

Songs of Love and Prayer: A Study of Reb Shlomo Carlebach

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Introduction

For as long as I have been aware of Jewish music, I have had a fascination with Shlomo Carlebach. As someone who has gone to synagogue for much of his life, I have heard the name Shlomo Carlebach many times, yet I knew relatively very little about this complicated and important Jewish figure. The more I heard his name mentioned, the more I was increasingly curious about who this man was and about how and why he wrote his incredibly haunting melodies.

The day I received my driver's license, one of my first destinations was to a local *Judaica* store in Monsey, New York named *Tuvia's*. As I wandered around the store, I eventually came across the CD section and while it only had a small selection of recordings, the majority of the cassette tapes and CD's were under a big neon sign that read "Carlebach." Excited to see a name that I recognized, I bought the recording *Carlebach Friday Night*¹, sung by Yisroel Williger, an album which became the first of a very extensive personal CD collection of Carlebach's music. For the following months, I listened to this recording constantly and was entranced by the simplicity and beauty of its music. I instantly made a deep spiritual, yet unexplainable connection to the prayers sung on this CD.

As a cantorial student, I have learned and used much of the Carlebach repertoire throughout school and student pulpit experiences, yet still knew very little about the man. Shlomo Carlebach, without question, has had more influence on my musical interests and

¹ Williger, Yisroel. *Carlebach Friday Night*. Sameach Music. 2001. Compact disc.

service leading style than any other rabbi or cantor in the field. This thesis provided me with the perfect opportunity to explore this individual who continues to have such a profound effect on me as a student of Jewish music.

Shlomo Carlebach (1925-1994) died over a decade ago yet his musical and rabbinic legacy continues to shape all streams of American Jewish culture. A Holocaust refugee who joined forces with the Lubavitcher Chasidic world, Carlebach ultimately ventured outside of the rigid confinements of Orthodoxy and ushered in a new style of Jewish ministry that has significantly altered the musical and rabbinic landscape of Jewish music and worship. His wide range, cross-denominational appeal both during his life and after his death, as well as his tremendous influence over modern day Jewish leaders, has cemented his role as a Jewish giant in the latter part of the 20th century.

Carlebach used his masterful performance skills as a vehicle to spread a non-threatening approach to *Torah* and serious Jewish study that focused on love and human connection. Influenced by the hippie counter-culture of the 1960s and 1970s with the unique scars of a Holocaust refugee, Carlebach spread his love of God, Israel and *Torah*, in the form of music and stories. His audience was composed of Jews and non-Jews alike; Carlebach appealed to people of all religions and Jewish observance levels who were seeking a spiritual understanding of life. His music, stories, and non-traditional rabbinical approach had a drastic impact on the development of Jewish culture and continue to influence Judaism and Jewish song in the new millennium.

Carlebach is as controversial and misunderstood as he is popular. Since his death there have been many attempts to cement a defining legacy for Carlebach, mostly by

people who are emotionally invested in how he is remembered as a historical Jewish figure. Many choose between canonizing Carlebach as next to godly or demonizing Carlebach as a sexual predator.² This paper, however, attempts to present a more balanced and unbiased representation of Carlebach as an important historical figure deserving of study and scrutiny.

This paper is divided into three sections. The first section is an overview of Carlebach's biography. Only by studying Carlebach's history is it possible to understand how his upbringing prepared him for the international ministry that he created. The second section of this paper deals with Carlebach as a performer and songwriter. It also provides an analysis and categorization of his musical output. The third section of this paper explores Carlebach's legacy and what implications his life's work has for Jewish music both inside and outside of the synagogue, now and in the future.

² As I will discuss later in my research, Carlebach was accused during his life as well as significantly so after his death of sexual indiscretions with both adults and minors. Later in his life, Carlebach claimed responsibility and remorse for past inappropriate behaviors that occurred in the early part of his career.

Songs of Love and Prayer: A Study of Reb Shlomo Carlebach
Chapter 1

“Carlebach was born in Berlin, Germany in 1925 to a well known and prominent rabbinic family of Germany who claimed their roots back to King David via eighteen different branches of the family.”³ Carlebach’s family moved from Berlin to Baden, Austria in 1930, escaped from the Nazi’s to Lithuania in 1938, and eventually settled in Brooklyn, New York in 1939.⁴

The American Jewish community was drastically altered by the over “300,000 refugees, survivors, and displaced persons from Europe” who found refuge in the United States from 1933 to 1950.⁵ These immigrants brought their own unique cultures with them from Central and Eastern Europe and they often tried to directly recreate their European Communities in the United States. “If any era in the history of American Jewry could be considered a ‘Golden Age,’ it would be the twenty years following World War II. In this relatively brief era American Jews pushed the troubled memories of the recent past - the uncertainties of the Depression, the anti-Semitism of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, and the horrors of the Nazi era- to the margins of their concerns.”⁶

It was during this “Golden Age” that *Chasidism* experienced a renaissance in Jewish life in America. Just before and during the early years of the war, “Grand *Chasidic* masters known as *Rebbes*, the spiritual leaders of thousands of European Jews,

³ Mandelbaum, *Holy Brother*, (Northvale: Jason Aronson Inc., 1997), xxiv.

⁴ Weiss, Sam. "Carlebach, Neo-Hasidic Music and Liturgical Practice," *Journal of Synagogue Music*, Volume 34, Fall 2009, 55.

⁵ Sarna, Jonathan *American Judaism*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 293.

⁶ Diner, Hasia R. *The Jews in the United States*, (Berkely: University of California Press, 2004), 259.

arrived: among them the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Joseph I. Schneerson (1880-1950) who immigrated (to New York) in 1940; his son-in-law and successor, Rabbi Menahem Mendel Schneerson (1902-1993), who followed a year later; and the Satmar Rebbe, Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaim(1887-1979), ransomed from the Bergen-Belson concentration camp, who came to Brooklyn via Jerusalem in 1946.”⁷ It was also during this time that many liberal Jewish thinkers of Eastern Europe immigrated to the United States as well, notably Rabbis Abraham Joshua Heschel and Leo Baeck.⁸

Carlebach was one of the many Jews who immigrated to the United States in this era from a Europe devastated by the Holocaust and World War II. Carlebach’s uncle, Chief Rabbi of Hamburg, Germany, was not as lucky as Shlomo, and was murdered in the Holocaust. Carlebach, his siblings (including his twin brother Eli Chaim) and his parents were fortunate to flee Berlin in 1938 and immigrate to New York. Once settled there, Carlebach’s parents enrolled him in the *Yeshivah Torah Vodaath*, and in 1943 he studied with Rabbi Aharon Kotler at his advanced Talmudic academy in Lakewood, New Jersey, one of the most respected and well-known Orthodox *Yeshivot* of the time. Carlebach was considered one of the most gifted students at Lakewood and it was thought that he might even succeed Kotler as head of the school someday. This would not be his destiny, however.

“In 1950, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, then Chief Rabbi in the Chassidic Lubavtich sect, arranged for Carlebach to travel to various *yeshivas*(around the United

⁷ Sarna, Jonathan, *American Judaism*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 293.

⁸ Sarna, 294.

States) to see how others were teaching.”⁹ Upon his return to New York in 1956, he was invited to give a class on *Chassidim* at Columbia University, received rabbinic ordination as well as a doctorate in philosophy at Columbia. Carlebach’s first pulpit upon rabbinic ordination was in Dorothy, New Jersey. Feeling perhaps stifled by the confinements and limitations of the congregational rabbinate, Carlebach began to experiment with new ways of teaching *Torah*, most notably, through basic music composition. In 1958, Carlebach became inspired by a performance he heard in a Greenwich Village coffee house. Shortly after this performance, he bought a guitar and began to teach himself the few chords necessary to write basic songs.¹⁰ Ultimately, Carlebach left his pulpit in New Jersey and, upon invitation of Rabbi Schneerson, joined his twin brother (Eli Chaim) and became as an emissary for *Chabad* at college campuses throughout the United States.¹¹

“Under the leadership of Rebbe Menachen Schneerson, *Chabad* transformed its position in the Jewish world by sending emissaries throughout the world into both Jewish and non-Jewish communities to spread their Jewish ideals and commitment to strict Jewish halachic observance.” During the early part of the 1960s Carlebach traveled extensively to college campuses throughout the United States for Chabad with the goal of “bringing Jews nearer to Judaism and promoting Jewish education and observance of the commandments.”¹² These years proved to be formative in Carlebach’s career as a Jewish musician and influential Jewish figure. College campuses provided him with an environment to experiment with his developing music compositions and performance

⁹ Baron, John, and Ruben, Emanuel. *Music in Jewish History and Culture*. Sterling Heights: Harmonie Park Press, 2006, 252.

¹⁰ Baron, John, and Ruben, Emanuel. *Music in Jewish History and Culture*. Sterling Heights: Harmonie Park Press, 2006, 254.

¹¹ Mandelbaum, Yitta, *Holy Brother*, (Northvale: Jason Aronson Inc., 1997), xxix.

¹² Sarna, Jonathan, *American Judaism*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004, 346.

styles. Presumably, it was during this time that Carlebach recognized how music could be his own vehicle for teaching *Torah* and creating community within a broad Jewish community of all observance levels. “He discovered he could inspire people through music, a living metaphor for the harmony he sought for a fragmented Jewish people.”¹³

It is well known that Carlebach adhered to a more liberal model of behavior than was endorsed by the conservative-minded *Chabad*. *Chabad* believes in strict religious adherence, which often put Carlebach and his more liberal religious tendencies at odds with the teachings that he was supposed to be imparting and symbolizing. In the synagogue, as well as in the concert hall, Carlebach interacted with women in ways not prescribed by the Orthodox mainstream. Carlebach “gave women *aliyot*, allowed them to put on a *tallis* or *tefillin*, and later in his life even ordained woman as rabbis¹⁴ (although there is some debate as whether he “fully” ordained women in the same fashion as one would ordain men).”¹⁵ According to Shaul Magid,

To the chagrin of his Orthodox associates, he [Carlebach] warmly embraced men and women alike – hugging, kissing,...Eschewing the traditional separation of the sexes, he accepted mixed dancing, mixed learning, even mixed praying. (These are things that are anathema to the traditional halachic observance espoused by Chabad) Indeed, he became a consistent supporter of feminist causes – so much so that he privately ordained several women and was the only male rabbi to join the crusading Women of the Wall in 1990 when, in defense of the Orthodox establishment, they read from their own *Torah* scroll before the Western Wall.” My sense is that while Shlomo lived a life in accordance with *halacha*, he did not believe that Jewish law was ultimately the glue to heal a broken people. After all, from him it was not only the Jews who were broken after the Holocaust; humanity was broken. Law may keep a people together but it will not heal them and it will

¹³ Musleah, Rahel. “Shlomo Carlebach The Music Man.” *Hadassah Magazine*. Oct, 2008, 52.

¹⁴ Cohen, Robert L. “Jewish Soul Man.” *Moment* (August 1997), 83. (Quoted from the thesis “Contributions and Controversies: A Study of Shlomo Carlebach’s Impact of ‘World Jewry’” by Dina R. Orron.)

¹⁵ Personal Communications with Alan Septimus. Former board member of *Kehilath Jacob*, in New York City.

certainly not heal the world. What mattered to him was human relations, the ability of one human being to see the other, the recognition of the others humanity.¹⁶

The chapter of Carlebach's biography in which he severs ties with *Chabad* (or perhaps *Chabad* severs ties with Carlebach) is not completely understood or documented. There is debate as to what ultimately separated him from the community that he helped to define, although it can be assumed that at the very least his liberalism put him outside *Chabad's* behavioral norms and led to his eventual leaving.

Carlebach was aware that his more broadminded beliefs made him an outsider with the Orthodox community. Carlebach once said, "The hardest thing as a Jew is the contradictions. Everything is a contradiction, which is a sign of truth, because only liars contradict themselves. People who tell the truth are full of contradictions."¹⁷ In fact, Carlebach often appeared to be more at ease with those whom would be considered non-religious. For example, in *Tikkun* magazine he writes:

Let me quote Rav Kook, one of our great prophets. He says the world always thinks that religious people are the ones who are close to religion and non-religious ones don't care about religion. But it is often the case that the non-religious people are yearning for something so deep and they look at the religious people and they don't find that there. People who are announcing themselves as messengers of God are often very mediocre people and they don't even sense the yearning of those unbelievable people. I see it all the time¹⁸

Eventually, Carlebach brought his new-age sense of Judaism to where it could be fully appreciated: San Francisco, California. In 1966, Carlebach, then a well known Jewish musical performer thanks to his successful performing and recording career, was

¹⁶ Magid, Shaul. "Shaul Magid on Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach." *Havruta: A Journal of Jewish Conversation* 2 no. 1 (2009).

¹⁷ Cohen, Robert. L. "Reb Shlomo-Jewish Soul Man." *Moment* (August 1997), 58.

¹⁸ "Practical Wisdom from Shlomo Carlebach." *Tikkun* 12 no. 5. 53-56. Fall 5768.

invited to participate in the Berkeley Folk Festival. This event, with more than 100,000 people in attendance, introduced him to a wider audience, as well as to some of the most popular folk and pop musicians of the time.

While attending the Berkeley Folk Festival, Carlebach developed an affinity for San Francisco and in 1968, decided to establish *The House of Love and Prayer*¹⁹, a Jewish hostel that served as a unique Jewish community center. At *The House of Love and Prayer*, Carlebach taught, prayed, and lived with affiliated and non-affiliated Jews who were very much a product of the 1960's and 1970's counter culture. Carlebach's ideology and way of life was in many ways the embodiment of this culture.

So many souls of all sorts are said to have drifted through Reb Shlomo's *House of Love and Prayer* over the years. It was there that so many new souls were born and so many others found again the light of their own Jewish heritage. Many wandered in, in drug induced stupors, catatonic, and in desperate need of sympathy and basic human contact. It was to many of these people, strung out from the variety of life's stresses – chemical, emotional, or otherwise – that Reb Shlomo reached out and in the process further risked his reputation among the Orthodox.²⁰

Carlebach, though deeply rooted in his Jewish identity, maintained strong ties with “leaders of Eastern religions...ashrams, New Age centers, and yoga retreats...”²¹ His non-threatening religious ideals, carefree lifestyle, and his relaxed approach to sexuality and drug use, made him an exciting role model for the hippie community of this time. At *The House of Love and Prayer*, Carlebach brought *Torah* to those whom many

¹⁹ Carlebach founded The House of Love and Prayer with his friend and fellow Lubavitcher emissary, Zalman Schachter, who would later leave Chabad and found the Jewish Renewal movement.

²⁰ Serkez, Kalman. *The Holy Beggars Banquet*. Northvale: Jason Aaronson Inc., 1998. xiv.

²¹ Sarna, Jonathan. *American Judaism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004. 349.

considered to be “lost Jewish souls – runways, drug addicts, and alcoholics.”²² The types of people who would often find themselves on the periphery of traditional Jewish communities made up the heart and soul of Carlebach’s ministry. For Carlebach, Judaism was something to be experienced on an emotional level and not something to merely be understood on an intellectual level.

Drugs were a staple in *The House and Love and Prayer*, and Carlebach himself in fact, admitted to using drugs recreationally throughout his life.

I wanted to know what was going on. Not heroin or cocaine, not drugs to make you crazy, but some drugs to open channels in your heart. I didn’t want to be in a generation where something was available which I didn’t take advantage of. It was *gevult* [wonderful]. Hasish had no effect on me, because if you’re on a certain high level, it doesn’t affect you.²³

The House of Love and Prayer ultimately closed in the late 1970s.²⁴ The closing brought Carlebach to two new simultaneous ventures: one, as the “traditional” congregational rabbi of *Kehillat Jacob* in New York City, and two, as the spiritual leader of Moshav Mod’iin in Israel. Shlomo’s father, Rabbi Naphtali Carlebach served as congregational rabbi of *Kehilath Jacob* in NYC from 1950 to 1957.²⁵ His death created a vacuum in the leadership of the synagogue which was ultimately filled by Shlomo and his twin brother Eli Chaim. Each brought their own particular style of Judaism to the synagogue. Eli Chaim’s more traditional rabbinate allowed Shlomo to continue

²² Goldman, Ari. “Obituary of Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach.” *The New York Times*. Oct. 22, 1994.11.

²³ Wohlgelenter, Elli. “Simply Shlomo.” *The Jerusalem Post*. (April 20, 1995), FEATURES 8. (Quoted from the thesis “Contributions and Controversies: A Study of Shlomo Carlebach’s Impact of World Jewry” by Dina R. Orron.)

²⁴ Ariel, Yaakov. “Hasidism in the Age of Aquarians: The House of Love and Prayer in San Francisco, 1967-1977.” *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* v. 13, no. 2 (Summer 2003), 156. (Quoted from the thesis “Contributions and Controversies: A Study of Shlomo Carlebach’s Impact of World Jewry” by Dina R. Orron.)

²⁵ “History.” *Carlebach Shul*. Available from <http://carlebachshul.org/About%20Us/History.htm>. Internet; accessed 29 December 2009.

exploring his decidedly non-traditional approach to the rabbinate. During the 1980s, Shlomo and Eli Chaim's rabbinic partnership permitted Shlomo to travel extensively while still having an influence over the culture of *Kehilath Jacob*. Eli Chaim was involved in the day-to-day activities of the synagogue, allowing Shlomo to lead services and programming when he was in New York and to have a hands-off approach with the synagogue when he was traveling outside of New York.²⁶

Simultaneously, Carlebach was creating a *moshav* in Israel, outside of Tel Aviv, that would be devoted to his special brand of Judaism. Made up of a collection of individuals from the now closed, *The House of Love and Prayer* in San Francisco, as well as other American and Israeli Jews from similar ideologies, the *moshav* created another community in which Carlebach could serve as spiritual leader. The community currently defines itself as a "community ...of top rate musicians and artists (who) follow the teachings of the late Shlomo Carlebach."²⁷

By working in San Francisco, New York, Israel, and traveling throughout all parts of the world, Carlebach became a recognized Jewish figure on the world stage and significantly expanded his sphere of influence. Throughout his life, Carlebach toured extensively around the world, most notably throughout the United States, Israel, and the USSR (and later Russia). His significant travel schedule combined with his charismatic persona created a cult-like following. His *chasidim* were known to follow him around the world, from one synagogue or performing venue to another. Neshama Carlebach, Shlomo's daughter, recounts that wherever she goes in the world, she meets people who

²⁶ Personal Communications with Alan Septimus, October 24th, 2009.

²⁷ "The Moshav (Moshav Medo Modiim)." [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/group.php?v=info&ref=mf&gid=2241689508). Available from <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?v=info&ref=mf&gid=2241689508>. Internet; accessed 29 December 2009.

tell her that her father was their best friend. "I ask them how long did you know my father? They answer, 'I met him once'. A best friend is that person who sees you, sees your pain, your joy, and my father was that person."²⁸ This was part of the magic that surrounded Carlebach. He had the gift to make every person he spoke to feel like they were the most important and special person he had ever met.

Carlebach's audience was by no means solely Jewish. "He sang and taught for Christians in churches and Buddhist (many of them Jewish) in ashrams, for Sufis and Hindus; for blacks in South Africa and blacks and Jews in Crown Heights; for the children of light in San Francisco and the children of darkness, children of Nazis and/or Nazi sympathizers, in Germany, and Poland; for Israeli soldiers and Palestinian prisoners."²⁹

As a musical personality...It is an indisputable fact that his music was the first to blur the lines between popular and synagogue music. To say he was the first 'Jewish rock star' may be overstating the case, but it's not far from the truth. In terms of the popular music of the early/mid 1960s he was an established 'folksinger'. He sang in venues as varied as synagogues, JCCs, colleges, folk festivals, and coffee houses, not to mention all over Europe and Israel (and later, famously, in the USSR).³⁰

The Holocaust was a defining experience in his life. In almost every story he told and in every song he sang, the memory of the Holocaust was never too far below the surface.

The Holocaust plays a central role in Shlomo's teaching. It is not that he talked about it very much, or that he had any coherent rendering of its meaning. Rather,

²⁸ Musleah, Rahel. "Shlomo Carlebach The Music Man." *Hadassah Magazine*. Oct, 2008, 52.

²⁹ Robert L. Cohen, "Jewish Soul Man," *Moment*(August 1997), 61.

³⁰ Personal Communications with Cantor Jeffrey Klepper, 12/29/09 -Jewish musician and composer who performed with Carlebach on numerous occasions.

the Holocaust was for him a divine sign of a seismic change in Jewish history that required a paradigmatic shift in Judaism's relationship to the world. For Shlomo, the evil of the *Shoah* [Holocaust] was not a sign that the world hates the Jews, but a sign that human hatred can only be conquered by human compassion, not by revenge or retribution. Thus his desire for Jews to become more a part of the world, and not more insular, he readily performed for non-Jewish audience.³¹

"Carlebach defined Judaism as a religion of happiness and love."³² He brought his message of Judaism through love not just where it may have been readily accepted, but also in places where Jews had had a particularly devastating history, like Poland, a country whose Jewish community had been decimated by the Holocaust. Many Jews, especially Holocaust survivors from Poland, condemned Carlebach for reaching out to the Polish people.³³ To Carlebach however, it was precisely because of Poland's treatment of the Jews that he knew he felt the need to perform there. Perhaps it is one of the most poignant tributes to Carlebach's legacy that a year after he died, his song *Lma'an Achai* [Because of my Friends], his song of peace that he sang at every concert, was chosen to honor Pope John Paul II the first Polish Pope on a trip he made to the United States in 1995.³⁴

Shortly after Carlebach's death in 1994, *Lilith*, a Jewish feminist magazine, had an explosive article in which multiple anonymous sources alleged inappropriate contact that Carlebach forced upon them. Although no one explicitly accused Carlebach of raping them, these sources accused him of some sort of sexual molestation and/or sexual

³¹ Magid, Shaul. "Shaul Magid on Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach." *Havruta: A Journal of Jewish Conversation* 2 no. 1. (2009).

³² Mandelbaum, Yitta, *Holy Brother*, (Northvale: Jason Aronson Inc., 1997, xxxii).

³³ "PBS." *Religion and Ethics Newsweekly*. Available from <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week1135/profile.html>. Internet; accessed 29 December 2009.

³⁴ "PBS." *Religion and Ethics Newsweekly*. Available from <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week1135/profile.html>. Internet; accessed 29 December 2009.

harassment.³⁵ Rumors regarding Carlebach's behavior had been circulating for years, especially during his time in San Francisco, but this was the first time that this discussion was brought out candidly into the open. Many of his most vocal supporters denounced this article as cowardly, being that these anonymous sources waited until after Carlebach's death to go public, thus denying Carlebach the ability to defend or refute these allegations. Whether factual or not, these allegations have obscured what otherwise would have been a proud and influential legacy of a masterful Jewish rabbi, musician, educator, and performer.

³⁵ Blustein, Sarah. "The Paradoxical Legacy: Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach's Shadow Side." *Lillith*. Spring 1998.

Songs of Love and Prayer: A Study of Reb Shlomo Carlebach
Chapter 2

Carlebach's musical output was vast and diverse. His *niggunim*³⁶ are infectious as reflected by why Ben Zion Solomon writes in his introduction to *Shlomo Shabbos* :
“Even if we’ve never heard them before (there are so many), it is as if we’ve been singing them all our lives, and there is even an intuition that we must have sung them as our souls stood together before God at Mount Sinai.”³⁷

In 1959 he produced the first of approximately 25 albums (entitled *HaNeshama Lach*³⁸), not counting the many unauthorized recordings of his live performances, as well as the numerous greatest hits collections that were produced during and after his lifetime. In all, he recorded only a fraction of his compositions, estimated to total upwards of 1,000 (Carlebach himself was not sure of the number).³⁹

The study of Carlebach's entire musical output presents many challenges. Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, at the time of writing, there are no collections of Carlebach sheet music in print. While one can find some of Carlebach's most well known pieces in assorted compilation books, there are no current or definitive collections of his musical library. Three books, however, were previously published: *The Shlomo*

³⁶ Usage of the word *niggun* will be defined later in chapter.

³⁷ Solomon, Ben Zion. *Shlomo Shabbos*. Mod'iim: Kehilat Jacob Publications. 1993, iv.

³⁸ Carlebach, Shlomo. *HaNeshama Lach*. Shlomo Carlebach. 635669025721, 1959. Compact disc

³⁹ Weiss, Sam, "Carlebach, Neo-Hasidic Music and Liturgical Practice," *Journal of Synagogue Music*, Volume 34, Fall 2009. 56.

*Carlebach Anthology*⁴⁰, compiled by Velvel Pasternak (which is a combination of two earlier songbooks)⁴¹, *Shlomo Shabbos*⁴², and *The Shlomo Carlebach Songbook*⁴³.

The Shlomo Carlebach Anthology is the most definitive collection of his music as it contains just fewer than two hundred of his most well known *niggunim*. *The Shlomo Carlebach Songbook* contains his well-known *niggunim* as well as his some of his lesser known, more complex pieces. The third book, called *Shlomo Shabbos*, is perhaps the most interesting of all three collections, though it is also by no means a definitive collection. What makes this particular book so fascinating is that it includes short explanations of each piece giving insight into the Carlebach creative process. As will be later explained in this paper, the context in which Carlebach wrote his pieces is essential to their understanding. These books, his numerous authorized and unauthorized recordings, as well as video clips of his concerts and the general usage of his music in synagogue, comprises the body of work that has shaped my understanding of his music.

Carlebach's music ranges drastically in style. From the *chasidic niggun*, to *chazzanut*, and even the occasional Yiddish pieces (such as *Gevalt!*⁴⁴), Carlebach was never tied to one particular musical genre. Nevertheless, all of his music can be considered under the category umbrella of the musical genre: folk music. As in the folk idiom, much of his music is derived from an oral tradition that drastically changes from one performer to another. Carlebach himself performed his music differently each time

⁴⁰ Pasternak, Velvel. *The Shlomo Carlebach Anthology*. Tara Publications, 1997.

⁴¹ It is believed that these books, published by Tara records, were pulled from print due to copyright and royalty disputes between the publishing company and the Carlebach estate.

⁴² Solomon, Ben Zion. *Shlomo Shabbos*. Modi'im: Kehilat Jacob Publications, 1993.

⁴⁴ Carlebach, Shlomo. *The Shlomo Carlebach Songbook*. New York: Zimrani Records Inc., 1970.

⁴⁵ Musical example # 1.

he sang, as can be evidenced by listening to his numerous authorized and unauthorized live albums. It seems as if he would alter his music so that it would fit the context of the people for whom he was performing and evoke the type of emotion that he was looking to achieve at any particular moment during his performances.

Carlebach was not concerned with his compositions being written or performed in a musically precise way.

Ben Zion Solomon, writes in the foreword to *Shlomo Shabbos*,

In our transcriptions we have tried to convey the simple body of the tune, leaving the animation to the individual musician, with a suggestion to keep in within the bounds of the idiom for the particular genre... We have included some ornamentation symbols, especially in the *nusach* that precedes some of the *niggunim*, but R' Shlomo himself sing the *nusach* differently each time, and like all good *chazzanim*, with an inflection and ornamentation that reflects the particular moment he is singing. Thus, 'accuracy' is a very relative term; and while accuracy is certainly one of our chiefly concerns, it must be understood that a fair degree of flexibility must be left to the musician.^{45/46}

In studying his available repertoire, I have chosen to divide Carlebach's music into three categories, each having various subcategories. While I acknowledge that there is occasional overlapping of pieces into more than one category, I believe that these divisions create a useable paradigm to explore his music further. These categories are 1) *niggunei* Carlebach 2) recitative, and 3) story songs.

The first category, *niggunei* Carlebach, is represented in such pieces as, *The Krakow Niggun*⁴⁷, *Esa Enai*⁴⁸, and *Am Yisrael Chai*⁴⁹ To the *Chasidim*, which Carlebach

⁴⁵ Solomon, Ben Zion. *Shlomo Shabbos*. Mod'iim: Kehilath Jacob Publications. 1993.

⁴⁶ Ironically, Cantor Benjie-Ellen Schiller, Professor at Hebrew Union College –Jewish Institute of Religion, recalls a time when she met Carlebach in an airport in the 1980's and that at their meeting he recounted how annoyed he was that the melody of *Lma'an achai* that had become wildly popular, actually is not the exact way in which he wrote it! -- personal communications on November 16th, 2009.

⁴⁷ Musical example # 2

was loosely aligned with throughout his life, *niggunim*, mostly in wordless form, are a primary way in which one connects with God. Though these melodies are often quite simple, inviting even the most non-musical to join in, some *niggunim* can be quite musically complex. Ellen Koskoff explains it as follows:

Chabad philosophy⁵⁰ encourages the composition and performance of special, sacred, but non-liturgical melodies, known as *niggunim*, for it is these melodies which are felt to be best suited to awaken and sustain the proper atmosphere for *devekut* (“Adhesion”). *Niggunim* are usually performed in the home, synagogue, or other meeting place in addition to the daily and special prayers which forms the orthodox liturgy. Traditionally, *niggunim* have been used to help achieve *devekut* because they are felt to contain the potential to arouse two essential emotional states, *simcha* (“joy”) and *hitlahavut* (“enthusiasm”), which lie dormant in the *Chasid*. Appropriate or “useable” *niggunim* then, are those in which the Lubavitcher perceives recognizable traces of these states. Traces of *simcha* and *hitlahavut* must be made active and sustained in order for *devekut* to take place, and this process is generally accomplished through vocal performance of *niggunim*.⁵¹

A *niggun* is “perceived as an intermediary which functions between the mundane world, represented by words, and the divine realm of *devekut*. *Niggun* is, in a sense, a channel through which the *Chasid* might elevate himself to a spiritually purer realm.”⁵²

“There are four characteristics found, to some extent, in all Lubavitcher *niggunim*. These characteristics are repetition at all structural levels, ornamentation, extensive use of vocables, and four-phrase and four-sectional structure. Many *niggunim* employ a four-phrase structure within each large section; that is, a section is generally constructed from four successive phrases of equal length, often a repetition of two phrases of equal length. However, when a *niggun* contains only three large sections

⁴⁸ Musical example # 3

⁴⁹ Musical example # 4

⁵⁰ While Koskoff speaks here specifically about Lubavitch *Chasidim*, her description of *niggunim* is consistent through all *Chasidic* communities.

⁵¹ Koskoff, Ellen. “Contemporary Nigun Composition in an American Hasidic Community.” *Notes*, no. 58 (2002): 155.

⁵² Koskoff, Ellen. “Contemporary Nigun Composition in an American Hasidic Community.” *Notes*, no. 58 (2002): 156.

of different musical material, one, usually, the second is often repeated in performance”... These characteristics created a recipe for how the Lubavitcher Chasidim can transform a simple wordless melody to a musical vehicle for reaching heightened spirituality. These *niggunim*, especially when following the specified order of how the *niggunim* sections should be ordered, bring the singer to an elevated sense of holiness.”⁵³

Carlebach had his own approach to writing and singing *niggunim*. More often than not, his *niggunim* were actually composed contrary to the attributes inherent in most traditional *niggunim*. In general, Carlebach’s *niggunim* were not musically complex. His short melodies are almost always diatonic and do not modulate. They are repetitive and may even sound derivative of other pieces which he wrote. Often they only have two sections as opposed to more traditional *niggunim* which have at least three or four. Sometimes, as in the case with “*Pitchu Li*”^{54/55}, the second section of the *niggun* is actually a retelling of the first section a few notes higher. Presumably, Carlebach was more concerned with his music creating some sort of human connection or spiritual moment, than whether or not they adhered to the rubrics governing more traditional *niggunim*. All of these simple, congregational, melodic melodies, whether with words or without, I will refer to as “*Niggunei Carlebach*.”

Another form of Carlebach composition is recitative⁵⁶. Two examples of this form are his settings of *Kavakarat*,⁵⁷ and *V'zocheir*.⁵⁸ While Carlebach is mostly known

⁵³ Koskoff, 159.

⁵⁴ Musical example # 5

⁵⁵ In an effort to be consistent in spelling, I have chosen to use the Sephardic form of spelling all Hebrew words, and titles of Carlebach songs, even though some Carlebach recordings would refer to pieces in both their Ashkenazi and Sephardic spellings.

⁵⁶ A recitative, in a traditional cantorial context, is a dramatic and grand cantorial gesture, often-times, but now always improvised by the *chazzan*.

⁵⁷ Musical example # 6

⁵⁸ Musical example # 7

around the world as a singer and composer of *niggunei* Carlebach, most people, even the most well-versed of Jewish musicians, are not aware of his incredible contributions to larger scale compositions in the style of traditional *chazzanut*. Carlebach, a child of Berlin, Germany, was well educated in the Eastern European heritage of virtuosic *chazzanut*. In both *Kavakarat*, and *V'zoher* we hear how Carlebach bridges the world between *chazzanut* and *niggunei* Carlebach in a way that is inherently his own. Both of these pieces follow the same format. They begin with a long recitative-like beginning which transitions into a metered, melodic *niggunei* Carlebach.

Carlebach is quoted as having said, “I don’t think I have a good voice. I think my voice is just good enough to inspire people to sing with me.”⁵⁹ ...“If I would have a *gevalt* voice...then nobody would want to sing with me, because then they’ll think they don’t want to miss my voice, but my voice is just good enough to make them sing.”⁶⁰ To anyone who has heard his first album, *HaNeshama Lach*, it is instantly clear that Carlebach drastically underestimated his vocal ability. Carlebach presents a well-trained, cantorial voice, at ease with challenging melismatic passages, virtuosic falsetto passages, and deep knowledge in traditional performance style of *chazzanut*. These types of songs, however, that Carlebach performed more so in the earliest part of his career were not a dominant part of his repertoire in his later years. Perhaps he believed that these types of songs did not serve the purpose of creating a communal atmosphere in the same way that his *niggunei* Carlebach did and that may explain why he performed them increasingly

⁵⁹ Wohlgeleter, Elli. “Simply Shlomo.” The Jerusalem Post. (April 20, 1995), FEATURES 8.

⁶⁰ Wohlgeleter, Elli. “Simply Shlomo.” The Jerusalem Post. (April 20, 1995), FEATURES 8.

less as his career proceeded. Carlebach viewed his voice not as a vehicle of beauty, but as a vehicle of *Torah* and communal prayer.

Another form of recitative can be heard on the album *Shlomo Shabbos* and is notated in the book of the same name. Carlebach set the psalms of *kabbalat Shabbat* into a repetitive musical theme⁶¹ that has come to be known as “Carlebach *nusach*.” Though by no means as complex and intricate as *Shabbat nusach* set by cantorial giants such as Israel Alter and Adolph Katchko, Carlebach beautifully creates his own respectable *nusach* pattern that to which sets sections of the *Kabbalat Shabbat* psalms. Similar to Western European *Shabbat nusach*, these passages are set in a major key. Additionally, similar to the recitative pieces, these *nusach* passages are only fully realized when they transition into his *niggunei* Carlebach.

Of equal importance to the actual composition of Carlebach’s songs, was his masterful form of delivery. Carlebach would speak often in his concerts, often times speaking more than he would actually sing. Sam Weiss describes it like this:

The undisputed master of setting up a song and extracting all the emotion that it could yield was Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach. His introductory personal anecdotes and Chasid stories uniquely synthesize the two most powerful devices in Chasidic culture, the *maiseh* (tale) and the *niggun*. He spoke his *maiselekh* in a bardic semi-chat, and used his *niggunim* to frame cantorial chants within the accepted *nusach* for that particular prayer text.⁶²

All throughout Carlebach’s concerts, before, after, and often times, during his songs, he would speak. “He was a master of the ‘set-up’ a contextual subtext that

⁶¹ Musical Example # 8.

⁶² Weiss, Sam. “Carlebach, Neo-Hasidic Music and Liturgical Practice,” *Journal of Synagogue Music*, Volume 34, Fall 2009, 64.

underpins and lends meaning to his song”⁶³ This is one of the performance characteristics which I believe gave Carlebach his uniqueness and his perceived sense of authenticity. For Carlebach, a song was never just a song. It was a vehicle to teach or to connect with his audience - whether in the synagogue, or night club, or concert stage. Carlebach was deeply connected to the *Chasidic* model of storytelling. To the *Chasidim*, stories are an integral part of their mystical tradition. Carlebach’s stories, some of them original to him, and others a retelling of older stories were filled with pearls of wisdom, sweet anecdotes, and thought-provoking messages. Two books have been published of Carlebach’s stories: *Lamed Vav: A collection of the favorite stories of Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach ztz”l*,⁶⁴ and *Shlomo’s Stories*.⁶⁵

The delivery of these stories would often be combined with singing in a way that was unique to Carlebach. These musical teaching moments which he would create, I have labeled as “story songs.” An example of this can be heard on the CD *HaNeshema Shel Shlomo*⁶⁶, which is Shlomo’s last recording created during his lifetime, as well as the only recording project in which he collaborated with his daughter, Neshama.⁶⁷ On this recording, Neshama tells a much beloved story called the *Ocean of Tears*. Like much of Carlebach’s output, it is not entirely clear whether or not he wrote this story himself or whether it is a retelling of an older story known throughout *Chasidic* circles. In this

⁶³ Weiss 64

⁶⁴ Carlebach, Shlomo. *Lamed Vav*. Lakewood: Israel Book Shop, 2005.

⁶⁵ Carlebach, Shlomo. *Shlomo’s Stories: Selected Tales*. Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc., 1994.

⁶⁶ Carlebach, Shlomo and Neshama. *HaNeshema shel Shlomo*. Sameach Music. 6356690102222, 1997. Compact disc.

⁶⁷ Dina R. Orron, in her thesis entitled *Contributions and Controversies: A Study of Carlebach’s Impact on World Jewry*, writes “The release (of *HaNeshema Shel Shlomo*) came after a two-year legal battle between Neshama Carlebach and a disciple of Shlomo Carlebach. Some of Carlebach’s disciples have released recordings that were not authorized by the original (Carlebach) *chevre*. It is possible that those members who released unauthorized material did not even think that Carlebach’s music did not belong to them...Neshama and her mother and sister had to endure court battles to sue for their legal right to Carlebach’s music, resulting in tension between his family and his followers.”

story, Reb Menachem Mendel of Kotz travels in his sleep to heaven to see his friend Reb Yitzhak Voker who had died three weeks before. The Kotz finds his father standing next to an ocean later revealed to be a collection of all of the tears of the Jewish people. For the Voker, he will never leave the ocean until God has dried every tear of the Jewish people. Throughout the story, Neshema sings the *niggunei* Carlebach *Al eleih ani bochea* (On these things do I cry). Combining of the story and the *niggunei* Carlebach one's emotions are heightened as each element of the performance, the story and the song, are discussing the tears of the Jewish people. Interestingly, in Neshama's rendering of the story, there is confusion in the names of the stories characters and it is not always entirely clear who is speaking to whom in the story. In most, if not in all Carlebach's story's, there is grammatical confusion in the rendering of each story and I've found that one must suspend all disbelief and accept these stories on their own terms. *Chasidic* stories and certainly the ones that Carlebach made famous, need to be understood in a symbolic fashion, and cannot be held up to grammatical or factual scrutiny.

Another form of story song that Carlebach was known for takes the form of a musical *d'var torah*. None of these are professionally recorded at the present time, yet can be found in personally recorded, non-authorized copies in certain *Judaica* stores. An example of this type of story song is *The Tragedy of Cain and Abel*.⁶⁸ With nothing more than two chords, "A minor" and "D minor," Carlebach, seemingly improvises (although it is impossible to know for sure whether it was rehearsed in advance) the Genesis story in which Cain kills his brother Abel, the first act of murder in the *Torah*. Unlike the *Ocean of Tears*, which Carlebach began with a *niggunei* Carlebach that would transition

⁶⁸ Youtube. Available from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvWWBK91ISg>. Internet; accessed 31 December 2009.

into a story, this style of story song is virtually entirely sung in a free flowing recitative style. In the story, Carlebach offers his own *midrash* on the story of Cain and Abel. In this version, Cain weeps for days after unintentionally killing his brother. Spiritual redemption, Carlebach explains, will only be achieved when all the “Cains and Abels and all the creatures of the world” will dance in unity. By telling these *Chasidic* tales in such a musical way, Carlebach added a heightened sense of drama and beauty to his tales. By doing this, he also cleverly found a way to put *Torah* and *yiddishkeit* in his concerts in a non- threatening and musically appealing way to Jews and non-Jews alike.

While his concerts were filled with many religiously educated Jews, as I discuss in chapter 3, Carlebach’s most ardent supporters were those who were not Jewishly educated in a traditional sense, but rather, open-minded individuals searching for a sense of spirituality and connection to God and community. One can only imagine people purchasing tickets to see the great Shlomo Carlebach in concert to hear great music, without realizing they were being told great *Chasidic* tales and being taught Jewish morals as well. His ability to exist simultaneously in the world of *Torah* and music was the gift and magic of Carlebach. Few others, if any, were able to seamlessly flow between music and Jewish wisdom in the way that Carlebach did.

Many have speculated as to what made his music as popular as they came to be. To Mark Kligman, perhaps it is because

Carlebach combin(ed) the participatory ease of folk music, the energy of the newly created music from Israel, and the religious fervor of the Hassidic *niggun*. He (Carlebach) succeeded in moving liturgical music out of the synagogue and into a wide range of other settings, including concert halls and night clubs, and

used his music to educate and inspire Jews to renew their Jewish identity and discover the beauty of Jewish life.⁶⁹

Rachel Rabinowitz, in the introduction to *The Shlomo Carlebach Songbook* describes Carlebach's music as follows.

Steeped in the ancient, haunting, soul-summoning melodies of the Chassidim, he interprets them individualistically in highly topical terms. Merging with the searing sadness of Negro minstrelsy, surging with the exuberant orchestrations of Israel reborn, the Carlebach compositions run the spiritual and emotional gamut from impassioned yearning to soaring rapture. For these songs are no ordinary songs. They are new-dimensional folksongs, soul songs, flame lit melodies. They are prayers, are paeans, and are impassioned outpourings of faith and hope and desire. They are moods that are mirrored in the rhapsodic response of kindled participants.⁷⁰

I believe what made Carlebach's music so widely loved by the masses, is exactly the same as what gave him his cult status: the charisma, the approachability, and the lack of pretention found in everything he did. Carlebach was not a trained musician. His later recordings show his voice hoarse and void of vocal technique. In general, his songs were simply composed and his guitar skills were minimal at best. Yet, in spite of what he lacked in traditional musical skills, or perhaps exactly because of it, Carlebach was a master performer whose music touched the souls of countless of Jews and non-Jews throughout the world. Whatever else can be said about Carlebach, he sang with incredible spiritual honesty and that is what I believe made him a success.

Or in Carlebach's own words,

I have never sat down to compose a song. Songs came to me at great moments when I heard the music of Heaven or the sounds of Hell, or when I felt the deep silence – whenever my heart was broken – or whenever my soul was uplifted. There is still the cry of war. Heaven and earth still tremble with the sound of six million broken strings. Yet there is a soft murmur coming down from the Holy

⁶⁹ Kligman, Mark. "Contemporary Jewish Music in America." *American Jewish Yearbook*, no. 101 (2001): 99.

⁷⁰ Carlebach, Shlomo. *The Shlomo Carlebach Songbook*. New York: Zimrani Records Inc., 1970. Page 6.

Wall. The beautiful people of the world are singing a song of love and peace. I hope that my melodies are part of this great song. I hope, my friends, that you will keep singing those melodies until our voices will be loud enough to reach heaven. Or maybe till our voices will be soft enough so we can hear the angles join us. There is a little tear in every song. Don't wipe it off, it is my gift to you. There is a little dance in every note -- dance it till we all dance together on the streets of Jerusalem.⁷¹

⁷¹ Carlebach, Shlomo. *The Shlomo Carlebach Songbook*. New York: Zimrani Records Inc., 1970. Page 95.

Songs of Love and Prayer: A Study of Reb Shlomo Carlebach

Chapter 3

Why is Shlomo Carlebach important to American Judaism? While approaching this research, this was the question that concerned me the most. Throughout this research, I conducted multiple interviews with individuals who have each experienced Carlebach differently. I interviewed cantors, rabbis, and laypeople, some of whom knew Carlebach professionally and personally and others who never met him. Perhaps indicative of the man I chose to study, each individual I interviewed seemed very emotionally invested in this topic. Some considered themselves to be fans of his music, while others made a point to say that while they commend the contributions of Carlebach, they strongly separate themselves from Carlebach and what they viewed as his personal failures. Some of these communications were extensive phone or in-person interviews, while others were brief email correspondence. All of these interactions however were exceptionally informative in trying to create a clear understanding of who Shlomo Carlebach was and why he continues to be a dominant force in American Judaism today.

Throughout my research, it became clear to me that Carlebach's multifaceted career allowed him to be experienced and understood drastically differently from community to community, and person-to-person. As Cantor Jeff Klepper told me: "The key to understanding Carlebach is to recognize the different aspects of his art and career, and what each one meant to different audiences and in different situations".⁷²

One of the first people I interviewed was Alan Septimus, member of *Kehilath Jacob* in New York City (also known as *The Carlebach Shul*) and former board member

⁷² Personal communications with Cantor Jeffrey Klepper, December 29th, 2009.

of the synagogue during the last years of Carlebach's rabbinate there. He was quick to tell me that the very premise of my question "Who was the real Shlomo Carlebach?" was faulty. "You can never really know someone" he told me, and he felt that this was especially true with Carlebach.⁷³

Both in life, and in death, Carlebach was larger than life, often times being shadowed by the mythology that follows him wherever he goes. As popular and famous as he was during his life and as exponentially famous as he has become since his death, there are still relatively few people who actually knew him intimately. This has not stopped many, however, from claiming close relationships with Carlebach. Many have claimed to speak for him though they barely knew him, causing much tension between those who were followers of Carlebach and his Estate, run by his estranged wife and two daughters. In fact, since Carlebach's death, there has been a long and, at times, very public feud between Neshama Carlebach, Shlomo's daughter, and many of Carlebach's disciples concerning copyright disputes with regards to recoding and publishing rights to his music. It should be noted that on every occasion where there has been a legal question on who controls the Carlebach's music, Neshama and the Carlebach Estate have prevailed.⁷⁴

Since Carlebach's death, the allegations have increased about his engagement in inappropriate sexual relations with women throughout his life, many of them children under the age of consent. These allegations have, at the very least, complicated the Carlebach legacy. This fact was always a source of tension with most of my interviews.

⁷³ Personal Communication with Alan Septimus November 7th, 2009.

⁷⁴ Personal Communications with Neshama Carlebach – Jewish recording artist and daughter of Shlomo Carlebach.

With each interviewee, with the exception of Neshama Carlebach, the topic of these allegations came up in some fashion and it became abundantly clear to me that this part of Carlebach's life is as much a part of his legacy as any other part. In fact, many of my interviews began with me providing a disclaimer that I would not be asking any questions regarding that specific subject.

In the course of my interviews, it was clear to me that Carlebach's greatest influence can be felt in the area of Jewish music. It is hard to imagine influential musicians such as Danny Maseng, Debbie Friedman, and Cantor Jeff Klepper, without there first having been a Shlomo Carlebach. His infectious *niggunim*, charismatic performances style, concerts which were part-worship, part-performance, and desire for audience participation all appear to have touched countless musicians and songwriters, whether or not they acknowledge it. In fact, between Danny Maseng, Debbie Friedman, and Cantor Jeff Klepper, only Cantor Klepper acknowledged the inspiration of Carlebach in his songwriting career. Both Friedman and Maseng argued that their music has not been inspired by Carlebach in any regard, though Maseng acknowledged that Carlebach's performance style and his gift of storytelling has been a guiding force in his career. Cantor Klepper however is quick to attribute Carlebach as one of his musical inspirations and proudly shared that he had, in fact, performed with Carlebach numerous times in the earlier part of his cantorial career

[Carlebach] inspired countless singers to do what he did - to take a line of text and create a catchy and sing-able melody for it. In that sense, every person who composes Jewish music in a folk idiom (including myself) - whether they admit it or not - has been influenced by Carlebach.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Personal Communications with Cantor Jeff Klepper December 29th, 2009.

Rabbi Dan Freeland, Vice-President of the Union of Reform Judaism, and former member of the Jewish musical group *Kol b'Seder*, alongside Jeff Klepper states

...His musical impact is enormous. I was first exposed to some of his text settings and *niggunim* as a camper at the URJ Eisner Camp and URJ Kutz camp in the late 1960's. This was a time of significant change in Reform Jewish music. Following the Six Day War in June 1967, Reform camps and youth movements - and synagogues – started looking for sing-able Hebrew language, worship appropriate melodies, to reflect their new found comfort with singing in Hebrew, and to express their connection to *Klal Yisrael*.

Carlebach was one of the few Jewish musicians composing and performing a repertoire that could easily translate into an upbeat song session melody. Melodies like *Esah Einai* quickly entered the mainstream Reform repertoire. In 1967 the *Chasidic* Song Festival began providing a dozen new songs each year that also met this criteria- and Carlebach was a major provider of repertoire to the annual festival. The recordings of these Festivals provided the primary entry point of these melodies of non-Reform origin into the Reform repertoire (think *Oseh Shalom* (Nurit Hirsch) ...or *Shehechiyanu* (Tzvika Pik). All traditional texts, with upbeat, contemporary, Israel influenced, sing-able Hebrew melodies...His music opened a door, and his approach to Jewish music sparked a musical revolution in American and in Israel...⁷⁶

In what is perhaps the largest proof of his musical dominance, Carlebach's music continues to thrive and be re-recorded by countless musicians years after his death. In fact, numerous posthumous recordings of Carlebach himself have been illegally released against the wishes of his Estate. As discussed in chapter two, because of numerous copyright concerns, all of Carlebach's music is presently out of print. Neshama told me that there is a plan in the works to release definitive transcriptions of Carlebach's music, though she believes that will not happen for quite some time.

⁷⁶ Personal Communications with Rabbi Dan Freeland, November 26th, 2009 – Vice President of the Union for Reform Judaism and former member of influential musical group, Kol b'Seder.

Perhaps the most prominent musician who has so clearly continued the musical tradition of Shlomo Carlebach is his daughter, Neshama. Although Neshama has sung throughout her life and even made a recording with her father, *HaNeshama Shel Shlomo*⁷⁷ shortly before his death, “Neshama began her professional career (in earnest) three weeks after her father had died, feeling compelled to continue in her father’s footsteps and continue his musical legacy”⁷⁸ Neshama, like her father, travels all over the world, especially throughout the United States and Israel, singing her father’s music as well as music written specifically for her. The first time I personally encountered Neshama was at a concert she gave at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem in 2005. While almost the entirety of her concert was comprised of her father’s music, she brought a very different aesthetic to his songs. Unlike the concerts her father gave, this concert was more subtle and more reserved. Whereas her father’s concerts were filled with a more eclectic audience, to my memory, this concert was filled mostly with pre-teen girls, many of whom appeared to be Modern Orthodox. Shlomo would tell stories throughout his concert, sometimes there being more stories than songs, while Neshama, to my recollection, did not tell a single story, allowing the music to speak for itself.

The majority of Neshama’s recordings are arrangements of her father’s music. In some instances, she sings the music in the same style as her father and in other instances, such as *Kavakarat*, on the recording *Haneshama Shel Shlomo*, she sings his compositions in a different style altogether. While Shlomo originally sang the song

⁷⁷ Carlebach, Shlomo and Neshama. *Haneshama shel Shlomo*. Sameach Music. 6356690102222, 1997. Compact disc.

⁷⁸ Official Neshama Carlebach Webpage. Available from <http://www.neshamacarlebach.com/home.htm>. Internet; accessed 1 January 2010.

Kavakarat with a style similar to traditional *chazanut*, Neshama sings the piece with more of a jazz influence.

Neshama's 7th studio album, *Higher and Higher*⁷⁹, was created with the Green Pastures Baptist Choir. With the choir, she masterfully transforms Carlebach's most beloved pieces into soulful gospel songs. Neshama has received criticism for this album, that her work with a Christian choir somehow puts her Jewish faith in question. Neshama strongly disagree with this viewpoint.⁸⁰ As stated recently in the *Jerusalem Post*,

She views this album however as a continuation of her father's work - he actually sang with a gospel choir in Harlem for his first album, *HaNeshama Lach*, and worked with churches throughout his life. (Neshama believes)"Humanity is suffering. It is not just the Jews. The people I work with are the holiest people in the world. We do not exist in a religious setting. We are doing concerts and we are coexisting as people who follow the same path towards holiness. They are not trying to convert me and I am not trying to convert them. We are celebrating life together."⁸¹

Neshama has kept the music of her father alive by transforming it in new musical styles. In fact, while discussing my upcoming recital of her father's music, Neshama gave me her blessing to perform her father's music in a way that is authentic and honest to my musical tastes and my own sense of spirituality.

Carlebach's music has been "transformed" by numerous other musicians as well. Numerous recordings have been created in which performers utilize Carlebach's music in

⁷⁹ Carlebach, Neshama. *Higher and Higher*. Sojourn Records. 896520002033 , 2009. Compact disc.

⁸⁰ Brygel, Yael. "A Legacy of Love." *Jerusalem Post*. Available from <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1249418659303&pagename=JPArticle/ShowFull>. Internet; accessed 5 December 2009.

⁸¹ Brygel, Yael. "A Legacy of Love." *Jerusalem Post*. Available from <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1249418659303&pagename=JPArticle/ShowFull>. Internet; accessed 5 December 2009.

a way that is authentic to whom they are as artists. *Chevre*, an Orthodox “Boy-Band,” performs Carlebach’s music as a capella music in tight harmonies. *World Cantors Sing Carlebach*, a recording comprised of operatically trained cantors, performs his music as elaborate operatic recitatives, and Yisroel Williger, a traditional *chazzan*, performs his music in the style of traditional *chazanut*. I believe that the versatility of Carlebach’s music is a testament to its worth, as well as proof of its potential for longevity.

Each Jewish denomination has incorporated Carlebach’s music in ways relevant to their communities. Reform Judaism has found a way to utilize his music in an authentic and appropriate Reform context as suggested by Dan Freeland when he says:

[The] Reform [Movement] appropriated his melodies and made them their own (see the Reform synagogue keyboard arrangements in *Shaarei Shira* (1987). They reflect a uniquely Reform appropriation of Carlebach (and Friedman, et al)’s approach, made useable in mainstream Reform congregations. (i.e. for organ/keyboard)⁸²

Merri Lovinger Arian, as part of the organization, *Synagogue 3000*, has traveled across the United States as a consultant advising synagogues on Jewish worship. While her focus has been predominantly Reform Worship, she has a unique perspective on Jewish worship throughout the denominational spectrum.

In speaking with her, she shared the resentment that certain segments of the Orthodox and Conservative cantorial community have towards Carlebach and how they perceive his music as having “dumbed-down” the cantorial tradition of their synagogues. She compares it to what she referred to as the “Debbie Effect” in the Reform movement. In the 1960s and 1970s, Debbie Friedman ushered in a new style of participatory Jewish

⁸² Personal Communications with Rabbi Dan Freeland, November 26, 2009.

folk music that many Reform cantors viewed as threatening to their traditional cantorial training. Even today, so many years after Friedman's debut, her music, which calls for strong congregational participation, is a lightning rod for some segments of the Reform cantorate, because of the perception that it is weakening the tradition. This phenomenon occurred within Orthodox and Conservative Judaism with Carlebach as its catalyst. In most mainstream Orthodox and Conservative Synagogues, traditional *chazzanut* has been replaced with either Carlebach melodies or music similar to Carlebach's participatory style of composition.

When asked why Carlebach was not threatening to the Reform movement, Arian's answer was simple: "He didn't write melodies for Reform texts." Whereas Friedman composed melodies for texts such as *Shema*, and *Elohai n'shama*, normative Reform worship texts, Carlebach's compositions of *Esai Enai*, *Haneshama lach*⁸³, and *Hashimint*⁸⁴ were never perceived as threatening because they were more esoteric texts⁸⁵.

Not only does each denomination use Carlebach's music differently, each synagogue that utilizes his music does so in a different fashion as well. Rabbi Margaret Moers Wenig recounts, "One Friday night...I went to *The Carlebach Shul*, then BJ [Congregation *Bnai Jeshurun* in NYC] then Beth Am (NYC) and heard the same Carlebach melody sung three different ways. (It) Made me think: What an impact he had,

⁸³ Musical Example # 9.

⁸⁴ Musical Example # 10.

⁸⁵ Personal Communications with Merri Lovinger Arrian, December 4th, 2009. — Professor at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

and how different his music sounds from *shul* to *shul*”⁸⁶ As student cantor, I have sung his music in numerous synagogues and at each synagogue, his music is sung differently. Sometimes it is as subtle as words being set slightly different on a given melody, while at other times as drastic as simple melodies being transformed into arrangements of four part chorales.

Carlebach’s fingerprints can be seen all over present-day Jewish worship. In a Jewish context, the connection between worship and music is directly related, meaning that there is much overlap for Carlebach in these two categories. According to Danny Maseng, an important Jewish musician and service leader in his own right,

I think Reb Shlomo's greatest influence has been in re-introducing the heart to the *T'fila*. His unrelenting message that the heart is the key has had a profound effect. His joyful melodies pull people out of their seats and his sad melodies break your heart - this is the real stuff of prayer and he has done more to connect Jews to their prayers, in my opinion, than any pontificating theologian has. Young people think he's cool, old people think he's cool. He's made devotional Jewish music cool and accessible. That is a HUGE feat. I do believe, however, that very quickly his music will be trivialized and made mundane and commonplace. It is already happening. I am sad for that - but that is the way of the world.⁸⁷

Alan Septimus views one of Carlebach’s biggest accomplishments as the affect he had on Orthodox liturgy. Because Carlebach’s musical output was so vast and he composed musical settings for so many texts, whether intentionally or not, Carlebach gave greater importance to certain prayers which had not been in a place of prominence before. Because there are now melodies to certain texts (such as ones during the silent

⁸⁶ Personal Communications with Rabbi Margaret Moers Wenig, December 2nd, 2009. – Professor at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

⁸⁷ Personal Communications with Danny Maseng – Jewish Recording Artist and composer.

sections of the *Amidah*), Carlebach influenced which pieces were to be sung aloud and which to be prayed silently.⁸⁸

[Carlebach's] ... most enduring legacy in synagogue music is the large body of his music he created.⁸⁹ Carlebach is, perhaps, more prolific in his compositions than any other modern composers. He has written hundreds of compositions, most of which have never been published, many of which can be heard on one of his numerous recordings. I cannot think of another Jewish musician who has written as many settings of Jewish texts as Carlebach did. In fact, Carlebach often wrote multiple settings of the same text. With so many songs to choose from which to choose, Jewish musicians will be pouring over his musical output for years to come.

What I believe makes Carlebach unique as a musician and sets him apart from many that would be perceived as his peers, is that he so perfectly paired his music with *Torah*. His music was never to be enjoyed as music. It was a vehicle for *Torah*. It was a vehicle to approach God. As Danny Maseng recalled, his *Torah* teaching was sublime and his storytelling second to none.⁹⁰

Now, more than a decade after his death, the Jewish community is attempting to come to terms with the legacy of Carlebach. Indeed, it is impossible to mention the name of Carlebach in certain synagogues, as I myself have experienced, without a congregant wanting to engage in a conversation about the many abuses allegedly committed by Carlebach. His legacy is a complicated one as related by Shaul Magid in a recent article.

⁸⁸ Personal Communication with Alan Seftimes November 7th, 2009.

⁸⁹ Personal Communication with Jeff Klepper, December 29th, 2009.

⁹⁰ Personal Communications with Danny Maseng.

Today, Shlomo is interpreted in many ways. The Orthodox give one reading, the neo-*Chasidim* another, Diaspora Jews another, Israeli Jews another, leftists read him one way, Kahanists another. The point is none of them really know, for the simple reason that Shlomo himself didn't know. He lived from meeting to meeting. All he knew was the pain of each life encountered. And joining it to his own pain, he understood that to really know another person one must know oneself. And knowing oneself was simply impossible. As a result, everything is possible.⁹¹

⁹¹ Magid, Shaul. "Shaul Magid on Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach." *Havruta: A Journal of Jewish Conversation* 2 no. 1 (2009).

Songs of Love and Prayer: A Study of Reb Shlomo Carlebach

Conclusion

“(Carlebach) was a *chasid* in the truest sense of the word; to be a *chasid* is to be without definition”⁹² Carlebach believed in a Judaism that was indefinable. It was a Judaism that didn’t always fit easily into walls created by the Judaism that surrounded him. He was an Orthodox Jew who embraced people of all religions who were genuinely seeking wholeness in a world that was and continues to be so devastatingly broken. He refused to get lost within the minutia of *halacha*. Judaism, for him, above all else, was about love and connection.

Carlebach was not Orthodox, nor was he liberal. Carlebach was a masterful singer and composer, yet he was not a musician. He was a teacher of *Torah*. Carlebach was simply Carlebach – a complicated, brilliant man, born in the horrors of the Holocaust, wanting to bring a little more peace and a little more love to what he perceived of as a broken world.

While much of his life and career is still shrouded in mystery, confusion and controversy, one thing remains clear: Carlebach’s music and performance styles will continue to influence American Jewish worship and music for years to come, thanks to musicians who continue to find ways to keep his music alive and relevant – not too difficult of a task when you’re talking about Carlebach.

⁹² Personal Communications with Neshama Carlebach.

I never met Carlebach. I never knew him. Yet, there is something about his music, his stories, and his seemingly familiar voice makes me feel like I have been friends with him my entire life.

Since the beginning of my cantorial studies at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, barely a day has passed when I have not sung a Carlebach melody or listened to one of his many recordings. Certainly, there has never been a Shabbat service that I have either attended or led that has not either directly used his music, or used music profoundly influenced by him.

The legacy that Carlebach leaves behind is at times a complicated one. What is not complicated however is the joy and sincerity that lies at the heart of every note that Carlebach ever wrote. His music and stories, sublimely simple yet theologically profound, touch the lives of Jews today around the world in the same way that it did during his lifetime.

May the Jewish people have the heart, soul, strength, conviction and courage to keep his holy music alive for generations to come.

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Interviews conducted with

Merri Lovinger Arian

Cantor Roz Barak

Neshama Carlebach

Rabbi Daniel Freeland

Debbie Friedman

Cantor Jeffrey Klepper

Danny Maseng

Cantor Benjie-Ellen Schiller

Alan Septimus

Rabbi Margaret Moers Wenig

Appendix

Gvalt

Help!

CAPO: 3rd (Play Am)

STARTING NOTE [String: 5
Fret: 0]

Moderately

Cm (Am) Eb (C) Fm (Dm)

Ge - valt sh' bri-der vos shloft ir Eins, tsvei, drai, fir, ge-

Cm (Am) Fm (Dm) Cm (Am)

valt sh' bri - der vos shloft ir Eins, tsvei, drai, fir,

Eb (C) Fm (Dm)

s'iz shoin tsait tsu zo - gn ti - lim. Eins, tsvei, drai, fir,

2. gein dav - nen.
3. gein ler - nen.
4. zain yi - den.

Cm (Am) Fm (Dm) Cm (Am) Fine

s'iz shoin tsait tsu zo - gn ti - lim. Eins, tsvei, drai, fir.

2. gein dav - nen.
3. gein ler - nen.
4. zain yi - den.

* Verses 1, 2, 3 below (ad lib.) Bb (G)

Nisht kain ti - lim nor ge - shlo-fen Tsu vos toigst du oif der

C (A) Bb (G) C (A) D.C.

velt, Mit vos ves - tu ku - men oif ye - ner velt?

(Last time end at Fine, then go to final section Slowly ad lib.)

- * 1. Nisht kain tilim, Nor geshlofen.
- 2. Nisht kain tilim, Nisht kain davnen,
Nisht kain davnen, Nor geshlofen.
- 3. Nisht kain tilim, Nisht kain davnen,
Nisht kain davnen, Nisht kain lernnen,
Nisht kain lernnen, Nor geshlofen.

Musical Example # 1

Slowly ad lib.

Cm (Am) Fm (Dm)

Her zach ain Yi - de - le Oi, her zach ain main zis_____

Cm (Am)

Yi - de - le. Main zis Yi - de - le, main tai - er Yi - de - le.

Eb (C) Fm (Dm) Cm (Am)

Oi, her zich ain mit a sach_____ hartz, Mit a

Fm (Fm) Cm (Am)

sach_____ n' - sho. - mo, Oi, nisht kain

Fm (Dm) Cm (Am)

ti - lim Oi, nisht kain dav - nen, Oi, nisht kain ler - nen.

Fm (Dm) Cm (Am)

Bist du nisht kain yid? Un as du bist nisht kain yid, Bist

Bb (G) C (A)

nor ge-shlo - fen. Tsu vos_____ toigst du oif der velt_____ Mit

Bb (G) C (A)

vos vest du ku-men oif ye - ner velt?

NIGUN

Lively

The musical score for 'NIGUN' is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a common time signature (C), which is then changed to 4/4. The melody is composed of eighth and quarter notes. Above the staff, the following chords are indicated: Am, Dm, Am, Dm, Am, Dm, Gm. The second staff continues the melody, with a repeat sign (double bar line with two dots) after the first measure. Above the staff, the chords are Dm, C, Dm, Gm, and C. The third staff features a first ending (marked '1.') and a second ending (marked '2.'). Above the staff, the chords are F, F, and Gm. The piece concludes with the instruction 'D.C. without end'.

ESA ENAI

57

Moderately

Chords: Dm, Gm, Dm, Gm, Gm, F, Dm, A⁷, Dm, Gm, A⁷, Dm, C⁷, Am, Dm.

English lyrics: E - sa é - nai el he - ha - rim mé - a - yin mé - a - yin ya - vo - ez - ri ez - ri mé - im Ha - shem o sé sha - ma - yim va - a - rets

Hebrew lyrics: עֵשָׂא עֵנִי אֶל הַהָרִים מֵאֵין יְבוֹא עֲזָרִי עֲזָרִי מֵעַם יְיָ עוֹשֶׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ

עֵשָׂא עֵנִי אֶל הַהָרִים מֵאֵין יְבוֹא עֲזָרִי
עֲזָרִי מֵעַם יְיָ עוֹשֶׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ

I lift up my eyes to the hills. Whence comes
my help? My help is from the Lord, Creator
of heaven and earth.

AM YISRAEL CHAI

With joyous fervor

Am Yis-ra-él am Yis-ra-él am Yis-ra-él chai am Yis-ra-él am Yis-ra-él am Yis-ra-él chai

od a - vi - nu chai od a - vi - nu chai od a - vi - nu od a - vi - nu od a - vi - nu

Musical Example # 4

Pitkhu Li

Open The Gates

CAPO: 5th (Play Am)

STARTING NOTE [String: 5
Fret: 0

Moderately

Dm (Am) Gm (Dm) Dm (Am) A7 (E7) Dm (Am)
 Pis - chu li sha - a - rei
 Gm (Dm) Dm (Am) A7 (E7) Dm (Am) Gm (Dm) Dm (Am) C (G)
 tse - dek o - vō vom - ō de
 Dm (Am) Gm (Dm)
 ko. Pis - chu li
 F (C) Gm (Dm) Dm (Am) Gm (Dm)
 sha - a - rei tse - dek o - vō
 Dm (Am) F (C) Gm (Dm) Dm (Am) Gm (Dm)
 vom - ō - de ko. Pis - chu
 F (C) Gm (Dm) Dm (Am)
 li sha - a - rei tse - dek
 Gm (Dm) Dm (Am) F (C) Gm (Dm) Dm (Am) A7 (E7) Dm (Am)
 o - vō vom - ō - de ko.

K'vakorat

Even As A Shepherd

CAPO: 3rd (Play Am)

STARTING NOTE [String: 1
Fret: 0]

Slowly

Cm (Am) Gm (Em) Cm (Am)

K' - va - ko - ras

E \flat (C)

K' - va - ko - ras rō - e

Cm (Am) B \flat (G) Cm (Am)

K' - va - ko - ras rō - e ed - rō. —

Fm (Dm)

Oi, Ma - a - vir tso - no ta chas —

Cm (Am) B \flat (G) Cm (Am)

ta - chas shiv - tō, — ta chas shiv - tō —

kein, —

oi, Kein —

oi, Ta a - vir.

E \flat (C) Cm (Am)
 V' sis - - - - - pör v'-sim-ne.

Fm (Dm) Cm (Am)
 Oi, vei v'-sif-köd ne - - - fesh, ne-fesh kol choi,

Fm (Dm)
 Oi, Ne - - - fesh kol choi. V'-sach-töch kits-vo l'-

E \flat (C) Cm (Am) Fm (Dm) Cm (Am)
 chol bri-yö-se-cho. Oi vei, v'-sich-töv

B \flat (G) Cm (Am)
 es g'-zar di - - - nom.

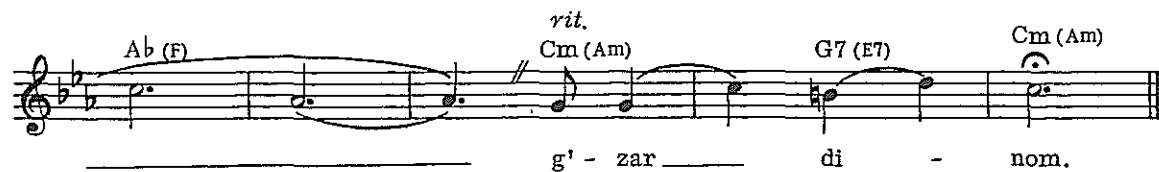
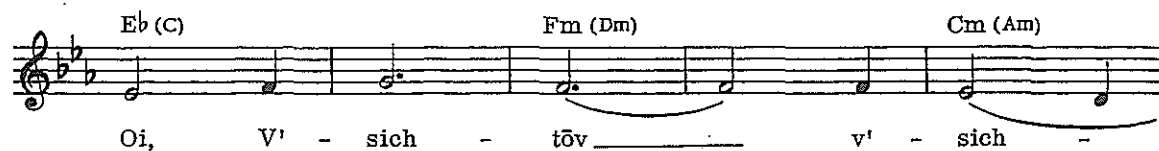
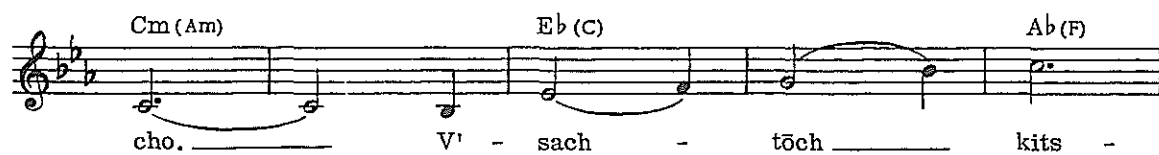
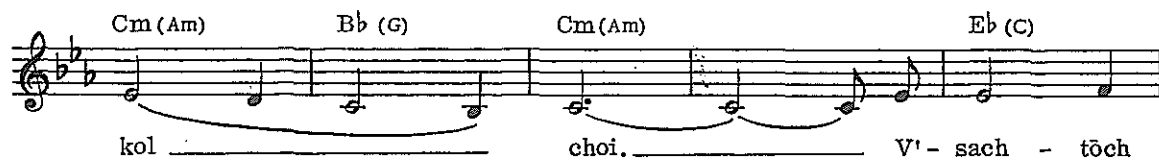
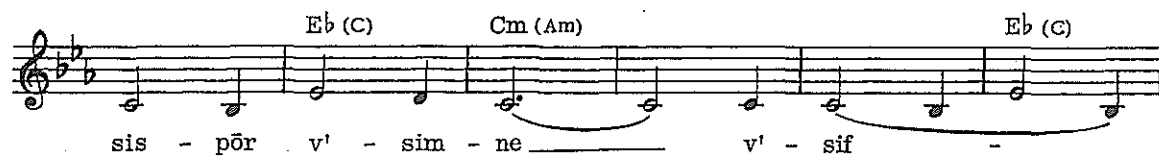
Cm (Am) E \flat (C) Cm (Am) E \flat (C)
 K'-va-ko-ras - - - rō-e ed-

Cm (Am) E \flat (C)
 rō. Ma-a-vir tsō - - - nō

Fm (Dm) Cm (Am) Fm (Dm) Cm (Am) B \flat (G)
 ta - - - chas shiv - - -

Cm (Am) Cm (Am) E \flat (C) Cm (Am)
 tō. Kein ta-a-vir v'-

B7 Emich



V'zokheir

The Faith Of Our Fathers

NO CAPO

STARTING NOTE [String: 1
Fret: 0

Ad lib.

Oi, V' - zō - cheir chas - dei o - vōs. Oi, V' - zō - cheir

chas - dei o - vōs, V' - zō - cheir,

Oi, chas - dei o - vōs u - mei - vi gō - eil

liv - nei v' - nei - hem. Oi, V' -

zō - cheir, Oi chas - dei o -

vōs Oi, V' - zō cheir

chas dei o - vōs u -

mei vi gō - eil.

Oi oi oi oi oi liv - nei v' - nei - hem, Oi, V' -

Musical Example # 7

Slowly (ad lib.)

Oi, _____ V' - zō-cheir oi, zō - cheir oi, zō -

cheir__ o - vōs oi, v' oi vei v' - zō - cheir oi v' -

zō - cheir chas - dei _____

o - vōs Oi, oi, oi, u -

mei - vi gō - eil. Oi v' oi vei v' - zō - cheir

oi v' oi vei v' - zō - cheir oi chas -

dei _____ o - vōs u - mei - vi

gō - eil liv - nei oi oi v' - nei - hem


oi, l' - ma - an sh' - mō _____ l' - maan sh' - mō _____

b' - a - ha - vo.

3. L'CHU N'RAN'NOH


Maestoso

D A D D A




L' - chu n' - ra - n' noh La - Ha - Shem no -
Ar' - bo - 'im sho - noh o - kut b' - doir vo -

A Em A7 D




ri - 'oh l' - tsur yi - sh'ei - nu. N' -
oi - mar 'am toi-'ei lei-vov heim, v' -

D D D A




kad' - moh fo - nov b' - soi - doh bi -
heim loi yo-d'u d' - ro - choi.

1. A7 D A7 D




z'mi rois no - ri - 'a loi.

2. G



Asher nish - ba' ti v' -

D A A7 D



a - pi im y' - voi - un el m' - nu - cho - si.

Hanshamah Lakh

My Soul Is Thine

CAPO: 3rd (Play Am)

STARTING NOTE [String: 4
Fret: 0]

Moderately

The musical score is written in 3/4 time with a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb). The tempo is marked 'Moderately'. The guitar accompaniment includes chords: Cm (Am), G7 (E7), Eb (C), Fm (Dm), and rit. The lyrics are in Hebrew: 'Ha - n' - sho - mo - loch v' - ha - guf po - o - loch chu - so, chu - so al a - mo loch. Ha - n' - loch. Ha - n' - sho - mo - loch v' - ha - guf po - o - loch chu - so, chu - so al a - mo loch.'

1. Cm (Am) loch. Ha - n' - loch. Ha - n' -

2. Cm (Am) loch. Ha - n' -

Fm (Dm) Cm (Am) Fm (Dm) sho - mo - loch v' - ha - guf

Cm (Am) Fm (Dm) po - o - loch chu - so, chu -

Cm (Am) G7 (E7) rit. Cm (Am) so al a - mo loch.

Hashmi'ini

Let Me Hear Thy Voice

CAPO: 3rd (Play Am)

STARTING NOTE [String: 1
Fret: 0

Moderately

