

**Mizmor 091****Sheltering Wings****Key Concepts**

This is the second in the series of 11 *mizmorim* that were originally composed by Moshe Rabbeinu and subsequently incorporated into Tehilim by David. In this mizmor Moshe addresses the Jewish people with an inspirational message of trust in G-d's protection. In order to truly trust in G-d, a person must think about who He is and how He reveals Himself to mankind. Since He reveals Himself in different ways, depending on the circumstance, G-d identifies Himself by various aspects or "Names".

There is an aspect of G-d which is totally concealed from mankind because His existence is in no way dependent upon our physical universe. Thus, Moshe refers to that aspect of Hashem as being **בְּסִתְרֵי עֲלִיּוֹן**, in highest seclusion.

G-d's relationship with the Creation of the physical universe is expressed by His Name *Shad-dai*, suggesting the concept of "enough." This is because Creation depends on the limits that G-d established in the laws of nature.

As stated in the Torah, G-d revealed Himself to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov as *Shad-dai* (*Shemos* 6:3). Through that Name He made them aware that He controls the natural order of things in the physical universe. Although He is invisible to human eyes, His presence pervades all of existence and is revealed by the events that He guides and controls.

In the current mizmor Moshe refers to the Name *Shad-dai* as the Al-mighty shadow. G-d's presence in the universe is all powerful, but is like a shadow that reflects reality.

When the time had come to liberate Yisrael from slavery in Mitzrayim, G-d told Moshe that He would now reveal Himself with the Name *Hashem*. In that capacity He would display breath-taking miracles vastly exceeding the previous limits of nature.

In this mizmor Moshe emphasizes the Name "Hashem" because it evokes a sense of having a personal relationship with Him. Moshe feels he can always turn to Him and rely on His protection. He encourages the people to trust in Him as well and he assures them that their trust will be rewarded.

## Exploring the Mizmor

**PART 1. DECLARATION OF TRUST.** Moshe explains why people should trust in Hashem's protection even though He is invisible to us. Moshe does so by succinctly taking us through three stages of mankind's recognition of G-d. The first is His existence which is concealed in highest seclusion, even prior to Creation. The second is that of an Al-mighty shadow that pervades the physical universe and controls the natural order. The third is the Name Of Hashem, which was brought to Moshe's attention in the context of the liberation from slavery in Mitzrayim.

(א) יֵשֶׁב בְּסִתְרַת עֲלֵיוֹן בְּצֵל שְׁדֵי יִתְלוֹנֵן: (ב) אֵמַר לֵה' מְחֹסִי וּמְצוּדָתִי אֱלֹקֵי אֲבֹתַי בּוֹ:

*(1) He who dwells in highest seclusion, resides [among us] as an Al-mighty shadow. (2) I say of Hashem, my refuge and my stronghold, He is my G-d, I trust in Him.*

**PART 2. ASSURANCE OF PROTECTION.** Moshe assures the people that if they follow his example and trust in Hashem, they will be protected under His sheltering wings from all manner of danger.

(ג) כִּי הוּא יִצְלֶךְ מִפֶּחַ יְקוּשׁ מִדְּבַר הַיּוֹת: (ד) בְּאַבְרָתוֹ יִסָּד לָךְ וְתַחַת כְּנָפָיו תִּחְסֶה צְנָה וְסִחְרָה אֲמַתּוֹ: (ה) לֹא תִירָא מִפֶּחַד לֵילָה מִחַץ יַעוּף יוֹמָם: (ו) מִדְּבַר בְּאֶפֶל יַהֲלֶךְ מִקֶּטֶב יִשׁוּד צְהָרִים: (ז) יִפֹּל מִצַּדְּךָ אֶלֶף וּרְבָבָה מִיַּמִּינֶךָ אֲלֵיךָ לֹא יִגָּשׁ: (ח) רַק בְּעֵינֶיךָ תִּבְיֵט וְשִׁלְמַת רְשָׁעִים תִּרְאֶה:

*(3) [You should trust in Him as well,] for He will save you from the ensnaring trap [and] from the devastating pestilence. (4) He will protect you with His wings and you will take shelter [in the holiness of His Torah] beneath His spread-out wings. His truth is a barbed shield and enveloping armor. (5) You will not fear the terror of night, [nor] the arrow that flies by day, (6) the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, [nor] the scourge that ravages at noon. (7) A thousand may fall [in battle] at your [left] side and ten thousand at your right side, but it will not reach you. (8) Only with your eyes will you behold. You will witness the retribution of the wicked*

**PART 3. A PERSONAL DECLARATION.** Moshe declares once more his abiding trust in Hashem. This time he demonstrates the closeness of his relationship by turning directly to Hashem.

(ט) כִּי אֶתָּה ה' מְחַסֵּי עֲלִיּוֹן שְׁמֹתָ מְעוֹנָה:

(9) [I know this] because You, Hashem, have been my refuge. You have set your abode on high.

**PART 4. ASSURANCE OF PROTECTION.** Moshe again assures the people that if they follow his example and trust in Hashem, they will be protected from all manner of danger.

(י) לֹא תֵאָנֶה אֵלֶיךָ רָעָה וְנִגַע לֹא יִקְרַב בְּאֹהֶלְךָ: (יא) כִּי מִלְאָכָיו יִצְוֶה לְךָ לְשֹׁמְרֶיךָ  
בְּכָל דְּרָכֶיךָ: (יב) עַל כַּפַּיִם יִשְׂאוּנֶךָ פֶּן תִּגְּפוּ בְּאֶבֶן רִגְלֶךָ: (יג) עַל שַׁחַל וּפְתוֹן תִּדְרֹךְ  
תִּרְמַס כְּפִיר וְתַנִּין:

(10) No misfortune will happen to you, nor will any disease come near your tent. (11) For on your behalf He will instruct His angels to guard you in all your ways. (12) They will be carrying you on the palms [of their hands] lest you hurt your foot on a stone. (13) You will tread on the lion and the viper. you will trample the young lion and the serpent.

**PART 5. HASHEM'S PROMISE.** We now hear the voice of Hashem responding to Moshe's declarations of trust. Hashem assures the people that Moshe's devotion will be rewarded. This promise is spoken in such a way that it could also apply to the entire nation of Yisrael. Because of Yisrael's devotion, Hashem will be with them when they are in *Galus* (Exile) and will surely bring the *Geulah* (Redemption).

(יד) כִּי בִי חֶשֶׁק וְאַפְלִטָהוּ אֲשַׁגְּבֶהוּ כִּי יָדַע שְׁמִי: (טו) יִקְרָאֵנִי וְאֶעֱנֶהוּ עִמּוֹ אֲנַכִּי  
בְּצָרָה אֲחַלְצֶהוּ וְאֲכַבְּדֶהוּ: (טז) אֶרְדֵּךְ יָמִים אֲשַׁבֵּיעֶהוּ וְאֶרְאֶהוּ בִישׁוּעָתִי:

(14) Because he is devoted to Me, I will save him. I will raise him high because he [has learned] to know my Name. (15) When he calls upon Me, I will answer him. I will be with him in his adversity. I will free him [from suffering] and I will bring him honor. (16) I will gratify him with a long life And I will let him witness My yeshuah [in the World to Come].

## Learning the Mizmor

### PART 1. DECLARATION OF TRUST

(א) יֵשֵׁב בְּסִתְרֵי עֲלִיּוֹן  
בְּצִל שְׁדֵי יִתְלוֹנֵן:

The one and only G-d Who **dwells** — יֵשֵׁב in highest seclusion — בְּסִתְרֵי עֲלִיּוֹן,

**resides** among us in the physical universe as an invisible **Al-mighty shadow** — **בְּצֵל שְׁדֵי יִתְלוֹנֵן** - that controls the natural order of things. But beyond this, G-d is near each individual person and nation, as reflected in His Name of Hashem. The special significance of this Name was revealed to Moshe in Mitzrayim (*Shemos* 6:3).

(ב) אִמַר לֵה' מְחֹסִי וּמְצוּדָתִי  
אֶלְקֵי אֲבֹטַח בוֹ:

Furthermore, **I say** to you **regarding** His Name of **Hashem**, He is **my personal refuge and my stronghold** — **אִמַר לֵה' מְחֹסִי וּמְצוּדָתִי**. Even though I cannot see Him, He is **my G-d** — **אֶלְקֵי**; **I trust** completely **in Him** — **אֲבֹטַח בוֹ**.

## PART 2. ASSURANCE OF PROTECTION

(ג) כִּי הוּא יַצִּילְךָ מִפֶּחַ יְקוּשׁ  
מִדְּבַר הַחוּת:

You should trust in Him as well, **for He will save you** — **כִּי הוּא יַצִּילְךָ** **from the ensnaring trap** — **מִפֶּחַ יְקוּשׁ** that is set by your enemies, and **from the devastating pestilence** — **מִדְּבַר הַחוּת** that is delivered by natural forces.

(ד) בְּאַבְרָתוֹ יִסֹּד לְךָ וְתַחַת כְּנָפָיו תִּחְסֶה  
צָנָה וְסַחְרָה אֲמַתּוֹ:

**He will protect you** from the sun and the rain **with His wings** — **בְּאַבְרָתוֹ יִסֹּד לְךָ**, **and you will take shelter** in the holiness of His Torah **beneath His spread-out wings** — **וְתַחַת כְּנָפָיו תִּחְסֶה**. **His truth**, which guarantees his promise of protection, **is a barbed shield and enveloping armor** — **צָנָה וְסַחְרָה אֲמַתּוֹ**, symbolizing His protection from assault by enemies. Through the variety of protective devices Hashem will add to your sense of security, so that you will not be in fear.

(ה) לֹא תִירָא מִפֶּחַד לַיְלָה  
מִחֶץ יַעֲוֹף יוֹמָם:

**You will not** have reason to **fear the terror** of events that might unexpectedly occur near you in the darkness **of night** — **לֹא תִירָא מִפֶּחַד לַיְלָה** when you are alone and cannot see the threat. Nor will you fear **the arrow that may fly** suddenly **by day** — **מִחֶץ יַעֲוֹף יוֹמָם** from such a long distance that you had not seen

it coming.

(ו) מִדְּבַר בְּאֶפֶס יִהְיֶה  
מִקֵּטֶב יְשׁוּד צְהָרִים:

You will not fear **the pestilence that stalks in the darkness** — מִדְּבַר בְּאֶפֶס יִהְיֶה, killing without the cause being known. Nor will you fear **the scourge that ravages at noon** — מִקֵּטֶב יְשׁוּד צְהָרִים, in response to a Divine decree.

(ז) יִפֹּל מֵצִדְךָ אֶלְיָ וּרְבֵבָה מִיְמִינְךָ  
אֵלֶיךָ לֹא יִגַּשׁ:

**A thousand may fall** victim in battle **at your left side** — יִפֹּל מֵצִדְךָ אֶלְיָ and **ten thousand at your right side** — וּרְבֵבָה מִיְמִינְךָ. **But** even without your having to defend yourself, **it will not reach you** — אֵלֶיךָ לֹא יִגַּשׁ.

(ח) רַק בְּעֵינֶיךָ תִּבְיֵט  
וְשִׁלַּמַּת רְשָׁעִים תִּרְאֶה:

You will not suffer from having to endure the battle. **Only with your eyes will you behold** death — רַק בְּעֵינֶיךָ תִּבְיֵט, but merely as an observer. In reward for Your trust in Hashem, **you will** be allowed to **witness the retribution of the wicked** — וְשִׁלַּמַּת רְשָׁעִים תִּרְאֶה. You will thank Hashem for being saved from these calamities and you will learn that all evil actually prepares its own ruin.

### PART 3. A PERSONAL DECLARATION

(ט) כִּי אֶתָּה ה' מְחַסֵּי  
עֲלִיוֹן שְׁמֹתָ מְעוֹנָךְ:

I know You will protect the one who trusts in You **because** — כִּי **You, Hashem, have been my refuge** — אֶתָּה ה' מְחַסֵּי. **You have set your abode on high** — עֲלִיוֹן שְׁמֹתָ מְעוֹנָךְ and You have it in Your power to help those who look to You.

### PART 4. ASSURANCE OF PROTECTION

(י) לֹא תֵאָנֶה אֵלֶיךָ רָעָה  
וְנִגַּע לֹא יִקְרַב בְּאֶהְלֶךָ:

Therefore **No misfortune will happen to you** — **לא תאנה אליך רעה**, even in a dream, **nor will any disease come near your tent** — **ונגע לא יקרב באהלקך** — affecting you your wife, or your children.

(יא) כי מלאכיו יצוה לך  
לשמרך בכל דרכיך:

**For on your behalf He will instruct His angels** that control the forces of nature — **לשמרך בכל דרכיך** — **כי מלאכיו יצוה לך**. They will regard you as a treasure entrusted to them for safekeeping.

(יב) על כפיים ישאוונך  
פן תגוף באבן רגלך:

Thus, it is as though **they will be carrying you on the palms** of their hands — **על כפיים ישאוונך** lest you hurt your foot on a stone — **פן תגוף באבן רגלך**.

(יג) על שחל ופתן תדרוך  
תרמס כפיר ותנין:

You will pass over dangers and overcome them without even being aware of them, including the evil people who act like beasts. **You will tread on the lion and the viper** — **על שחל ופתן תדרוך**; **you will trample the young lion and the serpent** — **תרמס כפיר ותנין**.

#### PART 5. HASHEM'S PROMISE.

(יד) כי בי חשק ואפליטהו  
אשגבהו כי ידע שמי:

**Because of his devotion to Me** — **כי בי חשק**, **I will** surely **save him** — **אשגבהו**. **I will raise him high** above the depredations of the Exile **ואפליטהו** because he has learned to know My Name — **כי ידע שמי**. He has bonded to Me and communed with My thoughts by studying My Torah. Thus, he has validated my act of creating him.

(טו) יקראני ואענהו  
עמו אנכי בצרה

## אֲחַלְצֶהוּ וְאֶכְבְּדֵהוּ:

**When he calls upon Me, I will answer him** — יִקְרָאֵנִי וְאֶעֱנֵהוּ. Even before I have rescued him, **I will be with him in his adversity** — עִמּוֹ אֲנֹכִי בְצָרָה. **I will free him** from suffering **and I will bring him honor** — אֲחַלְצֶהוּ וְאֶכְבְּדֵהוּ. Eventually I will cause him to receive from the rest of mankind the respect and appreciation that is his rightful due.

## (טז) אַרְךְּ יָמִים אֲשַׁבֵּיעֵהוּ

## וְאֶרְאֶהוּ בִישׁוּעָתִי:

**I will gratify him with a long life** in this world — אַרְךְּ יָמִים אֲשַׁבֵּיעֵהוּ. He will have lived a meaningful life, at the end of which he will feel that he has reached his goals and fulfilled his potential. **And I will let him witness My** ultimate **yeshuah** — וְאֶרְאֶהוּ בִישׁוּעָתִי in the World to Come.

## Sources

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

ט - רש"י, בן־רמון	א - אלשי"ך, רשר"ה, הללי נפשי
י - רש"י, רד"ק, בן־רמון, נר לרגלי	ב - אבן עזרא, מלבי"ם, אלשי"ך
יא - אבן עזרא, בן־רמון	ג - רד"ק, מלבי"ם, ספורנו
יב - אבן עזרא, רשר"ה	ד - רש"י, רד"ק, מצודות, מלבי"ם, בן רמון,
יג - מצודות, בן־רמון, רשר"ה, דעת סופרים	ה - רשר"ה, נר לרגלי
יד - בן־רמון, ספורנו, נר לרגלי	ו - רש"י, רד"ק, בן־רמון, ספורנו, נר לרגלי
טו - רד"ק, בן־רמון, אלשי"ך, רשר"ה	ז - דעת סופרים
טז - אבן עזרא, רד"ק, מצודות, ספורנו,	ח - רש"י, רד"ק, המאירי, נר לרגלי
דעת סופרים, רשר"ה	ט - אבן עזרא, מצודות, המאירי, בן־רמון,
	אבן יחיאל, רשר"ה

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