

The cover features a background of the American flag with a distressed, weathered texture. A large, stylized, semi-transparent graphic of a musical staff with a treble clef and a few notes is overlaid on the right side. At the top, the title 'Journal of Synagogue Music' is written in a white, elegant cursive font, with a musical staff and notes integrated into the design.

Journal of Synagogue Music

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FEATURED:

**CONTEMPORARY JEWISH MUSIC
IN AMERICA**

Word Play in the Bible

Singing Hebrew with Proper Accentuation

Gray Areas in the Weekday Nusah

From Jonah to Levi Yitzhak

**High Holidays According to Maier Levi
of Esslingen**

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GREETINGS FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

As we prepare to move to yet another New Year, I want to comment upon some of the transitions that have inspired this issue.

The symbolically enormous shift that marked the New Millennium occasioned Mark Kligman's seminal article on "Contemporary Jewish Music in America" that appeared in the *American Jewish Yearbook* in 2001. It seemed fitting, as we reached the twenty-year mark of the new century, to once again take stock of our rapidly changing field – and to invite Kligman to revisit the topic. This time, he invited Judah M. Cohen to join with him in curating an expansive collection of essays. Some are by recognized leaders in their fields. Most excitingly, many others are by younger scholars just beginning their careers, but with unique research interests that range from the synagogue to the concert stage. These essays also reach across the denominational and ethnic divides that, in the past, have fragmented our Jewish community, and point, now, to a Jewish musical scene that is becoming a rich tapestry of sounds and styles.

Another milestone we marked this year was the 10th anniversary of the untimely passing of Debbie Friedman. Beyond the revolution in Jewish music that she inspired, Debbie also had thoughtful things to say on the role of cantors. To mark this special *yahrzeit*, we offer excerpts from remarks she presented at the Cantors Assembly convention in 2008. Sadly, this volume also includes a long list of others whom we lost this past year, and whose special contributions we remember here.

On a happier note, this edition of the *Journal* is marked by the vibrant essays of valued colleagues who have shared their research, insights and wisdom. We are grateful to all of these authors, and look forward to welcoming them and others to these pages in future issues.

I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge the tireless efforts of our associate editor Hazzan David B. Sisen, with the artistic and technical support of Kaleigh Sisen, and the help of our distinguished Editorial Board. The fact that you are reading a beautifully designed tome and that it is as free as possible from factual mistakes, grammatical errors and design flaws is testament to their collective labors, for which we must all be grateful.

I must admit that it was with humility and great trepidation that I agreed to accept the editorship of this *Journal of Synagogue Music*. A reader for many years, and an admirer of all of its prior editors, I was especially daunted by the prospect of succeeding Joseph A. Levine. The extent of his tenure was impressive enough; if I am fortunate, God will grant me a "length of days." I am certain, though, that I will never achieve the breadth and depth of his knowledge. Joe is truly a "Renaissance Man" from whose bountiful expertise the *Journal* and its readers have benefitted. Joe's imprint remains on this volume, in the obvious form of his written contributions as well as his artistic hand. The patient guidance he offered me as I prepared this edition will be less apparent,

but it was invaluable. I will be forever grateful for his generosity, even as I despair of ever filling the enormous shoes he left behind.

And so, dear Reader, I present this 46th volume of the *Journal of Synagogue Music*. I hope that, in its pages, you will find new knowledge and new music to take into the New Year. May 5782 bring good health and many blessings to all.

B'khavod,

Marsha Bryan Edelman

Marsha Bryan Edelman, Editor



כִּי לְאָדָם שְׂטוּב לְפָנָיו, נָתַן חֵכְמָה וְדַעַת וְשִׂמְחָה

For to the man that is good in His sight
He gives wisdom, and knowledge, and joy

Kohelet 2:26



CONTEMPORARY JEWISH MUSIC IN AMERICA, 2000-2020

Curated by Mark Kligman and Judah M. Cohen¹

The first two decades of the twenty-first century have presented a remarkably fruitful American landscape for creating, performing and studying what we collectively describe here as Jewish music. These years have brought changing and challenging conditions for Jewish populations on local, national and global levels. Yet, as the following pages show, those very challenges have been the source of extraordinary creativity, pressing both Jews and non-Jews to explore new boundaries, create new opportunities and investigate new sources, all in an effort to keep Jewish music an active part of American Jewish discourse.

In 2001 Mark Kligman published the article “Contemporary Jewish Music in America” and described several significant trends: the increase in participatory music in synagogues seeking renewal and transformation, the limitation of retail sales in Jewish outlets, and early stages of the internet.² In this article Mark Kligman and Judah Cohen seek to update the 2001 study through collaboration with a working group of active scholars spanning the disciplines of musicology, ethnomusicology and Jewish studies. The result below is a series of short essays that update these contemporary trends, and identify new ones, between 2000-2020.

Introduction

By Mark Kligman

In my 2001 study “Contemporary Jewish Music in America” I intentionally used the term “Contemporary Jewish Music” (CJM) to define an arena of musical activity similar in concept to other “contemporary” forms of music like Contemporary Christian Music (CCM), Contemporary Jazz, etc. During the final thirty years of the twentieth century, musicians grew from local community artists into performing artists who recorded on folk and major labels. Networks of distribution remained largely within the Jewish community, with klezmer music as the major exception: a transcending “genre” that garnered national attention, and frequent inclusion in folk and heritage festivals. Over twenty years from 2000 to 2020 a great deal has changed as networks have expanded, and as the music industry has transitioned from brick-and-mortar stores to online sales and streaming services. An investigation of the last twenty years helps us see what has changed and what remains the same. What is clear is that Jewish music remains an important signifier of Jewish identity to many, and continues to thrive in America despite financial and institutional challenges to both new and stalwart artists. Recent demographic, sociological and historic studies of American Jews have noted two seemingly divergent trends. On one hand, data suggest flat or shrinking numbers of those who identify as “Jewish” in America; at the same time, self-identified Jews exhibited a rise in a positive Jewish identity, with active growth

¹ Our thanks to Alexander Hallenbeck, UCLA Musicology graduate student, who helped to coordinate preparation and edits with all authors for this article.

² Mark Kligman, “Contemporary Jewish Music in America,” *American Jewish Yearbook* 101 (2001): 88-141; see pages 138-41 for comments on tendencies and issues.

in religious observance, creative activity and Jewish engagement.³ The Pew Research Study of 2013, “A Portrait of Jewish Americans,” has been most often referred to for the finding that the increase of “Jews of no religion” (or “Nones”) has increased significantly.⁴ The majority of Jews in America see their Judaism as based mainly on ancestry and culture. This differs sharply from past studies where most Jews identify Judaism as a religion. Gen X and Millennial Jews identify as more diverse, more liberal, and more likely to intermarry.⁵ They are strongly attached to social justice causes and seek engagement and fulfillment of their ideals, even if their efforts may not be exclusively Jewish community-based.⁶ To be Jewish, in other words, intersects deeply, for many, with being American. The May 11, 2021 Pew Study “Jewish American in 2020” confirms many of these trends emphasizing that Jews are more culturally engaged, increasingly diverse, politically polarized and worried about Anti-Semitism.⁷

During the first twenty years of the twenty-first century national and international events have impacted the life of Americans in unexpected ways. The events of September 11, 2001 increased American vulnerability in new ways and, coupled with ongoing tensions in Israel and the Middle East, generated passionate debates over safety both here and abroad. The 2008 real estate financial collapse, along with the record financial Ponzi-scheme by Bernard Madoff, had both direct and indirect impacts on national and local Jewish organizations, accelerating both their closure and their reconsolidation. The rising ideological divide of liberals and conservatives in America polarized politics like never before, bringing new opposition within the Jewish community. And the COVID-19 pandemic that changed life suddenly and significantly in March 2020 will have an impact for years to come. At the same time, Jewish studies has received record funding in universities, with donors creating new funds to steward the growth of research, publications, and cultural events such as Jewish Film Festivals. All of these factors have led organizations dependent on religious and spiritual engagement to actively explore new modalities of expression for the communities they aim to serve.

Those of us in academia that study music of Jews in America have actively expanded our disciplinary boundaries as well, to document and understand the ever more complicated dynamic of how musicians maintain, change and innovate traditions. As more Jews from Russia, Iran, South Africa, South America, Cuba, the Middle East, Israel and other locales come to the United States, American Jewry is less tied to Eastern European culture for its source of tradition. Diversity in identity, religious expression, political views, social causes and issues to support have thus widened the range of cultural affiliation for Jews in America. In 2001 I noted the following: “The baby-boomer creators of the music accept, reject, and reshape the Eastern European heritage, showing a younger generation different ways of accommodating Jewish life and ideals to current challenges.”⁸ In the twenty years covered in this present study, we witness the transition to the

³ Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2004, second edition 2019); see esp. “Conclusion: Into the Twenty-First Century—American Judaism at a Crossroads,” 356-89. Ira Sheskin and Arnold Dashefsky, “United States Jewish Population, 2019,” in *Current Jewish Population Reports*, reprinted from the *American Jewish Year Book* 119 (2019): 135-232.

⁴ <https://www.pewforum.org/2013/10/01/jewish-american-beliefs-attitudes-culture-survey/>

⁵ Sheskin and Dashefsky, *Current Jewish Population Reports*, 1.

⁶ Sarna, *American Judaism*, 367-71.

⁷ <https://www.pewforum.org/2021/05/11/jewish-americans-in-2020/>

⁸ Kligman, “Contemporary Jewish Music in America,” 140.

next generation of musicians, bringing new considerations of how Jews in America engage with music inside and outside the synagogue, view the past for new revivals, and forge new directions.

Some common themes emerge in the essays to follow. What role does music play as a vehicle for transcending or reinforcing denomination, politics, and shared values in the twenty-first century? Just over a third of Jews in the 2020 survey (36%) reported listening to Jewish/Israeli music "often" or "sometimes." That number weighted heavily toward self-identified Orthodox Jews, who engaged with music more often than Jewish-themed literature, television, or film festivals; to liberal Jews and Jews of no religion, on the other hand, it was one of the least common forms of media consumption outside of Jewish film festivals.⁹ One relevant theme is the desire for communal participation, as seen in Adelstein's study of Reform and Progressive synagogues, Austerklein's exploration of the sovereign musical self in Conservative synagogues, Schreter's discussion of the growing trends of Jewish music festivals with the focus on "how to make music," and Edelman's contribution on multi-levelled participation in Jewish choirs. As some synagogues are forced to downsize staff and seek more lay leadership, often clergy facilitate increased lay participation and engagement, as seen in Summit's work on cantillation and Austerklein's on emerging trends of prayer leaders through songleading and *niggunim*. The team of Dale, Vaisman Schulman and Lockwood provides perspective on the expanding range of music in the Orthodox community, which continues to be prolific, dynamic, and expansive in what is usually seen as a "closed" community. Klezmer and Yiddish songs "revived" or "revitalized" in the 1970s have become stalwarts at music festivals (see Schreter), and increasingly part of not only the Jewish cultural landscape but American musical cultural offerings, as shown by Slobin and Netsky. New Jewish music encompasses more than klezmer, expanding new possibilities for musicians active in multiple musical scenes, as shown in Janeczko's essay on Radical Jewish Culture.

Smolov-Levy and Cooper, meanwhile, show how the twenty-first century has expanded in the present our views on how Jews are involved and represented in opera, both historically and in the present. Ladino, Middle Eastern and North African music are presented by Salmon and Dardashti in two separate essays. Both show the commitment of musicians to historic practices and trends through older musicians and early recordings, while at the same time developing new styles. Salmon shows that music from Turkey and Israel comes to America in various forms and performer at the new styles of Ladino rock. Dardashti draws from her experiences as a scholar to show the Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) influences in her work and how they develop new styles that speak to new conceptions of Jewish diversity.

While the challenges to Jewish institutions and organizations have been tested financially and ideologically during the first two decades of the twenty-first century, music for Jews continues in new ways. Complexities of identity, of boundaries and with the balance between tradition and innovation, continue to be part of Contemporary Jewish Music in America. The essays that follow encapsulate specific music making in a community, context or what we might typically view as a genre. Each is its own world of Jewish music.

⁹ https://www.pewforum.org/2021/05/11/jewish-practices-and-customs/pf_05-11-21_jewish-americans-03-3/

Contemporary Orthodox Music

By Gordon Dale, Asya Vaisman Schulman and Jeremiah Lockwood

In American Orthodox Jewish communities, music is a site of creativity and identity construction. In liturgical, paraliturgical, and popular musics, Orthodox musicians have sought to maintain the beliefs and practices of their community, while also acting within, and reacting to, the broader musical and social landscapes in which they live. Attitudes toward American popular culture vary greatly, mirroring the diversity of Orthodox Jewish approaches to engagement with those outside their community. In the twenty-first century, this issue has come to the foreground due to the proliferation of the internet, which has been variously embraced, banned, or mediated with the use of filters. The Orthodox music industry has been implicated in these debates, leading to changes that indicate both an expansion of communal boundaries and a turn inward: While some have embraced the internet as an important means of inspiration, collaboration, promotion, and distribution, others have reinforced the importance of older technologies of music transmission, such as brick-and-mortar record shops, radio, and call-in phone lines, which serve as platforms for music that promote their worldview. For some, the contemporary ease of access to non-Orthodox culture has prompted increased concern over communal boundary maintenance, and contestation over the appropriateness of music has been a proxy for larger issues of cultural continuity.

Orthodox Jews across the social and religious spectrum tend to look rightward for religious needs, including ritual objects, sacred books, and cultural productions such as music. As Mark Kligman has described,¹ because Modern Orthodox Jews tend to be comfortable consuming music that is not specifically Orthodox, or even Jewish, in content, the creators of Orthodox music generally belong to the more rightwing communities, and the Modern Orthodox will engage with this music when desiring Jewish content for ritual or pleasure. Therefore, this article's emphasis on Haredi musicians is not coincidental, but rather a reflection of the cultural dynamics that impact who creates and consumes Orthodox music. In these communities, male (primarily Ashkenazi) musicians are public facing, but women often determine the popularity of male musicians based on their hiring decisions for performances at weddings, which remain the main venue for Orthodox singers. Furthermore, women create music in all-female spaces that is aligned with contemporary performance practices and attitudes toward gender. This music can be understood as an extension of the post-World War II creation of women's repertoires with religious themes that replaced the secular music previously consumed by women that was now deemed "unkosher" in the "rupture and reconstruction" of Orthodoxy described by Haym Soloveitchik.²

The Orthodox community is dynamic and new music is created and released daily. Our observations in this essay point toward the main trends in contemporary Orthodox music, though due to space constrictions we only begin to address the topic's intriguing details. A rich literature

¹ Mark Kligman, "On the Creators and Consumers of Orthodox Popular Music in Brooklyn, New York," *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* 23 (1996): 259-93.

² Haym Soloveitchik, "Rupture and Reconstruction: The Transformation of Contemporary Orthodoxy," *Tradition* 28, no. 4 (1990): 64-130.

on Orthodox music has begun to emerge, and we encourage interested readers to see these writings, and listen to the music of Orthodox musicians, for a deeper immersion in this exciting aspect of contemporary Jewish life.

Orthodox Jewish Popular Music

By Gordon Dale

During the first two decades of the twenty-first century, popular music has been a vibrant component of American Orthodox Jewish culture. Musicians draw on the sounds of their predecessors such as Mordechai Ben David, as well as trends in American pop music, to create music that is consumed by both men and women and includes lyrics that invoke biblical texts and espouse the virtues of Orthodox life. While the Orthodox music industry was already well-established by the start of the new millennium, the increased ubiquity of the internet has impacted it significantly, leading to new forms of transmission, providing new avenues for promotion, and, in some cases, exposing Orthodox musicians to new stylistic possibilities. Musicians, including those from the most conservative sectors of Orthodox society, post highly produced music videos on YouTube, and their music can be purchased through online music retailers that cater specifically to the Orthodox community. Some music videos, such as those by Modern Orthodox a cappella group “The Maccabeats” become popular beyond Orthodox audiences and are passed throughout the Jewish community, often in the weeks leading up to holidays. Additionally, Haredi Jews distribute music within their community through smartphone applications that facilitate group communication such as Whatsapp and Telegram, and many musicians have social media accounts with high numbers of subscribers. Some more conservative community members do not use smartphones, yet still use technology to distribute music through devices such as USB flash drives and CDs burned on home computers. The prevalence of the internet has prompted a backlash from those in Orthodoxy’s right wing who wish to maintain a more sheltered environment. This has included attempts to censor music, ban concerts, and provide technology such as *Naki* [Clean] Radio, that brings only “kosher” music into the home. Contrastingly, Orthodox popular music has been changed by the presence of *ba’alei teshuvah* [Jews who choose to adopt Orthodoxy], who bring the music styles of their youth into their new community. Importantly, the contemporary ease of communication and travel between Israel and America has resulted in an ever-increasing transnational quality to the music industry.

Haredi Women’s Musical Creativity

By Asya Vaisman Schulman

Haredi women generally do not perform for mixed-gender audiences or commercially record vocal music, because of *kol b’ishah*, a Jewish religious regulation dictating that women’s voices are considered sensually attractive and thus may not be heard by men. In all-female contexts, however, many opportunities exist for women both to create and listen to

music. By far the most musically active period in a Haredi woman's life is during her school years. At all-girls' schools and camps, music plays a pivotal role, functioning not only as a source of entertainment but as a didactic tool for reinforcing the faith of the students and teaching them about their role in Haredi society. Girls write songs for elaborate yearly theatrical productions, which they perform solo and in choirs to audiences of their sisters, mothers, and grandmothers; they sing at fundraising events for charity, at camp Shabbos meals and bunk competitions, and in class. The topics of the songs are generally limited to five major categories: paraliturgical songs about the Sabbath; songs venerating mothers; songs expressing faith in God; songs about exile and redemption; and songs about the Holocaust. These songs are generally quite long and complex, ranging from two to ten stanzas in length, and written in Yiddish or English with a large component of Hebrew quotations from liturgy and biblical texts. While women and girls frequently author the lyrics, the melodies are usually borrowed from Hasidic men's music, such as *nigunim*, *zmires*, and Hasidic pop, as well as from non-Hasidic and even non-Jewish sources. Authorship and provenance of songs written by women is almost never acknowledged, and artistry for its own sake is discouraged; songs are written for the educational or spiritual enrichment of the community and not for personal advancement. Although a few semi-professional female musicians do work in the community (recording albums for female listeners, writing lyrics for albums recorded and produced by men, and writing music for girls' school productions), adult women are rarely able to dedicate full-time work to music, as their time is occupied by raising large families (up to 12 children) and often providing for the household as the men study. In their leisure time, however, or while they work on household tasks, Haredi women sing and listen to music. They gather together to sing with friends, they sing to their children, they listen to CDs, watch musical DVDs, and call in to Haredi phone lines playing music for women. Women's vocal music reinforces boundaries internally, between Haredi men and women, and externally, between *Haredim* and outsiders, by providing a culturally appropriate and content-rich avenue for musical expression.

Orthodox Jewish Liturgical Music

By Jeremiah Lockwood

Haredi prayer practices have preserved and continuously adapted liturgical styles that derive from historic Jewish communities in Europe, sometimes referred to in the community as Hungarian or Polish *nusah*. Multiple communally-specific forms of *nusah hatefillah* (prayer melodies and modes) are heard in Haredi prayer houses. This diversity enriches and problematizes the conception of Ashkenazi *nusah* as a unitary musical form, a theory of Jewish music that is expounded in professional cantorial training programs. The Hasidic community boasts a handful of semi-professional *ba'al tefilles* (prayer leaders) who are valued as liturgical experts and remunerated for High Holiday prayer leading, but in general cantorial performance is not professionalized and the most prestigious and musically marked services, especially the *Musaf* (additional service) for holidays, is reserved for rabbinic leaders. Social norms of prayer leading being linked to prestige and power in the community results in liturgically significant moments being performed by non-expert musicians. The dearth of focus on aesthetics in prayer is perhaps

one factor leading to a recent musical development in the Hasidic community: cantorial revival. A cohort of young singers has turned to the archive of classic Jewish records from the early twentieth century to establish musical identities and performance repertoires as “Golden Age”-style cantors, engaging with an aestheticized prayer music that is unusual and potentially transgressive in their birth community. Cantorial revivalists from Haredi backgrounds generally do not work in their birth communities; rather, they seek employment at Modern Orthodox synagogues where professional cantors are still occasionally hired. Cantorial revival has found more receptive avenues of expression outside of synagogues, in concert halls and on internet-based videos, where revivalists engage fans in an experience of sacred listening that is not currently a normative part of the prayer experience in American Jewish life. Ironically, in their pulpit positions, cantorial revivalists do not primarily perform the classic soloist repertoire they are skilled in, but are encouraged by local custom to develop yet another liturgical skill set as prayer leaders in the participatory “folk” liturgy that is prevalent in American synagogues, heavily foregrounding the work of late twentieth century Orthodox liturgical songwriters such as Shlomo Carlebach. The participatory songs of Carlebach and, increasingly, music by Orthodox pop stars are dominant aspects of Modern Orthodox services, which pivot back and forth between sounds of heterophonic chanting of prayer texts and more musically marked elements of liturgy that draw from Jewish pop song repertoires. In recent decades, women’s voices have become more audible in the Modern Orthodox synagogue, as *ba’al kores* (scriptural readers) and lay prayer leaders, both in all female prayer services and in the emerging phenomenon of “partnership *minyanim*,” prayer groups that include women leadership in mixed gender services.

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Synagogue Music Comes to the People

By Rachel Adelstein

Musical practice has expanded significantly in the twenty-first century, especially in the progressive movements. As with much of modern life, the internet has made synagogue music widely accessible both to professionals and laypeople. As a result, interest and participation in Jewish musical life have grown. Much of this growth has been influenced and guided by women. Women's activity in liturgical music is well established, and they have achieved new levels of creativity and leadership.

Contemporary congregants are eager to shape their own Jewish experience, both musically and spiritually. Many congregations expect to participate in liturgical singing, led by a cantor, a rabbi, or a songleader, often using a guitar. Some synagogues have introduced increased lay leadership of worship services. The desire for participation extends even to the most challenging portions of the service. In his contribution to this article, Jeffrey Summit describes a growing appetite among congregants to learn Torah chant,¹ taking the skill far beyond simply learning a bar/bat mitzvah portion by rote.

With the growing interest in participatory synagogue music, the ranks of the professional Jewish clergy have become more compact. As more Jews describe themselves as “having no religion,”² paying congregational membership shrinks, and synagogue budgets must be cut. Accordingly, some synagogues have reduced their professional musical leadership by hiring a cantor only for the High Holidays, or relying on cantorial soloists rather than graduates of a cantorial school. Some cantors have responded to this challenge by re-training for rabbinical ordination. Hebrew College in Massachusetts offers a combined “*Rav-Hazzan*” program designed to train multi-faceted worship leaders.³ However, although congregations may find it difficult to afford a professional cantor, many still want some form of trained musical leadership for participatory worship.

The ubiquity of the internet facilitates much of this participation. Synagogue music is available online in notation and recordings. YouTube allows viewers to listen to and learn anything from traditional chant formulas to the latest melodies from composers representing a wide range of Jewish movements from all around the world.⁴ Synagogues post recordings of their favorite melodies on their websites for congregants and visitors, and databases of synagogue melodies and

¹ Jeffrey Summit, *Singing God's Words: The Performance of Biblical Chant in Contemporary Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

² Pew Research Center, “A Portrait of Jewish Americans,” last modified October 1, 2013, <https://www.pewforum.org/2013/10/01/jewish-american-beliefs-attitudes-culture-survey/>.

³ Hebrew College, “Become a cantor – Hebrew College,” last modified 2020, <https://hebrewcollege.edu/graduate-leadership-programs/become-a-cantor/>.

⁴ See Jeremiah Lockwood's contribution to this article detailing the work of Haredi cantorial revivalists. Many of these singers present their interpretations of this repertoire on YouTube, and also use the platform to present original music as well.

chant are freely available.⁵ Large publishers of Jewish music and smaller boutique online shops alike offer sheet music and recordings for sale. Transcontinental Publications has released several large-scale compilations of popular synagogue music; its 2003 publication, *The Complete Shireinu* includes nearly 200 songs drawn from the liturgy (in addition to other contemporary American and Israeli selections). Composers maintain blogs and websites, so it is relatively easy to contact them to purchase or even commission new music. Social media allows synagogue musicians and scholars to form lively communities for discussing new music and researching older discoveries.

In 2007, the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) published a new *siddur*, called *Mishkan T'filah*. The *siddur* pairs normative Reform liturgy on the right-hand pages with poetry, commentary, and alternative readings on the facing pages. In response, composer Noah Aronson set several of these alternative texts to music. In 2013, Aronson released his CD and songbook *The Left Side of the Page* as a musical companion to *Mishkan T'filah*. The URJ's commitment to social justice has also increased rapidly, and several new songbooks released by Transcontinental offer synagogue repertoire addressing protest and social justice activism. The URJ has employed songwriter and producer Josh Nelson, one of the most popular Jewish music performers in the United States, as music director for its Biennial Convention. Nelson has also founded THE WAREHOUSE as a Shabbat home for unaffiliated Jewish young adults.⁶ In a similar vein, the pan-Jewish Yeshivat Hadar's Rising Song Institute, founded in 2006, promotes community singing, led by Joey Weisenberg, Rabbi Yosef Goldman, and Deborah Sacks Mintz.⁷

In this atmosphere of increased accessibility, women have gained significant influence in the world of synagogue music. Debbie Friedman ז"ל (1951 – 2011) has achieved prominent official recognition from the URJ, and her compositions have become contemporary classics. In 2000, the cantorial school of Hebrew Union College added guitar as a required course so that cantors and rabbis could lead congregations in the folk-style music that Friedman helped to popularize.⁸ Following Friedman's death in 2011, the cantorial school itself was renamed in her honor.⁹ The honor is especially notable because Friedman was not herself a graduate of this school, and never served officially as a cantor. In 2013, Transcontinental released an anthology of her work.

The ranks of women cantors are growing. With the 2002 ordination of Sharon Hordes as the first cantor in Reconstructing Judaism,¹⁰ and the 2006 ordination of Susan Wehle ז"ל (1953 –

⁵ See, for example, the Nusach (sic) Database, <https://offtonic.com/nusach/index.html>. The Nusach Database provides notation for *nusah* and for folk and composed melodies, as well as links to recordings available on synagogue websites. Other databases include Chazzanut Online (<http://www.chazzanut.com/>), and the Virtual Cantor (<http://www.virtualcantor.com/>).

⁶ Josh Nelson, "Bio," last modified 2021, <http://www.joshnelsonproject.com/bio>

⁷ Rising Song Institute, "Rising Song Institute," last modified 2021, <https://www.risingsong.org/>.

⁸ Ann Coppel, *A Journey of Spirit*, produced and directed by Ann Coppel (2003: Ann Coppel Productions, LLC) DVD.

⁹ Hebrew Union College, "Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion Dedicates Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music," last modified 2011, <http://huc.edu/news/article/2011/hebrew-union-college-jewish-institute-religion-dedicates-debbie-friedman-school?pressroomid=1950>.

¹⁰ Keneseth Israel, "K'lei Kodesh (Leadership)," last modified 2020, <https://www.kenesethisrael.com/about-ki/klei-kodesh-leadership/>.

2009) through Jewish Renewal,¹¹ all of the progressive movements in the United States now admit women cantors. The second and third generation of women cantors are currently serving in pulpits and graduating from cantorial programs. Today, the Women Cantors' Network (WCN), founded in 1982, has a membership of roughly 250 in several different countries. Women have assumed senior leadership positions in both the American Conference of Cantors and the Cantors Assembly, and fill senior educational roles at progressive cantorial schools. Many women also compose new liturgical music that is accessible to congregants and fits female-coded vocal ranges. In 2019, the WCN published a complete volume of music composed by its members.¹²

Women have also taken leading roles in developing synagogue music in progressive communities outside the United States. In the United Kingdom, two women attended American cantorial schools and brought their skills home. Jaclyn Chernett was ordained by the Academy of Jewish Religion in 2006,¹³ and serves a Masorti synagogue in London. Zöe Jacobs was ordained by Hebrew Union College in 2009,¹⁴ and serves a Reform synagogue, also in London. As of 2020, two other ordained women cantors, both American-trained, work in the UK,¹⁵ and several other women work in synagogue music development and composition. Along with Vivienne Bellos and Mich Sampson, Jacobs and Chernett have sponsored several music fairs and study days designed to educate attendees about synagogue music and teach new songs and new skills.

These music fairs have brought British musicians into increased contact with North American synagogue composers. Synagogue musicians travel from North America to the UK to teach workshops and share new music. This contact inspired composers Judith Silver and David Hoffman to form Shira Britannia, a loose collective of British synagogue composers.¹⁶ Their music is slowly entering British synagogues, spreading largely by word of mouth.

Although some scholars and cantors worry that older forms of cantorial art might fade, Jewish interest in engaging with synagogue music remains strong, and the desire for new music suggests that this interest will continue.

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¹¹ ALEPH, "ALEPH Cantors," last modified 2021, <https://www.aleph.org/aleph-cantors>.

¹² Susan Colin, Emily Howard Meyer, and Anita Schubert, eds, *Kol Isha: Songs and Settings of Prayers, Composed by Members of the Women Cantors' Network* (Natick, MA: Women Cantors' Network, 2019).

¹³ Cantor Jaclyn Chernett, personal interview, London, 2010.

¹⁴ Cantor Zöe Jacobs, personal interview, London, 2010.

¹⁵ Cantor Tamara Hope Wolfson was hired by Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue in 2019, and Cantor Sarah Grabiner was hired by Radlett Reform Congregation in the same year. Cantor Cheryl Wunch served Alyth Congregation in 2014 and 2015.

¹⁶ Judith Silver, personal interview, Watford, England, 2016.

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The Sovereign Musical Self: Musical Leadership in the Conservative Movement

By Matthew Austerklein

Organizational change is one of the most fundamental aspects of 21st century American life. At almost every level of society, we are experiencing the waning of centralized authority and the rise of the individual. Beginning with eBay and blogging, and progressing through the rise of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Bandcamp, and other web-based services, individuals are now radically empowered to do activities that once required a power greater than themselves: starting a business, influencing peers, and producing and sharing creative content, including music and video. The coronavirus pandemic has made this trend towards online empowerment even more acute. Everyone can now be a sovereign self-producer, leveraging their social and relational networks to market their creativity, products, and ideas. This volatile avalanche of unlocked individual power has also created the rise of networked power—loosely supported and associated individuals who share interests and/or cross-promote each other's creative output. Like-minded individuals from across the globe can gather and collaborate in online communities around any number of shared interests (both for good, and for ill). This is especially true in the music world, where artists no longer require a relationship with a record label in order to successfully create and share their content. We have also seen the rise of Spotify and YouTube as new centers of music sharing—which has yielded both meteoric macrotrends from viral music videos, and the simultaneous persistence of microtrends, in which all styles of music can cultivate and maintain devoted followings in our flattened online world.

The Conservative movement, like other movements of Judaism, has been subjected to the above transformations in spades, shifting the ground from underneath cornerstone Jewish institutions. This was well foreseen by Steven M. Cohen & JTS Chancellor Emeritus Arnold Eisen at the turn of the millennium in their book, *The Jew Within*. Jews today are “sovereign selves,” wrote Eisen, emphasizing “personal meaning as the arbiter of Jewish involvement.”¹ Dominant engines of Conservative Jewish musical identity and sources of its “sonic solidarity” have classically come from long-standing institutions -- Ramah Camps, USY, rabbinical schools, and the cantorate, in addition to local and regional synagogue cultures. But new musical trends, particularly the rise of songleading and *niggunim* through the development of individual creative production and through post-denominational centers, have created new musical energies both from within the movement and from without. This has challenged institutions, particularly the Conservative cantorate, to adopt and adapt to new styles, new structures, and the empowerment-

¹ Steven M. Cohen and Arnold M. Eisen, *The Jew Within: Self, Family, and Community in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 36.

centered online environment which has transformed the spread of music. This essay will endeavor to describe the dynamics within the songleading and *niggunim* trends of the Conservative movement during this age of empowerment, and conclude with observations on the place of cantors within 21st century Conservative music culture.

Songleading

Synagogue music experienced a radical transformation in the late 1960s, when sing-along tunes that originated in youth groups (simultaneous with the folk revival in American culture) dug their cultural heels into (predominantly) Ashkenazi Jewish *neshamas* (souls). This music was especially incubated in the NFTY summer camps of the American Reform movement in the 1960s & '70s. It took a generation for this current to make its way into the synagogue service — the same time it took those kids that grew up in Reform summer camps to become rabbis, cantors, and Jewish leaders. Pioneers in this movement included clergy-duo *Kol B'Seder* (Rabbi Daniel Freeland and Cantor Jeff Klepper), Julie Silver, and of course Debbie Friedman ז'ל, whose hits like “*Mi she-beirakh*,” and “*Havdalah*” are now so ubiquitous as to be rendered “traditional” (even very *frum* circles now find themselves singing her melody for *Havdalah*).

At the beginning, songleading was a movement centered in Jewish camping and youth subculture. A half-century later, it has become mainstreamed, democratized, and reshaped by new organizations. YouTube and Facebook have led to new opportunities for young new talent to rise up and gain recognition for their music, beyond “official” institutional channels. Online groups such as “Harmony in Unison” and “Sacred Space” reveal independent platforms which empower individuals to be heard by thousands within a short period of time.

Jewish institutions are also mainstreaming the songleading phenomenon as both time and the rapid change of online culture accelerates its change. Reform cantors have been actively co-opted into the American songleading norms of their movement’s dominant camp culture, all acquiring the necessary proficiency in guitar and songleading during cantorial school. But beyond the URJ, Rick Recht’s new independent enterprise of Songleader Boot Camp (SLBC) has created a powerful post-denominational network of Jewish singer-songwriters, anchored by artist development, social media, and SLBC’s annual retreats-- which function simultaneously as an experimental environment for new learners and as a launchpad for emerging talent.

Conservative Jews too, are now more at home with songleading than ever before. With particular leadership from Rabbi Josh Warshawsky, the SLBC conference-community has become home-base for training Camp Ramah music specialists and staff at large. Rabbi Warshawsky’s own repertoire has been recorded and shared widely through social media, bringing the reach of his music across boundaries and denominations. This trend reflects a norming of guitar-based worship across many parts of the Conservative world--at summer camp, Friday night “live” services, and beyond. Students at Conservative-feeder cantorial schools are now required to take guitar, oftentimes to work at Camp Ramah, and to be well-prepared for this post-traditional environment. While davening still makes up a core marker of authenticity within the Conservative

movement, songleading is no longer a newcomer on the fringes. It is a flowering style with new leaders and a broad reach, finding a normative home within the Conservative musical landscape.

The *Niggun*

The rise of the *niggun* in Jewish worship can be seen from many different angles: the growth of Chabad Hasidism; the growing access to recordings of *niggunim* in the second half of the 20th century; the rise of communal singing in Young Israel, Orthodox, Conservative, and even Reform camp settings; and of course, the influence of major recording artists and teachers like Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach. This interest in *niggun* is also shared with the Jewish Renewal and neo-Hasidic worlds, who have emphasized it as a way of achieving spiritual ecstasy and new heights of religious feeling.

This interest in *niggun* is also part of a fundamental shift in American religion away from centralized authority and/or elite culture, and towards community-worship and personal meaning. One might see it very much in line with the organizational and social trends affecting American life; the *niggun* sensitively connects a lonely, sovereign self within a temporary, radiant network of living, human voices. One may describe it as music of equity, prophetic music which denounces authority and emphasizes that we are all vocally equal before God. It is also the music of therapy, expressing the deep feelings which lie, beyond words, within each individual soul. And unlike much of the songleading world, the world of the *niggun* is more thickly cloaked in Ashkenazi culture, and, sonically, in Jewish particularism. For these reasons, and more, the *niggun* singing movement continues to catch the souls of the sovereign selves of the 21st century.

The *niggun*'s rise in the Conservative Jewish world has experienced a particular acceleration over the past twenty years. Apart from camp settings and the charismatic wake of the Carlebach craze, *niggunim* formed the emblematic music culture of one group close to the vanguard of Conservative Judaism—the independent *minyanim*. Founded by empowered Jews from day school backgrounds (with many rabbis among them), *minyanim* developed as a strong influence in Conservative music culture throughout the early 21st century, presenting both a halakhically normative yet musically empowering environment for communal song. One of the main participants in this culture is the Conservative rabbinate, which co-opted its style in rabbinical schools and spaces, and have often longed for its ethos of equity and communal emotion to successfully bridge into the more hierarchical environment of the synagogue. Beyond the Conservative rabbinate and *minyanim* themselves, the *niggun*'s greatest champion has been the Hadar Institute, led in music over the last decade by its bard and inspiration, Joey Weisenberg. Hadar and Rising Song Institute's resonant religious message and cultivation of the *niggun* as a communal spiritual art have been successfully combined with intensive in-person learning retreats and the effective use of music sharing platforms, technology and social media.

Like with songleading, cantors of both Reform and Conservative movements have co-opted the *niggun* into their toolkit as worship leaders. Transcontinental has published three volumes of its *Nigun Anthology* since 2004. The Cantors Assembly published *Shira Chadasha: Music of the Independent Minyan* in 2016, and now hosts “SongSwap,” a monthly, online melody

and *niggun*-sharing group of over 125 regular participants. The singing of *niggunim* and cultivation of communal singing is now both practically (and perhaps theologically) *de rigeur* in the mainstream of non-Orthodox and post-denominational synagogues.

Cantors

As we explored above, Conservative cantors have absorbed emergent styles into their own practices and institutions over the past two decades, particularly as a new generation of rabbis and congregants arose for whom this type of communal singing is so important. This of course did not come without emotion or difficulty, as the populist genres of songleading and *niggunim* came to displace more elite musical forms: *hazzanut*, art music, and choral singing. It is in the 21st century that more cantors have emerged who were perhaps less traumatized by this development (partly because it was standard practice when they were growing up), and thus were able to adopt it rather than see it predominantly as a threat.²

But cantors also remain as the principal stewards of cultivated music in the Conservative movement -- both of and beyond the synagogue. They are among the most likely to form choirs, perform Jewish art music, and/or bring classical, jazz, or other normative musics into their communities.³ Despite the rising macrotrends of *niggunim* and songleading, the interest of American Jewish humans in musical art is not limited to communal song. The Cantors Assembly's successful activities during the coronavirus pandemic are an interesting testimony to this phenomenon. Over the last nine months of 2020, the Cantors Assembly (under the leadership of its communications director, Hazzan Michael Weis) leaned into its nationwide network of colleagues to create over 80 hours of programming for online audiences, including concerts, benefits, online courses, worship opportunities, and education projects. These programs have reached over 10,000 individuals in 30 countries. Some of the most successful of these lie specifically in the areas of artistic music: "The Listening Room"—a weekly series for discussing and listening to cantorial music—draws hundreds of live attendees at every session. Two successful collaborations with the Milken Archive of Jewish Music: "Stories of Music"—a ten-week Jewish music educational series taught by CA cantors -- and "Cantors on Record"—an interview program with cantors who recorded with the Milken Archive—grew to audiences of up to 750 live participants, hungry for these traditional styles of Jewish music.

These and other effective online programs have validated the leadership of cantors in this area, and elicit new questions as to how they will lean into these successes in a post-pandemic

² I owe this observation to my colleague, Cantor Hinda Labovitz. She points out that the specter of post-Ashkenazi and post-cantorial Jewish music raised by Debbie Friedman and her followers awoke great resentment and resistance within the 1970s cantorial establishment, who passed that trauma on to their students and the next generation of cantors and educators. The 21st century represents an opportunity for cantors to emerge from this trauma and discover both the benefits and the limits of these developments for themselves.

³ The hybrid choral-pop genre of Jewish a cappella is rising in the cantorial community, particularly in the wake of both cantorial leadership in running Jewish a cappella competitions, and of the *Ilu Finu* project started by Ben Tisser and the author. One should observe that the majority of cantorial students at the Jewish Theological Seminary in the last several classes come from a Jewish (or secular) a cappella singing background.

environment. Will they be able to stay afloat as musical influence is decentralized and democratized? Will they be able to both successfully adopt communal singing models and champion artistic modes of Jewish music? Will they be able to inspire and teach Jewish music traditions with the support of the philanthropic community and the tools of individual empowerment? These are among the key questions that the next twenty years will bring in this era of accelerating change in Conservative Jewish life.

Singing God's Words: Contemporary Perspectives on Chanting Torah

By Jeffrey A. Summit

Chanting Torah is a mark of core cultural and religious competence initially learned by many Jews in preparation for bar or bat mitzvah, a ritual that remains a rite of passage in the contemporary Jewish community. More than half of the Jews in America have had a bar or bat mitzvah ceremony and have learned and performed biblical chant. The highly detailed and musically nuanced performance of Torah requires that the reader memorize both the pronunciation of unvocalized Hebrew text and the *te'amim* (cantillation or trope signs) that indicate the musical motif applied to each word of scripture. In many congregations, the rabbi, cantor or ritual director normally chant from the Torah, but it is increasingly common that members of the congregation will prepare and perform this ritual act for the congregation at Shabbat and holiday services. Many readers experience chanting Torah as one of the most powerful, personal and authentic ways that a layperson can publicly perform their commitment to Judaism.

The act of Torah reading is a complex site of cultural and religious performance, simultaneously embodying conflicting concepts.¹ Torah reading is both a symbol of ancient, historic continuity and modernity. On one hand, it is one of the oldest parts of the prayer service, and as some scholars argue, the basis for the synagogue itself.² While we cannot trace the specific musical tunes of the trope over the past two millennia, rabbinic sources confirm that the act of chanting text with a melody is an oral tradition that has existed for over two thousand years. Torah reading has remained remarkably unchanged over the centuries. At the same time, the Torah service is a fixture of modernity, and the tradition is plastic enough to accommodate contemporary rituals that engage contemporary Jews. The fact that the bar and bat mitzvah ceremony has remained such a popular rite of passage has established the tradition of chanting Torah as a contemporary performance of identity for Jews across denominational lines. The surrounding rituals of the Torah service--tunes for community participation, Debbie Friedman's setting of *Mi*

¹ I present a fuller treatment of the meaning and experience of chanting Torah in my book *Singing God's Words: The Performance of Biblical Chant in Contemporary Judaism* (Oxford University Press, 2016). I thank my colleague Judah Cohen for sharing his perspectives on the ways that Torah reading embodies a range of conflicting meanings.

² See Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*. (Philadelphia—Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1993 [1913]). Also see Ruth Langer, "From Study of Scripture to a Reenactment of Sinai: The Emergence of the Synagogue Torah Service." *Worship* 72/1 (1998), 43-67.

shebeirakh and other prayers for healing--easily accommodate contemporary expressions of spirituality.

The act of Torah reading is simultaneously a site of conservatism and liberalism. It has to be done right, and many liberal Jews are very “conservative” in their veneration of the reading and insistence upon a respectful, accurate performance. Cross-denominationally, communities maintain a commitment to an accurate and meticulous performance of the text. For many worshippers, respect for the Torah is equated with respect for the divine, as well as for Jewish religion and culture. At the same time, many liberal congregants see Torah reading as so central and rich with the possibility of even greater experience that they insist on exploring new ways to perform and engage with the ritual. This liberalism has led to innovative ways to approach the performance—using the trope to chant the text in English, theme-based aliyot, even using bibliodrama, Storahtelling³ and creative midrash—to make the Torah reading more meaningful and relevant. This liberalism has also led women, first in the liberal movements and now among some segments of Orthodoxy, to challenge traditional gender roles and lay claim to Torah reading.

Torah reading is also simultaneously a site of elitism and democratization. The performance requires detailed Hebrew pronunciation, musical, religious and cultural knowledge. Even then, careful study and practice are necessary when preparing a reading. Many Jews really want Torah reading to be “done right.” But at a time when many Jews have come to understand the act of Torah reading as an especially meaningful way to access and perform their Jewish identity, more and more Jews want to participate exactly at a time when the Jewish community is encouraging more Jews to study and be engaged with congregational life. The democratization of Torah reading has encouraged congregants to have equal access to this ritual, which in many synagogues, lowers the quality of the performance. In addition, so many congregants have read Torah for their bar and bat mitzvah, even though the act is highly specialized, it has been made broadly accessible as a rite of passage. It is important to consider multiple layers of historical and personal experience when exploring what it means for contemporary Jews to read Torah.

In the United States in the twenty-first century, worshippers across religious traditions are searching for *meaningful experiences* in religious life. While cantors and rabbis are often professionally obligated to read Torah, and in some traditional congregations accomplished Torah readers (*ba’alei kerit’ah*) are *hired* to fulfill this function, for lay congregants the decision to chant is an act of personal choice. There is no specific obligation for a Jew to chant Torah. Learning how to chant Torah requires a lot of work and preparation and in my research, I examine the range of driving factors that make women and men decide to chant Torah today. While I did not conduct a scientific survey of congregations, I interviewed and surveyed more than 400 people and the ratio of people who spoke about an increase in interest in Torah reading, as opposed to a decrease, was approximately six to one.

³ Created by Lab/Shul founding spiritual leader Amichai-Lau Lavie, Storahtelling integrates the art of Torah reading with story-telling and contemporary stagecraft.

In previous studies, when scholars posed the question “Why did Jews chant Torah?” they answered from historical and functional perspectives, addressing how the cadences of the chanted trope act as punctuation to the verses, how the melody of the trope points to specific rabbinic interpretation of the text, or how chant aids in the memorization of scripture or is an effective way to project and be heard in a crowd. However, when I asked Jews across America why *they* chant Torah, most did not answer in the language of communal or religious obligation or speak about the function of chant to interpret the text. The Jews I interviewed describe reading Torah as stepping into a stream of Jewish history, accessing a place of religious and cultural performance that feels truer, more authentic and more historically grounded than many other religious or cultural expressions of Jewish identity—an intimate and personal connection to history, peoplehood, family and community. Whether they understand the text they are chanting to be revealed from God to Moses on Mount Sinai, or as a collection of Jewish wisdom and law redacted by generations of teachers, these readers become the voice that proclaims the story of the Jewish people, their tradition’s core narrative.

Resources:

Jeffrey A. Summit, *Singing God’s Words: The Performance of Biblical Chant in Contemporary Judaism*. 2016. (New York: Oxford University Press); see website for the book: <https://global.oup.com/us/companion.websites/9780190497088/>

Navigating the Bible, <https://bible.ort.org>

Recent Activity in the Yiddish Song and Klezmer Music

By Mark Slobin and Hankus Netsky

Interest and creative participation in Yiddish-based musical arts has been blossoming in recent years. Since the first KlezKamp in 1986, the number and variety of workshops that offer people grounding in “Yiddish culture” have multiplied across the US and Europe and beyond (Brazil, Australia). The addition of Yiddish New York in 2016 to older events such as Yiddish Summer Weimar and Klez Kanada was a notable development, along with smaller events in cities from London, Paris, and Vienna to São Paulo. These regularly scheduled, dynamic transcontinental events have sown seeds that have been sprouting and flowering in the second decade of the twenty-first century.

Itzhak Perlman’s projects continue to bring the classic work of klezmerim and Yiddish composers to massive worldwide audiences through PBS Great Performances Broadcasts, including Rejoice (2014) and the 40th Anniversary Gala (2013) where, instead of performing European concert music classics, Perlman focused exclusively on Yiddish and klezmer repertoire. The late Theodore Bikel collaborated with younger artists in Yiddish culture projects right up until his death at age 91 in 2015, performing internationally with “Serendipity Four” and joining with the Klezematics and Hip-hop artist Socalled on numerous occasions. The past twenty years have

also seen a plethora of cooperative ventures pooling resources in the Hasidic and klezmer communities, including Perlman's work with Cantor Yitzchak Meir Helfgot, Avraham Fried and Cantor Yanky Lemmer's collaborations with Frank London, and the late Ben Zion Shenker's recordings with clarinetist and mandolinist Andy Statman.

Klezmer ensembles have become regular extracurricular offerings at such elite universities as Yale, Harvard, Princeton, Columbia, Brown, and Stanford and frequent curricular offerings of music programs at Berklee College, Mt. Holyoke College, Wesleyan University, UCLA, Temple University, and other institutions of higher learning. Since the mid-1990s, college-based ensembles have regularly participated in "Klezmerpalooza" festivals, most recently at New England Conservatory, where the collegiate klezmer movement originated forty-one years ago. Recent books focusing on Klezmer by Walter Zev Feldman, Joel Rubin, Hankus Netsky, and Magdalena Waligorska have helped further academic interest in the topic.

The loss of a key activist, Adrienne Cooper Gordon, in 2010, slowed momentum in the area of the Yiddish song, but the emergence of an older pioneer, Ethel Raim, as a teacher of folksong style offered a new focus in that area. Josh Waletzky, Yefim Chorny, Susan Ghergus, and Michael Alpert continue to add new repertoire to the genre and mentor younger performers, many of whom have also taken interest in the work of prolific but lesser-known folksong composers, including the late Beyle Schaechter-Gottesman and Arkady Gendler. Established structures, such as the Workmens (now Workers) Circle schools and choruses, have been revitalized. In Boston, Linda Gritz writes new socially conscious songs in Yiddish for the WC chorus, "*A Besere Velt*" while, in New York, Binyamin Schechter has energetically and creatively revived the Jewish People's Philharmonic Chorus.

For some decades now, Berlin has been home--literally--to a group of American expatriate musicians who collaborate with local music and theater colleagues in many intriguing joint ventures. In this way, the old transcontinental flavor of Yiddish-based musical production has restarted in earnest. Israel has also seen the rise of a new generation of Yiddish and klezmer performers, including vocalist Vira Lozinsky and klezmer bands including The Heart and the Wellspring and Oy Division.

Both live and virtual initiatives take advantage of the rise of specialists and strivers. The US has seen the engagement of activists still in their teens and twenties. Combining personal pathways with a generational orientation towards progressive politics, including gender issues, these young seekers have found a home in Yiddish tradition. New musical repertoire and formats are emerging as a parallel to more academic projects such as the *In Geveb* website (www.ingeveb.org) and the work of the Yiddish Book Center, including the online dissemination of the Stonehill and Ruth Rubin Yiddish field recording collections. Even the dark cloud of the COVID-19 pandemic, which shut down live performance, has had a Yiddish silver lining as online gathering points have sprung up, offering new perspectives on areas such as the research work of Moshe Beregovski and the new Yiddish song revitalization. Many engaged activists come from western Europe, Poland, the Former Soviet Union, and beyond.

In the US, Alex Weiser received an honorable mention in 2019 for America's most prestigious music award, the Pulitzer Prize, for a cycle of art songs based on Yiddish poetry, showing recognition for new concert music, and Yiddish art song composer Olivier Milhaud took first prize in the 2017 International Jewish Music Festival competition for his settings of Avrom Sutzkever's poetry. Other notable developments in the world of Yiddish art song include bass baritone Anthony Mordechai Tzvi Russell's highly acclaimed concert performances of new and classic Yiddish concert repertoire, Binyumin Schechter's settings of poetry by his aunt, Beyle Schechter-Gottesmann, and the work of the Berlin-based team of Sveta Kundish and Patrick Farrell.

The last few years has seen a resurgence of interest in both new and classic Yiddish musical theatre, spearheaded by the Folksbiene's production of Joseph Rumshinsky's *Di Goldene Kale* (The Golden Bride) in 2016, followed by the publication of Michael Och's critical edition of the work the following year. Other highlights have included the off-Broadway success of *Indecent*, a dramatic/musical production based on Sholem Asch's Yiddish classic, *God of Vengeance* and the very first contemporary production of Henech Kon's pre-war Yiddish Operetta, *Bassheve*. New Yiddish Cabaret has also been blossoming with the commissioning of works by Joshua Horowitz, Shane Baker and Michael Wex, featuring a new generation of Yiddish performers including Sasha Lurje, Rachel Weston, Miryem-Khaye Seigel, and Daniel Kahn. This widening of interest hit another high point with the commercial success of a small Yiddish-language production of *Fiddler on the Roof* in 2019, based on a translation that had been lying dormant since the 1960s. The future of music grounded in the history of Yiddish expressive culture looks remarkably bright in 2020.

Yiddish Music Links

Beregovski Tish-Nign Archive Project: <http://www.ilanacravitz.com/strings.htm>

Beregovski Online Forum (facebook group):
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/682669652488243>

The Edward Blank YIVO Vilna Online Collections: <https://www.yivo.org/vilna-collections-project>

Dartmouth Jewish Sound Archive: <https://djsa.dartmouth.edu/>

Recorded Sound Archives at Florida Atlantic University: <https://rsa.fau.edu/judaic>

Robert and Molly Freedman Collection: <http://sceti.library.upenn.edu/freedman/>

Kiselgof-Makonovetsky Digital Manuscript Project (Klezmer Institute):
<https://klezmerinstitute.org/kmdmp/>

Mayrent Institute for Yiddish Culture: <https://mayrent.wisc.edu/>

Ruth Rubin Legacy website (YIVO Institute for Jewish Research): <https://ruthrubin.yivo.org>

Stonehill Collection (Center for Traditional Music and Dance/YIVO):
<https://stonehilljewishsongs.wordpress.com/>

Historical Collection of Jewish Musical Folklore 1912-1947 (Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine): <http://www.audio.ipri.kiev.ua/index.html>

Yiddish Folksong: <https://www.yiddishfolksong.com/>

Jewish Music Festivals

By Uri Schreter

In the twenty-first century, festivals of Jewish music have become a mainstay of American Jewish cultural and communal life. Over the last few decades, festivals have multiplied and expanded, spreading to countless locations across North America, reaching new audiences, and providing the stage for ever more diverse forms of Jewish musical expression. Merely a handful in the 1980s, Jewish festivals today number in the dozens, covering most areas of the United States and Canada. As highly visible venues for public performance, they provide a significant impetus for artists to create and perform their music, and actively affirm Jewish identity. Moreover, thanks to the gathering of diverse communities of performers and attendees, festivals act as a central hub for cultural exchange and transmission.

Jewish music festivals vary considerably in form and in content and are difficult to define neatly. Some, like the Greater Chicago Jewish Festival (established 1980), are modeled after outdoor rock festivals, bringing together multiple musical acts to perform in a centralized location for a large audience.¹ Others, like the Kansas City Jewish Culture Fest (established 1994), more closely resemble American folk festivals, which typically celebrate certain aspects of vernacular culture drawn from one or several ethnic, regional, or occupational groups in American society.²

The presence of Jewish music at folk festivals dates back to the early National Folk Festivals, which featured Jewish folklore as early as 1942.³ The first public “festival” dedicated to Jewish music, aptly titled the “National Jewish Music Festival” (1947-1977), was organized by the National Jewish Welfare Board. But rather than being a centralized event, it was a designated month of musical performances in 250 communities around the country.⁴ Music festivals began to proliferate in North America during the 1970s as an outgrowth of the folk revival movement,⁵ and

¹ Gina Arnold, *Half a Million Strong: Crowds and Power from Woodstock to Coachella* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2018), 5.

² Richard Bauman, Patricia Sawin, and Inta Gale Carpenter, quoted in Ronald D. Cohen, *A History of Folk Music Festivals in the United States: Feasts of Musical Celebration* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2008), xiii.

³ Sarah Gertrude Knott, “The National Folk Festival after Twelve Years,” *California Folklore Quarterly* 5, no. 1 (1946): 83–93, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1495579>; Cohen, *A History of Folk Music Festivals in the United States*, 2.

⁴ This event existed for a longer period under different titles and formats (1945 until roughly 2000), but the label “festival” was only used between 1947-1977. See: Uriah Zevi Engelman, “Educational and Cultural Activities,” *The American Jewish Year Book* 47 (1945): 253; Moshe Starkman, “Cultural Activities,” *The American Jewish Year Book* 49 (1947): 187; and Irene Heskes, “Shapers of American Jewish Music: Mailamm and the Jewish Music Forum, 1931-62,” *American Music* 15, no. 3 (1997): 315–17, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3052327>.

⁵ Robert Cantwell, “Feasts of Unnaming: Folk Festivals and the Representation of Folklife,” in *Public Folklore*, ed. Robert Baron and Nick Spitzer, 3rd ed. (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 266 and Cohen, *A History of Folk Music Festivals in the United States*, 119.

gradually, several Jewish festivals emerged as well, such as the Westchester Jewish Festival (established 1975) and Long Island's Jewish Arts Festival (1983). Since the 1990s, alongside an exponential growth in folk festivals around the world, Jewish festivals have mushroomed in locations as diverse as San Diego (JFEST, 1994), Syracuse (1999), and Albuquerque (KlezmerQuerque, 2003). The increase in festivals since the new millennium has been associated with a decline in record sales, as well as with changes in the consumption of musical sub-genres that spurred the emergence of niche festivals.⁶

Unlike major rock festivals, which often span several days and take place in rural settings, most Jewish festivals are more limited in scope, and set in central urban locations. Some festivals, like Chicago and Kansas City, are single-day events, concentrated in one location, while others, like Toronto's Ashkenaz Festival (established 1995), spread their performances across multiple days and venues. The prevalence of Jewish festivals in cities such as New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston, and San Francisco, in alignment with the largest Jewish population clusters in the country,⁷ suggests that they rely primarily on their local Jewish communities for support. Indeed, funding for these largely not-for-profit festivals typically comes, at least in part, from local Jewish philanthropic institutions, alongside national and international foundations that support Jewish culture. This model contrasts with most contemporary rock festivals, which increasingly rely on major commercial sponsors.⁸

Jewish festivals tend to be participatory, at least to a certain extent, rather than purely representational.⁹ In addition to concerts, most festivals incorporate opportunities for active participation, through classes and workshops on a wide range of topics, such as musical performance, dance, and cooking. For instance, the New England Jewish Music and Art Festival (established 1998) features family-friendly workshops for making shofars, yarmulkes, and challahs alongside concerts.¹⁰ Such participation mirrors a broader trend in American folk festivals, which have increasingly used similar strategies to combat the insulation between audience and spectacle.¹¹

On the far end of the participation spectrum are musical events that straddle the border between festivals and camps or workshops. These events emphasize active participation and musical exchange above all else, yet also feature a lineup of high-profile musical performances. Chief among them was the Yiddish Folk Arts Institute, better known as KlezKamp (1985-2014), which was established by Henry Sapoznik with the purpose of encouraging intergenerational

⁶ Roxy Robinson, *Music Festivals and the Politics of Participation* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2015), 45–50.

⁷ Ira Sheskin and Arnold Dashefsky, "United States Jewish Population, 2018," *The American Jewish Year Book* (2019): 21, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-03907-3_6.

⁸ Chris Anderton, "Branding, Sponsorship and the Music Festival," in *The Pop Festival: History, Music, Media, Culture*, ed. George McKay and Chris Anderton (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 199.

⁹ For a discussion of the spectrum between participatory and representational music festivals, see: Robinson, *Music Festivals*, 1–19.

¹⁰ Kevin D. Roberts, "Thousands Enjoy Music Festival in Litchfield," *The Register Citizen*, September 3, 2007, <https://www.registercitizen.com/news/article/Thousands-enjoy-music-festival-in-Litchfield-12151308.php>.

¹¹ Cantwell, "Feasts of Unnaming," 287.

transmission of klezmer music in a community context.¹² Alongside musical performance, KlezKamp added to its programming courses in dance, history, language, and folklore, allowing nonmusical attendees to participate as well.¹³ In fact, most festivals of Jewish culture today feature some mixture of arts, thereby forming a diverse, collaborative, multidisciplinary space.¹⁴ The model of KlezKamp has been remarkably influential, inspiring several other festivals, such as Buffalo on the Roof (established 1992), KlezKanada (1996), and Yiddish New York (2015), as well as several offshoots overseas. Together, these festivals serve as the backbone for an ever-growing, tightly-knit community of performers and audiences, primarily centered around klezmer and Yiddish music.

The cultural content at Jewish festivals varies considerably: Some festivals focus on particular historical traditions, geographic regions, or subgroups within the Jewish population, while others favor a vaguer definition of “Jewish culture.” Many festivals spotlight Eastern European Ashkenazi Jewish culture, as evident in the endless variations on “Yiddish” and “klezmer” in festival titles, while relatively few focus on Sephardi or Mizrahi cultures, such as the Sephardic Music Festival (2005-2015) and the American Sephardi Music Festival (established 2017). Several festivals highlight Hasidic music, such as the Atlantic Seaboard NCSY Jewish Music Festival (1976), and a recently established festival at UCLA (2020) focuses on the music of American Jews.

Regardless of their focus, each act of musical curation promulgates a particular ideology that defines Jewish culture, or some sector of it, as a distinct object, worthy of being celebrated.¹⁵ As such, focusing on a particular Jewish tradition, as well as opting for a broader definition, can serve different agendas. For instance, the emphasis on Yiddish music and klezmer at festivals like KlezKamp and KlezKanada has successfully created a context in which Yiddish musical culture was able to thrive and grow in new ways, rather than simply revive old cultural forms.¹⁶ At the same time, the growing criticism of the primacy of Ashkenazi heritage in American Jewish life has sparked similar debates within the discourse about festivals.¹⁷ Erez Safar, the founder of the Sephardic Music Festival, stated that he was “eager to raise awareness of Judaism’s cultural

¹² Henry Sapoznik, *Klezmer!: Jewish Music from Old World to Our World* (1999; repr., New York City, NY: Schirmer Books, 2006), 215.

¹³ Sapoznik, *Klezmer!*, 219.

¹⁴ On the inclusion of diverse arts in music festivals and the creation of a multidisciplinary, collaborative space, see: Rebekka Kill, “The Artist at the Music Festival: Art, Performance and Hybridity,” in *The Pop Festival*, 75–86.

¹⁵ On the ideological and celebratory nature of folk festivals, see: Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Mistaken Dichotomies,” in *Public Folklore*, ed. Robert Baron and Nick Spitzer, 3rd ed. (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 44 and Cantwell, “Feasts of Unnaming,” 295–98.

¹⁶ Mike Anklewicz, “Extending the Tradition: KlezKanada, Klezmer Tradition and Hybridity,” *MUSICultures* 39, no. 2 (2012): 84; Abigail Wood, *And We’re All Brothers: Singing in Yiddish in Contemporary North America* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2013), 8–9.

¹⁷ For recent discussions of Sephardi and Mizrahi Jewish identities in America, see: Saba Soomekh, ed., *Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews in America* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2015); Michael Zalta, “Beyond the Critical Framework of Ashkenormativity: Reimagining Jewish Solidarity and Klal Yisrael,” *Zaman*, July 20, 2020, <https://www.zamancollective.com/all-posts/michaelbeyondashkenormativity>

diversity, which... extends beyond its ‘Eastern European, Ashkenazi’ face.”¹⁸ Additionally, the Atlanta Jewish Music Festival (established 2009), recently renamed Neranenah (in Hebrew, “come together and sing”), announced that its name change was “meant to attract a more inclusive and broader audience” and shift the focus to relationships between Black and Jewish artists.¹⁹ Even festivals that are expressly dedicated to Ashkenazi culture, such as Ashkenaz, Yidstock, and Yiddish New York, have come to include some elements of non-Ashkenazi traditions in their programs.

One final development has been the growing presence of Jewish music festivals in virtual spaces. Like other music industries, festivals have adapted to the digital age, and use websites and social media to interact with their audience beyond the limited time frame of the festival itself.²⁰ This digital infrastructure proved crucial during 2020, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, as limitations on large gatherings prevented holding events in person. While some festivals have been postponed, others pioneered a variety of virtual formats, ranging from small Zoom classrooms to large-scale screenings of lectures, concerts, and films. The success of these formats suggests that in the future, organizers may attempt to utilize hybrid models that combine virtual and in-person events, even when physical gatherings are once again possible.

Jewish Music Beyond Klezmer: Radical Jewish Culture and the Avant Garde

By Jeff Janeczko

Among the many microscenes and subcultures that comprise contemporary American Jewish music, the Radical Jewish Culture phenomenon has been among the more interesting, influential and, at times, controversial. The term “Radical Jewish Culture” is the title of a specific series of recordings on the Tzadik record label, but can also refer more generally to an approach to Jewish music-making that favors avant-garde and experimental composition and performance techniques. Tamar Barzel has discussed Radical Jewish Culture as both a “moment” and an “idea.”¹ These refer, respectively, to the creative ferment of performances and discussions in the 1990s that coalesced into Radical Jewish Culture, and to perceptions of causal links between Jewish identity and avant-garde musical aesthetics. The Radical Jewish Culture “idea” posits a kind of homology between Jews’ marginal status in American society and their overrepresentation in the marginal world of avant-garde and experimental music. While the

¹⁸ Amanda Petrusich, “Sounds of Diaspora, Updated,” *The New York Times*, December 15, 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/16/arts/music/sephardic-music-festival-in-new-york.html>.

¹⁹ Neranenah press release, available through: “Neranenah Concert and Culture Series,” *Neranenah*, <https://neranenaharts.org/>.

²⁰ George McKay, “Introduction,” in *The Pop Festival*, 8 and Robinson, *Music Festivals*, 57–58.

¹ Tamar Barzel, *New York Noise: Radical Jewish Music and the Downtown Scene* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2015) and Tamar Barzel, “Radical Jewish Culture: Composer/Improvisers on New York City’s 1990s Downtown Scene,” PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2003.

Radical Jewish Culture “moment” has largely come and gone, the “idea” and the recording series have persisted.

The Radical Jewish Culture recording series was launched in 1995 by John Zorn, a well-known composer and improvising musician who has been a pivotal figure on New York’s “downtown” scene since the late 1970s. Zorn gained attention and acclaim for early works that advanced new compositional techniques and displayed an insouciance toward traditional genre boundaries--an approach that often led to his being perceived as the quintessential postmodernist composer.² In 1992, Zorn was engaged, along with guitarist Marc Ribot, to curate a series of performances at a multi-day music festival in Munich. Both artists had recently begun exploring Jewish themes in their work and decided to bill their series of performances as the “Radical New Jewish Culture Festival.” They engaged many New York-based Jewish artists to perform at the festival, some of whom performed music of obvious Jewish connection and some of whom simply performed music in a context that highlighted their Jewishness. It was at this festival that Zorn premiered his first Jewish-identified work, *Kristallnacht*.

Subsequent festivals followed in New York City, and in 1995 John Zorn created the “Radical Jewish Culture” series on his newly founded record label, Tzadik, to release recordings of music that explored the nexus between Jewish identity, music, and the avant-garde. Zorn has released a handful (though not all) of his own Jewish-related works on this series, but has primarily used it to solicit and promote the work of other artists, many of whom are also fixtures on the “downtown” scene. Since its establishment in 1995, the Radical Jewish Culture series has released 187 albums, a figure that certainly makes it one of the largest collections of recorded Jewish music extant.

Though the recordings on the Radical Jewish Culture series cover a broad range of musical styles and approaches, there are elements that remain fairly stable across the entire series. First, there are relatively few ways in which artists deal with the notion of “Jewish music.” Some deal with it musically, by creating new works derived from older pieces of Jewish music (e.g., klezmer, Yiddish or Ladino folk songs, liturgical melodies) or by working with scales and motifs derived from particular forms or styles. Trumpeter Steven Bernstein and saxophonist Paul Shapiro work within a more-or-less straightforward jazz vein while drawing on traditional klezmer and cantorial repertoire. Others have taken a quasi-serious, quasi-tongue-in-cheek approach to music by Jewish composers that has no discernible Jewish musical connection. *Trouble* (2006), by the keyboardist Jamie Saft, features his jazz trio covering songs by Bob Dylan. In the liner notes, Saft suggests Dylan’s propensity for oblique meaning and the reinterpretation of his own work are akin to Jewish mysticism and the practice of *midrash*. Others have sought to create Jewish music conceptually in a range of abstract and concrete ways. *Émigré* (2003), by accordionist Ted Reichman, is an instrumental suite inspired by the work of Hungarian-Jewish photographer André Kertész that aims to reflect on the Jewish experience of diaspora and alienation. Jewlia Eisenberg’s *Trilectic* (2003) is a dynamic vocal suite on the relationships between philosopher Walter Benjamin, Bolshevik revolutionary Asja Lacis, and Jewish mysticism scholar Gershom Scholem. It is not

² John Brackett, *John Zorn: Tradition and Transgression* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008).

uncommon for multiple different approaches to be used by a single artist or on a single recording. Keyboardist Anthony Coleman has produced albums containing relatively straightforward jazz interpretations of Sephardic folk songs, and others in which he has tried to construct an entire musical language from a single Jewish sound: the *krekht*³. Several albums on the series display almost no avant-garde or experimental musical practices, such as those by Basya Schechter and Wolf Krakowski.

The Radical Jewish Culture phenomenon can be viewed from three perspectives: cultural, musical, and sociological.

From a cultural perspective, Radical Jewish Culture is partially an extension of, and reaction to, the klezmer revival. While the klezmer revival spawned several generations of musicians dedicated to learning its stylistic intricacies, there were many musicians for whom the genre held limited appeal. Moreover, though the revival began as a relatively small and contained phenomenon in the mid-late 1970s, within a decade klezmer had become so widespread and popular as to become a near metonym for “Jewish music.” Klezmer’s dominance within the world of Jewish music tended to obscure the diversity that already existed within Jewish music as well as limit its potential future directions. Indeed, John Zorn stated in a 2005 interview on National Public Radio, “The Radical Jewish Culture movement was begun in a lot of ways because I wanted to take the idea that Jewish music equals klezmer and expand it.”⁴ The series’ description on Tzadik’s website, “Jewish music beyond klezmer,” has remained unchanged for perhaps twenty or more years.

From a musical perspective, Radical Jewish Culture is notable for its hybridity. Many of the recordings exhibit some degree of combining traditional Jewish music with contemporary styles that reflect the artists’ musical identities. On almost no other recording series will one find traditional cantorial melodies and Hasidic *niggunim* combined with metal and jazz, or Yiddish folk songs done in styles ranging from country to hardcore. In addition to “Jewish music beyond klezmer,” the Radical Jewish Culture purports to comprise “adventurous recordings bringing Jewish culture and identity into the 21st century.” The series’ embrace of musical hybridity and marginality suggests an effort to construct a Jewish identity that is also hybrid and marginal, as well as multidimensional.

Viewing Radical Jewish Culture from a sociological perspective necessitates viewing it in relation to what other American ethnic and religious groups were doing at the turn of the twenty-first century. Jonathan Freedman has pointed out similarities among musical and sociological trends between Jewish and Asian Americans in the late twentieth century.⁵ If the klezmer revival occurred at an earlier time, it is possible to conceive that Zorn and other downtown Jewish artists with whom it failed to resonate would simply have continued making the music they had already been making for decades. That they were compelled in the late twentieth century to explore the

³ Literally a “groan,” in music the term refers to a “break” in the singer’s voice, reflective of great emotion.

⁴ “Zorn Redefines Jewish Music,” Hosted by Liane Hansen with guests John Zorn and Jon Madof, *Weekend Edition Sunday*, National Public Radio, November 13, 2005.

⁵ Jonathan Freedman, *Klezmer America: Jewishness, Ethnicity, Modernity* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2008).

contours of their own Jewish identities, to seek new musical languages that reflected those identities, and to attempt to shape the future of Jewish music and identity illustrates the power of sociological trends, and places Radical Jewish Culture within the resurgence in secular ethnic identity that occurred among many American minority groups in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

While the Radical Jewish Culture recording series has waned in recent years, it continues to add recordings and avant-garde approaches to making Jewish music remain a prevalent, if marginal, part of the world of contemporary American Jewish music.

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The Contemporary Study of Jewish Engagement with Opera in America

By Daniela Smolov Levy and Samantha M. Cooper

The history of Jewish involvement with opera in America is a rich and varied one. Jews have attended, composed, conducted, managed, patronized, produced, written about, and performed in amateur and professional performances alike. They have also featured as the subjects of operas and participated in the long tradition of lampooning the genre and its patrons. Although there is still relatively little scholarship about Jews and opera in both America and Europe compared to other areas of Jewish music research, scholars have increasingly addressed the subject over the last twenty years.¹ Its inherent interdisciplinarity has drawn researchers from

¹ In 2001, when Mark Kligman reflected on the state of contemporary Jewish music in America, the topic of Jews’ relationship with opera had not received much scholarly attention. While the topic was mostly outside the purview of his study, he did note (1) the increasing acceptance and recognition garnered by opera singing cantors Jan Peerce and Richard Tucker around the mid-twentieth century due to successful Jewish cultural assimilation; (2) Orthodox Jews’ replacement in the 1960s of the Wagner wedding march (“Here Comes the Bride”), emblematic of traditional American wedding music, with new Jewish wedding music; (3) the Metropolitan Opera House being among the

a wide range of fields, including Jewish studies, musicology, ethnomusicology, anthropology, sociology, performance studies, theatre studies, education studies, religious studies, literary studies, American studies, French studies, German studies, Italian studies, and philosophy. Recent scholarship about Jews and high culture more generally also provides important context for the study of Jews and opera. This diversity of approaches speaks to a new recognition of the distinctive ways that Jews, Jewish culture, and Judaism have influenced the world of opera.

Most of the recent work dealing with Jewish engagement with opera concentrates on Europe, offering valuable comparisons with the American context.² A particularly substantial area of research focuses on how both Jewish and non-Jewish opera composers such as Haydn, Meyerbeer, Strauss, and Bloch have musically or visually represented biblical Israelites or Jews on the opera stage.³ Other scholars have attended to the ways in which synagogue cantors have responded to the simultaneous threat and allure of opera's repertoire, vocal techniques, and professional responsibilities.⁴ With increasing frequency, biographies of opera singers of Jewish descent seek to unravel the significance of their Jewish heritage on their careers.⁵ Still others have

venues used to host benefit concerts presenting Orthodox Jewish popular music starting in the late 1980s; and (4) the "quasi-operatic music" of cantorial singing in synagogues in the late 1960s. See Mark Kligman, "Contemporary Jewish Music in America," *The American Jewish Yearbook* 101 (2001): 97, 105, 112, 116.

² Two recent edited collections concerning the study of Jews and opera in European contexts are Isolde Schmid-Reiter, and Aviel Cahn, eds., *Judaism in Opera/Judentum in der Oper* (Regensburg: ConBrio Verlagsgesellschaft, 2017), and Luca Lévi Sala, ed., *Jewishness, Jewish Identity, and Music Culture in 19th-Century Europe* (Bologna, Italy: Ut Orpheus, 2020).

³ For studies that explore the sonic characterization of biblical Israelites and Jews for the opera stage, see Judah M. Cohen, "Shylock in Opera, 1871-2014," in *Wrestling with Shylock: Jewish Responses to The Merchant of Venice*, ed. Edna Nahshon and Michael Shapiro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 381-412; Caryl Clark, *Haydn's Jews: Representation and Reception on the Operatic Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Clark, "Joseph Haydn's Judaizing of the Apothecary, Take 2," in *Opera in a Multicultural World*, ed. Mary Ingraham, Joseph So, and Roy Moodley (New York: Routledge, 2015), 99-121; Ruth HaCohen, *The Music Libel Against the Jews* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011); Diana R. Hallman, "'Rachel, ou l'Auto-da-fe': Representations of Jews and the Inquisition in the French Grand Opera *La Juive* (1835)," in *Sephardism: Spanish Jewish History and the Modern Literary Imagination*, ed. Yael Halevi-Wise (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 91-113; Ralph P. Locke, "Constructing the Oriental 'Other': Saint-Saens's '*Samson et Delila*,'" *Cambridge Opera Journal* 3, no. 3 (1991): 261-302; Klára Móricz, "Sensuous Pagans and Righteous Jews: Changing Concepts of Jewish Identity in Ernest Bloch's *Jézabel* and *Schelomo*," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 54, no. 3 (2001): 439-91; William Pencak, "Jewish Elements in the Operas of Giacomo Meyerbeer," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 32, no. 1 (2013): 43-59; Jeanne Swack, "Anti-Semitism at the Opera: The Portrayal of Jews in the 'Singspiels' of Reinhard Keiser," *The Musical Quarterly* 84, no. 3 (2000): 389-416; Jossi Wieler and Moshe Leiser, in conversation with John Deathridge, "Between Memories and Symbols: Creating the 'Jewish' on the Opera Stage," in *Judaism in Opera/Judentum in der Oper*, 157-74; and Eric Zakim, "The Dialectics of Nerves and Muscles: Schoenberg's Moses as the New Jew," *The Opera Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (2007): 455-77.

⁴ For examples of the study of the cantorial draw to, and vocal symbiosis with, operatic singing, see H.B. Rothman, J.A. Diaz, and K.E. Vincent, "Comparing Historical and Contemporary Opera Singers with Historical and Contemporary Jewish Cantors," *Journal of Voice* 14, no. 2 (2000): 205-214; Jeffrey Shandler, "Cantors on Trial" in *Jews, God, and the Video Tape: Religion and Media in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 13-55; Jeremiah Lockwood, "A Cantorial Lesson: The Lineage of a Learning Encounter," *Studies in American Jewish Literature* 38, no. 2 (2019): 179-97; and Ari Y. Kelman and Jeremiah Lockwood, "From Aesthetics to Experience: How Changing Conceptions of Prayer Changed Jewish Worship," *Religion & American Culture* 30, no. 1 (2020): 26-62.

⁵ David Conway, "John Braham – from *meshorrek* to tenor," *Jewish Historical Studies* 41 (2007): 37-61; Irit Duek, Jacob T. Cohen, and Ziv Gil, "Unilateral Vocal Cord Paralysis of a Great Jewish Opera Singer," *Rambam Maimonides*

analyzed popular culture relating to Jews and opera, leveraging the tensions inherent in a genre that straddles the high and popular cultural spheres.⁶ Continuing a long history of scholarship on Jews and Wagner, new studies explore the composer's evolving legacy, in part by probing differences between pre- and post-WWII perceptions of Wagner's antisemitism.⁷ A significant quantity of research also considers the performance and reception histories of operas composed during the Holocaust era, such as Hans Krása's *Brundibár* (1938) and Viktor Ullmann's *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* (1943).⁸ Questions of healing, guilt, atonement, and trauma after WWII have

Medical Journal 9, no. 1 (2018), doi: 10.5041/RMMJ.10322; Uri Erman, "The Operatic Voice of Leoni the Jew: Between the Synagogue and the Theater in Late Georgian Britain," *Journal of British Studies* 56, no. 2 (2017): 295-321; Judith S. Pinnolis, "'Cantor Soprano' Julie Rosewald: the musical career of a Jewish American 'new woman,'" *The American Jewish Archives Journal* 62, no. 2 (2010): 1-53; Elena Reikher (Temin), "Bukharan Jews in the Art Music of Central Asia," *Musica Judaica* 19 (5770/2009-2010): 131-64, esp. "Operatic Performances," 152-57; Ronald Schechter, "Catinka Heinefetter: A Jewish Prima Donna in Nineteenth-Century France," in *Borders and Boundaries in and around Dutch Jewish History*, ed. Judith Frishman, David J. Wertheim, Ido de Haan, and Joël J. Cahen (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 81-94; and Eileen Wingard, "Ernestine Schumann-Heink: Opera Star and Humanitarian," *Western States Jewish History* 50, no. 3/4 (2018): 65-70.

⁶ Michal Grover-Friedlander, "'There Ain't No Sanity Claus!': The Marx Brothers at the Opera," in *Between Opera and Cinema*, ed. Jeongwon Joe and Rose Theresa (New York: Routledge, 2002), 19-38; Larry Hamberlin, "Visions of Salome: The Femme Fatale in American Popular Songs before 1920," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 59, no. 3 (2006): 631-96; Larry Hamberlin, *Tin Pan Opera: Operatic Novelty Songs in the Ragtime Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Shai Biderman, "A Night at the Opera of Talmudic Reasoning: The 'Jewishness' of Jewish Cinema," *Cinema: Journal of Philosophy and the Moving Image* 4 (2014): 14-27; and Michal Grover-Friedlander, "Chapter 2: Brothers at the Opera," in *Vocal Apparitions: The Attraction of Cinema to Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 33-50.

⁷ On recent literature on Jews and Wagner, see Leah Garrett, *A Knight at the Opera: Heine, Wagner, Herzl, Peretz and the Legacy of Der Tannhäuser* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2011); James Loeffler, "Richard Wagner's 'Jewish Music': Antisemitism and Aesthetics in Modern Jewish Culture," *Jewish Social Studies* 15, no. 2, (January 2009): 2-36; Leon Botstein, "German Jews and Wagner," in *Richard Wagner and His World*, ed. Thomas S. Grey (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 151-98; Tom Kaufman, "Wagner vs. Meyerbeer," *The Opera Quarterly* 19, no. 4 (Autumn 2003): 644-69; Jane Fulcher, "A Political Barometer of Twentieth-Century France: Wagner as Jew or Anti-Semite," *The Musical Quarterly* 84, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 41-57; Michael Tusa, "Mime, Meyerbeer and the Genesis of *Der junge Siegfried*: New Light on the 'Jewish Question' in Richard Wagner's Work," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 26, no. 2 (July 2014): 113-46; Stephen McClatchie, "The Flying Dutchman, the Wandering Jew, and Wagner's Anti-Semitism," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 81, no. 4 (Fall 2012): 877-92; Thomas Grey, "The Owl, the Nightingale and the Jew in the Thorn-bush: Relocating Anti-Semitism in *Die Meistersinger*," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 28, no. 1 (March 2016): 1-35; Benjamin Binder, "Kundry and the Jewish Voice: Anti-Semitism and Musical Transcendence in Wagner's *Parsifal*," *Current Musicology* 87 (Spring 2009): 47-131; Lawrence Kramer, "Contesting Wagner: The *Lohengrin* Prelude and Anti-anti-Semitism," *19th Century Music* 25, nos. 2-3 (Sept. 2001): 190-211; Daniela Smolov Levy, "Parsifal in Yiddish? Why Not?" *The Musical Quarterly* 97, no. 2 (Summer 2014): 140-80 and "'The Spirit of Struggle and Revolution': Wagner for Yiddish Speakers in Early Twentieth-Century America" ("*Im Geist des Kampfes und der Revolution*": *Wagner für ein jiddischsprachiges Publikum im Amerika des frühen zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts*), *Wagnerspectrum, Schwerpunkt: Wagner – Weill – America* 2 (November 2020): 99-119; Thomas Grey, "The Jewish Question," in *The Cambridge Companion to Wagner*, ed. Thomas Grey (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 203-18; and William Kinderman, *Wagner's Parsifal* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁸ On opera and the Holocaust, see Charles Bertsch, "Language in the Dark: The Legacy of Walter Benjamin in the Opera *Shadowtime*," in *Radical Poetics and Secular Jewish Culture*, ed. Stephen Paul Miller and Daniel Morris (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 310-322; Samuel Edelman, "Singing in the Face of Death: A Study of Jewish Cabaret and Opera During the Holocaust," in *Theatrical Performance During the Holocaust: Texts,*

spurred analysis of operas like Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco's *Il mercante di Venezia* (1956) and Chaya Czernowin's opera *Prima ... ins Innere* (2000).⁹ The small but important body of research on Jewish engagement with opera in Israel also informs study of the topic in America.¹⁰

A growing quantity of American-focused scholarship explores subjects such as American-born Jewish opera singers, operas composed by Jews in America (such as Kurt Weill's *Street Scene* and Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*), critical events in American Jewish opera history (like the mounting of *The Death of Klinghoffer* or *La Juive* at the Metropolitan Opera), Jewish involvement in opera management (such as the influence of a group of Moravian-Jewish opera impresarios on the American opera industry), and opera performance aimed specifically at Jews (such as opera in Yiddish translation on New York's Lower East Side).¹¹ Since these studies still mostly concentrate on New York City, more work is needed that considers other urban and rural settings with a notable Jewish presence across the United States.

Documents, Memoirs, ed. Rebecca Rovit and Alvin Goldfarb (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 125-134; Teryl L. Dobbs, "Remembering the Singing of Silenced Voices: *Brundibár* and Problems of Pedagogy," *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 21, no. 2 (2013): 156-177; Anna Catherine Greer, "*Brundibár*: Confronting the Misrepresentation of Resistance in Theresienstadt," Master's Thesis, University of Tennessee, 2013; Rebecca Rovit, "The *Brundibar* Project: Memorializing Theresienstadt Children's Opera," *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 22, no. 2 (2000): 111-122; Joža Karas, "Operatic Performances in Terezin: Krasa's *Brundibar*," in *Theatrical Performance During the Holocaust: Texts, Documents, Memoirs*, ed. Rebecca Rovit and Alvin Goldfarb (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 190-202; Kristin M. Larsen, "Navigating Worlds of 'Trouble and Woe and Worse' in Children's Literature: An Exploration into the Double Text of Tony Kushner and Maurice Sendak's '*Brundibar*,'" *Children's Literature in Education* 43, no. 1 (2012): 27-47; Linda Hutcheon, and Michael Hutcheon, "'Death, where is thy sting?': The emperor of Atlantis," *Opera Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (2000): 224-239; Jesse Rosenberg, "Race, Religion, and Jewish Identity in the Operas of Fascist Italy," *Journal of Jewish Identities* 10, no. 1 (2017): 105-129; and Dina Porat, "The Richard Wagner and Adolf Hitler Connection: Ideology or Fascination?," *Holocaust Studies* 12, vol. 3 (Winter 2006): 89-106.

⁹ Jesse Rosenberg, "Guilt and Operatic Atonement in Post-Holocaust Italy," *Annali d'italianistica* 36 (2018): 235-259, and Amy Lynn Wlodarski, "Epilogue," in *Musical Witness and Holocaust Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 164-176.

¹⁰ See, for example, Dafna Kohn, "An Opera From Scratch: The Case of Raanana's Mor Metro-West High School," *Min-Ad: Israel Studies in Musicology Online* 15, no. 2 (2018): 87-101; Rachel Orzech, "Nabucco in Zion: Place, Metaphor and Nationalism in an Israeli Production of Verdi's Opera," *Music & Politics* 9, no. 1 (2015): 1-14; Garrett, *A Knight at the Opera*; and Na'ama Sheffi, *The Ring of Myths: The Israelis, Wagner and the Nazis*, translation by Martha Grenzeback (Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2001).

¹¹ See Robert Fink, "*Klinghoffer* in Brooklyn Heights: Opera, Anti-Semitism, and the Politics of Representation," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 17, no. 2 (2005): 173-213; Ruth Henderson, "A Confluence of Moravian Impresarios: Max Maretzek, the Strakosches, and the Graus," in *European Music and Musicians in New York City, 1840-1900*, 235-252, ed. John Graziano (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2006); Joy H. Calico, *Brecht at the Opera* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Rachel Orzech, "Politics, Identity, and the Sound of Jewishness: The Reception of Halévy's *La Juive* in New York, 2003," *Musicology Australia* 33, no. 1 (2011): 29-45; Naomi Graber, "Found in Translation: Kurt Weill on Broadway and in Hollywood, 1935-1939," PhD Diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2013; Levy, "*Parsifal* in Yiddish? Why Not?"; Ari Katorza, "It Ain't Necessarily So: Gershwin, Whiteness, Altruism, and the Distortion of American Jews' Music History," *Jewish Culture and History* 21, no. 4 (2020): 323-341; Naomi Graber, *Kurt Weill's America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021 [forthcoming]); and Samantha M. Cooper, "Cultivating High Society: American Jews Engaging European Opera in New York, 1880-1940," PhD Diss., New York University, forthcoming. On oratorios, see Michael Ochs, "Welcoming *Elijah* in 1927 Chicago: Mendelssohn in Yiddish Socialist Clothing," *American Music* 29, no. 1 (2011): 85-110.

Scholars have also recently begun to delve further into American-Jewish themes in research on class, gender, language, politics, race, national origin, and immigration. While these studies seldom mention opera, or at most refer to it in passing, they shed important light on the broader context in which Jewish engagement with opera takes place.¹² Recent scholarship on the Yiddish theater, for example, without dealing with opera specifically, has deepened understanding of Jewish involvement with high culture.¹³ In addition, research of the last twenty years has drawn attention to the heterogeneity of American Jews, employing lenses such as intersectionality, hybridity, ambiguity, in-betweenness, and difference to more effectively convey the complexity of Jewish experience.¹⁴

Jews have continued their involvement with opera into the present day. They have made careers as opera singers (e.g., David Serero and Anthony Russell), attended the opera (e.g., Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg), composed new operas on Jewish topics (e.g., works by Frank London and Joshua Horowitz), and revived existing Jewish-themed works (e.g., Henech Kon's 1924 Yiddish

¹² See Carol L. Shansky, *The Hebrew Orphan Asylum Band of New York City, 1874-1941: Community, Culture, and Opportunity* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), esp. 163-166; Alyssa Quint, "'Yiddish Literature for the Masses'? A Reconsideration of Who Read What in Jewish Eastern Europe," *AJS Review* 29, no. 1 (2005): 61-89; Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005); Jeffrey Veidlinger, *Jewish Public Culture in the Late Russian Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); David Biale, *Not in the Heavens: The Tradition of Jewish Secular Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Ari Y. Kelman, *Station Identification: A Cultural History of Yiddish Radio in the United States* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2009); Steven Cassedy, *To the Other Shore: The Russian Jewish Intellectuals Who Came to America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Steven Cassedy, ed. and trans.; *Building the Future: Jewish Immigrant Intellectuals and the Making of Tsukunft*, (New York, London: Holmes & Meier, 1999).

¹³ See, for example, essays in *Inventing the Modern Yiddish Stage: Essays in Drama, Performance, and Show Business*, ed. Joel Berkowitz and Barbara Henry (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2012); Alyssa Quint, *The Rise of the Modern Yiddish Theater* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019); essays in *New York's Yiddish Theater: From the Bowery to Broadway*, ed. Edna Nahshon (New York: Columbia University Press, in association with the Museum of the City of New York, 2016); Barbara J. Henry, *Rewriting Russia: Jacob Gordin's Yiddish Drama* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011); Nina Warnke, "Theater as Educational Institution: Jewish Immigrant Intellectuals and Yiddish Theater Reform," in *The Art of Being Jewish in Modern Times*, ed. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Jonathan Karp (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 23-41; Ruth Gay, "Inventing a Yiddish Theater in America," in *The Jewish King Lear: A Comedy in America*, by Jacob Gordin, trans. Ruth Gay, ed. Ruth Gay and Sophie Glazer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 73-106; Beth Kaplan, *Finding the Jewish Shakespeare: The Life and Legacy of Jacob Gordin* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007); Judith Thissen, "Reconsidering the Decline of the New York Yiddish Theatre in the Early 1900s," *Theatre Survey* 44, no. 2 (2003): 173-97; essays in *Yiddish Theatre: New Approaches*, ed. Joel Berkowitz (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2003); and Joel Berkowitz, *Shakespeare on the American Yiddish Stage* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2002). For an example of an article about Yiddish theater that does mention opera, see Ronald Robboy, "Reconstructing a Yiddish Theatre Score: Giacomo Minkowski and His Music to *Alexander; or, The Crown Prince of Jerusalem*," in *Inventing the Modern Yiddish Stage: Essays in Drama, Performance, and Show Business*, 225-50.

¹⁴ From Jewish studies, see Hasia R. Diner, "Why American Historians Really Ignore American Jewish History," *American Jewish History* 95, no. 1 (2009): 33-41 and Marla Brettschneider, *Jewish Feminism and Intersectionality* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2016). From music studies, see Josh Kun, "The Yiddish Are Coming," in *Audiotopia: Music, Race, and America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) and Jonathan Freedman, *Klezmer America: Jewishness, Ethnicity, Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

opera, *Bas Sheva*).¹⁵ Such examples reveal an explicit embrace of Jewish identity in a variety of opera-related arenas, opening up new avenues for scholarly exploration. Given that much of the research on the history of Jews and opera is archival, the rise of the field of digital humanities has been a particular boon to scholars in this area. Instant access to a tremendous online repository of primary sources, including rare documents, periodicals, and recordings, has reduced some of the need to travel to archives. These resources have sped up scholarship and expanded its scope by allowing researchers to easily search for items on adjacent subjects. Other digital tools and platforms such as ArcGIS and even Google Maps have offered new ways of absorbing, sorting, visualizing, and presenting historical and geographical information.

This assessment of extant literature confirms that the study of Jews and opera has attained a definitive place within American Jewish music studies. Research of the last two decades has heightened awareness of the diverse modes of Jewish involvement with opera and led to a more nuanced understanding of its scope and influence. Insights from this work may also shed light on broader questions relating to the impact of different ethnic groups' heritage on the creation and dissemination of culture.

¹⁵ Judith Roumani, "Interview with Opera Singer, David Serero," *Sephardic Horizons* 9, no. 4 (2019): 11, Christa Whitney, interviewer. Oral History Interview with Anthony Russell, *Yiddish Book Center*, Oakland California, January 9, 2013, <https://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/collections/oral-histories/interviews/woh-fi-0000376/anthony-russell-2013>. In the case of Justice Ginsburg, a study of her opera love would require consultation of her published writings on the subject. See Ruth Bader Ginsburg, "Law and Lawyers in Opera," and "The Scalia/Ginsburg in Opera," in *My Own Words* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016), 32-55. Recent Jewish-related operas include Frank London's Afro-Cuban-Yiddish opera *Hatuey: Memory of Fire* (2018), his klezmer opera *A Night in the Old Marketplace* (2007), and Joshua Horowitz's mostly Yiddish-language opera *Lilith The Night Demon in One Lewd Act* (2014). Horowitz premiered his reconstruction of the orchestral score to Kon's opera in 2019 and is slated to perform it again in 2022.

At the Intersection of Music, Judaism and Community: Jewish Choral Singing in America

By Marsha Bryan Edelman

A 2019 survey by Chorus America noted that participation in choral singing is on the increase, with 1 in 6 Americans (54 million people) engaged in choral activities.¹ Nearly three-quarters (73%) of those singers report significant personal benefits to their participation, including feeling more connected to others. Those connections are in evidence in strong commitments to their communities, manifested in greater volunteer participation, financial contributions and leadership roles than are found in the general public.

Very similar results were revealed by the first-ever survey of Jewish choral singers, conducted in 2010 by Drs. Diane Tickton Schuster and Ezra Kopelowitz at the request of the Zamir Choral Foundation.² That survey found that Jewish choral singers are at the “core of the American Jewish community...actively engaged in Jewish life through synagogue membership, dedicated to Jewish communal service through affiliation and leadership roles, and engaged in spiritual meaning-making within a Jewish framework. Most of their friends are Jewish, they regularly attend Jewish adult education programs, they contribute to Jewish charities, and they regard being Jewish as ‘very important’ in their lives.”³ The survey further revealed that 88% of respondents belong to synagogues, and 60% sing in synagogue choirs.

These findings, though, fly in the face of continuing tensions between congregations and their choirs. The last 20 years (and more) have seen increased interest in congregational singing as a means to spiritual engagement (as well as membership), accompanied by a perception that the synagogue choir, in collusion with the cantor, takes a disproportionate role in worship, precluding participation by the *kahal*. This attitude, exacerbated by limited budgets for the payment of choral directors, professional choral singers (as either the core of the ensemble or an “enhancement” supporting volunteers) and the purchase of music, has led many congregations to curtail choral singing during regular worship services. Some notable exceptions do exist in communities with long, rich histories of choral singing. KAM Isaiah (Reform) in Chicago, Park Avenue Synagogue (Conservative) in New York, and the Hampton Synagogue (Orthodox) in Westhampton Beach, NY are among several synagogue that see their reputations enhanced through choral music. Many other congregations, though, limit their congregational choirs to singing on the High Holy Days

¹ Gruenwald Associates and Chorus America, “The Chorus Impact Study: Singing for a Lifetime,” last modified 2019, https://www.chorusamerica.org/sites/default/files/resources/ChorusImpactStudy_SingingforaLifetime.pdf. In the forward to the Executive Summary of that study, Chorus America describes itself as “the advocacy, research, and leadership development organization for the choral field; see <https://www.chorusamerica.org/about/strategic-plan>.

² The Zamir Choral Foundation, founded and directed by Matthew Lazar, promotes choral music as a vehicle to inspire Jewish life, culture, and connection. It is guided by an expansive vision of vibrant Jewish identity across the generational, denominational, and political spectrum through the arts; see www.zamirchoralfoundation.org

³ Diane Tickton Schuster and Ezra Kopelowitz, *Executive Summary: First-Ever Survey of Jewish Choral Activity in North America* (Zamir Choral Foundation, unpublished, 2010).

and special Sabbaths (notably Shabbat Shirah, coinciding with the reading of *Shirat hayam*, the Song of the Sea in *Parashat Beshallah*).

Synagogue choirs have tried creative ways to mediate the complaints of their congregations. Some re-arrange famous choral works that have become congregational favorites (e.g. *Tzaddik katamar* by Louis Lewandowski) into keys with which worshipers can sing along. At the same time, some choirs disburse their members among the congregation, rather than having them present a “frontal performance” from the *bimah* or other designated space, creating the illusion that these singers are just “regular members of the congregation,” extemporaneously harmonizing, rather than devoted amateurs who have spent hours to master their parts.

Notwithstanding the lukewarm reception that meets some synagogue choirs, choral singing remains popular, and offers its participants a strong sense of community. Indeed, the growing number of independent Jewish choirs, based outside of synagogues and usually singing music that falls outside the liturgical repertoire, points to the value and strong sense of Jewish engagement felt by choral singers. The Zamir study revealed that participants in Jewish choirs experience an enhanced sense of Jewish competency as they engage with Jewish texts and the Hebrew language. Jewish choral singing supports an increased sense of Jewish peoplehood through exposure to music from different historical periods and ethnic traditions (including music from Israel). Jewish choral singing also provides a powerful vehicle for the integration of participants’ musical/secular and Jewish lives.

Performances by independent choirs offer the larger Jewish community a similarly integrative experience. Independent choirs frequently appear at community-wide festivals and ceremonies marking annual celebrations (*Yom ha-shoah* and *Yom ha-atzma’ut*) as well as significant milestones on the Jewish communal calendar (e.g. the 50th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem). Audience members are entertained as well as educated about the music they hear and the contexts that inspired its creation.

The North American Jewish Choral Festival (NAJCF), established in 1990 by Matthew Lazar,⁴ has become a premiere event in the Jewish music community, drawing hundreds of singers to a five-day immersion in Jewish choral singing. Participants hear performances by a variety of ensembles drawn from across the US (and beyond), which expose them to diverse choral styles and repertoire. Attendees also become more intimately familiar with a wide range of music through “community singing” gatherings⁵ as well as “instant choir”⁶ rehearsals that prepare music for presentation on the last morning of the Festival. This event has inspired the creation of community

⁴ Lazar, the conductor, since 1972, of the Zamir Chorale (America’s first Zionist Hebrew-singing choir, established in 1960) had been engaged in organizing one-day gatherings of Jewish choirs for several years, but was eager to expand to a more sustained form. The North American Jewish Choral Festival is now a program of the Zamir Choral Foundation, of which Lazar is Founder & Director.

⁵ A form of Jewish choral “speed dating,” participants learn several classic and new selections in short, 20-minute sessions led by experienced conductors.

⁶ Attendees are “sorted” into groups based on their self-described level of choral experience, from novice to advanced singers. These “instant choirs” then spent a total of 7.5 hours over the course of three days working with some of the Jewish community’s finest clinicians to master several selections.

choirs across the US, and provides a valuable opportunity for their members, and especially their leaders, to network, gaining insights and ideas for everything from recruitment to rehearsal technique to repertoire selection.

While general support for choral singing remains limited, individual donors have commissioned new works to honor or memorialize loved ones and colleagues. The Mandell Rosen Fund for New Music, the commissioning arm of the Zamir Choral Foundation, has enriched the Jewish choral repertoire with some 30 new works since its establishment in 2001. The premiere of those works by ensembles affiliated with the Foundation (at the annual NAJCF and elsewhere) has exposed this new music to international audiences, leading to its adoption by other choirs as well as inspiring new commissions.

One unsurprising finding of the Zamir Choral Foundation study was the revelation that nearly two-thirds of Jewish choral singers are females over the age of 55. This fact correlates with other studies of adult engagement with Jewish education and synagogue life.⁷ It also confirms a general decrease in Jewish engagement, broadly, as one studies younger respondents to general surveys.⁸ As Jewish community leaders have pursued a variety of outreach efforts to counter such trends, Jewish musicians have sought more creative ways to engage the younger generation. The popularity of a capella “boy bands” like the Backstreet Boys and Boys II Men in the 1990’s has been emulated in the Jewish community by the emergence of groups like Six13 and the Maccabeats.⁹ A capella singing by somewhat larger ensembles, long popular on college campuses,¹⁰ inspired a proliferation of Jewish a capella groups. Typically, close harmonies by the ensemble support a “lead singer” (or a series of soloists who divide the role) and “vocal percussionists” (“beatboxers”) provide rhythmic accompaniment. The effort to produce a quality performance (often enhanced by choreographic moves) requires the same (or greater!) investments of time and talent that engage more “traditional” choirs, but the selection of popular songs to inspire the repertoire is especially attractive to younger singers. Festivals of a capella singing draw audiences of all ages; in 2019, the Cantors Assembly published *Ilu Finu*, a collection of 22 a cappella settings of the liturgy, with the hope that the popularity of this genre will draw similar audiences to the synagogue.¹¹

Notwithstanding such popular variations on the theme of “choirs,” there is also a positive reception for more “traditional” choral singing among young singers. In 1993, Matthew Lazar noted the popularity of “all-state” and other select ensembles of high school singers, but lamented that much of their repertoire consisted of masterpieces from the Christian choral tradition. Lazar

⁷ Lisa Grant and Diane Tickton Schuster, “The New Adult Jewish Learning Marketplace,” in *International Handbook of Jewish Education*, eds. H. Miller, A. Pomson, and L. Grant (New York, NY: Springer, 2011).

⁸ See reports from the 2013 Pew study of Jewish-Americans at <https://www.pewforum.org/2013/10/01/jewish-american-beliefs-attitudes-culture-survey/>

⁹ All-male ensembles have the added benefit of appealing across the denominational spectrum, including in the Orthodox community, whose members avoid listening to female voices. These unaccompanied ensembles can also perform on Shabbat and other holidays when the use of instruments is traditionally forbidden.

¹⁰ The Whiffenpoofs of Yale University are thought to be the longest-standing group, singing continuously since 1909.

¹¹ Matt Austerklein, ed., *Ilu Finu: A Capella for Jewish Prayer* (Fairlawn, OH: Cantors Assembly, 2019). See a review by Charles Heller in *Journal of Synagogue Music* 45 (2020) p. 151.

established HaZamir to provide an alternative for Jewish singers seeking opportunities to sing quality Jewish music at a superior performance level. That Manhattan-based ensemble has grown into HaZamir: The International Jewish Teen Choir,¹² with 30 chapters across the US and another 10 chapters in Israel. Its 400 members join together annually to perform a gala concert, most recently on stages including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center and the Metropolitan Opera House. Their repertoire includes classic and contemporary liturgy, popular Israeli music, and many of the Mandell Rosen Fund commissions, written especially for them by prominent American Jewish composers including David Burger, Gerald Cohen, Steve Cohen and Benjie Ellen Schiller. These young singers have had transformative experiences singing exciting repertoire, learning about its history and meaning, and creating strong social communities across geographical and denominational boundaries. Their engagement with Jewish music offers a strong endorsement for the role that Jewish choral singing can and should continue to play in the years ahead – for singers of all generations.

Suggested Resources for Listening

Essa Einai, by David Burger, commissioned through the Mandell Rosen Fund for New Music, and performed by singers at the North American Jewish Choral Festival, Matthew Lazar, conductor: <https://youtu.be/eDepx2LOzdl>

L'ma'an Tziyon by Steve Cohen, commissioned through the Mandell Rosen Fund for New Music, performed by HaZamir: The International Jewish Teen Choir at its gala concert at the Metropolitan Opera House, March 2017: <https://youtu.be/DRffsY3Yp4>

Uk'ratem D'ror by Benjie Ellen Schiller, commissioned through the Mandell Rosen Fund for New Music, performed by the Zamir Chorale, Matthew Lazar conductor: <https://youtu.be/L0ow3cNWUeg>

Two Decades of Ladino Music: New Developments

By Simone Salmon

Although the term “Sephardic” is often used as a catch-all term for “non-Ashkenazi,” I will be covering here only music in the language of Judeo-Spanish or Ladino that belongs to Jews of Iberian heritage dating back to the 15th century. Survivors of the Inquisitions were subsequently scattered across the globe, accounting for the diverse styles of their music today. I began my radio program, *Los Bilbilikos*,¹ as an homage to Isaac Levy’s Judeo-Spanish program at Kol Israel.² On it, I mostly play commercial Ladino music that I have gathered during

¹² HaZamir: The International Jewish Teen Choir is also a program of the Zamir Choral Foundation.

¹ Recordings of the show are online: <https://www.mixcloud.com/simoneharp/>

² Today such a show exists in Jerusalem. It is called *Kan Ladino* and is hosted by Rubik Siman-Tov: <https://www.kan.org.il/radio/program.aspx?progId=1135>

my fieldwork in Turkey, Greece, Israel, save for that which I found in used record stores and thrift shops across America. Artists from Europe and the Middle East often donate their albums to be featured on the show. It is largely due to these donations that international Ladino music can be played over American airwaves. In fact, most Ladino music is sourced from outside because the development of the genre in America is largely dependent on private funding.

Commercial Ladino music at the beginning of the 21st century centered largely around the reproduction of so-called traditional melodies from the recordings of elderly people, whether the melodies were gathered from Sephardic homes for the aged or were those of close family members. This had been the main way in which Ladino songs made their way into the commercial sphere. American greats like Voice of the Turtle (with singer Judith Wachs) began in 1978 by collecting recordings from community leaders. Judy Frankel, a famous Bostonian guitarist and singer also learned her songs directly from Sephardim and had been releasing albums in Western-tempered intervals since 1990. Frankel died in 2008, the same year that Judith Wachs passed away. Flory Jagoda, a Bosnian-born guitarist and singer who escaped from Sarajevo to Croatia, to Italy, and to the United States during the Second World War released her first commercial album in America in 1988, *Kantikas di mi Nona*, for which she used the songs of her grandmother as source material. Her composition “Ocho Kandelikas” became a Hanukah staple even in non-Sephardic houses. Jagoda was awarded the National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts and gave a gala celebration concert celebrating her 90th birthday at the Library of Congress in 2013. That same year, Samuel Armistead, the prolific ethnographer, folklorist, and literary critic famous for his work with Joseph Silverman and Israel Katz collecting Judeo-Spanish Mediterranean and American songs, passed away. Shortly after Flory Jagoda’s death in February 2021, prominent Canadian Judeo-Spanish singer and instrumentalist Judith Cohen published several of their shared memories in the *Jewish-Music Digest*.³ Judith Cohen, known for her Moroccan-influenced music from her band Gerineldo, continues to perform, lecture, and publish on Sephardic music today.

Select commercial Judeo-Spanish albums from America, Greece, Austria, Israel, Turkey, Serbia, Spain and London populate the shelves in Jewish music sections of specialized record stores and synagogues today in America, Israel, and Turkey.⁴ The revival of the *a la turka* style, often inspired by the recordings of Haim Effendi in the early twentieth century, is present in Ladino commercial records if one knows where to find it. However, the last two decades brought about a new wave of recordings in the *a la franga* and early music styles. The past twenty years also spawned the genre of contemporary Ladino rock as an appeal to the younger generation and an attempt to save the endangered language.

I will begin with the turn of the twentieth century: 2001 brought a reissue of recordings sung by Isaac Levy, an Israeli musicologist, archivist, and radio host that specialized in Ladino music on the album *El Kante de una Vida*. The following year brought a box set of reissued classic Ladino recordings of Yehoram Gaon, The Parvarim, and selections from Rema Semsonov, Esther Ofarim, and Ricky Gal from NMC United Entertainment. Meanwhile, in the first decade of the

³ *Jewish-Music Digest*. 106:3.

⁴ They can also be found for sale at private Sephardic music concerts.

year 2000, commercial Ladino music continued its departure from the old commercial style of rich western orchestral accompaniment. Esti Kenan Ofri in Israel released her album, *Gazelle*, of Judeo-Spanish songs with her band Kol Oud Tof in the Moroccan style. Her subsequent album, *Camino en Mano*, sourced music from Turkey and the Balkans and focused largely on the voice and drum to reminisce on the way Ladino songs were performed centuries ago. Yasmin Levy, daughter of Isaac Levy, recorded albums of the Ladino music of her father, developing her reputation as an artist of Ladino music in the flamenco style starting with her 2005 album, *La Judería*.

In Turkey, Los Paşaros Sefaradis released *Kantikas Para Syempre*, with songs both based on those gathered during their research and those written by member Selim Hubeş. Their album *Las Puertas* contained two CDs, one interpreting Ladino songs in a western style and the other in an eastern style. They also produced the albums *Zemirot* and *Zemirot II* of Turkish synagogue hymns that were performed by the Yako Taragano Synagogue Hymns Choir. Also in Turkey, Hadass Pal-Yarden released *Yahudice* on Kalan records in 2003 while completing her doctoral degree in Ethnomusicology at Istanbul Technical University's Advanced Music Studies Program (MIAM). The songs on Pal-Yarden's album were arranged by Yurdal Tokcan, a distinguished oudist, and Göksel Baktagir, Turkey's most famous kanunist. Representing the *a la franga* style, Janet & Jak Esim released three albums in 2006 on Kalan. In these albums, the two sing together while Jak plays the guitar as he has since the beginning of the Ladino music revival in the 1970's. Jak was instrumental in the performance of the Ladino musical *Kula '930* about Jewish life in Istanbul's Galata district. He was inspired by the *ala turka* recordings of Haim Efendi and Isaac Sene but was led by his interest in the guitar to present the songs in a modernized form in equal temperament.

The second decade of the 21st century sees a resurgence of Ladino songs played in the Spanish style. In Spain, Mara Arada and her ensemble, the Al Andaluz Project, put out albums played on medieval instruments alluding to the ties that Sephardim still feel to Andalusia. Yaniv D'Or, an Israeli British countertenor, released his album *Liquefacta est...* in 2012 with Ensemble Naya, consisting mostly of music in Hebrew, Latin, and Ladino. In this album, Ladino songs are grouped with the madrigals of Claudio Monteverdi and other early Baroque composers, consciously plucking them from the folk and putting them into the art genre, despite the songs' 19th-century origins. Yaniv D'Or released another album, *Latino Ladino*, in 2015. Kochava Levy, the wife of Isaac Levy and mother of Yasmin Levy, released two albums in 2011 and 2016 that were sung in the *a la turka* style. Francoise Atlan, Ensemble Saltiel, Baklava, and Baladino did the same. In 2017, Los Paşaros Sefaradis released an *a la franga* album of tangos, danceable tunes that made Ladino popular to the generation of the 1920s and 1930s and helped to prolong Ladino music-culture through the use of popular melodies heard on commercial 78s.

Ladino music's overlap into the popular music scene by way of the electric guitar began with the Turkish band Sefarad, which released their self-titled album in 2003. The band mixed traditional instruments like the clarinet and darbuka with synthesized strings in the style of the popular arabesque genre, harmonized in the western style. Sarah Aroeste released *A la una* in the same year, combining the classic traditional Ladino songs with contemporary influences of rock,

blues, funk and jazz. Aroeste further cemented her place in the Ladino rock scene with her following album, *Puertas* in 2007, and *Gracia* in 2012 in which she included four original songs and more prominent hard rock, hip hop, and experimental influence. Her most recent album, *Ora de Despertar* in 2016, was written for children and the music is largely centered around the piano which she herself plays.

In the same year that *Gracia* graced American shelves, famous Israeli rock musician Yehuda Poliker released his album *Jacko and Yehuda Poliker*, which consists of recordings of his parents singing Greek and Ladino songs from Thessaloniki preceding the Second World War. This archival selection, accompanied much like Yehuda Poliker's solo recordings, brought the Holocaust to the forefront of the album due to his father's story of survival in Auschwitz. Also in 2012, Israeli actor Guy Zu-Aretz released the album *Ladino Songs and Sephardic Prayers* with his brother, Roy Zu-Aretz. The album dresses their grandparents' Libyan and Balkan *piyyutim* and Ladino songs "in contemporary clothing" through the use of the electric piano, guitars, and saxophone. They released another album of Hebrew and Ladino music in 2017 called *La Caza Zu-Aretz*. The duo has collaborated with David D'Or, Israel's representative in the 2004 Eurovision Song Contest, in their live performances. The final contemporary representation of Ladino rock music in Israel was released by Israeli rock superstars Ehud Banai and Berry Sakharof in 2017. In *He Hofi'ah Kmo Haruach*, the two sing Ladino melodies in Hebrew that they learned from the recordings of Isaac Levy and Haim Effendi, renewed in a creative manner.

Several Ladino performances and collaborations have taken place online since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic which has allowed performances across the world to be watched from American computers. Most notably was *Unidos por el Ladino*, a series of videos produced in Argentina by Liliana and Marcelo Benveniste, the founders and editors of the online Sephardic news platform eSefarad. The Benvenistes released their first video collaboration in April 2020 of members of the global Sephardic community singing from their homes. Performers recorded themselves singing along to Liliana's voice and Marcelo patched the video recordings together into a montage that was shared widely across Sephardic online platforms. The first video focused on the elderly generation,⁵ the second on the youngest generation,⁶ the third on women,⁷ and the fourth on men.⁸ In addition, concerts over Zoom have been put together by *Amigos por Israel*, the *Autoridad Nacional del Ladino i su Kultura*, and *El Sirkolo de Yerushalayim* featuring a slew of popular performers of Ladino music including Karen Şarhon, İzzet Bana, Mara Aranda, Susana Behar, Sarah Aroeste, and Paco Diez. It is through such free and open-access online collaborations that Ladino music-culture has remained strong at a time when social and musical interactions have been paused at large.

⁵ "Unidos por el ladino #1 – Estay Montanya – eSefarad abril 2020," *eSefarad Noticias del Mundo Sefardi*. 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iC_MnKRt1TE

⁶ "Unidos por el ladino #2 – Los bilbilikos," *eSefarad Noticias del Mundo Sefardi*. 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LDsizbcQ-BU>

⁷ "Unidos por el ladino #3 – Buena Semana," *eSefarad Noticias del Mundo Sefardi*. 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i6kGZaU6jDQ>

⁸ "Unidos por el ladino #4 – El Dio Alto," *eSefarad Noticias del Mundo Sefardi*. 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ppNy_D2F-h8

Unfortunately, traditional Sephardic music is not as professionalized as Ashkenazic genres are in the way that, for example, klezmer has enjoyed the participation of major Western art music elite Itzhak Perlman. Listeners to Judeo-Spanish music usually discover their interest through a set of personal circumstances, generally through an investigation of one's own heritage, which promotes the consumption of Sephardic patrimony in the form of commercially recorded traditional music and live Sephardic music concerts, among others. This has resulted in the development of Sephardic music as its own performative category, gaining it increased recognition by cultural outsiders, particularly in cities like Montréal. Due to the importance of Judeo-Spanish music in Sephardic culture, the genre has been incorporated into Sephardic Studies, mostly for its lyrics in the form of documentation. In addition, America has taken active participation in consuming Ladino music that has been sourced from the outside despite the domestic decline in the release of Judeo-Spanish music recordings over the last several years. The recent surge in audience attendance to live Sephardic concerts has largely been made possible through the use of online platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic. Ladino music is now regularly featured in the Spring at the UCLADINO symposium at UCLA.

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⁹ Supplementary material, including recordings, is available online at <http://www.sephardifolklit.org/>. Refer to Rosenstock's and Bistué's "The Folk Literature of the Sephardic Jews Digital Library" for more information.

Middle Eastern and North African Jewish Music in the US Public Sphere: 2000-2020^{1 2}

By Galeet Dardashti

Though I've kept my academic work separate from my US-based performance work by writing predominantly about Israel—most prominently on issues surrounding the performance of Mizrahi culture and music there—in what follows, I've abandoned any attempt to remove myself from the narrative. Instead, I draw heavily from my own experiences as I highlight the trends in the performance and discourse surrounding Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) Jewish music in the US public sphere as I've seen the cultural landscape shift around me.³

Performing MENA Jewish music in the US public sphere in 2000 meant catering to Jewish and non-Jewish audiences who often scarcely knew about such musical traditions (or about MENA Jews). Most of the older musicians in the US performing Jewish music from the MENA repertoire in the early 2000s were born outside of the US, including cantors such as Ramon Tasat (Argentina), Aaron Bensoussan (Morocco), Alberto Mizrahi (Greece) and singer/instrumentalist Gerard Ederly (Morocco). Notably, Bensoussan—who grew up steeped in North African Jewish musical traditions—and Mizrahi gained renown as performers of the Sephardic repertoire only after demonstrating mastery of Ashkenazi cantorial traditions.⁴ Only one song on the 2002 Bensoussan/Ederly/Mizrahi collaborative album, *The Sons of Sepharad*, contains quarter-tonal music, and the eight songs in Ladino are mostly well-known in the US Jewish music world and therefore comfortable for audiences.

Amidst the second intifada in Israel and after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack in the US, performing MENA Jewish music traditions in the US became imbued with new political meaning; most of the bands that emerged in this period underscored hopes for peace and the commonality between Middle Eastern cultures and religions in their album liner notes and press

¹ I've avoided the term "Mizrahi" in the title because it has historically referred exclusively to Middle Eastern and North African Jews in Israel after their shared experiences of discrimination upon immigration. North American Jews have typically not used this term though, as I will explain, this has changed in recent years. Still, identity markers used by Jews from the Middle East and North Africa vary significantly. Some—particularly Jews with roots in North Africa—embrace the term "Sephardic" while others for whom "Sephardic" does not feel historically accurate choose to use "Persian-Jewish," "Iraqi-Jewish," etc. to describe their identities. Utilizing "MENA Jews," therefore, is more inclusive.

² This short piece covers MENA Jewish music practices in the public sphere—that is, music intended for consumption outside of distinct Syrian, Iranian, Egyptian, Moroccan, Iraqi, Yemenite, etc. Jewish communities. See the works of Mark Kligman and Samuel Torjman Thomas on Syrian and Moroccan-Jewish musical practices, respectively, in Brooklyn during this period.

³ Due to space constraints, I've omitted Sephardic musicians who primary identify as "Ladino artists" for whom the preservation of Ladino or Judeo-Spanish is the driving force in their work. See, for example, <https://www.saraharoeste.com/bio>

⁴ Both Bensoussan and Mizrahi received their cantorial ordination from the Jewish Theological Seminary, where they studied Ashkenazi *nusah*, traditions, and vocal techniques. Most of their performances over the past twenty years have featured both Ashkenazi and Sephardic music.

interviews.⁵ My own all-female “Sephardic and Middle Eastern Jewish” band, Divahn, released its first album in Austin, Texas in 2002.⁶ The album features repertoire I knew from my childhood performances with my immediate family and music I learned through my graduate research on Mizrahi music in Israel.⁷ Other than *Yigdal* which I learned from my grandparents’ Persian synagogue in Israel, none of the other songs came from my own patrilineal Persian tradition, with which I was not well-versed.⁸⁹ Divahn became known for its unapologetic mixing of genres; our Iraqi rendition of *Yah Ribon Alam* featured an old-timey banjo solo, Indian tabla, 3-part harmony, and a gospel-inspired vocal solo. During my doctoral dissertation fieldwork in Israel in 2003/4, however, I deeply immersed myself in the study of Arab and Persian classical music traditions, and I brought back my newly acquired music skills to Divahn and other new solo projects.¹⁰

When I moved to New York City in 2004, I met other musicians exploring their Middle Eastern Jewish musical identities—almost all of them Mizrahi Israeli transplants like those I’d met and researched during my fieldwork; their projects primarily involved mixing music from their family heritages with other musical genres and styles.¹¹ Yoel Ben-Simhon (oud, guitar, vocals) and his Sultana Ensemble (named after Ben-Simhon’s Moroccan grandmother) released a personal album in 2004 with traditional-sounding Middle Eastern compositions with occasional jazz, pop, and flamenco stylings. In his track *Forgiveness Hymns*, Ben-Simhon musically narrates in Hebrew some of the sounds, images, and scents from his childhood memories of Yom Kippur before transitioning into a Moroccan version of the *piyyut Eil Nora Alilah*. Vocalist Michal Cohen, of Yemenite background, released her album *Henna* in 2007, featuring traditional Judeo-Yemenite songs set to electronic dance beats.

⁵ Za’atar describes the peace-making efforts of its members and emphasizes shared culture between Arabs and Jews here: <https://live-jweekly.alleydev.com/2001/02/09/za-atar-to-bring-mizrachi-harmonies-to-music-fest>. Yoel Ben-Simhon’s press materials discuss “re-uniting Arabs and Jews through music” and emphasizes that “Music was one of the few spaces that Jews and Muslims in Arab lands could come together and share their creativity without boundaries.”

⁶ This is how the group defined itself in promotional material as we began performing around 2000.

⁷ The album contains several Hebrew *piyyutim* and three classic Ladino tunes—two of which appeared on the *Sons of Sepharad* album that same year.

⁸ Ironically, though I listed the music for the *Yigdal* on Divahn’s album as “traditional Iranian” in the liner notes, I later learned that this melody, which I’d originally heard as *Lekha Dodi* at my grandparents’ Persian synagogue in Rishon Letzion, was originally a Sephardi/Yerushalmi melody that their particular Persian Jewish community had adopted.

⁹ Like Bensoussan and Mizrahi, my Iranian *hazzan* father attended JTS, and I grew up primarily hearing Ashkenormative Jewish music. None of the songs on our first album contained quarter-tones—not because of our attempt to cater to US audiences but rather because such songs were not in my repertoire.

¹⁰ I received a Six Points Fellowship for Emerging Jewish Artists in 2006 to pursue my solo project, *The Naming*, a song cycle of Middle Eastern-influenced compositions which interpret some of the compelling women of the Bible juxtaposed with family stories and traditional *piyyutim*. Funded by the UJA Federation of NY, each fellow received at least \$40,000 over two years, split between a living stipend and a project grant.

¹¹ Though definitely not a MENA Jewish band per se, Basya Schechter’s band, Pharaoh’s Daughter, was also active during this period and employed Middle Eastern grooves and occasionally a Sephardic tune in its hybrid east/west musical sound.

Not all of the young bands came from NYC, however.¹² The traditional Arab-Jewish Bay-Area band Za'atar formed in the late nineties and released albums in 2000 and 2004.¹³ Composed of Americans and Israelis, the driving forces were John Erlich, an Ashkenazi-American musician who fell in love with MENA Jewish music from cassettes he picked up in Israel in the late nineties, and Ron Elkayam, who grew up in the US with Israeli parents (one Moroccan).¹⁴ Unlike the NYC bands, however, Za'atar's musical sound stayed fairly true to the Judeo-Arab *piyyut* traditions they learned from the cassettes procured during Erlich's visits to Israel.¹⁵ Two members of Za'atar—both of whom spent significant time studying MENA music in Israel, Turkey, or Morocco—later formed Eliyahu and the Qadim Ensemble.¹⁶ Almost all of us—performers of MENA Jewish music in the US—had to manage the public's desire to label our music as “exotic” or “Middle Eastern magic” during this period.

The 2010s were a quieter time for MENA Jewish music.¹⁷ The American public's interest in MENA culture, precipitated by September 11th and ensuing wars, had perhaps waned by then. American Jewish institutions began withdrawing much of their institutional support for Jewish culture, and the Madoff scandal left many institutions with less money to support artists. Most of the Israeli expat musicians performing MENA music left NYC in the 2010s and returned to Israel.¹⁸

American cultural politics began to shift following the establishment of the BLM movement (2013), and even further after the 2016 election; discourse and attention surrounding MENA Jews in the Jewish community slowly began to shift as well, and this extended to music. Though many of us had been advocating for the inclusion of MENA Jewish music in mainstream institutions for years, some institutions finally began to listen. At the same time, a new consciousness grew among many young American Ashkenazi Jews regarding issues of appropriation and tokenization of MENA Jewish traditions.

¹² The Yuval Ron Ensemble in Los Angeles—though not a MENA Jewish band per se—featured some of this music over the years as part of its mission of “uniting the music and dance of the people of the Middle East.” See <https://yuvalronmusic.com/yuval-ron-ensemble/history-and-mission/>.

¹³ *Mizrah* in 2000 and *Rikmat HaZimrah* in 2004.

¹⁴ These cassettes featured some of the greatest *payytanim* of the time, such as Moshe Habusha, Yehezkel Tzion, and Emil Zrihan.

¹⁵ For more on Za'atar's mission see: <https://live-jweekly.alleydev.com/2001/02/09/za-atar-to-bring-mizrachi-harmonies-to-music-fest/>.

¹⁶ These musicians were Rachel Valfer and Eliyahu Sills. This group performed MENA Jewish music in addition to songs in Arabic, Greek, Turkish, and Armenian in order to emphasize the “common musical and spiritual heritage of the region's cultures” See: www.eliyahusills.com/qadim/.

¹⁷ A few projects of note, however, did occur in the 2010s. I received the Foundation for Jewish Culture's Inaugural “New Jewish Culture Network” Commission to create *Monajat* in 2010/2011 and performed it in six US cities that first year. Ethnomusicologist and multi-instrumentalist Samuel Torjman Thomas (who inserted “Torjman”—his mother's maiden name—during this period), formed the New York Andalus Ensemble, which brought more NYC performers and audiences into the realm of MENA Jewish music; he also recorded *Resonance* with his band Asefa in 2011. The 2018 album, *Safra: George Mordecai and the Hadar Ensemble* was significant since it was the first album released by Rising Song to feature non-Ashkenazi music. Two young musicians have emerged from Los Angeles in the last few years: Asher-Shasho Levy, of Syrian-Jewish background, who primarily performs Judeo-Arab music on oud and voice; and Chloe Pourmorady (vocals, kamancheh, and violin) who performs eclectic traditional and original pieces representing the Iranian, Jewish and Sephardic aspects of her identity.

¹⁸ Some of the Israeli musicians I knew left NYC, in part, to participate in the burgeoning Middle Eastern music scene.

By 2017, many young Jews of MENA background raised in the US—some of whom now began to refer to themselves as Mizrahim—became interested in connecting with their own Moroccan, Iraqi, Syrian, etc. identities and traditions.¹⁹ I began to see parallels between the US and the awakening of Mizrahi identities in Israel I’d documented in the early 2000s. Despite the social isolation that the global pandemic caused in 2020, the widespread adoption of Zoom and similar technologies dissolved the distance between cities, East coast/West coast, and even countries. For young aspiring MENA Jewish musicians in the US, this has afforded unprecedented accessibility to teachers in Israel and elsewhere in the MENA community without them having to leave their homes, apply for grants, pursue PhDs, or take time off from work.

For example, Laura Townsend, an up-and-coming performer of North African Jewish music in NYC, now takes weekly online lessons with a teacher from Jerusalem’s Degel Yehudah in Jerusalem on Moroccan *nusah*, and studies Andalusian music and *piyyutim* online with a few Jerusalem *payytanim*.^{20 21} Townsend aspires to reclaim her Moroccan heritage by eventually co-founding and leading an egalitarian Sephardi/Mizrahi community, and performing for and teaching other MENA Jews. For Townsend and others, the goal is less about transforming the American Jewish musical mainstream and more about empowering MENA Jews on the margins—women, queer, and transgender Jews, in particular—to form new spaces of their own. While this approach does not currently represent the majority of musicians working in this realm, the viability of such a model for MENA Jews in the US represents a significant paradigm shift seemingly inconceivable just a decade ago. Although MENA Jewish musical practices in the US have not followed predictable styles or trends over the past two decades, musicians today—whether attempting “authentic” renditions or mixing Eastern sounds with jazz, flamenco, or electronics—are beginning to dig deeper in order to access and perform the MENA music of their disparate heritages; learning this material is now just a few clicks or a conference call away.

Ontological Reflections on “Contemporary Jewish Music in America”

By Tina Frühauf

In March 1967, the Congressional Record, which is the official documentation of proceedings and debates of the United States Congress, issued an extensive note on composer Frederic A. Cohen, just days after his death. It summarizes his illustrious career which began in Germany, where he was born in 1904, and continued with his immigration to the United States in 1941. In the New World he not only successfully resumed his work as a music director and composer, he

¹⁹ Most, though not all, North Americans who use the term “Mizrahi” to self-describe are progressives who seek to align themselves with the plight and struggle of Mizrahim in Israel.

²⁰ Jerusalem’s Degel Yehudah is Israel’s only egalitarian Sephardi/Mizrahi prayer community.

²¹ Townsend began performing in MENA Jewish music in NYC via the New York Andalus Ensemble led by ethnomusicologist, Samuel Torjman Thomas. Though Townsend grew up in France rather than the US, she is a green card resident in process of naturalization and is active in the US “Mizrahi Collective”—a nascent progressive movement of young Jews in the US seeking to connect with their MENA Jewish traditions.

did so impacting his environment. As captured in the Congressional Record: “His devotion to furthering contemporary music in America was deep and lasted for the rest of his life.”¹ That was in 1967, more than fifty years ago, when his and others’ musics received the label “contemporary,” a term generally grasped as occurring in the present.

The present of 2020 is naturally quite different from that of 1967, as aptly sketched in Mark Kligman’s introduction to this collection of vignettes and in the conclusions by Judah Cohen. As such, the concept of “contemporary Jewish music in America,” first introduced by Kligman in his seminal essay of 2001 and in this collection temporally expanded to 2020, offers an opportunity to discuss the different facets of what it entails and what it problematizes. For one, it invites a diversity which related concepts such as “American Jewish music” (a small subset of Jewish music in America) do not offer. Such differentiation is important, for in the past, several authors have claimed that a unique Jewish American style emerged due to the particular circumstances under which American Judaism has developed. And yet, American soil has always offered encounters of cultures as well as the preservation of imported sounds from the Old World, the world of Islam, and elsewhere. For Jews, these processes unfolded from the moment they firmly settled on this soil—that is in 1654, way before the United States emerged as an independent nation—to the very present day; and they will continue on into the future. Jewish music *in* America thus offers infinite possibilities of preservation, invention, and reinvention, as it is a music tied to the place of a people, regardless of their geographic origin though with complete awareness of it. It can be traditional music, it can be heritage music driven by non-Jews, and it can be “new” music which over time becomes “old” music for future generations in a given place. As a clear acknowledgment of geography, the concept of “contemporary Jewish music in America” turns away from thinking about center and periphery; since 1948 it may include both the imported cultures of modern-day Israel and various diasporas, without necessarily being Diaspora music, and with the possibility of absorbing and radiating global phenomena. Indeed, “contemporary Jewish music in America” has the potential to overcome established binaries whose meanings have changed with time—Israel and the Diaspora, Sephardic and Ashkenazic or Oriental, religious and secular, Liberal and Orthodox, and others. By the twenty-first century such dichotomies have been long succeeded by spectrums of ideology and nationalism, cultural origin, denomination, and genre in light of increasing hybridizations over time.

Indeed, “contemporary Jewish music in America” not only brings to the fore *place*, but also and especially, *time*. Yet, it is not necessarily about a linear time. “Contemporary Jewish music in America” does not and should not merely stand for development, change, or, following Hegelianism, progress. Indeed, “contemporary Jewish music in America” veers away from old scholarly endeavors to substantiate claims of Jewish musical continuity. (A linear timeline of Jewish music in America would be devoid of tangible substance indeed.) It is also not about a cyclical time, which stresses repetition as an ideal rather than development. To be sure, the temporality of Jewish music needs interrogation through other lenses, such as temporal connections “in concentric circles that imply a fluidity between past, present, and future without

¹ *Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates of the 90th Congress, First Session* 113, no. 5 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1967), 6324.

closure, and in which the previous is also a new beginning” or, as I have previously suggested, “in spiral or curvilinear formations in which music histories go forth and return, creating moments of simultaneity and coevalness of diverse experiences of time, signifying repetition but with a difference.”² As such, “contemporary” is less about the aforementioned *occurrence* in the present as it is about its tight meaning of *belonging* to any given present, which is contemporary anew in every decade, an ongoing process that asks for fresh interrogations in light of ever shifting contexts.

Conclusion

By Judah M. Cohen

Looking back on the last twenty years presents us with a stark combination of vast change and strenuous continuity. Imagine falling into a deep sleep at a religious service or a Jewish music festival at the end of 1999: what would it be like to wake up in 2021, and walk into a synagogue, or a Jewish music concert, or even a cantorial class? What would seem familiar? What would we describe as “traditional”? Which new musical works from twenty years ago now seem normative?

This combined article allows us to venture a few ideas. Among other things, we see extraordinary energy placed into acts of musical self-preservation, and even re-preservation: when one longstanding effort to maintain klezmer music or cantorial music as a tradition wanes, many of the same people regroup into different organizations with similar names. We also see the contrapuntal process by which one generation’s ideas of music give way to the next, often through a combination of organic growth and “establishment” funding. Together, these two ideational streams lead to a kind of cooperation-based change, or a compromise for continuity.

A lot has happened in the last twenty years. While both local and touring Jews flocked to New York congregation B’nai Jeshurun at the end of the twentieth century, other young congregations such as Romemu and Hadar subsequently gained prominence; and related organizations such as The Rising Song Institute have shifted the conversation further. Seemingly unstoppable institutions for Jewish music exploration from this era, including Tara Publications, the Knitting Factory, the Foundation for Jewish Culture, JDub Records, and KlezKamp, have given way to new networks of distribution and performance, including the Jewish Emergent Network, university-based Jewish studies initiatives, and social media-based self-promoted careers. Kutz Camp closed; Songleader Boot Camp opened; Hava Nashira has grown substantially. Mostly Music has grown from a player in the Orthodox music market to its dominant distributor; and digital sharing networks both public and private continue to seed new alternative musical communities. Physical media, once a mode of prolific collection and trade, has largely given way to digital formats, eliminating space limitations; and personal digital storage devices such as the iPod (2001-2019) have given way to “cloud”-based streaming. Funding cycles have shifted from

² See Tina Frühauf, eds., *Postmodernity’s Musical Pasts* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2020), 14.

“Culture” (including music) to “Informal Education,” and (in light of COVID-19) back to “Culture.” Jewish music competitions that once copied the Eurovision Song Contest now resemble *American Idol*, and run across the political and religious spectrum. The major cantorial schools have undergone massive shifts under the pretense of not changing, while joined by new cantorial programs at Boston’s Hebrew College, the Academy for Jewish Religion, and (briefly) Reconstructing Judaism; publishers such as Transcontinental Music Publications had similar journeys. Social justice movements still use Yiddish, even as new songs join the old. In each case, categories of “Jewish music” often retain similar names as twenty years ago, even as they shift to incorporate new and different forms.

All of this should hardly be surprising, especially given the major economic, demographic, and political shifts that have taken place in America since 2000, leading to parallel liberal and conservative narratives. As #MeToo/#GamAni became a powerful moral force, congregations, musicians, and Jewish organizations addressed the past behavior of major mid-late twentieth century musical figures, including Shlomo Carlebach and David Putterman. The increased visibility of systemic racism and Black Lives Matter protests similarly accelerated ongoing efforts to understand Jewish populations’ affinity to Black people on one hand (through the activities of hip-hop artists Y-Love and Nissim Black, and Drake), and to recognize more explicitly Jews’ internal diversity on the other hand. At the same time, music was drawn into the increasingly politicized atmosphere in the United States, where artists such as Yaakov Shwekey on the right/orthodox and liberal Jewish folksingers on the left/progressive side openly endorsed political positions and candidates. While an argument can be made for steady development, the process of living through these years tends to feel more like a series of co-existing mini-movements constantly knocking against each other: with strong forces promoted by institutions insistent on the moral rightness of continuous practice, and a broad range of small forces seeking to establish their own newness.

While all these changes took place in the Jewish communal world, moreover, the academic field of Jewish studies was developing in parallel a new series of ideas on how people created and constructed Jewish history. What began in the late 19th century as a desire to establish scientific proof of longevity and tradition has morphed in the twenty-first century into a productive discussion between the lay-led and religious drive for a communal center of gravity, and a probing desire to understand how people assemble and use histories over time: a classic opposition between constancy and change. These mutually reinforcing ideas translate also to discussions of Jewish music.

Where does this leave us? On one hand, especially in the era of COVID, the practice and genre of “Jewish music” is more public than it has ever been. Video and audio streaming was clunky, expensive, and inconvenient in 2000; mass streaming services such as YouTube (founded in 2005) democratized the act, and faster hardware and internet speeds improved quality; and by mid-2020 a growing number of rabbinical authorities offered at least some provision for streaming during Jewish holidays. As the pandemic has confined Jewish populations to their homes, video screens became gathering places for people across the world to join (and sometimes revisit) by clicking on a URL; and music has adapted accordingly, via creative and sometimes awkward

attempts at communal experience (at this moment in 2021, video streaming must still solve the problem of simultaneous musical performance). Similarly, sound archive projects, whether private (The Milken Archive, founded 1990, first recordings issued 2003, website relaunched 2010), personal (such as Joel Bresler's *Sephardic Music: A Century of Recordings*, which went live at <http://www.sephardicmusic.org> in 2008), or institutional (such as the Judaic Collection of the Florida Atlantic University's Recorded Sound Archives, founded 2002) have made significant resources from the past easily available. Judaism has always had a global sense of itself; but these developments have collapsed many of the boundaries between synagogue, stage, work, and home, not to mention geographical boundaries (especially with Israel), and time itself. And it has created a vast, chaotic, variably regulated body of material that will delight and flummox future musicologists, while confounding efforts at generalized narratives constructed to fit a hegemonic category called "Jewish music." More musical spaces have opened to us, and we can be in more of them at once (so long as the corporations that control the data continue to make them available). Optimistically, this proliferation suggests that more people can build new, more informed audiences by reflecting on Jewish music as a manifestation of their own senses of identity, belief and history; more cynically, the overwhelming number of resources, combined with the limitations of predictive algorithms, can lead to narrowing and isolation as we have seen in American politics.

On the other hand, we find in this chaotic sound world the opportunity to explore new voices outside of the field's protected (yet limited) histories. I have experienced this expansion firsthand through my undergraduate course "American Jewish Popular Music," which I taught in 2008, 2011, 2014, and 2020. In the course's first iteration I had students listen and respond to a series of extended recordings ("Albums") available at the library; subsequent iterations shifted much of the media to music available through online streaming services—including one odd effort to incorporate the short-lived streaming service Grooveshark (which had forged a licensing agreement with Indiana University).

The first version of the course in 2008, which seems like eons away now, also had a completely different focus largely predetermined by the previous decade's philanthropy funded Jewish culture moment (the same decade that created JDub Records, *Heeb* Magazine, and the Ikar Congregation). I polled the students at the end on their opinions about American Jewish Popular Music as the basis of a presentation I did for the now-defunct National Foundation for Jewish Culture, which was trying to find new paradigms for funding Jewish music.

The latter two iterations have shifted to a more ethnographic approach and group work, which was particularly helpful when the pandemic required us to move online. Sometimes people had to listen to albums, but by this point the popular music scene had migrated toward YouTube videos and one-track-at-a-time streaming services.

In 2020, I tried a somewhat different approach: I laid out a set of topics that I thought were relevant to contemporary American Jewish music, walked students through a few key readings and then had them form working groups to tackle contemporary topics: making a living, marginalized groups, streaming services, and recent trends. We practiced by analyzing a recently posted video each day.

Rather than teach a syllabus after the first few weeks, I scheduled regular consultation meetings with each group to help them structure their research and ideas with a number of checkpoints along the way, including an annotated bibliography. I urged them to find sources rather than take them from me, but recognized that the specialization of the topic also required a substantial level of background in order to feel comfortable. That's the nature of teaching.

Many of their resulting papers were illuminating. A student in one group looked at queerness in American Jewish music, and presented an interview with a former member of the Yeshiva University a cappella group the Y-Studs who described being allowed to maintain his identity only if it didn't factor into performance.

A second group focused on the task of making a living as a self-identified "Jewish musician." One student scored an interview with Orthodox recording artist Avraham Fried and made a meaningful comparison with the more recent Orthodox group Zusha. Another analyzed YouTube and recent TV star Dave Burd (aka Lil Dicky, star of the FXX TV show "Dave") to offer new views about how artists sold the broad appeal of their personae as much as the music itself.

A third group looked at Jewish music in streaming services, a topic that has received almost no scholarly coverage even as it now serves as a predominant form of music delivery. They recognized that different streaming services, from Jewish Rock Radio to YouTube, Pandora and iTunes, relied on self-appointed users to define the term Jewish music, often resulting in idiosyncratic (literal) echo chambers--thus offering a meaningful counternarrative to the efforts at heterogeneity that often accompany Jewish music discussions.

Another student, a songleader, offered extensive discussions about her own experiences trying to recreate camp song sessions on Zoom while waiting to hear if her camp would open for the summer (it didn't). In doing so, she chronicled an important moment for understanding Jewish music during a pandemic, but also connected it to longer discussions about music's role in the relationship between camp and youth culture.

By the end of Spring 2020, I had come to look anew at American Jewish popular music by following my students, who pushed me to rethink some of its foundational concepts that have held the topic together, just as I have with each iteration of the course.

Which brings me back to the larger project: While we provide a twenty-year update of sorts to Kligman's 2001 article, we also seek to balance the continuity of the analytical structures he described—the emphasis on centralized resources, movements, and communities of activity—with the development of counternarratives that at first challenged the very nature of Jewish music, and over time folded back into an institutional equilibrium. "Hasidic Reggae Superstar" Matisyahu offers one paradigm, with a career of near-constant reinvention that remains linked at each stage to a longer Jewish narrative. While the #BlackLivesMatter protests sensitize us to inequality, they also highlight a longer story about Jews of Color and their musical marginalization, whose voices until recently were welcomed mainly as novelties. Similar things can be said about women in Jewish music, and queer identities, and even back-to-the-land movements and those who seek to avoid genre labels. Perhaps the scholar who wakes up twenty years hence will see those voices normalized in the same way that we view Radical Jewish Culture, streaming services and Jewish

music blogs today. They are already emerging through the efforts of young people. And we look forward to following how, in the coming years, these artists and thinkers will continue to renew the conversation around Jewish music, while appealing to tradition in ways that we have yet to imagine.

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Daniela Smolov Levy (*The Contemporary Study of Jewish Engagement with Opera in America [with Samantha M. Cooper]*) studies the democratization of opera in American society, including opera’s presence in early twentieth-century Yiddish theater and Yiddish speakers’ involvement with the broader American opera scene. She holds a doctorate in Musicology from Stanford University, a Master’s degree in Piano Performance from New York University, and a Bachelor’s degree in Comparative Literature and Music from Princeton University. Her articles have been published in the *Musical Quarterly* and *Wagnerspectrum*, and she has taught at Pomona College and the University of Southern California.

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זָמְרוּ לַיהוָה בְּכִנּוֹר; בְּכִנּוֹר, וְקוֹל זְמִרָה.

Sing praises unto the LORD with the harp; with
the harp and the voice of melody.

Psalm 98:5



JEWISH MUSIC AROUND THE WORLD

Glowing Coals

Synagogue songs recalled from the tradition of the Jewish community of Newcastle upon Tyne

Transcribed and Edited by Charles Heller

Preface

In my book *A Testament of Song*,¹ a selection of Jewish melodies notated from oral tradition, I included a few tunes unique to the community of Newcastle upon Tyne that I learned from my wife, Helen. On a visit to Newcastle in 1996 I was able to record some more tunes unique to that community, preserved by oral tradition, and they are presented here. Many other tunes were sung to me on that visit but are not given here, being part of the rich Anglo-Jewish tradition monumentalized in the United Synagogue “Blue Book.”²

These are not meticulous transcriptions in the spirit of the great musicologists who aimed for an exact record of what they actually heard, but rather edited versions, so that what is on the printed page is what the reader might want to sing—in the words of Phillips Barry, quoted admiringly by Ralph Vaughan Williams, “The editor of a practical work has the right ... to make both singable and understandable the song he edits.”³ In most cases the editing was negligible, but in some cases where my informants were elderly, with fading memories, a fair portion of the music given here is inspired guesswork. The great folk song collectors of old were not faced with this problem—they were able to select informants who were known to be experienced singers who knew their tradition well.

Dialect and Accent

A modern reader will want to see liturgical music printed in standard modern accentuation and pronunciation, which in practice means modern Israeli (*Editor’s Note: see Singing Hebrew with Proper Accentuation, page XX*). My informants sang with the traditional Ashkenazi attitude towards grammatical accentuation (as being subservient to the needs of the melody) and with that Anglo-Jewish-German pronunciation (*bakowl, mikowl, kowl* etc) which, while having a charm of its own, might seem strange to other people today. The music given here

¹ Heller, Charles. *A Testament of Song*. Toronto: Beth Emeth Bais Yehuda Synagogue, 1990.

² Cohen, F.L. and Davis, D.M., eds. *Kol Rinnah VeTodah/The Voice of Prayer and Praise*. London: United Synagogue, 1933. Available on line: <http://shulmusic.org/sheetmusic/bluebook/index.htm>

³ Vaughan Williams, Ralph, and Lloyd, A. L., eds., *The Penguin Book of English Folk Songs* (London: Penguin Books, 1959), p.8

aims towards correct accentuation except where the tune as actually sung has its own character that is worth preserving.

Note also that the keys for the music given here are largely arbitrary.

The Hasidic master R. Simhah Bunim of Pshiskha used to amend the morning prayers so that he could thank God *haboher beshirayim zimrah*, “Who chooses left-over songs.”⁴ One interpretation of this is that God favors those who linger over their prayers; but I prefer to think that it refers to those who have lovingly preserved old prayers and melodies, the left-overs from previous generations that still reach out to us.

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Ronnie and Eva Young *z'l* were our kind hosts during this visit; and I thank Dr. Bruce Gottlieb, Hazzan David Edwards and Daniel Tunkel for their assistance in preparing this paper.

When I first conceived this project I was encouraged by Cantor Samuel Rosenbaum *z'l* of the Cantors Assembly, New York, and by Geraldine Auerbach, MBE. I also thank the Board of Beth Emeth Bais Yehuda Synagogue, Toronto, who generously provided financial support.

I regret that it has taken 24 years to complete this project. Although never forgotten, the recordings and notes lay on a bottom shelf while interruptions and diversions pushed the project aside. It has taken a world-wide lockdown to provide the opportunity to focus on completing this project on synagogue music—ironically at the only moment in history when all synagogues have been closed.

Notes to the Selections

The Jewish community of Newcastle developed in the 19th century as immigrants came from Poland and Russia.⁵ Several synagogues were built, the most prominent being Leazes Park. The development of the community was supported by the United Synagogue (based in London) and the Chief Rabbi, and as a result, the music of the Newcastle liturgy was influenced by that of the London United Synagogue. The core of this repertoire is to be found in the Blue Book. The general style might be described as “Central-European/Victorian”, but there is plenty of room for folk-like tunes with an east European or Israeli character.

⁴ Scherman, Rabbi Nosson, ed., *The Complete ArtScroll Siddur* (NY: Mesorah Publications Ltd), ad loc.

⁵ Olsover, Lewis. *The Jewish Communities of North-east England 1755-1980*. Gateshead: Ashley Marks Publishing, 1980

To put this music in perspective: the consecration of Leazes Park in 1880 was conducted by the acting Chief Rabbi Hermann Adler and Rev Haim Wasserzug, the hazzan of the (now defunct) North London Synagogue. Steeped in the traditions of Vilna and Warsaw, he was considered one of the finest *hazzanim* of his day.⁶

Anim z'mirot

Sung by Barry and Faga Speker

Lively Dm Gm Dm Gm Dm A⁷ Dm

An - im z'mi-rot v' - shi rim e'e-rog ki ei - le - kha naf-shi ta'a-rog.

5 B^b C F B^b C F Gm Dm A⁷ Dm

Mi - dei dab - ri bikh - vo - de - kha ho - meh lib - bi el do - de - kha.

9 F C F C B^b F A⁷ Dm

A-sap -ra kh'-vod-kha v' - lo r' - i - ti-kha a - dam'-kha a-khan-kha v' - lo y' - da - ti-kha.

other verses similarly

⁶ Vigoda, Samuel, *Legendary Voices: The Fascinating Lives of The Great Cantors*, Volume 1 (N.Y., 1981), 428-439.

Ashrei

Sung by Barry and Faga Speker

(Sulzer) G D 3 Em D G C G D 3 Em

Ash - re yosh- vei_vei-te-kha od y'-ha-l'-lu-kha se - lah. Ash - rei ha- am_she-ka-kha lo,

5 D G 3 C G D G

ash - rei ha- am she-A-do - nai E - lo hav. T'-hi - lah l'-Da- vid. A-ro-

8 D 3 G Am G D G

mim-kha E - lo- hai ha-me-lekh va-a-var-kha shim - kha l'o - lam va - ed. B' -

11 Am E 3 Am G Am G D G *other verses similarly*

khol yom a - va - r'-khe- ka, va-a-ha-l' - lah shim - kha l'o - lam va - ed

14 G D G C G *rit* Am D G

T'hi-lat A-do-nai y'-da-ber pi, viy'-va-reich kol ba- sar_sheim kod-sho l'-o-lam va- ed.

(Mendelssohn)
17 *a tempo* G C G D B Em D7

Va - a - nah - nu n' - va - reikh Yah, mei - a -

21 G B° A Am D(sus4) D G

tah v' - ad o - lam ha - l' - lu - yah.

The version of *Ashrei* above is very similar to the version in the Blue Book pp.57-8. It is notable that this music preserves the ancient style of non-metrical psalmody. The music of *Va'anachnu*, sung throughout the UK as notated here (Blue Book p.58), is the chorus *Open the Heavens* from Mendelssohn's *Elijah*.

Barukh habba

Sung by Nathan Ernstone

D A D A D A D 1. A

Ba-ruk h-ab-ba b'- sheim A-do- nai__ bei-rakh-nu khem mi-beit A-do - nai

5 2. A⁷ D A D

beit A-do - nai. Eil A-do - nai va - ya - er__ la - nu

8 A D 1. A D 2. A⁷ D

is - ru hag ba'a-vo - tim ad kar-not ha-miz-bei - ah. kar-not ha-miz-bei - ah.

other verses similarly

L'kha adonai hag'dulah

Sung by Barry and Faga Speker

G D G D G

L' - kha A - do - nai ha - g - du - lah, v' - ha - g' - vu - rah v' - ha - tif - e - ret, v' -

5 D G D G Am D G D7

ha - nei - tsah v' - ha - hod, ki khol ba - sha - ma - yim, ba - sha - ma - yim u - va -

10 G D G D G

a - rets. L' - kha A - do - nai ham - mam la - kha, v' - ha - mit - na - sei l' - khol l' rosh,

15 D G D G Am D

ro - m' - mu A - do - nai E - lo - hei - nu, v' - hish - ta - ha - vu la - ha - dom rag - lav,

19 G D7 G D G

la - ha - dom rag - lav ka dosh hu. Ro - m' - mu A - do - nai E - lo - hei - nu, v' -

23 D G D G D

hish ta - ha - vu l' - har kod - sho, v' - hish - ta - ha - vu l' - har kod - sho, v' -

27 G Am D G D7 G

hish - ta - ha - vu l' - har kod sho, ki ka - dosh A - do - nai E - lo - hei - nu.

Yigdal

Sung by Mike Zuckerman

C F C F C G C F C G

1. Yig - dal E-lo-him hai v' - yish - ta - bah, nim - tsa v' - ein

7 C F G C F C F C G C E7

eit el m'tsi-u - to, 2. E - had v'-ein ya - hid k' - yi - hu - do, ne - lam v'-

14 Am B7 Em A Dm

gam ein sof l' - ah - du - to. 3. Ein lo d'-mut ha-guf v' - ei - no
4. Kad - mon l'-khol da - var etc.

20 Am E Am E Am E Dm E 1. Am 2. Am

guf, lo na'a roch ei - lav k' - du - sha - to. to. 5. Hin -

26 Am D7 G D G D G B7

no a- don o - lam v' - khol no - tsar yo - reh g'-

31 Em Am Em D7 1. G Am 2. G

du - la - to u - mal - khu - to. 6. She - to

*other verses similarly
v 13 Meitim sung like vv3-4*

The foregoing setting of *Yigdal* was recalled with difficulty and required some considerable editing to fill in the blanks.

Areshet

Sung by Nathan Ernstone

Gm Cm Gm D7 Gm

A - re-shet s' - fa - tei - nu ye'e-rav l' - fa - ne - kha Eil ram v' - nis - sa,

5 Cm Gm Eb F Gm Cm Gm Cm D G

mei - vin u - ma'a - zin, ma - bit u - mak - shiv l' - khol t' - ki - a - tei - nu, ut' -

9 Cm Gm Eb F Gm Cm D7 *rit* Gm

ka - beil b' - ra - ha - mim, b' - ra - ha mim uv' - ra - tson sei - der mal khu - yo - tei - nu.

Hayom harat olam

Sung by Nathan Ernstone

Gm D7 Gm Cm D

Ha-yom, ha-yom ha-rat o - lam ha-yom, ha-yom ya'a-mid ba-mish - pat

5 Gm Cm D Gm Eb Bb

kol y' - tsu - rei o - la - mim, im k' - va - nim im ka'a - va dim,

9 Cm Gm D7 Gm

im k' - va - nim ra - ha - mei - nu k' - ra - heim av al ba - nim.

Ki hinneih kahomer

Sung by Barry and Faga Speker

Gm D7 Gm D7 Gm D7 Gm

Ki hin-neih ka - ho - mer b' - yad ha - yo - tseir, bir - tso - to mar - hiv u-vir-

7 D7 Gm Bb

tso - to - m' - ka - tseir, kein a - nah - nu b' - yad - kha he - sed no -

12 F Cm D7 Gm

tseir, la - brit hab - beit v' - al tei - fen lay - yei - tser.

The first verse of this *piyyut* would be sung by the men's voices in the choir; verse 2 by children's voices; verse 3 by the cantor and so on. Everyone would sing the chorus to each verse.

Oseh shalom High Holydays

Sung by Raphael Richmond

Am E Am C G C C

O - seh sha-lom bim-ro-mav hu ya'a-seh sha - lom a - lei - nu v' -

6 Dm Am 1. 2. E7 Am

al kol yis-ra - el v' - im ru (v' - im - ru) ru A - men.

I was introduced to this piece by Raphael Richmond. Mr Richmond was 7 years old in 1934 when he joined the choir at Leazes Park Synagogue, singing with Hazzan Berl Gottlieb, who died three years later. Hazzan Gottlieb had his own way of singing *Oseh Shalom* at the end of the "Hasidic *Kaddish*" on the High Holydays, a piece composed by his father, the celebrated Jacob Gottlieb

(“Yankel der Heyzeriker”⁷) and which became world-famous in the recording by Herman Zalis and David Kusevitsky. Mr Richmond could not remember every detail, but he vividly recalled that the whole congregation looked forward eagerly to Hazzan Gottlieb’s high notes added at the end: “The people were all waitin’ for his fantastic high notes, Ah canna do it!”

I was fortunate to get in touch with Dr. Bruce Gottlieb of Montreal, the son of Hazzan Berl Gottlieb, who kindly forwarded me a copy of his father’s manuscript, which I give here.

V'khol ma'aminim

Sung by Helen Heller

slow and intense

Am Dm Am

v'- khol ma'a - mi - nim ma - a - mi - nim, ma'a - mi - nim she - hu, v'-

5 Dm Am Dm E7 Am

khol ma'a - mi - nim she - hu Eil e - mu - nah.

9 Dm E Am

V'khol, v'-khol, v'-khol, v'-khol, v'-khol, v'-khol ma - a - mi - nim she - hu v'-

13 Dm E7 Am

khol, v'-khol, v'-khol ma - a - mi - nim she - hu bo - hein k' - la - yot.

⁷ Ibid. pp. 64-6. It is very interesting that in all Vigoda’s voluminous writing he does not refer to the celebrated *Kaddish*. Presumably it was the Kusevitsky/Zalis version that launched the universal fame of this piece.

V'nislah

Sung by Barry and Faga Speker

Musical score for "V'nislah" in G minor, 6/8 time. The score consists of two staves of music with lyrics underneath. The first staff has measures 1-5 with chords Gm, D, Gm, D, C, D7. The second staff has measures 6-10 with chords Gm, D, Gm, D7, Gm, D7, Gm. The lyrics are: V' - nis - lah l' - khol a-dat b' - nei yis-ra - eil, v'-la-geir ha-gar b'- to - kham, ki l' - khol ha - am ki l khol ha - am bish - ga - gah.

Ya'aleh

Sung by Nathan Ernstone

Musical score for "Ya'aleh" in G minor, 3/4 time. The score consists of three staves of music with lyrics underneath. The first staff is marked "slow" and has measures 1-5 with chords Am, E, Am, E7, Am, C, G. The second staff has measures 6-10 with chords C, G, C, Dm, C, G, C, Am. The third staff has measures 11-15 with chords Dm, E, Dm, rit., E. The lyrics are: Ya - a-leh ta-ha-nu - nei - nu mei - e - rev, v' - ya - vo shav-a - tei - nu mi - bo - ker v' - yei - ra - eh ri - nu- nei - nu, ad a- rev, ad a- rev, ad a - rev. *other verses similarly*

Charles Heller is the award-winning author of *What To Listen For in Jewish Music* (www.ecanthuspress.com). His most recent book is *Shul Going: 2500 Years of Impressions and Reflections on Visits to the Synagogue* (Resource Publications, 2019, www.wipfandstock.com.)

OF TEXTS AND TUNES

Word Play in the Hebrew Bible

By Joshua R. Jacobson

A pun is a form of word play, a rhetorical device in which two words, similar in sound but different in meaning, are juxtaposed or exchanged to create a specific effect, perhaps ironic. Some puns involve just one word which has more than one possible meaning, allowing for comic confusion. Most of us think of punning as a form of humor. Consider this sentence: "He tried to conduct *Judas Maccabaeus*, but he just couldn't handle it." Imagine it spoken aloud, rather than viewed on the page. The word "handle" has two meanings in that sentence. The surface meaning has something to do with managing or successfully performing. The other sense of the word, wittily lurking in the background, although spelled differently, is the name of the composer, Handel.

The fancy Greek term for pun is **paronomasia**. It is based on another Greek concept, **polysemy** —the capacity for a word (or other sign) to have multiple meanings. Punning assumes that the juxtaposition of the two senses is not accidental. (Accidental is when the speaker says, "No pun intended," although in many cases she doth protest too much.) There are numerous examples of non-accidental word play in the Hebrew Bible, in most cases impossible to convey in translation. In this essay, we will examine biblical word play in several categories.

1. The juxtaposition of two (or more) words that sound alike (but not *exactly* alike) and have different meanings

1.a: The word ויראו appears in Exod. 14:30-31:

וַיֹּשַׁע יְהוָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם **וַיֵּרְא** יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־מִצְרַיִם מֵת עַל־שַׁפְּת הַיָּם: **וַיֵּרְא** יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַיָּד הַגְּדֹלָה
אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יְהוָה בְּמִצְרַיִם **וַיֵּרְאֻהוּ** הָעָם אֶת־יְהוָה וַיֵּאֱמִינוּ בַּיהוָה וּבְמֹשֶׁה עַבְדּוֹ:

*Thus, the LORD delivered Israel that day from the Egyptians. Israel **saw** the Egyptians dead on the shore of the sea. And when Israel **saw** the wondrous power which the LORD had wielded against the Egyptians, the people **feared** the LORD; they had faith in the LORD and His servant Moses.*

If we saw ויראו unpunctuated, we might infer that it means "they saw," (from the root ראה) especially in the context, in which the phrase יִשְׂרָאֵל **וַיֵּרְא** (the Israelites **saw**) appears twice. However, the word וַיֵּרְאֻהוּ (from the root ירא) means "they **feared**," or "they were in awe of (God)." Whoever chants this verse should emphasize the **ו** שוא **נע** under the **ר**, to clarify the word's meaning.

1.b: These verses (Deut. 11:16-17) found in the second paragraph of the שמע, are well known:

הַשָּׁמַר וְלָכֶם פֶּן יִפְתָּה לְבַבְכֶם וְסָרְתֶם וַעֲבַדְתֶּם אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתֶם לָהֶם. וְחָרָה אַף־יְהוָה בְּכֶם וְעָצַר אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם
וְלֹא־יִהְיֶה מָטָר וְהִצַּדְקָה לֹא תִתֵּן אֶת־יְבוּלָהּ וְאֶבְדְּתֶם מִהָרֵץ הַשְּׂבִיבָה אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה נָתַן לָכֶם.

Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and you turn aside, and serve other gods, and **worship** them. For the LORD'S anger will flare up against you, and He will shut up the skies so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its produce; and you will soon **perish** from the good land that the LORD is assigning to you.

Notice the use of the near homophones וַעֲבַדְתֶּם (you shall **serve/worship**) and וְאֵבַדְתֶּם (you shall **perish**). I don't think that juxtaposition is accidental. By sonically linking these two words, the core message is underlined, "if you serve other gods, you will perish."

1.c: Consider the word play in Gen. 21:17:

וַיִּקְרָא מַלְאָךְ אֱלֹהִים | אֶל־הַגֵּר מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ מַה־לָּךְ הַגֵּר

And a **messenger** of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "**What troubles you, Hagar?**"

God's messenger **מַלְאָךְ** uses a pun on its name when it asks Hagar, **מַה־לָּךְ**.

1.d: In Exod. 12:23 God passes over the homes of the Israelites with this paranomasial expression:

וַפָּסַח יְהוָה עַל־הַבָּתִּים

And the LORD **passed over the door**.

1.e: Notice the juxtaposition of מקץ ("**at the end**" from the root קצץ) and ויקץ ("**awoke**" from the root יקץ) in these verses:

וַיְהִי מִקְצֵי שְׁנַתַּיִם יָמִים; וַיִּפְרֹעַה חַלֵּם, וַהֲגִיחַ עַל־הַיָּאֵר

(Gen. 41:1) **At the end** of two years' time, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile,

וַיִּיקָץ פַּרְעֹה

(Gen. 41:4) and Pharaoh **awoke**.

1.f: The word דבר can mean "word" or "pestilence." In this verse we have both forms: (2 Sam. 24:13):

אִם־תִּיָּוֵת שְׁלִשֵׁת יָמִים דְּבַר בְּאַרְצְךָ עֹמֵה יָדַע וּרְאָה מֶ־הָאֱשִׁיב שְׁלֹחֵי דְבָר:

Shall there be three days of **pestilence** in your land? Now consider carefully what **word/reply** I shall take back to Him who sent me.

This same word play is even more pronounced in this passage (Exod. 9:3-6):

הֲנֵה נִדְ-יְהוָה הַיּוֹזֵה בְּמִקְנֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׂדֶה בְּסוּסִים בְּחֲמָרִים בְּגִמְלִים בְּבָקָר וּבְצֹאן דְבָר כְּבֹד מְאֹד: וְהִפְלִיחַ יְהוָה בֵּין מִקְנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבֵין מִקְנֵה מִצְרָיִם וְלֹא יָמוּת מִכָּל־לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל דְבָר: וַיִּשָּׂם יְהוָה מוֹעֵד לְאֹמֶר מִחֵר יַעֲשֶׂה יְהוָה הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה בְּאַרְצְךָ: וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוָה אֶת־הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה כַּמְּחֻרָת

Behold, the hand of the LORD is upon thy cattle which is in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep: there shall be a very severe **pestilence**. And the LORD will make a distinction between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt: and no **thing** shall die of all that belongs to the Israelites. And the LORD appointed a set time, saying, "Tomorrow the LORD shall do this **thing** in the land." And the LORD did that **thing** on the next day.

1.g. Isaiah uses word play to reveal an ironic truth. שר is a “ruler,” a “prince.” סרר is to be “**rebellious**,” or stubborn. The NJPS translation "Your **rulers** are **rogues**" uses alliteration to reflect the word play (Isa. 1:23):

שָׂרֵיךָ סוֹרְרִים

1.h: Micah (6:3-4) contrasts הִלְאֵתִיךָ (from לאה “to be **weary**”) with הִעֲלֵתִיךָ (from עלה “to **go up**”):

עָמִי מִה־עָשִׂיתִי לָךְ וּמִה־הִלְאֵתִיךָ עָנָה בִּי: כִּי הִעֲלֵתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וּמִבַּיִת עֲבָדִים פְּדִיתִיךָ

*O my people, what have I done unto thee? And wherein have I **wearied** thee? Testify against me. For I **brought thee up** out of the land of Egypt and redeemed thee out of the house of servants.*

1.i: The word תֵּאבֹדוּ is from the root אבה "to be willing/to agree." In Isa. 1:19 it is linked to טוב, meaning "goodness:"

אִם־תֵּאבֹדוּ וְשָׁמַעְתֶּם טוֹב הָאֶרֶץ תֹּאכְלוּ:

*If, then, you **agree** and give heed, you will eat the **good** things of the earth.*

1.j: Isaiah (24:17) intensifies his message with the repetition of the פה sound in three consecutive words:

פֶּחַד וּפְחַת וּפְחָה עָלֶיךָ יוֹשֵׁב הָאָרֶץ:

*Fear, and the **pit**, and the **snare**, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth.*

1.k: Jeremiah (1:11-12) makes an intentional pun. שָׂקֵד is an “**almond tree**,” but can also mean “to **watch**.”

וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר מִה־אַתָּה רָאָה יְרֻמְנָהוּ וְנֹאמַר מִשָּׂקֵד אֲנִי רָאָה:

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי הִיטַבְתָּ לְרָאוֹת כִּי־שָׂקֵד אֲנִי עַל־דְּבָרִי לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ:

*The word of the LORD came to me: What do you see, Jeremiah? I replied: I see a branch of an **almond tree**. The LORD said to me: You have seen right, For I am **watchful** to bring My word to pass.*

1.l: In this verse from the Song of Songs (4:2), not only is the initial ש used for alliteration, but the combination שכל recurs in nearly adjacent words:

שְׁנֵיךְ כְּעֶדֶר הַקְּצוּבוֹת שְׁעָלוּ מִן־הַרְחֻצָּה שִׁפְלָם מִתְּאִימוֹת וְשִׁפְלָהּ אֵין בָּהֶם:

*Your teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; **whereof every one** of them bears twins, and no one is **barren** among them.*

1.m: Notice the juxtaposition in Gen. 29:10-11 of two near homophones וַיִּשְׁק (from שקה "cause to drink") and וַיִּשָּׁק (from נשק "to kiss"):

וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר רָאָה יַעֲקֹב אֶת־רְחֵל בַּת־לְבָן אֲחֵי אִמּוֹ וְאֶת־צֹאן לְבָן אֲחֵי אִמּוֹ וַיִּגֶשׁ יַעֲקֹב וַיְגַל אֶת־הָאָבֶן מֵעַל פִּי הַבְּאֵר וַיִּשְׁק אֶת־צֹאן לְבָן אֲחֵי אִמּוֹ: וַיִּשָּׁק יַעֲקֹב לְרַחֵל וַיִּשָּׂא אֶת־קִלּוֹ וַיִּבְדֵּךְ:

*And when Jacob saw Rachel, the daughter of his uncle Laban, and the flock of his uncle Laban, Jacob went up and rolled the stone off the mouth of the well and **watered** the flock of his uncle Laban. Then Jacob **kissed** Rachel, and broke into tears.*

1.n: In these examples, the prophet makes his point by playing on the name of a city or nation:

וּבְתִקְוֶעַ תִּקְעוּ שׁוֹפָר

*(Jer. 6:1) **Blow** the horn in **Tekoa***

וְהִכַּרְתִּי אֶת־כְּרִיתִים

*(Ezek. 25:16) and **cut off** the **Kheretites***

וְהֵם יַעֲנֵנוּ אֶת־יִזְרְעֵאל. וַיִּזְרַעְתִּיהָ לִּי בְּאֶרֶץ

*(Hos. 2:24-25) And they shall respond **to Jezreel**. I will **sow her** in the land as My own*

כִּי הַגִּלְגָּל גָּלָה יִגְלָה

*(Amos 5:5) **for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity***

תִּבְנֶן צֹר מְצוּרָהּ

*(Zech. 9:3) Tyre (**Tsor**) has built herself **a fortress**;*

1.o: Word play on a name:

וַיִּשְׁאַל שְׂאוּל בְּאֱלֹהִים

*(1 Sam. 14:37) **So Saul inquired** of God*

(1Sam. 8:19) to *listen to the voice of Samuel*

1.p: Palindromic word play

These four words form a quasi-mirror image:

טוב שם משמן טוב

(Eccl. 7:1) A *good name is better than oil that is good (fragrant)*

2. A single word with double meaning—double entendre

2.a: The word הזמיר in Song 2:12 functions as a "Janus." That is, it is two-faced. The root זמר can mean "**pruning**" or "**music.**" When facing backward, towards the words "blossoms have appeared in the land," it suggests the pruning of the buds on the trees. When facing forward towards the turtledove, it suggests the singing of birds:

הנצנים נראו בארץ עת הזמיר הגיע וקול התור נשמע בארצנו:

*The blossoms have appeared in the land, the time of **pruning/nightingale singing** has come; and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.*

2.b: The word זהר can mean "**to warn**" but it can also mean "**to shine brilliantly.**" This is another Janus. When facing backward, towards the words "fine gold," it suggests shining. When facing forward, it suggests being warned:

הנחמלים מזהב ומפז רב ומתוקים מדבש ונפת צופים: גם-עבדה נזהר בהם כשמן עקב רב:

*(Ps. 19:11-12) More to be desired are they than **gold**, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is thy servant **warned**: and in keeping of them there is great reward.*

2.c: The word שבע can mean "**swear**" but it can also mean "**seven.**" This is another Janus. When facing backward, towards the words "seven ewe lambs," it suggests seven. When facing forward, it suggests swearing. To top it off, the final verse includes the similar sounding word וישבו:

ויצב אברהם את-שבע כבשת הצאן לבדו: ויאמר אבימלך אל-אברהם מה הנה שבע כבשת האלה אשר הצבת לבדך: ויאמר כי את-שבע כבשת תקח מידי בעבור תהיה-לי לעדה כי חפרתי את-הבאר הזאת: על-כן קרא למקום הזה באר שבע כי שם נשבעו שניהם: ויכרתו ברית בבאר שבע ויקם אבימלך ופילל שר-צבאו וישבו אל-ארץ פלשתים:

*(Gen. 21:28-32) And Abraham set **seven** ewe lambs of the flock by themselves. And Abimelech said unto Abraham, what mean these **seven** ewe lambs which thou hast set by themselves? And he said, For these **seven** ewe lambs shalt thou take of my hand, that they may be a witness unto me, that I dug this well. Wherefore he called that place **Beersheba**; because there they **swore** both of them. Thus they made a covenant at **Beersheba**: then Abimelech rose up, and Phikhol the chief captain of his host, and they **returned** into the land of the Philistines.*

2.d: In this verse (Song 2:7) the shepherdess asks her friends to take an oath. Normally an oath is taken in the name of God, but here the oath is taken in the name of the animals of the field. Note the word play: צבאות (single צביה) are “gazelles,” but that same word can also refer to “the Lord of Hosts,” and אילות are “does” (plural of doe) but embedded in that word is אל — God/god:

הַשְׁבַּעְתִּי אֶתְכֶם בְּנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם בְּצִבְאוֹת אוֹ בְּאֵילוֹת הַשָּׂדֶה אִם-תִּעְרְוּ אוֹ אִם-תִּעְוְרוּ אֶת-הָאֲהָבָה עַד שְׂתַחַפֵּץ:

I make you swear, O maidens of Jerusalem, by gazelles or by the does of the field: Do not wake or rouse love until it please!

2.e: The word רוּחַ can mean “spirit” or “breath” or “wind.” This simile in Psalm 103:15-16 plays on that ambiguity. Humans are alive until the spirit/breath leaves them. Flowers bloom and then a wind blows and they are gone:

אֲנוֹשׁ כְּחֶצִיר יִגְמֹו כְּצִיץ הַשָּׂדֶה כִּן יִצְיֵן: כִּי רוּחַ עָבְרָה-בּוֹ וְאֵינְנוּ וְלֹא-יִכְרַנּוּ עוֹד מִקוֹמוֹ:

Man, his days are like those of grass; he blooms like a flower of the field; a wind/breath/spirit passes through and it/he is no more, its/his own place no longer knows it.

2.f: X-rated word play

In Song 5:2 the male lover is knocking (דופק), but the word can also mean “to drive hard.” (In modern Hebrew the word is slang for the sexual act. Did it have that meaning in ancient Israel?) And his voice is heard calling for his lover to open for him. Is she opening more than just the door?

קוֹל | דוֹדִי דוֹפֵק פִּתְחֵי-לִי אֲחֹתִי רַעֲיִתִי יוֹנָתִי תִמְתִּי

Hark, my beloved knocks! “Open to me, my own, my darling, my faultless dove!”

Then two verses later (Song 5:4), she reports, דוֹדִי שָׁלַח יָדוֹ מִן-הַחֹר וּמַעֲי הִמּוּ עָלָיו: "my lover put his hand in the hole, and my guts were moved for him." The word יד was well known to ancient readers as a euphemism for the male sexual organ. But the King James Version (KJV) translates, "My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him."

3. Intertextual references

Some play involves connecting words or phrases that are not in the same verse, or even the same chapter, or even the same book. Several verses from the Song of Songs have intertextual echoes.

3.a: The last three words of Song 1:13 closely resemble the last three words of Psalm 9:1. Is that a coincidence, or has the love song morphed the words of the Psalmist? Note the transformation of שדי from a name of God to female anatomy. What a difference a דגש makes!

יֵשֵׁב בְּסִטֵּר עֲלֵיוֹן; בְּצֹל שְׂדֵי יִתְלוֹנֵן

(Ps. 91:1) He that dwelleth in the shelter of the Most-High shall abide/lie under the shadow of the Almighty.

צָרוּר הַמָּר דוֹדִי לִי, בֵּין שְׂדֵי יִלִּין

(Song 1:13) *A bundle of myrrh is my lover unto me; he **lies all night** in the cleavage of **my breasts**.*

3.b: In Song 8:6 we read, "Love is fierce as death, its jealousy (passion) bitter as the grave. Even its sparks are a raging **fire**, a mighty flame (or literally – a flame of God):"

כִּי־עֵזָה כְּמוֹת אֶהְבֶּה קִוְּשָׁה כְּשֹׂאֹל קִנְאָה רִשְׁפֵּיהָ רִשְׁפֵּיהָ אֵשׁ שְׁלֵה־בְתִיָּה:

We find similar fire imagery in Deut. 4:24, "For the LORD your God is a consuming **fire**, an impassioned (or jealous) God:"

כִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֵשׁ אֹכְלָה הוּא אֵל קָנָא:

And, of course, in the third chapter of Exodus (Exod. 3:2), God appears to Moses in a blazing **fire** out of a bush:

וַיֵּרָא מִלְּאֵךְ יְהוָה אֵלָיו בְּלֶבֶת־אֵשׁ

3.c: In the Song of Songs the lovers are constantly yearning for each other, seeking each other with difficulty:

יִוָּנְתִי בְּחִגְנֵי הַסֹּלֶעַ בְּסִתְרֵי הַמְּדֻרָּה הֲרֵאִינִי אֶת־מְרֹאֲיֶיךָ הַשְּׂמִיעֵינִי אֶת־קוֹלְךָ

(Song 2:14) *“O my dove, in the **cranny of the rocks**, hidden by the cliff, **let me see** your face, let me hear your voice.”*

We find nearly identical language in Exodus 33:18. Moses asks the seemingly impossible, **to see** God:

הֲרֵאִינִי נָא, אֶת־כְּבוֹדְךָ

When it happens, Moses must be hidden in a cleft of the rock, just as the dove of the Song is hidden by the cliff in the cranny of the rocks:

וְהָיָה בְּעֵבֶר כְּבוֹדִי וְשִׁמְתִּיךָ בְּנִקְרֹת הַצֹּיֵר וְשִׁכַּתִּי כַּפִּי עָלֶיךָ עַד־עֲבָרִי:

(Exod. 33:22) *and, as My Presence passes by, I will put you in a **cleft of the rock** and shield you with My hand until I have passed by.*

4. Names—Etiology

Etiology is the attribution of the cause or reason for something, often expressed in terms of historical or mythical explanation. In these verses the Bible explicitly explains why this person or place is called such-and-such. There are many, many of these; we will provide just a few examples.

4.a: Abraham's first son is called **ישמעאל**—God has heard:

וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ מִלְּאֵךְ יְהוָה הִנֵּה הָרָה וְיִלְדֹתָ בֵן וְקָרָאתָ שְׁמוֹ **יִשְׁמָעֵאל** כִּי־שָׁמַע יְהוָה אֶל־עֲנִיָּךְ:

(Gen. 16:11) *The angel of the LORD said to her, “Behold, you are with child and you will bear a son. You shall call him **Ishmael**, for the LORD **has heard** your suffering.*

4.b: The name **יצחק** is derived from his mother's laughter:

וַתֹּאמֶר שָׂרָה צָחֵק עָשָׂה לִי אֱלֹהִים כָּל־הַשְּׁמַע יִצְחָק־לִי:

(Gen. 21:6) And Sarah said, God made me **laugh**, everyone who hears will **laugh** with me.

וַיִּקְרָא אַבְרָהָם אֶת־שְׁמֵ־בְנוֹ הַנּוֹלָד־לּוֹ אֶשְׁרֵ־יְלֵדָה־לּוֹ שָׂרָה יִצְחָק:

(Gen. 21:3) Abraham gave his newborn son, whom Sarah had borne him, the name of **Isaac**.

4.c: The name **יעקב** is given when the infant emerges from the womb clutching his twin brother's **heel**:

וַאֲחֵרֵי־כֵן יָצָא אָחִיו וַיִּדּוּ אֶחְזָת בַּעֲקֵב עֵשָׂו וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ יַעֲקֹב

(Gen. 25:26) Then his brother emerged, holding on to the **heel** of Esau; so, they named him **Jacob**.

4.d: The brother of **יעקב** was initially called **עשו**, but after the incident with the **red** stew, he is known as **אדום**:

וַיֹּאמֶר עֵשָׂו אֶל־יַעֲקֹב הֲלַעֲיִטְנִי נָא מִן־הָאֵדָם הַזֶּה כִּי עָנָף אֲנִי עַל־כֵּן קָרָא־שְׁמוֹ אֲדָוִם:

(Gen. 25:30) And Esau said to Jacob, “Give me some of that **red stuff** to gulp down, for I am famished”—which is why he was named **Edom**.

4.e: Years later, **יעקב**'s name is changed to **ישראל**, the man who struggled with God:

וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא יַעֲקֹב יִאָמָר עוֹד שְׁמִי כִּי אִם־יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי־שָׁרִיתָ עִם־אֱלֹהִים וְעִם־אֲנָשִׁים וַתּוֹכַל:

(Gen. 32:29) Said he, “Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but **Israel**, for you have **striven with beings divine and human**, and have prevailed.”

4.f: There are two explanations for the name **בנימין**. His dying mother calls him "the son of my **mourning**," but his father calls him "my **right-hand** son:"

וַיְהִי בַצָּאת נִפְשָׁהּ כִּי מָתָה וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ בְּנֵי־אֹנִי וְאָבִיו קָרָא־לּוֹ בְּנֵי־מִיִּן:

(Gen. 35:18) But as she breathed her last—for she was dying—she named him **Ben-oni**; but his father called him **Benjamin**.

4.g: Pharaoh's daughter calls her adopted son **משה** because she **drew him** out of the waters of the Nile:

וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ מֹשֶׁה וַתֹּאמֶר כִּי מִן־הַמַּיִם מִשִּׁיתָהוּ

(Exod. 2:10) She named him **Moses**, explaining, “I **drew him** out of the water.”

4.h: In 1Sam. 25:25 we have what would become a well-known phrase, explaining etiology. The

person in question resembles his name, כַּשְׁמוֹ כְּ-הוּא:

אֶל־נָא יְשִׁים אָדֹנָי | אֶת־לְבוֹ אֶל־אִישׁ הַבְּלִיעַל הַזֶּה עַל־נָבָל כִּי כַשְׁמוֹ כְּ-הוּא נָבָל שְׁמוֹ וְנָבָלָה עִמּוֹ

*Please, my lord, pay no attention to that wretched fellow **Nabal**. For he is just what his name says: His name means ‘**boor**’ and he is a **boor**.*

4.i: The name of the city **בבל** reflects the fact that God caused the builders of the Babel Tower to speak in languages that were suddenly mutually unintelligible. This etiology explains not only the name of the city, but the origin of multiple languages. Plus, the word **בבל** itself, and its associated verb **בלל**, is onomatopoeic, describing derisively the **stuttering** sound of a "foreign" language:

עַל־כֵּן קָרָא שְׁמָהּ **בְּבֶל** כִּי־שָׁם **בָּלַל** יְהוָה שְׁפַת כָּל־הָאָרֶץ וּמִשָּׁם הִפְיָצָם יְהוָה עַל־פְּנֵי כָל־הָאָרֶץ:

*(Gen. 11:9) That is why it was called **Babel**, because there the LORD **confounded the speech** of the whole earth; and from there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.*

5. Names — implied word play

In these cases, no explicit explanation is given for the name, but the name nonetheless reflects some aspects of the person's character.

5.a: Many of the actors in the Ruth story have names that reflect their roles in the drama. Naomi's sons-in-law, who both die, are called **מַחְלוֹן**, related to מחלה “**sickness**,” and **כְּלִיוֹן**, related to כלה “**ended**.”

וַיָּמָתוּ גַם־שְׁנֵיהֶם, **מַחְלוֹן וְכְלִיוֹן**

*(Ruth 1:5) Then those two—**Mahlon** and **Khilion**—also died.*

Even the name of the actors' home is significant. **בית להם** means the “**home of bread**,” an abundance of food. Naomi and her family, like many of their biblical predecessors, have to leave their home in search of sustenance. Years later the famine in Judea is over and once again there is **להם** in **בית-** **להם**:

וַיְהִי בִּימֵי שְׁפֹט הַשְּׁפֹטִים וַיְהִי רָעַב בְּאֶרֶץ וַיֵּלֶךְ אִישׁ מִבְּיַת לָחֶם יְהוּדָה לְגוֹר בְּשׂוּדֵי מוֹאָב הוּא וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וּשְׁנֵי בָנָיו:

*(Ruth 1:1) In the days when the chieftains ruled, there was a famine in the land; and a man of **Bethlehem** in Judah, with his wife and two sons, went to reside in the country of Moab.*

וַתָּקֶם הִיא וְכַלְתֵּיהָ וַתָּשָׁב מִשְׂדֵי מוֹאָב כִּי שָׁמְעָה בְּשׂוּדָה מוֹאָב כִּי־פָקַד יְהוָה אֶת־עַמּוֹ לְתַת לָהֶם לָחֶם:

*(Ruth 1:6) She started out with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab; for in the country of Moab she had heard that the LORD had taken note of His people and given them **food**.*

5.b: Rachel is first introduced to us as a shepherdess. Her name **רחל** means “**ewe lamb**.” I wonder if we are supposed to smile when she is described (in both 29:6 and 29:9) as **בָּאָה עִם־הַצֹּאן** Is that **ba-ah** (“**arrived**”) like the sound of her **sheep**?

וַרְחֵל **בָּאָה** עִם הַצֹּאן אֲשֶׁר לְאִבְיָהָ כִּי רָעָה הוּא

(Gen. 29:9) *Rachel had arrived with her father's flock; for she was a shepherdess.*

But let's not forget Rachel's less attractive older sister, whose name **לאה** means “tired” or “exhausted:”

וילבן שתי בנות שם הגולה **לאה** ושם הקטנה רחל:

(Gen. 29:16) *Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older one was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel.*

5.c: The name of the first human on earth **אדם** reveals his origins **מִן־הָאֲדָמָה**:

וַיִּצְרֶה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם עֹפָר מִן־הָאֲדָמָה

(Gen. 2:7) *And the LORD God formed man (earthling) from the dust of the earth:*

5.d: The name of the fruit **דודאים** (mandrakes) reveals its function, **דודים**, lovemaking:

וַיֵּלֶךְ רְאוּבֵן בְּיָמֵי קְצִיר־חֹטִים וַיִּמְצֵא **דֹּדָאִים** בַּשָּׂדֶה וַיָּבֵא אֹתָם אֶל־לֵאָה אִמּוֹ וַתֹּאמֶר רְחֵל לֵאָה תִּנְיֶנָּה לִּי **מִדֹּדָאִי** בְּנֶה: וַתֹּאמֶר לָהּ הַמְעַט קָחְתְּךָ אֶת־אִישִׁי וְלָקַחְתְּ גַם אֶת־**דֹּדָאִי** בְּנִי וַתֹּאמֶר רְחֵל לָכֵן יִשְׁכַּב עִמָּךְ הַלַּיְלָה תִּסַּח **דֹּדָאִי** בְּנֶה: וַיָּבֵא יַעֲקֹב מִן־הַשָּׂדֶה בְּעֶרְבַּי וַתֵּצֵא לָאָה לַקְרָאתוֹ וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָי תָּבוֹא כִּי שָׁכַר שְׂכָרְתִּיךָ **דֹּדָאִי** בְּנִי וַיִּשְׁכַּב עִמָּה בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא:

(Gen. 30:14-16) *Once, at the time of the wheat harvest, Reuben came upon some mandrakes in the field and brought them to his mother Leah. Rachel said to Leah, “Please give me some of your son’s mandrakes.” But she said to her, “Was it not enough for you to take away my husband, that you would also take my son’s mandrakes?” Rachel replied, “I promise, he shall lie with you tonight, in return for your son’s mandrakes.” When Jacob came home from the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, “You are to sleep with me, for I have hired you with my son’s mandrakes.” And he lay with her that night.*

The word-play is even more pronounced in this verse from the Song of Songs:

הַדֹּדָאִים בְּתַנּוּרֵיחַ וְעַל־פֶּתַח־יַנּוּ כָּל־מִגְדִּים חֲדָשִׁים גַּם־יִשְׁגִּים **דֹּדָי** צִפְנָתִי לָךְ:

(Song 7:14) *The mandrakes yield their fragrance. At our doors are all choice fruits—both freshly picked and long-stored, which I have kept, my beloved, for you.*

6. Paregmenon

A similar type of word play is paregmenon, a rhetorical technique by which a word is used in close proximity to another word from which it is derived.

6.a: Isaiah hammers his point home by presenting five consecutive words derived from the same root:

בַּגְדִּים בַּגְדוּ וּבַגְדַת בּוֹגְדִים בּוֹגְדוּ:

(Isa. 24:16) *Treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously; yea, treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously.*

6.b: Jeremiah indulges in similar rhetoric in this passage (51:20-23) with repetition of the verb **נפץ** (**shatter**):

מפץ־אתה לי כלי מלחמה ונפצתי בה גוים והשחתי בה ממלכות:

ונפצתי בה סוס ורכבו ונפצתי בה רכב ורכבו:

ונפצתי בה איש ואשה ונפצתי בה זקן ונער ונפצתי בה בחור ובתולה:

ונפצתי בה רעה ועדרו ונפצתי בה אקר וצמדו ונפצתי בה פחות וסגגים:

*You are My war club (**shatterer**), My weapons of battle. With you I **shatter** nations, with you I destroyed kingdoms. With you I **shatter** horse and rider, with you I **shatter** chariot and driver. With you I **shatter** man and woman, with you I **shatter** graybeard and boy, with you I **shatter** youth and maiden. With you I **shatter** shepherd and flock, with you I **shatter** plowman and team, with you I **shatter** governors and prefects.*

7.Gemination—doubling of a word (in any inflection) for emphasis or intensification—an important stylistic feature of biblical Hebrew. Note how Everett Fox's translation retains the linguistic gemination:

כי ביום אכלה ממנו מות תמות

(Gen. 2:17) NJPS: for as soon as you eat of it, you shall **surely die**.

Fox: for on the day that you eat from it, you must **die, yes, die**.

טרה טרה יוסף

(Gen. 37:33) KJV: Joseph is **without doubt rent in pieces**

Fox: Yosef is **torn, torn-to-pieces!**

עבד עבדים, יקנה לאתיו

(Gen. 9:25) NJPS: The **lowest of slaves** shall he be to his brothers

Fox: **servant of servants** may he be to his brothers!

שיר השירים

(Song 1:1) The **Song of Songs** (i.e. the greatest song)

8. Other poetic devices, such as **alliteration** and **assonance** involve repetition of phonemes, letter play, sonic delight. These devices can affect the listener, without reference to the discursive meaning of the words.

8.a: The opening verses of the Song of Songs feature an abundance of the sound "sh." We hear the repetition of the shin words (שיר, נשק, שמן) as well as the similarity of the words שמניך and שמך. And the first three letters of מנשיקות echo the word שמן, with the letters reversed (metathesis):

שיר השירים אשר לשלמה: ישלמי מנשיקות פיהו כייטובים דודי מנין: לרית שמני טובים שמן תורק שמך על-כן עלמות אהבוך:

Similar is the repetition of the "sh" in 1:6:

אל-תראוני שאני שחרחרת ששזפתני השמש

8.b: In Song 4:2 there is a play on two words, with different meanings, but with the common letters שכל (see also **1.1.** above):

שניף כעדר הקצובות שעלו מן-הרצצה שכלם מתאימות ושלמה אין בהם:

8.c: Running as a thread throughout the Song are the related names שלמה, שולמית, שולם, ירושלם, all with שלם in common. Here are but a few examples:

שחורה אני ונאנה בנות ירושלם כאהלי קדר פריעות שלמה (1:5)

הנה מטתו שלשלמה ששים גברים סביב לה (3:7)

שובי שובל השולמית שובי שובי ונחזה-בך מה-תחזו בשולמית במחלת המחגים (7:1)

Notice how in 1:7 the word למה is changed to שלמה to echo the שלם leitmotiv:

שלמה אהיה פעטה על עדרי חבירה: (1:7)

8.d: Look at (listen to) the repetition of phonemes in these verses from Isaiah:

Isa. 28:4-5) וְהָיְתָה צִיצֵת נֹבֵל צָבִי תִפְאֶרְתּוֹ . . . בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִהְיֶה יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת לַעֲטֹרַת צְבִי וְלַצְפִּירַת תִּפְאֶרֶת לְשָׂאֵר עַמּוֹ:

Isa. 28:10) כִּי צוֹ לְצוֹ צוֹ לְצוֹ קוֹ לְקוֹ קוֹ לְקוֹ יַעֲרֵר יָשֵׁם יַעֲרֵר יָשֵׁם:

9. Onomatopoeia is the use of words to imitate natural sounds.

9.a: The Hebrew word for "fly," זבוב, plays on the **buzzing** sound of the insect:

וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִשְׂרָק יְהוָה לְזָבוּב אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרֶץ אַשּׁוּר

(Isa. 7:18) And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria.

9.b: The Hebrew word for "cricket," צלצל, plays on the **chirping** sound of the insect:

כָּל-עֵצֵי וַיִּכְרֵי אֲדַמְתָּהּ יִבְרַשׁ הַצִּלְצַל

(Deut. 28:42) The cricket shall take over all the trees and produce of your land.

9.c: The Hebrew word for "cymbals," צלצלים, plays on the metallic percussive sound of the

instrument:

הַלְלוּהוּ בַצִּלְצָלִים וְשִׁמְעוּ הַלְלוּהוּ בַצִּלְצָלִים תְּרוּעָה

(Ps. 150) Praise Him with resounding *cymbals*; praise Him with loud-clashing *cymbals*.

וַדָּוִד | וְכָל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל מִשְׁתַּקִּים לִפְנֵי יְהוָה כָּל־עֵצֵי בְרוֹשִׁים וּבְכִנּוֹרוֹת וּבְנִבְלִים וּבְתַפִּים וּבְמִנְעֻנְעִים וּבַצִּלְצָלִים

(Sam II 6:5) David and all the House of Israel danced before the LORD to the sound of all kinds of cypress wood instruments, with lyres, harps, timbrels, sistrums, and *cymbals*.

9.d: The Hebrew word for “shatter,” **פצץ**, plays on the sound of something being smashed and broken into pieces. (See also above **6b**.)

וְאַתָּה בְּעַרְפִּי וְיִפְצְצֵנִי וְיִקְיִמְנֵי לֹא לְמַטְרָה

(Job 16:12) He took me by the scruff and *shattered* me; He set me up as His target.

הֲלוֹא כֹה דִבַּרְתִּי כְּאֵשׁ נֹאֵם יְהוָה וּכְפִטְיֵשׁ יִפְצֵץ סֶלַע

(Jer. 23:29) Behold, My word is like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that *shatters* rock!

10. Conclusion

How does the reader who is chanting these texts evoke the word play, and what does it mean for those who chant the Bible? First of all, if we are aware of the word play, we take great delight in the text. We can call the listener's attention to the word play by emphasis (through loudness or elongating). In some cases, we need to call attention to the differences (ויראו, וייראו), and on other occasions to the similarities (בָּהֶם אֵין וְשִׁפְלָה מִתְּאִימוֹת שְׂפָלָם).

Coda: A Visual Pun

In Moses and Miriam's Song of the Sea (Exod. 15:19) the text is traditionally arranged on the parchment so that the people of Israel appear with the sea (standing up) on either side of them. Is that intentional or did it just come out that way?

For the horses of Pharaoh, with his chariots and horsemen, went into **the sea**; and the LORD turned back on them the waters of

the sea; **but the Israelites marched on dry ground in the midst of** **the sea.**

בַּא סוֹס פָּרָעָה בָּרָכְבוּ וּבַפָּרְשֵׁי בָיִם וַיֵּשֶׁב יְהוָה עֲלֵהֶם אֶת מֵי
הַיָּם וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָלְכוּ בִיבֶשֶׁת בַּתּוֹךְ הַיָּם

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וְעַתָּה, כְּתֹבוּ לָכֶם אֶת-הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת, וְלַמְדֶהָ אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, שִׁמְרֶהָ
בְּפִיהֶם: לְמַעַן תִּהְיֶה לִּי הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת, לְעֵד בְּבִנְיַי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach thou it the children of Israel;
put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness
for Me against the children of Israel

D'varim 31: 19



Singing Hebrew with Proper Accentuation

By Burton Abrams

Introduction

We all take pride in the founding and flourishing of *Medinat Yisrael*, and in the concurrent resurrection of Hebrew as a vernacular language in addition to a language for prayer. Most of our USCJ synagogues have adopted the pronunciation of Modern Israeli Hebrew as a result. We should also be careful to incorporate the accentuation of Modern Hebrew as well as its pronunciation. It is particularly important for how we teach the Hebrew language to our congregants, particularly the youngest generation, as well as their parents and grandparents.

A major opportunity for teaching Hebrew as a modern language comes from its musical renditions, both in *t'fillot* and in *shirim*. Our congregational cantors play a major role in that teaching. Unfortunately, the accentuation in too much of our congregational singing does not comply with the accentuation of Modern Hebrew. This article is a plea for USCJ cantors to improve that situation, along with guidelines for doing so by ensuring that accentuated syllables always begin on accentuated notes in the music.

Verifying the Proper Hebrew Accentuation

Years ago only some experts were recognized as knowing proper accentuation of the Hebrew language. These days, what used to lie in the realm of scholars is now readily available to all of us.

Virtually every *siddur* that has been published in the United States since 1950 has accent marks in it. This includes not only *siddurim* published by USCJ, but Orthodox, Reconstructionist, and Reform *siddurim* as well. Furthermore, they are all in agreement for 99+% of the words. How many other situations are there in which these four Jewish denominations are in such strong agreement?

The accent marks in USCJ, as well as Orthodox and Reform, *siddurim* are vertical strokes, or *metegim*, placed beneath the accentuated syllables. Most words have no such accent mark, which indicates that they are properly accentuated on the final syllable. Identical accent marks are included throughout *B'kol Echad*, the USCJ songster edited by Cantor Jeffrey Shiovitz, in *birkat hamazon* pamphlets, and in many *haggadot*.

When it comes to chanting the *Torah*, the *haftarah*, or the *megillot*, the placement of the *t'amim* in printed text indicates the accentuated syllables. The *t'amim* (except sometimes for *zarka*, *segol*, *t'lisha k'tanah*, and *t'lisha g'dolah*) always are placed above or below the accentuated syllables of the words.

Determining the Accentuated Notes

Almost every musical score has a time signature associated with it, which indicates the number of beats in each musical measure. Of those beats, some are the major beats (most stressed accentuation) in each measure; others are minor beats. The table below designates the major beats for the most common time signatures.

Major Beats in Musical Meters	
Time Signature	Major Beats in each Measure
4/4	First beat (primary) Third beat (secondary)
3/4	First beat
2/4	First beat
6/8	First beat (primary) Fourth beat (secondary)

All other beats in each measure are minor beats, and receive less accentuation than the major beats, but more accentuation than the second half of any beat.

Aligning the Accentuated Syllables with the Accentuated Notes

These are the procedures which I find most useful for accentuation alignment between the words and the music. (Note that monosyllabic words have no restriction. The following procedures apply only to polysyllabic words.)

1. **For a word whose musical phrase contains only one major beat, the accentuated syllable should start on the major beat.** As an example, consider the first four words in a commonly sung musical rendition of *Mah Tovu*, which are properly accentuated as *Mah TOvu ohaLEkha ya'aKOV*. The last three words in that phrase each are polysyllabic, and the musical phrase for each word contains only one major beat. All three are improperly accentuated in the original musical passage shown here (**Example 1**).

Mah tovu - Original

Example 1

Mah to - vu o - ha - le - kha ya - a - kov

Because the music is written in 4/4 time, each accentuated syllable should begin on the first or third beat of the measure. The revised musical passage is shown here (**Example 2**):

Mah tovu - Corrected

Example 2

Mah _____ to - vu o - ha - le - kha ya - a - kov _____

2. For a word whose musical phrase contains more than one major beat, the **accentuated syllable should start on one of the major beats**. As an example, consider the next two words in the same musical rendition of *Mah Tovu*, which are properly accentuated as *mishk'noTEkha yisraEL*. The original musical passage shown below is correct. Both words contain two major musical beats — the first and third beat of each measure. Each accentuated syllable starts on the third beat of each measure (**Example 3**):

Mah tovu – Second Phrase *Original Score – No Revision Necessary*

Example 3

mish - ke - no - te - kha _____ yi - sra - el

3. For a word whose musical phrase contains no major beat, the **accentuated syllable should start on one of the minor beats**. As an example, consider the first six words in the commonly sung musical rendition in 4/4 time of *Lo yisa goy el goy KHErev*, which has been written here with proper accentuation. The two polysyllabic words are both improperly accentuated in the musical passage shown here (**Example 4**):

Lo yisa goy - Original

Example 4

Lo yi - sa goy el goy khe - rev

The correction of accentuation of “*yisa*,” which contains a minor beat but no major beat, should be achieved by placing *SA* on the minor beat. That is accomplished by beginning the first word “*Lo*” on the third beat instead the second half of the third beat, followed by *yi* on the second half of the third beat and *SA* on the fourth beat (a minor beat). Correction of the accentuation of *khErev*, which does contain a major beat (procedure #1) is accomplished by placing two full beats instead of one on the second *goy*, so that *KHE* instead of *rev* starts on the first beat of the next measure (a major beat) (**Example 5**):

Lo yisa goy - Revision

Example 5

Lo yi - sa goy el goy khe - rev

Examples of Musical Rearrangement

1. *Torah tsivah lanu moshe* (4/4 time)

Hopefully, our congregational schools teach the students to pronounce our holy Five Books of Moses correctly as *To-RAH*. But if the cantor teaches them to sing *TO-rah TO-rah TO-rah*, the teaching lesson is subverted, rather than reinforced (**Example 6**):

Torah tsivah lanu moshe - Original

Example 6

To - rah, to-rah, to-rah, to - rah, to-rah, to-rah, to - rah tsi - vah la - nu mo - she,

5 To - rah, to-rah, to-rah, to - rah, to-rah, to-rah, to - rah tsi-vah la-nu mo - she. To-rah, to-rah,

10 to - rah, to-rah, to - rah tsi-vah la-nu mo - she, To - rah, to-rah, to - rah, to-rah,

15 to - rah tsi-vah la-nu mo - she. Mo - ra-shah ke - hi-lat ya-kov mo - ra-shah ke -

20 hi-lat ya-kov mo - ra-shah ke - hi-lat ya-kov, to - rah tsi - vah la - nu mo - she.

The singing of “*Torah*” several times at the beginning of this song has been modified so that the proper accentuation is not awkward: Note that “*Torah*” is properly accentuated by beginning its final syllable on a major beat according to procedure #1, sometimes on the first (primary) beat of the measure, and sometimes on the third (secondary) beat of the measure (**Example 7**):

Torah tsivah lanu moshe - Revised

Example 7

To - rah, to-rah, to-rah, to - rah, to-rah, to-rah, to - rah tsi- vah__ la-nu mo-she. To

5
rah, to-rah, to-rah, to - rah, to-rah, to-rah, to - rah tsi- vah__ la-nu mo-she. To-

9
rah, to-rah, to - rah, to-rah, to - rah tsi- vah__ la-nu mo-she. To-rah, to-rah, to-

14
rah, to-rah, to - rah tsi- vah__ la-nu mo-she Mo-ra-shah ke-hi - lat ya - a-kov,

19
mo - ra - shah ke - hi - lat ya - a - kov, mo - ra - shah ke - hi -

22
lat ya - a - kov to - rah tzi - vah__ la - nu mo - she.

2. *Hineih mah tov* (3/4 time)

This commonly sung version accentuates the first word *hiNEIH* incorrectly (**Example 8**):

Hineih mah tov - original

Example 8

Hi-neih mah tov u-mah na - im she-vet a - him gam ya - had. *Fine*

9
Hi - neih mah__ tov she-vet a - him gam ya - had. *DC al Fine*

It is easily corrected by singing *hi* as a pick-up note followed by *NEIH* on the downbeat (**Example 9**):

Hineih mah tov - revised

Example 9

Hi - neih mah tov u-mah na - im she-vet a - him gam ya -

9
had. Hi - neih mah tov she-vet a - him gam ya - had.
DC al Fine

Concluding Thoughts

Most of our *t'fillot* and *shirim* with improper accentuation can be properly rearranged without much difficulty. Indeed, when the Cantors Assembly published its first collections of congregational melodies, *Zamru Lo*, in the 1970's, great care was taken to reframe many melodies conceived with Ashkenazic accentuation (or simply with careless attention to proper pronunciation). Admittedly, some of those efforts proved too awkward; but rather than continuing to mis-accentuate the Hebrew, a different melody should be used. Hopefully, new compositions will not need to be rearranged to assure proper accentuation. Following these guidelines will enable our cantors to serve as proper teachers of the modern Hebrew language through their singing.

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D'VAR N'GINAH

Gray Areas in Weekday *Nusah*

By Joseph A. Levine

N*usah l'hol*, the generic modality for chanting Weekday prayer, remains the subject of periodic debate among Cantors Assembly members. Hazzanet has carried starkly contrasting opinions concerning three sections of the Weekday liturgy in particular: *Sh'ma u-virkhoteha* of Arvit; the *hazarah* (repetition) of *Amidot Shaḥarit* or *Minḥah*; and the *hazarah* of *Amidat musaf l'rosh hodesh*. This survey will cite three authoritative chant sources for each of the above sections--all of them interchanging various prayer modes in different combinations and sequences--and allow readers to decide for themselves which they prefer. A concluding setting for an abbreviated *Sh'moneh esreih* will demonstrate the timelessness of *nusah l'hol* along with its adaptability to the exigencies of modern life.

I - *Sh'ma u-virkhoteha* of Weekday *Ma'ariv*

Here are three distinct modal templates for this service, given in the order of their publication. The first, which immediately precedes the Silent *Amidah*, *Yir'u eineinu* ("May our eyes behold") by pioneering musicologist Abraham Z. Idelsohn (*Thesaurus VIII, 1932, no. 26*), moves from *Ahavah rabbah* to *Adonai malakh* and back to *Ahavah rabbah* (Example 1a):



4 Yir - u ei-nei-nu v'-yis-mah li-bei-nu v'-ta- gel_naf-shei-nu bi-shu-at- kha_be-e- met,
7 be-e-mor l'-tsi- yon ma-lakh e-lo - ha- yikh. A-do-nai me- lekh, a-do- nai ma- lakh, a-do
9 nai_ yim - lokh I - o- lam va - ed. Ki ha-mal-khut shel-kha
hi ul-ol-mei ad tim-lokh b'-kha- vod, ki ein la - nu me-lekh e-la a - tah. Ba-

12
 rukh a - tah a - do - nai, ha - me-lekh bikh - vo - do ta - mid yim -
 16
 lokh a - lei - nu l' - o - lam va - ed v' - al kol ma'a - sav.

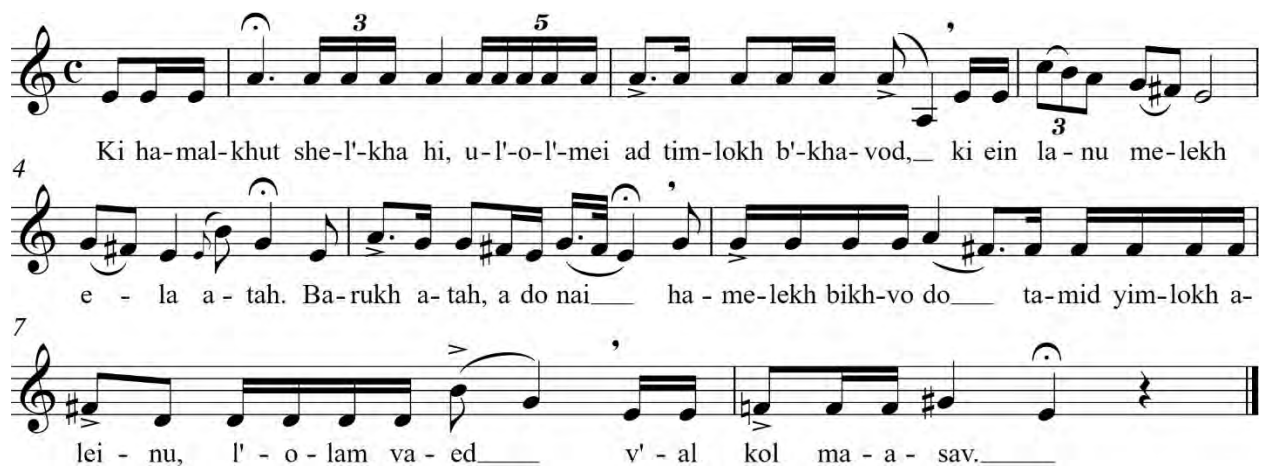
Example 1a. Idelsohn's *Ma'ariv* realization: *Ahavah Rabbah—Adonai malakh—Ahavah rabbah.*

Max Wohlberg was doyen of the American Conservative cantorate during the second half of the 20th century. His opening *Ma'ariv* blessing *U-ma'avir yom* (“Who causes the day to pass”) *Arvit L'hol*, 1972, pp. 3-4 includes passages in *Adonai malakh*, *Ahavah rabbah*, *Magein avot* and back to *Ahavah rabbah* (**Example 1b**):

U - ma - a - vir yom u - mei - vi lai - lah u - mav - dil bein yom u - vein
 4
 lai - lah a - do - nai ts' - va - ot sh' - mo, eil hai v' - ka - yam ta -
 7
 mid yim - lokh a - lei - nu l' - o - lam va - ed, Ba -
 8
 rukh a - tah a - do - nai, ha - ma - a - riv a - ra - vim.

Example 1b. Wohlberg's *Ma'ariv—Adonai malakh—Ahavah Rabbah—Magein avot—Ahavah rabbah.*

Abba Yosef Weisgal, who exemplified Salomon Sulzer's high-baritone cantorial style in the United States (*Emunat Abba*, 1981/2006, no. 217) juxtaposed *Magein avot* with *Ahavah rabbah* in the final *Ma'ariv* blessing, *Ki ha-malkhut* ("For Yours is the kingdom"; **Example 1c**):



4 Ki ha-mal-khut she-l'-kha hi, u-l'-o-l'-mei ad tim-lokh b'-kha-vod, ki ein la-nu me-lekh

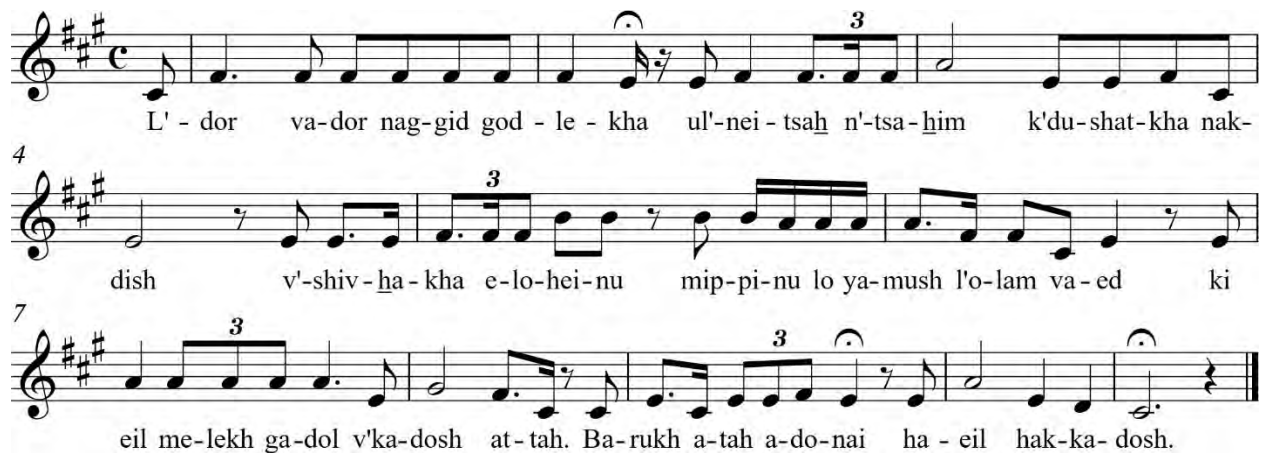
7 e - la a - tah. Ba-rukht a-tah, a do nai ha - me-lekh bikh-vo do ta-mid yim-lokh a-

lei - nu, l' - o - lam va - ed v' - al kol ma - a - sav.

Example 1c. Weisgal's *Ma'ariv*—*Magein avot* juxtaposed with *Ahavah rabbah*.

II - *Amidat Shaharit* or *Minhah* on Weekdays

The Weekday Morning-or-Afternoon *Amidah* raises an issue of whether or not we are dealing with a Pentatonic mode, and if so, what kind of Pentatonic? Of the three examples that follow, only the first, *L'dor va-dor* ("From generation to generation"), by Abraham Baer (*Baal T'fillah*, 1877, nos. 60a, 52 & 60b) represents a Pentatonic minor mode in which the 2nd and 6th degrees are omitted (after Theodore Baker, ed., *Pocket Manual of Musical Terms*, 1933: 149; **Example 2a**):



4 L' - dor va-dor nag-gid god - le - kha ul'-nei - tsah n'-tsa - him k'du-shat-kha nak-

7 dish v'-shiv - ha - kha e-lo-hei-nu mip-pi-nu lo ya-mush l'o-lam va-ed ki

eil me-lekh ga-dol v'ka-dosh at-tah. Ba-rukht a-tah a-do-nai ha - eil hak-ka-dosh.

Example 2a. Baer's *L'dor va-dor*--in a Pentatonic minor mode omitting scale degrees 2 & 6.

A different mood for the Weekday *Amidah* is achieved by Eliezer Gerovitch (*Schirej Simroh*, 1902, No. 6), the celebrated cantor of Rostow-on-Don in Russia during the last decade of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century. His blessing, *Hashivah shof'teinu* ("Restore our judges as in former times"), opens in natural minor on G. At the repeat of *v'haseir mimmenu* (first bracket) the mode shifts to G Ukranian-Dorian, retaining the minor 3rd (Bb) but raising the 4th (C#). At *v'tsadd'keinu ba-mishpat* (second bracket) the chant transposes a third lower, to Gerovitch's own idiosyncratic mode on E.

According to Jewish music theoretician Joseph Yasser, this is not one of the five recognized Pentatonic scales ("Introduction to Jewish Music," lecture at the Cantors Institute, Jewish Theological Seminary, February 1956). The mode spans nine tones and is neither major nor minor, hence Yasser designated it as **Nonatonic**, the prefix "Non" bearing a dual meaning of "nine" as well as "not." Gerovitch's Nonatonic scale for the *Hatimah* of this Weekday blessing would thus include degrees 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9 (E-F-G-A-Bb-C-D-E-F). It introduces a sound all its own.

Example 2b):

Ha - shi-vah shof- tei - nu k'va-ri-sho-nah v'yo-a- tsei - nu k'vat-hi-lah v'-ha-seir mi-

me - nu ya-gon va-a-na - hah um'-lokh a - lei - nu a-tah, a-do-nai l'-vad-

kha b'-he - sed u'-v' ra - ha-mim v'-tsad-kei - nu ba-mish- pat. Ba-rukh a-tah a-do-

nai, me - lekh o-heiv ts'da-kah u-mish- pat.

Example 2b. Gerovitch's *Hashivah shof'teinu*, opening in **Ukranian-Dorian** (minor 3rd, raised 4th) and closing in a **Nonatonic** (9-tone, stepwise up from E-F') mode, neither major nor minor.

Ukranian-born Zavel Kwartin, a leading cantor of the early 20th century in Europe and America, chanted the Weekday *Amidah* benediction *R'fa'einu* ("Heal us") in straightforward E minor (*T'filos Z'vulun Vol. III, 1937, No. 15*). It begins on the 5th degree (B) below and moves mostly stepwise between the tonic (E) and the 3rd above its octave (G'). Just before the *Hatimah* it introduces a lowered 5th (Bb) for poignancy, in accepted Eastern European practice of a century ago, on the bracketed words *v'rahaman atah* ("You are merciful"; **Example 2c**):

R'-fa - ei - nu a-do-nai v'-nei-ra - fei ho-shi - ei - nu v'-ni-va- shei - ah

4 ki t'-hi-la-tei - nu a-tah v'-ha-a - lei r'-fu-ah sh'-lei-mah l'- khol ma-ko-tei - nu ki

7 eil me-lekh ro-fei ne - e - man v'-ra-ha-man a - tah.

10 Ba- rukh a-tah, a-do- nai, ro - fei ho-lei a - mo yis-ra-eil.

Example 2c. Kwartin's *R'fa'einu* in a straightforward E minor mode with **lowered 5th** for poignancy.

III - *Musaf l'rosh hodesh* on Weekdays

A “normative” *nusah* for chanting the *Musaf Amidah* of *Rosh hodesh* on Weekday mornings remains unclear. Many cantors were taught to treat the special *K'dushat hayom* (“Sanctification of the Day”) paragraphs on that occasion--*Roshei hodoshim*, *u-v'roshei hodsheikhem*, *Eloheinu veilohei avoteinu*--as if it were *Shalosh r'galim*. The published sources incorporate elements of both *Shalosh r'galim* and *Yamim nora'im*, without committing to either one. This solution appears in the semi-cadential of verses and in the *Hatimot* of individual paragraphs, which are here bracketed for readers' convenience and given in liturgical order of appearance. Abraham Baer's *Roshei hodsheikhem* (“Your New Moon celebrations;” ***Baal t'fillah*, 1877, nos. 178-183**) cites *Shalosh r'galim* in its semi-cadential phrase *t'midim k'sidram u-musafim k'hilkhatam* (“As per the regular order of Daily and Additional services”), but favors *Yamim nora'im* at the *Hatimah*: *mi-pi kh'vodekha ka-amur* (**Example 3a**).

Ro - shei ho-da-shim l'- am-kha na - ta - ta z' - man ka-pa-rah l'-khol tol-do- tam,

3 bih - yo- tam mak - ri- vim l' - fa - ne- kha ziv - hei ra- tson u' - s - 'i - rei ha -

5
tat l'-kha-per ba-a- dam, zi-ka-ron l'-khu-lam yi - h' yu, u' - t'-shu-at naf -

8
sham mi-yad so - nei. A-ha-vat o-lam ta-vi la - hem u'-v'-rit a-vot la-ba-

12
nim tiz-kor. Va-ha-vi - ei - nu l'-tsi-yon ir-kha b'-ri-nah v'-li-ru-sha-la-yim bet mik-dash-

15
kha b'-sim hat o lam, she-sham a-su a-vo-tei-nu l' - fa-ne-kha et kor-b'-not ho-vo-

17
tei - hem t'-mi-dim k'-sid-ram u-mu-sa-fim k'-hil - kha - tam v'-et mu-

20
saf yom rosh ha-ho-desh ha-zeh a - su v'-hik-ri - vu l' - fa - ne-kha b' - a - ha-

22
vah k'-mits- vat r' - tso - ne - kha, ka - ka - tuv b' - to - ra - te - kha al y' -

24
dei mo - she av - de - kha, mi - pi kh' - vo - de - kha, ka - a - mur.

Example 3a. Baer's blend of cadential elements from *Shalosh r'galim* and *Yamim nora'im*.

The virtuoso cantor of Odessa, Solomon Rozumni (*Shirei Rozumni*, Samuel Alman, ed., 1930, no. 76), commits at first to *Shalosh r'galim* by descending one note below the dominant at the [bracketed] semi-cadence, *v'sa'ir l'khapeir* (“a he-goat for expiation”). But he then hints twice at *Yamim nora'im*, in the [bracketed] conclusion: *ush'nei t'midim k'hilkhatam* (“two prescribed Daily offerings”) follows the contour of *Yamim nora'im*, paralleling the *Kol nidre* phrase *v'kinusei u-sh'vu'ot* (“pledges and promises”) until their final note. Instead of ending on the tonic A in A minor, Rozumni drops to the dominant E, which in Rozumni's day, when *shul-goers* were still

familiar with *nusah ha-t'fillah*, must have thwarted worshipers' expectations by stopping one note short of the anticipated *Shalosh r'galim* resolution to D (**Example 3b**):

U - ve-ro - shei hod-shei-khem tak - ri - vu o - lah___ la - do - nai, pa -
 rim b'-nei va-kar sh'-na-yim v'-a - yil e- had k'-va-sim b'-nei sha-nah t'-mi-mim, u-min-ha-
 tam v'-nis-kei-hem ki- m'-du-bar sh'- lo - shah es-ro-nim la - par u - sh'-
 nei es-ro-nim l' - a - yil v' - i - sa - ron la - ke - ves v' - ya - yin k' - nis -
 ko___ v'-sa-ir l'-kha-peir, u-sh'-nei t'-mi-dim k'-hil-kha- tam

Example 3 b. Rozumni's cadential **thwarting** of worshipers' *Shalosh r'galim* expectations.

Berlin-based Aron Friedmann (*Schir lischlaumau*, 1901, no. 42) commits to a *Yamim nora'im* mode for his *Rosh hodesh Amidah in Eloheinu veilohei avoteinu* (“God of Our Ancestors”), the climactic blessing on that occasion. Three times [all bracketed] he cites the second phrase of *Birkhat kohanim*, the tripartite Priestly Benediction, that occurs on [*Y'varekh'kha*] *Adonai*, [*Ya'eir*] *adonai* and [*Yisa*] *Adonai*, in the *Amidah* of *Yamim nora'im* (“God bless you,” “God's light shine upon you,” “God's countenance lift toward you”; E/G-A-G-F#-E-F#-G). Friedmann’s final cadence, *m'kaddeish yisrael v'roshei hodashim* (“Who sanctifies Israel and the New Moon”), paraphrases that of the High Holiday *Kaddish*, inviting the congregation’s response, *v'imru amein* (“To which we respond, ‘Amein’”); **Example 3c**):

E-lo - hei-nu v'ei-lo-hei a-vo-tei-nu, ha - deish a-lei-nu et ha - ho-desh ha- zeh___ l'-to-

4

vah v'-liv-ra-khah,___ A - mein l'-sa - son u'-l'-sim-hah, A - mein li - shu-

8

ah u' - l' - ne - ha - mah, A - mein l'-far-na - sah u' - l'-khal-ka - lah,___

11

A - mein l'-hay - yim u'-l'-sha-lom A - mein lim' - hi-lat heit v'-lis-li-hat a - von,

15

A - mein u'-l'-kha-pa - rat___ pa - sha. A - mein Ki___ v'-a-m'-kha yis-ra-eil ba-har-ta-mi-

19

kol_ha-u-mot v'-hu-kei ro-shei ho-da-shim la-hem ka-va - ta. Ba___

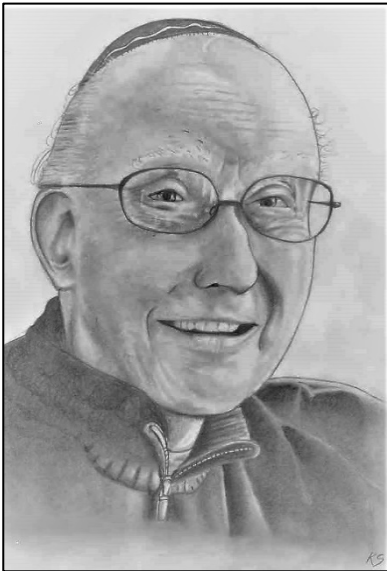
22

rukk h a - tah, a-do-nai m'-had - deish yis-ra-eil___ v'-ro-shei ho-da - shim.---

Example 3c. Friedmann's commitment to a **High Holiday** mode for *Musaf l'rosh hodesh shel hol*.

The foregoing variants remain equally valid as solutions for the challenge of how to chant a liturgical section that appears no more often than do *U-n'taneh tokef* or *Kol nidre*—perhaps two or three times a year. Just as the uniqueness of the latter prayers' melodies is due to the rarity of their occurrence, so too, is the singularity of *nusah* for Weekday *Musaf l'rosh hodesh*, a balancing act between elements of *Shalosh r'galim*, *Yamim nora'im*, and Pentatonic modes. Whereas the dead specimen of a discontinued practice can be pinned down and rigidly categorized, a living tradition like *Rosh hodesh*, that is being renewed (*Journal of Synagogue Music, March 2016, vol. 41, no. 1*) as The Women's Holiday, is always in flux. One hopes that the *nusah ha-t'fillah* for this old-

new celebration dating back to the days of our Second Temple will continue to defy any definitive post-mortem report.



*Joseph A. Levine served as editor for the Journal of Synagogue Music from 2004 through 2020, has published eight books, 45 articles, and lectured extensively across the United States and Canada. He served Conservative congregations as a cantor for 30 years, then pursued a career in business. While earning a Doctorate in Sacred Music at the Jewish Theological Seminary, he taught Hazzanut at the Cantors Institute for a decade. He also instructed periodically at the Academy for Jewish Religion in New York, and at the University of London's School of Asiatic Studies. His artistic collection, **A Cantor's Sketchbook**, was recently published by the Cantors Assembly.*

"Joseph A. Levine"
Kaleigh Sislen, graphite on
paper, 2021

NEGINAH L'MA'ASEH

V'sham'ru by Moshe Taubé

Mi she-beirakh by Chaim Feifel

The selections we have chosen to offer in this issue come from the pens of two of our esteemed colleagues whose passing we, unfortunately, also mark (see “In Memoriam” on pages 131-143) While those tributes will go into greater depth regarding the lives and careers of Moshe Taubé *z'l* and Chaim Feifel, *z'l*, the scores on the following pages will reveal a very small measure of their compositional gifts that will live on as this music continues to be sung.

Moshe Taubé's *V'sham'ru* is a lovely setting, easily chanted as part of the Shabbat *Ma'ariv*. It was originally (in a lower key and somewhat simplified version) part of a Shabbat-themed cantata intended to be sung by children, hence the accompanying piano part, but this heartfelt setting can stand equally well as an unaccompanied chant. Originally published (in its present form) in a Cantors Assembly publication, *Cantorial Masterpieces of Cantor Moshe Taubé-Shabbat (For High Voice)*, we are appreciative of the permission to reprint it here. We are also grateful to Hazzan Rachel Brook of New York's Park Avenue Synagogue, and her accompanist Colin MacKnight, for bringing it to life. Click anywhere on the first page of the score to hear her beautiful and heartfelt rendition.

Chaim Feifel's setting of the *Mi she-beirakh* for the congregation is a much more ambitious work, appropriate for a concert setting. Indeed, the performance linked here (click anywhere on the first page of the score) was orchestrated by the incomparable Raymond Goldstein, and indeed sung in concert some 16 years ago by Feifel's students, Azi Schwartz (now of the Park Avenue Synagogue in New York City) and Gideon Zelermyer (of Congregation Sha'ar HaShomayim in Montreal), accompanied by the Beth El Orchestra and conducted by Hazzan Joseph Ness, at his synagogue, Beth El Temple of West Hartford, CT. Though unlikely to be chanted as part of regular weekly services, a sensitive *hazzan* might yet find a way to adapt it for liturgical use on special occasions We offer gratitude to all of the performers (and the orchestrator) for their permission to include this performance, which can be accessed by clicking anywhere on the first page of the score.

VeShamru

Adagio rubato

p

Moshe Taubé

Ve-sham-ru ve - nei yis-ra-eil

pp *rit.* *tranquillo*

This system contains the first two staves of the score. The vocal line is in the upper staff, and the piano accompaniment is in the lower staff. The tempo is marked 'Adagio rubato' and the dynamics are 'p' and 'pp'. The piano part features several triplet figures and a 'rit.' marking.

5

et ha-sha - bat la - a - sot et ha-sha - bat le-do-ro - tam be-rit o -

f

This system contains the third and fourth staves. The vocal line continues with the lyrics 'et ha-sha - bat la - a - sot et ha-sha - bat le-do-ro - tam be-rit o -'. The piano part includes a 'f' dynamic marking and continues with triplet figures.

10

lam bei - ni u - vein be-nei yis - ra - eil, ot hi le-o - lam. Ki

p *p* *3*

This system contains the fifth and sixth staves. The vocal line continues with the lyrics 'lam bei - ni u - vein be-nei yis - ra - eil, ot hi le-o - lam. Ki'. The piano part includes a 'p' dynamic marking and a triplet figure.

15

— shei-shetya-mim, a - sa A-do-nai, et ha-sha-ma-yim ve - et ha-a - rets,

mf tremolo *f*

19

u - va-yom ha - shvi'i sha - vat, sha - vat,

p

23

sha - vat va - yi - na - fash.


ppp falsetto

pp rit. e morendo *ppp* *8va*

Mi she-beirakh

Chaim Feifel

Moderato


1

Mi she - be - rakh a - vo - tei - nu Av - ra ham Yitz - hak v' - Ya'a - kov


3

Hu y' - va - reikh et kol ha - ka - hal ha - ka - dosh ha - ze, im

5


kol k' - hi - lot ha - ko - desh Heim u - n - shei -


8

hem u - v' - nei - hem uv - no - tei - hem v' -

11

khol a - sher la - hem v' khol - a - sher la -

14

hem. u - mi she - m' - ya - ha - dim ba - tei kh' - nei - si - yot

17

lit - fi - la u mi she - ba - im b' - to - kham l' - hit - pa -

20

leil, she - ba - im b' - to - kham l' - hit - pa - leil

Nigun

Andantino

23

U mi she - not - nim neir

27

neir la - ma - or

30

v' - ya - yin l' - ki - dush

34

u - l' - hav da - lah u fat

39

l' - or - him u - ts - da - kah l' - a - ni - yim

44

U mi she - not nim neir
U - mi

48

neir la - ma - or
neir la - ma or

52

v' ya - yin l' - ki - dush u - l' - hav da -
v' - ya - yin

A LITERARY GLIMPSE

From Jonah to Levi Yitzhak—A Hasidic Parable Reimagined

By Joseph A. Levine

Following Titus' obliteration of the Temple in 70 B.C.E. and Trajan's quelling of various regional uprisings in 117 C.E., the Jewish religion in Eretz Yisrael was spared. That changed in 135 C.E. after the failed Bar Kochba rebellion under Hadrian, who prohibited all Jewish practices under pain of death. Ten rabbis who defied the edict and continued to teach Torah were captured over the course of the next year or so and individually executed. By the Geonic period (late in the first millennium) several Midrashim had conflated the legendary Ten Martyrs' deaths into a single agonizing event.¹

In 1096, over 1,000 innocent Jewish men, women and children were killed in the Rhineland German city of Mayence during the First Crusade. This atrocity inspired an otherwise unknown *payytan* to compose *Eilleh ezk'rah*, an alphabetical acrostic recalling the Ten Martyrs—with his own name, Yehudah—added at the end. Based on the earlier Midrashim, the poem was inserted into the Yom Kippur Martyrology, *Z'khor rahamekha* (Remember Your Mercies), which follows the *Avodah* re-enactment of the High Priest's ancient Ritual of Atonement in the Temple.

The *Eileh Ezk'rah* poem includes *Sarfei malah*, a legend concerning the “Heavenly Angels,” who cry bitterly over the flaying alive of Rabbi Ishmael (BT *M'nahot* 29b):

שְׂרָפֵי מַעֲלָה צָעֲקוּ בְּמַרְהָ, זוֹ תוֹרָה נִזְהָ שְׂכָרָה עֲטָה כְּשִׁלְמָה אֹרְהָ, אוֹיֵב מְנַאֵץ שָׂמָךְ
הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא, וּמְחַרֵּף וּמְגַדֵּף עַל דְּבָרֵי תוֹרָה.
עֲנִתָהּ בַּת קוֹל מְשֻׁמִּים, אִם אֲשַׁמַּע קוֹל אַחַר אֲהַפּוּדֶךָ אֶת הָעוֹלָם לְמִים, לְתַהוֹ נִבְהוּ
אֲשִׁית הַדּוֹמִים, גְּזֵרָה הִיא מִלְפָּנַי, קִבְּלוּהָ מְשַׁעֲשְׁעֵי דַת יוֹמִים.

Is this the reward for upholding Your commandments?

The foe blasphemes Your great and revered name

Whereupon a celestial voice (Bat-kol) thunders:

One more sound, and I will again cover the earth with water,

*You lovers of My Torah, which preceded Creation by 2,000 years!*²

¹ BT *M'nahot* 29b; *Avot of Rabbi Natan*, Version A, 38:3.

² *Mahzor Ha-shaleim*, Philip Birnbaum, ed. (Brooklyn, NY: Hebrew Publishing Co.) 1951: 841-42; based on a Midrash and Psalm 90:4 (“a thousand years in Your sight are like a day that passes”). [CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE AUDIO FILE, SARFEI MALAH, SUNG AND SELF-ACCOMPANIED BY FAITH STEINSNYDER; MUSIC AFTER ZAVEL KWARTIN'S TIHER RABBI YISHMAEL \(BROOKLYN, NY: SMIROTH ZEBULON, SELF-PUBLISHED, 1938: 82\).](#)

Three-quarters of a century later, in 1171, another direct questioning of God appeared in a *piyyut* written by Barukh of Mainz—*Eish okhlah eish* (A Fire that Devours Fire):³

Why did You allow the wicked to fatten on Your burnt offerings?
How could You let us be seized by fire?
[You, Who promised that] the house of Jacob would be fire,
The house of Joseph flame [and the house of Esau chaff!]

From that time forward, sporadic feelings of outrage over Jewish suffering sprouted alongside the age-old outpourings of grief. Even before national Jewish poet Hayyim Nahman Bialik's *B'ir ha-hareigah* (In the City of Slaughter),⁴ lamenting the bloody pogrom in Kishinev, Bessarabia, on Easter of 1903, or Uri Zvi Greenberg's *Tahat shein ma-harashtam* (Under the Tooth of Their Plow),⁵ mourning some three million Polish Jews murdered during the Holocaust, tremors of reaction to persecution were being felt among Hasidim in the Yiddish-speaking lands of Eastern Europe. The early *Tsaddikim* were reported by their disciples to have performed miracles to counteract evil that was about to overtake their followers:

By the power of their extraordinary virtue, ... they fought and triumphed over the wicked, even over the Angel of Death. ... It once happened that a *Tsaddik* rose to question God Himself. This he did, not out of blasphemous intent, but with the flame of truth and compassion burning within, ... on behalf of his downtrodden people."⁶

The *Tsaddik* referred to was Levi Yitzhak (1740-1809), rabbi of Berdichev in the Ukraine, so revered for his boundless compassion over Jewish suffering that he was known as *Der bàremdiger* (Yiddish: The Merciful One). Upon his death, Rav Nahman of Bratslav proclaimed: "The Light of the Universe has been extinguished."

It was the eve of Yom Kippur in Berdichev. Entire families headed to the synagogue, eager to seek forgiveness for the sins they had committed against one another and against God. There, they waited for the *Tzaddik* to step forward and lead them as their designated Messenger in Prayer. Instead, he stood uncertainly at his accustomed place next to the Ark, a large woolen Tallit over his head, rocking slowly back and murmuring as if he were deep in conversation with an invisible interlocutor. Thus, he would remain—through the Great White Fast's *Ma'ariv*, *Shaharit*, *Musaf* and *Minhah* services—immersed in a solitary marathon of self-doubt—oblivious to the congregation's growing consternation over his refusal to assume the rabbi's customary role of *Sh'liah tsibbur* on Yom Kippur.

³ *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse*, ed. T. Carmi (New York: Viking Press), 1981: 386.

⁴ *Kol Shirei Bialik* (Tel-Aviv: D'vir). 1951:361.

⁵ *The Modern Hebrew Poem Itself*, eds. S. Burnshaw, T. Carmi & E. Spicehandler (New York: Schocken Books), 1966: 64.

⁶ *A Treasure of Jewish Folklore*, ed. Nathan Ausubel (New York: Crown Publishers). 1948: 29.

On high, in the Heavenly Tribunal (*Y'shivah shel ma'alah*),⁷ Levi Yitzhak's rabbinic forebears were not surprised by his breach of liturgical protocol; he was known first and foremost for his idiosyncratic behavior as a champion of the common man. *Tanna'im* Hillel and Shammai, seated closest to the Holy Presence, were (for once) united in recalling how *Der bàremdiger* had once absolved a water carrier of unintentional guilt. Exhausted from helping others prepare for Pesah, the poor man honestly admitted that he had drunk a full flask of brandy just before the Seder, and slept through the entire ritual without having previously burned his *hamets*.⁸

Amora'im Abbaye and Rava, next in rank, were quick to testify concerning Levi Yitzhak's defense of a Hasid whom he encountered gnawing a chicken leg in public on the national Black fast of Tish'ah B'av. He assumed the man had forgotten the significance of the day, but the individual assured him such was not the case. Whereupon the *Tzaddik* raised his eyes heavenward: "Almighty God—see how righteous your children are; confessing aloud their sin, rather than telling a lie!"⁹



"Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev,"
Joseph A. Levine, pencil on paper,
1947

Poet Yehuda Halevy rose to apprise the assemblage of the *Tzaddik's* belief that *intention* was everything when it came to prayer. Halakhic codifier Moses Maimonides pointed out Levi Yitzhak's conviction that God was everywhere and in everything, even a wagon driver's humming of a dance-*niggun* while greasing the wheels of his cart. Upon hearing it, the Berdichever immediately thought of lyrics for the lively air.

The resultant song, *A Dudele*¹⁰—a play on the Yiddish word *Du* (You)—popularized Halevy's Ode of Yearning for God: *Yah, ana emtsa'akha*.¹¹

Master of the Universe, where can one find You—and where can one not find You?
You are east, You are west, You are north, You are south,
You are You-You-You-You, You!

In the synagogue of Berdichev, Yom Kippur prayers had arrived at *N'ilah*, with its multiple series of climactic final pleas for God's absolution before the Gates of Mercy closed. A *Ba'al t'fillah* was about to intone the introductory *Hatsi-Kaddish* when the voice of Reb Levi Ytzhak was unexpectedly heard; vibrant with emotion, addressing God directly:

⁷ BT *Bava Metsi'a*, 76a.

⁸ Chajim Bloch, *Priester der Liebe* (Vienna: Amalthe-Verlag), 1930.

⁹ Ausubel, op. cit., p.119.

¹⁰ *A Dudele*, A. Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Music* (New York: Henry Holt & Co.), 1929.

¹¹ *Jehuda Halevi: Selected Liturgical and Secular Poems* (New York: Ogen Publishing House), 1944.

*Good Day to You, Ribono shel olam...*¹²

May it please the Court, Your Divine Honor:
I, Levi Yitzhak son of Sarah from Berdichev—
Stand before You with a *complaint* on behalf of Your people Israel.
What grievance do You bear against Your people Israel—
that has caused You to burden them with an endless series of
directives, ordinances, rulings and commands?
Beloved Father, kindly regard other nations, such as the
Edomites, Medes and Persians, mentioned in Your Torah.
Or the Russians who boast that Czar Alexander is the only ruler—
the Germans who say that Kaiser Franz II reigns supreme—
or the English who claim that George III is king above all.
To them, I, Levi Yitzhak son of Sarah from Berdichev, say:
Our Sovereign's Throne of Mercy rests in the highest heights.
Therefore, let it be known that I shall not move from this place
until there is an end to ignorance and racial prejudice,
and the nations of the world will concur in declaring:

Magnified and Sanctified Be the Great and Holy Name!

No sooner had Levi Yitzhak closed his case with this effusive praise of God in the Mode of Supplication, a poignant juxtaposition of moods that pervades *N'ilah*, when a spirited debate ensued among jurists in the Heavenly Court. Eliyahu ben Shlomo Zalman, Gaon of Vilna, took the position that this unprecedented personal outburst by a spiritual leader in Israel constituted a blatant instance of *Hutspah k'lapei shamaya* (audacity in the face of God),¹³ and warranted official condemnation—if not excommunication.

The Baal Shem Tov, Yisroel ben Eliezer, respectfully disagreed; offering the possibility that, drained of conscious awareness after standing many hours while fasting, the gentle side of Levi Yitzhak's nature had unintentionally allowed his Evil Inclination to prevail in publicly doing battle for the basic rights of the Jewish people. Accordingly, he should be fully exonerated of all charges.

At that moment, another *Bat-kol* issued forth from the farthest reaches of outer space, surprisingly gentler than the one that had admonished the heavenly angels for questioning God's allowing the sacrifice of the Ten Martyrs back in the days of Emperor Hadrian.

Learned members of this Tribunal: What a pity that My courageous advocate did not press his advantage when he had the chance! Abraham, the first Patriarch, had shown the way

After David Blumenthal, "Observations & Reflections on the History and Meanings of the *Kaddish* in Judaism," ¹² *Judaism*, Winter 2001; **CLICK [HERE](#) TO ACCESS THE AUDIO FILE, A *DIN TORAH MIT GOTT*, SUNG BY BENJAMIN MAISSNER (ARRANGEMENT: LEO LOW; PIANO: CHARLES HELLER).**

¹³ BT *Sanhedrin* 105a; citing the heathen prophet Balaam, who ignored God's admonition not to go with Moabite King Balak's emissaries in attempting to curse Israel.

by challenging Me not to obliterate Sodom and Gemoroh—if he found ten righteous individuals dwelling there: “Shall not the Chief Justice of the Universe deal justly?”¹⁴

Centuries later, my recalcitrant prophet Jonah (once I had ordered the whale to eject him) actually dared to amend the Thirteen Principles of my Divine Mercy, listed in the Book of Exodus.¹⁵ After he finally complied with my command to warn the 120,000 sinners in Nineveh of their impending doom, they openly repented and turned back from their evil ways. Jonah then acknowledged my being “gracious and merciful, slow to anger, possessed of great kindness, and remitting of punishment.”¹⁶

He was deliberately misquoting My own words back to me; in the Exodus incident, I had specified to Moses that I do not remit punishment!

וַיַּעֲבֹר יְהוָה עַל־פְּנֵי וַיִּקְרָא יְהוָה אֶל רַחוּם וַחֲנוּן אֶרְךָ אַפַּיִם וְרַב־חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת:
נִצָּר חֶסֶד לְאַלְפִים נִשָּׂא עֵוֹן וּפְשָׁע וְחַטָּאת וְנִקְהָה לֹא יִנְקָה...

The Lord passed before him and proclaimed: “The Lord! The Lord! a God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness and faithfulness, extending kindness to the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; yet He does not remit all punishment...”

Having allowed Jonah’s more conciliatory version to become canonized both as Holy Writ and as the Common Coin of Prayer (Matbei’a shel t’fillah),¹⁷ what could I say in response to Levi Yitzhak’s valid syllogism: *If other nations can freely bow before rulers of their own appointment; than certainly, My chosen ones should not be persecuted for proclaiming the world’s Creator as their Eternal Sovereign! His case was so compelling that, had he uttered one more word, I might have forgiven all humankind!*

A fearful silence prevailed following this completely unexpected revelation by the Supreme Chief Justice... Historically, God had acted as both Judge and Prosecutor (*Dayyan u-mokhi’ah*) in presiding over the Jewish people’s exile. Now, however, God was suddenly appearing as Israel’s understanding and tolerant Creator (*Yots’ram*).

In the twentieth century, theologian Neil Gillman offered a rationale for this mythical role reversal through great liturgical imagery: “Having made us this way, ‘dust from the earth...who are gone like a vanished dream,’ God is in a sense co-responsible for what we are.”¹⁸

¹⁴ Genesis 18: 25.

¹⁵ Exodus 34: 6-7.

¹⁶ Jonah 4:2.

¹⁷ *Matbei’a she-tav’u hakhamim bivrakhot* (The Coin Our Sages Minted in Blessings), BT *B’rakhot*, 40b.

¹⁸ Neil Gillman (citing Genesis 2:7), “Reading the Liturgy through the Spectacles of Theology: The Case of *U-n’taneh Tokef*.” *Journal of Synagogue Music*, Fall 2008, Vol. 33, pp. 53-55.

Considering how weak and transient were the flesh-and-blood Jewish people that God had created, it was only fitting and proper that the *pro bono* Petition for Relief put forth by their honorably righteous attorney be heard. It would take almost a century and a half for the world's nations to concur. On December 19, 1948, the United Edomites Etc. voted—35 to 15, with eight abstentions—to recognize a Jewish State founded on “trust in Israel’s Rock and Redeemer.”¹⁹ Levi Yitzhak’s Bill of Complaint was finally addressed and acted upon, not just by the Heavenly Tribunal, but by the earthly Court of Nations as well.

*Joseph A. Levine served as editor for the Journal of Synagogue Music from 2004 through 2020, has published eight books, 45 articles, and lectured extensively across the United States and Canada. He served Conservative congregations as a cantor for 30 years, then pursued a career in business. While earning a Doctorate in Sacred Music at the Jewish Theological Seminary, he taught Hazzanut at the Cantors Institute for a decade. He also instructed periodically at the Academy for Jewish Religion in New York, and at the University of London’s School of Asiatic Studies. His artistic collection, **A Cantor’s Sketchbook**, was recently published by the Cantors Assembly.*



Even if you can't sing well, sing.
Sing to yourself.
Sing in the privacy of your home.
But sing.

R. Nahman of Breslov



¹⁹ Concluding paragraph of Israel’s Declaration of Independence, May 14, 1948.

D'VAR T'FILLAH

The Relationship between *Avodah* and Martyrology

by Joseph Moses

The word *Avodah* refers to the Service of God in the Temple, with the performance of rituals and sacrifices a few times every day. With the hundreds of *Avodah* services in the Temple every year, there was absolutely nothing like the *Avodah* at the time of the Musaf or "Additional" offering on Yom Kippur afternoon, the service in which the High Priest asked God to cover all of Israel's various sins during the past year.

It was unique, filled with awe and a terrifying beauty. It was electric, demonstrating a connection between our mortal being and the infinite magnificence that is the Source of All Being. Three times--during three confessions-supplications- reconciliations with their appointed sacrifices--would the High Priest, with what can only be called *sacred audacity*, pronounce the unspeakable, the unutterable name of infinite, eternal Being itself-and *live!*

Try to imagine, however imperfectly, the figure of the *Kohen gadol*, foremost symbol of elevated holiness among the Children of Israel. For centuries of consecutive years, on Yom Kippur, it was he who was charged to enter the most sacred chamber of the holiest edifice in Jerusalem, holiest city in the holiest of lands. Raised as he was, level by level, higher into a domain of the most extreme purity-like every Jew, he was also fasting. Dressed in the whitest linen, he performed the rituals of approaching the *Ehad*, the One, the Name, Whose holy Tetragrammaton he alone had been taught to pronounce.

In the Temple Courtyard where the Israelites were gathered, they could clearly hear the *Sheim ha-m'forash*, the *articulated* Name of God; the *Sheim havvayah*, the Name of Being, issuing forth from the lips of the *Kohen Gadol*. And as they did, they kneeled...and bowed...and prostrated themselves.

After the ordeal was over, the High Priest emerged—to everyone's relief, especially his own—and offered a prayer for prosperity, peace and health, for a year of fruitfulness and the coming of salvation for the entire peoplehood of Israel.

How well does the pathos of this straightforward plea move us into the next section of the Yom Kippur *Musaf*, the Martyrology. No Jew today can avoid, or afford to forget, the history of brutality and murder acted out upon us since we lost our Holy Land and our Holy Temple. We have called the bloody history briefly recounted here a martyrology because it focuses on individuals, ten martyred Sages of the Talmud during the first and second centuries of the Common era. Yet, the very *word* makes one's heart ache as we realize that the full martyrology of Israel could never be told in fifty human lifetimes.

For 2,000 years we have offered no animal or grain sacrifices to God. Instead, we have sacrificed *ourselves*, and we have even done one better. If the issue is atonement, we have atoned millions of times over. Our elders have been our Expiatory offerings and our infants

have risen as Incense through the sky. The only ritual we can still perform in their behalf is one of Memory.

By remembering the deaths of our saintliest martyrs immediately following our re-enactment of the High Priest's *Avodah*, we affirm that at the very moment when we have entered the Holy of Holies *we can still question God!* Rav Hai Gaon, last head of the Babylonian Academy at Pumbedita in the eleventh century, composed a *selihah* for the Ninth of Av that asked God,

The blood of Your murdered people
Has made the desert bring forth grain ...
Is it so hard for You to have mercy?

A century later, the scholar Baruch of Mainz commemorated the mass immolation of the entire Jewish community in Blois, France, by demanding of God,

Why did You allow the wicked
To fatten on Your burnt offerings ...
You, Who promised that
The House of Jacob would be fire ...
And the House of Esau, chaff?

In our own day the poet Abba Kovner, who helped lead an armed revolt in the Vilna Ghetto, looked upon Hebrew as an avenue not only for the retrieval of our collective past, but for protesting its injustices as well.

My God! There must be a language
Which will make a bridge between us.
A language of the living, which
The dead will also hear and understand.

The Martyrology poem of Yom Kippur *Musaf* gives us a language with which to build such a bridge.

These things I remember, and pour out my soul;
How the wicked have utterly consumed us ...

This D'var t'fillah by Joseph Moses, a Professor Emeritus of English Literature at NYU, is based upon one he delivered in May of 1993 at the Academy for Jewish Religion in Riverdale, NY. At the time, shortly before his death, Professor Moses was studying for the rabbinate at the Academy for Jewish Religion. Every week for a year, he commuted from his home in Luboc, Maine to the AJR located in Riverdale, New York. This article is adapted—with Dr. Moses' permission—by instructor Joseph A. Levine from a term paper submitted for a Spring 2003 course in Liturgy of the High Holidays.

Reaching Every Jew Through Music: The Role of the Cantor

By Debbie Friedman

Editor's Note: *Deborah Lynn Friedman's career as a musician, composer and teacher began in the early 1970's. Her earliest work, known primarily within the Reform movement, was greeted with disdain by the Jewish music "establishment" who derided it as "camp music" and pointed to her lack of traditional Jewish and musical training as evidence that she had little to offer the mainstream. Over the years, however, a remarkable transformation took place as her heartfelt melodies for texts like "Mi she-beirakh" and the Havdalah blessings imprinted themselves on congregants of all ages. Recognizing that Debbie did, indeed, have something powerful to say, the leaders of the Cantors Assembly invited her to address the 61st annual CA Convention in 2008. Having marked the 10th anniversary of her passing (as well as what would have been her 70th birthday) earlier this year, we thought it appropriate to revisit some of her remarks at that time. After a lengthy discussion of her upbringing and the path that had led her to deliver a keynote address to a gathering of Conservative cantors, she turned to her thoughts on prayer and the responsibilities of those who lead it.*

I'd like to reflect on a *Gemara* that I learned. It's in *B'rakhot kaf-zayin*. We're taught that there are three different proof texts that assure us that there is cause for the *Sh'moneh esrei*, the 18 (sic) benedictions in the daily Amidah, and that there are different ways in which we can approach *t'fillah*. The way in which we allow ourselves to experience God and communicate our relationship with God is reflected in each one of these texts.

The first, Psalm 29, *Havu l'adonai b'nei eilim*. In this Psalm, God is represented as Creator, majestic, all-powerful Designer of the many magnificent and praiseworthy wonders of creation. The second proof they give is the use of the spine, the *shidrah*. The spine has 18 discs, each representing a *b'rakhah*. The spine is flexible, and it moves forward and back and all around. It has the ability to move in and out of places, both personal and public. Finally, the *Sh'ma*, which focuses on love. It is the love relationship that exists between human beings and God and the promises made between us that demonstrate the power of that love. God is mentioned 18 times.

These texts provide us with three different models of *davening* and the first model of relating to God as a majestic and distant God, as Creator and all-powerful. The relationship to our congregants would be more formal, remote, and more at a distance, with little opportunity for connection and intimacy. It would mostly celebrate the powerful nature of God. The second would be the *shidrah*. In its flexibility, it would reach out to the *davener* in whatever way possible to draw the *davener* into the prayer experience. It bends forward, to the side, it is far-reaching, beyond the boundaries set by the text, by the environment, by any limits set in our

minds about how much to let be seen and how much to keep concealed. Remember that while the *shidrah* may be exposed, there's still the spinal cord, whose secrets are between you and the Holy One. The Still Small Voice rests in how we move as much as how we are able to instill a sense of growth and movement in others. The side and back and all around allow us to bring the inner self to the *t'fillah*, and encourage closeness and interaction with the *kahal*.

Both the model of majesty and the model of intimacy would lead us to what is ultimately a driving force for each one of us. This force, the love that is "*bein adam lamakom, bein adam l'haveiro*," and "*bein adam l'atsmo*," it is with love, with flexibility and with majesty that we bring ourselves to *t'fillah*. Sometimes the *shidrah*, the spine and *t'fillah*, are akin to the simple child, the *tam*, who in the Seder is the one "*she'eino yodei'a lish'ol*," the one who doesn't know to ask.

People come to pray not knowing what they need, in the same way that we, the prayer leaders, are unaware of the power that we have to awaken their souls and allow them the freedom to heal. This has nothing to do with ego. All of this happens within the context of the prayers themselves. These are not moments to be taken lightly, not moments of magic or miracles. They are openings, times of breakthrough where we recognize that all that we discover and discuss about the four children—the simple, the wise, the rebellious and the one who does not know how to ask—is a part of each one of us. The emergence of these pieces of ourselves does not happen suddenly on just those nights when the saltwater is there to stand in for our tears or the bitter herbs to express the distaste at hardships and the injustices we feel. When we open our hearts to freedom, freedom takes on a life of its own, and we begin to reach those who are in *Mitzrayim*.

I think it's interesting that those who set the basic liturgy, the *matbei'ah shel t'fillah*, chose to place the *Mi khamokha* right before the Amidah. In our wanderings and our ambivalence about leaving our personal *Mitzrayim* and our quest to find our *shidrah* and our essence, we practice crossing the sea every day — a few times a day in the hopes that at every crossing, our soul's song will become more clear, immersed in the beauty of love that only God can create. We're asked to give that love to one another with our whole being.

My friend Joe Septimus writes, "This approach to God, or godliness, is not the thunderous voice or richness of the instrument, but the inarticulate, inaudible whimper, the sound of your breathing next to me, the quiet peacefulness, the white parchment, not the black words." The question of the *she'eino yodei'a lish'ol* asked by wondrous, sad, inquisitive or lonely expression is heard, acknowledged by the visual embrace of the *aher* who is there to be there. The *Amidah* is the silent prayer of the individual as community, finding oneself in the silence of others.

I found this story which spoke to me as I was preparing for today: God and the angels were talking about the creation of the planet. They said, "Now that we've got the earth, we've got the sky and the mountains and the rivers and the moon and the stars, now we will create

humans. Where shall we hide the truth of their godlike qualities from them?" One of the angels said, "Hide it on the highest mountaintop." God said, "No, eventually they'll learn to scale the mountain and they will find it there." Then the angels said, "Let's take it down to the very deepest part of the ocean." God said, "Nah, don't do that. If you hide it in the deepest part of the ocean, eventually humans will learn how to go to the deepest part of the ocean and surely they'll find it there." Then another angel said, "Well, let's hide it on the moon, then." And God said, "No, eventually they'll go to the moon and they'll find it there." Finally, they all knew exactly at once where to hide this beautiful gift. It was in a place humans would never think to look. And God said, "Let this gift be hidden within every human being, for no human would think to look within themselves."

And with that, all of the great teachers, all of the sages of all times have said, there is a place within every human being, in you, that is so absolutely holy. There is a place in each of us that is absolutely pure, a place that is Divine, and it is that precious piece of godliness to which we speak in our *t'fillot*, the very ones you lead and teach.

Very little of what we have been talking about in the past years has addressed the issue of you and your power and your personal gifts as *hazzanim* and *hazzaniyot*. I was all prepared to say that I felt we had wasted time together in the past or spent too much time talking about issues that were unimportant. But I realized that had we not had those conversations together, we never would have gotten to this point where we would be able to consider anything that I had to say. I realize, in retrospect, that those conversations were important, though they were hard and, at times, each of us may have felt misunderstood or misrepresented.

By now, everyone knows that our objective is similar. Even if some parts of what we do may be dissimilar, the bottom line is: your congregants are calling to you. They're looking for you to help. We talk all about music and what you do when you sing that music. The big question is what's happening on the *bimah*? No one has the right to put you in the position of "performer." Your title defines your position in the *shul*. In the community you are the *hazzanim* and *hazzaniyot*. You are the visionaries, the ones who look to the future to build and to create. You grow your congregations, not necessarily in numbers, but in spirit and soulfulness. And to do that job, you must look into the souls of the people with whom you *daven*, and to do that, you must look into yourselves to see you.

I'm willing to guess that there are those of you who are thinking, "Who the heck does she think she is, telling me what to do on the *bimah*?" Well, I'm nobody. I don't want to tell you what to do on the *bimah*, but I want you to know what you did for me while you were on the *bimah*. I'm someone who needed you when I was growing up. I needed direction, and I needed someone to help me understand why all the things that were happening in my life were happening. I needed someone to help me take care of myself. I needed someone to explain to me why I couldn't have a Bat Mitzvah and all of my friends could who didn't even go to Hebrew school and didn't even care about being Jewish. And even now, I need someone to help me when I'm frightened and I think about what might come down the pike for me.

So, there are times when each of us needs. There are times when I needed you, and there are times when you have needed me, when each of us is vulnerable. The point is that all of us, each one of us, is vulnerable. And, that no matter how vulnerable we are, we're available to each other. And that the only way we can be available to each other is if we allow ourselves to see our frailty. And to be able to see our vulnerability is a huge strength. It requires great strength to see our brokenness and our fragility. It's a huge strength.

Sometimes you will need me by your side to remind you that you are not alone. These issues are timeless and ageless. They do not require investiture. At one time, the Little Engine That Could would suffice. But things are different now. Now you teach the paths to strength and with you there's opportunity for growth and learning.

I've learned a lot about you in these many years, and I'd like you to know some of the things I've seen, and here they are. This is how I experience you: You are delicate souls with the capacity to look beyond yourselves, to see your congregants. They make huge demands of you, but they are just your congregants.

There's a woman wearing a *tikh* who sits with her child by her side. She's attentive and she looks right at you as she holds her daughter close to her side, mouthing the words to the prayers along with you. It's clear that she's not wearing that *tikh* because she's observant. Her eyes, sunken and pale-faced, tell you she is wearing the *tikh* because she is in the process of chemotherapy. She's looking to you for a lifeline. She's waiting to hear a prayer, that prayer she will be able to keep with her until the next time she sees you. She's waiting for you to help her find a way, a prayer she will be able to use to transcend her fear. She's searching for the glue that will hold her life together. She's looking for a way to bring comfort to her child and alleviate the fear. She needs you.

There's a man in a beautiful Armani suit, his head in his hands. He's sobbing. His wife just died, and when he lifts his head, he looks right at you, his tears rolling down his cheeks. He's inconsolable. He's lost in his pain and he's come to find you because your prayers have spoken to him in the past. He comes to you waiting to hear prayers like the ones you shared when he stood with his wife together with you under the *huppah*. Now he's empty and all alone and he's naked. He's exposed. Where will he go? How will he find any place where the sounds of the tears rolling off his cheeks can be silenced? He looks to you to envelop him in the prayers you offer. He comes to you to be held in your arms over time. You are his lifeline.

A child with developmental disabilities finds the way up to the *bimah* and with his arms thrown around your legs, the child holds on for life. While you are singing in the service, the small voice of the child is muttering. What the child hears is the angel in you, the messenger who establishes the pathways to prayer for all of us. We, too, need to wrap ourselves around your legs and hold you and be held by you. But our inhibitions get the best of us. This child knows when you sing, you initiate the conversation with the Holy One of Blessing. This is the

beginning of that conversation for the child and the rest of us whose souls find their way up to the *bimah* with you and the child.

So much of who you are is veiled beneath that *tallit*. It's not commonplace to reveal the sensitive, gentle part of oneself. I've always said that so much of what happens in the sanctuary is affected by what goes on outside of the sanctuary. This is where we begin to talk about the integration of music and instruments and congregants and solos and choirs. It has little to do with music and everything to do with how we are willing to see ourselves. How do you see yourself? Do you see yourself as *sh'liah* or *sh'lihat tsibbur*, as *k'lei kodesh*, as messengers, as those who carry the holy words from one place to another? You are like neurotransmitters, the connectors between the prayer and the act. This is how I see you. This holiness is only a concept until you make it come to life. It takes on life when infused with the words and prayers, with acts and deeds of *hesed* and *tsedek*, and all that can happen through song.

You are the interpreters of text. You help those who have turned a deaf ear to the possibility of hope and resurrecting positive acts of kindness and goodness in their lives. You are the crash cart for those who have been devastated by loss and have given up on life, and feel there's nothing for which to live. You are the lifeline for people who are lost, who come from homes where there is battering and sexual abuse, substance abuse, bulimia, mental illness, financial problems, marital problems, the whole constellation of problems that manifest in the 21st century of the "me" generation. They sit in the seats of your *shuls* and they stare at you and your face, and they come to you because you are their lifeline.

In their minds, you translate the songs of their souls, the words of their mouths, their deepest longings, into prayers with them. You have the gift that brings them closer to God because you teach them to communicate with God through song and through prayer. You offer them a language of prayer through song. You give them spiritual access and a means of reclaiming the power of their tradition and prayers. *Va'ani t'fillati* – I am the prayer. When you become the prayer, you become the means by which those who wish to pray can first begin to understand the depth of the *t'fillah*. There's no separation between you and the *t'fillah*, and not between you and the *kahal*.

I said earlier that using the negative of what comes out of the heart goes into the heart. I said it while talking about a woman filled with anger, a woman who's *farbissen*, but given the benefit of sitting with you and davening with you, she might have become a different person. Alas, she didn't have the benefit of you, nor did she become that different person and she went on to make many people unhappy.

But you think about the many people you will have the privilege of sitting in your presence. In your prayers, and being blessed by your words and your melodies, touched by your knowledge, by your Torah text, by your love of Torah, by your love of the Jewish people, by your love of tradition, by your compassion, by your tender hearts, by the texts of your lives. There's an incredible, intimate relationship that goes unstated between you and your

congregants. I pray that you will know that in the most profound way. *Mah sheyotsei min halev nikhnas lalev* – all that you have to pour out of your hearts, for your congregants, goes into their hearts. May this be God’s will. *Kein y’hi ratson.*



Deborah Lynn Friedman (1951–2011) was a product of a unique moment in American Jewish history. Drawing upon the folk music influences popular during her teen years, she translated that music into a soundtrack for a new era in contemporary Jewish music. Her engaging melodies have been used to teach Hebrew language, the Jewish calendar, and a variety of biblical and liturgical texts that have become standards in congregations across the denominational spectrum. Debbie’s musical legacy has been preserved through the publication of Sing Unto God: The Debbie Friedman Anthology (Transcontinental Music Publications, 2013); her spirit is preserved through the rededication of the cantorial training program at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion as the “Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music.”



שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ

שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה כָּל-תְּאֲרֵץ

O sing unto the LORD a new song;
sing unto the LORD, all the earth

Tehillim 98:1



PULHAN L'MA'ASEH

Inspirational Chanting/Reading/Singing for a Non-denominational Funeral Service

Compiled from various sources by former Journal editor Joseph A. Levine, in response to requests on Hazzanet for liturgical texts that would console and comfort a mourning family but which do not mention the name of God. One reply noted that the texts of Psalms alone will not do it since they are totally God-saturated. The following is an attempt to meet the requirements stipulated above.

I. Chant (from *Ecclesiastes*) to the trop of *Rut-Kohelet-Shir ha-shirim*):

One generation goes, another comes; but the earth remains the same forever.
The sun rises, the sun goes down; and hastens to the place where it rises.
What has been will be; there is nothing new beneath the sun.
A season for everything; a time for every matter under heaven.
A time for laughing and a time for weeping;
a time for silence and a time for speaking.
A good name is better than fragrant oil;
better is the end, better by far, than its beginning.

Chant to Trop of Rut, Kohelet, Shir ha-shirim

Ecclesiastes 1:4-5,9;3:1,4,7; 7:1,8

One ge-ne-ra tion goes, a - no-ther comes; but the earth re-mains the same for
e-ver. The sun ri-ses, the sun goes down; and ha-stens to the place where it ri-ses.

8

What has been is what will be; there is no-thing new be-neath the sun!_ A

12

sea-son for_ ev'-ry-thing, a time for ev'-ry mat- ter___ un - der hea-ven. A

15

time for laugh-ing, and a time for weep-ing; a time for si - lence; and a

18

time_ for speak - ing. A good name_ is bet-ter than fra - grant

20

oil, bet - ter is the end; bet-ter by far than its be-gin - ning.

II. Read (after Hillel Zeitlin's *Shirat ahavah*, 1942):

Once again the morning stars will appear, and utter songs of love.
 And the sun will shine forth once more, and radiate brilliance.
 Souls will sing songs of yearning--ballads of avid longing.
 And a rippling brook will whisper its desire,
 and nestlings chirp of being abandoned
 A single ray of light will appear,
 and the world will be created anew!

III. Sing (after Beny Maissner's setting for *Shirat ahavah*, 1995):

Shirat ahavah

Hillel Zeitlin 1942

Beny Maissner 1995

$\text{♩} = 92$

The musical score is written on a single staff in G minor (one flat) and consists of eight lines of music. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 92. The time signature starts as 3/4 and changes to 4/4 at measure 7, 13, 19, 25, 31, 37, and 43. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings (p, pp, ppp). The lyrics are in Hebrew with vowel points and are aligned with the notes.

Od ha-pa-am ya - shi - ru kokh - vei_ sha - har v' - sha - ru, v' - sha - ru

7
shi - rim, shi - rim shel_ a - ha - vah; shi - rim shi - rim shel_ a - ha - vah.

13
V'od ha-pa-am yei - tsei ha - she - mesh big - vu - ra - to, v' - shar, v' - shar_

19
shi - rim shi - rim shel_ or; shi - rim shi - rim shel_ or.

25
v'od ha-pa-am v'od ha-pa-am ta - sheir - nah; v'od ha-pa-am ta - sheir - nah n'sha - mot,

31
shi - rim shi - rim shel_ tsi - ma - on; shi - rim shi - rim shel_ tsi - ma - on.

37
p
V'od kav e - had, V'od kav e - had shel or_ yi - ba - ka, v'ha - o - lam, v'ha - o - lam_

43
pp *ppp*
niv - ra, niv - ra mei - ha - dash; niv - ra, niv - ra mei ha - dash!

REVIEW

Geoffrey Goldberg, *Between Tradition and Modernity: The High Holy Day Melodies of Minhag Ashkenaz according to Hazzan Maier Levi of Esslingen*

Jerusalem: Jewish Music Research Centre, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2019. Yuval Music Series, vol. 12.

By Daniel S. Katz

About 700 years ago the medieval music theorist Johannes Grocheio wrote about a special type of praiseworthy music composition that he honored with the title “crowned song”—*cantus coronatus*.¹ In this fateful viral year we can call our colleague Geoffrey Goldberg’s new book a *liber coronatus* in, unfortunately, every sense of the word. Nevertheless, the comparison is not so dire as it seems: our crown-shaped plague may remind us of, but thankfully is hardly so deadly as, the bubonic plague of the fourteenth century.

On the positive side, Grocheio’s laudatory application of the word *coronatus* is also relevant, as Goldberg himself has been crowned with the Cantors Assembly’s Samuel Rosenbaum Award for Scholarship for the year 2020, and his book, based on his doctoral dissertation at Hebrew University,² is a worthy addition to his already impressive list of publications.

As an ordained cantor and rabbi with a Ph.D. in musicology, Geoffrey Goldberg has the highest possible credentials for a scholar at the intersection of the fields of Jewish studies and music history. His prior work includes studies on “The Training of *Hazzanim* in Nineteenth-Century Germany,”³ “*Mahzor Ha-Hayyim*: Life-Cycle Celebration in the Song of the Ashkenazic Synagogue,”⁴ and “The Development of Congregational Song in the American Conservative Synagogue 1900–1955.”⁵

The fact that almost none of us has previously heard of Maier Levi of Esslingen – and most of us have never even heard of Esslingen (it is near Stuttgart, which is near Frankfurt) – belies his

¹ See Ernst Rohloff, *Die Quellenhandschriften zum Musiktraktat des Johannes de Grocheio* (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, [1972]).

² Geoffrey Goldberg, *Maier Levi of Esslingen, Germany: A Small-Town Hazzan in the Time of the Emancipation and his Cantorial Compendium* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2000).

³ In Eliyahu Schleifer and Edwin Seroussi, eds., *Studies in Honour of Israel Adler*. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2002), pp. 299–367. Yuval: Studies of the Jewish Music Research Centre, vol. 7.

⁴ *AJS Review: The Journal of the Association for Jewish Studies*, vol. 33, no. 2 (November 2009), pp. 305–339.

⁵ *Journal of Synagogue Music*, vol. 44, no. 1 (September 2019), pp. 35–87.

historical importance. Maier Levi, whose lifetime (1813-1874) matches closely that of the better-known Hirsch Weintraub (ca. 1813-1881), was a teacher of *Hazzanut*. In this capacity he notated *nusah*, just as Katchko and Alter would do over a century later.⁶ “Levi’s compendium is the earliest surviving transcription of the musical tradition of the synagogue designed for direct, practical use” as part of the curriculum of a school (p.61).

We do not know if Levi intended to include, or originally did include, *nusah* for the complete liturgy. His treatment of festivals other than the High Holy Days is not comprehensive, and neither Shabbat nor *hol* is covered systematically in his extant manuscripts (he includes *Ma’ariv* after Yom Kippur [Nos. 173-178 in this collection], Shabbat *Minhah*, and some insertions for Shabbat on *Erev Rosh Hashannah* [Nos. 17-21]). However, “there is strong evidence that Levi wrote additional volumes” (p.62).

Fourteen of Maier Levi’s handwritten notebooks are known to have survived. Eight are at Gratz College outside of Philadelphia, four at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, and two at the Municipal and University Library in Frankfurt, Germany. This library, incidentally, has a large collection of Judaica, including synagogue music published in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, much of which is available in digitalized form online and can be downloaded without charge.⁷

Neither the scale nor the corresponding importance of Maier Levi’s work should be underestimated. “The extant volumes cover more than seventeen hundred pages of musical notation and annotations. Except for two choral settings, the musical transcriptions of the compendium are for solo *hazzan* alone” (p.62). In other words, Levi’s notations are many times more extensive than Alter’s and even Abraham Baer’s.⁸

Between Tradition and Modernity is the first publication of “a significant body of South German liturgical melodies” (p.28) since Idelsohn’s *Thesaurus*.⁹ As such, it provides valuable insights into a tradition that is not so widely known today as Eastern European *nusah*, and into the world of non-Sulzerian synagogue music. I say non-Sulzerian rather than pre-Sulzerian because, although the influences on Meier Levi, particularly in his settings of *Missinai* tunes and his cantorial fantasias, may be older, the years mentioned in his compendium (1845 and 1869) correspond with the middle of Sulzer’s career as well as the publication of the two volumes of Sulzer’s *Schir Zion* (1840 and 1865).

⁶ E.g. Adolph Katchko, *Services for Sabbath Eve and Morning* (New York: Hebrew Union College School of Education and Sacred Music, 1951) and Israel Alter, *The Sabbath Service: The Complete Musical Liturgy for the Hazzan*. [Rev. ed.] (New York: Cantors Assembly, 1970).

⁷ <http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/judaica/nav/index/all> (most recent access on Nov. 29, 2020).

⁸ Abraham Baer, *בעל תפילה, Baal T’fillah oder Der praktische Vorbeter*, 2nd. ed. [1877], (reprint New York: Sacred Music Press, 1953; Out of Print Classics Series of Synagogue Music, vol. 1).

⁹ Abraham Z. Idelsohn, *The Traditional Songs of the South German Jews*. Leipzig: Freidrich Hofmeister, 1933, *Thesaurus of Hebrew Oriental Melodies*, vol. 7.

Hazzanut as it is known in synagogues and cantorial schools today, begins more or less with Sulzer – to be sure, our teachers usually mention some earlier figures such as Obadiah,¹⁰ Rossi,¹¹ Kashtan,¹² perhaps even Lidarti¹³ and Isaac Offenbach,¹⁴ but of these, only Rossi has a more or less regular place in the modern repertory, and none is considered a source of *nusah* (with more research, perhaps Kashtan or Offenbach will become one). From Sulzer, Naumbourg, and Lewandowski a straight line is drawn through Baer to Katchko and Alter. Geoffrey Goldberg is now bending this line, and causing us to stop along the way in Esslingen.

No less important than Levi's location in Southern Germany was the chronology of his project and the way in which he went about his work. In discussing Levi's style, Goldberg stresses the preposition *between* in his title: "Levi's *Hazzanut* evolved from that reflecting the period of the pre-Emancipation to that reflecting post-Emancipation, but in a rather more conservative manner than the stylized *Hazzanut* of Sulzer, Lewandowski and others" (p.30). His conservative approach resulted in the rejection of the compendium for publication after a negative evaluation by a *hazzan* with a bias for Western classical music, who didn't approve of traditional cantorial metrical irregularities, of vocalises, or of the use of music notation running from right to left.

Unlike the pre-Sulzerian cantorial manuscripts, Levi's notebooks were not notated for the private use of their author, but for the purposes of teaching and dissemination. As Goldberg shows, not only the *Hazzanut* of this period, but also the teaching methods, were changing: Levi taught in a seminary, aspiring cantors were expected to learn from books instead of by apprenticing themselves as *m'shor'rim* (assistant singers), and students did not have the same level of musical expertise or practical experience in the synagogue as previously had been required.

A Study in Two Parts

B*etween Tradition and Modernity* is divided into two parts: an "Introductory Study" and a "Study of the Music." Despite its name, the former is more a monograph than an introduction. It establishes the historical and biographical context for Levi's work, gives an overview of the entire compendium, discusses the nature of South German *nusah*, and presents a number of musical features found in Levi's notations. Much of this material, which includes lists and descriptions of *minhag* books and of musical sources for South German *Hazzanut*, should be of interest to liturgists and historians, even if they are not specialists in music.

¹⁰ See Israel Adler (ed.), *Hebrew Notated Manuscript Sources up to circa 1840: A Descriptive and Thematic Catalogue with a Checklist of Printed Sources* (Munich: G. Henle, 1989), Répertoire International des Sources Musicales, B IX¹, 2 vols., vol. 1, pp.550-553, vol. 2, pp.862-863.

¹¹ See Don Harrán, *Salamone Rossi: Jewish Musician in Late Renaissance Mantua*. Oxford University Press, 1999.

¹² See Daniel S. Katz, "A Chestnut, a Grape, and a Pack of Lions: A Shabbos in Plock with a Popular Synagogue Singer in the Early Nineteenth Century," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 32 (2020), pp.15-29.

¹³ See Israël Adler, *La pratique musicale savante dans quelques communautés juives en Europe aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles*, 2 vols. (Paris and The Hague: Mouton, 1966), Etudes Juives VIII.

¹⁴ See Jacobo Kaufmann, *Isaac Offenbach und sein Sohn Jacques oder 'Es ist nicht alle Tage Purim,'* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1998), *Conditio Judaica* 21.

The second half of the book contains transcriptions of 179 examples of Levi's melodies for the High Holy Days from *Erev Rosh Hashannah* through *Ma'ariv* and *Havdalah* after *N'ilah*, accompanied by individual modal and motivic analyses; liturgical, historical, and musical commentaries; and references to comparable pieces in other collections. The musical analyses are sometimes very concise and technical, but a professional cantor will appreciate these annotations. This is an excellent source for alternative versions of familiar *Missinai* tunes, variant *nusah* according to a different *minhag*, virtuoso settings, and also for some simpler melodies (for example, Levi's version of *Kol nidrei*, No. 2, is surprisingly short and not virtuosic, and some of his settings, such as *Hamavdil*, No. 167, can easily be sung by a congregation).

I will mention a few pieces from the compendium and some details from Goldberg's commentary that I find of particular interest. The *nusah* of the High Holy Days was not always clearly separated from that of the Three Festivals: Levy's *Barekhu* for *Ma'ariv* (No. 5) combines motifs of the former and the latter, and "Levi's notation [for the *Hatzi kaddish* before *Tal* and *Geshem*] provides convincing evidence that some German Jews sang a single melody for both this *Kaddish* and the one before the *Musaf* service [No. 98] on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur..." (p.63). Levi gives "the second earliest musical notation" of a special Torah trop for the High Holy Days (p.277) and "the earliest representation in modern musical notation of the... shofar calls..." (p.284); he turns the blessing over the shofar into a small cantorial fantasia (No. 92). Another unexpected text with a cantorial fantasia is the *piyyut Melekh elyon* (No. 115). There was "a long-standing practice of *Minhag ashkenaz* that in the *Musaf* service on the Second Day of Rosh Hashannah the Shabbat melodies were used for the *Hatzi kaddish*, *Avot* and *Gevurot*" (p.301). Levi includes three rather rare South German melodies for *N'ilah* (Nos. 157-159).

Aleinu is the cantorial fantasia par excellence and one of the musical highlights of the entire High Holy Day liturgy. Levi's superb example (No. 115) is a lengthy, multi-sectional work, in which Goldberg identifies twenty distinct musical motifs (No. 116). His second version of *Aleinu* (No. 117) is simplified – but not simple; although it has no vocalise, its range is still an octave and a major sixth. Together with his analysis, Goldberg reviews several sources that discuss the reported singing of *Aleinu* by Jewish martyrs at Blois in 1171. A full investigation of this topic would have been beyond the scope of his book, but his summary is an excellent starting point for a future study. The open question is whether there is any connection between the martyrs' melody and ours. I remain dubious for three reasons: the *Aleinu* that we know is difficult to sing under any circumstances and cannot be sung by a congregation; I have a hard time envisaging the successful performance of a complex melody while being burned at the stake (the physical and psychological conditions would have been extreme, even if the singing was a prelude, rather than an accompaniment, to the main proceedings); and although "two *Aleinu* musical phrases" have apparently been documented in the twelfth century (p.338), we have no musical notation of *Aleinu* itself before the second half of the eighteenth century, 600 years afterwards. It would be highly desirable for a scholar to scrutinize the pertinent literature, analyze the Gregorian *Sanctus* whose opening resembles that of *Aleinu*, and soberly assess, while taking into account general stylistic features of known medieval melodies, whether the *Sanctus* and *Aleinu* are more than superficially

related and whether any historical information exists that can definitively connect the *Aleinu* of the last 250 years to the twelfth century.¹⁵ Another desirable future study would be a broad examination of the role of arpeggiated and triadic motifs in the early cantorial repertory; they are characteristic of *Aleinu*, but turn up repeatedly in Meier Levi's melodies throughout this book.

The publication of Geoffrey Goldberg's consummate historical, musical, and liturgical study brings to three the number of books by colleagues and friends of mine that present the cantorial repertoires of disparate Jewish communities with titles referring to the simultaneous preservation and transfiguration of Jewish musical tradition (the others are studies of the chant repertoires in Copenhagen and Belgrade).¹⁶ I am not sure if there is at all such a thing as a tradition without transfiguration, for even if the tradition is handed down unchanged, the holders of the tradition will change, as will their perception of it. Proper *nusah* is of course the *process* of applying interpretive principles and inspiration to liturgical texts, based on the musical outlines of modes and motives, rather than the rote recitation of memorized passages and fixed sequences of unchanging notes. It is a paradox that writing a tradition down simultaneously erodes it through standardization; Goldberg's lengthy discussion of how *Hazzanut* was taught in Levi's time stresses that his work "can only be understood... within the context of the transition from orality to the notated score...." (p. 54).

The transcriptions and analyses of Maier Levi's representations of South German *nusah* should be of use and interest to a variety of audiences for different reasons. For musicologists, Geoffrey Goldberg has presented a rare and authoritative source for a transitional style of nineteenth-century synagogue chant that maintains traces of an older tradition while anticipating the further simplifications and developments of modernity. The transition, and Levi's mediating role, are most apparent when Levi gives two settings of a single text, such as *Zokhreinu be-zikaron tov* (Nos. 121-122) for Musaf on Rosh Hashannah, and especially *Aleinu le-shabei'ah* (Nos. 115-117); however, his unaccompanied monophony avoids the more assimilated musical language of Sulzer. The "comparative sources" that Goldberg lists for most of the pieces in the book will enable readers to conduct their own comparisons of similar settings of the same liturgy.

Scholars of Gregorian chant or other religious, but non-Jewish, chant traditions will find here an ample corpus of Jewish chants for study and comparison. Cantors and cantorial students will find an abundance of historical and musical information to expand their knowledge of

¹⁵ My study of *Akdamut* shows how a synagogue melody and a Gregorian chant that appear to be nearly identical can nevertheless have significant structural differences and therefore not be directly related. See Daniel S. Katz, "From Mount Sinai to the Year 6000: A Study of the Interaction of Oral Tradition and Written Sources in the Transmission of an Ashkenazi Liturgical Chant (*Akdamut*)," *Rivista Internazionale di Musica Sacra*, vol. 20, no. 1 (1999), pp. 175-206, especially pp. 197-204.

¹⁶ See Jane Mink Rossen and Uri Sharvit, *A Fusion of Traditions: Liturgical Music in the Copenhagen Synagogue* (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2006), Denmark Studies in History and Social Sciences, vol. 310, and Jasmina Huber, *Wieviel Wandel Verträgt eine Tradition? Gesang und Gebet der jüdischen Gemeinde Belgrad in den Herausforderung der Gegenwart* (Georg Olms Verlag: Hildesheim, 2017), Haskala. Wissenschaftliche Abhandlungen, Band 51.

Hazzanut, as well as many musical pieces that can be sung during services or in cantorial concerts. A cantor looking for new or alternative settings of familiar liturgical paragraphs will find an assortment of possibilities. Levi also provides useful settings for several *piyyutim*, e.g. *Adirei ayumah* (No. 67) for *Shaharit* of Rosh Hashannah and *Zeh el zeh sho'alim* (No. 127) for *Musaf* of Yom Kippur.

Anyone with a serious interest in Jewish music should be eager to acquire this volume. It resurrects a long-forgotten cantor whose work will complement the *nusah* that we already know and expand our understanding of cantorial history and practice. It may help balance the eastern bias of modern American cantorial education and practice by introducing us to the generally overlooked, yet compelling and authentic South German *nusah* of the mid-19th-century. It will broaden the context in which we view Sulzer and his contemporaries, and thereby offer us a more complete picture of the development of *Hazzanut* nearly 200 years ago.

Between Tradition and Modernity is supplemented with over fifty recordings of Maier Levi's melodies, available on the website of the Jewish Music Research Centre.¹⁷ An index to the book would have been helpful. Although it would have added weight and length to a book that already is hard to hold and exceeds 450 pages, its usefulness to scholars would have been invaluable: there is at present no way to locate references, say, to the cantorial fantasia, to a particular prayer or mode, to *Missinai* tunes, or to any other term or subject of interest. Perhaps the author and publisher would consider having an index prepared and making it available on-line.

DANIEL S. KATZ holds a Ph.D. in musicology from Duke University with a dissertation on music notation in the fourteenth century. A specialist on the history of Ashkenazi liturgical chant, especially in the period before Sulzer, he has written on meshor'rim techniques, the relationship of the Akdamut chant to Gregorian chant, and synagogue reform in Denmark, and has published transcriptions of music by Isaac Offenbach, Hirsch Weintraub and Kashtan. Dr Katz is a founding member of the German General Rabbinical Conference, as well as a member of the Cantors Assembly.

¹⁷ It is not clear from the Centre's home page how to find these files. They can be downloaded at: <https://jewish-music.huji.ac.il/content/between-tradition-and-modernity-high-holy-days-melodies-minhag-ashkenaz>

MAILBOX

Re: Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman's Retirement

By Joseph A. Levine

Last August, concomitant with the appearance of *JSM* 2020 in which I turned over the publication's editorship to Dr. Marsha Bryan Edelman, came news of Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman's retirement as Professor of Liturgy at HUC-JIR/New York. Rabbi Hoffman's brilliant 45-year career as a Reform scholar, writer and teacher has left an indelible impact on the Conservative cantorate as well. He was ordained at HUC in 1969, earned his Ph.D. in 1973, and taught there from then until 2019.

As for Hoffman's influence upon Jewish sacred music: He directed HUC's School of Sacred Music (precursor of the Debbie Friedman School) from 1984 to 1987. During that brief tenure, he completely transformed its curriculum and brought Reform cantors into their movement's mainstream by insisting upon a cantorial presence at every national Biennial convention. He also established a Year-in-Israel Program for cantorial students, as equals alongside their rabbinic peers.

The 45 books that he has either written or edited include *My People's Prayer Book*, a 10-volume edition of the Siddur with modern commentaries, *The Art of Public Prayer: Not for Clergy Only*, and *Rethinking Synagogues: A New Vocabulary for Congregational Life*. His 200 articles have appeared in eight languages and on four continents. Among them are entries in *The Macmillan Encyclopedia of Religion*, *The Oxford Dictionary of Religion*, *The Encyclopedia of Judaism* and *The Encyclopedia of Religion in America*. His article, "Everyone Is Physically Fit," which showed how Judaism has historically not precluded disabled individuals from serving as prayer leaders, was reprinted in *JSM* 2006 with his kind permission.

For over 25 years, Rabbi Hoffman syndicated a regular column which ran, among other places, in *The Jewish Week*. His column of February 4, 2004, "What Makes Music Sacred?" set the bar challengingly high—yet still within reach—for cantors of every persuasion.

We recognize music as sacred when its singer—whether cantor, choir, or congregation—no longer owns it. It is the gift of God running through us, no longer ours.

With these words, Larry Hoffman, who once described himself as "an unsophisticated kid from a small Jewish community in Canada," elegantly summarized what communal prayer during Jewish worship is all about.

IN MEMORIAM

Irving Dean (1922-2021)

Remembered by David Propis, including parts re-printed from eulogies from Hazzan Dean's children and his bimah partner, Rabbi Barry Gelman of United Orthodox Synagogues, Houston, Texas

Irving Dean was born on April 5, 1922, on the Lower East Side of New York into a Hassidic family that instilled in him a great love for music, *Hazzanut*, *z'mirot* and *nigunim*. He grew up learning a deep respect for the traditions and true meanings of Jewish prayer and liturgy.



It started when he was a small boy going to the Melitzer Rebbe's *tish* on Friday night. He would often talk about the time he had the opportunity to sing in a choir accompanying Hazzan Yossele Rosenblatt. He was thrilled that a few years ago, his daughter Debbie, took him to meet Rosenblatt's great grandson, who was serving as a Rabbi in Vancouver.

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Irving Dean enlisted in the Army and was trained both in the U.S. and England to prepare for the long campaigns designed to defeat Hitler. Before shipping out, he married the love of his life, Millie, who was his musical partner for more than 50 years. He was in the Normandy invasion, major battles throughout France, and fought in the Battle of the Bulge. He personified the true meaning of The Greatest Generation.

Upon returning from the war, he became a cantor and worked with his wife Millie on featured radio programs in New York. His cantorial career spanned over 70 years and influenced generations of children and congregants in New York, San Antonio and Houston. He was beloved, and inspired those in his midst with *davv'nen* and prayer, teaching, writing, singing in concerts and plays, and all along, quietly, doing *mitzvot* and many acts of kindness in his communities.

Rabbi Barry Gelman of United Orthodox Synagogues in Houston, Texas, said in his eulogy for Hazzan Dean that, on some level, "Noah was the first Cantor. God told Noah to go into the *Tevah*. '*Tevah*' means 'ark,' but it also means 'word.' God told Noah, '*Tzohar ta'aseh l'tevah*,' make a light for the *Tevah* - for the word. Prayer is hard. Connecting with God is challenging. It can feel like we are in the dark. The responsibility of the Hazzan is '*Tzohar ta'aseh l'tevah*,' make a light for the word. Make the word of prayer meaningful, relevant, inspiring. It is to bring us the light of prayer. Cantor Irving Dean was the *Ba'al t'fillah*, the 'Master of Prayer' who brought light to the word through his music."

For the last few years, Hazzan Dean was writing many new pieces for cantors to use in expanding their repertoire. He was “on a mission” to get as much done as possible, and his works have been published and made available for free to hundreds of cantors worldwide through the Cantors Assembly.

Rabbi Gelman also said, “Cantor Dean was not only an American Hero for his service during World War II, but for his congregants he was a “hero of spirit. He had a unique talent. He never got embroiled in politics. It was amazing. I think I know why. Cantor Dean saw himself as the *Sh’liah tzibbur*. He was our emissary, and so it was unimaginable that he could not represent every single member of the congregation with a full heart. It was equally unimaginable to him that there could be someone in the congregation who did not see him as their emissary. To make that possible, he stayed out of the muck.”

In 2000, Cantor Dean went on a tour of Eastern Europe to retrace his steps as a member of the U.S. Army during World War II. He recalled one day on the tour as follows:

“...we went to a little restaurant in Sainte-Mere-Eglise, which was the first town that the American paratroopers captured and liberated after storming Normandy. We went in, and I was wearing a cap that said ‘World War II Veteran.’ The owner walked over to me and asked if I was a veteran. He got us a table and asked, in broken English, if I would sign my name on the wall in the restaurant. American soldiers had signed their names, and written battalions and dates. He asked if I would do the honor of signing the wall. I remember that it was noisy in the restaurant - people were talking, and banging plates. I walked over to the wall, and he gave me a marker to write with, and as I was writing my name, my battalion, and ‘June 1944’, I could hear that it was getting very quiet around me. When I finished, they all stood up and started to applaud. I never expected this. My daughter told me that she heard a little boy ask his mother, ‘Why is that man writing on the wall?’ She said to the child, ‘Because he is a hero.’”

“Cantor Dean, you were an American Hero for your service during World War II. For us, for UOS (United Orthodox Synagogues), you were a Hero of spirit.”

I’ve known Hazzan Irving Dean for almost 40 years. We met at a Cantors Assembly Convention at Grossinger’s in the Catskills with his inseparable partner, his beloved Millie *z’l* and my parents, Hazzan/Rabbi Dov and Sonia Propis *z’l*. We then created a tradition to have a “Houston” table every year for our annual Catskills pilgrimage. I treasured our annual Houston Cantors concerts, always enjoying his beautiful baritone voice with his classic “*Hazzonishe moyel*,” (his cantorial mouth), his masterful musicianship, his *Yiddishe harts*, his warm smile, and respectful collegiality to all the Reform and Conservative Cantors.

I cherished our unique bond, as we were both “*Vimalei* Boys,” singing the prayer “*Vimalei*” as little boys at weddings, especially learning *Hazzanut* in the traditional style (old school). He shared many of his original compositions with me, which are a memorable part of my music library. We also shared the “Lion of Judah” award presented to us by the State of Israel Bonds many years ago in Houston. I was thrilled when, in 1996, he recorded his CD “Musical Memories,” and submitted the track “Israel Forever” to the Joint CD Project of the Cantors Assembly and United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism which I produced and which was distributed to millions throughout North America.

All of the Houston cantors always referred to him as the “Dean of the Houston Cantorate,” and we truly meant it! We had so many memorable concerts together, especially the “afterglow” at the Deans’ house, sampling and overindulging in Millie’s culinary talents, as well as singing with his most talented children, with whom I felt a close kinship. This past summer, I had the *z’khut*, the honor, to interview Cantor Dean and preserve his life story for a Cantors Assembly project of our senior members.

Hazzan Irving Dean was a true gentleman, a “Gentle Man,” and an extraordinary Hazzan. Our world is richer for having had him, but definitely poorer with his passing.

יהי זכרו ברוך



Chaim Feifel (1931-2020)

Remembered by Joseph A. Levine and Marsha Bryan Edelman

A native of New York, Chaim Feifel began his musical life with an eight-year career as a boy alto in the Meyer Machtenberg choir, singing with the best-known remaining cantors of the 20th century’s Golden Age. After serving in the US Air Force during the Korean War, he enrolled in the Jewish Theological Seminary’s Cantors Institute. Upon graduating, he studied music at the Rubin Academy in Tel Aviv and *hazzanut* privately with Leib Glantz, who saw in him a potential heir to his uniquely dramatic approach. During the next two decades, he served various congregations throughout the United States, after which he organized an American group for the purpose of settling the Sinai town of Yamit. The impression he had on his fellow settlers was described in *Yediot Aharonot* by columnist Nahum Barnea (“30 Years Since Yamit’s Evacuation,” 4/12/12):



“The outlying farmers kept apart from the townspeople, no love lost between them. There was one store in Yamit – Hayyim (sic) Feifel’s *kol bo*... ‘How did you manage?’ I asked him two days ago. ‘Quite well,’ he answered. ‘What do you do nowadays?’ I asked. ‘I teach Hazzanut.’ Surprised, I repeat, ‘Hazzanut?’ ‘Yes,’ he says, ‘I am a hazzan by profession. I ran a store only in Yamit... those seven years were among the best in my life.’ A long line of admirers can attest to that summation: in Yamit, not everyone knew one another but they all knew Hayyim Feifel.”

Following Israel's disengagement from the Sinai in 1982, Hazzan Feifel resettled in the northern town of Zikhron Ya'akov. In 1985 he initiated a program for beginning Conservative cantorial students in Israel, under the direction of Hazzan Max Wohlberg. From 1988 to 2008 he taught Hazzanut at HUC in Jerusalem, under the direction of Dr. Eli Schleifer, and from 1995 until his passing he taught at the Tel Aviv Cantorial Institute, under the direction of Hazzan Naftali Hershtik. In 2011, Hazzan Feifel's 80th birthday was celebrated with a concert at the Institute at which he and his students performed his compositions exclusively. The evening's highlight was a *Sh'ma koleinu* that Feifel had written for the occasion, arranged for Cantor/SATB by Raymond Goldstein.

Hazzan Feifel's article, "Seeking the Extraordinary: Improvisation in Jewish Liturgical Music," appeared in the September 2015 issue of the *Journal of Synagogue Music* (Vol. 40, No.2). In it, he displayed his thoughtful devotion to the ancient traditions of our people, and his commitment to the symbiotic relationship between the words and the music used to express them. Treasuring the silence as well as the song, he encouraged his readers – and his students – to bring body, mind and soul together to "create artful and memorable expressions of our holy texts."

Hazzan Feifel's voice has been silenced, but he leaves behind beautiful compositions and generations of students who will maintain his legacy. *Yehi zikhro barukh.*



FLORY JAGODA (1923-2021)

An Intimate Memory Offered by Ramon Tasat

"*Komo ay naser ay murir*" is a well-known adage that means:
"As there is birth, there is death."

Flory Jagoda passed away on Friday, January 29, 2021.

How fitting that she left us on Shabbat Shirah, the Shabbat of Song, when the "Song at the Sea" is chanted at the synagogue, when Miriam and the women of Israel sang "with drums and dances." Flory Papo Kabilio Jagoda was born in Sarajevo,



Yugoslavia (later Bosnia) in 1923. She is known as “The Keeper of The Flame” for her commitment to continuing the rich musical heritage and Sephardic traditions in memory of her Altaras Family, killed in Bosnia during WWII.

As a refugee in Bari, Italy, Flory fell in love with Master Sargent Harry Jagoda and came to the US in 1946. Out of the ashes, Flory shared the music she had heard in Bosnia, the melodies she would compose later on and the Sephardic traditions of her beloved Sarajevo, teaching them to her children, to the country, and eventually to the world.

Sephardic music in the United States would probably be completely unknown without Flory’s mark. Singer, composer, mentor, and *Nona* (grandmother), Flory Jagoda, *z’l*, brought Judeo-Spanish music to Jewish and non-Jewish communities in the US when hardly anyone knew of its existence.

Only in 1992, as the world commemorated the 500th anniversary of the expulsion of the Jewish people from Spain, did the US experience an explosion of interest in Sephardic music from audiences that had never heard of Jews living in Saloniki, Bordeaux or Sarajevo.

Acclaimed the world over for her Hanukkah composition, “*Ocho Kandelikas*,” Flory became a featured concert performer and lecturer on Sephardic music as a soloist, with her children and with other musical colleagues.

Flory was also a founder of the Jewish Folk Arts Society and *Las Vijitas de Alhad*, a monthly gathering of descendants of Sephardic Jews of the Old Ottoman Empire interested in speaking Ladino and preserving its traditions.

Her renown grows larger by the day.

Flory was honored by countless organizations including the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and she was the proud recipient of a US Immigrant Achievement Award.

A video interview at the US Holocaust Museum, two documentaries (*The Key From Spain, Flory's Flame*), a children's book, *The Key From Spain* and five CD recordings vividly retell her experience during WWII and the music that informed her extraordinary life.

When I think of her, “wonder” is the word that comes to mind.

Yo me akodro d’akeya tadre - I remember that afternoon.

I first heard about Flory Jagoda in 1993. I was working on a doctoral degree at the University of Texas in Austin and had already passionately embraced the studying and performing of Sephardic music for years.

Somebody, one of those angels that one encounters in life, suggested that I could benefit from getting to know Flory, and offered me her phone number. I remember still, with great affection, that first phone call. Flory, without knowing who I was, discussed Sephardic music with

me for hours. A few months later, I made a point of attending my first concert, driving almost an hour to Magen David Congregation in Rockville, MD.

I enjoyed a remarkably close friendship with Flory. I used to visit her regularly in Alexandria, Virginia, learning songs and telling stories about our families, sharing anecdotes from our own personal concerts. I felt incredibly honored when Harry, her husband, asked me to teach him the Haftarah portion he was to chant as he celebrated a milestone anniversary of his Bar Mitzvah.

I experienced so many fantastic moments with her and her family, including singing together on the first of January, when Flory used to invite nearly every musician in town to her home, bringing in the new Gregorian year with songs, musical instruments of all types, great camaraderie and wonderful food.

Flory embraced me in every possible way, guiding me and sustaining me even in dire times. But the idea of performing with such a remarkable interpreter of Sephardic music seemed simply beyond reach. Then, one day--more precisely, on Sunday, October 21, 2003— Flory, with her proverbial generosity, invited some friends to perform with her at the University of Maryland's Clarice Smith Center.

Joan Reinthaler, a music critic for the *Washington Post*, wrote: “The performances were lovely, very much in the spirit of gentle and sympathetic collaboration that characterizes the best in folk tradition... Tasat's duets with Jagoda were most intimate, as he tempered his voice to balance exquisitely with hers...”

Kantikas de amor I vida, a CD of Sephardic duets between Flory and me was born that afternoon. Flory wrote:

“To my great joy, my songs and stories have touched the hearts of many talented musicians who want to support and join me in keeping this music alive and vibrant. Now, over 500 years after our ancestors were expelled from Spain, I have the pleasure of making this special recording of Ladino duets with Ramón Tasat.

“Although we grew up in different generations and in very different lands, we share the same intense feelings for our Sephardic ancestry and the desire to continue our musical heritage.

“Through his talented fingers and rich melodic voice, Ramón has woven his threads from Argentina into my own Sarajevo-style Sephardic tapestry, enriching the music and ensuring its survival.”

Our musical relationship grew, singing together in Istanbul and later at the Library of Congress, always sharing on stage the warmth and sincere affection we felt for each other.

Flory reminded me, reminded us all, of the words of Berta Altarac, Flory Jagoda's Nona: *Si nu puedis meter la alma, nu kantis* - If you can't put your soul into your songs, don't bother singing.

I wholeheartedly agree. *Yehi zikhra barukh*, may her memory be for a blessing.



SIDNEY KARPO (1927-2021)

Remembered by his daughter, Lynn Karpo-Lantz

Cantor Sidney Karpo passed away Monday, January 18, 2021 at the age of ninety-three.

First serving as Cantor in 1953 at the Yeadon Jewish Community Center, he was installed as Cantor of Congregation New Zedek-Ezrath Israel-Beth Uziel in Philadelphia in 1963, where he served for the next forty-four years. Cantor Karpo led and engaged his congregants in prayer, interpreting Jewish liturgy with a haunting nuance, a powerful and soulful voice; one that engaged and spiritually uplifted all who were in his presence.

Cantor Karpo was an exceptionally caring teacher and mentor to thousands of students of all ages for over six decades, often officiating later at their weddings and baby namings. Ministering to the needs of his congregants and others in the extended community, he served with compassion, sensitivity and understanding. Cantor Karpo was available to anyone in need.



Over the years, he received numerous letters of gratitude from former students who were now involved in the fields of education, law, medicine, business or the clergy. Each remembered with deep gratitude and appreciation his unwavering support and encouragement during their formative years as students, enabling them to overcome challenges throughout their lives.

Cantor Karpo served as President of the Philadelphia Region Cantors Assembly and was honored with a Doctor of Music (*honoris causa*) at a convocation at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, for having served the Conservative Movement and the Jewish people with distinction.

Married for 71 years to his beloved late wife Sylvia, Cantor Karpo credited her with guiding him toward his profession. "I could have been anything," he said at a party held for him when he retired from his congregation at the age of 80. "My wife is a very musical person, and I'd sing her songs. So she talked me into it." He studied with the famous Moishe Oysher to prepare for the career he loved.

All who were privileged to have been the recipient of his generous spirit, all who prayed with him, transformed by his heart-penetrating sound, will remember him as a sweet singer in Israel, and will praise his lasting legacy.



KENNETH KORANSKY (1943 – 2020)

Remembered by his dear friend, Paul Kowarsky

I was deeply saddened to learn of the untimely death of my friend, Ken. He and I grew up in Johannesburg, South Africa. We attended the same elementary and Hebrew schools.

Ken had a beautiful singing voice as a young boy, and was the soloist in the Yeoville Shul all-male Choir, while I was the soloist in the Berea Shull all-male Choir. As a youth, he studied under Shlomo Mandel, the famed cantor from Warsaw, Poland, who escaped to South Africa before the rise of Hitler. Ken's specialty was opera, and when his adult voice arrived, his ringing tenor voice was fantastic.

Ken used to sing operatic arias to the acclaim of everyone. He went on to study opera in Italy. On his return to South Africa, he decided that he wanted to study *Hazzanut*. He studied in Israel and in South Africa. Soon he became a wonderful *hazzan*.

One of his first cantorial posts outside of South Africa, was in Toronto, Canada, where I also became the *hazzan* in another shul. He was a member of the Toronto Council of *Hazzanim* and the Cantors Assembly of America.

After leaving Toronto, Ken held several cantorial positions in the United States, including in Long Island. He was highly regarded as a *hazzan* by the cantorial fraternity, with an outstanding voice. He sang at many concerts with tremendous success.

Ken and I remained good friends for many years, and visited one another often.

It is a terrible shame that he passed away at such a young age, at a time when his cantorial career was extremely successful.

May the soul of Hazzan Kenneth Koransky be bound up in the sheltering arms of Hashem, and may his memory be for a blessing.



ELLIOT D. LEVINE (1935-2021)

A Brother's Farewell—By Joseph A. Levine

“**B**lessed is the man who hearkens to Me, watching daily at My gates.” With this verse from Proverbs (8:34), my mentor Abba Weisgal, newly installed as cantor of the Chizuk Amuno Congregation in Baltimore, paid tribute to his highly respected predecessor, Reverend Hermann Glass. He offered that epigram almost exactly 100 years ago, just as I offer it now in loving memory of my younger brother, Elliot.

He served the Village Temple in Lower Manhattan faithfully as its cantor for almost four decades, leaving behind what our sages considered the greatest crown of all, that of a Good Name. His praises are being sung by young and old alike among the various generations he touched with his lovely voice and caring personality. He provided the strength of leadership to his Temple at a time when its very existence was in question. He set an example that Jewish observance could be full of fun while remaining dignified, with his love of family always coming first. Through his elegant officiating at the high and low points of people's lives, he became a role model for others as he continued to involve himself in their burgeoning careers. He even influenced several of them to pursue the rabbinate as a calling.



Growing up in the Modern Orthodox community of Borough Park, Brooklyn, Elliot was quiet and contemplative, a sweet boy who got along easily with everyone. For 20 years he gave no sign of interest in singing. Then one day, he asked if it would be all right for him to take a lesson with my voice teacher. Wondrous to behold, he came home displaying a booming baritone sound which we had never suspected and which he would never lose! He attended City College and then JTS, where he soon persuaded me to join him at the Cantors Institute. Those four years--studying side by side under creative Jewish spirits like Max Wohlberg, Hugo Weisgall, Siegfried Landau, Shlomo Rosowsky, Johanna Spector, Miriam Gideon and Joseph Yasser—would provide musical sustenance to both of us for a lifetime.

I remember a Sunday in 1958, driving from Baltimore where I assisted Hazzan Abba Weisgal every weekend, to DC to pick up Elliot, who had taken the train there from his student pulpit in Cranfield, New Jersey. We continued onward to Norfolk, Virginia to participate in the merging of our late grandfather's synagogue with the new United Orthodox Congregation. Our

Zeyde, Rav Jacob David Gordon, had guided the city's Orthodox community for 42 years until his death in 1947, and a pile of red bricks were currently all that remained of his *shul*.

During that long afternoon car trip, Elliot and I sang every duet we had learned together at the Seminary, and finally arrived almost too hoarse to perform the composition we were scheduled to sing during the ceremony.

If only my kid brother and I could once again shout out together the poignant words of *Sh'khulah akhulah* (Zion is Consumed)—to the majestic counterpoint of David Aizenstadt, a Holocaust victim who had been Moshe Koussevitzky's Choirmaster at the Tlomackie Synagogue in Warsaw:

Do not despair; in but a little while I will send an angel to light your way.

May these hope-filled words console all those who mourn Zion's former glory, along with my brother Elliot's grieving wife Elise, his heartbroken children Lori, Daniel, Gina and Tara and their spouses and his nine grandchildren, our brother Judah in Jerusalem and our sister Dr. Rochelle in New York.

Leikh l'shalom, ahi he-hazzan Eiliyahu David ben Liba Sheva v'Hayyim Z'eiv.



MOSHE TAUBÉ (1927-2020)

Remembered by Stephen Stein

Late last year, the Jewish community of Pittsburgh lost one of its brightest jewels — Cantor Moshe Taubé. Recognized throughout the world as among the great pulpit artists of the second half of the 20th century, he chose to spend the bulk of his career in Pittsburgh. His reputation as a celebrated singer extended throughout the city. A Juilliard graduate, his magnificent voice earned him a longstanding position as a vocal instructor in the School of Music at Duquesne University. Colleagues from throughout the country often told me of visits to their synagogues from Pittsburghers who proudly proclaimed to them after services, “You’re pretty good, but my cantor is Moshe Taubé.” At Cantors Assembly conventions, Taubé was one of a select few that colleagues asked to hear each year.



Born in Krakow, Poland, he was fortunate to have been in the select group saved by Oskar Schindler during the *Shoah*.

When Moshe Taubé came to Pittsburgh in the mid-1960s, highly skilled, prominent cantors were to be found throughout the city: Hillel Brummer at Poale Zedeck, Mordecai Heiser at B'nai Israel, Jacob Lefkowitz at Shaare Torah (his son, David, went on to serve as *hazzan* at Park Avenue Synagogue in New York City) and Harry

Silversmith at Tree of Life. All of these men are now of blessed memory.

As a native Pittsburgher, I was fortunate to have been one of Taubé's disciples. I spent semester and summer breaks from cantorial school at the Jewish Theological Seminary studying with him. No one had a greater influence on my cantorate. The more I learned about cantorial artistry, the more in awe I was of his talent.

Less known about Hazzan Taubé is that he was a prolific composer. Virtually every note sung at Beth Shalom over the decades was composed by him—cantorial renditions, congregational melodies and choral works.

One of the hallmarks of his solo compositions is that they always included a tuneful refrain, enabling the congregation to join in. When asked about his style, Hazzan Taubé would comment that he was influenced by the late, great cantor Leib Glantz. Like Glantz, Taubé's *Hazzanut* conveyed an aura of mysticism. A perfect example is his setting of "Ahavti," from the Psalms of Hallel, which can be found on YouTube.

The greatest cantors are masters of improvisation. The *nusah* (the musical modes and motifs unique to each service) set certain boundaries. The skilled *hazzan* is tasked with improvising, while remaining within those parameters. While a lay prayer leader is likely to chant a text the same way each time, the skilled *hazzan* never does. Our liturgy is fixed. While many worshippers yearn for familiarity, it is the ability to vary the chanting of the liturgy that keeps the service fresh and stimulating. Few could improvise *nusah* like Moshe Taubé.

Even in his 90s, Hazzan Taubé maintained impeccable control over his voice, continuing to sing with clarity, beauty and dignity. His coloratura remained flawless. As a personal favor, I asked him to chant the *Keil maleh* at the funeral for my father, who passed away two years ago. My son, an accomplished musician and faculty member at the cantorial schools of JTS and Hebrew Union College, was astonished by how Hazzan Taubé's singing remained completely on the mark in every way.

In all walks of life, we look up to those who are the very best practitioners in their chosen professions. In the sacred vocation of the cantorate there have been few who could match Moshe

Taubé. His passing leaves a void in the lives of his colleagues and admirers. I will remain forever grateful for the manner in which he elevated and inspired my career.



ISAAC WALL (1917-2021)

Remembered by Daniel Wolpe

Isaac Wall never became a cantor; he was born one. Born in Poland in 1917, he started performing *Hazzanut* when he was nine, and served as *sh'lich tzibbur* during the High Holy Days when he was 13, beginning a career that would last 90 years! In fact, even his bar mitzvah invitation referred to him as Hazzan Isaac Wall.

Hazzan Wall served several synagogues in New York and Houston and traveled around Texas to conduct services for stateside military men during World War II. But it was in 1944 that Isaac Wall took the position for which he would be best known, cantor at Har Zion Temple in Philadelphia, where he would remain for the next 44 years.

During those 44 years, he trained hundreds of boys and girls for their *b'nei mitzvah*. In addition to having a remarkable baritone that inspired the congregation, he had a gentle, kind manner that endeared him to everyone in the synagogue, particularly the children. To this day, children who grew up at Har Zion recall their time with Cantor Wall with fondness and love.

As a *sh'lich tzibbur*, it was not just his voice that inspired people, but the deep emotional connection he had to the liturgy. Being a cantor was not about the performance aspect for him, but for the connection with the Divine. He didn't just sing the prayers, he felt them. The year that he retired from Har Zion, when he was davening his last Kol Nidre service, the emotion behind his singing was so powerful that, had someone who had never heard of Yom Kippur walked into that synagogue, they would have been in tears.

But while Cantor Wall took prayer very seriously and felt each moment, he was also beloved for his sense of humor. Isaac loved puns. My father, Gerald Wolpe *z'l*, worked with him as rabbi of Har Zion for 27 years. He always referred to their association as "Wall to Wolpe services." He loved the sound of the Irish brogue and would break out into a perfect accent.

Cantor Wall not only loved being a cantor, he loved cantors. He enjoyed listening to others



perform cantorial music and he was a founder and past President of the Cantors Assembly. He was a fellow of the Cantors Institute, honored for his many years of service to the Conservative Movement. He also taught for 20 years at the Solomon Schechter Day School (now the Perelman Jewish Day School), which he helped to found, and continued to serve on the organization's Board well into his nineties.

I was fortunate to be home on vacation from rabbinical school on his last Shabbat at Har Zion. I was asked to give the *d'var Torah* that Shabbat, and I wanted to make it a tribute to this cantor who was more like an uncle to me than just a cantor. I said, "As we say goodbye to our beloved Cantor Wall, we want you to know that you were so much more to us than a cantor, a teacher or even a friend. You became part of us, part of the fabric of who we are. So, when you leave Har Zion, you will be taking a part of us with you, and wherever we walk, we each carry a part of you with us."

After leaving Har Zion, he moved to Ventnor, NJ, where he became a volunteer cantor at Orthodox Congregation Rodef Shalom. This would be his position until he passed away at the age of 103 on January 11, 2021.

Cantor Wall lost his beloved wife, Sheva, in 2004. They had three children, Ahavia, Shalom and Joshua. When he passed away, he left behind his children, 13 grandchildren and 19 great-grandchildren. May his memory always be a blessing.



שְׁמֶר-תָּם, וּרְאֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל: כִּי-אַחֲרַיִת לְאִישׁ
שְׁלוֹם.

Mark the man of integrity, and behold the upright;
for there is a future for the man of peace.

Psalm 37:37





Journal of Synagogue Music

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