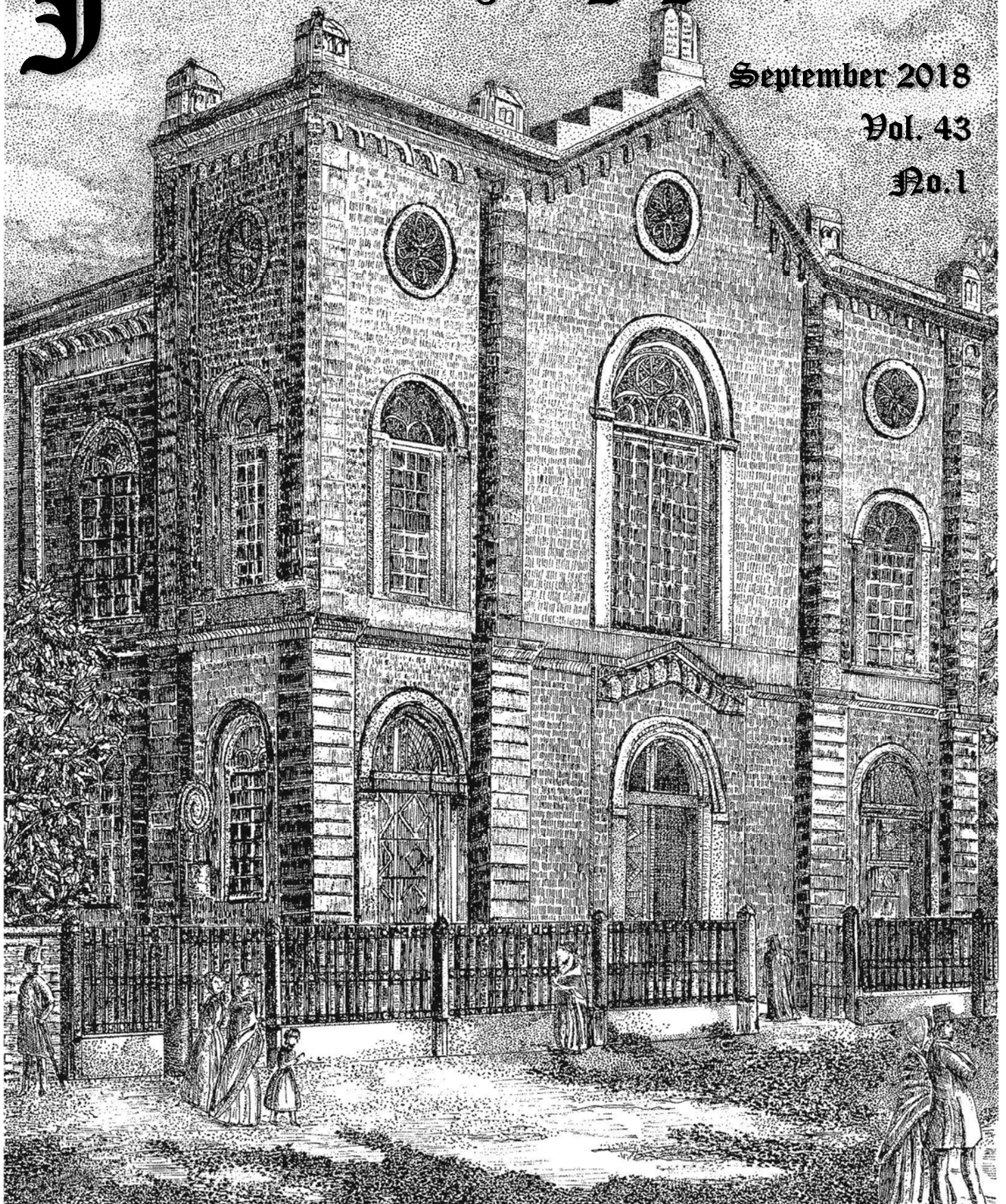


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The Great Synagogue of Kassel, Edwin Allen, 2016; after Wilhelm Thielmann’s *Bilder aus der Synagoge* (1899).

ETHNOMUSICOLOGICAL RESEARCH

The Talmudic Debate about Hallel

By Judith Hauptman

Hallel, as recited in the Second Jerusalem Temple, consisted of Psalms 113 to 118. A bit later I'll discuss *Hatsi* (Half) *hallel*, where we drop the beginnings of Psalms 115 and 116, but for now I would ask my readers to think about Hallel as it was performed in the Temple and described in the Babylonian Talmud's tractate *Arakhin* (Measurements), beginning with the Mishnah on 10a.

*Ein poḥatin mei-esrim v'ahat t'ki'ot ba-mikdash, v'lo mosifin al arba ush'moneh.
Ein poḥatin mish'nei n'valim, v'lo mosifin al shishah. Ein poḥatin mish'nei
halilim, v'lo mosifin al sh'neim-asar.*

They never blew less than 21 blasts [in the Temple], and never more than 48. They never played on less than two harps (*n'valim*) or on more than six, and never less than on two flutes (*halilim*) or more than on twelve.

This does not mean that one person knew how to play more than one musical instrument. The 11th-century commentator Rashi points out that each Levite had his own instrument and took care of both the singing and the playing—in the case of lyres and harps, simultaneously with the singing. We assume that the greater the holiday, the greater the number of musical instruments. There were never fewer than two *halilim* playing in the Temple, nor more than 12. Today we talk of the *halil* as being a recorder made of wood, yet all the information I could gather indicated that it was a flute or pipe.

The ancient *halil*, however, was made of reed. That's actually very helpful to know as we jump ahead in the Mishnah.

*V'lo hayah makeh b'abuv shel n'hoshet, elah b'abuv shel kaneh, mipnei
she-kolo areiv.*

And they did not play on a pipe (*abuv*) of copper but on a reed pipe, since its sound was sweet.

The Mishnah states that they didn't play (*l'hakot* means to bang when you play) on an *abuv* made out of copper but on an *abuv* made out of reed, because its sound was sweet. It's strange that earlier they talked about the *halil*, and now, continuing with the very same statement, they've switched from the word *halil* to the word *abuv*, even though (as the Gemara says later on) in any event we are talking about the same instrument.

We know that *abuv* in modern Hebrew means oboe—and in fact the Talmudic dictionaries (Krupnik, 1927; Jastrow, 1996) translate *abuv* as “reed or flute.” That is exactly what the Mishnah is telling us: it has to be made out of a reed, and this seems to have been true in ancient times as well: the *abuv* was made out of a reed. And the Hebrew word *halil* means

“hollow”—so a *halil* is a hollow reed.

When was the Mishnah’s final compilation, relative to the Second Temple? 200 C.E. When was the Second Temple destroyed? 70 C.E. True, the materials evolved over time, so it’s likely that knowledge of musical instruments had faded a bit, a century or more later. The *Tanna’im* (Mishnaic sages) admittedly had lost a certain amount of precision in describing the Temple’s musical instruments, and so they are implying that there were two different—though related—musical instruments. The wording would appear to indicate that they are describing the same instrument, but only due to a lack of precision.

If we look up the word “oboe” in *Webster’s New International Dictionary* (1981) we find that the modern instrument stems from the medieval French, *hautbois*. *Haut* is “high” and *bois* is “wood,” yielding: highwood. From this I am led to believe that *abuv* is clearly an oboe. Avraham Even-Shoshan’s *Millon hadash* (*New Dictionary of the Hebrew Language*, 1946-1958) says that the word “oboe” stems from Arabic, which locates the equivalence of oboe with *abuv* in Semitic languages.

It is unclear exactly where in the Temple they generally played the flute. We do know that the Levites stood on steps. On entering the Temple precinct, the first large enclosed area that one encountered was the Women’s Court. Most of us are under the impression that it was reserved only for women, but that’s not true. This large court—which covered almost half of the walled Temple compound—was called *Ezrat ha-nashim* (*azarah* meaning “court”) because, although everyone had to pass through it on the way in—men and women—the women could go no further. Men could continue up steps to *Ezrat ha-yisr’elim*, the Israelites’ Court, if they had a reason for being there, such as fulfilling a sacrificial obligation. Also on the upper level to which the aforementioned steps led—across from *Ezrat ha-yisr’elim*—was *Ezrat ha-kohanim* where Priests performed the sacrificial rites.

The Levites sang and played musical instruments on the steps (*Ma’alot*; hence: *Shir ha-ma’alot*), of which there were 15. Regarding the instruments, our Mishnah’s statement apparently refers to some modifications of standard practice. It specifies that there are only 12 days during the year when the *halil* is played. The list of those special occasions—when the flute was played over the sacrifice (i.e., “near the altar”) in the Temple—follows:

Bish’hitat pesah rishon—they played the *halil* when they slaughtered on the 15th of Nisan, known as the “First” Pesah. If someone missed the sacrificial opportunity due to being ritually impure, they could bring their offering a month later—on *Pesah sheini* (the “Second” Pesah)—and the *halil* was played at that time as well.

B’yom tov rishon shel pesah—they played the *halil* on the first day of Pesah—the day itself, not the night or afternoon before when they did the actual slaughtering.

B’yom tov shel atseret u-vishmonat y’mei he-hag—they played the *halil* on the first day of *Atseret* and on all eight days of the Holiday. “Atseret” sounds as if it could refer to what we know as Sh’mini Atseret. However, it can’t be, because of what follows: *sh’monat y’mei he-hag* (all eight days of the Holiday). By process of elimination (since we know the Mishnah is referring to all three Pilgrimage Festivals when the *halil* is played, and not just two of the festivals), *Atseret* must mean Shavuot, and *Hag* must mean Sukkot. The rabbis of the Mishnah (*Tanna’im*) and Gemara (*Amora’im*) had different names

for the holidays. Sukkot is *the* holiday because it occasioned the greatest celebration in the Temple: *Simhat beit ha-sho'eivah* (“the celebration of the Place of the Water-drawing”), not to mention the daily processions with *lulav* (palm branch), *etrog* (citron), and *Hoshana* (“O save Us!”) refrain. But why is Shavuot called *Atseret*? Because the word derives from the root *ayin-tsadi-reish*, which means “stop.” Shavuot is the true end of Pesah; Israel’s receiving the Torah at Sinai was the real purpose of its celebration. So too is Shavuot a culmination of the granting of our freedom at Pesah: deliverance from Egyptian slavery. Just so, Sh’mini Atseret is the culmination of Sukkot.

Leaving the Mishnah, we’ll now examine the Gemara’s exposition of it, which will segue into a discussion of Hallel.

Mai sh’na hannei—“why are these [12 days] singled out?” The Gemara answers its own question:

Ho’il v’yahid gomeir bahen et ha-hallel—“these days [have special musical accompaniment near the altar] because on them, each individual is required to finish the entire Hallel. On these days, the “full” Hallel is recited; therefore, they are considered special, and that is why they merit special musical accompaniment.

D’amar rabbi yohanan mi-shum rabbi shimon ben y’hotsadak. Rabbi Yohanan is one of the major speakers in the Babylonian Talmud; but he lived in *Erets yisrael* so he’s equally important in the Jerusalem Talmud, except that we most often study the Babylonian Talmud and here he’s citing a tradition in the name of a very early rabbi, Shimon ben Yehotsadak, from the time of the Mishnah. Rabbi Yohanan then lists this tradition for days on which one must finish the full Hallel--18 in all: *sh’monah-asar yamin she-yahid gomeir bahen et ha-hallel*.

Sh’monah y’mei he-hag—“eight days of Sukkot”;

sh’monah y’mei hanukkah—“eight days of Hanukkah” (not mentioned in the Mishnah);

yom tov shel rishon shel pesah—“the first day of Pesah” (this, of course, only in *Eretz yisrael*, elsewhere it would have been two days);

v’yom tov shel atseret—“and the feast day of Shavuot” (“which would have been two days elsewhere);

u-vagolah esrim v’ehad—“and 21 [days] in the diaspora.”

It is not at all uncommon for a rabbi from Eretz Yisrael to specify what one should do outside of the Land, because this is, after all, the Babylonian Talmud. So, in addition to the 18 days he listed for reciting full Hallel in Eretz Yisrael, R. Yohanan also spells a second list of 21 days for the diaspora, exactly when full Hallel must be recited.

Tish’ah y’mei he-hag—“the nine days of Sukkot” (including seven days of Sukkot and one day each of Sh’mini Atseret and Simhat Torah—

sh’nei yamim tovim shel pesah—“the two days of Pesah”;

u-sh’nei yamim tovim shel atseret—“and the two days of Shavuot.”

To summarize: the Mishnah has 12 days of playing the flute near the altar. R. Yohanan has 18 days of full Hallel for Eretz Yisrael, including the eight days of Hanukkah, and 21 days for reciting full Hallel in the Diaspora. Let us now see what got added, what got dropped, and how the numbers work out.

We went from 12 to 18 because Hanukkah got added. And why is Hanukkah not in the Mishnah? Because the Mishnah is talking about days on which they offered special sacrifices in the Temple. These sacrifices—and *only* these sacrifices—are mentioned in the Torah. Even if Hanukkah had already happened (as it did, in 164 B.C.E.), by the time of the Mishnah's final compilation (200 C.E.) we did not add sacrifices to those ordained by Scripture. As Rashi observes, there is no special sacrifice prescribed in the Torah for Hanukkah. But if we moderns—with our historical hindsight—add the eight days of Hanukkah to the Mishnah's 12, that would bring us up to 20 days when full Hallel is recited.

Meanwhile, the *Amora'im* of the Talmud dropped *Pesah sheini* as being redundant (for bringing delayed offerings) once the sacrificial rite had ceased. That brings us down to 19 days; how do they deal with R. Yohanan's figure of 18?

Two factors were at play here. In R. Yohanan's time the sacrifices of both *Pesah rishon* in Nisan and *Pesah sheini* in Iyyar no longer existed, and these just happened to be two of the days when the *halil* was *formerly* played near the altar. In other words, R. Yohanan is talking about days when an individual should recite Hallel in synagogues, whereas the Mishnah is discussing when the *halil* was played in the Temple.

To recapitulate: when R. Yohanan (in his list for the Diaspora) mentions “nine days” in reference to Sukkot, it's in the knowledge that Sh'mini Atseret already lasted two days. There are the first two days of *Yom tov Sukkot*, five days of *Hol ha-mo'eid sukkot* (including *Hoshana rabbah*), and the last two days—which were both called Sh'mini Atseret in the Diaspora before we applied the name Simhat Torah to the second of those two days.

Now we continue with the debate. The Gemara is trying to understand why on certain days we recite the full Hallel and on others we don't.

Mai sh'na b'hag d'amrinan kol yoma, u-mai sh'na b'pesah d'lo amrinan kol yoma?
Why is it that on Sukkot we recite Hallel every day, and why is it that on Pesah we don't?

With this question, we've left our Musical Instrument model and have moved into the post-Temple period. Let's forget the concept of *Hatsi hallel* for the moment. Here in Babylonia, all those days of Pesah are called “not saying Hallel” for the purposes of this *sugya* (subject). What we understand as being asked is: “Why is it that we do not say [a full] Hallel on all the days of Pesah after the first two?”

B'hag halukin b'korb'noteihen, b'ein halukin b'korb'noteihen

On Sukkot, each successive day has a distinctive set of sacrifices.
On Pesah, each successive day does not have a distinctive set of sacrifices.

So now, let us do the math and make sure it is right. On the first day of Sukkot, 13

sacrifices. On the second day of Sukkot, 12. On the third day, 11. On the fourth day, 10. So let us add $13 + 12 + 11 + 10 + 9 + 8 + 7$. The totality of sacrifices on Sukkot is 70. Why so?

Sukkot is our most universal holiday. It isn't particularistic like Pesah when we talk about us leaving Egypt, or Shavuot when we receive the Torah. On Sukkot we're praying for rain and for the well-being of the whole world, and the Haftarah reflects that. It's the one holiday where all the nations of the world—70 in number—will ascend to Jerusalem and worship there (Zechariah 13). The varying number of daily sacrifices makes each day of Sukkot a brand-new holiday, worthy of a Hallel on its own, whereas Pesah is but one drawn-out holiday. Accordingly, only the first day of Pesah merits a Hallel; the succeeding days are merely a continuation of the first day and do not merit a Hallel of their own.

The *Amora'im* established this as a principle, thinking that it would guarantee a predictive quality. Yet, if we remembered only this principle, that on any day during the Jewish year that had its own distinctive set of sacrifices you say Hallel, we'd get into trouble. Take Shabbat. If the criterion for saying Hallel is having distinctive sacrifices, then Shabbat fits the bill. Therefore, we should be able to conclude that on Shabbat we say Hallel. But it's not true. The answer given is: [*Shabbat*] *lo ikrei mo'eid*—[Shabbat] “is not called” *mo'eid* (an “appointed time”). So now we've introduced a second criterion. In addition to having distinctive sacrifices (which Shabbat has), it has to be an “appointed time,” usually associated with the celebration of some special event. Since Shabbat occurs all the time, it's not called *mo'eid*.

It seems to me that there are two ways to go about this: either we can memorize a long list (which is hard for some people), or we can set one or two criteria and judge each case by applying those criteria. Here the rabbis developed two criteria—distinctive sacrifices and an appointed time—but they're not done yet, because they say:

Rosh hodesh d'ikrei mo'eid, leima

On Rosh Hodesh (New Moon), which is called *mo'eid*, let us say Hallel.

And this despite the fact that Rosh Hodesh does have a distinctive set of sacrifices; therefore, we should recite (full) Hallel on it! But we don't, so they add a third criterion:

[*Rosh hodesh*] *Lo ikdish ba'asiyat m'lakhah*

[Rosh Hodesh] is not sanctified by refraining from work.

People do go to their jobs on Rosh Hodesh. (There is an ancient tradition that women refrain from certain kinds of work, but that definitely doesn't enter this *sugya*.)

At this point we think we have it: if we've got a distinctive set of sacrifices and if it's called *mo'eid* and if it's a day on which we're not allowed to work, that defines the list of days on which we say (full) Hallel. We think we're there, but we still have to deal with a charming little verse from Isaiah (30:29) that the rabbis throw in:

Ha-shir yihyeh lakhem k'leil hitkadeish hag

You shall have a song in the night when a feast is hallowed.

But the rabbis do not read verses according to such a simple meaning. They go on to say:

*Lailah ha-m'kuddash l'hag ta'un shirah,
v'she-ein m'kuddash l'hag ein ta'un shirah*

When a holiday is sanctified by not doing work it requires Hallel [to be sung];
if it's a day not sanctified by refraining from work it doesn't require Hallel [to be sung].

To sum up the argument thus far: If we have a day with special sacrifices, that's also called *mo'eid* and is sanctified by cessation from work, we recite Hallel. That's what we would think—but we would be mistaken, for our rabbis add the following.

*Rosh ha-shanah v'yom ha-kippurim d'ikru mo'eid
v'ikdush ba-asiyat m'lakhah, leima*

[On] Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, that are called *mo'eid*
and sanctified by the prohibition of labor, we should say Hallel.

It seems that Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur fit the three criteria—they are called *mo'eid*, you can't work on them and they have a distinctive set of sacrifices—therefore, we should be able to recite Hallel on them. But of course, we don't recite Hallel on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and here's why:

*Amru mal'akhei ha-shareit lifnei ha-kadosh barukhh hu,
ribbono shel olam, mipnei mah ein yisrael om'rim shirah
l'fanekha b'rosh ha-shanah v'yom ha-kippurim*

The ministering angels said before God, “Master of the Universe,
how is it that on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, Jews do not
sing Hallel before You?”

The underlying assumption is that the angels are saying: “How come at this moment--when one would think that the Jews would be praising You--they *aren't* praising You?” God then answers the angels with a question:

*Efshar melekch yosheiv al kisei had-din v'sifrei hayyim v'sifrei
meitim p'tu^him l'fanav v'yisrael om'rim shirah l'fanav*

Do you think it's possible that the King will sit on the Seat of Judgement,
with the Book of Life and the Book of Death open in front of Him, and
Israel will sing before Him?

This answer implies that there are two different mindsets at work; the angels are right, but then God is right. And God, of course, has the last word. According to Rabbi Abahu, who puts his words into God's mouth—why do we not say Hallel on Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur? Because they are really Days of Awe, *Yamim nora'im*. The nature of Yom Kippur in the Torah is spelled out in the commandment: *v'initem et nafshoteikhem*—“You shall afflict

yourselves” [through fasting]. And Rosh Hashanah is *Yom t’ru’ah*—“a day of blowing the Shofar.” The whole notion of Rosh Hashanah initiating a 10-day period of introspection--punctuated by Shofar blasts that led to repentance—is a rabbinic innovation. It’s also possible that it was a popular development, that just prior to Yom Kippur the people began to initiate some kind of process to prepare themselves for *t’shuvah* (repentance). You don’t just fall into a Day of Atonement. And if the people didn’t initiate it, the written record of Rosh HaShanah as *Yom had-din* (the Day of Judgement) is right there in the Mishnah.

Here, I beg my readers’ indulgence while I confess to a certain sensitivity on this point. A great deal of my research has been on the issue of women in Judaism, and women in the rabbinic period in particular. In one of my books I actually credit the rabbis with having ameliorated the status of women in Judaism. People often say to me: “How can you credit those misogynists with improving women’s status in marriage, in inheritance, even in divorce?” My answer is that they were actually under tremendous pressure from the people. Women in particular—but also men—must have lobbied rabbis to change Jewish law, most likely to bring it up to the level already reached by Aramaic common law or by Greco-Roman law.

The only record we have of changes in Jewish law in that period comes to us off the pages of the Mishnah and the Gemara, written by rabbis; and in those works they take credit for the changes they introduced. It’s possible that they were whipped into making these changes because women were furious with them on account of divorce discrimination. But until we have information confirming that theory, there’s nobody else to credit except those rabbis. I mention divorce as an example because we do have evidence in the Gemara where the rabbis themselves admit that women were going to the gentile courts to acquire divorces because rabbis were insensitive to the possibility of women initiating divorces. To save women from having to go elsewhere, they instituted this rule and that rule and so on.

Therefore, until we uncover a revelatory document—another Dead Sea Scroll in which a woman who had been forced to flee had buried her *ketubah* in an earthen jar in one of those caves near Qumran, and it provides information that changes the picture—I have no one else to credit for Jewish women by and large not doing so, except the rabbis. And now, having tested your patience to its limits, I return to our debate on Hallel and why it isn’t recited on Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur.

During the month of Tishrei we travel a continuum from dread (*Yom had-din*) on the one end, to frivolity (Simhat Torah) on the other end. In the *Yamim nora’im* segment of this continuum we feel closer to the “dread” aspect, whereas Hallel lies closer to the “frivolity” aspect. Simply put, it’s inappropriate to the occasion, as nice as is the content of Hallel and as beautiful as is its customary musical accompaniment. And to prove the point, let me mention one detail that we omitted when discussing the *halil* playing near the altar.

On days listed in the Mishnah as being special occasions when the *halil* was played near the altar, what do you suppose the Levites were doing? They were standing on the steps leading from *Ezrat ha-nashim* up to *Ezrat ha-yisr’elim* and *Ezrat ha-kohanim*, singing the Hallel. It’s easy to forget the most important thing in discussing the musical instruments played in the Temple: their purpose was to accompany the singing of Hallel!

So again, we think we've got the *halil*-playing days all figured out: they have special sacrifices, are called *mo'eid*, and are sanctified by cessation from work. And again, the rabbis come up with a new question:

V'hai hanukkah d'lo hakhi v'lo hakhi v'ka'amar

And then there's Hanukkah, which does not have special sacrifices and is not called *mo'eid*, and yet we recite Hallel!

Hanukkah violates every rule we've established so far, and still we say (full) Hallel. And the reason is: *mi-shum nisa*—because Hanukkah celebrates a miracle. This now becomes our fourth criterion—and it too is not going to work:

Purim d'ika nisa, leima

On Purim, when there was [also] a miracle, let us say Hallel!

But we don't. The real reason we say Hallel on Hanukkah is that historically speaking, the Maccabees missed Sukkot during the years of the Hasmonean revolt. Then, when they finally gained control, it was too late in the year to observe Sukkot (*b'mo'ado*) in its appointed time. So they observed it late, with *lulav* and *etrog*, for eight days, and with rejoicing in the Temple, but in a season that became identified with Hanukkah. There are so many connections between the two holidays that Hanukkah is, in effect, *Hag sukkot sheini* (a second Sukkot celebration).

But that is not on the table right now because, although we say Hallel, it doesn't mean there were special sacrifices. In this *sugya* the rabbis were saying that Hallel is recited on Hanukkah because of the miracle, and that is what got them into trouble. Because then, what do we do with Purim, when there's no Hallel—but there should be Hallel—because it, too, witnessed a miracle.

Amar Rav yits'hak: l'fi she-ein omrim shirah al neis sheb'huts la-arets

Said Rabbi Isaac; “Because we do not recite Hallel over a miracle that took place outside the Land of Israel [i.e., in Persia].

Rabbi Nahman bar Yitshak objected: “We've got Pesah—where a miracle occurred outside the Land of Israel—and we do say Hallel, and that goes against the rules.”

*Kid'tanya, ad she-lo nikhn'su yisrael la-arets,
hukhsh'ru kol ha-aratsot lomar shirah;
mishe-nikhn'su la-arets, lo hukhsh'ru kol ha-aratsot lomar shirah.*

As it has been learned in a Baraita (extra-Mishnaic source from the same period), if a miracle happened to the Jewish people before the time they entered the Land of Israel it was permitted to recite Hallel; if a miracle happened to the Jewish people after they entered the Land of Israel it was no longer permitted to recite Hallel.

Actually, aside from the manna that fell in the 38 years of Wilderness wandering following water from the rock (over which we don't recite Hallel since it was spread over so

many years), no other miracles happened to the Jewish people before they entered the land of Israel. So, that takes us out of the Pesah problem, and leaves us with the following rules: If the day has special sacrifices, is called *mo'eid*, and is sanctified by refraining from work, we recite Hallel. In addition, there are other days which don't have those qualities—but on which a miracle occurred and when we recite Hallel—but the miracle had to have happened in the Land of Israel.

Continuing with the *sugya*, we're still on the question of whether or not we should be saying Hallel on Purim, and if not, why? There are a couple of answers given; Rabbi Nahman said: *K'riyata zuhi hallila*, "Reading [the Megillah of Esther] is tantamount to reciting Hallel." The additional praise of God in Hallel would be redundant, because what is the purpose of reading the Megillah if not to thank God for our salvation? And what are the Hallel Psalms all about? They're saying: "Thank God for saving me." *Od'kha ki anitani* (Psalm 118) is all about thanking God for personal salvation; the Megillah thanks God for national salvation.

At this juncture, you may ask: But if—as we know—God is never mentioned in the Megillah, how can we be thanking Him for salvation?

Ah, but the rabbis did find God—under a different name—in the Megillah (Esther 4:14):

*Va-yomer mordekhai... el esteir... im hahareish taharishi ba-eit haz-zot,
revah v'hatsalah yavo la-y'hudim mi-makom aheir*

And Mordekhai said... to Esther... "if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another Place [*Makom* (place) also being a pseudonym for God].

Rava makes a different point, which applies to us who live in the Diaspora: *Bishlama hatam*, (Very well over there [in Egypt]). When the Jews left and began to sing the first Psalm of Hallel, *Hall'lu, avdei adonai* (Praise the Lord, you servants of God), it made sense. They left Egypt in order to be able to call themselves "servants of God," because they were no longer servants of Pharaoh. It was a clean break; they left Egypt where Pharaoh was worshiped as a god; they now worship God. But *hakha*, here (in Babylonia, still arguing the case for why we don't recite Hallel on Purim), when we say "*Hall'lu, avdei adonai*," does that imply that we are not still servants of *Ahashveirosh*? (Ahasuerus, King of Persia at the days of Mordekhai and Esther). "We are still the servants of *Ahashveirosh*!" says Rava, in a very cynical comment about Jewish life outside of Eretz Yisrael.

Incidentally, Rava was not a contemporary of Mordekhai and Esther, but Ahasuerus is the generic king of Babylonia, and Rava is saying that we Diaspora Jews are never totally free. Therefore, we celebrate on Purim, but it's not a full celebration—no recitation of Hallel—because it was not a full redemption.

A question next arises against Rav Nahman who said that reading the Megillah is tantamount to reciting Hallel. He is actually saying that we *do* recite Hallel on Purim, but under a different name. How does that reconcile with the earlier Baraita statement that we don't recite Hallel if the miracle took place outside of Eretz Yisrael? The answer hinges on the fact that we were exiled from the Land *after* we had entered it—in 586 B.C.E. and again in 70 C.E. Once that happened it was as if we had never entered the Land and so the original permission—to recite

Hallel even for a miracle occurring outside of *Eretz yisrael*—was reinstated. Still, the “Hallel” that we recite is only a substitution, with different words, and this supports Rava’s position.

The *sugya* essentially ends with that, but there are one or two more points which beg to be made in connection with the question of when Hallel ought to be said.

Yom Ha’atzmaut (Israel Independence Day) underscores the importance of criteria—rather than a list—in determining the question. It’s a day when people are unsure whether or not Hallel should be said. We need guidelines, and here we’ve got them. By the criteria of this *sugya* all we need for reciting Hallel on Yom Ha’atzmaut today is a miracle in the Land of Israel. Period. We don’t need special sacrifices and we don’t need it being called *mo’eid* or sanctified by refraining from work. As long as we’re willing to call Yom Ha’atzmaut a miracle—which we are by virtue of the *Al han-nissim* (For the Miracles) prayer that we (Conservative Jews) have put into the day’s liturgy—then we are permitted to recite Hallel with its blessing. We’ve actually just *redeemed the sugya*, giving it a more redemptive quality, because it now seems as if the *Amora’im* who took part in it understood what might transpire in the future.

Yom Yerushalayim (Jerusalem Day) is another instance. *Siddur sim shalom* (the Conservative Movement’s *Prayer Book for Shabbat, Festivals and Weekdays*, Jules Harlow, ed., 1985), which was published after *Yom yerushalayim* had been instituted, states: “Some congregations say Hallel on Yom Yerushalayim,” a neat solution. What it all boils down to is: how do we define a miracle? That can get a bit complicated. We now know the rules for reciting Hallel, but is regaining Jerusalem a miracle? If you ask me—yes.

And now, we can return (as promised earlier) to the question of *Hatsi* or “Half”- Hallel: where and when did it come in? It seems that in 3rd century Babylonia, Rav—who was head of the Academy at Sura—visited a town on Rosh Hodesh. He saw the people reciting Hallel and was aghast, but he kept quiet. Then he noticed that they were skipping portions of it, leaving out the beginnings of Psalms 115 and 116. That was when he realized that they weren’t acting out of ignorance, but rather following ancestral custom: *minhag avoteihem biy’deihem*.

Hatsi hallel is something that the people invented. Maybe the reason they added Hallel on Rosh Hodesh—which was more of a holy day in ancient times—was so there would be more days of Hallel during the year, on which they could sing and listen to their *hazzan*, who by that time had assumed the role of *sh’liah tsibbur*, chant even a partial amount of the Psalms. I would like to believe that *Hatsi hallel* is a vote of confidence in cantorial chanting of the prayers, that it came from the people and that the rabbis were unable to stop its recitation, because: *minhag avoteihem biy’deihem*.

Judith Hauptman, a professor of Talmud and Rabbinics at the Jewish Theological Seminary, is acclaimed for her synoptic studies in which related texts are examined for their implications about the history of Jewish law. Her articles have appeared—among other publications—in: United Synagogue Review, Daughters of the King, Celebration and Renewal, The Americanization of the Jews, Tikkun, and Judaism. Her books include Development of the Talmudic Sugya: Relationship Between Tannaitic and Amoraic Sources (1987) and Rereading the Rabbis: A Woman’s Voice (1998). This article is abridged and edited from a session that she taught at the Cantors Assembly Jubilee Convention (New York: Marriott at the World Trade Center), June 8, 1998. [JAL]

"It Took a Jew": The Mendelssohns and the Bachs

by Nina Lazar Sobelman

In 1829 Felix Mendelssohn, age 20, conducted the *St. Matthew Passion* by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) in Berlin.¹ This was its first performance since Bach's own a hundred years earlier and by now the work was unknown. It was a landmark event attended by an all-star audience, and it set in motion a revival of interest in Bach's music still felt in our own day. After Bach's death in 1750 he had been largely forgotten, except in Berlin, where his music was kept alive by two Jewish families, the Mendelssohns and the Itzigs.

Moses Mendelssohn: Philosopher and Aesthetician

Philosopher Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786) was a music-lover who studied both aesthetics and music. The banker Daniel Itzig (1723-1799) was also a music-lover, who gave his children an extraordinary musical education. Living in Berlin's small Jewish community, Moses Mendelssohn and Daniel Itzig would have known each other well, and the families were ultimately connected by marriage when Moses' son Abraham married Itzig's granddaughter, Lea Salomon; those two would become Felix Mendelssohn's parents. Another of Itzig's children was a hostess whose salon was the center of what was even then called a "Bach cult"; her collection of manuscripts was an unmatched source of music by all the Bachs.² This was Sara Itzig Levy (1761-1854), an unsung hero in the preservation of J.S. Bach's music who has been coming out of the shadows in recent years.³ Felix's father, Abraham Mendelssohn (1776-1835) was another hero, responsible for purchasing some hundred Bach manuscripts from the musical estate of Bach's son, Carl Philipp Emanuel.⁴

Moses Mendelssohn was a renowned thinker who remained an observant Jew his entire life. Still, he saw nothing inconsistent in also embracing the Enlightenment.⁵ Mendelssohn's

¹ The Passion according to Saint Matthew and the Passion according to Saint John are two long narrative cantatas by J.S. Bach depicting the death of Jesus, traditionally performed as part of the liturgical service at Easter. Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* was performed on Easter, 1729 at the Thomasschule in Leipzig where Bach was employed. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Matthew_Passion.

² Christoph Wolff, "A Bach Cult in Late 18th-Century Berlin: Sara Levy's Musical Salon," *Bulletin of the American Academy*, Spring 2005.

³ Many aspects of Sara Itzig Levy's life—and that of her extended family—are well represented in Lauren Belfer's fictional *After the Fire* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers: 2016).

⁴ R. Larry Todd, *Mendelssohn, A Life in Music* (Oxford University Press), 2003, 30-31. These manuscripts of the Bach family had been in the possession of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's daughter, Anna Caroline Philippina. They came up for sale upon her death in 1804.

⁵ The 17th- and 18th-century concept of Enlightenment refers to a philosophy of tolerance in science, religion and education. The Jewish Enlightenment, the *Haskalah*, which was touched by all these, included a love of classical Hebrew. Moses Mendelssohn in his essay "On the Question: What Does Enlightenment Mean?" writes, "Education, culture and enlightenment are modifications of social life, effects of the hard work and efforts of human beings to improve their social condition. Education breaks down into culture and enlightenment. The former seems to apply more to the practical dimension; enlightenment seems, by contrast, to refer more to the theoretical dimension. Culture in an external sense is called "refinement." Enlightenment is related to culture as, generally, theory is related to practice... One can say: The Nurembergers have more culture, the Berliners more enlightenment, the French more culture, the English more enlightenment... The Greeks had both culture and

biographer Alexander Altmann writes, "Mendelssohn's life is a kaleidoscope of the European intellectual scene, Jewish and non-Jewish, in the second half of the eighteenth century (he) was part and parcel of the local scene, which included the Jewish community on its fringe."⁶ He is remembered, of course, primarily as a philosopher—"the Jewish Socrates" as he was called⁷—and it was as a philosopher that his portrait hung on the walls of J.S. Bach's son Carl Philipp Emanuel.⁸ But it is neither the thinker I wish to discuss nor the Jewish scholar, but the Enlightenment man deeply involved in the philosophy of aesthetics of his time, and especially of music, which he considered the most exalted of the arts.⁹ The aesthetics of music was one of the current subjects of the day, and Moses was closely involved with it. He had a profound love and understanding of music, enriched by much study; his feeling for music was intense: "Such was the excitement music aroused in him that in later years he was forced to deny himself the pleasure of attending a concert in the evening."¹⁰

All this began in 1743 when Moses Mendelssohn, age fourteen, arrived in Berlin from Dessau. Moses ben Mendel of Dessau was following his rabbi, David Fraenkel (1704-1762) who had come there to serve as chief rabbi of Berlin's small Jewish community. Moses would have had to enter the city through the one gate permitted for Jews and cattle, and to pay a tax like that for cattle. He would have been rigorously interrogated about his purpose in Berlin, which was to study with Rabbi Fraenkel. Once there, he would teach himself English, French, Greek and Latin. But religious scholars only knew *Judendeutsch* (Yiddish) written right to left in Hebrew letters, so first he would have had to teach himself German, itself just coming into its own as a language.¹¹

When Moses arrived in Berlin, though it was the capital of Prussia and the seat of the Hohenzollern Court, it was a provincial town. There were around 2,000 Jews in a population of 100,000.¹² Nevertheless, Berlin enjoyed a thriving intellectual life. Frederick II ("the Great") whose 46-year reign had begun in 1740, had already set about transforming the Prussian court into one worthy of the capital of Prussia. Well known for his patronage of the arts (and the Enlightenment in general), one way he accomplished his goal was by importing prestigious musicians into the realm. An excellent flutist himself, he brought J.S. Bach's son Carl Philipp Emanuel to be the court harpsichordist, among other prominent musicians. Frederick preferred to live in his Potsdam estate Sans Souci, rather than in Berlin, where his sister Princess Anna Amalie, another accomplished musician, lived. Her *Kapellmeister* (court conductor), Johann

enlightenment." Mendelssohn, "On the question: what does 'to enlighten' mean?", 1784, quoted in *Moses Mendelssohn, Philosophical Writings* edited by Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Columbia University Press), 1997; 313.

⁶ Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn, A Biographical Study* (University of Alabama Press, 1973), xiii.

⁷ This news story is but one of many that nod to this nickname, which appears to have been common lore. Mendelssohn was also referred to as the 'German Socrates', Todd, *op. cit.*, 8.

⁸ It is quite possible that the two were personally acquainted; in any case they had acquaintances in common. Most importantly, both were good friends of the playwright Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781). Annette Richards, "An Enduring Monument: C.P.E. Bach and the Musical Sublime," in Annette Richards, ed. *C.P.E. Bach Studies*, (Cambridge Composer Studies), 2006, 170.

⁹ Mendelssohn's reasoning is discussed further below.

¹⁰ Todd, *op. cit.*, 67.

¹¹ Amos Elon, *The Pity of it All: A Portrait of the German-Jewish Epoch 1743-1933* (Picador, Henry Holt and Company) 2002: 3, 34.

¹² *Ibid.*, 13.

Philipp Kirnberger (1721-1783) had been J.S. Bach's pupil. Kirnberger will be an important part of our story, as he composed the method by which Felix Mendelssohn was taught. As we shall see, his studies came in a straight line from Bach.

When Moses Mendelssohn came to Berlin, Frederick was already on the throne and J.S. Bach was still alive and active in Leipzig. In 1747 Frederick brought Bach to Potsdam—the visit that went down in history, as it produced the *Musical Offering*.¹³ Although Music 101 tells us that the Baroque Era ended in 1750 with Bach's death, it had ended before, and actually Bach was already considered outmoded; he was thought of as the father of great sons who were writing much more modern music. (His sons were reputed to have referred to him as *der alte Perruque*—the old wig.)¹⁴ To our ears the difference between Bach's music and that of his sons is not immediately obvious. In the Baroque Era though, a piece was thought to have a single mood or "affect" such as happy, sad, gentle etc.; his sons' contemporaries were looking for music with much sharper changes of mood, which they called "mixed affect." To be able to compose music containing such startling changes required a superb command of harmony and expression. This they called "sublime", and it was most exemplified in the free fantasia¹⁵, of which Carl Phillip Emanuel Bach remains the master. Moses Mendelssohn valued these attributes, and he wrote extensively on the "sublime in music."

In 1763 Moses Mendelssohn submitted an essay to a competition of the Academy of Sciences and won first prize; Immanuel Kant¹⁶—whom he would later refer to as "the all-crushing Kant"—was awarded honorable mention.¹⁷ In 1754 he met Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781) one of the outstanding representatives of the Enlightenment, who became a lifelong friend. When Lessing died, Mendelssohn eulogized him as having been "more than a generation ahead of his century."¹⁸ Through Lessing he met Johann Georg Sulzer (1720-1779), a philosopher and aesthetician who focused on the philosophy of music, moving away from intellect and towards sentiment. The word "sentiment" (*Empfindung*) was important in the thinking about one of the burning issues of the day, namely, the aesthetics of music.

¹³ At Bach's visit to Potsdam he improvised upon a theme of Frederick's invention. Bach then reworked this into an encyclopedic collection of music written in all the genres of the time, including canons, a trio sonata, a fugue in three voices and a *ricercare* in six voices, and dedicated the entire work to Frederick. Any edition of this musical offering, including the author's personal copy (Edition Peters), begins with Bach's dedication to the King, as well as his inscription in Latin, *Regis iussu Cantio et Reliqua Cononica Arte Resoluta* ("By the King's command, the theme and its variations resolved in song and canonic art.") In addition, the canons stipulate that they are *super thema regium*, or "on the king's theme." Two of them state that they are in augmentation like the fortunes of the king, and in ascending keys, like the king's ascending glory.

¹⁴ This is commonly quoted, although not definitively sourced.

¹⁵ The term "Fantasia" is used to describe a piece of music, improvisational in character, following no prescribed requisite either in form (e.g. sonata form, several movements, contrasting tempo, etc.) or procedure (e.g., imitation or fugue). In other words, it is a free piece of music, alternating between characters and speeds. The composer is free to jump from one section to another at will, either gradually or abruptly. C.P.E. Bach was the acknowledged master of the fantasia both in his skill as a composer, the quality regarded as "the sublime in music," and his proficiency in execution. In fact, the use of "mixed affect" was no less than revolutionary.

¹⁶ 1724-1804, considered a central figure in modern philosophy.

¹⁷ Todd, *op. cit.*, 7.

¹⁸ Altmann, *op. cit.*, 7, from a letter of condolence from Moses Mendelssohn to Karl Lessing, the grand-nephew of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing.

Mendelssohn was deeply involved with the philosophy of aesthetics. Since his connection with music went through this route, we should look at his activity in the field, and the atmosphere in which he worked. Jews were not commonly thought of as particularly sensitive aesthetically: in 1780 a painter was refused entry to a gallery because a Jew was not permitted to enjoy the beautiful. And in Berlin, a Jew was not admitted to the Berlin Academy of Music because it was "mathematically impossible that a Jew could be a composer."¹⁹

Mendelssohn was now in the very thick of one of the important philosophical discussions of his day, and he became involved with *belles-lettres* and literary criticism. In 1756 he wrote, "I am making a fairly good start towards becoming a *bel esprit* (beautiful spirit)... Madam Metaphysics may forgive me."²⁰ It was at this point that he began studying music.

But first he wrote about aesthetics. In 1755 he published a collection of dialogues in letter form, *Ueber die Empfindungen* (On the Sentiments). He theorized that

There are three levels of pleasant sentiments: 1) The supreme delight that a clear and distinct understanding of some perfection produces in the soul and eventually also in the body. 2) The clear impression of a perfect whole... is of the nature of pleasant sentiments rather than delight. In this case the soul enjoys both the beauty of the object contemplated and, at the same time, the effect that its own pleasure has on the body. 3) A purely sensual pleasure does not require the cooperation of the soul yet indirectly causes the soul pleasure by virtue of her concern for the condition of her companion, the body.²¹

Mendelssohn then formulated his theory of the arts: Music is the only form of art which gives all three kinds of pleasure. In the Twelfth Letter he wrote, "The brain communicates this harmonious tension to the nerves of the other parts of the body and the body becomes comfortable; the human being acquires a pleasant emotion. Hence the welling up of the bloodstream."²²

On the Sentiments was followed in 1761 by *Rhapsody, or Additions to the letters on the Sentiments*, in which he discussed the mixed effect of abrupt changes of mood within one piece of music.

By now it was time for him to learn to play music himself. This being Berlin, he took lessons in keyboard and theory with Kirnberger, Anna Amelie's Kappelmeister. (We don't know exactly when or for how long, but it was certainly around now). The keyboard in question must have been the harpsichord; however good a player he might have become, he certainly became an excellent theoretician, for he invented, and published, his own method for tuning a keyboard instrument. At the time another current topic was tuning, and Kirnberger alone invented several methods ("temperaments"). In Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, the very name refers to a method

¹⁹ From the Introduction by Albert Jospé to *Moses Mendelssohn: Selections from his Writings*, edited and translated by Eva Jospé. Editor's Note: Louis Lewandowski (1821-1894) would become the first Jew to be admitted to the Academy, his tuition paid by a member of the Mendelssohn family.

²⁰ Dahlstrom, *op. cit.*, xiii, quoting Mendelssohn's letter to Lessing.

²¹ Altmann, *op. cit.*, 57.

²² Dahlstrom, *op. cit.*, 53.

of tuning, still under debate. Mendelssohn used mathematics to propose tuning with the aid of a monochord, incidentally proving one of Newton's theories.²³ His treatise was published twice, in 1761 and 1764, but anonymously, as his status was still one of "tolerated Jew."²⁴

Mendelssohn's thinking on affect and tuning show him involved in the most important musical questions of the day. Accustomed as we are to knowing that Felix Mendelssohn was Moses' grandson, it is still startling to see how profoundly and passionately Moses himself loved music.

The Itzig Family

While Moses Mendelssohn was amassing great learning and status in the German intellectual world, King Frederick's banker²⁵ Daniel Itzig was amassing fabulous wealth. Frederick began the Seven Years' War in 1756 by invading Austria. He financed this war, like his others, by devaluing the Prussian currency: He took foreign coins and melted them down, keeping the silver for his own treasury, then re-minting them with less silver content. Itzig, who was his minter, became known as the "Jewish Prince".²⁶

Itzig himself must have been interested in music, for his children had the best music teachers. He could have known Bach's son Carl Philipp Emanuel in Berlin. It is even possible that he could have heard Johann Sebastian Bach in 1747 when he visited Frederick's court, and as a musically aware man he certainly would have heard about it. His house contained a private synagogue, for Itzig, like Mendelssohn, was an observant Jew all his life. The children of "the Jewish prince" received an education that even many aristocrats would have been unable to afford; in fact, even within the Jewish community such wealthy Jews were called "aristocracy."²⁷ Some of Itzig's daughters were gifted musicians and were educated accordingly. These were Hanna, Bella, Sara, Caecilie and Fanny.

Fanny (1758-1818), the youngest, was a gifted pianist. Upon her marriage to banker Nathan Adam von Arnstein she moved to Vienna, where she brought the tradition of the Berlin

²³ Moses Mendelssohn was once a member of the "Berlin Circle" of distinguished mathematicians. Moses Mendelssohn wrote about an artificial way of solving the problem of intonation for organs, harpsichords and clavichords. He connected prescriptions of the ancient Greek Delian problem (of construing distances with the length of the cubic root of a given length) with the problem of equal temperament tuning. Thereby, he gave an original proof of Newton's prescription." Henk Visser, "Mendelssohn's Euclidean Treatise on Equal Temperament" in *Moses Mendelssohn's Metaphysics and Aesthetics*, edited by Reinier Munk, (Springer Science & Business Media), 2011. Sir Isaac Newton (1643- 1727), one of the most important scientists of all time, was an English mathematician, astronomer and physicist. A key person in the scientific revolution, he famously discovered gravity when an apple fell on his head while he was sitting under an apple tree.

²⁴ Harpsichords were tuned unequally, that is, the semitones were not identical as in the modern piano, in which all the semitones are equal. Fortepianos, like harpsichords, were tuned unequally, and this was so at least until the middle of the nineteenth century. It is hard to believe that Mendelssohn's method was put to much practical use, as a harpsichord tuned in equal temperament sounds out of tune. Altmann, *op cit.*, 67.

²⁵ In the eighteenth century, when there was no regulated system of banking and credit, this need was filled by private bankers who were a necessity even for noblemen, and even more for monarchs.

²⁶ Hilde Spiel, *Fanny von Arnstein, Daughter of the Enlightenment*, tr. From the original German (1962) by Christine Shuttleworth (New York: New Vessel Press), 2013:17.

²⁷ Deborah Hertz, *How Jews Became Germans* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 2007:236.

Jewish salons and was a patron of Mozart, who lived in her house for eight months while composing *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. Fanny's biographer, Hilde Spiel, reports, "He lodged among the Arnsteins' coachmen, valets and kitchen maids."²⁸ "The sound of his piano rang out above Fanny's head by day: 'For while that is standing in the room, I cannot live in it.'"²⁹

Fanny's older sister, Caecilie von Eskeles, studied the piano with Ignaz (born Itzhak) Moscheles (1794-1870), and was later his patron in Vienna, where she, too, ran a musical salon. Moscheles would become a great friend of Felix Mendelssohn, and the two friends performed (on the piano) Bach's concerti for two harpsichords, and on one occasion, his concerto for three harpsichords, together with Clara Schumann.³⁰

Oldest sister Bella (1749-1824) studied with Bach's pupil Johann Philipp Kirnberger, and later, so did her daughter, Lea Salomon. Lea was said to have played the *Well-Tempered Clavier* almost every day. When her daughter Fanny was born, Abraham Mendelssohn wrote to Bella announcing the birth, adding that Lea said the baby had "Bach fugal fingers."³¹

Bella and her sister, Sara Itzig Levy—Felix Mendelssohn's grandmother and great-aunt—were active participants in the musical education of both Fanny and Felix. It was grandmother Bella who presented fourteen-year-old Felix with the score of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, which she had had copied for him, very likely from the collection of her sister Sara, who employed several copyists.

Sara Itzig Levy, 1761-1854

Sara would be the most long-lived, and her legacy still endures. She studied with Wilhelm Friedemann Bach (1710-1784, the oldest son of Johann Sebastian) from 1774 to 1784 and was a concert-level harpsichordist. Although Wilhelm Friedemann taught very little, he remained in Berlin, where she was his patron and probably his only pupil; he composed a work for piano and flute as a wedding gift (her husband was a good amateur flutist). Sara commissioned several works from him³² and bought and preserved many of his compositions. The priceless collection of manuscripts she amassed throughout her life included works by all of Bach's sons including Wilhelm Friedemann and Carl Philipp Emanuel, but also Johann Cristoph Friedrich (1732-1795) and Johann Christian (1735-1782) the "London Bach," evidence that she kept abreast of wider developments in music, and not only those in Prussia. After Wilhelm Friedemann died, Sara became a patron of Carl Philipp Emanuel and commissioned what turned out to be the last composition before his death in 1788, the *Double Concerto for Harpsichord and Fortepiano*. The premiere took place in her home, which could accommodate an 18th-century (small) orchestra. She was the harpsichordist and one of her sisters played the

²⁸ Spiel, *op. cit.*, 67-68.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 68.

³⁰ 1819-1896, wife of composer Robert (1810-1856) and a highly regarded pianist and composer in her own right.

³¹ Abraham's letter November 15, 1805, quoted in Todd, *op. cit.*, 28.

³² For example, his *Fantasia in Dm*, which existed only in her archive, indicating that it was a commission.

fortepiano.³³ Before this, she had commissioned a set of three quartets for flute, viola and keyboard,³⁴ promoting the most modern instrumentation of her time.

Sara's keyboard instruments would have been the envy of any aristocrat; they included a harpsichord and a fortepiano (built by Bach's colleague Gottfried Silbermann, 1683-1753), as well as a second harpsichord. We know she and one of her sisters played Bach's organ sonata on two harpsichords, because her archive contained playing parts. Well into the nineteenth century, when both Bach and the harpsichord are popularly presumed to have been extinct, Sara played his *D Minor Harpsichord Concerto* BWV 1052 as well as the virtuoso harpsichord part of the fifth *Brandenburg Concerto*, BWV 1050. One researcher thinks that from 1808 until 1815 she played weekly concerts with the Berlin *Ripiensschule* (of which more later). In 1835 her grand-nephew Felix Mendelssohn, in his first season as music director of the Berlin *Gewandhaus* (orchestra) established a series of "*Historische Konzerte*" (Historical concerts) and in the first program he played the same *D Minor Concerto* (playing the piano). He was apparently unaware of his great-aunt's performance of this work, and probably he never heard her play as she had stopped performing sometime after 1815.³⁵

The Salon

Sara Levy was no private amateur playing at home. Her home also functioned as her salon, and here we need to know something about the salons—and the salonnières. Since at least the seventeenth century and earlier there had been gatherings for intellectual discussion and literary criticism, held regularly on *jours fixes* (fixed days) and hosted by women. Women were not only the hostesses; they set the tone and their agenda for these gatherings. These salons, as they were called, were more egalitarian and less bound by social rank than were the larger societies of the day. When these salons were initiated in Berlin it was a startling innovation that presiding over these meetings was not a host but a hostess, and for a brief period of twenty to thirty years before the turn of the 19th century, most of these hostesses were Jewish. In Berlin, where there was no university until 1810, the salons answered the very real need for a forum for the exchange of ideas and criticism; many literary works were presented at salon circles for a first airing. The salons thus functioned as a kind of interdisciplinary free university. Centering around a theme such as literature or music, the salons hosted a heady mixture of guests who included writers, philosophers, theologians, musicians and intellectual Jewish women. Historian Deborah Hertz called them "miniature utopias," and so they were.³⁶

Mme. Levy's salon was not only musical, but also literary and scientific. The philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814) spoke here, and it was here that naturalist Alexander Humboldt (1769-1859) gave his first scientific lecture. Frequent guests included E.T.A. Hoffmann (1776-1822, German author and composer), the poetess Bettina Brentano

³³ The *Double Concerto* is the quintessential piece for these two instruments, which by 1788 were uneasily, and barely, coexisting.

³⁴ The two keyboard parts consisted of the right hand and the left hand of the piano, so classical composers would have called them piano trios.

³⁵ Wolff, *op. cit.*, 29.

³⁶ Elon, *op. cit.*, 73, quoting T. M. Endelman, ed. *Jewish Apostasy in the Modern World* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1987), 47.

(1785-1859) and her husband, and writer Achim von Arnim (1781-1831). Beethoven played there, and when Mozart visited Berlin in 1789 hoping for royal commissions, he called on his patroness' sister.³⁷

Yet Sara Levy's home was mainly a musical salon, largely dedicated to J.S. Bach and his sons. That the music in her collection was actually played is indicated by the presence not only of scores but of actual playing parts. Even at the time, her salon was described as the center of a "Bach cult"³⁸ and there is no question that she was a force in setting musical taste in eighteenth-century Berlin.

The Jewish salons in Berlin operated for barely thirty years, but during that time they attracted visitors from abroad. One of these was French woman of letters, Mme. Germaine de Stael (1766-1817) in 1804.³⁹ The Berlin salons stood outside the Christian class system. "The noble-Jewish mixture was every bit as unusual in the context of 18th-century Germany, even more unusual was the mixing of income groups among the commoner men... (Mme. de Stael) was accustomed to noble women orchestrating high society, whereas this event was a novelty in Germany, especially in Prussia."⁴⁰ She wrote that the Jewish salons were the only places in the whole of Germany where aristocrats and bourgeois met freely and that did not reek of beer and smoke.⁴¹

What we owe to Sara Itzig Levy is really incalculable. We are indebted to her for her patronage of living composers as well as the music she commissioned from them. This body of music would continue to inform and inspire much of the music which followed it. She not only preserved manuscripts of J.S. Bach, but kept his music alive, not mummified on a page or on life-support as the study of theory and counterpoint but as living and breathing works which were played.

The importance of Levy's encyclopedic archive, collected over a lifetime, cannot be exaggerated for our day, and also for hers. During the 18th century, very few of J.S. Bach's compositions appeared in print. Even the *Well-Tempered Clavier* was circulated in manuscript copies reproduced by copyists Sara Levy employed.⁴² This was the case even when printed

³⁷ Mozart very possibly met Mme. Levy during his Berlin trip and may have performed in her salon. It will be remembered that Levy's sister, Fanny von Arnstein, was a patron of Mozart's in Vienna, and it makes sense that when in Berlin he would have called on his patroness's sister; the connection would surely have been useful for him. Fanny also belonged to the same Masonic circle studying the music of Bach, that included Haydn and Mozart. Levy had made several visits to Fanny in Vienna, so it is possible Mozart and Mme. Levy knew each other in Vienna as well. Interestingly, Levy's husband, Solomon, was also a mason. "At any rate the Arnstein connection provided a personal link to Sara Levy that Mozart could hardly have missed." Christoph Wolff, *Mozart at the Gateway to his Fortune: Serving the Emperor, 1788-1791* (Norton and Co.), 2012, 59

³⁸ Wolff, *A Bach Cult*, *op. cit.*, 27.

³⁹ Hertz, *Jewish High Society in Old Regime Berlin* (Syracuse University Press, 2005), 157.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁴¹ Elon, *op. cit.*, 69.

⁴² When printed music did become available, one of the first works to appear in print was the entire *Well-Tempered Clavier*, because it was so much in demand. Several different publishing houses, including Nageli and Breitkopf & Haertel, published the 48 at approximately the same time (1799-1801). Harold Schonberg, "Happy 250th Well-Tempered Clavier Book 1", D 15 in *The New York Times*, December 3, 1972.

editions began to appear in 1801, so her library would have been a precious resource, and the sole sources of many pieces of music.

The End of An Era

But meanwhile, Napoleon was marching on, and the Jewish salons would be one of the casualties.⁴³ In 1795 Prussia withdrew from the coalition against him, and in 1806 the French occupied Berlin. The Jewish salons began to be seen as too "cosmopolitan," that is, too French, and they rapidly declined until Sara Levy's was one of only two still operating. This had been some years in the making, of course. Deborah Hertz tells of a diplomat who, in 1801 attended a dinner party at the home of the Swedish ambassador, to which some Jewish friends had been invited—but by mistake. They were supposed to have been omitted from the guest list "out of the fear of the Christians." But invited they were, to everyone's discomfit. The diplomat "proudly reported that he took care to spend most of his time that evening talking to the salonniere Mme. Sara Levy, so that she would not feel rebuffed."⁴⁴

And there was worse to come. In 1811 the poetess Bettina Brentano was at the Levy salon when her husband, Achim von Arnim came to take her home. He had made a point of coming to the reception "dressed in street clothes instead of formal dress, and Mme. Levy's nephew, sensitive about anti-Semitism, was so outraged by the symbolic implications... that he felt compelled to defend his family's and his people's honor by challenging von Arnim to a duel. Von Arnim refused, on the grounds that no Jew could possess the honor requisite to engage in a duel."⁴⁵

As our story of this magnificent lady comes to an end, we have a small but powerful vignette from Fanny Lewald, (1811-1889) one of the most popular writers of the day. She was Levy's guest at a dinner party in the 1840's, when Sara was eighty years old. "They were all once *a la tête de la jeune phalange*, at the forefront of the movement. It was these frail women whose spirit and education broke through the barriers of the caste spirit, who were victorious, out of their own power, over the power of prejudice in Berlin. These old ladies and their kindred spirits, these Jews, were the ones who rose up from the pariah status of their people in order to represent education as the highest valid nobility."⁴⁶

We are not surprised to be meeting Jews as consumers of high culture, although in the 18th century, the education and the means were available only to the very rich. Otherwise, except for their fabulous wealth, most of us can relate to these consumers of music as our forebears. But what is strikingly different is to meet them not as consumers but as actual patrons, taste-setters for the rest of the public.

⁴³ Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) of France, was frequently at war with his neighbors in an ongoing effort to declare himself Emperor of a vastly-expanded French empire. In the War of the Fourth Coalition (1806-1807) Napoleon's French Empire defeated a coalition which included Prussia, Russia, Saxony, Sweden and Great Britain. As a result of this defeat, French soldiers occupied Berlin, and Prussia had to surrender half of its territory to France and her allies. The Napoleonic Wars continued until Napoleon's final defeat at Waterloo in 1815.

⁴⁴ Hertz, *Jewish High Society*, *op cit.*, 255.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 258-9.

⁴⁶ Fanny Lewald, *Meine Lebensgeschichte*, book 3, translated by Hanna Ballin Lewis as *The Education of Fanny Lewald: An Autobiography* (Albany: State University of New York Press), 1992.

The Berlin Singakademie

Just before the turn of the nineteenth century, two separate strands of the story began to fuse. One was the Levy "cult of Bach." In the 18th century, a concert program typically consisted of newly composed music, and this was so until the middle of the 19th century. There were two exceptions; one was Sara Levy's salon, where visitors heard music not only by Bach's sons but their father's.

The second strand was the *Singakademie zu Berlin* (Choral Society). It was founded in 1791 by Carl Friedrich Fasch (1736-1800, Carl Phillip Emanuel Bach's successor in Berlin) with the objective of reviving the music of J.S. Bach, who had been Fasch's teacher. Many visitors came to hear them, including Beethoven in 1796.⁴⁷ From the start, its membership included several members of Berlin's wealthiest Jewish families, including Sara Levy. Before their marriage, Lea Salomon joined in 1796, Abraham Mendelssohn joined in 1803, and their children, Fanny and Felix, became leading members. When he died in 1800, Fasch was succeeded by Carl Friedrich Zelter (1758-1832), who had the same ideas, and Zelter would be Felix's composition teacher.

In 1807, the *Singakademie* was complemented by an instrumental ensemble, the *Ripiensschule* (which formed the kernel of the Berlin Philharmonic), and Sara Itzig Levy was one of its first members and a lifelong supporter. She was not just a supporter; as noted earlier, in 1807 and 1808 she appeared as harpsichord soloist in the *Fifth Brandenburg Concerto* and the *D Minor Concerto* by J.S. Bach. Although the harpsichord is popularly thought to have become obsolete by then, she performed on the harpsichord with the *Ripiensschule* as late as 1815. And it was the *Ripiensschule* which Felix Mendelssohn conducted in the *St. Matthew Passion*.

Felix Mendelssohn's Musical Education

Composer Robert Schumann, Felix's friend in Leipzig during his years with the *Gewandhaus*, attributed Mendelssohn's early musical maturation to his superior musical education and the prosperous circumstances of his family. He confided his envy in a letter to his wife, Clara, in 1838.⁴⁸ And indeed there was what to be envious of. The Mendelssohn children, like the Itzigs, had an education that even aristocrats could have wished for.

Felix and Fanny's musical education really begins with that of their mother's mother, Bella Itzig Salomon, and their own mother, Lea. Or equally, it may be said to begin with their father's father, Moses. All of them studied with J.S. Bach's pupil, Kirnberger, who modeled his teaching on that of his mentor. Kirnberger's treatise on the subject, *The Art of Strict Musical Composition*, was published in 1776, and formed the basis of his teaching and of Zelter's. It must be said that Lea, even at this remove of time, was a breathtakingly talented woman.

⁴⁷ Beethoven visited Berlin in the spring of 1796. He stayed about a month and became acquainted with both Zelter and Fasch. He not only heard the *Singakademie*, but on two occasions improvised before them. *Kunsterfuge.com*, accessed on February 21, 2018.

⁴⁸ Clara Schumann, *Jugendbrief*, 283-4, quoted in Todd, *Mendelssohn's Musical Education*, p.3.

"Acquainted with every branch of fashionable information," she "played and sang with expression and grace, but seldom, and only for her friends; she drew exquisitely; she spoke and read French, English and Italian, and—secretly—Homer, in the original language."⁴⁹ The critic A.B. Marx wrote, "She had made the acquaintance of Sebastian Bach's music and perpetuated his tradition by continually playing *The Well-Tempered Clavier*."⁵⁰ Among her friends was Georg Poelchau (1773-1836) who had bought C.P.E. Bach's musical estate, and from whom Abraham subsequently purchased it between 1805 and 1808. Abraham gave it to Sara Levy, who presented it to the *Singakademie*.⁵¹

By 1816, Lea was instructing Fanny and Felix in piano; in 1818 both Fanny and Felix played at a concert, in which Fanny "when only thirteen...gave a splendid proof of her uncommon musical memory by playing twenty-four Preludes of Bach's by heart as a surprise for her father."⁵² Bella Salomon, their maternal grandmother, and her sister Sara Levy, their great-aunt, were both actively involved in their musical education, and Sara's collection of manuscripts would have been at their disposal. (One famous example is the copy of the *St. Matthew Passion* Bella gave Felix as a fourteenth-birthday gift; it is unclear whether the copy she had made for him came from the *Singakademie* library or her sister's collection.)

In 1816, en route to Paris, the Mendelssohns stopped at the home of writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) in Weimar. Abraham carried a letter of introduction from Zelter: "He has lovely, worthy children, and his eldest daughter can let you hear something by Sebastian Bach."⁵³ By 1819 both Fanny and Felix were attending the *Ripienschule*; like their parents they sang with the *Singakademie* chorus. Around this time, Felix began his formal studies with Zelter. Their mutual love of Bach made for a compatible program of study; Zelter was guided by Kirnberger's treatise in which he had tried to formulate Bach's teachings. He stressed the study of figured bass, and also a thorough basis in counterpoint.⁵⁴ "Essentially Zelter served as a musical hyphen to connect Felix to 18th-century German musical culture, epitomized by Bach."⁵⁵ Near the end of his life Abraham wrote Felix that his "musical existence and direction would have been entirely different without Zelter".⁵⁶

In 1819, a series of anti-Jewish riots began in Bavaria, spreading throughout Germany. They were called the "Hep-Hep" Riots, from the Latin cry of the Crusades, *Hierosolyma est perdita* (Jerusalem is lost). Karl August Varnhagen, the husband of the Jewish saloniere Rahel Levin, wrote one account:

⁴⁹ R. Larry Todd, *Mendelssohn's Musical Education: A Study and Edition of His Exercises in Composition* (Cambridge Studies in Music), 2009, 12 quoting Sebastian Hensel, "The Mendelssohn Family" I, p. 88.

⁵⁰ Quoted from *The Memoirs of Adolph Bernard Marx*, translated by Susan Gillespie, cited in *Mendelssohn and His World*, ed. R. Larry Todd (Princeton University Press, 1991, p. 207, appearing in Peter Mercer-Taylor, *The Life of Mendelssohn*, (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 209.

⁵¹ Todd, *Mendelssohn, A Life in Music*, *op. cit.*, 31.

⁵² R. Larry Todd, *Mendelssohn's Musical Education: A Study and Edition of His Exercises in Composition* (Cambridge Studies in Music), 2009, 12 quoting Sebastian Hensel.

⁵³ Todd, *A Life in Music*, *op. cit.*, 34-35.

⁵⁴ R. Larry Todd, *Mendelssohn's Music Education*, *op cit.*

⁵⁵ Todd, *A Life in Music*, *op. cit.*, 44.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 43, quoting Abraham's letter of March 10, 1835.

In one middle-sized town, I can't remember which, there suddenly started up, for no good reason, a wild anti-Jewish clamor. With the wild yell of "Hep, Hep!" individuals were assaulted and followed in the streets, their homes attacked and partly plundered, and abuse and violence of all kinds used on them... one royal prince jovially shouted "Hep, Hep!" after the boy Felix Mendelssohn in the street.⁵⁷

Werner's 1936 biography of Mendelssohn tells us more: that the unidentified prince not only taunted him but spat at him, and that Abraham described Berlin as *erbaermlich*, wretched, and seriously considered moving the family to Paris. Rahel's brother wrote her, "How come the common people are using this phrase? They could not be familiar with its origin. It must be a LEARNED mob that started the whole thing."⁵⁸

At the end of 1820, Felix began to study the organ with an instructor called August Wilhelm Bach (no relation!) and in a revealing incident, when Felix asked to examine an unpublished prelude of J.S. Bach from his collection, the teacher remarked to another of his students, "Why does the young Jew need to have everything? He has enough anyway; don't give him the fugue."⁵⁹ Nevertheless Felix studied with A. W. Bach until 1822, (which reveals something of his character) and became as much of a virtuoso organist as he was a pianist.

In 1821, Felix accompanied Zelter to Leipzig and visited the current *Thomascantor* (the music director at the St. Thomas church). He ecstatically wrote home that this man "sleeps in the same chamber in which Sebastian Bach lived, I have seen it, I have seen the little spot where his Clavier stood, where he composed his immortal motets, where he (in Professor Zelter's expression) 'punished' (*kuranzte*) his young charges, and hopefully I will bring along a drawing of this honorable house."⁶⁰

In October of 1824, the pianist Ignaz Moscheles (1794-1870) arrived in Berlin to give some concerts, and he later remarked that his greatest pleasure was the time he spent with the Mendelssohn family at their home.

This is a family the like of which I have never known. Felix, a boy of fifteen, is a phenomenon... this Felix Mendelssohn is already a mature artist, and yet but fifteen years old!... His elder sister Fanny, also extraordinarily gifted, played by heart, and with admirable precision, Fugues and Passacailles by Bach. I think one may well call her a thorough 'Mus. Doc.' Both parents give one the impression of being people of the highest refinement. They are far from overrating their children's talents; in fact, they are anxious about Felix's future, and to know whether his gift will prove sufficient to lead a noble and truly great career... These two are not specimens of the genus prodigy-parents (*Wunderkinds-Eltern*), such as I must frequently endure.⁶¹

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 50, quoting Karl von Varnhagen, IX

⁵⁸ Elon, *op. cit.*, 103, quoting from the correspondence between Rahel Levin and Ludwig Robert.

⁵⁹ Todd, *A Life in Music, op. cit.*, 59.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁶¹ Charlotte Moscheles, *Life of Moscheles: With Selections from His Diaries and Correspondence, Vol. 1* (Adamant Media Corp. 1999), 97.

In her biography of her husband, Charlotte Moscheles continues, "The Mendelssohns had frequently begged him to give Felix some lessons, but these requests he had ...always answered evasively; he writes in his diary, 'Felix has no need of lessons.'" Nevertheless, he complied. In later years Felix and Moscheles, two friends, played many performances together in London, especially featuring music by Bach. Moscheles had been the teacher of Felix's great-aunt Caecilie Itzig von Eskeles, who was also his patron in Vienna. This brief history offers a portrait of the special intimacy which existed between many of these musical families of Jewish origin (Ignaz's given name was Itzhak); Moscheles and his wife were married, and remained active, in the synagogue in Vienna, converting to Christianity only much later. Moscheles' letter to his wife includes accounts of many musical events with both Felix and Fanny at their home, and also of the presence of "Zelter, the well-known teacher of Felix and his sister, (who) never failed to attend these morning performances. Although in his outward manner rather harsh and forbidding, he was not a little proud of his pupils."⁶²

The St. Matthew Passion

On March 11, 1829, the twenty-year-old Felix Mendelssohn presented Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* in Berlin, for the first time since Bach's own performance one hundred years earlier in Leipzig. On the day of the concert the tickets were oversubscribed, and one thousand Berliners had to be turned away. It was a landmark event, and in the audience were the king of Prussia, the theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), philosopher Georg Hegel (1770-1831), poet Heinrich Heine (1797-1856), the writer and salonniere Rahel Levin (1771-1833) and Zelter. This last, who had participated in the early rehearsals of the work, sat with "exemplary resignation" in the audience.⁶³ Apparently Felix's conducting skills left something to be desired. Fanny wrote that "he had the look of an insane murderer and the gesticulations of a monkey." Devrient reported that instead of continually beating time, Felix sometimes lowered his baton in order to "influence without obtruding himself."⁶⁴

What led up to this day? In the winter of 1827-8 Felix organized a few singers to meet on Saturdays to rehearse "rarely heard works," including parts of the *St. Matthew Passion*. This was a private initiative at the Mendelssohn home and was intended as private study with no thought of a public performance. At the time, the Berlin public was largely unaware of Bach's music.

Sometime in the winter of 1824 Bella Salomon gave her grandson a complete score of the *St. Matthew Passion* which she had had copied for him. She and her sister, Sara Levy, were probably the first to recognize the importance of this work. Accounts vary as to the source of the original, whether it was Zelter's own, grudgingly given, or Sara's. It seems Zelter did have at least a partial copy, and from 1815 on had rehearsed some of it with a select group of singers. One of these singers was Felix's friend, an actor named Eduard Devrient (1801-1877), who supplies colorful, if not always accurate, accounts of events. In 1818 Devrient had joined these singers as they attempted to make sense of the music of Bach, who was considered "an

⁶² *Ibid.*, 102.

⁶³ Todd, *A Life in Music*, *op. cit.*, 196, quoting Fanny Mendelssohn.

⁶⁴ Eduard Devrient, *My Recollections of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy and His Letters to Me*, translated from the German by Natalia MacFarren (London: Richard Bentley), 1869: 60.

unintelligible musical arithmetician.⁶⁵ Devrient is the source of the (inaccurate) story that the score was a Christmas gift to Felix in 1823 from his grandmother. The fact that Bella was an Orthodox Jew and never converted to Christianity militates against her giving Felix a Christmas present. It is far more likely that it was a birthday present (she was still unaware of the family's conversion) in February 1824.⁶⁶ (She died in March of that year.)

According to Devrient, he was the one who convinced Felix to perform the work, and they went together to approach Zelter, who considered the project the childish game of two "snot-nosed brats" (*Rotznasen*) and resisted the idea. When they obtained the approval of the *Singakademie* management, Felix exclaimed, "And to think that it has to be an actor and a young Jew who return to the people the greatest Christian music!"⁶⁷

Choral rehearsals began in the *Singakademie* on February 2, 1829, one day before Felix's twentieth birthday. This event was the culmination of Felix's youth. But it was also the culmination of a trajectory that had begun almost a century before.

What's in a Name

In any family history some processes will require three generations to come full circle, and the story of how the Mendelssohn family became themselves, as traced through the evolution of their family name, is such a process. Abraham once remarked that he was formerly the son of his father and then the father of his son,⁶⁸ and called himself a "true Peter Schlemihl" who lacked his own shadow.⁶⁹ Name change was an important subject in the family, and appears in the family correspondence after the performance of the *St. Matthew Passion* in 1829, when Felix set out on his Grand Tour to England.

Moses Mendelssohn had arrived in Berlin as Moses ben Mendel Dessau; although in Hebrew he would always sign his name as *Moshe mi-Dessau*, early on he changed his German name to Mendelssohn. Abraham wrote to Felix in 1829, "My father felt that... Moses Dessau could not be a philosopher," and Abraham—or Felix—Mendelssohn could not be a Christian. "If Mendelssohn is your name, you are *ipso facto* a Jew."

But by then, the name under discussion was no longer Mendelssohn, but Mendelssohn Bartholdy. The early decades of the 19th century saw many Jewish conversions for various reasons, among which was to achieve Prussian citizenship. The case of Lea Mendelssohn's brother, Jacob, shows how this tore families apart. Around 1800, Jacob added the name Bartholdy, the name of his paternal grandfather's dairy farm, which, in the 18th century, had been owned by Baron Friedrich Christian von Bartholdy.⁷⁰ After his baptism in 1805, Jacob

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁶⁶ An inventory made by Fanny of the family's music library shows that Bella made the gift in 1824, after other Bach acquisitions in 1823. Before Bella's gift of the entire score, all Felix would have known were the six movements Zelter had been rehearsing since 1815. Her gift made it possible for him to study the whole. Todd, *A Life in Music*, *op. cit.*, 124.

⁶⁷ Devrient, *op. cit.*, 62.

⁶⁸ Todd, *A Life in Music*, *op. cit.*, 17.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 576.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

became Jacob Bartholdy. Bella disowned him. In 1812, King Frederick Wilhelm III issued an emancipation decree obliging new Jewish citizens to choose fixed family names.⁷¹ The children of Abraham and Lea became Protestants in 1816; the parents remained Jews until they secretly converted in 1822, at which point Jacob wrote Abraham, "I advise you to adopt the name of Mendelssohn Bartholdy as a distinction from the other Mendelssohns."⁷² Bella also took the name Bartholdy, although she remained an Orthodox Jew.

In London, in 1829, Felix was entering English society, with Moscheles' help. And now Abraham in Berlin became concerned when he saw that Felix appeared in the English press not as Mendelssohn Bartholdy but as Mendelssohn. On July 8 he wrote Felix, recalling their conversation when they traveled together to Paris, to escort Abraham's sister Henriette back to Berlin. "On our journey to Paris that neck-breaking night, you asked me...why our name was changed...A Christian Mendelssohn is an impossibility. A Christian Mendelssohn the world would never recognize. Nor should there be a Christian Mendelssohn; for my father himself did not want to be a Christian. 'Mendelssohn' does and always will stand for a Judaism in transition..."⁷³ "A Christian Mendelssohn is as impossible as a Jewish Confucius."⁷⁴ The issue provoked something of a family crisis in Berlin, producing a flurry of correspondence. Fanny wrote Felix about Abraham's distress, even though she approved of his "intention to lay aside someday this name that we all dislike."⁷⁵

I just finished my contribution to the large family letter to you, dear Felix, and must now add this small private dispatch, whose contents are as follows. It's suddenly come to Father's attention that your name was mentioned merely as Felix Mendelssohn in several English newspapers. He thinks he detects an ulterior motive in this fact and wants to write to you today about it, as Mother, who tried to dissuade him from doing so, told us yesterday. I don't know now whether or not he will still carry it out, but last night Hensel (her husband, painter Wilhelm Hensel, 1794-1861) and I decided to write you this letter in any case... I know and approve of your intention to lay aside someday this name that we all dislike, but you can't do it yet because you're a minor, and it's not necessary to make you aware of the unpleasant consequences it could have for you. Suffice it to say that you distress Father by your actions. If questioned, you could easily say you had made a mistake, and carry out your plan later at a more appropriate time.

Felix's reply to his father on July 16 relates that he had clarified the matter with the English editors, who explained that they had thought to emphasize his relation to his grandfather. In fact, he never dropped the name Bartholdy and continued to sign himself Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, as his father wished.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁷² Todd, *Mendelson's Musical Education*, *op. cit.*, 15.

⁷³ Todd, *A Life in Music*, *op. cit.*, 139, quoting from Eric Werner, *Mendelssohn: A New Image of the Composer and his Age*, (New York, Free Press of Glencoe, 1963).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 208.

⁷⁵ *Idem.*

Felix Mendelssohn and Bach: A Life-Long Mission

Felix Mendelssohn's efforts to rediscover the music of Johann Sebastian Bach continued for the rest of his life; they included rescuing manuscripts being used as wrapping paper. One popular but undocumented story relates that in Leipzig his search for people who had been Bach's choristers turned up one centenarian whose only recollection was that Bach used to hit them a lot. Wherever he went he performed Bach, whether on the piano or on the organ. And always, as in the life of any performer, there were the glitches which make for such piquant reading, although presumably less amusing to the performer. In 1835 in Leipzig Felix and Moscheles were rehearsing Bach's Triple Concerto in D minor. It is remarkable to note that this was the first performance of Bach in the *Gewandhaus*. Moscheles gives us an account of their efforts to rehearse:

"We were invited to Wieck's to meet Schumann.⁷⁶ Then we dined at Hauser's⁷⁷...Felix played me a concerto by J.S. Bach out of Hauser's fine collection." Moscheles continues the following day, "11:30 p.m. I am just entering my room, which I have not seen since early this morning; only fancy, I could not have a piano in there, there is such a dearth of good instruments in Leipzig." And the next day, "I wanted, just now, to go through my part of Bach's triple concerto, but I found all the pianoforte warehouses shut."⁷⁸

Clara Wieck, Moscheles and another pianist did finally rehearse, with Felix playing the orchestra part on a fourth piano, and they did perform it, with Felix conducting the orchestra. Moscheles resolved to have the piece copied for London and Felix, Clara and Moscheles performed it there many times.⁷⁹

In another episode, in 1837, during one of his many stays in London, Felix played J.S. Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in A minor*, BWV 543 on the organ in St. Paul's cathedral, the only organ in the city that could accommodate Bach. The concert was so mobbed that the beadle became alarmed at the size of the crowd—and dismissed the organ blower!⁸⁰ At the climax of the piece, a pedal passage at the end of the fugue, the organ naturally gave out. Felix was then

⁷⁶ Johann Gottlob Friedrich Wieck (1785-1873) was a noted German piano and singing teacher, and the father of Clara Wieck Schumann. At the time, Robert Schumann was studying with Wieck and living in the Wieck household, but he and Clara were not yet married.

⁷⁷ Franz Xavier Hauser (1794-1870) was one of the few collectors of J. S. Bach manuscripts at a time when most of his works, especially his vocal music, had not been published. Hauser bought both original manuscripts and copies and was in active correspondence with other collectors. He collected an important library of Bach material, much of which ended up in the State Library in Berlin. He was a bass singer at the theater in Leipzig and was one of Felix Mendelssohn's intimate friends. Melamed, Daniel R. *Hearing Bach's Passions*, (Oxford University Press, 2005, accessed on February 21, 2018).

⁷⁸ Moscheles, *op. cit.*, 322-323.

⁷⁹ *Idem*.

⁸⁰ The organ is, of course, a keyboard instrument, but it really is a kind of wind instrument, as the sound is produced by air blown through pipes of different sizes. This requires a source of air. In modern organs the air is pumped through the pipes by an electric motor. Before electricity, this was done by an organ blower, an apprentice or adult, operating a bellows, usually outside the church. In modern historical copies of Baroque organs, instead of a bellows the organ is pumped by several large foot pedals, usually in a loft, which may be operated by more than one person.

obliged to "exhibit the glorious ideas of Bach in all the dignity of dumb action." This caused something approaching a riot in the audience.⁸¹

Coda

As we leave the Mendelssohn-Itzig families, we bid a reluctant farewell to some of the most scintillating company we have been privileged to enjoy, even at this remove of time. The vivid family of Abraham and Lea Mendelssohn shines brightly, as does their partnership as husband and wife and their fierce devotion to their children. Their letters make for dazzling reading. But because we carry the burden of hindsight, there is always the sense of looming shadows, whether on the personal level of their secret conversion and its concealment or in Abraham's sense that his son's future could never be completely secure in Germany (hence his idea of Felix's Grand Tour to England).

Then too, there is an indefinable feeling of huddling together for warmth; many in their circle of friends and colleagues were actually converted Jews. Moscheles, one of them, remained devoted to Caecilie von Eskeles. His wife writes that when in Vienna they "never failed to attend the levees of his former patroness, Frau von E., which took place daily between four and six, the interval between dinner and theatre. The old lady, painted, rouged, and reclining on her luxurious sofa, received company... Ladies appeared in evening dress."⁸² One remembers that the appearance of Achem von Arnim at Sara Levy's in street clothes was considered an insult worthy of a duel! And it is a poignant reminder, too, of Fanny Lewald's description of Caecilie's sister Sara in her old age.

For this writer, the greatest surprise came with the discovery of the passion with which Moses Mendelssohn experienced music. In an aesthetic discussion which lauded the "musical sublime" of C.P.E. Bach, we find him an active participant; C.P.E. Bach's visage was among his collection of portraits of great thinkers, and if they were not personally acquainted they certainly knew of one another and had mutual friends and visitors.

We are accustomed to meeting Jews as consumers of high musical culture. Here though we meet them as active patrons and agents of music, as the setters of taste. Through their patronage and performance, their collection of manuscripts, the purchases made by Abraham Mendelssohn—and the generosity of their donations to the *Singakademie* library—they left us a tremendous gift which would otherwise have reached us in a diminished form, if at all.

The Mendelssohns and the Itzigs are so attractive, so vivid and intelligible to us as music-lovers, that one feels a sense of loss in leaving them. They left us a gift which continues to inform our lives, a legacy that truly lives with us. But our feeling of loss is intensified by the greater sorrow levied by our own hindsight. Sara Itzig Levy, who lived until the age of 94, supported several Jewish charities in addition to her musical activities. The Baruch Auerbach Jewish orphanage in Berlin was established in 1832. Supported, and more importantly endowed, by Levy, it remained in existence until November 1942 when the last of the children, 140 in number, and twelve of their caretakers were deported on the 23rd *Osttransport* from Berlin and

⁸¹ Todd, *A Life in Music*, 356, quoting an eyewitness account by H.J. Gauntlett in "Musical World," (1838): 6.

⁸² Moscheles, *op. cit.*, 133.

murdered in Auschwitz.⁸³ The building was requisitioned by the *Hitlerjugend*. (Hitler Youth). The library of the *Singakademie*, which included Sara Levy's archive and the manuscripts donated by Abraham Mendelssohn, went missing in 1945 when the Red Army entered Berlin, and was presumed lost (and widely mourned!) until, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union it surfaced in Kiev in 1999. Its re-discovery sparked, and continues to fuel, lively research, and is certain to inspire more. As it continues, Sara Levy will take her rightful place as a central figure.



Sara Itzig Levy, by Anton Graf, 1786

Nina Lazar Sobelman has lived since 1973 in Rehovot, Israel, where she teaches piano, harpsichord and continuo playing, and coaches ensembles playing early music. She was a member of the staff of the Jerusalem Early Music Workshop for ten years and has lectured several times at the Zamir Choral Foundation's North American Jewish Choral Festival. For five years she presented a series of explained concerts, "At the Keyboard in the Eighteenth Century," featuring music from Bach to Beethoven played on the harpsichord and fortepiano.

⁸³ Baruch Auerbach (1793-1864) was a Jewish educator in Berlin. He was the founder and life-long director of the orphanage which carried his name. During his lifetime, nearly 300 Jewish children were cared for there; the orphanage continued to operate until it was dissolved in the fall of 1942. <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/2110-auerbach-baruch/> by Isidore Singer and H. Baar, retrieved on February 21, 2018.

Samuel Naumbourg: The Scholarly Parisian Cantor/Composer Who Rediscovered Salamone Rossi and Introduced Synagogue Music to the French Operatic Style

By Coreen Duffy

Reviving Neglected Masterworks

Felix Mendelssohn famously reinvigorated interest in the neglected works of J.S. Bach by conducting the *Saint Matthew Passion* in 1829. [EDITOR'S NOTE: For more on this subject, see the preceding article, "It Took a Jew: The Mendelssohns and the Bachs," by Nina Lazar Sobelman, on p. 13] Cantor and synagogue composer Samuel Naumbourg (1815-1880) likewise instigated newfound interest in a particular collection of choral repertoire from an earlier epoch: the synagogue choral works of early Baroque composer Salamone Rossi (c.1570-1630). Rossi's *a cappella* choral music for the synagogue—polyphonic settings of the Jewish liturgy and psalms in three to eight parts—had been published originally in 1623 in part books, which had become scattered throughout Europe during the ensuing two-and-a-half centuries. Naumbourg, who had already published multiple volumes of his own synagogue compositions and transcriptions during his lengthy career in Paris, published the first full-score edition of most of Rossi's *Ha-shirim asher lishlomo* [The Songs of Solomon] in 1877—a collection that had been deemed lost by many of Naumbourg's contemporaries.¹ This new edition, published under both its Hebrew title and the French (*Cantiques de Salomon Rossi*) was to be the final publication of its editor's life (see **Figure 1**).

Naumbourg's interest in Jewish music history surfaced prior to the publication of the new Rossi edition. Born in Germany to a family of cantors, Naumbourg had moved to France as a young man and had served as cantor at the Ashkenazi Temple on rue Notre Dame de Nazareth in Paris since 1845.² In 1874, he published *Recueil de Chants Religieux et Populaires des Israélites*, a compendium of traditional synagogue tunes that Naumbourg had collected and edited throughout his career.³ The introduction to this collection, "*Etude historique sur la musique des Hébreux*," discusses the development of Jewish and Christian chant, music theory, and composition from ancient to contemporary times, and also considers questions of choral and cantorial performance practice in the synagogue.⁴

¹ Salamone Rossi, *Ha-shirim asher lishlomoh--Cantiques de Salomon Rossi Hébreo: Psaumes, Chants, et Hymnes à 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, et 8 Voix*, ed. Samuel Naumbourg and Vincent d'Indy (Paris: S. Naumbourg, 1877).

² John H. Baron, "A Golden Age for Jewish Musicians in Paris: 1820-1865," *Musica Judaica* 12, no. 1 (1991-1992): 32-33.

³ Samuel Naumbourg, *Recueil de Chants Religieux et Populaires des Israélites* (Paris, 1874). This collection is sometimes referenced by its Hebrew title, *Agudat shirim*, and the preceding historical study as its Introduction.

⁴ Naumbourg, "Samuel Naumbourg's Introduction to his *Agudat shirim* (Paris, 1874)," trans. Harvey Spitzer, *Journal of Jewish Music and Liturgy* 11 (1988-1989): 17-34.

Figure 1. Naumbourg's edition of *Cantiques de Salomon Rossi*, Cover page:



In the appendix to *Recueil de Chants Religieux et Populaires des Israélites*, Naumbourg relates his discovery of Rossi's Jewish choral literature and recounts his struggle to amass a full set of the disparate parts.⁵ He indicates that "[f]or a long time we had known about the existence of a Jewish composer named Salomon di Rossi of the famous Adumim family, who was born in Mantua, Italy around 1570," but had been unaware of Rossi's Jewish musical output, because most historians referenced only Rossi's secular works.⁶ Johann Christoph Wolf's *Bibliotheca Hebraica* (published in Hamburg in 1715) first alerted Naumbourg to the existence of Rossi's "psalms and hymns set to music."⁷ However, Naumbourg complains that Wolf's listing of Rossi's title reveals the historian's ignorance of the fact that he held merely one small piece of Rossi's collection: "[Wolf] calls it: *Basso. Hashirim asher lishlomoh* without questioning the meaning of the word 'Basso.'" This sort of musical illiteracy motivated Naumbourg to track down the remaining parts and "to correct the inaccuracies of previous authors regarding our composer."⁸

Naumbourg describes the hazards involved in attempting to compile a complete collection of Rossi's part books:

It is beyond doubt that Rossi's collection of Hebrew songs was printed in Venice in 1623 by Pietro Lorenzo Bragadini, but it is also possible that only a limited number of copies were made, and these have become nearly unobtainable. By very special chance, however, book lovers have been reminded of the composer's name. Mr. Moise Schwab recently announced in the *Révue Israélite* that the Paris National Library, with which he is associated, had just acquired Rossi's collection of Hebrew songs. For several years, I have had the tenor and bass parts of these songs in my possession without ever having been able to locate the complementary voices. My curiosity aroused, I hurried over to the National Library to examine the works in question. I was greatly surprised, however, when I saw that what was said to be Rossi's collection was only the "Sesto," that is to say, the 6th part or voice.⁹

Naumbourg attempted to locate the missing part books at the National Library, the Paris Conservatory Library, and the Brussels Library, without success.¹⁰ The closing paragraph of Naumbourg's appendix to *Recueil de Chants Religieux et Populaires des Israélites* appeals to his colleagues to assist him in his quest to complete the collection:

I therefore call upon lovers of religious music, scholars of all countries and particularly my Italian co-religionists who may possess the complete collection of Rossi's songs to send me or make copies of the parts I am missing. I will gladly arrange the score. That this would be a work of very high interest both from the point of view of musical art and the history of modern Jewish religious song is most definitely assured.¹¹

⁵ Naumbourg, "Samuel Naumbourg's Appendix to his *Agudat shirim* (Paris 1874)," trans. Harvey Spitzer, *Journal of Jewish Music and Liturgy* 12 (1989-1990): 39-40.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Naumbourg, "Appendix to *Agudat shirim*," 40.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Naumbourg, "Appendix to *Agudat shirim*," 40.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Ultimately, Naumbourg managed to assemble most, but not all, of the part books; he transliterated the Hebrew singing texts, transcribed the Renaissance-style parts into contemporary notation, and published the collection in full score.¹² He notes the tremendous accomplishment that Rossi had made, not only in publishing Jewish choral music, but in successfully penetrating the highest echelons of secular Italian musical culture during a time of extreme anti-Semitism:

It is really quite astonishing to think that in the early seventeenth century, at a time when there was still so much prejudice, fanaticism and persecution against the hapless remainder of the Jewish people, an obscure Jew could have forced open the gates of the ghetto of Mantua and, with his talent, succeed in winning a place and a name among the best musicians in Italy.¹³

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of Naumbourg's publication of the Rossi compendium is his editing collaborator: a young Vincent d'Indy (1851-1931), who would later become "[t]he most famous—and most vocal—antisemitic [*sic*] composer in late nineteenth-century France."¹⁴ In his book *Richard Wagner et son influence sur l'art musical français*, for example, "d'Indy charged 'the heavy hand of Judaism' with having set back French music a century."¹⁵

The dichotomous career of a French musician like d'Indy, who first worked side by side with a synagogue cantor to edit a major collection of Jewish Renaissance music, then turned perniciously against his Jewish colleagues, is an extreme example of a somewhat typical trajectory of opinion regarding Jewish composers in France in the nineteenth century. The Emancipation of French Jews in 1791 had opened the doors to nineteenth-century Jewish composers who wished to write secular music:

The revolution in 1789 suddenly overthrew not only a decadent monarchy and the nobility but long-cherished tastes and prejudices as well that had been imbedded in law for centuries. In 1790-1791 came the declaration of liberty, equality, and brotherhood for all citizens, and for the first time since the fourteenth century Jews were recognized in France... After the fall of Louis XVIII in 1830, Jewish integration into French society accelerated; and, although some anti-semitism [*sic*] persisted, Jews participated fully in French life.¹⁶

Two Jewish composers who achieved dizzying secular fame in French grand opera by the 1830s, were Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791-1864) and Jacques-François-Fromental-Élie Halévy (1799-1862). Both men were active in the Parisian Jewish community, but Halévy placed his religion squarely before the secular world in his opera *La Juive* (1835), which features a Jewish protagonist and takes up issues of historic anti-Semitism:

¹² As a result of the missing part books, three of Rossi's compositions "are lacking in [Naumbourg's] edition: Psalm 111 for eight voices; Psalm 121 for five voices; and Leviticus 23:4 for three voices." Eric Werner, "The Emancipation in Germany and France" in *A Voice Still Heard: The Sacred Songs of the Ashkenazic Jews* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976), 317, n. 42.

¹³ Naumbourg, "Appendix to *Agudat shirim*," 42.

¹⁴ James H. Johnson, "Antisemitism and Music in Nineteenth-Century France," *Musica Judaica* 5, no. 1 (1982-1983): 82.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, quoting Vincent d'Indy, *Richard Wagner et son influence sur l'art musical français*, trans. James H. Johnson (Paris: Librairie Delagrove, 1930): 11.

¹⁶ Baron, "A Golden Age for Jewish Musicians in Paris," 32.

In an era of religious tolerance and acceptance of Jews, [Halévy] felt that it was time for non-Jews to be confronted with the horrors that Jews previously had faced for centuries in France. Since it was thought perhaps too sensitive an issue for some, the setting of the story was moved to Constance, Switzerland, but the brutal insensitivities of Eleazar's tormentors were nonetheless displayed overtly and decisively. Reinforced by Scribe's collaboration, the opera is the statement of a Jew to the French as well as to the world that Jewish sensitivities, emotions, history, and liturgy can legitimately form the material for serious art—no less than Christian concerns.¹⁷

The subjects of Meyerbeer's French operas, on the other hand, are not Jewish; rather, "two of his most important operas for Paris—*Le Prophète* [sic] (1849) and *Les Huguenots* (1836)—are concerned with major Christian subjects."¹⁸ Meyerbeer's operas were wildly popular with the public; *Robert le Diable* (1831), for example, "remained enormously successful in France for thirty years."¹⁹ Spectacle played a large part in attracting crowds: "This was the age of splendid scenery and lavish productions, when singers dazzled audiences with trills, runs, and sparkling cadenzas."²⁰ In addition to the commercial success of the operatic productions, Meyerbeer's music itself earned astounding critical acclaim:

Hector Berlioz (1803-69) praised Meyerbeer's work as 'magnificently beautiful, perfectly nuanced, of incomparable precision and clarity,' adding that Meyerbeer could not hope for a better reception anywhere in Europe. Balzac was bowled over by Meyerbeer's operas, Goethe considered him one of the best composers of the age, and Georges Bizet (1838-75) went as far as to call him the Michelangelo of music.²¹

Perpetuating Ancient Prejudices

This success led aspiring musicians and composers to seek out Meyerbeer as a potential contact who could help them in the opera world: "Visiting singers considered it essential to their careers to sing for Meyerbeer."²² One such musician was a young, admiring Richard Wagner (1813-1883), who sought Meyerbeer's advice and recommendation beginning in the late 1830's.²³ Over the course of the next decade, Wagner ingratiated himself to Meyerbeer, hoping that the latter might use his influence to help promote Wagner's operatic composition.²⁴ The young Wagner's entreaties were quite successful; Meyerbeer took Wagner under his wing, introducing him and sending his music to powerful players in opera throughout

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁹ Johnson, "Antisemitism in Nineteenth-Century France," *Musica Judaica*, 80.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, quoting Hector Berlioz, *Mémoires* (Paris: Cahier-Flammarion, 1865), 128-29; and citing Laurence Davies, *César Franck and His Circle* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1970), 23.

²² Baron, "A Golden Age for Jewish Musicians," 41.

²³ Joan L. Thomson, "Giacomo Meyerbeer: The Jew and His Relationship with Richard Wagner," *Musica Judaica* 1, no. 1 (1975-76): 63.

²⁴ Thomson, "Meyerbeer and Wagner," 64-65.

Europe, including publishers, opera directors, singers, and the Intendant of the Royal Theater of Berlin.²⁵ Wagner responded to Meyerbeer by emphasizing his great appreciation:

When you said that you always think of protecting me, that caused me deep emotion. Oh! If you knew what an immense service you render me; if you could sense toward what infinite recognition you have pushed me by this simple and flattering evidence of your interest in me. I can only tell you eternally: thank you! thank you!²⁶

Wagner also rewarded Meyerbeer's attention by extolling the great composer's virtues in print:

Meyerbeer has written the story of the world, the story of the heart and its impressions. He has broken the barriers of national prejudice, destroyed the borders which restricted language, written the exploits of music, music like that which Handel, Gluck, and Mozart practiced. They were Germans, and Meyerbeer too is a German... He has guarded his German heritage...²⁷

The intensity of Wagner's tribute to Meyerbeer as a German in the early 1840's equals the extremity of his subsequent vitriol against the same composer. In 1850, Wagner stripped away the German identity he had previously bestowed upon Meyerbeer, disavowing Meyerbeer's—or any Jew's—capability of identifying with any nation: “No matter to what European nationality he belongs, [the Jew] has something disagreeably foreign to that nationality...”²⁸ Wagner published his views on Jewish composers in general, and Meyerbeer in particular, in two installments: *Das Judenthum in Musik* (1850) and *Oper und Drama* (1851). In these writings, Wagner contends with the phenomenon of the Jewish emancipation, claiming that it caused the unintended, inverse effect of enslaving non-Jews:

Tracing the breakdown of ghetto life and the gradual integration of the rich Jews into German social life, [Wagner] explained that like other Germans, he favored the ‘abstract principle’ of removing restrictions from the lives of the Jews. He made it clear, however, that those who agreed with him, and he himself, were ‘stimulated by a general idea, rather than by any real sympathy. For... we always felt instinctively repelled by any actual, operative contact with them [Jews].’ The result of emancipation had been, ironically, not only contact; the Jew evolved to the position of ruler. ‘It is rather *we* who are shifted into the necessity of fighting for emancipation from the Jews.’²⁹

Wagner foreshadowed his future vendetta against Meyerbeer in a letter to Franz Liszt (1811-1886) in 1849, in which he accuses Meyerbeer of greed, premeditates his attack, and attempts to recruit Liszt as a compatriot:

... I want money as much as M., or really--more than M., or else I must make myself feared... Well, money I have not, but a tremendous desire to practice a little artistic terrorism. Give me

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, quoting Richard Wagner in Albert Soubies and Charles Mahlerbe, *Wagner et Meyerbeer: Documents inédits a propos du centenaire de Meyerbeer*, (Paris: Bureaux de la Revue d'art dramatique, 1891), 5-6.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, quoting Wagner in Soubies and Mahlerbe, *Wagner et Meyerbeer*, 9.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 70, quoting Richard Wagner, *Sämtliche Schriften und Dichtungen*, 5th ed. (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1911), 83.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, quoting Wagner, *Sämtliche Schriften*, 80-81 (emphasis in original).

your assistance. Come here and lead the great hunt; we will shoot; and the hares shall fall left and right.³⁰

Two years later, in 1851, Liszt wrote to Wagner, asking whether he had authored *Das Judenthum*, which elicited this response:

You ask me about 'Das Judenthum.' You must know that the article is by me. Why do you ask? Not from fear, but only to avoid the Jews' dragging this question into a matter of personalities, did I appear in a pseudonym. I felt a long-repressed hatred for this Jewry, and this hatred is as necessary to my nature as gall is to the blood. An opportunity arose when their damnable scribbling annoyed me most, and so I broke forth at last.³¹

Meyerbeer's grand opera, *Le Prophète* (1849), was the "damnable scribbling" that so "annoyed" and propelled Wagner to write *Das Judenthum*. Wagner criticized various aspects of *Le Prophète* in print; ironically, he attacked features that he would eventually espouse and take credit for in his own operatic writing:

Like Meyerbeer in his own time, Wagner is venerated for passionate dramas, intense dramatic concerns, extraordinary vocal requirements, for the development of the orchestral writing in the opera pit, the lengthy grand opera, the capacity to build tremendous musical climaxes, impressive processions, and for 'religious' content.³²

Two other features of Meyerbeer's operas drew Wagner's ire: the composer's treatment of large choruses, and his text setting, which was allegedly inferior due to its similarity to prayer settings in the synagogue:

In exhibiting a total deficiency of understanding of synagogue musical practices and materials, Wagner [wrote] that a people whose lack of concern for the text is shown by melismatic settings cannot be the 'folk' source for the Jewish composer... 'That this composer invented thrilling situations and the effective weaving of emotional catastrophes need astonish no one who understands how this sort of thing is wished for by those whose time hangs heavily upon their hands...'³³

Wagner also compared a congregation's alleged distraction during a synagogue service to an audience's boredom during a Meyerbeer opera: "Whoever has observed the shamefulness and the absent-mindedness of a Jewish congregation, throughout the musical performance of the Divine Service in the Synagogue, may understand why a Jewish opera-composer feels not at all offended by encountering the same thing in a theater audience..."³⁴ Wagner's comparison of French grand opera to synagogue music, though designed as an insult and shrouded in ignorance of Jewish text, melody, or prayer, nonetheless resonates in that the music and composers of the mid-century Parisian synagogue and opera were indeed tightly interwoven.

³⁰ Johnson, "Antisemitism in Nineteenth-Century France," 90, quoting Richard Wagner in Léon Poliakov, *History of Antisemitism* (New York: Vanguard Press, 4 vols., 1965-1975), III, 435.

³¹ Thomson, "Meyerbeer and Wagner," 68, quoting Wagner in Franz Liszt, *Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt*, trans. Francis Hueffer (New York: Scribners, vol. 1, 1897), 145-146.

³² *Ibid.*, 79.

³³ Thomson, "Meyerbeer and Wagner," 71, quoting Wagner, *Sämtliche Schriften*, 97.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, quoting Wagner, *Sämtliche Schriften*, 96-97.

The Operatic Style in Synagogue Music

In 1808, Napoleon assigned each region of France its own Jewish governing body, or *consistoire israélite*.³⁵ The year 1822 saw the construction of a new Ashkenazi Temple on rue Notre Dame de Nazareth in Paris, which would become “the focal point of most Jewish religious life in Paris until the 1870s.”³⁶ The first major cantorial force to grace the Paris *Consistoire* was Israel Lovy (1773-1832), who had connections to the opera world; his “early career had included oratorio and Lieder singing,” and both Haydn and Rossini had praised his voice.³⁷ Lovy served as cantor on rue Notre Dame until his death in 1832; he composed some synagogue music there, which Naumbourg later integrated into his three-volume collection of synagogue music, *Zemirot yisrael* [Songs of Israel].³⁸ From 1832 until 1845, Jewish musical leadership in Paris changed hands several times, without ever gaining much momentum. After the resignation of the latest in a series of cantors in 1845, Samuel Naumbourg of Germany applied for the position.³⁹

One of the most prominent members of the *Consistoire* was Jacques Halévy, who reviewed Naumbourg’s application and wrote a letter in support of the prospective cantor.⁴⁰ Thus, a camaraderie between the two composers was born, which would link Naumbourg closely to the Parisian opera world. Within two years of his appointment as cantor of the Ashkenazi Temple at Rue Notre Dame de Nazareth in Paris, Naumbourg published the first of three installments of *Zemirot yisrael* (Songs of Israel), a collection of choral and cantorial music for Shabbat.⁴¹

Although Naumbourg was relatively new to Paris, he established the French character of *Zemirot yisrael* immediately by opening the collection with his new choral setting of *Adon olam* (Eternal Master) in French (see **Example 2.1**).⁴² *Adon olam* opens with a twenty-bar solo organ or piano introduction (and closes with an eight-bar organ coda), which, at first blush, makes sense, as the Ashkenazi Temple in Paris introduced its first portative organ in 1844.⁴³ The synagogue used the organ, however, only on Friday evenings and for special events such as weddings and concerts; the organ was not played on Sabbath mornings, holy days, or festivals.⁴⁴

³⁵ Baron, “A Golden Age for Jewish Musicians,” 32.

³⁶ *Idem*.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 33-34.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* Another member of the Paris *Consistoire* who reviewed Naumbourg’s application was Charles-Henri Valentin Alkan (1813-1888), a great Parisian piano prodigy and keyboard composer. Alkan may have written a letter in support of Naumbourg, but none survives. The relationship between the two musicians must have been good, however, because Naumbourg later included Alkan’s music in the third volume of *Zemirot yisrael*. See Baron, “A Golden Age for Jewish Musicians,” 35.

⁴¹ Baron, “A Golden Age for Jewish Musicians,” 30, 35. Baron credits Rabbi Geoffrey Goldberg with assessing more accurate publication dates for the original editions of *Zemirot yisrael* (which had previously been misidentified): Volume I (Sabbath music), Paris, 1847; Volume II (music for the major holy days), Paris, 1852; Volume III (hymns and psalms), Paris, 1857.

⁴² Samuel Naumbourg, *Zemirot yisrael: Chants Liturgiques de Sabbath* (Paris: chez l’auteur, 1847), 1. All subsequent references to the Sabbath volume of *Zemirot yisrael* come from this edition.

⁴³ Baron, “A Golden Age for Jewish Musicians,” 34.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Zemirot yisrael begins with an organ prelude for *Adon olam*, which evidently served as the opening prayer recited on Friday evening at the new Ashkenazi Temple's aesthetically and musically improved Orthodox service. As the score shows, *Adon olam* was sung in French.

Example 2.1: Naumbourg, *Adon olam*, No. 1 (mm. 1-41) from *Zemirot yisrael*, vol. 1

אָדֹן עֵלִים
ADON OLAM *traduit de l'Hebreu*
HYMNE A L'ÊTRE SUPRÊME
Andantino. 1872
INTRODUCTION.
par LOUIS RATISBONNE. (*)

ORGUE
ou
PIANO.

Cres.

ff *Marcato.* *pp*

pp

p *f*

Cresc. *ff* *p*

Spress. *Molto cresc.*

Mai - tre sur la ter - re Au ciel et sur l'on - de Quand rien n'é - tait Dé - ja régnait sa
lon Quand sa vo - lon - té fit jail - lir le mon - de Il eut un nom Et ce
nom la fut Roi Quand tout fi - ni - ra Lui seul dans l'es - pa - ce Il ré - gne

(*) Traducteur de DANTE et Auteur de la COMÉDIE ENFANTINE.

Naumbourg chose to open his collection of music for Kabbalat Shabbat with a keyboard introduction that could be played on the organ, provided it was done before Shabbat halakhically began. Used as an introit to the service proper, the organ prelude itself is self-contained and does not overlap with vocal material. The four-part vocal writing that follows could have been performed either *a cappella* or doubled by the keyboard. Naumbourg may have considered that a text such as *Adon olam*, performed in the vernacular as *Hymne à l'Être Suprême*, would also be useful for festive or civic occasions beyond the Sabbath morning.

In either case, the opening organ material, marked *Andantino*, is reminiscent of the Baroque French Overture, with its dotted rhythms, slow tempo, and pronounced Phrygian cadence at measure 7. The harmonic language, however, is fully Romantic, replete with an exotic shift in the last five bars of the organ introduction from tonic D major to B-flat major, then passing through G minor before arriving back at D major.

The choral material that follows is less showy and set strophically, as the text of *Adon olam* comprises five equal stanzas. The French translation by Louis Ratisbonne does not maintain the strict iambic tetrameter of the original Hebrew poetic meter, but Naumbourg manages to evoke a metered sense of regularity in his repetitive, dance-like thematic material. The first choral theme nods to Haydn in its immediate but brief tonicization of the mediant (F-sharp minor) in measure 24. Chromaticism continues in the consequent phrase (mm 29-33), as the harmony leads briefly into G major before returning to tonic.

Naumbourg's decision to begin his first volume of liturgical synagogue music with a French-language *Adon olam* demonstrates his eagerness to identify with his new nationality. Naumbourg was born in Dennenlohe, Bavaria, into a long line of cantors, and moved to Munich—the capital of Bavaria—as a boy to sing in the synagogue choir and study music theory.⁴⁵ In 1826, the synagogue in Munich “had begun to ‘modernize’ its synagogue... ; in many respects it followed the pattern of Vienna.”⁴⁶ The new cantor, however, had “negligible” musical training, so the synagogue established “a choral society to adorn the worship service.”⁴⁷

The new choral director, Maier Kohn, was a grade-school teacher “of poor musical abilities and less musical education,” who hired Caspar Ett, “father of modern Catholic church music in Germany,” to assist him in arranging and composing choral selections for a new collection of synagogue music.⁴⁸ A young Samuel Naumbourg sang as an “active member of Maier Kohn's chorus” at this time:

[Naumbourg] contributed one or two pieces to Kohn's collection, published in 1838, a collection that was completely eclipsed by Sulzer's *Shir tsiyon* of the same date. It must have been this unhappy coincidence and the comparison of the two works that caused the highly intelligent, well-educated, and vocally endowed Naumbourg to leave Munich.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Aron Rothmüller, *The Music of the Jews* (New York: Barnes, 1960), 108.

⁴⁶ Eric Werner, *A Voice Still Heard: The Sacred Songs of the Ashkenazic Jews* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976), 199.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Werner, *A Voice Still Heard*, 199.

Naumbourg departed Germany for France: he held positions in two cities there before moving to Paris, first as choirmaster in Strasbourg and then as cantor in Besançon.⁵⁰ By the time he went to Paris to seek the vacant cantorial position at the Ashkenazi Temple on rue Notre Dame de Nazareth, Naumbourg was acquainted with French-Jewish culture and “well provided with letters of introduction to the leading Jewish circles.”⁵¹

Jacques Halévy’s Contribution

As discussed above, Naumbourg’s most important letter of recommendation came from Halévy, and the two musicians began a lifelong affiliation. Halévy contributed a substantial number of compositions to *Zemirot yisrael*; one of Naumbourg’s favorites was Halévy’s *a cappella* setting of Psalm 118, v.5-25. The beginning of the fifth verse of Psalm 118 speaks of distress: “In my anguish I cried to the Lord.” To illustrate the sentiment of affliction, Halévy’s setting begins in C minor; the low choral voices, in unison and in *pianissimo*, outline the beginning of the C minor scale, then return to tonic on the text *min hammetzar* [in anguish]. At measure 8 the cantor enters and proclaims, in E-flat major: *Adonoi’ li lo iro* [The Lord is with me; I will not fear] in *forte* dynamic, fanfare-like, with the choral voices supporting as if a brass choir. The eight-bar phrase proceeds in operatic fashion, with the cantor singing as a dramatic tenor:

The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid.
What can man do to me?
The Lord is with me; He is my helper.
I will look with triumph on my enemies.

Throughout this section, the *a cappella* choir supports the operatic cantor by echoing his dotted-eighth-note rhythms in march-fashion (**Example 2.2**).

⁵⁰ Rothmüller, *Music of the Jews*, 108.

⁵¹ Werner, *A Voice Still Heard*, 199.

Example 2.2: Halévy, Psalm 118 (v. 5-25), No. 69 (mm. 1-16) from *Zemirot yisrael*, vol. 1, p. 74

Allegro non troppo

CHOIR *pp*

Min ha-me-tzar ko-ro-si yoh e-no-ni..... ba-

Min ha-me-tzar ko-ro-si yoh o-no-ni..... ba-

pp

min ha-me-tzar ko-ro-si yoh o-no-ni ba-

mer-chavyoh min ha-me-tzar ko-ro-si yoh o-no-ni ba-

mer-chavyoh min ha-me-tzar ko-ro-si yoh o-no-ni ba-

A-do-ni li lo i-ro..... ma ya-a-se li

mer-chav yoh A-do-ni li lo i-ra..... ma ya-a-se li

mer-chav yoh A-do-ni li lo i-ro ma ya-a-se li

mer-chav yoh A-do-ni li lo i-ra..... ma ya-a-se li

o-dom A-do-ni li b'-oz-roi va-a-ni er-e v'-son' oi

o-dom A-do-ni.... li b'-oz-roi va-a-ni er-e v'-son' oi

o-dom A-do-ni.... li b'-oz-roi va-a-ni er-e v'-son' oi

o-dom A-do-ni.... li b'-oz-roi va-a-ni er-e v'-son' oi

Naumbourg wrote of his admiration for Halévy both as a composer and a scholar, and particularly mentioned this setting of Psalm 118:

As for Halévy, I can say that he was a Jew at heart and was keenly interested in everything that might contribute to the advancement of our religious music. A distinguished scholar as well as musician, Halévy knew Hebrew perfectly and was kind enough to encourage the author of this collection with precious advice and even agreed to compose for the author's first work (*Zemirot yisrael*) six pieces in which one recognizes (especially in Psalm 118 which I consider a true masterpiece) all the qualities of his masterly style. If all the other Jewish composers had had the same respect for our religion, how many beautiful works might have enriched the collection of our religious songs!⁵²

Halévy's other contributions to *Zemirot yisrael* are equally as dramatic as Psalm 118; one example may be found in his setting of the brief but centrally important prayer, *Schema yisroel* [Hear, O Israel] (Example 2.3).⁵³ The tempo marking is *Maestoso*, fitting for a setting of one of the most important texts in the Jewish liturgy: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One." The setting of Halévy's *Schema* is syllabic—exactly one note per syllable—and the articulation of the harmony is clear and precise, matching the solemnity and regality of the text.

Example 2.3: Halévy, *Schema yisroel*, No. 17 (mm. 9-16) from *Zemirot yisrael*, vol. 1, 33

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Schema yisroel" by Halévy. It consists of three staves, all marked with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The top staff is for a vocal soloist, the middle staff is for a choir (labeled "CHOEUR." on the left), and the bottom staff is for a basso continuo or keyboard accompaniment. The music is in 4/4 time and features a syllabic setting where each syllable of the text is represented by a single note. The lyrics, written in French transliteration, are: "Sche-ma yis-ro - el a - do - noi e-lo - he-nu a - do - noi e - chod". The score includes various musical notations such as eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and bar lines.

Halévy composed a Torah service entitled *Sortie du Sefer* (to be performed as the Torah scroll is taken out of the Ark for the week's portion to be read) that functions, musically, as a cycle of unique miniature compositions. One of the movements, *Boruch shenosan* [Blessed He Who Gave (the Torah)], opens with a baritone soloist singing a folk-like march tune (Example 2.4).⁵⁴

⁵² Naumbourg, "Introduction to *Agudat shirim*," 33.

⁵³ Naumbourg's Ashkenazi-inflected transliterations are preserved in those instances where his usage is apparent in the musical examples provided.

⁵⁴ Samuel Naumbourg, *Zemirot yisrael: Chants Liturgiques des Grandes Fêtes* (Paris: chez l'auteur, 1852). All subsequent references to this volume come from this edition ["*Bigdushoso*" should be "*bikdushoso*"].

Example 2.4: Halévy, *Boruch shenosan* (mm. 1-27) from *Sortie du Sefer*, No. 152, in *Zemirot yisrael*, vol. 2, pp. 181-182

ברוך שנתן

p Andante.

SOLO. *p* bo - - - ruch sche - no - san to - roh le - am - mo jis-ro-el big - du -

CORO.

SOPRANI. *pp* bo - - - ruch sche - no - san to - roh le - am - mo

TENORI. *pp*

BASSI. *pp* - scho - - - so

Halévy's *Boruch shenosan* stands out, both within the composer's own repertoire and in *Zemirot yisrael* as a whole, due to its folk and modal quality, its quiet yet march-like insistency and its irregular harmonic language.

Another movement from Halévy's *Sortie du Sefer* that deserves attention is the *Romemu adonoi elohenu* [Exalt Ye the Lord Our God] section of the movement *Lecho adonoi* [Yours, O God, (is the Greatness)] (Example 2.5). The melody, presented first in the solo baritone part, is a variation of the same tune first introduced in the beginning of this movement, the *Lecho adonoi*. This time, however, in the *Romemu* section, the melody is set against a three-part trio of soprano, tenor, and bass soloists.

The tranquil simplicity of the *Romemu* melody provides an interesting companion to the text:

Exalt ye the Lord our God,
and worship
at His holy hill;
for the Lord our God is holy.

Most composers' settings of *Romemu* are up-tempo and march-like, in keeping with joyous exaltation of God and the march around the sanctuary with the Torah. Here, however, Halévy's setting is slow, quiet, and reverent; its gentle, lullaby-like melody, first in the solo baritone and then in the choral soprano I and II parts, builds to a high point and then, on *vehishtachavu* [and bow ye down] paints the textual description of worship at God's holy hill.

Example 2.5: Halévy, *Romemu* section of *Lecho adonoï* (mm. 33-56) from *Sortie du Sefer*, No. 152, in *Zemirot yisrael*, vol. 2, 183

The musical score is for a choral setting of 'Lecho adonoï'. It begins with a 'SOLI' section for Soprano 2°, Solo Baryton, Tenore 2°, and Solo. The lyrics are: ro - me mu a - do - noï e - lo - he - nu ve - hischta - cha - vu le - har ko - de - scho. This is followed by a 'Tutti' section for Soprano 1°, Soprano 2°, Tenore, and Basso. The lyrics continue: ro - me mu a - do - noï e - lo - he - nu ve - hischta - cha - vu le - har ko - de - scho. The score includes dynamic markings such as *p* (piano) and *ritard.* (ritardando). The final section is marked *p piu lento.* and *ritard.*, with the lyrics: - scho li ko - dosch a - do - noï e - lo - he - nu. The score ends with a 'Fin.' marking.

Naumbourg's 'Operatic' Compositions

Naumbourg wrote two Torah services of his own, which, like Halévy's, feature brief movements that quickly develop thematic material before moving on to the next prayer. Naumbourg's choral setting of *Kumoh adonoï* [Arise, O Lord], which immediately follows the cantorial statement, *Vajehi binsoa* [When the Ark was lifted] (see Example 2.6), emerges as one of the most creative of his Torah service movements.

Example 2.6: Naumbourg, Vajehi Binsoa and Kumoh Adonoï from *Sortie du Séfer*, No. 155, mm. 1-23, in *Zemirot yisrael*, vol. 2, 186-187

SORTIE DU SÉFER.

יְהִי בְנִסֵּעַ הָאֵרֶךְ

Par S. NAUMBOURG.

№ 155. Récit.

SOLO di
BARYTON.

va - je - hi bin - se - a ho - o - ran va - jo - mer mo - - scheh

CORO.

Allegro.

ku - moh a - do - noï v'jo - fu - tzu o - je - ve - cho v'jo - nu - sum'san - e - cho

Andante.

mi - bo - ne - cho ki mi - zi - jon te - tze so - -

- e - cho mi - bo - ne - - choh ki mi - zi - jon te - ze so - -

-roh u - d'var a - do - noï mi - ru - schola - jim mi - ru - schola - jim

-roh ud'var a do noï mi

-roh a - do - noï mi ru schola - jim mi - ru - schola - jim

-roh a - do - noï mi - ru - schola - - jim

In general, Naumbourg's music, like his setting of *Kumoh adonoï*, vacillates between passages of harmonically static material and sections of remarkable richness and creativity. Many are laced with operatic drama, influenced by Naumbourg's colleagues, Halévy and Meyerbeer. His setting in D for Psalm 150 (see **Example 2.7**) shows a synagogue choral work with great dramatic flair.

The harmonically destabilizing yet fanfare-like opening of this *Psaume 150* contrasts sharply with the material that immediately follows, before building dynamically to: "Praise Him in His mighty heavens. Praise Him for His acts of power." The phrase concludes by modulating to E major, only to swirl into the next variation of dotted rhythms and call-and-response texture, this time as an alternation between C major and E major, between low and treble voices. From "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord" to the end of the work, Naumbourg varies and expands upon the opening ideas, all on the word Hallelujah still featuring dotted rhythms, call-and-response texture, and dynamic contrast, but this time remaining in A major.

Example 2.7: Naumbourg, *Psaume 150*, No. 252 (mm. 1-10), in *Zemirot yisrael*, vol. 2, p. 302

הללויה Psaume 150 par S. NAUMBOURG.

N.º 252. *Andante.*

CORO.
SOPRANI. *ha - le - lu - joh* *ha - le - lu - joh* *ha - le - lu el be -*

TENORI. *ha - le - lu - joh* *ha - le - lu - joh*

BASSI. *ha - le - lu - joh* *ha - le - lu - joh*

- kod - scho ha - le - lu - hu bi - re - ki - a u - so ha - le - lu - hu bi - ge - vu - ro - sov ha - le -

ff *ff* *ff*

tutti.
ff
 - lu - hu ke - rov gud-lo
 ha-le-lu-hu be - se - ka-scho-for

Solo. *tutti.*
P
 - ne-vel ve-chin-nor ha-le-lu-hu be - sof u-mo-chol ha-le-lu-hu be mi nim ve-u - gox

f *cres.*
 ha-le-lu-hu be - tril-ze-le scho-ma ha-le-lu-hu be - tril-ze-le se-ru-oh kol han-neschomoh te-

- hal-lel joh ha-le-lu-joh ha-le-lu-joh
ff
 kol han-neschomoh te - hal-lel joh

ff
 kol han-neschomoh te - hal-lel joh ha-le-lu-joh
 ha-le-lu-joh

49

This excerpt from Psalm 24 that is used during the Torah service on Festival mornings, opens with a low-register, monophonic, fanfare-like call in D minor for the gates to open and admit *Adonoï*, the King of Glory. The low, unison choral voices give way at measure eight to an ostinato, robust accompaniment. The melody they accompany—introduced first in the solo soprano—is triumphant, majestic, and fitting for a description of God as king, valiant in battle. The operatic melody over a march-like, military rhythm, sets a dramatic scene for the clergy's march around the sanctuary with the Torah scroll before returning it to the ark. The setting would ultimately become one of his best-known choral works, performed both in service and concert settings throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries. His *Zemirot yisrael* is not only a triumph in synagogue choral repertoire, but in Jewish music history.

Example 2.8: Naumbourg, Seu Scheorim, No. 162 (mm. 1-28), in *Zemirot yisrael*, vol. 2, p. 195

195

שאו שערים par S. NAUMBourg.
Psaume 24 verset 7.

№ 162. *Andante maestoso.*

SOLI.
TENORE 1º

TENORE 2º

BASSO.

se-u sche- o - rim ro sche-chem ve-hin - nos'u pische o - lom ve-jo - yo melech hako -

Allegretto moderato.

CORO. **SOLO di SOPRANO.** *f dolce.*

TENORI.

-vod vejo - vo melech hako - vod mi sch me - lech hak - ko - vod a - do -

mi sch melech hako - vod mi sch melech hakovod a -

cres.

-noï is - sus ve - gib - bor a - do - noï gib - bor mil - cho - moh gib - bor milcho - moh

-do - noï is - sus vegibbora - donoi gibbor milchomoh gib - bor mil - cho - moh gib - bor milcho - moh

a - donoi gibbor milcho - moh

CORO.

SOPRANO 1° *f*
mi seh me - lech hak - ko - vod a - do - noï is - sus ve -

SOPRANO 2°
mil - cho - moh mi seh me - lech hak - ko - vod a - do - noï is - sus

TENORE.

BASSO.

- gib - bor a - do - noï gib - bor mil - cho - moh

ve - gib - bor a - do - noï gib - bor mil - cho - moh gib - bor mil - cho - moh

EDITOR'S NOTE: Readers of this article might also be interested in a 2012 book by Eliyahu Schleifer, *Samuel Naumbourg: the Cantor of the Emancipation*; Vol. 136 SA in the Jewish Miniature Series edited by Herman Simon (Berlin, Hentrich and Hentrich).

Coreen Duffy (DMA, JD) is a lecturer in Choral Studies at the **University of Miami Frost School of Music**, where she teaches choral literature, advanced conducting, choral arranging and courses in musicology. She is the Founding Artistic Director of South Florida's **Second Avenue Jewish Chorale**, and her choral works are published by **Walton Music**, **ECS Publishing**, and **Pavane Publishing**.

How a Conservative Congregation's Innovative Friday Night Service in Buenos Aires Led to the "BJ Experience" in New York

By Gastón Bogomolni

I—INTRODUCTION

I grew up in Buenos Aires in a secular Jewish household. Like most Jewish kids in the 1980s-and-90s (Wasserman 2006:8-20), I attended a secular Jewish Day School. Unlike the U.S., where Jewish day schools are run under the auspices of national religious movements, the Zionist organization in Argentina exerts the greatest influence on Jewish education. As a result, the day schools there are all secular (Zadoff 1994: 412-433). In spite of this, most of the Jewish children would still have their Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration at a Conservative/Zionist Synagogue—purely as a rite-of-passage ceremony.

For the first time in my life, I started to acquire some knowledge about Jewish religious life while being tutored for Bar Mitzvah by my cantor. I enjoyed being a part of the group of kids who would be asked to lead part of the Friday Night service, which is the most-attended service in Argentinian Conservative synagogues. On Saturdays and Sundays, youngsters spend time at the Jewish Community Center, mainly for its socio-cultural and sports environment (Babis 2009:61). Among my contemporaries, I was one of the few who truly enjoyed the Friday Night service; the energy surrounding it, the people all singing, the sense of community and unity, the choreography of the prayers. Above all, I was charmed by its music and (undoubtedly) by the prospect of one day leading it.

Shortly afterward, the Cantor of my home Synagogue—*Comunidad Yoel* (pronounced *Yoel*)—asked me to lead High Holiday Youth Services. I did so, seated at a keyboard, a standing microphone positioned in front of my lips. I had learned the entire liturgy and its melodies with accompanying chords, from a tape given to me five weeks before. I read Torah, blew Shofar, and led a sing-along of Holiday and Israeli songs between *Minhah* and *Neilah* of Yom Kippur as we waited for the sun to set. Thus, began my career as a cantor. It was followed by another position in Argentina, two in Buenos Aires, one in Basavilbaso, and one in Entre Ríos.

I left Argentina at age 19 to serve as spiritual leader of the Jewish Community in the north of the Dominican Republic, a town called Sosúa. A year later I moved to the capital, Santo Domingo, to serve the whole country in the same capacity. At 21, I moved to Barcelona to become youth director and cantor of Spain's only Progressive synagogue, *Atid* (future); and three years later I emigrated to the United States to work as a full-time cantor: in Omaha, Nebraska for six years and in Needham, Massachusetts for seven years.

The “Argentinian” Style of Service

While serving in Omaha, I was able to earn a Bachelor’s degree in Music at the University of Nebraska. Next, I passed a rigorous 10-hour exam to prove my proficiency in cantorial music and Jewish studies, in order to become a member of the Cantors Assembly, the largest organization of cantors in the world. The preparation of that comprehensive test introduced me to a significant amount of literature about Jewish music (its history, personalities and characteristics), data that I had never read before and didn’t know existed. I became obsessed with Jewish ethnomusicology, (Laki 1989), a field of study pioneered by the writings of Abraham Zvi Idelsohn. I started to collect books on the discipline, in addition to dozens of recorded Jewish voices and sounds from around the world, soon to be called Jewish World Music (Denburg 1996).

None of the published literature existed in Spanish, my native language, and although I was not yet fluent in academic English, I read through as much as I could of the difficult technical writings every day. The more I read, the more I wondered why research had never been done about Jewish music in Argentina, either sacred or secular. My main interest was naturally in the music of the synagogue. It saddened me to think that the heritage and stories of those who had been part of Argentinian synagogue music—its composers, organists, choir, leaders, music directors and especially its elderly cantors--could easily be forgotten unless research were to be undertaken immediately.

As luck would have it, an Argentinian rabbi happened to be hired three months after my arrival at Beth El Synagogue. At that time, most Conservative synagogues in the U.S. did not permit the use of musical instruments at Shabbat, Festival or High Holiday services (USCJ 2015). Our non-accompanied traditional Friday Night services were poorly attended by hardly more than a Minyan—the quorum needed for public prayer. Taking advantage of the early time (6 pm) for Friday Night services—plus the late sunset during summer months in Nebraska, when playing musical instruments in full daylight wouldn’t be considered a violation of the onset of Shabbat—Senior Cantor Moshe Rosen and I, serving as ritual director/assistant cantor at the time, created an Argentinian-style Friday Night service that included instrumental accompaniment. In the course of a month, attendance increased from 15 to 200. At first, Cantor Rosen led the service and I acted as the music director as well as the backup singer/keyboardist. Eventually I became the cantor, and a keyboardist was engaged to accompany me.

Our congregation, the only Conservative one in town, became known for its Friday Night “happening.” The level of curiosity was such that both the Orthodox and the Reform assistant rabbis attended the service at least once or twice. I started to ask myself: What is it about this particular style of worship that attracted people? Although the service’s success continued through my tenure in Omaha, I never felt that we were truly replicating a typical Argentinian Friday Night experience. What was missing? Both the rabbi and I were from

Argentina, which should have assured the service's stylistic integrity and Argentinian authenticity. For the congregation, it provided a pleasant novelty (based on conversations with the congregants in 2002), and *something* about the style made them come week after week. The repertoire was 75% the same as in Argentina. However, the keyboardist was not from Argentina, in fact she was trained in Russia. She did not grow up experiencing this particular style, and even though she borrowed CDs of live Friday Night services performed in various Argentinian synagogues, she was never able to understand or to fulfill the key role of "piano man."

I expressed my frustration to other Argentinian colleagues working in the U.S. Through their feedback I realized I was not alone; they were all in the same situation. I soon understood that some had paid significant honorariums to their former music directors back in Argentina to notate the entire service as they used to perform it. Others went further and got their synagogues to subsidize bringing those Argentinian musicians to accompany services during the High Holidays. I soon understood that not only was the role of music director critical in replicating the Conservative Argentinian style, but *the music itself—and the way in which it was performed*—rated equal billing with the music director. My thesis title evolved into: **"Musical Repertoire and Performance Practice in the Conservative Synagogues of Argentina."**

I conducted informal telephone interviews with Argentinian cantors, organists and rabbis to gather anecdotal information. I not only found the process fascinating, but also realized that a formal academic post-graduate program could better help me frame such a project and provide the necessary tools and structure to investigate using a proper academic methodology. Not until six years later was I able to embark on the World Music Studies Distance Learning Master Program at the University of Sheffield in the UK.

Research Methods

In the absence of published material on this particular subject, my only alternative was to return to Buenos Aires and interview as many informants as possible. I did so, interviewing more than 50 rabbis, cantors, music directors, teachers and congregants. In attending three different Friday Night services I had to present myself more as a researcher than as a cantor, to gain credibility. This was critical in establishing my scholarly relationship with the *Seminario Rabínico Latinoamericano*, (Latin American Rabbinical Seminary) and the *IWO* (The Argentinian Yiddish Research Institute).

The end of December—summertime in the southern hemisphere—coincides with both the end of the school year and the Christmas/New Year holiday season. It was therefore the worst possible time to connect with the people I wished to interview. Knowing this, I tried to organize my schedule two-to-three months in advance. I prepared a list of questions for all the possible interviewees and I contacted them by email, some by Skype and others by phone. Only

half of them answered me immediately and I had to re-contact the rest. Once they did respond I tried to schedule interviews, in which effort I succeeded only once. Deeply frustrated by being consistently put off, I couldn't picture accomplishing my goal by chasing 40-to-50 busy people with different schedules and from different neighborhoods, in a heavily-trafficked city of 13 million inhabitants. Knowing the culture, the city and the right public transportation, through agile improvising I managed to interview more people than originally planned.

Buenos Aires was no longer the safe metropolis that I remembered, and many interviewees warned me to be wary of thieves and various scams (Virtual Tourist 2015). Having that concern in mind, I decided to carry around less electronic equipment. As I left my mother's apartment each day, I took with me just my camcorder, mini-iPad and cell phone. At first I travelled by taxi, but soon realized that it was actually easier to make use of the *colectivos* (public buses), also known as the "owners of the road" (Local Tours 2015). I interviewed people at their office, synagogue, seminary, bar, mall and in the street, anything to fill the gaps in my knowledge.

As my theme developed, the need for more accurate data necessitated conducting a survey targeted at music directors through Google Docs (<https://goo.gl/forms/iFefq7IBaz0Iwc512>), which information I was able to use effectively throughout this work. Lastly, I often connected with many of my interviewees through texting, WhatsApp, Hangout and Skype, all of this so as to cross-reference and corroborate information and to pose any last-minute questions.

II--HOW THE "BA (BUENOS AIRES) EXPERIENCE" BEGAN

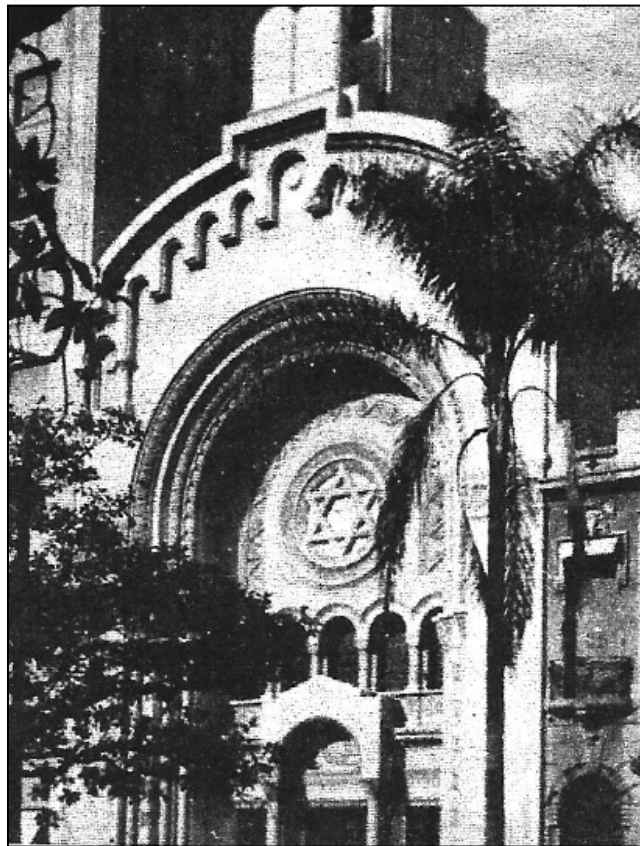
Enter Rabbi Marshall Meyer

In 1959, a 29-year-old graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, Rabbi Marshall T. Meyer (henceforth "Marshall"), arrived in Buenos Aires with his wife Naomi, to serve as assistant to Rabbi Guillermo Schlesinger at *Templo Libertad*. His express purpose was to work with the congregation's youth. Marshall and his wife planned to stay for two years and ended up staying for 25, most of which were spent leading the aforementioned *Seminario*, which he co-founded with Moroccan-born rabbi Mordechai Edery. During that quarter century, he revolutionized Latin American Judaism.

Marshall began by introducing mixed-gender seating at services to attract young people on Friday nights. They congregated at first in the basement of the synagogue. The youngest brought more friends, and as it became more popular, their parents also started to attend. As the service increased in numbers, it had to move to a connecting building. According to Weil, (Weil 1988) other radical innovations included a supplementary booklet with Spanish transliteration of the prayers, a thoughtful in-depth sermon on contemporary issues, and lots of upbeat melodies sung in unison by the entire congregation.

As Assistant Rabbi, just a month after his arrival, Marshall wrote an extensive memorandum to Rabbi Schlesinger, which contained a long list of suggestions designed to elevate the worship experience (Weil 1988; see VIII—SOURCES CONSULTED, below). His suggestions were without exception rejected by the Congregational Board. Due to the tensions that this high-handed treatment engendered among the membership, Marshall soon elected to leave, taking with him a large group of followers. Together they founded *Bet El*, the first Conservative synagogue in Argentina and all of Latin America. From Marshall's list of proposals, here is item # 4 (Weil, Appendix).

Music is one of the most powerful factors in introducing spirit to the rituals, and should receive the fullest attention possible. Many parts of the service could easily be filled with the community joining in singing. Adopting melodies of musical integrity, that are easy to sing, that in one way or another are Jewish and respect the meaning of the prayer, would signify a major advance in promoting warmth and beauty during worship and awaking congregational participation. I suggest that for both the Friday Night and Saturday morning services we provide and distribute a booklet with congregational melodies selected in advance (notated along with transliteration) to help all those in the congregation who don't read Hebrew, and afford them the opportunity to participate. On another occasion, I will present a second memorandum that will indicate which prayers I consider more appropriate for congregational singing.



Templo Libertad, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Music in Conservative Congregations Generally at That Time

Although the ritual of Conservative synagogues historically revolved around the inspiring prayer chant of the cantor, the second half of the 20th century found many worshipers seeking a more active role in the proceedings. They demanded the chance to sing along with the prayers, at first periodically, but eventually as they might at a non-stop community sing. Moreover, they were no longer comfortable with the time-honored sacred chants of their grandparents; they insisted on humming along with the liturgical words (of which they were increasingly ignorant) only to the sounds of their everyday world, while tapping or clapping (Levine 2001; Friedmann 2009). To meet this need, an entire repertoire of tunes for congregational singing was created. Levine writes in his chapter on “The Americanization of Synagogue Song: A Survey,” that by the 1960s “in all three movements of American Judaism, unison congregational singing became the norm, bypassing davening, an untranslatable term connoting the historically lively give-and-take between the cantor and congregation... often accompanied by handclapping.” I summarize the current Conservative synagogue repertoire as a mix of the following influences: 1) traditional synagogue prayer modes; 2) popular-and-folk tunes from surrounding culture; 3) Conservative-sponsored Ramah summer camp tunes; 4) hit songs of the 20-or-so annual Israeli Hasidic Song Festivals; and 5) Israeli folk songs and biblically-inspired songs. Add to that mix in Buenos Aires a dash of Latin American *Carnavalito* (Little Carnival) spice, and what emerges is a popular setting from the current Argentinian Conservative synagogue repertoire for *Friday Night Ma'ariv: Va-y'khulu* and *B'rakhah mei-ein sheva* following the Silent Amidah.

Example 1:

Va-y'khulu and *B'rakhah mei-ein sheva* In *Carnavalito* (Little Carnival) Style

Text: *Ma'ariv shel shabbat*

Music: Rabbi/Hazzan Teddy Horowitz

Andante ♩ = 80

(Optional filler syllables)

Lai - la-ra lai - la-ra - lai - la, lai - la-ra-lai la-ra - la, - lai-lai-lai - lai - lai, lai - la-ra lai - la-ra - lai; lai. Va-y' - khu-lu ha-sha-ma - yim v' - ha - a-rets v' - khol ts' - va - am, va-y' - khal e - lo-him bay - yom ha-sh' - vi - i m' - lakh - to a - sher a - sah, va-yish-

18 bot bay-yom ha-sh'-vi - i mi - kol m'lakh-to a-she-er a - sah. Va-y' - va-rekh e-lo-him et

23 yom ha-sh'-vi-i, va - y' - ka-deish o - to, ki vo sha-vat mi - kol m'lakh-to, a-she-er ba -

28 ra e-lo-him la-a - sot. Ba - rukh a-tah a-do - nai e-lo - hei-nu vei-lo-hei a-vo-

33 tei - nu, e-lo - hei av-ra-ham, e-lo - hei yits-hak, vei-lo - hei ya - kov, ha -

38 eil hag - ga - dol hag-gi - bor v'-han-no - ra, eil el - yon, ko-ne sha -

43 ma - yim va a - rets. * Optional repeat DC

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Marshall's First Cantor, Repertoire and Organists in Argentina

Marshall had brought with him to Buenos Aires mainly melodies sung in American Conservative synagogues during the 1950s (Interview, Israel, June 10, 2015). He also loved to sing, and possessed both an enormous sense of musicality and a strong voice (BJ Team, Interview, November 2013).

Presenting a musical repertoire that would be both appropriate and attractive was a primary goal (José Katz, Interview, November 2013). In an attempt to capture and describe his initial service in 1962 at Bet El Congregation, I recently interviewed the first cantor that Marshall worked with, Eli Bard. A secular Israeli who was studying engineering, Bard served with Marshall until 1967, when he and his wife returned to Israel. Eli did not read music, nor did he know anything about Jewish liturgy. Naturally, he spoke Hebrew fluently, and he had a pleasant voice. This proved adequate to the task at hand. Marshall shared with him the reel-to-reel tape recordings he had brought from the U.S., and that's how Eli Bard learned the melodies. He told me, "After so many years, I still sing the same melodies and in the same way with the exact phrasings I learned from Marshall back in 1962" (Eli Bard, Interview, June 10, 2015).

For the first few months while Marshall searched for an organist, services proceeded *a cappella*. As he had no written music, Marshall needed someone who could play by ear and read enough Hebrew from the prayer book to follow the service. One day Esther Krislavsky, “a young musicologist just back from Israel, entered the room stating that she could both read Hebrew fluently and play by ear anything she heard on the organ” (Eli Bard 2015). The first instrument they had available was a harmonium. Later, a Lowrey electronic organ would be bought and used for many years. Esther wrote the music down (see **Example 2, Max Wohlberg’s *V’sham’ru***, as taught at the Cantors Institute of JTS, ca. 1950, and transcribed by Esther Krislavsky in 1962). This would prove very helpful to her successor, who did read sheet music. Wohlberg’s *V’sham’ru*, a gentle march, is typical of the congregational melodies that Marshall introduced.

Example 2:

V'sham'ru

Text: Exodus 31:16-17
Ma'ariv Shel Shabbat

Music: Max Wohlberg

Gentle March

V - sha - m' - ru v' - nei yis-ra-el et ha-shab - bat. La-a - sot et ha-shab -

7 bat _____ l' - do-ro-tam b'-rit o - lam. Bei - ni u - vein b' - nei yis-ra-el

12 ot hi - l' - o - lam, ki shei - shet ya-mim a - sah a-do - nai et ha-sha-ma-yim v'-

17 et ha-a - rets, u - va - yom hash - vi - i sha - vat va - yi - na - fash.

The Influence of Israel in the Choice of Repertoire

As I noted in my **INTRODUCTION**, the Zionist dream—as expressed in Psalm 137, of keeping Jerusalem uppermost in our thoughts—plays a very important role in the life of every Jew (Diego Fuller, Interview, December 16, 2013). The Jewish community in Argentina not only reserves a very special place in its heart for Israel, but feels a unique attachment to it (Elkin 1998:230-250). Three-quarters of Argentinian Jewish youth has historically attended a secular Zionist Jewish Day school (Zadoff 1994:417-420). When Marshall arrived there in 1959, he encountered a secular and cultured community of young

people very active in Zionist movements but with little, if any, interest in religion. Although manifestly a young leader with vision, passion and energy, for the locals Marshall was an outsider, a *gringo*. For the old timers, he seemed a revolutionary (José Katz, Interview, November 8, 2013). What no one realized was the depth of Marshall's determination to make his project work. He set about acquiring local partners: (rabbis, scholars, teachers, synagogue-and-community leaders), and developed a network of disciples and followers. Among them was José Katz (Interview, November 8, 2013):

Marshall picked up on the community's cultural emphasis and decided to bring Israel to the synagogues, in his sermons, in the melodies, in his way of dressing, etc. He brought and implemented aspects of Israeli culture to all of us who had a full Zionist upbringing. That was Marshall's genius: he captured the essence of the new generation and worked with their passions, interest and motivations.

José Katz, the first of Marshall's disciples, would receive rabbinic ordination from the *Seminario* and go on to occupy pulpits in Mexico City and La Jolla, California. In addition, Katz's interest in music prompted him to assume the task of adapting secular Israeli melodies of that era to liturgical texts. Since most of the youth attended Jewish Day School and was active in Zionist organizations, they were already familiar with the Israeli melodies that he chose. Still, he did not pick random tunes, but ones that were thematically congruent with the feeling of the liturgy. Particularly when an Israeli holiday such as Yom Ha'atzmaut (Israel Independence Day) would approach, Katz's melodic allusions forged an irresistible emotional connection with the young worshipers (**Example 3**, *L'kha Dodi* [Come, my Beloved] adapted from the Israeli hit, *Zemer nugeh* [A Sad Song] words by Rachel Bluwstein, and music by Yosef Moustaki).

Example 3:
L'kha dodi
 (After *Zemer nugeh*)

Kabbalat Shabbat Liturgy

Music: Yosef Moustaki

Words: Shlomo Alkabetz (16th century)

Dolce ♩=135

Flowingly

1 L' - kha do - di lik - rat kal - lah, p' - nei shab - bat n' -

8 kab - lah; l' - kha do - di lik - rat kal - lah, p' -

14 nei shab - bat n' - kab lah.

The *Shiron*

Marshall found an even more direct way to communicate this Zionist sentiment during worship, which became known in Argentinian synagogue jargon as *la canción pre-prédica*, “the song before the sermon” (Various Interviews, December 2013). His original practice was originally part of the founding model he brought to *Bet El*. Marshall’s tradition was to sing a non-liturgical Shabbat melody, a wordless *niggun*, or simply to have the organist play an instrumental piece, sometimes from the operatic or Classical repertoire, or even from another part of the liturgy (Masias, Interview, December 2013). To assure the “Jewish” (if not necessarily Israeli) content of this musical interlude, he supervised the creation of a congregational *Shiron* (songbook). It proved so popular that every Conservative synagogue in Buenos Aires--and even Reform temples--eventually used it during Friday Night services.

The *Shiron* not only expanded the repertoire sung during that section of the Friday Night service, it gave everyone the ability to actively participate by making the lyrics available alongside the music. Even better, the songs were all numbered to make them simpler to identify. “The *Shiron* served an additional, but extremely important purpose by including a transliterated version of the complete Hebrew liturgy to help all those for whom Hebrew reading presented a challenge” (Carlos Tzug, Interview, December 16, 2013).

The *Siddur*

In 1959, prayer books were entirely in Hebrew with no translation available (Weil 1988:109). To rectify this situation, one of the first priorities of the newly founded *Seminario* was to produce a *Siddur* with Spanish translation. It is still used today in 85% of the Conservative congregations in Latin America (Survey 2014). A modicum of transliteration was also made available, in a separate booklet, just for the communally sung parts of the service.

A New Generation of Organists

In the 1970s, Zeev Malbergier— a music teacher, choir conductor and Hebrew teacher— accepted the position of organist at *Or Jadash* (pronounced *hadash*) Synagogue. Marshall’s model was just starting to proliferate, so the expanding role of the organist was still something new. Many Argentinian Jews at the time were only familiar with the old traditional model of male cantor and male choir as their presenters of long, non-participatory selections of liturgical music (Goldstein, Interview, December 21, 2015). Malbergier had to learn a completely different model, one that included up-to-date melodies and nuanced musical highlighting of the liturgy’s choreography and structure (Malbergier, Interview, December 2013). He commented that, given his prior experience at other synagogues, he contributed to the service something he knew how to do well, helping people to learn new songs and sing them enthusiastically (Malbergier 2013). He also used the spot for the “song before the sermon” to develop a more comprehensive songbook.

By the time of my research, general use of the *Shiron* had been discontinued in most of the Buenos Aires synagogues. Why? “The new music directors, though musically much more highly trained than we, do not have our background as teachers of music--with all that implies. So, they have eliminated *la canción pre-prédica* altogether!” (Malbergier, Interview, December 2015).

III–THE REPERTOIRE

Sources

The current melodies used in the service come from sources on the Internet and from sheet music. YouTube is the main source for new material, followed by websites of popular synagogues in the U.S. and Israel: *Ikar*, *Machon Hadar*, *Beit T’fillah Israeli* and *Rom’mu*, among others (Various Interviews, December 2013).

In Argentina during the 1980s, there was no access to original sheet music or tapes. Songbooks of Jewish music were rarely available unless someone brought them from the U.S. or had photocopies made. On top of that, they were very expensive. The few melodies that reached us at the time were first tried in the Winter-and-Summer Ramah camps and later brought to the synagogues.

“Not only were the campers singing ‘campfire’ songs, the camping experience itself became more overtly spiritual. Shabbat services were actually religious sing-alongs... This style of service had become a central feature of the camp experience” (Friedmann, 2009). According to ethnomusicologist Mark Slobin, this camp-music repertoire “replaced the highly dramatic orchestration of the organ-choir-reader-cantor complex [in synagogues] and led to the adoption of informal, congregationally active modes of worship that emphasized the simple songs preferred by American and Israeli youth.” (Slobin, 2002). The foregoing statements may also be applied to what was happening simultaneously in the Southern Hemisphere at Marshall’s Conservative Congregation *Bet El*. (See **Example 4**, an Israeli version of *Ashrei*—Psalms 84:5, 145:1-7) that was first popularized in the Conservative movement’s Ramah camps. Since no specific mode pertained to it, this ‘prayer for all seasons’ lent itself to an Israeli-Hasidic devotional style of performance.

Example 4:

Ashrei

Text: Psalms 84:5, 144:15

Music: Israeli-Hasidic

♩=106

Devotionally, with conviction

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It consists of eight staves of music. The lyrics are in Hebrew, and the chords are indicated above the notes. The score includes a repeat sign at measure 17 and a double bar line at measure 26.

Chords: Dm, Gm, A7, Dm, D7, C, F, A sus, Dm, Gm, C, F, A sus, Dm, A, Bm, A/C#, Dm, Gm, A7, Dm, A7, Dm, D7, Gm, C, F, A sus, Dm, Gm, C, F, A sus, Dm.

Lyrics:

Ash - rei___ yo-sh'-vei vei - te - kha, od y'-ha - l' - lu - kha se - lah._____
 Ash - rei___ yo-sh'-vei vei - te - kha, od y'-ha - l' - lu - kha se - lah._____
 Ash-rei ha -
 am she-ka - khah lo, ash-rei ha - am she - a - do - nai___ e - lo - hav. Ash-rei ha -
 am she-ka - khah lo, ash-rei ha - am she - a - do - nai e - lo - hav. Ash-rei ha -
 am she-ka - khah lo, ash-rei ha - am she - a - do - nai e - lo - hav.
 Yam ba-da-bam ba-da-bam ba-da-ba-da-ba bam, ba-da-bam ba-da-bam ba-da-ba-da-ba-da
 bam, ba-da-bam ba-da-bam ba-da bam bam bam;_____
 bam._____
 Ash-rei ha -
 am she-ka - kha lo, ash-rei ha - am she - a - do - nai___ e - lo - hav. Ash-rei ha -
 am she-ka - khah lo, ash-rei ha - am she - a - do - nai e - lo - hav.

The Era of the “Mashup,” New Sounds and Eclecticism

Historically, Jewish music had been eclectic, so much so, that lately it’s considered “world” music. Until the Internet era, it was very difficult to access all of its source streams. Only in Israel had a good portion of those geographically disparate local traditions been recorded and preserved by the Jewish Music Research Center at Jerusalem’s Hebrew University. Fortunately, Argentina was a country of immigrants, and anyone could hear the exotic sounds by attending synagogues that adhered to specific traditions.

With the recent explosion of technology in music distribution, each generation is now able to develop its own concept of how music should sound. Today’s world accepts equally such random mixing as salsa with cantorial, Yemenite with blues, African drumming with klezmer or kirtan with hasidic.

Musical “mashup” is the common language of our era. Furthermore, Argentinian music directors and cantors have a natural tendency to infuse genre influences such as tango, jazz, pop or regional folklore into their interpretation of a melody that comes into their hands. The main infused element I observed during my research was tango, in the accompanying phrasing, melody, chord progression and rhythm. Of notable mention is a pick-up 16th note on the last beat of a measure and the use of *marcato*—to the exclusion of *legato*—plus emphatic syncopation. Today, no matter where a melody originates, Argentinian music directors will quickly make it their own. It is to their credit that invariably, they also make it sound “Jewish.”

IV- PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

Instrumentation

Since all the cantorial recordings of Marshall’s era were accompanied by an organ, it seems obvious that a keyboard-type instrument would have been the main instrument he chose (Rushmavich, Interview, December 2015). Of necessity, the harmonium was the first instrument for Marshall’s model (Bard, Interview, June 2015). The organ soon replaced it, and “every synagogue in the movement copied the model” (Friedler, Interview, November 2013). In only two synagogues did I find acoustic pianos instead of electronic keyboards (Fieldnotes, December 2013; Rubinsztein, Interview, December 25, 2013). Flute is the second most-often used instrument. Hand drums appear infrequently, employed by a very few synagogues. Guitar, although an alternate instrument for many music directors (Survey 2014), is a common component of Argentinian pop, rock, classic, tango, folklore and camp music, yet only one synagogue used it. Cello and clarinet are also heard from time to time.

Vocals

The cantor has historically been synagogues music’s traditional presenter, leading the entire service by himself. As Marshall was a good singer, he did not feel the need for a cantor. If not himself, he preferred that teens or non-trained adults lead the services (BJ

Team, Interview, November 2013). This preference was slavishly imitated by Marshall's devoted followers ("the Congregation's Messenger in Prayer"). Instead of one designated individual, however, synagogues in Buenos Aires soon developed the concept of a "team" of prayer leaders (Interview, Rubinsztein, December, 2013). It still remains very common today to find a full team of singer-instrumentalists (rabbi, cantor and music director), who alternate in leading and harmonizing the singing. In some synagogues, teen-apprentices play the role of backup singers. A slightly different model features a group of vocalists drawn from a congregational cadre of volunteer *shlihei tsibbur*. The organist, whose task used to be to accompany the cantor and occasionally provide vocal harmony, has come to dominate the proceedings. And try as they might, "the...soloist cantors, despite embracing a more modern and pop style, have taken on a secondary role, and in many synagogues, have even disappeared" (Mirchinsky, Interview, December 2013).

"In South America, the work of a contemporary cantor is part-time, and only involves leading prayer on Shabbat, Holidays and a few weekdays, as well as the preparation of the B'nei Mitzvah" (Flishmik, Interview, December, 2013). Given this new reality, a practical solution might be for the cantor to accompany the congregation--instrumentally and vocally--and thereby complement the rabbi's primary function as prayer leader (Stofenmacher and Arazi, Interview, December 2013).

Women Cantors

Argentina-born Ruti Berman is today a cantor in the U.S., and Silvina Chemen--now a rabbi at *Bet El*--started as organist and later became prayer leader at *Bet Hilel* Community and at *Templo Emanuel* (Berman and Chemen, Interview, November and December 2013). These two were among the first women cantors. It was not until 1994 that Margit Baumatz and Analia Bortz became the first female rabbis. In 1999, Natalia Arazi was the first woman to be ordained as cantor by the Buenos Aires Rabbinical Seminary (*Seminario Rabínico*, 2015).

With this recent history in mind, we can regard the Argentinian musical style of synagogue service during the past 20 years as immensely influenced by the female singing style of Argentinian Tango, Rock and Pop. In addition, the current "singing octave" of Argentinian congregations coincides remarkably with the alto/mezzo vocal range of most female cantors. "My voice was once compared to Patricia Sosa, the famous Argentinian rock singer, for its low and mellow quality," proudly states Karen Nisnik in an informal video chat in May 2015. Despite this evident increase in female prominence within the Argentinian synagogue, 90% of the music directors and keyboardists who also play an active singing role are male, and the 10% of women in the field are mainly limited to playing the keyboard (Diego Rubinsztein, June 2015). (See **Example 5**, *Adon Olam* [Eternal God] sung by Argentinean congregations in an alto/mezzo range.)

Example 5:

Adon Olam

(In Alto/Mezzo range)

Text: Solomon Ibn Gabirol

(11th century)

Andante ♩=70

Music: Dario Newiadomsky

A - don o - lam a - sher ma - lakh, b' - te - rem kol y' - tsir niv -
had v' - ein shei - ni l' - ham - shil lo l' - hah - bi -

5 ra. L' - eit na'a - sah v' - hef - tso - kol a - zai me - lekh sh' - mo nik -
rah. B' - li rei - shit b' - li takh - lit, v' - lo ha - oz v' - ha - mis -

9 ra. V' - a - ha - rei kikh - lot ha - kol l' - va - do yim - lokh no -
rah. V' - hu ei - li v' - hai go'a - li, v' - tsur hev - li b' - eit tsa -

13 ra. V' hu ha - yah v' - hu ho - veh, v' - hu yih - yeh b' - tif - a -
rah. V' - hu ni - si u - ma - nos li, m' - nat ko - si b' - yom ek -

17 ra. A - don o - lam a - sher ma - lakh, b' - te - rem kol y' - tzir niv -
rah.

21 ra. L' - eit na'a - sah v' - hef - tso kol, v' - hef - tso kol,
24 a - zai me - lekh sh' - mo nik - ra. V' - hu e -

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Sound and Equipment

Due to the increasing use of an electronic keyboard and at least two microphones, the need for dependable amplification has become a must. In the beginning, many synagogues would utilize the social halls of their schools, and therefore relied upon the in-house system. As membership grew, synagogues rebuilt their sanctuaries. When audio technology became economically feasible, synagogues invested more money toward better sound equipment and hired an audio technician to operate and control the mixer, add effects and equalize the final outcome to seem more professional.

At one Friday Night service that I attended (led by Natan Gesang), I noticed a great deal of distraction because of volume fluctuation. Children were leading worship, and the projection of their voices wasn't the same as the cantor's or rabbi's. There was a lot of back-and-forth with hand motions to the sound operator to increase or decrease the volume. Each time, the operator would come out of his booth (in the back), walk down the middle aisle and make hand signals back to them, all in all, causing a major disruption of the entire experience.

Was this out of place? Judging by the congregation's reaction--or rather by the lack of it--I am not sure. Looking around, I perceived that no one seemed to have any issues with the goings-on (including my mom who was sitting next to me and continued singing). Could this lack of reaction represent the current norm? Or is it that synagogue-going Argentinian Jews no longer care, so long as they are happily engaged in augmenting the general tumult?

Need for an Assistant Audio Technician

The budget for services is not always sufficient to hire an extra person to modulate the sound during worship, so the music director/organist has had to take over responsibility for it. This type of multi-tasking is not easy when you must devote your attention primarily to running, accompanying and performing the service. "When I get blamed for something [that the rabbi] caused, i.e., when the cable microphone gets unplugged by his foot stepping on it and he gives me a look as if it were my fault, does he want me to stop playing, to be the *che pibe* (do-it-all boy) and reconnect the cable for him? Or am I supposed to untwine the cable from around his foot? Is that my responsibility? Seriously? (Anonymous, Interview, December 2013).

A deeper issue to be addressed by congregations might be adopting the type of budget that would adequately cover the purchase and maintenance of decent sound equipment along with a sound monitor who would work in conjunction with the music director during services. Another item for discussion might be what kind of equipment would create the minimum distraction to worshipers. The underlying issue is really how to temper the technology of troubleshooting so it does not impinge upon the mood of calm spirituality that rabbi, cantor and music director have worked so hard to achieve?

Volume

In the traditionally grand synagogues of Europe during the 19th century, acoustics were designed to allow the trained operatic-sounding cantor and choir to be heard throughout the huge space without amplification (Vaisman 2011: Introduction). In early Argentina, a land populated by European immigrants, it made sense that the first synagogues in Buenos Aires looked quite similar to their neighboring churches, the same as in the Old Country.

The introduction of a keyboard and the choice of contemporary repertoire sung by young, untrained voices necessitated the use of electronic amplification. The synagogues I visited, especially on Friday night, had a tendency to set their systems at very high volume during services. Perhaps they were following the conventional wisdom that more volume equals more energy (from my own perspective as a worshiper, December 2013).

How loud is *too* loud for worship? Is such a high volume necessary? Is it true that more volume equals more energy? Does it increase the level of spirituality? What would practitioners of meditation (e.g., adherents of Jewish Renewal who achieve *d'veikut*, connection with the Divine, say about that? Argentinian cantors and music directors gave me their answer: “When my rabbi gets to the point of not tolerating the accumulated din from instrumental volume and the people’s chatting over it, we can all see the resultant frustration on his face, and perceive his negative reaction towards it. I immediately get nervous because the calm and spiritual environment that was created by the natural flow of prayer and its melodies is spoiled by that evident moment of irritation” (Anonymous, Interview, December 2013).

V-EXCURSUS-MARSHALL’S SERVICE BROUGHT TO NEW YORK

B’nai Jeshurun (aka: The “BJ Experience”), 2000

On the Upper West Side of Manhattan in the mid-1980s, Conservative Congregation B’nai Jeshurun, down to 40 families at the time, was about to fold. Yet it managed to refill its reservoir of human potential to overflowing. How did it accomplish this renaissance? It set out to attract the professional young singles of its neighborhood through an interactive *Kabbalat Shabbat* experience that was conceived and implemented by its rabbi at the time, the late Marshall Meyer. He had accomplished a similar miracle in Buenos Aires during his tenure there from 1959 to 1967 (Levine, 2001), and was brought back to New York to achieve a similar miracle. He had discovered in South America that, if approached as individuals who mattered, unaffiliated singles could reconnect to their religion—and to each other—in a way that was evidently greater than anyone realized.

Early on in New York, Marshall along with Rabbi Rolando Matalon and Cantor Ari Priven, had recorded a cassette that presented all the singing parts of Shabbat prayers, from

Friday night through the Havdalah. It also included Shabbat table songs (*Z'mirot*) and Grace after Meals (*Birkat ha-mazon*). That first tape was soon borrowed and multi-copied by the *Seminario Rabínico Latinoamericano* and turned into the model service for all Conservative synagogues in Buenos Aires and all of Latin America throughout the 1980s-and-90s. Today, a generation later, many of those synagogues have not deviated from the original repertoire (Roberto Prado, Interview, December 15, 2015).

Regarding the challenge of dealing with excessive volume, I learned through an informal conversation with Cantor Ari Litvak that BJ's cantor/music director Ari Priven has found a satisfactory solution: He uses a pedal to control the main volume of the mixer, which gives him full control throughout the service—a sensible way to “refine” the Argentinian approach—while preserving both its energy and spirituality.

VI—BACK TO BUENOS AIRES

Organists: The Third Generation

A generation ago, “we organists were called *arpegiadores* (‘the ones who routinely perform arpeggios’). We broke open every chord into running arpeggios all the time; no matter what. I still can’t play a song the way it was given to me. I like to fool around with the new harmonic progressions, try new sonorities, clusters and rhythms, making it my own” (Rubinsztein, Interview, December 2013).

Usually, when someone learns something and later discovers that what they learned was not accurate, the logical thing would be to re-learn it correctly. Right? Among Argentinian musicians, this is not so common. One interviewee admitted: “When I brought the *Hashkiveinu* on a cassette, the last part of it was cut out and we didn’t know how it ended, so we made it up. Everyone was already singing it that way when a few years later I was able to acquire the actual ending. I tried correcting it, but many were reluctant to do so until this very day” (Rubinsztein, Interview, December, 2013).

There are reasons why “new compositions” like this come to be. It is not that the melodies get changed due to a lack of funds to purchase the original sheet music. There is simply ever-present among Argentinian musicians a tendency to limitlessly re-compose. Argentinian society in general enjoys freedom without limits. “Everything is valid in synagogue music, like clay that can be modified as many times as you wish” (Huergo, Interview, December 2013). Music directors make melodic, harmonic and rhythmic changes even if the composer has indicated it differently. There is a need to add one’s personal signature, one’s own idiosyncratic brushstroke to the original music. If Carlos makes a change, tomorrow Roberto will learn of it and make a change of the change. When Diego hears what Roberto played, he cannot resist the urge to add his own chords, and the composition literally becomes something

else. It is like collaborative composition over time, and at the end no one can recall what the original was like.

VII – TRANSMISSION OF THE STYLE

Ruah Hadarom (Spirit of the South) NY: Cantors Assembly, 2015

In 2007 the Conservative Movement's Rabbinical Assembly convention was held in Mexico City. There, Cantor Ari Litvak gave a workshop together with Rabbi Darío Feiguin--both Argentinian--about music in the synagogues of Buenos Aires. The session was entitled, *Davening La Vida Loca* (Praying the Crazy Life). This program was so successful that an expanded version was presented at the Cantors Assembly convention in New York in 2010, with Cantor Litvak and myself doing the presentation. The handouts from that session—20 printed scores—would later form the nucleus of *Ruah Hadarom*, the first anthology of congregational melodies from Latin America, sung mainly in Conservative synagogues. Here is a typical setting, for *Hal'lu* (Praise God on High) in a Pop Ballad style, from the early morning Psalms on Shabbat morning (**Example 6**).

Example 6:

Hal'lu (In pop-ballad style)

Text: Psalm 148:1-2

Music: Claudio Tzatzkin

♩=80

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a tempo of 80 beats per minute. It consists of four staves of music, each with Hebrew lyrics underneath. Chords are indicated above the notes. The lyrics are: Ha-l' - lu et a - do - nai min ha - sha - ma - yim, hal' - lu - hu bam - m' - ro - mim. Hal' - lu - hu khol mal - a - khav, hal' - lu - hu kol tsva - av. Ha - l' - lu - yah, ha - l' - lu - yah. Hal' - lu - hu she - mesh v' - ya - rei - ah, hal' - lu - hu kol kokh - vei or. Hal' - lu - hu sh' - mei ha - sha - ma - yim, v' - ham - ma - yim a - sher mei - al ha - sham -

17 G sus G F G C F C C7 F G
ma - yim. Ha-l' - lu - yah, ha-l' - lu - yah, ha-l' - lu - yah. Hal' - lu - hu khol mal - a - khav, hal' - lu -

21 C G/B Am F Dm7 G C
hu kol tsva - av. — Ha - l' - lu - yah, ha - l' - lu - yah.

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When this workshop topped the success of its Mexican predecessor, the Cantors Assembly assigned us the task of formally gathering sufficient material to publish a collection. We readily agreed. Contacting over 300 potential sources worldwide, we received over 300 entries, many of them recorded but not yet transcribed. Since most of the compositions were for Shabbat, we divided the project into three volumes, Shabbat comprising the first. It was our intention to reserve Weddings, the High Holidays and Jewish Songs for future publications.

Although the current volume reflects the sonority and style of Latin American music, other influences are evident as well: Ashkenazi, Sephardi and Mizrahi *nus'haot* that European immigrants carried with them to the Southern Hemisphere. These included: sounds of Zionist longing during the late-19th and early-20th centuries; Israeli Hasidic Song Festival hits; American folk ballads; and the Tango's emphatic syncopation and phrasing along with harmonic progression, derived from Argentinian Pop music. In every way, the result embodies the cultural manifestation of an entire epoch in the modern history of the Jewish people—the gift of a musical book for the People of the Book.

To ensure that the book's users will not have to guess about how the songs have to be performed, a companion website is being planned—with a link to audio files performed either by Cantor Litvak and myself or by individual settings' original composers. This audio-visual repertoire will hopefully provide ample evidence of the still-emerging model that emerged in Buenos Aires a half-century ago, and shortly afterward gave rise to what has become known on Manhattan's Upper West Side as the "BJ Experience."

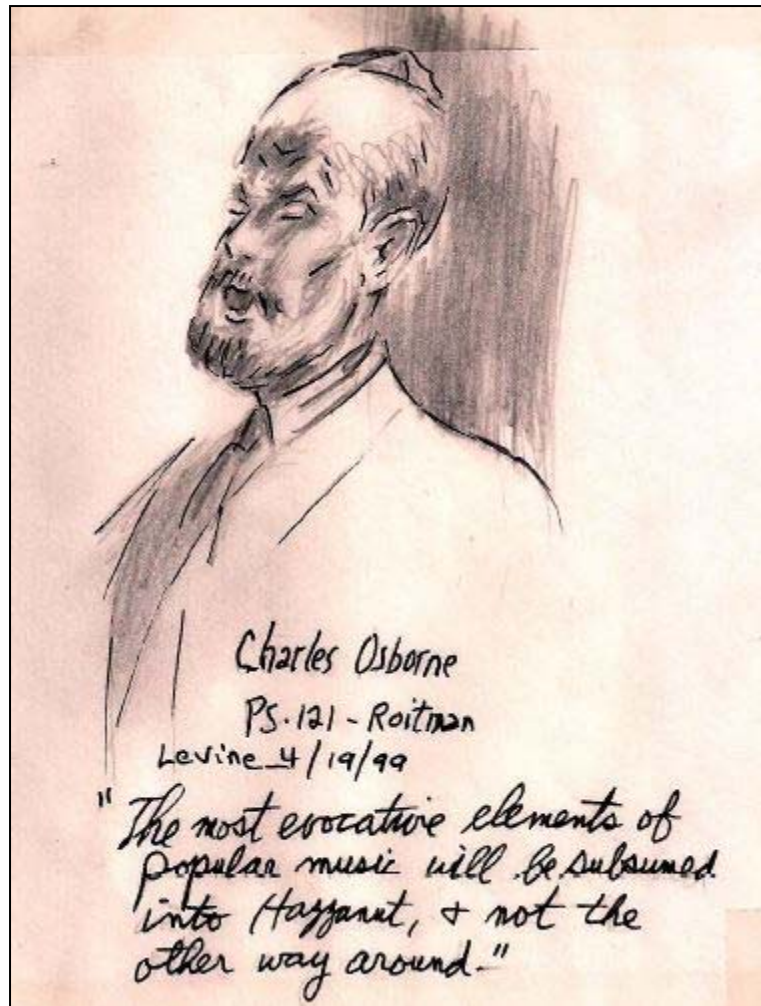
*Gastón Bogomolni is Cantor at Beth Torah Benny Rok Campus in North Miami Beach, Florida, the immediate past president of the New England Board of Cantors, and the Cantors Assembly liason with the National Ramah Commission. A teacher of Nusah at the **Seminario Rabínico Latinoamericano Marshall T. Meyer** in Argentina, and former **T'fillah** Specialist at the Solomon Schechter Day School of Greater Boston, he can often be found meditating with young students. After 25 years in the cantorate, he is currently studying for rabbinic ordination at the **Seminario**. Gastón thanks his mother, Mirta Serebrinsky, for typing this article.*

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A Song at Twilight: Options for a Transformed Cantorate¹

By Joseph A. Levine

Introduction

Given the opportunity to make one global change in the way contemporary synagogue services are run, I would try to reconcile its extremes: a continuous sing-along on the one hand, and pulpit micromanagement on the other. Specifically, a *shli'ah tsibbur* sharing the burden of prayer equally with the *kahal* would mark a return to synagogue normalcy: an ongoing musical dialogue with each party leading *in turn*. In addition to responses like the ones around which the *Kedushah* is constructed, the hymns *Yigdal*, *Eil adon* and *Adon olam* would be sung antiphonally, the form in which they were conceived. Restoring a give-and-take would add depth to our current mono-dimensional services which leave no room for the numerous responses built into our liturgy. Involving worshipers via responses is no mere convention, but rather, the consummation of a ritual act.

How so? When someone greets us by extending a hand, it is natural to respond with a handshake. So, too, in the arena of public prayer. In synagogue practice, the custom of exchanging a handshake with fellow worshipers after one performs a ritual act offers a chance for many to share the religious experience, usually accompanied by the words *Yasher koyakh*, the Yiddish colloquialization of the Hebrew approbation *Y'yasheir kohakha*, meaning, "May your strength continue unabated."² It generally follows one's delivering a D'var Torah, completing an Aliyah, chanting a Haftarah, leading a portion of the service, etc. The instant camaraderie inspired by this spontaneous gesture immeasurably strengthens a feeling of common purpose among daveners.

Philosopher Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929) agreed: "The supreme component in liturgy is not the common word, but the *common gesture*."³ Rosenzweig was referring specifically to a Neilah service he had attended, during which he envisioned *eternity* being pulled from the beyond to the present, seeming to actually *be there* with the worshipers. Individuals stood and confronted justice without any intermediate factor, their naked souls shrouded only in prayer shawls before their Maker. Rosenzweig 'saw' God lifting up His countenance to this united pleading, as throats parched from fasting burst forth all around him in the exultant Profession of Faith before Dying: *Adonai hu ha-elohim*—God is the Supreme Sovereign!⁴

¹ Prompted by conversations (Spring, 2012) with Kenneth B. Cohen, formerly Director of the Cantorial Program at the Academy for Jewish Religion in Riverdale, New York and currently Cantorial Consultant to HebrewWizards.com. His insightful contributions are attributed in footnotes throughout, inadequate as that is to acknowledge his having inspired this article and provided constant feedback. The title's opening comes from "Love's Old Sweet Song," words by G. Clifton Bingham, music by J.L. Molloy, 1884.

²Internet: *Glossary of Shabbat Buzzwords*; << Soc.culture.jewish FAQ:Miscellaneous&References >>.

³ Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption* (1920), William W. Hallo, tr. (London: University of Notre Dame Press), 1985, Introduction to Part III, final section.

⁴ Michael Zank, "The Rosenzweig-Rosenstock Triangle, or What Can We Learn from Letters to Gritli?" *Modern Judaism* (23.1), February 2003: 74-98.

This enactment of "Redemption from Death in the Midst of Life" occurred on the verge of Rosenzweig's entering Christianity. He had delayed taking that final step by attending what he thought would be his last High Holy Day services, at a small Orthodox synagogue in Berlin, where he was unknown. There he found the spark that had previously lain dormant within him as an assimilated Jew. Years later, while serving as a soldier on the Eastern front during WWI, he stumbled upon a Hasidic *shtibl* in Rembertow, Poland, and wrote to his mother:

The *singing* was the main thing... I have never heard anything like it. These people don't need an organ, with their surging enthusiasm, the voices of children and old men are blended... the little East European Jew is more of an 'aristocrat' than [his Western counterpart]... he has his chair behind him and sits on it without looking around before he dares to sit down... [like] the Western Jew... [Here] the five-year olds already live in a context of 3,000 years.⁵

I believe we must begin the process of somehow recapturing that God-intoxicated⁶ *quality* of the vanished world that Rosenzweig had discovered by chance. It is, of course, unrealistic to expect that passionate belief system to be literally replicated in our super-cool society. Yet it might be possible to re-create the sense of *sacred space* that was endemic to every humble *shul* in the hamlets of Eastern Europe.⁷ If the cantor's task is to initiate and lead prayer—let it be accomplished in a sacralized environment. The result might not quite rise to the level of “God-intoxicated,” but even the tiniest awareness of divinity that it arouses in those present might help people realize just how blessed are we Jews, here in North America. To achieve that end, I cannot conceive of starting with better raw material than our liturgy.

Keva vs. Kavvanah

The words of Hebrew prayer are regarded as *keva* (fixed) by rabbinic decree. The manner in which our voices reach out towards God in *singing* those fixed words is considered *kavvanah*—discretionary personal expression. These two polarities wage a continual tug-of-war. Whenever Jewish worship has over-organized itself in the past, a clamor for deregulation arose in protest, first by the Hebrew Prophets (Hosea 6:6), then in the Talmud (BT *Sanhedrin* 106b) and later by the *Heikhalot* (Divine Palaces) Mystics (BT *Niddah* 61b).⁸ Conversely, when predictability in worship—*T'fillat ha-seder*—gained the upper hand, public opinion demanded more spontaneity—*T'fillat ha-regesh*. Rabbinic authority would then reassert itself through an even stricter interpretation of Halakhah than before.⁹ Witness the most recent manifestation of this process in the 18th-century emergence of Hasidism, when its leader, the Baal Shem Tov (Yisroel ben Eliezer, 1698-1760) and his followers were excommunicated by Eastern European Jewry's supreme authority, the Vilna Gaon (Elijah ben Shlomo Zalman, 1720-1797).

⁵ *Ibid*, Appendix (Letter of May 28, 1918).

⁶ Abraham Joshua Heschel's phrase, *The Earth Is the Lord's* (New York: Harper Torchbooks), 1966: 107.

⁷ This 'partial answer' is written in reply to a question raised by Kenneth Cohen in private communication, April 2, 2012.

⁸ Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1991), Crossroads Publishing, 2004, chapter XIV.

⁹ Samuel Abba Horodetzky, *Yahadut ha-seikhel v'yahadut ha-regesh* (Tel-Aviv: N. Twersky), 1947, *passim*.

Today we are finally witnessing the decline of an *over-analytical* period in which everything that took place during a service was announced and explained. What forced the issue was people's reaction: a majority of American Jews has opted out of public worship. National Population Surveys taken between 1990 and 2013 reveal that only 11% of those who identified as "Jews by Religion" attended synagogue weekly.¹⁰ Along came the "B.J. Experience" of Congregation B'nai Jeshurun on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, a stunningly successful re-empowerment of worshipers through an *entirely sung liturgy*—without readings or sermons.

This is not to say that all who experience a Friday Night service at B'nai Jeshurun will share exactly the same degree of spiritual uplift. A service that is imaginatively conceived and executed is never "finished." Members of a congregation each sort out their own impression from a worship experience, be it sung, chanted, spoken, or choreographed. They receive varying signals, which they *re-interpret* according to their personal sensibilities and experiences. In addition, the conventions and circumstances that influence both prayer leaders and congregants, *periodically tend to reverse direction*. The calm that characterizes one decade might give way to frenzy in the next, formalism could well accede to disarray, tradition might bow to innovation at clearly discernible intervals. People's tastes change constantly.

The late Bible scholar Tikva Frymer-Kensky saw a similar process unfold in the way we understand Torah, particularly in recent centuries:

The ongoing reinterpretation of biblical texts and the dialogue about interpretation and about these texts have made it clear that there was nothing essentially "true" about the traditional religious or scholarly readings. They were "hegemonic readings," readings that depended for their authority on the hegemonic power of those doing the reading.

Frymer-Kensky cautioned us not to despair at the collapse of the old hegemonies, but to proceed with an understanding that—"revelation... lies in the very process of sifting and negotiating, and wrestling."¹¹

This writer would plead for the exercise of patience in the realm of our public prayer, until sufficient time has elapsed for a distinct and lasting version of *Minhag amerika*¹² to emerge. At that time, perhaps a remnant of the former dialogue of chanted *t'fillah* between *hazzan* and *kahal* will be recaptured.

Jewish worship used to be a give-and-take, where neither the one leading nor the ones being led were sure of the outcome. It was like life itself, which seems to happen *while we're not paying attention*. Every so often, a revelatory moment—completely unplanned—emerges

¹⁰ Barry Kosmin, *National Population Survey* (New York: Council of Jewish Federations, 1990) showed that 41% percent of America's Core Jewish Population belonged to synagogues. A survey taken in 2013 (Alan Cooperman, Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project) reduced that number to 33%, and a survey during the intervening years of 2003 and 2004 (Sarit Amir, New York: United Jewish Communities) confirmed that only 11% of synagogue affiliates attended weekly.

¹¹ Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "The Emergence of Biblical Theologies," *Studies in Bible and Feminist Criticism* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society), 2006: 371, 379.

¹² *American Rite*, title of an 1857 prayer book compiled by Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, founder of the American Reform movement.

during a service, when those who lead and those who are led finally get it right, and the antipodes of unrestrained excitement and enforced boredom seem to hang in suspended animation. At that fleeting moment, participants' level of engagement matches that of a runner extending his lead as he tests the pitcher's reflexes an instant before dashing to second base or retreating back to first. True prayer similarly appears to hold it all in while letting it all out, a balancing act that we intuit, but are unable to articulate. This essay will attempt to analyze the mechanics behind that miracle, by examining *t'fillah b'tsibbur* within the context of *group dynamics*.

The Five Stages of a Group Experience

Rabbi Stuart Kelman explains a service's highs and lows in terms of five stages that a group—in this case, a worshipping congregation—undergoes in order to develop “cohesion.”¹³ After passing through the third of these five stages (*Norming*, in the chart which appears immediately below), and is primed for “constructive action” (Stage 4, *Performing*). The critical point between Stages 3 and 4 is when the congregation reaches its *peak devotional moment*:¹⁴

1. **Forming** (orientating toward the task)
2. **Storming** (awakening to the group's potential)
3. **Norming** (developing group cohesion)
- PEAK DEVOTIONAL MOMENT**
4. **Performing** (discovering collective solutions and insights)
5. **Adjourning** (having jointly forged a sense of common purpose)

Getting Things Going

The most critical point for any service is its opening prayer—or introit—which serves the same purpose as a poetic invocation: it gives the impression of having begun *in the midst of things*. Homer's Goddess sang of Achilles' anger ten years into the war against Ilion. Milton's Heavenly Muse justified God's ways to man only after Paradise had already been lost. An old chorale that Armenians sing at the foot of the altar while their priest is vested in the sacristy, says it all: the best introits are “deep and incomprehensible, *without beginning!*”¹⁵ Von Ogden Vogt, a Protestant minister who prioritized worship's dynamic aspect, regarded the ideal introit as a confident, declarative exercise that captures attention without anyone being aware.¹⁶

Stage 1: *Forming*

¹³ Stuart Kelman, “Prayer and Process,” *Religious Education* (75.4) July-August 1980: 462-473.

¹⁴ After Bruce Tuckman, “Developmental Sequences in Small Groups,” *Psychological Bulletin* (63.6) 1965:384-399, and with Mary Jensen “Stages of Small Group Development Revisited,” *Group & Organizational Studies* (2.4) December 1977: 412-427.

¹⁵ “Khorhoort Khoreen,” *Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Apostolic Church*, Magar Yegmalian, ed. (New York: Armenian Prelacy), 1983.

¹⁶ Von Ogden Vogt, *Art and Religion* (1921) (Boston: Beacon Press), 1948: 166.

Orientating a group toward its task requires a bit of strategic *misdirection* on the part of service leaders, for the unconscious mind of every worshiper will resist attempts to address it directly.¹⁷ Hence, we must gently persuade people to participate 'voluntarily' in the group effort. This is achieved through an unconscious, even seductive *diversionary tactic*¹⁸ which overcomes inertia as it subtly recalls our relationship with God.

How to beguile people into moving effortlessly from the profane into the realm of the sacred? For starters, we might recall that the word *chant* derives from "enchant" in both English and Hebrew: *l'naggein* (to chant) turns the worship experience into an enchantment (*mangana*).¹⁹ When we surround words of prayer with music, which is *pre-verbal*, we circumvent our subconscious mind's automatic resistance to any nudging such as, "we read together on page such-and-such." Receiving that unsubtle stage direction precludes any possibility of our entering a worshipful mood on our own. Better to begin worship with *sung prayer* that involves everyone instantly, *without preamble*. The liturgy can then flow unimpeded, enabling us to connect with a host of otherwise unutterable feelings that lie buried in our subconscious. Once that connection is made, our deepest emotions about ourselves and our relationship with God can find expression far more meaningfully than through words alone.

Setting the Next Stage: 2, *Storming* and 3, *Norming*

On Shabbat morning, once we've channeled our individual energies into a collective group effort through the *Birkhot ha-shahar/p'sukei d'zimra* (*Forming*) sections, we travel together through *Shaharit* and its Amidah (*Storming*) as well as the Torah service and its Haftarah (*Norming*), our attention stands ready to be galvanized. It is an ideal spot for the D'var Torah, a micro-conflation of opposites that will summarize our entire worship experience. Although technically consisting of *learning* rather than praying, this Word of Torah—a timely message grounded in timeless truths—provides inspiration along with edification. When a sermon takes hold of worshipers, they actively engage, through *participatory listening*.²⁰ This engagement prepares them for the more vocal form of involvement to follow.

Stages 4 and 5: *Performing* and *Adjourning*

It is not mere coincidence that the parabola of a worship experience concurs with the contour of human indisposition. "It is the pattern of many illnesses to develop slowly towards a 'crisis,'" notes composer / theoretician Ernst Toch, "after which... reaction sets in

¹⁷ Jay Healy, *Uncommon Therapy: The Psychiatric Techniques of Milton H. Erickson* (New York: Norton), 1993:21.

¹⁸ Carl A. Hammerschlag, *The Dancing Healers* (San Francisco: Harper & Row), 1988: 54.

¹⁹ David H. Wulstan, "The Origin of the Modes," *Studies in Eastern Chant, II*, Milos Velimirovic, ed. (London: Oxford), 1971: 7.

²⁰ Ronald Wolfson, "Synagogue 2000--What It Means to Cantors," talk at the 53rd Annual Cantors Assembly Convention, Ellenville, New York, June 2000.

quickly.”²¹ In like fashion, the participatory singing during *Musaf* (The Additional Sabbath-or-Holiday service): Stage 4, draws traditional worship energetically toward its close as it gathers strength, for one final affirmation of faith: Stage 5. It is typically expressed through a ringing hymn like *Adon olam* ("Eternal God") or *Yigdal* ("Praise the Living God"). Any number of musical settings for either of these centuries-old texts will send us on our way singing, strengthened in our religious conviction, for "God is with us, we have no fear!"²²

Creative Leeway Within a Fixed Liturgy

In addition to chanted prayer, Jews have become known for other hallmark customs not found in the Written Law. Among these are lighting the Hanukkah Menorah, participating in a Passover Seder, and wearing a skullcap (*yarmulke*). These ritual acts have apparently developed on their own, like the stately Spanish dance—*Sardana*--that mysteriously forms on Sunday mornings in the plaza fronting Barcelona's Cathedral. One moment, hundreds of people are milling about. Scattered fiddlers, accordionists, brass and woodwind players are each doing their individual thing, hoping that passersby will drop enough coins in their instrument case to make the endeavor worthwhile. An instant later, the center of the plaza is miraculously dotted with piles of removed outer garments, a giant circle has formed, and people are gliding rhythmically around with arms on each other's shoulders while the musicians have all joined as an ensemble enthusiastically accompanying them.²³

More important than *what* we chant, is *how* we chant it! The anonymous liturgist of our *Shaharit* prayer section expressed the same thought in cosmic terms:

Ham-m'hadeish b'tuvo b'khol yom tamid ma'aseih v'reishit
Every day, God continually renews the Work of Creation.

If the world undergoes daily renewal by its Creator, so too might the familiar words of our daily morning prayer be refreshed through music, every time we utter them.

Rabbis are expected to infuse every sermon with at least one relevant idea. Why, then, should today's cantors not be encouraged to bring similar artistry to bear upon at least one statutory prayer during a service? Is it because the worshipping public considers their field of endeavor inferior to that of rabbis? Do American Jews honestly believe that only Halakhah--the Jewish religion's legal component--counts, but not Aggadah, its narrative portion? At the end of the day, poetically imaginative Aggadah is what *carries* the entire halakhic superstructure! How many of us would faithfully execute the ritual minutiae of Pesah observance without knowing the *story* of the Exodus?

²¹ Ernst Toch, *The Shaping Forces in Music* (New York: Dover), 1977: 82.

²² The musical settings of Eliezer Gerovitch for *Adon olam* (1904) and Meyer Leoni for *Yigdal* (1760) remained popular favorites until recently. The words are attributed to Solomon ibn Gabirol (11th century, Spain) and Daniel ben Judah (14th century, Italy), respectively.

²³ James A. Michener, *Iberia* (New York: Random House), 1968: 695.

Midday on Shabbat, a much shorter ritual event, as brief as the formation of the Spanish *Sardana* but much more demonstrative, occurs right after the final hymn of Musaf has been sung. It is the pistol-shot congregational response, *L'hayyim* ("To your Health!") invoked by the word, *Savrei* (With your permission), chanted by the rabbi or cantor just before reciting the Kiddush over a cup of wine. No one can spot it about to happen, but once it does—the effect is unforgettable (see **Figure 1**).²⁴

Written—Versus Oral—Tradition

Just as rabbis have at their disposal a *Torah she-b'al peh* (Oral Law) alongside the Written Law (*Torah she-bikhtav*), cantors, too, have developed and nurtured an oral tradition that has been handed down from generation to generation. The Master under whom I served my apprenticeship as an assistant cantor—Abba Yosef Weisgal (1885-1981) of Baltimore—had himself studied with two pupils of the renowned Viennese modernizer, Salomon Sulzer (1804-1890): Jacob Bauer (1852-1926) of Vienna; and Wilhelm Loewensohn (1839-1929) of Ivancice, Moravia (now the Czech Republic). Cantors everywhere, including the legendary ones of the so-called Golden Age (ca. 1910-1960), served similar apprenticeships in their youth. In modern times, hazzanic disciples have devotedly transcribed the habitual practice of their mentors from recordings made surreptitiously during services, by worshipers.²⁵

²⁴ Pen-and-ink illustration by the present writer, 1998.

²⁵ The clandestine recordings of Hazzan Weisgal were made by his former B'nei Mitzvah, who had returned from the battlefields of WWII and suddenly felt an urgent need to preserve the still-vibrant legacy of their beloved teacher who was approaching the end of his long career. As his de facto Assistant Cantor (1958-1960), I was given copies of the tapes, from which I eventually transcribed over 400 pages of music for a doctoral dissertation at the Jewish Theological Seminary (1981). Those pages, embodying Weisgal's habitual hazzanic repertoire for the yearly liturgical cycle, were later published by the Cantors Assembly: *Emunat Abba—The Sacred Chant of Abba Yosef Weisgal* (2006).



Figure 1. A pistol-shot response "*L'hayyim!*" to the invocation *Savri...* before **Sabbath Kiddush**.

In my case, the live transcriptions I made of Hazzan Weisgal often painted a more accurate portrait of his habitual practice than did his own formally 'composed' and subsequently published works. Nor was this extraordinary; I found it also to be true of Salomon Sulzer, whose son Joseph had "cleansed" for 1905 publication all of the modal flavor from his father's recitatives, fifteen years after the latter's death.²⁶ Here is the sanitized version of

²⁶ Eric Werner, *A Voice Still Heard... The Sacred Song of the Ashkenazic Jews* (University Park & London: The Pennsylvania State University Press), 1976: 214.

Salomon Sulzer's *hatimah* (conclusion) for the blessing *ha-eil ha-kaddosh* (the Holy God) from Shabbat morning, as presented by his son (**Example 1a**).²⁷

CANTOR

CHOIR

Example 1a. Sulzer's Shabbat morning blessing conclusion, *ha-eil ha-kaddosh*, published by his son.

The following is how Abba Weisgal performed the same *hatimah* two generations later. It follows the Oral Tradition he'd learned in independent study as a young man from Bauer and Loewensohn, who had been taught it by Sulzer himself (**Example 1b**).²⁸

Example 1b. Weisgal's performance of Sulzer's *ha-eil ha-kaddosh*, after an Oral Tradition.

Judging by the formal stiffness of Joseph Sulzer's posthumously published version, Abba Weisgal's rendition probably came closer to Salomon Sulzer's original uninhibited performance. Support for this assumption comes from an eyewitness report by the English Bluestocking writer Frances Trollope (1780-1863), who waxed rhapsodic over a service she attended in the Vienna Temple during Salomon Sulzer's heyday:

There is in truth so wild and strange a harmony in the songs of Israel as performed in the synagogue in this city that it would be difficult to render full justice to the splendid excellence of the performance, without falling into the language of enthusiasm... The volume of vocal sound

²⁷ *Schir zion of Salomon Sulzer, revised and newly published by Joseph Sulzer* (Vienna 1905; Third edition, Frankfurt Am Main: J.Kauffmann), 1922, No. 84.

²⁸ *Ketonet yosef--A Hazzanic Compendium for the Entire Year*, gleaned from many sources, for student use, compiled and edited by Joseph A. Levine, Second edition, 2008: 376; available on special request from the H.L. Miller Cantorial School at the Jewish Theological Seminary.

exceeds anything of the kind I have heard; and being unaccompanied by any instrument, it produces an effect both singular and delightful.²⁹

That ‘singular and delightful’ performance practice had been taught by Salomon Sulzer to his many private students over the course of a long career. They in turn passed it on to the generations that immediately followed. Tragically, World War II broke that chain of hazzanic continuity all over Europe. In an effort to repair the breach, American cantorial schools were founded by the three main national religious movements shortly after the War, to “grow” their own prayer leaders. Ever since, the schools’ graduates have tried gamely to rekindle the flame described so vividly by Frances Trollope, with mixed results. Perhaps the biggest obstacle to replicating that lofty-yet-disciplined style has been that, since the 1970s, accessible European-born role models who were still in their prime had either retired or passed on. For the past four decades, young American cantorial students have had no live connection with exemplary practitioners of a prayer chant both inspired and inspirational, that had reached its zenith in European *hazzanut* of the 1920s and 1930s.³⁰

To help compensate for lack of first-hand contact with an original template, I would respectfully suggest legitimizing hazzanic knowledge and practice as an academic pursuit. Just as the study of Judaism's legal system is referred to as “Rabbinics,” the systematic study of Judaism's sacred musical system would be called “Hazzanics,” a rigorous discipline boasting its own written and recorded literature—with an emphasis on recapturing the *grandeur* (for that is what it was!) of an exquisitely refined tradition for chanting the Hebrew liturgy. If rabbinical ordination requires intense training in deciding cases of Jewish Law, cantorial ordination should demand no less preparation from those charged to serve as their people's Sacred Singers.³¹

The Successive Phases of Creativity

A starting point for such serious study would be to identify the process by which we generally acquire knowledge. Early in the last century, Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce posited that “intuitive knowledge precedes logical knowledge, art is ruled by imagination long before it is defined by intellect.”³² Intuition comes first, and only afterwards does logic follow. This sequence was first spelled out in the Torah over 3,000 years ago. In Exodus chapter 35, God instructs Bezalel ben Uri, an artisan of the tribe of Benjamin, on how to construct a wilderness sanctuary for the Holy Presence. The process entailed two phases, which foreshadowed the way creativity would thenceforth occur in all art:

think artistic thoughts [*la-hashov mahashavot*, verse 32];
then **teach** them to others [*u-l'horot natan b'libo*, verse 34].

²⁹ Frances Trollope, *Vienna and the Austrians* (London: 1838), vol. I, p. 373.

³⁰ Its most renowned practitioner was Lithuanian-born Moshe Koussevitzky, Chief Cantor of Warsaw, who survived the war by singing opera in Tblisi, and immigrated to America in 1947. He died there in 1966.

³¹ Mark Slobin's phrase to describe *hazzanim* in *Chosen Voices--The Story of the American Cantorate* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press), 1989, *passim*.

³² Benedetto Croce, *Esthetic*, 1902: 50.

First comes **discovery**, an instinctive and solitary event. Systematic **modification** follows, a byproduct of passing on the discovery to others. The Bible is telling us: in the beginning conceive your own heaven and earth, then refine them. Give birth to an idea--your brain-child--then raise it as you would an infant, through teaching, during which you and others learn. Folk wisdom would phrase it in earthier terms: first hatch your chickens, then count them. The hatching and counting stages, conception and refinement, are interconnected; there is perpetual vacillation between them. Moreover, this pattern of cognitive alternation keeps repeating in every art form, including that of Jewish public worship.

It comprises a “Creative Cycle” that had been set in motion for Israel at the shores of the “Reed” Sea (*Yam suf*; Exodus 15). When its waters receded and our forebears crossed over to freedom, they celebrated their deliverance by *singing*. Moses-and-the-Israelites' Song at the Sea (*Shirat ha-yam*, verses 1-18) embodied the Jewish people's first communal religious expression. As such, we might infer that it was initially expressed through an ungoverned outpouring, the oral equivalent of childhood's all-encompassing *syncretized perception*. I do not believe that *Shirat ha-yam* was first performed through controlled music-making, analogous to the *focused attention* that comes from life experience. The biblical account supports a two-step reading of the Sea Song: **spontaneity**—and subsequent **revision**--occurring in successive steps.³³

Overcome by the immensity of God's deliverance, Moses' soul erupted in an emotional lava-flow of thanksgiving and glory. At that early stage of the process, the people followed as best they could. This was an initial reaction to their inconceivable victory, a synoptic glance which instantaneously registered everything that had transpired: the east wind; the standing water; their own crossing; the Egyptians' debacle. Moses' impromptu recounting of it—incorporating disbelief, gratitude and praise—stirred a mighty outburst of on-the-spot improvisation.³⁴

*I sing to the Lord for He has triumphed,
horse and rider has He thrown in the sea...
Your fury, O Lord, shattered the foe...
In love and in strength You led forth Your people...
Your reign, O Lord, is forever and ever!*

The **second** version of Moses' song did not emerge until **later**, once his sister Miriam had internalized its essence, and made the hymn her own (verse 20). Her rendition, different from the original, occurred sometime after Moses had introduced the Song. To go by our textual evidence, Moses-and-the-Israelites' outburst—in **unison**—represented the first impulsive step in a creative process. Miriam-and-the-Israelites' later refinement--**responsive singing** reinforced with timbrel and dance--embodied its subsequent sorting out.

This second step was needed so that others could internalize the Song as well. For a creative entity to be taught, its creator must organize the idea or image systematically, and then

³³ After a process delineated in Anton Ehrenzweig, *The Hidden Order of Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1967: 6.

³⁴ My understanding of Moses-and-the-Israelites' initial “singing” being in unison respectfully differs from Jonathan L. Friedmann's contention that “this spontaneous prayer-song [is] evidently sung as a call and response” (*Synagogue Song: An Introduction to Concepts*, 2012, s.v., “A Most Ancient Ritual”).

be able to shape it in a form that is capable of replication. This implies prior contemplation. From her having **answered all** the people (*vata'an lahem*—**non-gender-specific, third person plural**), we infer that Miriam's was not another instinctual unison outburst. By then, everyone was familiar enough with the Song for Miriam to confidently alter its manner of performance. This is reflected in the opening of Miriam's version: *shiru* (**you** sing), i.e., respond to my cue rather than listen to me improvise, which would have begun with *ashirah* (**I** sing), as did Moses's original.

Miriam gave the Sea Song the lasting, well-ordered arrangement by which it has been recognized ever since.³⁵ Indeed, its graphic representation in Torah scrolls--as I have reproduced it in transliteration above--is called "a long brick over two short bricks" (*ari'ah al gabei l'veinah*; BT *Megillah* 16b). Such staggered transcription recalls the alternating-line dialogue of classical Greek drama, indicating an *antiphonal* style. Exodus 15:20 transmits only the opening of Miriam's re-arrangement, but it seems logical to conclude that even the opening fragment that has come down to us reflects her critical input: the people reiterating a constant 'Chapter Heading'—*I sing to the Lord for He has triumphed*—after each succeeding half-verse. So posited the 2nd-century sage Rabbi Akiva ben Yosef, as cited in the Talmud (BT *Sotah* 30b).

It is hard to say which version proved more effective--the extemporaneous chant or a planned give-and-take—because they each suited different circumstances: the miraculous escape itself, succeeded by delicious retelling of the event. Both versions proved so apt for their specific circumstance that they set two precedents for approaching God: through *immediately passionate inspiration*, or through *delayed interaction that allowed for reflection*. After the Sea Song, one or another of two prayer species held sway, successively. Not surprisingly, the pattern also appears in Classical Greece. Alternation between emotionally driven (**Dionysian**) and intellectually directed (**Apollonian**) religious rites³⁶ echoes Aristotle's prescription for attaining a 'Golden Mean': "If we habitually incline towards one extreme, we should aim for the other, so that we ultimately achieve a balanced medium position."³⁷

The Greek terms 'Dionysian' and 'Apollonian' aptly describe *T'fillat ha-regesh* and *T'fillat ha-seder* (spontaneous-versus-predictable prayer), mentioned earlier in connection with the **keva-versus-kavvanah** impasse between fixed order and personal expression. Constant oscillation between the polarities makes it difficult to characterize either worship style as 'typical'; it depends upon how the tide of popular preference happens to be flowing at a given moment. The Dionysian (*T'fillat ha-regesh*) approach, a frenzied eruption, can be understood as Moses' attempt to recreate the unrepeatable atmosphere that prevailed when God redeemed Israel.³⁸ Its Apollonian (*T'fillat ha-seder*) antipode, a calculated call-and-response, may be seen as Miriam-and-the-people's elaboration upon a musico-poetic inspiration that had already been expressed. If either approach seems to be absent during a given epoch, it only confirms the

³⁵ Phyllis Trible, "Eve and Miriam," *Feminist Approaches to the Bible*, Smithsonian Symposium (Washington, DC: Biblical Archeological Society), 1994: 16-17.

³⁶ Edith Hamilton, *The Greek Way to Western Civilization* (New York: New American Library of World Literature), 1951: 164.

³⁷ Aristotle, *Ethos* II.9.

³⁸ Kenneth Cohen, personal communication to the writer, February 24, 2012.

postulate that one generation's *kavvanah* becomes the next generation's *keva*.³⁹ Elsewhere, I test the validity of this premise by surveying our people's worship practice through the many centuries of its uninterrupted existence, from biblical times through the present.⁴⁰

For our present exposition, we need only ascertain where we stand in the current cycle of worship, and how the paradigm may have shifted in the late-20th and early-21st centuries. Our perception of what constitutes a normative prayer service nowadays reflects the lingering solipsistic worldview of the Boomer Generation that is currently entering retirement. For those born during the euphoric decade immediately following World War II, pampered by their battle-weary ex-G.I. fathers and stay-at-home mothers, neither knowledge of Hebrew nor preparation for worship were necessary. Experiencing “spirituality” was considered an entitlement that came with simply attending synagogue. Luckily for the Boomers, it takes hardly any energy, either mental or physical, to participate in responsive reading. Hence today’s over-reliance on congregational singing, which used to be considered optional. As late as the 1960s, a cantor’s chanting of statutory prayers in prescribed prayer modes was mandatory in Traditional services. Now, however, Conservative rabbis are espousing a community singalong as *the* prime vehicle of “prayer.” As a result, congregations have come to view sacred Hebrew chant as mere self-indulgence on the cantor’s part.

The Significance of Prayer as a “Divine Offering” for Modern Jews

To appreciate the enormity of this rabbinically-propagated about-face, a brief excursus into the sacrificial rite that preceded synagogue prayer will provide an historical context. During the Second Temple era (5th century B.C.E.-1st century C.E.), anyone making a grain-or-animal offering was expected to witness it being burnt upon the Altar in the Temple’s inner Court of the Priests.⁴¹ Those who brought a sacrifice were offering not only its monetary value, but also the time and effort required to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, including the cost of lodging in the Holy City. Today, when words of prayer have long-since replaced burnt offerings, what comparable *sacrifice* can synagogue-goers make? Services on Sabbaths, Festivals and weekdays are free of charge and open to everyone. Aside from annual membership dues which cover admission to High Holiday services, synagogue attendance in most cases entails no hardship.

If today’s effortless version of prayer represents the sum total of a contemporary worshiper’s “offering,” it would seem that something more needs to be added—a quantifiable surrender that satisfies the notion of “sacrifice.” Even a *performance* of prayer that meets the definition of ‘work’—literal meaning of *avodah* (i.e., serving God)—would suffice. For this

³⁹ Jakob Petuchowski, *Understanding Jewish Prayer* (New York: Ktav), 1972, *passim*; compare Matthew Arnold’s “the freethinking of one age is the common sense of the next” (*God and the Bible*, 1895).

⁴⁰ Joseph A. Levine, *Rise and Be Seated—the Ups and Downs of Jewish Worship* (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc.), 2001: 4-32.

⁴¹ “Letter of Aristeas,” tr. R. J. H. Shutt, lines 92-104, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Vol. II*, James E. Charlesworth ed. (New York: Doubleday), 1985, pp. 19-20. This eyewitness account of actual sacrifices being performed confirms similar reports in Josephus: *Wars* 4: 262; *Antiquities* 13: 242; *Against Apion* 2: 5.

reason, several ideas have been advanced recently for having synagogue goers participate more actively in public worship:

1) Guide worshipers in moving from mundane to sacred

Saul Wachs, recently retired Professor of Education and Liturgy at Philadelphia's Gratz College, stresses "the need for a 'warm-up' or preparatory period to aid in achieving *kavvanah* in prayer." He points to the success that *Shirah hadashah*, a congregation in Jerusalem, has enjoyed by periodically inviting its members to take part in voluntary workshops where new melodies are introduced and practiced.⁴²

2) Locate communal melodies more strategically in the service

Cantor-Educator Neil Schwartz writes of the positive effect achieved by astutely using an appropriate congregational tune at the right liturgical moment: "It can make all the difference for some congregants between confusion and therefore boredom on the one hand, and understanding and therefore *engagement* on the other hand."⁴³

3) Train a congregational sub-group to lead prayer melodies

For congregants who may not be fluent in Hebrew, Music Director Joey Weisenberg organized a "Spontaneous Singing Choir" at the Kane Street Synagogue in Brooklyn. It consists of lay adults who are taught—patiently and with numerous repetitions—to encourage lustier participation in the davening by the rest of the congregation, while clustering around and supporting the prayer leader's singing.⁴⁴

4) Tap into the Neo-Hasidic revival's energy

Perhaps the most lasting contribution of all was made by Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach (1925-1994), who traveled the world bringing disaffected young Jewish souls back to their religion through songs of his own creation. He "combined... folk... music with a Hasidic style of participation in songs with consistent and driving rhythms... The hallmark of the "Carlebach style" was instant familiarity with a melody such that you feel like you have heard it before, even if it is your first hearing, and you want to sing along."⁴⁵

It should be noted, however, that congregations which have seized upon Carlebach's tunes too often overlook the cantorial-style prayer openings (*p'tihot*) and closings (*hatimot*) that frame his irresistible communal interludes. In fact, it was *p'tihot* and *hatimot* that gave Carlebach's melodies their motive force, providing an ebb-and-flow while carrying the text's ever-varying moods *in between* the melodies. The cantor's openings and closings provide a *regular heartbeat* that carries the congregation's *communal offering*: sung prayer. At the same time, these liturgical bridges allow cantors to utilize their unique skills at leading snippets of time-honored *sacred chant* that heighten the worship experience for everyone while efficiently moving things along..

⁴² Saul P. Wachs, "Toward a Curriculum for Increasing the Active Participation of Congregants at Prayer Services," *Journal of Synagogue Music*, vol. 40, Fall 2015.

⁴³ Neil Schwartz, "Tunes of Engagement: Using Congregational Melodies to Combat Alienation in Conservative Worship," *Journal of Synagogue Music*, 30, Fall 2005: 110-139.

⁴⁴ Shoshana Brown, "Joey Weisenberg's *Building Singing Communities*," Review, *Journal of Synagogue Music*, 37, Fall 2012: 248-250

⁴⁵ Mark L. Kligman, "Contemporary Jewish Music in America," *American Jewish Yearbook*, 2001: 88-141.

The Term “Nusah,” and Its Origin in Transitional Passages

American Jewry's still evolving common practice has morphed into non-stop community singing that allows for only occasional liturgical cues and wrap-ups by the cantor. Nonetheless, as Shlomo Carlebach demonstrated, such *transitional passages--however fleeting they may be--*remain crucial to synagogue worship. Chanted openings and closings lend themselves organically to whatever common *Minhag Amerika* ultimately emerges from the current ferment.

During the early centuries of the Common Era, Judaism's sacred chant developed from the aggregate of transitional passages that first appeared as words interposed by the *hazzan* to connect one statutory benediction with another. They were sung in a prayer mode that referenced the particular blessing (or section of blessings) into which they led. Israeli scholar Ezra Fleisher designates these inserted passages as *kavvei ha-ma'avar* (liminal corridors),⁴⁶ their original purpose being to serve as liturgical bridges for both text and chant. Eminently singable and easily remembered, the *kavvei ha-ma'avar*—frequently opening with the formulaic *U-v'khein* (And so,) and closing with *V'ne'emar* (as has been stated)—quickly caught on in an age before the introduction of printed prayer books. So, too, might *contemporary* cantors' *chanted* openings and closings, tinged with just a hint of the appropriate *rabbinically ordained* prayer mode (*nusah*), trigger a wave of participatory congregational melodies that combine traditional synagogue usage with modern musical innovations.

A Paradigmatic Transitional Passage

The notion of *kavvei ha-ma'avar* as primary conveyors of musical tradition in today's synagogues is illustrated by the near-universal acceptance of a 1992 composition by British-born Hazzan Meir Finkelstein, then based in Los Angeles. The setting was conceived as a transitional option for cantors as well as worshipers, offering a familiar-sounding air that suited everyone. Set to the text *L'dor va-dor* (From generation to generation),⁴⁷ Finkelstein's setting caught people's attention through a soaring melody that lay high enough for the cantor's voice to be heard above the congregational 'drone' that rolled along an octave below. Better still, it allowed *both leader and followers* a singing moment. The cantor could excel at what he or she does best, while the refrain recurred often enough for people to join in. A compelling praise of God in which *all voices are heard*,⁴⁸ Meir Finkelstein's *L'dor va-dor* serves as a liturgical bridge between two intensely participatory sections: the hopeful prophetic quotes of *K'dushah* (the Doxology) and the messianic verses sprinkled throughout the *Musaf* service. It is a win-win situation, described in the Talmud as a solution in which “one party benefits, while the other loses nothing” (*zeh neheneh v'zeh lo haseir*).⁴⁹ Best of all—from the

⁴⁶ Ezra Fleischer, *Shirat ha-kodesh ha-ivrit bimei ha-beinayim* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing), 1975:70-72.

⁴⁷ Meir Finkelstein, *L'dor Vador* for Cantor, SATB Choir and Organ, Aryell Cohen, ed. (New York: Transcontinental Music Publishers), 1992. This transitional text coincidentally opens the brief paragraph whose *hatimah* closes the *K'dushah* (please see Examples 1a and 1b above).

⁴⁸ A phrase borrowed from Kenneth Cohen.

⁴⁹ BT *Bava kama* 20b.

viewpoint of Jewish musical continuity—the melody of Finkelstein's *L'dor va-dor* seems to tap into a well of collective folk memory. Its opening motive may hint at the Prophetic mode for cantillating Haftarah,⁵⁰ and its continuing motive possibly suggests *Hatikvah*, the Jewish national anthem.⁵¹ Its closing motive coincidentally resembles a Study-mode phrase associated primarily with the Rosh Hashanah liturgy.⁵² Here is a chart of the setting's opening (which also serves as its refrain), showing the parallel sources just discussed, for its three motives (see **Example 2**):⁵³

Gently, with movement

The musical score is written for two staves in 2/4 time, with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The melody is primarily in the soprano staff, with the bass staff providing harmonic support. The lyrics are written below the notes.

Motive 1: The first system shows the opening phrase. The soprano staff begins with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The lyrics are "L - dor va -". The bass staff has a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G3, a quarter note A3, and a quarter note B3. The lyrics are "Pash-ta - tipp'-ha".

Motive 2: The second system shows the continuing phrase. The soprano staff begins with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The lyrics are "u - l' - nei - tsah n' - tsa - him u - l' - nei-tzah n' - tsa - him k' - du - shat - kha nak - dish;". The bass staff has a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G3, a quarter note A3, and a quarter note B3. The lyrics are "Shnot al - pa - yim".

Motive 3: The third system shows the closing phrase. The soprano staff begins with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The lyrics are "l' - dor va - du - shat - kha nak - dish". The bass staff has a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G3, a quarter note A3, and a quarter note B3. The lyrics are "V' - al y' - dei".

Example 2. Finkelstein's *L'dor Vador* refrain, with parallel sources for opening, continuing and closing motives.

⁵⁰ *Pashta-tipp'ha*; Solomon Rosowsky, "Neume motifs for the yearly cycle of biblical chant according to the Lithuanian tradition," Levine, *Synagogue Song in America* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson), 2001: 208, line II, HAF, 4b, 1b.

⁵¹ [*Od lo avdah*] *tikvateinu*, Carl Schrag, "High Hopes," *The Jerusalem Post Magazine*, May 8, 1992 (*Hatikvah*, words by Naphtali Herz Imber, 1878, music adapted by Shmuel Cohen, 1888; courtesy of Israeli Music Publications).

⁵² *V'al y'dei* from *Zikhronot*, Zebulun Kwartin, *Smiroth Zebulun II* (Brooklyn, NY: self-published), 1928: 70.

⁵³ BT *Bava Kama* 20a.

De facto revival of a multi-functioning cantorate

Routine involvement of the cantor in every area of community life is a matter of historical record. By the beginning of the 5th century, the formerly separated roles of Synagogue Overseer (*hazzan*) and Prayer Leader (*sh'li'ah tsibbur*) were amalgamated.⁵⁴ By the 8th century, the responsibility of leading the congregation in prayer had been assigned exclusively to the multi-tasked functionary that we know today as the “Cantor.” Even today, that synagogue functionary’s sacred chant can enable congregants to “experience the depth and power of traditional worship in an authentically understated-yet-moving style that still has a part to play”⁵⁵ in our super-hyped society. Attaining such a level of effectiveness presents the biggest challenge to contemporary cantors. When they *do* succeed in getting a congregation to erupt in full-blown song at a given moment in the service, it is as if the heavens, the fields and all the trees of the forests rejoiced with it.⁵⁶

Until that ideal again becomes the norm, another demographic reality of American Jewish life is affecting the very nature of the cantorate as we have known it. Congregations are increasingly seeking staff members who can fill more than one position. Of openings recently listed by the Cantors Assembly, the majority were for cantorial candidates willing and qualified to serve in at least one other capacity as well. This makes sense from an historical viewpoint, because as stated earlier, the cantor's role was *always multifunctional*.⁵⁷ During Talmudic times the *hazzan* functioned as an officer of the judiciary, and in smaller municipalities he performed the complete spectrum of religious and cultural duties: preacher, judge, prayer reader, scribe, and teacher of Bible and Mishnah.

Hazzanic adaptability to a community’s varied needs flourished throughout the Middle Ages and into the modern era. When Church-fomented oppression prohibited study of the Oral Law in synagogues, the burden of responsibility for including Torah study as part of the service easily shifted from the forbidden sermon *spoken by the hazzan* to Midrash-infused *piyyutim* (liturgical poems) *chanted by the hazzan*. Regarded as “harmless” prayer texts, such musico/poetic “teaching” passed unnoticed by local authorities who were present to enforce the prohibition. Chanting of this type, both complex and learned, was facilitated by the fact that, aside from leading refrains built into instructive *piyyutim*, the *hazzan* could also introduce learned interpretations into chanted statutory prayers—through specifically chosen musical allusions—subtle excursions into the nusah of other liturgical occasions, whose inclusion added multiple layers of hidden meaning to the prayer texts.

In 16th-century Europe, **cantors officiated at all the milestones of people’s lives:** birth, circumcision, marriage and death. During the course of the next three centuries cantors continued to perform all of these functions in the burgeoning New World as well, while

⁵⁴ Hyman I. Sky, *The Development of the Office of Hazzan through the Talmudic Period* (Philadelphia: the Dropsie University), 1977:172.

⁵⁵ Janet Leuchter, posting on Hazzanet, “Hazzanim, baalei tefila and appeal of ‘authenticity,’” July 29, 2012.

⁵⁶ After Psalms 96: 11-12.

⁵⁷ Jeremy Schonfield, *Undercurrents of Jewish Prayer* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization), 2008: 343.

European rabbis were unwilling to relinquish their sinecures as religious arbiters of their villages. It was not until the spread of Reform Judaism during the 19th century that a demand arose in the New World for rabbis who would commit themselves to serve as full-time ministers to the spiritual needs of rapidly growing Jewish communities. The new arrivals immediately replaced untrained laymen who had functioned as “cantor” all along the western frontier during America’s pioneer days. Officiating at burial and nuptial ceremonies well-suited the newly arrived rabbis, as did blessing the congregation and resolving religious disputes. Prayer leading was another matter, and here the Radical Reform program already instituted by Israel Jacobson (1768-1828) in Seesen, Germany, offered a perfect solution: have both prayer and Scripture *read* instead of *chanted*, and have an organ-accompanied choir lead *hymn singing* in between the readings.⁵⁸

From then on, updated liturgies replaced the traditional one; each new Reform prayer book deleted more prayers whose theological themes were considered to be out of step with the so-called Progressive Judaism that emerged toward the end of the 19th century. In American synagogues that had not yet obtained the new prayer books with their truncated liturgies, rabbis routinely felt compelled to interrupt services by announcing pages to be skipped. They thereby willfully usurped both the role of prayer leader that had historically been assigned to the cantor, along with worshipers’ independence as *voluntary partners* in worship.

The current reality of economic belt-tightening, however, overrides all other considerations—including the territorial skirmishes that have periodically marked rabbi-cantor relationships. Synagogue affiliation everywhere is steadily diminishing, together with revenues from membership dues. This has prompted a demand for professional functionaries who are prepared to cover a broader range of congregational duties. Ironically, this recent development also opens up new possibilities for the struggling cantorate. **A multi-functioning hazzan would perfectly match the needs of congregations** that can no longer afford the salaries of a full-time Cantor as well as a full-time Educational Director. The fact that fewer affiliated families are having fewer children necessitates a smaller Religious School. To meet the changed conditions, cantorial schools have been training cantors for various ancillary leadership roles, that of Cantor-Educator heading the list:⁵⁹

1) Hebrew Union College's Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music in New York (which has been "ordaining" cantors since 2012), along with the Rhea Hirsch School of Education, offers an option for cantorial students to graduate with *concurrent Masters degrees* in Hebrew Liturgy and Jewish Education.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ This paragraph as well as the following two are based upon Leo Landman, *The Cantor—An Historic Perspective* (New York: Yeshiva University), 1972: *passim*, especially pp. 28-42.

⁵⁹ Stephen J. Stein, "How Should We Train the Cantors of the Future?" *The Journal of Synagogue Music*, vol. 36, Fall 2011, pp. 248-249.

⁶⁰ Bruce Ruben, DFSSM Director, "Cantorial School Reports," *Minutes of the Cantors Assembly Executive Council Meeting, April 30, 2012* (e-mail to the general membership, 6/26/12).

2) The Jewish Theological Seminary's H.L. Miller Cantorial School enables its students to enroll simultaneously in the Seminary's Davidson School of Education so as to graduate with investiture as cantors with *dual Masters degrees* in Sacred Music and Jewish Education.⁶¹

3) The School of Jewish Music/Cantorial Ordination Program at Hebrew College in Boston schedules a *Cantor-Educator* course of study program through the school's Jewish Music Institute and Schoolman Graduate School of Jewish Education,⁶² plus an additional track in Jewish Liturgical Music that trains Ritual Directors as part of a Bachelors/Masters program.

4) The Cantorial Program at HUC-JIR in Los Angeles encourages students to develop *auxiliary specialties* in education, temple administration, counseling, youth work, the liturgical arts and synagogue programming.⁶³

5) The Academy for Jewish Religion in California has a *Chaplaincy Program* that runs concurrently with its Cantorial School. The Academy is also associated with Claremont School of Theology (Methodist), and collaborates with the Islamic Center of Southern California,⁶⁴ presumably to let aspiring cantors who will minister to multi-faith congregants avail themselves of cross-denominational pastoral skills.

6) The Academy for Jewish Religion in Yonkers, New York now "ordains" graduating students of its Cantorial Studies Program. In addition, it maintains a reciprocal academic arrangement with Gratz College in Philadelphia, which grants graduating cantors a concurrent *Master of Judaic Studies degree*,⁶⁵ a requirement for any Jewish Educator.

7) The Cantorial Ordination Program at ALEPH (Alliance for Jewish Renewal) attracts older students with established careers in other fields, who are looking to matriculate without uprooting their families. ALEPH meets that need by offering 'Distance Learning' in a wide skill set: Jewish Music in all its manifestations, Jewish Religious Practice and Renewal, Hebrew Language, Liturgy, History, Literature, Life Cycle Officiation, Counseling, and Spirituality. Additional Core Rabbinic courses produce multi-functioning *Spiritual Leaders for smaller congregations*, often on a part-time basis.⁶⁶

All of these programs are designed to help American cantors "re-invent themselves as a proactive community of spiritual leaders who comprise a valued and integral part of synagogue life."⁶⁷ To achieve this aim, the Conservative movement's Cantors Assembly has been running ongoing intensive workshops at its annual conventions that provide training in randomly selected areas such as: Spiritual Leadership, Chaplaincy, Homiletics, Funeral Skills, Public Speaking, Social Media and Technology, Self-Marketing, Highlighting the Theatrical Element

⁶¹ H.L. Miller Cantorial School website, *Courses of Study*: "Cantor-Educator Program,"

⁶² *Hebrew College Catalogue*: "Cantor-Educator Program." plus *Cantorial School Reports to the Cantors Assembly Executive Council* by Brian Mayer, Acting Dean of the Program, April 30, 2012

⁶³ Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion website: *Los Angeles Cantorial Music Program*--"Mechina--Preparing for the Cantorate."

⁶⁴ Nathan Lam, Dean of the AJR California Cantorial School, *Cantorial School Reports to the Cantors Assembly Executive Council Meeting*, April 30, 2012.

⁶⁵ *Idem*, Murray Simon, Interim Director of the AJR Yonkers Cantorial Studies Program in 2012.

⁶⁶ Several email communications, including curricula, from Hazzan Yakov Kessler, ALEPH, Director of the Cantorial Ordination Program, July 2012.

⁶⁷ Kenneth Cohen, private communication to the writer, June 5, 2012.

in Prayer. The Assembly also grants certificates for members who complete specified courses of continued Judaic studies via the Internet.⁶⁸

The net effect has been to slowly reverse the tide of public opinion that had been running against the American cantorate. One Reform rabbi recently advised that for a small congregation unable to afford both a rabbi and a cantor,

...it makes good sense to hire a cantor instead of a rabbi... I led Congregation B'nai Israel in Albany, Georgia for 10 years. Not being blessed with a good voice, I was reliant on a classically trained choir. When the congregation decided to modernize the music and make it more participatory, the choir was resistant. If I had been a cantor, I could have stepped in and helped to create a dynamic musical experience that would have enriched the spirituality of our services. All of my scholarship... could not compensate for sounding like a frog.⁶⁹

This opinion echoed a rabbinic ruling handed down by codifiers of the Oral Law centuries earlier: a congregation that could not afford both a Rabbi and a Cantor should give the *cantor* preference, for it would then be able to fulfill its duty to worship in public.⁷⁰

The Unheralded Contribution of Cantors

A paradox now exists between what multi-functioning cantors actually do, and how their role is commonly perceived. Cantors inspire profound trust when ministering to their congregants on a personal level. Yet, knowledge of their selflessness in privately serving others remains hidden in the face of their liturgical function's continuing debasement in the wider arena of public worship. Neither do synagogue-sponsored concerts—at which cantors unquestionably excel—really impact other people's lives on a deeper level. It is rather at Life Cycle events—birth, circumcision, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, marriage, anniversaries and death—where cantors truly fulfill their destiny as *visionaries* (the Hebrew *hazzan* derives from *hazon*: prophecy) who inspire congregants to realize the best that is within themselves.

People come to pray because they acknowledge something greater than themselves to which they can turn in distressing circumstances. When they witness a *hazzan* standing up in their midst, vindicating their faith in God through prayers that were recited by countless generations before them, people experience what the poet Virgil described as: "the tears in things, where our mortality cuts to the heart."⁷¹ The *hazzan's* evocative articulation of the awesome and terrible awareness that life is fragile, in an unbearably touching way, brings home the reality that we all share the same existential plight. What cantors do, what they have *always* done, allows a feeling of common trust to spring up where none existed before.

Yet the best-laid plans for scripting ritual moments in a service will go to naught if those who show up are not of a mind to move in that direction. It helps to remember that we enter this

⁶⁸ Numerous HAZZANET postings describing all of the above workshops, convention tracks and courses, between November 2012 and May 2013.

⁶⁹ Dana Evan Kaplan, "Ordaining cantors is mostly good for congregations," *JTA's free e-newsletters*, May 7, 2012.

⁷⁰ Leo Landman, *The Cantor--An Historic Perspective* (New York: Yeshiva University), 1972:47, citing Asheri VI: I, Caro on *Turim, Orach hayyim* 53: 24.

⁷¹ Virgil, *Aeneid*, I. 462.

world unscripted, unwilling and unrehearsed. The late Nobel Prize-winning poet Wislawa Szymborska framed this reality in unforgettable terms: "The sorry fact is that we arrive here improvised—and leave without the chance to practice."⁷² That is why cantors work from *intuition*, rather than from a script, to see what's being called for in the moment. Acting spontaneously through *musical*—rather than *instructional*—means, they are better able to spur people into *meaningful* action. They accomplish this by bringing a “Godly” aura into people's lives—one family or individual at a time—as opposed to leading public ceremonies, a rapidly dwindling option.

When ministering *off* the bimah, the true genius of *hazzanim* shines through. Often more sensed than discussed, the *comfort* they bring to people whose souls are bared and vulnerable, is palpable. Through heartfelt song, cantors share the sorrows of those in their communities who are widowed, orphaned or divorced. Their sole interest at such highly charged moments is in consoling those who are hurting. That is where the multi-functioning *hazzan* is nonpareil in meeting congregants' innermost needs. The transformation that a cantor's song enables people to undergo, from turmoil to inner calm, is surely a thing of wonder.

Peace of mind comes not just from knowledge of Bible or Talmud or Siddur, but from embracing the essence of those religious sources—their *melody*—in the words of theologian Jacob Neusner.⁷³ Yet even the awareness that something emanating from deep within our collective past has been *sung* to us, is ephemeral at best, a transcendent bubble that cannot last without constant nurturing through study or prayer. For those who attend synagogue every Shabbat, the cantor's familiar prayer chant can help, for it survives in the memory bank of regular worshipers who have heard it week-in-week-out, year after year. For those who might be unaffiliated with a synagogue and unfamiliar with prayer chant, anyone who has been uplifted by hearing *God's* song from the lips of a truly dedicated cantor—even once in a lifetime—must consider themselves blessed.⁷⁴

*Joseph A. Levine earned a doctorate in Sacred Music from the Jewish Theological Seminary, served for 30 years as a full-time cantor in Conservative congregations, and headed a textile manufacturing company for the next 30 years. His published books include **Synagogue Song in America**, **Ba'avur Dovid**, **Rise and Be Seated**, and **Scholar in Resonance**. His cantata—**The World of Yossele Rosenblatt**—with music arranged by Charles Davidson, premiered at the Cantors Assembly convention of 1993. He has edited the **Journal of Synagogue Music** since 2004.*

⁷² Wislawa Szymborska, "Nothing Twice," *Poems New and Collected--1955-1997* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co.), 1998.

⁷³ Jacob Neusner, in the subtitle to his 1995 book, *Judaism's Theological Voice—The Melody of the Talmud* (The University of Chicago Press).

⁷⁴ This summation was inspired—in both thought and verbiage—by Kenneth Cohen (personal communication to the writer, March 2, 2012).

N'GINAH L'MA'ASEH

Two High Holiday Transitional Passages: Max Wohlberg's *Emet ki atah hu yots'ram*; and Abba Yosef Weisgal's *V'atah hu melekh...ein kitsvah*

(CLICK ON THE FIRST PAGE OF MUSIC TO ACCESS THE COMBINED AUDIO FILE)

Our liturgy developed from a series of individual Statutory Blessings—*Matbei'a she-tav'u hakhamim bivrakhot* (the coin minted by our sages).¹ Over time, the individual blessings expanded into paragraphs, which were later grouped into complete sections of the liturgy. During the Middle Ages, particularly on High Holidays, religious poems—*piyyutim*—were inserted between the blessings to flesh out an ever-growing Order of Prayer (*Seder b'rakhot*) that organized the various section into a specified sequence.²

The *Amidah* (Standing Devotion) offers a prime example. Its first three blessings—the *Avot*, *G'vurot* and *K'dushah* (Our Ancestors, God's Saving Care and God's Holiness) are augmented significantly during the cantor's *Amidah* repetition on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. During the Musaf section on those days, a key ritual moment occurs in the *piyyut* that is positioned as the climax of several poetic insertions leading to the *Kedushah*. *U-n'taneh tokef* (We proclaim the power of this Day), describes God presiding over the Heavenly Court as all living beings pass in review, and are judged according to their deeds during the previous year.

The text then has God moving into a mode of Forgiveness,³ shifting from the Throne of Justice (*Emet Ki atah hu dayyan u-mokhi'ah* (You are the Prosecutor)—to the Throne of Mercy (*Emet Ki atah hu yots'ram*, You are [after all] their Creator [Who knows their mortal limitations]). Max Wohlberg has created a poignant chant for this conciliatory text that succinctly captures the ephemeral nature of our existence: “like a vanishing dream” (*v'kha-halom ya-uf!*) The second *Emet* functions as the first of two **Transitional Passages** (*kavvei ha-ma'avar*)⁴ between our being judged on High, and God's Sanctification by all creation, the *Kedushah*.

The second *Kav ha-ma'avar*, *V'atah hu melekh... ein kitsvah* (You are the Eternal Sovereign), set by Abba Yosef Weisgal in a majestic major declamatory mode, reflects Hebrew liturgical recitative at its Central European best. The paired rhythmic phrases (Your years never end; Your time has no measure) fall rapidly on one another's heels in a musical race to placate the Supreme Judge by recalling the endless mystery of God's name, and finally pleading that the revered and holy nature of that name be honored by an act of Divine mercy regarding our fate, as we recite the *Kedushah*. Jenny Chabon sings these two transitional passages on the combined audio files. [JAL]

¹ Jerusalem Talmud, *B'rakhot* V, 9b.

² The 9th-century *Seder rav amram*, by the Head of the Sura Academy in Babylon, was the first.

³ Neil Gillman, “Reading the Liturgy through the Spectacles of Theology: The case of *U-n'taneh tokef*,” *Journal of Synagogue Music*, Fall 2008, vol. 33, pp. 47-53.

⁴ Ezra Fleisher, *Shirat ha-kodesh bimei ha-beinayim* (Jerusalem: Keter), 1975:70-72.

Emet ki atah hu yots'ram

Words: *U-n'taneh tokef*,
High Holiday Musaf
Attributed to Rabbi Amnon of
Mayence, 11th Century

Music: Max Wohlberg

Parlando

E - met ki a-tah hu yots - ram v'-a-tah _____ yo-dei - a yits - ram, ki heim ba - sar

Lyricaly

va-dam. _____ A - dam _____ y'-so - do mei-a - far _____ v'-so -

rit. *Con moto*

fo _____ le - a - far. _____ B'-naf - sho ya - vi lah - mo. Ma -

marcato

shul ka-he - res ha-nish - bar; k'-ha -tsir ya-veish, _____ u-kh' - tsits no - veil, _____

rit.

_____ k' - tseil _____ o - veir, _____ u - kh' - a - nan _____ ka - lah, _____ u - kh' -

dim.

ru-ah no-sha - vet, u-kh'-a - vak po-rei - ah, v'-kha-ha - lom _____

p *pp*

ya - uf.

Continues immediately with "V'atah hu melekh..." on next page

V'atah hu melekh...ein kitsvah

Emunat Abba
Cantors Assembly, 2006

Music: Abba Yosef Weisgal
Transcribed: Joseph Levine

Decisively *f* Lightly *mf*

V'-a - tah hu me-lekh eil hai v'-ka-yam. Ein kits-vah lish-no - te-kha, v' - ein keits l'-

o-rekh ya-me - kha; v' - ein l'-sha-eir mar-k' - vot k'-vo-de - kha, v' - ein l'-fa-reish

i-lum sh'-me - kha, shim-kha na-eh l'-kha v'-a-tah na - eh lish me - kha, u-sh'-mei-

nu ka - ra ta bish - me kha. A - seih l' - ma - an sh'-me - kha, v' - ka -

deish et shim-kha al mak-di-shei sh' - me-kha, ba - a - vur k'-vod shim - kha ha - na - a - rats v' - ha - nik -

dash, k' - sod si-ah sar-fei ko-desh. ha - mak-di-shim shim - kha ba-ko - desh,

da-rei ma - la im-da-rei ma - tah ka - ka-tuv al yad n'-vi e - kha:

v' - ka - ra zeh el zeh v' - a - mar

allargando

N'GINAH L'MA'ASEH

Yizkor in Yossele Rosenblatt's Style; Abba Weisgal's Kaddish yatom

(CLICK ANYWHERE IN THE MUSIC TO ACCESS THE PARTICULAR AUDIO FILE)

Hazzan Yossele Rosenblatt's singing reflected the ups and downs of his career: a brilliant sunburst of international fame, followed by the blinding torrent of personal bankruptcy, through no fault of his own. **Joseph Levine's "Yizkor in Yossele Rosenblatt's Style"** was written in 1959 in honor of his teacher, **Hazzan Max Wohlberg**, Professor of Nusah in the Cantors Institute (now H.L. Miller Cantorial School) at the Jewish Theological Seminary. Like Rosenblatt's life story, Levine's setting rides the same roller-coaster (vocally) allowing for a sudden shift into sorrowful lament that dramatically tone-paints the prayer's mention of *Al kiddush ha-shem* ([the martyrs] who gave up their lives in sanctifying God's name). Without warning it then drops into a baritonal register appropriate to describing *Heid g'vuratam u-m'sirutam* (the self-sacrificing devotion [of those martyrs]). Anyone who has heard Hazzan Rosenblatt's recorded voice will recall in their inner ear the ringing sincerity of its every note, from the highest heights of its otherworldly *falsestto* to the utter despair with which it plunged to the core of our being. The text of this *Yizkor* is from the Rabbinical Assembly's *Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book*, edited by Morris Silverman, 1946.

Hazzan **Abba Weisgal** led mourners in ***Kaddish yatom*** at the Morning and Evening Minyan of Baltimore's Chizuk Amuno Synagogue for over 50 years. In doing so, he followed the practice of his father and grandfather who had been cantors-and-ritual slaughterers in Polish shtetls and had similarly attended daily services faithfully all their lives. So musically logical were the phrases Abba chanted in leading *Kaddish yatom*, and so compelling their emotional impact, that even first-time attendees found themselves singing along without realizing it. The feeling of absolute and total devotion in that humble chapel during those few moments—always amazed me. The young men who stood with Abba and recited those word affirming God's sovereignty over the world (in the face of their great loss) had been taught their Bar Mitzvah portions by him, had served their country overseas during WWII, had returned to rear families, and would now and forevermore **sing** *Yitgaddal v'yitkaddash...* in the unforgettable tones of their teacher.

The audio file features **Alberto Mizrahi**, immediate Past President of the Cantors Assembly and Hazzan of Anshei Emet Synagogue in Chicago. His review of "The CD—Rabbi Isaac Algazi Singing Ottoman-Turkish and Ottoman-Jewish Songs" appeared in the *Journal's* Fall 2013 issue. [JAL]

Yizkor in Rosenblatt's Style

In Memory of
Hazzan Max Wohlberg

This memorial prayer, for the
Jewish Martyrs of All the Ages,
borrows Hazzan Rosenblatt's use of
sudden dramatic shifts in vocal register

Joseph A. Levine
JTS, 1959

Parlando
mp

Yiz-kor el-o-him_ nish - mot kol a-hei-nu b'-nei yis-ra - el_ she-mas-

4 *Darker*

ru_ naf-sham al_ kid- dush_ ha-sheim. A - na yi-sha-ma b'-hay-yei - nu

8 *Brighter*

heid_ g'-vu-ra - tam_ u-m'-si-ru - tam, v'-yei-ra - eh b'-ma-a-sei-nu to-har li-bam.

11 *Pleading*

V'-ti-h' - ye - nah naf-sho-tei - hem ts'-ru-rot_

14

bi-ts' - ror_ ha- hay - yim, u - t' -

16 *pp* *mf* *ff*

hi m'-nu-ha-tam_ ka-vod. So - va s'- ma- hot_ et pa - ne - kha, n'-i-

19 *subito p* *morendo*

mot_ bi-min-kha ne-tsah. A - - mein.

Kaddish yatom

TEXT: Masekhet sofrim, 8th cent.
REFRAIN: Psalms 113:2

MUSIC: Abba Weisgal

Simply, with dignity

3 Yit-gad - dal v'-yit-kad-dash sh'-meih rab - ba b' - al - ma di v' -

6 ra khir-u-teih; v' yam-likh mal-khu -teih b' hay-yei-khon u-v'-yo-mei - khon, u-v'-hay-yei d'-khol

9 beit yis-ra-el, ba-a-ga - la u-viz-man ka-riv. V'-im-ru: a - mein. Y'-hei sh'-meih rab-ba m'-va

12 rakh l' - a-lam u-l'-al-mei al-ma-ya. Yit-ba-rakh v'-yish-ta-bah, v'-yit-pa-

15 ar v'-yit-ro-mam, v'-yit-na-sei v'-yit-had-dar, v'-yit-a-leh v'-yit-hal-lal sh'-

19 mei d'-kud-sha b' - rikh hu, l' - eil - la min kol bir-kha-ta

22 v'-shi-ra-ta, tush - b'-ha-ta v' - ne-he-ma-ta, da-a-mi-ran b'-al - ma. V'-im-ru: a-mein. Y'-

26 hei sh'-la-ma rab-ba min sh'-ma ya v' hay-yim a - lei-nu v'-al kol yis-ra - el. V'-im-ru: a-mein.

30 O - seh sha-lom bim-ro - mav, hu ya-a-seh sha-lom a -

lei - nu v'-al kol yis-ra-el. V'-im - ru: a - mein.

N'GINAH L'MA'ASEH

David Kusevitsky's *Hatsi-kaddish* for Friday Night

It is not often that the *Journal* can offer readers an eminently usable setting of a prayer that appears in virtually every service, by one of the 20th-century's master *hazzanim*. JSM is indebted to William Lieberman, cantor at B'nai Aviv of Weston, Florida, for whom David Kusevitsky (ז"ל) transcribed this *Hatsi-kaddish*. It gives the impression of having flowed spontaneously from the pen of its creator on the spot, were it not for the following several factors.

Hazzan Kusevitsky had already recorded (Tikvah LP, T-55) his more elaborate Cantor and-SATB arrangement of Yossele Rosenblatt's "Hasidic Kaddish" that had been popularized a generation earlier (tr. J. Levine, *Ketonet Yosef*, Cantors Institute, 2008: 713-14). Kusevitsky's more modest folk-like adaptation—ostensibly for student use only—was actually a version that he himself sang fairly regularly at Friday Night services in Borough Park's Temple Emanuel (per the present writer's personal observation during the 1950s).

The *heteir*, or authoritative "permission" to depart momentarily from *Nusah ha-t'fillah* in a passage that was traditionally chanted, had been given *de facto* by the universally admired Cantor of Odessa, Pinchas Minkowsky (1859-1924), in an attempt that also first appeared in the early 1950s. Gershon Ephros published it (courtesy of an oral tradition heard from S. Luskin) in his *Cantorial Anthology* IV (Bloch, 1953:147-48).

Neither Minkowsky nor Kusevitsky followed the Hasidic path in their personal lives. Quite the contrary; both pertained to an intellectual branch of *hazzanut* known as *T'fillat ha-seider* (after S. Horodetzky, *Yahadut ha-seikhel v'yhadut ha-regesh*, 1947). Of the two highly skilled practitioners, Minkowsky found it more difficult to break free of the orderly approach preordained by centuries of straight-laced tradition. His attempt at quasi-communal singing is awkward, at best; so much so, that the published version of his *Kaddish* requires serious re-working of its rhythmic scheme before it can even be sung!

By contrast, David Kusevitsky's superb musicality, refined through decades of transcribing the unschooled compositional efforts of others (as well as training and conducting large choirs for synagogues and the Polish Army) allowed him to dash off this little gem in note-perfect fashion. While it may seem to have been improvised during its writing, when sight-read *aloud*, it can "lead to an uncanny impression that the composer is looking over one's shoulder" (*Journal of Synagogue Music*, September 2016:78). [JAL]

(CLICK IN THE MUSIC TO HEAR IT SUNG BY WILLIAM LIEBERMAN,
FOR WHOM IT WAS WRITTEN DOWN BY HAZZAN KUSEVITSKY.)

Hatsi-kaddish (for Friday Night)

Jewish Theological Seminary
Cantors Institute

David Kusevitsky
1974

Yit- gad-dal v' - yit- kad-dash sh'- meih_ rab-ba_ A - mein. B' - al - ma di-

6 v'ra khir u-teih; v' yam-likh mal- khu - teih b' - hay - yei - khon uv'-

10 yo - mei-khon uv'-hay-yei d'-khol beit_ yis - ra - eil, ba-a- ga - la u-viz-

14 man ka - riv, v' - i-m'-ru: a - mein. Y'hei sh'-meih rab-ba m' - va - rakh l'-

19 a - lam_ u - l' - al-mei al-ma ya. Yit - ba - rakh v' - yish - ta - bah_ v'-

23 yit-pa-ar v'-yit-ro-mam v' - yit - na - sei v' - yit - had-dar v'-yit-al - leh v'-yit-hal-lal_ sh'-

27 meih d'- ku - d'-sha brikh hu, l' - eil - la min kol bir - kha-ta_ v' - shi - ra -

32 -ta, tush - b' - ha - ta v' - ne - he - ma - ta,

35 da - a - mi - ran_ b' - al - ma. V' - i - m'-ru: a - mein. *Rit.*

D'VAR TORAH

Purim and the Megillah—Its Music *Is* the Message

By Marcia Lane

There is a lot of music—from Baroque oratoria to Yiddish songs to English children's songs--associated with the festival of Purim. The accumulation of melodies for young and old spans from songs of triumph over Haman's evil plot (*Utsu eitsah*) to songs lauding the humble *hamantash*. The oratorio *Esther* by George Frederick Handel, set to a libretto by Samuel Humphreys after the drama by Jean Racine and first performed in 1732, makes much of the nobility of the King and the regal bearing of our courageous heroine. Nothing demonstrates this better than her magisterial opening statement:

*Thus pleased is the Almighty to dispense,
In ways unknown to us, His providence.*

In Hugo Weisgall's edgy opera, to a libretto by Charles Kondek and premiered at the New York City Opera in October of 1993, Esther sounds like a tormented soul, wondering what choices she can make to save her people and herself. She struggles to define her very self in an aria that has her declaring, "I am Esther," three different times "in at least three different fashions as its implications change," according to *The New York Times* critic Edward Rothstein.

Notwithstanding the above (and other) renowned settings of the biblical story, the quintessential Purim music remains the **chanting** of *M'gillat esteir*. In fact, Purim is the only festival for which the scroll **is** the holiday. Unlike all other *haggim* which exist to commemorate a historical event or an agricultural season, unlike those holidays with deep theological rationale for existence, Purim cannot exist without the Megillah of Esther. The holiday doesn't have a compelling claim to historical accuracy, nor does it claim either an agricultural or biblical *raison d'être*.

Purim exists to tell a story, and that story is the Megillah. Without it, we have no other basis for celebrating Purim, since all the *mitzvot* which we associate with Purim come exclusively from the Megillah itself. *Mishlo'ah manot*, *matanot la-evyonim*, *s'udah*—all are derived from the first commandment pertaining to the holiday, to hear the Megillah. That is, although one could have the festival of Passover without the Song of Songs (or Shavuot without Ruth or Sukkot without *Kohelet*), there is quite literally no Purim without *Megillat esteir*.

Oddly, in many respects Purim is analogous to the only other commemoration that is heavily dependent on its Megillah: Tishah B'av. In both cases, the melody used to chant the *m'gillah* is *sui generis* to that one book. While the books of Ruth, Song of Songs and *Kohelet* all share a trope system, and the book of Job is chanted in Haftarah trope, *Eikhah* and *Esteir* are each singular and distinctive.

There's another significant factor that connects these two entirely opposite days, the one the height of joy—even hilarity—and feasting, and the other the depths of misery and fasting. We have a musical hint that Purim knows about Tishah B'av. Embedded in the prescribed chant for the Purim Megillah are phrases traditionally sung in the Tishah B'Av chant:

the final verse of Chapter 3, when the extermination decree goes forth; and verses 1 and 3 of Chapter 4, when Mordechai along with every other Jew in the King's far-flung provinces bewails the approaching calamity.

It's as if the Megillah of Esther knows *M'gillat eikhah*. as if these two biblical books, the goofiest one and the saddest one, were bound together in a theological statement. Tishah B'Av commemorates the destruction of Temple and the dispersal of the Jewish people. Although there are questions about the "historicity" of events depicted in the Book of Esther, an historical community of Jews certainly existed in Persia, that had come there during the Babylonian Exile, seen ever since as a catastrophic event.

Perhaps that is why the music for the Megillah of Esther initially references the destruction of the First Temple in the four verses mentioned earlier, but later spends over two chapters (last three verses of Chapter 8, and all of Chapters 9 and 10) reassuring us that in the end, "the Jews had light, gladness, joy and honor"—which cantors like Abba Yosef Weisgal (1885-1981), still trained in the grand Eastern European tradition that would die in the *Shoah*—interpreted through soaring aria-like fantasias like this one originally published in *JSM* March 2016, page 65, "And Mordechai left the King's presence robed in majesty...":

U-mord'khai yatsa

Text: Esther 8:15-16

Music: Abba Yosef Weisgal

Majestically

U - mord - d' - khai — ya - tsa mi - lif - nei — ham - me — lekh bi - l' - vush — mal - khut t' -

khei - let va hur — va - a - te - ret za - hav g' - do - lah, v' - takh - rikh buts v' - arg - ga - man, — v' - ha -

ir — shu - shan tsa - ha - lah v' - sa - mei - hah. Lai - hu -

dim hai - tah — o - rah v' - sim - hah v' - sa - son vi - kar. U - v' - khol m' - di - nah u - m' - di - nah...

*Reader waits for congregation

Marcia Lane, an accomplished educator, storyteller and freelance hazzan, served Temple B'nai Abraham in Meriden, Connecticut during the 2017 High Holidays. Her Torah commentaries for the Academy of Jewish Religion appear regularly on that institution's website.

MAIL BOX

Shabbat Morning—a report from the UK

November 20, 2017

On Shabbat morning these days, I mostly go to our United Synagogue (British Orthodox) *shul*, specifically to its *Hashkamah* (early-riser) Minyan, where 40 or so locals away from the main throng are among the most knowledgeable and attentive daveners. My son Daniel [Editor’s note: see “A New Look at the Mystery Word, *Selah*,” in JSM of September 2017] when in England, often reads Torah for us. It’s all over by 10 AM, with our own Kiddush, and I have the rest of the day to read. Our daughter Sarah attends a Masorti (British Conservative) congregation, whose main Minyan *minhag* is virtually indistinguishable from the standard Anglo, so I can only generalize about prevalent trends here. Still, what Matthew Austerklein describes in his JSM review of the so-called “Independent Minyan”—allowing the congregational voice to lead once it has “gotten” the tune, and encouraging successive repetitions until an appropriate mood is reached—I do not believe has spread to the UK as yet [referring to “Music of the Independent Minyan,” JSM September 2017].

Apart from British Reform (like Belsize Square or West London congregations, never as extreme as British Liberal), there is no synagogue left in London with a regular trained choir. There is no professional United Synagogue or Masorti hazzan left in London or, I think, in England. This leaves us at the mercy of any congregant who thinks he knows nusah—assuming he is aware of the concept—and one or two capable part-timers. Some memories of the *Blue Book* (the United Synagogue’s official four-part choral handbook of 1933) do persist, sung in unison, more or less. Otherwise: much Carlebach and kids’ camp tunes and Israeli songs adapted to various texts. For the High Holidays here we have a powerful Israeli-based tenor—Simon Cohen—a transplanted Brit who serves as visiting hazzan--a rich diet for folk used only to a thin gruel. Some locals get conscripted to serve in a choir to support him, but more often they pull him down, rather than allow themselves to be uplifted by him.

So, as Tom Lehrer used to say of his audience, we are “small but declining.” I recall that when Sholom Kalib set about his multi-volume project of anthologizing and analyzing *The Musical Tradition of the East European Synagogue*, he said it was because he found when visiting an American *shul*, that the prayer leader had no idea of what was appropriate. Worse still, the congregation didn’t notice (I may have misquoted from memory). Perhaps we are due for a revival along the lines of what Austerklein terms the American “Independent Minyan,” now evident in Israel as well. Let us hope so. As the late Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson advised: “Think good—and it will *be* good!”

Victor Tunkel

London, UK

Echoes of the Past in Budapest

June 15, 2017

When my husband and I disembarked at Budapest, it brought back memories of the Dohanyi Street Synagogue which I had visited several times in connection with my work as Founding President of the EAJL (European Academy for Jewish Liturgy). I had known the former hazzan, Laszlo Fekete, possessor of a magnificent bass-baritone voice, the preferred sound in Central and Western European synagogues of a Liberal persuasion. I remembered finding the service very formal, the nusah being an Hungarian version of Eastern European. The Seminary (so-called *Neolog*, which is their form of Conservative) somehow survived World War II and still trains rabbis and cantors. Neither program appeals to their young people who are going outside, particularly to the Abraham Geiger College in Berlin where they do not have to pay any fees, or they are going to study in Israel.



Hazzan Laszlo Fekete

The Cantorial Training curriculum covers Ancient and Classical Jewish music, Diaspora music (including Hasidic and Reform), the Annual Cycle of Liturgy (including the Three Weeks from 17 Tammuz through 9 Av). Its practical courses include: Voice Training, Music Theory, Interpretation and Presentation. Subjects which overlap with Rabbinic and Educational training are: Jewish Law, Liturgy, Hebrew, Biblical and Talmudic Literature, World Jewry, Organizing Communities and Psychology of Religion.



University of Jewish Studies, Budapest

This surprisingly positive hint of a brighter future contrasted starkly with Budapest's palatial government buildings still bearing bullet holes from World War II and the Hungarian Uprising of 1956.

Jaclyn Chernett
London, UK

Teaching *Hazzanut* in Germany Today

August 14, 2017

Eight years ago. I received an invitation from the eminent pianist and musicologist, Professor Jascha Nemtsov, to teach *Hazzanut* at the Abraham Geiger Cantorial School in the Berlin suburb of Potsdam, where he is Academic Director. For the first year or two, the program remained in its embryonic stage, with administration feeling its way as to how best to educate the young men and women who had applied. With the appointment of Professor Eliyahu Schleifer—who is also a practicing cantor—as Coordinator, the program began to take shape.

Since the student body is quite small—graduating no more than one or two students per year—there is no possibility of holding separate classes for each of the program’s four years: Weekday and Shabbat; *Shalosh r’galim*; High Holy Days; Minor Holidays, Memorial Days and Life Cycle Events. It became obvious that even First-year students would be immediately engaged in the four-year cycle—while they were simultaneously being initiated into the rudiments of Weekday and Shabbat nusah. The subjects of my courses changed accordingly.

My overarching task has been to introduce students to both traditional and modern cantorial creations on an advanced level. It has worked only because the students are mostly good musicians and competent singers. However, the few whose skill set was more limited necessitated my adjusting the bar of hazzanic sensitivity to accommodate their more basic level. Despite my more advanced students’ eagerness to learn new musical material, the Abraham Geiger College gives priority to courses in History, Liturgy, Halakhah, Bible and Mishnah, leaving only limited time for musical studies. Despite this challenge, I did manage to bring my cantorial students to a relatively advanced level of hazzanic proficiency. During the past three years, they—together with alumni—were able to give concerts to the Berlin public, and were twice invited to participate in the annual Yiddish Music Festival held in Weimar.

Teaching cantorial music in Germany has been a unique experience. Especially in the beginning, I found it difficult to overcome a feeling of deep anger that arose from the memory of the Shoah, reinforced by the very names of the streets. Most moving were the *Stolpersteine* (stumbling stones), brass memorial plates embedded in the sidewalks fronting many houses in Berlin, that bear the names of Jews who had lived there and were murdered during the Shoah. Yet I could not help but notice an encouraging revival of Jewish life all around me. As a result, I have come to regard my teaching as a contribution to the revival of *Hazzanut* in Berlin, and by extension, in other European cities as well. This dovetails with the Geiger College’s goal of training rabbis and cantors to serve in re-emerging Jewish communities throughout Europe.

In Germany, most congregations are small and in dire need of funds. It is therefore remarkable that the College has been able to place almost all its graduating cantors. Current undergrads serve as interns in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Belgium. Graduates serve as cantors in Mannheim, Hannover, Braunschweig (Brunswick), Magdeburg and Stockholm, Sweden. Additionally, under the guidance of faculty member Dr. Ralph Selig, students periodically make short trips to Poland to enrich the Shabbat services in Warsaw and elsewhere.

It is noteworthy that, with the exception of Berlin's Pestalozzi Street Synagogue where services feature Lewandowski's compositions predominantly, performed by cantor, organ and professional choir, the music at all other synagogues consists of nusah sung unaccompanied. Congregational singing tends toward melodies of Eastern and Western Europe, to the exclusion—at least for the moment—of American influence.

The level of understanding of liturgical music in most congregations is quite low. Even so, *Hazzanut* is welcomed—in limited doses—if it is introduced and explained. This affords interns the opportunity to sing selected recitatives during worship.

Israel Goldstein
Jericho, New York

America Singing—from Mt. Desert Island to the Mississippi Delta

August 27, 2017



“Shining Sea” -- off the Coast of Maine

Photo: Shoshana Brown, 2017

A week of vacation in the cool air of Maine:
making daily forays into Acadia
from a grey-weathered house in Bass Harbor
where the songs we heard were those of the gulls,
bells on the markers out on the water,
Bass Light's foghorn, a seal's bark, the tremolo of a loon.

But before this Northern ascent we made *y'ridah*
South to Asheville, North Carolina:
hiking the Blue Ridge and the Smokies, sampling the resonance
of old Appalachian churches, ringing their walls with
Amazing Grace and *Wade in the Water*.

A road trip West through Tennessee—
destination: Graceland, and Elvis Discovery—
this young white man a bridge for blue, black and soul
strolling Beale Street after dark, booze and blues,
libations poured out into the night
mingling with the humidity, no letup in the heat.

In the morning a road straight down into the Delta
to Clarksdale, Mississippi on Highway 61,
cotton fields stretching to the horizon,
and overhead a blistering sun.

Someday someone will no doubt found
a Museum of *Hazzanut*—and if so they should visit
the Delta Blues Museum to see how it is done—

can they transport the walls of a Lower East Side tenement
as the Blues Museum has done with the former slave shack of
Muddy Waters? Will the walls ring out with our sighs and wails

as these walls do? Drive through the Delta
and you will understand how brutal
it must have been—cultivating and picking
all that cotton out in that heat with hardly a spot
of shade in sight! What water you can see is mirage
or swamp water, graced by wetland birds.

It was Reb Zalman (z”l) who taught me Rebbe Nahman’s
midrash on *zimrat ha’arets*—that every soil has
its own special song—imagine those descendants of Africa
sweating beneath this Mississippi sun, releasing
the songs of that earth, mingling them with melodies
and drumbeats from their Old Country...

All this gave birth to the Delta blues, to jazz of course, to Gospel
and Elvis, the Beatles and all rock ‘n roll,
to Stax Records and Motown, funk and soul
and even that which we sing in our synagogues today:
a bissel of Europe, grace notes of Appalachia,
the uncanny cry of a Maine loon mixed with sea-chanties:
Nusah amerika!

Shoshana Brown

Fall River, MA

Impressions of *Sukkot* at Toronto's Song Shul

October 9, 2017

Foremost, the service is thought out, rehearsed and realized with a high degree of professionalism, by Cantor Simon Spiro and his 16-voice mixed choir. The cantor chanted *Birkhot ha-shahar* and *P'sukei d'zimra* rapidly, in the style of a *Ba'al t'fillah*. He deftly improvised the davened passages of *Shaharit*, with moments of soaring hazzanic fancy à la Leyb Glantz, expertly accompanied by choral humming that Cantor Spiro cued with discreet hand signals. Even in these moments, nuances such as vowel changes during the same chord--along with wonderful inversions—were performed to great effect.

The set compositions adhered to *nusah* in the melody line, but were arranged in a jazzy, pop style that seemed to “bring in” people who might have been unfamiliar with the traditional chant. One could tell by their body language that these folks were totally engaged. The choir was brilliant, their Hebrew pronunciation extraordinary, even in lightning-fast passages sounding like battle-tested daveners!

Worshippers sat in a semi-circle around cantor and choir, attendance averaging 150-200 for the first two days of *Yom tov* and Shabbat. The festival happened to coincide with Canada's Thanksgiving weekend, which evidently kept many regulars away at their lakeshore vacation “cottages.” Among those who attended, about half sang along with the prayers, and everyone moved to the rhythms. The predominantly older crowd included some young families, while a separate children's service took place simultaneously.

A dozen or so youngsters who joined the Torah recessional around the room were each given a bottle by the cantor's wife, Aliza, and they merrily blew bubbles along the way. She referred to them as “the Children's Bubble Brigade.” Proceedings had begun at 9 A.M. and concluded by 11:30. Eliza announced pages, and delivered a five-minute *D'var torah* one day. On Shabbat, a guest speaker/author was allotted six minutes for a “Staccato Sermon,” apparently their regular practice. The Torah reading was limited to a third of the prescribed verses, while silent congregational reading of the Haftarah was preceded and followed by an honoree's chanting of the traditional blessings (both of these practices to save time, presumably). During *Musaf*, Cantor Spiro offered a bit of background just before each set piece.

All in all, my wife Fredda and I agreed that experiencing such a rare--yet surprisingly successful--presentation of meticulously-prepared Eastern European *Khorshul*-style prayer in a modern and congregation-friendly atmosphere, was well worth the long drive up to Toronto for this memorable visit.

Jacob Mendelson

White Plains, NY

“Sing Hallelujah” in the Cradle of American Liberty

May 7, 2018

On Thursday evening May 1, 2018, a time machine transported concert goers from Philadelphia’s Verizon Hall to pre-World War I Europe where, thanks to 200 amateur and professional choral singers, cantorial soloists, organist, harpist and percussionist, they could experience Jewish worship music as it had been practiced in “Liberal” synagogues at the time which featured mixed choir and organ. The concert resulted from months of intense preparation by the multi-talented Music Director and Conductor David Tilman, Hazzan Emeritus of Beth Sholom and choral director of Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel, both in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania.

Hazzan Tilman, who holds advanced degrees from Columbia College, the Jewish Theological Seminary and the Juilliard School, had been invited to prepare a concert celebrating the Frederick J. Cooper Memorial Organ in Verizon Hall. He envisioned focusing on the contributions of European, American and Israeli Jewish composers to the organ repertoire. As a framework, he used the unique type of prayer service that had developed in 19th-century Western Europe following the introduction of an organ during synagogue services in Westphalia, Germany in 1810. According to the succinct and informative program notes by Dr. Joseph A. Levine, that event opened “the floodgates [for worship reform] on both sides of the Atlantic,” notably by Liberal congregations in Charleston and New York City.

Because of its history as a city where a significant portion of the Jewish community had embraced the above innovation, Philadelphia was the perfect venue for this commemorative celebration. In the late 1800s, three of its major synagogues featured professional choirs with organ accompaniment: Rodeph Shalom, the oldest Ashkenazic synagogue in the Western hemisphere, founded in 1795; Keneseth Israel, established in 1847 by breakaway members of Rodeph Shalom; and Adath Jeshurun, which formalized its services in 1869. Their respective memberships included men who were imbedded in the fabric of American government, jurisprudence and commerce and whose spiritual leaders were prominent in the forming of a distinctly American rabbinate.

The first half of the concert focused on Jewish music written in 19th-century Europe. Chief among the represented composers were Cantor Solomon Sulzer of Vienna (1804-1890), whose expressed desire had been to modernize the Jewish music of his time, and Louis Lewandowski (1876-1894) Chief Choir Master of the Berlin community. A solo organ piece by Lewandowski opened the program, superbly performed by talented organist Andrew Senn. The recital organ console, located on stage, was used, offering a clear view of Senn’s agile fingers and feet. After this opening, remarks offered by Rabbi Dr. Lance Sussman of Keneseth Israel explained the place of the “Organ in Jewish Worship.”

As representative choral works for the “Torah Service” that followed, Tilman chose *Hotsa’at ha-torah* by Sulzer, *S’u sh’arim* in French Grand Opera style by Cantor Samuel Naumbourg of Paris (1815-1880), *U-v’nukho yomar* by Lewandowski, Psalm 100 (*Hari’u ladonai*) by Naumbourg and Psalm 111 (*Odeh ladonai b’hol leiv*) by Sulzer, *Mah Tov* and

Psalm 150 (*Haleluyah*) by Lewandowski. The soloists for this section—Cantors Aliza Pomerantz-Boro, Jeffrey Weber, Elizabeth Shammash, Howard Glantz, Eliot Vogel and Jen Cohen—all performed well. Cantor Leon Sher ably conducted the *Mah Tov*.

The second half of the program presented contributions to the choir/organ literature by 20th-century composers of Jewish music. Foremost among them and an early champion for preserving Jewish motives and prayer modes was Abraham Wolf Binder (New York, 1895-1966) whose dramatic three-part setting of the traditional Shofar Service was performed with great skill by shofar blower and trumpeter Jeffrey Miller, percussionist Rabbi Jeffrey Schnitzer, various chorus members and Cantor Rebecca Schwartz. That was followed by: Max Janowski's *Avinu Malkeinu* (Chicago, 1912-1991) with Cantor Amy Levy as soloist; *Kiddush* by Kurt Weill (Berlin, New York, 1900-1950) with Cantor Sandy Bernstein as soloist; Psalm 98 by Yehezkel Braun (Tel Aviv, 1922-2014) conducted by Dr. Elayne Robinson Grossman with Cantor Elizabeth Shammash singing the solo; and Psalm 150 by Cantor Charles Davidson (Elkins Park, 1929 -), eloquently conducted by Dr. Robert A. M. Ross.

In coincidental observance of Leonard Bernstein's Centennial (1918-1990), Ivy Weingram, Associate Curator of the National Museum of American Jewish History, gave a short talk preceded an exciting performance of his *Hashkiveinu*, commissioned by the Park Avenue Synagogue in 1946. Cantor Elena Zarkh and the *Nashirah* choir conducted by Dr. Julia Zavodsky gave an inspired performance of this difficult but rewarding piece, which featured snatches of syncopated melody that would blossom forth in Bernstein's future compositions.

The program concluded with what was perhaps the most memorable performance of the evening, Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*. To quote Levine's program notes: "The music still sounds fresh over half a century later, exuding the composer's unquenchable optimism in every phrase." The wonderful performance by the assembled choirs, organist Senn and boy soloist Landon Kratchman brought this affirmation of David Tilman's musical vision to a superbly dramatic conclusion.

Tilman had conceived, chosen, organized, rehearsed and led the entire program, aside from the four selections mentioned above, for which he graciously invited guest conductors to do the honors. Choir member Sue Lawson and stage manager Harvey Perelman assisted in the event's planning and coordination. Participating groups were: Beth El Adult Choir; Delaware Valley Ensemble of the Cantors Assembly; Chamber Singers of Haverford and Bryn Mawr Colleges; choirs of the Old York Road Kehillah/Jewish Community; *Mak'heilat* Beth Sholom; *Nashirah*—The Jewish Chorale of Greater Philadelphia; and *Sharim V'sharot*—People of Song.

Charles Davidson

Philadelphia

REVIEWS

Sholom Kalib's *The Musical Tradition of the Eastern European Synagogue*, Volume III-A, "The Sabbath Evening Service"

(Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2005), ISBN 1-8156-2927-3. Part One: The Sabbath Eve Service (Beginning), lviii, 700 pages; Part Two: The Sabbath Eve Service (Conclusion), xxv, 584 pages; Part Three: Annotative Commentary, xxi, 348 pages.

[Editor's note: Our reviewer has retained Sholom Kalib's transliterations as they appear consistently throughout the published three volumes of his monumental series.]

Reviewed by Joshua Jacobson

Syracuse University Press has recently issued the third volume in Sholom Kalib's ambitious five volume (twenty book) project on *The Musical Tradition of the Eastern European Synagogue*. Volume One was devoted to history and definition. Volume two presented the weekday services. And now volume three brings us music for the Sabbath Eve service. Parts four through nine of volume three (already outlined in the introduction to the current volume) will cover the services for Sabbath Morning, Sabbath Afternoon, for Special Sabbaths, and paraliturgical hymns (*z'miros*).

Sholom (a.k.a. Sylvan) Kalib (b. 1929 in Dallas, Texas) is a renowned cantor and music theorist. Since his retirement from Eastern Michigan University in 1999, Kalib has devoted most of his energies to completing this vast anthology under the aegis of his Jewish Music Heritage Project (<http://www.jmhp.org>). The stated purpose of the project is "to document, catalog, and disseminate one of the great sacred musical traditions of the world, namely that of the Eastern European Synagogue, which is now in real danger of being lost forever."

As in volume two (reviewed by Laurence Loeb in *JSM* Fall 2006), three Eastern European traditions are here represented and identified: the east-central traditions of Galicia (Czech, Slovak and Hungarian), the eastern traditions of Lithuania (Polish and Russian), and the "warm devotional" traditions of the Hasidim in Volhynia. The current volume also includes music by Salomon Sulzer and other Central European composers. The renditions are further classified as to the extent of improvisatory embellishment on the bare outlines of the nusah. Level one is "incipient *chazzônus*: the most elementary usage of traditional cantorial technique." Level two, "intermediate *chazzônus*," represents "the more gifted *ba'al t'filô*." And level three, "advanced *chazzônus*," presents "extended as well as virtuosic recitatives of the professional *chazz'n*." As an extension of level three, Kalib also provides liturgical choral compositions by noted *hazzanim*.

This is a huge project. There are 830 entries in the current volume, representing 228 sources, anthologists and composers. There are 316 pages containing detailed musical analysis of each of the entries. Kalib himself is represented by 166 selections, far and away the largest contribution. Some of the entries are the editor's transcriptions from recordings, both

commercial and private. Some were copied from published sheet music. And others were taken from *partituren*—cantors’ handwritten collections.

Kalib has included many settings of the same text. For example, there are 17 illustrations of *bame madlikin*, and 34 of *bôr’chu*. Why so many? Kalib provides his reasoning: (1) to illustrate the diversity within the tradition; (2) to illustrate different approaches to tone painting and to the overall spirit of particular passages; (3) to illustrate a variety of *nusahim*; and (4) to document and preserve these compositions, and to perpetuate the reputations of their creators.

Kalib writes in his preface, “With the gradual attrition of the *kôhôn* and the concomitant replacement of it by Anglo-acculturated generations bereft of the knowledge and background needed to experience genuinely devotional intonation and interpretation of prayer, this line of communication between *chazz’n* and *kôhôn* became severed, and has ceased to exist. The resultant vacuum, also explained in volume 1, was gradually and increasingly filled by congregational singing, in an unrelenting trend toward simplistic, lighthearted tunes.” And that’s just a small sampling of his critique of current trends in synagogue music, a critique that becomes increasingly harsh and explicit.

Allow me to state that I’m a fellow curmudgeon. I also lament the dwindling of *nusah*-knowledgeable congregants and practitioners. I also decry the near-universal rejection of our attempts to illustrate the sacred text through musical drama and beauty. I also rail against the idea that every moment of synagogue music must be exclusively taken over by congregational singing of metered prayer tunes, many of which are insipid, inappropriate, and just don’t fit the words.

The *Musical Tradition of the Eastern European Synagogue* is a wonderful resource for cantors and *ba’aley tefillah*. However, because of the editor’s approach, it does not meet the standards of academic ethnomusicology. Kalib writes, “The purpose of the present work is perpetuation of the tradition in its zenith form through systematic documentation.” But he has allowed himself the freedom to make numerous changes in his transcriptions. His changes include alterations of rhythm to suit proper prosody, and changes in accompanying harmony and voicing. In many cases he removes organ parts to make the music acceptable in Orthodox congregations. In some cases, he creates a pastiche by combining bits and pieces from different compositions. He notes that such “improvements” have been common practice in the tradition, and that such alterations should be made only by a person “thoroughly knowledgeable and imbued with the spirit and practice of the musical-liturgical tradition,” which he certainly is.

Let’s have a closer look. Example 1E is *Ma Tovv* attributed to S. Sulzer. And yet the editor has chosen Joseph Sulzer’s arrangement of his father’s music, rather than the original. Furthermore, this *Ma Tovv* was originally published in a section for *Shalosh Regalim*, not Shabbat.

Example 10A-2d combines two different settings by Lewandowski of Psalm 92, *Mizmor Shir L'yom Hashabôs*, with the organ accompaniment removed. The first 60 measures are a transcription of Lewandowski's setting number 24, again with the organ accompaniment removed. Kalib recomposed measures 55-60 in order to accommodate the modulation to the well-known *Tzadik Katômôr* from Lewandowski's setting number 21.

Given that the editor has chosen to include so many settings of each text, the reader is occasionally puzzled by some glaring omissions. Where are the well-known settings by Lewandowski of *L'chô Dodi*, *V'shôm'ru*, and the *Kidush*?

Kalib has it in for congregational singing. He writes, "Omitted from this and all volumes of the present work are any examples of congregational singing ... The role of the congregant was to *dav'n* (pray with conviction), not to sing together with the *chazz'n* or choir. ... Congregational singing was introduced in the United States around 1914 in an attempt to accommodate a growing element either ignorant of the liturgy or disinclined to devotional prayer." He's right, but has he gone too far?

There are certainly examples of hymns sung by the *kahal* that predate the twentieth century. These include: Meier Leon's *Yigdal* (London, 1791); Salomon Sulzer's *Ki Mitziyon* (Vienna, 1839); Julius Freudenthal's *Ein Keyloheinu* (Brunswick, 1841); and Abraham Baer's *Kein Anachnu B'yôd'chô... Labrit Habeit...* (Koenigsberg, 1877, later adapted to the *Chatzi Kaddish* refrains "B'chayeichon... Ba'agôlô..." and "Tushb'chôsô... Da'amirôn...").

Kalib does include some congregational tunes, but has omitted many of the best-known ones. He refers to the singing of *Y'did Nefesh* before *Kabbalat Shabbat* as "a travesty of gravely serious proportions." The "lamentable" congregational singing of *L'chô Dodi* "has cheapened and vulgarized the sublimity of this extraordinary liturgical poem." And the "inferior congregationally-sung melodies" for *Môgen Ôvos* has "wiped out the sublimity" of the text.

None of his examples of *Adon Olôm* are congregational melodies; all are compositions for cantor and choir. He includes Gerowitsch's setting of *Adon Olôm* but complains that "Throughout most of the twentieth century, the most widely sung melody for *Adon Olôm* was a simplified version of the soprano line of the Gerowitch composition." But was it? Gerowitsch himself actually labeled the tune as "AW" (Alte Weise), suggesting that he had created an extended composition out of a melody that was already well known to the masses.

Kalib also offers a selection of *Z'miros Lel Shabôs*. *Shôlom Alechem* is presented in eight settings (including the well-known Goldfarb composition, re-arranged to accommodate the tripled performance of each stanza), *Eshes Chayil* in 4 settings (omitting, of course, that of Ben-Zion Shenker), *Askinu S'udôsô*—4, *Azamer Bish'vôchin*—3, *Kol M'kadesh Shvii*—6, *M'nuchô V'simchô*—8, *Ma Y'didus*—2, *Yom Ze L'yisrôel*—3, *Kô Ribon Ôlam*—8, *Tsôm'ô Nafshi*—3, and *Tzur Mishelo*—12. Why did he choose to include Shabbat table songs? It seems to contradict his premise of focusing on elaborate musical settings of liturgical texts rather than congregational singing.

Sadly, it must be noted that the author sometimes resorts to cliché rather than informed research, making generalizations rather than relying on data from surveys. Kalib reports that “sensitive intonation by a master chazz’n and/or choir” evoked “momentary solace” within “the God-fearing Jewish masses of Eastern Europe.” Does the author really know what “feelings were evoked within the masses”? He may be retrojecting his positions onto a vanished culture when he states “chazzanic as well as choral renditions of the entire *Hashkivenu* text were particularly looked forward to by the Eastern European Jewish masses.” That may be an overstatement. Was he there? Did he interview witnesses? Does he know how many of them were looking at their watches instead?

A few words about Kalib’s transliteration. By eschewing regional dialects in favor of a standardized Ashkenazic pronunciation, he has imposed an artificial consistency on source materials that represent a variety of linguistic traditions. He states that he has based his pronunciation transcription on “that of Vilna, Lithuania, ... considered the most scholarly and literary of Eastern Europe.” But Kalib would have been more scholarly if he had not neglected *dageish hazak* — וַיִּתְּזֵם is transcribed "v'yis-ha-lôl" instead of "v'yis-**hal**-lôl". And by transcribing מְלֻכּוּתָהּ as mal’-chu-se he has omitted the *mappik-heih*, and confused vocal *sh’va* with silent *sh’va*.

Despite these minor reservations, Sholom Kalib is to be commended for his efforts to preserve the great traditions of Eastern European *hazzanut*. The many volumes of his project belong on the shelves of every library, every school music department, every synagogue and every cantor.

*A frequent contributor to JSM, Joshua Jacobson holds a Doctorate of Musical Arts from the University of Cincinnati, is Professor of Music and Director of Choral Activities at Northeastern University, and is Visiting Professor of Jewish Music at Hebrew College. He is also founding director of the Zamir Chorale of Boston, and has guest conducted the Boston Pops Orchestra, the Bulgarian National Symphony and Chorus, the New England Conservatory Orchestra and the Boston Lyric Opera Company. His book, **Chanting the Hebrew Bible: The Art of Cantillation** (JPS), was a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award in 2002, and a **second edition** appeared in 2017. His article, “**Sometimes a munah pasek is just a munah pasek**,” appeared in the March 2017 Journal, vol. 42, no. 1.*

Sholom Kalib's Edited Response to Issues Raised in the Preceding Review

Josh, referring to your statement that “Kalib himself is represented by 166 selections, far and away the largest contribution,” no more than 40 are entirely mine, and I co-authored 11 others. The reality is that all types of emendation employed in my volumes **are** in accordance with unwritten assumptions evolved and practiced within the musical-liturgical tradition of the Eastern European synagogue. Examples of editorial changes and emendations abound in both published as well as unpublished collections, including: Chemjo Vinaver: *Anthology of Jewish Music*, no. 30, p. 129; Gershon Ephros: *Cantorial Anthology*, Volume 1, Morning Service, no. 25, p. 51; Ephros: *Cantorial Anthology*, Volume 6, p. 65; Ephros: *Cantorial Anthology*, Volume 6, p. 161; and Ephros: *Cantorial Anthology*, Volume 6, p. 167.

I fail to understand why inclusion of the above-enumerated types of emendation in a major work devoted specifically to the tradition of which they were common practice violates any principle of scholarship. I believe quite the contrary. Knowing what I have described above, my conviction is that precisely **because** of the emendations I have included, the tradition has been enriched—in accordance with its unwritten parameters, of which such licenses were a part.

You claim that despite the voluminousness of my entries for each text, there are “glaring” omissions, viz., the Lewandowski *L’chô Dodi*; *V’shôm’ru*; and *Kidush*. First of all, their omissions were not inadvertent, but rather, quite deliberate. The reason relates solely to the fact that the subject of my volumes is the musical-liturgical tradition of the **Eastern European** synagogue. Nevertheless, I did include a number of selections from Sulzer, Lewandowski, and several other West Central European Synagogue composers.

On the subject of **congregational singing**, you state: “There are certainly many examples of hymns and responses sung by the *kahal* that predate the twentieth century.” Let me say from the outset that I have heard that claim many times, but I personally am aware of **only one** among the classic (19th-century) sources, and **only one** from the first decade of the 20th century, and they are assigned to *Chor und Gemeinde*. Except for these, the word “congregation” is nowhere to be found on page after page of music within Sulzer, Naumbourg, Baer, Weintraub, Gerowitsch, Nowakowsky, Dunajewski, Jos. Heller, or Alman.

You have quoted several of my comments, regarding congregational tunes, for *Y’did nefesh*; *L’chô Dodi*; and *Môgên Ôvos*, for which I have no problem. However, my remarks are statements always made immediately following descriptions of the exalting character of each of those texts and the appropriate ambience evolved for them in traditional, inspirational interpretations of the texts—all supported by subsequent detailed analyses of the numerous musical entries on each of those texts, in which the mentioned qualities are continually pointed out. My remarks are then intended to speak to the glaring contrast, by comparison, between those and the contemporary low quality, often tawdry (if not worse) tunes sung on them congregationally. However, simply quoting those comments without reference to the **contexts** in which they were made, renders the impression that they are extremely narrow and unjustly prejudicial, which is simply untrue. Parenthetically, I happily acknowledged, in my Volume 3A (part 3, p. 4), the loveliness of the *Y’did Nefesh*, and its appropriateness among the *Z’miros Lis’udô Sh’lishis*, among which it is included in my Volume 3B, part 8.

Regarding your statement that my inclusion of *Z’miros* seems to contradict my premise “of focusing on elaborate musical settings of liturgical texts rather than congregational singing,”

there is no contradiction. Elaborate or not, the *Z'miros* are extraneous to the Sabbath Eve liturgy (explained in Volume 3A, pt. 3, p. 285). Hence, in the home, where there are no functions of cantor or congregation, the phenomenon of congregational singing is simply nonexistent. History has brutally proven that in the realm of congregational singing—regardless how benign it may have been originally or in its earlier stages—once acceded to, its tunes inevitably increase in length and in numbers and pervasiveness, as they concomitantly and continually decrease in quality and taste. The above-described process and causality are as inevitable as tomorrow's rising and setting sun. That is simply the nature of the "beast." Once the congregational-singing idiom has become entrenched, it is, for all practical purposes, irrevocable, to the point that a Lewandowski *Ma Tovv*, for example, can never again be heard in congregations once it has been eschewed and displaced.

My memories of hearing a number of the most renowned *chazzônim* of the waning years of the so-called Golden Age of the cantorate, including Pinchik, Kwartin, Moshe Koussevitsky, Kapov-Kagan, Vigoda, and Leibele Waldman, are no fantasies. I personally am witness to the fact that at those services there was absolutely **no congregational singing whatsoever**. Parenthetically, the daveners at those services were people who eagerly looked forward to, and relished hearing *chazzônim* give meaningful and persuasive expression to their innermost feelings and hopes, did not "look at their watches." They could hardly get enough.

It is precisely this aspect of *nusach*, which I have termed *qualitative*—as opposed to the *quantitative*, the tangible concepts of scale- or mode-basis, characteristic motives, pausal tones, etc., defined in my volume 1, part 1, pp. 100–101—which constitutes a critically vital intrinsic element in the Eastern European perception of the term *nusach*. Prior to my volumes, the *qualitative* aspect had theretofore never been identified as such and was thus never pointed out in rendition after rendition, as it is in my volumes. As explained in them, both the *quantitative* and *qualitative* aspects were formerly common knowledge, but precisely because that knowledge has dissipated to practical nonexistence, my conceptualization and documentation of both, especially the *qualitative*, is, in my judgment, a significant contribution to the general knowledge of the subject, without which there can be no full understanding or appreciation of the subject as a whole, nor of any specific rendition within it.

You stated that it would have been more scholarly if I had observed the **dagesh chazak**. The reason that I did not relates to the fact that throughout my 7.5 decades of activity in synagogue music, the thought of its necessity never occurred to me, nor was it **ever** as much as brought to my attention. Moreover, since Hebrew requires no more than a dot in the letter to which it applies, in English transliteration it requires double consonants, the cluttering look of which I preferred to avoid (as explained in Volume 3A, part 1, *Preface*, p. *liv*). Because you raised the question, however, I researched the subject to learn that among the classics, many did indeed observe it. At the same time, I was quite surprised to find how many did not, including: A. Z. Idelsohn, Gerowitsch, Dunajewski, A. B. Birnbaum, Leib Glantz, Katchko, Alter, and Gershon Ephros. Apparently, they considered the purpose of transliteration, as I did, merely provision of the simplest phonetical equivalents of the Hebrew syllables, nothing more. Let us agree to disagree.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Due to space considerations, the author's responses to some issues raised by the reviewer could not be included. His full reply is accessible at sgkalib@comcast.net.

Daniel Akiva's Ladino Song Cycle, *Sarina kanta*, for Mezzo-soprano; *Malchut* CD (Or-Tav Music Publications, 2015; n.d.)

Reviewed by Charles Heller

S*arina kanta* is a set of five Ladino songs for mezzo and piano by accomplished Israeli composer Daniel Akiva. The original version for voice and strings was previously published by Or-Tav and has now been recorded on a fine CD, about which more below. These are sensual lyrics about love and marriage, including the familiar *Una matica de ruda* (A Sprig of Bitter Rue), opening with a lyrical poem by Avner Perez describing the singing of his grandmother Sarina, hence the title “Sarina Sings”. The composer tells us that he has “quoted” Ladino folk songs, which could mean anything from “making passing reference to” to “setting the whole song”. Whatever the case, this is colorful and rewarding repertoire for discerning artists and listeners, especially if you have a pianist with a light and virtuosic touch. (The strings version brings out reminiscences of de Falla.)

With regard to the printed piano score of *Sarina kanta*, I might just mention that there are a few accidentals missing in the vocal part; and the use of unconventional ‘proportional notation’ (e.g. relating to rubato-like accelerando) should have been explained for the benefit of performers.

The CD *Malchut* includes *Sarina kanta* performed by Bracha Kol and the New Chamber Ensemble, and other works by Daniel Akiva including a setting of the poem *Malchut* by Israeli poet Rivka Miriam and pieces for mandolin/guitar and oboe/cello/guitar. These are colorful and impressionistic pieces, with passing reference to Sephardic motifs, showcasing the guitar virtuosity of the composer and others. The CD also includes effective arrangements of six selections from Debussy’s piano *Preludes*.

*Charles Heller is an associate member of the Canadian Music Centre. He is the award-winning author of **What to Listen for in Jewish Music** (www.ecanthuspress.com). His recent work includes the song cycle **Tramvay Lider, Hebrew Melodies** for soprano and strings (based on Byron and Nathan), and **The Ancient Mariner and the Albatross** (commissioned by the Toronto Children’s Chorus).*

M. Marmer Verhoeff's Novel, *The Daily Diner*

Reviewed by Dorothy Goldberg

If you've been awake and alive and Jewish over these past 40 years or so, you've likely heard a lot of conversation and philosophical symbolic hand-wringing about intermarriage in the Jewish community. More than 50 percent of Jewish young people choose non-Jewish spouses, and for many families, this can be a cause for strife and conflict.

Who knew that another type of intermarriage, but between two Jews (both observant, no less) could be even more complicated, life-changing and potentially toxic to family ties? Actually, most of us know that a relationship between a man from an ultra-Orthodox Hasidic community and a woman from the Conservative movement seems unlikely. But that is exactly the premise of M. Marmer Verhoeff's *The Daily Diner*, a page-turner if ever there was one. I should warn you that there were a lot of pages, even on my Kindle. this novel took a while to get through, but it also covers a lot of ground.

According to Ms. Verhoeff's foreword, the *Daily Diner* is modeled on the Airmont Diner in her neighborhood, near Suffern, New York. Accordingly, the action takes place in an area that is not far from a city (New York, presumably, but never specified) in which Hasidic and mainstream Jews coexist more or less peacefully if not proximately.

Daniella (Danny) Sobler is a young woman with a voice and a passion: she wants to become a cantor. But this novel begins in 1984, and the Jewish Theological Seminary (never actually named, but implied) is not yet ordaining, or even "investing" women cantors. This would first occur in 1987, although Cantor Barbara Ostfeld had already been invested by the Reform Movement in 1975.

Danny gets a job at the Daily Diner, a *heymshe* kosher diner owned by *uber-mensch* and Greek Jew Benny Kalabokas and his non-Jewish business partner Nate Holmes. Having escaped Greece as a young child and lost his mother during the Nazi occupation of Greece, Benny wants to make his restaurant into a safe refuge and gathering place for Jews—a kind of re-creation of the close-knit community he lost in his childhood. He acts both as host and unofficial spiritual guide for the establishment, keeping close watch on who sits with whom and who should meet whom. He doesn't normally hire extra waiters, but after a plea from Danny's mother Marcia (a regular customer) to consider hiring her daughter, he finds himself taking a special interest in her well-being and her quest for ordination. It helps that she seems to bear a resemblance, both physically and vocally, to his murdered mother, and he soon finds himself involved in her life in ways that change them both.

The story begins in earnest when Adam Goldfarb, a handsome young man with *peyes*, *tsitsit* and a black hat walks in. This is a great shock to Benny's patrons—although the Daily Diner is strictly kosher, visits from any member of the city's hermetically sealed ultra-Orthodox communities in what the book dubs "the county" are rarer than hen's teeth. We learn that these communities not only do not accept the Daily Diner's *kashrut hekhsher*, they reject each other's

standards as well. So, when young Adam Goldfarb walks in, needing some refreshment before heading home from a long trip traveling abroad as a diamond broker, Benny is especially keen to make his stay worthwhile. He assigns Daniella to be his server, and immediately sparks start to fly.

The first part of the novel focuses in great detail on the development of this forbidden intellectual friendship, which then blossoms into romance. As their relationship intensifies, Adam is nearly torn apart by the competing imperatives of his two lives: in his first life he is a dutiful son, working for his jeweler uncle and matched with a young woman, Teme, from a similar Hasidic community in the diamond trading center of Antwerp, Belgium. In his second life he explores the greater freedom of thought and action in Daniella's world, where he grows to appreciate and embrace her desire to become a cantor. His almost childlike ignorance of sexuality and relationships hampers him as he yearns to escape the cocoon of his sheltered upbringing.

Eventually Adam is forced to make a decision, at which point the novel fast-forwards through a period of about six years. Daniella finishes the Seminary and is ordained. By this time, women are being admitted to the cantorate as full members—and shortly after that she and Adam both have to make choices that might result in the alienation of family and the loss of all they have known.

The Daily Diner sweeps almost cinematically through many important themes including the value of family, tradition, ambition, loss, forgiveness and renewal, to name a few. It reminds us of all the ways that Jews have had to redefine the meaning of family after the Holocaust, and of the ways that people must reluctantly leave their families behind when they choose certain paths. These includes retaining parental approval and assured comfort by accepting a loveless pre-arranged marriage—versus following the uncertainty of abandoning insular communal support for the sake of true love.

The ties that bind can also leave us with scars. *The Daily Diner* explores what happens when all the disparate worlds collide, and reminds us that our Jewish community may be too small to encompass the dogma that divides us. By the end, you'll want to join Benny and Daniella as they share tea and cookies while pondering the meaning of life, love and community.

*Dorothy Goldberg was ordained as a cantor in 2005 at the Academy for Jewish Religion in Yonkers, New York. 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 worked as a hospice chaplain. Her review of Gail Galvin and Patricia Rudden's novel, **The Kiddush Murder**, appeared in the Journal's September 2015 issue.*

Mark Elber's Book, *The Sacred Now: Cultivating Jewish Spiritual Consciousness*

Reviewed by Joseph A. Levine

This 132-page paperback, which effectively attempts to reconcile *Torah* and *Mada*, the worlds of Jewish tradition and modern science, has been characterized by one reviewer as “Heschel brought down to earth.” Indeed, its opening section assures readers who might be first discovering traditional Jewish practice that “there is no one correct way of reading a sacred text,” and argues that the literal reading of Scripture can actually distance us from divinity.

Rabbi Mark Elber, author of *The Everything Kabbalah Book* (2006), and the co-spiritual leader—together with his wife, Cantor Shoshana Brown—of Congregation Beth El, in Fall River, Massachusetts, preaches the desirability of adding spirituality to our lives, which “strikes a deal with the values of [one’s] host society,” and “is gloriously disruptive of the status quo.” He claims that spirituality is attained through the regular practice of ritual, which “achieves a balance between structure and freedom.” Moreover, his espousal of offering prayer in the original Hebrew of our ancestors should gladden the heart of any cantor reading this important work, since such prayer allows congregants to “absorb energy beyond [their] own, [while] leaving enough wiggle room for... individual consciousness.”

He cautions, however, that we should not overly venerate liturgical tradition which remains a means to an end, for ultimately “our allegiance is to God.” Instead, the author advises us to “think non-linguistically,” specifically through music, as one way “to capture the *bat-kol* [Divine echo] that still calls to us every day” from Mount Horeb. He also advocates that we perform *Mitsvot* on a regular basis, in order to “bring the eternal into the present.”

Rabbi Elber defines *kavvanah* (devotional focus) as removing “I” from the equation, a difficult goal to reach because of the pronoun *Atah* (Thou) which posits a distance that we need to overcome in every blessing, before reaching *Adonai*. Moreover, he asserts that the Siddur itself can present an equally insurmountable obstacle to reaching spirituality, for it “has become as sacrosanct as Torah.”

With this startling caveat, *The Sacred Now* begins to assume a New Age vagueness that this reviewer found daunting. Citing Rabbi Meir ben Gabbai (*Avodat ha-kodesh*, 16th century) in advocating meditation—moving beyond rationality—and entering a state of *Ayin* (nothingness), Rabbi Elber urges us to recognize the Divine in others. So far, so good—until he argues that in our own quest to achieve *D’veikut* (nearness to God), *written Scripture itself must be transcended*.

That statement, plus what followed, left this reader confused: “Conventional synagogue practices thwart *Kavvanah* (intense devotional prayer) by seeking conformity.” After all, does not the same *Tanakh* that has God declaring “Seek Me—and live” (Amos 5:6), also instruct us

to do so by approaching “the *Kohein* (Aaronite priest) in charge at that time” (Deuteronomy 26:3)? In our own day, therefore, to whom shall we turn, if not to the ordained rabbis charged with spiritual leadership of our synagogues?

In his Conclusion, this forward-thinking author again picks up the theme, actually seeming to imply an alternative to organized congregations and their officiants: “Meditation is its own reward—by deepening our consciousness of the Divine.” Here, he is perhaps deliberately leaving readers wanting more? If so, we might happily anticipate a sequel to *The Sacred Now*, in which Rabbi Elber clearly sets forth further steps on the path to spirituality that he would like to see fascinated readers (including the present reviewer) take in the decades ahead.

*Joseph A. Levine has served as editor for the Journal of Synagogue Music since 2004. His article, **A Song at Twilight: Options for a Changed Cantorate**, appears earlier in this issue.*



“Alternate Universe,” by Rona Black

COMMEMORATING 100 YEARS SINCE THE 1918 ARMISTICE

Adventures of a Polish-born Hazzan in the Austrian Army during the Great War

By Joseph A. Levine

At the outbreak of hostilities in 1914, 28-year old Abba Yosef Weisgal had been Chief Cantor at the Liberales¹ synagogue in Eibenschütz, Moravia (today: Ivancice, Czech Republic) for only two years. Prior to that he had studied *Hazzanut* in Vienna with Jacob Bauer (1852-1926) and in Ivancice with Oberkantor Wilhem Loewensohn (1839-1929), both of whom were among the great Salomon Sulzer's last group of private students.² Abba had functioned as Loewensohn's *Hazzan sheini* (Assistant Cantor) for five years, had married the Oberkantor's Budapest-born niece, Aranka Stricker, and was now the father of Hugo, who would gain renown as a Modernist American composer and teacher, and Founding Chair of the Cantors Institute Faculty at the Jewish Theological Seminary. The following article derives from a Doctoral Dissertation—*Eminat Abba: The Life and Work of Abba Yosef Weisgal* (New York: JTS, 1981)—by the present writer.

Abba Weisgal's participation in the Great War coincided with its full length of four years and four months, and included every defeat suffered by the Austrian Imperial Army on both the Russian and Italian fronts. The fact that he survived intact he attributed to Divine intervention. His individual wartime experience, however, did not reflect the fate suffered by the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary. Neither its territorial integrity nor its crowned head of state, whose longevity as Emperor provided the illusion of stability for 68 years, survived the cataclysm of military defeat. In the opening Galician campaign of 1914, the Imperial Army already revealed a consistent weakness in organization and execution. The provincial capital, Lemberg (Lwów in Polish), fell after one month's fighting and 250,000 casualties.³

Abba was one of the 900,000 who served in Galicia, though he did not come under direct fire in that campaign. His charmed life as a soldier had begun back in July, in Brno (Yiddish: *Brin*), where he was assigned to a battalion of trench-diggers. Abba made it evident that he wanted out, and his staff sergeant—who had been giving him a rather hard time of it—was about to comply by recommending him for immediate transfer to the front. Fate intervened in the form of the same infantry captain who had drilled Abba two years earlier as a fresh recruit. The captain happened to walk by at that moment and said to the sergeant: "Leave that man alone; he's married!" Thus was Abba freed to continue looking for a job with one of the service units attached to his army corps, preferably, Intelligence.

¹ The Central European concept of "Liberal" at that time corresponded to the American Conservative model in the latter movement's early years: mixed seating, vernacular sermon, traditional liturgy, an occasional reading, and mixed choir; perhaps 10% of the congregations employed an organ.

² A third classmate was Alois Kaiser (1840-1908). Abba Weisgal's choice of repertoire in Baltimore's Conservative congregation Chizuk Amuno Baltimore (1920-1974) would remind his older congregants of Kaiser's long tenure at Reform Temple Oheb Shalom in the same city from 1866 until his death in 1908.

³ Girard Lindsey M. McEntee, *Military History of the World War* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons). 1937:118.

He was unsuccessful in getting transferred out of the Infantry, but he did hear of an opening away from the trenches: an adjutant to the general was looking for an orderly. The officer's name was Josef Troyer, a cultured aristocrat whose Viennese family had been patrons of the Arts for generations. Abba reported to him, pick in hand, identified himself, and got the assignment. He would assist Troyer faithfully, in many capacities, for the next two years. Adjutant Troyer was regimental commander of two trench-digging battalions and, as his orderly, Abba was headquartered in the commandant's office. In effect, he was second-in-charge, and enjoyed a comparatively soft time of it even after his entire army corps was sent to Cracow in Galicia at the height of that disastrous campaign.

During the first year-and-a-half of the war, Abba and his superior directed their two battalions in digging trenches for the front-line units. Troyer soon became restless, wanting to get into the actual fighting. Aware of Abba's preference, he offered to have him transferred as an interpreter for the fort commander. His loyal assistant declined the offer, quoting the Book of Ruth: "Where you go, I will go."⁴ For the time being, they both went nowhere.

Toward the end of December, 1915, Troyer asked Abba to sing at an officers' concert at which the guest of honor would be the head of their brigade, General Reuter. The general's two daughters had come to Cracow from their home in Vienna and would participate in the concert on the piano and violin, respectively. Also scheduled was an operatic tenor. Despite the formidable competition, Abba conquered with Schubert's *Am Meer* (By the Sea).⁵ The general shook hands with him afterward and said: "Thank you; I hope we'll have the pleasure to listen to you in peacetime." Abba's derived wisdom, which he shared while relating this episode to the writer many years later, was: "Better to be a great baritone than a mediocre tenor."

At that time, a frustrating war of attrition had been in progress for almost a year along the Isonzo River, which empties into the Gulf of Panzano, on the Adriatic Sea. Its Austrian side, known as the *Carso* in the south, the *Gorizia* in the center and the *Bainsizza* further north, consists of a flat-topped plateau surrounded by mountains. The plateau's limestone surface is pitted with holes and tunnels which were converted into the most fortified area of the war. The Italians, under General Cadorna, could not cross the Isonzo without first capturing the surrounding mountains. Nor could they attack the mountain-positions of the entrenched Austrians until they crossed the river. During 1915, four attacks had been made and repulsed, with a total loss of 300,000 men on both sides. Going northward along the Isonzo, the terrain becomes more mountainous, the descent to the river more precipitous; the soldiers who fought on this stretch of the front led the most arduous existence of all. In winter, the snow and mist on the steep cliffs, plus the rarefied and freezing atmosphere, conspired to make life miserable and movement impossible;⁶ altogether, "A strange and mysterious war zone."⁷

⁴ Ruth 1:16.

⁵ Lyrics by Heinrich Heine, from *Schwanengesang* ("Swan Song"), an 1829 collection published a few months after Schubert's death in November, 1828.

⁶ McEntee, *Military History*, op. cit., 1937:202-205.

⁷ Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), 1929:36.

It was to this theater of operations that Abba's brigade, consisting of two regiments of 3,200 men each, was reassigned in the spring of 1916. The troops were transported by rail, south to Budapest and then westward along the Sava River which divided Austria from Hungary. The ancient enmity between Croats and Italians was exploited by the Austro-Hungarian High Command. It used Slavic regiments, with great effect, on the Italian front. One of its generals, Boroevic, was a Serb.⁸ At San Martino, Abba's unit relieved a group of battle-weary Magyars, who said to them in Hungarian: "May God be with you." That day, the brigade lost 1,800 men. An Italian shell landed within arm's reach of Abba, who picked it up and threw it beyond harm. The survivors pulled out at nightfall, carrying their wounded only, and marched toward Trieste.

In September of 1916, when the Austrians were beginning to succumb to the relentless Italian pressure, Abba was bivouacked in a stable at Giamiano, where he found a pair of *tefillin*. They were small consolation to him at the time, since the intensity of the fighting prevented him from receiving leave to return home. As a result, the High Holidays of 1916 were the only ones of the war during which he did not lead services for his congregation in Ivancice. But he did serve as Hazzan for the Jewish troops in an alpine valley. As the *Maariv* service for Rosh Hashanah ended, a captain approached the makeshift Ark, hat in hand, and addressed the men: "Comrades, I didn't come here to disturb your services. You pray to Jehovah, we pray to Jesus. But is there a more beautiful sanctuary than heaven and earth, God's international temple? Happy New Year!" For Yom Kippur, services were held in a barracks. Abba fasted and officiated straight through, except for the short Afternoon service, *Minchah*. He received 600 Gulden as compensation, but what could he do with it? Troyer came to his aid. Using his privilege as an officer, he sent the money home to his wife Aranka in Ivancice.

During each of their twelve Isonzo offensives, the Italians gained a bit more, albeit at the cost of mounting casualties. The eighth and ninth battles took place in the fall of 1916, on October 10th and November 1st, respectively. In this critical three-week period, Abba was assigned to staff headquarters situated in one of the numerous underground caverns that dotted the *Bainsizza* plain. One day, he took a telegraph message of an Italian breakthrough, and told his friend, who relayed it out loud. General Reuter, who happened to hear it, asked him to repeat the message. Alarmed at its implication, he went out to personally organize a counterattack. In this action, the general was killed. Three days later, his adjutant, Troyer, was ordered to gather General Reuter's personal effects and report to his widow in Vienna. Troyer, of course, took his orderly with him on this sad mission.

Along the way, Abba detrained (unofficially) to briefly visit with Aranka's parents, the Strickers, in Budapest. He caught the next train to Vienna, fabricating some excuse for his late arrival. Then, his official mission with Troyer accomplished, Abba requested and received a pass for limited leave to Ivancice. As he and Troyer prepared to return to the front, they were reassigned to Cracow, where the Russian General, Bruselow, was preparing a final offensive. The enemy force which the Austrians now faced in Galicia comprised 200,000 men, the pick of

⁸ Alan Palmer, *The Lands Between: A History of East-Central Europe Since the Congress of Vienna* (New York: The MacMillan Co.), 1970:141.

combat-tested Finnish, Caucasian and Serbian fighters.⁹ Against this formidable array, the Austrians sent up Zeppelins as observation posts, and Troyer was assigned to this duty. At Dubno, in Volhynia, his dirigible was hit by the Russians' newly introduced anti-aircraft guns, and he was wounded. He and Abba were sent to Vienna, where Troyer underwent nine months' recuperation. In gratitude over his recovery, he presented Abba with a silver cigarette case bearing the inscription: "Isonzo, Volhynia, Cracow," and his signature.

While Troyer's injury kept him and his orderly out of active duty for a time, the army's desperate need for manpower soon changed this. The order came for Abba to report to his regiment in Brno, the Moravian capital, and it had to be obeyed. From there he was sent to the U-shaped Austrian incursion into Italy as far south as Trento, where he would be assigned to mountain duty. As he traveled along the Danube to Western Austria, Abba had a sudden inspiration. At Linz, he had heard that recruits were needed for training in communications, and so he volunteered. Even this did not last long. In a few months, the overriding shortage of troops necessitated the breakup of this school and the return of all hands to combat duty.

At the front, in the town of Trento, Abba was assigned as a telephone operator to a Lieutenant Schwartz from Brno. Because he knew who Abba was, and possibly resenting a fellow Jew (and clergyman at that) getting what he considered a soft assignment, Schwartz ignored orders and determined to use this "slacker" as an ordinary infantry soldier. Yet again, Abba's luck held. Two hours before he was to move out, he appealed in desperation to the captain, named Hoffmann, a non-Jew from the Tyrol. When apprised of the situation, Hoffmann took him on as a telephonist, although Abba had not completed his communications training. The friendship that developed between them was very strong. Three times the captain caught his telephonist napping on watch. The first time, he warned him; the second time, he raised his voice. Even the third-and-last time, he did not have Abba court-martialed, as was required. Instead, he told the culprit that he would be sent forward to the most dangerous communications point the very next day, and there he could prove his loyalty to his country.

That afternoon, as Abba sat brooding at his post, a first lieutenant from Ivancice walked in to telephone a message. He was sensitive to non-verbalized feelings, being a professor in one of the town's two schools for the deaf. Noticing Abba's dejection, he encouraged him to talk about what happened, and then said: "Don't worry!" He went over to the officers' mess and less than an hour later, Abba got a call to report there. Captain Hoffmann asked him:

"Do you know Schumann's *Beide Grenadiere*?"¹⁰

"Yes," replied Abba.

"Well then, sing it!" said the captain.

That was his punishment.

⁹ McEntee, *op. cit.*, p. 425.

¹⁰ ("The Two Grenadiers," returning from captivity in Russia, laud the defeated French for their valor); 1840, lyrics by Heinrich Heine.

For a year-and-a-half Abba remained stationed on *Monte Maggiore* in what is today Northwestern Croatia, where his telephone duty did not allow him a full night's rest. By way of compensation, his post did afford him the solitude necessary for musical composition. Prayer texts came easily to mind; one in particular, seemed apt. It was M'CHALKEL CHAYIM B'CHESED¹¹ (Who lovingly sustains all life), which Abba set as a solo for himself in G harmonic minor (**see music on the following page**), using the leading tone half-a-dozen times, sequentially. This was typical of the Polish hazzanic style, as was the four-bar folk-like phrase he quoted on the words, *Mi chamocha, ba'al gevurot* (Whose power can compare with Yours?).¹² Abba retained the 4/4 meter of the old tune as a centerpiece, while framing it with a contrasting opening and closing in $\frac{3}{4}$ time. He intended the piece to be sung slowly and with great dignity, *Pianissimo* at first occurrence of a phrase, and *Piano* at its recurrence. The most volume he calls for is *Mezzo-Forte*, at *Mi chamocha, ba'al gevurot*, with a gradual tapering off at the end, to the opening *Pianissimo*. These dynamic guidelines effectively discourage any tendency to rush the underlying *Andante* tempo marking.

In retrospect, Abba's approach signals a departure from most prior settings of this text. Ashkenazic *hazzanut* fell into two categories: Eastern European and Western European. Atop his own personal Beth El,¹³ Abba had wrestled with the muses of both traditions—and prevailed. He gave modern form to the old chant, without quenching its innate fire. Virtually every other late-19th or early-20th century setting of *M'chalkel chayim* falls short in comparison. Louis Lewandowsky's twin efforts in waltz time appear frivolous.¹⁴ Abraham Baer's three "Old Modes" seem awkwardly redundant.¹⁵ Baruch Schorr's attempt flounders between uncongenial modalities and Baroque figurations.¹⁶ The Viennese master, Cantor Solomon Sulzer, had earlier passed on the text altogether. Alone among his contemporaries, Abba Weisgal "had effected a reconciliation between the rhapsodic tenor lyricism of *Minhag Polin* (the emotionally driven "Polish" rite) and the austere metered baritone declamation of *Minhag Ashkenaz* (the well-ordered custom of German-speaking lands).¹⁷ His achievement remained virtually unknown for another quarter-century. Not until 1950 would any of his compositions—including this one—appear in print, by which time they could not escape being thought of as "quaint" by a "liberated" post-World War II generation of native-born American Jews.

¹¹ In order to evoke the German-influenced Hebrew in which Austro-Hungarian Jewry davened at that time, all transliterations on this and the following two pages replicate the way they appeared in Abba's book: Adolph J. Weisgal, *SHIREI HAYYIM VE-EMUNAH* (Baltimore: Chizuk Amuno Congregation), 1950:26; one of many choral settings in the book that were arranged by Abba's son, Hugo Weisgall.

¹² The phrase had appeared in an old setting, one of three included by Abraham Baer in *Ba'al t'fillah* (Gothenburg 1877), *Out of Print Classics Series of Synagogue Music*, Vol. I (New York: Sacred Music Press), 1954, no. 107b. Baer's encyclopedic work had instantly become a prime source for all European cantors, and it is not surprising that Abba remembered the setting. The innovation lay in his unforgettable treatment of the material: as a direct plea to the Almighty.

¹³ Compare Father Jacob's predicament in Genesis 28:10-21.

¹⁴ *Todah v'simrah*, vol. II (Berlin, 1882), pp. 172, 190.

¹⁵ Baer, *Ba'al t'fillah*, *op. cit.*, nos. 1079 a,b,c.

¹⁶ *N'ginot baruch schorr*, ed. Israel Schorr, Vol. I (New York: Bloch Publishing Co.), 1928:73.

¹⁷ Eric Werner, *A Voice Still Heard* (University Park & London: Pennsylvania State University Press), 1976:146.

M'CHALKEL CHAYIM B'CHESED

Abba Yosef Weisgal
1950

Andante molto rubato

Chorus

p M'-chal - kel - cha - yim b' - che - sed m'-cha

pp ye - me - sim b' - -ra - cha - mim - ra - bim, so - mech nof - lim v' -

f ro - feh cho-lim - u - ma - tir a - su - rim u - m'-ka - yem e - mu - no -

mf so li - she - ne - o - for. Mi cho - mo - cho

18

ba - al g'-vu - ros u - mi do - me loch *p* me-lech me-mis

22

u - m'-cha ye u - matz-mi - ach y' shu - oh.

The spring of 1918 had seen Abba transferred from the active corps of “Army Group Conrad” (Austro-Hungarian 10th & 11th armies) into its reserve division, stationed at Trento. Just before Passover, he met his new unit’s chaplain, Dr. Abraham Altmann, who was also chief chaplain for all the other 275,000 Jews serving in the Austrian army.¹⁸ Abba inquired about arrangements for services during the Festival, informing Dr. Altmann that he was a cantor, and volunteering to officiate. Altmann accepted the suggestion, and arranged for services to be held in the *Palazzo Del Diabolo* (Devil’s Palace) in Trento. After the Torah processional on the first morning of Passover, an officer approached Abba and identified himself as a fellow cantor, from Sasov in the Lemberg (today: Lviv in Ukraine) district. He said feelingly: “Herr colleague, You have inspired me!”

Ironically, the *Palazzo Del Diabolo* was built on an infamously historic mound. Under this prominence were buried the Jewish martyrs who had been tortured, strangled and burned at the stake following Easter in the year 1475. They had been falsely accused of a blood libel which became known as the martyrdom of Simon of Trent. Truthfully, the only martyrs were the unfortunate Jews of Trent, whose Christian neighbors had murdered them at the instigation of the fanatical Franciscan, Bernardino da Feltre. This monstrous deed was later endorsed by Pope Sixtus IV in 1478, as “justly done.” Now, almost 450 Easters later, the edifice marking that atrocity was converted temporarily into a Kosher-for-Pesah synagogue!¹⁹

¹⁸ Nachum Tal Gidal, s.v., “Pioneers in Palestine 1840-1917,” *Encyclopedia Judaica Yearbook*, 1975-76: 65.

¹⁹ Shlomo Simonsohn, s.v., “Trent,” *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1972, Vol. 15: 1374f.

Chaplain Altmann was impressed with Abba and the dignified manner in which he had led the men in worship. He inquired about the remarkable telephonist/cantor's health rating. It was "Second-class," due to palpitations that had developed in the thin mountain air. Altmann made an appointment to see the general that afternoon. He told him he needed an assistant, related Abba's background and his current status. When the chaplain emerged, he said simply: *Mazel tov!* Two weeks later, the day Abba's transfer as a chaplain's assistant came through, Captain Hoffmann's standing request to return to customs work was granted. The full battalion stood at attention as its captain marched past in final review. Hoffmann stopped in front of Abba, saluted, shook hands and said: "As a man I admire and like you, but as a soldier you're a s _____! Keep well; I hope we'll see each other again." Abba remained a chaplain's assistant and even officiated at the wedding of Chaplain Altmann's sister, for which event he composed special music. If it accomplished nothing else, the war gave Abba both the time and opportunity to develop his creative ability.

The summer of 1918 witnessed the nadir of Abba's military experience. Foot soldiers in the Austrian army at that time were being paid the equivalent of three cents a day, U.S. currency.²⁰ To earn a few extra *Kronen* they traded in surplus merchandise, acquired at wholesale and sold around town at retail. One day a sergeant showed Abba some saccharine, told him it was contraband and asked whether he could arrange to sell a quantity of it on the basis of the sample. Abba recalled his deliveryman days as a student in Vienna, and took the sample to a soda bottling plant. He was told to return in two days; and when he did so, he was arrested.

At general headquarters, Dr. Josef Samuel Bloch of the Vienna weekly, *Oesterreichischer Wochenblatt*, was horrified to see the assistant to the Jewish chaplain brought into custody as a smuggler! Bloch was an outstanding journalist and parliamentary champion of his people's rights, Galician by birth, and close enough to its folk sources to appreciate fully the value of a hazzan, even one in uniform.²¹ Dr. Bloch notified Rabbi Altmann, who vehemently protested his assistant's unwitting involvement in a scheme of whose illegality he was totally innocent. The chief chaplain's protests were all to no avail. Abba claimed he was only following orders but, unfortunately, he could not produce the sergeant whose orders he had attempted to carry out. An investigation was made and the sergeant was finally located—doing time in the stockade. Under questioning he insisted that he himself had been ordered by his superior to move the saccharine, and the chain of commands continued all the way up the line. The inquiry established that the saccharine hoard, which had been the basis of all the illegal barter, was still in a factory across the nearby Swiss border. Abba was released, and privately vowed never again to traffic in black market goods, whether contraband or not.

As the summer wore on, things went from bad to worse for the Austrian army. Abba was sent to conduct services all along the front which, during the last four months of fighting, proved highly vulnerable. The Italians had reorganized for a general offensive—with hardly any

²⁰ Joseph C. Pick, "The Economy," *The Jews of Czechoslovakia*, Vol. II (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society), 1968:432.

²¹ Samuel Rosenblatt, *Yossele Rosenblatt* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Young), 1954:45.

Austrian interference. By autumn, they outgunned their enemy for the first time.²² In early October, Abba had just completed officiating at Sukkot services in Ivancice during his High Holiday leave, when an order came for him to return immediately to Trento. On October 14th, future Czechoslovakian president Edvard Benes notified the Allied states that an interim Czechoslovak nation had been established. Ten days later, the poised Italians struck decisively at the city of Vittorio Veneto, between the Piave and Livenza rivers in Northeastern Italy. In that battle, the Austrian Imperial army was destroyed as a fighting force.²³

Abba reached his unit in Trento only to withdraw with them before the Italian onslaught. Rabbi Altmann ordered him to take charge of the Torah scrolls. Together they retreated to Merano, where Altmann left him under fire. Abba ran around looking for someone to give him further instructions. The officer in charge happened to be the same cantorial colleague from Sasov who had been inspired at the *Palazzo Del Diabolo*. The officer assigned an orderly to help Abba carry his equipment, and put him on a train to the rear. He traveled through the final break-down of the once-proud Austrian army. As the policeman who delivered the telegram ordering him back to the front two weeks before had told him, he needn't have left Ivancice!



Hazzan Abba Yosef Weisgal in 1920

Although orders are meant to be executed, it appeared as if Abba was one of the few soldiers left who maintained military discipline. The Hapsburg Empire capitulated officially on October 27th, and its returning troops were in a state of open mutiny. Abba saw enlisted men rise up and murder their hated officers. Those who could not find room inside packed trains to the interior lay upon the car-roofs and were crushed in low-ceilinged tunnels.²⁴

On November 4th, Austria-Hungary asked for an armistice. During the prior two weeks, it had lost half of its 58 divisions, a total of 400,000 men. The Dual Monarchy was no more. In its place arose the separate states of Poland, Yugoslavia, Austria, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. *Feltwebel* (Sergeant) Adolph Weisgal was suddenly respected as a citizen of the latter republic, and enjoyed a safe conduct to Ivancice, where he returned for good on November 5th, 1918.

²² McEntee, *op. cit.*, p. 547.

²³ William Benton, s. v., "Czechoslovakia," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1971, Vol 3:967.

²⁴ Robert C. Pick, *The Last Days of Imperial Vienna* (London, 1975); New York: The Dial Press:1996, pages 102-103, 106.

IN MEMORIAM

Tzipora H. Jochsberger (1920-2017)

By Marsha Bryan Edelman

Born in 1920 in Leutershausen, southern Germany, Tzipora H. Jochsberger began piano lessons at the age of seven. She later attended Wurzburg High School and the Jewish Teachers Seminary, the only school of higher learning still open for Jewish students in Germany in 1934. Her love for Judaism and for music stems from this period, during which she taught herself to play the recorder and cello. In 1939 she won a scholarship to the Palestine Academy of Music, graduating in 1942 as a teacher of piano and school music. It was upon arrival in Palestine that she adopted “Tzipora” as her preferred name, taking the middle initial “H” to memorialize her given name, Hilde. During the 1940s Jochsberger built a music program at the Women’s Teachers’ Seminary for Arab Girls in Palestine, and also served as a director of the New Jerusalem Conservatory and Academy of Music (later renamed the Rubin Academy of Music and known today as the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance).



A 1947 summer of study at the Juilliard School in New York City introduced Jochsberger to an American Jewish community scarcely acquainted with its heritage, and she resolved to use music and Jewish melodies to waken the dormant Jewish soul of American Jewry. In 1950 (with a grant from the Jewish Agency) she started what would become her life’s work by using Israeli folk melodies as the basis for teaching recorder to college students at Hillel Foundations throughout the New York Metropolitan region.

In 1952, Jochsberger was invited to help establish the Hebrew Arts School. The school developed a strong Jewish profile, using holiday celebrations and the music of the Jewish people to attract students and faculty eager to explore Jewish culture. Jochsberger built the institution into a major presence in New York’s cultural life. Now known as the Kaufman Music Center, it houses Merkin Concert Hall in addition to its community arts school (renamed the Lucy Moses School of Music and Dance).

A 1956 invitation to teach at the Seminary College of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America forced Jochsberger to deepen her own limited knowledge of Jewish music. She earned master’s (1959) and doctoral (1972) degrees and used radio and television to reach a wider audience of students. Jochsberger served as host and producer of three 13-part half-hour

television series produced by the Tarbut Foundation: *Music of the Jewish People* (1976); *Experiences in Jewish Music* (1977) and *A Kaleidoscope of Jewish Music* (1978).

Following her retirement from the Kauman Music Center in 1985 Jochsberger returned to Israel, where she founded the Israel Music Heritage Project and served as Executive Producer on a 10-part video series, *A People and Its Music*, which captures the authentic musical expressions of Jewish communities in Israel whose roots are in Eastern Europe, North Africa and the Middle East.¹

Throughout her career Jochsberger remained active as a musician. She was director of music at the Society for the Advancement of Judaism from 1955-1972, and composed several settings for the Sabbath service, collected in a volume called *Bekol Zimrah* and published by the SAJ. Her *Four Hebrew Madrigals* was recorded by the Western Wind Vocal Ensemble and broadcast by Voice of America. Jochsberger herself conducted the Hebrew Arts Chamber Singers in a recording of her *A Call to Remember: Sacred Songs of the High Holidays*. A CD of her choral settings entitled simply *Jewish Choral Music*, was released in 1997.

Her many students, the institutions she built, and the music she left behind constitute a remarkable legacy that will continue to inspire, and her memory will undoubtedly be a blessing to future generations of Jewish music lovers.

[CLICK ON THE MUSIC EXCERPT TO ACCESS AUDIO FILE OF THE ENTIRE COMPOSITION]

Magein Avot

Friday Night Liturgy

Tzipora H. Jochsberger

pp **Moderato**

bid- va- ro ma - a- ma-

S
A

Ma- gein a - vot bid - va - ro me-ha - yei mei - tim be - ma'a-ma - ro

T
B

Me-ha - yei mei - tim be - ma - a-ma - ro

PERFORMED BY THE RIGA CHAMBER CHOIR *AVE SOL*, IMANTS KOKARS, CONDUCTOR:
 “JEWISH CHORAL MUSIC”: TZIPORA H. JOCHSBERGER,” ISRAEL MUSIC ASSOCIATES CD,
 1997; USED HERE WITH PERMISSION.

¹ These films may be viewed online at the Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive of the Hebrew University on their YouTube channel.

IN MEMORIAM

Rav-hazzan Avraham H. Feder (1930-2018)

By Joseph A. Levine

‘**H**erb’ Feder, as his Cantors Institute classmates knew him in the late 1950s when he commuted weekly from his cantorial position in Albany, was unique in choosing what to perform for our JTS Art Song class. Instead of Yiddish standards like Leo Low’s arrangements of *A Dudele* or *A Din Toire mit Gott*—with a second copy for our instructor, conductor Siegfried Landau to accompany us on the piano—Herb would hand Landau his only copy. When asked how he had managed to memorize (for example) Maurice Ravel’s cycle of three French love songs, *Don Quichotte à Dulcinée* (“Don Quixote to Dulcinea”), he self-effacingly explained that there was little else to do on his three-hour bus trips back and forth from upstate.



Herb went on to earn a Masters degree in Sacred Music as well as rabbinic ordination from the Jewish Theological Seminary and a doctorate in Educational Philosophy from the University of Toronto. He would serve as *hazzan* at B’nai Jacob in New Haven, as founding *Rav-hazzan* at both Beth Tikvah in Toronto and at *Moreshet Yisrael*, the Masorti congregation in Jerusalem.

Throughout his multi-functioning career he continued to perform brilliantly, singing the baritone role in Haydn’s *Creation* with the Israel Philharmonic under Zubin Mehta, and teaching JTS students in Jerusalem. His 2006 article for JSM, “The Problems a Modern Jew Faces in Prayer,” captures the essence of his uncompromising approach to the Mitzvah of *T’fillah*, as “... demanding more than Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s ‘willing suspension of belief.’” Citing Maimonides (*Mishneh torah, hilkhoh t’fillah* 4:16), he wrote: “The Jew who prays regularly...see[s] himself *k’illu*—as if—he is standing before God’s indwelling Presence.”

That vision is not easy for most of us to realize, but Avraham ben Leybl Feder would have it no other way. Ever resourceful, when he transposed the final chorus of a song a note higher for effect, to a key he could not finger on guitar, he simply cast off the instrument and—with arms akimbo and eyes lifted skyward like Charlton Heston in the movie *The Ten Commandments*—he brought his audience to their feet by thundering that finale with every ounce of energy and conviction at his command. To those of us who were privileged to know him and admire what he stood for back then at the beginning of his path, he was already *yahid b’minno*—one of a kind. That was the way he remained—*tzaddik v’ne’eman* to the very end. May his memory be a blessing, always.

Journal of Synagogue Music

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- Odessa's Unsung Composer: Pinchas Minkowsky (1859-1924)
- A Brief Encounter with Israeli Composer Yehezkel Braun (1922-2014)
- Congregational Song in American Conservative Synagogues (1900-1955)
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