

Mizmor 084

My Soul Yearns

Key Concepts

This mizmor is one of many in Tehillim that were designed to express the yearnings and *tefillos* (prayers) of the Jewish nation in a time of *Galus* (Exile). The singer refers to the heart, body, and soul of the nation, which represents the deepest yearnings of the people, longing to gain access once more to the *Bais HaMikdash* (Holy Temple in Yerushalayim). They reflect similar feelings experienced by King David during the time when he was a fugitive far from home in the Land of the Plishtim (see Mizmor 011). He desperately wanted to return to the one place in the world where he could be nearest to Hashem.

It was with this yearning that David subsequently sought to build the future *Bais HaMikdash*. When that privilege was denied him he worked with tireless devotion in laying the groundwork for the House of Hashem to be built by his son Shlomoh.

The thoughts articulated in the mizmor reflect the feelings and aspirations of Jews in Exile throughout history as they dedicate their *tefillos* to the coming *Geulah* (Redemption).

Historical Background

This is one of a series of *mizmorim* that were composed by the sons of Korach and passed down from generation to generation by their descendants (see Mizmor 042). Ultimately, these beautiful mizmorim were edited by King David and incorporated into the *sefer Tehillim*.

Exploring the Mizmor

PART 1. A SONG OF YEARNING. The mizmor begins with a song expressing the yearning that David felt towards the future dwelling place of Hashem and which Jews have felt throughout the centuries towards their study halls and places of prayer. This part of the mizmor ends with the famous verse "Ashrei" w

(א) לְמַנְצֵחַ עַל הַגִּתִּית לְבַנֵּי קִרְחַ מִזְמוֹר: (ב) מִה יְדִידוֹת מְשִׁכְנוֹתֶיךָ ה' צְבָאוֹת: (ג)
 נִכְסְפָה וְגַם כָּלֵתָה נַפְשִׁי לְחַצְרוֹת ה' לְבִי וּבִשְׂרֵי יִרְנְנוּ אֶל אֵל חַי: (ד) גַּם צְפוּר
 מִצְאָה בֵּית וְדָרוֹר קִן לָהּ אֲשֶׁר שָׁתָה אֶפְרָחֶיךָ אֶת מִזְבְּחוֹתֶיךָ ה' צְבָאוֹת מִלְכֵי

וְאֵלֶיךָ:

(1) For the musician, on the “gittis”, a mizmor by the sons of Korach. (2) How cherished are Your dwelling places, Hashem, Master of Legions. (3) My soul yearns, indeed it faints from longing for the courtyards of Hashem. My heart and my flesh pray fervently to the living G-d. (4) Even the sparrow has found its home and the swallow a nest for herself to place her young. [But we are unable to bring our offerings] at Your altars Hashem, Master of Legions, my King and my G-d.

PART 2. TRANSLATING YEARNING INTO GROWTH. The second part of the mizmor begins with a declaration of gratitude and appreciation for being able to visualize how fine it will be to serve Hashem in the *Bais HaMikdash* when it is once more rebuilt. This sense of recognition gives us the strength to devote ourselves individually and as a community to moral and spiritual growth so that we will be worthy of overcoming the challenges of the Galus (Exile) and seeing the fulfillment of our dreams.

(ה) אֲשֶׁרִי יוֹשְׁבֵי בֵיתְךָ עוֹד יִהְלָלוּךָ סֵלָה: (ו) אֲשֶׁרִי אָדָם עוֹז לוֹ בְּךָ מִסְלוֹת בְּלִבָּם:
(ז) עֲבָרִי בְעֵמֶק הַבָּכָא מֵעַן יִשְׁתַּוְּהוּ גַם בְּרָכוֹת יַעֲטֶה מוֹרָה: (ח) יִלְכוּ מִחֵיל אֶל חֵיל יִרְאֶה אֶל אֱלֹקִים בְּצִיּוֹן:

(5) Fortunate are those who live in Your House, may they continue to praise You, Selah. (6) Fortunate is the man that finds his strength in You and [fortunate are all with] pathways [to You] in their hearts. (7) Wandering through the valley of weeping, they make it a place of springs as if the early rain had clothed it with blessings. (8) They advance from strength to strength to appear before G-d in Tzion.

PART 3. TRANSLATING YEARNING INTO TEFILLAH. The third part of the mizmor is a *tefillah* for the *Geulah* and the restoration of the *Bais HaMikdash*. The *tefillah* invokes the memory of David whose intense yearning was the precursor to the building of the First *Bais HaMikdash*. We ask Hashem to respond to that yearning and reward it by sending David's anointed descendant to lead us to that goal once more.

(ט) ה' אֱלֹקִים צְבָאוֹת שְׁמֵעָה תַפְלֵתִי הֶאֱזִינָה אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב סֵלָה: (י) מִגִּנְנוּ רֵאָה אֱלֹקִים וְהִבֵּט פָּנָי מִשְׁיחָד: (יא) כִּי טוֹב יוֹם בְּחֻצְרֶיךָ מֵאֶלְף בְּחֻרְתֵי הַסְּתוּפָף בְּבֵית אֱלֹקֵי מְדוּר בְּאֶהְלֵי רָשָׁע: (יב) כִּי שָׁמֵשׁ וּמִגֵּן ה' אֱלֹקִים חוֹן וְכָבוֹד יִתֵּן ה' לֹא יִמְנַע טוֹב לְהִלְכֵי בְּתַמִּים: (יג) ה' צְבָאוֹת אֲשֶׁרִי אָדָם בְּטִחַ בְּךָ:

(9) Hashem, G-d, Master of Legions, hear my prayer. Listen, O G-d of Yaakov, Selah. (10) O G-d, our shield, see and look at the face of [David,] Your anointed one. (11) For a day in Your courtyards is better than a thousand [elsewhere]. I would rather sit upon the threshold of my G-d's house than dwell [in comfort] in the tents of lawlessness. (12) For Hashem is a sun and G-d is a shield. Hashem bestows favor and honor. He does not withhold good from those who walk in moral integrity. (13) Hashem, Master of Legions, fortunate is the man who trusts in You.

Learning the Mizmor

PART 1. A SONG OF YEARNING.

(א) לְמִנְצַחַּ עַל הַגְּתִית
לְבְנֵי קֹרַח מִזְמוֹר:

This song was prepared **for the musician** — לְמִנְצַחַּ who will perform it **on the** instrument called "**gittis**" — עַל הַגְּתִית. It is **a mizmor** composed **by the sons of Korach** — לְבְנֵי קֹרַח מִזְמוֹר. The *gittis* was a unique musical instrument fabricated in the city of Gass in the land of the Plishtim.

(ב) מַה יְדִידוֹת מְשֻׁכָּנוֹתֶיךָ
ה' צְבָאוֹת:

How cherished are Your dwelling places in Yerushalayim — מַה יְדִידוֹת! It is in Your places of holiness that I can feel especially close to You, **Hashem, Master of the Legions** — ה' צְבָאוֹת of Heavenly angels! Although You are attended by sublime beings in Heaven, You have shown a special concern for your holy precincts in the lowly world of mankind.

(ג) נִכְסְפָה וְגַם כָּלְתָה נַפְשִׁי לְחֻצְרוֹת ה'

My soul yearns, indeed it faints from longing — נִכְסְפָה וְגַם כָּלְתָה נַפְשִׁי **for the courtyards of Hashem** — לְחֻצְרוֹת ה', the holy precincts of the *Bais HaMikdash*.

לְבִי וּבִשְׂרִי יִרְנְנוּ אֶל אֱלֹהֵי חַיִּים:

My heart and my flesh – לְבִי וּבִשְׂרִי **pray fervently to the living G-d** – יִרְנְנוּ אֶל אֱלֹהֵי חַיִּים to makes this dream come true. All my faculties are involved: My heart is the intellect residing in my soul and my flesh is my power of speech which expresses that which is in my heart.

(ד) גַּם צְפוּר מְצֵאָה בַּיִת
וְדָרוֹר קָן לָהּ אֲשֶׁר שָׂתָה אֶפְרָחֶיהָ

Even the sparrow has found its home in the ruins of the *Bais HaMikdash* – גַּם צְפוּר מְצֵאָה בַּיִת **and the swallow** has made **herself a nest** – וְדָרוֹר קָן לָהּ **to place her young** – אֲשֶׁר שָׂתָה אֶפְרָחֶיהָ. Correspondingly, each soul builds its own "nest" in the House of G-d because there is assigned to each individual his own special task of devotion and upward striving in accordance with the particular nature of his personality.

אֶת מִזְבְּחוֹתֶיךָ ה' צְבָאוֹת מַלְכֵי וְאַלְקֵי:

But we are unable to bring our offerings **at Your altars** – אֶת מִזְבְּחוֹתֶיךָ, **Hashem, Master of Legions, my King and my G-d** – ה' צְבָאוֹת מַלְכֵי וְאַלְקֵי.

PART 2. TRANSLATING YEARNING INTO GROWTH.

(ה) אֲשֶׁרִי יוֹשְׁבֵי בֵיתְךָ

Fortunate – אֲשֶׁרִי **are those who** will see the *Bais HaMikdash* rebuilt and who will be allowed to **live in** the environs of **Your House** – יוֹשְׁבֵי בֵיתְךָ to be close to You and know You.

עוֹד יִהְלְלוּךָ סֵלָה:

And even if it is only in a replica of that House, where they are permitted to serve You with Torah and Tefillah, **may they continue to praise You** in gratitude and devotion all the days of their lives, **Selah** – עוֹד יִהְלְלוּךָ סֵלָה.

(ו) אֲשֶׁרִי אָדָם עוֹז לוֹ בְּךָ
מִסְלוֹת בְּלִבָּבָם:

Fortunate is the man, wherever he may be, **who finds his strength in You** –

אֲשֶׁרִי אָדָם עוֹז לוֹ בְּךָ. It is from You that He draws the strength to overcome the challenges to moral, intellectual, and spiritual growth. Fortunate are all who cherish **in their hearts the pathways** leading up towards You — **מַסְלֹת בְּלִבָּבָם**.

(ז) **עֲבָרִי בְּעֵמֶק הַבְּכָא**
מֵעֵיִן יִשְׁתוּהוּ
גַּם בְּרָכוֹת יַעֲטֶה מוֹרָה:

Wandering through the valley of weeping — **עֲבָרִי בְּעֵמֶק הַבְּכָא**, they are strengthened by their suffering and transform their tears into fresh water, **making it a place of springs** — **מֵעֵיִן יִשְׁתוּהוּ**, as if the early rain had clothed it with **blessings** — **גַּם בְּרָכוֹת יַעֲטֶה מוֹרָה**.

(ח) **יִלְכוּ מִחֵיל אֶל חֵיל**
יִרְאֶה אֶל אֱלֹקִים בְּצִיּוֹן:

They advance from strength to strength — **יִלְכוּ מִחֵיל אֶל חֵיל**, climbing through progressive levels of character development and Torah learning. **Each** of them is motivated by the knowledge that he **will appear before G-d in Zion** — **יִרְאֶה אֶל אֱלֹקִים בְּצִיּוֹן**, a blessed place of spiritual and intellectual clarity.

PART 3. TRANSLATING YEARNING INTO TEFILLAH.

(ט) **ה' אֱלֹקִים צְבָאוֹת שְׁמַעָה תְּפִלָּתִי**
הַאֲזִינָה אֱלֹקֵי יַעֲקֹב סֵלָה:

Hashem, G-d, Master of Legions, hear my prayer — **ה' אֱלֹקִים צְבָאוֹת שְׁמַעָה** , bring the *Geulah* and make my yearnings into a reality so that I will be among those who live in Your house. **Listen, O G-d of Yaakov, Selah** — **הַאֲזִינָה אֱלֹקֵי יַעֲקֹב סֵלָה**.

(י) **מִגִּנְנוּ רְאֵה אֱלֹקִים**
וְהִבֵּט פָּנָי מִשִּׁיחָד:

You Who are **our shield, O G-d, see** our plight — **מִגִּנְנוּ רְאֵה אֱלֹקִים**. **Look at the face of** David, **Your anointed one** — **וְהִבֵּט פָּנָי מִשִּׁיחָד**, see his efforts to build

ג - אבן עזרא, רד"ק

יא - רש"י, אבן עזרא, רד"ק, מלבי"ם

יב - רשר"ה

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