

INDISPENSABLE SOUND IN THE ORCHESTRA

Parshas Beshalach

By Rabbi Menachem Rokeach

The highest level of closeness to Hashem was experienced by the Israelites following the Exodus as they miraculously crossed the Yam Suf, and burst out in song, "Oz Yashir... Zeh Kailee... this is my G-d, and I shall glorify Him..." (Shemos 15:2). The word "Zeh" expresses a nearness as if pointing a finger at someone in sight (see Rashi Shemos 30:13). That ecstatic encounter was experienced by **all** Israel, approximating the prophetic. "A simple maid-servant SAW divinity at the Yam Suf on a higher level than that of Yechezkel and other prophets" (Mechilta Beshalach 3:2).

The SHIRA concludes "Hashem shall reign for all eternity" (15:18) (according to most commentators; Even Ezra includes the following passage as well into the SHIRA). As is found in other portions of the Torah where the conclusion is linked to the beginning, here, too, there is a profound connection. It is the instruction to all future generations, unto eternity, that they have the capacity to become close to Hashem on the level "ZEH", if they meet certain conditions. Indeed Isaiah (25:9), proclaims that day of closeness to Hashem in the future, when we shall say "Behold **this** is our G-d, ZEH HASHEM..."

What are the conditions to reach that level? It is disclosed in the very passage: ZEH... This is my G-d, VEANVAIHU and I shall glorify Him. Aba Shaul in the Mechilta expounds the word VEANVAIHU to mean ANI VEHU, I and He. We must emulate Hashem; just as He is merciful, so must we be merciful; just as He is compassionate so must we be compassionate." This requires us to become extra sensitive to the distress of our brethren, to do our utmost to alleviate his pain, to help lift the downtrodden.

This condition is rather surprising, elevating the refined human touch to the spiritual heights of closeness to Hashem. However, this is the profundity of SHIRA, harmonious song. It means enabling the voices of those just helped to sing with us in harmony. It means total participation in Shira to Hashem, connecting the daily Shira (in conclusion of Psukai deZimra) with the Bracha of "Yotzei Ohr... and Creator of **all**".

It is a reflection of the “cello” in the large orchestra, played by a man dressed, like the others, in a tuxedo, black bowtie, etc. He looked nervous and focused on the conductor, though his part was a short sound, but in the right moment. At the conclusion of the concert he bowed to the applause of an enthusiastic audience. Finally the conductor himself bowed to an appreciative assemble, humbly asking all players to bow with him.

Moshe, himself a heavenly conductor, exclaims: I shall sing to Hashem for He is exalted above all exaltation” “Ki go’oh go’oh” (Rashi expounds “above all prompters”, as in the Kadish, L’ailo mikol birchose v’shiroso). Moshe in his humility expresses his human limitations in the SHira to the “ain sof” (above limits). Yet, in his attempt to reach the level of ZEH Kaily, seeks, and gets, the support of the ancestors’ participation. Reaching up to the “ZEH” the Shira adds (Hashem is) the G-d of my father and I will exalt Him”. Rashi expounds: it is an inheritance from the ancestors. Quoting the Mechilta, Rashi writes that herein the Jew acknowledges that the sanctity and self-elation he may gain is an inheritance from the ancestors. The fact that he paces the path established by the ancestors gives him the strength and stamina to reach up to that higher destiny. It also serves as a basic element in the harmonization of the SHIRA. It is the symphonic orchestra of generations beginning with the ancestors and perseveres into eternity.

During the Ten Days of Repentance, chapter 130 of Tehilim is recited, following the Shira (and Yishtabach). The Mishna Brura (54:4) wonders whyt it is not considered a Hefsek, interruption. One may suggest the focus is on the word Mimamakim, from the depth. The Shira expresses the human limits facing the Infinite.

At the Seder table, Pesach night, the ZEH focus is given Halachic attention. Whereas on Shabos and Yom Tov the meal is required to begin right after Kidush, “Le’alter” (Rema 273:b), on the Seder night this requisite is fulfilled by Karpas, postpointing the meal until after the recital of Hagadah. The reason: “ZEH”, “Ba’avur Zeh”. The recital of Hagadah must take place while the Matzah is still on the table before you.

