

Cantorial Message

February 2020

This month we celebrate Shabbat Shira, the Song of the Sea. The song that is alluded to is from Parashat Be'shallach, Exodus 15: 1-21, in which G*d parts the Sea of Reeds to allow the Israelites to cross and find safety from their pursuers, the Egyptians. This Torah portion tells the details of that day and how G*d saved us. It is a song that praises G*d for defeating the Egyptians. Yet, there is a midrash that softens the harshness of joy at the expense of another's death. It goes something like this; G*d hears his children singing and rejoicing and asked them, "What do see happening?", to which the Israelites reply, "We see our enemy drowning in the sea!" G*d replies, "I see my children dying." I have also heard it told as the angels being so filled with joy at the Israelites being saved, that they begin to sing and G*d says, my children are dying, and you sing?! No matter which way the midrash is told, it reminds us that even in the joy of victory, we need to remember that there is sorrow for those who were not. Maybe remembering will keep us humble.

Exodus 15:11 says: Who is like you among the gods that are worshipped. Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendor, working wonders? Every evening and morning service, we sing the words from Mi Chamocha, so we always remember our going out from Egypt, from bondage to freedom.

In the Torah, this particular parasha is scribed differently than some of the others. It is supposed to look like the Israelites crossing through the Reed Sea. Another interesting thing which happens in this reading, which I know I say every year, is that the traditional trope is intertwined with that of a special melody wherever G*d's name is mentioned. So remember to listen for it, on February 7.

Thank you to our choir and Michael McCarthy for singing/accompanying on Shabbat Shira!

Enjoy these links to some of my favorite composers, that you may not have heard yet, singing Mi Chamocha! Dan Nichols, Elana Arian, and Nefesh Mountain.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8uf_PvxosRo

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AzClD3_RS5c

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WWmlM4Cm968>

B'shir,
Sherry