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WHAT TO DO

Preserving Nusah in the 21st-Century Conservative Synagogue

By Benjamin Tisser

Tradition and Change

The title of a 1958 book by Rabbi Mordechai Waxman, “Tradition and Change,” became Conservative Judaism’s motto during the 1960s as the movement thrived in rapidly growing suburbs all across the United States. The fledgling Conservative congregations were located far from the old Jewish neighborhoods that had connected them to traditional folkways and rituals. Adrift amidst a sea of sudden change, these congregants of overwhelmingly Eastern European backgrounds were torn between a strong desire to retain Jewish tradition in some form, along with a perhaps even stronger urge to fully integrate into the fabric of an increasingly upbeat post-war American life. The new suburban communities vied with one another in commissioning leading architects to design sanctuaries: the so-called “Edifice Complex.” Many newly organized groups remained affiliated with their former congregations back in the cities, others struck out on their own. All of them engaged dynamic young rabbis and cantors, as if to declare, “We are here to stay.”

While the Golden Age of East European *hazzanut* in America had ended by the 1960s, a younger generation of American-born cantors was already emerging. Synagogue attendance reached new peaks, and youth and adult choruses were in high fashion. Synagogue music—whether performed *a cappella* by a cantor or by an organ accompanying a soloist and mixed choir—was given priority. The happy coincidence of pews overflowing with participating worshipers is easily explainable: hardly a family didn’t have at least one member in an adult, youth or children’s chorus, or in a junior cantors or Torah readers club. In addition, a steady supply of catchy prayer melodies kept arriving through recordings made at the Hasidic Music Festivals in Israel. This situation prevailed through the 1980s.

Beginning in the 1990s, congregational familiarity with Hebrew underwent a drastic decline among Conservative Jewry, as did synagogue attendance. Some would blame this on the poor quality of afternoon school education. Others claim that a shift in the values that our larger society now considers important is to blame. Jews have become so Americanized that they prioritize their children’s participation in Saturday sports over attending Shabbat services (save for a family *simhah* or a friend’s Bar/Bat Mitzvah invitation). Economic tightening recently has certainly played a role in declining membership, as synagogue dues have risen significantly. Still, this factor by itself would not explain the crisis, since membership is not required for Shabbat attendance, and most congregations will at least partially subsidize dues and/or High Holy Day tickets to maintain their affiliates’ loyalty.

Whatever the underlying causes of this decline, I have witnessed it at the synagogue where I grew up: Valley Beth Shalom in Encino, California.¹ I remember that at my first Shabbat leading services alongside Cantor Herschel Fox in 1990-91, there were two *b'nei mitsvah* and at least one other *simhah* (either an *aufruf*, baby naming, anniversary, etc.), par for any given Shabbat during the year. The 600-seat Sanctuary was full and the partition into the Social Hall was opened to accommodate 900 more attendees. When the service began at 8:45 a.m., there were already 150 worshipers in place, and full attendance was achieved only by its conclusion at 12:30 p.m. The Cantors Choir which helped lead the entire *Shaharit*, would follow the Torah processional through the Sanctuary, singing *L'khah adonai ha-g'dulah* with the congregation as one-by-one they joined their parents in the pews. As we walked, I recall nodding to members (a number of them Holocaust survivors who were among the synagogue's founders in 1959 and are now long since gone) as they extended Yiddish-inflected greetings and encouragement to us: *Gut shabbes! yasherkoyakh!*

Some twenty years later, my wife and I attended Shabbat services at Valley Beth Shalom to celebrate the naming of our daughter. At first, time seemed to have stood still. Again, two *b'nei mitsvah* and an *aufruf* were scheduled. But looking around, I noticed only about 20 worshipers there to recite the Mourners Kaddish following *Birkhot ha-shahar*. When the service ended, the sanctuary seats were still not filled and the partition had not been opened. I did not recognize the majority of attendees who had come as guests of the *B'nei mitsvah* families. My two-fold conclusion: first, most of the regulars from my boyhood years had either passed on, moved away or were by now physically unable to attend, and second, for whatever reasons, their children have not taken their place. I learned that from its peak membership of 1,850 families, Valley Beth Shalom was now down to 1,400 families. This decline of 24% was seemingly not enough to create panic for a large congregation like VBS (to the extent that the worship experience was caused to change greatly in nature over those two decades), but in many small Conservative synagogues it would be calamitous, causing the leadership and clergy to re-evaluate the religious services they offer, among other things.

Changes in Popular Culture

When calculating shifts in congregational life, we should also include the many societal changes that have occurred over the past several decades. Among the most relevant to this article are preferences in popular music, widespread use of the Internet with its resultant desire to “belong,” the diminished importance of community and the growth of what I will call a “transaction-based” society in which the pursuit of fair value predominates.

In my younger years at school or summer camp, great value was placed on the “community sing.” Everyone looked forward to music class, the campfire *kumzitz* or other large

¹ Valley Beth Shalom's membership now numbers 1,400 families. Edward Feinstein has been Senior Rabbi since 2003, and Herschel Fox has served as Senior Cantor since 1981. The congregation is closely affiliated with a K- through-6 Day School (the Harold M. Schulweis VBS Day School) on the synagogue campus.

gatherings that involved group singing. Although music that we heard on the radio did not easily lend itself to communal singing, we were not so far removed from the folk rock music our parents' generation that we didn't also enjoy sharing. It was a great source of fun to bring one's guitar and join a few friends in singing together during the afternoon or evening; this was something young people had been doing for generations. However, by the 1990s, fine singing by a leader had been replaced by the entire group singing in unison. In Conservative Judaism, this trend had presumably been started by the national movement's Jewish camping program (Ramah) of the 1950s and 1960s. Its Tsunami-like effects apparently came in a series of waves that were felt most strongly when former campers, who had married and were raising children of their own, had reached leadership age in synagogues.

This generation of parents (who were in their forties) was now charged with the responsibility of setting policy for the way services were to be conducted. Perhaps (and naturally so) they did not feel the need for a strong and safe Jewish community as deeply as their parents did, who had grown up hearing daily about the decimation of European Jewry. For the most part, the 1990s' synagogue leadership had been born here. They were automatically a part of American society and did not need to join a synagogue in order to forge friendships and enjoy a rich social life. Many in their circle came from Hebrew school or youth group (USY) or had attended the neighborhood public school together with them, especially in metropolitan areas where a high percentage of the population was Jewish. The synagogue became a place to go only on the High Holidays, its clergy to be contacted only for Life Cycle events.

If we consider today's Internet-dominated society, the issue is further magnified. We can now be part of communities the world over through this virtual reality medium. In fact, on Facebook we have access to hundreds of thousands of communities in which we can interact with others who share our common interests. And the best part is that it costs us nothing! There is no need to spend thousands of dollars annually for membership in a synagogue or even a country club when we can video chat and correspond from the comfort of our Barcalounger. Finally, we can watch live-streaming services from some of the country's leading synagogues on the Internet for free as well.² Why, then, should we join a congregation?

This thought process of living is part of what I have designated a transaction-based society. While the cost of living has risen exponentially, income level has increased slightly at best, a factor not to be ignored. This disproportionate growth in personal expenditures has caused many people to carefully consider expected return in any transaction. In a large community, synagogue membership for a family may cost as much as \$3,000-\$4,500 a year. That is in addition to extra security fees, building fund dues, preferred High Holy Day seating premiums, *b'nei mitsvah* fees, Hebrew school tuition, youth group dues and activities, men's club and women's league memberships, etc. Even with partial subsidies by the Congregational Foundation, the balance is no small expenditure for a young and growing family who are bound

² Some examples of free-streaming religious services available online are: Shomrei Torah Synagogue in West Hills, California; Stephen S. Weiss Temple in Bel Air, California; and Congregation Beth Yeshurun in Houston, Texas (the largest Conservative congregation in North America).

to ask, “What do we get in return?” After all, there are viable alternatives. One might obtain free *B’nei mitzvah* training at Chabad, or for a nominal fee to a private tutor who is also a cantor, rent a hall and stage a ceremony for family and friends. One might also send a child to an unaffiliated community Hebrew school for far less than the cost of congregational membership, and at the same time have more of a say in the direction their family’s Jewish journey will take. It is this sort of thinking that has synagogues across the country reconsidering their offerings in order to make themselves more marketable to the Jewish “consumer.”

Dealing with Change

A major question facing contemporary synagogues is that of identity. Is the synagogue still an institution whose main focus and offerings are religious services, with a variety of social and educational programs supplementing them? Or has the modern synagogue become more of a cultural and community center, with religious services downgraded to equal status with any of the former supplementary offerings? Increasingly, the second possibility is now becoming a reality. This may explain the many liberties I have observed being taken with synagogues’ liturgy and ritual.

Thirty or forty years ago, Conservative worship lasted three hours, included a substantial and well-prepared rabbinic sermon and at least one substantive cantorial recitative delivered with great artistry and regard for its underlying liturgical implications. We are now seeing diminished attendance in every congregation where this model persists. The clock determines the duration of prayer, and this has radically altered the function of both rabbi and cantor. Instead of a sermon conveying timeless truths, we have multiple impromptu “infomercials” referring to sensationalist headlines. Rather than chanted hazzanic interpretation, we get a non-stop chain of simple melodies designed to keep people busy.

One influence on the choice of music other than Camp Ramah repertoire has been the steady stream of recorded Neo-Hasidic hit tunes that inundated American synagogues of all persuasions, beginning with the Tel Aviv musical *Ish hasid hayah* (“There Once Was a Hasid”) in 1968, and followed by decades of annual Hasidic Festivals from 1969 on. Set to words that appear in the liturgy, the syncopated tunes quickly caught on and have remained indelibly stamped upon the subconscious awareness of American synagogue goers who reflexively click on them every time those words come up in a *Siddur* or *Mahzor*.

As another musical source, history has shown that our people, dispersed among the nations for so many centuries, had no choice but to incorporate the sounds of their particular host culture into their worship experience. In this respect, American folk and popular music has proven no exception. We hear this influence in the music of Jeff Klepper, Michael Isaacson, Craig Taubman and the late Debbie Friedman²¹, whose unmistakably jazz-and-folk-rock-oriented compositions remain as popular as ever.

On the one hand, we must acknowledge that committed and talented composers such as these have familiarized a generation of hebraically-challenged Jews with the words of the prayer

book. By clothing prominent sections of the liturgy in easily accessible melodies and catchy rhythms, they have provided a growing number of synagogue newcomers an attractive entry point into a world whose only lingua franca until recently has been the Hebrew of the Bible and medieval poetry. On the other hand, wholesale adoption of these “easy”—often simplistic—settings may have cost us our treasured cantorial heritage, thus establishing what Hazzan Alberto Mizrahi terms “A tradition that has forgotten what the tradition is.”³

One thing we have learned from the continuing popularity of this easily singable contemporary congregational repertoire is that today’s synagogue goers want to participate actively in the worship experience. By the same token we should note that participation can come in many forms: singing along through an entire prayer, singing only the congregational refrains, following the cantor’s chant in an undertone and singing aloud only required responses such as *Amein*, *Kein y’hi ratson*, etc., listening mindfully to a rabbinic sermon or cantorial recitative. The bottom line for those who are charged with leading services: in order to maintain a congregation’s interest as well as prayer momentum and energy level for several hours, we must provide regular opportunities for people to join in the singing.

Some Conclusions

1. *Kavvanah* as a determinant

Through almost a year of visiting different communities in order to closely observe the ways in which their worship services are run, I’ve come to the conclusion that the challenge of retaining *nusah ha-t’fillah* is not specific to any one locale, but confronts synagogues all over the country.

The key to any measure of success in this confrontation is excellence. I learned this lesson from Rabbi Elliot Cosgrove of the Park Avenue Synagogue in New York City. He contends that with a finely-trained hazzan, a professional music program and well-delivered sermons, the prayer service will have by default an air of excellence which excites and attracts the congregation. This is as opposed to the “campfire songs, sung together in perfect mediocrity” that Hazzan Alberto Mizrahi speaks of in a blog posting.⁴ The truth is (and it pains me to say so) that *hazzanim* who habitually feature such music cannot and do not connect to it; and we know that if the delivery is not sincere (one definition of *kavvanah*), the prayer will never move people—and perhaps even less so the One to Whom it is directed.

³ In a personal communication to the author, April 2013.

⁴ Mizrahi, Alberto. ““Nusach” – Say It Quietly!” Web log post. *Alberto’s Voice*. Self-published, 30 July 2012. Web. 5 Aug. 2013.

2. Considering time and space

In a recent book, Michael Isaacson describes a phenomenon that he calls “the simultaneity of time.”⁵ He posits that “when an orchestral musician plays in the present, she is also remembering the past and energizing the future...” It is not enough to simply play the notes on the page! In order to foster the audience’s desire to keep listening, the musician must be continually aware of the measures she has just played as well as the notes ahead, so that the piece is in constant development. The rise of a climax must give way to the slow, beautiful cadence. I submit that a cantor must bear this caution in mind even more so than a player of secular music.

Isaacson continues by proposing that,

... in the most considered Jewish music there is a simultaneous resonance of antiquity (or recollection of former times), a presence of compelling attractiveness to the music itself and, in the best works, an innovative suggestion of where that particular music or the overall genre can progress in the future.

This notion is in direct line with a 3rd-century Mishnaic teaching (Avot 3.1):

Concentrate on three things and you will not fall into the grip of sin—know from where you came, where you are going, and before Whom you will have to give account and reckoning.

We are living in the second decade of the twenty-first century, in Los Angeles or Chicago or New York or South Florida, yet we must be cognizant of our hope, and look with hope to the future. Among the synagogues I visited, B’nai Torah of Boca Raton and Anshe Emet of Chicago have most thoroughly absorbed this philosophy. Both institutions offer inspiring worship that reflects (and respects) several resplendent eras of synagogue music in the past, woven into a seamless tapestry that is their present service.

3. *Nusah* as a constant

Nusah ha-t’fillah—the prescribed mode in which a particular prayer is sung at a specific liturgical moment—is perhaps the most accurate “clock” we possess. It grounds us in sacred time, makes us aware of consecrated moments in a normal day, alerting us that something special is about to happen or reminding us that a holy day is upon us. What more effective means of accomplishing all of the above is there than through music that has reached the status of “sacred,” over time? We recite the same prayer texts day in and day out, yet by shifting musical gears to accommodate a special liturgical occasion we alter the entire mood of a given service while creating an unexpected aura of freshness and celebration—if done without fanfare.

No matter what other musical styles are sung in the synagogue, *nusah* should play the “host”—and the others must remain “guests.” This is not to claim that every paragraph chanted during a service needs to sound like an imitation of Israel Alter or Moshe Ganchoff or David

⁵ Michael Isaacson, *Jewish Music As Midrash—What Makes Music Jewish?* Self-published, 2007:105-126.

Kusevitsky (all of whom taught *Hazzanut* at Hebrew Union College or the Jewish Theological Seminary). Let the words sung in nusah be uttered in a way that is appropriate to the hazzan singing them, to the worshipers who are following along, and to the world in which we live.

Some would have every traditional hazzan wearing mitre and robe and bringing forth a certain sound. There likewise exists a sense that traditional nusah, often misunderstood as being synonymous with hazzanic recitatives and concert pieces, is sung exclusively by cantors in love with the sound of their own voice. It has been my observation that neither of these opinions holds sway in most synagogues, certainly not in the ones I visited in conducting research for my thesis. In step with the majority of Americans who know how to temper nostalgia for the past with needs of the present, *hazzanim* in this country have learned to be judicious in keeping glimpses of the early 20th-century's Golden Age techniques and phrasing within modest proportion to the amount of worship time they spend focusing on the musical preferences of today's congregants.

4. Repertoire choice

It may seem obvious, but not all musical styles are appropriate to every congregation. While widely-known melodies like Israel Goldfarb's *Magein Avot* or Meier Finkelstein's *L'dor Va-dor* might appear to be universally accepted, particular congregations may have their own ingrained favorites which they will defend to the death when faced with the prospect of changing them. In such instances, where *minhag ham-makom* (local custom) prevails, trying to instill a setting by Joe Black or Josh Nelson will not work—unless it is simply featured as a one-time novelty, by a religious school class, for example. With every innovation comes potential upset for a segment of the congregation who attend faithfully every week. Avoiding this natural resistance to imposed change requires careful preparation of one's audience over months.

5. Instrumental accompaniment

My research confirms that Conservative congregations remain divided on this issue. The number of those who now do employ varied instruments during worship—ranging from hand-held drum to guitar to organ—is greater than the historical estimate of 10% that earlier studies revealed, yet nowhere near a majority or even parity. Nonetheless, from personal experience I would argue that instrumental enhancement of the music adds levels of enchantment to the service like nothing else. This endorsement comes with a caveat: that both the accompanying instrument and accompanist are carefully selected to suit the purpose and space. Here are three cases in point:

From 1967-1995, Aminadav Aloni was the organist at Valley Beth Shalom in Encino, California. His background was as an Israeli classical-and-jazz pianist. He perfected his organ playing on the job so well that his accompaniment of prayer was almost indescribable. One might have been subliminally aware of music in the Sanctuary, yet of a non-intrusive nature that seemed to come and go organically with the underlying textual meaning-- nothing more, nothing less. Even more impressive was the fact that all instrumental music at Valley Beth Shalom was

customarily improvised. Its only “set” characteristic was a mood that varied with the one that happened to prevail in the Sanctuary that week. This, in turn, depended upon the disposition of attendees, the energy level of the cantor’s chanting and the resultant flow of the service.

By way of contrast, Aryell Cohen has served as organist and choir director at Sinai Temple in Los Angeles for 38 years. The temple is famous for its large electric-pipe hybrid organ and for its well-rehearsed professional choirs. There is not a moment during the cantor’s officiating without a carefully prepared musical event taking place. The organ playing can only be described as meticulous, sometimes with an added overlay of string pads, and the choir produces every note and syllable flawlessly. It is impossible to deny the grandeur of this multi-leveled devotional exercise.

A third option is offered by B’nai Torah of Boca Raton whose mostly-volunteer choir, conducted by Cantor Mitch Martin, joins the officiating cantor for the Torah and Musaf services. While the choir regularly presents prepared compositions ranging from Meir Finkelstein’s elaborate arrangements to arrangements of well-known cantorial recitatives to settings based on melodies from the Sephardic tradition, the group is equally at home holding chords to support *hazzanic* improvisations. In sum, each of these three congregations’ musical heritage and preferences reflects the stylistic proclivities of its community, and every one of the varied treatments is equally effective—in its own distinctive manner.

6. A cautionary note

Although the paradigmatic services described above represent excellent examples of well-planned Conservative worship experiences, it must be emphasized that many people do not come to synagogue to hear the same style of music they can listen to on the radio. True, our congregants enjoy the new modern sound in their everyday world—no matter how often it is played or sung. Yet they are not drawn to *shul* because of the brilliantly arranged music or well-rehearsed choir or unobtrusive organ or cantor’s voice or rabbi’s sermon—alone. What moves people to true and fervent prayer goes much deeper than any of these elements could—by themselves. It is what Rabbi Nina Beth Cardin of the National Center for Jewish Healing calls “a collective unconscious memory” of what Jews past and present have gone through. The sounds, rituals and surroundings of the synagogue bring forth in worshipers’ conscious awareness “resonances from that heritage”⁶ and connect them as nothing else can—to their people, their inner selves and their place in God’s universe.

7. A final thought

Ideally, the team of Rabbi-and-Cantor should work in unconditional support of one another. I would encourage rabbis to spend time listening to different styles of synagogue music—as they

⁶ Nina Beth Cardin, *A Leader’s Guide to Services and Prayers of Healing*, 1996.

are currently being practiced—including variations of traditional nusah. This would go a long way towards leveling the playing field with their cantorial colleagues, while still retaining expertise in their distinct area of knowledge and skills. It would likewise behoove cantors to acquire as much familiarity with rabbinic texts (Biblical and Talmudic references to music and life cycle rituals, for starters) as they are able, even incrementally; the Internet has thankfully opened this door. By then making decisions jointly, based on the same information, the team could collaborate in the most effective way possible, enhancing the prayer experience for congregants while ensuring the continuity of the beautiful sounds of our tradition *mi-dor l'dor*.

Benjamin Tisser has served as Hazzan at B'nai Torah Congregation in Boca Raton, Florida since 2013, alongside Cantor Udi Spielman. This article was adapted from his Master's Thesis at the H.L. Miller Cantorial School of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, that same year. It was researched and written under the supervision of Hazzan Alberto Mizrahi.

IN EASTERN EUROPE, THE TERM *NUSACH* WAS... USED IN REFERENCE TO THE INTONATION OF THE LITURGY. IN THAT CONTEXT, THE TERM EVENTUALLY INCLUDED THE BASIC MUSICAL CONTENT OF THE PRAYER MODE, I.E., OF GROUPS OF PRAYERS OR SECTIONS OF SERVICES INTONED IN A SINGLE PRAYER MODE...THE TERM ALSO INCLUDED THE PERCEIVED LIMITS BEYOND WHICH A *CHAZZ'N* COULD NOT DIGRESS FROM ACCEPTED NORMS OF EMBELLISHMENT AND EXTENSION.

(Sholom Kalib, *The Musical Tradition of the Eastern European Synagogue*, 2002).

Toward a Curriculum for Increasing Participation at Prayer Services

by Saul P. Wachs

Introduction

The literature of education offers many definitions of the word "curriculum." Most agree that it involves some kind of plan for learning, its fuller meaning might be phrased as an intentional plan for bringing about improvement in learning. A curriculum is also usually connected to thoughtful consideration of goals and objectives in the learning process. As a participant observer of services in hundreds of Conservative congregations over the years, I have often wondered about how a curriculum might be designed for increasing congregant participation in the worship experience, what such a plan would look like and how it might be implemented. There is very little attention to this topic, although Elie Kaunfer recently offered a brief but valuable set of suggestions.¹ Kaunfer's suggestions have led me to conclude that if such a curriculum were developed to implement them, worship services could become a forum for significant adult learning that would increase congregants' participatory skills along with their capacity to pray with *kavvanah*.

A number of years ago I attended a service at a mid-size congregation. It was a late Friday evening service, one of many that I have attended over the years. What made this service different was the degree to which the congregation was able to chant parts of the liturgy along with the hazzan. Three *Kabbalat shabbat* Psalms, *L'kha dodi*, the *Ha-ma'ariv aravim* and *Emet ve-emunah* paragraphs, all three parts of *K'ri'at sh'ma* and both paragraphs of *Aleinu* were chanted this way by the congregation. Twice during the service the rabbi gave brief explanatory comments about a section of the liturgy.

After the service I approached the hazzan and told him I was tremendously impressed by the congregants' ability to read and chant so many complete paragraphs in Hebrew. He replied, "Thank you, but the credit really belongs to the rabbi." I asked him to explain. "In June, about ten years ago, the rabbi sat down with me to assess the health of the congregation. There was much to celebrate, but one area evoked a lot of concern. He said to me, 'I find your davening to be inspirational but I frequently think that we have an audience rather than a congregation out there. I want our people to *daven*, not just to be passive. Starting in the Fall, I'd like you to chant the *Kiddush* every *erev shabbat* in exactly the same way. Please don't elaborate on the chant, just sing it in a way that you feel people can imitate. Let's see what happens."

I complied, and by the following June the congregation sang the *Kiddush* along with me. Even better, I was told that people were singing *Kiddush* at home with their families on *Erev*

¹ Elie Kaunfer, "The Empowered Synagogue," *Conservative Judaism*, Vol. 59, No. 3, Spring 2005, pages 12, 106.

shabbat. The rabbi then said to me, "Please chant *Hashkiveinu* in a way that others can join with you." I did so, and by the year's end, regular attendees had joined in the chanting of both prayers, willingly and with confidence. Each year we have added new texts, so that by now the congregation is familiar with the entire liturgy. Now I can vary each service so there are many places for people to sing or chant along, and I also have the opportunity to interpret some of the prayers in a way that I hope is an aid to *kavvanah*. They trust me to bring something uplifting whenever I begin davening a prayer with an unfamiliar phrase."

The rabbi and hazzan of that congregation also developed a curriculum. Each contributed from his expertise and together they were able to increase the literacy of their regular attendees to a level far beyond what happens in many congregations. In this paper, since there are basically two groups that make up Conservative congregations at Shabbat services, "regulars" and "guests," I will set out scenarios connected to these different populations, and will offer a theory of practice designed to increase the literacy and skills of those who attend prayer service with regularity. It will also help those whose lack of ability to participate in large parts of the service makes the experience uncomfortable, if not embarrassing.

Who's in Charge?

The roles of the rabbi and hazzan in *t'fillah b'tsibbur* have evolved over the years. In the Conservative synagogue of my youth the service was conducted by the *sh'li'ah tsibbur*, often a professional hazzan. The rabbi davened in his seat, along with the rest of the congregation. It was assumed that people could and would find their place in the service, so page announcements were few and far between. Today in most non-Orthodox congregations, the rabbi typically functions as a master of ceremonies. The rabbi often stands at a pulpit during the prayer service and tends to dominate proceedings, making frequent page announcements and comments.²

While each congregation is different, my experience shows that in the largest number of congregations, it is the rabbi who decides the pace of davening along with much of its content, as well as how the liturgy is treated (read in Hebrew or the vernacular, sung or omitted). And this is all done on the spot, decreed from the pulpit. One rabbi told me he regards himself as "producer" of the service, another called himself its "director."

The role of the hazzan varies from congregation to congregation. Where a strong partnership exists between rabbi and hazzan, a collaborative approach to worship develops. For example, at Congregation Neve Sholom in Metuchen, New Jersey, Rabbi Gerald Zelizer and Hazzan Sheldon Levin share a collaborative relationship rooted in their common belief that a primary goal of the service is to empower the laity to serve as *ba'alei t'fillah*, *ba'alei k'ri'ah* and on occasion, to deliver *divrei torah*.³ Sharing a common goal forms a bedrock for the working relationship that this exemplary team of *k'lei kodesh* enjoy: they are both committed to making

² There are exceptions, of course. I was impressed with the role of Rabbi Morris Allen of Congregation Beth Jacob in the suburbs of Saint Paul, Minnesota, who epitomizes the concept of davening from his seat.

³ Written communication from Rabbi Zelizer, August 7, 2007.

prayer a central element of worship. Their united effort, together with the input of volunteers, has yielded significant results, and hints at what needs to be done for realizing the goals set forth in this paper.

Who Are to Be Targeted?

The first step in constructing a curriculum for services is to decide on a target audience. If it is the "guests," one set of behaviors makes sense. If it is to be the "regulars," then another strategy seems appropriate. If the focus is on the "guests," the service can be treated as a "Learners Minyan," with no assumptions made as to the Hebrew literacy of the congregants. The focus can instead be on making them feel comfortable while some instructions are given. The only caveat if this strategy is adopted: we risk the "regulars" becoming alienated by what they are sure to experience as infantilizing the congregation. There are Conservative Jews who choose to daven in Orthodox synagogues because as one of them put it, "the Conservative rabbi treated us as if we were in a Junior Congregation!"

For that reason, if the service is geared primarily to "guests," i.e., those with little or no liturgical familiarity, then I believe the best solution is to also allow for an *alternative* Minyan for those who might desire it. In that event, we should anticipate that some or most of the best daveners in the Main service will be drained off. The golden lining: it would at least enable them to daven the way they would *like* to daven, and it would free the rabbi and cantor to focus on a more homogeneous population.

What follows envisions a different strategy, in which the clergy feel that their primary responsibility is to nurture the prayer experience of those who attend services willingly and faithfully week after week. Our assumption is that although what is being advocated here may not be of much help to those lacking the motivation to gain prayer skills or expose themselves to the benefit of ongoing synagogue attendance, it will certainly enhance services for those who worship every Shabbat. If we can develop and heighten the prayer experience for this latter group who seek whatever opportunities there are for praying and studying with other Jews, we will more likely to retain continuing loyalty. For these are people who show the deepest commitment to *t'fillah b'tsibbur* as an important value in their lives. In addition, to address the needs of occasional attendees and Bar/Bat Mitzvah "guests," we suggest that a Learners Minyan be made available to help them master the requisite skills that will allow them to participate intelligently in worship.

Enriching the Experience for "Regulars"

A common scenario calls for standardizing the service so that it is repeated more or less exactly week after week, month after month, year after year. Here is the major drawback that I as an educator have found with that approach. Many congregations offer worshipers multiple opportunities to sing or chant along in Hebrew: *Bar'khu*, *Hatsi-kaddish*, *K'dushah*, *Ashrei*, *Eil adon*, *L'kha dodi*, closing hymns, *Aleinu* and increasingly, Prayer for the State of Israel. People participate actively in these passages because they have been given frequent exposure to the

experience.⁴ In other words, once a decision has been made to encourage the congregation to learn a specific text, the method employed is to make that text a constant part of the service. Unfortunately, not very much of the traditional service is *chanted* (as opposed to 'sung') out loud; most prayers are recited by the congregation silently, if at all.

As a result, even regular synagogue attendees are often unable to daven prayers other than the few recited aloud. This strategy of limiting the congregation's *davening* repertoire to a fixed and unchanging set of prayers ignores certain realities. For most people the preferred modality of learning is aural. They learn best through the ear and therefore, if they do not hear something, it is very difficult for them to learn it. If we watch the behavior of people in the synagogue, we notice that what is intended to be read silently is often not read at all. A certain percentage of worshipers simply "shut down" when the rabbi calls for silent reading, for instance, of the second and third paragraphs of *K'ri'at sh'ma*.⁵ Observation of what happens in many congregations during the Standing Devotion (*Amidah*) after *K'dushah* reveals that quite few worshipers do not in fact read at all--silently or otherwise. It is noteworthy that Sephardic congregations do not have this problem, since all of the liturgy is chanted aloud.

Over the years, I have had numerous opportunities to visit congregations as a participant observer. If I visit the same locale again a year later, I frequently find that nothing has changed. What was sung is still sung, what was skipped is still skipped, and silent reading is called for in the same places. In sum, the local rabbi has developed an abbreviated liturgy that is unwavering. This produces regular participants who have gained little in the way of liturgical fluency or literacy. Given these conditions, a person who attends services for years will rarely learn how to read or chant other parts of the service. Additionally, such a rigid way of davening eradicates the opportunity of allowing the liturgy to enhance a special occasion and circumstances, such as a House of Mourning (*beit eivel*).⁶ A service that balances the familiar with the novel always enhances the worship experience. Moreover, once people are comfortable with significant portions of the service, they are *ready* to leave that comfort zone and learn something new. What is fresh and unexpected adds interest and excitement to what might otherwise become monotonously boring.

Developing a Curriculum

It is common to begin any curricular thinking with a set of overarching goals. For a services curriculum I posit the following ones:

⁴ Pedagogically this is known as "distributed practice," the most effective way to master a skill such as learning to play a musical instrument.

⁵ Rabbi Zelizer encourages his congregants to chant aloud the *first-and-last parts* of each paragraph, and believes that over time, they will be able to chant *more and more* of each paragraph in this way. He informed me that this method was taught to him by his father, Rabbi Nathan Zelizer of blessed memory.

⁶ I have found that people who have come to form the Minyan at that time respond appreciatively to my reading aloud the parts that are davened.

- a) Serious daveners will find the service to be a deeply engaging and spiritually uplifting experience.
- b) The congregant will be able to find his or her way through the service with a minimum of announcements.
- c) Congregants will pleurably be able to read or chant large sections of the service in Hebrew, which will strengthen their sense of connection to Jews from other parts of the world, particular those living in *Erets Yisrael*.
- d) Congregants will acquire a working vocabulary of words and roots that appear with greatest frequency in the Siddur, adding to their sense of comprehension and ownership of the prayer experience.⁷
- e) Congregants will become familiar with the basic choreography of *t'fillah*: where to bow and how; where to respond and how, which will engender a sense of respect for the role of *halakhah* as well as *minhag ha-makom*.
- f) Congregants will understand the structure of the service, how the various sections relate to each other, and will appreciate the role of preliminary sections as "warm-ups" for major sections such as *Sh'ma u-virkhoteha*, *the Amidah* and *K'ri'at ha-torah*.
- g) Congregants will recognize differences in *nusah* ha-t'fillah and appreciate the role of music in conveying nuances of mood, content and structure of prayer.
- h) Congregants will learn how to analyze the literary and rhetorical properties of prayer texts, thereby gaining a deeper appreciation of their meaning and the Jewish people's enduring values.
- i) Congregants will be given ample opportunities to engage in discussion of prayer genres (*shevah* or praise, *bakkashah* or petition, *hodayah* or acknowledgement), rationales for prayer and theological study (including metaphoric names of God that resulted from human efforts to describe the ineffable).
- j) Congregants will feel a sense of growth in skill, knowledge and appreciation of *t'fillah* as a spiritual resource and community-building instrument.
- k) Congregants will come to recognize what works best for them as a preparatory exercise to achieve *kavvanah* in prayer.
- l) Finally, congregants will sense that *t'fillah* is taken very seriously in their congregation, a realization that will hopefully foster within them a feeling of loyalty to the Conservative movement of which they are a part.

⁷ Researchers have determined a core group of words and concepts that appear most frequently in liturgical texts. See Aharon bev Natan, "Basic Vocabulary and Language Forms of the Siddur," *Readings in the Teaching of Prayer and Siddur*, Azriel Eisenberg, ed. (New York: Jewish Education Press, 1964) or Shlomo Haramati, *Havanat ha-nikra ba-siddur uva-mikra* (Jerusalem: Hahistadrut Hatsiyonit Ha'olamit, 1983).

The Role of the Rabbi

Like any performance, that of liturgy (*Avodat ha-kodesh*) requires an ongoing flow. When this is missing, it is difficult to achieve a sense of *kavvanah* because the mood is being constantly interrupted, as by informational announcements. One solution is for the Siddur to use different fonts that indicate which readings are for the leader and which for the congregation. Another is to have a roller 'scoreboard' up front which shows the current page. A third expedient is to rely on the directions found in the most recent *Siddurim*. Some announcements may be unavoidable, but they can be minimized and limited to the beginnings of sections in order to promote a sense of flow in the service. Rabbi Zelizer has experimented with having knowledgeable members of the congregation sit alongside those less knowledgeable in order to quietly show them the place.

A rabbi can help congregants develop greater familiarity by giving *divrei t'fillah* at set points in the service so the basic flow is unimpeded. A brief word of explanation on the laws of prayer or on a concept to be found in an upcoming section can over time open the eyes and hearts of regular worshipers to beauties hidden in our liturgy. During *Yamim nora'im* I have the privilege of co-officiating with Rabbi William Hamilton of Kehillat Israel Congregation in Brookline, Massachusetts, who enriches every service by sharing with worshipers his own fascination with the liturgist's phrases, themes and word-choices. When these insights are reinforced in the congregational Bulletin or through the Internet, overall learning in the community is strengthened immeasurably.

In the end, the rabbi's role is to personify a model davener. Nothing distracts congregants more than seeing their rabbi converse on the Bimah with someone else during a service.

The Role of the Hazzan

Every hazzan with whom I have held discussion told me that he or she wants the congregation to participate actively in the davening. Yet there are noticeable differences from one congregation to another in the degree to which worshipers sing along. Some *hazzanim* do not radiate the same degree of encouraging enthusiasm that ignites a spark among congregants. *Perhaps without realizing it, a hazzan always signals by his or her body language whether congregational participation is truly valued.* If they are serious about encouraging it, there are at least two practices that they should follow: sing at a pitch level that is within the comfort zone of most worshipers, and maintain a consistent tempo to make people feel secure while following along. A group only feels empowered when it is comfortable with what it's doing.

Wise choices in setting pitch and tempo do not exhaust the hazzan's responsibility, an indifferent attitude on the part of its leader can shatter the devotional mood of public prayer. On the other hand, a passionate hazzan can take the congregation to a place that would be almost impossible for them to reach unaided. A capable hazzan will intuitively balance such moments with others in the service where he or she downplays vocal effects and instead encourages the congregants to give vent to *their* emotions through heartfelt song.

As with the rabbi, a hazzan's foremost responsibility in prayer is to be a model davener. Beyond that he or she must generate a feeling of warmth and utter selflessness in prayer that will

envelop the worshipers and draw them into the experience. Jewish liturgical music is *logogenic*, "word-born," in which the text dominates. An effective *sh'li'ah tsibbur* is therefore able to help worshipers in sensing the nuances of a word or phrase, through sensitive musical interpretation.⁸ In a meaningful pulpit collaboration, the teaching of the rabbi and the davening of the hazzan combine to reinforce each other's focus on the centrality of the word in Jewish liturgy.

Finally, the hazzan can perform a critically important function in setting forth for lay people an authentic template of which *nusah ha-t'fillah* is appropriate for which liturgical occasion. The term "nusah" connotes a traditional set of musical modes and motifs of Jewish prayer together with proper attention to the words and body-language. The 'appropriate' nusah (varying according to geography and culture) is important because it conveys meaning and emotion, not only pleasant melodies. A different nusah will accompany the service's progression through its different prayer sections, as from *Shaharit* to *K'ri'at ha-torah* and from *K'ri'at ha-torah* to *Musaf*. The *nusah ha-t'fillah* will also vary from one liturgical occasion to another, the *Amidah* nusah on Shabbat will differ from that of *Shalosh r'galim* or that of *Yamim nara'im*. Guarding and transmitting a community's traditional nusah stands (or has stood until recently) as central to the hazzan's mission.

The Ritual Committee

It is an accepted idea in educational circles that involving its eventual users in deliberations about the curriculum can increase both a sense of ownership and motivation to learn. I believe that this principle holds true for a Ritual Committee. Involving its members in planning greater participation for congregants in prayer can be an important vehicle to motivate them as well. The Ritual Committee, after all, routinely assesses the state of congregational worship, serves as a sounding board for the clergy and an initiator of ideas for the maintenance and renewal of services. If *its* deliberations were informed by hands-on involvement in planning greater congregational participation in prayer, a high level of quality could emerge in reevaluating challenges and achievements in the realm of worship.

This suggestion has another advantage. Ritual Committee members, who usually have a serious interest in worship, tend to be a part of what I have termed the "regulars," above. This group consists of two sub-groups: one which enjoys davening and frowns on innovation, a second which is more open to variation in the service. Where a congregation is able to support more than one Minyan, people can select the worship-style that appeals to them. If the number normally attend Shabbat services is too small to support more than a single Minyan, then innovation is likely to be met with disdain or active opposition by those who are accustomed to the status quo. If however, an active and thoughtful Ritual Committee works with the clergy to devise strategies for energizing those who are passive and at the same time attracting new worshipers, then any innovations that emerge will have the approval of enthusiastic volunteers as

⁸ On the role of the text as a source of numinous experience, see Saul P. Wachs, "Some Reflections on Two Genres of *Berakhah*," *Journal of Synagogue Music*, Vol. XXII, No. 1-2, July/December 2002, particularly pages 26-27 and note 10.

well as that of the professionals. That in turn will help smooth its acceptance by the rest of the congregation.

Of course, ongoing communication with congregation via written and oral messages will help educate members to the value of a curricular approach to worship. Further, an adult course focusing on the introduction of new melodies would be an excellent means of encouraging and fostering knowledgeable participation. Rabbi David Schuck introduced this methodology to his congregation in Pelham Manor, New York. His goal was to revitalize the Friday Evening service, his curricular vehicle was the musical settings of *Kabbalat Shabbat* as recorded by the late Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach, released posthumously by his estate in 1994 as *Shabbos in Shomayim*. Rabbi Schuck personally invited members of his congregation to come and attend a course in these enjoyable and highly singable melodies, which would run for as long as it took to master the Six Introductory Psalms. The impetus from that experience eventually carried forward into the congregation also learning all of the Friday night *Ma'ariv* service.

The Special Case of *Musaf*

I am finding that along with curtailing Shabbat morning's Torah reading to a Triennial Cycle, congregations are increasingly resorting to a *Hoykhe* or "High" *K'dushah* for *Musaf*. In this model the congregation hears or chants the opening three blessings of the *Amidah* repetition, through the *K'dushah*. The rest of the *Amidah* "repetition" is then "done" silently. In some congregations this is done for both *Shaharit* and *Musaf*, in others, only for *Musaf*.⁹ As an educator, I would question this practice on three grounds:

- (1) It prevents people from learning texts like *Modim d'rabbanan* and *Birkhat kohanim*, that appear in the *Amidah* repetition only after *K'dushah*.
- (2) It deprives latecomers of many opportunities that occur only in the *Amidah* repetition, to join in congregational singing.
- (3) It guarantees that almost nobody will think about the theological ideas of *Musaf*, for it is a rare congregant who will try to grapple with them on their own during Silent Devotion.

With regard to the third point, I must reiterate that people generally need to hear something in order to master it, and we must conclude that they won't learn much about *Amidat musaf* without having the chance to hear it. We should note that *Musaf* is the "Zionist" service.¹⁰

⁹ Congregants where a *Hoykhe K'dushah* is practiced in both *Shaharit* and *Musaf* seem confused about whether or not to respond at the third *Amidah* blessing, *K'dushat ha'sheim*. In *Shaharit*, because of the need to connect the *Amidah* without pause to the preceding *G'ulah* blessing, they should recite the third blessing with the *sh'li'ah tsibbur*. In *Musaf*, however, the halakhic procedure would be to listen and respond to the *sh'li'ah tsibbur* and then turn back to start reciting the *Amidah* silently from its beginning. Without written instructions in the prayer book, congregants are often at a loss about how to proceed.

¹⁰ While this was clearly not its original function since, more than any other service it centers around the reality of living in the diaspora, it does present an opportunity for reflection on our relationship to Israel, real and

Aside from forcing us to re-examine where we stand vis-à-vis our people's national homeland, it reminds us that *Aliyah* always remains an option and that service to Israel is a Mitzvah. *Musaf* can additionally (if readers will kindly overlook the pun) bring to mind our responsibility to support our fellow Conservative (*Masorti*) Jews in Israel as they struggle to gain official recognition by the Ministries of Religion and the Interior.

***Musaf* as a Symbol of Hope**

This particular service can strike an ever deeper note in the receptive heart: Judasim gave the world its first organized concept of hope. Against the dominant Greek world-view it insisted that life is not ultimately tragic, that there is meaning built into the Universe and that ultimately the forces of order will outlast and overcome the forces of chaos. This vision, daring in its view of reality, nurtured Jewish pride and fostered celebration even in those generations that endured persecution and genocide. In singing aloud from the texts of *Musaf*, we also celebrate the gift of Shabbat--a weekly day of rest--itself a foretaste of paradise.

Whether we interpret the *Musaf Amidah* texts literally or metaphorically, we cannot help but recall the role of sacrifice in building society, as we proclaim our joy in seeing the rebirth of Jewish life in *Erets yisrael*. Still, it must be admitted that with the exception of the most spiritually advanced among us, such insights will not surface automatically. It is the task of our *rabbanim* and *hazzanim* to help us make these connections, through textual and musical interpretation of the liturgy's verbal imagery.

When 19th-century leaders of the nascent Reform movement renounced Zionism—which they saw as a concretization of the restorative element of Messianism—it was logical for them to eliminate the *Musaf* service.¹¹ The leaders of that movement at that time were no longer prepared to ask God to restore us to *Erets yisrael*. In contrast, moderately liberal Conservative Judaism, from its very inception made support for restoring the national homeland a pillar of its ideology.¹² It is ironic that as each successive edition of official Reform liturgy reclaims more

ideal. For the origin of *Musaf* see Jeffrey Hoffman, "The Surprising History of the *Musaf* Amidah," *Conservative Judaism*, Vol. XLII, No. 1, Fall 1989, pp. 41-45.

¹¹ For a comprehensive review of deliberations about *Musaf* at Reform rabbinical synods in the 1840s see Jakob J. Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe* (New York: The World Union for Progressive Judaism, Ltd.), 1968: 26-264). A number of the rabbis favored a version that changed future-tense verbs to past-tense verbs, precisely the model that has since been used in Conservative prayer books. One practical reason advanced for the retention of *Musaf* was that many congregants arrived at the synagogue right before or during the *Kri'at ha-torah*. At that time,... "the Chief Cantor and the choir made their appearance. That was the beginning of the main service" (ibid., p, 241). Petuchowski also covers the attitude taken towards Zion and Jerusalem in pages 277-297 of the same volume. Interestingly, a more recent version of Reform Jewish liturgy unveiled at a *Limmud* conference at the University of Nottingham in December of 2005, intended for use by Reform congregations in the United Kingdom, includes a *Musaf* service with substantial inclusion of traditional texts within the *K'dushat hay-yom (m'kaddeish ha-shabbat)* blessing.

¹² A reading of the 1913 Preamble to the Constitution of the United Synagogue of America (now the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism), reveals clearly that, in large measure, the document is a response to and repudiation of the 1885 Pittsburgh Platform of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (now the World

and more of the traditional liturgy, Conservative congregations delete more and more of same. Inclusion or exclusion of *Musaf* remains one of the striking differences between the official *Siddurim* and *Mahzorim* of the two movements.

Overcoming the Tyranny of the Clock

Abridgement of the service, often by omitting repetition of one or both *Amidot*--is often justified on the need to keep worship within a reasonable time period. The argument is understandable, yet I cannot resist mentioning the many two-and-a-half-hour services--and longer--that I have attended on a *Shabbat* morning during which neither *Amidah* was repeated and only a third of the *Parashah* was read. The time was mostly taken up with teaching and preaching, chanting of the liturgy being reduced to a minor role in the service. The unintended message: that prayer is of secondary importance in the American synagogue.

It is possible to keep worship from going on too long, by accentuating different parts of the service at different times. For example, if a congregation is familiar with *V'ahavta*, that section of *K'ri'at sh'ma* could be read silently, and one of the two remaining paragraphs could be chanted aloud. If one wished to introduce responsive chanting earlier in the service, let us say *Barukh she-amar*, then *Ashrei* (Psalm 145) could be read silently, etc. In other words, without lengthening proceedings, we could introduce new material along the way by varying how we recite prayers with which congregants are already at home. *As a general rule, altering the way in which a text is treated raises consciousness of it.* That alone will seemingly make the time fly by.

The principle of *l'sheim hinukh* is a compelling reason to alter aspects of the standard service. Simply put, one may make changes in usual practice, "for the sake of educating." Thus it is justifiable to abbreviate some parts of the service (on a rotating basis) in order to leave room for chanting other parts. The theory is that over time, congregants will thereby become equally familiar with all parts of the service. The late Rabbi Aaron Landes adopted the principle of *l'sheim hinukh* in order to have his congregation, Beth Sholom in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, chant the *B'rakhah ahat mei-ein sheva*--traditionally recited by the hazzan alone--so that it would become familiar with the text. He did the same with other *b'rakhot*, and supported in the effort by his gifted Hazzan-Educator David Tillman, now Emeritus, he was gradually able to increase the Hebrew literacy of the congregation.

Three Success Stories

Three congregations that are often cited as exemplars of providing effective prayer experiences are *B'nai Jeshurun* in New York City, and *Shirah hadashah* and *Kol ha-n'shamah* in Jerusalem. In an attempt to understand why these in particular evoke so much enthusiasm among those who worship there, I have davened in all three congregations. Here is what I discovered.

Union for Progressive Judaism). It also includes among its objectives, "to preserve in the service the reference to Israel's past and the hopes for Israel's restoration." See on this, Herbert Rosenblum, *Conservative Judasim: A Contemporary History* (New York: United Synagogue of America), 1983:97-99.

The liturgy is central to the service, and a great deal of singing is encouraged. Melodies by Shlomo Carlebach and/or Debbie Friedman alternate with older settings by Salomon Sulzer, Louis Lewandowski and other 'Classical' composers of music for the synagogue. A melody is often repeated over and over again, building gradually in intensity until it climaxes. The rabbis pray fervently along with the congregation, and the *sh'lihei tsibbur* are excellent. The time-frame is fairly consistent, and if some parts of the service are given more generous amounts of time, other parts are davened more quickly. I have no doubt that other congregations not mentioned here may have also achieved great success in generating intense prayer experiences. *Where that happens, it is because leadership has committed to making prayer paramount in the life of that particular congregation.*

It means providing continuous opportunities for congregants to learn. In the case of *Shirah hadashah*, congregants are periodically invited to workshops where new melodies are introduced and practiced. In my own congregation, Temple Beth Hillel-Beth El of Wynnewood, Pennsylvania, Hazzan Eugene Rosner, encouraged by Rabbi Neil Cooper, has recorded melodies used in the service. These are then sent to every congregant. Some congregations have produced transliterations that allow worshipers who cannot decipher the Hebrew alphabet to sing along with those who can.¹³

Post Script Theology

While I have placed major emphasis on acquiring the skills of davening, it is important to note that skills do not constitute all of a curriculum. For one thing, people who lack prayer skills are much less likely to participate in *t'fillah b'tsibbur*, yet we all know people who have the skills of prayer and do not find meaning in formal worship. For that reason, congregations will act wisely if they place a major focus of children's, teens' and adults' religious education upon *kavvanah*, paying attention and really meaning it during prayer. One strategy is to make commentaries--geared to varying age levels--available in *Siddurim* used by the congregation. Another option for helping people to attaining a fuller measure of *kavvanah* is to arrange for moments of silence during prayer.

The Mishnah records that revered masters of prayer would pause before reciting the Amidah.¹⁴ According to one source, during that master's time-out one could recite all of *Birkhot ha-shahar*, *p'sukei d'zimra* and *Sh'ma u-virkhotiha*.¹⁵ Since very few people are present in the synagogue at the start of an early morning service, it would seem prudent to build in the periods of silence and opportunities for meditation (possibly guided) a bit later on. One logical spot might be immediately following the *Amidah*, before *K'ri'at ha-torah*. No athlete runs a race or

¹³ This is a major feature of both *Mishkan T'filah*, the most recent *Siddur* produced by the Central Conference of American Rabbis, and *Lev Shalem*, most recent High Holiday *Maḥzor* published by the Rabbinical Assembly. Also see Joseph A. Levine, "Teaching the Infinite through Liturgy," *Judaism*, Vol. 65, Nos. 1-1, Summer/Fall 2006, pp. 76-88.

¹⁴ Mishnah *B'rakhot* 5.1; BT *B'rakhot* 30b.

¹⁵ P'ri m'gadim, Eishel avraham 93:1.

begins a strenuous exercise routine without warming up beforehand. If prayer is to nurture spiritual athletes, it seems logical to provide them with similar preparatory spaces as part of the worship experience.

I have long felt that if the Conservative movement is to convince its adherents that it is an authentic form of Judaism, it must do a better job of preparing congregants to participate in prayer with mind and heart. By continuing to run services as if they were a type of "junior congregation for adults," we risk accelerating the exodus of some of our most knowledgeable and observant Jews to Orthodox synagogues and Havurot that are affiliated elsewhere. Our services must demonstrate that they are not merely a "show" put on for the benefit of Bar/Bat Mitzvah guests, but rather a living and breathing spiritual experience.

I believe the service offers us an arena for learning skills and ideas that will enhance the lives of congregants. This will not happen by accident. It requires a plan, a curriculum, if you prefer. This challenge deserves our attention--in our congregations and their religious schools, and in the classrooms of institutions charged with training the future spiritual leaders of our movement.

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PIYYUT AROSE AS AN ANSWER TO THE EARLY CHRISTIAN HYMNS. WHAT HAS CHRISTIANITY INTRODUCED LATELY THAT WOULD JUSTIFY OUR REACTION IN THE FORM OF RESPONSIVE READINGS? CHURCH SERVICES...DO NOT FEATURE RESPONSIVE READINGS. THEY DO FEATURE HYMNS, SCRIPTURE READINGS AND REPONSIVE CHANT, AND SO DID SYNAGOGUE SERVICES UNTIL WE CUT OUT SOME OF THE BEST-WRITTEN AND MOST POPULAR HYMNS

(Eric Werner, *The Sacred Bridge*, 1959).

Seeking the Extraordinary: Improvisation in Jewish Liturgy

By Chaim Feifel

Improvisation is something we do daily in every moment of our lives, without giving much thought to our actions. We are able to improvise because from experience we have developed prior resources which help us to function in a spontaneous way. In order to improvise successfully in life we rely on the unconscious memory of these past resources and combine them intuitively with present actuality.

In *hazzanut*, the artistic level of our improvisation will depend on several things: our familiarity with the statutory prayers; our creative capacities; and the musical abilities that we bring to bear. Cantors of previous generations were accomplished improvisers because they had absorbed our musical traditions from a very early age. They were generally masters of the art because in those days there were no recordings and few sources of published music. They had to depend solely on their intimacy with the prayer book and their familiarity with the traditional prayer modes which they had learned by absorbing what they habitually heard in synagogue. By drawing on these inner resources they were able to create artful and memorable musical expressions of our holy texts.

The aim of this article is to establish an awareness among today's *hazzanim* of how to enrich their *t'fillah* through unaccompanied improvisation. Once developed, this ability will hopefully permit them to access spiritual depths previously unexplored—their uninhibited inner imagination—and in the process, to spark the imaginations of those whom they lead in worship.

Although seemingly spontaneous to the listener, successful improvisation also needs direction. The improviser must attach an orderly framework to his creativity. A good start would be to know the words—and their rhythmic flow—thoroughly. Many kinds of frameworks can then be applied. One approach might be to mark a scale number of the intended prayer mode at the end of each phrase. If chanting in D *Magein Avot*, then D would be #1, B-flat would be #6, F would be #3, etc. Once we know on which tone we'd like to end the phrase, we are free to approach that final note in many different creative ways.

I am sure that every hazzan wishes to communicate the prayers in a meaningful, even memorable, way. When chanting prayer with neither a choir nor any form of instrumental accompaniment, the hazzan becomes a monologist. Hence the need for tools with which to create contrasts that will maintain worshipers' interest while bringing out the deeper meaning and beauty of the text. I have long been searching for such tools, techniques that would enhance a hazzan's ability to effectively communicate to other *mitpall'lim* his or her own inspiration. I have found the most effective means of attaining this end to be through carefully planned improvisation.

Granted, there are *hazzanim* who rarely change their chant from week to week. Yet in limiting themselves to the tried-and-true, they may be conveying little creativity and igniting few sparks. Their congregants' certainty about what is about to happen every step of the way could

easily be leading to boredom. There is no doubt that worshipers have a great need for the reassuring comfort of repetition. This is best achieved through periodic deployment of congregational melodies. However, in-between these communal interludes the hazzan has ample opportunity to engage creatively in impromptu chant and thereby intensify the devotional—as opposed to comfortable—component of *t'fillah b'tsibbur*.

To begin with, it helps if the hazzan has a pleasant voice and is willing to search for a deeper meaning in the statutory words. My teacher Leib Glantz once refused to let me sing a phrase until he was satisfied that I fully understood the text. After I'd read—and he'd questioned me approximately 50 times—on the text he finally said "Now you can sing the phrase." Another of Hazzan Glantz's favorite aphorisms was that a leader in worship should be like the angels who ascended and descended Jacob's ladder, establishing a continuum along which they moved freely between earthly and heavenly realms. A hazzan's feet should be well grounded in knowledge of the text and traditional *nusah*, so his/her spirit might aspire toward astral planes. I believe that the principles discussed here will, at the very least, encourage readers to start out on that noble path.

A hazzan is like a monologist who, when expressing ideas, habitually employs contrasts and colors to bring across the message in an interesting way. So, too, does the hazzan use a variety of musical and rhythmic contrasts in order to reveal hidden meaning in the prayers. Effective *hazzanut* requires an intuitive sense of timing. This has to do not only with the chant itself but with the prayer leader's own heartbeat. It is this inner rhythm that triggers the hazzan's ability to impart a poetic rhythm to the prayer text.

Once the reader realizes that all of us possess this innate ability—to a greater or lesser degree—there will emerge a better understanding of:

- word-spacing;
- word-sound relationship;
- sustaining-and-releasing of sounds;
- syllable-pulsation;
- the swaying process;
- melismatic patterning; and
- balancing the natural rhythm of the words with one's own inner rhythmic flow.

Spacing and Silence

These two elements are essential in creating meaningful improvisation. In their first attempts at impromptu chanting, many people feel uncomfortable with frequently remaining silent. They would do well to heed the point made by the innovative modern composer, John Cage, that

sound and silence are equal when moving through time ("The History of Experimental Music in the United States"). Spacing—through the employment of momentary silence—allows our inner thoughts to come to the surface during the creative process. It can also be used to emphasize an idea or a word, while creating a balanced phrase (**Example 1—*V'hu rahum***—"God, being merciful [grants atonement]"):



Spacing-through-silence is essential for contrasting musical ideas that do not relate with one other; it binds the two conflicting themes by making them complementary in the flow of the musical line (**Example 2—*b'rakhot v'hoda'ot***—"to praise and exalt You... forever"):



Quite often a phrase will be split by a brief pause—for effect or/and for taking a breath. To do this without breaking the logical flow of the phrase, slightly sustain the penultimate note before the pause, and shorten the final note before the pause (**Example 3—*Eloheinu***—"Our God and God of our ancestors"):



Combining Sounds and Words

We have shown that sound and silence go well together in making the message more meaningful, and that the improviser's task is to experiment through trial and error until the audible and the inaudible form an inseparable whole—a balanced new entity. This will only happen through practice, for it is a complex art. Yet it can be broken down into various building blocks, the first of which has to do with the most effective way of combining words with sounds. After all, it would be so much easier to improvise without words!

A good start would be to sing while conversing with others, an exercise that works well with children. Doing this with friends and students would come next. If nothing else, the technique helps one develop a *parlando* ("as-if-speaking") style of singing in which your message and its child-like melody bond together, while the text's natural stress pattern creates a pleasant rhythmic flow.

At this stage, it would be best to use a minimum number of tones. Initially, try to communicate a complete idea by singing each separate syllable on the same note (**Example 4A—*Hashkiveinu***—"Allow us, our God, to sleep peacefully"):

Hash - ki - vei - nu a - do - nai e - lo - hei - nu l' - sha - lom

Next, you might group syllables on different notes (**Example 4B—*v'ha'amideinu***—"and awaken us, our Sovereign, unto life"):

V' - ha - a - mi - dei - nu mal - kei - nu l' - hay - yim

Following the discipline of these two contrasting patterns, start to introduce wider intervals. Eventually, readers should be able to alternate the "syllabic" and the grouped-note (or "melodic," to be discussed below) patterns with ease. Not only will this alternation infuse your chant with varied textures, it will also fill it with energy. To generate the further tension of an *ebb-and-flow*, introduce spacing in the form of periodic silent pauses between contrasting phrases (**Example 4c—*u-f'ros aleinu***—"spread over us Your canopy of peace"):

U' - f' - ros - a - lei - nu suk - kat sh' - lo - me - kha

Pulsation

This is an essential tool, with many potential variations. I define 'pulsation' as the weight we apply to any given syllable or word. The improviser determines the weight and the frequency of the pulsation depending upon the mood and flow of the text, to convey feelings of intensity, warmth, gentleness, dance, joy, sadness and mystery, etc. For instance, when *hazzanim* chant the words *B'tseit yisrael mi-mitsrayim*—"When the Israelites departed Egypt"—they might strongly pulsate the accent and the syllables of every word to create the impression of a people on the march (**Example 5**):

B' - tseit yis - ra - el mi - mits - ra - yim beit ya - a - kov mei - am lo - eiz

When reciting *Yismah moshe*—"Moses rejoiced"—an improvising hazzan could minimize the weight of the pulse to convey a dance-like feeling of joy (**Example 6**):

Yis - mah mo - she b' - mat - nat hel - ko ki e - ved ne - e - man ka - ra - ta lo

A slow and heavy pulsation on the accent of every word would create an atmosphere of sadness while a slow and gentle pulse on each word would create a sense of mystery. Since there is a tendency to slur words in the *parlando* style, gently pulsating final syllables will almost certainly enhance clarity. Light and feathery pulsations can create a quiet flow that moves smoothly through the phrase. Finally, changing types of pulsation mid-phrase—from light to heavy and back to light, or vice versa—would create contrasts that might require a bit of spacing in addition.

Rocking and Swaying

Readers may have noticed that some people rock and sway while praying. This is not to suggest that *hazzanim* should start following suit while leading the prayer chant, but they can create an inner sway through improvisation. That less-fettered approach would signal worshipers that they, too, were free to pray along with their whole being—inner as well as outer. For a case in point, I believe that the Carlebach setting for *L'ma'an ahai v'rei'ai*—"I seek peace] for the sake of my brethren and companions"—has become popular in synagogues because it incorporates a built-in sway (**Example 7**):

L' - ma - an a - hai v' - rei - ai, I' - ma - an a - hai v' - rei - ai

The worshiper who has had a difficult and stressful week comes to the synagogue to find inner peace. When people are stressed they often dream of returning to their mother's arms and being gently rocked. That is the reason we have swings, hammocks and rocking chairs: to help us release tension and create inner peace. Psalm 23 describes this well: "God makes me lie down in green pastures, leading me beside the still waters, restoring my soul." Part of the hazzan's challenge is to turn liturgical language into the rocking pattern of poetic rhythm.

In the *Nishmat* prayer of Sabbath-and-Festival *Shaharit* we read: *kol atsmotai tomarna*—"every bone in my body cries out"—which I understand to mean that worshipers will find a way to invest their total being in voicing praise to God, and not just their lips. In traditional synagogues of old, most worshipers rocked and swayed when they prayed, so intense was their concentration. Although this phenomenon has almost disappeared in contemporary worship, stresses and tensions have not disappeared from our lives. I maintain that synagogue worship should still offer individuals the opportunity to enter into a spiritual realm beyond the mundane world and its endless troubles. Through improvised song the hazzan can develop rhythms within

the ongoing *t'fillah* that would enable worshipers to attain this end. Well chosen changes in tempo could determine the length of the calming sway. I find that the meter of 6/8 can provide a good start in this direction. Sequential melo-rhythmic patterns will also work, combined with regular contrasts in volume or pitch. All the techniques mentioned in this article can be employed not only to galvanize worshipers' attention, but to establish an inner rhythm of prayer (its 'sway,' if you will) and maintain worshipers' continued interest on the conscious and unconscious levels of awareness.

Coloratura

This feature has been an integral part of hazzanic chant for hundreds of years, and possibly from its Middle Eastern beginnings millennia ago. When people hear the word 'coloratura,' they immediately think of embellishments, which some consider extraneous to the chant. Not so, argues Michael Scott in the Preface to Volume I of his monumental illustrated anthology, *The Record of Singing*. He regards embellishment as "part of a basic vocal grammar—as old as, perhaps older than—music itself."

While a single grace note constitutes the smallest form of embellishment., hazzanic coloratura can range from that to a multitude of notes, depending on the underlying text's meaning. For instance, we might employ it to tone-paint the word *naggid*—"we shall recount [Your greatness]"—in the phrase from the *Kedushah* (Sanctification): *naggid godlekha* (**Example 8**):

(L' - dor va - dor) nag - gid god - le - kha

Coloratura can serve to unify contrasting musical ideas in a phrase like *Hat-tov ki lo khalu rahamekha*—"You are the One who is good, whose mercy is never-ending"—from the daily *Amidah* (Standing Devotion; **Example 9**):

Ha - tov ki lo kha - lu ra - ha - me - kha v' - ha - m' - ra - heim ki lo ta - mu ha - sa - de - kha

Coloratura can also be used as a tool to enhance the flow of a *parlando*-style phrase, as in *hayyim she-yimal'u mish'alot libeinu l'tovah*—"a life in which our worthy aspirations will be fulfilled"—from my teacher Max Wohlberg's setting of the New Moon Blessing; **Example 10**:

Hay- yim sheyi-mal'-u _____ mish - a-lot li - bei _____ nu - l'-to _____ mish _____ vah

Readers who have encountered coloratura passages in published works by past masters of *hazzanut* such as Solomon Kashtan (1781-1829), preserved in his son Hirsch Weintraub's 1859 collection *Shirei Beth Adonai* as a section titled "Shirei Sh'lomo," are aware of how difficult it is to chant these quick-moving patterns. Here are a few suggestions that may help in mastering coloratura:

1. Avoid using vibrato, which conflicts with fast-moving tones.
2. Look for smaller groupings of notes within the over-all pattern, and accent the first note of each smaller grouping. In **Example 11**; *l'einei kol hai*—"reign over us again" before all humankind"—Hirsch Weintraub has already broken down his father's 32-note coloratura pattern into groupings of 3-and-2-notes on the unaccented syllable, "ei," as shown on line 1, below. The lyrics on line 2 make the pattern easier to sing by shifting it onto the accented syllable, "nei," preceded with the word's two unaccented syllables, "l'-ei," instead of just "l'-." This simple adjustment also allows for a breath right after the pattern, but before the phrase's end on "*kol hai*:"

1. L' - ei _____ nei _____ kol hai.
2. L'-ei - nei _____ kol _____ hai.

3. Slightly sustain the note(s) immediately preceding the coloratura, and slightly slow down on the note(s) immediately following the coloratura (Weintraub's notation already indicates the latter).
4. When a coloratura pattern changes direction, slightly hold the note before there is a direction change. (in Ex. 12, the direction changes after every two triplet-groupings.)

Sustained Notes and Release Notes

Just as bones support the body, so do sustained notes support a chant. Flowing notes that move between the sustained notes bring life to the music—like flesh that surrounds the bones of our bodily skeleton. The longer we sustain a note, the faster should we release the flowing notes that follow. Correspondingly, a short sustained note should be followed by a slower release of the flowing notes that follow it. These two elements are strongly related. A continuous flow of

sustained notes—without a contrasting release—will create boredom. A continuous flow of notes—without any intervening sustained notes—will also create boredom. When we sing a phrase that features sustained notes, we would do well to feature flowing notes in the next phrase. There has to be a constant alternation of these two elements; we can't have one without the other. *Yism'hu ha-shamayim*—"Let the heavens rejoice"—**Example 12**, shows this alternation:

Yis - m' - hu ha sha - ma - yim v' ta - geil ha - a - rets

It is advantageous to sustain the accent of *mil'eil* words, which appears on the penultimate syllable. Here are a few common liturgical phrases that include words bearing penultimate accents; sustained syllables are in CAPITAL letters, flowing syllables are in lowercase letters:

e-lo-HEI-nu vei-lo-HEI a-vo-TEI-nu r'-TSEI vim-nu-ha-TEI-nu
 Hash-ki-VEI-nu a-do-NAI e-lo-HEI-nu l'-sha-LOM
 v'-ha-a-mi-DEI-nu mal-KEI-nu l'-hay-YIM
 va-a-NI b'-ROV has-d-'kHA a-VO vei-TE-kha
 a-DON o-LAM a-SHER ma-LAKH

The Unification of Musical and Rhythmic Ideas

Novice improvisers tend to meander. The key to avoiding this is taking one musical idea at a time and developing it, using any of the tools previously discussed. This is usually done through consistent rhythmic patterns and repetition of melodic figurations. When changing the rhythmic or melodic pattern, prepare your listeners for it by inserting a space (silence). Our final musical illustration, using a text from the Sabbath morning *Amidah*, will demonstrate what I mean.

It opens with a recurring figuration from measures 1 through 8 (*Eloheinu... b'toratekha*—"Our God... [sanctify us through Your Torah]")

It then inserts a space in order to introduce a Hasidic-style melody from mm. 9-13 (*sab'einu... bishu'atekha*—"fill our lives... [and gladden us] with Your triumph").

Then comes another space before mm. 14-17 (*V'taheir libeinu... be-emet*—"Purify our hearts... [to serve You faithfully]"), which employs a new rhythmic pattern.

At that point another space appears, before mm. 18-21 (*v'hanhileinu... kodshetkha*—"Grant that we inherit [Your holy Sabbath lovingly]")—with its return to the opening pattern.

An additional space then sets the stage for echoes of the earlier melody, sung in harmony, at *v'yanuhu vo yisrael m'kad'shei sh'mekha*—"Israel will rest on that day, hallowing Your name"—mm. 22-26.

A final space precedes mm. 26-29, the *Kiddush hayyom*—"Blessing for the Sabbath Day"—which 'seals' the prayer, via a gradually slowing flourish of coloratura (**Example 13**):

E-lo - hei - nu vei-lo-hei-a-vo - tei - nu r' - tseih vim-nu-ha - tei - nu ka-d'-
 6 shei - nu b'-mits-vo - te - kha v'-tein hel - kei - nu b'-to - ra - te - kha
 10 sa - b' - ei - nu mi - tu - ve-kha v' - sa - m'-hei - nu bi-shu - a - te - kha, sa - b' - ei - nu mi - tu - ve-kha
 13 v' - sa - m'-hei - nu bi-shu - a - te - kha. V'-ta - heir li - bei - nu l'-ov-d'-
 17 kha - be - e - met. V' - han - hi - lei - nu a-do-nai e-lo - hei - nu b'-a-ha-
 21 vah uv'-ra-tson shab - bat kod - she-kha v' - ya - nu - hu vo yis - ra - el
 25 m' - ka - d'-shei, m' - ka - d'-shei sh' - me - kha. Ba - rukh a - tah, a - do-
 29 nai, m'-ka - deish ha - shab - bat.

rit.

Conclusion

When anyone first begins to improvise, they feel as if they were entering the woods by way of an unknown path. This article is intended to assure them that, although the trail may prove rocky initially, the eventual rewards to both cantor and congregation are great. A lot can be accomplished, if accompanied by excitement at every new self-discovery. Certain disciplines

will first need to be internalized. As stated earlier, only trial and error can lead to a heightened level of individual expression.

My aim in setting forth these fruits of personal experience is to help restore the creative art that once permeated *t'fillah b'tsibbur*. Generations change with new ideas, and we must find ways to combine these new ideas with the traditions of our past. At this point, I am reminded of a story concerning Moses our Teacher, sitting on the roof of a talmudical academy in Babylon (à la Hillel the Elder), listening to the sages discussing Torah within. He didn't understand much of what was said, and what he did make out seemed very strange to him—until he heard one of the scholars say: "We understand this current principle according to the laws of Moses" (*k'dat mosheh*). Our Lawgiver was then satisfied, knowing that a link had been maintained between the old and the new.



*A native of New York, Chaim Feifel began an eight-year career as a boy alto in the Meyer Machtenberg choir, singing with the best-known remaining cantors of the 20th century's Golden Age. After serving in the U.S. Air Force during the Korean War, he enrolled in the Jewish Theological Seminary's Cantors Institute. Upon graduating he studied music at the Rubin Academy in Tel Aviv, and hazzanut privately with Leib Glantz, who saw in him a potential heir to his uniquely dramatic approach. During the next two decades he served various congregations throughout the United States, after which he organized an American group for the purpose of settling the Sinai town of Yamit. The impression he made on his fellow settlers was described in **Yediot Aharonot** by columnist Nahum Barnea ("30 Years since Yamit's Evacuation," 4/12/12):*

Photo by Nahum Barnea

The outlying farmers kept apart from the townspeople, no love lost between them. There was one store in Yamit—Hayyim Feifel's kol-bo... "How did you manage?" I asked him two days ago. "Quite well," he answered. "What do you do nowadays?" I asked. "I teach hazzanut." Surprised, I repeat: "hazzanut?" "Yes," he says, "I am a hazzan by profession; I ran a store only in Yamit... those seven years were among the best in my life." A long line of admirers can attest to that summation: in Yamit, not everyone knew one another, but they all knew Hayyim Feifel.

*Following Israel's disengagement from the Sinai in 1982, Hazzan Feifel resettled in the northern town of Zikhron Ya'akov. In 1985 he initiated a program for beginning Conservative cantorial students in Israel, under the direction of Hazzan Max Wohlberg. From 1988 to 2008 he taught hazzanut at HUC in Jerusalem, under the direction of Dr. Eli Schleifer, and from 1995 to the present he has taught at the Tel Aviv Cantorial Institute, under the direction of Hazzan Naftali Hershtik. In 2011 Hazzan Feifel's 80th birthday was celebrated with a concert at the Institute, at which he and his students performed his compositions exclusively. The evening's highlight was a **Sh'ma Koleinu** that Feifel had written for the occasion, arranged for Cantor/SATB by Raymond Goldstein.*

NUSAH ADDRESSED ON HAZZANET

2008 – The Changed Face of "Nusah"

Sam Weiss (Hazzan, Jewish Center, Paramus, NJ)

Once upon a time the ins-and-outs of synagogue prayer modes were the “meat and potatoes” of the hazzanic craft, the affective (i.e. non-textual) liturgical elements that touched congregants emotionally and linked them to their brethren in other synagogues on a particular Shabbat or Festival. In this scheme, the congregational melodies could be considered musical “garnish,” something variable, non-essential and beyond the emotional purview of nusah.

Nowadays the roles of these two elements have been reversed. The sing-along melodies are the “real stuff” from the typical congregants' point of view—and Heaven help you if you try to tinker with their expectations—while what used to be called nusah is incidental and inconsequential, if it registers at all...

One of our prime functions as cantors is to connect our congregants and rabbis liturgically to the larger Jewish world—past, present and future—beyond the ZIP code of the particular synagogue in which we and they happen to be located.

This is a very tough job to carry out effectively in our shifting world. We need to remind ourselves that the vast majority of our people do not possess anything close to our musical sensitivity, and they certainly do not hear our “calling” the way we do. Regardless of how they daven as lay leaders, they do respect our vocation and the authority derived from our training and “codification.” Our challenge, therefore, is to distinguish carefully between “teaching the correct way to our people” and “correcting our people.”

For now, I believe there's a way to create (not re-create) some of the magic and effect of the Golden Age even in our Ring-tone age (we've regressed since the Sesame Street Age). The time for congregants to be moved by vocal prowess—or even vocal quality—is perhaps over, but the magical essence of a Golden Age worship experience (as opposed to concert experience) was never about voice; it was about improvisation. The magical essence of improvisation lies not in the voice or the instrument; it consists in taking a listener to an unexpected musical place in a way that feels inspired. This is something we can all do with varying degrees of skill once we liberate ourselves from the routine.

To clarify: I am not referring here to improvising only on nusah, but on the new canon of Carlebach/Friedman/Taubman, etc. Once upon a time the hazzan was expected to improvise exclusively on nusah which, as explained above, can generally no longer have an inspirational effect on our worshipers. Better to choose any melodic material at all and play with it, however briefly. Give it to the congregants, take it back and make it your own, then give it back to them

filtered through your hazzanic personality and if you love it, they will, too. They will "get" it and you will feel like a Hazzan again.

... Nusah Addressed on Hazzanet

2009—Keep *Hazzanut* in the Mix

Jacob Mendelson (Hazzan Emeritus, Jewish Center of White Plains)

I will gladly match my usage of Carlebachian / Israeli or American Pop-sounding tunes in my davening arsenal with anyone. The operative rule is twofold: I must feel the tune has merit in interpreting the text; and it has to come from nusah--and go back to nusah. I was not dragged into this profession kicking and screaming, I believe our liturgical chant should reflect the musical culture of the day. However, nusah should be the host, and popular tunes, the guest! To let *nusah hat'fillah*, our very own prayer form sculpted over so many years, just peter out, is nothing less than self-hatred.

Is there anyone out there who doesn't get the etymological or semantic link between the words "hazzan" and "*hazzanut*"?

Is there anyone out there who thinks I am calling for a return to the Roaring Twenties, when *shul* ended on Shabbat at 2:30 pm? Let them know this is a plea to simply *keep hazzanut in the mix!*

Cantor Erik Contzius, my Reform buddy down the road, said the other day: "Our job is not just to meet people where they are, but rather, to take them where they should be."

My filmmaker friend Erik Anjou, railing about the industry rolling out films like "Spiderman" while ignoring the potential "Chinatown," said: "If the industry were to produce deeper, more challenging films, my bet is that the audience would come-- if the product were delivered with art, fire and inventiveness."

The legendary Hazzan Israel Alter taught us so passionately (at HUC's School of Sacred Music): "**Serve the text!**" When you shoehorn Leonard Cohen's "Halleluyah" into the sacred words, you are serving the *music* only.

The tail should not wag the dog. Yes, the dog is very sick and howling: "Can you tell me how to get to Sesame Street?" We can take him there, and he may feel better for a few moments. But inevitably, he will die. If we take him to a *m'kom kodesh* and there nurture him on what fed the generations before him, at least he'll have a fighting chance...

... Nusah Addressed on Hazzanet

2015--Re: JSM NUSAH WARS Issue

Joshua Jacobson (Founding Director, Zamir Chorale of Boston)

I find some pretty frank and heavy material in this issue, it will be fun to observe the reaction. As you may suspect, I happen to agree with the lament. I gave a scathing talk at the American Conference of Cantors convention in Boston a few years ago. At the upcoming American Choral Directors Association convention in Salt Lake City I'm going to lead a huge session (of mostly church musicians) on the dumbing-down of worship music. Here are two relevant quotes that I've collected on the subject, which will be distributed as a hand-out at the session.

Samuel Adler on the state of music in Reform synagogues

("A Composer's View of Temple Music," *CCAR Journal*, 49/1, Winter 2002):

After a lifetime of commitment to the synagogue and its music, I am alive to witness the dumbing-down of the music for the synagogue and complete triumph of the amateur as the composer of music for our liturgy. Our religious establishment has joyfully embraced the sound and the spirit of popular culture, and the musical sounds pouring forth from our pulpits are either Hasidic ditties written for people who are musically illiterate, or pop-sounding songs written by musical amateurs to make our congregants feel "warm" rather than get the spiritual high that would result if they were ever confronted with great music.

Daniel Schwartz on his frustration with the music sung in Orthodox synagogues

("I Dread Going to Shul," *Ideals*, Winter 2011):

I dread going to [synagogue]. The services are both uninspired and uninspiring. Nothing about what goes on there speaks to me spiritually or on any other level... I loathe hearing tunes applied to the [prayers] simply because they "fit" the text rhythmically but do nothing to convey the *meaning* of the text. I bemoan the lack of dignity that pervades the public presentation of our prayers. I resent the fact that the public worship... has become little more than a "Romper Room" style sing-along. I yearn for the "high church" atmosphere of a bygone era.

... Nusah Addressed on Hazzanet

2015--Re: Charles Heller's "Why We Are at War"

Michael Weis (Hazzan, Brotherhood Synagogue, New York)

I read with great interest Charles Heller's "Why We Are at War" article. While he made many great points, I think there's one point he either forgot, or tiptoed around so as not to elicit the ire of his colleagues, namely: us. It is a point that I feel lies at the heart of our problem. The reason nusah is in trouble is not because people are either tired of it, uneducated or ignorant. It's because a significant percentage of our congregants think that cantors are full of themselves. The reality is that one must have a strong ego to get up in front of people and do what we do. That's not a bad thing, but if we're not careful it can get the better of us.

It's not that people don't want to hear a performance when they go to shul, so long as they can participate in the performance as well. When they feel the service belongs more to the cantor than to them, they rebel. If we give our congregants frequent opportunities to engage meaningfully in the service, nobody is going to have a problem relating to us or to the *nusah ha-t'fillah* we are preserving in our prayer chant or prayer melodies. We may have to trade some good *hazzanut* for a few happy-clappy songs, but is that really such a terrible price to pay if it draws worshippers closer to sacred community? After all, we are still the ones to pick those songs!

... Nusah Addressed on Hazzanet

2015—A Matter of Nomenclature

Allan Robuck (Congregation Ohev Shalom, Maitland, Florida)

For me, Mike, there is little question that you are correct. I have found that when I sing participatory melodies in an appropriate nusah for the occasion, the *kahal* sings along. At those moments they feel empowered—and—they learn what is traditional without even thinking of it!

I am more successful when I call the nusah "tradition" rather than some sort of legal ruling.

As for ego, I left it at the door of the synagogue 24 years ago, and there it remains.

A SYMPOSIUM

Seeking Ways to Energize Services

a) Selective Use of the Guitar as Accompanying Instrument

By Ben Rosner

In the past 200 years, instruments used to accompany liturgy have been mainly organ or piano. While the present author loves the splendor of either instrument, they have fallen out of style with many who attend contemporary synagogues. By way of contrast, recent decades have seen the guitar gain favor in Liberal synagogues. Sadly, the guitar is not being used to its full capacity, generally played by those who do not have sufficient technique to do much beyond simple strumming and a few chords. While this folk style may appeal to some, it is only one type of worship experience.

It is my contention that traditional hazzanut as well as contemporary compositions can more effectively be accompanied by jazz-or-classical guitar -- when instrumentalists are able to play the music as written.

Rather than attempt to justify the general use of instrumental accompaniment in the synagogue, which has been done far more thoroughly by members of the Rabbinical assembly's Committee on Laws and Standards,¹ I propose to explore specific guidelines and applications for using the guitar to support liturgical music appropriately yet unobtrusively. Here are some respected synagogue musicians whose successful careers demonstrate that it is possible:

- **Bonia Shur (1923-2012):** As Director of Liturgical Arts at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, he wrote over 300 compositions, many of which remain in manuscript form.
- **Ilan Mamber:** A hazzan / guitarist who is equally adept at performing with guitar accompaniment or *a cappella*, in a vast repertoire of either liturgical or folk music.
- **Howard Dardashti:** A hazzan / guitarist who combines flamenco, classical and folk styles into liturgical music.
- **Ramon Tasat:** A hazzan / classical guitarist, he has published many books and CDs containing Sephardic secular and sacred music.
- **Gerard Edery:** A flamenco guitarist and cantorial soloist who has produced many CDs and DVDs as well as *The Gerard Edery Sephardic Song Book*.

¹ Philip Segal, CJLS 1958, "Teshuvah on Organs/Shabbat," cited in *Conservative Judaism* 17/3-4 (Spring/Summer 1963), page 113; Elie Spitz and Elliot Dorff, "Rethinking Music Making: A Teshuvah for the Conservative Movement," CJLS 2011.

- **Nico Castel (1931-2015):** A Metropolitan Opera tenor and diction coach, he collaborated with arranger Richard J. Neumann on *The Nico Castel Ladino Song Book* of usable settings for voice with guitar or piano, plus some with an additional flute part.

Concerning self-instruction: Two exemplary books on guitar technique are

- *Aaron Shearer's Classic Guitar Technique*; and
- *The Christopher Parkening Guitar Method*.

Concerning notation

- Guitar music is **written an octave above** where it is played.
- Writing for guitar is best done in certain **keys like e minor** which features mainly open strings.

Should guitar accompaniment be written in **a key that is hard to play**, a practical alternative would be to rewrite it in a lower key that is easier to play, and **apply a capo** (shown below), a small movable bar fitted across all the strings to raise the pitch. Please note that the *capo can only transpose up*, and not down.



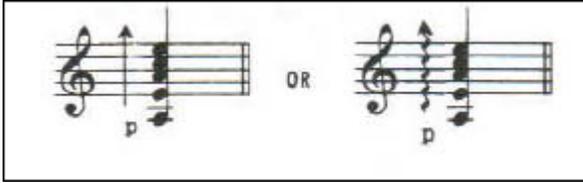
Concerning technique: Varying colors can be created by the way one picks the strings with the fingers. Picking closer to the neck of the guitar produces a sweet (*dolce*) sound. Picking further down—closer to the bridge—produces a crisper sound (*ponticello*).

Right hand fingerings: On the right hand the thumb is traditionally used as a bass, and the next three fingers are used for accompaniment and/or melody. The pinky is only used for certain complicated strumming patterns. The thumb is notated as “p,” the first finger is “i,” the second is “m,” the ring finger is, “a,” and the pinky is “c.”

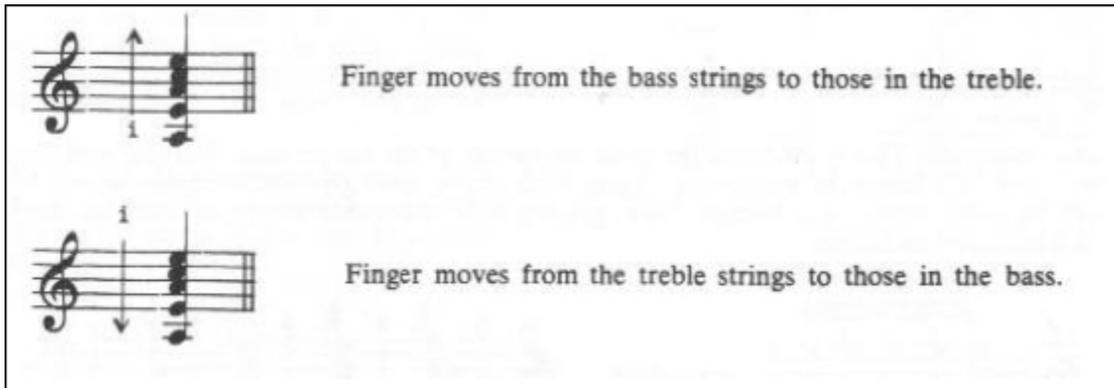
Strumming the guitar

Here are a few ways to brush the finger(s) over the strings:³

with the **thumb** up and down the strings;



with the **first finger** up and down the strings.



Traditional *hazzanut* accompanied by guitar

Israel Alter's "Hashkiveinu" in e minor⁴ offers a prime example of the varied effects that are possible when a sacred chant (in this case from the Friday Night liturgy) is accompanied creatively by guitar. The musical examples embody six varied sections—**A, B, C, D, E and F**--to match Alter's hazzanic hybrid of Middle Eastern and Western compositional styles.

A – The lyrical invocation uses a folk-like 3/4-time melody in the minor mode of Friday Night Ma'ariv, to depict our peaceful repose-and-awakening under God's protection. Note the strummed harp-like chords:

³ Examples are from Jack Buckingham, *Flamenco Guitar* (Carl Fischer), 1970: 3.

⁴ Israel Alter, *The Sabbath Service* (New York: Cantors assembly), 1968.

A

Choir

Hash-ki - vei - nu a-do-nai e-lo - hei - nu l'-sha - lom, l'-sha - lom...

Guitar

mp

B – An agitated plea in the tonic mode but with a raised third degree creating an augmented-second interval between II-III, for God to remove from our path every attacking enemy and natural disease. The texture of the guitar writing is contrapuntal, echoing the melody:

B

C

seir me-ia - lei - nu oy - yeiv, o - oy-yeiv de - ver v'-

Gtr.

mf agittato

C – To conclude the central ‘pleading’ section *Hashkiveinu*, the cantor’s line is harmonized with harmonics (here indicated by a circle above each of the notes), creating a bell-like heavenly tone:

C

hum a - tah. U - sh' -

Gtr.

D – A transitional passage uses nusah in straightforward “davening” style, with sequential motifs highlighting the argument that God has always been our merciful Guardian and Savior. Employing the *tremolo* technique mentioned above, the thumb on the right hand plays a ‘walking’ bass line, while three fingers on the same hand provide texture and harmonies:

D

C
mor _____ tsei -

Gtr.

E – We now return to the piece’s opening pastoral mood, with harp-like strumming followed by *pizzicato*: achieved by muting the strings next to the bottom of the guitar (by the bridge) with the right-hand palm, while using the fingers to pick. Note that the guitar does not play during the actual blessing, but re-enters at *ha-poreis*:

E

C
tah _____ v' - ad - o - lam. U - f' - ros a - lei-nu suk-kat sh'lo - me-kha. Ba-
ruk h a - tah a-do - nai, ha - po - reis suk - a - mo yis

Gtr.
pizz.

F - In the piece’s final section the guitar plays three parts: bass; doubling of melody played by the ring finger; and an arpeggio played with the middle and index fingers.

F

C
a - mo yis _____ ra - el.

Gtr.

A contemporary synagogue composition for voice and piano, with guitar part added

The following shows the opening section of Ben Steinberg’s “Shalom Rav,” also for Friday evening, as it appears in a published version.⁵ Between the piano and the vocal parts, a guitar line has been included. This arrangement capitalizes on the original composition having been published in G Major, an extremely *guitaristic* key. Moreover, it still honors the composer’s intention by keeping his accompaniment relatively intact while adapting as needed.

♩ = 88

G Em C G/B Am

Cantor

Guitar

Piano

6 G CM7 Am G C

C

Gtr.

Pno.

Sha - lom rav - al yis-ra - el am -

kha ta - sim l' - o - lam

⁵ Ben Steinberg—*L’cha Anu Shira*—Sabbath Eve Service for Cantor, Choir, Congregation and Organ, 1973.

Accompanying a contemporary ‘standard’ with guitar

The most commonly sung composed tune for the Friday Evening text *V’shamru* (“Israel has preserved the Sabbath”; by Moshe Rothblum) lends itself exceptionally well to what I would call “Leadbelly Blues” treatment, showcasing “heavy guitar sounds out front and a pronounced beat underneath.”⁶ I have adapted this guitar technique to the opening chorus and verse:

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). It consists of six systems of staves. The first system is labeled 'Guitar' and shows a complex, rhythmic accompaniment with many beamed eighth notes and chords. The second system is labeled 'Gtr.' and continues the guitar accompaniment. The third system is also labeled 'Gtr.' and continues the accompaniment. The fourth system shows the vocal line with the lyrics 'V' - sham - ru v' - nei - yis - ra - el' and a guitar accompaniment. The fifth system shows the vocal line with the lyrics 'et ha - shab - bat la - a - sot et' and a guitar accompaniment. The sixth system continues the guitar accompaniment.

⁶ After the American folk-and-blues musician, Huddie William Ledbetter (1888-1949); *Country Music—The Encyclopedia*, by Irwin Stambler & Grelun Landon (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997).

18

ha - shab - bat l' - do - ro - tam - b' - rit o - lam.

Gtr.

18

Summation

While piano or organ might add an aura of splendor to a prayer-service, the ears of our 21st-century worshipers may actually be more attuned to the sound of a guitar. The guitar is much more of a dynamic instrument than people know. In this article I have tried to show how it can be used to its fullest either by playing set accompaniments which are close approximations of a composer's intent, or by creating spirited new accompaniments that go far beyond simple-strumming.

Ben Rosner, who serves as Hazzan at Mosaic Law Congregation in Sacramento, California, has played classical guitar since age 13, consistently using this ability in reaching out to diverse members of the Jewish community. The author wishes to thank Rene Gonzalez for looking through this article and for showing him that guitar can recreate the sound of an entire orchestra and play styles ranging from Bach to bossa nova, jazz to blues and of course Rock. He also owes a debt of thanks to Natasha Hirschhorn who meticulously guided him through the 2010 Masters thesis from which this article is excerpted. The complete thesis can be accessed at:

http://garfield.jtsa.edu:1801/webclient/DeliveryManager?pid=32326&custom_att_2=direct

... Ways to Energize Services

b) High Holiday Answers

By David F. Tilman

All over North America, fast-growing *minyanim* not affiliated with mainstream denominations are springing up. These *minyanim* attract a significantly younger cohort of congregants in their 20s and 30s than more established congregations. Evidently, their liturgical music has much to do with drawing in great numbers of younger Jews, so I sought to learn what happens at these services that proves so alluring to their "hip" attendees. In the past, the music of such star performer / composers as Debbie Friedman and Craig Taubman had done the trick; what was so different about the liturgical repertoire of contemporary *minyanim*?

West Coast Liberalism

Sharon Brous, ranked 31st in the current *Newsweek* list of "America's Top Rabbis," is the founder and Spiritual Leader of the "Ikar" *minyan* in Los Angeles. Ikar attracts 200 congregants for Shabbat services and more than 1,300 on the High Holidays, including rabbinical students, hundreds of singles in their 20s, and families with young children from both the right and left sides of the religious spectrum. Brous, together with Hillel Tigay--the 40-year-old prayer leader and music director of Ikar---looks for material that communicates the "spiritual arc and narrative of the High Holiday liturgy through whatever music opens the heart," she explained

Two drummers playing Near Eastern Israeli-style instruments accompany most of Hillel Tigay's High Holiday chanting. Neither are he nor Rabbi Brous averse to borrowing music from popular sources. One example is a setting for *Hay-yom harat olam* ("Today is when the world was born"), derived from the Arrested Development band. The rabbi noted that they have used Norman Greenbaum's "Spirit in the Sky," as well as an Alison Kraus composition. Last Yom Kippur evening, the entire congregation sang "Amazing Grace," admittedly an audacious and controversial act.

While Tigay stated that he first searches for repertoire from Jewish sources, he stressed that "the purpose of the service is to move us spiritually, not just because the recitation of the prayer is prescribed by tradition." He chants the traditional Kol Nidre and *Avinu malkeinu* ("Our Father, our King") accompanied by a small vocal group; he says he is opposed to extended vocal solos that tend to "show off the hazzan's voice." By *Neilah* time at the conclusion of Yom Kippur, the energy of the congregants seems to go through the roof.

East Coast Traditionalism

Rabbi Chaim Gelfand, religious leader at the Raymond and Ruth Perelman Jewish Day Schools,

leads a group of Jews from the Philadelphia Main Line suburbs of Wynnewood and Ardmore. Calling itself "Ardwood," the group is a "loose amalgam of young committed families, he explained, "about 150 families who have synagogue roots, but who also meet together from time to time in people' homes."

During the High Holidays they constitute an informal *minyan* on Yom Kippur, for Kol Nidre, *Minhah* and *Neilah* services. Rabbi Gelfand elaborated: "We haven't altered Kol Nidre, but we add *piyyutim* such as *S'lah na* ("Forgive the Sin") later in the service, sung to Hassidic *niggunim*; in this case we set it to the Bratslaver wedding *niggun*," The rabbi wants his people to "really sing together"; at no time does the prayer leader daven for listening or introspection. "One really rousing super melody that we use is *V'ye'etayu* (" All shall come to worship You"), from the Hadar Minyan in New York," said Gelfand. "It has really helped us in our search for intimacy, connection and warmth." |

Adds Rabbi Elie Kaunfer, 46th on the *Newsweek* list and the executive director of Mechon Hadar, the Manhattan volunteer *minyan*: "Our *minyan* has a broad denominational background, from Orthodox to unaffiliated, including 180 Shabbat congregants and 350 to 550 High Holiday worshipers in their 20s and 30s." Describing his *minyan's* music, Kaunfer averred that "a premium is placed on variety!" The volunteer prayer leaders bring in melodies from all over the Jewish world: Shlomo Carlebach, Hasidic, Israeli. And on the High Holidays certain 'core' melodies must be included, namely the traditional chants for Kol Nidre, *Avinu malkeinu* ("Our Father our King") and the Short Confessional, *Ashamnu* ("We have sinned"). Referring to *V'ye'etayu*, the rabbi described it as "an Israeli tune beloved by our community... a joyous high point, with congregants rising to their feet in song and dance."

Rachel Forster Held, 35, who never received any cantorial training but is one of the more skilled Hadar High Holiday prayer leaders, points to her davening as "very engaging; people can get really involved through our participatory style." Held and her colleagues offer classes to review old melodies and teach new ones; this year, she introduced a new *niggun* from Morocco. But she does stand on the traditions of Hadar and the Jewish people: "Kol Nidre is universal; it resonates and hits home with all. *V'ye'etayu* has become sacred. If we left it out, we would have a revolution." (See next page for music).

The common elements

Several golden threads run through all the innovative projects I witnessed or heard about on both coasts: infectious melodies derived from many diverse sources both sacred and secular; a strong emphasis on rhythm; a significant nod to Jewish musical traditions; minimal solo singing; great courage; and... participation! Indeed, my cantorial foundations were rocked to their very core by what I learned.

David F Tilman is an Associate Professor at the Jewish Theological Seminary's Miller Cantorial School and Hazzan Emeritus of Beth Sholom Congregation, as well as conductor of Shir KI, the Adult Chorus of Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel, both in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania.

...Ways to Energize Services

(c) Lessons from the Music Culture of Independent *Minyanim*

By Matthew Klein

Nusah

Authenticity is one of the core values of many communities of independent minyanim. Nusah, to that end, is valued in many communities as a source of authenticity, though rarely of primary importance. **Kehilat Hadar**, one of the primary egalitarian *minyanim* of Manhattan's Upper West Side, for example, holds its leaders to a standard (though perhaps un-nuanced) outline for the nusah of the Shabbat service. Even doing *Hatsi-kaddish* before Musaf in its correct way is normative. The institute for minyanim that emerged out of that community, offers on its website a variety of recordings, including nusah and *niggunim* for the annual liturgical cycle.

But further examination of the Mechon Hadar website's resources shows that the issue of prayer modes is more complicated. What is authentic to one is not always authentic to another. The cantorial listener might observe that Shabbat *P'sukei d'zimra* recordings labeled "Basic Nusach" are in a non-specific minor. Yet the "Level 2" recording by Cantor Elizabeth Sacks is in the appropriate nusah, with its characteristic major-sounding motifs, though not terribly advanced. (Cantor Sacks, incidentally, has held classes at Mechon Hadar in the past few years, on the finer points of being a *sh'li'ah tsibbur* and davening).

A final point regarding nusah: In 2011 and 2012, I had the privilege to attend short winter conferences called "Nusach and Nigun Intensives," – which gathered *ba'alei t'fillah* from independent *minyanim* across the country to study and sing. Our sessions on nusah were run by composer/teacher Joey Weisenberg, who used a unique method for isolating the building blocks of nusah. After learning and then improvising orally on the motifs of nusah for about 45 minutes, we began to study the music of Katchko, Alter, Ganchoff, Schall, and other *hazzanim*. We concentrated on how they quoted or paraphrased the basic nusah motives, how they then extended the musical ideas, and finally how their interpretations served to express the words of the *t'fillah!*

Perhaps, as Jewish communities – established synagogues and independent *minyanim* alike – seek authenticity in their davening, *hazzanim* can offer the wisdom of a similar back-to-basics approach – teaching spiritual practice and expression through nusah-based chant tradition. This could work in the community at large, with classes on Jewish religious practice that started from the basic motifs of our liturgy. Relevant examples of *hazzanut* would then find their own way into the curriculum, as a welcome means of understanding how sacred music enables everyone to express their deepest feelings through the words of prayer.

Niggunim

In synagogues, melodies are often tied to a fixed text. Not so among *minyanim*. In minyan practice (as in time-honored hazzanic practice), a *niggun* may have an original text, yet a *sh'lich tsibbur* might use it at other points in the service as well. Shlomo Carlebach's melody for "Esa Einai" could recur periodically throughout a Shabbat Morning service as "An'im Zemirot," "Eil Adon," "Mi Khamokha," "Havu Ladonai" and even in the *Musaf Kedushah*. This technique, called 'contrafact,' is often used by *ba'alei t'fillah* in *minyanim* to elevate the davening experience. Nor is it new to traditional synagogue practice. It has been used by *hazzanim* for generations, as a means of musically highlighting certain recurring themes in the liturgy. The concept of *kedushah*, for example, might trigger the same melody throughout the Shaḥarit section leading to the Amidah, in:

“Shokhein Ad” (*u-v'kerev k'doshim titkaddash*),
“Et Sheim Ha-eil” (*Kadosh, kadosh, kadosh*), and
“Tsur Yisrael” (*k'dosh yisrael*).

Recordings produced by independent *minyanim* exhibit consistently spirited communal singing, even adding occasional impromptu harmonies. Professional artistry often takes a back seat to spirited singing and an exalted feeling of community. Musically, there has been a paradigm shift in the type of melody. The simple form of the typical Independent *Minyan* tune does not sound like the Modern Orthodox Young Israel refrains of the 1920s-and-30s or the syncopated Neo-Hasidic Hits of the 1970-and-80s. Most of the melodies heard on the various *minyan* web sites listed later in this article are fascinating in their own right, falling either into a plaintive natural-minor or a happy-type major – or anything in between those two opposites. The *minyan* repertoires are on the whole eclectic, reflecting old Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Hassidic, Young Israel and Renewal Jewish music cultures. And because this is primarily an oral repertoire, very little can be found in sheet music; most of it passes from person to person or via mp3.

Resources for Repertoire

Several *niggunim* patterned after the slow and meditative style of earlier Hasidic usage (e.g., the Baal Shem Tov or Shneur Zalman of Liady, as transcribed in the published works of M. S. Geshuri) appear on Joey Weisenberger's CD, *Joey's Nigunim*, also sold on the Mechon Hadar website. Joey is Music Director and Prayer Leader at the Kane Street Synagogue in Brooklyn.¹

The usefulness of websites for *minyanim* cannot be overstated – they constitute a prime source for learning new melodies apart from primary source methods like attending services or

¹ [Editor's note: Shoshana Brown's review of this CD as well as Joey Weisenberger's book, *Building Singing Communities*, appeared in *JSM* 2012].

learning with a community davenner. Among the more interesting and fruitful websites (and communities) are:

Shira Hadasha – This is the famous Carlebach-style, Orthodox-egalitarian *shul* on Emek R'fa'im Street in Jerusalem, a popular destination of Conservative Movement tour groups that wish to experience ecstatic davening (I know, they should also be visiting Heichal Shlomo). The congregation has produced a 2-CD set of their davening, which can be ordered by contacting Valerie Stessin at valerie@shirahadasha.org.il.

Kehilat Hadar – www.kehilathadar.org. This famous *minyán* community spawned one of the main institutions for *minyanim* worldwide, Mechon Hadar. Its *Pri Etz Hadar* CD is now available for digital download, and presents a good introduction to their repertoire for Shabbat, High Holidays and otherwise. I would also look to << www.mechonhadar.org >> for its *niggunim* and some davening recordings, in particularly the "Ebn Leader Selihot" from 2006, which reveals electrifying davening as well as both the style and repertoire of a prominent Independent *Minyan*. You can also find a lot of helpful lessons and source sheets on prayer, music, and halakhah.

IKAR – Referred to as the 'BJ of the West Coast,' it features drums and voices only. Its hazzan/music director, Hillel Tigay (son of Jeff Tigay, author of the JPS Commentary on *Deuteronomy*), is a fine musician and davener. Many of his original melodies are included on the website. The over-all flavor of this synagogue's music is innovative and well worth exploring (for a laugh, or perhaps a cry, I would suggest auditing the chilled-out guitar version of Moishe Oysher's "Chad Gadya").

Other worthwhile resources include:

Minyan Koleinu – www.cbsteaneck/prayer/melodies/shabbat.

Mission Minyan – www.missionminyan.org

Zemirot Database (much more than *zemirot*) – www.zemirotdatabase.org

Customs & Community

Concerning customs that are shared by independent *minyanim*, it might prove instructive to quote selectively from the **Mah Rabu** blog of November 30, 2007:

Without building or budget, **Tikkun Leil Shabbat** is one of the independent prayer groups (*minyanim*) that Jews in their 20s and 30s have organized in the last five years in at least 27 cities around the country.

In places like Atlanta; Brookline, Massachusetts; Chico, California; and Manhattan; the *minyan* groups have shrugged off what many participants see as the passive, rabbi-led worship of their parents' generation to join services led by their peers, with music sung by all, and where the full Hebrew liturgy and full inclusion of men and women, gay or straight, seem to be equal priorities.

Participants in independent *minyanim* are there out of a serious commitment to meaningful Judaism, and not because they're looking for something more watered down or because they're looking for a singles scene. This is a nationwide phenomenon... Talks with members of various *minyanim* indicate [that] "rather than taking young Jews out of the synagogue pews, they are taking them out of their beds on Saturday mornings"... The *minyanim*'s openness towards participants learning to lead services, etc., and active steps that *minyanim* are taking to help participants gain new skills... counters the meme out there that independent *minyanim* are "elitist" and only for people with extensive prior Jewish education... [Moreover] participants in independent Jewish communities come from all movements.

Focusing on one community located in the epicenter of new *minyanim* will shed even more light on what takes place over a typical Shabbat (this information comes from Wikipedia):

Kol Zimrah is an independent *minyan* or *havurah* founded in 2002, based in New York City and meeting primarily on Manhattan's Upper West Side. Its motto is "meaningful prayer through music." The congregation meets regularly for Friday night services which combine Hebrew-language liturgy with musical instruments and singing. It does not identify itself with any of the established Jewish religious movements, and has a style of prayer that does not fit neatly into the styles associated with any of them.

Like other *havurot*, Kol Zimrah has no rabbi or other professional leaders, and is run completely by volunteers. It uses a "two-table" system at its potluck dinners (one table with vegetarian food, and one table with vegetarian food in which all ingredients have kashrut certification) in order to accommodate different standards of kashrut in a pluralistic community.

Kol Zimrah has a "sibling" relationship with **Tikkun Leil Shabbat** in Washington, DC,² one of the few other congregations that has services in the same style (musical instruments and the traditional structure of the liturgy).

Conclusion

Independent *minyanim* are here to stay, expanding, and changing as their demographic – typically singles and young marrieds – continue to proliferate in America. The lessons we might take from them are many; in this respect I would recommend Eli Kaunfer's *Empowered Judaism*. For myself, two principles stand out:

² Joelle Novey, "Our Sponges are praying: How a Dish System Reflects Pluralism, Environmentalism, and Community at Tikkun Leil Shabbat in Washington, DC," in Rabbi Elie Kaunfer, *Empowered Judaism: What Independent Minyanim Can teach Us about Building Vibrant Jewish Communities*, Jewish Lights Publishing, 2010.

First, *minyans* operate on an assumption of innovation and new melodies, a Standard Operating Procedure I deem worthy of emulation. The more melodies a congregation knows, the broader a musical palette it has to paint its own worship experience.

Secondly, even a cursory listening to the recordings recommended above will demonstrate that *minyanim* care less for vocal prowess than a communally oriented singing experience. Putting the congregation's voice first allows the hazzan's artistry to emerge organically from the co-created energy of inspired davening.

The hazzan has a unique opportunity in the *minyan* world, which is hungry for the interpretation of Jewish texts, the creative use of melody and learning about Jewish musical traditions. These interests all lie within the hazzan's areas of expertise. As caretakers of this multi-faceted treasure, it would benefit everyone concerned if *hazzanim* as well as *rabbanim* looked seriously into this currently developing alternative to mainstream synagogue practice.

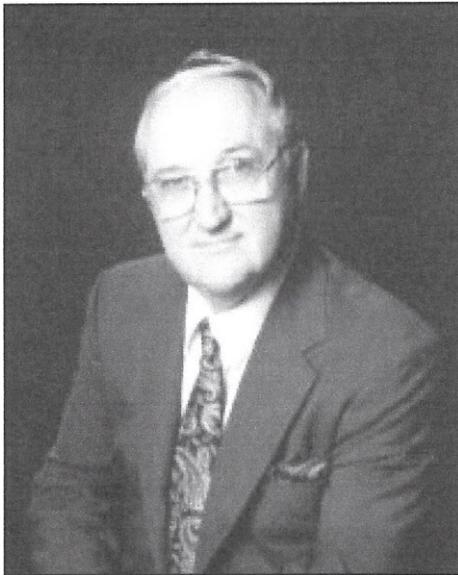
Matthew Klein is the Hazzan at Congregation Beth El of Montgomery County, Maryland. A graduate of William and Mary College, he also holds a Masters degree in Sacred Music and a diploma of Hazzan from the Jewish Theological Seminary. He has served as Rosh Tefillah at Camp Ramah Canada, and as an instructor in Nusach and Cantillation at JTS. He currently serves as the Cantors Assembly representative on the Committee of Jewish Law & Standards.

THE RITUALS OF SHABBAT MORNING CANNOT BE ENACTED BY ONE PERSON ALONE, THEY ARE IDEALLY PERFORMED IN COMMUNITY. THE FAMILY-LIKE INTIMACY OF AN INDEPENDENT MINYAN SUPPLIES THE ARENA WHERE THE WORSHIPER'S CONVICTIONS OR DOUBTS ARE TRANSFORMED INTO RELIGIOUS ACTION... SUCH OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRIVATE SOUL SEARCHING COMBINED WITH GROUP CAMARADERIE ARE ALL TOO RARE IN THE HYPERSTRUCTURED WORLD OF NORTH AMERICAN JEWISH WORSHIP.

(After Riv-Ellen Prell, *Prayer and Community*, 1989).

IN MEMORIAM

Hazzan Ivan Perlman (1925-2015)



A native of Queens, New York, Hazzan Perlman began singing in the Shubert Theater with the Jules Stone Studio at age 7. His Hebrew School teacher encouraged him to sing liturgical, Yiddish and Hebrew melodies, and by age 10, Ivan knew he would eventually enter the cantorate. His synagogue career began in 1948, with pulpits in New Jersey, Oklahoma and Iowa, before he settled in Providence, Rhode Island, where he accepted the position of Hazzan at Temple Emanu-El.

Ivan Perlman and Muriel, his beloved wife of 68 years, had four sons and eleven grandchildren. Whether as full-time Cantors or as Cantorial Soloists or as Rabbi-Cantors, the sons-Eli, Emanuel, Richard and Josh-have continued their father's hazzanic tradition in congregations from Massachusetts to New Mexico. Even in retirement, Ivan continued to officiate, in Stockholm, Sweden and in Boynton Beach, Florida. He was always a highly disciplined-yet moving-singer who knew exactly how to use his baritone voice most effectively, in highly dramatic or sweet lyrical fashion.

Hazzan Perlman lived a life of service to others. As a U.S. Marine in World War II he earned a Bronze Star for heroism on Iwo Jima. He was later a Post Commander, Department Chaplain, National Deputy Chaplain and the first National Chaplain of Jewish War Veterans. He also chaired the Clergy Division and Professions Division of the United Way in Rhode Island, and organized the Friends of the Rhode Island School for the Deaf, where he taught Jewish boys as their religious instructor.

Active in the Cantors Assembly since its inception, Hazzan Perlman functioned in many capacities: on the Placement Committee, Ethics Committee, as Convention Chair, and ultimately as the organization's President. His dynamic personality, never-failing optimism and kind encouragement affected an untold number of younger colleagues over the years.

We will not soon see his like.

IN MEMORIAM

Rabbi Gershon Freidlin (1938-2015)



Rabbi Freidlin served on the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Synagogue Music* since 2005, and contributed regularly as a reviewer and author. His most recent essay, "*Gilgl fun a nign*," appeared in the Fall 2011 issue. He sought interrelationships between traditional synagogue modes and Yiddish folk-and-theater songs of the Immigrant Generation, as well as in the hit songs of Broadway musicals from the 1930s through the 1960s. A typical premise: Tevye's musing to the nonsense syllables *boi-boi-boi* in "If I Were A Rich Man" from *Fiddler on the Roof*, echoes Cantor Yossele Rosenblatt's cry to *God-lomoh azavtoni* ("why have You Forsaken me") — from Peretz Sandler's Bowery Theater hit song of 1896, "Eili, Eili."

The home-made audio cassettes that Gershon sent along to back up his hypotheses were collector's items in their own right. He would dramatically role-play the dialogue-within-dialogue scenes from Song of Solomon (chapters 1,3,5 & 8), where the Shunamite Maiden recounts what she had said to her Beloved & what he had said to her—plus what she'd told her rivals, the Daughters of Jerusalem — while quoting what they'd said to her previously.

As a bonus he'd throw in a Yiddish dance song — the Russian *Sher* — illustrating the way *Vaikhulu* ("Heaven & earth were completed") on Friday night moves in-&-out of the Ukrainian-Dorian mode. Or he would describe how, in the course of a lecture, he'd be on stage performing "It Ain't Necessarily So" from Gershwin's *Porgy & Bess* while his audience (prepped in advance) provided a counterpoint of "Hava Nagila." Or—he might simply share a just-finished poetic translation from the Yiddish (in this case, after Schiller's "Ode to Joy"—from Beethoven's 9th):

Tcholnt—ancient stew divine—dinner cooked in Paradise;
Ludwig must have thought you fine—a meal on which to rhapsodize!

IN MEMORIAM

Hazzan Lawrence Avery (1927-2015)



Lawrence Avery began singing at the Crown Heights Yeshiva in Brooklyn, New York, and was in one of the first classes to graduate from the High School of Music and Art in Manhattan. He studied at the Juilliard School of Music before enlisting in the U.S. Navy where he served as a Chaplains Assistant and soloist in the famed Bluejacket Choir. He was ordained as a Cantor at Hebrew Union College's School of Sacred Music, where he later taught for 40 years.

He was a favorite coach of students at HUC and the H.L. Miller Cantorial School at the JTS, known for his dedication. He would bring a variety of settings to each session and read through every one until something stuck. He would then coach every phrase in a way that left a lasting impression.

Hazzan Avery served as Cantor at Beth El Synagogue/Center in New Rochelle, NY for 45 years, until his retirement in 1997. Even then, he felt there were still many services to lead, concerts to sing and young people to train for Bar or Bat Mitzvah. His philosophy was: "We all want a foot in eternity, my way is to convey this beautiful message."

Over the course of a distinguished career his lyric tenor voice had been heard widely through live performances or recordings with the Juilliard Opera Theater, Little Orchestra Society, National Orchestral Association, and Cantica Hebraica. His sacred compositions and arrangements, published by Transcontinental Music and Sacred Music Press, are sung by cantors throughout the world. He taught well over 1200 B'nei and B'not Mitzvah, and never lost enthusiasm for what he was doing.

After sitting through her daughter's lesson, a parent once remarked: "It's not like my daughter is his first student, it's as if she's his *only* one!"

Esa einai

Text: Psalm 121
As sung by: Lior Elmaleh
Transcription: J. Levine

At Funeral of Paris Martyrs
Jerusalem, January 14, 2015

Shir lam-ma-a - lot e - sa ei - nai el he-ha - rim, mei - a-yin ya - vo ez
ri. Ez - ri mei-im a-do - nai, o-seih sha - ma-yim va - a rets. Al yi-
tein lam-mot rag - le kha, al ya - num shom - re - kha. Hin-nei lo ya - num v'-
lo yi-shan sho-meir yis - ra - eil. A-do - nai shom-re-kha, a-do - nai tzil'-kha al
yad y' - mi - ne-kha. Yo-mam ha - she-mesh lo yak - kek ka v'-ya - rei-ah ba-lai
lah. A-do-nai yish - mor-kha mik - kol ra yish - mor et naf - she-kha. A-do-nai yish -
mor tseit-kha u - vo - e kha, me-a - tah v'-ad o - lam.

Lior Elmaleh – Born in K'far Sh'mona in 1974 – he has been the Israel Andalusian Orchestra's resident vocal soloist for a number of years. He studied the art of singing *Bakkashot* (petitionary prayers offered by Sephardim every Shabbat morning from midnight until dawn) with the late Nissim Shoshan, a *payy'tan* and leading authority on the subject.

REVIEWS

The Leib Glantz Project, Jerry Glantz, editor The Tel Aviv Institute for Jewish Liturgical Music, 2014

Reviewed by Israel Goldstein

Much was previously written about Leib Glantz in the Project's first publication: *The Man Who Spoke to God* (2008). Various excerpts from it reappear here, along with new essays by Naftali Herstik and Ralph Schlossberg among others, and a lecture delivered by Glantz at the 1952 Cantors Assembly Convention. The major contribution of this publication, in my view, is a herculean task undertaken by the gifted musician Raymond Goldstein in arranging 40 (out of 44) cantorial recitatives, Hebrew songs and Hasidic melodies by Glantz, for piano (organ) and choir, both SATB and TTBB. Accompaniments on the two enclosed CDs, however, are all from Glantz's original 78 rpm recordings.

This reviewer's task was complicated by the sheer volume of information on Glantz's persona, idealism, singing style, etc. For, although each of the foregoing deserves to be discussed at length on its own merits, such detailed explication lies beyond the scope of this brief survey. The same holds true for each of his musical compositions, which appear here in beautifully transcribed sheet music. With the reader's forbearance, I shall accordingly limit what follows to a brief overview of selected articles, compositions and arrangements; titles are given in their published form of transliteration.

ARTICLES

In the opening section, "Excerpts from Essays about Leib Glantz," **Amit Klein**, **Eliyahu Schleifer** and **Edwin Seroussi** ("Harmonizing Theory with Creativity: Cantor Leib Glantz's Musical Agenda") effectively capture the essence of their subject's agenda by pointing out that some of his virtues actually stood in opposition to each other. **Naftali Herstik** ("A Dialogue with the Almighty") writes: "The Image of the composer/performer is an image of the artist, in contrast to the image of the scholar which is an image of the sage."

In appreciating Glantz's exquisite *Birchat Kohanim*, **Joseph Levine** ("The Glantz / Pinchik Conundrum") notes how imaginatively Glantz has both simulated and expanded upon the wordless refrain that *Kohanim* (Aaronite descendants) and congregants sing after each section of the Tripartite Benediction. In fact, according to Herstik, in his *Selichot* (Midnight Penitential service), Glantz had the choir respond in a manner designed to evoke Levitic singing in the Holy Temple, by using "minimalist harmony and open fifths." While this comment sounds plausible, but might be at odds with Raymond Goldstein's assertion ("Introduction") that: "Glantz... relied heavily on diminished chords as a panacea to any harmonic problem."

Abraham Lubin ("How Shall We Open Our Mouth before Thee?") observes: "just as Arnold Schoenberg loosened the grip of traditional tonality, Glantz paved a new path in rendering the traditional modes." By this, I think he's referring to the fact that although today's *hazzanut* is

indeed unmistakably tonal, for passages within that matrix which retain the traditional modality of Common practice, Glantz's treatment offers a template for the modern cantor to follow.

Leib Glantz claimed in a 1947 essay ("The Cantor—A Unique Creation of Jewish Life"): "The institution of the cantorate...is difficult to compare with [anything comparable] in... other religions". This remark echoes the 19th-century French cantor/composer Samuel Naumbourg ("Reminiscences," Birnbaum Collection, HUC, Cincinnati; cited in Eric Werner, *A Voice Still Heard*, p.314, n.13) who criticized some of his colleagues: "All too often their music imitates the music of other religions... the synagogue possesses in its chants a character sui generis that must be respected and preserved under all circumstances."

Ralph Schlossberg ("Taking a Glantz at Ourselves") conjectures about what Glantz might do to improve what he calls the current "abysmal state" of synagogue music: "Leib Glantz would want Chazzanut not merely to survive, but to flourish." My reaction is that, just as flowers and plants need nurturing soil to survive and flourish, so does *hazzanut* require a knowledgeable and receptive audience.

In a 1947 lecture ("The Musical Basis for Nusach Ha'tefila"), **Glantz** disputed an assertion that "the roots of a culture are necessarily the same as the flowers and the fruits of a culture...it is just as important to cherish and to value the manifold developments of a culture throughout its entire history." Regarding Shabbat morning's *Pesukei D'Zimra* section, Glantz had this to say: "Since it was often chanted by a layman rather than a professional cantor, it retained the simplicity of the original and was not subjected to the musical development that other *nus'cha'ot* experienced. That assessment may have been true in Glantz's era, but hardly applies to the *laissez faire* manner in which Shabbat morning *Pesukei D'Zimra* is chanted today by lay prayer leaders

In a 1952 lecture ("The Musical Basis of Nu'sach Ha'Tefila"), when discussing the *Adonai malakh* mode used in chanting the two paragraphs that begin with the words *Yekum Purkon min shemaya* ("May salvation arise from Heaven") following Scripture Reading on Sabbath and Holy Day mornings, **Glantz** refers to it as the "Yekum Purkon" mode. Here, in summation, is the way this reviewer's scholarly colleagues **Noah Schall** and **Eliyahu Schleifer**, whom I consulted on this point, explained to me privately why he possibly did so:

Ukrainian-born Leib Glantz was attached to the Talnoi (Yiddish: *Tolner*) Hasidim through his father, who served as hazzan at the Tolner Rebbe's Court Synagogue in Kiev, Ukraine. It is therefore fair to assume that Glantz employed the modal terms used by his father and other Ukrainian *hazzanim* who visited the Rebbe. These terms would include: "Yekum Purkon" for the *Adonai malakh* mode, and "Mi Shebeirakh" for the paragraph into which the *Yekum Purkon* paragraphs lead, e.g., *Mi she-beirakh avoteinu... hu y'vareikh et kol ha-kahal...haz-zeh* ("May God, Who blessed our ancestors...also bless this holy congregation").

Although Glantz recognized that some chants are a combination of two or more *nus'chaot* (common usages of prayer modes for particular liturgical passages at particular times), he nevertheless routinely lumped together many chants into the *Magein Avot* mode. My

understanding is that the musical illustrations Glantz gave in his published lectures derived from his own version of a given *nusach* (singular of *nus'chaot*) rather than from published hazzanic manuals, an observation also made to me by Noah Schall. This is problematic, since Glantz's musical creations do not always conform to his own theories. Here is Eliyahu Schleifer's conclusion.

I find that Glantz's lectures have some merits. They are first of all a testimony to his ideas and as such, have their place in a book dedicated to his memory. In addition, the lectures can be a stimulating challenge for scholars to confront and discuss his points, pro and con. Nevertheless, I think that the editors should have appended to the article a short scholarly evaluation.

COMPOSITIONS

Glantz's compositions are each introduced with a descriptive analysis. Some are clearly insightful, others have a repetitive quality with references to what Alan L. Berger (listed in "Acknowledgements") terms his "pleading and crying out to God, and his creative use of *nusach*." Nonetheless, I am sure that readers will find these introductory comments very helpful before listening to the renditions.

As many times as I listen to Glantz's *Shma Yisrael, Kol Hashem, Tal, Shomer Yisrael* and *Birchat Kohanim*, I never cease to marvel at his creative virtuosity. I consider his *Ana Be'choach* to be one of the hazzanic repertoire's greatest pieces of solo liturgical music. Surely, an aura of divinity resides in his singing of the final plea within this Kabbalistic introit to *Lecha Dodi: shav'ateinu kabeil u-sh'ma tsa'akateinu, yodeia ta'alumot* ("accept our prayer, hear our cry, You who know our hidden thoughts"). One can only speculate as to what earthshaking interpretation might have resulted, if only Glantz's prayer book had included the often-omitted response--*Barukh sheim k'vod malkhuto l'olam va-ed* ("Blessed be the name of His Glorious Kingdom forever and ever"; *Siddur Sim Shalom for Sabbath and Festivals*, 1998:20)—and if it had only been within traditional practice to recite this angelic proclamation aloud!

In *Amar Rabbi Elazar*, Glantz's interpretation shows us what the Rabbis really meant by their admonition to not read here--*al tikra*--("the peace of your **children**")—*sh'lom banayikh*, but to read instead: *sh'lom bonayikh* ("the peace of your builders"), for scholars are the true forgers of peace.

Most published versions of *Be'tzeit Yisrael* (Psalm 114) begin in a brisk 'march' tempo and a major key. Glantz opens slowly in double pianissimo and a minor key. Could this be his way of memorializing the Egyptians who drowned in the Red Sea? The change to **12/8** time at verse 4, *Heharim rakdu ch'eilim, gevo'os kivnei tzon* ("The mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs"), reveals the depth and breadth of Glantz's imagination, along with his ability to tone-paint liturgical texts.

I couldn't agree more with the introductory sentence of Ralph Schlossberg to *Ahavti* ("I adore God, who hears my voice"; Psalm 116:1), "In [this] recording... Glantz makes great use of contrasts in volume and intensity to convey the emotions of someone in despair."

I am not sure why it was necessary for the editors to include more than one version of *L'chu Ne'rane'na* (“Come let us sing to the Lord”; Psalm 95) and of *Machnisei Rachamim* (“Angels of Mercy, bring our petition for mercy before the One Who hears prayer...”). Clearly Glantz’s single recorded version, provided with an accompanied transcription, would have been all that was needed.

V'al Ye'dei Ava'decha from the *Zichronot*—Remembrance--section of Rosh Hashanah (“And in the writings of Your servants the Prophets we find the following...”) is a paradigm of abstract tone painting. Yet the piece may take decades before gaining general acceptance; like many masterworks, it lies that far ahead of our current hazzanic ‘norms.’

I thought that my musical intelligence was once again going to be tested in *Ki Hiney Kachomer* (“As clay in the potter’s hand are we...”), until he got to *mechayei Ume'motet* (“So are we in Your hand, Bringer of life”), at which point Glantz readopted the style of a *ba'al tefillah* (simple lay prayer leader).

In the Neilah prayer *Ezkerá Elokim* (When I remember this, O God, I moan...”), a powerhouse of a piece, one can hear the distress in Glantz’s voice when he reaches its final strophe, *Yehi ratzon lefanecha, shomea kol bichyot* (“You, Who hear the sound of weeping...”). Here he features the repeated diminished-fifth intervals that Raymond Goldstein pinpointed in his Introduction, but later earns the approbation with which Naftali Herstik summarized his *Eil Melech Yosheiv al Kisei Rachamim* (“Almighty King Who sits upon the Throne of Mercy...”): “an exalting and optimistic ending to the Day of Atonement.

In setting the lament *Acharei Moti* (“After my death, eulogize me thus”), a heart-breaking tribute to poet Chaim Nachman Bialik who wrote it, Glantz has fashioned a fitting tribute to himself as well.

One can feel the anguish in Glantz's singing of *Devoirele*—a Yeshiva student venting sorrow over his unrequited love for a girl (some say the name ‘Devorah’ refers to a thwarted affair in Glantz’s own youth).

One can sense love of a different kind—for the Creator—in the Friday Night *Zemirah* (Sabbath Table Song), *Kol Me'kadesh Shviyi Kara'ui Lo* (“Whoever duly observes Shabbat shall be greatly rewarded”). The orchestral accompaniment conducted by Israeli composer Marc Lavri is exquisite; one might say the same here about Glantz’s mellow singing.

Contrastingly, *Nachpesa* (“Let us carefully examine our ways”) is a brooding piece in Hasidic style that, as Project editor Jerry Glantz points out in the Introduction, concludes on a bright and optimistic note, saying that God's right hand is open to those who return.

In an essay mentioned earlier, "A Dialogue with the Almighty," Naftali Herstik made reference to Glantz's admiration of Cantor David Roitman. This reminded me of the phrase in the opening Amidah paragraph, *v'zokheir hasdei avot* (“God remembers the merits of our ancestors”). Leib Glantz's *hazzanut* did not emerge in a vacuum. He had the shoulders of great predecessors on which to stand. And in his introductory essay, Raymond Goldstein wrote:

"Today's liturgical singers have become what I would call 'Gramophone Cantors.' "I therefore have to ask, who will stand on Glantz's shoulders?"

ARRANGEMENTS

The Leib Glantz Project's arrangements are sophisticated, and at times challenging, but always in sync with the hazzanic style in which he is working. In *Shomer Yisrael* ("Guardian of Israel"), a free-style chant, Raymond Goldstein switches to strict meter—albeit briefly—at the *Avinu Malkeinu* ("Our Father our King") passage. He also selects a Baroque accompaniment rather than a more fluid pianistic approach for the lovely *pizmon* ("refrain") melody in *Amar Rabbi Elazar* ("Said Rabbi Elazar").

The intensity of the accompaniment for *Ahavti* including the optional use of cello, tells us that the narrator is not alone in his despair. Similarly in *B'tzeit Yisrael*, Ralph Schlossberg's creative use of SATB choir lets us know that the narrator did not exit from Egypt alone. At the words *hehorim tirk'du ch'aylim*, the arrangement almost works counter to the melody, depicting a rather *disorderly* "skipping of the mountains like rams and the hills like lambs." Having only the basses sing *Milifney Adon chuli aretz* ("Before God, the earth trembles"), was also an appropriately threatening touch. I have one small caveat. I think an alternative use of the sopranos could have been found other than doubling with the cantor at the end of certain phrases such as *hayam ra-ah vayanos* ("The sea beheld, and fled").

The *Ve'al Ye'dei* from *Zichronot* is a particularly difficult composition to sing, and Raymond Goldstein's arrangement does much to help the singer navigate through the piece. I enjoyed the rich harmonies of *Lechteich acharei bamidbar* ("I remember [says God] how you were faithful to me in the Wilderness"), written in a martial tempo. This fine arrangement also adds an instrumental interlude anticipating the melody of *Ki midei dabri vo* ("For whenever my beloved son Ephraim is mentioned, I remember him fondly"). In *Ki hinei Kachomer*, however, I am not sure why Goldstein chose to insert the Rosh Hashanah Eve motif at the words *Chesed Notser* ("Gracious God"). His arrangement of *Acharei Moti* is fluid in style with just enough pianistic challenges and harmonic dissonances. His *De'voirele* accompaniment grows in complexity and builds to an exciting climax as the piece progresses.

Jack Baras did a wonderful arrangement of *Ezker Elokim*, which follows wherever the voice leads – but with surprising harmonic twists. And finally, Chanan Winternitz's arrangement of *Nachpesa* matches the piece's somber quality, especially so in an inventive introduction and underneath its opening phrases. To echo Alan L. Berger's words, "Jerry Glantz has more than fulfilled the biblical Commandment to honor his father." Those of us who have admired Leib Glantz for so long are grateful to his son for making it possible to read what others—all respected scholars--have written about Leib. I am particularly thankful to Jerry for sharing his father's idiosyncratic insights regarding *hazzanut*, and for again making accessible the voice of a profoundly inspiring hazzan whose talent was unique, even among those of his legendary contemporaries.

During the last year of World War II, Israel Goldstein began singing as alto soloist in the choir of London's New Synagogue, where his father, Jacob, was Cantor. After the family moved to New York in the early 1950s, he studied at Yeshiva University and went on to earn a Masters' degree in Hebrew Liturgy and investiture as Cantor at Hebrew Union College's School of Sacred Music. He is a Director Emeritus of the School and still serves on its faculty. He is also Cantor Emeritus of the Jericho Jewish Center in Long Island, NY. Cantor Goldstein is the soloist on four archival recordings of Great Synagogue Composers, and his piano arrangements of cantorial recitatives appear in several publications of synagogue music.



Leib Glantz (1898-1964)

The Kiddush Murder: A Cantor Shoshana Goldberg Mystery

By Gail F. Nalven and Patricia S. Rudden, 2012

Reviewed by Dorothy Goldberg

There is something delicious about having one Cantor Goldberg review a book about another Cantor Goldberg. So in evaluating *The Kiddush Murder* by Gail F. Nalven and Patricia S. Rudden, I naturally look for comparisons. Cantor Shoshana Goldberg, the heroine, has a few things in common not only with me but with many others in this profession. She lives in a suburban area (unnamed, but somewhere south of New York and north of Baltimore); has come to the cantorate as a second career (in her case, from several years as a lawyer); and as a woman and ordained clergy, she fights her share of battles over authority and recognition.

The themes of the book also resonate with anyone in synagogue work these days: expectations of levels of observance by congregants and clergy; the struggle to keep Jewish education and participation relevant in the face of constant distractions; issues of intermarriage, conversion, and who is considered “properly” Jewish; and, of course, the ever-present challenge of communication and cooperation with and between lay leaders and clergy partners.

In the case of Cantor Goldberg, or “Shosh” as her friends call her, she has landed at Congregation Rodeph Emet after spending several years practicing law (she was “Suzie” then), three years of marriage to the senior partner of her firm, divorce, and what sounds like a disastrous first pulpit. She is surely due a little bit of peace.

But it is not to be. The book opens with Shosh tutoring her star female student, Zahava Bloom, who is about to become a Bat Mitzvah. Zahava is one of those students every cantor wishes for—brilliant, kind, a good musician, and ready to *leyn* the entire Torah and Haftarah portion, as well as lead the Torah service. Up until now at Rodeph Emet, that role has been reserved for boys who attend Day School.

The Bat Mitzvah service goes beautifully, until Zahava’s New York grandmother, Myra Katz Bloom, dies after being taken to the hospital shortly after the Shabbat Kiddush.

At first, everyone thinks it is just related to the persistent gastrointestinal issues Myra has apparently complained of for quite some time. But as the tale unfolds, Myra’s story becomes more complicated, as she seems to have had entanglements with her nephew and his wife and daughter over the wife’s conversion to Judaism. She has made a major and rather secretive donation to her alma mater, Hunter College in New York City, an institution which also looms large in this book. It also appears that she has had a tumultuous history with the rabbi at Rodeph Emet, Solomon Himmelfarb, a City College alum. Finally, she is a silent partner in a bagel shop which has recently been sold to a larger chain. So the list of people with gripes against her is not negligible.

Cantor Goldberg is asked to conduct the funeral and *shiva* in New York, so most of the action takes place on the Upper West side. It’s a trip down memory lane for Shosh, who grew up in New York and was likewise ordained from the Jewish Theological Seminary. Not convinced that Myra’s death is entirely natural, she does a bit of sleuthing while there. Her suspicions were

aroused thanks in part to a confidential confession by a member of the Bat Mitzvah girl's family--and the coroner soon backs up her instincts. Her legal training prompts her to ask questions about Myra's death that take her beyond her role as clergy. The answers that she uncovers lead her into physical danger, and perhaps more seriously, into dispute with her rabbi. Granted, perhaps the physical danger is more serious, but the book maintains a tongue-in-cheek aspect that keeps the narrative light even as its action darkens.

While definitely an easy read, *The Kiddush Murder* nevertheless presents several problems. The writing, while solid enough, cannot escape a certain didactic quality that sometimes makes the novel seem like one big inside Jewish joke. Shoshana and her narrator are constantly explaining the duties of a cantor and why she needs to do this or that. Jewish professionals will, of course, often nod in recognition, but the constant and self-conscious use of Hebrew and Yiddish, and sometimes long-winded explanations, can get in the way of enjoying the story.

Better editing might have prevented a few other missteps. For instance, at one point Shoshana is called Cantor Goldman (alas, we Goldbergs often have to put up with this!), and one of Zahava's cousins, the *frum* Shulamit (formerly Shelley) is introduced several times as Shulamit Bloom even though her parents are Mitchell and Devorah Katz.

Interestingly, neither of the authors is actually an ordained cantor. Gail F. Nalven, a Jewish educator and alumna of JTS, recently received ordination as a rabbi. Patricia S. Rudden, a graduate of Hunter College and a professor of English at New York City College of Technology, CUNY, also functions as a lay cantor. Between them, the two writers share enough knowledge about the inside life of a cantor to make the mystery plausible. And if *The Kiddush Murder* appears slightly breathless in its admiration of the clergy responsibilities and life--it's not that glamorous, really!

We are not dealing with great literature here, but a fun read, and apparently the first in a series of Cantor Shoshana Goldberg mysteries. In coming releases, perhaps some of the mysteries surrounding Cantor Goldberg herself will be revealed, including exactly why her rabbi, AWOL through much of this book, is so angry with her, and what exactly went so terribly wrong at her last pulpit. Stay tuned!

Dorothy Goldberg was ordained as a cantor in 2005 at the Academy for Jewish Religion in Yonkers, NY. She holds a BA in History from Bryn Mawr College, an MA in Journalism and Public Relations from American University and a Postgraduate Diploma in Performance and Communications from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. As a cantor, she has served both Reform and Conservative synagogues, and has served as a hospice chaplain. Cantor Goldberg's article, "A Woman Reborn: Name-Changing Service for Women Traveling a New Path in Life," appeared in the 2007 issue of JSM.

RECENT ETHNOMUSICOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Jewish Elements in Leonard Bernstein's *Hashkiveinu*

By Ann Glazer Niren

*Whatever Bernstein was. . . composer, conductor, pianist, television educator—he was also a Jew and one who worked with other Jews, played with other Jews, never shied away from his identity as a Jew.*¹

Leonard Bernstein was not an observant Jew, but he did feel especially close to the cultural aspects of Judaism and he was an ardent Zionist.² Furthermore, Jewish music played an integral role in his life from an early age; when he was eight, his family joined the Conservative Boston synagogue, Congregation Mishkan Tefila, which boasted a vibrant musical environment. Here, Bernstein was inspired by the dynamic organist, composer and music director, Solomon Braslavsky. Braslavsky's fusion of European synagogue modes and Viennese harmonic practice informed many of Bernstein's compositions throughout his life.³ Such is the case, to a certain extent, with *Hashkiveinu* (1945), which uses a Biblical text and synagogue modes, but also draws upon aspects of secular music such as syncopated jazz rhythms. This piece, then, illustrates Bernstein's multifaceted musical style.

The Park Avenue Synagogue in New York commissioned *Hashkiveinu* as part of its commitment to the composition of new Jewish synagogue music. From 1943 to 1978, the synagogue's Cantor David Putterman tasked seventy-three composers, Jews and non-Jews alike, to supply music for this project.⁴ Cantor Putterman decided to found the commissioning project

¹ Joan Peyser, *Bernstein: A Biography*, revised edition (New York: Billboard Books, 1998), 248. Peyser also notes in the same passage that the American Jewish Congress honored Bernstein in 1955 for his "contribution toward the enrichment of the musical arts in the country and the Jewish community," one of many such honors that Bernstein received. *Ibid.*

² Geoffrey Fine states, "While Bernstein was not a practicing religious Jew (and at times defiantly rebelled against Judaism, by eating *treif* on *Yom Kippur*, for example), I am keenly aware that he was an intelligent, informed, learned, secular Jew down to his very soul." Geoffrey B. Fine, "The Vocal Music of Leonard Bernstein: Jewish Interpretations and Applications," M.S.M. thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Brookdale Center, 1998, 35. As to his Zionist leanings, Leonard Bernstein performed frequently in Israel since its infancy as a modern Jewish state, often conducting the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. In fact, the orchestra offered him a permanent post, but he requested the position of "musical advisor." Humphrey Burton, *Leonard Bernstein* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 164, 185.

³ Notable examples of Bernstein works with Jewish themes include *Jeremiah Symphony* (1942), *Kaddish Symphony* (1963), and *Chichester Psalms* (1965).

⁴ Irene Heskes, *Passport to Jewish Music: Its History, Traditions, and Culture* (New York: Tara Publications, 1994), 218-219. Many of the composers, such as David Diamond and Kurt Weill, responded favorably, but others, such as Aaron Copland, respectfully declined.

in part because of the Nazi threat in Germany in the 1940s; he wanted to insure that Jewish music would be preserved.⁵ Very few of the works have been performed in concerts; they were designed to be presented in the synagogue.⁶ Putterman later compiled the compositions from this project into a volume entitled *Synagogue Music by Contemporary Composers*.⁷

The Cantor first wrote to Bernstein on November 24, 1944, requesting a composition for “cantor, choir and organ... based on some portion of the Sabbath Eve service.”⁸ Bernstein’s secretary, Helen Coates, answered a few days later, saying, “Mr. Bernstein will feel it a privilege and honor to have you include a composition of his on that occasion, if his crowded schedule allows him sufficient time to write one.”⁹ However, Bernstein busied himself with other projects, delaying work on the piece. On March 3, 1945, in a letter to Coates, he composed a poem on where the matter stood, entitled “On Not Having an Idea in My Head for a Setting of Hashkiveinu”:

O deign, foolish Muse
To sit upon my shoulder,
I’ve got to sing a Blues
Ere I am one weak [*sic*] older.
The trouble of the Jews
In my dear guts does smolder
But spark is the fuse;
My writing arm grows colder
I ask not stupid Muse

⁵ Telephone interview with Dr. Elliott Kahn, Music Librarian at the Jewish Theological Seminary, April 22, 2010.

⁶ Marsha Bryan Edelman, *Discovering Jewish Music* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2003), 176.

⁷ An introductory note by Cantor Putterman states, “The music contained in this volume is not meant to replace the traditional fixed prayer modes, but is rather intended to enrich the music of our time. It was commissioned for the purpose of enhancing Jewish worship to encourage many composers to write for the Synagogue who otherwise may never have done so, and to contribute to the mainstream of contemporary music. This anthology of new music set to ancient prayers is dedicated to the enhancement of Jewish worship; to a wider diffusion and utilization of the resources of Jewish music; and to the encouragement of those who give of their lives and genius to the enrichment of that music.” David J. Putterman, *Synagogue Music by Contemporary Composers* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1951), v.

⁸ Letter from David Putterman to Helen Coates, November 24, 1944, David Putterman Collection, box 6, folder 16, Jewish Theological Seminary. Although Park Avenue Synagogue is Conservative like Mishkan Tefila, it houses an impressive organ. Emanuel Rubin and John H. Baron, *Music in Jewish History and Culture* (Sterling Heights, MI: Harmonie Park Press, 2006), 252-253. For a general discussion on the organ in the synagogue, see Tina Frühauf, *The Organ and its Music in German-Jewish Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁹ Letter from Helen Coates to Cantor David Putterman, November 29, 1944, David Putterman Collection, box 6, folder 16, Jewish Theological Seminary.

For a *Tristan und Isolde*.
Just a small Berceuse?
But ere I'm one week older.¹⁰

However, when Bernstein chose to get serious and complete a project, he could be very diligent. The holograph score notes that he finished the piece on April 4, 1945.¹¹

Figure 1 shows Bernstein performing *Hashkiveinu* with the Park Avenue Synagogue Choir.



Figure 1. Bernstein conducting the Park Avenue Synagogue Choir; Cantor Putterman is the soloist in front (Cantor David J. Putterman Collection, box 11, Jewish Theological Seminary).

Figure 2 shows the triumvirate of Cantor Putterman, Bernstein, and Max Helfman, music director of Park Avenue Synagogue. Since the initial performance was in a synagogue, no one recorded it at that time, as it was presented on the Sabbath. However, in Figure 1, the reader may observe the call letters of CBS on the microphone in the upper-right hand corner; there is also another microphone in the back of the room. It is likely that this photograph shows an actual recording at a CBS studio, but the author was unable to locate such a recording. In fact,

¹⁰ Jack Gottlieb, *Working with Bernstein: A Memoir* (Milwaukee, WI: Amadeus Press, 2010), 275.

¹¹ *Hashkiveinu*, holograph score, Leonard Bernstein Collection, manuscripts, box 18, folder 9, 21, Library of Congress.

Hashkiveinu has since been recorded a few times, such as on the CDs *Leonard Bernstein: A Jewish Legacy*, and *Introducing the World of American Jewish Music*.



Figure 2. Leonard Bernstein, Cantor Putterman, and Max Helfman at the premiere. Cantor David J. Putterman Collection, box 11, Jewish Theological Seminary.

Two writers reviewed the premiere of this piece. Thelma Spear, writing in the June 1945 column “Music in Manhattan,” called *Hashkiveinu* “the most original” of the compositions presented as part of a new sacred service.¹² A May 29, 1945 review by Frederic Ewen in *New Masses* reads: “Bernstein’s *Hashkiveinu* had the most virtuosity, especially in the fugal passages, but it was less moving than the work of some of the others.”¹³

Following the premiere, *Hashkiveinu* experienced a limited performance history. The Park Avenue Synagogue presented it several more times. On February 7, 1947, Bernstein gave a talk entitled “What is a Jewish Composer?” and performed this work at Temple Israel in

¹² Thelma Spear, “Music in Manhattan,” David Putterman Collection, box 6, folder 16, Jewish Theological Seminary.

¹³ Frederic Ewen, May 29, 1945, *New Masses*, Leonard Bernstein Collection, scrapbooks, reel 2, volume 4, Library of Congress.

Boston.¹⁴ In 1949, *Hashkiveinu* appeared as part of the Festival of Contemporary American Music at Columbia University, with Isidor Geller, Cantor Putterman, and Max Helfman reprising their respective roles as organist, soloist, and conductor. A review of that performance noted, “Mr. Bernstein’s extensive *Hashkiveinu* (Prayer for Divine Protection) was remarkable for its dramatic forcefulness, its coloring and sharp contrasts of dynamics and mood.”¹⁵ In 1972, it was performed at Carnegie Hall, with Cantor David Lefkowitz as soloist, and Stanley Sperber conducting.¹⁶ Temple Israel in New York also gave this work on Friday, May 4, 1973 as part of *A Tribute to Leonard Bernstein*.

The late scholar Jack Gottlieb notes that Bernstein organized *Hashkiveinu* into three sections based on the structure of the prayer: the opening and closing deal with peace, while the middle section is more dramatic and serves as a benediction.¹⁷ The outer parts contain a four-part fugue or two-part canon focused on the Phrygian mode.¹⁸ Gottlieb observes, “The pedal point of the organ on the note of E makes the entire section deliberately static and rigid, so that despite the polyphonic texture, the result is heterophonic. Symbolically, this mirrors the stability of the fundamental concept of *shalom*.”¹⁹ Gottlieb further states that the middle section is subdivided into three sections:

1. Lydian on C
2. E minor, modulating to Lydian on E with a similar melodic line
3. Mixolydian on A with an augmented rhythm of the earlier chorus.²⁰

¹⁴ Burton, *Leonard Bernstein*, 159; *Temple Israel Bulletin*, January 31, 1947, Archive of Temple Israel, Boston. Although Bernstein was not a member of Temple Israel, the brotherhood of the synagogue wrote to him, stating, “We have been wanting for some time to honor you for what you have achieved in the realm of music and Rabbi Leibman and I would consider it an honor to have you wish [*sic*] us on this occasion. . .” Letter from Paul Simon (not the famous singer) to Leonard Bernstein, March 7, 1946, Leonard Bernstein Collection, personal papers, box 1018, folder 11, Library of Congress. In an interesting twist, Herbert Fromm, the music director of Temple Israel for many years, studied composition at Tanglewood from 1940 to 1941. Frühauf, *The Organ and Its Music in German-Jewish Culture*, 193. It is quite possible that he met Bernstein while they were both there and may have suggested that Temple Israel invite Bernstein to the synagogue.

¹⁵ Noel Straus, “Columbia Opens Music Festival,” *The New York Times*, May 13, 1949: 28.

¹⁶ Telephone interview with Cantor David Lefkowitz by the author, April 26, 2010.

¹⁷ Gottlieb, “The Music of Leonard Bernstein: A Study of Melodic Manipulations,” D.M.A. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1964, 208. Gottlieb contradicts himself later when he notes that the third section serves as a benediction. Gottlieb, liner notes to *Leonard Bernstein: A Jewish Legacy*, Conducted by Samuel Adler, The Milken Archive of American Jewish Music on the Naxos American Classics Label, 2003, 9.

¹⁸ Gottlieb, *Working with Bernstein*, 250.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 247; Gottlieb, “The Music of Leonard Bernstein,” 209.

²⁰ Gottlieb, “The Choral Music of Leonard Bernstein: Reflections of Theater and Liturgy,” *American Choral Review* 10, no. 4 (summer 1968): 169; Gottlieb, *Working with Bernstein*, 248. He later notes that *each* of the three sections is subdivided into three subsections. Gottlieb, liner notes to *Leonard Bernstein: A Jewish Legacy*, 9. Gottlieb also observes similarities between *Hashkiveinu* and *Jeremiah*: both have E as a central pitch focus, both

This writer submits that the piece contains a more complex harmonic structure than Gottlieb suggests. The introduction appears to juxtapose the regions of E Major and E Phrygian, but even this analysis is not satisfactory; there are no C-sharps or F-sharps for the key of E Major, and the appearance of G-sharp seems to negate an analysis of Phrygian. Viewed another way, it seems that Bernstein borrows liberally from the *Ahavah rabbah* mode (sometimes called “Jewish Phrygian” because of its raised third), although he reverts to E minor at the end of measure 3 (**Examples 1a and b**). The *Ahavah rabbah* mode contains the distinctive augmented second interval between the second and third pitches, in this case, between F and G-sharp. This analysis contradicts author Alexandra Scheibler’s assertion that *Hashkiveinu* contains no “traditional liturgical melodies”; she probably means that this piece does not employ *obvious* synagogue chant.²¹ There is nothing to suggest that Bernstein used the mode intentionally; it is possible that he unconsciously recalled the synagogue music of his childhood at Mishkan Tefila.

Example 1a. *Hashkiveinu*, introduction (New York: Jalni Publications, Boosey and Hawkes, Inc., 1993).

Example 1b. *Ahavah rabbah* mode (Jack Gottlieb, *Funny, It Doesn't Sound Jewish....* 2004:141).

open with the same bitonality that resolves at the end, both are organized in three sections (fast-slow-fast) with jazzy, syncopated rhythms in the middle, and both use direct quotation. Gottlieb, “The Choral Music of Leonard Bernstein”: 171; Gottlieb, *Working with Bernstein*, 248. Actually, Gottlieb is not quite correct. *Hashkiveinu* does not employ bitonality, but rather, successive movement from one mode or pitch center to another. Moreover, while the excerpt from *Hashkiveinu* is very similar to the one from *Jeremiah*, the former does not *directly* quote the latter work. Alexandra Scheibler also describes the tripartite form of *Jeremiah*. Alexandra Scheibler, “*Ich glaube an den Menschen*”: *Leonard Bernsteins religiöse Haltung im Spiegel seiner Werke* (Hildesheim, Germany: Olms, 2001), 62.

²¹ Scheibler, “*Ich glaube an den Menschen*,” 61. However, she further notes, somewhat correctly, that the lack of synagogue music is counterbalanced by the Phrygian mode, which “ist für eine Art ‘jüdischen Flair’ in der Musik.” *Ibid.*, 63. The Phrygian mode resembles somewhat the *Ahavah Rabbah* mode. Additionally, biographer Artur Holde had the right idea, noting that this work is comprised “. . .den Typus alten synagogalen Melos,” but does not state which “old melody” he means. Arthur Holde, *Leonard Bernstein* (Berlin: Rembrandt, 1961), 20.

The next section, in which the counterpoint begins, focuses on the *Magein avot* mode, which resembles the Aeolian mode (**Examples 2a and b**).²² Gottlieb observes that one distinguishing feature of the *Magen Avot* mode “is an ascending line up to the fifth step where it tends to plateau.”²³ This feature may be seen to a certain extent in Example 2a.

The image shows a musical score for Example 2a. It consists of four staves. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef with lyrics: "Hash - ki - vei - nu, A - do - nai E - lo - hei - nu, l' - Hash - ki - vei - nu." The second staff is a piano accompaniment in treble clef, marked *p legatissimo*. The third and fourth staves are empty, likely representing a bass line and another voice part. The music is in 2/4 time and features a melodic line that ascends to the fifth step and then plateaus.

Example 2a. *Hashkiveinu*, *Magen Avot* mode, measures 6-11.

The image shows a single melodic line in treble clef for Example 2b. The notes are: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. This illustrates the ascending line up to the fifth step (E5) and then plateauing.

Example 2b. *Magein avot* mode.

A new subsection of A begins in measure 44 with material that recalls the introduction; it alternates between E minor and a pitch center of E-flat. E-flat continues as a pitch center in the bass, conflicting with a persistent D major arpeggio above it. At measure 48, B-flat in the melodic line occurs as a holdover from E-flat, or, viewed another way, as part of the *Ahavah rabbah* mode on D (**Example 3**).²⁴ Embedded within the *Ahavah rabbah* mode is the interval of the tritone. Example 3 shows Bernstein’s prominent treatment of this interval with the tritones circled. While we cannot prove conclusively that Bernstein first heard this interval through the *Ahavah Rabbah* mode, this example suggests that possibility. The cantor’s solo that follows modulates to E-flat pentatonic. The accompaniment varies between G-flat Major and A-flat minor; taken together, it may be seen as the *Adonai malakh* mode containing the lowered seventh

²² Boaz Tarsi makes a distinction between the *Magen Avot* and Aeolian modes, noting that the former is closer to a scale rather than a mode because of the “dominating sense of tonic. . .” Boaz Tarsi, “Toward a Clearer Definition of the Magen Avot Mode,” *Musica Judaica* 16 (January 1, 2001): 57, n. 12.

²³ Jack Gottlieb, *Funny, it Doesn’t Sound Jewish: How Yiddish Songs and Synagogue Melodies Influenced Tin Pan Alley, Broadway, and Hollywood* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004), 131. Other authors note this feature as well. Rubin and Baron, *Music in Jewish History and Culture*, 135; Abraham Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Music: Its Historical Development* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1929; reprint, with a new introduction by Arbie Orenstein; New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1992), 84.

²⁴ Only F at the end of the example does not fit into the *Ahavah Rabbah* mode on D.

scale degree. In measure 63, the pitch center focuses on E-flat Major; however, F, as an added second, muddies the harmony.

Example 3. *Hashkiveinu*, organ solo in *Ahavah rabbah* mode, measures 48-54.

Gottlieb states that the section in C Lydian begins in the next measure; this music opens the B section. However, simply calling this section “C Lydian” does not do it justice. The sharp fourth scale degree, F-sharp, contrasts strikingly with the C, both melodically and harmonically. Once again, we see Bernstein’s predilection for tritones. This section, from measure 74 to 82, coupled with the jagged, syncopated rhythms, anticipates, to an extent, the Bernstein style of *West Side Story* (1957). The sharp dissonance between the sustained C in the bass and F-sharp in the upper three parts, and the repetitive use of melodic C#-F# tritones against the sustained C, serves as an example of text painting to illustrate the words, “and remove from us enmity, pestilence, and war and hunger and anguish” (**Example 4**):

Example 4. *Hashkiveinu* with C#-F# tritones against the bass C, measures 75-78.

In a similarly clever manner, Bernstein sets the next part of the text--“And remove the evil inclination from before us and from behind us”²⁵--as if someone is treading lightly in quick, careful footsteps, pairing the tenors and basses against the sopranos and altos (**Example 5**). The jagged rhythms return beginning in measure 89, with the pitch now centered on E. This section climaxes beginning in measure 97 on A-mixolydian, as noted by Gottlieb, or A-*Adonai malakh*, accompanied by predominantly homorhythmic patterns and *fortissimo* dynamics. This loud section ironically contains a request for life and peace, as if someone is pleading with God.²⁶

83

p U' - mei - a - cha -

p U' - mei - a - cha -

p subito V' - ha - seir sa - tan mil - fa - nei - nu

p subito av, v' - ya - gon! V' - ha - seir sa - tan mil - fa - nei - nu

Example 5. *Hashkiveinu*, measures 83-85.

The organ solo that follows in measure 108, marked “twice as slow [as before],” mirrors the passage in measure 48; it is even in the same tonal center. As the cantor sings the text exhorting God to “spread over us Your tabernacle of peace,” the music indeed becomes more calm, returning to the mood in the first section. Similarly, the *Magein avot* mode returns, along with the choral counterpoint. The piece ends ambivalently on the pitch center of E with an added F-sharp on the text of “amen.”

One of the most striking aspects of *Hashkiveinu* is its dramatic, arresting quality. Gottlieb notes the theatricality of the work, because of the “dramatically opposed sections of musical stability versus agitation... Furthermore, at the time of its premiere, the jazzy middle section was considered inappropriate for the synagogue.”²⁷ Mishkan Tefila’s music director, Solomon Braslavsky, frequently incorporated dramatic elements, such as abrupt dynamic shifts, into his

²⁵ According to Dr. Raphael Finkel, the actual translation from the Hebrew is “the accuser” rather than the generally used “evil inclination.”

²⁶ This section foreshadows future Bernstein works that deal with a crisis of faith, most notably *Kaddish* and *Mass* (1971).

²⁷ Gottlieb, “The Choral Music of Leonard Bernstein”: 157.

compositions.²⁸ As a young man, Bernstein was highly influenced by Braslavsky's compositional style. Another connection is the organ, an instrument for which Braslavsky frequently composed. As in Braslavsky's works, Bernstein underutilizes the organ, although its emotional quality cannot be denied. Except for the introduction and a few interludes, the organ often occurs only as a pedal point. For this reason, *Hashkiveinu* does not require an accomplished organist, but could be performed by someone with limited organ experience. Additionally, a few measures resemble a recitative-like synagogue chant. Here, Bernstein might be recalling his early exposure to the music of Mishkan Tefila (**Example 6**):

44 **Tempo I** *p*
 v'-ha-a-mi-dei-nu, Mal-kei-nu, l'-cha - yim!

Example 6. Leonard Bernstein, *Hashkiveinu*, measures 44-47: recitative-like passage.

Also, the choral counterpoint of this work resembles that of Braslavsky's *Un'saneh Tokef* (**Example 7**). Since Bernstein needed to compose *Hashkiveinu* quickly because of his deadline, he possibly recalled unwittingly one of his favorite compositions by Braslavsky.²⁹ In perhaps a similar way, Bernstein instinctively used many of the synagogue modes he had heard so often growing up. While this work does not contain the overt use of synagogue modes or *nusah* of other pieces such as *Jeremiah Symphony*, it is still important to note the underlying melodic and harmonic language of the synagogue in this liturgical work. In this way, perhaps without realizing it, Bernstein is tipping his hat to Braslavsky.

f
 Lif - kod al tze - vo, mo - rom ba - din ba -
 Moderato
f
 l. h.

²⁸ Choral conductor Judith Clurman suggests that Braslavsky influenced Bernstein in this work, but does not give specific examples. Telephone interview with Judith Clurman by the author, February 28, 2009.

²⁹ Because Bernstein loved this work so much, he later helped Braslavsky publish it through Amberson.

lif - kod al tze -

din lif - kod al tze - vo - mo - rom - ba - din al tze -

Man.

Example 7. Solomon Braslavsky, *Un'saneh Tokef* (NY: Amberson Enterprises, 1962), fugue.

Hashkiveinu was more than simply a commission. It was a way to express musically Bernstein's spirituality and relationship with Judaism in a dramatic way. Alexandra Scheibler questions why Bernstein wrote this work for a service when he publically stated he "was against an organized form of religious practice."³⁰ Although Bernstein often wrestled with his belief in God and did not always adhere to Judaic practices, cultural and spiritual Judaism were important to him. Geoffrey Fine submits that "Bernstein's use of Jewish materials is not simply due to their being psychologically available or handy, but also that he holds them to have intrinsic value as ways of relating to the divine."³¹ In addition, Bernstein wanted to show his kinship with the Jewish people, noting, "In the synagogue, music is not part of a distant, priestly ritual; it belongs to the entire congregation no matter if they are singing along or merely listening."³²

Even more so, *Hashkiveinu* allowed Bernstein to pay tribute to his mentor Braslavsky, even if he did not consciously realize it, by integrating theatricality and synagogue modes. However, what makes this work so intriguing is the manner in which Bernstein incorporates these older styles with more modern ones, such as jagged, syncopated rhythms borrowed from jazz. Presented outside of the synagogue, the pieces take on a new life. In this way, we see the beginnings of Bernstein's evolution from Jewish music novice to eclectic composer.

³⁰ Scheibler, "Ich glaube an den Menschen," 60.

³¹ Fine, "The Vocal Music of Leonard Bernstein," 17.

³² *Leonard Bernstein—Boston to Broadway: Concerts and Symposia at Harvard University*, Carol J. Oja and Judith Clurman, Directors, Emily Abrams Ansari, Program Book Editor (Cambridge, MA: Office for the Arts at Harvard and Harvard University Music Department, 2006), 31.

For over a quarter-century, Dr. Ann Glazer Niren has served on the Music faculty at Indiana University Southeast where she teaches all the Upper-level Music Literature/History courses. This article is adapted from a chapter of her 2013 dissertation at the University of Kentucky, which she plans to publish as a book in the not-too-distant future. The musical excerpts presented here are used with permission.

MANY PEOPLE PLEADED WITH BERNSTEIN TO WRITE A COMPLETE JEWISH SERVICE (HIS SETTING OF THE *HASHKIVEINU* PRAYER WAS HIS ONLY ATTEMPT). HOWEVER, I HAVE COME ACROSS AN UNDATED JOTTING ON A WORK HE WAS CONTEMPLATING, BUT NEVER FOLLOWED THROUGH: “A CANTATA ON HEBREW-YIDDISH MATERIALS THAT MOVE ME. WHAT ARE THE JEWISH ROOTS I LONG FOR? NOSTALGIA FOR YOUTH? GUILT TOWARDS MY FATHER? FIRST REAL CULTURAL EXPOSURE? FIRST REAL MUSIC I HEARD (BRASLAVSKY)! SEEKING A LARGER IDENTITY, WITH A RACE OR CREED? WITH A SUPERNATURAL FORCE? (BUT THE LATTER RESPONSE DOESN’T ACCOUNT FOR SO MANY ‘YIDDISH’ RESPONSES). SEEKING ANY IDENTITY? COMMON ROOTS WITH SIBLINGS? SPEAKER (ENGLISH), THE SINGER (HEB. & YIDDISH).”

(Jack Gottlieb, “Leonard Bernstein, A Jewish Legacy.”)

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