִּי אֵין מַחְסוֹר לִירְאָיו – “*Fear Hashem, [you,] His holy ones. for there is no deprivation to those who fear Him.*” Don’t be discouraged from living a holy life, for you will not suffer from deprivation.

[34:11] – כְּפִיִּים רָשׁוּ וְרָעִבוּ וּדְרָשׁוּ ה' לֹא יַחְסְרוּ כָּל טוֹב – “*Young lions are in want and hunger, but those who seek Hashem will not lack any good.*”

[34:12] **COMING AND GOING.** – לָכוּ בְּנִים שְׁמְעוּ לִי – “Come, children, listen to me.” To achieve a change in attitude you must go as well as come. You must go away from your defective thinking by recognizing its fallacies; then you will be open to new and better ideas.

[34:12] – יְרֵאתָ ה' אֶלְמֹדָכִם – “I will teach you the fear of Hashem.”

The fear of Hashem does not come to a person without effort. He must exert himself to give up his old attitude and learn a new attitude.

[34:13] **LIFE.** – מִי הָאִישׁ הַחֹפֵץ חַיִּים – “Who is the man who wants life?” Everybody wants life but not everybody is willing to sacrifice his momentary desires to achieve the physical and spiritual health that are essential to long life in this world and the next.

[34:13] **DAYS.** – אֶהָב יָמַי – “cherishes days.” You should aspire to cherish every day of your life, to utilize it to its full potential.

[34:13] **GOOD.** – לִרְאוֹת טוֹב – “seeing good.” You should aspire to cherish that which has true value in life, as opposed to material wealth that has only superficial value.

Lessons for Life - Your Actions.

[34:14] **ON GUARD.** – נֹצֵר לְשׁוֹנֵךְ מִרַע וּשְׂפָתֶיךָ מִדְבַר מְרָמָה – “Guard your tongue from evil, your lips from speaking deceit.” Your tongue and lips may be inclined to utter inappropriate words unthinkingly, as though they are acting independently of you. Your challenge is to control them and restrain them.

[34:15] **THE WRONG ROAD.** – סוּר מִרַע וַעֲשֵׂה טוֹב – “Turn away from evil and do good.” Don't assume that as long as you are not choosing an evil road, you are doing good. You may already be on the wrong road and evil is waiting for you somewhere along the way, unless you stop and examine your life.

[34:15] **PEACE.** – בִּקֵּשׁ שָׁלוֹם וְרַדְפֵהוּ – “Seek peace and pursue it.” It is not sufficient to avoid starting a dispute. You need to put your energy into identifying any situation which has the potential for dispute or where ill will among people already exists. Once you have identified such a situation you need to actively pursue strategies to overcome it.

Tehillos for Life - Contemplation of Hashem.

[34:16] EYES. – עֵינֵי ה' אֶל צְדִיקִים – “*The eyes of Hashem are toward the righteous.*” Hashem sees everything in the universe, but His purpose in creating the world is fulfilled by what He sees in the the righteous.

[34:18] HATZALAH AND YESHUAH. – צָעָקוּ וְה' שָׁמַע וּמָכַל צָרוֹתָם הַצִּילָם – “*If they have cried out, He rescues them from all their troubles.*” Hashem rescues the wicked who have cried out, but he reserves a *yeshuah* (salvation) for the humble *tzadik*, as it says in posuk 7, “*And from all his troubles He saved him.*” The difference is that *yeshuah* implies forming a bond or *bris* with the person being saved, whereas rescue (*hatzalah*) refers only to the act of recovery from distress.

[34:7] – זֶה עָנִי קָרָא וְה' שָׁמַע וּמָכַל צָרוֹתָיו הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי – “*This poor man [David] called and Hashem heard. And from all his troubles He saved him.*”

[34:16] EYES. – עֵינֵי ה' אֶל צְדִיקִים – “*The eyes of Hashem are toward the righteous.*” Hashem sees everything in the universe, but His purpose in creating the world is fulfilled by what He sees in the the righteous.

Sources

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

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| א - רש"י, בן־רמון, אבן יחייא, מלבי"ם, רשר"ה | א - רש"י, בן־רמון, אבן יחייא, מלבי"ם, רשר"ה |
| ב - רד"ק, בן־רמון, מלבי"ם, רשר"ה, נר לרגלי
הללי נפשי | ב - רד"ק, בן־רמון, מלבי"ם, רשר"ה, נר לרגלי,
הללי נפשי |
| ג - רש"י, בן־רמון, ספורנו, מלבי"ם, רשר"ה,
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| ח - רד"ק, הללי נפשי | ח - רד"ק, הללי נפשי |
| ט - אבן עזרא, רד"ק, בן־רמון, אבן יחייא | ט - אבן עזרא, רד"ק, בן־רמון, אבן יחייא |
| י - רש"י, רד"ק | י - רש"י, רד"ק |
| יא - רש"י, אבן עזרא, רד"ק, בן־רמון | יא - רש"י, אבן עזרא, רד"ק, בן־רמון |
| יב - אבן עזרא, רד"ק, המאירי, בן־רמון, | יב - אבן עזרא, רד"ק, המאירי, בן־רמון, |

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