



## DAVID

# Make a Hymn Out of It

Atara Eis

כל אדם מגרש מגן עֵדֶן...  
וגם אני חולם כמו יוסף  
כן גם אותי זָרְקוּ לְבוֹר...  
וְכִמוֹ דָּוִד אֲנִי עוֹשֶׂה מִזֶּה מְזִמּוֹר.

**Every human is exiled from  
the Garden of Eden...**

**And I, too, dream like Yosef,**

**And I, too, was thrown into a pit...**

**And like David, I make  
a hymn out of it.**

(Hanan Ben Ari, "Dream like Yosef")

The popular musician Hanan Ben Ari's new song highlights the human trials that our Biblical heroes faced and argues that we can channel their resilience through our own challenges. Ben Ari brings David HaMelech to the conversation in a different way. He ends the refrain by reminding us that, like David HaMelech, we can make a hymn out of whatever troubles we experience. But unlike Yosef, after whom he names the song, he doesn't list any of David's trials; he only lists his reaction to those troubles. Why?

Although I don't know what Ben Ari intended, as a student of David HaMelech, this nuance made clear sense to me. Many of David's "palace intrigue" experiences are disconnected from the average person's mundane life. Though we might find some of his challenges ordinary and relatable, we do not share the royal tools that he had at his disposal to handle his foes. In contrast, we relate more easily to Yosef; we too can "dream big," and we too face crushing defeat when thrown into a proverbial pit.

But while our life experiences might not be similar to those of King David, we immediately recognize and relate to David's emotions and reactions to his life experiences. We might even occasionally wish that the founder of our eternal, religiously guided and spiritually infused monarchy would have reacted in a more refined way. Our tradition struggles with his flaws, with many commentators throughout the ages finding justifications for his halachically questionable moments. In contrast, others accept him, failings and all, and celebrate his self-honesty and intense desire to return to G-d.

David HaMelech may be the most complex personality of the Tanach: King, Torah scholar, warrior, sage, poet, and partially failed family man. Even as he takes his final breaths in this world, David HaMelech oozes complexity. He encourages his heir Shlomo to keep all the *mitzvot* truthfully and wholeheartedly so they will keep him wise; in turn, G-d will keep His word and continue their dynasty. But then, David turns political and sets Shlomo's royal agenda: resolving unfinished business by punishing his father's enemies. Yoav ben Tzruyah should be punished for his many errors, Barzilai HaGiladi should receive the kingdom's grace for saving David when he fled from Avshalom, and Shim'i ben Gera should be punished, despite temporary pardon during David's lifetime. With final words of revenge, the archetype of royalty passes from this world. As Malbim notes, halachically, G-d grants kings more latitude to ensure their sovereignty by punishing enemies in contexts that wouldn't warrant reaction in regular judicial situations. Nonetheless, we can read the text with

honesty, and feel slight disappointment at David's final recorded words in Tanach. An ending that highlights the king's executive privilege demonstrates how different he was from us in action but also reminds us of how emotionally and spiritually similar we are to his reactions.

For we, too, can choose to make a hymn out of any troubles that come our way. We can and must grow through our challenges. Poetry and song are unique tools to process our triumphs and failures and ensure that we learn from our experiences and grow stronger in our service of Hashem. Through Tehillim, David helps us increase our awareness of Hashem's Presence in all of reality. He explores every aspect of human spirituality and discovers Hashem in every corner of the human experience. As Hanan Ben Ari closes his song, we each play "a new role in an ancient story."



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