

THE PIRCHEI SHOSHANIM ROADMAP TO PRAYER PROJECT

The Roadmap to Prayer

Lesson 6

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6

The Closing of Va'yevorech David

The last part of this passage is in *Kesuvim* (Scriptures) - the Book of *Nechemia*. It speaks of G-d's promising the Jewish people to bring them into the Land of Israel. It then speaks of G-d's taking the Jewish people out of bondage and to Israel. This then leads -to the finale of *Pesukei De'zimra* - the *Shiras Hayam* (The song at the splitting of the Red Sea).

Az Yashir (Shiras Hayam)

Background מקורות

The very first song of praise sung by the Jews was the *Shiras Hayam*, the Song at the Red Sea. G-d split the sea so the Jews could cross over in safety and drowned the pursuing Egyptians.

This was added to *Pesukei De'zimra* at the time of Rav Amram Gaon. In fact, the Rambam recites this after *Yishtabach*, the closing blessing of *Pesukei De'zimra*.

Anyone who recites the Shiras Hayam with much joy will merit forgiveness for all sins.¹

This seems to be a very great reward just for reciting a few verses in great joy. In truth, we must examine why this portion is so important and why one needs to recite it with joy.

¹ *Zohar* cited by *Mishna Berura* Simon 51:17

The Essence of a Transgression

The Torah commands us to obey its commands and not transgress them by sinning. A sinner is considered as denying G-d's existence - as if he doesn't have to follow G-d's commands. Thus, every sin is the sinner's denial of G-d's complete power and dominion. As the *Mishna* in *Pirkei Avos* (*Chapters of the Fathers*) teaches: *One who sins in private is desecrating G-d's Name privately.* Thus, *Shiras Hayam* is a statement that one fully believes in all aspects of G-d's Divine Providence. The *Shira* states *Va'yaminu BaHashem u'beMoshe avdo* which means *that Israel has faith in Hashem and in Moses His servant.* At the splitting of the *Yam Suf*, it became quite clear to one and all that G-d is all powerful and that He communicates with the righteous- as in the prophetic ability of *Moshe Rabbeinu*. G-d showed us His Divine Providence as we were trapped between them and the Red Sea. He protected us from the imminent danger of the attacking Egyptians. *Shir Hashirim* describes that particularly trying moment, *Yonasi bechagvei haselah*... At that moment with no way to escape the situation; we turned to G-d and cried out to Him in prayer. G-d turned to Moshe and said, "This is not the time for prayer. Speak to them to continue and travel into the sea". Indeed, the Jews put their faith in G-d and went ahead into the sea. G-d then wrought the tremendous miracle of the splitting of the sea.

Like a Dove

The Gemora in Shabbos 130a explains another verse where the Jews are compared to the *Yonah*, a dove. As the dove fends off its attackers with its wings, so too Jews fend off their enemies with their *mitzvos* which are like their wings. Thus with their commitment to G-d and His *mitzvos* together with the *Emunah* (faith) they exhibited at the time, they merited great miracles and Divine Intervention. Likewise, someone who connects with that experience is demonstrating his personal *Emunah* in G-d and his personal commitment to His commands. Any sin this individual may have committed is no longer due to lack of faith in G-d, but rather should be attributed to human error. Hence, it makes sense that in reciting this portion with joy, one shows that one's faith is solid and one does not deny G-d by sinning. Such a person deserves to be forgiven for any past misdeeds. The *Yesod*

² 2:14 My dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the concealments of the steps, show me your appearance, let me hear your voice, for your voice is pleasant and your appearance is comely. *Rashi* comments - This is said concerning that time when Pharaoh pursued them and overtook them camping by the sea with no avenue of escape before them because of the sea, and they could not turn because of the wild beasts. What did they resemble at that time? A dove that fled from a hawk and entered the clefts of the rocks, and a snake was hissing at her. Should she enter, there was the snake. Should she go outside, there was the hawk. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to her, "Show Me your appearance," the propriety of your deeds, to whom you turn in time of trouble.

Ve'shoresh Ha'avodah stresses, that merely reciting the words does not show one's connection with the ideas and beliefs expressed in prayer (*Tefilla*). The latter is shown in fervent, heartfelt, and emotional outpouring of *Tefilla*.

Let us focus our thoughts on the events that took place at the time of the splitting of the Yam Suf. This will improve our ability to experience the uplifting nature of *Krias Yam Suf*.

Faith - Emunah: The lesson of Krias Yam Suf

As mentioned in the *Shira*, the Torah relates how everyone attained a level of *emunah* - *faith*, unparalleled, then, in history. The *Ali Shor* writes that Yechezkel HaNavi didn't see in all his prophetic visions what a maid servant saw then.

Rav Schwab *zt"l* explains that the *faith* acquired at the time of the splitting of the sea was not in the event itself for that was a reality which required no *faith*. Rather, it was a faith in G-d's omnipotence even after that event. Just as we witnessed then that our very existence was due to G-d's heavenly intervention, so too we must realize in life that everything is in G-d's hands.

Shira – song, is better understood as a poem of praise to G-d. The reason *Az Yashir* - verses from the Torah was placed at the end of *Pesukei De'zimra* rather than at its beginning, is that the very song (*Shira*) itself was only possible because of a miracle. We need to imagine masses of Jews leaving Egypt and crossing the sea without advance notice. Moshe Rabbeinu who had a speech impediment was able to raise his voice in song so that the millions of Jews could respond to his recital of the poem (*Shira*). The Gemora in Sotah 30b mentions different opinions as to the response of Jewish people when Moshe led them in this song. Whether they just repeated the first words of each sentence, or each word with exact precision, it was a miracle in itself. Thus, G-d gave the Jews an opportunity to express their praise for *Hashem*.

Therefore, explains Rav Schwab, we attempt to elevate all our praise during *Pesukei De'zimra* to a level of praise like *Az Yashir* which is a heavenly inspired one.

The Miracle

Looking at the event of *Krias Yam Suf* itself, there are two distinct parts to the miracle.

- § The splitting of the waters with the drying of the seabed.
- § The drowning of the Egyptians.

The second miracle is evident to all and is something we can relate to since essentially it is nature taking its course. However, the first miracle although experienced first-hand, was incomprehensible since it defied nature. Thus, we refer to this as *Emunah* - a belief, even though we actually experienced it. It was an incomprehensible miracle. The Jewish people were at the sea, and some already deep into it. G-d creates a wind and instantly dries the seabed without harming the people or drowning in them. Such a miracle elicits a "belief" in G-d's power in any situation in life - that He may do as He wishes without constraints. This is the deep lesson of *Shira* - praise is left for the end of the *Pesukei De'zimra* as it cannot be attained by human endeavor alone.

The *Zohar* also asked the same question. Why are these Torah verses at the very end of *Pesukei De'zimra* instead of at the beginning, where they really belong? The *Zohar* points out that as this praise is so elevated, it was left to be recited at the end of *Pesukei De'zimra* so it will elevate us as well. We say it before the blessings (*brochos*) of *Krias She'ma* so that they too, will be recited on this elevated spiritual level.

מנהג Custom

- § You should recite this section with a sense of joy as if you were crossing the *Yam Suf*.
- § Some people recite the passages of *Vayosha* and *Az Yashir* with the cantillation as when reading from the Torah scroll. This is in order to arouse a joyous feeling.
- § The custom is to stand for *Baruch She'omar*, Mizmor *Lesodah*, and *Va'yevorech David* until *atta hu Hashem*, and *Vayosha* until after *Az Yashir* and *Yishtabach*.

דינים Laws

- § One may not skip the entire *Pesukei De'zimra* in order to reach the *Amidah She'moneh Esrei* with the congregation (*tzibbur*).
- § One may not engage in idle talk from *Baruch She'omar* until after the *Amidah She'moneh Esrei*.

There are two places where certain interruptions are possible:

- a) In between the paragraphs – *bein haperakim* and
- b) In between verses or where there is a break in the verse anyway – *be'emtza haperak.*

One should respond even in the middle of a verse for:

- § The first *Amen* in *Kaddish*
- § *Amen yehei shemei rabbah*
- § The *Amen* of *Da'amiran be'alma*
- § *Amen* of *Hakeil Hakadosh*
- § *Amen* for the blessing of *Shome'ah Tefilla*

If possible one should try and reach the end of a the paragraph before responding

- § To recite the blessing of *Asher Yotzar* after using the facilities.

or get to the end of a *pasuk* or to a break in a sentence when one sees one will need to answer:

- § *Amen* of any other blessing

On the other hand

- § Do not respond *Baruch Hu u'varuch Shemo* upon hearing a blessing
- § Do not respond *Brich Hu* in *Kaddish*
- § Do not respond by saying *Amen* for *Ve'yatzmach purkanei etc.* in the Sefard version of *Kaddish*

According to Rav Moshe Feinstein *zt"l*, one does answer *Amen* to:

§ The added verse of *Tiskabeil* of *Kaddish tiskabeil*

§ The added verse of *Al Yisrael ve'al Rabbanan* in *Kaddish de' Rabbanan*

According to Rav Ovadiah Yosef *shlit"l*, it's better not to answer *Amen* to the above-mentioned items. One should remain quiet and think *Amen* in one's mind.

He also says:

§ It's better not to recite the entire *Modim de'rabbanan* if one hears the *chazzan's* repetition of the *She'moneh Esrei*. One should just say the words *Modim anachnu lach*.

According to the *Mishna Berura*:

§ One should recite the entire *Modim de'rabbanan* during the *chazzan's* repetition of the *She'moneh Esrei*

As for reciting *Shema Yisrael* and *Baruch sheim kevod etc.* during *Pesukei De'zimra*:

§ The *Mishna Berura* (*Ashkenazim*) rules to recite it without *Baruch Sheim kevod malchuso le'olam va'ed*.

§ Rav Ovadiah Yosef *shlit"l* says not to do so, but continue the *Pesukei De'zimra* out loud while everyone else is saying *Shema Yisrael*

If one hears thunder or sees lightning:

§ One must interrupt and recite the blessings for such an event since it is a one-time opportunity that cannot be delayed.

If one hears *Kedusha*, one should recite the verse:

§ *Kadosh kadosh kadosh etc.*

שְׁ בָּרֻךְ כְּבוֹד הַשֵּׁם מִמֶּכֹּמוֹ

שְׁ יִמְלֹךְ הַשֵּׁם לְעוֹלָם עֵתָּה.³

The other verses of *Kedusha* are not recited. However, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach ז"ל rules that on Shabbos when more stanzas are added to *Kedusha* one should recite those as well.

The Closing of Pesukei De'zimra

Just as we finish the final chapter of *Tehilim* by repeating the final verse –

All living souls will praise G-d, Bless G-d
Kol haneshama tehallel kah Hallelukah

so too at the end of the *Shira*, we repeat the verse *Hashem yimloch le'olam va'ed*. This marks the end of the *Shira* of *Az Yashir*. Although we recite one more verse about the drowning of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, other *Siddurim* omit it. We then proceed to say a few more verses on the theme of *Hashem yimloch le'olam va'ed* about how *Hashem* will reign ultimately over the entire world. He will be recognized by all nations as the only power and the only king.

And G-d will be the king over the entire
earth; on that day Hashem and His
Name will be recognized as the only
one!

Vehayah Hashem le'Melech al kol ha'aretz
bayome hahu yihyeh Hashem echad
u'sh'emo echad!

Yishtabach

At this point we recite the blessing of *Yishtabach*, which is the closing blessing of *Pesukei De'zimra*.

³ Rav Chaim Kanievsky *shlit"z* explains that although *Yimloch* is not integral to *Kedusha* and it would not be recited if one was in the middle of the blessings of *Yotzeir Ohr* and so on, during *Pesukei De'Zimra* it should be recited since it is a form of praise which is the focus of *Pesukei De'Zimra*.

Background מקורות

The blessing of *Yishtabach* concludes the *Pesukei De'zimra*. The Gemora in *Pesachim* alludes to this blessing as the *Birchas Hashir* – the Blessing of Praise. According to one opinion this was *Nishmas* which we recite at the end of *Pesukei De'zimra* of *Shabbos* with the closing *bracha* of *Yishtabach*. It does not begin with the usual opening of *Baruch Atta Hashem etc.* since it is considered to be the follow-up to *Baruch She'omar* – a *Bracha Ha'semucha Le'chaverta*⁴.

According to this explanation, Rabbi David Cohen *shlita* wonders why the Tur states that *Baruch She'omar* was a heavenly-sent blessing from the post Talmudic period and was not humanly composed, when the Gemora states clearly that *Yishtabach* existed in Talmudic times already?

He answers that although *Yishtabach* is from the Talmud, *Baruch She'omar* is not. Accordingly, in the Talmudic period the blessing of *Yishtabach* must have opened with *Baruch Atta Hashem etc.* Only later the *Baruch She'omar* blessing for the opening of the *Pesukei De'zimra* was found, was the blessing of *Yishtabach* altered by having the opening *Baruch Atta Hashem etc* removed.

Laws

- § If one recited *Asher Yatzar* right before *Yishtabach* after completing the *Pesukei De'zimra* one should repeat the chapter of *Ashrei* before reciting *Yishtabach*.
- § If the *chazan* only received his *Tallis* and *Tefillin* during *Pesukei De'zimra*, he should put them on at this point, with the appropriate blessings.
- § Other individuals who received their *Tallis* and *Tefillin* during *Pesukei De'zimra* should wait and put them on after *Yishtabach*.

⁴ *Daf* 118a

⁵ Lit. a blessing that follows the previous blessing

Questions:

1. What unusual reward is promised for reciting *Az Yashir* and in what manner must it be recited ...?
2. What is the message of the sinner and to what is he likened in the *Mishna in Pirkei Avos* (Chapters of the Fathers)?
3. How does affirming *Shiras Hayam* rectify one's sins?
4. To what aspect of *Krias Yam Suf* do we attribute *Emunah* - Faith? (according to Rav Schwab)?
5. What are the two categories of *Pesukei De'zimra* regarding interruptions and which of the two is stricter?
6. If one needs to answer *Amen* to any regular blessing or if one needs to recite the blessing of *Asher Yotzar* after using the facilities, what is the most appropriate place for this if one is in middle of a section of *Pesukei De'zimra*?
7. What is the law regarding saying *Baruch Hu u'varuch Shemmo* and *Brich Hu* during *Pesukei De'zimra*?
8. If one hears *Modim De'rabbanan* during *Pesukei De'zimra*, should one say it with the congregation?
9. If one hears *Krias She'ma* during *Pesukei De'zimra*, should one say it with the congregation?
10. Why does *Yishtabach* begin without an opening *Baruch Atta Hashem...*?

Answers:

1. If one recites *Az Yashir* with joy, one will be forgiven all sins.
2. A person who sins by transgressing the Torah's commands is stating that he is not governed by G-d and in *Pirkei Avos* (Chapter of the Fathers) is likened to someone who desecrates *Hashem's Name*.
3. If one sings *Az Yashir* with joy one understands that only *Hashem* controls all events in our world and that we in turn praise Him by sanctifying His glorious Name.
4. That supernatural event of the sea splitting is one we cannot begin to understand.
5. Between the paragraphs (*Bein Haperakim*) and in the middle of a paragraph (*Be'emtza Haperek*). The laws regarding in middle of a paragraph are stricter.
6. One should wait and recite *Asher Yotzar* between paragraphs and *Amen* should be recited at the end of a *pasuk* or at a break in a *pasuk* if possible.
7. One should never respond *Baruch Hu U'varuch Shemmo* and *Brich Hu* during *Pesukei De'zimra*.
8. The *Mishna Berura* rules to recite it in its entirety, but Rav Ovadiah Yosef *shlit"a* rules to say just the words *Modim anachnu lach*.
9. The *Mishna Berura* rules to recite the first verse but not *Baruch Sheim kevod malchusso le'olam va'ed*. Rav Ovadiah Yosef *shlit"a* rules not to say it. One should rather say whatever verses one is reciting in a loud voice.
10. It is considered to be a *Bracha Ha'semucha Le'chaverta* to *Baruch She'omar*.

⁶ Lit. a blessing that follows the previous blessing