



# Carnegie Shul Chatter

## March 31, 2021



## Notable Times

Light Shabbat candles, 7:28pm

Shabbat Zoom service, 10am

Light Yom Tov candles after 8:28 (1st night),  
8:29 (2nd night)

## Zoom in for Services

Our abbreviated Shabbos service begins at 10 am and lasts approximately an hour. Click here to join:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86548579957?pwd=Rk10a3V4eGpDQTF2WlZSYStkRFpBQT09>

Find the Birnbaum siddur at: <https://opensiddur.org/compilations/liturgical/siddurim/kol-bo/hasiddur-hashalem-by-paltiel-birnbaum-1949/>

## All in Our Heads

Isn't it amazing that when something is denied to us we seem to want it even more than we normally would?

I don't know about you, but if I miss breakfast on any given day I can make it to lunch time without any real problem. But on Yom Kippur, when I am not allowed to eat, it seems like I am going to starve to death if I have to wait until lunch to eat.

And yes, I do like sandwiches, but why is it that just a day or two into Passover we are so upset when we cannot eat bread. Is it really that terrible a thing?

Give up television or riding in a car on Shabbos? Impossible to be that observant. But when you decide to just do nothing sometimes when you are not commanded to do so, it really isn't that big a deal, is it?

This Sunday, on Easter, many of our Christian friends will go to church in the morning, eat lunch, then treat the day as if it is any other day. Here in Florida the beaches are expected to be jammed.

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Around the country, people will go to Major League Baseball games. It will be just another day to many.

But on our major Jewish holidays we do not go about business as usual. We spend hours in Shul. We deny ourselves foods or activities. Is it hard to do? You bet it is. But I, for one, am glad that we do. I think that giving up some of our daily pleasures to concentrate on what God has done for us is a worthy thing to do.

And it really isn't all that hard.



## Rejoicing at the Red Sea

According to tradition, the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea on the seventh day of Pesach. Thus, on the seventh day, which this year falls on this week's Sabbath, we read from Exodus, Chapter 15. It is a passage known as the Song of the Sea that we read every Shabbos and it can be found in English on page 330 and 332 of our Birnbaum siddur,

*Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord, they said: I will sing to the Lord for He is highly exalted; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.*

*Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord, they said: I will sing to the Lord for He has completely triumphed; the horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, for He has come to my aid. This is my G-d, and I will glorify Him: my father's G-d, and I will extoll Him. The Lord is a warrior — Lord is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his army He has cast into the sea, and his picked captains are engulfed in the Red Sea. The depths cover them: they went down into the depths like a stone. Thy right hand, O Lord, glorious in power, Thy right hand, O Lord, crushes the enemy. By Thy great majesty, Thou destroyest Thy opponents. Thou sendest forth Thy wrath — it consumes them like stubble. By the blast of Thy nostrils, the waters piled up — the flood stood upright like a wall; the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said: "I will pursue them, I will*



*overtake them, I will divide the spoil, my lust shall be glutted with them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them." Thou didst blow with Thy wind — the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters. Who is like Thee, among the mighty, O, Lord? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, awe-inspiring in renown, doing marvels? Thou didst stretch out Thy right hand — the earth swallowed them. In Thy grace, Thou hast led the people whom Thou hast redeemed; by Thy power Thou hast guided them to Thy holy habitation. The peoples have heard of it and trembled; pangs have seized the inhabitants of Philistia. Then were the chieftains of Edom in agony; trembling seized the lords of Moab; all the inhabitants melted away. Terror and dread fell on them. Under the great sweep of Thy arm they are as still as a stone, till Thy people pass over, O Lord, till the people Thou hast acquired pass over. Thou wilt bring them in and plant them in the highlights of Thy own, the place which then, O Lord, hast made for Thy dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established. The Lord shall reign forever and ever. The Lord shall reign forever and ever.*

*For sovereignty is the Lord's, and He governs the nations. Deliverers shall go up to Mount Zion to rule the hill country of Esau, and dominion shall be the Lord's. The Lord shall be king over all the earth; on that day shall the Lord be one and His name one.*

What we don't read every Sabbath is another song that was sung at the sea that is known as Miriam's Song. Here is an interesting commentary about Miriam's Song from [myjewishlearning.com](http://myjewishlearning.com):

## Song(s) of the Sea

Miriam's instinctive song of praise tells us something important about calling out to God.

In Parashat Beshalach, we find two songs.

The more well-known and elaborate of the two is known as Shirat Hayam ("The Song of the Sea"). Spanning 18 verses of the Torah (Exodus 15:1-15:18), this song has come to be identified with the Israelites expression of faith and their recognition of God's role as protector and warrior.

Shirat Hayam has become a focal point of our tradition and liturgy, included in our prayer books and recited each morning. The rabbis included the song in our prayer books to recited during the Pesukei D'Zimra ("Verses of Song") section of our morning prayers. When we arrive at Shirat Hayam during the weekly reading of the Torah portion, we pay homage to it by standing and singing it with a special melody.

The second song, shorter and less gallant, appears right after Shirat Hayam. In Exodus 15:20-21, we find these verses:

Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her in dance with timbrels. And Miriam chanted for them: Sing to the Lord, for



He has triumphed gloriously; Horse and driver He has hurled into the sea.

The song of Miriam, recorded in one lone verse, speaks volumes. Some scholars claim that these two songs are one and the same. The 13th-century French scholar Hezekiah ben Manoah, better known as the Chizkuni, argues that since the Torah uses words sparingly, it did not repeat the entire song again, but merely alluded to the first line suggesting the rest to follow.

But the two songs in fact serve different functions. Shirat Hayam is a record of events when the Israelites had full faith in God and trust in Moses their leader. Miriam's song functions more like prayer, its words more akin to liturgy.

First, consider the length: just one verse. In Eastern religions, one word or phrase can serve as a focal point of prayer. Reciting the word again and again, the worshipper can get lost in the experience of the sound. In the Hasidic tradition, this is how the niggun functions — the repetitive melody becomes a meditation, stirring the soul and captivating the heart. One can imagine the women as swirling colors, dancing on the shores of the sea, timbrels in hand, singing to God.

Second, consider the structure. Miriam's song has an urgency to it. Shirat Hayam begins Az yashir Moshe — then Moses will sing. But Miriam's song is written in the present tense, in the plural imperative: Shiru ladonai, sing to God now. The Midrash (Shemot Rabbah 23:8) recognizes this, stating that when Israel emerged from the sea, the angels came to sing to God first. But God said, let my children sing first because they are of flesh and blood. They must sing now before they die. But you, as long as you desire, you remain alive and can sing. Miriam grabbed the moment.

In Western culture, we don't often experience this communal instinct to sing, but the opportunities are there — in exceptional worship experiences, or even at concerts when throngs of fans sing their favorite song together along with the artist. And at Jewish festivities, particular songs often spring to our lips. No one has to be asked to sing at a wedding or bar mitzvah. We do it instinctively in celebration.

Finally, consider the instruments. The biblical commentator Rashi wonders where the women found these drums. Could it be that the Israelite women, rushing from their Egyptian homes





in the middle of the night with only a few precious belongings and some matzah to eat, brought drums with them? Rashi quotes a Midrash to explain:

With drums and dancing: “The righteous women of that generation were confident that God would do miracles for them; so they brought drums with them from Egypt.”

We can surmise from this commitment to shlep the instruments from Egypt that music must have played a central role

in ancient worship. And glancing through the Book of Psalms, it becomes clear that music was in fact a focal point of Israelite prayer. Psalm 92 reads: “A song for Shabbat: Sing to God with a ten stringed harp with a voice and lyre together.” Or Psalm 150: “Praise God with the blast of the horn/ with the violin and harp/ with timbrel and dance/ with lute and pipe/ with resounding cymbals/ with loud clashing cymbals.” In the ancient temple, the Levites would accompany the sacrificial offerings with singing and musical instruments.

In our day, we don’t need a playbook to tell us to sing when we pray. It comes naturally. Melodies tether us to one another and to God. There is a mystical power in unbridled human song. It lifts the spirit and brings us to our feet, evoking the passion and celebration at the shores of the sea.

May we take a page from Miriam’s song book by creating our own unique songs of praise to God. They don’t have to be long, just love notes from the heart. On whatever shores we find ourselves, may these songs bring us together in freedom, community and lasting peace.

*Rabbi Danielle Upbin teaches widely on Jewish spirituality, meditation and yoga. She is also the associate rabbi and prayer leader at Congregation Beth Shalom in Clearwater, Florida. Her musical release, “Reveal the Light,” is available on Amazon, iTunes, and Spotify or through her website, [danielleupbin.com](http://danielleupbin.com).*

