

Let Freedom SING

Nissan – the month that includes Passover – is considered by the Torah to be the first month of the year. We celebrate Rosh Hashana as the New Year, but that is actually the seventh month according to Torah. While Rosh Hashana is the birthday of the world, Passover is the birthday of the Jewish people and our connections, commitments and covenants with God.

The journey of our Israelite family is a circular one. Our ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob started in Canaan; Jacob and his children travelled to Egypt, where their descendants were enslaved; then Moses led the people across the desert back to their original homeland...but in the meantime, Canaan had become “the Promised Land.” Along the way, we experienced prosperity and then oppression before the struggles that led to freedom. Returning to our roots was a “coming home” – but a changed reality. Instead of a wandering tribe of shepherds, the new entry was as a people with a special relationship with God and Torah.

Among the many dramatic moments of this journey is the powerful splitting of the Sea of Reeds, with the Israelites fleeing their oppressors thanks to one of God's most memorable miracles. Imagine, for a moment, experiencing such a wondrous event. What would your reaction be? Especially after enduring such persecution and fear, what kind of reaction would be natural?

According to Torah, our ancestors responded spontaneously with song and dance. They sang the song we now sing in our own liturgy, “*Mi Chamocah Ba-Eilim Adonay? Mi Kamocha Ne-dar ba-Kodesh? No-rah t'hillot oseh feleh.* – Who is like You, oh LORD, among mighty? Who is like you, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? And Miriam, the prophetess, Aaron's (and Moses') sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dancing. And Miriam sang to them: ‘Sing to God, the Exalted One!’” (Exodus 15:11, 20-21)

The joy of song and dance *is* freedom! It gives us the opportunity to let loose a little bit, and express our inner emotions. Our worship services are filled with music – if you don't always know the words, the *feeling* within the music helps us connect to the Holiness of God as well as our own inner soul. It also helps us connect with the rest of community, joining voices together, enhancing the experience for all. And just as importantly, music opens the gates for learning, as children

Two major events this month bring the musical spirit to TBT. First, our Gala honoring the educators throughout the temple's history. “The Youth Shall See Visions,” a song by Debbie Friedman (of blessed memory) helps us recognize the devotion of these angels who introduced our young people to the joy of Judaism. Then, two of our most important holidays collide with each other: Shabbat and Passover. This year's community *Seder* at Kingwood Country Club will include more music than in the past, as Cantor Tunitsky will be joining us and partnering with me to lead us in the ultimate freedom celebration.

Let's celebrate the best of Judaism together – and let's all sing about it!

L'shalom,

Rabbi Dan Gordon

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