

## The Hebrew Corner

Are the hills alive with the sound of music? Certainly the Tanach is, with many references to music for various occasions, even an entire book of songs dedicated to the praise of God. In fact, there a Hebrew verb, zamar (זָמַר, zah-MAHR), that means to make music in praise of God. The word for psalm, mizmor (מִזְמוֹר, mihz-MOHR), is derived from the root of this verb. In the first book of the Torah, Genesis, Laban is described as feeling slighted because Jacob had left so abruptly with his family that he was not able to give them a farewell celebration. Here is the passage (Genesis 31:27):

“Wherefore didst thou flee away secretly and steal away from me; and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret, and with harp?”

Of special interest here is the Hebrew word translated as harp. This is the word kinor (כִּנּוֹר, kih-NOHR), which can also be translated as lyre. This is referring to a stringed instrument. In Genesis 4, a list of the descendants of Cain is given, with a man named Lamech recorded as a great-great-great grandson of Cain. Lamech is noteworthy as he admitted to killing a young man. Lamech had a son by one of his wives, named Jubal. Apparently Jubal was the first maker of musical instruments, as he is described as “the

father of all such as handle the harp and organ,” with the word kinor again translated as harp. The name Jubal in Hebrew is yubal (יובל, yoo-VAHL), which has the same root as the word yovayl (יובל, yoh-VAYL) which is translated as jubilee, but can also mean ram or ram's horn. We encounter the jubilee in Leviticus 25:9-10:

“Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubile to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall you make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof; it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.”

So we have an association of the name of the person who was described as being a patriarch of music with the jubilee, which is hailed by the blowing of the shofar.

Thus in an irony that is common in the Bible, we have an individual in Jubal, descended from the first murderer, Cain, and an admitted slayer of a youth, Lamech, who may also have been a murderer, who was instrumental (!) in the development of music used to praise God. In fact, David used one of these instruments that Jubal is associated with (the harp) in his worship (2 Samuel 6:5):

“And David and all the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.”

Praise and worship of God was so important to David that he organized the families of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun into orders of musicians to minister to God with music. The sons of Jeduthun even used a harp to prophesy, as described in 1 Chronicles 25:3:

“Of Jeduthun: the sons of Jeduthan; Gedaliah, and Zeri, and Jeshaiiah, Hashabiah, and Mattithiah, six, under the hands of their father Jeduthun, who prophesied with a harp, to give thanks and to praise the LORD.”

In the following passage of the B'rit Hadasha (New Testament), Paul instructs believers to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and connects this with music (Ephesians 5:18-20):

“And be not drunk with wine. wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;”

And yes, there is music in heaven, including a musical instrument (the harp) and singing (Revelation 5:6-9):

“And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth unto all the earth . And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”

May we offer music and singing to praise the Lord with our fellow believers. Boker ohr (morning light) to you and your family!