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The Nature of הלל on the Night of the Seder

**P**art of the מצוה of סיפור יציאת מצרים on פסח includes the הלל which we recite at the end of מגיד. *Sefer HaChinuch* (מצוה כא) tells us that the מצוה of סיפור includes both “לספר בענין” and “להלל ולשבח לשם יתברך על כל הנסים” and “שעשה לנו.” This הלל seems to have a number of unusual features. First of all, we say this הלל sitting down, despite the fact that the *Shulchan Aruch* rules clearly (תכב:ז) that in general “מצות קריאת הלל מעומד.” Secondly, we split the הלל in half, reciting the first two paragraphs before שלחן עורך, and the rest afterwards. This is again in direct contrast with the *Shulchan Aruch* (תכב:ד), which forbids any הפסק during הלל. Finally, the הלל in *Pesachim* (דף כו: בדפי הרי”ף) asks why we have no explicit ברכה on this הלל, in contradistinction with every other הלל recited during the year. How, then, are we to understand the message of this הלל?

The ר”ן, quoting ר”ה הא”י גאון, says, “אין מברכין על הלל שבלילי פסחים לגמור את ההלל, שאין אנו קוראין אותו בתורת קוראין אלא בתורת אומר שירה.” On the night of *Pesach*, we do not have a חיוב to read הלל, but rather to sing הלל. Rav Soloveitchik (see הקדמת ספר ראשית כחי) explains this opinion of ר”ה הא”י גאון as follows: By all קריאות הלל during the year, there is a bona fide חיוב to recite הלל either as a function of קדושת היום or as a זכר לנס. That is why there are formal rules and regulations regarding standing, הפסק, etc. On הלל, however, our הלל is a זכר לנס—now, at the end of הלל בשעת נס—we have just a moment ago experienced מצרים ourselves. We have experienced the initial שעבוד and are now culminating with the גאולה. We should naturally and spontaneously burst into song and praise for הקב”ה. This is not a הלל which the רבנן instructed us to say, a מצוה קריאת הלל. Rather, it is a spontaneous outpouring of emotions and הודאה to ה’. Reciting a ברכה in this context would formalize and even minimize this הלל. This is also why הלל of הסדר can be said while sitting down and is also split into two segments. It is a rulebreaking הלל, comprised of words that flow naturally, not part of a formal recital. (See an additional point in עמק ברכה, p. 78.)

II.

We mentioned above that the הלל of הסדר is split into two parts, the first two paragraphs recited before שלחן עורך and the rest recited after ברכת המזון. Why do we specifically divide the הלל right after the

paragraph beginning “בצאת ישראל”? The בוש suggests (סי’ תפ) that only the first two paragraphs discuss יציאת מצרים and therefore only they are appropriate to מגיד (see the terminology of זא:ומצה). Rav Soloveitchik, though, offers a different answer. He notes that throughout the year, a Jew’s praise of Hashem must always be coupled with בקשה, supplication, and תפילה, prayer. Throughout the year, we praise, of course, but at the same time we are aware that we are still in גלות and still not living peacefully in our homeland as a unified Jewish nation. We still have much to yearn for. Because it is always tempered with our declaration of the present reality, our praise is never pure.

הלל of הלל, though, is the exception. “On the *Seder* night, Jews have only one duty, namely, to glorify, extol, and praise G-d. [We] have no other duty. There is no room for petition and *Tefillah*. We must forget for a while that we are human beings, and that after יציאת מצרים, we went through numerous historical experiences, many of which were not very pleasant... We must forget that we offered millions of sacrifices. We must forget all of the blood and martyrdom. At this juncture, we must ignore all that and exclusively offer praise to G-d. These [first two] chapters of הלל are the only sections that consist exclusively of hymnal praise, and are devoid of any motif of petition. They are, therefore, the only chapters recited at this juncture” (עניני פסח on vol. 8 נוראות הרב).

When we resume הלל after our שלחן עורך, approaching the conclusion of our *Seder*, the הלל reverts back to the type of הלל recited during the rest of the year. We now focus not just on the present, but on the future as well. Now we pour our אליהו כוס של אליהו. During מגיד, this would have been inappropriate. Now we sing כל חי, focusing on the time in the future when all living creatures will praise ה’. This may also be why this second part of הלל is prefaced with “שפוך זמנתך אל הגוים אשר לא ידעוך, Pour out Your wrath upon the nations that have not known You.” We are declaring that the הלל we are about to say is very different from the הלל we said earlier at the end of מגיד. This is a הלל of praise and yearning, of gratitude and hope, of appreciation and prayer. This is a הלל which comes to a close with all of us saying in unison, “בירושלים.”

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