

# Shiur for musicians

3 Sivan 5773

(Notes taken during class, not reviewed nor edited by Harav Ginsburgh)

## *1. Musicians, God's army of redemption*

The day of the giving of the Torah is like a wedding, as it says "On the day of his wedding" in the Song of Songs, and the sages explain that "the day of his wedding" refers to the day on which the Torah was given to us at Mt. Sinai. Before Shavu'ot we have 3 days of separation (הַיָּבֻלָּה). What do we need these 3 days for today? Since we are the bride in this wedding (and the groom, as it were, is the Almighty), this means that we need these three days to rehearse, to get ready for our wedding. There are couples that actually volunteer to get married on these three days, all so that we get a chance to rehearse our marriage with the Almighty on Shavu'ot.

It is simple that all the people that are present here, are part of the redemption corps of God's army. There are different corps in God's army, and certainly those who play music are the redemption corps. They are the ones responsible for bringing in the redemption with the Mashiach. After the Rebbe suffered his first stroke, he stopped talking and therefore was only able to answer by nodding his head. Still a few days after the stroke he said the three last words that we have heard, "With much singing and music" (בְּרַב שִׁירָה וְזִמְרָה). Apart from the power of these words, being that they were the last words we heard him speak, what was his intent? Perhaps the Rebbe wanted to state that his own health and the coming of Mashiach are dependent on these two things, a great deal of music and song.

Normally song is with the mouth and music is with instruments, so both are needed together, the vocal music sung by the singer and the accompaniment with instruments. This is what it means to conquer the world, as God blessed Adam and Eve, "Conquer the earth and fill it." This is especially true these three days before Shavu'ot.

## *2. Bringing people together through music*

In each of the three festivals we read a Book, called a scroll from the Bible. On Shavu'ot we read the Book of Ruth, which is also the story of a wedding, specifically between Bo'az and Ruth. Their descendant was King David, the Mashiach. The Book of Ruth ends with the verse, "Bo'az gave birth to Oved who gave birth to Yishai, who gave birth to David." To reach David, we need this special wedding between Boaz and Ruth. These three days of separation are also the final three days of the Counting of the Omer all represent the yearning of the bride for her husband, and these three days are days of cleanliness, when we purify ourselves in preparation for our unification with the Almighty (every Jewish bride counts days of cleanliness and ritual purity before her wedding day). Now, on Pesach, the day before we began counting the omer, we read we read the book in the Bible called the Song of Songs. So if the entire counting of the Omer began with the Song of Songs, which describes the yearning of the bride and groom for

one another, then it follows that all the days of the counting of the Omer are like an extension of the Song of Songs. They are a daily expression of our yearning to be with the Almighty.

There is a halachic question about whether it is permissible to take a verse out of the Song of Songs and compose music to it. The Song of Songs is called the Holy of Holies of the Bible. The purpose of all music is to celebrate the joining of two people in a wedding. The purpose of all music is to bring people close together. Just as there are chaperones for the bride and groom (שׁוֹשְׁבֵינָא דְמַלְכָא, שׁוֹשְׁבֵינָא דְמַטְרוֹנִיתָא), whose task it is to bring them together, so the purpose of the musician and his music is to awaken the groom's yearning for his bride. This is called awakening from below (אַתְעָרוּתָא דְלַתְתָּא). But, if this is so, it is permissible to take holy verses from the Song of Songs and write music to them? This is not a simple question, but if there was a tzadik who did this, then it is certainly permitted. We would now like our musicians to play three songs set to verses from the Song of Songs.

There are certain verses that have become very popular, and have become almost as well known as a bumper sticker, then that makes it even more permissible. One of these verses is "I am to my beloved and my beloved is to me" (אֲנִי לְדוֹדִי וְדוֹדִי לִי), whose initials spell Elul (אֶלּוּל), the last month of the year.

The second song from the Song of Songs that is very well known is, "The sound of my beloved knocking..." (קוֹל דְּדוֹדִי דּוֹפֵק). This song was composed by the Alter Rebbe of Chabad.

The third song they will play is from Rebbe Naftali of Rupschitz, to the words, "The song of songs from Solomon" (שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים אֲשֶׁר לְשִׁלְמוֹה), the very first words of the Song of Songs. If it were not for Rebbe Naftali, we would be weary of composing music to this verse.

The second song, Kol Dodi, is so powerful, that the Alter Rebbe used to bring Jews back to Judaism and Torah observance with it. It has a great deal of awakening from below. In every true teshuvah there has to be both joy and crying. Whomever knows the song should of course join our musicians.

### ***3. Music must include both joy and weeping***

The full first verse we just sang is, "The song of songs from Solomon; He shall kiss me from the kisses of his mouth" (שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים אֲשֶׁר לְשִׁלְמוֹה יִשְׁקֵנִי מִנְשִׁיקוֹת פִּיהוּ). The kisses of his mouth represent the new interpretation and revelations of Torah that we will hear from the mouth of the Mashiach. It is known that the Ba'al Shem Tov went up to the hall of the Mahsiach and asked him, when will the master come? And he answered, When your wellsprings spread forth. The written Torah of what the Ba'al Shem Tov taught is written in the Tanya, written by his student's student, the Alter Rebbe. The entire book was written to come finally to the quote from the Zohar that, "Joy is in the heart from one side and crying is in the heart from the other side." The right side of the heart is full of the good inclination and that is where I am joyous, it receives from the mind, which brings it an illumination from the Divine soul. The left side of the heart is where the evil

inclination resides, so it is full with crying. The gematria of crying יחידה is בכיה, the highest part of the soul, and the gematria of joy חידה is חיה, the second highest part of the soul. The Chayah, the living one, is revealed by joy, but interestingly, the Yechidah, the highest part of the soul that is connected with self-sacrifice is revealed by the crying of the left side of the heart. God Himself is at one and the same time joyous and crying, as it were. The sages learn this from two verses: one reads, עוֹ וְחֵדוּהָ בְּמִקוֹמוֹ, there is joy and might in His place. The other reads, בְּמִסְתָּרַיִם תִּבְכֶּה נַפְשִׁי, in the concealed place, My soul cries. Why does it cry? The sages answer, because of the greatness (גְּאוּנוֹתָן שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל) of the Jewish people that was taken and given to the nations of the world, all because of the evil inclination which led to the Temple's destruction. Every day God regrets having created the evil inclination. So internally He cries. There is another reading that says that internally God is joyful and externally He is crying, but this is not the accepted reading. Still, what it means is that even in the crying there is some joy, joy because the exile will eventually end and based on the amount of difficulty experienced is the reward received at the end. In any case, the joy inside the crying is truly concealed. What we learn from this is that this is the nature of Jewish music.

Normally, music is divided into two categories, גְּעִיגוּעִים, which is yearning, and שְׂמֵחָה, which is joy. Yearning is related to crying, but a true Chassidic melody of yearning is full of joy in it. There is always hope in it. What is God's most internal place, the place that He cries? That is the Radla, the unknowable head in the crown. IN the Jewish soul this is the yechidah, the singular one, the highest level of the soul and the power of faith. The Arizal teaches us that in this most concealed and inner space, there is something more, not just yearning. The Arizal calls this hidden aspect of this most concealed room of the soul, חֲבִיטוֹן עוֹ הַעֲצָמוֹת, The hidden might of the very essence. Earlier we said that joy is related to עוֹ וְחֵדוּהָ בְּמִקוֹמוֹ, Might and joy in his place. So if there is might in this inner room, that is the hope for the immediate redemption of both the entire people and of each individual.

There is someone among our friends here that composed a melody just a few days ago. He let me hear it. In it he says, I am a giant, I am a gnat. He also says, I am an old man, I am a babe. This is very typical of this person. What does a Jew sing all the time, not just I am old and I am young, but I am happy and I am crying. There is a melody of yearning (crying) and there can be a happy melody that expressed crying out of joy. About the redemption it says that it is בְּבִכּוֹ יָבוֹא, with tears he comes. Not everyone can stand the great revelations that will occur so there will be crying. So what typifies a good Jewish melody. At first I recognize it as either a melody of yearning or of joy. But, with a little change in orchestration, it can be sung as the other type.

We saw this with the Lubavitcher Rebbe who took traditional Chabad melodies that were originally melodies of yearning and transformed them into happy tunes by singing them a little bit differently. This is the paradox, the power to carry opposites that is especially typical of this week's parashah, Naso. The non-Jew by contrast cannot contain these paradoxes. He is either this or that. But a Jew, is how do we say in Chassidut: Walking bitul, being selfless. A paradox in and of himself. As we said, one half is crying the other half is full of joy.

There is good crying that comes out of joy. But, can there be the opposite, joy that comes out of negative things, for instance the type of joy that comes with debauchery. There can also be crying that is negative. It can be connected with the Giving of the Torah. In three days there is a special mitzvah that everyone attend a synagogue and hear the reading of the Ten Commandments. Apart from 10, which is sanctified, the number 7 is also very special, endeared. The seventh commandment from the beginning is "You shall not commit adultery" (לא תנאף). What is the main example of negative crying in the entire Torah, and apparently the holiday of Shavu'ot comes to rectify this negative aspect of crying. Every holiday is related to joy, ושמחת בחגך. But, Shavu'ot is also connected with rectifying crying. What is the negative form of crying. It is written in a verse in this week's reading, וישמע משה את הקם בוכה למשפחותיו ויחר אף ה' מאוד ובעיני משה רע. In this verse it says that Moshe heard the people crying, to their families, and the Almighty was very angry, and in the eyes of Moshe it was bad. This is the only time that God is described as "very" angry in the Torah. Indeed the 6 permutations of "very" (מאד) equal the word "bad" (רע). They were crying about the restrictions on marriage between relatives.

Even though the musical scale of 7 notes was perhaps not known in the time of the Torah, the sages note that every song in the Torah begins with the word א, which equals 1 and 7 (alef and zayin). The sages say that the moment you marry a woman, there are 7 others that become forbidden to you. This is one of the secrets of the word א, which equals 8, or 1 plus 7. Meaning that you should love your wife so much that she is worth 7 other women. This should be one of the things built into the songs in a wedding, that the groom so loves his bride that he comes out in song. In any case, these restrictions caused the people to cry and more than anything it caused God to be very angry with them. So the holiday of Shavu'ot comes to rectify this negative weeping. There are many forms of crying, there is weeping because of the revelation of the Torah's secrets and there is weeping because of the hope for redemption, etc. When the Ten Commandments were spoken by God, there was on the one hand great joy, but on the other hand, with every commandment, their soul departed their bodies, this was something very terrible, an overpowering experience. And this is what rectifies the negative weeping in the world. This is the task entrusted to every Jewish musician, to bring together, to inter-include the joy and the weeping together. Our music should be so powerful that it awakens the Almighty to feel that He too as it were, weds us and is willing to give up 7 other women for this, the 70 nations of the world, whose root is 7.

Since Avi Piementa has arrived, we'll ask him to sing Ani Ledodi.

Dadi [ben Ami] from now on we'll just sing.

Now we'll here the nigun, אַתָּה תְּקוּם תְּרַחֵם צִיּוֹן בִּי עַתָּה לְחַנְּנֵהּ בִּי בָּא מוֹעֵד.

While the musicians tune their instruments we'll say something more, the redemption comes in the merit of righteous women. There are some righteous women here, and what the Torah forbids is not just improper relationships between men and women, but also to hear a woman singing. Perhaps one of the reasons that we are still crying before the redemption, is that we are crying over the greatness of women that has been taken from them, their singing voice. This will be true only until the coming of

Mashiach when it will become permissible. The weeping that appears after the giving of the Torah is not mentioned until parashat Beha'alotcha, because they carried it quietly in their hearts.

אתה תקום תרחם ציון כי עת לחננה כי בא מועד  
כי רצו עבדיך את אבניה ואת עפרה יחוננו

Now we'll ask our friend Ariel Zilber, who just put out a new disc, to sing. One of his songs on the new disc, thank you for sending it to us, is called או קנה, which is from verses in the Book of Vayikra (Leviticus), speaking about the importance of buying from Jews in the land of Israel and of supporting Jewish labor in the land of Israel. או קנה מיד  
עמיתך וחי אחיך עמך

Ariel if you're already up on the stage, why not sing another one. תתעורר.  
תתעורר תתעורר כי אתה נמצא בחשך חזק

This nigun the Rav originally composed in honor of someone, I believe it was Ben Landa. I like to note that it has a hint of Irish ballad in it.

There is a Karlin nigun that is set to the words of the piyut, עליונים ששו ותחתונים עליו  
בקבלת תורה הכתובה מסיני

תואר כלה מאד נתעלה בקבלת יום זה עשרת הדברים

#### ***4. Music connects the higher worlds with the lower***

One of the important things in the Giving of the Torah was that before the Torah was given there was a decree that the lower worlds shall not ascend and the upper worlds shall not descend. But, then Moshe ascended above and the Almighty descended on the mountain. These are higher unifications above. These are the higher worlds. There are also a bride and a groom below. Before the giving of the Torah, the joy of the wedding above, the unifications above did not descend below. And likewise, when there was joy below in a mundane wedding, it did not awaken anything above. The giving of the Torah causes this to happen. Every mitzvah that we perform causes a shidduch between the lower worlds and the higher worlds, and every unification above causes joy here below. There is a holy letter from the BST where he explains that the greatest joy in the world and the greatest joy above is caused by the joy of a bride and groom here below. And this is what the holiday of Shavu'ot that is coming upon us in three days with joy causes.

Therefore, let us play something from this letter from the BST whose yearzeit is on Shavu'ot. There are three great tzadikim connected with Shavu'ot. The first is of course Moshe Rabbeinu who gave us the Torah on Shavu'ot. Then there is King David and his reincarnation in the BST that both passed away on this day. So apparently all three of these tzadikim are related to this connection between the higher and lower worlds. In general, up to the present time, as the Lubavitcher Rebbe taught, we were engaged in the Service of Clarification which is to separate good from evil. But, presently, as we prepare for the redemption, we are entrusted with the Service of Unifications, the special service described by the Ba'al Shem Tov. For this reason everyone writing music and playing should feel that the joy that they cause here below unifies and causes joy above. The purpose of every melody should be to unify, the nigun, the melody above should

descend and the melody below should ascend. Lechaim lechaim. May we all merit to engage in the Service of Unifications. Let us therefore sing the nigum from this well known letter from the Ba'al Shem Tov. אימתי קאתי מר לכשיפוצו מעינותיך חוצה.

## *5. Levites, musical accompaniment, and loaning from God above*

There is a saying of the sages that if a person doesn't have enough money for the expenses of the holiday, even if he doesn't see where he can cover the expenses from at the moment, God says, Loan on me, and I will pay it back. לוו עלי ואני פורע. This word לוו does not only mean "loan" it also means accompaniment (ליווי). The person who is singing is also accompanying the higher melody that descends from above. This word is related to the Levites. When we play music we push away all the negative spirits in a person. One of the trope of music in the Torah is called גרשיים. In the giving of the Torah we have to have in mind that the Torah includes 4 levels, the trope (טעמים) are the highest level. Actually it says that only the Mashiach will explain the meaning of the trope. Song (שירה) is also the gematria of prayer (תפלה). Before we said that music is related to a wedding and the song that the groom sings to his bride is the Torah the "song," Write this song (כתבו לכם את השירה הזאת) and the song the bride sings for her husband is the prayer. These are the upper worlds and the lower worlds unifying. So there are 2 systems with 4 levels, the טנת"א (trope, vowels, tags, and letters) that descend from above to below and there is the Pardes, the four levels of interpretation (פשט רמז דרש סוד), which ascend from below to above. So what we do is we loan on God's account.

There is an allusion written in Kabbalah that these words, לוו עלי ואני פורע. Both the טנתא and the פרדס correspond to the letters of Havayah. What accompanies them? It is written that they are accompanied by the letters before and after these letter י-הוה in the alphabet. The letters preceding י-הוה are טדהד. Together they equal 22. The letters that come after י-הוה are even more well known, these are the letters that are written on the Mezuzah's backside, כוון. So there are two accompaniments, before and after. כו equals 26 (י-הוה itself) and the ו is the value of "one" (אחד). So כוון is equal to "Havayah is one" (י-הוה אחד). When we add them together, we get 61, the value of אני. That is the meaning of the phrase, לוו עלי, those that accompany Me, they are the value of ואני פורע, and I will pay back.

It is customary that the bride and groom's parents accompany them at the wedding. The chaperones here are the ones who develop one's natural consciousness, the rectified form of self-consciousness. This phrase was said about the festivals in general and about Shavu'ot specifically.

How does the אני, the rectified I pay back, thanks to its power, since the word אני is cognate with the word אוני, power, the power that God gave Adam and Eve to fill the Earth and fill it.

## ***6. The Ba'al Shem Tov's crowning achievement: A new song for the Jewish people***

Now, how much do the Rebbe's last spoken words, "With a great deal of song and music" (בְּרַב שִׁירָה וְזִמְרָה) equal? 204 plus 515 plus 258 equals 977 which is the value of כְּתָר שֵׁם טוֹב, the crown of Good Name. We said that there are three tzadikim particularly related with Shavu'ot, Moshe Rabbeinu, King David, and the BST. The Tanya is the Torah of the Ba'al Shem Tov, the Torah of Mashiach.

In the Ethics of the Fathers, Pirkei Avot, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai says that there are 3 crowns, but then there is one above them called the crown of the Good Name. Moshe Rabbeinu is the crown of Torah and Aharaon is brother is the crown of priesthood, and then King David is the crown of kingdom. Finally, the BST is the crown of the Good Name that rises above them all. Who today is the crown of the Good Name, it is all the musicians who play and entertain the bride and groom.

There are stories from the BST about Kelzmer's that did not merit a good name, they did not do good things, because they blemished their procreative covenant. But, they also did wonderful things by bringing joy to the bride and groom. By doing so they certainly merited the crown of the Good Name. The crown of the Mashiach (the Mashiach is certainly the crown of Torah and the crown of Kingdom) but his real crown is the crown of the Good Name. And these are the words that the Rebbe spoke, with much singing and melody.

We explained the 3 crowns, Torah, kingdom, and the Good Name. We said that the crown of the Good Name corresponds to the BST. But, he is more known for his Torah, for his bringing the light of kingdom, of Mashiach to the world, but we now understand that his greatest crown was that he added a new song in the hearts of the Jewish people.

The Torah was given in the third month, Sivan, because the Torah itself is divided again and again into 3 parts. Moshe Rabbeinu is the only prophet to prophesize as through a clear glass, but Aharon is the head of all prophets who prophesized through a not clear glass, which is called prophesizing with the word "Thus" (כֵּן), which is how the Priestly blessing begins, כֵּן תִּבְרַכּוּ אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. When we divide the three parts of the Tanach, Pentateuch, Prophets and Writings, they correspond to the three siblings, Moshe Rabbeinu to the Pentateuch, Aharon to the Prophets (as we just explained) and finally, Miriam to the Writings. There are different systems as to which book comes first in the Prophets, but one states that the Book of Ruth is the first, and this certainly corresponds to the holy spirit with which the writings were written, Miriam's special quality. Indeed, Ruth is the beginning of kingdom, since she was King David's great grandmother. So we have now all three crowns corresponding to the three siblings, Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam and the crown of the Good Name ascends above them all.