

Yisro said, “Blessed is Hashem Who has rescued you from the hand of Egypt and from the hand of Pharaoh.” (18:10)

Yisro offers praise to Hashem for *Klal Yisrael*'s good fortune in being rescued from near destruction. The *Mechilta* views this statement as a critique of *Klal Yisrael*, saying that Yisro was the first to praise Hashem with the words, “*Baruch Hashem*.” We must endeavor to understand what was inappropriate about *Klal Yisrael*'s previous expressions of praise. Did the *Shirah* that they sang at the *Yam Suf* constitute a less appropriate praise to Hashem than the words, “*Baruch Hashem*”? *Shirah* is communal praise, employed when the congregation assembles to express gratitude to the Almighty in unison. *Baruch Hashem* is a personal form of gratitude which is expressed individually, exclusive of a group. *Klal Yisrael* was criticized because each member did not offer his individual gratitude. Yisro was the first one who expressed his personal gratitude.

Why did the Jews wait to express their gratitude collectively? Did something impede their individual *hodoah*, expression of gratitude? **Horav Shimon Schwab, zl**, explains that the nature of people is to thank Hashem for His favor -- after it has been completed. Once a person has completed his task, been healed from illness, succeeded in any given endeavor, completed his trip, he expresses *hodoah* to Hashem. One does not stop in middle of a trip to offer praise to Hashem. Consequently, Yisro was able to praise Hashem, because, as far as he was concerned, the trip had ended -- he had arrived. *Klal Yisrael*, on the other hand, were still en route. Their trip would end when they received the *Torah*. That was the purpose of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, exodus from Egypt. While this logic seems to be a rationale for *Klal Yisrael*'s behavior, it does not justify it. They should have expressed their individual feelings of gratitude after each miracle.

Horav Schwab suggests a second reason for *Klal Yisrael*'s inability to offer individual expressions of gratitude. The Jews felt that the individual as a part of the entity of *Klal Yisrael* should not serve Hashem personally, but rather collectively with the *klal*, congregation. They were not to separate themselves and do their “own thing”; they were part of the entirety of the *klal* and should adhere to the service of the *klal*. Yisro taught them that each individual has his own obligation to praise and thank Hashem for his personal triumphs and successes. Every Jew must offer thanks to Hashem for his individual favor and for that of the entire *klal*. *Chazal* critiqued them for not realizing this important lesson on their own.