

# Cantorial Message

February 2019

Music is a means to express oneself. It can be romantic, scary, motivating or meditative, and can evoke a myriad of emotions. Like many of us, music has always been a part of my life and can't imagine a day without it. My father was always singing when I was growing up. He played classical, country, Mitch Miller, Elvis, Sinatra, and dance music, just to name a few. I learned to waltz while standing on his feet. Music is tied to memory. The Mayo Clinic states that playing music for Alzheimer and dementia patients can provide emotional or behavioral benefits, because musical memories are often preserved in key brain areas linked to musical memory which are relatively undamaged by these diseases. Music can make you feel comfortable. Sort of like being with an old friend. There are many pieces we sing on Shabbat evening that we have been singing since I came in 1987. For example, Shalom Rav is one of those pieces, as is the French Sephardic Adon Olam, and the traditional V'shamru. Over the last 18 years, I have noticed that there has been an explosion of new music written for liturgy. Some of it written especially for the poetry on the left side of the page in our siddur. When Rabbi Marc and I sit down to plan a service, liturgy and the music we want to use to convey a certain feeling are always a part of our discussion. The pieces we choose to add to a service are chosen with care and thought. Pieces like Let There Be Love, written by Noah Aronson, the new Hinei Mah Tov, and Lecha Dodi, written by Elana Arian, are sung quite often. Sometimes a new melody allows you to feel a piece of liturgy or text differently. The first time I had heard the Zohar's Psalm 23, The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want, I was surprised that it was sung on Shabbat and that they chose to compose music for the text that was upbeat. I had only sung Psalm 23 at funerals or at a Yizkor service. Hearing the piece through the upbeat piece of music, allowed me to hear the words of this psalm in a way that I had not thought of before. It allowed it to become a relevant prayer of gratitude, as opposed to something only sung or said to comfort those who are mourning. Music touches each of us differently. I hope both the new and old music that we sing continues to enrich our liturgy.

B'shir,  
Sherry