

a **CALL** *to*
ACTION

Shabbos Shira

PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION
FROM THE TEACHINGS OF THE REBBE
5748-5752

A PROJECT OF
HaMaaseh Hu HaIkar

Shabbos Shirah

INTRODUCTION

The Torah portion of Beshalach includes the “Song of the Sea” (Az Yashir) with which the Jews praised Hashem as they crossed the split sea on their journey out of Egypt. Consequently, the Shabbos when Parshas Beshalach is read is known as “Shabbos Shirah,” the “Shabbos of Song.”

In addition, the Haftorah for Parshas Beshalach is also a song – the “Song of Devorah” that was composed by the prophetess following the miraculous victory wrought in her days on behalf of the Jewish people.

Spiritually, the concept of raising one’s voice in song represents elevation. Shabbos, too, is an elevation of the past week’s spiritual achievements. So, when the two come together – as they do on Shabbos Shirah, the *Shabbos of Song* – the result is a day of foremost elevation.

Further, on the day of one’s Yahrtzait, their lifetime’s combined spiritual achievement is further elevated and magnified. And if the Yahrtzait is that of a Leader of Jewry – then the elevation of his holy soul and its sacred achievements results in an unparalleled elevation for all Jewry. Such a Yahrtzait is that of the Previous Rebbe, Leader of our generation, which takes place on Yud Shevat.

As explained earlier, the elevation of a week’s spiritual attainment occurs on the subsequent Shabbos. It follows, then, that it is specifically on the Shabbos following Yud Shevat that Jewry’s immense spiritual elevation is finalized and completed.

No wonder then, that the Shabbos following Yud Shevat is considered the ultimate Shabbos of elevation – Shabbos Shirah!¹

1. **Every Shabbos is a song**

[The concept of Shabbos is strongly associated with “song,” as we will explain. Shabbos Shirah, then, can be regarded as the “ultimate” Shabbos:]

Lechu Neranenuh

1) At Kabalas Shabbos, the service welcoming the Shabbos [on Friday Night], we begin by reciting the entire psalm that starts “Lechu Neranenuh,” “Come, let us *sing* to Hashem; let us raise our voices in jubilation ... Let us approach Him with thanksgiving; let us raise our voices to Him in song, etc.” ...

Mizmor Shir

2) The concept of joyous singing is especially associated with Shabbos [to the extent that the psalm recited each Shabbos by the Levites in the Beis HaMikdash, and which is still recited by all Jewry in their Shabbos prayers, is] “Mizmor Shir LeYom HaShabbos,” “A psalm of *joyous song* for the day of Shabbos.”

Uplifting tune

3) Then there is the Chassidic insight into the Mishnah in Tractate Shabbos, which states, “Kol Ba’alei Sheir Yotza’in BeSheir VeNimshachin BeSheir, “All [animals] that bear a collar, [may] go forth with a collar [in a public domain, on Shabbos], and [may] be drawn by a collar.”

[Simply, the Mishnah teaches a law of Shabbos governing animals in the public domain. However, the word for collar, “Sheir” (שׂוּר), is related to “Shir” (שִׁיר), meaning “joyous song” – both of which are “circular.”

Chassidus therefore finds an allusion in this law to the spiritual affect of song:] Every elevation from one spiritual level to a higher spiritual level (whereby a soul “goes forth” from its previous standing and is “drawn” upwards) is accomplished by Shir, “song.”

[Chassidus further explains that on Shabbos, the spiritual accomplishments of the past week are elevated – and indeed, all realms of creation are then “elevated.”] This elevation, which takes place on Shabbos, is accomplished through “song.”

The ultimate Shabbos

4) We could even say that the chief “elevation through song” that Shabbos accomplishes occurs on *Shabbos Shirah* – and that it is from Shabbos Shirah that all the remaining Shabbosos of the year receive the power to do likewise! (Parshas Beshalach 5752; Hisva’aduyos p.168)

The first Shabbos

5) Note that the *original* command to observe Shabbos is given in Parshas *Beshalach* – Shabbos Shirah. (ibid, footnote 9)

After Yud Shevat – elevating the elevation

[The Rebbe there continues to explain that the principle of elevation that occurs on Shabbos also occurs on the day of one’s Yahrzeit: Throughout the year, the soul of the departed rises to ever higher levels in Heaven. Yet, on the day of its Yahrzeit, it receives an *unparalleled* elevation.

Significantly, the Yahrzeit of the Previous Rebbe, Leader of our generation,

PERFECTING YUD SHEVAT ACTIVITIES

- We should fully utilize this special Shabbos by increasing and perfecting all of our activities that we undertook in honor of Yud Shevat.

STUDY HIS TEACHINGS, FOLLOW HIS DIRECTIVE

- This includes studying the Previous Rebbe's teachings in public sessions, and following the path he laid out in the dissemination of Torah and Chassidus.²

FARBRENG WITH SONG AND JOY

- We should certainly continue the Farbrengens in honor of Yud Shevat, and do so amidst joy and song – for it is specifically on Shabbos Shirah (song) that the service of Yud Shevat reaches its perfection.³

AHAVAS YISRAEL AND ACTUAL DEEDS

- These Farbrengens should be conducted with Ahavas Yisrael (love for our fellow Jews), and should inspire concrete action on our part.⁴

WHEN TO FARBRENG

- We should hold these Farbrengens on 1) Yud Shevat; 2) Shabbos Shirah; and 3) Motzei Shabbos Shirah.⁴

always occurs in the week leading up to Shabbos Shirah. As we have explained, all the days of the week are elevated on the following Shabbos, and therefore, the complete affects of the Yahrzeit occur on the following Shabbos – Shabbos Shirah. In this way, the day of ultimate elevation (the Yahrzeit) coincides with the Shabbos of ultimate elevation (Shabbos Shirah).]

2. Parshas Beshalach 5752; Hisva'aduyos p.180.

3. Ibid, p.319-20.

4. From the telegram composed by the Rebbe, to be sent to Lubavitchers worldwide in honor of Yud Shevat (5748-5752).

Maharal's custom

INTRODUCTION

On Shabbos Shirah 5702, the Previous Rebbe related that the Maharal of Prague (Rabbi Yehudah Loewe⁵) instituted the custom – which will hopefully be reinstated – whereby during the week before Shabbos Beshalach he would inform all the teachers and parents of small children to bring their children to the courtyard of the synagogue on Shabbos Shirah.

There they were told the story of the splitting of the sea and how the birds sang and chirped at the time that Moshe and the Jewish people burst out into the song of “Az Yashir.” The children picked fruits from the trees that had sprouted in the sea-bed and fed the singing birds.

The Maharal then distributed “Kasha” (buckwheat) to the children with which to feed the birds and fowl as a remembrance of the miraculous fruits of the sea which the children gave to the birds.

After this ceremony, the Maharal would bless the children and their parents with the traditional blessing – to raise and educate them in a manner that results in the children growing up to “Torah, Chupah and good deeds.”⁶

The Alter Rebbe, however, in his Shulchan Aruch (Orech Chayim 324:8) rules that it would be incorrect to place food before the birds on Shabbos itself.

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5. [Rabbi Yehudah Loewe, the “Maharal of Prague” (1525-1609), was an outstanding Torah scholar, author of classic Torah works (upon which – together with other works – the Alter Rebbe based his Tanya), philosopher, Kabbalist and Jewish leader. Popularly known for his extraordinary efforts to protect the Jewish community of Prague from the frequent threat of blood libels, the Maharal was a direct descendant of King David, and direct ascendant of the Rebbes of Chabad. His Yahrzeit is on a highly significant day in the Chassidic calendar, the 18th of Elul.]
 6. Based on Sichos In English, vol.34, Shabbos Parshas Beshalach, Tu BeShevat 5747.

Note that while Chabad do not distribute “Kasha” to the birds, it is nevertheless customary to *eat* “Kasha” on Shabbos Shirah.⁷

DO NOT FEED BIRDS ON SHABBOS

- Although the Previous Rebbe publicly *recounted*⁸ the practice instituted by the Maharal (of feeding the birds on Shabbos Shirah), he [notably] was *never* observed keeping this practice himself [and it is therefore *not* the Chabad custom to feed the birds during Shabbos Shirah].⁹

DISCUSS THE CUSTOM

- However, since the Previous Rebbe made a point of publicizing this custom [including the detail of feeding the birds], we should therefore *mention* and *discuss it* on Shabbos Shirah.¹⁰

GATHER KIDS TO RECOUNT MIRACLE

- In keeping with the first part of the Maharal’s custom, we should certainly gather children and tell them of the miraculous

7. Sefer HaMinhagim; HaYom Yom, p.20; Likutei Diburim, vol.2, p.521.

8. Sefer HaSichos 5702, p.73.

9. **Fed by Heaven**

One of the reasons for [not feeding the birds on Shabbos Shirah] is based on the ruling of the Alter Rebbe in his Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 324:8), “There are those who have the custom to place wheat before the birds on Shabbos Shirah – but it is *incorrect* to do so, since we are not responsible to provide the birds with sustenance [and it is therefore not permitted to feed them on Shabbos].”

This is certainly the case nowadays, when it is highly uncommon for the feeding of chicken and other fowl to be our direct responsibility – as was common in the tiny villages of former generations. (Parshas Beshalach 5749; Hisva’aduyos p.270, footnote 118)

10. **Study the practice**

... Anyhow, even if, for whatever reason, we do not actually observe this custom (of feeding birds) on Shabbos Shirah, we should nevertheless recall and discuss it. One of the reasons for the Previous Rebbe publicly discussing this custom, and then instructing that his discussion be published and publicized, was in order that we should study his address from time to time – particularly on a relevant occasion, i.e., [on Shabbos Shirah] when it is a “timely topic.” And as with all of his Torah teachings, this address is considered part of the Oral Torah. (Parshas Beshalach 5749; Hisva’aduyos p.275)

splitting of the sea – including the detail concerning the Jewish children who picked fruit from trees that miraculously sprouted from the sea-bed and fed them to the birds that joined the Jews in song.⁹

INGRAIN COMPASSION FOR ALL

- We should particularly strive to imbue our children with the positive trait of compassion for all living creatures, in the spirit of the verse, “His mercy is upon all His creatures.” This is effectively impressed upon them by recounting the feeding of the birds on Shabbos Shirah.⁹

מוקדש

לב"ק אדמו"ר מלך המשיח



לעילוי נשמת

ר' שמעון ב"ר יעקב ע"ה נפטר י"ז שבט

ולעילוי נשמת

אמי מורתי פריידא בת משולם ע"ה נפטר כ"ה שבט

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

נדפס ע"י בנם

ר' דניאל דוד ב"ר שמעון שיחיו לאופר



לעילוי נשמת

יהודה בערל הלוי בן לייב



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בניהם ובנותיהם:

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