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SOUTHERN VOICES: THE HISTORY AND MUSIC OF KAHAL KADOSH BETH ELOHIM, CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

By: Kim Harris

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the musical development of this unique congregation through the lens of its fascinating history. Founded in 1749, K. K. Beth Elohim was the first American congregation to implement reforms as well as the first to use an organ in worship. Significant research has been done on the history of this congregation, most recently by James W. Hagy and Gary P. Zola. There has been no research conducted about the music of this congregation, however. Having been a member of Beth Elohim and, in a way, part of its musical history, I wanted to try to gather this information. Given this congregation's history of firsts, I was sure that the data had to be interesting. I was certainly not disappointed. There was so much information that the thesis evolved into sixteen chapters, divided into two parts: congregational history and music. Upon reading the thesis, one will see that the Charleston community was a major influence upon the American Reform movement.

I began my research with basic history, reading materials by the congregation's historian. Upon the advice of Judah Cohen, I sought out the American Jewish Archives' online publications of *The Occident and American Jewish Review*, a nineteenth-century periodical. Here I found a wealth of material from the points of view of individuals who were actually living the history. I visited the American Jewish Archives, where I found microfilm of the minutes of K. K. Beth Elohim. I also made a visit to Charleston to look in the congregation's archives, where I found old hymnals, an 1866 choir book, and numerous music publications from the late nineteenth century.

SOUTHERN VOICES:
THE HISTORY AND MUSIC OF KAHAL KADOSH BETH ELOHIM, CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
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To the members of Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim with gratitude and love

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I wish to wholeheartedly thank my advisor, Dr. Martin A. Cohen, for his dedication in helping me bring this project to fruition. An amazing scholar, he has not only served as a kind mentor, but has become a true friend. Sincere thanks go to Judah Cohen for his interest in this endeavor. Judah gave so generously of his time and served as a fount of knowledge, helping me to leave no stone unturned. Thank you to Dr. Mark Kligman for giving me the training and encouragement to get this project started and for demonstrating ways to organize the vast amounts of music and information that I found.

I wish to recognize the American Jewish Archives for its assistance in my quest for information and Dr. Gary Zola for his enthusiasm and support of my efforts.

This project would not have been possible without the commitment of K. K. Beth Elohim's dedicated historian, Solomon (Solly) Breibart. Solly has compiled volumes of information about the congregation that have provided me with great insight on the history of the Charleston Jewish community and its oldest synagogue. Solly gave me access to the treasures of Beth Elohim's archival materials, which have proven to be invaluable to my study. I am certainly grateful for his devotion and expertise.

My heartfelt appreciation and love go to other members of the congregation as well. The office and administrative staff were of great help in giving me access to the archives and allowing me access to the copier. Marlene Williamon, thank you so much

for your efforts to locate music in so many locations. I appreciate your help so much. To Michael Kogan: You are a continuous source of local color and a dear friend. Thank you for being so dedicated to preserving Charleston's history and for sharing so much information about your Southern ancestry. To Ira and Anita Moïse Rosenberg, without whom I would not be graduating from Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, let alone completing this project: Thank you for your never ending encouragement and for showing me where I belong.

I wish to thank my children Nathan and Dana for their loving support of my efforts, even though they have had to give up their home, friends and family. And lastly, I thank my husband Brian for his undying love and his dedication, not only to the completion of this project, but to my educational process. Words like "thank you," "gratitude," "appreciation," and "indebtedness" are not sufficient to express just how thankful I am for all he does everyday so that I can accomplish my goals. I love you.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Charleston, South Carolina. The mention of this Southern city evokes an array of imagery---Spanish moss that drapes ghost-like from giant ancient oaks, azalea bushes whose bursts of color herald the coming of spring, palmetto trees whose welcoming arms extend greeting, the pungent smell of low tide, and the egrets that perform their ballets across the green marsh grass. One journeys along little alleys dotted with miniature gardens, boulevards graced with mansions built in colonial times, and plantations where the path back across three centuries is guarded by huge oak sentinels. The visitor hears waves of spirituals echoing across the boggy rice fields, the calls of basket weavers in the market, the melody of horse hooves tripping lightly upon cobblestone streets, and the clangor of the hundreds of church bells whose chimes mark the passing of time and affirm that one is in the Holy City.

"The Holy City"---a nickname given to Charleston because of the numerous church steeples that shape its unique skyline---is a commentary on the history of this port city; for as she grew during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, she opened her doors to all faiths and religious groups. Those who had been persecuted or unwelcome in other lands, such as the French Huguenots, Congregationalists, and Jews found refuge here. Today, these religious groups still survive and call Charleston home.

I, too, call Charleston home. Though I spent my childhood in a small town outside of Columbia, South Carolina, the capital of this Southern state, Charleston was home for the majority of my adult life prior to entering the School of Sacred Music. Charleston is where

my husband was raised and where my children were born. Charleston is where I came into my own as a teacher and where I grew into my Jewish identity. Charleston is where I was allowed to express my Jewish self in a variety of ways, eventually coming to the realization that creating meaningful worship through Jewish music is my true calling.

As a resident of this remarkable city, I developed great admiration for its unique character as a place where the past is revered and protected. Time there is often as motionless as the thick summer air, and as one meanders down the narrow streets, one almost feels lost in another era. Many of Charleston's buildings and homes pre-date the Civil War and have weathered hurricanes, fire, earthquakes and war. Even though I was aware of much of this city's rich history, I really had no cognizance of its extraordinary Jewish past. I was at home on the bima (the pulpit) of my temple, Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim. I knew this lovely building was the oldest synagogue in continuous use in the United States. I knew of the congregation's long-standing tradition of Classical Reform music and worship. What I was not knowledgeable about was the notable impact that this community had made upon the rest of American Jewish history.

I had previously accepted the notion that the Northeast and Midwest were the locations where the most significant Jewish growth and advancement had taken place. My research has led me to uncover substantial contributions made by early Jewish Charlestonians, particularly in the area of the development of an American Jewish musical style and within the evolution of a liberal liturgical approach. The role that the Charleston Jews played in the later formation of Reform Judaism is indisputable, as this paper will demonstrate. I will argue that it was the events that transpired within Charleston's unique milieu that enabled American Reform Judaism, with its subsequent grand musical tradition, to take root.

PART ONE

CONGREGATIONAL HISTORY

CHAPTER 2

BEGINNINGS

Many Americans express surprise upon learning that Jews live in the South at all. "Didn't all American Jews come from Poland at the end of the nineteenth century and stay in New York?" is a popular, but certainly erroneous assumption. In reality, there has been a Jewish presence in America since the mid-seventeenth century, and unlike the immigrants of the latter nineteenth century who were mostly Ashkenazi Jews from Eastern Europe, these first Jews were of Sephardic descent. New York, or New Amsterdam as it was known at that point in history, was definitely a place in which these Sephardi Jews sought a new home. Other cities along the eastern seaboard were attractive to Jews as well, such as Newport, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Savannah, and Charleston.

To fully understand the allure, as well as the success, of this coastal community---of this "Holy City" of Charleston---for Jews, one must develop an awareness of the other communities in which Jews have made homes for themselves. A unique history beginning centuries earlier prefaces the arrival of the Sephardic Jews to America. Israelite history, as understood and recorded in sacred scripture, begins with the patriarch Abraham who was commanded by God to leave the place of his birth for a land that God would show him. This pattern of leaving one's home for another unwittingly became a thematic thread, which has been woven by time and events to create the history of the Jewish people. The dwelling places of the Jews throughout the passing centuries are like history's kaleidoscope of ever-

changing patterns. As cycles of history moved across time, so did the Jews move across the continents. Just as each turn of the kaleidoscope creates new colors, shapes, and patterns, the migration of Jews into various communities of the world has produced a myriad mix of faces and colors, languages rich and diverse, new customs, alternate modes of worship, and an eclectic assortment of musical styles. As one community melded with another, the defining characteristics of the various peoples would begin to blur. Jews have proven to be highly adaptable to their surroundings and have skillfully woven their own folkways and traditions with those of the surrounding culture. Therefore, to bring to the reader a more complete understanding of the Charleston community, this paper will first explore some of the Diaspora communities in which Jews have lived and the resulting effects of life in these communities.

Babylonia

Life in lands other than *Eretz Yisrael*, the land of Israel, is traditionally known as a state of existing in *galut*, or exile. In the writings of the prophets, the condition of living in *galut* occurred as the result of Israel's collective failure to follow God's commandments. The term originated to describe the life of Jews who lived in Babylonia after having been deported there by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 B.C.E. *Diaspora*, a Greek word meaning "dispersion," later came to be synonymous with *galut*.

Though the Jews mourned the loss of their homeland, the community gradually settled into life in this "strange land" of Babylonia (Psalm 136:4), which proved to be pleasant in many ways. Biblical accounts describe how the Jews were allowed to build homes and plant gardens (Jer. 29:5). Ezekiel tells how the people were able to assemble as a group and perform community activities (Ezek. 8:1 ; 14:1 ; 33:30). Upon the eventual conquest of

Babylonia by the Persians around 539 B.C.E., the former residents of Judah were allowed to return and reclaim their homeland.[1] Many of the Jewish deportees opted to remain behind in Babylonia to continue their lives farming the rich soil and enjoying prosperity. Over time, the Babylonian Jewish community came to be the most prominent in the known world. Great seats of Jewish learning were established there in the cities of Sura and Pumpedita. The heads of these academies, or *geonim*, became quite powerful once political power was granted to them. These scholars, such as Saadiah Gaon, focused their attention on convincing the Jewish world to follow not only the Talmud (the extensive body of Jewish law and biblical commentary), but also the Babylonian traditions that developed from the Talmud.[2] By the tenth century of the Common Era, the Babylonian system of law dominated the entire Jewish world. Today's system of Torah reading with its division into *parashiot*, or weekly readings, was developed in Babylonia, as well as the Jewish lunar calendar. The names of the months of the Jewish year are derivatives of Babylonian names.

This pattern of uprootedness that eventually settles into comfortable existence, as established in Babylonia, repeated itself throughout the centuries. Jews began to find themselves in a variety of locales, many times as a result of force, but also as the product of their own choice. Over the course of history, the term *Diaspora* gradually lost its original negative connotations and developed into a term that conveys the concept of the spreading out of the Jews across the world.

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[1] John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 3d ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), 361.

[2] Daniel Jeremy Silver, *A History of Judaism*, vol. 1 (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1974), 326-327.

The centuries leading to the Common Era were marked by various transfers of power throughout the Near East from the Babylonians to the Persians to the Greeks and to the Romans. As another group came into power, the capital cities of the empire would change; thus, Jews found themselves creating new communities all across the Near Eastern region.

Alexandria

Around 334 B.C.E., the armies of Alexander the Great of Macedonia swept through the Near East and beyond, bringing the Jews once again into a strange cultural milieu. [3] With the arrival of Alexander and his armies, the region became immersed in the Greek way of life. *Gymnasia* were built to perpetuate the ideals of sport and physical beauty. Amphitheatres appearing in cities all across the Near East introduced the citizens of the empire to the great dramatists of the times.

Commerce and trading became the hallmark of the region. The Greeks had honed their skills in trade and finance and applied this knowledge to their newly acquired Asian conquests. These commercial endeavors were the impetus for increased movement of Jews to other areas, most notably Alexandria, Egypt, the capital of Alexander's empire.[4] Many were taken by force, but others left voluntarily to serve as mercenaries or to capitalize on the new economic opportunities. The Jews, formerly simple farmers, herdsmen, and craftsmen, evolved into a merchant class of significant numbers.[5] As members of a Greek community,

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[3] Ibid., 172.

[4] Bright, 412-413.

[5] Silver, 175.

these Jews became immersed in Greek culture, adopting the language and eventually translating Jewish texts into Greek as well. Greek dress, thought, and ideology penetrated Jewish culture, creating new patterns of thinking and self-expression. The Diaspora had become a ferment of new Jewish literary and philosophical activity.

Antioch

Antioch in Syria became the capital of the Near East once the Seleucids, or Syrian Greeks, rose to prominence. Trade was now opened to the Syrian markets of Antioch, Damascus, Tyre, and Sidon, which now attracted great numbers of Judean citizens to its financial centers. During these vast changes, Jerusalem had remained essentially isolated from the commercial fray. She maintained her character as an old-fashioned city---home to the priests, the temple, and to simple craftsmen and farmers.[6] Diaspora Jews had made pilgrimages to the Holy City to worship and maintain their ties to the temple but soon realized the economic potential waiting for them if Jerusalem would only shed its old ways and open itself up to Greek ways of doing business. Once Jerusalem was opened to the Seleucids, she quickly lost her character as a city governed by Torah and the priests and evolved into a Greek city barely indistinguishable from any other within the Seleucid Empire. The city was no longer governed by religious law, but by Greek rules. Steps were taken to suppress the practice of Judaism, which was viewed by the Seleucids as restrictive, and worship of other gods transpired in the Temple. These events led to the Hasmonean Revolt (168 -164 B.C.E.), a four-year struggle led by a group of Jews who wished to restore Jewish law and practices,

[6] Ibid., 180.

which succeeded in recovering Jerusalem from Seleucid control. This victory, following which the Temple was reclaimed from pagan worship, is the event on which the holiday of Hanukkah is based.

The Roman Empire

With the entrance of the Romans onto the Near Eastern scene around 65 B.C.E., Jewish life would be changed forever. The domination of Rome meant total subservience to the emperor, conformity to Roman ways, and burdensome taxes. [7] Jews were often accused of disloyalty to the emperor and subjected to riots and high taxes. Jews began to turn to the ancient words of the prophets for comfort. The influence of Greek and Eastern thought melded with Jewish thinking, engendering the concept of the *mashiach*, the messiah---a redeemer who would come at the "end of days" to liberate the Jewish people and restore the Davidic dynasty and Israelite sovereignty. Fueled by this feverish hope for redemption, the zealous dared to defy the Romans in a series of rebellions, only to fail miserably. Others, such as Yohanan ben Zakkai and his followers, opted to take a quietist stance. They believed that God would send salvation at the appropriate time.

The Romans finally took action to squelch the Jewish nuisance once and for all, breaching the walls of Jerusalem, burning the city, and destroying the Second Temple in the year 70 C.E. Promising deference to Rome, Yochanan and his followers were allowed to leave the city and establish an academy for Torah study in Yavneh. Here, Judaism sought to survive based on a system of law, Torah study, and adherence to *mitzvot*, God's

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[7] Silver, 187.

commandments. Still, groups of Jews refused to surrender so easily. Rebellions, such as the famous uprising led by Bar Kochba in 132 C.E., further incited the wrath of the Roman authorities.[8] By 135 C.E. Jerusalem's former glory had been reduced to rubble, every city in Judea had been leveled, and Judaism was absolutely forbidden. Jerusalem was rebuilt as a Roman city with no Jews allowed inside its gates. The former kingdom of Judah, later Judea, was renamed "Palestine", or the land of the Philistines, to highlight the fact that the land was no longer the domain of the Jews.[9]

Now the Diaspora was Jewish existence. There was no longer a central worship system. The priesthood was now defunct. The daily sacrifices could no longer be offered upon the altar of God. The people needed a viable substitute for the temple cult, which came in the form of prayer and study. The place for worship was now the synagogue. The synagogue had arisen centuries before out of necessity for those Jews living in the Diaspora. Some synagogues were built as a type of outpost of the temple. These communities sent a representative to Jerusalem as a proxy to perform the necessary sacrifices while the rest of the community prayed in the synagogue. Other communities had built synagogues in defiance of the temple system. Now those synagogues became a life-saving shelter for the battered Jewish spirit.[10] Following the fall of Jerusalem, more Jews began to trickle out of their homeland in search of other more hospitable communities. Their wanderings took them all across the Mediterranean, the Arabian Peninsula and eventually into the Iberian Peninsula, or

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[8] Ibid., 257.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Joan Comay, *The Diaspora Story: The Epic of the Jewish People among the Nations* (New York: Random House, 1980), 47-48.

what is today known as Spain. As the Roman Empire expanded, so did the Jews spread out across the lands of the known world.

Europe and the Ashkenazim

By the tenth century of the Common Era, Jews had spread into northwestern Europe into the areas of what are today's northern France and Germany. As these Jews migrated north and west, they gradually took on an identity different from the Jews of the East. Their rituals and the texts of their prayers varied from those of the Jews of Spain, Portugal, Provence, and the Arab lands. This group of Jews and their descendants came to be known as *Ashkenazim* and developed their own style of religious poetry (*piyyutim*) and penitential prayers (*selihot*).[11] Their style of cantillation, the chanting of Biblical texts, was quite elaborate, as was their manner of chanting the prayers. Living in Christian lands, these Jews were subject to more restrictions than their Eastern counterparts, and thus developed a more focused and meticulous form of religious practice. They followed *halakhah* (religious law) rigorously, and Torah study was of utmost importance, which consequently enabled the Ashkenazim to retain high levels of literacy as opposed to their Christian neighbors. Rashi, arguably the most famous of commentators, contributed strongly to Ashkenazi Jewish academia as well as to the community at large. This deep-seated value system and intricate structure of belief, custom and law sustained these Jews through centuries of Crusades and persecution and only strengthened as the Ashkenazim fled into areas of Eastern Europe.

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[11] Geoffrey Wigoder, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Judaism* (Jerusalem: The Jerusalem Publishing House), 82.

Spain Under Islamic Rule

The Jews who trace their ancestry to Spain are called *Sephardim*, after the Hebrew word for Spain---*S'farad*. The term is often erroneously ascribed to all non-Ashkenazi Jews but should be used to describe only those Jews whose ancestry hails from the Iberian Peninsula. The Jews who descend from families in North Africa, Yemen, Iran and Iraq, etc. are more correctly called Eastern or *Mizrahi* Jews.

The culture of the Sephardim is heavily influenced by the centuries of living immersed in Islamic culture. By the middle of the eighth century, Muslims were in control of a vast empire stretching from Spain to the Far East. Jews in these lands under Islamic control ultimately fared better than the Jews of Christian lands. The Muslims respected "the people of the Book," and allowed Jews relative freedom to govern themselves and practice their religion. Though there were restrictions placed upon the building of synagogues and upon public performance of Jewish ritual, the Jews enjoyed a safe, secure life. In Spain, Jews were allowed to work in most all occupations, often holding prominent positions in regards to trade, and enjoyed pursuits of art, literature, and philosophy. Muslim culture prized beauty and creative thinking. Revivals took place in areas of Greek philosophy and in the disciplines of math and science. The immersion into this environment had a transformative impact upon Jewish culture.[12] There was renewed interest in Hebrew and grammar, and Hebrew poets arose who incorporated Arabic meter and style into, not only liturgical poems, but verse espousing the joys of love, drink, and nature. Poems were often used as entertainment during

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[12] Comay, 174.

worship. The poets wrote in acrostic styles and sophisticated language that stimulated worshippers' thinking. The great medieval thinkers Judah ha-Levi, Solomon ibn Gabriol, and Moses Maimonides continue to influence Judaism to the present day. The openness of the general society was reflected in Sephardic culture. There was not the stringent adherence of law as in Ashkenazi culture, nor was there the concept of martyrdom for the sake of God's name (*Kiddush ha-Shem*). Life in Spain was enjoyable, not dark and harsh as in the Christian lands.

The *Reconquista*

By the 12th century, Sephardic Jews found themselves in the midst of a power struggle between the Moors who had ruled Spain with tolerance, fundamentalist Islamic sects from North Africa, and the Christians, who eventually gained control of most of Spain in the campaign known as the *Reconquista.* The Christians realized their need for Jews, who were often the most literate group within the society.[13] Jews helped to renew trade in the newly conquered regions, took over deserted Muslim estates and served as suppliers of tax revenue and loans. They were valuable cartographers and astronomers---extremely important in an era of voyages of exploration. Jews were encouraged to relocate to Spain from other Moslem nations and enjoyed better treatment than their Muslim neighbors.[14]

As the thirteenth century began, conditions for the Jewish community began to decline. The remnants of intolerance from the Crusades seeped into northern Spain and began

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[13] Comay, 128-129.

[14] Comay, 130.

to spread. As a result, a series of massacres swept through Spain, during which tens of thousands of Jews were killed.[15] In 1391, massive numbers of Jews were forced to become Christians or suffer death. Thus arose the community of the "*Conversos*" or "New Christians."

In the year 1449, an edict was issued in Toledo called the *Sentencia Estatuto* which ordered that all Conversos as well as their descendants were to be removed from any public offices they held.[16] The reasoning behind this ruling was that the New Christians could not be trusted to remain true to their new faith. Because any expression of Judaism was considered heretical, none of these Jews or any of their descendants could be thought of as *cristianos lindos*, or perfect Christians. True Christians were said to have the mark of *limpieza de sangre*, or pure Christian blood. Jews, of course, did not. The Inquisition was created in 1451 to seek out any of these heretical converted Christians who still remained loyal to Judaism. The Inquisition, according to Martin A. Cohen, was instituted by groups who found their control jeopardized as the Reconquista unfolded, thereby creating a means to control any individuals who did not conform to their political and ideological standards.[17] Jews, and particularly the New Christians, were considered valuable for the services they provided, but were also a threat because of their success. The Inquisition, therefore, sought, not to do away with all Jews and Conversos, but to make examples of some in order to exert control upon the

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Martin A. Cohen, "The Sephardic Phenomenon: A Reappraisal," *American Jewish Archives* 44 Spring/Summer 1992) : 39.

[17] Ibid., 29.

rest through a constant underlying fear. Many who were not even Jewish or Conversos fell under the watchful eye of the Inquisition over the centuries, such as "Erasmians, Protestants, mystics, Jansenists, Freemasons, devotees of the Enlightenment," etc.[18] Conversely, members of these groups who did not seem to pose a political threat were left unharmed. Should one seem to espouse views not acceptable to those in power, the individual would be brought in and forced to admit to heretical behavior against the church. Arrests were made followed by brutal forced confessions. Should the guilty ones choose to repent and confess, they would be "reconciled to the church."[19] If the imprisoned chose not to confess, they faced being burned at the stake. Jews and Conversos alike chose to leave the Iberian Peninsula over three different isolated periods: after the massacres of 1391, in 1492 by which time Spain was entirely under Christian domination and the Jews were totally expelled if they did not convert to Christianity, and in 1497 when mostly Portuguese New Christians left. Many Jews were absorbed into the Christian population. Other Jews fled to Muslim lands, such as North Africa, to the Ottoman Empire, or to Palestine and the Middle East. Others left for Italy and France. Some Jews found new homes among other Sephardi Jews and resumed Jewish lives. Others who left the Peninsula as Christians remained as Christians where they could settle in Christian lands that were closed to Jews.

Some Jews stayed in the Iberian Peninsula perpetuating Judaism openly in their hearts and secretly in their homes. By the 17th century, the descendants of these Conversos found themselves presented with a new opportunity. The way of thinking in regards to Jews was

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[18] Ibid., 49.

[19] Ibid., 50

changing due in part to growing interest in Judaism by Christian thinkers and because of the increasing importance of a mercantile economy.[20] European communities where no previous Jewish community had been established now welcomed Jews with open arms. The Portuguese New Christians who had established themselves in southern France and Antwerp, Belgium, particularly, had been instrumental toward facilitating trade with Portugal as well as with Brazil and the Caribbean. These Conversos were some of the first to move to the communities of Amsterdam, Hamburg, and London because of the desire of those communities to capitalize on their expertise. Thus began the process for some of the return back to Judaism.

For the Conversos to re-establish their identities as Jews in communities previously devoid of a Jewish community was a monumental task. They received assistance from rabbis in the Ottoman Empire and from Italian and North African communities, but most of the work had to be done themselves. Having been completely isolated for centuries from mainstream Judaism, these re-born Jews had to grapple with accepting the yoke of Jewish law. Though some rebelled, most Jews toiled diligently to create their communities based on the paradigm of the contemporary Jewish community, while trying to surmount the "spiritual isolation of generations that had left its imprint on the mentality of the Sephardi communities in the western world." [21]

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[20]Yosef Kaplan, "The Sephardim in North-Western Europe and the New World" in *Moreshet Sephard: The Sephardi Legacy* ed. Haim Beinart (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1992), 240.

[21]Ibid., 242.

Life in the New World

Conversos also made their way to the lands of the New World. From the time of the discovery of the Americas, Jews had arrived on its shores to escape from the Inquisition. The New Christians who arrived in the New World kept in close contact with Conversos back in Spain and Portugal as well as with merchants all across Western Europe. The Spanish - Portuguese Jews attracted the interest of the Dutch and English who had established colonies in the Caribbean. Realizing the value of the Jewish merchants' connections between the New World and Western Europe, the colonialists offered tremendous incentives for Sephardim to come the Caribbean. By the mid-17th century, Jewish communities flourished all over the Caribbean.

In the 1630's, colonial power in the New World vacillated between Spain, Portugal, Holland, and England. It is these battles for control of Brazil which led to the arrival of twenty-three of the first Jews to North America in 1654.[22] After this first settlement in New Amsterdam, which later was renamed New York when England won sovereignty over the colony, Jews began to arrive by steady stream into the American colonies and other areas all along the Atlantic coast. There is evidence that by the mid-eighteenth century, Jews could be found from Quebec in Canada all the way down south to Mobile, Pensacola, and New Orleans. Some Jews ventured farther west into the "backcountry" to establish trading posts and shops, landing in communities such as Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and Augusta, Georgia.[23]

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[22] Kaplan, 270.

[23] Jacob Rader Marcus, *United States Jewry 1776-1985*, vol. 1 (Detroit: Wayne State

Over the next century, some twenty-five hundred Jews came to inhabit cities in the American colonies. England's official policy regarding Jews had progressed into one of tolerance, and though the limits of tolerance varied from colony to colony, most of the colonies, with the exception of Puritan Massachusetts and Connecticut, followed the lead of the Mother Country. By 1740, the British Parliament had enacted a naturalization law for the colonies that offered natural citizenship to foreign Protestants and Jews who had lived in the colonies for a period of seven years.[24] The benefits of naturalization attracted Jews to the mainland colonies from Holland and England, and from the various English colonial holdings in the Caribbean. Some immigrants came from as far away as Bordeaux in France and from Spain and Portugal since the smoldering flames of Inquisition still periodically flared.[25]

There were other reasons for the growth of the Sephardic community in America. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, European Sephardic Jewish communities were on the decline. Many Sephardic Jewish citizens were impoverished and were a drain on their communities. Cities such as London and Amsterdam actually sent groups of Jews to the colonies, Georgia in particular.

As more and more Sephardim arrived in America, they established huge mercantile networks based on a sense of relationship with their extended Sephardic family who saw

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University Press, 1989), 30.

[24] Eli Faber, *A Time for Planting: The First Migration, 1654-1820*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 16-17.

[25] Ibid., 18.

themselves as sharing common roots and a collective destiny.[26] These networks linked Sephardic traders in the colonies with their counterparts in Holland and Hamburg, in Curaçao and Barbados, and in Surinam. Marriage also served to create commercial connections. Small Jewish populations and the commitment towards marrying within the Jewish faith caused families to look beyond the confines of their own communities to other cities and colonies as well as across the Atlantic to Europe and to the Caribbean.[27]

Ashkenazi Jews also immigrated to North America, though not in as greater numbers as the Sephardim. Having moved westward from central and eastern parts of Europe into England, the Ashkenazim eventually made their way to the shores of America. Like the Sephardim, many of the German and Polish Jews suffered from poverty, which did not abate as they moved to England.

Not every Jew from central or eastern European descent came to America to break out of poverty. Many were successful businessmen who wanted to take advantage of the vast mercantile networks of North America. Usually one family member would come to the New World and then establish a larger trading network for the rest of the family back in England and Holland.[28]

Whether Ashkenazi or Sephardi, both groups of Jewish newcomers differed from their non-Jewish equivalents in the patterns of their chosen professions. Where the non-Jewish immigrants were mostly craftsmen and planters, the Jewish colonists tended to pursue

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[26] Ibid., 21.

[27] Ibid., 47.

[28] Ibid., 25.

commercial endeavors. The desire to participate in Atlantic trade generally limited the merchants to setting up residence in a port city.[29] New York, Philadelphia, and Newport, Rhode Island, quickly grew into the major centers for commercial trade.

Arrival in Charleston

One port city, which grew into one of the most prominent Jewish communities in early America, was Charleston, South Carolina. This coastal city was founded as an English settlement in 1670, though the Spanish and the French Huguenots had attempted settlement of other areas of the coast since 1514. The colony was originally designated to be called "Carolana" by King Charles I (Carolinius is Latin for Charles), but was changed to "Carolina" by King Charles II who took the throne following the former's beheading. Charles II gave the colony to his eight strongest supporters, a group of noblemen called the Lords Proprietors. In April of 1670, the Proprietors sent a group of three ships to establish a settlement in Port Royal near Beaufort, an area where the French had previously attempted a settlement. After a difficult and stormy voyage, one of the ships, the Carolina, navigated into Charleston Harbor, discharging its passengers on the western banks of what would later be named the Ashley River after Lord Proprietor Anthony Ashley Cooper. The new settlement, located some 100 miles north of Port Royal, was initially named Albemarle Point after the eldest of the Lords Proprietor, but was later called Charles Towne in honor of the king.[30]

Realizing the great planting potential that lay in the marshy shores around Charles

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[29] Ibid., 29.

[30] Rod Welch, "Who is Carolina Named For," *SCIway News* 28, 30 September 2000 [journal online]; available from http://www.sciway.net/sn/sn28.html ; Internet; accessed 26 November 2001.

Towne and lured by the settlement's strategic location along the West Indian trade routes, many of Charles Towne's first settlers came from Barbados in the West Indies. South Carolina, therefore, established an agricultural economy early on, unlike the other colonies.[31] Jews were an integral part of this economic framework, possibly arriving in South Carolina as early as 1680. Concrete evidence of a Jewish presence in Carolina is found in the year 1695 in a document that describes the governor's employment of a Jew as an interpreter to a group of Native Americans who spoke Spanish.[32]

As citizens of Charles Towne and the surrounding coastal areas, Jews became active in all areas of commercial life. Though many were small traders and merchants, there were also Jews who were plantation owners, slave traders, and importer – exporters.[33] Jewish South Carolinians served in prominent positions, such as Francis Salvador, who came to Carolina in 1766 and achieved recognition by introducing innovative agricultural techniques and transforming plantation operations.[34] Salvador was the first Jew to hold state office and also served on many important committees. Moses Lindo, who arrived from London in 1756, transformed the Carolina indigo trade, later becoming the Board of Trade's 'certifier' for the

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[31] South Carolina Department of Archives and History, "A Brief History of South Carolina," [full text online] ; available from http://www.state.sc.us/scdah/history.html ; Internet; accessed 26 November 2001.

[32] Malcolm H. Stern, "Portuguese Sephardim in the Americas," *American Jewish Archives* 44 (Spring/Summer 1992) : 165.

[33] Howard M. Sachar, *A History of the Jews in America, from the Period of the Discovery of the New World to the Present Time*, (New York: Knopf, 1992), 22.

[34] Ibid.

indigo industry.[35]

Jews were attracted to South Carolina, not only because of its economic potential, but also for its liberal political policies. [36] South Carolina was governed predominantly by Lord Ashley who outlined the street plans for the city of Charles Towne and whose secretary was John Locke, the liberal philosopher. It was Locke who drafted the "Fundamental Constitution of Carolina."[37] Locke's constitution, though excluding Catholics, guaranteed "freedom of conscience" to groups of "Jews, heathens, and dissenters [sic]." [38] Therefore, Jews were given the right to worship freely as well as to own property.

A New Kind of Diaspora

The Jews who chose to come to Carolina found themselves in a unique milieu, arguably the most unique Diaspora community in which Jews had ever found themselves. Unlike the ancient Diaspora communities discussed above which were initially created out of political tyranny, Charleston was a city to which Jews voluntarily immigrated. Charleston's Jews were not legally of *dhimmi* status or deemed as second-class citizens as in the Muslim countries. Jews were not forced to pay extra taxes to the government as in Europe, nor did they live in confined areas. There was no dread of being accused of blood libel, no fear of

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[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., 19.

[37] Charleston County Public Library Multimedia Project, "The Lords Proprietors of Carolina,"[full text online]; available from http://www.ccpl.org/ccl/lords_props.html ; Internet ; accessed 26 November 2001.

[38] Sachar, 19.

being forced to convert to Christianity. The Jewish citizens were totally integrated into society at large, becoming physicians, writers, journalists, military leaders and translators, attorneys, educators, diplomats, poets, and dramatists. Many, particularly the children of the original settlers, were college educated. A Jewish elite developed---individuals who were "articulate, well-educated, ambitious, politically-minded." [39] Charleston's Jews were Charlestonians and were happy and proud to be so.

As the winds of freedom began to blow across the colonies in the 1770's, Charleston's Jewish community was second in population only behind New York and was comprised of some two hundred Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jews.[40]

Jews and the American Revolution

The freedom found in Carolina was not taken for granted, and Jews willingly participated in the various economic boycotts of English products. However, like many of the non-Jewish colonists, most Jews wanted no part of an actual rebellion.[41] South Carolina's Jews, like many of her citizens, had few grievances with Great Britain. South Carolina was an English colony, with a large number of citizens from English and Scottish descent, which enjoyed a fruitful trade relationship with the Mother Country. Jewish opinion was divided, but once they were pressed to make a decision, most Jews chose to support the Revolutionary

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[39]Marcus, 441.

[40]Sachar, 22.

[41]Marcus, 47.

War effort to gain independence from England.[42] There were Jews who actively fought in the war and were recognized for their bravery and conduct in battle. Mordecai Sheftall, one of Georgia's most prominent Jewish citizens, emerged as the "Deputy Commissary General of Issue for the Southern Department." Carolinian Francis Salvador was one of the first Charlestonians to lose his life in the struggle for independence. Historian Barnett A. Elzas verifies that at least thirty-four Jewish South Carolinians served in the war effort,[43] though James Hagy's list includes a slightly higher number.[44] Legend has it that many of this group, comprised of the majority of Charleston's young Jewish male population, served under Captain William Lushington whose company became known as the "Jew Company,"[45]

Other Jews assisted by supplying troops with clothing and other wares, running blockades, and providing financial services. Some Jews chose to exile themselves from their homes and communities to show solidarity for the American cause. During the battle for independence, several cities fell under British occupation. Rather than remain under British rule, many Jews departed for areas still under American control---not for reasons of personal safety, but rather to demonstrate their political affinity.[46] Families were often divided, as some members chose to remain loyal to the Crown and others sided with the Americans.

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[42] Barnett A. Elzas, *The Jews of South Carolina from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1905), 80.

[43] Ibid., 107.

[44] James W. Hagy, *This Happy Land: The Jews of Colonial and Antebellum Charleston*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993), 117.

[45] Sachar, 25.

[46] Faber, 104.

Colonial Expansion

As America gained sovereignty as a nation, Jews maintained a presence in more and more areas, moving westward and northward along the rivers---to Albany along the Hudson, to Syracuse on the Erie Canal, to Cleveland on Lake Erie, to Cincinnati and Louisville on the Ohio, and to St. Louis and New Orleans on the Mississippi. Other coastal cities grew to prominence, such as Richmond, Baltimore, and Norfolk, while once-thriving Jewish communities, such as Lancaster and Newport, never returned to their former prosperity. These communities could not reestablish their former commercial ties and suffered major economic losses. By 1792 the Newport synagogue had closed its doors, and by 1820 two Jewish citizens were all who remained. With the flow of migration farther westward, Lancaster, too, fell victim to the shifting population patterns and no longer was the center for trade for the inland areas. Its Jewish population totally vanished until the German immigration wave of the 1820s.[47]

The South Grows

As populations remained in flux throughout the new nation, Jews assisted in swelling the population in other areas across the South. The Monsanto family, an influential family in New Orleans, was instrumental in the construction of the Natchez wharf, which transformed the area into a thriving port on the Mississippi River. Abraham Mordecai traveled to Alabama

[47] Faber, 109.

where he founded the town of Montgomery and built its first cotton gin.[48]

Jews invested in acres upon acres of land across the South. Joseph Marx, a resident of Richmond, acquired huge amounts of land belonging to the Native American Chickasaw tribe in Mississippi and Alabama. Mordecai Sheftall was the owner of a 2,000-acre parcel of land in South Georgia near the Florida border. Once Florida became incorporated into the United States in 1813, it, too, became a conquest for the Jewish investor.[49] Most of these landowners had no desire to actually dwell on their land, though some did and became prosperous planters. Francis Salvador is one such example. Poland native Mordecai Cohen of Charleston owned at least two plantations. Chapman Levy, also a South Carolinian, had completed a successful law career, served in the state legislature, fought in the War of 1812, and worked for the governor before moving westward to Mississippi to run a large cotton plantation.[50]

Jews continued to arrive to Charleston's thriving port as well, and by 1820, Charleston had the largest and one of the most prosperous Jewish communities in America. Its semi-tropical climate and its strategic location along the British and Dutch West Indian trade routes created an environment ripe for prosperity.[51] The new arrivals included Jews from all over Central Europe and Poland, from England and Holland, and from Sephardic communities across the Caribbean as well.

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[48] Sachar, 30.

[49] Marcus, 171.

[50] Marcus, 173.

[51] Sachar, 30.

CHAPTER THREE
FORMATION OF A COMMUNITY

As Jews flocked to Charleston in the late seventeenth and into the eighteenth century, they sought the presence of a community to call their own. It is difficult to piece together the exact origins of the Jewish community in Charleston because most of the records prior to 1838 have been lost. It is apparent that Nathaniel Levin had access to them in the1840's because of his writings that appeared in the first volume of *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, a Jewish periodical of the time. Other information can be gleaned from the 1819 work of J.L.E.W. Shecut entitled *Medical and Philosophical Essays.*[1] It is in this work that historian James William Hagy discovered details about the creation of the first Charleston congregation: "As soon as ten men could assemble (and which the Hebrew law requires, for public worship) they provided themselves with a place, as suitable as their slender means could command. A vestry was afterwards organized, and a minister called from England, to exercise the sacred functions of his office."

Levin's work describes the first meeting as taking place on the evening of the second day of Rosh ha-Shanah. At the gathering, organizers chose certain individuals to serve in the fledging congregation's leadership positions. Moses Cohen, who apparently had a large role in creating the group was elected to be the *haham*, or chief rabbi and head of the religious court (beit din.) The *hazzan*, which meant "the reader" at the time, was Isaac DaCosta. Joseph Tobias was selected to serve as *parnass* (the president of the congregation), and Philip

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[1] Hagy, 58.

Hart (the only Ashkenazi Jew elected to one of the posts) was chosen to act as the *mohel*, the individual who would perform ritual circumcisions. During this meeting, the group approved the name *Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim*, or Holy Congregation of the House of God. Levin states that the group adopted as their mode of worship the Minhag Sephardim of the Spanish – Portuguese Jews "as observed by the congregations of London and Amsterdam." [2] The congregation at the time of its outset followed, not only the mode of worship of the European Sephardic congregations, but also the governing style.[3] That this form of governance was chosen is understandable since Moses Cohen and Isaac DaCosta had both been associated with *Kahal Kadosh Sahar Ashamai*, better known as Bevis Marks.[4] The group elected an "*Adjunta*" of eighteen men whose task it was to enforce not only laws to secure "the peace, harmony, and good government of the people," [5] but also to insure that all congregants strictly followed Jewish law and practice. As Levin records it, "those who violated the Sabbath, or the laws of the '*Medianos*,' or middle days of the holidays, subjected themselves to severe penalties, and forfeiture of the honours of the Synagogue." [6] Indeed, Elzas cites that it is highly likely that every Jewish resident of South Carolina was required to join the

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[2] Nathaniel Levin, "The Jewish Congregation of Charleston (Part One)," *The Occident* 1:7 (October 1843) [Full text online] ; Available from the American Jewish Archives, http://www.jewish-history.com/Occident/volume1/oct1843/charleston/html. [Accessed 19 December 2000].

[3] Ibid.

[4] Solomon Breibart, *Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim Synagogue, 250th Anniversary Booklet* (Charleston: Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, 1999), 5.

[5] Levin, October 1843.

[6] Ibid.

congregation to assist in its maintenance in compliance with the dictum of the leadership, for after extensive research, Elzas found that there are names that appear on the roles of the synagogue and "nowhere else." [7]

According to Levin, the newly organized Jewish group began to meet in a little wooden house on Union Street (today's State Street). This location was the congregation's home until 1757 when its size and success created the need for a larger meeting house, which was found at 318 King Street, near Hasell.

The first twenty years or so of the congregation's existence were evidently peaceful. Moses Cohen who had been elected the first *haham*, or rabbi, though not receiving a salary from the congregation, was a knowledgeable Jew who served the fledgling group well. He apparently was the spiritual leader in Charleston until his death in 1762.[8] Cohen was succeeded by Isaac DaCosta, the first hazzan of the congregation, who had studied under the chief rabbi of the Portuguese Jews in London.[9] Approximately one year earlier, the *parnass*, Joseph Tobias, a Sephardic Jew, had died and was interred at his family burial grounds on his plantation located east of Charleston. His position was filled by Israel Joseph, a German native, an event that demonstrates that Ashkenazi power was growing in the congregation.[10]

In 1764, a most transformative year, the congregation relocated to Beresford Street

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[7] Elzas, 288.

[8] Levin, October 1843.

[9] Hagy, 60.

[10] Breibart, *250th Anniversary Booklet*, 5.

(now Fulton), near King Street.[11] That same year, dissention began to erupt within Beth Elohim. Because of differences that arose between Isaac DaCosta and members of the congregation, DaCosta decided to resign his position. DaCosta's successor was Abraham Alexander who, according to newspaper accounts, arrived in Charleston from London in August of 1766.[12] Alexander was the son of Rabbi Joseph Raphael Alexander [13] and had apparently been sent by Bevis Marks.

The resignation of DaCosta did little to alleviate the tensions building within Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim. Large rifts had begun to form between the Sephardim and the newer Ashkenazi members of the congregation. In an act which must have been carried out to protect the interests of the Sephardi members, Isaac DaCosta deeded his family burial ground on Coming Street to the synagogue in exchange for "70 pounds lawful money of the province" for the use of Jews of the city and of the state of South Carolina who conformed to the regulations of Beth Elohim. [14] Only Sephardi Jews were named as trustees of this new cemetery: four members of Beth Elohim and twenty-five names of individuals from Sephardic congregations in New York, Jamaica, Barbados, and Georgia.[15] This burial ground is known today as the Coming Street Cemetery and is the oldest Jewish cemetery in the South.[16]

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[11] Levin, October 1843.

[12] Hagy, 60.

[13] Breibart, *250th Anniversary Booklet*, 5.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid., 6.

[16] Hagy, 63.

By the year 1775 during the tenure of Alexander, the hostilities in the congregation between the Sephardim and the Ashkenazim reached a boiling point. In January of that year, Isaac DaCosta, Abraham DaCosta, Isaac DaCosta, Jr., Jacob Tobias, and Isaac DeLeon held a meeting to discuss the situation. Their grievances seemed to stem from unfair treatment by the Ashkenazi members of the *Adjunta*. The group agreed that these trustees had acted illegally, one cited example being the event of Abraham DaCosta's removal from the *Adjunta*, which prevented him from becoming *parnass*.[17] This information, discovered by Hagy in a document known as a 'Fragment of Congregational Minutes,' indicates that the group wished to send letters to the *Adjunta* to request a meeting. The document also reveals that Isaac DaCosta announced during the gathering that Jacob Tobias would be renting to them 'two rooms over the westernmost part of his house on Hasell Street for the use of a synagogue pro tempore.' [18] The assembly then moved to purchase a lot on the west side of King Street south of Wentworth Street 'for the purpose of building a synagogue thereon.'[19] DaCosta attempted to solicit funds from other Sephardic congregations for this purpose but did not succeed. The American Revolutionary War intervened as well and the project was ended.[20]

Levin's records show that by 1780 the congregation worshipped in a "lot and brick building in Hasell Street" which Joseph Tobias [21]purchased "for 310 guineas, which was then

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[17] Ibid., 60.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Breibart, *250th Anniversary Booklet*, 6.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., 5.

occupied by a Mr. Little, as a cotton-gin manufactory." [22] He writes that in the following year the congregation bought this same property from Mr. Tobias since they were "now possessing a surplus fund, and desirous of procuring a permanent place of worship."[23] This building was transformed into a place suitable for worship and came to be known as the 'Old Synagogue.' [24] Exactly who worshipped here and for how long is unclear. The minutes of the DaCosta meeting make it apparent that plans for breaking away from Beth Elohim to form a strictly Sephardic congregation had been in effect for quite some time.[25] Perhaps the Sephardim used this space during their period of separation from Beth Elohim and later resigned control of the property back to the synagogue.

The Sephardim Break Away

The decade or so following the meeting of Beth Elohim's Sephardic contingent of January 25, 1775, was one of tumult within the congregation and the city and is not easily pieced together. The information that is available indicates that, indeed, the Sephardim did leave Beth Elohim and form their own congregation, *Beth Elohim Unveh Shalom*, or The House of God and Mansion of Peace.[26] Thus, Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim became a predominantly German synagogue formed of mostly newer members, and the breakoff

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[22] Levin, October 1843.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Hagy, 62.

[26] Breibart, *250th Anniversary Booklet*, 6.

synagogue was comprised of older members who maintained the Spanish - Portuguese rites.[27]

Though historian and minister Barnett Elzas concluded that it was highly unlikely that two congregations existed, Beth Elohim historian Solomon Breibart and James Hagy disagree with that conclusion.[28] Several incidents on record lead one to conclude that, indeed, a separate congregation did exist. One such example is the fact that Isaac DaCosta, who had initially deeded his family burial ground to Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim to become the Coming Street Cemetery, was not even buried in that cemetery following his death on November 23, 1783. His family buried him in a location that later became known as the "DaCosta Cemetery." [29] This unusual turn of events demonstrates that difficulties had continued to plague the congregation.

A second example discovered by Breibart and Hagy is a bequest left to the Spanish - Portuguese synagogue Beth Elohim Unveh Shalom, rather than to Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim by a Moses Molina who had died in 1785. [30]

Other information has been gathered from newspaper sources. The Charleston *Evening Gazette* of February 3, 1786, notes the following as quoted in Hagy's book *This Happy Land*:

> YESTERDAY the Portuguese Jewish Congregation of this City, called Beth Elohim Unve Shallom or the House of the Lord and mansion of Peace, Proceeded to their

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[27] Ibid.

[28] Hagy, 64.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

burying ground in Hampstead [the DaCosta Cemetery], in order to lay the Foundation Stones of the Wall. [31]

The newspaper named the individuals who laid the stones---all Sephardic Jews. An advertisement in the November 13, 1786, Charleston *Post and Advertiser* listed two apartments for sale at 21 - 22 Beresford with a "brick building, the upper part of which is the SYNAGOGUE for the PORTUGUESE JEWISH CONGREGATION." [32]

Solomon Breibart also located a supplement to the will of Francis Salvador that endowed funds to Joseph DaCosta for "the Portuguese Jews Congregation in Charleston known as Beth Elohim Unveh Shallom, or the House of the Lord and the Mansion of Peace." Interestingly, Salvador also bequeathed funds to Gershom Cohen for "the German Jewish Congregation in...Charleston known by the Name of Beth Elohim, or the House of God." [33]

The final piece of documentation was also found by Breibart. Dated 1794, this document describes an incident in which the *Adjunta* of Beth Elohim punished Emanuel DeLaMotta for interring his father in the Portuguese Cemetery. The trustees were afraid that this act "would tend to cause a Scism [sic] in the congregation and revive the distinction of portuguese [sic] & Todeska [German].[34] The conclusion that Hagy draws from these documents is that the Spanish - Portuguese Jews met in the Beresford Street location where

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[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., 67.

[33] Ibid., 66. The advertisement was found in the papers of the Charleston Library Society.

[34] Ibid., 67. Hagy quotes information from "Two Jewish Congregations" by S. Breibart. The brackets around "Todeska" are Hagy's.

Beth Elohim was previously and that Beth Elohim, the predominantly German congregation, met at the Hasell Street location behind the Tobias property that had been rented earlier by the Sephardic group.[35]

In 1780, the British invaded Charleston, occupying it for the next two years. This event brought even more upset to the already difficult situation in the Jewish community, which had worsened following the death of Jacob Tobias in November 1775. As stated earlier, numerous Jews escaped the city, including Isaac DaCosta. His property was later seized by the British troops who promised to return it if DaCosta would pledge loyalty to the Crown. When DaCosta refused, the British banished him from the city. [36] DaCosta arrived in Philadelphia sometime prior to December 1781 where he was instrumental in establishing the Spanish - Portuguese synagogue Mikveh Israel.[37] Back in Charleston, the Sephardic group most likely floundered without DaCosta, their strongest leader.

During the year 1784, the Hebrew Benevolent Society was created under the sponsorship of Beth Elohim---the first organization of its kind in the United States[38] Also in 1784, according to Nathaniel Levin's account, Abraham Alexander gave up his position as hazzan which left the congregation with no spiritual leadership until the arrival of the Reverend Abraham Azuby, a Spanish - Portuguese Jew from Amsterdam who was a "man

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[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., 62.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Breibart, *250th Anniversary Book*, 8.

well-versed in our laws, who afforded much satisfaction and pleasure to his flock." [39]

Azuby served for twenty prosperous years. During his tenure, the congregation grew as new immigrants flooded steadily into the city of Charleston. [40]

The Reunification of Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim

By 1790, the Sephardim had returned to Beth Elohim, which resulted in the development of a new constitution. This new document attempted to settle the differences between the Sephardim and the Ashkenazim. A decision was made to install two *parnassim* who would serve for consecutive six-month terms. [41] In that same year the constitutional convention met in South Carolina. The delegates, who were elected with the help of Jewish support, created a constitution that "allowed for religious freedom and the incorporation of organizations such as synagogues." [42] In 1791 the congregation was home to 53 families, approximately 400 members, so the decision was made to become an incorporated body. [43] The synagogue created a petition that was signed on January 7, 1791, by equal numbers of Ashkenazi and Sephardi members. Upon their incorporation, the congregation made plans to

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[39] Levin, October 1843.

[40] Breibart, *250th Anniversary Book*, 8.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Hagy, 73.

[43] Nathaniel Levin, "The Jewish Congregation of Charleston (Part Two), "*The Occident* 1:8 (November 1843) [Full text online] ; Available from the American Jewish Archives, http://www.jewish-history.com/Occident/volume1/oct1843/charleston/html. [Accessed 19 December 2000].

purchase a lot next to the "Old Synagogue" on Hasell Street to build a new house of worship. Aid was received from local donations and from the congregations of New York, London, and Barbados. [44]

A Permanent Home

On Friday, September 14, 1792, a ceremony for laying the cornerstones was held. Levin describes the event as follows:

> On that day the congregation assembled in the "old Synagogue," and after solemn prayers had been offered up to the Most High, they proceeded in procession to the spot where the new building was to be erected. Eight marble stones were laid; one at each corner of the building, and one at each corner of the porch. Each stone bore the name of the person laying it, also the date and an appropriate inscription in Hebrew and English. [45]

On September 19, 1794, the new building was consecrated in a ceremony attended not only by the congregation, but also by important government and religious figures. [46]

The exterior of the building was constructed in a church-like style with details characteristic of the Georgian architecture popular in Charleston at the time. A "cupola" adorned the top, and a cast-iron fence surrounded the grounds. The interior was modeled after the typical Sephardic synagogue with the Ark facing towards the east and the *teba* (reading table) erected in the center. Benches lined the north and south walls and flanked the

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[44] Hagy, 74.

[45] Levin, November 1843.

[46] Breibart, *250th Anniversary Booklet*, 10.

teba. Women sat in balconies that were above the men's seating. [47]

By 1800, Charleston had the largest Jewish community in the United States, and Beth Elohim was the largest congregation. [48] The group maintained its strict adherence to Jewish law, installing a *mikvah* (ritual bath) in 1809 and an oven for baking *matzah* (unleavened bread for Passover) shortly after. [49]

Following Azuby's death in 1805, there was no one left in the community who was knowledgeable enough to serve in the role of *hazzan*, so the leaders of Beth Elohim sought help from the Bevis Marks congregation of London. [50] Two men responded to the letter and indicated interest in coming to serve the Charleston congregation: Benjamin Cohen D'Azevedo and Abraham Ottolengui. Ottolengui had been born in Charleston but was deemed too young at age sixteen to take the position. D'Azevedo was auditioned by Bevis Marks and regarded as suitable to take the job. Upon his arrival, D'Azevedo proved to be a sickly man who did not suit the congregation. He was paid for his expenses and sent back to London. [51] Various congregants served in the position until the congregation chose Jacob Suares in 1806. Suares served as *hazzan* until he was replaced by Emanuel Nunes Carvalho in1811, who accepted the call as "then the best post on the continent." [52]

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[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid., 8.

[49] Hagy, 74.

[50] Breibart, *250th Anniversary Booklet*, 8.

[51] Levin, November 1843.

[52] Ibid.

Even with a beautiful new sanctuary and a constitution guaranteeing equality between both groups of Jews, dissention still continued among the members of Beth Elohim. Problems escalated under Carvalho's tenure. The *hazzan* had taught a choir of boys to sing a closing psalm in a way that the congregation found to be quite pleasing, but he soon rescinded the practice. He refused to reinstate the custom and was suspended for five days.[53] In response, Carvalho collected signatures from various members asking to be restored to his position. A violent riot broke out as the *Adjunta* met to discuss the problem, and court cases eventually resulted. [54] This incident may have served as an impetus for the germination of the seeds of reform. Mr. Carvalho resigned in 1814, after which the congregation relied upon lay leadership for four years. Following Carvalho's departure, Hartwig Cohen served for a few years after having been named hazzan in 1818 and was succeeded by Solomon Cohen Peixotto until the latter's death in 1835. [55]

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[53] Hagy, 79.

[54] Nathaniel Levin, "The Jewish Congregation of Charleston (Part Three), "*The Occident* 1:9 (December 1843) [Full text online] ; Available from the American Jewish Archives, http://www.jewish-history.com/Occident/volume1/oct1843/charleston/html. [Accessed 19 December 2000].

[55] Breibart, *250th Anniversary Booklet*, 11.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE REFORMED SOCIETY OF ISRAELITES

By the 1820's bitter feelings were showing no signs of dissipating. Perhaps there were individuals who had been forever changed by Carvalho's custom of choral singing and who had grown increasingly frustrated because of the retention of the strictly Orthodox mode of worship. Others felt that the continued usage of Spanish, Hebrew, and Ladino (a mixture of Castilian, [an early dialect what became Spanish], Hebrew and other Mediterranean words), which were understood by so few members, was an irrelevant practice for modern American Jews whose language was now English. Many of Charleston's Jewish citizens, predominantly the American-born, were "enlightened, cultured, [and] thoroughly Americanized."[1] Yosef Kaplan notes that to the Portuguese Sephardim, "Judaism was a religion and not necessarily an all-encompassing way of life."[2] Therefore, the ideal cultured Jewish Carolinian gentleman modeled his demeanor on the society in which he found himself, upon the "best in Protestant Christendom."[3] To avoid embarrassment in the company of their Christian neighbors, some Jews hastened to cast off their traditional Jewish identities. Being the educated young men (and women) that they were, they knew the writings of Thomas Paine and were familiar with

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[1] Marcus, 614.

[2] Edwin Seroussi, *Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue Music in Nineteenth-Century Reform Sources from Hamburg: Ancient Tradition in the Dawn of Modernity* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1996), 17.

[3] Marcus, 623.

Deist thought. They felt that Enlightenment and the American and French revolutions had liberated Jews "politically and culturally, but not religiously." [4] South Carolina in general was home to a sizeable group of religious liberals, among them the orator and long-time president of South Carolina College, Dr. Thomas Cooper, a Unitarian, who spoke fervently against traditional forms of organized religion.[5] There were other Jews who still felt close ties to their faith, however, and desired not to abandon religion, but to seek changes in order to make Judaism more viable.

The Reformed Society of Israelites

In late1824, a group of gentlemen led by Isaac Harby and Abraham Moïse met to discuss the possibility of going before the *Adjunta* of Beth Elohim in order to seek certain changes in the liturgy.[6] The group, many of which "had been only peripherally involved in Jewish life for quite some time." [7] lamented the "apathy and neglect which have been manifest toward our holy religion" and "the gradual decay of that system of worship which for ages past peculiarly distinguished us from among all nations of the earth." They desired to re-establish "a more respectable state of which its great character deserves." [8]

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[4] Marcus, 614.

[5] Reznikoff, 129.

[6] Hagy, 128.

[7] Gary P. Zola, "The First Reform Prayer Book in America: The Liturgy of the Reformed Society of Israelites" (manuscript photocopy received from the author, July 2001, publication pending), 2.

[8] Abraham Moïse, "Memorial---A Petition to the Parent Congregation," in L.C. Moïse, *Biography of Isaac Harby* (Columbia: R. L. Bryan, 1931).

One can gain further insight into the impetus for reforms through the writings of Samuel Gilman (1791 - 1858), a Unitarian minister serving Charleston's Second Independent Church,[9] who visited synagogues and wrote about his observations in the context of describing the worship practices that Isaac Harby and the reformers wanted to amend. It is probable that Gilman had visited Beth Elohim as part of his research. His findings were published in an article entitled "Harby's Discourse on the Jewish Synagogue" which appeared in the periodical *North American Review.*[10] Gilman noted that upon entering a synagogue, one observed a congregation of men "with their hats on" [11] seemingly impervious to the services going on around them. He describes one visit during which a congregant, "a highly respectable elder of the congregation," [12] crossed the room to initiate a conversation with Gilman's party about some Hebrew phrase. Though the man was ostensibly interested in the service initially, he quickly steered the conversation towards more mundane subjects. The service was conducted mostly in Hebrew with occasional prayers in Spanish. Spanish was also used to announce various donations of money given to the synagogue by its members. Gilman noticed that the attendees seemed to comprehend very little of the Spanish. The service was apparently conducted "in a kind of chant, or recitative, enunciated frequently with

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[9] Marcus, 623.

[10] Reznikoff, 120.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

great indistinctness and volubility." [13] Even though the chanting was done at a rapid pace, the service lasted for a length of approximately three hours. To pass the time, people frequently left their seats and children played in the aisles. Gilman's description, indeed, sheds much greater light upon the intentions of the petitioning reformers.

Believing themselves to be "following in the footsteps of the humanistic Founding Fathers,"[14] the reformist group, represented by its president, Aaron Phillips, [15] presented a written "Memorial" penned by Abraham Moïse and signed by forty-seven petitioners, advocating several aspects of change. Unlike the reforms implemented in Europe, which served as a condition for entry into the modern world, the moderate reforms proposed in Charleston were a response to complete Jewish integration into American society. [16] Reformers in Europe were usually rabbis. The Charleston group was strictly laymen. Their "Memorial" addressed the issues of ritual, practice, and decorum in regards to the worship services. [17] In Germany, reformers sought to change the traditional social and political order and developed a movement with "an ideological platform and programmatic objectives." [18] In Charleston, the intention was just the opposite. The group sought to join the conventional

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[13] Ibid., 123.

[14] Marcus, 619.

[15] Zola, 3.

[16] Leon A. Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England for Brandeis University Press, 1976) , 80.

[17] Ibid.; Zola, p. 4.

[18] Jick, 80.

political and social order.[19] Some of the changes proposed by the Charleston reformers are as follows:

> 1. repetition of Hebrew prayers in English by the *hazzan* so that "the congregation would be more forcibly impressed with the necessity of divine worship, and the moral obligations which they owe to themselves and to their Creator" which would "lead to more decency and decorum during the time they are engaged in...religious duties,"
>
> 2. elimination of "superfluous" parts of the service with "the most solemn parts...retained,"
>
> 3. "abridging the service" so "that so much of it" would not be "hastily and improperly hurried over,"
>
> 4. implementation of "an English discourse once a week," so that "at the expiration of the year the people would, at all events, know something of that religion which at present they so little regard." [20]

The *Adjunta* viewed themselves as guardians and protectors of Beth Elohim's constitution.[21] On Monday, January 10, 1825, the body returned the "Memorial" to the petitioners along with a letter to explain to them why they were rejecting the petition.[22] Citing Article XIV of K.K. Beth Elohim's 1820 constitution, the *Adjunta* ruled that any changes in the constitution could be considered only by a convening of the *Parnassim* (executive board) and the *Adjunta* or by a request of two-thirds of the membership. There was no intention by the *Adjunta* to summon a meeting, nor did the petitioners comprise two-thirds of the

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[19] Ibid.

[20] "Memorial," in L. C. Moïse.

[21] Levin, Dec. 1843.

[22] Zola, 5.

membership, since most of the forty-seven signatures belonged to non-members.[23] Therefore, since neither criterion had been met, the petition could not be discussed. [24]

Though they did not prevail against the conservative establishment of Beth Elohim initially, Harby, Moïse, and their supporters persisted in their efforts. This group of rebels was comprised mostly of very young men, one as young as thirteen,[25] and were strong personalities in their own right. History illustrates that most surpassed their youth to become important figures in economics, journalism, politics, law, banking, and discourse.[26] Not willing to concede defeat, the men met again on January 16, 1825, decided to organize themselves formally, and called themselves "The Reformed Society of Israelites." [27] Some of the new Society's members seceded totally from Beth Elohim; others had not been affiliated anyway; and a third portion of the group most likely made the decision to stay connected to Beth Elohim in order to assure burial privileges, since the Society never purchased a cemetery of its own.[28] The Society initially acted exactly as its name implies---as a Society. They functioned essentially as what Jacob Rader Marcus terms a *Kultusverein*, or "a religious confraternity with a variety of goals and activities." [29] Gary Zola equates the group to today's

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[23] Hagy, 132.

[24] L.C. Moïse, 60.

[25] Hagy, 134

[26] Marcus, 622; Hagy, 141.

[27] Zola, 5.

[28] Marcus, 627.

[29] Ibid., 627 - 628.

"think tank."[30]

The group met initially in Seyle's Masonic Hall, located a half-block south of Hasell Street,[31] on a monthly basis and later on a quarterly schedule. Hoping to impact the rest of American as well as European, Jewry, the men established a correspondence committee to share their ideas with others and solicit support for their liberal ideas. This committee, chaired by the "brilliant Harby, editor, litterateur, devotee of the classics, dramatist, and educator" was modeled after the Committees on Correspondence of the 1770's, which had striven to advance the cause of the American Revolution. [32]

A New Religious Group

By mid-1826, the Society had evidently started to view itself as a separate entity from Beth Elohim. The Reformed Society of Israelites now conducted their own worship services and aspired to eventually enlist the services of a *hazzan*, develop their own prayer book, and erect a synagogue.[33] It is unknown whether the group conducted worship services only during their Society meetings or if they conducted services on a more regular basis.[34]

In the fall of 1826, the group decided to appeal to the public for donations in order to raise funds for a building. Advertisements placed in the *Charleston Mercury* informed readers

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[30] Zola, 6.

[31] Breibart, *250th Anniversary Booklet,* 11.

[32] Marcus, 626.

[33] Marcus, 627.

[34] Ibid.

that the group had been in existence for two years and that contributions would be appreciated. The ads also stated four aims of the Society:

1. to have most of the service conducted in English,

2. to end all rituals "as partake strongly of bigotry: as owe their origin only to Rabbinical institutions"

3. to eradicate unessential prayers

4. to read Scriptures in Hebrew and in English and to have a lecture in English

The notice concluded with a list of the Society's officers.[35] Though the announcement ran for four months, the group's attempt to garner funds was not successful, and the house of worship was never constructed.[36]

Isaac Harby, Abraham Moïse, and David Nunes Carvalho published their own handwritten liturgies for usage by the group's members. These manuscript prayer books are considered to be the "first radical liturgy produced by the Reform movement anywhere, preceding by twenty years the 1845 prayerbook of the Berlin Reform Congregation."[37] The group pared down the traditional liturgy to only those elements that they felt were the most fundamental and supplemented it with English readings of their own composition. Gary Zola notes, "Although all of these compilations contained the special new prayers that some of its leading members composed specifically for the group, each manuscript was customized to

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[35] Hagy, 134.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Michael A. Meyer; *Response to Modernity: History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (Oxford: 1988), 231.

meet the religious needs and interests of its owner." [38] Three manuscripts are known to survive. There are two versions created by Harby---one dated June 1826, the other September 1827. One of the Harby manuscripts contains detailed drawings with "decorative symbols reminiscent of those used by the Freemasons in their publications." [39] The other manuscript was created by David Nunes Carvalho.[40] A prayer book was finally published by Abraham Moïse in 1830, but no Hebrew is included as there was most likely no printer in the city who had the correct typesetting equipment.[41]

It is not known if these handwritten liturgies were the only prayer book used, though perusal of the *Sabbath Service and Miscellaneous Prayers, adopted by the Reformed Society of Israelites* indicates that the book was, indeed, as its title indicates, predominantly designed for conducting a complete Shabbat service, as it includes liturgy for Shabbat evening and morning.

The "miscellaneous prayers" seem to supplement the traditional liturgy on the High Holy Days and the Festivals. This writer finds the document reminiscent of worship booklets that various Reform congregations create today. The booklets are used generally for Shabbat and include the essential liturgical rubrics as well as additional readings and songs that provide meaning for the congregation. For the major festivals and the High Holy Days, most congregations

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[38] Zola, 10.

[39] Zola, 18.

[40] Zola, 11.

[41] Hagy, 155. The American Jewish Archives has obtained Abraham Moïse's personal copy of *Sabbath Service* dated April 3, 1852. This copy has Hebrew on the pages that had been removed from another book and taped onto it. Moïse wrote notations on this copy about specific rituals and hymns that he had adapted.

revert to the standard liturgy. *Sabbath Service* appears to be of the same vein. The 1830 printed version has single prayers for use on the "New -Year and for the Day of Atonement," and for "Pentecost" (*Shavu'ot*), but there is no liturgy provided for the Feast of Booths (*Sukkot*) or Passover (*Pesach*). The handwritten copy completed by David N. Carvalho, however, contains a prayer "To be said on the Feasts---Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles." There is a version of the Ten Commandments in Hebrew and English to be read on "Tabernacles," as well as a complete service for the New Year. Evidently Abraham Moïse as redactor was forced to omit some of the liturgical works for the final publication, as he writes in the "Preface" to the *Sabbath Service*:

> It will be perceived in this part of the service which is respectfully submitted to the enlightened and pious Israelite, that the compilers have embraced only such portions of the prayers adopted by the Reformed society as are deemed of immediate and pressing necessity. In the total absence of any well digested form of service for the Sabbath, as well as other occasions, adapted to the feelings opinions and dispositions of many, who differ from their brethren of the ancient synagogue, it is hoped and believed that this collection will in a great measure supply that deficiency. At a future period it is contemplated to present to the Israelites of the United States, a new and enlarged edition of the whole form of prayer, to include the service of Festivals, as well as such selection from the original Hebrew, as have been unavoidably omitted in the present work.[42]

This expanded volume never came into existence, however.

There is no evidence to show that the Society conducted daily prayer services, but there are readings in the prayer book entitled "Morning Prayer" and "Evening Prayer," which seem applicable for such a weekday service. Study of the *Sabbath Service* reveals that there were numerous private prayers included for individuals and for specific occasions, such as "A

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[42]Isaac Harby and Abraham Moïse, "Preface," in *Sabbath Service and Miscellaneous Prayers, adopted by the Reformed Society of Israelites* (Charleston: 1830), 5-6.

Prayer Appropriated to any Day of Holy Convocation," "Private Thanksgiving for Deliverance," and "Private Prayer for the Sick." Interestingly, there are public prayers included for some of these same occasions. Included as well are prayers for the dying, prayers to be recited during the period of mourning, and prayers to recite prior to a sea voyage. Much of the prayer book was based on the standard Portuguese ritual but included a number of significant innovations.

One such adaptation was in the Articles of Faith. Written in the style of the "Thirteen Articles of Faith" of Maimonides, the Reformed Society of Israelites adopted ten articles of their own as a "creed" which were included in their prayer book's "Preface," composed by Isaac Harby and Abraham Moïse.[43] The articles appear in the surviving handwritten manuscripts as well as in the 1830-printed version of the *Sabbath Service*. The paragraph preceding the Articles reads in part:

> In laying down these Articles. . ., the compilers of the following Prayers. . .do not presume to restrict the faith or conscience of any man. Let each one believe or reject what his heart and understanding (at once humbled and enlightened by Divine goodness) may rationally dictate to be believed or rejected. The compilers act only for. . .all those who think the period has arrived, when the Jew should break in pieces the sceptre of Rabbinical power, and assert his attribute as a free agent, obedient only to the laws of God . . . .[44]

Several of the Articles invite special attention because of their departure from the views espoused by traditional Judaism. In Article VI, the group declares that God "will reward those who observe his commands, and punish those who transgress them."[45] This

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[43] Notations made by Moïse indicate the authorship of the Articles of Faith.

[44] *Sabbath Service*, 6.

[45] Ibid., 7.

idea opposes Maimonides' article that believes that God "will reward those who fulfil [sic] the law." [46] The Society wished to differentiate between the Ten Commandments, which they considered to be of authority, and the "law," including all post-Biblical mandates, which they regarded as invalid.

Article VII further demonstrates the desire of the Society to look only to Biblical sources for authority, and reads:

> I believe with a perfect faith, that the laws of God, as delivered by Moses in the ten commandments, are the only true foundations of piety towards the Almighty and of morality among men.[47]

The first mention of this idea emerged in the petition to the *Adjunta*, which referred to rabbinic institutions as harboring "Bigotry and Priestcraft." [48] The Society's constitution, while predominantly a simplistic document of rules and consequences, does promote the thinking that much of the misfortune plaguing the human condition is because of the "blind observance of the ceremonial law, to the neglect of the essential spirit of revealed religion contained in the Law and Prophets." [49] Harby footnoted in his *Discourse Before the Reformed Society of Israelites for Promoting True Principles of Judaism According to its Purity and Spirit on Their First Anniversary* that "the Talmud is called the traditional or unwritten law of the Jews. It is not their law. The only law is the written one, found in the

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[46] Hagy, 156.

[47] *Sabbath Service*, 7.

[48] "Memorial," in L.C. Moïse.

[49] Article II of the Constitution of the Society, in Hagy, 149.

books of Moses."[50]

Article VIII states:

> I believe with a perfect faith, that morality is essentially connected with religion, and that good faith towards all mankind, is among the most acceptable offerings to the Deity.[51]

This statement seems to illustrate that the Society ascribed to enlightened ideas of free will. Harby declared in his *Discourse* that homage to God was a result of "rational demonstration, not blind acquiescence."[52] That the human being has the power to act in the world is contrary to Article 6 of Beth Elohim's creed which mirrors the Articles of Faith of Maimonides and reads: "His providence. --- We believe he superintends the actions of mankind, both generally and particularly." [53]

The reformers' statement also appears to be a polemic against the practice of soliciting donations and announcing the amounts given during the Torah services. To the Society, one's "good faith" towards one's fellow human being was the most welcome contribution to God.

The last article in the document, Article X, is, to this writer, the most radical statement made by the group. The drama of the statement comes, not through the mode of words, but through the ideas that are blatantly missing. The traditional Jewish belief system included the concept of a "Redeemer" who would come at God's behest to "gather the dispersed of Israel,

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[50] Isaac Harby, *Discourse Before the Reformed Society of Israelites for Promoting True Principles of Judaism According to its Purity and Spirit on Their First Anniversary,* in Hagy, 149.

[51] *Sabbath Service,* 7.

[52] *Discourse,* in Hagy, 150.

[53] Hagy, 150.

and restore the government up to the house of David." There was also the trust that the dead would be resurrected. [54] Article X makes no reference to these ideas whatsoever. Rather, the Society advocated that "the Creator. . .is the only true Redeemer of all his children, and that he will spread the worship of his name over the whole earth." [55] Harby's view was that "these happy United States" comprised the Promised Land, not Palestine. [56]

Other innovations were implemented in the worship services. On Page 53 of *Sabbath Service*, there is found a "Mode of Confirmation" service, the first such ceremony of its kind in America. [57] Instructions given in italics at the top of the page indicate that "Any one [sic] born of Jewish parents, not under the age of thirteen, and desirous of expressing his belief in the Jewish faith, may, on any Sabbath, make declaration of the same and may be confirmed . . . ." In the ceremony the "youth" would approach the "minister" and express the desire to declare "my firm and religious belief in the divine origin of the moral law, and in the great articles of the Jewish faith."[58] The officiant would then ask the confirmand if this act were being done out of free will. At the conclusion of the ceremony, the young person would recite the ten articles as discussed above. The underlying implications of this ceremony are extraordinary. First of all, the text states that if one is "born of Jewish parents," he may

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[54] Hagy, 156 - 157.

[55] *Sabbath Service*, 7.

[56] *Discourse*, in Hagy, 150.

[57] Marcus, 628.

[58] *Sabbath Service*, 53.

participate. [59] This phrase seems to be directed to one who is being raised in a Jewish household, not necessarily one having been born of a Jewish mother---the traditional definition of a Jew. Perhaps the inclusion of this ceremony is indicative of the Society's willingness to accept those members whose identity as a Jew was questioned by the establishment. For this writer, there is present here the implication of the desire to "raise the bar" of Jewish identity standards. It seems evident that for the members of the Society, it was insufficient for one to consider oneself Jewish strictly by one's birthright. One had to demonstrate one's worthiness of that heritage by annunciating one's belief in the Jewish faith and acting upon that belief through one's interactions with others.

Other novel additions not originally found in the Portuguese liturgy include an abbreviated grace before and after meals, a circumcision ceremony, and, in an unprecedented show of concern for the religious needs of women, a "Ceremony of Naming a Daughter" and a "Burial Service for a Woman." A marriage service was also composed for the new prayer book.

At the back of the printed prayerbook is found evidence of what may be the most significant and consequential innovation implemented by this group. Present there are the English words to twenty-eight hymns, which, as will be discussed further below, were sung by a choir with the accompaniment of instrumental music. There are handwritten notations in Abraham Moïse's copy of the *Sabbath Service* of 1830 indicating the hymns "altered by Abraham Moïse," [60] which, according to Marcus, were "borrowed from the Protestants."[61]

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[59] *Sabbath Service*, 53.

[60] Ibid., 55.

The Carvalho manuscript, which has been named the "Carvalho holograph," contains hymns that appear in several locations throughout that book. Carvalho credits the hymns to a number of sources, among them Cherry Moïse, brother of Abraham. Carvalho created two of the hymns which exist there and also "versified a number of Psalms and hymns" that may be found in the manuscript.[62] This writer finds it interesting that the text of "Yigdal," the hymn that lists the "Thirteen Articles of Faith of Maimonides" is found in its entirety at the very end of the holograph in Hebrew with no English translation. Even though there is evidence that the Society commissioned, not one Hebrew translation, but two, for the Articles of Faith[63] one would think that Carvalho, the chief Hebraist for the group, would have sought to include the Hebrew version of the Ten Articles of Faith of the Society, rather than the traditional version of "Yigdal" or would have perhaps created an English hymn to exemplify those ideals. Even so, this adaptation of accompanied hymns, as will be illustrated in later chapters, was a pivotal development in the history of the Reform Jewish movement.

There are several sources that provide a glimpse into the manner that the Society used these writings and innovations to conduct its worship services. Maurice Mayer, a rabbi of Beth Elohim, wrote in 1856 that having known some of the society's members, he knew the group to have incorporated a choir, hymns of Jewish and Christian origin, and instrumental accompaniment. Mayer recorded that a prayer composed by one of the members would be recited by the leader (usually David N. Carvalho) at the beginning of the service. The service

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[61] Marcus, 630.

[62] Zola, 17.

[63] Zola, 20.

would typically end with the reading of the "Priestly Benediction" as found in Numbers 6:24-26. During the service, members would be encouraged to read together and to maintain an orderly, prayerful atmosphere. Mayer also noted that the men prayed without covering their heads.[64] By combining the writings of Nathaniel Levin, which appeared in *The Occident* with the accounts by Maurice Mayer, James Hagy was able to reconstruct a likely order of service that the Reformed Society would have used for the Sabbath Morning Service:

The Sabbath Morning Service

- Hymn by the Choir in English
- Prayer by the Officiating Minister in English
- Hymn by the Choir in English
- Reading of the 33rd Psalm by the Minister First in Hebrew and then in English with responses by the Congregation
- Reading of the Sanctification of the Sabbath and the "*Shemang*" (Sh'ma) in English by the Minister with Responses by the Congregation
- Prayer for the Government in English
- Reading of the *Parasa* or portion of the Torah by the Minister
- Sermon by the Minister in English
- Hymn in English
- Concluding Prayer in English [65]

The prayer books and the order of service discussed above provide an overall picture of the Reformed Society of Israelites' ideological structure. The group sought to abbreviate

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[64] Maurice Mayer, "Geschichte des religiösen Umschwunges unter den Israeliten Nordamerikas," in Hagy, 154 ; Zola, 17.

[65] Levin, January 1844; Mayer, 172.

the traditional worship service while maintaining its Jewish character. Though the Society wished to make services more understandable by the worshippers, they strove to retain as much of the crucial Hebrew elements as possible. Since most of the members were unable to copy the Hebrew in longhand, they most likely used the traditional prayer book for the Hebrew parts of the service.[66]

The Society agreed that certain traditional beliefs were irrelevant, such as the coming of the Messiah, the return of the Exiles to Palestine, and the restoration of the temple cult. Rather than a belief in the resurrection of the dead, the group emphasized the idea of the soul's immortality. There is no mention of angels who sing praise to God, such as in the Sanctification, nor are there any allusions to the concept of Jews as God's chosen people. Zola points out that it is possibly for this reason that only a remnant of the original *Amidah*---the collection of seven benedictions on the Sabbath and festivals that make up the most fundamental part of communal Jewish worship---was retained in its traditional form.[67] The prayers reflect a shift towards the universal, often underscoring the importance of love and respect for all peoples.

The Decline of the Society

By the time that Abraham Moïse had published the *Sabbath Service*, the Society had already reached its peak and was in a state of decline. Harby and Carvalho had both left the city of Charleston. The losses of the charismatic Harby and the knowledgeable Carvalho were

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[66] Zola, 20.

[67] Ibid., 21.

undoubtedly hard on the rest of the members. In 1833 the group returned the funds it had collected for the erection of a synagogue to the Jews and Christians from whom they had collected it.[68] One must ask why the Society seemed to flounder when the times seemed so ripe for change. Several theories may be offered.

One idea is that it was difficult for the members to remain active. All had full-time jobs and few members seemed to want to serve in a leadership capacity. Many had become actively involved in politics, particularly after the Nullification Ordinance controversy of 1829.[69]

The stress of being continuously ostracized from Beth Elohim may have been another factor. Members may have grown frustrated over the increasing rifts between families because of their religious differences. Perhaps the desire for a permanent house of worship and the need for burial privileges weighed upon the decision of others to leave the group. One by one, members began to return to the mother congregation, Beth Elohim.

Another possibility is that around the late-1820's Charleston began to experience an economic decline. This is most likely why Harby and Carvalho, as did a number of Charleston's Jews, left that city---to seek better financial opportunities. The agrarian South Carolina economy, which depended so much upon slave labor and mercantilism, was rapidly growing out of step with the evolving industrial economy of the North. Opposition against slavery was mounting as were federal tariffs (the impetus for the South Carolina Nullification Ordinance). The state attempted to revive itself by building enhanced port facilities in

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[68] Marcus, 631.

[69] Ibid., 631-632.

moving farther westward in search of land that was not overused. With each passing year, times grew more difficult in South Carolina, and her people grew more and more frustrated and disenfranchised from the rest of the nation.[70] This trend continued for the next three decades, finally leading to South Carolina's secession from the Union and the outbreak of the War Between the States. Neither Charleston nor its Jewish community would ever again know the glory days of the first decades of the nineteenth century, the era of the Reform Society of Israelites.

Though the Society remained active for only eight years, its legacy of creative change cannot be underestimated. The members of the Society forged new liturgical and musical ideals, which laid the foundation for the development of what is today's American Reform Judaism.

Isaac Harby

The contributions of Isaac Harby to the development of liberal religious thought and to Charleston's literary and dramatic culture are worthy of significant discussion. Harby came from a rich family heritage that is on record as going back to fifteenth-century Cambridge. Isaac's great-grandfather, Clement Harby, Jr., became knighted at Whitehall in 1669, then was appointed to be the Consul of Morea where he met and married a prominent Italian Jewish woman.[71] The couple moved to Morocco where Clement served as "Lapidary to the

[70] Hagy, 192-194.

[71] L. C. Moïse, 1.

Emperor of Monaco." [72] After an apparent scandal that erupted after Clement's death, the family's wealth was confiscated. The couple's son, the eldest Isaac Harby, amassed great wealth on his own as a jeweler. Due to later financial difficulties, there was no money left to bequeath to his son, Solomon.[73] Solomon, therefore, left England for Jamaica at a very young age in 1778, and three years later at the age of twenty-one, arrived in Charleston. There Solomon met his future wife, Rebecca Moses, and their son Isaac was born on November 9, 1788.

Isaac attended the best schools and because of his high academic stature, became a successful teacher around the age of sixteen. Following the death of his father in 1808, Isaac was now the chief supporter of his mother and six siblings, so he opened a school on Edisto Island (south of Charleston). As the school became quite a success, Harby decided to move his school to the city of Charleston where it thrived as one of the best academies in the area, at least until Harby departed Charleston for New York in 1828.[74]

While still teaching, Isaac married Rachael Mordecai of Savannah. Harby recorded in his Bible that his marriage was in 1810.[75] There is not much information available on Rachael Harby, as Isaac's writings were rarely of a personal nature.[76] The couple had nine children

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[72] Elzas, 172.

[73] L. C. Moïse, 1.

[74] Elzas, 173.

[75] L. C. Moïse, 47.

[76] Ibid., 5.

together, the last of which was born in 1823. Four years later Rachael passed away after a long illness, which Isaac attributed to "Mysterious and unsearchable Providence." [77]

During his career in Charleston, Harby ventured away from teaching for periods of time and established himself in literary circles as an essayist and editor. Developing a curiosity towards the political arena, Harby purchased a newspaper called *The Investigator* in 1814. In a bold move, he changed the name of the newspaper to *The Southern Patriot and Commercial Advertiser*. [78] Flavoring the paper with his own articles and editorials, Harby achieved great success with *The Southern Patriot*. After eight years, Harby decided to explore other journalistic ventures---writing and editing for other newspapers as well as becoming an astute theatre critic and a prolific writer of essays. After reaching the pinnacle of success as a critic, Harby experimented as a dramatist and playwright. Though his dramatic works never attained much success, nonetheless, Harby's writing in all genres was renowned for its straightforward style and discriminating taste.[79]

Following his wife's death, Harby made the decision to relocate to New York in order to seek broader opportunities for his literary endeavors.[80] His wife's illness had taken a huge emotional as well as financial toll, and his opportunities for publication were growing slimmer. [81]

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[77] L. C. Moïse, 48.

[78] Elzas, 174.

[79] Elzas, 174.

[80] Ibid., 176.

In New York, Harby established a school in his home with the help of his sister. He also made occasional contributions to the New York *Evening Post*. Harby had lived in New York barely six months before he became seriously ill. Though Harby apparently had become a respectable figure in New York, he was reported to have died in "abject poverty." [82]

Upon his death in 1828, the *Evening Post* staff praised Harby, bestowing upon him such accolades as "so very competent," "esteemed personal friend and accomplished scholar," "distinguished and eminent scholar, and writer of no ordinary taste and intelligence," and "the ripe and refined scholar, the respectable citizen, and the upright and moral man, who fulfilled in an exemplary manner the various duties he felt himself called upon to discharge in the relations of father, brother, and friend." [83]

Though Harby's academic achievement and contributions to the literary world are to be lauded, his greatest achievement is considered to be his role as one of the founders of the Reformed Society of Israelites, to which Harby contributed much of his passion and intellect. In fact, the most well-known surviving piece of his written work is Harby's *Discourse*, the address that he delivered before the Reformed Society of Israelites on the event of its first anniversary on November 21, 1825. This address was widely acclaimed, and Harby received letters of commendation from such notables as Thomas Jefferson. [84]

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[81] L. C. Moïse, 7.

[82] Reznikoff, 82

[83] L. C. Moïse cites various issues of the 1828 *New York Evening Post* on page 8 of *Biography of Isaac Harby.*

[84] Elzas, 176.

Harby's legacy continued after his death. His literary craft and brilliant intellect stimulated the creativity of Penina Moïse, the poetess and older sister of Abraham Moïse. Harby served as Penina's mentor, and upon his death, she composed a poem of tribute to him, "On the Death of My Preceptor, Isaac Harby, Esq." in which she poured out her gratitude:

> Light of my life!. . .
> Wert thou not he from whom my spirit caught
> Its proudest aspirations to high thought?
> Whose genial beam chased intellectual gloom,
> Whose mental radiance cherished fancy's bloom,
> Fired with ambitious hope my ardent soul
> And bent its energies to truth's control? [85]

Through Penina's hymns, which will be explored in later chapters, Harby's bequest to the Reform movement continues to be felt, even today.

[85] *Fancy's Sketch Book,* 75.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE 1830s AT BETH ELOHIM

The years during the withdrawal of the Reformed Society from Beth Elohim were difficult, and the congregation "experienced much inconvenience and perplexity in managing their financial affairs." [1] By 1835 many of the remaining members of the Reformed Society of Israelites had been absorbed back into the congregation, and finances improved. The congregation pursued the hiring of a new *hazzan*, and by October of 1836 they had elected Reverend Gustavus Poznanski, a former assistant at Shearith Israel in New York.[2] By the 1830's, New York's Jewish population had surpassed Charleston's, largely because of the influx of German immigrants into that city. With these immigrants arrived the liberal ideas that had been blossoming in Germany since the Enlightenment.[3] Poznanski was a part of this milieu, having been educated in Hamburg, a ferment of reform activity; and with his arrival, worship in Charleston began to breathe new life.[4]

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[1] Nathaniel Levin, "The Jewish Congregation at Charleston (Part Three)," *The Occident* 1, no. 9 (January 1843) ; [Full Text online] ; available from the American Jewish Archives, http://www.jewish-history.com/Occident/volume1/dec1843/charleston4.html. [accessed 19 December 2000].

[2] Breibart, *250th Anniversary Booklet*, 12.

[3] Tarshish, 419-420.

[4] Hagy, 238.

A new constitution was drafted in 1836, which attempted to reconcile differences between the reformers and the Orthodox. The membership was given more authority to decide on congregational issues; therefore, providing a liturgical issue was approved by three-fourths of the congregation, "the leaders could not revert to old practices." [5] Another monumental addition was the requirement that the *hazzan* be proficient in English and that he give a weekly sermon in the English language.[6] With the signing of this constitution, Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim became the first congregation (besides the Reformed Society of Israelites) to enact reforms in America.[7]. Har Sinai Society of Baltimore followed in 1843 by adopting the Hamburg prayerbook. New York's Emanu-El was next in 1845, and Anshe Emeth of Albany adopted reforms in 1850.

Upon Poznanski's arrival in January of 1837, the fact that he had lived in a city surrounded by liberal thought and religious practice was not obvious. He conducted the services as well as his daily activities according to the strictness that was expected of him.[8] Before Poznanski's two-year probationary term with the congregation expired, he had been given tenure for life.

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[5] Hagy, 237.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Sylvan Schwartzman, *Reform Judaism in the Making*, (New York: 1955), 89-90.

[8] Hagy, 238.

The Great Fire of 1838

The year 1838 saw Poznanski achieve a lifetime contract with Beth Elohim, but another significant incident took place that would set into motion a chain of events of sweeping consequence. On April 27th of that year, the city of Charleston was beset by a disastrous fire that destroyed over 1,000 structures, among them the elegant 1794 synagogue.[9] The congregation made the decision to quickly construct a temporary building just north of the former synagogue to be used for worship until the permanent synagogue could be rebuilt.

As the construction of the temporary structure (named the "Tabernacle") took place, the Board of Trustees consented to the request made by Sally Lopez to institute a religious school to instruct the congregation's children. The second Jewish Sunday school in the United States, the school met on Sundays once the Tabernacle was completed.[10] To rebuild the synagogue, the congregation solicited funds from Jewish communities in America and abroad, receiving only a few contributions. Most of the project was financed from local donations and insurance collections.[11] New York architects Cyrus L. Warner, Charles Noble, and Charles Tappan were commissioned to design the structure.[12] The task of building fell to David

[9] Hagy, 112.

[10] Levin, Dec. 1843.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Breibart, 13.

Lopez, a member of the Charleston congregation.[13] The new structure, built in the Neoclassical style, was dedicated on March 19, 1841, and survives today as the oldest synagogue in continuous use in the United States and a National Historic Landmark. Its exterior has remained virtually unchanged, though as of this writing, the congregation is in the midst of building a new museum and office complex which will be connected to the synagogue and to the newly expanded Tabernacle[14] by covered walkways.

The inside of the synagogue was modeled in the typical Sephardic style just as its predecessor. The elevated *teba* was situated in the center near the entrance and was adorned with mahogany and bronze. The floors were marble and led to an ark crafted of mahogany. Above the ark in black marble and gold gilded letters were placed the words: "Know Before Whom Thou Standest." Above the entrance was placed a plaque with the Shema Yisrael and the translation: "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is the sole eternal being." The ceiling forms a dome from which hung a large brass chandelier.[15]

The most unusual feature of the new synagogue was an organ that was installed on the rear wall. This act catapulted the congregation into a virulent struggle between the reform advocates and the traditionalists, which led to the largest schism in the congregation's history.

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[13] Nathaniel Levin, "The Jewish Congregation at Charleston (Part Four)," *The Occident* 1, no. 10 (January 1844) ; [Full Text online] ; available from the American Jewish Archives, http://www.jewish-history.com/Occident/volume1/jan1844/charleston4.html. [accessed 19 December 2000].

[14] The original 1838 building is no longer standing. The current Tabernacle was built to accommodate the growing religious school and was dedicated in 1948 as the "Bicentennial Tabernacle."

[15] Levin, Jan 1844.

CHAPTER SIX

NEW SANCTUARY, NEW LEADERSHIP

The Organ Controversy

The debate begun in 1840 regarding the installation of an organ ignited strong feelings on both sides of the issue. Those members in favor of the implementation of instrumental music cited innovations being instituted throughout Europe and found halakhic justification for their views. The traditionalists argued that the installation of such an instrument was in violation, not only of Jewish law, but of the constitution of Beth Elohim as well. Even the writing of such a petition, in their opinion, was contrary to the constitution, which stated that the congregation was to follow the Sephardic mode of worship. At their special meeting of July 14, 1840, the leadership decided to discuss the views expressed in the petition, a portion of which follows:

> We, the undersigned members of the congregation of K.K. Beth Elohim, feeling a deep interest in our religion, and anxious to embrace every laudable and sacred mode by which the rising generation may be made to conform to and attend our holy worship,
>
> Respectfully petition Your body, to call a General meeting of the congregation at the earliest and most convenient period you may deem proper...to discuss the propriety of erecting an organ in the synagogue to assist the vocal part of the service.
>
> Your petitioners would be among the last to ask for innovation in any respect in relation to the usages and formula of the Service. But your body is aware, that in this petition, there is nothing in-compatible with the practice of our brethren where they continue strict conformists. It is a matter of notoriety that farther than a century back, an organ was made part of the service in the city of Prague, the capital of Bohemia, and at a later period, organs have been introduced in other parts of Germany and in the South of France.[1]

[1] KKBE Minutes, July 14, 1840.

The petition had been signed by thirty-eight official members, a greater number than had petitioned the *Adjunta* back in 1824. This fact did not go unnoticed by the Board, who also realized that more members who had left Beth Elohim to join the Reformed Society of Israelites were beginning to return. There were also rumors circulating that the proponents for an organ had the backing of an unlikely source---the *hazzan*, Gustavus Poznanski.[2] This time the Board took different action than the body that had read and rejected the petition of the Reformed Society of Israelites some fifteen years earlier. Though the trustees still voted that the petition was unconstitutional, the Board scheduled a congregational meeting to be held on July 26, 1840.

The debate that day must have been quite intense. A motion initially had to be made to allow the *hazzan* to address the group. After substantial discussion, the group finally voted to hear the arguments of Reverend Poznanski. The minutes of the congregational meeting describe that after being brought in to address the group, the *hazzan* expressed his approval of the installation of an organ and quoted from several authoritative sources to corroborate his views. After fielding questions from the assembly, Poznanski requested permission to withdraw from the discussion.[3]

The minutes then indicate that Abraham Moïse (one of the founders of the Reformed Society of Israelites) put forward a resolution, which was seconded by Dr. P.M. Cohen:

> Whereas, instrumental music, the universal language of the soul...has been felt and cultivated by all nations...be it resolved as the determination of this congregation, that,

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[2] Allan Tarshish, "The Charleston Organ Case," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (June 1965): 421.

[3] KKBE Minutes, July 26, 1840.

as early as possible, an Organ shall be procured and erected in the new Synagogue to be purchased by voluntary contributions, and not drawn from congregational funds.[4]

The chairman of the board, Nathan Hart, declared the resolution out of order as being in violation of the constitution. M.C. Mordecai made a motion to appeal that decision, which was carried by a vote of forty-seven to forty. Then in a historical move, the resolution to "procure and erect" an organ in the new building was voted upon and passed by a margin of forty-six to forty. Even though tense feelings must have abounded at this meeting, there were still motions made and carried to thank the Reverend Poznanski "for his prompt responding to the call of the congregation" and "that the thanks of the meeting be tendered to the President for the dignified manner and impartial conduct during the meeting."[5]

Though none of the specific arguments made by the participants in this historical meeting are found in the minutes of the congregation, it would seem reasonable that those making motions garnered their supporting information from the foremost authoritative sources of the day. In his book *The Rise of Reform Judaism: A Sourcebook of Its Europe Origins*, W. Gunther Plaut notes some of the ideas that were circulating in Europe at the time. Perhaps these arguments were used by Moïse, Poznanski, and Nathan Hart as they heartily offered their opinions.

The first reforms on record occurred in Hamburg, Germany, with the founding of the Hamburg Reform Temple in 1817. Here were introduced such innovations as a sermon and prayers offered in the vernacular and singing performed by a choir with organ accompaniment.

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid. The Minutes list the names of those individuals present and those who voted for and against the organ.

Israel Jacobson, who was an influential figure in instituting these changes, sought rabbinic support for the temple and its new style of worship. One of his supporters was a Hungarian rabbi, Aaron Chorin (1766 - 1844) who wrote:

> It is not only permissible, but obligatory, to free the worship ritual from its adhesions, to hold the service in a language understandable to the worshipper, and to accompany it with organ and song.[6]

In response, the traditionalist rabbis of Europe issued a volume called *Eleh Divre Ha-Berith* (These are the Words of the Covenant) in which they ardently expressed their views about the organ:

> It is forbidden to play on any instrument in the synagogue, either on the Sabbath or Holydays, even if the playing is done by a non-Jew.[7]

The Beit Din of Prague, whose congregational worship, ironically, was cited by the Charleston Reformers, made this decision:

> . . .As far as playing the organ on the Holy Sabbath is concerned, this is in every way contrary to Jewish law, even if it is done through a non-Jew. . .Here in Prague, we have an old custom to observe the eve of the Sabbath with music. However, this takes place a half hour before Barechu, at which time the musical instruments have to be laid aside.[8]

Rabbi Moses of Pressburg stated that the presence of an organ was unacceptable because that instrument could be traced back to Jubal (Yuval) of the Bible, therefore rendering it a "pagan" instrument. He also argued that since the destruction of the second Temple, happiness, like the Jewish people, has to be exiled; therefore, music in the synagogue

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[6] W. Gunther Plaut, *The Rise of Reform Judaism: A Sourcebook of Its Europe Origins*, (New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1963) , 34.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., 35.

is to be forbidden.[9]

Rabbi Jacob of Lissa espoused that when deciding upon religious matters, one must not rely solely upon reason, which, he believed, was prone to error, but must turn to one's ancient tradition of faith. Reason may be called upon to help bring understanding to law and tradition, but only when reason is in accord with laws and practices, not contrary to them. In other words, since the traditions of the past did not incorporate the usage of an organ, no logic of today could justify changing those traditions.[10]

Even some of Europe's most passionate reformers could not justify the presence of an organ in worship. Isaak Noah Mannheimer wrote in 1830 that:

> the sound of an organ, like the sound of bells, has become too much of a characteristic of the Christian Church, and it is therefore offensive to the Jew.[11]

Rabbi Jacob Hayyim Recanati of Italy (1758 - 1824), the descendant of a line of distinguished rabbis and scholars, felt inclined towards using instrumental music in the synagogue ". . .for the glory of God...except on Sabbath and holidays, when an Israelite ought not to play it. . . ."[12]

The most thorough Reform argument comes from Leopold Stein in his report to the Rabbinical Commission to the Frankfort Assembly in 1845. Though his remarks postdate the events in Charleston, his remarks are worthy of attention. Stein wrote that not only was music permitted in the Temple but was a requirement. Though the expression of joy should

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[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., 44.

[12] Ibid., 165-166.

be prohibited in day to day living, it should not be removed from religious services. Stein came to the conclusion that since the conditions of the Jews in the modern period were so good and since music was a part of the home life of even the most devout Jews, music and an organ should be allowed in a worship service.

When asked if the organ should be disallowed because it is a Christian instrument, Stein replied that a similar instrument also containing numerous pipes called the *magrefa* was used in the Temple. He maintained that even if the organ were a Christian instrument, its usage would be permissible because the Jews would be mirroring a valuable tradition.

In response to an inquiry about the playing of an organ being a desecration of the Sabbath, Stein stated that the custom of banning the playing of an instrument arises out of the concern for the need to repair the instrument should it break on the Sabbath. Since the workings of the organ are so vastly complicated, he argued, a Jewish organist would certainly never consider trying to fix it on the Sabbath. Furthermore, he added, the Talmud allows for two or more people to read by light on the Sabbath; for if the light were to need adjusting, one could prompt the other not to correct it if tempted to do so. This same premise applies to the organ. A number of persons would be present at the service on the Sabbath and would remind the organist not to do any repairs. Stein's conclusion: The organ should be played by a Jew on the Sabbath[13]

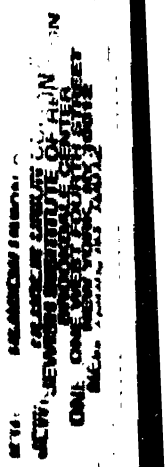
The decision to install the organ having been made, the stunned Traditionalists set about to right the wrong that they felt had been committed to Beth Elohim's constitution. Congregational minutes show that at the Board meeting of August 5, 1840, the Traditionalists

[13] Ibid., 165-169.

filed a motion of protest stating in part:

> Whereas, the recent determination by a majority of six members only of K.K.B.E. of Charleston, to erect an Organ in the Synagogue, is considered by the minority an infringement of the Constitution and a flagrant violation of the Minhag Sephardim which we profess to maintain, and
> Whereas, the members. . .in the minority are deeply concerned in a religious point of view, believing it inadmissible and tending to divert us from the steady, meek, and simple forms established for centuries past and sustained. . .by all the congregations in Europe and America, except a very few. . .and
> Whereas, it behoves [sic] every Israelite to respect well established forms. . .Be it therefore
> Resolved. . .that with a sincere conviction of the impropriety of the innovation, it is a duty they have, themselves and their families, to disapprove of. . .its adoption. . .They consider each other pledged to pursue such course as may be necessary to protect their rights, but always with moderation and forbearance towards their Bretheren [sic] of Israel . . . .[14]

Although this minority group threatened to allow a court of law to decide if their rights had been violated, it happened that two of their strongest leaders, Nathan Hart, the President of Beth Elohim, and H. M. Hertz, both of whom had recommended the hiring of Poznanski, died shortly after the resolution was presented to the board.



Factions in Beth Elohim Struggle for Control

The congregation was now under the leadership of Abraham Ottolengui (1790 - 1850), who had been rejected as *hazzan* back in 1806 because of his young age. Later in 1840, the Board adopted a new constitution that included provisos that appear to be directed towards stifling the Traditionalists, such as the change specifically sanctioning the use of the organ and requiring at least three-fourths of the membership to dispense with it. With

[14] KKBE Minutes, August 5, 1840.

the implementation of this constitution, the Board of Trustees moved to further the move towards reform by mandating the increased use of English in services and the placement of the Ten Commandments and the Articles of Faith on the synagogue's walls. The Articles of Faith were composed by Reverend Poznanski and were reminiscent of those created by the Reformed Society of Israelites less than a decade earlier. Poznanski's version omitted the belief in the coming of a Messiah and the idea of the resurrection of the dead, as well as the reinstatement of the temple cult.[15]

The Board then began to make plans for the consecration of the new synagogue, inviting numerous Jewish leaders and state and local government officials. The organ, which was borrowed from the "Hebrew Harmonic Society," was delivered shortly before the building was completed and installed in the balcony at the synagogue's western end.[16]

At the March 19, 1841, ceremony, the huge crowd processed from the "Tabernacle" building into the new sanctuary, carrying the Torah scrolls. The ceremony was recorded in great detail by the Charleston *Daily Courier* and by Nathaniel Levin in *The Occident.*[17] Led by the trustees, six of the congregation's oldest members, the *parnass* and the *hazzan*, the group ascended the marble steps and entered through the huge, ornately carved wooden doors [which recess into a pocket in the wall to open]. Once as many of the overflow crowd as

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[15] Breibart, *250th Anniversary Booklet*, 18.

[16] KKBE Minutes, Dec. 7, 1840; Feb. 14, Feb. 21, Mar. 7, 1841.

[17] Nathaniel Levin, "The Jewish Congregation at Charleston (Part Four)," *The Occident* 1, no. 10 (January 1844) ; [Full Text online] ; available from the American Jewish Archives, http://www.jewish-history.com/Occident/volume1/jan1844/charleston4.html. [accessed 19 December 2000].

possible had gathered inside, the *hazzan* sounded the *shofar* (a ram's horn) and the choir sang Psalm 118. "During the singing of this psalm, the Trustees bore the sacred scrolls around the Taybah, and at the conclusion of the psalm, ascended it, and took their station in the rear of the same."[18] The scrolls were placed into the new ark (*heichal*), and the eternal lamp (*ner tamid*) was lighted by the *hazzan*. During the ceremony, the choir used three hymns that were written by members of the congregation, Penina Moïse (mentioned earlier as a protégé of Isaac Harby), J. C. Levy, and Columbus Moïse. The newspaper published all three. The hymn written by Penina Moïse read in part:

> Here, Oh Supreme! our humble invocation;
> Our country, kindred, and the stranger bless!
> Bless too this sanctuary's consecration,
> Its hallowed purpose of our hearts impress.
> Still, still, let choral harmony,
> Ascend before thy throne;
> While echoing seraphim reply
> The Lord our God is One! [19]

Poznanski, as recorded by the Charleston *Courier*:

> spoke chiefly of vindication, on grounds of both reason and scripture, of the restoration of instrumental music, in his congregation, as an auxiliary to divine worship, and of the beautiful and salutary as well as scriptural propriety of 'praising Him with stringed instruments and with organs.' [20]

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[18] Ibid.

[19] The Charleston *Daily Courier*, March 20, 1841, in Hagy, 245.

[20] The Charleston *Daily Courier*, March 20, 1841, in Charles Reznikoff, *The Jews of Charleston: A History of an American Jewish Community,* with the collaboration of Uriah Z. Engelman (Philadelphia: the Jewish Publication Society of America, 1950) , 139.

This last quote, which echoes several psalms, was later placed above the new organ.[21]

The *Courier* followed with these comments:

> The dark clouds of sectarian prejudice and religious intolerance seem everywhere to be fast fading away, before the widely spreading lights of right, reason and philosophy. Thus, in the instance of this consecration, we find the event the more remarkable for the novelty of the introduction of instrumental music in a Jewish Synagogue, contributing much by its sweet and majestic harmony to hallow the ceremonies of the occasion. Deeming the connection of music with sacred service, not only strictly admissible, but in this age indispensable, we expect its divine influence to be attended with the most salutary results.[22]

The *Courier* praised Poznanski for implementing "the reformed practice of conducting certain portions of the service in the vernacular language of the people, instead of a tongue unintelligible to most of them," then reported,

> In dwelling on the plenitude of civil and religious privileges, enjoyed by the House of Israel in the land of liberty and equal rights, he kindled with a noble and generous enthusiasm, and declared, in behalf of himself and all grateful Israel, that 'this synagogue is our *temple*, this city our *Jerusalem*, this happy land our *Palestine*, and as our fathers defended with their lives *that* temple, *that* city and that land, so will their sons defend *this* temple, *this* city, and *this* land. . . .'[23]

Less than a year earlier the Traditionalists had expressed their fears that installation of an organ would be likely "to divert us from the steady, meek, and simple forms established for centuries past."[24] Upon hearing Poznanski's remarks, they must have realized that the penchant towards reform was now firmly entrenched in the synagogue and its leadership. The consecration marked the beginning of a new era in the history of Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim.

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[21] KKBE Minutes, Sept. 26, Oct. 4, 1840.

[22] Reznikoff, 140.

[23] The Charleston *Daily Courier*, March 20, 1841, in Reznikoff, 140.

[24] KKBE Minutes, July 5, 1840.

Never again would Charleston's Jews worship together as one unified congregation.[25]

Shearith Israel, the Remnant of Israel

The group of Traditionalists began to hold their own worship services almost immediately following their defeat.[26] Approximately a year after the decision was made to install the organ, most of the remaining group, some forty members, decided to leave the congregation.[27] Calling themselves "*Shearith Israel*" or "Remnant of Israel" after the Sephardic congregation in New York, the group began to meet as a separate congregation. Jacob DeLaMotta was elected to serve as *hazzan* for the new congregation, a post he held for two years.

Continued Change at Beth Elohim

After the consecration, the board hired the organist who had accompanied the choir, Charles A. DaCosta, who had demonstrated his skills in playing, leading the choir, and creating music for the choir to sing. Thus, DaCosta became the first organist to serve a Jewish synagogue in America. The board, looking to bring more decorum into the sanctuary, elected to bar young children from attending and prevented boys below the age of thirteen from reading from the *Haftarah* (the books of the prophets which are read after the weekly Torah portion).[28]

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[25] Hagy, 246.

[26] Ibid., 243.

[27] Tarshish, 430.

[28] KKBE Minutes, Mar. 21, April 5, May 3, 1841.

With reforms now firmly in place at Beth Elohim, the moderates within the congregation began to worry that more changes in the liturgy and ritual were forthcoming. When an opening occurred on the Board of Trustees, the more traditional members made a move to gain control. They were successful in electing Abraham Tobias on February 20, 1842.[29] The Board now consisted of Abraham Ottolengui, President; J. C. Levy, Vice-President; and Abraham Moïse who represented the reformers, as well as Solomon Moses, Abraham Tobias, Isaiah Moses and Isaac Woolf. Solomon Moses and Tobias had initially voted to install the organ but now aligned themselves with the group who wanted to slow the reforms. Isaiah Moses and Isaac Woolf had voted against the organ.[30] There was now a traditional majority who set about to put a stop to any further reform.

At this same meeting, Poznanski, who had just recovered from accusations that he was not truly Jewish, was now accused of changing music in the synagogue without approval by the Board. As a result, a petition signed by over one hundred members was presented to the Board requesting that the song be allowed. Though the request was initially denied by a vote of three to four, the board eventually compromised and allowed the song to be used on several holidays, but never on the Sabbath.[31]

Other contentious issues followed. The first concerned the institution of "*Tecun*" (or "*Tikkun*"), a nightlong service of prayer and study that is traditionally observed twice a year---

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[29] Tarshish, 433.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Hagy, 248.

once during *Shavuot* (The Feast of Weeks or Pentecost) and once on *Tisha b'Ab* (the ninth of Av), which commemorates the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. Prayers are recited in hopes of a return to Palestine. Some argued, notably Solomon Moses who was one of the more moderate board members, that the practice of *Tikkun* was unnecessary, particularly if Poznanski was correct in stating that Charleston was the new Jerusalem and America the new Palestine. His suggestion created such an uproar that Moses withdrew his motion. Abraham Moïse asked that the congregation by allowed to decide. Eighteen of the members present voted to do away with the practice of *Tikkun*, and twenty-eight chose to keep the custom.

A second issue that arose at another meeting involved a proposal that was made by congregational members who suggested that an afternoon Sabbath service be instituted which would be conducted by the *hazzan* in English only. The reformers supported the measure, but Abraham Tobias, the most traditional of the board members, strongly objected, saying that attendance at such a service would cause the regular service to be disregarded. Such violent argument erupted that the meeting was ended with no decision made. The anger was so fierce that both Tobias and Moïse were determined to resign their positions. The two men decided to keep their posts after resolutions were made asking them to stay.[32] Though the above events terribly strained the ever-tenuous relationship between the two factions, the one incident that caused the volatile mix to detonate was Reverend Poznanski's announcement on the first day of Passover 1843 that he would not be observing the second day of the festival as

[32] KKBE Minutes , Feb. 20, Mar. 20, April 24, May 7 and 11, 1842; Jan. 15, 17, 23, 1843).

a holy day. Poznanski cited that a second day of the holy day observance was implemented because Jews had been dispersed all over the world and wanted to insure that the festival day had been observed properly. Now that "the progress of astronomical science" had facilitated the existence of accurate calendars, Poznanski argued, there was no need to observe the extra day.[33]

This statement raised the apprehension of the Board who called an emergency meeting. The Board determined that Poznanski's proposition was against the constitution and "calculated to *create discord* & anarchy in a religious body when there should always be *peace & harmony.*" The Board sent a letter to the *hazzan* inquiring if he intended to persist with "innovations of the established forms of service as observed by us and all the congregations of the world." [34] Poznanski replied that he had been given permission in an earlier resolution to make such comments as he "might deem proper" and expressed dismay that his remarks would cause such unease. The *hazzan* then requested to be relieved totally of his sermon duties, for as a minister, his qualifications were those of a reader, not as a rabbi or preacher. He also stated that he would remove all English from the services, since that was apparently what the Board wanted. The traditional majority of the Board found the hazzan's reply to be most unsatisfactory and asked him to prepare another response. Poznanski apparently acted on his word and removed all English from the next service.

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[33] "The State *ex relatione* A. Ottolengui and others *vs.* G. V. Ancker and others," in *Reports of Cases at Law, Argued and Determined in the Court of Appeals and Court of Errors of South Carolina, 1845 to December 1846*, ed. J. S. G. Richardson, 2 (Columbia, S.C., 1846), 259 as cited in Hagy, 249.

[34] KKBE Minutes , April 19, 1843.

The Board met four days later, and Abraham Tobias questioned why this had been done. Abraham Ottolengui, replied that he had given authorization to the *hazzan.* Thus, Poznanski had successfully argued his point. The board then voted to maintain the use of English in services. In his second letter, Poznanski vowed to maintain:

> 'the established forms of service, as observed by us and all other congregations of Jews throughout the world' until the general desire of the congregation to hear the truth on any religious subject, and to have our holy religion divested of all its errors and abuses, shall be expressed to me through their representatives, your Honorable board, although to deliver either lectures or prayers in the English language is not a part of my duty.[35]

This response was deemed unacceptable by the Traditionalist majority as well, so a meeting was held to discuss the situation further. During the meeting, attempts were made to create peace between the two factions. Nathaniel Levin, the contributor to *The Occident* quoted above, agreed with the Board's decision, yet made a resolution to acknowledge the *hazzan*'s "entire deference to the opinions of his congregation, in his earnest desire to preserve the harmony which has so long prevailed among us" and promised that "this meeting does not intend any reflections on the Board of Trustees or the Rev. Hazan." [36] The congregation voted overwhelmingly to accept Levin's proposal. Abraham Tobias, the very conservative Traditionalist, had conducted conversations with the *hazzan* on earlier occasions and knew him to be of the opinion that in such an informed age there could be no end to reforms. He therefore resolved that "the established service of this congregation embrace all the Mosaic and Rabbinic laws." This proposal did not pass, but the defeat was by only two votes.[37]

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[35] KKBE Minutes, April 23, 1843.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE COURT CASE

The Orthodox Seek Control

The Traditionalists realized that had they more supporters in the membership, their agenda would pass easily. In a bold move, the group held a secret meeting on April 30, 1843, and decided to join with the members of the new congregation, Shearith Israel, with the objective to "stop the process of Reform in our synagogue, and to prevent the destruction of our holy religion."[1] Thirty-four members of Shearith Israel agreed to return to the Mother Congregation, providing that the following stipulations were met:

1. The service must be reinstated just as it was "in the Synagogue in Hazell-street, as it was practiced in the old Synagogue heretofore."

2. The "true spirit of the Mosaical and Rabbinical laws" must be preserved. There must be opposition to "any alterations in the mode of service hereafter, of whatever nature they may be."

3. A mikveh (ritual bath) must be constructed.

4. No one should be allowed on the *teba* "whose views have been known or expressed tending to reform or advocating any doctrines opposed to that recognized and established by the principal congregations of Israelites."

5. They would be allowed to join with the trustees in order to realize the above goals.

The Traditionalists agreed to the prerequisites; then their four representatives on the Board contacted Beth Elohim's president requesting that a meeting be called of the Board of

[1] Tarshish, 435. The author does not indicate his exact source.

Directors.[2]

The Traditionalists recognized that because of their majority on the Board they could easily vote in these returning members from Shearith Israel, thus giving them the majority in the congregation. Ottolengui knew this as well and declined to call the meeting, citing that he had already received a petition to hold a congregational meeting and would therefore do so on May 2, 1843.

At that meeting the congregation voted to enact the following resolutions:

> 1. Resolved, that the will of the majority is the fundamental principle of all associations in this country, political, social and religious.
>
> 2. Resolved, that the Trustees of this congregation were elected on the implied assurance, that they would, in all respects, conform to the will of the majority of this congregation.
>
> 3. Resolved, that sufficient presumptive evidence has been obtained to show that it is the intention of a majority of the Trustees to admit to all the privileges of congregators, those who have been denominated seceders from this congregation, by which its established ceremonial and present pastor are to be displaced, thus compelling a majority to submit to the wishes to the minority of this congregation.
>
> 4. Therefore be it *Resolved*, that the President of K.K.B.E. be instructed by this congregation not to call together the Board of Trustees, until the opinion and feelings of a majority of the congregation are correctly represented.[3]

Tobias persisted that the matter was not for the congregation to decide since the issue was a constitutional one, and thus under the jurisdiction of the Board only. Ottolenghi refused to honor Tobias's demand, and the four Traditionalist trustees walked out of the meeting along with twenty members of the congregation. The thirty-nine members remaining put forth and

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[2] *State ex relatione,* 21 - 22, in Tarshish, 436.

[3] KKBE Minutes, May 2, 1843; *State ex relatione*, 23 - 25 in Tarshish, 437.

voted upon the following changes to Beth Elohim's constitution:

> Any Israelite, not under religious disabilities, desirous of becoming a member or *yahid* of this congregation shall apply by letter to the Board of Trustees, a majority of whom being in his favor, he may be admitted a member, provided he has attained the age of 21 years; but such member can be made a *yahid* only by a majority of the congregation at the first public meeting thereafter . . .That no alteration, addition or amendment may be made to the present form of worship before the same has been submitted through the Trustees to the *Yehidim* of the congregation, and when adopted by three-fourths of the members present, shall be in force. [4]

The Traditionalists went forward with their plan to vote in the returnees from Shearith Israel, thirty-two as voting members and another ten as non-voting members. The group then held a meeting on May 10, 1843, and approved this statement which was proposed by Nathaniel Levin and seconded by Abraham Tobias and read in part:

> . . . it is a duty incumbent upon us as members and supporters of the Jewish faith, to incite in the minds of our brethren a love and reverence for that faith, and to inspire their hearts with a determination to adhere rigidly to our sacred and ancient forms and customs . . .
>
> From the rebuilding of our Synagogue, in Hasell Street (an eventful period in the history of our people in this city), many circumstances, too well known and felt by all of us, have caused a division amongst us, and seeds of discord and disunion have been seen threatening the most fearful consequences, and tending to the downfall of our ancient and holy institutions . . .Then . . . it is just and proper that we should rally around the altars of our fathers, and protect and defend them by every honorable means from attempts of those who would subvert or desecrate them.
>
> We cannot deny that there is an attempt of a portion of our brethren (. . .who may be well meaning, but are mistaken men . . .) to make progressive inroads upon the most sacred obligations...Our aim is to check this great and growing evil, and to restore concord and harmony. . . .[5]

On May 15th, another congregational meeting was called by the Traditionalists who now had control of Beth Elohim. They added further changes to the constitution, such as a

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[4] KKBE Minutes, May 2, 1843.

[5] KKBE Minutes, May 10, 1843

requirement of monthly Board meetings and a provision allowing a meeting of the Board to be called by only three trustees. In their last change, the group made it permissible for any member to officiate at funerals. This act reversed the amendment of the 1840 constitution that dictated that Poznanski was to conduct funeral services. The group also declared that constitutional adaptations made previously on May 2d were now unconstitutional.[6]

Beth Elohim's president and vice-president refused to attend the meetings, but because their positions were designated for life, the Traditionalists could not eliminate them. At a meeting on June 27, 1843, the orthodox issued a prohibition against instrumental music on the Sabbath, which they considered "obnoxious to the consciences of many Israelites." The organist was instructed to play on Friday evenings only until the "Mismor Shir Leyom Hashabat, which is the proper beginning of the Sabbath." They also demanded that Poznanski give back any books belonging to the synagogue, which the *hazzan* refused to do with permission of the president.[7] The congregational minutes of July 3d show that Poznanski had offered to resign because of his fear of "disgraceful conflict, and perhaps bloodshed." [8]

The more liberal members of the congregation were not standing idly by. When the Traditionalist members of the Board attempted to enter the synagogue for a meeting on July 10, they discovered that the gates were locked. Not only were the gates locked, but the locks themselves had been changed. The men called for the president and the vice-president to come

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[6] KKBE Minutes, May, 15, 1843.

[7] KKBE Minutes, June 27, 1843.

[8] Poznanski's letter written in regards to the resignation appears in the minutes of January 3, 1847.

to open the gates, but the gentlemen declined to do so. The orthodox members were then forced to attempt entry by "breaking or picking the locks." [9]

Also to the Traditionalists' dismay, the organist Charles DaCosta did not follow the orders he had been given and continued to play throughout the entirety of the Sabbath worship services. At a general meeting conducted by the orthodox faction, the decision was made to terminate DaCosta and to seize control of the synagogue for themselves. The group determined that the time had come to hire an attorney and bring charges against Abraham Ottolengui. [10] By this time, however, the actions were already being discussed in court. The Reformers had decided earlier to take legal action, declaring that the Traditionalists had acted unlawfully when they admitted members from Shearith Israel back into Beth Elohim.[11]

The Two Factions Go to Court

While the courts decided to whom control of the congregation would be eventually ceded, a compromise was made that allowed the "Organ Congregation" and the "Remnants" to hold services in the sanctuary on alternate Sabbaths. The Traditionalists made the decision to employ Jacob Rosenfeldt to act as minister "while the controversy exists." [12] Poznanski apparently remained to serve as *hazzan* for the Reformers but was not compensated for his

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[9] Reznikoff, 143.

[10]KKBE Minutes, July 10, 13, 19, Aug. 17, 1843.

[11] Reznikoff, p. 143.

[12] KKBE Minutes, Aug. 31, 1843.

work.[13]

At this point in time, the only information available about the events within Beth Elohim comes from court records, letters, and other such documents. The minutes of the congregation end at the August 31, 1843 entry and do not begin again until the account of August 24, 1846.

One can receive a glimpse into what transpired during the religious services during this period from an editorial piece that appeared in the March and April 1844 editions of *The Occident*. The letter was signed merely "Observer," but the editor, Isaac Leeser, posited that the author was probably "Dr. Jacob DeLaMotta, formerly President of the 'Remnant' congregation."[14] In this editorial, the writer describes worship both of the congregation of the "Remnants" and of "the organ party." The letter describes in "brief synopsis" the mode of worship for the Reformers:

> On the Sabbath eve, the usual form of prayers, adopted by the Portuguese Jews, is preceded by a voluntary on the organ, after which the reader or hazan deliberately chaunts the Psalm of David, "Give unto the Lord," the congregation accompanying in an under tone. The chapter of Mishna, "Bamay Mawdlikin," is entirely omitted. He then proceeds in the same tone with the "Lecha Dodee," ending, as usual, with the Kaddish Rabbanan. He pronounces audibly "Mizmor-shir-leyom-hashabath," a Psalm for the Sabbath day. The organ immediately striking up, when the choir, composed of ladies and gentlemen, sings the Psalm, accompanied at pleasure by the congregation, observing regularity and harmony. After which, the reader delivers an impressive and appropriate prayer in the English language. The evening service is continued and said as usual until the commencement of the Yigdal, previous to which another prayer is read in English,

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[13] *The Jewish Messenger*, 45, no.3, (January 17, 1879), in Reznikoff, 144.

[14] [Jacob DeLaMotta], "The Congregations of Charleston," *The Occident* 1:.2, (April 1844); [Full Text Online]; available from the American Jewish Archives, http://www.jewish-history.com/Occident/volume1/mar1844/charleston/html; Internet ; accessed 19 December 2000.

taken from the evening service. The choir, with the aid of the organ sing the Yigdal, the congregation joining at pleasure. In conclusion, the reader and congregation rising, the former reads impressively, that portion of the Birchath cohanim, first in Hebrew, commencing at "The Lord bless thee, and preserve thee," &c. While the congregation retires, the organ plays a voluntary.[15]

The Sabbath morning service is commenced and continued according to the Minhag Sephardim. The congregation make the responses as usual. Previous to returning the Sepher, a prayer for the government is said in English. After the Yimloch is said audibly and repeated, the reader pronounces "Mizmor le David," the then sing the Psalm accompanied with the organ, during which the congregation occasionally join. After the law is put up, and the reader resumes his station at the desk, he reads a selected hymn, or psalm, from a collection composed by talented ladies and gentlemen of the congregation in some instances paraphrased from those of David, &c. Then follows the delivery (when there is no discourse) of an appropriate prayer. The service as usual is then continued to the Ayn Kaylohenoo and Adon Olam, which are sung by the choir with the organ. The benediction is by the reader as at the conclusion of the evening service, and the congregation dismissed with a voluntary on the organ.[16]

About Shearith Israel, he relates that they:

> are more numerous than the organ party, and worship on every alternate Sabbath in the new Synagogue where the organ is erected; an arrangement made between the parties until the right of exclusive possession shall be decided. [17]

The letter describes the members as being:

> ostensibly opposed to the organ accompaniment during divine service, and are uncompromising in all attempts to improve or abridge...They are remarkable in their regular attendance at Synagogue.[18]

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

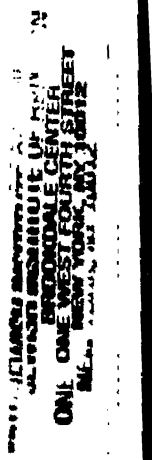
[18] Ibid.

Later the author comments that the traditional congregants "are as sincere as their co-religionists in the cause of enlightenment and are as anxious to sustain ancient institutions."[19] The letter continues to describe how the service is conducted in the Sephardic style with responses made:

> by the whole congregation audibly. The tunes to the psalms are the same as with the other congregations, and conducted by a well-instructed choir of gentlemen, the ladies chiming in good harmony and with the members generally, producing a regular and pleasing effect, far different to what it was formerly.[20]

The writer of the editorial notes that the "reader," the Reverend Mr. Rosenfeldt, "reads a prayer in English for the government, and has recently commenced, what we understand he contemplates continuing with, on every Sabbath, a discourse, or sermon also in the English language."[21]

The "Remnants" organized their own Sunday school that was organized by "The Society for the Instruction of Jewish doctrine." Some sixty women created this society in May of 1844 to teach "lessons of religious truth."[22]



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[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] "New School in Charleston", *The Occident*, 2 , June 1844 [Full text online] ; available from the National Jewish Archives, http://www.jewish-history.com/Occident/volume2/june1844/newschool.html ; Internet ; accessed 19 December 2000.

The Court Case

The court case came to be known as "*In the Case of the State ex relatione A. Ottolengui v. G. V. Ancker and others*" and "was first argued before Judge D. L. Wardlaw in the Court of Common Pleas at Charleston, Spring Term, 1844."[23]

The first portion of the defendants' argument contained these points:

1. The playing of the organ on the Sabbath was contrary to *Minhag Sephardim* and to the custom of the Jews in London and Amsterdam.

2. The instruction that the Messiah was an "Ideality" and not a "Person" was an unanticipated development, and the revisions of the Articles of Faith of Maimonides by Reverend Poznanski were a violation of "the fundamental law of the congregation and the long established faith of the 'Jewish nation.'"

This testimony was overruled by the judge who cited that it was immaterial before the court and would lead to the unnecessary discussion of religious details.

3. Since Ottolenghi had denied the request of the four Trustees to hold a meeting, even though those Trustees represented a majority on the board, the Trustees were then justified to convene their own meeting and admit the new members.

On this point, the judge decided that according to the Constitution of Beth Elohim of 1840, there was no legal way to form a Board without the president unless the president were absent or ill, neither of which was the case. Consequently, the actions taken by the Traditionalists were unauthorized and thus, invalid.

4. The Traditionalists had not really left Beth Elohim permanently, but had merely withdrawn temporarily, so they should still be considered full members of the congregation.

The judge sent the jury to make a decision in regards to the argument. The jury ruled that the

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[23]*State ex relatione*, title page, as cited in Tarshish, 439.

congregants had, indeed, officially resigned, and the judge affirmed their ruling. The Traditionalists brought the court's decision to the South Carolina Court of Appeals where it was argued in front of Judge A. P. Butler in January of 1845.[24]

After weighing all of the evidence and considering the lower court's verdict, Judge Butler rendered his decision in favor of the Reformers in January of the next year. He concluded his remarks to the court as follows:

> Let it not be understood, or in anywise inferred, that it is my design to throw any moral blame on the conduct of the four trustees who brought about the election of the defendants. I have every reason to believe that they were engaged in an honest struggle, to carry out plans for the preservations of what they regarded their ancient faith and forms of worship. they have many claims upon the toleration and respect of the dominant party. In matters not really essential, concession would seem to be a becoming course of conduct.
>
> It has been said in argument (and it should be here remarked that this case has been argued with uncommon learning and ability), is it reasonable that a single individual like the President, shall stop the whole operation of the corporate government . . .?
>
> The greatest of the ancient republics could be arrested in its legislation, and most important undertakings by the veto of a single officer. In the midst of peril and excitement, it was the duty of the Tribune to remain cool; and the people felt that there was safety in the fulfillment of this conservative trust. Such a power, in some form, seems necessary in the construction of all well-organized Corporations. Whether it has been wisely or unwisely exercised in the case under consideration, it is not my province to determine. . . .[25]

With the court case over, control of the Beth Elohim synagogue was relinquished to the Reformers. The members of Shearith Israel stayed with that congregation, their numbers now augmented by more traditional members of Beth Elohim. Martin Loovis, the vice-president of the Traditionalist group, described the situation thusly in a letter printed in the

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[24]Tarshish, 440.

[25]*State ex relatione,* in Tarshish, 444.

April 1847 issue of *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*:

> The innovations and reforms introduced by the Israelites of Charleston at present worshipping at the Hasell Street synagogue, has compelled fifty-six families who felt desirous to worship God according to the ancient usage...to leave that splendid and consecrated Temple, and seek their rights to the edifice, to which they had so liberally contributed, by an appeal to the laws. . .
>
> Finding that a third effort to recover our claim would be in vain, and conscientiously opposed to the mode of worship...we deem it necessary to establish a congregation upon orthodox principles, and to erect a Synagogue . . . .[26]

By 1847, Shearith Israel had erected a synagogue just blocks from Beth Elohim. The congregation grew steadily up until the time of the Civil War. [27]

[26] Martin Loovis, "The Congregation Shearith Israel of Charleston," *The Occident* 5 , April 1847 [Full Text Online] ; available from the American Jewish Archives, http://www.jewish-history.com/Occident/volume5/apr1947/charleston.html ; Internet ; accessed 19 December 2000.

[27]Solomon Breibart, " The *Synagogues of Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim of Charleston, South Carolina*," *South Carolina Historical Magazine,* 80, no. 3 (July 1979): 227.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A TIME TO HEAL: BETH ELOHIM, 1846 - 1861

With the court case behind them, the Reformers and their *hazzan,* Reverend Poznanski began the healing process. Penina Moïse expressed her bittersweet joy with a poem:

> The struggle is over -- the victory ours,
> And grateful emotion my bosom o'erpowers
> As ushered by Harmony's spirit divine,
> The return, Gracious Judge of the world! to thy shrine.
> One discord is heard in the jubilant hymn,
> One shadow is seen our triumph to dim.
> the first is the sound of a brother's farewell,
> The last is the tear that, in breathing, it fell.[1]

The reverend's supporters maintained their loyalty despite continued charges by the Traditionalists that Poznanski was not a Sabbath observer and which accused him of attempting to change Charleston's Jews into Deists.[2] By January 1847, the *hazzan*, which had been serving without salary, decided to resign stating that "our reform was firmly established by the decision of the tribunals of the country" and that he desired to help the congregation by restoring harmony among families. He cited that the congregation would have no bias

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[1] Penina Moïse, "The Struggle is Over---The Victory Ours." in Harold Moïse, *The Moïse Family of South Carolina: An Account of the Life and Descendants of Abraham and Sarah Moïse Who Settled in Charleston in 1791* (Columbia: R. L. Bryan: 1961), 65.

[2] [Many Orthodox Jews] , "Reverend Mr. Poznanski," letter to *The Occident* (September 1844) in Hagy, 263.

towards a new reader, thus facilitating better working relationships with the members, the Board, and the community. The congregation was so distraught by the decision that they passed a resolution stating that the departure of the *hazzan* would be detrimental to them and to reform. Poznanski remained in his position until November, then reiterated his desire to resign.[3] The congregation reluctantly sought a replacement, which proved to be difficult.[4]

Their hopes were renewed when an application was submitted by Isaac Mayer Wise, the future leader of American Reform Judaism. At that time, Wise was a new immigrant, having been in the country only four years, and was serving a congregation in Albany, New York.[5] Wise wrote his discourse during his journey to Charleston. Poznanski read over it to remove all the German expressions and coached Wise on how to conduct himself in a manner acceptable to the cultured Charlestonians. The visit went well. Wise had made acquaintances and felt comfortable in the enlightened milieu. When Beth Elohim offered him the position, Wise quickly accepted. His wife learned of the threat of yellow fever in Charleston, however, and urged him to stay in Albany, which he did. Poznanski offered to serve without pay until a replacement could be found. [6] He remained in Charleston for the next few years, becoming a member of the congregation before moving back to New York.

The Board decided to interview the next candidate, Julius Eckman of Richmond.

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[3]KKBE Minutes, Jan. 3, 6; Nov. 11, 14, 1847.

[4] Hagy, 264.

[5] Reznikoff, 145.

[6] Isaac M. Wise, *Reminiscences* (Cincinnati, OH: 1901) , 143-153 in Hagy, 264-265 ; KKBE Minutes, Mar. 12; April 7, 24, 1850.

Since the congregation found him acceptable, the trustees hired him.[7] Eckman was an ordained rabbi from Germany who had seemed to be a reformer while he was being considered for the position, but once in Charleston, the new minister began an attempt to return the congregation back towards more traditional practices. His resignation was turned in and accepted a year later.[8]

Maurice Mayer became minister in 1852 and, after a stay of five years, was given a lifetime contract. He, too, soon began to criticize congregants for their liberal beliefs and practices.[9] Mayer also complained that he was never paid on time. The next year Mayer left for New York, claiming ill health, then resigned the following year.[10]

Indeed, the congregation was suffering from financial difficulties due to low membership. Unable to pay its mortgage, Beth Elohim was forced to sell a portion of its property. Eventually, following the receipt of several large donations, the congregation's finances improved. Two months after Mayer's resignation, Beth Elohim elected Abraham Harris to serve as their *hazzan*. He began his tenure in February 1860.

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[7] KKBE Minutes, April 28; May 29; June 2, 1850.

[8] Reznikoff, 148.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Hagy, 269.

Another Synagogue for Charleston

In 1854, changes in Charleston's demographics gave rise to the desire for a third congregation. More and more members of the old Sephardic families were moving away, their numbers being replaced by Ashkenazi Jews from Eastern Europe. The newcomers from Eastern Europe and Germany were not comfortable with Sephardic practices or with the Sephardic pronunciation of Hebrew as performed at Beth Elohim and Shearith Israel. This group established their own congregation based on *Minhag Polin*, or Polish customs, and named it *Berith Shalome*, today's Brith Shalom --- Beth Israel.[11] Unlike Shearith Israel who placed its cemetery by that of Beth Elohim, Berith Shalome established its cemetery north of the city near Magnolia Cemetery.[12] So, on the eve of the War Between the States, Charleston was home to three congregations, one Polish and two Sephardic.

[11] Reznikoff, 148.

[12] *Brith Shalom Beth Israel, 130th Anniversary, 30th Anniversary Merger* in Hagy, 270.

CHAPTER NINE

THE CIVIL WAR ERA

The first shot of the Civil War rang out in April of 1861 as troops from the Military College of South Carolina in position on James Island fired upon Fort Sumter located at the entrance of Charleston Harbor. With the country now embroiled in conflict, the attention of the Charleston Jewish community was turned away from religious concerns and now focused instead on the war effort. Charleston drew heavy fire from Union troops and thus many citizens fled the city, including the new *hazzan*, Abraham Harris, who returned to England, his homeland. During the war period there were no minutes recorded, as so many males were away supporting the Confederate cause that no quorum could be reached. More than 180 Jewish Charlestonians served in the war with approximately twenty-five losing their lives.[1] It is interesting to note here that Gustavus Poznanski, Jr., the son of the former *hazzan*, came back to the South to fight for the Confederates, serving with the Sumter Guards. He lost his life in the Battle of Secessionville (South Carolina) in 1862.[2]

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[1] Reznikoff, 158.

[2] Elzas, 234.

Because Charleston was so threatened by Union attack, the decision was made to send certain valuable items from Beth Elohim inland to Columbia for safekeeping. General Tecumseh Sherman was marching across the South, and it was predicted that he would burn Charleston. The Board of Trustees sent several of the Torah scrolls and their ornaments to Columbia, as well as the organ and the chandelier.[3] Unfortunately, Sherman decided to turn inland from Savannah, instead of traveling up the marshy coast, and burned Columbia in 1865. Therefore, Beth Elohim's treasured items were destroyed. One scroll and one little bell were found in the rubble and returned to the synagogue to be placed in the ark.[4]

Isaac Leeser visited the city of Charleston in 1866 and found the synagogue erected by Shearith Israel almost unusable because of the battering it had sustained. Beth Elohim had also been greatly damaged, its ceiling collapsed in places because of the shells that had exploded on the roof. Many panes of glass were broken, and layers of dust lay on the furniture.[5]

On January 21, 1866, the members of Beth Elohim held a meeting in the Hebrew Orphan Society Hall to assess the post-war situation. Only eight members were present. A resolution was made by the acting president B. D. Lazarus, in which he noted "overtures...by the Congregation 'Shearith Israel'" for the "amalgamation on a basis of mutual concessions." Lazarus argued for the merger because Beth Elohim had been "disasterously [sic] diminished by death, and removals and by the ravages of War, its property...seriously

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[3] KKBE Minutes, January 21,1866.

[4] Reznikoff, 162

[5] Ibid., 163.

damaged, and its finances greatly reduced." The resolution was approved. (Worthy of mention here is the fact that Shearith Israel took possession of Beth Elohim in 1865, with permission granted by Union authorities. Beth Elohim's trustees petitioned for its return, which was granted a short time later.[6] During this period the members of Shearith Israel outnumbered those of K.K. Beth Elohim by five to one. [7]

Mother and Daughter Reunite

The two congregations agreed to join together under the auspices of Beth Elohim for a period of five years, and created a new constitution outlining the process and the mode of worship was penned in March of 1866. Over the next month the two groups worked to repair the Hasell Street synagogue and to elect new officers.[8] The synagogue belonging to Shearith Israel on Wentworth Street was later sold to the Catholic Diocese of Charleston and is no longer in existence.[9]

Leadership of Beth Elohim now consisted of a mixture of both congregations. Charles H. Moïse, formerly of Shearith Israel was now president and Philip Wineman of Beth Elohim was vice-president. The more orthodox members were now in control of Beth Elohim, so substantial compromises had to be made to create a mode of worship that was acceptable to all.

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[6] Ibid.

[7] Breibart, 250th Anniversary Booklet, 22.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Hagy, 259 ; KKBE Minutes, December 9, 1866.

Prior to the War, the services at Beth Elohim were conducted as described here in an 1852 advertisement for minister, which appeared in Germany:

1. The service was conducted with organ accompaniment.
2. The sermon and prayers were interspersed with hymns and psalms sung by the choir in Hebrew and English.
3. The Torah readings were divided into thirds, so that the complete Pentateuch was read every three years.
4. The Haftarah (sections of the Prophets) and some Hebrew portions were omitted.
5. The second day of the festivals was not observed.
6. The service would be conducted "according to grammatical rules or be chaunted in the manner of the Portuguese Jews."
7. Sermons were given in English as were prayers.[10]

Worship was agreed upon between the members of Shearith Israel and Beth Elohim to be conducted for five years in the following manner:

1. The service would be conducted according to Portuguese custom but would be shorter. There would be no offerings made during the Torah reading.
2. No member would be called up to read from the Torah. The *hazzan* would read the portions of the Torah and the Prophets. He would also remove the Torah scrolls from the Ark and return them with help from the "sexton."
3. There was to be no instrumental music; therefore the organ was not re-installed.
4. The choir would allow women and was to sing in Hebrew and English.
5. The synagogue was to observe the second day of festivals and the *hazzan* was required to officiate on those days.[11]

[10] Hagy, 259.

[11] Ibid.

The new president addressed his congregation as follows:

> . . .I call myself an enlightened Orthodox Jew. I am to be understood by this as giving my adhesion to the great cardinal principles of an ancient religion...I do not reject all propositions for changes in externals simply because they are *new*, nor do I favor alterations of forms because they are *old*. The first wish of my heart is that a Central Jewish authority may soon be established in this Country, to regulate all matters appertaining to American Jews, adjusting all differences of opinion, and establishing an American *Minhag* for all Congregations in this Country. . .[12]

Charles Moïse spoke prophetically that day. Just seven years later in 1873, Isaac Meyer Wise established the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, of which Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim became a charter member.

For now, however, any progress towards reform would have to be placed on hold in order to maintain the tenuous relationship between the two factions. Financial problems plagued the amalgamated congregation, and many members resigned for being unable to pay their yearly dues requirement.[13] The Rev. Meyer Myers, who had assumed the pulpit in 1866, resigned two years later because of problems with his salary payments and moved up north. The Rev. J.H.M. Chumaciero succeeded Myers and worked to maintain harmony within the congregation, struggling with tensions between the Board and the choir. Finding this task too great and feeling usurped of his power, Chumaciero resigned in 1874. [14]

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[12] KKBE minutes, April 8, 1866

[13] Breibart, *250th Anniversary Booklet*, 23.

[14] Ibid.

CHAPTER TEN

REFORM GAINS MOMENTUM

A permanent replacement was found in the Rev. David Levy who arrived in 1876. A Philadelphia native, Levy was the first American-born minister to serve Beth Elohim.[1] Barely twenty-one years of age, Levy brought fresh new ideas and a sense of harmony to Charleston, which lasted until his departure in 1898. Levy immediately set to work to implement further reforms in order to attract new membership, such as moving the beginning time for Saturday morning services forward to ten o'clock, rather than nine o'clock. Levy implemented the reading or singing of the "*Shemang*" when the Law was taken from the Ark, as well as the recitation of an invocation in English. Another invocation would be recited when the scroll was being returned to the Ark. Levy also replaced the custom of reading the weekly Torah portion in its entirety with the triennial cycle, in which a congregation reads one-third of the portion each year. After three years, the entire Torah has been read. The new minister read the "*Gnalenu*" in Hebrew on one Sabbath and in English on the next. [2]

On November 10, 1878, Rev. Levy submitted a request to the Board for new prayerbooks. He desired to print a new book maintaining the Sephardic customs, but including major changes for the Shabbat services. During his tenure, the minister implemented significant reforms, such as instituting a Confirmation ceremony, and developing a late

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[1]Breibart, *250th Anniversary Booklet*, 24.

[2] Ibid.

evening Friday Sabbath service, upgrading it to the importance of the Saturday morning service. Levy also insisted upon refiguring the synagogue's seating to provide for family pews and urged that the pulpit at the front of the sanctuary be altered according to his specifications. The minutes do not provide the details of the changes that were made in the sanctuary, but a seating chart located in the synagogue archives and determined to be from 1885, shows that though the galleries had not been changed, the pews were now arranged to face the Ark and the lectern. The *teba* was no longer in the center of the sanctuary, and the "beautifully ornamented balustrade which surrounded that platform was evidently then placed at the lower level of what is now the pulpit area." [3] The synagogue was becoming more and more like the houses of worship of the Jews' Protestant neighbors. After a fruitful tenure of seventeen years, Rev. Levy decided to resign because of health reasons, taking a pulpit in Connecticut.[4]

Just twenty years after the destruction wrought by the War Between the States, disaster struck Charleston once again in the form of a severe earthquake in 1886. Beth Elohim's synagogue suffered great damage to its interior. Its decorative ceiling stucco had crumbled and its walls were now marred with cracks. The congregation was fortunate to receive generous donations from other congregations for the repairs to the grand structure. The repairs and alterations transformed the sanctuary to the beautiful house of prayer we know today. Though the records from the congregation are missing from this time, Solomon

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[3]Breibart, "The Synagogues of Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, Charleston, South Carolina," *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 80, No. 3 (July 1979), 229.

[4] Ibid, *250th Anniversary Booklet*, 24.

Breibart notes that newspaper accounts are an invaluable source of information about the restoration process. [5] From these reports in the *News and Courier* we learn that a vestry room and rabbi's study (today called the "robing room") was added behind the Ark, which was moved back six feet from its original location into a new alcove. The pulpit area was restructured, and more pews were added to the front. The women's galleries on the sides of the balcony were taken out, "but the organ loft on the west side of the building was extended to form a semi-circular gallery of handsome design and proportions. The organ was repaired sufficiently to be used again." [6] The most magnificent addition to the building, according to the newspaper account, was the "substitution of the handsome stained glass windows for the old ones," which "...are ornamented with a number of scriptural designs." [7]

The reports describe that the ninety-six walnut pews in the sanctuary were now cushioned and the aisles were covered with carpeting of deep red. Hanging from the repaired stucco centerpiece was now a lighting fixture "bearing forty-two [gas] burners representing white wax candles." The ceiling was "exquisitely tinted in French grays, relieved by a rich cream tint," and the exterior had been painted to give the impression of brownstone.[8]

The *News and Courier* of March 19, 1887, reports that a ceremony had been held on that March 18 to rededicate the restored sanctuary and to celebrate the forty-sixth anniversary

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[5] Ibid., "The Synagogues of Beth Elohim," 229

[6] Ibid., 230.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

of the building's original dedication in 1840. [9]

By the end of the nineteenth century, Charleston was home to two synagogues, Beth Elohim and the Ashkenazi Orthodox synagogue Berith Shalom. Following the War Between the States, the new immigrants to Charleston were mostly from Eastern Europe and felt more comfortable at Berith Shalom. The membership of Beth Elohim was still comprised mostly of members of the old Charleston families, and its rolls had changed little since before the war, even with Levy's efforts to revitalize the congregation.[10]

In 1894, Barnett A. Elzas assumed the pulpit to become Beth Elohim's second ordained rabbi. Upon his arrival, Elzas set about to continue the efforts begun by Levy to bring energy to the congregation. Beginning in 1895, Elzas published a journal for the use of "Bible classes and religious schools." [11] He also discovered many of Beth Elohim's records and documents and compiled extensive histories of the congregation, publishing numerous books and articles. His hallmark work is *The Jews of South Carolina from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, published in 1905. Elzas' work has been invaluable because of his extensive compilations about Charleston's Jewish cemeteries and the Reformed Society of Israelites. Under the leadership of Elzas, Beth Elohim adopted the *Union Prayerbook* in 1895, making the move towards Reform finally official. [12]

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[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., *250th Anniversary Booklet*, 24.

[11] Ibid., 25.

[12] Ibid., 26.

instrumental in founding the Charleston Chapter of Hadassah.[2]

The twentieth century ushered in continued change at Beth Elohim. Women were allowed to become voting members of the congregation, and their organization, The Temple Guild, became affiliated with the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods. The religious school became a "Sabbath School" meeting on Saturdays, rather than Sundays---a change that lasted for many years to follow. [3] Electric lighting was installed in 1900. The chandelier that was affixed after the earthquake of 1886 was replaced with a circular array of small electric bulbs which lights the sanctuary to this day. By 1914, the congregation had installed a new organ as well as two modern marvels, the typewriter and the telephone.[4]

In 1924, the congregation marked the 100th anniversary of the Reformed Society of Israelites, celebrating in the newly-expanded tabernacle. To commemorate the occasion, Rabbi Raisin published a book entitled *Centennial Booklet commemorating the introduction of Reform Judaism America at Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim of Charleston, S.C.* The three day event was highlighted by visits from former rabbis of the congregation: David Levy, Barnett A. Elzas, and Isaac Marcuson. An augmented choir of eight voices added to the beauty of the special services created for the occasion.[5]

Throughout the 1920s and 30s, the congregation continued to be plagued by financial problems, exacerbated by the Depression. Though times were difficult, the congregation

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[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., "The Synagogues of Beth Elohim," 231.

[5] Ibid., *250th Anniversary Booklet*, 28.

maintained a warm community spirit, welcoming new members at receptions in their honor, hosting communal Passover seders, publishing a bulletin, and founding the K.K.B.E. Brotherhood.[6]

In the 1940's, the war brought military bases and more Jews to Charleston. Many of the new residents joined Beth Elohim, as well as a few families who had fled Europe. By this time the leaders of Beth Elohim were all born in the United States and the leaders of the congregation were all graduates of Hebrew Union College. When Rabbi Raisin retired in 1944, the congregation went through several rabbis before equilibrium was reached once again with the arrival of Rabbi Allan Tarshish in 1947. His tenure, though rocky at first because of the rabbi's anti-Zionist position, lasted for thirteen years. Tarshish, like his predecessors, involved himself in preserving the congregation's history, writing the article "The Charleston Organ Case." Under his leadership, the congregation's religious school continued to grow, creating the need for a new building. The tabernacle that had been built as temporary worship space back in 1838 was demolished, and the Bicentennial Tabernacle was dedicated in 1949 with a number of events in honor of the 200th anniversary of the founding of the congregation. Among the honored guests was Dr. Nelson Glueck, then president of Hebrew Union College, who gave an address that was broadcast nationwide by radio. This facility was soon outgrown, forcing the congregation to seek extra space. The congregation purchased the building behind the synagogue in 1957, which was eventually transformed into

[6] Ibid., 30.

extra classroom space, offices, the rabbi's study, a library and a museum.[7]

The 1950's saw the establishment of the synagogue's youth group, CHASTY, or Charleston Temple Youth, as well as the employment of a paid choir director. The Sisterhood achieved the ability to provide greater financial support to the synagogue through the implementation of certain fund raising projects which are still in place today, an annual bazaar, an annual bulb sale, and the Sisterhood gift shop.[8]

In 1961, Dr. Tarshish left the congregation for Chicago, so the congregation enlisted the services of Rabbi Burton Padoll. Rabbi Padoll continued to stress the importance of social justice, instituting talks with the African-American community during the difficult time of great social upheaval in the South. The congregation also sponsored an interfaith gathering of religious school teachers, which drew over 200 teachers from churches across the city.[9]

In 1964, the historic Coming Street Cemetery was restored, thanks to the efforts of Thomas J. Tobias, who served as Beth Elohim's president two hundred years after his forebear Joseph Tobias, the first president of the congregation.[10] The task was difficult since many of the tombstones had become indecipherable due to the ravages of time. Fortunately, Dr.

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[7] Ibid., 32.

[8] Ibid., 32-33.

[9] Ibid., 34.

[10] Breibart, "Dedication" in *Tombstones that Tell Stories: The Historic Coming Street Cemetery of Congregation Beth Elohim Charleston, S.C.* (K. K. Beth Elohim, 2000), revised by Solomon Breibart, originally published in *The Journal of the Southern Jewish Historical Society* in Nov. 1958 as "Tombstones that Tell Stories" by Thomas J. Tobias.

Barnett Elzas had recorded all of the English inscriptions that were still readable back in 1903 in his work *The Old Jewish Cemetery of Charleston, S.C.: A Transcription of Their Tombstones 1762 - 1903.* The restored cemetery was rededicated two hundred years after its ownership was first transferred to the congregation. Participants in the ceremony included "the famous financier Bernard Baruch, whose ancestor the Reverend Hartwig Cohen is buried there; Dr. David DeSola Pool, of Shearith Israel Congregation in New York. . .; and General Mark W. Clark, of World War II fame and president of The Citadel." [11]

In 1967, Rabbi Padoll departed Charleston to accept a position in New York City. A replacement could not be located right away, so for the High Holy Days, the esteemed historian Jacob Rader Marcus assumed the pulpit. Rabbi Edward Cohn would follow later and serve the congregation for eight years. The late 1960's were marked by a number of milestones for Beth Elohim. In 1968, the congregation hosted the convention of the Southeastern Region of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and all of its member organizations. Mrs. Leon Banov, Jr., was elected to the post of president of the Southeastern Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, the first woman from Beth Elohim to do so. In 1969 the congregation dedicated its archives and museum, assisted by Dr. Malcolm H. Stern, famed genealogist and historian.[12]

In 1974, the congregation celebrated the 150th anniversary of the Reformed Society of Israelites, inviting Dr. Stern to return to address the congregation as keynote speaker. Worthy of recognition are two publications that were released in honor of the occasion: a

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[11] Breibart, *250th Anniversary Booklet*, 35.

[12] Ibid., 36.

reprint of what has come to be known as the *Isaac Harby Prayerbook*, which was a project of Rabbi Cohn, and the *Sesquicentennial Booklet*. Updated by Reuben Lapin, the publication included a reprint of Rabbi Raisin's book from fifty years earlier.[13]

Over the last quarter of a century the congregation has continued to honor its tradition of Classical Reform. William A. Rosenthal, scholar, linguist, and leader in the World Union for Progressive Judaism, became the congregation's spiritual leader in 1976 and became its second rabbi emeritus upon his retirement in 1992. Assuming leadership of the congregation at that time is the congregation's current rabbi, Anthony Holz. Rabbi Holz led the congregation to fully adopt the 1975 publication of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, *Gates of Prayer*, slowly making transition from the usage of the *Union Prayerbook*. The demographics of the congregation have changed to reflect Charleston's flourishing economy. Though industry abandoned Charleston in the 1830s, the city is now one of the country's most attractive sites for new businesses. Jews are moving to Charleston from all over the country and are proud to be a part of the country's "most polite" city. To meet the needs of the changing membership, Rabbi Holz has introduced more Hebrew into worship services as well as the chanting of certain prayers. Other traditional elements have been reintroduced such as *Selichot*, the midnight service to prepare for the forthcoming High Holy Days, and *Tikkun Leil Shavu'ot*, the late night study period that ushers in the Feast of Weeks. The congregation's lay leaders have implemented a variety of innovative programs, such as the temple's Outreach program, which has been nationally recognized for its excellence in welcoming families with members of other faiths and Jews-by-choice. Spiritual needs of

[13] Ibid.

congregants are addressed through healing services, annual congregational retreats, and spirituality weekends.

The congregation has grown tremendously over the past ten years which has created once again the need for more space. The congregation is nearing the end of its major construction project begun in 1999 to renovate the sanctuary and enlarge its administration and educational facilities. A new Ontko and Young organ has replaced the often repaired 1914 Austin organ.[14] The tabernacle is being extended on both its western and eastern sides and a new building and parking garage is now situated to its north. The new building will house the archives, the award-winning Sisterhood gift shop, office space, and a multi-purpose room.

Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim welcomes thousands of visitors each year who come to marvel at her beautiful house of worship and to explore her distinguished past. Upon entering its gates, the same gates that welcomed the happy throng of worshippers in 1794, visitors are immediately embraced by the congregation's warmth and reverence for its traditions. The synagogue's gates are strikingly beautiful, the wooden doors are imposing, and the mahogany Ark is magnificent, but it is the people of this place that make this congregation special. Divine inspiration, courage, determination, faith and artistry permeate these walls. The glorious intonations of the organ echo throughout its chambers. Upon entering this sacred place one does certainly "Know Before Whom Thou Standest."

[14] Ibid., 38.

PART TWO

THE MUSIC OF KAHAL KADOSH BETH ELOHIM

CHAPTER TWELVE

MUSIC OF THE EARLY PERIOD

What was the music like in the early period following the founding of Beth Elohim? Unfortunately there is no written documentation that attests to the specific music that was performed, mainly because the Jewish music tradition is predominantly an oral one.[1] Even had there been notated musical documents, they most likely would have been lost in the 1838 blaze that destroyed the synagogue. Therefore, one must employ creative approaches to uncover the missing pieces to this interesting puzzle.

The ethnomusicologist Amnon Shiloah speaks of three possible methods to approach the Jewish music tradition: systematic, geographic, and historical. The systematic approach brings together the essential elements of the music itself, such as "scale, melody, rhythm, compositional structure, and stylistic aspects specific to a given repertoire."[2] The geographic approach studies the characteristics of the music of a specific locality, and the historical approach looks to place Jewish music in a "chronological sequence" from ancient times to the present. Each methodology has its restrictions and drawbacks. The systematic approach would be limiting, in that one could employ only specific studies of a certain time and place. The geographic approach is too all encompassing because one would have to

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[1] Amnon Shiloah, "Introduction," in *Jewish Musical Traditions* (Detroit, Wayne State University Press: 1992), 14.

[2] Ibid., 13.

explore the massive amounts of Jewish sources and musical customs, as well as compare them to the traditions of the surrounding cultures. The historical method is also difficult because of the nature of an oral transmission process. The written materials about the music are often very few and "too scattered to permit a systematic presentation of progressive development---which in itself is a concept almost incompatible with oral traditions." [3]

The process of music history, continues Shiloah, is a "cumulative" one. New ways of performing a piece of music are added to the old way, thus enhancing it, yet maintaining some semblance of the former tradition.[4]

Today's researchers conduct fieldwork studies to try to piece together what a particular tradition has retained and what has changed by analyzing the music that is heard today and comparing it to historical sources. A variety of Jewish groups has been studied over the past half century, such as the Moroccan community, the Yemenites, and the Samaritans among many, many others. To study the early Charleston community, one cannot apply this method because the community has not retained any form of its original Sephardi character. Jewish descendants of the individuals who implemented and practiced the *Minhag Sephardi* are very few. Physical objects have, indeed, been preserved and passed down through the old Charleston families, such as books, wedding gowns, candlesticks, Kiddush cups, letters, official documents, etc. One aspect of the Sephardi tradition that has remained with these few descendants is the Sephardi custom for observing Passover. But according to Anita Rosenberg, a direct descendant of both Abraham Moïse and Isaac Harby, no songs of

[3] Ibid., 14.

[4] Ibid.

Jewish content were passed along. "They wanted to be Americans and South Carolinians," Mrs. Rosenberg says. "They kept their religion to themselves. Religion was important to the family because they helped found the synagogues in Charleston and Sumter, but socially they were like everybody else. My grandmother would have made a great Episcopalian." [5] So without any contemporary samples of Sephardic music being sung in Charleston, one is unable to do any type of field study. Therefore one must turn to historic documents about the worship services to try to determine what music was sung.

It has been noted that Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim founded itself and designed its worship and governmental structure in the manner of that "observed by the congregations of London and Amsterdam." This statement provides the researcher with a direction in which to begin, Western Europe.

As discussed above, the migration patterns of the Western Sephardic *Conversos* and Jews following the expulsion from Spain led them through Portugal to Southern France and Belgium, later to Holland, Hamburg and London, then often to the Caribbean and finally arriving in the Americas. The *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* states that the roots of this Western Sephardic musical tradition are to be found in Amsterdam. The collection of liturgical traditions is related to the practices of Sephardic communities in the lands of North Africa and the Ottoman Empire because when the Jews and *Conversos* began to settle in Amsterdam, they sought assistance from other Sephardic communities.[6] The first cantors to

[5]Mrs. Anita Moïse Rosenberg of Charleston, interview by author, 21 January 2002.

[6] Kaplan, 242 ; "Jewish Music," in *Stanley Sadie, ed., Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2[d] ed., (2001) 13 : 61.

serve in Amsterdam came from Salonika and Morocco in the early seventeenth century. As the Jews moved onward to London, Hamburg, and the Caribbean, they employed *hazzanim* from their "mother community" of Amsterdam. These *hazzanim* perpetuated the Western Sephardic music tradition and helped to maintain a sense of uniformity among the various communities.[7]

In addition to the influences brought to the Western Sephardim by their Eastern cousins, the Jews of Amsterdam were inspired by 18th-century Italian art music. When Amsterdam's elegant new synagogue was dedicated in 1675, the congregation commissioned sophisticated works in Hebrew by both Jewish and non-Jewish composers. Many of these compositions have survived as "monophonic" congregational liturgical melodies.[8] Another indication that the Western Sephardi system was influenced by art music is the introduction of choirs into the synagogue, a trend that began in the 1820's in Bayonne.

It is the synthesis of the motifs of the Eastern Sephardim and the lyrical beauty of Western art music that gives Western Sephardic music its characteristic sound. Some of this music has been preserved in a variety of eclectic sources discovered by Israel Adler and Edwin Seroussi, among others. Some of the most significant collections that reflect the Amsterdam tradition as transmitted to Germany, London, and America are as follows:

1. The Birnbaum Collection housed at the Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

2. The volume *Agudat schirim* compiled by Samuel Naumbourg in ca. 1874

3. The collection entitled *Gesänge für Synagogen* of Cantor Hirsch Goldberg who was acquainted with Sephardic music used in Hamburg

4. *Gesänge und Melodien*, a volume most-likely dating to early nineteenth-century Germany by organist Gerson Rosenstein, which has several of the Hamburg melodies. A complete collection of the melodies from the Hamburg Temple was published after his death in 1852. It includes melodies that were preserved in Mus. Add. 14a of the Birnbaum Collection as well as several additional ones. It is unknown how Rosenstein came to know this music.

5. *Ba'al T'fillah oder Der practische Vorbeter* of Abraham Baer which contains twenty Sephardi melodies from a variety of sources in addition to Polish and German chazzanut

6. *The Ancient Melodies of the Liturgy of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews*, a collection notated and compiled by Emanuel Aguilar and David A. de Sola of Bevis Marks Synagogue in London in 1857. The collection was expanded and republished in 1931 as *Sephardi Melodies Being the Traditional Liturgical Chants of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation London.*

7. *Sephardic Songs of Praise according to the Spanish-Portuguese Tradition as Sung in the Synagogue and at Home*, a collection by Abraham Lopes Cardozo containing Sephardic tunes which are sung in Shearith Israel in New York City

8. *Spanish Liturgical Melodies of the Portuguese Israelitish Community, Amsterdam*, a collection edited by H.M. Krieg in 1954

9. *Ne'im zemirot: the Melodies of the Portuguese Community in Amsterdam*, compiled in 1975 by David Ricardo, the *hazzan* of Amsterdam who wanted to preserve its music

Returning to our study of the early years of Beth Elohim, it is worth examining the above sources for possible insights. Since Beth Elohim considered itself to be carrying on the traditions of London and Amsterdam, it is plausible that there was a connection between the Amsterdam music tradition and the music that was sung during worship in Charleston. As cited earlier, Beth Elohim had a close relationship with Bevis Marks in London and turned to this sister congregation when in need of a *hazzan*. It would seem certain that these *hazzanim*

would bring with them the music that they had learned at Bevis Marks. Therefore, the work that is most applicable to our study is the Aguilar / de Sola notated collection that was created to preserve the liturgical music tradition of Bevis Marks. That being said, it must be stressed that because of the nature of oral tradition, "a 'melody' is not a definitive musical structure in the sense of a 'composition,' but rather a product of collective memory, realized time and again in different performances." [9] Though the music had traveled from community to community and had been performed by various *hazzanim* for two hundred years before it was finally notated, Seroussi maintains that:

> faithful re-creation of a musical message and stability in performance are strikingly characteristic of certain sections of the Portuguese-Jewish liturgical music corpus---at least since the early nineteenth century---throughout Western Europe and the Americas. [10]

Therefore, it can be argued that the music that was performed during the early history of Beth Elohim was congruent with its parent tradition to a certain extent.

For the purpose of this study, we will examine the general characteristics of the Western Sephardic body of liturgical music in order to hypothetically recreate early worship at Beth Elohim and its temporary offshoot, Beth Elohim Unveh Shallom. We will then focus on texts from the Shabbat, High Holy Day and festival liturgy and the musical settings that accompany them. Music sung to observe the Ninth of Ab (the day of fasting to commemorate the destruction of Jerusalem) will also be explored, as it appears to have figured prominently in the Sephardic liturgical calendar.

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[9] Seroussi, 62.

[10] Ibid., 64.

First of all, how does one define "music"? Most Jewish musicologists define music as "the rich palette of tonal and rhythmic formations occurring within the liturgical sequence." [11] Israel Adler writes that music is a reference to "well-defined melodies with fixed form and meter." [12] These definitions do not necessarily apply to all Western Sephardic music, however. Seroussi states that sections of the liturgy are conducted:

> with different degrees of 'musicality,' ranging from declamatory reading to well-defined musical patterns. The 'musicality' of these re-creations...is variable. Although traditions of musical content and conventions of performance practice are faithfully transmitted from one generation to the next, there is still a wide range of possible musical re-creations, which depend on a number of factors (e.g. occasion and location of the performance or the background and skills of the performers).[13]

Therefore, the musical notations that we do have are predominantly those that were performed with the highest degree of musicality; they were sung with an easy to follow, often repetitive, melody in a rhythmic pattern. These notated prayers and hymns demonstrate the role of music in the Sephardic liturgy. The texts that are set to music are generally those that are found at the beginning or the end of a primary section in the liturgy and stand out from the remaining portions of the liturgy that are either read or lyrically recited. Seroussi calls these locations in the service "musical stations." [14]

There are certain texts in the Sephardi liturgical system that are assigned this manner

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[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid., 63.

[14] Ibid., 64.

of performance: the *Kaddish*, the *Kedushah*, selections of liturgical poetry (*piyyutim*), psalms, and some biblical verses. One of the Amsterdam publications mentioned above is a collection consisting only of various settings of the *Kaddish* and the *Kedushah*, further demonstrating the significance of these texts within this Western Sephardic tradition. These two prayers allowed the *hazzan* to show his musical prowess. The *Kaddish* that is recited before the *Barekhu* on holidays is sung in a special tune for the holiday, as is the *Kedushah*. These melodies are usually quite elaborate, some with their origins in Amsterdam art music.[15]

The punctuation of the service with these musical sections is partly a result of the limitations that the rabbis placed upon music in the synagogue. Following the dictate of Joseph Caro's *Shulhan Arukh*, the rabbis in the sixteenth century decided that too much music was time-consuming and tedious for the congregation. Ornate and florid music was greatly discouraged. Therefore, most of the musical passages were simplistic and strophic, or repetitive, in nature. Levine goes so far as to call the musical sections "austere and measured, sung with precision by the entire congregation." He notes that the same cantillation motifs of *darga* and *tevir* occur in a variety of settings, from the chanting of the Torah; to the tune for chanting Ruth, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs; to the Song of the Sea, the poetic passage in Exodus 15:1-21 that the Israelites sang following their escape across the Red Sea. This passage is included as part of the *Shaharit* (morning prayer) service. The same motif is also used for the singing of the "Poem on the Binding of Isaac," a twelfth-century *piyyut*.[16]

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[15] Ibid., 66-67.

[16] Joseph A. Levine, *Synagogue Song in America* (Crown Point, I.N.: White Cliffs Media Co., 1989), 174.

The *piyyutim* seem to occupy a special place in Western Sephardic liturgy. They are usually inserted before or after the foremost portions of the liturgy, such as between the *pesukei de-zimra* (the morning psalms and blessings of praise) and the *Barekhu* (the call to worship). Another prominent location for a *piyyut* is at the conclusion of the *Amidah* (the central benedictions of the service) and the beginning of the service for the reading of the *Torah.*

The strophic form of song---one that is repetitive or includes a repeated refrain---has its origins in eleventh century Spain. Many of these songs began as poems written by some of Judaism's most gifted and revered liturgical poets of the "Golden Age," such as Shmuel ha-Nagid, Shlomo ibn Gabriol, Moshe ibn Ezra, Yehuda ha-Levi, and Abraham ibn Ezra. Their poetry still figures prominently today in both Sephardic and Ashkenazic traditions.

Sometimes the musical renditions of text in Sephardi tradition have a melody and a well-defined rhythmical sense but do not maintain a set meter. A piece could have several measures with four beats to a measure, then switch to three beats per measure for two measures, then back to four beats per measure, for example. This pattern is usually found within the interpretations of certain biblical texts. Among these are the psalms (including the *Hallel*, which is recited on festivals), the Song of the Sea, and the initial portion of the afternoon worship service, *U-va le-tziyyon go'el.*[17] Seroussi notes that this type of rhythmical presentation is common among the North African Sephardi communities to this day.[18]

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[17] Seroussi, 67.

[18] Ibid., 96.

The first piece in our demonstration is of this type of pattern. *Mizmor le-David*, or Psalm 29, is recited on Shabbat evening and during the procession of the Torah scrolls on Shabbat and festivals. A biblical text, its musical setting conforms to the typical Sephardi pattern of an easily sung, repetitive melody that is rhythmical but of uneven meter. In the Aguilar / de Sola notation,[19] the *Mizmor le-David* (See appendix 2:a) is sung in a manner that repeats one melodic expression over and over with each phrase corresponding to one verse of the psalm. The melodic phrase consists of two sections. The first section is basically the same length throughout and presents no major rhythmical problems. The length of the notes is easily adjusted to fit the syllables of the verse. In the second half of each verse, more adjustments must be made to accommodate extra syllables. Verses 3 and 4 in particular are rhythmically problematic. In verse 3, Aguilar and de Sola accommodate the extra syllables by repeating a pattern of eighth notes with the interval of B-flat to A, B-flat to A until the additional syllables are absorbed. Then the phrase returns to its normal pattern. In verse 4, the problem of too many syllables is solved by inserting a measure with five beats into a phrase that is written in Common time, or four beats to the measure. Since this type of music is so dependent upon syllables, it would probably be easier to notate it as such and not impose a set time signature, measures, bar lines, etc.

Another piece representative of the Shabbat liturgy is the *Menucha Vesimcha* (Rest

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[19] Emanuel Aguilar and David A. de Sola, eds., *The Ancient Melodies of the Liturgy of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews* (London, 1857), republished as *Sephardi Melodies Being the Traditional Liturgical Chants of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation London* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931).

and Joy). The composer of this poem is not known, but the name *Moshe* appears in an acrostic that is created by the first words of the first three verses. The poem first appeared in print in 1545.[20] The setting from London is indicative of the influence of art music, namely its recitative-like characteristics and its long, flowing melodic phrases (See appendix 2:b.). The music makes use of the "turn," a style of ornamentation in which the singer or instrumentalist sounds the note indicated, then goes quickly up one tone, back to the original note, down one tone and back to the original note before continuing. The cadence of the piece is marked by a "trill," in which one rapidly alternates between the note indicated and one tone up for the length of the note, which is followed by two quick grace notes leading to the last note. Thus the Shabbat body of music from Bevis Marks demonstrates how there abound different styles within one tradition.

This is also true of the High Holy Day repertoire. *Ana Bekorenu* is one of the many *selihot* (prayers asking forgiveness) that pervade the Sephardi liturgy. Chanted on Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), this poem was composed by David ben Elazar ibn Paquda. It appears frequently in both Western and Eastern Sephardic communities,[21] so it is highly likely that the Charleston community would have been familiar with it as well. The setting of the poem that was notated by Aguilar and de Sola (See appendix 2:c) shows the typical call and response of Sephardic worship. The *hazzan* sings the stanzas, after which the congregation responds with a two-word response. What is unusual about this response is that it varies each

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[20] Nosson Scherman and Meir Zlotowitz, eds. *The Complete Artscroll Siddur* (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 1990), 363-364.

[21] Seroussi, 69.

time in this manner:

Hazzan sings Stanza 1, congregation replies, "*Adonai shema'a*"
Hazzan sings Stanza 2, congregation replies, "*Adonai selacha*"
Hazzan sings Stanza 3a, congregation replies, "*Shema Adonai*"
Hazzan sings Stanza 3b, congregation replies, "*Selach Adonai*"
Hazzan sings Stanza 4, congregation replies, "*Adonai shema'a*"
Hazzan sings Stanza 5, congregation replies, "*Adonai selacha*"

Also interesting to note is that in the third stanza, the music changes to reflect the change in poetic meter as well as the changes in Hebrew structure.

Of a contrasting style is the musical setting for the prayer *Shofet Kol Haaretz* (Judge of All the Land). The musical instruction is given, "Lento (Senza Tempo)," meaning "Slowly without tempo." (See appendix 2:d.) Neither bar lines nor time signatures appear in the selection, thus indicating that the piece is to be sung as a recitative. The music appears to be influenced by art music, as it is ornamented with turns and grace notes. The setting is characterized by large melismatic passages that are reminiscent of Eastern European *chazzanut*. Unlike the *chazzanut* in which melismatic sections are usually to be performed quickly and are notated with sixteenth, thirty-second, and sixty-fourth notes, the melismas here are comprised of equal eighth notes that are tied with a long slur, indicating a more lyrical, legato style. The longest of these phrases contains seventeen eighth notes, tied to two quarter notes, the last of which is marked with a fermata. Interestingly this notation is assigned to the Hebrew word *tamid*, which means "always or forever."

The Sephardi liturgy for the festivals, *Pesach*, *Shavu'ot* and *Sukkot*, is characterized by joyous, participatory melodic settings. The musical treatment that is given to the *Hallel* is often applied to other festivals prayer texts, such as the *Kaddish* and *El Adon al kol ha-*

ma'asim. The special melodies are also applied to *piyyutim* such as *Yigdal* and *Adon Olam*.[22] The common melody for the *Shirat ha-Yam* also resurfaces during the festivals, particularly for the singing of Psalm 118:26-29, which begins *Barukh ha-ba b'shem Adonai*.[23] Seroussi has found evidence of this melody being used in Philadelphia and New York, so it is conceivable that the Jews in Charleston would have used it for festivals as well. As stated earlier, the *Kaddish* and the *Kedushah* figure prominently, and on each festival, these prayers are sung with a melody unique to that festival. The *hazzan* is allowed to take improvisational liberties with each melody in order to exhibit his musical talents.[24]

In addition to Shabbat and holy days, the observance of *Tisha b'Ab*, or the ninth day of the month of Av, was a highly significant event on the Sephardi liturgical calendar. In the collection of melodies notated by Aguilar and de Sola, the section entitled "Elegies for the Ninth of Ab" contains more selections than either "Festival Hymns" or "New Year and Day of Atonement." Only the Shabbat section has more melodies listed. It is these elegies, or *kinot*, that make the observance so unique. The *kinot* are liturgical poems, most of which were composed by Yehudah ha-Levy and call to mind the Jewish people's longing for a return to Zion. There are also selections from the Prophets, such as the verse "Nakhamu, nakhamu ami" (Be comforted, my people). Most of the Aguilar / de Sola elegies are simple melodies in major keys, though some do incorporate a minor mode. Though written in a major key, the music is generally pensive and calming in character.

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[22] Seroussi, 111.

[23] Ibid., 117.

[24] Ibid., 99.

In Charleston, this observance gradually began to lose its significance as the Jews there grew more acclimated to American life. In 1842, a motion was made to the Beth Elohim trustees to do away with the practice of *tikkun*, an observance similar to *Tisha b'Ab*, during which congregants recite lamentations and prayers at midnight. The observance is of Kabbalistic origin and mourns the exile of the *Shekhinah* (the Divine Presence) from the world. The word *tikkun* is a derivative of the verb *l'takein*, to repair. The observance of the *tikkun* was to help to repair the rift between humankind and God in order to bring about redemption. Redemption would come in the form of the Messiah who would lead the people back to Zion. [25]. Many of Charleston's Jews came to believe that America was their Zion, thus eliminating the need to mourn for a homeland.

[25] "Luria, Isaac and Lurianic Kabbalah" in Wigoder, 441-444.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

MUSICAL ADAPTATIONS OF THE REFORMED SOCIETY OF ISRAELITES

As cited above, the Reformed Society of Israelites were among the first Jewish Charlestonians to feel that America was their "Promised Land." They were greatly impressed by their Protestant neighbors, and this influence surfaces most obviously in their music. It has been noted that Abraham Moïse adapted some of the hymns that appear in the Society's prayerbook. The hymns are in English, though the group did retain the traditional *Yigdal* and *Adon Olam*.[1] There is little documentation of the actual music used, save the hymn composed by D. N. Carvalho that appears in the Carvalho Holograph.[2] So, from what sources did the hymns originate? To what music were they sung? To answer these questions one must look to the Protestant community. Cross-reference of the hymn texts of the Society with various Protestant hymnals has yielded fruitful results.

One source of great interest to our study of the Charleston community is *Jacob Eckhard's Choirmaster's Book of 1809*, a facsimile of an original hymnbook that contains

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[1] David Nunes Carvalho, "The Carvalho Holograph" (Charleston, c. 1825). This handwritten prayerbook of the Reformed Society of Israelites was the personal copy of D.N. Carvalho. The original is available from the American Jewish Archives. The "Adon Olam" appears on page 106 in Hebrew. A translation in English is on page 107, as well as a "versified" version composed by Carvalho. The "Yigdal" appears in Hebrew only on the last page of the manuscript.

[2] The words and music for this hymn were composed by Carvalho and appear on page 17 of the "Holograph" at the end of the "Articles of Faith."

biographical information and notes in addition to the hymns and music. George W. Williams, the historiographer of St. Michael's Church in Charleston, created the facsimile in 1970, in honor of South Carolina's Tricentennial.[3] Williams writes that Jacob Eckhard was a German organist who came to America with Hessian troops in 1776. He arrived in Charleston in 1786, assuming the post of organist at St. John's Lutheran Church.[4] . Eckhard became a prominent and beloved figure in the community, and interestingly, played a concert to benefit the refugees who had come to Charleston to escape the slave insurrections in Santo Domingo, then a French colony.[5] This group would have included Abraham and Sarah Moïse, parents of Abraham and Penina Moïse.

In 1809, Eckhard left St. John's to become the organist as St. Michael's Episcopal Church. The pastor there believed that music was an essential element to worship, but that there should be only a few simple and plain selections in order to facilitate a sense of piety and prayerfulness. Eckhard fulfilled the need by providing over one hundred hymns for the use of the congregation.[6] It is in this collection that several texts were found that correlate to the texts of the hymns at the end of the Society's prayerbook. One could assert that the members of the Society were familiar with these hymns from attending events or worship services at the church with friends or co-workers. The Jewish citizens of Charleston most certainly mixed

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[3] George W. Williams, *Jacob Eckhard's Choirmaster's Book of 1809* (Charleston: St. Michael's Church, 1970).

[4] Ibid., "Introduction," x.

[5] Ibid., xii.

[6] Ibid., xiv.

socially with the elite of St. Michael's.

Eckhard's music is described by Williams as being:

> in the best conservative taste. Though many of [the hymns] are contemporary, they seldom are either the very florid English or the "fanatical" American tunes. They embrace the traditions of several hymnodies and disclose the caliber of Eckhard's abilities. . .and the good musical taste of the congregation; they are at the same time an accurate picture of Charleston hymnody during the early nineteenth century. They derive from four general sources: local composers, German chorales, American tune books, and English tune books. [7]

One of the local composers whose works are included in this anthology is the Rev. Henry Purcell, the rector of St. Michael's from 1782 to 1802. Since Purcell was a musician, he cared greatly about the musical pursuits of his congregation and instituted "the first vested choir of boys in this country." [8] It is conceivable that Beth Elohim's *hazzan*, Emanuel Nunes Carvalho, who served from 1811-1814, heard this boys' choir at some time during his tenure in Charleston. Could this explain why he began the practice of teaching a choir of boys to sing the closing psalm?

Three texts found in the back of the prayerbook of the Reformed Society of Israelites are found in the Eckhard collection. The texts, referenced according to their first lines, are these: "Arise my soul! With rapture rise!," "Before Jehovah's awful throne," and "The spacious firmament on high." Text correlations have been found in other hymn sources as well, including *The English Hymnal with Tunes* of 1933 which was published as a companion to the *Book of Common Prayer*; *The Southern Harmony and Musical Companion* which appeared in 1854 to provide simple, indigenous tunes for the informal worship gatherings in

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

the frontier lands of Kentucky and Tennessee; and *American Hymns Old and New*, an anthology compiled in 1980 which includes representative hymns from the seventeenth through twentieth century as used not only by various Christian traditions, but the Reform Jewish tradition as well. In that collection there appears a hymn written in 1820 by Samuel Gilman, the Unitarian minister who was a great influence upon the Society. Entitled "O God, Accept the Sacred Hour," the words would have been unsuitable for the Society's use because of the references to "the precepts of thy Son." [9] It would seem likely that Gilman authored additional hymns, but as of this writing they have not been located.

The source as of this writing in which the most text correlations have been found is *The Presbyterian Hymnal* of 1874. This collection is very well organized by tune with the customary texts for each tune included underneath. Six of the twenty-eight texts listed by the Society appear in this hymnal. Included are "Before Jehovah's awful throne," "The spacious firmament on high," "There is a land of pure delight," "From all that dwell below the skies," "Father! Whate'er of earthly bliss," "My opening eyes with rapture see," and "Now from the altar of our hearts."

The elements that all of the above hymns have in common are their singability and their decorous style. The inclusion of these hymns into the worship of the Reform Society of Israelites facilitated the kind of worship experience for which this group was searching by satisfying these key objectives: to worship in an atmosphere of decorum; to make possible the comprehension, and thus appreciation, of the prayers by incorporating the vernacular; and to

[9] Albert Christ-Janer, Charles W. Hughes, Carleton Sprague Smith, eds., *American Hymns Old and New* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 588.

reinforce the ideology of the group through the poetic texts. The predominant themes that permeate these hymns are God's sovereignty, God as protector and shepherd, God's mercy, the importance of faith, and eternal reward.

Even though tunes for these texts have been located, one cannot state for a fact that these musical settings were indeed those adopted by the Reformed Society of Israelites. One can definitely assert, however, that the musical settings were heard in the churches of Charleston during the opening decades of the nineteenth century. This experience of singing hymns must have greatly touched the religious side of Penina Moïse, for it is shortly following her involvement with the Society that she began to compose her own hymns.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE IMPACT OF THE ORGAN

It has been discussed earlier that the installation of the organ rent the fabric of the congregation so terribly that decades would pass before the rift would begin to repair. This portion of our study will take a look at the role of the organ once the congregation was unified following the Civil War. It is during this period that the organ is frequently discussed in the minutes of the congregation. The minutes reveal quite an interesting picture of the congregation's musical life after the arrival of instrumental accompaniment.

A discussion about the changes that the organ and the official introduction of English brought into the worship of Beth Elohim would not be complete without an account of the poetess Penina Moïse whose body of hymns was instrumental during this period.

Penina Moïse, the sixth child of Abraham and Sarah Moïse, was born in Charleston on April 23, 1797. Her parents had fled to Charleston from the Caribbean[1] to escape a slave uprising, leaving most of their wealth behind. In 1809, when Penina was only twelve, her father passed away, forcing her to leave school to help support the family and care for her

[1] The sources about the former home of the Moïse family are conflicting. Some indicate Saint Eustasius and others indicate Santo Domingo or Saint Domingue. Ethnomusicologist and expert on the St. Thomas community Judah Cohen suggests that perhaps the family moved from Saint Eustasius to Saint Domingue, then to Charleston.

mother who was frequently ill. [2] She toiled to make needle crafts during the day and read voraciously in the evenings.[3]

A great lover of literature and poetry, she drew inspiration from the likes of William Gilmore Simms and Hugh S. Legare, editors of *The Southern Review*; Samuel Gilman, Unitarian minister; J. N. Cardozo, editor and later owner of *The Southern Patriot*, and Isaac Harby, founder of the Reformed Society of Israelites and close friend of her younger brother, Abraham Moïse.[4] Miss Moïse developed an early affinity for writing. Rather than thwart her efforts because of her gender, her mother and siblings fostered her talent. Many men of the time espoused the view that women were "the guardian and ornament of the social compact" or that women were "delicate...mild...and beneficent in their dispositions," incomparable to the male who was woman's "superior in knowledge and the reasoning faculties."[5] In Charleston, however, if one was a single woman, as in England, one could take charge of her own affairs.[6]

Penina Moïse was one such woman. She remained single for her entire life, though it is unknown if she did so by choice. One family story affirms that Penina never married

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[2] Breibart, "Penina Moïse, Southern Jewish Poetess," in Samuel Proctor and Louis Schmier, eds., with Malcolm Stern, *The Jews of the South: Selected Essays from the Southern Jewish Historical Society* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1984) , 33.

[3] Harold Moïse, 61.

[4] Ibid.; Reznikoff, 79, 80, 82.

[5] Nathaniel Levin, "Address Delivered Before the Society for the Instruction of Jewish Youth," 162-164, in Hagy, 218-219.

[6] Hagy, 219.

because she was vehemently opposed to intermarriage and would rather remain single than to marry a non-Jew. [7] Extremely devoted to Judaism, she expressed her faith and values through numerous poems and hymns.

Miss Moïse published many of her works, the first publication a poem entitled "France After the Banishment of Napoleon" which appeared in *The Southern Patriot* in 1819. Other publications began to follow, and her works of poetry and fiction soon became known up and down the East coast and across the Southeast as far west as New Orleans.[8]

In 1833, Miss Moïse published a book of poetry entitled *Fancy's Sketch Book.* This work contained verse of both Jewish and secular content and was hailed as a success by critics. The book is unusual on two fronts, one being that *Fancy's Sketch Book* is thought to be the first book of poetry by a Jewish American woman, if not an American Jew, and two being that Penina used her real name. Most women writers of the Antebellum period feared doing this, and thus used a pseudonym, because of the prevailing attitude which considered "ink-stained women. . .detestable."[9] Much of the writings of Miss Moïse were typical of a female writer of the period, as she often wrote of domestic issues and of the occupations that consumed the time of most of her contemporaries: teaching, homemaking, nursing, etc.[10]

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[7] Reznikoff, 84.

[8] Breibart, "Penina Moïse," 34.

[9] Jay B. Hubbell, *The South in American Literature* (Durham: 1954), 605, in Breibart, "Penina Moïse," 35. Harold Moïse notes that Penina usually signed her contributions to the newspaper with the initials reversed---"M.P."

[10] Breibart, "Penina Moïse," 36.

Where she differed from most of her female counterparts was in the copious nature of her pen. She contributed to the Charleston *Courier* week after week, often multiple times during the same week, creating "long poems on almost every conceivable subject to the columns of a single paper." [11] Miss Moïse also responded in verse to the political issues of the times, particularly when events affected the Jewish people, penning such works as "The Rejection of the Jew Bill in the House of Lords" (1833), "The Jews of Damascus" (1840), and "To Sir Moses Montefiore" [12] With pen and ink, she spoke out against the official apathy in regards to the Italian Jewish boy who was kidnapped then baptized a Catholic as well as lamented the persecution of the Greeks at the hands of "the Turkish serpent" and the plight of the Irish as they suffered through famine.[13] Penina Moïse was loved and respected for her exemplary Jewish values, her selfless caring for others, her quick wit, and her joyful sense of humor, which emanated from her works and her dealings with others.[14] She put down her pen for two years in order to care for her elderly mother who had become paralyzed and also nursed her youngest brother Isaac who was susceptible to severe asthma attacks.[15] When the yellow fever epidemic struck Charleston in 1854, Penina toiled numerous hours helping the victims

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[11] Elzas, 181.

[12] Ibid., 182.

[13] Bertram W. Korn, The *American Reaction to the Mortara Case, 1858-1859* (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1957) ; Penina Moïse, *Fancy's Sketch Book* (1833) , 5 ; Charleston Section, Council of Jewish Women, eds., *Secular and Religious Works of Penina Moïse* (Charleston: Nicholas G. Duffy, 1911) , 188-189.

[14] Harold Moïse, 62- 67.

[15] Ibid., 63.

and passing the hours with her poems and stories.[16]

Miss Moïse was quite religiously observant and actively involved with Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim. When the 1794 structure was destroyed by fire, she wrote a poem of prophetic timbre called "A Poetic Homily on the Late Calamity," published in the Charleston *Courier* on the tenth of May 1838:

> Denounce their deities of wood and stone,
> False gods in fabric made known,
> Tell them that, when by venal impulse stirred,
> Gold is from charity to pomp transferred,
> That precious vessel is no less profaned
> Then temple cups at tyrant's orgies drained.[17]

The imposing new synagogue structure erected in 1840 inspired another poem, which was published in the *Courier* on August 28, 1840.

> Behold, O Mighty Architect,
> What love for Thee has wrought,
> This Fane arising from the wrecked,
> Beauty from ashes brought.
>
> How shrink the noblest works of man,
> And all his boasted powers,
> Before creation's glorious plan
> From satellite to flowers.[18]

Miss Moïse was also devoted to Charleston's Jewish youth and served as the second superintendent for the Sunday school at Beth Elohim, succeeding Sally Lopez, its founder.

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[16] "Foreword" to *Secular and Religious Works*, 11.

[17] Breibart, 38.

[18] Ibid.

She composed "hymns, recitations, and poems for its use" and developed lessons from plans created by Rebecca Gratz, who founded the first Sunday School for America's Jewish children in Philadelphia.[19]

The poems of Penina Moïse, though frequently of a secular nature and about secular topics, have a tone and imagery to them that recalls biblical language and structure. She often incorporates prophetic undertones and timbre reminiscent of the Psalms. Her writings about Israel (then Palestine) reflect such biblical echoes:

> When choral acclamation from the chosen of the Lord
> Shall announce that to thy borders captive Judah is restored:
> And Messiah, in the greatest of the Tabernacles, holds
> Harvest holidays to celebrate the ingathering of souls.[20]

Penina Moïse was a woman and a Jew, but she was also a Southerner. Her writing was reflected through the lens of Southern sensitivities and values. In the years leading up to the Civil War, she wrote as a patriotic South Carolinian. Her family advocated for states' rights, but Penina did not consider herself an ardent secessionist. She wrote poems in honor of famous South Carolinians, yet hoped urgently for peace to come to an embittered nation. This poem appeared in the Charleston *Courier* on April 30, 1850, to mark the death of John C. Calhoun, which had occurred soon after the struggles over the Missouri Compromise:

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[19] H. Moïse, 63.

[20] Breibart, "Penina Moïse," 38.

Oh, as ye group together around his grave,
Pray to the God who Freedom's blessings gave
Now and forever to remove each bar
That discord places between star and star. [21]

When South Carolina seceded from the Union in 1860, the feelings that the poetess held for her home prompted her to write the verse "Cockades of Blue," one verse lauding:

Hurrah for the Palmetto state!
Whose patriots the "Minutes" await
That shall summon their band
To engage hand to hand
Any foe that dare enter its gate.[22]

As the Civil War broke out, Miss Moïse penned the poem "Dialogue Between Peace and War" which was published in the *Courier* in June of 1861. The poet is convinced that peace will ultimately triumph:

I cannot, I will not, resign the sweet hope
That soon from each hand every weapon will drop
Which by your sanguine counsel compatriots wield
Who in harmony once gathered fruits from my field.[23]

At the outbreak of the war, Penina was living with her widowed sister Rachel and niece Jacqueline, who became a source of comfort for her during the waning years of her life. The war forced them to flee inland to Sumter, South Carolina, a town about one hundred miles from Charleston near Columbia, the state's capital. (Many of the contemporary members of the Moïse family from South Carolina, Jewish and non-Jewish, still call Sumter

[21] Breibart, "Penina Moïse," 37.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

home.) Though her sight was beginning to fail her, Miss Moïse and Rachel opened a little school to earn their living.[24] After the War, the three returned to Charleston and reopened their school in their former residence, which according to Harold Moïse, was "a little shack" that had been purchased in 1838 by Abraham Moïse as a home for his sister.[25] The school thrived, attracting many students, because of Miss Moïse's widespread literary reputation.[26] Penina lost Rachel in 1872, a huge emotional blow.[27] Though totally blind, and frequently in pain because of neuralgia and plagued by insomnia, Penina continued to teach and write, though forced to keep the words stored:

> in her photographic memory until Jacqueline could find the opportunity to transcribe them sometimes an entire week after they were conceived and revised, the poet repeating line after line as readily as if she were reading them aloud.[28]

Miss Moïse was well cared for in her last years. Young girls, many of whom had studied at the school, would come and read to her and listen to her stories. Many would come to have the beloved poetess and teacher bless their upcoming marriages as well as their babies. There were so many babies, in fact, that Penina wrote the following:

> My hand on many a fair young head
> In benediction has been laid
> * * *

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[24]H. Moise, 65.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Breibart, "Penina Moïse," 43.

[27] Elzas, 183.

[28] H. Moise, 65.

God Bless you, by affection spoken
And sanctified by solemn truth,
May prove the choicest birthday token
Age can bestow on fervid youth.[29]

Miss Moïse gives homage to all who had assisted her by coming to her home to lead services on Yom Kippur, for example, or by reading aloud to her, in her last poem entitled "A Farewell Message to all Friends."

Praise to my young associates who delight
To be, as 'twere, to me a second sight,
Though which alone I may again behold
Flowers and gems of intellectual mold.[30]

Penina Moise died on September 13, 1880, at the age of eighty-three. As she lay racked by pain, she is said to have spoken these last words: "Lay no flowers on my grave. They are for those who lived in the sun, and I have always lived in the shadow." She was laid to rest in the Coming Street Cemetery, and as per her request, was buried in a plain casket. A simple stone marks her grave that cites only her name and the dates of her birth and death.

Sadly, most of the poetic works of Penina Moïse have been either lost or forgotten. Her most famous works are those in which the poet revealed her spiritual nature. This unique facet of Penina's nature continues to live on in the abundant repertoire of hymns that she composed, which were used in worship at Beth Elohim. Following the installation of the

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[29] Ibid., 67.

[30] Ibid.

organ and the introduction of English into the services, the need was created for works in English for the congregation to recite and sing. Penina Moise responded to that need. Apparently other congregations enjoyed the poet's creations as well, though she was rarely recognized for her contributions.[31] Many of the hymns have been included in various hymnals, the first of which was published by the congregation in 1842.[32] This effort by the members of Beth Elohim to publish the hymns has been described by the "Committee on Synagog[ue] Music" as "the first attempt in the United States . . .of which Miss Penina Moïse was the author of all the hymns except a few that had been written at her request by some of her friends."[33] Other editions were published in 1856, 1866, and 1875. The first hymnal to represent the American Reform movement was compiled by the Conference and Society of American Cantors in 1897 and contained hymns from "the Moïse...collection" as well as from other sources. [34] The 1946 volume contains eleven of Penina's hymns. A variety of composers have set many of Moïse's hymns to music over the years, from Alois Kaiser who composed many settings for the *Union Hymnal* of 1897, to Simon Sargon, a contemporary composer, which further demonstrates the timeless value of her contribution to Jewish liturgy.

As mentioned above, the hymns of Penina Moïse played an essential role in the worship of Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim following the introduction of the organ. How were

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[31] *Secular and Religious Works, II-III.*

[32] K.K.Beth Elohim, "Title Page," *Hymns for the Use of Hebrew Congregations* (Charleston: William Perry, 1875).

[33]Central Conference of American Rabbis, "Preface," *Union Hymnal* (Cincinnati: CCAR, 1946), v.

[34] Ibid.

these hymns incorporated into the service, though? What was the reaction towards the music, especially by the members of Shearith Israel who were now part of Beth Elohim? Earlier, the basic compromise between the Traditionalists and the Reformers was briefly described. A more detailed account is in order for the purpose of the exploration of the music. The minutes from the September 2, 1866, meeting of the Board of Trustees record the proceedings for worship in great detail. From these writings, an order of proceedings for the main portion of the Shabbat morning worship may be created.

Shabbat Morning Worship in 1866

- The congregation used prayerbooks created by Isaac Leeser and followed the Sephardic Minhag.
- The service was to begin at 9:00 a.m. with the *Nishmat*.
- Prayers would be read until the "*Scharet Amidah*."
- The "law" was "taken out," and the "first and last two verses of *Roumamu* [were] to be chanted while the minister ascends the reading desk."
- "The *Parasah* to be read and seven persons called thereto."
- "No offerings to be allowed."
- The minister would read prayers for the government and for the congregation in English.
- "*Asheer*" (Ashrei) would be recited followed by "the first and last verses of "*Barech Adonai*."
- The Torah was replaced in the Ark with "the Choir and Congregation chaunting *Mismore le David* in Hebrew."
- An intermission of five minutes would follow the Torah reading at approximately 10:30 a.m. to give those who did not wish to remain the opportunity to leave and those who wished to attend only the second half to enter.

- After the intermission, the "additional service" would begin with "an English hymn, selected from the collection of hymns now in use by the congregation Beth Elohim."
- The "*Aptorah*" (Haftarah) or some other appropriate passage from the Prophets would be read by the minister in English.
- The minister then read the "*Musaph*" service in Hebrew until the "*Kol Israel*" which was omitted.
- The service would continue with the "*Ane Kalohenu,*" a sermon in English, and a prayer.
- The minister reads the "Gnalaynu" in English and Hebrew.
- "Adone Gnolam" is sung in English one week and in Hebrew the next "as stipulated."

Of special interest is the reference to the "collection of hymns now in use by the congregation Beth Elohim." The minutes are obviously alluding to a choir book dating to 1866, which has been preserved in the congregation's archives. The word "now" implies that this collection was new at the time, and the date of 1866, which is inscribed on the front of the book, reinforces this notion.

This collection is comprised of hymns written entirely in English and predominantly composed by Penina Moïse. Charles DaCosta, the first organist of the congregation, composed many of the settings included. Other settings were composed by the congregation's second organist, H.W. Greatorex. Most of the remaining selections are cited as being derived from Hamburg, with a few being credited to "Sellner" and "A.I.H." The numbered hymns in the choir book correspond directly to the hymn numbers in the hymnal that Beth Elohim published, which contained the English texts only.

This choir book deserves further examination. The book itself is quite attractive, with

a marbled cover of dark red, black, and tan. There is an ornately bordered label in the center upon which has been handwritten "Alto 1866" in calligraphy. At the bottom of this label appears in typeface, "Sold by HIRAM HARRIS, 59 Broad St., Charleston, S.C." A thin line directly above the typeface has the signature of a Miss R. H. Levy, the apparent owner of the book. It appears that this book was purchased as a blank book that could be used for any purpose, such as a journal, record book, etc. Each page has three systems of music, each system composed of a grand staff with two treble parts and one bass part. The staves are all drawn by hand with a fine pen and ruler. Acknowledgment is given to the individual composers of each musical setting, but there is no indication of the compiler and editor of the book. It is probable that the choir directress, Laura Z. Wineman put together the book, although the hymns could have been arranged and written down by the organist at an earlier time. (The organ was not in use during this period as part of the compromise.) The hymns' musical settings incorporate elements of harmony and meter typical of the Romantic style, which dominated the nineteenth century. Many of the hymns are set in 3/4 time, indicative of the popularity of the waltz. [35] The pieces are in major keys, typical of nineteenth century hymnody, and make use of accidentals to color the phrases.

The book is generally complete, missing some pages, but enough pages are left to provide one with much information about the music. There are two additions to the book, however, that appear to have been placed in between the pages later. One addition is another setting to a hymn by Penina Moïse entitled "God Supreme! to Thee I pray," a text that already appears in the choir book as "No. 68." The extra setting, which includes all verses, is

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[35] Levine, 177.

written by hand on what appears to be pre-made manuscript paper. The music consists of eight measures placed on two staves with a treble clef, and one unison part is all that is given. The handwriting is not the same calligraphic-style writing of the principal work, nor is indication of authorship provided. (No composer is listed for the original setting, either.)

Another addition was found placed in the back of the choir book. This work varies greatly from the preceding hymns in several ways. The piece, handwritten is florid script, represents the only Hebrew in the entire book. The title is listed as "*Kidusch*" written in German-style transliteration. *Kidusch*, or *Kiddush*, is the prayer of sanctification of the Sabbath, Festivals, or the New Year, recited over wine. The Hebrew script next to the title indicates that the music is for *Rosh Ha-Shanah*, the Jewish new year. A composer's name is given in the upper right corner, but the script is so ornate that it is unintelligible. Part of the surname, "von-," can be made out, indicating that the composer was most certainly German or Austrian. The transliteration is exactly as used in the publications of Sulzer and Lewandowski, but it is very difficult to decipher.

This insertion is such an intriguing piece for our musical puzzle. Where did this piece originate? Did Laura Wineman obtain it from one of the Traditionalist members of the reunited synagogue? Did it come from the German-Polish synagogue, Berith Shalome? Was one of the choir members from Germany? When was it used and by whom? It is hard to say for sure. Although it is difficult to discern the origin of this "*Kidusch*," it can be seen that the work is an amazing example of traditional Ashkenazi *hazzanut*, the hazzan's elaborate patterns of chanting prayer. The composer indicates that the piece is written for a tenor, and with this work's high range and melismatic passages, the tenor must be an accomplished one.

This piece is true to the traditional motifs for the High Holy Days in the Ashkenazi tradition, but the composer adds interesting unexpected moves to the motifs that give the piece a sense of drama and anticipation.

There are other findings in this choir book that pique one's interest. For example, there are pencil markings on many of the pages, "P M" in cursive, to indicate the hymns that were written by Penina Moïse. In the same handwriting frequently appear notes on the hymns, such as "good and familiar," or "fine and familiar," indicating that perhaps a later choir director explored the book in hopes of using the hymns. Perhaps he or she was asked by the choir or by the Board to do so. Perhaps the marks were made to indicate the hymns that the National Council of Jewish Women wanted for their publication of Penina's works. Possibly someone was looking for hymns to use in a concert. When these marks were placed, again we do not know.

There are other intriguing marks that have been made on one of the hymns in small, hard to decipher handwriting. The words do not appear to be English at all, but German. Written sometimes along the bottom of the bass line and sometimes across the top of the soprano line, the words do not reveal if they are Germanic transliterations of Hebrew or if they are a German translation of the English words, though they look to be the latter. Interestingly, upon close examination with a magnifying glass of the handwriting of the *Kidusch*, the "P M" notations, and the German-looking words, one could strongly contend that the same individual made these additions. There are striking resemblances in the way this individual(s) formed the cursive letters. The peaks of the lower case letters "m," "n," and "h" are quite pointed, and there are large spaces in between the peaks. The first peak in the "m"

and "n" are always taller than the subsequent peaks. The lower case "f" as it appears in "*hagafen*," "fine and familiar," and in the German words is quite unusual and is formed with strong pointed strokes rather than loops. The introductory stroke to form the capital "B" in "*Boruch*" is the same as that in the capital "P" of the "P M" markings. There is a u-shaped symbol, such as the notation for a short vowel sound in English, above the "u" in *Kidusch* and above all subsequent letters "u" in that piece, as well as above "u" in the German-looking words. All of the words and markings slant towards the right, indicating a left-handed writer. If these similarities are indeed accurate, then the question becomes even more pressing. Just who was this individual? When was he (or she) employed at Beth Elohim? Did this person emerge before the official switch to *Minhag Ashkenaz* or after? Again, it is difficult to find out.

We do know that once Shearith Israel and Beth Elohim reunited, worship was a continuous source of conflict. The minutes of Beth Elohim reflect difficulties between the Board of Trustees and Mrs. Wineman in regards to music during services. In the minutes of November 15, 1866, the Board resolved to "return thanks to the ladies and gentlemen composing the choir and to Mrs. Wineman, its efficient and zealous leader," thanking her for her willingness to sing "*Adone Ngolam*" and "*Yigdal*" to "the old tunes." The Board asked for the "same considerate spirit " in regards to "*Mizmor le David*" and "*Ane Kay lo haynu.*" The Board had apparently requested that the choir sing "the old tunes" during services.

In the minutes of January 13, 1867, a letter is recorded from Mrs. Wineman in which she acknowledged the receipt of a resolution made by the Board to have all of the Hebrew prayers sung to "the old tunes." Mrs. Wineman stated that she had tried to do as the Board

wished her to do but did not realize that complying would mean limiting herself to:

. . . what may be called 'old tunes' to some portion of the congregation to the entire exclusion of other tunes equally as old and cherished by the other portion . . . I would hardly know how old tunes could be strictly defined since what might be old to many would be new to others and vice versa. [36]

The choir directress wrote that she was attempting to meet the needs of all congregants since there were members of the old families as well as new German members. The president, a Traditionalist, insisted upon choosing the melodies himself, but Mrs. Wineman explained to him that as the director of the choir, she would desire the authority to work with the minister to choose the music that would be sung. She advised him that she would take his recommendations into consideration and would try to alternate the tunes, though it was a struggle to make the decision between Orthodox and Reform, Sephardic and German. The Board later modified its resolution.

Once the five-year agreement between Beth Elohim and Shearith Israel had expired in 1871, Beth Elohim wrote a new constitution. The constitution called for the retention of the *Minhag Sephardi* and the continued use of the Isaac Leeser prayerbook, but also voted to reinstate the use of the organ and to increase the amount of English used in services. The minister, J.H.M. Chumaciero, who had replaced the Rev. Meyers in 1868, sat down with Laura Wineman to decide upon an acceptable mode in which to conduct services. The minutes of March 26, 1871, record their suggestions for the Sabbath morning services to be conducted in this manner:

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[36] Letters dated Dec. 31, 1866; Jan. 2, 1867; May 14, 1872; as recorded in the minutes of KKBE.

Sabbath Morning Worship in 1871

- Minister reads from "*Nishmat*" to "*Yistabach.*"
- Choir sings "*Yistabach*" to "*Amen.*"
- Minister reads *Kadish.*
- Minister and choir chant "*Yotser*" to *Hakadesh.*"
- Minister reads "*Lael*" to "*Beyriah.*"
- Choir sings from "*Kadosh*" to "*Mimekomo.*"
- Minister reads "*Lael*" to "*Batachnu.*"
- Minister and choir chant "*Nachila*" to "*Beahaba*" then "*Shemang*" to "*Emet.*"
- Minister and choir lead the "*Gnamida* Prayer as at present" (Amidah) followed by minister reading "*Kadish*".
- Choir sings "Shuo Shengarim." (S'u she'arim)
- Minister recites "*Coenecha* before the Ark."
- Choir sings "*Gadelu,*" then the "reading of the Law as customary"
- Minister and choir sing "*Ashre, Bareich Adonai* to *Asher Telech.*"
- *Yimloch* is recited once.
- Choir sings "*Mizmor Le David,*" followed by the minister's reading of the "*Aptorah* in English," a sermon, and the prayers for the government and the congregation.
- Choir sings an English hymn, then chants "*Moosaph*" with the minister, then sings "*En Kelohenu.*"
- Minister recites "*Gnalenu*" and "*Kadish*" for mourners.
- Choir sings "Adon Gnolam."
- Minister concludes with a benediction. [37]

[37] KKBE Minutes, March 26, 1871.

Plans were also made for the Sabbath preceding the New Moon, holy and fast days, "Consecration day," and the order for the *Hallel*, as well as the Festivals, the evening and morning services for the New Year, and the services for *Yom Kippur*. No changes were made for the closing service of *Yom Kippur*, and the minister wrote that "the doors of the Synagogue would remain closed until after "Gnarabit" [Arvit] or evening service." [38] He obviously did not wish for the solemnity of services to be disturbed by the departure of congregants who wished to break the fast early.

Objections were apparently raised regarding the singing of an English hymn before the reading of the *haftarah*, so Rev. Chumaciero asked the Board to make a change in the "mode of service" to reflect the singing of "English Hymn No. 121 before the sermon."[39] Unfortunately, the page of the choir book that corresponds to No. 121 is missing, but the matching text in the Beth Elohim hymnal is in the section entitled "Miscellaneous Hymns" under the subheading "Prayer." Written by Penina Moïse, the hymn exhorts the worshipper to pray at all times:

Pray when the more unveileth
  Her glories to thine eyes;
Pray when the sun-light faileth,
  And stars usurp the skies,
Far from my bosom flinging
  Each worldly thought impure,
The praise of God be singing,
  Mortal! for evermore.

Pray for the friend whose kindness
  Ne'er failed in word or deed;

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

Pray for the foe whose blindness
  Hath caused thy heart to bleed,
A blessing for thy neighbor
  Ask thou of God above;
And on thy hallowed labor
  Shall fall His smile of love.

Beside the stranger's altar,
  Or at thy proper shrine,
Let not thy accents falter
  In utt'ring truths divine,
But e'en when life is waning,
  Thy faith with zeal declare---
One God alone is reigning
  Whose worship none may share.[40]

During the March 19, 1871, meeting of the Board, "Rules of Order" were created in order to further facilitate decorum in the sanctuary. Because "every act of impropriety and disorder becomes sinful," [41] the following ordinances were put into place and later posted on the walls of the synagogue:

- If one enters during "Kedusha, Reading of the Law, or during sermon," he or she must remain at the door.
- Children under five years of age are not permitted in the synagogue.
- "All conversation is strictly prohibited."
- "Every One must endeavour to be in his place...before service commences and there remain until it is concluded."
- "Children under 5 years of age are not permitted in the synagogue."
- When prayers are being read by the minister, the congregation "must remain silent."

[40] KKBE, "Hymns," 119-120.

[41] KKBE Minutes, March 19, 1871.

The new organ was installed in 1872, but prior to its return, the Rev. Chumaciero sent a letter to the Board requesting that the "elected" organist:

> not be allowed to perform any dramatic or operatic music, nor any tunes used in other churches and by other denominations. An opportunity is offered us to obtain the necessary music especially composed for Jewish Temples and I would therefore recommend the enclosed Circular to your kind consideration.[42]

After the organ was installed, the minister found the need for further changes in the worship services to accommodate the instrument. After consulting with Laura Wineman, he addressed a letter to the Board on April 12, 1872, in which he outlined the changes to the Sabbath and Festivals services. On Friday evenings, the "*Mizmor Le David*" would now be sung by the choir in Hebrew, rather than being read in English by the minister. In regards to "Mizmor Shir LeYom Ashabat," rather than being sung by the choir, the Minister would now read this psalm. The Saturday morning service shows additional singing by the choir during the congregational responses "with the assistance of the Organ." The *Yimloch* prayer, according to the minister, was to become the responsibility of the choir, no longer that of the congregation. These adaptations were to be applied to the Festivals as well. The minister declined to make suggestions in regards to the High Holy Days since those services had yet to be conducted with the organ.

In the next part of Chumaciero's letter, the minister reports that the choir directress feels "that it is impossible for the Choir to unite in the portions of the service laid down for the Congregation, as their portions cannot be conducted with sacred music." He also expresses the desire to "have the Organ play appropriate music during silent devotion in the evening,

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[42] KKBE Minutes, n.d. Minutes are presumably from early 1872.

Sabbath and Holiday services." The minister closes in begging the Board's patience with him for not knowing the "new melodies introduced by the Directress," which "will require some time." [43] With the implementation of these changes, it seems that the responsibility for prayer and spirituality now fell mostly to the choir, the minister, and the organ.

Some time after the changes were implemented, a motion was made to "respectfully request the Organist to avoid any operatic or lengthy or symphonic [pieces] on the Organ between the singing of Hebrew or English Hymns, or melodies." The motion was unanimously adopted, sending the message that the organ was to be an enhancement to the worship services, not a primary focus.[44]

Additional musical changes and continued questions about the role of the organ and choir would come with the arrival of Rev. David Levy in 1876. In his list of initial changes presented to the Board, Levy gave Laura Wineman the "power to act" upon any suggestions of tunes to be sung, a major step. With the proposed modifications, the choir would most certainly have had to adapt its music to reflect the new texts, surely a cumbersome task. Levy suggested these changes for the Friday Shabbat service:

- *L'kha Dodi* would be condensed.
- *Adonai Malakh* (Psalm 93) would be removed.
- The word "redemption" would be substituted for "redeemer."
- All repetitions would be omitted.
- The blessing before "*Modim*" would be changed.
- One verse would be added to the *Kaddish*.

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[43] KKBE Minutes, April 12, 1872.

[44] KKBE Minutes, n.d., probably mid-1872.

- One verse of *Yigdal* would be modified.[45]

The minister proposed these changes for the Sabbath morning service:

- The *Nishmat* and *Yotzer* would be contracted.
- "*Amet*" would be contracted.
- Repetitions would be omitted.
- "*Rezeh*" would be modified.
- The order for the taking out of the Torah for Festivals would be inserted.
- The *Hallel* blessing would be changed.
- The fourth commandment would be inserted into the liturgy.
- The prayers for dew and rain and the "*hoshanoth*" would be abbreviated.[46]

Levy's proposals were initially accepted by the Board, but at the request of members, the Board asked the minister to reinstate the references to "redeemer" and the phrase "gives life to the dead." With those modifications in place, the prayerbook was then adopted for use by the congregation, and Levy was elected to serve for the next three years.[47]

During this period, thanks in part to the urging of Isaac Meyer Wise, more music began to be published for use in Reform congregations, most by the Bloch Publishing Company of Cincinnati and New York. Some of the earliest publications were produced by Alois Kaiser and S. Welsch, who compiled three volumes of music for Shabbat (1871),

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[45] KKBE Minutes, November 10, 1878.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Breibart, *250th Anniversary Booklet*, 24.

Festivals, and the High Holy Days (1877) in English, German, and Hebrew. Entitled *Zimrath Yah*, this collection exists in the archives of Beth Elohim and gathers works from numerous composers, including Sulzer, Otto Lob, Goldstein, and Naumbourg. The editors also included numerous original compositions and arrangements of their own. The Hebrew is transliterated using the Ashkenazi pronunciation, which had become prevalent in most American congregations. Various pencil markings indicate the pieces that were actually sung by the choir at Beth Elohim. Those that were performed in Hebrew have markings that change the Ashkenazi Hebrew as published, back to the Sephardic pronunciation, adding "t" to change the Ashkenazi letter "*sav*" back to "*tav*" and the "ng" to reflect the gutteral "*ayin*." These changes in pronunciation are made on music dating as late as the 1880's, demonstrating the power of the tradition of the Sephardi *minhag*. It is not known exactly when the congregation made the switch to the Ashkenazi *minhag*, but the transition most likely began with the adoption of the *Union Prayerbook* in 1895.

By the closing of the nineteenth century, Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim employed the services of a paid choir. It is not indicated when this practice was implemented, but we do know that around the turn of the century, the congregation was forced to dispense with its services because of a lack of funds for the period of one year. [48] With paid professionals, the choir was able to perform pieces of greater difficulty. The archives of Beth Elohim contain music from such composers as Sigmund Schlessinger of Alabama and Fred Kitziger, the cantor of Touro Synagogue in New Orleans. Their music reflects an elaborate choral style, modeled after the grand opera tradition and composers such as Verdi. Schlessinger, who

[48] Breibart, 250th Anniversary Booklet, 26.

began to be published around 1901, composed volumes for the Sabbath, Festivals, and High Holy Days. The congregation also sang works from Cantor Gustav Gottheil and organist A.J. Davis of Temple Emanu-El in New York City, Max Spicker and William Sparger, Edward J. Stark, and Zavel Zilberts. The congregation also adopted the *Union Hymnal* of 1897, which included many hymns of Penina Moïse.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY AND TODAY'S LEGACY

Throughout the twentieth century, the congregation maintained its tradition of grand choral music accompanied by the huge pipe organ. By 1914, the rebuilt organ had to be replaced. The new one, purchased with voluntary donations from members, was built by the Austin Company using the same Gothic-style cabinet that was first installed in 1872 and is still in use today. A grand ceremony took place during Sabbath evening services on November 6, 1914 to mark the organ's dedication and to pay tribute to the introduction of instrumental music in 1841.[1] Interestingly, the program was composed of secular music, save the last two pieces, "Hear Ye Israel" by Mendelssohn and an unidentified "*Adon Olom*," which was sung by the choir. Other pieces to highlight the organ included "Toccato et Fuga" by Bach, Lizst's "Andantino," and "Organ Toccato" by Alphonse Mailly, which were played on the organ by "Miss Hyams."

The congregation marked the 125th anniversary of the organ's installation in 1966 with an arts festival of music, drama, art, and dance, featuring a performance of the *Charleston Cantata* commissioned by the congregation.[2] The festival was so successful that it was

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[1] A copy of the organ concert program may be found in the KKBE archives.

[2] Breibart, "Exhibit on Music of Beth Elohim," brochure prepared for music exhibit of March 7-9, 1980.

repeated for the next two years.[3]

Another important part of the music of the twentieth century is Beth Elohim's involvement in "Spoleto, USA," the arts festival created by Gian Carlo Menotti in 1977 modeled after a similar festival in Spoleto, Italy. The Spoleto Festival, which takes place over seventeen days in late spring, draws thousands of tourists from all over the world. The festival provides a backdrop for the whole gamut of the performing and visual arts. The entire city is transformed into a haven of beauty as artists with their paintings and sculptures line the sidewalks, chamber groups perform in the parks, and school children delight in the puppet shows and storytelling. The festival endeavors to showcase innovative art forms as well as the cultures of various ethnic groups. The churches and synagogues serve as venues for various concerts and exhibits, and Beth Elohim sponsors events each year. Each year, the festival joins forces with the Jewish Studies program at the College of Charleston to highlight aspects of Jewish culture. Concerts have been performed by a plethora of Jewish artists in a vast minority of genres. Israeli jazz musicians, Klezmer groups, cantors, instrumentalists, and vocal ensembles have all played a part in this endeavor. The 2001 Spoleto Festival featured a concert on world Jewish music. One of the most memorable of events of the Festival took place in1980 when Beth Elohim served as the venue for a performance of Ernest Bloch's *Avodath ha-Kodesh*, the *Sacred Service*. The performance featured the Charleston Symphony

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[3]Breibart, *250th Anniversary Booklet*, 34.

Orchestra and Choir, whose talented members included Cantor Robert Abelson.

In 1980 the congregation sponsored other events recognizing its music history. An exhibit on Beth Elohim's music took place in March of that year, and in October the congregation honored its poet laureate, Penina Moïse, with a special Sabbath evening service to observe the 100th anniversary of her death. The service, which included selections of Moïse's poetry and hymns, was put together by Solomon Breibart and led by Rabbi Rosenthal and Anita Moïse Rosenberg. Other descendants of the Moïse family participated in the service as well.[4]

Today, as in so many other periods of Beth Elohim's history, the music and mode of worship are again in flux. The congregation is again made up of two factions, Traditionalists and Reformers. These words have grown to mean something entirely different from 160 years ago. The Traditionalists are those members mostly descended from the old Charleston families who want to maintain the Classical Reform tradition with its regal decorum, grand organ music, liturgy from the *Union Prayerbook*, and services in English. The Reformers tend to be new to the congregation, though there are several members of the old families who would like to depart from the Classical mode of worship. The Reformers, like their predecessors of 1824, want to revitalize spiritual life. They want to see changes made in the worship by adding more Hebrew and chanting, employing alternative instrumentation, and enlisting the services of a cantor. As always, the music is a divisive issue. The rabbi has the

[4] Breibart, "Commemorative Service, Penina Moïse, 1797-1880," created for Sabbath evening service, October 17, 1980.

task of trying to please all parties. The Reformers have control of the Board at present and have insisted upon various changes, such as the use of a guitar at times, the chanting of the *Avot v'Imahot*, the recitation of the *Aleinu* in Hebrew, and an increased presence of a volunteer choir on the Sabbath and High Holy Days. One cannot say what the twenty-first century will bring. One can say, however, that Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim will always honor its birthright as the cradle of Reform Judaism, while continuing to wrestle with its challenges.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

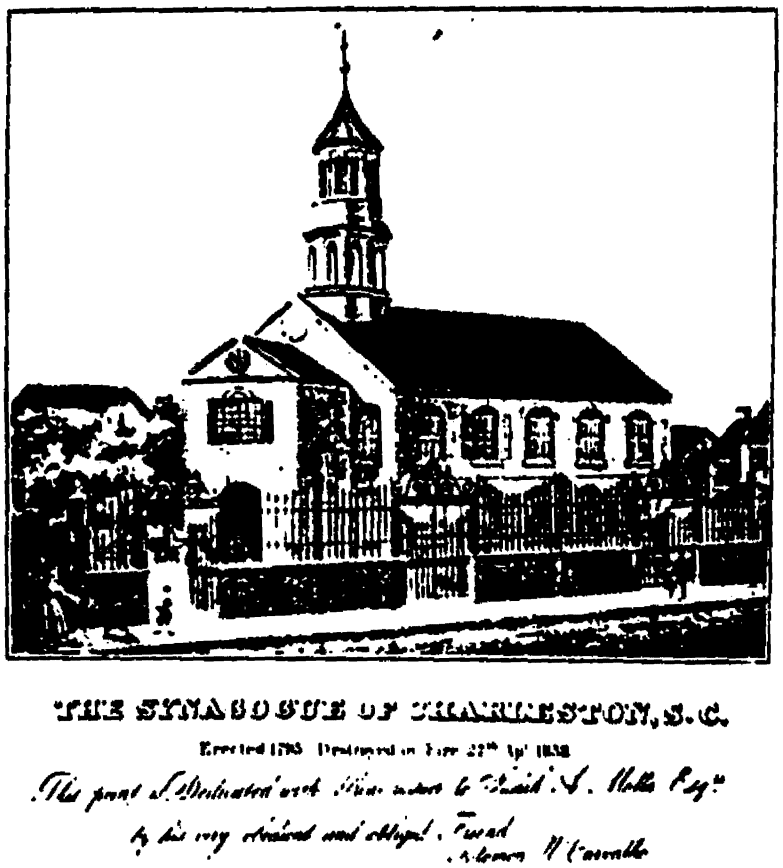
CONCLUSION

To return to an earlier statement, yes, there are Jews in the South, and they carry with them a powerful legacy of beginnings---beginnings that started as an idea, then germinated into a hop, then flowered into reality. Today we still enjoy the fruit that grew and ripened in spite of its environment. The American Reform movement began in Charleston as tiny seeds, sown by a group of revolutionaries in 1824 and nurtured by the words of Penina Moïse. Its heritage of welcome and inclusiveness as fostered by Rabbi Alexander Schindler, z"l, is rooted in the words of the liturgy of the Reformed Society of Israelites. The movement's ideal that prayer be accessible and appreciated by all was first conceived in the *Memorial* penned by Abraham Moïse nearly two centuries ago. The introduction of the organ into worship birthed the grand Classical Reform music tradition. One could argue that it was Isaac Meyer Wise's visit to Charleston that was the impetus for what would become his life's work as the voice of liberal Judaism. We cannot know what may have come about had Wise assumed the pulpit in Charleston. Would the oldest campus of Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion have been built down South? We know the price of economic change and war. What if trade routes had not shifted and Charleston had continued to be the mecca of economic boom? Would the Jews have remained? Again, we will never grasp what might have been, but we do realize now that the passion of these Jews for their faith helped to give Charleston the name for which she is so well known---the Holy City.

APPENDIX ONE

ILLUSTRATIONS

(The following illustrations are for educational purposes only and are not to be duplicated.)

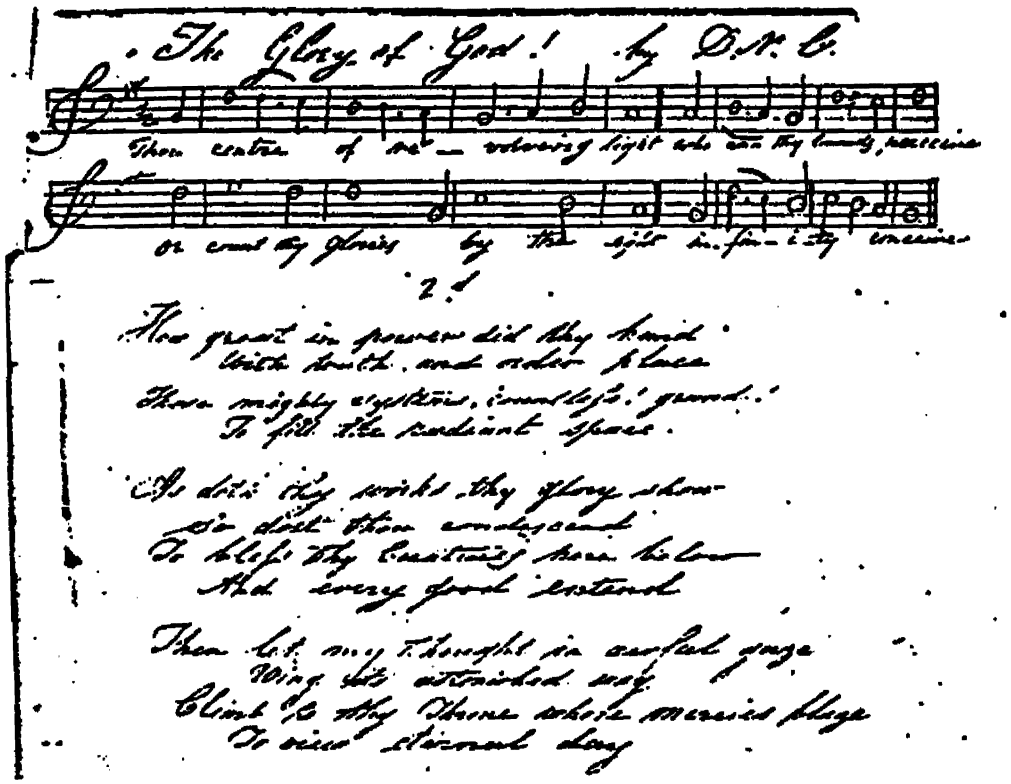


1-a. Exterior of original Beth Elohim. Destroyed by fire in 1838. Painting done by Solomon N. Carvalho. (Copy of photograph from collection of Beth Elohim.)

1-b. Interior of 1794 synagogue. Painting by Solomon N. Carvalho. (Copy of photograph from collection of Beth Elohim.)

1-c. Coming Street Cemetery. (Copy of photograph in collection of Beth Elohim.)

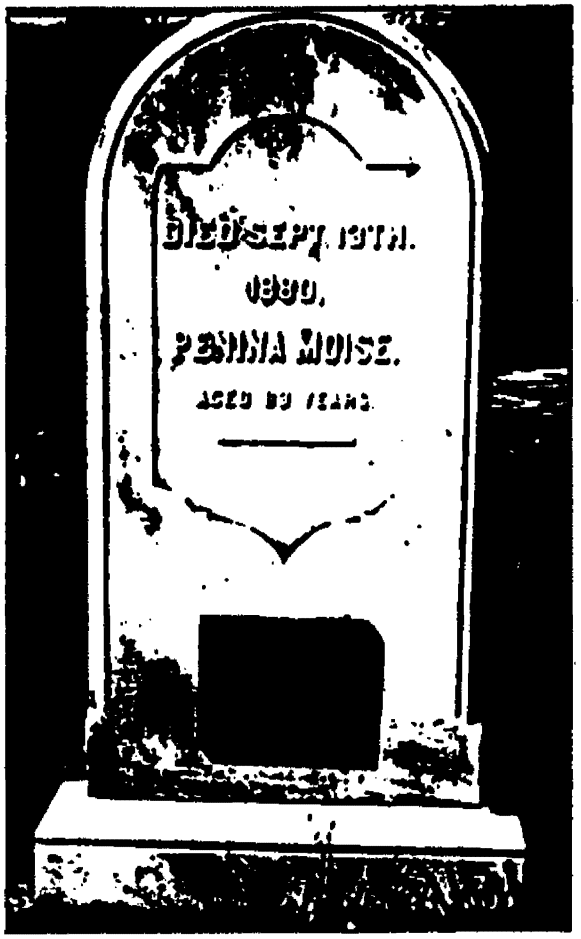
1-d. Silhouette of Isaac Harby, founder of the Reformed Society of Israelites. (Copy of original from the collection of L.C. Moïse, Sumter, South Carolina).



1-e. Hymn "The Glory of God," written by David N. Carvalho, one of the founders of the Reformed Society of Israelites. From the "Carvalho Holograph." (Courtesy of the American Jewish Archives.)

1-f. Portrait of Abraham Moïse, one of the founders of the Reformed Society (
(Courtesy of the American Jewish Archives.)

1-g. Portrait of poetess and hymnist Penina Moïse. (Courtesy of the American Jew Archives.)



1-h. Gravestone of Penina Moïse in the Coming Street Cemetery. (Copy of photograph in collection of Beth Elohim.)

FANCY'S SKETCH BOOK.

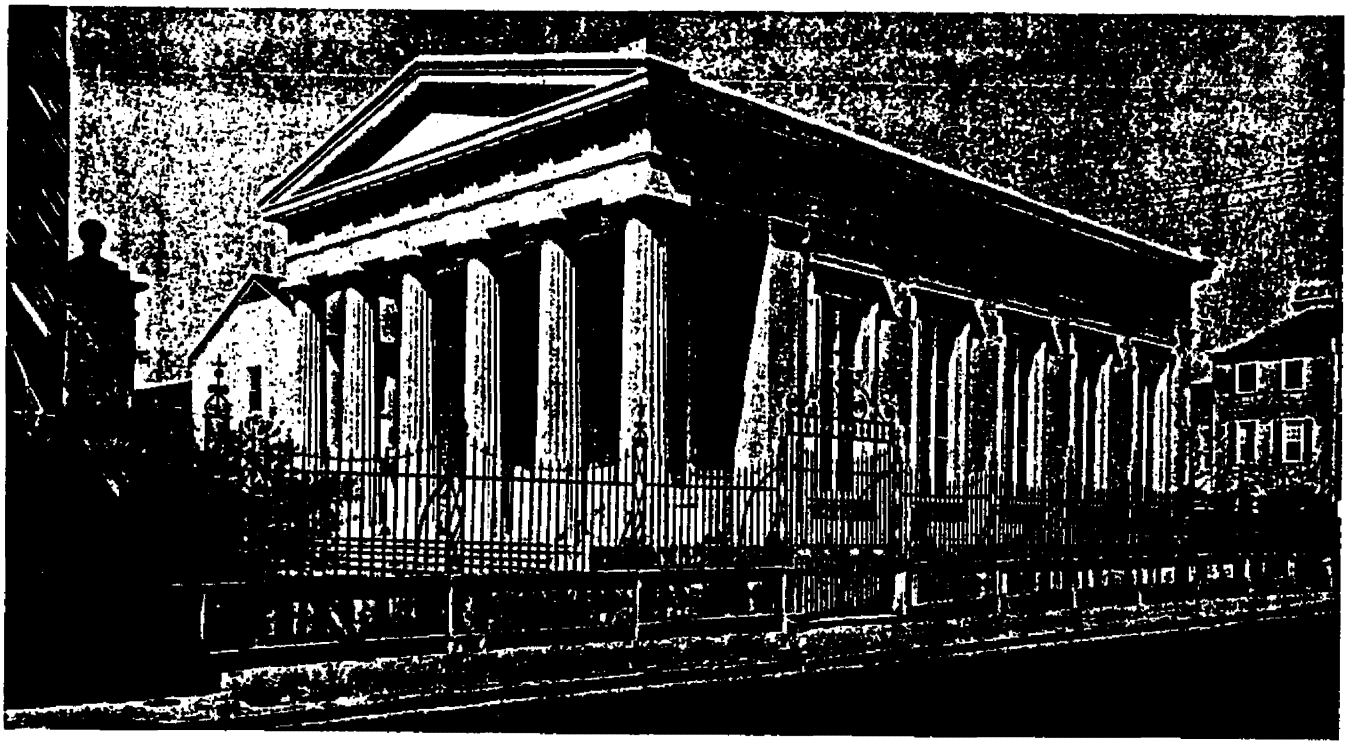
BY

MISS PENINA MOISE.

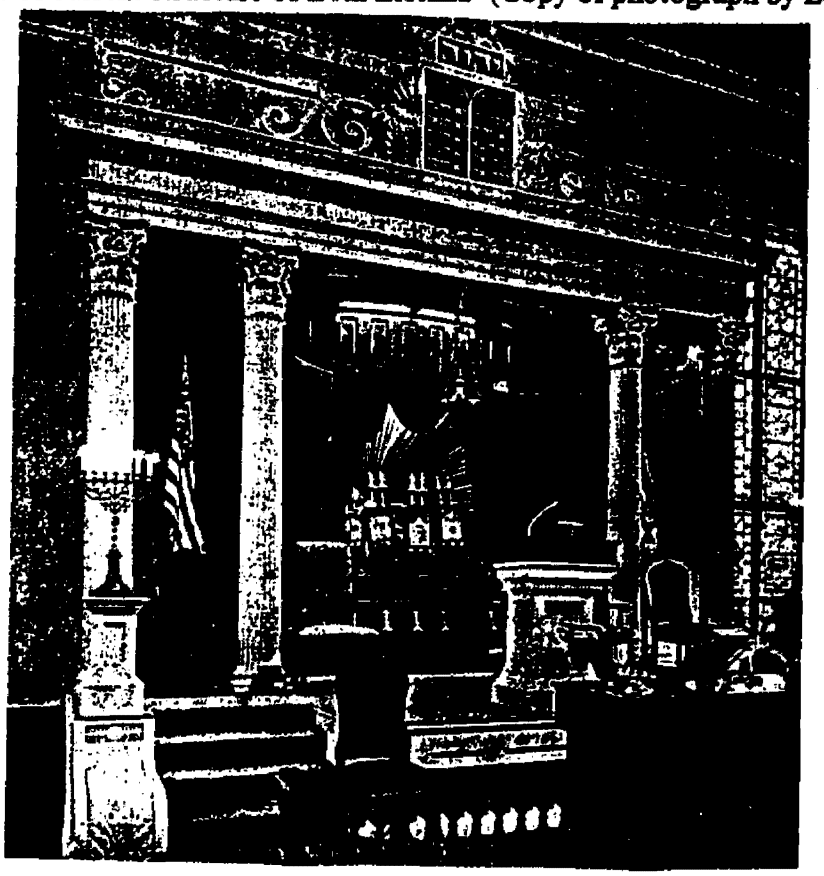
" 'Tis but to fill
A certain portion of uncertain paper:
Some like it to climbing up a hill,
Whose summit, like all hills, is lost in vapour."
BYRON.

Charleston, S. C.
PUBLISHED AND PRINTED BY J. S. BURGES.
1833.

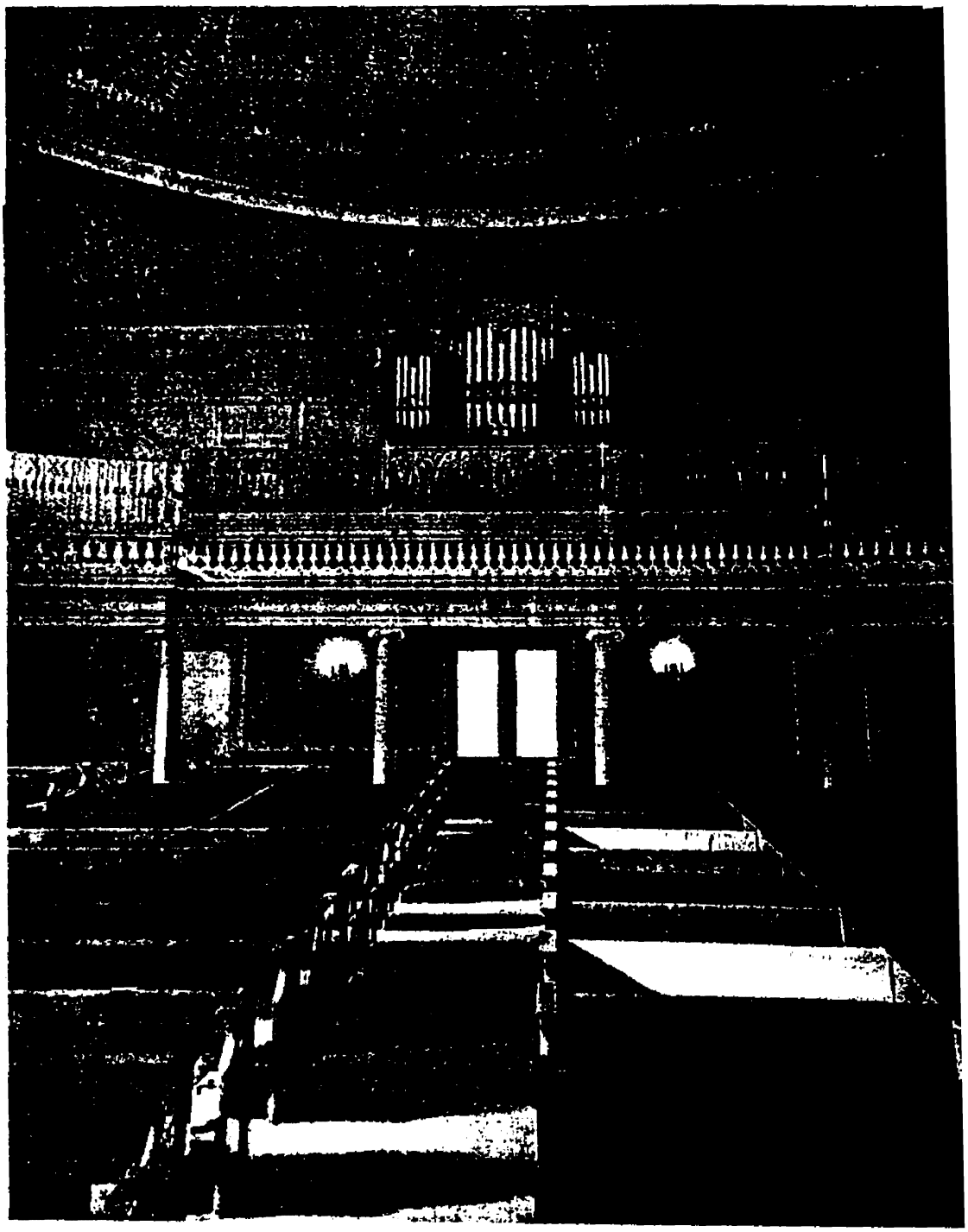
1-i. Copy of cover to *Fancy's Sketch Book*, 1833, by Penina Moïse. (Courtesy of the American Jewish Archives.)



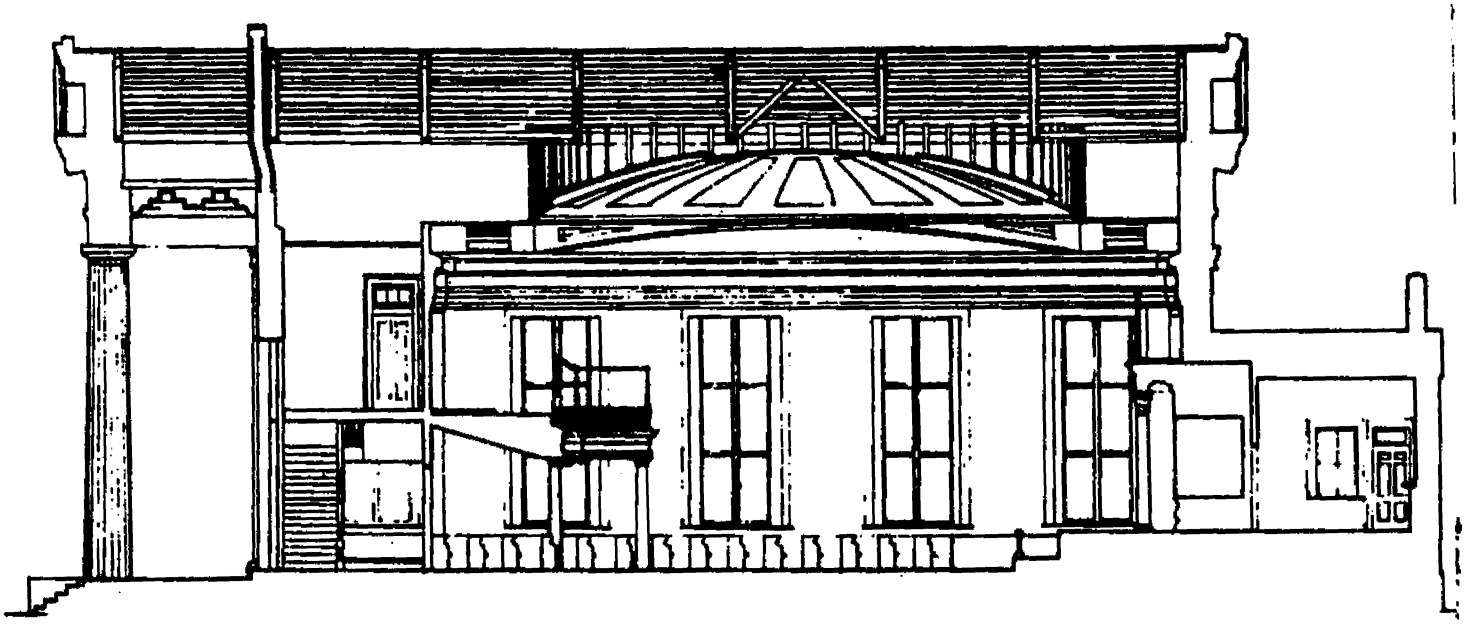
1-j. Exterior of current structure of Beth Elohim. (Copy of photograph by Louis J. Schwartz.)



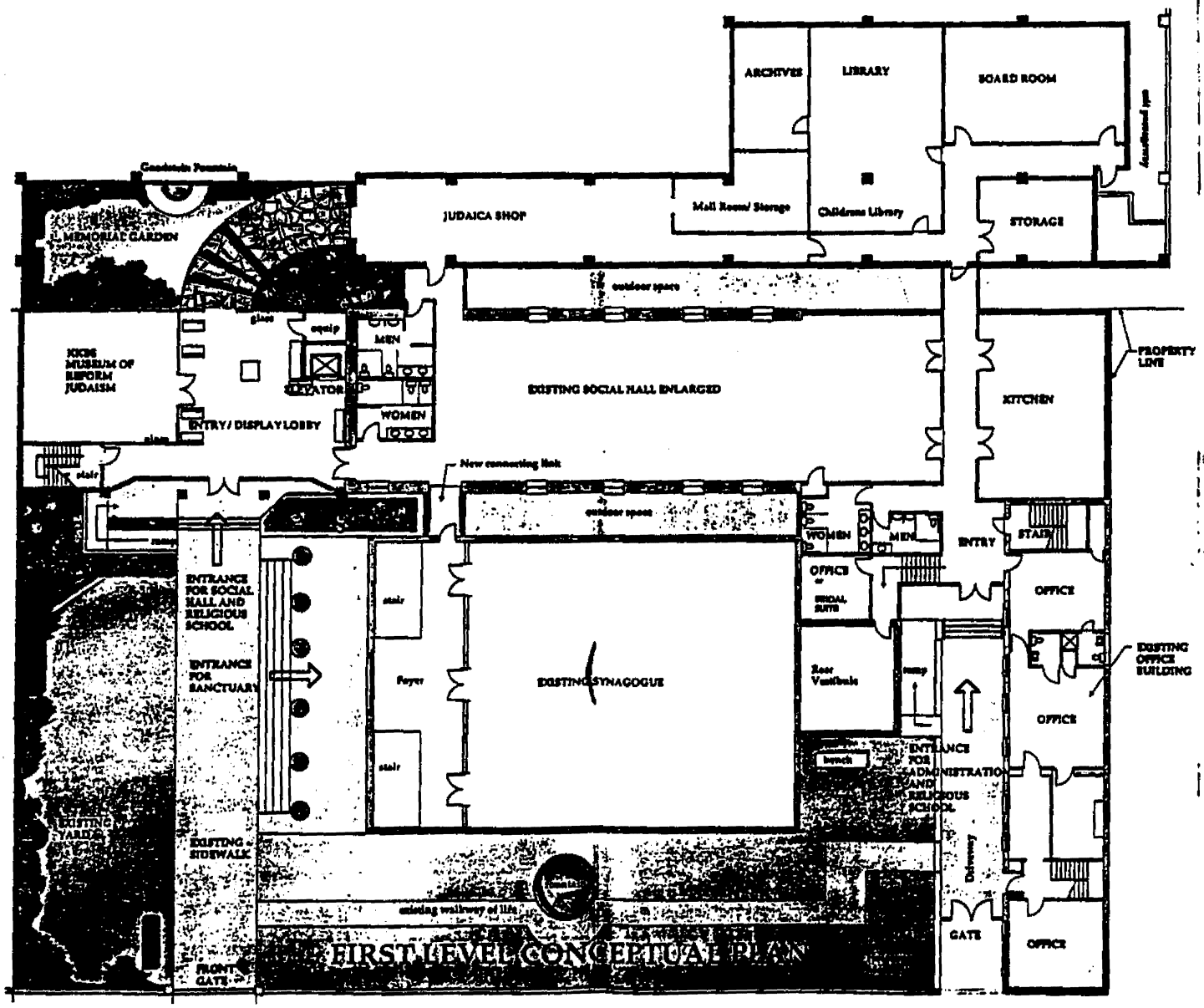
1-k. Interior of Beth Elohim. (Copy of photograph from collection of Beth Elohim.)



1-l. Copy of a 1920's photograph showing the organ facade installed in 1872. The same facade exists today. (Photograph appears in congregation's *250th Anniversary Booklet.*)



1-m. Cross-section of Beth Elohim synagogue. Note the dome structure over the sanctuary, which is not visible from the exterior. Drawing by Martin E. Weil, Historic American Building Survey, 1963. (Copy from "The Synagogues of Beth Elohim" by Solomon Breibart.)



1-n. Plans for expansion and construction project underway at Beth Elohim by architect and former president of Beth Elohim, Miles Glick. (Copy of illustration in "Honoring Our Past. . . Celebrating Our Future," booklet for Beth Elohim's capital campaign, 1999.)

HYMNS

WRITTEN

FOR THE USE

OF

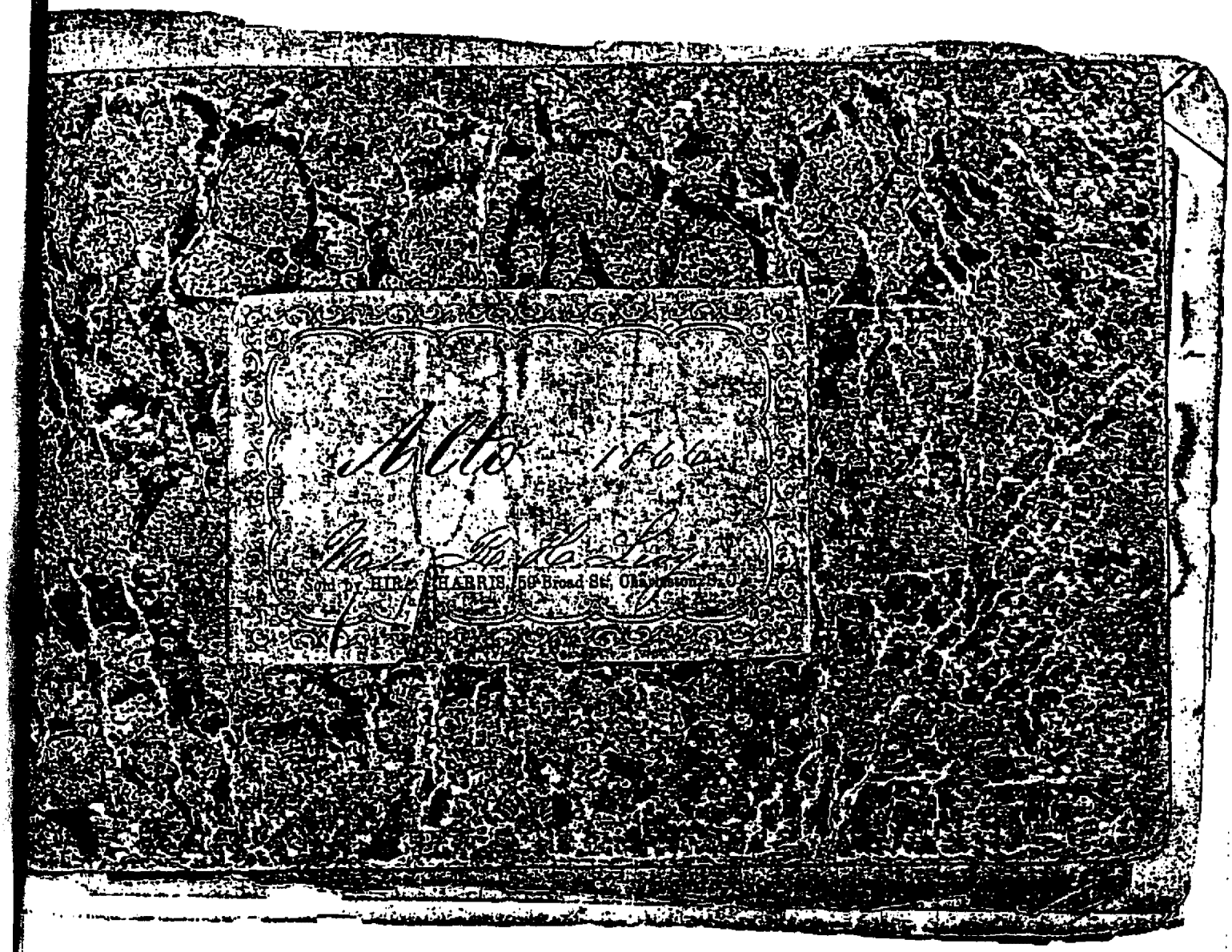
HEBREW CONGREGATIONS.

"I will sing unto the Lord while I live: I will sing praise unto my God while I exist." PSALM civ., v. 33.

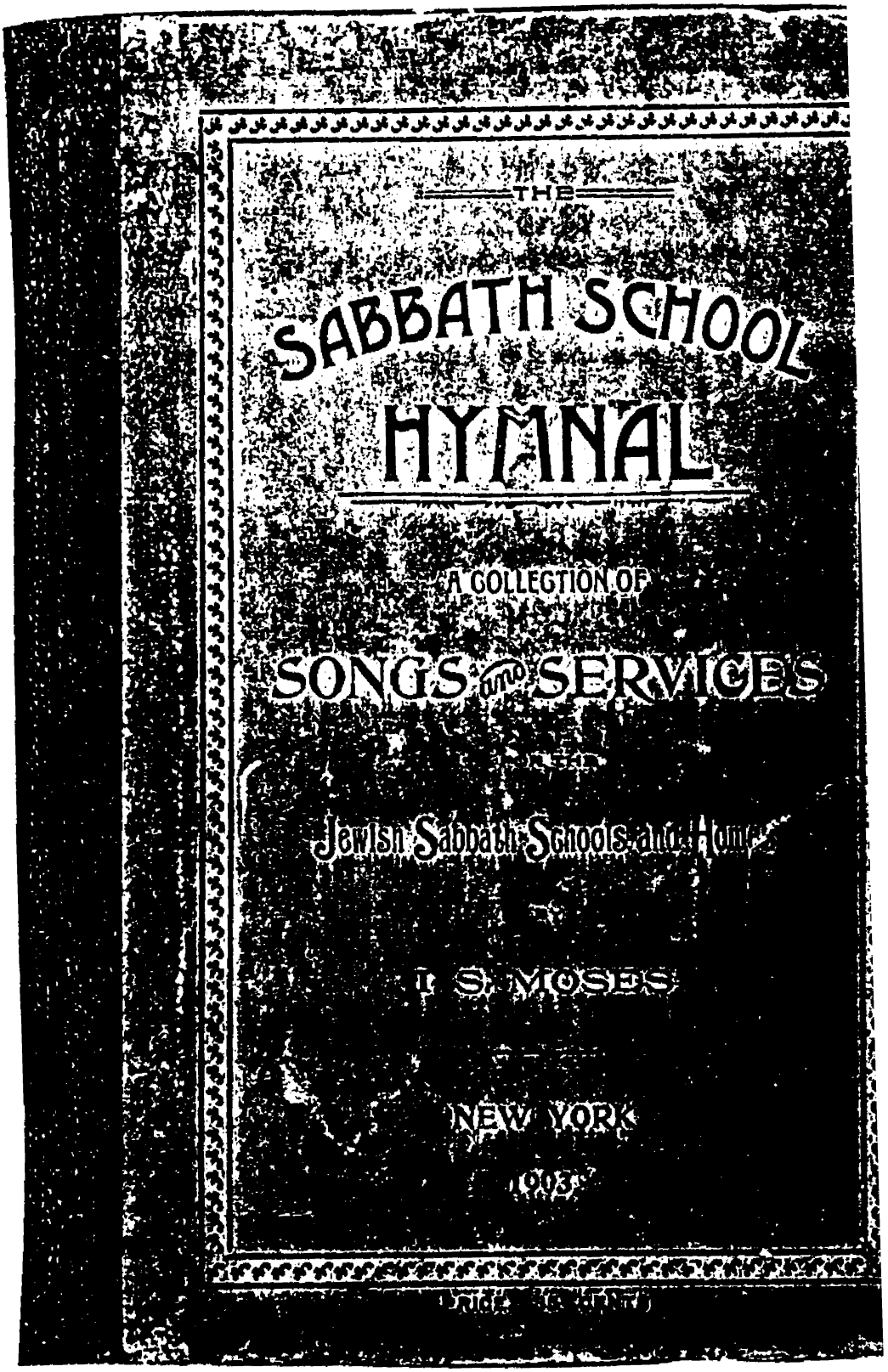
FOURTH EDITION, REVISED AND CORRECTED.

CHARLESTON, S. C.:
PUBLISHED BY THE
CONGREGATION BETH ELOHIM.
A. M. 5627.

1-o. Copy of title page of Beth Elohim's hymnal, *Hymns Written for the Use of Hebrew Congregations.* (Courtesy of Beth Elohim archives.)



1-p. Copy of cover of 1866 choir book. Label reads "Alto 1866." (Courtesy of Archives of Beth Elohim.)



1-q. Copy of cover of *The Sabbath School Hymnal, A Collection of Songs and the Jewish Sabbath Schools and Homes*, by I. S. Moses, 1903, used by the con (Courtesy of Beth Elohim archives.)

ORGAN DEDICATION

SERVICE

Congregation Beth Elohim,

HASELL STREET SYNAGOGUE,

Friday Evening, November 6, 1914

AT 8.15.

You will be most welcome.

FRIDAY EVENING SERVICE,

Rabbi and Choir.

ORGAN—Toccato et Fuga..... Bach

Miss Hyams.

ALTO SOLO—My Heart is Fixed ..Wiegand

Mrs. H. J. Williams.

ORGAN—Andantino.....Liszt

Miss Hyams.

VIOLIN SOLO—Serenade.....Ch. M. Widor

John C. Koster.

Organ Toccato..... Alphonse Mailly

Miss Hyams.

HISTORY OF SYNAGOGUE MUSIC.....

Rabbi I E. Marcuson.

SOLO—Hear Ye Israel.....Mendelssohn

Miss Elsa Bargmann.

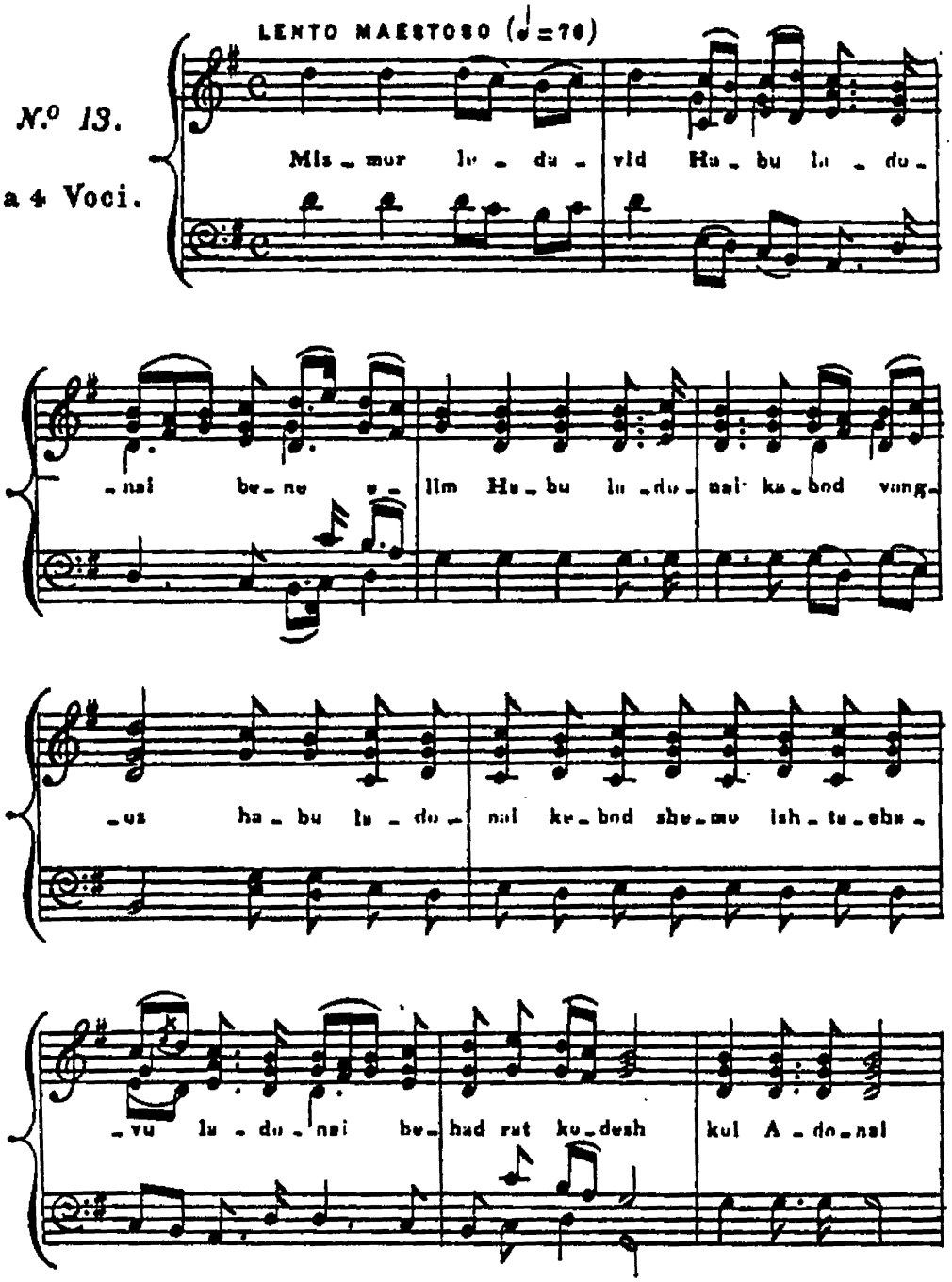
ADON OLOM..... Choir

1-r. Program from dedication ceremony for new organ, 1914. (Courtesy of Beth Elohim archives.)

APPENDIX TWO

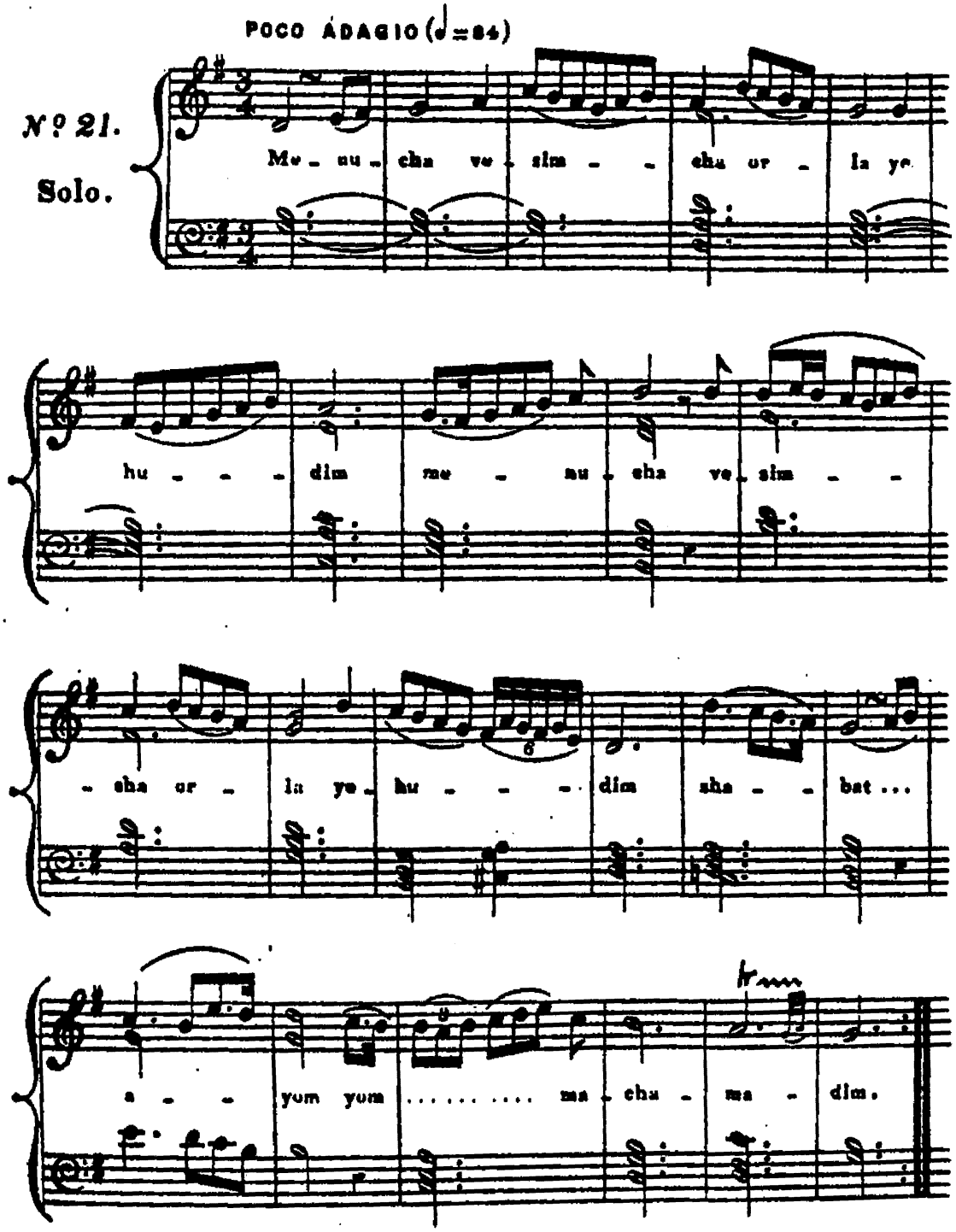
MUSICAL EXAMPLES FROM THE WESTERN SEPHARDIC TRADITION

MIZMOR LEDAVID.

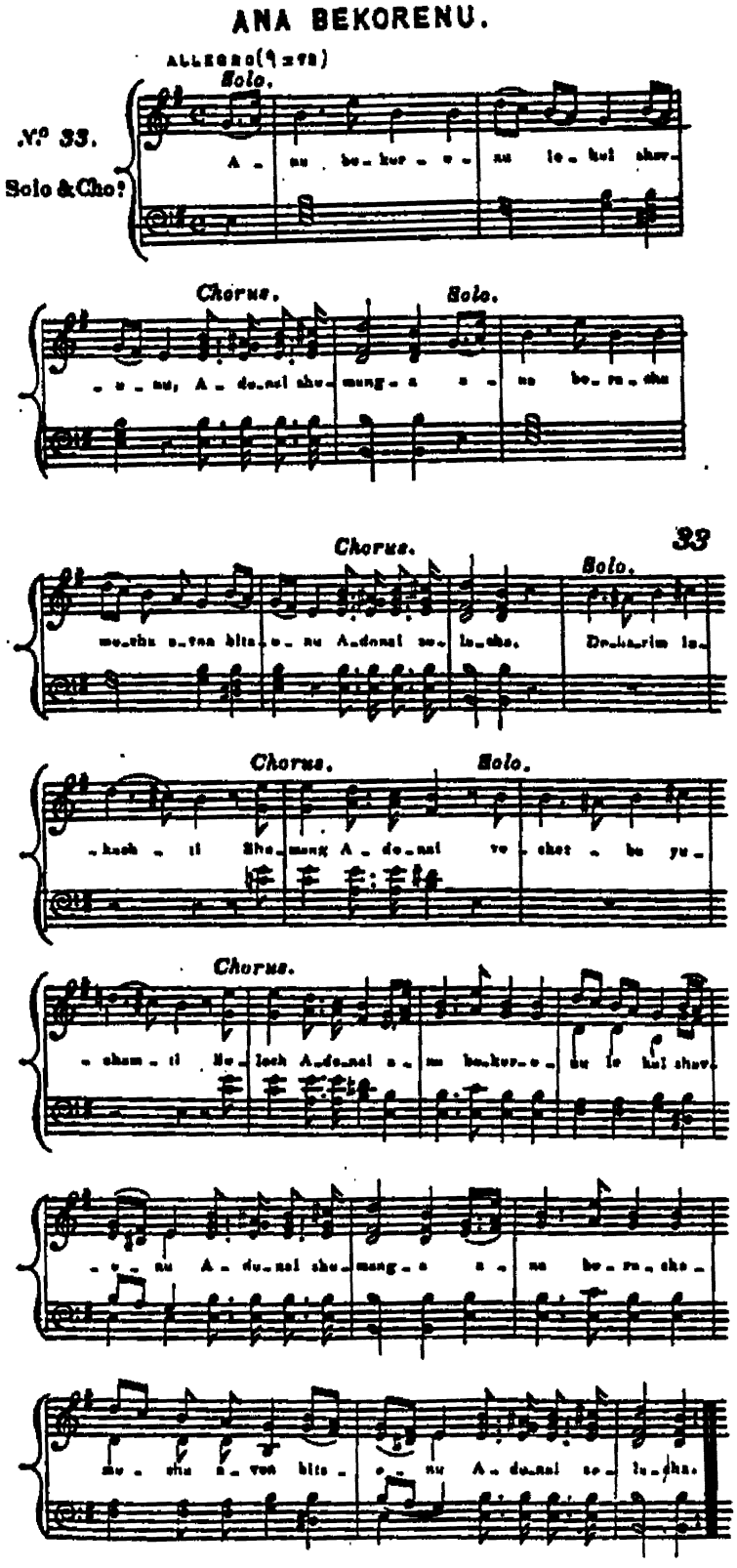


2:a. "*Mizmor le-David,*" from the Aguilar and de Sola collection.

MENUCHA VESIMCHA.



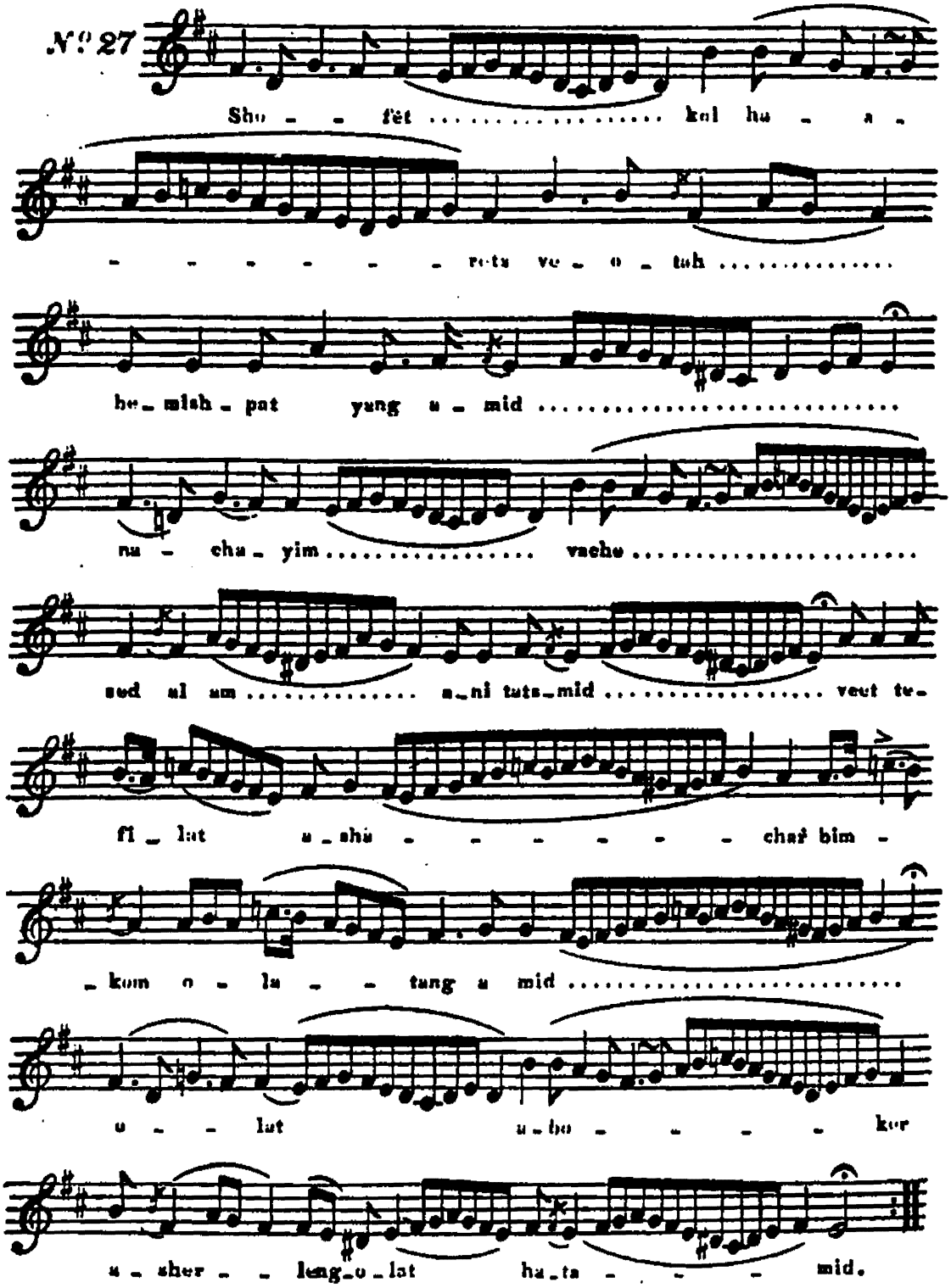
2:b. "*Menucha Vesimcha*," from the Aguilar and de Sola collection.



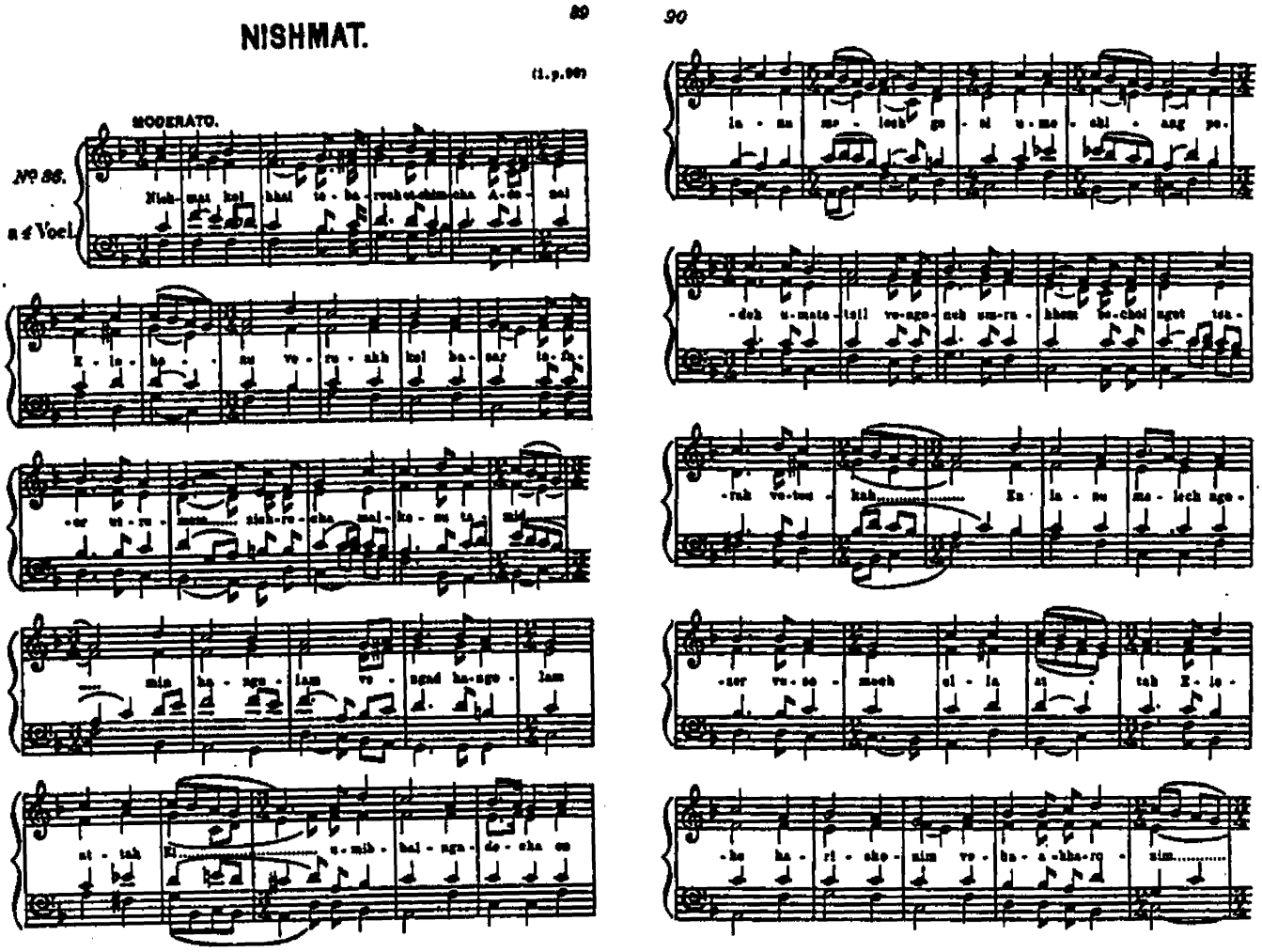
2:c. "*Ana Bekorenu,*" from the Aguilar and de Sola collection.

SHOFET KOL HAARETZ.

LENTO (SENZA TEMPO)



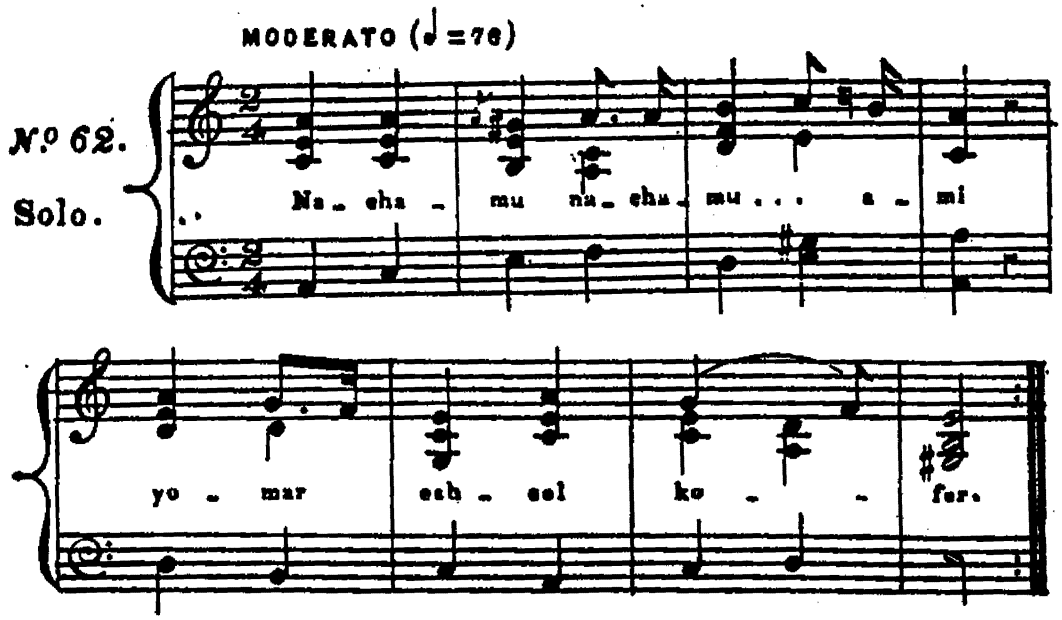
2:d. "*Shofet Kol Haaretz*," from the Aguilar and de Sola collection.



2:e. "*Nishmat*," from Aguilar and de Sola collection, incorporating the "*Shirat haYam*" melody. *Nishmat* is the place in the morning liturgy where the *hazzan* begins chanting the service.

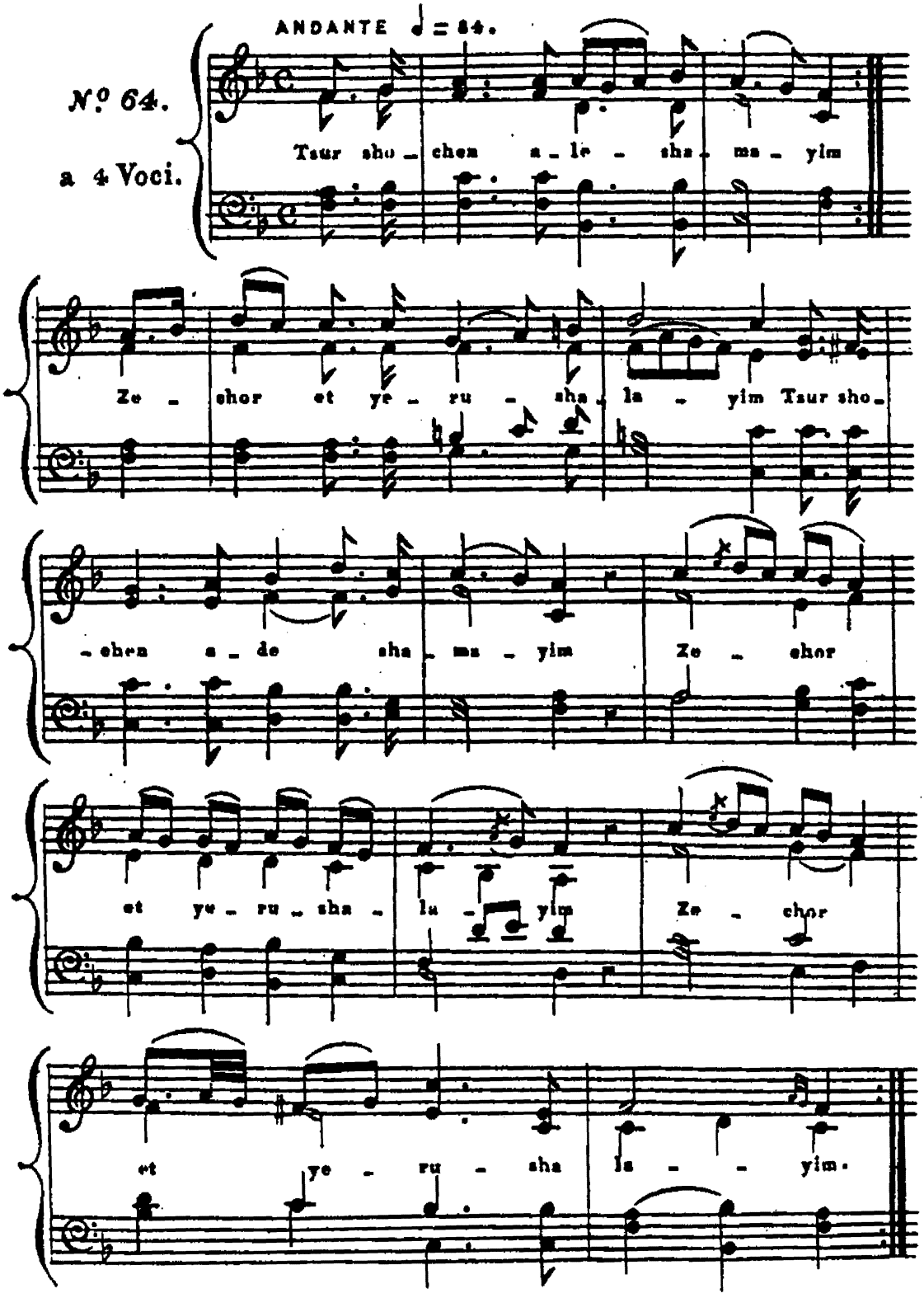
56

NACHAMU.



2:f. "*Nachamu*," prophetic words of comfort sung on Tisha b'Ab, in Aguilar and de Sola collection.

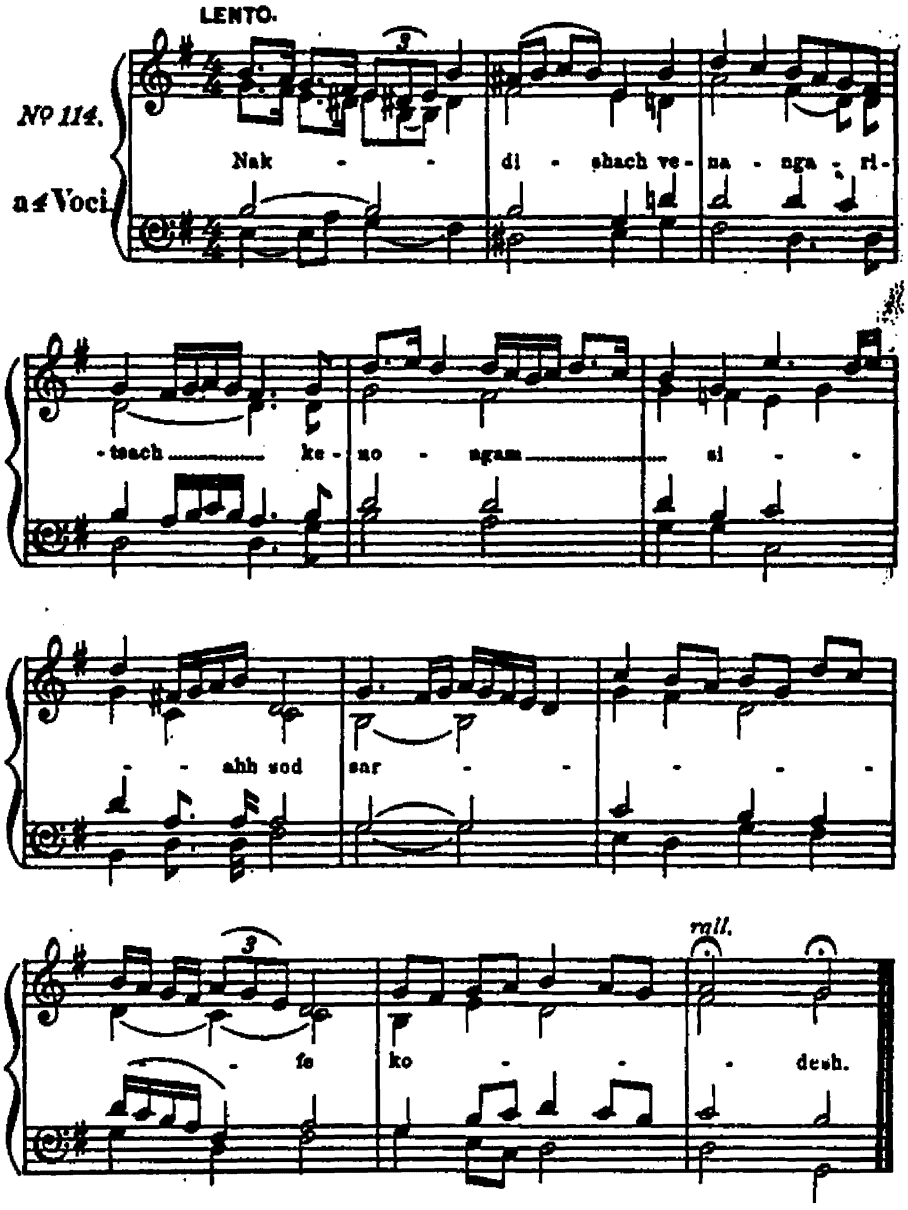
TSUR SHOCHEN.



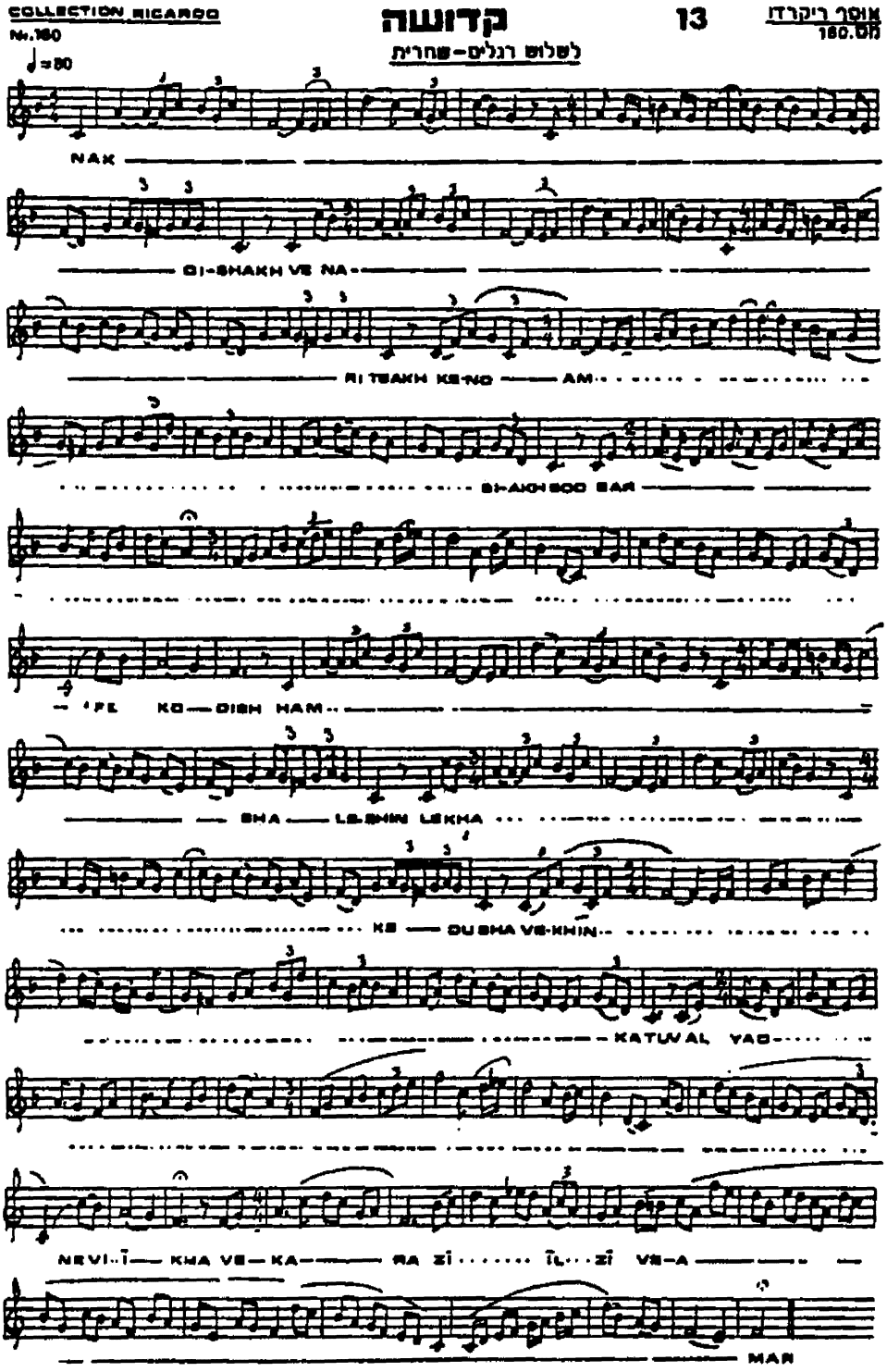
2:g. "*Tsur Shochen*," from the Aguilar and de Sola collection. In this *kinah*, or elegy, sung on Tisha b'Ab, the poet asks for God, the Rock who dwells in the heavens, to remember Jerusalem.

KEDUSHAH.

Sung by the Minister on Holy Days.



2:h. "*Kedushah* for Holy Days," from the Aguilar and de Sola collection.



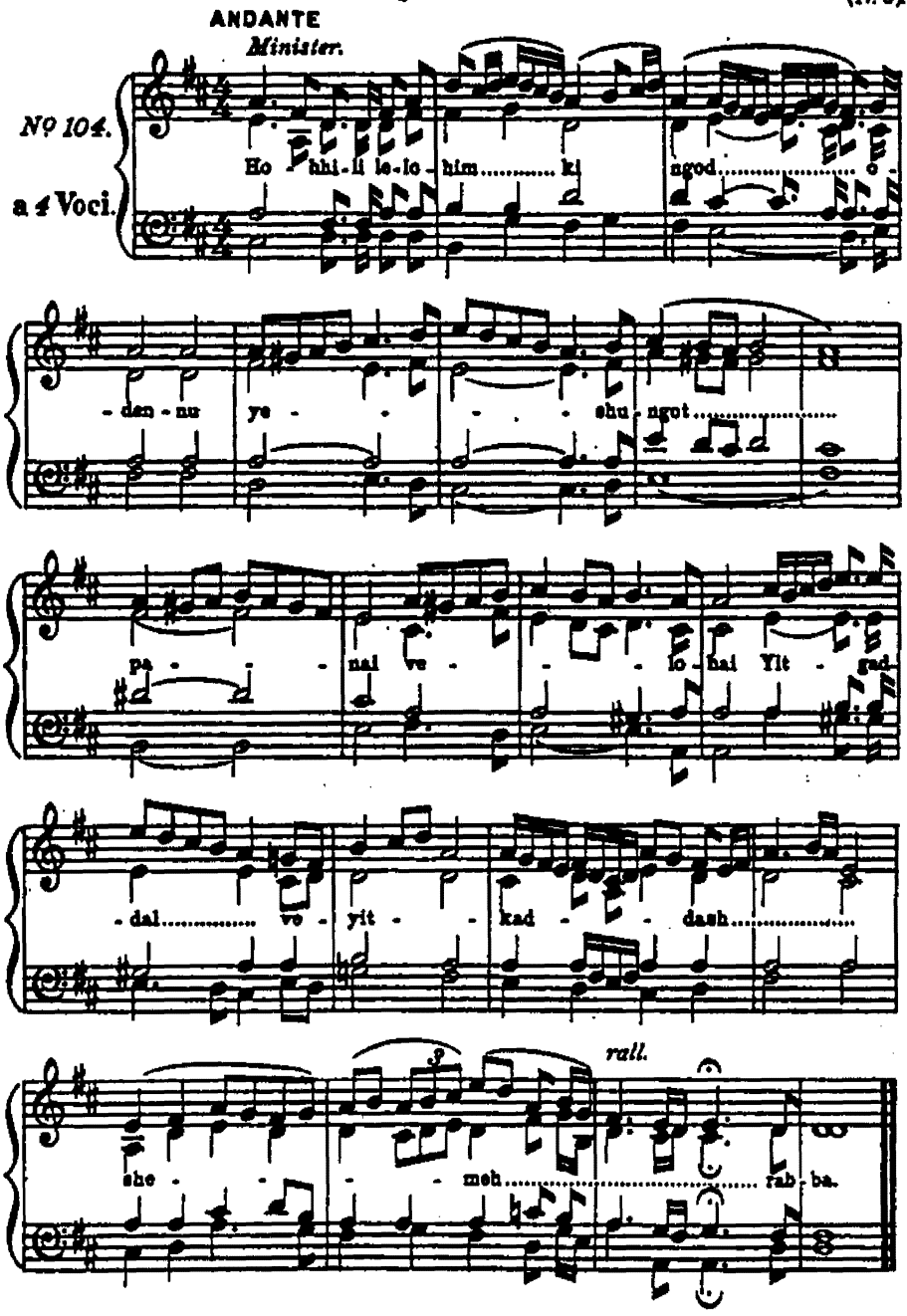
2:i. "*Kedushah*" for the morning service during the Three Festivals. From the Amsterdam collection of David Ricardo.

KADDISH

END OF PS. XLIII.

Sung on Succoth.

(tv. 5).



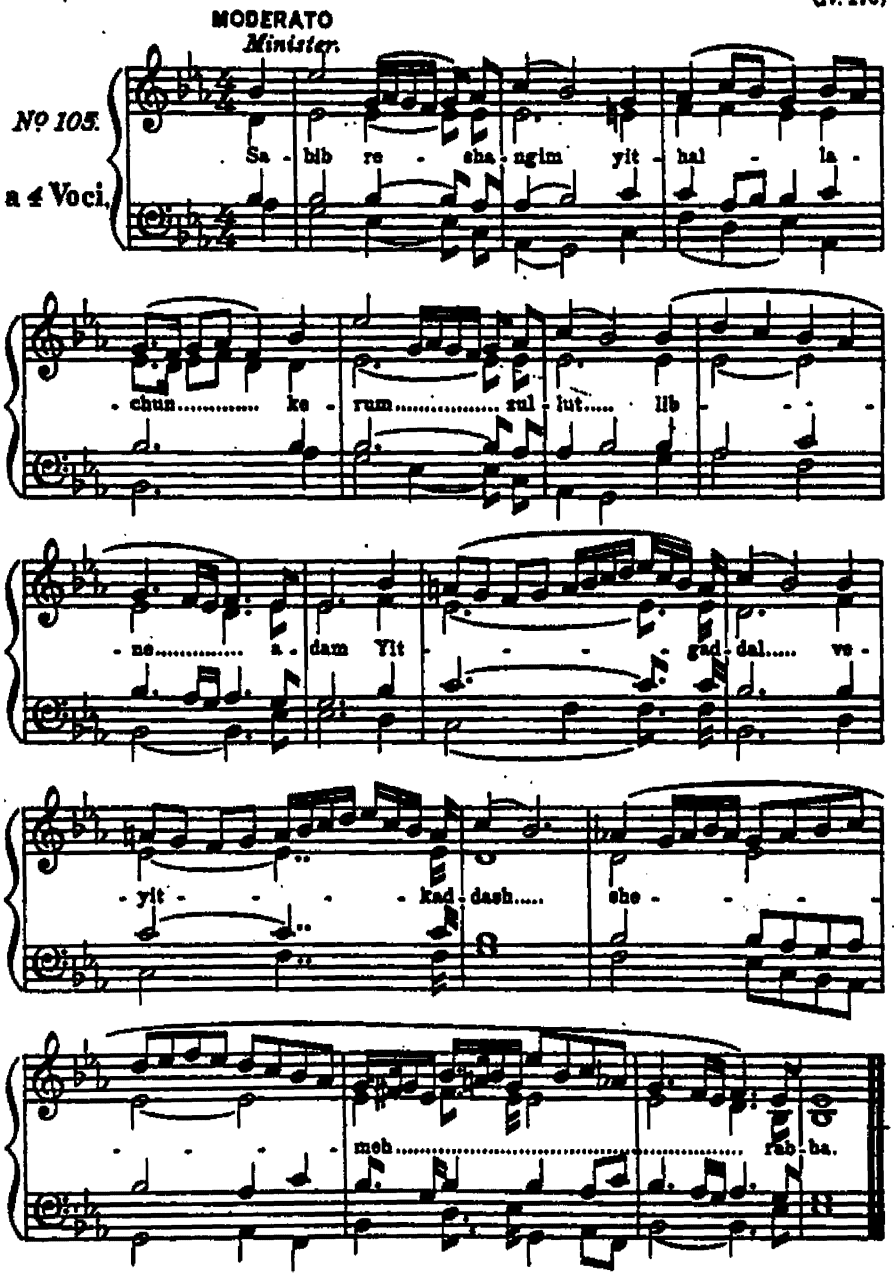
2:j. "*Kaddish*, End of Ps. XLIII, Sung on Succoth," from Aguilar and de Sola collection.

KADDISH

END OF PS. XII.

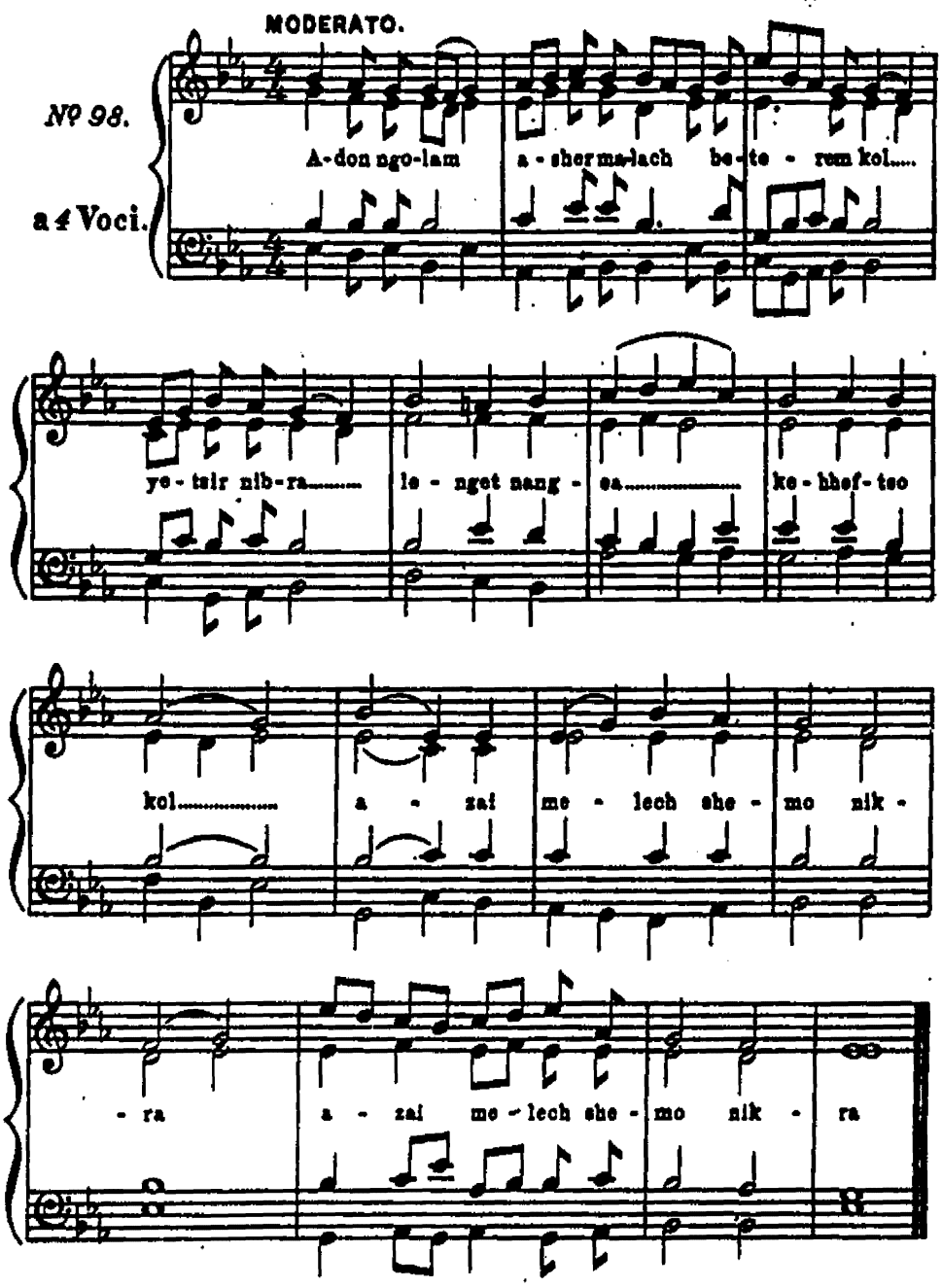
Sung on the Eve of Shemini Hhag Ngatsereth.

(Iv. 170)

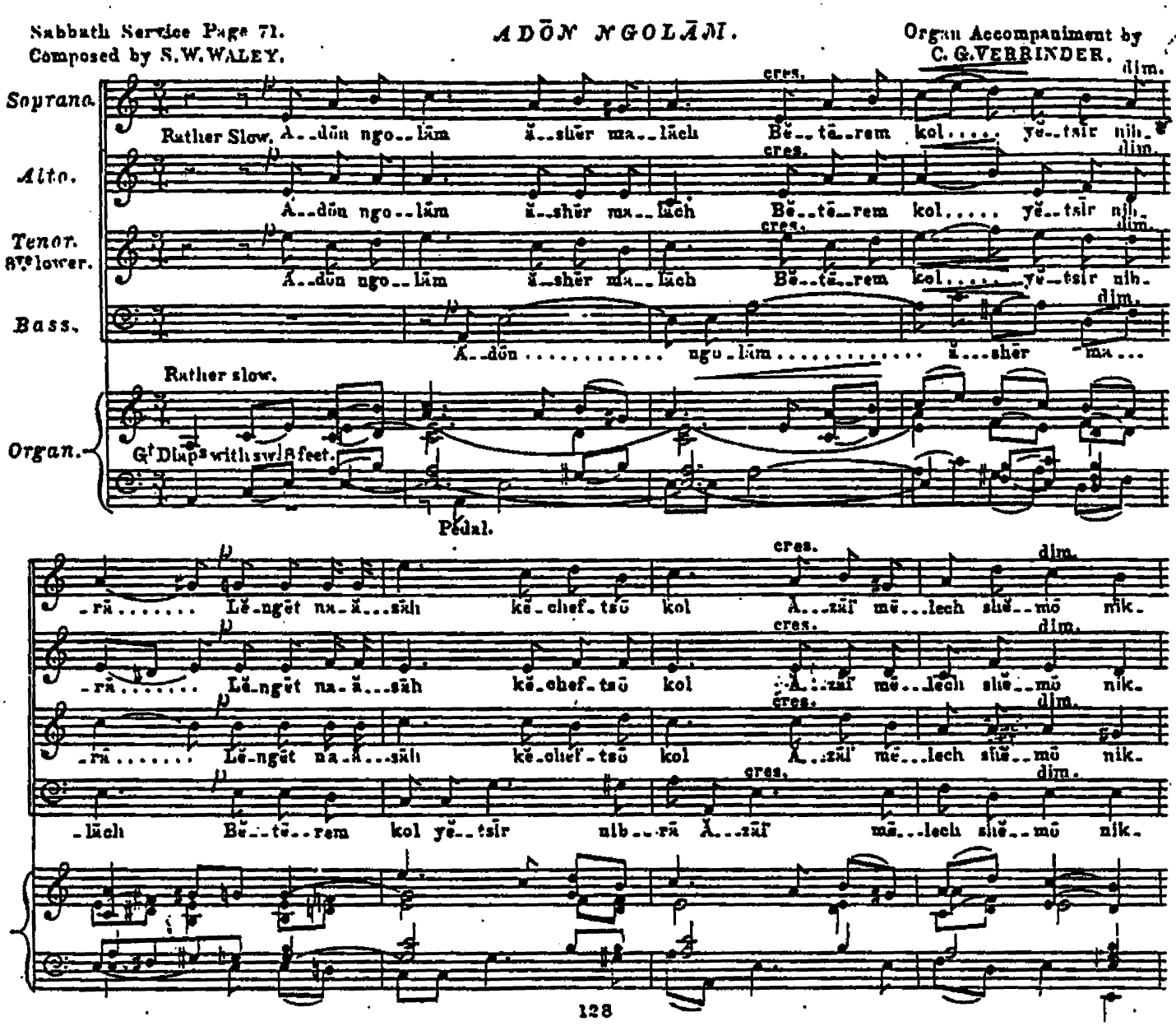


2:k. "Kaddish, End of Ps. XII, for the Eve of Shemini Hhag Ngatsereth," from Aguilar and de Sola collection.

ADON NGOLAM.

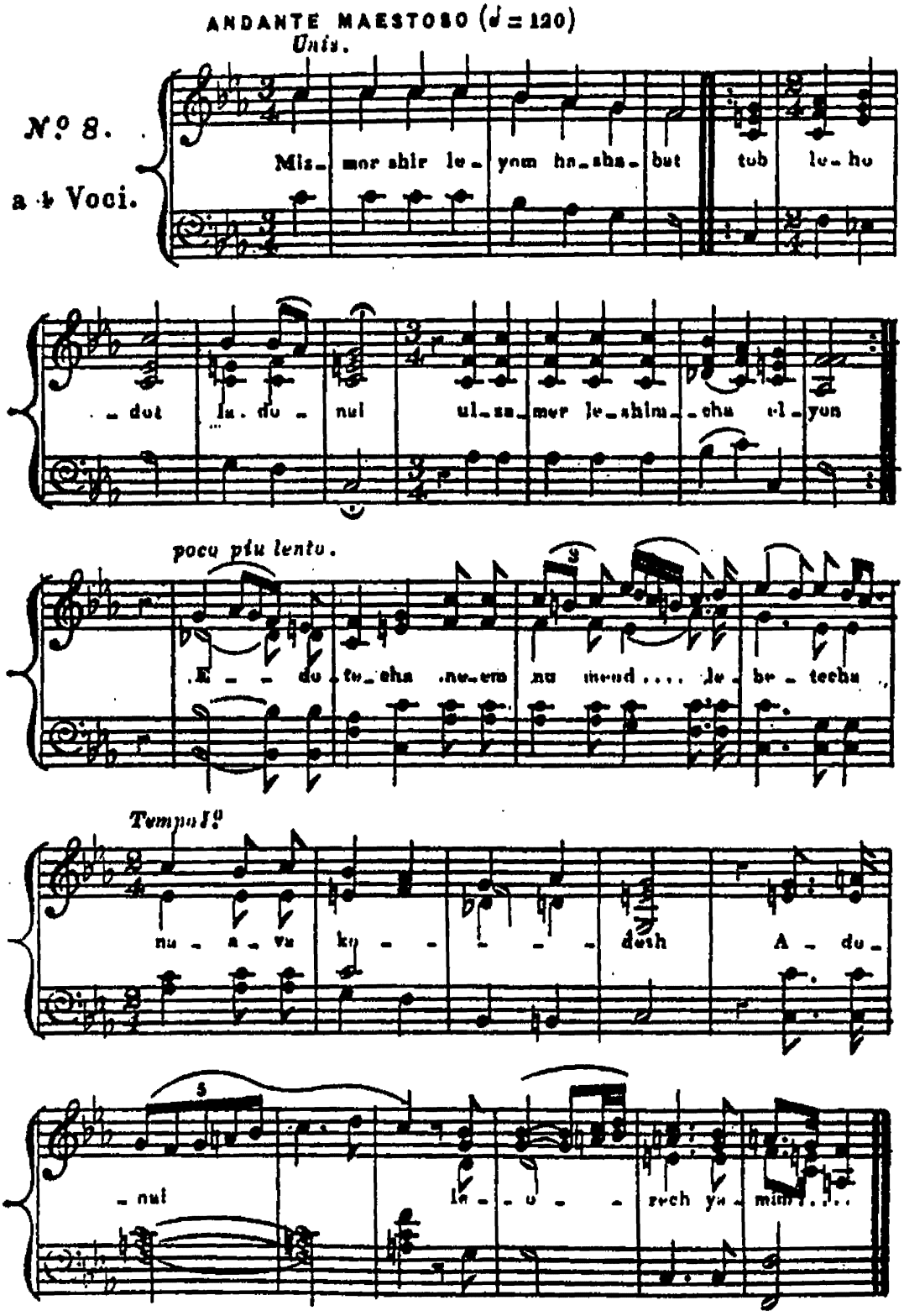


2:1. "*Adon Ngolam,*" from the Aguilar and de Sola collection.



2:m. *"Adon Ngolam,"* by S. W. Waley from the collection of melodies used by the West London Synagogue.

MIZMOR SHIR.

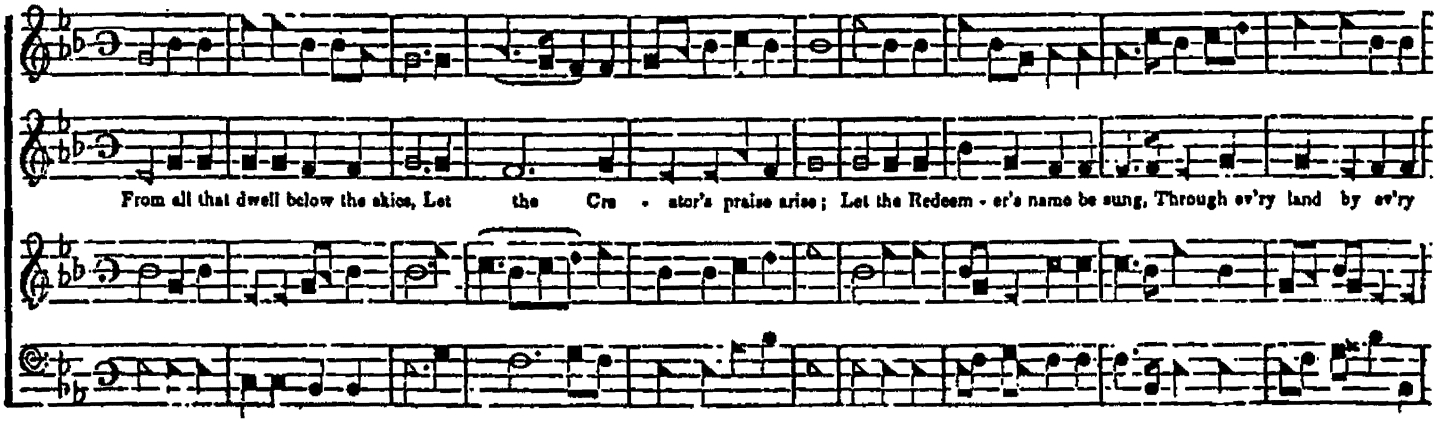


2:n: *"Mizmor Shir,"* from the Aguilar and de Sola collection.

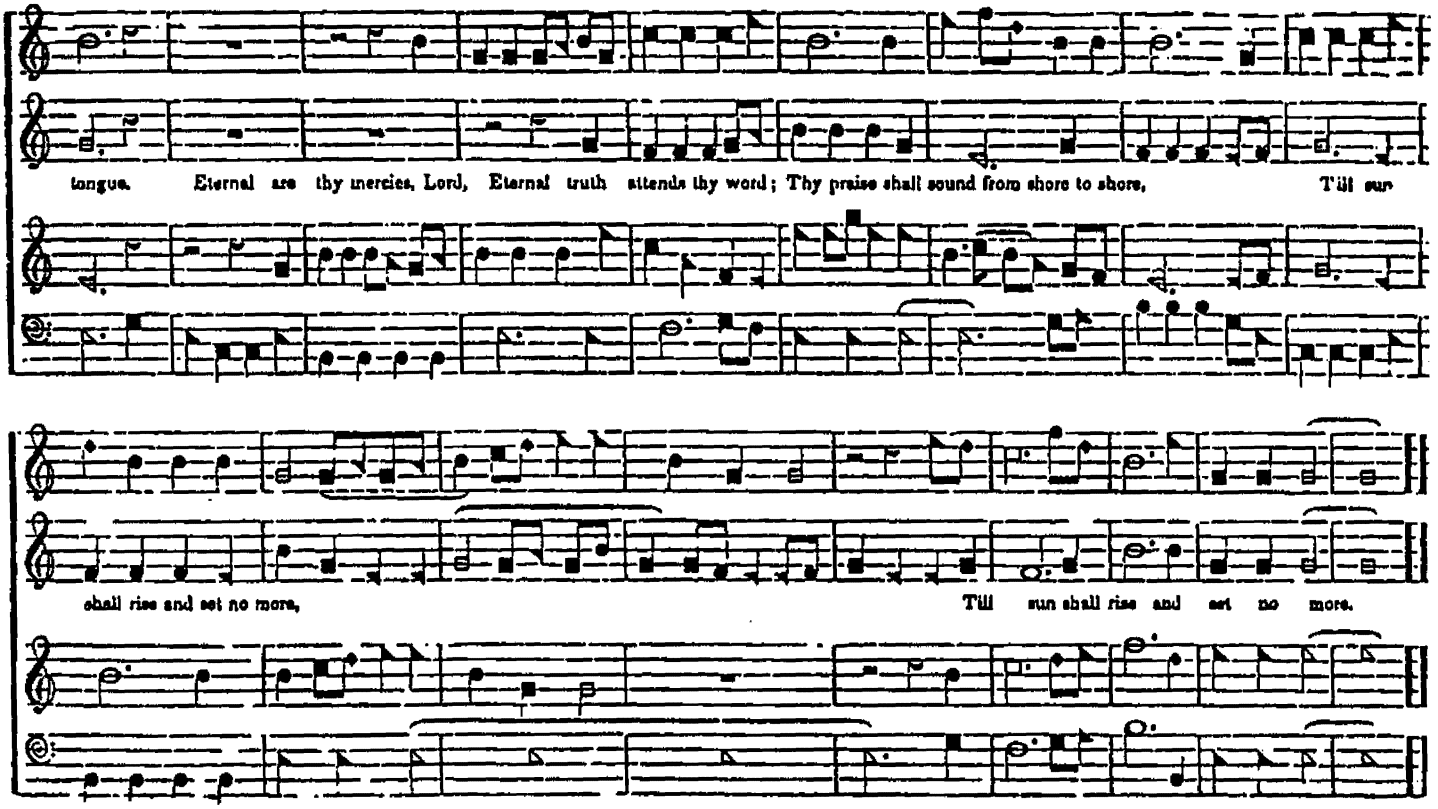
APPENDIX THREE

MUSICAL EXAMPLES FOR HYMN TEXTS OF THE REFORMED SOCIETY OF ISRAELITES

SCHENECTADY. L. M. *Shumway.*



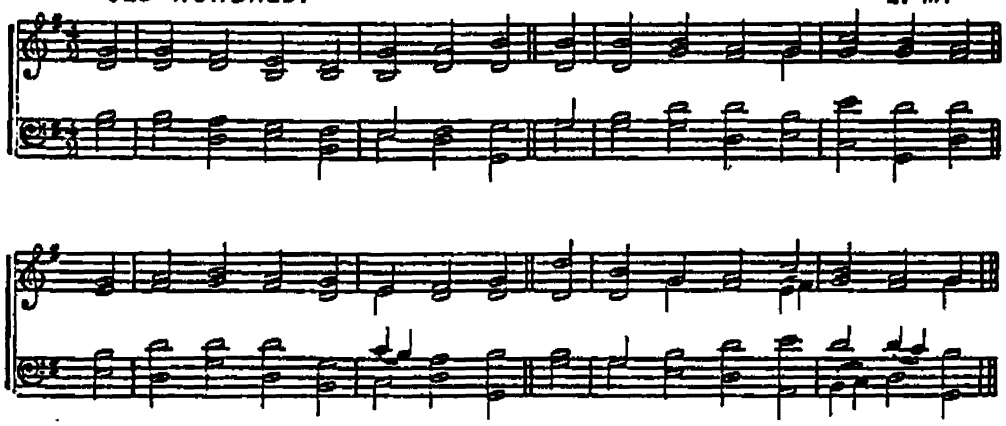
SCHENECTADY. L. M. *Continued* 179



3:a. Musical setting for "From All That Dwell Below the Skies" from *The Southern Harmony & Musical Companion* of 1854.

CALL TO PRAISE.

OLD HUNDRED. L. M.



2

1 Before Jehovah's awful throne,
Ye nations, bow with sacred joy:
Know that the Lord is God alone;
He can create, and he destroy.

2 His sovereign power, without our aid,
Made us of clay, and formed us men;
And when, like wandering sheep, we strayed,
He brought us to his fold again.

3 We are his people, we his care,
Our souls, and all our mortal frame:
What lasting honors shall we rear,
Almighty Maker! to thy name?

4 We'll crowd thy gates with thankful songs:
High as the heavens our voices raise;
And earth, with her ten thousand tongues,
Shall fill thy courts with sounding praise.

5 Wide as the world is thy command,
Vast as eternity, thy love;
Firm as a rock thy truth must stand,
When rolling years shall cease to move.

3

1 Ye nations round the earth, rejoice
Before the Lord, your sovereign King;
Serve him with cheerful heart and voice;
With all your tongues his glory sing.

2 The Lord is God; 'tis he alone
Doth life and breath and being give;
We are his work, and not our own;
The sheep that on his pastures live.

3 Enter his gates with songs of joy;
With praises to his courts repair:
And make it your divine employ
To pay your thanks and honors there.

4 The Lord is good, the Lord is kind;
Great is his grace, his mercy sure;
And the whole race of man shall find
His truth from age to age endure.

4

1 All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice:
Him serve with mirth, his praise forth tell;
Come ye before him and rejoice.

2 Know that the Lord is God indeed;
Without our aid he did us make;
We are his flock, he doth us feed,
And for his sheep he doth us take.

3 Oh, enter then his gates with praise,
Approach with joy his courts unto;
Praise, laud and bless his name always,
For it is seemly so to do.

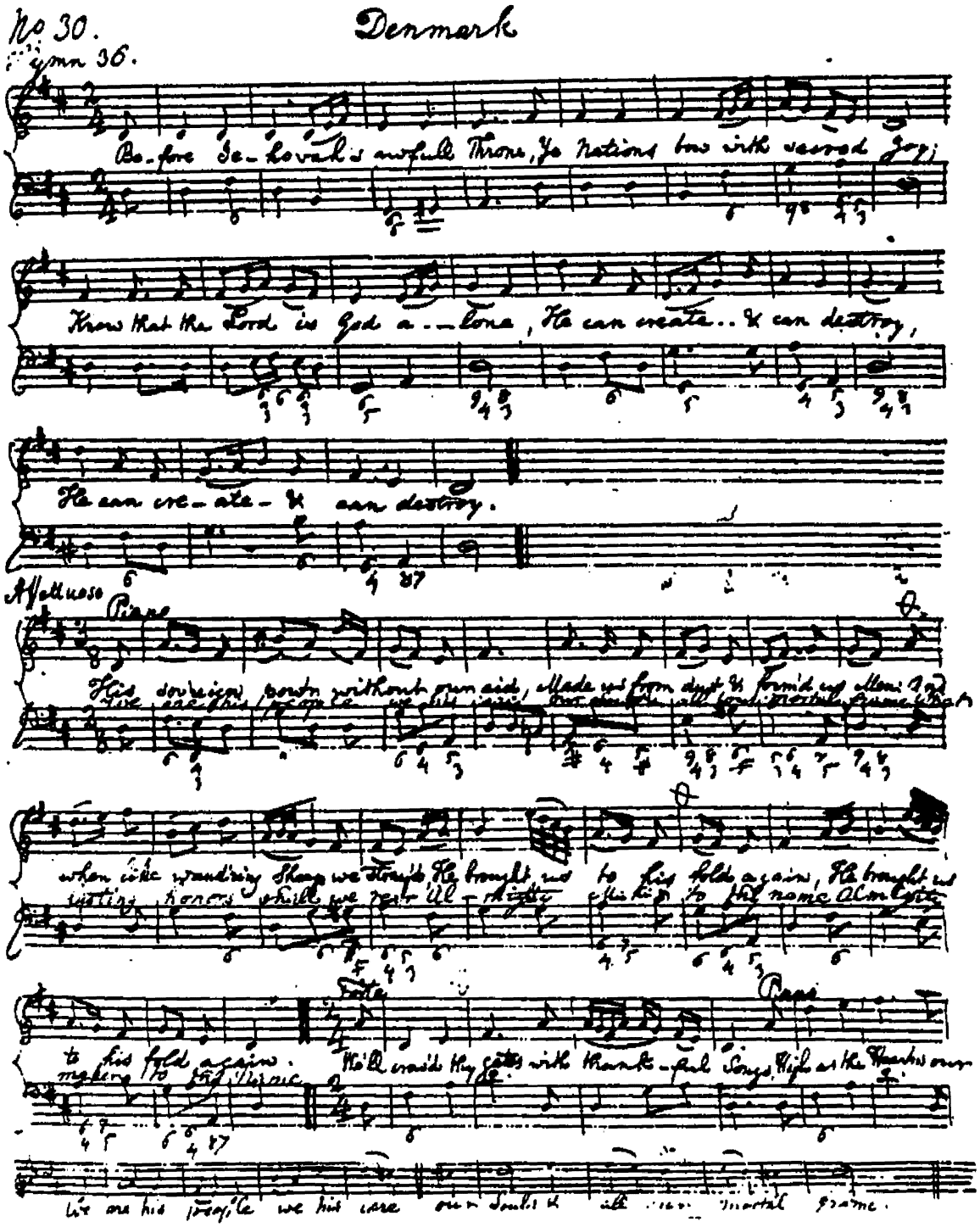
4 Because the Lord our God is good,
His mercy is for ever sure:
His truth at all times firmly stood,
And shall from age to age endure.

5

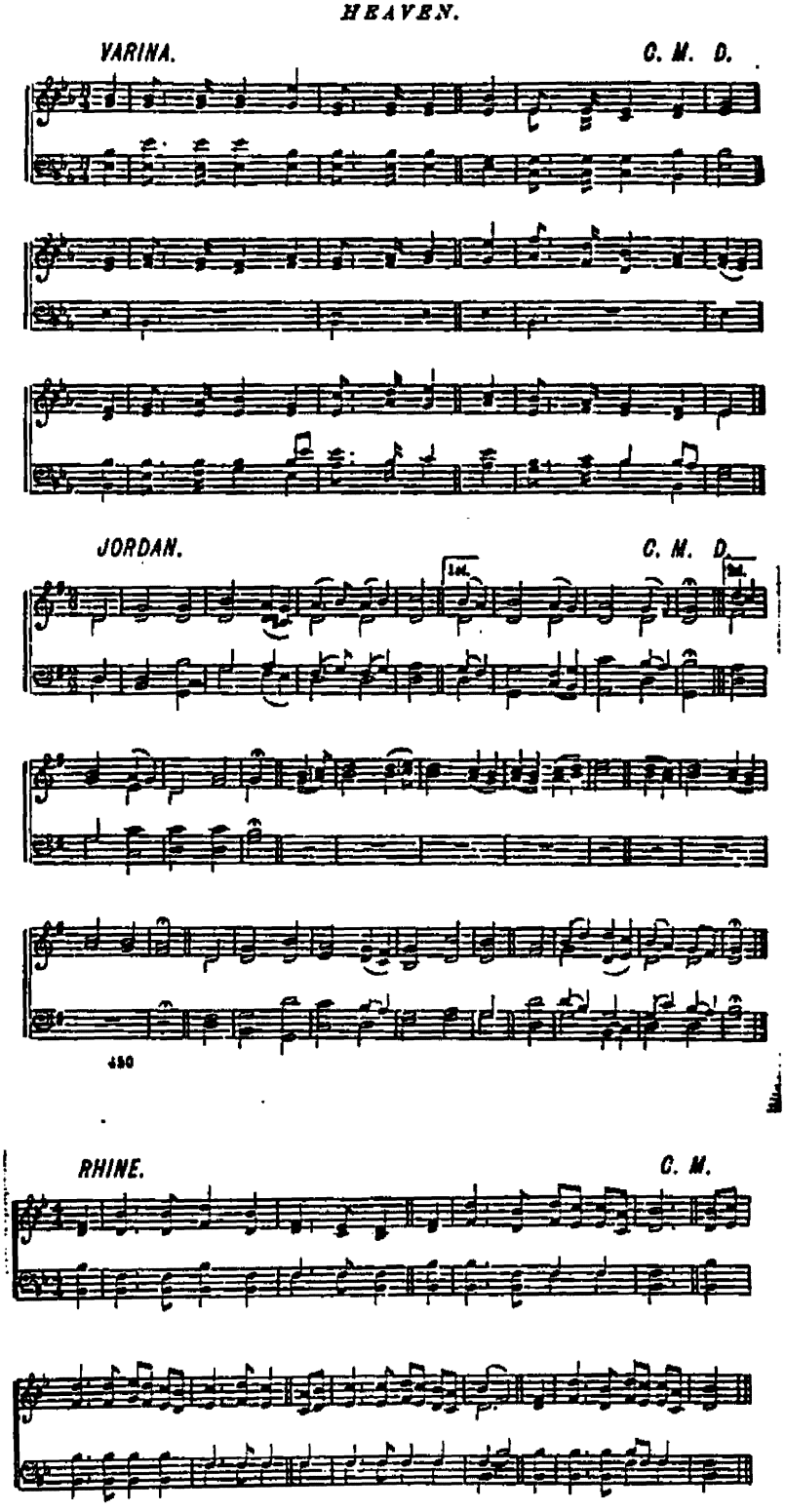
1 From all that dwell below the skies,
Let the Creator's praise arise:
Let the Redeemer's name be sung
Through every land, by every tongue.

2 Eternal are thy mercies, Lord;
Eternal truth attends thy word;
Thy praise shall sound from shore to shore,
Till suns shall set and rise no more.

3:b. Musical setting used for "Before Jehovah's Awful Throne" and "From All That Dwell Below the Skies" from the *Presbyterian Hymnal* of 1874.

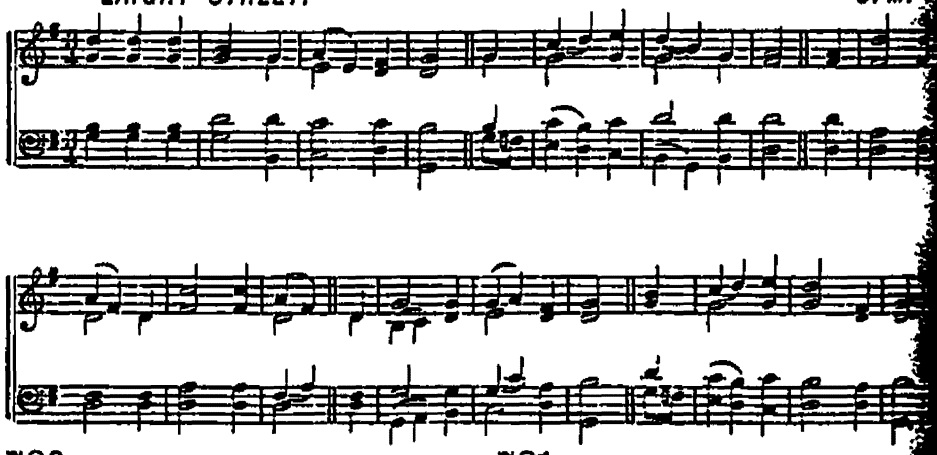


3:c. Musical setting used for "Before Jehovah's Awful Throne" from *Jacob Eckhard's Choirmaster's Book of 1809.*



3:d. Musical setting (#969) for "There is a Land of Pure Delight" from the *Presbyterian Hymnal* of 1874.

LAIGHT STREET. C. M.



780

1 Lo! what a glorious sight appears
To our believing eyes!
The earth and sea are passed away,
And the old rolling skies.

2 From the third heaven, where God resides,
That holy, happy place,
The new Jerusalem comes down,
Adorned with shining grace.

3 Attending angels shout for joy,
And the bright armies sing:
"Mortals, behold the sacred seat
Of your descending King.

4 "The God of glory down to men
Removes his blest abode—
Men, the dear objects of his grace,
And he the loving God.

5 "His own soft hand shall wipe the tears
From every weeping eye,
And pains and groans and griefs and fears,
And death itself, shall die."

6 How long, dear Saviour! oh how long
Shall this bright hour delay?
Fly swifter round, ye wheels of time,
And bring the welcome day.

350

781

1 THERE is a land of pure delight
Where saints immortal reign;
Infinite day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain.

2 There everlasting spring abides,
And never-with'ring flow'rs;
Death, like a narrow sea, divides
This heav'nly land from ours.

3 Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
Stand dressed in living green:
So to the Jews old Canaan stood,
While Jordan rolled between.

4 But tim'rous mortals start and shrink
To cross this narrow sea,
And linger, shiv'ring, on the brink,
And fear to launch away.

5 Oh, could we make our doubts remove
These gloomy doubts that rise,
And see the Canaan that we love
With unbeclouded eyes,

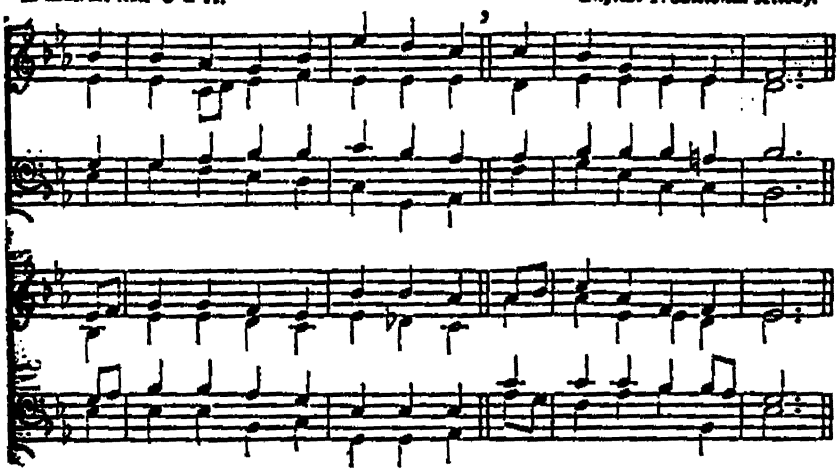
6 Could we but climb where Moses stood
And view the landscape o'er,
Not Jordan's stream nor death's cold flood
Should fright us from the shore.

3:e. Musical setting (#781) for "There is a Land of Pure Delight" from the *Presbyterian Hymnal* of 1874.

MENDIP. (C. M.)

498

In moderate time ♩ = 92. *English Traditional Melody.*



I. Watts, 1674–1748.

THERE is a land of pure delight,
Where Saints immortal reign;
Infinite day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain.

2 There everlasting spring abides,
And never-withering flowers;
Death, like a narrow sea, divides
This heavenly land from ours.

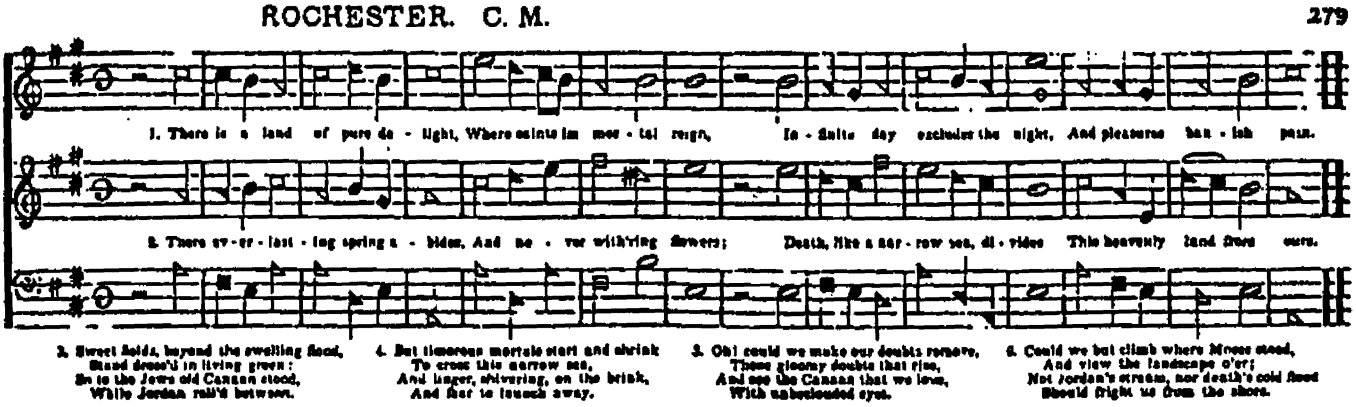
3 Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
Stand dressed in living green;
So to the Jews old Canaan stood,
While Jordan rolled between.

4 But timorous mortals start and shrink
To cross this narrow sea,
And linger shivering on the brink,
And fear to launch away.

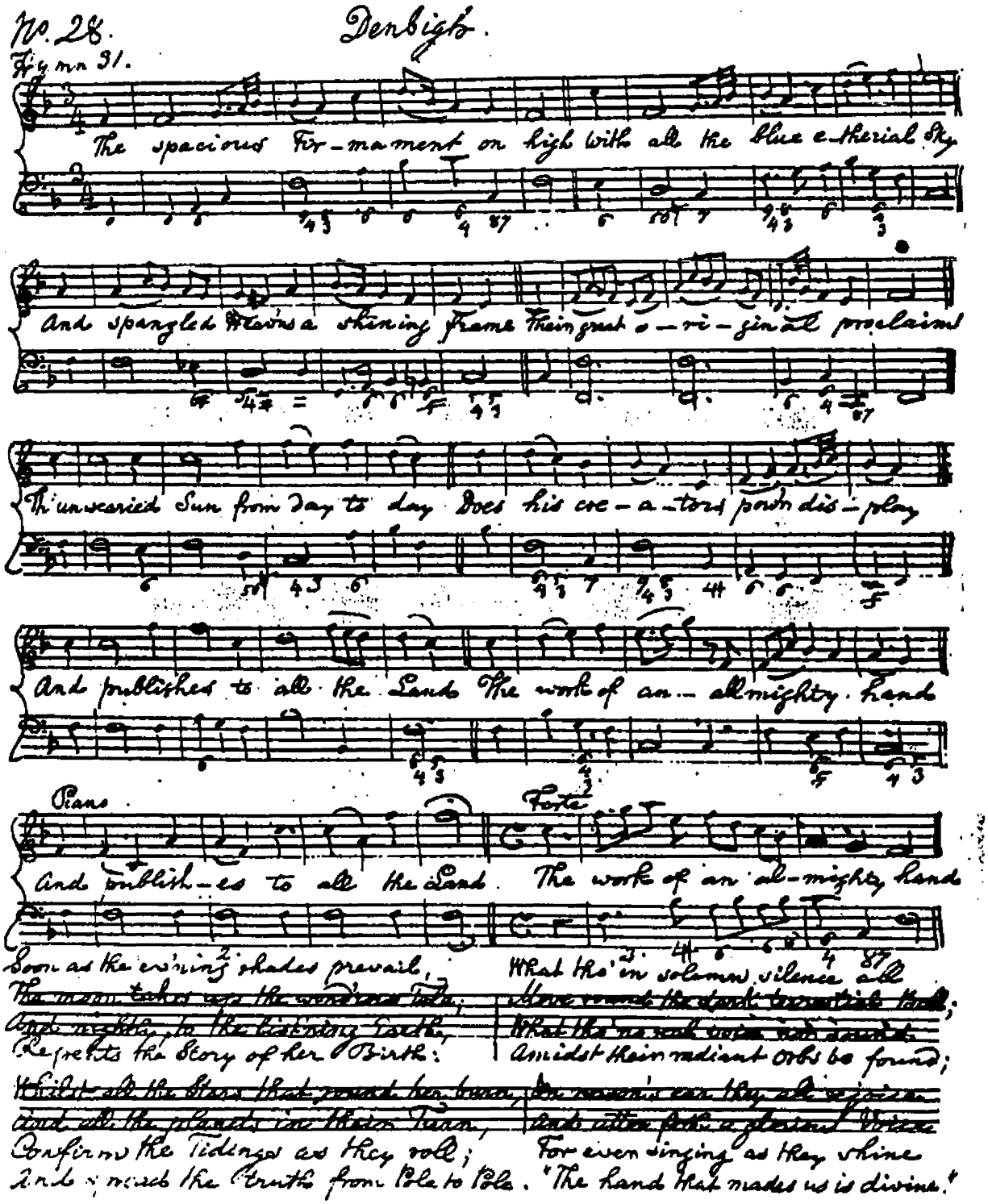
5 O could we make our doubts remove,
These gloomy doubts that rise,
And see the Canaan that we love
With unbeclouded eyes!

6. Could we but climb where Moses stood,
And view the landscape o'er,
Not Jordan's stream, nor death's cold flood,
Should fright us from the shore!

3:f. "English Traditional Melody" from the *English Hymnal with Tunes* of 1933 to accompany "There is a Land of Pure Delight."



3:g. "There is a Land of Pure Delight" in *The Southern Harmony &Musical Companion.*

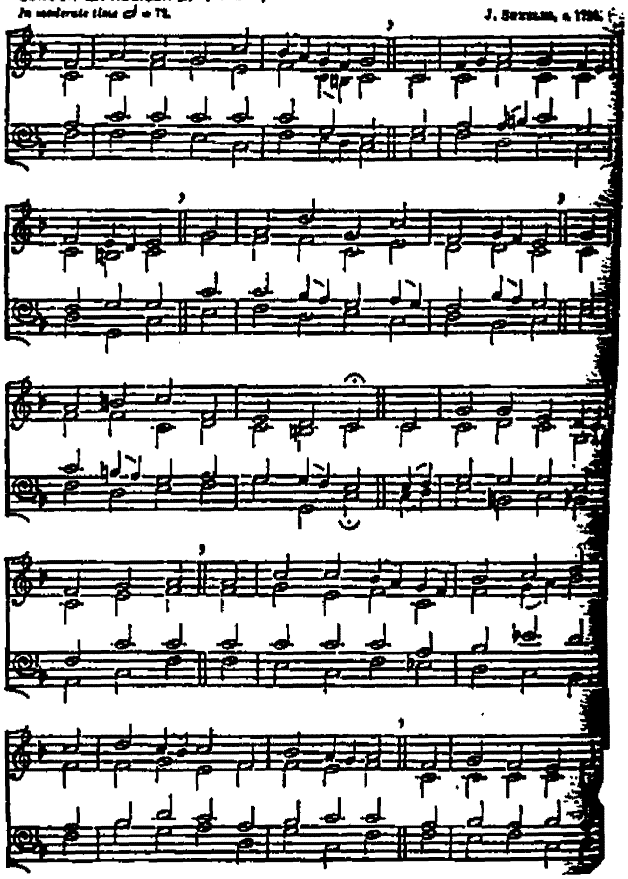


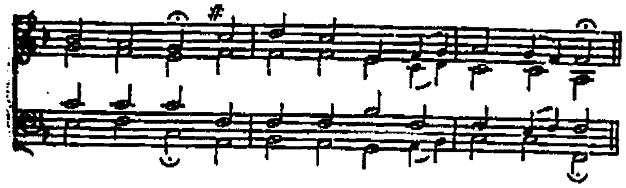
3:h. Eckhard's setting for "The Spacious Firmament on High."

LONDON (or ADDISON'S). (D. L. M.) **297**

In moderate time 𝅗𝅥 = 72.

J. Sheeles, c. 1720.



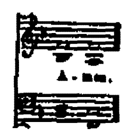


J. Addison, 1672–1719.

THE spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,
Their great Original proclaim.
The unwearied sun from day to day
Does his Creator's power display,
And publishes to every land
The works of an almighty hand.

2 Soon as the evening shades prevail
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,
And nightly to the listening earth
Repeats the story of her birth;
Whilst all the stars that round her burn,
And all the planets in their turn,
Confirm the tidings, as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

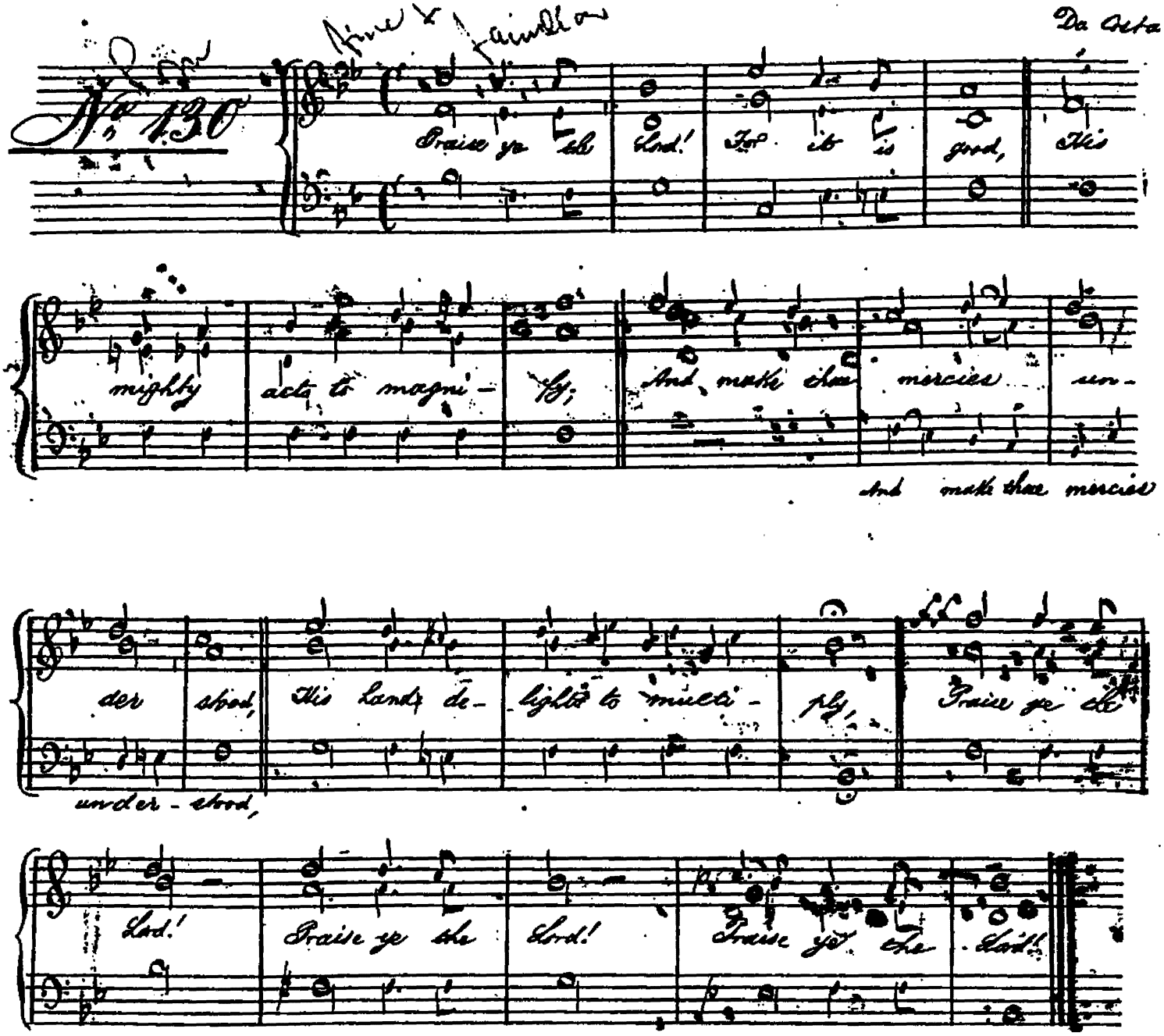
Unison. 3. What though in solemn silence all
Move round the dark terrestrial ball;
What though nor real voice nor sound
Amid their radiant orbs be found;
In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice;
For ever singing as they shine,
'The hand that made us is Divine.'



3:i: "The Spacious Firmament on High" in the *English Hymnal with Tunes* of 1933.

APPENDIX FOUR

MUSICAL SETTINGS OF THE HYMNS OF PENINA MOÏSE AND THE 1866 CHOIR BOOK

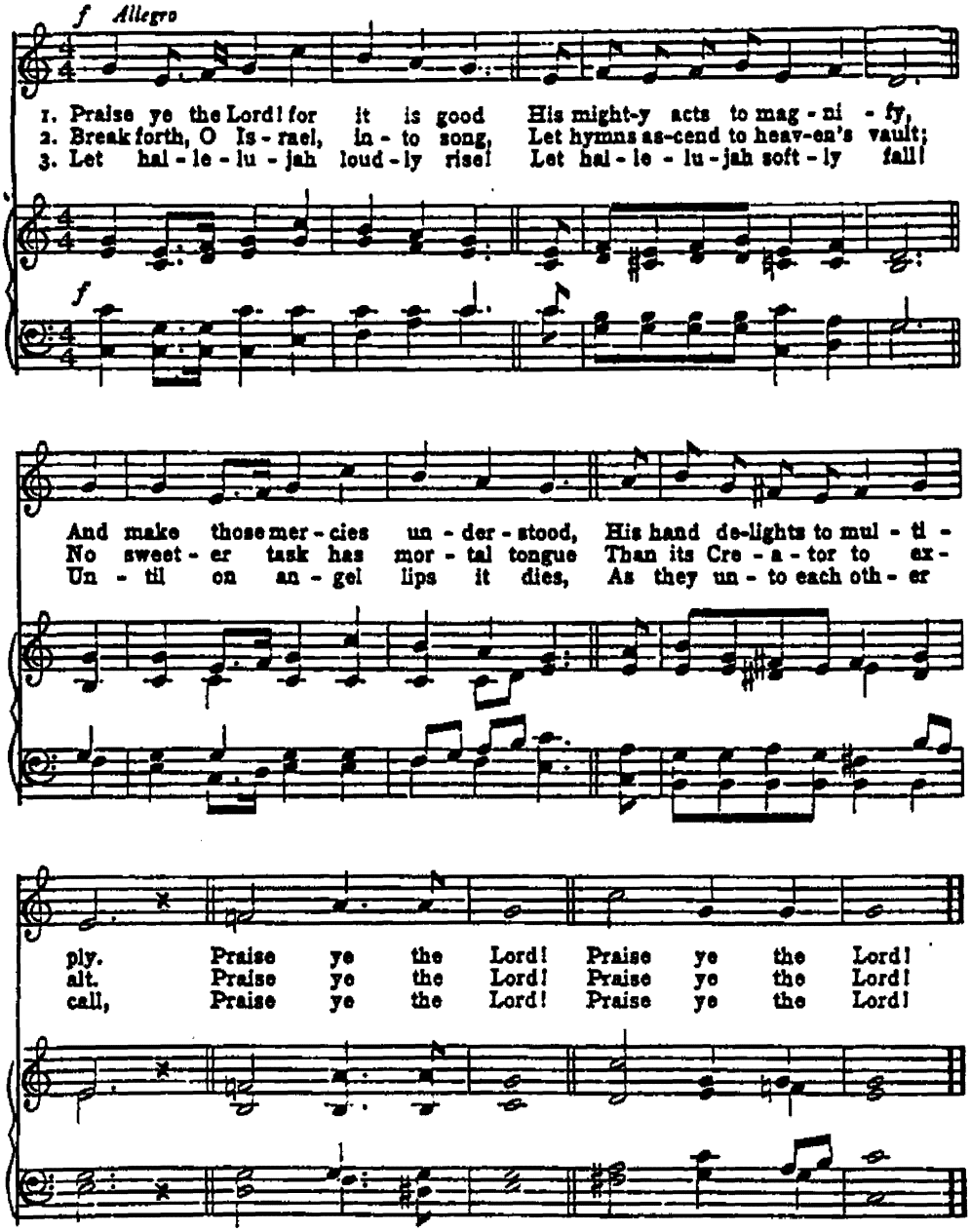


4:a. Hymn No. 130, "Praise Ye the Lord," from the 1866 Choir Book. Note the pencil markings---"P M" and "fine and familiar." Setting is by organist Charles DaCosta.

Praise

65 Praise Ye the Lord!

Penina Moise — Lewis M. Issacs

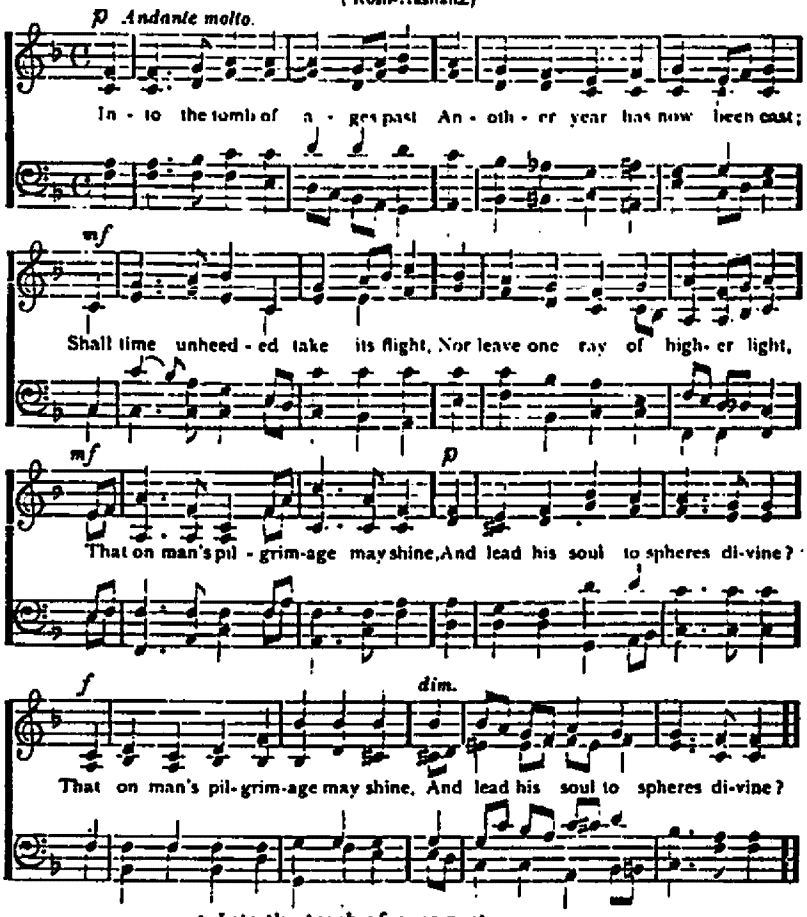


66

4:b. "Praise Ye the Lord," setting by Lewis M. Issacs, from the *Union Hymnal* of 1946.

No. 101. Into the Tomb of Ages Past.

(Rosh-Hashana.)



1 Into the tomb of ages past
Another year has now been cast;
Shall time unheeded take its flight,
Nor leave one ray of higher light,
‖: That on man's pilgrimage may shine
And lead his soul to spheres divine? :‖

2 With firm resolves your bosoms nerve,
The God of right alone to serve;
Speech, thought and act to regulate,
By what His perfect laws dictate;
‖: Nor from His holy precepts stray,
By worldly idols lured away. :‖

110

Into the Tomb of Ages Past.

3 Peace to the house of Israel!
May joy within it ever dwell!
May sorrow on the opening year,
Forgetting its accustomed tear,
‖: With smiles again fond kindred mee
With hopes revived, the festal greet! :‖

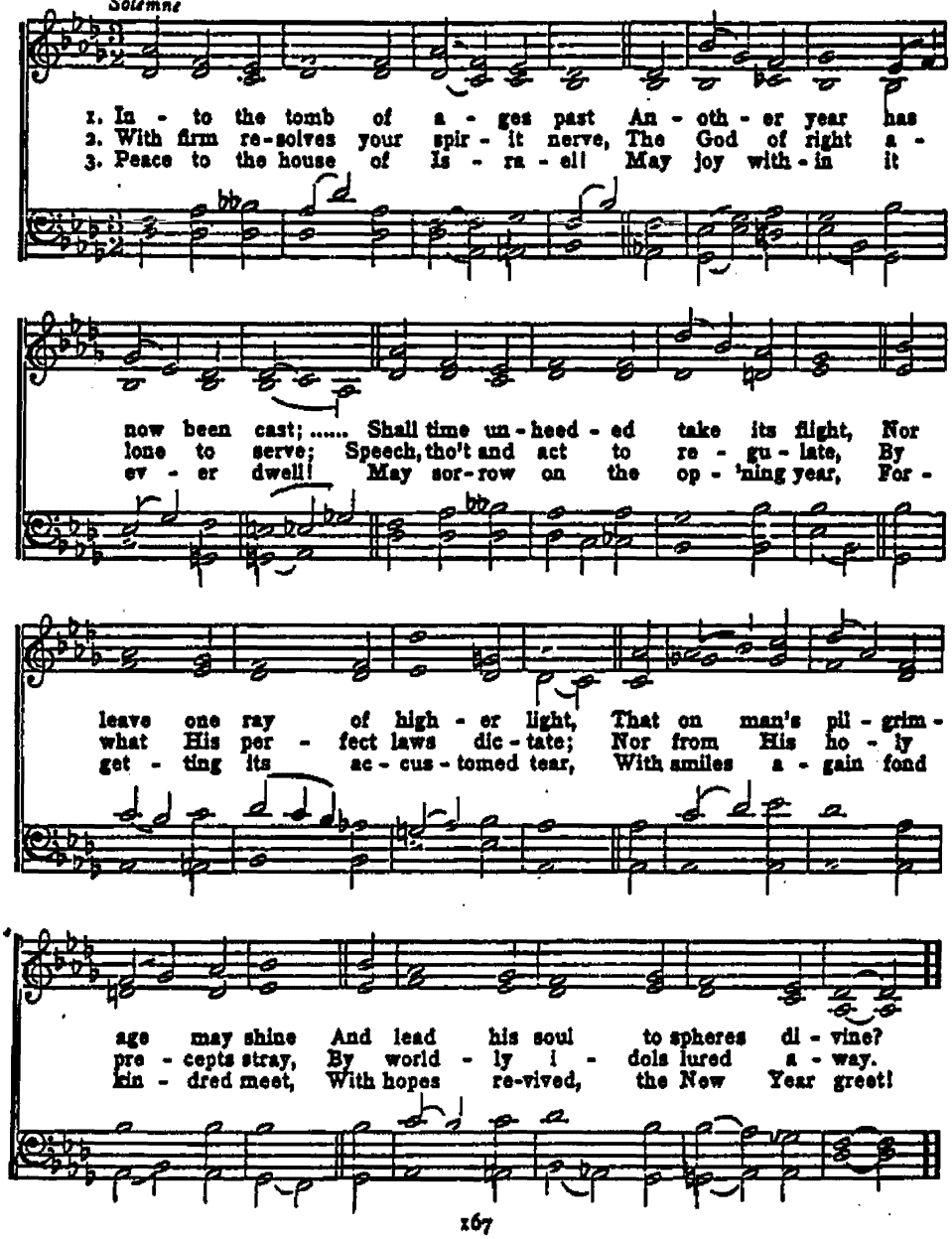
4:c. "Into the Tomb of Ages Past," setting from the *Union Hymnal* of 1897. The music is listed as "traditional."

New Year

156 Into the Tomb of Ages.

Penina Moise — James G. Heller

Solemne



167

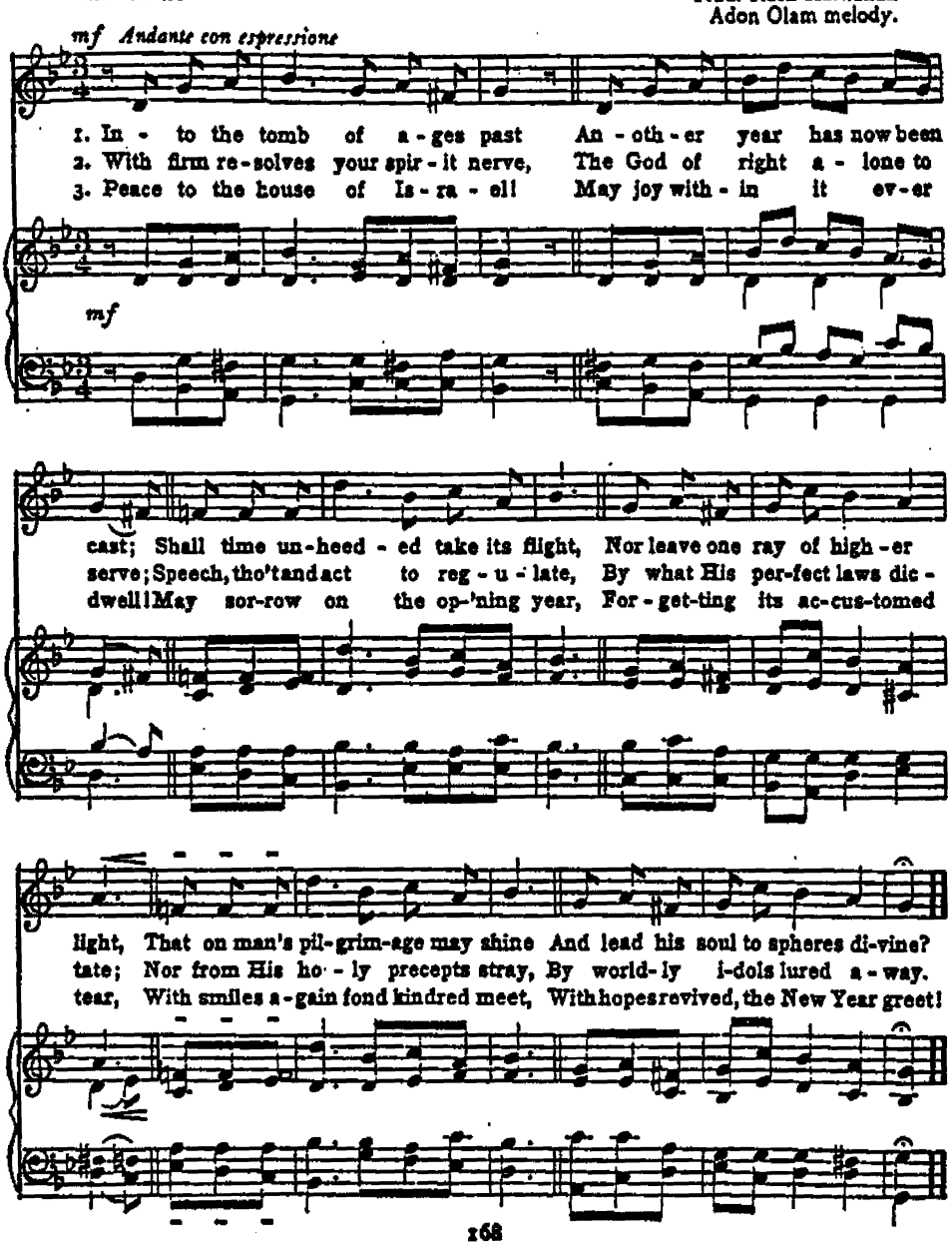
4:d. "Into the Tomb of Ages Past," setting by James G. Heller, from the Union Hymnal of 1946.

New Year

157 Into the Tomb of Ages Past

Penina Moise

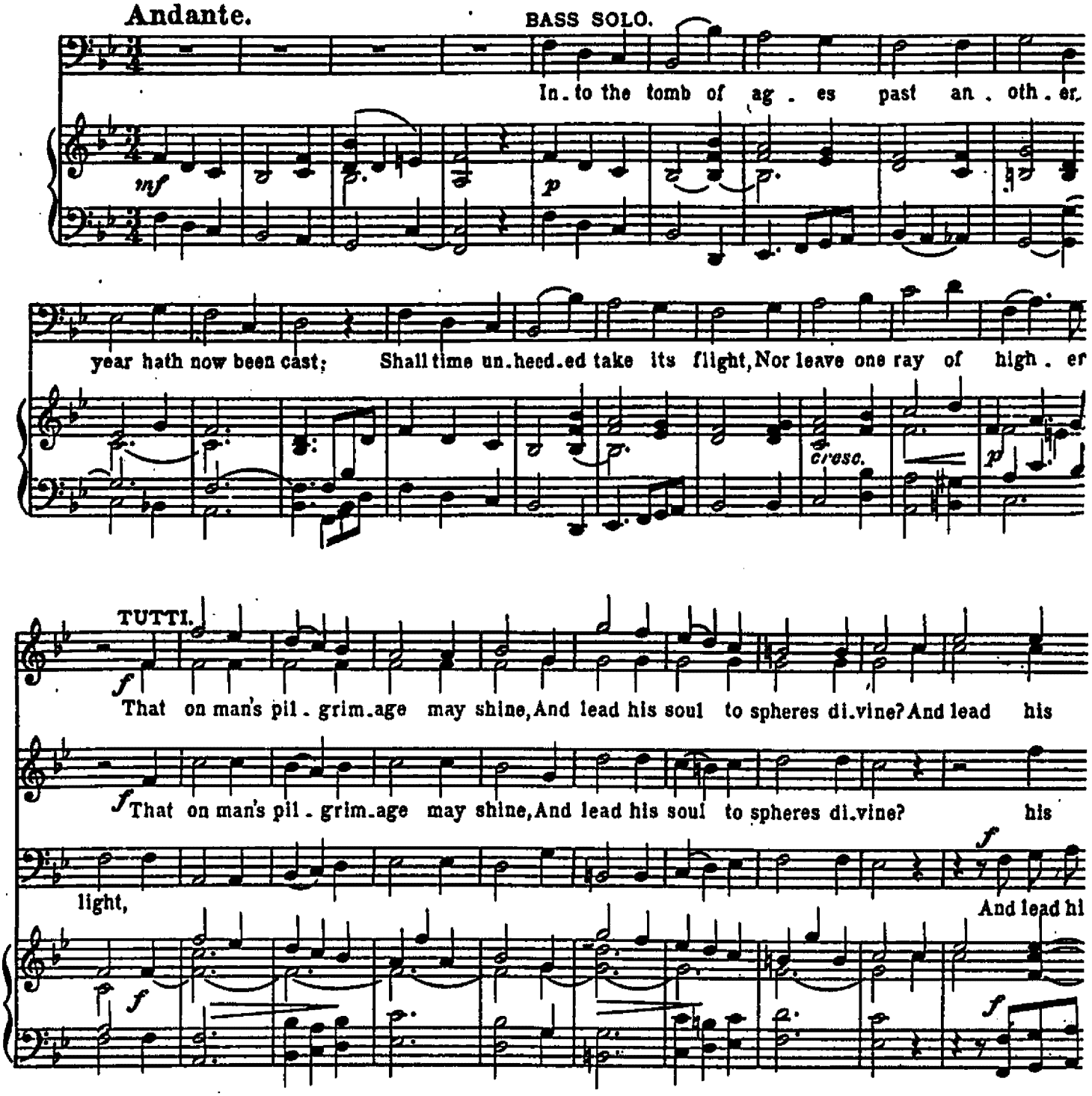
A. W. Binder
Trad. Rosh Hashanah
Adon Olam melody.



4:e. "Into the Tomb of Ages Past," setting by A.W. Binder, from the *Union Hymnal* of 1946.

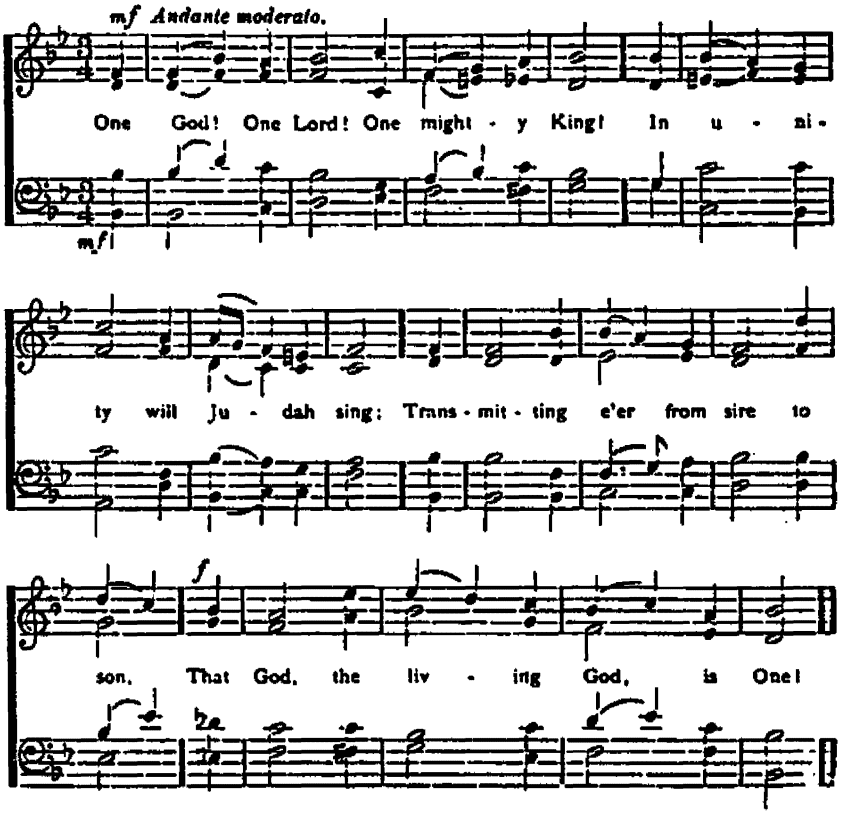
Nº 9.

Hymn. "Into the tomb."



4:f. "Into the Tomb of Ages Past," setting by Sigmund Schlessinger.

No. 5. The One God.



1 One God! One Lord! One mighty King
In unity will Judah sing;
Transmitting e'er from sire to son
That God, the living God, is One!

2 Thou Sovereign of the Universe
Through ages and all climes diverse,
The Jewish child is taught to praise,
To lisp Thy name, to walk Thy ways.

3 To Thee alone, when life recedes,
The dying Israelite still pleads;
In One allgracious God and guide
His fleeting spirit doth confide.

7

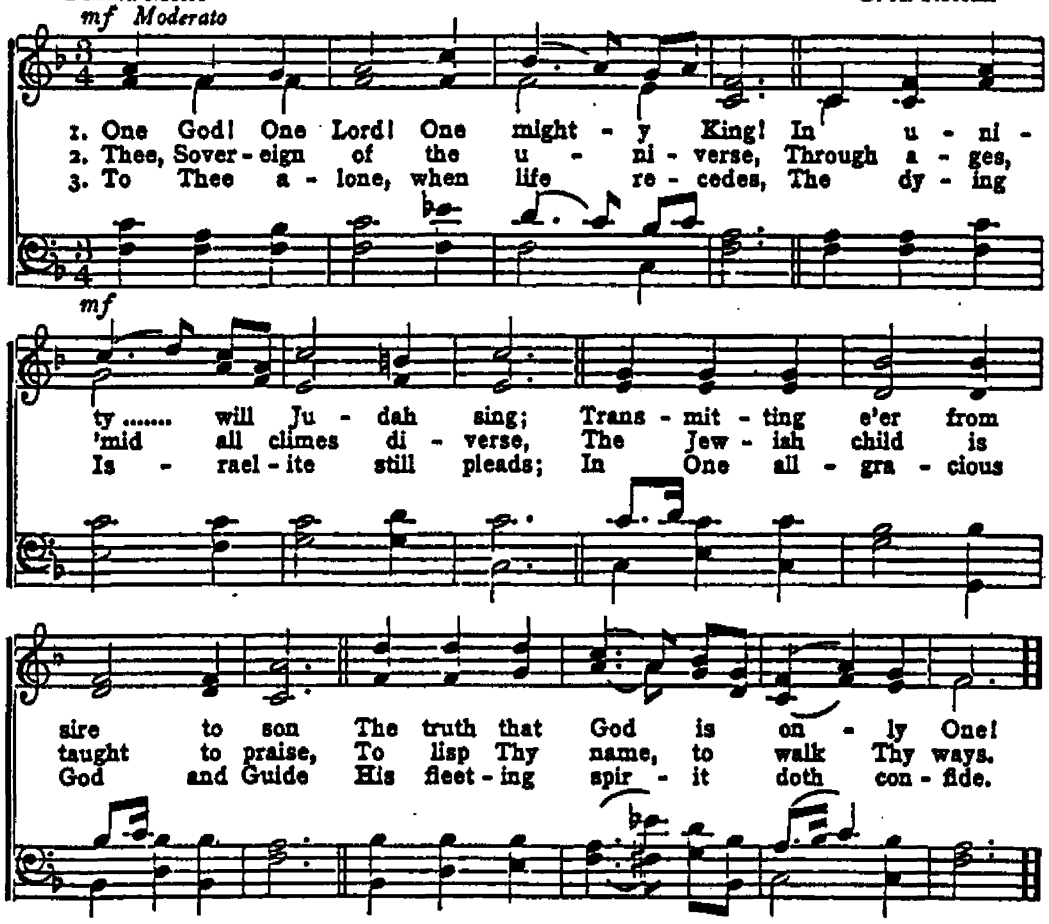
4:g. One God! One Lord,! setting by Beethoven, from the Union Hymnal of 1897.

Israel

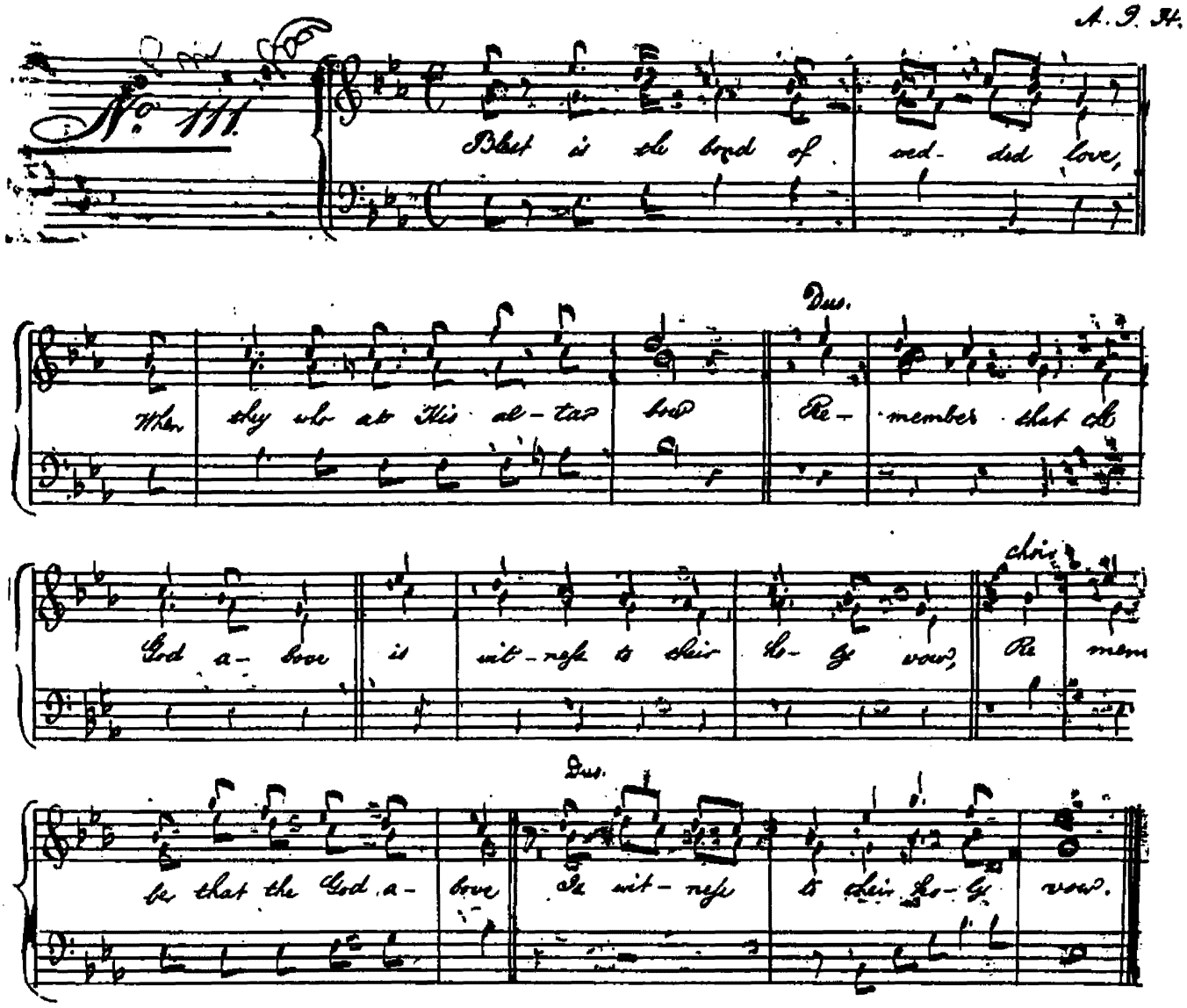
140 One God! One Lord!

Penina Moise — G. A. Rossini

mf Moderato



4:h. "One God! One Lord!" setting by G.A. Rossini, from the *Union Hymnal* of 1946.

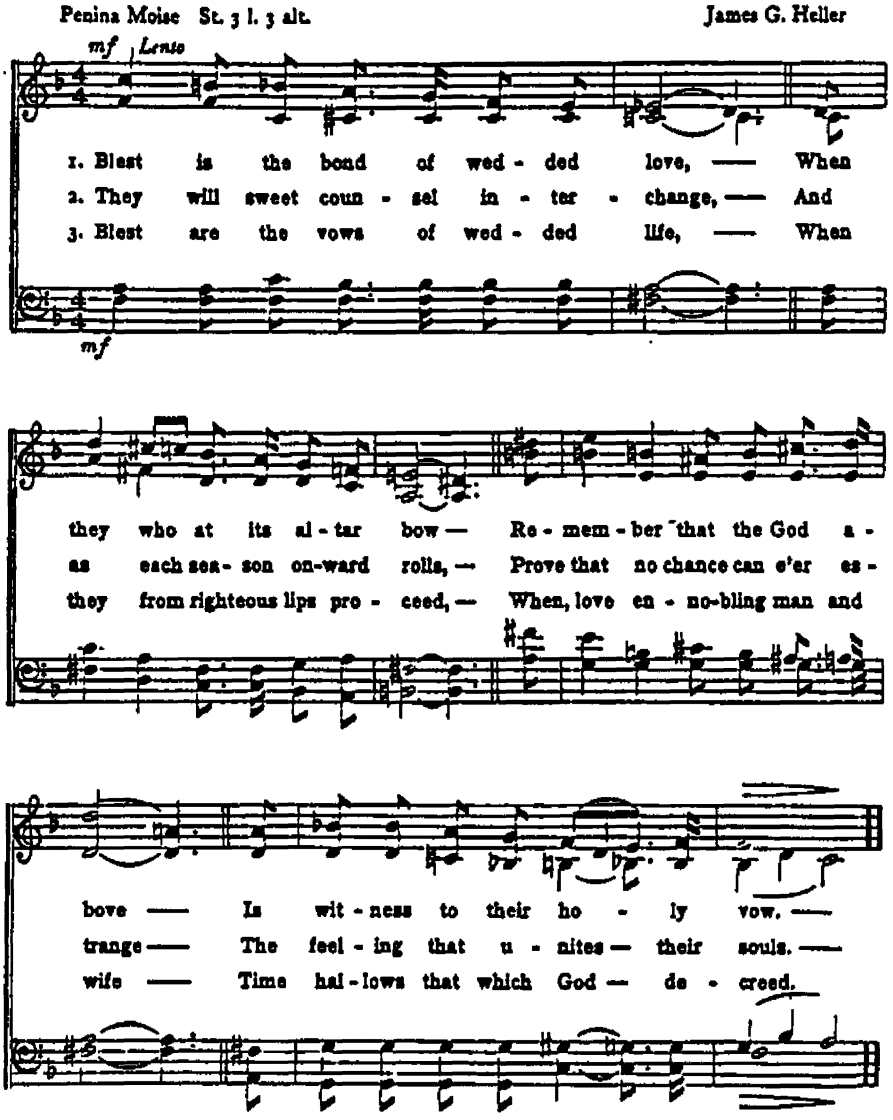


4:i. "Blest is the Bond of Wedded Love," setting by A.I.H., from the 1866 Choir Book.

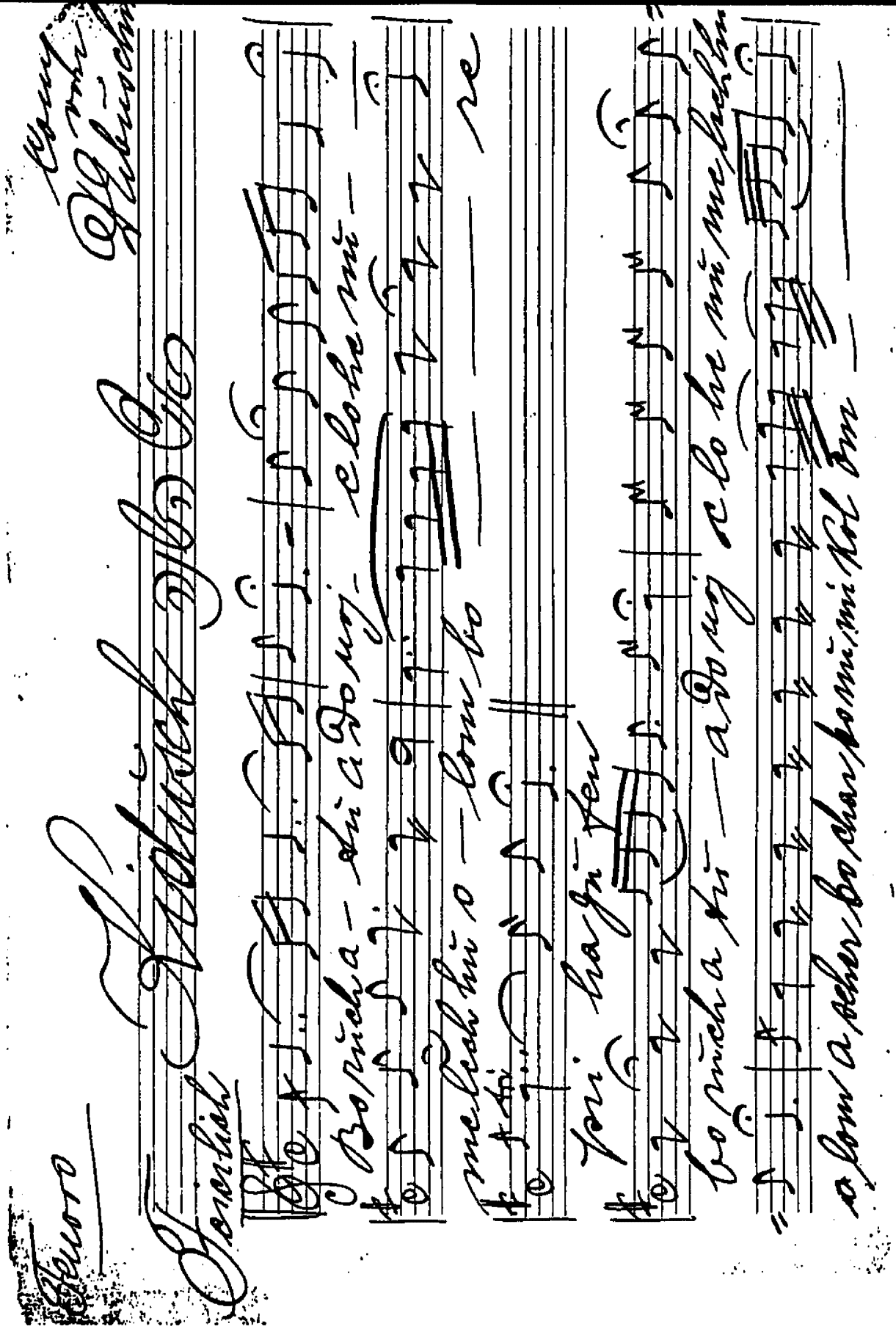
The Marriage

219 **Blest is the Bond**

Penina Moise St. 3 l. 3 alt. James G. Heller



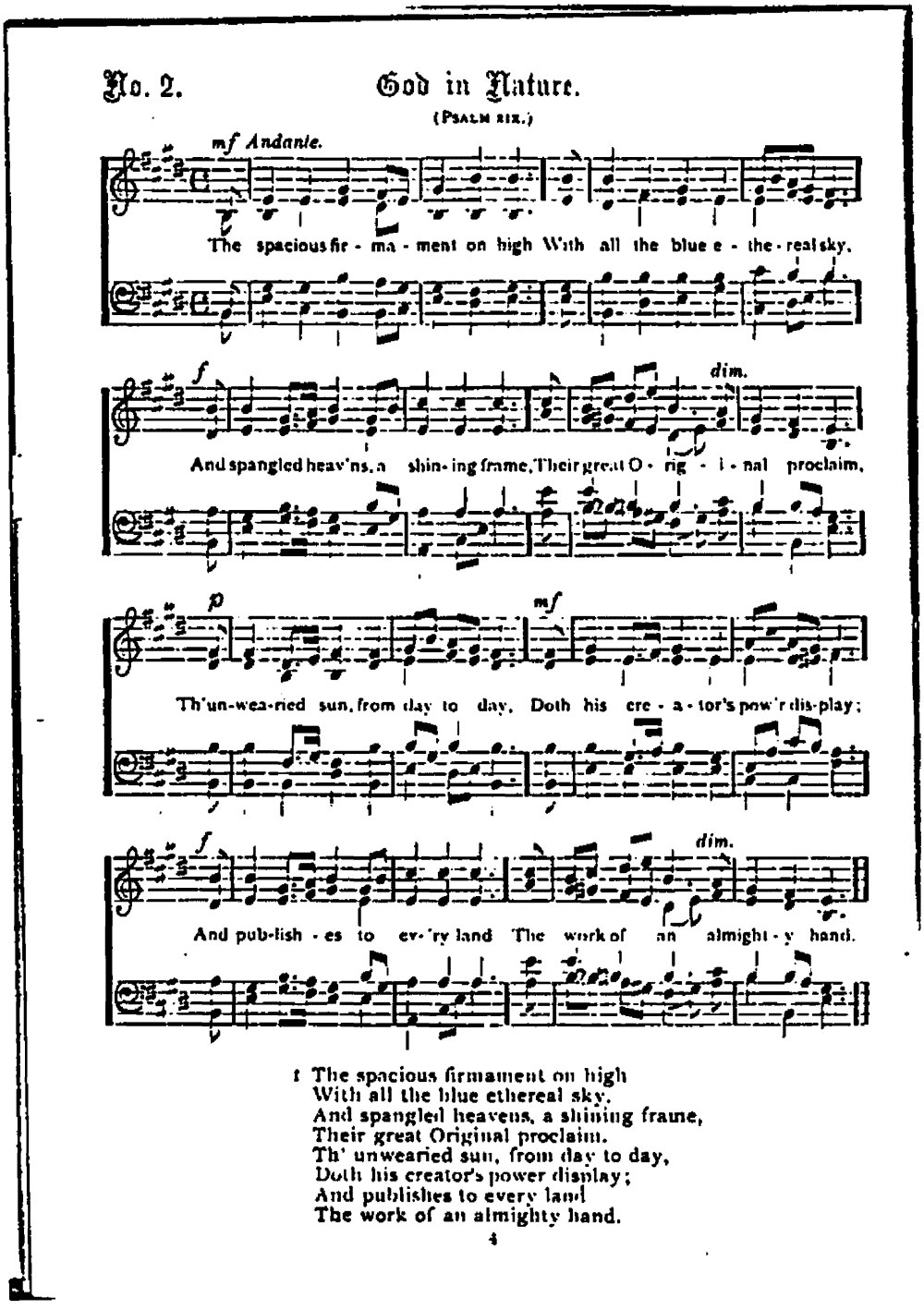
4:j. "Blest is the Bond of Wedded Love," setting by James G. Heller, from the Union Hymnal of 1946.



4:k. First page of the "Kidusch," found placed in back of the 1866 Choir Book. Composer is undetermined.

APPENDIX FIVE

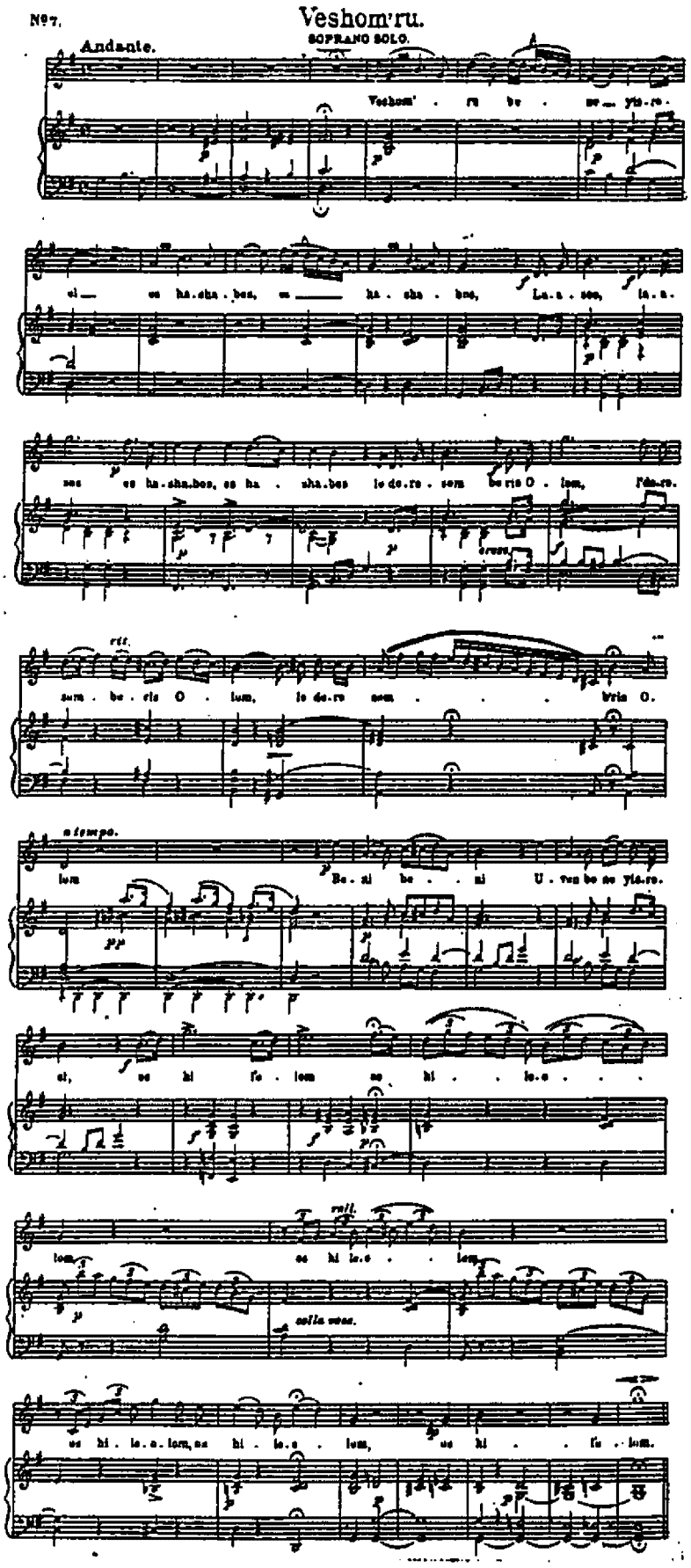
EXAMPLES FROM LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY REPERTOIRE



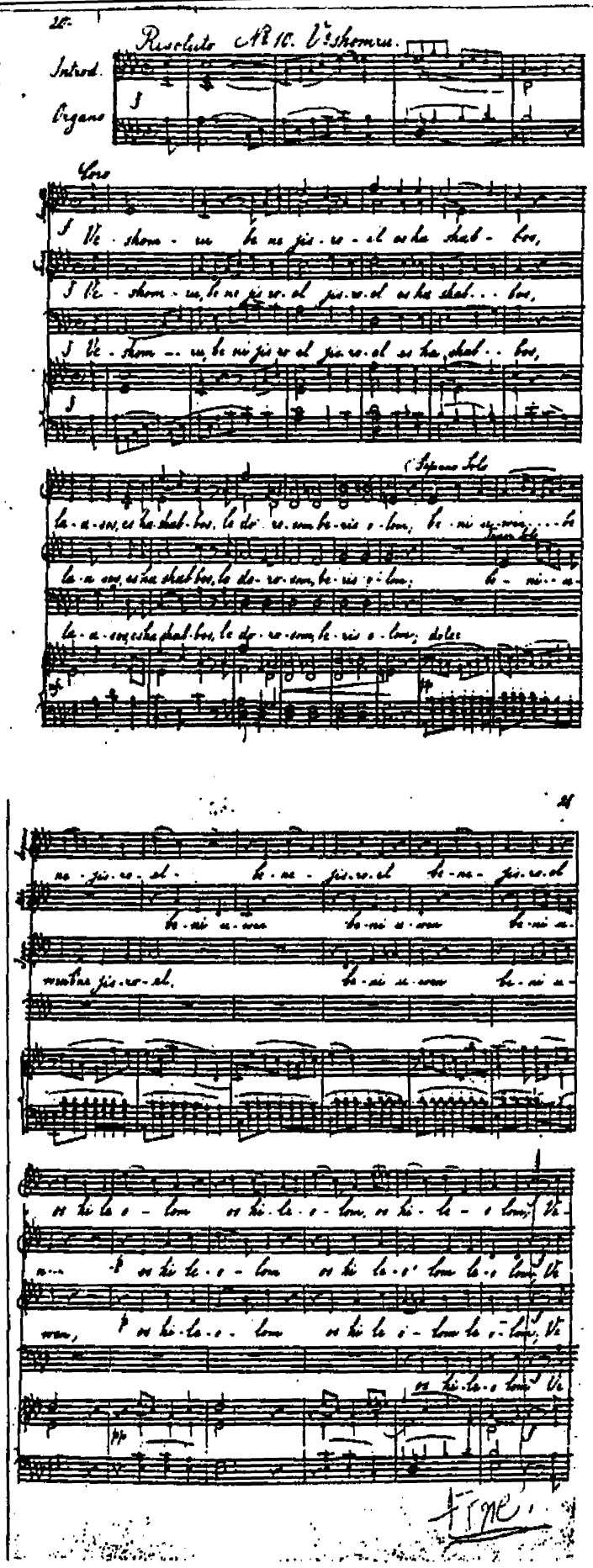
1 The spacious firmament on high
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,
Their great Original proclaim.
Th' unwearied sun, from day to day,
Doth his creator's power display;
And publishes to every land
The work of an almighty hand.

4

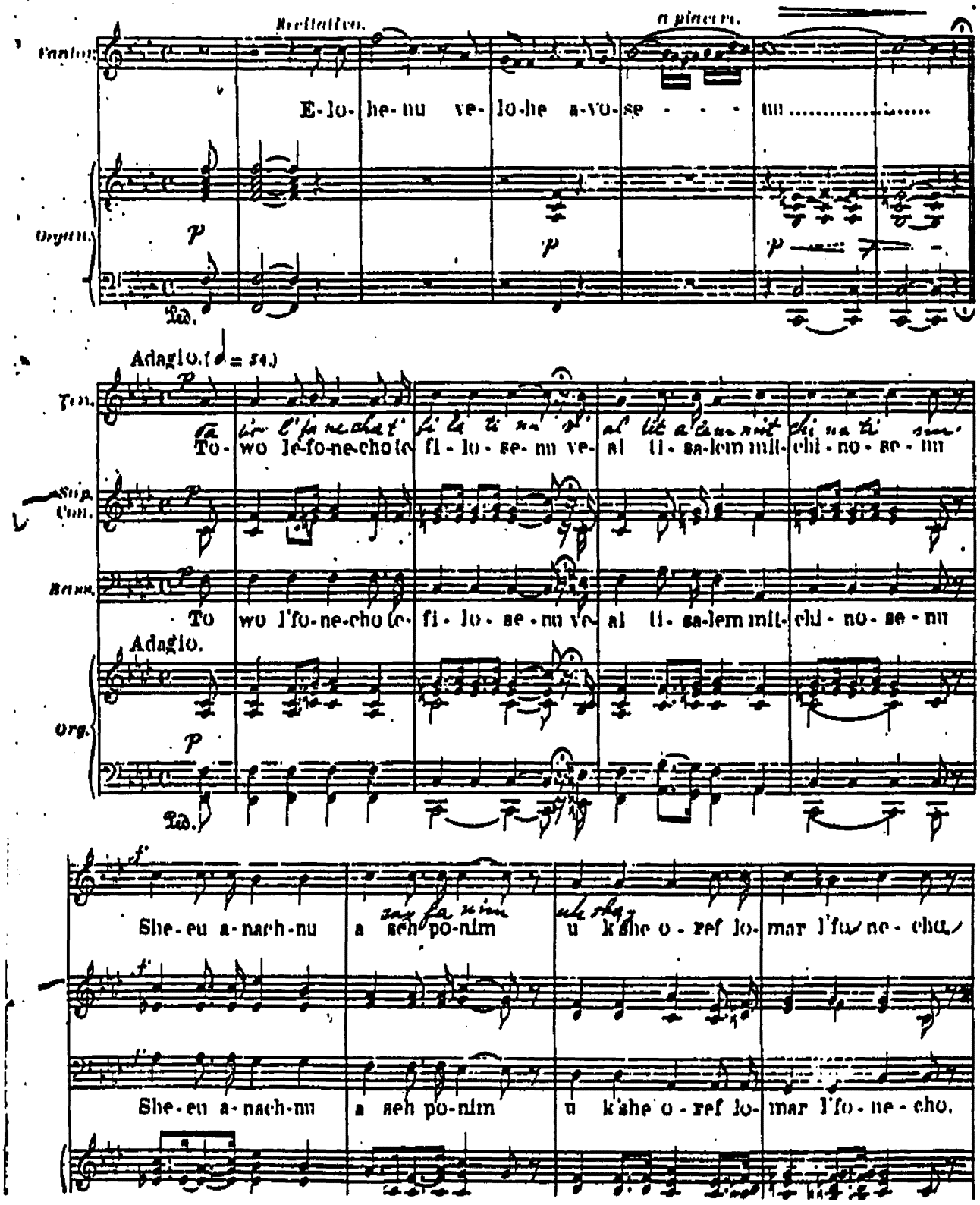
5:a. "The Spacious Firmament on High" as it appeared in the *Union Hymnal* of 1897. The musical setting is "traditional."



5:c. "*Veshom'ru,*" by Sigmund Schlessinger.



5:d. "*Veshomru,*" by Fred Kitziger.



5:e. *"Eloheinu, velohe avosenu,"* by Tho's Spencer Lloyd, from *Zimrath Yah* collection by Kaiser and Welsch. Note that the congregation was still following the Sephardi *minhag*. The transliteration was changed back to the old Sephardi pronunciation.

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