

Mizmor 080

Bring Us Back

Key Concepts

The prophet Asaph continues his look into the future and pictures a future *Galus* (Exile) such as the one in which now live. He visualizes the challenges we face and offers a *tefillah* to Hashem to bring us back to the state of closeness that once existed between Him and His nation.

The theme of the mizmor is expressed by the plea, **הַשִּׁיבֵנו**, "bring us back." Because the *Galus* has been so long, we ask Hashem not to wait until we are fully worthy of the *Geulah* (Redemption). Asaph repeats this plea three times and it is used to demarcate three heartfelt appeals for the ending of the Galus. These three appeals form three of the major parts of the mizmor.

The last of the three appeals is preceded by an analogy, likening the nation Yisrael to a grape vine that Hashem transplanted from Mitzrayim where it first took root. Hashem then replanted the vine in a special land, which He had chosen as the place where the full intensity of His Presence would reside. This land was also intended to be the national home of Yisrael, His special nation, to be forever under His protection. The analogy proceeds to show how the Exile began when Hashem severed the protective fencing around the vine. Without its protection the vine became vulnerable to intruders who plucked its fruit. Thus, Hashem chose to neglect His vine and Yisrael became vulnerable to invasion by the marauding nations.

Each of the three appeals ends with an almost identical verse based on the plea, **הַשִּׁיבֵנו**, "bring us back." Slight differences in the wording of the three verses are used to emphasize a gradual build-up in intensity of the plea.

Exploring the Mizmor

PART 1. FIRST APPEAL. In the first appeal for restoration of Hashem's closeness to Yisrael, Asaph addresses Him as the Shepherd of His people, associating *Hashem* with the memory of David, the young shepherd who cared for each one of the sheep that were in his charge. Asaph then refers to the historical peak of Hashem's closeness when the Divine Presence (*Shechinah*) was focused on top of the *Cheruvim* (cherubs) on the Ark in the innermost chamber of the *Bais HaMikdash*

(Temple)

(א) לְמִנְצַחַ אֶל שְׁשָׁנִים עֲדוּת לְאַסָּף מִזְמוֹר: (ב) רְעֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל הַאֲזִינָה נְהַג כְּצֹאן יוֹסֵף יֵשֵׁב הַכְּרוּבִים הוֹפִיעָה: (ג) לִפְנֵי אֶפְרַיִם וּבִנְיָמִן וּמְנַשֶּׁה עוֹרְרָה אֶת גְּבוּרָתְךָ וּלְכָה לִישַׁעְתָּה לָנוּ: (ד) אֱלֹקִים הִשִּׁיבֵנו וְהָאֵר פְּנִיךָ וְנִשְׁעָה:

(1) For the musician, to be performed on the shoshanim. A mizmor of testimony by Asaph . (2) Give ear, O Shepherd of Yisrael, You Who leads the nation like the flock of Yosef; You Who are enthroned upon the Cheruvim, shine forth. (3) Arouse Your might before Ephraim and Benjamin and Menasheh; it is upon You to save us. (4) O G-d, bring us back; light up Your face that we may be saved.

PART 2. SECOND APPEAL. In the second appeal, Asaph expands his symbolic conception of Hashem to identify Him on a cosmic scale. The Creator is now viewed as the Master of the Legions of Heavenly angels that are His agents in controlling the universe, even the armies of Yisrael's bitter enemy that must be overcome if the *Galus* is to end. This is in recognition of the fact that Yisrael cannot return to closeness with Hashem until its sins are forgiven.

(ה) ה' אֱלֹקִים צְבָאוֹת עַד מְתֵי עֲשָׂנֶת בְּתַפְלַת עַמְּךָ: (ו) הֲאֵכְלֶתֶם לָחֵם דְּמָעָה וּתְשַׁקְמוּ בְּדָמָעוֹת שְׁלִישׁ: (ז) תְּשִׁימוּנוּ מְדוֹן לְשִׁכְיָנוּ וְאִי־בִינוּ יִלְעָגוּ לָמוֹ: (ח) אֱלֹקִים צְבָאוֹת הִשִּׁיבֵנו וְהָאֵר פְּנִיךָ וְנִשְׁעָה:

(5) Hashem, G-d, [You are Master of the] Legions [of Heavenly angels]. How long will You fume [in wrath, rejecting] the prayers of Your people. (6) You fed them bread of tears; You made them drink tears in great measure. (7) You made us an object of strife for our neighbors and our enemies mock them [for not being more aggressive]. (8) O G-d, [Master] of Legions, bring us back; light up Your face that we may be saved.

PART 3. THE NEGLECTED VINE. The nation Yisrael is likened to a fruitful grape vine that Hashem successfully transplanted from Mitzrayim where it first took root. But because of Yisrael's sins, Hashem broke down the vine's protective fence and the nation symbolized by the vine became vulnerable to attack. The Sages explain that the vine can be the noblest among all plants if it brings forth the fruit expected of it; without its fruit, however, it would be quite worthless. Furthermore, the fruit of the vine is the most crushed and abused among fruits. But this very abuse ennobles it.

(ט) גִּפְן מִמְצָרִים תִּסְיַע תִּגְרַשׁ גוֹיִם וּתִטְעֶהָ: (י) פְּנִית לְפָנֶיהָ וּתְשַׁרֵּשׁ שָׁרְשֶׁיהָ

וּתְמַלֵּא אֶרֶץ: (יא) כָּסוּ הָרִים צֵלָה וְעֲנַפְיָהּ אֶרְזֵי אֵל: (יב) תִּשְׁלַח קַצִּירָהּ עַד יָם וְאֶל
נְהַר יוֹנְקוֹתֶיהָ: (יג) לָמָּה פָּרַצְתָּ גְדָרֶיהָ וְאָרוּהָ כָּל עֲבָרֵי דָרְךָ: (יד) יִכְרַסְמָנָה חַזִּיר
מִיַּעַר וְזִיז שְׂדֵי יִרְעֶנָּה:

(9) You brought a vine out of Mitzrayim. You drove out the [Canaanite] nations because of their moral failings and planted it [in their place.] (10) You cleared away [the Canaanite idol worshippers] before it and you caused it to take deep root until it filled the land. (11) Mountains were covered by its shade and mighty cedars by its branches. (12) It stretched its branches to the sea and its suctioning tendrils roots to the river. (13) Why have You breached its defensive fences so that every passerby plucks its fruit? (14) The wild boar of the forest nibbles at it and the creeping animals of the field feed on it.

PART 4. THIRD APPEAL. Asaph continues with his analogy of the grape vine and pleads with Hashem to restore His concern for the well-being of the vine. He emphasizes the special relationship that Hashem originally established with Yisrael, suggesting that the nation is ready to dedicate itself once more to His service, if only given the opportunity.

(טו) אֱלֹקִים צְבָאוֹת שׁוּב נָא הִבֵּט מִשָּׁמַיִם וּרְאֵה וּפְקֹד גְּפוֹן זֹאת: (טז) וּכְנֶה אֲשֶׁר
נָטְעָה יְמִינְךָ וְעַל בֶּן אֲמֻצָּתָה לָּךְ: (יז) שִׁרְפָהּ בְּאֵשׁ כְּסוּחָהּ מִגְּעֵרַת פְּנִידָה יֹאבְדוּ: (יח)
תִּהְיֶי יָדְךָ עַל אִישׁ יְמִינְךָ עַל בֶּן אָדָם אֲמֻצָּת לָּךְ: (יט) וְלֹא נְסוּג מִמֶּךָ תִּחְיִינוּ וּבְשִׁמְךָ
נִקְרָא: (כ) ה' אֱלֹקִים צְבָאוֹת הַשִּׁיבֵנו הָאֵר פְּנִידָה וְנוֹשְׁעָה:

(15) O G-d, Master of Legions, return now. Look down from heaven and see. Be mindful of this vine, (16) and the vine stock that Your right hand has planted, and the son You took as Your own — (17) consumed by fire, cut down, they perish before Your angry rebuke. (18) Let Your hand be over the man of Your right hand, over the son of man You took for Yourself. (19) Then we will not turn back from You. Grant us life that we may call upon Your Name. (20) Hashem, G-d, Master of Legions, bring us back. Light up Your face that we may be saved.

Learning the Mizmor

PART 1. FIRST APPEAL.

(א) לְמַנְצֵחַ אֶל שְׁשָׁנִים
עֲדוֹת לְאַסָּף מִזְמוֹר:

This mizmor was prepared **for the musician** — לְמַנְצֵחַ who will perform it **on the** instrument called *shoshanim* — על שְׁשָׁנִים. The *shoshanim* was a unique musical instrument shaped like a rose. The rose is a symbol of the Jewish people, surrounded by thorns. **The mizmor** was composed **by Asaph as a testimony** - עֲדוֹת לְאַסָּף מִזְמוֹר, bearing witness to the future Exiles.

(ב) רֵעֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל הָאֲזִינָה
נִהְיָ כְצֹאן יוֹסֵף יֹשֵׁב הַכְּרוּבִים הוֹפִיעָה:

Give ear, O Shepherd of Ysrael — רֵעֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל הָאֲזִינָה, **You Who leads the nation like a flock** — נִהְיָ כְצֹאן, that nation which was sustained in Mitzrayim by **Yosef** — יוֹסֵף and was inspired by his example to faithfully preserve their Jewish spirit and maintain their Torah way of life even in their associations with the non-Jewish world; **You Who are enthroned upon the Cheruvim** — יֹשֵׁב הַכְּרוּבִים on the cover of the Ark, where You established Your Torah as the law for all times, **shine forth** — הוֹפִיעָה and make Your presence known to all mankind.

(ג) לְפָנַי אֶפְרַיִם וּבִנְיָמִן וּמְנַשֶּׁה עוֹרְרָה אֶת גְּבוּרַתְךָ
וּלְכֹה לִישַׁעְתָּה לָנוּ:

Arouse Your might before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasheh — לְפָנַי אֶפְרַיִם וּבִנְיָמִן וּמְנַשֶּׁה עוֹרְרָה אֶת גְּבוּרַתְךָ. It is they who are the descendants of Rachel, who pleaded and wept for her children and to whom You responded with hope for the future (Yeshyahu 31:16). Now **it is upon You to save us** — וּלְכֹה לִישַׁעְתָּה לָנוּ.

(ד) אֱלֹקִים הַשִּׁיבֵנו
וְהָאֵר פְּנֵיךָ וְנִשְׁעָה:

O G-d, bring us back from Exile — אֱלֹקִים הַשִּׁיבֵנו and return us to Your service

in Yerushalayim. Don't wait until we purify ourselves from our sins, but lead us back now. Then we will be able to perform many *mitzvos* that will make it possible for You to **light up Your face** — **וְהָאֵר פְּנִיךָ** to us and put us in Your favor again so **that we may be saved** — **וְנִשְׁעָה** for all time.

PART 2. SECOND APPEAL.

(ה) ה' אֱלֹקִים צְבָאוֹת
עַד מָתִי עֲשֵׂנָהּ בְּתַפְלַת עֲמֹךָ:

Hashem, G-d, You are Master of the **Legions** — ה' אֱלֹקִים צְבָאוֹת of Heavenly angels that enable our enemies to attack us. After the fire of destruction has burned itself out, **how long will You** continue to **fume** in wrath, hiding Yourself behind a veil of **smoke**, rejecting **the prayers of Your people** — עַד מָתִי עֲשֵׂנָהּ בְּתַפְלַת עֲמֹךָ, and reacting to their offered incense as though it were unpleasant smoke?

(ו) הֶאֱכַלְתֶּם לֶחֶם דְּמָעָה
וַתִּשְׁקְמוּ בְּדַמְעוֹת שְׁלִישׁ:

You fed them bread of tears — הֶאֱכַלְתֶּם לֶחֶם דְּמָעָה, **for their** weeping displaced their appetite — הִיָּתָה לִי דְמָעָתִי לֶחֶם (as in Mizmor 42, v.4). And in place of wine or water **You made them drink tears in great measure** — וַתִּשְׁקְמוּ בְּדַמְעוֹת שְׁלִישׁ.

(ז) תִּשְׂיִמְנוּ מָדוֹן לְשֹׂכְנֵינוּ
וְאִיבֵינוּ יִלְעָגוּ לָמוֹ:

You made us a target of strife for our neighbors — תִּשְׂיִמְנוּ מָדוֹן לְשֹׂכְנֵינוּ, for they quarrel with us continually. **And our enemies mock** them — וְאִיבֵינוּ יִלְעָגוּ לָמוֹ, deriding them for not destroying us.

(ח) אֱלֹקִים צְבָאוֹת הֲשִׁיבֵנוּ
וְהָאֵר פְּנִיךָ וְנִשְׁעָה:

O G-d, [Master] of Legions, bring us back from Exile — אֱלֹקִים הֲשִׁיבֵנוּ and return us to Your service by inspiring us and encouraging us to do *teshuvah*. When

we finally return **shine Your face** — וְהָאֵר פָּנֶיךָ to us and show us Your blessing of kindness so **that we may be saved** — וְנִשְׁעָה for all time.

PART 3. THE NEGLECTED VINE.

(ט) גִּפְּוֹן מִמִּצְרַיִם תִּסְיַע
תִּגְרֹשׁ גּוֹיִם וְתִטְעֶה:

You brought a vine out of Mitzrayim — גִּפְּוֹן מִמִּצְרַיִם תִּסְיַע. This was Your nation Yisrael, a fruited vine which You had carefully selected because of its special qualities. **You drove out the** Canaanite **nations** because of their moral failings **and planted** Your selected vine — תִּגְרֹשׁ גּוֹיִם וְתִטְעֶה.

(י) פָּנִיתָ לְפָנֶיהָ
וְתִשְׂרֹשׁ שְׂרָשֶׁיהָ וְתִמְלֵא אֶרֶץ:

You cleared away the Canaanite idol worshippers **before it** — פָּנִיתָ לְפָנֶיהָ, **and you caused it to take deep root** — וְתִשְׂרֹשׁ שְׂרָשֶׁיהָ so that Yisrael formed an eternal spiritual bond with the land and became identified with the land for all time. **And** because of its strong roots Yisrael was able to grow **until it filled the land** — וְתִמְלֵא אֶרֶץ.

(יא) כָּסּוּ הָרִים צִלָּהּ
וְעֲנַפֶּיהָ אֶרְזֵי אֵל:

The vine of Yisrael grew so well that was as if **mountains were covered by its shade** — כָּסּוּ הָרִים צִלָּהּ, **and mighty cedars by its branches** — וְעֲנַפֶּיהָ אֶרְזֵי אֵל. This is a symbolic reference to the indirect blessings other nations may receive as a result of Yisrael being the beneficiary of Hashem's kindness.

(יב) תִּשְׁלַח קְצִירָהּ עַד יָם
וְאֶל נָהָר יוֹנְקוֹתֶיהָ:

The vine made Yisrael a center of commerce. **It stretched its branches** carrying harvested products **to the** Mediterranean **sea** — תִּשְׁלַח קְצִירָהּ עַד יָם to be sent around the world, **and** it extended **its suctioning tendril roots to the** Euphrates **river** — וְאֶל נָהָר יוֹנְקוֹתֶיהָ to import the products of the nations to the east.

(יג) לָמָּה פָּרַצְתָּ גְדֵרֶיהָ
וְאָרוּהָ כָּל עֹבְרֵי דָרֶךְ:

Why have You Yourself now delivered it up to destruction without any means of protection. **Why have You breached its defensive fences** — לָמָּה פָּרַצְתָּ גְדֵרֶיהָ, **so that every passerby plucks its fruit** — וְאָרוּהָ כָּל עֹבְרֵי דָרֶךְ? Why have you allowed every minor power to breach Yisrael's borders.

(יד) יִכְרַסְמָנָה חֲזִיר מִיַּעַר
וְזִיז שְׂדֵי יִרְעָנָה:

The power of Rome which is like **the wild boar of the forest nibbles at it** — יִכְרַסְמָנָה חֲזִיר מִיַּעַר, and the minor powers which are like **the creeping animals of the field feed on it** — וְזִיז שְׂדֵי יִרְעָנָה.

PART 4. THIRD APPEAL.

(טו) אֱלֹקִים צְבָאוֹת שׁוּב נָא
הִבֵּט מִשָּׁמַיִם וּרְאֵה וּפְקֹד גְּפוֹן זֹאת:

O G-d, Master of the Legions of heavenly angels, **return now** to see our suffering! — אֱלֹקִים צְבָאוֹת שׁוּב נָא. Though You are so great and we are so far from You in our lowly state, **look down from heaven and see** — הִבֵּט מִשָּׁמַיִם וּרְאֵה! **Be mindful of this vine** — וּפְקֹד גְּפוֹן זֹאת and protect it from the powers that are picking at it.

(טז) וְכִנָּה אֲשֶׁר נָטְעָה יְמִינְךָ
וְעַל בֵּן אֲמַצְתָּה לָךְ:

And be mindful of the Patriarchs (Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov), **the vine stock that Your right hand has planted** — וְכִנָּה אֲשֶׁר נָטְעָה יְמִינְךָ, and Yisrael, **the son You took as Your own** — וְעַל בֵּן אֲמַצְתָּה לָךְ, preferring him over Esav, the other son of Yitzchak.

(יז) שָׂרְפָה בָּאֵשׁ כְּסוּחָה
מִנְעֵרֶת פְּנִיךָ יֵאָבְדוּ:

Tragically, that precious vine is now **consumed by fire, cut down** — שָׂרְפָה בָּאֵשׁ

מְנַעַרְת פְּנִיךָ יֵאבְדוּ — they perish before Your angry rebuke for without Your favor they cannot survive.

(יח) תְּהִי יָדְךָ עַל אִישׁ יְמִינְךָ
עַל בֶּן אָדָם אֲמַצְתָּ לָּךְ:

Let Your protective hand be over Yisrael, the man of Your right hand — תְּהִי indeed, **over** that very **son of mortal man You took for Yourself —** **עַל בֶּן אָדָם אֲמַצְתָּ לָּךְ** out all of mankind.

(יט) וְלֹא נִסּוּג מִמְּךָ
תִּתְחַיְנֵנוּ וּבִשְׁמֶךָ נִקְרָא:

Then we will remain steadfast and **not turn back from You** and from Your service — **וְלֹא נִסּוּג מִמְּךָ**. Free us from this Galus and **grant us life that we may** publicly **call upon Your Name** in gratitude — **תִּתְחַיְנֵנוּ וּבִשְׁמֶךָ נִקְרָא**.

(כ) ה' אֱלֹקִים צְבָאוֹת
הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ הָאֵר פְּנִיךָ וְנִשְׁעָה

Hashem, G-d, Master of Legions, bring us back from Exile — **ה' אֱלֹקִים צְבָאוֹת** **הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ**. And even now while we are in Exile amidst all our present misery, **light up Your face — הָאֵר פְּנִיךָ** to us and show us Your blessing of kindness so **that we may be saved — וְנִשְׁעָה** and through the light of Your countenance we will be exalted beyond all suffering.

Sources

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

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

יז - רש"י, רד"ק, מצודות, המאירי, נר לרגל
יח - רש"י, רד"ק, המאירי,
יט - רש"י, רד"ק, מצודות, אבן יחייא, נר לרגלי
כ - אבן עזרא, רד"ק, רשר"ה, נר לרגלי

יב - המאירי, רשר"ה
יג - רש"י, רד"ק, מצודות, בן־רמוך, רשר"ה
יד - רש"י, המאירי, רשר"ה
טו - אבן עזרא, רד"ק, מלבי"ם
טז - מצודות, נר לרגל

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