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Exploring the sacred sounds of Mizrach and Ma'arav through the model of Kehilat Zion in Jerusalem

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Table of Contents

Introduction: Personal Reflections on the Power of Sacred Music in Israel

In 2018 I attended a concert in the Christian quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem led by Rabbi David Menachem. Rabbi Menachem is an accomplished *payy'tan* of Iraqi descent, who also happens to be the rabbi that officiated at my wedding. In this concert he was masterfully singing in Arabic the greatest hits of the most famous Cairo musicians[1]. The title of the concert was *Chaflah*, which in Arabic means anything from a party with food and music to a large concert. Upon arrival the audience received the text of a love song taught by the rabbi, written in Arabic and transliterated into Hebrew.

The event was much more than a musical experience. It was an intentionally organized cultural activity initiated by Mizrachi activists whose ancestry can be traced back to countries such as Morocco, Iraq, Yemen, and Libya. Over the past few years, these activists have used Sephardic Jewish music as a vehicle to reclaim their identity. At this event, they proudly and publicly celebrated their Jewish Arabic heritage.

As a Jewish Israeli, my life has been enriched by these examples of Jewish renewal in my country. These types of cultural encounters are not a rare event on my calendar. Like many Israelis I seek them out to further understand my complex Jewish-Israeli identity. My husband and I come from very different backgrounds: My parents made *aliyah* from the U.S and his parents immigrated from Iran. Thus, we have found that we are more comfortable together

[1] Rabbi David Menachem was a disciple of the Israeli Chief Sephardic Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef who encouraged the use of Arabic secular melodies in Jewish prayers, especially those of the great star singers of Egypt Such as Umm Kulthum and Farid El Atrash..

Jewishly in this type of multicultural setting rather than in a synagogue. The awakening of Mizrachi culture has provided us with a common language, a safe space to be together not only for us, but also for a wide audience of Israelis who wish to express their spirituality in sacred spaces that embrace diversity.

My thesis explores the ways in which the integration of eastern and western tradition has shaped prayer in Israel. My case study focuses on an independent congregation in Jerusalem, *Kehilat Zion*[2], founded by Rabbi Tamar Elad-Appelbaum, a Jew of Mizrachi and Ashkenazi descent. This community made its mission the creation of a synagogue inclusive of all cultures. The name, *Kehilat Zion*, captures the congregation's desire to shape Judaism and impart spirituality for the entirety of Israel (Zion), rather than within their synagogue alone. I will examine the model of worship that they have designed in order to accomplish this undertaking.

Through my research I hope to further understand a cultural phenomenon that could potentially change the face of liberal Judaism in Israel. Exploring the effective ways in which *Kehilat Zion* addresses the spiritual needs of Israelis may help prepare clergy to overcome the challenges they face in the field.

I would like to thank my advisor, Prof. Emeritus Eliyahu Schleifer, whose wisdom and mentorship helped deepen my understanding and intellectual growth over the course of this project. Also I am grateful to Dr. Gordon Dale and Cantor Richard Cohn for their guidance and support. I am extremely appreciative to the clergy team and members of Kehilat Zion who

[2] This is the official name of the congregation in English but is pronounced Kehilat Tzion.

agreed to be interviewed: Rabbi Tamar Elad-Appelbaum, Nerya Refael Knafo, Yahalah Lachmish, Rabbi Uri Kriozer, Sivan Navon Shoval, and Gili Re'i. I Thank my family and friends who helped edit my writing: Richard Ben-Or (father), Idit Ben-Or (sister), and my dear friend Cantor Sarah Grabiner who prepared notations as well as assisted with editing. Finally, thanks to my husband Yosef and to my son Natan for being my inspiration and for believing in me.

"MiTzion Tetzeh Torah" An Introduction to Kehilat Zion

In 2013, Rabbi Tamar Elad-Appelbaum decided to host a Yom Ha'Atzmaut gathering at her house. While most Israelis marked Yom Ha'Atzmaut by eating, singing and dancing together, Rabbi Elad-Appelbaum had other plans. Her guests were carefully chosen to launch a new Israeli initiative under her leadership. The group's vision, of what prayer should look like in a flourishing Jewish state, laid down the foundation of an egalitarian, cross-denominational, multi-cultural, and highly musical congregation in Jerusalem. Thus, they turned the 5th of Iyar into the birthday of Kehilat Zion, merging it alongside Israel's Independence Day from that point on.

Sivan Navon Shoval, a rabbinical student at Hebrew Union College and member of Kehilat Zion, attended the launch of Kehilat Zion at Rabbi Elad-Appelbaum's house and spent the following years serving on the congregation's executive committee. Sivan remembers in detail the gathering that turned her into an active member of the community.

"Yom Ha'Atzmaut we were at her [Rabbi Elad-Appelbaum's] house for the first time. She divided us into discussion groups and asked us to share our dreams for Zion. The dreams we shared determined our vision for a new community that would benefit the city. The goal was to enable us to dream our Zion beyond a specific community. It was understood from that moment that all of the attendees would be full participants and partners."[3]

From the very beginning, the Rabbi made it clear that the term Zion would be used as a symbol for the culture of Israel. The symbolic Zion of the past and current sacred community would be intertwined. Even the name, Kehilat Zion, captured the congregation's desire to shape Judaism and impart spiritualty within the entirety of Israel (Zion), rather than in just their synagogue. This initiative was started to actively "re-dream"[4] Jerusalem, to help the city meet its full potential as a spiritual center for all cultures, traditions and religions. On that note their website states the following:

"[…] [W]e who gather in Jerusalem in these days of the return to Zion, we tried to continue the language of faith given to us by our forefathers and added to it by our own. Therefore, we invited Jews from communities throughout the world to join us and teach us their own traditions, and we invited believers from neighboring religions and nations to participate and teach us from their prayers, so that Jerusalem would be able to welcome Shabbat and humanity at this time. So, in

[3] Taken from an interview with student Rabbi Sivan Navon Shoval conducted by Shani Ben-Or in person on 8 July 2020. Please note that all interviews for this research were conducted in Hebrew and translated by Shani Ben-Or.
[4] Term borrowed from Kehilat Zion's donation page, accessed June 27, 2021. http://kbyonline.org/synagogues/zion-jerusalem.

every prayer in the community of Zion, we go out to seek the heavenly Jerusalem in the actual streets of Jerusalem."[5]

To understand this quote we must acknowledge the tensions and conflict that heavily impact daily life in Jerusalem. We need to understand that there are competing religious narratives that are particularistic, exclusive, and hierarchical. Thus, Kehilat Zion's mission is not just a utopian dream, but rather a challenge to reality. To even define such a vision for a community in Jerusalem, to try and reclaim the city's narrative, is a bold statement and undertaking. Sivan understood the meaning of this mission when she joined the community:

"It is no coincidence that the name of the congregation is Kehilat Zion. She (Rabbi Elad--Appelbaum) wanted to redefine the experience of living here (in Israel), to create a thriving sacred community in the heart of the city that would dialogue with all religions, that is egalitarian and inclusive to all *edot* (Jews from diverse backgrounds). The biggest slogan of the community in those days was "come as you are." From the beginning, Rabbi Tamar made it clear to us that these were the core values of the community, whoever joined knew that this was our vision."[6]

The essence of Kehilat Zion goes deeper than an attempt to reconcile external conflicts. In her interview Rabbi Tamar Elad-Appelbaum describes how from the outset the congregation sought to resolve internal spiritual struggles:

[5] "Prayer," Kehilat Zion, accessed June 27, 2021. https://zion-jerusalem.wixsite.com/newengsite/prayer.
[6] Taken from an interview with Student Rabbi Sivan Navon Shoval conducted by Shani Ben-Or in person on 8 July 2020.

"Kehilat Zion began in my living room. In this community, unlike my parents' house, I do not need to choose between the rooms in my house (that represent) which parent I will disappoint according to what tradition I will follow."[7]

Rabbi Elad-Appelbaum used the metaphor of a living room as a neutral shared space. Through this metaphor the aspiration becomes apparent: to create a prayer service that can hold multiple traditions without the fear of compromising any of them.

The rabbi herself embodies multiple identities that require this sort of space. In a promotional video[8] for the rabbinical program that she founded in recent years, she talks about growing up in a family with a Moroccan grandfather on one side and a grandfather who was a Holocaust survivor on the other. In addition to her Ashkenazi and Mizrachi heritage, Rabbi Elad-Appelbaum was raised as an Orthodox Jew. From a young age, she spoke about wanting to be part of religious life with no exceptions, regardless of her gender identity[9]. This desire is what ultimately brought her to challenge her halachic upbringing and become a rabbi. Thus it is clear that the rabbi herself represents multiple cultures, traditions and identities.

Perhaps this explains why the congregation attracts Israelis who similarly experience belonging to more than one dominant identity. While interviewing for this project, including several interviews with clergy, professionals, and lay leaders, it became apparent that all interviewees

[7] Taken from an interview with Rabbi Tamar Elad-Appelbaum conducted by Shani Ben-Or over Zoom on 11 September 2020.
[8] "רבגוניות-על מנהיגות רוחנית קהילתית בישראל. פרק חמישי: הרבה תמר אלעד אפלבאום," YouTube, accessed June 27, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pR6zsdCrNRk&t=19s.
[9] ibid.

shared the experience of belonging to more than one dominant identity. They described their spiritualty as being rooted in tensions that come from mixed identities. They spoke of searching for a spiritual space to express all aspects of their selves without needing to choose between them. The quest for a multi-cultural spiritual experience seemed to be an essential need provided by Kehilat Zion.

When Gili Re'i, former CEO of Kehilat Zion, attended Kabbalat Shabbat for the first time, she felt the resonance of a specific melody of a well-known secular Israeli song "Shuvi Leveitech" (Return to Your Home). In her interview she explained how the song represented her identity as an Israeli raised on a secular kibbutz. Coming from such a background she expected to feel alienated by any kind of prayer service. Instead, she was drawn close by the song that opened that evening's Kabbalat Shabbat. Although Gili did not mention the text, it seems that "Shuvi Leveitech" captures her experience:

Return to Your Home Text: Dahlia Ravikovitch Melody: Shem-Tov Levi	**שׁוּבִי לְבֵיתֵךְ** מילים: רביקוביץ דליה מלחין: לוי שם-טוב
What is out there for you, girl? Your feet could find no rest. Wounded bird, come back to me And return to your home.	מַה לָּךְ בַּחוּץ, יַלְדָּה, מָנוֹחַ לֹא מָצְאָה רַגְלֵךְ- צִפּוֹר פְּצוּעָה, חִזְרִי אֵלַי וְשׁוּבִי לְבֵיתֵךְ.
Listen to the sounds, The thunder over the rooftops, From the crash of storm, guard your soul. Return to your home.	הַאֲזִינִי לַקּוֹלוֹת- הָרַעַם עַל גַּגּוֹת בָּתִּים. מִקּוֹל סוּפָה שִׁמְרִי נַפְשֵׁךְ- שׁוּבִי לְבֵיתֵךְ.
A high midnight moon, Light upon branches of a tree, Let your soul hear A tiny song.	סַהַר חֲצוֹת גָּבוֹהַּ, אוֹר עַל עַנְפֵי אִילָן, תְּנִי לְנַפְשֵׁךְ לִשְׁמֹעַ זֶמֶר קָטָן.
[…][10]	[...][11]

But Gili was not alone that evening; she brought her husband with her. The next song, a Moroccan piyyut, liturgical poem, led him to have a similar experience. When the piyyut sung to a familiar melody began, he whispered to his wife: "This one (tune) is from my grandfather, I know it from home." When Gili shared this story she concluded: "That is how we both found a connection (to Kehilat Zion) and it became our custom to attend every Yom Kippur since"[12]. Later on Gili became the congregation's CEO.

Gili and her husband hail from different backgrounds, yet they both felt that parts of the service reflected their unique identities. Variations of this story repeated throughout conversations with

[10] "שובי לביתך (Shuvi Leveitech) (English translation)," Lyrics Translate, accessed June 27, 2021. https://lyricstranslate.com.
[11] "SHUVI LEBETEKH," National Library of Israel, accessed June 27, 2021. https://zemer.nli.org.il/song/Bait_Lazemer003774228.
[12] Taken from an interview with Gili Re'I conducted by Shani Ben-Or over Zoom on 13 July 2020.

members of the congregation. The ability to create one prayer service that relates to a variety of cultures and traditions resulted from an intentional process of Kehilat Zion's leadership. In their website they express this mission clearly:

"We had guidelines on the way [prayer should look like at Kehilat Zion] that we could imagine our grandparents sitting in prayer on our one side and our grandchildren on our other side; that we will recognize at least one melody in each prayer and renew at least one other melody; that we should walk in an ancient memory and renew it with humility."[13]

Nerya Refael Knafo, co-head of the prayer committee, reflected on the reasons why this sort of written statement can become a reality for anyone participating in prayer at Kehilat Zion. He described how blending Mizrachi and Ashkenazi traditions constituted a crucial aspect of his worship, beyond the choice of repertoire:

"Many congregations have tried to integrate (Sephardi and Ashkenazi) *nusach*, but only a few have been successful. The challenge is that most participants (in such congregations) are unfamiliar with Sephardic nusach, most egalitarian and Orthodox communities in Israel are based on Ashkenazi (*nusach*). … [Thus] the attempts to incorporate Mizrachi *nusach* failed, especially Sepharad-Yerushalmi, because it was too foreign (for a western ear) to comprehend. In Kehilat Zion it was different because of Rabbi Tamar's commitment to this issue which represents her own complex identity. Thus, this is not an artificial effort. She herself is fully

[13] "Prayer," Kehilat Zion, accessed June 27, 2021. https://zion-jerusalem.wixsite.com/newengsite/prayer.

immersed in both traditions; you can see it on her face when she is singing, that both traditions provide her with *oneg* (great joy)."[14]

Nerya's co-head of the Prayer committee, Yahalah Lachmish, agreed with this analysis. In a separate conversation Yahalah explained that Kehilat Zion is unique due to the diversity of leadership that creates a merge of traditions with integrity:

"I always had this mix inside me: I prayed from a Mizrachi siddur in an Ashkenazi way. This is how we do things at Kehilat Zion; everything comes from within us. We are all full partners in this vision; we all get it in the deepest way. We make the decisions together in order to maintain our values. Teamwork is very important to us. The founders created from within themselves something authentic, and that is the model".[15]

It seems that the rabbi plays a fundamental role in establishing the community's mission: to create a synagogue inclusive of all cultures. She embodies diversity and models the possibility of expressing a range of traditions and customs in one space. And yet, she is not alone. She may have begun this initiative, but we have seen through the eyes of the congregation's leadership how the rabbi uses her position to empower others: lay leaders, professionals, and clergy. Congregants are not called 'members' but rather 'partners.' On their website they invite all who seek to "build Jerusalem and be built by her with us",[16] to become partners.

[14] Taken from an interview with Nerya Refael Knafo conducted by Shani Ben-Or in person on 24 June 2020.
[15] Taken from an interview with Yahalah Lachmish conducted by Shani Ben-Or in person on 22 June 2020.
[16] "Join-us," Kehilat Zion, accessed June 27, 2021.
https://www.zion-jerusalem.org.il/join-us.

Gili, the former CEO, expanded on the topic of partnership in the community by explaining the structure of communal dues:

"Membership dues are called partnership dues, and we have a lot of partners who do not pay, we do not check them. To inquire who is a member is like asking who is Jewish. To us the answer is simply anyone who feels connected is part of our community. There are no tickets for High Holy Days. When we did a communal Shabbat retreat, it was open to whoever wanted to join. The idea is to find as many ways as possible to connect."[17]

Partnership dues are only one way to be part of the community. There are many opportunities to contribute, such as: reading Torah, leading the *Aravit* part of the evening service on Shabbat, teaching, participating in social justice, interfaith activity, etc. In fact, during the recent Corona pandemic the congregation expanded the platforms in which partners can be active. Gili shared thus:

"…Our motto is that everyone has what to learn and what to teach. In the days of the Coronavirus the community led most of the activity. Rabbi Tamar calls this "distributive justice", we want to give the community the opportunity to lead as much as we can."[18]

In summary, in 2013 a congregation was born: an independent *minyan* in Jerusalem, founded by a promising charismatic rabbi, a Jew of Mizrachi and Ashkenazi descent from an Orthodox upbringing. On the 5th of Iyar of that year, a community of builders merged, seeking to bring

[17] Taken from an interview with Gili Re'I conducted by Shani Ben-Or over Zoom on 13 July 2020.
[18] ibid.

change to the world by creating a synagogue inclusive of all cultures. Under the rabbi's leadership, they attempted to succeed where others have failed, in praying together without betraying any aspect of themselves, they agreed to be partners to achieve this goal.

Kehilat Zion has succeeded in embracing a multi-cultural community through worship. Their unique approach to prayer offers an example for other communities seeking greater inclusivity. The challenge of inclusivity among liberal communities has become relevant in Israel due to the great societal diversity. It has thus become necessary to attract Israelis from a broader range of different cultural origins and identities. The task of creating inclusive sacred communities has a level of urgency and relevance that must be addressed. Over the next chapters I will examine the worship model Kehilat Zion designed to accomplish this mission. Through my research I hope to further understand a cultural phenomenon that I believe could potentially change the face of liberal Judaism in Israel.

"Yamah VaKedmah" One Prayer Service, Multiple Traditions

In his poem *The Ballad of East and West* Rudyard Kipling declares, "East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet." And yet, from the Zionist project's beginning , it seems that efforts to build a Jewish state in the land of Israel have offered exactly that: a potential meeting point between the traditions of those who immigrated to Israel from the east and those who did so from the west. While integrating populations could have reshaped aspects of Jewish identity upon their arrival, it seems that in many areas this revolution is only now gaining momentum. One area widely affected by the recent cultural awakening is prayer and sacred

music, especially in liberal communities. This chapter centers on the challenge of blending various traditions of sacred music in Israel, from east to west.

Sacred Music in Israel: The Historical Perspective

Even prior to the existence of the State of Israel, Abraham Tzvi Idelsohn (July 14, 1882 – August 14, 1938) believed that he discovered the formula to a pure sound of Hebrew music. According to James Loeffler, Idelsohn was not alone in his confidence.[19] In the beginning of the nineteen-hundreds, the early Zionists of the Yishuv perceived their way of life as a cure to foreign influences on Hebrew culture. Their confidence stemmed from their rejection of Jewish life in the Diaspora. In this period of early Zionist settlement there were two approaches to *sh'lilat hagalut* (rejection of the Diaspora)*:* total denial of Jewish culture outside of Palestine on the one hand and the willingness to adapt aspects of Jewish culture from the Diaspora on the other hand.

Idelsohn believed that "Zionism offered the possibility of a real musical renewal of the Jewish race."[20] In Loeffler's analysis, he asserts that Idelsohn's approach to *sh'lilat hagalut* was complex. While Idelsohn clearly appreciated European music,[21] he believed that the key to the next chapter of Jewish national music lay in the "Oriental" cultures that remained untainted by European culture, such as that of the Jews of Yemen.

[19] James Loeffler, "Do Zionists Read Music from Right to Left? Abraham Tsvi Idelsohn and the Invention of Israeli Music," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. 100, No. 3: Pennsylvania, 2010, pp. 385–416., 2010, pp. 385–416.
[20] James Loeffler, "Do Zionists Read Music from Right to Left? Abraham Tsvi Idelsohn and the Invention of Israeli Music," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. 100, No. 3: Pennsylvania, 2010, pp. 385–416.
[21] Ibid. Loeffler proves this through an analysis of Idelsohn's song book that includes music of Mendelsohn, a Jew who famously assimilated, as well as non-Jewish classical European composers.

Idelsohn was the first musicologist to document non-western Jewish music as part of an attempt to restore Jewish music that complemented the Zionist ideology. In his monumental work, "Thesaurus of Hebrew Oriental Melodies," the first five volumes are dedicated to traditional Sephardic melodies. His notations cover a wide spectrum of Mizrachi communities, including Babylon, Persia, Bukhara, Sepharad-Yerushalmi and Morocco. The entire body of work took Idelsohn twenty years to complete. By 1932 the final volume was published, immensely impacting the field of Jewish musicology to this day.[22]

While Idelsohn might have been the first musician to seriously take on the mission of reviving the "authentic" national sound, he was certainly not the last. In 1962, a gathering of some important Israeli musicologists, composers, and musicians took place in Jerusalem to discuss the western and eastern elements in Israeli music. At the conference, the historian Mordechai Breuer called for a liturgical revolution in Israel. He claimed that founding a Jewish state eliminated the need for a separation between different versions of *nusach* in prayer. Breuer issued a call to merge cultures in civil life as well as in prayer.[23]

Breuer was clearly influenced by the state's efforts to create a homogeneous society. These efforts included controversial methods of oppression of any identity that did not fit into the hegemonic white, secular, and western Jews; even the Yiddish heritage of traditional Ashkenazi Jews was repressed. As many Israelis grew critical of the dark side of the melting pot, which

[22] Eliyahu Schleifer, "Idelsohn's Scholarly and Literary Publications: An Annotated Bibliography," *Yuval, Studies of the Jewish Music Research Centre*, Vol. 5: The Abraham Zvi Idelsohn Memorial Volume, Jerusalem, 1986, pp. 54-180.

[23] מיכל זמורה, **יסודות מזרחיים ומערביים במוסיקה בישראל : דיוני כנס קומפוזיטורים, מוסיקולוגים, מבצעים, מבקרים ומורי מוסיקה שהתקיים בבית דניאל בזכרון יעקב, בימים 17.16.15 באפריל שנת 1962**, תל-אביב: מכון למוסיקה ישראלית, 1968, עמ' 26-23.

peaked in the 1960s and 1970s, Breuer's call for liturgical revolution together with other musical pioneers was frowned upon, and even rejected.

Idelsohn, Breuer, and others were passionate about the possibility of creating an Israeli liturgical revolution. The cultural and historical circumstances of their lives determined the strategies that they chose, such as fostering a 'national musical melting pot.' The goal was to blend a variety of traditions into one cohesive and coherent musical narrative. While we can learn from the passion, talent, and knowledge of these pioneering musicians, we must also be aware of the challenge that this approach creates in a multi-cultural society with power imbalances and struggles.

It would be unfair to hold previous generations solely responsible for an issue that continues to challenge Israeli musicians to this day. In Edwin Seroussi and Moti Regev's book, *Popular Music and Culture in Israel*, they claim that the essence of Israeli music consists of a power struggle between various streams that each consider themselves the "real" representation of the nation. The book focuses on three of the many genres sharing this claim: Israeli folk song (*Shirei Eretz Yirael*), Israeli Rock, and *Mizrachi* music.

All three genres react, consciously and subconsciously, to a mantra of the early pioneers: "one culture for one nation." This mantra shapes the mentality that creating a unique and unified musical narrative is a national mission. Seroussi and Regev determine that the quest for "one culture" causes tensions even today. Despite its concomitant tensions, it seems that the hegemony in Israel still views the merging of eastern and western cultures as a fundamental value. The authors express concern about the challenges that come with sanctifying cultural

unity. They assert that in this process, each tradition loses a part of its identity, especially those traditions that are weaker in the power dynamic.[24]

Continuing Serroussi and Regev's observations, Haviva Pedaya dives into the previously oppressed and recently revived art of Sephardic *piyyut* in Israel. In fact, Edwin Seroussi penned one of the essays for this compilation of articles by musicologists. These essays underscore the central place of *piyyutim* within Mizrachi communities. Whereas *piyyutim* in Ashkenazi communities were primarily recited as fixed texts in synagogue, this genre was developed in Mizrachi communities well beyond the sphere of the synagogue use. Sephardic *payy'tanim* in Israel and across the Middle East kept composing new text and melodies, expanding the use of these liturgical poems to life cycle events and events on the Jewish calendar.

Yet the first waves of Jewish immigrants from the Middle East could not fully express this essential part of their cultural identity. Pedaya explains that for the secular Ashkenazi hegemony, the melody was too Arab-sounding and the text too religious. Instead, as Seroussi and Regev discuss, Mizrachi musicians produced commercial music that constituted a reduced version of their culture. Thus, subsequent generations of the Mizrachi population have reclaimed their heritage. Pedaya describes how they partnered with the first-wave and now elderly generation to retrieve the lost sound.[25]

[24] אדוין סרוסי ומוטי רגב, **מוסיקה פופולרית ותרבות בישראל**, רעננה: האוניברסיטה הפתוחה, תשע"ד (2013).
[25] חביבה פדיה, **הפיוט כצוהר תרבותי : כיוונים חדשים להבנת הפיוט ולהבנייתו כצוהר תרבותי**, רעננה: הקיבוץ המאוחד בשיתוף מכון ון ליר, 2013, עמ' 380-369.

From Idelsohn to Pedaya, it becomes apparent that efforts to shape the national soundtrack are deeply intertwined with issues of national and personal identity. Those who aspire to shape music in the public sphere seek to express themselves, their beliefs and culture. Revisiting the lost voices of musicians from the past, including the melting-pot era, is a crucial step on our journey to understanding current models of multi-cultural prayer services, such as *Kehilat Zion*'s groundbreaking work

Applying the analysis of these musicologists, we can start to consider various questions. These include: What are the potential liturgical and musical meeting points in a multi-cultural service today? How can clergy successfully transition from one tradition to another without harming the integrity of each system and flow of the service? These questions stem from the relationship between identity, sacred music, and sacred communities that will be further addressed in the next section.

Sacred Music and Identity

In Eric Werner's essay "The Role of Tradition in the Music of the Synagogue," he discusses the conditions that enable communities to preserve musical traditions. Werner examines many factors, including geography, history, and the role of the cantor. He differentiates between open and closed communities, a concept borrowed from physical science. While it may seem that closed communities are more likely to preserve musical traditions, Werner is concerned that they lack the ability to create tradition. According to Werner, true preservation of tradition requires knowledge of the past and an ability to adapt to the present and prepare for the future. He even employs the term "active assimilation" to describe a positive change process that needs to

happen for communities to sustain themselves over time. Werner labels Orthodox communities as closed yet subconsciously undergoing a process of passive assimilation. The process, as he describes it, is subconscious; Orthodox communities are unintentionally undergoing a process of change due to foreign cultural influences and traditions.

Another key factor that Werner discusses is the cantor's role. Werner points out that historically, large Western communities in major cities encountered major difficulties in preserving musical traditions because the cantor's main purpose was to sing. Thus, it was natural for the cantor to neglect tradition to please the community's lowest common denominator. In contrast, cantors in small peripheral congregations had other communal roles. Hence, they were not under pressure to prove their singing ability because they were an integral part of communal life.[26]

Werner suggests that the continuity of music in a synagogue relies on the congregation's identity. Where are they located? What resources do they have? What type of clergy are employed? And what is their denomination? It seems to me that Jeffrey Summit would agree with the act of examining musical traditions through the lens of community. In his search for the meaning of *nusach* in communal life, Summit interviewed clergy and congregants about their role in influencing the music of their congregations. He also observed services in various synagogues. He found that the same musical practice can have a different meaning to people depending on setting and culture. For instance, in a liberal setting *nusach* represents the sound of memory as opposed to a *halakhic* setting in which it is the sound of authority. A *nusach*'s meaning also varies depending on a person's role in a community. For a Chassidic rabbi, a

[26] Eric Werner, "The Role of Tradition in the Music of the synagogue." In *From Generation to Generation: Studies on Jewish Musical Traditions,* New York : American Conference of Cantors, 1969.

nusach's purpose may be to enhance the intention of the text. For a Reform cantor the intention may be communal education. And for congregants the practice of *nusach* might be a burden or a sign of commitment to tradition.[27]

Summit offers a more complex and flexible view on the relationship between Jewish music, congregational structure, and denominational affiliation. Contrary to Werner, whose method of research seems to be text-based, Summit's ethnographic fieldwork provides important insights into issues of identity. While Werner provides new and exciting terminology to understand the conditions in which tradition can thrive, Summit provides deep insight into the experience of sacred communities and individuals that seek to hold tradition close, day-by-day.

However, Summit's research does not include subjects from Sephardi communities. To gain further understanding of the relationship between music and identity in Sephardic sacred communities, we can refer to Mark L. Kligman, who researched a Jewish Syrian congregation in Brooklyn over the course of a year. His goal was to explore the connection between two main elements in Syrian liturgy: Arabic music and Jewish text. While each component has distinct characteristics, according to Kligman, a *hazzan*'s role is to synthesize them. In the introduction to Kligman's book, he refers to this process as a Judeo-Arab synthesis. One of Kligman's conclusions is that the community's commitment to preserving strict musical systems helps them internalize tradition in meaningful and relevant ways:

[27] Jeffrey A. Summit, "Nusach and Identity: The Contemporary Meaning of Traditional Jewish Prayer Modes." In *Music in the American Religious Experience*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 271-286.

"[…] Associations go beyond shaping the liturgical year; they reflect the essence of a people and the allied tradition. Perpetuating the biblical associations of the maqam for Syrian Jews displays usage of a local tradition shaped by strong ties to the past; biblical events and images of antiquity become relevant for the present day."[28]

Perhaps the community that Kligman encountered exemplifies a traditionally observant community that according to Werner may seem closed, but in fact has found ways to be creative within their religious structure. Thus, they can effectively preserve their musical heritage while also evolving. A good example is the community's practice of the *maqam* of the day. The *maqam* of the day is a system that pairs biblical readings for events on the Jewish calendar to a *maqam*. The system is carefully designed to prevent repetitions of *maqamat* (plural of *maqam*) from week to week, utilizing all eleven *maqamat* associated with Arab music. Thus, their practice demonstrates how a traditional setting can be dynamic and highly creative.

Going back to Werner's terminology of open and closed communities, borrowed from the realm of physical science, Kehilat Zion can be categorized as an open community that embraces change. That being said, Kehilat Zion also has a strong traditional component that does not fit Werner's description of open communities. Although the congregation may be egalitarian, they preserve all other aspects of *halachah*, while embracing traditional Sephardic Jewish customs. As such, according to the Kligman model of traditional systems of sacred music, Kehilat Zion

[28] Kligman, Mark. *Maqam and Liturgy: ritual, Music and Aesthetics of Syrian Jews in Brooklyn*, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 2009, p. 190.

can be both open and traditional; they seem to have found ways to cultivate change and embrace creativity within the traditional system.

"Kibbutz Galuyot" Embracing Sacred Music from All Corners of the Earth

After spending time at Kehilat Zion, one is likely to encounter the term "kibbutz galuyot," ingathering of the exiles, to describe their prayer and community. Taken from traditional Jewish scripture and liturgy, this term expresses a yearning for all Jews to return to Zion and reunite as a nation and an aspiration for all traditions to blend into one. At Kehilat Zion this term is used differently. Instead of expressing a call for unity, they view this term as a call for spiritual pluralism. On their website they describe their prayer as "a prayer of kibbutz galuyot [the ingathering of the exiles]"[29] and further explain the concept:

> […] the ingathering of the exiles is not only a physical act of gathering from all corners of the world, but that it is also meant to be an act of gathering the spirit, when all the treasures of the people are gathered together in one prayer woven from endless traditions, [and attentive to one another in the great synagogue of the] Land of Israel.[30]

As opposed to the early pioneers who rejected Jewish traditional life in the diaspora, Kehilat Zion embraces traditions developed outside Israel. While they still yearn to hold a gathering in Jerusalem (literally, a *kibbutz),* they do not intend the assimilation of any group. Rather, they

[29] "Prayer," Kehilat Zion, accessed July 7, 2021, https://zion-jerusalem.wixsite.com/newengsite/prayer.
[30] Ibid.

provide a gathering that celebrates diversity and acknowledges all cultures and traditions that enter. In this, they differ from the pioneers who sought to assimilate others in the name of unity.

This chapter will discuss the ways in which the clergy team at Kehilat Zion conducts worship in the spirit of *kibbutz galuyot* by introducing team members and exploring their approach to prayer.

Introduction to the Clergy Team - Rabbi Tamar Elad-Appelbaum

Biography of the Rabbi

Rabbi Tamar Elad--Appelbaum was born in Israel into a mixed Ashkenazi-Mizrahi family and raised in an Orthodox home. Her religious upbringing was greatly shaped by both grandparents. Her grandfather on her father's side, Alfons Eliazar Sharf, was a Holocaust survivor and a *hazzan* in Dalem, France. Yaish Bouskilah, her grandfather on her mother's side, was a gabbai, lay leader, in charge of worship, in the city of Bat Yam, Israel. Rabbi Elad--Appelbaum was inspired by their commitment to tradition and community. With a growing interest in Judaism and spiritualty, she dreamed of taking an active part in shaping Jewish life even as a young girl:

> I was a girl of 7 or 8 [years old] and my whole family, the Bouskilas, sat around the table and recited Maggid, the story of the Exodus from Egypt, and I remember that my grandfather noticed that people were getting tired so he said to the women: 'Let's finish the Maggid section; we'll tell the story of the Exodus and you'll go to the kitchen, and when we smell the food we'll know that we're eating soon.' And I stood up in front of my grandfather, this wasn't planned, and shouted: 'No! Grandpa, you taught us that we all leave Egypt.' Silence falls, the whole Bouskila family's Seder comes to a halt, my

> parents are "hiding under the table," and my grandpa Yaish, may he rest in peace, says [the] words that changed my life: 'the girl is right.' That was the beginning of my journey, a journey towards being part of a nation that speaks the language of a free people that has, and has always had, room for women and men who leave Egypt and go to the land of Israel.[31]

Her dream began to become a reality upon receiving ordination from the *Masorti* (Conservative) seminary in Jerusalem, Machon Schechter. Initially she served as the rabbi of Congregation Magen Avraham in Omer, a town near Be'er Sheva, and later as a congregational rabbi in a suburb of New York, alongside Rabbi Gordon Tucker. She also worked as the Assistant Dean of the Schechter Rabbinical Seminary in Jerusalem. By 2010 Rabbi Elad-Appelbaum's reputation had grown beyond the Conservative movement when she was named by the Jewish newspaper "The Forward" as one of the five most influential female religious leaders in Israel in 2010.

Rabbi Elad-Appelbaum co-founded a Beit Midrash for Israeli Rabbis. The Beit Midrash is a joint project of the secular HaMidrasha at the Oranim College of Education in northern Israel and the Modern Orthodox Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem. It offers independent, multi-denominational, and egalitarian rabbinical ordination to Israelis. In that same spiritual vein, she founded Kehilat Zion in 2013, an independent *minyan* in Jerusalem's Baka neighborhood.[32]

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[31] "רבגוניות – על מנהיגות רוחנית קהילתית בישראל, פרק חמישי: הרבה תמר אלעד-אפלבאום", Shalom Hartman Institute, 10 June 2020, accessed 29 July, 2021.
https://heb.hartman.org.il/israeli-spiritual-leadership-5/.

[32] "Tamar Elad-Appelbaum: Educational Director, Beit Midrash for Israeli Rabbis", Shalom Hartman Institute, accessed 29 July, 2021.
https://www.hartman.org.il/person/tamar-elad-appelbaum/.
Yair Rosenberg, Yedida Schwartz, "Israeli Rabbis You Should Know", *Tablet*, 6 October 2016, accessed 29 July, 2021.
https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/community/articles/israeli-rabbis-you-should-know.

Approach to Sacred Text and Music

As discussed in previous chapters, Rabbi Tamar Elad-Appelbaum is the dominant, charismatic leader and founder of Kehilat Zion. As such, she holds an essential role in prayer development. When describing *t'fillah* in her community, she shared that:

> Prayer is the most fragile place for human beings and it can be taken advantage of […]. Unfortunately in Israel there are many people that no one opens a gate of prayer for them […] In Israel, prayer has become an exclusive kingdom. My grandfather taught me that a synagogue is an *ir miklat*[33] [city of refuge] for the soul. Every person deserves an *ir miklat* to dwell in when they cry, when they rejoice, to dwell without gender expectations and roles, and when they find love - a quiet place that is a room of our own, of her own.[34] Kehilat Zion was founded to create a healing channel that in the storm there is an asylum, a ship that enables them [participants] to breathe. The tapestry of music was designed to support the need for healing.[35]

Rabbi Elad-Appelbaum expresses an approach akin toRabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel's famous teaching regarding prayer. "Prayer is not a stratagem for occasional use, a refuge to resort to now and then. It is rather like an established residence for the innermost self. All things have a

[33] Reference to the six biblical cities of refuge
[34] Reference to Virginia Wolf's feminist assay, *A Room of One's Own*, England: Hogarth Press, 1929.
[35] Taken from an interview with Rabbi Tamar Elad-Appelbaum conducted by Shani-Ben-Or over Zoom on 11 September 2020.

home, the bird has a nest, the fox has a hole, the bee has a hive. A soul without prayer is a soul without a home."[36]

Although Rabbi Elad-Appelbaum did not mention Heschel's concept, they seem to share a common understanding regarding the essence of prayer. Both agree that prayer should be a safe space, an anchor that provides stability in a somewhat chaotic world. Both view prayer as an internal process that serves as a temporary setting for spiritualty. And both recognize that a lack of accessibility to prayer, or the wrong use of prayer, can lead to devastating results.

Perhaps, therefore, Rabbi Elad-Appelbaum perceives her role in the clergy team as a mediator between musicians and community. Her concern is that without the perspective and guidance of a non-musician, the team may lose sight of the community's spiritual needs. In her interview she explains her motivation to be involved in the musical selections as well as the other components in coordinating weekly services:

> […] that is why I am very involved with the clergy team [who lead services]. On one hand I believe that our *sh'lichei tzibur* [prayer leaders] have an opportunity to contribute, to bring themselves and their unique perspective; they are granted a lot of [creative] freedom. On the other hand, I have a very important role in the team. My job is to make sure that that the text is accessible and egalitarian, *avot v'imahot* [patriarchs and matriarchs] etc., for instance. Leading up to the High Holidays, as we went over every tune, I made sure that there was no Carlebach. I am the guardian who says no, but there is

[36] Abraham Joshua Heschel, ed. Susannah Heschel, *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity: Essays*, New York: Macmillan, 1997, p.258.

> also the place of yes, I hold the voice of the people, a space that everyone [musician or not] can join.[37]

In the case of Carlebach's compositions, Rabbi Elad-Appelbaum takes a clear stand on a highly controversial issue. In theory, Carlebach's musical legacy suits the community's values. His refreshing approach to prayer inspired by Hassidism swept the Jewish world into a frenzy of communal singing in the 20th century. For many, Carlebach's soulful, accessible melodies were a revelation, a comfort and gateway into spirituality. As an Orthodox rabbi, he was also forward-thinking with regard to women. He sang for women and with women and was outspoken in his support of Women of the Wall's protest for egalitarian prayer at the Western Wall in Jerusalem.

But there was another side to this charismatic figure: his career was stained by rumors of sexual misconduct. After his passing, allegations by dozens of women were exposed in the 1998 edition of Lilith Magazine.[38] With the outbreak of the #MeToo movement in recent years, the controversy over similar allegations on social media struck the Jewish global community and posed a dilemma regarding using his music in sacred communities. The controversy went beyond Carlebach, posing challenging ethical questions for sacred communities: is it fair to ban art because of the behavior of its creator? [39]

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[37] All quotations are taken from an interview with Rabbi Tamar Elad-Appelbaum conducted by Shani-Ben-Or over Zoom on 11 September 2020, unless cited otherwise.

[38] Sarah Blustain, "Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach's Shaddow Side," *Lilith Magazine*, March 9, 1998, accessed 29 July 2021.
https://lilith.org/articles/rabbi-shlomo-carlebachs-shadow-side/.

[39] Melanie Lidman, "After #MeToo, some congregations weigh changing their tune on Shlomo Carlebach," *The Times of Israel*, 20 December. 2017, accessed 29 July 2021.
https://www.timesofisrael.com/after-metoo-some-congregations-weigh-changing-their-tune-on-shlomo-carlebach/.

Returning to Kehilat Zion, Rabbi Elad-Appelbaum's approach to Carlebach sheds light on the the limits of creative freedom that she allows for her clergy team. This case exemplifies a conflict between music that can inspire the community on the one hand while on the other hand it might compromise the safe space due to the negative connotations associated with the well-known composer. In her commitment to providing "a city of refuge" and shelter for the soul, the rabbi chooses to avoid musical selections that may trigger harmful emotions. The rabbi asserts her authority by determining clear boundaries for the musical team in their joint process of repertoire selection.

In a different case, Rabbi Elad-Appelbaum decided to add an unusual member to the clergy team over the High Holy Days:

> We have a congregant who is not a musician. She feels [especially] connected to prayer when clapping her hands. She was looking for a place to pray and express herself […] we let her lead and it was beautiful to see her closing her eyes, clapping her hands and knowing that people will join. From the beginning it was important for me that prayer leaders be also non-musicians who may sing out of tune.

Here we have a situation in which a congregant might lack musical abilities yet is given an opportunity to express herself, from the *bimah*, in her own unique way. It is the rabbi's decision to include the congregant who is a "non-musician," and even sings "out of tune." If the goal in the previous case was to protect the community, here the goal was to encourage active communal participation. Inclusion of a non-musical lay leader can empower and encourage other non-

musical congregants to sing. This is another example in which the rabbi asserted her authority when she felt a congregational need of which the rest of the clergy team may be unaware.

Although there are occasions in which Rabbi Elad-Appelbaum limits her team's authority, she clearly values their musical skills and leadership:

> My grandparents were hazzanim; that is why I understand the importance of enabling musical leaders to be creative and express themselves. Neryah brought (tunes) from his childhood, Hadas brought her daughter to sing with us, Yahalah brought tunes from her home that were important to her. It [the service] is a lab, [when] Hadas says she wants to try something. We [then] try [her suggestions] together and make mistakes together. On one hand, there needs to be [a commitment to] accuracy and integrity, but [on the other hand there is] also a lot of openness and willingness [by the congregation] to be part of the experiment.

What enables all members of the community, including the clergy team, to express themselves, is a leadership model that is flexible, inclusive, and protective of the core values that shape the Kehilat Zion vision.

To conclude, there are three main components that guide the rabbi in leading prayer in her community:

1. **A city of refuge**: Prayer must be a safe space for human beings to express their most fragile sides—a space that is natural, open, and inclusive to all aspects of their identity.

2. **A space for healing**: Sacred communities ought to provide a sacred space for healing through prayer. The act of prayer can repair the pain of the past. The role of clergy is to support congregants in their process of healing.
3. **Empowering the community:** There needs to be a balance between the cantorial needs and the community's needs, the people. A mixed clergy team of musicians, non-musical participants, and lay leaders is vital in modeling the essence of participatory prayer to the community.

Co-Leaders of Prayer

Rabbi Tamar Elad-Appelbaum works closely with two musicians: Nerya Knafo and Yahala Lachmish, who serve as cantorial figures, musical educators, coordinators, and producers of worship at Kehilat Zion. While they are not formally trained as cantors, they both gained years of experience as prayer leaders prior to joining the staff. Under them serve two payy'tanim, additional prayer leaders, vocalists who specialize in the art of liturgical poems, and an instrumentalist.

On a weekly basis their responsibilities include:

- Planning and coordinating services that include: Kabbalat Shabbat (Weekly), Shabbat morning service (once a month), and holiday services.
- Training lay leaders and incorporating them into prayer services.
- Leading educational programing for children, including teaching a course on piyyut (liturgical poetry).

- Coordinating interfaith services outside the synagogue in partnership with Jerusalem clergy of different faiths.

Before I introduce their biographies, I believe it is instructive to note that not many congregations in Israel have such a varied musical team. It bears mention that they do not all serve at the same time; other than the rabbi none of them holds a full-time position. Still, this model enables at least two musical figures to lead every service along with the rabbi. The clergy team model plays an important role in inspiring congregants and elevating their prayer experience.

Nerya Refael Knafo

Nerya, born in Ashdod, descends from the Knafo, Abuhatzeira, and Bardugo families, leading families in the Moroccan Jewish community. Raised within the religious-Zionist community, he is a graduate of Yeshivat Or Etzion and served in the IDF in the Hesder Yeshiva program. Nerya has a rich background in social and political activism. He is one of the founders and leaders of the youth branch of the HaBayit HaYehudi Party, a right-wing national religious party, as well as a founder of a forum for young representatives of political parties. Nerya currently serves as Director of the civil action center of the Masorti Movement: Jewish Pluralism Watch (JPW).

Nerya is particularly interested in integrating Sephardic Jewish values into Israeli society. His passion for promoting the values of multicultural Jewish traditions and education in terms of the

Sephardic community in Israel[40] is what led him to Kehilat Zion. After securing employment by the Conservative movement in Israel, he sought ways to connect to their congregations. The movement's CEO, Yizhar Hass, referred him to Kehilat Zion. On Yom Ha'atzmaut he joined services for the first time:

> Yom Ha'atzmaut is a very important event for the community that was founded on this day; what I witnessed was a big celebration, a unique atmosphere that drew me in. I could relate because for me Yom Ha'atzmaut is the most important day of the year. I couldn't imagine celebrating without participating in a meaningful prayer service. Prior [to this and unlike in some orthodox communities] I was looking for a place that the service is not just an opportunity to recite Hallel in passing. I came [into Kehilat Zion] to capture a moment as a participant that left a deep impression on me.[41]

Nerya was invited to lead services in the community by Yair Harel, who used to lead the prayer department. Later he was trained by Yair to take over the prayer department with Yahala. In Nerya's interview, he shared his thoughts about being offered this new position:

> When I was offered the position, it was a huge moment for me. [Kehilat] Zion is a community that centers around prayer […] Every aspect of the prayer is planned by the

[40] "Nerya Knafo", ROI community, accessed 29 July, 2021. https://www.schusterman.org/users/nerya-knafo.

[41] Taken from an in-person interview with Nerya Refael Knafo conducted by Shani Ben-Or on 24 June 2020.

clergy team with full intention. We are all in sync, fully committed. The rabbi chooses her teachings based on our musical choices.[42]

Yahala Lachmish

Yahala is currently the only clergy member at Kehilat Zion formally trained as a musician. With a B.A. in Composition from the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance, she has paved her way as a professional singer, composer, choral conductor, teacher, and workshop facilitator in Jerusalem. Prior to taking the position of co-prayer leader at Kehilat Zion, she began to explore the art of religious liturgical poems, piyyut, and became a passionate active member of the Kehillot Sharot Piyyut movement, whose aim was to awaken the cultural treasure of piyyut in Israel. Yahala teaches piyyutim and Torah trope at the Keshet Elementary School in Jerusalem,[43] bringing together secular and orthodox families. She also leads the young adult group and national multi-generational choir of Singing Communities, an organization that provides intimate singing group experiences nationwide in order to learn share the art of piyyut.[44]

Similarly, to Nerya, Yahala was raised in an orthodox setting, Kibbutz Yavne. Later, she attended the Beit Midrash for women at Kibbutz Migdal Oz in Gush Etzion. Only as a young adult, upon participating in a mixed yeshivah for secular and orthodox Israelis at Midreshet Ein Prat, was she exposed to egalitarian *t'fillah* and began to emerge as a self-taught prayer leader:

[42] Ibid.
[43] A school that intentionally builds a co-existing community of secular and orthodox students.
[44] "Our Staff", Kehilat Zion, accessed 29 July 2021.
https://zion-jerusalem.wixsite.com/newengsite/staff-and-committees.

> The first time I ever allowed myself to lead prayer was by accident. I was studying at Midreshet Ein Prat for [the month of] Elul and felt that I needed a proper s'lichot prayer service. Because there were no plans to provide one [by the program] I needed to create it myself. I understood early in the process that I would need to compromise so that every participant could relate, those who had a religious upbringing and those who did not [...] This positive experience led me to lead the team of prayer leaders for the entire High Holy Day services of the Midrasha that year, and I have been in charge of that prayer service ever since.[45]

Rabbi Tamar Elad-Appelbaum invited Yahala to join the clergy team of Kehilat Zion after hearing her perform in the Piyyut Festival held annually at the National Library of Jerusalem. Yahala relates:

> I was invited by [Rabbi] Uri Kriozer[46] to participate in the Piyyut Festival due to my involvement with [Midreshet] Ein Prat and Kehilot Sharot.[47] I had never experienced anything like what happened to me there, I was spiritually moved in ways I didn't know were possible and it felt so fitting. Rabbi Tamar [Elad-Appelbaum] approached me after the performance and reflected on what a powerful experience it had been for her as well. She then invited me to lead services at [Kehilat] Zion, and that is what brought me to the congregation.[48]

[45] Taken from an interview with Yahalah Lachmish conducted by Shani Ben-Or in person on 22 June 2020.
[46] Rabbi Uri Kroizer is also a payy'tan and Kehilat Zion.
[47] Singing Communities national organization
[48] Ibid.

Approach to Sacred Text and Music

Much of Yahala and Nerya's efforts as co-leaders of the prayer department is devoted to creating the right balance between representation of a wide range of traditions and cultures, and the spiritual needs of their congregants. In their interviews, they both raised this issue and described a few guidelines that help them accomplish their goals.

Sensitivity to Transitions

The inclusive nature of Kehilat Zion calls for a high level of artistry regarding musical transitions during the service. Yahala and Nerya know that if the transitions are not well-planned, the prayer experience may be compromised. In our conversations they described the process of planning musical transitions while bearing in mind the following two premises.

Honoring the Essence of Each Musical Tradition

The blend of traditions should not come at the expense of any of the highlights of any musical tradition. This premise requires that clergy members explore traditions unfamiliar to them. They must try to understand the essence of all the traditions they encounter. These range from Israeli folk tunes to Moroccan traditional melodies.

Before joining Kehilat Zion, Nerya underwent difficult experiences as a Moroccan orthodox man who mostly prayed in Ashkenazi settings. He struggled to find an orthodox synagogue that incorporated Sephardic *nusach* without diminishing it.

> At the Yeshivah there were only three Sephardic piyyutim that were sung in [mocking] exaggeration with an extra [unnecessary] emphasis on [the eastern pronunciation of the letters] *chet* and *ayin*, pure orientalism. As a [Jew of] Moroccan [descent] I struggled; I thought 'really, is this all we have to offer?' Out of the entire Kabbalat Shabbat only 'Hashkiveinu' was sung to a Sephardic setting, and only the Minchah service was led in Sephardic *nusach*, the lowest attended service of the day. I felt that these attempts to be inclusive were not genuine. As opposed to this, change at [Kehilat] Zion is real, and is part of the bigger [Israeli] picture; the congregants witnessed the excitement of the awakening of the *piyyut*, they are more receptive, and some of the leadership of the community are the same pioneers of the movement.

At Kehilat Zion the clergy team is highly sensitive to distinguishing between an imitation of a culture and a true representation of it. This could be realized in the congregation's reaction to situations similar to those that Nerya described in which power struggles outside of prayer seep into synagogue life and shape spiritual practice. They constantly attempt to avoid this problematic use of traditional cultures that strive to become part of the Israeli social canon. The aspiration to be inclusive requires willingness to change the essence of the aesthetics of prayer so that these cultural treasures won't be presented as an afterthought but rather as an integral part of the service.

Determining Potential Musical Meeting Points Between Traditions

It may sound practically impossible to accommodate the goal of sensitivity to such a wide range of repertoire. That is why musicians within the clergy team have chosen to focus on three main

traditions regarding *nusach*: (i) Moroccan, (ii) so-called "Sephardi-Yerushalmi," namely, the Sephardi tradition of the Near East, and (iii) Ashkenazi. In their practicing sessions, Yahala and Nerya determine which *nusach* will be the "glue" between the different musical choices on the set list coordinated with the rabbi. They differentiate between congregational melodies that can be in any genre and the chanted *nusach* that connects them. While they and their *payytanim* have freedom to choose congregational melodies, the *nusach* must be from one of these three traditions. Yahala described the importance of *nusach*:

> When we prepare for t'fillah, we look closely at our musical selections and make sure that there is a balance between the highlights of each culture. Then we decide which *nusach*, Moroccan, S'fard Y'rushalmi, or Ashkenazi, will help us move seamlessly from one to another. [Through this process] I have learned, for instance, that there are unexpected similarities between these ancient traditions. They all blend between minor and major, for example. This enables us to create a common thread across systems that may feel different but can move smoothly from one to another.

Two out of the three traditions that Yahala mentions are also the dominant ones for the general public in Israel, namely the Eastern European Ashkenazi tradition and the S'farad Y'rushalmi Mizrachi tradition. It bears mention that each of these traditions is a blend of multiple cultures. The current Ashkenazi tradition in Israel is based on various local traditions imported by waves of immigration from Eastern Europe (pre- and post- the founding of the state). Likewise, the Mizrachi tradition is based primarily on the S'farad Y'rushalmi tradition that merges between the

tradition of Ladino-speaking Spanish Jews, who immigrated to Palestine in the 1900s, and the tradition of Jews who immigrated primarily from Middle Eastern Arab countries.

Without formally studying the theory of these ancient musical systems, Yahala and Nerya intuitively understand that they encompass interesting combinations and musical features. The complex nature of these types of musical traditions might be intimidating to those who are unfamiliar with them, yet they can provide exactly the intelligent and sensitive solutions to the art of tapestry that a current multi-cultural prayer service requires.

Providing Listening Moments

A component unapologetically implemented throughout the service is the use of solo cantorial moments. While the congregation is not singing during that time, there is an understanding that they are not passive, rather, they participate by actively listening. Nerya discussed the added value of incorporating listening moments in prayer:

> Rabbi Tamar [Elad-Appelbaum] directed me to take my time, to take long breaths before, during and after [singing phrases]. This was a different approach than what I was used to, the patience, [the fact] that there is a place for silence, a place to be a soloist. In contrast to other places [of worship] where silence is perceived as awkward and to lead as a soloist is strange and stressful […], when I sing on my own the community enjoys it. I know that they are willing, that they want to hear me, it is part of our language.

With the guidance of the rabbi, Nerya was able to assert his presence as a provider to the community of sacred listening moments. The method of breathing that he described is used to signal to the community that there will be a change in their role—that something will be different and someone else is in charge. Another key component that Nerya points out is that the unspoken dialogue between cantor and community is a sacred "language," meaning that there is an understanding, a culture developed over time. As a result, Nerya felt comfortable to stand out knowing that the congregation and rabbi value the cantorial voice and are not intimidated by its pivotal role for creating successful listening moments in prayer.

The ability to redefine the meaning of a "participatory service" has enabled the congregation to practice active listening and the clergy to become comfortable singing on their own. This combination has led to a dynamic service that balances between congregational singing and cantorial moments.

Creating a Culture of Chance

From the time of our sages there was a tension between a routine of repetitive prayer and the desire to experience spiritual renewal. This dispute is known in Talmudic scripture as the battle between *kevah*, set liturgy, as opposed to *kavanah*, the intention that is ever-changing. Perhaps one can even argue that every *sh'liach tzibur*[49], prayer leader, must address the challenge of balancing tradition and relevance. Creativity requires change whereas a sense of familiarity provides comfort. Yet, it seems fitting to ask if *kevah* and *kavanah* have to clash with one another?

[49] In Israel usage of the term sh'liach tzibur and in plural sh'lichei tzibur applies to any person who leads prayer, not necessarily ordained clergy.

The coleaders of prayer at Kehilat Zion aspire to create a culture of change in which new melodies are not a rare occasion. In this model, what the sages perceived as *kavanah* is inherent to the prayer's fixed structure. Thus, the *kavanah* is part of the *kevah*, renewal is an inseparable part of the worship routine to the extent that the congregation has learned to not only expect change but accept it.

When Nerya introduced a new and unfamiliar tune to the beloved climactic liturgical moment of *Lecha Dodi* one Kabbalat Shabbat, the congregation struggled to sing along. Yet their reaction after the service surprised him:

> When I introduced a Moroccan setting of *Lecha Dodi* I was mostly singing on my own; the congregation partially joined only after verse six. After the service a few congregants approached me and asked that I continue with the tune in the upcoming weeks until they get the hang of it. Mizrachi music is an acquired taste for those who are unfamiliar with it. That is why being committed to the process of learning is crucial.

The heads of prayer are aware of the fact that a routine of renewal can be unsettling for the congregation. Their motivation to introduce new melodies comes with the responsibility to repeat them until the congregation feels confident enough to participate. This repetition is a key component in creating a culture of change. Without it, the clergy risked compromising the congregation's sense of stability.

Although the congregation is receptive to embracing change, the heads of prayer are still aware of their difficulties:

> Yom Kippur is more complex. There is a deep sense of nostalgia and it is hard for congregants to give up what they know from home. When the text repeats, like in Kol Nidre, we can solve the problem by doing a different setting each time. That way each person has something to hold on to. But there are places that don't enable repetition and require us to make difficult choices. What makes it all work is the willingness of participants to give up on some of what they are used to in order to gain the togetherness. They know that everyone is giving up something. It is the challenge that unites us, and all participants who chose to join us accept this full-heartedly.

Nerya's reflection demonstrates how important it is to build a strong foundation of trust among congregants—especially when the service is highly dynamic, versatile and led by multiple clergy members. For a congregant the terms "new" or "old" are irrelevant according to Nerya. Instead the heads of prayer focus on what is familiar and unfamiliar to participants, "what they know from home." They are sensitive to the experience of change one might feel upon encountering a cultural heritage that is new to them.

To overcome this challenge, they use their role as communal educators. Not only do they teach unfamiliar melodies in the context of prayer, but also, as stated before, part of their work includes teaching children sacred music on a weekly basis. They also support the congregation by publishing recordings of less familiar melodies that they have introduced in the

congregation's weekly newsletter for the entire community to practice and learn. Leading up to the High Holy Days, the clergy team models the openness that they ask of their congregants by inviting members to send melodies from their household. They choose a few to learn and incorporate throughout the services that year.

To conclude, the role of the coleaders of the prayer department role requires a blend of creativity, musicality, community organizing, and pedagogy skills. Their presence in the community goes beyond the music; they are an inseparable part of the leadership and clergy team. Nerya and Yahala's biographies demonstrate that Kehilat Zion is far more than a professional opportunity. In both cases these young Israelis sought to express their spirituality in a way that was true to their complex identities. Through Kehilat Zion they found a place to pray and grow as clergy.

"Chadesh Yameinu K'kedem" The Role of the Payy'tanim and Their Revival of Ancient Liturgy

In the previous chapter we introduced the professional leadership in charge of prayer at Kehilat Zion, including the rabbi and two sh'lichei tzibur who co-direct the prayer department. In this chapter we shall discuss the role of two other prayer leaders: the payy'tanim, liturgical artists. Each specializes in a different tradition which they are passionate about preserving inside and outside of the synagogue. While they appear regularly on the bimah and lead services, they are not a part of the ongoing discussions and decision-making regarding the nature of prayer in the

community. Their role resembles artists-in-residence, but they are seen more regularly by the community. Thus, their impact on the synagogue is far greater.

Their title, payy'tanim, references the ancient liturgical poets in the land of Israel whose compositions substituted entire sections of the routine prayer service. As such, a congregation would gather without knowing in advance what to expect when a payy'tan would take over the service and introduce his version of the liturgy in an artistic way.[50] Similarly, the payy'tanim at Kehilat Zion enrich the service with unusual texts and melodies hard to access in other sacred spaces.

The title 'payy'tan' or 'somech' is also used today in Sephardic synagogues to describe the role of an additional sh'liach tzibur that supports the Sephardic hazzan. In contrast to the ancient payy'tanim, these payy'tanim do not compose the liturgical poems that they sing. Rather, their role is to relieve the cantor of the burden of leading large portions of liturgy primarily by chanting the many verses of piyyutim. Therefore, the title payy'tan encompasses a few meanings in Sephardic congregational life.

Like the current Sephardic payy'tanim, those of Kehilat Zion do not compose texts and melodies, but they do stretch the boundaries of the repertoire sung by the congregation, creating a new liturgical experience. This is done by introducing traditional texts and melodies, primarily from Sephardic Jewish communities. In addition, they strive to revive texts of ancient Jewish liturgies that have been long forgotten. We shall further discuss this as part of this chapter.

[50] עזרא פליישר **שירת הקודש העברית בימי הביניים** (ירושלים, הוצאת כתר, 1975), עמ׳ 137-138, גם בתוך – אורי קרויזר, ״הלב שבעבודה – על המשכיות וחידוש בתפילה / אורי קרויזר,״ נאמני תורה ועבודה, נדלה: 19.10.2021. www.toravoda.org.il/כתבה/הלב-שבעבודה-על-המשכיות-וחידוש-בתפילה/.

Biographies

Hadas Pal-Yarden:

Hadass Pal-Yarden is an Israeli singer specializing in Ladino and Turkish music. She is also a doctoral student of the Ethnomusicology Section of Istanbul Technical University's Advanced Music Studies (MIAM). She has spent several years in Turkey studying folklore and classical Turkish music and the Turkish Maqam system. In 2002, she received her master's degree from the Music Department of Bar-Ilan University, Israel, for research on Contemporary Performances of Ladino Songs in Jerusalem.

One of her most important works is the CD *Yahudije*, Turkish for "the Jewish language", released in 2003 by the Turkish Kalan label. Some songs on the CD are entirely in Ladino while others contain parts sung in Turkish, Greek, or Hebrew reflecting the multicultural Ottoman societies of the past.[51]

Pal-Yarden is passionate about bringing Ladino and Turkish music back to life. Kehilat Tzion provides her with the opportunity to do exactly that, especially when it comes to incorporating unique piyyutim into the service. In an interview in The Jerusalem Post she spoke about her guidelines for choosing repertoire for performing in a concert as part of the online Oud Festival, 2020:

> "'I balanced the repertoire with songs which many people will recognize, and others which, if we don't perform them and record them, they will simply cease to exist.' One

[51] "Hadas Pal-Yarden," Last.FM, accessed: October 17, 2021. https://www.last.fm/music/Hadass+Pal-Yarden/+wiki.

> extremely rare work, 'Kol Beruei Maalah' (All Celestial Creations), written by the 11th century Spanish poet and philosopher Rabbi Shlomo Ibn Gabirol, was certainly on the danger list. 'I was taught the song by someone in Turkey who told me, at the time, that only four people knew it,' Pal-Yarden notes. 'Now thousands know it. I have taught it at workshops I have done in Jewish communities all over the world.'"[52]

It is hard to know for sure whether the piyyut 'Kol Beruei Ma'alah' would have been lost if Pal-Yarden had not disseminated it. But what she said in her interview showed a clear devotion to reviving traditional repertoire that she believed was at risk of being forgotten. Her skills as a renowned artist have allowed her, throughout her career, to produce repertoire in a manner that has been well received by the public. Having a distinguished female singer on the *bimah* is a clear asset for a congregation such as Kehilat Zion that seeks to appeal to and inspire a wide audience of Israelis. This is also sends a strong statement about embracing female artistry and leadership. Having a well-known female figure at the forefront of worship signals the congregation's stand on religion and equality.

Rabbi Uri Kroizer

Uri Kroizer is one of the leading activists of the movement to revive the art of piyyut in Israel. He serves as Director of Education and Community for the Piyyut and Tefillah Website and initiates and leads prayer at Kabbalat Shabbat services in Jerusalem's public squares, as well as at Kehilat Zion. Rabbi Kroizer participated in the first cohort of the Beit Midrash for Israeli Rabbis, a project of the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem and HaMidrasha at Oranim,

[52] "Bringing Ladino music back to life,", *The Jerusalem Post*, accessed: October 17, 2021. https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/bringing-ladino-music-back-to-life-649600.

where he was ordained as a rabbi in 2016. He is also the co-head of the Ashkenazi track of the Ashira program of the Schechter Institute, Jerusalem. The program's goal is to train prayer leaders from across Israel to lead creative prayers in one of the following three tracks: Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and contemporary liturgy.[53]

Rabbi Kroizer grew up in an orthodox family with a somewhat unusual upbringing. While both parents shared an Ashkenazi ultra-orthodox background, they represented diversity within western Jewry. Tziporah Kroizer, his mother, was born in Jerusalem to a Chasidic family associated with the Karlin dynasty of Lithuania. Her father, Rabbi Yisrael Ber Odesser, also known as "Baal HaPetek," later became a Breslav Chasid. He earned fame and gained a following near the end of his life due to a unique finding of a note, "Petek", containing the sentence "Na Nach Nachma Nachman MeUman."[54] He claimed that the note was written by Rabbi Nachman of Breslav himself. In his interview Rabbi Kroizer shared memories of growing up with his grandfather as a dominant spiritual figure:

> "My grandfather, Baal HaPetek, was a Breslav Chassid; he modeled spiritually in the deepest way possible. Growing up I would wake up to his sweet voice reciting personal prayer. We would sing together regularly around the Shabbat table. The Breslav tradition became ingrained in me, [I experienced it] not only through text and music, rather, as a passion for prayer and spirituality. As a young boy I would wrap myself in a blanket and pretend that I was a sh'liach tzibur."[55]

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[53] "Hartman and HaMidrasha at Oranim Ordain Rabbis," Shalom Hartman Institute, accessed: October 19, 2021. https://www.hartman.org.il/hartman-and-hamidrasha-at-oranim-ordain-rabbis-at-jerusalem-ceremony/.
"Learning to lead prayer," Jewish Independent, accessed: October 19, 2021. https://www.jewishindependent.ca/learning-to-lead-prayer/.

[54] This discovery led to the establishment of a subgroup of Breslov Hasidim, who believe that repetition of the phrase, like a mantra, will help bring the messiah.

[55] Taken from an interview on zoom with Rabbi Uri Kroizer conducted by Shani Ben-Or on 3 September 2020.

Rabbi Kroizer was not only inspired from the Breslav tradition. His father, Rabbi Sh'muel Kroizer, had a large religious impact on him as well. Rabbi Sh'muel Kroizer came from a long-standing Jerusalemite family that immigrated in the early days of the Yishuv, prior to the founding of the state of Israel. Rabbi Sh'muel Kroizer was gifted in the study of Torah, chanting of Torah, and as a 'Baal T'fillah,' prayer leader. In many ways, Rabbi Kroizer was trained by him his father to be a sh'liach tzibur:

> "I remember how during the month of Elul, as a child, my father and I would return [home] from synagogue, sit in the living room and go over the High Holy Day prayers together. On the evening before Yom Kippur, my father would ask me to turn on the record player and play Cantor Kwartin's [version of] 'Tiher Rabbi Yishmoel' (from the Eleh Ezkerah piyyut), […] we would shed a tear in memory of the martyrs as we directed our souls in preparation for the Holy Day."[56]

With a strong foundation in traditional Ashkenazi prayer, Rabbi Kroizer's father set out on an unusual mission to research the teachings of Sephardic scholars, Chachmei Sepharad. His magnum opus was the translation of 'Me'am Lo'ez' to Hebrew. Originally written in Ladino by Rabbi Yaakov Culi in 1730, this commentary of the bible is perhaps the most renowned publication associated with Sephardic Jewry to date. Rabbi Kroizer reflected on his father's groundbreaking work and the impact he experienced at home:

[56] אורי קרויזר, " האם ניתן להרגיש בן בית במסורת שלא גדלת בה?," אתר הזמנה לפיוט (ישן), נדלה: 19.10.2021. http://old.piyut.org.il/articles/966.html.

> "My father's choice to translate 'Me'am Lo'ez,' a book whose whole purpose is to make Torah accessible to the public, was a choice to exit the stream of Judaism that he came from. The Sephardic culture captivated him. He became fluent in Arabic, would listen to Arab radio stations; soon our home was filled with Arabic music and artists such as Jo Amar."[57]

And yet, only as an adult did Rabbi Kroizer discover the art of Sephardic piyyutim, a revelation that changed his life. He started to acquire the repertoire as a participant in 'Kehilot Sharot,' an organization whose mission is to bring piyyutim to Israeli audiences via a network of study groups across the country. Later he became a teacher of a group and then part of the entire organization's leadership.

Just like his father and grandfather, Rabbi Kroizer, too, sought a new spiritual journey. He may have separated from past generations regarding his musical heritage, yet his openness to new experiences and willingness to embrace change is most certainly a quality that the patriarchs of his family embodied. As a result, Rabbi Kroizer organically blends in with the rich multi-cultural atmosphere at Kehilat Zion.

Revival of Ancient Liturgy

The payy'tanim of Kehilat Zion, Hadas Pal-Yarden and Rabbi Uri Kroizer, differ from each other in many respects. Pal-Yarden is a formally trained musician, academic, and professional singer whereas Rabbi Kroizer is a self-taught musician, highly skilled sh'liach tzibur, and

[57] Taken from an interview with Rabbi Uri Kroizer conducted by Shani Ben-Or via zoom on 3 September 2020.

ordained rabbi. Yet both personas share an enthusiasm for the revival of ancient liturgy and sacred music.

As discussed earlier, Pal-Yarden focuses on preserving melodies, specifically for Ladino texts and sung by the Turkish Jewish community. Rabbi Kroizer, on the other hand, has made it his mission to revive liturgical poems composed by the ancient payy'tanim in the land of Israel, specifically, the use of poems set to the morning prayer service on Shabbat. Consequently, Rabbi Kroizer primarily leads services on Shabbat mornings and Festivals.

Many of these poems were recovered in the Cairo Geniza alongside other liturgical texts. While these artifacts do not indicate how these sacred texts were sung and performed, the many versions of poems expose an ancient tradition that embraced change. These texts comprise piyyutim set to three categories of liturgy: "Yotzer" in place of the morning blessings of the Kriat Sh'ma; "Maariv" in place of the evening blessings of the Kriat Sh'ma; and "K'rovah" in place of the Amidah. [58]

These liturgical poems later became set parts of the service as they were printed and sealed in prayer books. While this historical process may have helped preserve some liturgical treasures, it may have also caused them to lose part of their essence as creative opportunities for liturgical renewal.

In recent years there is a growing interest among Israeli scholars and spiritual figures to revive *nusach Eretz Yisarel*. This awakening reflects a desire to connect to local customs of the past in

[58] עזרא פלייישר, **שירת הקודש העברית בימי הביניים**, ירושלים: הוצאת כתר, 1975, עמ׳ 246-137.

new ways. Two examples of these initiatives include a publication of a prayer book, *Siddur Eretz Yisrael*, using entirely *nusach Eretz Yisrael* and incorporating liturgical texts from the Caro Geniza in the new Israeli Reform siddur *T'filat HaAdam*. Rabbi Dr. Dalia Marx teaches that interest in liturgy from the Caro Geniza has brought together some unusual figures with contrasting ideologies. It seems that these richly complex texts can support many contrasts, even opposing agendas.[59]

Rabbi Kroizer is among those who believe that reviving these dynamic liturgical texts is pivotal for sustaining Jewish life and prayer:

> "The need for renewal comes from the yearning to revive the essence of prayer, in the spirit of '*chadesh yameinu k'kedem'* ('renew our days as of old')[60] —renewal for the sake of maintaining a connection to the past. My intention is not for us to return to the era of the ancient piyyutim and reject '*T'filot Kevah,'* (routine prayers) as a whole; but rather to return to a state in which renewal is an integral part of prayer.[61]"

In his interview, Rabbi Kroizer explains how he and Rabbi Tamar Elad-Appelbaum collaborated to turn this vision into a religious practice. Both share the belief that Kehilat Zion's mission will be incomplete until they incorporate liturgy composed in the land of the past in a meaningful way for the present-day congregation . Together they decided to focus on the "K'rovah," ancient poems recovered in the Cairo Geniza recited in place of the Amidah. On Shabbat they are called

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[59] דליה מרקס, "שפתיהם דובבות תפילות מגניזת קהיר בסידורי ימינו", **גנזי קדם**, ירושלים: יד בן צבי, כרך י"ג, תשע"ז, עמ' 64-39.

[60] Lamentations 5:21

[61] אורי קרויזר, "הלב שבעבודה – על המשכיות וחידוש בתפילה / אורי קרויזר," נאמני תורה ועבודה, נדלה: 19.10.2021. www.toravoda.org.il/כתבה/הלב-שבעבודה-על-המשכיות-וחידוש-בתפילה/.

"Shivatot" referencing the seven blessings recited during the Amidah. This section of liturgy is traditionally repeated aloud by the cantor after the congregation recites it silently, which could explain why there was an artistic opportunity for payy'tanim to introduce something new rather than repeating the same text.

Over the years Rabbi Kroizer selected poems from the wide repertory of the ancient *Shivatot* and compiled a usable liturgy. He chose the ones that use relatively easy language and are relatable for the community. As the payy'tan, he regularly prepares a source sheet that changes every service. He gives a short introduction to the community right after the Torah is returned to the ark. Then he leads the Chatzi Kaddish that goes straight into the Amidah and the Shivatot. Over the years he has found that he can be creative in his musical choices:

> After a while of leading them [the Shivatot] I understood that I can incorporate other piyyutim that I know, that there is no need to stick strictly to the Shivatot [from the Cairo Genizah]. By doing this I remain true to the essence of the Shivatot as creative and dynamic liturgical moments that are thematically connected to the seven blessings of the Shabbat morning Amidah.[62]

By expanding the choice of poems beyond the old-existing selections, Rabbi Kroizer demonstrates an act of revival as opposed to preservation. The profound understanding that he raises is that the essence of *nusach Eretz Yisrael*, the ancient Israeli liturgy, goes way beyond text or music. It is a tradition of constant opportunity for spiritual renewal, or as Rabbi Kroizer puts it:

[62] Taken from an interview with Rabbi Uri Kroizer conducted by Shani Ben-Or via zoom on 3 September 2020.

> The legacy of nusach Eretz Yisrael in its essence is that the prayer book should not be sealed; hence, the sh'liach tzibur's role is to challenge the community by motivating them to embrace change, to truly awaken the *tzibur* [people] to prayer.[63]

In summary, although they do not lead prayer every week, the payy'tanim of Kehilat Zion play an essential role in the community. They challenge prayer norms , raise the level of artistry, and keep the spiritual experience dynamic. Their unique abilities and perspectives are utilized to help congregants and clergy maintain a high level of interest and pray with full intention.

"Dodi Yarad L'Gano" A Musical Analysis of Kabbalat Shabbat at Kehilat Zion

It was the beginning of the summer when the bimah was shared by a priest, an orthodox poet, a payy'tanit of Turkish descent, a female rabbi, a guitarist, and an oud player. The weekly Torah portion was Balak, and all the leaders were sharing music and thoughts about the place of the "voice of silence" in prayer. When it was time to move onto the next portion of the liturgy, the Arvit L'Shabat service, the guest speakers, clergy, musicians, and instrumentalist all cleared the bimah, and a lay leader took their place until the service's end.

This unusual scenario is just one example of the culture of prayer expressed in Kehilat Zion every week during Kabbalat Shabbat. As opposed to the regular weekly prayers, Kabbalat Shabbat is full of rich poetic liturgy and a wide range of exciting musical repertoire that offers a

[63] Ibid.

unique prayer experience for congregants. For a community committed to halachah, the summer Kabbalat Shabbat service that begins relatively late provides the congregation with the opportunity for a leisurely and expansive musical service. In addition, starting the service well before Shabbat traditionally begins allows for integrating instruments while remaining true to orthodox halachah. The liturgical structure's artistic nature facilitates creative opportunities, such as enriching the service by chanting from the book of Song of Songs and introducing secular Israeli songs.

Thus, Kabbalat Shabbat provides a deep glance into the spirit of prayer in a multicultural, egalitarian, and traditional community such as Kehilat Zion. Thus, it is no surprise that Kabbalat Shabbat is one of the most highly attended events that the community provides to the public. This chapter consists of a musical analysis of one Kabbalat Shabbat that took place in the courtyard of Kehilat Zion on June 25, 2021, in partnership with Mashiv HaRuach, a publication of poetry journals that feature poets from diverse Jewish-Israeli backgrounds.[64] The reason for an open-air event was to abide by health regulations due to the recent coronavirus outbreak . This was also the reason that the Kabbalat Shabbat portion of the entire service was broadcast live via Facebook for those who could not participate in person. The livestream ended once the Arvit service began and Shabbat started according to orthodox halachah.

[64] "About Mashiv HaRuach," Mashiv HaRuach, accessed: October 9, 2021. https://mashiv.org.il/%d9%8f%d9%8f%d9%8fenglish/.

Musical Analysis

The Kabbalat Shabbat structure at Kehilat Zion presented here centers around three main sections and themes: Song of Songs, Songs of Shabbat, and Kabbalat Shabbat.

Although this analysis focuses on Kabbalat Shabbat, there are two components that happen in the transition between Kabbalat Shabbat and Arvit L'Shabbat that merit mentioning: the rabbi's sermon and the recitation of Kaddish Shalem. Both traditional components conclude the entire Kabbalat Shabbat. They mark the end of the liturgical ritual as well as the handover from the professional musicians and clergy to the community's lay leadership. The placement of the rabbi's sermon is true to the tradition in most Sephardic communities.

Table 1 Song of Songs - Outline of the opening section of Kabbalat Shabbat at Kehilat Zion on June 25, 2021:[65]

Text	**Text Source**	**Musical Source**	**Performance**
"Dodi Yarad l'Gano"	Piyyut by Haim haKohen (first verse) only), Psalm 90:17 (second verse).	Traditional Moroccan	Congregational
Verses from Song of Songs	Song of Songs 1:1-2, 1:4, 2:5-8, 2:10-12, 2:14, 4:16, 5:2, 6:12.	Sephard-Yerushalmi	Call and response between cantor and congregation

Drawing inspiration from the Sephardic tradition of opening Kabbalat Shabbat by chanting the entire book of Song of Songs, this section includes mainly a liturgical poem and a compilation of

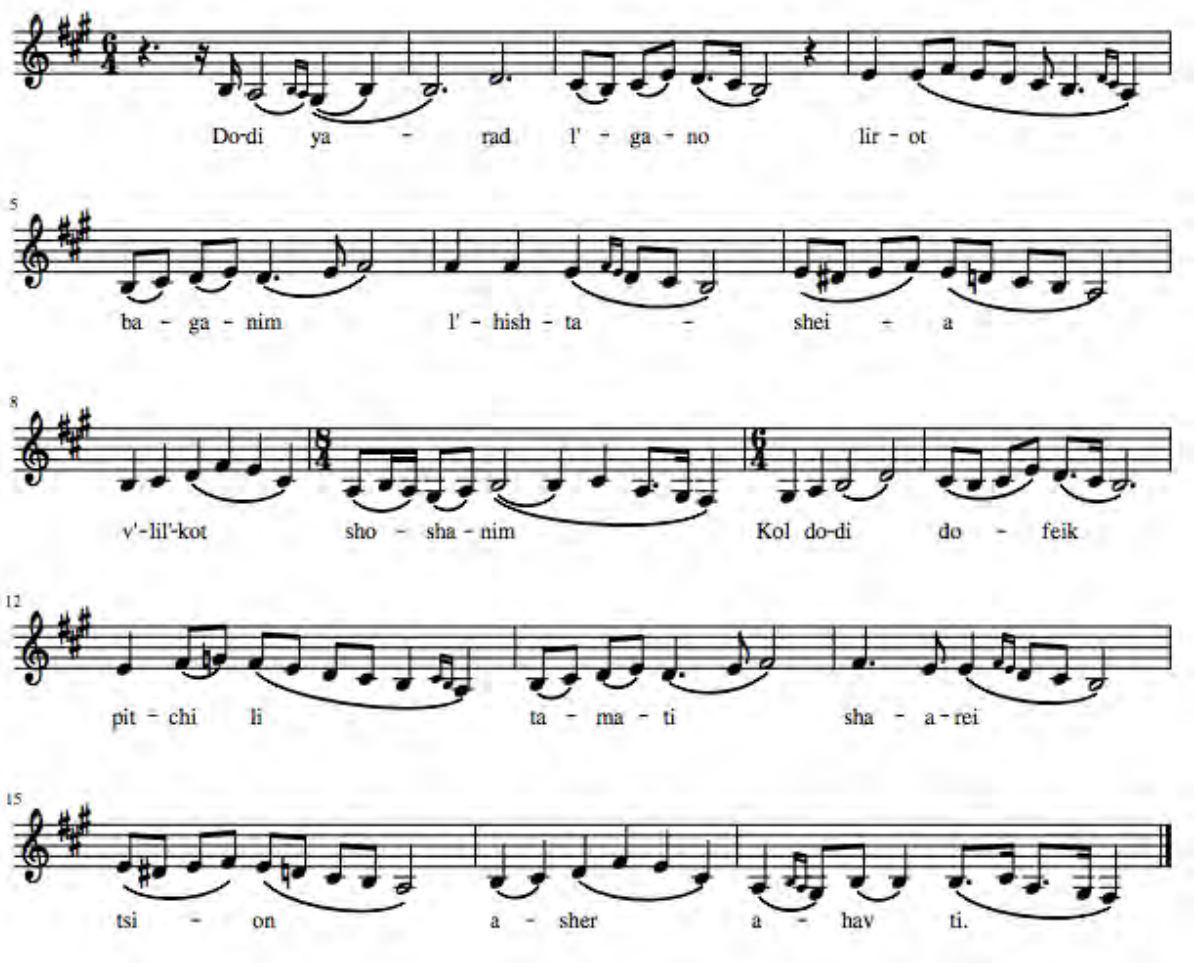
[65] All figures are taken from a recording of the live broadcast of the service on Facebook, accessed: October 9, 2021: https://www.facebook.com/KehilatZionJerusalem/videos/943039026533937.

verses from Song of Songs. There are weeks that Israeli folk songs (referencing verses from Song of Songs) are included here as well.

The origin of the piyyut *"Dodi Yarad l'Gano"* is the liturgy of the Moroccan *baqashot* service. The *baqashot* services are conducted on Shabbat mornings, from Shabbat Bereshit until Shabbat Zachor[66] during the early hours of the morning over the long winter nights, usually between 3:00 to 7:00 AM. These services are preserved in the main by Syrian and Moroccan Jews.[67] The traditions differ in the selection of piyyutim, melodies and *maqamat* that they offer as part of the ritual.

"Dodi Yarad l'Gano" opens the entire *baqashot* service every week according to Moroccan tradition. While many of the settings of *"Dodi Yarad l'Gano"* are highly complex, the melody sung at Kehilat Zion, shown in notation no. 1, is a simple periodic melody. This pleasant, contemplative, and repetitive tune was clearly intended to be a congregational piece. From the many verses of the piyyut they chose to sing only the first verse and then they repeated and adapted the melody to the text from Psalm 90:17.

[66] In some communities until Shabbat HaGadol (Pesach).
[67] And in some Turkish communities as well.

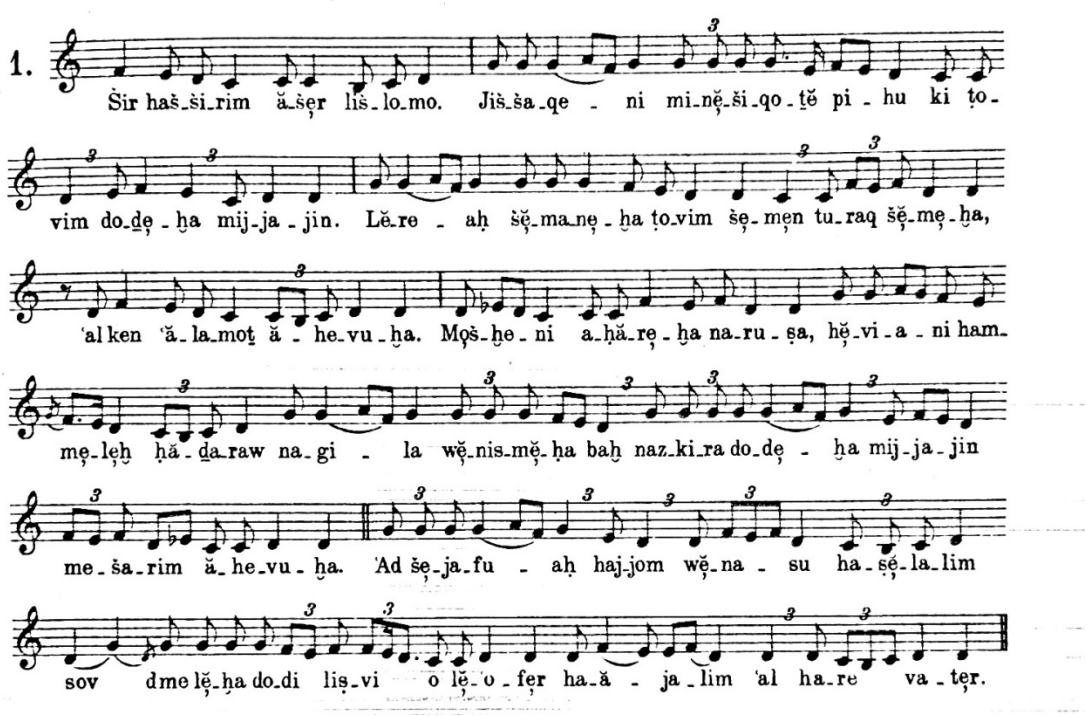


Notation No. 1: "דודי ירד לגנו" Moroccan Melody, edit: Cantor Sarah Grabiner.[68]

While this piyyut was not originally intended for Kabbalat Shabbat, the reference to Song of Songs may have been the reason behind the inclusion of *"Dodi Yarad l'Gano"* on Shabbat evening. Also, part of the text proclaims, "Open for me, my beloved, the gates of Zion," that could relate to the opening of the gates of prayer at Kehilat Zion as well as the land of Israel.

[68] All notations included by Cantor Sarah Grabiner were taken from a recording of the live broadcast of the service on Facebook, accessed: October 9, 2021: https://www.facebook.com/KehilatZionJerusalem/videos/943039026533937.

The recitation of verses from Song of Songs occurred right after the Moroccan piyyut. The psalmody chant sung at Kehilat Zion originates from the Sephard-Yerushalmi tradition, as notated by Abraham Zvi Idelsohn.



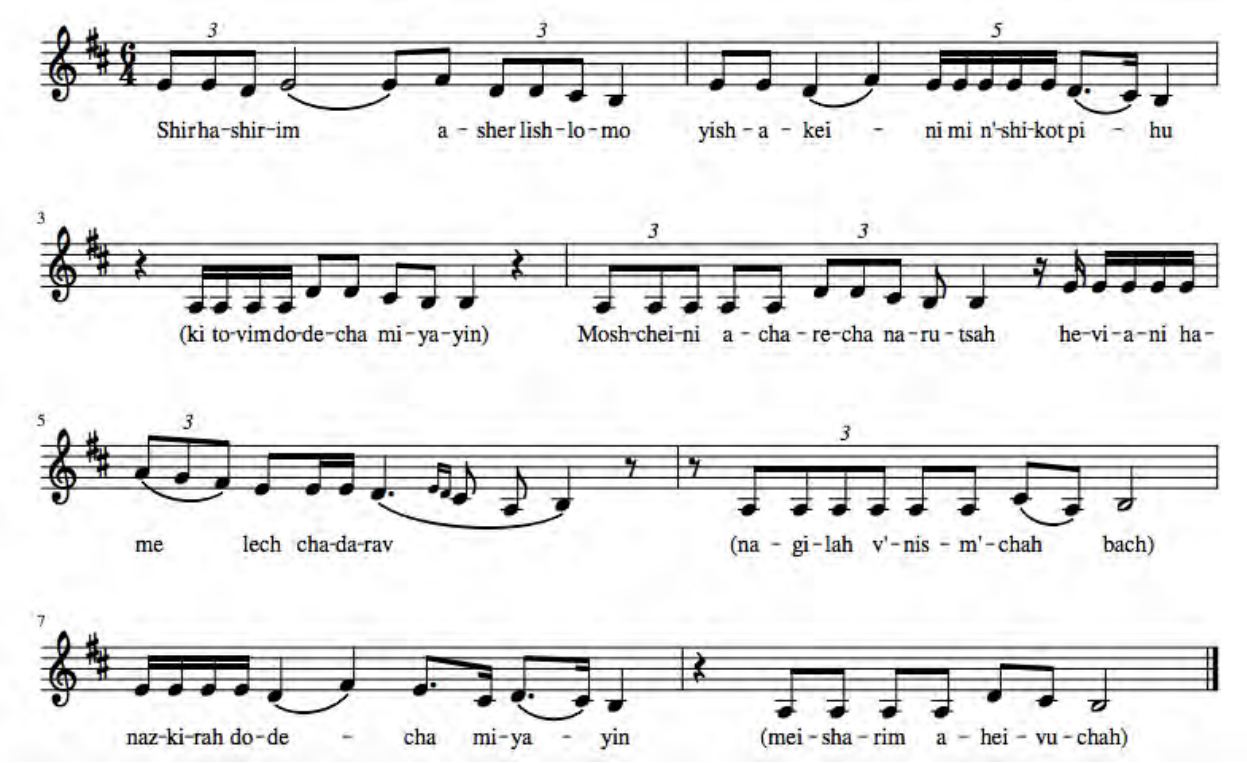
Notation No. 2: Abraham Zvi Idelsohn, *Gesänge der orientalischen Sefaradim*, Hebräisch-orientalischer Melodienschatz vol. IV, Berlin: Benjamin Harz, 1932, p. 121.

Psalmody is a process that occurs due to the dual division of a biblical verse, such as psalms.[69] The verse's structure creates an easy and natural signing pattern. Typically, the *etnachtah* trope will mark the ending of a pre-concluding musical phrase and the *sof-pasuk* trope the concluding phrase.[70] Another significant characteristic of psalmody is that the outline of the melodic chant is flexible to accommodate different numbers of syllables in uneven sentences. There are set

[69] That verses of psalms are usually divided into two, sometimes three, parts.
[70] According to the system of Taamei Emet that govern the verse divisions of the psalms, the half verse is marked by Teamim other than the Etnachta, such as Revia Mugrash.

tones that can be stretched out in various ways to allow for pre-concluding and concluding phrases, thereby preserving the entire verse's dominant melodic pattern.

The Sepharad-Yerushalmi psalmody has some unique aspects that can be identified at Kehilat Zion:

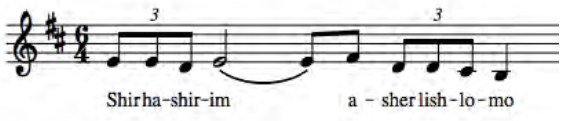


Notation No. 3: "שיר השירים", Song of Songs vs. 1:1-2, 1:4, edit: Cantor Sarah Grabiner.

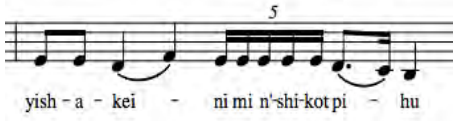
Originally the Sepharad-Yerushalmi psalmody was set to a blend of two *maqamat*: *Nahawand* and *Bayat*. Many congregations in Israel have settled on chanting only in *Nahawand*, which resembles a western minor key, due to the relatively complex nature of the *Bayat* maqam that is difficult to sing. At Kehilat Zion, Song of Songs is only chanted in *Nahawand* (as indicated in notation No. 3).

The melodic pattern of Sepharad-Yerushalmi psalmody is not determined by the trope. For instance, the first verse is almost identical to the first half of the second verse even though the trope is different:

[71] שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים אֲשֶׁר לִשְׁלֹמֹה׃

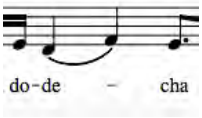


[72] יִשָּׁקֵנִי מִנְּשִׁיקוֹת פִּיהוּ

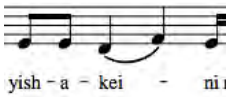


There is an exception in the case of two tropes consistently sung to a specific motif: *Pashta-Kefulah* and *Gershayim*. Notation No. 3, demonstrates this in two cases where a *Pashta-Kefulah* appears:

[73] דֹּדֶיךָ

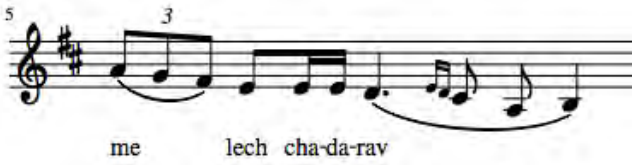


[74] יִשָּׁקֵנִי



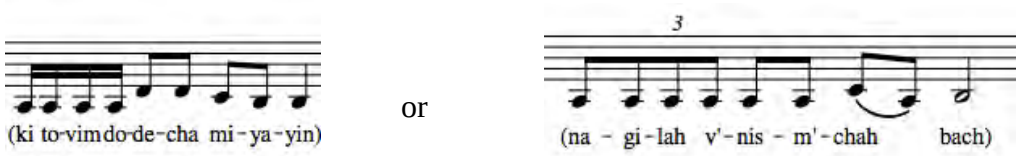
Although the trope in other cases does not necessarily define the melodic patterns, it seems that there are places in which special, less frequent trope is sung in an embellished and expressive manner, such as the use of *Kadmah VeAzlah* and *Revi'ee*:

[75] הֱבִיאַנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ חֲדָרָיו

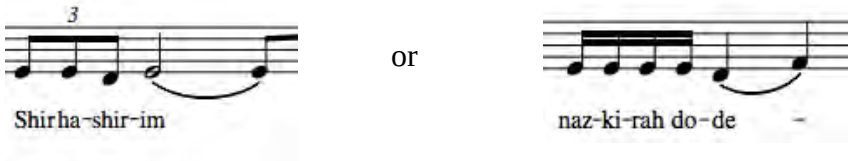


[71] Song of Songs 1:1
[72] Song of Songs, 1:2
[73]Song of Songs, 1:4
[74] Song of Songs,1:2
[75] Song of Songs, 1:4

In general, there are two patterns for an opening of a phrase that can be identified in Kehilat Zion's version of the Sepharad-Yerushalemi psalmody. The first consists of an opening of a pre-concluding phrase, usually sung by the congregation, beginning on the VII:



The opening of a concluding phrase happens on the IV and tends to move to the III:



Both outlines of opening phrases demonstrate the repetition of a dominant note in order to fit in a changing number of syllables. In the opening of a pre-concluding phrase, the repetition centers around the VII scale degree and in a concluding phrase around the IV.

The outline for the ending of both a pre-concluding and concluding phrases is a descending melody from III-II-I:

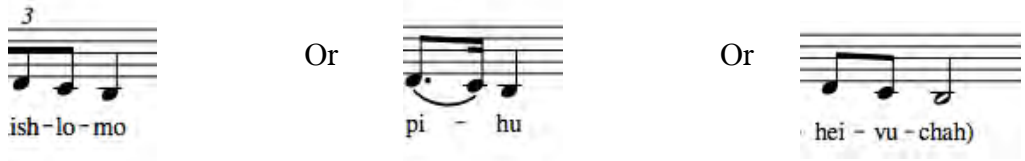
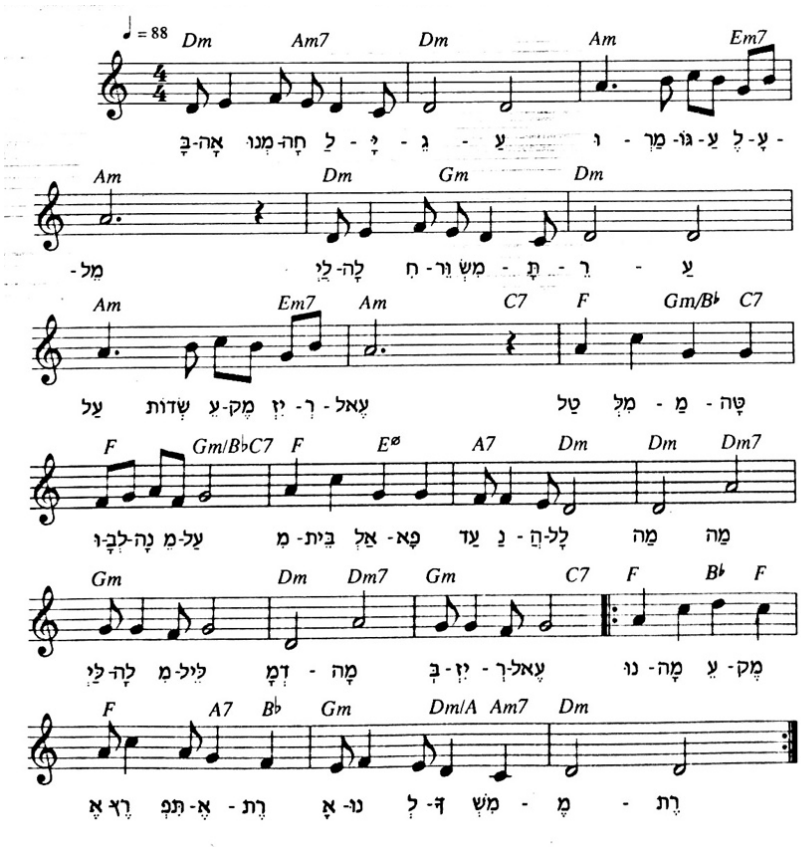


Table 2 Songs of Shabbat: Outline of the second section

Text	**Text Source**	**Musical Source**	**Performance**
"Shir HaEmek"	Nathan Alterman	Daniel Sambursky	Congregational
"Yedid Nefesh"	Rabbi Elazar Ben Moshe Azikri	Leonard Cohen (melody of the song "Hallelujah")	Congregational
Verses from Psalms (In French)	Psalm 62:2-3	Unknown	An offering by guest priest (solo)

This section generally includes traditional and other sources (mostly piyyutim and songs of the land of Israel) that encompass the notion of Shabbat and help prepare the congregation spiritually for reciting Kabbalat Shabbat.

"Shir HaEmek" is an iconic song from the canon of Israeli folk music, composed by Daniel Sambursky in 1934 for the film *"L'chayim Chadashim,"* a documentary film of the JNF on life in a Kibbutz. Sambursky appeared in the movie, accompanying his song *"Shir HaEmek"* on the piano. The scene was filmed in the dining hall of a Kibbutz in a valley in northern Israel, "Emek Yizre'el," turning the song into a symbol of the beauty of the land and recognizing the hard labor that went into the founding of the state.



Notation No. 4:

גיל אלדמע, נתן שחר, "**ספר השירים לתלמיד: מילים תווים ודברי רקע**", תל-אביב: הספריה למוסיקה ע"ש נסימוב מס' 374, 1995, ע"מ 140.

"Shir HaEmek" does not explicitly relate to Shabbat. The final verse that was not sung at Kehilat Zion reviles the tragedy of blood shed on the land. Perhaps the choice to include the iconic song in Kabbalat Shabbat comes from the text of the chorus: "the weary come to rest as their labor ends," that connects thematically to Shabbat as a day of rest. Another explanation could be the agenda to include a well-known secular piece relatable for a wide spectrum of Israelis.

The next piece, "*Yedid Nefesh*," continued to reflect the congregation's desire to appeal to a wide audience by introducing a popular western melody, the tune of the song "Hallelujah" by Leonard Cohen, paired with the traditional text of the piyyut. The pairing of Leonard Cohen's melody to the traditional liturgy has become a trend among liberal congregations in recent years, mostly with the text of Psalm 150. In this example the relationship between the popular melody and traditional liturgy is not thematic, but rather an association of a famous Jewish singer and a song that tells the story of a biblical character, King David.

Closing this section was a musical offering by a Christian clergyperson in French. The melody of Psalm 62:2-3 that was shared can be categorized as part of the awakening of Christian music in the Catholic Church in the early 1960s. While this unusual offering is not a regular part of the repertoire of Kabbalat Shabbat at Kehilat Zion, it stays true to their goal of modeling tolerance and cultural diversity.

Table 3 Kabbalat Shabbat: Outline of the third section:

Text	Text Source	Musical Source	Performance
"Lechu Neranena"	Psalm 95	Nusach based on Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach	**Opening verse:** congregational into silent chant. **Closing verse:** cantor solo into congregational
"Moshe V'Aharon"	Excerpt from Psalm 99	Nusach based on Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach	Cantor solo, congregation. From "BeAmud Anan"
"Mizmor L'David"	Psalm 29	Sefarad-Yerushalmi nusach	Congregational (standing)
"Lecha Dodi"	Rabbi Shlomo Halevi Alkabets	**Vs 1-5:** Sefarad-Yerushalmi melody **Vs. 6-8:** Turkish melody **Vs. 9:** "Erev Shel Shoshanim" music: Yosef Hadar, lyrics: Moshe Dor	Congregational
"Mizmor Shir"		Sefarad-Yerushalmi Nusach	Congregational
"Adonai Malach"		Ibid.	Congregational

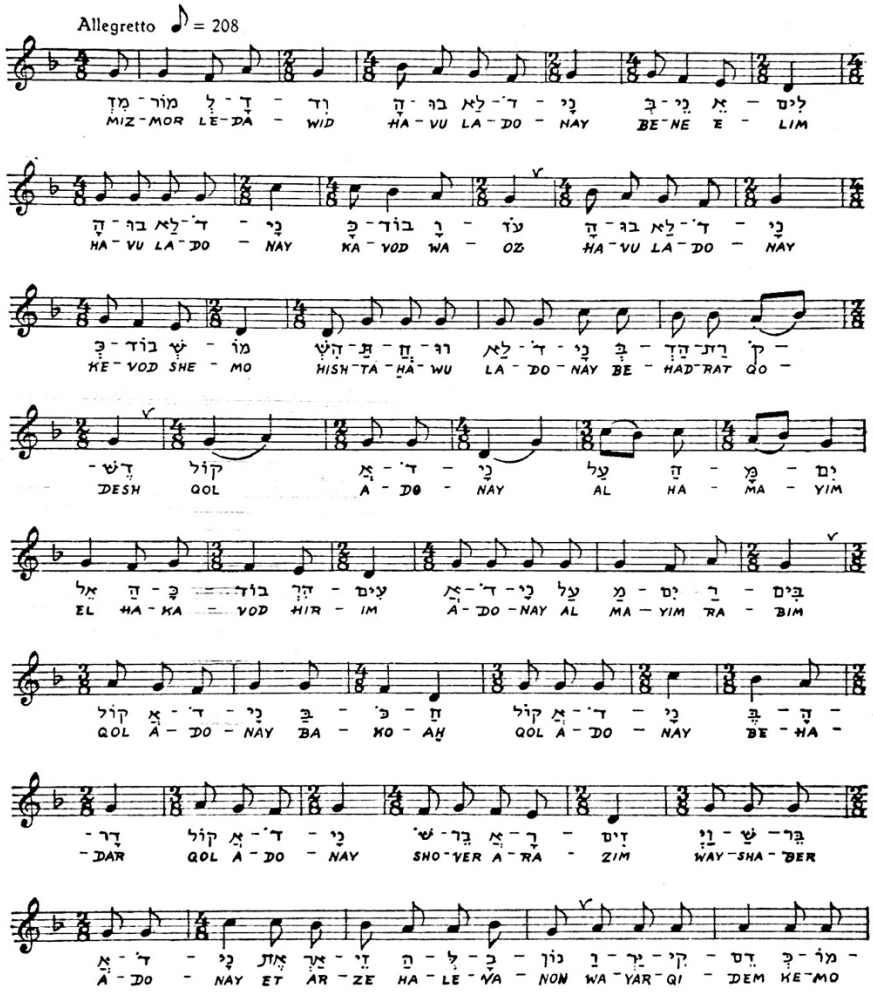
This section focuses on reciting the six traditional palms prior to Lecha Dodi and the two psalms that follow Lecha Dodi.

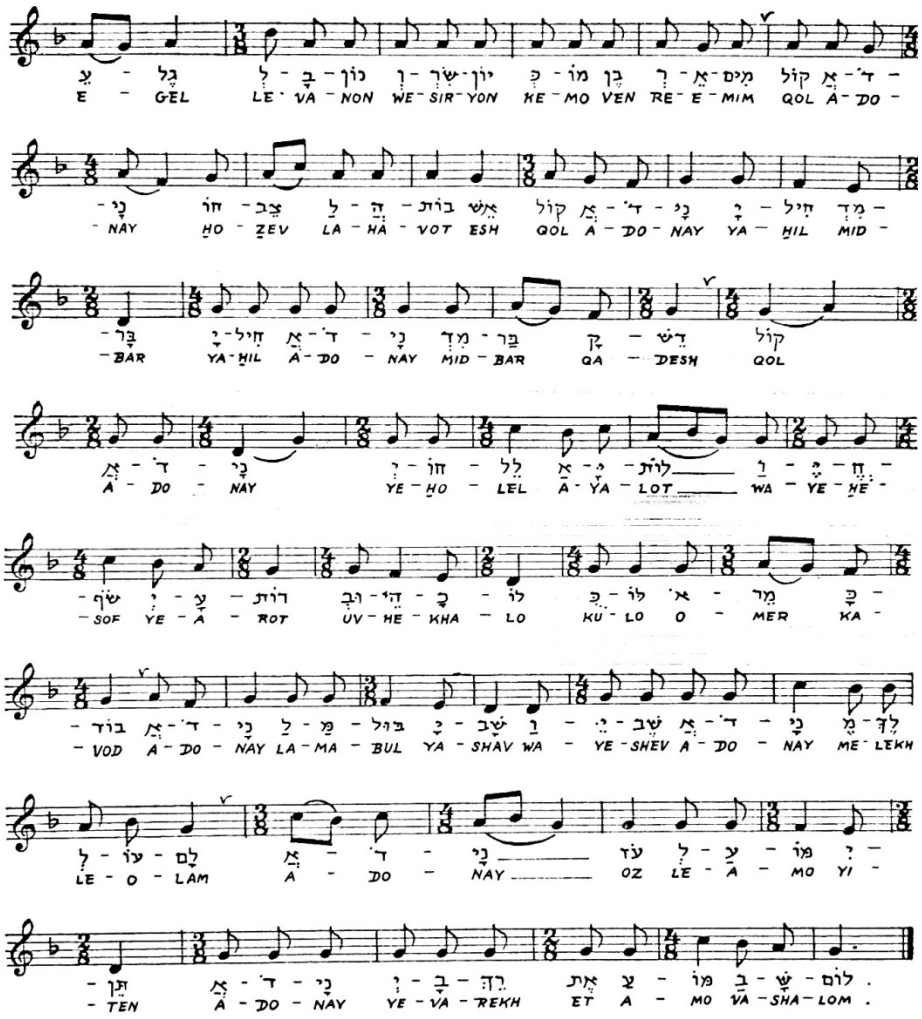
Although the rabbi prefers not to sing Carlebach melodies, as discussed in previous chapters, psalm 95[76] and psalm 99[77] were sung in a tune associated with Rabbi Carlebach. It is unclear whether Carlebach composed this *nusach* or recorded a Chassidic version he heard elsewhere. There is a known Chassidic tradition to sing psalm 99 in the Ahavah Rabah mode as Carlebach

[76] "Lechu Neranena - Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach," YouTube, accessed October 24, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Uigo_ZA2oA&t=9s.
[77] "Moshe Ve'aharon - Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach," YouTube, accessed October 24, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-WAC2ppgXQ.

recorded, for instance. It is also unclear if the clergy and congregation are aware that this nusach was made popular by Carlebach's recording and is associated with him. Nevertheless, when Kehilat Zion chose to sing an Ashkenazi nusach in Kabbalat Shabbat they referred to a Carlebach style of worship. Perhaps they were merely drawing inspiration from Carlebach *minyanim* that offer highly approachable congregational prayer and have become popular in Israel, rather than drawing inspiration from Carlebach as a composer of original Chassidic music.

Psalm 29 that follows was sung according to the Sepharad-Yerushalmi psalmody, as documented by Issac Levy:



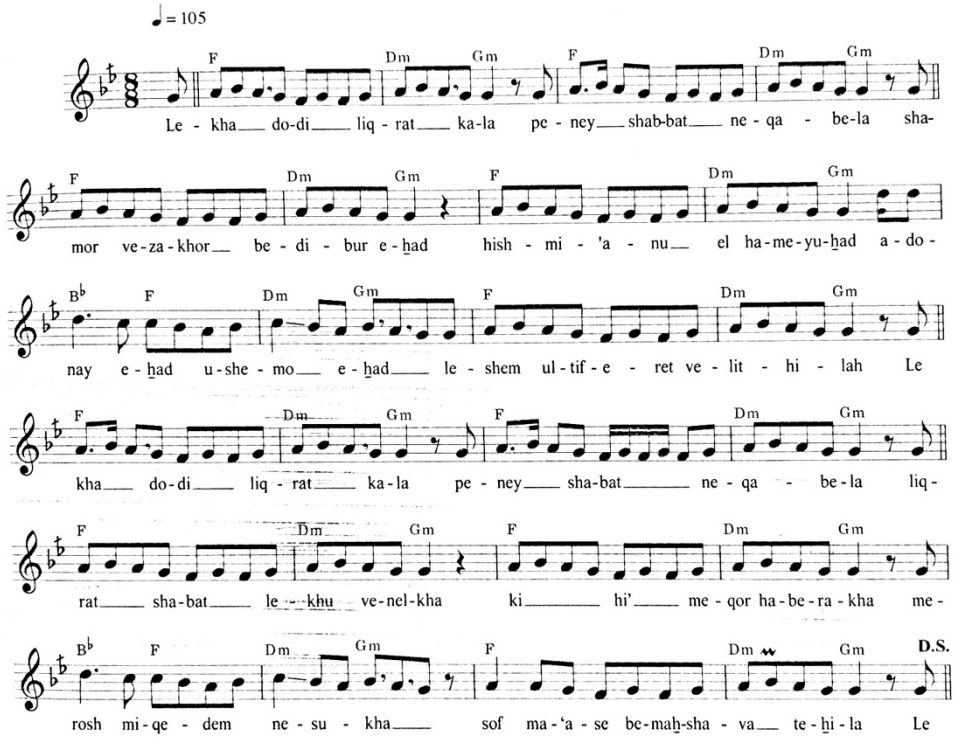


Notation No. 5:

יצחק לוי, **אנתולוגיה של חזנות ספרדית**, ירושלים: בהוצאת המחבר, כרך א׳, עמ׳ 36-35.

As is customary in Sepharad-Yerushalmi synagogues, at Kehilat Zion they rise for "*Mizmor L'David"* in honor of the seven aspects of God's voice mentioned in the psalm. This traditional version of the psalm has a unique, uneven, and captivating rhythmic pattern that is easy to follow. Thus, it has become popular to sing the psalm in unison in Sephardic congregations as well as at Kehilat Zion. The distinct rhythm is the staple of the piece, creating a liturgical peak of ecstatic singing.

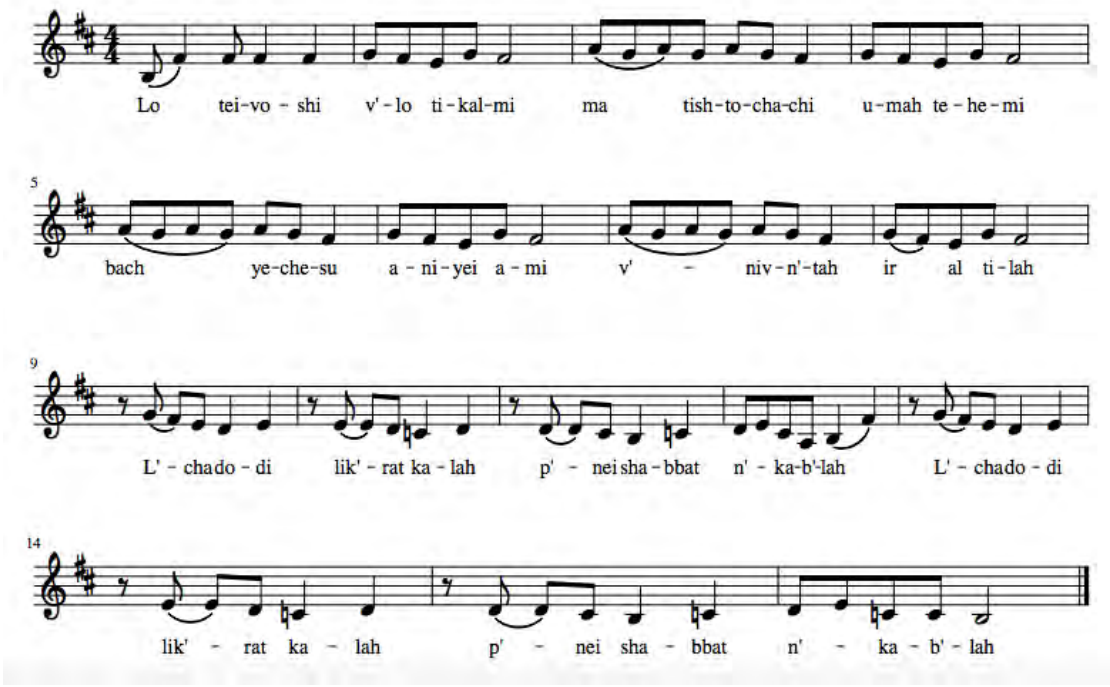
The Sefarad-Yerushalmi custom is to remain standing for the piyyut *"Lecha Dodi."* In Kehilat Zion they were seated after psalm 29 but preserved the Sepharad-Yerushalmi traditional melody for *"Lecha Dodi"*:



Notation No. 6:

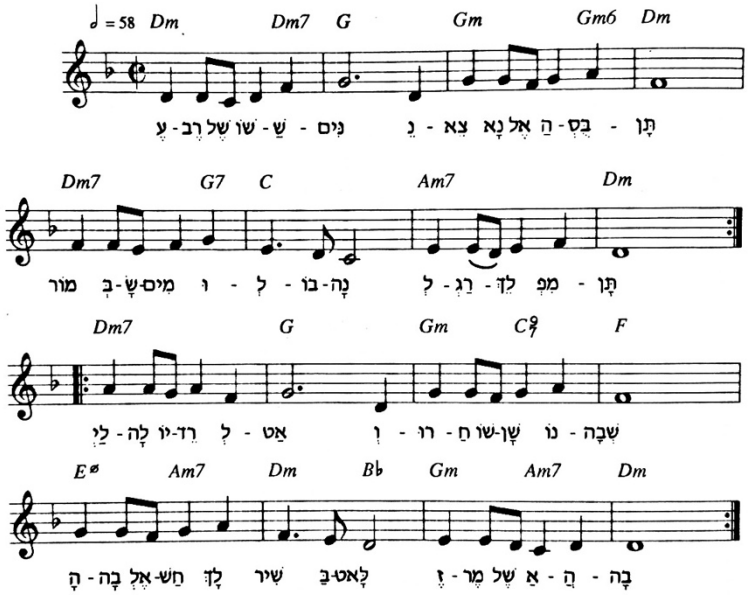
אורי קרויזר ויאיר הראל, **מאה ואחד פיוט: לכל עת | לשבת | למעגל החיים | למעגל השנה,** ירושלים: הזמנה לפיוט ועמותת סנונית, תשע"ז (2017), עמ' 96.

On the sixth verse they changed the tune, as is customary in Chassidic congregations. They did not use a Chassidic melody, but an upbeat congregational Turkish melody:



Notation No. 7: "לכה דודי" Turkish Melody, edit: Cantor Sarah Grabiner.

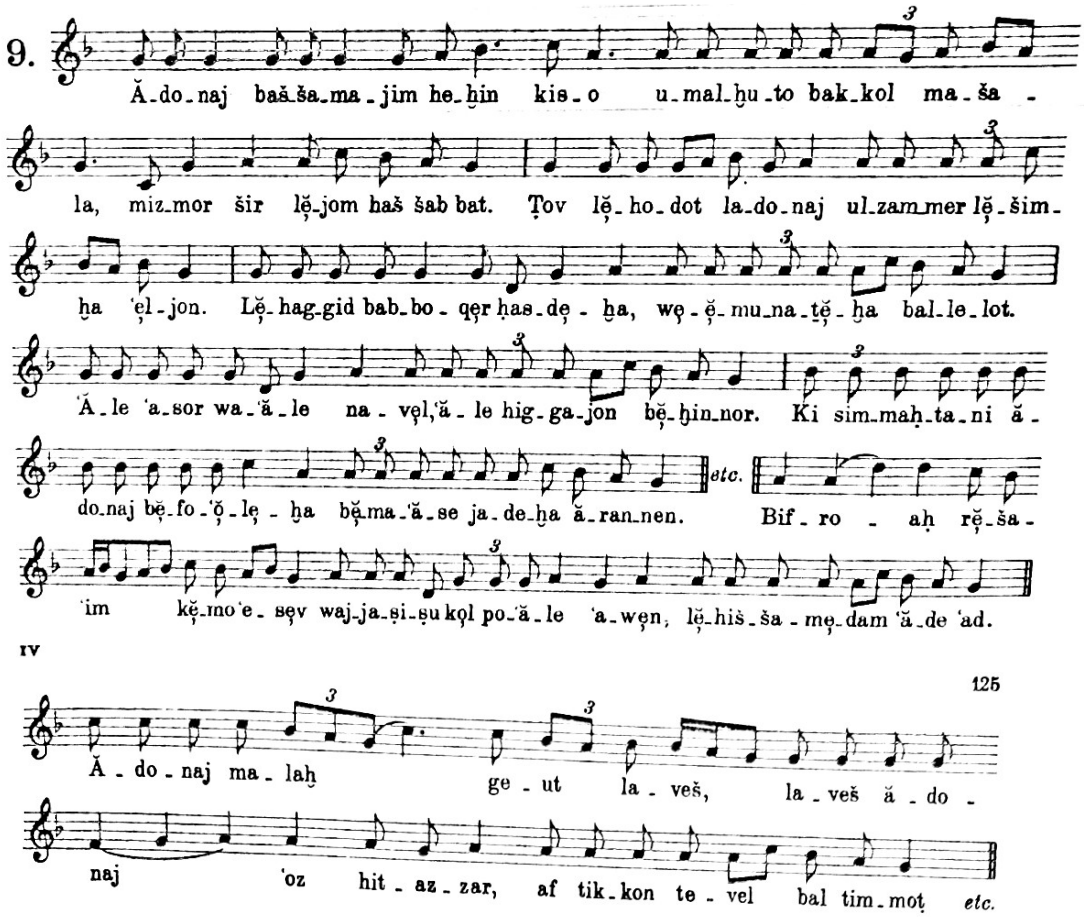
On the last verse they chose to sing the melody of the hit Israeli song from the 1950s *"Erev Shel Shoshanim"* words by Moshe Dor, melody by Yosef Hadar, referencing the traditional Kabbalat Shabbat theme of love in a way relevant to Israelis:



Notation No. 7:

גיל אלדמע, נתן שחר, "**ספר השירים לתלמיד: מילים תווים ודברי רקע**", תל-אביב: הספריה למוסיקה ע"ש נסימוב מס׳ 374, 1995, ע"מ 49.

Finally, Kabbalat Shabbat was concluded with the recitation of the two final Psalms, 92-93, according to the traditional Sepharad-Yerushali psalmody, transcribed by Abraham Zvi Idelsohn:



Notation No. 8: Abraham Zvi Idelsohn, *Gesänge der orientalischen Sefaradim*, Hebräisch-orientalischer Melodienschatz vol. IV, Berlin: Benjamin Harz, 1932, pp. 124-125.

To conclude, analyzing Kabbalat Shabbat at Kehilat Zion helps bring to life the community's ideological discussion, historical background, and structure. Through Kabbalat Shabbat one can experience in less than an hour the rich blend between east and west, past and present, tradition and renewal, Judaism and other religions, and so much more creating a new approach to prayer in Israel with the potential to attract many different types of Israelis.

Conclusion

As an Israeli clergyperson-in-training, I believe that sh'lichei tzibur in Israel need to be immersed in a variety of musical traditions, especially in Ashkenazi and Mizrachi Jewish music. The liberal communities we serve are far more diverse than they were in the past, attracting Israelis from a range of different cultural origins and identities. Thus, the task of creating inclusive sacred communities is an urgent and relevant matter that must be addressed by clergy.

It seems that Kehilat Zion has found ways to effectively engage their community in a multi-cultural prayer service without compromising its integrity. Their model provides an example for other communities seeking greater inclusivity. My hope is that my thesis will help to provide practical tools for communities and clergy beyond the theoretical content introduced.

We can learn from Kehilat Zion's unique approach to prayer, with its foundation of a wide musical team of clergy members working closely together under the rabbi's leadership. Congregants are provided with spiritual inspiration from diverse clergy models, including the distinctive perspective of their payy'tanim. The diverse leadership is in sync in their willingness to embrace multiple cultures and commitment to honoring and preserving them. Both congregants and clergy are partners in creating a culture of change that enables all members to be part of a highly creative and innovative prayer experience.

We can draw inspiration from their wide selection of repertoire that flows seamlessly due to their strong foundation and clear vision for the liturgy, as mentioned above. The many cultures represented in less than an hour of Kabbalat Shabbat feel part of one sacred language, enabling

one sacred space for many traditions and identities to be elevated in prayer. The public is thereby offered a new understanding of the potential of Israeli prayer.

While this topic focused on Israel's social climate, I believe that it is relevant for the wider Jewish community. There will always be reasons for the Jewish people to be divided; there is not one Jewish community that does not face the challenge of diversity. Finding a common sacred language and space that can help us understand one another is essential. Learning how to embrace and conduct a multicultural prayer experience is relevant to us all.

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