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Summary of Senior Project
Melissa Lynne Adleman

This senior project provides biographical data, recorded personal interviews, and musical examples of five female composers. In addition, this thesis explores Jewish women's changing roles. To this end, it explores the ways in which these composers reflect women's roles in their music. Finally, the thesis provides an history of the Jewish woman, her music, her roles, and her contributions to the Jewish people.

This study comprises four chapters and an appendix, and is divided as follows:

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Many materials were used for this project including personal interviews and periodicals which provided the biographical information. Other materials include published songbooks, unpublished manuscript, and feminist works which provided historical and sociological information.

She'asani Kirtzono:
New Music by the 20th Century American Jewess

Melissa Lynne Adleman

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for Master of Sacred Music Degree

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School of Sacred Music
New York, New York

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Advisor: Dr. Sherry H. Blumberg

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Many thanks to the composers for sharing their perspectives on women and Judaism, their inspirations, and their compositions with me.

Finally, I dedicate this senior project to the memory of my grandmother, Emma Kessel, and to her daughter, my mother, Goldie, for allowing me to inherit not only their dark eyes, but also their sharp instincts, their strength, and their dignity.

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Chapter I: Philosophy Statement

For millennia, Judaism has maintained precise attitudes regarding the role of women, such as its requirement for women to be wives and mothers. These ideas have limited women's opportunity to create and pass on music:

> To view women's music making in terms of biblical legacy and early theological traditions raises significant issues about the historic role of women in religious rituals and in melodic creativity (Heskes 325).

For my senior project, I will study the 20th Century American Jewish woman and the music which she composes, sings, and passes on. To this end, I hope to depict several of the roles which American women assume today and to investigate new songs which they have begun to write and sing. Certainly, the role of women has changed considerably within the last century. For example, women are able to function as public leaders of liturgical music:

> "Evolving changes in religious perceptions among leaders in the Reform and Conservative branches of Judaism currently permit opportunities for the training and placement of women as cantors to lead synagogue prayers (Heskes 325).

This thesis will explore whether or not Jewish women's music reflects these new roles.

NEW MUSIC

In recent years, women have begun to sing and worship together more than ever. They have created women's minyanim, as well as Rosh Chodesh groups. As part of my thesis, I will investigate what music these women compose or choose to use for these

occasions. In addition, I will attempt to deduce whether or not their music reflects the changing roles of American Jewish women today. Also, the thesis will touch on some of the pervasive attitudes towards Jewish women that the Jewish community maintains. One prohibition against women's singing publicly, known as the law of *Kol Isha*, influences Jewish women to this day. It will be interesting to see if such attitudes influence or are reflected in Jewish women's music.

ROLES

For the sake of clarity, the term role refers to the different identities which a modern Jewish woman assumes. Simply, a role is "a function or office assumed by someone as a leading public character" (Webster New Universal Unabridged Dictionary, 1983). In addition, a role refers to "the proper or customary function of a person or thing (Random House College Dictionary 1984). In regards to this project, role refers to the gender roles which Jewish society has expected women to accept. For example, many women hold a specific status within a Jewish family. They assume specific duties within their roles as wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters. One recent study of the relationship between Jewish immigrant mothers and daughters found that "an important influence on women's lives was the role their mothers had played in the family" (Stahl Weinberg 43):

> Although many daughters became Americanized and most worked steadily before marrying, they did not assume that a homebound mother was less important than a wage-earning father. In fact, the most common observation about a mother was that she was a `great manager,' when managing meant everything from looking after [her] husband and children's needs to taking in boarders and doing piecework to controlling the family's expenditures-the key to most women's importance throughout urban society at the time (43-44).

Hence, during the first part of this century, Jewish women took on much responsibility to protect their families' survival. Thus, a mother became a powerful role model for her daughter:

> Although ambition to be anything but a wife and mother was not considered appropriate for young women of any ethnic background, Jewish immigrant mothers, while accepting traditional roles for themselves, sometimes encouraged their daughters' ambitions, or at least passed on a mixed message (46).

Certainly, many daughters followed their mothers' traditional roles, while other women wished to pursue goals outside the home. In the course of my study, I will include any new music which reflects women's status outside the Jewish family, if such songs exist.

PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY

I have chosen this topic for many reasons. One primary reason is that until recently, little information has come forth regarding the role of women. In fact, "beyond the biblical literature, there [is] a vast historical gap until the 19th Century when women such as Emma Lazarus, Henrietta Szold and Golda Meir appear" (Henry xiii). This study seeks to fill in some of that gap. Therefore, I will investigate the roles of American Jewish women from this period until the present. In addition, I hope to find music from this period which may reflect these women's roles and attitudes towards those roles.

Today, however, American Jewish women enjoy a high level of academic autonomy and authority, and are able to show prowess in these areas. The fact that I am able to undertake this project is testimony to the advancement of Jewish women in 20th Century America. For me, this project is a reflection of gender pride and identity. My

intention is not to blame or exclude my Jewish brothers. On the contrary, my aim is to celebrate the American Jewish woman, her music, and her contributions to American Jewish life.

Despite the recent triumphs, modern Jewish women, like all American women, face many challenges:

> [Feminism] is about justice, fairness and access to the broad range of human experience. It's about women consulting their own well-being and being judged as individuals rather than as members of a class with one personality, one social function, one road to happiness. It says a great deal about our society that this idea is so unsettling to so many, and that the social measures that would forward it-reproductive freedom...an end to job and pay discrimination...and so forth-have been so bitterly resisted (Pollitt xiii-xiv)

As a result, women must strive to gain self-respect and self-worth in the face of such negative forces. Therefore, women need to come together and enjoy the dialogue and company of other women. Consequently, another aspect of this project will be to see whether women's songs reflect these issues as well as the changing roles.

Ultimately, the new wave of Jewish women music's reflects a need for gender pride and comraderie. As women grow, they need mediums such as music to mark that growth. Recently, women's groups have surfaced whose music will be an interesting medium to investigate. By undertaking this study, I hope to give credit to the American Jewish woman, her music, and her legacy.

Chapter II: An History of Jewish Women's Roles
Biblical Women

Recorded Jewish history begins with the Bible. Women of the biblical times were wives and mothers as well as queens, prophetesses, and songstresses. In the second chapter of the Bible, Eve, the first woman, appears as a woman who, "[by] eating the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge...became the first [woman] to commit a definitive act based on her own thinking." (Henry, Taitz 15) Eve had two sons, Cain and Abel and is thus, by biblical record, the mother of all humanity. Regarding Jewish ancestry, Sarah, the wife of Abraham "is considered to be the first mother of the Hebrews." (15) (Gen 16:1-4) In fact, she becomes a mother at the age of 90. (Gen 17:17-19) Originally, she laughs when Gd informs her that she will indeed bear a child:

> Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; and it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. Therefore sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am grown old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? (Gen 18: 11-13)

Despite her initial skepticism, "the child grew and was weaned" (Gen 21: 8). As Isaac grows, Sarah decides by her own accord to banish Abraham's concubine Hagar, and their son, Ishmael. (Gen 21:1-4) Apparently, her motive was to protect her son and his birthright:

> So she said to Abraham, Cast out this bond woman and her son: for the son of this bond woman shall not be heir with my son, with Yitzhak. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's eyes because of his son (Gen 21:10-11)

Therefore, like Eve, Sarah commits a significant act without the influence of her husband. In fact, Sarah's actions are in spite of Abraham's loyalty to his first son. In so doing, Sarah ensures the future of Isaac and his descendants.

When Isaac reaches maturity, he marries Rebecca. Rebecca is the first woman to give her consent to a marriage. That is, "[when] her brother went to her and said: `wilt thou go with this man?' Rebecca answered: `I will go' (Henry, Taitz 17). In addition, Rebecca receives direct instruction from Gd, unlike Sarah, who learns of her pregnancy by overhearing a conversation. (Gen 18) This direct communication from Gd appears in Genesis 25:

> And the children struggled together within [Rebecca]; and she said, "If it be so, why am I thus?" And she went to inquire of the [Eternal]. And the [Eternal] said to her, "Two nations are in thy womb, and two peoples shall be separated from thy bowels. And the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger." (Gen 25:22-23)

Moreover, other similarities exist between Sarah and her mother-in-law. For instance, as Sarah banishes Ishmael to secure Isaac's inheritance, thus does Rebecca deceive Isaac into giving his blessing to Jacob. Initially, the blessing belonged to Esau, the first born son (Gen 27). Hence, Rebecca and Sarah act independently to protect the future of their sons.

After Sarah and Rebecca, Jacob's wives, Rachel and Leah, are the next female characters to appear. Like Sarah, Rachel is barren and takes self-sacrificing steps to satisfy her husband:

> Rachel chose to exercise the same prerogative as Sarah had. She too gave Jacob her handmaid Bilhah, saying: "Go in unto her; that she may bear upon my knees, and I also may be builded up through her. Bilhah had two sons, but it was Rachel's own children, Joseph and Benjamin, born much later, who were their father's favorites (Henry, Taitz 18-19).

Notably, Leah bears a daughter, Dina, who was raped by Sh'chem, the son of Hamor (Gen 34: 1-3). Unfortunately, the Bible does not include Dina's reactions to this

savage act, nor the reactions of her mother. However, two of her brothers, Shimeon and Levi, conspire to kill her rapist, his father, and all the men of their city. (Gen 34:25-27)

In the book of Exodus, two women save the life of Moses, the Hebrew leader. Namely, Shifra and Puah, midwives present at Moses' birth, stand up to Pharoah by refusing to kill Hebrew, male babies. ((Ex 1: 18) In addition, Yocheved, the mother of Moses, is a heroic figure who gives up her baby boy to protect him from Pharoah. (Ex 2:1-4) Her daughter, Miriam, not only arranges for her mother to be Moses' nurse, (Gen 2: 5-7) but also appears as the earliest songstress in Jewish history. After crossing the Red Sea, she leads other women in song:

> From Exodus 15:20 we learn that Miriam, tambourine in hand, led the Hebrew women to a location outside the desert encampment. There they sang and danced, intoning what appears to have been a refrain or responsive musical text for Moses' hymn of triumph after crossing the Red Sea (Heskes 325).

Another important biblical heroine was Hannah, "the mother of Samuel, the great prophet who anointed both Saul and David as Kings of Israel" (Henry, Taitz 21). Although not a songstress, Hannah is most famous for a prayer in which she promises "that if a son were born to her, she would dedicate his life to [Gd]" (22). This entreaty, which appears in the First Book of Samuel, "is one of the longest passages in the Bible attributed to a woman" (21). In addition, she keeps her promise to Gd after Samuel is born:

> Her prayer was answered and Samuel was born. No sooner was he weaned than she brought him to the High Priest to reaffirm her vow. It was at that time that she recited her beautiful and moving praise to [Gd], who had granted her a son, thus giving her what she most desired (22).

In the book of Judges, the figure Deborah appears as "a judge, a leader and

unifier of all Israel, a prophetess, a warrior, and a passionate believer in Israel's ultimate victory" (24). Like Miriam, Deborah is an early Israelite songstress:

> In Judges 5, the prophet and leader Deborah and her military adjutant Barak together sing her battle hymn of praise and thanksgiving. Later, in Judges 11:34, we learn that Jephthah's daughter came out to meet him in Mizpah, accompanied by *mevaseroth*-women who celebrated Hebrew victories with songs and dances (Heskes 325).

Like Deborah and Miriam, the *mevaseroth* functioned as transmitters of victory through song. However, "the role of female musicians becomes increasingly obscure and then all but disappears in descriptions of liturgical practices" (326). Hence, as early as the biblical period, the musical and vocal presence of women was not a part of religious experience.

Talmudic Women

During the Talmudic period, the rabbis clearly define women's roles. Specifically, the rabbis give specific attention to a woman's voice:

> The primary Talmudic source ascribing sexual quality to the female voice is a statement ascribed to the Amora Samuel and cited twice in the corpus of the Talmud. The first instance of its use appears in tractate *Berakhot* in the context of an Amoraic discussion of the permissibility of reciting the *Shema* in the presence of a nude person. At the conclusion of the discussion, the *Gemara* inserts four separate statements concerning sexual incitement, one of which is the declaration by Samuel that ..."a woman's voice is a sexual incitement' (Berman 45).

Over centuries, legal authorities transformed Samuel's position into prohibitions against a women's singing voice. Indeed, modern proponents of halachah still incorporate such restrictions today:

> The identification of a woman's voice as a likely source of sexual stimulation has led many modern [halachic] authorities to ban, albeit with substantial dissent by other authorities, activities such as choirs of men and

> women singing together, women singing [Sabbath melodies] in the presence of men other than their husbands, listening to records of women singing, and even women singing lullabies to their children in the hearing of men (45).

Certainly, these prohibitions influenced a woman's opportunity to sing and to pray in the presence of men, as it does to this day.

However, the Talmud did not silence every woman. In fact, the Talmud is the first realm in which a Jewish woman functions as an intellectual, a student, and a teacher. For example, the words of one woman, Ima Shalom, appear in more than one tractate. Ima Shalom, the wife of Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, head of one of the Palestinian academies, was born in Palestine in 50 C.E. (Henry, Taitz 48). Regardless of her lineage, she is best known for her candor:

> She was apparently irascible as well as clever, and her habit of outsmarting others might well have aggravated her husband. Stories concerning her bluntness of speech and actions are found scattered throughout the Talmud (48-49).

In fact, "renowned Talmudic scholars utilized Ima Shalom's words to prove and/or disprove their scholarly contentions" (51). Hence, Ima Shalom represents a female voice in the rabbis' discussions. However, she is not the only woman to influence the making of Jewish law. Specifically, a woman by the name of Beruriah, "is the only woman in Talmudic literature whose views were considered seriously by the scholars" (54). Moreover, "Beruriah was also a teacher in the academy-a situation which was certainly highly unusual" (54). In fact, the Talmud attributes two different laws to her:

> Both [laws] pertain to a specific item's ability to become ritually impure...Beruriah's rulings help to identify the exact moment when an item moves from the category of "complete item," in which it can receive uncleanness, to the category of "incomplete item," in which it cannot

become ritually impure (Abrams 2-3).

Hence, rabbinic tradition identifies Beruriah as a maker of Jewish law. Obviously, such distinction was rare for women in her time. In addition, prohibitions against the female voice inhibited women from participating or leading public worship or liturgical song. Nevertheless, the Talmud does indicate the role of women with regard to secular song:

> According to fourth-century rabbinical dicta, female responses to Psalms chanted by male voices were permitted, but not in the context of prayer services. A leading rabbinical scholar of the time, the Amora Rav Joseph, permitted responsive choral singing for women but denied them any leadership role (Heskes 328).

Medieval Women

According to all available data, a large gap in the recorded history of Jewish women occurs between the 5th and 9th Centuries. However, much information exists regarding female musicians of the period. In fact, they participated at many life-cycle, community gatherings:

> Among Jews there remained certain professional female musicians whose music was actively sought by their communities. Well into the later Middle Ages, especially among the Hispanic-Sephardic and Oriental-Near Eastern Jewish traditions, there were women whose singing and instrumentation prevailed at funerals and serious processions. Moreover, weddings and feasts were enhanced by female musicians, who were, however, usually relegated solely to female groupings (328).

During this period, some women acquired knowledge in areas of Jewish tradition and law, like Beruriah. Incidentally, such students were often the daughters of prominent rabbinic figures:

> One woman who was held in high esteem in the Middle Ages was a noted teacher at the Talmudic academy in Baghdad where her father, Samuel,

> was the *Gaon*...the Jewish spiritual leader...His daughter, referred to only as Bat HaLevi (daughter of the Levite), had been educated by him in Bible and Talmud (Henry, Taitz 86).

Importantly, the most famous of learned daughters from this period were the daughters of Rashi:

> The family of Rashi, the famous Biblical commentator who lived in France (1040-1105), was blessed with many daughters and granddaughters...[The youngest daughter], Rachel was credited with having written a responsa on a question of Talmudic Law when her father was sick...[Rashi's] granddaughters...were reputed authorities on dietary laws (88).

Thus, even in the most prestigious of rabbinic families, women were scholars and transmitters of the oral tradition. Consequently, women assumed other positions during this time. One new role comes in the arena of commerce:

> Jewish women in the Middle Ages were emancipated to the extent that they conducted independent businesses and used the money at their own discretion. More than a few of the charitable contributions and funds for the printing of books and maintenance of synagogues, were the direct result of the generosity of individual women (85-86).

Furthermore, evidence supports the notion that Jewish women were prayer leaders:

> In central Europe, not only were there women's music entertainments among themselves, but there are indications that there were liturgical services conducted entirely apart from the men...In such cases, it was the custom to have specially trained female precentors conduct the independent services, as well as other ceremonies, for the women of the community. Records from the thirteenth-century annals of Worms and Nuremberg refer to female precentors...Those professional liturgists were called (in Old Rhenish German) *saegerin* and later (in Yiddish), *sogern* (329-330).

An example of one such prayer leader was Dulcie of Worms, known as "a singer of hymns and prayers, a speaker of supplications" (Henry, Taitz 87). Such lay leaders, like Dulcie, "wrote their own prayers or supplications (called *techinot*) for the women's

congregation. Naturally, these prayers reflect women's roles and perspectives:

> These were written in Yiddish and usually concerned themselves with personal feelings and prayers for families or communities. Such prayers often were addressed specifically to the Mothers of Israel: Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, and Rachel (87).

Hence, with the onslaught of the medieval period, Jewish women sustain their roles as songstress and musicians. In addition, they gain the opportunity to use their musical and linguistic talents for the purposes of prayer. Finally, they show immense initiative not only to compose their own litanies, but also to lead them "in the balcony of the synagogue while the men prayed below" (87).

Dulcie of Worms was also a noted thinker of her time. Like women of the Talmudic period, Dulcie and her contemporaries were learned in many aspects of Jewish tradition:

> Other noted women scholars of the same period were Miriam Shapira Luria, who lectured in rabbinics and Talmud in Italy in the 13th century...Dulcie was known to have held public discourses on the Sabbath. Hard working, and the sole support of her husband and children, she died a martyr's death with her two daughters in 1213 (87).

Finally, women were also authors during this time. One noteworthy literary composer was Rebecca Tiktiner. Rebecca was "a learned woman and a preacher, who died in Prague in the middle of the 16th century (94). Significantly, Rebecca is best known for one work in particular:

> ...She had written a book in old Judeo-German called *Meneket Rivka* (Rebecca's Nurse). The title is a reference to the Biblical story of Rebecca who brings her nurse (personal governess) with her when she leaves home to join Isaac, her new husband...The book contained moral teachings, selections from the Talmud and Mishna, and poetry (92-93).

In fact, "101 years after the publication of *Meneket Rivka*, a book had been

written about Rebecca Tiktiner" (94). In addition, Rebecca was a creator of *techinot*. (100) With all of Rebecca Tiktiner's accomplishments, she succeeded to enable future Jewish women to express themselves through the written word.

The Middle Ages were certainly a time of musical and artistic fervor. Specifically, women took a significant musical role in many realms. One particular realm is the Renaissance of Italy:

> In the seventeenth century, the Jewess Rachel Hebrea...was frequently permitted to leave the confines of the Venetian ghetto in order to sing and play her music for the gentry of Venice and surrounding communities...A better known name in music history is that of Madama Europa...a member of the Jewish Rossi family of noted musicians. As a renowned singer of her time and place, she performed the innovative "Lamento" aria by Claudio Monteverdi at the Mantuan court of the Gonzagas in 1608 (330). Somewhat later, another Jewish woman from Mantua, Hanna Norsa...found her way to London and in 1732 created the role of Polly Peachum in the *Beggar's Opera* (Heskes 330).

In other words, Jewish women were able to gain tremendous fame as professional singers and musicians in 17th Century Italy. In addition, this era encouraged Jewish women to make music in informal, social contexts:

> European Jewish homes became the private locations for increasingly elaborate *Purim*..musicales and socials,at which men and women danced, sang, and played musical instruments. Women taught each other songs...and often picked up tunes from non-Jewish neighbors, adapting them to their own milieu...Most women appeared to prefer the lute or clavichord as accompaniment for versified ballads (330).

Hence, women were able to express themselves musically both as performers and for their own enjoyment. For example, one celebrated figure of the time bears witness to the musicianship of her contemporaries:

> The Jewish diarist Glueckel of Hameln (1645-1724) wrote in her memoirs that her stepsister, while playing the spinet-clavicembalom at home,

> happened to hear a conversation between two visitors and thus was able to foil a blackmail attempt upon their father (330).

Glueckel of Hameln lived during the age of the Chmelnitzki massacres and the rise and fall of Shabbetai Zvi, the false Messiah (Henry, Taitz 166). Her memoirs "were found in 1724 and copied over by her grandson, Moses Hameln, chief Rabbi of Baiersdorf" (167). By her own account, Glueckel was a pious woman who made "business and family decisions" (167). In fact, she assumes full responsibility of the family business after her husband's death (168). Hence, Glueckel is noteworthy not only for her memoirs, but for the extraordinary life which she lived. In addition to her functions as mother and business woman, she is probably the first Jewish woman to document her own life story.

Pre-Modern Women

Undoubtedly, Glueckel's strength and autonomy paved the way for future Jewish women. Certainly women of the pre-modern and modern periods were no exception. With the onslaught of the 19th century, American Jewish women emerge as poetesses. One famous poetess is Penina Moise. "Penina was born on April 23, 1797 in Charleston, South Carolina" (Henry, Taitz 224). Despite great family hardship, Penina became a vibrant literary force:

> When her father died, Penina, then twelve years old, assumed the difficult task of helping to care for her mother and siblings...Penina left school and soon took charge of the entire household as well as complete care of her invalid mother...[Nevertheless], Penina published her first poems when she was very young. By the time she was thirty, she was widely known in publications throughout the country (225).

Significantly, as Penina became more famous, she "remained ever steadfast to

Jewish life" (225). In fact, "some of her poems were written on Jewish themes" (225). Of particular importance are her beautiful hymns, written towards the end of her life. With these works she left a legacy for future generations of Reform and Conservative Jews:

> These poems, set to music, are included in many collections in both the Conservative and Reform hymnals...Penina was the author of most of the pieces which comprised the first collection of hymns used in the Charleston synagogue...[To this day, some of her hymns] are included in the collection of the Union Hymnal used by the Congregation of Temple Emanu-El in New York "City as well as by many other reform Temples throughout the country. [Many] have been set to music, some by several different songwriters (226-227).

In other words, Penina's works affect Jewish people to this day. Her hymns continue to influence Jewish worship services through spoken and chanted word. Like the *sogern* who wrote *techinot*, Penina's liturgy has become a permanent part of Jewish literature.

Of all the Jewish American poetess of the 19th Century, Emma Lazarus deserves special distinction. Simply, "Emma Lazarus is one of the few Jewish women whose name immediately sparks recognition in the eyes of the most uninitiated students of Jewish women's history" (236). Simply, she was a prolific writer:

> The most famous of Emma's poems, "The New Colossus," which is engraved on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty, is only one small contribution in a vast selection of excellent work. The earliest of her poetry, written in her teens, was first published in 1866 when she was only 17 years old. This was soon followed by other volumes of poetry as well as novels, many on Jewish topics (236).

In addition, Emma was a noteworthy scholar, translator, and humanitarian:

> Emma became a foremost translator of the work of the great Spanish Jews, Solomon ibn Gabirol and Judah HaLevi. By her own initiative, she developed into one of the more learned Jewish scholars of the day.

> [Nonetheless], Emma spoke for all Jews and especially for the downtrodden...As she eloquently pointed out: "Until we are all free, we are none of us free (237).

Hence, Emma Lazarus brought the Jewish woman to a new level of recognition. Certainly, she enabled 2Oth Century American Jewish women to strive for and attain greatness. Many such women have set their place in history. For instance, "Emma Goldman was a leading feminist and pioneer advocate of birth control, an anarchist lecturer, and agitator for free speech" (Priesand 96). Eventually, she "was deported because of her political activities" (Henry, Taitz 257). Not only were these women activists, but also they were social reformers:

> Jewish women's contributions to social reform in America far exceeded their percentage in the population. From Rebecca Gratz (1789-1869), philanthropist and educator; to Ernestine Rose (1810-1892), abolitionist and activist in America who fought for the married women's property act of 1848; to Lillian Wald (1867-1940) who is famous for her work with immigrants during the 1920's on the lower East Side of Manhattan, our [history] is filled with dedicated and accomplished women (258).

Modern Women

Hence, many American Jewess' were concerned with creating a better America for their daughters and granddaughters. Some of them sought to establish a Jewish homeland in the Land of Palestine, as did Henrietta Szold, who became a founder of the Youth Aliyah movement (Vorspan 156). Importantly, "In 1935 a colony was established in her name, Kfar Szold (Szold village) was set up in the Negev and, later, was moved to its present location in the north, near Mount Hermon" (156).

During the late 19th and 20th Centuries, Jewish American women expanded their musical roles, as well:

> More significantly, Jewish women in America took on music leadership roles on the stage and performed all kinds of songs, including even chants of liturgical significance. For example, Sophie Karp (1861-1906)...became the toast of Yiddish theatricals, which were then flourishing in the Bowery theaters on the lower East Side of New York City. (Heskes 331).

In addition, one of her signature pieces made its way into the mainstream:

> The song became an immediate favorite, and was taken on as a featured solo by other popular female performers of the day. However, within two decades of its introduction it had become the special encore of Cantor Yossele Rosenblatt (1882-1933) in his nationwide vaudeville and synagogue tours. As a result, what had been the Bowery tune of women singers rapidly evolved into a Jewish hymn of liturgical qualities, assuming a form of religious status in the domain of male singers (331).

Hence, 20th Century American Jewish women were bridging the gap between their secular music and the religious music which men passed on.

Certainly, many women in history have gained recognition in their areas of expertise. Undoubtedly, Jewish women today have the same need to put forth their ideas into the public domain. Above all, they have a need to be heard, and to express themselves on their own terms.

As history maintains, music continues to be a medium through which women speak, sing, and play. As a result, some new female composers and their works deserve some special attention. Also, their personal motivations and goals are of particular importance. The next section of this thesis features the interviews and compostions of five American Jewesses.

Chapter III: Five Jewish Women Composers and Their Music

This chapter includes biographical data and records of personal interviews with five composers; musical and textual analyses of their work; as well as illustrations of women's roles.

Debbie Friedman

Born in Utica, New York, Debbie Friedman spent most of her childhood in St Paul, Minnesota. As a teenager, she spent time on Kibbutz and learned to play the guitar. Later, she worked at Reform synagogues and camps as a song leader and teacher of music and prayer. In addition, she began to compose original music. Her first composition, entitled "And You Shall Love" is an English rendering of a biblical passage which Jews recite everyday. Not unlike her first composition, Friedman usually combines English and Hebrew from the texts of Jewish tradition. In addition, she has written much music for holidays such as Chanukah and Purim, for Jewish rites of passage, and in recent years, for Jewish women's groups and healing circles. Consequently, she has worked as a cantor at synagogues in Houston, Chicago, Palm Springs, San Diego, Los Angeles and New Jersey. She has directed music programs at the University of Judaism, the University of California at Santa Cruz, Brandeis University, and Brandeis-Bardin Institute in Brandeis, CA. In addition to many anthologies and songbooks, she has released three recordings: "And You Shall Be a Blessing" (1989), Live at the Del (1990), and Renewal of Spirit (1995). (biographical information taken from "Crossover Dreams." Moment. June 1996. 50-53, 68-71).

An Interview with Debbie Friedman

Debbie Friedman does not consider herself an expert in any type of music, but rather, a "person of text, [one who] translates historical, liturgical, modern and classical text into music and interprets or re-interprets it." She maintains that "music is a vehicle to express the essence of text." As a musician, her goal is to "make text accessible to people who are not textually or musically oriented so that they can participate [and thus] embrace what is rightfully theirs." Consequently, Friedman does not write about women's roles. She explains that her feminist work "is not about women's oppression" although she has written a piece entitled "Miriam's song" and hopes to do a musical

about Chana Senesh. She maintains that her "songs are for women, not about them." However, she has written a "Birkat Levanah," a blessing for the new moon, "for women's groups" to use on Rosh Chodesh. In addition, in two of her compositions Friedman has converted standard Hebrew phrases into feminine forms. For example, her piece entitled "L'chi Lach" is based upon the Torah portion "Lech L'cha" in which Gd tells Abraham to go forth to a land that Gd will give to him and his descendants. By rendering these pivotal words, and thus the title, in the feminine, women are included in Gd's blessing. Moreover, in Friedman's "Bruchot Habaot," whose title means "welcome" in the feminine grammatical form of Hebrew, the composer used feminine language to include women.

As an interpreter of text, Friedman has also written not about women's roles, but for women's groups such as *Ma'ayan*, the women's project of the Jewish Community Center of the Upper West Side in New York City. However, Friedman maintains that their music is "focused more on the *neshama*, the essence of a human being."

Regarding any recent changes in women's roles, Friedman remarks that for Jewish women "[a] sense of empowerment is a big issue." She adds that "more women are free to be at home and do not have to prove anything to anyone." In addition, she mentions that "other communities, such as the Orthodox Jewish community, are just developing that concept and are just catching up."

In other words, "going back to [the home] and raising children is what [women] want to do, not what [they] have to do or what is `politically correct' or imposed on them by [their] peers." To this end, Friedman maintains that "Feminism is about liberating

men."

Friedman asserts that most Jewish musicians are not writing about women's roles although perhaps a few are. In reference to her own motivations, Friedman asserts that her favorite songs are really those that speak to "where her mood is." For her, different texts help her to "experience the day." She mentions two texts, Elohai Neshama and Asher Yatzar, both taken from morning liturgy, that speak to her.

In her career as a professional musician, Friedman admits that she has experienced sexism, and has written music to help her deal with these negative experiences. In her composition entitled "Tefilat Haderech" or traveler's prayer, Friedman has "reframed negative experiences into affirmations." She points out that these negative experiences symbolize a hope that "[Gd] may bless us with the opposite of those things." However, Friedman indicates that music about women does not help her to deal with the challenges that women face. She states that "[she has] to process [the music] first, and has to pass through it." Thus, she hasn't "lived it yet" nor is she "a friend to it." That is, this composer must connect with music on many different levels before she is able to let it affect her. Apparently, music about women's experiences is no exception.

Finally, Debbie Friedman has written many songs about women of the Bible such as Miriam and the matriarchs, Leah and Rachel, as well as about Israeli women such as Chana Senesh, and the poetesses Leah Goldberg and Rahel. The composer concedes that "everything is a metaphor for everyone." Ultimately, this composer believes that interpreting music is just like the acronym *PARDES* which, according to Jewish mystical tradition, represents different levels of Torah exegesis. In other words, the meaning is

"all there by itself and becomes whatever we bring to it."

"Miriam's Song"

Miriam's song is featured on the recording entitled "And You Shall Be a Blessing." It also appears in the 1992 songbook "Blessings," published by Sounds Write Productions, Inc., and is a tribute to Miriam the prophetess, the first songstress of biblical history. The text of "Miriam's Song" stems largely from the following biblical passage:

> And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, sing to the [Eternal], for the [Eternal has triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider has Gd thrown into the sea] (Exodus 15:20-21).

Apparently, the composer sought to pay homage to this early musical leader and heroine. That is, Friedman expands and glorifies Miriam's roles and contributions to her people. As a result, the text of "Miriam's Song" is a longer, more sophisticated version of the Exodus passage. For the sake of clarity, the lyrics of "Miriam's Song" appear as follows:

> **Chorus**
> And the women dancing with their timbrels
> Followed Miriam as she sang her song
> Sing a song to the One whom we've exalted
> Miriam and the women danced and danced the whole night long
>
> And Miriam was a weaver of unique variety
> The tapestry she wove was one which sang our history
> With every strand and every thread she crafted her delight
> A woman touched with spirit she dances toward the light. **Chorus**
>
> When Miriam stood upon the shores and gazed across the sea
> The wonder of this miracle she soon came to believe
> Whoever thought the sea would part with an outstretched hand

And we would pass to freedom and march to the promised land. **Chorus**

And Miriam the prophet took her timbrel in her hand
And all the women followed her just as she had planned
And Miriam raised her voice in song, she sang with praise and might
We've just lived through a miracle, we're going to dance tonight
(Friedman, Blessings, 13)

Hence, Friedman's text includes Miriam's work as a weaver, as well as her reactions to the splitting of the Red Sea, which inspire her public celebration of song and dance. Not only does Miriam lead other women in song, but also she enables them to share in the joy of Gd's miracle at the Red Sea. Hence, Miriam's roles come through in this piece. Such details do not appear in the passage from Exodus.

In addition, Friedman's musical setting adds to the excitement of "Miriam's Song." In this composition, she utilizes a lively, pop-style melody combined with easy lyrics. Written in B flat major, the melody begins with a chorus that includes some syncopated rhythms. Also, it includes a lowered scale degree seven or A flat, rather than an A natural. Each phrase consists of two measures. The refrain follows the pattern of "ABAC." In other words, the piece begins with a musical idea, "A," followed by a new idea, "B," after which "A" repeats. Finally, a third idea, "C," rounds out the refrain and becomes a transition to the verse (see Fig. 1). Consequently, each verse follows this formula as well, and section "C" of the verses marks a transition back to the chorus. In "C" of both the chorus and the verse, the meter changes for just two bars.

Like the chorus, each verse consists of two-measure phrases. However, each verse contains many eighth-notes which form a faster melodic line. That is, the verses tell the story of Miriam, and the faster rhythms allow the lengthy text to fit into just three verses.

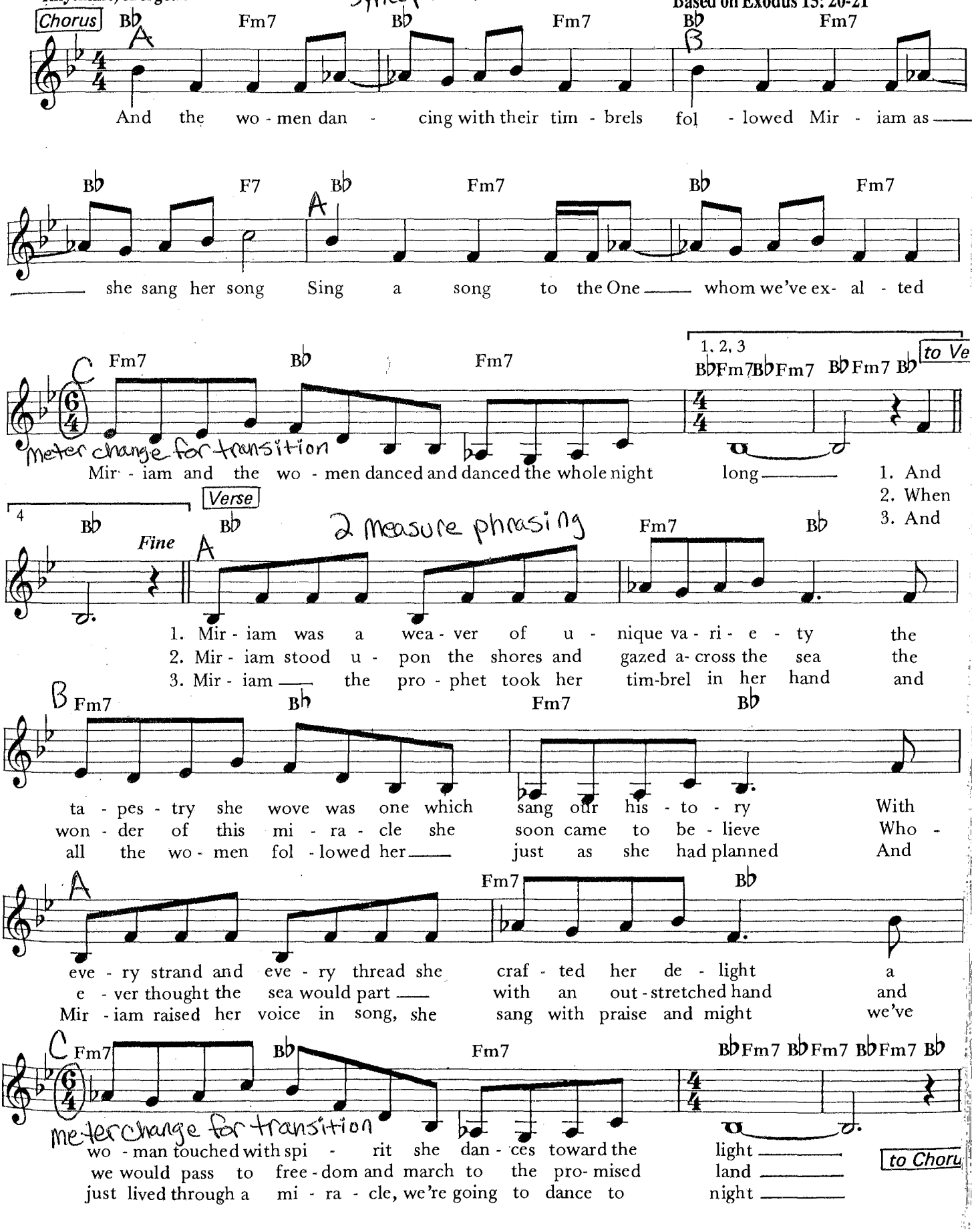
MIRIAM'S SONG

Fig. 1

Music and Lyrics: Debbie Friedman
Based on Exodus 15: 20-21

Rhythmic, energetic

syncopation



Certainly, this composition contains a very concrete, balanced structure. Moreover, Friedman's arrangement provides an uncomplicated medium through which to tell her story. As a result, the composer has made the story of Miriam more accessible not only to women, but to anyone.

Ultimately, "Miriam's Song" reflects women's roles because it reflects Miriam's roles, emotions, and experiences. It is a feminist, biblical explanation or *midrash* which provides a proud depiction of a female character. As a "person of text," Friedman has provided women with a strong, feminine leader and role model. In addition, she has enabled them to reclaim their status within the story of the Song of the Sea. Thus, Friedman has given her sisters not only greater perspective, but a new role model in Miriam and, likewise, in Friedman herself.

Some composers write not only about women's roles, but also for women's voices. Like Miriam and her followers, they rejoice in their sisterhood through song. One such composer is Linda Hirschhorn.

Linda Hirschhorn

> Linda Hirschhorn was born and raised in New York City. She studied at the Yeshiva Rabbi Moses Soloveichik and at the High School of Music and Art. She has a B.A. in Philosophy and an M.A. in Counseling. She spent two years in Israel, one on Kibbutz and one at the University of Jerusalem. As a child she sang under Seymour Silbermintz, and while in college sang with the Zamir Chorale in New York. Linda has performed all over the world and released four original recordings that reflect her pride as a Jewish woman, her social consciousness and peace activism and her feminism. In the late 1980's she founded the women's acappella quintet Vocolot with whom she still records and performs. She

> also travels as a solo artist helping establish choruses around the country in her unique Artist-in-Residence program "A Concert Starring You." Linda's music has been used in videos, dance scores and radio documentaries, is sung by choruses and in Synagogues around the country, and she has published in Jewish anthologies and in national music publications. (composition and biographical information taken from The Music of Linda Hirschhorn: More Hebrew Canons, Rounds and Musical Settings. Tara Publications. 50) Currently, the composer resides in Oakland, CA with her husband, David Cooper, and her daughter, Talia (Gather Round, 26).

An Interview with Linda Hirschhorn

Linda contends that she performs most often as a singer and composer with her group of female vocalists called Vocolot. She writes for women's voices and specifies that the harmonies of her compositions are suited for female voices. She writes about Jewish women and Jewish women's roles "by implication." In other words, "women's roles emerge through the characters" about whom she writes. She has written about Ruth and Naomi to accentuate women's choices; about Hagar to accentuate "willingness to talk rather than to fight" and "world peace," and about Miriam to accentuate a "struggle for freedom." In addition, Hirschhorn writes about her roles as a fighter for social action and as a role model for women's issues and other issues. In other words, she hopes that her music will inspire others to get involved in such issues.

Hirschhorn is committed to "reclaiming the Jewish world." She reaches out to Jewish women in non-Jewish settings so that they may hear the music of their "experiences." That is, her music speaks to Jewish women about their heritage and about the composer's personal pride in her identity. Hirschhorn suggests that such an experience is "very validating for those people to hear."

Hirschhorn asserts that the role of Jewish women has changed in that women are

able to become rabbis and cantors. She believes that "economics" is a key factor in this development. That is, "men are taking higher paying positions" which enables women to become rabbi and cantors. However, she stresses that "every aspect of synagogue life is still male dominated, especially from the professional aspect" although the vast majority of "volunteers are women."

Hirschhorn maintains that some musicians are writing about and performing songs about Jewish women's roles. However, she adds that these musicians are "not the most famous ones." and still write with "traditional texts." She sees no "major shift" and that these songs are not "mainstream." As a result, the new movement of Jewish music is "pretty minimal" in her opinion. She adds that they use some traditional and non-traditional texts but are "not concerned with changing the music of the mainstream, [which is] still traditional Jewish music."

This composer enjoys listening to her own compositions, such as Harey At, as well as of old *nigunnim*, such as those of Shenker and the Mozitz Hasidim. Ultimately, Hirschhorn is "moved" by music which forms a "powerful mix." She describes that such a "mix" occurs "if the melody fits the words [and is] evocative [with a] sense of authenticity."

Hirschhorn admits that she has experienced some sexism as a cantorial soloist and asserts that "women are paid less than men [simply] because they are women." In addition, she has been "patronized for her feminist concerns" in that her desire to "feminize words [of certain prayers is deemed] cute and charming [and thus] not taken seriously." Hirschhorn's writing helps to deal with these difficult situations. Through

her music, she hopes to "change people's attitudes." In addition, she hopes that children's attitudes will change as they see her writing and putting forth her music.

For many years, Hirschhorn has written about female biblical characters such as Miriam, Sarah and Hagar, and Ruth and Naomi. In addition, she has written about Emma Goldman, "the radical and outspoken crusader for unions and for birth control" (Henry and Taitz 257). Hirschhorn explains that these figures are "representations by implications." For example, Sarah and Hagar represent a "feminist approach to life [whereby] "women can make more peace than men." Finally, "Miriam is an inspirational leader." To this end, the composer seeks to explore "what we can learn from [her] and apply to our own lives."

"Roots and Wings"

Not only is "Roots and Wings" an interesting melody, it is also the first track featured on Vocolot's 1992 recording by the same name. Ironically, this short introduction is a good prototype for Hirschhorn's compositional style. That is, it combines acapella women's singing and harmonic contrasts in the form of a round. These attributes apply to many of Hirshorn's compositions. As the composer mentioned above, she often writes music specifically geared towards her quintet.

During "Roots and Wings," the voices repeat the same text "I can give you roots, I can give you wings, but only you can know when to fly" and because they sing as a round, their voices overlap. To this end, a listener may find it difficult to distinguish one voice from another. Also, sometimes the entrance of a new voice is distinguishable, but to follow that voice through to the end is often quite difficult. Therefore, a momentum

begins to build as each voice repeats the text at different times.

In addition, with each new beginning of the phrase, the melody ascends by step from E minor, to F sharp minor, and finally to G sharp minor. The voices come together in a final G sharp minor chord to resolve the harmonic chaos and textual overlap which continues throughout the piece (see Fig. 2).

For many listeners, this piece may evoke a feeling of meditation, as it contains the continuous pace and repetition of a steady chant. However, the melodic ascension by step, as well as the intermingling of voices, create the feeling of flight. That is, the movement of this piece has the power to transcend the listener with a feeling of weightlessness and peace which both resemble the feeling of flight.

Certainly, the concept of flight comes from the text itself. Moreover, it is likely that Hirschhorn had flight in mind when she wrote "Roots and Wings." As she described above, bringing the text and music together to form a "powerful mix" is especially moving to her. An assembling of the words "flight" and "wings" together with melodic ascension, and a repetitive momentum, achieves one such mix.

Undoubtedly, Hirschhorn has written songs about Jewish roles by writing about heroines of Jewish history. By her own account, she has written music which speaks to women because it features women's voices in harmony and without the use of accompanying instruments. In addition, her music reflects her desire to be a role model for other women and children. As a result, although "Roots and Wings" makes no mention of a female figure or role, it speaks to today's women nonetheless.

Other modern composers speak to women in a similar fashion. That is, they encourage women to embrace gender pride and reflect upon their roles. Simply, they allow women to be proud of who they are. One such composer is Dana Mase.

Dana Mase

> Raised as a Jewish child in Shaker Heights, Ohio, Dana Mase spent her early years as a born again Christian. After finishing missionary school in North Dakota, she continued her education at Oral Roberts University. Later, she settled in New York, and has lived as an Orthodox Jewess for the last five years. She and her husband-manager, Barry Mase, were songwriters and bandmates before they fell in love, married, and returned to Judaism. She has two recordings, the 1994 "Diary" which reflects Mase's life as an observant Jewess, wife, mother, and daughter, as well as the 1995 "Sitting with an Angel" which contains music for a more secular audience. In addition, she plays live shows for all-women audiences such as the "Michigan Womyn's Music Festival." In June 1996, she played at the Jewish Museum in New York City. In accordance with Orthodox practice, Mase often performs with an all female band and for women only. However, she has performed for "mixed" audiences "on the grounds that the onus is upon the man not to betray his wife" while listening to Mase's performance. In addition, the fact that her music "might spread a positive Judaic message" encourages Orthodox rabbinic authorities to accept Mase. Moreover, some Orthodox audiences invite Mase not to sing or play, but "to tell her life story." Interviews with Mase as well as her music have been played on Jewish and secular radio stations including National Public Radio. In addition to her musical pursuits, Mase hosts a weekly Torah study at her home in Monsey, NY. (biographical information taken from "Gotta Have Faith." Village Voice. 11 June 1996, 60).

An Interview with Dana Mase

Although Mase does not have formal training in a specific musical genre, she is a singer and songwriter of "Jewish folk rock music." as she describes it. Unlike many of her peers in the world of Orthodox music, Mase submits that her "music is in a class of itself" in that she doesn't use "Jewish liturgy, [or] Hebrew" consistently for her lyrics.

Mase's music "reflects different changes and perspectives" within the arena of "American melodic folk rock."

Mase does write about Jewish women and their roles. In fact, her first recording entitled "Diary," was "geared to women." For instance, the cassette includes a song about Yocheved, the mother of the biblical figure Moses, whom Mase refers to as an "ordinary mother." Hence, the song speaks to all mothers, and Yocheved is a metaphor for all mothers. "Yocheved" is also a song about a mother's struggle in having to give up her child. Mase wonders if she would be able to give up one of her children, as "Yocheved gave up Moshe.

In addition, Mase's first recording includes a song entitled "*She'osoni" Kirtzono*" which is taken from the morning blessing for women. Recently, Mase has written a song about battered women which "is inspired by women [she knows]." Primarily, Mase performs as a solo act only, and does not compose with the help of other musicians.

In terms of the changing role of Jewish women, Mase views Orthodox Jewish women as "the most feminist." She cites the laws regarding modest dress as a way to prevent women from being "sex objects." Also, such laws encourage men to look at a woman "as a Neshama" as a soul rather than "a body." Finally, Mase mentions that Orthodox women hold a very "high place in the family structure."

Regarding Jewish music, Mase believes that it is "evolving." She mentions that Orthodox Jewish women have always been writing music about Jewish women's roles, and suggests that the custom of women singing together began "with Miriam." In addition, she mentions the prohibition of "Kol Isha" which forbids women to sing in the

presence of men, as an impetus for women to sing with other women. She mentions that she is involved in all-women's Rosh Chodesh groups and performs with other musicians when the group convenes.

Regarding Mase's personal, musical tastes, the composer maintains that "female musicians and vocalists" really influence [her] more than men. She believes that women's music "is melodically different than [that of] men." In addition, she mentions that women's music "speaks to [her] as a woman."

Regarding any sexist experiences, Mase admits that the law of "Kol Isha" is an obstacle, but does not deem that as sexist or as a "negative experience." Rather, Mase admits that "women singing only for women is a beautiful thing." As a result, Mase does not write about the challenges which women face, but rather, about " the realness of Judaism in [her] life." In addition, she writes about her baby, and her role as mother as in the song "Ordinary Day" which does reflect the challenge of maintaining motherhood and a career. As mentioned above, Mase has written about such biblical characters as Yocheved, the mother of Moses. She admits that her song entitled "Desert" is about a mother and a daughter as they "continue through the desert" As Yocheved is a metaphor for "every mother" thus are this mother and daughter metaphors for Mase "as a mother and a daughter." Ultimately, Mase writes about these women because "they affect us." Above all, she writes about "something that affects [her] personally."

"Ordinary Day/*She'osoni Kirtzono*"

As Mase asserts, her composition "Yocheved" tells of this biblical heroine's difficult decision to give away her baby, Moses. Not only is Yocheved a role model or

"ordinary mother," as Mase explains, but she is also an important biblical figure. Also, Mase mentioned her piece "Ordinary Day" which reflects the challenge of juggling career responsibilities with home and family duties. In "Ordinary Day," Mase alludes to her own family experiences, as well as the joy that they bring to her. The text of "Ordinary Day," appears below:

> It's early morning; I'm making pancakes for breakfast.
> Your drinking coffee; the children are at play.
> The sun comes in and kisses the children.
> It's just another ordinary day. **Chorus**
> **Chorus**
> It's all from heaven, my ordinary day.
> And I cherish every moment that's been given to me.
> My ordinary day
>
> Telephone ringing, I say hello to my mother.
> The baby's crying and milk spills on the floor.
> I close my eyes and find peace inside.
> It's just another ordinary day. **Chorus**
>
> **Bridge**
> Every moment of my day is what my life is made of.
> Everything I wanna be lies right here in front of me.
> Every moment of my life, I'm lifted to a higher place.
> Every second of our lives, we open up our eyes and see that...**Chorus**
>
> It's late at night: the children, quietly sleeping.
> The stars are shining on my family.
> I close my eyes and whisper a prayer.
> I'm so thankful for my ordinary day. **Chorus**

Hence, Mase provides women with a powerful text through which to experience her role as wife and as mother. In addition, she purports her strong faith in Gd, as well as her deep gratitude to the Deity for providing her with this life. Specifically, Mase asserts her personal contentment with the words, "Everything I wanna be lies right here in front of me." Also, these lyrics reflect Mase's humble pride in her family, her roles

as wife and mother, and her Gd. Importantly, they also reflect the hectic, everyday life of a devoted wife and mother. In this case, the wife and mother, Mase, also pursues a career outside the home. By featuring her own experiences through song, Mase becomes a role model for all working mothers, as well as an advocate for them.

Musically speaking, "Ordinary Day" reflects the "Jewish folk rock" style in which Mase usually writes. She incorporates full use of vocal and instrumental harmonies as a setting for her text. The music builds in momentum and energy and thus reflects the composer's strong feelings of faith, contentment, and pride. Unfortunately, written manuscript of this composition does not exist, for Mase and her team rely on mental notes and chord charts, rather than on sophisticated, musical notation. In other words, Mase's music is born not from hours of composition, but rather from hours of group improvisation and rehearsal based upon Mase's original, musical ideas.

However, one more work by Mase deserves special attention. Although the music is unavailable, the words bring to life Mase's feminist motivations, as well as the passion and spirit with which she writes. Simply, Mase's piece is a proud tribute to a Jewish woman's many roles. The title, "*She'osoni Kirtzono*" (Very Special People), which translates to "that made me according to [Gd's] will," is taken from the morning blessing traditionally recited only by Jewish women. Its lyrics are as follows:

> We can open up our hearts then give to those in need.
> Anyone who hungers, we're always ready to feed.
> We can read your dreams and desires by what is in your eyes,
> hear all your sorrows, feel all your cries.
>
> **Chorus**
> We are very special people, made in a special way.
> That's why every morning we feel privileged to say

She'osoni Kirtzono

We understand your silence by words behind your eyes.
Just a simple touch can reach deep, deep inside.
We can comfort a newborn baby, calm a troubled man,
bring peace to an empty life, and help them find a plan. **Chorus**

It's a lost and crazy world that we live in today.
But we are very special people, with very special words to say.
We hold a fire burning brightly, in a lost generation.
We are the key to survival; we are the strength of our nation. **Chorus**

Hence, Mase's music reflects gender roles as well as gender pride.

Other composers reflect gender pride within the context of full choir compositions. The final two composers, Benjie-Ellen Schiller and Sharon Wechter, use the female voice within their classical, liturgical opuses to promote the experiences and roles of Jewish women.

Cantor Benjie-Ellen Schiller

Born in New York, New York, Cantor Schiller grew up in Stamford, CT, and began playing and improvising on the piano from the early age of five. "Cantor Schiller claims that much of her composing today is based on her improvisational skills." At a young age, Cantor Schiller taught music to children at her synagogue's religious school, and became involved with NFTY Camps as a song leader. As a university student, Schiller worked as a cantorial soloist and as a music teacher. Later, she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Music Theory and Composition from Boston University. In 1987 she graduated and was invested as cantor from the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, School of Sacred Music. Since her college years, Schiller has written and published Jewish liturgical music of many different genres. In addition, she writes and performs music as a member of the group "Beged Kefet," which has made several recordings as well. Cantor Schiller lives with her husband, Rabbi Lester Bronstein, also a member of "Beged Kefet," and their children in White Plains, New York. (biographical information taken from "The

Sacred Sounds of Contemporary Synagogue Worship." Master's recital program of Cantor Ilene Keys. May 2, 1996, 6-7. Additional information regarding "Beged Kefet" provided by interview with the composer).

An interview with Cantor Benjie-Ellen Schiller

By her own account, Cantor Schiller sings and performs many types of Jewish music. She cites Jewish Art Song, cantorial music "of all sorts," "acapella davening" or nusach; congregational melodies; and contemporary liturgical music which include both "classical and folk genres." She reflects that she performs mostly as a cantor, and as a performer and singer of her own music. Sometimes she performs as a piano accompanist, and has composed and performed songs for guitar.

In her music, she has written about Jewish women. For instance, her piece entitled "Canticle of Hannah," is a "prayer with narration" named for the legendary biblical figure. In addition, she has written about women poets such as Leah Goldberg and Marsha Falk. Also, she points out that she writes about women "indirectly." As an individual, she writes from "herself" and therefore, from a "women's perspective." Often, Cantor Schiller writes for women's voices specifically. However, her music does not reflect women's roles.

Cantor Schiller explains that the theme of the musical group, Beged Kefet, is to continue the work of Miriam Mendele, the founder of Yad Lakashish, an organization which helps the disabled and elderly in Jerusalem. The group performs 10 concerts a year, and has recorded two compact discs. None of the groups songs reflect women's roles, although in a song about Miriam's life and work, entitled "Lifeline," the female voices are dominant.

Cantor Schiller views women as "pioneers" in that in the professional world, "the doors are open" for them, as they never were for "other generations." Also, she notes that women are now "leaders" as is the new Dean of HUC New York, Rabbi Zohara Davidowicz-Farkas. Cantor Schiller mentions the artistic and professional "recognition" which she has been able to gain, and no longer sees the "biases and generalities" of previous years. In her opinion, women are no longer "second class."

In the realm of Jewish music, Cantor Schiller sees "more focus on women of the Bible, [and of] Jewish literature and Israeli literature. However, she does not find much music about "modern Jewish women" or about the "saga about women." Also, she points out that some music does reflect "new roles of [the Jewish] family." Indeed, Cantor Schiller explains that new music has emerged for particularly female lifecycle events, such as pregnancies, miscarriages, and even mastectomies. "The lifecycle of women," she says, "needs more recognition." "Women are not sitting back in spiritual, Jewish life." Moreover, "they make customers for Jewish music." In other words, not only are women composing Jewish music for lifecycle, and by relation, to women's roles, but also, women, as consumers, are supporting such music.

Cantor Schiller shares that some of her favorite songs include "Remember to Remember," by the late Anselm Rothchild, which for her symbolizes "not to deny what is important." Also, she enjoys music as a "mode of expression," and music that "acknowledges [her] deepest feelings." She enjoys classical pieces such as "Adagio for strings" by Samuel Barber, as well songs by Naomi Shemer, Shlomo Carlebach, Hasidic *niggunim,* and early music by James Taylor and Carly Simon.

Cantor Schiller maintains that she has never experienced sexism as a female, professional musician, in fact, she says, " I was the right sex at the right time." However, she says that music about women helps her to deal with the challenges of "balancing" her maternal responsibilities with her professional duties. In addition she finds "great comfort in other women, as role models, their perspective strengthens [me]." To this end, Cantor Schiller has written music, like the Canticle of Hannah, for and about women. One of her pieces, taken from the Song of Songs, reflects women's roles in that the mens' and women's voices are in dialogue. Also, she performs songs about women in the Bible, such as the piece "Rahel M'vakeh Al Baneha", Barren Rachel." She sings about Ruth and Naomi, and other female role models from the Bible who "help with differences in life; [these] biblical figures are suffering as I am." She deems such characters as "heroes, tragic figures."

"Canticle of Hannah"

In the beginning of the First Book of Samuel, Hannah appears as a barren woman who pleads to [Gd] for a child, and in a lengthy supplication, Hannah praises [Gd] when her child is born.

Cantor Schiller's "Canticle of Hannah" is based upon this story. Importantly, the composer imparts many of the important moments of the story, rather than a complete account. As a result, Schiller has created a *midrash* which is an interpretive abridgment of the biblical verses. The full text of Schiller's "Hannah" is as follows:

> Hannah prayed to [Gd] and poured out all her soul.
> A barren woman whose heart weighs heavy and cries to [Gd] in pain.

Hannah prayed to [Gd] and poured out all her soul.
A barren woman whose heart weighs heavy and cries to [Gd] in pain.
"Take note of me, O [Gd], for I am closed within.
Let me bring forth life in joy."

Elkanah her husband begged her not to cry.
"Does not my love mean more to you than children of your own?"
But Hannah rose at dawn to pray at the temple of [Gd].
Her lips would utter in a hushed, small silence the prayer that
weighed on her heart:

"Take note of me, O [Gd], for I am closed within.
Let me bring forth life in joy!"

Then she bowed her head and offered all her praise to [Gd].
"There is none as holy as [Gd].
There is none beside You.

The priest saw Hannah pray, but did not understand.
She told him why she cried as if a woman drunk in a prayer.
The priest listened intently, he know now why she prayed.
He offered her the blessing of [Gd] and sent her on her way.

Hannah's prayers were answered, she bore a son!
Hannah and Elkanah called the boy "Shmuel."
Together they went to the mountain of [Gd].
There they bowed their heads and offered all their thanks and
dedicated their newborn son as a servant to [Gd] all the days of his
life.

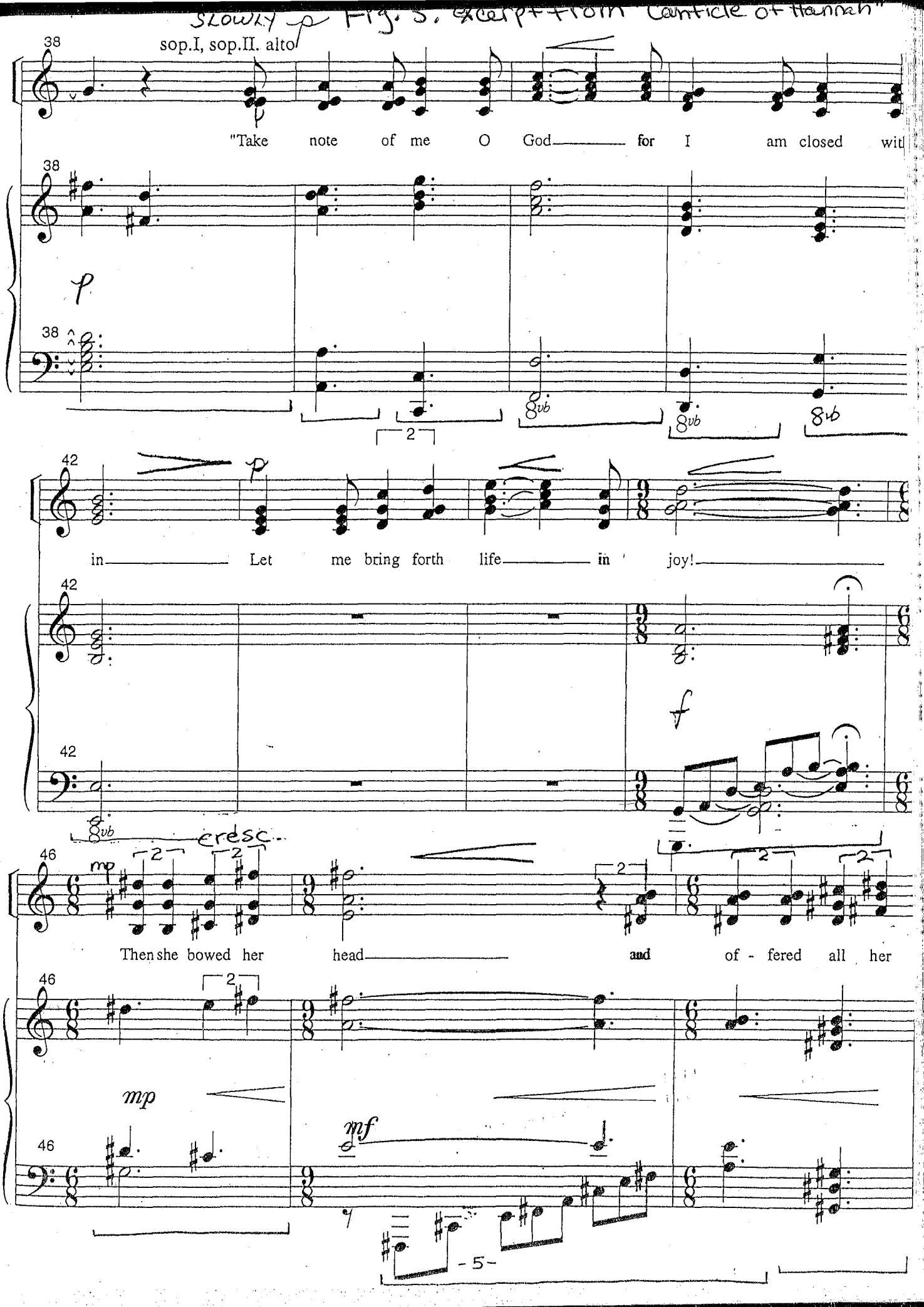
There is none as holy as [Gd].
There is none beside You.

In summary, Schiller's verses indicates much of the key events and important dialogues of the original narrative. Although this text is only a skeleton of the biblical narrative, nonetheless it is an accurate reiteration of the original. However, the composer did incorporate one significant change. For example, in the original text, Hannah brings Shmuel to [Gd] alone, whereas in this composition, she and her husband ascend the mountain together. (1 Samuel 1: 24)

"Canticle of Hannah" is a lengthy composition for piano, mixed voices, and soli. Schiller interchanges different keys, tempi, dynamics, and voices to submit a very sophisticated composition. Unfortunately, it is impossible to include the entire manuscript in a study of this size. However, an interesting section needs special attention (See Fig 3). Beginning at measure thirty-eight, not one solo voice but all of the women's voices exclaim Hannah's words, "Take note of me, O [Gd], for I am closed within. Let me bring forth life in joy!" The use of second and thirds make these harmonies very close albeit very beautiful. In addition the last triumphant word, "joy!" is held in an elongated bar. In addition, the women begin that phrase softly, building steadily in intensity and volume, until the climactic final word. Moreover, the use of all of the women's voices represents a sense of comraderie to Hannah's suffering, as well as support for her appeal to [Gd]. One might argue that Hannah is a model for all barren women, and that this section symbolizes the struggle of them all. As a result, these few bars bring out not only women's voices, but their experiences as well.

Above all, Schiller's composition displays the spectrum of emotion which Hannah experiences. Hannah's deep pain while she is barren, as well as her overwhelming joy at Shmuel's birth come through in word and in song. In fact, much of this work is centered around Hannah's emotions, more directly than the original text. In addition, Cantor Schiller does not use the word "Lord," a gender-exclusive term, to refer to the Deity. Hence, "Canticle of Hannah" is a *midrash* which allows a woman's pain, joy, and voice to be heard.

Obviously, the composer was deeply touched by this story, and her compassion


slowly p Fig. 5. excerpt from "Canticle of Hannah"
38
sop.I, sop.II. alto
"Take note of me O God for I am closed wit
p
8vb
42
in Let me bring forth life in joy!
f
8vb
cresc.
46
mp
Then she bowed her head and of - fered all her
mp
mf
- 5 -

for Hannah pervades her work. As Cantor Schiller noted above, she often writes about "female role models from the Bible who "help with differences in life; [these] biblical figures are suffering as I am." Apparently, writing about these "heroes" or "tragic figures" speak to the composer in her time of need.

The final composer of this study, Sharon Wecter, also finds solace in writing about women and for women.

Sharon Wechter

> Raised in Texas in a family that loved listening to both classical and Jewish music, singer/songwriter/educator Sharon Wechter has been performing since age 10. She has received extensive training as a classical pianist and is a certified music therapist. In addition to her love of performing and composing, she delights in teaching Jewish music to children and their families. Her workshops for adults encourage participants to explore and deepen their Jewish connections through the spiritual richness of Jewish music. As a Jewish educator, she has extensive experience in developing curriculum programs, most recently for MAZON and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations' Commission on Substance Abuse. Wechter is a graduate of New York University with a Master's of Social Work from Yeshiva University. In 1996 she received her Master's of Arts in Religious Education, in which she wrote about the creative process in Jewish education, from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York City in 1996. Her first recording entitled "Journey of a Soul" was released in 1991.(biographical information taken from the composer's professional brochure entitled "Sharon Wechter: Jewish Songs and Workshops.")

An Interview with Sharon Wechter

By her own account, Wechter's music comes from her personal experiences. Specifically, she was exposed to much Jewish American folk and Israeli folk music as a child. She maintains that at her local synagogue, religious school, and summer camp she came to appreciate such music. In addition to her classical training, she composes and

sings folk music with her guitar, and this music includes music about Jewish women.

Primarily, Wechter's music reflects different stages of her life. For instance, after the birth of her first child, she composed a lullaby. After the birth of her second child, she began to write music with "a more Jewish feel" which led to a song entitled "For Our Children." This "song of blessing," as Wechter describes it, is inspired by the Jewish custom of blessing children on Shabbat.

Recently, Wechter has begun to write and perform music for an all-female Rosh Chodesh group in the Berkshires. Her involvement in this group has inspired music which reflects women's roles. This music reflects Wechter's roles as wife, mother, and daughter. For instance, one piece entitled "Sing Praises" has become a choral composition for women's voices. Within the last two years, Wechter has composed music about the female characters in the Torah. With the use of *midrashim*, she seeks to create a personal connection with some of these characters and with women in general. To this end, she hopes that her music will inspire modern Jewish women to connect with and learn from Sarah and Eve.

In addition, Wechter is a member of a support group for Jewish women artists in her region. The group's members meet regularly to discuss issues which hinder their work, such as time constraints, financial difficulties, as well as family issues. Issues of self-esteem are also an important part of the women's discussion, as is problem-solving. Also, Wechter is a member of an all-women's Rosh Chodesh group, which meets to celebrate festivals as well. Wechter is the musical coordinator for this group, and has performed some of her own music, such as a piece entitled "V'imoteinu", a composition

written "for mothers" specifically. She has also incorporated the piece "L'chi Lach" by Debbie Friedman, as well as a piece about "Ruth and Naomi" by Jeff Klepper which the group sings at Shavuot. Although the group does not sing songs which specify women's roles, Wechter maintains that if she did begin to bring in such material, "they would love that."

Although Wechter has yet to write about women's roles, she stresses in her music the "need to be heard." She asserts that the acts of singing and writing music are significant as is the ability to put such music "out there." She maintains that women are no longer "relegated to the kitchen" as her grandmother was. Moreover, Wechter maintains that modern Jewish women are able to "make choices" and to be "full Jews." She cites women as perpetuators of Torah study and midrashim and notes the role of Torah chanter as a new role for Jewish women. Consequently, she attributes the women's movement and the expansion of choices for women as catalysts for the recent explosion of Jewish women's music. In fact, Wechter admits that women are "process oriented, [we tend to] talk about things, [whereas] men are goal directed" and cites the need for self-reflection as a possible stimulus for women to write music about their experiences as women. Finally, she reiterates that women have not always had the "option to be heard" and that in many ways their writing and singing music "is making up for that."

Wechter has many favorite songs. She mentions her own composition entitled "Near to You" as helping her through a difficult time in her life. She also enjoys songs which use the blessing "Ahavat Olam," because it speaks of Torah study and of Gd's

"deepening his love for [the Jewish people by] showing us the Torah." Also, she enjoys a choral piece entitled "The Chichester Psalms" by Leonard Bernstein, which features both Hebrew and English renderings of different Psalms. In fact, Wechter writes about the Psalms in her music and uses them often as healing texts. Interestingly, she sees herself as a healer and as a giver of Torah because she is a Jewish mother. Ultimately, what speaks to Wechter the most musically are melodies which bring out the meaning of the texts, as in "Ahavat Olam" and melodies that fit the text very well to bring them out effectively.

As a Jewish musician, Wechter has experienced some sexism. She describes and "old boys network" in which Jewish, male musicians exclude her. As a result, it has been difficult for her "to be heard," as both a singer and a composer in the Reform movement. She maintains that male musicians who have been in a position to help her "put her music out there" are to "threatened" to do so. She cites "territorialism and competitiveness" as possible reasons for this lack of support.

Wechter has written and performed music which helps her deal with this difficult situation. For instance, her choral piece for women's voices entitled "Sing Praises" includes a climactic section in which the women repeat the words "Hear, O Israel, the words of Torah in a woman's voice." She speaks of this piece enthusiastically and notes that her motivation was to allow women's voices "to be heard." In addition, Wechter performs with a weaver and a dancer as a trio of performance artists. The group's work helps Wechter to deal with sexism, and with feeling "victimized" and "stifled" as a result. In addition, she concludes that other songs with Torah texts spark her interest in

Torah, and make its characters "not so abstract." Hence, she has written a song about Eve's pain after leaving the Garden of Eden, in which she depicts Adam as withdrawn from Eve, whose Hebrew name means life, brings Adam back to life after their banishment. In another song, Wechter writes of Rachel and the lessons which men and women can learn from her. The composer sees Eve and Rachel as every woman and sees "every woman in them."

"Sing Praises!"

As the composer mentions above, her choral piece for women's voices entitled "Sing Praises" includes a climactic section in which the women's chorus repeat the words "Hear, O Israel, the words of Torah in a woman's voice." In addition, the lyrics, written by Wechter and Paula L. Hellman, make mention of women's pride, experience, and roles. A rendering of the complete text appears below:

> Sing praises to the living [Gd], Source of all Creation.
> Sing, sing, sing a new song to Adonai!
> As Miryam the prophet raised her voice in praise,
> We now own our voices, as we lift them up in prayer.
>
> Shema, Yisrael! Divrei ha-Torah b'kol ishah.
> Shout, shout, shout to Adonai!
>
> Woman to woman, we're passing down a treasure;
> a precious woven tapestry.
> A sewing together, the values of our fam'ly,
> a weaving of our history.
>
> Strong tender women, with hearts filled with spirit
> and love of life's sweet energy.
> We join our hands in a magical meeting.
> Embrace our hearts and our souls.
> We're bringing the Torah into the future;
> It's shaped our own destiny.

> Sing praises to the living [Gd], Source of all Creation.
> Shema, Yisrael! Shema! Shema!

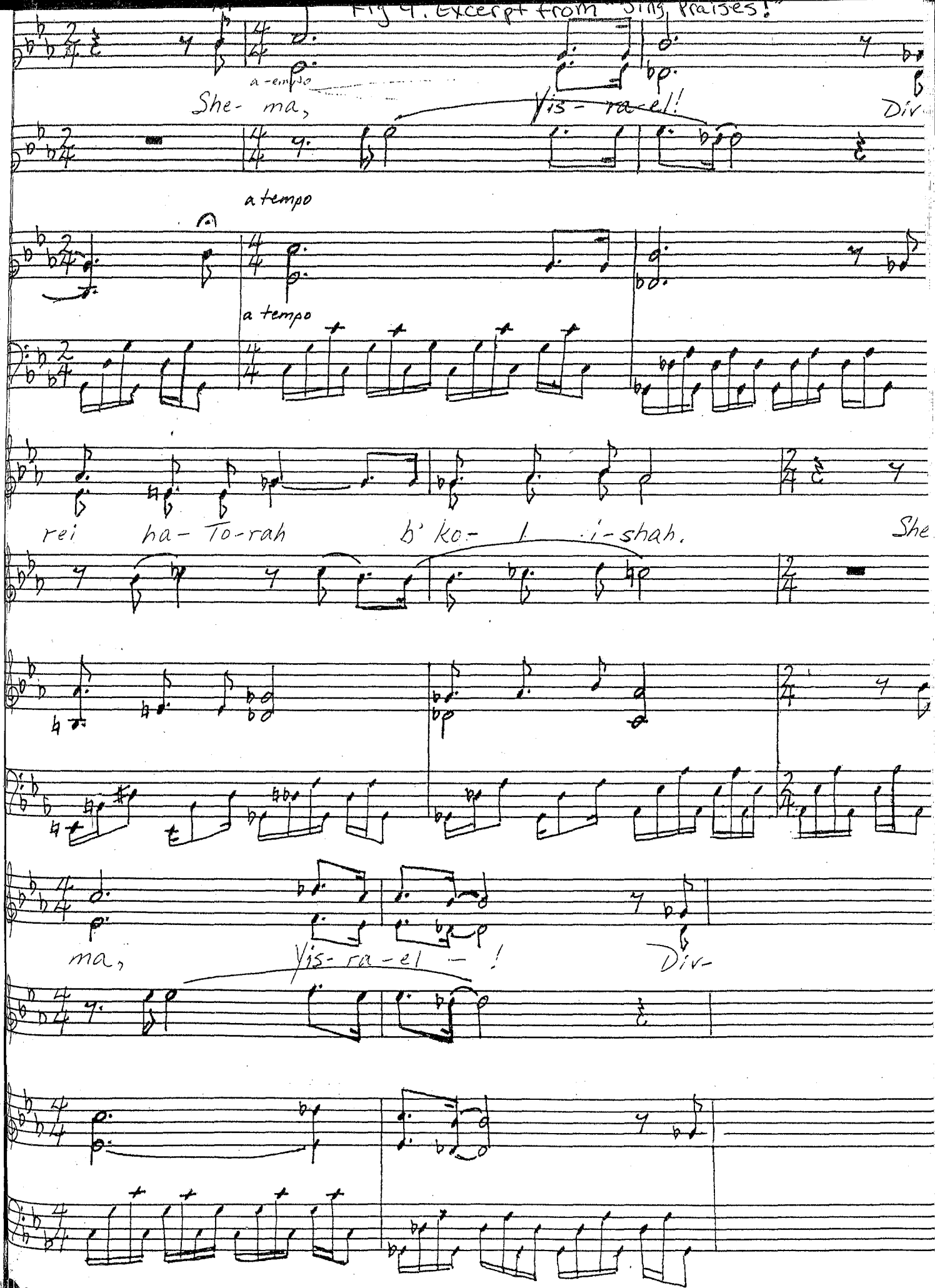
Accompanied by piano, the women's voices sing in harmony and in a duet with violin. The music begins very gently, increasing in intensity and tempo, until it reaches a climax at this section (see Fig. 4). In addition, the phrases "Hear, O Israel, words of Torah in a woman's voice" are elongated and thus allow the women's voices to put forth a "declaration." Accordingly, because "Shema" is a command, Wechter "wrote the music to fit the urgency of the text."

Importantly, Wechter asserts that this section features "women singing Torah in a way that we haven't before." Apparently, the issue of women's reclaiming Torah has special significance for this composer:

> This theme is based on personal experience, because I did not have a Bat Mitzvah until I was in my thirties. In fact, I wrote this piece during a time when women [were experiencing persecution for wanting to pray] at the Wailing Wall. [I felt] a strong connection with those women.

As the composer points out, the main purpose of this composition is to empower women's voices "to be heard." Hence, "Sing Praises" mentions Miriam, and refers to her as a musical inspiration to other women. Also, the composer refers to Gd in gender inclusive terms, and the lyrics promote several women's roles. Finally, this composition urges women to be transmitters of Torah through song.

Fig 9. Excerpt from "Sing, Praises!"



Chapter IV: Conclusions

In this senior project, I have defined the impact of gender roles, outlined a history of Jewish women's roles, interviewed five modern composers, explored their motivations, and analyzed their music to discover the ways in which it reflects women's roles. While this study only scratches the surface, it demonstrates clearly that women continue to be important to the world of Jewish music.

Also, this study proves that Jewish women have made a great impact on their people's history and music. The five composers which this study features have incorporated their personal experiences as Jewish women into their music. Although the composers' personal backgrounds and musical styles differ greatly, each woman highlighted some aspect of women's roles in her music.

Importantly, all of the women have assumed roles as creators, transmitters, and interpreters of Jewish texts and traditions. Thus, they incorporate Jewish subjects, themes, and beliefs into their works. Moreover, they mark the contributions of biblical women such as Yocheved, Miriam, and Hannah. By creating feminist, biblical *midrashim*, they bring a new voice through which Jewish women can reclaim their ancestry.

Ultimately, these composers have dedicated themselves to allowing women to be heard as never before. They are committed to empowering women to embrace their gender roles and their Judaism through song. Moreover, they have given the Jewish woman her due credit. In the face of many social and political challenges, Jewish women can take great solace in the music of these five composers. Each composer has blessed

the American Jewess with a heightened awareness, a fuller pride, and a deeper understanding of not only her past, but her future.

Therefore, Jewish professional and lay leaders need to recognize this music as a viable genre. Hence, they must accept this music into the modern canon of Jewish music, and enable women to learn from it and take comfort in it. To this end, male and female cantors alike should adopt these compositions as musical options for lifecycle events, such as new ceremonies created for women in recovery. Above all, women who experience emotional or physical pain have the right to find peace from these melodies, as do their fathers, husbands, and sons. Finally, may the harmonies of these women facilitate a greater harmony between Jewish women and Jewish men.

Appendix
An Historical Timeline of Jewish Women

The Biblical Period	
Genesis	Eve
	Sarah
	Rebecca
	Dina
	Rachel and Leah
Exodus	Shifra
	Yocheved
	Miriam
1 Samuel	Hannah
Judges	Deborah
	Jephthah's daughter and her *Mevaseroth*
The Talmudic Period	Kol Isha/The ruling of Amora Samuel
1st Century C.E.	Ima Shalom
2nd Century C.E.	Beruriah
4th Century C.E	rabbinical dicta approves choral, secular singing only
5-9th Centuries	Gap in recorded history of Jewish women
The Medieval Period	female musicians at weddings and funerals
	Bat HaLevi, daughter of Samuel *HaGaon*
11th Century C.E.	Rashi's daughters and granddaughters
	women assume roles in commerce
	sogern/liturgical precentor
12th Century C.E	Dulcie of Worms composes *techinot*/supplications
13th Century C.E.	Miriam Shapira Luria
16th Century C.E.	Rebecca Tiktiner writes *Meneket Rivka*
17th Century C.E.	Rachel Hebrea, noted musician ofItaly
	Madama Europa (Rossi), renowned singer
	Glueckel of Hameln
18th Century C.E.	Hanna Norsa, created role in the *Beggar's Opera*
	women host musical *Purim* at their homes
The Modern Period	Jewish poetesses, Penina Moise
(1849-1887)	Emma Lazarus
(1789-1869)	Rebecca Gratz, philanthropist and educator
(1810-1892)	Ernestine Rose, abolitionist and feminist
(1861-1906)	Sophie Karp, actress/singer of Yiddish Theatre
(1867-1940)	Lillian Wald, hand to immigrants

20th Century C.E.	Jewish American women, Emma Goldman, activist
(1860-1945)	Henrietta Szold, founder of Youth Aliyah movement
1970's	women recognized as Cantors and Rabbis
1980's-present	women compose about their changing roles

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