

# Mizmor 086

## Answer Me

### Key Concepts

This mizmor was originally composed by David to strengthen his trust in Divine help when he was a fugitive, fleeing from King Shaul. David subsequently adapted it to serve the needs of the Jewish people whenever they might be in distress.

In this model *tefillah* (prayer), David demonstrates how a person who is despondent and forlorn, suffering from fear and guilt, can find solace and a renewed feeling of nearness to Hashem.

The mizmor consists of four parts, reflecting four stages in the process of regaining confidence in Hashem's love. In the first part, David is dejected and crushed by circumstances. But he appeals to Hashem to listen to his *tefillah*. He does so by throwing himself upon Hashem's mercy, humbly recognizing his total dependence upon his Creator. David pleads with Hashem to answer him and in doing so he feels a sense of Hashem's presence all around him.

In the second part, David refreshes his appreciation of Hashem as the all-powerful and all-good Creator, the only authentic Power in all of Creation. This reminds him that Hashem loves him and will surely be ready to receive him in forgiveness.

In the third part, David is inspired to make a renewed effort to develop his own moral character and strengthen his spirit to be worthy of Hashem's confidence. He asks Hashem to guide him in this process, teaching him the Divine attributes of goodness and kindness so that he can learn to emulate them.

Finally, in the fourth part David has gained sufficient confidence in his relationship with his Creator to step forward and plead with Hashem to exercise those Divine qualities now to enable him to endure the difficult challenges he is facing. And so he asks Hashem to let him overcome those who would harm him.

### Exploring the Mizmor

**PART 1. PLEA TO BE HEARD.** David begins by seeking to re-establish his relationship with Hashem. His goal is to use the power of *tefillah* to gain a sense of Hashem's nearness. The core of this plea is a self-examination in which he sees himself as being totally dependent upon Hashem, while at the same time being totally dedicated to Him. He praises the qualities of Hashem that cause Him to be

responsive to those who call upon Him. By dwelling on those qualities David hopes that he too will be heard and will be blessed with the sense of nearness that he desperately seeks.

(א) תַּפְּלָה לְדָוִד הַטָּה ה' אֲזַנְךָ עֲנֵנִי כִי עָנִי וְאֶבְיֹן אָנֹכִי: (ב) שְׁמְרָה נַפְשִׁי כִי חֶסֶד אָנֹכִי הוֹשַׁע עַבְדְּךָ אֶתְּהָ אֱלֹקֵי הַבֹּטֶחַ אֵלֶיךָ: (ג) חֲנִנִי אֲדַנֶּי כִי אֵלֶיךָ אֶקְרָא כָּל הַיּוֹם: (ד) שְׂמַח נַפְשׁ עַבְדְּךָ כִי אֵלֶיךָ אֲדַנֶּי נַפְשִׁי אֲשָׂא: (ה) כִּי אֶתְּהָ אֲדַנֶּי טוֹב וְסִלַּח וְרַב חֶסֶד לְכָל קוֹרְאֶיךָ: (ו) הַאֲזִינָה ה' תַּפְּלָתִי וְהִקְשִׁיבָה בְּקוֹל תַּחֲנוּנוֹתַי: (ז) בְּיוֹם צָרָתִי אֶקְרָאךָ כִּי תַעֲנֵנִי:

(1) A tefillah by David. Hashem, incline Your ear, answer me, for I am poor and defenseless (2) Protect my soul, for I am entirely dedicated [to You]. Save Your servant, who puts his trust in You, my G-d. (3) Grant me Your favor, Hashem, for I call upon You every day. (4) Bring joy to the soul of Your servant, for I lift up my soul to You Hashem [in total devotion]. (5) You, Hashem, are good and forgiving and You treat all who call upon You with bountiful kindness. (6) Hashem, hear my tefillah. Listen to the sound [and sincere intentions] of my supplications (7) I call upon You [now] on the day of my distress so that You will answer me [by giving me a sense of Your nearness].

**PART 2. SONG OF PRAISE.** David reflects upon the greatness of Hashem as the only authentic Power in all of Creation. Hashem's unlimited goodness provides the basis by which even a poverty-stricken sinner can approach Him and be forgiven. These qualities will ultimately be recognized by all of humanity.

(ח) אֵין כָּמוֹךָ בְּאֱלֹקִים אֲדַנֶּי וְאֵין כְּמַעֲשֶׂיךָ: (ט) כָּל גּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ יְבוֹאוּ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ לְפָנֶיךָ אֲדַנֶּי וַיִּכְבְּדוּ לְשִׁמְךָ: (י) כִּי גְדוֹל אֶתְּהָ וְעֵשָׂה נִפְלְאוֹת אֶתְּהָ אֱלֹקִים לְבַדְּךָ:

(8) There is none like You among the heavenly forces, Hashem, and there is nothing like Your works. (9) All the nations that You have made will come and bow down before You, Hashem, and they will pay honor to Your Name. (10) For You are magnificent and perform wonders. You alone are G-d.

**PART 3. PLEA FOR PERSONAL GROWTH.** David resolves to work on his own spiritual development and calls upon Hashem to help him grow by focusing his attention on the cosmic qualities of morality, loving kindness, and gratitude .

(יא) הוֹרֵנִי ה' דַּרְכֶּךָ אֶתְּהָ בְּאַמְתָּךָ יַחַד לְבָבִי לִירְאָה שְׁמָךְ: (יב) אֲוֹדְךָ אֲדַנֶּי אֱלֹקֵי

בְּכֹל לִבִּי וְאֶכְבְּדָה שְׁמֶךָ לְעוֹלָם: (יג) כִּי חֶסֶדְךָ גָּדוֹל עָלַי וְהִצַּלְתָּ נַפְשִׁי מִשְׂאוּל  
תַּחֲתֵיָהּ:

*(11) Teach me Your way, Hashem, so that I may walk in Your truth. Let my heart be focused in fearing Your Name. (12) I will then acknowledge You, Hashem, my G-d, with all my heart and I will give honor to Your Name forever (13) For Your kindness toward me is great; You have rescued my soul from the deep grave.*

**PART 4. PLEA FOR SURVIVAL.** David now turns to his immediate and urgent need for surviving the dangers he is facing from ruthless enemies. He hopes that the spiritual strength he has acquired through *tefillah* will be rewarded with Hashem's fire help in outlasting those who wish him harm.

(יד) אֱלֹקִים זָדִים קָמוּ עָלַי וְעַדַּת עָרִיצִים בִּקְשׁוּ נַפְשִׁי וְלֹא שָׁמוּדָ לְנַגְדָם: (טו)  
וְאַתָּה אֲדֹנָי אֵל רַחוּם וְחַנוּן אַרְךָ אַפְּסִים וְרַב חֶסֶד וְאֶמֶת: (טז) פְּנֵה אֵלַי וְחַנּוּנִי תִנֵּה  
עֲזֵךְ לְעַבְדְּךָ וְהוֹשִׁיעָה לִבִּי אֶמְתֵּךְ: (יז) עֲשֵׂה עִמִּי אוֹת לְטוֹבָה וִירָאוּ שְׂנְאֵי וַיִּבְשׂוּ כִּי  
אַתָּה ה' עֲזַרְתָּנִי וְנַחַמְתָּנִי:

*(14) O G-d, wicked men have risen up against me; a group of powerful, ruthless men has sought my soul. They did not take Your truth into account. (15) But You, Hashem, are mighty G-d, the merciful and compassionate, slow to anger, and abundant in kindness and truth. (16) Turn to me and have mercy on me. Grant Your strength to Your servant. Save the son of Your maidservant. (17) Provide me with a sign for good so that my enemies may see it and be disappointed that You, Hashem, have helped me and given me comfort.*

## Learning the Mizmor

### **PART 1. PLEA TO BE HEARD.**

#### (א) תְּפִלָּה לְדָוִד

This mizmor was composed **by David as a *tefillah*** — תְּפִלָּה לְדָוִד — to strengthen his trust in Divine help when he was a fugitive, fleeing from King Shaul. David subsequently adapted it to serve the needs of his people whenever they might be in distress.

הִטָּה ה' אָזְנֶךָ עֲנֵנִי  
כִּי עָנִי וְאֶבְיוֹן אָנִי:

**Hashem, incline Your ear** — הִטָּה ה' אָזְנֶךָ and hear my words. **Answer me** — עֲנֵנִי by making me aware of Your active and sympathetic presence even before I have articulated any specific prayer, **for I am poor and defenseless** — כִּי עָנִי וְאֶבְיוֹן אָנִי. I am totally dependent on You. I want to please You but am unable to do so because of my desperate situation.

(ב) שְׁמֹרָה נַפְשִׁי כִּי חֹסִיד אָנִי  
הוֹשֵׁעַ עַבְדְּךָ אֵתָּה אֱלֹקֵי הַבּוֹטָח אֵלֶיךָ:

**Protect my soul** — שְׁמֹרָה נַפְשִׁי from the dangers surrounding me; **for I am entirely dedicated** to You — כִּי חֹסִיד אָנִי and I am defenseless without You. **Save Your servant** — הוֹשֵׁעַ עַבְדְּךָ, who puts his trust in You, for You are my G-d — אֵתָּה אֱלֹקֵי הַבּוֹטָח אֵלֶיךָ.

(ג) חֲנִנִי אֲדַנֶּי  
כִּי אֵלֶיךָ אֶקְרָא כָּל הַיּוֹם:

Though I am unworthy, **grant me Your favor, Hashem** — חֲנִנִי אֲדַנֶּי, **for I call upon You** alone — כִּי אֵלֶיךָ אֶקְרָא **every day** — כָּל הַיּוֹם, not just when I am in trouble.

(ד) שִׁמַּח נַפְשִׁי עַבְדְּךָ  
כִּי אֵלֶיךָ אֲדַנֶּי נַפְשִׁי אֲשָׂא:

**Bring spiritual joy to the soul of Your servant** — שִׁמַּח נַפְשִׁי עַבְדְּךָ by shining Your countenance upon me even in the midst of my physical suffering, **for I lift up my soul to You Hashem** in total devotion — כִּי אֵלֶיךָ אֲדַנֶּי נַפְשִׁי אֲשָׂא.

(ה) כִּי אֵתָּה אֲדַנֶּי טוֹב וְסִלַּח  
וְרַב חֶסֶד לְכָל קוֹרְאֶיךָ:

For I know that even if I succumb to sin, **You, Hashem, are good** to the righteous and **forgiving** to the penitent — כִּי אֵתָּה אֲדַנֶּי טוֹב וְסִלַּח and You treat all who

call upon You with bountiful kindness — וְרַב חֶסֶד לְכָל קְרָאִיךָ:

(ו) הַאֲזִינָה ה' תִּפְלְתִי  
וְהִקְשִׁיבָה בְּקוֹל תַּחֲנוּנוֹתַי:

**Hashem, hear my tefillah** — הַאֲזִינָה ה' תִּפְלְתִי. It will bring me closer to You if my attempt to recognize Your truth becomes worthy of Your attention. **Listen to the sound** and good intentions **of my supplications** — וְהִקְשִׁיבָה בְּקוֹל תַּחֲנוּנוֹתַי even if the contents are not acceptable to You.

(ז) בְּיוֹם צָרָתִי אֶקְרָאךָ כִּי תַעֲנֵנִי:

**On the day of my distress** — בְּיוֹם צָרָתִי **I call upon You**, not to test You but **so that You will answer me** — אֶקְרָאךָ כִּי תַעֲנֵנִי by giving me a sense of Your nearness, so that I can endure the necessary suffering that You have decreed.

## PART 2. SONG OF PRAISE.

(ח) אֵין כָּמוֹךָ בְּאֱלֹקִים אֲדֹנָי  
וְאֵין כְּמַעֲשֶׂיךָ:

I know that You will bring an end to my pain when the time is right, for there is no limit to Your power. For **there is none like You among the heavenly forces, Hashem** — אֵין כָּמוֹךָ בְּאֱלֹקִים אֲדֹנָי — **and there is nothing like Your works** — וְאֵין כְּמַעֲשֶׂיךָ.

(ט) כָּל גּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ  
יָבוֹאוּ וְיִשְׁתַּחֲווּ לְפָנֶיךָ אֲדֹנָי  
וְיִכְבְּדוּ לְשִׁמְךָ:

Your truth will one day be recognized by all of mankind. **All the nations that You have made** — כָּל גּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ — **will come and bow down before You, Hashem** — יָבוֹאוּ וְיִשְׁתַּחֲווּ לְפָנֶיךָ אֲדֹנָי — **and they will pay honor to Your Name** — וְיִכְבְּדוּ לְשִׁמְךָ for they will have come to recognize and value Your qualities of truth and goodness that are inherent in Your Name.

(י) כִּי גָדוֹל אֶתָּה וְעֵשָׂה נִפְלְאוֹת  
אֶתָּה אֱלֹקִים לְבַדְּךָ:

**For You are magnificent — כִּי גָדוֹל אֶתָּה and perform wonders — וְעֵשָׂה נִפְלְאוֹת.** But the greatest of Your wonders is the kindness with which You guide those who have strayed and must be led back to You. They then recognize that **You alone are G-d — אֶתָּה אֱלֹקִים לְבַדְּךָ**, the original force of all existence. The power to create something out of nothing rests with You alone. Mankind will come to realize that the heavenly forces that impress them are nothing more than tools in Your hand.

### PART 3. PLEA FOR PERSONAL GROWTH.

(יא) הוֹרֵנִי ה' דְּרֹכֶךָ אֶהְלֶךְ בְּאַמְתֶּךָ  
יַחַד לִבִּי לִירְאָה שְׁמֶךָ:

**Teach me, Your way** of universal love and kindness, **Hashem — הוֹרֵנִי ה' דְּרֹכֶךָ**, **so that I may walk in Your truth — אֶהְלֶךְ בְּאַמְתֶּךָ**, to abide by the laws of the Torah that are not evident to the mind of man. **Let my heart** avoid distracting thoughts and concerns so that it will **be focused in** sincerely **fearing Your Name — יַחַד לִבִּי לִירְאָה שְׁמֶךָ**. Reconcile all the stirrings and inclinations within me so that my only fear will be that I fail to respect the holiness of Your Name.

(יב) אֹדֶדְךָ אֲדַנֶּי אֱלֹקֵי בְּכָל לִבִּי  
וְאֶכְבְּדָה שְׁמֶךָ לְעוֹלָם:

Then, with my heart completely focused, **I will acknowledge** and thank **You, Hashem, my G-d, with all my heart — אֹדֶדְךָ אֲדַנֶּי אֱלֹקֵי בְּכָל לִבִּי**, and **I will publicly give honor to Your Name forever — וְאֶכְבְּדָה שְׁמֶךָ לְעוֹלָם** with clear and persuasive expositions of Your truth. I will work to match my qualities of character to Your example so that through my behavior honor will be given to Your Name.

(יג) כִּי חֲסִידְךָ גָדוֹל עָלַי  
וְהִצַּלְתָּ נַפְשִׁי מִשְׂאוֹל תַּחְתִּינָה:

**For Your kindness toward me is great — כִּי חֲסִידְךָ גָדוֹל עָלַי**. Not only have You acted to save my body from the hands of my enemies by teaching me to repent my sins, **You have rescued my soul from the deep grave — וְהִצַּלְתָּ נַפְשִׁי**

משאול תחתייה of death.

**PART 4. PLEA FOR SURVIVAL.**

(יד) אֶלְקִים זָדִים קָמוּ עָלַי  
וְעַדַּת עָרִיצִים בִּקְשׁוּ נַפְשִׁי  
וְלֹא שָׁמוּדָה לְנַגְדָם:

**O G-d, wicked men have risen up against me** – אֶלְקִים זָדִים קָמוּ עָלַי, although I did them no harm. **A group of powerful, ruthless men has sought my soul** – וְעַדַּת עָרִיצִים בִּקְשׁוּ נַפְשִׁי. Thinking You abandoned me, they felt free to attack, but **they did not take You or Your truth into account** in their misguided considerations – וְלֹא שָׁמוּדָה לְנַגְדָם.

(טו) וְאַתָּה אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהֵי רַחוּם וְחַנוּן  
אָרְךְ אַפִּים וְרַב חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת:

They forgot that **You, Hashem, are mighty G-d** – וְאַתָּה אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהֵי רַחוּם וְחַנוּן, the inexhaustible source of strength for all those that are weak. And they forgot that You are **the merciful and compassionate** – רַחוּם וְחַנוּן, **slow to anger** – אָרְךְ אַפִּים, **abundant in kindness and truth** – וְרַב חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת. They forgot that You stand ready to forgive those who repent their sins.

(טז) פָּנֵה אֵלַי וְחַנּוּנִי  
תְּנֵה עֵזֶךְ לְעַבְדֶּךָ  
וְהוֹשִׁיעָה לְבִן אִמְתֶּךָ:

**Turn to me now and have mercy on me** – פָּנֵה אֵלַי וְחַנּוּנִי. **Grant Your spiritual strength to enable Your servant** – תְּנֵה עֵזֶךְ לְעַבְדֶּךָ to persevere in Your service. **Save the son of Your maidservant** – וְהוֹשִׁיעָה לְבִן אִמְתֶּךָ, the virtuous Jewish mother who sacrificed so much in her devotion to You.

(יז) עֲשֵׂה עִמִּי אוֹת לְטוֹבָה  
וַיִּרְאוּ שְׂנְאָי וַיִּבְשׂוּ  
כִּי אַתָּה ה' עֲזַרְתָּנִי וְנַחַמְתָּנִי:

**Provide me with a sign for good** – עֲשֵׂה עִמִּי אוֹת לְטוֹבָה; so that my enemies

**may see it and be disappointed — וַיֵּרְאוּ שְׁנֵאֵי וַיִּבְשׂוּ — that You, Hashem, have helped me — כִּי אָתָּה ה' עֲזַרְתָּנִי** against my enemies, that You have forgiven my sins and that You have **given me comfort — וַנְחַמְתָּנִי**.

## Sources

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

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| א - רד"ק, אלשיך, המאירי, ספורנו, רשר"ה | י - רד"ק, מלבי"ם, אבן יחייא, רשר"ה        |
| ב - רשר"ה                              | יא - רד"ק, מלבי"ם, המאירי, בן רמוך, רשר"ה |
| ג - רד"ק, המאירי, נר לרגלי             | יב - רד"ק, בן רמוך,                       |
| ד - רש"י, רד"ק, נר לרגלי               | יג - רש"י, רד"ק, מלבי"ם, נר לרגלי         |
| ה - אבן עזרא, בן רמוך, רשר"ה           | יד - מצודות, רשר"ה, נר לרגלי              |
| ו - רשר"ה, נר לרגלי                    | טו - רד"ק, בן רמוך, רשר"ה                 |
| ז - אבן עזרא, רשר"ה                    | טז - רשר"ה, דעת סופרים                    |
| ח - רד"ק, בן רמוך                      | יז - רש"י, מצודות, מלבי"ם, רשר"ה          |
| ט - רד"ק, נר לרגלי                     |   |

© COPYRIGHT NOTICE

All rights to this document are reserved by the author. For further information contact Isaac Kirzner at [isaac@kirzner.com](mailto:isaac@kirzner.com)