

ISSN 0449-5128

Journal
of
Synagogue
Music

Summer/Fall 2003 • Vol. XXIX • No. 1

The Journal of Synagogue Music
Vol. 29, No. 1, Summer/Fall 2003
ISSN 0449-5128

Copyright ©2003, the Cantors Assembly. All Rights Reserved.

Design and Layout by Prose & Con Spirito, Inc.
Cover Design by Florette Kupfer.

Journal of Synagogue Music

Vol. 29 No. 1, – Summer/Fall 2003

Editorial Remarks iii

{ ARTICLES }

On the Placement of Hebrew Accents 1
Boaz Tarsi

Arnold Schoenberg and Ahad Ha'Am 31
Joshua Jacobson

{ NOTES }

A Note on the Vocation of the Cantor 41
Scott M. Sokol

{ REVIEWS }

The Musical Tradition of the Eastern
European Synagogue *by Sholom Kalib* 47
Jerome B. Kopmar

{ NEW MUSIC }

V'Shamru #2 *For the CA/ACC Israel Mission, November 2002* 51
Richard M. Berlin

Editorial Board

Hazzan Dr. Scott M. Sokol, Editor

Hazzan Neil Blumofe & Hazzan Richard Berlin, Associate Editors

Hazzan Ira Bigeleisen, Hazzan Dr. Gerald Cohen, Dr. Marsha Bryan Edelman, Hazzan Stephen Freedman, Dr. Joshua Jacobson, Hazzan Dr. Daniel Katz, Hazzan Dr. Joseph Levine, Hazzan Dr. Laurence Loeb, Hazzan Dr. Brian Mayer, Hazzan Eugene Rosner, Hazzan Robert Scherr, Hazzan Dr. Saul Wachs and Hazzan Sam Weiss

Editorial Remarks

Hazzan Scott M. Sokol

Hazzan Neil Blumofe

Shanah Tovah! This issue of the *Journal of Synagogue Music* opens with an important article by Boaz Tarsi on the pronunciation of Hebrew for the purpose of prayer chant. In it, Professor Tarsi attempts to redirect misperceptions about the authenticity of certain pronunciation schemes over others. He provides a conceptual framework with which the hazzan can make motivated decisions about particular performance practices based on appreciation of both musical and linguistic factors.

Joshua Jacobson offers an intriguing article that attempts to unpack the priest/prophet dialectic of Moses and Aaron through consideration and analysis of the works of Arnold Schoenberg and Ahad Ha'am. Scott Sokol offers a thought-piece on the vocation of the cantor, inspired in part by the writings of Abraham Joshua Heschel.

In our review section, Jerome Kopmar discusses the first volumes of what many expect will become instant classics of Jewish musicology: Sholom Kalib's writings on the musical traditions of the Eastern European synagogue. Finally in our new music section, Richard Berlin shares a recent setting of *V'Shamru* for cantor and four-part chorus.

Once again, the editors are particularly indebted to Hazzan Berlin for his professional work on typesetting the journal. In recognition of this and other contributions, we are pleased to announce that Hazzan Berlin has been named an associate editor of the journal. We would also like to thank Tony Finno for his help with the musical examples in Professor Tarsi's article, and Florette Kupfer for her cover design.

Instructions for Contributors

The *Journal of Synagogue Music* publishes articles, notes and music of broad interest to the hazzan and other Jewish musical professionals. Articles of any length will be considered; however, the typical paper will be between 1,000 and 10,000 words. The *Journal of Synagogue Music* is peer-reviewed by its editorial board and outside reviewers as needed.

Submissions should be sent to either Hazzan Neil Blumofe or Hazzan Scott Sokol. Two typed hard-copies should be sent along with an electronic copy. We can accept most electronic formats including Word for Macintosh or Windows (Windows preferred), Wordperfect, Dagesh or Davkewriter for Windows, or Mellel Hebrew Writer for Macintosh. Musical submissions should be sent as high-quality camera-ready copy, and as a Sibelius, Finale, or MIDI file. Please contact Hazzan Richard Berlin for any additional questions regarding format for submissions.

Hazzan Scott Sokol
Congregation Kehillath Israel
384 Harvard Street, Brookline, MA 02446.
E-mail: hazzan@conghi.org

Hazzan Neil Blumofe
Congregation Agudas Achim, PO Box 28400, Austin, TX 78755.
E-mail: hazzan@caa-austin.org

Hazzan Richard Berlin
Parkway Jewish Center, 300 Princeton Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15235
E-mail: hazzanrick@earthlink.net

Requests for reprints or subscriptions should be sent to: Cantors Assembly, 3080 Broadway, Suite 613, New York, NY 10027, or send an e-mail to caoffice@jtsa.edu.

On the Placement of Hebrew Accents

Correct, Hypercorrect, Necessary and Unnecessary Adjustments of Hebrew Accentuation in the Synagogue – the Musical Considerations by Boaz Tarsi

A few years ago, quite by coincidence I found a cassette tape with a recording of a Jewish choral group singing Lewandowski's "Mazkir Neshamot, Chöre zur Seelenfeier" (Psalm 103, 15-17 "Enosch").¹ This performance included a variety of rhythmical and metrical changes applied to Lewandowski's piece for what can only seem to be a wish to follow Modern Hebrew accentuation. Here, for example, is how the opening phrase in this recording sounds:

Example 1

Adjusted version

e - nosh ke-cha-tzir ya - mav___ ke - tsits ha-sa-de ken ya-taits___

Lewandowski's original

e-nosch k'-cho-zir jo-mow k' - zi(z) ha- sso - de ken jo - zi(z)

Obviously the departures from the original score were an attempt to accord with contemporary pronunciation. Whether such alterations are acceptable or necessary will be addressed later below. Let us first examine the effect these changes impose on the very essence of the composition. Clearly, the changes result in a significant distortion of the rhythm. In

¹ *Todah W'simrah, Zweiter Teil: Festgesänge*, Frankfurt: J. Kauffmann, 1921, pp. 260-262.

and of itself this modification alone is problematic, especially when the change is so drastic, not any less disturbing in fact, than changing the notes of the melody or a harmonic progression. But beyond the surface of such rhythmic changes there lurks a concomitant series of other undesired effects of considerable musical and compositional impact. In addition to important questions of performance practice this tampering causes esthetical aberrations that strain at the very core of the content and expressive integrity of the piece.

The alterations as reflected in the recording take Lewandowski's rhythmically balanced pattern – which is also a pure syllabic setting (where each syllable corresponds with one note) – and turns it into a rhythmically unbalanced random mixture of sets of faster recitation followed by a melisma.² The regular rhythmic pattern not only becomes irregular, the phrase adopts a pick-up that is not part of the original (perhaps even with an eighth-note rest in the beginning). Consonants and vowels are assigned to notes other than the ones originally designated – for example, the expressive accented quarter note on YO of the word *jomow*³ becomes an eighth-note upbeat on the lower note before the one in the original setting. The central substance of the piece's thematic material – its initial motif – loses one of its essential components, the rhythmic parameter, and with it are lost the repetition and acceleration – the manner in which the motif organically develops into a phrase and into a theme.

Another crucial element, the one eighth-note rest at the opening gesture (third beat of the first sung measure) is omitted. Not only does this omission distort the dramatic, expressive gesture of the original opening, it is in essence equivalent to eliminating a note or a chord. In addition, and as an

² See also discussion of the “Zimmerman effect” below.

³ Text quoted from the piece is spelled as it appears in the original manuscript. Note that in addition to the German Ashkenazi transliteration, Lewandowski uses the letter “r” for the sound of “TS” on the words “*k'tsits*” and “*yotsits*.” On the other hand, the standard German transliteration (using the letter “z” for this sound) is used on the same words during the reprise (p. 262.) In addition, on the word “*ruach*” (p. 260) the sound of “*Resh*” is represented by the letter “z.” It therefore follows that, in all likelihood, these are typographical errors and not a transliteration mode. Seth Adelson, a cantorial student at JTS, pointed out to me that all of these errors might be explained as a consistent mix up between the letters “z” and “r.”

overall outcome, the repetitive pattern of combining trochaic and dactylic meter (^ . . ^ . . ^ . . ^ . . ^ . .) is completely lost. With it also disappears the characteristic sigh-like opening, consisting of two notes, one accented and the other a release, which is echoed again on the words *jomow* and *jozits* (with a secondary reflection on *hassode*), whose expressive lament-like softness is replaced by harsh jumpy upbeats. Another loss is the rhyme effect that results from the accented note of both gestures taking the same vowel sound (Ashkenazi O) and even the Y that precedes it. In the adjusted version only the first one is on this vowel whereas the second is on I (of *jozits*.) Even the change from a sigh-like motif on YO to a short melisma on TSI takes away from the emotional content of the gesture. It also interferes with the consistency of having the accent fall on the S/TS and Y sounds, symmetrically set in the (also disturbed) dactylic/trochaic combination: "...*JO-mow k'ZITS ha-SSO-de ken JO-zits*." Finally, among the significant results of these departures from Lewandowski is an eradication of one of the most important features of his composition – its built-in invocation of a *Marcia Funebre*.

Thus it seems for the case in point that changes motivated by a desire to adhere to Modern Hebrew accentuation not only completely change a given piece, they create a version of it that is significantly inferior. The immediate question, therefore, is whether more is lost than gained from these changes. The question that is bound to follow is whether such alterations, in this instance at least, are necessary at all, considering the style in which the piece is written, what it represents, and more significantly, the context and function of any given specific performance circumstance. The answer to both questions is, in all likelihood, no.

First and foremost, in circumstances other than religious services there does not seem to be a practical need to refrain from the Ashkenazi patterns of accentuation. This touches on the second consideration as to the extent to which music by composers such as Lewandowski, Sulzer, or Naumbourg constitutes the closest available approximation of a "classical Jewish music" style, and comprises a core canon of an Ashkenazi music repertoire. If there exists such a style and core repertoire, then constitutional musical components, such as pitch, melody, harmony, rhythm, and meter in pieces from this repertoire should not be tampered with, in the same manner as

one would not alter these components in the compositions of Mendelssohn or Schubert.⁴ In effect, the place of Lewandowski's piece within this genre and the status of its composer being among its most highly valued representatives requires that its performance retain its essential variables, Ashkenazi accentuation and all.⁵

But these requirements do not cease to apply when the piece takes place in a real prayer service at the synagogue. What reinforces this view in this case is also the fact that within a prayer service the subject composition cannot be presented or perceived as anything but a closed, distinctly separate unit. Its being a choral setting, and as such an accompanied piece, with no cantor participation, and in all likelihood performed in festive or semi-festive circumstances, in which a concert-derived, or concert-style section is not inappropriate, further supports this departure from the currently accepted practice at a synagogue service. But if any such factors are deemed insufficient to justify performing the piece in a service as originally intended, including keeping its meter and rhythm intact, then I believe that perhaps a different piece should be chosen in its stead, at least for this particular circumstance.

Recently a cantorial student approached me with the following dilemma. Performing J. Sussman's melody for "Nishmat Kol Chai" at a synagogue service, she encountered critical comments about how she applied the melody to the text, for instance on the word "melech." The score I examined does not reach this far into the text. A long-play record included a version in which the melody is applied to this text in the following manner:⁶

Example 2



The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef. The melody consists of the following notes: quarter note G4, eighth note A4, quarter note B4, quarter note C5, quarter note B4, quarter note A4, quarter note G4, quarter note F4, quarter note E4, quarter note D4, quarter note C4, quarter note B3, quarter note A3, quarter note G3, quarter note F3, quarter note E3, quarter note D3, quarter note C3. The lyrics are: u - mi - bal - a - de - cha ein la - nu me - lech.

⁴ The choice of these two composers from the canon of the Romantic era in Europe is not coincidental: I am invoking Hugo Weisgal's often-expressed paradigm that places Sulzer as the Jewish classic equivalent parallel with Schubert, and Lewandowski with Mendelssohn.

⁵ This does not necessarily imply that we should also retain all the other characteristics of

Granted, this musical rendering of the word is problem-free so far as accentuation is concerned. Nevertheless, having encountered the criticism, the student asked if changing it to the following would ensure proper accentuation:

Example 3



Obviously the accent in her proposal is correct, but it is both unnecessary and distorts the rhythm and upsets the flow of the phrase. Moreover, it introduces an uncharacteristic, Czardash-like pattern of sixteenth note followed by a dotted eighth note on the word *melech*. Nevertheless, even as she chose this hypercorrect way of pronouncing the word, a member of the congregation, who considered herself a knowledgeable authority on Hebrew pronunciation corrected her in turn, by demonstrating the “correct” variant. In fact, this variant is an example of the kind of adjustment that resorts to crude imitation of the accentuation as utilized in the performance practice of biblical cantillations, by saving the entire melisma for the accented syllable only:⁷

Example 4



Ashkenazi dialect – those that do not affect the musical factors – such as using the “O” vowel for all cases of *Kamats*, or using “S” for *Tav* without a *Dagesh* etc., as discussed below. These pronunciation modes cannot be supported by the arguments that our discussion presents and may be considered to border on mannerism.

⁶ A Call to Remember: Sacred Song of the High Holy Days, The Hebrew Art Chamber Singers, Tziporah H. Jochsberger (no date indicated.)

⁷ This will be addressed in more detail later below. Also see discussion of the “Zimmerman effect” and examples 14, 15, 18.

Therein lies an excellent type-specimen of correcting, overcorrecting, and making choices that result in unmusical rendering where no change should have been introduced in the first place. Regardless of whether one needs to adjust the Hebrew to modern pronunciation in this setting at all, the original setting is correct. The second variant (Example 3) is an over-correction, and the third (Example 4) really constitutes a manneristic manipulation, which does not provide an improvement on the accentuation but really only flags a statement about the performer's (or in this case, the other member's) critical awareness of correct pronunciation.

As suggested earlier, part of the initial consideration whether to make any accentuation adjustments has to do with the piece at hand, with the understanding that set pieces, especially those from the classical Jewish canon, should be performed as composed even within a synagogue service. Thus in such pieces the solution is easy – we keep them intact and perform them as they were initially composed, keeping the composer's specific instructions as reflected in his notation, with no adjustments or alterations. The benefit of not having to ponder such considerations is also available in cases from the other extreme of the freedom spectrum: improvised or semi-improvised synagogue music in which we have complete liberty to mold the musical aspects as we please. Obviously because the music itself is free, prayer leaders may have complete discretion over the pronunciation and accentuation of the words, and therefore we can assume that all words would be pronounced with correct accentuation.

But in the broad middle of the variation spectrum, a prerogative to be exempt from making musical adjustments to the Hebrew does not apply. Most congregational tunes, given settings, written arrangements of traditional material, semi-improvised chant taken from a written source, various cases of composed music, events in which other singing parts or an ensemble are involved, a version from a cantorial manuscript, and the like – all represent instances where concern about accentuation is valid. These cases do require, at times, some changes and adjustments because many settings are simply wrong or inconsistent, some are created by ignorant composers and cantors, some are unattested, or are taken from ineffective sources, and some are derived from sources that originally follow the

Ashkenazi practice. Such adjustments involve significant issues of performance practice and esthetics. In brief, the question is what to do, where and how to adjust, and when to refrain from such measures. When properly undertaken, these adjustments would follow the accepted convention that the correct enunciation to be applied in the synagogue is Modern Hebrew pronunciation, using the language as spoken⁸ in Israel as the model.

The principal difference between Modern Hebrew and Ashkenazi pronunciation is in the location of the accent (stressed syllable) within each word. The accentuation in Modern Hebrew, as opposed to the Ashkenazi custom, follows the original biblical form as indicated by *Ta'amey Hamikra*. In this respect Modern Hebrew follows the Sepharadi tradition. It also departs from Ashkenazi pronunciation in other aspects such as not pronouncing the letter *Tav* without a *Dagesh* as S, pronouncing both *Patach* and *Kamats gadol* as AH, pronouncing some *Kamats Katan* in the same manner as *Cholam*, not making a distinction between *Segol* and *Tsere* (except for *Tsere* followed by a *Yod*), etc. Nevertheless, Modern Hebrew is not identical to Sepharadi Hebrew either. Traits such as the difference between *Aleph* and *Ayin*, *Kaf* and *Kof*, as well as a variety of cases of *Dagesh* in sounds represented by such letters as *Gimel*, *Daled*, and *Tav*, typical of various Sephardi speech traditions⁹ are also absent from Modern Hebrew.

To sum up, spoken Modern Hebrew is neither fully Sephardi nor fully Ashkenazi, but a mixture of practices (each one in itself is a combination of a variety of modes of pronunciation, even bordering on dialect differences.) This is the main reason that this shared pattern of speech should be called Modern Hebrew and not Sephardi pronunciation, as is so often heard in the professional, educational, and sometimes even

⁸ And by extension, as sung, which as will be discussed below, carries further affecting significance.

⁹ It should be noted that there is no one version of Ashkenazi, Sephardi, or “*Edot Hamizrach*” pronunciation. The Lithuanian pronunciation is not the same as Hungarian or the German tradition from the Rhineland for example, nor is Moroccan Hebrew pronunciation identical to that spoken by Jewish communities in Greece, Turkey, or the Balkans, which is still different from that of Yemenite Jews, etc. Thus, so far as Hebrew pronunciation is concerned, the terms Sephardi or Ashkenazi are a gross approximation.

scholarly circles. Moreover, rather than a derogatory colloquial reference to uninformed, wrong manner of performance and pronunciation, “Ashkesphardic” really marks the norm of formal Modern Hebrew.

In the detailed circumstances of its practical daily use, Modern Hebrew incorporates and reflects some freedom and flexibility, not so much in terms of how the vowels and consonants should sound but, to a certain extent, where the placement of the accent should fall within the word. The reasons for, and limits of this tolerance are yet to be thoroughly explored. One of the primary hypotheses would naturally point to Modern Hebrew’s being an amalgam of many forms of speech, the dynamic product of a relatively young immigrant culture, which still comprises many first-generation immigrants from many parts of the world. As such, spoken Hebrew still absorbs a diverse array of living modes of pronunciation and accents in addition to the local Israeli vernacular. One may also hypothesize that the wide tolerance for stress placement in Hebrew is due to a smaller contrast between its accented and unaccented syllables, a difference that appears less extreme, for example, than that found in English or German (perhaps similar, although not as even, as French.)¹⁰

Given the exigencies of daily living in Israel, freedoms with Hebrew accentuation are taken not infrequently, even though they are recognized as contrary to the formal pronunciation. More importantly, however, even when divergent to the point of being recognized as incorrect, these are so organically imbedded in Israeli parlance, that in most instances the differences go unnoticed, and certainly uncorrected. In a few other cases where a divergence is obvious, it is accepted and understood as a particular form of colloquialism, and/or informality. One example is the word “*hine*” or, especially when used as a term of endearment (but not always, see note 13) – “*buba*.” Another one variant of emotional interpretation finds its

¹⁰ Max Wohlberg used to suggest that in addition to the primary accent, every word in Hebrew included a secondary, less distinct or audible stress on another syllable. Although I find this proposal dubious and unsubstantiated I suspect that it was a reflection of Wohlberg’s instinctive sense of this hypothesized lack of contrast between accented and unaccented syllables, as well as the general flexibility and tolerance I discuss here. We may also add to this observation the lack of consideration for accents in the meter of medieval Hebrew poetry for example.

way to the colloquial *Mil'el* form of the word “*kapara*.” Misplaced *Mil'el* in Modern Hebrew is also found in reference to names of geographical location such as towns and villages. A few examples among many include *CHAl-fa*,¹¹ *RI-shon le-TSI-yon* (or often just *RI-shon*), *ZICH-ron* (for Zichron Ya'akov), *PAR-des CHA-na* and *PAR-des kats*, *PE-tach TIK-va*, *KI-riat SHMO-ne*, *Mazkeret BAT-ya*, *Ra-a-NA-na*, *Re-CHO-vot*, *YA-fo*, and at times, *ASH-dod*, *ASH-kelon*, *BAT-yam*, and *CHU-lon*. This also extends to markers of any location such as neighborhood, (*Re-CHAV-ya*, *Sh'chunat ha-TIK-va*), or a place of business or commerce, for example, *Shuk ha-KAR-mel*. Interestingly some of these pronunciation habits constitute the particular slant of colloquialism of population segments that are typically not of Ashkenazi origin.

Mil'el forms are also prevalent among children-related terms, such as *Sholem* or the various numerical stages in children's games such as the Israeli version of hopscotch (*Klass*) or the stages of a game known as “*Chamesh Avanim*,” which are pronounced as *RI-shon*, *SHE-ni*, *SHLI-shi*, etc. In the realm of food we can find the (now almost discontinued) breakfast cereal known as “*SHAL-va*,” and items such as *CHAL-va* (maintaining the original Arabic), *GLI-da*, *PIL-pel*, and in some colloquial circumstances also *RI-ba* and *U-ga*.¹² Perhaps because of its association with food, the originally cooperative enterprise for the marketing of agricultural products “*Tnuva*” also took the *Mil'el* form. Another food-related usage includes the term “*BIM-kom*” (a *Mil'el* form of the Hebrew word for substitute), which was used mostly in the Kibbutz dining hall to refer to an alternative for the main dish of the day (probably the most known reference to this item can be found in *Le'hakat Hanachal's* rendition of the song “*Ada*”). *Habimah* Theater is also pronounced in *Mil'el*, in all likelihood

¹¹ In all of the examples from Modern Hebrew I spell the words as they sound when spoken colloquially and not as they are formally spelled in English.

¹² An amusing quaint entertaining artifact of the assumption of *Mil'el* in “*Uga*” is deeply rooted in a misinterpretation of the word in the popular children's dance song “*Uga Uga Uga*.” Originally indicating the imperative of the verb *Ayin Vav Gimel* (to form a circle), *Uga* was understood by the illustrator of the children's book in which it appeared as a *Mil'el* form of the word “cake,” hence the drawing of children dancing around a huge bundt cake.

due to its origins in Ashkenazi Russia.

When it comes to the common pronunciation of names, this phenomenon is so commonplace as to become the rule rather than the exception. Thus the norm would be the *Mil'el* version of names such as *Adam, Avram, Bracha, Chedva, Dafnah, Dinah, Dvorah, Eytan, Eli, Ester, Gidon, Gila, Ilan, Le'ah, Michael, Nurit, Orah, Rivka, Ruven, Sara, Shalom, Shimon, Yakov, Yo'av, Yonatan*, (also featured in one of the most popular children songs "*Yonatan Hakatan*"), *Yuda, Yudit*, and many many others. The name *Yoram* would take on the *Mil'el* form to indicate a derogatory similar to that of the English slang "dork" or "nerd." The *Mil'el* in the context of names is indeed noted in fiction literature such as in a recent novel by Meir Shalev,¹³ and in local and national Hebrew newspapers, such as in a Jerusalem local newspaper,¹⁴ or *Ha'arets*.¹⁵

While at times a good deal of freedom is taken in the spoken language, when it comes to singing, Modern Hebrew absorbs variation within traditional standards to an even further degree. From the hazy echoes of early childhood in Israel I can summon the memory of a loop song we inherited from the early pioneers that was then in some districts still circulating occasionally. This tune may be useful as an example for such tolerance as well as a case study of the determining factors (the "wrong" accents are indicated within the example.)¹⁶

¹³ Meir Shalev, *Beveyto Bamidbar* (In his House in the Wilderness), Tel Aviv: Am Oved Publishers, 1998, pp. 126, 275, 337. Shalev also mentions the *Mil'el* pronunciation of the word "*bubot*" in its literal meaning as a doll (not a term of endearment) in his novel *Esau* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved Publishers, 1991, pp. 350, 383.)

¹⁴ *Kol Hazman*, No. 109, Jerusalem, 5/11/2001, p. 67.

¹⁵ *Ha'arets*, weekend section, 9/20/2002, P. 34. Relevant here is the reference to the association of a *Mil'el* pronunciation of the name of a town (*Bat Yam*) as an indicator of a low class, non-Ashkenazi sector ("k'shehaya moti ben sheva..... vevamoishpacha avra 'lalev hakashe shel Bat Yam' (bemil'el), yichus she'hu nehene lenafef bo. imo, shezhidata b'od mo'ed et ma shehu mechane 'netiyotai hafrechiyot'...")

¹⁶ See discussion of these factors as they appear in these songs below, pp. 18-20.

Example 5

hayi - ta tse - i - ra ba - ki - ne - ret a - sher ba - ga - lil
 kol ha - yom hayi - ta sha - ra shir ched - va va - gil kol ha -
 yom hayi - ta sha - ra shir e - chad hi rak yad - 'ah she -

Another example can be extracted from the prevalent folk-dancing culture (“*Rikudey Am*”) associated with the youth movements and kibbutzim (which I hear is enjoying a vigorous revival in the last few years, now in vogue among everybody including the new young and old urbanites). From the late Seventies I recall a dance set to the text of “*Hine Ma Tov Uma Na'im*” that contains a few phrases with similar examples for accentuation tolerance. Here too I suspect the acceptable “wrong accents” may not always derive from Ashkenazi pronunciation only but also from a general tendency to allow occasionally for accents to fall on syllables for which they are not designated, as marked in the following example:

Example 6

hi-ne hi-ne hi-ne matov u-mana-im she-vet a-chim gam ya - chad
 she-vet a-chim she-vet a-chim she-vet a-chim gam ya - chad

In fact the earlier setting of this text may also provide a further example, albeit a different kind, of tolerance for misplaced accentuation (note the words “hine” and “na'im.”)

Example 7

hi-ne ma tov u-ma na - im she-vet a - chim gam ya - chad

More instances of accent manipulation can be observed within the standard Israeli top-forty hits, and other derivatives of Israeli quasi pop music. Among these we may find samples from the song contests that enjoyed vast popularity in the Sixties, Seventies, and Eighties. These constitute a class of what is known in Hebrew as “*Festival Hazemer*” (the modest but not yet unqualifiedly successful revival of which has been attempted in the last two years). From the “*Festival Hazemer Hachasidi*,” (i.e., the “*Hassidic style*” song-contest) of the Seventies, for example, may be recalled the song, “*Yevarechecha*,” which is based on the text of *Yevarechecha Hashem Mitsiyon*.

Example 8

ur - e va - nim le - va - ne - cha sha - lom al yis - ra - el

ur - e va - nim le - va - ne - cha sha - lom al yis - ra - el

Also from the pop music and top-forty world of Israel in the Seventies we may recall Shmulik Kraus’s setting of Miriam-Yalan Shtekelis children’s song, “*Buba Zehava*.”

Example 9

a - ye - fa bu - ba ze - ha - va ve - a - yef me - od
 ha - dov hats - la - lim la - che - der ba - u
 lo - cha - shim li layi - la tov ba - mi - ta sho - che -
 10 vet nu - rit al ya - da yo - shev du - bon ve - ka - dur ve - gam
 15 ar - ne - vet ve - chu - lam ro - tsim li - shon
 20 ach le - fe - ta ka - ma nu - rit a - ba a - ba hi - kor - 'ah
 bo ma - her ga - resh ha - cho - shech hu maf - ri - a ye - led ra
 25 tsa - cha - ka bu - ba ze - ha - va ve - tsa - chak me - od

ha - dov _____ la - ma le - ga - resh _____ ha - cho - shech

va - ha - rey hu ye - led tov _____

The image shows two staves of musical notation in a single system. The first staff contains the melody for the words 'ha-dov', 'la-ma le-ga-resh', and 'ha-cho-shech'. The second staff contains the melody for 'va-ha-rey hu ye-led tov'. The music is written in a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The first staff has a 30-measure rest at the beginning. There are downward-pointing arrows above the notes for 'ma' and 'ga' in the first staff, and a '30' above the first note of the second staff.

The list of possible cases to demonstrate this accentuation flexibility and tolerance in the sung word of Modern Hebrew goes on to include many examples such as *hevenu* SHA-lom a-LE-chem, *ha-le-LU*-ya HA-le-lu-ya, *od lo* NUT-ka hasharsheret, YI-l'lat TA-nim nuga TECH'tse d'mi halayil, *ufaratsta yama va-ked-MA* tsafona *va-neg-BA*,¹⁷ and many many more. One may quickly arrive at the easy conclusion that there is a degree of built-in freedom and tolerance within Modern Hebrew, especially when the language is expressed in song. Granted, this latitude is not universal in that it is found mostly in folk and popular music, nevertheless it is far from insubstantial. In fact, it may be the relative prevalence of free variation in accentuation among folk songs and popular music that renders it more applicable to prayer music, especially outside the realm of formal classical settings as discussed above.

But combined with this specific case of freedom in Hebrew is also a general degree of ambiguity at times, and some room for flexibility when it comes to the very process of identifying an accented syllable in the sung word. The reason stems from the variety of musical factors involved in what comes to constitute the acoustical phenomenon we perceive as accentuation. In all non-tonal languages,¹⁸ the only musical component that determines the meaning of a word, is timbre. That is, in our perception and understanding of words, timbre is the key audible essence that permits distinctions among words because it provides the differences between the various vowels and consonants that they comprise. Acoustically what defines these consonants and vowels is a matter of the unique combination of

¹⁷ Note that these examples (e.g., the last song on this list), as well as many other cases discussed here, do not always constitute a change from *Milrah* to *Mil'el* and cannot always be explained as a residue of Ashkenazi pronunciation.

overtones of each sound, the relationships between them, including the degree and relationship of their various amplitudes, and most importantly, what is called the envelope – the attack and decay of each individual sound. Other music variables such as dynamics, pitch, rhythm, meter, and tempo, normally go completely unmonitored in regular speech (although each one of the variables may affect the overall expression, interpretation, suggested attitude, non-verbal content and the like). Thus the every day speech of ordinary speakers is not for these parameters consciously controlled; in short, these musical variables do not contribute to the dictionary definitions of the words of the language. Consequently, ordinary combinations of these parameters in normal speech production, do not affect the content of each word or phrase (interpretation, insinuation, non-verbal meaning, attitude and emotional content, and at times the aggregate meaning of the phrase beyond that of the total of the meanings of each word notwithstanding).

Nevertheless, one musical parameter does play a specific role in speech. In speaking, the single factor to determine where the accent of the word falls is pitch, which is often associated with stress. This does not imply singing or exact pitch however, rather, it betokens the fact that the syllable that carries a pitch that is relatively higher than the others in the same word is predictably the one that is perceived as accented.¹⁹ None of the other variables, such as dynamics or the length of each syllable can overcome the dominance of pitch in this regard. A case in point would be to experiment with the pronunciation of a multi-syllable word such as “encyclopedia.” Any syllable other than PE, whether prolonged more than the

¹⁸ Tonal languages such as some Bantu languages, Yoruba, and many Asian languages, are languages in which vowels or more accurately syllables, may be pronounced as high, low, or middle tone, rising, or falling. The tone by which the syllable is pronounced can change the meaning of the word dramatically. The title of Barbara Kingsolver’s novel, *The Poisonwood Bible* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998) is based on the two possible meanings of a phrase that includes a Kikongo word, “Jesus is *bangala*” meaning in one mode of pronunciation “Jesus is beloved,” and in another, “Jesus is poisonwood” (pp. 70, 490.) Kingsolver also uses this effect in reference to one of her characters being called a “*benduka*,” which means “the crooked walker” but also a certain kind of slick, fast moving bird (p. 493.)

¹⁹ One exception in most languages is indication of a question. The pitch interplay between the accent and the indication of a question mark in the same word is in fact rather

others, or uttered much louder than they, would not sound accented so long as PE takes the highest pitch. On the other hand, however else we may pronounce the word, if a syllable other than PE is assigned a higher pitch, it immediately changes the accentuation of the word.

Nevertheless, the very definition of singing is that pitch is dictated by the music. As opposed to the spoken word, in the sung word pitch is the most controlled and pre-determined musical parameter. Thus the most important feature available to establish the accent of a given word, pitch, is already set in the song and we cannot use it to control the location of the accent as we please. On the other hand, as opposed to ordinary speech in which rhythm is not given, and is arbitrary, free, and unmeasured, and meter does not exist at all, sung music includes these elements as distinguishing parameters, whether indicated or implied. By default they automatically become variables in determining the accent. Other factors such as scale degree, motivic and thematic content, and most significantly, melisma versus syllabic rendering may also have an affect. Thus in the sung word a variety of parameters come into play in addition to pitch. The interrelationships and specific balance among these parameters would eventually determine which syllable would be perceived as accented, and in some cases may remain ambiguous or semi-ambiguous.

Naturally most examples from any given repertoire, such as the ones given above, include a combination of factors and parameters, so that exemplary cases in which all parameters are equal except for the pitch, are rarely found. A nearly minimal case can be drawn from two different ways of singing the word “*hakadosh*” in Israel Goldfarb’s “*Shalom Aleychem*.”²⁰

complicated and its exploration is beyond the scope of this article. In general terms, within each question phrase one word marks the question and it carries the stress of the entire phrase. Within this word the highest syllable would be the last one, but the accented syllable would still be higher than the others. It is the interrelationship between the two higher pitches that results in our perception of the word as containing an accented syllable as well as signifying a question. Other exceptions and considerations to this rule do exist such as a negative tag question in English like, “He didn’t, did he?” in which “he” would have a higher or lower pitch than “did,” hence the above-mentioned complications involved in the role of pitch in question phrases.

²⁰ The tune appears in Israel Goldfarb and Samuel Eliezer Goldfarb, *Friday Evening Melodies for Synagogue, School, and Home*, New York: Bureau of Jewish Education, 1918, pp. 83-86.

In the first alternate, as shown in the following example, both KA and DOSH are on the same pitch (the higher one) and thus the accent is perceived according to meter (the first beat of the measure.) Nevertheless when DOSH is placed on a pitch higher than HA and KA, it becomes accented despite its being on the weak beat of the measure.

Example 10

Example 10 consists of two musical phrases, A and B, on a single staff. Both phrases are in treble clef and have a key signature of one flat (B-flat).
 Phrase A: The melody starts on a G4 note, moves to A4, then B4, and then a quarter rest. The lyrics are "ha - ka - dosh ba - ruch hu".
 Phrase B: The melody starts on a G4 note, moves to A4, then B4, and then a quarter rest. The lyrics are "ha - ka - dosh ba - ruch hu".
 The notes for "dosh" and "ba" are beamed together in both phrases.

This example (10) also demonstrates that the effect that the higher pitch has depends on its relative placement next to its neighboring notes only. Thus all other parameters being equal, a note is perceived as accented if it is higher than the note that immediately follows or precedes it.²¹ This pattern may account for the ambiguity that arises in the accent in such words as “artsa,” which normally is AR-tsa , but in the dance-song, “Artsa Alinu,” may have the syllable TSA perceived as accented because it is higher than the following syllable as well as the one that precedes it:

Example 11

Example 11 shows a single musical phrase on a staff in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4. The lyrics are "ar - tsa a - li - nu ar - tsa a - li - nu".

In other sources, such as a publication of a choral arrangement by Gil Aldema in *Daf Lamak'hela* No. 487 by the *merkaz letarbut velechinuch, hamador lemusica* in Israel, 1975, the tune is referred to as “traditional.” Max Helfman considered a Hassidic *Niggun* to be the origin of the tune, as mentioned by Pinchas Spiro in “Israel Goldfarb’s ‘Shalom Alechem,’” *Journal of Synagogue Music*, Vol. XVI, No. 2, 1986, pp. 38-46, in which the author argues that Goldfarb is nevertheless the composer of this tune. Max Wohlberg mentioned (on p. 6 of the April 1953 issue of the Cantors Assembly’s newsletter *The Cantors Voice*) that it appears in *Zmiros shel Shabos* by Naftali ben Menachem, Jerusalem, 1949, as “*mushar b’fi chassidim*” (sung by Hassidic people), with no mention of Goldfarb. It also appears as “*lachan chassidi*” (Hassidic melody) in 1000 *zemer ve’od zemer, chelek daled, shirey chagim*, Talma Alyagon and Rafi Pesachzon, eds., Kineret Publications (no place and date), p. 18.

²¹ In fact we may use this perception to avoid a wrong accent or correct it, see for example the correction in measure 3 in example 21B below (on the word “*bemitsvotcha*.”)

Regardless of the possible ambiguity regarding the stress in the example of “ar-tsa,” I suggest that because of the syncopation and not despite it, further emphasis is perceived on the first note’s strong beat quality and less stress is put on the metric and rhythmic accent qualities of the second note. Other contributing factors may be the fact that the syllable AR contains the first note of the entire song, and perhaps also because it is the tonic. Thus, the first note is still properly accentuated in this song.

Let us examine more fully the evidence for the operation and function of the determinants of accent placement as they come into play in the songs mentioned earlier in our discussion. In Example 5 the first syllable on the word “*hayita*” is accented instead of the second one, as would be normally expected in ordinary Hebrew speech. This is primarily because it falls on the first beat and as such, on the first note of the song. The second syllable falling on the same note reinforces the accent on the first syllable; if the second syllable were at a higher pitch, and moreover, were both higher and co-occurring with a melisma, then such an event might create some ambiguity.

The accent on TSE in the second word, (*tse-ira*) in Example 5 is also misplaced. This accent also results from a strong beat. The higher pitch on RA in this word, where the accent should ordinarily be in spoken Hebrew, although creating a small (alas negligible) sense of ambiguity, is not enough to counterbalance the fact that TSE is on a melisma and that RA shares a beat with I. Moreover, the latter takes the first eighth note, leaving the syllable that is supposed to be accented on the weakest half of the weakest beat. The first syllable on the word “*asher*” is also accented as it falls on the first half of the first beat. Nevertheless, the second syllable is at a higher pitch, inducing a perception that the accentuation of the word is ambiguous. Indeed this may serve as an example of a case in which a change (if it occurred in a setting that required adjustment) would not be required even if the word might still be perceived to be mispronounced. The second time the word “*hayita*” appears (Example 5, measure 6) is a case identical to the first time, and RA in “*sha-ira*” on measure 10 is wrongly accentuated due to its falling on the strong beat as well as on a higher note.

In Example 8 the accent on VA in “*vanim*” (measure 1) is a result of a strong beat and the shade of ambiguity stems from NIM being on a higher

pitch. When the phrase repeats, the ambiguity is absent because this time the first syllable of the word is both on a strong beat as well as on the higher pitch (measure 5). The accent on the word “*yisrael*” is ambiguous because RA is on a higher pitch and EL is on a stronger beat. The word “*al*” is also accented because of the higher pitch.

All the cases marked in Example 9 present instances of unresolved accent placement. Ambiguity stems from a conflict induced by perceptions of discordance between the pitch parameter, and meter and rhythm. Consider, for example, the syllable YE in “*ayefa*” (measure 1), or MI in “*bamita*” (measure 9). From a rhythmic point of view, given the requirements of the formal notation, these syllables are the least accentuated because they fall on the second eighth-note of the beat. Meter-wise they are also unaccented because the syllables that follow them fall on a stronger beat (3 in a 4/4 meter.) Nevertheless, both YE and MI are perceived as accented because of their higher pitch, and this perception is reinforced by the large interval skips the words “*ayefa*” and “*bamita*” contain. This tendency is abundantly clear in the words “*aba aba*” because of the repetition of the word, which is normally accented A-ba. The perception of an accent on BA in the first “*aba*” because of the pitch factor renders the following eighth-note unaccented and therefore the BA in the second “*aba*” on the next note is accented like the first one (see example 12). The urge to resolve this conflicting input would most commonly result in hearing the accents as correct and blocking out the pitch factor. But the same impetus combined with a Zipfian tendency²² to choose the simpler of two options (in our case the simpler of two rhythmic interpretations), may result in our hearing the accents as wrong and making an internal adjustment of the meter and rhythm as follows:

Example 12

The musical notation for Example 12 is written on a single staff in 4/4 time. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes. The lyrics are: a-ye-fa bu-ba ze-ha - va a-ba a - ba hi kor - 'ah tsa-cha-ka bu-ba ze-ha - va. The melody starts with a quarter rest, followed by an eighth note (a), a quarter note (ye), an eighth note (fa), a quarter note (bu), an eighth note (ba), a quarter note (ze), an eighth note (ha), and a quarter note (va). This pattern repeats for the second phrase, with a slight change in the final notes.

²² After George K. Zipf, *Human Behaviour and the Principle of Least Effort* (1949).

Similar pitch contribution to a perception of an accent where none is expected can be found on the words “*hatslaim*,” “*maher*,” “*tsachaka*,” and “*lama*” (measures 5, 21, 25, 29 respectively).

The accents on the words “*buba*,” “*zehava*,” “*lacheder*,” and “*ba’u*” in Example 9 are all ambiguous because of the syncopation, and at times, pitch. In the word “*buba*,” for example, we may perceive the syllable BU as accented because it is at a higher pitch, and because BA falls on a weak part of the beat and the measure. Nevertheless, BA, which is the proper syllable for the accent is equal here to BU in terms of rhythm and meter because it is equal to BU in length and, like BU, falls on a weak part of the beat. But if we unconsciously modify our perception of the music to accept all the supposed accents in these words (such as “*me’od*” and “*hadov*” in measures 27-28) as correct, that is, if we take the last note of every measure as accented, then the word “*ba’u*” would include an accent on the wrong syllable.²³

Given this understandable desire to apply the norms of formal Hebrew, the impulse to correct accentuation when no correction is needed looms as a common problem within the realm of educated practitioners at the synagogue. The activity of overcorrecting, in addition to seeming either arrogant or naive, unfortunately yields nonsensical and unmusical results. In both necessary adjustments and unnecessary hyper-corrections, the most notable weakness expresses itself in an effect for whose description I must resort again to the luxury of extracting from past memories of growing up in Israel, and invoke the colloquial term “Zimmerman.” As an accepted colloquialism this expression marked a general reference to any awkward outcome of the practice of trying to match alternative text to a given melody by applying words that did not fit the original tune. The primary result of this practice was the appearance of segments that included words with too many syllables to fit into the original musical phrase, in most cases ending up with extra “recitation tones” on what should be in the original tune only one note. Conversely at times the result was the opposite effect – one

²³ It should be noted that most of these perceptions and ambiguities are also affected by the dominating syncopated rhythm of this song.

syllable that originally was sung on one note got assigned a long melisma on many notes. We may demonstrate this phenomenon by trying to fit the sentence “No one can sing this song” into the first phrase of “My Bonnie Lies over the Ocean” (a rather banal but convenient choice due to the tune’s pure syllabic quality).

Example 13



Thus any changes that involve the Zimmerman effect result primarily in a significant imbalance between syllabic and melismatic expression as well as effect a notable rhythmical distortion.

I suspect that in the musical practices of the synagogue, many cases of a Zimmerman effect may be derived, at least partially, from a combination of two facets of ignorance. One is the attitude and behavior that strives to demonstrate knowledge and propriety, and therefore cultivates a rigid purism whether justified or not. The second is in the specific type of technique chosen to implement the sought-after correctives. Again, an uninformed or semi-informed individual would be conversant in only the basic (and purist) way of effecting correct accentuation in liturgical Hebrew, which is to follow the performance practice of biblical cantillation (*Ta'amey Hamikra*). Needless to say, purism justified in this sense (i.e., when applied to cantillations), so far as accentuation is concerned, is not only an organic part of the reading of biblical cantillations, it is imbedded in the core of the discipline itself, that is, in the codified instructions that are specifically germane to it, for they are in fact what defines it. On the other hand, the musical considerations and questions of taste that apply to liturgical music are not only irrelevant in this practice but constitute part of what differentiates cantillation and prayer music as two separate genres. All of this serves to underscore the fact that cantillation-oriented accentuation — in which one renders all the unaccented syllables as a syllabic gesture and/or with a recitation tone, saving the entire melisma for the accent — in addition to being unmusical, is foreign to music outside of the realm of cantillation.

One of the clearest illustrations of an incident of such uninformed mannerism is recorded in the following example, in which a student at The Jewish Theological Seminary needlessly changed Israel Goldfarb's "Magen Avot" and sang the word "bikdusha" as follows:

Example 14

The musical notation for Example 14 is on a single staff in G major (one sharp). The notes are: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4-A4 (beamed eighth notes), G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter). The lyrics are: u - me - ni - ach bik - du - sha. A long horizontal line underlines the word "bikdusha" from the beginning of the eighth note (D4) to the end of the final note (D4).

Similarly, the ending of the Three Festivals Blessing does not require saving the entire melisma for the final cadence. In most cases the meter, or implied meter element would render the accent correct without having to resort to this device. Thus the accent in the first variant of the following example is just as correct as the one in the second, but the first is by far inferior musically.

Example 15

The musical notation for Example 15 shows two variants, A and B, of the phrase "yis-ra-el ve-haz-ma-nim". Variant A (circled) has a melisma on "yis-ra-el" (measures 1-4) and a melisma on "ve-haz-ma-nim" (measures 5-8). Variant B (circled) has a melisma on "yis-ra-el" (measures 1-4) and a melisma on "ve-haz-ma-nim" (measures 5-8). The notes are: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4-A4 (beamed eighth notes), G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter). The lyrics are: yis - ra - el ve - haz - ma - nim yis - ra - el ve - haz - ma - nim.

Following are two examples in which either the editor, the arranger/transcriber, or the composer himself created such musically inferior variants. Compare measures 1-12, 16-20 in the following Setting by Jacob Beimel (Alternate A)²⁴ with the musically sensible, rhythmically balanced, and consistent (and most likely the pre-edited) choice in Alternate B:

²⁴ Moshe Nathanson, editor, *Zamru Lo: Congregational Melodies and Z'mirot for the Shalosh R'galim and the High Holidays*, Vol. III, New York: Cantors Assembly, 1974, p. 135.

Examples 16

(A)

1
zoch - rei - nu l' - cha - yim

5
me-lech cha - fets ba - cha - yim v' chot - vei - nu b' - sei - fer

10

15
ha - cha - yim l' ma - an - cha E - lo -

20
him cha - - - yim.

(B)

zoch - re - nu le - cha - yim me - lech cha - fets ba -

cha - yim ve - chot - ve - nu be - se -

fer le - ma - an - cha e - lo - him

The same can be observed in the following setting by Jacob Rapoport:²⁵

Example 17

(A)

M' chal - kel cha - yim b' - che - sed m' cha - ye me -
 sim b' - ra - cha - mim ra - bim so - mech no - f' - lim v' - ro -
 fe cho - lim u - ma - tir a - su - rim
 u - m' - ka - yem e - mu - no -
 so li - she - ne o
 me - tim be - ra - cha - mim ra - bim u - me -
 ka - yem e - mu - na - to

The following examples demonstrate similar cases of unnecessary alterations, over-correction, and/or unmusical solutions that occurred in

²⁵ Noah Schall, editor, *Hazzanut for the High Holidays*, New York: The Cantorial Council of America, Yeshiva University, 1969, p. 25.

actual performances I attended in the last few years (mostly in “nusach presentations” at JTS.) Lines A in this example feature the adjusted performance and lines B, an alternative, or original variant that is more musical and balanced both rhythmically as well as regarding the proportions of syllabic rendering and melisma. Note that in the overwhelming majority of these cases the adjustment was not necessary in the first place because lines B are also correct so far as the accentuation is concerned.

Example 18

(A) u - ve - cha - yey de - chol beyt yis - ra - el
 (B) u - ve - cha - yey de - chol beyt yis - ra - el

(A) a - do - nai ha - me - vo - rach
 (B) a - do - nai ham' - vo - rach

(A) be - a - ha - va u - ve - ra - tzon
 (B) be - a - ha - va uv - ra - tzon

(A) be - a - ha - va
 (B) be - a - ha - va

(A) ba - a - ga - la u - viz - man ka - riv
 (B) ba - a - ga - la u - viz - man ka - riv

(A) tush - be - cha - ta ve - ne - che - ma ta da - a - mi - ran b' al - ma
 (B) tush - be - cha - ta v'ne - che - ma - ta da - a mi - ran b' al - ma

As may be inferred from the discussion thus far the rule of thumb I propose is to follow the path of least interference. As suggested earlier, pre-composed pieces, settings and choral compositions, and repertoire from the classical canon should not be altered. The same applies to tunes that are obviously taken from a different repertoire or context and presented as such in the service, or inserted as separate units – almost in the sense of being a quotation – such as the tune for *Vetaher Libenu* and *Vekarev P'zurenu*, or tunes borrowed from the realms of Hassidic practice or repertoire. Even in other cases not so clear cut the matter still requires discretion: if a proposed alteration entails extensive distortion, or if it seems overly tedious, good taste will suggest that it be avoided. Lines 8-9 in Example 18 (*tushbechata venechemata*) illustrate such a case.

The melodies known as “*Misinai Tunes*” also provide instances in which changes in accentuation are not necessary, especially if done in an awkward manner. I recall a cantor who gave a lecture at a Cantors Institute Alumni Association conference (for the record, not an alumnae herself) some years ago, who glibly stated that changes must be made in the High Holiday evening singing of *Mi Chamocha*, resulting in the “choppy” rendering she demonstrated as follows:

Example 19



After reviewing the range of cases and various sources of misaccentuation that we have discussed so far, it becomes apparent that making any adjustments to liturgical music in order to adjust to Modern Hebrew pronunciation involves a built-in degree of freedom. As such it requires taking into account the balance and interplay between the various musical parameters that determine an accent and the ambiguity factor that comes into play. The more fluid state of accentuation in the language in most cases enables the use of these factors to our advantage, because when we apply them critically as the basic method of determining musical appropriateness as well as a corrective measure, they can help us avoid

many unnecessary changes. On the other hand, when we do have to make adjustments in cases that are blatantly wrong or of questionable taste, these considerations provide us with the guidance for making these modifications in a musical manner with aesthetically pleasing results.

Clearly, these alterations should be the product of careful thought and consideration. Good taste and common sense are primary prerequisites. Skillful changes are unobtrusive, for they avoid severe interruption, and do not cause a distortion of the rhythmic patterns and musical flow. They do require both competence and facility with Hebrew as well as a good instinctive sense of the language. I believe that with this sensitivity to the language combined with an awareness and understanding of the dominance of pitch in the spoken language and the various musical factors and considerations in the sung word, we can find solutions beyond the mere use of meter and melisma and resolve accentuation difficulties without the awkward results demonstrated above. Yet I would maintain that if implementing all of the devices at our disposal is not possible and/or the result is still unmusical or nonsensical, it is better to leave the “wrong accent” in place.

Some cases are very subtle, yet so easy to correct or better yet, to preempt an unmusical rendering before it occurs, that a modification would be in order, for example choosing Alternate A in the following example from *Adon Olam*, over the commonly practiced Alternate B.

Example 20

The musical notation for Example 20 is written on a single staff in treble clef. It consists of two phrases, each with a circled letter above it. The first phrase, labeled 'A', begins with a quarter note G4 (labeled 'A'), followed by a quarter note F4 (labeled 'a'), a quarter note G4 (labeled 'g'), a quarter note A4 (labeled 'a'), a quarter note B4 (labeled 'b'), a quarter note C5 (labeled 'c'), a quarter note B4 (labeled 'b'), a quarter note A4 (labeled 'a'), a quarter note G4 (labeled 'g'), a quarter note F4 (labeled 'f'), a quarter note E4 (labeled 'e'), a quarter note D4 (labeled 'd'), and a quarter note C4 (labeled 'c'). The second phrase, labeled 'B', begins with a quarter note G4 (labeled 'B'), followed by a quarter note F4 (labeled 'f'), a quarter note G4 (labeled 'g'), a quarter note A4 (labeled 'a'), a quarter note B4 (labeled 'b'), a quarter note C5 (labeled 'c'), a quarter note B4 (labeled 'b'), a quarter note A4 (labeled 'a'), a quarter note G4 (labeled 'g'), a quarter note F4 (labeled 'f'), a quarter note E4 (labeled 'e'), a quarter note D4 (labeled 'd'), and a quarter note C4 (labeled 'c'). The lyrics 'be - ya - do af-kid ru - chi be-ya - do af - kid ru - chi' are written below the staff, with hyphens indicating syllable placement under the notes.

Other events require different methods of adjusting to correct Modern Hebrew accentuation without musical distortions. A good case study of a variety of accent problems, in which some adjustments are necessary, and which can provide a demonstration of a variety of possible modes of adjustment may be found in Goldfarb’s setting for *Retse Vimnuchatenu* for *Shabbat* morning. One may argue that being a congregational tune, this

may be viewed as a separate unit, inserted as such, and therefore requires no adjustment. But let us further clarify the issue. The Goldfarb tune is not from the classic canon, nor is it a composition or a piece borrowed from a different context, usage, style, or repertoire. It was created and presented specifically for the practicum, precisely to constitute an organic part of simple, congregational, laity-oriented prayer music for the synagogue service. Furthermore, it involves yet another consideration, the question of consistency. *Retse Vimnuchatenu* does not follow Ashkenazi pronunciation, nor does it set out to emulate it or any other unique style. The piece is basically a new tune that tries to capture a folk-like style. The overall approach is Modern Hebrew but many of the words are simply set in a way that misappropriates the accents. As such, these words are blatantly jarring and create a noticeable departure from ordinary language.

The task we are beset with is to resolve this distortion without disturbing the piece musically. In measure 3 of Example 21A the original variant includes a wrong accent on MI in *bemitsvotecha*. The musical factors behind this accent are meter (first beat of the measure) and pitch – the vowel on which the correct accentuation should occur, TE, is placed on a lower note. (See discussion above, p. 17, following Example 10.) This can easily be corrected by placing a lower note immediately preceding and following the note on which the correct accent should be (Example 21B, measure 3). The adjustment proposed in Example 21B, measure 7 is based on a perceived free rhythm (subtly lengthening the time value on the note for the vowel TE in *betoratecha*, as suggested by the short *fermata*). Adding an extra note that is higher than the note preceding it and placing the correct accented VE on it (Example 21B, measure 11) shifts some of the incorrect accent from TU in *mitwecha* (stemming from the strong beat of the measure and from its being on a higher note than VE in the original) helps to strengthen the perceived accent on VE and at least creates some ambiguity in comparison to the original wrong accentuation. A metric shift as well as a subtle rhythmic change renders TE in *biyshuatecha* a correctly accented syllable in that it shifts it to a strong beat of the measure (whereas in the original this beat was assigned to CHA.)

Example 21

A
 kad - she - nu be - mits - vo - te - cha ve - ten — chel -
 ke - nu be - to - ra - te - cha sab - e - nu mi - tu - ve -
 cha ve - sam - - che - nu biy -
 15
 shu - a - te - cha ve - ta - her —

B
 kad - she - nu be - mits - vo - te - cha ve - ten — chel -
 (short)
 ke - nu be - to - ra - te - cha sab - e - nu mi - tu - ve -
 cha ve - sam - - che - nu biy -
 15
 shu - a - te - cha ve - ta - her —

Finally, there are cases that, although presenting a substantial challenge so far as accentuation adjustment is concerned, alas, are not worth

bothering with. The ever so ubiquitous melody for *Shehu Note Shamayim* of the *Aleynu* section is probably the ultimate example of a tune having a variety of most of the mistakes that could possibly occur, while also being combined with the lowest musical quality and a crude, even offensive “carnival” mood setting.²⁶ It seems that regardless of the occasion, circumstances, or point of reference, all resources of sensible thinking and good taste would indicate that the best solution is to refrain from using this setting altogether.

While it is not presently possible to sum up conclusively from only the examples that we have examined above, we may nevertheless perceive that in those instances that required some degree of adjustment, and in the solutions discussed, there looms a possible model for an underlying approach. In view of the variety of tools at hand, including the flexibility and tolerance available in the language, and the interplay and balance between several musical parameters, we may value the practical approach toward achieving the most sensible, least obtrusive, and best musical solution for avoiding hypercorrect accentuation and the musical distortions it engenders. In the end, it is good to recall that even with the gift of language and freedom of speech available to us all, there are times when proper musical considerations would and should provide the first frame of reference for fulfillment and enjoyment of the human voice.

Dr. Boaz Tarsi is an associate professor at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. His compositions have been performed, recorded, and broadcast internationally. His music is published by Transcontinental Music Publishers. He has published and lectured internationally on Ashkenazi liturgical music and on Arnold Schoenberg.

²⁶ For a detailed discussion of these traits in this melody as well as other, similar cases, see Arnold Rothstein, “A Practical Proposal to Upgrade the Level of Taste in the Music in the Synagogue,” *Journal of Synagogue Music*, Vol. X, No. 2, 1980.

Arnold Schoenberg and Ahad Ha'Am

by Joshua R. Jacobson

The Ten Commandments were given to Israel against a dramatic environmental backdrop.

וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי בַּהֵיטֵב הַבְּקָר וַיְהִי קֶלֶת וּבְרָקִים
וַעֲנָן כָּבֵד עַל-הַהָר וְקֶלֶת שֹׁפָר הִזְק מְאֹד
וַיִּתְהַדֵּד כָּל-הָעָם אֲשֶׁר בַּמַּחֲנֶה

וְהָר סִינַי עָשָׂן כִּלּוֹ מִפְּנֵי אֲשֶׁר יָרַד עָלָיו ה' בְּאֵשׁ
וַיַּעַל עָשָׁנוּ כַּעֲשָׂן הַכֹּבֵשֶׁן וַיִּתְהַדֵּד כָּל-הָהָר מְאֹד

On the third day, as morning dawned, there was thunder and lightning, and a dense cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud blast of the shofar; and all the people who were in the camp trembled.... Mount Sinai was all in smoke, for the LORD had come down upon it in fire; the smoke rose like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled violently.

(Exod. 19:16, 18)

God explains to Moses the need for making such a scene:

הִנֵּה אֲנִי בָּא אֵלֶיךָ בְּעָב כֶּעָב הָעָנָן בְּעִבּוֹר יִשְׁמַע הָעָם בְּרִבְרֵי עִמּוֹךְ
וְגַם-בָּךְ יֵאֱמִינוּ לְעוֹלָם

“I will come to you in a thick cloud, in order that the people may hear when I speak with you and trust you forever.”

(Exod. 19:9)

How do we reconcile the theatricality of the smoke, the earthquake, the thunder and the lightning with the concept of Divine transcendence? How can we reconcile the concept of God as a metaphysical essence with this very physical display at Sinai? Why such a “Cecil B. DeMille” production?

How different is the revelation, the theophany, experienced at Mount Sinai by the prophet Elijah:

וַיֹּאמֶר זֶא וְעַמְדוֹתָ בָּהָר לִפְנֵי ה'

וַתִּהְיֶה ה' עֹבֵר וְרוּחַ גְּדוּלָּה וְחֶזֶק

מִפְּרֶקֶת הָרִים וּמִשֶּׁבֶר סְלָעִים לִפְנֵי ה'

לֹא בְרוּחַ ה'

וְאַחַר הָרוּחַ רָעַשׁ לֹא בְרַעַשׁ ה'

וְאַחַר הָרַעַשׁ אֵשׁ לֹא בְּאֵשׁ ה' וְאַחַר הָאֵשׁ קוֹל דְּמָמָה דַּקָּה

(1Kgs. 19:11-12)

Elijah felt the earthquake, he saw the wind and the fire, but the Biblical text clearly states that God was not in any of those physical manifestations. Elijah then experienced God in a still small voice, or to translate more accurately, the sound of thin silence. Similarly, in the case of Moses, God reveals himself not in elaborate visions, but by simple communication. (Exod. 33:11) אֵל-מִשְׁחָה פָּנִים אֵל-פָּנִים.

But to Israel the revelation is through thunder and lightning. There is an implication that to humans of rare spirituality, to prophets such as Moses and Elijah, God is revealed as pure spirit; whereas to the common folk, an image is required.

בַּעֲבוּר יִשְׁמַע הָעָם בְּרֶבְרֵי עִמּוּד (Exod 19:9)

The great twentieth century Austrian composer, Arnold Schoenberg, closely identified with this concept. Like the mature Beethoven, in his music, Schoenberg was addressing God, not mortals. His tonal language was extremely cerebral. Accordingly, Schoenberg despaired of the possibility that his sophisticated musical ideas could be understood by the masses. He once said:

Is one supposed to talk only about matters that the most stupid can understand? ... It is self-evident that art which treats deeper ideas cannot address itself to the [multitudes]. ... In the end, art and success will yet again have to part company. (*Style and Idea*, p. 336)

Schoenberg was convinced that if music is pure, if it is created for the purpose of expressing deep sentiments through the worlds of sound, uncompromised by a self-conscious striving for accessibility, affect or

financial success, then music can convey a prophetic message, revealing a transcendent reality. In a 1951 letter to the Director of the Israel Academy of Music in Jerusalem, he wrote:

I would have tried to give this Academy universal significance so as to place it in a position to serve as an alternative for a mankind that caters in so many ways to an amoral, business-inspired materialism. A materialism behind which any ethical assumptions of our art are rapidly disappearing.... From such an institution must go forth true priests of art who confront art with the same sense of consecration that the priest brings to God's altar. For, just as God chose Israel, whose task it is to preserve, in spite of all suffering, the pure, true, mosaic monotheism, so it behooves Israeli musicians to offer the world a model possessed of the unique capacity to make our souls function once more in ways apt to further the development of humanity toward ever higher goals. (Ringer 1990, p. 246)

Schoenberg was an ardent Zionist, who on several occasions expressed his willingness to give up his career as a composer in order to give speeches to raise money and consciousness for the establishment of a Jewish homeland to save the doomed Jews of Europe. In 1926 he wrote a prophetic play, *Der biblische Weg (the Path of the Bible)* about the establishment of a modern Jewish state in the ancient holy land.

He was drawn to the concept of an unfathomable Supreme Being who had chosen the Jewish people to preserve the pure faith through the ages. He wrote:

We Jews call ourselves the chosen people of the Lord, and are the keepers of His promise. And we know that we were chosen only to think the thought of the one, eternal, unimaginable, invisible God through to completion, in short, to keep it alive! And there is nothing that can compromise with that mission. (Ringer 1990, p. 36)

For Arnold Schoenberg, compromise was the greatest sin. He saw in the second commandment his credo—do not reduce the concept of the infinite God by limiting it to an image or to a name or to an easily recognizable icon. He remembered God's words to Moses in the desert. When Moses asks God, "By what name shall I call You?" the response is אֲדֹנָי אֲשֶׁר אֲדֹנָי,

usually translated as “I am what I am.” Or, in Schoenberg’s *midrash*, “don’t limit your concept of God by giving it a name or a shape as the pagans had done.”

Arnold Schoenberg composed this poem in 1925 (opus 27, no. 2):

You should not make yourself an image!

For an image limits, reduces,

Strangles that which should remain unlimited and unimaginable.

An image warrants a name:

You can take that only from below;

Do not worship that which is base!

You must believe in the spirit!

Immediate, unfeeling and unselfish,

You must, if you want to remain the chosen one!

In 1928 Arnold Schoenberg wrote his own libretto for an opera that he subsequently set to music. *Moses and Aaron* deals with the struggle between the purity of a great idea and the inability of the masses to grasp that idea. The opera revolves around the conflict between the two brothers who lead the Israelites in two very different ways. Moses understands the Divine Idea, but realizes that by putting the Idea into words it immediately perverts and cheapens that Idea. He is thus frustrated at his inability to communicate his great vision.

Aaron has no such compunctions. Aaron realizes that the Israelites have no idea what Moses is getting at, and that in order to make the people go along with this covenant he has to be able to present it in a way that ordinary mortals can readily understand. He is willing to compromise. This attitude was recognized some 2,000 years ago by Rabbi Hillel who wrote, “be thou of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving your fellow creatures and bringing them closer to the Torah.” (Mishnah *Avot* 1:12) And so, to Moses’ eventual chagrin, it is Aaron who speaks to the people, translating Moses’s obscure ideas, working miracles for the impressionable slaves, and even fashioning a golden calf as a tangible object of worship.

In Schoenberg’s opera, Moses never sings, his words are delivered in

severe inflected speech (*sprechstimme*). Aaron's words are always sung, conveying an appealing lyricism, an aura of popularity. Of course, this is based on the Biblical account that Moses had a speech defect, a problem communicating with people.

...לא איש דברים אנכי...
כי כבד־פה וכבד לשון אנכי

I have never been a man of words
I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.
(Exod. 4:10)

...and on the image of Aaron as the great communicator.

הלא אחרן אחיך הלוי ידעתי כי־דבר ידבר הוא
ודברת אליו ושמת את־הדברים בפיו
ודבר־הוא לך אל־העם והיה הוא יהיה־לך לפה
ואתה תהיה־לו לאלהים

There is your brother Aaron the Levite. He, I know, speaks readily.
You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth...

and he shall speak for you to the people. Thus he shall serve as your
spokesman, with you playing the role of God to him,
(Exod. 4:14-16)

Now look at this dialogue from the libretto of Schoenberg's opera:

Moses speaks:

My love is for my idea.
I live only for that idea.
To serve the divine idea is the purpose of the
freedom for which this people has been chosen.

Aaron responds:

No people can grasp more than just the perceivable part of the
whole idea, so it becomes understood by all the people in their
own accustomed way.

Then Aaron addresses Moses:

I was to speak in images,

while you spoke in ideas.
I was to speak to the heart,
you to the mind.

Listen also to the frustration in Moses' words:

Inconceivable God!
Inexpressible, many-sided idea,
will You let Yourself be explained in such a way?
Shall Aaron, my mouth, fashion this image?
Then I have fashioned an image too,
false, as all images must be.
Thus I am defeated!
Thus, what I believed before was but madness,
it can not and must not be given voice.
O word, thou word that I lack! (act 2, scene 5)

Moses is frustrated. He realizes that by putting God's words, the Decalogue, into stone, by phrasing the Divine idea in human language, by associating the Deity with such natural phenomena as thunder and lightning, he has reduced the Divine to the mundane.

There is a remarkable similarity between Schoenberg's concept of Moses and Aaron and that of Ahad Ha'Am. Ahad Ha'Am was the pen name for Asher Hirsch Ginzberg, a remarkable Hebrew essayist active at the turn of the century, and a leading figure of the Hibbat Zion movement. I have found no evidence that the composer was directly influenced by the Hebrew writer. The confluence of their ideas appears to be coincidental.

In his 1894 essay, "*Kohen Venavi*" ("Priest and Prophet"), anticipating Schoenberg's midrashic opera by some three decades, Ahad Ha'Am wrote:

In the early history of any epoch-making idea, there have always been men who have devoted themselves to that idea, and to it alone, all their powers, both physical and spiritual. Such men as these look at the world exclusively from the point of view of their idea, and wish to save society by it alone...they refuse to compromise. (p. 129)

The Prophet is essentially a one-sided man. A certain moral idea fills his entire being.... He desires nothing, strives for nothing, except to make every phase of his life around him an embodiment of that

idea in its perfect form. (p. 130)

The Prophet is thus a primal force. His action affects the character of the general harmony, while he himself does not become a part of that harmony, but remains always a man apart, a narrow-minded extremist, zealous for his own ideal, and intolerant of every other. And since he cannot have all that he would, he is in a perpetual state of anger and grief.... The other members of society, ...creatures of the general harmony, cry out after him, "The prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad!" (p. 131)

It is otherwise with the Priest. The Priest also fosters the Idea and desires to perpetuate it, but he is not of the race of the giants. He has not the strength to fight continually...he broadens his outlook and takes a wider view of the relation between his Idea and the facts of life. Not what ought to be, but what can be, is what he seeks....He accepts the complex "harmony" which has resulted from the conflict of that Idea with other forces. (p. 133)

In another essay, written in 1904 and entitled simply, "Moses," Ahad Ha'Am identified Moses as the archetypal prophet, citing as his proof-text the verses that conclude the Torah:

וְלֹא־קָם נָבִיא עוֹד בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל כַּמֹּשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר יָדָעוּ ה' פָּנִים אֶל־פָּנִים

Never again did there arise in Israel a prophet like Moses —
whom the LORD singled out (knew), face to face,
(Deut. 34:10)

And Ahad Ha'Am identified Aaron as the archetypal priest:

[Moses] has a brother in Egypt, a man of position, a Levite who knows how to shape his words to the needs of the time and place...the "Priest" of the future. (p. 320)

[Priests] are men who cannot rise to the Prophet's elevation and have no sympathy with his extremism, but are none the less nearer to him in spirit than the mass of humanity, and are capable of being influenced by him up to a certain point.... They stand between the Prophet and the world and transmit his influence by devious ways, adapting their methods to the needs of each particular time. (p. 314)

So where does this leave us in the struggle of the dialectic between the esoteric and the popular, between Moses and Aaron? Is there a way for ordinary people to transcend the intermediary and, like the prophet, confront God face to face?

In "The Lonely Man of Faith," Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (z"l) suggests that through the act of communal prayer we attempt to reconcile that dialectic.

The very essence of prayer is the covenantal experience of being together with and talking to God. ... Prayer is unimaginable without having man stand before and address himself to God in a manner reminiscent of the prophet's dialogue with God. ... Only within the covenantal community, which is formed by God descending upon the mountain and man, upon the call of the Lord, ascending the mountain, is a direct and personal relationship expressing itself in the prophetic "face to face" colloquy established. ... Prayer is basically an awareness of man finding himself in the presence of and addressing himself to his Maker, and to pray has one connotation only: to stand before God. (pp. 34-35)

Rabbi Soloveitchik's calling himself "a lonely man of faith" brings to mind the loneliness of the single-minded Arnold Schoenberg, or of the pure-thinking prophet Moses.

Arnold Schoenberg once wrote, "The ideas represented [in my opera, *Moses and Aaron*] are all so much tied in with my own personality." (Letters, p. 143) In other words, while Schoenberg closely identified with the purity of thought represented by Moses, he realized that only Aaron could have found the means of communication enabling him to compose an opera. The Moses and Aaron dialectic is the struggle within Schoenberg himself, and perhaps within all of us who grapple with these questions.

If we do not struggle, if we do not continue to discover, we fall prey to complacency. We worship the thunder and lightning and may be unable to realize that they are only the backdrop for the Divine idea. Each of us has the capacity to "ascend the mountain" and, like Moses, confront God face to face.

Bibliography

Cherlin, Michael. "Schoenberg's Representation of the Divine in 'Moses and Aaron'." *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute*, 9 (2 [November 1986]): 210-216.

Dawidowicz, Lucy. "Arnold Schoenberg: A Search for Jewish Identity." In *The Jewish Presence*. New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1977.

Ginzberg, Asher (Ahad Ha'Am). *Selected Essays of Ahad Ha'Am*. Translated from the Hebrew, Edited and with an Introduction by Leon Simon. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1912. Reprint edition New York: Atheneum, 1970.

Gradenwitz, Peter. "The Religious Works of Arnold Schoenberg." *The Music Review*, 21/1 (1960): 19-29.

Ringer, Alexander. *Arnold Schoenberg: The Composer as Jew*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Ringer, Alexander. "Arnold Schoenberg and the Prophetic Image in Music." *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute*, 1/1 (October, 1976): 26-38.

Schiff, David. "Jewish and Musical Tradition in the Music of Mahler and Schoenberg." *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute*, 9 (2 (November) 1986): 217-231.

Schoenberg, Arnold. *Letters: Selected and edited by Erwin Stein, translated from the original German by Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser*. London: Faber and Faber, 1964.

Schoenberg, Arnold. *Style and Idea*. ed. Leonard Stein. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975.

Soloveitchik, Joseph B. "The Lonely Man of Faith." *Tradition*, 7/2 (Spring, 1965): 5-67.

Stein, Leonard. "Schoenberg's Jewish Identity." *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute*, 3 (1 (March) 1979): 3-10.

Weaver, Robert. "The Conflict of Religion and Aesthetics in Schoenberg's *Moses and Aaron*." In Robert Weaver, editor, *Essays on the Music of J. S. Bach and Other Divers Subjects*. Louisville, KY: The

University of Louisville, 1981.

Wörner, Karl H. Schoenberg's 'Moses and Aaron.' Translated by Paul Hamburger. New York: St. Martin's Press, c. 1963.

Dr. Joshua Jacobson is Professor of Music and director of choral activities at Northeastern University. He is also Visiting Professor of Jewish Music at Hebrew College and the founder and artistic director of the Zamir Chorale of Boston.

A Note on the Vocation of the Cantor

by Scott M. Sokol ¹

Consider the following Yiddish proverb:

אינער איז אַ מבין אויף אַ פּשטל, דער צווייטער אויף חזיר-האר,
אַבער אלע זענען מבנים אויף אַ חזן.

One is an expert on scholarly discourse, while another is an expert on boar's bristle, but everyone is an expert on cantors!

Although the saying is certainly funny on its face, I think we can get more out of a proverb than simply a good laugh. As with most proverbs, this one can be interpreted on several levels and some of these interpretations I think may be informative of Jewish attitudes about cantors.

To begin, we might ask ourselves the question, what sort of status do cantors and the cantorate have that even jokingly we acknowledge everyone's stake and expertise in what it is that they do? According to the proverb, the status of *chazzanut* among our people is somewhere between rabbinic discourse and knowledge of pig's hair, hopefully a bit closer to the former than the latter. Given this opinion as a point of departure, I'd like to consider briefly what it is about cantors and their communal role that evokes such strong personal reactions.

Some definitional preliminaries seem in order. The term cantor is really only one of many that is used to describe the role of liturgical chanter/leader. Cantor of course means singer, from the Latin *cantus*. The Hebrew term חזן/Hazzan is of uncertain origin, though there are some who believe it related to the word חזן which indicates some sort of prophetic role, that is the *hazzan* as "seer." I think the best term of use, though, is שליח ציבור, the emissary or representative of the community. This of course refers to the *hazzan's* role as emissary in prayer before G-d. First

¹This note was first delivered as a sermon on Shabbat Shirah. It is reprinted here in honor of the recent 30th Yahrtzeit of Abraham Joshua Heschel (זצ"ל).

and foremost, then, the *hazzan* is the בעל תפילה (yet another term), the master of prayer, and in that mastery comes his or her greatest responsibility.

In the beginnings of institutionalized prayer, the *hazzan* was among the few who even knew the “required” prayers; many Jews did not read Hebrew, and certainly didn’t have siddurim from which to pray. It was therefore the sacred role of the *hazzan* to do the praying for the *kahal*. The rabbis stated that if one heard a *bracha* (blessing) and responded “amen,” that in itself fulfilled one’s obligation for the recitation of a particular prayer. In later centuries, when more Jews had greater direct access to the required prayers, the *hazzan*’s role became more specialized. He then became particularly expert in the crafting and rendering of *piyutim*, poetic insertions interpolated within the required prayer canon. Many of these paytanic insertions have remained in our service, especially during the High Holidays. The *hazzan* still led the less specialized prayers as well, but the craft of the *hazzan* soon lent itself to more of an art-form. The concept of *hidur mitzvah*, the fulfillment of mitzvot in ever more beautiful ways, became the *raison d’etre* of the *hazzan*. What emerged was an individual whose talents, knowledge and piety permitted him to render the service carefully and beautifully.

On this point of *hiddur mitzvah*, the *Aruch haShulchan* states the following:

מי שזיכהו הקב"ה בקול נעים, ירנן להקב"ה בשמחה של מצוה
ולא שאר רגנות.

He who the Holy One Blessed be He has endowed with a pleasant voice, let him sing to the Holy One Blessed be He at festivals in honor of the fulfillment of a mitzvah, rather than at secular festivities.

This is in essence the Rabbinic prescription for the cantorial tradition. Having a good voice, however, is seen by the rabbis as merely a necessary characteristic for being a *sheliach tsibbur*; it is certainly not a sufficient one. In fact, the *Mishnah Brurah* states quite clearly:

ויניחו אותו להתפלל משום נעימת קולו, אין הקב"ה מקבל תפילתו

“If one is allowed to pray (as sheliach tsibbur) by merit of his voice alone, the Holy One Blessed be He does not accept his prayers.”

Indeed, the halachic requirements of a *sheliach tsibbur* are extensive, and interestingly do not seem to apply to other individuals such as rabbis. In

addition to listing a large number of necessary attributes, the *Mishnah Brurah* tells us that a *sheliach tsibbur* must be a “suitable person,” and who is considered suitable? One who is free of sin and whose reputation was not defamed, even in his youth. Along these lines, we learn that even a single congregant may protest and attain the dismissal of a *sheliach tsibbur* of whom a continuous defamatory rumor is circulated.

The obvious question here is why? Why do our codes spend so much time on the requirements and characteristics of the *sheliach tsibbur*? There are probably several answers to this question, but I’d like to briefly explore just two. The first has to do with the “magical” powers of music, and the second with the sanctity and privacy of prayer itself.

The great Jewish philosopher and sage Abraham Joshua Heschel, wrote a seminal essay entitled “The Vocation of the Cantor.”² In it, Heschel speaks at length about the spiritual power of music.

“The only language that seems to be compatible with the wonder and mystery of being is the language of music. Music is more than just expressiveness. It is rather a reaching out toward a realm that lies beyond the reach of verbal propositions.”

And then he states:

“Listening to great music is a shattering experience, throwing the soul into an encounter with an aspect of reality to which the mind can never relate itself adequately.”

And just in case one were not sure of the primacy he ascribes to music, Heschel goes on to say:

“I am neither a musician nor an expert on music. But the shattering experience of music has been a challenge to my thinking on *ultimate issues*. I spend my life working with thoughts. And one problem that gives me no rest is: do these thoughts ever rise to the heights reached by authentic music?”

Heschel’s words are poetic and moving in their own right, but in addition I think they speak to a very real truth about the ability of music to touch the spirit in ways which words, even liturgical words are unable to do

² Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Insecurity of Freedom*. Schocken, 1972.

alone. The power of music is in this respect almost akin to magic or sorcery. Indeed, people have often associated unusual musical talent with divine or sometimes satanic powers. Nicolo Paganini, surely one of the greatest violin and guitar virtuosos of all times, was in fact required to formally swear that his musical abilities did not derive from the devil, so unbelievable were his talents and their power to move people.

The rabbis, I think, were clearly aware of the ability of music and song to move the spirit. Perhaps the most obvious example of this is the concept of *kol islah*, the proscription against hearing women's voices in the synagogue and in public. According to certain authorities women's voices are considered too alluring for men to resist, and therefore must be avoided in both prayer and secular settings. Of course, this thought is not unique to Israel; the Sirens of classical mythology offer another example.

In Judaism, prophecy is likewise linked to music, although such a discussion falls outside the purview of this brief note. In essence, it appears that the detailed restrictions and regulations that the rabbis place on the *sheliach tsibbur* are at least in part a result of their discomfiture with the intimate powers of music and the voice, at least when properly channeled. These *halachot*, then, serve as a system of checks and balances to prevent undo control from someone who could be of suspect character.

The second – and perhaps more critical – reason for these *halachot* likely has to do with the concept and practice of prayer and praying. Again, quoting Heschel:

“The mission of a Cantor is to lead in prayer. He does not stand before the Ark as an artist in isolation, trying to demonstrate his skill or to display vocal feats. He stands before the Ark not as an individual but with a Congregation. He must identify himself with the Congregation. His task is to represent as well as to inspire a community. Within the synagogue, music is not an end in itself but a means of religious experience. Its function is to help us to live through a moment of confrontation with the presence of God; to expose ourselves to Him in praise, in self-scrutiny and in hope.”

This is really an awesome task when you think about it, when you take it seriously as *hazzanim* do. How can one possibly be an agent of confrontation with the presence of God for oneself, let alone for a whole congregation?

How utterly impossible the task, and how utterly presumptuous the taskmaster, this *baal t'filah!* And yet, that's what a cantor must do. This sentiment is expressed vividly in the *Hineni* prayer from the High Holidays. "Here I stand in utter humility before you O G-d, praying on behalf of the people Israel who has placed me in this role of *shlichut*, although I am entirely unworthy of the task."

I believe one final aspect to understanding our proverb completely involves the expertise of the *hazzan* him/herself. The *hazzan* after all is also a *maven*, specifically an expert on prayer, and has been invested thereby with a great deal of authority and responsibility to represent the community before G-d. Yet prayer is ultimately a personal enterprise, and as a result a *hazzan* must be careful not to impose him- or herself too heavily on the prayer practices of individuals, remembering instead that what and how a person prays is truly sacred.

A moving illustration of this fact is found in the *Seder Hasidim*, a pietistic work of the eleventh century attributed to Rabbi Yehudah HaHasid. The story is told of an Israelite herdsman who did not know how to pray.³

Each day, he would say, "Ribono Shel Olam, Master of the Universe, it is obvious and known before You that if one had cattle for grazing and gave them to me to protect, I would be paid for my services. But for You, I would guard Your herd unpaid because I love You so dearly."

Once upon a time, a sage of Torah went on his way and found the herdsman praying, "Ribono Shel Olam..." (in the manner that the herdsman would pray everyday). The sage balked: "Fool, don't pray that way." So the herdsman inquired, "How then should I pray?" The sage agreed to teach the herdsman on the condition that he no longer pray that which he had been accustomed to each day. And so the sage taught the herdsman the blessing before and after the Shema, the Shema, and the Amida.

Unfortunately, after the sage left, the herdsman forgot everything the sage had taught him and ceased praying – even that prayer which he had been accustomed to say. For he was afraid; the sage had forbid him from uttering the prayer of his heart.

³ This text was first taught to me by Rabbi Matthew Berkowitz.

That night, the sage had a dream and a voice said to him, “If you do not tell the herdsman to say that which he had been used to saying before you came to him...if you do not go to him — know that evil will find you. For you have stolen a soul from the world to come.” Immediately, the sage went out and asked the herdsman, “What are you praying?” The herdsman answered, “Nothing, for I have forgotten what you taught me. And you also forbade me from saying my own prayer.” The sage recounted his dream to the herdsman and said, “Say that which you were accustomed to pray.”

Behold, the herdsman had no great learning or deeds to his credit, but thought well of G-d and so he was raised to greatness. For G-d desires the heart.

So perhaps in the end, it is to be entirely expected that *hazzanim* are held so accountable to their congregations and congregants, that “everyone” in a sense is a critic of what we do. Perhaps as our proverb tells us, every Jew thinks him- or herself an expert on cantors, precisely because it is the job of *hazzanim* to use their own expertise to understand and reach every Jew in turn.

Dr. Scott Sokol is Hazzan/Spiritual Leader at Congregation Kehillath Israel in Brookline, MA and director of the Jewish Music Institute and the Program in Special Education at Hebrew College.

The Musical Tradition of the Eastern European Synagogue

Volume One (Two Parts)

1. Introduction History and Definition (277 pgs.)

2. Musical Examples (227 pgs.)

By Sholom Kalib

Syracuse University Press (2002)

\$59.95

Reviewed by Jerome B. Kopmar

In the Spring of 1978, while in the final preparations of Sholom Kalib's monumental concert service for cantor and youth choir, *The Day Of Rest*, he revealed to me the concepts of a project that he was about to undertake; namely, the exploration and documentation of the Eastern European musical traditions, including historical data, and an analysis of its various musical-liturgical traditions. After more than twenty years in which Kalib transversed the United States, Canada, and Israel, to research his project by interviewing and recording knowledgeable native Eastern European cantors and *baaley t'filah* (lay prayer leaders), the first volume, of what will eventually be a five-volume (ten-book) thesaurus, has been published by Syracuse University Press.

The impetus that made Kalib pursue this major effort – a task not undertaken so extensively since A.Z. Idelsohn's ten-volume *Thesaurus of Hebrew Oriental Melodies* in 1932 – was his firm belief that through acculturation, sociological revolution, and assimilation, this musical tradition which has been the primary synagogue musical expression of United States Jewry as well as the Jews in the multitude of lands where Jews emigrated from Eastern Europe during the 1880's through the beginning of World War Two, is in a serious state of deterioration and perhaps on the verge of extinction.

Sholom Kalib, a native of Dallas, Texas, was born in 1929. From his early youth he was imbued with the love of Eastern European *hazzanut* (cantorial art) and Biblical cantillation from his father, a son of a *hazzan* (cantor), who not only taught him the various Eastern European *nuschaot* (traditional prayer modes), but also the basics of sight-reading and the ability to take musical dictation. When Kalib moved to Chicago after his *bar mitzvah*, he entered a community that was at its zenith in terms of *hazzanic* (cantorial) vibrancy. The young Kalib was exposed to an unceasing wealth of knowledge of Eastern European *hazzanut* that became the mother's milk of his love and devotion to this sacred tradition. Aside from his benefiting from being able to learn first-hand from the master *hazzanim* (cantors) who officiated in the many flourishing synagogues of Chicago's West side at that time, he also aided these *hazzanim* by transcribing and editing their music. He was closely associated with two of the foremost cantors living in Chicago during that time, Joshua Lind and Todros Greenberg (perhaps Kalib's greatest mentor and influence). Kalib notated, arranged, and edited Greenberg's massive creative output that led to their publications (1961-1978). He was also a practicing cantor for many years, and until his recent retirement he was a professor of music theory at Eastern Michigan University.

One can't help but be impressed, even awed, by what is represented in the first two books of Volume 1: Part one, *Introduction: History and Definition* and Part 2. *Musical Examples*. Not only is the scholarship impressive and thorough, but the manner in which it is presented is elucidating and cogent. In the first volume, *Introduction: History and Definition*, the author meticulously traces the historical development of his subject. He takes us from the earliest developments of liturgical song from post Biblical times to the present. He examines in minute detail the various aspects of synagogue liturgical music: Biblical cantillation, the *Missinai Tunes* (melodies created for individual texts in the eleventh through the sixteenth centuries in Southwest Germany), the evolution of the musical traditions of the Eastern European synagogue, and does a complete study and analysis of the *nusach* (traditional chant) that permeated this genre. There is also a thorough examination of the art of *hazzanut*, including an in-depth study of the techniques of the various musical embellishments that are so inherent in Eastern European *hazzanut*. We are even exposed to a review of the

place of the choir in the synagogue service: its function *vis-a-vis* the *hazzan*, the choral composers and their compositions, not only of Eastern Europe but also those of Western and Central Europe who were so influential in the choral development of Eastern European choral music. Also discussed is the value, or lack of such, which our society and congregations place in the choir. The author also gives a detailed chronology of the erosions of Eastern European synagogue music that, Kalib asserts, began as early as the latter part of the nineteenth century (i.e., during a time ironically coincidental with its “golden” era), and which continues unabated to this day.

The subjects are exhaustive in their depth and analysis. The documentation is erudite and brilliantly conceived. Even those who have been involved in synagogue music their entire lives will find these volumes opening new vistas never realized, and will make one aware—even proud—of the immense history and musical sophistication that we often take for granted.

Every subject discussed in the first volume (Part 1: Text) contains musical examples in the accompanying volume, (Part 2: Musical Examples). Not only does Kalib musically elucidate his premises, but he also goes about defining them through his multiple musical annotations. The research here is voluminous, and the clarification he brings through the musical examples are eye-opening and filled with expansive detail. In a method—never seen by this writer—Kalib shows by comparison the derivation of the various subjects he’s discussing through layers of multiple examples. For instance: in his discussion of how the prayer modes developed, one of his musical examples shows how the Eastern European *Viddui* (confessional) mode (recited during *Yom Kippur*) may have derived from the Yemenite Psalm Mode. He illustrates this with three staves, one atop the other. First he has the Yemenite Psalm Mode, the second is an example of the *Viddui* mode as realized by Cantor Adolph Katchko, and the bottom staff is an illustration of the Eastern European prelude to *Oshamnu* (the confessional prayer recited during the *Yom Kippur* service). The examining eye immediately sees the commonality of these three examples. Throughout the volume, the musical examples bring to life with vivid clarity the author’s hypothesis presented in the text volume.

To be sure, a work of such scholarship and scope will not be easily understood by everyone. But there is enough historical data in the text volume that will be of great interest to those seeking a detailed historical perspective of this fascinating subject, even those possessing limited musical knowledge. On the other hand, even professional cantors and musicians will be challenged in the study of the vast amount of knowledge that these volumes offer. I might add that the idea of having two separate volumes, one containing the text and the second the musical illustrations, is a very good one. This will enable the reader to have both volumes open at the same time instead of having to constantly refer to the back of the book for the musical examples.

With these first volumes but an appetizer to the other volumes of this thesaurus, we now anxiously anticipate their publication. The forthcoming volumes are: Volume Two, The Weekday, Minor Holiday, and Life-Cycle Event Services (at the time of this writing this volume is in the final stages of completion); Volume Three, The Sabbath Services; Volume Four, The Three Festival Services; and Volume Five, The High Holiday Services. These volumes will come in the form of annotated anthologies, together with recordings of their musical selections.

In a work of such magnitude there will surely be conclusions and points of view essayed by the author that will be questioned and even disagreed with. But, any work of great scholarship can only be judged by how much interest and knowledge it brings to those who study it. Even if some of the contents will cause disagreement—and they surely will—no one can ever question the importance of this major work in the lexicon of synagogue music scholarship, as well as the passion, love, sincerity, and intellectual integrity put forth by the author.

At the time I was first apprised by Dr. Kalib of his intentions in writing this work, my initial reaction was that this task will be an epitaph to the glorious history of Eastern European synagogue music. After studying and learning from this wonderful two-book volume, I now feel that its publication may afford the subject a much-deserved renaissance.

Cantor Jerome B. Kopmar is cantor emeritus of Beth Abraham Synagogue in Dayton, Ohio. He is also an adjunct professor of vocal studies at Sinclair Community College in Dayton.

V'Sham'ru #2

Dedicated to the Israel Mission of the CA and ACC, November 2002

Cantor Richard M. Berlin

♩=100

Cantor/Solo

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Keyboard

5

S.

A.

T.

B.

et ha - shab - bat et ha - shab - bat.

V' - sha - m' - ru v' - nei Yis - ra - eil

V' - sha - m' - ru v' - nei Yis - ra - eil

V' - sha - m' - ru v' - nei Yis - ra - eil

V' - sha - m' - ru v' - nei Yis - ra - eil

© 2002 Prose & Con Spirito, Inc. (ASCAP) All International Rights Reserved.

9

S. la - a - sot et ha - shab - bat, et ha - shab - bat

A. et ha - shab - bat et ha - shab - bat

T. et ha - shab - bat et ha - shab - bat

B. et ha - shab - bat et ha - shab - bat

12

S. bat. l' - do - ro - tam b' - la - a - sot et ha - shab - bat

A. la - a - sot et ha - shab - bat

T. la - a - sot, la - a - sot

B. la - a - sot et ha - shab - bat

16

rit o - lam. bei - ni u - ven b' -

S. l' - do - ro - tam b' - rit o - lam.

A. l' - do - ro - tam b' - rit o - lam.

T. l' - do - ro - tam b' - rit o - lam.

B. l' - do - ro - tam b' - rit o - lam.

20

nei Yis - ra - eil ot hi l' - o - lam, ot hi l' - o - lam.

S. bei - ni u - vein b' - nei Yis - ra - eil ot hi l' -

A. bei - ni u - vein b' - nei Yis - ra - eil ot hi l' -

T. bei - ni u - vein b' - nei Yis - ra - eil ot hi l' -

B. bei - ni u - vein b' - nei Yis - ra - eil, Yis - ra - eil ot hi l' -

24 $\text{♩} = 50$

S. o - lam, ot hi l' - o - lam. _____ ki shei - shet ya - mim a - sa A - do - nai. et ha - sha

A. o - lam ot hi l' - o - lam. _____ ki shei - shet ya - mim a sa A - do - nai. et ha - sha

T. o - lam, ot hi l' - o - lam. _____ ki shei - shet ya - mim a - sa A - do - nai. et ha - sha

B. o - lam, ot hi l' - o - lam. _____ ki shei - shet ya - mim a - sa A - do - nai. et ha - sha

28 $\text{♩} = 50$

S. ma - yim et ha - sha - ma - yim v' - et ha - a - retz v' - et ha -

A. ma - yim et ha - sha - ma - yim v' - et ha - a - retz v' - et ha -

T. ma - yim et ha - sha - ma - yim v' - et ha - a - retz v' - et ha -

B. ma - yim et ha - sha - ma - yim v' - et ha - a - retz v' - et ha -

33 $\text{♩} = 100$

S. u - va - yom ha - sh' - vi - i

A. - a - - retz. u - va - yom, u - va -

T. - a - - retz. u - va - yom, u - va -

B. - a - - retz. u - va -

retz. $\text{♩} = 100$

37

S. sha - vat va - yi - na - fash.

A. yom ha - sh' - vi - i sha - vat sha -

T. yom ha - sh' - vi - i sha - vat sha -

B. yom ha - sh' - vi - i sha -

40

S. *-vat va - yi - na - fash Ritardando sha -*

A. *-vat va - yi - na - fash sha -*

T. *vat va - yi - na - fash Ritardando sha -*

B. *-vat va - yi - na - fash sha -*

Ritardando

42

Ritardando Molto a la Fine

S. *va - yi - na - fash.*

A. *-vat va - yi - na - fash, va - yi - na - fash.*

T. *-vat va - yi - na - fash va - yi - na - fash va - yi - na - fash*

B. *vat va - yi - na - fash va - yi - na - fash va - yi - na - fash.*

Ritardando Molto a la Fine

Ritardando Molto a la Fine

Dr. Richard Berlin is Hazzan/Spiritual Leader at Parkway Jewish Center (Sha'ar HaShamayim) in Pittsburgh, PA. A member of ASCAP himself, he is also the Founder and President of Prose & Con Spirito, Inc., a Publisher Member of ASCAP.