

Mizmor 099

Contemplating Holiness

Key Concepts

This is the tenth in the series of 11 *mizmorim* that were originally composed by Moshe Rabbeinu and subsequently incorporated into Tehilim by David. Like the previous *mizmorim*, the *mizmor* paints a picture of a promised future, but it also contemplates the infinite variety of ways in which Hashem allows Himself to be perceived by mankind. That perception extends from the lowly image of an accessible footstool and the minute space between two Cheruvim to the soaring grandeur of a distant mountain peak.

The *mizmor* consists of three parts, all of which are united by a common theme of Hashem's holiness as King of the World, the King of Justice, and the King of His people. Each of the three parts ends with a declaration of His holiness.

The last part speaks of the high standards maintained by the leaders of the Jewish people, especially Moshe, Aharon, and Shmuel. But even they are held to account for their slightest misstep, despite the fact that Hashem responds to their supplications that the people be forgiven their sins.

Exploring the Mizmor

PART 1. THE KING OF ALL THE WORLD. The first three pesukim celebrate the world-wide recognition of Hashem's Kingship and His holiness that radiates out from the rebuilt Bais Hamikdash in Tzion.

(א) ה' מְלֶכֶךְ יִרְגָזוּ עַמִּים יֵשֶׁב כְּרוּבִים תִּנּוּט הָאָרֶץ: (ב) ה' בְּצִיּוֹן גְּדוֹל
וְרָם הוּא עַל-כָּל-הָעַמִּים: (ג) יִדּוּ שְׁמֶךָ גְּדוֹל וְנוֹרָא קְדוֹשׁ הוּא:

(1) Hashem reigns. Let the people tremble. Let the earth quake before Him Who is enthroned upon the Cheruvim [in the Bais Hamikdash]. (2) Hashem is great and exalted above all the peoples. (3) Let them gratefully praise Your great and awesome Name . He is holy!

PART 2. THE KING OF JUSTICE. The next two pesukim celebrate qualities that especially distinguish Hashem from earthly kings. These are His justice and His holiness. His justice, enforced by His might, is based on the integrity of His fairness. His holiness is most evident in the Bais Hamikdash, which is symbolically His

footstool on earth.

(ד) ועז מלך משפט אהב אתה כוננת מישרים משפט וצדקה ביעקב

אתה עשית: (ה) רוממו ה' אלקינו והשתחוו להדם רגליו קדוש הוא:

(4) Mighty is the King Who loves justice. You founded fairness. You have treated Yaakov with justice and caring goodness.

PART 3. THE KING AND HIS PEOPLE. The remaining four pesukim address the relationship between Hashem, the Jewish people and their righteous leaders. The Jewish people were blessed with righteous leaders who served Hashem with total integrity. Of special note were Moshe, Aharon, and Shmuel. These saintly men were the beloved of Hashem and He responded to their tefillos when they interceded for their people. However, although Hashem forgives sin, He does not compromise the high standards of holiness which we must all aspire to.

(ו) משה ואהרן בכהנו ושמואל בקראי שמו קראים אלה' והוא יענם:

(ז) בעמוד ענן ידבר אליהם שמרו עדתיו וחוק נתן-למו: (ח) ה' אלקינו

אתה עניתם אל נשא היית להם ונקם על-עלילותם: (ט) רוממו ה'

אלקינו והשתחוו להר קדשו כי-קדוש ה' אלקינו:

(6) Moshe and Aharon were among His Kohanim, and Shmuel was among those who call His Name. They called upon Hashem and He answered them. (7) He spoke to them in a pillar of cloud. They obeyed His testimonies and the statutes that He gave them. (8) Hashem, our G-d, You answered them. You were a forgiving G-d because of them, while [still] avenging their misdeeds. (9) Exalt Hashem, our G-d and bow at His holy mountain; for Hashem our G-d is holy.

Learning the Mizmor

PART 1. THE KING OF ALL THE WORLD.

(א) ה' מלך ירגזו עמים

ישב כרובים תנוט הארץ:

Hashem reigns — ה' מלך — Let the peoples tremble — ירגזו עמים at the downfall of empires during the wars preceding the Geulah. **Let the earth quake before Him Who is enthroned upon the Cheruvim — ישב כרובים תנוט הארץ**

for the Shechinah has returned to the Bais Hamikdash.

(ב) ה' בְּצִיּוֹן גָּדוֹל
וְרָם הוּא עַל כָּל הָעַמִּים:

And so **Hashem is** recognized as **great** and accessible to all, with the Shechinah resident **in Tzion** — **but He is exalted above all the peoples** — **וְרָם הוּא** — **עַל-כָּל-הָעַמִּים**.

(ג) יוֹדוּ שְׁמֶךָ גָּדוֹל וְנוֹרָא
קְדוֹשׁ הוּא:

Even if they are distant from Your holiness, **let** all nations **gratefully praise** what they are able to grasp of the qualities inherent in **Your great and awesome Name** — **יודוּ שְׁמֶךָ גָּדוֹל וְנוֹרָא**. But they will recognize that **He is holy** — **קְדוֹשׁ הוּא** — independent of any human comprehension!

PART 2. THE KING OF JUSTICE.

(ד) וְעַז מֶלֶךְ מְשַׁפֵּט אֶהָב
אֶתָּה כּוֹנֵנֶת מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל
מְשַׁפֵּט וְצַדִּיקָה בְּיַעֲקֹב אֶתָּה עֹשֵׂית:

Mighty is the King, Who loves and enforces **justice** — **וְעַז מֶלֶךְ מְשַׁפֵּט אֶהָב** as reflected in the Laws which He gave Yisrael. **You founded fairness** — **אֶתָּה כּוֹנֵנֶת מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל** and made it the basis of the Torah for all Your Laws are consistent and fair, instead of the laws of human kings which are often corrupt and self-serving. **You have treated Yaakov with justice and caring goodness** — **מְשַׁפֵּט וְצַדִּיקָה** — **בְּיַעֲקֹב אֶתָּה עֹשֵׂית**.

(ה) רוֹמְמוֹ ה' אֶלְקֵינוּ
וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לְהַדָּם רַגְלֵי קְדוֹשׁ הוּא:

All the world, **exalt Hashem, our G-d** — **רוֹמְמוֹ ה' אֶלְקֵינוּ**, and **bow** toward His Bais Hamikdash, which is **His footstool** — **וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לְהַדָּם רַגְלֵי**. For **He is holy** — **קְדוֹשׁ הוּא** and His holiness is especially revealed in the Bais HaMikdash!

PART 3. THE KING AND HIS PEOPLE.

(ו) מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן בְּכֹהֲנָיו
וְשָׂמוּאֵל בְּקֹרְאֵי שְׁמוֹ קֹרְאִים אֶל ה' וְהוּא יַעֲנֵם:

Moshe and Aharon were among His Kohanim – מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן בְּכֹהֲנָיו, (Kohanim are designated individuals who exert influence through teaching, personal example and symbolic acts. Moshe officiated as a Kohen Gadol during the seven days of the inauguration of the Mishkan.) **And Shmuel**, possibly the greatest navi after Moshe, **was among those who call His Name** – וְשָׂמוּאֵל בְּקֹרְאֵי שְׁמוֹ. **They called upon Hashem** in supplication to ask Hashem's forgiveness for the people **and He answered them** – קֹרְאִים אֶל־ה' וְהוּא יַעֲנֵם.

(ז) בְּעַמּוּד עָנָן יִדְבֵר אֲלֵיהֶם
שָׁמְרוּ עֲדוֹתָיו וְחֻק נִתַּן לָמוֹ:

He spoke to those righteous leaders **in a pillar of cloud** – בְּעַמּוּד עָנָן יִדְבֵר. **They kept His testimonies and the statutes that He entrusted to them** – שָׁמְרוּ עֲדוֹתָיו וְחֻק נִתַּן לָמוֹ. The leaders faithfully taught all of Hashem's Torah to the people. The testimonies represent the laws appointed by God to further the knowledge of Him and the cause of moral ennoblement; and the statutes represent those for the regulation of everyday, practical life.

(ח) ה' אֶלְקֵינוּ אַתָּה עֲנִיתָם
אֶל־נִשְׂא הַיִּתְּ לָהֶם וְנִקַּם עַל עֲלִילוֹתָם:

Hashem, our G-d, You answered them – ה' אֶלְקֵינוּ אַתָּה עֲנִיתָם. **You were a forgiving G-d because of them** – אֶל־נִשְׂא הַיִּתְּ לָהֶם, **while still avenging their misdeeds** – וְנִקַּם עַל־עֲלִילוֹתָם. You held our leaders to a high standard, so that you held them to account for their slightest misstep so that even Moshe was not permitted to enter Eretz Yisrael.

(ט) רוּמְמוֹ ה' אֶלְקֵינוּ
וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לְהַר קְדֹשׁוֹ
כִּי קְדוֹשׁ ה' אֶלְקֵינוּ:

Exalt Hashem, our G-d – רוּמְמוֹ ה' אֶלְקֵינוּ, **and bow** at the Bais Hamikdash on **His holy mountain**, the symbol of His eternal holiness – וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לְהַר קְדֹשׁוֹ; **for**

Hashem our G-d is holy – מִי־קְדוֹשׁ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ. His holiness is demonstrated by the high standards He sets for those who are close to Him. The holy mountain symbolizes the height of kedushah that each person should aspire to.

Sources

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

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| ו - אבן עזרא, רד"ק, ספורנו, רשר"ה,
נר לרגלי | א - רד"ק, המאירי |
| ז - רש"י, רשר"ה | ב - אבן עזרא, מלבי"ם |
| ח - רש"י, מצודות, ספורנו, נר לרגלי | ג - רד"ק, מלבי"ם, ספורנו |
| ט - רש"י, המאירי, בן רמוך | ד - רד"ק, מצודות, נר לרגלי |
| | ה - רד"ק, בן רמוך |