

Mizmor 101

Self-Dedication

Key Concepts

This mizmor is a song of renewed self-dedication in which David declares his intent to devote himself and his kingdom to the goal of moral and ethical perfection. He commits himself to modeling his kingdom on the qualities of kindness and justice with which Hashem rules the world. He wants to banish from his court all behavior that is unworthy or morally base and evil.

But he realizes that before seeking to impose high standards on others he must first overcome his own deficiencies. After internalizing the principles of sincerity and integrity within his personal behavior, he is determined to share these principles with all who look to him for guidance.

Exploring the Mizmor

PART 1. CHOOSING THE GOOD WAY. David begins by declaring his commitment to the way of perfection, as symbolized by the Creator Himself. This involves adherence to complete sincerity and integrity, even within the privacy of his own home.

(א) לְדוֹד מִזְמוֹר חֹסֵד וּמִשְׁפָּט אֲשִׁירָה לְךָ ה' אֲזַמְרָה: (ב) אֲשַׁפִּילָה בְּדַרְךָ תְּמִים
מְתִי תָבוֹא אֵלַי אֶתְהַלֵּךְ בְּתָם לְבָבִי בְּקֶרֶב בֵּיתִי: (ג) לֹא אֲשִׁית לְנֶגֶד עֵינַי דָּבָר
בְּלִיעַל עֵשֶׂה סִטִּים שִׁנְאֹתַי לֹא יִדְבַק בִּי:

(1) A Mizmor by David. Of [Your] kindness and justice I will sing. To You, Hashem, I will sing. (2) I will contemplate the way of perfection . When will it come to me? I will walk in sincerity of heart [even] within my home. (3) I will not place before my eyes anything unworthy. I despise all crooked practice; it will not cling to me.

PART 2. CHOOSING GOOD PEOPLE. David resolves to apply the same high standards of ethics and morality to the people he recruits to carry out the functions of his kingdom.

(ד) לֵבָב עֲקֹשׁ יִסוֹר מִמֶּנִּי רַע לֹא אֲדַע: (ה) מִלְשֹׁנִי בְּסֵתֶר רַעִהוּ אוֹתוֹ אֲצַמִּית גְּבִהַ
עֵינַיִם וּרְחַב לֵבָב אוֹתוֹ לֹא אוֹכֵל: (ו) עֵינַי בְּנֶאֱמָנִי אֶרְץ לְשֶׁבֶת עַמְדֵי הַלֵּךְ בְּדַרְךָ:

תָּמִים הוּא יִשְׁרָתְנִי: (ז) לֹא יֵשֵׁב בְּקִרְבִּי בֵּיתִי עֹשֶׂה רָמְיָה דִּבֵּר שְׁקָרִים לֹא יִכּוֹן לִנְגֹד עֵינָי: (ח) לְבַקָּרִים אֲצַמִּית כָּל רִשְׁעֵי אֶרֶץ לְהַכְרִית מֵעִיר ה' כָּל פְּעֻלֵי אָוֶן:

(4) A perverse heart shall remain removed from me. I will have nothing to do with evil. (5) The person who secretly speaks ill of his neighbor, him will I cut off. I will not tolerate a person of proud looks and a conceited heart. (6) My eyes are on the trustworthy of the land that they may dwell with me. He that walks in the path of absolute integrity shall serve me. (7) The practitioner of deceit shall not stay within my house. One who tells lies, shall not remain in my sight. (8) Every morning I will [work to] eliminate all the wicked of the land, to cut off all doers of evil from the City of Hashem.

Learning the Mizmor

PART 1. CHOOSING THE GOOD WAY.

(א) לְדוֹד מִזְמוֹר

A mizmor composed **by David** – **לְדוֹד מִזְמוֹר** after a period of reflection and moral self-examination. He began the mizmor with the word **לְדוֹד** because he could not expect to be inspired until he was spiritually ready. Only then would he be able to guide others in achieving the high standards of morality and integrity upon which his kingdom was to be modeled.

חֶסֶד וּמִשְׁפָּט אֲשִׁירָה

לְךָ ה' אֲזַמְרָה:

Hashem, whether You act toward me with **kindness or** with harsh **justice, I will gratefully sing** to You – **חֶסֶד וּמִשְׁפָּט אֲשִׁירָה**, for Your kindness is pure and Your justice atones for my sins. **To You, Hashem, I will sing** praises – **לְךָ ה' אֲזַמְרָה** – for with this mizmor I dedicate myself to Your service. And so I will speak of your virtues for You have enabled me to emulate them.

(ב) אֲשַׁכִּילָה בְּדַרְךָ תָּמִים

מִתִּי תִבּוֹא אֵלַי

I will contemplate the meaning of what is happening in my life and learn from my experiences. I will try to achieve **the way of perfection** – אֲשְׁפִילָה בְּדֹרֶךְ – **תמים**. This means not being motivated by the possibility of any personal benefit, other than just doing what is right. **When will it come to me** – מָתַי – **תבוא אלי** through Your holy inspiration? I will be continually on the lookout for the opportunity to do what is right in every situation.

אֶתְהַלֵּךְ בְּתָם לִבִּי
בְּקָרֵב בֵּיתִי:

I will constantly **walk in** search of perfect integrity and **sincerity of heart** even **within** the privacy of **my home** – אֶתְהַלֵּךְ בְּתָם לִבִּי בְּקָרֵב בֵּיתִי – I will consistently work to free myself from all ulterior motives, even when I am under duress.

(ג) לֹא אֲשִׁית לְנֶגֶד עֵינַי דְּבַר בְּלִיעַל
עֲשֵׂה סִטִּים שְׁנֵאתִי לֹא יִדְבַק בִּי:

I will not emulate the practices and behavior of the wicked even when they seem to be benefitting thereby. This means I will **not place before my eyes anything unworthy** of coming up before Hashem – לֹא אֲשִׁית לְנֶגֶד עֵינַי דְּבַר בְּלִיעַל – nor will I contemplate it in my mind's eye. **I despise all crooked practice** – עֲשֵׂה סִטִּים – **לא ידבק בי; it will not cling to me** – לֹא יִדְבַק בִּי.

PART 2. CHOOSING GOOD PEOPLE.

(ד) לֵבִי עֵקֶשׁ יִסּוּר מִמֶּנִּי
רַע לֹא אֲדַע:

In contrast with the practices other kings and leaders, I will not keep company with people of perverse character. **A perverse heart shall remain removed from me** – לֵבִי עֵקֶשׁ יִסּוּר מִמֶּנִּי – **I will have nothing to do with evil** – רַע לֹא אֲדַע – even in my heart.

(ה) מְלַשְׁנִי בִּסְתֵר רַעְהוּ
אוֹתוֹ אֶצְמִית
גְּבוּהַ עֵינַיִם וּרְחַב לֵבִי
אֵתוֹ לֹא אוֹכֵל:

The person who secretly speaks ill of his neighbor – מְלַשְׁנִי בִּסְתֵר רַעְהוּ – **him will I cut off** from my fellowship – אוֹתוֹ אֶצְמִית – **I will not tolerate a person of**

proud looks and a conceited heart – גְּבוּהַ עֵינַיִם וּרְחַב לֵבָב אֶתּוֹ לֹא אֵיכָל

(ו) עֵינַי בְּנֹאֲמַי אֶרֶץ לְשֹׁבֵת עֹמְדֵי
הַלֵּךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ תָּמִים הוּא יִשְׁרָתֵנִי:

Instead of having evil men around me I will keep the company those who are honest. **My eyes** will be **on the trustworthy of the land – עֵינַי בְּנֹאֲמַי אֶרֶץ**, **that they may dwell with me – לְשֹׁבֵת עֹמְדֵי**. The man **that walks in the path of absolute integrity – הַלֵּךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ תָּמִים** – **he shall serve me – הוּא יִשְׁרָתֵנִי** by giving me the benefit of his counsel.

(ז) לֹא יֵשֵׁב בְּקֶרֶב בֵּיתִי עֹשֶׂה רָמְיָה
דִּבַּר שְׁקָרִים לֹא יִפְּוֹן לִנְגַד עֵינַי:

The practitioner of deceit will not be allowed to stay within my house – לֹא דִבַּר שְׁקָרִים. **One who tells lies**, even harmless lies, – **יֵשֵׁב בְּקֶרֶב בֵּיתִי עֹשֶׂה רָמְיָה shall not remain in my sight – לֹא יִפְּוֹן לִנְגַד עֵינַי**. I want to avoid interacting with such people lest I become accustomed to their ways and find myself adopting their habits.

(ח) לְבַקְרִים אֲצַמִּית כָּל רְשָׁעֵי אֶרֶץ
לְהַכְרִית מֵעִיר ה' כָּל פְּעֻלֵי אֲוֹן:

Starting early **every morning I will** actively diminish and ultimately **get rid of all the wicked of the land – לְבַקְרִים אֲצַמִּית כָּל רְשָׁעֵי אֶרֶץ**, especially **to cut off all doers of evil** from Yerushalayim, **the city of Hashem – לְהַכְרִית מֵעִיר ה' כָּל פְּעֻלֵי אֲוֹן**.

Sources

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

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