Lech L'chazzan:
A Study of Cantorial Migration

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INTRODUCTION

In this paper I will examine the phenomenon of cantorial migration from Europe to the United States and Israel through the biographies, musical output and legacies of three famous *chazzanim*: Gershon Sirota, Zevulun Kwartin and Leib Glantz. All three men were born in present day Ukraine and each man's career would be shaped by his own emigrational journey. Through the lens of these journeys I will assess the changing musical landscape of late 19th and early 20th century Europe, as well as how each cantor's career differed from that of their own contemporaries. I will argue that in each case, the cantors' styles and careers were radically altered by their time in Europe, the United States, and Israel, three continents which were central to the cantorial diaspora story. Although this is by no means an exhaustive study, by focusing on three prominent names in the history of cantorial music, I wish to paint an image of why cantorial migration was such an important part of Jewish musical history, and thereby demonstrate that for both listener and *chazzan*, the geographical choices they made would impact their musical directions, liturgical decisions, and even political ideologies.

In the first section, I will look at the biography of each cantor, focusing on the routes of their migration, and the impact that this travel had on their economic, social, and spiritual lives. In the second section, using recordings, musical scores and contemporaneous first-hand accounts, I will look at musical style and how this developed based on location and outside influences in the career of each cantor. In the third section, I will examine the Jewish immigrational story of the late 19th century, and how this was particularly relevant to the cantorate, which represented a highly skilled labour market of Jewish professional immigrants which came to shape American synagogue life over the coming decades.

Through new recording technology, the mass-migration of European Jewry, and the concept of cantor as a vessel of tradition through the migration process, I will demonstrate the crucial role the cantorate in transferring Jewish culture between continents from the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries, and to what extent this may be viewed as a Golden Age in the chain of cantorial tradition.

I. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Gershon Sirota was born in Haysin, Podolia'er Guberniye in what is present-day Ukraine. He was the son of the village cantor, and quickly established himself as a highly gifted singer, first as a member of the choir, and later by leading Shabbat services (Siroty-Flowers, 3). His father then sent him to live with his grandfather in Odessa, where he became a pupil of Cantor Yakovkin, the choirmaster of the *Shalashna* synagogue. Yakovkin recommended that he attend the Odessa Conservatory of Music. There he learned harmony, music theory and even operatic repertoire with Baron Kolbuss (Siroty-Flowers, 3). Samuel Vigoda recounts that on one occasion during this time, "The Baron asked him to sing a certain aria, which he knew already by heart. When he finished, the door of the adjoining room opened and in walked a number of well-known artists of the Russian musical stage. All of them were applauding and giving enthusiastic expression of their admiration for the excellent performance which they had just heard. They were lavish in their praise of the young man and foresaw for him a brilliant future in the field of opera" (Vigoda, 521). Nevertheless, Sirota's path was to be a Cantor, and his father felt the conservatory was "anathema" (Vigoda, 521) to Sirota's intended cantorial path.

Sirota then moved on to the Pikashtshikes suburb in Odessa. His former professor at the conservatory, Baron Kolbuss, even convinced him to partake in a performance of Haydn's Creation as tenor soloist, and this led to plans to be engaged as the *Oberkantor* of Vienna. Unfortunately, his father became dangerously ill at this time, and Sirota returned to see him, leaving his career on hold (Vigoda 526-528).

After his father's death Sirota's next serious posting came in the city of Vilna, the "Lithuanian Jerusalem" (Vigoda, 528). The previous cantor had been fired, "in the wake of a scandal which rocked the city… He was allegedly observed putting a piece of candy in his mouth while officiating on the Day of Atonement" (Vigoda, 530). During Sirota's interview for this position when Sirota was only 19 years old, Mr Hash, a member of the panel remarked, "Have you had a chance to see our synagogue? Have you seen the city? Do you know that Vilna is bigger than you?" To this Sirota replied, "You are mistaken… I am bigger than Vilna" (Vigoda, 530).

Sirota's time in Vilna proved invaluable to his development as a *chazzan*, in part due to the many famous music directors that he would work with, including Isaac Schlossberg and Mayer Machtenberg, however, it was the partnership with Leo Leow that would "Change both their lives forever" (Siroty-Flowers, 5). Leow felt that giving concerts outside of the synagogue for the general public would be a way to endear him to the populace, and these concerts became so popular they led to a concert at the Baratzkoy Concert Hall, the largest in Vilna (Siroty-Flowers, 5).

Sirota was a huge hit in Vilna with his immense voice and perhaps even larger ego and referred to his time there as "The best conservatory ever". Yet, "how long a stretch can one stay put in a conservatory, even the very best one" (Vigoda, 547)? After a brief stint in

the Guinzburg synagogue of St Petersburg, in 1905 Sirota's graduation took the form of in the great Tlomatzker synagogue of Warsaw (Siroty-Flowers, 7). This was a citadel of assimilation, vastly different to his previous posting. On the front of the building were the words, "*Mi zsidzsi Tego Krayu*" or "We are Jews of this fatherland" (Vigoda, 553). Warsaw during this time, which had previously not been a Jewish centre, now became a hub for new Jewish communities. Siroty-Flowers writes, "There were numerous synagogues and schools of study and tens of Yiddish journals and newspapers in circulation. As more Jews streamed into Poland between the wars, the Jewish population of Warsaw exploded, and by the beginning of Wold War II, over one third of its inhabitants were Jewish" (Siroty Flowers, 21).

The Tlomatzker was referred to as the *Deitshe shule* (German synagogue), or the *Beys Mikdash m'at*, or miniature temple (Vigoda, 568). Furthermore, "The building adjoining the synagogue was the cultural center of Jewish life. On the first floor was a museum with artefacts of Warsaw's Jews and a library of 30,000 volumes of books. The second floor housed the *Literaten Verein* and the *Mizrachi* religious Zionist organization. This center of learning and meeting played a large role in the cohesiveness of the different groups in the community, regardless of religious practise (Siroty Flowers, 27). Warsaw was a thriving metropolis of Jewish life, and Sirota had reached the heights of cantorial fame at the young age of 31. The *Tlomatzker* synagogue had never previously had a position for a cantor, however "Eventually the people demanded a cantor to create the service of their hometowns, with a beautiful voice and the knowledge to properly interpret the prayers" (Siroty Flowers, 7). He presided there for 19 years to great acclaim, bringing Leo Leow with him to be his choirmaster.

In 1911, Leow traveled to America and decided that the new world was "ready to hear Sirota's talent" and engaged him with the prestigious William Morris Agency for a twenty-five concert tour (Siroty Flowers, 8). From here, Sirota "Became infected with the bug of an unquenchable thirst and an inextinguishable preference for the tumultuous pace, the cacophony, the galloping tempo and freedom prevailing the youngest of the continents. Once he got a taste of America, he could not any longer be content with the poverty, intolerance and backwardness that he saw and felt all around him in Poland" (Vigoda, 580). Although torn between both continents, Sirota would travel between the United States and Poland, being drawn to New York and the concert stage through great financial incentives, even performing four concerts at Carnegie Hall (Siroty Flowers, Appendix E). The famous tenor of the Metropolitan Opera, Enrico Caruso, is said to have remarked during one performance, "Oh if I had such a voice! Thank God, that he has chosen to employ his heavenly gift in a different field and I do not have to compete with such a formidable challenger in opera (Vigoda, 585). Sirota was also chastised for not appearing in synagogues (Siroty-Flowers, 10), although this would change with later voyages. Sirota's movement was restricted to Europe during the war until 1916, but after this time he continued to make appearances at Carnegie Hall until 1921 (Siroty Flowers, Appendix E).

Over the following decade, Sirota toured extensively to New York, Chicago, Montreal, Buenos Aires and Tel Aviv. In 1938, after appearances in Canada, he returned home to be with his ailing wife. Although friends warned him against returning to Europe, his familial obligations drew him back, and Sirota spent the remainder of his life in the Warsaw ghetto, unable to leave despite his connections in the USA. Sirota officiated for the last time in 1941, leading those in the ghetto in prayer. An eye witness, David Efross wrote,

"Those who had for many decades had occasion to attend his religious services in the Tlomatzker synagogue… and were knowledgeable in the appraisal of cantorial art declared… never before had his voice sounded as mighty and brilliant as when he chanted his swansong. With superhuman effort and searing passion he implored the Lord to rescue his flock from the trap in which they were languishing" (Vigoda, 609). He perished during the liquidation in a house fire on the 10th of August 1942. Although Sirota's tragic end in Warsaw foreshadowed the destruction of Europe as a centre of Jewish music and culture, the cantorial tradition would survive and flourish through the cantors who made a life for themselves in the New World.

Zevulun, or Zavel Kwartin was one of the greatest exponents of *chazzanut* of all time. Kwartin, paralleling Sirota, was also born in 1874 in present day Ukraine, and was similarly surrounded by *chazzanut* from his father, an observant and highly musical man who would improvise *z'mirot* at the dinner table. From an early age, Kwartin would imitate these improvisations, before undertaking serious studies with the Cantor Jerichum Hakaton, a famous *chazzan* of the time.

Kwartin's father was against the idea of his son becoming a professional Cantor, since those of the time lived mainly from *tzedakah* donations and wedding singing. Nevertheless, Kwartin founded a quartet with his brother, cousin and uncle. After a period of study, transitioning from alto to tenor, and learning the traditional *nuschaot hatefilah*, Kwartin's first big break came when he was asked to chant Haftarah in 1898. He was taken under the wing of Cantor Mayer Pissak (Kwartin, 2018*,* 103-104*).* There, he studied harmony, piano and operatic repertoire. Never losing sight of his goal to become a cantor, he made his way to Odessa to study and sing with the great Pini Minkowsky and the choral director Novakovsky

(Kwartin, 2018, 128-135). From here, he made his way to Vienna in 1899 to study with Sulzer (Kwartin, 2018, 136). Even so, his family did everything in their power to sway him from the cantorial path, and he returned home to be with them, not returning to Vienna until 1904 (Kwartin, 2018, 168). On Kwartin's return to Vienna, he was accepted as the new cantor of the Kaiserin-Elisabeth-Tempel where he would sing until 1909 (Kwartin, 2018, 326). After this period Kwartin spent extensive periods as cantor in St Petersburg (Kwartin, 2018, 311) and Budapest (Kwartin, 2018, 330) as well as singing at the *Tlomatzker* synagogue after Sirota's departure (Kwartin, 2018, 277). Despite plans to tour to America during this time, Kwartin was unable to follow-through with his tour until 1920 due to the outbreak of the First World War (Kwartin, 2018, 372).

Like Sirota, Kwartin was attracted to the financial opportunities and freedoms of the New World, and in 1920 while touring, he made his debut at the Metropolitan Opera. One review of the time wrote, "Mr Kwartin's voice and style are peculiarly suited to the rendition of Hebraic chants and songs of an appealing nature, which he gives in plentiful number, evidently causing pleasure to a large contingent of adherents of this form of vocalization' ("Music Magazine-Courier", 36). In contrast, Kwartin in his own autobiography, laments of the same concert, "I felt in this moment, as though I wasn't Kwartin. I didn't gain control of my voice, and the applause after my *V'shamru* was very weak…. They applauded me after my exit, though I recognized in the applause more of an expression of sympathy and compassion… I gave myself a frank evaluation, that my first performance in the World-City [*Weltshtot*] of New York was a total failure" (Kwartin, 2018 407-409) [1]. The truth probably

[1] All translations from Kwartin's *Mayn Leben* are by myself from Yiddish to English.

lies somewhere in the middle, as Kwartin later redeemed himself and would become incredibly successful in the United States giving many further concerts to great acclaim.

In 1921, Kwartin emigrated and became a full-time cantor at Temple Emanu-El of Borough Park. Kwartin writes of his time there, "The first of January 1921 I began to daven in Temple Emanu-El in Borough Park. I had a wonderful choir to help me, under the leadership of the famous director, Zavel Zilberts, which set up a shining relationship between us. What followed was extraordinary, and I thought to myself that the Jews of Brooklyn had every reason to be satisfied with the *shidduch* which they had made with me (Kwartin, 2018, 425).

Kwartin also writes, "With quiet confidence I can say that these years in New York, from 1922, the year of my second marriage, until 1928… were the happiest years of my life. My importance grew from year to year. My talents developed to their fullest powers and beauty. My personal happiness was found whenever my wife came home into the house. I can't imagine there could be a happier man than me in those times" (Kwartin, 2018, 450).

Kwartin would continue to travel between Europe and the United States, performing often in Budapest and even in the Berlin Philharmonie, but his true passion over the coming years lay in visiting and performing in Israel, where he eventually bought property on Mt Carmel. He explains, "The greatest event from this period in my life was certainly when I finally was able to realize the dream of all my years, beginning from my earliest youth, to go to the holy land of Israel and see it with my own eyes" (Kwartin, 2018, 467). Kwartin even explains this connection with Jerusalem liturgically, writing, "In all the years that I have wandered through different capital cities of Europe, when I was all grown up and had achieved glory and fame, never had I let our ancient homeland leave my eye, for which I

recited the most beautiful *Tefilah*, for which I awakened nostalgia and passion from the thousands upon thousands of Jews who came to Shul or temple to hear me. The "*V'techezenah eineinu*" [from the *Avoda* section of the *Amida*] was permanently a part of my life (Kwartin, 2018, 468)." Kwartin was buried on Mt Carmel in 1952, having seen the establishment of the state of Israel which was for him "A great day in our history" (Kwartin, 2018, 580).

Sirota and Kwartin were exact contemporaries and laid the template for the proliferation of recorded cantorial music throughout Europe and the New World. In the next generation of cantors, one individual stands out for his innovation, virtuosity and musical variety: Leib Glantz. Born in present-day Ukraine in 1898, Glantz showed great musical promise from a very early age. His father, Kalman Glantz was a cantor at the Talner Chasidic synagogue, and his paternal grandfather was one of the leaders of the Talner Chasidim (Glantz, 2008, 13). He was only 8 years old when he first officiated at his synagogue in Dimievka (Glantz, 2008, 14). Glantz was sent at the age of 13 to study Chasidic *D'veikut niggunim*, or particular devotional melodies from the great Cantor Avraham Berkovitz-Kalechnik (Glantz, 2008, 14).

Glantz was also a product of his time. With the growing emancipation of Eastern European Jewry, Glantz was able to attend the University of Kiev, studying great Russian Operas and Ballets (Glantz, 2008, 26) which were not a part of the previous cantorial generation's musical development. Glantz is also inseparable from his Zionist aspirations. He was leader of both *Tz'ei'rei Tzion* and the *Bund*, teaching and conducting the choir of the *Tarbut*, a Zionist Hebrew language school network, as well as the Yiddish professional school of the *Bund* (Glantz, 2013, 15). He was also a member of the central committee of

Hechalutz and spoke on their behalf at many conferences. During this time, although Glantz officiated at holidays and festivals, his career as a *chazzan* was less important to him than his Zionist activities. Cantorial singing was a means to support his family, and raise Zionist awareness, although this would change in the coming decades. Charles Broden writes,

> Before Glantz migrated, most of his time was devoted to Zionist activity which he saw as his calling in life. As such he refused to tie himself to a synagogue full-time. He only prayed from the *amud* during holidays and occasional Shabbatot. He lectured greatly and made appeals for money on behalf of Hechalutz. Glantz turned down several offers from high schools in and around Kishinev to teach music. He began to write and speak about Jewish music discussing its motifs and style in order to get those youth who had been distancing themselves from the synagogue more in touch with their roots- to deepen their Jewish consciousness (Broden, 8).

In 1920 Glantz returned to Kishinev in Bessarabia, a centre of both Zionist and cantorial activity. Glantz had plans to emigrate to Palestine, however his father's death in 1923 as well as the regime's growing antagonism towards its Jewry meant that he would decide to move to the United States in 1926 in order to better support his family (Broden, 9). After appearing in a prestigious cantorial concert, Glantz was engaged by an impresario to record for RCA Victor appearing on its prestigious Red Label series. Glantz's recordings of this time, such as his "*L'chu N'ranena"*, "*Kol Adonai",* and most famously his, "*Sh'ma Yisrael"*, would cement his reputation as one of the new great names in *chazzanut*.

In New York he served the *Ohev Shalom* synagogue for two years, before moving to Los Angeles in 1941 where he became the chief cantor of Sinai Temple from 1941-1946, and the chief cantor of *Sha'are Te'fi'la* Synagogue from 1949-1954. Glantz also continued to tour the United States as well as Canada, Mexico, South America, Western and Eastern Europe, South Africa and Palestine.

From his initial success in the USA until this point, Glantz had refused the pull of his Zionist dreams for one simple reason: synagogue politics. The leaders of the religious political parties of Israel would not grant him a full-time post at any synagogue in Israel unless he agreed to join one of the religious political parties, and renounce his affiliations with the *Ma'pai* labor Zionist party. This changed in 1954 when the new leaders of the Tiferet Zvi Synagogue in Tel Aviv invited him to assume a full-time post (Glantz, 2008, 21). Glantz's midnight *Se'lichot* service that year was, in the words of Leib's son, Jerry Glantz, "A national event before a fully packed synagogue, with four thousand additional worshippers crowding the surrounding streets, listening to his voice through loudspeakers." As Jerry Glantz further explains, "My father lived in Israel for the last ten years of his life. Many of his greatest compositions were written during this period, as he finally found himself in the ideal setting. He could compose and perform for an audience that was capable of appreciating the Hebrew nuances of his musical interpretations of the ancient prayer texts" (Glantz, 2008, 5). Glantz went on to found the Tel Aviv Institute for Jewish Liturgical Music as well as *Ha'akademia L'chazanut*, an academic conservatory for cantorial music, where he taught until his death on January 27 1964 during a performance at the Beit Hamlin concert hall in Tel Aviv. After his death the Institute was transformed into a publishing arm for Glantz's musical compositions and written works (Glantz, 2008, 23). He is buried at the *Kiryat Sha'ul* cemetery in North Tel Aviv.

In summarizing the biographies of these three cantors, several parallels and differences emerge. All three showed great promise musically from a very early age, and this talent was nurtured first and foremost through cantorial training and apprenticeship. In addition to this, all three had fathers who were either cantors themselves, or highly musical

men who had a great knowledge of liturgy in the case of Kwartin. There were also obstacles luring each man away from the cantorate in each case. Although Kwartin's family tried to stop him from choosing the path of the cantorate, his prodigious talent, early utilization of recording technology and readiness to migrate meant that his own aspirations were heavily aligned with the cantorial profession in his time. In contrast, for Sirota it seems that the true original lure was a life on the stage, and his performance both in recording and on stage of operatic arias may show that he maintained a passion and desire to turn to opera. For Glantz, his political activities and the fixation with the return of the Jewish people to Israel was at the centre of his life until he needed to provide for his family after his father's death, although he would later pursue his Zionist calling.

Additionally, Kwartin and Sirota as the first generation of cantors to spend time in the United States, first needed to conquer the larger cities of Eastern Europe, and these represented an important stepping stone to migration. Both Kwartin and Sirota served the Warsaw *Tlomatzker* synagogue community, and both felt constricted in Europe, both financially and socially. In contrast, Glantz, through the infrastructure put in place through previous concert tours and the marketing of recordings, was able to commence his career almost instantly in the United States. In addition to this, Europe was already perceived to be in decline as a Jewish centre. Much of the pale of settlement was already migrating to the United States and Palestine, and for Glantz, the reality that the future of his career lay in migration was clear. The fact that this migration was first to the United states is a testament to the economic drive of the early migration from Eastern Europe, and the opportunities presented to the next generation of cantors.

II. MUSICAL OUTPUT, STYLE AND DEVELOPMENT

In the second section, I will examine the various musical elements of each cantor's style and their approach to *chazzanut* which made them unique. I will also look at potential external influences which may have impacted their style, and attempt to chart broad trends in cantorial music and style across continents, and how this affected each cantor in their emigrational journey and career development.

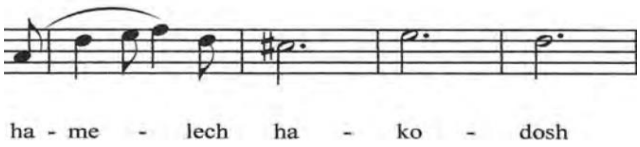
For Sirota, a large part of his musical output is based around those who wrote for him. He had an incredibly secure, unfailing technique which was transferable not only to great cantorial works, but also the operatic canon and Sirota recorded and performed several Verdi arias throughout his career. Leo Loewe wrote, "His voice stretched over three octaves, and he traversed this range easily without strain. With a little effort, he could 'shoot out' an E and F above the high C. The latter was for him child's play and he could 'belt' it out immediately upon opening up his eyes after a night's sleep, while still lying horizontally in bed" (Vigoda, 573).

Although Sirota's style was inimitable and entirely unique, he never wrote his own compositions, thus it is not necessarily possible to chart his development compositionally. In terms of his development stylistically, Vigoda writes that in his earlier concerts in America, Gershon Sirota had received the criticism that his style in America was "Too dry and that there was not enough heart and feeling in his chanting, that there was lacking the Jewish sigh, cry and lament. Sirota replied, "The crying with crocodile tears, the sighing and the artificial moaning and tear-jerking sobbing I leave the Yosselech, the Berele'ch and to the Moyshelech" (Vigoda, 600). Nevertheless, Vigoda contends that Sirota did indeed indulge in "the vulgarities" of the American Jewish community on his return to Poland. He recounts,

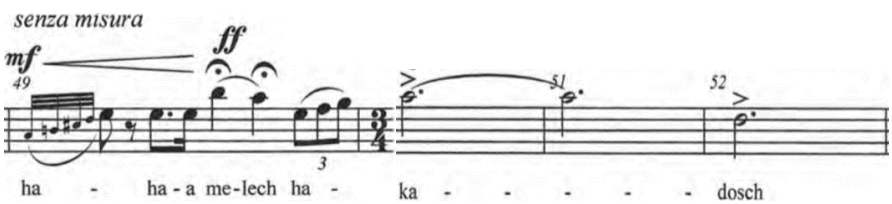
> He was taken to task for his frequent use of banal and cheap effects and for his sudden outbreaks of unrelated, stunt-like roulades and coloratura acrobatics. He also incurred the displeasure of the authorities for his latest innovation of whistling in his falsetto, which he had never possessed naturally and which was patently artificially contrived; they looked also askance at his too frequent repeating of the text and his lately adopted habit of throwing around the words in arbitrary disorder, in utter disregard of the sequence in which they appeared in the prayer book (Vigoda, 600).

Hence, we see that although Sirota may have had a very refined style suitable for the *Tlomatzker* synagogue in Europe, this may have adapted and changed in response to his time spent in the United States, although due to the lack of dates on recordings it is very difficult to chart whether this influence was consistent. A comparison by Siroty Flowers of Sirota's two recordings of Paul Abras' *Kadosh Atah* reveals heavy stylistic embellishment and the "stunt like roulades" which Vigoda mentioned. The first musical example is taken from the manuscript by Abras, while the second is taken from an undated recording, although Siroty Flowers dates it to the late 1920s or early 1930s from Sirota's accompanist of this period.

Original manuscript (Siroty Flowers, Appendix B):



Recording (Siroty Flowers, Appendix C):



Here we see that Sirota interpolates several grace notes, triplets, and a far higher cadence into his own interpretation of the finale of the work. Although we cannot surmise that this applied to all of Sirota's later output, it is certainly a far cry from his earlier recordings such as the *R'tzei* of Schlossberg where he remains far more faithful to the score.

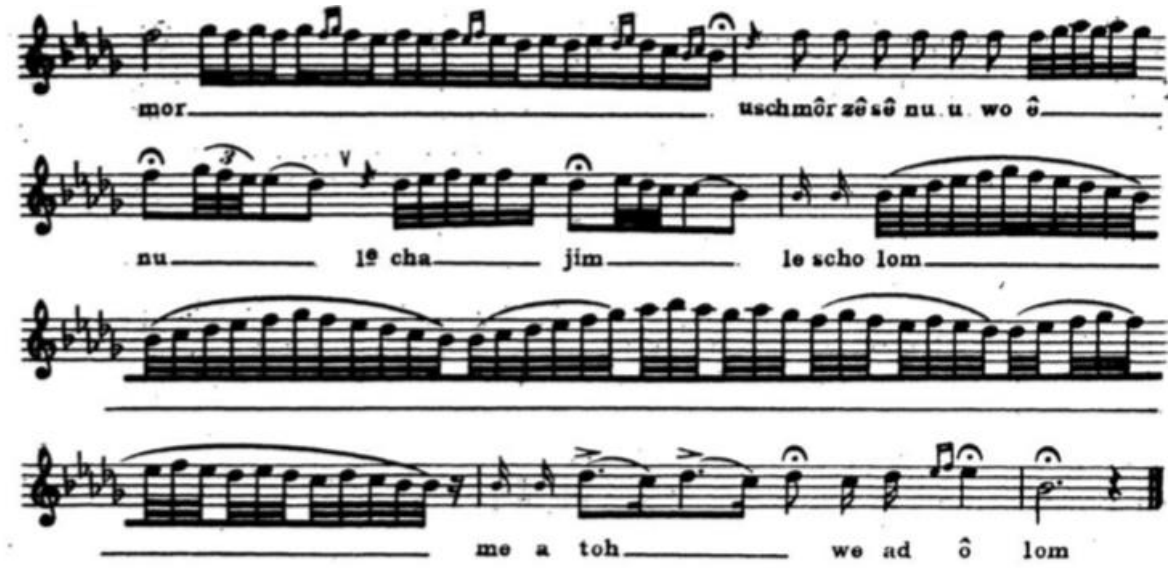
In contrast, Kwartin, having never spent time in formal institutions or had training in Western music like Sirota and Glantz, began with a far more Eastern-European and less refined style. Unlike Sirota, Kwartin wrote all his own *retchitatives*, although they were mostly based on his improvisations. His first compositions, although not necessarily entirely traceable to this early period, but certainly composed before 1926, bear the hallmarks of his unique virtuosity. They reflect a heavily fluid style with much ornamentation, as well as arpeggiated chords to fill out the harmony of an unaccompanied synagogue. They also have a strong grounding in the traditional Eastern European *nusach ha'tefilah*, but with many detours of coloratura and long scale runs. Kwartin himself writes of his initial compositional instincts during his time in Vienna,

> I began to look around for compositions, *retchitatives* [cantorial solos] and improvisations which came from the old orthodox *chazzanim* from the old tradition. I tracked down the *niggunim* from Jeruchum hakaton, from Nisi Belzer and Shestapol. I delved deeply into those unique creations, which breathed with the generational deep roots of Jewish life. But, what was more, a desire was embedded in me, to add to these creations something of my own to that which generations of cantors out of religiosity and *yirat shamayim* [fear of heaven] had sung before me out of grief, and of the hidden hopes of their people…. I sat there in my dark room… and my thoughts wandered far far away, to the time in my hometown, when my father was seated at the Shabbos-table and improvised different *niggunim* to *z'mirot*. It revealed melodies to me which I expanded and elaborated, and I tightly bound the meaning of the words to the sounds which appeared in my mind, and in this manner came the compositions which would lay the foundation for my many varied creations in the liturgical realm (Kwartin, 2018, 148).

This improvisational style was always prevalent in Kwartin's early writing, as notated in this excerpt from his *Hashkiveinu* (below), from his first book of compositions. It is also worth mentioning that the word *niggun* at this time is not being used in reference to the song genre commonly associated with Chasidism, but instead refers to melody more generally. Although we think of *nusach* as the basis for liturgical singing, the idea of playing with the melody was probably what Kwartin was implying when he refers to the *niggunim* of famous cantors, and this would apply more to the florid cantorial singing we are used to in cantorial *retchitatives*, rather than a simple melody.

Irene Heskes writes of Kwartin's style, "He couldn't read music fluently and his recitatives did not present much musical variety. He never used direct melodies or 'ditties.' As a result, there is a certain sameness in his recitatives as evident from his many recordings" (Pasternak and Schall, 18). In this excerpt from Kwartin's notated Hashkiveinu, he goes up and down the scale on the word *shalom*, emphasizing its importance, before finally reaching the octave on a high B flat, and descending in a florid pattern of triplets. Kwartin then elongates the words "*Mei atah v'ad olam*" with dotted 8th notes, emphasizing the idea of eternity, before ending in a traditional 4-1 cadence. Thus, we see Kwartin's florid spontaneity, but also his deep respect for text. Kwartin's artistry never deviates from the modal nusach of the particular liturgy, but his interpretive artistry with melisma and coloratura within these parameters was a defining feature of his output .

(Kwartin, Smiroth Zevulun I, p. 10):



Although Kwartin doesn't write of adapting his style to the United States, one of his most popular records, the chant from the Martyrology section of Yom Kippur, "*Tiher Rabbi Yishmoel Atzmo"*, does give us clues to Kwartin's evolution over time. When looking at the sheet music, we are confronted with a declamatory and much more musically sparse rendering of text than the *Hashkiveinu* depicted. Kwartin reaches new depths of emotion through the use of long held notes as well as idiomatic embellishments such as sobs and vocal breaks. It is my hypothesis that this style was influenced by his time in America. Cantor Israel Goldstein sums up this difference in the United States in four words, "Too many oy veys" (Goldstein, Interview).

Although this remains subjective, an analysis of the sheet music for Tiher Rabbi Yishmoel (Kwartin Smiroth Zevulun II, p.82) reveals 34 oys, 27 veys, and 86 words of liturgy, meaning that the piece is in fact 41 percent oy vey. This development may have also been environmental as well as musicological. Kwartin, as with all *chazzanim* of this period

was heavily influenced by his peers. Although comparisons to current cantorial trends and contemporaries such as Yossele Rosenblatt are never mentioned in his autobiography, the need to record in the new style, incorporating a much heavier use of *oy veys* and sobbing, was certainly reminiscent of Rosenblatt's own style, and could be seen as an environmental factor in Kwartin's newer dramatic renditions.

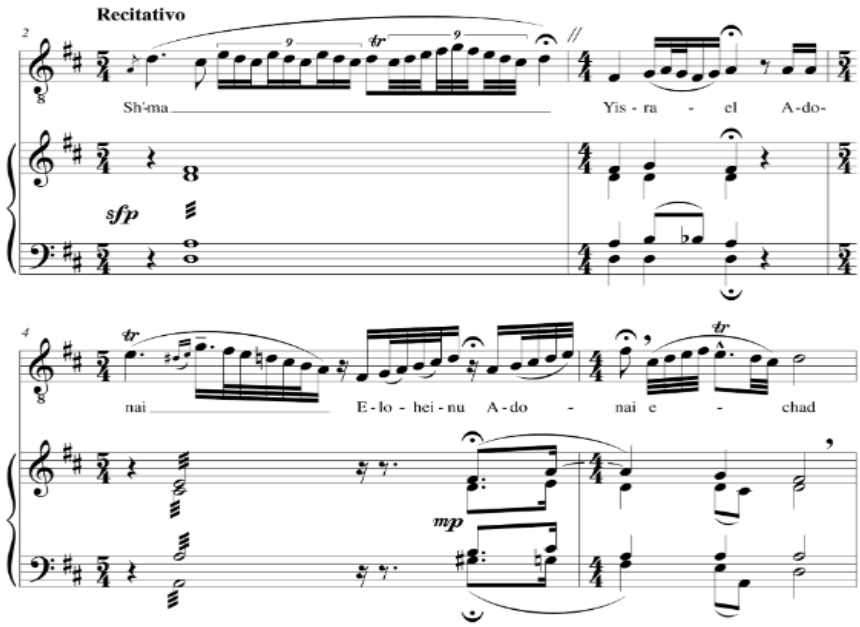
In contrast, Glantz despised cantorial performance practises such as vocal breaks and contrived theatrics. Charles Broden argues,

> During his career, Glantz received much acclaim for his avoidance of sobbing during his prayer. The concept of the chazzan had become synonymous with the deliberate plaintive cry in the voice bewailing the sorrows of Israel. Much of this weeping had become a stereotyped vice of the cantor and had lost its original dramatic vitality. Uncharacteristic for a great cantor of his day, Glantz eschewed this form of prayer grounding his musical expressions upon a deeper analysis of the text and its historical implications. 'What is there to bewail?', asks Glantz. Through intensive study of this question, he suggests two answers. The first being that the situation for the Jews in the Diaspora had for many generations been tragic and catastrophic, 'Jewish blood flowed like water', the Jew did not pay any particular attention to the verbal content of his prayers, but found in them a suitable opportunity to pour out his heart in lamentation and in complaints to the Almighty about his bitter plight. The second answer lies in the musical formulas and in a misconstrued perception of the proper nusach. (Broden, 45)

Glantz's unique style is based upon musical refinement and balance. Glantz despised not only certain vocal techniques used by some cantors, but even their approach to virtuosity and ornamentation conceptually. Cantor Naftali Herstik explains,

> By virtue of the fact that it represents a starting point for a unique new direction, I would like to emphasize the importance of the mathematical precision and the balanced distribution of each and every melisma and every movement or nuance in Glantz's rendition… As opposed to the many intensely powerful and ostentatious renditions that we sometimes witness in synagogue and concert performances, there was nothing further than that in Glantz's mind. In his live and recorded renditions he never employed vocal jugglery or arrogant showmanship (Glantz, 2013, 175).

Below is an example of Glantz's "mathematical precision" at work in his "*Sh'ma"* from the *Shabbat musaf* service (Glantz, 2008, p.175).



Here we see Glantz's declamation of *Sh'ma Yisrael* divided into four bars, two bars of four and two of five. The first, a bar of 5/4 measures a dotted quarter, followed by an exposition of two beats and a fermata on the final beat. We are given two sets of nonuplets, outlining the D major chord very firmly by playing with the leading tone of C# repeatedly. The second bar, in 4/4 seems to answer this exposition, leading to the second beat ending on the 5th of the chord. In the third bar again in 5/4, we are given another dotted quarter declaration, but this time, the grace note chromatically emphasizes the 5th of the chord, before building to the 7th degree and then finally rearticulating the A major scale. Glantz's rhythmic choices here suggest his own emphases of the text and harmonic structure, as his melisma is weighted around the key scale degrees he wishes to bring out. There are no repeated notes, and each melisma has a very clear scope of reference. The fact that Glantz measured his rhythmic values with such care and that the bars are evenly weighted is a

testament to Glantz's compositional meticulousness, and it is a far cry from the scale runs in rapid succession and seemingly spontaneous coloratura of Kwartin in his *Hashkiveinu*.

Glantz's compositions, also featured a kind of Chasidic mysticism. Glantz linked this with his previous studies of *d'veikut*, writing, "The word *d'veikut* is immersed in sound. True *chazzanut* is a ritual purification of *d'veikut*, and is heavenly divine. Therefore, *chazzanut* should never sink to the level of ordinary song. *Chazzanut* must always be spiritually and intellectually superior. The higher *chazzanut* is removed from the mundane, the closer it will be to heaven" (Glantz, 2008, 133). Perhaps due to this respect for mysticism and the idealised place of c*hazzanut*, Glantz was hesitant to improvise freely or arbitrarily insert melisma into his compositions. Avraham Soltes makes the analogy of "a crystal kiddush cup… that holds the wine high for all the congregation to see, turning it now this way and now that, bringing out its many facets of warmth and sparkle and fragrance… to Glantz, singing was never an end in itself. For to be a true Cantor one must also possess the skill of a composer and the instinct of a teacher" (Soltes, 6).

Another central characteristic of Glantz's compositional style is his exposure and usage of Romantic and late Classical compositional styles which were influenced by his time at the music school of pianist Nikolai Tutkovsky under the composer Reinhold Gliere. Glantz's son writes, "Gliere was the composer of some of the most important Russian symphonies, operas and ballets. Influenced by these studies, Glantz began applying his classical music tools towards composing Jewish liturgical music as well as Hebrew and Yiddish art songs" (Glantz, 2008, 15). As Glantz's reputation and standing in the United States grew, so did his musical innovation and development. He began writing more

expansive works which delved further into chromatics, lush harmonies and even atonality, but always with the correct *nusach* at the core of the work.

Another crucial tenet of Glantz's compositional style was his own musicological perspective on cantorial development which was likely informed or attributable to his ideology as a Zionist. Glantz believed that modern Jewish cantorial music had roots dating back to the Babylonian exile. Glantz writes in "The Musical Basis of *Nu'sach HaTe'fila*", "Although legend and folklore place the origin of the *Mi'Sinai* prayer melodies even further back in the mists of history than the biblical cantillations, musicological research has demonstrated that these *Mi'Sinai* melodies developed later- in the diaspora. The first group, the musical lines based upon the biblical cantillation modes, has history that goes back at least 2400 years. Both the biblical modes and the *Mi'Sinai* melodies were exposed to many different influences and to many different cultures in their long history, but their main features have remained the basis of synagogue music to this day" (Glantz, 2008, 331). Glantz cites the famed Jewish ethnomusicologist Abraham Zvi Idelosohn, who similarly saw all the prayer modes as part of a larger Jewish musical whole which encompassed the entirety of Jewish music. Boaz Tarsi asserts,

> Glantz's and Idelsohn's meta-structure approaches are expressed somewhat differently in their respective works. One characteristic of Idelsohn's all-encompassing explanation of Jewish music is that it includes the entire repertoire throughout the world and through history… Moreover, even when he identifies modes that he claims to be present across geographical and sectional boundaries, the constituent defining particles of these modes are different in each tradition or geographical origin. Glantz, on the other hand, seems to unify almost the entire repertoire under his one-scale meta-structure theory" (Glantz, 2008, 177-178).

Although Glantz's approach has been viewed with much skepticism, first by *chazzanim* such as Max Wohlberg, and later by academics such as Boaz Tarsi, it certainly informed his

compositional style throughout his life. Glantz writes of his composition *Tal*, "The original Jewish *Tal* must be garbed in oriental dress- in oriental scales. The cantor must do everything he can to divest himself of those ordinary major and minor keys. The agricultural village life of our country must be given the proper and true musical expression in our prayers. The *nusach* from Sinai must be revived, perhaps in a modernistic manner, but in a clear and concrete fashion" (Glantz, 2013, 189).

Finally, after Glantz's emigration to Israel in 1946 came another change from the traditional Ashkenaz pronunciation of text to Sephardic, which Cantor Dan Mutlu argues had a huge impact on his compositional style and recitation of text (Mutlu, Interview). Vowels became purer and more Italianate, and the text took on a style that was far closer to the spoken Hebrew of the streets of Israel.

III. TRANSMISSION OF TRADITION

In this section, I will examine the ways that the cantorial legacy was transferred across generations and continents, as well as the place of the cantorate within an ethnomusicological context, and how this relates to wider Jewish migration. From earlier insights, we have seen the importance of familial lineage to cantorial music, however this became increasingly less relevant as the emphasis on cantorial education shifted away from apprenticeship and upbringing and into the world of recordings, sheet music and training institutions. The phonograph was a huge development in human history, and no less so for the world of the cantorate. Congregations were able to hear the greatest cantors of Europe without ever seeing them in the flesh. Both Kwartin and Sirota's first real break came through their recordings. Vigoda writes,

> The phonograph was a novelty, an extraordinary machine which people played in their homes on every festive occasion as a very popular and pleasant treat for their guests... A singer could by this means become world famous overnight and be heard by many people at the same time, at the expended effort of a mere few minutes, which it took him to record the song at the studio. Thus was the case with Sirota. He was the first on the scene. His first twelve records came out in 1913 and they had a great impact, especially in the countries of the European continent, where Jews formed a large segment of the population. I emphasize Europe, for oddly enough his records were not distributed in America until much later. Whatever the reason, it is a fact, that the first records exported to the United States came from France and Germany. They were the cantorial chants of Zavel Kwartin recorded by the French company, Pathe and the German one, Victor. (512)

One reason for the changed style, and the emphasis on recordings, may have been the competition and influence of other *chazzanim*. One poet of the time joked,

> Cantors and singers, we get without quota.
> We've already heard both Kwartin and Sirota
> But this must admitted be, even by his son'im [haters]
> That Yossele king is of all the chazon'im (Koppman, 482).

Rosenblatt's stature at this time was unquestioned, and Jeffrey Shandler links this heavily to the success of his recordings, as well as the zeitgeist of the period, asserting, "The cantor's new stature in the immigrant community was articulated in terms of publicity, income, and later on, use of new media" (Shandler, 256). The poem above, as well as the idea of cantorial success being based on finances certainly would have affected the impression of Kwartin and Sirota on recorded technology and its use for their careers.

It is also crucial to understand when considering the recorded legacy of each cantor, the very real effect of the cantors on each other. Kwartin, when experiencing the gramophone for the first time, asked of a salon owner whether he had any examples of Jewish music. After hearing the records of Sirota for the first time, Kwartin remarked, "Sirota...A name which would later so magnificently resonate in the Jewish world, and which would be so

deeply written into modern Jewish *chazzanut*… From that day on, after I heard the first two cantors [Tcherny and Sirota] I couldn't find peace. I felt I wanted to have the credit of my voice going out through the airwaves to the world with the help of this new invention." (Kwartin, 2018, 283). Clearly the recordings had the desired effect. Kwartin explains in his autobiography, "The… first ten gramophone records with the old Jewish *t'filot* spread my name far and wide around Russia, and even made their way to America… It didn't take long before I received letters from other gramophone companies with offers to pay far more than the German company had offered me" (Kwartin, 2018, 292).

Additionally, Kwartin, when negotiating his second contract, was paid a visit by his recording company, who tried to offer him an exclusive contract for 5 years for 3000 *kronen* per year to sing 20 recordings per year. After Kwartin expressed hesitation, the management of his company then threatened he had one day to accept or the same deal would be offered to Sirota (Kwartin, 2018, 285). Coincidentally Sirota happened to be in Vienna at the exact same time and luckily, Kwartin was able to discuss the contract with him and realised that there was "no competition" (Kwartin, 2018, 289) for Sirota's contract. The same company had clearly been deceptive and unable to match Sirota's fee and thus Kwartin took the deal. Despite these potentially conflicting business interests, Kwartin maintained his love for Sirota's voice and talent. At this same meeting, Kwartin gushes, "Sirota asked what he should sing for us. [We] asked for Lewandowski's "Mah Gadlu" with the famous "Tzadik Katamar" in D major… When he finished the *Tzuri v'lo avlata bo* with the high D, we were all shaking. He then sang his famous "*R'tzei"* with which he became known throughout the whole Jewish world, and I was again overwhelmed, and thus we saw in Sirota the greatest vocal giant of our time" *(*Kwartin, 2018*,* 289). He went even further after hearing Sirota,

organizing a reception for Sirota with the star-cantors of Vienna the following day. (Kwartin, 2018, 290). Here we see that Sirota not only inspired the next generation, but also Kwartin directly. The degrees of separation between the great names of cantorial music, both in Europe and the United States, were virtually non-existent.

Glantz, perhaps because he was a generation later, was less interested in the fortunes and great names of the cantorate, or at least didn't discuss them as openly as his predecessors. Nevertheless, Glantz's arrival in the United States and subsequent success was built on the early success of his first records. His son writes, "After his arrival in New York in 1926, Leib Glantz engaged the services of Sara Wachs as his agent and manager… In 1928… Glantz signed a contract to record his first compositions with RCA Victor on their prestigious Red Label Series… In total, Glantz recorded ten compositions that he arranged for the four minute durations of these records… Sh'ma Yisrael and Tal became tremendously popular all over the world and represented a commercial success for RCA" (Glantz, 2008 484-485).

Although Glantz was less concerned in his lifetime with his recorded legacy than many of his contemporaries, the fact is that without the vast listening public of Jewish immigrants who had previously developed an interest in recorded *chazzanut* through exponents such as Sirota and Kwartin, Glantz may never have risen to the heights he was able to achieve in the United States. Although there exists little information on his record sales in Israel, Glantz's previous fame and reputation as a Zionist thinker and lecturer meant that he was able to continue the momentum of his career even after making *Aliyah*.

Glantz also stands out for his attempts to establish new institutions and manners of training the next generation of *chazzanim*. Glantz's founding of the school of the Cantors Academy at the Tel Aviv Institute for Jewish Liturgical Music marked a radical new phase of

his life. His central teaching, seeing Jewish music as a continuum from Temple times certainly speaks to his Zionist aspirations, and although much of his theory on modal music may be questionable, his knowledge and mastery of the modes, as well as his desire to impart this wisdom to future generations marked an ambitious and influential undertaking. Chaim Adler writes, "Leib Glantz's penetrating and inspiring lectures were the highlight of our studies. He focused on the musical scale of the different prayer modes, explaining and demonstrating the complicated tones and intervals appropriate for each and every prayer service… As students, we learned from Glantz that cantorial [sic] has two main purposes: to coach and lead the worshippers in prayer and to faithfully represent the worshippers before God Almighty. Every person that has ever witnessed his prayer services in the synagogue felt immersed in a passionate river of flames" (Glantz, 2013, 73). Glantz's project sought to train a new generation for the demands of the cantorate, based not around repertoire, but rather a radical interpretation that the *chazzan* was the guardian and vessel of ancient Jewish melody and spiritual interpretation. It spoke of a higher place of *chazzanut*, above the discussion of salaries and famous recordings in the United States.

Spiritually, the cantorate has been instrumental in maintaining liturgical heritage and musical knowledge throughout generations of disruptions in the diaspora. During this period the idea of cantorial training being passed from father to son or cantor to apprentice was the typical model of the transmission of cantorial knowledge. As we have seen, all three cantors being studied in this paper had very musical fathers with high levels of knowledge of Jewish ritual and liturgy, which fits the traditional model of cantorial epistemology. Furthermore, Judah Cohen, referencing the film "The Jazz Singer" writes, "The cantor's specialized musical knowledge and presentation style became a core narrative of musical transmission

from father to son or (male) teacher to (male) pupil as part of a 'tradition' in Jewish music, even to the point of representing Judaism itself in popular culture" (Cohen, 458). Nevertheless, this transmission would be useless were it not for a vast Jewish population which was in the process of migration along similar timelines to our cantors being analysed.

Mark Slobin asserts, "An unprecedented, almost impossibly large number of Jews- 2.3 million- came to the United states in the great immigration of 1882-1924… To indicate the size of this wave, it is enough to note that while New York City housed some 80,000 Jews in 1880, it found room for perhaps 1.75 million by 1925, creating the largest metropolitan Jewish population in history" (Slobin, 51). We see that this explosion in population coincides exactly with the height of the careers of Sirota and Kwartin, who reached world-fame particularly in the United States in the 1920s, while Glantz was able to make a highly auspicious debut in New York in 1923 precisely because of this huge listening public.

Slobin also points out that it wasn't just the expansion in population, but the changes in economic status which enabled this cantorial boom. He argues, "The expansion of a new middle class among American Jews led to the opening up of new neighbourhoods and the experimenting with new forms of association and identification (Slobin, 69). Hasia R. Diner takes this idea further and writes, "in some ways, the 1920s heralded the beginnings of Jewish "normalcy" in America. Their dense urban concentration no longer stood out, now that a majority of Americans lived in cities… By the end of World War I, America had become increasingly unified not only by roads and railroads but also by radio and movies. These revolutions in technology and communication made challenging the white Protestant elite possible, since the creation of new media took the production of culture out of the hands

of a small group who defined themselves as the custodians of the nation" (Diner, 115-116). Thus, we see that not only was it the proliferation of recording technologies and the vast numbers of new Jewish migrants which fuelled ticket and record sales in the United States, but also the fabric of American society itself becoming more pluralistic, allowing wealth and status to be shared with "outsider" immigrants who had previously held only low-paying jobs, which enabled such a huge industry in cantorial music and performance.

CONCLUSION

In his book, *The Songlines*, Bruce Chatwin writes of a tradition in indigenous Australian culture, whereby traditional songs are passed down from generation to generation explaining history and the geography of the land. He explains, "By singing the world into existence… the Ancestors had been poets in the original sense of *poesis* meaning creation. No Aboriginal could conceive that the created world was in any way imperfect. His religious life had a single aim: to keep the land the way it was and should be… The man who went 'walkabout' was making a ritual journey. He trod in the footprints of his ancestor. He sang the ancestor's stanza without changing a word or note- and so he recreated the Creation. Aboriginals could not believe the country existed until they could see and sing it—just as, in the Dreamtime, the country had not existed until the Ancestors sang it" (Chatwin, 14).

When reading these words, I couldn't help drawing parallels between the three cantors I studied in *Lech l'chazzan* and the idea of songlines. Although *chazzanut* is based around improvisation and spontaneity within given musical parameters, the unchanged liturgy is always at the core of the interpretation. Vigoda wrote anecdotally of a meeting between Herzl and Sirota, "Sirota and Leow presented two psalms of David, Herzl listened

attentively. His face showed the strain. He was pale and apparently very tired. His eyes burned with a strange mystical prophetic fire. He relished the consoling words of the ancient Jewish king. He kept on asking for more, as if the prophetic visions of David were a balm that brought healing to his wounded heart… His face shone as if their songs, heralding a brighter Jewish future, had infused a new soul and a new hope in him" (Vigoda, 543).

The idea of singing the creation of land before it exists takes on a very literal and concrete meaning with the image of Sirota singing to Herzl before the creation of the Jewish state. Furthermore, Kwartin's previously mentioned attachment to the text *V'techezenah* which translates as, "Let our eyes behold your merciful return to Zion" as a basis for his longing to see Israel with his own eyes is a powerful example of connection between singer and place. The fact that both Kwartin and Glantz were able to realise this dream and recite these ancient words again in an ancient Jewish homeland, is at the least a demonstration of the power of the early Zionist aspirations of European Jewry, and could even represent the manifestation of reality in the lives of those who had sung this dream their whole lives.

For Sirota, his ties to Europe and faith in the continent proved to be the tragic end to his line of transmission though it was able to be perpetuated through his recordings and performances. For Kwartin, his success through recordings and concerts in the New World in order to achieve economic prosperity seems to be the driving force, while in Glantz's case, a clear acknowledgement of history, as well as a radical and revolutionary compositional style aimed at revitalizing Jewish life in its ancestral home was the basis of his singing.

When considering our three cantors in relation to each other, certain patterns emerge: The fleeing of persecution, the chance for success and innovation in a new land, and the ideological drive to follow a dream. In other words, the cantors' stories are immigrant stories.

They are diaspora stories, perhaps like those of our own families, but there is a deeper, spiritual dimension which draws me to their lives and music.

Just as songlines tell the story of the history of the landscape in Australian indigenous culture, *chazzanut* tells the story of the Jewish people through song, explaining our story and providing a framework for Jewish religious life in new lands through *nusach ha'tefilah*. Ultimately, the story of the cantor is a story of traveling, of taking old songs to new lands and letting the story evolve with those who are telling it. My project, *Lech l'chazzan* demonstrates this powerful connection between singer, journey and song over a very short time frame, but ultimately shows the role of the cantor as custodian of Jewish tradition through periods of diaspora and transition throughout the globe.

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