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ABOUT THE PSALMS

Psalmody: Concept or Genre?

By Judit Frigyesi

There is great danger in the naming of things—by means of words and terms. And there is great danger in categorizations, especially when these cross the boundaries from one culture to another. To situate Jewish liturgical music within a “universal” history, no term could be more seductive than “psalmody.”¹ The psalms (*Sefer tehillim*, literally: Book of Praises) are the core of the Hebrew scriptures being part of the *K’tuvim* (‘Writings’), the last of three sub-divisions within the *Tanakh*. They have been associated with King David and were performed in the Temple service by the Levites who apparently sang Psalms as a choir accompanied by instruments. The Psalms also have prominence in Christian liturgies and their performance is one of the pillars of the ritual. Because of the extremely high status of Psalms in both religions, and the intertwined histories of the development of their rituals, the assumption that the two religions share a common basic style for the recitation of Psalms seems logical, and the literature on Christian psalmody alone is enormous.²

This article will discuss psalmody in its use within the oral practice of the East-European liturgical tradition as it survived to the early twentieth century. The assumptions will be based

¹ It is not possible to elaborate on the history of the various attitudes toward the idea of psalmody in Jewish scholarship. A good general summary of the scholarship, with extensive bibliography, can be found in the entry “Jewish Music” by Edwin Seroussi et al. in the latest edition of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2000), online: <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/41322#S41322>. For a somewhat different view on scholarship and the issue of psalmody, see Hanoch Avenary, “[Jewish] Music,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (The Macmillan Company, Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Ltd., 1971).

It should be noted that psalmody was not a central concept for early editors and scholars of Jewish liturgical music such as Singer, Baer and Idelsohn. They were preoccupied with the modal system (“Tonarten”) of Jewish music, an issue that has remained in the focus of research till our day. When and exactly how psalmody emerged as a central idea in Jewish research is difficult to determine. However, for the generation of scholars active after WWII, as for instance, Gerson-Kiwi, Werner and Avenary, psalmody was already a basic musicological category for Jewish music.

For early sources see: Abraham Baer, *Baal Tefillah oder der practische Vorbeter* (Leipzig, 1877); Joseph Singer, *Die Tonarten des traditionellen Synagogengesanges (Steiger): ihr Verhältnis zu den Kirchentonarten und den Tonarten der vorchristlichen Musikperiode erläutert und durch Notenbeispiele erklärt* (Vienna, 1886); A. Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Music in Its Historical Development* (New York: Schocken Books, 1967, originally published in 1929).

For post-WW II sources see: Edith Gerson-Kiwi, “‘Justus ut Palma’,” *Festschrift-Bruno Stablein* (Kassel, 1967); Hanoch Avenary, *Studies in the Hebrew, Syrian and Greek Liturgical Recitative* (Tel Aviv: Israel Music Institute, 1963). See also his “Formal Structure of Psalms and Canticles in Early Jewish and Christian Chant,” *MD*, vii (1953), 1-13; Eric Werner, *A Voice Still Heard... The Sacred Songs of the Ashkenazi Jews* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976) and *The Sacred Bridge: the Interdependence of Liturgy and Music in Synagogue and Church during the First Millennium* (London and New York, 1959–84).

² For a basic introduction see the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*’ entry on “Psalm” by John Arthur Smith et al. See also J. McKinnon, “On the Question of Psalmody in the Ancient Synagogue,” *EMH*, vi (1986), 159–91.

primarily on my fieldwork among traditional Eastern Europe Jewish communities from 1976 to the present day, conducted in their original locations as well as their subsequent points of relocation to Western Europe, the United States and Israel (through interviews, the observance of practices and the recording of melodies). Only secondarily did I rely upon notated music and other written sources. My arguments refer to *the oral tradition of the liturgical music of the Eastern European/Eastern Ashkenazi Jews*, which may differ and overlap with the practices of other eras and regions. Rather than examine such correlations, I will describe what I see as *the core practice*, agreed upon (with minor local variations) by the millions of Jews who lived and flourished in Eastern Europe before and since WWII.

Christian and Jewish conceptions of a religious service and of textual-musical genres

Focusing upon the Eastern Ashkenazi oral tradition of liturgical music, we have to ask not merely whether psalmody is a genre or a concept but whether anything in this tradition could be termed “psalmody” at all. The word “psalmody” did not appear in that region’s terminology. Furthermore, to my knowledge there had been no Hebrew or Yiddish word used specifically for the act of the recitation of Psalms. The only musical term which traditional communities associated with the melodic execution of certain Psalms was “*nusah*,” but then, *nusah* is a general term. It meant the governing principle for the melodies of all texts of the service, not merely those of the Psalms. This gap, plus the fact that there was only one basic musical concept—*nusah*—that governed the musical practice of the entire liturgy, stand out as particularly significant.

While the development of psalmody in Christian liturgy and the origin, history and usage of this word as a scholarly term lies beyond the scope of this article, the fact that psalmody has now become a musicological term designating a melodic genre, form and performing practice associated with the performance of the Psalm texts in Gregorian chant, makes it relevant to our subject. It is not clear exactly how the practice developed but it is considered to have been widespread and generally accepted by the 8th century, the period when the first extant *Tonaries* (Ecclesiastical Psalm Tones) were notated.³ By then, psalmody had gone through significant structural and tonal developments; Christian psalmodies of the first few centuries C.E. must have been different. Gregorian chant psalmody in its developed form exemplifies a perfect correlation between textual and musical genres, form, melodic system, and performing style which was codified before or around the 9th century and remained basic to the service throughout the Middle Ages. It was a relatively pure form of psalmody that corresponded to nothing in the Jewish liturgy. In fact, because Jewish worship is based on a conception of ritual that is different from the Christian ideal, such correspondence cannot exist. In order to understand the nature of psalmody, it is necessary to first explain this difference.

In Medieval Catholic practice, apart from a few fixed pieces, each ritual for each day of the year contained a different set of pieces: different texts with their melodies.⁴ Furthermore, although the yearly order of this rich repertory following the Catholic calendar had been largely agreed upon, each region, city, and religious order, and to some extent, each monastery and church had its own texts and melodies for the rituals. Recent studies have shown that even the order of genres within

³ Michael Huglo, *Les Tonaires: inventaire, analyse, comparaison* (Paris), 1971.

⁴ What I describe in the following pertains primarily to the offices of the monastic tradition, which provides a more apt parallel to Jewish sacred music.

the same service followed local practices.⁵

Nevertheless, there existed a typical sequence of textual-musical genres associated with each service and *the form of the service was conceptualized in terms of genres*. Each type of service was supposed to proceed more or less according to the *same series of textual and musical genres*. For instance, it was typical to find in the Vespers, among other items of lesser musical significance, the sequence of: five Psalms with five Antiphons, Chapter, Hymn, Versicle, and the Magnificat with Antiphon. Each of these sequences meant a specific textual genre and each textual genre was associated with a specific musical style and form. For example, on the basis of its style, one could identify a text as being most likely an antiphon and a melody as one suited for an antiphon. Of course, there were overlaps between styles, borderline cases and exceptions--but the system remained solid. It is important to stress again that both the text and the music changed with each service. That meant, for instance, that different antiphon texts and melodies were performed on different days. What did not change was the overall textual-musical form of the service: at a given point in it, one was bound to hear antiphons with their clearly recognizable melodic styles.

Gregorian chant psalmody is a musical form and style associated with the reading of biblical Psalms, meaning that only Psalm texts are performed in this manner. Psalm recitation is based on prescribed melodic formulae: eight melodies corresponding to the eight Psalm tones (“octo toni psalmorum”), to which the ninth, the so-called “Tonus Peregrinus” (see footnote 26, below) was added. The recitation of a Psalm must remain within one tonus, which, according to this system, means the exact same melody is used over and over again for all of its verses. The melody of Psalm recitation therefore has a specific form: a melodic phrase consisting of an opening and a closing half-phrase. Each half- phrase begins with an opening formula (intonation/initium), continues with a recitation tone (tenor) and concludes with a cadence (mediation). The opening half-phrase concludes with a semi-cadence; the closing half-phrase concludes with a full cadence.⁶ Apart from the introductory and closing motives, the verses are recited on one single note--the recitation tone.

We can find nothing even remotely similar in the Eastern Ashkenazi liturgy, save for a fundamental melodic organizational principle which will be explained later in this article. The Roman Catholic codification of the melody, the association of melodic style with textual type (rather than with a particular text and specific liturgical function), the recitation on one note and a strictly formulaic execution of melody--all of this is completely alien to Eastern Ashkenazi musical thinking.

The Jewish service is conceptualized in a manner different from the Christian ritual. One crucial difference is the lack of textual-musical genres; the second is a great flexibility in the melodies following regional and individual customs, needs and devotions, and the third is the fluid dividing line between the role and knowledge of the congregation and the prayer leader. It is not an

⁵ See, for instance, the study of the research group of the “history of Monophony” of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and their effort to provide a computerized catalogue of local variants in the structure of Central European ritual: László Dobszay and Gábor Prósztéki, *Corpus Antiphonarium Officii, Ecclesiarum Centralis Europe* (Budapest: Institute of Musicology), 1988.

⁶ For each Psalm Tone a set of final closing motives (*differentiae*) are provided because these serve as transitions to the melody of the following antiphon.

accident that the synagogue ritual is normally called *t'fillah* (prayer) rather than service—the word signals that it is thought of less as a ritual administered by professionals according to pre-set rules than an occasion allowing for the individual worshiper to express his/her devotion. In traditional practice, there need be no cantor, only a prayer leader chosen from within the congregation: a *ba'al t'fillah* or *sh'liah tsibbur*.⁷ The emphasis on prayer as the spontaneous act of the individual allows for great freedom in the melodic execution of the texts and the idea of matching a text with a strictly codified melody is unimaginable in this context.⁸

There is another important difference between Jewish and Christian ritual that needs to be discussed in relation to the topic of psalmody. What is fixed in the Jewish ritual is not the sequence of textual-musical genres but the text itself. As opposed to the Christian tradition, the basic texts of Jewish liturgy are, apart from minor variants, alike in all Jewish communities. Furthermore, the text of a given service is the same every time when this service is performed. For example, the Morning service is the same every weekday, and Sabbath features the same prayer texts each week. Contrarily, the different sections of Vespers, the Afternoon service in the Christian tradition, would have different texts on different days. Moreover, the core of all services consists of the same prayers. There is no statutory public service which does not include the prayer known as the Amidah (which, in Eastern Europe, was called *Shmoneh esreih*,⁹ and there are services which consist solely of this prayer (with introductory and closing sections). Essentially, the textual differences among various services involve additions to and omissions from the core prayers.

The only element that changes with the fixed prayers is the manner of their musical performance, which varies with each liturgical occasion.¹⁰ The same words of the *Amidah* are recited differently on weekdays, differently at each service of the Sabbath and again differently at each service of a holiday. Thus liturgical function is expressed through both textual and musical changes, by textual additions and omissions on the one hand, and by the musical rendition of those changed wordings, on the other. Except for the seasonally changing formulaic endings of benedictions, the core texts remain fixed in every service.

This system possibly accounts for the fact that that we do not find a direct association between textual and musical genres in Eastern European Jewish liturgy. Such organization into genres would be meaningless, since the text is so constant in most services. It is therefore mainly the musical variety in the way those texts are rendered that defines the specific liturgical occasion.

⁷ *Ba'al t'fillah* literally means “master of prayer” (i.e., one who is in command of the prayers, and thus able to lead them publically) and *sh'liah tsibbur* means “delegate of the congregation.” Both names emphasize that the Hebrew term for “prayer leader” signifies neither a profession nor a religious title.

⁸ The arguments of this and the following paragraphs are explained in detail in my “Orality as Religious Ideal: The Music of East-European Jewish Prayer,” *Yuval 7 - Studies in Honor of Israel Adler* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2001), 113-153.

⁹ *T'fillah* means prayer, in this case: “prayer proper”—the most important prayer. The term *Shmoneh esreih* refers to the eighteen benedictions that comprise the central portion of this prayer (a nineteenth was later added). Interestingly, although on Shabbat several of these benedictions are omitted, so that the number of blessings is less than eighteen, in common practice, even the Shabbat *Amidah* was called *Shmoneh esreih*. In the traditional communities of Eastern Europe that I researched, I never heard this prayer called *Amidah*.

¹⁰ Interestingly, the idea of clearly differentiating the holidays by their melodies characterizes all regional variants of the Ashkenazi tradition, but is not typical of other Jewish rites.

Rather than a series of genres, Eastern Ashkenazi ritual could be conceived as a *large-scale through-composed musical form*. The word “composed” does not mean here the sequence of fixed melodies but rather the sequence of more or less circumscribed musical frameworks—commonly known as the “*nusah*.” This large-scale musical tapestry is particular to each type of service and holiday, although *nusah* allows for significant variations. Each holiday and each section within the holiday and the ritual, and sometimes even a particular line of the text on a certain holiday, has its specific *nusah*.

Scripture reading versus prayer chant

In Eastern Ashkenazi liturgy there is a crucial conceptual and musical dividing line between inflected reading from the Torah scroll and melodically chanted prayers. The type of recitation employed for Torah reading is called *leynen* in Eastern European practice and *cantillation* in the scholarly literature. The systematization of Torah cantillation originated in the 10th century when the grammarians of Tiberias (called Masorites) codified its rules, with Aaron ben Asher creating the version that has become normative throughout the Jewish diaspora.¹¹ The grammarians interpreted and specified the meaning of the text, and notated this by adding punctuation signs to the words (determining the vowels, and in this manner, the precise meaning) and symbols to each word (called: *t’amim*) specifying the word’s grammatical function and musical intonation. The melodies themselves were not notated, but since each sign was associated with a specific melodic motive, the musical structure now became defined.

Cantillation/leynen is the only example of a textual genre being associated with only one liturgical function (public reading) and a defined and largely fixed melodic execution (cantillation/leynen according to the graphic signs of *t’amim*). Public reading from the Torah is a separate ceremony with introductory and closing rituals—characteristically--the radical difference in its purpose is paralleled by its separation from the rest of the service. Torah reading is for the sake of teaching; it has nothing to do with the emotional state of the person who recites it. It is not a medium for the personal expression of devotion which lies at the heart of prayer. This distinction, that the execution of a text for public reading is codified musically whereas prayer chant follows the much freer system of *nusah*, is characteristic of the Jewish approach to reading sacred texts. When individual lines from *Tanakh* appear inserted into prayer texts, these are not recited according to the *t’amim* but according to the particular *nusah* of the given liturgical occasion, since in that context, they are not seen as teaching but as a part of the individual’s devotional act: praying.¹²

¹¹ The literature on cantillation is enormous. For the topic of psalmody, apart from the articles in the *New Grove* and Idelsohn’s book mentioned earlier, consider especially: Avigdor Herzog, “Masoretic Accents (Musical Rendition),” *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (The Macmillan Company, Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, Ltd., 1971), vol. 11: 1098-1111; Dalia Cohen and Daniel Weil, “The Scale System and Scale of Tiberian Masoretic Cantillation: Were They Pentatonic? Theoretical Considerations,” *Essays in Honor of Hanoch Avenary. Orbis Musicae*, ed. Judith Cohen, vol. x. (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, Department of Musicology, Yolanda and David Katz Faculty of the Arts, 1990/1991), 98-117; Samuel Rosowsky, *The Cantillation of the Bible* (New York, 1957); Hanoch Avenary, *The Ashkenazi Tradition of Biblical Chant Between 1500 and 1900: Documentation and Musical Analysis* (Tel-Aviv, 1978); Robert Lachmann, *Jewish Cantillation and Song in the Isle of Djerba* (Jerusalem, 1940; repr. in the original Ger. and with transcriptions as *Gesänge der Juden auf der Insel Djerba*, ed. E. Gerson-Kiwi (Jerusalem, 1978); Weil, *The Masoretic Chant of the Bible* (Jerusalem, 1995).

¹² It has become customary in modern practice to recite continuous Torah sections inserted within prayer, especially the *Sh’ma*, according to their biblical cantillation signs. As far as I could establish, this practice did not exist among pre-WWII Eastern Ashkenazim.

In prayer, the only instance of some correlation between textual and melodic genre occurs in the case of religious poetry known as *piyyut*, which is more likely to be performed with a song tune in metrical rhythm than are other prayer texts. In this case, a textual genre—*piyyut*—is associated with a musical genre—metrical song.¹³ This matching is not surprising, since the *piyyutim* are poetic insertions into the liturgy, and their content, language and structure noticeably differ from the majority of the prayers, which are written normally in prose. But even this is not an absolute rule: *piyyutim* might be incorporated into the system of the flowing-rhythm *nusah* as this happens, for instance, with most *piyyutim* during the High Holiday services.

The case of Psalms

The treatment of Psalms that appear within the liturgy is peculiar and puzzling. Most other texts of the synagogue service had been composed with the explicit purpose of providing a statutory formulaic basis for personal devotional expression, and therefore almost nothing could be transferred from the texts and actions of the discontinued sacrificial Temple ritual save for references and symbolic allusions.¹⁴ The Psalms are a notable exception: their performance by the Levites had been an indispensable part of the Temple service,¹⁵ even though their texts are essentially prayers. It would therefore have been logical to view them as pillars around which to construct the new prayer service that developed in synagogues. Yet this is not what had happened. The Psalms are by no means pillars of the synagogue liturgy.

Instead, Psalm texts occur primarily in four situations: as individual Psalm verses worked into the text of the prayers; as complete Psalms which function as introduction, addition and/or caesura inserted within prayer sections; as *Hallel*, a specially inserted section of Thanksgiving Psalms; and as a set of Psalms read at the beginning of the morning service, the so-called *P'sukei d'zimrah* (Verses of Praise/ Song).

Individual Psalm verses permeate the prayer book. They are worked into prayer texts so integrally that they do not strike the reader as quotations. They fit in naturally with the rest of the phrases, and during the recitation of the prayer, people normally do not think of their origin in the Book of Psalms. They are performed with the same melodic recitation style as the rest of the given prayer corpus, following its ongoing *nusah*.

Complete Psalms in the prayer book are rare, the most notable examples being the opening of the *Minhah* service with Psalm 145 (*Aromim'kha*, proceeded always by the line *Ashrei* from Psalm 84) and the insertion of Psalm 130 (*Shir ha-ma'a lot, mim-ma'amakim*) in the Sabbath Morning service during the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The melodies of these psalms follow the *nusah* of the service (or in the second case, might be performed in a freely chosen

¹³ Obviously, metrical song forms a much larger category than that of genre. As there could be various genres within the category of metrical song, it would be better to call this a mega-genre.

¹⁴ There are numerous studies dealing with the origin and development of the prayer texts. Some of the works that served for the basis of this article are: Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy. A Comprehensive History*, trans. Raymond P. Scheindlin, ed. Joseph Heinemann, et. al. (Philadelphia–Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1993, based on *Der jüdische Gottesdienst in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, originally published in Frankfurt am Main, 1913); Joseph Heinemann, *The Prayer in the Talmud. Forms and Patterns* (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1977), Israel Abrahams, "Prayer," *Encyclopedia Judaica* 13: 978.

¹⁵ Mishnah *Tamid*, 2:6 and 7:3-4 delineates when Psalms were sung by the Levites in between sacrifices during the Daily Priestly Offering.

nusah appropriate to the general mood of this Penitential season). In their musical execution, they are treated like any other prayer text.

The *Hallel* section, consisting of Thanksgiving Psalms 113-118, receives special treatment. Because its series of Psalms has been fitted with introductory and closing benedictions, it is regarded as a separate self-contained prayer. Accordingly, it does not belong to the regular service but functions as a festive addition to the liturgy on certain days. In the Eastern Ashkenazi tradition, its performance takes a unique form in which improvised recitative passages alternate with composed songs, the recitative parts adhering to a *nusah* particular to this prayer and called *nusah hallel*.¹⁶

As we have seen, Psalm texts in the first three categories behave exactly like prayers. The case of *P'sukei d'zimrah* is somewhat different. These Psalm texts are said to have no *nusah* per se, meaning that their melody is not fixed—practically any recitation melody type can be chosen for their chanting. I would suggest that *P'sukei d'zimrah* in fact has a *nusah*, except in this *nusah* the melodic framework is not fixed. What is fixed is the global style. The prayer leader might choose the melody, but still has to adhere to the following rules: use simple melodies; recite a large segment of the text by using (variants of) the same melody—being composed of either one undivided phrase or two sections (opening-closing) or extensions of the opening-closing idea; the performance should remain in the style of simple and fluid recitation, without dynamic changes and few ornaments (if at all); the tempo should be more or less that of normal speech; and finally, the voice quality should be soft and restrained.

In a sense, *P'sukei d'zimrah* Psalms are not yet the service, they are more like a collective private prayer—individual worshipers' emotional preparation for the service to come. On Shabbat morning it is customary to grant the privilege of leading this section to a volunteer—by definition, less accomplished—member of the congregation. The main *ba'al t'fillah*, who is charged with leading the bulk of the service, will take over in the middle of the prayer *Nishmat* that introduces the concluding benediction of *P'sukei d'zimrah*. I even heard of the custom (without having witnessed it), of *P'sukei d'zimrah* being recited in the synagogue entirely without a prayer leader.

All this seems to suggest that the *P'sukei d'zimrah* Psalms are merely a warm-up to the service, this is not the case. They have, one might say, a reverse significance. Their importance lies precisely in that their recitation has a quasi private character—they create an ambiance of intimacy. This intimacy lays a foundation for the more festive and musically more elaborate prayer sections to follow: *Shaharit*, Torah and *Musaf*. I was once told that, in a traditional prayer house, “the atmosphere of *P'sukei d'zimrah* tells you how Shabbat will go.”

This is in accordance with the general function of Psalms in the lives of Eastern Ashkenazim. In Christian tradition, Psalms are a major genre in the service. By contrast, despite the fact that the Psalms figured prominently in the ancient Temple rite, with the rise of synagogue prayer tradition they assumed an opposite role, becoming the primary texts for intimate personal devotion. Their recitation was a devotional act that took place mostly outside of the synagogue and apart from communal liturgical or para-liturgical contexts.

¹⁶ See my article written together with Peter Laki: “Free-Form Recitative and Strophic Structure in the Hallel Psalms,” *Orbis Musicae* vol. VII (1979-80), 43-80.

Traditional Ashkenazim would take up the Book of Psalms whether they were happy or distressed. Individuals would read Psalms when they could not fall asleep--or when visiting a parent's grave. And one could read them for no specific reason, simply for the sake of reciting them. For the Eastern Ashkenazim, reciting the complete cycle of 150 Psalms had become something of an ongoing personal ritual that one could perform anytime and anywhere, and it could be done in any manner, even without melody. Perhaps no one better expressed the sorrow and serenity embedded within this lifelong ritual than Joseph Roth in his novel, *Job*:

Mendel Singer... lighted a candle and began to sing one Psalm after the other. He sang on good days and on bad ones. He sang when he had thanks to offer to Heaven, and when he feared it. Mendel's swaying movements were always the same. And only from his voice an observant listener might perhaps have recognized whether Mendel, the righteous, was thankful or burdened with anxiety. In these nights fear shook him as the wind shakes a tender tree. And care lent him her own voice; in a stranger's voice, he sang the Psalms.¹⁷

The conception of Psalm texts as a uniquely personal and intimate prayer ritual might also explain the fate of cantillation marks for reciting the Psalms. As explained above, the melodic structure of Torah reading had been conceptually codified since the 10th century. The system may have already existed centuries earlier, albeit in a more fluid form. Nor did codification mean that many local versions were instantly replaced by ben Asher's system. But it gradually took hold among most Jewish communities.

It is striking that, although the grammarians also furnished the Psalm texts with their own set of *t'amim*, similar in their function but more complex than those for the Torah, these did not survive in the oral tradition. Moreover, attempts to prove that they once existed in practice have failed so far or are at least problematic.¹⁸ There is no sign that the *t'amim* for reading Psalm texts would have been used in Eastern Europe. The gap between readiness of the Jewish community to accept the Tiberian system for the Torah and its apparent rejection of the same system for the Psalms may give us a key for understanding the conceptualization of Psalms.

Torah reading was a professional art whose aim was education: the dissemination of the text in its precise and codified meaning. The recitation of Psalms, however, was a private act carried out by individuals. Considering Eastern Ashkenazi practice where the reading of Psalms was a largely private ritual practiced by even the most uneducated, a sophisticated cantillation system requiring complex knowledge would have been meaningless. This having been said, a case might still be made to view *P'sukei d'zimrah* as the Jewish equivalent of chanted psalmody. The complete Psalms texts found in this prayer section are read in a recitation style that comes close to what is termed psalmody in chant scholarship.

¹⁷ Joseph Roth, *Job—The Story of a Simple Man*, translated by Dorothy Thompson (Woodstock and New York: The Overlook Press, 1982), 145.

¹⁸ An important step in creating a historical approach to Psalm cantillation is Reinhard Flender's *Hebrew Psalmody, A Structural Investigation* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1992).

Yet there are fundamental problems in correlating these two “psalmodies.” The first is a difference in performance practice, and as a result, in their atmosphere. In church practice, Psalms are sung antiphonally, meaning that two choruses of equal size alternate in reciting the verses.¹⁹ The performance is choral, organized and done by professionals. The situation was different in Eastern European synagogues. *P’sukei d’zimrah* were read by the congregation in an un-coordinated manner: each person recited in a soft voice according to their own personal melodic pattern, tempo and style—a performance that resulted in heterophony. Like everyone else, the prayer leader would read the bulk of each Psalm silently and raised his voice only at the last verse or two—as if emerging from shadow into sunlight. He sang these final verses with clearer melody and then continued in the same manner while introducing the opening phrase of the next Psalm. After this fragmentary “solo” he submerged again into the general noise of individual recitations, raising his voice—as before—only for the last verses of the next Psalm, and so on. This kind of performance is not unique to *P’sukei d’zimrah*; it is the common practice for leading synagogue prayer among Eastern European Ashkenazim. It creates a completely different overall form and atmosphere than the performance of trained choirs in the church.

The second difference concerns the content and structure of the melodies themselves. Of course, what could be compared to Christian chant psalmody is not the totality of the experience but merely those lines which the prayer leader sings aloud for the closing verses. In this limited regard, there is indeed a commonality of characteristics to both the Church’s chant psalmody and Eastern European recitation of *P’sukei d’zimra*. In both “psalmodies,” the recitation follows simple melodic formulae:

- a) the bulk of each text is performed on a recitation tone or recitation tone-group,
- b) recurring motives signal opening, middle cadence and final closure,
- c) the melodies often have binary forms with opening and closing half-phrases,
- d) execution is within the limits of the tempo of normal speech.

In chant psalmody these features are conceptualized as a concrete melodic line, whereas in *P’sukei d’zimrah*, they appear merely as a framework for improvised recitation. The melodies for *P’sukei d’zimrah* are always improvised. The prayer leader is allowed to hold on to the same melodic line throughout the recitation. But this is rare; most prayer leaders make significant changes in the melody and phrasing in the course of the recitation. The best prayer leaders conceive—perhaps subconsciously—of *P’sukei d’zimrah* in its totality, as a large-scale piece, and change the basic melody with each Psalm in a manner that drives the music toward its climax: recitation of the so-called “Song at the sea” (*Shirat hay-yam*; Exodus 15:1-21).²⁰

The second set of problems relate to conceptualizing *P’sukei d’zimrah* as a type or genre within the Jewish liturgy. It is neither of these. The Psalms which occur at other parts of the service are performed completely differently. The melodic solutions for these dispersed Psalm verses and for the occasional full Psalm text insertion display a different compositional logic which fits with the system of the specific *nusah* of the prayer or the holiday of which they are a part. The *Hallel*

¹⁹ Scholarship usually distinguishes three methods of Psalm performance: direct, antiphonal, and responsorial. Antiphonal seems to be the most common. Each of these practices relies on a professional singer and/or chorus.

²⁰ I recorded such a creative Psalm recitation by Jenő Roth in 1977: “Preliminary thoughts toward the study of music without clear beat: the example of ‘flowing rhythm’ in Jewish *nusah*,” *Asian Music* vol. XXIV-2 (Spring-Summer 1993), 59-88 and especially 70-76.

Psalms to take one instance, exemplify this markedly different musical conception. Furthermore, the simple recitation style that characterizes *P'sukei d'zimrah* is not unique to it alone, but occurs in one form or another throughout the liturgy. We thus find that Psalms could be associated with various musical styles and melodic frameworks, and that these musical styles also occur with texts that are not psalms.

The four structural organizing principles of Jewish recitative style:

In the most recent edition of the *New Grove's* article on Jewish music, the recitative (non-metric, not song-like) styles of the synagogue service are divided into two categories: "psalmody" and "modal improvisation of prayers" (the latter meaning, practically, *nusah*). In my interviews with Eastern Ashkenazi *ba'alei t'fillah*, I never heard of such a division for the music of prayer. What is described in the article's sub-chapter on psalmody is a melody-organizational technique that is common also in "modal improvisation."

As we have seen, in the Eastern Ashkenazi oral tradition, psalmody cannot be considered a musical genre--but neither is it a style. It cannot be described as a collection of melodic types, nor can it be associated with a fixed formal framework. But there indeed exists a conceptual organizing principle, which can be likened to psalmody. It is a primary and fundamental approach to the flow of music on both the micro and the macro level. This idea, which will be described below, permeates Eastern Ashkenazi musical thinking associated with sacred texts--not only prayer melodies but also cantillation.

It is misleading, however, to single out this concept as the sole or the most important organizing principle of Eastern Ashkenazi prayer melodies. This principle is inseparable and acts together with at least three other basic melody and form-creating principles. It is impossible to separate them--all four act together and appear in constant interaction.²¹ The widespread occurrence of these principles in early Christian Liturgical melodies might suggest that these four melody-creating ideas originate in antiquity.

The first two of these principles--Psalmody and group style-- had been wonderfully described and their widespread use in antiquity demonstrated by Hanoch Avenary.²²

1) Psalmody

Avenary gave the name "melodic punctuation style" to what we would term "psalmody": a technique of organizing text and melody into pairs of opening-and-closing phrases. In Eastern Ashkenazi practice, this was more of an idea than a pre-set form; prayer phrases are rarely symmetrical. Typically, the improvised chant would be moving back and forth between simple opening-closing phrases and more complex structures. For instance, instead of two (opening and closing) units, a melodic phrase could be divided into four units. Such fourfold division of an extended double phrase, then, might be developed to give the impression of a stanza, as if part of a miniature song. Pairs of phrases could also be expanded into three, four or five-units, and even larger sections resulting in the most diverse formations. The psalmody concept thus allows the

²¹ I selected these four principles--perhaps arbitrarily--simply because they were the ones I noticed in the course of my analyses and/or have been described by scholars. There may be many more such basic principles.

²² Hanoch Avenary, *Studies in the Hebrew...* (1963), also "Formal Structure..." (1953), op. cit.

performer to move easily between simple and more complex structures.²³ This flexibility of form provides a basis for personal expression in melodically interpreting the prayer texts within the overarching hegemony of *nusah*.

With our regular duple-rhythm heartbeat in mind, one would think that the idea of opening-closing phrases is basic to human expression and thus must be found in all recitation styles. But this is not the case. Recitation has a simpler form, in which each textual segment is rendered by (variants of) one melodic line which is without inner division. This is called “litany form” or “one-phrase psalmody.” In fact, this type is more common in folk cultures than the psalmody type. In Eastern Ashkenazi liturgy, however, litany form is rarely used for more than short liturgical segments, and even in such cases, the idea is often combined with other melody-structuring concepts, resulting in creative musical composition.²⁴

It is quite possible that the psalmody-idea was a musical invention that emerged in early antiquity. Perhaps it originated among Jews and then spread to the surrounding religious cultures. This is difficult to prove, but it is striking that the use of psalmody (or “melodic-punctuation style”) is sporadic, for instance, in the indigenous recitation genres of Africa, whereas such melodies were tremendously popular in those liturgies whose early phase could be associated with the Mediterranean and the Jewish religion.

Scholarship has a major problem in that it associated this concept with the Psalms, assuming that it was invented in order to render Psalm texts. In fact, the opposite seems to be the case. Psalmody-style recitation is a fundamental organizing principle of prayer *nusah* as well as of Torah cantillation and is part and parcel of early Christian liturgies as well; even a superficial overview of various Christian and Jewish liturgical melodies convinces us of the significance of

²³ The concept of interaction between simple melodic phrases and their more song-like expansions is the topic of my article written together with Peter Laki: “Free-Form Recitative and Strophic Structure in the Hallel Psalms.”

Two versions of *Minhah l'shabbat* are transcribed in my “Preliminary thoughts...” (1993, see note 20, above) where they provide an interesting example of analysis from the point of view of rhythm.

I also analyzed the interaction of melodic principles in: “The unbearable lightness of ethnomusicological complete editions: the style of the *ba'al tefillah* (prayer leader) in the East European Jewish service,” *Studies in the Sources and the Interpretation of Music. Essays in Honor of László Somfai on His 70th Birthday*, ed. László Vikárius and Vera Lampert (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2005), 7-18; “The stylistic strata of Haggadah-recitation,” *The bound of Tradition: Studies in Hungarian Jewish Folklore*, ed. Ildikó Kriza (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1990), 165-176; “Modulation as an Integral Part of the Modal System in Jewish Music,” *Musica Judaica* vol. V-1 (1982-83), 53-71.

²⁴ A good example for this appears in the recitation of *Minhah l'shabbat* by Jenő Roth, transcribed and analyzed in my article “Preliminary thoughts...” (1993), loc. cit. Roth begins the recitation of the *Atah ehad* paragraph with single-phrase recitation, but the simple pattern holds only briefly before expanding. In the final extended phrase, he creates a climactic moment—even touching upon the note A-flat which is alien to the mode—this climax is both carefully prepared and unexpected. Roth’s performance is a masterpiece that, within a few seconds, leads from the simplest form of recitation and expression toward exuberant melodic elaboration and an emotional climax.

this principle.²⁵ Yet it is also true--as we have seen--that *in Eastern Ashkenazi practice there is no special connection between what we might call musical psalmody and the Psalm texts*. In fact, this is also the case with most early Christian liturgies, namely, that while psalmody-like performing styles appear throughout the liturgy, they are not restricted to the recitation of Psalms. *The case of codified Psalm recitation in Gregorian chant is an exception rather than the norm*.

I will therefore use the term “psalmody” reluctantly in the following analysis and summation, and only because other terms which had been proposed (like Avenary’s “punctuation style”) have not gained currency. In using this term one unavoidably strengthens the presumption that this particular musical principle has something to do exclusively with the Psalms. I do not think that this is the case. There is no reason to believe that the psalmody idea was originally invented for and associated uniquely with Psalms, and only later, would have been transferred to other liturgical texts. A more likely supposition would be that psalmody was a musical “invention” for the recitation of various (sacred) texts. Its practice might even pre-date composition of the Psalms, and it is not unlikely that the Psalm-texts were created with this already extant musical form in mind.

2) Group style

Psalmody appears almost always in connection with the second basic structural principle that Avenary calls “group style,” and that in Gregorian chant scholarship would be referred to as “centonization.” It is a technique of combining melodic motives in a mosaic-like fashion, although not in a mechanical manner. As Avenary has shown, these two concepts—psalmody (melodic punctuation style) and group style--appear almost always in combination, in Jewish as well as Christian liturgical music. They are deeply intertwined and could, in fact, be seen as two aspects of the same approach: melodic punctuation defines the underlying structure of phrasing, and group style the precise working out of motives.

The most extreme example of group style recitation is Torah cantillation, where a melodic motive is assigned to each word, and hence the melody for a textual line is conceived as a sequence of distinct motives. One would be tempted to suggest that the group style principle was derived from the cantillation system. But this is unlikely. The constant interplay between psalmody and group style is basic not only to Jewish musical thinking but has also been amply documented in the early Christian traditions. It would be absurd to propose that this idea, already universally present in the sacred recitations of the Mediterranean in the first centuries of the Common Era, was missing only from the Jewish tradition until Tiberian grammarians invented it in the 10th century. In fact, the assumption that Torah cantillation would have preserved the most ancient melodic stratum of Jewish liturgical music is unlikely. Hungarian musicologist Bence Szabolcsi first challenged this view and proposed that certain aspects of Ashkenazi prayer tunes (in fact certain key melodies) might represent older strata than the melodies of cantillation. I will return to this point in the subsection on “Proclamation Style.”

²⁵ An excellent starting point is the superb selection of excerpts on the recording of Leo Levi: *Oriental Ritual Songs, Anthology of Documentary Recordings by Dr. Leo Levi (Oriental Origins of Christian Songs)* (Czechoslovakia: Supraphon #2213, 1964).

3) Melody type

Psalmody and group style, our first two structural principles, become manifest through melody—and these melodies are conceived of as types. In Eastern Ashkenazi practice, the idea of *nusah* almost always includes adherence to a melody type. It would be difficult to say whether any of the melody types typical in Eastern Ashkenazi liturgical music dates back to antiquity. Yet one type seems to be an especially good candidate: a melodic line based on a minor-like tonal segment with alternating recitation notes on the fourth and third degrees or on the fifth and fourth degrees. Although these are two different melodies, they often merge into one. In modern scholarship, the first is known as the *S'liḥah* mode (using Idelsohn's terminology) and the second—as the Tonus Peregrinus (“wandering tone” in Christian chants—the additional tonus to the eight *tonoi*—the only one with a moving recitation tone). Both types, and especially Tonus Peregrinus, are basic to Jewish prayer and cantillation melodies and to Gregorian chant. Several scholars have also noted widespread use of these melody types along the Mediterranean.²⁶

4) Proclamation style

This fourth principle of Jewish recitative style was first observed by Bence Szabolcsi, who also named it. Szabolcsi regarded it as one of the most ancient types of Jewish liturgical melodies, one that probably predates the invention of *t'amim*.²⁷ The idea of Szabolcsi's proclamation style might seem fantastic at first, but after deep analysis of the material, I found it to be a basic principle. Proclamation style means that the melodic idea is structured around a few melodic “jumps” of fourth and fifth intervals which are “filled in” with diverse scalar figures. Melodic jumps as the basis for shaping a melody (as opposed to scale-like, modal or motivic conceptions) have not been described in other musical traditions and it might be that this idea is specific to the Jewish liturgy. In any case, because of the emphasis on the fourth interval, as opposed to a triadic conception, it is likely that the idea predates the era of modern European melodic styles. The peculiarity of this practice is that, since the essence of the melody is defined by “pillars-tones” spaced relatively far from one another, the gaps between them could be filled in various ways, resulting even in melodic segments in different modes, without changing the melody's essential framework. Szabolcsi calls this technique proclamation style because the melodic jumps have the effect of a fanfare or proclamation.²⁸

In researching this article, I found the above four principles to be basic for the structure of Jewish liturgical melodies and for an especially creative instance of melodic variations as they appear in the *nusah* for *minḥah l'shabbat*. Private recordings that I made of Jenő Roth and Emerich Deutsch performing the *Atah eḥad* paragraph from *Minḥah l'shabbat* illustrate how the four principles basic to the structure of Jewish liturgical melodies interact on the micro-level.²⁹ Both performances belong to the same melodic type and overall form for the *Minḥah l'shabbat*

²⁶ Edith Gerson-Kiwi, “Justus ut Palma’,” *Festschrift Btuno Stablein* (Kassel, 1967); Avigdor Herzog and André Hajdu, “A la recherche du ‘Tonus Peregrinus’ dans la tradition musicale juive,” Israel Adler, ed., *Yuval. Studies of the Jewish Music Research Centre* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1968), 194-203.

²⁷ Bence Szabolcsi, “The ‘Proclamation Style’ in Hebrew Music.” *Yuval. Studies of the Jewish Music Research Centre* (Jerusalem, 1968), 249-250; see also his “About Five-tone Scales in the Early Hebrew Melodies,” eds. Samuel Löwinger and Alexander Scheiber, *Ignace Goldziher Memorial Volume I*. (Budapest, 1948), 309-313.

²⁸ Idem, Szabolcsi provides examples for the proclamation style from all types of Ashkenazi liturgical music.

²⁹ See footnotes 20 and 24, above.

Amidah, although each emphasizes different aspects of the type. Roth's performance is more psalmody-like, except toward the end when he steps out, so to speak, from his self-imposed single-phrase psalmody recitation framework, as explained in footnote 24, above. A careful look at the transcription also reveals the underlying idea of melodic jumps with stable and recurring pillar-notes. Deutsch's performance is more group-style-like with clear separation of the motives (also in slower tempo). The proclamation style is noticeable in his version as well but what is more important: he expands the psalmody idea in such a manner that the melody for the second half of this prayer becomes a full-fledged stanza performed twice with variation—in essence, two micro-songs.

The global atmosphere of Jewish prayer remains the same throughout. But there is a duality: the relative calmness and stability on the surface is counteracted by constant tension-resolution on the micro level. For traditional Eastern Ashkenazi Jews, this micro-level of the music, which is composed primarily with help of the four principles described above, had an enormous significance.³⁰

The combination of these four principles might seem at first complicated and oversophisticated, but if one conceives of them as different aspects of the same phenomenon, their presence and interaction will seem natural. The proclamation style, like the other three, should not be thought of as a category to which certain melodies belong and others don't, but rather as a manner of conceptualizing the melody—these same melodies can be seen also as manifesting psalmody and group-style aspects. It is like intonation, tempo, rhythm and phrase in language: together they mimic—often on a subconscious level—the way one speaks. I consider psalmody not a style or form or genre but a basic principle on the micro-level of the melodies of the oral tradition of Eastern Ashkenazi music—a principle that acts in connection with other similarly fundamental principles following subconscious creative impulses.

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³⁰ A moving document of the traditional Eastern Ashkenazi Jews' concern with the micro-level of melody can be found in the explanatory texts (based on observation and interviews) and the transcriptions of prayer recitations in Chemjo Vinaver, *Anthology of Hassidic Music*, edited with introductions and annotations by Eliyahu Schleifer (Jerusalem: The Jewish Music Research Centre, 1985).

PSALMS FOR LITURGICAL OCCASIONS

The Daily Psalms for Sunday through Friday

Text by Isaac Klein and Harold Kushner

Music by Michael Levy, Pinchas Spiro and Charles Davidson

Editor's Note: Rabbi Klein served as Scholar-in-Residence at the 17th Annual Cantors Assembly convention held at Grossinger's Resort in Liberty, New York, May 24-27, 1964, lecturing each morning on Psalms 24, 48, 82, 94 and 81. He was then spiritual leader of Congregation Shaarey Zedek in Buffalo, and a former President of the Rabbinical Assembly who had authored *Responsa and Halakhic Studies* and would later produce the best-selling *Guide to Jewish Religious Practice*.

The musical selections that follow each of Rabbi Klein's introductions stylistically represent the eras during which they were composed. Yet they are timeless in their unerring choice of prayer mode for the particular text. Michael Levy's settings of excerpts from the Psalms for Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday were commissioned by the Histadrut Hapoel Hamizrahi's Department of Music (*Mi-zimrei ha-yom*, 1954). K'shimkha elohim—excerpted from the Monday Psalm--was patterned after the "Mah Tov" from Pinchas Spiro's *Complete Weekday Service*, 1970.

Psalm 93 for both Friday morning and evening is introduced by Rabbi Harold Kushner, who served as spiritual leader of Temple Israel in Natick, Massachusetts for 24 years, and authored the best-seller *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, 1978. He delivered these remarks at a workshop, "Psalms in the Liturgy," on May 9, 1979 during the 37th Annual Cantors Assembly Convention. The music was adapted from the "Yismechu" in Charles Davidson's *Chassidic Sabbath*, 1973, and appears here with the composer's permission. [JAL]

Mi ya'aleh ("Who shall ascend God's Mountain?")--Sunday's Psalm—24

While searching for a theme for the week which would still make each morning an independent entity, I found it in a Mishnah that has become part of the Saturday Morning service. Since we do not recite it any more in my synagogue, I came across it elsewhere, while leading the Siyyum on Erev Pesah for *ta'anit b'khorim*. It's the Mishnah beginning: *Ha-shir she-hal'viyyim hayyu om'rim b'veit ha-mikdash* ("The hymn that the Levites recited during the Daily service in the Jerusalem Temple"). It proceeds to enumerate the hymns: *Ba-yom ha-rishon hayyu om'rim, ladonai ha-arets u-m'lo'o...*, ("on Sunday they would recite, 'The earth and its fullness are God's...', etc., through the entire week).

The Levites were the sacred singers in the Holy Temple; today we would say they were the cantors, and the Daily Psalm was chanted by a choir of cantors, led by a *m'natsei'ah* ("precentor"; as in Psalm 19: *La-m'natsei'ah mizmor l'david*). It would therefore be an appropriate text to use at a cantors convention. Each morning I shall take a verse from the *Shir shel yom* and try to explain it. Although today is Monday, I do not want to insult the Psalm for Sunday by skipping it. On one of the mornings we'll catch up by combining two psalms.

Psalm 24 is all creation's hymn of praise to the Lord, followed by a description of who is fit to be in God's presence: *Mi ya'aleh b'har adonai, u-mi ya-kum bimkom kodsho* ("Who shall

ascend the mountain of the Lord, and who can stand in His holy place?"). And the answer comes: *N'ki khappayim u-var leivav* ("One who has clean hands and a pure heart."). The repeated question is a literary scheme for emphasis; we call it *hakpalah* in Hebrew, and "parallelism" in English. It means that we repeat the same thought with different words. This is the *p'shat*, the simple meaning; but I also want to employ a bit of *d'rash* or exegesis.

In all education, the process consists of leading the student step-by-step towards the goal he/she is able to reach. If your field is music education, you do not start your student with Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*. You start with a more modest goal that is within your student's grasp. Today, very few people speak about moral education; instead we talk about adjustment. In the education of our parents however, morality was the major goal. They were taught how to subdue the *yeitser ha-ra* ("evil inclination"), how to become a virtuous person. Some of us still remember the term *madreigah*, referring to the stage of one's moral development.

This, however, was only part of the challenge; getting there was a great achievement. Staying there is another problem. Alas, we often reach a high *madreigah* and then fall down and have to start all over again. The question remains: how can we manage to keep our position?

The dilemma exists in all fields. Once we attain our goal there is the problem of how to hold onto it. America is a democracy. American history tells us that it was achieved through many struggles. Some people thought that having achieved it, it would be ours forever. Jefferson, who was the wisest American, knew better. He said: "Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom." Relax this vigilance and there will appear a Senator McCarthy to rob us of our freedom.

We train our children to be loyal Jews. We give them a good Jewish education, and enjoy the pride of seeing them become devoted members of the teen-aged Jewish community. Then they go off to college, and we face the problem of them keeping what they have acquired. That is why the Psalmist, after asking: "Who shall ascend the mountain of the Lord?" follows it up with the answer: "One who has clean hands and a pure heart." I would like to paraphrase the Psalmist's response and say: One who has a living faith which is repeatedly and deeply internalized, when it is such a powerful subjective reality that one's clean hands are the *product* of a pure heart, and when one's acts bite deep into one's soul.

If I were addressing rabbis, I could easily tell them the distinction between the rabbinate as a job and the rabbinate as a calling. With cantors, I would make the distinction between those who sing and those who worship. There are cantors who are excellent musicians and there are cantors who say *kol atsmotai tomarnah*--my whole being worships the Lord. My own cantor told of a saying attributed to Khazn Yossele Rosenblatt: *Ikh daven oykh di shtille shmoneh esrey* ("I also pray the Silent Amidah"). What a beautiful way of expressing this idea that is enshrined in the words *n'ki khappayim u-var leivav*! The old-time *khazonim* would say: not only the *keylim*, but the *mesirat nefesh* ("it's not only the voice, but the devotion that matters"). When a cantor functions that way, there is a good chance that the congregation, too, will develop a proper attitude. It is then that a cantor performs his work *bishleimut* (fully) and leads the worshipers to God.

Mi ya'aleh

(FROM THE PSALM FOR SUNDAY)

Text: Psalm 24:3-6

Music: After Michael David Levy

Mi-zimrei hayyom

HISTADRUT HAPOEL HAMIZRAHI

DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC, 1954

Moderato rit. Sprightly

Mi ya - a-leh v' - har a - do-nai, u - mi ya - kum bim - kom kod - sho. N' -
 ki khap-pa - yim u - var lei - vav, a - sher lo na - sa la-shav naf - shi v' -
 lo nish-ba l' - mir mah. Yi - sa v'ra - khah mei - eit a - do-nai, uts - da-kah
 mei - e - lo-hei yish - o. Zeh dor dor shav, m' - vak - shei fa - ne-kha ya - a -
 kov Se - lah.

***K'shimkha elohim* ("Your name is glorious")--Monday's Psalm—48**

This is the song of a pilgrim who has come to Jerusalem in order to celebrate a religious festival. The city itself was his goal: *y'feih nof m'sos kol ha-arets, kiryat melekh rav* ("Beautiful in elevation, joy of the earth, city of the Great King"). Every stone, every object in Jerusalem is precious to the pilgrim and makes him sing. He or she loves the palaces and towers, and swells with pride over the city's ramparts.

Then the pilgrim has a second thought. Are the above physical features all there is to Jerusalem? Is its uniqueness merely a matter of brick and stone? Surely, this is not why it is called the Holy City; there must be something more to it. At this point the Psalm continues with the spiritual virtues of Jerusalem: *Dimminu elohim hasdekha b'kerev heikhalekha* ("We are thinking of Thy goodness, O God, within Thy Temple"). *K'shimkha elohim kein t'hilat'kha* ("Thy fame, O God, echoes Thy name"). Jerusalem was known outwardly to the world for its beauty, but within it a pilgrim felt the grace of God; that is what made it a holy city.

In Mishnah *Sh'kalim* (5:4), we find this striking discussion between two rabbis:

Rabbi Hamah bar Haninah and Rabbi Hoshaya the Great were strolling by certain synagogues in Lod. Said Rabbi Hamah: "How much money have my forebears sunk in here?" To which Rabbi Hoshaya replied: "How many lives have my ancestors sunk in this place?"

The difference between the two is obvious. One commented on the outward appearances of the synagogues, which represented the financial investments involved. The other stressed the inward spirit of the place that is the product--not of the money invested--but of the minds and hearts and souls that the people involved poured into those places of worship.

There is *hizaniyut* ("appearance" in Aramaic) and there is *p'nimiyut* ("inwardness"). Should someone ask which is the more important, all of us would answer: *p'nimiyut*. Jerusalem without the *Shekhinah*--God's Presence--is not Jerusalem. A synagogue without a soul--without Torah and *t'fillah*--is a very poor substitute, or not even a substitute.

On the other hand, a soul without a body cannot exist, either. A congregation without proper facilities has difficulty doing its work properly. A good cantor who sings in a hall without adequate acoustics, cannot adequately discharge his obligation to pray on behalf of worshipers and have them respond "*amein*" to his recital of statutory blessings. We should, therefore, not minimize the importance of material considerations. They do have their place. Yet here, it is a question of priorities. We must affirm and stress that the spirit comes first.

In America, particularly, we must emphasize this affirmation. The boom in synagogue building that is currently going on contains much that is good. We love to pray in large, airy surroundings. The Talmud tells us that the Great Synagogue of Alexandria in ancient Egypt was a fabulous structure, so huge that the *shammash* (sexton) had to wave a flag to signal the people when to respond to the cantor. Contrarily, the religious life of Polish Jewry had its symbol--not in large synagogues--but in tiny *batei midrash* (study halls) and miniscule *shitblakh* (prayer rooms).

Which community has left us a richer legacy?

K'shimkha, elohim (FROM THE PSALM FOR MONDAY)

Text: Psalm 48:11-15
Music: Pinchas Spiro

Complete Weekday Service
(After "Mah Tovu," 1970:1)

Andante

K'-shim - kha, e - lo him, kein t' - hi - lat - kha, al kats vei

e rets, tse-dek mal - ah y' - mi - ne - kha. Yis-mah har tsi yon, ta-geil-nah

b'not y'-hu-dah, l' ma - an mish-pa - te - kha. So-bu tsi-yon v' - hak ki-fu-ha, sif-
 ru mig da le-ha. Shi-tu lib-khem l' - hei lah, pas-s' - gu ar m'-
 no te - ha, l' - ma - an t' - sap p' - ru l' - dor a - ha-
 ron. Ki zeh e - lo-him, e - lo-hei - nu o - lam va ed,
 hu y' - na - ha - gei - nu al mut.

***Ani amarti* ("I have said, 'You are angelic'")--Tuesday's Psalm—82**

This Psalm calls for justice, specifically for justice in the courts. It accuses judges of giving biased verdicts and calls upon them to be fair, particularly in defending the rights of the weak and helpless. The Psalm ends with an impassioned call: *Arise O God and judge the earth, for You are Master of all the earth.*

This verse touches upon an age-old problem: the character and source of justice. There are at least two sources of injustice. First is when the laws themselves are bad, either because the lawmakers did not know any better or because they were corrupt and deliberately enacted unjust laws. Then there is the case where the laws are just, but the officers who are charged with administering the law are evil.

The author Arthur Koestler makes this distinction in another context. He wrote a book many years ago with the title, *The Yogi and the Commissar*. As you may know, a commissar is a functionary of the Russian government, who sees to it that the laws of the Communist Party are carried out. A Yogi is a Hindu holy man who develops a high degree of self-control, even so far as controlling the flow of blood in his veins. The Yogi's mind largely controls the functions of his body.

The book investigates what makes the good society. Is it a good system, or is it good people? A Communist would say that it is the system; a Capitalist system makes it impossible to be good even if one wants to. Capitalism enmeshes you into the system, which in turn determines your conduct; you cannot escape it even with the best intentions. Therefore, to improve society you must change the system; this is the idea of the commissar.

The Yogi symbolizes those who maintain that ultimately it is the character of human beings that determines the character of a society. The best system, if administered by wicked people, results in evil. The best proof of this statement is Communism itself which, as a philosophy, has much to recommend it. While not really practical, it is not bad if done on a voluntary basis by those involved. But under a Stalin or his ilk, it becomes a calamity.

The truth is that we need both a good system and good people to run it. When laws are bad, the good administrator cannot do very much. In the city of Sodom, Abraham's nephew Lot found himself in a tight spot when he wanted to act justly toward strangers. In dictatorial countries, the good people often face a firing squad. On the other hand, good laws are no guarantee against corruption; cries against corrupt officials ring out through history. The Bible constantly repeats the admonition: *In justice shall you judge your neighbor... Justice, only justice shall you pursue.*

God is called *Avi y'tomim v'dayyan almanot* ("Father of orphans and advocate of widows"). In other words, God takes up the cause of those without a means of defending themselves, who are the ones most apt to become victims of corrupt officials. The real problem seems to be: where to find incorruptible officials? We must assume that in normal times, the laws are fair and equitable. People who will administer them fairly and equitable are humanity's challenge. Hence, the frequent pleadings of the Hebrew Prophets and of the Psalmist, that God Himself should come and judge the world.

Ani amarti

(FROM THE PSALM FOR TUESDAY)

Text: Psalm 82:6-8

Music: After Michael David Levy

Mi-zimrei hayyom

HISTADRUT HAPOEL HAMIZRAHI

DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC, 1954

Andante

mf A - ni a-mar-ti e - lo him a - tem, uv' - nei el-yon ku - l'-khem. *p* A -

più mosso

khein k' - a-dam t' - mu - tun ukh'-a - had ha - sa-rim tip - po-lu. A -

1.

2. *ff* *Declamato* *mf*

had ha - sa-rim tip - po-lu. Ku-mah e-lo-him shof - tah ha - a - rets, ki - a -

rit. *Deliberato* *p*

tah tin - hal b' - khol hag - go - yim.

***Eil n'kamot* ("God of Vengeance")--Wednesday's Psalm—94**

When the Nazi arch-murderer Adolph Eichmann was caught hiding in Argentina and brought to stand trial in Israel, the headlines of *Davkah*--a secular Israeli newspaper--carried the following verse from Psalm 94.

Eil n'kamot adonai, eil n'kamot hofi'a...
O avenging God, appear...
and let the wicked receive their recompense!

When Christians read this Psalm, they immediately draw a contrast between the Old Testament's God of Vengeance and the New Testament's God of Love. Here is the Talmud's understanding of the subject (BT *B'rakhot* 10a):

Rabbi Meier had wicked neighbors, who molested him. He prayed for their death. His wife, Beruriah, said, "What do you think? Is it because it is written (Ps. 104:35), 'Let sinners cease from the earth'? But does the text have *hott'im* ["sinners"]? Here it is written *hatta'im* ["sins"]. Glance also at the end of the verse, 'and let the wicked be no more.' This means, when sin will cease, then the wicked will be no more. Rather, should you pray that they repent, and cease from being wicked. Then Rabbi Meier offered prayers on their behalf and they repented.

An even more direct way of putting it is: *Eyzehu gibbor? ha-oseh son'av ohavav* ("Who is strong? The who transforms a foe into a friend. And yet, we know that this is not always the answer. When the soul cries out in anguish because the wicked are in power, we do not usually turn the other cheek, but seek the help of a power that can eradicate the source of the evil. The pious person then relies on his belief that God will redress the wrongs, because when we turn to humans, we find them unreliable. Verses 16 and 17 of today's Psalm express that idea.

Who is my champion against the ungodly;
Who sides with me against the evildoers.
If the Lord had not been my help;
I would soon have passed to the silent land.

Recently, we were agitated about the play, *The Deputy*, which accused Pope Pius XII of not speaking up against the Nazi extermination of European Jewry. The sad part was that not only the Pope failed to speak up. Did Roosevelt speak up? Did Churchill speak up? One who did speak up was Lord Moyne, British Secretary of State for the Colonies, and his remarks were anything but helpful. When an opportunity opened to save the Jews of Hungary, he said: "What will I do with a million Jews?" American military commanders claimed they did not have enough ships. And when ships did become available, they were assigned to deliver jigsaw puzzles to the troops overseas. Even then, did we American Jews raise our voices loudly enough to be heard?

At the end of the day, what can a Jew possibly say to his unspeakable enemy? I was a chaplain in Germany during the last stages of WWII. A Jew who had survived the concentration camp was given a chance to face one of his tormenters. I wondered what he would do. The survivor looked silently at the German, who was terror-stricken and afraid for his life. After a moment the Jew, turning away in disgust, said: "What you did to us, I cannot and will not do. To me, you are a contemptible beast. I leave it to the good Lord to settle accounts with you."

One of the charges that the Psalmist levels against the people appears in verse 10:

Lo yih'yeh v'kha eil zar, v'lo tishtahaveh l'eil neikhar

There shall be no strange god among you;

Neither shall you bow down to a foreign god.

We must ask ourselves: How can we make this admonition relevant to our own day? We do not bow down to foreign gods, nor is there any strange god to be found among us. Someone quipped that today--instead of a commandment against many gods--there ought to be a commandment that we have at least *one* god! The Kotzker Rebbe's comment will help us; he turned the words around a bit: *Eil she-b'kha lo yih'yeh zar* ("The God *within* you should not be a stranger to you").

I would like to expand the words of the Kotzker Rebbe. In the *Ethics of the Fathers* it is written: *Aseih r'tson'kha kirtsono* ("Make your will like the will of God"). How do you make your will like the will of God? The obvious answer is that you should want that which God wants. But for that, it should simply state: "You should obey God's commandments." What is meant here is that you should train your will so that it reflexively wants that which God wants.

When you ask people whether they believe in God, the overwhelming majority will answer in the affirmative. If you ask them whether that belief shapes their conduct in any way, they will not be so sure. It affects one's conduct only if the belief becomes internalized and part of one. If "belief in God" is spelled out in this way, then one's will is so trained that it always agrees with God's will as expressed in the Torah.

This is the meaning of the Kotzer Rebbe's rewording: *Eil she-b'kha lo yih'yeh zar*. Let the God that you believe in not be a mere formula, but the very essence of who and what you are (in the words of Pascal: not the God of Aristotle, but the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob).

Harninu leilohim

(FROM THE PSALM FOR THURSDAY)

Text: Psalm 81:2-5

Music: After Michael David Levy

Mi-zimrei hayyom

HISTADRUT HAPOEL HAMIZRAHI

DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC, 1954

Quasi maestoso

mf Har - ni - nu, har - ni - nu lei lo-him u - zei nu, ha - ri - u, ha -

ri - u lei - lo - hei - ya - a - kov. S' - u zim-rah ut' - nu tof,



***Adonai malakh* ("God Reigns")—Psalm 93 for Friday**

The question we must ask ourselves is: Why was Psalm 93 chosen for Friday morning and evening? It has to do with Creation. By the sixth day the heavens and the earth are firmly established, they shall not be moved. This is the whole of the Creation story. In Genesis chapter one, God clears away the waters in order to make a world. Because this Psalm is a Creation story--*zeikher l'ma'aseih v'reishit*--it takes place appropriately on Friday, eve of Sabbath, the very first Shabbat of history. Accordingly, the opening verses of the Psalm have to do with the God Who established the world and Who will reign over it throughout eternity.

Nakhon kis'akha mei'az, mei'olam atah

Your throne was established from the beginning, You are eternal."

The Psalm's closing verse predicts that "the sovereignty of Your holy house, O God," will extend "until the end of time":

l'veit'kha na'avah kodesh, adonai, l'orekh yamim.

This is the God Who we worship, and we do so here through a thrilling description of God's enthronement as Sovereign, in which the rivers rise up and raise their rushing voices by means of crashing waves, and the oceans roar in mighty breakers from their utmost depths. It is only after the awesome forces of nature proclaim: *adir ba-marom adonai*--"God is supreme!" that a spirit of calm enters--the tranquility of Sabbath. Only on the wings of peace that arrives with Shabbat can God be seen truly as "garbed in majesty"--*oz hit'azar*.

The solemn yet gently restful chant of Cantor Charles Davidson perfectly tone-paints the biblical imagery of Psalm 93. With a sure touch the music portrays chaos and collision: the noise of Creation. It is only the final third of the melody that depicts stillness and quiet. The music itself makes the point for people who are not Bible scholars, expressing through the non-verbal language of tones the passage from *ma'aseih v'reishit* to *m'nuhat shabbat* (The Work of Creation to the tranquility of God's surcease from labor).

Adonai malakh

Text: Psalm 93
Music: After Charles Davidson

26

17

S
A

nas - u n' - ha - rot ko - lam, yis - u n' - ha - rot, n' - ha - rot
ne - em - nu m' od l' - veit-kha na - a - vah, na - a - vah

T
B

22

1. 2.

Largo
Cantor sings, choir hums

S
A

dokh - yam. ko - desh, a - do - nai l' - o - rekh,

T
B

26

tenuto

pp

S
A

l' - o - rekh ya - mim.

T
B

pp

Psalm 47 – An Introductory Hymn to Sounding the Shofar

By Samuel I. Cohen

Before sounding the Shofar during services on Rosh Hashanah, the custom of reciting Psalm 47 is already mentioned in the Talmud (*Sofrim* 19b). According to Jewish tradition, Rosh Hashanah celebrates the sovereignty of the Lord over the whole world. Thus, while the text for the Blessing of the Day for all festivals except the New Year reads "Blessed are You, O Lord Who sanctifies Israel and the Festival of...", that for Rosh Hashanah reads "Blessed are You, *Adonai*, King of the whole earth (*melekh al kol ha-arets*), Who sanctifies..."

Jacob Bazak¹ has shown that a variety of numerical and geometrical devices are used to create emphases in the Book of Psalms, and Herbert Rand² has described numerological structures in biblical literature--including use of the number 26, the numerical value of the Tetragrammaton's four letters (Y-H-V-H), to suggest the Divine presence. This article will attempt to show that the author of Psalm 47 used these devices as well as many others to emphasize the words "Lord" (Tetragrammaton), "King" (*melekh*) and "earth" (*arets*), and that it was his original intention that this Psalm be recited at the Rosh Hashanah service.

The Psalm and its content

The Psalm consists of two stanzas, each with two verses, then the central verse (6), followed by two more two-verse stanzas. The superscription (verse 1) is not part of the structure of the Psalm.

Figure I--the text of Psalm 47

- (1) For the leader; a psalm of the sons of Korah
- (2) O clap your hands, all ye peoples,
Shout unto God with the voice of triumph.
- (3) For *ADONAI* is most high, awful;
A great King over all the earth.
- (4) He subdueth people under us,
And nations under our feet.
- (5) He chooseth our inheritance for us.
The pride of Jacob whom He loveth. Selah.
- (6) God is gone up amidst shouting,
ADONAI amidst the sound of the Shofar.
- (7) Sing praises to God, sing praises;
Sing praises unto our King, sing praises.
- (8) For God is the King of all the earth;
Sing ye praises in a skillful song.
- (9) God reigneth over the nations;

¹ Jacob Bazak, "Short Notes, Numerical Devices in Biblical Poetry," *Vitus Testamentum* 38 (1988), pp. 333-337.

² Herbert Rand, "Numerological Structure in Hebrew Literature," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* (1991) 20, pp. 50-56.

- God sitteth upon His holy throne.
(10) The princes of the peoples are gathered together,
The people of the God of Abraham;
For unto God belong the shields of the earth;
He is greatly exalted.

In the first stanza the author turns to the people of the world and calls upon them to proclaim the supremacy of the Lord, the great King over the world. In the next stanza, the author turns to his own people and promises them that the Lord will eventually subdue their enemies and give them "our inheritance" (*nahalateinu*), the Land of Israel. Verse 6 stands alone and describes the ascent of the Lord to His throne, accompanied by the trumpeting of a ram's horn (*b'kol shofar*). In the third stanza, the author turns to his people and asks them to praise God, "our King," King of the whole world (*melekh kol ha-arets*). In the final stanza, the author turns to the princes of the world, who in time to come will assemble with the people of Abraham in acknowledging the sovereignty of the Lord.

Devices emphasizing the kingship of *ADONAI*

The ascent of the Lord to His throne and His universal kingship expressed in verse 6 is the central *idea*: God is gone up amidst shouting, *the Lord amidst the sound of the Shofar*. This is emphasized by means of a number of devices.

Verse 6 is the middle one of the Psalm's nine verses and is almost exactly in the center, with 33 words before it and 34 after it. The Tetragrammaton in verse 6 is found *exactly* in the text's halfway point, with 36 words before it and 36 words after it, thus placing God's name in the center of all things. Furthermore, the Tetragrammaton appears only twice in the Psalm, in verses 3 and 6, and between these two appearances there are exactly 26 words: the numerical value of the Tetragrammaton. Also, in these two verses, the supremacy of God the King is the main thing. Verse 6 contains 26 letters, giving it further emphasis. The words used to indicate "shouting" (*t'ru'ah*) and "trumpet" (*shofar*) in verse 6 happen to be those used in connection with the Shofar ceremony--commemorating God's Kingship--that is re-enacted on Rosh Hashanah. By placing the name of God in significant positions in verses which stress His supremacy, this central idea is emphasized.

Each stanza consists of two short and equal phrases of parallel meaning, each of three or four beats followed by a much longer phrase. By contrast, verse 6 consists only of two short equal phrases, each of three beats. This interruption of rhythm at verse 6 would have created emphasis when the Psalm was sung in the ancient Temple service, and if the Psalm is read aloud, this emphasis can still be felt.

Emphasis on the word "King"

The Psalm can be divided into two halves, as follows: Verses 2 to 6 have a chiasmic structure, whereby the words of an antecedent part are inverted in the subsequent part. "Shout" in verse 2 (*hari'u*) is parallel to "in shouting" (*bitru'ah*) in verse 6. "King of the world" in verse 3 is parallel to the king who will choose the inheritance in verse 5, and the parallels in both cases occur in mirror image. In verse 4, this inversion occurs within the verse itself: the first half is parallel to the second half. And this verse is situated almost exactly in the center of this half of the Psalm, with 17 words before it and 16 after it.

The Psalm's second half, verses 6 to 10, is defined *numerically*. Verse 6 contains 26 letters, verses 7 and 8 each contain 52 letters (26 X 2), and verses 9 and 10 each contain 78 letters (26 X 3). Verse 6 is common to both halves of the Psalm--as if the central idea were repeated for emphasis. The word "King" (*melekh*, here referring to God) appears only twice in the Psalm. In verse 3 it appears 26 words before the end of the Psalm's first half; i.e., before the end of verse 6. In verse 8 it appears 26 words before the end of the Psalm's second half. One hundred and thirty words (26 X 5) separate "King" in verse 3 from "king" in verse 8. By using the number 26 in this way, the role of God as Supreme King is emphasized.

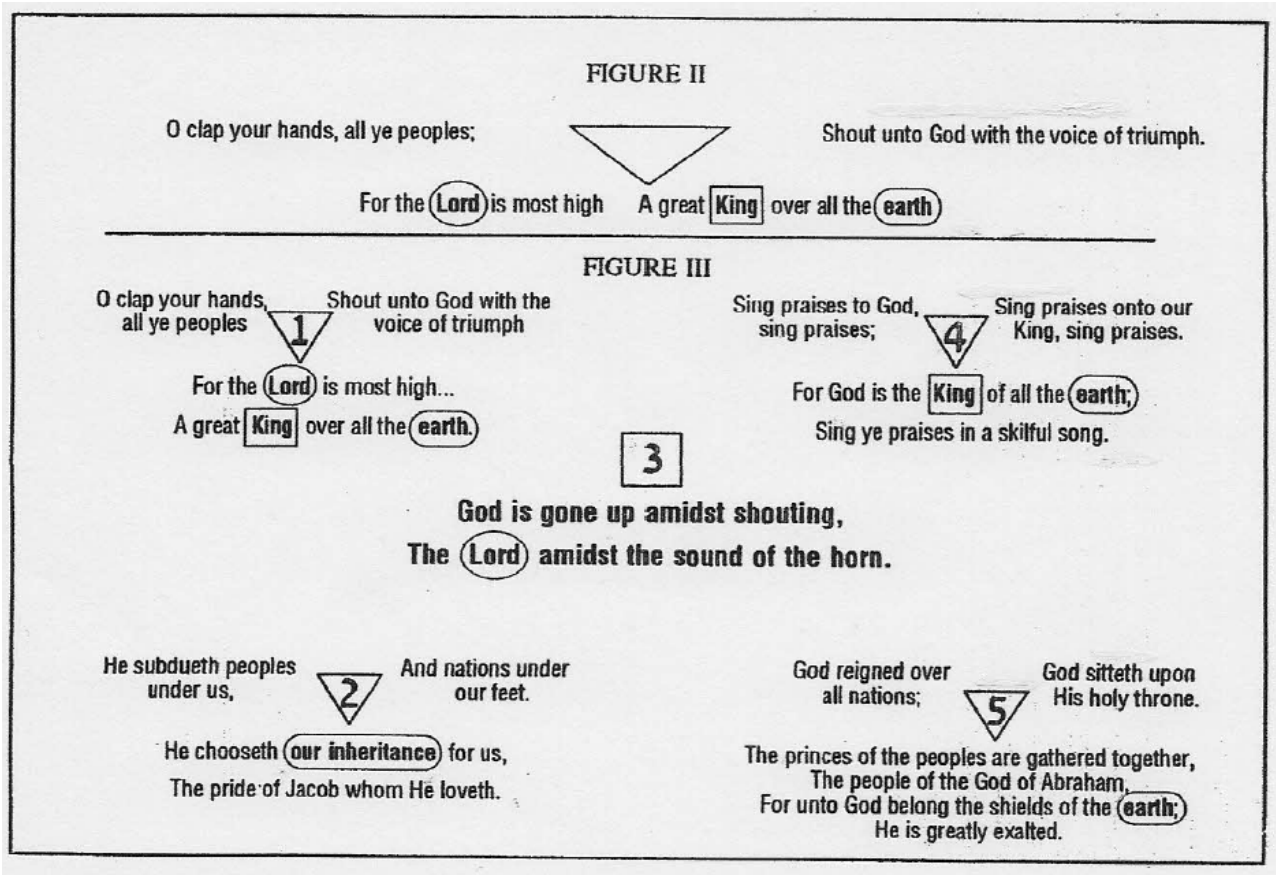
Special position of the word "Earth"

The word "earth" is emphasized by *structural* devices. Each stanza consists of two short equal phrases of parallel meaning followed by a longer phrase, and could be represented by a triangle with the apex pointing downwards (**Figure II**). The structure of the whole Psalm can be represented by having the first two stanzas on the left and the second two on the right, with verse 6 in the center (**Figure III**). That this positioning is correct can be seen from the fact that the words at the top of triangle 1, in which all the peoples are asked to clap hands and shout in song, are opposite the words at the top of triangle 4, in which the people of Israel are asked to sing out. The word "earth" (*arets*) occurs at the apexes of triangle 1, 4 and 5, while the words "our inheritance" (*nahalateinu*) occurs at the apex of triangle 2 (*nahalah* usually means land which is inherited). In triangles 1, 4 and 5, the sovereignty of God over the earth is stated, in each case introduced with the Hebrew participle: *ki*. In triangle 2 (verse 5), the Lord Who is King of the universe gives the Promised Land as an inheritance to His people, and since He has sovereignty over it, the gift is as of right.

From Figure III it can also be seen that in addition to the emphasis on the word "King" by a numerical device, as described above, the Psalm's structure emphasizes this word additionally. Notice that the words "King of all the earth" (*melekh kol ha-arets*) appear opposite one another at the apexes of triangles 1 and 4.

Finally, it is possible that the phrase "people of the God of Abraham" (*am elohei avraham*) in triangle 5 (verse 10) was placed deliberately opposite "our inheritance" (*nahalateinu*) in triangle 2 (verse 4), since the inheritance was promised to Abraham and his children (Genesis 12:7).

Figures II and III--structural devices built into Psalm 47



The names of God

Several names are used for God in this Psalm. The name *elohim* is normally used, according to Jewish tradition, when God is seen in the role of a judge. Some 400 years ago, Rabbi Yaakov Emden--in his siddur *Beit ya'akov*--pointed out that the name *elohim* appears seven times in Psalm 47. The number seven is significant in that it suggests wholeness and is further evidence that the Psalm was intended for use on the Day of Judgement: Rosh Hashanah.

The meaning of the word *maskil*

The word *maskil* sometimes appears in the superscription of Psalms, and its meaning has puzzled most translators. One meaning that is favored is that it is an instruction to sing with a particular skill. It is possible that the words "sing maskil" (*shiru maskil*) at the end of verse 8 are, in fact, an introduction to verses 9 and 10, and that they serve to emphasize further the contents of these verses: that in the Messianic age all people will unite in recognizing the universality of the kingship of God. This could be the reason why the author refers to God in verse 10 as the God of Abraham, who was called "the father of a multitude of nations" (*av hamon goyyim*) and was regarded as the first convert (*t'hilah la-geirim*).³

³ BT *Hagigah* 3a.

Summary

The author's intention was to affirm the kingship of God over the whole earth, and it was therefore probably his intention that the Psalm would be part of the Rosh Hashanah liturgy where this idea is paramount. The author creates this emphasis by using numerical and geometrical devices to add weight to the terms "God," King" and "earth." At the same time, he uses the devices to show that the King of the world will keep His promise to Abraham and will give the Promised land--which is His--to Abraham's children.

*Dr. Samuel Isaac Cohen (1925-2004) was a pioneer in the field of Liason Psychiatry at the Royal London Hospital. He continued clinical work as a visiting professor after retirement, and in 1968 re-established Jerusalem's Ezrath Nashim Hospital as a modern psychiatric center. Throughout his medical career he pursued advanced Judaic study, publishing numerous papers on the Psalms and their structure. This article is printed here with his personal permission, given to the editor pre-publication; **it later appeared in Beit Mikra 135, July-September 199: 361-367, as "Melekh gadol al kol ha'arets" and in The Jewish Bible Quarterly Review 23.4, 1995:256-264, under the title, "Psalm 47-- Numerical and Geometrical Devices Used to Emphasize the Author's Message."***

Art works without show, and without pomp presides.

(Alexander Pope, *Essay on Criticism*, 1711)

Lamnatsei'ah livnei korah

Psalm 47

After Beny Maissner
1978

Verse 1 (Cantor's Introduction)



From here on, Cantor, then Congregation,
Verse by Verse



Verse 9

Gm6 F Eb F C

Ma - lach e - lo - him al go - yim, e - lo - him ya - shav al ki - sei kod - sho.

Verse 10

Bbm Db Ab Fm Bbm Fm

N'di vei a - mim ne - e - sa - fu, am e - lo - hei av - ra

ham; ki lei - lo - him ma - gi - nei e - rets m' - od na - a - lah.



The Shofar Blower, Germany, early 15th century;
Cambridge University Library.

Psalm 23—A Learning Session on Transfiguration in the House of Mourning

By Jacob Agus

My dear family and friends.

In the siddurim you have before you—*Prayers of Consolation*⁴--the text we have just read is titled, “Psalm 23.” I like to think of it as The Prayer of *Transfiguration*. That is to say, we offer it not to find new meaning in the *prayer*—but to find new meaning in *ourselves*.

The Psalm opens with an image of God as our “shepherd.” If God is our shepherd, then it follows that we are—sheep! And, like sheep, we submit to our given place in the world. Sheep, after all, cannot understand their shepherd’s mind. Just so, *we* cannot understand God’s ultimate plan for humankind, including the time that was set for _____ to depart this world.

That is because life never sets a straight, *predictable* path for us to follow. That may seem strange to you, as you read the psalmist’s words in English translation: “He guideth me in *straight* paths for His name’s sake.” But the Hebrew phrase *ma’aglei tzedek* does *not* mean “straight” paths; what God actually lays out for us to follow are anything but straight. *Ma’agal* is a circle, and *ma’aglei tzedek* are circuitous--or circular—paths. They turn out to be righteous--in the sense of “right” or “correct”—because, though we take them like trusting sheep following their shepherd, they will eventually get us to the right place.

The psalmist’s message: There *is* meaning in the world, and we *can* share in it—even in “the valley of the shadow of death.” The key is to trust in our shepherd. The prophet Isaiah put it this way: “God’s thoughts are not our thoughts” (Is. 55: 8).

And so, we console one another at times of great loss, with the adage, “weep for the mourners; the departed is at peace.” And yet, the stark reality remains: it is the *family* of the departed who are left to deal with their sorrow.

At this dark moment, in the 23rd Psalm, it is as if a *light* has been turned on. Where we had started out as sheep, now the image of God suddenly has shifted—from a shepherd—to a *King*. Not only that, but this Shepherd/King invites us to *dinner*. We are eyewitnesses to an unbelievable scene where it is not the *servants* who do the menial work, but God Almighty, Who “prepares a table before me.”

Our place at this table is set. In ancient times you weren’t given a plate, but a *cup*. Think of the bride and groom at a wedding; they drink from the same cup, which represents their shared destiny. The cup of *our* destiny, from which we are about to drink, “runneth over.” We are being treated like royalty.

So certain are we that our future is assured, we are moved to announce with confidence: “I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever!”

⁴ Compiled by Rabbi Morris Silverman (Hartford: Prayer Book Press), 1953: 184.

Think of it. We have gone from sheep—to *permanent houseguests* of the King. In other words, we are *transfigured*. We have seen daylight at the end of the tunnel of grief. We realize that ultimately we *will* emerge from the ordeal of our beloved _____'s death. We now feel that God is no longer *beyond* us, but that God is also a *part* of us, that we--and God--share the same table, live in the same house.

Knowing we are created in the image of God, and heartened by that knowledge, we are finally able to *stand* before God—in this house of mourning—and say with deep conviction:

We exalt and hallow the great name
of the Holy One Who created this world,
and Whose sovereignty holds sway over our lives...

Yitgaddal v'yitkaddash sh'meih rabba
b'alma di v'ra khiruteih v'yamlakh malkhuteih b'hayyeikhon...

The Journal's editor was honored in 1960 to co-officiate with Jacob Agus at a Shiva minyan in Baltimore where the rabbi gave this talk. Impressed with the its theological implications, I jotted down the gist of it immediately afterwards, and have reconstructed it more fully for this article. [JAL]

True art always eludes the net of contemporary taste.

(André Malraux, *The Voices of Silence*, 1953)

Mizmor l'david...adonai ro'i

Chant for Psalm 23
In Hebrew or English

(THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD)

M. Wohlberg
Arr. L. Avery

Cantor

Piano

F#m parlando *C#m* *F#m*

Miz - mor l' - da - vid, a - do - nai ro - i lo eh - sar. Bin - ot
The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie

Bm *A* *F#m*

de - she yar - bi - tsei - ni, al mei m' - nu - hot y' - na - ha - lei - ni.
down in green pas - tures, He leads me be - side still wa - ters.

E *F#m Declamato* *C#m7* *F#m*

Naf - shi y' - sho - veiv, yan - hei - ni v' - mag - lei tse - dek l' - ma - an sh' - mo.____
He re - stores my soul, He leads me in right paths for the sake of His name.____

8 *C#m F#m parlando Bm*

Gam ki ei - leikh b' - gei tsal - ma - vet
Even when I walk in the valley of the sha - dow of death

11 *Bm A Bm*

lo i - ra ra ki a - tah i - ma - di,
I shal fear no evil for You are with me,

colla voce

14 *F#m D7 F#m F#*

shiv' - t' - kha u - mish - an - te - kha heim - mah y' - na - ha - mu - ni.
with rod and staff You comfort me.

16 F# Em F#

Ta - a - rokh l'-fa-nai shul - han ne ged
You have set a ta-ble be - for me in the pre - sence

19 E

tso - r' - rai, di - shan - ta va - she - men ro -
of my e - ne - mies, You have a - noin - ted my

21 E

shi ko - si r'-va-yah. Akh
head with oil, my cup o - ver flows. Sure-ly

23

F#m Dmaj7 F#m B

tov va - he - sed yir - d' - fu - ni kol y' - mei hay - yai, v' - shav -
 good - ness and mer - cy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall

25

A Bm F#m C#m F#m

ti b'-veit a - do - nai l' - o - rekh ya - mim.
 dwell in the house of the Lord, for - e - ver

MAIL BOX

Subject: Un-Jewish Music

June 26, 2013

I recently have been enjoying the CD *Whitechapel Mayn Vaytshepl* by Klezmer Klub. The fact that this exciting London-based klezmer band is largely made up of non-Jews set me thinking: What is the attraction of Jewish music to non-Jews?

Klezmer music in the UK is now largely a non-Jewish culture. In 2010 the Jewish Music Institute promoted a klezmer workshop in which, to the surprise of the organizers, the majority of participants were non-Jews. The 2011 Spitalfields Festival likewise featured a klezmer band which was mainly non-Jewish. Of course, it doesn't matter in performance whether a musician is Jewish or not; but if the majority of artists playing ethnic music belong to a different ethnic group, the question arises: what direction is the music taking? What kind of "Jewish music" will there be if the performers regard Jewish content as irrelevant or even embarrassing?

The *Zeitgeist* (to use the term popularized by Richard Dawkins) considers Jews to be a left-over from the Stone Age, an inherently cruel people (think: circumcision, *sh'hithah*) that should have disappeared long ago. Two recent faux-histories,--Gilad Atzmon's *The Wandering Who?*--and Shlomo Sand's *The Invention of the Jewish People*, have held the attention of a poorly-educated public with accounts of the weaknesses and absurdities of the Jewish People: borderline anti-semitism that would surely never have been published if the authors had not themselves been Jewish. How does this spill over into the world of Jewish music?

Meanwhile in the background there is the de-Judaizing trend of attempting to remove Holocaust material from the repertoire. The Holocaust makes many people uneasy, seeing it as a cheap way to arouse sympathy for unpleasant Jewish activities such as support for Israel. So uneasy, in fact, that in January 2012 the Archbishop of Canterbury, in a Holocaust Memorial Day speech, failed to mention the word "Jew" altogether. In 2010 Will Self, writing in the *Times Literary Supplement*, quoted approvingly critic Theodore Adorno's opinion that the Holocaust should not be commemorated through the arts. Now, Adorno wrote a lot of foolish things about music and the arts, but this one is particularly foolish. Are we really going to abandon the magnificent works of the witnesses themselves--Primo Levi, Avrom Sutskever, Viktor Ullmann and the myriad ghetto songs that today still inspire survivors and their families, and indeed anyone who cares about humanity?

Then there are the several klezmer groups in the UK who work on old and new repertoire that deliberately emphasizes "universal" themes of poverty and struggle. Certainly, "social activism" has always been an important part of Yiddish music and culture, championed in particular by Workmen's Circle *folksmentshn* such as the late, great singer Adrienne Cooper. Nothing wrong in that -- but neither is there anything particularly Jewish about it. But even the *folksmentshn* of the past celebrated Jewish customs. The Klezmer Klub website quotes a review that its CD is full of the "bustle and boisterousness of Saturday markets"--hardly the kind of comment that springs to mind when reflecting on specifically Jewish experience. Who speaks for the Jews in this "Jewish music"?

A program at the Spiro Ark (a London-based charitable organization which fosters cultural events) in 2011 looked at the lives of the Jews in the old East End and asked: “What were their lives like? What songs reflected the factories and sweatshops?” No place here, then, for Adrienne Cooper’s favourite song *Shnirele, Perele*, with its haunting vision of the Messiah making Kiddush prior to his imminent arrival on Earth—“Too Jewish!”--as Jackie Mason would say. Instead, the new un-Jewish music interprets Jewish life as little more than a history of past social struggles. Klezmer music has become a memorial to an extinct race, rather than a genuine expression of the life of the Jewish People.

Charles Heller
Toronto

Subject: What *U-n'taneh tokef* and *Dayyeinu* Have in Common

March 15, 2013

In JSM 2013 ("The Provenance, Dating, Allusions and Variants of *U-n'taneh tokef* and Its Relationship to Romano's Kontakion") John Planer writes:

The *piyyut* as we know it may be a composite work. The *B'rosh ha-shanah* section is more a list than exposition and development of ideas.

Reading about this kind of "list" in juxtaposition with a more crafted work which it summarizes, reminded me of the way *Kamah ma'alot tovo* adds nothing to the *Dayyeinu* which precedes it. One can speculate as to the liturgical function of such redundancy (as I have), but one can safely assume that a *payy'tan* who just finished putting the finishing touches on a transparently simple *piyyut* is not about to run on at the quill explaining what he just wrote. Then who did? Probably a moralist of a later generation wanting to hammer the point into our conscience lest we dismiss (or even omit) his creation as mere poetry.

Sam Weiss
Oradell, NJ

To reveal art and conceal the artist is art's aim.

(Oscar Wilde, preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 1891)

D'VAR N'GINAH

Notes from a Workshop: Adapting an Existent Psalm Tune to Newly Created Words

By Shoshana Brown

For a workshop that I once led on this topic at an ALEPH Kallah (Jewish Renewal Retreat), I brought along a handful of Psalms photocopied from the original Conservative *Siddur Sim Shalom* (edited by Jules Harlow and published in 1985; henceforth, SSS). My text selections were Psalms 30, 130, 27, 146 and 150--in both Hebrew and English versions. This was because I did not know whether my students would be Hebrew readers or not.

I had a little under two hours with these students, during which I explained to them how and why Psalms had for so long been dear to me on my own personal journey. At that point in my life I had begun either to compose my own melodies or to find "borrowed" Psalm melodies to sing slowly in my own private davening at home, since at a conventional minyan one hardly has the chance to stretch out proceedings through the introduction of such personal favorites. At the workshop I demonstrated examples of what I had done with several of the above-mentioned Psalms--and gave the participants free copies of homemade CDs that I had made at my computer just before coming to the Kallah.

Next, we had to determine in what language we would be working. I apologized for the lame English translations from SSS, and told the group that the first part of their assignment for this session would be to pick a Psalm and rewrite the words in their own personal vernacular. For that new text they then had to either compose a tune or "borrow" one (as I had previously demonstrated for them, applying Appalachian folk melodies to the pre-selected Psalms).

The results, in about 90 minutes, were remarkable. Most of the students (all women, incidentally), chose familiar tunes like "You Are My Sunshine" and "Home on the Range." An attorney from Pittsburgh, however, named Beth Rabkin, not only used "Waters of Babylon" (a public domain melody) for Psalm 150, she set it to her own on-the-spot translation of the text. Beth subsequently gave me written permission to feature her lyrics in this *Dvar n'ginah*.

The melody is variously named "We Remember Thee, Zion" or "Babylon" or "By the Waters" or "Waters of Babylon," which we finally settled upon. The most recent version of it appears on a CD: the sound track for the TV series, *Mad Men*. Beth Rabkin subsequently had the following to say about the words she wrote for the tune, "Waters of Babylon."

I've called our song "Just by Breathing," because that's less of a mouthful than "Each and every breath of life (its first line). For me, it better captures the song's meaning, which is all about the naturalness and ease and flow of prayer and of blessings. I see the connection with Hashem as being a part of every minute of our lives instead of bein compartmentalized, bottled up, sanitized and twisted into what some Ritual committee thinks is the only "correct" way to pray.¹

¹ Private communication to the writer, December 4, 2009.

Here is the opening strophe of the new poem that Beth created at the Kallah, set to the old music as a three-part round:

Just by Breathing

Words: Beth Rabkin, after the
Jules Harlow translation
in *Siddur Sim Shalom*, 1985

Music : After "Waters of Babylon,"
a three part round

The musical score is written in 4/4 time and consists of three parts, each on a single staff. Part 1 begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is composed of eighth and quarter notes. Part 2 starts with a whole note, followed by half notes and quarter notes. Part 3 continues the melody with eighth and quarter notes. The lyrics are written below the staves, with some words underlined to indicate phrasing.

① Each ____ and ev' - ry, each ____ and ev' - ry, each ____ and ev' - ry breath of life

② Shall sing Your praise, ____ shall sing, ____ shall sing Your praise,

③ Just ____ by breath ____ ing, shall sing, ____ shall sing Your praise.

I do not expect to start hearing this at my Conservative *shul*, but it's alive, it's real, and it is from the heart. I felt so thrilled to witness this and other treasures pour forth from the imaginations of students I'd never met before this brief workshop. It was a truly humbling experience.

Shoshana Brown is a frequent contributor to the Journal of Synagogue Music. She and her husband Mark serve Beth El Congregation in Fall River, MA, as Cantor and Rabbi, respectively. Her most recent review, of Shmuel Barzilai's "Chassidic Ecstasy in Music," appeared in the 2013 issue.

RECENT ETHNOMUSICOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Two Symbolic Songs of the Seder Night

By Amanda Winter

Translations of the Haggadah have proliferated, but only since the 16th century. Before then, it seems that it was the duty of the head of the household to “translate” by telling the story of the Exodus in the vernacular language to those attending the Seder. Thomas Murner, a Christian scholar, produced the first written translation of the Haggadah into Latin in 1612. Amsterdam and Venice—more than a century after Murner’s work was printed—were the locations for the first printed productions of the Haggadah translated by Jews into a standard European language: Spanish.¹ The world has seen many different translations of the Haggadah since then, occasionally embracing the local vernacular along with Hebrew.

Different groups of Jews have developed their own Seder customs, not necessarily included in the Haggadah, that made use of their vernacular language at a certain point of the Exodus story’s retelling. For example, during a Syrian Seder, someone would wrap up the Afikomen, put it over their shoulder and recite the verse from Exodus (12:34) that told of how “the people took their dough before it was leavened, with their kneading bowls wrapped in their cloaks upon their shoulders.” Essentially, that person is acting out a specific element of the Exodus from Egypt. Attendees at the Syrian Seder witness this re-enactment and ask in Arabic, “Where do you come from?” The individual replies, “Egypt! The group asks another question, “Where are you going?” And the individual happily responds, “Jerusalem!”² In Morocco, there is a Passover tradition of the family all singing an Arabic song when the *matsah* is first broken. Here is the English translation:

So too did the Almighty split the Red Sea into twelve paths when our ancestors left Egypt under the leadership of Moses, the son of Amram, may he rest in peace. Just as God redeemed them from their hard work to freedom, so too will the Almighty, blessed be He, redeem us from this dispersion for His own awesome name’s sake.

Just as with the Syrian tradition, this song may be the only ritual at the Moroccan Seder that is performed in the vernacular—Arabic—while the rest of the Seder is in Hebrew.³ In both instances, the scenarios described are key points of the Seder ritual. The actions performed and words sung reveal the major headlines of the Passover story. If a Syrian or Moroccan father had to choose which pieces of the Seder were the most meaningful and memorable, they might well be these two moments, for they embody the main reasons behind the celebration: the joy of freedom and the acknowledgement of how we got there. So, it makes perfect sense that these customs—as part of an interactive holiday celebration—would be performed in a language that everyone, especially those not learned in biblical or rabbinic texts, would have the ability to understand and appreciate.

¹ Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Haggadah and History* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society), 2005: 61-62.

² Herbert C. Dobrinsky, *A Treasury of Sephardic Laws and Customs* (New York: Yeshiva University Press), 1986:246.

³ *Ibid.*, 261-262.

The part of the Seder ritual that most notably changes from Haggadah to Haggadah is the group of songs that follow *Nirtsah*, or official conclusion--*Hasal siddur pesah k'hilkhato*--"Now is our Seder concluded, each custom and law fulfilled."⁴ Two songs in particular--*Ehad mi yodei'a* and *Had gadya*--were added only in the Middle Ages. There is no documented reason for their appearance in the Haggadah, except perhaps to keep the children awake and engaged towards the end of the evening, or simply to continue the joyous celebration. They each tell a unique story. Although they seem lighthearted, playing with numbers and animals, they both are highly symbolic in their prose.

***Ehad mi yodei'a*--Who Knows One?**

Here are the opening and closing verses of our first selected song, in its Hebrew original, and in an English translation:⁵

אֶחָד מִי יוֹדֵעַ, אֶחָד אֲנִי יוֹדֵעַ: אֶחָד אֱלֹהֵינוּ שֶׁבְּשָׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ...	Who knows one? I know one: One is God of heaven and earth...
שְׁלֹשָׁה עָשָׂר מִי יוֹדֵעַ, שְׁלֹשָׁה עָשָׂר אֲנִי יוֹדֵעַ: שְׁלֹשָׁה עָשָׂר מִזְדָּא, שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר שְׁבִטִיָּא, אֶחָד עָשָׂר בּוֹכְבִיָּא, עֶשְׂרֵה דְּבִרְיָא, תְּשַׁעַה יְרֵחַי לֵידָה, שְׁמֹנֶה יָמֵי מִילָה, שִׁבְעָה יָמֵי שְׁבֻתָּא, שֵׁשָׁה סִדְרֵי מִשְׁנָה, חֲמִשָּׁה חֻמְשֵׁי תוֹרָה, אַרְבַּע אֲמָרוֹת, שְׁלֹשָׁה אֲבוֹת, שְׁנֵי לַחֹת הַבְּרִית, אֶחָד אֱלֹהֵינוּ שֶׁבְּשָׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ.	Who knows thirteen? I know thirteen: Thirteen attributes of God; Twelve tribes of Israel; Eleven stars in Joseph's dream; Ten, the Ten Commandments; Nine months to make a human child; Eight days before the foreskin's cut; Seven days of the week; Six sections of Mishnah; Five the Books of Moses; Four fruitful Patriarchs; Three believing Patriarchs; Two stone tablets of the Law; One is God of heaven and earth.

⁴ *The Passover Haggadah*, Morris Silverman, ed. (Bridgeport, CT: Prayer Book Press), 1959:65.

⁵ *The Passover Haggadah*, Translated and Annotated by Philip Birnbaum (New York: Hebrew Publishing Company), 1953:92-93, 96-97.

Ehad mi yodei'a has its roots in the 15th century,⁶ and is believed to be based on a German folk song called “*Guter Freund Ich Frage Dich*” (Good Friend, I Ask You). The song opens with, *Eins ist unser Gott, der da lebt, der da schwebt im Himmel* (“One is our God who lives in and hovers over heaven”). We find this same verse in a Yiddish version of *Ehad mi yodei'a*.⁷ While it is common for a Jewish song to develop from a non-Jewish folk song, this one manages to find deeper meaning. David Arnov, an expert on the Passover Seder, says about the text of *Ehad mi yodei'a*: “this song encourages us to count—to count what matters, not the size of our armies, but the objects of our faith.”⁸

Ehad mi yodei'a exists in multiple languages, many of which are translations, as in the English above. Other versions interpret the text less literally. As an example, for the 200th anniversary of the United States’s existence, the American Jewish Historical Society created *The Bicentennial Passover Haggadah*. It includes a patriotic version of *Ehad mi yodei'a* in English, that highlights the successes of those who fought for our American freedom.⁹ Among these were the Colonial settlers, Revolutionary War patriots, Supreme Court Justices and exceptional American Jewish women like the poet Emma Lazarus, among others, who contributed to the uniqueness of America and of American Jewry. Based on the extensive listings for each enumeration, it is highly improbable that this version of the song was meant to be sung. Rather, it was intended to teach American Jews to better appreciate the 18th-century American fight for independence, comparing it to the Israelites’ ancient path to liberation from slavery. The struggles and sentiments behind both events evoke similar emotions. When we recall either of them, as Jews and as Americans, we are grateful that our forebears made sacrifices and persevered so that we would be able to live the free lives that we do. The use of English in this interpretive Haggadah is a clear representation of Jewish-American identity.

Rabbi Shelton J. Donnell recently compiled a Haggadah based on the Sephardic rite. He includes the Ladino version of *Ehad mi yodei'a*, which is a very close translation of the Hebrew listed previously:¹⁰

Kien supiense y entiendense alavar al Dio kriense,
Kualo son los treje?

Treje son los Ikarim,
doje hermanos kon Yosef,
onze hermanos sin Yosef,
diez mandamientos de la Ley,
nueve mezes de la prenyada,
ocho dias de la millah,
siete dias kon el Shabbat,
sesh dias de la semana,
cinko livros de la Ley,

⁶ *The Haggadah of Passover* (New York:Shulsinger Brothers), 1949, P. 12 of the "Introductory Notes" by Sidney B. Hoenig.

⁷ Lawrence Hoffman, *My People's Passover Haggadah*, (Woodstock; Jewish Lights, 1976), Vol. 2, 1976:222.

⁸ David Arnov, *My People's Passover Haggadah*, Vol. 2: 215

⁹ Carole B. Balin, *My People's Passover Haggadah*, Vol. 2 : 206.

¹⁰ Shelton J. Donnell, *A Passover Haggadah* (Santa Anna, CA), 2001:62-65.

kuatro madres de Yisrael,
tres muestros padres son,
dos Moshe y Aharon,
uno es el Kriador, *barukh hu uvarukh sh'mo!*

An element that stands out in this *Ehad mi yodei'a* is its use of both Hebrew and Ladino. *Ikkarim* and *millah* are Hebrew words that bear uniquely Jewish meaning; they do not exist in secular Spanish. Any attempt to translate them would require extra explanation of their meaning and origin. Consequently, it makes sense that those words would simply remain in Hebrew and that their meaning would be common knowledge among Ladino-speaking communities. Furthermore, the idea that the concepts of Maimonides' Thirteen Principles (*ikkarim*) of Faith and of ritual circumcision (*millah*) were common knowledge tells outsiders that they were important parts of the community's everyday life. While scholars are fairly certain of this song's origin in 15th-century, Germany, when it first appeared in a Ladino translation is unclear.

Here is an excerpt from another version of *Ehad mi yodei'a*. This one, known as *Mu asapru*, is given in Yiddish, followed by its translation.¹¹ It is a straightforward rendering of the Hebrew, with the first line recurring as a refrain:

Mu asapru mu adabru oyskho, oyskho, yam-ti-di-day-dam?
Ver ken zogn, ver ken redn
Vos di eyns batayt?
Eyner iz dokh gott, un gott iz eyner, un vayter keyner...

... vos di zibn batayt?
Zibn zenen di vokhentyg,
Zeks zenen di mishnayes,
Finf zenen di khumoshim,
Fir zenen di imes,
Dray zenen di oves,
Tsvey zenen di likhes,
Un eyner iz dokh Got, Un Got iz eyner...

How shall I tell, how shall I say,
Who can know, who can tell the meaning of One?
One is God, He is One, and none else...

... the meaning of seven?
Seven are the days of the week,
Six are the six books of Mishnah,
Five are the Five Books of Moses Four are the Matriarchs,
Three are our Patriarchs,
Two are the Tablets of the Law,
One is God, He is One, and none else...

¹¹ Hebrew and English are from www.zemerl.com

The Yiddish version of *Ehad mi yodei'a* was popularized by the well-known actor and musician, Theodore Bikel.¹² Its wording is slightly different than the English or the Ladino, but it uses the same structure and enumerated objects. As indicated earlier (see note 7), other Yiddish versions begin with words from the German song believed to be its inspiration. It seems that taking liberties with this particular song and this part of the Haggadah in general is a regular occurrence throughout the Jewish Diaspora. Not being part of part of the prescribed liturgy, it remains fair game for any group to take ownership and make it their own.

Allegretto, accelerating with each verse

Mu a-sap-ru mu a-dab-ru oys-kho, oys-kho yam ta-da-ri - ya ver ken zo-gn ver ken re-dn

vos di eyns ba-dayt, vos di eyns ba-dayt? Ey - ner iz gott, un gott iz ey - ner, un

vay-ter key-ner Hey!... ...Mu a - sap-ru mu a - dab-ru oys - kho, oys - kho yam ta-da-ri - ya

ver ken zo-gen ver ken re-dn vos di zi-bn ba-dayt, vos di zi-bn ba-dayt? Zi-bn ze-nen di

vo-kh'n teyg, zeks ze-nen di mish - na-yes, finf ze-nen di khu - mo-shim, fir ze-nen di

i - mes, dray ze-nen di o - ves, tsvey ze-nen di li - khes, un ey-ner iz dokh gott, un

gott iz ey - ner un vay - ter key - ner.

Example 1. Yiddish version of *Ehad mi yodei'a* as recorded by Theodore Bikel.

¹² Theodore Bikel Sings Jewish Folk Songs, Elektra Records, 1959, track 11.

Had gadya—One Little Goat

The second of our two selected songs--*Had gadya*--may have been written originally in Yiddish. This surmise is based upon the fact that in the first Haggadah printed by a Jew (Prague, 1526), it appeared in Yiddish.¹³ It was eventually translated into Aramaic, whose opening and closing strophes along with an English translation appear below:¹⁴

חד גדיא, חד גדיא, דיבן אבא בתרי זוי; חד גדיא, חד גדיא...	One little goat, one little goat. That Father bought for two zuzim, one little goat, one little goat...
ואתא הקדוש ברוך הוא, ושחט למלאך המות, ושחט לשוחט, ושחט להורא, ושחט למיא, דכבה לנורא, דשרף לחוטא, דהבה לבלבא, דנשד לשנא, דאכל לגדיא, דיבן אבא בתרי זוי; חד גדיא, חד גדיא.	... Then came the Holy One, Blessed be He and slew the Angel of Death, that killed the slaughterer, that slaughtered the ox, that drank the water, that quenched the fire, that burnt the stick, that beat the dog, that bit the cat, that ate the goat, That Father bought for two zuzim, one little goat, one little goat.

Had gadya, the final sung poem to be added to the Haggadah, is didactic and contains symbolic and figurative language that playfully hints at the history of the Jewish people.¹⁵ This structure and its imagery have certainly appeared in other similar poems and songs from non-Jewish cultures, including European, Persian, and Indian groups, among others. One that very closely resembles *Had gadya* is a German folk song called *Der Herr der Schickt den Jokel aus*, meaning, "The Master who Sent the Pheasant out."¹⁶ As one might assume, there is no single fixed text or melody for this Seder song. The melody is much less important than the text, the purpose of the music being simply a functional one. For optimal comprehension, the text exists in many different vernacular languages, including Aramaic, Yiddish, Arabic, and Ladino. Even more interesting is the fact that in several instances it is written in more than one language.

While the words are seemingly playful and meaningless, the symbolism of the song

¹³ This according to Frances Weinman Schwartz, *Passage to Pesach*, 2003:1.

¹⁴ Hebrew from *The Passover Haggadah*, Annotated by Philip Birnbaum, New York, Hebrew Publishing Company, 1953:98-99, 100-101; English from Abraham A. Schwadron, "Un Cavritico: The Sephardic Tradition" *Journal of Jewish Music and Liturgy*, vol. 5, 1982-83, p. 39, n. 2. Charles Zmeruk first posited the theory that Yiddish was the original language of *Had gadya*, in "The Earliest Aramaic and Yiddish Versions of 'The Song of the Kid (Khad Gadye),' *Studies in the Field of Yiddish Language, Folksong and Literature*, Uriel Weinreich, ed., New York: Columbia University, 1954, pp. 214-208.

¹⁵ Joseph A. Levine, *Pesach: Historical Context for the Aramaic Vernacular Songs at Opening and Closing of the Seder Rite*, PDF based upon his lecturer notes for a course titled "Celebration and Commemoration," given 2002-2003 at the Academy for Jewish religion, then in Riverdale, New York; personal communication, November 2012.

¹⁶ Ibid.

stands as a parable reflecting Jewish history. The “kid” is a metaphor for the Jewish people that “my father” (God) bought for “two zuzim” (Tablets of the Ten Commandments). The images that follow--animals or personages--represent various nations that intended to annihilate the Jewish people throughout history.¹⁷ The underlying message is that Jews somehow survived and continue in finding ways to thrive. The very first example of our survival under the threat of another nation was the Exodus from Egypt, so it is very fitting for this song to be a part of the Passover celebration. In *Pirkei Avot* (2:7), the sage Hillel goes a step further, suggesting that divine retribution (in this case, the Egyptians' debacle) is based on a principle of deserved justice--those who destroy will inevitable themselves be destroyed.¹⁸

Here is the *Had gadya* text in Yiddish:¹⁹

*Kh'ob far aykh a maysele, a maysele gor sheyn.
Der tateh hot a tsigele gekoyft far tsvey gildeyn.
A tsigele, a vaysinke, a sheyninke vi gold,
Un tsvey gildeyn mezumeneh hot er far ir batsolt
Khad gadyo...*

*Iz dokh in hoyf a kats faran, a mazik, vi bavust;
Hot ketslen zikh fartsukn gor dos tsigele farglust.
Derzen hot es hintele, fardrist es im gants shtark,
Er varft zikh oyf der beyzer kats un bayst ir ayn in kark.
Khad gadyo...*

*Kumt shtekele in kas arayn un trakht gor nit keyn sakh,
Un shpalt dos kepl hintelen -- du, hunt, s'iz nit dayn zakh!
Tseflakert hot zikh fayerl far kas tsunt er royt:
Du shtekele, du flekele, ikh makh dir bald a toyt.
Khad gadyo...*

*Kumt tsu flisn vaserl un lesht dos fayer oys;
Kumt tsu geyn dos eksele un trinkt dos vaser oys.
Nu, hobn mir a shoykhetl mit a khalefl vos glantst,
Makht er tsum oks--khik, khik, un s'iz oys bald undzer tants.
Khad gadyo...*

A rationale for its translation from Yiddish to Aramaic was to align it with the Aramaic invocation, *Ha lahma anya* ("Behold, the bread of poverty!"), that opens the Haggadah ritual proper following the *Kiddush* (Sanctification of the religious occasion). After the Israelites' oppressive sojourn in Egypt, the next time they were forced into exile--in Babylonia--the language they would be speaking was Aramaic. By that reasoning, opening and closing our ritual retelling of Exile and Return in Aramaic is a hearkening back to memories of our national history. In 20th-and-21st century America--when first Yiddish and then English prevailed--those

¹⁷ Lawrence Kushner and Nehemia Polen, *My People's Passover Haggadah*, Vol. 2, 224.

¹⁸ Levine, *Pesah*,... personal communication.

¹⁹ *The Workmen's Circle Haggadah*, 1991:75.

vernaculars increasingly entered our *haggadot*.²⁰

Regarding *Had gadya*, the Sephardic tradition includes differing practices within itself. Often, one finds two versions of the text: one in Aramaic, and one in Ladino or Arabic. In other Sephardic *haggadot*, the *Had gadya* text is a fusion of two or more versions in yet other languages.²¹ It makes sense that each Jewish group would be influenced in language and music by the geographical locations through which they traveled and in which they settled. Sephardic Jews—specifically those who left the Iberian Peninsula at the time of the Spanish Inquisition—can be divided into two main categories originating in Spain and Portugal—can be divided into two main categories, Eastern and Western. Eastern Sephardic Jews are the ones who traveled to France, Italy, Turkey, Greece, the Balkan States, the Middle East and North Africa. Those who settled in Amsterdam and Gibraltar (to the north and south of Spain) are known as the Western Sephardim.²²

Eastern Sephardim often have the Ladino version of *Had gadya*--*Un Cavritico*--in their *haggadot*. Because of the wide variety of their locations after escaping the Inquisition, the text as well as the music is varied from group to group. Here is an excerpt--with English translation--from one example of the Ladino text:²³

1. Un cavritico que lo merco mi padre, por dos levanim, por dos levanim...
10. Y vino el Santo Bendicho El y mato al malaj amavet, que mato al shojet, que degollo al buey, que se bevio el agua, que amato el fuego, que quemo al palo, que jarvo al perro, que mordio al gato, que se comio al cavritico, que lo compro mi padre, por dos *levanim*, por dos *levanim*.
1. There was a kid goat that my father bought with two *levanim*, with two *levanim*..
10. Then came *The Holy Blessed One* and tied down The Angel of Death who killed the butcher who beheaded the ox that drank the water that extinguished the fire that burned the stick that hit the dog that bit the cat that ate the kid goat that my father bought with two *levanim*, with two *levanim*.

²⁰ A noteworthy adaptation of *Had gadya* to English lyrics by Ben Aronin and music by A. Piroznikov appears in *The Songs We Sing*, Harry Coopersmith, ed. (New York: The United Synagogue), 1950:192. In 2013, appeared *The Bronfman Haggadah*, written by Edgar Bronfman entirely in English, and illustrated by Jan Aronson (New York: Rizzoli), 2013.

²¹ Schwadron, "Un Cavritico..." p. 28.

²² Ibid., 25-26.

²³ "Un Cavritico," Yehoram Gaon, *Canticos Tradicionales de Pesah--Songs for Passover in the Sephardic Tradition*, Israeli vinyl LP 80668, 1975, track 3; English translation by R. Romero, www.zemerl.com

Deliberately

Un cav-ri-ti-co que lo mer-co mi pad - re, por dos le-va-nim, — por dos le-va-nim... ..Y
vi-no el San-to Ben - di — cho El, y ma-to al ma-lakh ha - ma-vet, que ma-to al sho-
khet, que de-go-yo al buey — que se bev-yo al ag - ua, que a-ma-to el fue - go, — que que -
mo al pa - lo, — que khar-vo al per - ro, que mor-dio al ga-to, que se com-io al cav-ri-
ti - co, que lo comp-ro mi pad - re, por dos — le - va - nim, — por dos le-va - nim.

Example 2. Un Cavritico, as recorded by Yehoram Gaon.

Western Sephardim, on the other hand, do not generally include the text at all in their *haggadot*. In fact, they oppose its inclusion, because it prolonged the Seder unnecessarily and because they were troubled by its message of “an eye for an eye.” This variance is significant because it shows how a single group engendered two branches that developed differing practices concerning the same text.²⁴

Musicians and songwriters have also taken to creating new interpretations of *Had gadya*. Most notably, the Israeli singer and guitarist Chava Alberstein, in the late 1980s wrote and performed a particularly moving adaptation as a response to the First Palestinian Intifada (uprising). It stirred up such an emotional response among Israeli citizens that Alberstein received multiple threats against her life. The government immediately restricted the playing of her version on the radio. In it she had incorporated a Hebrew translation of the Aramaic text along with additional lyrics that openly expressed disapproval of the way the Israeli government handled the situation with the Palestinians. Her criticism, in an English translation, is clear:

²⁴ Schwadron “Un Cavritico...” 25-28.

And why are you singing *Had gadya*?
 Spring isn't here yet and Passover hasn't arrived.
 And what has changed for you, what has changed?
 I have changed this year.
 For on all the nights, all the nights I only asked four questions.
 This night I have another question:
 How long will the cycle of horror last,
 The pursuer and the pursued
 The striker and the stricken,
 When will this madness end?
 And what has changed for you, what has changed?

Alberstein calls for peace and compassion, and makes a plea for violence to end. In her view, even although Israel had often been victimized by others, it should not turn around and become the Angel of Death killing the slaughterer.

Musically, *Had gadya* varies from place to place, just as it does linguistically. The different musics to which these varying texts are set also reflect their respective cultures. For example, Mikhl Gelbart composed a musical setting for the Yiddish *Khad gadyo*. It is in a major key that conveys a playful feeling, and the instruments have a significant function in the performance. Stepping to the foreground in between verses, they play the melody while embellishing it with trills. Also, when singing through the growing lists of adversaries in each verse, the vocal line ascends a step. This pattern repeats every time an action occurs in the text, until we get to the line just before the refrain--*khad gadyo*--where the melody descends to the tonic again. The loss-of-control effect is similar to that of a drinking song.

Somewhat contrarily, the Ladino *Un Cavritico* by Yehoram Gaon is slower, less playful, and in a minor key. The only instruments are a classical guitar played in a finger-picked style, and a flute. Unlike the Yiddish version, *Un Cavritico*'s repetitive lines descend each time and the melody is very simple. Gaon's recording has strong affinities with Flamenco music, the flute playing a descant in a descending modified Phrygian scale typical of that style.²⁵ This is entirely in keeping with our people's traditional practice, for Jews have always used language and music as strong tools for conveying, understanding, and reinterpreting the memory of our collective history. We are constantly aiming to make that story available and accessible for ourselves and our families by connecting it with our everyday lives and surroundings.

Amanda Winter was graduated from the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in 2013. This article is adapted from her Masters thesis: "Language as Identity—Retelling Our Story."

²⁵ Balin, *My People's Passover Haggadah*, vol. 2:216.

REVIEWS

Max Wohlberg's *Chanting the Haggadah—Selected Passages—* Edited by Charles Davidson, Ashbourne Music Publishing, 2012

Reviewed by Jack Kessler

While there are numerous collections of nusah for the Jewish liturgical year, one area that has received little attention is the *application* of nusah to the Pesach Haggadah. Popular conception of a Passover Seder's musical component is that of nothing but folk melodies strung together and applied to the various texts. That there is such a thing as a classical nusah grounding to the singing parts of the Seder rite may come as a surprise to many (between those four+ cups of wine).

With this slim volume, Hazzan Charles Davidson has added yet another important contribution to his vast array of beautifully produced, eminently valuable Jewish music publications. In this case it is both a useful resource and a tribute to the brilliant musician and scholar who taught three generations of cantorial students at the JTS: Max Wohlberg.

As always with a Davidson production (under the Ashbourne imprimatur), this soft-cover 25-page collection is easy to work with. It is printed on excellent paper and the music is clearly formatted. Crisply reproduced illustrations from medieval *Haggadot* are included on almost every page (including the frontispiece shown immediately below), adding to the sheer visual pleasure of using the settings. The accompanying 23-track CD, sung by Hazzan Elliot Vogel in a warm and mellow baritone, adds to the esthetic quality and attractiveness of the package.

Chanting the Haggadah relies exclusively upon Ashkenazi nusah for through-chanting the Haggadah. Every paragraph was recorded by Wohlberg, transcribed and edited by Davidson. Rather than a setting of every word in the Haggadah, it covers major text points, set to the nusah that Wohlberg knew from his family background. He evidently felt that this musical tapestry comprised a core nusah for the Pesah home service. These clearly presented ideas reveal a classical East European feel for expressing the key Haggadah texts in a straightforward 'davening' style. The book is a great reference source for anyone looking to steep themselves in a solid traditional grounding.

Wohlberg employs three different modes: the so-called Pentatonic (the archaic-sounding *Ha lahma anya*), *Adonai malakh* (the celebratory *Kiddush lir'galim*), and a version of minor (with one passing *Mi she-beirakh* reference) that has a simple line and a poignant feel. With a bit of musical imagination one can hear an entire traditional Seder davened alternately in these modes, shifting back and forth depending on the particular text.

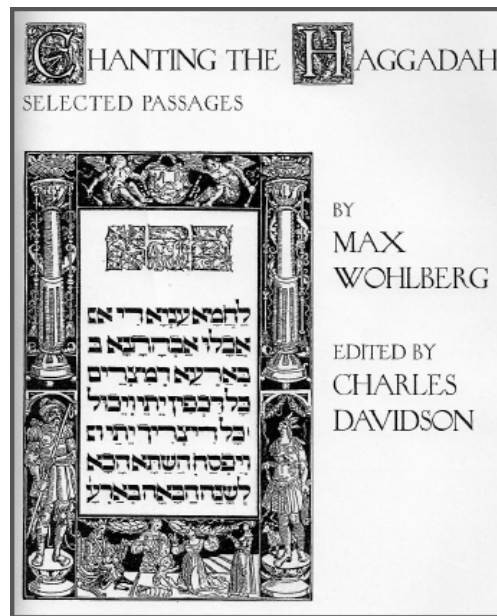
Publisher Davidson includes something of a disclaimer in his preface, to the effect that this work represents but one man's memory (ah, but what a man) and that others may have varying musical traditions. As for this reviewer, some of the material felt immediately familiar (I

claim Hungarian *yikhus* on my father's side--which may have been the only reason Hazzan Wohlberg tolerated my brashness, and some of it felt foreign. In the "Ten Plagues" section, for example, I could hear my parents singing together and taste my much younger self licking the spilled Chateau Manischewitz off my finger.

One of the less familiar aspects: I am used to hearing more of the *Mi she-beirakh* sound. The late Hazzan Chaim Rothstein, whose Seder I attended once, used the mode's flavoring rather consistently throughout the strictly chanted sections. Another point: the application of *Adonai malakh* grandeur is rather limited in this collection; one could make an educated guess that, in in a Seder led by Hazzan Wohlberg, it would have shown up again and again, possibly every time wine was involved. Also, in memories of my own family's *sedarim*, the *Lern-steiger* (think of the old *Mah nishtanah* tune) reappears quite a bit, especially in the "Rabban Gamliel" section. Then too, the "Nishmat" section that follows the meal is done by some in festival nusah from the morning service; ditto for the "Hallel" parts that are not folk tunes.

I express the above reservations with no lack of trepidation, as Hazzan Wohlberg was my beloved teacher as well as being universally respected as a master of Ashkenazi nusah. Yet he remained open-minded about musical *minhag*, recognizing the validity of a range of styles and local modal usages within the liturgy. We who were privileged to be his students can hope that if he were to sit at our Seder he would lean back, and with that wide, sparkling-eyed smile of his, say: "not bad, not bad."

Hazzan Jack Kessler is a graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary. As Director of the Cantorial program at ALEPH—Alliance for Jewish Renewal—his primary goal is to transmit the nusah tradition that he learned, to the next generation of hazzanim.



Chazzonos: a novel by Lyle Rockler **iUniverse, Inc, Bloomington, IN, 2011**

Reviewed by Linda Shivers

Lyle Rockler, Religious Leader of of Temple Beth El in North Port, Florida and holder of a Masters degree in English, has put his congregational and linguistic skills to good use in this book about the trials and joys of functioning effectively as a cantor in modern day America.

Hal Perlmutter, the main character, has been khazn in his congregation for 20 years. He's divorced, has two grown children and keeps company with a girlfriend who is beloved by the congregation. His daughter has become quite frum and as a result, judgmental towards her father. His gay son is in love with a much older man. Hal's beloved rabbi has recently retired, and the young replacement doesn't measure up in Hal's eyes. In addition, our protagonist suffers from anger management issues, and harbors many of the same dire thoughts that are shared by his less impulsive colleagues. The difference is that they never express them aloud.

Hal is not particularly religious, in the sense of observing mitsvot. Yet despite his casual irreverence and gutter language, he is totally committed to *chazzonos* (*Hazzanut*), the art of consistently beautifying prayer to the point where it uplifts the soul of everyone who comes to pray at his synagogue. He cherishes the legendary cantors of the Golden Age, whose famous recorded performances help him understand the world around him. At the same time he wonders "whether his love of *chazzonos* is just bringing up ghosts." Yet, even this nagging doubt does not stop him from steadfastly analyzing the acclaimed compositions of these mythical figures and emulating their amazing vocal prowess.

Hal receives a large and unexpected inheritance from his self-styled "Aunt," an elderly woman who lived across the street while he was growing up, and with whom he'd remained in friendly contact for many years. The bequest enables him to resign from his position, but first he must decide how to exit gracefully, and also what to do next. For his final Shabbat Morning service he teaches his most accomplished student to sing Yossele Rosenblatt's *Yishtabah*. In this way he hopes to keep alive the tradition of his own davening style.

When called before the Congregational Board and asked why he is leaving, he finally unburdens himself:

Bosses. I'm tired of bosses... There have been good people here, nurturing people I've loved as well as the usual percentage of mumserim [*mamzeirim*] and desperate egos... You work for a shul, everyone thinks they're your boss. Bosses killed my father off... I want to answer only to myself. I don't want to be told who I slighted, how I should appear in public, what my attitude should be toward my work... What I really know in the world is *chazzonos*, which I love, and how to get a kid through Bar Mitzvah. That's enough for me. Don't judge me on anything else--certainly not on how many new tunes I know, if I can sing Shlomo or play a guitar or join the Renewal and chant till I drop like a Jewish holy roller. And how about this? I can finally be done with the black cauldron of shul gossip. What I do in my own home is my business. What

mitzvahs I do or don't do is my business. Yes, the money has given me financial freedom, but mostly it has released me from bosses. No more bosses.

Despite the vehemence of this bridge-burning declaration, Hal's decision to leave the congregation doesn't come easily. Admiration for the high level of his daven'n remains solid among all the various contending factions, and he's torn by concern for the welfare and happiness of his students and the many lifelong friends he's made within the congregation.

Following the author's example, this reviewer has retained Hebrew and Yiddish words that are translated only some of the time, an approach that strives for familiarity with the targeted audience in both cases. Still, the book's proofreading could have been improved, especially with regard to quotation marks. Overall, Lyle Rockler's *Chazzonos* offers an engrossing and immensely readable tale of one synagogue cantor's most deeply seated frustrations.

I recommend it to professionals and lay readers alike.

Linda Shivers serves as Hazzan at Tifereth Israel Synagogue In Des Moines, Iowa. A native of Pompano Beach, Florida, after graduating from the Seminary College of Jewish Music at JTS (one of the first women to do so), she spent 23 years as Cantor of Congregation Neveh Shalom in Portland, Oregon.

The CD: Shehecheyonu -- The Music of Congregation Shaar Hashomayim of Montreal, Canada

Reviewed by Morton Gold

Every now and then one is confronted with a fact that either changes your preconceptions or at the very least offers one exception to preconceived ideas. Such a fact is this recording. It features the magnificent voice and musicianship of Cantor Gideon Zelermyer, and a superb all male Jewish choir admirably led by Stephen Glass.

If this CD is an exception, it is a marvelous exception, and one which can only offer a challenge as well as inspiration to other Orthodox congregations. The fact simply put is that assembling a really fine all male choir, especially a Jewish all male choir with trained voices, is difficult. The practice in most Orthodox *shuls* is that the choir usually is employed to supply a fixed harmony for a time while the cantor embellishes a particular word, and/or to repeat the last phrase while the cantor gets some air. This procedure may be more the rule than the exception in most places, but it is certainly not the rule in Montreal's Shaar Hashomayim or on this recording of its music.

While it is true that an organ can do most of what a choir in an Orthodox *shul* normally does, and often does it better, it is also true that the lack of any instrumental voice can have musical as well as devotional advantages. If choirs (and cantors) such as are found in Shaar Hashomayim were the rule and not the exception in most Orthodox *shuls*, I might be persuaded to abandon or at least mitigate my Conservative preferences, in musical matters at any rate.

Where to begin? Gideon Zelremyer has a beautiful trained lyric tenor. The range and timbre is appealing from low to high. His singing is as elegant as it is moving. He can shift it effortlessly in and out of falsetto in the upper register. Stephen Glass is much more than a choir leader. Most of what the choir sings are his arrangements, and they are both musically significant and sensitive. I cannot praise his choir enough. Even with a fine hazzan and choir director, the beauty and *kavvanah* of the music would be for naught were it not for the superb vocal accomplishment of this choir. Where Mr. Glass found and trained these singers would make for interesting reading.

Good cantors, even ones with great voices, while not commonplace are not rare. Good singers, especially good Jewish male singers are *extremely* rare. The choir on this recording sing for services every *Shabbat* as well as on holidays. I would keep them well guarded and under lock and key at all times (like the *Kohein gadol* in ancient times before Yom Kippur).

- 1) *Shehecheyanu* by Ralph Schlossberg has an otherworldly sound, yet the setting is traditional in approach. The cantor sings the words, the choir provides harmonic background, and then repeats the words with congregation. It is very sweet (perhaps too sweet).
- 2) *L'dor Vador* by Meier Finkelstein, a familiar *t'fillah*, is given a very sensitive rendition here. The choir employs a beautiful increase and decrease in sound, and the cantor's upper register is used to good effect.
- 3) *Birkhat Hachodesh*, also by Finkelstein, provides examples of imaginative harmonies in the choral writing, and moving phrases by the cantor. I really liked the ending. Very well done.
- 4) *Eitz Chayim Hi*, a familiar melody by Tanchum Portnoy, used in many synagogues, is given a sophisticated harmonic arrangement by Stephen Glass. (In the interests of full disclosure I will aver that in my oratorio "Songs of Triumph" I composed a melody similar to--but different from--the one by Portnoy.)
- 5) *Uvenucho Yomar* by Louis Lewandowsky sounds strangely up to date, though it was composed in the 19th century. It is beautifully sung by one and all, a description that applies to every selection on this disc.
- 6) *Sh'ma / Hu Eloheinu* by Geoffrey Shisler shows the influence of acclaimed Cantors Leib Glantz and Pierre Pinchik. If the previous selections could be performed elsewhere, this setting definitely places one in an Orthodox *shul* (which I do not at all intend as a putdown).

7) Another setting of the same text, by Zeidl Rovner, is as delightful as it is charming. My compliments go to Mr. Glass for this superb arrangement--the man knows his craft--so much so that I am running out of accolades.

Ditto for numbers 8) and 9): *Uv'yom Hashabbat* by Zvi Talmon, and *Yism'chu* by Yaaov Talmud, where the Hasidic influence is appealingly apparent.

10) *Sim Shalom* by Samuel Alman may not look impressive on paper, but in performance it is a terrifically expressive work.

11) Shlomo Carlebach's *Pitchu Li* is sung here in an arrangement by Raymond Goldstein and Stephen Glass, that makes the somewhat trite tune look like much more than it is. The performance makes it sound like a truly inspired religious piece.

12) *Eil Melech Yosheiv* comes from the Siroto collection. Please note and enjoy the lovely falsetto register of Cantor Zelermyer.

13) *Tzaddik Adonai* by Sholom Secunda has been arranged by Lionel Rosenfeld and Stephen Glass. Surprisingly, the music does not suffer by having had two arrangers! The genius of Secunda, with its fanciful cantorial flights regaling the ear, is given its due by Zelemyer. This work really needs to be performed by a good hazzan. It is.

14) Geoffrey Shisler's *Rachamana* has here been arranged by Glass. The present setting both reflective and effective.

15) *Eil Malei Rachamim* by Finkelstein is a different, imaginative and original version of the well known prayer.

16) *Avot for Yamim Noraim* by Naumbourg, Sulzer, Glass and Zelermyer works well in spite of--or perhaps because--of the four musical minds that fathered it.

17) *Unetaneh Tokef*, by Jacob Rosmarin and Alman, is performed in an arrangement by Glass. This is a marvelous confluence of religiously inspired talents.

18) *Kaddish Shaleim* by Jacob Gottlieb, has also been variously attributed to Yossele Rosenblatt and David Kusevitsky. This is a very musical setting of a tune that could otherwise easily descend into vulgarity, presented here in angelic garb.

In sum, this fine CD offers beautiful voices singing traditional Jewish music in an inspired manner. I cannot recommend it too highly.

*In addition to composing and conducting, Dr. Morton Gold is a music and drama critic who can be reached at drmortongold@yahoo.com. This review first appeared in **The Jewish Post & Opinion** of December 7, 2011, and is reprinted here with the publisher's kind permission.*

Journal of Synagogue Music

OUR MARCH 2015 ISSUE—*NUSAH WARS*—WILL FEATURE THE FOLLOWING ARTICLES:

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- Hebrew Chant in the Daily Liturgy of the Synagogue
- Why We Are At War
- Study Chant of the *Melamed*, Khayim-Itzik
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