

Tehilim 91- Under G-d's Wing

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Dr. Esther Shkop

Tehilim, Chapter 91 is found often in the Jewish liturgy. It was included in the *pesukei d'zimra* of *Shachrit* on *Shabbat* and the Holidays, in *kriat shema* before going to sleep, and in Maariv of *Motzai Shabbat* as a prayer for the new week. It's also recited at funerals as the bier is carried to the grave. Midrash Shochor Tov attributes this *mizmor* to Moshe Rabbenu. The imagery and language are reminiscent of *Shirat Haazinu*, the prophetic epic written by Moshe prior to his death. It appears to be a continuation of the previous psalm which depicts the brevity and frailty of human life and endeavor which can only be overcome by relying on Hashem and receiving his aid.

This chapter is a peon to the person who has complete faith and trust in Hashem and is rewarded with His protection from the vagaries and dangers of life both known and unknown. Chazal tell us that were we able to see what was really around us, we would see thousands of *mazikim* whether spiritual or organic surrounding us on all sides with the

ability to threaten our very lives and we would be paralyzed with fear. This *mizmor* provides comfort to the man who sits *b'seser elyon* and leans on *b'zel shakai*- the shadow of Hashem. Rashi explains that this chapter is not a description of *Hashem* but rather of the man who trusts in Hashem and recognizes that He is at his side at all times. Part of the psalm is a declaration to *Hashem* and part of it is meant for us to learn from. Conceivably, Moshe addresses the Jewish nation throughout the ages telling us that the one who seeks Hashem's closeness and protection is promised that he will receive it.

Malbim argues that, "The one that dwells in the hidden secrets on high," refers to one of the angels who offers encouragement to the person who seeks Hashem and His protection. Perhaps the angel is Moshe himself who was called *Ish Elokim*; the one who had gone up on the mountain and had seen what no human had seen. Moshe gives encouragement to all Jews throughout the ages through this *mizmor* said prior to his death reassuring us that

Hashem will guide us and protect us as we traverse through exile and seek to return to our homeland. Hashem will save us from all entrapments, stumbling blocks, and plagues. Under His wings we will find refuge; He will be like a shield that protects us from physical, emotional, and spiritual dangers that surround us.

"Do not fear the terror of night." Night represents the times when Hashem's presence is concealed. "A thousand will fall on your side, ten thousand on your right and the angel of death will not approach you... we will see the payback and the downfall of evil doers." And we've witnessed this throughout history.

"For you *Hashem* are my shelter..." And if we put our trust in Him- "No evil will befall you..." Hashem Himself promises, "I will rescue him, I will lift him up from his troubles ... when he calls on me, I will surely answer him...and I will yet show him (if not in this world then in the next) my salvation."

The Significance of Why There Are Five Books of the Torah Part 2

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

In this class we continue to examine what makes *Sefer Bereishit* a *sefer* unto itself and why weren't the five *chumashim* combined into one book? *Parshat Bereishit* and Noach span 2000 years which Chazal called *tohu*. During this time the world turned away from its purpose and this necessitated that Hashem bring it back on track by selecting Avraham and then *Klal Yisrael* to fulfill this mission. After the *mabul*, Noach was afraid it would happen again. As a result, Hashem made a *brit* (covenant) with him that He would never completely destroy the world again. This was the second *brit* Hashem made. Before Noach entered the *teva*, Hashem made the first *brit* assuring him that he and his children would survive. The Rambam says a *brit* is a promise of Hashem that can never be changed. After this, the *Torah* describes *brit ben habesarim*, the covenant Hashem made with Avraham where He promised that he would have children and they would get *Eretz Yisrael*. The *brit* with Avraham is

reinforced when Hashem assures Yitzchak and Yaakov that He will fulfill the promise. We see that the concept of a *brit* is repeated constantly in *Chumash Bereishit*, more than in the other books of the *Torah* and we have to understand why.

What was the difference between the punishment of *dor hambul* and *dor haflaga*? In *dor hamabul*, Hashem destroyed everyone except Noach and his family. In *dor haflaga*, Hashem interfered in a different way. He didn't destroy them entirely as He promised, but rather divided them by creating 70 languages and spreading them all over the world. Then Hashem chose Avraham and his children to bring the world to its purpose. Hashem almost never interferes with free choice but what happens if *Klal Yisrael* don't fulfill their mission? What happens if the world come to a state where there's no point to its further existence and Hashem must uphold His unconditional *brit*?

The Shem MiShmuel explains that the *mabul* was described as a *mikva*, it purified the world. The first stage of the rain was 40 days which symbolizes the time it takes to create something new. The *mabul* was a cleansing process. When Hashem promised it wouldn't happen again His intention was that He would stop the process of mankind's deterioration before it came to the point it did at the time of the *mabul*. After the *mabul*, Noach brought an offering which created a closeness between the people and Hashem. The reality from now on would be that people could not come to the level of corruption of *dor hamabul* by the fact that they were now closer to Hashem. Hashem maneuvers things in many different ways that doesn't interfere with free choice to make sure that the world will come to its purpose. After the second covenant of *brit ben habesarim*, Avraham asks Hashem how he will know that His promise will be fulfilled. So, Hashem says- take animals and Rashi

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explains this correspond to different *korbonot* that *Klal Yisrael* will bring. Avraham was asking Hashem, how will I know my children will deserve the reward you are promising. Hashem responded, don't worry they'll get it in the merit of *korbonot*. There is a way to correct what went wrong. When we had the *bet hamikdash* we brought sacrifices. Hashem says the *brit* will continue to be unconditional.

I'm standing behind my promise. If they sin, I'm giving them the opportunity to repent through *korbonot* and now through *teshuva* and *tefilah*. Hashem's promise is unconditional, but he also gives us the means on our end to be able to guarantee that the world will come to its purpose.

The Seforno points out that not only did Hashem promise Noach he wouldn't destroy

the world, but He added the *keshef* (rainbow) as a sign. When the *tzadikim* will see it, they will pray to Hashem and their merit will protect the world. This tells us another means Hashem uses in order to ensure the world's continued existence and that is- there won't be a generation without *tzadikim* who will have enough influence to guarantee that *Klal Yisrael* will go in the ways of Hashem.

The Beauty of the Month of Elul

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller-Gottlieb

In this class on *Elul* we will study how to see the *rachamim* in *din*, the nature of self-change, and how it's possible for all of us to achieve this in a limited amount of time. We know that everything comes from one source. When we say the words of *shema* and acknowledge that Hashem is one and the flow of His essence is in all of creation, it means we are a part of it and have a direct relationship with Him.

In the second paragraph of *Shema* we say, *V'haya*- And it will be as, opposed to *Vayehi* - And it was. *Vayehi* has two *yud*'s and *v'haya* has two *heh*'s and a *vav* and *yud*. The letter *yud* is small and above the line and is a symbol of Hashem's transcendental reality hidden from the human eye. Conversely, the letter *heh* has two feet on the ground symbolizing this world. *V'haya* is used to connote that you can see this world as being good and it will be if you listen and understand that *mitzvot* create a relationship between the one who gave them and the one who fulfills it. We as Jews have a shared ability and *mitzva* to answer Hashem's love for us by collectively loving Him and this generates goodness. In the same paragraph where we speak about love we read about losing the land and going to exile, the source

of all our suffering. How can a loving Hashem do this?

There's a famous parable about a king who opened up his palace and announced to all the people that they could come take what they wanted. Some took objects of art and some jewelry. But one person embraced the king and said, "I don't want what you have, but what you are." There are all sorts of things that keep us away from embracing the King and having a meaningful relationship with Him and they lie in our choices.

Sometimes Hashem conceals His presence and that is *midat hadin*. We have to flex our spiritual muscles and search for Him and grow and change. *Elul* is a time that introduces us to *midat hadin*, yet it's called the month of *rachamim* and *selichot*. It's about taking all the *midat hadin* you experienced and committing to explore its source in *rachamim*. It's about asking for forgiveness and achieving the love and *rachamim* you want your life to be defined by. The trembling of *Elul* is an affirmation that even when your back is to the wall, it's not because Hashem is so limited that He's punishing you. Rather He's saying- I know you want Me, look for Me.

There are different practices in *Eul* that remove the blockages and open up the doors, among them *teshuva*, *tefilah*, and *tzedakah*. *Teshuva* is about returning to who you want to be, to the fulfillments of your potential. In order to do that, you have to pinpoint what is wrong, otherwise it's hard to know how to rectify the problem. The *Nesivot Sholom* suggests not focusing on the misdeed but rather on the roots of it. I'll give you an example. My very good friend is somewhat judgmental. She's a really good person. If she thinks it's right to help someone, she's there. The same kind of judgmental capacity she has for looking inward she has for looking outward. She lives in a mixed socio-economic area. One day her neighbor's kid threw some litter on her manicured lawn and she lost it, which is unusual for her because it's not right to be negative and her sense of rectitude is real. But then she realized that it says in *Tomer Devora* that the effect of any act you do is far reaching. If you say something that's true but negative and judgmental you've created an aura of judgment and negativity around you, that you'll have to account for. You have to go to the root of sin to change. You might say it's too hard and you're right. You can't possibly do this yourself. This is why we have *Elul*. Hashem is there to help us in the process.