

Mizmor 092

A Day for Thinking

Key Concepts

This is the third in the series of 11 *mizmorim* that were originally composed by Moshe Rabbeinu and subsequently incorporated into Tehilim by David. It was designed to be sung in *Bais HaMikdash* as the Song of the Day for Shabbos, the seventh day of the week.

The mizmor calls our attention to the special opportunity that Shabbos offers – to think deeply into the world that Hashem has given us. Since on Shabbos we are not harried by the ordinary demands of our working lives, this day of rest encourages us to think beyond the surface appearances and fallacies that undermine our *emunah* and *bitachon* in Hashem's justice.

The mizmor offers as a focus of this contemplation the typical injustice and unfairness that we contend with every day. If Hashem represents truth and justice, why does He tolerate the apparent success of unworthy people? Why must good people be subjected to pain and suffering? The answer requires digging into our own mental resources, but is available to those who seek it.

We are caught up and confused by illusions because we look at events with a limited, short-term perspective. On Shabbos we can open our minds to the Divine perspective of a larger existence that does not stop with what we see every day, but extends into the long-term spiritual reality of human existence in this world and the eternity of the next.

Exploring the Mizmor

PART 1. SETTING THE TONE. In order to open our minds to the challenging ideas of this mizmor, it begins by reestablishing our foundation of gratitude and *emunah* in Hashem. That is done through the emotional power of music.

(א) מִזְמוֹר שִׁיר לְיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת: (ב) טוֹב לְהַדוֹת לַה' וּלְזַמֵּר לְשִׁמְךָ עֲלֵינוּ: (ג) לְהַגִּיד
בְּבִקְרַח חֶסֶדְךָ וְאַמוּנָתְךָ בְּלִילוֹת: (ד) עָלַי עָשׂוֹר וְעָלַי נָבֵל עָלַי הַגִּיּוֹן בְּכִנּוֹר: (ה) כִּי
שָׁמַחְתִּנִּי ה' בְּפִעֲלֶךָ בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יְדִידֶךָ אֲרַנֶּנּוּ: (ו) מֵה גִדְלוֹ מַעֲשֵׂיךָ ה' מְאֹד עִמְקוֹ

מחשבתיקה:

(1) A mizmor, a song for the day of Shabbos. (2) It is good to give thanks to Hashem and to sing praises to Your Name, Most High. (3) To tell of your kindness in the morning of your faithfulness in the nights. (4) [Accompanied] by a ten-stringed instrument and bagpipe with meditative music on a harp. (5) For You have gladdened me, Hashem, with Your actions; I sing joyously at the works of Your hands. (6) How great are your works, Hashem; how deeply profound are your thoughts.

PART 2. UNEARNED SUCCESS. The mizmor now proceeds to help us understand the unearned success and apparent prosperity that we see around us. We are reminded to look beneath the surface and recognize that the happiness of the wicked is an illusion, which will ultimately be cut short. Hashem's existence as the Creator and Provider is eternal and so He is well-placed to guarantee that the scales of justice will ultimately be balanced.

(ז) אִישׁ בְּעַר לֹא יָדַע וְכֹסִיל לֹא יָבִין אֶת זֹאת: (ח) בְּפֹרֶחַ רְשָׁעִים כְּמוֹ עֵשֶׂב וַיִּצְיָאוּ
כָּל פְּעֻלֵי אֱוֹן לְהַשְׁמָדָם עַד יְעָד: (ט) וְאַתָּה מָרוֹם לְעֵלָם ה': (י) כִּי הִנֵּה אֵיבֹיָהּ ה' כִּי
הִנֵּה אֵיבֹיָהּ יִתְפָּרְדּוּ כָּל פְּעֻלֵי אֱוֹן:

(7) A simple-minded person does not know, nor does a fool understand all this. (8) When the wicked flourish like grass and when all evil doers blossom, it is so that they may be destroyed forever. (9) But You remain on high forever, Hashem. (10) Surely, Your enemies, Hashem will perish; all evildoers will be scattered.

PART 3. SURVIVAL OF THE RIGHTEOUS. The mizmor visualizes the ultimate survival of law-abiding people despite the vicious attacks of their enemies. The insults and threats will soon be forgotten because the righteous have been anointed with a flow of ever-fresh oil.

(יא) וַתָּרֵם כְּרָאִים קַרְנֵי בַלְתֵּי בְּשֶׁמֶן רַעֲנָן: (יב) וַתִּבֶּט עֵינַי בְּשׁוֹרֵי בְּקַמִּים עָלַי
מִרְעִים תִּשְׁמַעְנָה אָזְנִי:

(11) You raised my horn [of strength] like that of a noble creature of the wild; I have been anointed with ever-fresh oil. (12) My eyes have seen [the downfall of] my ever-watching foes; when I am attacked by wicked antagonists, my ears hear [Your assurance].

PART 4. THE RIGHTEOUS FLOURISH. The mizmor concludes with the image of the long-term prosperity of the righteous people. Such people are likened to tall and sturdy trees, whose life span extends far into the future, reinforcing the lesson of Hashem's eternal justice. That lesson is then concluded emphatically by the ringing statement, "There is no injustice in Him."

(יג) צַדִּיק כְּתֵמָר יִפְרַח כְּאַרְז בְּלִבְנוֹן יִשְׁגָּה: (יד) שְׁתוּלִים בְּבַיִת ה' בְּחִצְרוֹת אֶלְהִינוּ
יִפְרִיחוּ: (טו) עוֹד יִנּוּבוֹן בְּשִׁיבָה דְשָׁנִים וְרַעֲנָנִים יִהְיוּ: (טז) לְהַגִּיד כִּי יָשָׁר ה' צוּרֵי
וְלֹא עוֹלָתָהּ בּוֹ:

(13) The righteous man will flourish like the date palm; he will thrive like the cedar of Lebanon. (14) Planted in the house of Hashem, they will flourish in the courtyards of our G-d. (15) They will still be fruitful in old age; they will be vigorous and fresh, (16) declaring that Hashem is straight and upright. He is my Rock and there is no injustice in Him.

Learning the Mizmor

(א) מִזְמוֹר שִׁיר לְיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת:

This **mizmor** is a **song** — **מִזְמוֹר שִׁיר** to be performed in the *Bais HaMikdash* **on the day of Shabbos** — **לְיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת**.

(ב) טוֹב לְהַדוֹת לָהּ

וּלְזַמֵּר לְשִׁמְךָ עֲלֵינוּ:

Shabbos is the day when my freedom from mundane occupations enables me to devote more of my thoughts to my relationship with Hashem. Therefore, especially on this day, **it is good to give thanks to You, Hashem** — **טוֹב לְהַדוֹת לָהּ** **and to sing praises to Your Name** — **וּלְזַמֵּר לְשִׁמְךָ**. You are recognized by all of mankind as the **Most High** — **עֲלֵינוּ**, even by those who worship lesser forces.

(ג) לְהַגִּיד בְּבֹקֶר חֲסֵדְךָ

וְאַמוּנָתְךָ בַּלַּיְלוֹת:

Regardless of my current situation, I welcome Shabbos with joy. It is a day for me **to tell of your kindness in the morning** — **לְהַגִּיד בְּבֹקֶר חֲסֵדְךָ** at the dawn of better times for all of mankind, **and** it is a day for me to tell **of your faithfulness in the nights** — **וְאַמוּנָתְךָ בַּלַּיְלוֹת** of darkest exile when I look to Your promise of

redemption.

(ד) עָלַי עֲשׂוֹר וְעָלַי נָבֵל
עָלַי הַגָּיוֹן בְּכִנּוֹר:

My words in praise and gratitude to You are accompanied **by a ten-stringed instrument** — **עָלַי עֲשׂוֹר** and the stirring melody of the ten-tone **bagpipe** — **וְעָלַי** **נָבֵל**, **with meditative music on** the ten-stringed **harp** — **עָלַי הַגָּיוֹן בְּכִנּוֹר**. The variety of instruments corresponds to the variety of things to be thankful for. Their wondrous harmonies and moving melodies inspire me to greater depths of spiritual insight.

(ה) כִּי שִׂמְחַתְנִי ה' בְּפַעֲלֶיךָ
בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יְדֶיךָ אֲרַנֶּן:

For You have gladdened me, Hashem, with Your actions — **כִּי שִׂמְחַתְנִי ה'** **בְּפַעֲלֶיךָ**, which are intellectually gratifying like the Shabbos itself that offers man time to reflect on the meaning of what has been accomplished during the previous six days. **I sing joyously at the works of Your hands** — **בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יְדֶיךָ אֲרַנֶּן**, including the wonders of nature and the special miracles that You have done for me.

(ו) מַה גָּדְלוֹ מַעֲשֵׂיךָ ה'
מֵאֵד עֲמֻקּוֹ מִחֻשְׁבְּתֶיךָ:

How great are your works, Hashem — **מַה גָּדְלוֹ מַעֲשֵׂיךָ ה'** We can only wonder at the awesomeness of Your Creation and we can only feel completely incapable of assessing what You have wrought. **Deeply profound are your thoughts** — **מֵאֵד עֲמֻקּוֹ מִחֻשְׁבְּתֶיךָ**, which are at the basis of all the phenomena of nature and of all the events of history.

(ז) אִישׁ בֵּעֵר לֹא יָדַע
וְכֹסֵיל לֹא יָבִין אֶת זֹאת:

A simple-minded person does not know — **אִישׁ בֵּעֵר לֹא יָדַע**, **nor does a self-centered fool understand all this** — **וְכֹסֵיל לֹא יָבִין אֶת זֹאת** that is outlined in the coming verses, for the lesson that Shabbos is designed to teach requires humility and a willingness to learn. As a result they are likely to renounce their faith

in the ultimate justice and fairness of Hashem.

(ח) בַּפְּרוֹחַ רְשָׁעִים כְּמוֹ עֵשֶׂב
וַיִּצְיָצוּ כָּל פְּעָלֵי אֱוֹן
לְהַשְׁמָדָם עַד־עַד:

When the wicked flourish like grass — בַּפְּרוֹחַ רְשָׁעִים כְּמוֹ עֵשֶׂב and when all evil doers blossom — וַיִּצְיָצוּ כָּל פְּעָלֵי אֱוֹן they do not realize that it is only so that they may be destroyed forever — לְהַשְׁמָדָם עַד־עַד. Their prosperity was Hashem's way of rewarding them for their few good deeds in this world, in order to deny them the World to Come. It has always been true that whenever nations have succumbed to moral corruption, they have produced tyrants who in turn proved to be the scourges of their own people.

(ט) וְאַתָּה מָרוֹם לְעַלְמֵי הַ':

But You remain on high forever, Hashem — וְאַתָּה מָרוֹם לְעַלְמֵי הַ' and see all. You always have the upper hand and will ensure justice is served, if not in this world, then in the world to come. In the end there is no alternative for the wicked but to accept Your judgment. As for the man of evil, no direct act of Divine intervention is even necessary to eradicate him. He will self-destruct.

(י) כִּי הִנֵּה אֵיבֹיֶיךָ ה' כִּי הִנֵּה אֵיבֹיֶיךָ יֵאָבְדוּ
יִתְפָּרְדוּ כָּל פְּעָלֵי אֱוֹן:

Based on what we have already seen, we are convinced that **surely Your enemies, Hashem — כִּי הִנֵּה אֵיבֹיֶיךָ, will eventually perish — כִּי הִנֵּה אֵיבֹיֶיךָ** through Your intervention; **all evildoers will eventually be scattered — יֵאָבְדוּ יִתְפָּרְדוּ כָּל פְּעָלֵי אֱוֹן** because of their own disunity.

(יא) וַתָּרֵם כְּרָאִים קִרְנִי
בְּלַתִּי בְּשֶׁמֶן רֵעֵנָן:

As for any success I have, it is not my own doing; it is You. **You raised my horn of strength like that of a noble creature of the wild — וַתָּרֵם כְּרָאִים קִרְנִי**, which owes its stature to You. **I have been anointed with ever-fresh oil — בְּלַתִּי בְּשֶׁמֶן רֵעֵנָן**, symbolizing material enjoyment as well as spiritual and moral consecration.

(יב) וַתִּבֹט עֵינַי בְּשׂוֹרֵי
בְּקָמִים עָלַי מְרַעִים תִּשְׁמַעְנָה אָזְנִי:

My eyes have seen the downfall **of my ever-watching foes** — וַתִּבֹט עֵינַי בְּשׂוֹרֵי , who lie in wait for me and watch for a moment of weakness. **When I am attacked by wicked antagonists** that hate what I stand for — בְּקָמִים עָלַי מְרַעִים, **my ears hear** — תִּשְׁמַעְנָה אָזְנִי an assurance from Heaven that they will not succeed.

(יג) צַדִּיק כְּתַמָּר יִפְרַח
כְּאֶרֶז בְּלִבָּנוֹן יִשְׁגָה:

The righteous man will flourish like the tall date palm — צַדִּיק כְּתַמָּר יִפְרַח, producing his fruit in the form of offspring. **He will thrive like the towering cedar of Lebanon** — כְּאֶרֶז בְּלִבָּנוֹן יִשְׁגָה, which grows to be strong and enduring. Like fragrance of the cedar, the righteous man will be renowned for his good deeds.

(יד) שְׁתוּלִים בְּבַיִת ה'
בְּחִצְרוֹת אֶלְקֵינוּ יִפְרִיחוּ:

Planted in the house of Hashem — שְׁתוּלִים בְּבַיִת ה', with their roots drawing vigor and strength from the Torah, **they will flourish** through the nation **in all of the courtyards of our G-d** — בְּחִצְרוֹת אֶלְקֵינוּ יִפְרִיחוּ .

(טו) עוֹד יִנּוּבוֹן בְּשִׁיבָה
דְּשָׁנִים וְרַעֲנָנִים יִהְיוּ:

They will still be fruitful in old age — עוֹד יִנּוּבוֹן בְּשִׁיבָה, continually increasing in wisdom as they grow older. **They will be vigorous and fresh** — דְּשָׁנִים וְרַעֲנָנִים יִהְיוּ,

(טז) לְהַגִּיד כִּי יֵשֶׁר ה'
צוּרֵי וְלֹא עוֹלָתָהּ בּוֹ:

declaring that Hashem is straight and upright — לְהַגִּיד כִּי יֵשֶׁר ה' as is evident from the prosperity of the righteous and the downfall of the wicked. He is **my Rock and there is no injustice in Him** — צוּרֵי וְלֹא עוֹלָתָהּ בּוֹ.

Sources

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

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

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