HEBREW UNION COLLEGE - JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
NEW YORK SCHOOL

INSTRUCTIONS FROM AUTHOR TO LIBRARY FOR THESIS

AUTHOR: ROSALIE WILL BOXT

TITLE: CANTORS AND CAMPERS: BRINGING YOUTH INTO THE WORSHIP SERVICE

TYPE OF THESIS:

RABBINIC ( ) SSM (X) D.H.L. ( )

D.MIN. ( ) M.A.R.E. ( ) M.A.J.S. ( )

1. (X) May be used without my written permission.

2. ( ) My written permission is required for use during the next ___ years.

Note: The Library shall respect restrictions placed on theses for a period of no more than ten years.

I understand that the Library may make a photocopy of my thesis for security purposes.

3. The Library may sell photocopies of my thesis. ___ yes X no

1/30/01
Date

Rosalie Will Boxt
Signature of Author

.....

THE KLAU LIBRARY
HEBREW UNION COLLEGE
JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
BROOKDALE CENTER
ONE WEST FOURTH STREET
NEW YORK, NY 10012

LIBRARY RECORD

Microfilmed: _____
Date

_____
Signature of Library Staff Member

March 5, 1996

Cantors and Campers: Bringing Youth into the Worship Service

Rosalie Will Boxt

Jewish camping builds Jewish identity and Jewish community; the music of camp is a primary catalyst for that community building. Numerous factors of the camp's musical experience can be used to build Jewish identity and community in our congregations. The goal of this thesis is to answer the following questions: How does the music of camp communicate meaning? How does it represent the individual and the community, as well as express their values and behaviors? What elements of the camp experience can be used in synagogue worship?

The phenomenon of camp, and of the community it fosters, is influenced most powerfully by the musical moments which occur there. When campers participate in singing as a group, the value of shared experience, particularly a shared Jewish experience, is communicated best. My goal with this work is to provide an understanding of the way in which the music sung at camp influences Reform Jewish Youth by building community. Furthermore, I will show that the musical aspects of community-building that work at camp can be used also in synagogue worship.

I, personally, bridge two worlds: the cantorate and camp. I am now in cantorial school but I have known the power of camp community. In fact the music of that experience was primary in my decision to become a cantor. My congregational work has also led me to believe that creating community through worship is essential. I will examine how my camp experience can be used to provide a congregation with a community that prays together instead of separately.

There are five parts involved in this study. First, I look at the role of camp in identity formation, exploring the ways in which youth are influenced to identify positively as committed Jews. In Chapter 2, I examine the impact of music on the creation of Reform camp community, by investigating music's role in fostering societal relationships. Using ethnomusicological research of African communities, I explain the relationship between hierarchical structures and the dynamics of group singing. The chapter also includes interviews with three teenagers who had camp or youth-group experiences, to demonstrate how the music of those experiences has influenced who they are as Jews. By documenting and interpreting the experiences of these individuals, I illustrate how they construct identity and meaning.

Chapter 3 presents an ethnomusicological analysis of the relationship of youth music to the secular music that influenced its development in the 1960s and 1970s. An important aspect of Jewish youth music lies in its relationship to secular music, and teenagers' desire to merge the secular with the holy. In Chapter 4, I look at how music functions to build community in worship, by exploring such elements as text, rhythm, location and set-up, and mood. These factors explain the effect music at camp particularly has upon community-building. Finally, in the last chapter I suggest ways in which the *shaliach tzibur* can make connections with youth through the music of the synagogue. I posit that the elements of community-building do not apply only to camp settings, but can be used with *nusach*, art music, and congregational melodies. Many professionals already recognize the tension between the experiences many teenagers have at summer camps and their perceptions of the music of their synagogues. The goal of this final section is to struggle with ways in which cantors can utilize summer camp insights

without necessarily sacrificing the tasteful music that exemplifies Jewish musical tradition. I recommend ways in which adults and teens can be engaged in synagogue worship together. and urge cantors to become more involved in the musical development of teens, both in the congregation and at camp. This connection will give cantors exposure to the musical and communal experiences that are definitive for teens, thereby facilitating the needed education of our youth.

My thesis in short is this: Jewish camping builds Jewish identity and Jewish community; the music of camp is a primary catalyst for that community-building. Numerous factors of camp's musical experience can be used to build Jewish identity and community in our congregations as well. The separation that exists between the music of camp and of the synagogue should be minimized or even eliminated, through knowledge of the power of camp's musical experience, developed by the cantor's increased involvement in camp.

Cantors and Campers: Bringing Youth into the Worship Service

Rosalie Will Boxt

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

Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion
School of Sacred Music
New York, New York

6 Sh'vat 5761/January 30, 2001
Advisors: Dr. Lawrence Hoffman and Dr. Mark Kligman

Contents

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to my advisor Dr. Lawrence Hoffman for his ceaseless support and encouragement. Much of the spirit behind this work was inspired by him and his work with Synagogue 2000. His honesty showed me how much he cared for me and my work and without it I might have given up. I also must thank Dr. Mark Kligman, who helped me to focus, and provided more enthusiasm for my work than I could have imagined. I can't thank Cantor Benjie Ellen Schiller enough for years of guidance and love, and a true understanding of camp's importance in my life.

To those individuals who gave of their time to speak with me; Zoe Jacobs, Callie Souther, Caryn Roman, Rabbi Ramie Arian and Merri Arian, and Rabbi Allan Smith, I thank you. I have to thank Merri Arian for brainstorming with me and always expressing concern and care.

I would not be the song-leader I am today; I would not understand teenagers and love working with them if Rabbi Robbie Weiner had not taught me almost everything I know. There is no one I consider more an expert on youth and song-leading than he. He is a dear friend, a wonderful colleague, and my true song-leading partner. Cantor Ellen Dreskin has been my guide and friend, the inspiration behind my desire to become a cantor, and an honest lover of youth and lover of music. And finally to my husband Jason, whose editing and wise contributions made this work possible. You have always supported me unequivocally and believed in everything I do. Thank you.

INTRODUCTION

In the Fall 1996 Issue of Reform Judaism, incoming President Eric Yoffie said, "Our camps kindle the fire of Judaism in our youth and reinforce a sense of Jewish identity that few other programs can match. At camp there is an organic Reform Jewish community 24 hours a day, where Judaism is not just a matter of formal study but infuses all aspects of life. If you ask high school seniors what was the most powerful Jewish experience of their lives, they invariably will cite the camping experience."[1] Jewish summer camp is an identity building, transformative Jewish experience. What makes camp powerful is the community created within a very short period of time. A community of youth, committed to each other and to Jewish values, is an extraordinary phenomenon.

Youth play a vital role in the Reform movement. They have always been at the forefront of political action, such as the fight for freedom of Soviet Jews in the 1980s, the increased awareness of AIDS and other infectious diseases, and the rights of gays and lesbians to equal rights in both the secular and religious landscape. Most of the movements for such social action arose from camp and youth-group programs in which young people banded together for a greater good. It is estimated that over half of the current student body of the Hebrew Union College have spent some amount of time at Jewish summer camps. The dedication of students to careers in the Jewish community attests to the power of their experiences as youth.

---

[1] *Reform Judaism,* "Rabbi Eric H. Yoffie: Teacher of Living Torah," Fall 1996.

The phenomenon of camp, and of the community it fosters, is influenced most powerfully by the musical moments which occur there. When campers participate in singing as a group, the value of shared experience, particularly a shared Jewish experience, is communicated best. My goal with this work is to provide an understanding of the way in which the music sung at camp influences Reform Jewish Youth by building community. Furthermore, I will show that the musical aspects of community-building that work at camp can be used also in synagogue worship.

I, personally, bridge two worlds: the cantorate and camp. I am now in cantorial school but I have known the power of camp community. In fact the music of that experience was primary in my decision to become a cantor. My congregational work has also led me to believe that creating community through worship is essential. I will examine how my camp experience can be used to provide a congregation with a community that prays together instead of separately. I will ask how the music of camp communicates meaning, how it represents both individual and community, expressing common values and behaviors, and which elements of the camp experience can be used in synagogue worship.

There are five parts involved in this study. First, I look at the role of camp in identity formation, exploring the ways in which youth are influenced to identify positively as committed Jews. In Chapter 2, I examine the impact of music on the creation of Reform camp community, by investigating music's role in fostering societal relationships. Using ethnomusicological research of African communities, I discuss the relationship between hierarchical structures and the dynamics of group singing. The chapter also includes interviews with three teenagers who had camp or youth-group experiences, to demonstrate how the music of those experiences has influenced who they

are as Jews. By documenting and interpreting the experiences of these individuals, I illustrate how they construct identity and meaning.

Chapter 3 presents an ethnomusicological analysis of the relationship of youth music to the secular music that influenced its development in the 1960s and 1970s. An important aspect of Jewish youth music lies in its relationship to secular music, and teenagers' desire to merge the secular with the holy. In Chapter 4, I look at how music functions to build community in worship, by exploring such elements as text, rhythm, location and set-up, and mood. These factors explain the effect music at camp particularly has upon community-building. Finally, in the last chapter I suggest ways in which the *shaliach tzibur* can make connections with youth through the music of the synagogue. I posit that the elements of community-building do not apply only to camp settings, but can be used with *nusach*, art music, and congregational melodies. Many professionals already recognize the tension between the experiences many teenagers have at summer camps and their perceptions of the music of their synagogues. The goal of this final section is to struggle with ways in which cantors can utilize summer camp insights without necessarily sacrificing the tasteful music that exemplifies Jewish musical tradition. I recommend ways in which adults and teens can be engaged in synagogue worship together, and urge cantors to become more involved in the musical development of teens, both in the congregation and at camp. This connection will give cantors exposure to the musical and communal experiences that are definitive for teens, thereby facilitating the needed education of our youth.

My thesis in short is this: Jewish camping builds Jewish identity and Jewish community; the music of camp is a primary catalyst for that community-building. Numerous factors of camp's musical experience can be used to build Jewish identity and

community in our congregations as well. The separation that exists between the music of camp and of the synagogue should be minimized or even eliminated, through knowledge of the power of camp's musical experience, developed by the cantor's increased involvement in camp.

Participation in the music of camp creates powerful community. Jewishly-motivated teen behavior, powerful sense of community, commitment to Jewish values, and a desire to be involved in *tikkun olam* are all furthered by the music in which people participate together. I hope to show the importance of this experience, and the most effective way in which to connect that experience to the ongoing life of the synagogue.

CHAPTER 1

IDENTITY FORMATION

Jewish professionals who study Jewish camping, particularly in the Reform Movement, recognize a strong connection between camp attendance and Jewish identity. The extent of that connection's significance is influenced by the diversity of experience, amount of time spent, and a variety of other competing experiences. However, regardless of those variables, the chances are that some amount of identity formation occurs for young people at Reform summer camps. Dr. Gary A. Tobin and Meryle Weinstein, editors of a booklet called "Jewish Camping," written for the Institute for Jewish and Community Research, are cautious in their estimate:

> There is little systematic study of Jewish camping, and Jewish identity and participation. The examination of Jewish demographic studies shows that while there is little difference in how former campers and non-campers feel about being Jewish, there is some evidence that those involved as a child in some form of Jewish overnight camp are more involved in Jewish life as an adult.[2]

But nonetheless, the two qualify this caution by saying:

> Much of what we think about Jewish camping comes from personal or professional experience, or anecdotal evidence. We assume that camping is one of the most enjoyable and meaningful ways to build a positive association with being Jewish. But our empirical knowledge of camping is very limited.[3]

Clearly, anecdotal evidence of positive camp impact is overwhelming even as empirical evidence is limited. But that limitation is due only to the lack of study.

---

[2] Dr. Gary A. Tobin and Meryle Weinstein, *Jewish Camping*, (San Francisco: Institute for Jewish and Community Research, 2000), 5.

[3] Ibid., 1.

Exemplary of this difficulty is a study conducted by the Institute for Jewish and Community Research, consisting of 105 interviews with professionals and lay leaders involved in Jewish camping in Baltimore, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Delaware, Atlanta, and Denver. The study demonstrated, among other things, the uncertainty of the very description of 'Jewish', as some camps with primary Jewish membership but limited Jewish education call themselves Jewish camps, while others do not. The respondents in those cities were not asked uniform questions, and the populations had different opinions as to what constituted a Jewish camp. Research of camp alumni to determine the degree that camps influence identity growth and Jewish involvement has yet to occur.

The lack of available empirical research notwithstanding, "it is believed that a quality Jewish overnight camping experience is a powerful force for building Jewish community involvement."[4] The enjoyable learning settings that typify summer camps provide an ideal environment for nurturing Jewish values and good feelings about being Jewish. A large body of anecdotal evidence exists to substantiate the fact that experience at Jewish camp as a child can be associated with adult Jewish identity and commitment, as measured by affiliation with a synagogue and Jewish community center, participation in philanthropic activity, ritual observance, and potential work as a Jewish communal professional.[5]

---

[4] Tobin and Weinstein, 1.

[5] Ibid., 11.

Jewish camping goes back to the 1920's, when camp was seen as a safe summer haven for European immigrants escaping the rough New York streets. Even then, camps taught young Jews important values and religious ideas. Jenna Weissman Joselit, as Guest Curator of the National Museum of Jewish History's 1993 exhibit called "A Worthy Use of Summer: Jewish Summer Camping in America," maintains that Jewish camping was already the most successful way to inspire and transform young Jewish lives. Originally limited to the very rich or very poor, the attraction of Jewish summer camp became universal in the 1930s, transcending class and political boundaries. "The summer camp was uniformly hailed as the most successful instrument for inspiring and remaking individual young Jewish lives.... While not every American Jewish child attended camp, or even wanted to, universal attendance was potentially within reach of every Jewish family."[6] From the 1920s to the 1950s, now considered the heyday of Jewish camping, hundreds of Jewish camps sprang up, taking children aged six through sixteen out of the "temptations of city life" and putting them in a kind of *shtetl*, where Jews and Jewish values were central.[7] Camp was seen as an unprecedented opportunity for building both character and community.

In the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, however, the nature of the Jewish community and the perceived need for Jewish camps changed. Jews abandoned urban centers for the suburbs, leaving behind their immigrant mentality as well. Whereas immigrants wanted their children to learn how to become Americans while retaining Jewish values, the Jews of the suburbs too had to focus upon acculturation, on becoming true Americans, living

---

[6] Jenna Weissman Joselit and Karen S. Mittelman, eds., *A Worthy Use of Summer*, (Philadelphia: National Museum of Jewish History, 1993), 15.

[7] Ibid.

among their Christian neighbors. But by moving to the suburbs, the pull of a tightly woven Jewish community was lost. Jewish parents wanted their children to participate in local activities that integrated them with their non-Jewish neighbors, as opposed to sending them off to a religious camp. The safety of the suburbs was another factor in the decline of camp. Absent the fear of the city streets that the immigrant generations had experienced, suburban Jews felt comfortable allowing their children to play in the neighborhood streets. As camp attendance waned, however, commitment of Jewish youth to their Jewish community decreased as well.

In response to the declining attendance at Jewish camps since the 1950s, the Foundation for Jewish Camping was recently created. A portion of its Mission Statement reads:

> Excellent Jewish Camps are powerful vehicles for building Jewish identity and commitment. They have the ability to impact positively and dramatically on the Jewish development of large numbers of young people, potentially reaching more young people than any other program of comparable effectiveness.[8]

The Foundation researches the effectiveness of Jewish camping, raises awareness of the importance of camp experiences, and develops funding to increase the support of the camping movement. At the heart of the success of camping, the Foundation asserts, are the following benefits:

---

[8] Ramie Arian, "Jewish Camping: A Critical Need & A Historic Opportunity" Promotional Materials, (New York, NY: Foundation for Jewish Camping, Inc., 1999), [3].

- High-impact experiences create intense learning opportunities
- Raw teaching time exists more than in similar experiences
- Attendance occurs at young ages; identity imprint is "early and strong"
- Repeated impact is effective for those who do not attend day schools
- Community and peer group are critical in the teenage years for identity formation
- Experiential education is effective: We remember 10% of what we hear, 50% of what we see, 80% of what we *do*
- Camping populations reach beyond Hillel, Israel, Day Schools
- Population diversity represents a wide range of interests, and geographic and denominational sectors
- Proof of track-record is found in the large proportion of lay and professional Jewish leaders who can "trace the beginning of their Jewish commitment to their summers at camp"[9]

The Foundation identifies a particularly strong positive correlation between attendance at Jewish sleep-away camp and Jewish identity. Crucial to young people from communities where Jews are the minority, the summer months allow total immersion in a vibrant Jewish community, similar to the "*shtetl* experience" that Joselit describes. Finally, the connection between camp experience and active involvement in the Jewish community cannot be ignored. According to the Foundation's research, a 1996 study found that a majority of lay-leaders had been engaged in Jewish living through youth activities, youth focussed leaders, and youth leadership opportunities.[10]

Teenage years and the early 20s are equally critical for identity formation. As older campers, counselors, and staff, Jewish teens and young adults benefit from experiences which build their identity and commitment to the community. The more intense the experience, the greater the impact. Intensity is created by an integral community, a natural social group, an internal 'private' language and established norms

---

[9] Arian, [7].

[10] Ibid., [16].

of behavior. Campers learn how to function in a tightly knit, closed and full-time community, which fosters cooperation, understanding and communication, and allows for experimentation with a variety of levels of value formation and religious commitment. The participants learn to care about one another and to care about their Jewish identity.

CHAPTER 2

COMMUNITY

Building Community at Camp

An apt analogy for the nature of camp community is made by both the Foundation for Jewish Camping and Sheldon Posen, the director of Folklife Research and Consulting in Ottawa, Canada. Both Posen and the Foundation compare camping experiences to descriptions of Jewish life found in biblical and rabbinic texts. The Foundation points out that Jews have had "'camping' experiences from the beginning. The Bible uses the idea of camp as we do – as an 'outdoorsy' closed community where participants interact closely with one another in isolation from the outside world." In the biblical camps, identity was learned and values forged. The biblical words *machaneh* (camp) and *vayachanu* (they camped) relate to the word *chanah* (to be covered, surrounded, to encamp or to rest). The *Tanach* mentions the words *camp, camped,* or *encamp* 307 times, while the Talmud mentions them 480 times. "Midrash understands that the choice of a wilderness setting, away from the influence of foreign society, was a deliberate and important factor in our development as a people."[11] The biblical community's "camp" experience provided a close community, which the Midrash identifies as an environment removed from society and a venue for the people to spend time evolving as a community.

Not only were the people involved in an environment that was removed from external societal pressures; they were also able to create transformative moments as a people there. While encamped in the desert, the Israelites move from a people enslaved

[11] Arian, [18].

to a people who understand freedom and behave as a free society should. The Rabbis teach that after the Exodus from Egypt, the Israelites were forced to wander in the desert for 40 years in order to re-teach the people how to behave as a community, free from the enslavement of Egypt. They had to experience a transformation from a people with a slave mentality to a group of individuals who could work for the good of the community. The completion of successful transformation allowed them to receive Torah and, subsequently, enter the Promised Land.

The belief that Jewish summer camp is transformative for the youth who participate in it stems from this understanding of the power of community suggested already by the Bible. Transformative moments occur to individuals surrounded by people experiencing a similar event. Powerful connections are made by the sharing of important moments. Is it the fact that one person can validate the experience another one had? Is it the sheer electric energy felt when a large group has a similar goal, desire, or a love of a particular venue? Conversely, one could argue that the power of a moment like the murder of John Lennon, or President John F. Kennedy, lies in the fact that we individually recall where we were when the events occurred. However, while we might have been alone when hearing of the tragedy, we were, in a sense, all "alone together," experiencing the event separately, but checking to see that others experienced it too. For it is in the recollection *to other people* of where one was that makes the event powerful.

Victor Turner uses the term *communitas* to refer to "a strong communal experience of identification with a group when an individual senses, even momentarily, a recognition of an essential and generic human bond."[12] A bond is made with others when

[12] Victor Turner, Liminality and *Communitas*, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 96.

discussing the memory of a news-breaking event, or by participating in a political rally. *Communitas* is one of two kinds of "human inter-relatedness" which Turner delineates. One is a hierarchical, societal model marked by structure and division. By contrast, *communitas* is camp: a social setting that is unstructured and undifferentiated. It is a community of equal individuals "who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders."[13] At camp, all participants are seen as equal, in that they have similar requirements of activities, living together, and behavioral expectations. Yet camp maintains an authority, through the camp director, counselor, or clergy, who take the role of ritual elders.

The importance of *communitas* lies in the development of peer relationships in contrast to the hierarchical adherence to differentiating rules and structure. A perfect example of *communitas* versus hierarchy can be found in the "literature and behavior of the hippie and beat generation, decades of powerful youth culture."[14] The hippie generation stressed personal relationships rather than social obligations. The actions and behavior of the youth were spontaneous, and thrived on immediacy. Individuals involved in *communitas* weigh consequences purely on the basis of interpersonal dynamics and response by peer group and friends, as opposed to larger societal rules or fear of consequence.

Not only does *communitas* focus on the interpersonal versus the societal, but, in its essence, it transcends the norms of society. Turner believes that *communitas* emerges

---

[13] Turner, 96.

[14] Ibid., 112.

precisely where social structure is not; "*Communitas* is of the now."[15] *Communitas* is held sacred because "it transgresses or dissolves the norms that govern structures and institutionalized relationships, and is accompanied by experiences of unprecedented potency."[16] The camp community creates *communitas* by dissolving norms of society. Camp contradicts the structures to which most youth are tied during the year. The family group is composed of rules, with a hierarchy based in the parental units. School is composed of a rigorous schedule, adherence to teachers' rules, and examinations. Informal youth life at home emphasizes a social network separating youth in the form of cliques, based upon wealth, extra-curricular activities, or popularity.

At camp, however, participants are placed in living situations, programs, and activities alongside peers with whom they might not have interacted back home. In addition, the rules for behavior and interaction are less structured. While the schedule contains assigned times for programs and curfew, the rules are malleable. Like *communitas*, camp emphasizes the responsibility for behavior and participation that lies primarily in the hands of the youth who participate. Campers in a bunk cannot be forced to become friends; instead the challenge rests upon the individuals to create their own community of care and respect. While this freedom does not always lead to model behavior, a specific lesson is taught to the participants: you are responsible for your community and for the members in it. The potency of *communitas* exists because of the expanded possibilities for experiences beyond normal rules and differentiation. Participants at camp are able to feel the "bond" Turner describes precisely because the

---

[15] Turner, 113.

[16] Ibid., 128.

experience is felt in a group. The camp environment does not automatically create community, but the situations and dynamics are in place to allow for the possibility of *communitas* to occur.

Turner finds a corollary to his idea of *communitas* in the work of Martin Buber, for whom community is not being side by side, or above and below, but *with*. "Community is where community happens."[17] That is to say, a group can only be a community, fulfill *communitas*, when the experience allows for the participants to feel the generic human bond Turner describes. Community does not occur automatically, when people are simply standing side by side in a group, even if they imagine that they are ignoring social structure and have no differentiation among them. Buber is saying that the potential for community occurs when an experience is shared by everyone in the group.

Music and Community

Rabbi Ramie Arian, himself a song-leader, teacher, and Director of the Foundation for Jewish Camping, points out that "times to sing publicly" are particularly powerful examples of community. He cites rock concerts, political events, and even a birthday party at a restaurant, as moments of community not to be trivialized. Group singing expresses the community's own awareness of itself.[18] Music concerts, political rallies, and motivational speakers are all powerful because the participants sense that they are individuals who have come together to create a single entity.

---

[17] Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man* (translated by R.G. Smith), (London and Glasgow: Fontana Library, 1961), 51 as quoted in Turner, 127.

[18] Interview with Ramie Arian, October 3, 2000.

The function of music in a camp community can be better understood by examining the way it creates a single community. An ethnomusicological analysis allows us to contextualize music by understanding its function. Alan Merriam explains, "Our interests here are not directed toward the distinctions people may make between major and minor thirds, for example, but rather toward what the nature of music is, how it fits into society as a part of the existing phenomena of life and how it is arranged conceptually by the people who use and organize it."[19] What makes my study of the music of camp an ethnomusicological one, versus one of pure music analysis, is that I will argue that group identity is as important a function, if not the most important function, music performs in Reform Jewish community.

According to ethnomusicologists, music represents more than just notated text and aesthetic value. John Blacking, who studied the children's music of the Venda, an African community, says, "Music is an expression of cultural realities. Therefore, although it can be enjoyed purely as sound, it can never be fully understood as such."[20] His study indicated that the Venda "classify the songs according to their social function, and make no comments on their musical characteristics."[21] The Venda's music expresses certain societal norms and activities, such as life-cycle events, momentous occasions, and trouble within the community. The participants in any given song (for example, boys and girls often have separate songs) and the venue in which they sing it,

---

[19] Alan Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music*, (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 63.

[20] John Blacking, *Venda Children' Songs: A Study in Ethnomusicological Analysis*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), 195.

[21] Ibid., 191.

are more indicative of the communal event than the musical aspects of the song. "Because in Venda society the sound of music is always the result of human activity, it expresses something about the human condition which is understood at various levels by those who are involved. ... It reaffirms and enhances the social meaning of the institutions that it embellishes."[22]

If the goal is to understand how music is an expression of cultural realities, we must look beyond the "sound value" (interpretation of notes and musicality) of given musical settings. Alan Lomax discusses the "process" of folk music in society and differentiates the function of the music from the music itself. One must be as acutely aware of a culture and its norms as one is about musical structure. He explains that "one of the functions of the sung communication is to define and reinforce the level of specificity which must efficiently organize interaction in a given society."[23] Before we look at the Reform Jewish camp and the role that music plays in that community, let us further examine the claim that "a culture's song performance style [represents] generalized aspects of its social and communications systems."[24]

The first thing music reveals about a culture is its values. David McAllester's research of the Navajo Indians illustrates how a "culture's general values are found in music and [how] these general values shape attitudes toward music as they shape other aspects of cultural behavior."[25] The editors *of Ethnomusicology and Modern Music*

---

[22] Blacking, 23.

[23] Alan Lomax, *Folk Song Style and Culture*, (Washington D.C.: American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1968), 138.

[24] Ibid., ix.

[25] Merriam, 248.

History concur; style is defined not as a collection of tunes, but as a collection of values that differentiate between what is or is not music, what is ours and not ours, proper and improper, bad and good.[26] A community's values can be expressed not only in what songs they choose to sing, but in what songs they discard. The discussion of values here does not refer to 'values' such as loving-kindness or charity to strangers. Instead, what these ethnomusicologists point out is that societal structures represent the values of the community's relationships. The music demonstrates those societal structures.

Lomax compares complex cultures to more simplistic ones in order to demonstrate that "some traits of song performance show a powerful relationship to features of social structure that regulate interaction in all cultures."[27] He says that song styles of complex cultures carry a lot of information, while songs from more simple cultures carry less. In other words, musical traits will mirror the society from which the music comes. For example, more complex cultures exhibit music with lengthy and complicated texts. The leader will enunciate the diction, while the text length may be seen as a measure of the importance of what the leader or specialist has to say. This specificity "preempts the communication space by thoughts, ideas, feelings, and needs of the leader."[28] On the other hand, cultures lower on the complexity scale will sing music with a higher proportion of nonsense syllables, cries, and shorter text. The leader in this case will slur consonants and repeat phrases. Lomax feels that these factors "allow for

---

[26] Stephen Blum, Philip V. Bohlman and Daniel M. Neuman, eds., *Ethnomusicology and Modern Music History*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 66.

[27] Lomax, 4.

[28] Ibid., 139.

group consensus to be maintained at a minimal level which might allows members of the group to fantasize freely (take liberties in expression) during a song performance."[29]

The notion that the structure of group dynamic is reflected in the type of music performed is significant. Music that focuses on the leader, using a high specificity of text and message, is indicative of a more complex culture in which commonality of group participation is secondary to individual differentiation. Music that encourages universal participation reflects a simpler cultural organization without complex differentiation of roles across class and function lines.

Song style thus reflects the nature of human relationship in a given culture.[30] For example, Lomax found solo singing more in cultures with unstable 'work teams' and a lot of differentiation between social roles and levels of task work. Conversely, cultures with a high level of group communication and group music betrayed a high level of non-compulsory community performance of community tasks.[31] These observations place communal participation in a context that allows us to understand the focus on group singing. In cultures for which group participation is the crucial element, the preferred music will be participational also.

---

[29] Lomax, 137.

[30] Ibid., 121.

[31] Ibid., 185.

In his travels around Africa and Asia, Lomax observed the relationship between societal structures and the style of music sung. He identifies the following models:

1. Interlocked: In "collecting" societies [gatherers], with no leaders, the individuals all sing at the same time, but independently in terms of melody, rhythm and harmony.
2. Simple social unison: In societies with little authority, someone may initiate a song, but the leader is lost, and all the members play the same role.
3. Overlap: In cultures with a "village chief" model, with a leader and a group, the two sing different parts. The leader competes with and responds to the group's part.
4. Simple Alternation: In societies with extra-local political control, (an external authority), Lomax found that the leader would sing and the chorus would respond. He noticed that this became the most popular way of organizing a chorus in Western Europe.
5. Solo and Explicit: All societies have some form of solo singing. However, the more differentiated the society, the more explicit the solos become. As structure increases, the nature of the solo depends on the degree to which differentiated leadership emerges. That is to say, the more strongly differentiated leadership role becomes, the more complicated the individual solos become and the ability for just anyone to sing decreases.[32]

These models provide an important comparison between political structure and musical participation. The last model for instance – solo and explicit – focuses on the complexity of the solo and the individual solo singer as a function of the level of social

[32] Lomax, 156-159.

hierarchy. These models will be helpful as we examine more closely the political dynamic of the camp community, as well as the structure of the synagogue.

It is unclear, though, which comes first, the societal model or the musical style. In other words, does communal singing lead a group to become more community-oriented and less hierarchical? Or does the lack of hierarchy foster music that allows the entire group to participate? It would appear from the ethnomusicological research that societies that operate a certain way, communicate similarly. It seems unlikely that members of a highly structured society would be able to break into song collectively if someone simply asked them to try it. If the members usually operate in a highly hierarchical model, it will be difficult to make music that contradicts that model. The music of a group is going to mirror the values and norms of behavior in that group's social structure.

What is clear, at the very least, is that communal music substantiates a community with low hierarchic expectations by confirming the equality of the group. The power of the music lies less in its own compositional merit than it does in its function as community-builder.

Power of Music at Camp

Sheldon Posen relates the experience of the ancient Israelites camping in the wilderness, mentioned earlier in this chapter, to a modern-day camp and music's role there.

> In a sense, camp for Jewish children was akin to the Israelites' sojourn in the desert after Egypt: it removed the children for a delimited time from their accustomed environment so that they might have an intense, culturally renewing experience. At camp, a significant portion of that experience was packaged or given expression in song.[33]

During the many years that I have been involved in Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) camps as a song-leader, I have come to recognize what many people in similar settings have already realized: the music of camp is a powerful tool for involvement and connection. It is important to explain at this point that references will be made in this work to the "music *of* or *at* camp," as opposed to "camp music." The distinction is necessary because the language used discussing this subject matter can often be misunderstood. At issue is style and venue. Of course, much of the music of camp was written expressly for a camp environment. Calling it music *of* camp, however, defines it in a way that allows it to be used outside of the camp environment as well. "Music of camp" is music that is used at camp, regardless of its style, even if it was composed for a different venue. "Camp music" refers to a particular camp style that is used only at camp, while the "music of camp," because it includes music written for camp as well as *nusach*, Israeli melodies, synagogue tunes and so forth, implies that the music includes a variety of genres. Separating "camp music" from "music of camp" allows us to imagine more than one style being used at camp, and the same music being

---

[33] Joselit, 35.

used in synagogue. The issue will be the effect the music has on the individuals and community at camp, as opposed to a value placed on any particular musical compositions themselves.

A camp counselor from Camp Kinderland is quoted in *A Worthy Use of Summer* as saying "Music and camp are inseparable." Music occurs everywhere – on hikes, at the start of programs, in and out of the dining room, on buses, and at campfires. Sheldon Posen notes, "The result was that summer camp became one of North American culture's most prolific settings for both structured and spontaneous group singing by children and adults!"[34] To recognize the intrinsic connection between music and camp is to begin to understand that the environment in which music is presented, taught, and enjoyed is integral to the success of building Jewish identity.

The music in the camp community is powerful precisely because it fosters a group dynamic. Those who remember the music of the camp they attended as a child believe they were personally transformed because of the music. The transformation, however, occurred because of the communal environment in which they experienced that music. Margo Bloom reports reflections about camp reunions by men in their 40s, 50s, 60s, and 70s. At the reunions they sang camp songs together, telling the interviewer that their summers at camp "remained the most meaningful and profound experiences of their lifetime."[35] The fact that the reunions were full of the singing of camp songs, thirty or forty years after the fact, speaks to the power of that music and the lasting bond between them that it created.

---

[34] Joselit, 30.

[35] Ibid., 1.

Group singing, particularly in Jewish settings, has a powerful impact on Jews' connection to their history and tradition. Rabbi Eugene B. Borowitz says, "Communal singing [is] ... expressive of Judaism. In ensemble singing the individual is linked to his brothers in a community of effort and action which is indicative of what we mean when we speak of ours being a community religion."[36] One thing can be said of the music at camp: it is participatory, and expresses the "community religion" of which Borowitz speaks. "Participatory music," says Edward Henry, an ethnographer of Indian music, "is music in which ideally everyone present participates. It constitutes a type of commune: a song of this type is a framework for a cooperative social process which joins musically untrained individuals in immediate, tangible relationships with one another."[37]

Judith Marie Kubicki's study of the role of music as ritual symbol articulates this phenomenon.

> The effectiveness of symbols depends not on the extent to which they are rationally grasped and understood, but more importantly on the extent to which a person or persons are *involved in them*. Participation in the symbol is what determined the possibility of insight and interaction (emphasis mine).[38]

---

[36] Wally Schachet-Briskin, " The Music of Reform Youth" (Masters' Thesis, Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, 1996), 9.

[37] Angela Warnick Buchdahl. "Music and Identity at Temple Emanu-El, B'nai Jeshurun, and Chavurat Tikvah" (Masters' Thesis, Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, 1999), 68.

[38] Judith Marie Kubicki, "The Role of Music as Ritual Symbol in Roman Catholic Liturgy," *Worship*. 69:5 (Sept. 1995) as cited in Buchdahl, 77.

Again, one can see that transformation will occur more readily if experienced in a group than if felt in isolation. The symbol, or musical moment, is experienced, not known intellectually. This observation applies to camp most aptly. Youth must be actively involved in a process in order to grasp its meaning and import. This may be why teenagers beg to "make their own mistakes" – they must be made to feel a part of the transformative process, not simply to observe it – to know that it is true for them. Cantor Wally Schachet-Briskin, a camp alumnus and song-leader, notes in his study of Reform camps that "the Jewish experience does not play out *in front* of the campers; rather, they are all *participants* [emphasis mine]."[39]

It is of utmost importance, as in all activities at camp, that *everyone* participates. The most discouraging moment for a participant is not to know the melodies during song-sessions or services. Feeling left out during singing is the way in which new participants feel their "other-ness" most acutely. Involving the newcomer in the community during musical moments is therefore crucial. Once the new participant knows the songs, he or she joins the crowd of participants as "one of the group."

This phenomenon is not unique to Jewish summer camps. While studying the African community in Vendaland, John Blacking found that "knowledge of the songs is primarily a social asset for any child who wishes to be an accepted member of his own group."[40] Those children who are unaware of the songs are not seen as part of the social group. At camp too, while participants are not necessarily cruel to each other, a sense of belonging is demonstrated most profoundly during musical moments. Communities

---

[39] Schachet-Briskin, 6.

[40] Venda, 191.

whose strength, even purpose, comes from pure communal connections engage the entire group in songs that it can sing, and encourage everyone to participate. "For many who attended Jewish summer camps, songs and singing were an essential part of camp's cultural landscape."[41] As shown previously, the cultural values of a given group are represented in the music the group sings, and the behavior of the group is an extension of this value.

Not only is the value of communal participation expressed through music, but specific camp goals can be taught through music as well. "Singing was a resource that camp authorities could call upon to help achieve their institution's philosophical, religious, and social goals."[42]

The unarticulated goals of summer camp can be summarized by the overly simplistic phrase "Jewish identity." The overarching goal of Reform camps is to help Jewish youngsters foster a sense of Jewish meaning in their lives, and maintain a connection to the community that will influence life choices. Yet most Reform youth today are unable to sense a complete picture of the Judaism in which they are a part. A "once or twice a week" religious school experience, an occasional visit to a synagogue worship service, and rare experiences of living Judaism at home do little to create a sense that Judaism is important and compelling. The information the youth receive sporadically through the synagogue and an occasional home experience contribute to the confusion many young Jews feel about Judaism in general, and about being Jewish more

---

[41] Joselit, 29.

[42] Ibid., 30.

specifically. For a majority of camp participants, particularly from small towns in Middle America, camp is the only place where they learn about Judaism as a vibrant part of life – they learn about Jewish history, people, and tradition by being living participants in them. The informal model of education dovetails with the previously expressed idea that the youth need to experience values and ideas first-hand, if they are to incorporate them into their being.

One of the most effective and meaningful ways in which values of Jewish identity are expressed is through song. Posen writes:

> Song repertoires at Jewish summer camps consolidated complex cultural information and made it accessible to children. Moreover, the singing at Jewish summer camps helped give them a coherent picture, a unified vision of Jewish culture they might not have gotten anywhere else.[43]

This occurs on both a simplistic and complex level. First, religious school music repertoires are often a mixture of Hebrew and English. Most of the songs sung in the dining hall and the worship settings of the UAHC camps, however, are in Hebrew, so the campers learn the value of Hebrew. While they may not know the meaning of every word or song, they learn that Hebrew in and of itself is valuable to Jews. Buchdahl says, "music is a primary vehicle for constructing and sacrilizing identity, for it can connect latent threads of identification and help articulate an identity that is not yet fully formed."[44] This role of music must not be overlooked. When I went to college and graduate school, I was amazed at how many biblical and liturgical phrases I knew, even if I did not have a complete understanding of their meaning, because I could sing a song to those texts. I could memorize certain biblical passages with more ease if they were lyrics

---

[43] Joselit, 35.

[44] Buchdahl, 2.

from a song I had learned at camp. Music is thus a valuable teaching tool, the impact of which cannot be underestimated.

Another way in which Jewish values are taught is through the ideas presented by the song content. The songs sung at camp frequently express biblical and talmudic themes of social justice, peace, and *tikkun olam*. Again, while the campers may not remember the meaning of every Hebrew word they hear in the dining hall, when the song-leaders translate "*B'makom she'ayn anashim, hishtadeil lih'yot ish*" (*Pirke Avot* 2:5) as "In a place where no one acts like a person, you must strive to be human," the message is heard and received. When entire song sets contain messages such as these, a certain understanding of a group's value is felt. "This is a group that cares about other people and wants to take steps to better the world!" Posen notes that the philosophy of the group is expressed in this way. "Look at the songs a camp sang, and you look into the cultural heart of the people that sang them."[45]

All of the Reform camps have an informal educational component that typically involves the presentation of a topic, such as violence, Israel, or welcoming the stranger. After an introduction, content is shared through skits, small group learning, and engaging activities. Participants contribute to the discussion by processing, questioning, and sharing experiences. They then summarize their lessons in a short synthesized conclusion. The conclusion of the program is usually constructed around the singing of a song, either previously known or learned for the occasion. The song is frequently based upon Torah text or another Jewish textual source such as *Pirke Avot*.

---

[45] Joselit, 35.

The group thereby learns two important messages. First, our texts have a lot to teach us – they are not obscure, ancient pieces of parchment, but are living expressions of the values that Reform Jews hold dear. Second, simply through singing, the campers sense the power of group, so that the community feels empowered to tackle projects or struggle with an issue. The program, and in essence the learning, ends with a community joined together, voices raised in song. Buchdahl notes that "music's function as a symbol enables it to identify the cultural and theological values expressed within the music."[46] The music becomes a symbol with value when it is combined with a social or cultural context. "Musical sound alone, without cultural values, does not hold transformative power in terms of identification, for there is no context in the sound."[47] Singing texts put to music at camp becomes powerful because it represents the values important to the community.

In fact, the music itself does little unless individuals participate in singing it. Not only do participants who are initially outside the group feel included, as discussed previously, but the participation in the music orients the group and the individual. "Music evokes participation and allows an individual or social group to orient themselves, that is, to discover their identity and their place within the world."[48] When music acts as a symbol that is utilized by the community to express values, through song the individual discovers those values. The camp community learns the value of social justice through group singing; this is clear. Furthermore, the individual who participates in the music of

---

[46] Buchdahl, 2.

[47] Ibid., 72.

[48] Philip Alperson, "Introduction: New Directions in the Philosophy of Music," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 52 (Winter 1994), 111, as cited in Buchdahl, 73.

the community builds an internal sense of Jewish identity that stems from community, but strengthens the individual. "For some, the songs they heard and sang at Jewish summer camp sparked their very *self-awareness* as Jews" (emphasis mine).[49]

Much of the power of camp experiences lies in the identity formation that takes place within individuals. Participants take a tremendous amount of information and feeling away from personal relationships and group experience. Decades later, former campers remember song lyrics in great detail, as they remember what it felt like to "be Jewish" at camp. They sensed a connection to this music that made a lasting impression on them, and manifested itself as some form of Jewish identity.

> If a camper were to be asked what all the excitement is about, it is unclear if the teen would be able to articulate an answer. A joyful connection with something Jewish is one of the sub-goals of the philosophy at camp – if kids can love singing in Hebrew, that is, an act of being Jewish, they will take a love of Judaism with them.[50]

Not only is love of Judaism a value taught at camp, but also is an inevitable result of group singing. Group singing allows everyone to participate equally in a transcendent purpose; the individual takes pride in that experience, pride in being Jewish and wishes to repeat the experience. Singing at camp thus increases a desire to participate in other Jewish activities during the year, be it youth-group, synagogue activities, social action projects, or the like.

The most compelling proof that individual Jewish identities are strengthened by camp participation can be seen in the high level of participation of camp alumni from all movements of Judaism in Jewish professional endeavors. A study of Wexner

---

[49] Joselit, 29.

[50] Schachet-Briskin, 35-36.

Foundation Fellows[51] demonstrates the impact camp has had on the leadership of the Jewish community. As many as 63% of the Wexner applicants reported having attended a Jewish summer camp.[52] While group identity was built through group activities, the individuals were also profoundly influenced and Jewish consciousness was raised – which in many cases led to an active role in the leadership of the Jewish community.

Cantor Wally Schachet-Briskin speaks of the effect the music of camp had on him as a Jew:

> It was the music that marked moments of the day, from prayer services to campfires, from *Birkat HaMazon* [grace after meals] to formal youth choirs that effectively drew me into being Jewish. It was the singing that gave me moments of 'religious consciousness,' that taught me and my fellow campers basic Hebrew, that helped us express our feelings as teenagers and that we took with us back home.[53]

Many camp alumni feel this way. The music sung at camp, in an environment which is entirely Jewish and entirely for youth, enhances Jewish youth identity.

We should see the communal feeling of camp as a significant factor in Jewish identity and music as the most forceful method through which that communal feeling is expressed. The question remains: Is the music of camp *itself* identity forming? I argue that it is not. Instead, the context in which the music is found – the group, the mood, the

---

[51] Wexner Foundation fellowships are granted to selected individuals who are preparation for careers as professionals in the Jewish community.

[52] Steven M. Cohen, Sylvia Barack Fishman, Jonathan D. Sarna and Charles Liebman, "Expectations, Education and Experience of Jewish Professional Leaders: Report of the Wexner Foundation Research Project on Contemporary Jewish Professional Leadership." This study examined the backgrounds of all applicants for the Wexner Foundation Fellowship.

[53] Schachet-Briskin, 1.

physical dynamic, and the way in which the music is presented – creates pride in Jewish identity.

Personal Experiences with Music at Camp

Via e-mail I asked questions of participants and staff of the UAHC Kutz Camp, which I have attended as song-leader and faculty member for several years. Three particular responses (Karyn, Zoe, and Callie) were very similar, yet different regarding their feelings about music at camp.[54]

I asked first for the strongest memories the participants had of singing in a camp or youth-group setting. One responded that camp song-sessions were most powerful; one responded that worship in general was the most powerful memory, and the other had two responses – one was a song-session moment, and the other was worship. However, all three referred to the transformative power of song-sessions or worship.

I then asked the campers what the music moved them to feel. All three mentioned some form or other of "community." Caryn said, "The only thing that comes to mind is community. Especially in those great camp and youth-group song-sessions. I really felt a part of a community because we all shared the music. ... Singing at camp is fun because it's a shared, joyful experience. Everyone gets into it because they get drawn in. It's very hard to resist a large group of people having a great time." Sharing the music is the important part of the value of community, and the other two articulated that as well.

---

[54] The following quoted responses are based on an email questionnaire sent in November 2000, and the respondents granted me permission to use their thoughts in this work. I asked 14 participants and staff, 9 women and 7 men. I heard from 3, all women, all staff members, who were campers only one or two years previous. The three respondents are not representative of all those who have attended camp.

Zoe said that she could "feel the huge sense of community that exists in a camping environment." She reflected upon singing together in her youth-group, saying, "no matter how stressful the day had been or how many people were 'cool' and how many were not, it made no difference. When we chanted, everyone was on a mission together to make a lot of noise and have fun." Breaking barriers between different groups of people, particularly among teenagers who can be cruel to each other, seems to be of utmost importance to a camp or youth-group environment. Everyone is involved in a certain goal, even if it is through the singing of silly songs.

Most campers are resistant to performative solo music in worship, but not because they are opposed to performances in general. Instead, their sense, their learned value as a camp culture, stresses the fact that everyone is a member, everyone is equal, and everyone participates. This inclusivity is exemplified by the fact that often socially awkward children, or the "less popular" kids in school, thrive at camp. They are included from the outset, not only in activities and programs, but by singing together – one voice blends into the next; no one stands out; no one is alone. "For camp people, singing was not a frivolous pastime: it helped lubricate camp's social machinery."[55] Transformation occurs when one senses that as part of a group, one is part of something larger than oneself. Music is the common denominator in the transformation.

Zoe also mentioned the personal feelings she experienced during the musical moments. The music allowed her to feel part of a group and "strengthen [her] Jewish identity. Physically, it can often give me the shivers or make me feel very happy." The group experience is not only beneficial for the social group to connect and soften the

[55] Joselit, 29.

divisions between participants, but it allows the individual to feel a part of something larger. She expressed surprise that everyone around her "seemed to want to be singing Jewish music." Zoe also articulated a conviction that her Jewish identity was strengthened. Can that be proven? What does she mean by identity? While her use of the word is unclear, it is clear from her that camp strives to build a connection to Judaism in the lives of individual campers.

Callie shared a somewhat extended view of the community feeling that the music brings to her: "The best thing about camp music is listening to it after camp, or a National Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) event,[56] once you are home and away from all of the people and places that have touched you. Listening to the music brings me back to that comfortable, loving, and holy place that we all created. I never feel alone as long as I have the music that has bound me to my closest friends." The music creates a bond immediately but acts beyond the moment to bring to mind that community even when one is separated from it.

The question of what actually exists within the music or the setting to allow for such powerful moments drew different responses. I mentioned text, melodies themselves, rhythm, and location. Caryn said that all of these things, particularly the rhythm, are distinctive in the music at camp. Zoe spoke about text and melody.

---

[56] Youth-group events do not occur only within the local synagogue. There are 22 regions, across North America, and 4 or so times a year participants travel to a community within the geographic region for weekend events. Friends often see each other only these 4 times a year, because they live in different cities or states.

> I think it is only the text when it is something relevant to the time. For example, the text of *Shir LaShalom* only has become so powerful because of the association that has been forged between it and Rabin's death and the hope for peace in Israel. The calmer more melodic melodies do tend to enhance how powerful the music is for me personally, because when lots of people are singing together, the beauty of the sounds their voices can create is hugely powerful. The simple act of many people singing together can also be very powerful though, even if the melody is extremely simple.

Callie admitted that both rhythm and melody are important, but returned to the idea of community as a key factor when she said that "above all, it is the people with whom I sing the songs that make them [the songs] so powerful." The three responses focus on different aspects of the music; but the power of community comes through in all three cases.

Finally, I asked the participants to describe moments from their respective synagogues that were similar to the moments experienced at camp. Caryn told me that she had been in some synagogue settings in which "that sense of community was really strong. I think music was absolutely a part of that; in each case, the congregation singing together totally changed the experience." Zoe expressed a similar sentiment. Her particular synagogue in Britain has a history of participatory singing, and Zoe tried to identify why the music is so powerful. "I think that it has the power to totally transform a community, and people have witnessed it happening several times. I think society as a whole tends to be very overly self-conscious and relatively held back, and music seems to give people permission to go a little crazy and enjoy themselves in a socially acceptable way."

Zoe continued to respond to my questions about diversity of music in the camp environment, and whether or not it was necessary to participate actively in every moment of worship. She said that she would like to see the use of more traditional music at camp,

but "portrayed as excitingly as the more modern stuff we sing at camp." She suspected that the group is resistant to *nusach* or more traditional melodies because "we more frequently see camp song-leaders doing funky things with modern music and less often hear *nusach* sung beautifully." She also asserted that camp participants should be more educated about "when the prayer actually requires a *shaliach tzibor* to lead part of it." She thought overall that active participation is important and should be encouraged, but that a "change now and again, perhaps for specific relevant prayers, can be a good thing."

The responses I received about the participants' experiences with the music of camp revealed several things. Primarily, they recognized the bond established among the community. Furthermore, the positive nature of the experience was directly related to the fact that the community participated as one, with all the individuals involved. The three persons interviewed have rarely experienced musical moments outside of a camp or youth-group environment as powerfully as they did the moments within the camp community. While Zoe was able to critique the camp experience for keeping participants uninformed about the variety of Jewish musical styles, she still stressed the community-building aspect of communal singing, along with her belief that the need to sing in a group emerges from the void our society has created for such experiences.

A specific example may serve to articulate the lasting influence the music of camp has on individual youth. A parent and congregant from Queens, New York wrote to the Greater New York Council of Reform Synagogue's Regional Bulletin to tell of an extraordinary scene he witnessed. His son, returning from his freshman year in college, invited thirty other 17-19 year olds to his house for a Millennium New Year's Eve party. The father left them alone to attend a party a few blocks away. As New Year's was on

Erev Shabbat, the teenagers led each other in a Shabbat service (remember, no adults were present) until close to midnight.

At 11:45 the father and a few of his adult friends came to the house to check on the group. They discovered the group singing *V'shamru*, from the Shabbat liturgy, and as the clock struck midnight, the kids ran into the street, began to dance the *hora* and sing camp songs. The father was in awe that these teenagers were "celebrating the millennium by doing what they loved the most – being together, dancing and singing the songs that mean the most to them."[57]

What actually occurs in a camp singing setting is most akin to what Lomax described as *simple social unison*: In societies with little authority, someone may initiate a song, but the leader is lost, and all the members play the same role. While the camp hierarchy is made up of a camp director, assistant directors, counselors or teachers, and participants, group unity is stressed over the camp hierarchy. Boundaries between the levels of authority are deliberately blurred, as, for instance, staff, faculty, and even the camp director sit with participants on the floor. Participational music reflects this lack of hierarchy.

Musical moments are therefore approached as *simple social unison* because of the lack of a structured hierarchy in the camp environment. While song-leaders or clergy may lead the singing, the ideal is that the leader initiates the melody, the prayer, or the song and allows the groups to "own the music" themselves. Campers feel so strongly about camp in general, and the music specifically, because they are encouraged not only to participate, but allowed to feel as if the songs and experiences are their own. As a

---

[57] Lawrence Finkelstein, "Our Youth: The Lasting Magic of UAHC Camps," *Regional Update* 4, no. 3 (Summer 2000): 4-5.

song-leader myself, and teacher of song-leaders, I recognize that an important balance must be maintained between letting the group lead the song from within, and keeping control and being able to mold and shape the group as I see fit. This balance involves letting the group move with the song, to respond naturally based on their mood and experience, while at the same time maintaining enough control to take that experience and reaction to a song, and raise the group to another level.

The song-leader's balancing act occurs in worship as well as in a song-session. For the sake of this study, I will use worship moments to explain how the group might "own" a musical moment. However, I must first describe how a leader can participate in *tzimtzum,*[58] while still being able to create a meaningful experience. The ability of a leader to withdraw somewhat from the group dictates the ability of the group to feel ownership. Before a service, the leader usually has a good idea of which melody to sing for which piece of liturgy, usually chosen based on the time of day, the thematic content of the particular service, or a particular favorite tune of the group in question. In addition, most melodies used in camp worship have a set structure, either specified by composer, or "traditional" to the camp community. However, once the song has begun, I will let the group take it where they might, recognizing that if they know the song they do not need to hear my voice over theirs. I simply act as accompanist and guide for the experience. If the group is responding in a certain way, I may decide to sing the chorus a few more extra times, or sing a refrain *a capella*, or speed up the second verse. The group will dictate how I as the leader will react and continue to lead the experience.

---

[58] A Hebrew word for "contraction", used frequently to describe when a leader must withdraw his or her presence in order to let an experience occur. It is a Kabbalistic explanation for what God had to do in order to let the world exist on its own; God had to contract to give the world space.

Furthermore, I must not be afraid to choose to use a melody other than the one planned before the service, if the group seems to be in a mood that might be better served by it. This might occur if a particular reading comes directly before the prayer and speaks to a certain mood or experience with which the melody chosen would clash. Alternatively, I might keep the original melody, but sing it differently in order to create a unique experience, related to the feeling of the group. To create a powerful musical moment requires both an ability to let the group feel out its own experience, to push its own limits of experience, and an ability to recognize a given mood and respond to it. This is why, while *simple social unison* describes the camp experience most generally, it is not a precise match because not every member is *really* equal. The group still looks to a leader to help mold a meaningful experience.

The power of music at camp to build community lies in its rhythm, the setting of the experience, the mood of the group and (as described above) the leader who guides the moment. The mood of the group is partially dependent upon factors external to the musical experience: even such things as the weather or the program following the musical experience. Let me take just the weather as my example.

The weather affects a group's mood and energy level. It may also offer the opportunity to mold a new energy. For example, if an all-day rain has cancelled all outdoor programming, the participants are probably not going to be happy singing mellow songs and sitting quietly. They will be full of unused energy and "bouncing off the walls." With such pent-up energy, they will also have difficulty learning a song with difficult words. The song-leaders might therefore plan a song-session which is fairly

upbeat, with songs the group knows and loves, with a possible "teach" of a silly song with few words.

On the other hand, an extraordinarily hot day may lead the song-leaders to plan a slow relaxing song-session, because the participants will be lethargic. It is important to mention, however, that these tools are not foolproof. Any plan could backfire. It is possible that the heat of the day, while making the participants tired, will make them bored and not interested in singing slow songs; instead, they start to talk amongst themselves. In this case, a session of medium-speed songs that gets them moving a little might be more successful. There is no single hard and fast rule or trick. Success depends on knowing your group and being flexible enough to respond to their cues.

Other factors too are important; are a lot of staff away on days off, making it harder to control the group? Is the evening program that follows the song-session a fun scavenger hunt or is it a service for which the leader should slow the song-session down in preparation? Are the participants coming to services from a program on the Holocaust, in which case the melodies chosen may need to ease them into worship? Or is there a particular theme to the program following services that the leader wants to address in worship, by way of a closing song with text relevant to the program?

Finally, in order to allow the group to feel that they are in control of their own experience as a community in the musical moment, the leader must respond to the mood as it exists during the experience. The new song may have caught on or the participants felt confused and left out. Awareness of the group's immediate reaction will affect whether or not you continue with songs that they know well in order to re-engage them. It is possible that a funny incident during services has raised the group's energy. Alternatively, a participant may have shared something particularly poignant that requires

a musical response. All of these factors are crucial to leading a community's musical experience.

An examination of the power that location and room set-up has will be discussed in Chapter 4, in conjunction with synagogue musical experiences. The importance of rhythm will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

BEING A JEW IN AMERICA

Secular Influence in Jewish Music

The music Jews sing in worship services is influenced by the secular world and by secular music. "Even in their homelands, Jewish musics present a special profile. Basic to all forms of local musical practice are the Jews' close ties to the musical traditions of the non-Jewish co-territorial peoples."[59] Jews of the Mediterranean, for example, mingled with their surrounding musical cultures such that their melodies were borrowed to express Jewish texts. Ethnic boundaries have become so blurred that some Jews claim their music is Jewish, when it was most likely borrowed from Muslims.

The myth that a common musical heritage links Jewish music through the centuries is challenged by scholars who suggest, "Jewish music derives from the diverse styles of different times and places."[60] Kay Kaufman Shelamay is one such scholar, who points out that musical material that is borrowed from a local community often becomes 'traditional' over the years. She gives an example from Ellen Koskoff's work with the Lubavitch Hasidim in Brooklyn, New York. One popular *niggun* is based on the Pepsi-Cola commercial jingle "There's a Whole New Way of Livin'." The Lubavitch community thus borrows melodies from its host culture, but the song becomes an authentic part of the group's Jewish identity and tradition over time.[61]

---

[59] Mark Slobin, "Ten Paradoxes and Four Dilemmas of Studying Jewish Music," *The World of Music* 37 (1) 1995, 20.

[60] Kay Kaufman Shelamay, "Mythologies and Realities in the Study of Jewish Music," *The World of Music* 37 (1) 1995, 24.

[61] Ibid., 26-27.

Mark Slobin makes a related observation about American Jewish music. The inclusion of American Jews in a dominant white culture alters their view of music. "Now free to become completely mainstream in taste, American Jews ... have become connoisseurs of their own past .... But part of the paradox lies in their simultaneous outreach to current American pop fads as part of the deepest expression of Jewish youth music."[62] Similarly, ultra-orthodox identity is grounded in "transformed rock 'n roll songs." The result then is a tension between the search for the 'authentic' and the 'with-it' music.[63]

Many contemporary Jewish musicians, composers, and cantors express strong opinions concerning the prominence of secular music in the canon of Jewish melodies. Some see secular music as a powerful expression of American Jewish identity, and a legitimate part of the Jewish historical experience. Others believe that the Jewish community should seek a sound altogether different from that of the surrounding culture.

Two opinions address the distaste for secular influence upon Jewish music. Judith Karzan, the Artistic Director/Executive Director of the Halevi Choral Society in Chicago, finds a "direct ratio between the growing informality of religious services and the shrinking numbers of those who attend." She believes that the music should be different from the secular world; fewer people are inspired by our worship because we have brought the secular world into the synagogue.[64] Sharon Steinberg, Cantorial

---

[62] Slobin, 20.

[63] Ibid., 21.

[64] John H. Planer and Cantor Howard M. Stahl, eds., *Koleinu B'Yachad: Our Voices as One – Envisioning Jewish Music for the 21st Century*, (Published by the American Conference of Cantors and the Guild of Temple Musicians: 1999), 11-12.

Assistant at Baltimore Hebrew Congregation says, "I am seriously concerned that, as we move into the twenty-first century, American liturgical music is no longer retaining its historic elements. American secular music has infiltrated American Jewish music. If a piece utilizes Jewish text, whether Hebrew or vernacular, and it touches the soul, then it can become *minhag* [tradition] without any regard for Jewish musical structure and elements."[65]

Steinberg's logic is faulty if one considers that "Jewish musical structure and elements" are nearly impossible to define. Jewish modes do indeed have historical relevance, and can be seen as pieces of our musical tapestry. Yet Arabic modes absorbed during the Jewish People's lengthy stay in medieval Spain are also a part of the "Jewish musical structure." Israeli folk melodies, composed by Jews from all over the world with a variety of different cultural musical sounds, are a part of the "Jewish musical structure." Western harmonies, which influenced the Jewish composers of the late nineteenth century and folk tunes and chants of the twentieth century, have become part of our musical heritage. Moreover, artful renditions of traditional prayer texts within the Jewish modes and artful renditions in Western or atonal harmony of the same texts are both considered to contain "Jewish musical structure."

Still, Steinberg's sentiment is commonly encountered. Dr. Fred Blumenthal, who directs an adult choir in suburban St. Louis says, "the struggle to maintain a distinctly Jewish identity can be sensed in our music; therefore we should preserve much that is traditional and value it as meaningful, desirable, intellectual, and beautiful."[66]

---

[65] Planer, 32.

[66] Ibid., 5.

Ultimately, the question still remains: What is "traditional" and what is "a distinctly Jewish identity?" Throughout our history, communities have expressed their Jewish identity in a variety of ways, with numerous sounds, textures, and cultural influences.

Another problem with Steinberg's statement lies in the claim that "American secular music has infiltrated American Jewish music." It is ironic that she finds it unacceptable that *American* music has infiltrated *American* Jewish music. What then is American Jewish music, if not a representation of the sounds and feelings of the Jewish community living in America? Most Jews in America are acculturated: full participants in a society that affords them freedom to experience, learn, and succeed. How can our experience not be influenced by American secular music? Jewish music has rarely developed – if ever – in isolation from the secular influences of the surrounding culture.

Throughout our history we have become acculturated – incorporated secular folk tunes, and some have even become *Misinai*[67]. Cantor Stephen Richards therefore asks the question, What makes [music] Jewish? He says that it is it not how the music sounds, or the intent of the composer. Instead, "the music becomes Jewish music when it *functions* as Jewish music: when it is acculturated, is absorbed and becomes our own (emphasis mine)."[68] He continues:

> Today ... our music is American, encompassing all of the elements of American music: jazz and show tunes, folk songs, protest songs and movie music, hints of rock and soul and gospel. We absorb the sounds around us but infuse them with a Jewish spirit. The music is Jewish and kosher because it functions as Jewish music: it makes Jews feel welcome in the synagogue and helps us pray together as a community.[69]

---

[67] *Misinai* is a word used to describe tunes that were created in Germany in the Middle Ages. They are tunes that were sanctified and called "sacred melodies" and given the name *Misinai*, which means 'received by Moses at Sinai'.

[68] Planer, 20.

[69] Ibid., 20.

Function for Richards is the focus, observed as well by ethnomusicologists who study African culture, and noticed by those who recognize the value of music's function in the Jewish community.

In an examination of the relationship of Egyptian music to Western music, Ali Jihad Racy questions the validity of judging all music by European standards. He replaces the belief that European music is superior with a "non-judgmental and non-utilitarian perspective that deem[s] all local musical profiles legitimate and equally varied."[70] To compare the music of different cultures and experiences to the Western European musical genre is to ignore the reality that non-European music might have a completely different function. If music functions to build community, as the music of camp does, than an examination of the social structures in relationship to the music is all-important. European music may build community in its own way; but different groups require different musical styles for their own community building.

Secular Music and Teenagers

Before we can examine the role of secular music, particularly rock music, in Jewish camping, we must look briefly at rock music and the youth experience in general. According to Roy Shuker, the youth culture of the 1950s developed in part because of the growth of secondary and university education in western countries. Higher educational opportunities encouraged youth solidarity and separateness, and created small societies cut off from the rest of society, forced inwards toward their own peers, with whom they

[70] Blum, 87.

had the most important interactions.[71] The insular nature of these communities inspired musical choices and acceptance of styles particular to these small societies. Dave Marsh notes that "it may be true that young people were the first people to realize that rock and soul had a serious message to convey, but that message has little or nothing to do with youth, per se." He supports this claim by citing the large number of adults who grew up in the 1950s, and who today still appreciate, even love, the music of that era. While they discovered it as youth, it still speaks to them as adults.

Many aspects of rock and roll are attractive to the youth who enjoy it, particularly text and rhythm. Text is an important part of secular music, and the analysis of the words of songs is important to the popular music culture. The lyrics of popular songs can even be used in classroom teaching, particularly in social studies, to illustrate social, political, and personal issues. "The literary images and linguistic configurations presented in popular lyrics are fascinating as communication vehicles, particularly when they reveal rich patterns of attitudes, values, and beliefs. In short, contemporary songs are invaluable tools for pursuing the twin educational goals of self-knowledge and social analysis."[72] The popular music of each generation reflects the social, moral, and political issues relevant to that generation.

Even if the lyrics are not studied in a classroom environment, the words to which the youth listen have an impact on the way in which they see the world. The songs become an expression for feelings and experiences that individual youth are often unable to communicate. I remember my friends in the 1980s claiming that their parents didn't

---

[71] Roy Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music*, (New York: Routledge, 1994), 227.

[72] Ibid., 137.

understand them, no one understood them, but the music was their soul mate. Troubled teenagers often sent their parents song lyrics or shared popular songs as expressions of their frustrations. Popular music is a microscope, which brings into focus the issues youth confront.

In addition to the content of popular song lyrics, the rhythm of the tunes is a vital part of the connection youth make to rock music. "Traditional musicology neglects the social context ... and emphasizes the transcription of music.... Rock, on the other hand, emphasizes interpretation through performance, and is received primarily in terms of the body and emotions rather than as pure text."[73] Rhythm is connected to sexuality. The sexuality of music is usually referred to in terms of rhythm because it is the beat that commands a directly physical response. Rhythm provides the impetus to move one's body, to be involved in kinetic energy; the rhythm that attracts youth is often a heavy-hard beat, or a beat that is "off-the-beat," or syncopated. Music that compels one to move allows teenagers who are exploring their sexuality to become intimate with their peers. They are able to challenge themselves within their peer group, without parents deeming their behavior inappropriate. When teens express themselves with body language, they are expressing more about their desire to loosen the bonds of their parents, and experiment with their own comfort levels, than they are about sexuality per se. The sexuality to which rhythm relates is a sexuality of body language and boundary stretching. Rhythm creates physical tension and release, which is a valuable part of the teen growth experience. They often find that the music that "moves" them is the best form of communication they have at their disposal.

---

[73] Shuker, 136.

Today, one finds a decline in youth as a market force – both as consumers and as producers – and it has altered the social visibility of the youth.[74] Without a viable foot in the global economy, youth are powerless. Therefore, they flaunt their musical tastes in order to feel some part of the world in which they are often invisible. They play their music loudly, they dress provocatively (often mirroring the style of the musicians whom they emulate), and they force themselves into the rest of society's view. For youth, musical expression is frequently the only way they feel their presence can be made known to the adult world from which they are excluded.

Function of Secular Influence in the Music of Camp

Music at camp synthesizes Jewish youth ideas and American secular culture. Joselit, examining Jewish summer camps historically, claims that "as much an American phenomenon as a Jewish one, this institution melded two distinct imperatives, that of assimilation on one hand and ethnic persistence on the other, to create a model of cultural synthesis ... blending American notions of play and peer culture with Yiddishkeit, Zionism, secular Judaism and denominationalism."[75] For Jewish immigrants, camps taught young children how to be "American," to play with peers and develop socialization that was imperative to American survival.

By the middle of the twentieth century the Jewish summer camp began to function in reverse. Still synthesizing American and Jewish values, camp now took acculturated and socialized American children and taught them Jewish values and the

---

[74] Shuker, 226.

[75] Joselit, 16.

importance of Jewish community. Either way, Jewish summer camp has always merged two philosophical ideals with which American Jews have always struggled: being Jewish and being American. "The seamless integration of all manner of songs at Jewish summer camps is consistent with the way Jewish culture through history has incorporated elements from the societies among which Jews lived."[76] Despite a minority who theoretically rejects secular influence in Jewish music, the reality of the American Jewish situation is that we are necessarily religious and secular simultaneously. Jewish summer camp is one place that addresses the challenge of being Jewish in America.

Cantor Wally Schachet-Briskin believes that "the choice of music [at camp] had more to do with the *conscious* goal of wedding American pop culture with Judaism in order to make it accessible to teenagers, while the *unconscious* result was an increase in Jewish awareness, expression, identity and knowledge."[77] The diversity of rhythms, styles, and melodies in any given camp is indicative of the influx of American music into the fabric of Jewish music for camping. Cantor Bruce Benson, a song-leader and composer, talks about the introduction in the 1960s of the "*kumsitz*, the connective tissue between Jewish activists and the music of an upheaval." The young Jews of that generation found meaning in the music of their secular world, and combined the power of that music with the meaningful messages of their faith. "NFTY, that meteoric bastion of the new Jewish youth focus, had embraced the music of the world around it and the process of bringing the songs and their meanings to a waiting and excited Jewish

[76] Joselit, 35.

[77] Schachet-Briskin, 1.

America had begun."[78] The idea of meaning plays an important role in the merging of secular and religious musical styles. For American Jewish youth, the music by which they are surrounded in their non-Jewish schools and peer groups is meaningful on a variety of levels. The music is often popular because of its content, rhythm and style; the music also is meaningful because it acts as an important peer group "gel." Acceptance in many social groups is highly dependent upon knowledge of the latest musical hits.

Just as American popular music of the 1960s and 1970s was utilized to express Jewish values at camp, diverse styles of secular music influence the music of camps today. In the mid 1990s, the NFTY Song Competition entries (and ultimately the winner) were pieces written in both Hebrew and English, to creative and liturgical texts, in the vocal style of the popular folk duo The Indigo Girls. The pulsing rhythm and moving harmonies of woman singers were immensely popular among teenagers during the 1990s and the influence was expressed in the meaningful Jewish music they heard and sang. Rabbi Ramie Arian maintains that the music "provides a bridge between what's very contemporary and very traditional." It is powerful to sing the same words as Hillel or the Torah, yet the music feels very contemporary.[79] Modes of expression for most of these teenagers are based upon the music by which they have been influenced. In this way, understanding the power of the secular American repertoire is imperative to understanding what compels our teenagers.

In song-session experiences at camps today, where singing occurs for singing's sake – or for teaching values, texts, and history – Jewish teens crave music that reflects

---

[78] Planer, 4.

[79] Interview with Ramie Arian, October 3, 2000.

the kinds of secular music to which they normally listen. The simple folk sound of Joni Mitchell and James Taylor is still a vital part of camp's musical experience, but it does not connect the teens of the year 2000 as readily as it did the teens of the 1970s and 1980s. Instead, when contemporary song-leader/songwriter Dan Nichols or Rick Recht comes to any number of UAHC camps, they present Jewish music that reflects the rhythm, sound, and emotion of the music that compels teens today. Similar to popular American pop music star Dave Mathews, the music of the new Jewish composers for teens has a heavy beat which causes the group to jump up and down in unison (a popular rock fad today). The chord patterns of the music also reflect a change from the traditional folk music of the 1960s and 1970s. The new composers have broken out of the standard I-IV-V chord circle, and created phrases which express tension, dissonance, and a sound more compatible with the rock and roll the teens listen to every day.

How Far Does Secular Influence Go?

Incorporating secular styles in Jewish music does not imply, however, that Jewish teens today want to hear "rock and roll" alone. While the youth do live in the "MTV generation," where rock, pop, rhythm and blues, and hip-hop are immensely popular, they retain an important distinction between their secular musical lives and their Jewish experiences. At the 1999 National Biennial NFTY Convention held in Los Angeles, California, I spoke with a number of participants about their attraction to the music of camps and youth-group. The participants were asked what they loved about the music of the youth movement and what they found meaningful about it, particularly in the area of worship. The four or five participants interviewed agreed that they loved the up-beat nature of a lot of the repertoire, which led them to clap or sway, and "get into" the music

physically. They also were moved by the slow, lyrical melodies for many prayers and found spiritual connections singing their favorite tunes in beautiful harmony.

Interestingly, when asked about the influence of rock and roll on the service, and whether the participants would enjoy a fuller rock sound in worship, they expressed a desire to keep that genre separate from their Jewish worship experiences. The teens went even so far as to say that because they heard so much rock and roll and pop music on the radio and MTV, the wanted a different mood in camp services. They sought a more relaxed, quiet, or simply more communal feel when expressing their Judaism through worship.

A balancing act therefore exists between incorporating secular sounds and styles with a worshipful experience that allows the participant to feel different from the day to day secular experience. It is of course impossible to separate out what is "Jewish" in the music of our camps and synagogues, and what is "secular." Centuries of acculturation have introduced secular ingredients into the Jewish music of almost every community. However, while secular elements are present in Jewish music, the NFTY participants can articulate a difference between the music they sing at camp and hear in synagogue, and the music they hear on the radio.

In reality, the way in which new music is introduced to a group, particularly a close-knit and "traditional" camp community, plays a role in its acceptance. A new song, possibly with a more "rock" sound, can become a part of the camp repertoire, even in worship, if it is introduced by music leaders whom the group trusts, or if it was first heard in a concert setting to which the group responded positively. A radical departure from the "expected norm" of community worship is most usually met with some sort of resistance.

Two examples are worthy of note. At the very same NFTY National Convention referred to previously, Cantor Bruce Benson was invited, with his band, to lead the 1,500 teenagers and adult youth workers in Friday night Shabbat worship. Cantor Benson has a "rock service" which he takes to various communities and congregations across the country. The music was well prepared and executed. However, many participants were disappointed with the result. They may have enjoyed the presentation in another setting, or as a special concert of liturgical work on another day. But as a worship experience, it was seen as radical and not enjoyable. The discomfort may have occurred for a variety of reasons. First, like many adult congregants, the youth simply like what they like. It is always hard to alter the melodies and patterns of music, particularly with regard to worship. Prayer can be very personal, so most people take their involvement in it personally. In addition, for many within our community, young and old, prayer is frightening. People are not sure whether or not they are "doing it right" and often feel incredibly vulnerable when praying. The comfort one feels with familiar melodies, and knowledge of what can be expected, can be reassuring to a nervous soul.

Another reason the participants were unhappy is that the NFTYites expected their National Convention experience[80] to be a "quintessential" NFTY experience. While some of the melodies and favorite tunes vary across the country, most Reform teenagers sing a standard repertoire. When their expectation for the most amazing "camp service" they had ever been to was not met, they were frustrated. Many aspects noted earlier – the communal nature of worship at camp, the inclusion of all participants, and the ability to

[80] Because the convention occurs every two years, a high school student can attend at most two conventions in their high school tenure.

pray and sing songs that are meaningful to the teens – were absent from this experimental service, and the potential power of the moment was lost.

Finally, for better or for worse, most teenagers have a vision of what "prayer" should be, in part because many of the song-leaders at UAHC camps are limited in their ability to expose participants to a variety of worship styles and musical genres. Camp youth are not exposed to cantors or knowledgeable Jewish musicians and, therefore, are either unwilling to accept, or are simply unaware of, other powerful forms of worship available to the Jewish community. For the NFTYites at the 1999 Convention, the potential to appreciate the rock and roll presentation of such core liturgy as *Bar'khu*, *Mi Khamokha*, and *Shalom Rav*, was lost because of their lack of exposure to and experience with diverse models. Some participants were even deeply offended by the presentation.

The second example of resistance to change involves a visit by singer/songwriter Craig Taubman. Taubman recently wrote a collection of liturgical music called "Friday Night Live," which he performs at synagogues across North America. His presentation involves a small band consisting of clarinet, bass, and light back up. The melodies are often new for the community but are *niggun*-like in their repetition. He repeats the melodies of the liturgy until everyone in the group has become involved in singing. Yet to make the adjustment more smooth for a congregation, the cantor or musical leader might teach a melody or two from "Friday Night Live" to familiarize them with a portion of the service before Taubman arrives.

In the summer of 2000, Taubman visited the UAHC Kutz Camp, the National Leadership Camp of NFTY, to present an abridged version of his "Friday Night Live" service, assisted by me as well as other song-leaders and faculty who attended camp all summer. Many participants responded positively as Taubman gathered the group of 150

people into a small area, and encouraged hand clapping, harmonizing, and dancing. The melodies were repetitive, rhythmic, and pulsing. Those who enjoyed it responded to the intensity of the singing, the freedom to express themselves, and the diversity it presented to their range of experience.

However, a number of participants did not like the experience. They accused it of being a performance, and felt manipulated by the controlled environment marked by directions on how to behave during worship (to move closer, for instance). They also were unhappy with the dancing that took place during the *Amidah*, the central portion of the Friday evening service, in which personal prayer is conducted. They were distracted by other's dancing, and felt that it was not "appropriate" for worship.

I was genuinely surprised that so many participants responded negatively to the experience. But I learned from them that the introduction of something new, "radical" even, particularly in worship, was seen as a threat to the worship experience that they expected. Though teens at camp, particularly at Kutz Camp, pride themselves on being open-minded and adventurous, when their "traditional" worship (albeit traditional for camp) was altered it was met with resistance.

CHAPTER 4

SYNAGOGUE WORSHIP

How Music Functions

Having explored the way in which music at camp has the ability to form community, we can now address those elements that can be translated into the synagogue. Synagogues that strive to create communities of meaning would do well to use the model of camp to guide their development of communal worship. The success of worship at camp comes from its music; the same is true of synagogues. It is critical, therefore to understand how music functions.

Dr. Lawrence Hoffman describes music's role in ritual performance. He says that the music of a given community must be examined in terms of what it *does*, as opposed to what it *is*. "As long as we persist in imagining that sacred music means 'music that is sacred' we will get nowhere."[81] Instead, sacred music is music that performs in a way that is sacred to the community in which it is heard. "Songs do not come prepackaged as sacred or profane; their sacredness depends on something other than purely musical considerations."[82]

Rabbi Jeffrey Summit, an ethnomusicologist and director of the Hillel of Tufts University calls these other considerations "codes." "Code," he says, " ... is meant to

---

[81] Lawrence A. Hoffman, *The Art of Public Prayer: Not for Clergy Only*, 2d ed., (Woodstock: SkyLight Paths Publishing, 1999),180.

[82] Ibid., 175.

imply that melodies are infused with particular associations, coded meaning and symbolic significance."[83] Codes,

> Are composed of redundant components with a high level of predictability. A code has an identifiable stylistic profile, a bundle of recurring, packaged details, such as rhythm, melodic contour, the number of melodic repetitions, vocal quality, ornamentation, harmony, instrumental accompaniment, the relations between solo performance and congregational participation and length of songs.[84]

These components combine to form specific codes. Most importantly, however is that "while they [codes] are identified easily, their symbolic meaning and situational associations are *different* from community to community (emphasis mine)."[85] A list of redundant components can be found in every community that performs Jewish music, yet any particular combination is unique to a given community, which uses it to distinguish itself as the unique community that it is.

While most communities do not consciously identify themselves in terms of such a code, they do articulate their musical style when, for example, they share information about their worship with others, or when they advertise their community to the public or to professionals looking to understand who they are. "We sing a lot of *niggunim*; we use choir every Friday night; our cantor plays the guitar a lot." Ironically, these definitions do not really describe the community per se. Instead, an assumption exists that the coded message will reveal the community's values. A community mentions the use of guitar, not organ, to send such a message. The message is not identical in every community, though we all tend to speculate as to the general message that the code implies. The

---

[83] Jeffrey A. Summit, *The Lord's Song in a Strange Land: Music and Identity in Contemporary Jewish Worship*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 131.

[84] Ibid., 132-133.

[85] Ibid., 133.

unspoken message in this case is the value of participation and community. Synagogues who stress inclusive communities often stress the use of guitar. Communities who are very proud of their musical excellence will articulate components related to fine musicianship. Mentioning such variables as instrumental accompaniment or group participation articulates the coded message of the community's style.

Summit's explanation of melodic code components addresses the "high level of predictability" that codes express. Communities expect music, old or new, to fit into their expected coded message. This is how the code functions; it is a code precisely *because* it is predictable. This expectation sheds light on resistance to new music that obeys a different, or even a partly different code. If a cantor were to present a piece of music that is otherwise within the code, but with different instrumentation than usual, the community would find it disturbing. A congregant would sense a larger change than an outsider might imagine. Because code is representative of the community's values, a change in even part of the code implies a change in value. Another example is if a regular reoccurring piece were sung to a new four-part choral arrangement, in a way that discourages the congregation from participating, when they have always participated before.

The components set out by Summit are a more sophisticated measure of a community's values than simply melody itself. "As melodies are appropriated [by a community] they become infused with meaning that is specific to a particular group."[86] That meaning is based upon the external messages sent through the rhythm, instrumentation, relationship of leader(s) to group, and so on. John Blacking calls the

[86] Summit, 19.

music behind the music "functional analyses." He says that each piece has its own logic.[87] Because a piece functions beyond its melodic structure, it cannot be examined as just one more melody alongside others. For example, the instrumentation used at a specific moment in a given community gives a piece its meaning, not just the notes on a page. Discussions of the value of certain musical settings that ignore functional analysis are pointless. The way in which a piece is coded, and the way in which the community receives the code, are what matter.

Hoffman explicates the meaning behind liturgical music in terms of performance. He says, "meaning comes not just from text, but from context."[88] The importance lies in not only what a text says, but also *how* it says it. Hoffman would agree with Summit that the code, not the music itself, is expressive of meaning. The information conveyed through the use of components of the code, such as instrumentation or musical ornamentation, defines not just music, but community. The music becomes a symbol for the community, and the way in which the music is communicated expresses the community's values.

Music in Worship

A community's values are expressed most powerfully through worship. "Style functions as a symbolic expression of core values and identity."[89] Because a given community operates as a unified group most effectively in worship (other events are

---

[87] Blacking, 194.

[88] Hoffman, 148.

[89] Summit, 19.

unlikely to involve the entire community), the music of worship is an important symbol in the expression of community values. The music becomes a symbol because it cannot be explained, yet has personal significance. It is given this significance because it has "accompanied ritual moments that are important to us."[90] As a ritual symbol, music has the power "to refer to a larger 'whole' of which we are a part and to open up levels of connection with God and community that might not otherwise be accessible to us."[91]

In order to open those levels of connection, it is necessary to understand each community individually and discover its unique needs. "Each community works hard to find a style of worship that properly expresses who its members are as Jews and as Americans."[92] As explained in the previous chapter, the challenge to find a mode of expression that is both American and Jewish is a daunting one. The music selected for worship is expected to serve in both capacities, in order to help the group articulate its sense of Jewish community, while celebrating its part of American society.

Jeffrey Summit recalls a discussion with the leadership of a Christian Church in Boston concerning the selection of music for worship. The clergy expressed their "struggle to establish traditions that felt both modern and at the same time in touch with the past. They [the clergy] described their search for music that seemed historically authentic and yet spoke to the contemporary soul."[93] Both Christian and Jewish clergy are involved in a search for powerful moments in worship that help the community

---

[90] Hoffman, 59.

[91] Buchdahl, 10.

[92] Summit, 19.

[93] Ibid., 147.

articulate its identity as religious beings with their sense of belonging to the larger secular world.

Moments of ritual become important because they provide us with a sense of belonging we rarely find outside of the worship environment. Ritual creates bonds that sustain both individual and community. A Roman Catholic priest with whom Summit spoke articulates the idea of music as the vehicle that creates communal unity. "Music in prayer did more than provide an experience for the worshippers; it determined the nature of their identity as Catholics, creating and sustaining their community."[94] The music, as this priest sees it, expresses a certain message, or code, that allows his community to understand itself and its relationship to its faith.

The same is true in Jewish worship. The values of a group are expressed in the message it gives and receives through the music of worship. A community that prays with ornate music presented by professional musicians or that is moved by artistic renditions that raise its members' spirits values fine artistry and grandeur in worship. A community that seats its members close together and encourages participatory singing sends the message that it values equality above all else. Neither community is morally better than the other. But each communicates who it is through musical style (or code). Hoffman calls this ability of a worship leader, at least, to send such a subliminal message, "meta-communication." Meta-communication cues people about the way things should be interpreted.[95] For example, a prayer leader may ask for group participation, but if he does not really believe in such a code, he will send a counter meta-message that betrays

---

[94] Summit, 151-152.

[95] Hoffman, 92.

what the community really stands for. The choir may be singing; participants may be far from each other and the song may be led in a non-participatory key (meta-communication). "Meta-communication, not communication, determines what we do in public prayer."[96] The cues individuals receive, the code, indicate the values of the group and how the group is to function.

To contextualize the effect of meta-communication, Hoffman uses the example of worship space in American synagogues. He explains that "Americans will interpret spatial messages according to the American code."[97] Synagogues rarely plan worship space with an eye towards how it will be interpreted. For example, if you have a worship setting shaped like a theatre, with chairs in rows facing a raised stage, American worshippers will respond as they would in a theatre. They will watch passively, rarely interacting.[98] If participants are familiar with a certain coded message in one environment, and the code is presented in the exact same manner elsewhere, the response will tend to be the same. Since the goals of worship differ from the goals of theatre, the synagogue code must differ as well. "Worship space becomes a paradigm for the way worshipers would like to see the world."[99]

In her study of three congregations in the New York area, Cantor Angela Warnick Buchdahl observed how worship behavior is dictated, at least in part, by the use of space. At Temple Emanu-El, individuals sit in clusters, well apart from each other, in pews that

---

[96] Hoffman., 96.

[97] Ibid., 216.

[98] Ibid., 230.

[99] Ibid., 205.

cover a large cathedral-like hall. The leadership stands on a high *bimah* in the grand space, far away from the congregants. Worship is very formal, participants appear to be removed from one another and the prayer leaders; the prayers are not emotive. Like Temple Emanu-El, the space that Congregation B'nai Jeshurun uses is not particularly intimate. There is a large floor with many seats and a balcony; the prayer leaders use microphones to fill the large space. Here, however, participants sit close together and interact with each other and the leaders. The difference in response between Emanu-El and B'nai Jeshurun, though the spaces are similar, may be in style of leadership. The leaders at B'nai Jeshurun do not wear robes and they lead music that connects participants with each other in prayer.

Chavurat Tikvah, a small community of worshipers in Westchester, New York, conducts worship in members' homes. The group sits close together, even "squished" into a small space, almost on top of the ritual objects. They are made to feel incredibly close – to each other, the leaders, and the Jewish ritual in which they are a part. The lack of space, in this case, creates precisely the communal feeling that the participants seek. This community is looking for a world of intimacy and camaraderie, and their worship space mirrors that desire.

Participation

One of the most important functions of music in worship is its ability to create community. Though not for everyone, a camp-like worship community is desirable for many, depending upon the desired level of participation in worship.

As was shown in the camping model, participation allows individuals to feel part of a group, and a part of something larger than themselves. We saw above that the social

structure of a group determines the level of participation of its membership. Both in the *simple social unison* articulated by Lomax, and in the camp's lack of rigid hierarchy, we see that the high level of differentiation among individuals affects the ability of the community to feel unified. "Worship defines a world of values that group members share: it both mirrors and directs the social order in which the group lives."[100]

Chavurat Tikvah, mentioned previously, is a community of families which was formed because the members were unhappy with congregations that were hierarchical in structure. For example, they did not like the cantor singing for the congregation.[101] Similar to Lomax's "solo and explicit" model of group singing, the highly differentiated community mirrored its social structure in worship. In this case, the cantor sang and occasionally the participants responded. Families were attracted to the *chavurah* because there was a sense of equality, of complete engagement of the membership. So as Hoffman points out, the worship of the *chavurah's* new community directs the social order in which the group lives. Highly hierarchical communities lead worship that is such. While their communication may indicate that they would like worship to be less differentiated, the meta-communication of their hierarchy will prevent such a change.

Satisfying the desire for a less hierarchical model in synagogue worship depends also on the ability of the participant to feel ownership of the worship. For many, simply singing along, still being led, does not fulfill their needs for meaningful worship. One congregant from Chavurat Tikvah said "we want to be led into a song, but then it

---

[100] Hoffman, 79.

[101] Buchdahl, 58.

becomes our song, not just the cantor or leader's song."[102] The ability to feel in control of their own worship experience is paramount to many worshipers' ability to find meaning in prayer. Worshipers feel that their active participation is noticed and valued.[103] They feel as if they are leading the worship as well; nothing is preplanned. When everything is preordained, it contradicts the importance of the group's presence. This is why, in a camp situation, the song-leaders try to be flexible during the course of a worship experience. Participants want to believe they are leading; to be recognized as a fundamental piece of the experience. Allowing the group to feel that they have really been heard, and that the continuing experience will be a direct result of their participation, is paramount to the success of worship.

Summit observes a similar need to be in control in the college students with whom he works. "Students appreciate being in control of the experience of worship verses being a passive spectator."[104] When the music was so unfamiliar, they could not participate, and they felt that they did not belong. Familiar music allowed the participants to take some ownership of the moment and feel a part of creating the experience that was happening *to* them, as opposed to being witness to the creation of moments *for* them. Cantor Roy Einhorn discusses this need for familiar and participatory music. "I think the familiarity and the ability for them to participate makes it *theirs* and I

---

[102] Buchdahl, 58.

[103] Summit, 57.

[104] Ibid., 71-72.

think that anyone who pays dues and comes to a synagogue should have the expectation that it is theirs (emphasis mine)."[105]

This need to feel in control of the worship experience may lie in the fact that modern individuals do not feel that they have sufficient control over the lives they lead during the week. Because society is so fragmented, and people do not feel that they can truly express themselves in the secular work worlds in which they are a part, the synagogue becomes the place for them to share their voice. The synagogue gives the individual a community, a common ground, a sense of the Divine that they lack during the week. For those who compete for time and money in the business world, or who constantly feel that their positions are being threatened, synagogue worship becomes a time to join with others on the same level. This leveling is manifest in the discomfort with clergy hierarchy as well. Not only do worshipers want to feel a part of their community; they want a leadership model in their synagogue that allows them to express themselves freely as well.

The similarity between many adult congregants and the youth in the camp environment is striking. Both groups are looking for worship that allows them to take ownership in order to affect their own experience. For youth, this desire is rooted in the relationship to their elders, and a desire to flex their muscles and begin to take control of their own lives. For adults, the desire is similar. However, they are reacting to what they find missing from the secular world, as they strive for success, popularity, and comfort. "When we pray together we provide a mirror image of ourselves sending and receiving messages about the nature of reality, the values and aspirations that we hold in common;

---

[105] Summit, 58.

and we bind ourselves together as an actual group, rather than as sole individuals, united in our commitment to ultimate purpose, respectful and affirming of each other's worth."[106] Both youth and adults are seeking meaningful experiences, in which the meta-communication is equal to the communication, and the components of the code define the values of the group. The camp community is a perfect model for such a meaningful experience and can help the synagogue community find such experiences.

Camp to the Synagogue

Worship is linked to the environment in which it is experienced. Chaim Potok remembers his first summer at Camp Ramah in the Poconos in 1951, after many years as a camper and counselor in other Jewish but non-religious camps. He reflects upon his first Friday night service. He recalls that the benches were set in a semi-circle, under the trees, with the setting sun, and everyone was in white. The group began to sing a soft song about the setting sun and meeting the Sabbath bride. He knew the words to the Chaim Nachman Bialik poem they sang, but had never heard them sung before. This quiet song was sung, "somehow transforming the very air through which it sounded into particles of sanctity. I was transfixed by that service. It remains a radiant memory."[107]

As Hoffman noted earlier, it matters less what the music or the text says, than how it is said. For Bialik, the mood set by the seating arrangement, the white clothing, and the setting sun created the moment through which the music could be felt most effectively. If the unknown melody to a known text had been presented to him in an

---

[106] Hoffman, 80.

[107] Joselit, 7.

academic environment, or explained as a piece of art, he may have enjoyed it as well. Yet the air was transformed into "particles of sanctity" because of the coded message found in the natural setting and the physical relationship of the group.

The synagogue can use the coded messaging of camp to influence the way in which it provides worship moments. Firstly, one of the most effective aspects to worship at camp is the natural surroundings. As Chaim Potok recalls, worshiping while facing a sunset-sparkling lake, with a cool breeze rustling through the trees is intensely moving. Summer camp provides beautiful worship settings in abundance. Yet this does not mean that without a lake or wooded chapel the synagogue cannot also create beautiful worship. The internal worship space can model certain aspects of camp. Most importantly, the leaders of camp worship are never on a higher physical plane than the community, so worshippers do not feel looked down upon. Camp worship often occurs in small locations, forcing participants to sit close together, often touching. This provides an intimate feeling that allows everyone to be involved in the experience and prevents someone from being lost on the periphery.

Another aspect of camp worship that can be brought into the synagogue is instrumentation and rhythm. The guitar is the most popular instrument at camp, and is portable, allowing the music leader to travel to a variety of worship locations, or move in such a way as to interact directly with sub-groups of worshipers during services. A carry-over from the 1960s and 1970s, the guitar is also the predominating symbol of youth culture, and the folk sound the guitar provides is still intricately tied to youth expression.

But other instruments are used as well. Frequently participants are asked to contribute through the use of the instruments they play while at home, such as clarinet or flute. Not only does this provide beautiful texture and diverse sounds for worship that

(with a guitar alone) can at times seem repetitive, but it also encourages individuals to contribute to the worship experience through their own personal musical gifts. Another popular instrument is the drum. The drum has become popular through the influence of Israeli and other Middle Eastern and Spanish musical styles. The drum is important to the rhythmical pulse of worship music. The inclusion of repetitious beat, as pulsed on a drum, creates a sensual experience that is part of the youth experience. However, the desire to feel a rhythm in one's bones and to feel an intimacy with one's neighbors is not unique to youth. The attraction of worship communities that use such rhythm instruments lies in the permission to "let go" that rhythm provides. Drums inspire body movement, both minor – like swaying or clapping – or actual dancing. The power of the rhythmic pulse is compelling and gives youth and adults the freedom to express themselves without the normal inhibitions. Rhythm, instrumentation and worship space can be utilized to create powerful moments of prayer in a synagogue – just as they are used at summer camp.

Many adults on weekend retreats in camp environments have experienced a taste of what youth participants feel at summer camp. A congregation may take a group away for the weekend, and sing the same melodies that they might sing use at home. In the new environment, however, something very special happens. One cannot argue, therefore, that only different tunes, or "camp songs," create the meaningful moments. Frequently singing familiar melodies a different way, and with a different goal and sensitivity to environment, will suffice. The problem, however, lies in the fact that the participants return from an amazing experience at camp and have no idea how to integrate the elements of the experience into their regular worship.

I am not suggesting that for a community to experience transformation worship must change radically. On the contrary, subtle changes (which in reception are not so subtle) can alter worship dramatically. An example is useful. The musical leader of the service might begin to lead congregational singing, particularly the singing of very popular melodies, similar to the way a songleader does at camp. Begin the piece, let the community know the mood, rhythm, and meaning of the piece in the first few notes, but then step back and allow the congregation to take control of the song. Not to withdraw completely, but to allow the congregation to hear its own voice over the music leaders provides a subtle, often subconscious, cue to the congregation that the melody, prayer, and meditation is theirs. The leader is simply leading them, guiding the experience moment to moment without controlling every feeling.

Why should congregations look to the model of the music of camp at all? What makes the camp environment an experience worth utilizing for more than just a camp experience? Because it works. Experiences in camp settings, for both youth and adults, are transformative, and its music is translatable outside the camp setting. Both teenagers and adults who pray at camp feel a connection to their traditions, texts, and people that they rarely feel elsewhere. In synagogues too people should have the opportunity to feel that connection, without, as is currently the case, feeling marginalized or disenfranchised from their Jewish community. As currently constructed, music of synagogue worship does not draw people into the community as effectively as music of camp does.

The tools discusses in Chapter 2 concerning the cues the song-leader must take from the group in preparing music are available to leaders of synagogue worship also. Has something happened in the world to which the group will want to respond? Did the community experience something within, tragic or joyful, which will affect their mood?

As the worship experience progresses, is the group tired or energized; are there a number of new congregants or just the core regulars? These and similar questions should be at the forefront as any leader guides worship. We have an obligation to create meaningful moments of synagogue worship which allow congregants to leave fulfilled, rejuvenated, and connected to each other and to God.

CHAPTER 5

INVOLVING TEENS IN SYNAGOGUE WORSHIP

Camp Welcomes the Cantor

The Reform movement has always prided itself on its excellent youth programs and its focus upon identity formation and skill building in young people. For example, NFTY (founded in 1939) established National Leadership Training Institutes (NLTI) after World War II to teach young people how to lead youth-groups and take the skills learned at camp back to their synagogue communities. Dr. Eugene Borowitz was the Dean of the first three Institutes, which were held at different retreat sites for two weeks during each summer.[108] A Song and Dance Leader's Institute (SDLI) was developed in conjunction with NLTI to train teenagers to be cultural teachers. Cantor William Sharlin, composer and cantor from California, was Dean of that program for several years.[109] This program later developed into KUTZ Camp, the National Leadership Academy, which runs training programs for two three-week sessions every summer.

The education of our youth has always been a priority for Reform educators, as is evident from an impressive 1965 list of professionals who spent their summer at the NLTI: Isaac Bashevis Singer, Paul Ben-Haim, Lazar Weiner, Jack Gottleib, Herbert Fromm, Charles Davidson, and Cantor Ray Smolover. All were in attendance teaching composing, song-leading, Yiddish, and culture.[110] Their presence indicates a priority of Jewish education at camp that is astounding. Most critics of the music of camp would be

---

[108] Schachet-Briskin, 3-4.

[109] Ibid., 18.

[110] Ibid., 16.

surprised to know that composers of some of the most artistic and "classical" Jewish music devoted time and energy to the youth at camp. When reflecting upon the dearth of qualified musicians at camp today, one must remember that a time existed when musical education at camp was highly valued.

Cantors today bemoan the absence of Jewish historical music and synagogue music in youth programs. Yet few cantors devote any time to youth-group or camp experiences. No wonder there is no significant influence of Jewish music there. If the quality of music education has decreased at camp, and I would agree that it has, it is due in large measure to the fact that musicians of the caliber of those attending KUTZ in 1965 are not spending time with youth outside of synagogue programs today.

In the 1960s and 1970s the musical leadership at camp changed from adults (usually cantors and composers) to teenagers. As the first song-leader of the UAHC Camp Swig in the 1950s, Cantor Sharlin was in his 30s – as compared to the teenagers who act as song-leaders today.[111]

> It was because of the youthful optimism and assertiveness that some control of the agenda was taken away from the rabbis and cantors who had set up the camps the previous decade [1950s]. Jewish music in the youths' experience had been led by a seemingly old male cantor in a robe, and was now being led by a young, female counselor in shorts and a tie-dyed shirt yelling, 'Louder!'[112]

An important connection develops between the participants and music leader, particularly when the leader is close to the campers' age. The value of peer group is high at camp – hence the desire for young song-leaders as opposed to older cantors. But as dedicated to music as they are, song-leaders who work at UAHC summer

---

[111] Schachet-Briskin, 10.

[112] Ibid., 14.

camps and who are only college students themselves, know little about the breadth of Jewish music, historically speaking. Song-leaders should be close to the age of the participants. But slightly older, more experienced music specialists should join them every summer as well. Whether recent graduates or current students from the School of Sacred Music, the presence of clergy who are trained to teach and lead Jewish music would be invaluable.

A misconception exists that cantors who do not play the guitar have nothing to contribute to the camp environment. Granted, the presence of guitar is vital to the music of camp; song-leaders who play guitar will continue to be employed in camps. But cantors can contribute a variety of things to camp that song-leaders cannot. Cantors bring choral repertoire that represents the best of Jewish music and teaches music skills and Jewish history at the same time. They also contribute knowledge of liturgy and liturgical music unparalleled by rabbis or educators. Like other clergy, cantors can teach such things as Torah study, *midrash*, Bible, and history.

Regardless of the skills the cantor brings to camp, the cantor must fundamentally be a *presence* there. It matters less what the cantor actually does, than it matters that the participants see their cantor as part of the camp community. Cantor Bruce Benson led a session at the 2000 American Conference of Cantors (ACC) Convention in Los Angeles entitled "The Cantor and Camp Involvement." He and many of the cantors in attendance stressed that presence is the strongest influence cantors can have with the youth at camp. He challenges cantors to "make the youth a part of our clergy lives."

In addition, cantors also benefit in several ways [113]:

1) Show the youth that the cantor cares. Just "hanging out" at camp is seen as the coolest thing clergy can do. Participants will approach him just to chat, to talk about the job, or to ask a question of general Jewish content. The cantor should also ask children to teach her melodies she does not know. Allowing the children to become the teacher of their own music demonstrates that the cantor cares enough about them and their music to temporarily forfeit her position of strength.

2) Teach the youth something new. The cantor can teach a class, help plan and lead programs, and simply contribute to the overall camp experience. Teaching a choir brings Jewish music to the group in an enjoyable and casual environment, and pieces can be showcased in worship or programs. Help coordinate services, and co-lead them with the song-leader. Introduce a little *nusach*, like a *chatimah* or the weekday *Amidah*. It is helpful to teach the song-leaders the new music before it is introduced to the group. Music must be presented by people the group trusts, rather than just the cantor. It is important to avoid forcing a musical agenda upon the group. Camp has a particular culture and code, and the music that is sung there is presented very specifically. A sudden change in presentation will be met with resistance.

[113] These were influenced by Cantor Bruce Benson's presentation at the ACC Convention, as well as my own thoughts and experiences.

3) Make connections with the kids who belong to the congregation. They will remind the cantor throughout the year of a certain program or experience at camp, or simply tell her how good it was to see her at camp, and ask if she is returning the following summer. Camp memories are a link between the cantor and a Bar/Bat Mitzvah student, and campers can be the foundation of a new youth choir. These connections can be utilized to involve youth in worship. The cantor can choose music the campers love from camp, or help lead the youth service. A relationship with the youth in the synagogue allows the cantor to dialogue with them in a partnership based on trust and understanding. If both parties are a part of a shared camp experience, the cantor will be better prepared to understand the nature of the teenager's desire to create a camp-like community through music. A cantor who is uneducated about the power of camp and its transformative effect misses an opportunity to connect, through music, with the youth of his congregation.

Including teenagers in the synagogue begins by understanding the community-building aspects laid out in this study and by being involved in the teens' lives, responding to the values that they hold sacred. Teenagers' youth-group or camp experiences often epitomize their values. The power of those experiences should be taken very seriously.

Including Teenagers at Home

Caryn believes that the music of camp has little connection to the "traditional" music of her home congregation. Though similar melodies are sung in both places, they are presented so differently that they sound completely dissimilar. For instance, participants *perceive* Moshe Rothbloom's *V'shamru* in camp differently than they do in synagogue. Freedom to move around, sway, or even clap is encouraged at camp but not in synagogue. Furthermore, campers respond to the meta-communication of the entire synagogue service; they perceive that their voice is of less value in synagogue, regardless of the communication to participate during a singular moment such as *V'shamru*, and are therefore reluctant to sing.

Music facilitated by an "insider" is crucial to the relationship between group and leader.[114] Once the cantor has attended camp and youth-group events, she is seen as one of the group. Consequently, when the cantor teaches the congregation a song popular at camp from the *bimah*, the teenagers feel a special bond with her, and recognize that their voice is valued by the leadership. Furthermore, when the cantor teaches a song the youth do not know they will be more willing to learn it, because they know that the cantor has a musical agenda for the synagogue that includes them as well.

Cantors must build trust between themselves and young congregants at camp as well as the synagogue. My own experience is a good example. After my first year in cantorial school I was asked to return to the UAHC Kutz camp as song-leader. I taught the entire camp to *daven* weekday *nusach* for the *Amidah*, which took the entire summer, and was met with very little resistance. Because the campers and staff knew me – knew

[114] Schachet-Briskin, 62.

that I "understood them," that I "got" what the goals of camp were – they took a risk and let me lead them. If cantors become one of the group and create meaningful relationships with teens they will easily bridge the gap between the music of synagogue and camp.

Reform camp music has had an effect on the synagogue throughout history. For instance, chanting of prayers such as the *Chatzi Kaddish* in Reform temples was inspired by the fact that it was sung in camp. Cantor Schachet-Briskin believes that the distance between camp and synagogue is closing because of the growing variety of tunes and musical styles sung in both venues.[115] Certainly numerous melodies, particularly by singer/songwriters Debbie Freedman, Jeff Klepper, and Danny Freelander, are used in both camp and synagogue. Yet we do not see increasing youth participation in the synagogue service. I would argue, therefore, that the gap is not really closing at all.

How can we increase youth participation in synagogue services? First of all, cantors can invite the youth to co-lead services in synagogue. Cantors often have difficulty relinquishing musical control on the *bimah*, but it is important to provide teens with the experience of leading songs in front of their community. Perhaps the cantor sings quietly with them, without taking control. The cantor can ask the songleader to accompany the cantor on the guitar during a traditional melody. More frequent collaboration between cantor and song-leader creates the stronger connections between camp and synagogue music.

Another means by which teenagers can be more attracted to synagogue worship is if common melodies are used in both camp and synagogue. Because of the misunderstanding of the term "camp music," however, cantors have not examined the

---

[115] Schachet-Briskin, 46.

repertoire of camps in depth, or interacted with the participants enough, to learn which melodies sung at camp could be equally effective in synagogue worship. But incorporating melodies from camp into the synagogue is simply not enough. Youth are not attracted to worship that uses familiar camp melodies which are presented with very little understanding as to how the piece should be performed. The example of Rothbloom's *V'shamru* is a case in point. As pointed out in Chapter 4, the way in which music functions, the amount of control the group is given, the room set up, the instrumentation, and the rhythm dictate the success of a meaningful musical moment. In order to utilize community-building tools effectively, cantors must witness the group experience as it occurs naturally at camp, and present music similarly in synagogue. Cantors can create communities of meaning in their congregations by altering hierarchical models, encouraging participation, and creating moments that those who attend camp find so powerful.

Cantors sometimes avoid including the music and techniques of camp because they believe that they de-legitimize serious worship. But "informality of the service does not belie a lack of seriousness or reverence. Rather, it has developed because these worshippers have become increasingly knowledgeable about, and subsequently more comfortable with Jewish prayer."[116] Campers participate fully and casually because they are able to do so -- they know the Hebrew prayers, and a good deal about the structure of the prayerbook and the use of ritual garb. Most are more knowledgeable of Jewish tradition than their parents. Communal worship experiences enhance connection among worshipers, a desire to participate and knowledge of Jewish ritual. Participation does not

[116] Schachet-Briskin, 58.

diminish the serious nature of worship. On the contrary, actively participating worshipers take prayer very seriously.

Youth must be taken seriously, then; they are a so-far unappreciated part of the Jewish community. Cantors do sing with religious school children, they tutor Bar/Bar Mitzvah students, counsel adults and visit the sick; but very few work directly with youth. The obvious result is a tension between youth and their cantors. Youth who attend camp say their cantors "don't get it," because the cantors do not respond positively to them or sing the music that teenagers like. Cantors are wary of camp, unsure of how to contribute and uninterested in how camp builds community. The result is a wall between camp and synagogue, a tension between cantor and songleader, and two opposing worship traditions developing side by side. Involving cantors in camp, for the sake of the youth who need their clergy, is essential.

CONCLUSION

Acceptance of youth programs as meaningful opportunities to develop Jewish identity is widely accepted. But efforts to integrate youth into the Jewish community are minimal. Youth are usually the least appreciated, least understood, and least utilized sector in synagogue life. For example, rarely are youth-group board members honored alongside other congregational committees' board members at installation services. Youth services are attended only by youth and their friends and they are relegated to the youth lounge or social hall, instead of the main sanctuary. Youth express dissatisfaction with the lack of encouragement that they receive to be involved in synagogue life.

They feel particularly excluded from the sanctuary. Their worship is expressed through music which synagogues must embrace if they are to embrace the youth themselves. I do not assert that cantors should lead song-sessions from the pulpit. But aspects of the camp experience can and should be utilized to include youth in synagogue worship. Teen experience can be incorporated in synagogue without disturbing the established traditions and customs of the primarily adult population.

Cantors in the Reform movement have yet to recognize the role they can play in the lives of young people at camp. This is evident in the simple fact that very few cantors attend summer camps or appear to display a desire to become a viable part of the summer youth experience. The workshop on the cantor's role at camp that Cantor Bruce Benson facilitated at the ACC Conference was attended by just six cantors, out of over 200 at the conference. The camp workshop was not poorly attended because everyone at the conference was already very involved in camp life; the camp workshop was poorly attended because it was not a high priority.

Those cantors who are involved in youth work understand the power of camp as a community-building tool. Crucial to community-building at camp is the atmosphere in which music is presented. While some cantors attempt to learn songs from NFTY Songsters, they very rarely understand how those songs are performed. Only participation in a camp worship service will illustrate that *how* music is performed is more important than the melodies themselves. Room configuration, instrumentation, alternative rhythms, and reaction by the music leader to the mood of the group all play a crucial role in the function of music at camp to build community. Most importantly, a high level of participation, ownership of moments by the group, and a sense that the leader will direct but not control the experience lead to successful community-building experiences at camp.

One powerful value of camp is the equality of members who come together in unified participation. We saw previously that social groups with little hierarchical differentiation are more likely to sing together as a group, with minimal solo and leader singing. The camp structure is a perfect example of such social groups. Professionals teach and guide the youth, and adults protect the health and safety of the participants, but when it comes to camp activities, all participants are involved, with no one left outside. Teenagers of differing backgrounds, geographic regions, and interests forge bonds by singing together. Leaders minimize authoritarian roles to produce a community with little hierarchy where the value of group experience predominates.

Another important aspect of the power of music at camp is that it merges two pieces of teens' identity: being American and being Jewish. Some youth struggle with the tension between the two; most do not even struggle. They simply opt to be Americans with little thought to being Jewish. Jewish summer camps, however, provide

meaningful and safe environments for young people to explore their Jewish identities and incorporate Jewish values into their decision-making processes. Music of camp blends the two identities. Jewish texts set to up-beat, rock-like melodies combined with songs about secular problems celebrate the reality of Jewish values amidst worldly events.

By knowing the importance camp youth place on the music that helps them identify as Jews, cantors can involve teens meaningfully in synagogue worship. Involving a youth-group song-leader in a Friday night worship service, inviting a participant who plays an instrument to incorporate it into a liturgical piece, or asking a teen to help lead a new song (which was popular at camp but is equally appropriate for Shabbat worship) can go a long way toward forging strong ties between a community and its youth, between cantor and campers.

Finally, and most importantly, the tools used to create camp community are useful – even essential – for building worship experiences in the synagogue in which everyone feels connected. Music leaders can express Jewish music without distancing themselves from the congregation. Congregants feel listened to and understood when the cantor reacts to the mood of the group during worship. Allowing the congregation's voice to be louder than the leader's places their experience and their worship of God in their own hands. Music leaders can still offer uplifting prayers at meditative moments without the congregation joining in. In fact, musical moments of participatory listening are seen as less performative when the congregation's participation is encouraged at other times. Different instrumentation, youth choirs, camp song-leaders, and creative liturgy sparks interest in adults who might otherwise never hear different musical styles. In addition, teenagers may be encouraged to participate in synagogue worship if they hear melodies that are meaningful to them and if they themselves are actually involved in prayer. While

adults and teenagers have some different worship needs, they share much also. More opportunities can be created to encourage both groups to pray together, and to raise their voices in song with a common vision of equality and community.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arian, Ramie. "Jewish Camping: A Critical Need & A Historic Opportunity" Promotional Materials. New York, NY: Foundation for Jewish Camping, Inc., 1999.

Blacking, John. *Venda Children' Songs: A Study in Ethnomusicological Analysis.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967.

Blum, Stephen, Philip V. Bohlman and Daniel M. Neuman, eds. *Ethnomusicology and Modern Music History.* Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991.

Bradshaw, Paul F. and Lawrence A. Hoffman, eds. *The Changing Face of Jewish and Christian Worship in North America.* Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991.

_____. *The Making of Jewish and Christian Worship.* Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991.

Buchdahl, Angela Warnick. "Music and Identity at Temple Emanu-El, B'nai Jeshurun, and Chavurat Tikvah" (Masters' Thesis, Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, 1999).

Ettenberg, Sylvia C. and Geraldine Rosenfield, eds. *The Ramah Experience: Community and Commitment.* New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America in Cooperation with The National Ramah Commission, 1989.

Farago, Uri. "The Influence of a Jewish Summer Camp's Social Climate on the Camper's Identity" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1971).

Finkelstein, Lawrence. "Our Youth: The Lasting Magic of UAHC Camps." *Regional Update* 4, no. 3 (Summer 2000).

Fox, Seymour and William Novak. *Vision at the Heart: Lessons from Camp Ramah on the Power of Ideas in Shaping Educational Institutions.* Jerusalem: S. Fox and Monographs from The Mandel Foundation, 2000.

Heskes, Irene. *Passport to Jewish Music: It's History, Traditions and Culture.* New York: Tara Publications, 1994.

Hoffman, Lawrence A. *The Art of Public Prayer: Not for Clergy Only,* 2d ed. Washington D.C.: Pastoral Press, 1988.

Hoffman, Lawrence A. and Janet R. Walton. *Sacred Sound and Social Change*. Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992.

Idelsohn, Abraham Z. *Jewish Music: Its Historical Development*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1992.

Joselit, Jenna Weissman and Karen S. Mittelman, eds. *A Worthy Use of Summer*. Philadelphia: National Museum of Jewish History, 1993.

Kligman, Mark. "Contemporary Jewish Music in America". *American Jewish Yearbook*

Levin, Joseph A. *Synagogue Song in America*. Indiana: White Cliffs Media Company, 1989.

Lomax, Alan. *Folk Song Style and Culture*. Washington D.C.: American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1968.

Lorch, Steven Charles. "The Convergence of Jewish and Western Culture as Exemplified Through Music: Some Educational Consequences" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1977).

Luckens, Rabbi Reuben. "The Jewish Educational Summer Camp: A Portrait" (Ph.D. diss., Jewish Teachers Seminary and People's University, 1968).

Merriam, Alan. *The Anthropology of Music*. Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1964.

Miller, Eric. "A Responding Community: Dialogue and Participation in Communal Worship" (Masters' Thesis, Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, 1999).

Planer, John H. and Cantor Howard M. Stahl, eds. *Koleinu B'Yachad: Our Voices as One – Envisioning Jewish Music for the 21st Century*. Published by the American Conference of Cantors and the Guild of Temple Musicians: 1999.

Reform Judaism. "Rabbi Eric H. Yoffie: Teaching of Living Torah." Fall 1996.

Tobin, Dr. Gary A. and Meryle Weinstein. *Jewish Camping*. San Francisco: Institute for Jewish and Community Research, 2000.

Turner, Victor. Liminality and *Communitas*, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti Structure*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969.

Schachet-Briskin, Wally. " The Music of Reform Youth" (Masters' Thesis, Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, 1996).

Shelamay, Kay Kaufman. "Mythologies and Realities in the Study of Jewish Music." *The World of Music* 37 (1) 1995.

Shuker, Roy. *Understanding Popular Music*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Slobin, Mark. *Chosen Voices: The Story of the American Cantorate*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989.

Slobin, Mark. "Ten Paradoxes and Four Dilemmas of Studying Jewish Music." *The World of Music* 37 (1) 1995.

Summit, Jeffrey. "I'm a Yankee Doodle Dandy?: Identity and Melody at an American Simchat Torah Celebration." *Ethnomusicology* 37/1: 41-62.

Summit, Jeffrey. *The Lord's Song in a Strange Land : Music and Identity in Contemporary Jewish Worship*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.