



RABBI SHALOM

ROSNER

Rav Kehilla, Nofei HaShemesh
Maggid Shiur, Daf Yomi, OU.org
Senior Ra"m, Kerem B'Yavneh



PESACH

Thoughts on Hallel

We recite Hallel throughout Pesach. Hallel is even included in the Haggada and recited at the Seder. We will share several ideas on Hallel (see also Shalom Rav Haggada, published by Koren).

A BREAK IN THE ACTION?

The *Hallel* that is recited at the Seder is a bit strange. First, we interrupt the recitation of *Hallel* and break for a meal. Second, we do not recite a *bracha* over *Hallel*.

Perhaps we can explain this phenomenon based on a suggestion by Rav Hai Gaon, quoted in the *Ran* at the end of *Massechet Pesachim*. He explains that this *Hallel* is classified as song, as *shira*, rather than as a reading, a *kriya*. What does Rav Hai Gaon mean by this?

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik explains that after spending two hours discussing the exile and Exodus, we should truly feel an outburst

of emotion, the desire for spontaneous praise.

Thus, if we were to recite a *beracha*, it would diminish the authenticity of our passion. We are praising God at this time because we want to, not because we are commanded. That is why we can interrupt our outpouring of praise, and that is also why we do not recite a blessing over this praise. To do so would dilute its personal authenticity and spontaneity.

SHIRA CHADASHA

When we recite *Hallel* at the Seder, we introduce it with the words, *venomar lefanav shira chadasha*, we will sing a new song before You. With that introduction, one would expect to use new and different words that are uttered only at the Seder. Yet we then reiterate the same *Hallel* that we recite on holidays and on Rosh Chodesh. So why do we refer to it as a new song, a *shira chadasha*?

Rabbi Lamm (*The Royal Table*) explains that in Judaism, we take the old and instill it with vigor and newness. The same religion that has been practiced for centuries does not go out of vogue. It crosses the chasm of time.

It is amazing how each year we once again read the same Torah, and yet we uncover new insights on each *parsha*. When we recite *Hallel* at the Seder, it may be the same words that have been sung over thousands of years, but it is not outdated. Its words are applicable today and express our appreciation to the Almighty. *Hallel* and Judaism maintain their freshness throughout the generations.

HALLELU ET HASHEM KOL GOYIM

A priest once asked Rav Chaim of Volozhin



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a question regarding a *pasuk* in *Tehillim* that we recite in *Hallel*. It says in *Tehillim* (117), *Hallelu et Hashem kol goyim, shabehuhu kol ha'umim*, all the nations of the world will praise God. Why? *Ki gavar aleinu hasdo*, because God showered us Jews with compassion. The priest did not comprehend why gentiles would praise God for showing compassion to the Jews.

Rav Chaim Volozhin explained to the priest that we are not cognizant of all the evil schemes that you plotted against us. Only you know exactly what you have planned for us, and Hashem acts to protect us. That is to say, you may plan to blow up a bridge and destroy a caravan of Jews, but Hashem causes your explosive device to jam, and the Jewish caravan is saved. Only you are aware of this compassionate act of the Almighty, and therefore, only you can praise Him for His *chesed* toward us.

Even in those generations where there appears to be tranquility, the other nations either plot unsuccessfully against us or seek to annihilate us not through physical means, but by doing all they can to degrade us spiritually. They recognize how God protects us even when it is not apparent to us.

ANA HASHEM KI ANI AVDECHA

A story is told that the Lev Simha, one of the Gerer Rebbeim, told his *chasidim* to have special *kavana* when reciting the words *ana Hashem* during *Hallel*. There was an argument among the *chasidim* as to whether the Rebbe was referring to *ana Hashem hoshia na*, or *ana Hashem hatzlicha na*. The Rebbe's son approached Rav Simha to resolve the debate among the *chasidim*.

The Rebbe responded that it was neither. He was referring to *ana Hashem ki ani avdecha*, please Hashem, for I am your **servant**. This

is the key to being a Jew: understanding that we are here to serve Hashem. Seder night in particular, we should state this verse with special concentration, special *kavana*, as we are proclaiming that we went from being servants of Pharaoh to being *avdei Hashem!*

ANA HASHEM HOSHIA NA

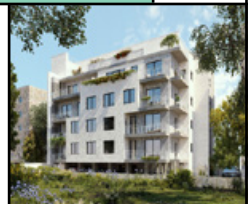
As we recite *Hallel* and feel like we are on top of the world, it seems a bit strange that we are also asking for a *yeshua*, for salvation. Similarly, on Sukkot, we perform *Hoshanot* at a time of tremendous celebration. We cry out *hoshia na!* It would seem more appropriate to conduct *Hoshanot* on Rosh Hashana or Yom Kippur, rather than on Sukkot which is *zman simchatenu*.

The Shemen Hatov explains that calling out to Hashem should not be limited to an *eit tzara*, to challenging times. We should turn to Hashem even at times of celebration, during *Hallel* and on Sukkot, expressing that we know Hashem is in charge, no matter what we are experiencing.

In addition, twice in Tanakh the statement *yehi shem Hashem mevorach* appears. Once in *Tehillim* (113:2) which is cited in *Hallel* and the other at the beginning of *Iyov* (1:21) when it states *Hashem natan veHashem lakach, yehi shem Hashem mevorach*. Thus, we recognize and turn to Hashem in times of difficulty, as well as in times of celebration. ■

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