

## Mizmor 087

# Tzion and Its People

### Key Concepts

This mizmor is a song of praise for Yerushalayim and its people. The city has earned the name Tzion which designates it as the source of Divine law for all mankind. In the first of its two parts, the mizmor identifies Yerushalayim by its holy mountains and by the special love that Hashem has expressed for this city. Because of that love He chose it as the dwelling place on earth for the Shechinah (the Divine spirit).

In the second part, the mizmor calls attention to the relationship of the city to its people. In effect every Jew in the world can be thought of as having been born there, because the spirit of the Torah which emanates from Yerushalayim is the driving force in the life of every Jew.

### Exploring the Mizmor

#### PART 1. IN PRAISE OF TZION.

(א) לְבַנֵּי קִרַח מִזְמוֹר שִׁיר יְסוּדָתוֹ בְּהַרְרֵי קֹדֶשׁ: (ב) אֲהַב ה' שַׁעְרֵי צִיּוֹן מִכָּל מְשָׁכְנוֹת יַעֲקֹב: (ג) נִכְבְּדוֹת מִדְּבַר בָּךְ עִיר הָאֱלֹקִים סֶלָה:

(1) A mizmor by the sons of Korach. It is a song, whose foundation is in the holy mountains [of Yerushayim]. (2) Hashem loves the gates of Tzion [more] than all the dwellings of Yaakov. (3) Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of G-d, Selah.

#### PART 2. THE JEWS OF TZION.

(ד) אֲזַכִּיר רַהַב וּבָבֶל לְיָדַעִי הִנֵּה פִלְשֵׁת וְצוּר עִם כּוּשׁ זֶה יֵלֵד שָׁם: (ה) וּלְצִיּוֹן יֹאמַר אִישׁ וְאִישׁ יֵלֵד בָּהּ וְהוּא יְכוֹנְנָה עָלָיו: (ו) ה' יִסְפֹּר בְּכַתּוּב עַמִּים זֶה יֵלֵד שָׁם סֶלָה: (ז) וְשָׂרִים כְּחַלְלִים כָּל מַעֲנֵי בָךְ:

(4) I mention Rahav (Egypt) and Bavel to my friends. [They respond] "There is Pleshes and Tzur, with Cush. This one was born there." (5) But of Tzion it can be said, "Every man was born there, and He, the Most High, maintains her thus." (6) Hashem will count when He records nations, "This

*one was born there," Selah. (7) And singers and dancers alike will respond, "All My wellsprings of the spirit are in You."*

## Learning the Mizmor

### PART 1. IN PRAISE OF TZION.

(א) לְבַנֵּי קָרַח מִזְמוֹר  
שִׁיר יְסוּדָתוֹ בְּהַרֵי קֹדֶשׁ:

This is a **mizmor** composed **by the sons of Korach** – לְבַנֵּי קָרַח מִזְמוֹר. **It is a song, whose foundation is in the holy mountains** – שִׁיר יְסוּדָתוֹ בְּהַרֵי קֹדֶשׁ of Tzion. These are the mountains of Yerushalayim. They identify this city as the source of Divine law for all mankind and the permanent abode of the Divine presence on earth.

(ב) אֱהָבָהּ שְׁעָרֵי צִיּוֹן  
מִכָּל מִשְׁכָּנוֹת יַעֲקֹב:

**Hashem loves the gates of Tzion** – אֱהָבָהּ שְׁעָרֵי צִיּוֹן **more than all the other dwellings of Yaakov** – מִכָּל מִשְׁכָּנוֹת יַעֲקֹב. The gates of Tzion are the entryway through which all the members of the nation enter the place of spiritual unity. Without the spirit that is derived from Tzion, "Yisrael" is only "Ya'akov."

(ג) נִכְבְּדוֹת מִדְּבַר בְּךָ  
עִיר הָאֱלֹהִים סֶלָה:

All over the world **glorious things are spoken of you** – נִכְבְּדוֹת מִדְּבַר בְּךָ, **O city of G-d, Selah** – עִיר הָאֱלֹהִים סֶלָה. The praise of Tzion includes admiration for the *middos* (character traits) of its residents as well as that it is the city of G-d. Even after the destruction of the temple, the Divine presence never departed from Tzion completely. Furthermore it is the center of the inhabited earth and its most beneficial location.

PART 2. THE JEWS OF TZION.

(ד) אֲזָכִיר רַהַב וּבָבֶל לִידְעֵי  
הִנֵּה פְּלִשְׁתִּים וְצוּר עִם כּוּשׁ  
זֶה יֵלֵד שָׁם:

People like to compare the strengths of great civilizations around the world. When **I mention** the good qualities of Jews living in **Rahav** (Egypt) **and Bavel to my friends** — אֲזָכִיר רַהַב וּבָבֶל לִידְעֵי, they confront me with praise of Jews from others places, saying: “**There is Pleshes** (Philistia) **and Tzur** (Phoenicia), **with Cush** (Africa) — הִנֵּה פְּלִשְׁתִּים וְצוּר עִם כּוּשׁ.” Every one can name at least one worthy man who was born in one of these places, and on whose account his native city or country is praised, saying: “**This one was born there** — זֶה יֵלֵד שָׁם.”

(ה) וְלִצִּיּוֹן יֹאמֵר אִישׁ וְאִישׁ יֵלֵד בָּהּ  
וְהוּא יְכוֹנְנֶה עֲלֵיוֹן:

**But of Tzion it can be said** — וְלִצִּיּוֹן יֹאמֵר, “**Every man of note was born there**” — אִישׁ וְאִישׁ יֵלֵד בָּהּ. Tzion is the spiritual cradle of every great spirit that has ever lived. **And** the message of the Torah goes out from Tziyon to the world because **He, the Most High, maintains her thus** — וְהוּא יְכוֹנְנֶה עֲלֵיוֹן.

(ו) ה' יִסְפֹּר בְּכַתוּב עַמִּים  
זֶה יֵלֵד שָׁם סֵלָה: -

**Hashem will count** — ה' יִסְפֹּר every worthy Jew, **when He records** the history of Jews among the **nations** — בְּכַתוּב עַמִּים, and He will identify his place of birth as being in Tzion: “**This one was born there,**” **Selah** — זֶה יֵלֵד שָׁם סֵלָה.

(ז) וְשָׂרִים כְּחַלְלִים כָּל מַעֲנֵי בָךְ:

**And** Jews in every walk of life and every land, **singers and dancers alike** — וְשָׂרִים כְּחַלְלִים, will respond by saying, “**All My wellsprings of the spirit are in You** — כָּל מַעֲנֵי בָךְ.”

**Sources**

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

ה - רד"ק, רשר"ה  
ו - רשר"ה,  
ז - רשר"ה

א -רש"י, רשר"ה  
ב - רד"ק, רשר"ה  
ג - רש"י, רד"ק, המאירי  
ד- רש"י, רשר"ה

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