

Mizmor 094

The Return of Justice

Key Concepts

This is the fifth 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 the *Bais HaMikdash* as the Song of the Day for the fourth day of the week.

Just as the fourth day of the week turns its direction towards the peace of Shabbos, the singer calls upon Hashem to turn the tide of history and bring an end to the freedom that has been granted to the perpetrators of evil.

The mizmor begins with a call from the Jewish people crying out to Hashem for justice (Part 1). The singer, representing his people, proceeds like a prosecuting attorney denouncing the crimes of the wicked who have not only been persecuting the Jewish people but harming innocent victims everywhere (Part 2). He then addresses the perpetrators directly, making his case by showing them how foolish they are in thinking they can get away with what they have been doing (Part 3). The singer now turns to the victims of oppression, consoling the Jewish people and reminding them that even their suffering has served a constructive purpose (Part 4). That will all become clear when justice is finally restored to the world, as it surely will.

As the mizmor proceeds, the confidence of the singer is gradually building up that the yeshuah is coming. And so it is time for gratitude to Hashem (Part 5) as the Jewish people realize their own despondency has contributed to their suffering. Their renewed confidence in total victory against their corrupt enemies brings the mizmor to an end (Part 6).

This ending is actually a lead-in to the next mizmor (095), which is a song of joy and praise to Hashem (לְכוּ נִרְנְנָה לַיהוָה). That mizmor introduces the evening service (קַבְּלַת שַׁבָּת) that is used to welcome the onset of Shabbos each week. Accordingly, the first three pesukim of that mizmor have been added to the end of Mizmor 094 to complete the Song of the Day for the fourth day of the week. And so as the thoughts of Jews throughout the world begin to focus on the coming Shabbos of peace and serenity, they sweeten the mood of justice and bitter revenge by turning to positive thoughts

of coming closer to their Creator in gratitude and joy.

Exploring the Mizmor

PART 1. CALL FOR JUSTICE. The people in exile are crying out to Hashem: You are the King and Master of the world. You have it in your power to impose Your justice upon Your enemies. Do so now and take vengeance against the arrogant resha'im who have challenged You. They are taking advantage of Your patience and confirming their illusions of being in control.

(א) אֵל נְקָמוֹת ה' אֵל נְקָמוֹת הוֹפִיעַ: (ב) הַנִּשְׂא שִׁפְט הָאָרֶץ הַשֵּׁב גְּמוּל עַל־גָּאִים:
 (ג) עַד־מָתִי רְשָׁעִים ה' עַד־מָתִי רְשָׁעִים יַעֲלֹזוּ: (ד) יִבְיְעוּ יִדְבְּרוּ עֲתָק יִתְאַמְרוּ
 כָּל־פִּעְלֵי אָוֶן:

(1) Hashem, [You are the] G-d of vengeance. O G-d of vengeance, shine forth. (2) Rise up, O Judge of the earth. Repay the arrogant. (3) Until when will the wicked ... Until when will the wicked rejoice? (4) [How long will] they speak shamelessly, declare [their] intent to do harm, and promote themselves, all doers of iniquity?

PART 2. DENUNCIATION OF THE WICKED. The singer cries out to awaken the anger of Hashem against the wicked who persecute the Jewish people and vulnerable people everywhere. By doing so, the wicked impugn the honor of Hashem, for He has forever associated His Name with His people. The enemies of Yisrael foolishly think Hashem's endless patience is a sign that He does not know or care what happens to the victims so they are free to do as they please.

(ה) עֲמֹד ה' יִדְכָּאוּ וְנִחַלְתָּד יַעֲנוּ: (ו) אֲלֹמָנָה וְגַר יִהְרְגוּ וִיתוּמִים יִרְצְחוּ:
 (ז) וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא יִרְאֶה־יְהוָה וְלֹא־יָבִין אֱלֹקֵי יַעֲקֹב:

(5) [It is] Your nation, Hashem, they [seek to] crush. They afflict Your heritage. (6) They kill the widow and the stranger, and murder the orphans. (7) They are saying, "G-d will not see, nor will the G-d of Yaacov understand."

PART 3. MAKING THE CASE. The singer addresses the foolish nations and demonstrates to them how mistaken they have been in going against the will of the Creator. They have been grossly underestimating Him in thinking that they can get away with what they have been doing.

(ח) בִּינוּ בְּעָרִים בָּעָם וּכְסִילִים מָתִי תִשְׁפִּילוּ: (ט) הַנִּטֵּעַ אֶזְרָא יִשְׁמַע אִם־יִצְרָ:

עֵין הַלֵּא יִבִּיט: (י) הַיִּסֵּר גּוֹיִם הֲלֵא יוֹכִיחַ הַמְּלַמֵּד אָדָם דַּעַת: (יא) ה' יִדַּע מַחְשְׁבוֹת
אָדָם כִּי־הֵמָּה הִבֵּל:

(8) Consider, you ignorant among the people; and you fools, when will you use your intelligence? (9) He Who implants the ear, will He not hear? He Who forms the eye, will He not see? (10) He Who disciplines nations, will He not rebuke? It is He Who teaches man knowledge. (11) [And so surely] Hashem knows the thoughts of man, that they are of no consequence.

PART 4. CONSOLING THE VICTIM. The singer consoles the righteous people who are being mocked by the oppressors for accepting their suffering willingly. He argues that the suffering was for a constructive purpose and that this will have been demonstrated when justice is restored to the benefit of the righteous.

(יב) אֲשֶׁרִין הַגָּבֵר אֲשֶׁר־תִּיַסְרֵנוּ יְהוָה וּמִתּוֹרַתְךָ תִּלְמַדְנוּ: (יג) לְהַשְׁקִיט לּוֹ מִיָּמִי רָע עַד
יִכָּרֶה לְרָשָׁע שַׁחַת: (יד) כִּין לֹא־יִטֹּשׁ ה' עַמּוֹ וְנִחַלְתּוֹ לֹא יַעֲזֹב: (טו) כִּי־עַד־צָדֵק יָשׁוּב
מִשָּׁפֵט וְאַחֲרָיו כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל:

(12) Fortunate is the man whom You discipline, O Hashem, and whom You teach from your Torah. (13) To relieve him from the days of adversity while a pit is dug for the wicked. (14) For Hashem will not forsake His people, nor will He abandon His legacy. (15) But justice will again revert to righteousness and then all the upright in heart will rally to it.

PART 5. A TIME FOR GRATITUDE. The singer expresses the gratitude of the Jewish people for the help that they know Hashem will bring. While still at the edge of despair, they have caught themselves up short with the realization that Hashem has not abandoned them. The Galus seems endless, but it will surely come to an end.

(טז) מִי־קוֹם לִי עִם־מְרָעִים מִי־תִנָּצֵב לִי עִם־פְּעֻלֵי אָוֶן: (יז) לּוּלִי ה' עֲזָרְתָה לִּי
כַּמְעַטן שָׁכְנָה דוּמָה נִפְשִׁי: (יח) אִם־אֲמַרְתִּי מָטָה רַגְלִי חֲסִדְךָ ה' יִסְעֵדְנִי: (יט) בָּרַב
שָׁרְעָפִי בְּקִרְבִּי תִנְחַמְנִידָהּ יִשְׁעֵשְׁעוּ נִפְשִׁי:

(16) Who was there to rise up for me against evildoers? Who will stand up for me against wrongdoers? (17) Were Hashem not my help, my soul would almost be residing in the silence [of the grave]. (18) Whenever I thought, "My foot has given way," Your kindness, Hashem, supported me. (19) When my forebodings increased within me, Your comforting words cheered

my soul.

PART 6. CONFIDENCE RESTORED. The mizmor ends with the singer's expression of confidence that the corrupt forces of evil in the world are no match for the integrity of truth. They will surely be defeated by their own lies and viciousness, which will be turned against them, so that their punishment will be absolute. They wanted to destroy the Jewish people, but instead they will forever cut off and obliterated.

(כ) הִיחַבְרֶךְ כִּסֵּא הַחוּת יִצַר עֲמַל עַל־יַחֲקִי: (כא) יְגוּדוּ עַל־נַפְשִׁי צַדִּיק וְדָם נָקִי יִרְשִׁיעוּ: (כב) וַיְהִי ה' לִי לְמִשְׁגָּב וְאֱלֹהֵי לְצוּר מַחֲסִי: (כג) וַיִּשָּׁב עָלֵיהֶם אֶת־אוֹנָם וַיִּבְרָעֶתֶם יִצְמִיתֶם יִצְמִיתֶם ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ:

(20) Can [the wicked kings who sit on] the throne of destruction be associated with You, those who frame vice into law? (21) They join forces against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the blood of the innocent. (22) But Hashem is my bastion, and my G-d is the Rock of my refuge. (23) He will turn their own violence back upon them; and with their own evil He will cut them off; Hashem, our G-d, will cut them off.

Learning the Mizmor

PART 1. CALL FOR JUSTICE.

(א) אֵל נְקָמוֹת ה'
אֵל נְקָמוֹת הוֹפִיעַ:

You have always been the G-d of mercy, **Hashem**, but You have demonstrated that You are also the **G-d of vengeance** — **אֵל נְקָמוֹת ה'**, Who imposes justice again and again upon our oppressors. **O G-d of vengeance, shine forth** now — **אֵל נְקָמוֹת הוֹפִיעַ** and judge the wicked!

(ב) הַנִּשְׂא שִׁפְט הָאָרֶץ
הַשֵּׁב גָּמוּל עַל גְּאִים:

Rise up, O Judge of the earth — **הַנִּשְׂא שִׁפְט הָאָרֶץ**. **Repay the arrogant** — **הַשֵּׁב גָּמוּל עַל־גְּאִים** with the retribution that they deserve and bring them down from their illusions of pride. Reveal Your greatness and let them know that You do not hide Yourself in the face of the wicked.

(ג) עַד מְתֵי רְשָׁעִים ה'
עַד מְתֵי רְשָׁעִים יַעֲלֹזוּ:

Hashem, the Galus is lasting so long and the wicked are under the impression they are in control! **Until when will the wicked** be allowed to take advantage of Your patience and desecrate Your Name..., **O Hashem** — **עַד־מְתֵי רְשָׁעִים ה'**; **until when will the wicked** be allowed to **rejoice** — **עַד־מְתֵי רְשָׁעִים יַעֲלֹזוּ** over the suffering of Yisrael?

(ד) יִבְיֵעוּ יִדְבְּרוּ עֲתָק
יִתְאַמְרוּ כָּל פְּעֻלֵי אָוֶן:

How long will **they speak shamelessly** — **יִבְיֵעוּ**? They act as though they have been empowered and authorized to destroy us. How long will **they declare** their **intent to do harm** — **יִדְבְּרוּ עֲתָק**? How long will **they promote themselves** while challenging G-d, **all those doers of iniquity** — **יִתְאַמְרוּ כָּל פְּעֻלֵי אָוֶן**? They take pride in their being able to do as they please, for their apparent power seems to confirm the rightness of their twisted ideas.

PART 2. DENUNCIATION OF THE WICKED.

(ה) עֲמָךְ ה' יִדְכָּאוּ
וְנַחֲלֶתְךָ יַעֲנוּ:

And who is the object of their hatred? It is **Your nation, Hashem**, that **they** seek to **crush** — **עֲמָךְ ה' יִדְכָּאוּ**, the very people who subordinate their lives to You. The wicked hate them for doing Your will. **They** seek to **afflict** the nation that is **Your heritage** — **וְנַחֲלֶתְךָ יַעֲנוּ**, to humiliating pain. Because Your nation is eternally associated with You, the wicked torment them to provoke You.

(ו) אֶלְמָנָה וְגֵר יַהֲרֹגוּ
וּיְתוּמִים יִרְצְחוּ:

But it is not only the Jewish people as a whole that they abuse, they especially persecute the weak and vulnerable. **They kill the widow and the stranger** in their midst — **אֶלְמָנָה וְגֵר יַהֲרֹגוּ**, **and murder the orphans** — **וּיְתוּמִים יִרְצְחוּ**, all those who are unable to defend themselves.

(ז) וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא יִרְאֶה יְיָ
וְלֹא יִבִּין אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב:

All the while **they are saying** — וַיֹּאמְרוּ, "G-d will not see — לֹא יִרְאֶה יְיָ, nor will the G-d of Yaacov understand — וְלֹא יִבִּין אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב for they think He does not concern Himself with the affairs of mankind. They interpret His tolerance of wickedness in the world as a sign that He does not care or is unable to do anything about it."

PART 3. MAKING THE CASE.

(ח) בִּינוּ בְעָרִים בְּעַם
וּכְסִילִים מְתֵי תִשְׁכִּילוּ:

Consider, you who behave as though you are **the ignorant among the people** — בִּינוּ בְעָרִים בְּעַם **And** as for **you** who behave like **fools, when will you use your intelligence** — וּכְסִילִים מְתֵי תִשְׁכִּילוּ ? How can you deny your knowledge of Hashem, when the evidence is everywhere? Don't you realize you will ultimately have to pay the price of your crimes?

(ט) הֲנִטַע אָזֶן הֲלֹא יִשְׁמַע
אִם יֵצֵר עֵין הֲלֹא יִבִּיט:

If you had taken the time to think about it, you would realize that **He Who implants the ear** — הֲנִטַע אָזֶן, **will He not hear** — הֲלֹא יִשְׁמַע the lies you have been speaking about Hashem and His nation ? **He Who forms the eye** — אִם יֵצֵר עֵין, **will He not see** — הֲלֹא יִבִּיט? Although He makes no use of eyes or ears, He is surely aware of the harm you are doing.

(י) הִיטֵר גּוֹיִם הֲלֹא יוֹכִיחַ
הַמְלִימָד אָדָם דָּעַת:

He Who disciplines nations — הִיטֵר גּוֹיִם and has done so in the events of the Flood, the Tower of Babel, and the destruction of Sedom, **will He not rebuke** individuals who displease Him — הֲלֹא יוֹכִיחַ ? **It is He Who teaches man knowledge** — הַמְלִימָד אָדָם דָּעַת. So He must surely know man's thoughts.

(יא) ה' יִדַע מַחְשְׁבוֹת אָדָם
כִּי הִמָּה הַבֵּל:

You foolish people think He does not understand your thoughts or actions, **but Hashem knows the thoughts of man** — ה' יִדַע מַחְשְׁבוֹת אָדָם, **that they are of no consequence** — כִּי הִמָּה הַבֵּל for they cannot be translated into deeds unless He wishes it.

PART 4. CONSOLING THE VICTIM.

(יב) אֲשֶׁרִי הַגִּבֹּר אֲשֶׁר תִּיַסְרֶנּוּ יְיָ
וּמִתּוֹרַתְךָ תִּלְמְדֶנּוּ:

Fortunate is the righteous man whom You discipline to encourage him to observe **Your mitzvos, O Hashem** — אֲשֶׁרִי הַגִּבֹּר אֲשֶׁר תִּיַסְרֶנּוּ יְיָ, **and whom You teach from your Torah** — וּמִתּוֹרַתְךָ תִּלְמְדֶנּוּ to endure the discipline for his ultimate good. The same strength of character which enables him to master his *yetzter hara*, enables him to endure suffering gracefully. It is a discipline to which Hashem subjects only those of His children who are capable of improvement and ennoblement.

(יג) לְהַשְׁקִיט לוֹ מִיְמֵי רָע
עַד יִכָּרֶה לְרָשָׁע שְׁחַת:

You discipline the righteous **to relieve him** and protect him from unnecessary suffering in **the days of adversity** — לְהַשְׁקִיט לוֹ מִיְמֵי רָע, **while a pit is dug for the wicked** — עַד יִכָּרֶה לְרָשָׁע שְׁחַת. When the wicked are facing their well-deserved deserved punishment, the righteous will be at peace.

(יד) כִּי לֹא יִטֹּשׁ ה' עַמּוֹ
וְנִחַלְתּוֹ לֹא יַעֲזֹב:

For although Hashem disciplines Yisrael, it is done with love and **He will not forsake His people** — כִּי לֹא יִטֹּשׁ ה' עַמּוֹ, **nor will He abandon His legacy** — וְנִחַלְתּוֹ לֹא יַעֲזֹב, which bears His Name. Yisrael is the one nation that has remained faithful to Hiom throughout the ages. Without them, whom can Hashem rely on? And so the time will surely come when He will redeem them.

(טו) כִּי עַד צְדָק יָשׁוּב מִשְׁפָּט
וְאַחֲרָיו כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵב:

When the righteous suffer it seems as though justice has failed them. **But justice will again revert to righteousness** — כִּי עַד צְדָק יָשׁוּב מִשְׁפָּט so that the righteous will get the benefit of Hashem's justice and they will no longer need to endure persecution and affliction; **and then all the upright in heart will rally to righteousness** — וְאַחֲרָיו כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵב for its truth will have been demonstrated and all temptations to wickedness will have been banished from their hearts. Then the process of disciplining them will no longer be necessary.

PART 5. A TIME FOR GRATITUDE.

(טז) מִי יְקוּם לִי עִם מְרַעִים
מִי יִתְיַצֵּב לִי עִם פְּעָלֵי אֹן:

The Jewish nation speaks out: Even in the midst of suffering it is evident that Hashem is helping us. Were it not for Hashem, **who was there to rise up for me against evildoers** — מִי יְקוּם לִי עִם מְרַעִים in the land of my enemies? **Who was there to stand up for me against wrongdoers** — מִי יִתְיַצֵּב לִי עִם פְּעָלֵי אֹן? I could not have done on my own because I didn't have the strength.

(יז) לוּלִי ה' עֲזָרְתָה לִּי
כִּמְעַט שְׁכָנָה דוּמָה נִפְשִׁי:

Were Hashem not my help — לוּלִי ה' עֲזָרְתָה לִּי, **my soul would almost be residing in the silence** of the grave — כִּמְעַט שְׁכָנָה דוּמָה נִפְשִׁי. It would have meant the loss of my my opportunity to fulfill my mission in this world, doing mitzvos and good deeds.

(יח) אִם אָמַרְתִּי מָטָה רַגְלִי
חֲסִדְךָ ה' יִסְעֵדְנִי:

At those times when I thought that I was about to succumb to the travails of exile You enabled me to keep going. **Whenever I thought, "My foot has given way** — אִם אָמַרְתִּי מָטָה רַגְלִי, "I knew that **Your kindness, Hashem, would support me** — חֲסִדְךָ ה' יִסְעֵדְנִי.

(יט) בָּרַב שְׂרָעָפִי בְּקִרְבִּי
תִּנְחֹמְיָךְ יִשְׁעֵשְׂעוּ נַפְשִׁי:

When my forebodings increased within me — בָּרַב שְׂרָעָפִי בְּקִרְבִּי because of the length of the Galus and those anxieties prevented my from devoting myself to Your Torah, **Your comforting** words, expressed through Your prophets, **cheered my soul** — תִּנְחֹמְיָךְ יִשְׁעֵשְׂעוּ נַפְשִׁי.

PART 6. CONFIDENCE RESTORED.

(כ) הִיחָבְרָךְ פֶּסֶא הוֹת
יִצָר עֲמָל עָלַי חֶק:

I know that Your assurances given to me through Your prophets are authentic and true for You are the true Judge and Your throne is the throne of truth. **Can** the wicked kings who sit on **the throne of libel and falsehood be associated with You** — הִיחָבְרָךְ פֶּסֶא הוֹת — **those who frame vice into law** — יִצָר עֲמָל עָלַי חֶק?

(כא) יְגוּדוּ עַל נַפֶּשׁ צַדִּיק
וְדָם נְקִי יִרְשִׁיעוּ:

They join forces against the soul of the righteous — יְגוּדוּ עַל-נַפֶּשׁ צַדִּיק, justifying the crimes of the wicked and **condemning the blood of the innocent** — וְדָם נְקִי יִרְשִׁיעוּ through their perverted laws and corrupt governments. They pretend to be acting with justice, whereas their behavior is dishonest and immoral.

(כב) וַיְהִי ה' לִי לְמִשְׁגָּב
וְאֵלֶקִי לְצוּר מַחְסִי:

But Hashem is my bastion — וַיְהִי ה' לִי לְמִשְׁגָּב, and my G-d is the **Rock of my refuge** — וְאֵלֶקִי לְצוּר מַחְסִי. He maintains the integrity of truth and is not shaken by their lies and their threats. I rely on Him to protect me and they cannot touch me.

(כג) וַיִּשָּׁב עֲלֵיהֶם אֶת אוֹנָם
וּבְרָעָתָם יִצְמִיתֵם יִצְמִיתֵם ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ:

Not only will He save me, **He will turn their own violence back upon them** —

וַיִּשָׁב עֲלֵיהֶם אֶת־אוֹנָם, and with their own evil He will cut them off — **וַיִּבְרַעֲתֵם**, so that they will be punished by the other nations for their crimes. **Hashem, our G-d, will surely cut them off** — **ה' אֶלְקֵינוּ יַצְמִיתֵם** so that nothing will be left of them.

Sources

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

א - רש"י, אבן עזרא, בן־רמוך, אבן יחייא	ג - רד"ק
ב - רד"ק, נר לרגלי	יד - רד"ק, נר לרגלי
ג - רד"ק	טו - רד"ק, נר לרגלי, רשר"ה
ד - רש"י, רד"ק, אבן יחייא, נר לרגלי	טז - רד"ק, מצודות, נר לרגלי
ה - רד"ק, נר לרגלי	יז - מצודות, נר לרגלי
ו - המאירי	יח - אבן עזרא, רד"ק, ספורנו
ז - מצודות, מלבים	יט - רד"ק, ספורנו
ח - המאירי, נר לרגלי	כ - רד"ק, ספורנו, נר לרגלי
ט - רד"ק, נר לרגלי	כא - רש"י, ספורנו
י - אבן עזרא, רד"ק, בן־רמוך, ספורנו	כב - ספורנו, נר לרגלי
יא - אבן עזרא, רד"ק,	כג - רש"י, בן־רמוך, ספורנו
יב - רש"י, אבן עזרא, רד"ק, בן־רמוך, רשר"ה	