



TOWARDS MEANINGFUL

TEFILLA

BY REBBETZIN ZEMIRA OZAROWSKI

Director of OU Israel L'Ayla Women's Initiative

לְדוֹד ה' אֹרִי וְיִשְׁעִי

Starting on Rosh Chodesh Elul, the widespread custom is to recite Mizmor 27 of Tehillim, אורי וישעי, לודוד ה' אורי וישעי, every day at the end of both Shacharit and Maariv. Since we will continue to recite this Mizmor all the way through Shemini Atzeret, I thought it might be helpful to focus on it this week. The **Shulchan Aruch** (128:2) explains that the reason we recite this Mizmor during this time period is based on a midrash which says that certain words in this paragraph correlate to the holidays of this time: אורי (Hashem is my light) refers to Rosh Hashana, וישעי (and my salvation) refers to Yom Kippur, and כי יצפני בסכה (for He will hide me in His shelter) refers to Sukkot.

What exactly does this mean? This seems like a nice, cute connection, but is there a deeper meaning?

In order to answer this question, we need to look at the Mizmor inside. When one analyzes it, one will note that Dovid Hamelech seems to be having very contradictory emotions that do not flow in a logical order.

Dovid HaMelech starts out seeming very confident. He proclaims triumphantly in פסוקים א-ג:

א לְדוֹד ה' אֹרִי וְיִשְׁעִי מִמִּי אֵיכָא ה' מְעוֹל-חַיִּי מִמִּי אֶפְחָד.

ב בְּקֶרֶב עָלִי מְרַעִים לְאָכַל אֶת-בְּשָׂרִי צָרִי וְאֹיְבֵי לִי הִמָּה כְּשֶׁלו וְנָפְלוּ. ג אִם-תִּתְּנֶנָּה עָלַי מִחֲנֶה לֹא-יִירָא לְבִי-אִם-תִּקְוָם עָלַי מִלְחָמָה זֹאת אֲנִי בֹטָח.

"Hashem is my light, who should I be afraid of? My enemies will stumble and fall, even if a camp comes to fight against me, I can trust in Hashem".

But then in פסוק ד, Dovid begins to get a little nervous. He starts to feel like things are going well but how long can it last this way?

ד אַחַת שְׁאֵלַתִּי מֵאֵת ה' אוֹתָהּ אֲבַקֵּשׁ שְׁבִתִּי בְּבֵיתִי הֲכִל-יָמֵי חַיִּי לְחַזּוֹת בְּנַעֲם ה' וּלְבַקֵּר בְּהִיכְלוֹ. ה כִּי יִצְפְּנִי בַסֶּכֶה בְּיוֹם רָעָה יִסְתַּכְנִי בַסֶּתֶר אֲהִלּוּ בָצוּר יִרְוּמָנִי.

He cries out to Hashem...שבתי בבית – please let me stay with You, to always feel your protection. When things get bad, please let me feel your shelter.

By פסוקים ז-י, he really begins calling out in dire straits –

ז שְׁמַע-ה' קוֹלִי אֶקְרָא וְחֲנִנִי וְעֲנֵנִי. ח לֵךְ אֲמַר לְבִי בִקְשׁוּ פָנַי אֶת-פְּנֵיךְ ה' אֲבַקֵּשׁ. ט אֶל-תִּסְתֵּר פְּנֵיךְ מִמֶּנִּי אֶל תִּטְּבֹאֲךָ עַבְדְּךָ עֲזָרְתִּי הִי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵי מִלְחָמָתִי וְאֶל-תַּעֲזֹבֵנִי אֱלֹקֵי יִשְׁרָאֵל. י כִּי-אֲבִי וְאִמִּי עֲזָבוּנִי וְה' יִצְאֵסֶנִּי.

"Hashem listen to me, I am begging you. I am seeking you out. Don't hide your face from me, don't leave me. My parents have left me, please take care of me."

What is happening? Why is Dovid HaMelech suddenly faltering? Some commentaries find the order of this composition so strange

that they even suggest it was two different mizmorim joined together at a later time.

On Rosh Hashana, we coronate Hashem as King; We come out of the Chag and we are on top of the world

But one insightful answer to this question is that this is the human condition – our feelings don't need to go in order. *Ein mukdam umeuchar baTorah (or in people's feelings either!)*. Yes, it's nice and neat if we first feel scared and then work through our feelings and come out trusting in Hashem. But it doesn't always work that way, we are human and can't always control our emotions. There are times one feels total בטחון (faith) and then there are times when we feel like we are drowning. And it's not a contradiction. But what is underlying these emotions is that at all times, there is still a connection to Hashem. Whether one is on top of the world or feels that the world is caving in on him, one must constantly remember Hashem and call out to Him.

Rabbi Shaul Yisraeli z"l (founder of Eretz Chemda) explains that during the Yamim Noraim themselves, we also go through different conflicting stages. On Rosh Hashana, we coronate Hashem as King; We come out of the Chag and we are on top of the world. Everything is great ה' הוא המלך. But then as we go into the עשרת ימי תשובה, and we scrutinize and evaluate ourselves and our misdeeds and our middot, we fall into a sense of despair and depression. How silly

we were to think everything was so great. Hashem is great, but we have sinned. And so we call out to Hashem and say please help us out of this mess!!! And then finally we come to Yom Kippur, where after 24 hours of על חטא's and atonement, we come to a point where we can once again feel hope that we can work on ourselves and rise up.

We end off with the last stage as we complete the Yamim Noraim and move on to Sukkot and then to regular life, where we say to Hashem – בָּאֵלֶיךָ מִישׁוּר – ה' דִּרְכְּךָ וְנִתְּנִי בָאֵלֶיךָ מִישׁוּר – *Please show us your ways*. We need you to guide us, to show us where we need to get to and how to get there. We need you to help us through all of life's bumps, through the rollercoaster of life.

In the last פסוק we call out – קוּמָה אֱלֹהֵי ה' חֲזַק וַיִּצְמַח – *Hope in Hashem, strengthen your heart, and hope in Hashem*. This פסוק encapsulates again this fluctuation in our relationship with Hashem – We start off by turning to Hashem with hope but then we falter. So we work on strengthening ourselves, and finally we can turn to Hashem again in hope. This is the reality of the human condition – to have ups and downs, highs and lows, but throughout the most important thing to remember is to continue to call out to Hashem and to connect with Him at whatever stage we are at.

This then is the deeper connection of the paragraph of לְדוֹד ה' to the Elul/Tishrei time period. It's not just the cute word connection, but a much more profound connection relating to the emotional stages inherent in the current season. Wishing everyone a Shana Tova! ■