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**MI SHEBEIRACH, ANOINTING, ZIKR:
MULTI-FAITH HEALING~MUSIC AND MEANING**

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**Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for Master of Sacred Music Degree and Cantorial Ordination**

**Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music,
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Advisor: Rabbi Kim Geringer

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INTRODUCTION

What's the purpose of religion, if not to be there as a supporting, meaningful presence, in times of emotional, spiritual and physical need? I wanted to delve deeper in my religion, Reform Judaism, and the two other core monotheistic faith traditions, Christianity, and Islam, to see what I could discover about their healing musical and ritual traditions. I wanted to search on a human, personal level, talking to people that I found to be authorities in the field. After being deeply shaped and impacted by doing a summer unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) in San Francisco, CA, being the only Jewish chaplain intern, working with a diverse array of patients, nurses, doctors, and chaplains, I wanted to further explore how healing through music touches people when they are ill, and on a daily basis, through their religion. Being able to be present for and impact people of many cultural backgrounds and faith traditions, as a Reform Jewish, graduate student, and almost cantor, was powerful and life changing. Since I was a child, I have always been interested in Judaism through music, as well connecting with other faith traditions. I got even more involved, inspired, and passionate about this after my CPE journey. I have so many stories of visiting non-Jewish patients a series of times, and after listening to their stories, wanted to give of myself as a Jewish cantor, which meant singing a *Mi Shebeirach*, healing prayer, holding the hand of someone who was in and out of the cardio telemetry unit for years, and felt hopeless. Yet she was comfortable to share of herself with me, so I shared my tradition with her and she listened, recorded it and cried, and had a glimmer of hope. My first on-call visit, I had to be there for a middle-aged man whose breathing tube was about to be pulled out. His two sisters were by his side. I was so scared, but I knew I had to just be present for them. I kept repeating, welled with tears, "You will be with God." We were all holding hands over him. After 20 minutes or so and he still hadn't passed on, I noticed their crosses, and offered that we could

all sing "Amazing Grace." That was the greatest gift I could give them at this most difficult moment in their lives of losing their brother. And shortly after, he took his last breath.

I discovered that there isn't any traditional healing liturgy of any religion. There isn't a right or wrong way to touch people's hearts in times of need and suffering. What I've learned from the culmination of talking to those who I perceive to be experts of the three monotheistic faiths, and purely spiritually driven people, is that healing isn't about a cure-- it's about being touched emotionally. It's about wholeness. There is no better way to strive for that wholeness and connection, both internally and with those around us, than with music. Music triggers and touches our emotions, our hearts, and our brains, in a way that no spoken word can. It is a direct path to healing and peace of the moment. Music, whether stemming from the three monotheistic faiths that truly unite rather than divide us, or music deemed nostalgic, nationalistic, or spiritual, can heal our broken hearts of the now; not cure, but open ourselves up to greater reception of love, purpose and joy, in whatever we are in need of in that moment. Being a presenter of music to someone, one can be a channel of healing.

Everyone has pain and challenges. We all come into contact with people who aren't like us. We all have to have methods through music and ritual to cope with brokenness, both individually and collectively. I want all healing music to be accessible to people of any faith. Music transcends faith lines; if music is done with clear intentions and beautifully, it can touch the soul. Healing is a process, a continuous journey. If one is strongly rooted in one's own faith, one should be able to transcend faith. Music is a part of our humanity, an essential part of healing. Music is how I connect to God, a form of prayer; music envelops my whole identity; I think it can do that for others if they're open-hearted and open minded to it.

CHAPTER 1 ~ Jewish Healing: Music and Meaning

A. Background

Debbie Friedman is a defining figure of contemporary Reform Jewish music, with even Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion's cantorial graduate school named after her, The Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music. Friedman's *Mi Shebeirach*, is known as the quintessential prayer for healing to most Reform Jews. Without Friedman, creating a new genre of accessible, folk, Jewish music with Hebrew and English, including songs for the intention of healing, there wouldn't be the vast usage and creativity to incorporate healing songs, add healing services, and have the concept of healing and wholeness play such a vital role in contemporary Judaism. This is the first time Friedman used the *Mi Shebeirach* melody she wrote, and also why:

In October of 1987, four designated individuals took their places on the *bimah* and opened a huge *tallit*. All those who were in need of healing were invited to come forward to gather under the *tallit*. A mass exodus ensued and there was no one left sitting in the congregation. One hundred fifty people were huddled beneath the *tallit*. This would be the very first time I was to sing the *Mi Shebeirach* publicly... I wrote this setting of the *Mi Shebeirach* for a friend who was celebrating her 60th birthday. She was struggling with the recent death of her husband as well as other significant difficulties in her life. I wanted and needed to write something that would speak to both the pain and the joy of this occasion... I wrote this piece when I was hearty and healthy. I wrote it for my friends... While we know full well that healing of the body may not be a possibility, we know that healing of the soul has infinite possibilities.¹

Friedman realized after that moment how many people were in need of healing. None of us go through a year without physical, emotional, or spiritual challenges, changes and pain, so Friedman's creation of the original *Mi Shebeirach* melody was a springboard for a whole new world of human emotional depth and reality to be added and integrated into our religious practice. This *Mi Shebeirach* prayer was originally used only within the Torah service. But, thanks to Debbie Friedman, Jewish healing, within the *Mi Shebeirach* prayer, was revitalized and

¹ Merri Lovinger Arian, editor, *R'fuah Sh'leimah Songs of Jewish Healing* (New York, NY: Synagogue 2000, 2002), 53-54.

given a whole new purpose. Traditionally, in Judaism the healing service and prayer for healing didn't exist. According to Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman, traditional prayer speaks to God, and healing services speak to the individual person, and then connect them to God.² We owe this to Debbie Freidman. Debbie Friedman and Rabbi Amy Eilberg started the healing center in San Francisco, California (CA), the Bay Area Jewish Healing Center, which stemmed into healing centers nationally. A healing syllabus was written which featured a healing service. This was the first attempt to bring the word, "transformation", to Jewish consciousness. According to Rabbi Hoffman, "Healing is a sense of how music brings out wholeness and the deepest aspirations we have," and it depends on the moment and is elevated by our rituals. We Jewish clergy, musicians, and congregants, are inspired to infuse the themes of healing and wholeness into our prayer of action and our action of prayer, encouraging our inner selves to continue to strive for wholeness, purity, connection and hope.

Debbie Friedman was directly responsible for our Reform Jewish tradition having a whole new intention for musical prayer and healing. Even so, our Jewish tradition has had emotional connection and depth through recitation, but healing music as a theme wasn't at the forefront of the practice. Music as an intentional, personal, and communal act is inherently healing, and I think that is more of a contemporary awareness, the more music and the brain are studied scientifically. Lamentations, Psalms 27 and 121, David's psalms about praise and music like 98, 146, 147, and many other psalms can be used as a guide, something to personally relate to during challenging times. Rabbi Daniel F. Polish in his book, Bringing the Psalms to Life, describes how the psalms express humanity and shows that in Christian tradition, one of the Church Fathers, Bishop of Alexandria, said, "The Psalms embrace the entire human life, express

² Personal Interview with Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman, July 6, 2016.

every emotion of the soul, every impulse of the heart.”³ Psalms 22, 31, 88, and 102, for example, remind us that even when we feel like we have been abandoned, we are never alone. Human emotions and God's presence are palpable in the psalms. Moses sets aside everything else in his life as a leader of the Jewish people to plead with God to heal his sister, Miriam, in a swift declaration in Numbers 12:13. This expresses that care and healing for those we love takes precedence over all else, even if this process occurs at inopportune times.

The Bible is intrinsic, and while we can experience the purest and rawest form of humanity from the *Tanach*, Rabbi Shefa Gold tells us in *The Magic of Hebrew Chant*, that the Baal Shem Tov was an early believer in the power of song and called on the Jewish people to expand their capacity for joy, so that they could sing their own personal Torah daily. Similarly, Rabbi Akiva taught that it is healthy to sing daily.⁴ I believe that the purpose of religion is to find meaning and connection in our lives, to answer those existential questions. Using, sharing, and creating music from our religion is a gift, as music as an entity speaks to our heads, our hearts, our pulses, and also connects us to others. Music and religion, when fusing at their best, and most productive, can elevate one another, and can be the most healing vehicle of all. Musical prayer calls us to a place of individual and communal goodness, to be our highest selves, to be aware of God's Divine, compassionate presence all around us and inside ourselves.

Psalms are powerful-- sung, read or recited. The psalms on their own, and then further in musical form, are powerful and personal tools in challenging times for us to use at our disposal, reminding us we are not alone. Rabbi Polish further teaches us that the psalms are tools to call out to God and express our closeness to God in times of illness and beyond, calling on God as

³ Daniel F. Polish, *Bringing the Psalms to Life* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2000), 13.

⁴ Rabbi Shefa Gold, *The Magic of Hebrew Chant* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2013), 39.

Rofeh, Healer, whether or not physical cure is in the realm of possibility.⁵ In our daily liturgy, God is referred to as a Healer in, for example, the *Elohai N'shamah* prayer, or *R'faeinu* within multiple sections of our *Amidah*, the core of the Jewish prayer service. Psalms are a connective model for our own challenges. The enemies mentioned in the psalms can be seen as the failings of our own bodies. There are metaphorical ways to directly connect to the psalms and apply them to our own experiences. Psalm 6 is an example of one of many psalms that can be turned to in times of physical struggle for the relief, comfort and hope that can come from experiencing closeness to God. Psalm 107 also expresses God's mercy in times of distress. Psalm 30 encourages us to maintain hope in God as our healer, in whatever form that may take for the individual. For example, verse 3 of Psalm 30 says, "Oh Lord my God, I cried unto Thee, and Thou didst heal me." Rabbi Polish tells us that:

The psalms open to us the possibility of understanding that God is there for us to call upon for help and healing in our time of need... We encountered Moses interceding on behalf of his sister Miriam during her illness. Just as he cried out in his time of need, so the psalms allow us to call out in ours-- and be answered: "O God, please God... Heal us and we shall be healed."⁶

The psalms remind us that illness is a part of the universal human experience, and that we have all the resources we need inside ourselves.

⁵ Polish, *Bringing the Psalms to Life*, 73.

⁶ Polish, *Bringing the Psalms to Life*, 93.

B. Practitioners in the Field

Cantor Lisa Levine, chaplain and composer, spoke with me about how she helps people connect to their deepest selves. She believes that the power that musical ritual has to bring hope and positivity, both personal and communal, neurological and psycho-spiritual, is profound, and cannot be denied, dismissed or taken for granted.⁷ When it comes to prayer and rituals for healing, especially when visiting individuals in the hospital, Cantor Levine asks herself, "What do people need?" and sometimes asks patients specifically, "What would you like me to pray for?" She uses music as a vehicle to express what is in people's hearts. Cantor Levine recognizes Debbie Friedman as one of her primary influences since she was her mentor. Cantor Levine's *Mi Shebeirach*, with the words "Hear our prayer" repeated has joined Debbie Friedman's in the pantheon of Jewish healing music. Our Jewish healing rituals and creations continue to be formed from lived experience, challenge and change. Cantor Levine, who wrote her *Mi Shebeirach* for a friend who later died, adapts Jewish and folk songs at bedside for people, in the moment. She writes different songs for different stages of healing and life. Cantor Levine explains how symbiotic the work she does with other people is, how she draws strength from their hope in the face of incredible physical challenges. She believes that when we do something to help others, we also help ourselves. The music Cantor Levine shares on chaplaincy visits stems from listening and being in tune with patient. She listens to their story, and at the end of a visit, offers a prayer of song, asking what they'd like to pray about, or what would bring them the most comfort. Listening in a healing way, can lead to healing music, and can lead to a response that is authentic. According to James E. Miller, in The Art of Listening in a Healing Way, a book and philosophy recommended by Cantor Levine, "By listening from your own separate foundation, from a non anxious presence stance, you participate in an experience of

⁷ Personal Interview with Cantor Lisa Levine, September 13, 2016.

stability and safety that can open the door to hope.”⁸ And music also leads to hope, and music is reflecting, is mirroring like deep listening, what the other person needs. And as Miller quotes Voltaire, “The ear is the road to the heart.”⁹

Rabbi Shefa Gold further elaborates on this concept, arguing that healing music and chant are not just beneficial acts, but also, a way of life. She writes in The Magic of Hebrew Chant, inspiring tools of chant and sacred phrase to live a more compassionate, meaningful life, being aware of our own gratitude and the Divine. Sylvia Boorstein writes in the forward of this book, that life is an arena of practice, and Hebrew chant is an “Invitation to leading a sanctified life, one cleansed of confusion, shining in clarity.”¹⁰ The word of our liturgy can become music of the mind that supports, consoles, directs and redirects, moment to moment, all of our activities.” And further, Rabbi Gold says that only chanting encompasses all these aspects of ourselves, integrates physical, heart feeling, head study, and spiritual intention, and can lead to healing. She believes that sacred chant brings out our whole being, the fullness of what is inside ourselves, moves energy when it gets stuck, and magnifies our awareness of a state of consciousness via breath, sound and rhythm. Rabbi Gold writes, “The magic of chant is that just a few short words, simply repeated with sweet passion, deliberate intention, and refined beauty, can unlock treasure upon treasure of healing, wisdom and love.”¹¹ Rabbi Gold has developed a program to teach people this way of life and to train people to heal themselves and others through sacred chant. Just as in hospital-based chaplaincy caregivers must tune into the present need of themselves or the person or group they are with, music can offer access to these needs and bring awareness to the caregiver herself; Rabbi Gold advises spiritual leaders to respond to the needs in front of them

⁸ James E. Miller, *The Art of Listening in a Healing Way* (Fort Wayne, IN: Willow Green Publishing, 2003), 33.

⁹ Miller, *The Art of Listening in a Healing Way*, 30.

¹⁰ Gold, *The Magic of Hebrew Chant*, xiv.

¹¹ Gold, *The Magic of Hebrew Chant*, xv.

and ask what is working. There is also just as much space for emotions and listening in the silence. Rabbi Gold uses the “vault” of sacred texts in our Jewish tradition to write chants for what is needed in that moment, for herself and the community. Rabbi Gold notes that the Hebrew root *zayin-mem-reish* means both “to chant,” and “to prune,” pruning away all the unnecessary clutter, all that obscures the essential. “Each repetition of the sacred phrase can clear away another layer of extraneous clutter and distraction.”¹² Rabbi Gold is also emphasizing that chant has the power to open us inwards and outwards to our deepest selves and to foster communal connection through our inner work.

Rabbi Geela Rayzel Raphael does artistic, musically uplifting, “soul unfolding” work.¹³ She does Jewish healing and outreach in interfaith forms, writing a vast amount of music; one of her CDs is, “May the Angels Carry You,” and an example of a song on there is, “Healer of the Broken of Hearted” (Psalm 147). She has led and practiced healing services frequently. Rabbi Raphael does personalized rituals for individuals going through physical challenges, and they attempt to serve what is needed in the moment. When her own father was sick, she chanted for hours, the prayer based on Moses’ shortest prayer for his ill sister, Miriam, “*Ana El Na R’fa Na La*,” “Heal her now.” She has continued to do mantras based on this alliteration, to attempt to let go into God’s power; just as Rabbi Shefa Gold similarly says, we can surrender to the power of chant in music and turn over to God: “We raise our vibration to a more joyous level, higher to where healing can occur.” Rabbi Raphael intertwines emotion and intention into prayer; in some healing rituals she uses drums or Tibetan crystal singing bowls. Her soul resonates to joy, so she resonates strongly with a highly musical *Kabbalat Shabbat* service. She also finds it inspiring to do chaplaincy monthly in a nursing home and says that wherever she is, she sings.

¹² Gold, *The Magic of Hebrew Chant*, xvi.

¹³ Personal Interview with Rabbi Geela Rayzel Raphael, June 28, 2016.

Rabbi Nancy Fuchs Kreimer, P.h.D., is an Associate Professor of Religious Studies and the director of multi-faith studies at Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC). In college she was interested in Jewish-Christian dialogue. She later became involved in work around Israel. She also worked at a chaplaincy, healing center. Post 9/11, she spoke with Muslims in America, as they needed interfaith work at this time with all the Islamaphobia. Rabbi Kreimer says that during the anti-Semitism of the 1920s, many Christians had our backs, so now it is our turn again to be there for Muslims, and RRC brings young Muslim and Jewish leaders together.¹⁴ She learned about chanting the same verse over and over in a mantra type way, from the Sufi Zikr ceremony, charting God's characteristics, and says that this is a healing practice transporting one to a healing world. She feels energized as an interfaith educator. It is easy and accessible to chant in multi-faith settings. And she believes that "Peace work is healing work," and that having interfaith dialogue, connection and creating trust, is peace work. She has worked on many interfaith retreats at which people are invited to share their stories from their hearts around a campfire, very often sharing in song and teaching others new songs, and in turn connecting deeper to the self in learning from others. Religious music was used in a non-religious, comfortable way. Her theology of interfaith work is that we are all truly *betzelem elohim*, made in the image of God.

Cantor Sharon Bernstein, created a book of healing called Under the Wings of Rafa'el. It is designed for Jews and non-Jews alike, with a universal concept of healing. She did struggle with how to translate the word, "God," as many people are not comfortable with the terminology but love the idea of a spirit or divinity. The music is about the text to Cantor Bernstein. She says that "Any words have infinite possibilities."¹⁵ She loves liturgy, and finds leading prayer

¹⁴ Personal Interview with Rabbi Nancy Fuchs Kreimer, July 21, 2016

¹⁵ Personal Interview with Cantor Sharon Bernstein, October 18, 2016.

incredible, helping people find new things in connections when singing. She really connects to and loves the verses *Min Hameitzar*, about envisioning God widening out of the depths of despair. She also loves *Ufros Aleinu*, the sheltering aspect of it, with *Shechinah*, the feminine side of the Divine, guarding us. She will also sing musical theater standards to some people, because that is what is healing and relevant to them. She sang Schubert with a dying man, which meant the world to him. Cantor Bernstein created a prayer for a woman who was going through chemotherapy treatment, every other week that she did it, and she would send the woman texts and recordings the night before a visit. She finds textual resonances in prayer, different healing exercises and elements. Just as such, almost anything in Jewish life can be healing, including music. She recognizes that healing music is very subjective, and healing and healing music looks different for each person. Healing is radically built into Jewish life, like our daily *Amidah* with *R'faeinu*, our morning prayer of *Asher Yatzar*, and *Bikur Cholim* laws, to name a few.

Rabbi Eric Weiss, the President and CEO of the Bay Area Jewish Healing center, is a chaplain who works daily with people who are at their most vulnerable, sick and sometimes dying, and with their families as well. As a rabbi and chaplain, he incorporates music into all his healing work, whether it is a workshop, grief group, funeral, memorial, or bedside visit. The prayers in his handbook for chaplaincy, *Mishkan R'fuah: Where Healing Resides*, can be applicable to patients of all faith traditions.¹⁶ I shared with a woman who had just had a successful liver transplant surgery, the transplant prayer from this book, and then we sang a *niggun* and she and each family member said what they were grateful for, creating a small, simple, yet powerful ritual for this most memorable, personal moment. Rabbi Weiss through his work of chaplaincy and words provides the tools and space for music to be a healing vessel. It's important for him to share a song that is familiar and comfortable when people are in such a state

¹⁶ Rabbi Eric Weiss, editor, *Mishkan R'fuah* (New York, NY: CCAR Press, 2013).

of vulnerability, and yet new music can be nice too if it feels appropriate to give music as a gift, after a visit. Rabbi Weiss shares that it's key to recognize that the *Mi Shebeirach* theology might be disturbing, the words could be alienating, if someone doesn't have any chance of physical healing or recovery, or if someone is on their deathbed.¹⁷ Rabbi Weiss recommends recognizing this and using music as a tool for connection, reflection, and most importantly, comfort.

Rabbi Weiss' colleague at the Bay Area Jewish Healing Center, Rabbi Natan Fenner, also uses music in his chaplaincy work and believes in meeting people where they are. He says that after listening to his patient, he might work with chant, music and silence.¹⁸ He uses meditation as well as traditional *nusach* and *niggunim*. He always matches the words and melody to where a person is, always tailoring to their needs, never generic. For example, when Rabbi Fenner visits an older adult in a nursing home who is seeking calm and *shalom*, he'll invoke forces of comfort and wholeness with a few words, a *kavanah*, or intention of the moment, and then sing the traditional *Shalom Aleichem* as a vehicle to connect, in a heartfelt way, the patient's past to their present and pour from their own heart. The music Rabbi Fenner offers is about affirming where someone is, whether that is about accessibility, the ability to join in, or whether that is about giving voice to someone's emotions in a soothing way, and creating a comforting listening moment. Also, something rooted in tradition can help a person feel less alone, so Rabbi Fenner will sometimes chant an improvised *Mi Shebeirach* with Hebrew and English. Another way for a person to see their life as part of the Jewish communal, people-hood experience is to tap into and reflect on a familiar biblical text that Rabbi Fenner finds applicable to each person. He uses familiar language that is reflective of their experience. He might use the Debbie Friedman *Mi Shebeirach* if that feels appropriate. At their annual Grief and Growing bereavement weekend,

¹⁷ Personal Interview with Rabbi Eric Weiss, June 20, 2016.

¹⁸ Personal Interview with Rabbi Natan Fenner, July 25, 2016.

Hamakom by Craig Taubman has been a theme melody, chanted at poignant moments. Rabbi Fenner says people can enter deeply into music which can frame their experience in a powerful way. He says it's also important to be careful and intentional about choices, easing the way into relational intimacy. Rabbi Fenner admires and uses Rabbi Shefa Gold's chants and concepts and her approaches to text and music, and gives people the permission and space to do deep work within themselves. He also recognizes within all his core themes of how he is as a chaplain, that entering a room and becoming close to a stranger is countercultural (our Western culture having a tendency to be so individualistic and separate), and that it's bold to enter into this profound conversation and connection; the transition should be eased and made sacred.

Rabbi Nancy Flam, the co-founder of the Jewish Healing Center, and now with The Institute for Jewish Spirituality, believes strongly in the soothing capacity of music and often uses singing when meeting with people in multiple capacities and settings. With Rabbi Amy Eilberg, she founded the Bay Area Jewish Healing Center, which led to the National Center for Jewish Healing. Rabbi Flam led a weekly healing service at Sha'ar Zahav in San Francisco, during the height of the AIDS epidemic in 1991. She remembers how it was personal, meaningful and authentic.¹⁹ She notes that being sung to can be reminiscent of being sung to as a child, with the accompanying feelings of safety and comfort, whether with one person or a whole community. Repeating the same words and prayers, she says, can open parts of the spiritual and emotional self up, to giving and receiving comfort and connection through the voice. Rabbi Flam says that because of the suffering in her own life and the compassion of a few people near her, she learned something about the power of presence in the midst of suffering. Rabbi Flam was a self-proclaimed spirituality seeker beginning as a child, and says that she has discovered that connecting to God with others, with awareness, is the most fulfilling work, and therefore

¹⁹ Personal Interview with Rabbi Nancy Flam, October 6, 2016.

knowing the power of loving and faithful human presence is the most compelling knowledge. Rabbi Flam sees multiple core features and themes within healing music and practice. In her work she begins with formal prayers, adding music along with spontaneous spoken prayer; she believes that this format offers the greatest potential for healing, providing an inward journey to the soul. For example, when using music as a part of prayer, when sitting with one of her students who was dying, Rabbi Flam made up a melody for the last part of the *Vidui*, *Adonai Hu haElohim*, a final confessional prayer, trusting in her own prayer sensibility and voice of love, and the connection it could convey. Another theme in healing work is vulnerability, illness just being one kind of vulnerability, and being able to be vulnerable in return in the process of this soul sharing. Both human beings are giving and receiving loving, compassionate presence. The traditional Chasidic emphasis of God as *Hatov v' Hameitiv*, always showering with blessing, as an unconditional source of goodness, wanting the best for us, an empathetic response from the universe, (and in turn with this knowledge we imitate and we act *Betzelem Elohim*, in God's image), is a theological concept that is extremely grounding and healing to Rabbi Flam. She has created a ritual of a healing circle for friends' pre-surgery. She believes in being simple and functional, starting with a song for gathering, then an invitation, then a prayer or blessing. The person who is ill can speak if he or she chooses, friends present can offer a few words, there can be moments of quiet, and then a closing song. This is such a simple yet powerful way to use music in the face of sickness, as a connective and healing tool and ritual creator. Rabbi Flam will use the whole vast repertoire of knowledge of Jewish music she has for the purpose of healing and wholeness, whatever is soothing, calming and connecting for that moment.

Rabbi Amy Eilberg, did hospice work and chaplaincy training for many years, and was the first woman ordained by the Jewish Conservative movement. She is currently doing peace

and reconciliation work and interfaith dialogue. Part of her chaplaincy education included learning from Christian colleagues, and music was an essential, powerful and positive addition. She realized with patients who were unconscious that music was calming and soothing, and that gave her the courage to sing with patients who were conscious, the offering of music an extension of pastoral presence. It became natural for Rabbi Eilberg to sing and breathe with family, friends and patients who were in many different states – those who were unconscious or those who had difficulty speaking, for example. Rabbi Eilberg also found herself often creating spontaneous healing rituals that included music for transitional moments of vulnerability whether during the beginning or end of a chemotherapy treatment, end of a divorce process, the termination of a pregnancy, a miscarriage, and many more. She would often offer a woman and a few of her close friends the opportunity to go to *mikvah*, a ritual bath for moments of physical, emotional or spiritual transition. Looking back, Rabbi Eilberg recalls the general shape of a spontaneous healing ritual for moments of transition, and at the *mikvah* it might look like the following: invoking God's presence, an opening song of *Esa Einai* or Angel Blessing, a healing poem, a sharing of the meaning of this process and short, spontaneous blessings by close friends or family, *Mi Shebeirach* blessing, and then a closing song. During the ritual, the ill person as well as some of the participants might immerse in the *mikvah*.²⁰ What a healing model for us all, whether we have a *mikvah*, or people of any gender in any transitional moment, of any religion, to create a healing ritual with music in a time of such change, challenge, limbo and vulnerability. Rabbi Eilberg has used music to frame healing in many other ways, including contemplative, healing chant for a second day *Rosh Hashanah* service. She uses music in spiritual direction, as a "way to deepen presence and prayer," and now also in her interfaith work.

²⁰ Personal Interview with Rabbi Amy Eilberg, October 21, 2016.

Rabbi Eilberg considers certain core themes when creating moments of healing. First, the music can be about God, without making any assumptions about the person's beliefs. Placing this person's moment or journey of suffering into a broader perspective, of self into a chain of tradition, creating the awareness that there are resources in and outside of herself, that she is not alone. Hope can be a theme, but it must be invoked carefully, with attention to the person's realistic hope for recovery. Regardless, says Rabbi Eilberg, "There can always be hope for a beautiful moment." Community is a theme, deepening connections in times of difficulty and vulnerability, and community in knowing that humankind has dealt with these challenges personally and communally before. Healing can include its possibility, not necessarily connected to cure, and healing can offer moments of release from fear. Rabbi Eilberg ultimately emphasizes that words, intention, and quality of presence are of the utmost importance in creating a spontaneous and powerful moment or ritual of healing.

Rabbi William Cutter, Ph.D., the founding director of the Kalsman Institute on Judaism and Health, had the joy of working with Debbie Friedman, and she worked with Rabbi Cutter on his breathing, pacing and presence. He witnessed her being so specifically responsive and adaptive to each environment, and though some resented the interruption of formalism, he witnessed her work enlivening American, Jewish Reform congregations and communities. He writes in *R'fuah Sh'leimah*, edited by Merri Arian, that, "Music responds to illness more naturally than speech."²¹ Rabbi Susan Talve explains that she uses music "To bridge the divide." Music is healing not only in times of personal illness, but for brokenness of the community at large. She says there is "Nothing that carries us into the future and hope more than music." Rabbi Talve is the founding rabbi of Central Reform Congregation in St. Louis, and she actively and

²¹ Merri Lovinger Arian, editor, *R'fuah Sh'leimah Songs of Jewish Healing* (New York, NY: Synagogue 2000, 2002), 5.

proudly incorporates music into her interfaith and protest work in the synagogue and community. She uses prayer to engage people and fire people up, for healing and to bring comfort.²² Her community held an interfaith vigil, with many instruments, voices and faith leaders, after the atrocity of the mass shooting in Orlando, Florida. Rabbi Talve's energy as a progressive rabbi goes to respond to the suffering in the community around her, including being involved in the protest movement for equal rights for Black Lives Matter, after Michael Brown was murdered in Ferguson. Music has a role in healing and bridging in these protests for racial justice, according to Rabbi Talve, and furthermore, she says that sharing and expressing themselves via music, is a universal core value amongst the community. She emphasizes that "Music evokes a passion to believe and hope in difficult times."

Merri Lovinger Arian, a professor at the Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music, is an innovative worship leader, sacred music educator, and composer, who was involved in Synagogue 2000, where much of her work involved healing. Overall, Synagogue 2000 was about how synagogues function better, learning from outside resources like churches; different synagogues and cities were a part of this quest for change in worship and function, to increase the success of synagogues.²³ Healing services became widespread through this, and people began to say names aloud for the *Mi Shebeirach* and *Kaddish* prayer. Through this program, synagogues learned from churches how to be more inclusive and welcoming, even from things like the architectures of the bima and parking, to greeting each other at the beginning of services. It provided a different way to look at prayer and membership. When introducing a new song in services, they learned to open and close with it, and weave it throughout so people became connected and familiar and prayed along with it. Arian calls it "Leveling the Praying Field."

²² Personal Interview with Rabbi Susan Talve, July 11, 2016.

²³ Personal Interview with Merri Lovinger Arian, July 19, 2016.

With healing centers opening nationally within the Jewish world, these efforts reinvigorated many synagogues with healing songs, moments and services brought within worship services. The power of music in terms of building community at Jewish summer camp was another huge role Debbie Friedman had. Synagogue 2000 collected healing services from across the country, and Friedman did healing services once a month at Westchester Reform Temple. Once again, Friedman taught that we are all broken and healing needs to be made available for all. A sacred, intimate community is so important to Arian, and she learned from Friedman that everyone is in need of healing of some kind, and it's vital to be in tune to each other needs, as clergy and as congregants. Arian remembers when Friedman did her *Mi Shebeirach* at a Synagogue 2000 conference, that many stood around her, with tears running down her cheeks; and this moment of community was enabled by the fact that she fostered a healing moment. According to Arian, we must "Create communities where people can tell their stories and really connect," and "People now come for healing moments just as much as *yahrzeit*."

Cantor Ellen Dreskin, the director of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion's Cantorial Certification program, always played guitar starting at camp as a child, and found that being full clergy and leading services was her most powerful tool, as "In worship, people are more likely to come with an open heart."²⁴ She appreciates Jewish rituals, because they communicate that you're not the first person this has ever happened to, you're not alone, you exist within a long tradition, in good human company, and ritual ultimately provides communal strength. She also participated in Westchester Reform Temple healing services, sometimes leading with Debbie Friedman. She finds that the calming, irrational, nature of music plays a role in healing. She thinks that the *Mi Shebeirach* is one of our most different prayers, as there's a difference between healing and recovery, and we're not in the habit of praying for

²⁴ Personal Interview with Cantor Ellen Dreskin, September 28, 2016.

others. Besides healing services, Cantor Dreskin finds the ritual of *shiva* healing, "Being in community [after someone has died], letting them [your community] help you be sad, and then get back on your feet." She finds that the psalms discussing crying out are very powerful, like Psalm 130, *Mi Ma'amakim*, "I called out from the depths," and then something can change in my life. She also finds Psalm 118:14 to be healing, *Ozi v'Zimrat Yah*, "God is my strength and salvation." Before Friedman's *Mi Shebeirach*, which was personal, according to Cantor Dreskin, everything was plural and public. She also loves "Heal Us Now," by Leon Sher, which is personal, national, and universal, "Helping us understand the truth of healing." She also talks about a section of the *G'vurot* prayer within our *Amidah*, the central section of the Jewish prayer service, about upholding the fallen and freeing the captivity of the body, having faith in whatever our healing process may be. Cantor Dreskin sees God as the sum total of everything, having a ripple over the generations. Cantor Dreskin says that, "Healing prayers make me feel and act differently; my healing could be through prayers, someone else's healing could be knowing that everyone's praying for them, expressing concerns within a communal setting." She also says that it's nice to be given psalms to express our feelings so we don't have to write them.

Rabbi Daniel Polish, whose book Bringing the Psalms to Life was discussed previously, emphasizes how the psalms verbalize personal situations, putting into the context of all of humankind's experience. He says that it is important to say aloud the name of the person for whom you are saying the *Mi Shebeirach*, as that strengthens the will of the person who has said the name. He told me how *Kol Nidre* – a central prayer of Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year in Jewish tradition, to atone to each other and God – "Has three separate movements, like the psalms, providing a template and words to articulate situations and apply to many things," to

be ever present.²⁵ He believes that the whole of Jewish liturgy was built on the template of and influenced by the psalms. Rabbi Polish finds the psalms personally helpful, and suggests them to congregants in pastoral care, as well as people who are hospitalized. He will prescribe certain psalms to people. His theology of the psalms is that “God is imminent, concerned while you’re pouring out your heart, helping you, and the psalms help prayer make sense.” The psalms are articulated in a way that focuses on already existent belief.

Cantor Benjie Ellen Schiller, Professor at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, School of Sacred Music Cantorial program, spoke with me about what moves her within healing music in Judaism:

I have to start with Shabbat. A regular practice of making a day sacred; of pausing; of meals; of study; of singing; of prayer. That is healing and sacred time; cathartic and humbling. It connects me back to relationships. Comfort of community. It’s a refuge.²⁶

She also finds it healing to be present for others, impacting people’s lives, and overall being involved in something that has meaning, that can lift you out of yourself. A few decades ago, Cantor Schiller realized, on her own and with the help of Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman, after receiving her BA in composition and voice, she wanted to touch people’s lives, and give meaning and have connection, through merging her Jewish/spiritual self with her artistic/musical self, and so she became a cantor. The act of meditating every day, Cantor Schiller finds healing, so she can be a better healing presence to others. She tells me, “I don’t even know how to separate music and healing... Music can express emotion beyond words, touches deep places that pain hits. It’s ineffable.” One of many things that Cantor Schiller is inspired by is a *niggun*, a wordless melody. It can be caressing, it can be a teacher, and can transport one deeper within when sung within a community of people; it’s “Simplified, purest prayer.” The High Holy Days

²⁵ Personal Interview with Rabbi Daniel Polish, October 5, 2016.

²⁶ Personal Interview with Cantor Benjie Schiller, December 19, 2016.

and the music that carries them are also healing, after the challenge of confronting oneself and God. By *Neilah*, the last service of Yom Kippur, of the High Holy Days, according to Cantor Schiller, like a *niggun*, one's heart is more open. It inspires Cantor Schiller when she senses that people open their hearts, "Penetrating layers that may be hardened," and there are full, beautiful voices of congregational singing. She finds it healing and a privilege to do weddings and funerals, to be present for those peak moments in people's lives, as "Human contact through music touches people's souls." Cantor Schiller also participated a few decades ago, in the early 90's, in a healing services with Rabbi Rick Jacobs and sometimes Debbie Friedman, at Westchester Reform Temple, and she recalls three general stages of the services: a welcoming and setting the space; naming, being with and calling out the pain; then searching for hope, renewal and healing. This was all done largely through music, communally. Cantor Schiller told me, "We can be angels, healing agents for each other, find *betzelem elohim* in others. We can help people feel a sense of closeness, touching others... a little less distant, a little healed."

C. Personal Experience

I woke up on the morning of Nov 9, 2016, screaming and crying, thinking that the night before was the worst nightmare I'd ever had. It couldn't possibly be true. Getting on the subway was quiet and eerie; it felt like a horror movie. No one in my world of Jewish, liberal, New York City, could have imagined that Hilary Clinton could have actually lost the presidency. The joy and optimism the day before, juxtaposed with the shock, anger, and grief that hit me and, I have no doubt, millions of other Americans, was unbelievable. Second to September 11, 2001, which was far more horrendous in so many ways, being attacked in our own country, I had never felt such a sense of national tragedy and mourning. I couldn't have been more grateful to go to a graduate, seminary that morning, and have the opportunity to attend a worship service, that became a healing service, much needed by us all. Without the grounding, comforting space of my Jewish community, I'm not sure how I would have gotten through such communal and personal difficult times. That Friday for Shabbat services, my cantor mentor and I led a healing Shabbat service. We assessed the needs of our community and knew people would be coming to prayer, coming to temple for comfort in each other and in the stability of the Jewish liturgy. Healing moments and services can occur for people we love, and they also can occur for times of national tragedy of upset, when we come together in grief and then hope.

CHAPTER 2 ~ Christian Healing: Music and Meaning

A. Background

There is emphasis on healing all throughout the book of Acts. In the book Healing in the Landscape of Prayer, by Avery Brooke, the history and tradition of healing is broken down within Christianity.²⁷ The most familiar story of healing is in Acts 3:1-16, of Peter and John healing the man who had been lame from birth. Another familiar healing mention is from James 5:14-15 in the New Testament, talking about the power of faith and anointing those who are ill with oil, and stating that the elders will pray for them and God will raise them up. Jesus told all of his disciples to go and heal anyone who needed it, so according to that, all Christians who have been baptized are gifted with the ability to heal. As a result, healing became associated with the church liturgy as early as the 3rd century, especially the Eucharist, which was seen as liturgy about overall healing and redemption. Anointing with oil was solely for the sick, as opposed to for other reasons, and the anointing ritual was added to the offering with bread and wine in the Eucharist. Later, full healing services emphasized the laying on of the hands and anointing with oil. Brooke writes in regards to our contemporary, Westernized culture:

We want to be in control, to manipulate life to fit our desires. In contrast, a Judeo-Christian perspective assumes that God is in control. As we surrender to God and follow God's lead in our lives, we are healed. We may or may not be physically cured, but we are healed in the sense that our lives are in God's hands and we know it (37, Brooke).

Christians believe that Jesus had varied ways of healing, not through a particular rite or ritual, but because he was always closely in touch with God; Christian healing rituals take that as their model. The laying on of the hands symbolizes transferring God's grace from one being to another. Jesus also emphasized forgiveness; healing and repentance became connected in Church

²⁷ Avery Brooke, *Healing in the Landscape of Prayer* (Boston, MA: Cowley Publications, 1996), 5, 6.

doctrine. Jesus healed in multifaceted ways, by word and by touch, in groups and individually, and often after forgiving sins. (Some believe that he continues to heal today.) As we find in Matthew 22:37-39: "And he said to him, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' " -- and similarly within the *V'ahavta* in the Jewish tradition, Christian healing means loving the neighbor who is in pain, or reaching out to any other soul who needs help. Prayer is a significant aspect of this and brings hope.

In her article, "Recovery of Liturgies of Healing and Reconciliation," Pastor Ruth Duck writes that in the roots of Christianity there are many examples of Jesus healing and helping people. Anointing with oil, laying on of hands and healing were initially a common part of Christianity. These rituals were rejected, and now have returned, especially after the Protestant Reformation, so healing is now a part of the liturgy and hymnal books. For example, there is an entire section on healing in the United Methodist Hymnal. Music is played while announcing the laying on of the hands. Pastor Duck says it's important to be innovative and creative in tweaking liturgy, to make it relevant and accessible to a broader range of people. It's no longer about believing that sin causes disability and sickness; the frame has shifted completely. For example, in the frame of a healing service, people can come forward to be anointed with oil and have hands laid upon them, with "Healer of Our Every Ill" being sung, a text and melody by Marty Haugen. This song begins:

Healer of our every ill, light of each tomorrow, give us peace beyond our fear, and hope beyond our sorrow. You who know our fears and sadness, grace us with your peace and gladness; Spirit of all comfort, fill our hearts... You who know each thought and feeling, teach us all your way of healing; Spirit of compassion, fill each heart...

Another song that could be sung in different situations where people might need healing is “Prayers of the People”, a melody by Mark A. Miller and words by Ruth Duck, which was also used for the North American Academy of Liturgy Conference, for both Christian and Jewish leaders. The chorus is, “Holy Healer, your people call your name. Send your Spirit. Hear our prayer.” “There is a Balm in Gilead,” is a very common hymn among many Protestants to be used in the context of healing. Some of the words are: “There is a balm in Gilead, to make the wounded whole, to heal the sin sick soul. Sometimes I feel discouraged and think my work’s in vain, but then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again...” What inspires Pastor Duck in the context of healing Christian music is gentle music that provides for a safe space for praying of all kinds. She believes that having music in one’s life is healing and helpful no matter where one is.

B. Practitioners in the Field

Reverend Ann Akers, the Director at HUC-JIR, of the Interfaith Doctorate of Ministry program, spoke with me about her liberal approach to music, faith and healing.²⁸ She was raised Presbyterian, grew up in Egypt with her parents as missionaries, and later graduated from Yale Divinity School. She said that Middle Eastern music goes straight to her soul, loves Hindu meditation and music and crystal healing, and has had a diversity of faith tradition and music experiences and exposure. Music has always mattered to Reverend Akers who, beginning at a young age, played Christian hymns on the piano when she was sad. She found the sounds of church music to be comforting. Her father was a classical musician before the ministry, and their church worship was in classical Arabic. Her interfaith work is key, because, to her, it conveys a sense of God and purpose beyond institutional religion, requiring all to be humble in their work and practice. She believes God's spirit pushes far beyond the constructions that human beings create; each chosen faith path may not have all the truth, so others can add to or challenge the story. For her music to be healing, Reverend Akers integrates reason with spirit and soul. Her faith tradition is an intellectual faith path, with "people of the word," deeply immersed in knowledge of the text, yet they don't read the Bible literally. Coming from the Presbyterian, Reformed, Calvinist tradition, with rational, traditionalist, educated clergy, only in the last 50 years or so has religion become more comfortable with sensory, visceral wholeness and healing, according to Reverend Akers. She has done recent healing services, anointing with oil, with contemporary music. Reverend Akers wouldn't call something especially healing music, yet believes music is an integral part of all worship.

Reverend Akers states, "I think that music is the vehicle, the channel for the luminous, spiritual, existential experience of being, that words can't capture, that's so essential to our

²⁸ Personal Interview with Reverend Ann Akers, June 13, 2016.

humanity.” Beyond church, she channels healing and aligns with the divine in her Buddhist, Hindu meditation group. She started it with her meditation teacher and spiritual director, to reach out to people unaffiliated, yet people of faith. They use crystal bowl music, drumming, chanting, guided meditation, and silence for connection and healing. They do something different each time. Sometimes they’ll do guided meditation with contemporary music playing, for example playing “All of Me” by John Legend, and prefacing that by saying, “Imagine God is singing that to you.” Contemporary song lyrics about profound love are often used as a connection to the Divine. They also use Kirtan folk music -- which came from Indian classical music, and is a musical, spiritual, performance art that tells a story, often engaging large groups with call and response -- affirming the Divine path, with very healing lyrics. Reverend Akers believes that healing is an integrative process of being oneself and finding a sense of wholeness. Her group will practice Tonglen meditation – a type of meditation from Tibetan Buddhism --, to notice what’s present in the body, having compassion for oneself without necessarily wanting to change whatever is there. This has been shown, according to Reverend Akers, to even change the mindset of women in their 80’s. Through all facets of her spiritual and religious identity, Reverend Akers is able to bring meditation and music together in a healing way, to many who would otherwise not be open to it.

Paul Westermeyer, Emeritus Professor of Church Music at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, served as a Christian Cantor, and directed the Master of Sacred Music program with St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota.²⁹ He is also an ordained Lutheran pastor, of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. The name Evangelical right now, according to Pastor Westermeyer, has been hijacked by the conservative, fundamentalists but the Evangelical Lutheran Church overall is in fact none of those exclusionary traits, and is rather about accepting

²⁹ Personal Interview with Paul Westermeyer, June 16, 2016.

and embracing. He always felt his call was to be a teacher of church music. Pastor Westermeyer discovered as a church musician and clergy that traumatic events prevented singing, as singing comes from such a vulnerable place, so working with someone to be able to sing again was a healing gift. He stated that, "The community that sings is greater than the sum of its parts and there is a deep sense of shalom in the singing." *Shalom*, the Hebrew for peace is a word that was beautiful to hear within the vernacular of a Christian pastor and musician. *Shalom* immediately connotes more than the word "peace" for all of us, that we are all connected of different faith traditions, and have more similarities than we think. Congregational singing is in direct correlation with the worship. Pastor Westermeyer also said that, "Psalms are the womb of human life, humanity and time." Psalms are a common usage, theme, and path for healing and comfort in life, for people of faith and secular alike.

The most important healing rituals for Lutherans, according to Pastor Westermeyer, are done through "word and sacrament" – the textual tradition, and the key rites and rituals that visibly express God's grace. Historically, Lutherans were suspicious of the concept of attempting direct physical healing because such actions were associated with Charlatans, or frauds. There is healing language within some of the hymns of Evangelical Lutheran worship. In this community, the prayer leader always has to make choices based on the health of the community. The leader has to be sensitive to finding the best ways to help the congregation sing. For example a service with elderly people should go faster than other services because they have less breath support. The hymns have to do with the community in song. Pastor Westermeyer says that, "Breathing and phrasing relates to health and healing...Chant relates directly to that reality of healing polyphony and 18th century harmony." Westermeyer believes that if the people are comfortable, then it's healing. Westermeyer states that Charles Ives, who was a church musician and

composer in New York believed that “the people have rights,” so they should have a variety and be comfortable, with the best of chant, folk, and hymns. Bach could be included, and either way, it’s a very healthy frame to juxtapose different styles. Any congregation has a memory bank, a familiar flow, and yet can have music from many cultures and faith traditions. “Glory Be to God on High” is a formative piece in the German Lutheran tradition, but there is no singular healing service text, according to Pastor Westenmeyer.

Ruth Duck, a professor at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston Illinois and a past president of the North American Academy of Liturgy, is now partially retired after a long career. She is an ordained pastor of the United Church of Christ, and has written articles, books and music. She advocates creating new and reinvigorated rituals for healing, combined with traditional ritual, to make them relevant for the moment. Pastor Duck says that “Healing is the transformation that may occur when humans encounter God at the point of their need.”³⁰ She has been successful with authentic prayer and healing experience and believes in sharing that with so many others. She recalls that she had asthma when she was younger, and when a healer in South Africa prayed for her and she fully recovered, she came to believe in the healing power of prayer, faith, music and connection. She has now taught a course for over 20 years on healing and reconciliation. Many churches would do healing services but focus on sin, so she has tapped into the great need to change the perspective on healing for people, disconnecting sin from illness and healing, recognizing that many people with disabilities and chronic illness will never be physically cured, and that healing is an emotional and spiritual journey for them.

Chanda Rule, similarly believes in creating sacred spaces for all types of communal coming together, beyond praying.³¹ She does song leading in many Christian contexts. She

³⁰ Personal Interview with Ruth Duck, September 13, 2016.

³¹ Personal Interview with Chanda Rule, November 8, 2016.

brings engaging singing and clapping into church through song leading. A powerful storyteller through music, and an interfaith minister, Rule is now finishing her degree from Union Theological Seminary from afar, her thesis being about the healing power of story, her type of *Midrash*, weaving in short songs, combining her consistent strength and interest in theology and the arts. Her congregational music is gospel and jazz inspired; one of her CDs is called, "Surrender." She has written scores of music over the past 10 years and counting; her presence in churches and in close relationships with pastors led them to request that she write music. Rule's music is inspirational soul and acoustic, inspired by her background in gospel and jazz. She grew up within the United Church of Christ, within a primarily African American Christian church community in Chicago, participating in the church choir, and came from a long line of charismatic preachers, influencing her religious and spiritual language. She has always been an artist and found it important to create safe, sacred space together. She respects all people actively within her preaching and music and doesn't consider herself now to be of any specific Christian denomination. Unlike many Christians, she does not believe in proselytizing. After taking classes with One Spirit Interfaith, an interfaith training for spiritual leaders, she met, singing and meditating and creating rituals weekly, with other like minded people from there. They would take time to talk, sing, and create rituals, to listen to each other, and "To actively engage in interfaith and interspiritual healing." Singing was the one thing that connected them, and in such a healing way, which led to their and then her individual chant, music and ritual creation. She found the act of singing together to be magical. With her inherent charismatic, Christian upbringing, this group really inspired her to delve deeply into music leading, exploring sacred space through music. She finds it important to make liturgy meaningful in a modern context, and she for a while, was working at St. Peter's, a Lutheran church, in NYC, and often improvised

when song leading. Her music is accessible to people of all faith traditions as well as non-faith backgrounds. She uses a lot of acoustic guitar, and her presence is warm and authentic. Rule, on her own and in working with other pastors, considers what she does, inherently inviting and healing. She says she “Loves working with the divine feminine, what the spirit is calling you to be, exploring how to create space through music and ritual that is inviting to everybody! I create welcoming space through music, language that’s welcoming and inclusive, cultivating a sense of hospitality, working in many types of environments.”

C. Personal Experience

Healing Service at Calvary-St. George's Parish, Episcopal, NYC

Coming upon the church, there was a young pastor standing outside and shaking hands with congregants and guests alike as they walked in. I immediately felt welcomed, introducing myself and my purpose for being there, and he seemed thrilled to have me. I asked if I could take notes and record for personal purposes for my research, and they were very open to that. I felt invited as a guest from the start of my experience at this church.

It was a very traditional and beautiful Gothic style church with vaulted ceilings. The atmosphere in the church felt grand, yet warm. The pianist was improvising music as people walked in. It continued to be comfortable and low-key despite the grand feeling of the physical place. The altar felt like it went back really deep and had such beautiful artistry. The inviting presence of the pastors, the welcoming, comforting music, and the friendly energy of the congregants all contrasted with the grandiosity of the physical space; the congregation appeared very diverse in race and age, seemingly very representative of the New York City population. People were sitting all spread out amongst the dark wooden pews, separated into sections which helped people cluster together and make their own little groups. It felt like a community, one which provides both private and communal spaces to pray.

The hymnal books and bibles were in the pews, and there were additional pamphlets for the healing service. There were extra specific additions for this service of selected prayers and hymns and intentions. The service began with the prayer, "May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable to you, oh God." The sermon was towards the beginning, in which the pastor discussed the atrocity of the Orlando hate crime shooting which had taken place less than a week earlier. A healing service mentioning atrocities that happen in our country,

suggests that healing isn't just individual, about people one knows, but is instead a communal experience, where tragedy can connect us all. This was an effective way to connect all the worshipers. Talking about this was a way for the pastor to connect those in attendance to those who were killed and hurt. He stated that, "I've been to too many vigils recently, whether Syria or Orlando." He talked about Jesus being ever present throughout, and gave the parable of the Good Samaritan, and further, defining healing as wholeness and forgiveness. It was possible for worshipers of differing theologies to come together around the ideas and spirit presented.

The pastor emphasized that everyone was welcome, reading the names of those that needed healing, going from the global to the personal. I think this method can affect you more, especially if you're privileged and feel badly about not doing enough. It can make you feel better about yourself as someone who wants to help others; starting from the existential can help you feel like you have a place in that, as opposed to starting from your own self and trying to connect yourself to world. There was a call-and-response reading, with the common response being "Hear us oh Lord." After the lines about healing, there was kneeling to confess sins, and then there was an invitation for people to come up to the front altar of the church, and to be anointed with oil, if you were in individual need of healing for yourself or someone you loved. While people were going up and coming back, the pianist was playing hymns, some improvised. The music was setting a mood and making people feel more comfortable, and it had a powerful impact on the ritual moment, the healing anointing. There was a "Peace be with you" greeting to one's neighbor, and after that, baptized Christians were offered the opportunity to go up to receive communion. More music occurred here, and then a few communal songs, which were not specific for healing. There was a responsive reading, a holy Lord hymn, and then the Lord's Prayer. The last song was "Go in Peace," and then there was a benediction, as well as piano

playing on the way out, just as it was on the way in. The music felt uplifting, with major chords and tone. It was comforting, and seemed better in a larger setting. The uplifting music kept the worshiper more engaged with the service and the community, I think because the music encouraged congregants to be part of the group; more somber music in a minor key might have created an atmosphere more internally-directed.

After the service, Reverend Jacob Smith, the lead pastor at the Church, spoke with me about healing, music and his path in the church. He said that healing from God is an emotional and subjective experience. He had found himself wanting a more tangible, intellectual, and objective faith, and yet something deeper outside of himself, so he eventually found that Episcopalian Christianity satisfied this intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and practical desire within him. A healing prayer to Reverend Smith for example is, "Lord Hear Our Prayer," a commonly read and sung prayer: it repeats "Oh Lord hear our prayer", then says "When we call, answer us," then repeats part of the title again, then says, "Come and listen to us." Anointing with oil represents the presence of God, the Holy Spirit. The words, "I lay my hands upon you," or "I anoint your head with oil," can be said by the pastor, to invoke God's presence to the person receiving the anointing and prayer, and the receivers, gesture or marks themselves with the cross symbol across their front. There is a great image of Jesus as a divine physician all throughout the New Testament. According to Reverend Smith, the idea of healing is not about moving God into a certain space, but rather helping bring God to the worshiper, helping God relate to people's cries; the presence of the cross is a reminder that God is in the midst of our suffering. The Reverend says that, "Wholeness is found when you realize that you are broken."³² Healing is constantly aspiring for wholeness, recognizing that human beings are in constant need

³² Personal Interview with Reverend Jacob Smith, June 16, 2016.

of healing. He also says that people use religion incorrectly as a way to mask their pain, and instead they should be using religion as an instrument to open up.

CHAPTER 3 ~ Muslim Healing: Music and Meaning

A. Background

In the vast tradition of Islam, it is most common to spontaneously recite sections of the Quran with someone who is sick. If it's requested, an Imam or Sheikh, or other relevant spiritual leader, will visit the person who is ill and in need. There isn't one fixed healing prayer, service, or set of liturgy or music for Islam. When a Muslim patient is in the hospital, prayers from Christian chaplains can be acceptable, as Jesus was viewed as a healing prophet in the Quran.³³ When someone is actively dying, and there are friends and family around, in addition to facing Mecca, the Muslim declaration of faith or call to prayer, called the *Kalima*, "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah," should be recited by them. Then also Chapter 36, called *Sura Ya-Sin* of the Quran is also fitting for this most challenging and vulnerable moment, ending in, "All glory to him [God/Allah]... And to him you shall be returned." This is the most common chapter of the Quran to be recited or improvised, chanted by a Muslim chaplain to a patient in the hospital, and believed to have healing qualities, according to many of the authorities on this topic whom I interviewed. Also, Chapter or *Sura* 1 of the Quran, *Al-Fatiha*, "the Opening," is another chapter that is deemed to be healing, claiming God's compassion and ability to guide us on the correct path. The Ottomans long ago, embodied Sufi philosophy, so Sufi tradition which is inherently healing is embodied within the majority of Sunni, Muslim practice. In addition, the five pillars of Islam are core to the healing Sufism practice, as they have an effect on one's inner being, not just religious life.

³³ Neville A. Kirkwood, *A Hospital Handbook on Multiculturalism and Religion*, revised edition (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing), 33-36.

B. Practitioners in the Field

Yafiah Katherine Randall, Ph.D. Professor of Sufi and Muslim Relations at the University of Winchester, is a practicing Muslim and Sufi, calling the spiritual path and practice of Sufism, "The spiritual heart of Islam." Kabbalah is to Judaism, as Sufism is to Islam, "A way of life." She calls herself a Muslim, a Sufi, someone who completely surrenders to *Hashem*, using in her vernacular, one of many Jewish names referring to God, meaning literally, "the name." In a Skype interview, Dr. Randall shared that in terms of healing tradition, there is Sufi healing meditation practice and Sufi healing chant. Zikr--which is similar to the word for "remembrance", *Zikaron* in Hebrew-- is a Sufi healing practice designed to "Polish or cleanse the heart of the dust that covers it."³⁴ In this meaningful yet informal ceremony, meditation and chant is done, often with rhythmic repetition, and in varied, improvisational ways, to call out the 99 names and attributes of Allah that are given in the Quran. There is no specific healing music within the Muslim faith, but it is considered healing to improvise by chanting the 99 names of Allah from the Quran. Dr. Randall explains, "These 99 names are ways in which God works in the world with all things, and the names are ways to talk about *Hashem*." For example, Allah, the All Merciful, the All Compassionate, and the Absolute Ruler are just a few of the many names that are chanted in Arabic. There are different phrases or pieces of liturgy that are declarations of belief; and there are *ilahis* which are spiritual songs at the end of the Zikr, and then everyone has a meal. Dr. Randall said that, according to when one is ill, a healer can put their hands on the place of illness, say the person's name and a few of the names of God, rhythmically or chanted. It is also common to recite the first *Sura* or chapter of the Quran, as a healing recitation, called *Al Fatiha*, or "The Opening." There are other verses that are recited for the intention and need for protection. And sometimes one may recite the names of Allah that connect to where the patient is

³⁴ Personal Interview with Dr. Yafiah Katherine Randall, June 30, 2016.

emotionally at the moment, which is considered a personal Zikr. Dr. Randall likes the word “*Hashem*” for God or Allah, because it’s genderless: she says that “Allah is genderless, and God is one,” for everyone. Dr. Randall states that “Sufism is a path that requires complete commitment, and you have to hold tight, even when you are doubtful.”

Sheikh Kevin Germaine, is an ordained Sheikh who leads Zikr on a regular basis in Nassau, New York. There are many kinds of music involved with the practice of Zikr, and once again, the emphasis is on the vibrational quality when reciting the 99 names of Allah.³⁵ His order like Sufi orders, is a healing one. He is believed to be within the primary chain of transmission, where a lineage of sheikhs is believed to stem backwards and so forth. Sheikh Germaine connects to his spiritual power to be a healer. He believes in the full modality of a healing Zikr or prayer over somebody, with or without predetermined music. He draws upon the *ilahis* or spiritual songs, for his order, where it is all sung in Turkish, in certain *makam*, or non-tempered scales, a complex melody type for composing and performance, which are deemed to be healing. Microtones attempt to sound natural, to move in tune, type, complexity and vibration with the body. Yet at the same time, they draw upon almost a pentatonic, simplistic musical style at times, with only singing and drums. The Threshold Society, a Sufi order community and resource, has certain pieces of music that they use sometimes for services. Sheikh Germaine also uses the music of Tumata, a musical group that combines fuses healing and music, using specific Turkish *makams* for healing.

Chaplain Shareda Hosein is recently retired from working in the Army Reserves in the military for a long time. She works at Tufts part time, and is part of an association of Muslim chaplains. Music isn't a huge part of her personal daily Islamic worship, yet it is incorporated somewhat into her chaplaincy. According to her, classical recitation of the Quran occurs with

³⁵ Personal Interview with Sheikh Kevin Germaine, July 20, 2016.

seven different styles. When the Imam recites the Quran, she finds it inspirational, and there are religious songs honoring God, God's creation and the prophet Mohammad. Nevertheless, I think, that even if music isn't a part of formal prayer, it's still worship. It's interesting to me, that Chaplain Hosein, like others, doesn't see recitation or chant as music. I think that it's a stereotype that talking is a more effective form of communication. My definition of music is more inclusive; lots of people think that music isn't a direct method of communication; but I think that music is and can be a more direct method of communication because it touches the mind and the heart in such a unique way, and resonates and helps with the memory so distinctly. On Mohammad's birthday, people get together and have food and sing, and Chaplain Hosein finds that healing. In addition, she finds healing the traditional, beautiful recitation the 99 names of God or God's attributes within the Zikr ceremony, remembering God through singing and dancing, where one can even get into a trance with the whirling dervish dancers. Sound does have the power to bring you into a new state of mind and being. Within the Zikr, instruments can be controversial, but drums were supposedly there at the time of the prophets, so when trying to be purist, those are allowed, but other people or orders will use string instruments like an oud. The mosque community that Chaplain Hosein is a part of, shies away from instrumental music beyond drumming. Chaplain Hosein says she is inspired by the beautiful recitation, as it is the most critical part of the religious experience, but religious music is not so important to her (which I find fascinating, that she doesn't qualify recitation as religious music). She says that in a non-religious space, music is important for focus, relaxation, and listening to religious songs from other languages and religions for full expression.³⁶ There is this essential question and tension, within the difference between how I see music and how many Muslim leaders view music. Is chanting more healing than music in a way? Sufi chant is considered healing; Hebrew

³⁶ Personal Interview with Chaplain Sharda Hosein, July 20, 2016.

chant done in a mantra type way is considered to be very healing. Nonetheless, I consider all of that chant, to be also music; just because there may not be a typical song structure of multiple verse and choruses, the music can be healing when done with a specific intention. I think chanting can be more transcendent, with the intention to move you to a different place emotionally and spiritually, and music can comfort and sooth the place you're presently in.

Chaplain Khalid Latif, is a chaplain at the NYU Islamic center, as well as a chaplain part time with the NYPD. Within Islam, there is a rich tradition of prophet songs that he considers to be healing. A most important ritual to him that is healing within Islam, is how the Quran creates opportunities for reflection and concentration with the "Science of recitation" or *tarteel*.³⁷ It's interesting that he doesn't consider this music either. I wonder if chanting is somehow seen as more serious, because it's not a song, and more word focused, and less melody centered. Is it not considered music, because the words are more important than the melody? Yet, I, as a cantor, am trained to think about words and conveying emotion even more so when I'm singing an extensive piece of music. Chaplain Latif confirmed that the first chapters of the Quran have healing traits within them which can be chanted; he calls this "Metaphysical healing." He also considers, "The narration in the framework of prophetic tradition," looking to the prophets, to be emotionally healing. He looks to the prophet Abraham, to whom he connects, often saying "Peace be upon him, and in turn, God will guide and heal me when I'm ill."

I spoke with Chaplain Kamal Abu-Shamsieh, a Muslim hospital chaplain, who works in palliative care, in central California. He affirms that the recitation of the Quran is soothing, and that Chapter 36 is most often recited for those at bedside, who are dying.³⁸ Also at the bedside of a Muslim patient, he will make an affirmation of faith, called *Shahadah*, which is one of the five

³⁷ Personal Interview with Chaplain Khalid Latif, October 24, 2016.

³⁸ Personal Interview with Chaplain Kamal Abu-Shamsieh, June 18, 2016.

pillars of Islam. Beyond the hospital, Chaplain Abu-Shamsieh finds *Mawlid*, the communal observance of the birthday of the prophet Mohammad, to be healing.

C. Personal Experience

I was able to be a guest, an insider at a Sufi Mosque of the Jerrahi Order, for their Saturday evening prayer, inherently healing Zikr ceremony, and celebration. It was a long evening and communal event of prayer, socializing, eating, drinking tea, dancing, and celebration. I was a guest of Dr. Hodayra Ziad, with whom I had only spoken with briefly on the phone, and she invited me to her mosque, to be the guest of her family. She and everyone in the congregation seemed so happy to have me. I was the only Jewish person, and seemingly the only guest. From the moment I walked in, everyone was so welcoming. It felt very musically devotional, and a few minutes after I arrived, it was prayer and pre-Zikr, and I sat in the women's section. A woman next to me offered to translate the prayers for me, recognizing that I was a guest and probably couldn't understand the Arabic. She had a child with her whom I instantly gravitated towards. Many of the lines were chanted in repetition, asking God for forgiveness, proclaiming God's oneness. Everyone had all the lines memorized, and the woman told me they were all from chapter 67 of the Quran. All the children coming in and out of prayer and wandering around the whole congregation, helped me to feel comfortable, because I love children and feel a kindred spirit connection.

I went to the children room upstairs and informally interviewed and spoke with Dr. Ziad, on the floor, with children playing all around us. There were a few adults with them, and everyone trusts the community with their children. She told me that ultimately, the entire Sufi tradition is about, "Cleansing of the heart and character, purification of the ego self, and overall self transformation."³⁹ Sufism is therefore an inherently healing musical tradition. She gave me some background, telling me that Sufism was reinvigorated in the 8th century against the push of the imperialism of Islam, during the Ottoman Empire. And by the 12th century, Sufism was fully

³⁹ Personal Interview with Dr. Hodayra Ziad, December 10, 2016.

integrated into Sunnism; about 90 percent of Muslims are Sunni. Each order prays in their own vernacular, so some are in Arabic, some are in Turkish, and beyond. Dr. Ziad was speaking Urdu with her children, and some other families were speaking it too, which is the national language of Pakistan.

I asked Dr. Ziad, about what she perceives to be the differences between singing and chanting. She responded that because of the traditional stereotype in the Islamic tradition, music being part of the id and pleasure-seeking, people who are traditional don't tend to want to use that word, singing or music. Nevertheless, she agreed with me, that most of what they do is, in essence, creating music. The music they do is believed to bring back God from the moment of creation, an intimate, primordial space with God. The 99 attributes of God recited during the healing Zikr, are considered to be integral and life giving. Performing the Zikr, she said, is believed to call the angels down in assembly, and/or the spirits of the prophets. Dr. Ziad said that their Zikr, which in essence is healing, praises God's 99 names, praises prophet songs, and praises songs for the great teachers of the chain of tradition. When asking her about the difference between song and chant, and my confusion with the terminology, she says that people always refer to "chanting" with the Quran, not singing, yet it is melodious, and she does not necessarily agree, as "Music has always been a vehicle of God's word." She says that the human voice and frame drums were mentioned in the earliest text, and music at one time was considered profane and chant sacred, yet it's subjective and interregional. Some sounds are even similar to Gregorian chant, as they all stem from the Ottoman Empire.

Later on in the evening, I had an opportunity to ask the Sheikh questions, in regards to this, in front of many of the congregants. Apparently, they always have a question-answer time with the Sheikh. The Sheikh's name was Yurdaer, and he invited me to ask my questions, and I

asked what in general did music mean to the Sufi tradition, and why and how is it healing. His extensive answer surprised me, and seemed to push back against the fundamentalist view of seeing music as a sin. He said that, "Music is part of the divine harmony, because we have an inner yearning for the divine, and music reminds the material being of the divine origin." The Sufi music reminds the self of religion. Music is powerful and intensifies all emotions, including love and loss. He's emphasized how careful and intentional one must be with the act of leading music. The external listening touches the internal. He said that it tames the lower self, the ego.

Then the Sheikh expanded into a beautiful connection and metaphor of the reed flute. The flute is of the mud, and the earth, just as we as humans are. The flute is only beautiful when a musician breathes into it and plays it, much like God breathing life into our bodies at the beginning of time. Every melody that touches us reminds us unconsciously of our souls being created by God. This reed flute has 9 sections, correlating with the 9 months of pregnancy and then beautiful life continues after childbirth. There are 7 holes on the flute, and they represent the 7 holes in our face. He said that we have to be careful, skillful, and intentional when sounds emit from our face, and it takes practice. After discussing this powerful metaphor of the flute and our bodies, and being intentional with the sound and music that we produce, Yurdaer discussed the history in the 12th and 13th centuries where music and water were used for healing in Turkey. This was an early form of music therapy. Music is inspirational and powerful. The whole of the Zikr is to remember the act of creation, and participate as if it's happening all over again. When people stand up during the Zikr ceremony, it represents our souls entering the body and the music intensifies, adding drums to the already multi-layered vocal harmony and beat.

There are musical modes or *makams*, just like in Jewish music. *Ijaz* mode is for lullabies, and this is the mode they used for the Zikr, because it has a calming effect and is known to ease

or help anxiety, panic attacks, and to aid in digestion, according to the Sheikh. He jokingly, mentioned the neurosurgeon sitting near him, and said while chuckling, that he plays *Ijaz*, and he gives Prozac. There are different musical modes for varying times of the year. The *Ijaz* mode sounded similar to *Ahava rabah* mode in Jewish Ashkenazic mode, both having a lowered second degree scale, and a raised 3rd degree. The Sheikh said that the morning call for prayer has a different mode that is even gentler and caresses. He said that, "Music changes chemistry and balance, and therefore must be done right and carefully." He confirmed that music really does touch the body and soul, which is something I have always believed.

In terms of the set-up for the Zikr, the women were in the back, but in response to this separation, Dr. Ziad said she prefers sitting with other women as appreciates the sisterhood. Nevertheless, there wasn't a strong separation. The prayer space was a circular and open room, with the men in front sitting and standing in a circle. There was one ledge with a few wooden beams, but other than that, there wasn't a physical separator-- like in Orthodox Judaism there's a physical separator called *mechitza* or a balcony--there were just two open yet distinct areas for men and women. And then there was one bench, in between them which seemed to be for disabled, elderly, or children, and I was asked to sit on that bench. I was in this middle limbo area between the men and women, where I was able to observe and participate. I felt welcomed and comfortable, even as an outsider, in this space. With the Zikr, there was so much powerful singing and body movement, eventually with drums added in. I could feel the beat that was created with vocal technique, with the guttural drone of the mouths, and then different layers of singing harmony. There was what sounded like primitive vocal heart beating, also beat-boxing and intense calls. I was in awe. In its entirety, the ceremony was 50 minutes of singing and dancing; seamless from one piece to the next. They were so prepared that they could have true

spontaneity of the moment in prayer. I felt more healed and whole, with every new breath and beat and music that was almost solely being created by the mouth and body. They would sit and then stand up, walk in a circle or sway, moving most of the time. About halfway through, a whirling dervish came into the center and began spinning and dancing. When the drums began, a few women came up to drum with the men, in the back of the circle. I noticed that there wasn't a hierarchical structure: the Sheikh and the male lead singers were in the center, and stemmed outwards, with everyone looking at each other, and all participating in the same movements and sounds. I had chills throughout, and even added onto the harmony, humming along to be part of the chanting. There were a few moments where they would put their hands out in offering to God, and then motion washing their faces, a gesture of receiving and cleansing themselves. There were moments where they pounded their hearts, asking God and each other for forgiveness, which reminded me of in Judaism, during Yom Kippur when there is also an atonement prayer in the liturgy. In the chants during the ceremony I noticed repetition and mantra moments. I felt the intensity and vibration on my skin of music coming from vocals. Every vocal part, every rhythm change, every tempo variation felt very intentional. It felt primal and exhilarating with deep nasal breathing, reaching into yourself to connection with the community all around you. The energy was palpable and contagious from the multi-layered harmony and the guttural base from the male singers. At the end of the ceremony, the Sheikh was the first to leave, and he turned to the women and bowed and, and said *Salaam Aleikum*, "Peace be unto you"--in Hebrew *Shalom Aleichem* also means the same. That ended it, and everyone hugged. It felt as if I was partaking in simultaneous brotherhood and sisterhood, connecting to each other and praising God through music of the soul and body, as well as words of devotion to Allah.

CONCLUSION

When looking at various faiths and their healing music, one can see that communal healing music offers support to the individual as well as the community. The religious leaders use music to help worshipers heal through what's ineffable; music can touch places that words alone cannot. When one's in a service, praying and singing, deep within community, it helps to facilitate personal reflection. All the religious leaders I interviewed are thinking about how to support communal and individual healing through music and believe that music can touch places in our hearts, deep to our souls, that words alone cannot. They create an environment where we can be fully present with others and ourselves. We use music to meet someone where they are at, to be fully present, and to see what they need. There is a reciprocal relationship between individuals and their community when at the most successful and heartfelt point of worship in any faith tradition.

In any faith tradition, there is a reciprocal relationship between individuals and their community as individuals find healing themselves but also support the community. Unlike Judaism and Christianity, Islam doesn't have specific healing rituals and songs. Nonetheless, within the Sufi tradition of Islam, which the majority of Muslims practice, much of the chanting and music done for the prayer and prayer ceremonies, especially the songs sung and danced during Zikr, are considered to be inherently healing. There are certain verses as well in the Quran that are considered healing, like chapters 1 and 36, that are improvisationally chanted to a patient in the hospital, just as New Testament bible verses are read and hymns are sung to Christian patients, and just as psalms are recited and the *Mi Shebeirach* prayer is sung to Jewish patients. At the core, Jesus cared about healing and forgiveness, just as Judaism emphasizes forgiveness, especially during the holiest time of the Jewish calendar, atoning for

our sins to God, each other and ourselves during *Yom Kippur*. The Episcopalian healing service in New York City, which I attended and described, began with an English prayer, "May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable to you, oh God." This really resonated with me because this is part of Jewish liturgy, often sung in Hebrew after silent meditation at the conclusion of the central section of the prayer service. I found it meaningful and interesting that the Episcopalian community I visited chose to start with this prayer instead of conclude with it after meditation. I acknowledge such a distinct connection between Islam and Judaism, as even with the differences, there are many parallels. Dr. Randall, a Professor of Sufi and Muslim Relations at the University of Winchester, whom I interviewed, studied a Jewish-Sufi group in Israel which met to understand one another and celebrate their commonalities. When she looked at Muslim-Jewish relations, she was examining them through the lens of Sufism. Viewing the commonalities between Judaism and Islam through a Sufi professor's eyes is very inspiring. Dr. Randall noted similarities between Chasidic, Kabbalah-following Jews, and Sufism. She met with and interviewed a group called *Derech Avraham*, "Path of Abraham," a Jewish and Sufi group in Nazareth. Ultimately, the underlying message in both religions is seeing other humans in the image of God. Being witness to these groups in Israel, Dr. Randall saw people being respectful to and understanding each other's faiths. I found it interesting that Dr. Randall uses the words "God" and *Hashem* interchangeably. This reminds me of when I talked with the Lutheran School of Sacred Music director, Westermeyer, and he also used the Hebrew word *Shalom*, for peace and wholeness, as a part of his vernacular. These professors of other faiths using powerful words to have a shared language, is another step towards peace. Understanding and moving past the walls of ignorance are the first steps to true empathy, reconciliation, and peace. All three religions

embrace loving and therefore caring about the wellbeing of all other humans, because all three faith traditions stem from *b'izelem elohim*, that we are made in God's image, so that loving one's neighbor is as important as loving oneself. The healing music in all three monotheistic faith traditions, can connect us communally, but touch us on a very individual level, enabling personal moments of people singing the same song in a room full of others. Therefore, by this standard, I also found that through my experience of attending worship, all three faith traditions included communal and national healing, when also praying for healing on a more personal level.

Just as religious leaders do, there are also secular community members amongst us, volunteering to be a healing presence for those in their most vulnerable states, participating in reciprocal relationship with those they impact. Threshold Choir, founded by Kate Munger, in March, 2000, in the Bay Area, Northern California, does such inspiring, powerful, unique, secular work with people. Munger started with a few choirs, and now there are over 125 such choirs worldwide! She says that her intention with the choir, when being present with someone in their process of dying, was to "Voice a perfect vehicle to communicate essential life vibrations."⁴⁰ They practice in a large choir a few times a month, and then about three individual members visit dying people at their bedsides. It is an incredible, unique gift of giving their musical voices, giving to those who may not necessarily be religious, or even have family or friends. Choir members sing a variety of secular and religious pieces, mostly folk pieces choir members have written specifically for this purpose, very quietly, with short, simple, comforting lyrics. Munger says that the themes of the songs are, "Comfort, you're not alone, and sacredness." What a powerful gift to give those in their most vulnerable and intimate and challenging time, to people who could not otherwise receive such emotional connection and

⁴⁰ Personal Interview with Kate Munger, September 19, 2016.

positivity. Singing most often can have a calming effect on those being sung to, proof of momentary healing, being truly alive in the moment, even if just calming of the breath temporarily. It's transference of love and care through the emotional, heartfelt connection of song. There is a symbiotic relationship, a connectivity of energy and sound that occurs when giving the gift of musical singing to someone who is at their most vulnerable state, during the process of dying. Munger says in the KQED public television video about what they do, on the homepage of their website, "A song can be a bridge from the purely physical, temporal, body experience that we have for many years, to what lies beyond." Now there are over a hundred choirs giving this gift of being present in song, at the threshold of people's lives. On the "Values" page of their website, among many values, they say "We value the transformative power of love and the healing power of presence," and "We are making kindness audible."

I attended a Threshold Choir Rehearsal in NYC on November 2, 2016. This chapter is almost 10 years old. Winnie Lee is volunteer in charge of the NYC group who has been almost full time for about 10 years. This group is an all-volunteer group of women, mostly middle-aged, who rehearse weekly; we met that week at Rockefeller Research Labs on East 67th St. We were seated in a circular formation for the rehearsal. There was a reclining chair in the middle of the room to eventually model for bedside visits. The singing was very quiet to start, and the atmosphere created felt very caring and compassionate. The rehearsal felt like one long, beautiful ritual, and even though the group is explicitly not religious, there was a viscerally present spirituality. The rehearsal began with a round, *Dona Nobis Pacem*. Then there was a short guided meditation. Next we did stretching with sound. We then went around the room with our names, and a gesture and sound to our name. Then one of the leaders taught, "Walking Each Other Home." Because not everyone there reads music, they used repeat-after technique and hand

motions with sol-fesh motions to teach the song. We sang a Hebrew song next, "*Bakesh Shalom V'rodfehu*," "Seek peace and pursue it." We sang "Rest in Each Breath." They then did a modeling of what to do at bedside and encouraged members to learn songs fully off book. There was chair time, where members were invited to come to the chair, modeling being a patient, if they were in need at that moment, and other members practiced singing to them. There was one anchor who called songs and invited others to join, solely at the beginning; and then they just used eye contact to decide what to sing next for healing for the person in need. They sang, "May I Be An Instrument of Peace," and "I Let the River," and "May Peace/Grace Be with You," songs unique to Threshold Choir. After this section, the closing songs of the rehearsal were, "I World, I Voice, I Heart Beating," and "1 More Step."

After the rehearsal, I spoke further with Winnie Lee and a longtime member, Rebecca Kaplan. This was a typical rehearsal, seemingly fluid to me, like a ritual, with structure. They established from the start the setting to be very caring, meditative and settling, and grounding. They have such a diverse array of music, because they are in NYC. Ideally, they are off book for visits so they can have their eyes on each other and the patient. There is always an anchor and 2-4 singers, and oral tradition is encouraged, while sensing and reacting to what the patient needs at that moment. They start in unison, then can go into parts, round, or humming; it's up to the anchor in moment, based on her reading of the situation. Fluidity is encouraged. They can be with each patient for 20 minutes or up to an hour if they've visited them before, depending on the patient's needs. The goal is to ultimately, "Hold a safe space, not imposing, allowing what needs to happen, happen. Sometime people don't want to be ministered, they want to be distracted. It's already difficult enough; sometimes they literally just need the room to breathe."

They are being very present at that moment, being of service, sometimes to family, caregivers, and hospital staff too.

As seen before, community members experience a different kind of personal reflection when amongst each other; being surrounded by a supportive environment allows for a deeper individual reflection and, ultimately, healing. I think there are ultimately two goals and outcomes with music: it can either alter and change one's state of being, bringing one into a new spiritual, other place, or it can excite and heighten the state one is already in--whether joy or sadness, wherever one is at the present moment. Both can be healing; it depends on whether one needs to escape or be grounded, transcend beyond, or be present with one's own feelings at that moment. Either way, music can be a vessel to either transcend or stay present. In creating moments and in creating a service, it's about finding a balance between going inward and seeking healing from the community. As a cantor, as a prayer leader, I'm always connecting to other prayer leaders and asking and thinking about what is their intention with each moment of the service.

APPENDIX

(Following are links to musical works – lyrics and sources – referenced in this paper.)

<http://www.debbiefriedman.com/healing/>

<http://www.cantorlisalevine.com/music/>

<http://www.rabbishefagold.com/chanting-healing/>

<http://www.shechinah.com/may-the-angels-carry-you.html>

<http://www.sharonbernstein.com/under-the-wings-of-rafael.html>

<https://jewishhealingcenter.org/about-bajhs-overview/our-rabbis/>

<https://g.co/kgs/0dst9P>

http://shcnewton.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/HealingRiveroftheSpirit_400191.pdf

<https://g.co/kgs/gCCfM5>

http://www.hopepublishing.com/media/pdf/hset/hs_5639.pdf

https://www.hymnary.org/person/Duck_RC

https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&cd=&ved=0ahUKEwi5qd23_tvRAhWB3YMKHQRDBewQwqsBCA8wAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fm.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3D8fcMxI_6xsk&usq=AFQjCNGkk5dYzmnO3ZA5uwILS60sHxZC2w&sig2=m2_WYB-lrcSAS5YkTrOEcQ

http://www.hymnary.org/text/sometimes_i_feel_discouraged_spiritual

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/a-service-of-healing-i>

<http://www.chandarule.com/music/>

<http://www.calvarystgeorges.org/>

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&cd=&ved=0ahUKEwiporLOhtzRAhWB4yYKHQxFAQIQwqsBCBcwAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fm.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DlDxO6Bq-Tho&usg=AFQjCNFCNUwU7p6qHj-DltRMMBT3yLYCPw&sig2=YTWik06mTd8RPqdFz3eJkA>

<http://www.noblequran.com/translation/surah36.html>

<https://sufism.org/origins/quran-islam/quranic-chapters/the-fatiha-2>

<https://sufism.org/library/ilahis>

<http://ilahis.org/>

<http://www.jerrahi.org/about-us>

<http://www.icjs.org/scholars/dr-homayra-ziad>

<https://thresholdchoir.org/>

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