

This is the account of the descendants of Adam. (5:1)

The *Midrash* (cited by *Yalkut Shemoni Bereishis* 5:41) relates that Hashem passed all forthcoming generations before Adam *HaRishon*. When Adam saw that David *Hamelech* had been allotted only three hours of life, he asked, "Hashem, is there no remedy for this? (Is there not some way to lengthen David's life?)" Hashem replied, "This is, indeed, what I had in mind (accept the three hours without question). Adam then asked, "How many years of life have I been allotted?" Hashem replied, "One thousand years." Adam asked, "May I give a gift?" Hashem said, "Yes." Adam then bequeathed seventy years of his originally allotted lifespan to David. Adam brought a parchment and wrote down the terms of his gift on it, and it was later signed by Hashem, the *Malach*, Angel M-T-A-T. and Adam. Adam declared, "Master of the World, great will be David's kingdom and the songs that will be rendered during this seventy year (gifted) period that David will live and make music for You."

Chazal are teaching us that the flow of life bequeathed by Adam to David resulted in the existence of the Davidic dynasty and seventy years of song of praise to Hashem. In other words, David *Hamelech's* life was one long, uninterrupted song of adoration to Hashem.

In referring to David *Hamelech's* songs of praise, the *Midrash* uses the word *zemiros*, which is one of the ten forms of song. I find this interesting, especially considering that David's seventy years of life of song was a gift from Adam to Hashem. *Zemer* is different from *shir*. While both mean song, *zimrah* is derived from the word *z'mor*, which means to cut off, to prune. When we sing *zemiros* (on *Shabbos*), we cut off our material selves, allowing our *neshamos*, souls, the freedom to unite with Hashem (*Shlah Hakadosh*). *Horav Shimshon Pincus, zl*, explains that there are two types of song – *shirah* and *zimrah*. When we sing *shirah*, we sing Hashem's praise through a narrative, such as *Shiras HaYam* and *Shiras Devorah* – two songs which relate to various miracles. *Zemirah*, however, is an expression of emotion: when a person wishes to express his gratitude to Hashem; when he is motivated to declare His greatness; when he is filled with overwhelming joy. In such situations, he is so overcome with emotion that words escape him. Instead, he bursts forth into song, and he sings without words. *Shabbos Kodesh* is a day of *zimrah*. It is a spiritual day that is beyond our comprehension. It is *mei'ein Olam Habba*, a taste/a form of the World to Come. What the soul feels and the heart senses is impossible to express with words. Thus, we utilize the sanctity of the *Shabbos* day to express ourselves through *zemiros*.

Zimrah demands an emotional investment through which the singer engages in the song. When one sings *Shabbos zemiros* he is to engage much more than his mind; it calls forth his heart, his passions, his aspirations, as well. *Chazal* (*Sotah* 35a) teach that David *Hamelech* was criticized, his honor diminished, because he referred to the Torah as a *zemer*. He says in *Sefer Tehillim* 119:54), *Zemiros hayu li chukecha*, "Your statutes were as songs to me." David's punishment was that he erred in following a simple *halachah* which demands that when transporting the *Aron HaKodesh*, it should be carried upon the shoulders of the *Leviim*. Instead, David allowed Uzza to transport it in a wagon. This was a dishonor to the Ark. It was this improper mode of transport that

caused the oxen pulling the wagon to shake the Ark. The shaking caused Uzza to stretch out his hand in an attempt to prevent the Ark from tipping over – not realizing that the Ark carries its carriers and does not require human support to right it. Had David done things properly, Uzza would not have died. The culpability of Uzza's death (so to speak) rests on David. All of this occurred because David referred to the Torah as a song. While the Torah itself is called a *shirah*, song, because of its perfection in mirroring the whole of human experience, it is not a *zimrah*. The Torah is an expression of intellect, not emotion. It is timeless; its narrative encompasses past, present and future. *Shirah* is a much more all-encompassing term than *zimrah*. *Shirah* is the song of the mind; *zimrah* is the song of the heart, the language of the soul.

The actions of David *Hamelech* may be explained in the following manner. David used the word *chukecha*, Your statutes, by design. He was not referring to the Torah *per se*, but rather, to life's *chukim*. A statute is a *mitzvah* whose rationale defies human cognition. We know that Hashem has a reason for *Parah Adumah*, the Red Cow, but we do not know what it is. Therefore, we observe this *mitzvah* as an *afkaata d'Malkah*, decree of the King/Hashem. We ask no questions. We expect no explanations. We do as we are told. There are also *chukim* in life, challenge, adversity, experiences that are overwhelming, which cause us to wonder, to question. Some are unable to get over the obstacle, which results in impaired faith. David *Hamelech* declared, "Your *chukim* in life are for me a source of *zemer*, a song expressing my overwhelming emotion of gratitude and love." David was not reducing the Torah. He was elevating the process of confronting adversity.

As the *Naim Zemiros Yisrael*, Sweet Singer of *Yisrael*, David demonstrated his ability to traverse through challenge and adversity, to overcome the debilitating pain that takes its toll on people. He perceived inspiration and song in challenge. Only good comes from Hashem. Our inability to see this, our obstinacy in not accepting this verity, does not alter its essence and purpose. This is the role of the faith which we must develop. David *Hamelech's* faith in Hashem was so perfect, so wholesome, that it engendered an expression of song. Furthermore, he was acutely aware that he owed an enormous debt of gratitude to Adam *HaRishon* for his gift of life. Thus, David's songs were the product of his abiding love for – and faith in – Hashem, and his overwhelming sense of gratitude to Adam. Is it any wonder that *Sefer Tehillim* has become for us the staple of prayer and enduring faith to the Almighty?