

Mizmor 122

Remembered Glory

Key Concepts

As in the previous mizmor, King David foresees a time in the future when the Jewish people are in Exile. Although the *Bais HaMikdash* and the glory of Yerushalayim are only a memory, David offers a *tefillah* to be said by the Jewish people for the restoration of the city and its place of *avodas Hashem*. The mizmor begins with a nostalgic recollection of the joy that the Jewish people shared in going up to Yerushalayim three times a year for the *shalosh regalim* (pilgrimage festivals). The singer of the mizmor visualizes the glory of the city and the happiness of the people as they experienced the love and brotherhood of coming together from all over the land in the service of Hashem.

Of course, when David composed the mizmor, the *Bais HaMikdash* had not yet even been built and the prospect of future exile and redemption were matters of prophetic vision.

Navigating Tehillim (1). This is the third in the series of 15 mizmorim to be sung by the Leviim in the *Beis HaMikdash* while standing on the 15 steps leading up from the women's courtyard to the men's courtyard.

Navigating Tehillim (2). In Mizmor 042 we find another example of people remembering the joy that they felt in their nearness to Hashem when they came to Yerushalayim three times a year. In that case the emphasis is on the yearning for redemption, whereas here the emphasis is on the prayer for peace.

Exploring the Mizmor

PART 1. MEMORIES. The singer nostalgically recalls the times gone by when Jews went up to Yerushalayim to serve Hashem in the *Bais HaMikdash*.

(א) שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת לְדָוִד, שֶׁמִּחֲתִי בְּאֲמָרִים לִי בֵּית ה' גִּלְדִּי: (ב) עֲמָדוֹת הָיוּ רַגְלֵינוּ
 בְּשַׁעְרֵיךָ יְרוּשָׁלָּיִם: (ג) יְרוּשָׁלָּיִם הַבְּנוּיָה כְּעִיר שֶׁחֲבָרָה לָהּ יַחְדָּו: (ד) נִשְׁשָׁם עָלוּ
 שְׁבָטִים שְׁבָטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהַזְדוּת לְשֵׁם ה': (ה) כִּי שָׁמָּה יָשְׁבוּ כְּסָאוֹת
 לְמִשְׁפַּט כְּסָאוֹת לְבֵית דָּוִד:

(1) *A song of the steps, by David. I rejoiced when they said to me, "Let us go to the House of Hashem." (2) "Our feet were standing within your gates, O Yerushalayim." (3) Yerushalayim, massively built, like a city to which [people of the distant regions] come together. (4) For there the 12 tribes went up, the tribes of G-d — a testimony for Yisrael, to give thanks to the Name of Hashem. (5) For there sat [wise men on] the seats of judgment [and] the thrones of the house of David.*

PART 2. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE. The singer calls upon Jews wherever they are in the lands of Exile to pray for the restoration of Yerushalayim and the *Bais HaMikdash*. The city of Yerushalayim is so real in the mind of the singer that it has a personality of its own. He calls upon the people of each generation to bless the city as one blesses a loved one, fondly wishing the city peace and tranquility, for the sake of its people and for the sake of the *Bais HaMikdash*.

(ו) שְׁאַלוּ שְׁלוֹם יְרוּשָׁלַם יִשְׁלִי אֶהְבֵּיךָ: (ז) יְהִי שְׁלוֹם בְּחֵילְךָ שְׁלוֹה בְּאַרְמְנוֹתֶיךָ:
 (ח) לְמַעַן אַחֵי וְרַעֵי אֲדַבְּרָה נָא שְׁלוֹם בְּךָ: (ט) לְמַעַן בֵּית ה' אֶלְקֵינוּ אֲבַקֶּשׂה טוֹב
 לְךָ:

(6) *Pray for the peace of Yerushalayim: "Let those who love you, [O Yerushayim,] enjoy the tranquility. (7) May there be peace within your outer defenses; may there be tranquility in your inner citadels. (8) For the sake of my brethren and my comrades, I shall speak of peace in your midst. (9) For the sake of the House of Hashem, our G-d, I will request good for you."*

Additional Thoughts

Mizmor 122 is a heartfelt *tefillah* for the in-gathering of the exiles, while at the same time being a song of praise for Yerushalayim as it once was, a city where a united people came together in peace three times a year to be near the *Shechinah* (Divine Presence). Many of us who live outside of Eretz Yisrael today are privileged to visit Yerushalayim from time to time, hoping to recapture some of the spirit expressed in this *Shir Hamaalos*.

After we return from such a trip, this *mizmor* may have special meaning for us. We may be able to fondly recall the happy experience of planning our visit, thinking of the holy places of Yerushalayim, and saying, "I rejoiced when they said to me, 'Let us go to the House of Hashem.'" We may recall the excitement and the thrill of standing

on the holy soil, "Our feet were standing within your gates, O Yerushalayim."

And when the time comes to leave Yerushalayim and return to our homes, we may visualize the people of the city calling out to us and asking us not to forget them, but to pray for their welfare, "Pray for the peace of Yerushalayim." As we leave, our *tefillah* should be for the sake of our loving brothers, "For the sake of my brethren and my comrades," and for the sake of the *Bais HaMikdash* to be rebuilt speedily in our days, "For the sake of the House of Hashem, our G-d."

Learning the Mizmor

PART 1. MEMORIES.

(א) שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת לְדָוִד

A song of the steps — שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת, composed by **David** — לְדָוִד.

שָׂמַחְתִּי בְּאִמְרֵי לִי בֵּית ה' גִּלְדָּה:

I rejoiced when the *Bais HaMikdash* was in its glory and **they said to me** — שָׂמַחְתִּי בְּאִמְרֵי לִי, three times a year, "**Let us go to the House of Hashem** — בֵּית ה' גִּלְדָּה."

(ב) עַמְדוֹת הָיוּ רַגְלֵינוּ

בְּשַׁעֲרֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם:

As we entered the great city, **our feet were standing** — עַמְדוֹת הָיוּ רַגְלֵינוּ **within your gates, O Yerushalayim** — בְּשַׁעֲרֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם, watching the throngs of people coming and going. We were not impatient about having to wait our turn. We were happy just to admire the beauty of the city and see our fellow Jews.

(ג) יְרוּשָׁלַם הַבְּנוּיָה

כְּעִיר שֶׁחִבְרָה לָהּ יַחְדָּו:

We admired **Yerushalayim**, which was massively **built** — יְרוּשָׁלַם הַבְּנוּיָה **like a** centrally located **city** — כְּעִיר, **in which** people of the distant regions confidently **come together** — שֶׁחִבְרָה לָהּ יַחְדָּו in brotherhood and goodwill.

(ד) נִשְׁפָּם עָלוּ שְׂבָטִים שְׂבָטֵי יָהּ

יְעוּדוֹת לְיִשְׂרָאֵל

לְהַדוֹת לַיָּשֵׁם ה':

For there the 12 tribes went up — שָׁשׁם עָלוּ שְׁבֵטִים during the *shalosh regalim* (pilgrimage festivals). They were uplifted in spirit because they were **the tribes of G-d** — שְׁבֵטֵי יְהוָה, each of which maintained its individual identity, serving Hashem in its own way, while still serving as part of one nation.

The miracles that occurred then in Yerushalayim were **a testimony for Yisrael** — עֵדוּת לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, that the *Shechinah* (Divine Presence) dwells within the nation. Yerushalayim was seen to absorb all 12 tribes and yet they did not feel cramped. And so the people were inspired **to give thanks to the Name of Hashem** — לְהַדוֹת לְשֵׁם ה'.

(ה) כִּי שָׁמָּה יָשְׁבוּ כְּסֵאוֹת לְמִשְׁפָּט
כְּסֵאוֹת לְבֵית דָּוִד:

It was fitting that the *Shechinah* should dwell in Yerushalayim **for there sat** — כִּי שָׁמָּה יָשְׁבוּ respected *chachamim* on **the many seats of judgment** — לְמִשְׁפָּט, including the Sanhedrin. The people were united in brotherhood and comradeship because they trusted the judgment of their courts and because they were loyal to the noble kings on **the thrones of the house of David** — כְּסֵאוֹת לְבֵית דָּוִד, who worked devotedly to bring the people to *avodas Hashem*.

PART 2. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE.

(ו) שְׁאַלוּ שְׁלוֹם יְרוּשָׁלַם

Pray for the peace of Yerushalayim — שְׁאַלוּ שְׁלוֹם יְרוּשָׁלַם so that there will be an ingathering of exiles to the city at peace from its enemies. Wherever you are, your *tefillah* should be directed to Yerushalayim:

יְשֻׁלְיוּ אֶהְבִּיךָ:

O Yerushalayim, **let Hashem** grant that **those who love you** and are now mourning your destruction **enjoy the tranquility** — יְשֻׁלְיוּ אֶהְבִּיךָ of a city at peace.

(ז) יְהִי שְׁלוֹם בְּחֵילְךָ
שְׁלוֹהַ בְּאַרְמְנוֹתֶיךָ:

May there be peace within your outer defenses — יְהִי שְׁלוֹם בְּחֵילְךָ; **may there be tranquility in your inner citadels** — שְׁלוֹהַ בְּאַרְמְנוֹתֶיךָ. May your inhabitants be freed from the concerns of fending off foreign enemies and resolving

internal dissension.

(ח) לְמַעַן אֶחָי וְרַעֲי
אֲדַבְּרָה נָא שְׁלוֹם בְּךָ:

It is not for myself that I ask but **for the sake of my brethren and my comrades** — לְמַעַן אֶחָי וְרַעֲי and my love for every Jew, **I shall speak of peace in your midst** — אֲדַבְּרָה נָא שְׁלוֹם בְּךָ.

(ט) לְמַעַן בֵּית ה' אֶלְקֵינוּ
אֲבַקֶּשׁה טוֹב לְךָ:

For the sake of the House of Hashem, our G-d — לְמַעַן בֵּית ה' אֶלְקֵינוּ, which will be rebuilt, **I will request good for you** — אֲבַקֶּשׁה טוֹב לְךָ.

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* to Hashem.

Tehillos for Life - Contemplation of Hashem.

[122:1] THE HOUSE OF HASHEM. – שִׂמְחֹתַי בְּאִמְרֵים לִי בֵּית ה' נִלְדָּה: – “I rejoiced when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the House of Hashem.’” The *Bais HaMikdash* is the place where the greatness of Hashem as Master of the universe is most clearly perceived. It is there that the intensity of His presence is most felt and so it is there that Hashem is seen as truly great.

[122:3] THE CITY OF HASHEM. – יְרוּשָׁלַם הַבְּנוּיָה כְּעִיר שֶׁחֻבְּרָה לָהּ יַחְדָּו: – “Yerushalayim, massively built, like a city to which [people of the distant regions] come together.” The City of Hashem is the place which people of distant regions come together in brotherhood and goodwill.

[122:4] A TESTIMONY FOR YISRAEL. – עֲדוּת לְיִשְׂרָאֵל לְהַזְכִּיר לְשֵׁם ה' – “a testimony for Yisrael, to give thanks to the Name of Hashem.” The miracles that occurred in Yerushalayim were a testimony for Yisrael, that the *Shechinah* dwells within the nation. Yerushalayim was seen to absorb all 12 tribes and yet they did not feel cramped.

Tefillos for Life - Your Geulah.

[122:5] RESTORATION. – כִּי שָׁמָּה יֵשְׁבוּ כִסְאוֹת לְמִשְׁפֵּט כִסְאוֹת לְבַיִת דָּוִד: –
 “For there sat [wise men on] the seats of judgment [and] the thrones of the
 house of David.” Ask Hashem to bring the *Geulah* (Redemption), restore the
 Sanhedrin, rebuild Yerusahayim, and establish again the reign of the House
 of David.

Tefillos for Life - Your Yeshuah.

[122:6] PEACE. – שְׁאַלוּ שְׁלוֹם יְרוּשָׁלַיִם יִשְׁלֹוּ אֹהֲבֵיךָ – “Pray for the peace of
 Yerushalayim: “Let those who love you, [O Yerushayim,] enjoy the
 tranquility.” Ask Hashem to restore the peace of Yerushalayim.

[122:7] – יְהִי שְׁלוֹם בְּחֵילְךָ שְׁלוֹהַּ בְּאַרְמְנוֹתֶיךָ – “May there be
 peace within your outer defenses; may there be tranquility in your
 inner citadels.”

Sources

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

ה - מצודות, מלבי"ם

ו - רד"ק

ז - אבן יחיא

ח - נר לרגלי

א - אבן עזרא, רד"ק, מצודות

ב - רד"ק, המאירי

ג - רד"ק, מלבי"ם

ד - רד"ק, המאירי, אבן יחיא

© COPYRIGHT NOTICE

All rights to this document are reserved by the author. For further information contact Isaac Kirzner at isaac@kirzner.com