

# **The Song of Moses**

**Fall Quarter: God's Exceptional Choice**

**Unit 2: Out of slavery to nationhood**

**Lesson 6**

**Sunday School Lesson for the week of October 9, 2022**

**By Craig Rikard**

**Lesson Scripture: Deuteronomy 31:30-32:47**

**Key Text:** *Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of the Law. Deuteronomy 32:46*

## **Lesson Aims:**

1. Music: the eternal gift.
2. Music and Lyric possess inspirational power.
3. Hymns of Praise and Proclamation

## **Introduction: Eternal Music**

The gift of music is written into the very fabric of creation. Music isn't a separate item that stands separate from the cosmos, ready to be used when called upon. When planets and stars are held in perfect gravitational tension within our solar system, all planets exist in perfect gravitational relationship. The vibrations, pulses, and echoes create a pulsating sound. The universe is filled, not with silence, but with vibration; and where there is vibration there is sound. All musical instruments operate as one string or note striking another. All celestial bodies create sound as one body interacts with another.

The *musica universalis*, also called music of the spheres or harmony of the spheres, is a philosophical concept that regards proportions in the movements of celestial bodies - the Sun, Moon, and planets – as a form of music. Pythagoras surmised in earlier times the concept of the “music of the spheres.”

Though some question Pythagoras' specific theory, many do believe the universe is filled with sound. Thus, we don't “create” music, we find it. We discover its melodies, patterns, and rhythms. I personally am astounded that from one piano keyboard we have yet to exhaust all the music it can provide.

I am a novice musician and can read some music. Above all, music has a mystical, spiritual power over my soul. I truly believe that some are born with a kinship of the eternal music composed in the heavens.

**Have you ever given thought to the eternal origin of music? If not, why not? Does music take on an even greater wonder when you consider it fills the heavens as much as the stars? How does this reality change the way you listen to music, especially sacred music?**

## Music Finds Its Word

The great Sidney Lanier wrote, “Music is love in search of a word.” I do not believe it is coincidental that music plays a major role in the revelation of Holy Scripture. A vast majority of Scripture is prose and music. When my spouse Gail and I visited the Holy Land, we visited the assumed birth grotto of Jesus. It was the last of February and sleet was falling, mixed with snow outside the entrance. Gail has a pretty voice, and they asked her to sing “Joy to the World.” As we sang I looked about the faces singing, most were smiling and enjoying the experience. I admit, I wasn’t the only one with tears in my eyes. I heard the same notes as all the others and shared their tears. I believe I felt something deeper. Was I hearing the music of the spheres? Had the music of the heavens found their word of love that night for me in Bethlehem? Believe me, I am no special guy, but all of my life I heard music differently. The notes resonated with my soul, and I truly felt as though my soul vibrated.

I admit I tend to believe our early biblical ancestors discovered the music that glorified God. It originated from the heavens and sounded through the rocks and rills. It sounded through the trees. Eventually, we learned to harness its sounds with instruments, and an entire world opened, a world that could whisper the sounds of the heavens in daily life. It is for this reason music never grows outdated and continues to touch us for generations. Years ago, I placed Psalm 25 to music. It came almost naturally, but it resonated with my soul. I sing it regularly, and it always moves me. I didn’t write it or create it; I found it.

“Show me your way O Lord,  
Guide me in your truth and teach me,  
For you are God, my Salvation,  
In you do I wait all the day.”

I sing this hymn regularly. I just hear it from the “music of the spheres.” It blesses me. It is both old and new, ancient and true, beautiful and timeless.

**Have you considered music to be an instrument of revelation? Have you considered God chose this special gift to reveal the divine nature to us? What does the beauty of music say to us about the beauty of God? How has music touched our Judeo/Christian faith for centuries? Can you imagine what our faith would be like apart from the music we sing?**

## Music Finding THE Word

Again, looking at the words Sidney Lanier so beautifully stated: “Music is love in search of a word.” Let’s apply Lanier’s powerful poetic line to our text. Our song possesses two major emphases. First, the song glorifies God as God over all. It isn’t just any “god” that providentially protected and called Moses; it was THE GOD! Not only is God caring for Moses, the Lord is perfect and upright in all of his actions. His actions toward Moses do not vary to the right or left. God’s steady, righteous hand is upon Moses.

Secondly, the song proclaims that God chose Moses from a wayward people who worshipped their pharaoh, and most likely other Egyptian gods. From among this wayward people, God’s

song reminds us he found the covenant child in that polytheistic land and took him unto himself. It is a song of being chosen, protected, nurtured, and raised to the highest calling.

However, it wasn't just the Egyptians that were wayward. The nation of Israel had settled for a life in Egypt. It offered existence, but no covenant blessing. Israel would have never achieved their destiny as God's covenant people unless they left Egypt. They could not settle for survival, they had to choose thriving. A land awaited them. There was a land in which they would worship the one and only true God of the world. Nothing could be allowed to deter that destiny.

This is a song of risk. If left to humanity, the story of Moses would prove a sad song indeed. But, this is a song of God's providence. God made covenant with Abraham, and that covenant is going to continue through Moses regardless of the difficult circumstances. It wasn't the Pharaoh or any Egyptian god that sustained and prospered Moses. It was the God of creation! It was the God of Abraham and Sarah!

This song proclaims God is true to God's promises and is faithful to those chosen.

Consequently, as Israel desired to remember and teach the story of their God, and God's interaction with them, music was the perfect vehicle. The songs recorded in Exodus reveal that God's people had been singing for years. It was a vital part of their faith and the telling of their story.

From this one song, the people and children of Israel would remember, embrace, and believe one of the more foundational stories in their faith.

Returning to Sydney Lanier's saying, "Music is love in search of a word." For years, psalms and prose would be written to record the magnificent faith dealings of God with the covenant people. These stories would be taught to their children, and generations would sing them in the temple.

Music eventually found its word of words. Jesus was that WORD. All of the beautiful music, and the beautiful expressions, and the beautiful truth was embodied in Jesus. Music has never found a more beautiful, powerful, or redemptive word.

**Can you think of a sacred song that especially touches your spirit? Is there a song in which you might wonder, "Am I hearing the music of heaven?" How is Jesus the word for all the "seeking songs" in your life? What sacred song never fails to touch you intimately with its truth and beauty?**

### **Prayer**

*Almighty God, for all the songs, melodies, and lyrics that have enriched our faith, we are thankful. Let us continue to be a "singing people" in our Methodist tradition. Allow our spirits to hear the music of creation in every day, that we might always have a song of hope. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

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