

## פרשת בשלח

Have we ever felt unworthy to approach HaKodosh Boruch Hu in prayer?

Have we ever felt totally inadequate to say the word אתה –You, as if we are talking with our friend – to the רבונו של עולם?

Have we ever considered the fact that it is preposterous for Man with all of his faults to ask favors from the Supreme Being?

Or perhaps we should rephrase these queries a little differently:

Do we always feel worthy to approach HaKodosh Boruch Hu in prayer?

Do we always feel adequate to say the word אתה –You, as if we are talking with our friend – to the רבונו של עולם?

Do we always think it reasonable for Man to ask favors from the Supreme Being?

In the *Tefilah* that is recited immediately before *Korbonos* at Shacharis we say:

מה אנו? מה חסדנו? מה צדקותנו? מה נאמר לפניך?

What are we? What is the kindness that we do deserve? What is our righteousness? What can we say before You?

In the prayer of *Nishmas*, which dates back at least to the time of the Mishnah<sup>1</sup>, we read:

אילו פיננו מלא שירה כים ולשונונו כהמון גליו ושפתותינו כמרחבי רקיע אין אנו מספיקים להודות לך ה' א...ל'קיננו.

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<sup>1</sup> We read the Mishnah in Masseches Pesachim (Perek 10/Mishnah 7):

מזגו לו כוס שלישי מברך על מזונו רביעי גומר עליו את ההלל ואומר עליו ברכת השיר  
They pour the third cup at the Seder for him and he says Birkas HaMazon. On the fourth cup, he completes Hallel and says *Birkas HaShir*.

Bartenura writes there:

ברכת השיר - אית דאמרי נשמת כל חי. ואית דאמרי יהללך ה' כל מעשיך.  
*Birkas HaShir* – Some say it refers to *Nishmas*. Others say it refers to *Yehalelucha* (the Bracha that we say at the conclusion of Hallel).

In Masseches B'rachos 59 b we find the text that was quoted above.

If our mouth was full with song like the sea is full with water and our tongue like its multitude of waves and our lips with the width of the heavens, we do not have enough to give thanks to You, Hashem our G-d.

The tension that exists, or should exist, in praying to G-d is given expression in Masseches B'rachos, on one of the pages of this week's *Daf HaYomi*.

As an introduction, we note that every *Amida* begins with the *B'racha of Ovos*, concluding with Boruch...Mogen Avraham.

In that blessing we say:

הא...ל הגדול הגבור והנורא

The G-d Who is Great, Who is mighty and Who is awesome.

These words are taken from what Moshe Rabbenu said in Parshas Eikev. We read there (D'vorim Perek 10/Posuk 17)

כִּי ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הוּא אֱלֹהֵי הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא וְהַגָּדוֹל הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא  
אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִשָּׂא פָנִים וְלֹא יִקַּח שֹׁחַד:

Because Hashem your G-d He is the G-d of the mighty, and the Master of masters; the great, mighty and awesome G-d Who does not show favoritism and does not accept bribes.

We read there in Masseches B'rachos (33 b):

ההוא דנחית קמיה דרבי חנינא, אמר: הא...ל הגדול הגבור והנורא והאדיר והעזוז והיראוי החזק והאמיץ והודאי והנכבד. המתין לו עד דסיים, כי סיים אמר ליה: סיימתינהו לכולהו שבחי דמרך? למה לי כולי האי? אנן הני תלת דאמרינן - אי לאו דאמרינהו משה רבינו באורייתא, ואתו אנשי כנסת הגדולה ותקנינהו בתפלה - לא הוינן יכולין למימר להו, ואת אמרת כולי האי ואזלת! משל, למלך בשר ודם שהיו לו אלף אלפים דינרי זהב, והיו מקלסין אותו בשל כסף, והלא גנאי הוא לו!

Someone was the *Shliach Tzibbur* in the place where Rabi Chanina was Rosh HaYeshiva. In the *Amida* he said:

The G-d Who is great, Who is mighty, Who is awesome, Who is strong, Who is powerful, Who is courageous, Who is feared, Who is strong, Who is brave, Who is certain, Who is honored.

Rabi Chanina waited for the Shliach Tzibbur to conclude and he said to him, 'Have you concluded *all* of the praises for your Master? Why so much? We say three praises of Hashem<sup>2</sup> and had it not been that Moshe Rabbenu said all three in the Torah and the *Anshei K'nesses HaGedola* had not come and established those words in prayer, we would not have been able to say [even] them. Why did you keep on going?

The parable is that of a flesh and blood king that had millions of gold pieces and he was praised for his silver. Isn't that denigrating?

The point is certainly clear. Approaching G-d in prayer is not a given idea. That is why it is necessary for the Torah to give us a special Posuk requiring us to daven.

The Posuk reads (D'vorim Perek 11/Posuk 13):

וְהָיָה אִם שָׁמַעַתְּ תִשְׁמָעוּ אֶל מִצְוֹתַי אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוֶּה אֶתְכֶם הַיּוֹם לְאַהֲבָה אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְלַעֲבֹדוֹ בְּכָל לְבַבְכֶם וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁכֶם:

It will be if you certainly listen to My commandments that I Hashem command you today to love Hashem your G-d and to serve Him with all of your heart and all of your soul.

*Serving* G-d is His worship. The Torah instituted very ways of serving G-d but, seemingly, one has to undertake an action to serve Him.

In the Beis HaMikdosh, serving G-d is done through the activities that are required to bring a Korbon, to light the Menorah and to bake the bread of the *Lechem HaPonim*.

Outside the Beis HaMikdosh, serving G-d is done by donning Tefillin, lighting Shabbos candles, giving Tzedaka.

The common thread that binds all of these services is that something has to be *done*. In all of these services, G-d is served by the hand, the foot. In none of them is He served by the heart – but the Posuk says to serve Him with all of your heart'.

How is that accomplished? That is the Gemara's question as we read in Masseches Taanis (2 a):

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<sup>2</sup> הגדול, הגיבור והנורא

דתניא: לאהבה את ה' א...לקיכם ולעבדו בכל לבבכם, איזו היא עבודה שהיא בלב -  
הוי אומר זו תפלה.

The Braisa taught, 'to love G-d and to serve Him with all of your heart'. What type of Divine service is in the heart? I would say, 'prayer'.

Without a specific commandment<sup>3</sup>, would we have the courage, or audacity, to pray to Him?

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<sup>3</sup> It is worthwhile to learn a segment of Aruch HaShulchan in his introduction to Hilchos Tefillah (Orach Chaim Siman 89, s'ifim 1-5):

כתב הרמב"ם ריש הלכות תפלה מצות עשה להתפלל בכל יום שנאמר [שמות כג/ה] ועבדתם את ה' א...לקיכם מפי השמועה למדו שעבודה זו היא תפלה שנאמר [דברים יא/ג] ולעבדו בכל לבבכם אמרו חכמים איזו היא עבודה שבלב זו תפלה...עד כאן לשון הרמב"ם:

Rambam writes at the beginning of Hilchos Tefillah that prayer is a positive commandment that one should pray daily as it says, 'you shall serve Hashem your G-d'. Through the *Mesorah* we have learned that this service is prayer as it says, 'to serve Him with all of your heart. The Chachamim said, 'What is 'service of the heart'? It is prayer. This is the end of the quote from Rambam.

והנה לדעת הרמב"ם הוי תפלה בכל יום מצות עשה כמו שביאר זה בספר המצות מצוה ה'...והרמב"ן חולק עליו שם וסבירא ליה דתפלה היא מדרבנן כמפורסם בכל השלחן ערוך דתפלה דרבנן ולדעת הרמב"ם היא על נוסחת וזמני התפלה...

Behold, according to Rambam daily prayer is a positive commandment as he explains in His Sefer HaMitzvos, Mitzvah 5.

Ramban argues against the Rambam there and he holds that prayer is a Rabbinic obligation as is written throughout Shulchan Aruch that prayer is a Rabbinic obligation. The Rambam understands that the text and times of prayer are of Rabbinic origin [but prayer itself is a Torah-based obligation.]

ונראה לעניות דעתי דאפילו להרמב"ן אין הכונה דעיקר חיובו דרבנן ומן התורה ליכא חיוב כלל להתפלל דאין זה סברא כלל אלא שאומר דאין זה נחשב במנין המצות...

In my humble opinion, even Ramban's intent is not to say that the basic obligation of prayer is of Rabbinic origin and that from the Torah there is no obligation to pray whatsoever. That is not logical but Ramban is saying that prayer is not counted as a specific Mitzvah from among the 613 Mitzvos.

וכן אני אומר דאיך אפשר לומר שלא נתפלל כלל לאבינו שבשמים והרי עבודה היא אחת משלשה עמודי העולם ועתה בעונותינו הרבים שאין לנו מקדש לא נשאר לנו רק תפלה ואנחנו כעיני עבדים אל יד אדוניהם איך אפשר שלא נתחנן לפניו יתברך בכל יום...

And so I say, how is it possible to say that there is no obligation at all that we should pray to our Father in Heaven. Behold, prayer is one of the three pillars of the world and now because of our many sins that we do not have a Beis

In fact, this entire discussion could really have begun with our Parshas B'shalach because the kernel of our discussion is clearly stated in *Shiras HaYam*, the song sang by Moshe Rabbenu and Israel after their crossing of the Red Sea.

Let us remind ourselves of the relevant verse, known to us all.

We read (Sh'mos Perek 15/Posuk 11):

מִי כְמוֹכָה בְּאֵלֶם ה' מִי כְמוֹכָה<sup>4</sup> נֶאֱדָר בְּקִדְשׁ נֹרָא תְהִלַּת עֲשֵׂה פְלֵא:

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HaMikdosh, all we have left is prayer. And our eyes are like the eyes of the slaves to their masters. How is it possible that we should not supplicate before Him Yisborach daily?

<sup>4</sup> This verse repeats the same dyad twice. The first letter *chof* of the second *chomocho* has a *dageish*; the letter of the *chof* of the first *chomocho* does not have a *dageish*.

There are two types of *d'geishim* in L'shon HaKodesh. One type is termed דגש קל and the other is termed דגש חזק. The letters ב, ג, ד, כ, פ, ת are the only letters that can have a דגש קל [they can have a דגש חזק as well].

The general rule, among others, is that a דגש קל does not appear in a letter when the previous letter was a *yud*. Since the word מִי immediately precedes the letter כ in the word כְמוֹכָה, we expect it to be without a *dageish* and thus read *chomocho* as is the reading the first time that word appears.

Thus it is surprising that the second time the word כְמוֹכָה it appears that it has a *dageish* and is read *komocho* despite the fact that it too, just like in the first instance follows מִי, a word ending in a *yud*.

This 'unexpected' and exceptional *dageish* is termed תפארת הקריאה, an enhancement of the reading and indicates that we are to give it special emphasis.

[An additional well-known example of תפארת הקריאה is the word אלה where the letter *lamed* has a *dageish* 'against the rules' indicating a special emphasis on the emphasized letter *lamed*.]

Thus, when reading the Posuk of מִי כְמוֹכָה it is appropriate to pause for a second and emphasize *komocho* in that second phrase.

The reader has probably noticed years ago that part of the *Amida* seems to be patterned after the double מִי כְמוֹכָה that we have here. We read in the *Amida*'s second *bracha*:

מִי כְמוֹכָה בְּעַל גְבוּרוֹת וּמִי דוּמָה לָךְ

Who is like You, the Master of Might, who is comparable to You?

Who is like You among the mighty, Hashem? Who is like You, the One Who is mighty in sanctity, Awesome One of praises, Doer of the wondrous?

Let us see one of these praises of HaKodosh Boruch Hu:

נורא תהילות

Awesome One of praises

and examine its meaning.

Rashi writes most clearly:

נורא תהלות - יראוי מלהגיד תהלותיו פן ימעטו, כמו שכתוב (תהילים סה/ב<sup>5</sup>) לך דומיה תהלה:

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The word *chomocho* is without a *dageish*. What about the word דומה? It, too, has a letter that is eligible for the דגש קל; the letter *dalet* is one of those listed above.

In fact, in various *Siddurim* you will see a variety. Sometimes the word דומה has a *dageish*; sometime it doesn't.

It seems to me that a *dageish* is more appropriate because the pattern of words follows the pattern of the מי כמוכה in our Parsha, with the first instance not having a *dageish* and the second instance having one.

If that is so, then the letter *dalet* in the word דומה should have a *dageish* and even though we do not differentiate in pronouncing between the letter *dalet* with a *dageish* and the letter *dalet* without one, nevertheless the תפארת הקריאה aspect should lead us to pause a bit after the recitation of the second word מי and then recite the word דומה with more emphasis, underscoring that there is no one similar whatsoever to the Ribbono Shel Olom, He Who is entire exclusive and unmatched.

<sup>5</sup> The entire verse reads:

לך דמיה תהלה א...ליקים בציון ויך ישלם נדר:

To You silence is praise, G-d in Zion; to You the vow will be paid.

Rashi writes:

לך דמיה תהלה - השתיקה תהלה לך לפי שאין קץ לשבחך והמרבה בשבח אינו אלא גורע:

*To You silence is praise* – Quietude is praise to You because Your praise is infinite and one who excessively praises, diminishes [Your praise].

*Awesome One of praises* – He is feared from telling His praises, lest they be insufficient, as it is written, ‘to You, silence is praise.

Ibn Ezra writes similarly with the addition connecting this phrase with the one that follows it: עושה פלא – Doer of the wondrous.

He writes:

נורא תהלות. כי כל המהללים יראים הם להלל שמו, כי מי (תהילים קו/ב<sup>6</sup>) ישמיע כל תהלתו, והם חייבים להלל שמו, כי הוא לבדו עושה פלא:

*Awesome One of praises* – Because all who offer praise are afraid to praise His Name. Who is able to express all of His praise? But they are obligated to praise Him because He alone does wonders<sup>7</sup>.

If you think about it, however, this phrase’s placement in the Torah, in *Oz Yoshir* raises questions.

*Oz Yoshir* is the supreme *Shira*, the song of praise to the Ribbono Shel Olom; it is part and parcel of our daily davening; it completes *P’sukei D’zimra*. Besides being

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<sup>6</sup> The entire verse reads:

מי ימַלֵּל גְבוּרוֹת ה' יִשְׁמִיעַ כָּל תְּהִלָּתוֹ:

Who can say the mighty acts of Hashem, express all of His praise?

<sup>7</sup> Ramban cites Rashi and Ibn Ezra and comments on the similarities of their explanations and writes:

ולפי דעתי כי טעם נורא תהלות שהוא נורא בתהלות, כי יעשה דברים נוראים ומתהלל בהם, שעשה נקמות בעוברי רצונו והושיע בהם את עבדיו, והנה הוא בזה נורא ומהולל מאד. ובעבור כי מלכי ארץ נוראים בעשק ונלוז, אמר כי ה' הוא נורא בדברים אשר הוא מהולל בהם.

According to my mind, the explanation of נורא תהלות is that He is Awesome in that which He does for which He is praised. Hashem does awesome acts and He is praiseworthy for them. He takes revenge upon those who violate His Will and with His revenge He saves His servants. In this way Hashem is awesome and greatly praised.

Since the kings of the nations are awesome and fearful in their corruption and sleaze, Moshe said that Hashem is awesome in those matters for which He is praised.

[This contrast between Hashem and the kings of the nations is based on Ramban’s understanding of מי כמוכה באלים – Who is like you among the mighty? He understands that the ‘mighty’ refer to the rulers of the nations.]

read as a section of the weekly Parshas Hashavua B'shalach, it is also read on the Seventh Day of Pesach, the day of the crossing of the Red Sea<sup>8</sup>.

Doesn't it seem out of place to write that He is נורא תהילות in a section of praises, especially when we associate the verse לך דומיה תהילה, 'for You, silence is praise', writing it in a mighty expression of verbal praise, the very content of Oz Yoshir?

Furthermore, the very verse in which the phrase נורא תהילות appears in one of great praises for the Ribbono Shel Olom. Is Moshe praising Hashem and, at the very same time, retracting his praise.

As we look at Oz Yoshir we notice a particular phenomenon.

*Oz Yoshir* is a mixture of praise to G-d that does not necessarily refer specifically to the context of splitting of the Yam Suf. Our verse of מי כמוכה is a superb example of this point. Are we limited in praising G-d's uniqueness and singularity just at the time of the splitting of the Red Sea? Aren't we able to recognize that uniqueness every moment of creation, of our existence?

Perhaps by looking at the makeup of *Oz Yoshir* we can begin to develop an approach.

The first Posuk of the *Shira* clearly integrates the praise given to the Ribbono Shel Olom with the miracles that He performed at the sea.

That verse reads (Perek 15/Posuk 1):

אָז יִשִּׁיר מֹשֶׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לַיהוָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ יֹאמַר אֲשִׁירָה לַיהוָה כִּי גָאָה  
גָּאָה סוֹס וּרְכָבוֹ רָמָה בַיָּם

Then Moshe and B'nei Yisroel will sing this song to Hashem and they said saying: 'I will sing to G-d because He is truly unique; the horse and its rider were tossed up in the sea.

Rashi illuminates this Posuk:

כי גאה גאה - דבר אחר בא הכפל לומר שעשה דבר שאי אפשר לבשר ודם לעשות, כשהוא נלחם בחבירו ומתגבר עליו מפילו מן הסוס וכאן סוס ורכבו רמה בים וכל שאי אפשר לעשות על ידי זולתו נופל בו לשון גאות,

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<sup>8</sup> See Rashi, Sh'mos Perek 14/Posuk 5.



*Because He is truly unique* – another explanation is that the double term – גאה גאה, refers to doing something which man is incapable of doing. When a person is at war with another and he overcomes him, he knocks him off his horse.

Here, the horse and its rider were cast up in the sea – that is something that anyone other than G-d could not do and so the term גאות is appropriate here<sup>9</sup>.

The following verses refer to the victory over Egypt and the Divine power that was victorious. Interspersed among those verses and other P'sukim that punctuate the context and focus of Divine praises<sup>10</sup>.

Those praises are followed by additional verses that describe the punishments that were meted out to the Egyptians. And then we come to the verse of our focus:

מי כמוכה.

Our Posuk of focus מי כמוכה, is then followed by a number of additional verses that describe the punishments that were meted out to the Egyptians and Hashem's graciousness to B'nei Yisroel and there is one more Posuk of praise. We read (Posuk 18):

ה' יְמַלֵּךְ לְעַלְמֵי וָעַד:

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<sup>9</sup> As is apparent, the term גאווה, conceit, shares its root with the term גאה. And with Rashi's explanation we can now understand what the term גאווה implies. One who possesses attitudes of conceit, or the person who is a בעל גאווה, seems himself as being exclusive. He sees his actions as being unique and that no one else can match him.

<sup>10</sup> An early verse in *Oz Yoshir* (Posuk 6) reads:

יְמִינְךָ ה' נְאֻדְרֵי בְכַח יְמִינְךָ ה' תִּרְעַץ אוֹיְבֵי:

Your right hand is empowered with strength; Your right hand crushes the enemy.

It is certainly relevant to discuss if this verse is more one of praise or that it is descriptive of the destruction that Hashem wrought with His mighty hand.

See Rashi there.

Hashem will rule forever and ever.

When we recite *Oz Yoshir* in davening, we say that Posuk twice. However, in the Torah it is not written twice, only once.

Presumably the reason for repeating the verse twice, even though it is written only once in the Torah, is that its recitation is to mark the end of the subject – in this case the *Shira*.

We have a similar example daily when we recite the five paragraphs of *Hallelu-yah*. The fifth and final *Hallelu-yah's* final verse reads (Tehillim 150/Posuk 6):

כָּל הַנְּשָׁמָה תְהַלֵּל יְיָ... הַלְלוּ יְיָ...

The entirety of the soul shall praise G-d, praise G-d<sup>11</sup>.

This Posuk appears only once in that Perek of Tehillim but in our davening we say it twice as a conclusion to Sefer Tehillim<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> See the discussion in Masseches Pesachim 117 a regarding the word הַלְלוּ יְיָ if it is one word, and thus just means 'praise' in a more poetic form, or it is two words and the second word spelled with a *yud* and a *heh* is G-d's Name and thus *Hallelu ya....h* means 'praise G-d'.

<sup>12</sup> There are other instances where P'sukim are repeated. Famously, in our recitation of Hallel, many verses that are written only once in Sefer Tehillim are repeated.

The repetition of those verses is an ancient *minhag* and is already mentioned in the Mishnah in Masseches Sukkah (Perek 3/Mishnah 11):

מְקוֹם שֶׁנֶּהְגוּ לְכַפּוֹל יְכַפּוֹל לְפִשּׁוּט יִפְשׁוּט

Places where the custom is to repeat verses [in Hallel] – they should repeat.  
Places where the custom is to recite them [only] once – they should recite them only once.

The reason for this uniqueness of Hallel is because of the various ways in which Hallel was said. In many communities the Shliach Tzibbur recited most of it with the congregation responding with specific refrains.

For a glimpse of the early *minhagim*, see Mishnah Torah LaRambam Hilchos Megillah and Chanukah, Perek 3, Halachos 11-14. It is far different than current Ashkenazic, whether *Nusach Ashkenaz* or *Nusach Sefard* than that of those who follow Ashkenazic practice.

Thus, it would be reasonable to hypothesize that our doubled recitation of ה' ימלוך when we recite *Oz Yashir* in our davening<sup>13</sup> is to establish that the Posuk of ה' ימלוך לעולם ועד is the conclusion of the Shira.

That most reasonable hypothesis is strengthened by the tune used by the *Ba'al Kriah* when reciting the Shira. Many of the P'sukim in the *Shira* have a special tune to them and the *Ba'al Kriah* recites the verse of ה' ימלוך לעולם ועד with that tune and concludes it with his voice rising to a crescendo<sup>14</sup>.

However, that most reasonable hypothesis is contradicted by the Torah itself. As we know, the *Shira* is written in a distinct style in the Torah. That style is called *לבינה על גבי לבינה*, meaning 'bricks on bricks' when there are breaks on each line and the empty space on one line is filled on the line below it, with the filled space on the line below finding an empty space on the line below it.

And when we see the *Shira* written in the Torah in this distinctive way, we see that the Posuk of ה' ימלוך לעולם ועד is not the conclusion of this aesthetic form. Rather it is the next Posuk which concludes the stylistic writing.

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There is one more example of repeated P'sukim and it is known by its acronym of יתק"ק. Those letters stand for the following books of *Nevi'im* and *Kesuvim*:

ישעיה, תרי עשר [מלאכי], קינה [איכה], קוהלת.

The final verse of each of those *Sefarim* is one of negativity and punishment, פורענות and therefore the *minhag* evolved that the penultimate verse in each of those *Sefarim*, 'positive' P'sukim, should be recited once again, following the truly final verse of the *Sefer*.

These are 'famous' repetitions because they are all public. The final Perek of *Sefer Yeshaya* is the *Haftarah* of *Shabbos Rosh Chodesh* and the final Perek of *Sefer Mal'achi* is the *Haftara* for *Shabbos HaGodol* and, of course, *Koheles* and *Eicha* are recited on *Sukkos* and *Tish'a B'av*, respectively.

Regarding repetitions of P'sukim or other parts of the davening about which there is no precedent, see *Igros Moshe Orach Chaim II, Siman 22*

<sup>13</sup> However, during *Kri'as HaTorah* it is said once only, of course.

<sup>14</sup> Posuk 20, there, which describes the Song of Miriam is also sung in the special tune but it is a section clearly distinct from the *Shira*.

That next Posuk (19) reads:

כִּי בָא סוֹס פְּרָעָה בְּרִכְבּוֹ וּבְפָרְשָׁיו בָּיָם וַיָּשָׁב ה' עֲלֵהֶם אֶת מֵי הַיָּם וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הִלְכוּ  
בַּיַבֵּשָׁה בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם :

Because the horse of Par'o with his chariot and his horsemen came in to the sea and Hashem returned the waters of the sea over them and B'nei Yisroel walked on dry land in the midst of the sea.

This verse, like most of the verses in the *Shira* describes G-d's salvation but is not specifically a Posuk of praise like the first verse of *Oz Yoshir* and *מי כמוכה* and *ה' ימלוך*.

It is clear that this final verse written in the unique style of the *Shira* is a part of it. Thus, that verse is recited as part of our daily recitation of *Oz Yoshir*<sup>15</sup>.

And thus, another question is raised. Wouldn't we have expected that the Song of *Oz Yoshir* to conclude on a high note of praise?

And, while we are thinking about what we would have thought the proper conclusion of *Oz Yoshir* should have been, why is the verse of *ה' ימלוך* its final praise?

I would have thought that the appropriate high note with which to conclude *Oz Yoshir* would have been its first verse: *מי כמוכה* or *כי גאה גאה*. Doesn't it appear that the praises that are found in those P'sukim are more complete, describe more G-d's wondrous works?

Why is it enough to have a semi-conclusion of the *Shira* with *only ה' ימלוך* and why isn't that Posuk the *Shira's* conclusion at the very least?

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<sup>15</sup> In fact, when one learns Shulchan Aruch and its commentaries, it is apparent that there were different practices regarding reciting the verse of *כי בא סוס פרעה* as part of *Oz Yoshir* because it seemed that *ה' ימלוך* was its conclusion.

Thus, there is a broad discussion on whether *כי בא סוס פרעה* should be part of our recitation of *Oz Yoshir*.

For example see Mishnah Brurah Siman 51/s'if koton 17 for an introduction to that discussion.

When we return to the beginning of this study of Parshas B'shalach and focus as well upon the phrase נורא תהילות we may discover a pathway to approach our questions.

The beginning of the Shira is expansive. With perfect accuracy Moshe Rabbenu says that Hashem is unequalled; such is the meaning of גאה גאה. Once I understand that Hashem is unequalled then I think that I am conferring upon Him all of the honor that is possible.

And that is the theme of the Posuk upon which we place our focus when Moshe rhetorically says:

מי כמוכה?

Who is comparable to You, because no one is comparable to you!

However, at the very moment that those words are uttered by Moshe Rabbenu Olov HaShalom, he takes a step back and says:

נורא תהילות

It is awesome and frightening to praise You, Hashem.

And what is so awesome and frightening? That is explained in the verse's final two words:

עושה פלא

You Hashem are a Doer of Wonders.

Multiple times in Tanach<sup>16</sup> Rashi explains that the word פלא, that we render as 'wonder', means that which is hidden and cannot be fathomed.

We read in Sefer Tehillim (Perek 139/Posuk 6):

פְּלִיאָה דַּעַת מִמֶּנִּי נִשְׁגָּבָה לֹא אוֹכֵל לָהּ:

Your knowledge is wondrous from me; I am incapable of it.

Rashi writes:

פְּלִיאָה דַּעַת וְגוֹמֵר - מְכוּסָה וְנִעְלָם מִמֶּנִּי

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<sup>16</sup> See for example D'vorim Perek 30/Posuk 11 and Shoftim Perek 13/Posuk 18.

*Wondrous knowledge etc.* – it is covered and invisible to me.

Moshe Rabbenu, in the very midst of praising the Ribbono Shel Olom pronounces that he is incapable of praising G-d and assessing His greatness. Despite his personal greatness, Moshe Rabbenu is finite and G-d is infinite and man cannot understand Him.

If man cannot understand G-d, what is he to do?

All that is left for man to say is that G-d is infinite and that is the meaning of what Moshe Rabbenu said:

ה' ימלוך לעולם ועד

G-d is forever and I, Moshe is limited and thus I must demonstrate that I must step back from my praise of Him.

When Moshe Rabbenu steps back from his praise of G-d, he is then expressing the praise that the Posuk requires:

לך דמיה תהלה א...ל"קים בציון ויך ישלם נדר:

To You silence is praise, G-d in Zion; to You the vow will be paid.

How does Moshe demonstrate that he is stepping back and relegating his praise of G-d to silent awe and veneration?

Moshe Rabbenu does so by omitting direct praise of HaKodosh Boruch Hu from the final verse of the Shira.

The Shira concludes with a verse that describes what Hashem did for Israel with the silent understanding that to fathom *all* that He did and its eternal meaning and to offer appropriate and proportional praise is truly a wondrous פלא, beyond our understanding and comprehension.

And perhaps that is the reason that *Anshei K'nesses HaGedolah* placed the two verses of *כמוכה מי* and *ה' ימלוך* in *ברכת הגאולה*, the blessing of Redemption that immediately precedes the Amida of Shacharis and is in close proximity to the Amida of Arvis.

When we stand for the *amida*, we are fulfilling what we learn in the Braisa of Ovov D'Rabi Noson (Perek 1/17):

דע לפני מי אתה עומד

Know before Whom you are standing!

Can we truly know before Whom we are standing? Dovid Hamelech taught us

פְּלִיאָה דַּעַת מִמֶּנִּי נִשְׁגְּבָה לֹא אוֹכֵל לָהּ:

Your knowledge is wondrous from me; I am incapable of it.

What are we to know? We are to know that He before Whom we are standing is greater than any of our expectations, aspirations and hopes.

He before Whom we are standing is able to do whatever He wishes and therefore as Rambam writes in his Peirush HaMishnah (Masseches Sanhedrin Perek 10/Mishnah 1):

והיסוד החמישי שהוא יתעלה הוא אשר ראוי לעבדו ולרוממו ולפרסם גדולתו...אלא כלפיו יתעלה יכונו המחשבות ויניחו כל מה שזולתו.

The fifth foundational principle [of faith] is that Hashem is the One to Whom it is proper to serve, to exalt, to bring fame to His greatness; only to Him should one direct his thoughts and ignore all that are beside Him.

Yes, we give expression to our praise of Him because such is a necessity. But when we approach Him to stand before Him we first say:

מִי כְּמִכָּה בְּאֵלִים ה' מִי כְּמִכָּה נְאֻדָּר בְּקִדְּשׁ נִרְאָה תְּהִלַּת עֲשֵׂה פְּלֵא:

Who is like You among the mighty, Hashem? Who is like You, the One Who is mighty in sanctity, Awesome One of praises, Doer of the wondrous.

We praise You in the words that we say to the best of our ability. We praise you in our silent admission of our utter inadequacy to come before You in prayer.

All we can truly say is

ה' ימלוך לעולם ועד

We stand humble and lowly before the Infinite.

Our next words are:

ברוך אתה ה' גאל ישראל

We praise You for the *Geulah Shleima* that You will bring us speedily in our days.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Pollock