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THE MANY VOICES OF THE CANTOR:
BIBLICAL AND CONTEMPORARY SUPPORT FOR THE EMERGING ROLES OF THE MODERN CANTOR

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Ordination

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Summary

Throughout history, the responsibilities of the cantor have changed according to the needs of the community. This thesis aims to understand and promote the expanding role of the modern cantor's voice, through both a deep historical foundation in the Bible and a broad experiential report from contemporary cantors. Operating under the assumption that a cantor is known for having a voice, I explore how the many appearances of "*kol*" (voice) in the Tanakh broaden our understanding of the cantor's primary instrument and how she can best use it to serve a community. In addition to this biblical research, I also interviewed twenty-six cantors to see how they use their many voices to serve their communities today.

In Part 1 of this thesis, I present some theoretical information about the voice and some historical information about the cantor. In Part 2, I present some of the many voices of the cantor: *kol zimrah* (voice of music) for leading people in prayer and song; *kol d'varim* (voice of words) for teaching and preaching; *kol nishmoteinu* (voice of our souls) for pastoral care and lifecycle events; and *kol hashofar* (voice of the shofar) for social action. Finally, I share some insights about the personal impact of a few other voices of the cantor.

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Just as a cantor must access many different voices in order to successfully serve a community, so must a cantorial student access many resources in order to successfully complete a senior thesis. I am extremely grateful to the many people who helped me throughout my studies at HUC-JIR and am particularly appreciative of those who assisted me with my recital and thesis.

This development of this thesis provided me an opportunity to explore how I can best use my skills, training, and interests to become a cantor and serve the Jewish community. I am grateful to Joyce Rosenzweig, my academic and recital advisor, for accompanying me on this journey. This project also allowed me to explore rich, deep text study, which would have been impossible without the expertise of Rabbi Dr. David Sperling. Cantor Benjie Schiller has been an amazingly supportive resource throughout both my recital and thesis process, to whom I am eternally grateful. This project also provided me with the opportunity for ethnographic research (and a bit of schmoozing) with twenty-six talented cantors from across the country who contribute an incredible amount of time and energy to the Jewish community. I would also like to thank Rabbi Dr. Norman Cohen and Dr. Alyssa Gray for their insights in biblical and rabbinic uses of "*kol*." I must also thank Dr. Mark Kligman and Dr. Lillian Wohl for their guidance on both the history of the cantorate and the logistics of the thesis process. I cannot begin to list all the wonderful faculty and staff across the rabbinic, educational, and cantorial schools and on both the Jerusalem and New York campuses; this thesis would not have been possible without the many lessons they taught me both in and out of the classroom.

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I think I have thanked everyone, but if I somehow forgot you, thank you as well for all you have given me, which at the very least is a bit of your time to read my senior thesis, *The Many Voices of the Cantor: Biblical and Contemporary Support for the Emerging Roles of the Modern Cantor*.

Thank you again and I hope this thesis resonates within each of you as you explore your own many voices.

<u>**Introduction**</u>

"There are three things a cantor needs – a voice, a voice, and a voice."

At a practicum discussion at the Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music in the fall of 2015, Cantor Israel Goldstein quoted his mentor, Cantor Israel Alter, whose words suggest the central importance of the singing voice of a cantor. While Cantor Alter repeated the word "voice" for emphasis of the *single musical* component to the voice, I will argue through this thesis that this repetition can be interpreted in modern times to suggest the need for cantors to access their *many different* voices in order to have the greatest impact on their communities. Throughout history, the responsibilities of a cantor have changed according to the society's needs. This thesis aims to understand and promote the potential expanding role of the modern cantor's voice, through both a deep historical foundation in the Bible and a broad experiential report from contemporary cantors.

Before I continue, it should be noted that throughout this thesis I have chosen to use the pronoun "she" to refer to the singular cantor. Certainly, all of the research on the modern cantor can equally apply to both male and female cantors, but for the sake of simplicity, I have opted to avoid clunky phrases like "he or she" and "his or her." Though primarily aimed at improving the flow of the language, this choice also represents my role as a female cantor and offers a nod to the women in a field that had previously been dominated by men. It is also worth noting that I have chosen to use “Bible” and “Tanakh” interchangeably to refer to the Hebrew Holy Scriptures.

“What a beautiful voice you have!” “Let your voice be heard!” “The voice of the people,” and the list continues. When most people consider the voice, they primarily think of the sounds that are produced from the throat and come out of the mouth, either spoken or sung. While this is undoubtedly true, English contains many metaphorical meanings of voice. These phrases suggest that the English language permits us to consider one’s voice to also represent one’s opinion – the deeper meaning behind the words. It is the cantor’s responsibility not only to make sure people hear what she has to say, but also to be sure to listen to the many voices surrounding her.

These multiple interpretations of the word “voice” are not limited to the English language. Hebrew also contains varied connotations for the voice, or *kol.* For the purpose of this thesis, I limited my investigation of *kol* to appearances within the Tanakh. Operating under the assumption that a cantor is known for having a voice, I explored how the many appearances of “*kol*” in Tanakh may broaden our understanding of the cantor’s primary instrument and how she can best use it to serve a community.

In addition to this biblical research, I also interviewed twenty-six cantors to see how they use their many voices to serve their communities. Twenty-first century professionally trained cantors are very different from the original musical leaders of the synagogue service from earlier centuries. They must still possess beautiful singing voices, but in order to truly contribute to their communities, it is necessary that they utilize the other voices of the cantorate for teaching, pastoral care, and social justice. In some cases, cantors use their singing voices to best serve the needs of the situation through music. At other times, their simple, strong presence proclaims their authority and leadership within the community – a different way of making sure their voices are heard while also engaging the voices of others.

With the current economic state of the Jewish community and the changing spiritual and social needs of its members, cantors today must use these many voices both to maintain job security and to most effectively serve the needs of their communities. Cantors must learn how to balance and prioritize these voices they possess and feel confident using whichever voice may be needed within the community at a given time.

No matter what voice the cantor is employing at a particular moment, as a clergy person doing holy work, she is always in some way representing the voice of God (*kol Adonai*). According to Azzan Yadin, in the Bible, *kol* often plays a mediating, hypostatic role. S. Dean McBride defines hypostasis as "a quality, epithet, attribute, manifestation, or the like of a deity, which through a process of personification and differentiation has become a distinct (if not fully independent) divine being in its own right."[1] *Kol* often appears without a designated speaker in the context of divine revelation. Like other mediators, the voice represents God's transcendence – God's medium for contacting the material world.[2] Cantors not only constantly represent the voice of God, but they also help access the voice of God within every person. In doing so, cantors are able to connect their communities with the Almighty and in turn connect them to one another.

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[1] Yadin, "Kol as Hypostasis," 601.
[2] Ibid., 616. Yadin explains in great detail some examples found in Numbers 7:89, Ezekiel 1:24-2:2, 9:1, and 43:6.

God’s voice defies the limits of time and space. When Moses reiterates the revelation of the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy, he says that God spoke the words in “a mighty voice that did not end.” (Deut. 5:19). Yossy Goldman points out in a sermon posted on chabad.org, “The Never Ending Voice,” that even Pavorotti’s voice would eventually grow weak, but God’s voice always remains strong. He suggests that God’s voice still resonates through the many generations and throughout the world.[3] As the role of the cantor has developed, it has maintained its humble connection to *kol Adonai*. Therefore, cantors who unpretentiously acknowledge the holy potential for their work can have an impact that similarly exceeds expectations.

During my interviews, one of the most rewarding and time-consuming activities that cantors reported was building relationships within their communities. Much like the voice of God, this activity transcends all tasks and all voices. Relationship building happens while singing, teaching, counseling, and organizing. Cantor Benjie Schiller spoke about building relationships at all times, from post-service oneg celebrations to choir rehearsals. Cantor Richard Cohn highlighted the importance of the cantor’s “listening voice” to help center the focus on community. Cantor Mo Glazman spoke extensively about the power of relationships and the need to build bridges. This can happen over lunch or at cocktail parties, but as he says, “before you can be pastoral, you must be personal.” Finally, Cantor Josh Breitzer builds relationships through community wide holiday services and celebrations in Brooklyn. Cantor Breitzer coordinates multiple synagogues and minyanim for large-scale events that successfully maintain an intimate communal atmosphere.

[3] Goldman, “The Never Ending Voice.”

Cantors build these relationships by using their many voices to connect with their communities. In Part 1 of this thesis, I will present some background information about the voice and the cantor. I will present the etymology, grammar, philosophy, and synesthetic comprehension of the voice. Then, I will provide a brief history of the cantorate, specifically focusing on the changing roles of the cantor over time. This history section is not intended to be exhaustive. For additional historical and musical details, please refer to the extensive research of Abraham Idelsohn, Mark Slobin, and Judah Cohen.[4]

In Part 2, I will present some of the many voices of the cantor. I will begin with the *kol zimrah* (voice of music), as that is the core voice of the cantor and is used to lead people in prayer and song. I will then present the *kol d'varim* (voice of words) representing teaching and preaching, followed by the *kol nishmoteinu* (voice of our souls) representing pastoral care and lifecycle events, and finally the *kol hashofar* (voice of the shofar) representing social action. In each of these chapters, I will begin with biblical citations of the *kol*-phrase followed by reports from cantors in the field about how they use that voice in their communities. Each chapter will also be followed by a "musical interlude" that will generally be a song from my recital that highlights that type of voice. This structure is meant to reinforce the fluidity of these voices from one to the next, not only throughout this thesis, but in real life as well. Before concluding, I will share some insights about a few other voices of the cantor that are a bit more personal in nature.

Thank you for joining me on this journey through the cantorate, under the

[4] Idelson, *Jewish Music*. Slobin, *Chosen Voices*. Cohen, *The Making of a Jewish Cantor*.

constant wing of the *kol Adonai* – rooted in the voices of the Bible and reaching toward the modern imperative to utilize these voices today and into the future.

~~~ Overture – *Kol Adonai* ~~~

The voice of God (*Kol Adonai*) permeates everything that a cantor does. As holy vessels (*klei kodesh*), cantors are conduits between God and the community. Psalm 29 describes the incomparable might and majesty of God's voice. It is a daunting task to take on the role of a cantor and represent the Jewish people, but it is a very rewarding one as well.

Psalm 29 mentions the voice of God seven times – describing God's power over the waters, the trees, the fire, and the wilderness. When these poetic texts are set to music, we witness the full power of God's mighty voice. In my recital, I sang the following modern setting of Psalm 29 by Lance Rhodes. This choral setting was very challenging, but sung with great skill by my choir which included: Lindsay Kanter, Vladimir Lapin, Richard Newman, Jay O'Brien, Malka Rappaport, Jennifer Rueben, Leah Shafritz, and Jordan Shaner and was conducted by the gifted Joyce Rosenzweig.

Psalm 29

Music: Lance Rhodes
Text: Psalm 29
Source: Octavo – Transcontinental Music Publications

(א) מִזְמ֗וֹר לְדָ֫וִ֥ד הָב֣וּ לַֽ֭יהוָה בְּנֵ֣י אֵלִ֑ים
הָב֥וּ לַ֝יהוָ֗ה כָּב֥וֹד וָעֹֽז׃ (ב) הָב֣וּ לַֽ֭יהוָה
כְּב֣וֹד שְׁמ֑וֹ הִשְׁתַּחֲו֥וּ לַ֝יהוָ֗ה
בְּהַדְרַת־קֹֽדֶשׁ׃ (ג) ק֥וֹל יְהוָ֗ה עַל־הַ֫מָּ֥יִם
אֵֽל־הַכָּב֥וֹד הִרְעִ֑ים יְ֝הוָ֗ה עַל־מַ֥יִם
רַבִּֽים׃ (ד) קוֹל־יְהוָ֥ה בַּכֹּ֑חַ ק֥וֹל יְ֝הוָ֗ה
בֶּהָדָֽר׃ (ה) ק֣וֹל יְ֭הוָה שֹׁבֵ֣ר אֲרָזִ֑ים
וַיְשַׁבֵּ֥ר יְ֝הוָ֗ה אֶת־אַרְזֵ֥י הַלְּבָנֽוֹן׃
(ו) וַיַּרְקִידֵ֥ם כְּמוֹ־עֵ֑גֶל לְבָנ֥וֹן וְ֝שִׂרְיֹ֗ן כְּמ֣וֹ
בֶן־רְאֵמִֽים׃ (ז) קוֹל־יְהוָ֥ה חֹצֵ֗ב לַהֲב֥וֹת
אֵֽשׁ׃ (ח) ק֣וֹל יְ֭הוָה יָחִ֣יל מִדְבָּ֑ר יָחִ֥יל
יְ֝הוָ֗ה מִדְבַּ֥ר קָדֵֽשׁ׃
(ט) ק֤וֹל יְהוָ֨ה ׀ יְחוֹלֵ֥ל אַיָּל֡וֹת וַֽיֶּחֱשֹׂ֫ף
יְעָר֥וֹת וּבְהֵיכָל֑וֹ כֻּ֝לּ֗וֹ אֹמֵ֥ר כָּבֽוֹד׃
(י) יְהוָ֭ה לַמַּבּ֣וּל יָשָׁ֑ב וַיֵּ֥שֶׁב יְ֝הוָ֗ה מֶ֣לֶךְ
לְעוֹלָֽם׃ (יא) יְֽהוָ֗ה עֹ֭ז לְעַמּ֣וֹ יִתֵּ֑ן יְהוָ֓ה ׀
יְבָרֵ֖ךְ אֶת־עַמּ֣וֹ בַשָּׁלֽוֹם׃

(1) A psalm of David. Ascribe to God, O divine beings, ascribe to God glory and strength. (2) Ascribe to God the glory of God's name; bow down to God, majestic in holiness. (3) The voice of God is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, God, over the mighty waters.
(4) The voice of God is power; the voice of God is majesty; (5) the voice of God breaks cedars; God shatters the cedars of Lebanon.
(6) God makes Lebanon skip like a calf, Sirion, like a young wild ox.
(7) The voice of God kindles flames of fire; (8) the voice of God convulses the wilderness; God convulses the wilderness of Kadesh;

(9) the voice of God causes hinds to calve, and strips forests bare, while in God's temple all say "Glory!"
(10) God sat enthroned at the flood; God sits enthroned, king forever. (11) May God grant strength to God's people; may God bestow on God's people wellbeing.

<u>Part 1 – The Voice and the Cantor</u>

The Voice

"Be a voice, not an echo." - Albert Einstein

As a celebrated physicist, Albert Einstein certainly knew a bit about the acoustical phenomenon of sound. His words above go beyond science to instruct cantors to find the voice within them and make sure that it is heard, before the opportunity passes. This chapter will begin by clarifying the biological aspects of the voice and then discuss the biblical etymology and grammatical usage of *kol.* It will then highlight the philosophy and metaphysics around this powerful entity and conclude with examples of the synesthetic comprehension of the voice and seen in the Bible and today.

Biological Aspects of the Voice

In humans, the voice is produced when air from the lungs passes through the larynx via an intricate interaction of the vocal folds, arytenoid, cricoid, and thyroid cartilages, which then bounces off the facial cavities to produce a sound that emerges from the mouth.[1] Based on breath and articulation, these sounds may be spoken or sustained through song. These sounds, whether attached to language or not, carry information about the identity of the producer, the emotional environment, and the intended reaction of the listener. Life begins with the sound of a baby's voice. Through the voice, we can access the essence of both life and meaning.

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[1] Miller, *On the Art of Singing*.

Biblical etymology and grammatical use of *kol*

According to the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*,[2] the denotation for "*kol*" is "voice or sound" and may also be etymologically related to "*kahal*" (assembly). This link is based on phonetic similarities as well as the use of the voice to gather people and the need for the voice to be heard by those assembled. The different modifying words around the appearances of *kol* in the Tanakh specify the content (such as *kol d'varim* – voice of words), quality (such as *kol sasson* – voice of joy), and origin of the phonetic phenomenon (such as *kol shofar* – voice of the shofar) of these many voices.

The *kol* does not conform to rules of number nor gender. In the singular form, *kol* can refer to a combination of noises or voices. This is reinforced by the fact that pronominal suffixes are attached to this singular form. For example "*kolchem*" means "your (plural) voices." The plural form (*kolot*) is used to signify peals of thunder throughout the Bible. *Kolot* often appears with hail or lightning throughout Exodus (9:23, 28, 29, 33, 34, 19:16) and rain in First Samuel 12:17,18 and Job 28:26.[3]

Haiim Rosén argues that *kol* follows a pattern of "gender incongruity" marked by a masculine singular form with a zero grade ending and a plural feminine form with an "-ot" suffix. Nouns with this pattern are discrete and countable in the plural, but not countable in the singular. Some examples include: *eretz* and *artzot* – the singular means "earth" or "land," but the plural refers to "discrete political entities"; *ner* and *nerot* – the singular means "light," but the plural means "lamps"; and finally, *or* and *orot* – the

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[2] Botterweck, Ringgren, and Fabry, "*Kol*," 566-67.
[3] Ibid., 577.

singular means “skin,” but the plural means “hides.”[4] It appears that *kol* follows this pattern as well. While one can easily recognize the different peals of thunder, the singular voice cannot always be measured, certainly not for all the meaning it holds.

Philosophy and Metaphysics of the Voice

Adriana Cavarero writes extensively about the philosophy of the voice. She writes that according to the Bible, God’s power is expressed in breath (*ruach*) and voice (*kol*). *Ruach* and *kol* “belong in the Hebrew tradition to a fundamental sphere of meaning that comes before speech.”[5] The etymology of the word “voice” in English comes from the Latin “*vox*.” The verb “*vocare*” means, “to call” or “invoke.” According to Cavarero, the voice is a sound entrusting itself to the ear that hears it.

The voice translates thought into speech. Much of Jewish history has been dominated by Jewish intellectual thought. Cavarero cites the Jewish philosopher, Franz Rosenzweig, when writing that in order to free the voice there must be a shift from thinking to speaking. While thinking aims to be timeless, speaking is always bound to time. Additionally, thought is solitary, while speech is relational. Cavarero suggests that the voice shifts the timeless, solitary, abstract protagonist of thought into time-bound, relational, flesh and bone speakers, with both mouths and ears.[6]

In his foundational work, *A Voice and Nothing More*, philosopher Mladen Dolar sheds additional light on both the power and weakness of the voice. He writes that what

[4] Yadin, “Kol as Hypostasis,” 618-619.
[5] Cavarero, *For More than One Voice*, 20.
[6] Ibid., 174.

defines the voice as special among the infinite array of acoustic phenomena is its inner relationship with meaning.[7] The voice possesses "the power to turn words into acts; the mere vocalization endows words with ritual efficacy. The passage from articulation to vocalization is like a ... passage to action and an exertion of authority."[8] He continues by writing that while the voice can represent the authority of the speaker, it can also expose her vulnerabilities. This is because the listener has the power to determine the fate of the sender's voice. The listener can rule over its meaning or turn a deaf ear. The trembling voice is a plea for compassion and understanding and relies on the listener to grant this response.[9]

Synesthetic Comprehension of the Voice

As one might expect, in general, the verbs associated with the reception of the voice involve the auditory sense, such as "hear" or "listen." However, occasionally in the Bible and in life we find that the voice is "seen." This apparent confusion of the senses is known as synesthesia, which is the defined by Merriam-Webster as "a subjective sensation or image of a sense other than the one being stimulated." This suggests that the voice is so powerful that it defies our customary senses and is understood in its own unique and profound way.

[7] Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, kindle location 160.
[8] Ibid., kindle location 656.
[9] Ibid., kindle location 968.

Rabbi Dr. Norman Cohen explains that these various verbs of seeing and hearing can more universally refer to the acts of understanding, internalizing, and learning.[10] With appreciation of the biblical use of parallel phrases, Cohen cites Isaiah 37:17: "O God, incline Your ear and hear, open Your eye and see." In this scene, King Hezekiah prays to God for protection against the King of Assyria. These parallel phrases, first referring to listening and then referring to seeing, request the same thing – God's understanding of Hezekiah's wishes – and the repetition reinforces his urgency.

Cohen also reminds us of this confusion of senses in modern conversation. For example, after explaining something verbally (which requires the sense of hearing), someone might say, "Do you see what I'm saying?" The other person in the conversation might then respond, "Yes, I understand." In this brief dialogue, hearing, seeing, and understanding were all used interchangeably and without confusion.[11]

There are a few examples in the Bible where the *kol* specifically is seen. In Exodus 20:18, we read in the description of the reception of the Ten Commandments "and all the people saw the thunder (*kolot*) and flashes of lightning and the voice of the shofar (*kol hashofar*)." While people might expect to see flashes of lightning, it is surprising to read that they also see both the thunder and the voice of the shofar. Yadin points out another dramatic scene of synesthesia. In Deuteronomy 4:11-12, "Then YHWH spoke to you out of the midst of the fire; you heard the sound of the words, but you saw (*ro'im*) no form except a voice (*kol)*." Yadin explains that to avoid confusion some translations opt to translate "*ro'im*" using non-sight specific verbs like "perceived"

[10] Cohen, verbal and email communication, around September 5, 2015.
[11] Ibid.

(Revised Standard Version) or “witnessed” (New Revised Standard Version). Citing Frank Polak’s “Theophany and Mediator,” Yadin writes that perhaps the action of this verse conveys “something stronger and more inclusive than ‘hearing,’ e.g., synesthetic ‘seeing,’ or ‘witnessed and experienced.’”[12]

Moving from the Bible to the contemporary, Cantor Josh Breitzer shared an observation regarding the etymologies of the different words we use to refer to a movie theater in both English and Hebrew that also reinforces the interchangeability of seeing and hearing. The English word “cinema” is an abbreviation for cinematograph, derived from the Greek “kinema” implying movement and the French “graph” suggesting the visual. Similarly, early movies in America were called “moving pictures.” In Hebrew, however, the word for movie theater is “*kolnoa*” whose root can be found in “*kol*” (voice) and “*t’nuah*” (motion). So while both the Hebrew and English terms focus on motion, the English word relies on the visual, while the Hebrew word relies on the aural. Taken together, we witness the similarity of these apparently disparate senses.

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[12] Yadin, “Kol as Hypostasis,” 620-22.

~~~ Musical Interlude #1 – The Voice ~~~

The Bible shows us the immense power of the voice, which transcends mere biology. Philosophers debate the varied intentions of the voice, but no one questions the weight of its message. The importance of understanding the voice is so great that we may witness it not only through the expected sense of hearing but often through other senses as well.

In my recital, I sang "One Voice" by Ruth Moody, which begins as a solo voice taking action. As my good friends Kenneth Feibush and Lindsay Kanter joined me with each successive verse, we sang about the enhanced abilities of many voices. Each voice maintained its own melody, but together, we created beautiful harmony. The audience even joined us (as noted below) to fully demonstrate our communal desire to relate to one another. The song ended with me singing alone, yet connecting to everyone – once again showing how the voice has the power to unite the many and to remain a single entity.

One Voice

Music & Text: Ruth Moody
Source: Sheet music accessed from www.ruthmoody.com

This is the sound of one voice, one spirit, one voice
The sound of one who makes a choice, this is the sound of one voice

This is the sound of voices two, the sound of me singing with you
Helping each other to make it through, this is the sound of voices two

This is the sound of voices three, singing together in harmony
Surrendering to the mystery, this is the sound of voices three

(Please join this verse with music below)
This is the sound of all of us, singing with love and the will to trust
Leave the rest behind it will turn to dust, this is the sound of all of us

This is the sound of one voice, one people, one voice
A song for every one of us, this is the sound of one voice

<u>**The Cantor**</u>

"The cantorate can still be best described as a stable profession that shifts in synch with the volatile versatility of American Jewish Life."[1]

The role of the cantor within a community has changed throughout time and location, and yet Mark Slobin, who has studied the history of the cantorate in great detail, remains confident in the stability and relative versatility of this profession. This chapter briefly outlines the shifting multifaceted roles of the cantor, or the person holding a similar title, from ancient times to today. It will focus primarily on the required tasks and education of the people filling this role and less on specific people and musical details. It will begin by discussing the extended period from the end of the Second Temple through the Geonic Period. Many of these dates are vague due to imprecise dating methods of archeological and textual evidence. Changes between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries will be discussed next. This will be followed by information about the history of the cantorate in America. The chapter will conclude with some commentary on the cantorate today.

In describing his research methods into the history of the cantorate, music historian Judah Cohen writes:

> Researchers trying to construct cantorial practices before the eighteenth century often had to conflate linguistic and cultural history, tracing words or concepts perceived as connected with the cantors across canonical Jewish texts. These texts, which largely comprised legal interpretive works written by religious authorities, claimed linear descent from the Torah (The Five Books of Moses) including: the *Mishnah* (Judea, c. 200 CE), the *Talmud* (Israel/Babylonia, c. 500 CE), *The Guide*

[1] Slobin, *Chosen Voices*, vii.

> *for the Perplexed* (Cairo, Moses Maimonides, 1185-1190 CE), the *Shulchan Aruch* (Venice, Joseph Caro, 1565) and numerous subsidiary writings.[2]

Before continuing, it is worth noting that I used a similar approach to expand our understanding of the role of the cantor today to that which was used to reconstruct our understanding of the role of the cantor in the past. Much like the researchers of cantorial history, I engaged in a word search of the cantor's primary instrument, the voice (*kol*), throughout an even older document, the Bible. Rather than reconstruct the past, which has already so skillfully been done by my predecessors, this thesis aims to reinvent the future. Before we get there however, we must first dive into our past, beginning with the ancient times of the Temple. As you will read, there is great precedent for the cantor performing many varied roles throughout history.

Second Temple Times through the Geonic Period

Renowned music historian Abraham Z. Idelsohn[3] teaches that deeply imbedded in Judaism is the belief that everyone is entitled to speak to God without priestly mediation. A prominent man, "one of the people," would play the role of intercessor because not everyone had sufficient education to lead prayers. This person was called "*mithpallel*" roughly meaning, "one who leads oneself to pray." During the final centuries before Common Era, in some emerging synagogues, this precentor[4] was called "*shaliach tzibur*" (messenger of the community). A layman held this position of honor because he was well

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[2] Cohen, *The Making of a Jewish Cantor*, 26.
[3] Idelsohn, *Jewish Music*, 102.
[4] "Precentor" is a term used by Idelsohn to refer to the person who facilitates worship. Its etymology may be related to "cantor."

versed in prayers and their meanings.[5] By the third century CE, the collection of prayers became ritual, but since it was forbidden to write them down, two assistants helped the precentor memorize texts and procedures. Initially just prompters, these assistants later helped with singing music as well. Even when prayers could be written, around the seventh century, the assistants stayed and developed into synagogue choir singers.[6]

Idelsohn writes that the requirements for such an honorary person were fixed by Judah ben Illai in Palestine in the second century:

> a man who has heavy family obligations (who has not enough to meet them), who has to struggle for a livelihood (but who nonetheless keeps his house clean – above reproach), who has an attractive appearance, is humble, pleasant to and liked by people, who has a sweet voice and a musical ability, who is well versed in the Scriptures, capable of preaching, conversant with *Halakha* (Law), and Jewish Folklore (*Aggada)*, and who knows all the prayers and benedictions by heart.[7]

With ensuing persecution and oppression, it became hard to find an honorary precentor to lead a Jewish community in prayer. In addition to these external pressures, many other conditions also contributed to the need to professionalize this role, which became known as *hazzan*. They include: an emphasis on communal prayer, the ignorance of the public, the emergence of the synagogue as a house of prayer, a stress on the melodic quality of prayer, and the premise that liturgy combined both the fixed and the improvised.[8] A specialist was needed, and through music, people could connect as a community and enjoy the beautiful aesthetic as well.[9]

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[5] Idelsohn, *Jewish Music*. 102.
[6] Ibid., 104.
[7] Ibid., 105.
[8] Ibid., 106. And Slobin, *Chosen Voices*, 5.
[9] Kublin, Zimmerman, and Geffen, "*Hazzan*."

But what is the origin of this term "*hazzan*"? The Rishonim, leading rabbis in the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries, say that *hazzan* comes from the Hebrew word "*hazzah*" (to oversee). Other scholars say it is related to the Akadian "*ḫazannu*"[10] (officer) such as the city wardens whose task it was to see to the burial of the dead.[11] In end of the Second Temple period, the caretakers or beadles were called *hazzanim*. According to the Talmud, the *hazzan* was responsible for various duties around the synagogue, including sweeping the sanctuary, bringing out the Torah scrolls, and blowing a trumpet to announce the beginning of Shabbat and festivals. By the sixth and seventh centuries, Jewish communities lacked able men to fulfill the various synagogue service duties. Since the *hazzan* was in the building, he gradually gained responsibilities, assuming he was learned. The *hazzan* initially just chanted Torah and Prophets and translated the texts into the vernacular, but his duties continued to grow over time.[12] During the Geonic period (sixth to eleventh centuries), in addition to serving as the *shaliach tzibbur* for synagogue services, the *hazzan* often still served as a mohel and a butcher, as well. Further documentation for the many roles expected of *hazzanim* can be see in the Yerushalmi Yevamot 12, 13a, which states, "The people of Simonia came before Rabbi [Yehuda ha-nasi]. They said to him, 'We want you to give us a man to serve as preacher, judge, reader of scripture, teacher [of tradition], and to do all the things we need.'"

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[10] Roth, *Assyrian Dictionary*, 163. In the earlier attestations of Akkadian, "*ḫazannu*" refers to mayors, chief magistrates and the like. In later texts, it refers to temple officials. This final meaning is borrowed into Jewish Aramaic and Mishnaic Hebrew where it refers to religious functionaries, but not singers.
[11] Ketubot, 8b, note in margins.
[12] Idelsohn, *Jewish Music*, 107.

Sixteenth Through Nineteenth Century Cantorate

The requirements of the *hazzan* were further articulated in the sixteenth century rabbinic document, the *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Hayim*[13] 53:4ff: "The hazzan was required to have a pleasant voice and appearance, to be married, to have a beard, to be fully familiar with the liturgy, to be of blameless character, and to be acceptable in all other respects to the members of the community."[14] Singing was viewed as the most spiritual of all the artistic gifts, but was considered useless if the *hazzan* did not obey the sanctity of life.[15]

The emancipation of European Jewry in the mid-1800s and the acculturation with surrounding society facilitated the shift of traditional Jewish melodies into musical notation, complete with harmonies, exemplified by Cantor Salomon Sulzer (1804-1890, Vienna). Other key cantors, also working as composers and choir conductors, at this time included Samuel Naumbourg (1815-1880, Paris), Louis Lewandowski (1821-1894, Berlin), and Abraham Baer (1834-1894, Gothenberg).[16]

The European cantorate had reached new heights with regard to musical depth and breadth. While many were pleased with these musical enhancements, this sentiment was not universal. This acculturation, combined with the professionalization of the *hazzan*, addressed both the issue of communal ignorance and the desire for beauty within the synagogue service. However, some people questioned whether such musical

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[13] The name means "road /path of life."
[14] Kublin, Zimmerman, and Geffen, "*Hazzan*."
[15] Heskes, *Passport to Jewish Music*, 67.
[16] Ibid., 49-50.

advancements could be compatible with the traditional requirements of education and piety. Still, most Jews of the nineteenth century relished the opportunity to be able to appreciate quality music while praying.

History of the American Cantorate

While the nineteenth century European cantor emerged as a musical scholar and service leader, cantors in America played a slightly different role. In early American Judaism, the cantor was the sole congregational leader and played a role similar to what people today think of as that of a rabbi. Until the 1840s, there were no ordained rabbis in United States, so the cantor was the one who circumcised, taught, butchered, married, buried, chanted, and led services.[17]

By the mid-nineteenth century, the role of the American cantor began to change. Cantor and intellectual leader of American Judaism Isaac Leeser (1806-1868) created a journal called the *Occident*, which provides us with a great deal of information about Jewish life at that time. Leeser felt that cantors were overburdened and wanted to take away their responsibilities as teachers, preachers, and pastors.[18] Isaac Mayer Wise (1819-1900), a major organizer of American Reform Judaism, wrote that the *hazzan*:

> was teacher, butcher, circumciser, [shofar]blower, gravedigger, secretary… He accepted bread, turnips, cabbage, potatoes as a gift and peddled in case his salary was not sufficient. He was *sui generis*, half priest, half beggar, half oracle, half fool, as the occasion demanded. Among all the *hazzanim* who I learned to know at that time, there was not one who had a common-school education or possessed any Hebrew learning.[19]

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[17] Slobin, *Chosen Voices*. 30-31.
[18] Ibid., 36.
[19] Ibid., 44.

Wise was not alone in these sentiments. American Reformers wanted to appear like forward-looking Jews. They felt that these folk practices performed by cantors were inappropriate for leaders of the new Jewish communities. Reformers sought to adapt Judaism to the culture of their new home in America. They were greatly influenced by the Protestant practice in which ministers presided over congregations. Therefore, they elevated the status of the rabbi to an educated robed minister, thus replacing the *hazzan* for most roles within the community.[20]

Great immigration during the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century transformed the Jewish community. In the period from 1882-1924, 2.3 million Jews immigrated to United States.[21] Still influenced by their homeland, these incoming Eastern European Jews valued the role of the *hazzan*, at a time when resident American Jews were dethroning these congregational leaders. The European immigrant community valued *hazzanim* for their respectability, financial stability, and ability to satisfy membership needs through their vocal talents. It is worth noting that at this time, there was a shift toward preferring the term "cantor" over "*hazzan*," which was another reflection of the Protestant influence on the Reform Jewish community. The term "cantor" is based on the Latin word for singer and was also the title of the music director and choir leader of the church.[22]

The period during the early twentieth century is often described as the "Golden Age of Cantors." Cantors were lauded for their vocal prowess, akin to that of an opera

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[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid., 51.
[22] Ibid., 54.

singer. Creative improvisation was seen as a religious duty as cantors experimented with word painting, vocal stamina, and flexibility of intonation. Famous cantors such as Yossele Rosenblatt (1882-1933) also known as “The Jewish Enrico Caruso,” and Zavel Kwartin (1874-1952) gave public concerts and demanded impressive salaries. With tours and the development of sound recordings, their fame increased and their style spread to the masses, both for public enjoyment and emulation. After World War II, a new generation of cantors emerged including Moshe Koussevitsky (1899-1966) and Leib Glanz (1898-1964) who skillfully continued the tradition of the musical giants before them.[23]

Despite these very successful examples, there were not enough cantors in America with proper knowledge and skills to serve the growing Jewish population. In response, in the mid-twentieth century each of the three major Jewish movements created its own cantorial school. The Reform movement established the first school, the School of Sacred Music (SSM) at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) in 1948. Next, the Conservative movement created the Cantor’s Institute (CI) at Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) in 1951. Finally, in 1954, the Orthodox movement introduced the Cantorial Training Institute (CTI) at Yeshiva University (YU).[24]

While this thesis is not specifically limited to any particular movement, there is a focus on the development of the Reform cantorial school, originally the SSM, now known as the Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music (DFSSM) at HUC-JIR. The school began as a three-year program, mostly focused on music, with some classes on

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[23] Kublin, Zimmerman, and Geffen, “*Hazzan*.”
[24] Robinson, “The New Cantor,” 28.

Hebrew language and Jewish education.[25] The cantorial program was very separate from the HUC-JIR rabbinic program, until 1986 when Rabbi Dr. Lawrence Hoffman, director of the SSM at that time, moved the first year of cantorial studies to the Jerusalem campus.[26] In doing so, Rabbi Dr. Hoffman allowed cantorial students to interact with rabbinical students and become attuned to Israeli culture and music.[27]

Initially, cantors received investiture at the completion of their studies. This was seen as a process title to express both similarity and difference from rabbinic ordination[28] Over the years, this ceremony changed greatly. It was initially part of the ordination ceremony, but then split off as it became more formalized. Then, with increased acceptance of the cantor as a member of the Reform Jewish clergy in 1960s, investiture rejoined the ordination ceremony. Still, Cohen points out, “even then, decades would pass before investiture attained full parity with rabbinic ordination.”[29] Finally, in 2012, the DFSSM ordained its first class of cantors. According to Cantors Jodi Schechtman & Bruce Ruben, who played crucial roles in this change of designation, “The change has been several years in the making. Reform movement officials say it both recognizes the elevated role that cantors have in modern times and eliminates some barriers they have faced in their clergy work.”[30]

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[25] Cohen, *The Making of a Jewish Cantor*, 40.
[26] Ibid., 44.
[27] Robinson, “The New Cantor,” 74.
[28] Cohen, *The Making of a Jewish Cantor*, 3.
[29] Ibid., 229.
[30] Rubin, What’s is a word?

One can learn a great deal about the expectations of the modern Reform cantor by investigating the current DFSSM HUC-JIR promotional materials on their website.[31] Cantor Richard Cohn, current Director of DFSSM, says in a video on the website:

> "Yes, there's a lot of music making. We do all kinds of Jewish music from the most traditional to the most contemporary. We do it in a collaborative way with artists from other Jewish musical disciplines. But we also are about training as educators, learning to how be great collaborators in the synagogue, learning how to be good managers, and learning how to be pastoral counselors."

Later on the website it states:

> "Our Cantorial Program is a time of tremendous growth and development as a singer, committed Jew, and future member of the clergy. You will emerge from this program with the knowledge and skills to engage and inspire others in the act of worship, forming a link in a chain of tradition. Your role is diverse and also includes pastoral care; officiating at lifecycle events; teaching adults and children; developing interpersonal skills; and creating and presenting cultural programs appropriate to Jewish life."

It is not surprising then, particularly in the context of this thesis, that the top of the cantorial section of the HUC-JIR website states, "A voice can inspire. A voice can heal. A voice can lead. Your voice."[32]

American Cantorate Today

We now step back from the world of the DFSSM to look at the larger picture of the American cantorate today. Cantors have the power "to maintain relationships with the cantorial past through a collective musical repertory and to carry the cantorial figure –

[31] http://huc.edu/academics/become-cantor.
[32] Ibid.

sometimes cautiously and defensively – into an ever-changing future."[33] Cantors combine many musical traditions, including: Sephardic, nineteenth century German, Ashkenazic shtetl, folk, rock, jazz, Israeli, Chasidic, klezmer, mi Sinai, nusach, and, of course, the various worshippers' personal musical memories. They are seen as central players in synagogue worship, lifecycle events, education, choir, youth programming, and pastoral care. Cantor Richard Cohn predicts that in twenty-first century, the cantor's role will continue to expand, perhaps to include work as Hillel directors, camp directors, chaplains, administrators, and more.[34] Unlike the early Reformers on the nineteenth century, today's rabbis appreciate the potential for partnership. This is seen in a CCAR (Central Conference of American Rabbis) document from 2005, "Rabbis and Cantors: A Sacred Partnership." It reads, "We view cantors as colleagues who join with us in offering pastoral care to our congregants and in raising the level of Jewish knowledge and observance."

Just this fall, Ted Merwin wrote an article in *The Jewish Week*, entitled "Where Have All the Cantors Gone?" This article discusses the declining need for traditionally trained cantors. He quotes Mark Slobin, stating that the *hazzan* is now often seen as a "luxury or ornamental item" that is dispensable except, perhaps, during the High Holidays when congregants expect a more "charged and special experience." This article received a great deal of resistance from cantors in the field, eager and proud to disprove Merwin's claim. *Hazzan* Robert Scherr, Director of Placement and Human Resources for the Cantors Assembly (the Conservative union of cantors), wrote in response to Merwin, "the *hazzanim* of the 21st century continue to be spiritual leaders, educators, and

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[33] Cohen, *The Making of a Jewish Cantor*, 228.
[34] Robinson, "The New Cantor," 23.

protectors of our sacred and evolving traditions that celebrate the beauty of holiness and the sacredness of prayer."[35] In addition, Cantor Richard Cohn, Director of the DFSSM at HUC-JIR, wrote, "Our cantors are flourishing throughout the Reform movement, integrating tradition with modernity and serving the Jewish community as spiritual leaders, liturgical artists, pastoral counselors, and educators." He continues, "Most importantly, a cantor helps bind the souls of our people to the soul of existence through song."[36]

Eric Werner writes in *A Voice Still Heard*, "From its inception to the present, the cantorate has been the center of debate, sometimes of communal strife, but also the source of exultation and of spiritual revival."[37] The future of the cantorate is unclear, but a full exploration of the many voices available to the cantor can help inspire the Judaism of tomorrow. As cantors revisit the many roles of their predecessors and rediscover their many voices, they can find new ways to address both moments of strife and moments of exultation for members of their communities.

[35] Merwin, "Where Have All the Cantors Gone?"
[36] Cohn, "Cantors Thriving."
[37] Slobin, *Chosen Voices*. 3.

~~~ Musical Interlude #2 – The Cantor ~~~

Throughout time, the role of the cantor has developed and changed according to the needs of the community. Sometimes their primary responsibilities revolved around making music and leading prayers. At other times, their tasks ranged from chopping meat, to sweeping floors, to teaching children, to comforting the bereaved. As the American Jewish community continues to transform during the twenty-first century, cantors seek new ways to utilize their many voices to connect with congregants in unique ways.

I began my recital with Michael Isaacson's composition in honor of Cantor Jay L. Frailich's twenty-five years of service to the Jewish community. In this duet with clarinet, so beautifully played by Ivan Barenboim, "*Hazzan*, *Hazzan*" employs varied musical styles to highlight the many roles of a cantor. The song concludes by honoring and thanking the beloved cantor who has served the community for so many years.

Hazzan, Hazzan

Music & Text: Michael Isaacson
Source: Songbook Volume II – Transcontinental Music Publications

Cantor, master of chant and prayer, messenger of the assembled, Hazzan, Hazzan.
Hazzan, Hazzan, pray with us, convey our deepest prayers to God on High.
Hazzan, Hazzan, pray for us, when our hearts are confused,
plead our unvoiced yearnings before our majestic Creator.
Hazzan, Hazzan, give thanks with us. Hazzan, Hazzan, sing praises to our God.
Hazzan, Hazzan, gratefully sing our praises, praises to our God, the Blessed One.
In times of sickness and sorrow, bring us a celestial sign that we will carry on.
Pray with us, pray for us, plead for us, sing with us, draw strength for us, Hazzan, Hazzan!
From our covenant at birth, through Bar and Bat Mizvah, under a wedding canopy,
through each milestone in our lives, until the Holy One calls us to return.
Hazzan, Hazzan, mourn with us, recall with us, reflect with us, rejoice with us,
and honor us, as we now honor you:
Cantor, master of chant and prayer, messenger of the assembled,
our esteemed advocate before the Eternal, Hazzan, Hazzan!

Part 2 – The Voices of the Cantor

Kol Zimrah – the Voice of Music

The *kol zimrah* (voice of music) is the core voice of the cantor. When most people think of a cantor, they imagine the person who uses his or her voice to sing and lead a community in music and prayer. While this thesis primarily aims to shed light on the less obvious voices of the cantor, it does so with full respect to the inherent importance of the *kol zimrah*. Music has great value in religion and society. As such, this chapter will begin with this societal impact of music and then investigate the appearances of *kol zimrah* in Tanakh. The chapter will close with examples from the cantors interviewed regarding how they use their *kol zimrah* in their communities.

The Value of Music

In the Zohar, we read, "There are halls in heaven that open only to the voice of song." As this thirteenth century work on Jewish mysticism teaches, the *kol zimrah* has the ability to open doors and connect people on a level which mere speech (unsung) cannot. There is even an entire television singing competition called "The Voice" which reinforces the power of the *kol zimrah* to attract the attention of millions of people. However, before the Zohar was written and before "The Voice" was televised, the Bible had already identified the unique power of the *kol zimrah*. Throughout Tanakh, the voice of music is associated with praise and joy. Put simply, its presence is good and its absence is bad. While the voice of music often appears as just that – *kol zimrah* –

sometimes we also hear the voice of singing birds or the voice of instruments. All of these examples reinforce the elevating power of the voice of music.

In addition to the text itself proclaiming the importance of the voice of music, it is crucial to highlight how tradition, both Jewish and not, underscores the importance of singing these texts aloud. The Talmud scorns those who read the Holy Scriptures without melody and study its words without singing.[1] The church father Athanasius (293-376) focused specifically on the importance of singing Psalms, stating that in doing so, we can express Moses' or David's emotions as if they were our own. Athanasius went on to say, "The Psalms are a rich and broad place where all the fullness of one's heart and soul and strength can be given a voice." Athanasius continued by pointing out his belief that music is a "sounding image of a soul that is no longer at odds with itself, nor at odds with the Holy Spirit. Melody models an inner life in which the many different elements and impulses of the person are drawn together in a pleasing chorus."[2]

Despite the overwhelming consensus that music enhances the Jewish textual tradition, it is important to present the alternative. Philosopher Mladen Dolar cautions that music might "fetishize and obfuscate the voice."[3] He fears that singing texts is bad communication and prevents a clear understanding of the words.[4] Perhaps that is why the *Shulchan Arukh, Orach Hayim* 53.11) teaches:

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[1] Heskes, *Passport to Jewish Music*, 37.
[2] Guthrie, "Love the Lord with all Your Voice," 46-47.
[3] Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, kindle location 377.
[4] Ibid., kindle location 362.

> "A *shatz*[5] who prolongs the service so that people will hear how pleasant his voice is, if it is because he rejoices in his heart that he is able to praise God with his sweet voice, let a blessing come to him, provided that he offers his prayers in a serious frame of mind and stands in God's presence in awe and dread. But if his intention is for people to hear his voice and he rejoices in this, it is disgraceful."[6]

Clearly, it is impossible to set a single rule regarding how we should recite (read vs. sing) these ancient texts. Nevertheless, the Scriptures themselves reveal the central importance of the voice of music throughout biblical history.

The Voice of Music throughout Tanakh

Throughout the Bible, the voice of music appears in times of joy. For example, in Isaiah 51:3, Isaiah reports that God has comforted Zion. He says, "God has made her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the Garden of God. Gladness and joy shall abide there, thanksgiving and the sound of music (*kol zimrah*)." Similarly, in Song of Songs 2:12, the beloved approaches and proclaims that the seasons have changed from winter to spring. The voice of the turtledove (*kol hator*) is heard throughout the land as the beloved beckons the listener to come away with him. Finally, in Job 21:12, Job talks about how the wicked prosper. He mentions how their homes are secure, their cows don't miscarry, and they "sing to the music of the timbrel and lute and revel to the voice of the pipe (*kol ugav*)." While it is troubling when the wicked prosper, they nonetheless do it in the same manner that the good celebrate – with the voice of music.

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[5] *Shatz* is an abbreviation for *shaliach tzibbur*, the messenger of the people, or service leader.

[6] Jacobs, "The Cantor."

In times of sadness or destruction, music is either missing or unappreciated. For example, in Second Samuel 19:35-6, King David offers Barzilai, a wealthy man who provided food for the king during his stay at Mahanaim, to visit Jerusalem where he will return the favor. Barzilai replies that he is old and can't appreciate such things as the taste of food or the voice of singing men and women (*kol sharim v'sharot*). In Ezekiel 26:13, during the oracle against Tyre, Ezekiel says in no uncertain terms that God will bring great devastation to Tyre. The streets will be trampled, pillars will crash, wealth will be plundered, and walls will be razed. God will "put an end to the murmur of your songs and the voice of your lyres (*kol kinorayich*) shall be heard no more." Later in our texts, Ecclesiastes 12:4 contains another scene of great destruction. Doors are shut and the normal sounds of life have disappeared. At the song of the bird (*kol hatzipor*), there is an inclination to rise, and yet their fears cause them to fall.

Since the voice of music is so powerful, it is not surprising that it is used throughout the Bible to praise God. Psalm 98 is one of the Psalms of Praise for the Congregation, which is sung during Kabbalat Shabbat every week. Verse 5 reads, "sing praise to God with the lyre, with the lyre and the voice of music (*kol zimrah*)." This mirrors the noisy acclaim of the new king – a common motif in kingship psalms.[7] In Exodus 28:34-35, the bells on the bottom of the high priest's robes announce his coming and going from the sanctuary. According to the text, the voice of the bells also prevents Aaron's death, as the bells were "apotropaic[8] devices to protect the priest from demons that are widely believed to haunt the thresholds."[9] It is also possible that the bells let God

[7] Berlin and Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible*, 1392.
[8] Merriam-Webster defines "apotropaic" as "designed to avert evil."
[9] Ibid., 173-174

know that the priest is coming. It is observed elsewhere (Judges 13:22) that seeing God can kill a person, so this voice of the bells serves as a warning to God as well.

Another example of the voice of music praising God can be found four chapters later in Exodus 32. Responding to the Israelites' anxiety and lack of faith in Moses' return from Mount Sinai, Aaron helps them create the Golden Calf to which they might direct their worship. God grows angry at this act of disobedience, but Moses is able to temper God's anger and dissuade God from annihilating them. However, as Moses descends Mount Sinai, he hears noises from below and says in verse 18 that it is neither the voice of triumph nor the voice of defeat, but "the voice of song" (*kol anot*) that he hears. This Hebrew word for singing, "*anot,*" is the same one used during Miriam's singing of God's praises in Exodus 15:21. This suggests that the Israelites were honoring the Golden Calf in the same way they previously honored God.[10]

A final example of the voice of music can be found in Second Chronicles 5:13, which describes the dedication of the Temple, complete with sacrifices and singing. This brought about a cloud, the glory of God, which filled the house of God. It reads, "the trumpeter and the singers joined in unison (*kol echad*) to praise and extol God" with the "sound of trumpets, cymbals, and other musical instruments (*kol bachatzotz'rot u'vimtzilta'im uvicklei hashir*)." Finally, while the word "*kol*" is missing from Psalm 150, it is impossible to ignore the overwhelming use of many instruments (harp, lyre, timbrel, lute, pipe, cymbals, etc.) used to praise God in this prayer that is so central to our morning liturgy.

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[10] Ibid., 185.

Using the *Kol Zimrah* in Today's Communities

Nearly all the cantors interviewed for this thesis reported that their connection to music and their desire to use their singing voices to connect to people and Judaism was the most important factor that led to their decision to pursue the cantorate. Some had formal classical training, like Cantor Julia Cadrain or Cantor Josh Breitzer. Some, like Cantor Bob Abelson, grew up singing in quartets or working directly with the cantors in services in their synagogues while others, like Cantor Rosalie Boxt, came to the cantorate from a love of song leading at camps and youth group.

When asked about the voice, many cantors found meaning in the physical and biological components of singing. Cantor Richard Cohn spoke of the different frequencies, the fundamental tone, plus the overtones and partials. Cantor Bob Abelson spoke of the need for proper technique at all times. Cantor Mo Glazman said, "at the *p'shat* [or simple] level, I think of the function of ligaments, muscles, and cartilage that lead to phonation. On a deeper level, you have the energy and vibration used to color the world in many ways. The voice really is the most intimate form of expression."

For many of these cantors, a significant part of their portfolio is filled with activities related to music. Many cantors, including Cantor Anita Hochman and Cantor David Berger, spoke extensively about their role in conducting choirs, with both voluntary and professionally trained singers. As Cantor Shira Ginsburg pointed out, the cantor is also in charge of musicians and other musical guests. Cantor Rollin Simmons spoke about the annual summer concert she coordinates in which she brings colleagues to explore new music against the gorgeous background of Aspen, CO.

As expected, the cantor is the one in charge of selecting musical settings for prayers during services. Some cantors report collaborating with clergy partners to have the music set the tone of the service and/or sermon. Many mentioned the need to select a mixture of familiar songs, which provide comfort for the congregants, and new settings, which challenge the congregants and maintain the interest of the cantor. Cantor David Berger refuses to get complacent and said that he must have at least one piece in a service of which he is "genuinely proud." Cantor Mo Glazman will often set Jewish text to the tune of secular music to make prayers more accessible for congregants. Many cantors reported their deliberate choice to lower keys for songs that involved congregational participation, as that range would be more comfortable for the untrained singer. Cantor Josh Breitzer further elaborated on his intentionality of service planning, focusing on key modulations and new harmonies to segue between prayers.

Expounding upon the power of the *kol zimrah*, many cantors proclaimed the profound capacity of music to add new meaning to prayers. Both Cantor Julia Cadrain and Cantor Faith Steinsnyder spoke about "musical midrash," the ability of a cantor to choose a particular composer's setting of a prayer to demonstrate a new level of understanding. Cantor Benjie Schiller spoke extensively about the joy she finds in composing. She said it "allows me to access my own rendition of a prayer. I get it down on paper and give it away. I then let people connect and have their own moment."

The *kol zimrah* signals times of joy and its absence conveys times of sadness and destruction. The Bible also instructs us to praise God through the voice of music. The *kol* *zimrah* adds life and passion to our texts and our prayers. It is the *kol zimrah* that draws cantors into this profession, so it is incumbent upon cantors to use the *kol zimrah* to its fullest potential to create meaning and community. Through music, we forge connections for congregants to God, prayer, and each other.

~~~ Musical Interlude #3 – *Kol Zimrah* ~~~

The *kol zimrah* is the core voice of the cantor. It is often the voice of music that calls us to the cantorate and it is because of the direct connection to this voice that cantors are able to access their many other voices to help those around them.

Psalm 98 begins by commanding us to sing a new song to God. In response we proclaim God's glory and sing joyous songs of praise. With the assistance of instruments and nature, we proclaim our hope that God will continue to rule the world justly. For my recital, I once again engaged my talented choir to assist me in Heinrich Schalit's setting of Psalm 98 from his *Sabbath Eve Liturgy*. This classical setting is glorious and filled with great majesty.

The 98th Psalm

Music: Heinrich Schalit
Text: Psalm 98
Source: Sabbath Eve Liturgy – Transcontinental Music Publications

(א) מִזְמ֡וֹר שִׁ֤ירוּ לַֽיהוָ֨ה ׀ שִׁ֣יר חָ֭דָשׁ
כִּֽי־נִפְלָא֣וֹת עָשָׂ֑ה הוֹשִֽׁיעָה־לּ֥וֹ יְ֝מִינ֗וֹ
וּזְר֥וֹעַ קָדְשֽׁוֹ׃ (ב) הוֹדִ֣יעַ יְ֭הוָה יְשׁוּעָת֑וֹ
לְעֵינֵ֥י הַ֝גּוֹיִ֗ם גִּלָּ֥ה צִדְקָתֽוֹ׃ (ג) זָ֘כַ֤ר
חַסְדּ֨וֹ ׀ וֶֽאֱֽמוּנָתוֹ֮ לְבֵ֪ית יִשְׂרָ֫אֵ֥ל רָא֥וּ
כָל־אַפְסֵי־אָ֑רֶץ אֵ֝֗ת יְשׁוּעַ֥ת אֱלֹהֵֽינוּ׃ (ד)
הָרִ֣יעוּ לַֽ֭יהוָה כָּל־הָאָ֑רֶץ פִּצְח֖וּ וְרַנְּנ֣וּ
וְזַמֵּֽרוּ׃ (ה) זַמְּר֣וּ לַיהוָ֣ה בְּכִנּ֑וֹר בְּ֝כִנּ֗וֹר
וְק֣וֹל זִמְרָֽה׃ (ו) בַּ֭חֲצֹ֣צְרוֹת
וְק֣וֹל שׁוֹפָ֑ר הָ֝רִ֗יעוּ לִפְנֵ֤י ׀ הַמֶּ֬לֶךְ
יְהוָֽה׃ (ז) יִרְעַ֣ם הַ֭יָּם וּמְלֹא֑וֹ תֵּ֝בֵ֗ל וְיֹ֣שְׁבֵי
בָֽהּ׃ (ח) נְהָר֥וֹת יִמְחֲאוּ־כָ֑ף
יַ֝֗חַד הָרִ֥ים יְרַנֵּֽנוּ׃ (ט) לִֽפְנֵי־יְהוָ֗ה כִּ֥י בָא֮
לִשְׁפֹּ֪ט הָ֫אָ֥רֶץ יִשְׁפֹּֽט־תֵּבֵ֥ל בְּצֶ֑דֶק וְ֝עַמִּ֗ים
בְּמֵישָׁרִֽים׃

(1) A psalm. Sing to God a new song, for God has worked wonders; God's right hand, God's holy arm, has won God victory. (2) God has manifested God's victory, has displayed God's triumph in the sight of the nations. (3) God was mindful of God's steadfast love and faithfulness toward the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth beheld the victory of our God. (4) Raise a shout to God, all the earth, break into joyous songs of praise! (5) Sing praise to God with the lyre, with the lyre and melodious song. (6) With trumpets and the blast of the horn raise a shout before God, the ruler. (7) Let the sea and all within it thunder, the world and its inhabitants; (8) let the rivers clap their hands, the mountains sing joyously together (9) at the presence of God, for God is coming to rule the earth; God will rule the world justly, and its peoples with equity.

<u>Kol D'varim – the Voice of Words</u>

Philosopher Mladen Dolar writes, "The three great religions of the Book all rely on Holy Scripture where the truth is manifested, yet the scripture, the holy letter, can become effective only if and when it is assumed by a living voice."[1] Throughout the Bible, there are many examples of *kol d'varim* – the voice of words. This phrase presents an interesting situation. Assuming the words are spoken, the Bible could simply just state that someone "heard the words" of someone else. Why bother stating that someone "heard the *voice* of the words"? According to the *Theological Dictionary of Old Testament,* "*kol*" referred "originally to the sounds of speech, then came to refer metonymically[2] to its content as well since form and meaning not only coincide in human speech but can also appear as situational equivalents."[3] An old adage states, "It's not what you say; it's how you say it." To really listen to the voice of someone's words, one must look beyond basic hearing. With the phrase "*kol d'varim,*" the listener is called to focus on the message or intent of the words as a whole and not on the mere phonation of syllables.

In Tanakh, there are a few forms of this phrase that all emphasize this notion of the "voice of words." The word "*kol*" may be paired with "*d'varim*" or other possessive variants, as well as "*milim*" and its variants. In addition, the "voice of the sign" (*kol ot*)

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[1] Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, kindle location 1286.
[2] Merriam-Webster defines "metonymically" to refer to a figure of speech consisting of the use of the name of one thing for that of another of which it is an attribute or with which it is associated.
[3] Botterweck, Ringgren, and Fabry, "*Kol*," 582.

serves a similar role. While a sign (*ot*) may lack words, by pairing it with "*kol*" the Bible once again advises us to focus on the message of this voice as if it contained words.

The voice of words can be very impressive and when the words are those of God, they command obedience. The *kol d'varim* may represent the thoughts of a group of people or it may relay the intent of a single speaker. Cantors interviewed for this thesis listed many ways that they use their *kol d'varim* to teach and represent the Jewish people. As Dolar reminds us, a teacher transmits knowledge by using her voice: "Knowledge is all stored in books, but it can become effective only when relegated to the voice."[4]

Impressive – Bigger than the Sum of its Parts

In referring to the voice of someone's words, the listener is beckoned to step back from the consonants and vowels and encouraged to witness the fullness of the message. For example, in Daniel 10:6, Daniel describes the vision of the angelic messenger stating "His body was like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and legs had the color of burnished bronze, and the voice of his words (*kol d'varav*) was like the voice of a multitude (*k'kol hamon*). The appearance of this man is described in a similar way to how other divine beings are described elsewhere (Ezek. 1:4–14; 9:2–3).[5] A few sentences later, Daniel says, "I heard the voice of his words (*kol d'varav*); and when I heard the voice of his words (*kol d'varav*), overcome by a deep sleep, I lay prostrate on the ground. "*Kol d'varav*" is repeated here to emphasize its importance and the overwhelming power, which leads the angelic messenger to tell Daniel not to fear. These many words are united and amplified by the singular voice. This

[4] Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, kindle location 1328.
[5] Berlin and Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible*, 1661.

reinforces the proverb, “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” The singular voice, as it represents the full message, inspires a sense of awe that is greater than any combination of infinite words could possibly evoke.

Commanding Obedience (from God)

If the *kol d’varim* of a messenger was impressive, one can only imagine the effect that the voice of the words of God has on people. In fact, throughout Tanakh, the voice of God’s words evokes such reverence that it often leads to obedience on the part of the hearers. The first example of this can be found in Exodus 4:8. Moses is reluctant to take on his new leadership role. He fears that people will not believe him that God has sent him as a messenger. God gives Moses some signs to demonstrate that he and his mission have divine support. God instructs Moses how to turn his staff into a snake and how to cause his hands to become encrusted with snowy scales, similar to leprosy. God then states, “if they do not believe you or pay heed to the voice of the first sign (*kol ha’ot harishon*), they will believe the voice of the second (*kol ha’ot ha'acharon*).” While this example involves signs and not words, these signs nonetheless represent a message from God. Much later in the Torah, in Deuteronomy 4:12, Moses reminds the Israelites to obey God by recalling when they, or their previous generation, received the Ten Commandments. Moses says, “YHWH spoke to you out of the fire; you heard the voice of words (*kol d’varim*).” By connecting them to this remarkable moment, Moses instills great reverence in the Israelites for the Almighty God.

The voice of God’s words is not limited to Torah. It is also found in Nevi’im and K’tuvim. First Samuel 15:1 depicts the importance of listening to the voice of God’s words. After summarizing Saul's kingship, the prophet Samuel says to King Saul, "I am the one God sent to anoint you king over the Eternal's people Israel. Therefore, listen to the Eternal's command (literally, the voice of the words of God, *kol divrei YHWH*)!" God then commands Saul to attack Amalekites, the vicious adversaries of Israel.[6]

In Psalm 103, God is described as the compassionate, gracious remover of sin with steadfast love for God's people. God reigns over all and in verse 20, God's angels are invoked with, "mighty creatures who do God's word, ever obedient to the voice of God's word (*kol d'varo*)." Not only do God's angels do what God says, but they also obey the voice of God's words. Doing what God asks is not enough; the angels revere God's message and omnipotence.

Message of one person

While the voice of God's words may command obedience, the voice of the words of humans also carries great intent. In the book of Job, Elihu mentions the "voice of words" twice when talking to his friend Job. His construct involves the word "*milin*" instead of "*d'varim*," but the meaning is the same. In Job 33:8, Elihu pejoratively refers to Job's previous speech by saying, "I have heard the voice of your words (*kol milin*)." Elihu then rebukes Job for claiming that he is guiltless. In the next chapter, specifically Job 34:16, Elihu entreats Job to listen carefully and with understanding to what he has to say, "Listen to the voice of my words (*kol milai*)." Elihu then proclaims that God is just and observes all.[7] This suggests that only in listening to the voice of these words can one

[6] Berlin and Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible*, 588.
[7] Botterweck, Ringgren, and Fabry, "*Kol*," 583.

truly understand their deeper theological meaning.

Opinion of a group

Sometimes the singular word "*kol*" has the power to unite not only many words, but the many words of many people. In the beginning of Deuteronomy, God hears the "voice of words" of the Israelites, which initially provokes God's anger and later wins God's approval. In Deuteronomy 1:34, the Israelites, fearing the Amorites, complain that God hates them, and deny God's constant acts of protection. Moses then says, "When God heard your loud complaint (literally, voice of your words, *kol divreichem*), God was angry." And so God decided that none of this evil generation would enter Israel. Later, in Deuteronomy 5:25, after reiterating the story of receiving the Ten Commandments, Moses adds, "God heard the plea that you made to me (again, literally, voice of your words, *kol divreichem*), and God said to me, 'I have heard the plea that this people (*kol divrei ha'am*) made to you; they did well to speak thus.'" In both of these cases, the phrasal structure with "*kol*" suggests that God is able to understand the intent – either complaint or plea – of the words of the group and act accordingly.

Using Kol D'varim in Today's Communities

With the voice of their words, cantors share so much with their communities. Cantors constantly represent their communities, teach them both formally and informally, and preach to them both orally and through the written word.

Many cantors spoke about the importance of their role in representing the cantorate and the Jewish people. Cantor Michael Shochet said that he is "constantly teaching people what cantors do, every minute, through presence… to those unfamiliar with the role of cantor and to interfaith communities." As a military chaplain, Cantor David Frommer was an "ambassador to non-Jews, representing opinions on Israel and Jewish values." Like many other cantors, Rabbi Cantor Jeff Saxe spoke about his role in interfaith work, specifically with the neighboring Muslim community.

Cantors often use their *kol d'varim* in the field of education. In the Talmud, Shabbat 1:3, the *hazzan* is described as a teacher. Since Cantor Rollin Simmons has a Masters in Special Education, she knew she wanted a job that was creative and that utilized her prior experience. Fittingly, she currently runs the Hebrew school at her synagogue. Cantor Vicky Glikin helped restructure her religious school and also teaches adult education. Cantor David Berger reports that he proudly uses his *kol d'varim* to teach the deeper subjects of Talmud and Rabbinics to his advanced learners.

Educational applications of the *kol d'varim* extend beyond Religious School and adult education. In addition to teaching students privately in their homes, Cantor Nancy Bach also leads an Introduction to Judaism class for potential conversion students, which she feels provides "such a unique opportunity to instill enthusiasm at such a crucial time." Cantor Benjie Schiller spoke extensively about the privilege of teaching the next generation of cantors. Cantor Schiller also reported on the joy of traveling and serving as scholar-in-residence for synagogues around the country. Finally, Cantor Tracey Scher spoke of her role training the board of her synagogue – teaching them to welcome people and embody the URJ's [Union for Reform Judaism's] new ideal of "audacious hospitality."

While teaching often involves an informal setting with opportunities for conversation, cantors also reported using the *kol d'varim* in other less interactive settings, such as sermons or publications. Cantor Rosalie Boxt appreciates how the voice helps her "articulate thoughts, make them real, [and] put them out there." Many cantors mentioned that they often give *d'vrei torah* (short sermons) on Shabbat and some, like Cantor Mike Shochet, even have the opportunity to preach to the entire congregation on the High Holidays. In addition, cantors, like Cantor Henry Rosenblum, enjoy writing bulletin articles for their congregational or local publications as a supplementary way to spread their *kol d'varim*.

Cantor Bob Abelson shared an additional creative use of the *kol d'varim* during his interview. For about fifteen minutes, Cantor Abelson spoke about his love of poetry and his personal project to write poetic interpretations for different Torah portions, prayers, and occasions. He innately spoke of "the importance of words and the depth of heart" of these poems, which he has read at services and other events. He then suggested that we "begin the interview," as if the previous discussion were irrelevant to my research interests. I told him that on the contrary, his poetry is a beautiful example of how a cantor can uniquely use the *kol d'varim* to contribute to the life of a community.

The voice of our words has the power to reach far and wide. It commands our attention and calls upon cantors to comprehend meaning beyond that which consonants, vowels, syntax, and grammar can relay. It may express the opinion of one or of many. Cantors today can use the *kol d'varim* to continue the tradition of our Bible to teach the Jewish story and represent our values to the greater community.

~~~ Musical (Poetic) Interlude #4 – *Kol D'varim* ~~~

The voice of our words helps us to hear the true message behind the collections of mere words spoken aloud or written on a page. When a cantor utilizes the *kol d'varim*, she teaches others both what our tradition says and what a cantor knows to be true in her heart.

I did not find a suitable song to sing in my recital to represent this important voice. However, thankfully, Cantor Robert Abelson has allowed me to include one of his poems, a beautiful example of *kol d'varim*, here. In this poem, Cantor Abelson doubts the authority of his words, proclaiming he is often more comfortable utilizing his *kol zimrah*. However, as you will read, his words are deep and meaningful. Without question, Cantor Abelson has successfully represented the Jewish people and continues to teach the next generation of cantors as a beloved professor at the DFSSM.

WORDS

Text: Cantor Robert Abelson

They lack authority, my words.
Born from a wandering imbalance,
I wish for fluency to carry that spirit from
My parents, Bedouinlike, settled on foreign sand,
With language, too porous for filial security.

This secular, unfrocked Kohen, unfamiliar,
Yearns for the ammunition to fire off
Words that would cover my canvas
With Yiddish, English, and Polish pigments.

How easily, do I connect, through song,
Using an incomplete disguised scenario,
But my verses will lie and die
On fading, overlooked paper.
Slipping by distracted kinship

Ah, vanity, to yearn for some attention.
Confessing, I bear it, only slightly giving way
To a quiet delight in sculpturing words.

<u>Kol Nishmoteinu – The Voice of our Souls</u>

The Bible includes many different examples of the "voice of our souls" (*kol nishmoteinu*). As with the other biblical examples of phrases using *kol*, the presence of the word *kol* focuses attention on the deeper meaning, in this case, of the emotions. In some cases, phrases combine *kol* directly with an emotion – *kol sasson* (voice of joy) or *kol pachad* (voice of fear). In other cases, *kol* is paired with an action that is closely associated with an emotion – *kol b'chi* (voice of crying - sadness) or *kol tz'akah* (voice of shouting – anger). While some sounds might be associated with these actions, the use of *kol* in these cases helps get to the essence of these challenging emotions. Perhaps a cantor's innate connection to the voice will enable her to relate to people on a deeper emotional level. In this realm, cantors connect to congregants through pastoral care and life cycle events.

Voice of Joy

One of the most recognizable biblical texts recited at a Jewish wedding is "*kol sasson v'kol simcha, kol chatan v'kol kalah.*" This phrase appears four times in the Book of Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 7:34, God instructs Jeremiah to preach to the people about the consequences of false worship. God threatens to silence the "voice of mirth and gladness, groom and bride." In 16:9, Jeremiah lists many festive activities that the people will be unable to do because God will banish these joyous voices from the town. This similar story continues in 25:10 as Jeremiah reiterates the punishment for failing to listen to

God’s words. Finally in 33:11, Jeremiah repeats this familiar phrase, but rather than speak of how God will remove these happy sounds, Jeremiah proclaims God’s promise of restoration. God will forgive the sins of the people and once again the “voice of mirth and gladness…” will be heard in Jerusalem.

In addition to the *kol sasson* and the *kol simcha*, another voice of happiness is the “*kol rina*” (voice of joy), which can be found in the book of Psalms. In Psalms 42:5, the poet is searching for God and chooses to walk with the festive crowd to the House of God “*b’kol rina v’todah”* (shouts of joy and praise). A few psalms later in 47:2, the psalmist instructs the listeners to clap their hands and raise joyous shouts to God. Later in Psalms 118:15, after the well-known proclamation that “God is my strength and might; He has become my deliverance” the tents of the victorious resound with “shouts of joy and deliverance” (*kol rina vishu’a).* It is intriguing that in all three cases, most translations suggest “joyous shouts” for “*kol rina.*” However, “*kol”* is clearly written in the singular form. It is as if the many shouts are united in a single voice of joy – *kol rina.*

Voice of Fear

Happiness and joy are not the only emotions in the Hebrew Bible. There are moments of fear and trembling, where once again the phrasal structure with the voice is used to amplify and unite these emotions. Isaiah 24 contains prophecies concerning the end of days.[1] Verse 18 states, “He who flees at the voice of terror (*mikol hapachad*), shall fall into the pit.” As another example, Job 15:21 describes the writhing of the wicked

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[1] Berlin and Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible*, 782.

man, whose ears are filled with the “voice of fear” (*kol p’chadim*). In a final example, Jeremiah describes God’s promise for restoration, recounting what God will say just before the fortunes are returned. In 30:5, Jeremiah reports that God will say, “we have heard the voice of panic (*kol charadah*), terror without relief.”

Voice of Crying or Shouting

In addition to the voices of joy and fear, the Tanakh is also filled with many examples of the voice of sadness or anger. However, rather than link the word “*kol”* directly with these emotions, these examples pair the word “*kol”* with associated actions – crying and shouting. While crying and shouting could be heard on their own, the Bible still pairs these actions with the word “*kol”* as if to imply that in doing so, the message is clearer and resounds farther.

The stories of the prophets are filled with examples of these types of voices in need. In First Samuel 4:14, the Philistines have just routed Israel, captured the Ark of God, and killed Eli’s sons, Hophni and Pinchas. A messenger told the people of Shiloh the news and when Eli heard the sound of the outcry (*kol hatz’akah*), he asked, “What is the meaning of this uproar?” Later in Isaiah 65:19, Isaiah reports in an exuberant and literary style that the world will be transformed.[2] God will save us and say, “And I will rejoice in Jerusalem and delight in her people. Never again shall be heard there the sounds of weeping and wailing (*kol b’chi v’kol z’akah)*.” As another example, in the lament of Tyre, Ezekiel 27:28 describes how the voice of the cry (*kol z’akat*) of the pilots

[2] Berlin and Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible*, 913.

will cause the countryside to shake. This suggests that these voices don't just resound in the ears of the listeners. Their effect is not only auditory; these voices reach seismological proportions.

Jeremiah's challenging mission as prophet during the destruction of the Temple and the beginning of the Babylonian exile is reflected by the many examples of the voices of sadness and anger. In Jeremiah 9:18, Jeremiah laments and sends for the women who perform rituals of mourning,[3] saying "For the sound of wailing (*kol n'hi*) is heard from Zion." The Book of Jeremiah includes many oracles about the future of various peoples and towns. In 48:3, Jeremiah presents the oracle concerning Moab: "Hark! A voice of shouting (*kol tz'akah)* shall be from Horonaim, spoiling and great destruction." Three chapters later, in 51:54, the oracle concerning Babylon employs a similar structure and phrasing. "Hark! A voice of shouting (*kol z'akah*) from Babylon - Great destruction..." Comparing these two phrases, we see the "*kol tz'akah*" and the "*kol z'akah*." Rabbi Dr. David Sperling advises that the slight variation in spelling is negligible and does not affect the meaning. Additionally, both sentences include the phrase "*shever gadol*," which characterizes the great damage present in these towns. Through this repeated structure, Jeremiah intensifies the magnitude of the voice of shouting and the level of destruction.

Action-driven emotional voices are also found in the Books of Writings. In Psalms 5:2-3 there is an example of literary parallelism – a repetitive structure that reinforces the meaning of one thing through a similar use of another. "Give ear to my speech, O God; consider my utterance. Heed the voice of my cry (*kol shav'i*), my king

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[3] Berlin and Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible*, 944.

and God, for I pray to You." Just as the first phrase asks God to "give ear to my speech" the second phrase requests God to hear the "voice of my cry." There is a message of pain behind this cry, seeking God's attention. Later on, in Psalms 6:9-11, with confidence that "God heeds the voice of my weeping (*kol b'chi*)," the speaker proclaims, "All my enemies… will turn back in an instant, frustrated."

In one final example, Ezra 3:13, Ezra describes the rebuilding of the Temple, an event which is filled with so many emotions that they become indistinguishable from one another. Some people celebrate the restoration of rituals while others mourn the irrevocable loss of the First Temple. "The people could not distinguish the shouts of joy (*kol t'ru'at hasimcha*) from the voice of the people's weeping (*kol b'chi ha'am*), for the people raised a great shout, the sound of which could be heard from afar." This moment reflects so many real life experiences that evoke a variety of emotions from different people. The cantor, who is naturally in-tune with her own voice, possesses a unique ability to connect with people through the voice of our souls (*kol nishmoteinu*).

Cantors use the *Kol Nishmoteinu* in Today's Communities

Second only to *kol zimrah*, the *kol nishmoteinu* is the voice which cantors reported they used most frequently and meaningfully in their communities. In tractate Brachot 6b, Rashi explains Rav Sheshet's difficult[4] statement writing, "The primary reward for delivering a eulogy is for causing those in attendance to raise their voices and

[4] Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, 339.

cry, as that increases the grief over the deceased."[5] Whether sad or happy, angry or afraid, emotions are transmitted through voices. Cantors play enormous roles in pastoral care and lifecycle events. As Cantor Sherwood Goffin said, the cantorate is "no longer just about concerts by Moshe Koussevitsky. We must get involved in the lives of our congregants. It's about *avodah shebalev* – service of the heart."

Some cantors have chosen to make pastoral care the focus of their cantorate by serving as chaplains in either a hospital or the military. Cantor Sarah Silverberg said that she "uses the voice as a lens for pastoral care. You must listen to what people say and don't say." This image reinforces the notion that the rests in the music are just as important as the notes. Cantor Silverberg has used "Amazing Grace" in chaplaincy for veterans and reports that it is "good for nonverbal patients. It has a profound calming effect." She also mentioned that she uses prayer and music not just for her patients, but also for herself. She said that she finds both the text and music for "*Esa Einai*," specifically the musical setting by Shlomo Carlebach, extremely powerful. She uses it as an internal monologue to help her meet the demanding needs of chaplaincy.

According to the *Encyclopedia Judaica* article about *hazzanim*, many cantors serve in chaplaincy corps of the Israeli army.[6] Here in America, Cantor David Frommer was the first ordained Jewish cantor to serve as a U. S. Army chaplain. Rabbis, such as Rabbi Jacob Frankel, some of whom also served cantorial functions, began serving as chaplains in the U.S. military during the Civil War, only after they successfully

[5] Koren Talmud Bavli, Brachot 6b.
[6] Kublin, Zimmerman, and Geffen, "*Hazzan*."

convinced President Lincoln to rescind the order that chaplains had to be Christian.[7] Many years later, Frommer became the first ordained cantor to hold this challenging position. He completed a tour in Kuwait and Afghanistan and continues to serve as a battalion chaplain in the California Army National Guard as well as the cantor at Congregation Shomrei Torah in Santa Rosa, California. Regarding his deployment, Cantor Frommer reported:

> Faith can be an incredible source of strength for all soldiers; a source of comfort; a source of peace, and a source of optimism during deployment. After spending this time, I have realized that the biggest threat toward our soldiers has nothing to do with the enemy – we know how to fight the enemy; we're trained to do that. The biggest threat has to do with our own minds. When we start to feel depressed, when we start to feel like our mission has no value or our place here is not appreciated faith in those moments has an incredible ability to provide us with a different perspective.[8]

Many other cantors have found ways to incorporate pastoral care into their congregational work. Sometimes they use music and other times they use their strong presence to fill the needs of their congregants. Cantor Vicky Glikin said that she initially didn't use music during pastoral care, fearing it would be a crutch. However, she later realized that she should use this gift when providing care for the sick. Rabbi Cantor Angela Buchdahl mentioned that she feels that the combination of speaking and singing at life cycle events such as funerals and weddings creates deeply meaningful moments. Cantor Michael Shochet stays connected to his prior career as a police officer by providing chaplaincy to law enforcement officials and for other CIA related activities.

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[7] Patrick, "Jacob Frankel."
[8] Neely, "First US army cantor."

As one final example of a cantor's ability to connect with the *kol nishmoteinu* of a community, I must give credit to my childhood cantor, Anita Hochman. Cantor Hochman has been the rock of Congregation M'kor Shalom in Cherry Hill, NJ for more than thirty years. This includes a particularly challenging period of about ten years when our former senior rabbi was under investigation, and ultimately tried and convicted for the murder of his wife. Assisted by lay leaders in the community, Cantor Hochman provided an unimaginable amount of comfort to our congregants whose reactions to these events spanned the full range of human emotions. Through this unenviable experience, Cantor Hochman certainly demonstrated her mastery of the *kol nishmoteinu*.

The *kol nishmoteinu* of the Bible signals a variety of emotions. Cantors today celebrate the joys of life with congregants through weddings and baby namings. They also may support congregants during times of sadness, anger, and fear when dealing with sickness and death. Just as the Tanakh uses the voice to drive at the core of these emotions and amplify the magnitude of their effect, cantors today use their *kol nishmoteinu* to connect with people in new and profound ways.

~~~ Musical Interlude #5 – *Kol Nishmoteinu* ~~~

The voice of our souls factors into all parts of our life. A cantor taps into this *kol nishmoteinu* through counseling, pastoral care, and lifecycle events. I like to think that cantors have "VIP tickets" into the best and worst moments in the lives of our congregants.

During my recital, I sang "Rachel M'vakah al Baneha" by David Roitman. This song employs various biblical quotes from Prophets and Writings to dig deeper into Rachel's pain. When we focus on the voice, we can hone in on the deeper meaning and pathos behind our emotions. As cantors, we are blessed with the opportunity to help people in these difficult moments. Perhaps our innate understanding of the voice helps us play a uniquely helpful role in the lives of our congregants.

Rachel M'vakah al Baneha

Music: David Roitman
Arrangement: Abraham Wolf Binder
Edited by: Faith Steinsnyder
Text: Jeremiah 31:15, 25:30, Isaiah 22:12, 33:7, Lamentations 1:16
Source: Transposed manuscript, original source published by Metro Music

כֹּ֣ה ׀ אָמַ֣ר יְהֹוָ֗ה ק֣וֹל בְּרָמָ֤ה נִשְׁמָע֙ נְהִ֔י
בְּכִ֣י תַמְרוּרִ֔ים רָחֵ֖ל מְבַכָּ֣ה עַל־בָּנֶ֑יהָ
מֵאֲנָ֛ה לְהִנָּחֵ֥ם עַל־בָּנֶ֖יהָ כִּ֥י אֵינֶֽנּוּ׃

Thus said God: A voice is heard in Ramah — Wailing, bitterly weeping — Rachel weeping for her children. She refuses to be comforted for her children, who are gone.

... יְהֹוָ֞ה מִמָּר֤וֹם יִשְׁאָג֙ וּמִמְּע֤וֹן
קָדְשׁוֹ֙ יִתֵּ֣ן קוֹל֔וֹ שָׁאֹ֤ג יִשְׁאַג֙
עַל־נָוֵ֔הוּ (עַל־בָּנֶ֑יהָ)...

...God roars from on high, God makes God's voice heard from God's holy dwelling; God roars aloud over God's [earthly] abode (children)...

וַיִּקְרָ֗א אֲדֹנָ֧י יְהֹוִ֛ה צְבָא֖וֹת בַּיּ֣וֹם הַה֑וּא
לִבְכִי֙ וּלְמִסְפֵּ֔ד וּלְקָרְחָ֖ה וְלַחֲגֹ֥ר שָֽׂק׃

My God, God of Hosts, summoned on that day to weeping and lamenting, to baldness and girding with sackcloth.

עַל־אֵ֣לֶּה ׀ אֲנִ֣י בוֹכִיָּ֗ה עֵינִ֤י ׀ עֵינִי֙ יֹ֣רְדָה
מַּ֔יִם כִּֽי־רָחַ֥ק מִמֶּ֛נִּי מְנַחֵ֖ם מֵשִׁ֣יב נַפְשִׁ֑י
הָי֤וּ בָנַי֙ שֽׁוֹמֵמִ֔ים כִּ֥י גָבַ֖ר אוֹיֵֽב׃

For these things do I weep, my eyes flow with tears: Far from me is any comforter who might revive my spirit; My children are forlorn, for the foe has prevailed.

הֵ֚ן אֶרְאֶלָּ֔ם צָעֲק֖וּ חֻ֑צָה מַלְאֲכֵ֣י שָׁל֔וֹם
מַ֖ר יִבְכָּיֽוּן׃

Behold, their heroes cry in the streets; the envoys of peace weep bitterly.

<u>Kol HaShofar – the Voice of the Shofar</u>

Of the 505 appearances of the word "voice" found in the Tanakh, the voice of the shofar (*kol hashofar*) is one of the most frequent and yet it is one of the newest voices to be employed by cantors. While it may seem obvious that a shofar emits a sound and therefore has a voice, the message or intended reaction to this *kol shofar* varies throughout Tanakh.

The loud sound of the shofar gets the attention of all the people who can hear it. Most of the references to the *kol shofar* can be grouped into three categories ranging from negative to positive, respectively: to sound an alarm, to summon people to assembly, and to praise God or a ruler.[1] As with previous chapters, this chapter will conclude with stories of cantors using their *kol shofar* to help people in their communities.

To Sound an Alarm

The most common purpose for sounding the shofar in Tanakh is to give an alarm of warning. The loud blasts of the shofar deliver bad news of impending danger. This warning is often accompanied by thunder and lightning which add to the ominous scene. During Rosh Hashanah Musaf services, in the Shofarot section, there are many lines from Tanakh that highlight the importance and symbolism of the shofar. Exodus 19:16 presents a scene in which "there were thunders and lightning, a thick cloud on the mount, and the sound of the shofar exceedingly loud." It continues to describe a scene of smoke

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[1] Botterweck, Ringgren, and Fabry, "*Kol*," 580.

and fire and how all the people of the camp, and even the mountain itself, trembled. The final quotation from the Torah in the Shofarot service is from Exodus 20:15, which similarly depicts the loud smoky scene which causes people to stand at a distance. The voice of the shofar often occurs at dramatic moments, usually when a covenant is established or reasserted. Only Moses could hear and speak to God, but everyone could hear the voice of the shofar. As Dolar writes, by hearing the voice of the shofar, "the community of believers establishes its covenant, its alliance with God."[2]

The Prophets also teach about the power of the *kol shofar.* Zephaniah 1:14-18 describes the day of wrath, trouble, and distress, which is heralded with darkness, clouds, and the "sound of the day of God." The text later specifies this as "the day of the shofar and alarm," when all is devoured in God's fire. In chapter 4 of the Book of Jeremiah, God requests Judah to repent. Once again this scene includes fire, clouds, and a strong wind. Throughout this section we read about wickedness and evil. Finally, in verse 19, Jeremiah cries out in pain. He can no longer hold his peace, for he has heard the sound of the shofar, the alarm of war. The grammatical structure here suggests a synonymous relationship between the "*kol shofar*" and the "*t'ru'at milchamah*." Again in Jeremiah 42:14, the phrase "hear no sound of the shofar" is paired with "see no war," as the prophet mocks the false hopes of the people to return to Egypt.

The Bible also suggests that great harm will come to those who fail to listen to the sound of the shofar. In Jeremiah 6:17, Jeremiah warns the people of great danger, bidding they listen to the sound of the watchman's shofar. He tells them that since they failed to listen and rejected the words of Torah, God will punish them. Later, Ezekiel 33:3-6,

[2] Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, kindle location 636-44.

explains the watchman's responsibility to sound the shofar when swords approach. The passage continues by stating that those who fail to take warning from the shofar blasts and die have only themselves to blame. However, if the watchman fails to blow the shofar of warning, then all the bloodshed is the fault of the watchman.

To Summon People to Assembly

The sound of the shofar need not always signal that doom is approaching. Often the shofar was used to simply relay a message or gather people. Occasionally, the phrases "*t'ruat shofar"* or *"t'ka shofar"* refer simply to the "sound/voice of the shofar." In Leviticus 25:9, the shofar is sounded on the tenth day of the seventh month, on Yom Kippur. This shofar blast does not arouse fear; it merely tells people the proper day, since they lacked personal calendars at that time. In Judges 3, Ehud kills Eglon, king of Moab, with a dagger. As Ehud escapes, he blows the shofar to gather the Israelites and inform them that God has delivered their enemies, the Moabites, into their hands.

In Isaiah 27:13, the end of days is described as a time when the great shofar will be blown and all Israelites who are in exile in Assyria and Egypt shall come to Jerusalem to worship God. Chapter 2 of Joel begins with familiar grammatical structure that suggests that the blast of the shofar is the sound of an alarm, as discussed above. However, by line 15 this same phrase "*tiku shofar*" is used to gather the people for communal lamentation. Finally, in Nehemiah 4:12-14, the people are separated, so Nehemiah instructs them to gather upon hearing the voice of the shofar and God will fight for them.

To Praise God or a Ruler

Occasionally, *kol hashofar* can evoke a positive image of praise – mostly for God, but sometimes for kings. These settings are often accompanied by additional musical instruments. In First Kings 1:34-40, Solomon rises to power to succeed King David. Twice, David's men blow the shofar and proclaim "Long live King Solomon." Other instruments are played and there is great rejoicing. However, once Joab and Adonijah hear this *kol hashofar* (1:41-51) they rise in dread of this city in an uproar, for they fear they will lose their power and their lives.

The majority of the positive uses of *kol hashofar* appear in *Ketuvim*, specifically Psalms and Chronicles. Psalm 47 praises God's kingly qualities, and in line 6, God ascension is accompanied by the voice of the shofar. This is followed by much singing and praise. As mentioned in the context of *kol zimrah*, Psalm 98, another kingship psalm, commands the listeners to "sing a new song unto God." It suggests they play the lyre and trumpet as the shofar makes a joyful noise before God. Also as mentioned before, in the most musical of all the psalms, Psalm 150, we are overwhelmed with praise (Hallelujah!). While we don't hear the "voice" of the shofar, we certainly hear its call, along with those of various musical instruments (harp, lyre, tambourine, stringed instrument, pipe, and cymbals) in praise of God.

The final books of Tanakh also include musical rejoicing with the shofar. First Chronicles 15:28 depicts a scene of great rejoicing after the Israelites successfully bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord. They celebrate with shofar, trumpets, cymbals, lyres, and harps. In Second Chronicles 15:14, the Israelites swear loyalty to God with shofar blasts, trumpets, and great rejoicing.

Using the *Kol Shofar* in our Communities

The new Conservative machzor, *Lev Shalem*,[3] teaches that the sounding of the shofar awakens the listener to a divine calling. Just as it accompanied the revelation of the Torah at Mount Sinai, the *kol shofar* has the power to awaken the listeners to the needs of those around them. This booming voice requests that listeners join in the "progress to redemption." One might argue that perhaps the most intrusive and compelling voices are those that are unheard and the most deafening thing can be silence.[4] It is the responsibility of clergy to utilize the *kol shofar* to listen to the unheard voices and alert others of the need to help.

The urgency of this need for clergy to voice their *kol shofar* and engage in social action can be easily witnessed in groups like “T’ruah – The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights.” Despite the use of the word “rabbinic,” this group is very welcoming to cantors. The word “rabbinic” serves here as an adjective with historical weight and future potential to connect us to all those seeking to change the world. Recently, T’ruah organized Jewish clergy to sign a commitment to use their “voices for *ahavat chinam* (love without bounds) and not for *sinat chinam* (senseless hate).” The commitment continues with “We, rabbis and cantors, commit ourselves to our religious obligation to

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[3] Rabbinical Assembly, *Lev Shalem*, 163.
[4] Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 152.

bringing a Jewish moral voice to protecting the *tzelem elohim* (image of God) in every single human being."[5]

Another clergy-based social action group is Rabbis Organizing Rabbis (ROR), which is a project of the Religious Action Center (RAC), Just Congregations, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR)'s Peace and Justice Committee. ROR is a national network of Reform Jewish clergy working across boundaries of race, class, and faith through community organizing and effective grassroots action. While once again the title of this group does not specifically mention them, cantors are certainly entitled to add their voices to the call. This summer, over 200 Reform clergy people joined the NAACP in "America's Journey for Justice," a 40-day march for racial equality from Selma, Alabama to Washington, D.C. Every night of the 860-mile journey, travelers joined in prayer and study sessions on modern compelling civil rights issues.[6]

In such moments of social action, many participants often recall a phrase "praying with your feet." This phrase employs a method of expanding literal definitions similar to that which is employed in this thesis. This famous phrase was coined by Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel in describing his original march with Dr. Martin Luther King from Selma, Alabama to Montgomery, Alabama. When Heschel was asked whether he found time to pray on his march, he responded that he "prayed with his feet." By this, he meant that his marching and protesting for Civil Rights was the greatest prayer possible.

In one final large-scale example of clergy-based employment of *kol shofar*, Erika Katshe writes in *Sh'ma – The Jewish Journal of Ideas*, about "Harnessing a Synagogue's

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[5] T'ruah, "Commit to Moral Rabbinic Voices."
[6] "Journey for Justice."

Voice."[7] She describes a gathering to call for an end to violence on neighborhood streets in San Francisco. She writes, "On that bright autumn afternoon, leaders were ready to use their collective prophetic voice to tell their stories, demand change, and hold their officials to task." She continues with, "The fundamental idea behind Congregation-Based Community Organizing (CBCO) is that the power rests in relationships: when we take intentional time to build relationships and leadership among members of the community, we are more able to speak with one voice in the public sphere."

Many cantors who were interviewed also relayed personal stories of their roles in social action. While many made their voices heard through their spoken words and silent presence, some mentioned how they use music to assist their *kol shofar* of justice. Cantor David Berger said he sang "*Eil Male Rachamim*" at a prayer meeting in a synagogue after the shooting of a gay victim in Los Angeles. Rabbi Cantor Jeffrey Saxe reported that he is very involved in a community-organizing group called VOICE – Virginians Organize Interfaith Community Engagement. The very name of this organization reinforces the importance of the *kol shofar.* Cantor Vicky Glikin described her belief that we have "a duty to use our voices to bring goodness to the world." She spoke about her involvement with a children's trauma center and how she would not only speak out about the cause and request donations, but she would also sing anything from "*Mi Shebeirach*" to "*Oseh Shalom*" in public gatherings for this organization. In a related story, Cantor Ida Rae Cahana said that she sang "*Eli Eli*" at a community fundraiser for the 2011 tsunami attack in Japan. Rabbi Cantor Angela Buchdahl spoke about how she weaves in words and song

[7] Katshe, "Harnessing a Synagogue's Voice," 4-5.

with social justice work and the result is “exponentially more powerful.” As a specific example, she once sang, “This Little Light” at a sex trafficking protest.

Cantor Israel Goldstein told a very poignant story about when his father, who was a cantor in Vilnius, used his *kol shofar* to help those in need. Sensing the emerging trouble in Eastern Europe in the 1930s, his mother pushed the family to move to London for safety. In 1938, around the time of Kristallnacht, his father received a telegram from five cantors in Vienna requesting help to leave the city. His father was able to use his voice to “hire” these cantors and help their families escape danger and come to England.

The voice of the shofar blasts is extremely powerful. It may signal a warning of impending danger or it may proclaim unending praise to God. Sometimes it just arouses attention to come together as a community. No matter the result, the *kol shofar* causes people to stop and listen. Everyone needs this wake up call every now and then. Whether or not there is impending personal danger, it is important to listen to the message of the shofar and gather together to help one’s neighbors. In addition to the importance of this social action work, cantors can also use the *kol shofar* to remind people of the many gifts we have and to thank God for such blessings.

~~~ Musical Interlude #6 – *Kol Shofar* ~~~

The voice of the shofar is the cantor's instrument to both wake up the community to the needs of the society and to proclaim unending praise to God. A cantor can use her own *kol shofar* to gather people and organize them to action.

"Atah nigleta" is part of Shofarot in the Rosh Hashanah Musaf service. Like Psalm 29, which describes God's greatness through intense storms, here too, we witness God's voice in thunder and lightening. However, amidst the rage of the skies, we also hear the voice of the shofar, which gathers our attention and causes us to tremble as we observe the world around us. In my recital, I sang Moshe Ganchoff's setting of these glorious texts, accompanied on the organ expertly arranged and played by Pedro d'Aquino. Ganchoff combines traditional nusach and word painting to depict the ominous scene at Mount Sinai filled with fire, smoke, and of course, the *kol shofar*.

Atah Nigleta

Music: Moshe Ganchoff
Text: Rosh Hashanah Musaf – Shofarot
Ex 19:16, 19:19, 20:15, Psalms 47:6, 98:6
Source: From the Repertoire of Cantor Moshe Ganchoff – Tara Publications
Translation: Machzor Lev Shalem
Arrangement: Pedro d'Aquino

אַתָּה נִגְלֵיתָ בַּעֲנַן כְּבוֹדֶךָ
עַל עַם קָדְשְׁךָ לְדַבֵּר עִמָּם
מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם הִשְׁמַעְתָּם קוֹלֶךָ
וְנִגְלֵיתָ עֲלֵיהֶם בְּעַרְפְלֵּי טֹהַר
גַּם הָעוֹלָם כֻּלּוֹ חָל מִפָּנֶיךָ
וּבְרִיּוֹת בְּרֵאשִׁית חָרְדוּ מִמֶּךָּ
בְּהִגָּלוֹתְךָ מַלְכֵּנוּ עַל הַר סִינַי
לְלַמֵּד לְעַמְּךָ תּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת
וַתַּשְׁמִיעֵם אֶת הוֹד קוֹלֶךָ
וְדִבְּרוֹת קָדְשְׁךָ מִלַּהֲבוֹת אֵשׁ
בְּקוֹלוֹת וּבְרָקִים עֲלֵיהֶם נִגְלֵיתָ
וּבְקוֹל שׁוֹפָר עֲלֵיהֶם הוֹפַעְתָּ..

You revealed Yourself in a cloud of glory
to speak to Your holy people,
allowing them to hear Your voice from
the heavens.
Through a pure mist You disclosed
Yourself, and the whole world,
everything, quivered in Your presence.
All of creation trembled with awe, as
You, our sovereign, made Yourself
known on Mount Sinai, teaching Your
people Torah and mitzvot.
You spoke to them from amidst fiery
flames, allowing them to hear Your
majestic voice and Your sacred words.
You revealed Yourself to them amidst
thunder and lightning, and appeared
to them with the sounding of the shofar.

כַּכָּתוּב בְּתוֹרָתֶךָ:

It is written in Your Torah:

וַיְהִי֩ בַיּ֨וֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁ֜י בִּֽהְיֹ֣ת הַבֹּ֗קֶר וַיְהִי֩
קֹלֹ֨ת וּבְרָקִ֜ים וְעָנָ֤ן כָּבֵד֙ עַל־הָהָ֔ר וְקֹ֥ל
שֹׁפָ֖ר חָזָ֣ק מְאֹ֑ד וַיֶּחֱרַ֥ד כָּל־הָעָ֖ם אֲשֶׁ֥ר
בַּֽמַּחֲנֶֽה׃

On the third day, as morning dawned, there was thunder and lightning, and a dense cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud blast of the shofar; and all the people who were in the camp trembled.

וַיְהִי֙ ק֣וֹל הַשּׁוֹפָ֔ר הוֹלֵ֖ךְ וְחָזֵ֣ק מְאֹ֑ד מֹשֶׁ֣ה
יְדַבֵּ֔ר וְהָאֱלֹהִ֖ים יַעֲנֶ֥נּוּ בְקֽוֹל׃

The voice of the shofar grew louder and louder. As Moses spoke, God answered him in a voice.

וְכָל־הָעָם֩ רֹאִ֨ים אֶת־הַקּוֹלֹ֜ת
וְאֶת־הַלַּפִּידִ֗ם וְאֵת֙ ק֣וֹל הַשֹּׁפָ֔ר
וְאֶת־הָהָ֖ר עָשֵׁ֑ן וַיַּ֤רְא הָעָם֙ וַיָּנֻ֔עוּ וַיַּֽעַמְד֖וּ
מֵרָחֹֽק׃

All the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the voice of the shofar and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they fell back and stood at a distance.

עָלָ֣ה אֱ֭לֹהִים בִּתְרוּעָ֑ה יְ֝הוָ֗ה בְּק֣וֹל
שׁוֹפָֽר׃

God ascends midst acclamation; God, to the blasts of the horn.

בַּחֲצֹ֣צְר֗וֹת וְק֣וֹל שׁוֹפָ֑ר הָ֝רִ֗יעוּ לִפְנֵ֤י ׀
הַמֶּ֬לֶךְ יְהוָֽה׃

With trumpets and the blast of the shofar raise a shout before God, the ruler.

Kolot Acherim – Other Voices

While the four voices presented above are the core voices identified in the Bible that support the new roles of the cantor, there are a few remaining issues around the idea of voice which merit mention in this thesis. These voices focus less on the external roles of the cantor and more on the personal aspects that influence one's approach to the cantorate. First, though the focus of this thesis is not gendered, as a female soon-to-be cantor, I would like to share a few thoughts on *kol isha* – the rabbinic prohibition against hearing a woman's singing voice. Next, I can't stress enough the importance of bringing myself, my voice (*koli*) to the work that I hope to do and that I have witnessed other cantors do. Finally, I would like to share some concluding thoughts on the need to encourage and evoke the many voices from our congregants and to ensure that they know their voices are heard.

Kol Isha

All of the major figures in the history of the cantorate and Jewish music prior to the twentieth century were men. While in liberal Jewish communities, women now play equal and important musical roles[1], in much of the Orthodox world, women are still silenced due to the rabbinic prohibition against hearing a woman's singing voice (*kol isha*). According to Mishnah Berurah 75:17, a man should not listen to women singing

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[1] Slobin, *Chosen Voices*, 120. The first female Reform cantor was admitted to the SSM at HUC-JIR in 1976 and the first female Conservative cantor was admitted to the CI at JTS in 1987.

because it could lead to impure thoughts. The Talmud (Brachot 24a) proclaims that the woman's voice is erotic, citing appearances of *kol* from Song of Songs.

The interpretation of the prohibition varies. Many rabbinic authorities permit listening to mixed choral singing, citing the Talmudic principle that “two voices cannot be heard simultaneously.” Based on this observation, they state that it is unlikely that a woman’s voice would be arousing in these situations.[2] Despite this leniency, some people take a stricter approach and extend *kol isha* to prohibit listening to even a woman’s speaking voice. However, most rabbis would argue that such practice goes beyond the *halacha* (rabbinic law), which only focuses on the singing voice.[3] It is worth noting that this theory of the attractiveness of the voice is not limited to Jewish texts. Even Plato reflects on the power of the muses, stating that the voice belongs to an acoustic sphere of pleasure.[4]

As a member of the Reform movement, I am happy that I don’t face issues of *kol isha* on a regular basis. However, I am challenged by the difficulties it presents as a member of the greater Jewish community. Despite the potential for flattery, the notion that the female voice is purely seductive is actually quite insulting because it denies the possibility for sanctity. Nonetheless, rather than completely reject the concept of *kol isha*, I am intrigued by ways the cantor, both female and male, can reclaim this term. I seek to discover techniques for how we can use these innately alluring qualities of the voice to help build stronger communities.

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[2] Enkin, *Dalet Amot*, kindle location 1819.
[3] Ibid., 1803.
[4] Cavarero, *For More than One Voice*. 91.

Synagogues and organizations across the country are already reclaiming this term by using *kol isha* as the title of their domestic violence programs, study groups, and even blogs for female rabbis. One Jewish domestic abuse website,[5] focuses on the Jewish women's conversation about marriage and divorce and proclaims to give "voice to women of all Orthodox Jewish backgrounds, who are confronted daily with the dynamics and challenges of an Orthodox Jewish lifestyle." A Reform synagogue in Washington DC, Temple Micah, has a study group called *Kol Isha* and states on their website,[6] that they are "a community of study and practice which explores Judaism's rich traditions and texts through the lens of women's energies, interpretations, and images of the divine." Finally, the Women's Rabbinic Network has a blog called *Kol Isha*[7] where "Reform women rabbis speak out!"

My Voice – *Koli*

The voice is like a fingerprint – instantly identifiable.[8] As humans, we have the ability to recognize voices, regardless of the words that are spoken. Speech may play tricks, but the voice communicates the uniqueness of the one who emits it. We can witness this both in the Bible as well as though our experiences today. In the story of Jacob (Gen. 27:22), when Jacob tries to steal Esau's birthright, he lies to his blind father Isaac about his identity. Isaac quickly recognizes Jacob's voice; however, he is ultimately deceived by Jacob's costume disguised as Esau. This fingerprint-like quality of the voice can also be witnessed in modern times in the everyday activity of a phone call. While the

[5] http://kol-isha.org/
[6] http://www.templemicah.org/micahgroups/kolisha
[7] https://womensrabbinicnetwork.wordpress.com/
[8] Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, kindle location 260.

invention of caller ID makes this situation slightly outdated, before this technology existed, when the phone rang, the identity of the caller was unknown to the receiver. The receiver would pick up the phone and ask, “Who is it?” Even though the common reply of “It’s me” lacks true identifying information, the uniqueness of the voice of the caller immediately reveals his or her identity.[9]

So what does my voice, *koli*, have to say about me? While people have told me I should become a cantor since my Bat Mitzvah, my path to the cantorate had a few stops along the way, including a master’s degree and a few years performing in operas. However, with time, I realized that when I sang opera, I was presenting a character, playing the role of Mimi, Donna Elvira, or Fiordiligi. I wore their costumes and sang words that expressed *their* emotions. As a cantor, on the other hand, my costume is my own clothes (possibly including my kippah or tallit) and my role is me. I stand on the bimah, next to the hospital bed, and in the classroom as Lauren and that is the best role I know how to play.

It is crucial for cantors to remember the importance of the *koli* while using their many voices. Cantor Richard Cohn said that integrity comes from his effort to be honest with himself about commitments and spiritual life. He says, “if we are in touch with something of significance, others are receptive.” Cantor Rosalie Boxt said that she is constantly in tune with who she is, what she is called to be, and what the community needs. Cantor Ida Rae Cahana spoke about how the voice often defines who we are, and notes that “we must keep loving ourselves as our voices change.” Despite her important

[9] Cavarero, *For More the One Voice*, 24.

role as a teacher at the DFSSM, Cantor Josée Wolff proclaimed that "it's more who we are and less what we studied."

Many other cantors spoke about the importance of bringing their personal hobbies or interests into their cantorate and reported how their family relations have shaped their approach to their work. Rabbi Cantor Elana Rosen-Brown spoke about how the voice is the unique expression of self and how she incorporates her love of hiking and backpacking into her outdoor activities with M'kor Mavin. Cantor Shira Ginsburg grew up with Holocaust survivors. As part of her belief that there should be no border between the person and the cantor, she created a musical called "Bubby's Kitchen" as her senior recital, which she continues to perform. Cantor Henry Rosenblum spoke extensively about his new role as a grandparent and how that has affected his cantorate. Finally, Cantor Nancy Bach recounted how authenticity comes from bringing her true self and her role as a single mother to her cantorate. She continues by noting that only then, can she realize her true cantorial authority.

So what does my voice, *koli*, have to say about me? How will I bring *koli* to my cantorate? While I hope to have many years to discover this, I would like to think this process has already begun. I loved merging my athletic interests with my Jewish ones as Director of Jewish Life at URJ Six Points Sports Academy. Every year at Purim, I excitedly display my creativity and playfulness with costumes ranging from Pecan Pie (when Purim fell on Pi Day – 3/14 as in 3.14159) to a Soy Double Chai Latte, complete with an "'S'-stirrer" (a play on the character "Esther" and a "stirrer" for tea). In fact, this thesis is a genuine expression of *koli*, complete with opportunities for creativity, text study, and person-to-person interactions. I feel excited to hear how cantors today continue to access so many voices, within their authentic selves – all originating from *koli*.

Voice of Others – *Kol Acherim*

There is an aspect of the voice that seems all-encompassing and deeply personal. As Hans Christian Andersen wrote in *The Little Mermaid*, "But if you take away my voice," said the little mermaid – "what will I have left?"[10] For a few days around the time that I was finishing my thesis I lost my voice. By voice here, I mean the ability to speak, sing, or even phonate. My laryngitis only lasted for a few days, but it opened my eyes to the hardships of not being able to use one's voice. I felt horribly rude on the subway as I tried to wedge my way into a car without the ability to politely say, "Excuse me." I feared I was insulting the cashier at the supermarket because I couldn't greet her with my usual cheery inquiry about her day. Instead, in my silence, I worried that I appeared like every other self-absorbed New Yorker, neglecting to check in on the welfare of the hardworking people who help us every day. These experiences are obviously minor, but the insight they provided me was truly major.

As I continue to learn how to access the many voices of the cantor, I need to be vigilant in my efforts to help the people of my community know that their voices are also being heard. Without question, there will be people in my community unable to find their voices. They may not be able to physically phonate, or they may not have the language to communicate. They may fear their ignorance removes their right to use their voices, or their voices may in fact be silenced by the society around them. While I may not be able

[10] Cavarero, 103

to fix people’s vocal folds, I can commit myself to the following: I will learn and teach languages to those around me. I will educate people on the facts they need to gain the confidence to share their voices. And finally, I will do my very best to change my environment, so that all voices are respected and all people know that their voices are heard.

~~~ Musical Finale – *Koli* ~~~

The voice is unlike any other musical instrument – it is made by God, and therefore unique, set apart from any handmade instrument. While all musicians bring a part of themselves into their performance, with a singer this is exponentially magnified. The boundaries between instrument, technique, and soul are blurred and result in an incomparable manifestation of connectedness and communication.

It is vital that cantors do not forget their personal selves when serving this role and supporting a community. Cantors may be *klei kodesh* (holy vessels) for their congregations, but each vessel is composed of unique material. We must be sure to always sing with our own voices and represent our passions and ourselves. Or rather, to make it personal, I must sing with my voice (*koli*). In my recital, my entire DFSSM class of 2016 joined me in singing "Zemer Nugeh." The words by the poet Rachel describe deep and personal emotions, all yearning for someone to hear *koli*.

Zemer Nugeh

Music: Shmulik Kraus
Text: Rachel Blewstein
Source: Manuscript
Translation: Chana Shuvaly (HebrewSongs.com)

הֲתִשְׁמַע קוֹלִי, רְחוֹקִי שֶׁלִּי? הֲתִשְׁמַע קוֹלִי, בַּאֲשֶׁר הִנְּךָ? קוֹל קוֹרֵא בְּעֹז, קוֹל בּוֹכֶה בִּדְמִי וּמֵעַל לַזְּמַן מְצַוֶּה בְּרָכָה.	Will you hear my voice my far-away one? Will you hear my voice wherever you are? A voice calling with strength, crying in my blood. Over time it sends a blessing.
תֵּבֵל זוֹ רַבָּה וּדְרָכִים בָּהּ רָב. נִפְגָּשׁוֹת לְדַק, נִפְרָדוֹת לָעַד. מְבַקֵּשׁ אָדָם, אַךְ כּוֹשְׁלוֹת רַגְלָיו, לֹא יוּכַל לִמְצֹא אֶת אֲשֶׁר אָבַד.	Land so big and has many roads we meet for a moment, separate forever. A man asks, but his legs fail, He can never find that which he has lost.
אַחֲרוֹן יָמַי כְּבָר קָרוֹב אוּלַי, כְּבָר קָרוֹב הַיּוֹם שֶׁל דִּמְעוֹת פְּרִידָה, אֲחַכֶּה לְךָ עַד יִכְבּוּ חַיַּי, כְּחַכּוֹת רָחֵל לְדוֹדָהּ.	The last of my days is so close perhaps. So near is the day of goodbye tears. I will wait for you until my life will end, like Rachel's wait for her lover.

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis I have explored the potential of the many voices of the cantor, presented with the credibility of both biblical and experiential support. As a member of the clergy, a cantor must always be aware of the *kol Adonai* (voice of God) which permeates all of this holy work. I began by looking at the voice and the cantor independently. I presented the etymological, philosophical, and metaphysical implications of the voice. Many of these aspects support the uniqueness of the voice in defying boundaries and unifying intentions. I then described some of the history of the cantorate, highlighting the changing responsibilities of the cantor. There is great precedence for cantors playing many roles in their communities. Importantly, the shifting roles have always met the needs of the people at that time.

Supported by the personal narratives from twenty-six contemporary cantors, I then presented four specific biblical voices and suggested how a cantor might access each to best serve her community. I began with *kol zimrah* (voice of music) for song and prayer leading, highlighting the importance of music in our society, as noted by the general biblical trend in which music represents happiness and its absence signals trouble. The *kol d'varim* (voice of words) relates to teaching and preaching and is impressive in the way it commands our obedience from God while also relaying the opinion of an entire group of people. From there, I presented *kol nishmoteinu* (voice of our souls), which represents pastoral care and lifecycle events. The Bible, much like life, is filled with voices ranging from joy to sadness to fear and to anger. Finally, the *kol hashofar* (voice of the shofar) symbolizes social justice in its ability to sound an alarm, assemble a group of people, and offer praise and gratitude. Finally, I also discussed some personal aspects of the voice including "*kol isha*," "*koli*" and "*kol acherim*" that inspire and inform my approach to my specific role within the cantorate.

As the Jewish community continues to transform, so must the role of the cantor. With the recent increased recognition of our authority as ordained clergy who are part of a team of Jewish spiritual leaders, the possibilities for positive impact are limitless. Rooted in the history of our texts and expanding to the shared experiences of our colleagues, cantors today have the opportunity to truly let our voices be heard and to encourage the voices of our congregants to join us in true of harmony.

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Appendix 1 – Interview Names and Dates

Cantor Name	**Date**
Cantor David Frommer	4/22/15
Cantor Mo Glazman	7/27/15
Cantor Julia Cadrain	7/29/15
Cantor Sarah Silverberg	8/3/15
Cantor Izzy Goldstein	8/3/15
Rabbi Cantor Angela Buchdahl	8/5/15
Rabbi Cantor Elana Rosen-Brown	8/5/15
Cantor Tracey Scher	8/5/15
Cantor Bob Abelson	8/6/15
Cantor David Berger	8/6/15
Cantor Anita Hochman	8/7/15
Cantor Faith Steinsnyder	8/9/15
Cantor Henry Rosenblum	8/12/15
Cantor Vicky Glikin	8/26/15
Cantor Sherwood Goffin	8/27/15
Cantor Nancy Bach	8/31/15
Cantor Shira Ginsburg	9/1/15
Cantor Josh Breitzer	9/2/15
Cantor Ida Rae Cahana	9/2/15
Cantor Mike Shochet	9/4/15
Cantor Josée Wolff	9/9/15
Cantor Benjie Schiller	9/17/15
Cantor Rosalie Boxt	9/21/15
Rabbi Cantor Jeff Saxe	9/29/15
Cantor Richard Cohn	10/1/15
Cantor Rollin Simmons	10/1/15

Appendix 2 – Recital Poster