



RABBI SHALOM

ROSNER

RAV KEHILLA, OHEL EPHRAIM IN NOFEI HASHEMESH

MAGGID SHIUR, DAF YOMI, OU.ORG

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Why Is the Torah Called a Song?

The final mitzvah in the Torah is the mitzvah of writing a Sefer Torah. The Torah commands:

וְעַתָּה כְּתֹבוּ לָכֶם אֶת הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת
וְלַמְדָּה אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שִׁמָּה בְּפִיהֶם
לְמַעַן תִּהְיֶה־לִּי הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לְעֵד בְּבְנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל

*And now, write for yourselves this song, and teach it to Bnei Yisrael; place it in their mouths, so that this song shall be for Me a witness among Bnei Yisrael.*¹

Rashi explains that the immediate reference is to Shirat Ha'azinu.² Hazal, however, understand the *pasuk* more broadly as referring to the Torah itself and derive from it the mitzvah of writing a Sefer Torah.²

This raises two fundamental questions. First, why is the Torah called a *shira*, a

1. Devarim 31:19

2. Sanhedrin 21b



Rav Avraham
Yitzchak Kook z"l

song? Certainly, there is an element of melody in Torah learning, as Hazal emphasize the importance of learning Torah with proper cadence and tune. Yet the comparison seems to convey something much deeper. In what sense is Torah itself a song?

Second, why does this description appear only at the very end of the Torah? If the Torah is a song, that should be true from Bereshit onward. Why is this title introduced only in Moshe Rabbeinu's final days?

THE SONG OF A NATION

Rav Kook³, addresses the second question. He notes that this section was delivered after the covenant of *Arvot Moav*, where a new dimension of Jewish responsibility emerged, the principle of *arvut*, mutual responsibility. Hazal derive from this covenant the foundational concept: כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה - *All Jews are responsible for one another.*⁴

This concept is possible because the Jewish people are considered, in a profound sense, a single organism. What affects one Jew affects all Jews. According to Rav Kook, it is only after this covenant of collective responsibility that the Torah can properly be called a *shirah*.

A song is not created by a single note. It emerges when many voices combine into a unified harmony. Similarly, the Torah

3. Rav Moshe Tzvi Neriah, *Mo'adei HaRe'iyah*

4. Shavuot 39a; see also Rosh Hashana 29a



Mazal Tov to



Aytan & Rivki Himelstein and family
on the birth of their grandson

reaches its fullest expression when it is lived and upheld not merely by individuals, but by the entirety of *Klal Yisrael*.

Rav Kook develops this idea further by connecting it to Eretz Yisrael. Torah in exile often focuses upon the spiritual growth of the individual. Torah in Eretz Yisrael, however, reveals an additional dimension: the building of a nation and the expression of the collective soul of the Jewish people. In Eretz Yisrael, the Jew experiences himself not only as a private individual, but as part of the destiny, mission, and soul of the nation. Torah becomes a national song rather than merely a personal discipline.

THE SYMPHONY OF TORAH

A second dimension of Torah as song is offered by the *Torah Temima* in his Siddur commentary, *Baruch She'amar*. At the conclusion of several *messechtot* of Shas, and at the end of our Shabbat morning prayers, we recite:

תלמידי חכמים מרבים שלום בעולם שנאמר: וכל
בניך לימודי ה' ורב שלום בניך. אל תקרי בניך אלא
בוניך.

The scholars increase peace in the world, as it is stated: 'All your children shall be taught by Hashem, and great shall be the peace of your children.' Read not banayich (your children), but bonayich (your builders).⁵

Why is this passage chosen specifically to conclude a *massechet*? This declaration encapsulates one of the deepest principles of Torah: אלו ואלו דברי אלקים חיים - multiple viewpoints within Torah can all be expressions of Divine truth.⁶

Throughout Shas we encounter countless disagreements: regarding ruling of permitted and prohibited; pure and impure;

obligated and exempt; stringent and lenient and more. How can so many opposing opinions all be part of Torah?

Imagine an orchestra composed of violins, cellos, clarinets, trumpets, french horns, and percussion. If one listens to each instrument in isolation, the sounds may appear incomplete or even discordant. One instrument is deep and resonant; another is sharp and piercing; a third seems to move in an entirely different direction. Yet when the conductor brings them together, they form a magnificent symphony. So too with Torah. Each Rabbi contributes a unique voice. Each opinion adds a different note. Standing alone, one perspective may seem incomplete. Together, however, they create the breathtaking harmony of *Torah Shebe'al Peh*.

This, suggests the *Baruch She'amar*, is why Torah is called a *shira*. Its beauty emerges not from uniformity, but from harmony. The many voices of Torah combine into a single Divine composition.

That is also the reason that we conclude a *massechet* with the declaration that Torah scholars increase peace in the world. After encountering page after page of debate and disagreement, we affirm that these arguments are not fractures within Torah. They are the very notes that create its music.

THE FINAL LESSON OF THE TORAH

Perhaps this is why the Torah reserves the title *shira* for its closing chapters. At the beginning of the Torah, we encounter

5. Berakhot 64a; Yeshayahu 54:13.

6. Eruvin 13b.

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individual stories, individual mitzvot, and individual journeys. By the end, however, we have discovered the larger picture. We have learned that Torah is not merely about personal growth. It is about joining a people, participating in a covenant, and contributing our unique voice to a collective mission. A song is beautiful not because every note is identical, but because every note knows how to join something greater than itself.

The final mitzvah of the Torah therefore reminds us that our task is not merely to learn Torah, but to become part of its song. Each Jew contributes a distinct melody. Each generation adds its own harmony. When the voices of *Klal Yisrael* unite, in responsibility, purpose and in devotion to Torah, the result is the greatest *shira* ever composed: the eternal song of Am Yisrael and Torat Hashem. ■

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