YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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***TEHILLIM* (SERIES II)**

**Rav Elchanan Samet**

**Shiur #24: Psalm 82 – (Continuation)**

**“How Long Will You Judge Unjustly…**

**All the Foundations of the Earth Are Shaken” (2,5)**

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| 1 A psalm of Asaf. |
| I God stands in the congregation of God; He judges among the judges. | IV 5. They know not, nor do they understand;They walk on in darkness:All the foundations of the earth are shaken. |
| II 2. How long will You judge unjustly, and respect the persons of the wicked? (Sela.) | V 6. I had said, You are angels,All of you sons of the most High. |
| III 3. Judge the cause of the poor and fatherless:Vindicate the afflicted and needy.4. Deliver the poor and destitute:Rescue them out of the hand of the wicked. | VI 7. Nevertheless, you shall die like a man, and fall like one of the princes. |
| VII 8. Arise, O God, judge the earth:For You possess all the nations. |

### IV. Stanzas V-VI: The misconception concerning the Judges and the psalmist's disillusionment from it

V 6. I had said, You are angels,

All of you sons of the most High.

VI 7. Nevertheless, you shall die like a man,

and fall like one of the princes.

 Now that we have seen how appropriately stanza I of our psalm serves as a vital introduction and theological foundation for the rebuke of the unjust judges in stanzas II-III-IV, let us now turn to stanzas V-VI (verses 6-7), which follow that rebuke and the account of its failure.

 **Stylistically,** stanzas V-VI are not entirely set apart from the rebuke. In these stanzas, the psalmist renews his address to the unjust judges in second person, **"You** are angels," as he had done in stanzas II-III: "How long **will you judge** unjustly" (after interrupting his appeal to them in stanza IV and speaking about them in third person). In this respect, stanzas V-VI are different from stanza I. In stanza I the psalmist spoke about judges **in general** (whom he refers to with the designations *adat E-l* and *elohim*); therefore he spoke of the judges in stanza I in third person. But in stanzas V-VI he addresses those very judges whom he had just rebuked.

 However, **the content** of the words of the psalmist in stanzas V-VI does not appear to be a continuation of the rebuke that he sounded in stanzas II-III. On the contrary, content-wise, stanzas V-VI continue what was stated in stanza I, which deals with the standing of the judges. It is for this reason that at the beginning of the previous section we defined stanza I and stanzas V-VI as a framework for the stanzas between them.

 Opening with the words, "I had said," is meant to emphasize, as we find in other places in Scripture, "that this was a thought that had occurred to him but which ultimately proved incorrect" (Amos Chakham, ad loc.).[[1]](#footnote-1) What, then, was the mistaken idea that entered the psalmist's mind concerning the judges whom he had previously rebuked?

 His misconception was that the judges are "angels" and "sons of the most High." This idea of the psalmist is connected to what he said in stanza I. There the psalmist referred to the judges as "the congregation of God"and "*elohim*." The term with which he concluded stanza I – *elohim* – opens stanza V.[[2]](#footnote-2) From this we learn that the designation used for the judges, "sons of the most High," is similar to and parallels the designation "congregation of God." "The most High" is one of the most common designations of God in Scripture.

 What was the psalmist's line of thought ("I had said…") from which he has now become disillusioned?

 This line of thought is reflected in the designations with which he refers to the judges. We must go back to the words of the commentators cited in the previous section, where they explain the designation given to judges in the book of *Shemot*, "*elohim*." They all agree that this designation derives from the term "*E-lohim*" as a name of God. According to the Ibn Ezra, this is because they are "God's officials on the earth," or because "they keep God's judgment on the earth." The Ramban's explanation, cited earlier, is more persuasive: This designation "alludes that God will be with them in the judgment on earth." He brings several verses to prove this, one of them being the opening verse of our psalm:

And so the verse states: "God stands in the congregation of God; He judges among the judges (*elohim*).” That is to say, he judges among **the congregation of God,** **because God is the judge.**

 According to the Ramban, just human judgment, when correctly executed, is in fact the judgment of God Himself, "because God is the judge" who is present among the human judges, and the judges are "His congregation," who surround the true judge who is present among them.

 This description of God, who judges among His congregation, seems to be taken from Biblical descriptions, according to which God in heaven is described as directing the judgment (or the judicial proceeding) as He is surrounded by His angels:

I *Melakhim* 22:19-20: I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, **and all the host of heaven standing by Him** on His right hand and on His left. And the Lord said, “Who shall entice Achav, that he may go up and fall at Ramot-Gil'ad?”

*Iyov* 1:6-8: Now there was a day when **the sons of God came to stand themselves before the Lord**, and the adversary came also among them… And the Lord said to the adversary, “Have you considered my servant Iyov…”

 It would seem that human judgment, as it is described in our psalm and in other places in Scripture, is an earthly reflection of a Divine judgment in heaven:[[3]](#footnote-3) In both judgments, God is the judge (in heaven – openly; on earth – in hidden manner), and in both of them He is surrounded by His congregation, who are called by various designations which partly overlap (in heaven: "the host of heaven," "the sons of God"; on earth: "the congregation of God," "*elohim*," "the sons of the most High").

 It turns out that Scripture's perception of human judgment as an act of God, which is performed among and through human judges, impacts upon the designations given to the human judges, which are borrowed from the designations ordinarily reserved for angels.[[4]](#footnote-4)

 The borrowed use of angelic designations for human judges is not merely a stylistic matter, a literary device and nothing more. What stands behind this is the idea that some Divine attribute cleaves to the human judge; when he judges justly in human society, he serves as an agent, a partner or a representative of God Himself, and he is not like some other ordinary person.[[5]](#footnote-5)

 Let us now return to stanza V and try to understand the full meaning of its words:

I had said, You are angels,

All of you sons of the most High.

 In other words, before your shame as unjust judges who show favor to the wicked was revealed, I mistakenly took you for "God's angels," His partners in the execution of righteous judgment in this world, and I saw you as mortals who have cleaved to some Divine attribute that separates you from the rest of mankind.

 However, it became clear that this was not the case, but just the opposite of my erroneous assumption:

Nevertheless, you shall die like a man,

and fall like one of the princes.

Indeed, you are not "*elohim*," but men of flesh and blood; and you are not "the sons of the most High," but rather "princes," people who wield authority over their neighbors.

 The only problem is that stanza VI presents us with several exegetical difficulties.

 Were the psalmist's conclusion "Nevertheless, you shall die like a man," all would be well. Then we would explain: You are not "*elohim" –* you are not elevated above the rest of the people, and a Divine quality has not cleaved to you as it does to the heavenly angels. Rather, "you are men" – ordinary people, who are in no way unique and have no special virtue elevating them so that they be considered like angels.

 However, the psalmist's conclusion is: "Nevertheless, **you shall die** like a man."[[6]](#footnote-6) Did anyone imagine that human judges, even if they are compared to "angels" and "sons of the most High," are immune to death?

 It seems that the alternative formulation that we proposed above – "Nevertheless, you are men" – is inappropriate for expressing the disappointment and condemnation that the psalmist feels toward the unjust judges. "You are men" serves as an honorific in Scripture,[[7]](#footnote-7) and it fails to express the lowliness that the psalmist finds in those whom he had previously related to as "*elohim*."

 The psalmist seeks a trait that lowers human dignity, this trait being death:

*Kohelet* 3:19: That which befalls the sons of men befalls the beasts; even one thing befalls them both; as the one dies, so the other dies; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man has no preeminence over a beast….

 The contrast that the psalmist wishes to express is not between "*elohim*" and man, but rather between "*elohim*" in the sense of angels and mortals who will end up as dust. While it is true that even men who are like Divine angels, e.g., judges who carry out their appointed tasks in appropriate manner, eventually die like all other human beings, the human-social tendency is to ignore that reality and magnify the consciousness of the glorious existence of these people, despite the knowledge of their inevitable end. However, once it has become clear that the judges betray their office and judge unjustly, their glory is hidden away, and they are once again perceived as ordinary people who will die and return to dust like animals.

 But what is the meaning of the comparative letter *kof* in the word *ke-adam*, "like a man"?

 Stanza VI appears to manifest deficient parallelism, and the first clause should be completed by the second clause:

Nevertheless, you shall die like [one] man,

and fall like one of the princes.

 The phrase, *ke-echad ha-adam*, appears twice in Scripture. In the story of Shimshon and Delila (*Shofetim* 16), Delila tries to uncover the secret of Shimshon's God-like trait, his great strength, and how this trait can be cancelled, and Shimshon answers her: If they do this and that to me, "then shall I be weak, and be **as another man** (*ke-achad ha-am*)" (verses 7,11). In the end he reveals the truth, that the secret of his God-like trait that gives him his great strength is his naziriteship to God: "If I am shaved, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be **like any other man** (*ke-achad ha-am*)" (verse 17).

 The Divine trait of the judges is judging people fairly, while God sits among them and participates together with them in the judgment process. If, however, they betray their destiny and judge unfairly, "they will become weak and be like any other man" – their Divine majesty will disappear from them, and they will once again become like any other person.[[8]](#footnote-8)

 Finally, we must explain the second clause of this stanza: "And you shall fall like one of the princes." Who are these princes to whom the verse is referring, and what is the meaning of their fall?

 What allows the judges to preserve their status as judges, even when they are unjust, is a corrupt social order on the basis of which they exert power over the community. In this situation, the judges are but "princes," who exert lordship in society – not because they represent Divine justice, but because of human, political interests. As such, they can be expected to fall from their standing, as happens from time to time among many in leadership positions, when the clash between conflicting human interests leads to their downfall.

 If the judges would work together with God who stands among them, exercising justice and righteousness, with no signs of favoritism, they would merit a human standing that is essentially different from all the social, political mechanisms operating outside them. They would indeed be perceived as "*adat El*," "sons of the most High," and as such they would be immune to falling.

### V. Stanza VII: the psalm's conclusion

Arise, O God, judge the earth:

For You possess all the nations.

 Stanza VII, the last stanza in our psalm, serves as a conclusion for the psalm, standing outside the structure of the main body of the psalm (stanzas I-VII), a structure that we will discuss in the next section.[[9]](#footnote-9) The reason for this assertion is that it is only in this stanza that the psalmist addresses God ("Arise… judge… For You possess…), whereas in all the other stanzas of the psalm he addresses the judges (in stanzas II-III, V-VI) or speaks about them in third person (in stanzas I and IV).

 The appeal to God to arise and judge the earth serves as a conclusion of the entire psalm:

 As we have seen, according to our psalm, even human judgement, when it is carried out with justice and righteousness, is not detached from God. On the contrary, God stands among the congregation of judges and participates among them in the judgment. By virtue of His participation in their judgment, the judges in our psalm are called "the congregation of God," "*elohim*," and "the sons of the most High." But God's partnership in the human judicial process is a hidden partnership. Outwardly, human judgment is a human activity; only in its inner, hidden essence, is it a shared activity of God and the judges.

 This partnership has failed. The human judges have betrayed their office, and it has become clear they are not "the congregation of God" or "the sons of the most High," but lowly morals and men in power who will ultimately fall.

 Who is left then to execute just judgment on earth? The hidden partner. The psalmist feels that it is no longer possible to entrust the world in the hands of wicked judges. They are the cause that "all the foundations of the earth are shaken" (verse 5). From here emerges the desperate cry to God that He should arise in all His glory and judge the earth alone, in the open, without His human partners who have been found to be disappointing. As the Radak writes: "Since the judges are not truthful judges, You must judge the earth and remove the judgment of the poor from their oppressors."

 It seems that the tone that characterizes the psalm as a whole, the tone of disappointment and even despair from the human judicial system, is replaced by an optimistic tone, the hope and the request that God appear and judge the earth and repair that which has become distorted. In truth, however, this request relates to God's appearance at the End of Days, for the purpose of repairing a world that has become corrupt. This is a distant vision, which does not relate to the present, blemished world, and it is difficult to translate it into realistic terms at this time.[[10]](#footnote-10)

 The connection between the request that closes the psalm and the idea of disappointing human judgment that has been laid out until that conclusion finds expression in the fact that every word in the first clause of the concluding stanza ("Arise, O God, judge the earth") is connected to something appearing earlier in the psalm:

1. The appeal, "**Arise,** O God," is connected to the last word in the previous stanza, **"fall."** Falling and arising are a common pair of opposites in Scripture.[[11]](#footnote-11) The idea that is expressed here is: Since the human judges have disappointed us, and they will eventually **"fall** like one of the princes" – **arise** You and judge the earth with righteousness.
2. **"Arise,** O God" – "God stands" – the verbs *nitzav* and *kam* frequently interchange in Scripture, and sometimes appear together.[[12]](#footnote-12) What, then, is the difference between the beginning of the psalm, where the psalmist asserts that "God stands (***nitzav***) in the congregation of God" in order to judge among the judges, and the conclusion of the psalm, where he calls upon God: **"Arise**… judge…." We have already explained this: God's hidden partnership in the judgment of the "congregation of God," His standing among them, did not succeed because of the corruption of the human judges, and therefore the psalmist calls upon God to arise by Himself, out in the open, and judge the earth with righteousness.
3. **"Judge"** – "He **judges** among the judges" – The difference between the assertion in stanza I that God judges among the human judges and the appeal to God in stanza VII to judge the world by Himself is the same difference that was mentioned in the previous paragraph.

1. "Judge **the earth"** – "All the foundations of **the earth** are shaken.” If the reference in stanza IV is to the collapse of the foundations of human society because of the unjust judgment of the judges (see our doubts about the meaning of these words in section II), the connection between the two verses is clear. The appeal to God to judge "the earth" – human society on the earth[[13]](#footnote-13) - is meant to prevent the collapse of the foundations of the earth because of the unjust judgment of the human judges.

The second clause in stanza VII comes to explain the appeal to God in the first clause: **"For** You possess all the nations." The words found in this rationale are all "new" in the psalm, and the idea as well is new. How, then, does the psalmist explain his appeal?

Let us first explain, in the wake of the Ibn Ezra, the phrase "*be-khol ha-goyim*": "The *bet* in '*be-khol ha-goyim*' is extraneous, as in: 'Come, eat my bread (*be-lachmi*), and drink the wine (*be-yayin*) which I have mingled"' (*Mishlei* 9:5)." The prepositional *bet* has no special meaning. In our verse as well, *ata tinchal be-khol ha-goyim*, means: "All the nations are Your possession." The future tense of the transitive verb *tinchal* means that this is a continuous action – in other words, You shall always possess all the nations.

What the rationale means is as follows. Since all the nations are Your possession, the responsibility falls upon You to rise and judge them justly, just as an estate owner concerns himself with the proper administration of his estate.[[14]](#footnote-14)

This last clause of stanza VII, which closes our psalm, contains an important novelty that retroactively bestows precise meaning on the entire psalm. The appeal to God is that He should judge **all** of the inhabitants of the earth, for **"all the nations"** are His possession. Our psalm then is a universal psalm (see note 10).

Who, then, are the judges in our psalm? They are not specifically the judges of Israel, but rather the judges of all the nations. It is they who have disappointed and judged unjustly, and it is they who "shall die like a man," and it is they who shall ultimately fall "like one of the princes."[[15]](#footnote-15)

### VII. The structure of the psalm

 The main body of our psalm – stanzas I-VI (to the exclusion of stanza VII which serves as a conclusion) – is divided in the usual manner into two halves, almost identical in length: 3 stanzas in the first half with 27 words, and 3 stanzas in the second half with 23 words.

 What is the difference between the first half and the second half?

 The essence of the first half is the rebuke of the judges in stanzas II-III (stanza I serves as a necessary introduction for this rebuke). The person delivering the rebuke is confident in his ability to change the behavior of those to whom his rebuke is addressed, and so in his reproach there is hope that the current situation can be corrected.[[16]](#footnote-16) Indeed, the rhetorical question in stanza II, "how long," and the series of appeals in stanza III, "judge… vindicate… deliver… rescue…," are based on the assumption that these demands have a chance of being accepted.

 At the beginning of the second half – in stanza IV – there is "a turn in the plot."[[17]](#footnote-17) The psalmist's admonition is not accepted by the judges, and he describes the failure of his rebuke, while referring to the judges in third person: "They know not, nor do they understand…."

 In the continuation of the second half, in stanzas V-VI, the psalmist once again appeals to the judges in second person, but now this is not a rebuke (which would have been a continuation of his appeal to them in stanzas II-III of the first half), but rather an appeal that expresses his bitter disappointment with them, his recognition of his mistaken assessment of them, and his current, opposite assessment of them, after having despaired of the possibility of correcting their perverse path.

 Thus, the distinction between the two halves is the distinction between **hope** for the reform of the judicial system and **despair** regarding the possibility of achieving it.

The conclusion of the psalm is a clear continuation of the content of the second half. It is only the disappointment and despair regarding the human judicial system that gives rise to the appeal to God and the request addressed to Him in the conclusion.[[18]](#footnote-18)

However, the main linguistic and conceptual ties connect the psalm's conclusion to its first half, as we pointed out in section V, which was dedicated to the psalm's conclusion. This is explained by the fact that the appeal to God to rise up and judge the earth is not a new and surprising idea, but rather a necessary conclusion from the concept of fitting human judgment, as it was presented at the beginning of the psalm. God is a hidden partner in every human court that fulfills its function properly. When the human partners betray their role, an appeal can still be made to the master of judgment to reveal Himself and judge all of humanity instead of the judges who have failed us.

It turns out that the psalm's conclusion is based both on the assumptions of the first half and on the conclusion drawn in the second half, and that it repairs the tone of despair that prevails in the second half.

There are two aspects to the parallelism between the two halves, one stylistic and the other substantive, and the structure obtained according to each of these two aspects is the opposite of the other:

Stylistically, each half opens **with one stanza** in which the psalmist speaks **about** the judges in third person plural, and ends **with two stanzas** in which he turns to the judges in second person. This creates a **direct parallelism** between the two halves:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **First half: Hope** | **Second half: Despair** |
| About the judges | Stanza I: | Stanza IV: |
|  | God… He judges among the judges. | They know not, nor do they understand. |
| To the judges: | Stanzas II-III | Stanzas V-VI |
| How long will You judge unjustly… judge… rescue. | You are angels… Nevertheless, you shall die like a man. |

This direct parallelism between the halves is based on a formal aspect of similarity between them - the grammatical person used by the psalmist. But the truth is that no substantive connection between the parallel parts is evident.

From the substantive aspect (which sometimes has also linguistic dimensions), there is a contrasting chiastic parallelism between the two halves. Stanza I stands in contrasting parallelism with stanzas V-VI. These three stanzas discuss **the status of the judges:** In stanza I, the psalmist asserts that judges are all "the congregation of God" and "*elohim*," because God stands among them and participates in their judgment. In stanza V, the psalmist repeats these descriptions with respect to the judges who are **present before him:** "You are angels, all of you sons of the most High." But this time he mentions these descriptions as a mistake that he had made in the past, and that he hastens to correct in stanza VI: "Nevertheless, you shall die like a man."

Stanza II-III in the first half join with stanza IV, which opens the second half, and the three of them constitute a substantive unit in the psalm: "The rebuke of the judges and its failure." In stanzas II-III, the psalmist turns his rebuke to the judges, expressing thereby his hope for a change in their ways. In stanza IV, he describes the failure of his reproach and his despair regarding the judges. The parallelism between the halves looks like this:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| First half: Hope |  | Second half: Despair |
| Stanza I | Stanza IV |
| The standing of ideal judges | The failure of the rebuke |
| Stanzas II-III | Stanzas V-VI |
| The rebuke of the judges | The standing of the judges who judge unjustly |

(Appendices to this study will appear in the future.)

(Translated by David Strauss)

1. In note 9, Chakham brings additional examples: *Yeshayahu* 38:10; 49:4; *Tehilim* 30:7; and elsewhere. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Thus, the "Zeidel principle" finds expression in a single psalm; see his book, *Chikrei Mikra* (Jerusalem, 5738), p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. In truth, the reflection between the two planes is two-way: the heavenly description is also a reflection of earthly behavior – of a king who sits among his advisors and discusses crucial issues with them. See our comments in our studies of I *Melakhim* 22, "The Battle at Ramot Gil'ad and Achav's Death," Study X, section 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This borrowed use of angelic designations for human judges was not understood by certain modern commentators, who interpreted our entire psalm as a rebuke directed towards the angels themselves. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. It should be noted that despite this reflection, the human judges who are called by the designations of the heavenly angels are greater than their counterparts in heaven. The role of the angels in the heavenly judgment is technical, even when they are active participants in the process (like the adversary in *Iyov*, or the "spirit" in I *Melakhim* 22). All the more so when they serve merely as scenery. In the end, the decree is issued by the Supreme Judge, and by Him alone.

This is not the case with earthly judgment. Here the human judges issue their verdicts based on their human judgment, while God serves as their hidden partner, even when He is described as found among them, and even when the judgment is defined as an act of God.

From here comes the reversal that bewildered Grintz (see note 22 in the first part of this study). In a heavenly judgment, God is described as sitting, whereas the heavenly host "**stands** above Him." But in an earthly judgment, the judges sit, as they discuss and decide the case with their human judgment, while God **stands** among them – "God stands in the congregation of God." God's standing among the judges means help, bestowal of authority, or perhaps even a test. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. M. Buber, in an article that he wrote on our psalm, concludes from this verse, "which decrees about these '*elohim*' that they will die like men, **that they are not humans,"** but rather heavenly angels (*"Ha-Tzedek Ve-Ha-Avel al pi Tzeror Mizmorei Tehilim*," in his book, "*Darko shel Mikra*" [Jerusalem, 5738], p. 158). This conclusion seems to be supported by two things: First, by the comparitive *kaf* – "*ke-adam*," and second, by the decree issued against them, or the destiny that awaits them – "you shall die." In the wake of this verse, as Buber understood it, he explains the entire psalm as dealing with heavenly entities. See note 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Compare, for example, with *Yechezkel* 34:31: "But you My flock (*tzon*), the flock of My pasture, are men (*adam*), and I am your God, says the Lord." The word *adam* appears there in contrast to the word *tzon*, but nevertheless, it is a term of honor. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The difference between Shimshon and the judges who are the subject of our psalm is that Shimshon's Divine trait expressed itself on the **physical plane,** in his great strength, and therefore even when he was turned into "*achad ha-adam*," the matter expressed itself accordingly – in a physical manner, in his weakness in relation to the Pelishtim. In contrast, the Divine trait of the judges is not expressed in parameters visible to the eye. Therefore, also when they turn into "*achad ha-am*," this finds expression in a change in their image, and not in some visible quality. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Regarding a conclusion as a typical phenomenon in many psalms of *Tehilim*, see the introductory study to this series of studies, at the end. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. In several psalms that deal with God's appearance at the End of Days, an account is given of the just judgment that God will perform on the earth when He appears there, and the nations' joy in that judgment: 96:7-13; 97; 98:4-9; 99:1-4; see also 67:4-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. *Shemot* 21:18-19; *Yeshayahu* 24:20; *Yirmeyahu* 50:32; *Amos* 5:2; *Amos* 8:14; *Mikha* 7:8; *Tehillim* 20:9; and elsewhere. Usually the falling and rising refer to the same entity, but sometimes they refer to different entities, e.g., in *Tehillim* 20:9, and in our psalm. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. *Bereishit* 37:7: "And, lo, my sheaf arose (*kama*), and also stood (*nitzava*)upright"; *Tehillim* 94:16: "Who will rise up (*yakum*)for me against the evildoers? Who will stand up (*yityatzev*) for me against the workers of iniquity?"; and elsewhere. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Clearly, "the earth" in the phrase "judge the earth" refers to human society, and not to the earth itself, both because of the context and because of the partial parallelism with the second clause: "all the nations." [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. A similar rationale appears in several prayers in Scripture with respect to the people of Israel. For example, in Moshe's prayer on behalf of the people of Israel following the sin of the golden calf: "'O Lord God, destroy not Your people and Your inheritance, that You have redeemed… **Yet they are Your people and Your inheritance…**" (*Devarim* 9:26-29). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Rashi explains our psalm as refering to the judges of Israel (for example, in his commentary to verse 6, he writes: "You are *Elohim* – angels, **when I gave you the Torah,** I gave it to You so that the Angel of Death should no longer rule over you"). Therefore, he explains the concluding verse as follows: "Arise, O God – Asaf began to pray that He should rise up and destroy the corrupt judges **in Israel,** because You possess all the nations, and all is in Your hands to judge."

Other medieval commentators (Ibn Ezra, Radak, Meiri) also explained our psalm as referring to the judges of Israel, this because of the explanation that they gave to the phrase, *adat El*, as the congregation of God, which in the Bible means the congregation of Israel. See note 17 in the first half of this study. Nevertheless, these commentators explain the conclusion as a prayer about all the nations. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. If it is clear to a person that the listener will not accept his rebuke, and on the contrary, he will dig himself even deeper in his evil ways and insist even more strongly to follow them, that person is exempt from the *mitzva* of rebuke (the source for which is the *mitzva* in the Torah (*Vayikra* 19:7): "You shall certainly rebuke your neighbor"). Therefore *Chazal* say: "Just as there is a *mitzva* for a person to say that which will be heard, so there is a *mitzva* for a person not to say that which will not be heard" (*Yevamot* 65b). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. We have used here a phrase that we generally use in the analysis of the structure of a Biblical **story.** That which marks the beginning of the second half of a story in the Bible is generally a dramatic twist in the story's plot. The use of this term in the analysis of the structure of a psalm in *Tehillim* is, of course, borrowed. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Linguistically, this finds expression in the juxtaposition of the verb at the end of the second half, "*tipolu*," to the verb that opens the conclusion, *kuma*, and in the repetition in the conclusion of the word *aretz*, which was already mentioned at the end of section IV. For these connections, see section V. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)