

HALLEL (II) MIZMOR 114 - B'TZET YISRA'EL MIMITZRAYIM

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לע"נ אמי מורתי מרים בת יצחק ורבקה הכ"מ

PSALM 114 - A UNIQUE PSALM

The second chapter of Hallel is unique in several ways. It is unique within the context of Hallel, in that it is the only chapter that makes any overt reference to any historic event. Its iconoclastic nature is further borne out by the dispute regarding its recital at the "Shirah-Hallel" at the Seder (see **V'shinantam** 1/25 §II.B.4). According to Beit Shamai, it is to be said along with the completion of Hallel on the fourth cup; whereas Beit Hillel rule (and such is the Halakhah) that it joins the opening chapter as said over the second cup as part of "Maggid".

Within the scope of Sefer T'hilim, Chapter 114 stands alone, as well. Although the Exodus is mentioned in a number of psalms (generally the historiosophies, such as ps. 78 and ps. 105), this is the only psalm that is exclusively dedicated to Yetziat Mitzrayim. It seems to be the reason that this series of six psalms is known as "Hallel Mitzrayim" (see last week's shiur). Furthermore, it may be suggested that without this psalm, the association with the Exodus that we are able to extract from the remaining chapters is only possible due to the overt Exodus-theme in this psalm. We will elaborate on this point in the next shiur.

We raised several points in the first shiur that we will pick up in the first half of this shiur, after which we will analyze the psalm in detail, attending both to its structure and literary devices that infuse it with meaning beyond the simple impact of the words. There are several overall difficulties that obstruct a proper understanding of the psalm - we will attend to them and suggest several approaches that not only resolve these difficulties but enhance our appreciation - and the impact - of this beautiful piece of sanctified poetry.

II

AUTHORSHIP REVISITED: SA'ADIAH'S POSITION

In the first installment in this series, I noted that "common wisdom" holds David to be the sole author of T'hilim - indeed, even those psalms which are apparently attributed to other composers (such as the 12 Korahide psalms, 42-49; 84-85; 87-88), will inevitably be credited to David's pen. As I adumbrated last week, there is only one opinion among "major" traditional commentators that ascribes authorship of T'hilim exclusively to David - the opinion presented by Sa'adiah Ga'on. As noted, this approach contradicts the one presented in the Gemara (BT Bava Batra 14b-15a) which

credits David with the redaction of T'hillim, adding his own psalms to those composed by ten contributors who preceded him (Adam, Malkizedek, Abraham, Mosheh, Heiman, Yedutun, Asaph, and the three sons of Korah).

Sa'adiah presented two introductions to his commentary on T'hillim - one short, the other much longer. In his short introduction, he presents his basic approach to T'hillim: It is a prophetic book (more on this later), in which the prophet David writes in a wide range of rhetoric styles, all intended to one purpose. That purpose is to instruct us in the proper ethic. Since people respond to various types of speech, the prophet places "the words of the Master in the mouth of the servant", such that petition, praise, cries of despair etc., which make up the bulk of the text of T'hillim, are all instructive. After listing the ten rhetorical devices/styles used to instruct man - and providing examples of each from T'nakh - Sa'adiah states:

We must understand the prophet's words in this book, such as "have mercy upon me", as [spoken by Hashem] - "I will have mercy upon My servant" - and [understand] "heed my prayer" as "I will hear your prayer"...and similarly everything in this book. All is the word of Hashem and nothing is human discourse, as the faithful transmitters of our tradition have attested.

One of the most far-reaching implications of Sa'adiah's formula is to remove the 150 psalms from the "world of prayer" - if the text is prophetic and instructive, it is not prayer and should not be read (or used) as such. We will revisit this issue below.

As Uriel Simon points out in his "Four Approaches to the Book of Psalms" (SUNY Press, 1991), the premise of the unity of the text (single authorship) is nowhere supported by Sa'adiah; his claim that Hakhmei haMesorah have attested to the whole work being the word of God is likewise never backed up in his introduction. Simon surmises that the former assumption must be based on the common practice in Rabbinic literature to preface citations from T'hillim with the customary "as it says" without distinguishing one author from another.

A full treatment of Sa'adiah's approach is well beyond the scope of this forum - the interested reader is directed to Simon's work - but it is critical that we sketch a few of the components of his appreciation of T'hillim.

The first problem within the text of T'hillim that presents a challenge to Sa'adiah is the multiplicity of superscriptions that ascribe authorship to others (as noted above). "T'fillah l'Mosheh" (ps. 90), "Mizmor l'Asaph" (e.g. ps. 50) etc. all direct us away from Davidic composition. Sa'adiah responds to this in his long introduction. He maintains that the superscriptions have nothing to do with composition, rather with direction. That particular psalm was composed by David (prophetically) to be performed in the Mikdash by that particular family of Levites. In this manner, he interprets "T'fillah l'Mosheh" as composed by David for the descendants of Mosheh, all Levites, to perform.

The second problem, again inherent in the text, is the very liturgical nature of the psalms. In spite of

his explanation (in the short introduction) that this is merely a rhetorical tool, it still does not fully explain why the text would be presented in such a "misleading" fashion.

He responds to this by noting that beside the instructive value of the text, it was used in the Mikdash - albeit ritually, rather than liturgically. Each psalm was composed for performance in the Mikdash, and each had five conditions attached to it:

1) ,

Personal

- each psalm belongs only to that Levitical family to whom it was assigned; 2)

Melodic

- the specific tune composed to accompany that psalm must be used whenever it is recited/performed (here Sa'adiah goes on at length, utilizing contemporary musical theory to explain six different performance instructions); 3)

Instrumental

- each psalm has certain instruments assigned to its performance and they must be used;
4) - each psalm was to be recited on a specific day (the only explicit direction of this sort given in a psalm is ps. 92 - "Mizmor Shir l'Yom haShabbat"); 5)

Local

- each psalm was to be recited in a specific place within the Mikdash.

Noting how far Sa'adiah's basic approach to T'hilim strayed from traditional Rabbinic thinking - his theory never found any adherents in later Rabbinic commentators - one would have to wonder what motivated him to interpret T'hilim in such a difficult manner. Not only did he deviate from tradition in his assessment, he also made his own task much more taxing. He had to defend his position not only against traditionalists (and others, as we will see forthwith) but also against anyone reading the text in a straightforward manner. The many references to other authors, the overwhelming prayerful style of the rhetoric all militate against his approach.

There are two avenues open to understanding the underlying motivation for his approach; one textual and the other polemic.

THE TEXTUAL MOTIVE:

The text of T'hilim is part and parcel of T'nakh and holds an honored place within the canon. Since the T'nakh is generally understood as "a record of D'var Hashem", the inclusion of T'hilim becomes problematic. Perhaps Sa'adiah is bothered by the inclusion of human words,

supplications, complaints, exultations and laments in the Book of Books. Sa'adiah resolves this quandry (and we will see a very different response in the next section), by arguing that we err in our premise. The text differs from Yeshayah and Yirmiyah - overtly the words of the Ribbono Shel Olam - in rhetorical style only. This also helps us pre-empt the inevitable challenge to the Rabbinic position outlined in the Gemara which ascribes redaction of this compendium of prayers to David - that reference and responses to events taking place after David's death (notably "by the waters of Babylon" ps. 137) are hard to fathom. Sa'adiah's assignation of the text to prophecy neatly sidesteps the problem; once we accept the text as prophetic in nature, chronological sequence ceases to be an obstacle to authorship.

In addition, there are several textual clues that can support Sa'adiah. The lamed prefix which is included in all of the superscriptions (e.g. "Mizmor lDavid" etc.), commonly interpreted as indicating authorship (i.e. "a song of David"), cannot be consistently interpreted this way, following the Davidic redaction suggested in Bava Batra. Psalms 72 and 127 include superscriptions with "liSh'lomoh" - and Sh'lomoh was not included as one of the ten elders who composed T'hilim. Therefore, we must - at least on occasion - read the lamed prefix as "on behalf of" rather than "composed by". Once we've allowed for that possibility (again, a necessity according to the BT), there is nothing to keep us from interpreting every non-Davidic lamed in the same way - which works quite well for Sa'adiah's approach.

THE POLEMIC MOTIVE:

Sa'adiah was a great - and trailblazing - commentator, philosopher, grammarian, poet etc., he was also an accomplished polemicist. The chief group that felt the sharp edge of his pen was the Karaite sect, which held powerful influence in the Jewish communities in Israel and Mesopotamia. Sa'adiah's chief philosophical work - "The Choicest of Beliefs and Opinions", was devoted, in part, to deflecting the Karaite attacks on the Rabbinate. He even composed a philological work - "Shiv'im Milim Bod'dot", detailing the 70 instances of hapax legomenon (unmatched words in the T'nakh), in order to demonstrate that without the Mesorah, it would be impossible to properly interpret the Written Word.

One of the bones of contention among the Karaites was the Rabbinic composition of prayer, variously ascribed to Ezra and his Great Assembly, Shim'on haPakuli and other Sages. The Karaites protested the use of "man-made" prayers to approach God; they insisted that only those prayers that bear the Divine stamp of approval - i.e. included in T'nakh - may be used for prayer. As such, they would only pray from the T'nakh, chiefly using the book of T'hilim for purposes of prayer.

As part of the ongoing war with the Karaites, Sa'adiah challenged their position on prayer. There is certainly room to consider that Sa'adiah may have taken a more radical position than he personally maintained and that he did so as part of this polemic. By excising "prayer" from T'nakh (such that every passage that seems to be a prayer is really prophecy and is instruction to man on how to

relate to haKadosh Barukh Hu), he took out the rug from beneath the legs of their argument. There is certainly precedent for maintaining that a position taken by Sa'adiah ought to be adjudged as directed towards a contemporary crisis - see Rambam's "Iggeret Teiman" and his comments on Sa'adiah's Messianic calculations.

III

RAMBAM AND "RUACH HAKODESH"

As mentioned above, one of the chief difficulties inherent in the inclusion of T'hillim in T'nakh (a problem which encompasses far more than just T'hillim; Eikhah, whole sections of N'vi'im and even prayers found in the Torah fall under this rubric) is the very nature of such texts. How can we resolve man's words as worthy of occupying the same space as God's? Let us phrase this with greater rigor. We assume that the T'nakh represents God's words as given to the greatest of the N'vi'im (Mosheh) and then through other prophets throughout the history until the beginning of the second commonwealth (5th century BCE). What are we to make of anthro-po-generated words - in prayer or in lament - as belonging in the T'nakh?

Truth to tell, there are words found in the Torah itself that are not only non-Divine in source, they are even heretical. When Pharaoh declares: "I do not know Hashem" (Sh'mot 5:2), we can hardly ascribe Divinity to these terrible words. What accords this phrase its sanctity? Not the foreign heretical source - rather the Divine command given to Mosheh (somewhere between Sinai and Arvot Mo'av) to commit these words to writing. It is axiomatic - and the central theme of Bamidbar 12 - that any prophecy given to Mosheh is qualitatively superior and of a different essence than that given to all other prophets. This explains the division between Torah and the rest of the T'nakh ("Nach") - the Torah represents a clearer, more distilled and straightforward prophecy.

What are we to make of the further division into N'vi'im and K'tuvim? Why is Sh'mu'el in N'vi'im and Ruth in K'tuvim?

Rambam, in his philosophic magnum opus Moreh Nevukhim (II 45) answers this by way of establishing gradations of levels of Divine inspiration. Rambam maintains that there are eleven levels of N'vu'ah - each more intense than the earlier one.

The most sublime level of prophecy is that of Mosheh Rabbenu; the prophecy he received represented the greatest intensity of the Divine ever experienced by a human. The first level "consists in the fact that an individual receives a Divine help that moves and activates him to a great, righteous and important action - such as the deliverance of a community of virtuous people from a community of wicked people...The individual in question finds in himself something that moves and incites him to the action, and that is called the spirit of Hashem. And it is said of the individual who was in such a state that the spirit of Hashem came upon him...this is the grade of all the Shof'tim of Israel..." (Rambam ascribes this level to Mosheh when he slayed the Egyptian who was oppressing the Hebrew slave, among others).

The second level "...consists in the fact that an individual finds that a certain thing has descended upon him and that another force has come upon him and has made him speak; so that he talks in wise sayings, in words of praise, in useful admonitory dicta, or concerning governmental or divine matters - and all this while he is awake and his senses function as usual. Such an individual is said to speak **b'Ruach haKodesh**. It is through this kind of **Ruach haKodesh** that David composed T'hilim..."

For Rambam, the division into N'vi'im and K'tuvim is one of degree - the human authors of N'vi'im were committing to writing the result of an ecstatic prophetic experience, one in which they lost all faculties and sense of self (as described in the "higher levels" in that same chapter). The authors of K'tuvim, on the other hand, were composing on much more of a "human" level; they were using their own creative powers ("a certain thing has descended upon him") and were "pushed" beyond what they could possibly accomplish on their own by a "force [which] has come upon him..."

As with any other explanation of the division of T'nakh, this one has its own problems. As Abravanel points out (in his introduction to his commentary on Daniel), how could the same Navi (Sh'mu'el) compose his eponymous work on the "Navi" level, earning its place among the N'vi'im, while composing Ruth that is "only" included in K'tuvim?

This question can be answered as follows: Even Mosheh operated, as Rambam himself points out, on various levels along the "N'vu'ah-continuum". Certainly his conversations with family members etc. were not suffused with the same level of Divine inspiration as the Mitzvot written in the Torah. Indeed, even Mosheh prayed - and that prayer did not "make it" into the Torah, but was considered to be "only" composed "b'Ruach HaKodesh", which is why it was included in T'hilim (ch. 90).

In sum, Rambam's approach to the "T'hilim problem" is quite simple: although both Torah (on a higher level) and N'vi'im (on a lesser level) represent God's directive to man, K'tuvim include those compositions that are essentially "human-driven" but which, by virtue of Divine assistance, are considered Divine and worthy of inclusion in T'nakh. Hence, one would have to argue that as Sh'mu'el was composing Ruth (or Yirmiyah authoring Eikhah), he was overtaken by the "Divine Spirit" (even though he had, at other times, experienced much more intense levels of Divine inspiration) which allowed him to compose that which he could not ever compose on his own.

T'hilim is a compilation of prayers - running the gamut from praise to lament - composed by various individuals during the period when prophecy was operating in the world and compiled (according to the Bavli, by David). It is included in T'nakh not due solely to its elegance, beauty or truth - rather on account of its composition being enabled by the suffusion of Ruach haKodesh.

Although the topics covered in this (2nd part of our) introduction to T'hilim do not directly impact upon our study of psalm 114, they form a necessary preface to our study of these six psalms so that we might better appreciate the method utilized here.

IV

PSALM 114: THE TEXT

1. When Yisra'el went from Egypt, the house of Ya'akov from a people of foreign language;
2. Yehudah was His sanctuary, and Yisra'el His dominion.
3. The sea saw it, and fled; the Jordan was driven back.
4. The mountains skipped like rams, and the hills like lambs.
5. What ails you, O sea, that you flee? O Jordan, that you are driven back?
6. O mountains, that you skip like rams? And you O hills, like lambs?
7. Tremble, earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Ya'akov;
8. Who turned the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a fountain of waters.

V

STRUCTURE OF THE PSALM

As was the case in ch. 113, there aren't a lot of difficulties with the meaning of the words in this Mizmor. We will reexamine one or two words later on, but, for the most part, the words are accessible and unambiguous. What they mean and to what they refer - that is a far different question and ambiguities abound.

Before breaking the psalm down into its stanzas, there is an overall question that must be posed at this point. What is this psalm celebrating? In other words, what event is the focus of the praise here - and what is the purpose of this praise?

At first blush, these questions seem a bit sophomoric. The common assumption is that the event in question is the Exodus in general and the splitting of the Reed Sea in particular - and the praise is directed towards God Who redeemed His people. We will soon see that this "conventional" understanding has little to recommend it in the text; we will have to reevaluate our assessment of this chapter of Hallel.

Where would we properly identify the stanzas of the psalm?

Unlike many chapters of T'hillim, where we first identify the greater sections and then break each one into sub-sections (as we will do in the next shiur), we will be better served here by moving from the smaller division to the greater.

This chapter clearly breaks into four even stanzas, each containing two verses, each of which contains two stichs. Its very symmetry makes the division quite clear. Furthermore, each stich stands in parallel to its partner, and each verse stands in a clearly evolving relationship with its fellow. Thus:

When Yisra'el left Mitzrayim The House of Ya'akov(=Yisra'el) from a foreign nation (=Mitzrayim)
(at that point): Yehudah was His sanctuary, and Yisra'el (=Yehudah) His dominion (=sanctuary)

We may easily title the four stanzas as such:

A (vv. 1-2): Setting B (vv. 3-4) Reaction of Nature C (vv. 5-6) Questioning Nature about this reaction D

(vv. 7-8) Nature's Response

The difficulty begins when we try to align these four into two larger groups - what are the two halves of the psalm?

At this point, it is prudent to remind ourselves that we can only arrive at a proper appreciation of the psalm, the emotion it is intended to imbue in the reader and its meaning, by assessing its poetic structure.

We might propose that the first two stanzas form the first half: "The Event", and the last two form the second half: "The Dialogue". We could argue, with equal persuasion, that the first and last stanzas form one unit - both refer to God and B'nei Yisra'el, while the middle stanzas are self-referential in their words, phrases and content.

VI

STRAUSS' ANALYSIS

Aryeh Leib Strauss, a German Jew who joined the nascent "Teshuvah" movement among young German Jews at the beginning of the 20th century and made Aliyah as a result, received his training and professorship in the field of literature. When the Aliyat haNo'ar project was founded in the mid-30's (Aliyat haNo'ar was a program initiated by the Palestinian Jewish community to encourage the German Jews to send their children to Eretz Yisrael to study. The thinking was that if, as the Eretz Yisrael community correctly perceived, the end was nigh for German Jewry, at least their children would be saved. Tens of thousands of Jews were rescued from the impending Shoah as a result), a rush for qualified instructors led the Jewish Agency to seek master teachers at the Hebrew University. Although he had never taught T'nakh, Professor Strauss was enlisted to teach T'hilim to the future teachers of this life-saving program. (Nehama Leibowitz z"l was also an instructor in that program and later became a colleague and admirer of Professor Strauss and his work). He relied upon the only tools that he had at his behest and utilized the tools of literary analysis to explain and teach T'hilim. He later published a booklet - **Al Sh'loshah Pirkei T'hilim**, in which his analysis of three chapters of T'hilim was sketched out in brief, somewhat recondite form. One of those chapters is our Mizmor.

In his analysis, Strauss points out that the relationship between the four stanzas is a combination of both possibilities raised above.

There are two perspectives from which our psalm may be viewed - and both coexist harmoniously.

In one aspect, the psalm describes God's power as manifested in history (stanza A) and as found in nature (stanzas B & C). The psalm concludes by returning to the first theme.

In the other aspect, the psalm tells of the powerful reaction of nature to God's redemption (stanzas A & B), followed by a meditative portion in the form of question and answer.

Note that according to either aspect, the psalm returns to the opening idea - God's redemption of His people - at the end of the psalm; this return is, however, more of an ascending spiral than a simple circle. This is where the beauty of Strauss' analysis begins.

The beginning of the psalm refers to God without making mention of His Name - "Yehudah was His sanctuary..." [This awkward phrasing is likely what led the Greek translators in Alexandria (the Septuagint) to add the word "Halleluyah" to the beginning of the psalm - there should at least be a mention of God to which "His sanctuary" refers.] At the end of the psalm, He is referred to by Name - **Adon Huli Aretz** and **E-lo'ah Ya'akov**. Furthermore, the opening stanza presents the Exodus as Yisra'el-generated - **B'tzet Yisra'el miMitz'rayim**, whereas the end of the psalm attributes the powerful reaction of nature to God's appearance and actions.

There is a type of inversion going on within the psalm. As God's presence becomes more manifest and overt, the terms of excitement in nature become more compact. The "mountains" become "hills", the "sea" becomes "Jordan" and "rams" turn to "sheep". The verbs, as well, go through this process of diminution: "fled" becomes "ran backward".

Strauss points to a more intricate process of contraction in the "gapping" of the parallels. (Gapping is the process whereby a term is introduced in one half of the verse and is tacitly "carried over" to or from the second half), as follows: (The words in brackets are not explicitly in the text, but are understood from the previous phrase):

5. What ails you, O sea, that you flee? [What ails you] O Jordan, [that] you are driven back? 6.
[What ails you] O mountains, [that] you skip like rams? [What ails you] O hills, [that you skip] like lambs?

By the end of this phrase, three words **g'va'ot kiv'nei tzo'n** represent seven: **mah lakhem g'va'ot, ki tirk'dun kiv'nei tzo'n**.

This process of intensification through contraction continues through the end of the psalm: The rock of 8a becomes a flint stone in 8b, and the "pool of water" in 8a shrinks to a "spring" in 8b.

SUMMARY OF STRAUSS' ANALYSIS

Strauss, using tools with which he was comfortable and familiar, brought a fresh and insightful understanding to this psalm. Seeing it as a paeon to God for the Exodus, it focuses on the impact of God's Presence on the natural world, with ever-growing intensity as His Name becomes more "known". The seemingly "human" event chronicled in the first stanza provokes a violent reaction in the natural world that, after investigation, demonstrates that that event was nothing less than God's salvation.

VII

WEISS' ANALYSIS

Professor Meir Weiss z"l, who did much to enhance our study of T'nakh over the past half century (he taught at Bar-Ilan University), wrote several articles about this psalm. To represent his work here would take two issues by itself - but there are several points he makes which are so choice that they must be included.

Weiss also points out the odd phrasing at the beginning, which seems to paint the Exodus as bereft of the Divine. He further points to the odd choice of a parallel for Mitzrayim - **Am Lo'ez** - why note the foreign language, as opposed to the many harsher descriptions of Egypt and its people?

One larger question that he poses addresses the descriptions in the psalm. As noted above, we conventionally think of this psalm as referring to the events of the Exodus - the sea fleeing is a poetic take on the Splitting of the Sea. That is, however, difficult on several counts. First of all, what is the role of the Jordan here - unless we choose to extend the Exodus until the entry into the Land. That is, itself, not so outlandish - but what is the role of the "dancing mountains" here? What are these mountains and where do we ever read of their dancing like rams in Sh'mot? Furthermore, the description of the sea is itself troubling; describing the sea as "fleeing" is not merely a poetic way of describing the splitting of the sea - it is an utter inversion of the description in Sh'mot. Part of the demonstration effected at Yam Suf was God's total mastery over nature - the sea split because God commanded it do so; the description in our passage leaves us with the impression that the sea (and Jordan), acting as an independent agent, chose to flee. It is as if there is another event, one unrelated to the miracle at Yam Suf, which is the object of praise here.

As we have noted in many essays, the text often utilizes phrases and unusual words which form an association with earlier narratives, laws, prophecies etc. so as to draw two events, personalities etc. together. This is done as often for purposes of contrast (as in the case of Megillat Esther and the many word-associations which connect Achashverosh's palace to the Mishkan) as for analogy.

Weiss suggests that the beginning of our psalm is built upon the opening dialogue at Sinai between God and Mosheh: (Sh'mot 19:1-6)

- 1. In the third month, when the B'nei Yisra'el were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai.*
- 2. For they had departed from Rephidim, and had come to the desert of Sinai, and had camped in the wilderness; and there Yisra'el camped before the mount.*
- 3. And Moses went up to God, and Hashem called to him from the mountain, saying, Thus shall you say to the house of Ya'akov, and tell the people of Yisra'el;*
- 4. You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I carried you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself.*
- 5. Now therefore, if you will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own treasure among all peoples; for all the earth is Mine;*
- 6. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall*

Speak to the B'nei Yisra'el.

Now we can revisit our psalm:

v. 1:

Just as that chapter opens with **tze't B'nei Yisra'el** - so does our psalm. The reference to **Beit Ya'akov** draws us to the command in v. 3

The "foreign tongue" is again part of this association. In v. 4, God describes taking the people out **al Kanfei Nesharim** - a later verse in the Torah describes the swooping of a **Nesher** (although translated differently there):

Hashem shall bring a nation against you from far, from the end of the earth, which will swoop down like the vulture; a nation whose tongue you shall not understand; (D'varim 28:49)

The psalmist (remember Rambam's description) ties in the "foreign tongue" from D'varim to the **Nesher**, using it as a poetic description of the people from whom we were redeemed.

v. 2:

Yehudah and Yisra'el are synonymous here; but looking back at Sh'mot 19:6 reminds us that we were chosen for a two-fold task: To be a kingdom (dominion) and a holy people (sanctuary). Both terms - **Kodsho** and **Mam'sh'lotav** parallel these two tasks.

Why were these terms "matched" the way they were? Yehudah carries within it the Name of God, (only a daled is added), such that **Kodsho** fits "Yehudah" much better. Yisra'el, on the other hand, was the name given to Ya'akov because he held dominion over the angel and over man.

vv. 3-4:

The natural phenomena here are not paralleled in any account of either the Exodus or the Stand at Sinai. (Lightning, thunder, smoke etc. - but no "mountains dancing" or "seas fleeing"). We do, however, find these phenomena in descriptions in Yeshayah and T'hilim as associated with the appearance of God (note especially psalm 29). All of these creatures are acting against their natural assignment - rivers are to flow downstream and hills are to remain stable. In this manner, the second stanza parallels the first - the first describes a change of place, the second a change of state.

vv. 5-6:

The gradual reduction of words used here is an expression of the psalmist's amazement at what he now sees - all boundaries of time and space erased, he stands before the dancing mountains and fleeing sea and is stunned at their behavior.

v. 7:

I noted above that there would be one or two words that needed clarification. **Huli** here has been translated as a command - "tremble" - given to the earth. This is hard to accept within the context of the verse. Weiss suggests, instead, that we read **huli** as related to **Meholel**; to wit: Creator of the

World. In other words, the dancing and fleeing is happening because of an appearance of the Creator, Whose presence inspires this amazing reaction throughout creation.

v. 8:

Note how beautifully the psalmist takes the dancing mountains (made of rock) and turns them to pools of water and springs (the sea/Jordan). The two components of creation that lost their bearings and left their moorings at the sight of the Almighty not only melt at his Presence, they also turn one into the other at His word.

This psalm is not specifically about the Exodus; it is rather, an expression of amazement that the selection of Yisra'el, as defined in Sh'mot 19:1-6, has caused such an upheaval in nature. It is an expression of the idea that "the choice of Yisra'el was a revolution in Creation, or, more exactly, a new Creation." (Weiss, The Bible In Its Own Image, p. 374).

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