

The Shirah Melody and Special Customs for Shabbat Shirah

On Shabbat, *Rosh Hodesh*, and holy-days, we chant "*Az Yashir*". The melody we sing for the *Shira* has become an "anthem" of sorts for Western Sephardim. It is without doubt the most well-known and widespread of all Spanish & Portuguese melodies. The *Shira* melody is also used for *Barukh haBa* in the *Hallel* and other festive occasions and this is also the same melody used for *Bendigamos*. This melody is very ancient, it has closely related variants in Turkey, Morocco, and Italy. Macy Nulman has even theorized that the special Ashkenazic Torah chant for the *Shirat haYam* is actually related to our melody deriving from a common source. This is another indication that the *Shira* melody has very ancient origins.

On *Shabbat Shira* as well as on the Seventh day of Passover, we read the *Shira* within the Torah portion of the day. In our community this section is read with a distinctive and special melody known as "*High Na'um*." This melody is usually performed with great musical drama. It is reserved for first chapter of Genesis, the 10 commandments, and several other particularly special or dramatic portions of the Torah.

A unique Spanish & Portuguese custom is that during the morning *zemirot* of Shabbat Shira we do not conclude the "*Az Yashir*" at verse 18 as we normally would on page 50, rather we continue chanting straight into verse 19, including Miriam's song, and on until the end of the Torah portion at verse 26 (see page 367). We also utilize the special *High Na'um* Torah reading melody even during the *Zemirot* prayers in the morning — and do not chant the normal Shira melody. So paradoxically, on *Shabbat Shira* we never read *Az Yashir* with this most famous melody!

While we do not actually chant the *Az Yashir* to the *Shira* melody — this melody is the musical theme of the day. It is sung during *Kaddish* and *Yigdal* in the evening, and for *Kaddish*, *Kedushah*, *En Kelohenu* and *Adon Olam* on Shabbat morning.

Choir Selections for Shabbat Shirah

The Choir this week is sponsored by the SHEARITH ISRAEL LEAGUE in memory of David Bousso.

Friday Night

V'Shameru (#2) (p. 166) | Samuel Naumbourg

This setting for *V'Shameru* was once part of our repertoire but has not been sung in many decades

Psalm 23 (p. 174) | Leon Hyman

This intricate setting for the 23rd Psalm was composed by our current choirmaster, Leon Hyman, it contains themes from the "*Az Yashir*" melody making it particularly appropriate for this Shabbat.

Shabbat Morning

Misheberakh (p. 208) | Salomone Rossi (-1570 - 1630, Mantua)

Yehi Hasdekha (p.215) | Leon Hyman

Ubnuho Yomar (p. 218) | Solomon Sulzer (1804-1890, Vienna)

DEBAR TORAH: IS THIS THE PROMIS'D END?

—Z. EDINGER—

In this week's *parasha* we read the *Shirat haYam* (Song of the Sea) sung by the Israelites after their miraculous redemption in praise of God for splitting the Sea and the triumph over the Egyptian army. The language of the song is archaic and poetic. It is literally the oldest and most famous song in the Bible.

When written in the Torah a special scribal layout is used. The Talmud calls this scribal method "אריה על גבי לבנה" which means *tile over brick* (i.e. like bonded brickwork). When written it looks like this:

אֶזְרָא יִשְׁרָאֵל וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לֵיהוָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ
לֵאמֹר אֲשִׁירָה לֵיהוָה כִּי גָאֹה גָאֹה
עָזְרָא וְחִמְרָה יָהּ וַיְהִי לִי
לִישׁוּעָה זֶה אֱלֹהֵי וַאֲצֻדָּהוּ
אֲבִי וַאֲרַמְבֹּמֶדָּהוּ יְהוָה אִישׁ מִכֹּל־מִדָּה יְהוָה
שְׁמוֹ מִרְכַּבַּת פָּרֹעַה וַחֲזִילוֹ יְרֵדָה בֵּים
וּמִבְּחֹר

This special layout sets the text of the song apart very clearly from the prose text normally encountered in the Torah. Interestingly, the last verse of the song is a matter of some debate. According to most commentaries (see especially, Ramban) *Shirat haYam* concludes with verse 18: *The Lord shall reign forever and ever*. Ramban does not include the following verse in the song, verse 19 read: "*For the horses of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and Hashem brought back the waters of the sea on them; but the children of Israel walked on dry land in the midst of the sea.*" For Ramban, this just returns us to the story where we left off before the Song took us away from the narrative. He notes that the language of verse 19 is no longer poetic but rather returns to prose and therefore he does not consider it part of *Shirat haYam*.

Ibn Ezra however includes verse 19 as an integral part of the Song of the Sea. He felt that this verse was included to emphasize a *double miracle*, or, *miracle within a miracle* - that the Israelites crossed the sea on dry land while at the same time the Egyptians drowned in the sea. Ibn Ezra's insistence that this verse is part of the song can only be understood when looking inside a torah scroll and realizing that according to our scribal tradition verse 19 is written in the special brick-like layout of the Song of the Sea. Therefore, Ibn Ezra felt compelled to explain verse 19 as being part of the song itself.

The *Shirat haYam* (or simply the "*Shira*") became a central part of our prayer liturgy. We recite it daily at the conclusion of the *zemirot* psalms. In many Sephardic communities verse 19 (*Ki Ba Sus Par'oh*) is included in the daily recitation of the Shira. But, in our tradition here at Shearith Israel we conclude the *Shira* at verse 18 (*Adonai Yimlokh le'Olam va'Ed*.) In most Ashkenazic communities verse 18 is actually repeated twice, apparently to emphasize that it is the conclusion of the song and not to continue reading the next verse. The various liturgical customs seem to be directly related to the question where does this most famous song, the *Shirat haYam* actually end?



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL
The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Beshallah-Shira
January 18-19, 2019

Hertz Pentateuch: p. 265; Haftarah p. 283
Kaplan Living Torah: p. 320; Haftarah p. 1108

- CANDLE LIGHTING | 4:38 pm
EVENING SERVICES | 4:45 pm
FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS | Rabbi Soloveichik | "The Song of Sabbath and the Sabbath of Song" | *2018-2019 season sponsored by the Julis family.*
MORNING SERVICES | Main Sanctuary | 8:15 am
TOT SHABBAT | Ages 0-4 | 10:00 am | Fidanque Youth Room
YOUTH GROUPS | Ages 5-12 | 10:00 am | Fidanque Youth Room
JUNIOR CONGREGATION | 10:30 am | Featuring our PTTS Students | Little Synagogue
LECTURE | Rabbi Soloveichik | "Praying at Cambridge With A 700-Year Old Torah: A Story of a Jewish History and Ritual"
KIDDUSH | Elias Room | *Sponsored by the Schildkraut Family in honor of Eli's upcoming marriage.*
SHABBAT SHIRA SING-ALONG LUNCHEON | for pre-registered guests | Levy Auditorium
SHABBAT AFTERNOON SHIUR | Rabbi Soloveichik | 3:30 pm | "Scribal Secrets of Az Yashir" | Main Sanctuary
EVENING SERVICES | 4:30 pm
HABDALA | 5:25 pm

Weekday Service Times

Mornings:

Sunday & Monday: 8:00 am | Tuesday-Friday: 7:15 am

Evenings (Arbit only):

Sunday-Thursday: 6:30 pm

THE SHEARITH ISRAEL SISTERHOOD PRESENTS

Wrapunzel

Sunday, February 3 | 11:00 am - 2:00 pm

Joined by Sharsheret, helping families facing cancer

Want to give your creative side a twist?

Looking for an elegant solution to a bad hair day?

Tired of shivering, windblown, as temperatures drop? Intrigued by well-priced soft silk scarves and a side order of technique?

Know a cancer patient who might benefit?

Join the Shearith Israel Sisterhood, Wrapunzel, and Sharsheret at this special event, featuring demonstrations, one-on-one tutorials, plus scarves, accessories, and specialty gear for sale.

To register, visit shearithisrael.org/wrapunzel.

Only \$5 in advance; \$10 at the door.

Light refreshments will be served. Women only, please.

NEW YOUTH INITIATIVE:

Knitting For Teens

Presented by the Shearith Israel Sisterhood

On three upcoming Saturday nights | 7:00 pm-8:30 pm

NEXT week, January 26 | February 2 | February 16

Held at a private home on the Upper West Side

Our member, Karen Daar, an accomplished knitter, will instruct the basics of knitting—how to cast on, the garter & purl stitch, how to increase, decrease, and bind off—everything one needs to know to create a knitted project.

All teens are welcome to try their hands at this new activity. If you're a teen or have a teenager who is interested, contact Rose Edinger at rgedinger@gmail.com for location information and other questions.

Note: There will be a nominal fee (about \$15) for materials (knitting needles and yarn).

Public Tours

Our next public tour is
Wednesday,
February 13, at 11:00 AM

Parnas Office Hours

Louis Solomon would be delighted to meet with you. Please schedule a visit at parnas@shearithisrael.org.

Important Alerts

- Central Park West will be closed off on Saturday from 86th St. to 59th St. between 8am-4pm. Please be sure to adjust your route accordingly.
- Our office is closed on Monday, January 21, for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.
- Rabbi Soloveichik's Tuesday Morning Women's Class returns from hiatus this Tuesday, January 22.
- Rabbi Silber's new class on the Book of Judges will begin on Sunday, February 3. To learn more and register (FREE for Shearith Israel members), visit shearithisrael.org/silber-judges.
- Rabbi Sjimon den Hollander's Sunday Class returns this Sunday, January 20.

Shearith Israel Toddler Program

Mondays and Wednesdays | 9:30 am-11:30 am

January 2-June 5

For ages 16-34 months | *Parent or caregiver attendance required.*

There is still time to enroll your toddler for the Spring Semester of "the best-kept secret on the Upper West Side"!

To learn more and apply, go to shearithisrael.org/toddlerprogram.

UPCOMING FILM SCREENING

Wednesday, February 6 | 7:00 pm

The Last Jews of Baghdad

Marking the anniversary of the Baghdad Hangings

With opening remarks from producer Carole Basri

Register at shearithisrael.org/baghdad-screenings.

Only \$5 per member/\$8 per non-member in advance, \$10 at the door.



This screening is part of our many Year of Years, 365th Anniversary events, showcasing the extraordinary diversity and heritage of our congregation.

PTTS Shabbaton 2.0

This Shabbat, January 19

On this special Shabbat, PTTS students take the lead at Jr. Congregation. Come by to cheer on our youngest community members and connect with their families!

Parent-Child Learning & Pizza

Final Session:

Saturday Night, February 9 | 7:00 pm—Led by Z. Edinger

For Children Aged 5-12 & Their Parents or Grandparents

A wonderful opportunity for parents (or grandparents) to study Torah with their children together with Shearith Israel's clergy.

Pizza and prizes help make this a fun-filled evening of inter-generational learning.

Register for the February 9 session (only \$5 per person) at shearithisrael.org/parent-child-learning.

Meldadura of Reverend A. L. Cardozo

Monday, January 28 | Following 6:30 pm Evening Services

All are welcome to join us at the Meldadura marking the 13th *nahala* of Reverend Abraham Lopes Cardozo.

Services begin at 6:30 pm with Arbit in the Little Synagogue.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mazal Tob to the Schildkraut Family on Eli's upcoming marriage.

Mazal Tob to Marlene & Michael Sperling upon their granddaughter, Batya Sperling Milner, becoming a Bat Mitzvah.

Batya created a braille system for rendering the *Masoretic Tropes*, making this a particularly special and unique celebration — *mazal tob* and *hazak u'barukh* to the family!