

Mizmor 075

The Horn of Pride

Key Concepts

Continuing the theme of the previous mizmor, the prophet Asaph foresees a time during the final stages of *Galus* (Exile) when the Jewish people are disturbed by a sense of impending tragedy and the fear of complete destruction. Addressing the confusion and uncertainty of this time, Asaph offers a plea for the survival of the nation and the glorious coming of the *Geulah* (Redemption). At the same time he expresses thanks to the Creator for what He has done for us in the past and he visualizes the stern message that mankind must absorb during this period in which the world is being judged.

Despite the harsh conditions that Asaph foresees, this mizmor is presented as a song of joy because of the prophet's confidence that the righteous will be vindicated and the enemies of our people will receive their retribution.

In addressing the sins of our enemies, Asaph focuses on the overarching sin of pride, which is symbolized by the horn of a bull. The bull raises his horns to express his sense of power. This reflects the fallacy that causes people to think they have control over their own fate and that they are free to disregard moral and ethical principles.

Exploring the Mizmor

PART 1. INTRODUCTION. Asaph opens the mizmor by declaring his theme, a plea that Yisrael not be destroyed in the global turmoil that is anticipated when the Galus comes to its long-awaited end. Asaph strengthens this brief plea with a redoubled expression of gratitude to Hashem for maintaining His closeness to us, despite the turbulent times we have gone through.

(א) לְמַנְצַח אֶל־תִּשְׁחַת מִזְמוֹר לְאַסָּף שִׁיר: (ב) הוֹדִינוּ לְךָ אֱלֹקִים הוֹדִינוּ וְקָרוֹב
שִׁמְךָ סִפְרוּ נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ:

(1) For the musician, [based on the theme] "Let there not be destruction", a mizmor by Asaph, a song of joy. (2) We thank You, O G-d, we thank You. Your Name is near [to us]. Your wonders have declared [Your presence].

PART 2. ANNOUNCING JUDGMENT. Asaph now declares in the Name of Hashem, that the *Geulah* will be accompanied with an awesome period of judgement. All of mankind will then be overwhelmed with the fear of what may happen if full retribution is exacted for their sins.

(ג) כִּי אֶקַח מוֹעֵד אֲנִי מִיִּשְׁרָיִם אֲשַׁפֹּט: (ד) נִמְגִים אֶרָץ וְכָל־יִשְׁבֵיָהּ אֲנֹכִי תִכְנֹתִי עֲמוּדֵיהָ סֵלָה:

(3) [Hashem says:] When I seize the appointed time, I will judge the world with fairness. (4) The earth and all its inhabitants will melt [in awe, realizing] it was I Who [created the world and] established its pillars, Selah.

PART 3. MISPLACED PRIDE. Hashem is now quoted as charging mankind with the sin of pride, the pride that prevents people from acknowledging a greater Power. That pride is symbolized by the bull that raises its horns in a show of defiance. Such pride is misplaced because its is unwarranted. Man is a created being and everything that he achieves depends upon being enabled by his Creator. The decision as to whether or not a man will achieve greatness is in the hand of Hashem.

Part 3 concludes with the symbol of a full wine cup in the hand of Hashem. The wine cup represents the fate of a human being. Just as wine can have positive and negative effects in human life, the fate of a person can be positive or negative, depending upon how he conducts his life. He may be drinking a cup of blessing or a cup of retribution.

(ה) אֲמַרְתִּי לַהוֹלְלִים אֶל־תִּהְיוּ וְלַרְשָׁעִים אֶל־תִּרְימוּ קָרוֹן: (ו) אֶל־תִּרְימוּ לַמָּרוֹם קָרוֹנְכֶם תִּדְבְּרוּ בְצוֹאֵר עֵתֶק: (ז) כִּי לֹא מִמוֹצֵא וּמִמַּעַרְב וְלֹא מִמִּדְבַּר הָרִים: (ח) כִּי־אֲלֹקִים שֹׁפֵט זֶה יִשְׁפִּיל וְזֶה יָרִים: (ט) כִּי כֹס בְּיַד־ה' וַיִּין חֲמַר מְלֵא מִסָּדָךְ וַיִּגַּר מִזֶּה אֶדְ-שְׁמָרְיָהּ יִמְצוּ יִשְׁתּוּ כָל רְשָׁעֵי־אֶרֶץ:

(5) [Hashem continues:] I have told the frivolous fools, “Don’t indulge in your frivolities.” And I have told the wicked, “Don’t raise your horn of pride. (6) Don’t raise your horn of pride heavenward, speaking insolently with a haughty neck.” [Asaph adds:] (7) For greatness does not come from the [eastern] sunrise, nor from the [western] sunset, and not from the [southern] wilderness. (8) For G-d gives judgment. He brings down this one and raises up that one. (9) For there is a cup [of fate] in Hashem’s hand, containing red wine, fully mixed. He pours from it. All the wicked of the earth [are made to drink], draining it to the dregs.

PART 4. CONCLUSION. Asaph recognizes that the important lesson of the previous verses may not be heeded. However, he declares his intention to continue calling people's attention to it. The *Geulah* will surely come and those who stand guilty of their crimes against Yisrael will be made to pay.

(י) וְאֲנִי אֶגִּיד לְעַלְמֵי אֲזַמְרָה לֵאלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב: (יא) וְכָל-קַרְנֵי רְשָׁעִים אֶגְדַּע תְּרוֹמְמָנָה קַרְנוֹת צְדִיק:

(10) [Asaph says:] But as for me, I will declare [this truth] forever. I will sing [praises] to the G-d of Yaakov. (11) [Hashem responds:] “And I will cut down all the horns of pride of the wicked, and the horns of pride of the righteous [as they return from Galus] will be exalted.

Learning the Mizmor

PART 1. INTRODUCTION

(א) לְמִנְצַחַי אֶל תִּשְׁחַת

A *mizmor* prepared for the musician — לְמִנְצַחַי, based on the theme, “**Let there not be destruction**” — אֶל תִּשְׁחַת. This theme expresses Asaph's plea that Hashem not let destruction spread in the world as a result of spiritual, moral and social corruption.

מִזְמוֹר לְאַסָּף שִׁיר:

This **mizmor**, composed by Asaph — מִזְמוֹר לְאַסָּף שִׁיר, ends up as a **song** of joy — שִׁיר, reflecting a growing confidence that Hashem will surely intervene and restore lawful order on earth.

(ב) הוֹדִינוּ לְךָ אֱלֹקִים הוֹדִינוּ וְקָרוֹב שְׁמֶךָ

סִפְרוּ נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ:

We thank You, O G-d for the good — וְדִינוּ לְךָ אֱלֹקִים, **we thank You** for the bad — הוֹדִינוּ because we know that it is meant to purify us. In either case, **Your Name is near** — וְקָרוֹב שְׁמֶךָ to us. **Your wonders have declared** it — סִפְרוּ נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ for they have told the world of Your presence.

PART 2. ANNOUNCING JUDGMENT

(ג) כִּי אֶקַח מוֹעֵד
אֲנִי מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל אֲשַׁפֵּט:

Hashem is telling the world: "When I seize the appointed time — כִּי אֶקַח מוֹעֵד of the Geulah, it will not be because I need the time to prepare, it will be a calculated act of judgment, allowing time for Yisrael to do *teshuvah*. **I will judge** the world **with fairness** — אֲנִי מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל אֲשַׁפֵּט."

(ד) נִמְגִים אָרֶץ וְכָל יֹשְׁבֵיהָ
אֲנֹכִי תִכְנַתִּי עֲמוּדֶיהָ סֵלָה:

"When they see that day of judgment and the retribution that I take against the sinful nations, **the hearts of the earth and all its inhabitants will melt** — נִמְגִים אָרֶץ וְכָל יֹשְׁבֵיהָ, in fear and awe. The wicked people will then realize **that it was I Who** created the world and **established its pillars, Selah** — אֲנֹכִי תִכְנַתִּי עֲמוּדֶיהָ סֵלָה. The earth stands by My will and can dissolve at My will. "

PART 3. MISPLACED PRIDE

(ה) אֶמְרַתִּי לְהוֹלִלִים
אֶל תִּהְיוּ וְלִרְשָׁעִים אֶל תִּרְיֵמוּ קֶרֶן:

"**I have told the frivolous fools** — אֶמְרַתִּי לְהוֹלִלִים, who are immersed in the physical pleasures of this world, '**Don't indulge in your frivolities**' — אֶל־תִּהְיוּ. **And I have said to the wicked** — וְלִרְשָׁעִים, "**Don't raise your horn** of pride and arrogance — אֶל־תִּרְיֵמוּ קֶרֶן. It is not your to own abilities nor to your lucky stars, but to Hashem that you owe gratitude for the good things in life."

(ו) אֶל תִּרְיֵמוּ לְמָרוֹם קֶרְנֶכֶם
תִּדְבְּרוּ בְצִוְאָר עֵתֶק:

Don't raise your horn of pride **heavenward** against Hashem — אֶל־תִּרְיֵמוּ לְמָרוֹם by trampling His laws underfoot. Don't **speak** insolently **with a haughty neck** — תִּדְבְּרוּ בְצִוְאָר עֵתֶק.

(ז) כִּי לֹא מִמוּצָא וּמִמַּעַרְב
וְלֹא מִמִּדְבַּר הָרִים:

Don't think that you can achieve your prideful ambition from some part of the earth

while rejecting your Creator in Heaven. **For neither from the eastern sunrise nor from the western sunset — כִּי לֹא מִמּוֹצָא וּמִמְעַרְבַּב, nor from the southern wilderness comes greatness — וְלֹא מִמִּדְבַּר הָרִים.**

(ח) כִּי אֱלֹקִים שִׁפֹּט
זֶה יִשְׁפִּיל וְזֶה יָרִים:

For it is G-d Who gives judgment — כִּי-אֱלֹקִים שִׁפֹּט. He brings down this one and raises up that one — זֶה יִשְׁפִּיל וְזֶה יָרִים and He does so in accordance with our deeds.

(ט) כִּי כֹס בְּיַד ה'
וַיִּין חֲמַר מְלֵא מִסָּדַ וַיִּגַּר מִזֶּה
אֶדְ שְׁמֶרְיָהּ יִמְצוּ יִשְׁתּוּ כָּל רְשָׁעֵי אֶרֶץ:

For there is a cup of fate in Hashem's hand — כִּי כֹס בְּיַד-ה', containing the red wine of retribution and discipline fully mixed with the waters of mercy — וַיִּין חֲמַר מְלֵא מִסָּדַ. He pours from it — וַיִּגַּר מִזֶּה to render justice to each individual. **All the wicked of the earth are made to drink, draining it to the dregs — אֶדְ-שְׁמֶרְיָהּ יִמְצוּ יִשְׁתּוּ כָּל רְשָׁעֵי-אֶרֶץ.**

PART 4. CONCLUSION

(י) וְאֲנִי אֶגִּיד לְעֵלָם
אֶזְמְרָה לְאֱלֹקֵי יַעֲקֹב:

[Asaph says:] "The wicked may refuse to accept my message, **but as for me, I will declare it forever — וְאֲנִי אֶגִּיד לְעֵלָם.** I will take the wine as a cup of blessing and **I will sing praises over it to the G-d of Yaakov — וְאֶזְמְרָה לְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב**"

(יא) וְכָל קַרְנֵי רְשָׁעִים אֶגְדַּע
תְּרוֹמְמָנָה קַרְנוֹת צְדִיק:

[Hashem responds:] "**And eventually I will cut down all the horns of pride of the wicked — וְכָל-קַרְנֵי רְשָׁעִים אֶגְדַּע** because of their accumulated sins. Then **the horns of pride of the righteous as they return from Galus will be exalted — תְּרוֹמְמָנָה קַרְנוֹת צְדִיק !**

Sources

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

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

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