

פרשת בשלח

The Americans, at least, among our readers can immediately find an identification with the term *preamble* when they hear it. That is because that when they take a high school class in United States Government and study its constitution, they study its *preamble*.

A preamble serves as an introduction, presenting a background, or the principles involved, to the main text that will follow. The main text is justified by the ideas outlined in its preamble.

And, so, we will take the liberty of labelling a small section of our Parshas B'shalach as a 'preamble'.

It is true that the Torah does not name the two P'sukim that we will study in any way or form as a preamble, but I think, when we will consider it, that we will not be out of order in applying that term to this section.

Our justification for the application of such a term is *Minhag Yisroel* – hallowed customs that our people have followed for centuries.

For many centuries, our daily recitation of *P'sukei D'zimra* concludes with the recitation of the *Shira – Oz Yoshir*. The *Shira* is named such because it is seen as an epitome of our praises to Hashem and, or because of, the fact it was recited by all of Israel.

It is the *Shira* that is read on this Shabbos of Parshas B'shalach as well as on the Seventh Day of Pesach, the day on which commemorate the crossing of the Red Sea and the first recitation of that unique song of praise¹.

We will not focus on the *Shira* per se. Rather we will investigate that which we have dared to term its *preamble*.

We read (Sh'mos Perek 14/P'sukim 30-31):

¹ Rashi, Sh'mos Perek 14/Posuk 5.

וַיֹּשַׁע ה' בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם וַיִּרְא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת מִצְרַיִם מֵת עַל שְׂפַת הַיָּם: וַיִּרְא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַיָּד הַגְּדוֹלָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה ה' בְּמִצְרַיִם וַיִּירָאוּ הָעָם אֶת ה' וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְּה' וּבְמֹשֶׁה עֲבָדָיו:

On that day, Hashem saved Israel from the hand of Egypt; Israel saw Egypt dead on the bank of the sea. Israel saw the great hand that Hashem placed against Egypt and the people feared Hashem and they believed in Hashem and in Moshe, His servant.

When I look at these verses as they appear in the Sefer Torah, I see nothing by which to distinguish them from the many verses that precede them.

This is in contrast to the *Shira* that immediately follows these verses. The *Shira* is distinguished by its uniquely written structure, where the stanzas are written on broken lines, as well as the space in the Torah separating it from the two verses that we termed a *preamble*. Those two verses have no distinction that calls any special attention to them.

Nonetheless, our daily recitation of *Oz Yoshir* is always preceded by those two verses and thus they appear to be a preamble which will help us appreciate the Song sung by our ancestors on that momentous day over 3300 years ago.

Let us note our issues and questions regarding this preamble and attempt to further our understanding of them and, in addition, thereby attain a greater appreciation of the *Shira* itself.

First, the initial words of the first of our two verses seems to be superfluous without a doubt. The many verses that come before it tell us in significant detail of the punishments that Hashem wreaked upon Egypt and the salvation that thus occurred.

Do we have to be told that Hashem saved Israel? That is apparent when we read our Parsha and the previous Parshos that teach us of the *makkos* – the Ten Plagues through which Hashem punished the Egyptians.

Do we have to be told that Israel saw G-d's Great Hand? Isn't that part and parcel of Hashem's saving of Israel?

Do we have to be told that Israel believed in Hashem? Did we not learn that at the time of the initial appearance of Moshe Rabbenu before Israel that they believed in the upcoming salvation? We read in Parshas Sh'mos (Perek 4/Posuk 31):

וַיֵּאֱמַן הָעָם וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ כִּי פָקַד ה' אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכִי רָאָה אֶת עַנְיֵיהֶם וַיִּקְדּוּ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ:

The people believed and they heard that Hashem remembered B'nei Yisroel and that He saw their affliction and the people prostrated and bowed.

But, since we are told all of the above, and more, we must seek to learn what we really did not understand and to reveal previously unknown truths that are masked by this seeming repetitiveness.

We read in the Midrash Halachah *Mechilta* (B'shalach. *Masechta va'y'hi* Parshata 6) our Parsha:

ויאמינו בה', גדולה האמונה שהאמינו ישראל במי שאמר והיה העולם שבשכר שהאמינו ישראל בה' שרתה עליהם רוח הקדש ואמרו שירה שנאמר ויאמינו בה' ובמשה עבדו ונאמר אז ישיר משה ובני ישראל:

They believed in Hashem – The belief that Israel believed in 'He Who said and the world came into being' was very great. The reward for the fact that they believed in Hashem was that *Ruach HaKodesh* was upon them and they recited the *Shira* – Oz Yoshir. This is as it says, 'They believed in Hashem and in Moshe His servant' and then it says, 'Then Moshe and B'nei Yisroel sang'.

We can immediately note two pieces of information.

First, the level of *emunah* in this instance must have been greater than that of the first time when the Torah tells us that Israel had *emunah*, as we saw above.

Secondly, we learn that the justification for *Shiras Hayam*, the song that Moshe and B'nei Yisroel sang after their miraculous crossing, was the belief that Israel had. It would seem that there was more than a quantitative difference in their belief after crossing the Sea; we now learn that it must have been qualitative as well.

Let us see how much we are able to uncover as we attend to the specific words and phrases.

We read:

וירא ישראל

Israel saw.

Unquestionably, the literal translation of these words is the *p'shat*. Israel literally saw the Egyptians drowning as the walls of the sea came crashing down upon the Egyptians who were pursuing them furiously.

However, throughout the Torah, 'seeing' can mean far more than the physiological aspects of vision.

Let us look at a few examples.

We read in Parshas Noach (B'reishis Perek 11/Posuk 5) regarding *Migdal Bavel* – the Tower that the inhabitants of the earth wished to build:

וַיֵּרַד ה' לְרַאֲתָא אֶת הָעִיר וְאֶת הַמִּגְדָּל אֲשֶׁר בָּנוּ בְנֵי הָאָדָם:

Hashem went down to see the city and the tower that the people built.

Rashi writes there:

וַיֵּרַד ה' לְרַאֲתָא - לֹא הוּצַרְךָ לְכַר, אֲלֵא בֵּא לְלַמֵּד לְדֵיִינִים שֶׁלֹּא יִרְשִׁיעוּ הַנְּדוֹן עַד שִׁירָאוּ וַיְבִינוּ. בַּמְדַּרְשׁ רַבִּי תַנְחוּמָא:

Hashem went down to see – this was not necessary [to be said]. Rather it comes to teach judges that they should not find the accused 'guilty' until they see and they understand. This is in the Midrash Tanchuma.

Of course, G-d does not need to have a close-up view in order to know a situation or to understand it. He did not need 'to go down to see'. From His 'vantage point' He sees everything. Rather, Hashem wanted to teach a lesson in the context of this section in which humanity was being judged.

Those who will take upon themselves to determine the guilt of others had better make sure that they see and *understand* the events that they are witnessing or hearing testimony in their regards.

The lesson here is not regarding the registering of image on the wonderful Divine creation of the human eye. The lesson here is that 'seeing' means investigating, analysing and organizing and ordering the sightings into a coherent and understandable package.

We read further regarding the sins of Sedom in Parshas Vayera (ibid. Perek 18/Posuk 21). Hashem says:

אַרְדָּה נָא וְאֶרְאֶה הַכְּצַעְקוֹתֶיךָ הַבָּאִים אֵלַי עָשׂוּ כָלֵה וְאִם לֹא אֲדַע:

I will go down now and I will see if it is like its cry that comes to Me –if they did it, then they are finished; and if not, I Hashem will know it.

Rashi offers two explanations. He writes:

ארדה נא ואראה - למד לדיינים שלא יפסקו דיני נפשות אלא בראיה, הכל כמו שפירשתי בפרשת הפלגה. דבר אחר ארדה נא לסוף מעשיהם:

I will go down and see – This teaches the judges that they should not decide cases of capital punishment without seeing. All this is like I explained regarding the Generation of the Division [*Migdal Bavel*].

Another explanation – I will go down to see the final result of their actions.

It is likely that Rashi presents us with an additional explanation because the first commentary seems to be merely a repeat of what Rashi already wrote – and Rashi says that explicitly.

The second explanation means that it was necessary to ‘see’ past the specific actions and understand their intent and their ramifications. ‘Seeing’ in this explanation is certainly referring to ‘understanding’.

We will take the opportunity to learn two additional examples regarding the meaning of ‘sight’ in the Torah that flow directly from what we have just written.

In Parshas Vayikro the Torah teaches us the laws of the *Korban Chattos*, the sin-offering that is brought when a person unintentionally transgresses a prohibition that would bring the *Kores* punishment if the sin was done intentionally².

² Rambam writes in Hilchos Shegogos (Perek 1/Halachah 1):

כל העובר בשגגה על אחת ממצות לא תעשה שיש בה מעשה שחייבין עליה כרת, הרי זה חייב להקריב קרבן חטאת, ומצות עשה שיקריב חטאתו על שגגתו.

Anyone who unintentionally violates a Torah prohibition that involves an activity for which there is a punishment of *kores* [if done intentionally], that person is obligated to bring a *Chattos*-sin offering. It is a positive commandment to bring that *Korban Chattos*.

The Korban Chattos has specific parameters that guide its offering. Although the obligation for a Korban Chattos applies to every Jew, there are three categories of individuals whose *Korban Chattos's* profile is different than that of everyman³: The King⁴, the Kohen Godol⁵ and the Beis Din of 71, the *Sanhedrin HaGedolah*⁶.

The case of the *Korban Chattos* that the Sanhedrin brings does not deal when its individual members sin. In such a case they are like 'everyman' and have no special status; they bring the offering of everyman.

The Torah, in the case of Sanhedrin, is dealing with an instance when the Sanhedrin erred unintentionally in its Halachic decision and permitted an act for which its unintentional violation requires the individual sinner to bring a *Korban Chattos* as well as the punishment of *Kores* if that act was done intentionally.

In this case, if the majority of Israel unintentionally follows the ruling of the Sanhedrin and do the sin that was erroneously permitted – the *Korban Chattos* comes from the Sanhedrin.

The Torah expresses this sin as follows (Vayikro Perek 4/Posuk 13):

וְאִם כָּל עֵדֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׁגּוּ וְנִעְלַם דְבַר מֵעֵינֵי הַקְהָל וְעָשׂוּ אַחַת מִכָּל מִצְוֹת ה' אֲשֶׁר לֹא תַעֲשִׂינָהּ וְאָשְׁמוּ:

If the entire congregation of Israel sins unintentionally and the [fact that it was a] sin was hidden from the eyes of the congregation and they do one of Mitzvos of G-d which should not be done and they are guilty.

As Rashi teaches here, this verse and the ones that follow refer to the Sanhedrin and its members are called the *eyes* of the congregation because they are to *see* and *understand*. *Davka* in this context, the Sanhedrin is referred to as the 'eyes'

³ All of Vayikro Perek 4 deals with the *Korban Chattos* of everyman as well as the related *Korban Oshom*.

⁴ Vayikro Perek 4/P'sukim 22-31

⁵ Vayikro Perek 4/P'sukim 3-12.

⁶ Vayikro Perek 3/P'sukim 13-31.

because they did not see properly in this errant ruling; their *understanding* was at fault.

Finally, let us go to Sefer B'midbar and read of Moshe Rabbenu's pleading with Yisro not to return to Midian.

The Torah writes in Parshas B'haa'losecha (Perek 10/Posuk 31):

וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל נָא תַעֲזֹב אֶתְנוּ כִּי עַל כֵּן יָדַעְתָּ חֲנֻתְנוּ בַּמִּדְבָּר וְהָיִיתָ לָנוּ לְעֵינָיִם:

Moshe said, 'Please do not forsake us because therefore you know our encamping in the wilderness and you were *eyes* for us.

Referring to Yisro as 'eyes' is close to a double entendre (if not a triple one). It was Yisro who taught Moshe regarding the establishment of the Torah court system⁷, and thus he was 'eyes' – setting up the mechanism for the judges to 'see' and to 'understand'.

Additionally, Yisro prefaced his words by telling Moshe to 'see' and choose the proper judges with intelligence and understanding. We read there (Sh'mos Perek 18/Posuk 21):

וְאַתָּה תִּחְזֶה מִכָּל הָעָם אַנְשֵׁי חַיִּל יִרְאִי אֱלֹהִים אֲנָשִׁי אֱמֶת שֹׂנְאֵי בָצַע וְשֹׂמְרֵי עֲשָׂוֹת
שָׂרֵי אֲלָפִים שָׂרֵי מֵאוֹת שָׂרֵי חֲמִשִּׁים וְשָׂרֵי עֶשְׂרֵת:

You, Moshe, shall see from the entire people men of valour, fearers of G-d, people of truth, haters of corruption and you shall place them upon the people: officers of thousands, officers of hundreds, officers of fifties and officers of tens.

It is most clear that often 'seeing' refers to understand and comprehension.

And now we return to the preamble of the *Shira*. We read:

וִירָא יִשְׂרָאֵל

Israel saw.

It was not a mere observation that Israel made; it was not a picture for their album of memories.

⁷ Sh'mos Perek 18/P'sukim 13-24.

When the Torah tells us that

וִירָא יִשְׂרָאֵל

Israel saw.

we learn that Israel reached a new level in their understanding of Providence, of *Hashgacha*, of G-d's protection over Israel.

And what was it that they understood that had escaped them until that moment?

The following Posuk continues:

וִירָא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַיָּד הַגְּדוֹלָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה ה' בְּמִצְרַיִם

Israel saw the great hand that Hashem placed against Egypt.

Perhaps because we are so accustomed to reciting this verse it has become second-nature to us, we fail to appreciate the *chiddush* that it contains.

Let us see if the reader can catch on to the point that we wish to make without our giving the secret away.

What comes to our mind when we think about the Hand of Hashem in regards to Egypt?

Doesn't the phrase בִּיד חֲזָקָה – 'with a strong hand' come to mind immediately? Isn't that our immediate association? Hasn't that phrase been ingrained in most of us since elementary school?

Have we ever seen the phrase הַיָּד הַגְּדוֹלָה before this verse – or after?

In fact, הַיָּד הַגְּדוֹלָה makes a unique and one-time appearance in Tanach and it is found in our Posuk. This is in contrast to twenty (!) times in Tanach that the word חֲזָק, strong, is associated with the word יָד, hand⁸.

⁸ See the following verses in which חֲזָק is associated with יָד:

Sefer Sh'mos: Perek 3/Posuk 19, Perek 6/Posuk 1(2 mentions), Perek 13/Posuk 9, Perek 13/Posuk 14, Perek 13/Posuk 16, Perek 32/Posuk 11.

Sefer B'midbar: Perek 20/Posuk 20.

What is the significance of this most notable change and why is our verse its locus?

In fact, we can posit a distinction between these two terms of **יד הגדולה** and **יד החזקה**.

חזק, strong is a term that can only be appreciated in a situation where strength is necessary. I might surmise, correctly or not, that someone is strong but I cannot validate my assumption until that alleged strength is given an opportunity to prove itself by defeating its opponents.

In contrast, **גדול**, great or big, can be an objective statement, not just one that is relative. That is, though we can say when A is next to B he is **גדול** but when he is next to C he is not **גדול**, a statement of relativity, **גדול** can also be a statement of fact, unrelated to other circumstances, an objective truth.

An example of such of the use of **גדול** as an objective standard rather than comparative can be seen in a verse in Tehillim.

In Perek 99 (Posuk 2) we read:

ה' בְּצִיּוֹן גָּדוֹל וְרָם הוּא עַל כָּל הָעַמִּים:

Hashem is **גדול** – great in Zion and He is **רם** - high above all of the nations.

The idolatrous nations see Hashem as the highest of gods; He is not the only One, according to their misguided views – but He is above all the rest. That is, in this verse **רם** - 'high above' is a relative term.

Sefer D'vorim: Perek 4/Posuk 34, Perek 6/Posuk 21, Perek 7/Posuk 8, Perek 7/Posuk 19, Perek 9/Posuk 2, Perek 26/Posuk 8, Perek 34/Posuk 12:

Sefer Yehoshua: Perek 1/Posuk 24

Sefer Yechezkel: Perek 3/Posuk 14, Perek 20/Posuk 33.

Sefer Tehillim: Perek 136/Posuk 12.

Sefer Doniyel: Perek 9/Posuk 15.

In contradistinction to the view of the idolatrous nations of the world, Hashem is גדול in Zion. For Am Yisroel, for whom there are no 'competing gods', G-d is great, not because He is greater than the other gods, but because He is objectively גדול.

What did Israel see and *understand* at the Red Sea and comprehend that which they had not understood earlier?

They saw, as much as mankind can perceive, Hashem's objective greatness.

And that is what Chazal interpreted in the verse of the *Shira* (Sh'mos Perek 15/Pouk 2) that reads:

עֲזִי וְזַמְרַת קָה וַיְהִי לִי לִישׁוּעָה זֶה אֱלֹהֵי וְאֲנֹהוּ אֲלֵי... לִקְי אָבִי וְאֲרַמְּנֶהוּ:

G-d is my strength and my song; He was a salvation for me; *this* is my G-d and I will praise Him, the G-d of my father and I will exalt Him.

Chazal taught in Midrash Lekach Tov to our verse:

רבי אליעזר אומר מנין אתה אומר שראתה שפחה על הים, מה שלא ראו ישעיה ויחזקאל, שנאמר זה קלי ואנוהו. וכתוב וביד הנביאים אדמה (הושע יב/יא⁹), וכתוב נפתחו השמים ואראה מראות א...ל'קים (יחזקאל א/א¹⁰), אבל על הים כולם ראו ואמרו זה א...לי ואנוהו:

Rabi Eliezer says, From where do you say that "That which the maidservant saw at the sea, Yeshaya HaNovi and Yechezkel HaNovi did not see?" It is as it is written, 'This is my G-d and I will praise Him'. And it is written, 'I Hashem spoke regarding the prophets and I increased the vision; in the hands of the prophets I Hashem will be imagined.' And it is written, It was in the thirtieth year, the fourth month on the fifth day of the month and I was among the

⁹ The entire verse reads:

וְדַבַּרְתִּי עַל הַנְּבִיאִים וְאֲנִי חֲזוֹן הַרְבֵּיתִי וּבִיד הַנְּבִיאִים אֲדַמָּה:
I Hashem spoke regarding the prophets and I increased the vision; in the hands of the prophets I Hashem will be imagined.

¹⁰ The entire verse reads:

וַיְהִי בְשָׁלְשִׁים שָׁנָה בְּרַבִּיעִי בַחֲמִשָּׁה לַחֹדֶשׁ וְאֲנִי בְּתוֹךְ הַגּוֹלָה עַל נְהַר כְּבָר נִפְתְּחוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאָרָא מְרָאוֹת אֲלֵי...ל'קים:

It was in the thirtieth year, the fourth month on the fifth day of the month and I was among the exile on the *Kevar River*; the heavens opened up and I saw the visions of G-d.

exile on the *Kevar River*; the heavens opened up and I saw the visions of G-d.'

As Rashi writes in our Parsha :

זה קלי - בכבודו נגלה עליהם והיו מראין אותו באצבע, ראתה שפחה על הים מה
שלא ראו נביאים:

This is my G-d – In His Glory, Hashem revealed Himself upon them and they pointed to Him with their finger. The maidservant saw at the sea that which the prophets did not see.

That is, when our ancestors 'saw' G-d and understood Him in a way that they were unable to understand before, their vision was one that was objective. They said זה – This is He Yisborach!

And thus in the preamble of the *Shira* we are told:

וַיֵּרָא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַיָּד הַגְּדֹלָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה ה' בְּמִצְרַיִם

Israel saw the great hand that Hashem placed against Egypt.

They perceived a vision far greater than when they saw only His החזקה יד.

At this point, now, the Torah tells us of two reactions that Israel had from these unique perceptions and understandings.

The first reaction is:

וייראו העם את ה'

The people feared G-d.

Now, is it possible that after seeing months of G-d's wrath being poured out against Egypt that our ancestors did not fear Hashem?

The answer may well be that there is more than one type of fear: there is fear and there is fear.

There is fear because one is afraid. A person sees water turning into blood and frogs invading houses and a plague of locusts and boils that incapacitate movement and overwhelming darkness – one is afraid because perhaps the same will happen to him.

And then there is the fear that is termed as awe when the Presence of that which is so much larger than you dominates your entire being and one is totally and completely overwhelmed by that Presence.

That is what Rambam writes in Mishneh Torah in Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah (Perek 2/Halachah 2):

והיאך היא הדרך ל...יראתו, בשעה שיתבונן האדם במעשיו וברואיו הנפלאים הגדולים ויראה מהן חכמתו שאין לה ערך ולא קץ...מיד הוא נרתע לאחוריו ויפחד ויודע שהוא בריה קטנה שפלה אפלה עומדת בדעת קלה מעוטה לפני תמים דעות...

What is the way to be in awe of Hashem? When a person considers G-d's actions and His wondrous and great creations and a person sees in them His inestimable and infinite wisdom, immediately a person is drawn backward and is frightened and knows that he is a small, lowly and unenlightened creature with shallow and little knowledge before He Who is Pure of Knowledge.

Man does not compare himself to G-d. Man knows that G-d is גדול, objectively great and knows that he is objectively small and insignificant.

This is the explanation of the fear and awe that was the first reaction of our ancestors in the aftermath of their crossing the Red Sea.

But there was a second reaction that seems puzzling when we confront it at first. We read:

וַיֵּאֱמִינוּ בַּה' וּבַמֹּשֶׁה עַבְדּוֹ:

They believed in Hashem and in Moshe, His servant.

Earlier we raised the question of why is Israel's belief in Hashem told to us now when we already read earlier in the Torah that Israel believed in G-d.

But, even more stunning is the saying 'in Hashem and in Moshe'. Can one think to equate Moshe Rabbenu with Hashem Yisborach? Doesn't such a statement seem to border on denying the uniqueness and Oneness of HaKodosh Boruch Hu?

In order to gain an approach that will solve these questions we will return to what our ancestors saw at the Red Sea – the יד הגדולה, the Great Hand of Hashem, a phrase that is found in our Posuk only.

We contrasted that phrase with the twenty times that the Torah uses a similar but different expression – יד החזקה, the Strong Hand, a phrase with a number of variations but with the same message: Hashem is able to conquer all and nothing will prevent Him from fulfilling His Will.

When we noted the many instances of this יד החזקה, we omitted one important piece of information.

Not all of those twenty instances in which the ‘hand’ is referred to as being ‘strong’ relate to HaKodosh Boruch Hu. Nineteen of those instances do refer to Hashem but there is a twentieth that tells us that a ‘strong hand’ is possessed by a person as well.

Where do we read that? In the very last Posuk of the Torah. About whom does the Torah say that he possessed a ‘strong hand’? Moshe Rabbenu¹¹ is the subject of that verse as we read (D’vorim Perek 34/Posuk 12):

וְלִכְלֹל הַיָּד הַחֲזָקָה וְלִכְלֹל הַמוֹרָא הַגָּדוֹל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה מֹשֶׁה לְעֵינֵי כָל יִשְׂרָאֵל:

For all of the strong hand and for all of great acts of awe that Moshe did before the eyes of all of Israel.

This verse, which we know so well and are moved to tears over the demise of Moshe Rabbenu Olov HaShalom and to joy as we merit completing the Torah on

¹¹ However, none of the powerful men of history, Par’o, Nevuchadnezar and others never received such a description.

And thus our preamble is understood even better when we read:

וַיִּוָּשַׁע ה' בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם וַיֵּרָא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת מִצְרַיִם מֵת עַל שַׁפַּת הַיָּם:

On that day, Hashem saved Israel from the hand of Egypt; Israel saw Egypt dead on the bank of the sea.

Israel was saved from the ‘hand of Egypt’. The Torah pointedly did not write the ‘strong hand of Egypt’, though it appeared to be extraordinarily strong until G-d’s punishments began to raid down upon the Egyptians.

It was the ‘hand of Egypt’ against the ‘great Hand of G-d’. Was there a question of who would be victorious? The answer to one with objective sight was obvious. The outcome was a forgone conclusion.

Simchas Torah, should leave us perplexed. Certainly we have no doubt: the 'strong hand' was that of Hashem, not of Moshe. How could it be attributed to a creature of flesh and blood?

The answer is inherent in that which we learned earlier when we distinguished between the **יד הגדולה** which implies objective greatness and **יד החזקה** which refers to relative greatness, the strength to overpower one who is weaker.

Objective greatness of power, the **יד הגדולה**, cannot be attributed to a person, not even to one as great as Moshe Rabbenu. But, relative strength, **יד החזקה**, can.

Seemingly, in principle, any person who has overpowered another with his strength, could be termed to possess a 'strong hand'. Nonetheless, that description is limited to HaKodosh Boruch Hu and to Moshe Rabbenu.

How is this to be understood?

I think that the message is contained in the true meaning of

וַיֵּאֱמִינוּ בַּה' וּבַמֹּשֶׁה עַבְדּוֹ:

They believed in Hashem and in Moshe, His servant.

When in this Posuk, G-d's might is defined by a new term, **יד הגדולה**, telling us that that is what Israel perceived at the Red Sea, we learn that Israel understood [וירא] that Hashem's power is constant, whether or not it is visible in everyday life.

Hashem's power is a 'given', whether it is performing undeniable miraculous acts or whether when it allows the world to continue to exist by eternally renewing the existence of Creation.

The former is clear. That was what our ancestors saw in Egypt. The latter was not clear then.

True, we say

המחדש בטובו בכל יום תמיד מעשה בראשית

Hashem renews the act of Creation, daily, all of the time.

However, that 'hidden' aspect of G-d's work was unknown to the wider populace of our ancestors until they saw 'more at the Red Sea than did the prophets'.

At that moment, not only did their belief in G-d change, becoming more sophisticated, more understanding. At that moment their understanding of Moshe's 'powers' also became more sophisticated, more understanding.

Our ancestors *understood* that the source of all power is the **יד הגדולה** of Hashem. His power is objective.

They therefore understood that the power of Moshe, which was 'only' his **יד החזקה**, was not his own power; it was not inherent to the nature of Moshe that he performed the miracles and awesome acts that he brought into the world.

Moshe's **יד החזקה**, the only person in history to receive such a description, was merely a derivative of the **יד הגדולה** of Hashem.

With that realization, our ancestors no longer saw Moshe Rabbenu as being a separate entity, acting somewhat independently. They *understood* that his actions were part and parcel of the Will of G-d.

Hashem sometimes appeared directly to Israel and sometimes has His 'representatives' to fulfil His Will. But the 'representatives' are not independent. They are subservient to Him Yisborach.

Who was the most subservient to Hashem – it was Moshe Rabbenu who was referred to as **עבד ה' ¹²**.

At that moment, on the bank of the Red Sea, understanding was realized and thus the Torah tells us about our ancestors:

וַיֵּאֱמִינוּ בַּה' וּבְמֹשֶׁה עַבְדּוֹ:

They believed in Hashem and in Moshe, His servant.

What did our ancestors believe? They understood and believed that all of the powers of Moshe that they saw previously, his **יד החזקה**, his subjective strength, were merely a derivative of the **יד הגדולה** of the Ribbono Shel Olom Who appointed Moshe Rabbenu to be His emissary, His **שליח**.

¹² We read at the end of Parshas V'zos HaBracha (D'vorim Perek 34/Posuk 5):

וַיָּמָת שָׁם מֹשֶׁה עַבְדְּ ה' בְּאֶרֶץ מוֹאָב עַל פִּי ה':

Moshe, the servant of Hashem, died there in the Land of Moav according to the mouth of G-d.

At that moment, with the appropriate preamble in place, for the first time in history a true song of praise could be recited. And how was that first song of praise recited? The Torah reveals that as well as we read (Sh'mos Perek 15/Posuk 1):

אָז יָשִׁיר מֹשֶׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לַיהוָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֵאמֹר אֲשִׁירָה לַיהוָה כִּי גָאָה
גָּאָה סוּס וָרֹכֵב וְרָמָה בַיָּם:

Then Moshe and B'nei Yisroel sang this song to Hashem and they said saying, 'I will sing to Hashem because He is far above all, the horse and its rider who threw into the sea.

Moshe's praise of G-d, Moshe in whom now all of Israel believed as the *shliach Hashem*, brought all of Israel along with him in song to teach us how we are to express our gratitude, our awe and our understanding of G-d's actions in our world and to 'thank You' for what He has done for us.

The preamble and its resultant song are recited by us daily as we pray that we should continue to merit His gracious and faithful יד הגדולה, His great hand of salvation.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Pollock