

# Journal of Synagogue Music

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December 1989 . Tevet 5750 . Vol. XIX . No. 2

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**JOURNAL OF SYNAGOGUE MUSIC, Volume XIX, Number 2**  
**December 1989 / Tevet 5750**

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JOURNAL OF SYNAGOGUE MUSIC *is a semi-annual publication. The subscription fee is \$15.00 per year. All subscription correspondence should be addressed to Journal of Synagogue Music, Cantors Assembly, 150 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10011.*

*Articles and Letters to the Editor should be addressed to Cantor Jack Chomsky, Editor, Journal of Synagogue Music, 1354 East Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio 43205. Articles should be typewritten and double-spaced. Music and musical examples should be photo-ready.*

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## FROM THE EDITOR

This issue of the *Journal of Synagogue Music* should please all of our readers. We have assembled a number of different articles on wide-ranging subjects which provide some scholarship, some history, some biographical data, and some music-something for everyone, we hope.

The lead article by Alexander Knapp provides great insight into the writings (both personal and musical) of the composer Ernest Bloch. Professor Knapp's piece provides new understanding while stripping away some old cliché-ridden ideas associated with Bloch's work and creativity.

Shoshana Gelfand's study of Katchko's Ki ***K'shimkha*** reminds us of how important it is for hazzanim to think about every note and every syllable which they sing. I'm not sure whether Katchko himself was aware of all of the nuances which Ms. Gelfand finds in his composition. Indeed, I believe that musical analysis usually turns up more detail in a composition than the composer originally was aware of. Yet the validity of her comments stands on its own, and suggests that, when we chant using our hearts, souls, and minds, someone out there is listening.

In the category of personal histories, we are pleased to include Max Wohlberg's sketch of the life of Gershon Ephros, whose centenary is celebrated in 1990, as well as Akiva Zimmerman's anecdotal history of our beloved Ychudah Mandel.

"Toward the 21 st Century" is Michael Isaacson's latest reminder to us of the importance of commissioning new music with some helpful suggestions on how to do it successfully.

The Music Section includes three works. First, we chose to print Ki ***K'shimkha*** in its entirety since it is taken apart phrase by phrase elsewhere in this issue. Though this is without adoubt already in the librariesof some of our readers, it would seem unjust not to print the entire work after Ms. Gelfand's impressive examination of it. We also publish two pieces sent to us by David Lefkowitz — an unaccompanied setting of ***Hashkivenu*** which Lefkowitz based on a recitative by Jacob Koussevitsky, and an accompanied arrangement of ***Mikolot Mayim Rabim***.

We would happily present some excerpts of more contemporary new works in the Music Section as well. Those of you who have written or commissioned such works are welcome to send them to us for publication or excerpting. In the case of commissions, please be sure to secure the composer's permission before you send us the material. It will save us time and effort.

***-Jack Chomsky***

## HELVETIA - ISRAEL - AMERICA: IDENTITY IN BLOCH'S LIFE AND MUSIC

ALEXANDER KNAPP

***I am thrice homeless: as a Bohemian among Austrians; as an Austrian among Germans; and as a Jew in the world at large. Everywhere, one is an intruder; nowhere is one accepted.***

-Gustav Mahler<sup>1</sup>

How remarkably similar is the following statement:

***Here, I am a "Swiss composer" - In Europe, I am an "American composer" - I have no home, no country...I have no place anywhere. I am not wanted anywhere - It is a very sad situation.***

These words come from a letter written by Ernest Bloch in 1928 in San Francisco to his friend Alfred Pochon, the year after he had won outright the ***Musical America*** prize, for his ***Epic Rhapsody America***, from a field of 92 competitors. Disappointment at the lack of personal recognition and 'belonging' are ***leitmotifs*** (among many others) that recur frequently throughout a lifetime of correspondence with his numerous friends around the world. In order to understand something of his feelings as an ***emigre*** composer - among the first of his generation to settle in the U.S.A. - we must first investigate the ingredients that made up his sense of identity.

His family, both on his mother's side and on his father's side, had for six generations and more been established in a small part of Western Europe bounded by North Switzerland, South-West Germany and Alsace. Though life had been difficult for them economically and socially, they had been spared the excesses of persecution meted out to Jews elsewhere.

Bloch was born in 1880 and, from his earliest days, felt ambivalent about his geographical and religious surroundings. On the one hand, he loved the mountains near his native Geneva; he responded to the unsophisticated wisdom of the local peasantry. But, on the other hand,

ALEXANDER KNAPP is a pianist, musicologist and ethnomusicologist in Cambridge, England.

anti-Semitism was an ever-present fact of life, and as a sensitive child he was quick to pick this up. His father, Maurice, would intone Sabbath and Festival services in the home, and the atmosphere and music made a deep impression on the child. But although traditional in matters of observance, Maurice did not disguise his agnosticism. This double standard, together with distasteful memories of the behavior of congregants in the synagogue and in the Jewish community at large, tarnished the boy's perception of Judaism. Already the seeds of inner conflict and confusion were being sown; and the only source of genuine security came from the simple spirituality of his mother, Sophie.

Some of his early misfortunes in Europe were the direct result of anti-Semitism. A case in point is the extraordinary episode during which the French critic Robert Godet took Bloch into his confidence while, at the same time, secretly translating Houston Stewart Chamberlain's *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* into French (the book was to form the basis for "intellectual Nazism" a few years later).

Finances became so bad, opportunities so few, that working abroad seemed the only option. Bloch's letters of 1915 and 1916 reveal the level of his despair and desperation. When at last invited to be conductor for the dancer Maud Allan and her company on a tour of the U.S.A. in 1916, Bloch accepted with alacrity, although the First World War was at its height. The works he took with him, including the *Jewish Cycle* (comprising *Three Jewish Poems*, *Three Psalms*, *Israel Symphony*, *Schelomo*, and most of his First String Quartet), were an immediate success in New York and elsewhere. He loved the excitement in the air, the characteristic openness of the Americans he met, and the new financial security he was now enjoying. On returning home the following year he had to decide whether or not to emigrate. He and his wife, Marguerite, would be only too happy to leave the wider family tensions and other unpleasantnesses of life in Geneva. But they would also have to sell all their belongings; they would have to leave the beautiful countryside; they would have to get used to American cities, which evoked horror in Bloch.

The decision was made; and the family (Ernest, Marguerite, and their three young children: Ivan, Suzanne and Lucienne) made their way to what, at the time, must have seemed like the 'Promised Land': an ethnic 'melting pot' where refugees from persecution anywhere in the world could find sanctuary. It was now that Bloch could freely express his views about musical inspiration in general, and his music in particular:

***A man does not have to label a composition 'American' or "German' or "Italian", but he has to be American, German, Italian, or even Jewish, at the bottom of his heart if he expects to produce any real music. I, for instance, am a Jew, and I aspire to write Jewish music, not for the sake of self-advertisement but because I am sure that this is the only way in which I can produce music of vitality and significance...I believe that those pages of my own in which I am at my best are those in which I am most unmistakably racial. But the racial quality is not only in folk themes: it is in myself? .. Racial feeling is certainly a quality of all great music, which must be the essential expression of the people as well as the individual. Does anyone think he is only himself? Far from it: he is thousands of his ancestors. If he writes as he feels...his expression will be basically that of his forefathers.. If folk themes are to be used, this should only be the case when they are as a mother tongue to the composer, and I do not see how this can be the case in this country with the songs of Indians, Negroes, etc., although I can believe that a day will come when these melodies will have become a part of the music of the country.***<sup>3</sup>

Bloch also said, in the same article, that Mahler (whom he otherwise greatly admired) didn't 'link himself to the genius of his race;' and because of this, the musical material of his symphonies, for all their spirituality, was 'too conventional, too certain to crumble with the passage of time.' These words show a degree of somewhat over-confident outspokenness - something rather new in Bloch's mode of expression...The earlier part of this quotation has been used by numerous commentators to 'prove' (as it were) that Bloch is a 'Jewish Composer.' But only two years later, he wrote as follows about his recently completed Viola Suite:

***(It) does not belong to my so-called 'Jewish Works.' It is rather a vision of the Far East that inspired me: Java, Sumatra, Borneo - these wonderful countries I so often dreamed of, though I was never fortunate enough to visit them in any other way than through my imagination.'***

Indeed, the last movement of this work sounds very 'far-eastern' in its use of pentatonicism. The multi-ethnic stimuli that New York had to offer could only give substance to fantasies inspired by the literature Bloch had read in his youth - but what about the expression of his forefathers?...This is only one of so many apparent contradictions in Bloch's writings. And it serves to remind us that he said different things at different times in his life, sometimes quite unpredictably. These discrepancies indicate a

complex and evolving personality; they **cannot be** ignored just to suit the many and various wishful ideologies of academics and critics in their quest for consistent patterns of behavior.

Although Bloch became an American citizen in 1924, he found himself increasingly alienated from some of the more materialistic attitudes and values he encountered in the 1920's while Director of the Cleveland Institute of Music and subsequently the San Francisco Conservatoire. Trips to Europe during this period reinforced his longing for the land of his birth; and in 1930 he left the U.S.A. for an eight-year sojourn in France and Switzerland: 'I am exhausted from fifteen years in America and I need first of all to recover my strength? The first three years were devoted to the composition of **Avodath Hakodesh, the** 'Sacred Service' that forms the very epicenter of his creative life in more ways than one. But thereafter, he visited his adopted land, and in early 1939, when American citizenship requirements and the grip of Nazism in Europe made any further delay impossible, he resettled in the U.S.A., eventually 'plunging my roots in Oregon.<sup>6</sup> However, Europe continued to attract him, and he journeyed back and forth as long as his chronically indifferent health allowed.

What is the significance of all this restlessness? I feel that there was a constant struggle between the **spiritual** and **emotional/psychological** dimensions of Bloch's being.

The spirituality he absorbed from his mother was manifested in his concepts of the universality of life, of nature, of music. The works which expressed this timeless quality were those which were written without motive and can be found in every period of his life (for example, the **Poemes d'Automne**, some of the ten piano pieces for children entitled **Enfantines**, or the slow movement of the Violin Concerto). Here we sense the absence of conflict.

His delight that **Avodath Hakodesh was** being performed in churches and cathedrals as well as synagogues and temples was a natural expression of his deeply felt ecumenism. But the evangelical and almost messianic zeal in his nature transformed the 'brotherhood of mankind' into an emotional and sometimes confused expression of 'nationalism in music.' This is especially apparent in what he wrote about his three 'patriotic' works: **Helvetia - a Symphonic Fresco** (composed on-and-off between 1900 and 1929), **Israel Symphony** (composed between 1912 and 1916), and **America - an Epic Rhapsody** (composed between 1916 and 1926).



All three works are for large orchestra, and each has a choral or vocal section just before its conclusion that projects a distinct ethnic identity. Let us consider, first of all, the anthem in his Symphonic Fresco **Helvetia** (Ex.1)<sup>7</sup> about which he said:

***When I am dead may be...children will sing the Swiss anthem...in which I hear distinctly the multitude, combined with the orchestra, symbolizing the union of man and his country, his Fatherland, in the most profound and complete sense...the motif of the hymn emerges...above all, like the national flag, symbol of Peace.'***

This is based on an old folksong in the dialect of Geneva: *Ce que le no* ('The One who is Above'). The original score and numerous sketches were donated by Bloch to the Bibliothèque Nationale in Bcme, despite his complaint that 'nobody cares about it in Switzerland.'<sup>9</sup>

Next, part of the vocal finale of Israel that clearly suggests some of the traditional Lithuanian cantillation motifs for the Song **of Songs** (Ex.2). Suzanne Bloch has written that

***Bloch's original plan had been to add another movement to what had already been written...In this last section he wanted to envision the return of the Jews to Israel and express rejoicing over the redemption of the Jews...Giving up this hope he explained.- 'After the war was over the real horrors and the moral degradation of the world were exposed to humanity.' Bloch was so disillusioned that the second part...has never been written.***<sup>10</sup>

And finally, the anthem Bloch composed for his Epic Rhapsody **America** (Ex.3), about which he spoke as follows:

***I had the idea of this symphony America before landing in August 1916. Europe was at war. I came to America; it was like another planet. It took me ten years before I wrote this symphony. I had to absorb America, and then the music came. I wanted then to use some of those beautiful folksongs of America: Indian songs, Southern songs, 'Old Folks at Home,' 'Hail Columbia,' the songs of the War, all those songs. I am not ashamed of them; they are as beautiful as those of any country; and they moved me, and they still move me; because they are the songs that, to my imagination, bring back the pioneers and those who made this great country, those of the past. Of course to use all those folksongs, and give them unity, that it be not a***

*hotch-potch, there ought to be a central idea. Well, the central idea, I thought at that time, to write a song; to unite all these ideas in one **melody**. Well, finally I succeeded, after much work and much time. Now this hymn comes in its full form only at the end **of** the symphony. The whole **symphony** is built upon this hymn; and my **idea** was that the audience, the America people, You, all **of you**, would sing this song. Now you see, this symphony is your symphony. I hope I wrote a good work, that you may come at the **end and sing it, with us, with the orchestra, with me; much more than music: a kind of giving of hearts to our great country in faith, not only in what is now, but in what has to come, and can come; an example to the whole of humanity, of no discrimination, of unity of different peoples, different races, different tongues, all that, all coming together.**"*

*Bloch again:*

***It is evident that 'Helvetia' and 'America' required a style quite different from that of 'Israel' or 'Schelomo.' In 'Helvetia' I have deliberately chosen my means and have confined myself to the style that matched the subject I was interpreting. A style clearly diatonic and tonal, strong and traditional, a style which, after all, is not so easy as many today believe....But those who have eyes and ears - and a heart - will find me as well in this work, and in 'America', as in 'Schelomo' or my 'Quintet.' It is only that, in each of these works, I have set free a different part of my personality perhaps appears less 'picturesque' or 'original' or, as they say, 'modern,' to those who judge by the surface.<sup>12</sup>***

But if the preceding instances have exhibited Bloch's perception of different national traits, how easy is it to tell one work from another? Taking from each work one sample of a *meditative* passage (Ex. 4a, b, c) and one sample of a *climactic* passage (Ex. 5a, b, c), and without knowing each composition thoroughly, can we immediately identify each extract as *typically* American, Swiss, or Jewish?

Much has been made of the eclecticism of Bloch's music: the Swiss characteristics, not only of *Helvetia*, but also of parts of the 'Concerto Grosso for Strings and Piano' (both written in America), and much of his chamber music; the American flavor, not only of America, but also of the Violin Concerto (written in Europe), *Poem's of the Sea, etc.*; the Far-Eastern traits in the Viola Suite, *Evocations*, and *Four Episodes; the* Neoclassicism of the later String Quartets, *Suite Modale, Suite*

***Symphonique***, and the unaccompanied violin, viola and cello Suites; the introduction of Gregorian Chant in ***Poeme Mystique***; the partial use of serialism in ***Sinfonia Breve*** and elsewhere; not to mention the Jewish works - comprising about one quarter of his total creativity - exemplified here by the ***Israel Symphony***.

However, I feel that the effects of living in the pluralist society that America was, and is, not only **expanded** Bloch's horizons but also had the effect of **blending** seemingly disparate elements in his musical personality into a homogeneous idiom. Despite differences between early, middle and late styles, and the use of diverse ethnic materials, most of Bloch's works can be identified as having been composed by Bloch.

America's effect on Bloch's Jewish consciousness was quite different from that of his early days in Europe. In the Old World, his music had, at first, been influenced by his **and** by contemporary masters - Debussy, Franck, Strauss, Wagner; and his ***Jewish Cycle was*** a gesture of individuality and a reaction against his environment. There is, incidentally, no truth in the suggestion that he had flirted with Christianity, which he, in fact, regarded as a failure after 18 centuries of hypocrisy.<sup>13</sup> It is true, however, that he admired the teachings of Jesus, as distinct from those of the church; he purchased a lifesize crucifix, which to him represented a suffering Jew; and his commitment to his cultural heritage seemed in no way diminished by his marriage to a woman of German Protestant lineage (who, incidentally, contemplated conversion during Bloch's first visit to U.S.A. in 1916, but who later abandoned her course of instruction for personal reasons).

In the New World, his Jewishness was at the same time weakened and strengthened. He was deeply touched by the generosity of those who, in the early days, organized and participated in concerts devoted largely to his Jewish works (e.g. the 'New York Society of the Friends of Music'). He was also overwhelmed by a visit he made, for example, to the Lower East Side of New York in 1918, where he came into contact with the hassidic community.

But the doctrines and practices of organized religion in any form could not satisfy him: and he became disconcerted when he saw that Jews in positions of influence did little or nothing to alleviate his sense of musical 'obliteration' (a word he used frequently). Two examples will suffice: there were no performances of ***the Israel Symphony*** in the U.S.A. between 1917 and 1932; and much later, in the context of the Six-Day Ernest Bloch

Music Festival in Chicago in 1950, Bloch complained that 'Five **Jewish** Conductors had refused to conduct my works...! before Kubelik accepted - he's not Jewish.'<sup>14</sup> At the same time, despite his early manifestos on the subject, he gradually came to resent being labeled and pigeon-holed a 'Jewish composer,' so it must have been particularly painful for him to read these stabbing words of Daniel Gregory Mason:

***Our whole contemporary aesthetic attitude toward instrumental music, especially in New York, is dominated by Jewish tastes and standards, with their oriental extravagance, their sensuous brilliance and intellectual facility and superficiality, their general tendency to exaggeration and disproportion. Bloch, long the chief minister of that intoxication to our public, has capped his dealings with us by the grim jest of presenting to us a long, brilliant, megalomaniac, and thoroughly 'Jewish' symphony - entitled 'America.'***<sup>15</sup>

Unhappy in Switzerland, unhappy in the U.S.A., what were his feelings about the Holy Land? Unlike his close friend and librettist Edmond Fleg, Bloch had never proclaimed himself a Zionist. Whether or not it would have been reasonable to expect Bloch to take the initiative in opening negotiations with the newly formed State of Israel, to give his services free, to donate his manuscripts to the National Library 'in Jerusalem, is open to debate. The fact is he didn't, and he felt slighted at not being brought over as a guest of the Israel Philharmonic. (It was not the orchestra's policy to invite composers, and Bloch was not rated among the world's greatest conductors). Perhaps he thought, however, that he was no less worthy than Aaron Copland, who was invited by the Ministry of Education and Culture to give a course for composers.<sup>16</sup>

So Bloch remained domiciled in the U.S.A. where he died in 1959. Altogether about half his working life had been spent there: the other half in Europe. His situation can be summed up in the words he wrote to Alfred Pochon from Agate Beach, Oregon on November 28, 1941: 'I feel - and I am **aware** of being - in **exile**, for **30 years** in his vast country where, in spite of everything, I feel a stranger - .' Physically and psychologically a 'Wandering Jew' all his life, he never found his 'promised land.' Numerous prizes and awards were bestowed on him over the years; his reputation as an outstanding pedagogue was second to none, and his teaching attracted some of the most prominent young American composers of the time (Roger Sessions, Bernard Rogers, Randall Thompson, and many others): yet it somehow wasn't enough to make him feel wanted. Though well able to show gratitude when appropriate, a

seemingly inescapable cycle of “cause and effect: misfortune and self-pity” dogged him all his life.

But, to conclude on a lighter note, Bloch developed an engaging wit, perhaps as an antidote to his melancholy and protection against the inclement world he saw around him. He was heard to complain on one occasion: ‘I spend so much time on the lecture stage that I fear I shall have to put on my business card: Ernest Bloch - Schmusik!’<sup>17</sup>

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Alma Mahler in Max Brod, *Die Musik Israels*, Sefer Press Ltd., Tel Aviv, 1951, pp. **35-6**

<sup>2</sup> April 22, 1928

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Olin Downes, 'Ernest Bloch, the Swiss Composer, on the Influence of Race in Composition', The *Musical Observer*, Vol. 15 no.3, 1917, p. 11

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in sleeve notes, Orion ORS 6904, 1969

<sup>5</sup> Letter to Alfred Pochon, Roveredo Capriasca, Ticino, Switzerland, August 30, 1931

<sup>6</sup> Letter to Pochon, Agate Beach, Oregon, November 28, 1941

<sup>7</sup> For full impact, the musical examples need to be heard rather than looked at. However, to facilitate easy visual access to the extracts under discussion, a complete list of relevant music-score references has been provided after the main text.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Mary Tibaldi-Chiesa, *Ernest Bloch*, G.B. Paravia Co., Turin, 1933, pp. 81-2

<sup>9</sup> Letter to Pochon, Roveredo, August 25, 1931

<sup>10</sup> Suzanne Bloch and Irene Heskes, *Ernest Bloch: Creative Spirit*, Jewish Music Council, New York, 1976, p. 48

<sup>11</sup> Transcribed from the end of Side B of the Vanguard VSL 11020 (stereo) recording of America by Leopold Stokowski, conducting the Symphony of the Air and the American Concert Choir

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in program notes to Boston Symphony Orchestra Fifty-Eighth Season 1938-1939, Fifth Programme, (March 20-21: first performance of *Helvetia* in Boston), pp. 30-31

<sup>13</sup> Letter to Sophie Bloch, 1918 (further details not available at this time)

<sup>14</sup> Letter to Pochon, Agate Beach, February 19, 1951

<sup>15</sup> Daniel Gregory Mason, *Tune in, America*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1931, pp.161-2

<sup>16</sup> Information by courtesy of Ze'ev Steinberg (a co-founder of the IPO), via Salome Berger, letter to me from Jerusalem, February 18, 1983

<sup>17</sup> Herbert A. Klein, 'Emst Bloch: A Study in Personality', *The American Hebrew*, February 17, 1928

## Musical Examples

- Ex. 1: **Helvetia**: one bar before fig. 63 (p. 81) · fig. 66 (p. 86)  
 Ex. 2: **Israel**: figs. 59-61 (pp. 83-86)  
 Ex. 3: **America**: four bars after fig. 102 (p. 175) · fig. 105 (p. 179)  
 Ex. 4a: **America**: beginning of slow movement (p. 72)  
 Ex. 4b: **Israel: figs.** 5-8 (pp. 4243)  
 Ex. 4c: **Helvetiu**: one bar before fig. 1 (p. 2) · fig. 2 (p. 4)  
 Ex. 5a: **Israel: figs.** 5-8 (pp. 21-23)  
 Ex. 5b: **Helvetiu**: one bar before fig. 40 (p. 53) · three bars before fig. 51 (p. 64)  
 Ex. 5c: **America: two** bars before fig. 27 (p.53) · fig. 29 (p. 58)

Figures, page and bar numbers, listed above, refer to the following publications:

***Helvetiu: The Lund of Mountains and its People: A Symphonic Fresco for Orchestra [To All Lovers of Mountains and Freedom], C.C. Birchard and Co., Boston, publ. 1931, 88 pp.***

***Israel: Symphony for Orchestra and Five Solo Voices, G. Schirmer, New York, publ. 1924, 96 pp.***

***America: An Epic Rhapsody in Three Parts for Orchestra [This Symphony has been written in love for this country. In reverence to its Past · In faith in its Future...] C.C. Birchard and Co., Boston, publ. 1928, 181 pp.***



## MAKING MIDRASH OUT OF MUSIC: A STUDY OF KATCHKO'S KI K'SHIMKHA

SHOSHANA GELFAND

Musicians have always known the interpretive power of music. Opera has long been a form of bringing secular texts to life; and musicologists have made the study of opera into an art form in itself. Unfortunately, this method of "midrash" had been largely ignored by Jewish musicians and scholars of liturgy. Jewish music lacks a parallel to opera analysis. While most cantors can perform the music, few are interested in interpreting or analyzing it. This is surprising since interpretation of texts is such a large part of Jewish tradition.

Because of the huge quantity of rabbinic midrashim which exist, one can logically ask, "Why doesn't the same massive amount of commentary exist for Jewish liturgy?" After all, these too are texts which are central to Jewish life. Furthermore, it is just as important to render the words of the liturgy meaningful since this is one's way of communicating with God.

The dearth of commentary on prayer is the impetus for the writing of this paper. It seems odd that there are so few midrashim on the liturgy (with the exception of the psalms). Although there are several siddurim which include perushim, these seem very cerebral in nature, not at all fitting with the experiential nature of prayer.

The genre of the cantorial recitative can be interpreted as a "midrash" on the liturgy. Depending on the composer, the recitative will mirror and comment upon the text to a greater or lesser degree. Whereas the rabbis who wrote *aggadah* utilized certain standard hermeneutical tools, so too do hazzanic composers have a clear methodology for expanding upon the text. Their techniques include: making use of chord structure, intervals between notes, phrasing, repeating motifs, and text painting (conjuring pictures with the music).

Several examples of these midrashic techniques are demonstrated in

SHOSHANA GELFAND is a rabbinical student at the Jewish Theological Seminary. This article was made possible in part through the **support** of the Wexner Foundation.

the following recitative. The text is *Ki K'shimkha* by the composer Adolph Katchko. It appears in the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur liturgy as part of the musaf service.

The text and translation are found below, reproduced from the Rabbinical Assembly Mahzor, pp. 242-243.

כִּי כְשֶׁמָדָּ בֵּן תְּהַלְתָּהּ, קָשָׁה לְכַעַס וְנוֹחַ לְרַצוֹת. כִּי לֹא תַחַפֵּץ  
בְּמוֹת הַמֵּת כִּי אִם בְּשׁוּבוֹ מִדְרָכּוֹ וְחַיָּה. וְעַד יוֹם מוֹתוֹ תַחַכֶּה-לּוֹ,  
אִם יָשׁוּב מִיַּד תִּקְבְּלוּ. אֲמַת כִּי אַתָּה הוּא יוֹצֵרֵם וְיוֹדֵעַ יִצְרֵם  
כִּי הֵם בְּשָׂר וְדָם.

אָדָם יְסוּדוֹ מֵעָפָר וְסוּפוֹ לְעָפָר. בְּנַפְשׁוֹ יָבִיא לְחַמוֹ. מְשׁוּל כְּחַרְס  
הַנְּשָׁבֵר, כְּחֻצִיר יָבֵשׁ וְכֻצִּיץ נוֹבֵל, כְּצֶל עוֹבֵר וְכַעֲנַן כָּלָה,  
וְכִרְוֹחַ נוֹשֶׁבֶת, וְכֶאֱבֵק פּוֹרֵחַ, וְכַחֲלוֹם יַעֲוֶה.

Your glory is Your nature: slow to anger, ready to forgive. You desire not the sinner's death, but that he turn from his path and live. Until the day of his death You wait for him. Whenever he returns, You welcome him at once. Truly You are Creator, and know the weakness of Your creatures, who are but flesh and blood.

Man's origin is dust and his end is dust. He spends his life earning bread. He is like a clay vessel, easily broken, like withering grass, a fading flower, a passing shadow, a fugitive cloud, a fleeting breeze, scattering dust, a vanishing dream.

\* \* \* \* \*

We first note that the music for this piece is written initially in the key of E and later in the key of A in the hazzanic mode of *ahavah rabbuh*. Large portions of Jewish liturgy are sung in the *uhuvuh rabbuh* mode. For example, much of the Amidah on Shabbat mornings, *El Malei Ruhumim* at funerals, or even the popular *Hava Nagila* performed at weddings and other festive occasions.

So, too, is the music for *Ki K'shimkhu* written in this *ahavah rabbuh* mode. It is strange, that the key of the piece appears to be E until almost halfway through, when it unexpectedly changes to A. This confusion of keys cannot be a mistake. The music intentionally starts in an ambiguous

key. The question is, why? What does this indicate about the nature of this prayer?

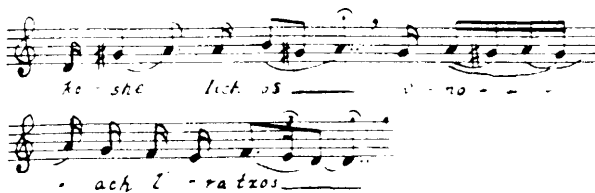
It may be a comment on the prayer's position in the mahzor. *Ki K'shimkha* comes directly following *B'Rosh Hashanah* in the high holiday liturgy. The latter prayer indicates that we, as human beings, do not know who will live in the coming year and who will die. We have little control over which way God will decide our fate. All we can do is repent for our sins and pray for forgiveness. No wonder we find it appropriate to recite *Ki K'shimkha* at this point in the service since this prayer praises God's attributes and compares them to ours, And no wonder we do not know what key we are in; that is as unsure as our fate at this point.

So it is possible to interpret the starting key of this prayer by its place in the liturgy, The words of the text indicate where the music should go next.

*Ki K'shimkha kein t'hilatekha kushesh likhos v'noah lirtzot.*

The first phrase is a preliminary clause for what is to follow. The second phrase is actually the independent clause. We discover, it is "because glory is His nature" that "He is slow to anger and ready to forgive." Several points can be made about this second clause:

On the word *kushesh*, difficult," there is a tri-tone an interval of three whole steps. It just so happens that this is *the* most difficult interval to hear or sing. For this reason, it is entirely appropriate for it to appear in conjunction with the word *kasheh*.



In contrast, a light trill and easy scale downward appears for the word *v'noah*. This musical juxtaposition truly describes the relationship between the two halves of the phrase, "slow to anger" and "ready to forgive."

The last notes of the phrase are identical to the opening notes of the

piece (i.e. the *-tzot* of *lirtzot* is sung the same as the *-kha* of *Ki K'shimkha*). This suggests that this whole beginning part is indeed a unified sentence and not two separate phrases. The two parts of this one larger phrase are related in a circular way, beginning and ending with the same musical motif.

There now follow two more phrases built on the conjunction *Ki*: *Ki im b'shuvu midarko v'hayah* and *Ki lo tahpotz b'mot hamet*.

ki lo tach-potz b-mos ha-mes

ki im b-shu-vo mi-dar-ko

cho-vo v-cho-vo

The music builds from one phrase to the next, but the idea is similar, so let us examine the second more complicated one. The text has been altered here to repeat the last word of this clause *v' hayah*. This repetition could be interpreted as an impassioned plea to do *t'shuvah* and choose life on this Rosh Hashanah day. Alternatively, it could be interpreted in a questioning fashion wondering if indeed we will live throughout the year.

The ambiguity is further enhanced by the music which appears here. The first time *v'hayah* appears it ends on the note E.

cho-vo

which is the key we are in at this point. When the same word is repeated however, the music rests on the *G#*.

v'-cho-vo

The *G#* appeared in the first case, yet the music passed right through it, choosing instead to stop on the root note of the key (E). Why does the music for the repetition of the exact same word end on a different note? Music theory suggests that the *G#* is not likely to be the final note of

the piece (whereas the E could have been). The G# leaves the listener hanging, unsure what will happen next. Because of this feeling of hanging, we sense that the question of life or death is still undecided for the following year - there is more to come and more for us to say. Furthermore, the G# is the most ambiguous note in the entire E chord, for it can change the entire nature of the chord from major to minor were it to slip down just one half step. The major sound thus represents potential life while the minor sound (down one half step) represents potential death.



*V'ad yom moto t'hakeh lo:*

“And until the day he (man) dies He will wait for him.” These words are stretched out over many notes, both on a scale up and another back down. On the way up, each note of the scale is repeated, further lengthening the amount of time it takes to reach the top note. This top note is preceded by yet another note, a grace note, which lasts but a split second. All of these notes take time to sing and represent the amount of time that God will wait for us to repent; in His infinite patience. He will wait until the very last second of the day of our death.



*Im yashuv miyad t'kabfo:*

God, however, does not want us to wait that long; for one never knows when death will come. For this reason *miyad* is repeated twice so that the musical phrasing parses the sentence into two separate but complementary statements. First there is *im yashuv miyad*. Here three notes repeat over and over giving a circular “returning” feeling to the words. This repetition makes sense as a model for man’s repentance.

After this however, we get *miyad t'kabfo*. This time *miyad* refers to

God's action as opposed to man's. The entire phrase becomes an if/then statement suggesting that God's speed in receiving us will parallel our eagerness to repent: "If he will repent immediately," then "immediately He will receive him."

There is another interesting aspect to this phrase. With *Im yashuv miyad* there is a circular motion to the notes (suggesting a return); whereas with *miyad t'kablo* it is a linear line, a scale straight down to the E which has been our root (foundation) note throughout the first section of the piece. The linear line here indicates direction and purpose in God's plan. He knows where our "returning" will lead- straight back to the foundation of life, our source, Him.

The above *d'rush* may not have been the intention of the composer himself. However, it is important for individuals to develop their own explanations and ideas about the words and music of prayer. These ideas may contradict each other as are many ways to interpret a poetic composition. This is not only okay but desirable. Just as the rabbis would create many *midrushim* on a single verse of the Bible, so should we express our ideas and feelings by creating many interpretations of a single prayer.

This ends the first half of the piece. Now we switch clearly to the key of A. Indeed the first word of the second section *met*, is appropriately centered on the three notes of the A minor chord. No other notes are present- just pure A minor, like pure truth.

*Ki atah hu yotzrum, v'utuh yodeiu yitzrum:*

The next two lines are in *slihu* mode, usually reserved for penitential prayers (like *Avinu Malkenu* found earlier in the service). Here this petitionary mode indeed fits the words since it puts us in the reverential mindset of standing before God who knows everything about us; *v'utuh yodeiu yi tzrum*. "For You are our Creator and You know that we have sinned. Therefore, we use *slihu* mode here to suggest the fact that we must ask forgiveness (even though the text does not say so explicitly).

*Ki heim basar vudum:*

In the last part of this sentence, we encounter the first G of the piece. This regular G (as opposed to the G#) followed by a B<sup>b</sup> lend an unexpected dark quality to the phrase:



This is a typical Eastern European way of ending a musical phrase. One rarely finds it in Western music: rather it is a very Jewish way to resolve a chord. Because of the aforementioned dark quality, we realize just how fragile we (made of flesh and blood) are compared to our Creator. He is our Creator (with a G#); we are the creatures of flesh and blood (the regular G located a half step lower than the G#).

### ***Adam y'sodo meyafar:***

“Man’s foundation is from dust” begins with the exact same motif as Emet. One could see this as a kind of “musical **gezerah shavah**.” The same motif appears in two places; therefore, we can apply what we know about one phrase to the other. Thus, while we know from the first phrase that it is emet that God created us, we can imply from the repetition of the same motif on the word **adam** that it is also true (emet) that man’s foundation is from the dust.

The same motif repeats yet again for the next line **v'sofa leafar** “and his end is to the dust.” The **emet** motif links this phrase with the one before it. In fact, this motif at the beginning of both lines, combined with the identical word at the end of both lines, causes the listener to assume that there will be a simple repetition, i.e. the music from will be exactly the same for **v'sofa leafar** as **adam y'sodo meifafar**. It does start out that way, but then **v'sofa leafar** continues on in its own direction. We can compare the two phrases to see the difference.

It is almost as if man does not mind admitting that he comes from the

dust; but the idea that he will have to return there is too terrifying to speak about. The hazzan therefore puts off saying the word “dust” until he or she is almost out of breath. Only at this final moment when no breath is left in the body can one truly know that we do indeed return to the dust. And we are forced to contemplate this end most forcefully during the High Holidays.

### ***B'nafsho yavi lakhmo:***

“By his breath (or soul) he brings his bread.” On the first word of this phrase, we find the A minor chord in its root position. This is the same chord (i.e. the same notes as with the word *æmet*, ***adam***, and ***v'sofo***, but here for the first time it appears with the A on the bottom.



The A-C-E example shows the basic position of a chord, the way in which it is built. The chord remains an A minor no matter which order the notes are in, but written the first way (with its fundamental note, the A, on the bottom), it mirrors the way a man is built (with his fundamental root, his soul, as his essence).

From these words we learn that it is through his soul that man earns his bread, his sustenance in life. Then comes the word *mashul*, “a parable or example,” telling us that some sort of comparison is to follow. Three similes do indeed follow in a descending musical pattern, indicating that each one expresses more weakness than the previous one. Man’s struggle for life is compared to 1) a pot breaking ***k'heres hanishbar***, 2) grass withering, ***k' hatzir yaveish***, and 3) a flower wilting, uch' *tzitz noveif*. The last two notes of the word ***noveif*** actually do “wilt” in a musical sense. The second-to-last note has an unexpected flat written on it, lowering the tone so that it sounds “droopy.”

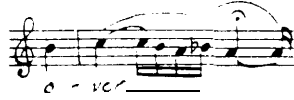


Two comparisons follow in a section which sounds more like an aria than the rest of the piece. The aria section has a song-like quality to it with definite rhythmic markings. Whereas in all the other sections of the piece, the hazzan is free to interpret the rhythm in a free manner, the next four words are marked in an explicit rhythm with directions to sing it sweetly



(dolce). It is almost farcical to “sweetly” compare man’s earning of his bread to a shadow (i.e. darkness) passing by him **k’tzeil oveir**.

Because of the section’s rhythmic accuracy, however., the music keeps moving so that the shadow merely passes by, touching man but not harming him. The notes on the word **oveir** look like this:



The curve connecting the second and third notes tells the musician to extend the former just a hair longer than it should be held. The shadow (perhaps representing darkness or death) is playing an unpredictable game of hide and seek. By staying on one note longer than expected (especially in this very rhythmic section of the piece), we realize how arbitrary and deceitful this shadow can be. This feeling is further enhanced by the fact that the first time the B is sung it is a B natural (a regular B), but the second time there is a flat written next to it. Thus, we feel like it has barely brushed by us. For the moment we are safe, but can soon return again, sneaking up from behind and withering us with that same B flat that withered the flower only seconds earlier (see above).

The second of the two similes in the aria section **v'kheanan kalah also** uses music to paint a picture of what the words mean. For example, the music line goes up higher just as a cloud floats up high in the sky. Then, however, the music flutters very fast in a descending pattern, suggesting that the cloud had somehow vanished away:



Three more similes end the piece:

### **Ukh'ruah noshavet:**

“And like the wind blowing” - The marking here is **agitato** and it sounds like the wind blowing for it is sung quickly and enunciated well. Certain consonants (the **h**, **sh**, and t of **ruah noshavet**) emphasize the sound of rushing wind.

The image shows two staves of musical notation in treble clef. The first staff is marked 'agitato' and contains the lyrics 'u - ch' - ru - ach no - sho - ves'. The second staff contains the lyrics 'u - ch - o - vok - - - - - no - re - - - - - ach'. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some notes beamed together and others held as half notes. There are dynamic markings like accents and hairpins throughout.

***Ukh'avak poreiach:***

“And like the dust that floats” - ***ukh'avak*** uses the very same notes as ***ukh'ruah***. One suspects that the musical phrase for ***ukh'ruah*** may be repeated on ***ukh'avak***, yet there is a surprise in store. The music switches into Ukrainian-Dorian mode, a very “Jewish-sounding” mode which possesses a somewhat eerie scale. As the notes (i.e. dust) “float” down this scale - F#, E<sup>b</sup>, D, C, B, A, one would expect the phrase to end here, resting on A (since we are in the key of A). Yet after a few seconds on the note A, the scale continues to drop one more note to G where it flutters once back to A and then finally rests for good on the G. Just as all specks of dust would not float or settle together in unison, so too the music keeps floating up and down the scale.

***V' khahalom yauf:***

“And like a dream, flies away” - For the first word of this last phrase, the music switches **from** the Ukrainian-Dorian of the previous section to an A major sound. It climbs up the C major scale in a precise strong manner with no sense of any impending doom. Yet the last word of the piece **yauf** reverses this confident attitude and reduced it to one of fear and uncertainty.

The major key is maintained until the word **yauf**. Then it jumps from a G to a C#, the same tri-tone interval that appeared at the very beginning of the prayer with the word **kasheh**. This jump to the C# throws the mode out of A major and into A **ahavah rabbah**, again similar to the beginning of piece which was written in **ahavah rabbah** mode (although in the key of E). Thus, we return to the classic Jewish nusah by the end of the piece. The C# goes to Bb which finally goes to A, the name of the key we are in and the ending note of the piece; but before the piece actually ends, those notes C# Bb A are repeated again as the ‘dream flies away.’”

The juxtaposition of the major “dream” and the **ahavah rabbah** “**flying** away” shows the dialectic of the high holiday prayers. On the one hand, we stand before God in fear and awe, admitting publicly that we have

sinned and asking for His mercy and forgiveness. on the other hand, we have the audacity to believe that we will actually be forgiven, that God will have mercy on these little lumps of clay which He has created. This paradox seems bizarre, yet it is our Jewish condition. We are like the pot that breaks, and the grass that withers; yet because of His name, **Ki K'shimkha**, we may do **t'shuvah** and be forgiven.

***The complete setting of Ki K'shimkha will be found in the Music Section of this edition of the Journal. The excerpts and setting are printed with the kind permission of Cantor Theodore Katchko and Sacred Music Press.***

**-Ed.**

## **GERSHON EPHROS, 1890-1978 : A REMEMBRANCE AT HIS CENTENARY.**

MAX WOHLBERG

For a full appreciation of the accomplishments of Gershon Ephros, we must have a clear view of the times and milieu in which he functioned. As they were to Jewish demography, the years 1880-1920 were of great consequence to the history of synagogue music and the evolution of the cantorate in the United States.

Following the substantial influx of German Jews between 1840 and 1880, the subsequent immigration of Jews from Eastern Europe and the Balkans, commencing in 1880, was in unprecedented numbers.

At an almost frenzied pace, *landsmannschaften* were organized, societies were established, synagogues were built, and cantors were imported. A number of well-known congregations, served by such prominent cantors as Alois Kaiser in Baltimore, Edward Stark in San Francisco, Max Graumann and Solomon Baum in New York, thrived. Some East European cantors such as Leib Shlossberg and Israel Fine, for example, had to officiate on the High Holidays (1906) in concert halls, the former in Beethoven Hall, and the latter in People's Theater.

Recalling the synagogues built in the era, it is both amusing and revealing to note the attempt to retain the ties to the old country and the shtetl whence came its organizers. We thus had synagogues named: Rumanien, Warsaw, Slonim, Bialystok, Suwalk, Dukler, Anshei Ungaren, etc. This custom of utilizing geographic names was frequently indulged by cantors of old. Wellknown were: the Vilner Balebeisel, Zalel Odesser, Nisi Belzer, Chayim Lomzher, Velvel Shestapol, Yankel Soroker, Zeidl Rovner, Yoshe Slonimer, Solomon Sulzer, etc.

Among the cantors who visited and concertized here in the early part of the 20th century were such men of prominence as Minkowsky, B. Shorr and Sirota. Permanent residents included Cooper, Meisels, Greenspan, Kamiol, Rutman. These were shortly followed by Rosenblatt, Kwartin, Roitman, Steinberg, Shlisky, Hershman and later by Vigoda, Pinchik,

MAX WOHLBERG is Nathan Cummings Professor of Liturgy and Hazzanut at the Jewish Theological Seminary.

Glantz, Kapov-Kagan and the Kusevitzkys.

This is the period when Gershon Ephros arrived here. Even a materially condensed biography, such as this article, should state the following: Gershon was born on Jan. 15, 1890 in Serotzk, a suburb of Warsaw. His mother, a much favored seamstress, had a number of assistants who, working into the late hours, accompanied their work singing popular folksongs. Thus, young Gershon absorbed the folksongs of our people.

Although his father, a competent Hebrew teacher and excellent *baal koreh* passed away when Gershon was only 10 years old, he obviously managed to transmit to his precious son a love of Hebrew and familiarity with the oldest element of our music: cantillation.

As their home faced a huge marketplace, little Gershon could not escape the attractive sounds of shepherds' flutes as they guided *their flocks* to the areas assigned for them. Thus, Gershon was exposed to another style of music.

His widowed mother married a cousin who had also lost his mate at about the same time. He happened to be a fairly well-known Hazzan, Moshe Fromberg. The latter, recognizing Gershon's musical potential, taught him the rudiments of music theory and sight-singing. He also made him a member of the choir and introduced him to the popular synagogue repertoire.

Gershon rapidly advanced to becoming a soloist and fairly soon a choir-leader. With this choir he traveled, concertizing in neighboring communities. Simultaneously, Gershon acquired rudimentary Hebraic knowledge in the local cheder, and later more advanced studies in the Yeshivah of Brest-Litovsk. He also succeeded in getting to know modern Hebrew literature and in the process became a fervent Zionist.

Notwithstanding the success he met in all his endeavors, Gershon grew restive. A visit to Bialystok enabled him to gain a wider view of synagogue music. He also became tenor soloist in one of its larger synagogues. A year or so later, at age 17, he became choir leader in the city of S'geresh.

Two years later, in 1909, spurred by his desire to help in rebuilding the ancient Jewish homeland, he traveled to Palestine with the intent of

becoming a *halutz*. Shortly after his arrival there he met with the famous Hebrew author A.Z. Rabinowitz, who advised him to continue with his studies in music. Provided with a letter of introduction, Ephros traveled to Jerusalem and met with A.Z. Idelsohn, Hazzan of the Great Synagogue. The latter appointed him as his assistant and his choir leader. Ephros also assumed a teaching position at *Makhon L'Shirat Yisrael*, the Institute for Jewish Music. More importantly, however, Ephros became involved with Idelsohn in the area of research, thus becoming acquainted with the music of diverse oriental communities. At the same time he also continued his own studies in advanced harmony and counterpoint. His musical perceptions widened considerably.

One Shabbat, during his vacation, Ephros was in a Jaffa synagogue where he was prevailed upon to lead the service. A well-to-do Russian chasid, Chayim Hurwitz, was enthralled with “the voice of an angel” and promptly invited Ephros to his home to meet his daughter, Rose. The two young people were favorably impressed with each other and would later be married. During a lengthy discussion that followed shortly thereafter, Hurwitz convincingly maintained that, just as his own business plans could only be successfully achieved in the United States, so too Ephros’ potential could only be fully realized in the New World. Thus it was that on July 2nd, 19 11, Hurwitz and Ephros arrived at Ellis Island. Rose and her mother soon followed. On Friday, May 3 1st, 19 12, the wedding took place. Their marriage was a long and happy one.

At about that time, the prominent educator, Dr. Samson Benderley, succeeded in bringing some order in the chaotic situation prevailing in Jewish Education. He organized the Bureau of Jewish Education and engaged Ephros to teach children the songs of the *halutzim as well* as how to conduct Shabbat services.

In the interim, Ephros found social fulfillment in the company of fellow Hebraists such as Petsky, Sacklet, Friedland, Efros and others. He also joined such cultural groups as Achievet and Yuval, leading the music sessions at their gatherings.

Ultimately he turned to the cantorate. In 1918 he served as cantor in Norfolk, Virginia, but promptly returned to New York, and in 1919 accepted the cantorial position at Temple Beth Elohim in the Bronx.

Wishing to establish a traditionally valid, sensibly arranged repertoire geared for contemporary worshippers, he encountered difficulties in two areas. 1) Most of the selections current in European congregations and

freely exchanged by itinerant cantors were not easily available here. 2) Their harmonic arrangements now appeared altogether primitive and outdated.

This led him to spend much time in public and private libraries, at book sales, pushcarts, collections or older colleagues, in search of compositions, recitatives and nusach-chants. He also prevailed on many to sing for him melodies which he carefully transcribed. The problem of finding appropriate harmonizations for synagogue chants was a troubling one. Earlier composers and arrangers simply forced the medieval (or earlier) tunes into the currently accepted occidental diatonic system of harmonization.

Finding this method anachronistic, Ephros began a serious study of the harmonies employed by contemporary composers. He soon located two areas which seemed to shed light and indicate guidance. One was *Theory of Evolving Tonality*, a scholarly volume by Dr. Joseph Yasser. This book offered a new perspective on music, scales, tonality and harmony. The other, most fortuitous find, was the examination and analysis of the works of Joseph Achron. In these, and in subsequent meetings, Achron clearly diagnosed the problem and prescribed the remedy.

In essence, the solution lay in the ascription of primacy to the melodic line and not the harmonic aspect. The melody is to decide the kind of harmony which is to be employed. In deference to an archaic chant, for example, the triad, a mainstay of current harmonic system, is to be divested of its primacy. Parallel motion of forbidden intervals need not be shunned. Quartal harmony is to be preferred.

Thus began the prodigious work of collecting, cleansing, arranging and harmonizing (for solo, choir, organ) the music of Jewish liturgy which resulted in the inestimably valuable five volumes of *The Cantoriaf Anthology*. These volumes serve the needs of most Reform, Conservative and Orthodox congregations. Volume 6, *Recitativesfor Rosh Hashanah*, a most interesting compilation, appeared in 1969.

Volumes 1 through 5 were published within the 30 years (1927-1957) Ephros served Congregation Beth Mordecai in Perth Amboy, New Jersey. At his invitation, many contemporary Jewish composers contributed to this collection. Also represented are many of the legendary, and some of the younger hazzanim. Credit should also be given to many congregants

for their financial help toward publication.

A detailed description and evaluation of the contents of these six volumes would require more pages than this Journal can offer. Suffice it to say that practically every review known to me was laudatory. Among those who lavished praise on these volumes in particular, and on the works of Ephros in general, were the renowned critics Olin Downes, Howard Taubman, Howard Klein, Alan Rich (all of the New *York Times*), Dr. Kurt List, Prof. Hugo Leichtentritt (Harvard University), Dr. Charles Davidson, Judith Eisenstein, Rabbi Ario Hyams, Abraham Soltes, Samuel Bugatsh and Prof. Irving Cohen. As was pointed out by a number of critics, the Anthology “serves as a rich source of old-new thematic material,” and even after several decades it is called “The Cantorial Bible.”

Upon retiring from cantorial duties, Ephros was able to devote himself exclusively to composing. These later compositions, such as *S’lihot (1962)*, *L’ Yom Hashabat (1966)*, *Leil Shabbat (1967)*, *Hallel V’zimrah (1968)*, *Torah Service (1970)*, *Chanukah Service, Wedding Service, Second Kedushah* (all finished before 1977), *Shiron Chadash (2 vols.)*, plus some smaller items, deserve serious study and in-depth reviews. Surely his unpublished works deserve publication.

Ephros also composed for the piano, violin, chorus, string quartets, a Biblical (and Hebraic) Suite for Orchestra. A few of these items appeared on a record celebrating the composer’s 70th birthday. The reviews of these compositions were invariably enthusiastic. J.S. Harrison, of the Herald Tribune found the string quartet “extremely attractive.” “The diatonic tunes have life and lilt and serve admirably the contrapuntal development . . . an impressive work.”

“The Children’s Suite,” said the reviewer in the New *York Times*, “has an exotic charm. Without doubt the works of Gershon Ephros should become better known. Then ultimate popularity is sure to follow.”

Of his *Leil Shabbat*, Charles Davidson wrote: “only Ephros could have conceived a service on such a grand scale and utilized the motifs and modes of the traditional Friday Eve service in such an inspired and interesting manner. Time and again the nusach is stated, transposed and juxtaposed in a particularly skillful and artful manner. The *Ana B’khoah* is particularly ingratiating with subtle and mystical overtones while the *Hashkiveinu* is exceptional”



In a review appearing in the Jewish Frontier, Ario Hyams commented: “In Gershon Ephros we have an accomplished and honest craftsman who does not allow his modern techniques to obscure his essentially melodic style.”

At the age of 53 and again at 70, Ephros’s life was threatened by cancer. In 1960 he underwent serious surgery, but eschewing complaints, he meticulously continued his work in music. He was a loving husband and father. His last major work, ***Shiron Chadash*** (a setting of 16 poems by Chaim Nachman Bialik who asked Ephros to compose music for him) was dedicated to his beloved wife. It was published posthumously in 1983 by his children, Abraham and Helen. His last work for piano, Five ***Bagatelles***, written in 1977, was dedicated to his daughter.

Gershon was a mild-spoken, humble, affable, gentle, thoughtful, considerate colleague and friend. One recalls him with a great deal of affection and admiration. His contributions to Jewish music and to our profession are enormous. Our indebtedness to him is immense. While I am normally not inclined to mysticism, the enigmatic and the occult, I sense an act of Heavenly Providence in the fact that in the year of 1890, when our people mourned the passing of the great Solomon Sulzer, we were blessed with the birth of Gershon Ephros.

**HAZZAN YEHUDAH MANDEL:  
APPOINTED ON RECOMMENDATION OF THE  
ROGOCHOVER GAON**

**AKIVA ZIMMERMAN**

(This article appeared in the Israeli newspaper Yom *Hushishi* September 15, 1989.) (translated from Hebrew)

Few are the Hazzanim who are blessed with the vitality that permit their continued service even after reaching the age of senior citizens. One of these is Yehudah L. Mandel. We recently heard him perform a weekday Maariv (at the annual Convention of the Cantors Assembly, where he was honored on his 85th birthday) and from the experience we know that he still has the skill, the voice, the temperament, and knows how to properly address his calling.

We interviewed him and discovered several unusual elements in his rich background and memory. He was born in Csepe, a tiny village of 30 Jewish families in Hungary. His father served as *Baal Tefillah* and at times took him to Szatmar where Hazzanim of note served. His father taught him the appreciation of prayer. Yet before he could read he knew the pleasures of *Birchot Hushuchur*, the opening section of the morning prayers. As was the custom of the times, he studied in *heder* and by the age of nine knew Gemara with Rashi's commentaries. His father taught him the poetry of the *Mahzor*. Study followed in the Yeshivah of Rabbi Josef Nehemiah Komitzer and then with Rabbi Avraham Josef Gruenwald.

In Ungvar, where he received ordination/smikha, the local Hazzan, J. Gottlieb, asked him to join his choir, but Rabbi Gruenwald, the head of the Yeshivah, insisted that studies continue for a time. While still a student, he served as Hazzan in the City of Rosenberg. Though Hungarian by birth, he was now a citizen of Czechoslovakia, based on the outcome of World War I and the revision of national boundaries. He was obliged to enter the Army where procedure permitted seminarians to do basic training followed by noncombatant service.

The Director of the Army Band was on tour and heard rumors about

AKIVA ZIMMERMAN is a frequent contributor on the subject of Hazzanut to many Israeli publications.

a young man with an exceptional voice. The Army's production of Smetana's "Bartered Bride" was being prepared and young Mandel was asked to participate. Mandel recounts his reaction to this assignment with a wry smile as he says: "At the time I did not know the discipline, the text, did not read music, and had never seen an opera. Yet because of my voice I was assigned. I was coached to memorize the role and was literally prompted on and off the stage." The military was impressed and an offer was made to permit four years of study at the Prague Conservatory with a career in opera as the goal. Yehudah relates that he was fearful of approaching his father with the news of this career possibility, so he asked his attorney uncle, Dr. Moses Bolgar, to intervene, though with no success whatsoever. Yehudah's father said: "I have seven children and if Yehudah wishes to be a singer for the goyim I will only have six children." And thus, in keeping with the percept of honoring parents, ended Mandel's operatic "career."

Yehudah's studies continued in Pressburg. He received ordination again and began serving various pulpits leading to the Montefiore Temple in Vienna where he also enrolled in the Cantors Conservatory headed by Hazzan Y. L. Miller. Among his teachers were the conductor Josef Milet and Hazzan Gershon Margulieus. His first position following graduation was in Novisad, Yugoslavia. He began giving concerts, sang on the radio, and received growing recognition in Central Europe. After an appearance in Kovno, Lithuania, he was elected to the Great Choir Synagogue of Riga, Latvia in 1934.

This is where the recommendation of the Rogochover Gaon has impact on this story. Riga was the city of Rosovsky, and competition for the position was keen. It included the well-known Israel Alter and Riga native Herman Yadlovker. The Rogochover Gaon visited Riga with frequency and met the young cantorial candidate for several discussions. When the question of final selection was made the Gaon wrote to the directors of the synagogue and stated: "If it is your wish to have at your pulpit a *talmid hakham*, choose Mandel." While in Riga, Mandel concertized widely, befriended and appeared with Hazzan Moshe Kusevitsky. In 1936 he was selected as one of four chief cantors of Budapest at the Rombach Street Temple where his predecessors included Baruch Schorrand Yaakov Bachman. In fact, he was the last Hazzan of the Rombach Temple, as it was not refurbished after the Holocaust. Today the shell of the building is being renovated as the Bourse of Budapest.

In Hungary during the Holocaust years he served in forced labor

camps, His wife and son escaped with the Kasztner group and arrived in Palestine in 1945. It took until 1946 for Yehudah to follow them to Palestine with the Spezia illegal immigration group after detention by the British and a 96-hour hunger strike. In transit he held Passover Seder on the docks of Spezia and composed the words and music to the group's anthem: "We will not bend to any foe or fiend, not even to the guardians of these shores..."

Arriving a few days before Shavuot, reunited with his wife and son, he was aided by Dr. Moshe Weltman, a friend yet from Novisad. He performed at the Yeshurun Synagogue and was offered the position of Chief Cantor. Residence, however, could not be secured in Jerusalem. Fortunately, a **gabbai** of the Carmia Synagogue in Haifa heard him and through this contact Mandel and his family settled there. His concerts and appearances on **Kol Yisrael** were acclaimed in reviews appearing in the **Hatzofeh** and **Hagalgal** publications.

In 1948 Mandel sailed to the U.S. to visit his sister in Philadelphia, the sole other survivor among his six brothers and sisters. He appeared at concerts on the east coast. One such appearance in New York was the offering of a Yom **Kippur Katan** service at the First Rumanian-American Congregation, where he was selected as Hazzan. After two years he relocated to Philadelphia where he served for many years at Congregation Beth Judah of Logan. Even after retirement he appeared there during holidays until 1983 when the Synagogue closed. Since then he has continued to perform high holiday services in Florida, Maryland and New Jersey. A veteran member of the Cantors Assembly, he served as its national president in 1972.

***As it does not seem to have found its way into Zimmerman's biography of Mandel, we must add that Mandel's status among his colleagues in the Cantors Assembly is without parallel. He has served for many years as gabbai at the services held at Cantors Assembly conventions, and he is truly one of the most cherished figures to be seen there. The affection for this humble talmid hakham cuts across all ages and regions in the organization. He is often imitated, but will never be equaled.***

-Ed.

## **TOWARD THE 21ST CENTURY: CREATING THE FUTURE IN JEWISH MUSIC**

**MICHAEL ISAACSON**

As we enter the last decade of this century, it seems prudent to plan the future by taking inventory of the Jewish music that exists and, at the same time, identifying the music that still needs to be created.

This is precisely the right time to ask yourself: “Do I know what music is out there?” “Have I exposed my congregants to the very best of Jewish music that is currently available?” and “What can I do to facilitate the creation of good new Jewish music?”

In order to answer these essential questions you might like to involve yourself in a satisfying activity which is sure to be instructive and thought provoking: Take inventory with a Jewish music catalog.

To do this, simply open up the Transcontinental, Tara, Cantors Assembly or JWB catalogs and reacquaint yourself with their offerings. When you see something interesting that you’ve hesitated to peruse, or learn more about, make a “should do” list of music to be studied and acquired.

If you don’t see a setting of a text or a genre which could use some fresh music, make a note of that as well.

For example: Your religious school is celebrating a service in recognition of its teaching staff. Do you have a song or setting of an appropriate Jewish nature? A Bat Mitzvah family is looking for some new music appropriate for a Jewish girl. Do you have anything which fits the bill? Adult B’nei Mitzvah, couples celebrating anniversaries in synagogue, senior citizens, etc. are leading a service dealing with the later years of life. What fitting Jewish musical response can you provide?

**MICHAEL ISAACSON** is a synagogue composer, conductor and recording producer who has written many highly regarded musical works for synagogue.

With the expanded role of the synagogue in the contemporary Jewish life cycle, new needs arise each day.

Many hazzanim have actively commissioned new works and are to be congratulated for that. But for those who have not as yet participated in the creative pursuit of new music, this is an ideal time to begin.

The best way to commission a new piece is through the joint team approach. Getting together a group of colleagues and sharing mutual ideas for new works will satisfy a number of needs:

It will pool the expenses of commissioning among several congregations. This allows for the necessity of working within financial limitations while enabling participants to commission better works from professional, experienced synagogue composers. It will expose the new music to a greater number of listeners, thereby assuring a better chance for its initial hearing and acceptance, as well as subsequent performance. It will create a network of performances and exchanges of information about new Jewish music.

What does one receive for the investment in commissioning? There are four answers:

1. The creation of a new work which satisfies a particular need that personally identified by those who commission it.
2. The excitement of enjoying the first performance (or simultaneous performance) of new music.
3. The lasting honor of having your name (and your institution's name) on all printed copies of the music as well as on all printed programs of its subsequent performances.
4. Most importantly, you receive the immense satisfaction in knowing that, by your activism, you have helped to create a more musically active Jewish future for you and your congregation and community. Now is the time to begin!

If you have heard a good new work that you have not yet performed, make it a priority to do so. if you don't know what's available, take inventory and learn! If you identify a need that has not been addressed by the creation of a new work, commission the new work by yourself or with your colleagues.

The 21st century is only a decade **away**; have you begun creating the future?

# Ki K'shimkha

by Adolph Katchko

*Allegretto*

KI K'SHIMKHA

Ki k'shimkha for  
 2. ki-lo-se-cho ki-she kich-vo u-ma-  
 ach i-na-dzo ki lo-jest-ode b-mos ta-mes  
 ki-im i-sta-vo ma-dan-ko  
 clo-vo u-cio vo sh-ad yam mo-so  
 cha-ke lo im-ya-stud mi-  
 yad mi-yad t'-tab-lo e-mes  
 ki-a-to sa-yetz-nom vi-a-do vo-  
 de-a vitz-nom ki-kom bo-sor  
 vo-dom o-dom v-se-do me-o-nor vi-so-  
 se-o  
 for b-naf-sho vo-ve last-  
 mo mo-stul k'-che-res ka-nish-ber k'-cho-tur yo-



## Ki K'shimkha Page 2

The musical score consists of five staves. The first staff begins with the tempo marking *Tempo dolce*. The lyrics for the first staff are: *vest u-chi' tzitz no-ve. k-tzei o-ver*. The second staff includes the marking *agitato* and the lyrics: *v-cha-o-nan ko-lo u-cti-*. The third staff has the lyrics: *ru-ach no-sha-ves u-cti-o-va ki-re-ach*. The fourth staff has the lyrics: *v-cha-cha-lom*. The fifth staff begins with the marking *rit* and ends with *yo - - - uf*.

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and Sacred Music Press.

# HASHKIVENU

based on a recitative by Jacob Koussevitsky/  
D. Lefkowitz 12/2/85

*Largo*

*fr.*

Hash-ki-ve nu A-do-nai E-lo-he nu le-sha - - - lom, ve -

*meno più mosso*

ha-a-i-dy nu mal-ke - nu le-che - - -

*rit.*

yim. U-fi ros a-le nu su - kat-shlo - me cha,

*accel.* *tr.* *rit.*

u-fe-ros a-le - nu su - kat-shlo - me - cha, ve-tak - re - nu be-ta-to-va - v' tak -

*ten.*

me - - - nu be-ta-to-va mil - fa - ne - nu, ve-no-shi -

*ten.* *(D)* *(d)*

e - - - nu, v' ho-shi-g - - - nu le -

*(a)*

me-an shi-me-cha, ve-ho-shi - e - nu l' ma-an shi-me-cha, ve-ho-shi -

e - - nu le-ma-an shi-me - - - cha, ve-ho-shi-e nu ve-ho-shi -

e - - nu le-ma-an she-me - cha, Ve-ha-

*agitato*

gen ba - a - de - nu, ve-ha-ser me - a - le - nu o -

yev - de - ver ve-che-rev ve-ra - av, de-ver ve-che-rev ve-ra-av ve-ya -

*agitato* *calmato*

gon Ve-ha-gen ba - a - de - nu, v ha -

*ten.*

gen ba-a-de-nu ve-ha-gen ba-a-de-nu, ve-ho-

*3*

ser-me-a-le - - - nu o - yev, o -

## Hashkivenu page 2

yev de - ver, de - ver ve - che - rev v' ra - av ve - ya - gon,  
 de - ver ve - che - rev ve - ra - av, ve - ra - av ve - ya - gon. ve - ha -  
 ser sa - tan, sa - tan mil - fa - ne - nu, mil - fa -  
 ne - nu u - me - a - cha - re - nu, uv' - tsel ke - na - fe - cha  
 tas - ti - re - nu, uv' - tsel ke - na - fe - cha tas - ti - re -  
 nu, ki El sho - mi - re - nu, shom -  
 re - nu u - ma - tsi - le - nu, shom - re - nu u - ma - tsi - le - nu a - ta,  
 cantabile  
 ki El me - lech, me - lech cha - nun, cha -  
 nun v' ra - chum o - ta.

# Mikolot Mayim Rabim

from Psalm 93:4,5

Jacob Lefkowitz

(arr. J. Golden)

*Organ:* *maestoso*

*Cantor:*

Mi — kö — löt

ma — yim mayim ra-bim, mayim ra — bim,

a — di — rim, a — di-rim mish-b'reu-

yam; Mi — kö — löt ma — yim,

The musical score is written in 2/4 time with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The Organ part is marked *maestoso* and features a steady accompaniment of eighth notes in the right hand and chords in the left hand. The Cantor part consists of vocal lines with Hebrew lyrics. The lyrics are: "Mi — kö — löt ma — yim mayim ra-bim, mayim ra — bim, a — di — rim, a — di-rim mish-b'reu- yam; Mi — kö — löt ma — yim,". The score is divided into five systems, each with a vocal line and an organ line.

## Mikolot Mayim Rabim page 2

ma-yim ra-bim — a-di-rim — mish-brei-yam,  
 Mi-kō-Lét ma-yim ra-bim  
 a-di-rim — mish-brei-yam — a-dir —  
 ba-ma-rom — A-do-rai —

*cresc.*  
*cresc.*

Musical score for Mikolot Mayim Rabim page 2. The score is written in G major and 4/4 time. It consists of four systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are in Hebrew. The piano accompaniment features various textures, including arpeggiated chords and rhythmic patterns. Dynamics include *cresc.* (crescendo) and *sub p* (sub piano).

Mikolot Mayim Rabim page 3

*Animato*

Ei-dó-te-cha-nem-nu m'ód

*mf*

*colla voce*

*p*

A-do-nai o-rech l'

*f*

o-rech-ya mim!

*cresc. et allarg.*

*a tempo*

*poco allarg.*