

Mizmor 042

Yearning for Redemption

Key Concepts

This mizmor is one of many in Tehillim that were designed to express the yearnings and *tefillos* of the Jewish nation in a time of *Galus* (Exile). The singer speaks for the nation as it appeals to Hashem to bring the *Geulah* (Redemption). At various points he refers to the soul of the nation, which represents the deepest feelings of the people. The yearning of the nation is visualized as the thirst for cooling water of a deer in the desert. The people recall the joy they felt in their nearness to Hashem when they came to Yerushalayim three times a year. The nation tries to console its anguished soul by expressing confidence that the long-awaited *Geulah* will surely come.

Historical Background

This is the first of a series of *mizmorim* that were composed by the sons of Korach and passed down from generation to generation by their descendants. Ultimately, these beautiful mizmorim were edited by King David and incorporated into the *sefer Tehillim*. The sons of Korach were Assir, Elkanah, and Aviassaf, as mentioned in *Shemos* 6:24. They had initially joined their father's rebellion but they soon realized their mistake. They repented and dissociated themselves from the conspiracy. When the earth opened up, Hashem put them on a safe ledge where they were given the gift of Divine prophecy. (See *Midrash Tehillim* 45:1.)

Exploring the Mizmor

The form of the mizmor is a dialog between the nation and its soul. The soul is at first inconsolable, but after repeated attempts the nation is able to convince its soul that there is hope for a bright future.

PART 1. A CRY OF LONGING. The soul of the nation in exile cries out in longing for Hashem to end His estrangement. That yearning is visualized as the thirst for cooling water of a deer in the desert. The people recall the joy they felt in their nearness to Hashem when they came to Yerushalayim three times a year.

(א) לְמַנְצַחַ מְשִׁכִּיל לְבַנְי קָרַח: (ב) כָּאֵיל תִּעְרַג עַל אֲפִיקֵי מַיִם כִּן נַפְשִׁי תִעְרַג אֵלֶיךָ
אֱלֹקִים: (ג) צָמְאָה נַפְשִׁי לְאֱלֹקִים לְאֵל-הָי מְתִי אָבוֹא וְאֶרְאֶה פְּנֵי אֱלֹקִים: (ד)

הִיָּתָה לִי דְמַעְתִּי לֶחֶם יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה בְּאָמֹר אֵלַי כָּל הַיּוֹם אֵיִה אֶלְקִיָּה: (ה) אֵלֶּה
אֲזַכְּרָה וְאֲשַׁפְּכָה עָלַי נַפְשִׁי כִּי אֶעְבֵּר בְּסֶף אַדְדָּם עַד בַּיִת אֶלְקִים בְּקוֹל רִנָּה וְתוֹדָה
הַמּוֹן חוֹגֵג:

(1) For the musician, a song of enlightenment by the sons of Korach. (2) [The nation's soul calls out to Hashem:] As the deer cries out for springs of water, so my soul cries out for You, O G-d. (3) My soul thirsts for G-d, for the living G-d. When will I come [again to Yerushalayim] and appear before G-d. (4) My tears have been [my] bread, day and by night, for [the oppressors] say to me all day long, "Where is your G-d?" (5) These do I remember and I pour out my soul, how I used to pass along in the [stately] throng, proceeding slowly to the House of G-d, with joyous song [of praise] and thanksgiving, a dancing multitude.

PART 2. CONSOLATION. The nation tries to console its anguished soul by expressing confidence that the long-awaited *Geulah* will surely come. This consolation will appear again at the end of the mizmor.

(ו) מַה תִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה נַפְשִׁי וְתִתְהַמֵּי עָלַי הוֹחִילִי לְאֶלְקִים כִּי עוֹד אוֹדְנוּ יְשׁוּעוֹת פְּנִי:

(6) [The nation tries to console itself:] Why are you downcast, my soul, and confused within me? Wait and look to G-d! For I shall yet thank Him for the yeshuos [from] before Him.

PART 3. MEMORIES. The soul of the nation renews its plea, explaining why it is so difficult to be consoled. There are so many good memories of times past and they contrast so harshly with the bitter present. The tribulations that the nation is experiencing are like repeated floodings of raging waters.

(ז) אֶלְקֵי עָלַי נַפְשִׁי תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה עַל כֵּן אֲזַכְּרָךְ מֵאֶרֶץ יַרְדֵּן וְחַרְמוֹנִים מִהַר מְצָעַר: (ח)
תְּהוֹם אֶל תְּהוֹם קוֹרָא לְקוֹל צְנוּרִיךְ כָּל מִשְׁבְּרִיךְ וְגִלְיָד עָלַי עֲבָרוּ:

(7) My G-d, my soul is downcast within me because I remember [how we used to journey from] the land of Yardein and Chermon's peaks, as well as from Mount Mitzar. (8) [But now] watery deep calls out to watery deep while [there is] the [roaring] sound of Your streams. All Your breakers and Your waves have swept over me.

PART 4. A NEW CONSOLATION. The nation again tries to console its soul, this time with thoughts of the special *tefillah* of praise the people will sing when the *yeshuah* comes.

(ט) יוֹמָם יִצְוֶה ה' חֲסָדוֹ וּבִלְיָלָה שִׁירוּ עִמִּי תִפְלָה לְאֵל חַיִּי: (י) אוֹמְרָה לְאֵל סִלְעֵי
לְמָה שִׁכַּחְתָּנִי לְמָה קִדַּר אֵלֶיךָ בְּלַחַץ אוֹיֵב: (יא) בְּרִצָּח בְּעֲצָמוֹתַי חֲרַפּוֹנֵי צוּרְי

בְּאִמְרָם אֵלַי כָּל הַיּוֹם אֵיךְ אֶלְקִיד:

(9) Hashem will [surely] command His kindness [and bring the glorious] day and [even] in the night [of Exile], His song is with me, a tefillah to the G-d of my life. (10) I will say to G-d, my Rock, "Why have You forgotten me?" Why must I walk in black gloom under the foe's oppression?' (11) [They taunt me] with murderous viciousness to [pierce] my bones. My tormentors have mocked me when they say to me all day long, 'Where is your G-d?'

PART 5. CONCLUSION. The nation's confidence has been restored and so it concludes the mizmor with final words of consolation. These final words are very similar to the earlier consolation in Part 2, but this time there is an added emphasis on the immediacy of the *Geulah*.

(יב) מַה תִּשְׁתַּוְּחַחֵי נַפְשִׁי וּמַה תִּתְהַמֵּי עָלַי הוֹחִילִי לְאֱלֹקִים כִּי עוֹד אֲוִדְנוּ יְשׁוּעַת פְּנֵי וְאֱלֹהֵי:

(12) Why are you downcast, my soul, and why are you confused within me? Wait and look to G-d! For I shall yet thank Him for yeshuos in my own lifetime, [demonstrating to all that He is] my G-d.

Learning the Mizmor

PART 1. A CRY OF YEARNING.

(א) לְמַנְצַח מִשְׁכִּיל לְבְנֵי קֹרַח:

For the musician — לְמַנְצַח who will perform it, this is a **maskil** (song of enlightenment) composed **by the sons of Korach** — מִשְׁכִּיל לְבְנֵי קֹרַח.

(ב) כָּאֵיל תִּעְרַג עַל אֶפְיֵקֵי מַיִם

כִּן נַפְשִׁי תִעְרַג אֵלֶיךָ אֱלֹקִים:

[The nation's soul calls out to Hashem:] **As the deer** — כָּאֵיל in the barren desert plaintively **cries out** — תִּעְרַג for **springs of cooling water** — עַל אֶפְיֵקֵי מַיִם to quench its thirst, **so my soul cries out for You, O G-d** — כִּן נַפְשִׁי תִעְרַג אֵלֶיךָ אֱלֹקִים.

(ג) צָמְאָה נַפְשִׁי לְאֱלֹקִים לְקַל הָי

My soul thirsts for G-d — צָמְאָה נַפְשִׁי לְאֱלֹקִים, **for the living G-d.** — לְקַל הָי in contrast to the lifeless gods of the nation in which I am exiled. Just as a living

creature cannot live without water, my soul cannot live without G-d.

מְתִי אָבוּא וְאַרְאָה פְּנֵי אֱלֹקִים:

My soul is impatient. **When will I come** — מְתִי אָבוּא — again to Yerushalayim **and appear before G-d** — וְאַרְאָה פְּנֵי אֱלֹקִים — on the Three Festivals as in days of old to restore my soul as fresh water restores the soul of one who is thirsty.

(ד) הִיָּתָה לִי דִמְעָתִי לֶחֶם

יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה

My tears have been my bread — הִיָּתָה לִי דִמְעָתִי לֶחֶם, for my weeping has displaced my appetite by **day and** by **night** — יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה.

בְּאָמֹר אֵלַי כָּל הַיּוֹם

אֵיִה אֱלֹקֶיךָ:

I weep not only for myself but for Your honor, Hashem! **For the oppressors say to me all day long** — בְּאָמֹר אֵלַי כָּל הַיּוֹם — throughout the Exile, "**Where is your G-d** — אֵיִה אֱלֹקֶיךָ? He has forgotten you long ago! If He really is what you claim, He would surely have come to your aid and rescued you from your Exile."

(ה) אֵלֶּה אֲזַכְּרָה

וְאֶשְׂפֹּכָה עָלַי נַפְשִׁי

The experiences of previous generations are so alive for me that I feel as though I lived through them myself. The joy that the Jewish people felt during the Festivals stands in contrast to what is happening now. **These things do I remember and I pour out my soul** — אֵלֶּה אֲזַכְּרָה וְאֶשְׂפֹּכָה עָלַי נַפְשִׁי — in tears for what has happened to me:

כִּי אֶעְבֵּר בְּסֹךְ אֲדֹדִים

עַד בַּיִת אֱלֹקִים

I recall **how I used to pass along** — כִּי אֶעְבֵּר — in the stately **throng** — בְּסֹךְ, **proceeding slowly** — אֲדֹדִים — and unafraid, along with the others **to the House of G-d** — עַד בַּיִת אֱלֹקִים — in Yerushalayim.

בְּקוֹל רִנָּה וְתוֹדָה

הַמּוֹן חוּגְג:

We came **with joyous song** of praise **and thanksgiving** — בְּקוֹל רִנָּה וְתוֹדָה, a

dancing, celebrating **multitude** — **המון חוגג**.

PART 2. CONSOLATION.

(ו) מֵה תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה נַפְשִׁי
וְתַהַמִּי עָלַי

[The nation tries to console itself:] **Why are you downcast, my soul — מֵה**
וְתַהַמִּי עָלַי ? and why are you **confused within me** — **תִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה נַפְשִׁי** ?

הוֹחִילִי לֵאלֹקִים
כִּי עוֹד אֹדְנֵנוּ יְשׁוּעוֹת פְּנִינוּ:

Wait confidently **and look to G-d** — **הוֹחִילִי לֵאלֹקִים** for the *yeshuah!* **For** — **כִּי**
just as I praised Him for past *yeshuos*, **I shall yet** have the opportunity to **thank**
Him — **עוֹד אֹדְנֵנוּ** for the *yeshuos* — **יְשׁוּעוֹת** that He will send to me directly
from **before Him** — **פְּנִינוּ**.

PART 3. MEMORIES.

(ז) אֶלְקֵי עָלַי נַפְשִׁי תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה
עַל כֵּן אֶזְכְּרֶךָ מֵאֶרֶץ יַרְדֵּן
וְחֶרְמוֹנִים מִהַר מְצָעַר:

My G-d, my soul is downcast within me — **אֶלְקֵי עָלַי נַפְשִׁי תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה**, **because I**
remember — **עַל כֵּן אֶזְכְּרֶךָ** how we used to journey to the *Beis HaMikdash*
(Temple) from the farthest reaches of our land, from **the land of Yardein and**
Chermon 's peaks — **מֵאֶרֶץ יַרְדֵּן וְחֶרְמוֹנִים**, as well as **from Mount Mitzar** — **מִהַר**
מְצָעַר.

(ח) תְּהוֹם אֶל תְּהוֹם
קוֹרֵא לְקוֹל צְנוּרִיךָ

But now one disaster is following another. It is as though each tragedy is calling to
the next to befall us. The disasters are like a series of torrential floods from below
the earth with little pause in between. Thus, **watery deep calls out to watery**
deep — **תְּהוֹם אֶל תְּהוֹם קוֹרֵא** while at the same time there is **the roaring sound**
— **לְקוֹל** of **Your streams** — **צְנוּרִיךָ** of rushing waters from on high.

כָּל מִשְׁבְּרִיךָ וְגִלְיָךָ
עָלַי עֲבֹרוּ:

Wherever I turn I am inundated by the deluge. **All Your** fast-moving **breakers** — **כָּל מְשַׁבְּרֵיךָ** and **Your** relentless **waves** — **וְגַלְיָךָ** have swept over me — **עָלֵי** עָבְרוּ.

PART 4. A NEW CONSOLATION.

(ט) יוֹמָם יִצְוֶה ה' חֲסִדוֹ

My soul, don't despair; **Hashem will** surely **command His kindness** and bring the glorious **day** of *yeshuah* — יוֹמָם יִצְוֶה ה' חֲסִדוֹ.

וּבְלִילָה שִׁירָה עָמִי
תִּפְלֶה לְקַל חַיִּי:

And although I am still in the dark **night** of the Exile — **וּבְלִילָה**, **His song** of *tefillah* **is with me** — **שִׁירָה עָמִי** so that even now I will sing of the kindnesses that He showed my forefathers in times past and which He continues to do for me now in this night of *Galus* (Exile). And so I shall say **a tefillah** — **תִּפְלֶה** **to the G-d of my life** — **לְקַל חַיִּי** asking Him to continue to grant me life until the *yeshuah* is here.

(י) אוֹמְרָה לְקַל סְלַעִי
לָמָּה שְׁכַחְתָּנִי
לָמָּה קִדְר אֵלֶיךָ בְּלַחַץ אוֹיֵב:

I will say to G-d, Who was always **my Rock**, — **אוֹמְרָה לְקַל סְלַעִי**, my tower of strength, Who protected me from enemies in times past: "**Why have You forgotten me** now in this *Galus* — **לָמָּה שְׁכַחְתָּנִי** ? **Why must I walk in black gloom** — **בְּלַחַץ אוֹיֵב** — **לָמָּה קִדְר אֵלֶיךָ** under the foe's oppression — **בְּלַחַץ אוֹיֵב** ?"

(יא) בְּרִצָּח בְּעֲצָמוֹתַי חֲרָפוּנֵי צוּרְרֵי
בְּאִמְרָם אֵלַי כָּל הַיּוֹם אֵינִי אֶלְקִיךָ:

Their taunts are like daggers that are killing me **with murderous viciousness** — **בְּרִצָּח** that seems **to pierce my very bones** — **בְּעֲצָמוֹתַי**. **My tormentors have mocked me** — **חֲרָפוּנֵי צוּרְרֵי**, especially **when they say to me all day long** — **בְּאִמְרָם אֵלַי כָּל הַיּוֹם**, "If He supports you, **Where is your G-d** — **אֵינִי אֶלְקִיךָ** ? How can He let you remain in *Galus* at the mercy of tragic circumstance? It must be that He wants you to be humiliated and we are merely doing His will."

PART 5. CONCLUSION.

(יב) מַה תִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶי נַפְשִׁי

וּמַה תִּהְיֶי עָלַי

Why are you downcast, my soul – מַה תִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶי נַפְשִׁי, and why are you confused within me – וּמַה תִּהְיֶי עָלַי ? Why are you allowing yourself to be affected by the taunts of your tormentors? Why do you let them shake your *emunah*?

הוֹחִילִי לְאֱלֹקִים

כִּי עוֹד אֲוֹדְנֶנּוּ יְשׁוּעוֹת פְּנֵי וְאֱלֹקֵי:

Wait confidently **and look to G-d – הוֹחִילִי לְאֱלֹקִים** for the *yeshuah*! **For – כִּי** just as I praised Him for past *yeshuos*, **I shall yet** have the opportunity to answer the nations who have been humiliating me and I will be able to **thank Him – עוֹד אֲוֹדְנֶנּוּ** for *yeshuos* in my own lifetime – **יְשׁוּעוֹת פְּנֵי**, demonstrating to all that He is my **G-d – וְאֱלֹקֵי**, as He has always been.

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 Relationship with Hashem.

[42:2] YEARNING. – כָּאֵיל תַּעֲרַג עַל אַפְיָקֵי מַיִם כִּן נַפְשִׁי תַעֲרַג אֵלֶיךָ אֱלֹקִים – “As the deer cries out for springs of water, so my soul cries out for You, O G-d.” Visualize the life-giving flow of fresh water to enhance your spiritual experience of bonding with Hashem.

[42:3] – צָמְאָה נַפְשִׁי לְאֱלֹקִים לְאֵל־חַי – “My soul thirsts for G-d, for the living G-d.”

Tefillos for Life - Your Anguish.

[42:4] TEARS. – הִיָּתָה לִי דִמְעָתִי לֶחֶם יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה – *My tears have been [my] bread, day and by night.*” Ask Hashem to let the bitter experience of being taunted by wicked people serve as a penance for your sins.

[42:8] – כָּל מִשְׁבְּרֶיךָ וְגִלְיָד עָלַי עָבְרוּ – “All Your breakers and Your

waves have swept over me."

Lessons for Life - Your Attitude.

[42:5] PAINFUL MEMORY. – **כִּי אָעֵבֵר בַּסֶּף אֲדִידִם עַד בַּיַּת אֱלֹקִים** – "*how I used to pass along in the [stately] throng, proceeding slowly to the House of G-d.*" Develop your yearning for the *Geulah* by visualizing the spectacle of the orderly procession through the gates of Yerushalayim in ancient times.

[42:6] COMFORT. – **מַה תִּשְׁתַּחֲוִי נַפְשִׁי וְתִהְיֶהמִי עָלַי הוֹחִילִי לְאֱלֹקִים** – "*Why are you downcast, my soul, and confused within me? Wait and look to G-d!*" Work on yourself to restore your optimism and have faith that the *Geulah* will surely come.

Sources

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

א - רש"י, המאירי, בן־רמון, ספורנו, אבן יחיאל, מצודות	א - רש"י, המאירי, אבן יחיאל, ספורנו, מצודות
ב - רד"ק, בן־רמון, רשר"ה	ב - רש"י, רד"ק, נר לרגלי, מאיר טוב
ג - רש"י, רד"ק, נר לרגלי, מאיר טוב	ג - רש"י, רד"ק, בן־רמון, באר אברהם, רשר"ה, מאיר טוב
ד - רש"י, רד"ק, בן־רמון, באר אברהם, רשר"ה, מאיר טוב	ד - רש"י, רד"ק, בן־רמון, באר אברהם, רשר"ה, מאיר טוב
ה - רש"י, המאירי, אבן יחיאל, מאיר טוב	ה - רש"י, רד"ק, אבן יחיאל, מאיר טוב
ו - רש"י, רד"ק, המאירי, אבן יחיאל, מצודות,	ו - רש"י, רד"ק, אבן יחיאל, מצודות,

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