

The Spiritual Life of Tikvah Campers  
or  
Why Amitzim Davening (*Usually*) Works

Shabbat Shirah  
Tu B'Shvat 5763  
January 18, 2003

A discussion lead by:

Howard Blas  
Tikvah Director

1. When and for what reasons do people/Jews sing?
2. When in the *Tanach* do people sing? (Who sings and when?)

Etz Chaim page 407 (quoting Exodus Rabbah 23:4)

"From the day that God created the world until this moment (at Reed Sea), no one had sung praises to God-not Adam after having been created, not Abraham after being delivered from the fiery furnace, not Isaac when he was spared the knife, or Jacob when he escaped from wrestling with an angel and from Esau. But when Israel came to the sea and it parted for them, "Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord." And God said, "for this I have been waiting."

Ginzberg's Legend of the Jews (I'll read this aloud)

3. What is a "song" anyway? (Thoughts about "The Shira")

Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (page 1124):

- the act or art of singing
- poetical composition
- a short musical composition of words and music
- a melody for a lyric poem or ballad
- a poem easily set to music

Stone Chumash page 375:

- "In the Torah's definition, a "song" is a profound and unusual spiritual phenomena; according to the Mechilta 15.1, there were only 10 songs from the beginning of creation to the end of the Scriptural period. Even the sublime 'poetry' of David and Isaiah, as well as that of the other prophets, is not among the ten songs. What then constitutes the Torah's concept or song? In the normal course of events, we fail to perceive the hand of God at work, and we often wonder how most of the daily, seemingly unrelated phenomena surrounding us could be part of a Divine, coherent plan. We see suffering and evil, and we wonder how they can be the handiwork of a Merciful God. Rarely, however—very rarely—there is a flash of insight that makes people realize how all the pieces of the puzzle

fall into place. At such times, we can understand how every note, instrument and participant in God's symphony of Creation plays its role. The result is a song, for the Torah's concept of song is the condition in which all the apparently unrelated and contradictory phenomena do indeed meld into a coherent, merciful, comprehensible whole. At the sea, Moses and the Jewish people understood their situation as never before..."

#### JPS Translation:

- Song of the Sea was an "spontaneous, lyrical outpouring of emotion on the part of the people who experienced the great events of the Exodus."
- the topic of the shira was glorification of God.
- they were preoccupied with celebrating the mighty acts of God as he intervenes in human affairs.

#### Nahum Sarna on the Structure of the Shira:

- 1-10: celebrates God's great triumph over Egyptian foes.
  - 11-13: tells of incomparability of God.
  - 14-16: describes the impact of these extraordinary events upon the surrounding peoples.
  - 17-18: forward looking and anticipation of future developments]
- Song of Miriam

4. How does this relate to Tikvah campers?  
For Tikvah Campers, tefillah *is* song!

5. How and Why do Tikvah Tefillot Work?  
Implications for Other Edot?

- It is really a Carlebach/BJ Service
- Participation of Staff and Campers
- Routine and Matbeah Tefillah
- Guitar and Other Instruments (Real and Pretend!)
- Music is Just a Part of Special Needs (and All) Campers
- Sense of Competence/Self-Esteem Builder
- Tool for Staff Education

6. Conclusion