



## ~ SHABBAT SHIRA ~ THE MUSIC OF OUR PEOPLE

*Shabbat Shira is observed this year  
tonight, January 30<sup>th</sup>  
as part of our Friday night service.*

*Rabbi Bruce Benson will be joined by the  
High Holiday choir and string ensemble to  
share uplifting, lively and spiritually moving  
music creating a very different spiritual ex-  
perience.*

*Attached is historical information about this  
service and how it has been celebrated in  
Temples.*

*Please share this notice with friends*

*- Jewish or not -*

*to join us on this very special Shabbat.*

## SHABBAT SHIRA

On *Shabbat Shira*, we celebrate a very special moment in the Torah, a very musical moment in Jewish biblical history. It is the Sabbath of Singing. Many congregations highlight this Shabbat by creating services brimming with extraordinary music to celebrate Moses and Miriam leading the Israelites across the Sea of Reeds (The Red Sea) and out of Egypt.



This Shabbat we read [\*Parashat B'shalach\*](#) from Chapter 15 in the book of Exodus. This section is important for several reasons. It is visually, liturgically and musically important. *Shabbat Shirah* gets its name from part of the *sedra* (weekly Torah reading) known as *Shirat HaYam* (song of the sea).

Visually, this song/poem is laid out very differently from the rest of the Torah so it is very obvious to the reader and to the congregation during *Hagbah* (the lifting of the Torah after it is read) that something special is happening. It is known as "brick on brick." There are several additional songs/poems in the Torah that are also written differently than the rest; another great example is [\*Parashat Haazinu\*](#) in Deuteronomy Chapter 32, which is written in two narrow columns.

Liturgically, this is the part of the Torah from which the Rabbis selected [\*Mi Chamocha\*](#) to become part of our worship. The prayer is taken from Exodus Chapter 15, verses 11 and 18:

*Mi chamocha ba-ei-lim Adonai, mi ka-mocha ne-e-dar ba-kodesh, no-rah t'hi-lot o-seh feleh. Adonai yim-loch l'o-lam va-ed.*

*Who is like You, O God, among the gods that are worshipped? Who is like You, O God, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendor, working wonders? Adonai will reign forever and ever!*

Musically, not only does *Shabbat Shirah* lend itself to be a service throughout which one is totally immersed in amazing music led by a cantor, choir, temple band, and guest musicians, there is a special musical motif that exists just for this song/poem in the Torah.

When we read *Shirat HaYam*, we intertwine this special melody with the regular Shabbat Torah chant. By hearing this melody and seeing the way the verses are written, it is impressed upon us that something special is happening, so we should pay attention!

If you are wondering why we would be addressing the story of the Exodus from Egypt at this time of year, and not merely around [\*Passover\*](#), the answer would be this:



We celebrate Passover in the spring partly because of its connection to the harvest season and the timing assigned for the Feast of Unleavened Bread given by the Torah. Yet the Torah reading cycle brings us the story of the Exodus during this time of year. Not only do we read the story, we have a special Shabbat dedicated to celebrate the crossing of the Red Sea – *Shabbat Shira*.