YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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# **SEFER Tehillim**

**by Rav Elchanan Samet**

**Lecture 53: Psalm 6 - "The Lord has heard my supplication"**

 (1) To the director of music for instruments

 *al-ha-sheminit.* A psalm of David.

1 (2) O Lord,

 do not punish me in Your anger,

 and do not chastise me in Your wrath.

2 (3) Favor me, O Lord, for I am broken.

 Heal me, O Lord, for my limbs are dismayed.

 (4) And my soul is greatly dismayed,

 But You, O Lord, how long…?

3 (5) Turn, O Lord, rescue my soul.

 Save me for the sake of Your loving-kindness.

4 (6) For in death there is no remembrance of You.

 In the underworld who will give You thanks?

5 (7) I have become weary with my sighing.

 Every night I make my bed swim.

 I melt my couch with my tears.

6 (8) My eye is dimmed because of grief.

 It has become old because of all my adversaries.

 (9) Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity,

7 for the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping.

 (10) The Lord has heard my supplication.

 The Lord will accept my prayer.

8 (11) May all my enemies be frustrated and greatly

 dismayed.

 May they turn back, may they be suddenly frustrated.

### A psalm of supplication

Psalm 6 is a clear example of a psalm of supplication,[[1]](#footnote-1) and it is perhaps for this reason that it was chosen to be recited as part of "*Tachanun*" according to the rite followed in most Ashkenazi communities.[[2]](#footnote-2) Psalms of supplication are among the most common in the book of *Tehillim*, and the characteristic features of such psalms were discussed in our study of psalm 30, where we noted the difference between psalms of thanksgiving and psalms of supplication,[[3]](#footnote-3) and in our study of psalm 34, where we noted the difference between psalms of complaint and psalms of supplication.[[4]](#footnote-4)

What affliction does the petitioner in our psalm suffer, and regarding what distress does he beseech God to come to his rescue? The petitioner's emotional and physical suffering is described at relative length, and it seems that his life is in danger (v. 6). But what is causing his hardship, and what is putting his life in jeopardy?

In verse 3 the psalmist pleads, "**Heal me** (*refa'eni*), O Lord, for my limbs are dismayed." From this one might conclude that the affliction described in this psalm is a difficult illness. This is the way the psalm was understood by several commentators, both early and modern.[[5]](#footnote-5)

This understanding, however, is by no means necessary. Words stemming from the root *resh-peh-alef* frequently appear in Scripture in the metaphoric sense of repair, improvement, and rescue; this last sense of rescue is appropriate for our psalm, even if it is not dealing with illness.

In the concluding portion of the psalm, beginning with the second half of verse 8, mention is made of the author's "adversaries," who are "workers of iniquity" (v. 9), and "his enemies" (v. 11). This suggests that it is they who are causing the psalmist such distress and endangering his life.

This interpretation is also not established beyond doubt. The psalmist does not describe his enemies as placing him in peril.[[6]](#footnote-6) It may be that his distress results from some other misfortune, but his enemies' joy over his affliction and their anticipation of his death add emotional anguish to his suffering. Other psalms that describe a particular affliction from which the psalmist suffers mention the psalmist's enemies, who rejoice over his misfortune, but it is clear that they are not the source of his misery, but rather one of its consequences.[[7]](#footnote-7)

We see, then, that the affliction from which the psalmist is suffering is not explained in our psalm. We noted a similar phenomenon in our study of psalm 30.[[8]](#footnote-8) We said there that this is very characteristic of the book of *Tehillim*: psalms of supplication and thanksgiving richly describe the background of the affliction under discussion, but this detailed account is limited to the emotional realm. The factual realm is purposely left obscure, thus allowing many different people who find themselves in all sorts of troubles to identify with the psalm's contents.

### Reading the Psalm stanza by Stanza

According to our analysis, psalm 6 is composed of eight stanzas of two or three lines each. The breakdown into stanzas is based on stylistic and substantive considerations, following the approach of A.L. Strauss.

The first four stanzas constitute the main "supplication" in our psalm. In these stanzas, God is addressed in the second person and His name is mentioned five times.[[9]](#footnote-9) As for their contents, these four stanzas divide into two sets of two stanzas. In stanzas 1-2, the petitioner emphasizes his great physical and emotional suffering, this suffering serving as the reason for his desperate supplication before God.

In stanza 1, the psalmist petitions God about what He should **not** do to him:

Do **not** punish in Your anger,

and do **not** chastise me in Your wrath.

Based on a logical analysis of what is stated in this stanza in the two parallel clauses, one might explain as follows: "I am not asking You not to punish or chastise me, but only that Your punishments should not be in 'anger' and that your chastisements should not be in 'wrath.'"[[10]](#footnote-10) This understanding implies that the psalmist's words include an admission of a sin of which he is guilty and for which he is being punished. It would surely be appropriate to adopt this explanation would it find support in the continuation of the psalm – if we found, for example, a more explicit expression of the psalmist's recognition of his sin and a more explicit expression of his repentance. But there is not a hint of either in the continuation of the psalm. It therefore seems that stanza 1 should be understood in a different manner. The essence of the prayer is "Do not punish… and do not chastise…." The words "in Your anger" and "in Your wrath" merely intensify the description of the punishment and chastisement, for the cessation of which the psalmist is praying. Thus, we cannot conclude from this prayer that the psalmist is alluding to a sin for which he has been struck with afflictions.

 In stanza 2, the psalmist beseeches God to perform a positive action on his behalf: "Favor me, O Lord… Heal me, O Lord." The petitioner explains his plea for action with his enormous suffering as described in three parallel clauses:

… for I am broken.

… for my limbs are dismayed.

And my soul is greatly dismayed.

 We have placed the cry that closes verse 4, "But You, O Lord, how long," between stanza 2 and stanza 3. These words do, in fact, serve as a "central axis," the function of which is to serve as a transitional stage between the contents of stanzas 1-2 to the contents of stanzas 3-4. First, however, we must explain in what way the second pair of stanzas (3-4) differs from the first (1-2).

 In stanzas 1-2, the psalmist sets his own person and the great suffering that he is experiencing at the center of his consciousness. This is expressed in stanza 2 in the threefold repetition of "*ani*"(I), "*atzamai*"(my limbs), and "*nafshi*"(my soul), all of which refer to different aspects of the "I." It is also expressed in the fourfold repetition in stanzas 1-2 of the pronominal suffixes attached to verbs relating to God: "*tokhicheni*"(punish **me**), "*teyasreni*" (chastise **me**), "*chaneni*" (favor **me**), "*refa'eni*" (heal **me**).

 The descriptions of the suffering found in stanzas 1-2 cause the author to let out an interrupted cry:

But You, O Lord, how long…?

 What he means is: How long will You allow my great suffering to continue? This cry contains an element of complaint, and the cut-off formulation reveals a note of impatience and urgency. Contents-wise, this cry, "But You, O Lord, how long," is the climax of the two preceding stanzas.

 Stylistically, however, this cry stands in sharp contrast to the emphasis placed on the "I" in the previous two stanzas: "**But You, O Lord**." Were it not for the two words that follow, "how long," we would have explained the words, "But You, O Lord," as a dramatic shift in consciousness transpiring inside the petitioner, from concentration on himself and his own suffering to thoughts about the greatness of God.[[11]](#footnote-11)

 Such a shift in the petitioner's consciousness does, in fact, take place in stanzas 3-4: He continues to pray for himself - "rescue my soul,"[[12]](#footnote-12) "save me" - but even when he prays on his own behalf, he does not explain his praying with his suffering, as he did in stanzas 1-2, but rather he offers a new explanation: "for the sake of Your loving-kindness." Weiss explains the meaning of these words based on what is stated in the next stanza: "So that I may tell of Your loving-kindness."[[13]](#footnote-13)

 In stanza 4, the psalmist no longer mentions himself, but rather asserts a general truth:

For in death there is no remembrance of You.

In the underworld who will give You thanks?

It is clear that in the context in which this stanza appears the psalmist means to explain his previous plea, "rescue my soul" – save my life. "For" if You don't do so, I won't be able to make remembrance of You or give thanks to You when I am dead.

 We see, then, that the psalmist's consciousness in stanzas 3-4 is focused on his desire to speak of God during his lifetime and to thank Him for His loving-kindness when He comes to his rescue, and this is the very reason that he beseeches God to save him.

 Paradoxically, what brings about this shift in consciousness is his cry, "But You, O Lord…," despite the fact that this cry constitutes an implied complaint.

 In stanza 5, the reader encounters his first surprise in our psalm: he had thought that the noble reason for the petitioner's request in stanzas 3-4, "for the sake of Your loving-kindness," would bring about a positive change in his situation (objective or subjective). In actuality, however, we find the very opposite: the psalmist returns to his suffering, describing it with greater force than that found in stanzas 1-2. He sighs because of his afflictions until he becomes weary with sighing, and he floods his bed with tears, which cause his couch to melt.

 A note of somber desperation seizes control of stanza 5, and this continues into stanza 6, where the psalmist describes his crying and its consequences for his eyes.[[14]](#footnote-14)

 The gravest aspect of these two stanzas is that the psalmist describes his crying and suffering not in a prayer that he offers to God, but rather in a monologue that he conducts with himself, without turning to God and without even mentioning God's name. This intensifies the feeling of despair from which there is no escape and gives expression to the sense that God has hidden His face from the psalmist.

 The end of stanza 6 mentions an additional point that intensifies the petitioner's suffering and despair: the petitioner has adversaries, and they too bring him to tears; because of them, "his eye has become old."[[15]](#footnote-15)

 And then, following stanza 6, we find another cry:

Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity!

It is clear that "**all** you workers of iniquity" are one and the same as "**all** my adversaries" mentioned at the end of stanza 6. On the face of it, this cry can be understood as a cry of anger and desperation on the part of one who, in the wake of his enormous suffering and unremitting crying, has reached a point that he can no longer restrain himself. Thus, he furiously calls out to his enemies who are the cause of his suffering and crying: "Depart from me!"

 What is amazing is that in the continuation in stanza 7, the psalmist explains his cry with an explanation that is filled with joy and excitement:

For the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping.

The Lord has heard my supplication.

The Lord will accept my prayer!

 We see, then, that it is not anger and desperation that stand behind the psalmist's cry to his enemies, but rather the joy of victory!

 Once again, the psalmist's cry reveals itself as the "central axis" of stanzas 5-8. At first glance, this cry seems to be a conclusion of stanzas 5-6, and also a continuation of them with respect to his emotional state of mind. But when we go on and read stanzas 7-8, it becomes clear that this cry expresses a dramatic change in the psalmist's situation and serves as an introduction to an account of this change in stanzas 7-8.

 No explanation is given for this surprising shift. What happened between stanzas 5-6 and stanzas 7-8? Was there any change in the psalmist's actual situation? This is possible, but it is more reasonable to assume that the change took place in his consciousness. He distinctly feels that God has heard his prayers and that he is therefore about to see a dramatic change in his objective situation. He is so confident about this that he scolds his enemies, saying, "Depart from me," and he sees before his eyes the change in his situation that is about to take place:

May all my enemies be frustrated and greatly dismayed.

May they turn back, may they be suddenly frustrated.

### THe structure of the psalm

Reading the psalm stanza by stanza also reveals its structure. Our psalm is divided into two halves that are equal in length,[[16]](#footnote-16) but differ in one important way: whether the psalmist's words are directed at God in the second person, as in the entire first half of the psalm, or whether they are not directed at Him, as is the case in the second half of the psalm.

Each of the two halves is divided into two parts (two stanzas in each part) by way of a cry made by the psalmist. In the first half, this cry is directed, as is dictated by the nature of the first half, at God, whereas in the second half the cry is direct at the psalmist's enemies. The cry in each half moves us from the topic of the first quarter in each half to that of the second quarter of that half. In the first half, the difference between the two quarters is not so prominent, for in both of them the psalmist beseeches God that He should rescue him from his distress. Nevertheless, substantive progress is made in the second quarter in relation to the first quarter, as was spelled out in detail in the previous section.

In the second half, however, the two quarters seem to stand in sharp contrast to each other. In stanzas 5-6, the petitioner's words are filled with despair, whereas in stanzas 7-8 they are filled with joy and confidence. The progress in this half from the first quarter to the second quarter shouts out at us. Is there stylistic-substantive justification to join stanzas 5-8 into a single unit – the second half of the psalm?[[17]](#footnote-17)

One motif seems to join the three parts of this half – the first quarter (stanzas 5-6), the cry in the middle of the half (the beginning of verse 9), and the second quarter (stanzas 7-8).

At the end of the first quarter: "**all** my adversaries."

In the cry in the middle: "**all** workers of iniquity."

In the second quarter: "**all** my enemies."

This motif does not appear at all (at least not on the explicit level) in the first half of our psalm. What, then, are the connections between the second half of the psalm and the first half?

1. Let us consider the threefold mention of God's name in stanza 7:

For the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping.

The Lord has heard my supplication.

The Lord will accept my prayer.[[18]](#footnote-18)

These lines relate to earlier parts of the psalm:

"For the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping" – this refers to the weeping mentioned in stanzas 5-6.

"The Lord has heard my supplication (*techinati*)" – this refers to the supplication in stanza 2: "Favor (*chaneni*) me… Heal me…."

"The Lord will accept my prayer" – this refers to the prayer which spreads out over the entire first half of the psalm.

1. In stanza 8 as well, there are connections to the first half. Describing the enemies with the words "may they **be greatly dismayed**" (*ve-yibahalu me'od*) brings to mind what the psalmist said about himself in stanza 2, "and my soul **is greatly dismayed**" (*nivhala me'od*). This indicates that this is an instance of “measure for measure”: they caused the psalmist to be greatly dismayed, or at least they rejoiced over his situation, and therefore when the psalmist senses that God has heard his supplication and when he knows that his enemies will be frustrated, he also knows that dismay will pass over them.
2. The root *shin-vav-bet* appears a second time in the last line of the psalm: "May they turn back (*yashuvu*), may they be suddenly frustrated." It first appears in stanza 3: "Turn (*shuva*), O Lord." Is there any similarity between the enemies' turning back and God's turning? The answer seems to be yes. When God will turn to the psalmist, He will change His attitude toward him and no longer punish him in anger; when the enemies will turn back, they too will change their attitude toward the psalmist and no longer wish evil upon him.

### "THe gate of tears"

As was stated above in section II, the second half of the psalm includes two surprising turns. The first turn takes place in stanzas 5-6, which express despair and the feeling of abandonment, with a return to the description of the suffering at a time that the reader had expected that the psalmist would find some relief following the prayer voiced in the two parts of the first half of the psalm.

The second turn takes place in stanzas 7-8, and it is the opposite of the first turn. In these stanzas, as Weiss formulates it, "an amazing metamorphosis takes place. The lament-filled[[19]](#footnote-19) petition suddenly transforms into confidence that the prayer has been accepted." How is this to be explained? Once again, let us turn to Weiss: "This phenomenon… is psychological truth, and therefore it is found not only in this psalm, but also in other psalms.[[20]](#footnote-20) It is a phenomenon common to all humanity."

Indeed, this phenomenon repeats itself in various different ways in many psalms of supplication, but nevertheless in our psalm there is a difficulty: the petitioner's confidence that "the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping; the Lord has heard my supplication…" does not immediately follow upon the prayer that he had offered – that which is found in the first half of the psalm - but rather it appears after stanzas 5-6, which do not contain any prayer! In these stanzas, the psalmist discusses his terrible afflictions with himself, and an element of despair is evident in them. But nevertheless, it is precisely out of this despair and feeling of abandonment that this "amazing metamorphosis" takes place!

 It turns out, then, that the surprising turn in stanzas 5-6 is the reason for the special difficulty regarding the other turn – that found in stanzas 7-8.[[21]](#footnote-21)

 It seems that these two surprising phenomena that arise in the course of the second half of the psalm are connected to each other and can be explained in the same manner.

 It is true that in many psalms of supplication in the book of *Tehillim*, the petitioner feels that his petition has been accepted, and as a result his mood suddenly changes from one extreme to the other. But there is no "law" that every prayer is accepted. Some prayers remain hanging in the air, incapable of changing anything for the petitioner. Just as the petitioner feels at times that his prayer has been accepted, he also senses when his prayer has not been accepted.

It seems that the prayer that spreads across the first four stanzas of the psalm was not accepted. This, in any event, is the way that the petitioner feels. His troubles continue, and he does not feel that God will rescue him. What will he do now? He feels powerless and dejected. He is weary from sighing, and cries at night without stop.

Every night I make my bed swim.

I melt my couch with my tears.[[22]](#footnote-22)

In the first half, the petitioner did not cry. He begged and pleaded on his own, and as long as he could still pray and hope for a change in his situation, he did not reach the gate of tears. What brought him to tears was the feeling of having arrived at an impasse, and especially the bitter sense that God is hiding His face from him.

It is precisely when he reaches this point, the exceedingly bitter feeling that expresses itself in tears, that he feels that his tears have melted not only his couch, but also the barrier separating between his prayer and God:

For the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping!

He cries out in excited manner, and once his tears breach the barrier separating between him and his God, his previous prayer is also answered:

The Lord has heard my supplication.

The Lord will accept my prayer.

Our psalm is a poetic illustration of what *Chazal* have taught us in *Berakhot* 32b, that -

Even though the gates of prayer are closed, the gates of weeping are not closed, as it says: "Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry; keep not silence at my tears" (*Tehillim* 39:13).[[23]](#footnote-23)

(Translated by David Strauss)

1. In the scholarly literature in Hebrew that follows Gunkel's approach regarding the classification of Biblical psalms, our psalm is assigned to the category referred to as "individual lamentation" (*kinat yachid*) (for example, Weiss, *Emunot Ve-De'ot Be-Mizmorei Tehillim*, p. 31). The reader will surely ask, however: a "lamentation" is a mourning dirge over the death of a person or some major catastrophe, which are irreversible situations (for example, David's lamentation over Shaul and Yonatan [*Shmuel* II17], or the book of *Eikha*, referred to as "*Kinnot*" by *Chazal* because it is composed of five lamentations over the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple). What is the connection between a psalm in which the psalmist prays to be saved from his troubles, difficult as they may be, and the literary term "*kina"*? Surely, the supplication that is sounded in our psalm and in many others like it in the book of *Tehillim* assumes that with the help of prayer it is possible that the petitioner's situation will change for the better. Most of the psalms that scholars refer to as "individual lamentations" close on an optimistic note that expresses the psalmist's confidence that his prayer will be accepted and that his situation will quickly improve; in some of them, the end of the psalm seems to suggest that the change has already transpired. How then can they be called "lamentations"?

Gunkel used the German term "*klage"* for the literary class of the psalms under discussion. This word bears the meaning of "lamentation," but also of "complaint." Gunkel had the second sense in mind, but someone who translated his work into Hebrew incorrectly chose the first sense; ever since scholars have repeated the mistake, as if the term "*kinat yachid*" had been given at Sinai! (This was noted by Alexander Rofe in his book, "*Mavo Le-Shira U-Le-Sifrut Ha-Chokhma She-Ba-Mikra*" [Jerusalem, 5764], p. 78, note 160. He correctly added that "we need a solid term.")

However, the term "complaint" (*teluna*) is also inappropriate for these psalms. A complaint is an objection that the complainant directs at someone who did him an injustice. Is this the mindset of the petitioner in our psalm or in similar psalms? There are a few psalms in the book of *Tehillim* that can be defined as psalms of complaint, and the speaker in these psalms is usually the people of Israel. But in our psalm and in those that are similar to it, the psalmist neither complains to God, nor claims that an injustice had been done to him. On the contrary, in many of the psalms that Gunkel refers to as "individual lamentations," the petitioner accepts what happened to him and attributes his troubles to his sins. Thus, his prayer expresses his return to God. Even in those psalms that do not display this moral background, the petitioner is far removed from accusations hurled at God, and he humbly prays to Him hoping for salvation. How inappropriate is the term "complaint" for psalms of this sort!

The terminology that we use to describe the various classes of psalms is not merely a technical issue. Use of incorrect terminology is liable to pervert the way the reader relates to the contents of a psalm and to blur the fundamental differences between the various classes of psalms. We therefore propose to call all the many psalms in our book in which the speaker beseeches God to save him from his troubles "individual supplications" (*techinat yachid*), as is stated in our psalm, "The Lord has heard my supplication." This does not mean that words of complaint cannot "infiltrate" an individual or collective supplication, as they do in our psalm: "But You, O Lord, how long" (v. 4). But this isolated complaint does not change the character of the psalm as a whole. (In our study of psalm 80, we showed that the psalm is built of a prayer and a complaint, and that the distinction between prayer [supplication] and complaint is what underlies the structure of the psalm.)

Even in a psalm of complaint, such as psalm 44, a short prayer may be found at the end, but this does not change the character of the psalm as a whole.

Psalm 137, the similarity of which to the lamentations in the book of *Eikha* is striking, may fall into the category of "lamentation" in its original sense, as a dirge over the death of an individual or over a catastrophe. Contents-wise, a national lamentation can include a prayer for salvation or revenge or a bitter complaint directed at God. But, as stated, the context in which a lamentation is said is strictly defined, and this context is generally not found in the psalms of the book of *Tehillim.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The custom among the Sefardi communities, as well as Chabad, is to recite psalm 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Section II, note 17. The role of "supplication" in a psalm of thanksgiving was discussed in sections III and VI of that study. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Section I, toward the end, as well as notes 6-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Rashi to v. 5; Ibn Ezra to v. 2; Radak to v. 4. A list of the modern commentators who offer this explanation can be found in Weiss (*Emunot Ve-De'ot*), p. 31, note 4. At first glance, this explanation is supported by what is stated in v. 7, where the psalmist describes his weeping in his bed, from which one might conclude that he is bedridden. This, however, is not necessarily so: "**Every night** I make my bed swim" – may refer to the time that the psalmist lies down in bed to go to sleep at night. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. A description of enemies who endanger the petitioner may be found, for example, in *Tehillim* 27:2-3 and 22:13-19. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. For example, in *Tehillim* 30:2, the petitioner states: "I will extol You, O Lord, for You have lifted me up, and You have not made my enemies rejoice over me." While it is true that the weight of the description of the enemies in our psalm is much greater than that in psalm 30, in our present case, the psalmist pushes off mentioning them until the end of the psalm. In any event, it cannot be determined in our psalm that it is the enemies who cause the petitioner's troubles, and not as argued by Weiss in his article about our psalm (*Emunot Ve-De'ot*, pp. 36-37, and p. 39). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. End of section II. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. In the continuation of the psalm, in stanzas 5-8, the name of God is mentioned three more times in one stanza (stanza 7), but not in direct address to God, but in an address to "all workers of iniquity." [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Compare to *Yirmiyahu* 10:24: "O Lord, correct me, but in due measure, not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing." [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Compare to *Tehillim* 92:8: "But You, O Lord, are high for evermore." [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The word "*nafshi*" appears here a second time, after it was stated in stanza 2: "And my soul (*nafshi*) is greatly dismayed." Weiss, however, argues (p. 34): "From the context, however, it is clear that the word is used in a different sense. Here it is used in the sense of 'vitality,' the petition being: 'Save my life.'" [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. *Emunot Ve-De'ot Be-Mizmorei Tehillim*, p. 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. The precise meaning of the terms "*ashesha*" and "*ateka*" in connection with the petitioner's non-stop weeping is discussed by the commentators. Without committing myself to any one understanding, it is clear that the general thrust is that the constant crying has caused damages of one kind or another. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. "*Ateka* ***be-kol*** *tzorerai*" means "it has become old **because of** all my adversaries." [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Each half of the psalm is comprised of four stanzas, five verses and thirty-nine words. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Besides for the fact that they do not contain any direct address to God (but merely speak about Him in stanza 7), this standing in clear contrast to the first half of the psalm. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Wherever there are three parallel clauses in our psalm, the third clause is in chiastic parallelism with the two previous clauses, and thus the end of the stanza is felt:

Stanza 2:

Broken am I

For dismayed are my limbs

And my soul is greatly dismayed.

Stanza 5:

I have become weary with my sighing.

Every night I make swim my bed.

My couch with my tears I melt.

Stanza 7:

For the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping.

The Lord has heard my supplication.

The Lord my prayer will accept. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. As stated in note 1, the word "lament" is inappropriate, and it would be more fitting to say "the pain-filled petition," or the like. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Here, Weiss refers to the following psalms: *Tehillim* 13; 22; 28; 31; 62; 71; and others. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Had stanza 4 been followed by what is stated in stanza 7, "The Lord has heard my supplication; the Lord will accept my prayer," until the end of the psalm, we wouldn't have had any particular difficulty and we would have included our psalm among the other psalms of supplication in which a similar phenomenon is found. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. The meaning of the verse is: "I will flood my bed every night with tears to the point that it is as if I were swimming in them, and I will thereby cause my couch to melt with my tears." [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. a) R. Elazar's statement appears also in *Bava Metzia* 59a. The proof brought from *Tehillim* 39:13 is explained by Rashi in two different places in different ways.

b) In the previous section, we asked what the justification for joining stanzas 5-6 and stanzas 7-8, which seem to be opposite sets of stanzas, into a single unit is. Now it becomes clear that the contrast between the two pairs of stanzas is precisely what turns what is stated in the first set into the cause of what is stated in the second set. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)