

## **Mizmor 063**

# Transcending Fear

### **Key Concepts**

When David composed this mizmor, he was a fugitive hiding out in the Wilderness of Yehudah, being hunted by Shaul HaMelech. David was in fear for his life because Shaul had become tragically misled into accusing David of treason against him.

Despite suffering from a lack of food and water in the desert heat and with his very survival at stake, David's thoughts turned to his spiritual yearning, a longing for closeness with Hashem. Not only was his soul thirsting for contact with Hashem, his very body felt the desire for holiness. In his yearning, David hoped to recapture the level of devotion that he had experienced when he visited Kiryas Yearim the holy place where the Ark of the Covenant was maintained and the City of Nov where the Mishkan with the Altar were located.

David was able to focus his mind on composing this mizmor despite the threat to his survival. Through his intense yearning he transcended fear by elevating his physical self to a state of holiness. As a result, he achieved a harmony between body and soul. In the mizmor he suggests that without this harmony, his soul would surely have left him and returned to its Creator.

### **Historical Background**

While in the wilderness of Yehudah, David was devastated by his inability to visit what was then the holiest place in the Eretz Yisrael, the location of the Ark of the Covenant (see I *Shmuel* 7:1). The Ark had been in Kiryas Yearim for 11 years when Shaul became king. Initially, Shaul gave his daughter Michal to David in marriage and David was free to visit Kiryas Yearim whenever he wished. He was also free to visit Nov, the City of Kohanim, where the Tabernacle and Altar were maintained.

However, it was not long before Shaul developed an irrational hatred towards David and so David was forced to flee as described in Mizmor 059. After passing through Nov and the Wilderness of Yehudah, David realized that he must leave Eretz Yisrael completely. This caused him great anguish as described in Mizmor 011. After a brief encounter with the King of the Plishtim as described in Mizmor 034, David returned to Eretz Yisrael, but remained a fugitive in the wilderness of Yehudah.

## Exploring the Mizmor

**PART 1. THIRSTING IN THE DESERT.** David begins the mizmor by declaring his yearning to restore his closeness to Hashem. Despite his physical fear and suffering in this parched, desolate land, the primary concern of his whole being, is to drink in once more the intense holiness of Hashem.

(א) מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד בְּהִיוֹתוֹ בְּמִדְבַּר יְהוּדָה: (ב) אֱלֹקִים אֵלִי אַתָּה אֲשַׁחֲרֶךָ צִמְאָה לְךָ נַפְשִׁי כִּמְהָ לְךָ בָּשָׂרִי בְּאֶרֶץ צִיָּה וְעֵינִי בְּלִי מַיִם: (ג) כֵּן בִּקְדָּשׁ חֲזִיתִיךָ לִרְאוֹת עֲזֶיךָ וּכְבוֹדֶךָ: (ד) כִּי טוֹב חֲסִדֶּךָ מִחַיִּים שְׂפָתַי יִשְׁבְּחוּנֶךָ: (ה) כֵּן אֲבָרְכֶךָ בְּחַיֵּי בִשְׁמֶיךָ אֲשֶׁא כָפִי: (ו) כִּמוֹ חֶלֶב וְדֶשֶׁן תִּשְׂבַּע נַפְשִׁי וְשִׁפְתַי רִנָּנוֹת יְהוָה לֵב פִּי:

(1) A Mizmor by David, when he was in the wilderness of Yehudah. (2) O G-d, You are my G-d. I seek You. My soul thirsts for You. My flesh thirsts for You in this desolate, parched, waterless land. (3) Just as I beheld You in the Mikdash, [I am thirsting] to see Your power and Your glory. (4) Because Your kindness is better than life, my lips will praise You. (5) Then, I will bless You with my life. I will lift my hands [to] Your Name. (6) Just as with a rich and abundant feast, my mouth will give praise with [all] the languages of joy.

**PART 2. HARMONY RESTORED.** Although his physical circumstances have not changed, David's desperate yearning has been rewarded with a spiritual elevation. As he counts off the watches of the night, he feels Hashem's presence as strong as it was when he lay on his royal bed in better times. His physical body has become so suffused with the holiness of his yearning that he feels fulfilled. Even here in the wilderness, he dwells in the shade of Hashem's protective wings with his body and soul in harmony.

(ז) אִם זִכְרְתִיךָ עַל יְצוּעֵי בִּאשְׁמֵרוֹת אֶהְיֶה בְּךָ: (ח) כִּי הָיִיתָ עֲזָרְתָה לִּי וּבָצִל כְּנָפֶיךָ אֶרְנֶנּוּ: (ט) דָּבַקָה נַפְשִׁי אַחֲרֶיךָ בִּי תִמְכָּה יְמִינֶךָ:

(7) Although I [once] called You to mind upon my royal bed, I now think of You [here] in the watches of the night. (8) For You are my help and so I joyously sing to You under the shade of Your protective wings. (9) In its eagerness for contact with holiness] My soul cleaved after You [to depart my body], but Your right arm supported me.

**PART 3. ACCOUNTS TO BE SETTLED.** Because his sense of closeness to Hashem has been restored, David is able to view his adversaries without fear or resentment. He is confident that those wicked individuals who have slandered him for personal gain will be subject to Hashem's judgment. As for Shaul HaMelech, who has behaved badly because of irrational fears, David still believes him to be a good man at heart. He hopes that Shaul will come to see the error of his ways. Then Shaul and the men who served him out of sincere loyalty, will also be given the opportunity to rejoice.

(י) וְהָמָּה לְשׂוֹאָה יִבְקְשׁוּ נַפְשִׁי יָבֹאוּ בְּתַחֲתִיּוֹת הָאָרֶץ: (יא) יִגְיְרוּהוּ עַל יְדֵי חָרֵב מִנֶּת שְׂעָלִים יִהְיוּ: (יב) וְהַמֶּלֶךְ יִשְׂמַח בְּאֱלֻקִּים יִתְהַלֵּל כָּל הַנִּשְׁבָּע בּוֹ כִּי יִסָּכֵר כִּי דוֹבְרֵי שָׁקֶר:

*(10) But as for them, seeking the devastation of my soul, let them end up in disgrace . (11) Let his blood be shed by the sword and let them become the meal of foxes. (12) Let the King (Shaul) rejoice in G-d. Let everyone who swears by him exult in his loyalty to him. For the mouth of those who utter lies will fall silent.*

## Learning the Mizmor

### **PART 1. THIRSTING IN THE DESERT .**

(א) מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד בְּהִיּוֹתוֹ בְּמִדְבַּר יְהוּדָה:

**A mizmor composed by David — מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד**, which he sang **when he was fleeing Shaul in the wilderness of Yehudah — בְּהִיּוֹתוֹ בְּמִדְבַּר יְהוּדָה**, also known as the wilderness of Ziph.

(ב) אֱלֻקִּים אֱלֹהֵי אֲתָהּ אֲשַׁחֲרֶךָ  
צִמְאָה לְךָ נַפְשִׁי כָמָּה לְךָ בָּשָׂרִי  
בְּאֶרֶץ צִיָּה וְעֵינִי בְּלִי מַיִם:

**O G-d — אֱלֻקִּים**, **You are my G-d — אֱלֹהֵי אֲתָהּ**, Who gives me the strength to survive this ordeal. **I seek You — אֲשַׁחֲרֶךָ** in prayer each morning as I flee from place to place. **My soul thirsts for You — צִמְאָה לְךָ נַפְשִׁי**, eager to experience again Your Presence in the *Mikdash* (Sanctuary) where the holy Ark is kept. Even **my flesh thirsts for You — כָּמָּה לְךָ בָּשָׂרִי** in this **desolate and parched, waterless land — בְּאֶרֶץ צִיָּה וְעֵינִי בְּלִי מַיִם**, where other people have no thought

other than to slake their physical need for water.

(ג) כִּן בִּקְדָשׁ חַיִּיתִיךָ לְרֹאוֹת עֲזֶךָ וּכְבוֹדֶךָ:

**Just as I beheld You in the Mikdash** — כִּן בִּקְדָשׁ חַיִּיתִיךָ, with all of my intellectual and physical faculties, so am I thirsting **to see** again the vision of **Your power and Your glory** — לְרֹאוֹת עֲזֶךָ וּכְבוֹדֶךָ.

(ד) כִּי טוֹב חֶסֶדְךָ מִחַיִּים

שִׁפְתֵי יִשְׁבְּחוּנֶךָ:

**Because Your kindness** in giving man a spiritual existence **is better** even **than life** itself — שִׁפְתֵי יִשְׁבְּחוּנֶךָ **כי טוב חסדך ממים**, **my lips will praise You** — in gratitude. You gave life to all of Your creatures, but You chose man to receive the supreme gift of the spirit.

(ה) כִּן אֶבְרַכְךָ בְּחַיֵּי בְשִׁמְךָ אֲשֶׁא כָפִי:

**Then**, when I again have the *zechus* (privilege) of being in the Mikdash, **I will bless You with** all the powers of **my life** — כִּן אֶבְרַכְךָ בְּחַיֵּי. **I will lift my hands in tefillah**, dedicated to **Your Name** — בְּשִׁמְךָ אֲשֶׁא כָפִי. Because every physical act that I perform is dedicated to You, my physical body becomes sanctified and thereby elevated to a spiritual level.

(ו) כִּמוֹ חֶלֶב וְדָשֵׁן תִּשְׂבַּע נַפְשִׁי

וּשְׁפִתֵי רִנָּנוֹת יִהְיֶה לִּי:

Then **my soul will be satiated** with devotion **as** if my body were gratified **with a rich and abundant feast** — כִּמוֹ חֶלֶב וְדָשֵׁן תִּשְׂבַּע נַפְשִׁי. **My mouth will give praise with** all the languages of joy — וּשְׁפִתֵי רִנָּנוֹת יִהְיֶה לִּי that I can muster. That experience of nearness to You will provide my soul with its fulfillment. Just as the body is said to receive its nourishment in three meals a day, so will the soul receive its nourishment in three *tefilos* a day (*Shacharis, Minchah, and Maariv*)

## PART 2. PRESENT FULFILLMENT.

(ז) אִם זִכְרְתִיךָ עַל יְצוּעַי

בְּאַשְׁמֵרוֹת אֶהְגֶּה בְּךָ:

**Although** in days past **I called You to mind** as I lay in comfort **upon my royal bed** — אִם זִכְרְתִיךָ עַל יְצוּעַי, **I will now think of You** here **in the watches of the night** — בְּאַשְׁמֵרוֹת אֶהְגֶּה בְּךָ, while I evade Shaul's pursuing troops.

(ח) כִּי הָיִיתָ עֲזָרָתָה לִּי  
וּבְצֵל כְּנָפֶיךָ אֶרְנֶנּוּ:

**For You are my help** — כִּי הָיִיתָ עֲזָרָתָה לִּי **no matter where I am and so I joyously sing to You under the shade of Your protective wings** — וּבְצֵל כְּנָפֶיךָ אֶרְנֶנּוּ in my gratitude for being permitted to remain here on the hallowed ground of Eretz Yisrael.

(ט) דָּבַקָה נַפְשִׁי אַחֲרֶיךָ  
בִּי תַמְכָּה יְמִינֶךָ:

**My soul cleaved after You** — דָּבַקָה נַפְשִׁי אַחֲרֶיךָ and wanted to depart from my body entirely to be with You, **but** to my great joy — **Your right arm supported me by sanctifying my body so that my soul could stay with me** — בִּי תַמְכָּה יְמִינֶךָ. In effect, my body became a holy vessel for my soul and it became possible for Your *hashgachah* to watch over my body and soul as one.

### PART 3. ACCOUNTS TO BE SETTLED.

(י) וְהֵמָּה לְשׂוֹאָה יִבְקְשׁוּ נַפְשִׁי  
יָבֹאוּ בְּתַחֲתִיּוֹת הָאָרֶץ:

**But** as for **them** — וְהֵמָּה, the wicked people who have been exploiting Shaul's jealous fears, they are viciously **seeking the devastation of my soul** — לְשׂוֹאָה יִבְקְשׁוּ נַפְשִׁי and its separation from my body in death. **Let them** be judged in like fashion and **end up in** disgrace, i.e. **the depths of the earth** — יָבֹאוּ בְּתַחֲתִיּוֹת הָאָרֶץ.

(יא) יַגִּירָהוּ עַל יְדֵי חָרֵב  
מִנֶּת שְׁעָלִים יִהְיוּ:

**Let** each one be dealt with as he intended to deal with me. His enemies will **shed his blood by the sword** — יַגִּירָהוּ עַל יְדֵי חָרֵב, and he will suffer the fate of wicked men whose bodies **become the meal of foxes** — מִנֶּת שְׁעָלִים יִהְיוּ.

(יב) וְהַמֶּלֶךְ יִשְׁמַח בְּאֱלֻקִּים  
יִתְהַלֵּל כָּל הַנִּשְׁבָּע בּוֹ  
כִּי יִסְכַּר פִּי דוֹבְרֵי שָׁקֶר:

As for King Shaul, whose hostility can be attributed to his state of melancholia, I

bear no grudge against him. Let him recover his mental balance and see the light of truth. I do not wish him harm. **Let the king rejoice in G-d — וְהַמֶּלֶךְ יִשְׂמַח — בָּאלֹקִים.** **Let everyone who** pays sincere homage to him and **swears by him exult in his loyalty to him — יִתְהַלֵּל כָּל הַנִּשְׁבָּע בּוֹ.** **For the mouth of those who utter lies** and exploit Shaul's mental illness for personal advantage **will fall silent — כִּי יִסְכַּר פִּי דוֹבְרֵי שָׁקֶר.**

## Living the Mizmor

Listed below are some of the thoughts you might have in mind when you say the words of the mizmor as *tefillos* expressing your gratitude to Hashem and as *tehillas* expressing your recognition of Hashem.

### Lessons for Life - Your Attitude.

[63:1] CRISIS. – **מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד בְּהִיּוֹתוֹ בְּמִדְבַּר יְהוּדָה** – “A Mizmor by David, when he was in the wilderness of Yehudah.” Even when your survival is at stake, don't abandon your focus on serving Hashem. In fact, your bond with Hashem will strengthen you and help you deal with the crisis.

### Tefillos for Life - Your Relationship with Hashem.

[63:2] SEEKING. – **אֱלֹקִים אֵלִי אַתָּה אֲשַׁחֲרֶךָ** – “O G-d, You Are my G-d. I seek You.” Develop a personal relationship with Hashem.

[63:2] HOLINESS. – **כָּמָה לִךְ בָּשָׂרִי** – “My flesh thirsts for You.” Absorb holiness into your body by focusing on Hashem when you do *mitzvos*.

[63:5] – **כֹּן אֲבָרְכֶךָ בְּחַיֵּי בִשְׁמִךְ אֲשָׂא כָפִי** – “Then, I will bless You with my life. I will lift my hands [to] Your Name.”

### Tefillos for Life - Your Gratitude.

[63:4] SPIRITUAL EXISTENCE. – **כִּי טוֹב חַסְדְּךָ מֵחַיִּים שִׁפְתֵי יִשְׁבְּחוּנֶךָ** – “Because Your kindness is better than life, my lips will praise You.” Thank Hashem for giving you a spiritual existence that enables you to perceive Him.

[63:8] WINGS. – **כִּי הָיִיתָ עֶזְרָתָה לִּי וּבִצֵּל כְּנָפֶיךָ אֲרִנֶּה** – “For You are my help and so I joyously sing to You under the shade of your protective wings.” Thank Hashem for protecting you.

## Sources

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

א - רש"י, רד"ק, מלבי"ם, ריל"ק	ז - רשר"ה
ב - רש"י, רד"ק, מצודות, ריל"ק	ח - רד"ק, אלשיך, ריל"ק
ג - רש"י, מלבי"ם	ט - אלשיך, מלבי"ם, ריל"ק
ד - רד"ק	י - רד"ק, אלשיך, מצודות, ריל"ק
ה - רש"י, אבן עזרא, אלשיך, מצודות, ריל"ק	יא - רש"י, רד"ק
ו - רש"י, אבן עזרא, מלבי"ם	יב - רשר"ה

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