(2c-400 feine -4/20/20)

This Shabbos is especially called SHABBAS SHIRAH on account of the scriptural reading, this morning, of the AZ YASHIR, the song of Moses and Israel which they sang on the shores of the Red Sea which had they just crossed miraculously. This SHIRAH, or song, was the deep expression of joy by the Paople of Israel, their heart-felt happiness at their exodus from the slavery of Egypt, and their deep thankfulness to G-d that He had so favored them.

But AZ YASHIR was more than a victory song, or song of jubilation, by a subjugated songs
people who had just won a war. Many nations have sung victory wars composed in honor
of martial victories, but they have faded from the world of music even as the wars a nations
they commemorated dwindled in significance in the history books. If AZ YASHIR were
only a primitive war song, we Jews would not recite it every day of the year, as part
of our morning service. No, it is not only an ancient song of Israel. It is something
infinitely more than that.

It is, for one thing, a song for all times. Today, 4,000 years after the great event, we still sing it. Our children and children's children will sing it long after what is now Egypt will have been submerged under new seas, and long after the pyramids will have been crumbled by the sheer weight of years. It is an eternal song.

And even more than that, AZ YASHIR is not only a national song but a personal hymn. Our mystics speak of individuals experiencing YETZIAS MITZRAYIM, the exodus from a personal Egypt. There comes a time in man's life when he leaves his foolish ways and his base interests, when he takes stock of himself and becomes aware of the G-dliness all about him. He changes his mind, his outlook and his whohe way of life. When that happens, such a man sings his own personal AZ YASHIR in honor of his own YETZIAS MITZRAYIM. Every person, at some time or other, reaches that degree of hapiness and thankfulness that he cries out: MI CHAMOCHA BA'EILIM HA'SHEM, "O G-d, thank you." And in every human breast there beats the unspoken hope, T'VI'AIMO V'SI'TA'AYMO BE'HAR NACHLAS'CHA, the hope for redemption, the hope for better and happier times. So that

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AZ YASHIR becomes not only a song for Israel as a nation, but a song and hymn for each and every individual. This SHIRAH becomes, then, not only eternal, but also - universal. It is the eternal and universal expression of human joy, happiness, bliss.

Now, what about this personal AZ YASHIR of every person. Is there any preferred way of expressing it? Do we have any guide as to the manner in which the joys of Life should be sung? We certainly do. Our Rabbis of the Talmud, who generally more analytical in their observations than most people are, had some mighty important things to say about the manner in which a man should express his SHIRAH, the joy or song of his life.

Talmud records the following controversy between two

The Telmud records the following controversy between two Rabbis, R. Nechemiah and R. Akiva: we know that the SHIRAH of Egypt, the AZ YASHIR, was originally recited responsively, much as we occasionally indulge in responsive readings. Now one Rabbi said that the SHIRAH should be read like the HALLEL y the selections from the Psalms which we read on ROSH CHODESH and Holidays; and the other Rabbi maintained that the SHIRAH reading should be similar to that of the SHEMA, where the Reader merely begins the first word and then all the congregation reads together. Now, whatever might be the actual mechanics of the type of responsive reading is incidental. What is important is the meaning behind the Law, the symbols which Hallel and Shema really are, and what they tell us about how a Jew should sing his SHIRAH, how a Jew is happy. For both Rabbis have here enunciated great truths, eternal verities of the human, Jewish, soul at its happiest.

It is true, for one thing, that every man's SHIRAH should be similar to our Hallel.

Hallel is the ultimate expression of unbridled happiness and thankfulness for G-d's goodness to us in the past. We recite it on YOM TOVIM, moments of joy for G-d's favors to us in years gone by. We are happy B'TZEISS YISROEL MI'MITZRAYIM, for our political freedom and independence. We thank G-d KI LE'OLAM CHASSDO, for his fatherly interest in our welfare. We are glad for MEKIMI ME'AFAR DAL, for our financial security and economic which is a security and economic well-being. We are healthy, secure and safe. We are therefore joyous and thank G-d for it.

One aspect of SHIRAH, therefore, is that of HALLEL, we are happy that G-d has made things "go our way" in the past.

But that is not enough. It is not sufficient to express the SHIRAH of life like that of Hallel. Even a child or primitive can be terribly happy about his personal welfare, about gifts that someone has given him. The Jew must add to this Hallel element in the SHIRAH of his Life an even more important note. His SHIRAH must also sound like the SHIRAH of his Life an even more important note. His SHIRAH must also sound like the SHIRAH YISROEL. The Shima is not related to the past. It is concerned solely with the Present and the Future. There is nothing festive about the Shima. It is, rather, the terribly serious. The essence of the Shima is KABALAS OL MALCHUS SHAMAYIM, the acceptance of G-d's rule of the universe and my personal subservience to Him. Whereas Hallel the speaks of gaiety, Shima speaks of the consequences of this gaiety, and that is - dedication. The Shima element of SHIRAH is that which tells me that I am so happy, that I shall make of my future an ordered, devoted, G-dly life. The gay and the serious are both parts in Licenter, whether we will have the shima.

Friends, last night we spoke to the Bnei Mitzvah boys and girls about the way they as the Youth of Israel should attempt to keep on singing this SHIRAH, this Jewish joy. Let me now address myself to their parents, to all the adults here this morning. Let us too talk about SHIRAH, about the SHIRAH of Hallel and of Shma.

This week one lady confided to me that a Bar Mitzvah celebration is for a parent the supreme joy. Even more than the wedding of a child, this "simchah" is completely that of the parents. And certainly no one will want to begrudge parents the great "nachas" of seeing their son called up to the Torah on the Sabbath of his Bar Mitzvah. At this time of SHIRAH, of song and joy and bliss, a parent is deserving of singing in happiness like Hallel - plain, simple, unadulterated joy. The Hallel of joy that their son has servived the sicknesses and diseases which tortured the minds of his parents; the Hallel of thankfulness that they have, in these thirteen years, been able to afford him a decent material life, that they and he have emerged successfully from the various economic vicissitudes that beset them; the Hallel that all the work, the toil and the tears spent in raising him have not been in vain. Yes, the Bar Mitzvah SHIRAH of parents deserves to be like that of Hallel.

But the tragedy of the matter is that it so often remains a Hallel-type SHTRAH, and goes no further. There is a Kiddush and a party and a banquet and a band and no end of expenses to celebrate the Hallel, but where, O G-d, where is the Shma part of SHTRAH? Where is the honest devotion, the deadly serious planning for the future, and the sincere dedication of a lifetime which is so very necessary if a SHTRAH, if happiness, is to be complete and genuinely Jewish? Never mind the chanting of the Haftorah or even the whole Portion or even the Mussaf Service, where is the BECHOL LEVAVCHA UVECHOL NAF'SH'CHA UVECHOL ME'ODECHA, the heart and soul and substance of that child's life going to be spent?

No, friends, we have got to remember as never before that the Jewish SHIRAH, and especially that of the Bar Mitzvah, calls for more than a four-piece band and an M.C. It means BECHOL NAFSH'CHA, AFILU NOTEIL ES NAFSH'CHA, the readiness to sacrifice one's whole life for Judaism, It means BECHOL ME'ODECHA, ZEH MAMMON, the willingness to give all one's substance - yes, charity - for Jewish causes. It means VEHAYU HA'DVORIM HA'EILA AL LEVAVECHA, the desire on parents' part to study Torah, to build themselves too, to have the knowledge of Torah come in to their heads and settle in their hearts. It means VESHINANTEM LE'VANECHA, educating children for a life-time, and not - G-d forbid! - to stop at the 13th year. It means Jewishness BESHIVTECHA BEVEISECHA UVELECHT CHA BADERECH UVESHACHBECHA UWEKUMECHA, Jewishness at all times and in all places, a complete and total and absolute commitment to full, wholesome Jewish living. It means LE'OSS AL YADECHA ULETOTAFOSS BEIN THE MITZVAH of Teffilin which a parent should train a child to observe every day of his life. And, above all and beyond everything we have mentioned, it means MEZUZOS AL BEISECHA UVISHE'ARECHA, the Mezuzah on the door-post - that is, a Jewish home. All education, all teaching, all guidance is wasted if the home does not reflect that beauty of Torah. The SHIRAH means especially this part of SHMA - the terrifically ernest insistence that the parents are henceforth going to provide that child with Mezuzos, with a guide to his home, that the word of G-d will guide the entrance to his house, and make of an ordinary house a Jewish home.

This, then, is the insight with which our Bages provided us; the analysis of every man's and woman's SHIRAH; the moral and religious lesson that Jey the correct equation is Happiness equals Joy PLUS Seriousness; the saintly lesson that the Song of Life is a duet between Man and G-d; and that this great SHIRAH is to sung both in major and in minor, in the key of festivity and in the key of dedication.

May G-d in His goodness grant each and every one of us a life full of SHIRAH; and let us make of that SHIRAH not only Hallel but also Shma; not only celebration but also resolution; not only thankfulness but also dedication; not only something of the Past, but a shiring plan of Hope for the great and brilliant Future.

## BENEDICTION:

Almighty G-d,

Do Thou in Thy Infinite Goodness provide us with a MIZMOR SHIR LE'YOM HA'SHABBOS, with a life of Song worthy of Thy Sabbath Day; A Song in which TOV LE'HODOS LA'SHEM ULEZAMER LESHIMCHA ELYON, in which our whole beings will be filled with great Joy for Thy favors to us; and in which also, we will always remeber LE'HAGID BA'BOKER CHASDECHA VE'EMUNASCHA BA'LEILOS, that it is the sacred duty of each of us to consecrate ourselves to Thee Morning and night, throughout all our lives. Amen.