

קבלת פני המלך(ז) - עיון במזמור צג

KABBALAT SHABBAT (VII) - ANALYSIS OF PSALM 93

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1 INTRODUCTION

The addition of Mizmor 93 (which is clearly distinct from מזמור שיר ליום השבת) to Kabbalat Shabbat is something of an anomaly. Even though its inclusion may predate the formulation of the Friday evening liturgy in Tz'fat in the 16th century, the final picture seems to render the inclusion of this psalm superfluous. After all, as many of the commentators point out (and is clearly marked in some siddurim), the six psalms which preface לכה דודי correspond to the six days of the week, with מזמור שיר completing the picture as the seventh. In our analysis of that psalm (installment #6 in this series), we noted the many "sevens," including the sevenfold mention of G-d's Name, which make that Mizmor appropriate as an anthem of Shabbat. As such, the "add-on" of Mizmor 93 seems to upset the numeric symbolism built into Kabbalat Shabbat. Why was it added here?

Even if we can identify themes in this short psalm which are so significant that they warrant recitation as part of Kabbalat Shabbat, why not substitute this one for either psalms 95 or 99?

In sum, the inclusion of this psalm in its location within the sequence of Kabbalat Shabbat begs explanation.

Parenthetically, we must reiterate that not all traditions share a common scheme of Kabbalat Shabbat. The general northern European tradition (from France to the Urals) includes pss. 95-99, 29, Lkhah Dodi and pss. 92-93; this convention has guided the structure of these shiurim.

There are some Sefaradic traditions, such as Rhodes and Turkey, that complete the series of "Mosaic psalms" and include psalm 100 (מזמור לתודה) before psalm 29. In those siddurim where each psalm is prefaced with its corresponding day of the week, מזמור לתודה is "Friday's psalm" (see, *inter alia*, "תפילת החדש", published by Josef Schlesinger of Vienna.) Sperber (Minhagei Yisra'el vol. I pp. 67-70) argues that this psalm was added in those communities where the second chapter of Mishnah Shabbat ("מדיקין"), the poem "אנא בכח" and לכה דודי were all recited before psalm 92. As a result of this long "interruption" between the earlier psalms and מזמור שיר, and on account of the great desire held by those who formulated the liturgy for "sevens" (see below), they added a sixth Mosaic psalm before מזמור לדוד. As a result, psalm 29, which is reckoned in most Siddurim as the sixth (corresponding to Friday) psalm, becomes the seventh - and מזמור שיר ליום השבת (ps. 92) stands alone, outside of the sequence. This is altogether fitting, as מזמור לדוד includes seven "voices" of G-d, as we explained in our analysis (Part V of this series).

Sperber points out (ibid. n. 9) that R. Yehuda b. Yakar (13th c. Spain, the mentor of Ramban) notes in his explanation of T'fillot that we add seven psalms to the Psukei d'Zimra of Shabbat morning, (pss. 19, 34, 90, 91, 135, 136, 33) followed by מזמור שיר ליום השבת, as if to say that these seven come on account of Shabbat. This serves as a model for the structure that those Sefaradic communities adopted.

At first glance, following this model solves our question, as anything after לכה דודי isn't part of the "seven-scheme"; thus, our question is only valid according to the predominant custom.

This isn't necessarily the case; indeed, the question may even be stronger according to the Rhodesian and Turkish (etc.) custom. By applying the reasoning of R. Yehuda b. Yakar to Friday night, מזמור שיר stands on its own as the focus of the sevenfold praise. The addition of ה' מלך (ps. 93) is hard to explain (the same question could be asked about the same addition on Shabbat morning).

By examining the themes of this short psalm, we will endeavor to answer this quandary.

II MIZMOR 93

1. Hashem reigns, He is clothed with majesty; Hashem is clothed with strength, with which He has girded Himself; the world also is established, that it cannot be moved.
2. Your throne is established of old; You are from everlasting.
3. The floods have lifted up, Hashem, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their roaring.
4. Hashem on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, than the mighty waves of the sea.
5. Your testimonies are very sure; holiness becomes Your house, Hashem, for length of days.

III ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT

This Mizmor is too short to attempt to divide it into stanzas - we will analyze it verse by verse - but three distinct themes become clear which weave together through the Mizmor.

פסוק א: ה' מלך גאות לבש לבש ה' עז התאזר אף תכון תבל כל תמוט

There are three ideas in this verse:

- a) G-d is King (a declaration)
- b) G-d's power is expressed through His strength (an observation)
- c) G-d's creation is firm and stable (a tenet - perhaps; see below).

The first phrase is one with which we are familiar from other passages in T'hillim, including the opening of both psalms 97 and 99, which we have already analyzed in this series. Unlike those other mentions, however, which are followed with descriptions (witnessed or anticipated) of the world to G-d's sovereignty, this one continues to describe G-d's rule in and of itself.

The next three phrases describe G-d as being garbed in majesty (גאות) and strength (עז). These are clearly borrowed images from both human majesty and might. We might refer to this as the "Divine Warrior"; an image alluded to in ps. 24:8 as well. The notion which informs this image is G-d going out to war against those who would rise against Him (or against primordial chaos - Yeshaya, T'hillim and Iyyov are replete with allusions to this pre- or meta-historic battle). "Girding" oneself is always associated with battle (see, by analogy, Yirmiyah 1:17).

This image is particularly significant within the flow of this psalm; there are numerous hints within T'nakh - going back to the opening verses of B'reshet - to a battle between the Creator and the waters of the deep (see, e.g. Yeshayah 51:10). Our psalm harnesses the power of the mighty waters to illustrate the overwhelming strength of G-d (indeed, carved into a rock at the foot of the mighty Iguaza Falls on the border between Argentina and Brazil are the words of v. 4 of our psalm: *Hashem on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, than the mighty waves of the sea.*)

The splendid garb of G-d is undefined in the first verse; it might be argued that those clothes are the mighty waters of vv. 3-4.

The verse ends with an assertion about the stability of the earth. This may be understood in two diametrically opposite ways:

- 1) As a conclusion, resulting from the glory and strength of the Creator (i.e. since G-d, who created the world, is garbed in majesty - therefore, His creation is firm and stable)
- 2) As a premise, supporting the notion expressed in the earlier phrases (i.e. since His creation is so firm and stable, He must be majestic and powerful).

פסוק ב: נכון כסאך מאז מעולם אתה

This, the only bicolon in the psalm, reinforces the stability and majesty expressed in v. 1 by expanding the description of G-d's power to the temporal plane. Since G-d has been "from ever" (see our discussion re: lamabul in installment #5 of this series), His throne is firm, also from ancient times.

פסוק ג: נשאו נהרות ה' נשאו נהרות קולם ישאו נהרות דכים

Sarna (*On The Book Of Psalms*, p. 186) suggests that the “allusion to time immemorial stimulates thoughts of Creation.” Following the verse which declares G-d’s everlasting nature, predating the existence of the world, the psalmist utilizes the image of the mighty waters of creation both as an example of G-d’s might (within creation) and as a foil against which to sense G-d’s power (standing apart from creation).

The verse, like rising waters, uses each stich to build the idea:

- 1) The waters have lifted up (what have they lifted?)
- 2) They have lifted their voice (what is that voice?)
- 3) They have raised the voice of their roar.

The final word - דכים is a *hapax legomenon* (unmatched in T'nakh) and can only be resolved by context.

The Rishonim, by and large, render the word as “wave”, referring to the most powerful sound the water makes.

Malbim, innovatively, suggests that the word is related to the root דכא, depressed; to wit, even where the water runs shallow to allow civilization to flourish, the water still tells of G-d’s presence as Creator.

פסוק ד: מקלות מים רבים אדירים משברי ים אדיר במרום ה'

The translation here doesn’t do justice to the power of the verse - nor is it necessarily accurate. The verse is made up, as are four of the five, of three stichs, each bearing one idea:

- 1) (something) is mightier than the sounds of many waters,
- 2) That something is the sound of the waves, and mightier yet
- 3) Is G-d, on high.

In other words, the power of G-d as sensed through the lapping and surging of the waters of the deep is significant in its own right. A more overwhelming experience which sings to us of His strength is the sound of the waves breaking - yet none of that is truly representative of the great power of G-d on high.

פסוק ה: עדתיך נאמנו מאד לביתך נאווה קדש ה' לארך ימים

This verse seems disconnected from the previous ones - what do G-d’s laws (“testimonies”) have to do with the power of the sea?

First of all, we ought to clarify why we assume that עדתיך (*Your testimonies*) is a reference to the law, rather than the testimony of G-d’s creation, i.e. the manifestation of G-d’s power in His world.

The widespread use of עדות (*testimonies*) as a synonym for Mitzvot (see, e.g. I Melakhim 2:3, T'hilim 19:8-10) is well attested; indeed, we never find the word as referring to anything but G-d’s law (and never to His creatures).

The principle set forth here harks back to the notions developed in the first verse. Since G-d’s power, as manifested in the word, provides ample testimony to His grandeur, His everlasting existence and His power, it follows that all that He creates is “trustworthy” - in the sense of permanence and reliability.

The second phrase - לביתך נאווה קדש - also seems incongruous. There is, however, a subtle logic which informs the sequence of ideas here. Since G-d is majestic, permanent and all-powerful, overcoming and far outshining the power of the waters, His laws are similarly permanent and trustworthy. As such (following the royalty model), it is appropriate to ascribe holiness to His abode. G-d’s bona fides, as it were, have been established and affirmed - He is the morally and spiritually perfect Creator. Not only is holiness befitting His abode, but that ascription is itself eternal - לארך ימים. (This last phrase is commonly mis-parsed, in a manner which borders on blasphemy. It is commonly phrased: ה' לארך ימים. Taken at face value, this would mean - *G-d exists for a long*

time - explication of the theological problem here is unnecessary. A pause ought to be inserted, such that the verse is read: ימים לביתך, ה', נאוה קדש לארך ימים... Reordered, the words are: ימים, ה', נאוה קדש לארך ימים.)

IV POWER, FAITH, CORONATION

Although we did not divide the psalm into stanzas, we can identify a flow of ideas throughout; once we have sketched the schema of the psalm, we will be better equipped to respond to our earlier questions as to the inclusion of this Mizmor after שיר ליום השבת מזמור.

- (v. 1) G-d reigns [coronation]
 - (v. 1) G-d's majesty and glory [power]
 - (v. 2) The everlasting reign of the Creator [faithfulness]
 - (vv. 3-4) The waters "sing" of - and testify to - G-d's might [power]
 - (v. 5) G-d's laws are trustworthy [faithfulness]
- (v. 5) G-d's royal abode is holy [coronation]

We see that the themes of G-d's power which is both manifestation and proof of His faithfulness, the stability of His creation and His laws, weave together within the framework of a "coronation-declaration."

Furthermore, the terms are not static. The opening phrase is a simple declaration of G-d's rule, one found elsewhere in T'hillim. The second reference to kingship is G-d's throne (v. 2), a more specific focus which alludes to G-d's justice. The final reference takes us to G-d's "house", which may be alternatively interpreted as G-d's heavenly abode (as in the end of v. 4) or the Mikdash. Either way, the "coronation theme" develops and fleshes out here in a way unparalleled in T'nakh - G-d, Who is king, sits on His eternal throne and metes out perfect justice (through His trustworthy laws) and, therefore, His abode is fittingly considered sanctified forever.

In addition, as the rising waters depicted in v. 3, the psalm develops the themes of "power" and "faith" in a dynamic fashion.

The first mention of power is as G-d's "garment" (v. 1); this theme is then developed in two simultaneous strands - as manifested in G-d's creation and as overshadowing the might of that same creation.

The first mention of "faith" or "trustworthiness" is the stability of the world (v. 1) - this is then matched and raised by the "stability" and "reliability" of G-d's laws in the final verse.

Thus, we not only have an interweave of these three themes, but each of them develops significantly within the psalm, rising from a simple declaration of G-d's majesty, power and faith in that which can be seen and touched to an intricate and elegant paean which recognizes the power and everlasting truth of that which is beyond our physical reach - G-d's laws and His holiness.

Now we can return to Kabbalat Shabbat and respond to our questions.

The mystical experience of the onset of Shabbat was one of great anticipation - not only on a personal level, but also national and even universal. The sense was that this was the auspicious time for redemption. ספר תולדות אר"י records the following story:

"[The Ari] used to go out every Erev Shabbat with the colleagues to greet the Shabbat and he would close his eyes, explaining that the reason he was closing his eyes was that his vision was distracted by the commingling of all the souls of the righteous rising from the cemetery that came to visit the body and to give it an effulgence of light and now were rising up; similarly [he was distracted by] the souls that were descending to be the "additional soul" on Shabbat among B'nei Yisra'el. [we see that the group used to go outside of the city limits for Kabbalat Shabbat, in proximity of the town cemetery.]

"One day on Erev Shabbat he went out with the colleagues to greet the Shabbat as was his wont. He said to the colleagues:

'Let us go immediately to Jerusalem, I know where the ashes of the [red] heifer are buried there and we will sprinkle ourselves and purify ourselves from the defilement of the dead; we will build the Beit haMikdash and offer the Korban Shabbat, for I see that this is a true "endtime" for redemption.' [The response of the colleagues is intriguing, as was the Ari's reaction to their response - see *Tol'dot Ari*, pp. 168-69].

This story gives us much insight into the greeting of Shabbat as experienced in Tz'fat; there was a great sense of anticipation of redemption which would usher in the universal awareness of G-d as king.

It is only fitting that once Shabbat has arrived with the recitation of Mizmor Shir l'Yom haShabbat, we declare G-d's rule over the world, combining the three themes which tie our appreciation of the stability of Creation and G-d's power (the six days) with a proper coronation (the seventh day).

This explanation does not satisfy the parallel question about the addition of ps. 93 immediately after *שיר ליום השבת* on Shabbat morning (P'sukei d'Zimra). (It might be argued, based on the explanation provided by R. Yehuda b. Yakar, that on Shabbat morning we have a recreation of the coronation of Kabbalat Shabbat; it would take an in-depth analysis of the seven added psalms to identify the sequence).

As we have seen through this series, the theme of anticipation of G-d's rule, with an appreciation of G-d's power as seen through His creation, are the overarching ideas found in the psalms used for Kabbalat Shabbat. In that sense, the shortest psalm used on Friday night, Mizmor 93, summarizes these notions in a declaration of G-d's eternal monarchy.

V

ADDENDUM: ידיד נפש

As we noted in the second installment in this series, the tradition of escorting the Shabbat queen - both at her entrance and at her departure - with singing dates back at least to 12th century Provence. Many communities have the beautiful custom of singing special tunes, usually soulful in melody and rhythm, at the beginning of Shabbat and at Seudah Sh'lisheet.

One of the most common songs sung during both of these times is the poem *ידיד נפש*. I have long puzzled over this beautiful song, as different Siddurim include it in alternate locations (some have it before Kabbalat Shabbat, others before Minchah of Erev Shabbat, yet others only in Se'udah Sh'lisheet while others record it before the beginning of daily prayer) and there are many Siddurim where it doesn't appear at all. Furthermore, the "conventional" version of *ידיד נפש* (which fits most of the common tunes used to accompany it) differs significantly from the version found in several Siddurim.

We will not be able to analyze all of the differences but will highlight a few of the most glaring variations and attempt to explain them.

VI

BACK TO TZ'FAT

Although we don't have any explicit attestation, *ידיד נפש* was most likely composed by R. Eliezer al-Azkiri (d. 1600), who was descended from a family of Spanish exiles and, like many of those families, made his way to Tz'fat. Within the religious and mystical ferment of that vibrant community, al-Azkiri was considered both a Halakhic teacher and an inspiring speaker. He composed a "Sefer haMitzvot", premised on the verse "All of my bones will state, Hashem, who is like You..." (T'hilim 35:10) and called it *ספר חרדים*.

In Chapter 34 of *Sefer Haredim*, the author presented a case for the stimulation of love for G-d via singing, and therefore: "I will present before you a few of the songs of love which we sang in joy among the attentive Haverim". He then presents three poems, the first of which is an alphabetic acrostic. The second of the three is *ידיד נפש* which is a Tetragrammaton-acrostic, spelling out G-d's Name. It is the earliest source where *ידיד נפש* appears.

A number of years ago, Meir Benayahu found a copy of *ידיד נפש* written (by hand) by al-Azkiri in the archives of the JTS Library in New York. It has been reproduced at the end of this shiur.

The version of **ידיד נפש** as found in Haredim - and the manuscript - differ in significant ways from the “conventional” version. Three of the most glaring differences appear in the middle verses.

In the second verse, the final line reads (in Haredim): **והיתה לך שפחת עולם** (and she will be unto You a perpetual maidservant); in most Siddurim, the line reads **והיתה לה שמחת עולם** (and it will be for her eternal joy).

In the third verse, the second half of the first line reads (Haredim) **והוסיף נא על בן אוהבך** (have compassion on the son that loves You); some Siddurim read **והוסיף נא על בן אוהבך** (and have compassion on the son of Your beloved).

The final line of the third verse (Haredim) reads: **אנא אל-י מחמד לבי חושה נא ואל תתעלם** (Please, my G-d, the One my heart desires, act speedily and do not disappear); other Siddurim read **אלה חמדה לבי חושה נא ואל תתעלם** (These my heart desired, have compassion and do not disappear).

Before addressing these changes - and the various locations within the Siddur where **ידיד נפש** appears, we need to trace the transmission of this beautiful poem to the world of Ashkenaz.

VII FROM THE GALIL TO GERMANY

As we have seen in earlier installments, the impact of the Tz'fat community was quite immediate in some parts of the world, whereas others were slow to accept their innovations.

For instance, the community of Aleppo, Syria, which had its own proud history, did not adopt many of the customs introduced in nearby Tz'fat - to this day, their Kabbalat Shabbat begins at Mizmor 29. It shouldn't be surprising, therefore, to find that **ידיד נפש** is found nowhere in the Siddur of that community.

How, then, did **ידיד נפש** get to the world of Ashkenazi Europe? This question carries an extra twist, as the authoritative Siddur Avodat Yisrael (published by R. Yitzchak Zeligman Ber in Germany in 1868), based on thirteen earlier Ashkenazi siddurim, omitted **ידיד נפש**.

The answer lies in the itinerant travels of R. Tzvi b. Ya'akov Ashkenazi (1660-1718). R. Tzvi was born in Poland, but was sent as a young man to study in Salonica, a Sefaradic community (which flourished until WWII). He was ordained there and given the Sefardic honorific **חכם** (parallel to “Rav”), such that he was known for the rest of his life as the **חכם צבי**. He returned to northern Europe, served as a time as the Rav of the “three communities” (Altona, Hamburg and Wandsbek), afterwards accepting a position as Ashkenazi Rav of Amsterdam. When Sabbatian fever reached Amsterdam in the person of a “prophet” named Haylon, R. Moshe Hagiz and the Hakham Tzvi excommunicated him in their attempt to root out the venomous growth of Sabbatianism. The Sefaradic community protested that he was interfering in their affairs and he soon left the post, spending the rest of his life teaching throughout Europe. *(Interested readers are directed to Elisheva Carlebach's “Pursuit of Heresy” for an in-depth study of the Haylon controversy)*

When the Hakham Tzvi's son, R. Ya'akov Emden (who continued his father's mission of identifying and battling the Sabbatians) published his first Siddur (Amudei Shamayim, Altuna 1745), he included **ידיד נפש** before the morning prayers, prefaced with the following note:

A beautiful song to stimulate the soul to the love of G-d; my father, o.b.m., was accustomed to singing it especially at night.

He also included it with a similar note in the more familiar “Siddur Beit Yaakov”.

Evidently, the **חכם צבי** learned this song in Salonica and, in tribute to his late father, R. Ya'akov Emden included it in the Siddur - a Siddur which had tremendous influence (as did many of R. Ya'akov Emden's works) throughout the Ashkenazi world.

In Amudei Shamayim, the first two changes we noted appear: the **שפחה** becomes **שמחה** (and, therefore, **לך** becomes **לה**), and “the

son who loves You” becomes “the son of Your beloved”. Whereas the latter change can be ascribed to a copyist’s error (it means moving the “vav” two spaces back), it may also be rooted in the reasons for the second change.

As Yahalom points out, much of the liturgy composed by Jews in Moslem countries (including, at this point in time, in the Ottoman Empire) included many images which created a profound sense of discomfort among the Ashkenazi Jews. One example of this is the romantic and even erotic images employed throughout Spanish, Mediterranean and Oriental religious poetry which find no parallel in the piyutim composed in Franco-Germany during the 12-15th centuries. This discomfort was likely occasioned by the surrounding culture. In Moslem countries, where romantic and erotic poetry was being composed in a decidedly secular context, Jews felt little discomfort employing these images (a la Shir haShirim) as a parable for the love of G-d. Christianity, on the other hand, is replete with this type of imagery in the relationship with G-d; it is understandable that Jews living in Northern Europe would be bothered by utilizing this same model. (There is ample evidence that similar sensitivities and considerations affected other areas of Jewish literature, including Parshanut; see Neubauer’s *The Fifty-Third Chapter Of Isaiah, According To The Jewish Interpreters*.)

Yahalom argues that the “servant” image similarly created discomfort within the environs of Ashkenaz, even though those living in Ottoman Palestine were at ease with such images. It ought to be noted that the פִּימָה written by al-Azkiri (see copy of manuscript below) looks very similar to a מִיָּמָה.

Once the שפחה became שמחה, the לך no longer makes any sense - for the happiness desired here is the rejoicing of the soul, not of G-d. Hence, לך becomes לה.

It might be argued that this change led to the earlier alteration. If we are diminishing the intensity of desire on the part of the penitent, it may be more appropriate to turn that defined love into the love of G-d for His servant, as opposed to the love of the servant for G-d. The awkward word בן, then, means that the one beloved by G-d is the parent of the penitent - hence - בן אהוביך. This is just an estimate, as we have no record of why these changes were made.

The final change is not “black and white.” In Haredim, the verse reads אֲנִי אֵלֵי מְחַמֵּד לְבִי; in Siddur זקנים (Livorno 1910), the verse reads אֵלֵי חֲמֹדֵת לְבִי, which is substantively the same. Somehow, אֵלֵי was misread as אלה - and the rest flows from there. (This change does not appear in R. Ya’akov Emden’s Siddur).

For a full treatment of the changes, see Efrati’s article in *Sh’mat’atin* 123-124, pp. 75-80.

Efrati notes (as can be seen in the manuscript below) that al-Azkiri intended for the last line in each stanza to be repeated; he expresses the wish that someone would compose a tune that fits the “proper” words and the repeated line.

Interested readers are also directed to Tal’s “HaSiddur b’Hishtal’sh’luto” pp. 66-68.

We can easily understand why a T’fillah originally intended to be sung before T’fillah but aimed to stimulate great love for G-d moved to the times of Shabbat where that love is evoked through song.

Manuscript in R. Eliezer al-Azkiri’s handwriting - note the mark to repeat the last line of each stanza.



