

Then Moshe and Bnei Yisrael chose to sing this song to Hashem. (15:1)

Klal Yisrael praised Hashem for the miracle of *Krias Yam Suf*, the splitting of the Red Sea, through a *shirah*, a song of praise. This rare, sublime expression of gratitude to Hashem is unique in its form and meaning. We should address a pressing question regarding the *shirah*. *Krias Yam Suf* was not the first miracle that *Klal Yisrael* had experienced. Many miraculous occurrences had preceded it. There were the Ten Plagues that befell Egypt. Were they so "natural" that they paled in comparison to the splitting of the Red Sea? Why did *Klal Yisrael* wait so long to sing *shirah* to Hashem?

Horav Nissan Alpert, zl, distinguishes between the miracle of *Krias Yam Suf* and the other miracles. The miracles of the Ten Plagues and their accompanying miracles were all the handiwork of Hashem - with no accompanying participation from *Klal Yisrael*. Hashem performed, and *Klal Yisrael* were the fortunate recipients of His beneficence. *Krias Yam Suf* was a different phenomenon. There, *Klal Yisrael* engaged in prayer and *mesiras nefesh*, self-sacrifice, which earned them the splitting of the sea. They acted, and Hashem responded to their action. Their actions and belief in the Almighty sustained the miracle. This is the underlying motif behind the phrase, "*Zeh Keili v'anveihu*," "*This is my G-d, and I will beautify Him*." This is my G-d whom I have sanctified in the world. I am an active participant in the miracle.

Horav Alpert applies this idea to explain the noted Midrash that relates that the angels sought to sing *shirah*. Hashem told them, "My handiwork/creations are drowning in the sea, and you want to sing *shirah*!" Why did *Klal Yisrael* say *shirah*? If it was inappropriate for the angels, should it not also have been inappropriate for *Klal Yisrael*? According to the above thesis, we can understand the distinction. The angels did nothing to efficate the miracles - neither in Egypt nor at the Red Sea. The only difference between the miracles that occurred in Egypt and those which occurred at the Red Sea is in their definitiveness and finality - the Egyptians died.

Consequently, the *shirah* which the angels would have sung would have been in praise of Hashem for killing the Egyptians. That would be callous. *Klal Yisrael*, however, were expressing their gratitude at being able to withstand the trials of the Egyptian bondage. They were declaring their willingness to give up their lives for the sake of the Almighty.

With this in mind, we can also understand why we do not recite the complete *Hallel* on the seventh day of *Pesach*. In reality, the miracle of *Krias Yam Suf* should have occurred immediately when *Klal Yisrael* left Egypt. It was dependent only upon *Klal Yisrael's* withstanding the test of *emunah*, belief in the Almighty, when they "*believed in Hashem*" - "*va'yaaminu b'Hashem u'v'Moshe avdo*." For rising to the challenge of faith, one does not say *Hallel*; for everything is in the "hands of Heaven, except for *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven." We are given the opportunity to "make it" on our own. The miracles of the Exodus, on the other hand, were all clearly initiated by

Shomayim. Consequently, we recite *Hallel* in gratitude.

According to the above, we postulate that *Hallel* is said only when the miracle that is commemorated is one that was initiated and engendered entirely by Hashem, exclusive of *Klal Yisrael's* participation. This is why the miracle of *Chanukah*, which is commemorated through *Hallel*, only became worthy of *Hallel* after they found the flask of oil that had miraculously burnt for eight days. That portion of the miracle was initiated by Hashem. Their triumph in battle over the forces of evil, in which "rabim," "many," fell into the hands of "me'atim," "few", however, was a miracle initiated by *mesiras nefesh*, personal sacrifice, in battle and prayer. Thus, this miracle does not warrant *Hallel*. This thesis gives us the opportunity to analyze the concept of which miracles warrant the recitation of *Hallel* by *Klal Yisrael*.