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# TEHILLIM 135: HALLEL HA-GADOL, PART 1

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CONGREGATION KINS  
פרשת ויקהל-פקודי תשפ"ג

(1) TEHILLIM 135

- (1) Halleluyah. Praise the name of Hashem; give praise, O you servants of Hashem,
- (2) you that stand in the house of Hashem, in the courts of the house of our God.
- (3) Praise Hashem, for Hashem is good; sing praises to His name, for it is pleasant.
- (4) For Hashem has chosen Jacob to Himself, and Israel for His own treasure.
- (5) For I know that Hashem is great, and that our Master is above all gods.
- (6) Whatever Hashem pleased, that has He done, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.
- (7) he causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth. He makes lightning for the rain. He brings forth the wind out of His treasuries.
- (8) He smote the first-born of Egypt, both of man and beast.
- (9) He sent signs and wonders into your midst, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants.
- (10) He smote many nations, and slew mighty kings:
- (11) Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan;
- (12) and gave their land for a heritage, a heritage to Israel His people.
- (13) Hashem, Your name endures forever; your memorial, Hashem, throughout all generations.
- (14) For Hashem will judge His people, and have compassion for His servants.
- (15) The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.
- (16) They have mouths, but they do not speak; they have eyes, but they do not see.
- (17) They have ears, but they do not hear. There is no breath in their mouths.
- (18) Those that make them shall be like them; yes, every one that trusts in them.
- (19) O house of Israel, bless Hashem. O house of Aaron, bless Hashem.
- (20) O house of Levi, bless Hashem. You that fear Hashem, bless you Hashem.
- (21) Blessed be Hashem out of Zion, who dwells at Jerusalem. Halleluyah.

- (א) הַלְלוּ יְהוָה הַלְלוּ אֶת שְׁם יְיָ הַלְלוּ עַבְדֵי יְיָ.
- (ב) שְׁעַמְדִים בְּבַיִת יְיָ בְּחִצְרוֹת בַּיִת אֱלֹהֵינוּ.
- (ג) הַלְלוּ יְהוָה כִּי טוֹב יְיָ וַיִּמְרוּ לְשִׁמּוֹ כִּי נְעִים.
- (ד) כִּי יַעֲקֹב בָּחַר לוֹ יְהוָה יִשְׂרָאֵל לְסִגְלָתוֹ.
- (ה) כִּי אֲנִי יָדַעְתִּי כִּי גָדוֹל יְיָ וְאֲדַגִּינוּ מִכָּל אֱלֹהִים.
- (ו) כֹּל אֲשֶׁר חָפֵץ יְיָ עָשָׂה בְּשָׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ בַּיָּמִים וְכָל תְּהוֹמוֹת.
- (ז) מַעַלָּה נְשָׂאִים מִקִּצֵּה הָאָרֶץ בְּרָקִים לְמִטֵּר עָשָׂה מוֹצֵא רוּחַ מְאֹדְרוֹתָיו.
- (ח) שָׁהַקָּה בְּכוֹרֵי מִצְרַיִם מֵאָדָם עַד בְּהֵמָה.
- (ט) שָׁלַח אוֹתוֹת וּמִפְתִּים בְּתוֹכְכִי מִצְרַיִם בְּפִרְעֹה וּבְכָל עַבְדָּיו.
- (י) שָׁהַקָּה גּוֹיִם רַבִּים וְהָרַג מְלָכִים עֲצוּמִים.
- (יא) לְסִיחּוֹן מֶלֶךְ הָאֲמֹרִי וְלַעֲוֹג מֶלֶךְ הַבָּשָׁן וְלִכְלֵל מַמְלָכוֹת כְּנָעַן.
- (יב) וְנָתַן אֶרֶץ נַחֲלָה נַחֲלָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל עַמּוֹ.
- (יג) יְיָ שָׁמַךְ לַעֲוֹלָם יְיָ וְנִכְרָךְ לְדֹר וָדֹר.
- (יד) כִּי יַדִּין יְיָ עַמּוֹ וְעַל עַבְדָּיו יִתְנַחֵם.
- (טו) עֲצָבֵי הַגּוֹיִם כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵי אָדָם.
- (טז) פֶּה לָהֶם וְלֹא יִדְבְּרוּ עֵינַיִם לָהֶם וְלֹא יִרְאוּ.
- (יז) אָזְנוֹת לָהֶם וְלֹא יִאֲזִינוּ אֶף אֵין יֵשׁ רוּחַ בְּפִיהֶם.
- (יח) כְּמוֹתֵם יִהְיוּ עֲשִׂיהֶם כֹּל אֲשֶׁר בִּטְחָם בָּהֶם.
- (יט) בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרַכּוּ אֶת יְיָ בַּיִת אַהֲרֹן בְּרַכּוּ אֶת יְיָ.
- (כ) בַּיִת הַלְלוּ בְּרַכּוּ אֶת יְיָ יִרְאֵי יְיָ בְּרַכּוּ אֶת יְיָ.
- (כא) בְּרוּךְ יְיָ מִצִּיּוֹן שְׁכֵן יְרוּשָׁלַם הַלְלוּ יְהוָה.

## HALLEL HA-GADOL

### (2) PESACHIM 118A

מהיכן הלל הגדול? רבי יהודה אומר: מ"הודו" עד "נהרות בבל". ורבי יוחנן אומר: מ"שיר המעלות" עד "נהרות בבל". רב אהא בר יעקב אומר: מ"כי יעקב בחר לו יה" עד "נהרות בבל". ולמה נקרא שמו הלל הגדול? אומר רבי יוחנן: מפני שהקדוש ברוך הוא יושב ברומו של עולם ומחלק מזונות לכל ברייה.

From where does the **great hallel** begin and where does it end? **Rabbi Yehuda says: From "Give thanks"** (Psalms 136:1) **until "The rivers of Babylon"** (Psalms 137:1). **And Rabbi Yoḥanan says: From "A song of ascents"** (Psalms 134:1) **until "The rivers of Babylon."** **Rav Aḥa bar Ya'akov said: From "For the Lord has chosen Jacob for Himself"** (Psalms 135:4) **until "The rivers of Babylon."** The Gemara asks: **And why is this section called the great hallel?** **Rabbi Yoḥanan said: Because this passage states that the Holy One, Blessed be He, sits in the heights of the universe and dispenses food to every creature.**

### (3) YERUSHALMI PESACHIM 5:7

איזו היא הלל הגדולה. רבי פרנך בשם רבי חנינה. הודו לאלהי האלקים. אומר רבי יוחנן. ובלבד משעמדים בבית יי. למה באילין תרמין פרשתא. רבי זעורא רבי אבהו בשם רבי שמואל בר נחמן. מפני שירידת גשמים כלולה בהן. על דעתיה דרבי יוחנן ניקא. דכתיב מעלה נשאים מקצה הארץ. וקרבי חנינה מה. בגין דכתיב גותן לחם לכל-בשר כי לעולם חסדו:

What is the Great Hallel? Rebbi Pamakh in the name of Rebbi Ḥaninah; "Give thanks to Almighty God." Rebbi Joḥanan said, on condition of "who stand in the Eternal's house." Why these two chapters? Because rainfall is included in them. In the opinion of Rebbi Joḥanan it is understandable, for it is written, "He brings up vapors from the ends of the earth." How is it for Rebbi Ḥaninah? Because it is written, "He gives nourishment to all flesh; Truly, His kindness is forever."

## COMMENTARY

### (4) MALBIM TEHILLIM 135:1

במזמור הזה יאמר, כי ההנהגה הקבועה המסודרת היא לבדה תספיק שנכיר על ידה מציאות ה' ויכלתו וחכמתו והשגחתו יתברך, עד שמה שישנה לפעמים את הטבע הקבועה אל נס ופלא, הנקראים אותות ומופתים, אינו מן ההכרח לישראל עם קרובו, רק היה צריך בעבור המצריים שגם הם יכירו כח ה' ועוזו, או שיעשה לצורך גאולת ישראל ותשועתם

In this *mizmor* it says that the fixed, organized behavior is enough for us to recognize the existence of Hashem and His abilities, wisdom, and providence, such that the occasional changes to nature in miracles and wonders, called *otot* and *moftim* are clearly not for Israel, His close nation, but rather were necessary for the Egyptians to be able to recognize Hashem's strength and might, or in order to facilitated the redemption and salvation of Israel.

## (5) R' HIRSCH TEHILLIM 135

V. 6 – From this recognition of God several tenets from the realm of nature and history are pointed out. First of all, the basic tenet of any knowledge of God, namely, that the Lord is the free Creator of the Universe. All that is in heaven, on earth and in the sea came into existence through His חפץ, through His will, which is free, unhindered and subject to nothing else. Therefore, even now all things are subject to His almighty will for the goals which He has set.

V. 7 – And even as it was His will that created the world, so His will is still present today in the course of the world's historical development and in phenomena of nature...

V. 8 – And even as we behold the rule of God in nature, so we also see Him in history as He shapes the destinies of the nations. In history, even as in nature, His rule is directed toward a specific goal that is attained by way of a specific series of historic events, much like the separate stages in which He sends rain down to earth (see Verse 7). Israel's liberation was the goal which was brought about through a planned series of events culminating in the death of the first-born of Egypt, an event of which warning had been given prior to its actual occurrence...

## BIBLICAL PARALLELS

### (6) SHEMOT 18:10-11

(י) ויאמר יתרו ברוך י"י אשר הציל אתכם מיד מצרים ומיד פרעה אשר הציל את העם מתחת יד מצרים. (יא) עתה ידעתי כי גדול י"י מקל האלהים כי בדבר אשר נדו עליהם.

(10) Yitro said, "Blessed is Hashem Who has saved you from the hand of Egypt and from the hand of Paroh, who has saved the people from under the hand of Egypt. (11) Now I know that Hashem is greater than all the gods, for the matter in which they schemed against them."

### (7) SHEMOT 3:15

ויאמר עוד אלהים אל משה פה תאמר אל בני ישראל י"י אלהי אבותיכם אלהי אברהם אלהי יצחק ואלהי יעקב שלחני אליכם זה שמי לעלם וזה זכרי לדור דר.

(15) God said further to Moshe, "So shall you say to the Children of Israel, 'Hashem, the God of your fathers, the God of Avraham, the God of Yitzchak, and the God of Yaakov, sent me to you. This is My name forever; this is My title for all generations.'

### (8) DEVARIM 32:36

(לו) כי ידיו י"י עמו ועל עבדיו יתנחם כי יראה כי אָזלת יד ואָפס עצור וְעָזוב. (לז) ואמר אי אלהימו צור חסיו בו. (לח) אשר חלב זבחימו יאכלו ישתו יין נסיכם קומו וינעזרכם יהי עליכם סתרה.

(36) For Hashem will judge his people, and have compassion on his servants, when He sees that their power is gone, there is none remaining, shut up or left at large. (37) He will say, "Where are their gods, the rock in which they took refuge, (38) which ate the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offering? Let them rise up and help you! Let them be your protection.

(9) YIRMIYAHU 51:11-19

(יא) הברו החצים מלאו השלטים העיר י"י את רוח מלכי מדי כי על בבל מזמתו להשחיתה כי נקמת י"י היא נקמת היקלו. (יב) אל חומת בבל שאו נס החזיקו המשמר הקימו שמרים הכינו הארבים כי גם זמם י"י גם עשה את אשר דבר אל ישבי בבל. (יג) [שכנת] (שכנת) על מים רבים רבת אוצרת בא קצף אמת בצעף. (יד) גשבע י"י צבאות בנפשו כי אם מלאתיך אדם פילק וענו עליך הידד. (טו) עשה ארץ בכחו מכין תבל בהקמתו ובתבניתו נטה שמים. (טז) לקול תתו המון מים בשמים ויעל נשאים מקצה ארץ ברקים למטר עשה ויוצא רוח מאצרתיו. (יז) נבער כל אדם מדעת הביש כל צרף מפסל כי שקר נסכו ולא רוח בם. (יח) הבל המה מעשה תעתעים בעת פקדתם יאבדו. (יט) לא כאלה חלק יעקוב כי יוצר הפל הוא ושפט נחלתו י"י צבאות שמו.

(11) "Make sharp the arrows; hold firm the shields. Hashem has stirred up the spirit of the kings of the Medes; because His purpose is against Babylon, to destroy it. For it is the vengeance of Hashem, the vengeance of His temple. (12) Set up a standard against the walls of Babylon, make the watch strong, set the watchmen, prepare the ambushes; for Hashem has both purposed and done that which He spoke concerning the inhabitants of Babylon." (13) "You who dwell on many waters, abundant in treasures, your end is come, the measure of your covetousness. (14) Hashem of Hosts has sworn by himself, 'Surely I will fill you with men, as with the canker worm; and they shall lift up a shout against you.' (15) He has made the earth by His power. He has established the world by His wisdom, and by His understanding has He stretched out the heavens. (16) When He utters his voice, there is a tumult of waters in the heavens, and He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth. He makes lightning for the rain, and brings forth the wind out of His treasuries. (17) Every man has become brutish and is without knowledge; every goldsmith is disappointed by his image; for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them. (18) They are vanity, a work of delusion; in the time of their visitation they shall perish. (19) The portion of Jacob is not like these. For He is the former of all things; and Israel is the tribe of His inheritance. Hashem of Hosts is His name."

(10) BEREISHIT 9:26, 24:27

(כו) ויאמר ברוך י"י אלהי שם ויהי כנען עבד למו.

(26) He said, "Blessed is Hashem, the God of Shem. May Canaan be a servant to them.

(כז) ויאמר ברוך י"י אלהי אדני אברהם אשר לא עזב חסדו ונאמתו מעם אדני אנכי בדרך נחני י"י בית אחי אדני.

(27) He said, "Blessed is Hashem, the god of my master Avraham, who did not forsake his steadfast kindness from my master. As for me, Hashem has led me on the path to the house of my master's relatives.

## FURTHER READING

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### (11) R' HIRSCH TEHILLIM 135

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V. 1 – It is evident from Verse 14 that this Psalm speaks of a time when the Jewish nation will have forfeited its independence and, about to succumb to the abuses of the nations, it will longingly await the judgment of the Lord and a change in its bitter lot. Psalm 135 is written with that time in view; it is intended to remind Israel of the greatness of God's rule, and does so by means of a contemplation of the phenomena of nature and of the facts of history (Verses 5-14), and, in contrast, by a glimpse of the utter insignificance of the powers which the nations adore. Those who would worship such false gods cannot long endure (Verses 15-18). In this connection, Israel is then urged to devote itself to the service of the Lord in accordance with the Law that has gone forth from Zion (Verses 19-21).

v. 14 – And even if times will come when the freedom and independence which Israel had attained through **יציאת מצרים** and **נחלת הארץ**, will appear to have vanished almost entirely, and Israel, banished from its own land, seems helplessly at the mercy of the nations, there still stands the reassurance which the Lord has given Israel through Moses (Deut. 32:36) and which is repeated here verbatim. The Lord has promised that He will call the nations to account regarding their treatment of the people which had been cast helpless and dispersed into their midst. Even in dispersion He will pave the way for the reunion of His people, which, even in exile, had never ceased to be **עבדי**, to remain dedicated with their lives and their destinies to the fulfillment of His Law and to labor on behalf of His rule in the midst of mankind.

## Notes

Yerushalmi Pesachim 5:7, Taanit 3:11 – R' Yochanan calls this “Hallel HaGadol” (see Mishna Taanit 3:9 and Pesachim 118a, but Tosefta Taanit 3:5 thinks it's just 136). Lots of connections to Hallel HaMitzri (113-118), especially 115.

L'Halacha, we pasken Hallel HaGadol is 136 (Orach Chaim 480:1 and 575:11). But lots of views in Yerushalmi and Bavli.

Parallels – Most of the language is found elsewhere. The poet's greatness is in his ability to draw from these sources to make his point.

Structure –

1-3: Hallel to Hashem

4-18: Hashem's Greatness

19-21: Beracha to Hashem

OR 4-12: Hashem in Creation and Exodus

13-21: Greatness of Hashem vs. other gods

v. 9 – follows 8 either because it's about great people vs. normal people/animals (following inanimate things), or because it's about Kriat Yam Suf