

Mizmor 060

Hashgachah in Wartime

Key Concepts

David composed this mizmor after he had been accepted as king by the entire nation. However, his lot was a difficult one for the surrounding peoples continued to threaten the existence of the fledgling Jewish kingdom. As a result, David faced a series of violent battles to beat back the enemy. Some of these battles were purely defensive in nature. In other cases, David advanced against the enemy in a pre-emptive attack because he knew they would have no mercy if they achieved the upper hand.

Throughout all of these challenging conflicts, David held to the principle that he was the servant of Hashem and that he would succeed against his adversaries only if he and the Jewish people obeyed the will of G-d. As long as they did, he was confident that Hashem's *hashgachah* (Divine Providence) would watch over them and protect them. And so when there came a time that David's armies suffered a defeat, he did not blame the failure on his troops, but on a failure in devotion of the people who sent them into battle. He understood that Divine Providence had temporarily distanced itself from the Jewish people and he prayed for their closeness with *Hashem* to be restored. This mizmor reflects his *tefillos* on one such occasion.

Historical Background

The events reflected in this mizmor occurred after David had finally succeeded in defeating the Plishtim, who had been the primary foreign adversary of the Jewish nation throughout the reign of King Shaul. After the death of Shaul, the Plishtim tried again but were soundly defeated in three major battles.

David now found it necessary to contend with the Arameans who occupied the land north of Eretz Yisrael, in what is today mostly Syria. The two main Aramean kingdoms were Aram Tzovah and Aram Naharayim. These nations fought against David for a period of time and at one point invaded the Eretz Yisrael heartland. Once David succeeded in beating them back, they enlisted the help of Edom, which was a kingdom situated to the south and east of the Dead Sea in what is now Jordan. David then had to send an army to overcome Edom. This army, which was ultimately led by Yoav, David's top general, defeated Edom and killed a large number of the Edomi warriors.

The mizmor was originally composed when Eretz Yisrael had been invaded by the Arameans. David felt that this was a sign from Hashem, a clear example of *hashgachah* reacting to the sins of the Jewish people.

As our mizmor describes, David prayed for Hashem's help and he received a favorable reply in the form of Yoav's success. This battle is mentioned in II *Shmuel* 8:13, which states that David struck down 18,000 men at the Valley of Salt. However, in our mizmor (posuk 2), the number killed by Yoav is given as 12,000. Furthermore, in I *Divrei Hayamim* (18:12), it is stated that the victory was won by Avishai, the brother of Yoav. The *Radak* reconciles these apparent discrepancies by explaining that Avishai was in charge at the beginning of the battle, killing 6000 of the enemy. When Yoav arrived on the scene, he took over and the army then slew an additional 12,000. Thus, the total killed were actually 18,000 as reported in both *Shmuel* and *Divrei Hayamim*. However, in *Divrei Hayamim* the battle is credited to Avishai, since it began under his command. In *Shmuel*, it is credited to David, since he had overall responsibility.

Navigating Tehillim. Mizmor 060 is reminiscent of Mizmor 020 (May Hashem Answer You). There we also find David saying a *tefillah* for the success of the army fighting a battle in which he personally was not present. The specific campaign is not identified in that case, but it may very well have been the campaign against Edom that is spoken of in Mizmor 060.

Exploring the Mizmor

PART 1. INTRODUCTION. David begins by introducing the wartime situation that formed the backdrop to the mizmor.

(א) לְמִנְצַחַ עַל שׁוֹשֵׁן עֵדוּת, מִכְתָּם לְדוֹד לְלִמָּד: (ב) בְּהַצּוֹתוֹ אֶת אֲרָם נְהָרִים וְאֶת אֲרָם צוֹבָה, וַיָּשֶׁב יוֹאָב וַיִּךְ אֶת אֲדוֹם בְּגִיא מְלַח שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר אֲלָף:

(1) For the musician, on the [instrument called] the "rose of testimony," a *michtam* by David, to instruct [on the principle of Divine Providence]. (2) When he made war against Aram-Naharayim and Aram-Tzovah, and Yoav returned to strike Edom in the Valley of Salt, [killing] twelve thousand [men].

The name of the musical instrument used in this mizmor (*rose of testimony*) refers to the nation of Yisrael, which is described in *Shir HaShirim* (2:2) as a rose among the thorns. The thorns correspond to the surrounding nations, which represent a threat to the survival of the rose. When the wind blows from any direction, it may be injured by the thorns. Thus, the rose can survive only if it remains straight and

upright. Similarly, Yisrael can survive the sufferings of the Exile only if it remains faithful to the Torah (the testimony) and stands firm as it looks up to Hashem on high.

PART 2. ABANDONED. David laments the defeat that Yisrael has suffered at the hands of the allies of Edom. Such a thing could only have happened because Hashem had distanced Himself from the nation on account of their sins. David concludes this part of the mizmor by pleading with Hashem to answer his *tefillah* and restore His relationship with our people.

(ג) אֱלֹקִים זָנַחְתָּנוּ, פָּרַצְתָּנוּ אֲנַפְתָּ תִשׁוּבָב לָנוּ: (ד) הֲרַעַשְׁתָּה אֶרֶץ, פָּצַמְתָּהּ, רָפָה שְׁבָרֶיהָ כִּי מָטָה: (ה) הֲרֵאִיתָה עִמָּךְ קֶשֶׁה, הִשְׁקִיתָנוּ יַיִן תִּרְעָלָה: (ו) נָתַתָּה לִירֵאָיוּ נֶס לְהִתְנוֹסֵס מִפְּנֵי קֶשֶׁט סֵלָה: (ז) לִמְעַן יִחַלְצוּן יְדִידֶיךָ, הוֹשִׁיעָה יְמִינֶךָ [ועֲנֵנוּ] וְעֲנֵנִי:

(3) O G-d. You have abandoned us. You have made us defenseless. You have become furious [because of our sins]. Return to us. (4) You have made [our] land quake [under the feet of invading armies]. You have split it apart. Heal its fissures, for it totters. (5) You have shown Your nation a harsh [spectacle], You made us drink the wine of stupefaction. (6) You have given to those who fear You a challenging test to raise themselves to glory, Selah. (7) [But now,] in order that Your beloved ones may be released [from servitude to the enemy], save them with Your right hand and answer me.

PART 3. THE PROMISE. David compares the current tragic situation with the promise that Hashem had made to him through the prophecies of Shmuel. Hashem had assured David that the surrounding nations would be either completely defeated and subjugated or forced to sue for peace. David describes the promise by providing an abbreviated word outline of the map of Yisrael.

(ח) אֱלֹקִים דָּבַר בְּקֹדֶשׁוֹ, אֶעֱלֶה אֶחְלָקָה שְׁכֵם וְעֵמֶק סִכּוֹת אֶמְדֹּד: (ט) לִי גִלְעָד וְלִי מְנַשֶּׁה, וְאֶפְרַיִם מְעוֹז רֹאשִׁי, יְהוּדָה מְחֻקְקִי: (י) מוֹאָב סִיר רַחֲצִי, עַל אֲדוֹם אֲשָׁלִיךְ נַעֲלִי, עָלַי פְּלֶשֶׁת הִתְרַעְעִי:

(8) G-d spoke through His holiness, [saying that] I would exult [in achieving victory over our enemies]. I would divide Shechem and measure out the Valley of Succos. (9) To me [as king of Yisrael I was assigned dominion over] Gilead. To me [was assigned] Menasheh and Ephraim, my foremost stronghold. I was assured of maintaining Yehudah, [the seat of my authority as] lawgiver. (10) [As for the surrounding nations,] Moav is my washbasin [because I have subjugated them]. Upon Edom I will place my lock [to keep them under control]. [As for you] O Pleshes [Land of the

Plishtim], will you ally yourself with me?

PART 4. FULFILLING THE PROMISE. David concludes the mizmor with a *tefillah* to Hashem in which he places himself and his nation in Hashem's hands. The Jewish nation can withstand its enemies only if Hashem wills it. It is only then that the promise will be fulfilled.

(יא) מִי יִבְלִי עִיר מְצוּרָה, מִי נִחְנֶי עַד אֲדוֹם: (יב) הֲלֹא אַתָּה אֱלֹקִים זִנְחָתָנוּ, וְלֹא תִצֵּא אֱלֹקִים בְּצַבָּאוֹתֵינוּ: (יג) הֲבֵה לָנוּ עֲזָרַת מִצָּר, וְשׂוּא תִשׁוּעַת אָדָם: (יד) בְּאֱלֹקִים נַעֲשֶׂה חֵיל, וְהוּא יְבוֹס צָרֵינוּ:

(11) [So I asked myself], Who will lead me to [overcome] the fortified city? Who will guide me to [the conquest of] Edom? (12) Is it not You, O G-d? [But] You have forsaken us and You do not go forth, O G-d, with our legions. (13) Give us help against the foe, for human help is futile. (14) [We pray that] through G-d we will act valiantly and He will trample our foes.

Learning the Mizmor

PART 1. INTRODUCTION.

(א) לְמִנְצַחַת עַל שׁוֹשַׁן עֵדוּת

This song has been prepared **for the musician** — לְמִנְצַחַת — who will perform it **on** — עַל — the instrument called **the rose of testimony** — שׁוֹשַׁן עֵדוּת.

מִכְתָּם לְדָוִד לְלִמּוֹד:

This song is a *michtam* composed **by David** — מִכְתָּם לְדָוִד. A "michtam" is a very fine composition, whose name means "adornment of purest gold". The purpose of the *michtam* is **to instruct** — לְלִמּוֹד — the nation on the essential role that hashgachah (Divine Providence) plays in human affairs.

(ב) בְּהַצֹּתוֹ אֶת אֲרָם נְהָרַיִם וְאֶת אֲרָם צוֹבָה

וַיָּשָׁב יוֹאָב וַיִּדְ אֶת אֲדוֹם בְּגִיַּא מֶלֶח

שָׁנִים עֶשֶׂר אָלְפִי:

David composed the song **when he made war against Aram-Naharayim** — וְאֶת אֲרָם צוֹבָה — **and Aram-Tzovah** — בְּהַצֹּתוֹ אֶת אֲרָם נְהָרַיִם, which had joined together to attack Yisrael. After David's army, led by Yoav, defeated the enemy, **Yoav returned to strike Edom** — וַיָּשָׁב יוֹאָב וַיִּדְ אֶת אֲדוֹם, which had formed an

alliance with Aram-Naharayim and Aram-Tzvoah. The battle against Edom was fought **in the Valley of Salt** – בְּגִיאַ מֶלַח, and there the army under Yoav was again victorious, killing **twelve thousand men** – שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר אֲלָף. That was the second phase of the battle. His brother Avishai had led the army in the initial phase of the battle, killing 6000 of the enemy.

PART 2. ABANDONED.

(ג) אֱלֹקִים זָנְחָתָנוּ פְּרָצְתָנוּ אֲנַפְתָּ
תְּשׁוּבָב לָנוּ:

O G-d, You have judged us guilty because of our sins and **abandoned us** – זָנְחָתָנוּ אֱלֹקִים. By withdrawing Your favor from us **You have made us defenseless** – פְּרָצְתָנוּ. Even worse, **You have become furious** – אֲנַפְתָּ with us and allowed the enemy to invade us. Have pity on us and **return to us** – תְּשׁוּבָב לָנוּ !

(ד) הִרְעִשְׁתָּהּ אֶרֶץ פְּצַמְתָּהּ
רָפָה שְׁבָרִיהָ כִּי מָטָה:

You have made our **land quake** – הִרְעִשְׁתָּהּ אֶרֶץ under the weight of invading armies. **You have split** it **apart** – פְּצַמְתָּהּ and given pieces of it to our enemies. **Heal its fissures** – רָפָה שְׁבָרִיהָ, **for it totters** – כִּי מָטָה. By bringing us this low You have set the stage for recovery.

(ה) הִרְאִיתָה עִמּוֹד קִשָּׁה
הִשְׁקִיתָנוּ יַיִן תִּרְעָלָה:

By allowing our land to be invaded **You have shown Your nation a harsh vision** – הִרְאִיתָה עִמּוֹד קִשָּׁה. **You made us drink the poisonous wine of stupefaction** – הִשְׁקִיתָנוּ יַיִן תִּרְעָלָה. We wanted to steep ourselves with new life and courage, but we found only bewilderment instead.

(ו) נָתַתָּה לִירְאֵיךָ גֵּס לְהִתְנוּסָס
מִפְּנֵי קִשְׁט סֵלָה:

You have given to those who fear You – נָתַתָּה לִירְאֵיךָ a **challenging test to prove themselves** and raise themselves – גֵּס לְהִתְנוּסָס to the **glory** – מִפְּנֵי קִשְׁט of their hidden potential, **Selah** – סֵלָה !

(ז) לְמַעַן יִחַלְצוּן יְדִידֶיךָ
הוֹשִׁיעָה יְמִינְךָ [ועַנְנוּ] וְעַנְנִי:

In order that Your beloved ones may be released – לְמַעַן יִחַלְצוּן יְדִידֶיךָ – save them with Your right hand which You have been holding back **and answer me** now – הוֹשִׁיעָה יְמִינְךָ וְעַנְנִי.

PART 3. THE PROMISE.

(ח) אֱלֹקִים דָּבַר בְּקִדְשׁוֹ אֶעֱלֶה
אֶחְלַקְהָ שְׂכָם וְעִמָּק וְסִכּוֹת אֲמַדֵּד:

G-d spoke through His spirit of holiness – אֱלֹקִים דָּבַר בְּקִדְשׁוֹ, as conveyed by Shmuel, **that I would exult – אֶעֱלֶה** in conquering my enemies and fulfilling my role as king over the entire land of Yisrael [as outlined below]. **I would divide Shechem – אֶחְלַקְהָ שְׂכָם** and **measure out the Valley of Succos – וְעִמָּק** and **סִכּוֹת אֲמַדֵּד**. [Both of these are located in the territory of Ephraim, which Avner had placed under the rule of Ish-Boshes, the son of Shaul.] I was given the responsibility of settling land disputes and making peace among the residents of these territories.

(ט) לִי גִלְעָד וְלִי מְנַשֶּׁה
וְאַפְרַיִם מְעוֹז רֹאשִׁי
יְהוּדָה מְחֻקְקִי:

To me was assigned dominion over **Gilead – לִי גִלְעָד**. [This was the territory on the east bank of the Yarden that had been placed under the rule of Ish-Boshes by Avner. It included the territories of Reuven, Gad, and part of of the territory of Menashe.] **To me** was also assigned the territory of **Menasheh – וְלִי מְנַשֶּׁה** east of the Yarden. To me was **also** assigned the territory of **Ephraim – וְאַפְרַיִם**, **my foremost stronghold – מְעוֹז רֹאשִׁי**. I was assured of maintaining **Yehudah**, the seat of **my authority** as lawgiver – **יְהוּדָה מְחֻקְקִי**. [The territory of Yehudah had come under the rule of David once Shaul was killed.]

(י) מוֹאָב סִיר רְחָצִי
עַל אֲדוֹם אֲשַׁלֵּךְ נַעֲלִי
עָלַי פְּלִשְׁתֵּי הַתְּרַעְעִי:

Moav is my washbasin – מוֹאָב סִיר רְחָצִי, for I have defeated it in battle and it is

now completely subjugated to me. It is nearby, just to the east of the Dead Sea, so I can easily maintain control. In contrast, Edom is further south and once I defeat them they will be more difficult to keep from rebelling. And so, **upon Edom I will place my lock** — על אֶדוֹם אֲשַׁלֵּךְ נֶעְלִי — by establishing a string of forts to maintain control. I will do the same for the two territories of Aram that have allied with Edom. As for you O Peleshes, which I conquered, but have not subjugated, **will you ally yourself with me** — עָלִי פִלְשֶׁת הִתְרַעְעִי — and accept my authority?

PART 4. FULFILLING THE PROMISE.

(יא) מִי יְבַלְגֵנִי עִיר מְצוּר
מִי נַחְנִי עַד אֶדוֹם:

I turned to You Hashem because I asked myself, **“Who will lead me to overcome the fortified city — מִי יְבַלְגֵנִי עִיר מְצוּר** of the enemy? **Who will guide me to the conquest of Edom — מִי נַחְנִי עַד אֶדוֹם**?”

(יב) הֲלֹא אַתָּה אֱלֹקִים זִנְחָתָנוּ
וְלֹא תֵצֵא אֱלֹקִים בְּצַבָּאוֹתֵינוּ:

I responded to my question with self-doubt, saying, **“Is it not You, O G-d — הֲלֹא אֱלֹקִים** ? But **You have now forsaken us — זִנְחָתָנוּ** because of our sins, **and You do not go forth, O G-d, with our legions — וְלֹא תֵצֵא אֱלֹקִים** — **בְּצַבָּאוֹתֵינוּ** to fight our battles. You have distanced Your protective *hashgachah* from us.

(יג) הֲבֵה לָנוּ עֲזָרַת מְצָר
וְשׂוֹא תִשׁוּעַת אָדָם:

Therefore, Hashem we call upon You with renewed intensity to **give us help against the foe — הֲבֵה לָנוּ עֲזָרַת מְצָר**, for we realize that **human help is futile — וְשׂוֹא תִשׁוּעַת אָדָם** and therefore our legions are worthless without You. Furthermore the alliances that the enemy has made among themselves will not avail them.

(יד) בְּאֱלֹקִים נַעֲשֶׂה חַיִּל
וְהוּא יְבוֹס צָרֵינוּ:

We pray that **through G-d we will act valiantly — בְּאֱלֹקִים נַעֲשֶׂה חַיִּל** and **that He will trample our foes — וְהוּא יְבוֹס צָרֵינוּ**. Any defeat that we bring to our

enemies will not be effective unless Hashem wills it.

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.

[60:3] ABANDONED. – אֱלֹקִים זָנְחָתָנוּ, פָּרַצְתָּנוּ אֲנַפְתָּ תְּשׁוּבָב לָנוּ – “O G-d. You have abandoned us. You have made us defenseless. You have become furious [because of our sins]. Return to us.” Plead with Hashem to restore His relationship with us. The reverses we have recently experienced are an indication that He has temporarily abandoned us and this must have been due to our sins

[60:5] – הֲרֵאִיתָ עַמְּךָ קָשָׁה, הִשְׁקִיתָנוּ יַיִן תַּרְעֵלָה – “You have shown Your nation a harsh [spectacle], You made us drink the wine of stupefaction.”

[60:12] – הֲלֹא אֶתָּה אֱלֹקִים זָנְחָתָנוּ, וְלֹא תֵצֵא אִלֵּינוּ בְּצַבָּאוֹתֵינוּ – “You have forsaken us and You do not go forth, O G-d, with our legions.”

Tefillos for Life - Your Yeshuah.

[60:7] RIGHT HAND. – לְמַעַן יִחַלְצוּן יְדִידֶיךָ, הוֹשִׁיעָה יְמִינְךָ וְעַנֵּנִי – “In order that Your beloved ones may be released [from servitude to the enemy], save them with Your right hand and answer me.” Ask Hashem to bring to bear the power of His right hand so that we will be saved from the depredations of the enemy.

[60:13] UNRELIABLE ALLIES. – הִבֵּה לָנוּ עֲזֶרֶת מִצָּר, וְשׂוֹא תְּשׁוּעַת אָדָם – “Give us help against the foe, for human help is futile.” We cannot rely upon the help of nations which are inconstant and act in their own perceived self-interest.

[60:14] – בְּאֵלֵינוּ נַעֲשֶׂה חֵיל, וְהוּא יְבוֹס צָרֵינוּ – “[We pray that] through G-d we will act valiantly and He will trample our foes.”

Sources

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

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

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