

## Mizmor 126

# It was a Bad Dream

### Key Concepts

As in the previous mizmorim of this series, the mizmor speaks of a time when the Jewish people are in Exile, but eagerly looking ahead to the *Geulah* (Redemption). The singer anticipates that the transition from captivity to freedom will bring about a dramatic change in our lives. It will be like waking up from a bad dream. The nations will also be amazed. Their scorn will change to respect and they will be surprised at not having seen it coming. We, however, will be able to remind them that our joy preceded the actual event because we had *bitachon* (trust) that the *Geulah* was on its way.

The singer then speaks for the Jewish people in offering an urgent *tefillah* (prayer) to Hashem to bring the *Geulah* even sooner than it was meant to be. The words of his *tefillah* are uttered with renewed hope and joy as he compares the *Geulah* to the sudden appearance of fresh water in the desert and to the joy a farmer feels when reaping a bountiful harvest after the anxiety of cultivating a parched field.

**Navigating Tehillim (1)**. This is the seventh 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). Mizmor 126 completes a cycle of seven mizmorim in which David anticipates a tragic time of Exile for the Jewish people. The cycle begins in a sombre mood with Mizmor 120, but the tone becomes gradually elevated to reflect how the *bitachon* of the people in the coming *Geulah* is gradually strengthened, despite all the tribulations of the Exile. Thus, we joyfully sing this last mizmor just before Birkas Hamazon (Grace After Meals) on Shabbos and Yom Tov, as we contemplate returning to our Land and gratefully partaking in the produce of its fields.

### Exploring the Mizmor

**PART 1. ANTICIPATING THE GEULAH**. The singer looks forward to the *Geulah*. It will be like waking up from a bad dream. The nations will be amazed at what has transpired, but we will not be surprised. We had *bitachon* that this day would

come.

(א) שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת בְּשׁוּב ה' אֶת שִׁיבַת צִיּוֹן הָיִינוּ כְּחֹלְמִים: (ב) אָז יִמְלֵא שְׂחוֹק פִּינוּ וּלְשׁוֹנֵינוּ רִנָּה אָז יֹאמְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם הַגְדִּיל ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת עִם אֱלֹהֵי: (ג) הַגְדִּיל ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת עִמָּנוּ הָיִינוּ שְׂמֵחִים:

(1) A song of the steps. When Hashem brings [us] back [from] the captivity of Tzion, we will be like dreamers [who have woken up]. (2) Then our mouths will be filled with laughter [and there will be] joyous song on our tongue. Then they will talk among the nations [saying], “Hashem has done great things for these [people].” (3) [We will respond,] “Hashem has done great [things] for us. We were [already] gladdened.”

**PART 2. BRINGING THE GEULAH.** The singer calls upon Hashem to bring the *Geulah* now to the Jewish people.

(ד) שׁוּבָה ה' אֶת שְׁבִיתֵנוּ כְּאַפְיָקִים בְּנֹגֵב: (ה) הַזְרְעִים בְּדַמְעָה בְּרִנָּה יִקְצְרוּ: (ו) הַלֹּחֵד יִלְחֵד וּבִכָּה נִשְׂא מְשֻׁדָּה הַזְרַע בֹּא יָבוֹא בְּרִנָּה נִשְׂא אֶלְמֹתָיו:

(4) Hashem, bring back our captivity as streams of running water in the desert. (5) [It will be like] those who sow in tears but reap in glad song. (6) [The farmer] goes out [to the fields] weeping, carrying precious seed, but returns in exultation, carrying his sheaves.

## Learning the Mizmor

### PART 1. ANTICIPATING THE GEULAH.

#### (א) שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת

This is the seventh **song of the steps**.

#### בְּשׁוּב ה' אֶת שִׁיבַת צִיּוֹן הָיִינוּ כְּחֹלְמִים:

At the end of this bitter Exile, **when Hashem brings us back** — **בְּשׁוּב ה'** from **the captivity of Tzion** — **אֶת שִׁיבַת צִיּוֹן**, it will all seem to have been a bad dream. Returning to our own land will be so wonderful that it will be hard to believe that the suffering was real. **We will be like dreamers** — **הָיִינוּ כְּחֹלְמִים** who have woken up.

(ב) אָז יִמְלֵא שְׂחוֹק פִּינוּ  
וּלְשׁוֹנֵנוּ רִנָּה

In our present situation any joy we feel is tinged with grief. It is only when we are **in our own land that** will we be able to feel unmitigated joy. Only **then will our mouths be filled with laughter** — אָז יִמְלֵא שְׂחוֹק פִּינוּ. Only then will the praise of Hashem that is **on our tongue** be a totally **joyous song** — וּלְשׁוֹנֵנוּ רִנָּה.

אָז יֹאמְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם  
הַגְדִּיל ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת עִם אֱלֹהֵי:

**Then they will even talk** — אָז יֹאמְרוּ about this miracle **among the nations** — בְּגוֹיִם who have scorned us. Our rebirth to a new life will be so unexpected and so obviously a miracle that the nations will be amazed and will say, "**Hashem has done great things for these** people. — הַגְדִּיל ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת עִם אֱלֹהֵי." They will wonder how they could have looked down upon us. They will realize that it is You, Hashem, Who did it and that it is not an accident of history.

(ג) הַגְדִּיל ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת עִמָּנוּ  
הֵיינוּ שְׂמֵחִים:

But we will reply that we are not surprised. We anticipated this even in our darkest days. It was a foregone conclusion that "**Hashem has done great things for us** — הַגְדִּיל ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת עִמָּנוּ. **We were** already **gladdened** — הֵיינוּ שְׂמֵחִים," because although we didn't deserve it we hoped that the kindness of Hashem would overcome the harsh judgment of the Exile.

PART 2. BRINGING THE GEUALAH.

(ד) שׁוּבָה ה' אֶת שְׁבִיתָנוּ  
כְּאַפְיקִים בְּנֶגֶב:

**Hashem**, don't delay any further, but **bring us back** from **our captivity** — שׁוּבָה ה' אֶת שְׁבִיתָנוּ now. We will be overjoyed like those who receive the blessing of an unexpected rainfall in a parched land. The transition will be as energizing to us **as streams of running water** that suddenly appear **in the desert** — כְּאַפְיקִים בְּנֶגֶב, which bring moisture to the arid earth.

(ה) הַזְרְעִים בְּדַמְעָה  
בְּרִנָּה יִקְצְרוּ:

Our spirits will then be fully restored like **those who sow** — הַזְרְעִים dry land **in tears** — בְּדַמְעָה because of their concern that the crops won't grow, **but reap in glad song** — בְּרִנָּה יִקְצְרוּ because of the water that has refreshed the land. So it is with the Jewish people in exile. We sow our seeds of doing *mitzvos* and learning Torah even under the most difficult conditions, but we hope to reap our reward of joy in the future.

(ו) הַלּוֹדֵי יֵלֶךְ וּבָכָה  
נִשָּׂא מִשְׁדֵּי הַזֶּרַע

We will be like the hard-working farmer **that goes out** to his fields **weeping** — הַלּוֹדֵי יֵלֶךְ וּבָכָה in anxious fear that the grain won't grow. Nevertheless, he does his duty **carrying** his **precious seed** — נִשָּׂא מִשְׁדֵּי הַזֶּרַע as he plants his crops for the coming year. But Hashem sees his tears and has mercy on him.

בָּא יָבוֹא בְּרִנָּה נִשָּׂא אֶלְמֵתָיו:

The farmer is gratified to be rewarded with an abundant harvest that is much greater than the paltry seeds that he has sowed. And so, the farmer **returns in exultation** — בָּא יָבוֹא בְּרִנָּה, **carrying his sheaves** — נִשָּׂא אֶלְמֵתָיו. Our *tefillah* is that we will also be able to rejoice at the sudden *Geulah* when we reap the reward for our devotion to Torah and *mitzvos*.

## Living the Mizmor

Listed below are some of the thoughts you might have in mind when you say the words of the mizmor as *tefillas* expressing your gratitude to Hashem and as *tehillas* expressing your recognition of Hashem.

### Lessons for Life - Your Attitude.

[126:1] A DREAM. – בְּשׁוּב ה' אֶת שִׁיבַת צִיּוֹן הֵינּוּ כְּחֹלְמִים – "When Hashem brings [us] back [from] the captivity of Tzion, we will be like dreamers [who have woken up]." Even if things seem bleak now, remember that the *Geulah* will surely come.

**Lessons for Life - Your Behavior.**

[126:2] LAUGHTER. – אֶז יִמְלֵא שְׁחוֹק פִּינוּ וּלְשׁוֹנֵנוּ רִנָּה – “Then our mouths will be filled with laughter.” Full-throated joy is reserved for the time of the Geulah. Only then will our mouths be filled with laughter.

**Tehillos for Life - Public Acclaim.**

[126:2] GREAT THINGS. – אֶז יֹאמְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם הַגְדִּיל ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת עִם אֱלֹהֵ – “Then they will talk among the nations [saying], Hashem has done great things for these [people].” Encourage the nations to acknowledge the greatness of Hashem.

[126:3] OUR RESPONSE. – הַגְדִּיל ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת עִמָּנוּ הֵינּוּ שְׂמֵחִים – “Hashem has done great [things] for us. We were [already] gladdened.”

**Tefillos for Life - Your Geulah.**

[126:4] TO FLOW AGAIN. – שׁוּבָה ה' אֶת שְׁבִיתֵנוּ כְּאַפְיָקִים בְּנֶגֶב – “Hashem, bring back our captivity as streams of running water in the desert.” After each meal, thank Hashem and ask Him to bring the Geulah now.

**Sources**

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

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| ד – רש"י, ספורנו, אבן יחיאל, מלבי"ם, נר לרגלי | א – רד"ק, מצודות, נר לרגלי                   |
| ה – רד"ק, המאירי מצודות, נר לרגלי             | ב – ספורנו, מצודות, מלבי"ם, רשר"ה, נר לרגלי, |
| ו – רש"י, רד"ק, אלשי"ך, מצודות, מלבי"ם        | ג – אבן עזרא                                 |

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