

The purpose of most books is to be read. While our Torah is technically a book, we do more than just read it. We study it, argue with it, live it, stand up for it, and dance with it. If God forbid it falls, we fast for it and if a copy is no longer fit for use, we treat it like a loved one and bury it. We write commentaries to commentaries and then commentaries on those commentaries. It seems most Jewish writings are directly or indirectly some sort of commentary on the Torah. The Torah is our safe space. As the poet Heinrich Heine put it, when we were exiled the Torah became our “portable homeland.” Even as we finish reading it we have the custom to immediately move from the end to the beginning and start to read it again.

So as we aim to finish the Torah again this year, having already been given 612 of God’s commands, the Torah gives us its final mitzvah: “Now therefore write down for yourselves this (*shira*) song and teach it to the people of Israel.” The last mitzvah is that each person should write their own copy of the Torah. But why is the Torah referred to as a (*shira*) song?

Some interpret this to mean that the Torah should be read as poetry and not prose (the Hebrew word “*shira*” means both song and poem). Commentators explain that like poetry, the Torah leaves more unsaid than is said and it writes in a way that hints at deeper meanings well beneath the surface.

My personal favorite explanation comes from Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein, who points out that one of the reasons the Torah is called “a song” – because a song becomes more beautiful when scored for many voices interwoven in complex harmonies. So too is there is room for multiple, even contradictory and argumentative perspectives. A song is not just read. It does not just tell a story. It has a melody that speaks to us personally and emotionally that only gets more powerful when more people add their voices and harmonies to it.

This is why starting Thursday, October 27. I will begin running a learning session for our King David community parents and anyone else who want to join. We will read through the Torah in English in an interactive weekly parsha experience to see how our Torah still speaks to each of us today. Please join us. It’s time to add your voice to the song. For more information click [here](#).

Shabbat Shalom, Chag Sameach and G’mar Chatima Tova  
Rabbi Berger