Learning the Mizmor

PART 1. THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE WORLD.

(א) בָּרֲכִי נַפְשִׁי אֶת ה׳

A mizmor composed by David. **O my soul,** I call upon you to **bless Hashem — בָּרֲכִי נַפְשִׁי אֶת־ה׳** with gratitude for everything He does for the benefit of His creatures. Among all the creatures it is only the human soul that has the knowledge and ability to appreciate and bless the Creator.

ה׳ אֱלֹקַי גָּדַלְתָּ מְאֹד

Hashem, my G-d — ה׳ אֱלֹקַי, You are uniquely great — גָּדַלְתָּ מְאֹד with a greatness that is evident from Your works and that You reveal by Your care and goodness.

הוֹד וְהָדָר לָבָשְׁתָּ׃

You are clothed with all the wonders of Creation, demonstrating the powerful **glory** of Your being **and** the visible impression conveyed by the **majesty** of Your might **— הוֹד וְהָדָר לָבָשְׁתָּ**. But just as human clothing prevents the actual person from being seen, so are Your actual glory and majesty far greater than anything that can be seen.

(ב) עֹטֶה אוֹר כַּשַּׂלְמָה
נוֹטֶה שָׁמַיִם כַּיְרִיעָה׃

He wraps the world **with light — עֹטֶה אוֹר as with a garment — כַּשַּׂלְמָה .** The light that came into being on the First Day of Creation is like a garment that shields His invisibility. **He spreads out the heavens — נוֹטֶה שָׁמַיִם like a** rich multi-colored **tapestry — כַּיְרִיעָה** that came into being on the Second Day of Creation for mankind to see.

(ג) הַמְקָרֶה בַמַּיִם עֲלִיּוֹתָיו
הַשָּׂם עָבִים רְכוּבוֹ הַמְהַלֵּךְ עַל כַּנְפֵי רוּחַ׃

He forms the clouds, which are like **the rafters of His upper chambers, from** the **water** of clouds **— הַמְקָרֶה בַמַּיִם עֲלִיּוֹתָיו. He sets** the **clouds** as **His chariot — הַשָּׂם עָבִים רְכוּבוֹ which flies** where He sends it to bring rain to the world **on wings of wind — הַמְהַלֵּךְ עַל כַּנְפֵי רוּחַ.**

(ד) עֹשֶׂה מַלְאָכָיו רוּחוֹת
מְשָׁרְתָיו אֵשׁ לֹהֵט׃

He makes the winds His messengers — עֹשֶׂה מַלְאָכָיו רוּחוֹת, for nothing happens in the world without a reason or purpose.Likewise, He makes the lightning with its **flames of fire His ministers — מְשָׁרְתָיו אֵשׁ לֹהֵט.** All the natural forces of wind, air, fire, and water are at His beck and call to carry out His will.

(ה) יָסַד אֶרֶץ עַל מְכוֹנֶיהָ
בַּל תִּמּוֹט עוֹלָם וָעֶד׃

He established the earth on its firm foundations within the gravitational structure of space **— יָסַד אֶרֶץ עַל מְכוֹנֶיהָ, never to be moved — בַּל תִּמּוֹט עוֹלָם וָעֶד** from its orbital path. The downward direction in man's habitat is defined by the pull of gravity.

(ו) תְּהוֹם כַּלְבוּשׁ כִּסִּיתוֹ
עַל הָרִים יַעַמְדוּ מָיִם׃

You covered it with the deep oceans **as with a garment — תְּהוֹם כַּלְבוּשׁ כִּסִּיתוֹ; the waters stood above the mountains — עַל הָרִים יַעַמְדוּ מָיִם** before You gave the command for the waters to retreat and the dry land to appear.

(ז) מִן גַּעֲרָתְךָ יְנוּסוּן
מִן קוֹל רַעַמְךָ יֵחָפֵזוּן׃

The waters **fled from** before **Your raging** storm winds **— מִן גַּעֲרָתְךָ יְנוּסוּן** like a servant frantically fleeing before his master's anger. **They hurried away at** the sound of **Your thunder — מִן קוֹל רַעַמְךָ יֵחָפֵזוּן.**

(ח) יַעֲלוּ הָרִים יֵרְדוּ בְקָעוֹת
אֶל מְקוֹם זֶה יָסַדְתָּ לָהֶם׃

In their desperation to obey **they rose** over the **mountains — יַעֲלוּ הָרִים,** and then **they flowed** back **down into the valleys — יֵרְדוּ בְקָעוֹת** of the land areas, ultimately returning **to** the sea, which is **the place You established for them — אֶל מְקוֹם זֶה יָסַדְתָּ לָהֶם.**

(ט) גְּבוּל שַׂמְתָּ בַּל יַעֲבֹרוּן
בַּל יְשׁוּבוּן לְכַסּוֹת הָאָרֶץ׃

You set the sea shore as **a boundary they may not cross — גְּבוּל שַׂמְתָּ בַּל יַעֲבֹרוּן,** so that **they would not return to inundate the earth — בַּל יְשׁוּבוּן לְכַסּוֹת הָאָרֶץ.** However, you draw vapor from the seas and let the winds carry it across the land in the clouds. You then release it as rain, which soaks the earth so that fresh water springs can appear to the delight of all living things.

PART 2. SUSTENANCE AND SHELTER.

(י) הַמְשַׁלֵּחַ מַעְיָנִים בַּנְּחָלִים
בֵּין הָרִים יְהַלֵּכוּן׃

You make the springs gush forth **in streams — הַמְשַׁלֵּחַ מַעְיָנִים בַּנְּחָלִים,** which **make their way between the mountains — בֵּין הָרִים יְהַלֵּכוּן .** This provides a continuous flow of water that is always available to quench the thirst of the creatures of the earth. Water is the basis of life because it enables the growth of vegetation that feeds all creatures.

(יא) יַשְׁקוּ כָּל חַיְתוֹ שָׂדָי
יִשְׁבְּרוּ פְרָאִים צְמָאָם׃

The streams **deliver drinking water to every beast of the field — יַשְׁקוּ כָּל חַיְתוֹ שָׂדָי,** each according to its needs and its habitat. **They even slake the thirst of the wild asses — יִשְׁבְּרוּ פְרָאִים צְמָאָם** that inhabit desert regions and need water in large amounts.

(יב) עֲלֵיהֶם עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם יִשְׁכּוֹן
מִבֵּין עֳפָאִים יִתְּנוּ קוֹל׃

In the nearby trees **the birds of the air make their nest — עֲלֵיהֶם עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם יִשְׁכּוֹן.** They live off the small fish and vegetation found in the waters. **From among the leafy branches they give voice** to their song **— מִבֵּין עֳפָאִים יִתְּנוּ קוֹל.**

(יג) מַשְׁקֶה הָרִים מֵעֲלִיּוֹתָיו
מִפְּרִי מַעֲשֶׂיךָ תִּשְׂבַּע הָאָרֶץ׃

He waters the mountains from His clouds in **lofty chambers — מַשְׁקֶה הָרִים**

מֵעֲלִיּוֹתֶיהָ. The needs of the **earth** are filled **with the** blessed rain which is the special **fruit of** His **works — מִפְּרִי מַעֲשֶׂיךָ תִּשְׂבַּע הָאָרֶץ,** including the heat of the sun which draws the vapor from the seas to form the clouds that release the rain..

(יד) מַצְמִיחַ חָצִיר לַבְּהֵמָה
וְעֵשֶׂב לַעֲבֹדַת הָאָדָם
לְהוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ׃

He causes vegetation to grow freely **for the cattle — מַצְמִיחַ חָצִיר לַבְּהֵמָה** to feed themselves **and** He causes **cereal grasses** to grow **with man's labor — וְעֵשֶׂב לַעֲבֹדַת הָאָדָם to bring forth bread from the earth — לְהוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ** for his sustenance and for man's industrial use, such as the production of dyes**;**

(טו) וְיַיִן יְשַׂמַּח לְבַב אֱנוֹשׁ
לְהַצְהִיל פָּנִים מִשָּׁמֶן
וְלֶחֶם לְבַב אֱנוֹשׁ יִסְעָד׃

He brings forth **wine** from grapes **to cheer the heart of man — וְיַיִן יְשַׂמַּח לְבַב אֱנוֹשׁ** even in times of sadness or difficulty. He brings forth **oil** from olives **to make** man's **face glow** with health **— לְהַצְהִיל פָּנִים מִשָּׁמֶן** through consuming the oil and rubbing it on his skin. **And** He brings forth **bread** from grain **to nourish** and strengthen **man's heart — וְלֶחֶם לְבַב אֱנוֹשׁ יִסְעָד.**

(טז) יִשְׂבְּעוּ עֲצֵי ה׳
אַרְזֵי לְבָנוֹן אֲשֶׁר נָטָע׃

Through the blessing of rain **the** tall forest **trees of Hashem are granted their fill** of fresh water **— יִשְׂבְּעוּ עֲצֵי ה׳.** These are **the cedars of Lebanon that He planted — אַרְזֵי לְבָנוֹן אֲשֶׁר נָטָע** to inspire men.

(יז) אֲשֶׁר שָׁם צִפֳּרִים יְקַנֵּנוּ
חֲסִידָה בְּרוֹשִׁים בֵּיתָהּ׃

Also, it is **there** in the branches of the cedars of Lebanon **where the birds make their nests — אֲשֶׁר שָׁם צִפֳּרִים יְקַנֵּנוּ.** As for the **stork, cypresses** with their wide protective leaves **are its home — חֲסִידָה בְּרוֹשִׁים בֵּיתָהּ.** Although these trees are not fruit-bearing, while they are growing they provide shelter for birds and after

they have been cut down they to provide wood for construction of houses and ships, and as fuel for heating.

(יח) הָרִים הַגְּבֹהִים לַיְעֵלִים
סְלָעִים מַחְסֶה לַשְׁפַנִּים׃

As the trees shelter the birds, so **the high mountains** offer a habitat **for the wild goats — הָרִים הַגְּבֹהִים לַיְעֵלִים.** Their **rocky crags provide refuge for the badgers — סְלָעִים מַחְסֶה לַשְׁפַנִּים.**