

Mizmor 057

Glory in a Cave

Key Concepts

When David composed Mizmor 057 he was a fugitive, hiding with a small band of loyal warriors in the dark recesses of one of the rocky caves of the Desert of Ein-Gedi. David's father-in-law King Shaul had gone forth to search for David and, without realizing it, entered the very cave in which David had taken shelter. David was in a precarious situation. His men urged him to take advantage of the opportunity and kill Shaul who was his sworn enemy. But he knew that it was wrong to destroy a man who had been anointed as king of Yisrael. He also knew that his own life would be in great danger from Shaul's warriors who were waiting outside the cave.

In the mizmor David appeals to Hashem to give him the strength to resist killing Shaul, but also to let him escape with his own life. Although momentarily trapped underground in a cold, damp cave, David drew strength from his vision of the future in which he would make the glory of Hashem known throughout the world.

Historical Background

This mizmor was composed several months after David returned from the land of the Plishtim, having fooled their king by disguising himself as a madman (see Mizmor 034). Despite returning to the Land. David was still unable to find a secure place. At one point his location in the Wilderness of Ziph was betrayed to Shaul by the local people as described in I *Shmuel* 23. Shaul then set out with three thousand selected men and surrounded David's small force. Just when it seemed that David's plight was hopeless, Shaul was diverted by a report that there was a large force of Plishtim in the area and so Hashem's hidden intervention helped David escape once more.

After Shaul returned from pursuing the Plishtim, he was told that David was now in the Desert of Ein-Gedi, and so Shaul began searching that area. As it happened, Shaul entered a cave to relieve himself, the very cave in which David was hiding.

As described in I *Shmuel* 24, David resisted the demands of his men who urged him to exploit his temporary advantage and kill Shaul. Instead David contented himself with cutting off a corner from Shaul's garment in order thus to prove to the king

how unjustified he was in his hatred.

Navigating Tehillim (1). The incident which gave rise to this mizmor is recalled in Mizmor 007 (A Song of Errors), where David asks not to be held to account for the disrespect he showed to Shaul by cutting off a corner of his garment.

Navigating Tehillim (2). The prior incident involving David's betrayal by the Ziphim was very discouraging for him. However, he was subsequently able to renew his bitachon as described in Mizmor 054 (Betrayal and Bitachon).

Navigating Tehillim (3). While hiding out in the cave David had reason to feel like the lowest criminal, fearing to go out in the light of day. This mood is expressed in Mizmor 142 (Tefillah in a Cave), which is filled with depression and brokenness. In contrast Mizmor 057 is filled with courage and an uplifted spirit.

Exploring the Mizmor

PART 1. LET THERE BE NO DESTRUCTION. From deep within the cave, David prays to Hashem to extract him from a precarious situation of great danger. He needs Hashem's help to resist the urge to kill Shaul, who is temporarily within his power. Even if he succeeds in that, he needs to get away from the area of the cave without being attacked and killed by Shaul's large force.

(א) לְמַנְצַחַ אֵל תִּשְׁחַת לְדָוִד מִכָּתָם בְּבָרְחוֹ מִפְּנֵי שָׂאוּל בְּמַעְרָה: (ב) חֲנִנִי אֱלֹקִים
 חֲנִנִי כִי בַדַּחְסִיָּה נִפְשִׁי וּבְצַל כְּנָפֶיךָ אֶחְסֶה עַד יַעֲבֹר הַחוּת: (ג) אֶקְרָא לְאֱלֹקִים
 עֲלִיּוֹן לֹא-ל גִּמְרַ עָלַי: (ד) יִשְׁלַח מִשְׁמַיִם וְיוֹשִׁיעֵנִי חַרְף שְׂאֲפֵי סֶלָה יִשְׁלַח אֱלֹקִים
 חֲסִדוֹ וְאַמְתּוֹ: (ה) נִפְשִׁי בְּתוֹךְ לְבָאִם אֲשֶׁכְּבָה לְהִטִּים בְּנֵי אָדָם שְׁנִיָּהֶם חֲנִית וְחֻצִים
 וּלְשׁוֹנָם חָרֶב חֲדָה:

(1) For the musician, [based on the theme,] "Let there be no destruction," a michtam by David, when he fled from Shaul [and hid] in the cave. (2) Grant me favor, O G-d [that I not kill]. Grant me favor [that I not be killed]. For my soul takes refuge in You. And I will take refuge in the shelter of Your wings until the danger has passed. (3) I call upon G-d, Most High to the Almighty One Who decrees my fate. (4) May G-d dispatch [His angels] from heaven and save me from the defamation of the one who wants to swallow me, Selah. May G-d dispatch His mercy and His truth. (5) My life is in the midst of lions. I am lying with men who are aflame, people whose teeth are spears and arrows, and whose tongue is a sharp sword.

PART 2. ANTICIPATED GRATITUDE. David praises Hashem for helping him evade catastrophe in the past. He promises to express his gratitude in song when he is saved.

(ו) רוּמָה עַל הַשָּׁמַיִם אֱלֹקִים עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדָךְ: (ז) רָשַׁת הַכִּינּוּ לַפְעָמִי כַפֶּף
נִפְשִׁי כָרוּ לִפְנֵי שִׂיחָה נָפְלוּ בְּתוֹכָהּ סֵלָה: (ח) נָכוֹן לִבִּי אֱלֹקִים נָכוֹן לִבִּי אֲשִׁירָה
וְאֶזְמְרָה:

6) [By showing that] You are higher than the heavens, O G-d. You will reveal Your glory to the entire world. (7) In the past they prepared a snare for my feet, bending down my soul. They dug a pit before me [but] they fell into it, Selah. (8) My heart is steadfast, O G-d, my heart is steadfast. [When You save me] I will sing and I will make music.

PART 3. SONG OF PRAISE. From deep within the dark cave, David anticipates the glory of G-d being revealed to the world. In his song he praises Hashem for His qualities of kindness and truth.

(ט) עוֹרָה כְּבוֹדֵי עוֹרָה הַנֶּבֶל וְכִנּוֹר אֶעֱיָרָה שָׁחַר: (י) אוֹדֶךָ בְּעַמִּים אֲדַנִּי אֶזְמְרָךְ
בְּלְאֻמִּים: (יא) כִּי גָדַל עַד שָׁמַיִם חֲסִדֶךָ וְעַד שְׁחָקִים אֲמַתֶּךָ: (יב) רוּמָה עַל שָׁמַיִם
אֱלֹקִים עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדָךְ:

(9) "Awake, O my soul, awake! Awake, O lyre and harp! I will waken the dawn." (10) I will acknowledge my gratitude to You among the tribes, O L-rd. I will sing to You among the nations. (11) For Your kindness extends until the heavens and Your truth until the skies. (12) [You show that] You are higher than the heavens, O G-d. You will reveal Your glory to the entire world."

Learning the Mizmor

PART 1. LET THERE BE NO DESTRUCTION.

(א) לְמַנְצִיחַ אֶל תִּשְׁחֹת

A song prepared **for the musician** — לְמַנְצִיחַ, based on the theme, **Let there not be destruction** — אֶל תִּשְׁחֹת. This theme expresses David's plea to Hashem that he emerge from the encounter with Shaul without the loss of human life.

לְדוֹד מִכְתָּם

This song is a **michtam** composed **by David** — לְדוֹד מִכְתָּם. A "michtam" is a very

fine composition, whose name means "adornment of purest gold".

בְּבָרְחוֹ מִפְּנֵי שָׂאוּל בְּמַעְרָה:

David composed the song **when he fled from Shaul** — בְּבָרְחוֹ מִפְּנֵי שָׂאוּל — and was hiding **in the cave** — בְּמַעְרָה, which Shaul subsequently entered, unaware that David was already there.

(ב) חֲנִנֵי אֱלֹקִים חֲנִנֵי
כִּי בְּדָ חֲסָיָה נִפְשִׁי
וּבְצִל כְּנָפֶיךָ אֶחְסֶה עַד יַעֲבֹר הַחוּת:

Grant me Your merciful favor, O G-d — חֲנִנֵי אֱלֹקִים. Give me the strength to resist the impulse to kill Shaul while he is at my mercy. And **grant me Your further favor** — חֲנִנֵי to protect me when I leave the cave and Shaul's men are in a position to harm me. **For** although I have for the moment taken physical shelter in a cave, **my soul takes refuge in You** alone — כִּי בְּדָ חֲסָיָה נִפְשִׁי. **And I will** continue to **take refuge in the shelter of Your wings** — וּבְצִל כְּנָפֶיךָ אֶחְסֶה — **until the danger** from Shaul **has passed** — עַד יַעֲבֹר הַחוּת and I will continue to do so in any future danger.

(ג) אֶקְרָא לְאֱלֹקִים עָלְיוֹן
לְאֵל־לִי גִמְרֵ עָלַי:

Even though I am in the depths of the cave, **I call upon G-d, Most High** — אֶקְרָא לְאֱלֹהִים עָלְיוֹן to help me. I call **to the Almighty One Who decrees my fate** — לְאֵל־לִי גִמְרֵ עָלַי wherever I am.

(ד) יִשְׁלַח מְשָׁמַיִם
וַיּוֹשִׁיעֵנִי חֲרָף שְׂאֵפֵי סֵלָה

I am in the depths of the cave and weak but **may He dispatch** His angels **from heaven** — יִשְׁלַח מְשָׁמַיִם — and **save me from the defamation** — חֲרָף — **of the one who wants to swallow me, Selah** — שְׂאֵפֵי סֵלָה.

יִשְׁלַח אֱלֹקִים חֲסֵדוֹ וְאַמְתּוֹ:

May G-d dispatch His mercy — יִשְׁלַח אֱלֹקִים חֲסֵדוֹ — that He invoked to make me His anointed. **And** may He dispatch **His truth** — וְאַמְתּוֹ — to save me from Shaul and thereby fulfill the promise that He made by choosing me as the king in

place of Shaul.

(ה) נִפְשִׁי בְּתוֹךְ לְבָאִם
אֲשֶׁכְּבָה לְהִטִּים
בְּנֵי אָדָם שְׁנִיָּהֶם חֲנִית וְחֲצִים
וּלְשׁוֹנָם חֶרֶב חֲדָה:

Here in this cave my life is in danger because **I am in the midst of** Shaul's warriors who are like man-eating **lions** — **נִפְשִׁי בְּתוֹךְ לְבָאִם**. I am hoping they won't notice my presence here and so **I am lying quietly with men who are aflame** — **אֲשֶׁכְּבָה לְהִטִּים** with anger and viciousness. **They are people whose teeth are spears and arrows** — **בְּנֵי אָדָם שְׁנִיָּהֶם חֲנִית וְחֲצִים** and whose tongue is a **sharp sword** — **וּלְשׁוֹנָם חֶרֶב חֲדָה** because they use it to spread malicious rumors.

PART 2. ANTICIPATED GRATITUDE.

(ו) רוּמָה עַל הַשָּׁמַיִם אֱלֹקִים
עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדָךְ:

By saving me from an enemy that is far more powerful than me You will demonstrate that there are no limits to Your power. And so I ask that You show that **You are higher than the heavens, O G-d** — **רוּמָה עַל הַשָּׁמַיִם אֱלֹקִים**. Thereby You will reveal **Your glory to the entire world** — **עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדָךְ**.

(ז) רָשַׁת הִכִּינוּ לַפְעָמִי
כַּפָּף נִפְשִׁי
כָרוּ לִפְנֵי שִׁיחָה נָפְלוּ בְּתוֹכָהּ סֵלָה:

This is not the first time that they attempted to destroy me. In the past **they prepared a snare for my feet** — **רָשַׁת הִכִּינוּ לַפְעָמִי**, **bending down my soul** — **כַּפָּף נִפְשִׁי**, but You helped me escape. **They dug a pit before me** — **כָרוּ לִפְנֵי שִׁיחָה** but they themselves **fell into it, indeed, Selah** — **נָפְלוּ בְּתוֹכָהּ סֵלָה**. This is all part of the Divine plan, to allow evil men to exercise their free will but to sabotage its effects.

(ח) נִכּוֹן לִבִּי אֱלֹקִים
נִכּוֹן לִבִּי אֲשִׁירָה וְאֶזְמְרָה:

Even though my enemies have constantly pursued me, **my heart is steadfast, O G-d, my heart is steadfast** — נִכּוֹן לִבִּי אֱלֹקִים נִכּוֹן לִבִּי because I am confident of Your support and so I am resisting the voices among my warriors urging me to exploit my advantage here in the cave and kill Shaul. I do not listen to them because I have no doubt that You will save me from Shaul, and that I will celebrate Your yeshuah; **I will sing and I will make music** — אֲשִׁירָה וְאֶזְמְרָה to honor Your Name.

PART 3. SONG OF PRAISE.

(ט) עוֹרָה כְּבוֹדִי
עוֹרָה הַנֶּבֶל וְכִנּוֹר
אֲעִירָה שָׁחַר:

My song will be: **Awake, O my soul, awake** — עוֹרָה כְּבוֹדִי to compose songs of gratitude and praise to Hashem! **Awake, O lyre and harp** — עוֹרָה הַנֶּבֶל וְכִנּוֹר to inspire my soul with the spirit of joyful music to Hashem. My song will begin even in the dark night of this cave and **I will waken the dawn** — אֲעִירָה שָׁחַר with the intensity of my devotion. The light of truth will then be visible and acknowledged by everyone.

(י) אֹדֹדָּה בְּעַמִּים אֲדֹנָי
אֶזְמַרְדָּה בְּלְאֻמִּים:

Though I am singing to You now as a fugitive in a cold, dark cave **I will acknowledge my gratitude to You** publicly **among the tribes** of Yisrael, **O L-rd** — אֹדֹדָּה בְּעַמִּים אֲדֹנָי. **I will even sing in praise to You among the nations** of the world — אֶזְמַרְדָּה בְּלְאֻמִּים.

(יא) כִּי גָדֹל עַד שָׁמַיִם חֶסֶדְךָ
וְעַד שְׁחָקִים אֲמַתְךָ:

For Your kindness is so great that it **extends until the very heavens** — כִּי גָדֹל עַד שָׁמַיִם חֶסֶדְךָ. **And Your truth** is so magnificent that it extends even beyond the heavens, **until the upper reaches** of the universe — וְעַד שְׁחָקִים אֲמַתְךָ. And so there is nothing within the entire universe that can interfere with Your qualities of

kindness and truth.

(יב) רוּמָה עַל שָׁמַיִם אֱלֹקִים
עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדָךְ:

By saving me from an enemy that is far more powerful than me You will demonstrate that there are no limits to Your power. And so I again ask that You show that **You are higher than the heavens, O G-d** – רוּמָה עַל שָׁמַיִם אֱלֹקִים. Thereby You will reveal **Your glory to the entire world** – עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדָךְ.

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.

[57:2] SEEKING SHELTER. – וּבַצֵּל כַּנְּפִיךָ אֶחְסֶה עַד יַעֲבֹר הַיּוֹת – “*And I will take refuge in the shelter of Your wings until the danger has passed.*” Turn to Hashem for protection, especially when you are in personal danger.

[57:3] MY FATE. – אֶקְרָא לְאֱלֹקִים עֲלִיּוֹן לְאֵל גִּמְרֵ עָלַי – “*I call upon G-d, Most High to the Almighty One Who decrees my fate.*” Turn to Hashem in every situation of life for He is always in control.

Tefillos for Life - Your Yeshuah.

[57:4] ANGELS FROM ON HIGH. – יִשְׁלַח מִשָּׁמַיִם וַיּוֹשִׁיעֵנִי – “*May G-d dispatch [His angels] from heaven and save me.*” Ask Hashem to send His angels to save you from the vicious enemy.

Tefillos for Life - Your Anguish.

[57:5] AMID LIONS. – נַפְשִׁי בְּתוֹךְ לְבָאִים – “*My life is in the midst of lions.*” Turn to Hashem for help because you are surrounded by lions and you are in fear of calling their attention to you.

Tehillos for Life - Contemplation of Hashem.

[57:6] NO LIMITS. – רוּמָה עַל שָׁמַיִם אֱלֹקִים עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדָךְ – “*You are higher than the heavens, O G-d. You will reveal Your glory to the entire*

world." Hashem, when You save Yisrael You demonstrate that there are no limits to Your power.

[57:11] – **כִּי גָדַל עַד שָׁמַיִם חֶסֶדְךָ וְעַד שְׁחָקִים אֱמֶתְךָ** – “*For Your kindness extends until the heavens and Your truth until the skies.*”

You also demonstrate that there is nothing within the entire universe that can interfere with Your qualities of kindness and truth.

[57:7] HISTORY. – **כָּרוּ לִפְנֵי שִׁיחָה נִפְלוּ בְּתוֹכָהּ** – “*They dug a pit before me [but] they fell into it.*” By saving Yisrael in the past Hashem has demonstrated His power.

Tefillos for Life - Your Gratitude.

[57:8] STEADFAST. – **נִכּוֹן לִבִּי אֱלֹקִים נִכּוֹן לִבִּי אֲשִׁירָה וְאֶזְמְרָה** – “*My heart is steadfast, O G-d, my heart is steadfast. [When You save me] I will sing and I will make music.*” Yisrael will always be grateful for Hashem’s *yeshuah*.

[57:9] AWAKEN. – **עוֹרָה כְּבוֹדִי עוֹרָה הַנִּבֵּל וְכֹנֹר אֶעֱיָרָה שָׁחַר** – “*Awake, O my soul, awake! Awake, O lyre and harp! I will waken the dawn.*” We begin our song of thanks even in the pre-dawn darkness when the signs of *yeshuah* are not yet visible.

Tehillos for Life - Public Acclaim.

[57:10] ANTICIPATED THANKS. – **אוֹדֶךָ בְּעַמִּים אֲדַנִּי אֶזְמְרֶךָ בְּלְאֻמִּים** – “*I will acknowledge my gratitude to You among the tribes, O L-rd. I will sing to You among the nations.*” We look forward to publicly thanking Hashem for His *yeshuah*.

Sources

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

ז - רש"י, ספורנו, אלשיך	א - רש"י, אבן עזרא, רד"ק, מלבי"ם, דעת סופרים
ח - רד"ק, מלבי"ם	ב - רש"י, המאירי, אלשיך, מלבי"ם
ט - רד"ק, המאירי, מלבי"ם, נר לרגלי	ג - אבן עזרא, רש"י
י - אבן עזרא, בן-רמון, רש"י	ד - רש"י, רד"ק, אבן יחיאל, מצודות
יא - בן-רמון	ה - רד"ק, בן-רמון
יב - רד"ק	ו - אבן עזרא, רד"ק

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