

Mizmor 076

Miracle at the Gates

Key Concepts

In this mizmor Asaph presents his prophetic vision of the great victory that was to take place at the gates of Yerushalayim during the reign of Chizkiyahu, the King of Yehudah. He speaks of the miraculous victory against Sancheiriv as an expression Hashem's anger at the wickedness of the enemy and Hashem's pity upon the enemy's suffering victims.

The confrontation with the enemy is described as something that happened at night when they were asleep. The enemy warriors simply lost consciousness and never woke up.

Asaph points out the great fallacy of thinking that because Sancheiriv had such a powerful army, he was to be feared. The "powerful" warriors of Sancheiriv even lost the ability to control their hands. Actually, the fear of G-d excludes the fear of all other beings. If man fears G-d his conscience can be calm and at peace. Thus, a man should fear only G-d.

Historical Background

It was a time of great fear and uncertainty throughout the Land. The Kingdom of Yisrael had recently been defeated by the armies of Ashur (Assyria) and the ten tribes of that kingdom had been driven into exile. Many of the nations in the region paid tribute to Ashur, whose kings were savage and brutal. They practiced a policy of deporting conquered peoples to distant lands, obliterating their national and cultural identity.

Chizkiyahu foolishly chose to join a regional revolt against Ashur, just when Sancheiriv came to the throne. Sancheiriv marched against the rebels, defeating one after the other. In the fourteenth year of Chizkiyahu's reign, Sancheiriv overcame the fortified towns of Yehudah and deported tens of thousands of their residents. Many believed that the bitter fate of its sister kingdom awaited Yehudah, the holy city of Yerushalayim and the *Bais HaMikdash*.

However, when Chizkiyahu pleaded with the prophet Yeshayahu to offer a prayer for the survival of Yerushalayim, Yeshayahu responded with Hashem's promise to save the city. This is what happened and so that night an angel of Hashem killed

185,000 warriors while they were asleep. (See *Yeshayahu* 37:36) As a result, despite his overwhelming forces, Sancheiriv abandoned his siege of the city and withdrew from Yehudah in disgrace.

Exploring the Mizmor

PART 1. INTRODUCTION. Asaph opens the mizmor by announcing the great military victory that took place at the gates of Yerushalayim. He alludes to its being the capital of Yehudah, and describes it as the designated location of the Shechinah, G-d's earthly presence.

(א) לְמִנְצַחַּ בְּנִגִּינֹת מִזְמוֹר לְאַסָּף שִׁיר: (ב) נוֹדַע בֵּיהוּדָה אֱלֹקִים בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל גָּדוֹל
שְׁמוֹ: (ג) וַיְהִי בְשָׁלֹם סָכּוּ וּמַעוֹנָתוֹ בְּצִיּוֹן: (ד) שָׁמָּה שִׁבַּר רֶשֶׁפִי-קִשְׁתֹּת מַגֵּן וְחֶרֶב
וּמִלְחָמָה סָלָה:

(1) For the musician, with musical accompaniment, a mizmor by Asaph, a song of joy. (2) G-d is known in Yehudah; throughout Yisrael His Name is great. (3) His abode was [designated to be] in Yerushalayim, and His dwelling is in Tzion. (4) There He broke the flying arrows of [Sancheiriv's] bow, [his] shield and sword, and [his ability to wage] war. Selah.

PART 2. A MIRACULOUS VICTORY. Asaph now sings in praise of Hashem for the miraculous victory that took place when a seemingly invincible army succumbed to a spiritual force aroused by Hashem's judgment.

(ה) נֶאֱוֹר אַתָּה אֲדִיר מִהַרְרֵי-טָרֶף: (ו) אֲשֶׁתּוֹלְלוּ אַבְיָרֵי לֵב נָמוּ שְׁנָתֶם וְלֹא-מָצְאוּ
כָּל-אֲנָשֵׁי-חַיִל יְדֵיהֶם: (ז) מִגְּעַרְתָּךְ אֱלֹקֵי יַעֲקֹב נִרְדָּם וְרָכַב וְסוּסֵי: (ח) אַתָּה נוֹרָא
אַתָּה וּמִי-יַעֲמֵד לְפָנֶיךָ מֵאֵז אַפָּךְ: (ט) מִשְׁמַיִם הִשְׁמַעְתָּ דִּין אֶרֶץ יִרְאָה וְשָׁקֵטָה: (י)
בְּקוֹם-לְמִשְׁפָּט אֱלֹקִים לְהוֹשִׁיעַ כָּל-עַנְוֵי-אֶרֶץ סָלָה:

(5) [Hashem] You are resplendent, more powerful than [armies that are like beasts] of prey [emerging from the] mountains. (6) The warriors of soaring courage became bereft of reason. They drifted off into their sleep [of death]. All the mighty warriors could not find [the strength of] their hands [to do battle]. (7) At Your rebuke, O G-d of Yaakov, chariot and horse lay stunned. (8) You are the One to be feared, it is You! You are the One to be feared. Who can stand before You when You are enraged? (9) From heaven You pronounced judgment and the fearful Land calmed down. (10) For G-d arose to execute judgment, to save all the humble of the Land, Selah.

PART 3. CONCLUSION. Asaph concludes the mizmor by reviewing the effect of this miracle. Sancheiriv had acted in fierce anger, thinking he could defeat the power of Hashem with his mighty army. But his very rage provoked the judgment of Hashem and created an object lesson for all the nations of the region. They learned that it is a mistake to fear a human tyrant, when the true Source of Awesome power is Hashem. Paying tribute to wicked princes and kings will inevitably be curtailed and replaced with recognition and service to the one G-d.

(יא) כִּי־חַמַּת אָדָם וַתִּזְדַּךְ שְׂאֲרֵית חַמַּת תַּחֲגֹר: (יב) נִדְרוּ וְשָׁלְמוּ לֵה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם
כָּל־סְבִיבָיו יוֹבִילוּ שֵׁי לַמּוֹרָא: (יג) יִבְצַר רוּחַ נְגִידִים נוֹרָא לְמַלְכֵי־אֶרֶץ:
(11) For the rage of man acknowledges You [by provoking heavenly judgment, so that You] restrain the remnant of their rage. (12) [As for my fellow Jews:] make vows to Hashem, your G-d and fulfill them. [As for the nations in the region:] all who are around Him, bring [your] tribute to the Awesome One. (13) He curbs the arrogance of princes and arouses awe in the kings of the earth.

Learning the Mizmor

PART 1. INTRODUCTION

(א) לְמִנְצִיחַ בְּנִגִּינַת מִזְמוֹר לְאַסָּף שִׁיר:

This song has been **for the musician** — לְמִנְצִיחַ, to be performed **with musical accompaniment** — בְּנִגִּינַת. It is a **mizmor** — מִזְמוֹר composed **by Asaph** — לְאַסָּף, in the form of a **song** of joy — שִׁיר, immortalizing the defeat of Sancheiriv at the gates of Yerushalayim during the reign of Chizkiyahu (see Melachim II 19).

(ב) נוֹדַע בִּיהוּדָה אֱלֹקִים
בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל גָּדוֹל שְׁמוֹ:

G-d is especially **known** to the Jewish people **in** the core province of **Yehudah** — נוֹדַע בִּיהוּדָה אֱלֹקִים, where Yerushalayim is situated. But **throughout** the territories of **Yisrael His Name** is recognized as **great** — בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל גָּדוֹל שְׁמוֹ.

(ג) וַיְהִי בְּשָׁלִם סָכוּ
וַיִּמְעוֹנְתוּ בְּצִיּוֹן:

His holy **abode**, the Temple, **was** designated to be **in Yerushalayim** — וַיְהִי בְּשָׁלִם סָכוּ when it was known by its ancient name of Shalem. **And** that place became

His permanent dwelling in Tzion — **וּמְעוֹנָתוֹ בְּצִיּוֹן**, the name that designates Yerushalayim as the source of Divine law for all mankind.

(ד) שָׁמָּה שָׁבַר רְשָׁפֵי קִשְׁת׃ מִגֵּן
וַחֲרַב וּמִלְחָמָה סֵלָה:

There in Yerushalayim Hashem **broke** the **flying arrows of** Sancheiriv's **bow** — **שָׁמָּה שָׁבַר רְשָׁפֵי קִשְׁת׃** He also broke his **shield**, his **sword** — **מִגֵּן וַחֲרַב**, and even his ability to wage **war** — **וּמִלְחָמָה**, **Selah** — **סֵלָה**.

PART 2. A MIRACULOUS VICTORY

(ה) נֶאֱזַר אֲתָהּ
אֲדִיר מִהַרְרֵי טָרֶף:

Hashem, **You are** now clearly recognized and **resplendent** in the light of Your glory — **נֶאֱזַר אֲתָהּ**, more **powerful than** armies that are like beasts **of prey** emerging **from the mountains** — **אֲדִיר מִהַרְרֵי טָרֶף** in the dark of night.

(ו) אֲשֶׁתּוֹלְלוּ אַבְיָרֵי לֵב
נָמוּ שְׁנָתָם וְלֹא מָצְאוּ כָּל אַנְשֵׁי חַיִּל יְדִיהֶם:

The warriors of soaring courage became bereft of reason — **אֲשֶׁתּוֹלְלוּ אַבְיָרֵי לֵב** "Death came to them while they slept and **they drifted off into their sleep** of death — **נָמוּ שְׁנָתָם**. **All the mighty warriors could not find** the strength of **their hands** to do battle — **וְלֹא מָצְאוּ כָּל אַנְשֵׁי חַיִּל יְדִיהֶם**. They were effectively paralyzed and unable to act.

(ז) מִגַּעַרְתֶּךָ אֱלֹקֵי יַעֲקֹב
נִרְדָּם וַרְכָב וָסוּס:

At Your rebuke, O G-d of Yaakov — **מִגַּעַרְתֶּךָ אֱלֹקֵי יַעֲקֹב**, the warrior with his chariot and horse lay stunned — **נִרְדָּם וַרְכָב וָסוּס**.

(ח) אֲתָהּ נוֹרָא אֲתָהּ
וּמִי יַעֲמֹד לְפָנֶיךָ מְאֹז אַפְּךָ:

You are the One to be feared — **אֲתָהּ נוֹרָא**, it is **You** — **אֲתָהּ ! Who can stand before You when You are enraged** — **וּמִי יַעֲמֹד לְפָנֶיךָ מְאֹז אַפְּךָ** ?

(ט) מִשְׁמַיִם הִשְׁמַעְתָּ דִּין
אֶרֶץ יִרְאָה וְשָׁקְטָה:

From heaven You pronounced judgment – מִשְׁמַיִם הִשְׁמַעְתָּ דִּין, as revealed in the prophecies of Yeshayahu. Then, when the prophecies were fulfilled, **the Land**, which had been agitated **by their fear** of Sancheiriv and his armies, **calmed down** – אֶרֶץ יִרְאָה וְשָׁקְטָה.

(י) בָּקוּם לְמִשְׁפָּט אֱלֹקִים
לְהוֹשִׁיעַ כָּל עַנְוֵי אֶרֶץ סֵלָה:

For G-d arose to execute judgment – בָּקוּם לְמִשְׁפָּט אֱלֹקִים, **to save all the humble** and oppressed people **of the Land, Selah** – לְהוֹשִׁיעַ כָּל עַנְוֵי אֶרֶץ סֵלָה.

PART 3. CONCLUSION

(יא) כִּי חַמַּת אָדָם תִּוֹדֵךְ
שְׂאֵרִית חַמַּת תִּתְחַגֵּר:

For the rage of wicked man provokes heavenly judgment so that his anger is proven false and thereby the anger itself **acknowledges You** – כִּי חַמַּת אָדָם תִּוֹדֵךְ. Thus, as a result of Your judgment, all the nations have learned their lesson and rejoice for **You restrain the remnant of their rage** and arrogance – שְׂאֵרִית חַמַּת תִּתְחַגֵּר, and peace returns to the world.

(יב) נִדְרוּ וְשָׁלְמוּ לֵה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם
כָּל סְבִיבֵי יוֹבִילוּ שִׁי לְמוֹרָא:

In celebration and loving gratitude for this miraculous *yeshuah*, let all Jews **make vows to Hashem, your G-d and then fulfill them** – נִדְרוּ וְשָׁלְמוּ לֵה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם. As for the nations in the region, **all who are around Him** – כָּל סְבִיבֵי, all who have been giving tribute to Sancheiriv, let them now **bring their tribute to the Awesome One** – כָּל סְבִיבֵי יוֹבִילוּ שִׁי לְמוֹרָא for He is the true Source of all awe.

(יג) יִבְצַר רוּחַ נְגִידִים
נוֹרָא לְמַלְכֵי אֶרֶץ:

He curbs the arrogance of princes – יִבְצַר רוּחַ נְגִידִים **and arouses awe in the kings of the earth** – נוֹרָא לְמַלְכֵי אֶרֶץ.

Sources

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

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| ז - מצודות, אבן יחייא, רשר"ה | א - מלבי"ם, המאירי |
| ח - רש"י, אבן עזרא, רשר"ה | ב - אבן עזרא, מלבי"ם |
| ט - רש"י, מלבי"ם | ג - רד"ק, אבן יחייא |
| י - רד"ק, | ד - רש"י, אבן עזרא, מלבי"ם, המאירי |
| יא - רש"י, מצודות, ספורנו | ה - רד"ק, מצודות, מלבי"ם, המאירי, בן־רמוך, |
| יב - רד"ק, מצודות, מלבי"ם, המאירי, ספורנו | אבן יחייא |
| יג - רש"י, מצודות | ו - רד"ק, מצודות, רשר"ה |

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