

He explains that we begin the פֶּרֶק with the first two verses – where we say that we are going to exalt and bless Hashem’s name forever. This is coming from a place of immense love that we cannot even begin to help ourselves and we just have to praise Hashem. However, then we realize that we cannot. We take a step back and realize that Hashem is so great and praiseworthy. How could we even begin to think we are שׂי י to praise him. The answer is the next verse – only because דּוֹר לְדוֹר בִּישׁוּחַ מַעֲשִׂיךְ could then we do it as well!!

The רמבם says in the מורה הנבוכים that this is also the verse: לך דומיה תהלה - he says, “השתיקה אצלך” (See there where he explains the more philosophical underpinnings of this idea, but it is the same idea.)

The ריטב”א on this גמרא quotes the רמבם and explains that this is also the continuation of the גמרא and the parable that the גמרא brings. The גמרא speaks about a king who has all of this gold and instead his subjects praises him about his silver. It is something that is not relevant to be praised in the face of gold!! The same is true for us.

So therefore, the question becomes – how could someone (like רבי שמלאי says on ברכות לב) say that we are allowed to say פסוקי דזמרא? After all, there are many שבחים there?

So the ריטב”א suggests one answer. He says there is a difference between labelling Hashem and giving שבח to Hashem about the things that Hashem does in this world. Therefore, that is completely okay and that is what we say in תהילים and פסוקי דזמרא.

However, the Rav Suggested another answer. He said that the only שבחות that we could say are only the ones that were said by our sages before us. That is why we only say תהילים according to the רמבם! Because those we know were said before us as a praise to Hashem!!

Additionally, the Rav explains that the only way we could say פסוקי דזמרא is with some sort of הקדמה of some sort of paragraph that makes it מותר to us and frames for us that really we cannot praise Hashem. The Rav explains that this is why we have the paragraph of ברוך שאמר because it is the words that teach us how above praise Hashem really is. Once we have this, then we could go and praise Hashem but only with the praises of our ancestors and were sanctioned.

Based on this, the Rav explained that this is why the גר”א says there could not be any שבח before ברוך שאמר, because there is not yet the מתיר, the ברכה that frames all the praise for us, and therefore it is not yet permissible.

Message: Sometimes, when we are silent, it is because we realize how humble and small we are. That is a feeling that we try to feel a little bit during our תפילות in order to realize who we are standing in front of and the power of what we are about to do. This could be why in some ways we remain silent in פסוקי דזמרא according to the opinions above – to show ourselves that we are so undeserving to stand in front of מלך מלכי המלכים הקב”ה. So, to a certain extent, we go in front of Him as we make our way to שמע and שמונה עשרה with our tail between our legs.