

SACRED SOUNDS

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And: A Miraculous Word

By Hazzan Daniel Gross



As we light the Chanukah candles in our *chanukiah*, we will recite two *b'rachot* (blessings) each night (plus the *Shehecheyanu* blessing on the first night). We say the first *b'rachah* over the *mitzvah* of lighting the Chanukah candle. I want to shed some light on the second *b'rachah* which we say over the miracle of Chanukah. There are actually two versions of this *b'rachah* which exist today, and the only difference between them is one letter, *shuruk*. Now you might be thinking to yourself, "I've never heard of a Hebrew letter called *shuruk*!" *Shuruk* is a specific type of the letter *vav*, which has a dot in the middle and is pronounced "oo." It looks like this: ם

When the *shuruk* is used as a prefix, it simply means "and" (like the more common ם pronounced "ve").

Most of us may be familiar with the way older *siddurim* have this *b'rachah* written, without the *shuruk*:

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, שעשה נסים לאבותינו
בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בַּזְּמַן הַזֶּה.

This would be translated as: Praised are You, Adonai, our God, sovereign of time and space, who has performed miracles for our ancestors *in those days at this time* – *bayamim haheim bazman hazeh*.

More modern *siddurim* contain the *shuruk* in the last line as follows:

בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם וּבַזְּמַן הַזֶּה

and the translation is changed to: Praised are You, Adonai, our God, sovereign of time and space, who has performed miracles for our ancestors *in those days and at this time* – *bayamim haheim uvazman hazeh*.

The addition of the simple little word "and" completely changes the blessing's meaning! Our gratitude to God can be expressed by recognizing the miracle at that time, that is, the miracle of the oil lamp and the defeat of the Syrian-Greeks by the underdog Maccabees, **or** it can be expressed by thanking God for the miracles that happened both then and now. Modern day miracles frequently go unnoticed. Especially at this time of year, allow yourself to be both cognizant and appreciative of the cup of coffee you are drinking while looking at a beautiful sunset and at the same time FaceTiming your relative who just had a baby across the country. Whether you choose to conclude the *b'rachah* by saying *bazman hazeh* or *u-vazman hazeh*, I pray that you are able to be grateful for both the Chanukah miracles and the everyday miracles.
Chag Urim Sameach!

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Engaging Our Senses Through Prayer By Cantor Rachel Brook

What are your earliest memories around the Jewish Holidays? Whether these memories extend back to the far-reaches of childhood or were created in adulthood, one of the beautiful aspects of our tradition lies in the engagement of all of our bodily senses. The sight of the candles glowing in the Chanukah menorah; the first night dimly shining with growing potential and the eighth night gleaming brightly, fulfilling its promise. The sound of the shofar blast in the new year, calling us to attention once again. The taste of the foods of the seder, from the spicy bitterness of the maror to the unique sweetness of the charoset.

Perhaps it is the smell of the crisp autumn air and new clothes and Rosh Hashanah dinner wafting through the house. For me, one of my earliest memories was a feeling of pride at being entrusted to hold the *mahzor* in my own lap during the High Holy Day service and flipping through it at will as the service progressed, pretending to read along with the community. Needless to say, the actual content of the book was well beyond my capacity to absorb but the mere act of holding and feeling the cool pages let me imagine that I was participating.

As the parent of a young child, I find myself highly conscious of the idea of sensory engagement. My 3-year-old daughter is on the verge of retaining her earliest memories and I often find myself wondering, what will those early memories consist of? My husband and I do all we can to facilitate a sense of pride in her Jewish identity and help her create positive and meaningful early memories around being Jewish.

"Prayer is a multi-sensory experience."

At Park Avenue Synagogue, our wonderful team is conscious of this same value and goal. We want all of the children in our community to feel like the shul belongs to them as much as it belongs to their grown-ups. We are blessed with incredible resources and educators and the children in our Young Family Programming and Early Childhood Center learn about prayer from the earliest ages. But we were left wondering, how can these same little ones be engaged in the services in our main sanctuary, the heart and soul of

our prayer life? Even though our Friday night services are inter-generational and full of music and *ruah*, at the core of our tradition lies a barrier for our youngest members who have yet to learn how to read in any language: the prayer book.

As part of a small editorial team, Cantor Azi Schwartz and I have spent the last two years working on addressing this issue by creating a series of prayer books intended for our youngest learners. Our first volume, *Mahzor for Young Families* (ages 2-7) was released this past Rosh Hashanah and was received with glowing reviews by children, parents, grandparents and educators in our community. Our foremost goal was to stay true to the liturgy, enhancing our traditional prayers with beautiful pictures and musical recordings which all serve to imprint the beauty and holiness of these days onto our children's hearts and souls. The book was designed to be used in services as well as in the home, empowering children AND their grown-ups to feel a sense of ownership around creating a Jewish home through shared blessings and texts.

Prayer is a multi-sensory experience. The colorful and playful pages of this book not only show the words of the prayers and what they mean, but also the structure of the service and its choreography. In addition, we recorded accompanying music available for download. The musical selections include contemporary compositions commissioned recently by the PAS Music Center, as well as familiar melodies closely identified with the High Holy Days. We believe in the power of song and know that singing will help children learn the prayers, find meaning in the text, and become comfortable with the full range of Jewish music.

Over the next four years we plan to introduce four more volumes of prayer books: *Mahzor for Youth* (Ages 8-11), *Prayers for Everyday Life and Friday Night* (ages 2-7), *Friday Night and Shabbat for Youth* (Ages 8-11), and *Festivals* (ages 2-7). Through this project we hope to shape the next generation of shul-goers, facilitating each child's sense of pride in their heritage through ownership, participation and a deep connection to the power of our most sacred texts through music.



We are pleased to share our *Mahzor for Young Families* with you and your community. If you are interested in learning more, please email Production Manager Gil Smuskowitz at gsmuskowitz@pasyn.org.

Cantor Rachel Brook serves as the Cantorial Fellow at Park Avenue Synagogue in New York City.



An Alabama Chaplain? Yes, the story of a cantor rolling with the tide.....

By Hazzan G. Michael Horwitz



Please consider joining the Cantors Assembly on the sacred journey of tradition and innovation.

Through your tax deductible contribution to the Cantors Assembly, you will help to build bridges between the past and future through the heritage of Jewish music, assuring the continuation of our traditions and legacy.

Visit our website www.cantors.org

Click on **"Support the CA"** to make a donation online.

The Cantors Assembly motto, *Singing is the just the beginning....*, couldn't be more true for me since singing has little to do with what defines my cantorate. I love music, liturgy and *sid-durim*. But I can be just as effective providing encouragement simply by listening. Even by being silent, I can be a wonderful *hazzan*. After working in congregations, I decided to pursue chaplaincy full time. I have the gift of singing to accompany my work at the University of Alabama Birmingham Hospital, the third largest public hospital in the country with nearly 1200 patients plus the Kirklin Clinic with 2000 outpatients a day. I meet with individuals from all walks of life and faiths regardless of where they are emotionally, spiritually and physically. I continue leading services at times in area synagogues, but prefer being at UAB helping people, reminding them they are not alone.

I organize two worship services per year for families of patients who died in our care, using inclusive language for people from all faiths and scripture, prayers, music, or illustrations covering all backgrounds. As a university medical center, it's imperative that we demonstrate openness and inclusivity for persons of all faiths or no faith. I include Psalm 23 in Hebrew with one of my colleagues on guitar singing a version he wrote in English and we conclude together in harmony with Hebrew and English. This is a primarily non-Jewish audience. I visit few Jewish patients. As the only Jewish chaplain at UAB, which has a staff of more than 30 chaplains, I have opportunities to teach clinical pastoral education residents and medical staff, providing insights into the needs of Jewish patients or even Muslim or Buddhist patients based on my life experience. For example, a family whose newborn died wanted a service for naming their child. There was not anything readily available. I wrote a ceremony based on Judaism and used my own resources, crafting it with appropriate language. I'm asked to lead prayers for medical staff and during patient visits my language is always inclusive, respecting those I am praying for as well as my own faith tradition, so that all parties are comfortable, including myself. This skill took time for me to develop and I am very proud of where I have come in my worship style in a mostly Christian environment. When our Director of Pastoral Care had his Ordination ceremony at the hospital in 2014, I was asked to sing a Psalm in Hebrew and English.

During sacred moments, I often join hands and invite staff to join us. I'm warmly welcomed and accepted once the family acknowledges that they do want prayer. We have worship services on a weekly basis available for all of our guests. There are four quiet places in different parts of the hospital that are always open, including an Interfaith Chapel, Meditation Room, Quiet Reflection Room, and small Chapel. We provide Bibles, prayer books and pamphlets to patients, families and employees. I often spend time with our guests in these prayer locations offering comfort.

I have experienced losses of staff that are tragic, including accidents, murders and suicides as well as illness. Our department has a protocol to respond to the unit or area of the hospital to offer pastoral care to employees immediately upon hearing about the death. I work with leadership in the units to plan a service at the hospital of celebration and appreciation for the co-worker. I invite immediate family members to attend to hear how their family member was loved. As part of the informal service, I encourage co-workers to share stories, say what they appreciate about their peer, and more. Usually there is lots of laughter and tears.

We are family and care for one another using our various faith backgrounds while taking care of our patients and their loved ones. I provide comfort, healing and hope. Our work as *Hazzanim* is a sacred task and I believe that my calling as a hospital chaplain helps so many people every day find their voice despite whatever challenges they face. May you be blessed with peace and health during Chanukah, and I wish your family and friends a joyous 2018. Shalom.

Hazzan G. Michael Horwitz has been a Staff Chaplain at University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) Hospital since 2013. He is a Board Certified Chaplain with the Association of Professional Chaplains, a former member of the Cantors Assembly Executive Council, and a 1999 graduate of the JTS Harvey L. Miller Cantorial School.



Spend A Day with the CA - Join us in June 2018!

The Cantors Assembly is one of the Jewish world's best kept secrets. Whether you've attended an electrifying concert, learned and shared together with your hometown cantor, or joined the whole group on one of our memorable European mission trips, you will have experienced the magic of this warm, diverse group of musical spiritual leaders. Now, for the first time ever, we are opening the heart of our musical community, our annual convention, for a one-day musical *tour-de-force*, entitled "A Day with the CA."

This year's inaugural program will be held on June 4, 2018 at the PGA Resort in Palm Beach Gardens. Participants will join with over 150 cantors from around the country in lectures, recitals, panels, catered kosher meals, and hearing the best in Jewish musical leadership.

Highlights of "A Day with the CA"

Study Session with Rabbi Jack Riemer: Rabbi Riemer is often referred to by his colleagues as the "Rabbi's Rabbi." He became known, as well, as the "President's Rabbi" after his writings inspired President Bill Clinton.

Presentation of the Hazzan Samuel Rosenbaum Award (the CA's highest honor bestowed upon a distinguished Cantor), followed by a compelling Shoah related true life personal account by noted physician, Dr. Bernd Wollschlaeger

A Recital Featuring Renowned Cantors Jacob & Fredda Mendelson

This Cantorial Life: An Intimate Conversation about the Challenges and Rewards of the Modern Cantorate

The Musical Creativity of Cantor Rachelle Nelson

Gala Concert of Yiddish Music (preceded by Ma'ariv): Featuring a variety of styles of Yiddish music, including Art and Folk songs, as well as repertoire from the Yiddish Theater.

Great Eats: Continental Breakfast, Lunch, Cocktails and Dinner with the Cantors*

*Laws of Kashrut are fully observed and all meals are catered.

Whether you love Jewish music, hazzanut, yiddish, Torah, Jewish culture, or just love *your* cantor, this is a special opportunity to reconnect with them and with that part of your Jewish soul. For more information, please contact the Cantors Assembly office at (330)-864-8533 or e-mail us at cantors@cantors.org. Register online <http://palmsandpsalms2018.eventzilla.net/web/event?eventid=2138920610>. We look forward to spending time with you on June 4, 2018 for this special day of Jewish music, *hazzonim*, and community.

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CANTORS ASSEMBLY
singing is just the beginning

The Cantors Assembly promotes the profession of the Cantorate, serving our members and their congregations by supporting our colleagues in their roles as vibrant, engaging, vital clergy and musical leaders.

Beyond offering our members opportunities for mentorship, professional development and personal growth, we also provide essential services such as placement, insurance and retirement planning.

Affiliated with the Conservative/Masorti movement, we serve congregations from across the denominational spectrum. We seek to ensure that our members are fully prepared to lead synagogues and the whole Jewish community through an ever-evolving musical and spiritual landscape.