

Mizmor 131

To Be Worthy of Redemption

Key Concepts

As in many of the previous *mizmorim* of this series, the mizmor reflects a time when the Jewish people are in Exile. In the mizmor the nation defends its worthiness for the *Geulah* (Redemption), pleading that it has overcome the sinful *middos* (attitudes) of pride and arrogance. It uses the powerful image of a nursing baby to symbolize complete trust and submissiveness.

Navigating Tehillim. This is the twelfth 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.

Exploring the Mizmor

PART 1. A PLEA FOR REDEMPTION. The nation in exile calls out to Hashem and pleads that it deserves to be redeemed. The nation has gained an attitude of humility and submissiveness, which it describes using the image of a nursing baby that is gradually being weaned. The contented infant has total trust in its mother's love and in her commitment to its welfare.

(א) שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת לְדָוִד ה' לֹא גִבָּה לְבִי וְלֹא רָמוּ עֵינַי וְלֹא הִלְכֹתִי בְגִדְלוֹת וּבִנְפִלְאוֹת מִמֶּנִּי: (ב) אִם לֹא שְׁוִיתִי וְדוּמַמְתִּי נִפְשִׁי כְּגִמְלַעַלִי אִמּוֹ כְּגִמְלַעַלִי נִפְשִׁי:
 (1) *A song of the steps, by David. Hashem, my heart has not been conceited, nor have my eyes looked with superiority. I have not gone about [looking] for things [too] great and wondrous for me. (2) I swear I have calmed and stilled myself, like a nursing baby on its mother; I am like a nursing baby.*

PART 2. NEVER GIVE UP HOPE. The mizmor is concluded with the words of David comforting the nation, and advising the people not to lose hope. The *Geulah* will surely come, he says, and the efforts of the people to improve their *middos* will bring that day closer.

(ג) יַחַל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל ה' מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם:

(3) *Let Yisrael look expectantly for Hashem from this time and forever.*

Additional Thoughts

Mizmorim 130 and 131 appear to be logically related, linked by the phrase, "Let Yisrael look expectantly for Hashem." which they share. In both *mizmorim* David cries out in the name of Klal Yisrael, pleading to Hashem to bring the *Geulah*. However, in Mizmor 130 he emphasizes our low physical and spiritual state, and how distant we are from Hashem. In Mizmor 131 he also pleads for redemption. But he now argues that even though the pain of Exile has eased, we have not let it go to our heads; we have worked to overcome the temptations of pride and selfishness. The humbled words of the previous mizmor are, in effect, a demonstration of this attitude.

Learning the Mizmor

PART 1. A PLEA FOR REDEMPTION.

(א) שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת לְדָוִד

This is the 12th **song of the steps** — שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת. It was composed **by David** — לְדָוִד.

ה' לֹא גִבָּה לִבִּי
וְלֹא רָמוּ עֵינַי

Hashem, my heart has not been conceited — ה' לֹא גִבָּה לִבִּי with thoughts of self-entitlement in pursuing pleasure and knowledge. **Nor have my eyes looked with superiority** — וְלֹא רָמוּ עֵינַי upon other people and upon the necessary limits to my behavior.

וְלֹא הִלַּכְתִּי בְּגִדְלוֹת
וּבְנִפְלְאוֹת מִמֶּנִּי:

I have not gone about — וְלֹא הִלַּכְתִּי looking **for** things too **great and** too **wondrous for me** — בְּגִדְלוֹת וּבְנִפְלְאוֹת מִמֶּנִּי, such as determining the exact time of the *Geulah* or understanding the mysteries of the universe that are beyond human comprehension. I have accepted the tribulations of the Exile with humility.

(ב) אִם לֹא שׁוֹיֵתִי וְדוֹמְמֵתִי נִפְשִׁי
 כְּגִמְלַעַלִי אִמּוֹ
 כְּגִמְלַעַלִי נִפְשִׁי:

I swear — אִם לֹא that I have taught myself to be humble. **I have calmed and stilled myself — שׁוֹיֵתִי וְדוֹמְמֵתִי נִפְשִׁי**, like a nursing baby on its mother's bosom — **כְּגִמְלַעַלִי אִמּוֹ**; I have truly made **myself** to be **like a nursing baby — כְּגִמְלַעַלִי נִפְשִׁי**. I am like a contented infant that has complete trust in its mother. It accepts her judgment of when to nurse and when to be gradually weaned. And so I have trusted Your wisdom, Hashem, and have not questioned Your plan for me.

PART 2. NEVER GIVE UP HOPE.

(ג) יַחַל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל ה'
 מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם:

O nation of **Yisrael, look expectantly for Hashem — יַחַל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל ה'** to bring the *Geulah* as He has promised. The *zechus* of your worthy middos will surely bring that day closer. So continue to have faith **from this time and forever — מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם**.

Living the Mizmor

Listed below are some of the thoughts you might have in mind when you say the words of the mizmor as a *tefillah* to Hashem.

Lessons for Life - Your Attitude.

[131:1] HUMILITY. – **לֹא גִבַּה לְבִי וְלֹא רָמוּ עֵינַי** – "*Hashem, my heart has not been conceited, nor have my eyes looked with superiority.*" Make a conscious effort to develop and maintain humility.

[131:2] SUBMISSIVENESS. – **אִם לֹא שׁוֹיֵתִי וְדוֹמְמֵתִי נִפְשִׁי כְּגִמְלַעַלִי אִמּוֹ** – "*I swear I have calmed and stilled myself, like a nursing baby on its mother.*" Work on your attitude of submissiveness to the will of Hashem, modeling it on that of a nursing baby.

[131:3] HOPE. – **יַחַל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל ה' מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם** – "*Let Yisrael look expectantly for Hashem from this time and forever.*" Having developed the right *middos* you are justified in hoping expectantly for the *Geulah*.

Sources

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

א - אבן עזרא, רד"ק, ספורנו, אבן יחיאל, מלבי"ם,
ב - רד"ק, המאירי, ספורנו
ג - רד"ק, ספורנו
מזמור לתודה

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