
TEHILLIM 126: A SONG OF REDEMPTION

R' Yair Lichtman



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(1) TEHILLIM 126

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| <p>(1) A Song of Ascents. When Hashem brought back those that returned to Zion, we were like dreamers.</p> <p>(2) Then our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. Then they said among the nations, "Hashem has done great things with these."</p> <p>(3) Hashem has done great things with us; we have rejoiced.</p> <p>(4) Return our captivity, Hashem, as the streams in the dry land.</p> <p>(5) They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.</p> <p>(6) Though he that bears the measure of seed goes on his way weeping, he shall come home with joy, bearing his sheaves.</p> | <p>(א) שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת בְּשׁוּב י"י אֶת שְׂבִיבַת צִיּוֹן הֵייוּנוּ בְּחֻלְמִים.</p> <p>(ב) אִזְ יִמְלֵא שְׂחֹק פִּינוּ וּלְשׁוֹנֵנוּ רִנָּה אִזְ יֹאמְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם הַגְּדִיל י"י לַעֲשׂוֹת עִם אֱלֹהֵי.</p> <p>(ג) הַגְּדִיל י"י לַעֲשׂוֹת עִמָּנוּ הֵייוּנוּ שְׂמֵחִים.</p> <p>(ד) שׁוּבָה י"י אֶת [שְׂבִיבַתנוּ] (שְׁבוּתָנוּ) כְּאֶפְיָקִים בְּנָגֵב.</p> <p>(ה) הַזֹּרְעִים בְּדַמְעָה בְּרִנָּה יִקְצְרוּ.</p> <p>(ו) הַלֹּוֹךְ יֵלֵךְ וּבָכָה נֹשֵׂא מִשְׁפָּךְ הַזֹּרֵעַ בֹּא יָבֵא בְּרִנָּה נֹשֵׂא אֲלֻמָּתָיו.</p> |
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COMMENTARY

(2) MALBIM TEHILLIM 126:1

(א) שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת – הוֹסֵד בְּגִלוֹת בָּבֶל עַל שִׁבְתַּת צִיּוֹן וְהַגּוּלָה... תְּקוּת יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵה שִׁיקוּוֹ שִׁימְלֵא ה' הַבְּטַחְתּוֹ ע"י נְבִיאָיו לְהַשִּׁיב שְׁבוּתָם, כְּחֹלֶם חֹלֶם נְבוֹאִי, שְׂרֹאָה אֶת הַעֲתִיד כְּדַבֵּר הוּא עֵתָה...

This [psalm] was established during the Babylonian exile on the return of Tziyon and the exile... the hope of Israel was their hope that Hashem will fulfill His promise through the prophets to return them. This is like the one who dreams a prophetic dream, who sees the future as though it is present...

(3) MEYUCHAS L'RASHBAM TEHILLIM 126:1

וְכַשְׁנִגְאֵל נִהְיָ כְּאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲוֹר מִשְׁנָתוֹ, וְנִמְצָא שְׂכָל מֵה שְׂרֹאָה בְּחֹלְמוֹ אִמֵּת הוּא

When we are redeemed, we will be like a person who awakens from his sleep and finds that everything that he saw in his dream had come true.

(4) RADAK TEHILLIM 126:1

הֵייוּנוּ כְּחֹלְמִים – כְּחֹלֶם יַעֲוֹף בְּעֵינֵינוּ צְרוּת הַגּוּלוֹת, מְרֹב הַשְּׂמֵחָה שֶׁתִּהְיֶה לָנוּ בְּשׁוּבָנוּ לְאַרְצֵנוּ. כֵּן פִּירְשׁוּ אֲדוֹנֵי אֲבֵי ז"ל.

וְהַחֲכָם רַאב"ע פִּירְשׁ: כֵּן יֹאמְרוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשׁוּב הָאֵל אֶת שְׁבוּתָם, אִין אָדָם רוֹאֵה בְּעֵינָיו בְּפִלְאָה הַזֶּה רַק בְּחֹלֶם.

“We were like dreamers” – the pains of exile are like a fleeting dream in our eyes, because of the great joy that will be with us when we return to our land. This is how my father explained it.

The sage Avraham ibn Ezra explained that this is what Israel will say when God will return them: “no person has seen a wonder like this with their eyes, but only in a dream.”

(5) IYOV 8:21-22

(כא) עד ימלא שחוק פיה ושפתיך תרועה. (כב) שנא' יקבשו ב'ש'ת ואהל רשעים איננו.

(21) He will yet fill your mouth with laughter and your lips with shouting. (22) Those that hate you shall be clothed with shame; and the tent of the wicked shall be no more.

(6) R' ELCHANAN SAMET, "PSALM 126: PART 2," VBM WEBSITE

Why do the nations think "the Lord did great things for these"? The answer seems to lie in the uniqueness of the process of return of those who returned from the Babylonian exile to their homeland.

Many nations were exiled from their lands by the kings of Assyria and Babylonia over the course of the two hundred years that preceded the Persian conquest of Babylonia. To the best of our knowledge, however, none of these nations returned to their homelands other than the Jews who were exiled to Babylonia.

Koresh's proclamation set in motion the return to Zion that came in its wake, the renewal of settlement in Judea with political rights, limited as they may have been, and the rebuilding of the Temple and restoration of Jerusalem and its walls. All of these constitute a unique phenomenon in the history of the ancient world. Had it not been for the return of Jews to their homeland in recent generations, it might well have remained a unique phenomenon in all of history.

(7) NIDDAH 31A

אמר רבי אלעזר מאי דכתיב (תהלים עב, יח) עושה נפלאות (גדולות) לבדו וברוך שם כבודו לעולם אפילו בעל הנס אינו מכיר
בנסו

Rabbi Elazar said: What is the meaning of that which is written: "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, **Who does wondrous things alone; and blessed be His glorious name forever**" (Psalms 72:18–19)? What does it mean that God "does wondrous things alone"? It means that **even the one for whom the miracle was performed does not recognize the miracle** that was performed for him.

(8) YOSEF BRESLAVI, "HA-YADATA ET HA-ARETZ?" PP. 320-328

Rashi explains... "Like streams of water in an arid land, which moisten it, so too we shall be moistened when You bring back our return." The Radak maintains that "the Negev is an arid region... It itself is thirsty for water, and if streams of water would pass through it, it would be a great novelty and favor. So, too, the return of our exile: the exile is likened to the Negev and the salvation to streams of water."... These explanations do not accord with Scripture...

The streambeds in the Negev cannot serve as an encouraging symbol even in the winter. They are usually filled with stones, silt, and sand. The great streams of water that sometimes pass through them are rare and usually last for only a few hours or days. The streambeds in the Negev do not return to their former strength during the winter; they do not even fill with water, and they are not covered with rich flora, which might serve as a symbol of flowering and for encouragement...

The most surprising sight in the Negev is a flood without rain... The clouds glide over the Negev plateau without releasing a single drip of rain. The clouds are carried further east and the skies clear up, but somewhere far off in the mountains, heavy rain begins to fall. Water begins to stream from every side towards the Negev streambeds; it grows stronger and stronger without pause; and in the end it bursts forth with enormous power towards the Negev plateau westward, astonishing the person who had seen no rain whatsoever that day...

If we return now to the psalmist's prayer in chapter 126, "Bring back, O Lord, our return, like the streams in the south," and ask ourselves about the psalmist's analogy and request, we must say: The psalmist was well familiar with the streams of the Negev, which during the winter turn into powerful currents. The small ingathering of the exiles did not satisfy him, and he too, like the prophet Zekharya, prayed for a massive return from all across the Diaspora. Therefore, "Bring back, O Lord, our return, like the streams in the south" – bring back our return in strong, powerful, and unforeseen currents, like the great currents of water that occasionally flow in the streambeds of the Negev! The nation that returned to Zion must pass through areas of wilderness. Its masses are likened to the streams in the Negev which all of a sudden bring great amounts of water.

(9) CHAGGAI 1:9-11

(ט) פָּנָה אֶל הַרְבֵּה וְהִנֵּה לְמַעַט וְהִבֵּאתֶם הַבַּיִת וְנִפְתַּחְתִּי בּוֹ יַעַן מָה נָאֵם י"י צְבָאוֹת יַעַן בֵּיתִי אֲשֶׁר הוּא חָרַב וְאַתֶּם רְצִיִּים אִישׁ לְבֵיתוֹ.
 (י) עַל כֵּן עֲלִיכֶם כָּלֹאֵו שָׁמַיִם מִטֶּל וְהָאָרֶץ כְּלֹאָה יְבוּלָה. (יא) וְאֶקְרָא חָרֵב עַל הָאָרֶץ וְעַל הַהָרִים וְעַל הַדְּגָן וְעַל הַתִּירוֹשׁ וְעַל הַיֶּצֶהָר וְעַל אֲשֶׁר תּוֹצִיא הָאֲדָמָה וְעַל הָאָדָם וְעַל הַבְּהֵמָה וְעַל כָּל יִגְיַע כְּפָיִם.

(9) "You looked for much, and, behold, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?" says Hashem of Hosts, "Because of My house that lies waste, while each of you is busy with his own house. (10) Therefore for your sake the heavens withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit. (11) I called for a drought on the land, on the mountains, on the grain, on the new wine, on the oil, on that which the ground brings forth, on men, on livestock, and on all the labor of the hands."

INTERTEXTUAL PARALLELS

(10) YOEL 2:20-23

(כ) וְאֵת הַצִּפּוֹנִי אֶרְחִיק מֵעֲלֵיכֶם וְהִדַּחְתִּיו אֶל אֲרֶץ צִיָּה וְשָׁמְמָה אֵת פְּנֵיו אֶל הַיָּם הַקְּדֻמָּי וְסָפוּ אֶל הַיָּם הָאֲחֵרוֹן וְעָלָה בְּאִשׁוֹ וְתַעַל צַחְחָתוֹ כִּי הִגְדִּיל לַעֲשׂוֹת. (כא) אֵל תִּירָאִי אֲדָמָה גִילִי וְשִׂמְחִי כִּי הִגְדִּיל י"י לַעֲשׂוֹת. (כב) אֵל תִּירָאוּ בְּהֵמוֹת שָׂדֵי כִּי דָשְׁאוּ נְאוֹת מִדְּבַר כִּי עֵץ נִשָּׂא פִרְיוֹ תֵּאָנֶה וְגִפְזוֹ נִתְּנָהוּ חֵילָם. (כג) וּבְנֵי צִיּוֹן גִּילוּ וְשִׂמְחוּ בִּי"י אֲלֵהֵיכֶם כִּי נָתַן לָכֶם אֵת הַמּוֹרָה לַצְּדָקָה וַיּוֹרֵד לָכֶם גֶּשֶׁם מוֹרָה וּמִלְקוֹשׁ בְּרֵאשׁוֹן.

(20) But I will remove the northern one far away from you, and will drive it into a barren and desolate land, its front into the eastern sea, and its back into the western sea; and its stench will come up, and its bad smell will rise, for he has done great things." (21) Land, don't be afraid. Be glad and rejoice, for Hashem has done great things. (22) Don't be afraid, you animals of the field; for the pastures of the wilderness spring up, for the tree bears its fruit. The fig tree and the vine yield their strength. (23) Be glad then, you children of Zion,

and rejoice in Hashem, Your God; for He gives you the former rain in just measure, and He causes the rain to come down for you, the former rain and the latter rain, as before.

(11) AMOS 9:13-15

(יג) הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים נְאֻם י"י וְנִגַּשׁ חֹרֶשׁ בְּקֹצֵר וְדֹרֵךְ עֲנָבִים בְּמִשְׁךְ הַזֶּרַע וְהִטִּיפוּ הַהָרִים עָסִיס וְכָל הַגְּבָעוֹת תִּתְמוּגְגְנָה. (יד) וְשִׁבְתִּי אֶת שְׁבוֹת עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבְנוּ עָרִים וְשָׂמוֹת וַיָּשׁוּבוּ וַיִּשְׁבְּעוּ כְרָמִים וְשָׂתוּ אֶת יַיִנָם וַעֲשׂוּ גִבּוֹת וְאָכְלוּ אֶת פְּרִיָהֶם. (טו) וַיִּטְעֲתֵם עַל אֲדָמְתֵם וְלֹא יִנְתָּשׁוּ עוֹד מֵעַל אֲדָמְתֵם אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לָהֶם אָמַר י"י אֱלֹהֵיךָ.

(13) "Behold, the days come," says Hashem, "that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the one treading grapes him who sows seed; and sweet wine will drip from the mountains, and flow from the hills. (14) I will bring My people Israel back from captivity, and they will rebuild the ruined cities, and inhabit them; and they will plant vineyards, and drink wine from them. They shall also make gardens, and eat their fruit. (15) I will plant them on their land, and they will no more be plucked up out of their land which I have given them," says Hashem your God.

(12) BEREISHIT 37:5-7

(ה) וַיִּחְלֶם יוֹסֵף חֲלוֹם וַיַּגִּד לְאֶחָיו וַיֹּסְפוּ עוֹד שִׁנְאוֹ אֹתוֹ. (ו) וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם שְׁמְעוּ נָא הַחֲלוֹם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר חֲלַמְתִּי. (ז) וְהִנֵּה אֲנִי הוֹנֵה מֵאֲלֵמִים אֲלֵמִים בְּתוֹךְ הַשָּׂדֶה וְהִנֵּה קִמָּה אֲלַמְתִּי וְגַם נִצְבָה וְהִנֵּה תִסְבְּיָנָה אֲלַמְתֵיכֶם וַתִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶינּוּ לְאֲלַמְתִּי.

(5) Yosef dreamed a dream and he told his brothers, and they hated him even more. (6) He said to them, "Listen, now, to this dream that I dreamed. (7) Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field and my sheaf rose and even stood erect, and, behold, your sheaves surrounded and bowed down to my sheaf."

(13) MIDRASH TANCHUMA VAYIGASH 10

וְאֵת יְהוּדָה שְׁלַח. זֶה שְׁאָמַר הַכֹּתוּב: הַנְּנִי שְׁלַח מְלָאכִי וּפְנֵה וְגו' (מלאכי ג, א). בֹּא וּרְאֵה, כָּל צָרוֹת שְׂאֲרַע לְיוֹסֵף, אֲרַע לְצִיּוֹן... בְּיוֹסֵף, וְהִנֵּה אֲנִי הוֹנֵה מֵאֲלֵמִים אֲלֵמִים. בְּצִיּוֹן, בֹּא יְבֹא בְרִנָּה נִשְׂאָה אֲלַמְתִּיו (תהלים קכו, ו)... בְּיוֹסֵף, וַיִּחְלֶם יוֹסֵף חֲלוֹם, בְּצִיּוֹן, בְּשׁוּב ה' אֶת שִׁיבַת צִיּוֹן הִינֵנוּ כְּחֲלָמִים (תהלים קכו, א).

And he sent Judah before him (Gen. 46:28). Scripture states elsewhere: *Behold, I send My messenger, and he shall clear the way before Me* (Mal. 3:1). Observe that every misfortune that occurred to Joseph likewise befell Zion... With reference to Joseph it is said: *For behold, we are binding sheaves* (Gen. 37:7), and in regard to Zion: *Ye shall come home with song, bearing sheaves* (Ps. 126:6)... Joseph: *And Joseph dreamed a dream* (Gen. 37:5), and Zion: *When the Lord brought back those that returned to Zion, we were like unto them that dream* (Ps. 126:1).