

Accessible Vocal Harmony 101

Facilitated by Mayta Cohen

Text Study: Exodus 19:16-19 (Sefaria)

“On the third day, as morning dawned, there were **sounds** of thunder, and lightning, and a dense cloud upon the mountain, and a **very loud blast of the horn**; and all the people who were in the camp trembled. Moses led the people out of the camp toward G-d, and they took their places at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke, for G-d had come down upon it in fire; the smoke rose like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled violently. And when the **voice of the shofar** grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and **God answered him by a voice.**”

Question: How many voices were present at Sinai when we were given the Torah?

Text Study: Exodus 19:20, Ramban Commentary (Sefaria)

Ramban: Thus there are **six** ‘voices’ mentioned here in the section, and in addition it clearly says, And G-d spoke. In Deuteronomy, Scripture likewise mentions **seven** ‘voices’ in connection with the Giving of the Torah. In Tractate Berachot, however, the Rabbis have said in the Gemara that the Torah was given in **five** ‘voices’...

The Israelites, however, heard one voice, as it is said, *a great voice, and it went on no more*, and it is said again, *They heard the voice of words, but they saw no form; only a voice.*

Question: So... the Torah was literally given in *vocal harmony*?! And yet, all of it was heard as one voice? How does this make you feel about vocal harmony? What do you take from this?!

5 Vocal Harmony Experiences:

1. Warm Up with a Round (*The Geshem Song* by Mayta Cohen)

Geshem, Geshem, what a rainy day! When I wear my raincoat, I don't have to say “oy vey!”
Thunder rolling, it's just the angels bowling. And when you see the lightning, someone got a strike! Sing:

2. Multi-Part Repertoire (Elohai Neshama - set by Mayta Cohen)

1. אֱלֹהֵי נֶשְׁמָה שֶׁנָּתַתָּ בִּי
Elohai neshama shenatata bi
2. תְּהוֹרָה הִיא, תְּהוֹרָה הִיא
T'horah hi, t'horah hi
3. My soul is pure that G-d, my soul is pure that G-d, my soul is pure that G-d has given me, oh!

3. Communal Improvisation (Let the River Run - improvised by Tracy Robertson and Matt Goldstein)

Let the river run, let the river flow. Let the tears come, let it all go.

4. Circle Singing

5. See You on the Other Side

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