

The Healing Power of Shir Ha'Shirim

Rabbi Hagay Batzri
with Dafna Ezran

The name of this week Parasha is "Emor" Emor translates as a command—"say." We recite it twice a day during our prayers when we describe how the incense, or "ketoret," was prepared for use in the Mishkan, or holy sanctuary that travelled with the Jewish people as they wandered through the desert, and then later in the Bet Hamikdash, or Holy Temple, in Jerusalem. In Baraita, Rabbi Natan tells us: "when he [the Kohen] ground the incense, he would say, 'Grind it very fine, very fine grind it' for the human voice is beneficial the spices."

Today, we ask "how could the human voice possibly benefit the spices?"

If we look to the Zohar, the source of Kabbalah, we find that this statement of Rabbi Natan is taken very seriously. It is seen as a very powerful chant and, furthermore, it is connected and related to the power of chanting the Song of Songs. The Song of

Songs, or Shir HaShirim, is a beautiful, delicate poem describing the love of the Jewish people and Hashem through the description of a human relationship and through the imagery of the natural world. In comparison to the chant for spices, the impact of the Song of Songs is easy to appreciate on a very basic level; but it can also be explored in depth on many levels. We benefit from chanting the Shir Hashirim any time but especially every Friday night on Erev Shabbat, and each day from Passover to Shavuot, during the time period when we count the Omer.

But how could the chant for spices and the chanting of the Song of Songs be connected?

If we take a moment to think about it, it is not so hard to understand. The power of expressing love, of celebrating and tenderly caring for another being or object, connects the two. What Rabbi Natan says, in brief, is this. When we talk to something that is inanimate, such as the spices for incense, while, at the same time, we make a physical change to it, we are benefitting it. Think about it. When we take the time and care to grind the incense

properly, thoroughly, then the incense will smell better.

The Torah, Tanakh and Talmud recognize the connections between humans and the vegetative and inanimate world.

When we see flowers, mountains, or animals, when we cook special food, when we see beauty in other beings or people, we should appreciate what Hashem has given us. When I have these moments, I chant something related to it from the Torah, the Psalms or Shir Hashirim. When I see a rose blooming, I reach out to touch it and bless it.

After reading this passage in the Zohar, I recognized that our interactions with the inanimate world are beneficial. In fact, scientific research has documented that plants grow better when surrounded by music and the human voice—they produce better fruit and flowers. Some farmers have now put this into practice, filling their fields with the sounds of, yes, music. But, the Zohar goes even further. It a person sings the Shir Hashirim, a poem filled with the celebration and beautiful description of the world, the singer elevates both himself and the universe together.

(Continued on page 2)

Prayer Schedule

SHABBAT

PARASHAT EMOR

Friday, May 6th, 2011

Shaharit 6:30 am

Minhah & Arbit 6:30 pm

Candle Lighting 7:22 pm

Saturday, April 7th

Shaharit 8:30 am

**Blue & White Shabbat
Kahol Lavan Celebration
Israel's Independence Day**
Musical Tribute w/ Rabbi Batzri
"Sephardim in Israel Today"
Talk with Rabbi Bouskila &
Remarks from Israeli Consulate
during Morning Services and
Festive Israeli Kiddush

Tehillim 6:00 pm

Class w/R. Batzri 6:00 pm

Minhah & Arbit 6:30 pm

Motzei Shabbat 8:26 pm

WEEKDAYS

Sunday, May 8th

Shaharit 7:30 am

Monday-Friday

Shaharit 6:30 am

YOM HA'ATZMAUT

ISRAEL INDEPENDENCE DAY

Tuesday, May 10, 2011

EREV SHABBAT

Friday, May 13th, 2011

Shaharit 6:30 am

Minhah & Arbit 6:30 pm

Candle Lighting 7:27 pm

Torah Readings

Parasha 513 - 528

Haftara 528 - 530

Submissions Deadline

Kol Mevasser Newsletter

Tuesdays at 6 pm

Thank You!



Birmingham Synagogue Copes with Disaster

By Rabbi Eytan Yammer

Dear Friends,

I am writing from Birmingham, Alabama which is recovering from a natural disaster of biblical proportions. As you know,... countless small towns in our area suffered incredible tragedy caused by this past week's tornadoes. Within several miles of our home and shul, people have been killed, property damaged, homes destroyed. Pratt City, Pleasant Grove, Fultondale are among the places where only last week people lived and today no longer exist. As one now homeless former resident remarked recently, "Things here aren't broken. They're gone". Anyone who has seen the photos can attest to the accuracy of that statement. Seeing it in person is overwhelming.

As a Jewish community, we are blessed to have come through with life and limb intact. As of this writing no one from the Jewish community is known to have been seriously injured or killed. Some have experienced property damage. Many of us are still in the dark, literally and figuratively. Tens of thousands of people in the area remain without electricity . . . Some don't anticipate having electricity back for another week or more. Almost everyone's perishable food has spoiled

and several families can't afford to replace it.

Our shul and community are responding to the tragedy by attempting to help those whose lives have been devastated by these storms. The medical professionals in our community are volunteering at emergency clinics, and as a community we are visiting people in shelters. We are collecting food, water, clothing, and baby items that are so desperately needed by so many. Because our shul has gas stoves, we were able to feed more than 100 people over Shabbat. We cooked by flashlight and ate by the light of glowsticks. Because we were blessed to have the power restored during Shabbat, our shul and our family home have become places of respite for the community. However, there is no guarantee that the power will remain. Our shul is trying to raise money to install a generator that can power the building so we can continue to provide space for eating, study, sleep, learning and prayer . . . At times like these, when the urge to shut down or cry out is great, we must heed the words of Rav Soloveitchik (Kol Dodi Dofek: "Listen-My Beloved Knocks") about the Jewish response to suffering:

"We do not inquire about the hidden ways of the Almighty but, rather, about the path wherein man shall walk when suffering strikes. We ask neither about the cause ... nor about its purpose, but, rather, about how it might be mended and elevated."

We ask that you assist the

Shir Hashirim (continued)

In Ta'amei Haminhagim, it states in the name of the Maharar, that all healing remedies, or *refuot*, are included in Shir Hashirim. What's more, if there is someone sick in the house, it is good to read the Song of Songs during the day.

It also says, in the book *Segulot Yisrael*, in the name of *Yeshuot Yisrael*, that Shir Hashirim is a good part of the Tanakh to read for healing, for having children, and for matchmaking. In other places it says it is good for "*refuot v'yeshuot bechol inyanim*—healing, hope, and assistance in any matter. The Song of Songs provides remedy for the soul in almost all situations—an all-purpose



Jews in Birmingham as we attempt to mend some of the suffering that surrounds us. To aid our efforts, please donate to the Rabbis Discretionary Fund at and mark your donation "Tornado Recovery Fund." Thank you for your consideration.

Knesseth Israel
3100 Overton Rd
Birmingham AL, 35223

remedy.

The power invested in the Song of Songs is revealed, in part, in the prayer we say after reciting Shir Hashirim: "Master of all the worlds!, may it be Your will, that in the merit of the Song of Songs that we have recited and studied—which is the holiest holy—in the merit of its verses, words, letters, vowel signs, cantillation signs, its word and letters combinations and its allusions and its secrets—holy, pure and awesome—that emanate from it"

For those who would like to listen to the Song of Songs, an audio CD is available in the Kahal Joseph office. I have also posted some of the recordings on youtube. Interestingly, these tracks have received more views than many others I have placed on line—as well as hundreds of comments in just a few months.

All this goes to show the tremendous power that resides in the Shir HaShirim, and its ability to affect people and to change their lives for the better. Since I have been at Kahal Yosef, we have honored the Iraqi tradition of singing the Song of Songs on Friday nights as we welcome the Shabbat. It is my hope and wish that this Sephardic, Iraqi minhag will bring blessings of success and prosperity to all members

Community News

In Memoriam

SHABBAT KIDDUSH

is sponsored
in memory of

Shimon Faraj Iny, z"l

by
Tikva and Yoel Iny
and Family

CONDOLENCES

to the family and friends of
Moshe Shiri, z"l

Who passed away last night in Montreal, Canada. Our deepest sympathy goes out to his wife, Widad Shiri, and to his children, Emil, Danny, Robert and Helen. May Hashem comfort them together with all the mourners of Tzion.

Services and shiva will be held in Montreal, Canada.

It is customary to light a memorial candle in the evening and to donate tzedakah. Family members are encouraged to attend prayer services in honor of loved ones.

Shabbat / 3 Iyar

Hanina bat Chahla
Sasson ben Binyaim Gemal

Sunday / 4 Iyar

Joshua ben Binyamin Gemal

Monday / 5 Iyar

Shimon ben Faraj
Aziza bat Nouna

Tuesday / 6 Iyar

Jane Ester Feldman*
Tifaha bat Mazal

Wednesday / 7 Iyar

Ezra ben Yaacov Baruch
Aharon Sasson ben Avraham Haim
Eliyahu ben Ezra Kadoori Halevi
Rachel bat Mazal Tov

Thursday / 8 Iyar

Toba bat Aziza
Salim Ezra A. Haim*

Friday / 9 Iyar

Menashi Jiji
Moshi Haim ben Yehoshua Moche
Simcha bat Hannah

Shabbat / 10 Iyar

Rahmah bat Lulu Khatoon
Abraham Amir Saed Zoghee
To update, please call the office

THANK YOU

To all who sponsored
Shabbat Kahol Lavan
In honor of Israel's Independence

Yaacov Aghalar
Ruth and Edmond Hagooli
Nicole and Abe Mathalon
Sholeh and Moussa Shaaya
Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Shaye
SEC: Sephardic Educational Center

And thank you to our volunteers
David Kohan
Yvette Dabby
Elsa Singman and the
Sisterhood of Kahal Joseph
and everyone who contributed
toward and helped with
this special event.

TO ALL PARENTS

1. Children under 5 years old must be supervised by a parent when using our KIDS ZONE upstairs.
2. No child will be allowed in the synagogue lobby without the constant supervision of a parent or guardian.
3. We are not responsible for unsupervised children walking out the front door.

SPONSOR A KIDDUSH or SEUDAH SHLISHEET

To sponsor a Shabbat Kiddush or an afternoon meal, or Seudah Shlisheet, in honor of a special occasion or in honor of a family member or friend, please contact our office at 310.474.0559. Please notify us 1-2 weeks in advance of the date so that we may honor your generous tribute.

Refuah Shlemah

Yonatan ben Alizah • Mazal Tov
bat Sulha Mitana • Matilda
Louisa • Yaheskel ben Regina •
Ayala bat Naomi • Khayah Noa
bat Sara • Haim ben Mordechai •
Pnina bat Esther • Yosi ben
Esther • Victor ben Latif • Ramah
Regina bat Farha • Aziza bat Sara
Judith bat Malka • Ofek ben Yochai
• Efrayim Zev ben Fayga • Sulha
Matana bat Mozelle • Gershon ben
David • Farangis Miriam bat
Touran • David ben Leah •
Avraham Haim ben Miryam •
Yaakov ben Freda • Rachel bat
Mazal Tov • Avraham ben Rab-
bie • Mazal Sigalit bat Rivkah •
Orit bat Tikvah • Yaakov ben
Aliyah • Chana Leah bat Reiza •
Victoria Cohen • Avraham
Moshe ben Miriam



For Women Only: **Tehillim Reading**
& Torah Learning with Rabbanit Orly Batzri

Monday Mornings at 11:30 am

Shabbat Afternoon 1/2 hour before Minha Afternoon Prayer
in the Kahal Joseph Library

Song of Songs

שיר השירים

The song for this Shabbat, for the honor of the week of Yom Haatzmaut, Israel's Independence Day, will be the first Chapter of Shir Hashirim, the Song of Songs, which is a love song to Hashem. Listen to it Iraqi Yerushalmi melody with Rabbi Batzri chanting Shir HaShirim on youtube at: http://youtube/W4_M0V6pc0Q

פרק א

א שיר השירים אשר לשלמה : ב ישקני מנשיקות פיהו כִּי־טובים דְּדִידָךְ מִיַּיִן : ג לְרִיחַ
שְׁמֹנֶיךָ טובים שְׁמֹן תּוֹרֵךְ שְׁמֶךָ עַל־כֵּן עֲלָמוֹת אֶהְבֹּדְךָ : ד מְשַׁכְּנֵי אַחֲרֶיךָ נְרוּצָה הִבִּיאֲנִי
הַמֶּלֶךְ חֲדָרָיו נְגִילָה וְנִשְׁמָחָה בְּךָ נִזְכִּירָה דְּדִידָךְ מִיַּיִן מִישָׁרִים אֶהְבֹּדְךָ : ה שְׁחוּרָה אָנִי
וְנָאוֹה בְּנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם כְּאֶהְלִי קֶדֶר כִּי רִיעוֹת שְׁלֹמָה : ו אֶל־תִּרְאוּנִי שְׂאֲנִי שְׁחַרְחַרְתְּ
שִׁשְׁזַפְתָּנִי הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בְּנֵי אֲמִי נִחְרוּ־בִי שְׁמֹנִי נִטְרָה אֶת־הַכְּרָמִים כְּרָמִי שְׁלִי לֹא נִטְרַתִּי :
ז הַגִּידָה לִי שְׂאֵהָבָה נִפְשִׁי אֵיכָה תִרְעָה אֵיכָה תִרְבִּיץ בְּצִהָרִים שְׁלֹמָה אֶהְיָה כְּעֹטֶיָה עַל
עֲדָרֵי חִבְרִיךָ : ח אִם־לֹא תִדְעִי לָךְ הַיָּפָה בְּנָשִׁים צְאִי־לָךְ בְּעַקְבֵי הַצֹּאן וּרְעִי אֶת־גְּדִילֶיךָ
עַל מְשַׁכְּנוֹת הָרָעִים : ט לְסַסְתִּי בְּרַכְבֵּי פָרְעָה דְּמִיתֶיךָ רַעֲיֹתִי : י נָאוֹה לְחַיֶּיךָ בַּתָּרִים
צוּאֲרָךְ בְּחַרוּזִים : יא תוֹרֵי זָהָב נַעֲשֶׂה־לָךְ עִם נִקְדוֹת הַכֶּסֶף : יב עַד־שֶׁהַמֶּלֶךְ בְּמַסְבוֹ נִרְדִּי
נִתַּן רִיחוֹ : יג צְרוּר הַמֵּר | דוֹדִי לִי בֵּין שְׂדֵי יַלְדָּן : יד אֲשַׁכַּל הַכֶּפֶר | דוֹדִי לִי בְּכַרְמֵי עֵין
גְּדִי : טו הִנֵּךְ יָפָה רַעֲיֹתִי הִנֵּךְ יָפָה עֵינֶיךָ יוֹנִים : טז הִנֵּךְ יָפָה דוֹדִי אֵף נָעִים אֵף־עַרְשֹׁנוֹ
רַעֲנָנָה : יז קְרוֹת בְּתֵינֹו אֲרָזִים רְחִיטְנוֹ [רְהִיטְנוֹ] בְּרוֹתִים :

Chapter One

1. The song of songs, which is Solomon's.
 2. Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth; for your love is better than wine.
 3. Your anointing oils are fragrant, your name is oil poured out, therefore the maidens love you.
 4. Draw me after you, we will run; the king has brought me into his chambers; we will be glad and rejoice in you, we will praise your love more than wine; rightly they love you.
 5. I am black, but comely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon.
 6. Gaze not upon me, for I am dark, because the sun has scorched me. My mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but my own vineyard I have not kept.
 7. Tell me, O you whom my soul loves, where do you pasture your flock, where do you make it rest at noon; for why should I be like one who veils himself by the flocks of your companions?
 8. If you know not, O most beautiful among women, go your way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and pasture your kids beside the shepherds' tents.
 9. I compare you, O my love, to a mare of the chariots of Pharaoh.
 10. Your cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, your neck with strings of beads.
 11. We will make you ornaments of gold studded with silver.
 12. While the king was reclining at his table, my nard sent forth its fragrance.
 13. My beloved is to me a bundle of myrrh, that lies between my breasts.
 14. My beloved is to me a cluster of henna in the vineyards of Ein-Gedi.
 15. Behold, you are beautiful, my love; behold, you are beautiful; your eyes are doves.
 16. Behold, you are beautiful, my beloved, truly lovely; our couch is green.
 17. (K) The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters are of cypress.
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