



Shabbat Sh'mot
18 Tevet 5778 / January 5, 2018

Dear Shir Tikvah:

Shabbat shalom!

There's a story I love telling about the origins of our Friday night traditions:

Way back in Sefat in the 16th century, every Friday night, Isaac Luria, the Ari, founder of contemporary kabbalah, would stand in one place in a field; preferably on a high spot with a clear view. He would turn his face towards the West where the sun was setting, and at the very moment that it set, would close his eyes and place his left hand upon his chest and his right hand upon his left. He would direct his concentration -- while in a state of awe and trembling, imagining himself to be standing in the presence the Creator - and thus would receive the special holiness of Shabbat.

Luria would then recite psalms 92 and 93, and then would return home, where he would enter and wrap himself in a fringed prayer shawl...he would circle the table -- prepared with challot - and would walk around the table several times until he had repeated everything he had recited while in the field.

Before there was a kabbalat shabbat liturgy at all, we had the Ari in an orchard, face to face with the glory of creation.

And now, every week, we confront the challenge - and the divine invitation - of shabbat. We accept upon ourselves the mitzvah, the obligation, to find our own way to shamor and zakhor et ha-shabbat, to guard and remember shabbat.

Kabbalat shabbat, the liturgy we say on Friday nights, returns us to a consciousness of the majesty of creation. We invoke the voices of the water, trees and fields that cry out praise to God, mountains that tremble with awe. On Shabbat, all of creation praises the Creator and through our liturgy, we place ourselves back in the company of the natural world.

Our liturgy comes as a poetic expression of the origin story of kabbalat shabbat. The psalms and poems that we say as part of kabbalat Shabbat were curated together as poetic expressions of the heart of embodied kabbalat shabbat, of the receiving of shabbat, that was modeled by Isaac Luria of Sefat. There was no kabbalat shabbat before the kabbalists, who created the liturgy we now say every Friday night, taking inspiration from the rabbis of the Mishna, who would greet Shabbat each week with the invocation "Boi Kallah, Shabbat haMalkah. Welcome Bride, Welcome Shabbat Queen."

In two weeks, we will kick off Lechu Neranena (Let us sing!), a monthly gathering of learning and song. On the third Thursday of each month, we will spend time learning a single psalm/poem from our Friday night service, digging into its language and mystical resonance and opening our hearts in song as we learn multiple musical arrangements of the language.

Lechu neranena is open to all: whether you're wanting to get oriented to the structure of the Shir Tikvah Friday night service or you're seeking to deepen your relationship to the poetry and prayers, whether you come to Friday night service every week or it's been years since you've been in a Friday night prayer space, I hope you will find something of interest and inspiration in this space.

I look forward to learning with you in this special learning experiment. Wishing you a meaningful Shabbat, full of poetry and wonder.

Shabbat Shalom,
Rabbi Arielle Rosenberg

The first session of Lechu Neranena is Thursday, January 18th, from 6:30-8:30 in the Shir Tikvah Sanctuary.