TEHILIM # 12: Professional deception

1. Lamenatseah ‘al haSheminit, psalm of David.
Like the majority of the Psalms, this too was composed by David HaMelekh, who suffered, and personally witnessed, the immense damage that unscrupulous people can cause with their words. David was the victim of deceit and lies in his army, in his court and even in his own family.

2. Save us Hashem, for good men have disappeared, righteousness has faded among men.
David asks: What can a good man do? A righteous person who lives in a society in which all lie and cheat? The righteous man does not tolerate lying, his word is sacred. But what remains to be done in a society where falsehood is there to stay? Where everyone around succeeds through deceptions and scams? David HaMelekh fears that there are no more good men, because even the good people have adapted to the “new normal”, to falsehood, if not to succeed, then to survive.

3. Men, tell each other vanities, all speak the language of deception, as if they have two hearts.
The hypocrites have a double heart. On the one hand (with one heart) they might hate a person, but on the other hand (with the other heart) they pretend to love that person. To deceive and eventually achieve some personal gain. Or in the case of the enemies of King David, to praise the King in his presence to gain his trust, and then, when the opportunity presents itself, betray and kill David to inherit his throne.
I also think about the relevance of this Psalm for our contemporary society. I think on the people who thrive by practicing deception and have become professional scammers. Or the immoral but “legal” maneuvers; or the fine print of contracts. I think of promises that are made knowing that will not be fulfilled. I think of journalism sold to the highest

bidder. Or in the smoke screens the conspirators build. Cheating is endemic. It seems that human society has built a model designed for preying the naive.

4. HaShem cut off the lips of falsehood, and the tongue practicing arrogance. 5. [God punish] those men who say, "our language will make us powerful, while we speak with our lips, who can defeat us"?
According to King David's, the only hope of the victims of "legal" lies victims is Divine retribution. David prays to HaShem begging Him to do the justice good men cannot reach. David hopes that somehow, God will expose the lies of the scammers, destroying their working tool: their misused eloquence.

6. "From the abuse of the poor, from the desperate cry of the oppressed, I will arise," say HaShem, "I will defeat the [scammers] and make them disappear."
David asks HaShem to punish those who use their lips and tongues to deceive the gullible man. It seems that this kind of moral decay can only be corrected by Divine Intervention. For David HaMelekh, God's justice will emerge from the depths, from the pain of the victims of deception. From the cry of the abused.

7. HaShem's words are pure, refined like silver that has been polished seven times. 8. Your HaShem will protect [the righteous from the wicked], thou shall protect [good men] forever. 9. The oppressed will rise [= will emerge from the depth], and the wicked are doomed to spin, [as lost, not knowing where to go].
God has promised justice. He vouched to protect the oppressed. And unlike men, His word, His promises, will always be fulfilled. In this life, or perhaps later, justice will be served. Because He knows the duplicity of the trickster. And He will not allow impunity for the wicked.