
Journal of Synagogue Music
September 2019
Volume 44
Number 1
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LOOKING BACK

N'GINAH L'MA'ASEH

(Click on each first page of music to access its audio file)

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Alex Levin, *Dancing on Simhat Torah in the Venetian Ghetto Synagogue,* reprinted here with the artist's kind permission.

LOOKING BACK

The Jewish Cantor in History–or–Music in Medieval Judaism

By Israel Goldschmidt

Life would be an eternal bloodletting without music! (Karl Ludwig Börne)

This article is derived from an editorial written by Dr. Goldschmidt, who served as Rabbi of the Synagogue in Briesen, West Prussia. It first appeared in the periodical, The Jewish Cantor*, as a series of installments that began in October 1879.* Der Jüdische Kantor *was published in Bromberg by the Cantors Association of Central Europe from 1879 to 1899. Its translation was commissioned by Matthew Austerklein, then cantor at Congregation Beth El of Montgomery County, in Bethesda, Maryland, after he discovered it in the digital archive of the University of Frankfurt-am-Main (http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de). This robust online resource contains digital copies of many important Judaic works in German, including cantorial collections and sheet music.*

The present article is adapted from a complete commissioned translation of the German original, done by Rabbi Rebecca Kushner, of Iowa City, IA, where she works with several small Midwestern congregations. She was trained as a professional flautist at the Staatliche Hochshule fuer Musik *in Freiburg, Germany, and spent several decades in German opera and radio orchestras. Rabbi Kushner is also a published poet in both English and German. She received Rabbinic Smikha from the Aleph Alliance of Jewish Renewal in 2015. At the time of this publication she was completing her MSJE thesis at Spertus Institute in Chicago, on the topic of "Zacharias Frankel as a Jewish Educator."*

The Jewish Cantor's Historical Importance

Many intelligent and distinguished cantors considered it highly desirable to present these journalistic fragments in their entirety to a wider public. This was based on the idea that the historical importance of the cantor would lend the contemporary cantor more dignity and honor, both inwardly, in his own consciousness, as well as outwardly. May this opinion be verified! This would be a deeply desired goal especially for congregations. Would it not be more honorable and advantageous if the position of the Cultural Emissary would be just as popular as the generally lower paid civil servant? Does it reflect the healthy condition of our German Fatherland when a Jewish father, when considering the professional direction for his son, reacts calmly to the question of his son's future with, "My son can become anything except a Jewish congregational professional!" And this, although the professional positions within the Jewish congregations usually provide adequate financial compensation. Who can deny that it is an honor for a State when all its professionals are proud of their employment status? This is generally the case in our native country. But then each community must consider the honor of their own professionals as a special duty and obligation. To contribute to this end alone would be a worthy endeavor.

The Jewish People is one of the strangest historical phenomena. Its story stretches from nebulous antiquity into the present as the only living witness of the lively existence that blossomed so magnificently thousands of years ago in the lands where the three continents of the old world converged: Asia, Africa and Europe. Time could not grind it down, the martial powers

of the old empires could subjugate but not destroy it. The powerful arm of Rome could splinter and disperse, but not choke it. The fanaticism of the Middle Ages, the greed of kings, the *auto-da-fé* of the Inquisition; they all succeeded–to the great detriment of humanity–in driving back or misdirecting its development but could not remove Judaism from the stage of history. How was Judaism able to withstand so many hostile forces? What gave Judaism the strength to resist such powerful efforts to destroy it?

It is correct to assume that Jewish law, which continued to evolve throughout the long exile, provided the vitality which enabled Israel to withstand the storms of history. It is just as legitimate to point to the intimacy of Jewish family life. During the Middle Ages, this provided the Jew with rich compensation for the many joys of life that were prohibited to him. A Jew could readily do without the love and support of the outside world; because he was sure to find in his family, his wife and children, complete devotion and security. Another element that weighs strongly in strengthening Jewish life in times of persecution and peril is the support offered by Jewish religious life–the organization of the synagogue and its congregation. But who would ever have thought about the important role that was played, in strengthening Judaism from within, by *the Jewish Cantor?*

And yet the merits that the Jewish Cantor has won on behalf of the life of the people, throughout the Middle Ages up to contemporary times, is so expansive and so obvious that it has been overlooked up to now. The merits of the Jewish Cantor on behalf of his people are no secret. They are not something that a dusty closet academician has extracted from yellowed parchments in order to save them from oblivion. They are something that are well known to every non-alienated co-religionist, with the exception perhaps of those circles who have modernized the synagogue rite over the course of several decades.

Who would have proposed such an outlandish idea, that the Jewish Cantor should have historic importance! A cantor should not complain about this. For what has happened from his side to create the awareness in the world regarding the importance and significance of his profession? In the *world*? How many cantors have attempted to deeply involve themselves with the contemporary (not to mention historic) condition of their profession? The educated among them study all kinds of things: music and literature, the history of art and literature, but who takes it upon himself to make "The History of the Cantor" the object of personal study? Indeed, who would even consider expanding the subject of General History to include the Cantor?

And if the Cantor himself neglects this task, who else should be more sympathetic to his situation? In the words of Hillel: If I am not for myself, who will be?

The establishment of a professional cantorial journal will hopefully stimulate interest in this direction, namely, the historical circumstances of the cantor. But can a cantor really be blamed for not enthusiastically devoting his free time to studies other than his music? Even in Jewish history, which has recently found such an excellent and thorough cultivation, where in its annals can you find a consideration of the Cantor? The worst poet, the most unimportant poetess, the most dubious philosopher, all have their place in Jewish history. It is only the Cantor who doesn't. How is the Cantor supposed to warm up to the study of Jewish history when he is treated by historians with such indifference?

These lapses in Jewish history must be filled by the Cantors themselves. The historic treasure chambers are rich and varied; it all depends upon *researching* them. This is the way in the realm of history: history only responds when a question is posed. You must search in her, then you will find. And who should have greater interest in obtaining clarification regarding the history and development of Cantorial Art than the Jewish Cantor himself? But that which is the individual duty of each and every Jewish Cantor is a thousand times more the responsibility of a journal that vouches for thousands of Cantors. Thus, the following content, which is but an initial attempt towards realization of the general historic importance of the cantorial profession.

The Hebrew Liturgy

Let us consider the Jewish people in the Diaspora. Initially, it appeared we would be dealing with all the sources of vitality (mentioned in the introduction) from which Israel drew strength and perseverance on the stormy sea of history. Surprisingly, from none of them could we detect an influence of the unfolding and strengthening of the artistic seed of human nature or a satisfaction of the emotional needs of the human heart that are directed towards the aesthetic forms of art. The Torah illuminated the spirit and strengthened morality, but fantasy was channeled towards homiletics, not aesthetics. Family life and the synagogue, as such, with its prayers and Psalms, poured balm upon many a wounded heart, but they were not able to uplift the surging of this heart to the bright, clear regions of art. There was too much pressure upon Israel to allow such a free expression of movement. Science and morality, thought and correct behavior, were at home in broad Jewish circles. The academies that developed knowledge and discernment were always in full flower. But the school of emotional density, the artistic expression of Beauty in word and picture and act, lay desolate and in decay.

The Jewish religion itself had made sculpture impossible, and during the entire Middle Ages there was not a single painter of the Jewish persuasion. The smoke of the *auto-da-fé* was not a suitable light by which the artist's brush could create its magical forms. There were some poets blessed with heavenly talents (such as Judah Halevi and Ibn Gabriol), who brought marvelous structures of general poetic meaning to maturity. At the same time, most of the other Jewish poets exhibited merely an extraordinary linguistic talent, or possessed an abundance of Talmudic-midrashic knowledge, which they worked into metrical religious poems known as *Piyyutim*. These could not be denied a certain alliterative ingenuity, but it was certainly not true poetry.

And not long after Judah Halevi, the worm of fanaticism began to gnaw on the blossom of Judaism in Spain. In this sole country where the Jewish spirit, free from all bonds, had begun such a magnificent unfolding in all directions–alas, the brief springtime was followed by a raw autumn. The examples of synagogue poetry found general acceptance, but they are more prayer than poetry–and, if I may say so; didactic prayer, recited and more-or-less comprehended in the Synagogue.

Even the noble verses of the Psalms, with their unequaled religious-poetic soaring, did not receive adequate valuation for their poetic majesty during all the long centuries of persecution and pressure. If these proud "Cedars of Lebanon" were too weak to stand against the flames of the pyre, how were the "graftings of the wall" to prove strong enough? (Babylonian Talmud, *Moed katan*, 25b).

Thus, the existence of imagination would have been doomed, and if the argument I have just presented is valid, the entire existence of Judaism would have been doomed as well, had not the religion of Israel proven itself a Tree of Life in this direction.

The development of the Hebrew Liturgy and the unfolding of the Order of Prayers (*Seder t'fillah*) took a direction that soon led the synagogue, besides its role as being a place of devotion, to provide a fresh source from which the suppressed poetic life of Judaism would derive rich nourishment. This became possible through the interface between liturgy and song. The division of the praying public into prayer leader and congregation was initially only a consequence of ignorance on the part of the masses. The prayer leader was the knowledgeable one who presented to the unknowledgeable, in the simplest way possible, what they neither knew by heart nor could they read. Over the course of time the role of the prayer leader became consolidated and paid. Thus, emerged the endeavor to move the prayers closer to the hearts of the congregation by the power of song. This developed broader and more established forms, and it was ultimately the synagogue which "took down the harps from the willows (upon which they were hung) by the rivers of Babylon," and let them resound with fresh, lively melodies and harmonies. By these means the Psalms and prayers were graced (though not always with the noblest of taste), and the long-forgotten melodies of Zion and Jerusalem echoed once more from the walls of the synagogue by means of *the Jewish Cantor!*

The Power of Song

Who could measure it? Who could discern the marvelous strength over the human heart that the Creator gave to musical notes, and especially the sound of the human voice? As the cheerful orb of the day penetrates everything with its rays, as the unrestricted force of magic activates the imagination of humanity, such is the power of song−limitless and immeasurable. In high flights of excitement, as well as in the deepest agony of the heart, let a like-minded melody of song encircle you, and it will pluck at the wildly vibrating strings of your heart with an all-powerful and irresistible touch.

The power of song is not earthly! As is light, thought, the eternal law, as is faith itself – song is a present from heaven.

When the Creator banished from his sight
Frail man to dark mortality's abode,
And granted him a late return to light,
Only by treading reason's arduous road—
When each immortal turned his face away,
She, the compassionate, alone
Took up her dwelling in that house of clay,
With the deserted, banished one.
With drooping wing she hovers here
Around her darling, near the senses' land,
And on his prison-walls so drear
Elysium paints with fond deceptive hand.

(Friedrich Schiller, "The Artists").

These noble words, uttered by the poet regarding art in its entirety, are valid to a higher degree and in an unrestricted sense when applied to the art of song. Art in general paints Elysium upon the prison wall of human existence, which results from the inherent faultiness of the human condition. The general dark sides of human life are brightened and mitigated by means of all art forms.

Only a free-spirited mind can find delight and inspiration with the performing arts. With music, this is not so. It doesn't wait for a person to find it. It wafts through the air until it has found the heart in need of comfort. Music demands no effort, no attentiveness. It finds its way into the broken heart, and neither joy nor pain bar its way. Misery and joy find their strongest expression through the medium of song. Thus, the oppression of the Middle Ages could not completely suppress the poetic freshness of the Jewish heart, and the art of song could not fully be alienated from the Jewish soul. Through the synagogue and the Jewish home, song was always an element of Jewish life.

The Synagogue

The importance of this institution in respect to the continuity of Jewish existence is immeasurably vast, not only as a place of devotion where the praying heart can soar above daily cares, but in its particular quality: the center and source of all musical impulses that formed the richness of Medieval Judaism's manifest vocal tradition. The melodic recitation in which the cantor clothed any particular prayer had meaning not only for the length of the prayer service. In the stirring of religious emotion and dedication, this melody unfolded its sphere of influence far beyond the walls of the synagogue into all aspects of life.

We have almost no written documentation of Jewish musical life in the Middle Ages. But it should not be thought that this documentation is missing because there was nothing there to be documented. Medieval Judaism lacked the means to bring to paper the floating subtleties of musical language. There was no knowledge of musical notation. Just as until recently there was no seminary for the education of rabbis. Just so, there was no musical institute for the education of cantors. The synagogue was simultaneously the seminary for rabbis as well as the school of the cantor. If a child had a good voice, he was encouraged to participate in services as a *m'shoreir* (chorister) singing alongside the cantor. If, at a later date, the child desired to pursue the career of cantor, he spent several years as an apprentice, often with several cantors. When he reached a certain age and had also learned ritual slaughter, he was considered a "finished" *hazzan*. The mutual exchange of synagogue melodies didn't happen through the basis of written music, but by means of these wandering apprentices. They memorized the best melodies of their masters and sang them at the tables of those cantors who offered them hospitality. In this manner, contemporary musical expression became connected to different geographical eras.

It should therefore not surprise us that we have so few written documents of Medieval Jewish music. But we have proof of the rich musical life during this period in the varied local traditions of synagogue music. The variety of original song is astonishing, all a creation of the Jewish heart, a characteristic expression of Medieval Jewry's emotional state.

These rich musical expressions were not limited to the synagogue. They poured forth into all aspects of life. They were the constant companion of the Jew; they laughed with him in his rejoicing and mourned with him in his suffering. Synagogue music is a cultural portrait for the entirety of Jewish Medieval life. This can be observed not through ancient, yellowed documents, but by living witnesses—elders who survive from the "good old days" into modern times. What I am going to expand upon regarding the historical importance of the Jewish Cantor cannot be proven from any book other than that of my own life and experience. Our purpose is to proclaim to a thousand hearts what had lived within them and had simply gone unnoticed. I am convinced that I need not call up witnesses for the following thoughts, but merely need to repeat what has long been commonly overlooked: Synagogue music, the musical creations of the Jewish Cantor for the synagogue, were the source from which music and song flowed over into all aspects of Jewish existence.

Family life

All week long the Jew was involved with his business. The bulk of Jewish business activity was widespread, because the districts in which Jews were forced to live were too limited to allow for successful business dealings. The entire week the Jew wandered as a peddler in the villages, dealt with his customers, and was the victim of mockery and humiliation. He endured all of this only to provide for his wife and children. All this traveling was doubly difficult because of his obligation to observe the dietary rules. Thus, he could only partially enjoy the hospitality that many a noble soul offered to him. When Friday came, he prepared to return home. Although weary and tired from work and deprivation, the way home seemed easy. The Sabbath offered him replacement for the privations of the entire week. He was returning home to his house, to his family, to his loyal wife, to his beloved children–and to the synagogue. Here he listened to the chants and songs that poured forth from the cantor's breast, sometimes dark and melancholy, sometimes jolly and wild.

The Jew took these melodies home with him to his domicile. To the scents and tastes of a luscious Sabbath meal, he recalled all his experiences of the week. He began to sing table songs, the *Z'mirot*, which incorporated snatches of melodies that he had heard in the synagogue from the cantor. These took flight within him, as he applied the tune of the new *L'kha dodi* to the words of the table song, *Tsur mi-shelo akhalnu*, and the new tune for *V'sham'ru* to the words of *Shir ha-ma'alot*, which introduces Grace after Meals. Through this musical juxtaposition, the festive Sabbath meal gained its incredible poetic and musical attraction. It even remains indelibly etched upon the memory of those who no longer observe the Sabbath.

After the meal, when the thread of pleasant conversation came to an end, melodies from the fully attended High Holidays Musaf service might emerge: *U-n'taneh tokef; Ki k'shimkha*; and *Ha-vein yakkir-li*. In this way, the synagogue became a source of inspiration for the Jewish home and the Jewish family. Accordingly, what was it that almost single-handedly maintained the freshness and fullness of this source?

The Cantor – Functioning within the Jewish Life Cycle!

The Cantor's task was not an easy one. The Jew of the Middle Ages was so inwardly downtrodden that even when joy outweighed his misfortune, his heart preferred to be stirred to tears by the gentle, mournful melodies of melancholy. The joyful tunes of contentment and happiness passed him by; they were alien to his heart. He could only be superficially happy in the hours of forgetting himself. Music may bring a person back to himself, scattering external influences. But the true, natural mood of the Jewish heart in the centuries of persecution was always painfully darkened, pleading for help. In the hours of mourning and in funeral processions, there was no desire for music. The Jewish heart needed no artificial prod to mourn. The tears that music enticed from him were a consequence of relief, not of sorrow, consolation, not grief. This was the Jew's natural element, the air which he breathed

Therefore, no one should be surprised when even the contemporary Jew, whose education and emancipation reaches back several decades, feels more deeply attracted to the minor scales, and shows much less warmth for the major keys. These are the remnants of the general mood of Medieval Judaism. Only the melancholy sounds of synagogue song exerted a magical power over those happy celebrations. And of course, the synagogue had no orchestra at its disposition other than the Cantor and his *m'shor'rim*.

There were happy occasions which enabled the Jewish community to stage festivities--the entrance of a child into the covenant of Abraham, the marriage of a young couple—or annual dinners of the *Hevra kaddisha* or the *Bikkur holim* societies. At these times the congregation gathered together for celebration. Then the aroma of food wafted through the room, the glasses bubbled over, and the rabbi added a scholarly element to the occasion with his sermon (without which a celebratory meal becomes like a meal eaten in a house of mourning). And song, which uplifted the soul, was never missing.

It was the Jewish Cantor who capped the festivities by means of the melodies of the synagogue. He had the liturgy of the entire year at his disposition. And after all the feasting, his *Mi she-beirakh* benedictions were received with great delight as they wove an exquisite wreath of melodies around the names of each person present, creating a fitting and dignified closure for the proceedings.

The music of the Jewish cantor also found a friendly echo in the life of the individual. As the music of the synagogue framed the communal festivities in family and broader social circles with uplifting melodies, so these same melodies fluttered pleasantly around the Jewish heart of the individual Jew. Lonely, burdened, estranged from society, he struggled for his existence. Away from home and synagogue, the holiness and peaceful rest of the Sabbath dissipated in the face of the prosaic tasks of everyday working conditions. The joyous sounds of festivities faded away to make a place for the need to earn a livelihood.

When the Jew wandered out into the district of his business dealings, into the hostile circle of fanatic customers, his faithful companions were his religion and his trust in God. But additionally, it was the *music* of the synagogue that shortened his paths, drove away the deluges of loneliness and comforted many feelings of doubt and depression. When, on Sunday, the Jew left his house and took leave of his wife and children, the last thing he did was to kiss the *Mezuzah*–the artifact containing the holy Name of God, that decorates the door of every Jewish

domicile–as it guards his going out and his coming in.

He perhaps remembered some thought or other from a sermon from Saturday morning. Perhaps he pondered some difficulty that a particular text or prayer had presented to him, or that someone else had brought to his attention. But after that, what busied his fluctuating consciousness? We can listen to him, because his mouth has opened; consciously or unconsciously, he hums to himself several notes of a melody that he has been trying to reconstruct. Finally, he has found the context, and now it resounds clearly, so that we can recognize it: it is a melody sung in the synagogue! Now he continues on his way, forgetting all his difficulty and distress. He forgets everything around him; he is transported. Now the legendary ninth-century Rabbi Amnon appears before him who, as he once read in his High Holiday *Mahzor*, composed the mysterious *U-n'taneh tokef* in the course of a painful martyrdom. Now he envisions himself prostrating at the *Avodah* re-enactment of the High Priest's Yom Kippur Confessional. Now the Holy Ark is opened, and the melody to *V'khol ma'aminim* is intoned.

He attempts one prayer melody after the other. Of course he can only render them incompletely. The rich embellishments and trills, the endless runs–he cannot imitate the cantor here. But what does it matter? His fantasy completes what his voice cannot; his song is for him only a reminder of that which he has heard from the cantor. This is enough to spark his fantasy. He doesn't hear himself, he hears the cantor and the *m'shor'rim*. Intent and distracted, he finally arrives at the goal of his wanderings, surprised that he reached it so quickly. Who could measure how many other melancholy thoughts, how many depressed feelings in a Jewish heart were uplifted and comforted through the echo of the musical activity of the Jewish Cantor!

The Jew in the Middle Ages

Are we able today to measure with what joy and love he attended synagogue? With what depth and inner intensity did the musical melodies (that he heard) sink into his heart? The synagogue is for us, and should exclusively be, the place of devotion, of religious elevation and instruction. The melodies in which prayers have traditionally been clothed are now for the most part merely tolerated as an inherited remnant of the past. For the contemporary visitor to the synagogue, the one who is regularly at least every Sabbath in *Shul*; for him, the only principle is: go quickly! "Short" is the only measuring stick by which contemporaries judge the value and the worth of the cantor's exertions.

Even those who don't mind listening to the cantor's song do so less because this music actually has an independent worth in their eyes. They listen because the service would be more boring without music than with it; they choose the lesser evil. This is not remarkable: religious stirrings have been weakened by the currents of materialism and pleasure. One need not go to synagogue. Nowadays one can play cards or billiards, or go to concerts, theater, opera or ballet. Please forgive this compilation; it is not our listing, but that of life, of reality.

During the Middle Ages, it was not so in the circle of our people. Excluded from all rights of freedom and human rights, thrust backward into the farthest corner of human society, the Jew had no possibility to experience emotional fulfillment other than in the synagogue. Due to his boundless misery, the Jew felt an immeasurable need to pray. He could admittedly pray at home, given the presence of a *minyan*, with the same validity as in the synagogue. But he felt the

urge to go to the synagogue to hear the *hazzan*. It was his delight. He didn't listen to the song because he was in the synagogue anyway and obliged to go there. He went to the synagogue to listen to the voice of the cantor. He hurried in order to be there as early as possible and miss nothing. Not like today, where one is likely to come late precisely in order to miss some things. For the Jews in the Middle Ages, the synagogue was also a musical edifice.

If I may say so, the synagogue was for him both concert and opera, it was everything combined. In the truest sense of the word, the synagogue was the "university" where the areas of thought and feeling were not separated. When we are alone for any reason, or if we are on a boring journey, what do we do to distract ourselves underway? With the melodies that we have heard in concert or opera. The Jew in the Middle Ages amused himself by means of the melodies that he heard in the synagogue!

We must apply this measuring stick to the historical role of the Jewish Cantor in order to better comprehend the role that he played in strengthening the inner core of the Jew in the Middle Ages; helping him to withstand his suffering. We can only guess into how many hearts–directly and indirectly–the Jewish cantor magically instilled calmness, comfort, joy and uplift.

Currently, living as we do in culturally developed countries, no one would consider this role of the cantor as desirable or commendable. Today the efforts of all colleagues must be concentrated upon one single goal: that the cantor's range of activity be restricted mainly, if not entirely, to the dignified musical presentation of the service. His boundaries are to be found in encouraging religious devotion in the service. Every role that is laid upon the cantor outside of the official place of worship is a burden that is foreign to his profession and that he must strip off.

Nevertheless, the Cantor may readily and with modest pride accept the laurel wreath of honor from the hand of history. He has earned it on behalf of his people. He didn't chase after this wreath of honor. Unconsciously, without intention, he labored in the institution that history designed in order to maintain Judaism. He thought of nothing besides the loyal fulfillment of his office. The successes that went beyond that are due to divine benevolence. There is no more elevated reward than recognition by the Judge of the World!

Conclusion

In Jewish history there are many epochs that accommodate understanding and morals to the highest degree, but that do not allow for any emotions. While the history of the Jews in Spain is surrounded by the sweet perfume of its religious poetry, so many periods in Germany, Poland, etc., seem to us cold and void of emotion. With all due appreciation for Talmudic study, Jewish philosophy had become cold and soul-less! Should there not have been a counterbalance in the form of musico-poetic expression?

There was, in a hidden area almost unknown to historic research, *music*. Where the study of Talmud was earnestly pursued, poetic creativity did not develop. Nonetheless, synagogue song burgeoned alongside it–unheralded–and still remains a wild, driving force that is without competition in comparison to any other historically evaluated form of poetic expression. Whether musical productivity is in agreement or disagreement with the theories of aesthetics of harmony is spurious as far as this viewpoint is concerned. Synagogue song presents itself as the

area in which the poetic expressions of the Jewish spirit found their creative channel.

It is remarkable that the musical productivity of Judaism did not succumb to the oppressiveness of the Middle Ages. Many celebrated modern composers and performing artists are sons of Judaism; merely a few years of equality were sufficient to bring the seed of Jewish music to such a blossoming. Despite the vituperations of Richard Wagner (who is verily no master of modesty or self-reflection) about the high number of contemporary Jewish composers, Jew-hatred persists in denying this reality. Yet how, otherwise, is it possible that the musical element of the broad mass of the Jewish people, having been petrified for almost two thousand years, has awakened and in such a short time developed into such a powerful current?

Perhaps the musical element was never really petrified! In richest fullness and agility, it had conceivably retained its primacy of place within Judaism all along. Our contemporary era with its freedom may have merely contributed to a perfection of its form. Who, then, was it who had dutifully kept the musical stream flowing through the Judaism of the Middle Ages?

The Jewish Cantor!

***The Feast of Rejoicing of the Law in Leghorn*, by Solomon Alexander Hart, 1850**

Byron's "She Walks in Beauty," a New Setting by Charles Heller

***After Sara Constant,* "Byron on Bellevue: The Kiever Shul's Hebrew Melodies"; *theWholeNote* Internet Newsletter, Oct. 18, 2017**

George Gordon Byron—best known simply as 'Lord Byron'—is often considered one of the Romantic Era's greatest poets. But a number of Byron's greatest works, among them his celebrated short poem "She Walks in Beauty," have a lesser-known musical and spiritual connection. Originally published in 1815 as the first in a collection of music and lyrics titled *Hebrew Melodies*, the lyrics were meant to be sung to traditional synagogue melodies supplied for the book by Byron's composer friend Isaac Nathan, the son of a cantor in London. The book was an instant hit, but while Byron's lyrics remained famous for years to come, Nathan's musical settings did not.

In a concert on October 29, 2017 at Toronto's Kiever Shul, violist Barry Shiffman, soprano Stacie Carmona, clarinetist Ori Carmona and musicians from the Royal Conservatory came together to perform a selection of traditional and new Jewish music. This setting, the first among several brand-new ones for Byron's *Hebrew Melodies*, provided a centerpiece for the concert. They were all inspired by the synagogue tunes that composer Isaac Nathan adapted for them over 200 years ago.

Toronto composer Charles Heller, who has been involved in synagogue music for over 50 years, is the person behind the project. For his new settings of Byron's collection, he used Nathan's music as a starting point. He explains, "Byron's poems are remarkable for their sympathy with Jewish suffering and longing for a restoration of Jewish national independence."

Heller isn't new to the task, either. In 2015, he composed, performed and recorded a song cycle titled *Tramvay Lider* ("Streetcar Songs"), settings of Yiddish poems by acclaimed Toronto poet Shimon Nepom, who worked as a streetcar conductor until his death in 1939, and who wrote poems descriptive of his daily route through town. This earlier cycle was also featured in a concert at the Kiever Shul, a venue that Heller describes as "having a reputation for a charming and restful atmosphere, as well as good acoustics and an intimate feel, very conducive to concerts."

For Heller, though the two projects present totally different musical and poetic worlds, it's easy to hear the cantorial influence in both, "a form of melismatic chant that is very influenced by the meaning of the words." While he's committed to honoring the work of Byron and Nathan, he's also bringing to this collection of settings something new. "I used a few of the traditional synagogue melodies as arranged by Nathan in 1815, but also there is much completely original music. So, my piece is a collaboration between me, Byron, traditional synagogue melodies and Isaac Nathan's melodies written in 19th-century cantorial style." Heller's new setting of Lord Byron's *She Walks in Beauty* exemplifies that fascinating traversal of musical styles through the centuries.

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE AUDIO FILE]

She Walks in Beauty

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellowed to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impaired the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow ,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON (1788-1824)

A Moment in Time: Odessa and its Unsung Composer– Pinchas Minkowsky (1859-1924)

By Marsha Bryan Edelman

Minkowsky and Odessa in An Historical Context

The impact of 19th-century liturgical reforms in France, Germany and Austria on Jewish music is well known. A product of the twin forces of political emancipation and social enlightenment, the progressive spirit that inspired composers like Salomon Sulzer (1804-1890) in Vienna, Louis Lewandowski (1821-1894) in Berlin, and Samuel Naumbourg (1815-1880) in Paris remains a potent presence in contemporary synagogues (albeit, often in "folklorized" form, sacrificing the rhythmic and harmonic detail originally conceived by the composers for simplified versions enshrined through congregational singing).

It is also well known that Jews in Eastern Europe did not enjoy similar political blessings. Indeed, millions of Jews who came under the Imperialist rule of the Russian czar during approximately the same period (1791-1917) were limited to residence in a "Pale of Settlement" (comprising much of present day Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Moldova, Poland and Western Russia). This segregation of Jewish residents "acquired" through Russian military conquests in the late-18th and early-19th centuries was a reflection of anti-Semitism among the Russian Orthodox, but also of a nationalist desire to keep Russian culture "pure."

A limited quota of Jews who evidenced extraordinary academic or artistic gifts (or who possessed the financial wherewithal to be useful to the crown – and to dole out the necessary bribes) was granted permission to live in major Russian cities like Moscow and St. Petersburg. It was this small minority who responded to their exclusion from Russian life by exploring and exploiting the manifestations of Jewish cultural heritage that constituted their own "nationalism." Yiddish stories by Shalom Aleichem (ne Solomon Naumovitch Rabinovich, 1859-1916) and Mendele Mocher Sforim (ne Yaakov Abramovitch, 1846-1917) gave iconic life to the "shtetls" (small villages) of Eastern Europe, while poetry by Hayim Nahman Bialik (1873-1934), and Saul Tchernichovsky (1875-1943) in the "reborn" Hebrew language of the Jewish people signaled a return to ancient linguistic roots and both reflected and fanned the early flames of a new, secular Zionism.

In musical circles, Joel Engel (1868-1927) was among the early ethnographers and composers whose research in the hinterlands of Eastern Europe documented the cultural heritage that would inspire the creation of the *Gesellschaft fur Yiddishe Folksmusik* (Society for Jewish Folk Music) and, its name notwithstanding, the creation of art music that brought traditional Jewish melodies to the concert hall. A decade of musical creativity from 1908-1917 produced music by Engel, Joseph Achron (1816-1943), Solomon Rosowsky (1878-1962), Lazar Saminsky (1882-1959) and Mikhail (Moshe) Milner (1886-1953) and made Jewish music the "equal" of other nationalist expressions of the day, setting the stage for the continuing evolution and proliferation of "secular" Jewish music.

Less well known is the presence of similar cultural richness in the smaller cities of Eastern Europe. Jews in Warsaw, Vilna (home of the first Yiddish "art theater" and the debut of Anski's revolutionary play, *The Dybbuk*) and Kiev supported chapters of the *Gesellschaft* and

produced concerts to promote the thriving new Jewish culture. Odessa, in what is today Southern Ukraine, was among the more "Westernized" communities, in large part due to the influence of a group of Jews who immigrated there from Brody in the first part of the 19th century. Today, Brody is an insignificant town on the Western Ukranian border, and its Jewish population was destroyed during World War II. During the 19th century, though, Brody was the seat of commerce between the Westernized Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Russian Empire, and home to one of the largest Jewish communities in the Pale of Settlement (nearly 140,000 people, approximately one-third of the total population) and its citizens benefited from and contributed to the *Haskalah* (Enlightenment) movement.

The so-called "Brodsky" Jews established their synagogue in 1841, engaging Nissan Blumenthal (1805-1903) to serve as their cantor. Under Blumenthal's leadership, the *Broder Shul* (Brodsky Synagogue) became known as the first *khorshul* (choral synagogue) in the East. Blumenthal utilized his knowledge of German classical music (as well as the new music introduced by Salamon Sulzer and later, Louis Lewandowski), to adapt melodies by Handel, Haydn, Cherubini and Mendelssohn for use in liturgical singing. After nearly three decades of juggling his multiple responsibilities as soloist, organist, choral director and composer/arranger, Blumenthal hired David Nowakowsky (1848-1921) to serve as the choir's rehearsal conductor in 1869. Nowakowsky had an extensive background as a chorister in Berditchev; he had also studied the Jewish liturgical modes with Yeruchom (HaKoton) Blindman (c. 1798-1891) as well as organ, music theory and counterpoint at the local conservatory. Nowakowsky's talents and somewhat more conservative liturgical tendencies (rejecting the use of German during worship) were overshadowed by his prominent mentor, but the partnership was extraordinarily successful, and established Odessa as a popular destination for even non-Jewish visitors to the region, who had heard about the unparalleled beauty of the services. Still, Nowakowsky's skill as a composer saw its fullest development during the tenure of Blumenthal's successor, Pinchas Minkowsky.

Pinchas Minkowsky (1859-1924) was born in Belaya Tserkov, Ukraine, a small town about 80 km. south of Kiev, where his father served as the local cantor. As a boy, Pinchas received his earliest choral experience and cantorial training from his father, and then joined the choir of Nissan Spivak (aka Nissi Belzer, 1824-1906) in Berdichev. The young man was generally well educated, pursuing serious studies in Bible and Talmud, and achieving fluency in German and Russian. He also studied at the Vienna Conservatory, where he earned a diploma in singing. Minkowsky returned to Ukraine and served briefly as cantor in Kishinev, Kherson, Lemberg and Odessa before accepting a three-year term as cantor at K'hal Adat Yeshurun in New York. He was called back to Odessa to serve the Brodsky Synagogue in 1892, a position he held until 1922.

The 30-year collaboration between Minkowsky and Nowakowsky brought out the best in both musicians. Minkowsky shared the conductor's interest in traditional liturgical melodies, and became a great advocate for his music. Nowakowsky wrote with the cantor's voice in mind, and Minkowsky beautifully interpreted the composer's music, appreciating the purity of the lines, and Nowakowsky's resistance to the types of "vocal excesses" that had crept into cantorial music from Italian opera.

Ironically, the popularity of Nowakowsky's music seems to have eclipsed that of his mentor, Pinchas Minkowsky. Today, most students of Jewish music regard him largely as a "one-hit wonder," the writer of a lovely tune setting the text of Bialik's famous poem, *Shabbat*

ha-malkah. In fact, Minkowsky was a fine composer in his own right, with more than 20 completed settings (and sketches for several more) to his credit.

An Overview of Minkowsky's Compositions

With dates given on only a few of his manuscripts, it is impossible to ascertain any sequence to Minkowsky's compositions, or even to know whether these settings were the result of an intensive burst of creativity or consistent, if occasional, efforts. Indeed, we cannot know whether the extant "collection" is truly complete, for while the inclusion of sketches among his papers suggests an attempt to retain every scrap of the composer's output, we cannot know what may have been lost. The works that do exist comprise an interesting collection, though, including settings of many of the "usual" texts, as well as a few less commonly treated liturgical passages.

For Friday Evening

1. *Mah tovu*
2. *Adonai malakh*
3. *Tov l'hodot*–in D major– 3/4 time
4. *Tov l'hodot*–in Eb major–4/4 time
5. *L'kha dodi*
6. *Magein avot*
7. *R'tseih*

For Sabbath Morning

8. *Mim-m'kom'kha*
9. *Hatsi-kaddish*[1]
10. Blessings for Rosh Hodesh: *Y'hi ratson* / *Mi she-asah nissim* / *Y'had'sheihu*
11. *K'dushah* (Musaf) #1–begins in C major, 4/4 time
12. *K'dushah* (Musaf) #2– begins in G Major, ¾ time
13. *Adon olam*

For Pilgrimage Festivals

14. *Ein kamokha*[2]
15. *Lo lanu* (Ps. 115: 1-11)
16. *Adonai z'kharanu* (Ps. 115:12-18
17. *Ahavti* (Ps. 116 complete)

[1] The only indication that this work may be intended for Shabbat morning is a brief flirtation with the Ahavah Rabbah mode; but given that Minkowsky is inconsistent with his use of modes, this selection may easily be used elsewhere.

[2] The addition of music for *Adonai, adonai, eil rahum v'hannun…* suggests that this setting of excerpts from the Torah service was intended for use on Festivals, but the prior sections, concluding with *Barukh she-natan torah…* might well have been used on other occasions when the Torah was being read.

For the High Holidays

18. *Atah nigleita*
19. *Atah notein yad*

For Hanukkah

21. *Ashirah na* (*Pizmon* by D. Frischman)

Uncompleted sketches

1. *U-mi she-harav*–Soprano and organ
2. *Nefesh kol hai*–Soprano and organ
3. *K'dushah* (*Shaharit*)−for Cantor and two treble voices
4. *Adonai z'kharanu*–Soprano Solo
5. *Lo amut*–Cantor, Choir and organ
6. *Ribbono shel olam*–Cantor, Choir and organ
7. *B'motsa'ei m'nuhah*–Choir
8. *Atanu al shimkha*– Choir
9. *Avi hidlik neirot li*–a sketch for a children's setting of a poem by Hayyim Nahman Bialik

The Essence of Minkowsky's Musical Contribution

Although it is impossible to make any definitive statements about the sketches and whether or not any of the resulting compositions might have yielded any different musical ideas from the composer, it is interesting to note the range of the liturgy Minkowsky approached. One of these sketches is for an apparently subsequent setting of a text the composer had already completed (*Adonai z'kharanu*), but the others represent completely new liturgical forays, including some more texts for the High Holy Days and some other little-known passages (as well as a venture into children's repertoire, perhaps intended as a "companion" to his other familiar Bialik setting).

As is to be expected, virtually all of the complete works do include a role for the cantor, and show off Minkowsky's evident skills as a vocalist with a wide range and the flexibility to negotiate demanding coloratura passages.[3] At the same time, Minkowsky's works also include substantial roles for a professional choir whose members will be comfortable regularly exploiting the outer limits of their ranges. Minkowsky's sopranos and tenors are often required to sing a high A (and occasional B), while basses are called upon to sing D above middle C at the top of their registers, as well as F below the staff. Interestingly, Minkowsky seems to be ambivalent about the second female voice, sometimes labeling it as "soprano II" and elsewhere designating the second part for "alto" (though most often the two parts appear on the same treble score and the three staves are simply labeled "chorus.") Regardless of label, there is no difference in the tessitura he sets for either voice, and he uses a consistently comfortable range for those singers.

[3] A lengthy choral setting of a "Hanukkah Pizmon"called *Ashirah no* by the otherwise unknown D. Frischman includes a "tenor solo" that is not designated as "cantor" but might certainly have been sung by him. Minkowsky's setting of *Magein avot* is for choir only (with solo parts designated for members of the ensemble) but it is immediately followed by a setting of *R'tseih* for solo cantor.

Minkowsky's use of the organ is inconsistent. Several of his settings include substantial organ introductions (*L'kha dodi*, *Tov l'hodot*, *Magein avot*, *Va'ani t'fillati*, *Y'hi ratson*) and/or interludes or postludes (*Tov l'hodot*, *Ein kamokha* / *Av ha-raḥamim*, *Adonai z'kharanu*). The accompaniments for solo passages are harmonically interesting, sensitive and supportive of the vocal line without overwhelming it. For much of the choral writing, though, the organ's role is merely duplicative, and adds nothing to the music. His setting of *L'kho dodi* includes three "verses" sung by solo cantor in a quasi-recitativo style, but without accompaniment. It is worth noting that his only complete compositions for the High Holy Days are a cappella: *Atoh nigleiso* from the Rosh Hashanah Musaf (*Shofarot*) and *Atah notein yad* from the Neilah service concluding Yom Kippur.[4] (One of his two settings of *Na'aritskha* from the Sabbath Musaf service also seems to be unaccompanied; however, it must be observed that the notation of this composition is clearly in another hand and it is possible that the extant work is merely someone else's rendering of the vocal score alone.

Notwithstanding the impact of the organ, the whole point of the *Khorshul* is, of course, the choir, and it is unquestionably there that Minkowsky's creativity is on best display. From a textural perspective, Minkowsky makes full use of the various combinations possible in employing a mixed choir, writing some segments for male or female voices alone, and others where he pairs male and female voices: soprano/tenor and alto/bass divisions are favored, but there are other places where the outer (soprano and bass) voices sing in tandem, and in contrast with the inner (alto/tenor) parts. In some settings, Minkowsky uses the choir as an antiphonal contrast to the cantor; in others, the four voices of the choir "compete" with each other in fugal (or fugato) passages.

Minkowsky's actual writing for the choral voices is most interesting, especially in observing its flaws. There are many passages in which the men's and women's voices are written in simple thirds (especially when the male and female voices are set apart from each other). Often the male and female voices are written an octave (or more) apart. In other passages, the soprano, alto and tenor voices appear to exist independent of the bass, with the upper voices at the higher end of their ranges, and the bass an octave or more below. Elsewhere, Minkowsky's studies in counterpoint are in better evidence, with richer and more consistent spacing among the voices, though some of his compositions conclude on chords that span four octaves!

Structurally, Minkowsky's works are quite varied. In some passages he employs fairly straightforward, non-repetitive settings of the liturgy, while other texts are repeated several times. Most of his longer works are composed in distinct sections with varying meters and key signatures. Harmonically, Minkowsky uses "conservative" chords for the most part, but he is not afraid of chromaticism. He often wavers between major and minor, and occasionally flirts with the *ahavah rabbah* mode. At the same time, the composer makes strategic and impactful use of occasional unison, as well as a clear sense of dynamic range.

[4] Minkowsky also wrote an accompanied selection entitled *Va'ani t'fillati* but actually beginning with *Adonai, adonai*. The juxtaposition of these texts clearly designates their use in the High Holy Day Torah service, but since this composition is in the same key as the *Adonai, adonai* setting "attached" to his *Ein kamokha* (E minor), it is possible Minkowsky planned this setting to go along with his other, accompanied "Torah Service."

Examination of two settings of the Psalm for the Sabbath, Psalm 92, will offer some interesting illustration of Minkowsky's compositional skills, as well as his "open-mindedness" in approaching the same text in two very different ways.

Pinchas Minkowsky (1859-1924)

What we will call "setting one" of Psalm 92 is in D major, and ¾ time. It begins with an 8-bar organ introduction that suggests some of the writing that will appear in the opening, homophonic choral segment that covers verses 1 – 5 (albeit with some repetition of the final phrase, *B'ma'asei yadekha arannein*, I will exult in the works of Your hands.)

A 12-bar organ interlude effects the transition to the next section, verses 6-8 (*Mah godlu ma'asekha, adonai* (How great are Your works, O Lord) for solo cantor. This section is notated as if it were in 4/4, but "Cantorial recitative" is designated in the score and it is clearly intended that the passage (and organ accompaniment) be more *ad libitum* than exact. A brief, metrical statement (back in ¾) by the choir sets the short verse 9 (*V'atah marom l'olam, adonai*, But You, O Lord, are on high for ever), and then the cantor continues his solo chanting of verses 10 – 12. This time the choir's homophonic chanting of the last phrase in verse 12 (*tishmanoh oznoi*, my ears hear) sets up the final passage, a lengthy (92 bars) setting of verses 13-17 (*Tsaddik kat-tomor yifroh*, the righteous shall flourish like the palm tree). Here the cantor and choir share the first two and one half verses, first singing together, then antiphonally chanting the next several phrases until the choir takes over for the dramatic conclusion to the work.

Minkowsky's second setting of Psalm 92[5] is in Eb major, in 4/4 time, and starts immediately with a maestoso choral statement of the opening three verses. Beginning with verse 4 (*Alei asor*, with an instrument of 10 strings), this setting adopts a contrapuntal texture for an extended (34 bars) and repetitive statement of the next two verses.

Following a brief organ postlude to the previous section, Minkowsky again sets verses 6-8 (*Mah godlu… l'hishomdam adei ad*) for "cantorial recitative" but here the 4/4 meter seems more intentional, because it includes choral "echoes" of each phrase sung by the soloist. Given the presence of the choir in the preceding verses, the choir-alone setting of Verse 9 (albeit in ¾) seems more logical and anticipated than the similar treatment in the first setting.

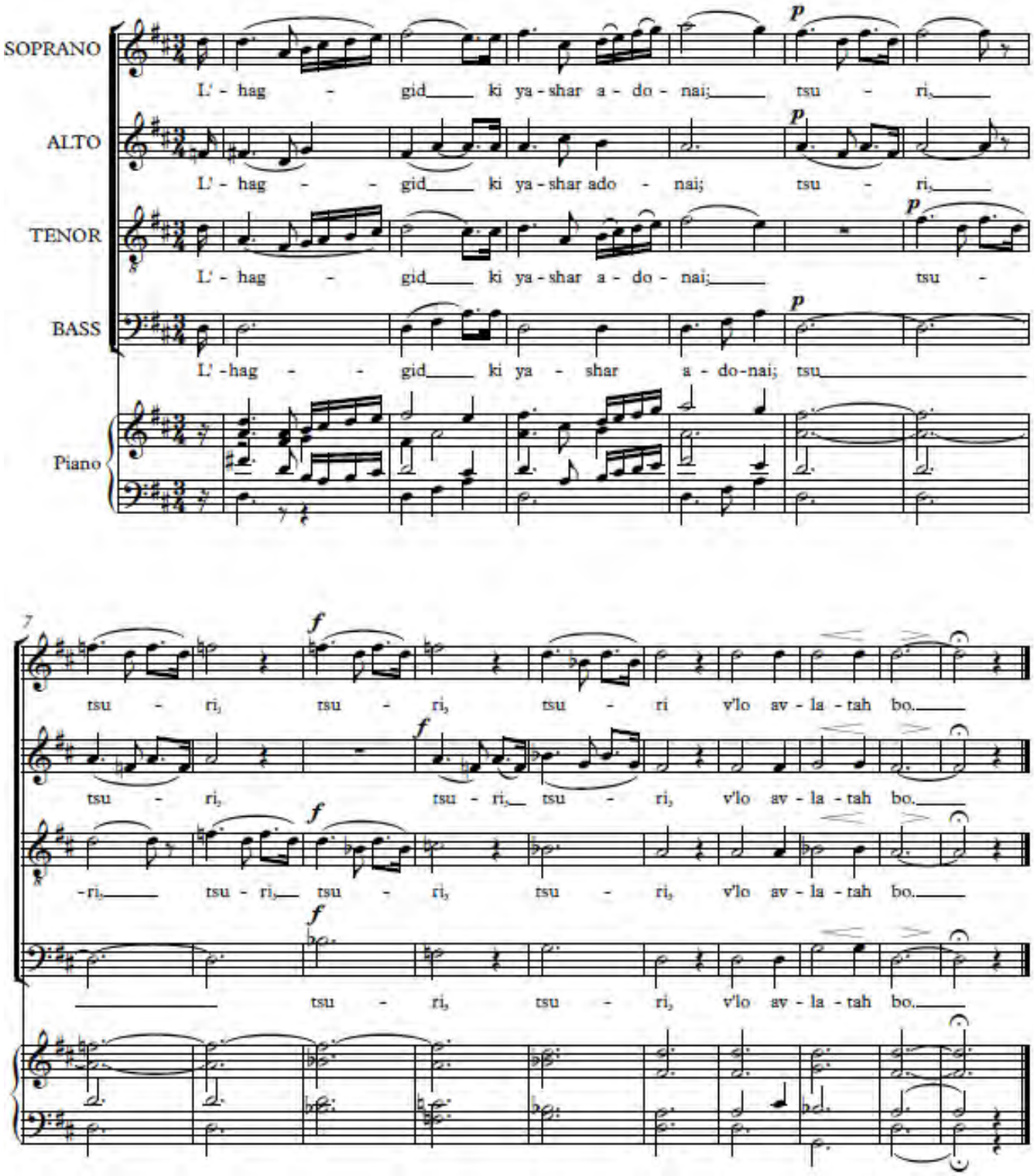
Minkowsky returns to 4/4 and the antiphonal cantor/choir chanting established in verses 6-8 for his setting of verse 10, but the cantor chants a (metrical) solo statement of verses 11-12 (*Va-tarem kir'eim karni… tishmanah oznai*, You raised me like a ram's horn…may my ears hear). The choir returns to echo that final phrase, and the organ provides a 6 bar transition to the adagio, 3/4 statement of the last 4 verses. The cantor joins the choir for verse 13, adding a fifth voice, as it were, to the choral forces, but drops out to leave the final verses to the choir alone. Curiously, while the choral voices move homophonically throughout, the tenors and basses begin their phrase on an upbeat, so that the men's voices and women's voices are "out of step" with each other's texts until the middle of verse 16.

[5] Since there are no dates on either composition, we have arbitrarily assigned them positions in recognition of their ascending keys.

Tov l'hodot #1

Psalm 92:16

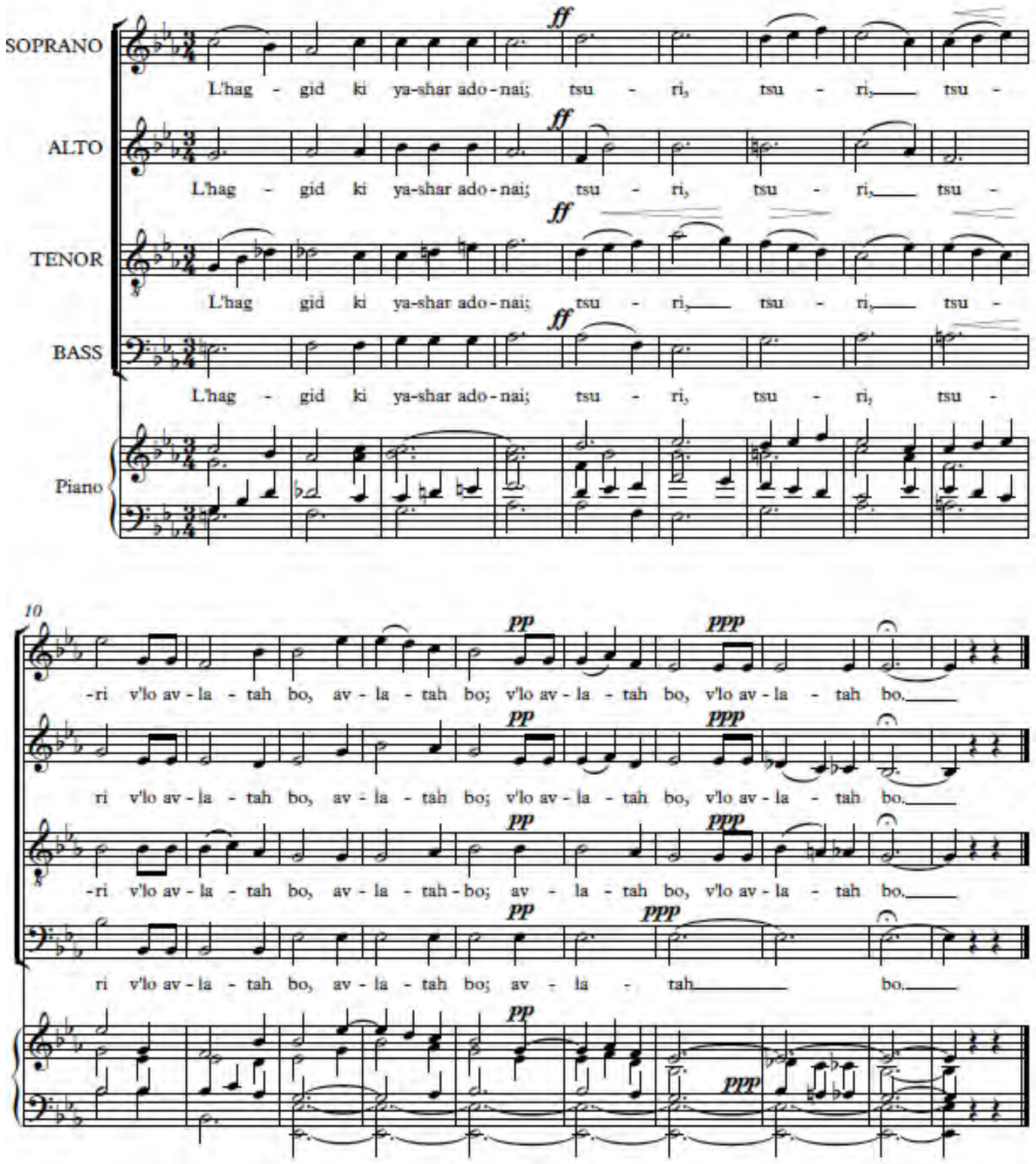
Pinchas Minkowsky



Tov l'hodot #2

Pinchas Minkowsky

Psalm 92:16



Conclusion

As is often the case, the meaning and phrasing of the liturgy makes incontrovertible demands upon the composer who is sensitive to his text. This brief demonstration of Minkowsky's ability to respect the constraints of his text and still find original ways to treat it is illustrative of the variation and creativity to be found throughout his work.[6]

A flurry of correspondence in 1971 between members of Minkowsky's family and Samuel Rosenbaum, then Executive Vice President of the Cantors Assembly, sought to publish, or at least, sponsor a performance of some of the composer's work. At that time, though, Hazzan Rosenbaum gently but correctly concluded that, "Minkowski [sic] was a pioneer in his time but events have moved so swiftly since then and the state of synagogue music has changed so radically that his music is now somewhat 'old fashioned.'[7] In the more than 45 years that have passed since then, that conclusion has become even more true. Still, the existence of this music offers several useful insights to the interested reader and historian: It provides further evidence of the productive collaboration between a cantor and his choral director, and it proves that Nowakowsky's efforts were not isolated, but part of a vital *Khorshul* in Odessa. Perhaps most important, it sheds light on the more prolific contributions of a renowned but little-appreciated composer, Pinchas Minkowsky, whose music illuminates the capacity of synagogue choirs to perform demanding works, and of synagogue worshipers to receive them as spiritual offerings. One can hope that contemporary congregations might achieve the same level of appreciation for the efforts of their cantors and choirs to "sing unto the Lord" with similarly high art.

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[6] A similar examination of Minkowsky's setting of *Adonai z'kharanu* and the better-known treatment of that text by his choir director, Nowakowsky, would yield another interesting set of comparisons, but is beyond the scope of this short paper.

[7] Correspondence between Hazzan Samuel Rosenbaum and David Mink, a nephew of the composer, July 8, 1971.

Portrait of the Artist as a Young Cantor−Moshe Koussevitzky's Early Career (1918-1928)—on the 120th Anniversary of His Birth

By Mark Friedlander

The essential milestones of Moshe Koussevitzky's life are well-known to most people who love cantorial music. Often, the sources of such information are the printed inserts which accompany recordings sold in stores. However, his eventful life has also generated material which can only be described as fanciful, some of which has found its way into those same inserts. The most authoritative information about his life now comes from the only existing Koussevitzky biography, *Zakhor ezk'renu od* (I Remember Him Still) which was authored by the late Israeli scholar Akiva Zimmermann and issued in connection with the centennial of the hazzan's birth. In his 45-page Hebrew text, which is accompanied by brief Yiddish and English summaries, Zimmermann reveals that he spent so much time with Koussevitzky, mostly during the hazzan's trips to Israel, that Koussevitzky himself stated "no one knows more about my life than you do." Zimmermann was an expert who previously wrote scholarly works on Jewish music and specifically, cantorial and liturgical music, so that his background, combined with his exposure to the subject of his work, makes this book incomparable source material. The book is also accompanied by hundreds of wonderful photos, many supplied to Zimmermann by the hazzan's widow. Unfortunately for those interested, the book is now out of print, and copies on the secondary market are very hard to find.

It is known that Moshe Koussevitzky was born on June 9, 1899, in Smorgon, which is located at the present time in Belarus. Smorgon has been described in some accounts of his life as near the Polish border, but this is misleading. In fact, in the year 1899, there was no Polish border, as Poland had been completely absorbed into neighboring countries, mostly Russia, since 1795. From Koussevitzky's birth until late in the First World War, Smorgon was an integral part of the Russian Empire, ruled by Czar Nicholas II. Neither Belarus nor its earlier version, Byelo-Russian SSR, then existed. In czarist times, Smorgon was part of the Vilna Governorate, which meant it was administered from nearby Vilna. While Smorgon is now within the borders of Belarus, it is located so close to the border of Lithuania that it is much closer to the current Lithuanian capital of Vilnius (formerly Vilna) than to the Belarus capital of Minsk. The significance of this is that the strongest cultural and religious influences on the hazzan's family and his neighbors may be presumed to have emanated from Vilna, the epicenter of the "Litvak," or Lithuanian Jewish, identity.

After World War I, when both Lithuania and Poland had been carved out of the Czar's empire and re-established as nations, the border of Poland was extended by Polish forces so far east as to take in the city of Vilna itself, an event bitterly contested by Lithuania. From then until 1939, not only Vilna, but also Smorgon, were within Poland. Thus, during Koussevitzky's tenure as cantor in both Vilna and Warsaw, in the 1920s and 1930s, when he was identified as a Polish-Jewish cantor, his birthplace of Smorgon was, quite temporarily, within Poland, as was the city of his first post, Vilna.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the majority of Smorgon's population was Jewish. Smorgon also contained respected institutions of learning. It is known that the eventual Chief Rabbi of the pre-Mandate Palestine, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, studied there, and spoke warmly of his years in Smorgon. It was also a place of noted Zionist leanings and sent some of its native sons and daughters to join the *yishuv* (renascent Jewish community) in the late nineteenth century.

Koussevitzky's father, Avigdor, was an amateur violinist, and it may be from him that Koussevitzky derived the precision which he imported into his singing. The children of the family were given violins and encouraged to learn the instrument and to practice. (Moshe Koussevitzky was the eldest of four brothers, all of whom became professional cantors. His brothers, in the order of their birth, were Jacob, Simcha and David.) There is no evidence available, however, to suggest that Koussevitzky inherited vocal abilities from his paternal line. By contrast, Koussevitzky's mother, Alta, came from a family of cantors named Schulman. Koussevitzky's maternal grandfather was a *ba'al t'fillah* and *melamed*, who taught the young Moshe how to pronounce Hebrew with clarity. An uncle on his mother's side was a cantor who eventually served in the United States. Yet, there is no indication that any of the Schulman family exhibited the level of talent that Moshe did.

Moshe's singing ability came to the attention of local leaders when he sang at school events, and he was asked to join the choir at one of the Smorgon synagogues. At that time, it was the usual practice for established synagogues to have their cantor accompanied by a choir, which was directed by a choir leader. Moshe and his brothers all served in choirs prior to becoming cantors, and David spent a considerable portion of his early manhood as a choir leader, before joining the family profession. Intriguingly, Zimmermann reports in his book that Moshe told him of the existence of a phonograph in his childhood home. Apparently, Moshe was fond of listening to records of Zavel Kwartin (1874-1952) and Yossele Rosenblatt (1882-1933). It is riveting to imagine him as a child of ten or thirteen, listening to such recordings and perhaps trying to imitate the styles of those giants.

Moshe's voice started to change at some point prior to his 16th birthday. "It was a good thing I stopped singing at the time," Moshe would tell an interviewer from *The Jewish Press* decades later, "I could have lost my voice forever." Having to rest his voice during those years and unsure of the quality of voice which would emerge at the end, he developed another talent, for art, enrolling in studies related to painting and sculpture, and even completed a portrait of the previous czar. Demonstrating that he had not forgotten his early training, later in life he created a bust of President John F. Kennedy.

During the First World War, the eastern front was a hellish environment for Jews. The major Jewish population centers of nearly all Eastern European Jewry lay directly in the path of the contending armies of Germany (including its ally, Austria-Hungary) and Russia. Cities, villages and fields alike were trampled, shelled and all but crushed as the armies moved back and forth, sometimes prevailing, at other times retreating. In the usual fashion, each army suspected the Jewish population of secretly favoring the other side. When the Russians made progress with the assistance of their Cossack forces, the Cossacks inflicted depredations on

the Jews that need not be belabored here. In short, life became unbearable, and the Koussevitzky family removed itself from Smorgon in 1915, to seek respite in the Russian interior. They reached Rostov-on-Don in south Russia (east of what is now the much-embattled Ukrainian border) and remained there for the duration of the war.

Rostov-na-Danu, as it is known in Russian, is identified by its proximity to the Don River, in order to distinguish it from the much smaller, but far more historic, Rostov the Great (or Rostov Veliki) which is located about 100 miles northeast of Moscow. The latter is considered one of the earliest towns built by the original Slavic settlers of the region over a thousand years ago. By contrast, Rostov-on-Don is a relatively young city, having been established in the late eighteenth century, and having witnessed a Jewish influx mostly during the second half of the nineteenth century. Late in the nineteenth century, the boundaries of the Jewish Pale of Settlement were changed, as happened occasionally, this time to exclude Rostov from the Pale. The change did not mean that Jews could no longer reside in the city, but their numbers were thereafter limited in a variety of ways. Nevertheless, Rostov, a city of more than one hundred twenty thousand in the early twentieth century, remained at least ten percent Jewish, with a large choral synagogue and many other Jewish institutions. It also had an interesting mix of theological strictness. Scrupulously Orthodox Jews mingled freely with Sabbath observing Jews who also held mixed-gender social dancing events, while both groups co-existed uneasily with socialist free-thinkers.

Fleeing the same sort of chaos which had engulfed the Koussevitzky family, the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe moved his Court to Rostov in 1915, accompanied by many Hasidim. It was there that the Rebbe, Sholom Dov Ber, passed away in 1920 and was succeeded by his only son, Rav Yosef Yitzchak, known today as father-in-law of the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe, the late Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902-1994). By 1924, the anti-religious stance of the new Communist regime had grown so severe that the sixth Rebbe was forcibly removed from Rostov to Leningrad. Although it is not known whether there was any interaction between the Koussevitzky and Schneerson families during the First World War, the powerful presence of this movement in the relatively close-knit Rostov community surely had some impact on the adolescent future hazzan.

As the war wound on, Koussevitzky reached the age at which his adult voice emerged, and his unusually sweet lyric tenor soon made an impression on the hazzan of the city's choral synagogue, Eliyahu Zaludkovsky, who took the young man under his wing and began to tutor him in the discipline. At the urging of his mentor, the young Koussevitzky entered the choir, which performed not only at the synagogue, but also at other venues, singing classical musical selections. At choir performances in non-synagogue locations, he met a pretty young soprano, who also participated in the classical renditions. Her name was Raya Zarenkin, and she was descended from a family of cantors and singers. She also came from a Smorgon family. The two would eventually marry, but not until sometime after the war ended and they returned to northern Russia.

Russia had withdrawn from the World War even prior to the armistice on the western front in November 1918, but that withdrawal brought little peace to the battered nation and its

people. Vicious internal battles raged between the "red" forces of the Bolsheviks and the "white" forces which favored the old order. Travel became dangerous, but random violence could also find those who chose to stay put. In these circumstances, the Koussevitzky family eventually made its way fearfully toward its former home. When the family finally arrived in Smorgon, they were dismayed and overwhelmed by the extent of the destruction the World War had wrought. Discouraged, after spending a short time in Smorgon, they travelled onward a bit farther, and opted to make their new home in the city once called *Y'rushalayim d'lita* (the Jerusalem of Lithuania), the city of Vilna.

The Koussevitzky family arrived in Vilna in 1921, having exhausted its financial resources, and moved in with Moshe's maternal cousins. At some point thereafter, Moshe was heard to sing in the presence of a small group of relatives, a group which included a noted choir leader. His performance so excited the choir leader that he predicted a great future as a hazzan for Moshe and accepted him into what was then called the "Cultural League" choir.[1] At this time, Moshe resumed taking voice lessons and also studied Torah at the renowned Ramailis Yeshiva. His fame spread and, in 1923, he was given a paid position as the lead tenor in the choir of the Taharas Hakodesh synagogue in Vilna. This synagogue, the only one to survive the Holocaust, is still in use today. It was, at the time, considered the second most important Vilna house of worship, exceeded in prestige only by the Great Synagogue.

Several months after Moshe joined the choir, the presiding cantor retired after many years of service and a search for a new cantor resulted in the choice of Zaludkovsky, the same individual who had mentored the young Moshe in Rostov, years earlier. Moshe was overjoyed at the association with a senior cantor whom he considered a friend as well as a teacher. In 1923, it was this friend who conducted the wedding ceremony by which Moshe married Raya Zarenkin. After two years of service, however, Zaludkovsky moved on, causing a row in the Taharas Hakodesh congregation which Moshe later described, in detail, to Akiva Zimmermann.

In summary, after the departure of Zaludkovsky, the synagogue's choir leader, who was quite taken with Moshe's abilities, wished to see him promoted to the position of cantor. Although Moshe was now 26 years of age, he was still considered young for the purpose of leading so prominent a congregation. To advance Moshe's chances, the choir leader featured Moshe in solo parts ever more frequently and once or twice even arranged the opportunity for Moshe to officiate as cantor. In this way, the congregation began to get the idea that Moshe could indeed succeed Zaludkovsky, and many of the Board agreed. However, the Board Chairman stubbornly refused, despite the importuning of many in the synagogue, proclaiming that a choir member would never become the cantor in the Taharas Hakodesh synagogue. Thus, one man stood in the way of popular demand. Then, it got worse.

The synagogue hired a new cantor who was a baritone and there was word the choir would be re-organized, not exactly welcome news for the choir's lead tenor. In the midst of this upheaval, a salary dispute between choir members and the Chairman developed, with the

[1] Moshe's youngest brother, David, who was later considered the only brother at all comparable to Moshe in greatness, joined the same choir as an alto. He was then twelve years old, but quickly became the main boy soloist.

Chairman at one point telling Moshe that what was offered him was final and he could "take it or leave it." Moshe was now a married family man and feared his livelihood would vanish. Then, a devotee of Moshe's, frustrated by frequent arguments with the Board Chairman, arranged for Moshe to officiate at the third most important synagogue in Vilna, known by its location as the Zavels Kloyz synagogue. Moshe approached the event with trepidation, knowing how precarious his financial position was, but, despite his nervousness, he felt himself rise to the occasion. He so impressed the listeners there that he was invited to return as hazzan for Sukkot, and, thereafter, was given his first annual contract to serve as a cantor. Thus, in 1925, began the storied career of one of the greatest cantors in history.

Within one year, a vacancy occurred at Vilna's Great Synagogue, and the position was offered to Moshe, whose popularity had soared during his service to the Zavels Kloyz congregation. Moshe accepted the position and now officiated in the synagogue, which had been built in 1573 and was considered the pride of Vilna. It has been said that officials of that synagogue at first resisted the idea that so young a hazzan, and one who had served in a cantorial capacity for barely a year, could possibly be named the "Cantor of Vilna," but, after a tryout, there was so great a hue and cry in his favor, that even the doubters among the officers became his fans. He now served in a position where his predecessors included such titans as Mordechai Hershman (1888-1940), David Roitman (1884-1943) and Gershon Sirota (1874-1943). As his reknown grew, he began to appear in concerts for the first time, in nearby cities such as Bialystok.[2]

Yet, even in the new exalted pulpit, Moshe's tenure did not last long. He now had a daughter, Sophia, born in 1925, and, by 1927, a son, Alexander, would be born. Vilna's synagogues were prestigious, but their capacity to pay their cantors was limited. There was a pattern of ***hazzanim*** leaving all of the major Vilna synagogues after short tenures, to seek more appropriate compensation elsewhere. It did not take long for a new opportunity to present itself to Moshe Koussevitzky.

At the time, Poland was home to more Jews than any other country. Perhaps one fifth of the world's Jews lived in Poland, and the country's population was one-third Jewish. Warsaw, the capital, contained nearly 350,000 Jews, more than any other city. There were over 600 synagogues in the city, but one, the Tlomatskie Street synagogue, stood above them all in prestige. A vacancy occurred there, and tryouts were held for a replacement, attracting no fewer than 200 candidates. Koussevitzky was among those two hundred of the finest cantors in Europe who applied, and it was he who prevailed. In 1928, before he had turned 29, he was offered a

[2] Moshe's prestige was sufficient to arrange for his two youngest brothers, Simcha and David, to join his choir. At the time, his closest brother in age, Jacob, was already serving as a cantor elsewhere in Poland. David's involvement in the choir also presented him with the opportunity to try his hand at leading the group. When Moshe did not conduct services, it was the permanent choir leader who served in Moshe's place as ***Hazzan sheini*** (Assistant Cantor) and, on such occasions, the choir leader found David to be the most appropriate substitute for himself. In this way, David learned that he loved the task of choir-leading. Eventually, he departed Vilna to lead the choir at the synagogue where Jacob served, and, after that, when Simcha became the cantor at another city, David led his choir in turn.

position which made him the most prominent hazzan on the European continent, and he departed from the Great Synagogue of Vilna after less than two years. Just three years earlier, the leader of the Taharas Hakodesh synagogue in Vilna had considered him unsuitable to be its cantor, and even his livelihood as a choir member there had been in peril, and now he stood at the head of the entire cantorate!

At his new post, he was a successor to the incomparable Gershon Sirota, who had served there for twenty years, but had departed for America only a short time earlier. Sirota was reputed to have had one of the few cantorial voices which matched the quality of top opera tenors, and filling his shoes was considered an enormous achievement. Before Moshe accepted the post, though, he insisted on preserving his right to appear and sing at events held in outside venues which were for the benefit of the Zionist cause.[3] Synagogue officials at first resisted his demand, but in the end conceded the point, out of their intense desire to engage him.

Moshe also remained attached to Vilna, always appreciative of his earlier acclaim there. He appeared at concerts in Vilna and accepted invitations to return there for an occasional Sabbath appearance, when he was not scheduled to be at the Tlomatskie. (In those days, every major synagogue had a ***Hazzan sheini***, and the position of Oberkantor did not require the senior hazzan to lead services every week).

The Rabbi at the Tlomatskie synagogue was the respected Professor Moshe Schorr, and Koussevitzky found great fulfillment in having sessions to sit and learn with the noted scholar, thus continuing the learning he had enjoyed in the Ramailis Yeshiva in Vilna.[4] During this time, Moshe wisely continued to study voice culture, and was taught by one of the prime teachers of Eastern Europe, who had as another of his pupils one of the greatest Polish opera singers of the age, Jan Kiepura.[5] During this period, Moshe's voice continued to improve in power and resonance.

Also to be found at the Tlomatskie synagogue in those days were the learned ***Hazzan sheini***, Pinchas Sherman, and the noted choir leader, David Eisenstadt. Moshe had gotten to know Eisenstadt in Rostov and was pleased to find him now in Warsaw. These two respected artists helped acclimate Moshe to what was expected at the synagogue and, according to Moshe himself, had a great role in helping him to reach new heights as a cantor. Eisenstadt was an exacting taskmaster and would not be cowed even by working with a star tenor. He insisted on perfection from both cantor and choir, and Moshe quickly understood and appreciated how much this punctiliousness contributed to his own development. Near the end of his life, Moshe stated that there was never again so great a choir as that led by Eisenstadt in Warsaw. From Sherman, Moshe derived inspiration, as Sherman was a master of both nusah and the projection of intense

[3] This was neither the first, nor the last, time that Moshe demonstrated his fervent attachment to Zionism, perhaps learned at the knee of his maternal grandfather.

[4] In a curious coincidence, the Rabbi at Moshe's final synagogue in Boro Park was the scholarly Rabbi Dr. Israel Schorr, so that the only two synagogues at which Moshe officiated for a decade or more were both led by a Rabbi with the same family name (but no family relationship).

[5] Jan Kiepura (1902-1966), son of a Jewish mother, followed his operatic career with a career as an actor, appearing in a variety of musicals and films.

feeling for prayer. When Moshe davened *Musaf* on the high holidays, according to what he told Zimmermann, his best preparation was first hearing Sherman do *Shaharit*.

Koussevitzky's renown increased exponentially during his eleven years in Warsaw, as he performed at sold-out concerts in nearly all major European cities, visited the Holy Land twice, drawing enraptured crowds, and had a triumphal tour of the United States. Those high points, though, were quickly succeeded, like the years of famine following years of plenty, by the awful times which he had to endure after the Nazis marched into Warsaw, as he barely managed to escape to the Soviet Union. His trials and triumphs during the war years, like his earlier successes in Warsaw, and his eventual rise to iconic status in post-war Brooklyn, are beyond the scope of this article. Suffice it to say that every stage in his eventful life provides fascinating stories, even to those not enamored of his style of music.

Nearly as compelling as his magisterial voice were his magnetic personality and royal appearance. His was the complete package. Yet, in engaging with his public, he was always friendly, if not actually humble. He spoke to others with an enthusiasm and energy which made people his fans, even before they heard his voice. There was a kindness about him, which manifested in his many charitable acts, and in another characteristic, with the description of which I shall close this piece.

Moshe Koussevitzky refrained from speaking harshly of anyone. He was not critical in nature, except perhaps of himself. He extolled and openly respected Cantor Leib Glantz (1898-1964) for his intellectualism and musical genius, and, similarly, for his refusal to ever put down another member of his fraternity. Moshe was once asked about the much-praised voice of Cantor Gershon Sirota, whom he succeeded in Warsaw. It was suggested to him that Sirota's recordings did not fully bear out the reputation he had earned. Here was Moshe's chance to perhaps downplay the greatness of one of his very few competitors for the title of greatest cantorial voice of the century. All he needed to do was nod his head knowingly. Instead, he said, "You had to have heard him in the Tlomatskie Synagogue. Then you would understand…" That was his way.

It was perhaps ironic that he felt Sirota could be most appreciated in the context of his greatest locale. In the end, the same can be said for Koussevitzky. Although his recordings are fabulous, they cannot fully capture the greatness of the experience of hearing him in Boro Park's Temple Beth El (1952-1966). He himself praised the extraordinary acoustics of the Temple. "The voice just goes up…" he would say approvingly. It almost seemed that the symbiosis of his voice and the great domed space of that synagogue made the room an extension of his incomparable instrument, as if the man and his environment were one. There were those who, over the years, tried to secretly capture the sound of Koussevitzky in Beth El, and they had good reason to do so. It was as if--as the line from the musical Camelot[6] would put it--"Don't let it be forgot, that once there was a spot, for one brief shining moment..." Once there was Koussevitzky, dominating the world of Jewish prayer, at the head of thousands, for all too short a time, in a remarkable place called Beth El.

[6] Lyrics by Alan Jay Lerner and music by Frederick Loewe, 1960.

Mark Friedlander is a retired Justice of the New York State Supreme Court, and former long-time President of the Riverdale Jewish Community Council in the Bronx. He served as a Ba'al musaf *on the High Holy Days for over three decades and continues to be an active* Ba'al korei. *He is now working on a book about Cantor Moshe Koussevitzky, and invites anyone who can share information, vignettes and personal reminiscences involving the legendary cantor, to contact him at Justicefriedlander@gmail.com Justice Friedlander's article is excerpted from the manuscript of that book-in-progress, and reprinted here with the author's permission. Three chapters from Akiva Zimmermann's book Zakhor ezk'renu had appeared in translation in the* ***2011 issue of JSM: "Moshe Koussevitzky's Years in Vilna, Warsaw and Russia."*** *Also, a much-condensed version of Justice Friedlander's 22,000-word manuscript appeared in* ***The Journal of Jewish Music and Liturgy in 2015-16****, under the author's byline.*

Editor's Note: I recall attending the latter part of a 2nd Day Rosh Hashanah service that Moshe Koussevitzky led right after arriving at Temple Beth El in 1952. Still in my teens, I had read Torah in a Yom Tov service specially set up for the occasion in the Labor Emporium, a ten-block walk from Beth El. Figuring that by the time my service ended, Moshe's would still be going, and no one would be checking admission tickets, I walked right in, unchallenged. Better yet, my favorite 'sweet spot' was vacant: center aisle, three rows in from the back, first seat on the left. From there, all the domed sanctuary's reverbs somehow coalesced. Moshe was just beginning *M'lokh al kol ha-arets* of the *Amidat musaf* repetition, and I followed his business-like dispatch of *Malkhuyot* and *Zikhronot*—wondering what all the fuss was about. I had, after all, been attending Late Friday Night services featuring his youngest brother David at Conservative Temple Emanuel a city block away since 1949, and David's habitual interpretation of *Hashkiveinu* was a knockout!

I soon discovered the difference. At the *B'kolot uv'rakim* section of *Shofarot*, Moshe began building one of his greatly-anticipated climaxes, layering ascending sequences of repetitive *Forte-Fortissimo-Fortississimo* declamation until the acoustical bombshell finally exploded and the entire domed sanctuary vibrated in synch with those overlapping waves of sound. All thoughts of what I may have missed earlier vanished as I sat there, stupefied by the experience. It was a *T'ka b'shofar gadol* to hasten the Messiah! Moshe's recordings, although uniformly faithful to the velvety timbre of his voice, had not conveyed its colossal *enormity*—particularly in Beth El's congenial echo chamber. Yet, for all the bombast created in this eruptive Revelation section of the New Year liturgy, my lasting impression was one of Moshe's seamless davening. Were it not for the unbelievably lengthy strings of crisply enunciated words on different pitch levels, and the incredibly rapid turns of bravura ornamentation, and the palpable feeling of being swept up in the rendition's sheer volume, Moshe's *t'fillah* struck me—at its core—as being that of a simple (if musically gifted) Jew from the Vilna suburb of Smorgon. [*JAL*]

Moshe Koussevitzky early in his career; undated photograph from Akiva Zimmermann's book, *Zakhor ezk'renu od* (Tel Aviv: Sharei Ron, 1999), used with the late author's kind permission.

The Development of Congregational Song in the American Conservative Synagogue: 1900-1955

By Geoffrey Goldberg

INTRODUCTION

Congregational song in the contemporary American Conservative synagogue is such an integral component of Sabbath and Festival services that it is almost impossible to imagine a time when it played little or no role. Yet in 1900 there was almost no congregational singing *of the traditional liturgy* in synagogues in America, at least in Ashkenazic synagogues. A half century later this situation had changed considerably, exemplified by the appearance in 1955 of *Zamru Lo*, the ground-breaking collection of congregational melodies published by the Cantors Assembly of America.[1] This article will attempt to examine the circumstances, forces and leading figures (largely in New York City by virtue of its size and influence) responsible for this transformation and creating, between 1900 and 1955, this significant feature of Conservative synagogue worship.

When we examine the heritage that immigrant American Jews had left behind in Eastern Europe from the evidence of printed musical scores, even basic staples of synagogue song today, such as *Adon olam* and *Yigdal*, were rarely sung at all, except on the High Holy Days.[2] (In Germany congregational singing was introduced during the nineteenth century but never to the extent to which we are familiar today).[3] Sholom Kalib thus concluded that, apart from the occasional *niggun* in Hassidic *shtiblakh*, congregational song was "practically non-existent in the formal synagogues of Eastern Europe."[4]

1. BEGINNINGS

A. Uptown and Downtown New York Jews: The Musics of *Shul* and Temple

In 1900 there were two Jewries in New York City. Downtown, there was a huge, overwhelmingly immigrant community of Eastern European Jews concentrated on the Lower East Side. Uptown, there was a smaller community of largely German Jews, a majority of

[1]Moshe Nathanson, *Zamru Lo*: *Congregational Melodies, Prayers, Z'mirot, Hymns* [*ZL* I] (New York: Cantors Assembly of America [CA], 1955). Reference will be made in this article to later volumes: Moshe Nathanson, *Zamru Lo*: *Congregational Melodies and Z'mirot* [*ZL* II] (CA, 1960); *Zamru Lo*: *Congregational Melodies for the High Holidays* [*ZL* III] (CA, 1974); Jeffrey Shiovitz, *Zamru Lo: The Next Generation: Congregational Melodies for Shabbat* [*ZL NG* I], (CA, 2004); Jeffrey Shiovitz. *Zamru Lo: The Next Generation, Volume II: Congregational Melodies for the High Holidays* [*ZL NG* II], (CA, 2006); Jeffrey Shiovitz, *Zamru Lo: The Next Generation, Vol. III: Congregational Melodies for Hallel, Shalosh r'galim, and the Weekdays* [*ZL NG* III] (CA, 2009).

[2] Preliminary examination of Eastern-European settings of *piyyut* texts such as as *Eil adon*, *Ya'aleh*, etc., reveals no congregational melodies.

[3] Geoffrey Goldberg, "An Overview of Congregational Song in the German Synagogue up until the Shoah," *Journal of Synagogue Music* 30 (Fall 2000), 13–53.

[4] Sholom Kalib, *The Musical Tradition of the Eastern European Synagogue, Vol. 1, Introduction: History and Definition,* 1st ed. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 197.

whom, but by no means all, had become Reform Jews during the heyday of "Classical" Reform Judaism. The synagogue musics of the two communities could not have been more starkly contrasted, but both shared an absence of congregational song. In the Uptown community some were disturbed by this situation, so much so that in 1898 the *American Hebrew* lamented this state of affairs in an editorial:

> The great failing in our services both in *Schule* [i.e., Orthodox *shuls*][5] and Temple [i.e., Reform synagogues] is the want of congregational singing. There are no responses in easy tone and rhythm for the congregation to sing. No outward act of worship is demanded in the Temple, if too much of what may be mechanical speech is required in the *Schule*. Both forms of services ignore the value of chanted responses.[6]

From the musical perspective, both types of service were seriously wanting. In the Temple the congregation sat passively and was *sung at* by the choir,[7] while in the *shul*, even though the congregation actively participated through vocalizing aloud, there was no singing or chanting *together*. Instead of "garbled response and operatic singing," both houses of worship, according to the editor, would benefit greatly from the introduction of congregational song.[8]

At this time, the American Orthodox synagogue was in the midst of the so-called "Cantor Craze," when star cantors were brought over from Europe and paid exorbitantly to officiate in new, lavishly built synagogues, performing vocally acrobatic renditions of the liturgy, often with choral support.[9] These cantors played heavily on feelings of nostalgia for the life abandoned by the immigrant generation. Previously, on the Lower East Side, Jews attended small *landsmanshaft* synagogues, peopled by expatriates from their particular Yiddish-speaking European countries of origin, where simple *ba'alei t'fillah* led the prayers, even though worshippers largely prayed and vocalized at their own pace.[10]

Even some Uptown synagogues were affected by the "Cantor Craze." One of these was *Ohab Zedek*, whose rabbi and JTS professor of Bible,[11] Bernard Drachman (a proponent of congregational song), unlike his *nouveau riche* Eastern-European congregants, strongly disliked the *ḥazzanut* of the synagogue's cantor, Yossele Rosenblatt, who, through endless repetitions of words and phrases, "turned the service into a musical performance."[12] Although Rosenblatt

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[5] The reference is to Downtown Orthodox synagogues and *shtiblakh* and Uptown Orthodox synagogues of upwardly mobile Jews.

[6] "Synagogal Singing," *American Hebrew* (November 25, 1898), 106.

[7] Worshippers participated little in singing English hymns. Israel Aaron, "The Reintroduction of Congregational Singing," *CCAR Yearbook* 22 (1912), 334.

[8] "Synagogal Singing," 106.

[9] The cantor craze began in 1885 and lasted until the early 1930s. Mark Slobin, *Chosen Voices: The Story of the American Cantorate* (Urbana, Ill: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 51–61.

[10] Jonathan D. Sarna. *People Walk on Their Heads: Moses Weinberger's Jews and Judaism in New York*. Translated from the Hebrew and edited by Jonathan D. Sarna (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1981), 13–14.

[11] From 1887 to 1902.

[12] Bernard Drachman, *The Unfailing Light: Memoirs of an American Rabbi* (New York: Rabbinical Council of America, 1948): 282–283.

sometimes included short metrical tunes towards the end of some of his recitatives, these were more akin to operatic arias than an invitation to congregational song.[13]

B. The Generational Divide

According to Moses Weinberger in his Hebrew tract "Jews and Judaism in New York" (1887) the "*hazzan* craze" "brought tumult to every Jewish home, turned sons against fathers … there is fighting over the *hazzan* question all day long."[14] Reaction and even revulsion against star *hazzanim* was felt strongest by children of the immigrants for whom nostalgia for the home country meant little. Even at services of the *landsmanschaft shuls*, although more intimate and participatory, the general unruliness seemed un-American.

C. Uptown meets Downtown: Role of JTS in Promoting Congregational Song

The reorganization of the Jewish Theological Seminary [JTS] (founded in 1886) and the arrival of Solomon Schechter to assume the presidency in 1902 reinvigorated contacts between the Uptown Seminary and the Downtown Jews. The Seminary, which stood for a modern, traditional Judaism, intensified efforts to enroll rabbinical students from the Lower East Side.[15] Receptive to these efforts and JTS's religious stance were tradition-minded "modernizers" in the Lower East Side and sections of the Yiddish press, who were increasingly disturbed by a growing ossification of religious life in the immigrant community.[16]

Within the small group of faculty and rabbinical students of the Seminary the idea emerged of inserting congregational song, as a means of outreach and engagement of the young. According to composer, music director and scholar, Abraham Binder (1895–1966), "Credit must be given to Solomon Schechter… for the first real efforts to organize congregational singing at the Seminary…"[17] Under Schechter's leadership a course in *hazzanut* (for rabbinical students) was introduced at JTS in 1902 and one of the classes that Rabbi/*Hazzan* Israel Goldfarb (JTS 1902) taught from 1920 to 1942 was entitled "Traditional Melodies," consisting largely of congregational melodies.[18]

D. Mathilde Schechter and *Kol Rinnah*

Solomon Schechter's wife Mathilde (1857–1924) was also an early, active proponent of congregational song. Ever since her arrival in New York she had been disquieted by the lack of participation in Uptown synagogues.[19] Already a significant figure in Jewish communal life, in a lecture delivered in 1904 at the National Council of Jewish Women, Mathilde contended that "the professional choir is a mistake unless it leads the congregation's

[13] Bernard Beer, "Joseph Rosenblatt, 1882–1933, the Man and his Music," *Journal of Jewish Music and Liturgy* 33 (2013–2014), 61–63.
[14] Sarna, *People Walk on Their Heads*, 100.
[15] Ibid., 16.
[16] David Weinberg, "The Jewish Theological Seminary and the Downtown Jews of New York at the Turn of the Century" in Jack Wertheimer, ed., *Tradition Renewed: A History of the Jewish Theological Seminary* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1997), Vol. 2, 14, 26–33.
[17] Jacob Beimel Collection, JTSA Music Archives, New York, Box 2, Folder 1, 3, typescript of article in *Atlantic City Jewish Ledger* (Dec. 24, 1937).
[18] Levin, "Music at JTS," in Wertheimer, ed., *Tradition Renewed*, Vol. 1, 722–724.
[19] *New York Times* (April 15, 1907).

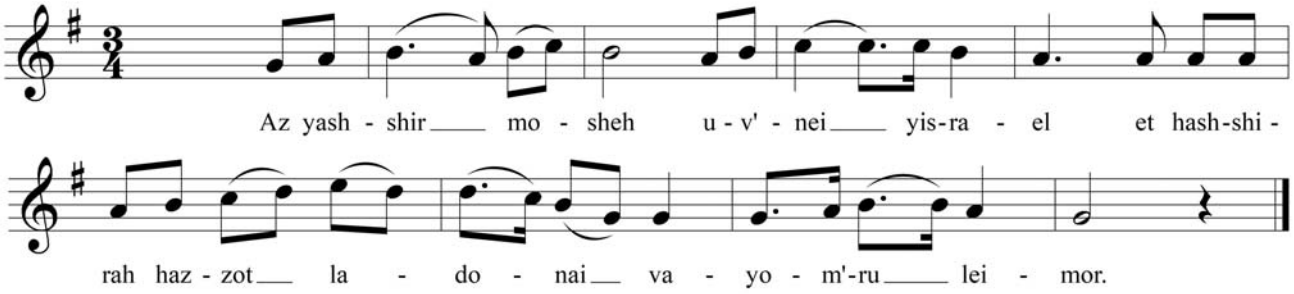
singing.[20] She argued that congregational song would help connect Jewish women to the synagogue and called for "a return to the beautiful ancient melodies, at present neglected and almost disappearing."[21]

Mathilde's appeal led to the establishment in 1905 of the *Choral Society for Ancient Hebrew Melodies*.[22] To encourage participation from the immigrant community, rehearsals were relocated to the Downtown Educational Alliance (established in 1899 to promote Americanization of the immigrant Jews).[23] Several local cantors and musicians, including Simon Jacobson, *hazzan* of the Seminary synagogue, assisted in selecting melodies, both Ashkenazic and Sephardic.[24] The project culminated in the publication in 1910 of *Kol Rinnah: Hebrew Hymnal*.[25] Its objective was "to present traditional melodies of the synagogue and the home … [and] to further the spread of congregational singing.[26]

Eleven of the twenty-seven melodies of *Kol Rinnah* were composed (or were arrangements of traditional melodies) by Sulzer, Naumbourg, Lewandowski and Mombach.[27] An important source for several melodies was *Kol Rinnah V'todah*, an English publication with which Mathilde would have been familiar.[28] The intent of both works was for the choir to lead unison singing by the congregation. By virtue of Simon Jacobson's involvement, some of the melodies were in all probability sung in the Seminary synagogue. According to Binder, Jacobson helped realize Schechter's desire for congregational song in the Seminary synagogue "as well as it could have been."[29] **(Examples 1 and 2)**.[30]

Example 1 ***Az ya-shir moshe***

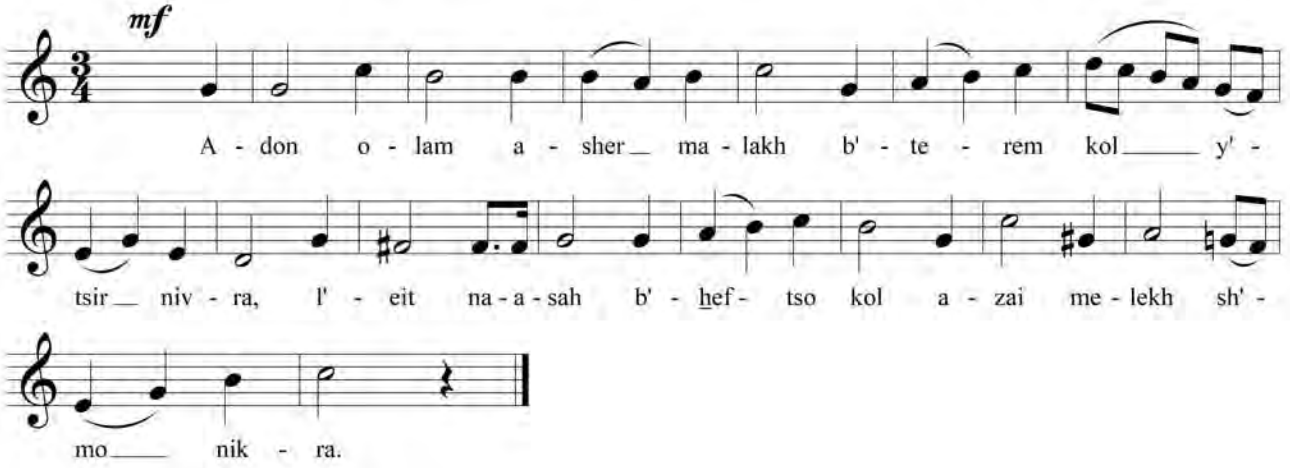
Moderato Sephardic



[20] *American Hebrew* (December 23, 1904), 161.
[21] *New York Times* (March 10, 1905), 5.
[22] *New York Times* (January 29, 1906).
[23] *New York Times* (April 15, 1907); David Kaufman, *Shul with a Pool: The "Synagogue Center" in American Jewish History* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1999), 193.
[24] Jacobson was cantor of the Seminary from 1898–1900 and 1904–1921. Neil Levin, "Music at JTS," 720.
[25] Lewis M. Isaacs and Mathilde S. Schechter, *Kol Rinnah*: *Hebrew Hymnal for School and Home* (New York: Bloch, 1910).
[26] Ibid., Preface,
[27] Some of the melodies were for Sabbath *z'mirot*.
[28] Francis L. Cohen and David M. Davis, *Kol Rinnah V'todah*: *The Voice of Prayer and Praise: A Handbook of Synagogue Music for Congregational Singing* (London: United Synagogue, 1899).
[29] Jacob Beimel Collection… Box 2, Folder 1, 3.
[30] Among these we suggest Sulzer's *Adon olam* (no. 12) that became the "traditional" melody at JTS public ceremonies; Freudenthal's *Ein keiloheinu* (no. 9); Sulzer's *K'dushah* responses (no. 10); the Sephardic melodies of *Shirat hay-yam* (no. 5) and *Eil norah* (no. 22).

Example 2 ***Adon olam***

Andante con moto S. Sulzer



E. The Jewish Endeavor Society

The first significant encounter between faculty and students of JTS and the Downtown community (from which a number of the students, like Mordecai Kaplan, who would later found the breakaway Reconsructionist movement, had originated) was through the formation of the *Jewish Endeavor Society* in 1900-1901.[31] Drachman spearheaded the movement and Kaplan and his fellow-students were his "foot soldiers for his campaign to lead the second generation to synagogue life."[32] The goal of JES was to provide religious, educational and cultural programming attractive to the new generation "who stayed away from the synagogues in droves."[33]

JES began to organize its own services in 1901, renting space, often with strong opposition, in Downtown synagogues. The aim was "dignified" services, without the disorder and excesses of the existing synagogues, while maintaining the warmth of the *landsmanschaft* synagogues, relevant sermons (in English), admitting into the service "as much as Jewish law would permit."[34] The young "modernizers" of JES were "sufficiently Americanized to insist upon the esthetic, [the] dignified and reverential."[35]

JES services were held on Sabbath afternoon because many of the young men and women worked on Saturday mornings. Contemporary reports stress the English sermons delivered by JTS students as well as the inclusion of congregational song. In the period 1901–1902 Israel Goldfarb, then a student at JTS, was largely responsible for conducting the nascent JES services, and formed a choir to lead the congregation in song. The services were "most beautifully

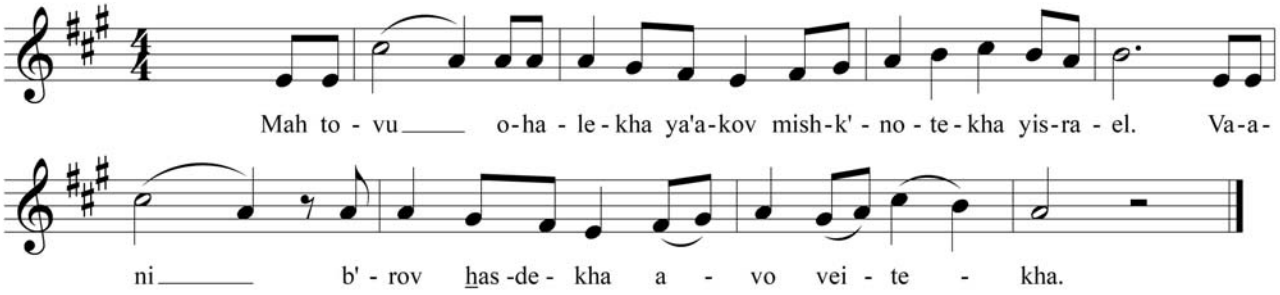
[31] It was modeled after the Christian Endeavor Society, a youth revivalist movement.
[32] Jeffrey S. Gurock and Jacob Schachter, *A Modern Heretic and a Traditional Community: Mordecai M. Kaplan and American Judaism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 28.
[33] Gurock, *Modern Heretic*, 29.
[34] Ibid, 27
[35] *American Hebrew* (January 29, 1904), 349.

rendered and aroused great enthusiasm."[36] After a hiatus owing to Orthodox opposition, services resumed in 1905, assisted again by Goldfarb, who walked from his synagogue in Downtown Brooklyn.

Traditionally, there is no congregational song at the Sabbath *Minḥah* service. However, a guide to what was sung at JES services is found in *T'fillat Minḥah L'shabbat*, an expanded Sabbath *Minḥah* liturgy for "young people's" services. Although published later (1911), from textual additions and rubrics we can suggest that the following were sung:[37] *Mah tovu* (to open the service);[38] responsorial chanting of *Ashrei*;[39] Ps. 92 while dressing the scroll;[40] *Atah eḥad* (during the repetition of the *Amidah*);[41] Ps. 29 (instead of Ps. 24);[42] "Closing hymns," including *Ein keiloheinu* and *Adon olam* and a choice of English hymn. Although JES disbanded in 1905, for the JTS students it was an invaluable experience that they brought to their future congregations **(Examples 3–5)**.

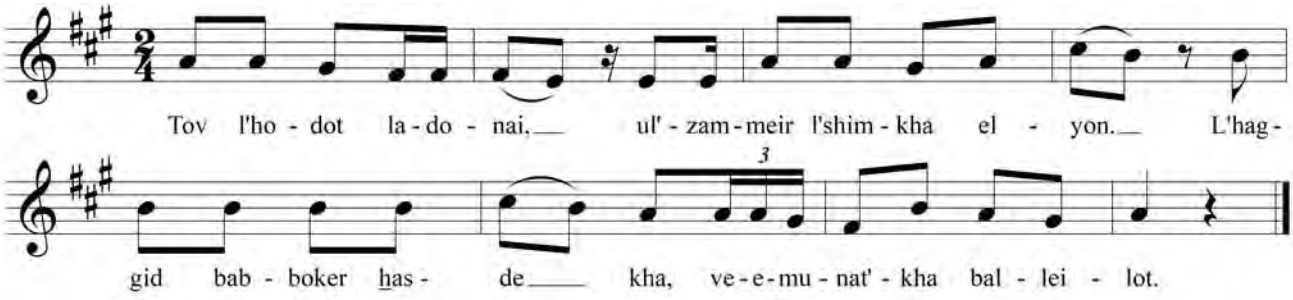
Example 3 ***Mah tovu***

Andante maestoso I. Goldfarb



Example 4 ***Tov l'hodot***

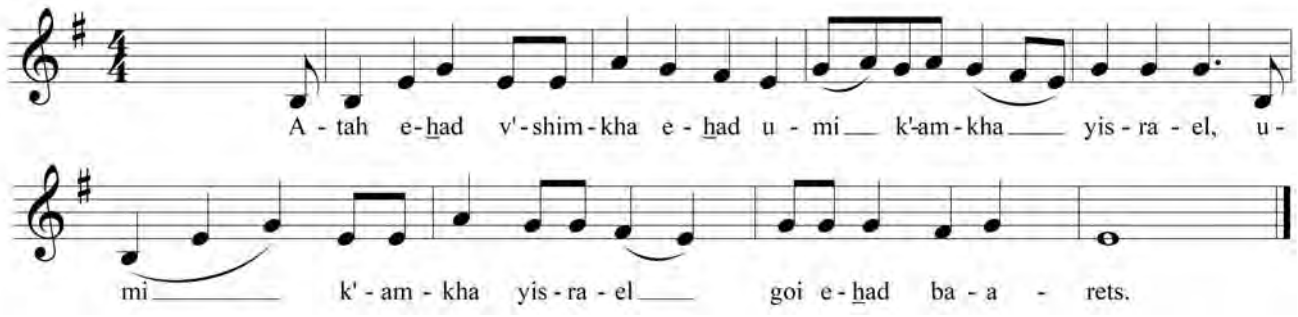
Con spirito J. Mombach



[36] *American Hebrew* (October 25, 1901), 596.
[37] *T'fillat Minḥah L'shabbat*: *Sabbath Afternoon Service, Arranged for Young People's Services* (New York: Bloch, 1911).
[38] Israel and Samuel Eliezer Goldfarb, *Friday Evening Melodies* (New York: Bureau of Jewish Education), 1918, 7. Many Goldfarb melodies were sung long before they were published.
[39] Traditional chant (*ZL* II, 97).
[40] On chanting Ps. 92 while dressing the scroll at the Sabbath *Minḥah* service, see David Golinkin, *Responsa in a Moment* 11, no. 5; Max Halpern, *Z'mirot U-t'fillot Yisrael: A Sabbath Hymnal for Sabbath and Festivals* (Boston: Boston Music, 1915), no. 11.
[41] Folk tune (*ZL* II, 161)
[42] Traditional chant (*ZL* II, 100).

Example 5 ***Atah ehad***

Andante Folktune



F. Young Israel: Early Years

The successor, in many respects, of JES was Young Israel (YI), made up of young professionals from the Lower East Side, which began around 1912.[43] YI activities were, at first, largely educational and social, but in 1915 a faction started to organize lay-led services that were to include sermons, decorum, and "complete congregational singing."[44] In its early years Young Israel had strong support from JTS, particularly Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan and many of his students.[45] By the mid-1920s, however, Young Israel declared itself explicitly Orthodox and disassociated from the Seminary.[46]

The first YI melodies were brought from the Downtown Talmud Torah (See below). Until the mid-1920s, Goldfarb melodies predominated; however, the flowering of Young Israel musical creativity took place somewhat later, to be discussed further in this study. On Friday nights, Goldfarb conducted services at the "Model Synagogue" (later named the Young Israel Synagogue) at the Educational Alliance. His brothers and cousins were active members of Young Israel, serving as *ba'alei t'fillah*.[47] One of the early Young Israel melodies at Sabbath Morning services was almost certainly *Beih ana raheits*, reworked from a longer choral setting of *B'rikh sh'meih* by Zeidel Rovner **(Examples 6–7)**.[48]

[43] Hyman Goldstein, "History of the Young Israel Movement," *Jewish Forum* 9, no. 10 (1926), 529–532; Jeffrey Gurock, "The Orthodox Synagogue," in Jack Wertheimer, ed., *The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 57.

[44] Gurock, "Orthodox Synagogue," 57.

[45] Gurock, *Modern Heretic*, 80. In 1919 five of nine graduating JTS students had connections with YI. Shulamith Berger, "The Early History of the Young Israel Movement" (MA thesis, Yeshiva University, 1982), 7.

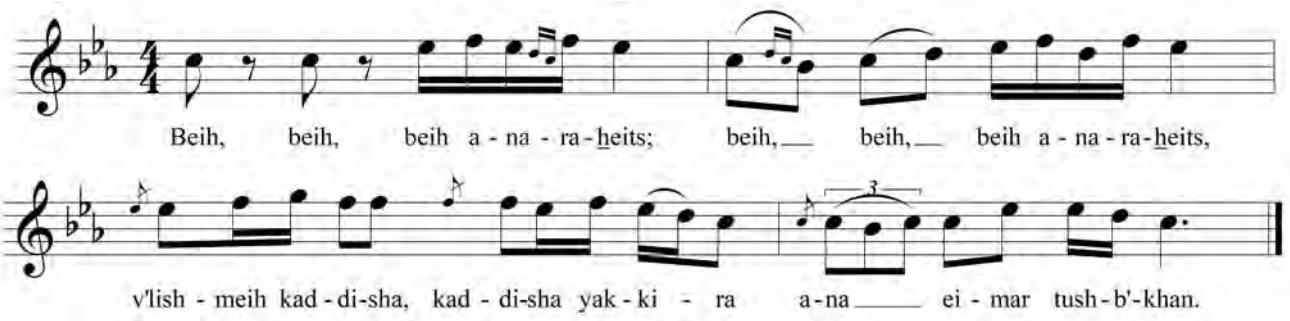
[46] The movement expanded rapidly, especially in Brooklyn: Kaufman, *Shul with a Pool*, 204–205.

[47] Henry Michelman, "Israel Goldfarb (1879–1967) Rabbi, Cantor and Influential Composer," *Synagogue Journal* 6 (2006), 5.

[48] Judy Ganz, "*T'hillah*," and Benjamin Oxenhandler, "*Zikhronoteinu*: Our Treasured Memories," in Yaakov Kornreich, ed., *Young Israel at 100: An American Response to the Challenges of Orthodox Living, 1912–2012*. (New York: National Council of Young Israel, 2012), 19–20; Kalib, *Musical Tradition,* Vol. 2, 194, Example 164d; *ZL* II, 82.

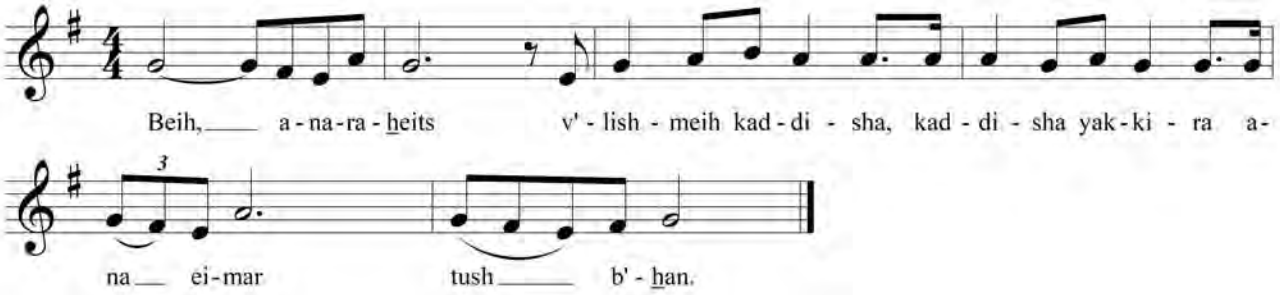
Example 6 ***Beih ana raheits***

Molto andante Z. Rovner



Example 7 ***Beih ana***

Traditional/attributed to Z. Rovner



2. SECOND-GENERATION JEWS, THE SYNAGOGUE CENTER AND CONGREGATIONAL SONG

The synagogue of second-generation Jews who were moving into "second areas of settlement" developed into a uniquely American institution, the multi-purpose "synagogue center" that catered to all the needs, religious, social and educational of American Jews. Although Kaplan was not the originator of the "synagogue center," he provided its theoretical basis through a broader concept of Judaism that also embraced community, culture and esthetics.[49] In perceiving Judaism as a civilization, congregational song embodied both esthetic and social togetherness. The community, not the *hazzan* alone, should also be a source of song in the synagogue.[50]

A. The Jewish Center (86th Street): Jacob Beimel and Abraham Binder

At the Jewish Center on 86th Street in Manhattan (dedicated in 1918) Mordecai Kaplan attempted to transmit to this Orthodox synagogue his wider, people-based concept of Judaism. Visualizing a different type of Orthodox service, Kaplan chose Jacob Beimel

[49] Mel Scult, *Judaism Faces the Twentieth Century: A Biography of Mordechai M. Kaplan*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press) 1993:199.
[50] Slobin, *Chosen Voices*, 68.

(1880–1952) as the cantor and Abraham Binder (1895–1966) as the musical director. Beimel had spent several years in Berlin, where he would have been familiar with congregational song.[51] Beimel and Binder remained at the Jewish Center only until 1920 but created a particularly fruitful period in the synagogue's musical history.

Binder later explained that the successful introduction of congregational song was mainly due to weekly rehearsals, so that:

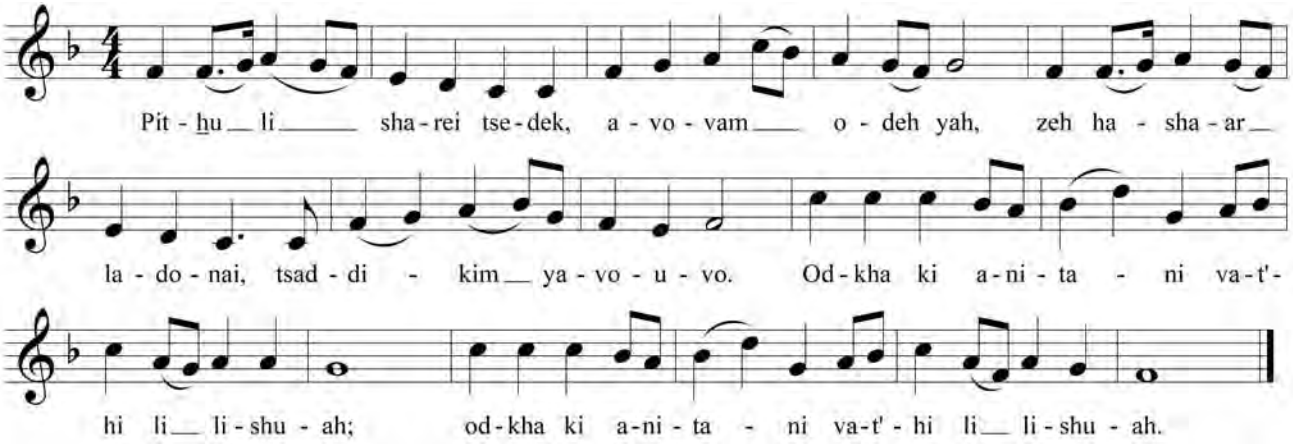
> In three years, a singing congregation evolved, a congregation which sang together… This service in those days was the model service. Congregations sent cantors, presidents and musical directors to see and hear it.[52]

Binder included musical factors that contributed to the success, such as choice of music, comfortable tessitura and range, simple rhythms and musical forms, and the efficacy of responsorial singing.[53] Strangely, however, he omitted the synagogue choir that supported the congregational singing.

Beimel's unpublished manuscripts shed light on some of the congregational melodies that were sung.[54] Among these are drafts of *Pithu li sha'arei tsedek* from *Hallel*, but with slightly different cadences than the published version (*ZL* II, p. 69); a draft of *V'zot ha-torah* resembling one attributed to Idelsohn but actually composed by Beimel (*ZL* II, p. 89); a setting of *V'sham'ru* (AA'BB'A" form) but requiring simplification (*ZL* I, p. 73, "edited"); *Mi khamokha* based upon the *nusah* of the Sabbath *Ma'ariv* service[55] **(Examples 8–11)**.

Example 8 ***Pit'hu li***

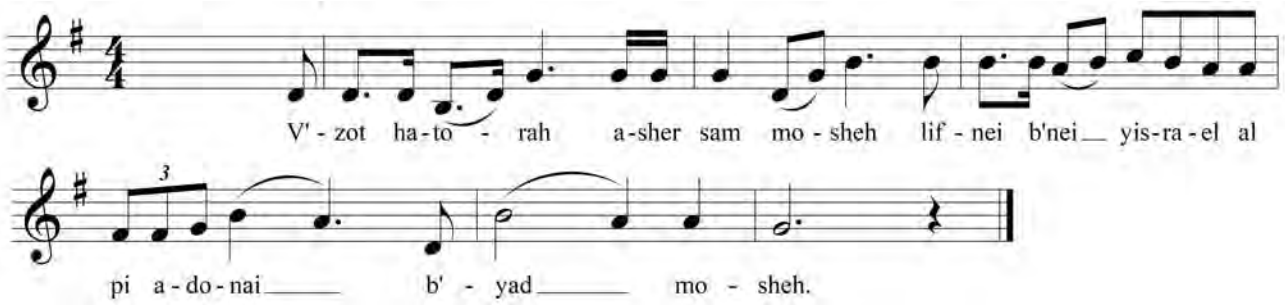
Alla marcia J. Beimel



[51] "Biographical Notes" in Guide to the Jacob Beimel Music Scores and Papers, Jewish Theological Seminary; Goldberg, "Overview of Congregational Song," 30-40.
[52] Beimel Collection… Box 2, Folder 1, 3–4.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Jacob Beimel Music Scores and Papers, Library of Jewish Theological Seminary, New York, ARC.MUS.5, file "*Ba'al t'fillah im m'shor'rim*, Jewish Center… Jacob Beimel and Mordecai Kaplan." Unfortunately, due to the rebuilding of the JTS Library, Beimel's High Holy Day manuscripts were not accessible to the writer.
[55] It also employs the *Eil hai* motif.

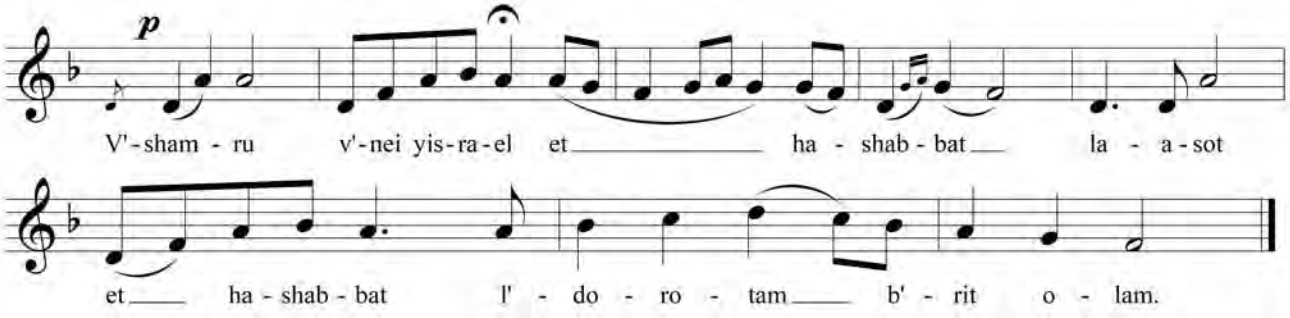
Example 9 ***V'zot ha-torah***

J. Beimel



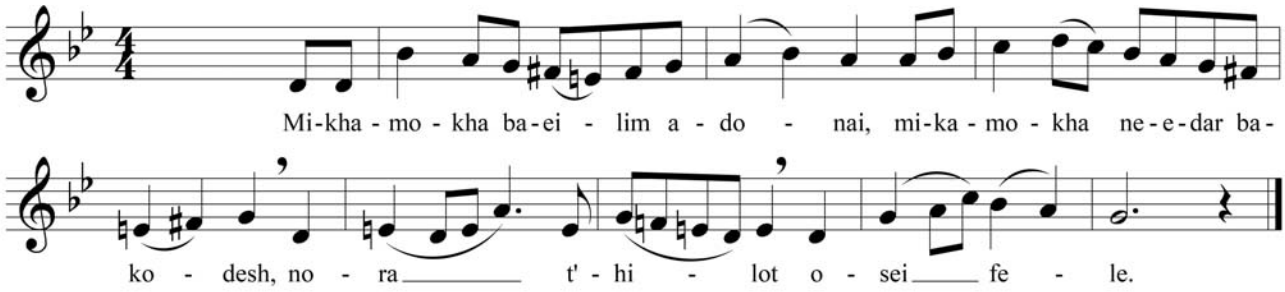
Example 10 ***V'shamru***

Quietly J. Beimel



Example 11 ***Mi khamokha***

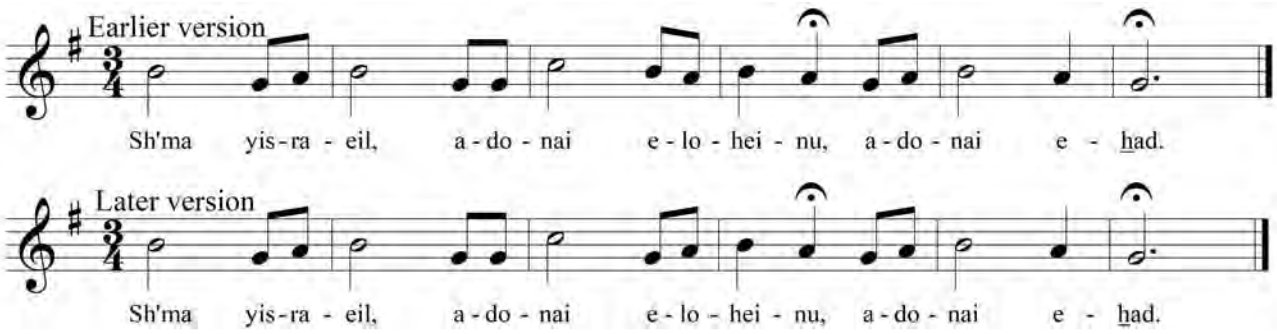
J. Beimel



Of particular interest is Beimel's notation of the *Sh'ma*. A setting of the *Sh'ma* with the same opening motif has been located in a manuscript of Cantor Alois Kaiser (1840–1908), but the rest of Kaiser's melody is not identical.[56] We conclude, therefore, that this so-called "Sulzer *Sh'ma*" should be attributed to Beimel. Beimel's manuscript reveals the evolution of the melody, from an earlier version to the one sung ubiquitously today **(Example 12)**.

[56] Ethan Goldberg, "In the Shadow of Sulzer: The Mixed Legacy of Cantor Alois Kaiser," Senior Honors Thesis, Brandeis University, Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies, Brandeis University (2012), 35–37.

Example 12 ***Sh'ma*** J. Beimel



B. The Society for the Advancement of Judaism (SAJ)

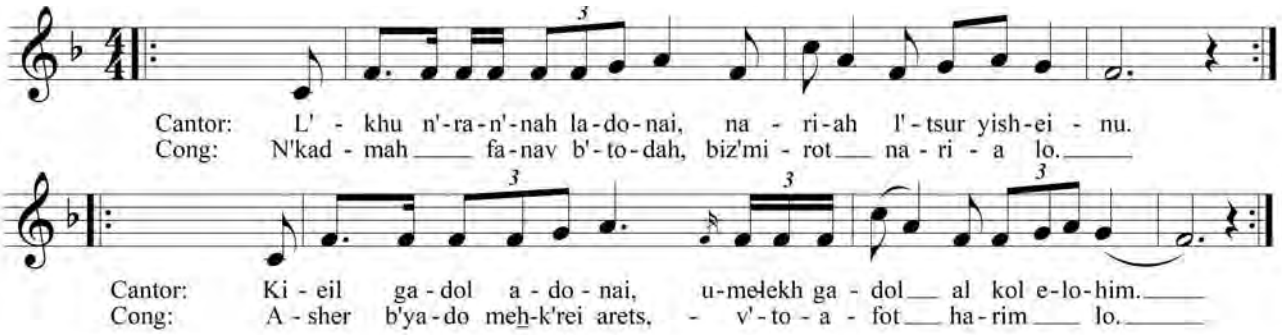
When Kaplan left the Jewish Center in 1920, he took his followers with him to establish the Society for the Advancement of Judaism (which remained part of the United Synagogue throughout the period of this study). Kaplan was determined to have a participatory congregation. Following a disappointing initial choice of *hazzan*, Kaplan secured as "cantor and director of congregational song" the noted musicologist, Abraham Z. Idelsohn.[57] After Idelsohn left to take up an academic position at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, he recommended his student in Jerusalem, Moshe Nathanson, of whom he later wrote:

> [Nathanson] captivated us by his rendition and his sweet singing voice… From the very beginning he has been able to woo the congregation into chanting the service along with him. We are not reduced to a passive audience listening to a musical performance, but we join in lustily with all the verve, but without the antics, of a hasidic service.[58]

We can assume that many of Nathanson's melodies included in *Zamru Lo* had been successfully introduced at the SAJ. One particular group was Nathanson's setting of the *Kabbalat shabbat* psalms, for which he composed responsorial chants typified by the one for *L'khu n'ran'nah* **(Example 13)**.[59]

Example 13 ***L'khu n'ran'nah*—Psalm 95**

Maestoso M. Nathanson



[57] A. Irma Cohen, "Idelsohn: The Founder and Builder of the Science of Jewish Music, A Creator of Jewish Song," in Israel Adler, ed., *The Abraham Zvi Idelsohn Memorial Volume* (*Yuval*, Vol. 5, 1986), 41.

[58] Mordecai Kaplan, "Moshe Nathanson, A Personal Tribute, (in Sheldon Feinberg, *Havah nagilah: The Story Behind the Song and its Composer)* (New York: Shapolsky, 1988), 96. The original MS and typed copy (June 1, 1959) is located at the Center for Jewish History, New York, I–70, Folder 8.

[59] Nathanson, *Zamru Lo*, 1, *Friday Evening Service*, 18–25.

C. Orthodox Synagogue Centers and Congregational Song

So strong was the urge to introduce congregational song into prayer that it spread to many mainstream Orthodox synagogues as well, although more gradually. At the Institutional Synagogue in West Harlem, Rabbi Herbert Goldstein (JTS 1917), in wanting "to engage the youth of America," organized rehearsals for congregational singing in 1920 at his home, and in 1922 at the synagogue.[60] When Cantor Zalmon Yavneh (1904–1979) was hired in 1926, he brought with him some hasidic melodies, but the congregation enjoyed more the "American tunes" led by *ba'alei t'fillah*, especially for *Adon olam*, sung to "different American tunes every week."[61] In 1930 Kehillat Jeshurun even granted its cantor a two week leave so that he might "study congregational singing."[62]

D. Israel Goldfarb, The Brooklyn Jewish Center and the Late Friday Night Service

The flagship Conservative synagogue center was the Brooklyn Jewish Center (founded in 1919) whose Late Friday Night service became a model for other synagogues. This service was designed to accommodate the needs of Jews who did not (or could not, due to having to work) attend the traditional *Erev shabbat* and/or Sabbath Morning service but who welcomed a program that provided socialization and community, a connection to tradition, together with a sermon by the Center's rabbi, Israel Levinthal (JTS 1910), or guest speaker, on topics relating to being Jewish and American. To provide spiritual content, the program was supplemented with prayers, readings and congregational song.

Levinthal solicited the assistance of Israel Goldfarb to provide the musical content of the "Late Friday Night Lecture and Musical Service."[63] The result was publication of *Song and Praise for Sabbath Eve* that not only included the liturgical texts, transliterations of the Hebrew, readings (in Hebrew and/or English) but also the musical scores of the sung items—in other words, "a musical *siddur*."[64] Before the program began, Goldfarb's brother, Samuel, led rehearsals of the singing.[65]

Song and Praise for Sabbath Eve was divided into three sections: The opening and concluding sections were the same at every service, the middle section varied according to the Sabbath of the month. The opening section included the singing of the *Sh'ma* (Goldfarb) followed immediately by *Shalom aleikhem* (composed by Goldfarb earlier in 1918, in ABBA form, not in ABAB form as sung today) [66] Sung items at the conclusion included *Va'anahnu*[67] and *V'hayah*

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[60] Jenna Weissman Joselit, *New York's Jewish Jews: The Orthodox Community in the Interwar Years* (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1974), 40.

[61] Aaron I. Reichel*, The Maverick Rabbi: Rabbi Herbert S. Goldstein and the Institutional Synagogue—A New Organizational Form* (Norfolk VA: Donning Company, 1986), 188.

[62] Joselit, "*New York's Jewish Jews*," 40.

[63] Deborah Dash Moore, "A Synagogue Center Grows in Brooklyn," in Wertheimer, *American Synagogue*, 312. In his synagogue ("Kane Street Synagogue"), Goldfarb had a choir of boys and men (girls were later included), to encourage congregational participation.

[64] Israel Goldfarb and Israel Herbert Levinthal, *Song and Praise for Sabbath Eve: For Use at Synagogue Gatherings, in Connection with the Late Friday Evening Sermon or Discourse* (Brooklyn, NY, 1920), Preface.

[65] Moore, "A Synagogue Center Grows," 303, 312.

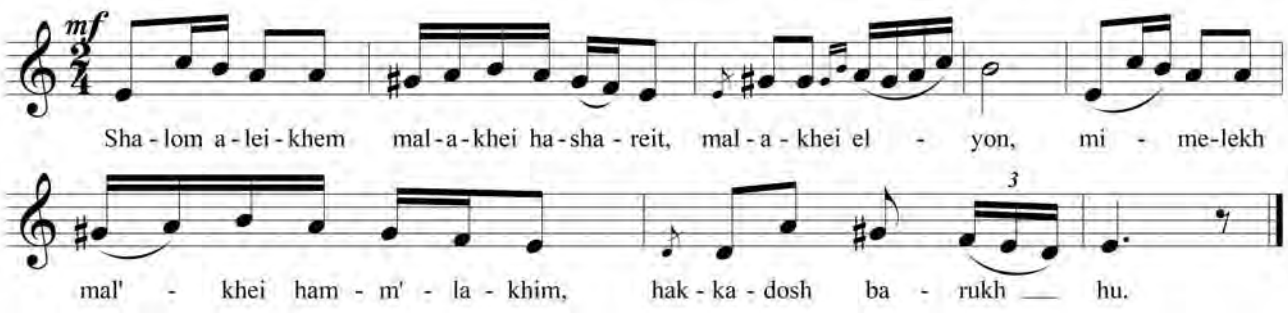
[66] Eliyahu Schleifer, "*Shalom aleikhem: ha-lahan ha-m'kubbal v'ha-malhin ha-nishkakh*," *Dukhan* 16 (November 2005), 308–325.

[67] Incorrectly designated "Traditional" but based on Sulzer.

adonai (Goldfarb) in *Aleinu*; *Yigdal* or *Adon olam*;[68] and finally the singing of *Hatikvah*, "America" and "The Star-Spangled Banner."

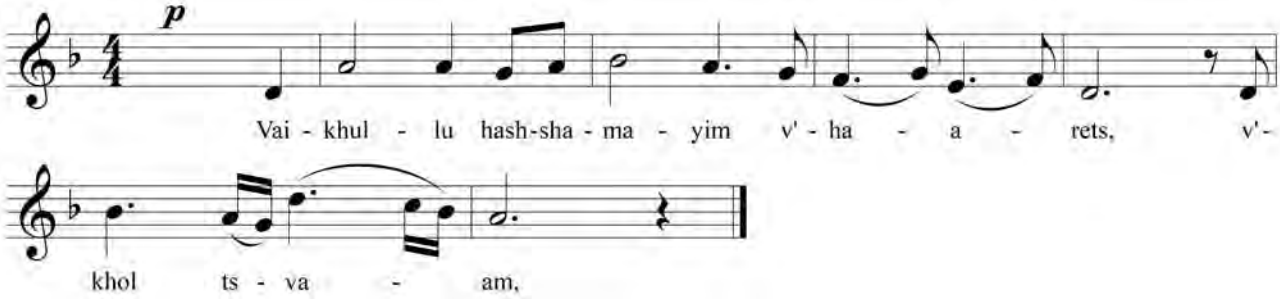
The middle section and supplement consisted largely of *z'mirot*, several of which were composed by Goldfarb, and transferred from the home liturgical/musical tradition to the synagogue. Included here was *Ha-hamah mei-rosh* of Bialik, set to music by Pinchos Minkowsky. The most significant musical items were undoubtedly Goldfarb's *Vaikhullu* and *Magein avot*.[69] These metrical compositions, being in minor, were not too remote from the *Magein avot* mode of the traditional *nusah*. *Vaikhullu* includes a trace of art song embedded within elements of *nusah*.[70] Both pieces have clear-cut Western musical forms (AA' and ABAC) **(Examples 14–18)**.[71]

Example 14 ***Shalom aleikhem***



Moderato I. Goldfarb

Example 15 ***Vaikhullu***

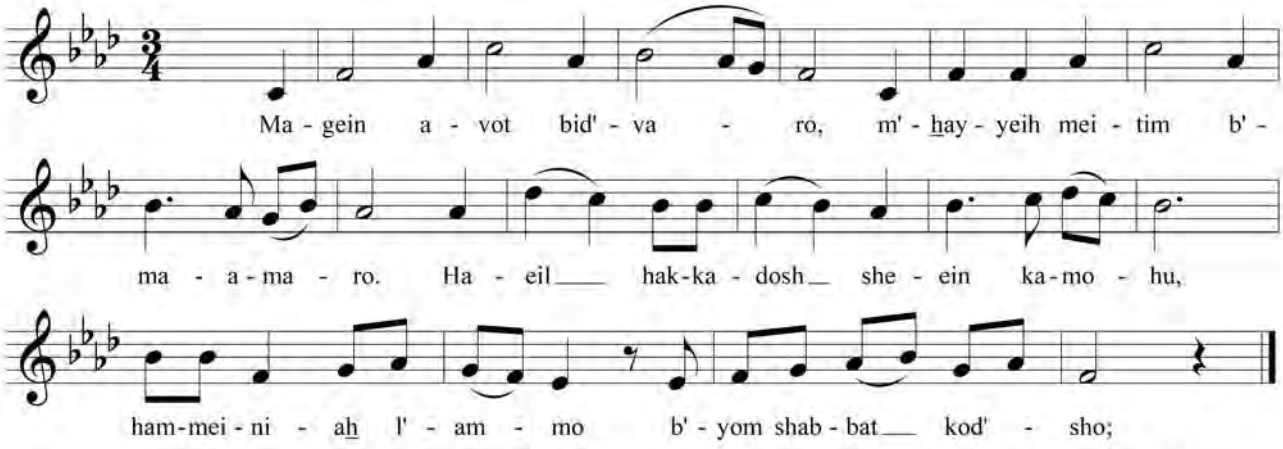


I. Goldfarb

[68] Incorrectly designated "Traditional." The first is by "Leoni" (Meyer Lyon), the second is the Gerovitsch/folk tune.
[69] *Vaikhullu* (*ZL NG*, 103); *Magein avot* (*ZL* I, 97; *ZL NG*, 109). In *ZL,* in *Magein avot,* the passing touch of *Ahavah rabbah* mode at *hab-b'rakhot* and the final coda were eliminated, and several pitches altered. It appears that *Vaikhullu* was originally intended for solo.
[70] Schleifer, "Shalom aleikhem," 319.
[71] *Song and Praise for Sabbath Eve* included several non-Shabbat melodies such as *Shomeir yisra'eil* (Goldfarb) recited on Weekdays (p. 114), the *Avinu malkeinu* folk melody (p. 109) and *Havah nagilah* of Moshe Nathanson (p. 74).

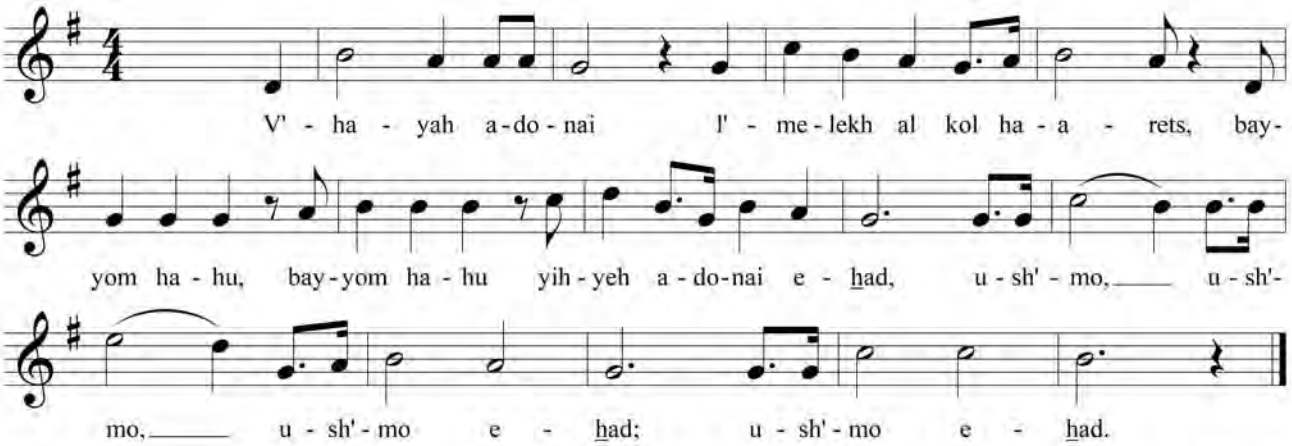
Example 16 ***Magein avot***

Andante, dolce I. Goldfarb



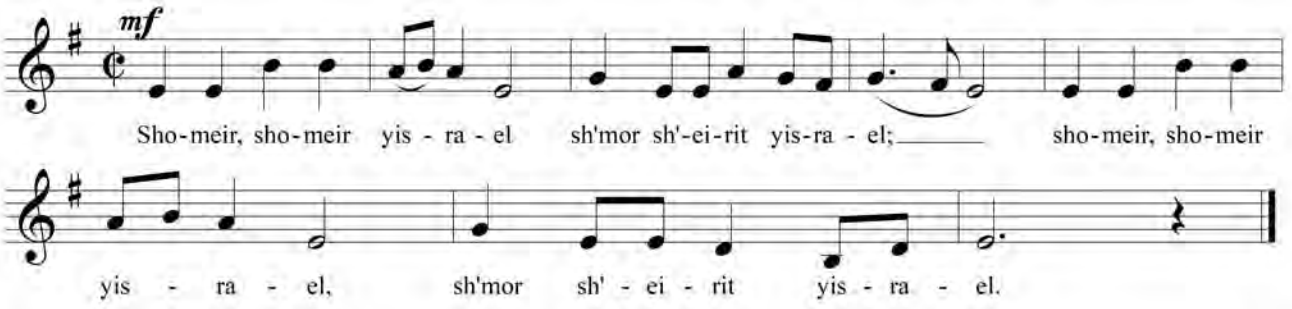
Example 17 ***V'hayah adonai***

Tempo di marcia I. Goldfarb



Example 18 ***Shomeir yisrael***

Moderato (with devotion) I. Goldfarb



E. The Young People's League and *Synagogue Melodies for the High Holy Days*

Playing a significant role in the adoption of Goldfarb's melodies was the Young People's League of the United Synagogue. This organization was started in 1921 by several forward-looking Conservative rabbis impressed by the success of Young Israel.[72] A semi-autonomous affiliate of the United Synagogue, the League aimed to meet the needs of young people in their late teens to mid-20s.[73] Like Young Israel, the League desired more participatory services, congregational singing being the best means for achieving this. Unlike Young Israel, however, the League sought advice and guidance from cantors and rabbis.

Almost from its inception, the League began conducting religious services, starting with Friday nights.[74] In 1925 it produced a *Guide* for conducting both Levinthal-type "forums" and more traditional Friday Night services. The *Guide* stressed that "nothing will do more to make the services impressive and at the same time enjoyable than congregational singing of responses and traditional melodies."[75] It also suggested various ways for securing success, including training a group of singers to lead.[76]

In 1924 the League began to organize High Holy Day services, publishing a *High Holy Day Guide* to provide guidance to local chapters regarding the content, including musical, of the services.[77] The League, together with Young Israel, encouraged Israel Goldfarb to prepare a collection of High Holy Day congregational melodies.[78] The ensuing result was the publication in 1926 of *Synagogue Melodies for the High Holy Days*. The objectives were: (1) "Close adherence to the old Jewish traditional form;"[79] (2) A "simplicity of arrangement;" and (3) "A vocal range suitable for the average voice." It contained arrangements of well-known *Mis-sinai* (old traditional) melodies, together with several melodies of Lewandowski and Sulzer. Goldfarb compositions included **(Examples 19–25,** see next page**)**.[80]

1. *Adonai, adonai* (no. 41; *ZL/NG* III, p. 170[81]).
2. *Va'ani t'fillati* of Samuel Goldfarb, sung ubiquitously today (no. 42; *ZL/NG* III).
3. *Zokhreinu* and *Mi khamokha av ha-rahamim* (nos. 53 and 54; *ZL/NG* II, p. 88 and p. 103).
4. *Yimlokh* and *V'atah kadosh* (no. 55; *ZL/NG* II, p. 126).
5. *Areshet s'fateinu* borrowed, without attribution, from Halpern's *Z'mirot u-t'fillot yisrael*, no. 127 (no. 69; *ZL* III, p. 164).

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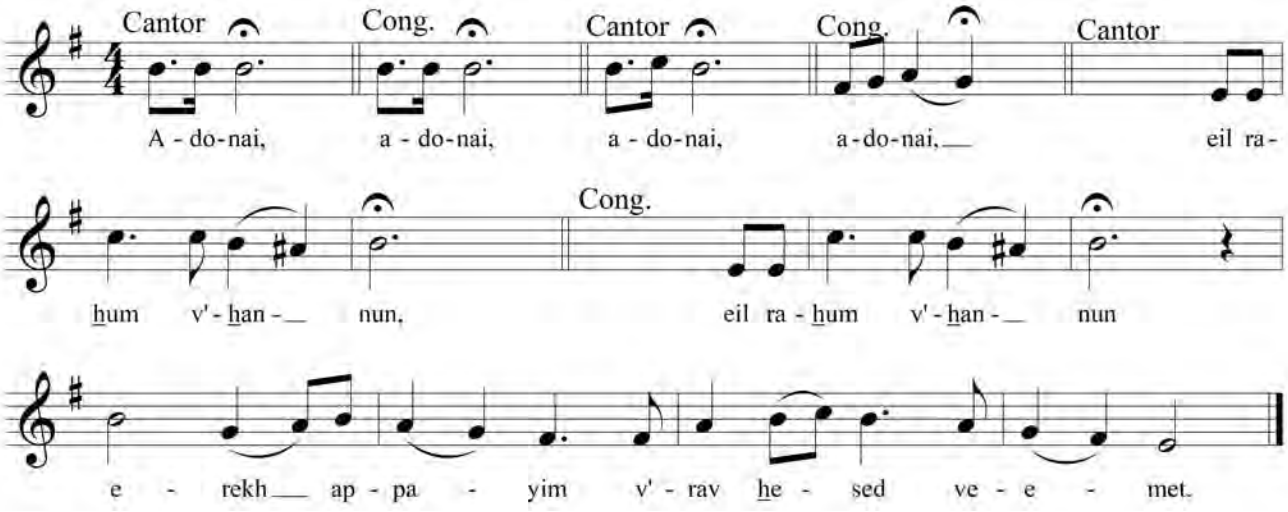
[72] Young People's League, Religious Observance Committee, *Guide for Arrangement of Young People's Friday Evening Service* (New York: United Synagogue of America) 1925, 1.
[73] YPL was replaced in 1951 by the United Synagogue Youth (USY), with a much younger membership.
[74] *United Synagogue Recorder* 4/4 (October 1924), 17.
[75] *Guide for Arrangement*, 7.
[76] Ibid., 4.
[77] *United Synagogue Recorder* 5, Vol. 1 (January 1925), 34.
[78] Israel and Samuel E. Goldfarb, *Synagogue Melodies for the High Holy Days arranged for Congregational Singing* (Brooklyn NY, 1926), *Preface*.
[79] The compilers used the term "*Skarbove niggunim"* very broadly.
[80] Unless otherwise indicated, the composer is Israel Goldfarb.
[81] Marked "Traditional."

6. *B'seifer hayyim* (no. 73; *ZL* III, p. 176; *ZL/NG* II, p. 198).
7. *Hay-yom t'amtseinu* (no. 74; *ZL/NG*, p. 206).

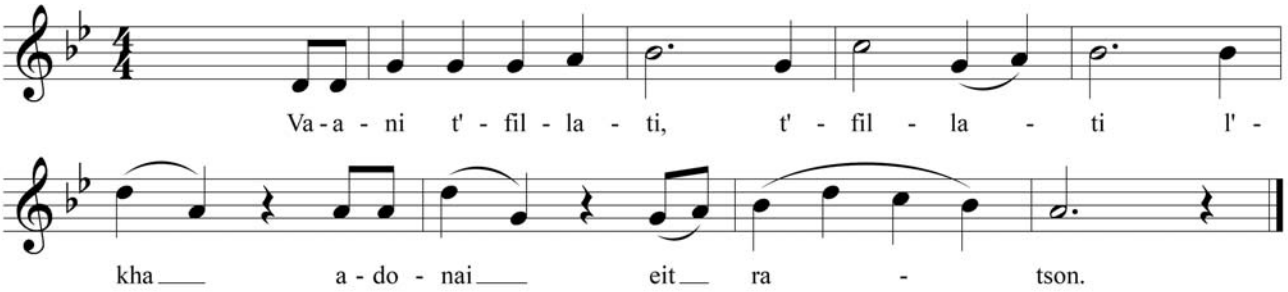
Example 19 ***Adonai, adonai***

I. Goldfarb



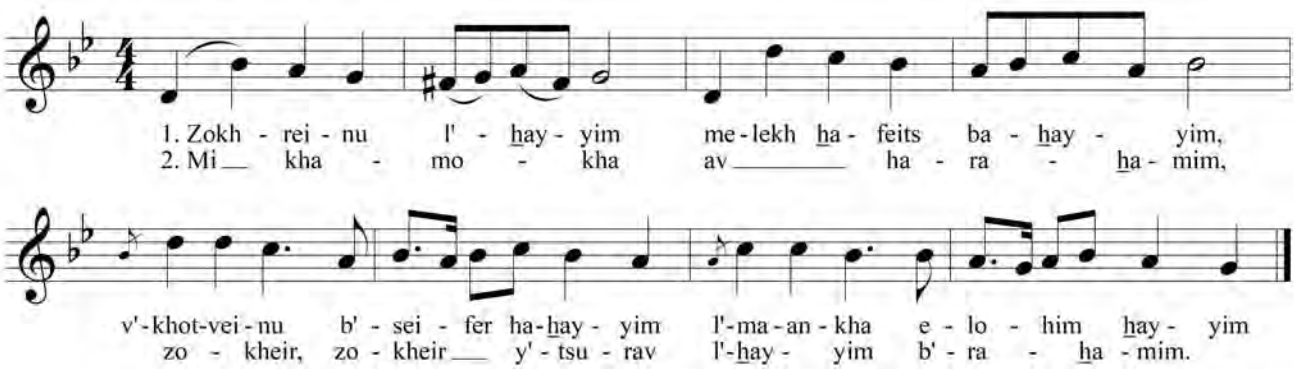
Example 20 ***Va-ani t'fillati***

S.E. Goldfarb



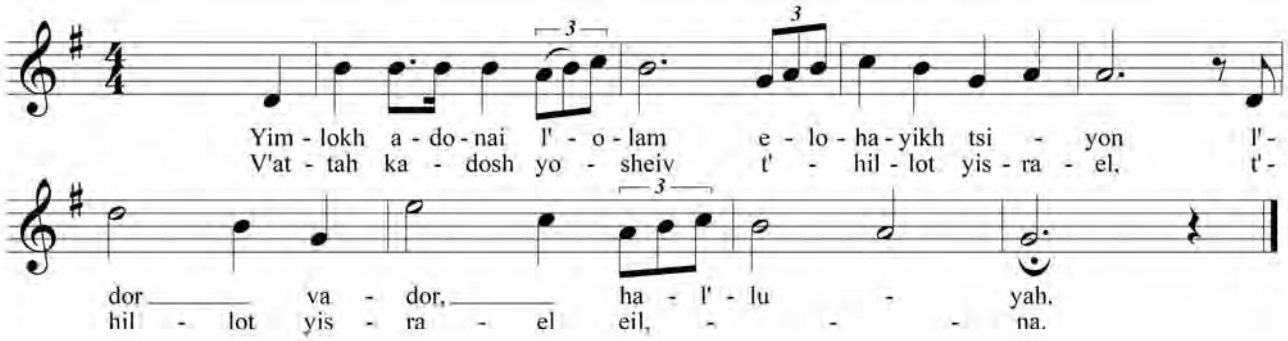
Example 21 ***Zokhreinu/Mi khamokha***

Andante I. Goldfarb



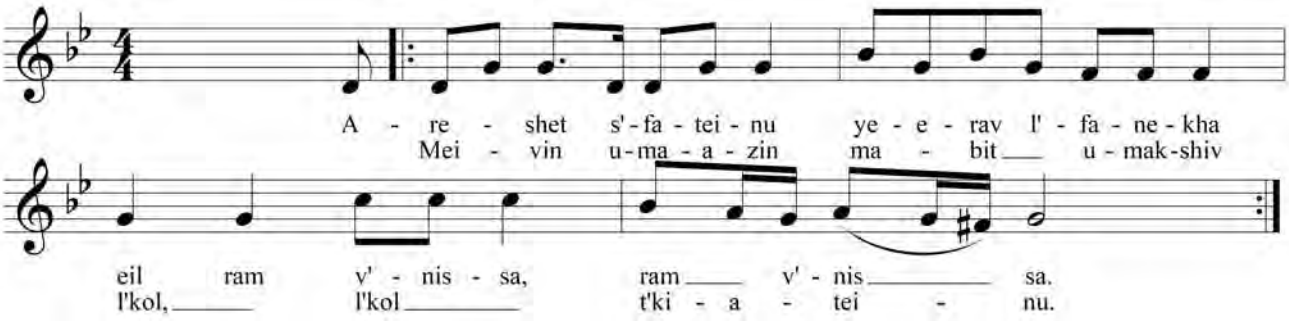
Example 22 ***Yimlokh adonai/V'atah kadosh***

Maestoso I. Goldfarb



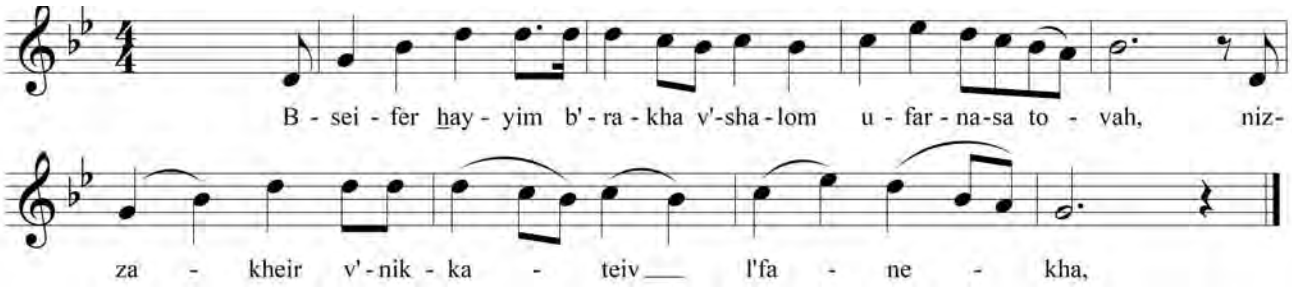
Example 23 ***Areshet s'fateinu***

Andante I. Goldfarb



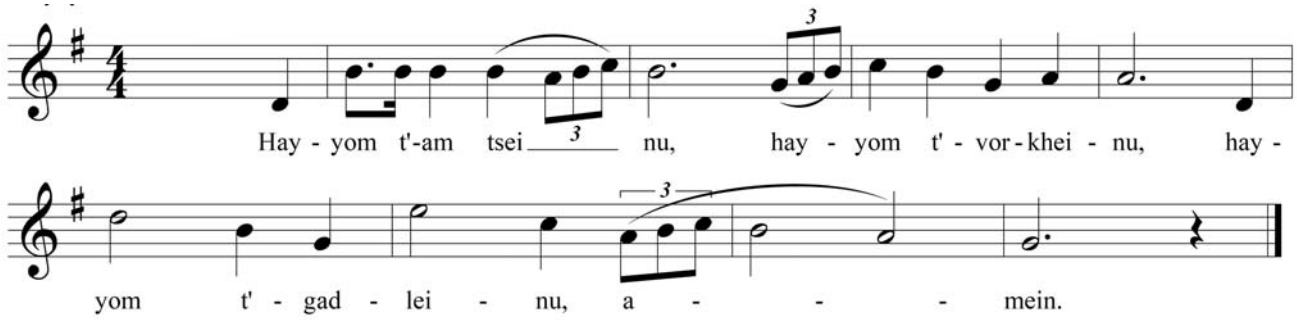
Example 24 ***B'seifer hayyim***

Andante religioso I. Goldfarb



Example 25 ***Ha-yyom t'amtseinu***

Vivace I. Goldfarb

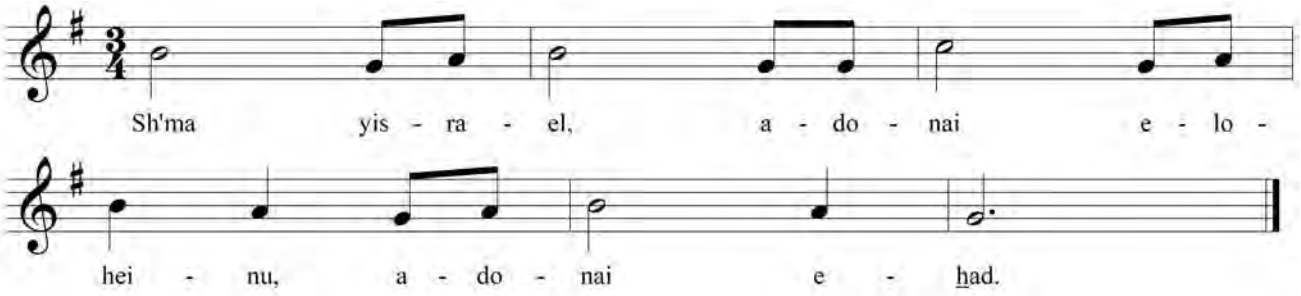


Items not composed by Goldfarb, but whose inclusion furthered their popularization, include **(Examples 26–27)**.

1. *Sh'ma*, the first printed occurrence of the so-called "Sulzer" *Sh'ma* (no. 19; *ZL* II, p. 83; *ZL/NG* I, p. 68).
2. *V'zot ha-torah* (no. 46, without attribution; *ZL* II, p. 89).
3. *V'al kullam* (no. 86, without attribution; *ZL* III, p. 199; *ZL/NG* II, p. 255).[82]

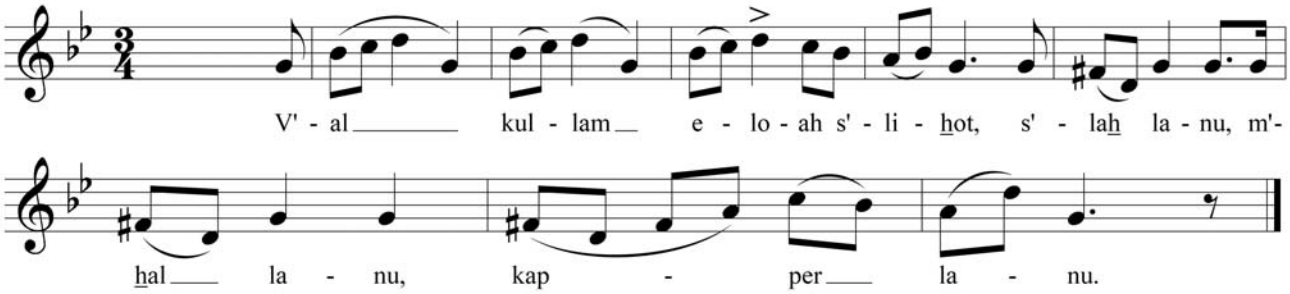
Example 26 ***Sh'ma***

Maestoso S. Sulzer



Example 27 ***V'al kullam***

Moderato Yosche Slonimor



The key to the success of Israel Goldfarb's melodies was that he sought to retain the "warmth and impetuosity" of Eastern-European Synagogue song along with the "deliberate, orderly and dignified style… and classical structure" of the Western European Synagogue" without "sacrificing much of the Jewish spirit for the sake of external beauty and harmonic form."[83] The content felt and sounded Jewish, but the form was "American." In this manner, Goldfarb brought "new life" to the music of the synagogue.[84] Owing to the impact of his publications, Goldfarb has been called "the father of congregational singing" and for several decades his melodies predominated in Conservative synagogues.[85]

[82] The composer is Joseph Altschul, known as "Yosche Slonimer" (1840-1908).
[83] Goldfarb, *Friday Evening Melodies*, Preface.
[84] Schleifer, "*Shalom aleikhem*," 316. *Song and Praise* underwent many editions up until the late 1950s.
[85] Michelman, "Israel Goldfarb," 5.

F. Abraham Zvi Idelsohn: *The Jewish Song Book*

A songster somewhat difficult to categorize was Idelsohn's *The Jewish Song Book* (1928), as it was created both for regular synagogue services as well as for Jewish religious schools (see below). Although it includes pieces for solo/cantor and choir, Idelsohn placed "unison congregational singing" first.[86] It was designed for use in both Reform and Conservative congregations, so that occasionally there are two versions of the same piece to accommodate different wordings of the Hebrew prayers.

In the *Preface* Idelsohn wrote:

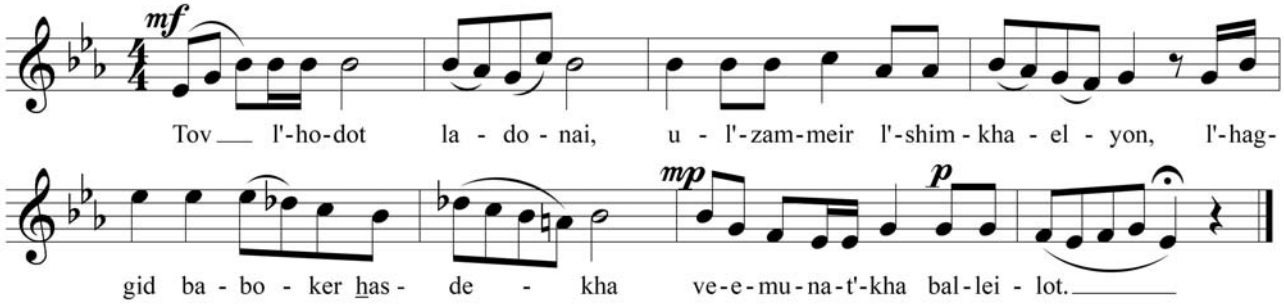
> *Unison Song*. "One of the chief reasons for the appearance of this book is the desire to make available to the modern Synagogue, a song service that can be rendered not only *to* the congregation, but *by* the congregation—genuine Jewish melody so arranged that it can be carried, unison, by the worshippers."

He also stressed that simplicity and singability were among his objectives.

The Jewish Song Book included selections and simplifications from the great classics of synagogue music, as well as melodies composed by Idelsohn himself. As a musicologist, Idelsohn was concerned with raising Jewish musical literacy, so he not only named the composers of borrowed or arranged items, but also indicated items stemming from the musical tradition of the synagogue by adding "traditional" ("for when the traditional tune was used in its entirety"); "based on traditional mode" ("for when the music was mainly according to a certain mode or chant"); "utilizing traditional material" (when traditional elements were used "in the creation of a composition, new in form)"; or "folk tune" (for example, the *Adon olam* tune later arranged by Gerowitch). In the Friday night service, Idelsohn employed the *Adonai malakh* mode for congregational singing of Ps. 92 and in the Sabbath Morning service he provided a beautiful setting in minor for *R'tseih* which was later included in *Zamru Lo* (*ZL* II, p. 42). His melody for *Yism'hu*, although not indicated, is also possibly of folk origin **(Examples 28–30)**.

Example 28 ***Tov l'hodot***

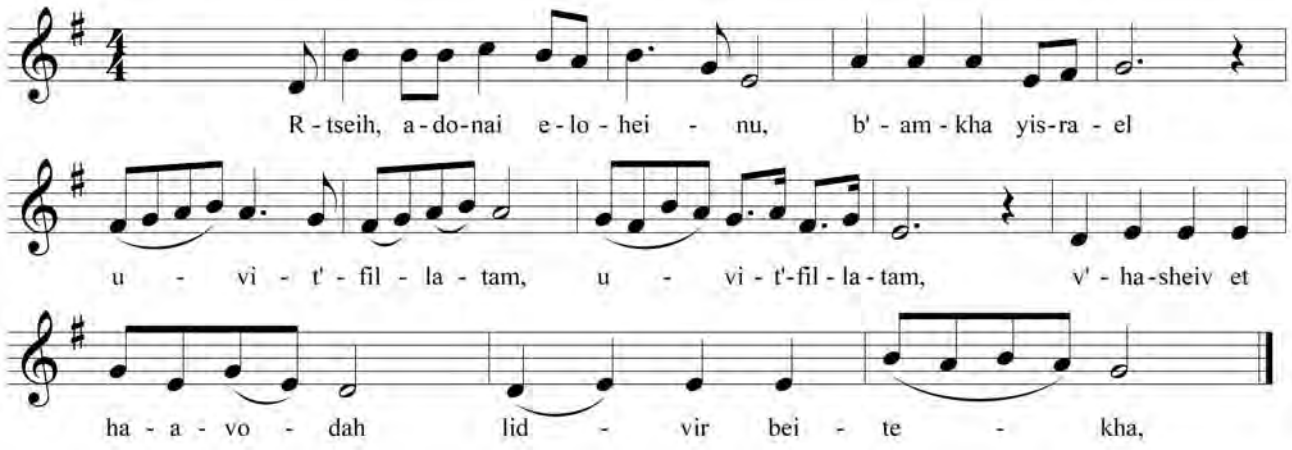
Andante con anima A.Z. Idelsohn



[86] A.Z. Idelsohn, *The Jewish Song Book for Synagogue, School and Home* (Cincinnati, OH: A. Z. Idelsohn) 1928.

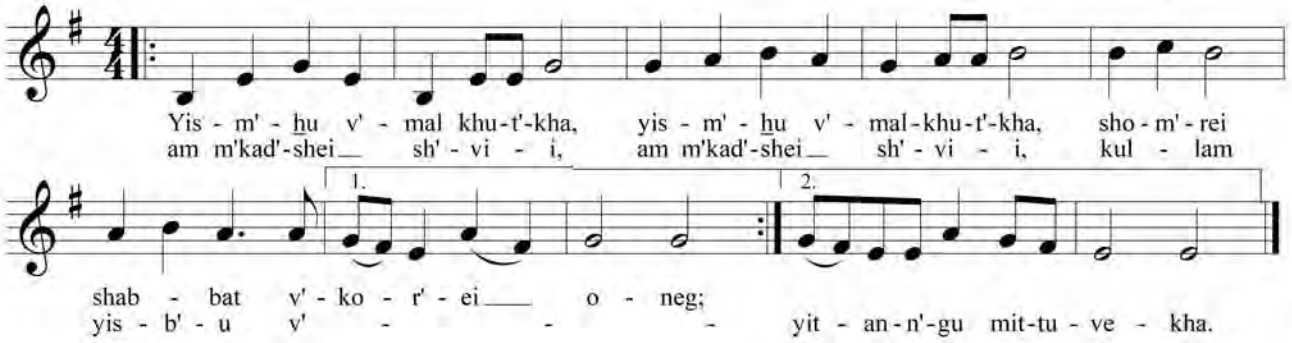
Example 29 ***R'tseih***

A.Z. Idelsohn



Example 30 ***Yism'hu***

Allegretto con brio A.Z. Idelsohn



3. THE ROLE OF JEWISH RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS

A. Music in the Schools of the New York Bureau of Jewish Education

Jewish children were now learning synagogue melodies in religious school. The New York Bureau of Jewish Education was established in 1910 and similar Bureaus soon followed elsewhere. The Bureau was headed by Simon Benderly (1876–1944), the progressive Jewish educator who (along with Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, Principal of the Teacher's Institute of JTS) introduced modern methods of instruction into Jewish children's education.[87] Among his innovations was the introduction of music in the Talmud Torahs and supplementary schools as a means for teaching prayer and Hebrew language.[88] Benderly had a deep appreciation of music and while no longer religiously observant, had come from a hasidic family in Safed and never lost his love of hasidic melodies.[89] He wanted to use the classroom to transmit some of the power and beauty of Jewish music.

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[87] Jonathan B. Krasner, *The Benderly Boys and American Jewish Education* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press. 2011), 3.

[88] Ibid., 354.

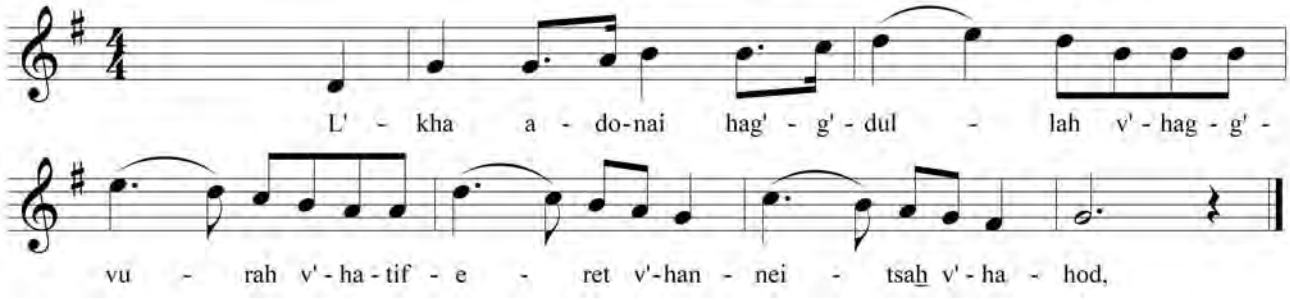
[89] "I remember his singing hasidic chants with tears streaming down his face." Alexander Dushkin, "The Personality of Samson Benderly–His Life and Influence," *Jewish Education* 20 (Summer 1949), 10.

The first person whom Benderly appointed to teach music in the Bureau's schools was Gershon Ephros (1890–1978) who, before his arrival in New York in 1911, had served as Abraham Zvi Idelsohn's choir leader and assistant cantor in Jerusalem.[90] In addition to folk songs, Zionist songs and home ritual melodies, Ephros also taught synagogue skills, in which singing played a significant role, enabling children to conduct their own Sabbath services in "children's synagogues."[91] He also formed school choirs to lead singing at services, especially during the Torah Service.[92]

Ephros' impact was particularly significant at the Downtown Talmud Torah. At the "boys' *minyan*" several future pioneers of the Young Israel movement "practiced and perfected many of the melodies that later became favorite mainstays of Young Israel sing-along prayer services."[93] Girls, too, often participated in the "children's synagogues" of the Bureau, even taking turns as prayer leaders and Torah readers.[94] Ephros' setting of *L'kha adonai* (written in 1912) was certainly composed for the "children's synagogue" of the Downtown Talmud Torah.[95] Similar services were soon conducted at other Talmud Torahs in the city **(Examples 31–32).**[96]

Example 31 ***L'kha adonai***

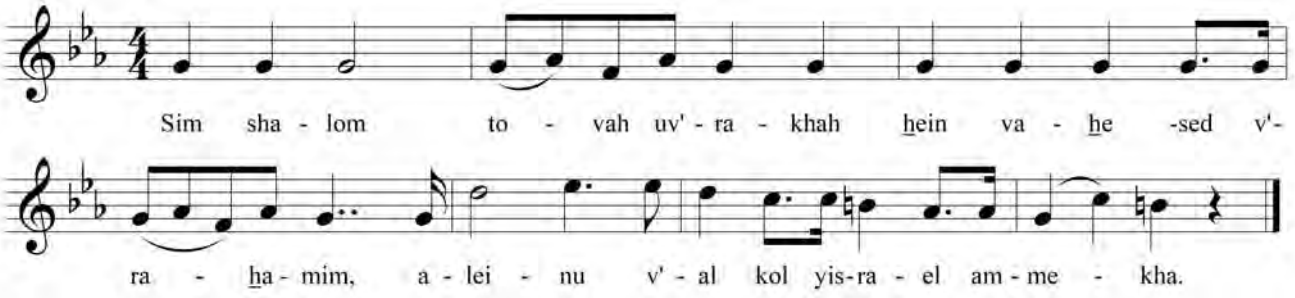
Tempo di marcia G. Ephros



[90] Irene Heskes, *Passport to Jewish Music: Its History, Traditions, and Culture* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994), 14–17.
[91] Krasner, *Benderly Boys*, 95.
[92] Alexander M. Dushkin, *Jewish Education in New York City* (Ph.D., Columbia University, New York, 1918), 308 and 329.
[93] Kornreich, *Young Israel at 100*, 29.
[94] Krasner, *Benderly Boys*, p. 192; Kaufman, *Shul with a Pool*, 150.
[95] Israel and Samuel E. Goldfarb, *The Jewish Songster: Music for Voice and Piano*, 3rd ed. (New York: Religious Schools of Congregation Beth Israel Anshe Emes, 1919), 48. Gershon Ephros, *Cantorial Anthology of Traditional and Modern Synagogue Music… Vol. 4, Shabbat* (New York: Bloch, 1976), 288. Ephros added, "1912, revised 1942;" *Sim Shalom* was composed by Abraham Kalb, music director at the Central Jewish Institute (Talmud Torah).
[96] Kaufman, *Shul with a Pool*, 150–158.

Example 32 ***Sim shalom***

Moderato A.I. Kalb



When Ephros left New York City in 1918, the composer and accompanist Samuel Goldfarb (1884–1967), younger brother of Rabbi Israel Goldfarb, succeeded him as Director of the Department of Music (1918–1923; 1925–1929).[97] Samuel had already gained a reputation as a popular music teacher.[97] He spent many hours a week shuttling between the Bureau's schools providing music instruction, especially in the sung portions of the liturgy and home rituals.[98] Samuel was the catalyst behind Israel's composing his famous *Shalom aleikhem* melody. For a rally in May 1918 of the League of Jewish Youth of America (founded by the Bureau), Samuel had asked Israel for "something catchy and melodic that they would learn easily."[99]

One of Samuel Goldfarb's most notable achievements was, together with his brother, the publication of *The Jewish Songster* (1918), the prime resource for secular and religious songs taught throughout the country, undergoing many editions. In the Preface the editors explained that, "These compositions have for a number of years been sung by the choirs and schools of the Bureau of Jewish Education." Although the liturgical component was smaller than the holiday secular songs, it was still significant. Items published for the first time include Ephros' *L'kha adonai*, a hasidic-style *Yism'hu*, the opening of *Aleinu l'shabbei'ah* by Sigmund Sabel,[100] and the arrangement of *Ma'oz tsur* in which the last line is repeated.[101] The same year, several liturgical melodies were published in *Friday Evening Melodies* (1918),[102] notably *Shalom aleikhem* and the edited version of Lewandowski's *Kiddush* where the *ki vanu vaharta* theme repeats at *v'shabbat kodsh'kha*.[103] The considerably expanded 1925 edition of the *Jewish Songster* included the Goldfarb brothers' *Eil adon*, Binder's *Kad-d'sheinu*,[104] a traditional *Yism'hu* in minor, *Mizmor l'david* (Ps. 29), other "core" liturgical melodies and several pieces from *Friday Evening Melodies* **(Examples 33–35)**.[105]

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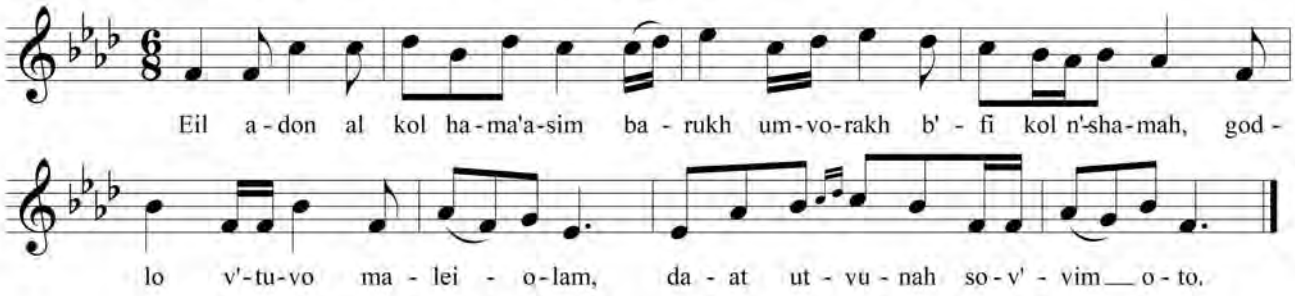
[97] Krasner, *Benderly Boys*, 194.
[98] Krasner, *Benderly Boys*, 191–192, 354.
[99] Krasner, *Benderly Boys*, p. 203 and n. 27, p. 447, quoting "Letter from Bella Goldfarb Lehrman to Carol Levin" (June 20, 2003); *Synagogue Journal* 6 (February 10, 2006).
[100] Organist of Emanu-El Social House Brotherhood. *Emanuel-el Review* 4, no. 1 (1918), 19.
[101] Earlier notations of the melody contain no repetition.
[102] See note 38.
[103] Not in the original composition.
[104] Abraham W. Binder, *The Jewish Year in Song* (New York: Schirmer, 1928), 4.
[105] For example, *Vaikhullu* (p. 160). Three items only appeared in *Friday Evening Melodies*: *Mah tovu* (p. 7), *Shamor v'zakhor* (p. 15, *ZL* I, 32) and *Ahavat olam* (p. 36, *ZL* I, 58).

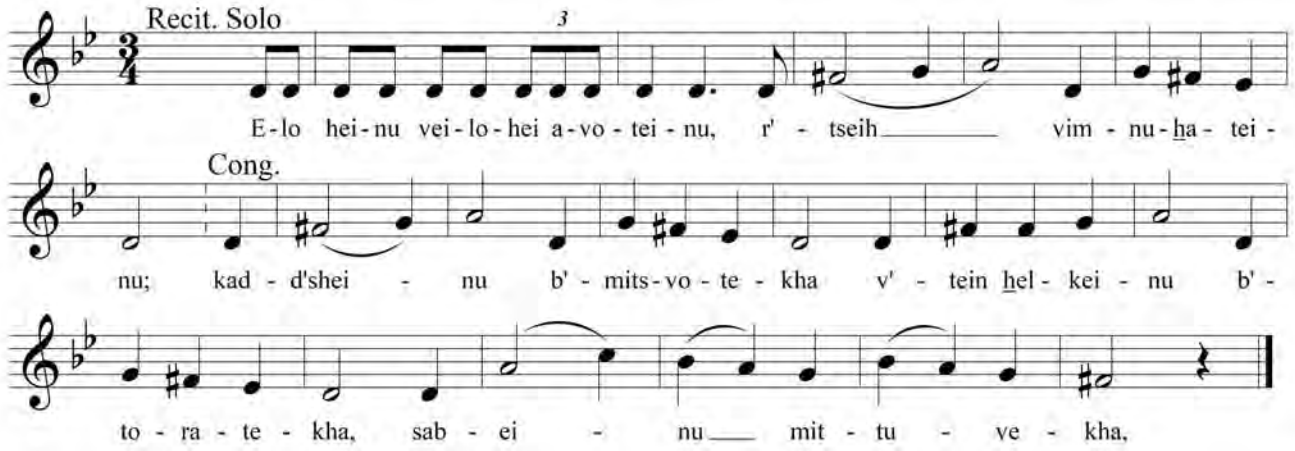
Example 33 ***Eil adon***

Moderato I. and S.E. Goldfarb



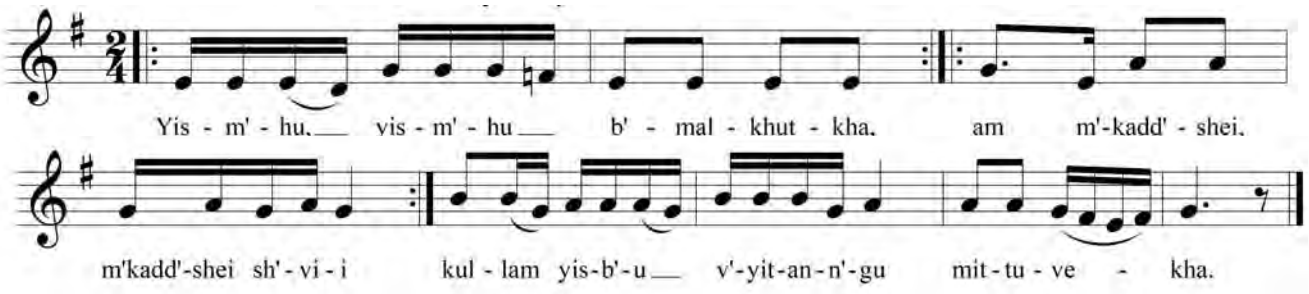
Example 34 ***Kadd'sheinu***

Moderato Arr. I. and S.E. Goldfarb



Example 35 ***Yism'hu***

Allegretto vivace Traditional

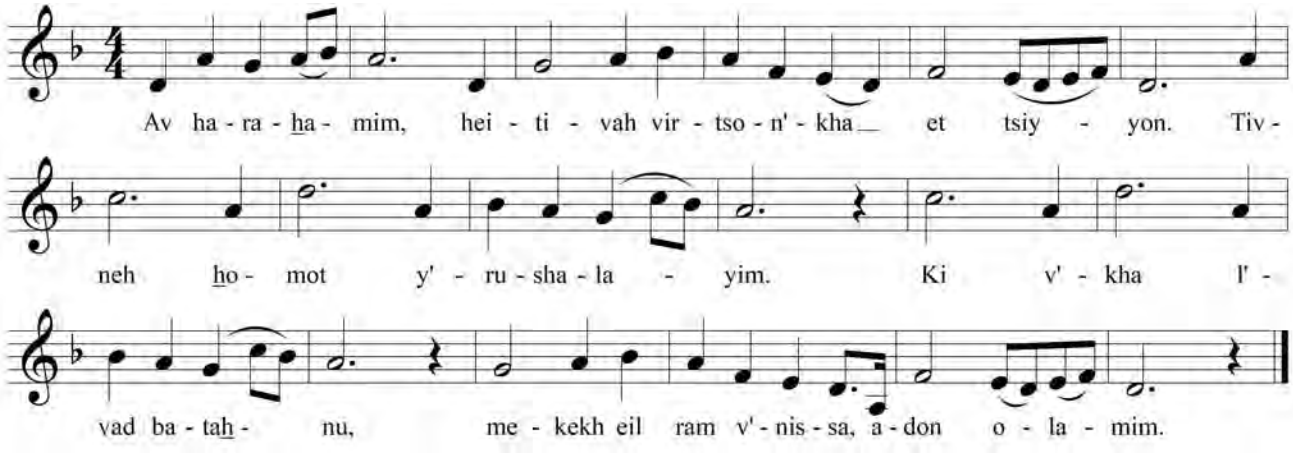


When Samuel Goldfarb left New York City in 1929, he was succeeded by Moshe Nathanson. Simultaneously serving as cantor of the SAJ, Nathanson taught Jewish music at various schools, *yeshivot* and summer camps,[106] and held a remarkably well-attended music class for teachers on Sunday afternoons.[107] The outgrowth of the latter, together with Benderly's encouragement and suggestions, was the publication of Nathanson's influential *Manginot Shireinu*.[108] The liturgical section helped to popularize a number of melodies including **(Examples 36–41)**.

1. Torah Service: Dunajewsky's (originally choral) *Av ha-raḥamim* (*MS* no. 137; *ZL* II, p. 76); Zeidel Rovner's *Beih ana raḥeits* (incorrectly labeled "traditional") (*MS* no. 139; *ZL* II, p. 82); *V'zot ha-torah* (*MS* no. 142; *ZL* II, p. 89).
2. *Amidah* (*Musaf*): The hasidic *Yism'ḥu* (*MS* no. 151; *ZL* II, p. 121); the "Israeli-hasidic" *Sim shalom* (*MS* no. 154; *ZL* II, p. 54).
3. Yossele Rosenblatt's *An'im z'mirot* (*MS* no. 158, without attribution; *ZL* II, p. 136); the folk melody of *Halleluyah* (*MS* no. 6; *ZL* II, p. 5).
4. The first blessing of the *Birkat ham-mazon* (*MS* no. 132).[109]

Example 36 ***Av ha-raḥamim***

M. Nathanson/after A. Dunajewsky



[106] The musical impact of Camp Ramah (founded in 1947) occurred later, in the 1960s and 1970s. Even so, by the mid-1950s, Goldfarb's *Shalom aleikheim* melody was sung in the *K'dushah* of *Shaḥarit* (Shabbat) and the Vilna/Rosowsky melody for the third chapter of Lamentations. Dr. Saul Wachs, e-mail message to author, June 26, 2017.

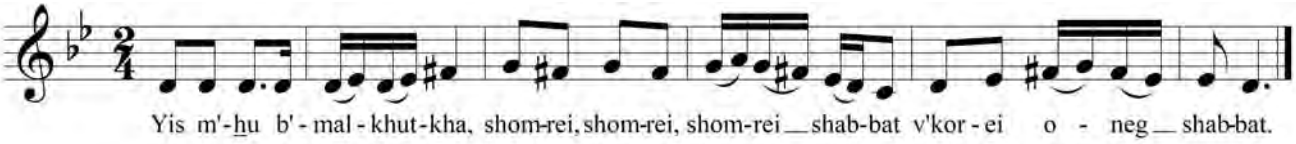
[107] Feinberg, *Havah Nagilah,* 65–66 and 73–74.

[108] Moshe Nathanson, *Manginot shireinu: Hebrew Melodies, Old and New, Religious and Secular* (New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1939); Moshe Nathanson, "Dr. Benderly as Impresario," *Jewish Education*, Vol. 20, issue 3 (1949), 79.

[109] Nathanson later wrote a complete Grace after Meals. Moshe Nathanson, Philip Birnbaum and Cantors Assembly of America: *Rabbotai n'vareikh: Birkat ha-mazon* (New York: Hebrew Publishing Company), 1954. Additional pieces in *MS* that became popular in Conservative synagogues include *Zakharti lakh* (Lewandowski) (*MS*, no. 108; *ZL* III, 171); *L'kha dodi*, possibly a corrupted version of Sulzer (*MS*, no. 116; *ZL* I, 30, no. 14); *B'tseit yisrael* (*MS*, no 111; *ZL* II, 63 "(J[oseph] Millet"); *L'kha adonai* (Ephros) (*MS*, no. 64); *Hodu ladonai* (Beimel) (*MS* no. 162; *ZL* II, 69, for *Pit'ḥu-li*); *Na'arits'kha* (*MS*, no. 146; *ZL* II, 107, "Unknown").

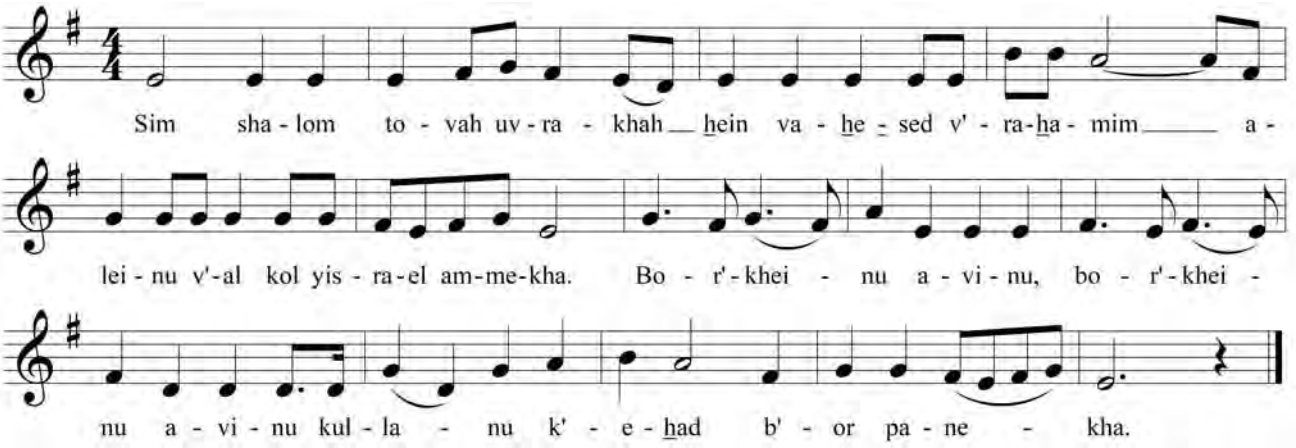
Example 37 ***Yism'hu***

Vivace Hasidic/arr. M. Nathanson



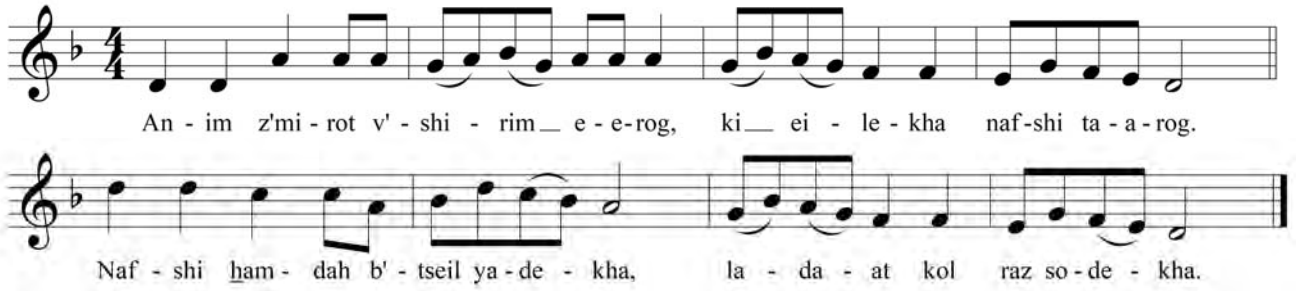
Example 38 ***Sim shalom***

Moderato Hasidic/arr. M. Nathanson



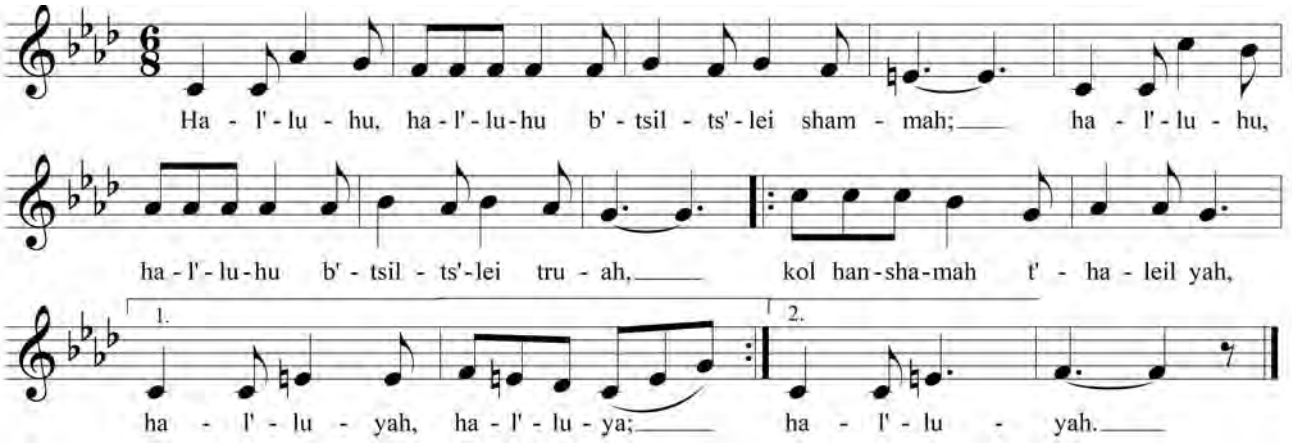
Example 39 ***An'im z'mirot***

M. Nathanson/after J. Rosenblatt



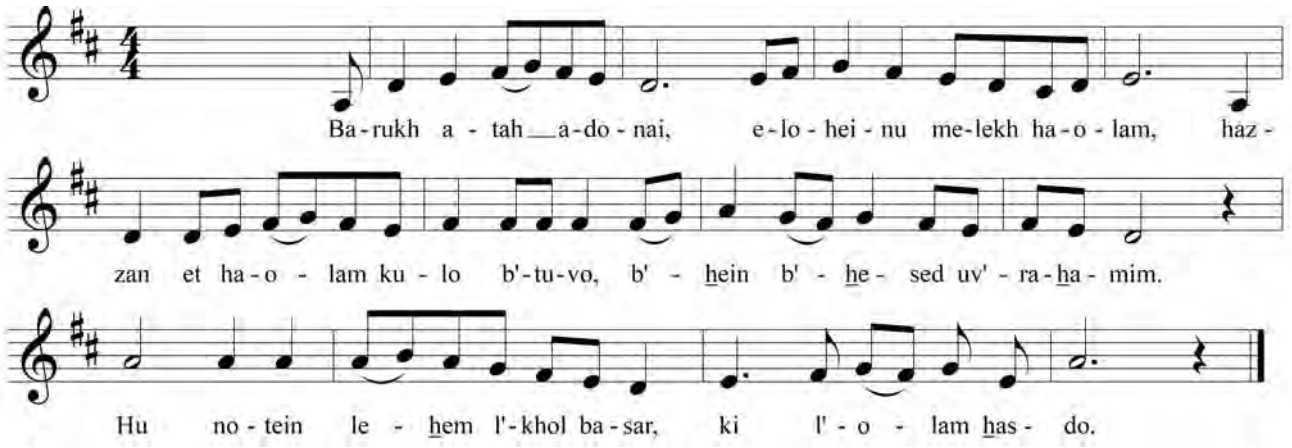
Example 40 ***Hal'luyah***

Folk melody/arr. M. Nathanson



Example 41 ***Birkat ha-mmazon***

Moderato M. Nathanson



In 1939 Harry Coopersmith (1902–1975) was brought from Chicago in 1939 to replace Nathanson as head of the Music Department of the Jewish Education Committee of New York, the Bureau's successor body. Coopersmith encouraged the formation of school choruses and established an Inter-School Music Festival. He prepared a six-year curriculum for teaching Yiddish and Hebrew folk songs, Zionist songs and liturgical music.[110] Coopersmith edited a non-denominational songster for use by the American armed forces. Although small in size, its contribution towards a shared body of liturgical melodies should not be underestimated.[111]

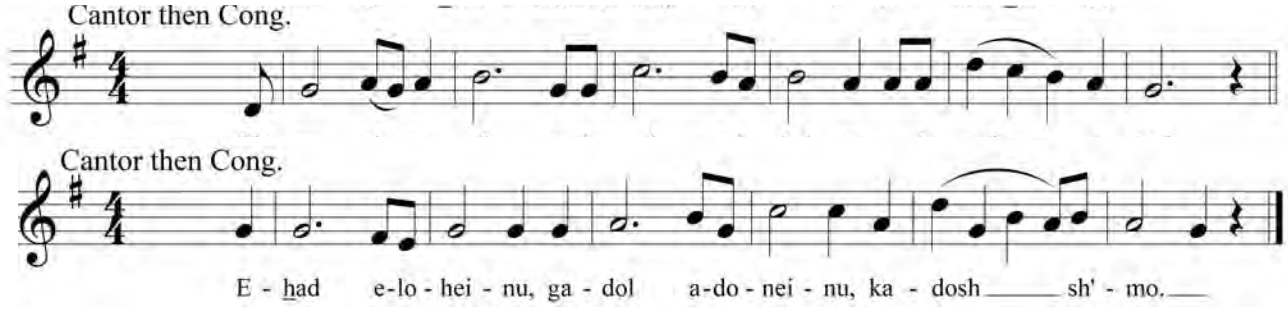
Coopersmith's primary endeavor was in creating a standardized canon and settings of Jewish children's songs.[112] *The Songs We Sing* [SWS] (1950) was Coopersmith's crowning

[110] Krasner, *Benderly Boys*, 355–356.
[111] *Selected Jewish Songs for Members of the Armed Forces* (New York: Jewish Welfare Board), 1943.
[112] Krasner, *Benderly Boys*, 357-358.

achievement.[113] Here too, as with Nathanson's *Manginot Shireinu*, the liturgical element was also important and several of the melodies published in SWS became popular at Conservative services **(Examples 42–46)**.

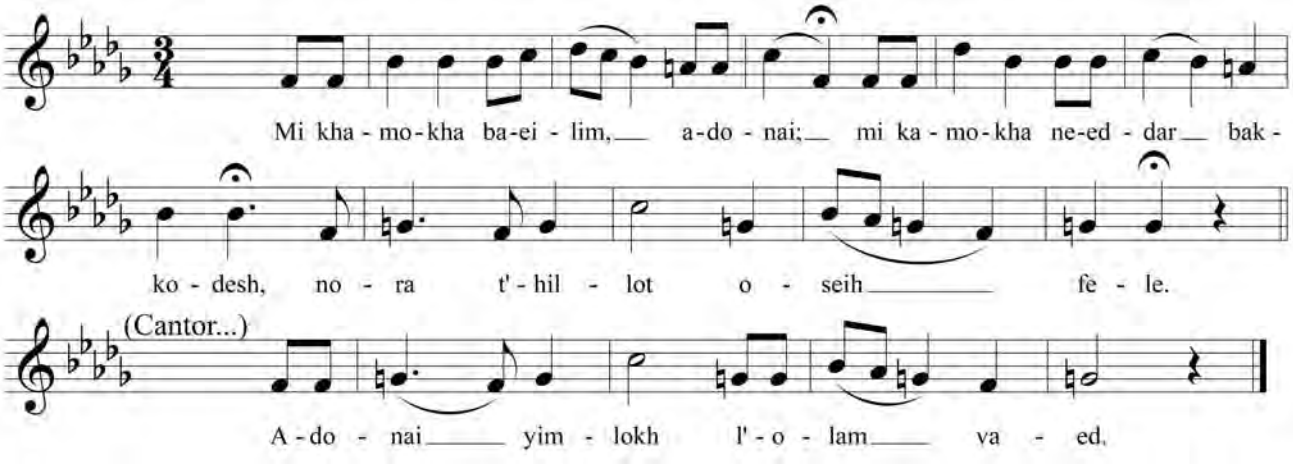
Example 42 ***Sh'ma***

E. Gerovitsch



Example 43 ***Mi khamokha***

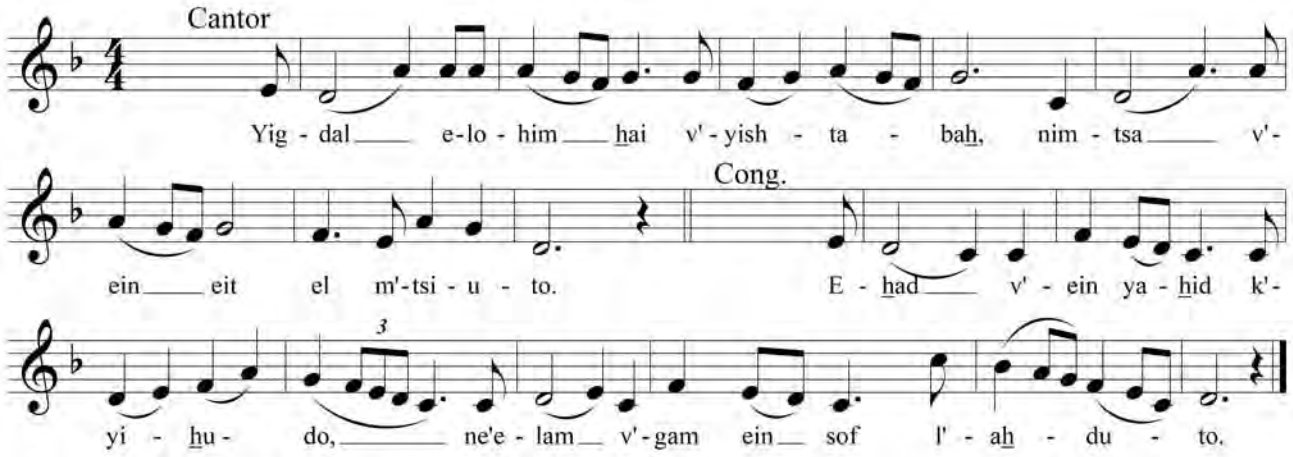
Con moto energico Traditional motif/arr. G. Ephros



[113] Harry Coopersmith, "*The Songs We Sing*" (New York: The United Synagogue Commission on Jewish Education) 1950.

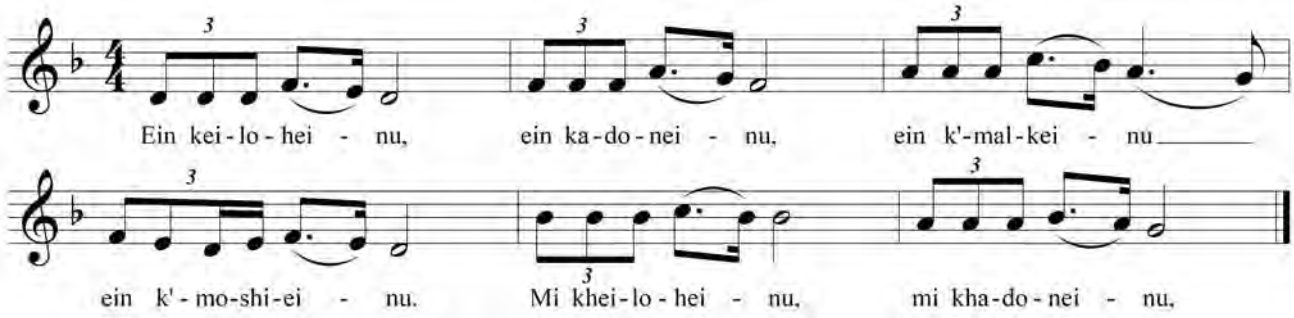
Example 44 ***Yigdal***

Allegretto — Attributed to *Erets yisrael*



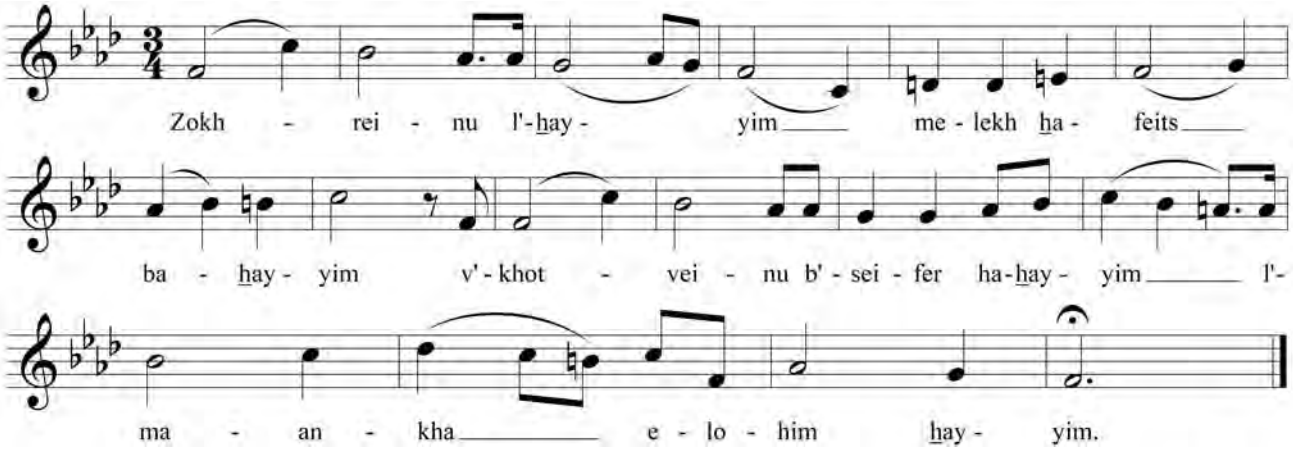
Example 45 ***Ein keiloheinu***

Hasidic



Example 46 ***Zokhreinu***

Andante moderato — G. Ephros



B. Music at the Teachers Institute of JTS

Many of the teachers of music in the schools were women graduates of the Teachers Institute, established in 1909, where Kaplan had introduced "the arts" into the curriculum. Here, in addition to his work at the Bureau, one of the two courses that Samuel Goldfarb taught was a "Survey of Folksongs and Liturgical Melodies." His successor was Kaplan's daughter, Judith Kaplan Eisenstein (Principal 1929–1954).[114] Although she promoted Zionist-Israeli song, this supplemented, but did not replace, other categories of song, including liturgical.[115]

C. Music in the Junior Congregation

By the late 1920s almost 75 percent of congregations affiliated with the United Synagogue held Junior Congregation (*Shaḥarit*) services.[116] In some synagogues, Junior Congregation played a pivotal role in facilitating congregational song at the main Sabbath Morning services. Some congregations held Junior Congregation on Sabbath afternoons, as at Israel Goldfarb's synagogue, where a post bar-mitzvah group conducted its own services at which "congregational singing [was] always an important feature."[117]

Even by the late 1940s, however, some cantors refused to involve themselves in the musical aspect of congregational schools, and by extension, Junior Congregation, considering it beneath their dignity, or beyond their ability, a situation bemoaned by Harry Coopersmith.[118] Even so, progress had been made, and according to one opinion, "the best congregational singing is done at Junior Congregation."[119] In some places adults attended the junior congregation services in order to sing their melodies.[120] One cantor encouraged his colleagues "to turn to the youngsters for help" in leading congregational singing at the main services.[121]

D. Musical Publications for Junior Congregation

One of the earliest Junior Congregations was at Adath Jeshurun in Boston. Its rabbi, Pinchas Israeli (JTS 1902), the brother-in-law of Kaplan, shared many of his progressive ideas and had participated in the activities of the JES.[122] Israeli largely handed over the Friday Evening and Sabbath Afternoon services to the Junior Congregation and encouraged the cantor, Max Halpern, to prepare a songster for use at these services. Israeli believed that

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[114] Neil Levin, "Music at JTS," 726–727.

[115] Ibid., 731–732.

[116] In some cases JC services were integrated with adult services. For example, at Beth Sholom, Rockville Center, NY, every second Sabbath "pupils of the Hebrew school sing all the responses" *United Synagogue Recorder* 8/1 (February 1928): 21.

[117] Israel Goldfarb, "The Rabbi and the Child in the Community," *The Jewish Forum* 9, no. 6 (August 1926)*:* 305–306.

[118] Harry Coopersmith, "Music Education in the Jewish Schools," *Proceedings of the Second Annual Conference-Convention of the Cantors Assembly and Department of Music of the United Synagogue of America* (1949): 12.

[119] Cantor Edgar Mills, *Proceedings of First Annual Conference-Convention of the Cantors Assembly…* (1948): 12.

[120] Rabbi Jacob B. Grossman [JTS 1911], "The Junior Congregation," *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly,* 12 (1948): 151–152.

[121] Cantor Samuel Rosenbaum, *Proceedings of the Second Annual Conference-Convention of the Cantors Assembly….* (1949): 11.

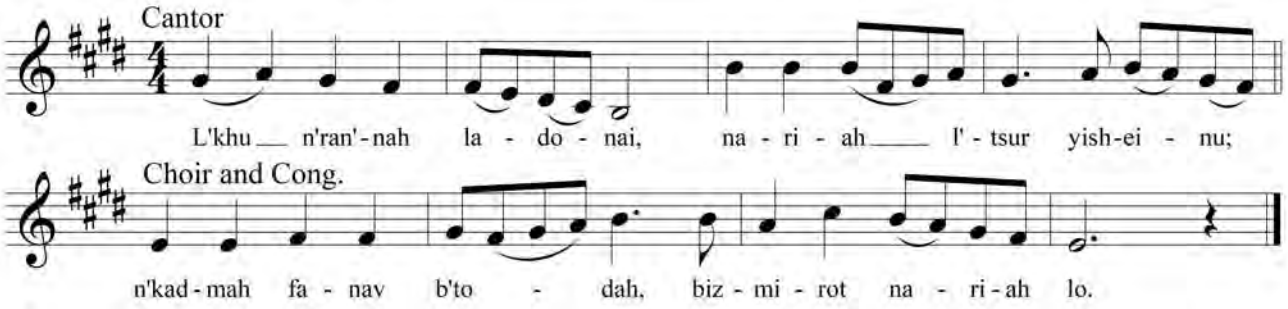
[122] Kaufman, *Shul with a Pool*, 210–211.

congregational singing was "the only way in which the services [can] be rendered attractive and acceptable to [the young people]."[123]

Z'mirot U-t'fillot Yisrael (1915) was an eclectic work,[124] with borrowings from other sources including Lewandowski's *L'khu n'ran'nah* (no. 9) and *V'sham'ru* (no. 22), and the London Ps. 92 melody, in addition to compositions by Halpern himself. However, except for the main responses, the Torah service, the concluding Hebrew hymns, and a transcription of the *nusah* of the *Minhah* service, there was little else specifically for younger voices **(Examples 47-48)**.

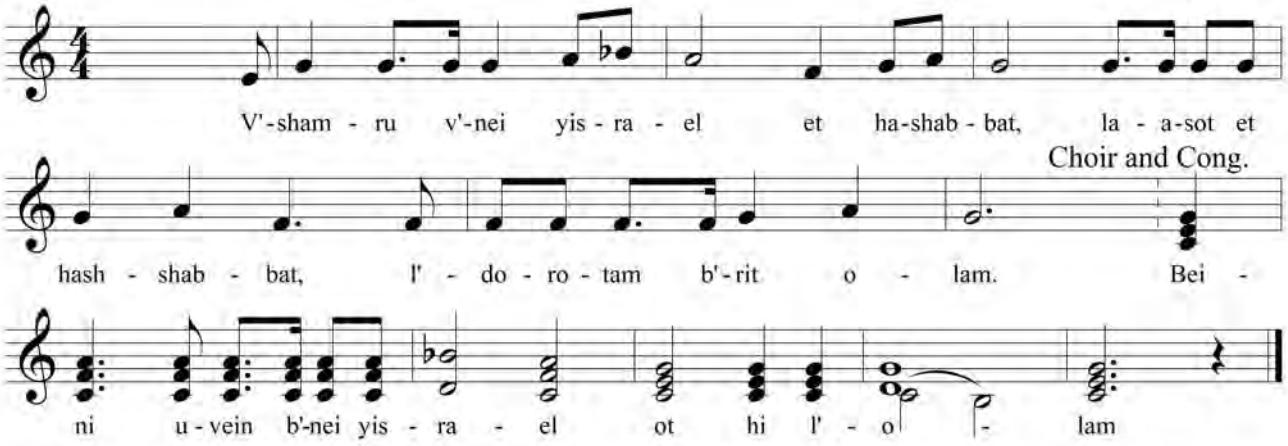
Example 47 ***L'khu n'ran'nah***

Psalmody L. Lewandowski



Example 48 ***V'shamru***

Andantino L. Lewandowski



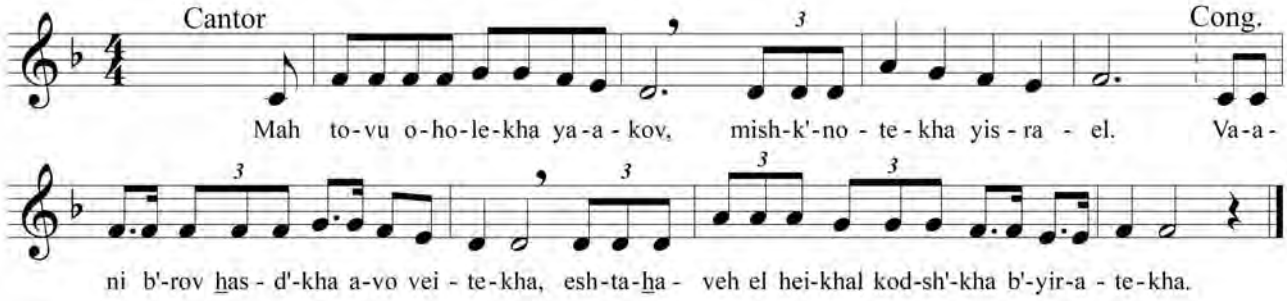
Thirty years transpired before another work was written for Junior Congregations, Max Wohlberg's *Shirei Zimrah* (1947) for the Sabbath Morning service.[125] Although a few items were adaptations of other melodies[126] and several (for biblical texts) were according to *trop*,[127] most

[123] *Z'mirot U-t'fillot Yisrael*, Preface.
[124] See n. 40.
[125] Max Wohlberg, *Shirei Zimrah: A New Musical Setting of the Complete Sabbath Service* (New York: Bloch, 1947).
[126] These include *Yismah mosheh* (no. 66b) based upon the Yiddish folk melody. *Av ha-rahamim* (no. 83a) is based upon *Hatikvah*.

were original compositions by Wohlberg himself, based largely upon *nusaḥ*. Many pieces are responsorial in form, examples being *Mah tovu* (no. 1), *Barukh she-amar* (no. 12) and *Mizmor l'david* (no. 107) **(Examples 49–51)**.

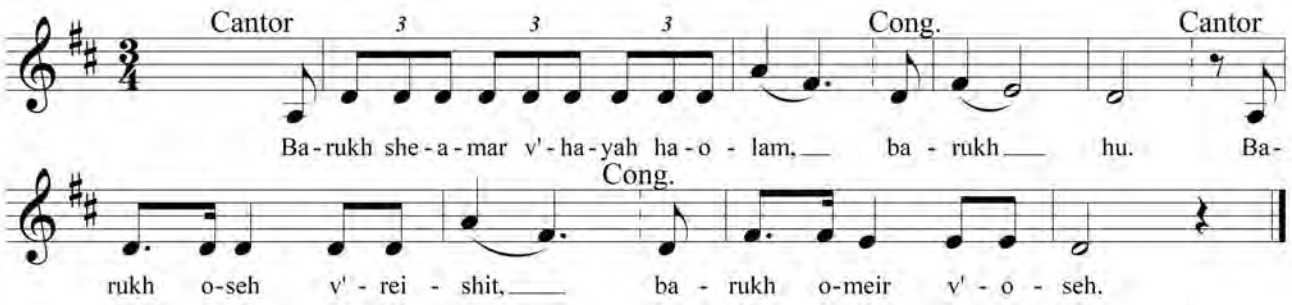
Example 49 ***Mah tovu***

M. Wohlberg



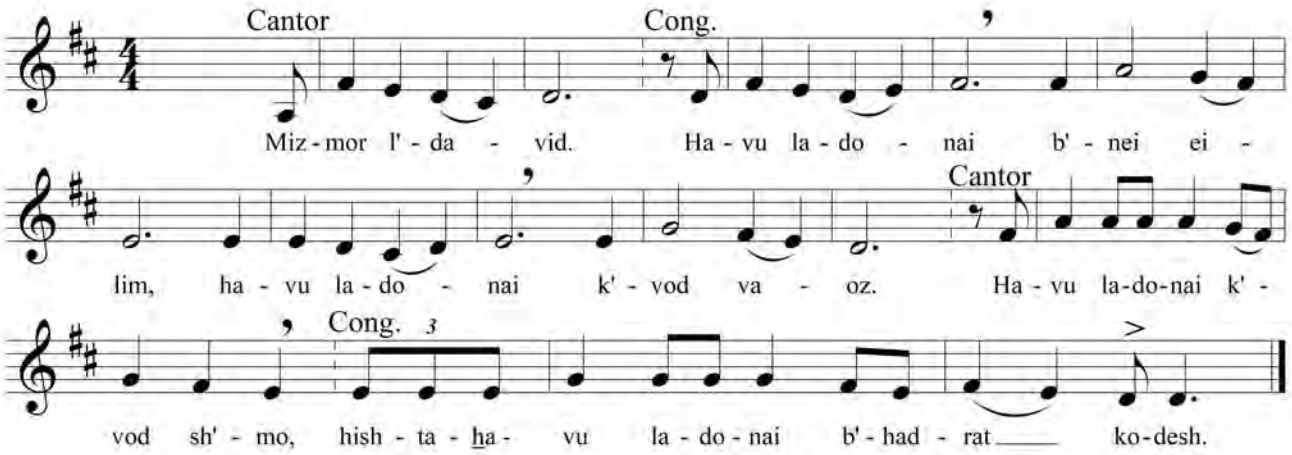
Example 50 ***Barukh she-amar***

M. Wohlberg



Example 51 ***Mizmor l'david***

Moderato M. Wohlberg

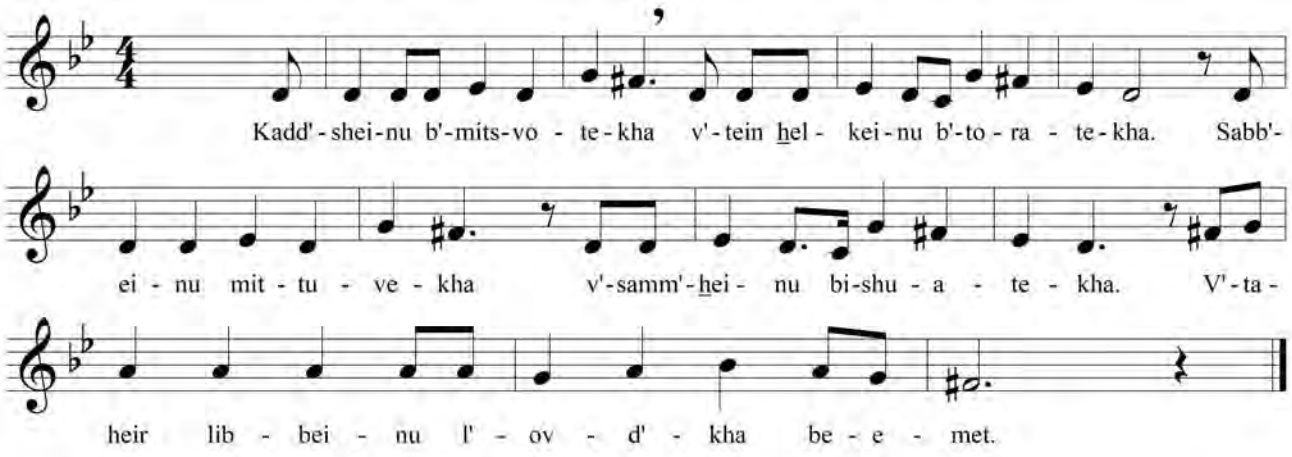


[127] For example, *V'sham'ru* (no. 68b) and *Va-y'hi binso'a* (no. 84a).

Wohlberg was gifted with the ability to compose melodies with a clear-cut musical form and within a comfortable range for the average singer. Three pieces in *Shirei Zimrah*, sung almost entirely by the congregation, were later included in *Zamru Lo* II (1960): *Kad-d'sheinu* (no. 71), *R'tseih* (no. 72) and *Sim shalom* (no. 79), all in *Ahavah rabbah* mode.[128] These employ simple and effective compositional techniques, including sequences and repetition and variation of motifs and phrases **(Example 52)**.

Example 52 ***Kadd'sheinu***

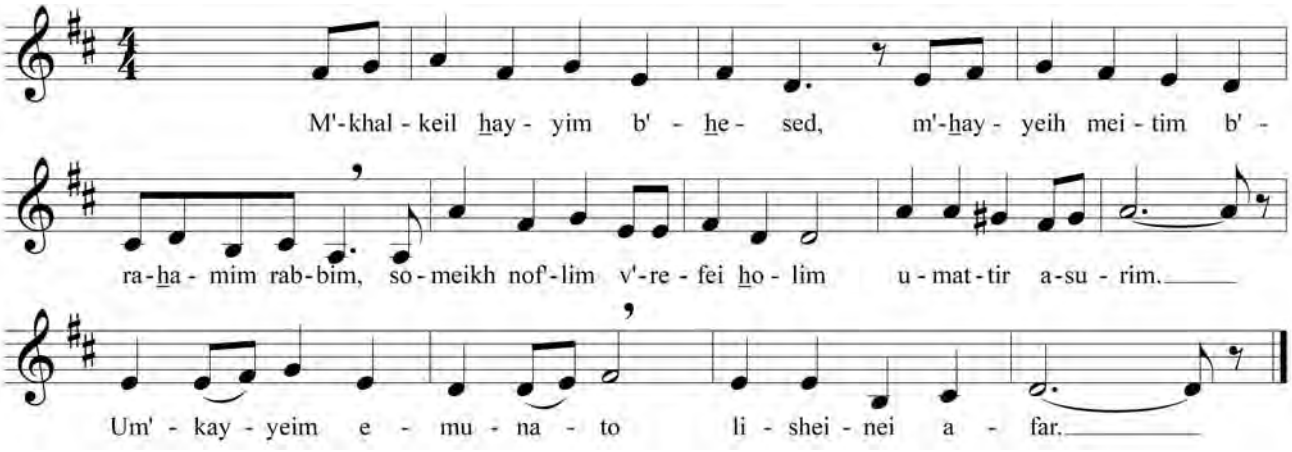
Moderato M. Wohlberg



Shirei Zimrah includes three settings of *M'khalkeil*. The first setting (no. 50) became so popular that it came to be regarded as the standard *"nusah"* for the *G'vurot* blessing. In its oral transmission, the melody was slightly modified, mainly by the addition of "filler notes." Surprisingly, the melody was not included in *ZL* II (1960); the version in *ZL NG* is according to the modified one of the oral tradition. The second, rather hauntingly beautiful setting of *M'khalkeil* (no. 51) is written in minor **(Examples 53–54)**.[129]

Example 53 ***M'khalkeil hayyim*** **("Standard")**

Allegro M. Wohlberg

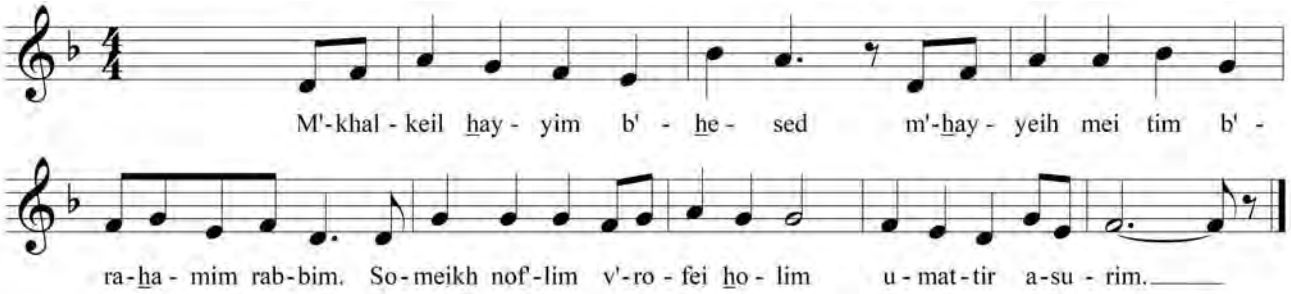


[128] *ZL* II (1960), 42, 43 and 58.

[129] This melody was never included in *ZL*.

Example 54 ***M'khalkeil hayyim*** **("Minor")**

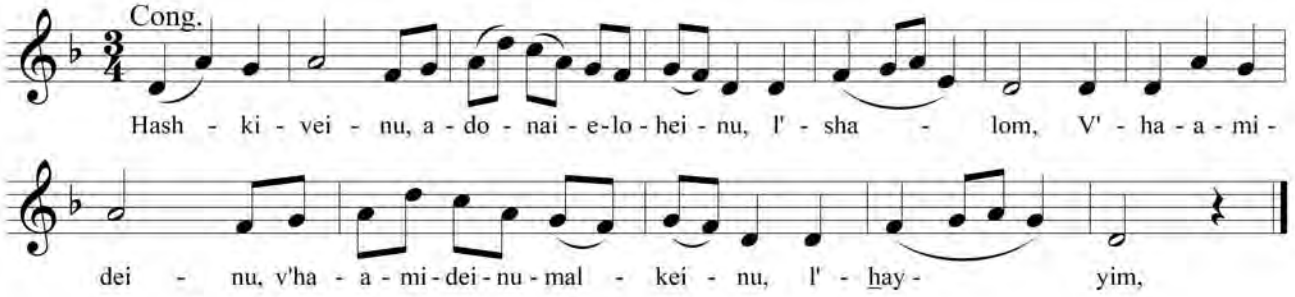
Moderato M. Wohlberg



The following year (1948), to provide a resource for junior congregations, the Jewish Education Committee of New York published *Manginot Shabbat*, edited by Coopersmith.[130] It included simple chants in *nusah* and congregational melodies. The *nusah* for the Friday Evening Service was prepared by Ephros, and that for the Sabbath Morning Service (including *Hallel*) by Beimel. Coopersmith selected the melodies, the sources of which were carefully documented. Advice was given by members of the Music Commission of the United Synagogue, especially Cantors David Putterman (1913-1979) and Adolph Katchko (1886-1958).[131] Notable are the compositions of contemporary Jewish composers including Max Helfman (1901-1963), Jacob Weinberg (1879-1956), Isadore Freed (1900-1960) and Israel-based Yedidyah (Gorochov) Admon (1897-1982), as well as Abraham Binder (1895-1966).[132] Many of their melodies have a distinctive pre-1948 "Israeli" modal structure **(Examples 55–59)**.[133]

Example 55 ***Hashkiveinu***

Andante M. Helfman



[130] Harry Coopersmith, Gershon Ephros and Jacob Beimel, *Manginot Shabbat: Sabbath Service in Song* (New York: Berman House in cooperation with the Jewish Education Committee of N.Y., 1955).

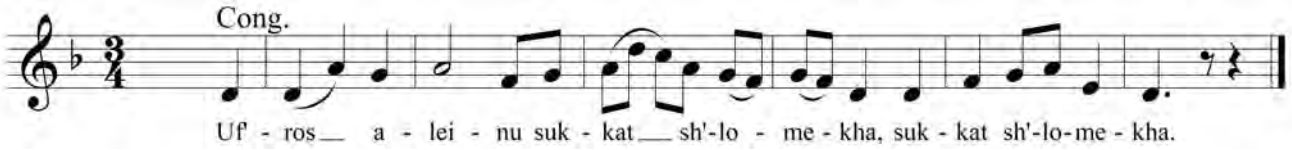
[131] Coopersmith, *Acknowledgments* (p. 3).

[132] *Hashkiveinu* (nos. 31–32) of Helfman; *Adon olam* (no. 43B) of Weinberg; *Yism'hu* (no. 125B) of Freed; *B'tseit yisrael* (no. 123) of Admon; the two settings of *Kadd'sheinu* (nos. 39 and 27b) and *V'sham'ru* (no. 32B) of Binder (from his *Hibbat shabbat*).

[133] *Yigdal* (*MSh*, no. 132B; *ZL* I, 123; *ZL NG*, 124); Katchko's *Tov l'hodot* (*MS*, no. 16B) from Adolph Katchko *Avodath Aharon: Musical Service for Sabbath Evening* (New York: United Synagogue of America, 1938).

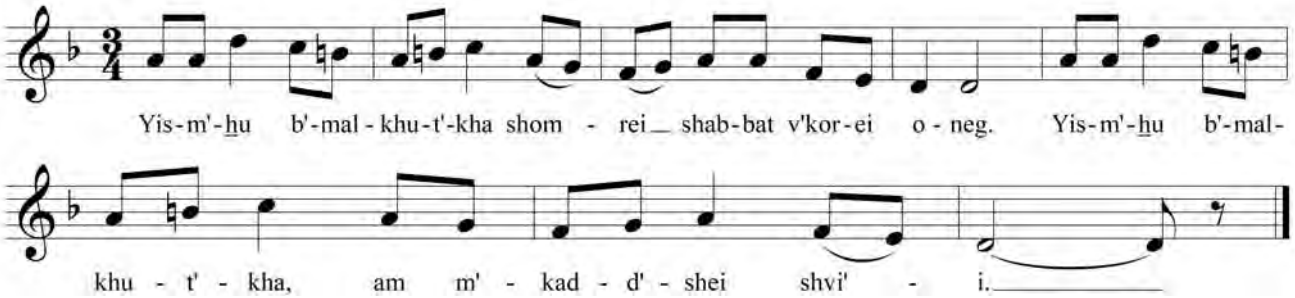
Example 56 ***U-f'ros aleinu***

M. Helfman



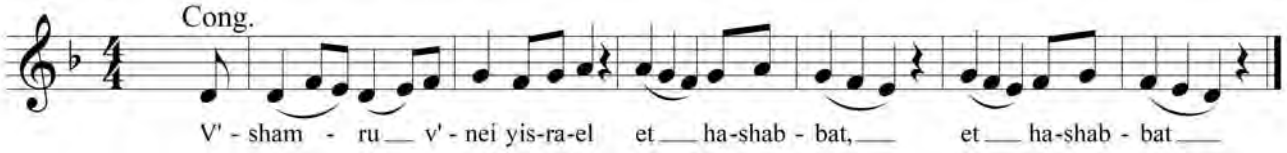
Example 57 ***Yism'hu***

Joyously I. Freed



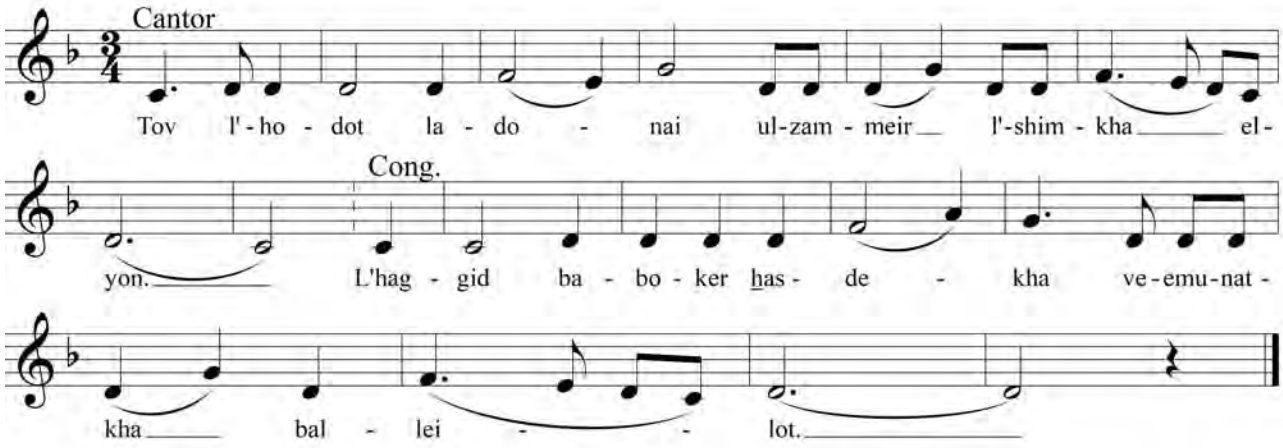
Example 58 ***V'shamru***

Moderato A.W. Binder



Example 59 ***Tov l'hodot***

Moderato A. Katchko



ADAPTING *HAZZANUT* TO THE CHANGING TIMES: 1930s AND 1940s

A. The Evolving Soundscape of the Conservative Synagogue

By the early 1930s, most Conservative synagogues had some degree of congregational singing even though "many [had] not been successful in this respect."[134] Binder opined that [congregational song] has stood still; it has not improved… No new tunes of any Jewish or musical value have been added to the repertoire of our congregational singing."[135] Most singing still largely occurred at late Friday Night services held by ninety percent of Conservative synagogues.[136] At Sabbath Morning services, attended by far fewer congregants, congregational singing was still in its infancy and limited. Further progress in some congregations was inhibited by virtuoso cantors, notwithstanding protests by rabbis against "the cantor idolatry."[137] The most significant recent musical innovation might have been congregational chanting in *trop* of the *V'ahavta* paragraph of the *Sh'ma*.[138] Cantor Pinchos Jassinowsky (of The Jewish Center) was of the opinion that the Depression had forced many synagogues to dispense with professional choirs, for which congregational singing was merely a temporary substitute.[139] His prediction that congregational singing would largely be a temporary phenomenon would prove to be unfounded.[140]

Lack of musical resources was certainly a factor inhibiting expansion of congregational singing, but in the early 1930s, there were calls for new music to add to the (predominately) Goldfarb repertory.[141] In response to this situation, and under pressure from rabbis and congregants, between the 1930s and early 1950s, several cantor-composers published works of synagogue music that would reflect the changing musical character of Conservative (and many Orthodox) synagogue services and contribute, with various degrees of success, to a gradually expanding corpus of congregational melodies.

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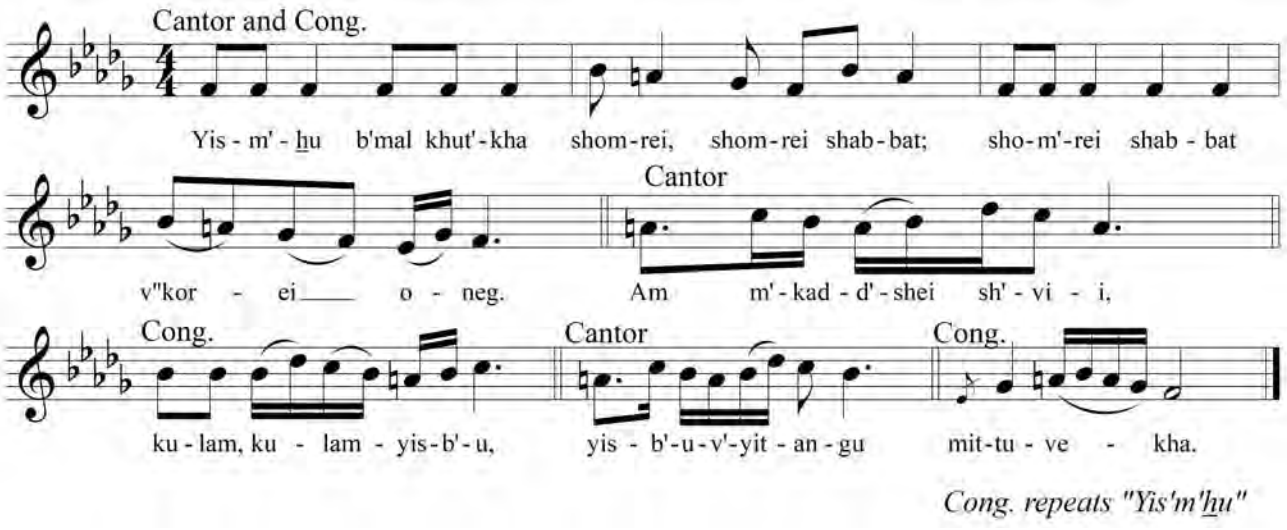
[134] Morris Silverman, "Report of Survey on Ritual," *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly* 4 (1930–1932): 335.
[135] Jacob Beimel Collection, Box 2, Folder 1, 7.
[136] Silverman, "Report of Survey," 323.
[137] Ibid., 329.
[138] Ibid. Halakhic and *minhag* works stressed the importance of reciting the *Sh'ma* with the *t'amim*, but this had been largely ignored by Ashkenazic Jews.
[139] Pinchos Jassinowsky, "*Zimrah b'tsibbur*– Congregational Singing," *Jewish Music, a Quarterly Journal* 1, no. 1 (July 1934): 9–10 (Yiddish section).
[140] Probably a slight majority of Conservative synagogues had professional or volunteer choirs. Rabbi Morris Silverman opined, that however impressive the choir may be, "it is more important to develop congregational singing." Morris Silverman, "Vitalizing Public Worship," *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly* 7 (1940): 160.
[141] Silverman, "Report of Survey," 338.

B. Joshua Samuel Weisser

The changing soundscape of the traditional American synagogue is perhaps best exemplified by the works of Joshua Samuel Weisser (1888–1952). His early publications, notably *T'fillat Y'shuah* (1915) and *Rinnat Joshua* (1927), were in the musical style of the Golden Age of *Hazzanut*, marked by elaborate cantorial recitatives in a high tessitura, extensive melismatic passages and frequent word and phrase repetitions.[142] Except for one item in *Rinnat Joshua*, a hasidic-style setting of Y*ism'hu* (no. 57), no congregational melodies were included **(Example 60)**.[143]

Example 60 ***Yism'hu b'malkhut'kha***

Andante J. Weisser



At this time, Weisser was not a proponent of congregational singing and even voiced his strong opposition to it in 1934 in *Di Khazonim Velt*.[144] Nevertheless, Weisser must soon have realized that he was fighting a rising tide of "*zimrah b'tsibbur*," even though he considered much of it tasteless and lacking authentic Jewish musical content.[145] In his *Baal T'fillah* (1936) he therefore included a few short congregational passages, some in hasidic style, such as the beginning of *Ahavat olam* (no. 25) and metrical responses in the first and third strophes of *Eil adon* (nos. 44–49) **(Example 61)**.[146]

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[142] Joshua Weisser, *T'fillath Y'shuah* (Brooklyn NY: Eagle Advertising and Novelty Co., 1915); Samuel Weisser, *Rinnat Joshua: Erster teil Sabbath: Recitativen für Kantor* (New York, Metro Music, 1927). Stylistically, there is little to differentiate the two works, except that in *Rinnat Joshua* the pieces are in a more comfortable tessitura. Paul Kavon, "Joshua Samuel Weisser: His Life and Works," *Journal of Synagogue Music* 1, no. 3 (Jan. 1968), 29.

[143] This composition reveals the strong hasidic imprint of Weisser's early youth in Ukraine, the influence of which increased in his later works. Several decades later, hasidic melodies in non-hasidic services became quite commonplace.

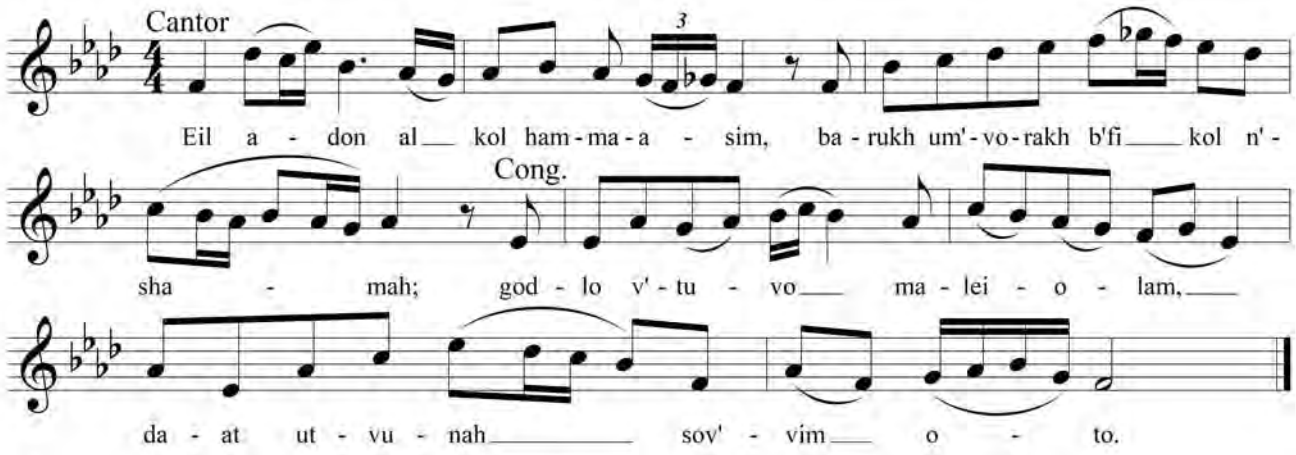
[144] *Di Khazonim Velt* 1 (September–October 1934): 22 and 13.

[145] Albert Weisser, "Autobiographical Sketch: Joshua S. Weisser (1888–1952)," *Journal of Jewish Music* 6, no. 4 (Jan. 1968): 10. In the *Di Khazonim velt* article Weisser considered most congregational tunes "Salvation Army" music, arbitrary in musical style and content, dubbed by Pinchas Minkowsky as *v'keilim mi-keilim shonim* (Esther 1:7).

[146] Joshua Weisser, *Baal T'fillah: Recitatives for Cantors* [Vol. 1] (New York, Metro Music), 1936. The congregational melody for the opening of *Ahavat olam* was intended as a refrain, repeated several times during the

Example 61 ***Eil adon***

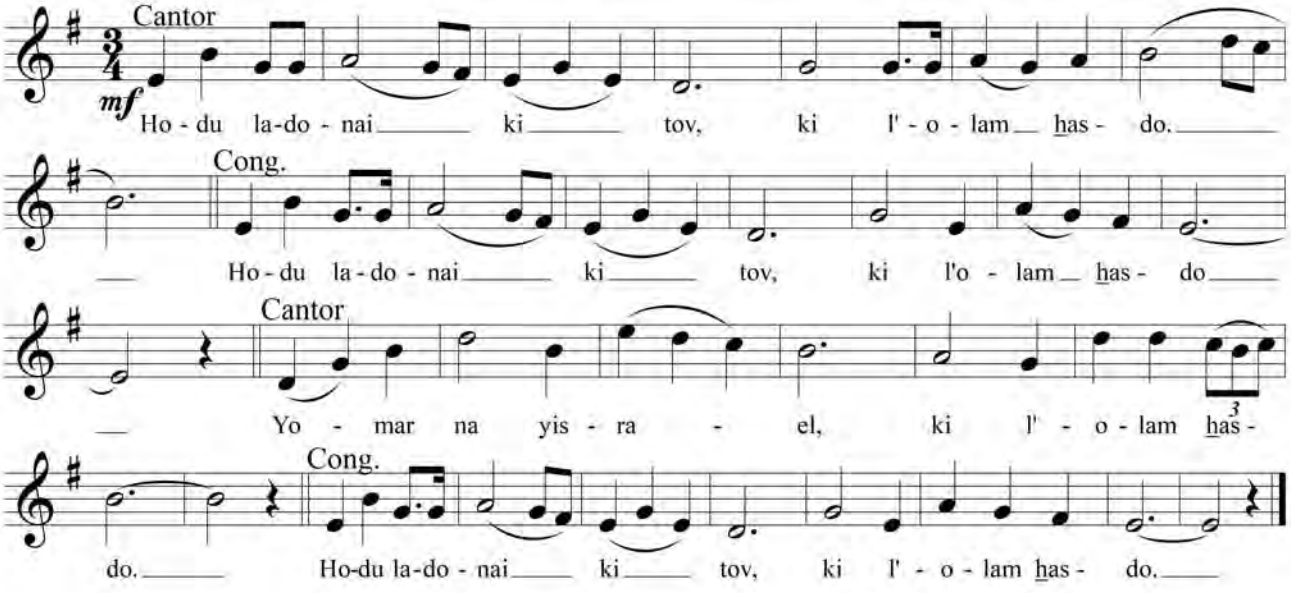
Andante J. Weisser



A more complete congregational piece was a setting of *Hodu* (Ps. 118) where the congregation repeats the refrain after each verse sung by the cantor (no. 118) **(Example 62)**.[147]

Example 62 ***Hodu ladonai***

Andante J. Weisser



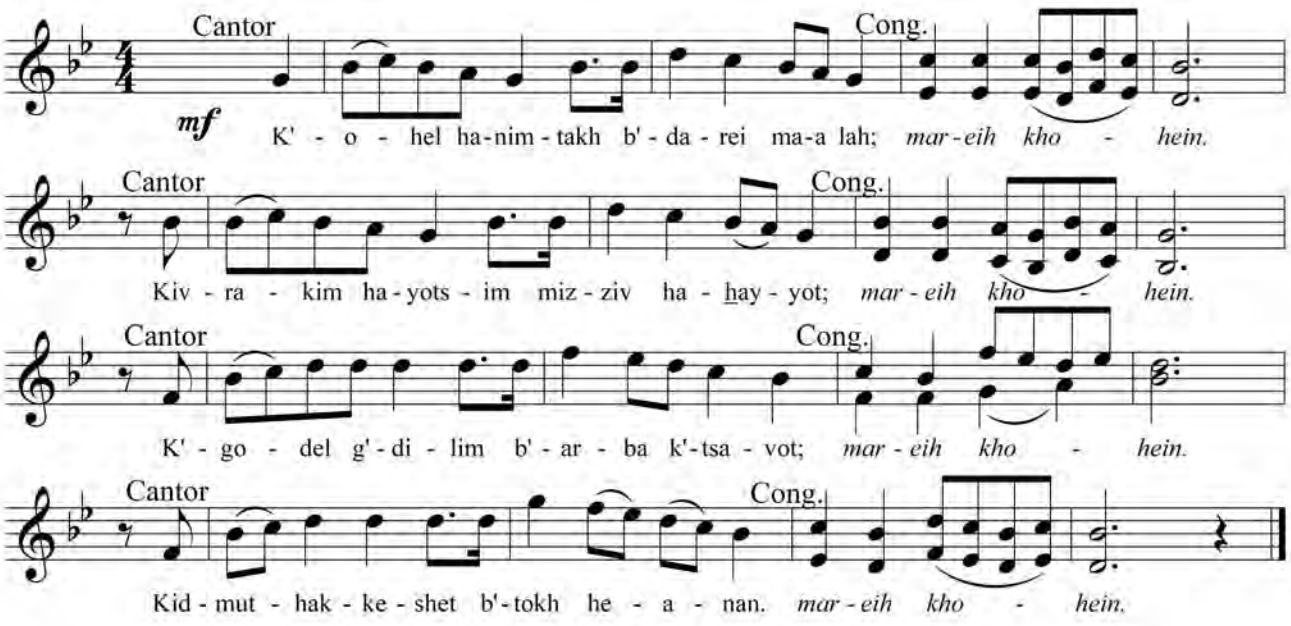
chanting of the prayer. This technique of repeating the opening textual phrase (or other passage) was adopted by several later cantor-composers, notably Max Wohlberg.

[147] Here, in contrast to the rest of the book, not only the congregational refrains, but even the verses sung by the cantor, are sung almost exclusively in syllabic rendition.

In the Yom Kippur section of the second volume of *Baal T'fillah* (1940), Weisser provided a refrain for the words *mar'eih khohein* in his hasidic-style setting of *K'ohel ha-nimtah* (no. 120). It became widely popular **(Example 63)**.[148]

Example 63 ***K'ohel ha-nimtakh***

Andante con spirito J. Weisser



The metamorphosis of Weisser's compositional style and his embrace of congregational singing are evident in his *Cantor's Manual* (*Avodat Ha-ḥazzan*) (1943–1948).[149] In the first volume for the Sabbath (1943) the recitatives were simplified, complicated coloratura eliminated, and word repetition significantly reduced. For the congregation, Weisser endeavored "to create melodies of beauty derived from our folklore tunes," in other words, based on *nusah* and expressing a traditional Jewish musical idiom.[150] Most of the melodies were for short liturgical passages, selected phrases within longer texts, or responses.[151] Surprisingly, even though it included "tunes that are excellent and fairly easy to sing," the volume's impact was limited.[152] Nevertheless, a

[148] Kavon, "Joshua Samuel Weiser," 35; *ZL,* NG III, p. 263.

[149] Joshua S. Weisser, *Cantor's Manual: Recitatives for Cantors and Congregational Singing* [*Avodath Ha-hazzan*], Vol. 1... *for the Sabbath* (New York, Metro Music 1943). Weisser's aim was "to create a modern liturgical work based on genuinely Jewish traditional prayer chants… [to] fill the needs of Conservative and Orthodox congregations" (*Preface*).

[150] *Preface*.

[151] Two additional sections are worthy of note: "*Oneg Shabbat*" comprises melodies for use at Late Friday Night services; "*Niggunei Hasidim"* constitutes an invaluable transcription of hasidic *niggunim*.

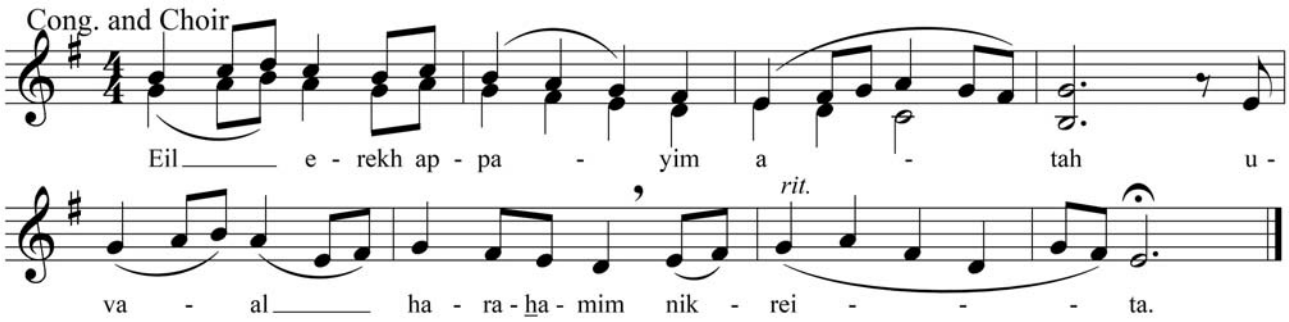
[152] Kavon, "Joshua Samuel Weisser," 36.

number of the melodies gained a hold in some synagogues, judging from their later inclusion in *Zamru Lo*.[153]

Weisser had greater success in the second volume for the High Holy Days (1948).[154] Here, the congregational melodies were provided with simple two-part harmonizations (many in thirds or *tertsele*),[155] but are generally simpler than in the previous volume. In the *S'lihot* service, the congregation sang the opening of *Eil erekh appayyim* (no. 11) and *Eil melekh yosheiv* (no. 16) to similar or identical short melodies, while *Sh'ma koleinu* shows effective use of melodic repetition and sequences (nos. 28–31); **(Examples 64–65)**.[156]

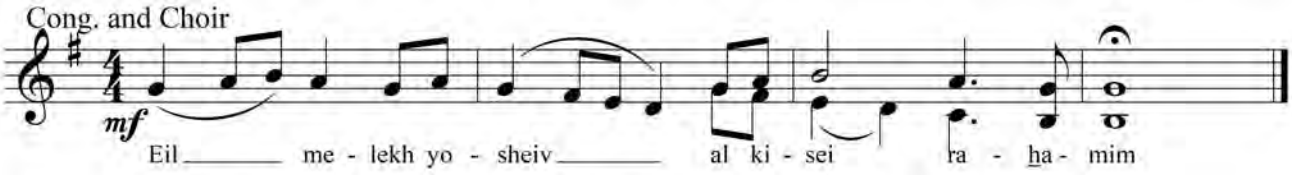
Example 64 ***Eil erekh appayim***

Lento J. Weisser



Example 65 ***Eil melekh***

Andante J. Weisser



New life was given to texts that were frequently rushed through such as *Mi she-ana l'avraham*, the *piyyut* at the conclusion of the Kol Nidrei service (no. 36). In place of previously uncoordinated congregational responses Weisser provided simple, alternating, sequential melodic patterns, the first starting on the 6th degree, the sequence starting on the 4th degree **(Example 66)**.[157]

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[153] These include *Hatsi kaddish* (*AH* I, no. 37; *ZL* I, 86); *Yigdal* (*AH* I, no. 46; *ZL* I, *Yigdal* no. 7, 125); *Bar'khu AH* I, no. 66; *ZL* II, 9); *V'yishlah b'rakhah* (*AH* I, no. 113, end; *ZL* II, 91); *Va'ani t'fillati* (*AH* I, no, 140, *ZL* II, 160; *Tsidkat'kha tsedek* (*AH* I, no. 142; *ZL* II, 163); *Anim z'mirot* (*AH*, no. 138; *ZL* II, 136); *Hodu* for *Na'anu'im* (Sukkot) (*AH* I, 158).

[154] Joshua Weisser, *Cantor's Manual* [*Avodat Ha–hazzan*]*: Recitatives for Cantors and Congregational Singing*, Vol. 2 *[for the High Holy Days]* (New York: Metro Music, 1947).

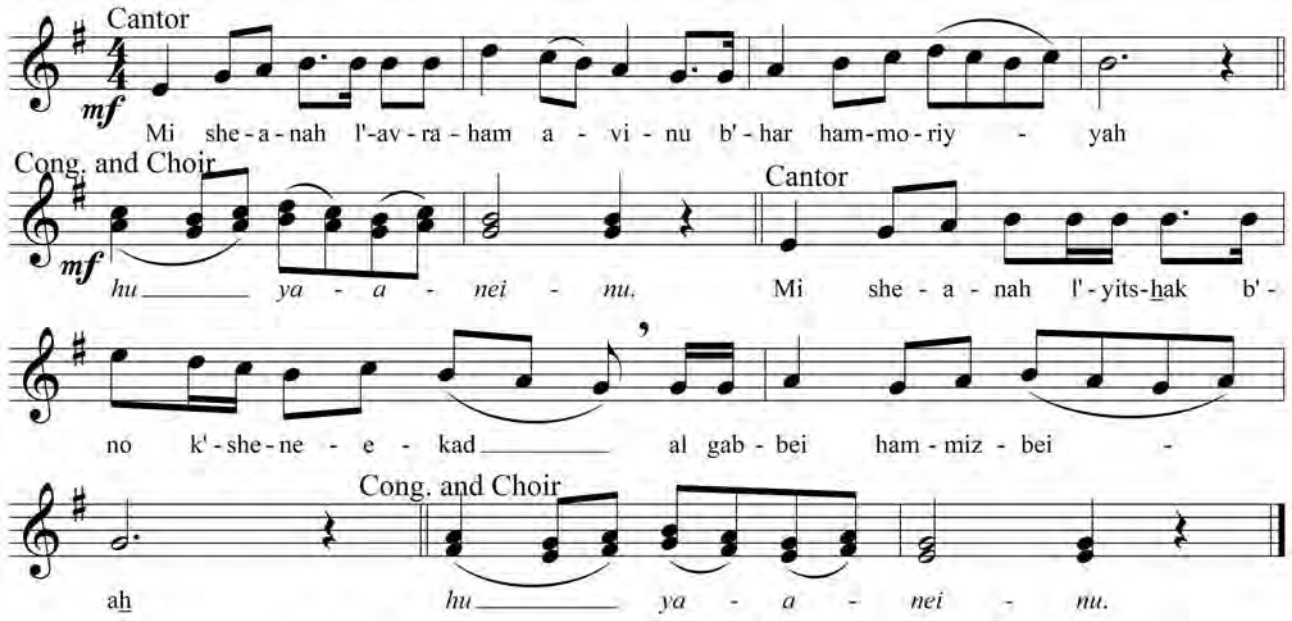
[155] This term was used by Eastern European cantors. Kavon, "Joshua Samuel Weisser," 37.

[156] *ZL NG* II, 27.

[157] The first descends from 6 to 5, the second descends from 4 to 3.

Example 66 ***Mi she-anah***

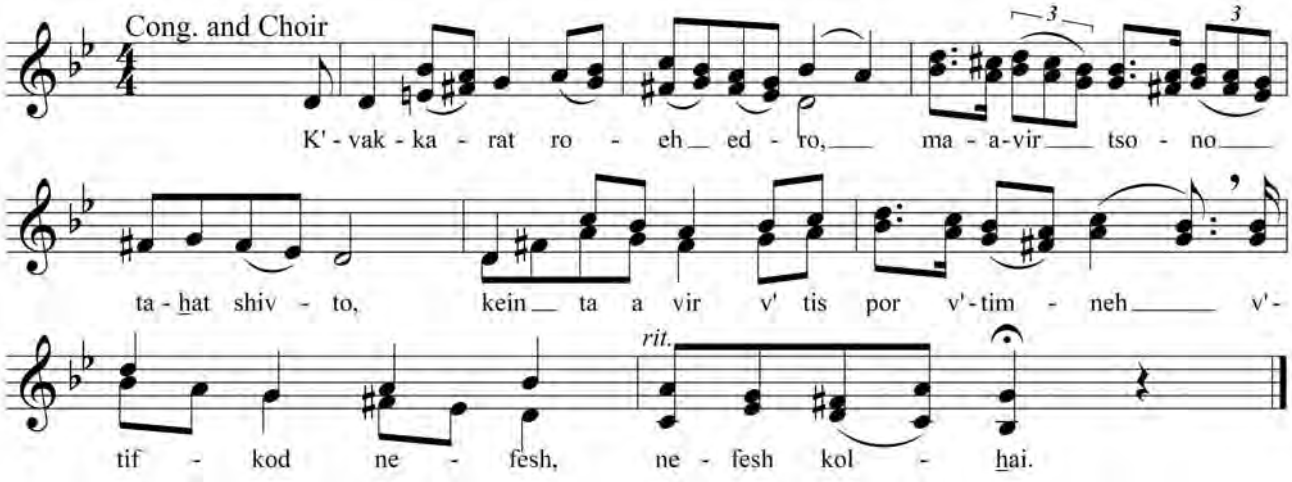
Andante molto religioso J. Weisser



Several of the short congregational responses became quite popular.[158] A longer congregational setting was *K'vakarat ro'eh edro* in *U-n'tanneh tokef* (no. 93), **(Example 67)**.[159]

Example 67 ***K'vakkarat***

Andante assai J. Weisser



[158] They were later included in *Zamru Lo*. Among these are *Ki vanu vaḥarta* in the *Kiddush* for Rosh Hashanah (*Avodat Ha-ḥazzan [AH]* 2, no. 52; *ZL NG*, 53); The refrains in *Ki anu amekha* (*AH* 2, no. 166; *ZL NG*, 252); *Simḥah l'artsekha* in the High Holy Day *Amidah* (*AH* 2, no, 107; *ZL NG*, no. 147).'

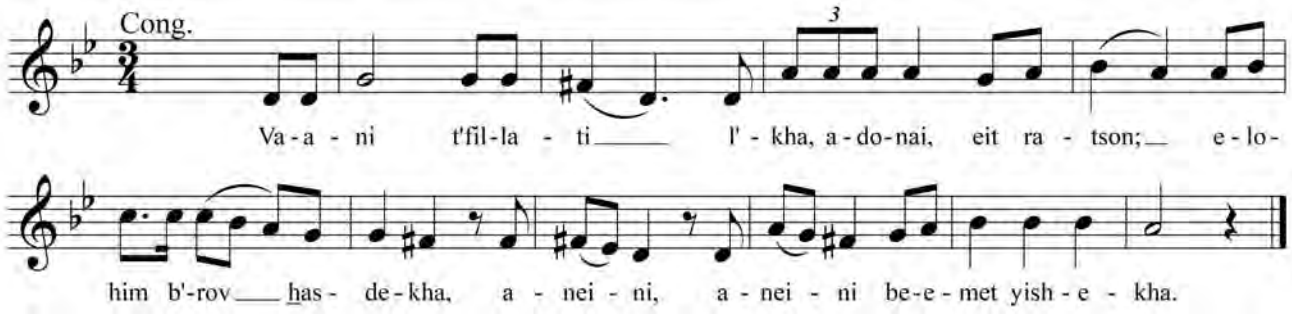
[159] This volume includes additional hasidic melodies. *Y'vareikh et beit yisrael* (Ps. 115), a melody of Vizhnitz hasidic Jews, became very popular in Conservative synagogues (*AH* II, 281–282; *ZL* II, 1960, 65, starting at "*Ha-shamayim*;" *ZL NG*, 42).

C. Samuel Kavetzky, Herman Semiatin and Asher Goldenberg

In the 1940s and early 1950s, several other cantor-composers also provided a degree of congregational participation in their publications, but less successfully than Weisser. Most notable were Samuel Kavetzky (1884–1962), Herman Semiatin (1883–1969) and Asher Goldenberg (1889–1954), who served in both Orthodox and Conservative synagogues.[160] In Kavetzky's *Recitatives for Cantors* (1945) many of the congregational melodies were similar to Weisser's two-part choral *tertsele* and largely unsuitable (and too difficult) for genuine congregational singing.[161] However, two pieces, composed for complete texts (and without *tertsele* harmonization), are worthy of mention: *Va'ani t'fillati* for the High Holy Day Torah service (no. 52), and the rather beautiful *V'nislah* sung after *Kol nidrei* (no. 120) **(Examples 68–69)**.[162]

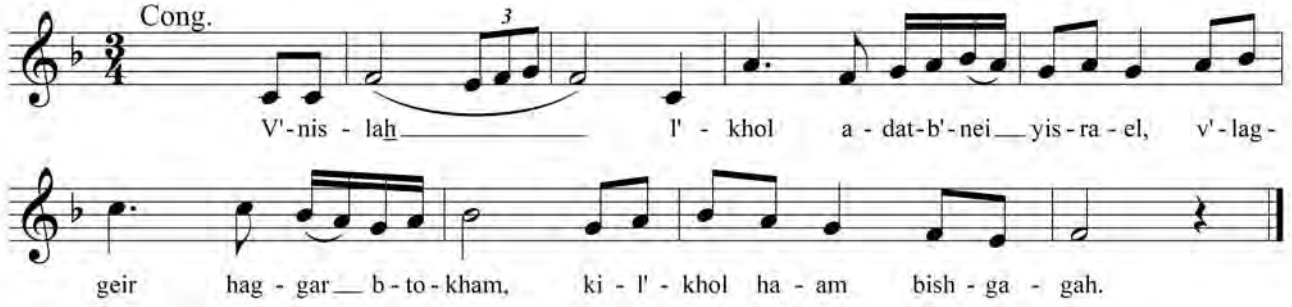
Example 68 ***Va-ani t'fillati***

Andante S. Kavetzky



Example 69 ***V'nislah***

Largo S. Kavetzky



Semiatin's *Shirim U-z'mirot* (1950), despite touches of melodic inventiveness, includes many passages intended for the cantor and congregation to sing *together*, but most are beyond the musical ability of the average worshipper.[163] A small number of melodies are, however, suitable

[160] Semiatin, born to hasidic parents, studied at Abraham B. Birnbaum's cantorial school in Częstochowa, Poland. He came to the USA shortly after WWII. *American Jewish Year Book* (1955), 569.

[161] Samuel Kavetzky, *Recitatives for Cantors: and Congregational Singing for the High Holy Days* (New York, Schulsinger, 1945). Short congregational passages were included in the posthumously published *Recitatives for Cantor and Congregational Singing for Shabbat and Shalosh R'galim* (New York: Mrs. Rose Kavetzky, 1966).

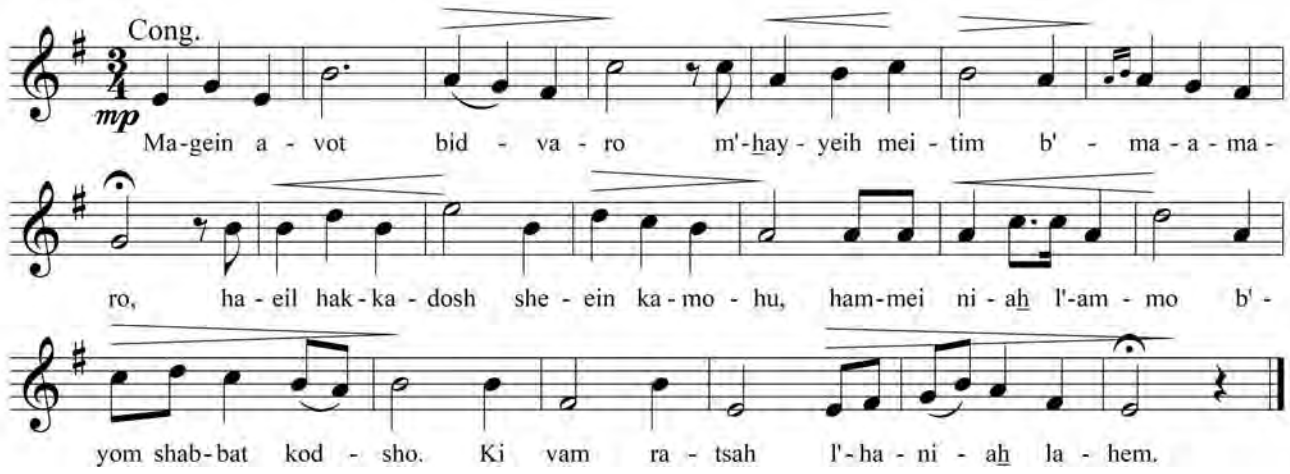
[162] These compositions are written in a comfortable tessitura, with simple melodies and rhythms.

[163] Herman Semiatin. *Shirim U-z'mirot: Cantorial Recitatives and Congregational Singing for Complete Friday Evening and Saturday Morning Services* (New York, privately published), 1950. The melodies sung together by the

for congregational singing. These include, in the Friday Evening service, the beginning and conclusion of *Magein avot* (no. 30), and in the Sabbath Morning service, the second of each two-verse strophes of *Eil adon* (no. 37). The Torah service and the *K'dushah* of the *Musaf* service include a number of singable congregational melodies, such as *Hu eloheinu* (no. 62). Semiatin's volume for the High Holy Days (1953) differs little in style from the earlier work but suffers from many of the same defects.[164] The single truly suitable melody for congregational singing was a lyrical setting of *Zokhreinu* (no. 52) **(Examples 70–73)**.

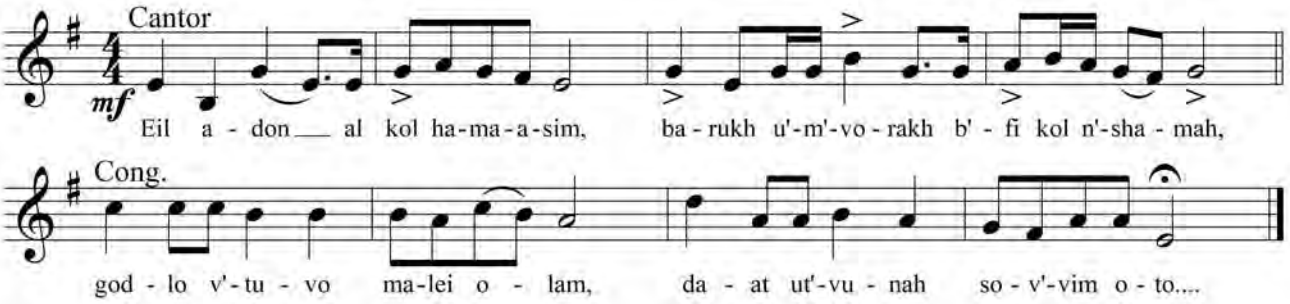
Example 70 ***Magein avot***

H. Semiatin



Example 71 ***Eil adon***

Andante H. Semiatin

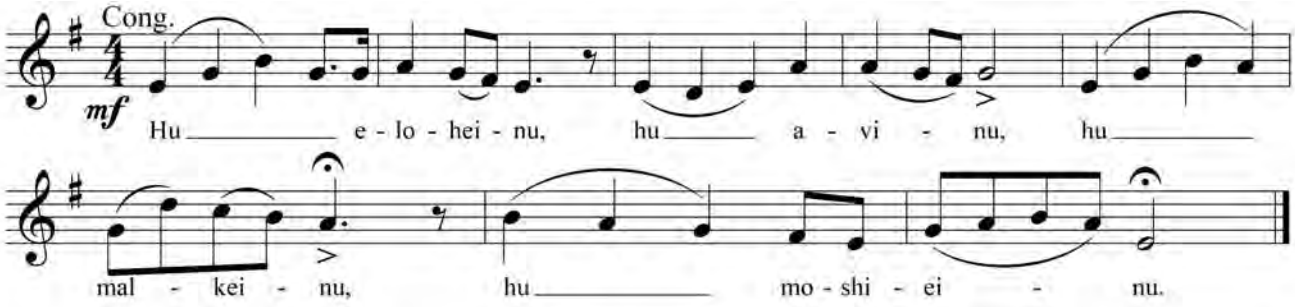


hazzan and congregation contain many arpeggios, melodic runs, chromatic alterations, challenging rhythms and pitches.

[164] Herman Semiatin, *Shirim U-t'fillot: Cantorial Recitatives and Congregational Singing for Complete S'lihot and High Holy Day Services* (New York, privately published), 1953.

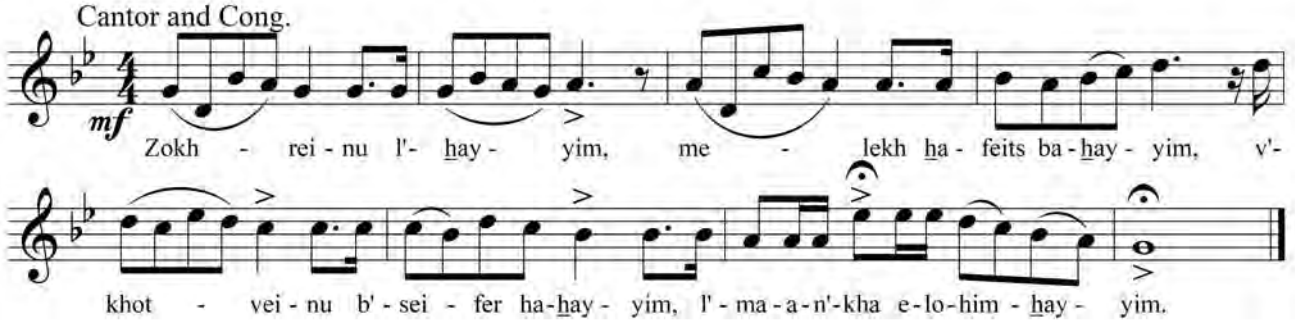
Example 72 ***Hu eloheinu***

Andante H. Semiatin



Example 73 ***Zokhreinu***

Andante con moto H. Semiatin



In 1944 Asher Goldenberg, while serving Congregation Orach Chaim, a leading Orthodox synagogue in Manhattan, published *Shirat Ha-kahal: Congregational Singing for Synagogue and Religious School* (1944).[165] This work is quite different from those of Weisser, Kavetzky and Semiatin in that *all* the melodies are considerably simpler, both melodically and rhythmically, and largely set syllabically. Unfortunately, by forcing the flowing rhythm of the prose texts into fixed musical meters some melodies are rather labored.

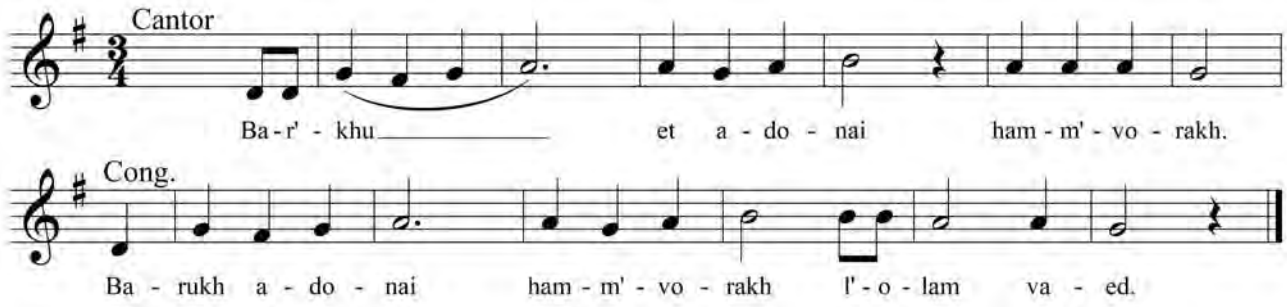
To Goldenberg's credit, we should mention his inventiveness in employing the "*Eil ḥai v'kayyam*" motif for *Bar'khu* (no.3); the rather beautiful melodies for *V'shamru* (no. 9) and *Kad-d'sheinu* (no. 13);[166] the setting of *Aleinu* (no. 15) which arguably could have rivaled (or replaced) the Sulzer/Goldfarb arrangement; and the correct use of *Ahavah rabbah* mode for *Tsur yisrael* (no. 27). Finally, mention should be made of Goldenberg's use of *trop* for settings of biblical quotations (including the *Sh'ma*) and his meticulously correct Hebrew accentuation. Even though Goldenberg was well-known in cantorial circles across the religious spectrum, none of his melodies were included in *Zamru Lo* **(Examples 74–77)**.

[165] Asher Goldenberg, *Shirat Ha-kahal: Congregational Singing for Synagogue and Religious School, Correctly Accented to Revive the Beauty of the Hebrew Tongue* (New York: Bloch), 1944. It contains congregational melodies for Sabbath services, supplements for Hanukkah and Purim and settings of *Z'mirot* and *Birkat ham-mazon*. Goldenberg served Orach Chaim between 1936 and 1945.

[166] The latter is similar in style to a composition of Max Wohlberg (*ZL* I, 108).

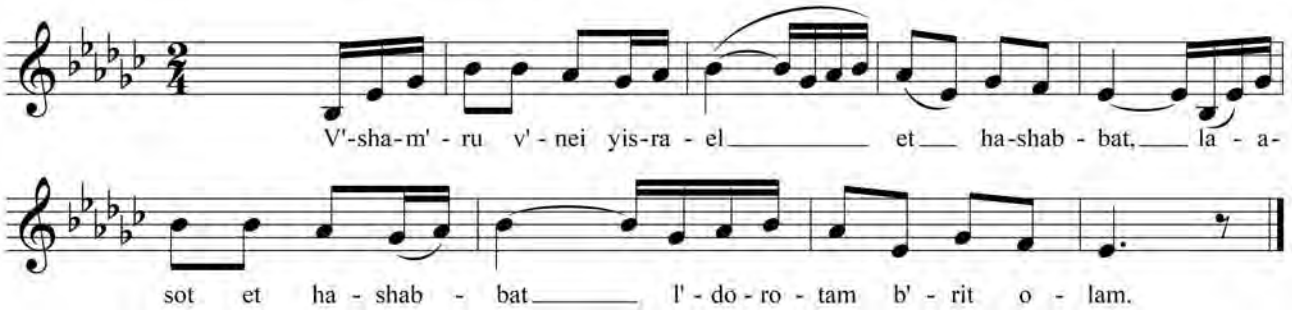
Example 74 ***Bar'khu***

Religioso A. Goldenberg



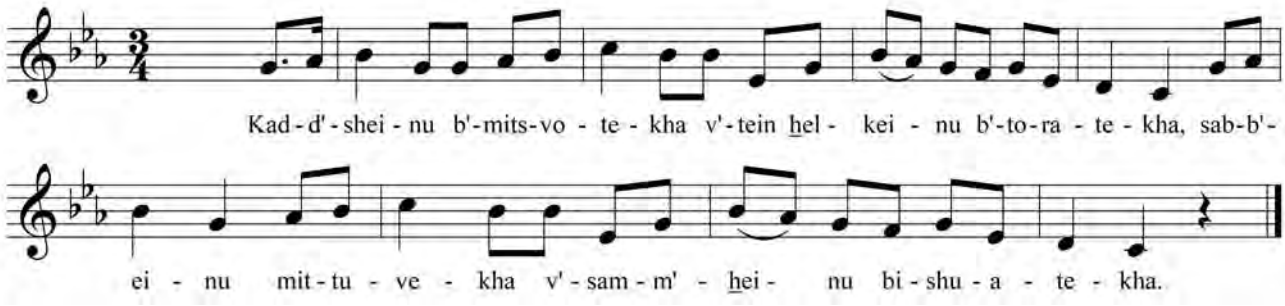
Example 75 ***V'shamru***

Largo A. Goldenberg



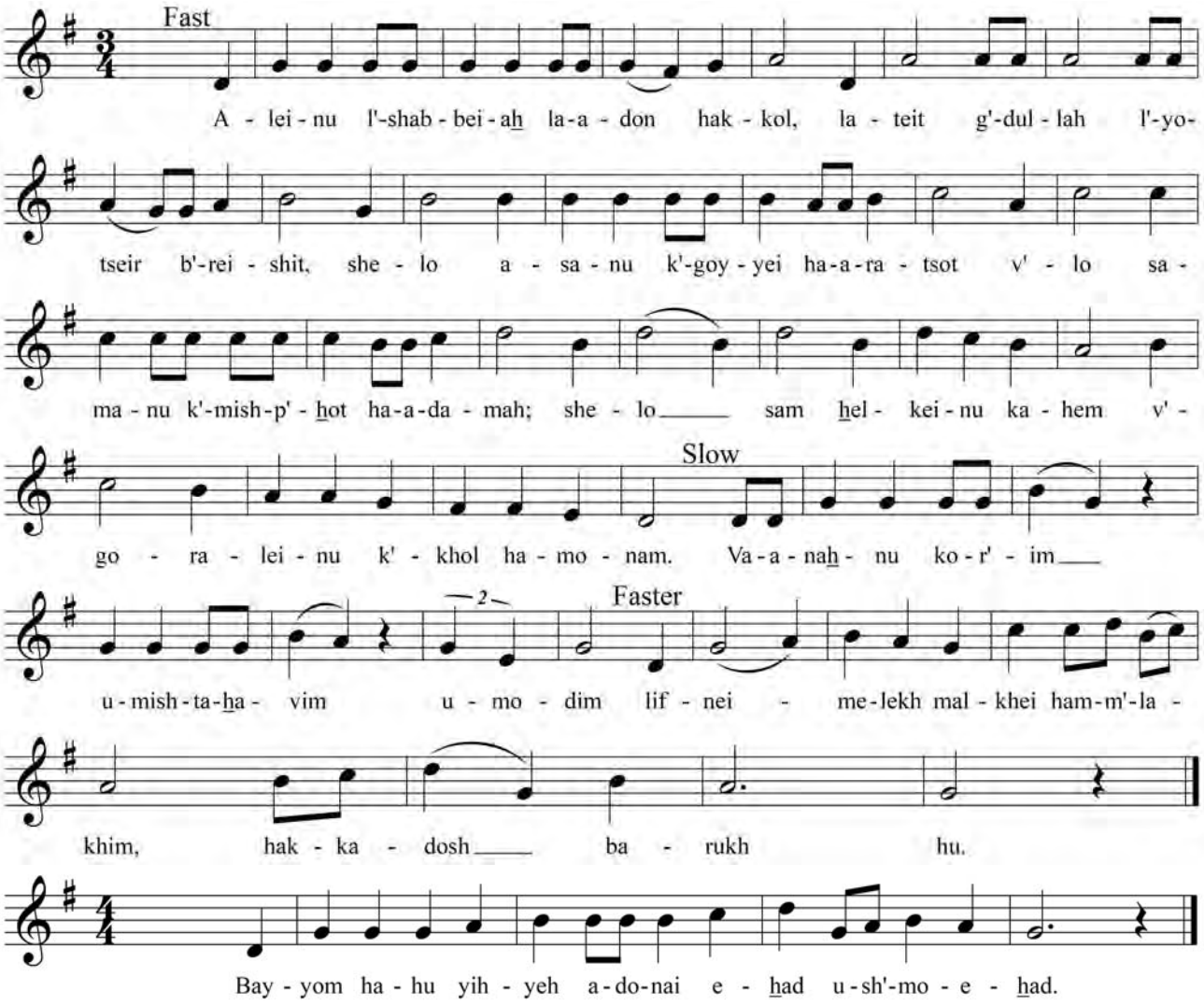
Example 76 ***Kadd'sheinu***

Largo A. Goldenberg



Example 77 ***Aleinu/Ba-yyom ha-hu***

A. Goldenberg



D. Elias Zaludowski

Different in style and purpose was Elias Zaludowski's *Rinnah U-t'fillah L'leil Shabbat. The Friday Evening Late Service* (1940).[167] Like the Goldfarb-Levinthal *Song and Praise for Sabbath Eve*, it included both liturgical texts and musical scores (many by other composers), but for more traditional *Kabbalat Shabbat* and *Ma'ariv* services.[168] *Rinnah U-t'fillah* presumed the assistance of a choir to lead the congregation. The *Kabbalat shabbat* responses were taken (without accreditation) from Abraham Ber Birnbaum (1865–1922).[169] By the inclusion of congregational chanting of parts of *Ahavat olam* and portions of *V'ahavta* (albeit

[167] Goodman A. Rose and Elias Zaludkowski. *Rinnah U-t'fillah L'leil Shabbat. The Friday Evening Late Service*. (Pittsburgh, PA. Philadelphia: JPS (Press of Jewish Publication Society) 1940.

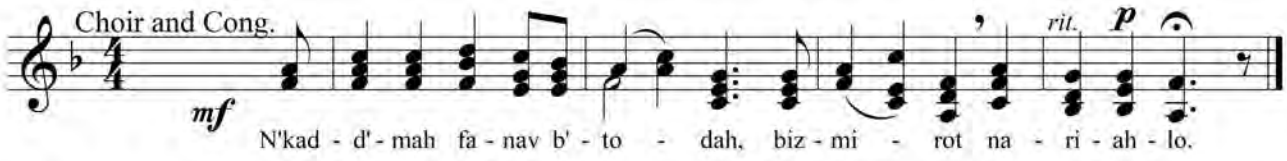
[168] Ibid., Preface.

[169] Abraham Ber Birnbaum, *Amanut Ha-hazzanut, Die Kunst des jüdischen Kantorats, Rezitative, Responsorien und Chöre fur den jüdischen Gottesdienst, Erster Teil* (New York, Sacred Music Press, Out of Print Classics of Synagogue Music, Vol. 24, no. 2) 1954.

stylized), the collection reinforced and reflected what were becoming standard musical components of Conservative services **(Examples 78–80)**.

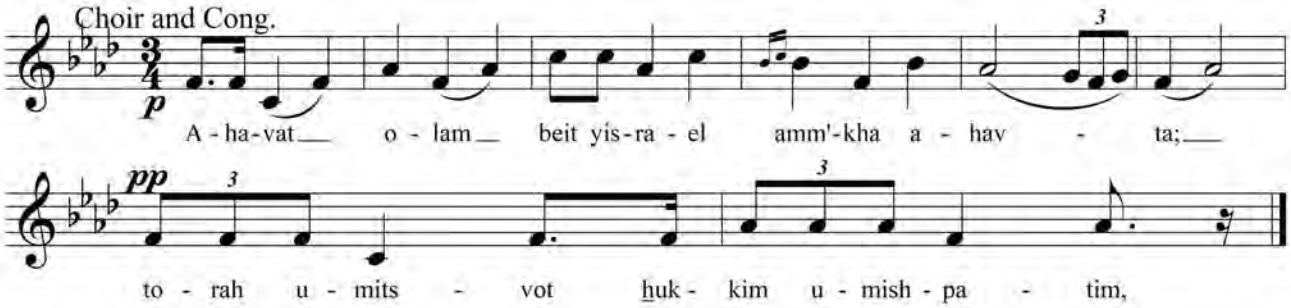
Example 78 ***N'kadd'mah fanav***

C.E. Zaludkowski



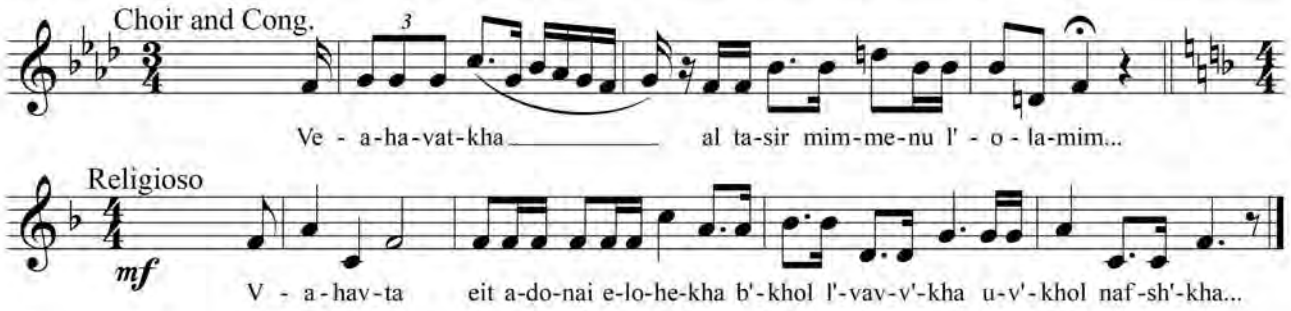
Example 79 ***Ahavat olam***

Cantabile religioso C.E. Zaludkowski



Example 80 ***V'ahavat'kha/V'ahavta***

C.E. Zaludkowski



Notwithstanding their limitations, in less than three decades, these published works of synagogue music, featuring changing cantorial style and the inclusion of congregational song, exemplified an effort to transfer the musical soundscape of the American Conservative synagogue (and a good proportion of the Modern Orthodox synagogue as well).

5. YOUNG ISRAEL

In the 1930s to the early 1950s, in the outer boroughs of New York City, especially parts of Brooklyn, Conservative synagogues competed with synagogues of Young Israel, at that time the most liberal wing of Orthodoxy.[170] Documentation of Young Israel, in particular its

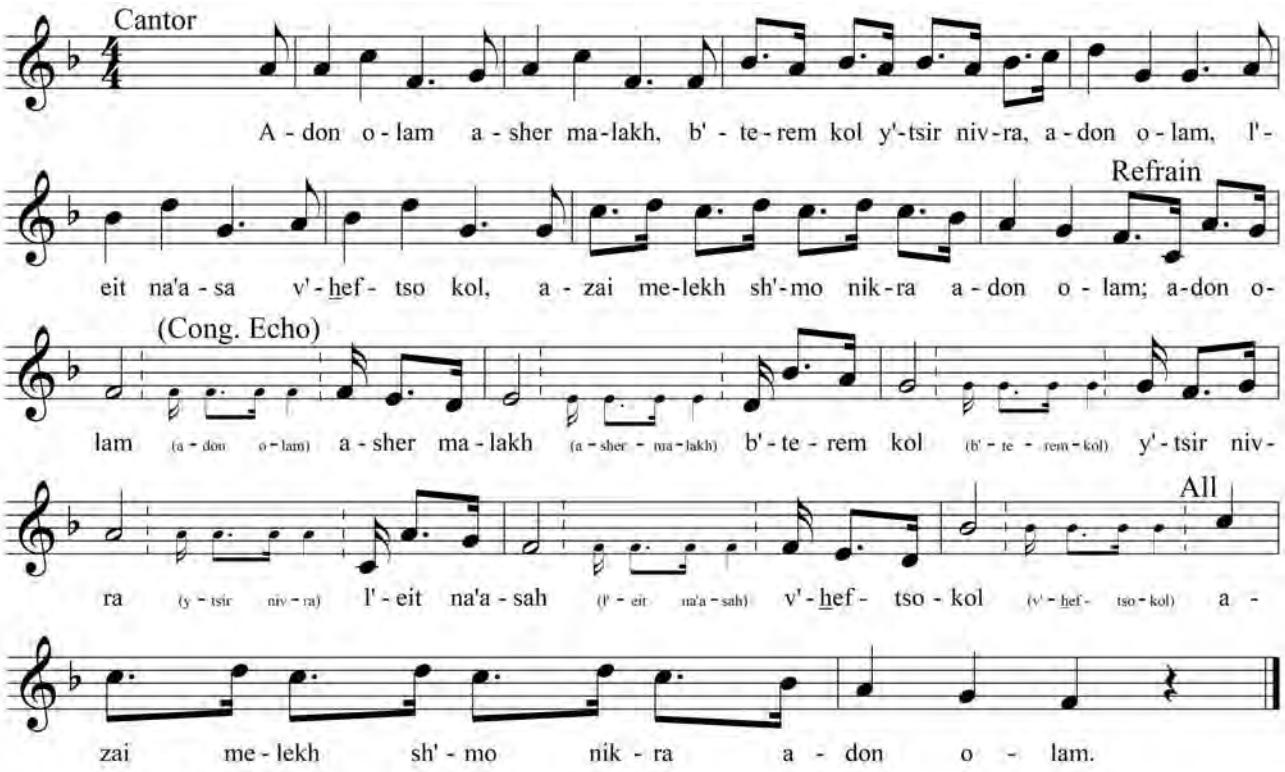
[170] Gurock, "Orthodox Synagogue," 63.

music, is frustratingly meager. The conscious preference for lay *ba'alei t'fillah*, rather than professional cantors (and rabbis), might have contributed to the dearth of documentation, oral and written, relating to its musical development. In some narratives, Young Israel is even considered the originator of "music of participation" in the synagogue.[171]

That so many melodies—built upon elements of *nusah*, Yiddish and hasidic folk tunes, fragments of cantorial recitatives of star cantors, borrowings from opera and popular song, and the musical inventiveness of individual *ba'alei t'fillah* themselves—originated in Young Israel, is rather remarkable. Unfortunately, singability superseded correctness with respect to *nusah* and at times, musical taste. A popular melody for *Adon olam* illustrates the latter **(Example 81)**.[172]

Example 81 ***Adon olam***

With 'bounce' Young Israel melody



Undoubtedly, Binder had this melody in mind when he wrote about "a certain tune sung to *Adon olam* in the Young Israel Synagogues which sounds like a French night club song."[173] Since many of these "Young Israel melodies" found their way into Conservative synagogues, they deserve a brief examination.[174]

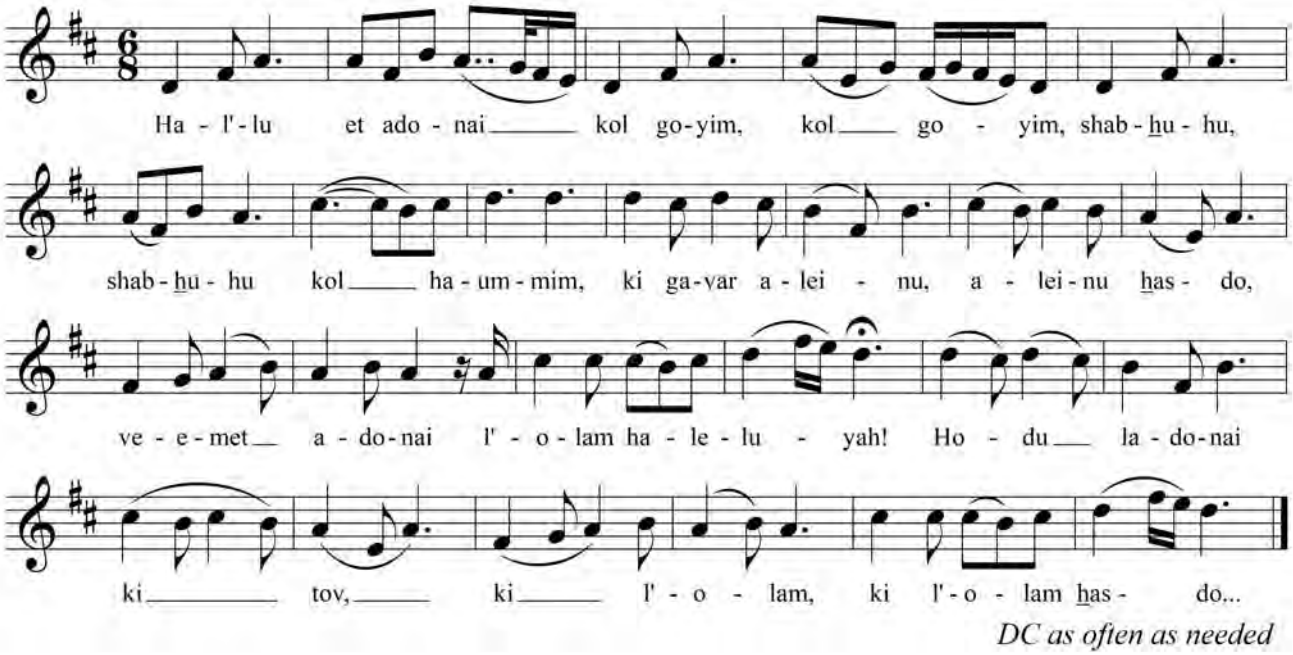
[171] Slobin, *Chosen Voices*, 195–196.
[172] *ZL NG* I, 396 ("Traditional").
[173] See n. 17 for the full reference
[174] On a personal note, to my amazement many of the melodies that I learned in a Conservative synagogue shortly after my arrival in the USA were, in fact, "Young Israel" melodies.

There appear to be three categories of Young Israel melodies: (1) Melodies that are indigenous to the movement; (2) Melodies adopted by YI whose derivation is unclear; and (3) Melodies adopted by YI, whose source appeared unknown, but is identifiable by us today. To help identify YI melodies (of the three categories) I am indebted to Dr. Joseph Levine, brought up in the Young Israel of Borough Park, Brooklyn, for sharing with me his documentation of that synagogue's melodies as recalled from his youth, included in an unpublished collection for use by students of the H.L. Miller Cantorial School at JTS, *K'tonet Yosef* (*KY*, 2009).[175]

Examples of (1) include: the *Hallel* melody in major for Ps. 117 and *Hodu* (Ps. 118) (*KY; ZL NG* II, 59); *Eil adon* in major, rather than the customary minor (*ZL NG* I, 145); *Na'arits'kha* (*KY*, 363; *ZL NG*, 311); *Mimm'komo* (*KY* 363; *ZL II*, 13) **(Examples 82–85)**.

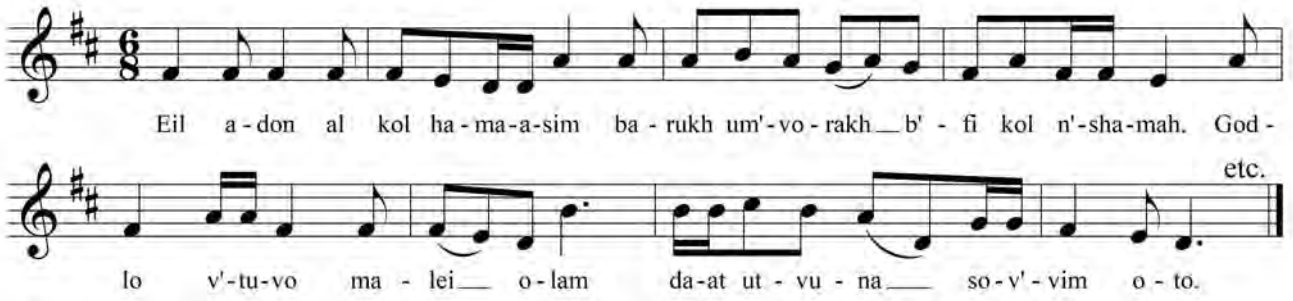
Example 82 ***Hal'lu***

Joyously — Young Israel melody



Example 83 ***Eil adon***

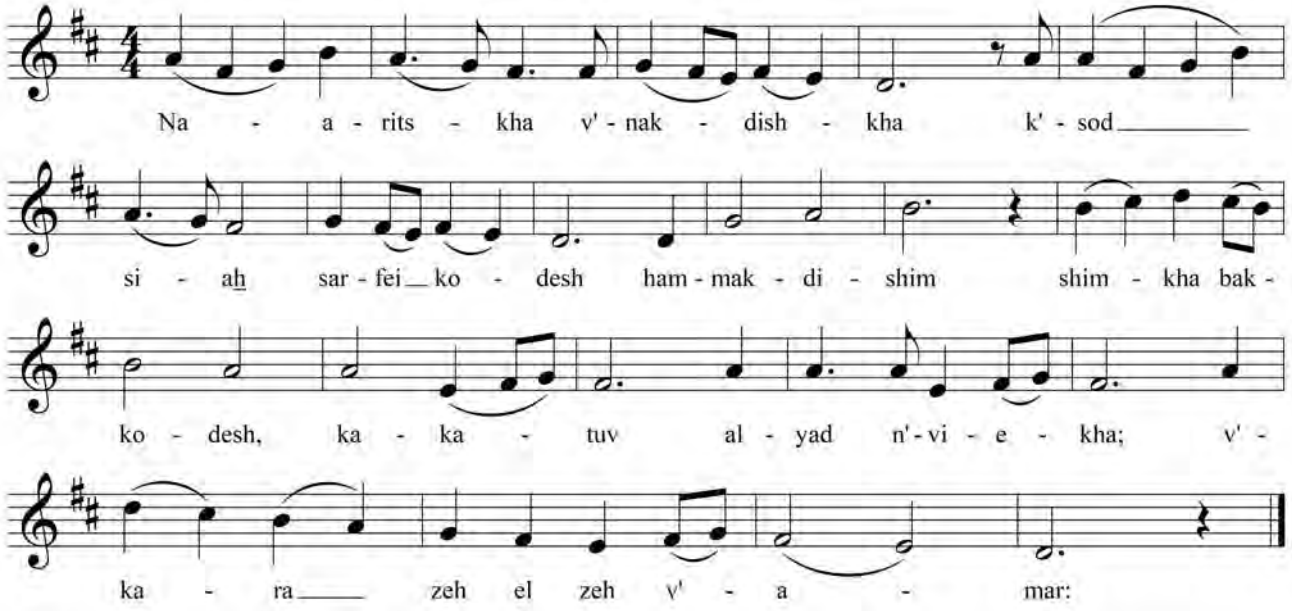
Fervently — Young Israel melody



[175] E-mail communication to the writer, January 12, 2017.

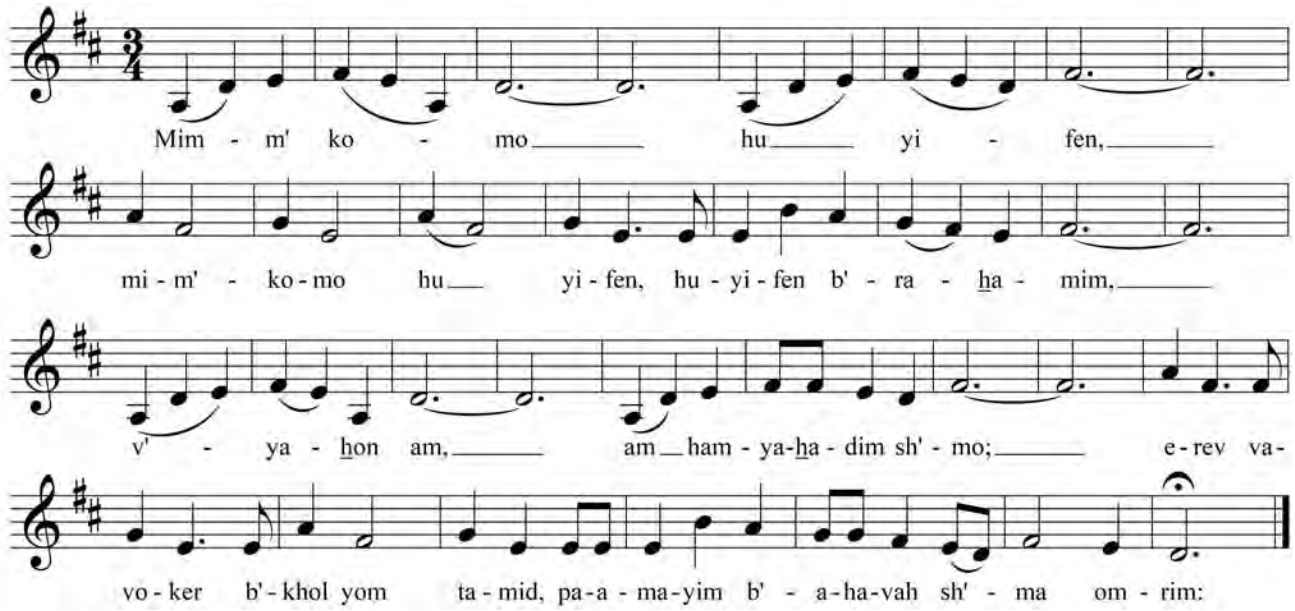
Example 84 ***Na'arits'kha***

With devotion — Young Israel melody



Example 85 ***Mim-m'komo***

Lightly — Young Israel melody

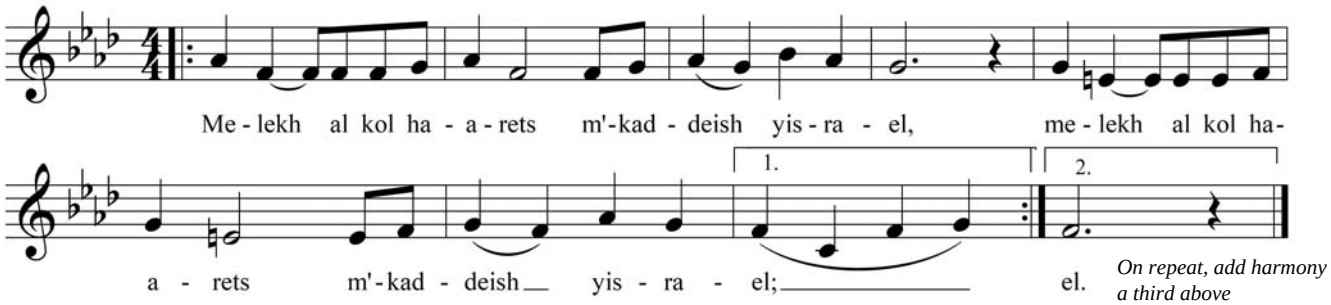


Examples of (2) include: *Melekh al kol ha-arets* from a larger recitative of Zeidel Rovner (ZL *KY* 101; NG II, 163;[176] *Yism'hu* (*KY* 394; ZL II, 121), a hasidic melody arranged by Nathanson (*Manginot Shireinu*, 151) **(Examples 86–87)**.

[176] Schleifer, "*Shalom aleikhem*," 317–318.

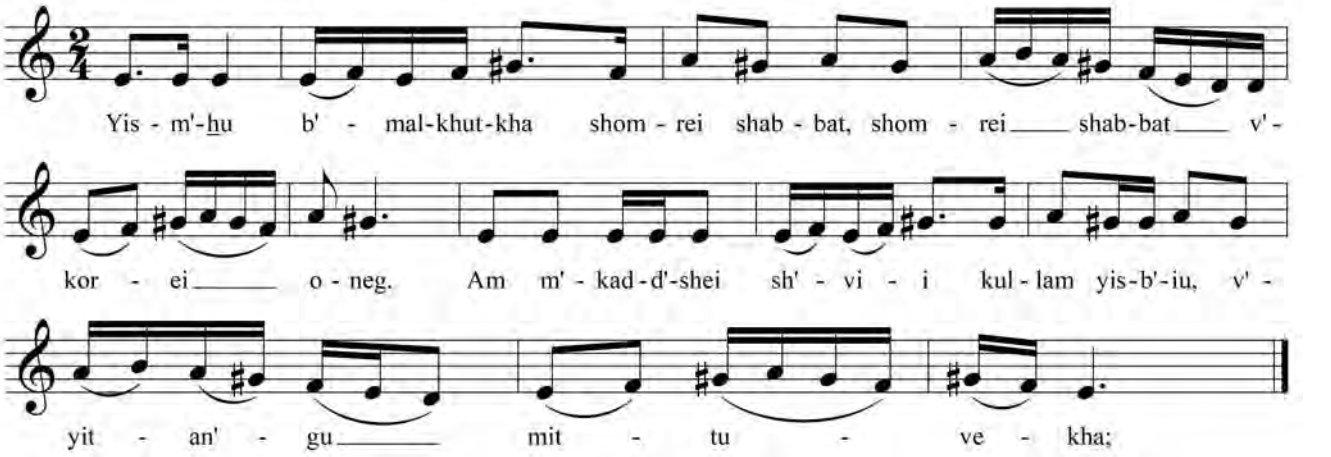
Example 86 ***Melekh al kol ha-arets***

With solemnity — Young Israel melody



Example 87 ***Yism'hu***

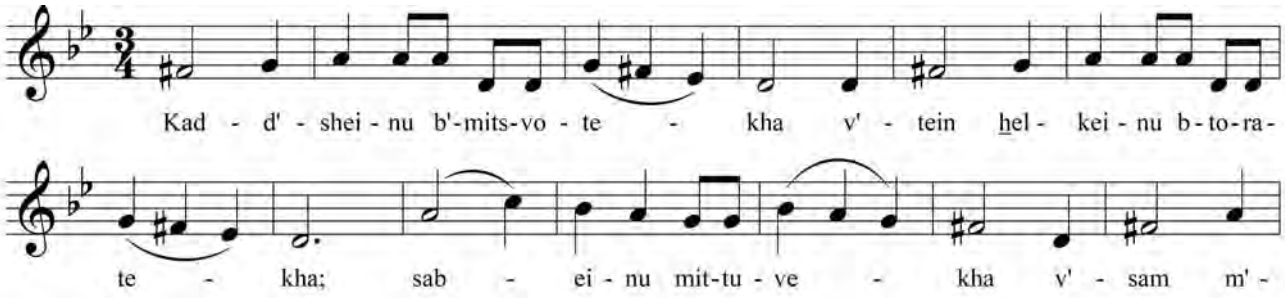
Quickly — Hasidic, arr. M. Nathanson



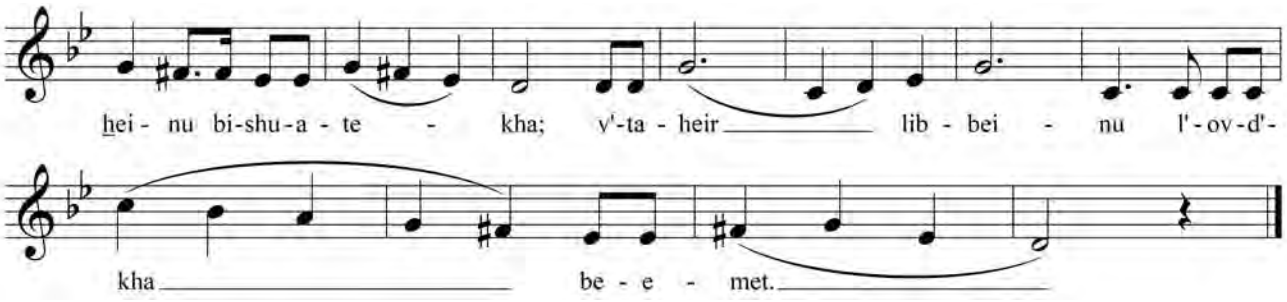
Examples of (3) include: *Kad-d'sheinu* of Binder (*KY*, 399); *Adonai, Adonai* (*KY* 799; NG III, 169), which has a slight tonal modification or corruption of the melody of Cantor Max Kotlowitz (ZL NG II, 171); *Yismah moshe* of Beimel (*SWS*, 60) **(Examples 88–90)**.[177]

Example 88 ***Kadd'sheinu***

Slowly — A.W. Binder

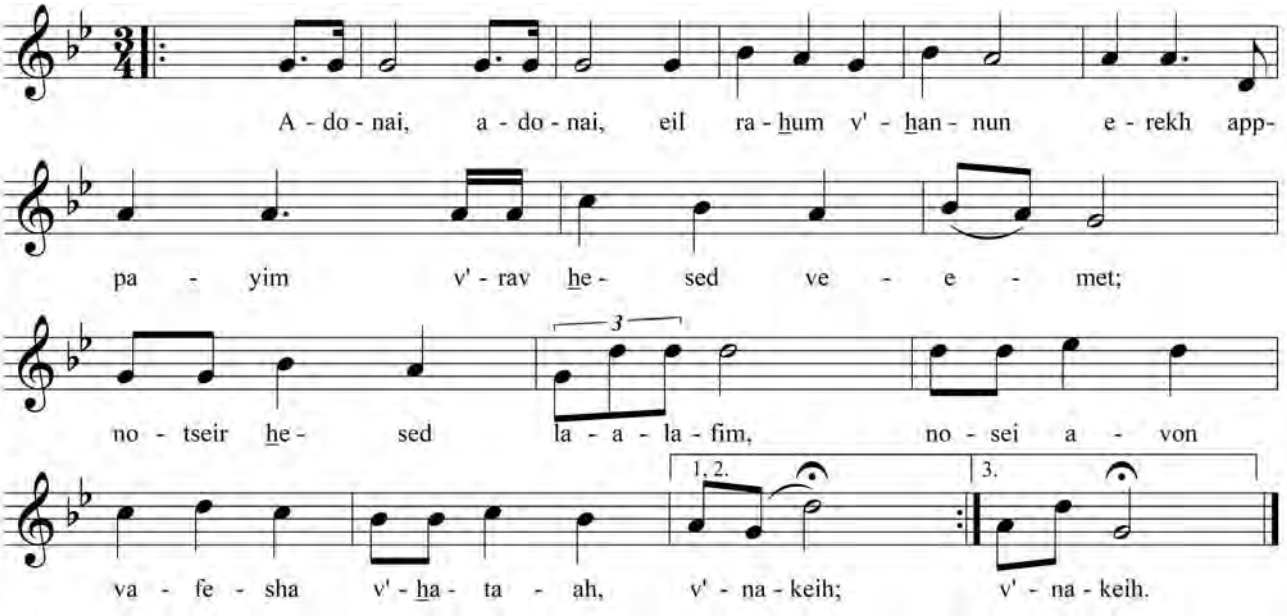


[177] Recorded on Ron and Nama Menachem Aliran, *A People that Sings—Lives! Sabbath Congregational Melodies: Young Israel Favorites*, Aleph Records (196?).



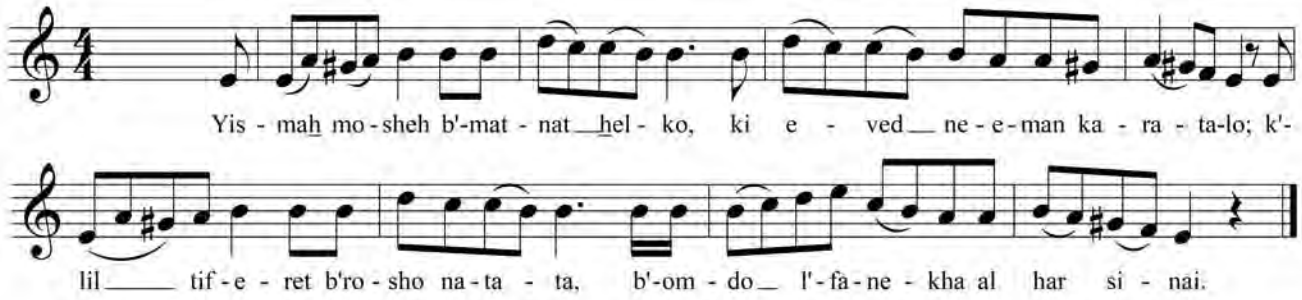
Example 89 ***Adonai, adonai***

With great emotion Young Israel melody



Example 90 ***Yismah moshe***

Moderately fast Young Israel melody



6. THE PATH TO *ZAMRU LO*

A. Initiatives of the United Synagogue and the Cantors Assembly

The early 1940s witnessed a new level of energy within the leadership of the Conservative movement in the promotion of congregational song. It began in December 1940 when Samuel H. Cohen, Executive Director of the United Synagogue, invited several leading

cantors to a meeting "for promoting congregational singing." Cohen took this initiative after Israel Levinthal of the Brooklyn Jewish Center had expressed to him his dissatisfaction with the slow progress in furthering congregational song. The meeting was attended by Cantors Beimel, Ephros, Katchko, Jassinowsky and Goldfarb. All agreed that congregational singing was sufficiently important as to warrant a conference.[178]

The ensuing conference on "The Status of Congregational Singing in America" was held in February 1943 at the SAJ. It was well attended by cantors, rabbis and synagogue musicians.[179] Three papers were presented, the most substantive being that of Beimel on "Melodic Sources for Congregational Singing." Beimel argued that congregational melodies should be rooted in (1) the *nus'ha'ot* (2) the tropes and (3) *Skarbove* tunes, "so that the singing of the congregation would appear as a continuation of the chanting of the *hazzan* and not as an interruption." He strongly opposed the singing of secular tunes, even if Jewish in character, including Palestinian pioneer songs and Hassidic *niggunim*.[180]

The conference included a demonstration of congregational singing in which new congregational melodies by Beimel, Katchko and Ephros were taught by Binder, but unfortunately, there is no record of the melodies presented. A resolution was made "to provide congregations with congregational music appropriate to the synagogue and at the same time, singable."[181] This appears to refer to a publication of congregational melodies, which would take over a decade to realize.

Four years later, following the United Synagogue's establishment of a Department of Music, a conference on "Jewish Music in the Synagogue" was held in February 1947. Cantor David Putterman, Director of the Department, explained that one of its goals was "to create new uniform hymnals" in an effort to standardize congregational singing.[182] Isadore Freed, the influential composer of synagogue music, raised the issue of musical quality. In contrast to the sophisticated level of music being composed for Reform synagogues, he expressed reservations about the quality of Conservative congregational song, which seemed to place singability first.[183] In April 1947, shortly after the Cantors Assembly was established, a Music Committee was formed to advance Putterman's aim of publishing a songster.[184]

At the CA's first Annual Conference in February 1948 Cantor Edgar Mills, Chair of the Music Committee, reiterated that standardization of singing in Conservative congregations was a

[178] Beimel Collection JTSA, Box 1, no. 26, Minutes of meeting, December 19, 1940.
[179] The conference was sponsored by the Jewish Music Forum (founded in 1939 by Abraham Binder) and the Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation (founded in 1940). "Report on Conference on Status of Congregational Singing in America," *Jewish Music Forum* 4, no. 1 (December 1943), 12–15.
[180] Ibid., 13–14.
[181] Report on Conference on Status, Ibid.
[182] *Proceedings of the Conference on Jewish Music in the Synagogue* (New York: United Synagogue of America, 1947), 4.
[183] Ibid., 8.
[184] Levin, "Music at JTS," 748; *Proceedings of First Annual Conference-Convention of the Cantors Assembly and the Department of Music of the United Synagogue of America* (1948), 1.

motivating force behind the creation of the songster.[185] This objective reflected both the organizational strength of the Conservative cantorate and the rapid growth of the Conservative Movement in the post World War II period. Cantor Aaron Edgar stressed the importance of balance between cantorial recitative, choral pieces and congregational singing, adding, "The average Conservative congregation cannot stand [too] much *hazzanut*, including our rabbis."[186] Putterman stressed the need for musical quality and taste. He deplored the use of melodies that were adaptations from secular sources, because they "violate the sanctity of religious worship."[187]

In the following year (1949) Samuel Rosenbaum, in addressing the concern that congregational singing would result in a lowering of the cantor's art, contended that simplicity of melody was not necessarily a synonym for mediocrity. To allay fears that congregational singing lowered the status of the cantor, he argued that it changed the function of the cantor "from a star performer to a religious official ministering to the congregation."[188] Edgar Mills reported on the materials that CA members had submitted for consideration of inclusion in the songster. Many were by the great European cantor-composers of the nineteenth and early twentieth-century, as well as contemporary composers, in the hope that they could be adapted for congregational singing. Qualifications for selection were inherent musical merit, originality and easy adaptability for congregational singing.[189]

In 1951 Wohlberg, as editor of the songster, presented a detailed report of the progress of the Music Committee. He had personally examined 25 volumes of synagogue music from which he found 159 items suitable for inclusion. Interestingly, the largest number of items came from Coopersmith's *Manginot Shabbat* (26), the British *Kol Rinnah V'todah* (20), Goldfarb (18) Weisser (17) and Goldenberg (17). Since a majority of the pieces were settings of *Yism'hu* (5), *V'sham'ru* (6), *Sim shalom* (6) and *Magein avot*, it is apparent that at this stage the selection was both for Friday night and Shabbat morning.[190]

In 1952 Wohlberg passed on the editorship to Moshe Nathanson. He was an ideal choice. Evidently, Nathanson had long desired to publish a songster of the scale of the proposed CA songster, having been urged to do so by many cantors "probably because of my long connection with a 'singing congregation' and experience in Jewish music education."[191] In 1953 Nathanson reported that the Executive Council of the CA had decided that the first volume would be limited to a "Friday Night Songster."[192] In 1954 he reported that the congregational songster was now in manuscript form, but priority had to be given to publication of *Rabbotai N'vareikh*, his complete setting of the *Birkat ham-mazon*.[193] At the Cantor's Assembly Convention in 1955, Nathanson

[185] *CA Proceedings* (1948), 3.
[186] Ibid, 12.
[187] Ibid., 14.
[188] *CA Proceedings* (1949), 10.
[189] *CA Proceedings* (1949, 3–4.
[190] *CA Proceedings* (1951), 5.
[191] *CA Proceedings* (1952), 7–8.
[192] *CA Proceedings* (1953), 6.
[193] *CA Proceedings* (1954), 9–10.

finally had the opportunity to announce the publication of the Cantor Assembly's long awaited congregational songster, *Zamru Lo*.

B. *Zamru Lo*

The completed project of the Cantors Assembly was a significant achievement of the Cantors Assembly, and especially on the part of Nathanson. *Zamru Lo* included congregational melodies not only for *Kabbalat shabbat* and *Ma'ariv*, but also *zemirot* for the Shabbat *"Oneg"* program and the home. The melodies were chosen because they were "singable, melodic, Hebraically correct, musical and based on our traditional *nus'haot*."[194] They were expected to be thoughtfully selected in order to achieve a musical balance between the chants of the *hazzan*, the renditions of the choir, and the vocal participation of the congregation, "transforming them from passive listeners into active participants."[195] It was hoped that the collection would help to standardize the melodies sung in Conservative synagogues, enabling congregants to "feel at home" in other Conservative synagogues as well as, perhaps, contributing to one's Conservative religious identity. It was also hoped that *Zamru Lo* would contribute to the standardization of melodies sung in the "main" synagogue and those in the Junior Congregation.

A choice of melodies was an additional objective of *Zamru Lo*, especially for certain texts. To give a few examples: *L'kha dodi* refrain (19), *Ahavat olam* (9), *Sh'ma* (8), *Mi khamokha* (10), *V'sham'ru* (18), *Magein avot* (10), *Adon olam* (12), *Yigdal* (10). In reality, however, only a few melodies for each text struck root in most synagogues. The largest number of pieces was contributed by Nathanson, followed by Goldfarb and Wohlberg. Many pieces were arrangements of European compositions of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, but a considerable number of pieces were by contemporary American cantor-composers and composers of synagogue music including Emanuel Barkan, Samuel Rosenbaum, Mark Silver and Jacob Sivowitch.

Zamru Lo was an unqualified success. It was followed by similar works for Sabbath Morning (1960), the Three Festivals and the High Holy Days (1974) and a three-volume version edited by Jeffrey Shiovitz, subtitled *The Next Generation* (2004, 2006, 2009). Along the way there were warnings that the cantor would be transformed into a song leader, but thus far, this has not transpired. There has been room to spare in the Conservative liturgy for both chant and song. If they were alive today, Solomon and Mathilde Schechter might be shocked, but they would not be disappointed.

Geoffrey Goldberg has rabbinical ordination from Leo Baeck College, cantorial investiture from JTS and a Ph.D. in Musicology from the Hebrew University. He has been an adjunct member of the Musicology Department at Tel-Aviv University, the Academy for Jewish Religion, HUC-JIR and the Department of Religion and Classics at the University of Rochester. He serves on The Journal of Synagogue Music*'s Editorial Board and his scholarly writings have also appeared in the HUC Annual,* Studia Rosenthalianer, Yuval, Musica Judaica, Jewish Culture and History *and* AJS Review (Journal of the Association for Jewish Studies*). His review of* **Va'ani t'fillati: siddur yisraeli,** *appeared in the* Fall 2013 JSM.

[194] *Preface* to the First Edition, 1955.
[195] Ibid.

A Bibliography of Selected Jewish Worship Services Written for Cantor, Choir and Organ During the Years Following World War II.

Compiled by Charles Davidson

Most of the compositions listed here have been analyzed by the author as part of an earlier article, "Hidden Treasures–An Annotated Survey of Selected Jewish Worship Services Written for Cantor, Choir and Organ," commissioned by the Milken Archive of Jewish Music, 2014 (https://www.milkenarchive.org/articles/view/hidden-treasures/ ; also available from the Beit Shirah Archive, The H. L. Miller Cantorial School at JTS NY, Robert Kieval, coordinator: rokieval@JTSA.EDU). That detailed analysis included a description of the context that produced these works: Jewish veterans returning from World War II moved their families from New York City to suburban communities in Long Island and Westchester County. The resultant migration prompted the establishment of many new synagogues and temples, whose religious services were often enhanced by cantors, choirs and organs. Reform congregations, in particular, commissioned talented composers to write music for their services, and in so doing, helped create a rich treasury of new American Jewish music.

Since many of the services discussed in that article are no longer available in print, the author hopes this select bibliography will offer a means of enabling contemporary American Jewry to access its sacred musical heritage from a post-War era that witnessed the founding of the State of Israel and the return to favor of ancient Jewish prayer modalities. Hazzan Davidson has accordingly donated a copy of all the works listed below to the Judaica Division of Harvard University's Library in order to assure the availability of this material for research, as well as its possible use during Jewish worship.

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Coopersmith, Harry: *Friday Eve Service for Two Part Choir*; Transcontinental Music Publications, 1958, 51 pages.

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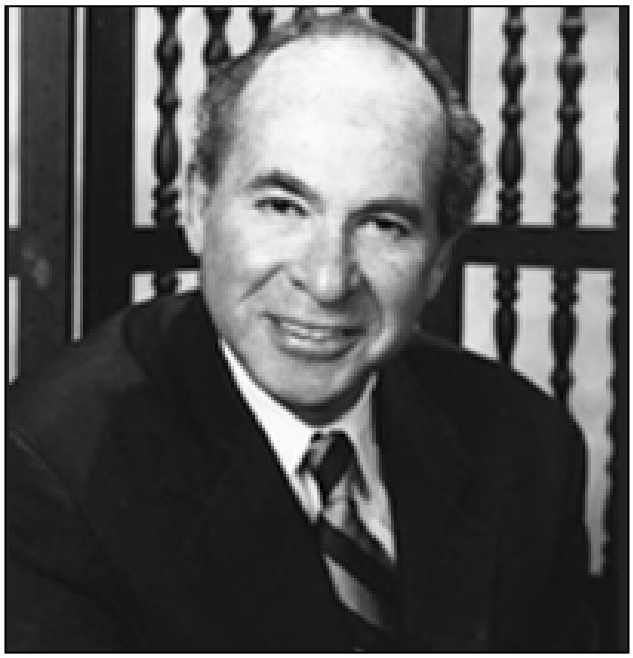
Cantor Charles Davidson is an accomplished composer in many musical styles, an Emeritus Professor of Nusah at the H.L. Miller Cantorial School of the Jewish Theological Seminary, and Cantor Emeritus at Congregation Adath Jeshurun in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, where he served with distinction for 43 years.



N'GINAH L'MA'ASEH

L'khayim, brider--after Idelsohn *Thesaurus* IX, #467; audio by Moshe Bear and members of HaZamir Long Island

According to tradition, the title, "A Song of Ascents," borne by this Psalm (133) as well as all others between 120-134, refers to 15 steps in the Second Jerusalem Temple that fronted the bronze Nicanor Gate. The latter separated the lower Court of Women from the upper Courts of Israelites and Priests, where offerings were burnt upon the Altar. The steps led up to a dais on which the Levitical choir and orchestra stood and performed Psalms in between the sacrificial rites.

While the style in which *T'hillim* were rendered in antiquity is today a subject of conjecture, musicologist Abraham Z. Idelsohn cites the provenance of this particular version of Psalm 133 as "Jerusalem 1912" in his *Thesaurus* Volume IX, "Folk Songs of the East European Jews" (number 467). It is presented here in a Yiddish-inflected Ashkenazic Hebrew dialect characteristic of late-19th century Eastern European Jewish usage. The song's refrain, which picks up on a key word of the preceding verse and uses it to get everyone singing, reflects Religious Zionism's socialist inclination to stress the notion of proletarian brotherhood by repeating the Hebrew word for brothers (Yiddish: *brider)* as often as possible. The text closes with God's promise of eternal life (*khayim*), echoed by everyone toasting–***L'khayim***!

In a nod to contemporary gender inclusiveness, we have interpolated the Yiddish word ***shvester***—**sisters**--wherever possible, acknowledging the song's more probable use today as a *z'mirah* sung around the festive table at celebratory occasions rather than as a Labor movement hymn. Indeed, I first heard it at a Bar Mitzvah luncheon in 1975, where it was taught by the boy's father, an accomplished musical raconteur. He chanted each verse in the style of a *maggid* (itinerant preacher), combining elements of *limmud* and *t'fillah*.

Leader (in Yiddish-inflected Hebrew)	**Congregation (in Hebrew and Yiddish)**
Mah no'im sheves akhim gam yokhad	*Brider un shvester gam yokhad*.
Ka-shemen ha-tov… she-yoreid al ha-zokon	*Z'kan aharon–brider*.
K'tal khermon she-yoreid al har'rei tziyon	*Tziyon–shvester*.
Ki shom tzivoh adonoy… khayim ad ho-olom	*L'khayim–brider un shvester*!

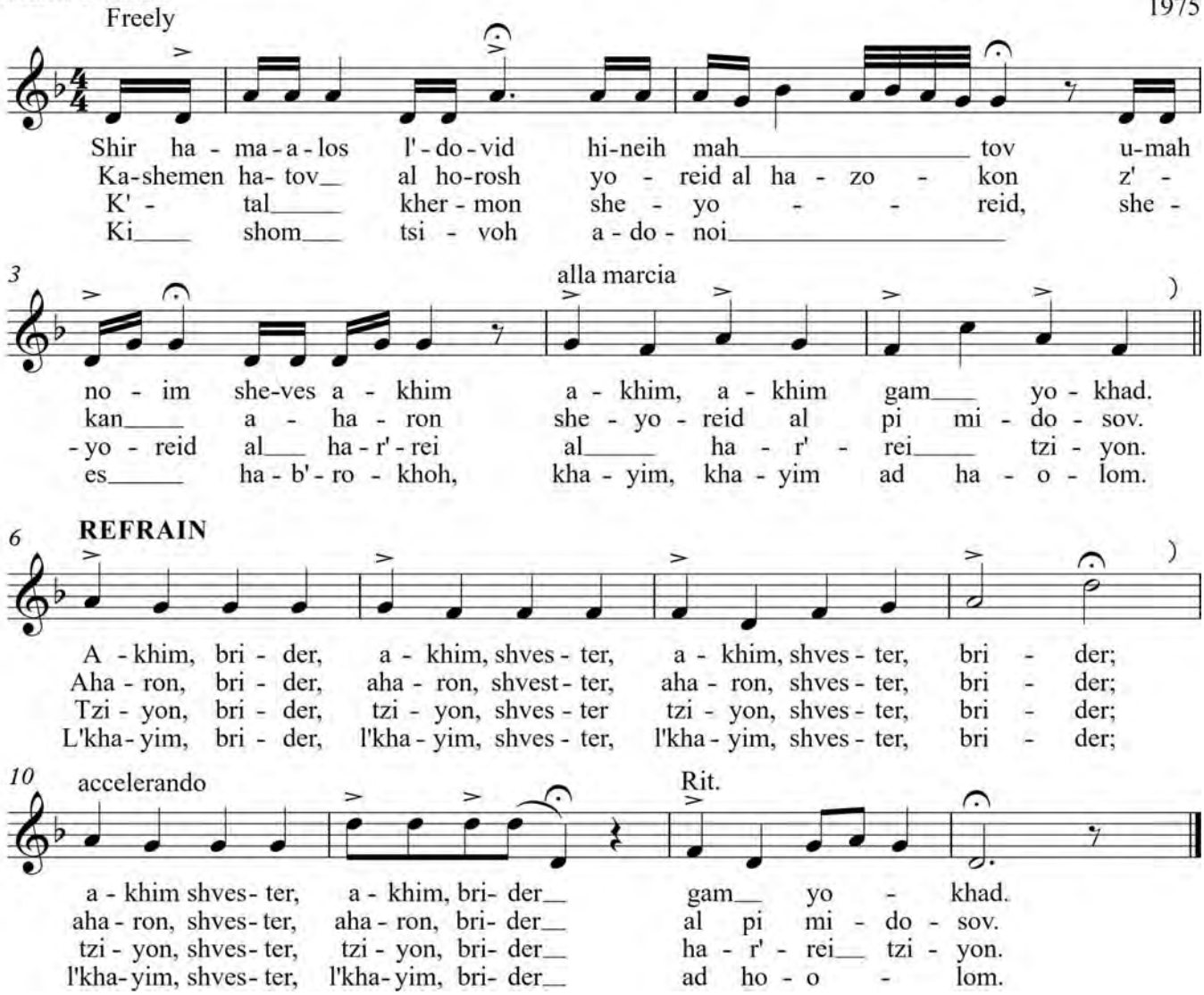
The audio file features **Moshe Bear** and members of the Long Island (NY) chapter of **HaZamir: The International Jewish Teen Choir**. Hazzan Bear has made the study and authentically ethnic performance of Yiddish folk song his life-long pursuit. [*JAL*].

(CLICK ANYWHERE ON THE MUSIC TO ACCESS THE AUDIO FILE)

L'khayim, brider

Psalm 133
After A.Z. Idelsohn *Thesaurus*
Volume IV:#467

Heard from
Rabbi Mortimer J. Rubin
1975



N'GINAH L'MA'ASEH

Shiviti (Nissi Blumenthal; arr. for guitar by Benjamin Rosner; audio by Elizabeth Shammash)

My God, you are ever at my right hand
my faith shall not be shaken.
So, my heart rejoices, my being exults;
and my body rests secure.
Amen

The text from Psalm 16 (verses 8-9) lends itself well to a community-wide Memorial Service when sung to this hymn-like melody by the celebrated 19th-century Chief Cantor at the Broder Shul in Odessa, **Nissi Blumenthal (1805-1903)**. Together with his choirmaster/composer **David Nowakowsky (1849-1921**), Blumenthal instituted a *khorshul* (Choral Synagogue) service in Odessa. An eyewitness would later recall the sonorities produced by that balanced approach: "as if heavenly angels were singing to the Creator of the Universe" (Zavel Kwartin, *My Life*, 1952:147).

Blumenthal's anthem (Gershon Ephros, *Cantorial Anthology*, Vol. II, 1953: 231) affords listeners both a hint of the *khorshul* approach and an opportunity to participate in a dignified manner. It is compelling enough for an audience to comfortably find itself humming along in an undertone. In a public ceremonial, the question then arises: What sort of instrumental accompaniment might support such widespread participation and not detract from its spontaneity?

Benjamin Rosner has created an optional accompaniment for classical guitar, which he plays on the audio file; **Elizabeth Shammash** is the vocal soloist. It provides a softer background, to which contemporary worshipers' ears might generally be more attuned at a Memorial Service, than the unrelenting reverberance of an organ. The guitar part is written in the key of A minor, for alto or baritone. (To accommodate a higher-voiced soprano or tenor voice without having to transpose the score, a small movable bar known as a ***capo*** is generally fitted over the strings to raise the pitch as desired.) In addition to guitar notation (Staff 2), **Tablature** notation (Staff 3) indicates fingering on the fretboard.

Thanks are due to **Jeremy Burko**, who fine-tuned the audio file; and **Sean O'Connor**, who edited the guitar arrangement. [*JAL*]

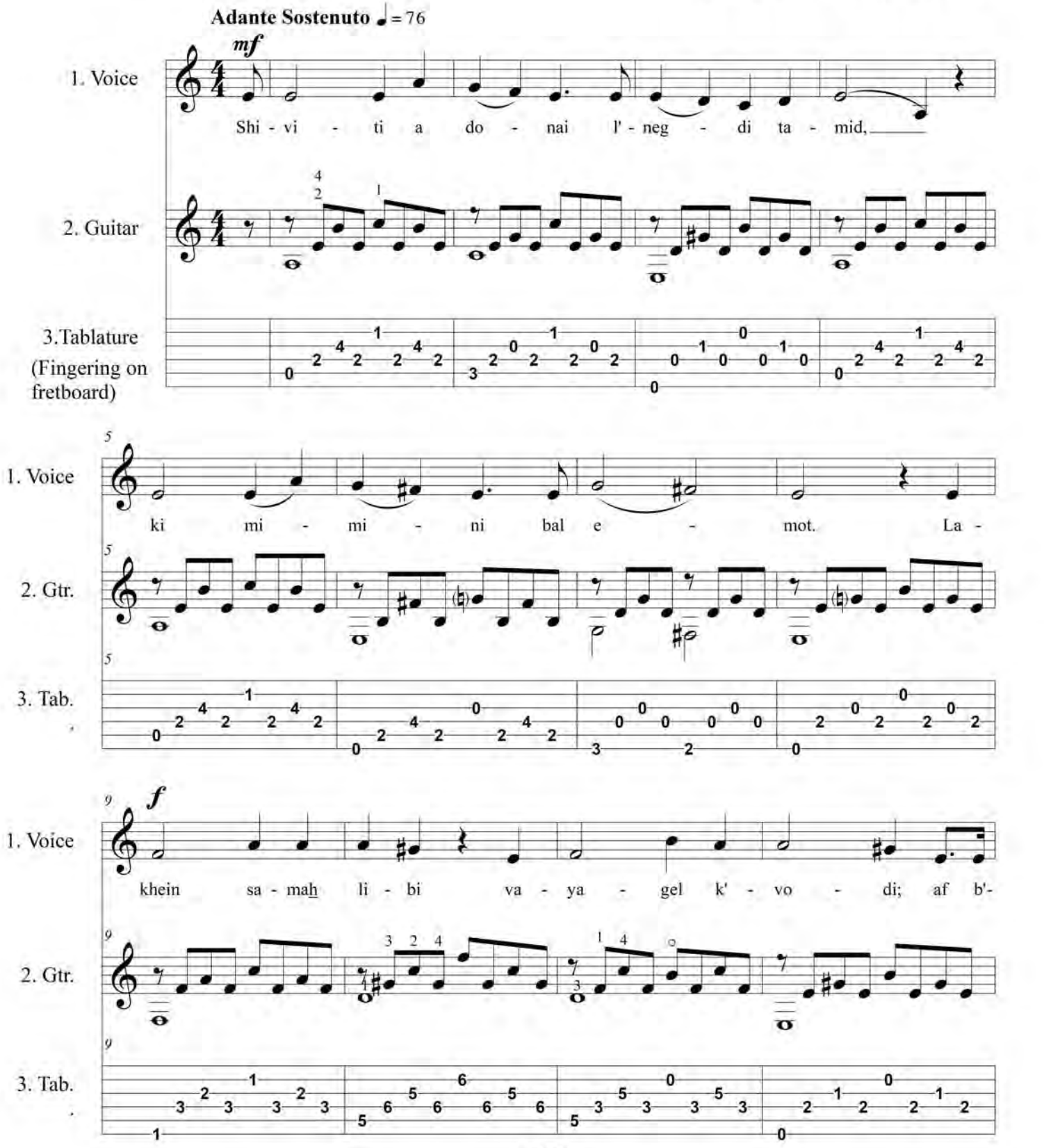
(CLICK ANYWHERE ON THE FIRST PAGE OF MUSIC TO ACCESS THE AUDIO FILE)

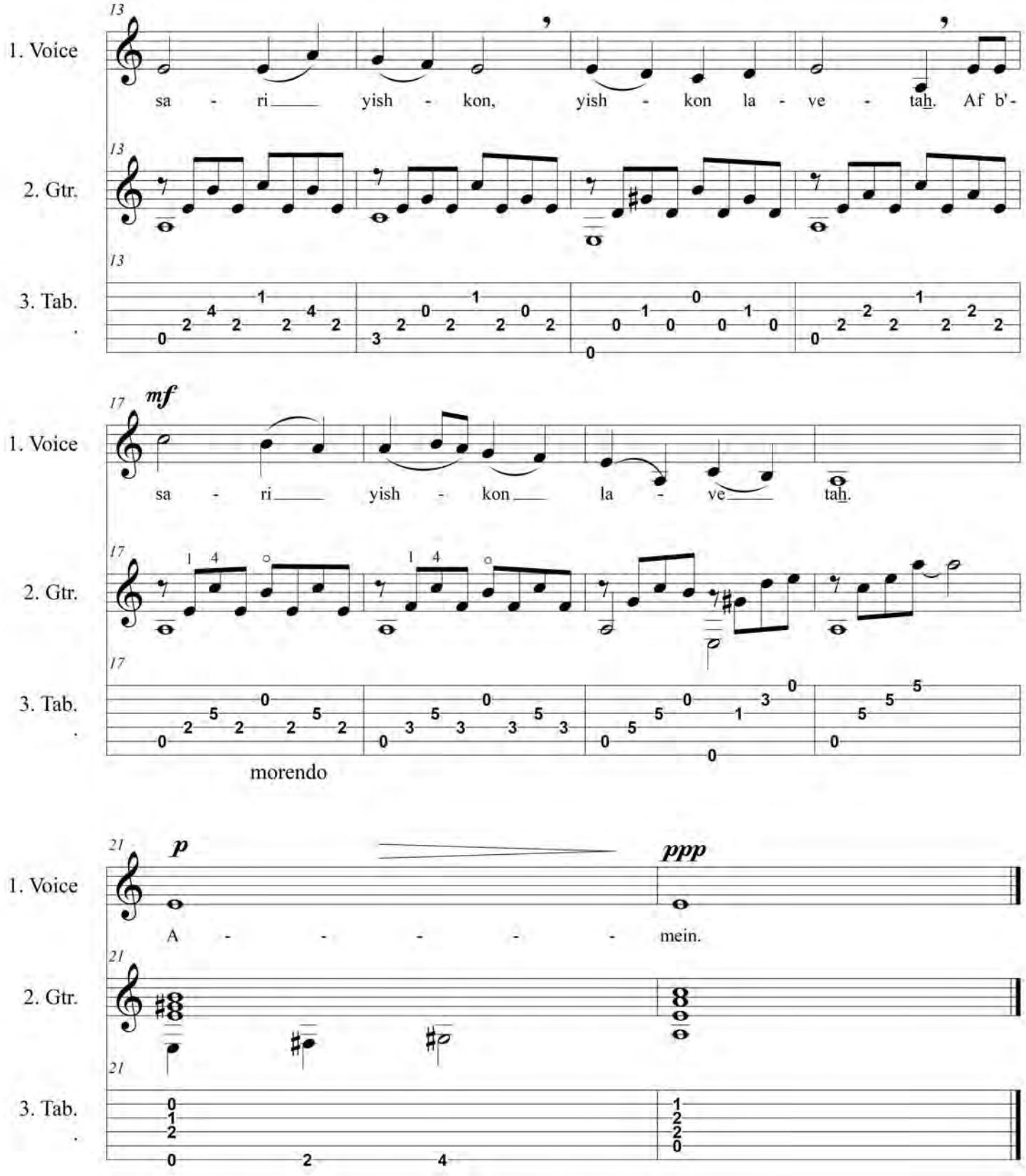
Shiviti

Text: Psalm 16:8-9

Music: Nissi Blumenthal (1805-1903)

Optional Guitar: Benjamin Rosner




13
1. Voice
sa - ri yish - kon, yish - kon la - ve - tah. Af b'-
2. Gtr.
3. Tab.
17
mf
1. Voice
sa - ri yish - kon la - ve tah.
2. Gtr.
3. Tab.
morendo
21
p
ppp
1. Voice
A - - - - - mein.
2. Gtr.
3. Tab.

N'GINAH L'MA'ASEH
The *Aleinu* Section
Arthur Yolkoff & Pinchas Spiro; Audio by Gideon Zelermyer & the Shaar Hashomayim Synagogue Choir, Montreal

During the late 1950s, **composer Arthur Yolkoff (1934-1988)** was asked by his classmates at the Jewish Theological Seminary's Cantors Institute (now the H. L. Miller Cantorial School) to set the opening verses of this liturgical section (*Aleinu l'shabei'ah… hak-kadosh barukh hu*) as well as its concluding verse (*V'ne'emar… u-sh'mo ehad*) for cantor and male choir. The composition that emerged is published here for the first time, although a version of the music, modified for youth chorus, appeared in Yolkoff's *Shirat Atideinu* (NY: Transcontinental, 1966).

Between 1960 and 1970, **Cantor Pinchas Spiro (1922-2008)** self-published a series of Weekday and Holiday services written expressly to be led by and participated in by young people. In one Weekday service he provided a psalmodic-style chant for the half-paragraph between the above two passages, which was generally prayed silently by the congregation. It opened with *She-hu noteh shamayim*… and ended at … *ein od*. Other than a ditty paraphrasing the Pop song "When the Red, Red Robin Comes Bob, Bob, Bobbin' Along" (Words and Music by Harry Woods, 1926), being applied to these words in the Conservative movement's Ramah Camps, no serious synagogue music *per se* existed for them.

Spiro's chant filled that void by imparting to their syllabic recitation a steady rhythmic pulse articulated through an understated quasi-Israeli melody (*Hu eloheinu ein od… va-hasheivota el l'vavekha…*). This brilliantly conceived treatment of the transitional passage picks up the devotional mood from Yolkoff's hope-filled opening in the natural-minor *Magein avot* mode. At *Va'anahnu kor'im*, the setting segués into a hushed *Ahavah Rabbah* mode as worshipers reverently bow their heads and bend their knees. The *Aleinu* section concludes triumphantly with Yolkoff's syncopated horah on the upper octave, proclaiming God's Oneness (*Bayom ha-hu… u-sh'mo ehad*!).

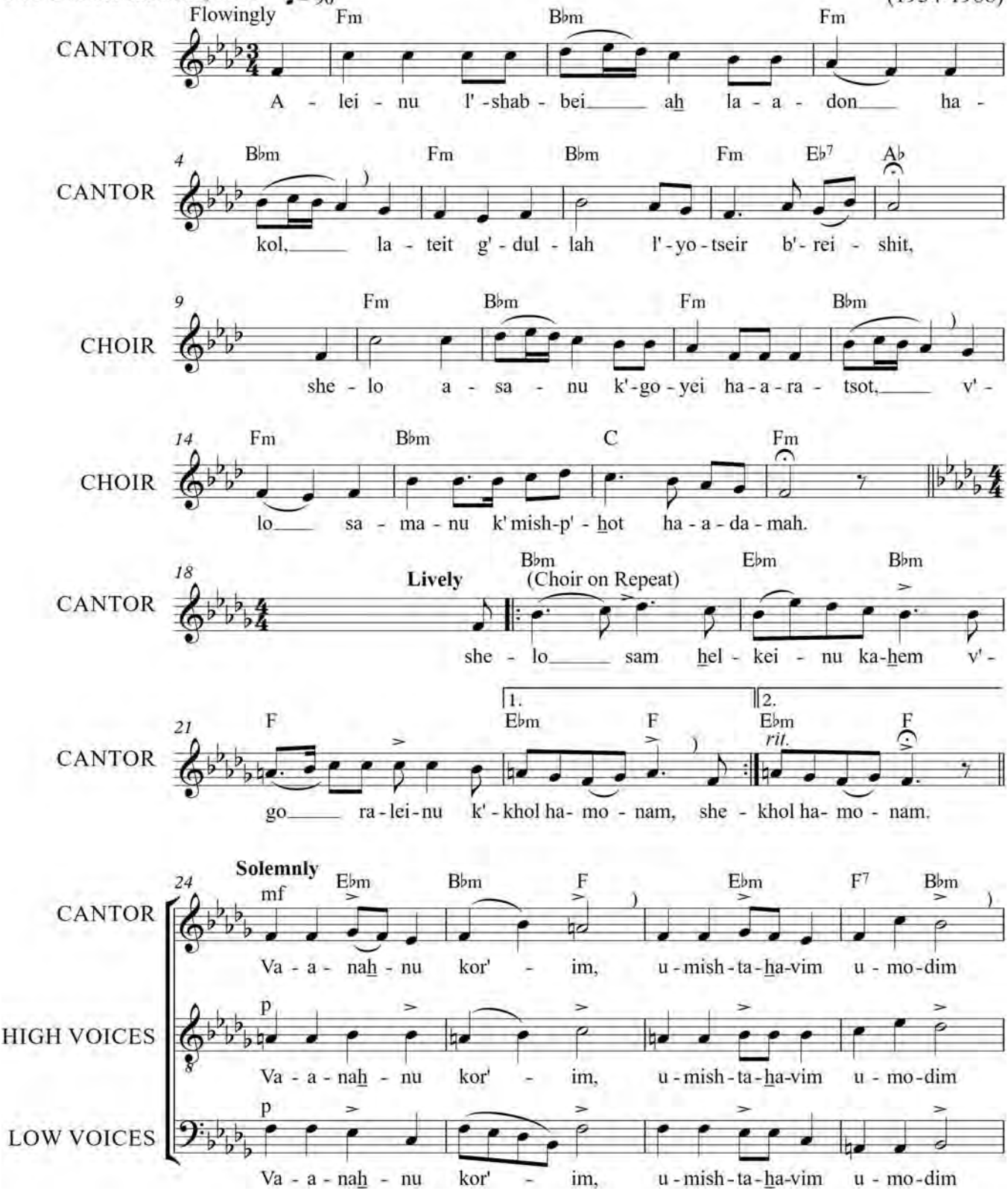
The combined settings are performed in the audio file by **Cantor Gideon Zelermyer and the Synagogue Choir of Congregation Shaar Hashomayim in Montreal**, one of the few such traditional all-male ensembles still functioning during worship every Shabbat and Festival in North America synagogues; it is led by **Music Director Roï Azoulai**. [*JAL*]

(CLICK ANYWHERE ON THE FIRST PAGE OF MUSIC TO ACCCESS THE AUDIO FILE)

The *Aleinu* Section

JEWISH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,
The Cantors Institute, 1958

Arthur Yolkoff
(1934-1988)



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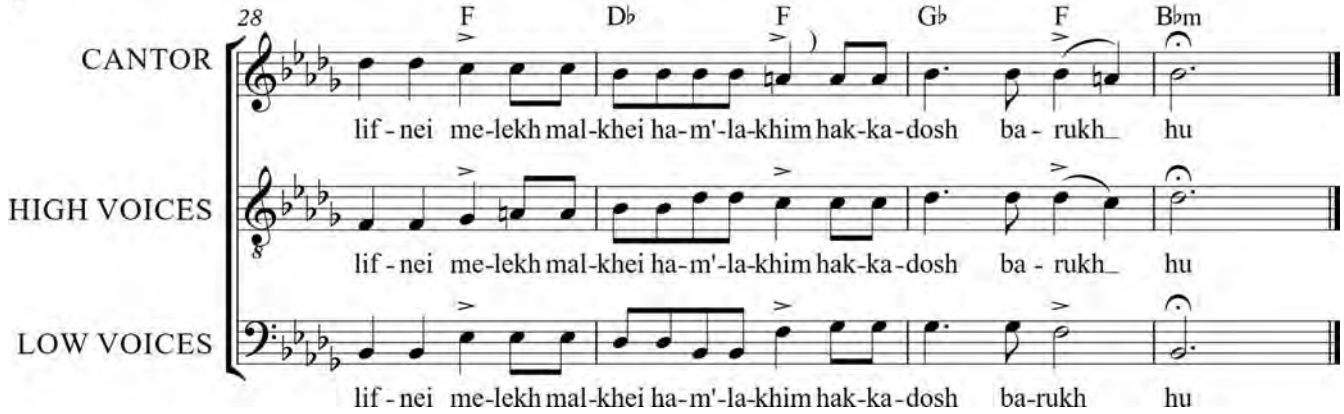
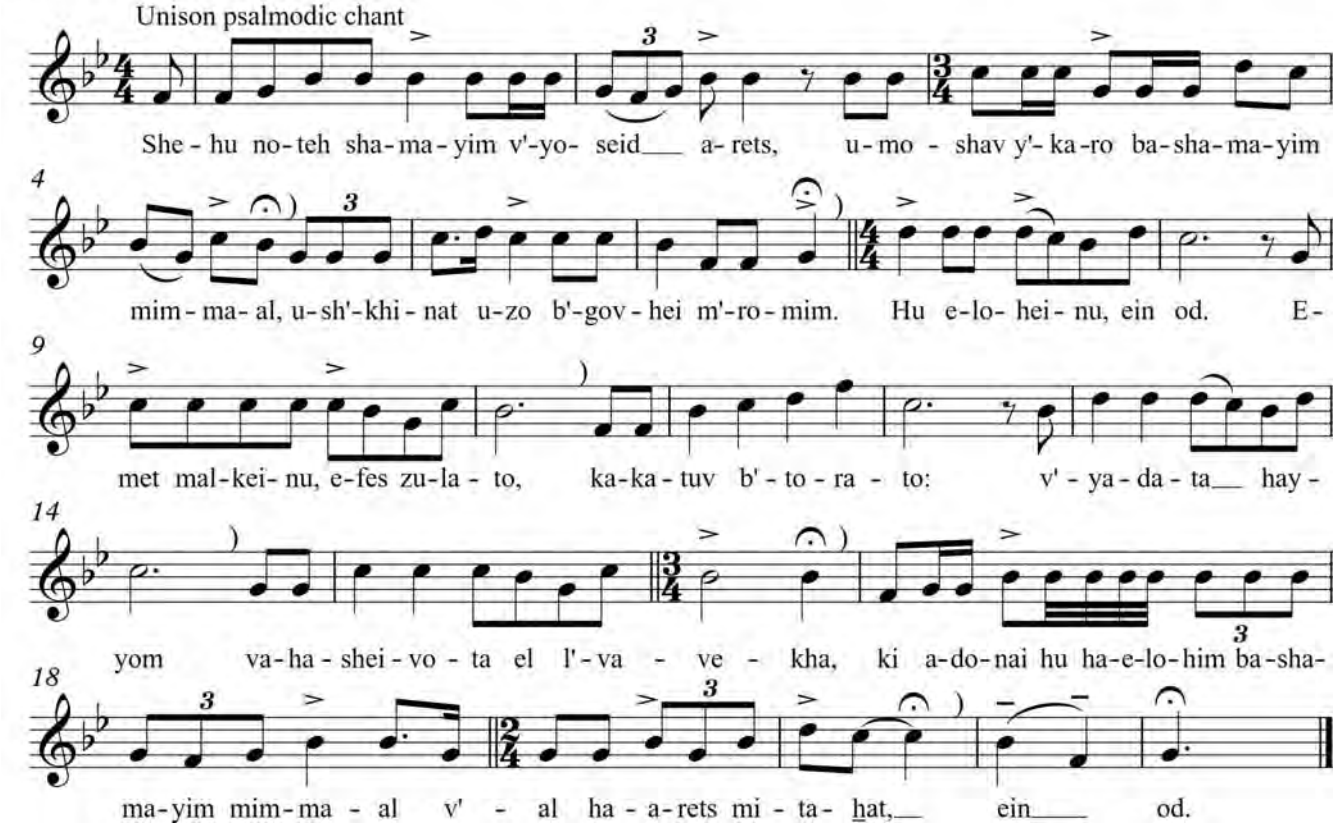


She-hu noteh shamayim

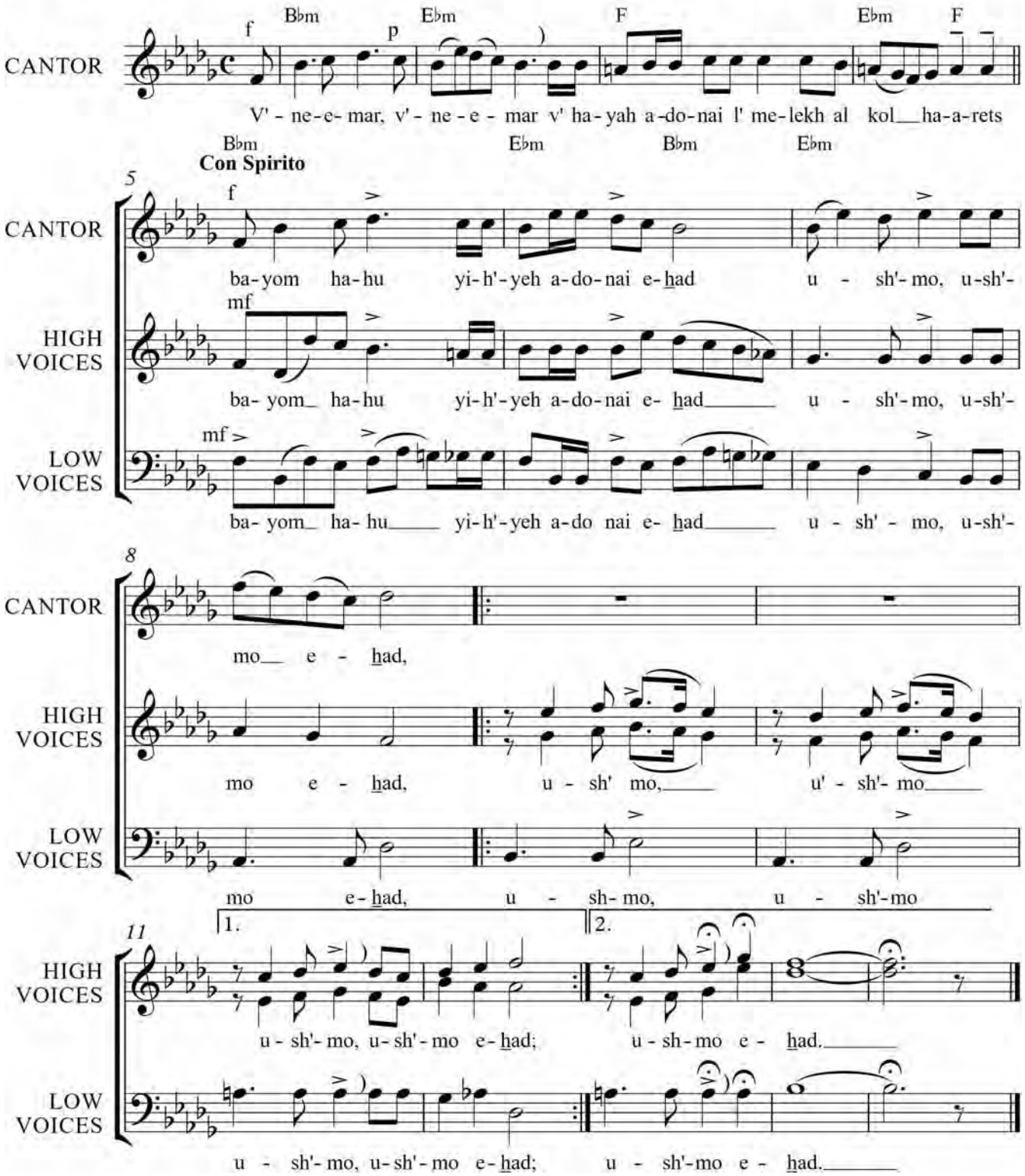
A Complete Weekday Service
(1960-1970)

Pinchas Spiro



V'ne'emar

JTS, 1958 — Yolkoff



A LITERARY GLIMPSE

“N’ilah in Hell”

By I. L. Peretz (1915; translated *JAL*, 2015)

It happened at the gates of Hell, one day, where an informer—a Jew who spied on his coreligionists for the authorities—showed up for interrogation before being admitted.

When he replied,"Lahadam," to the question of where he had died, the previously disinterested Admissions clerk took uncharacteristic notice.

"La-ha-what?"

"Ladam," said the informer.

Puzzled, the clerk turned to his assistants. "Have you heard of such a town?"

"Never," they chorused, shrugging their shoulders and shaking their heads.

"In that case, look it up," the clerk instructed them, nodding towards the alphabetic file of communities. Under the letter L they found Lublin, Lemberg, Leipzig, etc., but nothing for Ladam (or Lahadam).

It's there, I tell you," insisted the informer. "It's where my horse's hooves caught in a wheel rut and threw me from my wagon. Next thing I knew I was standing here."

"Is it the place where you practiced your, uh, profession?" asked the clerk.

"The neighboring town," answered the informer, but it's still in Poland, I tell you."

"Since when?"

"Since 20 years ago when the Baron granted it a charter. They hold a fair there twice every year. It has a synagogue, a study house, a bathhouse, and two taverns for gentiles."

The clerk again addressed his assistants: "Have we ever had anyone from Ladam?"

"Not that we remember," they replied in unison.

The clerk turned back to the informer: "So, they never die in this Ladam of yours?"

"Why shouldn't they die there?" countered the latter with another question, Jewish-style. They live in hovels, they're squashed together like insects, the bathhouse is nothing more than a privy; the whole place is a pig-sty!" (For a moment it felt like old times, this informing on fellow Jews, so he continued.)

"How can you think they never die? They have their own cemetery. Of course, the Burial Society will gouge every zloty you have before laying you to rest--not long ago they even had an epidemic!"

With that, the interrogation came to a close and the informer received his due sentence. Still, something felt wrong. How could a 20-year-old town, whose medical history included an epidemic, not have sent a single soul to Hell? Inquiring imps were dispatched to investigate, and quickly returned with a report. "It's true!"

In the realm of Poland there did exist such a place--a town like any other--called Ladam, with a fair amount of good deeds and a huge number of misdeeds. As for its economy, people got

by, barely, and not always legitimately. The bottom line: Hell's own representative there was without a job.

Why, then, were there no candidates on record from that particular place?

Because of Ladam's cantor! Personally, he was nothing special, but what a voice! So pure and sweet, tender and poignant that it was able to penetrate right through a heart of iron and melt it like wax! No sooner would this cantor position himself at the prayer stand and lift his voice in prayer, when the entire congregation, together with its officers, would dissolve in a puddle of repentance, and so fervently that in the Heavenly Court all of the town's transgressions were wiped from the docket! Because of this cantor's singing, the Gates of Paradise were opened to anyone who stood before them and said he was from Ladam, no further questions; Up There, they knew!

All at once it was understood why Hell's agent in Ladam had remained unemployed for two decades. It also became clear that the Nether Region's Director himself would have to deal with this cantor.

So, Satan sent forth his minions to the world of humans and instructed them to bring him a crowing rooster with a fiery red comb.

It was done. The bewildered cock lay motionless on a satanic altar while the Devil circled round and round, crouched, then squatted, his evil eye fixed upon the bird's scarlet crest, until his spell was cast, and the red comb turned white as chalk.

Suddenly, a portentous rumble was heard from Above; the wrath of Heaven had been roused by this subterranean black magic. The Potentate of Darkness immediately cut short his sorcery with a wrathful curse:

"Begone—his singing voice—until the time of his death!"

You will have guessed by now, dear reader, who was the target of this curse. Before blood could return to the Calcutta rooster's comb, the cantor of Ladam's voice was gone; not a sound could he emit without croaking.

Pious individuals might discern the source of this calamitous blow, and even among such holy ones few, if any, were willing to talk about it. For everyone else, it was unexplainable, to the cantor most of all. Had he been a person of good deeds, devout intercession on his behalf might have been enlisted and who knows what would have been the result? But the cantor's merit, unfortunately, weighed next to nothing on the scales of Heavenly justice. Nevertheless, he solicited help from saintly rabbis reputed to be miracle-workers, all to no avail.

In desperation he traveled to the court of the Rebbe of Apt and demanded a private audience. On his knees, he begged the Tzaddik for relief from the affliction that had stricken him without warning, refusing to leave without it; all in all, a pitiful sight to behold.

The Rebbe could not bear to see this man suffer any longer without reacting. He told the cantor that the decree—whether it came from Above or from Below—was irrevocable. And he could not help but add a small measure of consolation.

"My dear cantor, know that your hoarseness will last until you die. But, at the time of your death, when you recite the Final Confessional, you will do so in a voice so clear, so musical, that it will resound in the halls of the Heavenly Palace."

"And until then?"

"It's lost."

"But why, Rebbe, for what reason?" And he persists, unwilling to leave.

At last, the Tzaddik relents; he tells him of the informer, of the rooster, and of the curse.

"If that is the case," cries the cantor in his broken voice, "if that story is true, I will have my revenge!" and he storms out.

"Revenge?," the Rebbe calls after him, "on whom, and how?" But the cantor has gone.

This took place on a Tuesday, or perhaps a Wednesday. At any event, that Thursday evening when the fishermen of Apt rowed out on the river to haul in their catch of fish for the Sabbath, their nets appeared to weigh more than usual. When they pulled the nets up out of the water, in them they found the drowned body of the cantor of Ladam.

He had evidently jumped from the little bridge over the river. Clinging to the Rebbe of Apt's consoling promise that his voice would return at the time of his death when he recited the final confessional, he had resolved to do so underwater. Since he could not open his mouth to repent aloud, the restored voice lay trapped within him. This was his revenge, as will shortly be made clear.

No sooner was the cantor buried outside the graveyard according to the established rite for suicides, than the imps from Below reclaimed his soul and brought him to the Admissions clerk at the Gates of Hell. The standard questions were put to him: where was he from, what sort of work did he do, but he refused to answer. The clerk's assistants prodded him with sharp spears, they raked him with burning coals, still he maintained silence, would not answer.

"Take him just as he is!"

The questions were a mere formality; in Hell they knew all about him, in fact, they'd been anticipating his arrival for quite a while. He was led to a cauldron of boiling water that seethed and bubbled as if expecting him personally. Just before being cast in, the cantor allowed himself the privilege of using his voice again.

It burst forth in *Yisgadal*, the Kaddish of N'ilah, the closing service for the Day of Atonement, in all its former splendor and intensity.

He sang *b'-olmo di-v'ro khir'usei...* and as he sang his voice grew brighter... darker... rousing… soothing... sweet and glorious as before... even more so, higher... deeper... ascending to great heights and plunging equally low.

The boiling cauldrons, from which had emanated the bloodcurdling noise of anguished groans and hysterical wails, were now hushed. Nothing but silence--until from within was heard

an accompanying hum to the Kaddish. Lids were slowly lifted, scorched faces appeared, blistered lips offered a response...

Satan's crew, caught in the midst of stoking the flames, were stricken dumb! They stood about, functionless, bewildered—their devilish implements in hand: pokers, tridents, logs—either frozen by the cantor's prayer or convulsing and thrashing about on the ground in epileptic fits.

The cantor's Kaddish soared as the fires faded into glowing embers, and the dead climbed painfully out of the cauldrons and began to join in. As each verse was completed, the flesh of these Worshipers in Hell began to heal, their souls miraculously became whole again.

When the cantor reached the Amidah and his voice rang out with the blessing, "Who Quickens the Dead," his otherworldly choir of penitents responded as one: "Amen," with such fervor that one might have imagined a resurrection was taking place right then and there.

So powerful was this multitudinous cry that the heavens opened on high and the repentance of these wicked ascended to the Seventh--the highest--Palace and arrived before the Throne of Mercy.

It was a moment of grace so overwhelming that the former sinners—instantaneously become saints--grew wings! One after the other they flew from the jaws of Hell through the open doors of Paradise...

The only ones remaining Below were Satan's minions, writhing in shock and dismay, and the cantor, who never left his prayer stand. As he had done on earth, so in Hell had he brought his congregation of sinners to repentance.

But he was unable to accomplish the same for himself… there was the Final Confessional that had not been uttered… and that unfortunate matter of the suicide...

It did not take very long for Hell to fill up once more. Management expanded the accommodations, but it is still just as crowded as before.

*At the same time that I. L. Peretz (1852-1915) urged his fellow Jews in earnest essays to carve out a lasting niche for themselves as a folk among other European peoples by virtue of their own rich culture, he was writing whimsical satires like "***N'ilah in Hell***," which places its hero--a cantor--in the untenable position of defying a pre-ordained fate. The fantastical Yiddish story from which this translation was excerpted, appears in* **Alle Verk fun Y. L Peretz***, New York, Tsiko Bikher Farlag, 1948, vol. 15.*

DIVREI K'RIAH

Anfei Hayim Triennial Haftarah System

By Arianne Brown and Rachel Goldsmith

> The ***T'shuvah on Haftarot for a Triennial Cycle Torah Reading*** was composed by Rabbi Avram Israel Reisner and approved by the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards (CJLS) of The Rabbinical Assembly on April 30, 2014. Triennial Torah reading had been approved by the CJLS in 1988, and the Committee eventually recognized that pairing a short Torah reading with a long Haftarah diminished the impact of the Torah reading.

In the Fall of 2016, we at Congregation Adas Israel in Washington DC became the first in the Conservative and Masorti movements to implement the triennial Haftarah reading cycle as the standard in our main service. The implementation was complex and included many constituencies of the congregation. The success of our B'nei Mitzvah program as well as adult congregational engagement has been enhanced by our use of the triennial system. This article will explain the motivations, implementation process, and results of the introduction of triennial Haftarah reading at Adas Israel.

It did not take long for our core Shabbat morning attendees to notice that our traditional Haftarah practice was not in sync with our triennial Torah reading. In some ways, the Haftarah reading felt more sacrosanct than the abbreviated Torah readings, despite the knowledge that *k'riat ha-torah* occupies a stronger place in our tradition. The themes and connections between these two readings were also disconnected much of the time. The amount of listening time that the Haftarah took made it difficult to maintain the energy level of the service and was often out of proportion to the Torah reading.

By 2012, when Cantor Brown arrived, discussion concerning the length of *haftarot* was already underway. Adas Israel celebrates between 50-75 B'nei Mitzvah per year. We do not have the luxury of matching B'nei Mitzvah dates to students' future abilities to recite long passages of Hebrew text. Many of the youngsters recited arbitrarily shortened *haftarot.* Shortening a student's Prophetic portion well into the tutoring process often resulted in hurt feelings and a sense of inadequacy. Clergy and staff were seeking a better, more systematic way of providing a more consistent, shorter length of text. As we began searching for options, we found that the Rabbinical Assembly had already begun working on this issue. [1]

As the CJLS noted in its 2014 *T'shuvah*:

> Though the specific occasion of his ruminations was a different one, David bar Samuel HaLevy writes in his commentary *Magen david* to *Orah hayyim* 284, in #1, that it is necessary that everyone recognize that the Torah is more important than the prophetic portion, and that we not allow a situation where "the honor granted the Torah portion and the prophetic portion be equal."

The secondary motivation of the CJLS was to expand the text presented to the congregation.

[1] Rabbinical Assembly, Committee on Jewish Law and Standards "*T'shuvah* on *Haftarot* for a Triennial Cycle Torah Reading," OH 284:1.2014a, p.4.

We are able, in this way, to add into the canon of *haftarot* many sections of the prophets, particularly the former prophets, that are not now familiar to our congregants, as well as additional readings from the poetry of the latter prophets. For the traditional Haftarah, abridged, need not be repeated for each reading of the *parashah*.

In selecting the texts for this system, the *T'shuvah* issued several *p'sakim*. First, *haftarot* were permitted to have fewer than 21 verses, preferably 10-15.[2] Secondly, it included a lectionary of selected texts for each iteration of the triennial cycle.

Through a process of study and deliberation, Adas Israel Congregation embarked on a journey to be the first congregation to implement this new system of readings. The decision was made to begin using the triennial text with the onset of the first year of the triennial reading with *B'reishit* of 5777 in the fall of 2016.

The idea of a triennial Haftarah system was brought before our Ritual Practices Committee. They read Rabbi Avram Reisner's *t'shuvah* and came together for discussion. The majority agreed that shorter selections, with thematic connections to *k'riat ha-torah*, would enhance our services and better connect with our Torah reading process. The largest concern raised by the committee was that many people feel a connection to their particular Bar/Bat Mitzvah *parashah* along with its traditional Haftarah, as a connection to Jewish communities around the world. To address this concern, our Religious Practices Committee adopted the triennial system with a measure of flexibility. Triennial would become our default, but if requested, traditional *haftarot* would be allowed in full.

Once the decision to implement the new system was made, staff recognized that a new infrastructure would need to be created for educational as well as congregational purposes. These efforts proceeded in two parallel processes.

For congregational use, we needed to provide a supplemental compilation of the new *haftarot*. It was important to our congregation that publication of these texts would meet a high aesthetic standard. With hundreds of attendees each Shabbat morning, handout sheets would be cumbersome and wasteful. We decided to create and publish a supplemental book.

Our triennial haftarah publication committee was formed, with hand-picked members who had skills relating to the Jewish calendar, proofreading text in both Hebrew and English, and design. Rabbi Reisner had provided introductory notes connecting his new Haftarah selections to the triennial Torah reading. We decided to elaborate on these introductions along with filling in some blanks. These introductions were divided and assigned to each of our clergy members and some committee members.

The publication committee recognized that making the new system clear and understandable would be critical to its acceptance. They worked diligently to create a legible and understandable table in the back of the book, where users could find the Haftarah selection pertaining to a particular *parashah* in a particular year. The table also references whether each Haftarah is found in the *Etz Hayim Torah and Commentary* (2001) or in the supplement. This table needed to clearly lay out a plan for double *parshiyot*, special *Shabbatot*, and holidays.

[2] *Ibid.*

The committee focused on graphics, layout, and design. Our title, *Anfei Hayim,* is meant to relate to the larger *Etz Hayim.* With Torah as the "tree," we view the words of the Prophets as its "branches." This led the graphic designer on our team to make titles, introductions and Haftarah text as clear and correct as possible.

After obtaining permission from DavkaWriter© to use their texts, we needed to carefully edit for inconsistencies in punctuation, vowels, and trope. The English translations, used with permission from the Jewish Publication Society, were carefully aligned with the Hebrew texts.

For educational and implementation purposes, our efforts began long before publication of the supplement. In the year leading up to the start of the triennial Haftarah system, we held several congregational study sessions after Shabbat morning services for congregants to learn and ask questions. We prepared a letter for the inaugural class of B'nei Mitzvah families to introduce the new system, invite them to a congregational study session, and to open communication lines for feedback.

The preparation of educational materials for B'nei Mitzvah students began early. Because many of the texts were "off book," no pre-built resources existed for these new texts. We also discovered that much of the Prophetic writings were not included in Trope Trainer©.[3]

At Adas Israel, B'nei Mitzvah students enrolled in our educational programs are provided with 6-8 months of in-house tutoring. By extraction, our Triennial Year One teaching materials needed to be prepared by January preceding the implementation. Our team invested significant time in identifying text editions that contained markings important for cantillation. Those texts were excised, enlarged, digitized and organized in such a way that they are now available for our students in future years. Additionally, the B'nei Mitzvah education staff prepared recordings of all the new texts for reference purposes, matching the resources already available to Adas Israel students for traditional texts. All of the new materials are now resident in both our internal system, as well as accessible through our Mitzvah Tools platform for easy access by our students. It was critical that these new materials matched the level of precision offered by Trope Trainer© and the *Simanim* series of *Tikkunim*.[4] Additionally, we educated all of our staff who interact with parents and students about how the system would work and how to answer or refer questions.

We were aiming to start the system with *B'reishit* of 5777 when we realized that the first two *haftarot* of the year happened to be the traditional ones assigned in the triennial system to *B'reishit* and *Noah*. The coordinated start of the new system therefore occurred on November 12, 2016 at the Bat Mitzvah of Lindsay Grosser, when she chanted the triennial year one Haftarah of *Lekh l'kha* from the newly published ***Anfei Hayim***, Judges 6:24-32 (vs. the traditional Haftarah, Isaiah 40:27-42:6). During the service the Publication Committee received an Aliyah and the entire congregation recited *Birkhat she-heheyanu* for this singular achievement.

[3] **Trope Trainer** ©, by Kinnor Software is used to generate text sheets for each student.

[4] The ***Simanim*** **Series** is published by *Makhon Simanim* of Feldheim Publishers. These meticulous editions provide distinguishing cantillation and vowel markings which aid students and are found in the Trope Trainer© software as well. These include *sh'va na* and *sh'va nah*, *kamats katan, kadma* and *pashta*, among other subtle learning aids.

All B'nei Mitzvah families are given the option of chanting the traditional Haftarah in place of the new triennial selection. It was thought that families with a direct connection to the Haftarah or *parashah*, or children with a particular aptitude would opt for the traditional text. Over the course of the first two years of implementation, only two celebrants chose the traditional text: One was because of a family connection, and one was for the challenge of completing the whole text. All the other families whose celebrants had the capacity to master additional text opted to learn additional Torah readings. As we were using the Triennial system, these requests resulted in additional Torah reading of from 3 to more than 20 verses.

There had been concerns voiced in the implementation process that the congregation might miss the traditional texts. In practice, there was little feedback in this mode. Because the first year of triennial *haftarot* contains 75% traditional abbreviated texts, the impact was small. By the second year, when closer to 50% of the texts were new, the congregation had already acclimated to using the new book. Our adult congregants, when chanting a Haftarah on a non-Bar Mitzvah Shabbat, were given the option of Traditional or Triennial *haftarot*. Approximately 75% of these selected the Triennial text. Our adults were excited about the new texts and stories, as well as the brevity of the selections. For our teachers and tutors, the opportunity to engage with new text was fulfilling and greeted with enthusiasm.

Challenges remain with the implementation of the Triennial Haftarah system. Certain *shabbatot* still have *haftarot* that are longer than the triennial target of 10 verses. Most of the longer *haftaro*t are traditional readings for holidays and *shabbatot* where B'nei Mitzvah are not usually scheduled. These include the readings for *Shabbat Shuvah*, the High Holydays and the Festivals. Some prime B'nei Mitzvah dates also remain challenging. In particular, *Mahar hodesh* comes in at 24 verses, and *Shabbat rosh hodesh* is 18 verses. Depending on the capacity of the celebrant, we have sometimes further abbreviated these readings. Luckily, because the congregation is now accustomed to a 10-12 verse Haftarah, it is not embarrassing for the child whose text needs to be abbreviated.

A significant drawback of the system is the connection of the student to the text for the future. Whereas a traditional text, once learned, can be used annually in any synagogue, our new triennial texts are, for now, specific to our congregation. Even here, the student would wait another three years for their particular reading to come around again. As we are a large synagogue with many B'nei Mitzvah, there are limited opportunities for B'nei Mitzvah to celebrate their anniversaries with a Haftarah reading. We do, however, invite our students to accept an anniversary Aliyah and, if available, to chant a Torah portion for that Shabbat. This usually entails reading new material from a subsequent year of the triennial system.

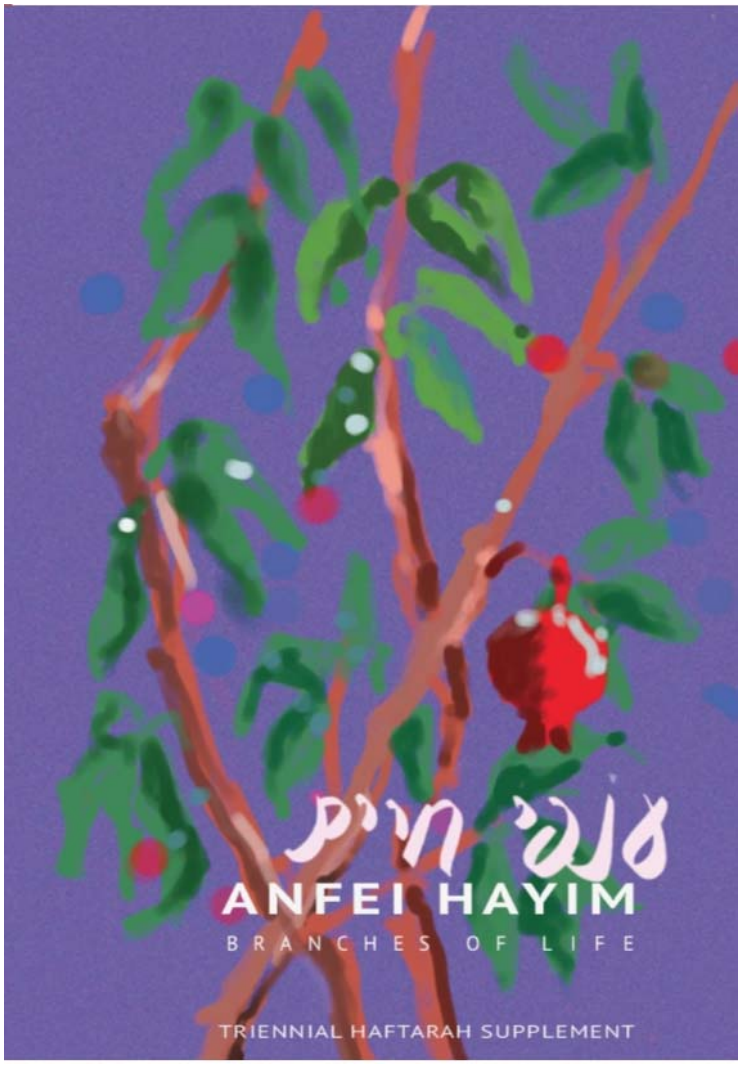
As previously mentioned, the triennial Haftarah system continues to lack appropriate study materials and tools. The infrastructure around the traditional texts is extensive. We rely heavily on tools like Trope Trainer© for resources and materials. Additionally, some students use other cantillation apps or websites to see or hear text. We hope that with the implementation of this system in more congregations, Kinnor.Software will opt to support our effort and add these new texts to Trope Trainer©.

Finally, a minor challenge arose with the distribution of our new *Anfei Hayim* books. We printed them with paper covers. While attractive and lightweight, they are also very appealing to the Gan pre-school students who come to our sanctuary for Shabbat Sing each Friday morning.

We have had to replace a number of covers due to curious little hands. Should we issue a second edition, we will recommend a hard cover binding for synagogue use.

Arianne Brown, *Hazzan at Congregation Adas Israel in Washington DC, holds a Bachelor of Music Education/Voice from Rutgers University and was invested at the Jewish Theological Seminary. Specializing in Yiddish music, she performed with the Folksbiene Yiddish Theater and appeared at Carnegie Hall, Safra Hall, Disney Hall, the Krakow Jewish Music Festival and Warsaw's Ida Kaminska State Theatre. Her recordings include* **Suddenly Spirited**, **Eternal Flame–A Yiddish Love Story***, and a children's album entitled* **Shabbat Sing!**

Rachel Goldsmith, *Ritual Director at Adas Israel, was invested at the Jewish Theological Seminary, receiving an MA in Sacred Music. In addition, she holds degrees from Bryn Mawr College and the University of Michigan. She has taught in Jewish day schools and the Hebrew Home of Greater Washington and has appeared with her barbershop quartet* ***Pearl*** *for the Baltimore Orioles at Camden Yards and for the George Washington University Colonials.*



One Day in the Life of a Berlin-based Liberal Woman Cantor

By Jalda Rebling

In December of 2018, I was privileged to officiate at a service in a hall in the town of Landshut, Bavaria, where three generations of Jewish women received their first Aliyah to the Torah. Their Grandmother, a Holocaust survivor, had translated over 300 books, including those of Amos Oz, into German. I chose a Shabbat *Minhah* service because it included a Torah reading, it was brief, and because Grandma could not endure a long ceremony.

After she read the first portion, I asked whether Grandma had ever had an Aliyah. "No," she replied; "Well, let's recite the *She-heheyanu*." I called up her three daughters for the second Aliyah; each of them read a single *pasuk* and then handed the *yad* to another sister. "Have any of you ever received an Aliyah?" "No"; so, a second *She-heheyanu* for the daughters. Finally, it was the turn of the 26-year-old Bat Mitzvah, who had requested that the ceremony take place while her grandmother was still in this world. There was not a dry eye in the room as Grandma gave the celebrant a new name in memory of her great-grandmother, *Malkah*. Prior to Shabbat we had tied *tsitsiyot* knots for the Bat Mitzvah's *tallit*, and I quoted my teacher Rabbi Shalom Shachter's explanation: "It's the fringes that make the garment holy, and *we* are those fringes."

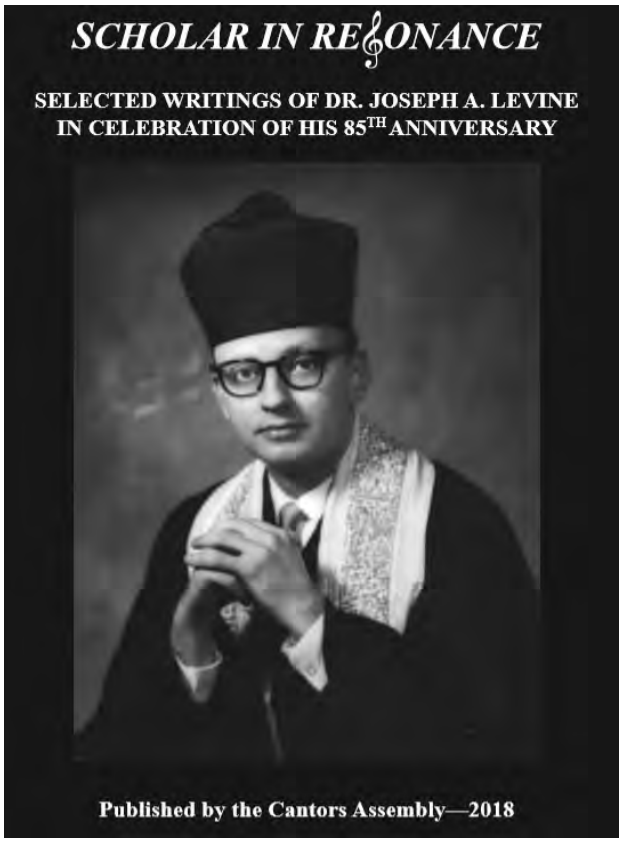
Jalda Rebling holds hazzanic S'mikhah from the ALEPH Institute in Philadelphia, serves at Congregation Ohel ha-Chidusch in Berlin and teaches at the European Academy for Jewish Liturgy in London. Her article **"*Tehillim* in Jewish, Christian and Islamic Usage"** *appeared in JSM March 2014.*

Three generations of women's hands holding the *tsitsiyot* of their granddaughter's Bat Mitzvah *tallit*. Grandma Mirjam passed away one month after this picture was taken.

REVIEWS

Scholar in Resonance—Selected Writings of Dr. Joseph A. Levine—in Celebration of His 85th Anniversary, The Cantors Assembly, 2018

Reviewed by Marsha Bryan Edelman



It is not uncommon for colleagues to produce a *Festschrift* to honor a significant milestone in the life of one of their own. What is less common is for the celebrant to offer his own gift to his community–and yet that is precisely what Joe Levine has done in producing *Scholar in Resonance: Selected Writings of Dr. Joseph A. Levine in Celebration of his 85th Anniversary*. The result is an impressive collection of essays Levine had previously produced (largely since 2000, although a few predate the current century, and the sole musical composition, a *Yizkor* in the style of Yossele Rosenblatt, was written in 1959), as well as one final "preview" of an article that appeared in these pages last fall. An added bonus are the delightful hand-drawn sketches that he has scattered throughout.

Readers familiar with Levine's *Synagogue Song in America* (White Cliffs Media, 1989, reprinted by Jason Aronson, 2001) will find that the author has remained faithful to the themes he espoused in that volume. Notwithstanding its title, Levine devoted seven of that book's eight chapters to an historic overview of the origins of Ashkenazic Jewish musical tradition, from the psalmody of the ancient Jerusalem Temple through the evolution of the liturgy in the post-Temple era, the development of nusah and *mi-Sinai* melodies (and the influence of cantillation on them). Filled with charts and illustrations, it provides a comprehensive examination of synagogue liturgical music. Only in the final chapter does Levine offer much on the condition of synagogue music in America, and there he makes no effort to conceal his distress over the popularization of synagogue song, to the detriment of the glorious traditions of old.

The current volume helpfully organizes disparate articles into themes that echo the ideas Levine continues to espouse nearly 40 years later. The first group (following introductions by Cantors Charles Davidson and Stephen Stein as well as Levine's own dedication and "A Theory on the Motive Force That Drives Synagogue Prayer" [2000]) is devoted to "The Aesthetic of Jewish Worship." In these five essays, all written between 2001 and 2012, the author most clearly reiterates his world view on the origins, the nature and the ideal purposes of synagogue music. Levine's command of the subject, and of a wide range of related topics referenced in numerous footnotes, is simply breathtaking.

The next two segments of the volume are certainly no less impressive, but they do branch out into somewhat broader topics. Part II, "A Golden Past," offers articles about Yossele Rosenblatt, a compare-and-contrast appreciation of Leib Lantz and Pierre Pinchik, and a tribute to Abba Weisgal's career (the subject of Levine's doctoral dissertation). Part III, "The Afterglow," includes an appreciation of David Kusevitsky, a lengthy examination of Yiddish dance songs, and the different ways in which Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews reveal their attitudes about key biblical figures–and themselves–through their folk songs.

In the volume's final essays, grouped under the banner "What Lies Ahead," Levine returns to his concerns about synagogue music's future by offering his views about then-contemporary practices in 1984 ("A Modest Synagogue Proposal") and 1995 ("Musical Continuity and the Jewish Community"). He also addresses the current era in "A Song at Twilight–Options for a Changed Cantorate." (The opening essay of part three, "Last Chants for the Cantorate," dated 1983-84, might just as easily have been assigned to this section as well). Levine earnestly believes in the power of synagogue song to rescue congregants from disinterest and down-right boredom, but he disdains their choices of musical vocabulary, as well as the efforts of both rabbis and cantors to use congregational participation as a literal "rallying song" that displaces nusah from its accustomed and well-deserved role. In these thoughtful essays–and indeed, throughout his career--Levine has adopted a prophetic role for himself: pointing out the liturgical sins of worshipers and their leaders; recalling past "glory days" as inspiring models to emulate; and holding out the promise of a future in which the righteous shall be restored to greatness–or at least, to well-informed musical choices.

A reviewer who merely indulges in extravagant praise of their subject can legitimately be accused of a lack of objectivity. In the interest of full disclosure, I will happily confess that I have been the fortunate colleague of Joe Levine for more than 30 years. In addition to being quoted in the book, it was I who commissioned one of this collection's essays, for an academic symposium on Jewish music.

Certainly, one who is so inclined, can find fault with Levine's volume. There are numerous typographical and formatting errors throughout the book that are distracting and make some passages difficult to read. More substantively, Levine's many footnotes can sometimes be off-putting, seeming, at times, to display the author's broad-ranging erudition rather than adding substantively to the topic at hand, and occasionally failing to sufficiently elucidate a reference with which most readers will be unfamiliar. Such complaints, however, are trivial, and pale in comparison to the enormous gift that Joe Levine has given to all of us in celebration of his 85th year. May we all continue to learn from our gifted teacher for years to come – *ad meiah v'esrim*!

Dr. Marsha Bryan Edelman is Professor Emerita of Music and Education, Gratz College; and Adjunct Professor of Music, H. L. Miller Cantorial School, Jewish Theological Seminary of America. Marsha holds advanced degrees in general music, Jewish music and Jewish studies from Columbia University and the Jewish Theological Seminary, has taught Jewish music to students of all ages for more than 40 years, and conducts three different Jewish choral ensembles. Since 1971 she has been affiliated with the Zamir Choral Foundation, and currently serves as its Administrator. Dr. Edelman, author of ***Discovering Jewish Music*** (2003), *was recently appointed* ***Co-editor for the Journal of Synagogue Music.*** *Her article,* ***"A Moment in Time: Odessa and Its Unsung Composer−Pinchas Minkowsky (1859-1924)."*** *appears earlier in this issue.*

Joshua R. Jacobson's *Chanting the Hebrew Bible*: *The Art of Cantillation*; Second, Expanded Edition (2017)

Reviewed by Neil Schwartz

The author prefaces this 845-page volume with an assurance that, despite the book's being long, heavy and technical with musical notation and strange diagrams, "it is worth the effort to explore." This reviewer would tend to agree. The many improvements in this Second, Expanded Edition warrant study and regular use.

As in the original edition, chapters 1 and 2 introduce the concept that *trop* (Yiddish: Bible-reading neumes) is first a system of punctuation, then a system of accentuation, and lastly a system of intonation or chanting. They then explore the syntax of biblical Hebrew and posit a detailed method of using "nested" and "stepping" diagrams to show relationships among text phrases and segments. They explain the neumes (*t'amim)* as a way of reflecting the syntax of biblical Hebrew texts via the concept of a "complement" as a "syntactic unit" that gives information about the verb in a sentence. This "unit" could be a subject, an object of the verb, an adverb, or a prepositional phrase that functions as an adverb.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 explore pronunciation of biblical Hebrew, including the *dagesh*, the *sheva*, and the *kamats* in all their variations. They analyze the Masoretic tradition of cantillation, and theories about sources of the *t'amim*. They also provide information on "parsing" and teaching biblical texts.

Chapter 6, comprising 40% of the book, shows how to musically notate each *trop* in a way that reflects the accented syllable, by using two different shades of gray behind the relevant notes. It also gives full notation for the various "systems" of trop in the Ashkenazic tradition: Torah, Haftarah, Esther, *Eikhah, Shir ha-shirim* and *Kohelet,,* and High Holiday Torah.

Chapter 7 contains new material beyond what appeared in the First Edition (2002). Readers familiar with the "vertical" format of trope comparison charts in the writings of Abraham Idelsohn (e.g., *Tol'dot ha-n'ginah ha'ivrit*, 1924 and *Jewish Music*, 1929), will welcome this edition's horizontal chart. This chapter then discusses "The Ideal Reader" and includes a "Guide to the Readings," a supplement to the grammar details found in the annual *Luah* (Liturgical Calendar) prepared by Rabbi Miles Cohen (info@milesb.cohen.com). A large Glossary then offers changes and additions, including the feminine forms of Hebrew terms that identify a person's ritual role.

The book ends with an expanded Bibliography and an Index that the earlier edition notably lacked. There are over 50 additional items in the Bibliography, mostly new books and articles written during the last fifteen years. This expanded edition also includes a separate "Index of Biblical and Rabbinic Passages" at the end of the book.

In a 2017 interview, the author made clear that he had written *Chanting the Hebrew Bible* to present the systems underlying the structure and logic of biblical syntax and cantillation. His academic argument was that by understanding these underlying textual and musical systems, one could learn to chant biblical texts more easily and more accurately. In both the First Edition and a Student Edition that followed in 2005, an accompanying CD was included that demonstrated the chants for *trop* motifs. There were 73 musical examples of Torah segments and 14 summary examples of the other five *trop* systems.

The CD has been replaced with a website containing all of the above audio files and many more riches: www.chantingthehebrewbible.com . The home page has tabs labeled with over 330 musical examples for all six *trop* systems: "Watch," which so far has three videos; "Read," with books and four articles; "Insights," which delves into five issues; and "Connect," with links to 13 other *trop*-related websites.

Among other changes and improvements in this Expanded Second Edition are the fonts used for the English and Hebrew texts. There are two main advantages that result from this change: both the English and Hebrew texts are more legible, and Dr. Jacobson was able to "tighten up" the spacing on each page using these very clear fonts. While the Second Edition is 120 pages shorter than the First Edition, almost nothing was left out.

Among Jacobson's innovations is the use of one shade of gray to highlight accented musical notes in the "core" of each *trop* motif, and a lighter shade of gray for a final unaccented note when appropriate. In the First Edition, the darker of the two shades of gray interfered with the legibility of the notes on the music staffs, and in the Student Edition, this interference was worse. The Second Edition solves the problem by lightening the tones of both the "medium gray" on the accented notes and the "lighter gray" highlighting a final unaccented note.

Another subtle improvement is moving discussion of the *Tevir* segment from that of the *Tipp'kha* segment. It now appears after the *Segol* segment in Chapter 2, and after the *Zakeif* segment in most of Chapter 6. Given that *Tipp'kha* is a "Level 2" disjunctive and *T'vir* is a weak "Level 3" disjunctive, this rearrangement makes more sense. Also, the concept of "*elision*" has been given the new term "*redistribution*" during discussions about "sharing" *trop* notes when one word is fairly long and the word before or after it is very short.

My only complaint about this book has nothing to do with its contents. After only two weeks of light use, the binding separated inside the front of the book, a problem shared by the *Etz Hayim Torah and Commentary*, also produced by the Jewish Publication Society. Despite this reservation, the improvements and additions to the text, the new Index and enlarged Bibliography, the clear fonts and visual presentation, and the added charts make this book a "must-have" for the regular use of everyone who chants and teaches *trop*.

Neil Schwartz holds a Master of Arts in Religion and Culture from The University of Saskatchewan. He teaches Trop and Nusah online for Hebrew College and notates music for **Trope Trainer™** *and* **Tefillah Trainer™** *teaching software for Kinnor.com. The Cantors Assembly published his Trop Flashcards, and he currently serves as Spritual Leader for Congregation Agudath Achim in Shreveport, Louisiana. His article,* **"Comparing Nusah ha-t'fillah, Arabic Maqamat and Hindustani Ragas,"** *appeared in the March 2017 Journal.*

Judit Niran Frigyesi's *Writing on Water—The Sounds of Jewish Prayer* (Budapest−New York, CEU Press, 2018

Reviewed by Joseph A. Levine

Judit Niran Frigyesi is an associate professor of Ethnomusicology at Bar Ilan and Tel Aviv Universities, whose research includes music of the 19th and 20th centuries, focusing on that of Bela Bartok, ritual music outside of the European tradition, and the prayer chant of Ashkenazi Jews. *Writing on Water*, an attempt to capture the musical essence of prayer, was prompted by Frigyesi's fieldwork among traditional Jews under Communist suppression in Budapest and Prague during the years 1978-1981. Their semi-secret services echo Elie Wiesel's term for Russian Refuseniks: *The Jews of Silence* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, 1966).

In the first of three sections−**The Sound of A Thousand Walls**−Frigyesi uses utmost discretion in easing her informants' discomfort, to ensure that their singing not become "unnaturally subdued and at the same time, somewhat theatrical" (p.49). Her research shows further that the *davenen* of her informants incorporated "a mishmash of whatever Jews found among surrounding peoples" (p.66). Gärtner and Jenö Roth, two *ba'alei t'fillah*, stressed that "the most important thing is to pray with *kavvanah*… we never spoke about dates and melody and origin" (p.69). Their second point: "Every *ba'al t'fillah* has his… version… as long as he keeps to the basic rules… But this is not easy… and not every *ba'al t'fillah* can do it" (p.71).

Years later, after her emigration to America, Frigyesi listened over and over again to her recording of Roth's *Mimkom'kha* from the *Kedushah* for *Shaharit l'shabbat*, wondering why a particular passage stood out as being different from the cantorial flourishes that went before. She thought: "This is not song; but it is not *davenen* either, nor is it *nusah*. What is it, then?" She found her answer in *Sefer Han-niggunim* (Samuel Zamanoff, ed., 1956), a collection of Chabad Hasidic songs, under the section *Niggunei ga'agu'im*−Songs of Longing. As Jenö Roth had put it: "In Miskolc, at the Hasidic Yeshivah, we sang melodies that long for… I don't know how to say it… for that… for that place. For *Him*."

Frigyesi realized that her informants' singing had included heterogenous secular melodies that had simply "come their way" (pp.78-81). She contrasts this well-intentioned but ultimately random *davenen* with the "clear and structured melodies of the *Neolog* (Hungarian term for

Moderate Reform; *Liberale* in German-speaking lands) services at the Budapest Rabbinical Seminary when the choir would periodically reassure everyone with a pompous and noble *amein*.

> *Davenen*, on the other hand, vibrates with the tension of unanswerable questions, myriads of muddled emotions, memories and forebodings… stirred up and pulled… like forces in a magnetic field… a journey [that] cannot arrive home (p.116).

Instead of concerning itself with exact pitches, traditional *davenen* "vibrates with the tension of unanswered questions… a journey [that] cannot arrive home" (p.116).

The book's second section−**Voices**−reflects on various aspects of prayer; for example, a lay person's opinion concerning recordings: "It is not… alive (p.190). Concerning the rabbi's ban of the organ from the Rabbinical Seminary's service: "A big mistake" (p.191). This section also reveals the amazing tolerance shown for each other by the *Neolog* and Orthodox communities during the decade just before World War II. In Szeged during the High Holidays, *Kohanim* from the Orthodox community left in the middle of their service, walked over to the Neolog synagogue to bless their more liberal co-religionists, and then went back to continue the prayer in their *shul.*

The book's closing section−**Shards and Flowers**−offers various informants' personal observations: "in memory of those who did not come back." One comment in particular, from an Orthodox survivor, sums up what Frigyei's tribute to what that lost world of pre-War Hungarian Jewish ritual was all about:

> When it comes to tradition [and modernity]: one would like to be in both places at the same time. It's no different today, or in any era; people would like to be traditional−but also modern. And nobody knows how… (p. 244).

The overleaf to Judit Frigyesi's book calls it "a witness to the Jews of Budapest and Prague during the era of Communism [that] goes beyond documentation." Using the testimony of those who lived through it, she has held up a mirror to the semi-secret *davenen* of her Hungarian co-religionists under Communist repression. The image she conveys is of a musical language so elusive that it has left no more of a trail than would *Writing on Water*.

Joseph A. Levine has edited the Journal of Synagogue Music since 2004. To mark his 85th anniversary, The Cantors Assembly produced a limited-edition volume of his selected writings and lectures, entitled ***Scholar in Resonance*** *(2018), reviewed earlier in this REVIEWS section.*

T'fillat Shmuel—Selected Writings of Hazzan Samuel Rosenbaum (1919-1997)—Prepared on the Occasion of His 20th Yahrzeit

Reviewed by Robert Kieval

In this concise booklet, compiler and editor Matthew Austerklein has given us a literary portrait of Hazzan Samuel Rosenbaum as cantor, composer, poet, writer, speaker, educator, musician, superb executive and all-around Renaissance man—through the subject's own words. Remarkably, 20 years after his death and 70 years after the founding of the Cantors

Sam Rosenbaum ca. 1967 [JAL]

Assembly, Sam Rosenbaum's thoughts on so many areas of Jewish life still have immediacy for us today.

So vital was one particular issue, the admission of women to membership in the Cantors Assembly, that an addendum had to be sent out after *T'fillat Shmuel* had already been bound and distributed. In that addendum from 1987, Sam concluded that "*halakhah* must evolve if it is to be viable," and that "the voice of the people must be heard." This reviewer, who served as President of the CA when the final vote to admit women took place, can attest to how radical Sam's decision to place the matter to a final vote before the general membership seemed at the time. Yet, this giant step represented only one of Sam's many achievements as the Assembly's Executive Vice President.

Here are several more of Sam's deeply held convictions which *T'fillat Shmuel* conveys in its 65 pages plus the addendum's 5, totaling 70, a veritable "lifetime" of ideas:

The Cantors Assembly at 25 (1972)

As many lay people were present as were *hazzanim,* so popular has *hazzanut* been with the great Jewish masses… He hoped that that those who would be privileged to celebrate the Assembly's 50th anniversary would find the event as meaningful in their lives as those currently present.

***Hazzanut* is with People (1982)**

How do we cantors reach people? We must listen closely… and be prepared to respond using every aspect of a cantor's job description.

Towards a New Vision of *Hazzanut* (1989)

We must trust that increased Jewish literacy among the laity will lead them to make wise decisions… The synagogue must be more than a house of prayer: the spiritual powerhouse of the community… We must come down from on high and listen to what people have to say… The future is already here, we only have to step into it.

KTAV Publishing Company's "Living As a Jew" series (1969-1982)

There appeared from time to time, false prophets… Time has separated the genuine from the false. It was the true prophet who captured the universal truths of the Torah… chastise an erring people, predict its destruction… and then turn immediately to the task of comforting the remnant.

(How similar is this analysis to the way Sam habitually summed up the cantor's role as a consoler of people who'd gone astray, at annual CA conventions.)

Words About Music: Why *Hazzanut*? (1982)

Like poetry, it deals with what cannot be perceived… and brings people closer to the unthinkable.

On Rock and Roll (1969)

Like alcohol during the Prohibition era… it has taken on the aura of forbidden fruit… If the worship of God is to have meaning for us today, it must include the present along with the past and future.

Only a leader with the accumulated wisdom, both general and Judaic, displayed in the above brief excerpts could have led the Assembly through the various crises that arose during its tumultuous formative decades. I would, accordingly, suggest that the CA periodically sees fit to reprint selections from the wealth of articles written and reports given by Sam Rosenbaum over the years, on subjects pertaining to the American cantorate.

When added to the tantalizingly modest selection now made available in *T'fillat Shmuel*, this hopefully ongoing library would give future generations access to the liturgical knowledge and wise counsel of the Assembly's first Executive Vice President.

Jeffrey Summit's *Singing God's Words*: *The Performance of Biblical Chant in Contemporary Judaism* (American Musicspheres, 2016)

Reviewed by Scott Sokol

The past several decades have seen renewed academic interest in the cantillation of the Bible. Perhaps the most obvious example is Joshua Jacobson's tome, *Chanting the Hebrew Bible: The Complete Guide to the Art of Cantillation, 2002* (an expanded edition, reviewed earlier in this Journal issue by Neil Schwartz, was released in 2017). Entering into the conversation most recently is Jeffrey Summit's new book, the subject of this review. Summit has once again succeeded in raising awareness about an interesting area of ethnomusicology, while enriching our understanding of the Jewish community. Indeed, these two aspects of the discussion comprise the twin goals of Summit's scholarly research.

Jeffrey Summit is a rabbi and Jewish ethnomusicologist who has just become Jewish Chaplain Emeritus after serving as Executive Director of Tufts Hillel for forty years. With the eyes of a rabbi, Hillel professional, ethnomusicologist, instrumentalist and educator, Summit's preferred lens has always been a prism. His previous written work includes two important Jewish music volumes, *The Lord's Song in a Strange Land: Music and Identity in Contemporary Jewish Worship* (Oxford University Press, 2000) and together with photojournalist Richard Sobol, *Abayudaya: The Jews of Uganda* (Abbeville Press, 2002). This last work also resulted in a

GRAMMY Award nomination for his recording of *Abayudaya: Music from the Jewish People of Uganda* (Smithsonian Folkways Recordings).

In *Singing God's Words*, Summit's primary focus is not on typical cantillation scholarship. That is, he is not terribly interested in the theory behind cantillation–the syntax or development of the various trope systems. Nor is he concerned with improving the pedagogy of cantillation *per se* (although part of his discussion bears on this issue). Rather, his interest lies in understanding the sociological, anthropological and spiritual dimensions of Torah as a performative art. Namely, he wants to know how, and more importantly, why people choose to chant Torah in their prayer communities.

The book is organized into four sections. In Part 1, he considers the chanting of Torah from the perspective of religion and culture. This discussion includes unpacking the Torah service of Jewish worship and how its pageantry and symbolism sets up the historical and spiritual authenticity that provides a context for Torah chanting. I especially enjoyed the sections therein that dealt with the assigning of *aliyot* to the Torah: who gets them and why, as well as different rituals around calling up *olim*. Another fascinating discussion has to do with the insertion of prayers for the sick into the Torah service, and how these have become such an important mainstay of many congregations.

In Part II, Summit takes on what I consider to be the most important issues of the book, why Jews choose to chant Torah when no particular religious obligation exists for this practice. Summit points out that there is a significant disconnect for many Torah readers between what they understand about the text itself (often little to nothing) and the act of chanting itself, to which they subscribe significant meaning. There were many compelling discussions in this section, including some insights from one of my mentors, Saul Wachs, Professor of Education and Liturgy at Gratz College for over four decades, who pointed out that Torah reading re-establishes three types of roots for participants: the vertical roots of lineage that link us to the continuity of the Jewish people; the horizontal roots of peerage connecting us to others who share our identity; and finally the roots of linkage that connect us specifically to our own generational history–parents, grandparents and children. Part II also contains important discussions on the role of women reading Torah in contemporary society. I was particularly moved by one quote:

> When I am up here reading, I'm trembling… because I feel that there are hundreds of women standing up there with me, generations of women who never got to touch the Torah…to read Torah, and I'm reading for all of them." (p. 111)

In Part III, Summit explores the aesthetic values by which Torah reading is judged. This section to some degree provides the most treatment of musical performance. For example, although as cantors we know that trope errors are not supposed to be corrected unless they change the meaning of the text (e.g., missing a major disjunctive like *silluk* or *etnahta*), in practice, *gabba'im* often do correct for trope alone. Moreover, people who chant Torah spend hours painstakingly learning the trope sequences in order to present an authentic musical

rendering. What values uphold this practice is a question Summit seeks to understand. Also taken up in this section is how musical chanting helps convey meaning.

Finally, in Part IV, Summit considers modern technology and how it has impacted the learning of Torah chant. With the many computer programs and internet resources available today, the one-to-one relationship of teacher to pupil in learning to chant could arguably be a thing of the past. In reading this section, I was reminded of my own early learning of *ta'amei ha-mikrah*¸as a young child at Camp Ramah. My first trope system was for Torah reading, but after that came *Eikhah*, because summer camp offered an opportunity to participate in Tishah B'av services. I also learned Haftarah there, but when I asked to learn Megillah trope, there was no one at camp to teach me the system. Luckily, they found a cassette tape (also a relic of the past) for me to learn from. I distinctly remember how it felt to be learning in this way. On the one hand, I felt more "adult" in self-motivated learning, but also missed the connection to any person or tradition. Summit argues in this regard that although modern technology has the potential to depersonalize the process of learning to chant Torah, it doesn't have to be so. In truth, many cantors and educators are using the tools now available to them to make even stronger connections with their students.

Throughout this impressively comprehensive work, Summit's own love for chanting Torah is apparent. In his careful treatment of this material, we encounter a Jewish professional whose own interaction with the chanting of canonical text has clearly been a transformative experience. I highly recommend the book to cantors, Jewish educators, and of course to all those who, like Jeffrey Summit, have found deep meaning in biblical chant.

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Wayne Allen's *The Cantor–From the Mishnah to Modernity*
Wipf and Stock Publishers wipfandstock.com (541)-344-1528

Reviewed by Kimberly Komrad

The author of this comprehensive study was ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary, holds a Ph.D. from York University in Toronto, and has served as a congregational rabbi for 34 years. *The Cantor Controversy* traces the position of cantor in rabbinic literature from the 2nd century, when rabbis first realized that a *precentor* or *lector* was needed to lead public prayer, through contemporary times. It is a thorough exploration of what was written and discussed among the rabbis in every generation pertaining to the various qualities, qualifications, job descriptions, legal restrictions and limitations that were placed upon the cantor. Rabbi Allen recounts in minute detail the evolving rabbinic view of what and who the cantor should be, a view that from its inception, has always been controversial.

Rabbi Allen is clearly a proponent and supporter of cantors. He has been positively influenced and spiritually moved by them throughout his life and is convinced that the cantor is indispensable to Jewish worship specifically and to Jewish life in general. He regards many of the rules restricting cantors as "concessions to custom," and wrote this exposition of the cantor's role during the past 1900 years to help readers understand why it was always surrounded by controversy. He intends that this history of a most important position in synagogue life will "serve as a tool for accessing the past" and assessing the future of what has emerged as the profession of cantor.

Toward that end, the book cites rabbinic writings on the subject during the Mishnaic, Talmudic, Geonic, Medieval and Modern periods. It explores halakhic Responsa concerning the the cantor, tracing its history through every imaginable predicament. These include the cantor's humility, the pace of prayer, proper enunciation, how and when to dismiss a cantor, cantors who recite prayers by heart, blind cantors, cantors who don't understand the words of the liturgy, tardy cantors, the requirement of a pleasant voice, cantors who add words, cantors who swear falsely, cantors who sing secular songs, cantors whose reputations are damaged, cantors who prolong prayers, beardless cantors, drunken cantors, mourning cantors, spiteful cantors, blemished cantors and cantors accused of manslaughter.

Responsa examine the need for unanimous consent in appointing or replacing a cantor. They stipulate what mood a cantor's prayer should generate, how a cantor should be paid, who pays the cantor's salary and how disputes over a cantors' contract should be settled. They rule on the acceptability of a minor as cantor, of a convert as cantor, of a one-eyed cantor or of a cantor who is hard of hearing. They establish grounds for a cantor's dismissal, for the length of a cantor's *tallit*, the length of a cantor's contract, and the retention of a cantor whose family member's behavior is suspect. They determine the proper dress for a cantor, whether short sleeves are permitted. They decide whether a cantor may appear in a major role in an opera house or if an old and infirm cantor may be allowed to sit while leading prayers. They judge on the validity of dismissing a cantor who has violated the Sabbath or retiring a cantor whose voice and strength have weakened. In the 20th century they raise the question of allowing a mercy-killer (during the Holocaust) to serve as cantor, and in the 21st century they introduce the possibility of women cantors.

As the cantor's multiple functions grew, rabbis tried to limit what his role would entail, by attaching to the position an open-ended list of regulations and specifications. Indeed, since the rabbis had created the role of cantor, they felt it their prerogative to manage and control it. At first, rabbis steadfastly championed cantors, defending and standing up for them, for example, against criticism by laypeople who didn't want to pay two salaries. In fact, a tally of all the halakhic decisions cited by Rabbi Allen throughout the book reveals that 75% of them favor the cantor. Then, gradually, there came growing criticism by the rabbis as the cantor's role became increasingly important and more embraced by congregations, and as cantorial personalities and talents began to emerge and gain in popularity due to "the changes and challenges of synagogue life." All of these factors led to rising tensions between rabbis and cantors.

The author provides numerous entries that speak supportively and eloquently about the position of the cantor and the tremendous honor, value and responsibility of the office. One such entry is from *Mishpatei uziel*, Volume 3, Addendum No. 1– "The Value of a Cantor" (1935-1964):

> The prayer leader who is agreeable to the public and goes before the lectern according to Jewish practice is not like any other working craftsman who does his job with pay or without pay according to the will of those who engage him. Rather, he is the agent of Israel, each congregation being a microcosm of the collective. So, every prayer leader in his place is no less than the agent of all Israel to pray and recite holy words before the Holy One of Israel Who is esteemed in holiness.

Among proscriptions, several concern the cantor appearing on the opera stage or in the theatre. Others forbid the use of songs and melodies from those venues. In fact, some Responsa ban all secular tunes from the sacred liturgy.

The book does offer fascinating background information about a few very famous cantors, including their opinions about the role of the cantor, their concerns about the decline of the office and their colleagues' lack of professionalism and religious authenticity.

Pinchas Minkowsky (the subject of an article by Marsha Bryan Edelman, earlier in this Journal issue), provides a case in point. In his multi-volume *Modern Liturgy in Russian Synagogues* (1910) he established steps to raise the standards of cantors in Tsarist Russia. He advocated for the organization of cantors as well as the creation of a placement office through a cantors' union and an educational curriculum to increase appreciation of liturgical music. His principal concern was the conduct of the cantor within the synagogue and community. Here is a sampling from Minkowsky's "Eleven Rules:"

> Do not record synagogue compositions on the gramophone. Flee from that terrible development. Take a holy oath not to introduce into the liturgy any melody heard from that modern desecration.
>
> Do not sing the immoral compositions of Warsaw and Vilna. We are not like the other nations. We have only prayer and song in the service of our synagogues. Don't introduce them into the cabarets.
>
> Songs from the theater and concerts and all profane modern songs must under all circumstances be kept out of the synagogue service. We must guard the traditional modes of prayer like the eyes in our heads, for only the traditional prayer modes unify us in all synagogues. A singer who is not thoroughly versed in all the synagogue prayer modes should not be recommended as a cantor in the synagogue.

Rabbi Allen's book gives examples of the cantor's prominence in Jewish literature, folksongs, humor and folklore, all of which support the popular saying: *khazonim zenen naronim* (cantors are fools). One all-too-typical example:

> Stranger, questioning a Cantor reviled by everyone in the neighborhood: 'Why do you devote so much time to the synagogue, is it the money they pay you?'
>
> Cantor: "I don't get paid, not a penny!'

Stranger: 'Then why do you do it?"

Cantor: 'Why, for the honor, of course!'

The book concludes by examining the current state of the Cantorate: where it is going, whether it will reinvent itself; if it will survive and what form it will take. In summation, it finds the future quite promising:

> Given the history of cantorial transformation, there is good reason to believe it is still a work in progress rather than an institution that has run its course. The position of cantor has changed, evolved, transmogrified (as the title hazzan itself has) to suit the needs of the Jewish people. It should continue so. Rather than think and talk of "decline," we should be thinking "metamorphosis.

Wayne Allen's *The Cantor Controversy* provides important reference material for anyone concerned with today's ongoing restoration of the Cantorate to its vital place in Jewish life.

Kimberly Komrad has been hazzan at Kehilat Shalom in Gaithersburg, Maryland since 2002. Considered as one of the "12 most prominent contemporary Conservative cantors (Chicago Tribune), she served as chair of the Cantors Assembly's Seaboard Region, has lectured widely to diverse groups on the subject of "Women in the Cantorate," and is a certified "End-of-Life" specialist. Her review of the recording, **Selections from Marcia Falk's "Blessings"—in Song**, *appeared in JSM's Fall 2007 issue.*

Joey Weisenberg's *The Torah of Music*, Hadar Press, 2017.

Reviewed by Matthew Austerklein

Joey Weisenberg is one of the leading movers and shakers in Jewish music today. His warm spirit, his ability to help people come into the present moment with each other, with themselves, and with their spiritual side through the practice of communal singing, is a beautiful thing to watch. I remember fondly sitting together with a dozen or so other people—a motley crew united by their humble spirits and musical ears—in the choir loft of the Kane Street synagogue for Joey's first recording. Joey knew just how to guide us, how to help us unite as singers, how to sit in silence and have our spirits swing together on the monkey bars of each sweet melody.

Eight years later we have seen the ever-expanding growth of the type of singing and musical community modeled by Joey. During that time, he has issued five more recordings, two books, and has launched Hadar's "Rising Song Institute," a Philadelphia-based "music yeshiva" dedicated to cultivating spiritual life through song.

The Torah of Music is a new handbook for this movement, an ode to the blessings of singing, of music, and of the spiritual fruits it yields. The first part of the book comprises ten chapters of "Studies and Stories," each exploring the potential of music, dancing between Jewish religious texts, anecdotes and reflections on music as a spiritual practice. Looking at these studies, one can see the priorities and values that Joey's musical philosophy encourages, such as "Quieting" (Chapter 3), "Listening" (Chapter 4), "Joining Together Through Song" (Chapter 5), "Songs of Struggle" (Chapter 7) and "Brokenness & Wholeness" (Chapter 8). These chapters, which weave together diverse Jewish texts with wisdom derived from Joey's extensive experience as a musician and prayer leader, all point to one of the book's underlying ideas: that the spiritual lessons of making music (particularly with others) teach us deep truths about how to live a sensitive, spiritual life in community.

Pointing to its power to release emotions, to reduce tensions, bring unity and to re-sensitize the soul, Joey mines the Jewish textual tradition to point towards the human vitality and sense of purpose that singing indicates. He emphasizes: "*Music signifies life* …. To sing is to be fully alive." Joey evidently wants everyone to realize their sense of purpose, to be in touch with themselves and to find a positive (if not transcendent) connectedness to others through the communal relationships created through sensitive communal singing.

The second part of the book is a curated collection of Jewish texts about music from Torah to the 20th century. This section is a wonderful resource for cantors, prayer leaders and musicians, as it elegantly strings together pearls of Jewish teaching that show how music helps to evoke wonder, meaning and personal growth. The collection demonstrates the unique depth of Joey's (and Hadar's) approach to music, which is grounded in a concomitant commitment to study sacred Jewish texts. Of special note are the particularly evocative translations by Joshua Schwartz, whose linguistic artistry makes the words sing themselves off the page.

The book shows Joey's heart on his sleeve, and it is a sweet heart. He encourages the reader to join in his vision of the power of music realized in a transformative way. Nearly each chapter ends with a prophetic vision yet to be realized, a prayer for our musical future:

> It should only be that Torah helps us sing our new ancient song!
> Let us find our melodies, and let us find our prayers, and let us bring the world to life!
> Can we allow our Amens to remind us of the songs that are sung by all of creation?
> May it be that we sing every day as though it were our first time singing!

One intuits Joey's own sensitivity here, feeling the divisions in the world and longing to heal them through the Torah, and through models of music-making and prayer that he so beautifully masters and teaches.

Hazzan Matthew Austerklein serves alongside his wife, Rabbi Alyssa, at Congregation Beth El in Akron, Ohio. He graduated from the College of William and Mary and the Jewish Theological Seminary, where he received cantorial investiture. He has been a member of the Cantors Assembly's Executive Council, its representative on the Rabbinical Assembly's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, and has mentored cantorial students at JTS, HUC and Hebrew College. He is co-founder of **Ilu Finu**, *a nationwide contest for Jewish a cappella groups to write synagogue music.*

The Blue Book CD: Mosaic Voices, directed by Michael Etherton; n.d., distributed by the New West End Synagogue, London

Reviewed by Charles Heller

I always get excited when I come across a recording of synagogue choral music in the High Victorian style, so imagine my delight when a colleague in the UK sent me this beautifully packaged CD—but not so fast. With it came the colleague's warning: "I found it boring." Oh dear! Let's see...

For over a century the popularly called "Blue Book" (properly titled: *The Voice of Prayer and Praise/Kol rinnah v'todah*)[1] has had a place of honor on the shelves of Anglo-Jewish synagogue music lovers, and it continues to to be a valuable resource today. Originally published as a small "Handbook" to enable congregants to sing along with the choir in 4-part harmony (how many of today's congregants could do that?), it was reissued in an enlarged version in 1899. Composer Samuel Alman added material in 1933, and this is the Blue Book that we have today (despite the cover being changed from blue to black for no apparent reason).

A reviewer in the *Jewish Chronicle* in 1899[2] wrote that the Blue Book "deserves to be regarded as the authorized musical companion to the... Prayer Book." This is an acknowledgement of the key role in the synagogue of artistic music based on nusah, to which the great Viennese critic Eduard Hanslick drew attention in his discussion of Cantor Salomon Sulzer's work.[3]

The Blue Book was a production of the British United Synagogue. Those who are familiar with this institution today will have difficulty picturing it as it was in 1899, the inspiration for Solomon Schechter's United Synagogue of America. It originated as a liberal-minded organization in which only the Chief Rabbi could call himself "Rabbi." Local clergy were "Reverends," often wearing a Church of England-style collar, and most choirs had men and women. This was a far cry from the United Synagogue that former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks bequeathed to Anglo-Jewry, nervously looking over its shoulder for the approbation of the Black Hats.[4]

In the early twentieth century the Soprano-Alto problem was solved by choirs having women or boys; the advantage of the latter was that boy choristers provided the next generation of knowledgeable shul goers. On this CD the S-A problem has simply been ignored: the parts are allocated to other men. On some tracks the original key has been changed so that the soprano/melody line can actually be given to the prominent first tenor, but in many cases the music is left in its original SATB scoring, with the SA parts sounding muffled in the wrong octave, without even an attempt to amplify the tenor singing the soprano part (the lead voice in 95% of cases) so that it can be heard distinctly. The result is, I am sorry to say, a disappointment.

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[1] For more details see: Charles Heller, "Masters of the London Blue Book—Marking 350 Years Since the Resettlement of the Jews in England," *JSM* 31(1) (Fall 2006), 67-76

[2] "*The New Handbook of Synagogue Music*," *Jewish Chronicle* , Aug. 18, 1899, p.22

[3] Eduard Hanslick, *Aus Dem Concertsaal* (Vienna, 1870: Braumüller, pp.400-404). Extracts from this article, in English, are in Eric Werner, *A Voice Still Heard* (Pennsylvania University Press, 1976, pp.216-7)

[4] Benjamin J. Elton, "Did the Chief Rabbinate move to the right? A case study: the mixed-choir controversies, 1880-1986." *Jewish Historical Studies* 39 (2004), pp.121-151

So what do we have here? 15 tracks sampling the varied material in the Blue Book: artistic gems such as Naumbourg's *Eits hayyim*; hard-core nusah such as *Horeim* and *Ana ha-sheim*; delightful overlooked Anglo-Jewish pieces such as Waley's *Adon olam*; and some real head-scratchers like Alman's setting of *Hatikvah* (why record it? And the arrangement doesn't even match the Blue Book!), or F. L. Cohen's *Y'had-d'sheihu*, an ingenious but ultimately pointless wangling of Beethoven. Rossi's *Adon olam* is performed beautifully, but the music is not in the Blue Book! (The CD gives Rossi's original, the Blue Book version is a Victorianization by F. L. Cohen.)

The arrangers have been rather free in adding notes and suspensions here and there, which is not really what one expects in a homage-type performance. The worst case is the "improvement" of Lewandowski's *U-v'nuhoh yomar* which removes the delicious canon at *had-deish yameinu.* Another odd point: the arrangers have been rather hit and miss in their substitution of God's name by "Hashem."

Among Blue Book gems that I would love to hear on a CD are Lewandowski's *Zakharti lakh* (and it's already scored for male choir!), and perhaps a few *Yigdal* settings for the *Shalosh r'galim.* A boring CD? Hardly. But it does leaves plenty of room for improvement if anyone gets around to recording a Volume 2 ...

Charles Heller is the award-winning author of **What to Listen for in Jewish Music** *(www.ecanthuspress.com). His book* **Shul Going: 2500 Years of Impressions and Reflections on Visits to the Synagogue** *is due for publication in 2019 (Wipf and Stock).*

LOOKING AHEAD

Rescuing a Nearly-Lost Liturgical Tradition: Synagogue Music of the Romaniote Jews in Greece

By Miranda Crowdus

Introduction: The Project

Since the beginning of 2016, the European Center for Jewish Music (EZJM), a research institute in Jewish Music Studies at the Hanover University of Music, Theatre and Media in Germany, where I am based, has been in the process of recording the liturgical output of Cantor Haim Ischakis from Athens. Cantor Ischakis is one of the last people to perform the synagogue music traditions of the Romaniote Jews.[1] The EZJM is currently working on a complete set of the recordings so as to make this distinctive repertoire accessible to future generations. We hope to eventually release professional tracks of Cantor Ischakis, recorded in a studio. In the meantime, it was thought worthwhile to work within the confines of our current budget and release a "grassroots" highlights CD collection. This set, inspired by the Smithsonian Folkways series of Jewish music recordings made by Amnon Shiloah in the 1970s, includes liturgical melodies for Shabbat, Jewish festivals and commemorative events. The goal was not to offer a "high-brow" studio recording, but to highlight Ischakis' work. As a research associate at the center and an ethnomusicologist, I have begun a preliminary academic study of the fieldwork and recordings so as to more effectively realize a holistic, long-term research project on the music of this disappearing Jewish identity. This article charts and discusses my efforts so far in working to rescue this disappearing tradition of synagogue music, highlighting some of the discoveries, challenges, and surprises encountered along the way.[2]

The front cover of the CD booklet depicts the Romaniote synagogue, Kahal Kadosh Yashan (ancient holy synagogue of Ioannina) in Ioannina, Greece (see below, page 148). After consultation with Cantor Ischakis, we presented this grassroots CD in subtle blue and white tones, with the logo of Ischakis' Jewish cultural heritage tours on the bottom right of the front cover. The tracks of this CD-set were recorded by Professor Sarah Ross and me between 2016 and 2017 at the Synagogue of the Restion Jewish Senior Home in Athens. The home is about 16 miles from the center of Athens, located in the valley of a small hill, surrounded by breathtaking scenery. The home for Jewish senior citizens houses a mikvah and a synagogue on its lower floor. While relatively small in size, the chapel is filled with natural light and has excellent acoustics. During our visits to Athens, Haim Ischakis himself picked us up at the airport and chauffeured us to the Restion home in style, pointing out sites of interest along the way. He also shared with us his profound knowledge of Judeo-Greek history. Once at the seniors' home, we

[1] Although I use the term "Romaniote" in my research, Romaniotes often refer to themselves collectively as "Ioanniote" or "Ioanniotes."

[2] The following is my own interpretation of primary and secondary sources, including fieldwork. As such, my analyses may not always perfectly correlate with fellow scholars or practitioners, including what they might say about themselves. Any errors of interpretation are my own.

briefly exchanged pleasantries with a smiling director, and Ischakis then spent many hours chanting the beautiful repertoire of Romaniote Jewry in its current form, so that we could complete our recordings. In our self-produced CD-set, the unique sonic qualities of the space have been preserved as much as possible to provide a direct sense of what these beautiful chants sound like in their original synagogue setting.

Many important questions were raised during our efforts to investigate and preserve Romaniote traditions of synagogue music. The first concerned "rescuing" disappearing Jewish liturgical practices: can one really save a disappearing repertoire? And if so, what kind of processes should one employ in the case of an orally-transmitted liturgical tradition where change, transformation, and even re-contextualization was the norm? How can ethnomusicological researchers appropriately document and analyse this musical repertoire? Moreover, if only one or perhaps a few people currently practice a musical repertoire, can it still be considered a "tradition"?

A second issue deals with the cultural and historical specificity of the person or persons practicing the tradition: who were and are the Romaniote Jews? Can we really speak about Romaniote Jews today and in the past as completely distinct from their Sephardic and Italian counterparts? Why have Romaniotes, and their music in particular, been so neglected by academic scholarship? This article views the liturgical repertoire of the Romaniote Jews as the product of a multitude of musical and cultural exchanges and clashes occurring over many centuries. It considers Romaniote identity as a cultural, historical, geo-spatial and symbolic designation, encompassing and within several relational levels of identity and belonging, an identity of which musical traditions form an integral part.

History: Who were the Romaniote Jews? Who are they today?

The name, "Romaniote", is derived from the name "Romania", the Latin designation for the Eastern Roman Empire, which became Byzantium after 330 CE. The Romaniotes, for the most part, occupied the Epirus region of Greece, with Ioannina in the province of Epirus in northwest Greece as their social, cultural and historical epicenter.[3] There has been some debate about the precise time of Romaniote origins in Greece. Gkoumas remarks that it would be difficult to give a superficial explanation of their descent from Jewish Hellenism.[4] While some scholarly accounts consider that Greek-speaking Jews settled in the Epirus region of Greece during the reign of Alexander the Great (356-323 BCE), others maintain that Jews settled in the area following an accident during Emperor Titus's transfer of Jewish slaves to Rome by boat. According to Dalven, oral accounts in Ioannina maintain that the slave ship was destroyed on the Albanian coast, resulting in the Jewish survivors settling in the area.[5] Overall, what we do

[3] Scholars such as Dalven consider that Ioannina was, to some extent, geographically isolated due to its location at the foot of the Pindros mountains, which facilitated the maintenance of Romaniote culture. *Of the Jews of Ioanninia*, Rae Dalvin.(Athens: Cadmus Press, 1990).

[4] Panagiotis Gkoumas, *Bibliography on the Romaniote Jewry*, first edition (Norderstedt, Germany: BoD Verlag, 2016), 1.

[5] *The Jews of Ioanniania*, Rae Dalven, 3.

know is that it is highly probable that the Romaniote Jews have been living in Greece for more than 2000 years.[6]

The Romaniote Jews are an indigenous Judeo-Greek community. It is important to note that they are distinct from the Sephardic Jews who were exiled from Spain and Portugal and settled in Greece at the end of the 15th century. During their long history, the Romaniotes adopted many customs and traditions of Greek civilization while maintaining their Jewish identity, many aspects of which were unique or different from that of other nearby Jewish communities.[7] Over the centuries they survived under different rulers and regimes, including the Roman Period (146 BCE-330 CE), the Byzantine Period (331-1082), the Frankish rule (1082-1204), the Venetian Period (1205-1453), the Ottoman Empire (1453-1913) and the 20th-century period corresponding to the rise of Greek Nationalism. Almost 300 years before the codification of customs and laws written in the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds, Romaniote Jewry acquired traits of its surrounding Greco-Roman and later, Byzantine, environments: "[w]e find among Romaniote Jewry a rich blend of Hellenistic Jewish and Palestinian rabbinic traditions, of both of the intellectual currents continued right up to the end of the empire."[8] Until the 16th century, the Romaniote Jews used the *Mahzor romania*, (Venice, 1523), which originated during the Byzantine Empire and is one of the oldest compilation of prayers and para-liturgical hymns (*piyyutim*) in Europe.

Romaniote history was also characterized by intra-Jewish tension with the Sephardic communities who arrived in Greece following the Inquisition. In 1492, the Sultan Bayzeid II offered an invitation to the Sephardim who had been exiled from Spain and Sicily to come and live in the Ottoman Empire.[9] Most of these Sephardim were skilled craftsman, merchants, rabbis and scholars, usually considered more urbane and sophisticated than their Romaniote counterparts. As such, the Sephardic communities, newly arrived in Greece, were riven by social and religious tensions, both amongst themselves and in relation to their Romaniote coreligionists:[10]

> [a] new dimension was added to Judeo Greek history when, during the late-15th and early-16th centuries, thousands of Jewish exiles from the Iberian Peninsula settled along the eastern seaboard of the Ottoman Empire. Once there, these Sephardim…established a number of prominent communities, the most important of which was Salonika.[11]

Despite initial tensions, the two communities gradually reconciled their differences, even as they remained relatively distinct.[12] In 1577, the Romaniotes adopted the prayers of the Sephardim "so

[6] Nicholas Stavroulakis states, "The Jews of Greece have survived some 2,300 years of change and are a living link with antiquity." *The Jews of Greece* (Athens: Talos Press, 1990), 10.
[7] These distinctive traits are aptly described and summarized, including the documentary evidence, in: Stephen Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium*, (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1985).
[8] Stephen Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium*, 129.
[9] This offer was extended even before the Inquisition was carried out in Portugal in 1497.
[10] Rae Dalven, *The Jews of Ioannina*, 18-20.
[11] Ibid, 191.
[12] *Beit Yosef*. In his work Rabbi Yosef Caro recorded laws observed by the Romaniotes and the Sephardim, showing the common origins of the laws in the Talmud. It is thought that he did this to unite the two communities.

that they could be united as Jews."[13] Throughout their history, the Romaniotes expended great effort on religious poetry, which reached its peak during the period 1350-1550. This interest resulted in a fluid prayer service, which was codified in several traditions only in the 16th century, when the creative energy of the Romaniote communities was "overwhelmed by the influence of the newly arrived Sephardic communities."[14]

During the Nazi occupation of Greece, the Romaniote community was almost completely annihilated. Communities such as the one in Ioannina suffered losses of 91% of the population.[15] Before the Holocaust, the Jewish community in Ioannina was the largest Romaniote community in Greece and "one of the leading Jewish centers in the Levant."[16] In April 1941, the Allied forces on the Albanian side were broken and by the end of May, Greece fell under the control of Germany. The country was divided into three zones of occupation overseen by the Germans, Bulgarians and Italians. Both Athens and Ioannina were initially under Italian control. A German division arrived in Ioannina in 1943, and 1,860 Jews from Ioannina were deported to Auschwitz on March 25, 1944. Of those men, women, and children only approximately 163 adults survived and very few returned to Greece.

The devastation and near-erasure of the Jews in Greece caused the near-loss of many Judeo-Greek traditions, including the distinctive musical-liturgical practices of the Romaniotes. For a time, the Romaniote traditions continued outside of Greece, at the Beth Avraham and Ohel Sarah Synagogues in Jerusalem's Montefiore district and at Shalom Synagogue of Kfar Shalem in Israel, established by the former Romaniote Jewish community of Zakynthos, an island in the Ionian Sea. In the USA, services using the Romaniote Rite continued in New York City at the Kehila Kedosha Janina, established in 1906 by Greek-speaking Romaniote Jews who had immigrated there from the city of Ioannina. The synagogue is located at 280 Broome Street on the Lower East Side of Manhattan and is currently operational. The synagogue also houses a museum, directed by Marcia Haddad Ikonomopolous, and facilitates different initiatives for preserving the distinctive history and identity of the Romaniotes.

Practitioner: Cantor Haim Ischakis[17]

Since the EZJM's research with Romaniote synagogue music commenced, there has been contact with the descendants of Romaniote communities, mainly in the USA, but also in Israel, who wish to "re-learn" the musical-liturgical traditions of their Romaniote ancestors (usually their grandparents). However, the last known practitioner of the Romaniote liturgy to any significant degree is Cantor Haim Ischakis who was born in Athens in 1959. In his

[13] Rae Dalven, *The Jews of Ioannina*, 19.
[14] Bowman, *The Jews of Byzantium*, 129-130.
[15] drupal/en/education/newsletter/ioannina.pdf-https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/pdf
[16] Rae Dalven, *The Jews of Ioannina*, xii.
[17] No large-scale academic publications yet exist on Haim Ischakis and his musical oeuvre. This account of Ischakis' personal history has been compiled from fieldwork conducted with Ischakis in 2016, during which he related his life history and experiences. This account has also been compiled from the biography included in Ischakis' cultural heritage tours website: www.jewishtours-greece.com. A similar version of this account has also been included in the booklet that I wrote for our CD set: *Cantor Haim Ischakis: Synagogue Music of the Romaniote Jews of Greece*: Hanover, Germany: EZJM Ethnographic Fieldwork Recordings Series, 2018.

important role as cantor, Haim follows in his father's footsteps, using the Romaniote nusah, and it was from his father that he learned much of the repertoire that he performs today. Thus, Haim's particular situation, musical aptitude, and his family's history enabled him to learn the Romaniote tradition of Torah cantillation as well as other liturgical melodies. According to Ross, "Haim is probably one of the last practitioners who actively recalls and continues to cultivate much of the ancient music culture of Romaniote Jews in Greece."[18]

Haim Ischakis's parents were from Ioannina and Chalkis, cities that had been home to two flourishing Romaniote Jewish communities. Following World War II, they settled in Athens. During the war, Haim's father, Daniel, endured the horrors of Auschwitz while Haim's mother survived due to being hidden by Christian neighbors in the mountains surrounding Chalkis. Haim graduated from the Greek-French High School "Lycée Léonin" in Athens in 1976. He then went to Israel to earn a degree at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. After graduating in 1981, he returned to Greece. He then became the manager of the family watches and clocks wholesale business. In June of 1996, Haim's father passed away. He was one of the few Romaniote survivors of Auschwitz.

According to Haim Ischakis, it was the death of his father that prompted him to dedicate himself to continuing the musical and cultural legacy of his Romaniote family. He handed over the family business to his brother Solon (Solomon), so that he could have time to dedicate himself to the preservation of the Jewish heritage in Greece. In the religious services, including life cycle events and commemoration events, that Haim leads today, he brings his own musical interpretations to the liturgy, imbuing the special Romaniote *piyyutim* (religious poems) of the High Holidays with new melodies and embellishments. Haim continues to lead services and act as a rabbi, often simultaneously, for local Judeo-Greek communities as well as visitors to cultural heritage sites.

Haim's work is not only music-focused, but is also varied and wide-ranging. In the early 2000s, in an effort to resuscitate Jewish life, the Jewish community of Athens and the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece sent him to engage with communities in Greece in which there are still dwindling Jewish populations. On an international level, Haim has provided Jewish heritage tours to Jewish communities worldwide in order to raise awareness about the Romaniote culture and traditions. He has led many memorial services, including one at the crematoria of Birkenau where he blew the shofar in memory of his father and all the victims of the Holocaust. In July 2010, Haim was invited by the Jewish Community of Riga in Latvia to lead the annual memorial service for the victims of the Shoah. The commemoration took place at the Bikernieki forest. The site is significant, as it marks the spot in which thousands of Jews from Latvia, Germany, Austria, Bohemia and Moravia were murdered by the Nazis and buried in several mass graves.[19] In March 2014, the Jewish community of Ioannina and the International

[18] Sarah Ross, "Cultural Sustainability as an Applied Research Strategy in Jewish Music Studies," conference paper presented at: *Jewish Cultural Heritage and Cultural Sustainability*. Basel, Switzerland: 8 September (2017): p.8 of the written transcript.

[19] See: Bernhard Press, *The Murder of the Jews of Latvia 1941-1945*, translated from German by Laimdota Mazzarins, (Evanston, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000).

Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) invited Haim to lead the memorial service at the Synagogue of Ioannina, during the commemoration events marking 70 years since the deportation of the city's Jewish population during World War II.

Haim continues today to perform religious services throughout Greece on a regular basis. He has also been invited to perform as a cantor internationally, in many European countries and in Israel. Since 2013, he has been working together with his two sons, who decided upon completion of their studies that they would continue the family tradition by dedicating themselves to the preservation of the Jewish heritage in Greece. Many of Haim's performances strengthen Jewish religious identity and cultural heritage. For instance, every year, Haim leads the Yom Kippur services at the synagogue of Ioannina. This service draws Jews from all over the world, different parts of Greece, Israel, the USA, and also Canada, France and other places where there are religious Jewish populations. The service draws not only Jews who are descendants of the Romaniote communities, but also practicing Jews who are interested in reconnecting with Jewish communities of the past and engaging with and participating in meaningful religious services.

Ethnographic Fieldwork: Athens and Ioannina

For the past three years, Professor Sarah Ross and I have been traveling to Athens, in part to collect Haim's recordings, but also to conduct a more holistic process of ethnographic fieldwork. Staying in the prosperous suburb of Athens called Glyfada, we've had many informative encounters with Haim and his immediate family and other members of the Jewish community in Athens. During September of 2018 I also traveled to Ioannina to observe and document the Yom Kippur service which was performed almost single-handedly by Cantor Ischakis. That was quite a feat, as the Morning service alone took from 7:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Somehow, throughout the long fast's five services, Haim's voice did not falter once, and his singing was punctuated with his many blasts on the shofar as the Day of Atonement drew to a close.

The Yom Kippur experience in Greece was informative, inspiring and moving on many levels. I had traveled from Athens on the complimentary bus with members of the Jewish community there who, like me, intended to celebrate Yom Kippur in Ioannina. The bus ride was lively and picturesque as we traveled westward and then northward through the waterway above Patras, continuing due north to the mountainous Epirus region of Greece, at whose very center Ioannina lies. My bus-mates were for the most part an older crowd who conversed, occasionally singing and clapping to music being broadcast on portable speakers, passing bags of food up and down to fellow passengers. I learned that many of the passengers were descendants of survivors of the Jewish community in Ioannina; they returned there every year to remember their heritage and their origins. For many, this is one of the few times in the year when they will attend a synagogue service.

The trip to Ioannina is a relatively long one by European standards. Five hours and several rest-stops later, we pulled up atop a large hill and turned slightly to the right. We could then see much of the town below, including a sparkling lake on its eastern side. The bus droped

us off at the Grand Serai Hotel, a luxury facility to which we had been given special rates for the duration of our stay. As I hurried down the hill and through the bustling town so that I would be on time for Kol Nidre,[20] I could not help but feel that, like the former Jewish communities of Eastern Europe, whose current absence Eva Hoffman[21]argues is "inescapable" or that the "absence is itself felt like a presence," Ioannina inspires similar feelings in me. Those feelings intensify as I visit the busy little center, with its many little shops and restaurants, and the old citadel, once frequented by a thriving Jewish community, historically made up of humble workers and craftsman, merchants, farmers, fisherman and the like. Or perhaps my perception of their current absence is merely my own imagination, emphasized by the aftermath of the recent economic difficulties in Greece.

Nevertheless, there are still small vestiges of a once thriving Jewish life: the synagogue, Kahal Kadosh Yashan, stands inside the walled city at the edge of what was once the old Jewish quarter. It was built in 1829 and apparently occupies the site of an older synagogue, which most likely dated back to the Byzantine period when Jews first moved inside the fortress.[22] A high-ceilinged stone building, the synagogue is characterized by intricate architecture and has exceptional acoustics. During the German occupation, the synagogue was requisitioned as a municipal library, which, according to Dalven, was the reason that it was spared destruction. A great number of its wooden and silver *tikkim* (Torah cases), liturgical books, and textiles were hidden away in a crypt. Following World War II, the mayor of Ioannina returned these items, along with the building itself, to the surviving members of the community. Many of the furnishings are now being displayed in the Jewish Museum of Athens. The names of the Romaniote Jews who perished in the Holocaust are engraved on large plaques which adorn the synagogue walls. It was in this synagogue where the Yom Kippur service led by Cantor Ischakis was held.

The Music: Challenges in Categorization and Analysis

The Romaniote Rite stems from a long-enduring musical-liturgical Jewish tradition that, due to its oral transmission, has experienced many changes throughout the centuries. To date, very little has been written exclusively about the music of the Romaniote Jews. In the specific context of Jewish music studies, this probably has to do with the fact that, as Seroussi observes, the value of investigating both specific and general concepts of Jewish music has been only "haphazardly addressed since the late nineteenth century."[23] In 1971 Leo Levi, a musicologist from Israel of Italian origin, published what is probably still the most thorough overview of the different Jewish musical traditions in Greece, which he categorized as "Romaniote, Sephardic and Italian."[24] Israeli ethnomusicologist Amnon Shiloah also contributed several short articles on Judeo-Greek music in the early 1970s and his important recordings,

[20] Pronounced "Kal Nidre" according to Romaniote custom.
[21] Eva Hoffman, *Exit into History: A Journey Through Eastern Europe* (New York: Penguin, 1993), 276. Also cited in Kevin C. Barnes, "Recollecting Jewish Musics from the Baltic Bloodlands" (*Aota Musicologica* 84 (2012), 253.
[22] Rae Dalven, *The Jews of Ioannina*, 71.
[23] Edwin Seroussi, "Music: The 'Jew' of Jewish Studies," in *Jewish Studies* 46, (2009): 24.
[24] Described in Rae Dalven and Israel J. Katz, "Four Traditional Judeo-Greek Hymns and Their Tunes," *Musica Judaica* 18 (2005-2006): 108.

Greek Jewish Musical Traditions.[25] Nevertheless, there has yet to be any significant research on Judeo-Greek musical traditions, and there is a particular gap where the Romaniotes are concerned. This lacuna is probably in part due to a lack of sources and the musicological impossibility of ascertaining precise influences and developments throughout the centuries.

Another more general reason for the lack of research on Romaniote music in scholarly discourse probably has to do with the overwhelming focus on product rather than process in studies on synagogue music, as I comment elsewhere.[26] Frigyesi cites this focus on unchangeable product as being due to a German romantic focus on artists' works: "Once completed, an artwork was frozen in time, so to speak; every subsequent version of it is necessarily viewed as an imitation, that is, as being corrupt."[27] Consequently, while in relatively economically prosperous countries like Germany funding can be obtained to study Jewish scores or objects, funding is difficult to obtain to support research focusing on oral traditions in synagogue music. Globally, contemporary initiatives at safeguarding cultural heritage, including musical traditions, are characterized by similar views of the artwork as a static (or relatively static) object. This perception is inherent, for instance, in many initiatives directed by UNESCO in the last twenty years. Such initiatives are important, devoted to the conservation of intangible cultural heritage, and these have caused the proliferation of many similar initiatives, funded by governmental and non-governmental organizations worldwide.

However, as I comment elsewhere "the very act of 'safeguarding' music, in a relatively fixed form, can be seen as antithetical to the reality of music-making, in which ebb, flow and change are normal parts of the process, particularly in the case of orally transmitted traditions."[28] Indeed, in the Romaniote context, while little can be definitively ascertained regarding the characteristics of the music over the centuries, we know that contact with the greater society and culture of the Mediterranean brought about an independent tradition (e.g. language and customs) including a distinctive Romaniote Jewish repertoire of synagogue music that differs significantly from its Ashkenazi, Sephardi and Mizrahi counterparts. Thus, the Romaniote Jews had their own melodies and ornaments that they use in their prayer chants, and particular melodies for their *piyyutim* and their own tradition of Torah cantillation. We know that these liturgical customs were developed and refined in Greece in all probability for over two thousand years; we can also conjecture that these musical traditions experienced a consistent, albeit relatively slow, rate of variation.

Due to the long-surviving nature of the Romaniotes and the fact that their musical-liturgical repertoire, like many Jewish musical traditions, is orally transmitted, it is particularly

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[25] New York: Ethnic Folkways Records.

[26] Miranda Crowdus. "Redefining the Music-Object in the Synagogue: Ethics and Dissonances in the Museum Display of Jewish Musical Practices," *Synagogue and Museum*: *Publication of the Third International Congress on Jewish Architecture,* Braunschweig, Germany (2017).

[27] Judit Frigyesi, "Orality as Religious Ideal: The Music of East-European Jewish Prayer," in E. Schliefer and E. Seroussi, eds., *Yuval – Studies in Honor of Israel Adler*, *Yuval Studies of the Jewish Music Research Centre* VII (2006): 114.

[28] Miranda Crowdus, *Cultural Sustainability as a Relational Concept in the Practice of Jewish Music* (Bern: Perter Lang, forthcoming).

challenging for the ethnomusicologist to document and analyze. The first tendency of those wanting to learn more about the music is to ask the ethnomusicologist to identify precise ethnic, religious and historical influences in the form of musical notation (e.g. influence of Byzantine chant; Balkan music). While some of the more recent influences are plainly audible, others have long been subsumed into Haim Ischakis's repertoire, and such a search would in any case not be particularly valuable with regard to preserving the tradition today.

Rather than consider the Romaniote rite as a static music-object, I evaluate Cantor Ischakis' oeuvre according to Frigyesi's paradigm of "orality as a religious ideal" with which she analyses the music of East-European Jewish prayer. My application is combined with Romaniote identity as self-definition through the establishment and negotiation of important cultural heritage performances. Today, Haim Ischakis's prolific oeuvre is formed by centuries of changing oral tradition, including his own musical creativity within the greater liturgical framework. Thus, his idiosyncratic performance of Jewish liturgical music can be viewed as evidence of Romaniote continuity: Frigyesi considers that orality was not the cause, but the result of the flexibility of liturgical music… "[allowing for] multiple expressive potentialities in the prayer."[29] In other words, "[t]he *hazzan* is not simply a solo singer who performs the traditional melodies of the service…He does not simply reproduce a preconceived piece of music, but gives a personal rendition of the text, an original musical realization of the prayer within the general framework of the nusah."[30] The latter statement, true regarding nearly all rabbinically prescribed seasonal nusah and emotionally driven *hazzanut*−which are both orally transmitted−is illustrated by the following examples from Ischakis's repertoire.

Synagogue Music: Examples

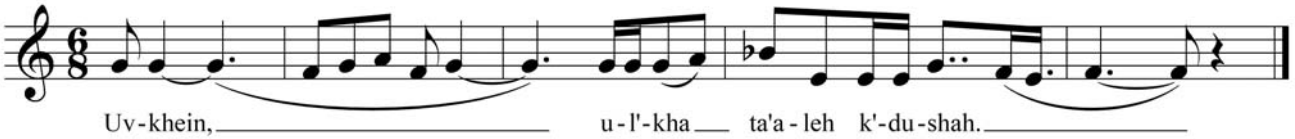
U-n'tanneh tokef

U-n'tanneh tokef (Let us speak of the day's sacred power) is a *piyyut* that has been part of the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur liturgy in some traditions of Judaism for centuries. It is chanted before the *K'dushah* (Sanctification) of the Musaf service. Niren describes the prayer as "one of the most iconic sections of the Rosh Hashanah liturgy… a dramatic and terrifying poem which depicts God as the ultimate Judge of all living souls on the annual Day of Remembrance."[31]

Ischakis's rendition of *U-n'tanneh tokef* is particularly moving, exemplifying the many musical layers inherent in orally transmitted Jewish liturgical traditions. Haim's version reveals several influences, particularly a contemporary version of the *piyyut* composed in Israel by Yair Rosenblum in 1990. Haim shows this influence in a particular melodic motive that he uses throughout the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services, chanting the *piyyut*'s introduction in an E-minor-like phrase with an undulating triplet rhythmic flow. Below is a short excerpt of Haim's interpretation, starting with the word *Uv-khein* (Accordingly, may our sanctification ascend to You):

[29] Frigyesi, "Orality as Religious Ideal," 116-117.
[30] Ibid, 129.
[31] Ann Glazer Niren, "A Nearly Forgotten *Un'saneh Tokef*," *Journal of Synagogue Music* 42, no. 2 (2007):16.

Example 1: *U-n'tanneh tokef*: Ischakis's Introduction[32]



After a slight pause, the opening lines of the *piyyut* proper are sung: *U-n'tanneh tokef k'dushat ha-yom*. The melody is a version of the opening of the vocal part of Rosenblum's piece, using the characteristic triplet on the syllables "*u-n'-tan* and an octave jump on the syllable *neh*. Ischakis's referencing of Yair Rosenblum particularly in this canonical piece is significant, connecting his own work with the music of Israel (the State), and also with *am yisrael* (the People), a worldwide community within which the Romaniote community is one of many. The difference between Haim's interpretation and Rosenblum's piece is apparent almost immediately as the first syllable of the word *tokef*, rather than remaining on the same note, descends in Haim's version by a semi-tone. Moreover, Ischakis's version starts on a C-sharp rather than an E or an A, as is common in most arrangements of the piece. While there are many different versions of the Rosenblum piece, there are few versions like Ischakis' that take the piece as a point of departure and then modify the musical and melodic content, creating a unique and arguably new interpretation.

Ischakis's recitation of this *piyyut* is liturgically and socially important, and also musically creative. His interpretation is imbued with lyrical passages and text-painting not present in the text, but which emphasize the meaning of the passage, even to those who do not understand Hebrew. For instance, the ephemeral nature of human life in the following passage is musically portrayed by Ischakis not only through melodic interpretation and improvisation, but also by the color of his voice in comparison to the previously-sung portion of the *piyyut*, which portrayed God as seated on the Bench of Judgement. This portion portrays humanity arguing its case before a God who is suddenly seated on the Throne of Mercy.[33]

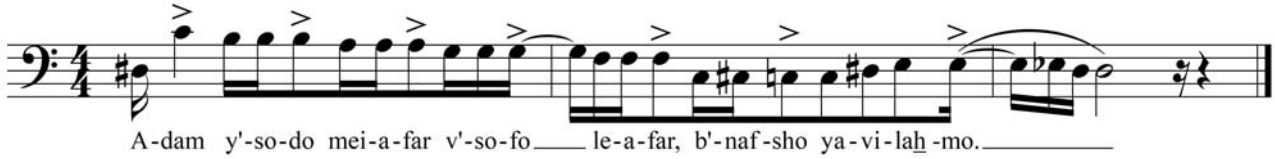
[32] The transcriptions in this article were made by the author. These transcriptions depict an oral tradition and therefore do not exactly represent the chant or its different variations performed by Ischakis. However, these do give a good impression of the basic melodic and rhythmic structures.

[33] Neil Gillman, "Reading Liturgy Through the Spectacles of Theology: The Case of *U-n'tanneh tokef*," *Journal of Synagogue Music 33* (2008): 53-54

> We humans come from dust and end in dust. We expend our lives bringing forth bread. We are like a fragment of broken pottery, like dried grass; like a faded flower, like a passing shadow; like a melting cloud, a blowing breeze; like flying dust, a dream dissolving.[34]

This statement from the Jewish liturgy, the ideas of which are reiterated throughout other parts of the liturgy and in the *Tanakh* (e.g. Genesis 3:19) can be seen as epitomizing the fleetingness of human existence, which is ephemeral and unstable: only our Creator is eternal. This phrase is also a reminder that, in many forms of Jewish thought, life is not in the control of human beings. Haim's interpretation of this passage in the *piyyut* depicts the fragile nature of human life through performance and subtle tone-painting of the text:

Example 2: *Adam y'sodo*: Cantor Haim Ischaki



The word *adam* is outlined by a dramatic leap, in the style of the rest of Haim's recital of *U-n'tanneh tokef*. But this leap is not triumphant like the one at the beginning of the *piyyut* on the word *U-n'tanneh*. This leap is melancholic, outlining an interval somewhere between a major sixth and a minor 7th.[35] But the transcription does not communicate Ischakis' delivery: his voice is soft and we hear the higher overtones echoing in the synagogue space. Each word is articulated almost separately, as if each utterance is a sigh descending into nothingness, until the word *lahmo* brings the listener back to where they began, except a semi-tone lower, musically portraying impermanence as well as the process of coming from a place and going back to that same place, slightly diminished.

In the Romaniote service, following the section with *U-n'tanneh tokef* that is influenced by Rosenblum's piece, there is a pause and the text is chanted in Modern Greek (*Demotiki*) to a Romaniote tune. As spoken in Epirus, it is mixed with Turkish, Italian and Hebrew words, a remnant of the many years lived under Turkish rule. The Hebrew and Greek texts are clearly differentiated by Haim, who lowers the key of the chant from one resembling G minor to what at first sounds like a key resembling F major, but that quickly evolves into something like F-sharp minor. Nevertheless, the pause and stark contrast of the long G-minor-like passage with the F-major tetrachord alerts listeners to the change in language and the specific Judeo-Greek character of the music.

This practice of singing *U-n'tanneh tokef* in the vernacular after the Hebrew version was chanted emerged to ensure that all members of the community would understand the words at

[34] Translation from: Richard N. Levy, ed., *On Wings of Awe: A Machzor for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur*, (Washington D.C.: Bnai Brith Hillel Foundation, 1985), 181.

[35] Future research will determine whether this is due to the influence of Middle Eastern modes or simply from the sighing technique used by the cantor to depict the images in the text.

this important juncture in the service. Fieldwork observations reveal that in liturgical terms, as well as current social practices, this is one of the denouements of the service. The clergy−including Haim−stand facing the ark, which is open. As he chants the important words, now repeated in Greek; "Who will die by fire or by water or by another means," the eyes of many of the participants on the women's side focus, not on Haim or their prayer books or on their neighbors with whom some have been chatting throughout the service, but rather on a plaque listing the names of members of the Romaniote community who were deported to Auschwitz and murdered. One community member, middle-aged with an adult son who was also in attendance, described this moment as follows:

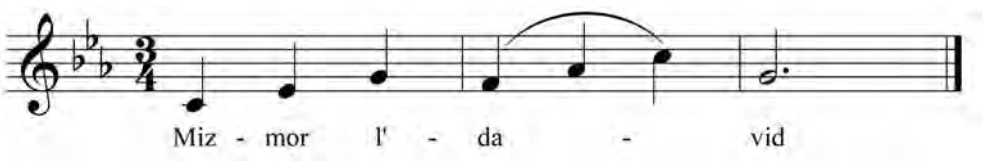
> I cannot experience this part of the service without thinking about my family who used to live here, without imagining what life once was for Jews here. When I look at the names, I cannot help but remember and this for me cannot be isolated from the service (per Batya: Yom Kippur Service Attendee; Ioannina, September 2018).

For the worshipers, this part of the service is connected with their hopeful prayers for the year to come, and also inextricably connected with the long-enduring Romaniote community despite its almost complete destruction during the Nazi occupation of Greece. These community feelings are evoked by Haim Ischakis's multi-layered, moving interpretation, culminating in the recitation in Greek of the pivotal passage.

Mizmor l'david (Psalm 23)

A transcription of Haim's version of *Mizmor l'david* reveals that his rendition is, in fact, an interpretation of the classic American version of this psalm composed by Rabbi Ben Zion Shenker in 1946 in Brooklyn. During fieldwork, I initially thought Cantor Ischakis must have learned the American tune at some point and incorporated it into his musical repertoire and forgotten its American origins. Then I realized it could not be that simple for two reasons. First, there was no way of telling where he heard it, as this tune is now sung in Jewish communities worldwide. Shortly after his father passed away, Haim spent a significant amount of time in Israel so that he could study Hebrew and Jewish Studies with the goal of performing the repertoire of his Romaniote ancestors. He may well have learned it and other diverse Jewish musics there. Secondly, a musical analysis and comparison with Cantor Ischakis's other repertoire revealed that, while clearly based on the Shenker melody, there are subtle differences in melody, timbre, tone, execution and even mode that make it difficult to categorize according to Western musical notation:

Example 3: Shenker's *Mizmor l'david*"[36]



[36] Transcribed from David R. Godine, *The Harvard Hillel Sabbath Songbook*, 1st ed. (Boston, MA: David R. Godine, 1992).

Example 4: Ischakis's *Mizmor l'david*

Moreover, the incorporation of local, non-Jewish melodies into a Jewish liturgical corpus is very common in many traditional contexts. Kay Kaufman Shelemay focuses on "the manner in which a Jewish community intentionally draws upon the broader musical world surrounding it, and how that music, originally borrowed, can itself become an 'authentic' part of Jewish tradition for years to come. One can look at the music of virtually any Jewish community and find similar examples of borrowing and adaptation of local musical style." [37] Thus, the integration of external melodies that then become an "authentic" part of a corpus, is an entirely usual process. Most interesting about this example is that the influence is technically "global" (from the US to Greece), but it is also community-based in the sense that it was incorporated as a result of Haim's being part of a Jewish community and a Jewish cultural heritage tours enterprise, both of which enable many networks of exchange. I suggest that this American Jewish classic has essentially been "romanioticized" by Haim, reinvented in a new form with a slightly different tonality, different ornamentations and different textual emphasis as well as other variances.

Many *K'dushot*

During my discussions with Haim Ischakis, I noted that he described the Romaniote exchange as emanating from various places where there once were significant Romaniote communities: Ioannina, Chalkis, Volos, and Corfu, the latter of which he described as having an "Italian" influence. Hence, he understands and communicates his musical knowledge as having been filtered through a mapping of Romaniote locations from which the melodies came. It may be that historically, there was some communication between the Romaniote communities in Greece, largely because of mercantile initiatives, possibly both by land and sea. Or possibly intra-Romaniote contact might have occurred in larger cities in Greece, such as Athens or Salonika. According to some scholars, in the past, Romaniotes left small towns and came to the cities in search of employment or other opportunities.[38] As such, intra-Romaniote cultural exchange may have led to the exchange of melodies. Or perhaps this melodic exchange and identification occurred later through Haim's father or even Haim himself. At this point in the research process, much of what we can glean is through educated guesswork and

[37] Kay Kaufman Shelemay, "Mythologies and Realities in the Study of Jewish Music," *The World of Music* 37, no. 1, *Jewish Musical Culture: Past and Present* (1995): 27.
[38] Devin E. Naar, "The 'Mother of Israel' or the 'Sephardi Metropolis'? Sephardim, Ashkenazim, and Romaniotes in Salonica," *Jewish Social Studies* 22, no. 1 (Fall 2016): 81-129.

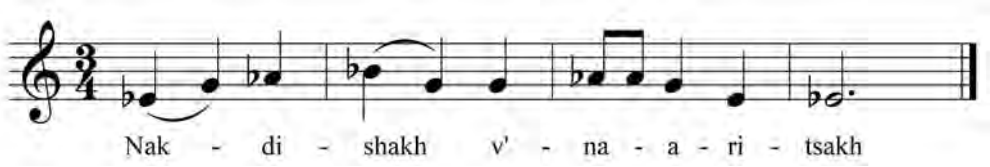
conjecture. What we do know is that prevalent in Haim's repertoire are both different melodies and different texts for what we conjecture are the same liturgical moments.

The *K'dushah* itself has several unique features. It is the one part of the publicly recited Amidah for which we are all supposed to stand and reverently face the Ark, it is improper to enter or leave the sanctuary during the *K'dushah*, or to engage in conversation. The *K'dushah* is the lone part of the Amidah (apart from the Priestly Blessing) that we recite only during the public repetition of the Amidah, omitting it when we pray the Amidah silently. It is also the one part of the publicly recited Amidah that requires active congregational participation in reciting its biblically derived responses.

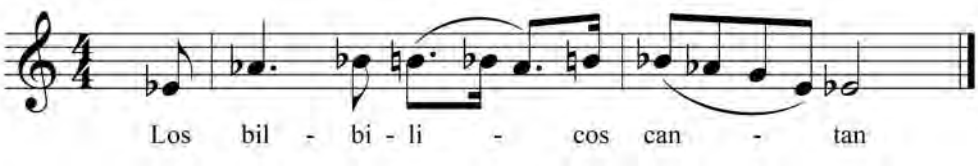
Volos *K'dushah*: Scholarly Debate

During fieldwork, Haim sang a *K'dushah* for us that he described as coming from Volos, a coastal city in Thessaly. This *K'dushah* (in the Shaharit service) uses the Sephardic text that begins *Nakdishakh v'naaritsakh* (We sanctify and revere You). When presenting our recording of this prayer at a recent international conference "ICTM Study Group on Mediterranean Music Studies" in Essaouira, Morocco (June 2018), there was some debate about the melody. A scholar specializing in Islamic religious music determined that this was in the Middle Eastern mode, maqam Hijaz. Another scholar specializing in Sephardic music declared that the melody was almost identical to the Sephardic Judeo-Spanish folk-song "Los Bilbilicos" (The Nightingales Sing). Following the latter claim, I made a detailed comparison of "Los Bilbilicos" and the Volos *K'dushah*. Below are short excerpts from the folk song and from Haim's *K'dushah* interpretation; the folk song has been transposed so that it starts on the same note (E-flat). Additionally, the first beat of measure three reflects Haim's use of a 'repeated-note' technique common to cantorial style: a sigh-like effect which slightly lowers the second note's pitch less than a quarter-tone (**click on the music of Example 5 to access audio file of Haim Ischakis singing the complete Volos *K'dushah***).

Example 5: Ischakis's Volos *K'dushah* Segment



Example 6: "Los Bilbilicos," Sephardic Traditional (Judeo-Spanish)



Even if we just examine the opening phrase, the similarity to "Los Bilbilicos" is evident. The main melodic tones and overarching structure do resemble the Sephardic folk song. For instance, the short segments included here reveal in both examples the structurally important A-flat and the nearly identical descending phrase on the words "*cantan*" or *naaritsakh*. This is particularly evident if, as in the above examples, I begin on Haim's starting tone of E-flat below middle C. But this categorization is also problematic because, unlike "Los Bilbilicos", the opening of the Volos *K'dushah* is felt very much in 3 whereas the folk-song is felt very much in 4. Moreover, many folk-melodies bear strong resemblance to each other, especially when comparing only short fragments. Indeed, while the melodic structure of Haim's *K'dushah* is similar to the Sephardic folk-song (and many other Jewish folk songs, for that matter), the statement that it *comes from* the folk-song assumes Sephardic dominance without sufficient proof. Many elements of the Romaniote rite are older than their Sephardic counterparts. However, while there has been a long-established tradition of scholarship in Sephardic music, there has been no corresponding scholarship built around Romaniote musical traditions.

Next, I considered the comment that the melody could be in maqam Hijaz. This is somewhat plausible: the melody has distinctive melodic patterns and intervals that one could associate with this mode, such as the flattened second degree. Historically, we know that there were Romaniote communities residing in what today is modern Turkey, where several forms of the Hijaz mode were prevalent. But, very technically speaking (i.e. in terms of melodic intervals), maqam Hijaz bears a striking similarity to the *Ahavah rabbah* (Yiddish: *freygish)* mode originating in European Jewish liturgical and folk music. Moreover, while some of the tonal patterns could be seen as emulating those of the Hijaz mode, the melodies used in the Volos *K'dushah* do not conform to the usual linear, heterophonic use of Hijaz in most Middle Eastern traditions, nor is it usual to categorize Judeo-Greek liturgical music using Middle Eastern modes. This on-going discussion and debate about influences and similarities reveals the difficulty of categorization in ethnomusicological research, in particular, in this distinctive Judeo-Greek repertoire with little surrounding research. It also reveals the difficulty of "rescuing" such music, which comes from such a long-enduring oral tradition that has yet to be significantly explored by academic scholarship.

Keter yit'nu: The Italian Influence?

The *K'dushah* from Volos was not the only one sung to us by Cantor Ischakis. He also sang us one which he designated as coming from Corfu. Unlike the first version of the *K'dushah*, the Corfu version uses a text beginning with the words *Keter yit'nu* ([Angels] crown You), employed by Sephardic and Hasidic communities, including the Chabad movement, for *K'dushah* during the Musaf service.[39] The text as well as the music highly suggest an Italian influence.[40] Unlike the other *K'dushah* sung to us by Haim, which was in a decidedly minor-like

[39] In Yaacob Dweck in: *The Scandal of Kabbalah: Leon Modena, Jewish Mysticism, Early Modern Venice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011) there is a discussion on whether or not this particular text for the *K'dushah* had a mystical influence.

[40] Daniel Goldschmidt, *Meḥqare Tefillah u-Fiyyut* (On Jewish Liturgy) (Jerusalem; Hebrew University Press, 1978).

key or mode, the *Keter yit'nu* version from Corfu is clearly in a major-sounding key[41] more typical of *K'dushat musaf l'shabbat* in all branches of Judaism, when the synagogue is filled and the mood is one of singing God's glory.

Overall, there are many more examples of this repertoire to be explored, such as the modal chants for Torah and Haftarah cantillation, which are arguably the "oldest" and least changed elements of the repertoire as it was handed down throughout the centuries. But such explorations can only be developed given future funding initiatives, receptive surviving community members, and ethnomusicologists who wish to undertake the research, preservation and transmission. However, even at this juncture we can conclude that the repertoire is worth exploring, both as the most recent evidence of Romaniote musical traditions, whether through self-identification or heritage, as well as the eclectic oeuvre of a talented musician and prayer leader.

Conclusion

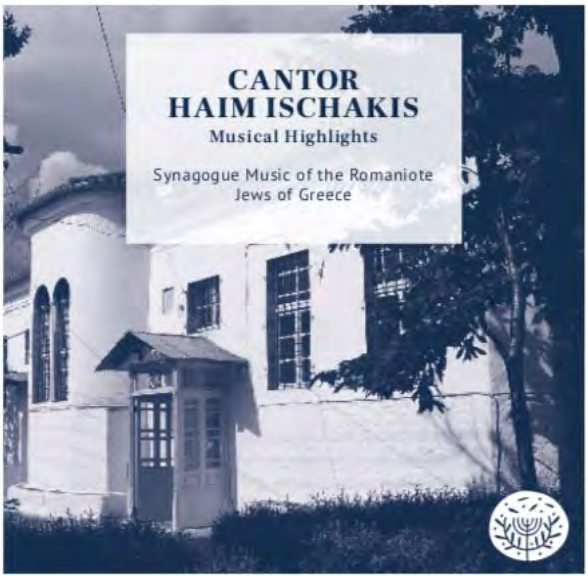
While my research on the music of the Romaniote Jews of Greece has a long way to go, a great deal has nonetheless been accomplished. Our endeavors at the EZJM to rescue a nearly-lost Jewish liturgical musical tradition shed new light on some important questions that should be thoroughly explored in future research on Jewish musical traditions. For instance, in this increasingly global world, can we even speak about bounded "music cultures" or should we be speaking about "Jewish communities" across national boundaries? Other challenges involve scholarly doubt regarding the authenticity of this corpus, so generously transmitted to us by Cantor Ischakis. These suspicions prompt one to ask: What is authentic Romaniote liturgical music? What is any "authentic Jewish music tradition" for that matter? According to Nelson H. H. Graburn, "Tradition was the name given to those cultural features which, in situations of change, were to be continued to be handed on, thought about, preserved and not lost."[42] Romaniote Jewry has been consistently influenced by the greater societies and cultures of the Mediterranean. These encounters include contact with non-Jewish communities, such as the Muslim communities under Ottoman rule, as well as intra-Jewish encounters between the Romaniotes and the Sephardim that settled in Greece following the Spanish Inquisition.

These interactions, ranging from those occurring in daily life to sudden and often violent incursions such as war and deportation, continued to shape this distinctive liturgical tradition of synagogue music that differs significantly from its Ashkenazi and Sephardic counterparts. Is not Haim Ischakis's experience and musical interpretation and that of his father before him who survived Auschwitz and passed this melodies onto his son, part of Romaniote history? Is not the experience of Romaniote communities characterized by war, persecution, migration, commerce or simply the passing of time and the natural process of transmission an integral part of this so-called "authentic" tradition? Or in this case of a disappearing musical tradition within the context of powerful global influences, must we fall back on defining music as a purely individual, eclectic oeuvre in order to avoid hairy questions of communal, cultural identity and authenticity?

[41] Please note: I use the designations "minor-like" or "major-sounding" etc. to indicate that these sound-files cannot precisely be described using terminology for Western art music.
[42] Nelson H. H. Graburn, "What is Tradition?" *Museum Anthropology* 23, nos. 2 & 3 (2001): 6.

Certainly, looking at this distinctive repertoire, even in the context of one individual and how he performs it today, allows us to explore and raise awareness about the history of this innovative and long-enduring community.

This discussion and analysis of academic study and fieldwork relating to one of the last known practitioners of the musical liturgy of the Romaniote Jews of Greece reveals that in a case in which there has been very little research on a musical tradition, research and documentation to ensure support and continuity is only possible through the creative accessing of many different sources in all their forms. Moving forward, sources will include not only conventional written publications but also: 1) cultural heritage events; 2) recordings and other media implemented by external people or institutions; 3) current musical experimentation and composition; and 4) research and analysis and subsequent reconstruction of sources and influences (sometimes requiring the accessing of sources in several collections in trans-national locations and forms), a constellation of data of various kinds. Moreover, it would seem that given the lack of sources on the Romaniotes, the rescue of disappearing musical traditions requires an interdisciplinary approach, accessing all available sources.



EZJM CD Cover: Synagogue Music of the Romaniote Jews of Greece.

As this research unfolds, one thing is apparent: rescuing a musical tradition is not just about documenting and preserving the music. What it needs is recognition as both a long-enduring oral tradition, as well as a current practice informed by many layers of history, self-definition and musical invention within the structures of a Jewish liturgical context. The rescuing of Jewish nearly-lost or disappearing liturgical music, including the reconstruction of previously lost or disappearing musical works, has necessitated the negotiation of practical issues relating to the collection, preservation, and dissemination of music. In all this, musical tradition is never static, but rather an ever-changing process of invention, transformation, innovation and reinvention.

Dr. Miranda Crowdus is a research associate in the European Center for Jewish Music at the Hanover University of Music, Drama and Media. Her work includes original research to develop postgraduate programs in Jewish Music Studies, and she serves as an international liaison for projects and other initiatives. She earned her Doctorate at City University London, focusing on Jewish identity, popular music and cross-cultural encounters in South Tel Aviv. Her book, **Hip Hop in Urban Borderlands***, was published at the end of 2018. She is currently researching the distinctive liturgical traditions of Romaniote Jewry and is completing short-term fellowships at Fordham University and the New York Public Library.*

MAIL BOX

An Editor's Reaction to a Photo of Avigdor Kusevitsky's Gravestone in Warsaw's Jewish Cemetery (1934), Submitted by David and Jill Prager, Aug. 1, 2018. [*JAL*]

Never would I have imagined the Kusevitsky patriarch's *matseivah* to be sculpted in a quadruple-pilastered Art Deco form more typical of 1930s New York. Yet, your recent photo shows how stylistically advanced the arts must have been there, far different than the "backwater" image we may have harbored of Jewish life in Poland between the wars, judging by everyday images that were published decades later (Roman Visniac, *Polish Life*, Schocken, 1965).

The cosmopolitan capitol city apparently did not share the backwardness of contemporary Polish rural existence, nor did its resplendent Tlomackie Synagogue (where Avigdor's eldest son Moshe presided as Chief Cantor from 1928-1939), which featured four huge Corinthian columns that fronted an open portico and Palladian-style wings on either side, in any way resemble the humble prayer houses seen elsewhere in the country. Even earlier (1908-1928), during Cantor Gershon Sirota's tenure at the Tlomackie, wealthier members would regularly be driven to services on Shabbat and dropped off a block away so as to give the appearance of having walked (Abraham Vigoda, *Legendary Voices*, 1981).Perhaps that singularly aristocratic heritage would explain the elegant vocal line that Moshe's singing still retained on his first post-War American LP recording (*Festival Gems*, RCA Victor, 1947), as well as the album's refined accompaniment played superbly by a string quartet.

I never met Avigdor Kusevitsky, who passed away in Warsaw, Poland, as mentioned above. Yet I happened to be present the day his name was mentioned from the pulpit of Conservative Temple Emanuel in Borough Park, Brooklyn, where his youngest son David was serving as cantor during the 1950s. David's rabbi, Polish-born Boruch Silverstein, was a master of the *Bon Mot*. On the Shabbat morning after Patricia and David's fourth child Victor was born, Rabbi Silverstein congratulated the couple and remarked that the infant had seemingly chosen his own Hebrew name, *Avigdo*r, which had belonged to his grandfather. He explained that the name could also be read as *Avi, g'dor* or "My father, make a fence." In other words, stop. Turning to David who was seated on the Bimah, he smilingly added: "*Khazn*, your son is telling you, 'Enough already'!"

Celebrating Gladys Gewirtz (1928-2012), 60 Years after Her Retirement as Music Director at Camp Ramah in the Poconos

A Co-editor's recall of his working summer at Ramah, October 29, 2018. [*JAL*]

In June of 1959, JTS offered a Seminar for Music Counselors-to-Be at Ramah Camps, led by Gladys (Tovah) Gewirtz, known for her popular recordings of children's songs, shortly before she relinquished her post as *Madrikhah l'musikah* at the Poconos camp. The piano was her instrument, while the 1957 edition of ***Kol b'ramah*****,** a *shiron* containing the lyrics of some 300 Hebrew songs, served as her teaching text. The seminar's first three weeks covered songs themed around Shabbat, Labor, Planting and Harvesting, Love of Zion, Circle Dancing, Pastoral Love and Tishah B'av. The present writer, one of the participants, recorded the final session, in which Gladys' performance testified to the high musical level that prevailed in Ramah Poconos at the time.

Gladys (Tovah) Gewirtz, ca. 1965

I recently sent the recording to two retired alumni of JTS who had been Ramah campers in the 1950s. They were "transported back to the *hadar okhel* of Ramah Poconos" by the sound of Gladys singing those songs 60 years later. **Rabbi Stuart Kelman** and **Professor Raymond Scheindlin**, who hold doctorates in Psychology and Medieval Hebrew Literature, respectively, recalled how "the way she worked that dining hall was something special… what a sweet voice she had, and what an excellent self-accompanist!" Stu Kelman "worked with her one summer" by playing string bass to underpin Tovah's instrumental/vocal ensemble that performed "complicated rounds."

One of the rounds was decidedly sophisticated for a non-specialized summer music curriculum. ***B'ofel leil*** (In Darkest Night), was adapted to music written in the *Gallante* (Courtly) style of Italian Baroque composer **Luigi Cherubini** (1743-1805). The anonymously authored lyrics might easily have been penned by any number of modern Hebrew poets; songs about "The Still of Night" had been written by composers ranging from **Rachmaninoff** (1893) to **Cole Porter** (1937).

(Click anywhere in the music on the following page to access the audio file.)

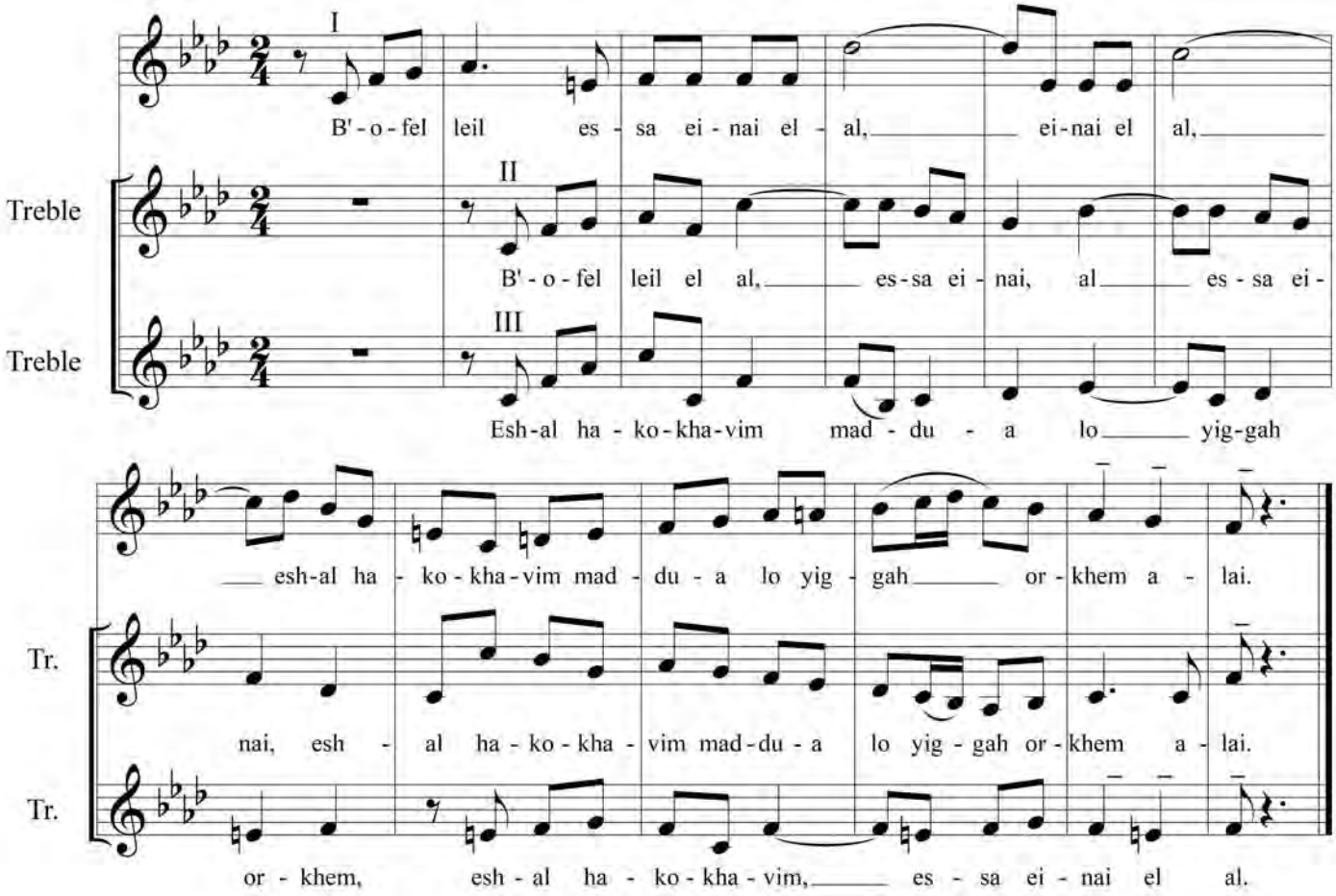
B'ofel Leil

Hebrew: Author Unknown

Music: After Luigi Cherubini
Translation and Transcription: Joseph A. Levine

The Complete song is sung three times:

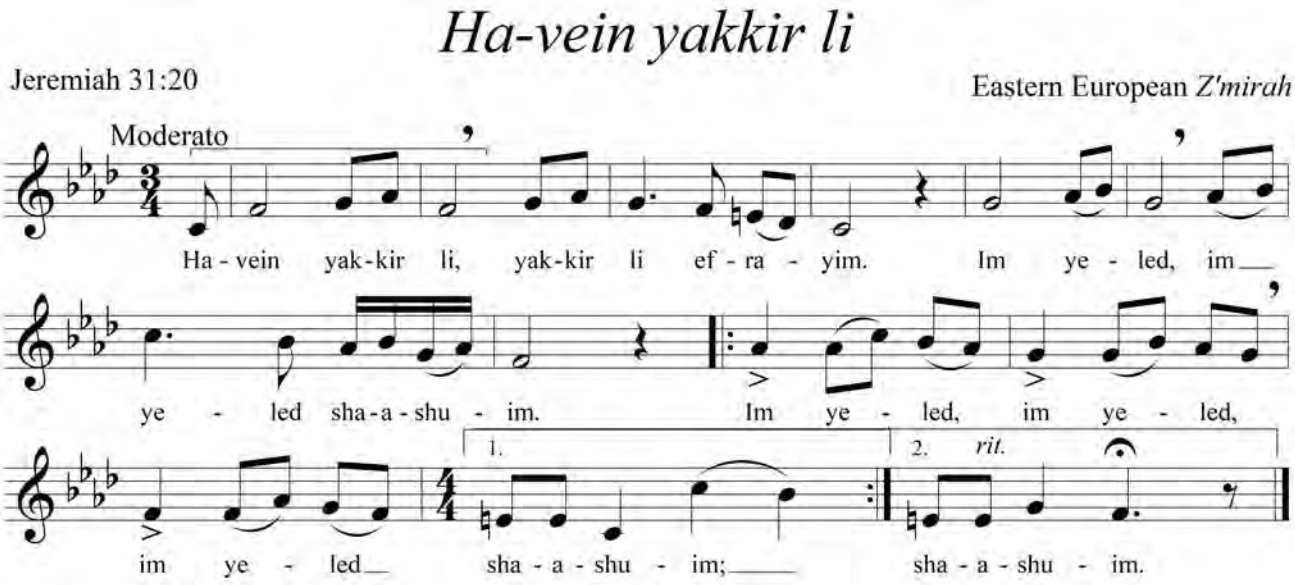
1. *Tutti* in unison: I, II, & III successively;
2. Parts I & II only; as a 2-part Round;
3. Parts I, II, & III as a 3-part Round.



I lift my eyes in darkest night,
Demanding of the stars in flight:
Why can't I bask in your reflected light?

בְּאֹפֶל לַיִל אֶשָּׂא עֵינַי אֶל עָל,
אֶשְׁאַל הַכּוֹכָבִים:
מַדּוּעַ לֹא יִגַּהּ אוֹרָכֶם עָלַי?

In like fashion, Ray Scheindlin was overwhelmed upon hearing Tovah's simple tune for ***Ha-vein yakkir li*** among *Shirei shabbat* on the recording; he had sung it "as a boy of nine while the soprano soloist in an all-male High Holiday choir in our sort-of Orthodox synagogue." The present writer's family, affiliated at the time with the Modern Orthodox Young Israel Synagogue of Borough Park, Brooklyn, used to sing it as a ***z'mirah*** around the table on Friday nights. Interestingly, the melody of *Ha-vein yakkir li* (Is not Ephraim my dear son, my precious child) opens with the same motif as the Cherubini *B'ofel leil esa einai*: identical notes, different meter and rhythm [bracketed in the example below]:



Musicologist Deryck Cooke (*The Language of Music,* 1959: 124-25) cites the musical motif with its "move upward from the lower dominant, via the tonic to the minor third," as it appears in settings by two dozen composers between 1594 (Thomas Morley) and 1924 (Benjamin Britten). Based on the stoic texts it tone-paints in these compositions, he characterizes the motif as giving "**a strong feeling of courage**, in that it boldly acknowledges the existence of tragedy and springs onward into the thick of it."

My two informants, Rabbi Stuart Kelman and Professor Raymond Scheindlin, both of whom belong to the Baby Boomer generation born immediately after the *Shoah* of World War II, related positively to this music that expressed the "heroic overcoming of tragedy." They were evidently not the only ones living and working at Ramah camps to react similarly. The wide stylistic range of Tovah's musical selections plus her professional skills and personal charisma brought out the very best in hundreds of campers and their counselors who raised the roof of that dining hall, in the biblical language their co-religionists were resurrecting after two millennia, in a Third Jewish Commonwealth! Tovah's repertoire, both religious and secular, at **Ramah Poconos** still lives in the memories of those she taught by simply singing the contemporary songs of our people with them on a daily basis. Let the foregoing serve as a belated acknowledgement of the lasting motivational effect that Gladys Gewirtz had upon a generation of American Conservative Judaism's lay leaders, educators, rabbis, cantors and lay membership over the past half century.

IN MEMORIAM
Mordechai Sobol (1951-2018)

Born in Tel Aviv, Mordechai Sobol studied with master hazzan and teacher Shlomo Ravitz, taught countless other *hazzanim*, earned a doctorate in Jewish Music and was the founder and conductor of the Yuval Symphony Orchestra and Choir. With these forces plus guest artists like Yitzchak Meir Helfgot, Yaakov Lemmer, Chaim Adler, Netanel Hershtik, Zvi Weiss and Shay Abraham, Dr. Sobol presented hundreds of sold-out concerts throughout Israel. As a functioning hazzan, his encyclopedic knowledge of *hazzanut*, its history and repertoire combined with a clear lyric tenor and solid singing technique to produce davening that recalled the legendary Golden Age cantors, yet openly imitated none of them (**right-click on the hyperlink; then left-click to open the video**) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KbDXiYzl0wU).

Sobol hosted a popular Friday radio program that featured recordings of and anecdotes about *hazzanut* and *hazzanim*. In 2006 he received the Education Prize from President Yitzhak Navon, in addition to the Jerusalem Prize for his special contribution the revival of Cantorial singing in Israel. For the past 25 years he officiated as guest hazzan at High Holiday services for Temple Israel in Great Neck, New York, upon the recommendation of Raphael Frieder, the congregation's long-time cantor. It was after davening on the second day of Rosh Hashanah in 2018 that Hazzan Sobol suffered a massive stroke that led to his death several days later in Atlanta.

Mordechai Sobol was a credit to his chosen calling in every one of its public manifestations: prayer leader, teacher and mentor, composer and arranger, conductor and impresario. Through this brief memorial, which barely dents the surface of Mordechai's monumental accomplishments on behalf of synagogue music, the Cantors Assembly extends its deepest sympathy to his wife Yona, their children Ofir, Eyal, Hila and Asaf and their families. His lifelong efforts to sustain *hazzanut* as a living art form on the highest level possible will long be remembered and cherished by all who continue to benefit from the fruits of his labor. [*JAL*]

IN MEMORIAM

Richard M. Berlin (1943-2019)

By Joy Katzen-Guthrie

How does one describe a mensch? A simple task for the *Journal of Synagogue Music,* whose good fortune it was to have had Rick Berlin as its Associate Editor for 20 years. In *JSM* 2011, themed around ***Hazzanut* in the 20th Century,** his generous spirit filled the personal note he appended to a Memorial List of almost 1500 *hazzanim* in Europe who were killed during the Shoah:

*For the first time, I feel the need to comment publicly. Halfway through the names, I had to stop and write these lines, for no other reason than being overwhelmed. To no other article that I have formatted for the JSM have I had such an emotional response. With each keystroke, with each name, city and camp, my heart ached. I thought of the people who recovered those lists, and of those who preserved them for us so that we might never forget. We know those people listed—every single one—**for they are us**. [RMB]*

Rick and his equally gifted wife Mary, both classically trained vocalists, shared a deep appreciation of music and Judaism that they imparted to their children. They settled in Pittsburgh, devoting themselves to singing in and helping establish choirs throughout the city. Blessed with a *tenore robusto* voice that easily filled a synagogue sanctuary, Rick was soon asked to serve as cantor of Congregation B'nai Israel. The joy of officiating, as well as the success of daughter Liz's professional music career, inspired him to take a leap of faith, shut down a successful public relations business, and to enroll full-time as a cantorial student at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York—a frightening choice in mid-career. Yet, the above sketch from this period (1998) shows Rick happily absorbed in the music he was performing at a Cantors Assembly convention.

Following his ordination in 2000, Rick served Parkway Jewish Center in Monroeville, PA as Spiritual Leader and Cantor for almost a decade, truly "finding his voice" as he learned to communicate the meaning of prayer and grow in understanding Torah. His sermons deepened in wisdom and in understanding the needs of his congregants for comfort and reassurance. Under his direction, Parkway thrived in collaboration with other local synagogues, joining Religious School projects and *S'lihot* services in an effort to grow the greater community. In the words of one member of his congregation, "it was magic."

In 2013, a heart condition became serious enough for Rick and Mary to reluctantly leave Parkway and move to Florida, where Rick immediately joined BACA: the (Tampa) Bay Area Cantorial Association. His vibrant presence quickly made itself felt. No matter what the event, Rick was always the first to say, "I'm in." In retirement, he also became active with the Cantors Assembly's Southern Florida Region, the Jewish Federations of Tampa and Greater

Sarasota Region. When asked, he willingly officiated at several area synagogues, in addition to serving as Spiritual Leader of Temple Beth El in North Port.

Rick loved to share generously with colleagues, singing while demonstrating how certain synagogue motifs and Yiddish folk songs seemed to prefigure later Broadway show tunes. A published ASCAP composer, his liturgical works were performed at JTS and at interfaith services worldwide. Earlier in his career he had soloed with the Pittsburgh Pops and Mendelssohn Choir. Unfortunately, in the past year, Rick faced serious bouts with his health. Yet he bounced back after each one, returning to rehearsals and concerts without missing a beat. He seemed more alive than ever. It is hard to believe that his smile, his rich voice and cheerful countenance are now gone.

May the memory of his unquenchable devotion to *hazzanut* and a full Jewish life serve as an everlasting blessing for those who were privileged to have been touched by his gift. May his final journey be enriched by joyous music and the radiance that he expressed in so many ways. May all the good that he accomplished continue to live long beyond the mortal years that were allotted to him on earth, and his name—**Yerachmiel Mendel ben Nachum V'nechamah**—serve as an everlasting blessing for his loving family.

A **Cantor Richard and Mary Berlin Scholarship Fund** to aid students of the H.L. Miller Cantorial School has been established in Rick's memory by the **Cantors Assembly**, 55 S. Miller Road, Suite 101, Fairlawn, OH 44333.

Joy Katzen-Guthrie is a Past President of BACA; she functions regularly as Guest Cantor for various congregations in Southwest Florida, and organizes Jewish Heritage Tours around the world.

(Readers may access an audio file of Richard M. Berlin singing his own arrangement of Max Helfman's *Hashkiveinu* melody, by clicking here.)

IN MEMORIAM
Donald Neil Roberts (1945-2019)

Rarely has the *Journal* eulogized a voice teacher. Yet, the passing of Rabbi Donald Roberts has elicited such an outpouring of laudatory remembrances on Hazzanet, that they cannot be ignored:

He taught many fellow-members of the Cantors Assembly along with opera- and -pop singers…

A feature-length documentary on him has been screened at film festivals from Ashkelon, Israel to Saarbrucken, Germany…

Don was certainly an iconoclast, but a good soul, kind and generous…

He was an eccentric, to be sure, whose **Zoooo-eeee** *vocalise will live forever…*

His excuses for canceling lessons were legendary; how could there be as many funerals as he claimed? Were people traveling in droves to his tiny shul just to be buried?

For 20 years he worked his magic by telephone from tiny Beth El Synagogue in Oneonta, NY, where he arrived as a newly ordained rabbi with his wife Barbara in 1992. He preached and she served as cantorial soloist, their voices joining frequently in soaring duets. He worked with local clergymen of varied faiths to instill tolerance and understanding in the community. She administered the Religious School, taught adult groups, edited the newsletter and organized Oneg Shabbat programs as well as parties on Sukkot and Purim.

A film aficionado, Don regaled his parishioners with behind-the-scene anecdotes about Hollywood and its stars. He spearheaded the drive for renovating a synagogue that was bursting its seams as services drew more and more worshipers. Together, he and Barbara worked to accommodate the beliefs and practices of congregants who might have been more comfortable in Orthodox and Reform settings, rather than Conservative Beth El, the only synagogue in the area.

May his loved ones experience no further sorrow for many years to come; and take comfort in the knowledge that his life touched those of many others for good. [*Gleaned from several sources*].

IN MEMORIAM

Velvel Pasternak (1933-2019)

In a review-essay of Velvel Pasternak's *Anthology of Classic Jewish Folksongs* (*Journal of Synagogue Music* March 2017, pp. 80-88), Jewish music specialist Sam Weiss wrote:

Velvel Pasternak's career as a collector, transcriber, arranger, editor, compiler, publisher, recording producer of Jewish music—and its all-around champion—spanned [over] half a century. From his hard-cover *Songs of the Chassidim* to the latest eBooks and single-song PDFs, Pasternak's **Tara Publications** has released hundreds of titles and collections of vocal, choral and instrumental works in all of the Jewish genres, with an emphasis on popular music.

In an Internet review of Pasternak's *Behind the Music: Stories, Anecdotes, Articles and Reflections* (CT Jewish Ledger Online, June 21, 1917), Rabbi Jack Riemer singled out a recording session that Velvel had described in the book:

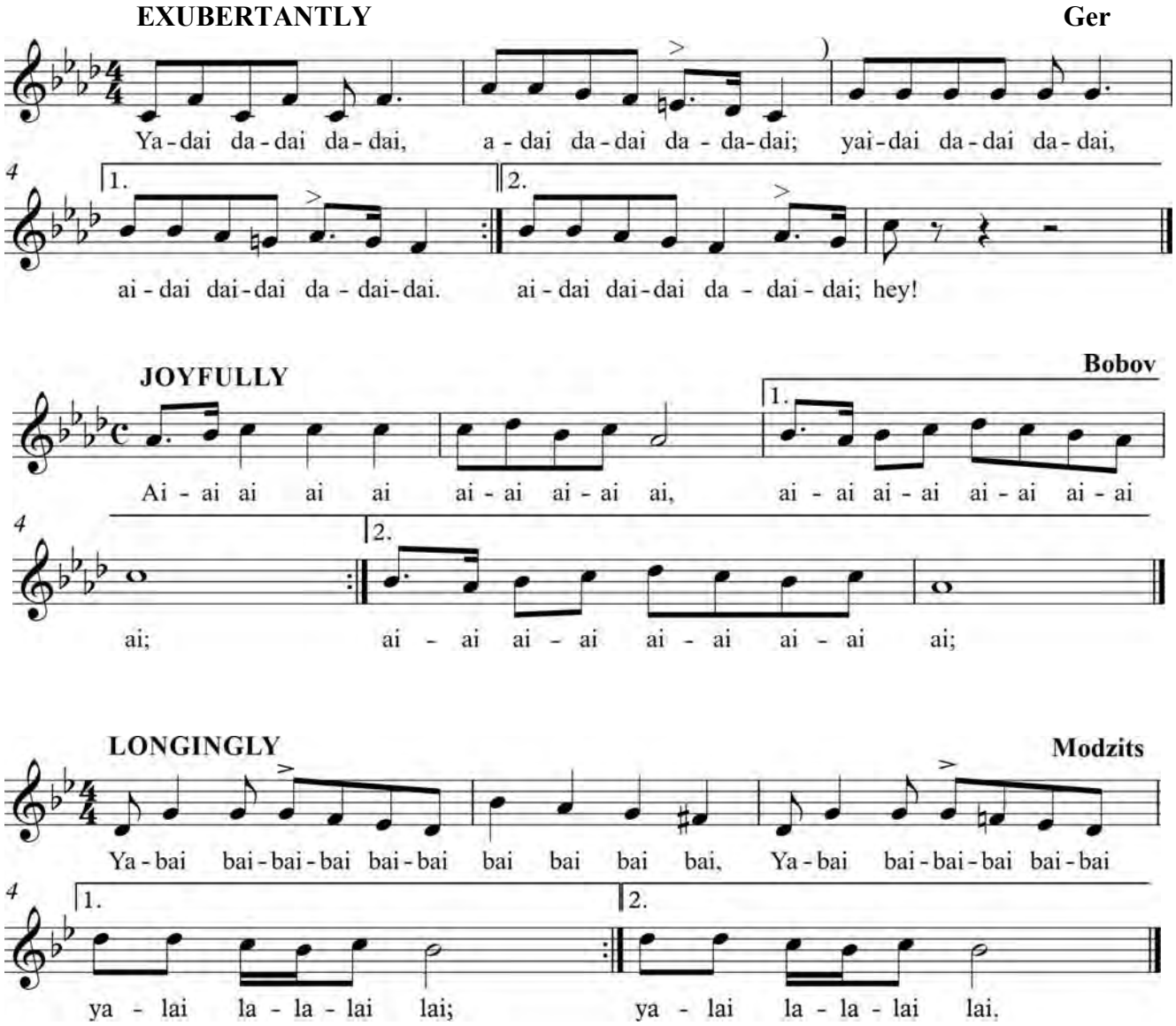
> The head honcho of the Hasidim told him "not to make with his hands" since the Hasidim would sing with their eyes closed anyway, because they were more concerned with expressing the music's spiritual meaning than with paying attention to [musical direction]. He also told Velvel that the musicians he had hired to accompany the Hasidim would not be necessary, since the Hasidim would pay no attention to them. Velvel realized he was arguing with an irresistible force, so he let the Hasidim sing without trying to conduct them. He [also] dubbed in the musicians' playing afterwards [and] the recording came out fine.

Twenty-six recordings and over 150 books later under the label of Tara Publications, running the gamut from Israeli, Yiddish, Ladino, cantorial, Hasidic and Holocaust music, plus countless illustrated lectures in which he fascinated audiences while singing and accompanying himself on the piano, he had spearheaded an effort to help preserve Jewish music for future generations. To accomplish this, he had marshaled all the traditional and technical musical knowledge acquired growing up as an Orthodox youngster in Toronto, the last bastion of shul-going Yiddish-speaking Jews in North America. He remained ever conscious of his traditional roots through his high school and college years at New York's Yeshiva University and postgraduate study at the Juilliard School and Columbia University.

A talk he delivered at a convention of the Reform Cantors' ACC convention (ca 1990s) typifies the type of unique information he was able to offer on the nuances of real-life Hasidic singing (as opposed to what had been previously available only in books). It concerned the actual *moods* of various *niggunim* which were conveyed by the "filler syllables" preferred by members of the specific Hasidic "dynasties" that had created each *niggun.* He then

demonstrated three different moods that were expressed by the different filler syllables sung to niggunim (excerpted below) of the Gerer, Bobover. and Modzitser Hasidim—Exuberance, Joy, and Longing—approbations that pertain as well to the vibrant musical legacy that Velvel Pasternak has left us.

Hazzan Greg Yaroslow may have expressed it best: "His contribution to the expanse of Jewish music cannot be measured; more than the scores he prepared and the knowledge he shared, Velvel was a mensch!" May that truth serve as an eternal blessing for his beloved and untiring life's partner, Goldie, his five children, twenty-two grandchildren, and the multitudes who will continue to benefit from the results of his self-appointed—often thankless yet divinely inspired—life's work.



Journal of Synagogue Music

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 ISSN 0449-5128