"שירת הים"

עד. אחר ויברך דוד, תיקנו לומר ויושע ה' (שמות יד, ל-לא), ושירת הים (שמות טו, א-יט), מ"אָז יָשִׁיר מֹשֶׁה", ועד, "וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָלְכוּ בַיַּבָּשָׁה בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם". והוא זכר ליציאת מצרים. [אבודרהם]

עה. שירת הים צריך לאומרה בכוונה גדולה. [כה"ח ס"ק מ]. ויאמר שירת הים בשמחה ובנעימה, כאילו עומד בתוך הים בשעת הנס, ובזה תהיה מסוגלת לכפרת עונותיו. [בא"ח ויגש הי"ד. וע"א משנ"ב ס"ק יז, כה"ח ס"ק

Day 49

Az Yashir

The miracle at the sea

74) After completing the passage of *Vayvarekh David*, we continue with the two verses of *Vayosha Hashem*, following them with *Az Yashir* (*Shemot* 15:1-19) as a reminder of the exodus from Egypt.[216]

Spiritual value of *Az yashir*

75) It is extremely important to concentrate fully on the meaning of the words of *Az yashir* while reciting it. One should recite it with joy and with a pleasant melody as if one was standing at the sea's edge and witnessing the miracle. If someone recites it in this manner, he can achieve atonement for all his sins.[217] This is one

216. Rabbenu David Abudarham wrote that we recite *Az yashir* each morning to remember the exodus from Egypt. The *Zohar* (*Beshalaḥ* 54b) states that the song of *Az yashir* is meant to immortalize the memory of the miracle of the sea's splitting. Those who sing this song properly during their lifetimes will have the privilege of having it in the World to Come, and to sing its praise during the era of the Mashi'aḥ. This is the meaning of the term לֶאֱמֹר – to say it. Our ancestors sang it at that time, and they sang it later upon entering the land of Yisrael, and they continued when they were forced into exile. They will continue to sing it when they will be redeemed in the future, and even in the World to Come.

The *Or Haḥayim* (comment to *Shemot* 15:1) pointed out, in support of this Midrash, that the verse contains the term *yashir*, which means "will sing" in the future tense. He suggested that this is the reason that this song was incorporated into our daily prayers.

Where to say it

Rambam (*Hilkhot Tefilla* 7:13) wrote that in some communities they recite *Az yashir* immediately *after* the blessing of *Yishtabaḥ*. Rambam did not list *Az yashir* as part of the prayers at all when he described the text of our prayers. He wrote that the congregation recites the blessing of *Yishtabaḥ* immediately after the passage of *Vayvarekh David*.

Most other *Rishonim*, however, give instructions to recite *Az yashir* before the blessing of *Yishtabaḥ*. This includes Rav Amram Ga'on, Rashi, *Sefer Ha'eshkol*, the *Roke'aḥ*, and the *Arba'a Turim*. The Arizal also gave these instructions, and this has become the universal custom.

217. The *Midrash Shoḥar Tov* (18) states that if someone sings a song to Hashem after experiencing a miracle, he is ensured that he has been cleansed of all his sins and has a clean slate as if he was just created. This is what happened to the people of Yisrael when they sang the song of *Az yashir*, and this is the meaning of the verse (*Shemot* 15:22) "וַיַּסַּע מֹשֶׁה אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִיַּם סוּף – Moshe moved the people of Yisrael away from the Reed Sea." He extracted the people from the sins that they had committed at the edge of the sea.

The *Solet Belula* (51:4) cited the Midrash teaching that whoever recites this song daily with joy and takes care to pronounce the words correctly, using the liturgical notes of the Torah as if he had just experienced Hashem taking him from Egypt and through the sea, is forgiven all his sins. Harav ḤIDA (*Tzipporen Shamir* 2:24) instructed us to imagine standing at the sea's edge after having marched through the dry seabed and watching the Egyptians drowning in the sea, noting that in this way one can achieve atonement for all one's sins. See also the *Kaf Haḥayim* Sofer (51:42) and the *Mishna Berura* (51:17). The *Sefer Ḥaredim* (Unit *Teshuva* chapter 7) states: "There is no doubt that this song's power is renewed every day, potentially matching the power it possessed that first time on the sea's bank."

מא). והוא אחת מעשר סגולות שמכפרים עוונותיו של אדם בלי סיגוף ועינוי, שיקרא "ויושע" בשמחה ובניגון, כמו שאמרוהו ישראל בקריעת ים סוף. [כה"ח פאלאג'י סי' יב אות כד]

עו. "מִי כָמֹכָה בָּאֵלִם ה', מִי כָּמֹכָה נֶאְדָּר בַּקֹּדֶשׁ". "מִי כָּמֹכָה" תנינא הכ"ף דגושה. אבל "מִי כָמֹכָה" קמא הכ"ף רפויה. וכן "כָּל עַצְמוֹתַי תֹּאמַרְנָה ה' מִי כָמוֹךָ", הכף רפויה. [באה"ח ויגש הי"ד, משנ"ב ס"ק יז, כה"ח ס"ק לח]

of the ten special ways to achieve atonement without subjecting oneself to self-affliction and prolonged fasting.

Details in pronunciation

76) When reciting the verse of מִי כָמֹכָה נֶאְדָּר בַּקֹּדֶשׁ, מִי כָמֹכָה בָּאֵלִם ה', one must take care to pronounce the words correctly. In the first מִי כָּמֹכָה, the letter *khaf* does not have a *dagesh* and it is pronounced with the sound of *kh*. In the second מִי כָמֹכָה, the letter *kaf* has a *dagesh*, and it is pronounced with the sound of *k*. In the verse (Tehillim 35:10) כָּל עַצְמוֹתַי תֹּאמַרְנָה ה' מִי כָמוֹךָ, the letter *khaf* has no *dagesh* and is pronounced with the sound of *kh*.[218]

With liturgical notes

As noted above, the *Solet Belula* encouraged people to chant *Az yashir* with the liturgical notes as if reading it from the Torah scroll. The *Halakha Berura* concurred with this, but in fact in most communities this is not practiced. The Syrian congregations abroad are a notable exception, for on Shabbat and *Yom Tov* the congregation sings *Az yashir* in unison with the liturgical notes. Even in those congregations, this is not the practice on weekdays, probably because people are in a hurry.

The *Hesed La'alafim* and the *Ben Ish Hai* wrote that we should recite it "with joy and a pleasant melody," and this probably means to chant it melodiously with the liturgical notes.

The *Derashot Rabbenu Yehoshua ibn Shu'ib* (a disciple of the Rashb"a) instructs people to recite *Az yashir* each day with enthusiasm as if this is the very first time they are singing it. The common custom in the Land of Yisrael is to chant it with a tune that does not at all resemble the liturgical notes.

With joy

The *Hesed La'alafim* (51:12) wrote that although not everyone can control his feelings all the time and be happy, everyone should try to inspire himself to feel inner joy. One way to accomplish this is to contemplate how Hashem performed miracles for our ancestors, and how He saves us every day from those who would annihilate us. If someone would only pay attention to the words of *Az yashir*, he would find cause to rejoice in every word. It is important, however, not to do this for one's own benefit to achieve atonement for one's sins, but to do it completely for Hashem's honor and satisfaction.

In a mourner's home

Based on the above, some *Aharonim* ruled that *Az yashir* should not be recited in a mourner's home, where joy should not be displayed. See the *Yafe Lalev* (51:16). Maran the Rishon Letziyon (*Hazon Ovadya Avelut* Vol. III, page 5) testified that the custom in our time is to recite *Az yashir* as usual even in a mourner's home.

While standing

The *Iyun Yaakov* (comment to *Sanhedrin* 92b) noted that when the prophet Yehezkel resurrected the dry bones in the valley, those people stood up and sang a song of thanksgiving. He suggested that this Midrash teaches us that whenever we wish to sing to Hashem we are supposed to stand up. The *Yafe Lalev* (51:15) added that the *Zohar* seems to support this position. Several *Aharonim* ruled, based on these sources, that one must stand up while reciting *Az yashir*, and the *Piske Teshuvot* (51:18) commented that this is the common custom among Ashkenazic Jews. The common custom of Sefardic Jews, however, is to remain seated while reciting it.

218. According to the rules of Hebrew grammar, when a word that ends with any of the letters *alef he vav* or *yod* is followed by a word beginning with the letter *bet*, *gimel*, *dalet*, *kaf*, *pe*, or *tav*, that beginning letter is usually pronounced without a *dagesh* [depending on the liturgical notes]. This verse is an exception to that rule, and in the second מִי כָמוֹךָ the letter *kaf* is pronounced with a *dagesh*. The *Orhot Hayim*, cited in the *Bet Yosef*, explained that it

"עַם זוּ גָּאָלְתָּ", הגימל דגושה. "יִדְמוּ כָּאָבֶן", הכף דגושה. [שם]
"בְּמַיִם אַדִּירִים". יש להפסיק בין "במים", ובין "אדירים", שהאדירים קאי על מצרים. [שם ובכה"ח ס"ק ט"ל]

עז. כופלים "ה' יִמְלֹךְ לְעֹלָם וָעֶד", כדי להשלים שמונה עשרה שמות שם ה'. [ראה סידור רש"י ואבודרהם ועוד, ומ"ש בב"י]. ועוד כדי להודיע שגמרנו השירה. [מהרי"ל מנהגים תפלה אות ט, לבוש ס"ט]

ואחר כך אומרים התרגום של פסוק זה: "ה' מלכותיה קאים לעלם ולעלמי עלמיא". [באו"ח פי ויגש הי"ד, משנ"ב ס"ק יז, כה"ח ס"ק לז], ומסיימים בפסוק (שמות טו, יט) "כִּי בָא סוּס פַּרְעֹה..." שגם פרשה זו מעיקר שירה. [משנ"ב שם, וע"ע כה"ח שם]

In the words עַם זוּ גָּאָלְתָּ, the letter *gimel* has a *dagesh* and it is pronounced with the sound of *ga*. In the words יִדְמוּ כָּאָבֶן, the letter *kaf* has a *dagesh*, and so the word is pronounced *ka'avven*.[219] When reciting the words בְּמַיִם אַדִּירִים, one should pause between the two words, since the correct meaning of the verse is, "The mighty [Egyptians] sank in the water," and not, "They sank in mighty waters."[220]

Completing the song

77) We recite the verse of ה' יִמְלֹךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד two times so that Hashem's Name is recited eighteen times in the song. The repetition also signifies that this is the final verse of the song.

After that, we recite the Aramaic translation of this verse. This is followed by the Torah's one-verse summary of the miracle of the sea: כִּי בָא סוּס פַּרְעֹה..., and it is connected to the song preceding it.

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is important to pronounce the word this way so that it does not sound like we are saying, "Hashem Micha," as if Micha is a god. Micha, according to the Midrash, is the person who was responsible for the creation of the Golden Calf. Although the verse of כָּל עַצְמוֹתַי תֹּאמַרְנָה ה' מִי כָמוֹךָ has the same combination, it is totally unrelated to the generation that left Egypt and went through the sea.

219. The *Orḥot Ḥayim*, cited in the *Bet Yosef*, explained that although the word *ga'alta* follows the letter *vav*, we still pronounce the letter *gimel* with a *dagesh* since if we would not it might sound like we are saying גָּעַלְתָּ, that Hashem is disgusted with the nation of Yisrael, Heaven forbid. [Since the *gimel* has a *dagesh*, it is easier to distinguish the second letter as an *alef* and not an *ayin*.] Likewise, we pronounce the letter *kaf* in the word *ka'avven* with a *dagesh* although it follows the letter *vav*. Otherwise it might sound like we are saying *yiddemucha aven* – a stone will silence Hashem, Heaven forbid.

220. These instructions are given by the *Ben Ish Ḥai*, the *Mishna Berura*, and the *Kaf Haḥayim* Sofer. They explained that the liturgical note on the word *bemayim* denotes a pause, suggesting that the word *adirim* is not describing the waters, but refers to the Egyptians. Harav Meir Mazuz (*Sinsan Laya'ir* page 35), however, pointed out that in one of Rabbenu Yehuda Halevi's poems, he clearly states that *adirim* refers to the waters, and this is supported by the *Mekhilta*. Rav Mazuz then demonstrated that the *Rishonim* disputed how to interpret this verse. The *Halakha Berura* likewise cited both these interpretations. According to the interpretation that the word *adirim* describes the waters, it is unnecessary to pause between the two words.