Hamanginah Nisheret:

Preserving the Traditional Elements of Jewish Music in Contemporary Composition

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Abstract

This Master's thesis considers the work of two prominent Jewish composers, Solomon Sulzer and Abraham Wolf Binder, and explores their ability to bridge the gap between traditional Jewish prayer modes (*nusaḥ hat'filah*) and the musical tastes of their contemporaries. What were the conditions that led Sulzer to the position of cantor and music director in nineteenth-century Vienna? How did he seek to renew the music of the past and give it new life? How does the life and work of A.W. Binder mirror that of Sulzer's, and how does it differ? Finally, this thesis attempts to glean approaches from both of these composers that have withstood the test of time, and might be used by composers of synagogue music today to create new works that speak the musical language of today's listener while still honoring the heritage and continuity of the Jewish musical tradition.

The thesis is divided into eight chapters including musical analysis of three selected pieces, plus an introduction and one appendix. Chapter 1 provides a background of the development of the American synagogue from colonial times until modernity and the changing roles of music and musical leadership. Chapter 2 explores the life and work of Solomon Sulzer with attention to his thorough education both within the Jewish world and without. This solid footing gave Sulzer the tools he needed to craft an entirely new expression of synagogue music that met the needs of the nascent Reform community of Vienna while also attracting attention from the music community at large. Chapter 3 provides a biography of A.W. Binder, drawing attention to his traditional Jewish and secular education, and some of the many ways in which he immersed himself in Jewish-American life. Excerpts from Binder's own writings help illuminate his relationship to

Sulzer as he saw it as well. Chapter 4 explores the specific ways in which Binder wrote music that honored the past while speaking to his contemporaries. Three aspects of his approach are considered: awareness of modal harmonization, the quoting of nusaḥ hat'filah, and the evolving role of the congregational voice. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 are in-depth musical analyses of one setting by Sulzer, and two settings by Binder. Chapter 8 looks at the success and shortcomings of both Sulzer and Binder and draws conclusions about how one might use the best aspects of both of these composers as a model for future creative endeavors.

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Introduction

"*Hamanginah nisheret*" (the melody remains) are words found on the tombstone of Abraham Wolf Binder. A significant portion of his creative efforts as a composer will be shown to have been in service to this ideal: namely, that in order for synagogue music to be successful, it must retain some element of historic Jewish melodies or prayer modes. In addition to Binder, the work of Solomon Sulzer is also considered, as well as the ability of these composers to bridge the gap between traditional Jewish prayer modes (nusaḥ hat'filah) and the musical tastes of their contemporaries.

In order to establish a context for the work of Binder in early twentieth-century America, a condensed history of the American synagogue and its development, both in terms of denominational and geographic diversity, is laid out first. Compared to Sulzer, Binder had a much richer musical vocabulary at his disposal, allowing him to harmonize Jewish prayer modes in ways that Sulzer couldn't even imagine. At its core, Binder's work was much like Sulzer's however. Both men strived to enable the ancient sounds of traditional Jewish prayer to be expressed within the framework of contemporary secular music.

Through the detailed musical analysis of one of Sulzer's finer musical settings – according to Binder himself (Heskes 1971, 285) – as well as harmonic and modal analysis of two of Binder's works, a case will be made for the enduring value of both composers' music. Considering this analysis in aggregate, one finds trends that can inform the work of present-day composers of Jewish liturgical music. These trends are

discussed in the final chapter, and an example of the guided creativity that can result from an interactive commission of a new composition can be found in Appendix A.

Chapter 1: Historical Background

The earliest American synagogues were established during the period of time between 1654 and 1749, all following the Spanish-Portuguese tradition that was established in London/Amsterdam following the Spanish expulsion in 1492. (Edelman 2003, 125) Additionally, there is no evidence of significant influence from the changing musical styles of the surrounding community, and entire Jewish populations were served by only one synagogue with a strong lay leadership and often a *ḥazan* (cantor) who filled all ritual and educational roles. Under these circumstances, there was neither the opportunity nor reason for musical leadership or innovation (ibid, 126). Nearly a century later, immigration of Ashkenazi Jews from Germany began around 1840, and their arrival brought significant changes in Jewish communal and musical life. Influenced by the Jewish Enlightenment, or *Haskalah*, German Jews brought fundamental reforms with them such as the subjugation of traditional nusaḥ hat'filah to choral singing, the introduction of rabbis in America (whose presence reduced the role of the ḥazan significantly), and the introduction of the offices of choir director and organist (ibid, 126).

One would have to wait some 25 years until the pendulum began to swing back in favor of the ḥazan with the appointment of Cantor Alois Kaiser at Congregation Oheb Shalom in Baltimore, Maryland in 1866. Even then, both Kaiser and his successor, Jacob Schuman, contributed to synagogue music through their composition of music modeled

after operatic arias, not music modeled after traditional Jewish prayer modes or melodies; and the congregation continued to sing Protestant-style hymns. The first edition of the Union Hymnal was published in 1897 (and edited by Kaiser) containing hymns by Haydn, Mozart, Brahms, Sir Arthur Sullivan, as well as the works of Jewish composers Sulzer and Lewandowski.

The "one community, one synagogue" model of the 1700s was no longer valid. Differences between the Sephardic and Ashkenazic rites, as well as disagreement over the use of musical instruments (especially the organ) on Shabbat meant that the American-Jewish community split, and with that split came diversity and musical choice. During the forty years following 1880, newly-immigrated Eastern European Jews were quick to establish or join synagogues whose membership was largely from a given point of origin in the Old World. In time, these synagogue communities desired to hear the sounds of home, and would try to recruit "star" cantors form Europe. The best voices were in high demand, and congregations would advertise their newly-found stars in hopes of attracting new members.

In the early 1900s, the recording industry came into its own, and with it, the opportunity for many star cantors to spread their renown beyond the walls of their respective synagogues. It was the dawning of the *Golden Age of Ḥazanut*, and as these cantors gained popularity outside the Jewish community as entertainers, a new point of contention arose: was it proper for these religious leaders of prayer to engage in such extravagant commercialization? Many congregations would host cantorial concerts throughout the year featuring their own cantor and choir, or sometimes visiting cantors. Some of the best ḥazanim even went on to perform on stage at Carnegie Hall and other

major venues (Edelman 2003,129). While some intricate and lengthy cantorial music was composed for the purposes of these concerts, it had little use in the synagogue since it often repeated text (prohibited in traditional worship) and was simply too long for the modern worshipper to tolerate. What did emerge, however, was a renewed appreciation for traditional nusaḥ hat'filah, or cantorial prayer modes.

While the first half of the twentieth century ushered in the composition of various "sacred services" by such composers as Isadore Freed, Ernest Bloch, and A. W. Binder, this music enjoyed limited success in the synagogue. "This 'failure' was less a function of unappealing musical quality than a result of the congregation's lack of familiarity with the music – along with the elimination of any reasonable role for them in the services" (Edelman 2003, 134).

Chapter 2: Solomon Sulzer

Solomon Sulzer (1804-1890) may rightly be called "father of the modern cantorate" (Macy 1975, 240). Before him, we might look to Salamone Rossi (circa 1570-1630), an Italian-Jewish late-Baroque composer who set many liturgical texts to music of his time and place, yet with a tangible Jewish understanding[1]. While Rossi predates Sulzer by over 200 years, what separates their creativity even more is the use of nusaḥ or cantorial recitative, which is entirely absent in Rossi's music, and readily visible in Sulzer's. Some argue that Rossi's musical milieu did not afford him any opportunity to incorporate nusaḥ [2], being a court musician in Mantua, Italy during the late Renaissance period, when the musical aesthetics were not compatible with the modal nature of ḥazanut.

Born in Hohenems, Austria in 1804, Sulzer was born to a family that originally bore the name Levi, having moved from Sulz to Hohenems in 1748. Legend has it that as a young boy, Sulzer wandered off and nearly drowned in a nearby creek (Duffy 2013, 30). Thankful that his life was spared, his mother is said to have dedicated his life to the rabbinate. But even at this young age, Sulzer showed interest in music and studied, instead, to be a cantor. By the time of his Bar Mitzvah, he was already able to lead *davening*, and formally applied for the position of cantor at his hometown synagogue. The Emperor of Austria, Franz Jozef, needed to endorse such a religious appointment, but before doing so, he insisted that Sulzer first continue his cantorial studies. Sulzer did so with enthusiastic aplomb, studying at the Yeshiva in Endigen, the music center in

[1] Conversation with Marsha Edelman, January 2016. Examples include 7-bar phrases (atypical of the music of Rossi's contemporaries), and word painting of Hebrew text with melismatic phrases.
[2] ibid

Karlsruhe, as we as apprenticing with several cantors in Switzerland, France, and Germany.

Like many of Europe's influential composers such as Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, Sulzer's career is also linked to Vienna. After a reign of intolerance against the Jews in eighteenth-century Austria, the Edict of Toleration of 1781 ushered in a new age of relaxed restrictions and new possibilities. One such possibility was the construction of a new synagogue in Vienna, called the Seitenstettengasse Synagogue, which soon became the European leader in Jewish synagogue music with its renowned cantor/composer – Salomon Sulzer. New-found political freedom for Jews in Vienna led to a desire to follow the Jewish Enlightenment of Western Europe, including the recognition of immersion in secular society, the use of the vernacular language in prayer, as well as the use of organ and choir in regular synagogue services. The most extreme form of liturgical worship could be found in Seesen, Germany, where Israel Jacobson established the first Reform temple, and called for such changes as: the use of a bell to call worshippers to prayer, the introduction of German chorale tunes, the abolishment of Torah cantillation and prayer modes, and ultimately the abolition of the cantor himself. Unlike the extreme liturgical reforms of Jacobson in Seesen, the Jewish community of Vienna sought a much more conservative reformation and enlisted Rabbi Isaac Noah Mannheimer (1793-1865) to craft "an order of divine service in keeping with the era of Enlightenment." (Duffy 2013, 29). As a demonstration of his understanding of the wishes of the Vienna community, Mannheimer invited the then 22-year-old Sulzer, already a young cantor, to work with him in crafting the new service. Quite opposed to the radical reform in Germany, Sulzer advocated that "Jewish liturgy must satisfy the musical

demands while remaining Jewish; and it should not be necessary to sacrifice the Jewish characteristics to artistic forms" (Sulzer 1876, 19). While other Jewish youth in Europe were in favor of adopting Christian-style worship in place of "outmoded" Jewish rituals, Sulzer's deep knowledge of traditional Jewish ritual, a thorough education in secular music, as well as his legendary baritone voice gave him the tools he needed to forge new musical ground in a manner he saw fitting.

"Sulzer confronted the chaotic state of synagogue music directly, seeking to overhaul what he saw as a buildup of 'foreign accretions and popular styles' in synagogue chant while integrating Western harmonization into newly-composed choral responses." (Duffy 2013, 31) Sulzer's musical efforts to catalogue traditional chants after purifying them, to harmonize them, and to compose new works for cantor and choir can be found in his two volumes of *Schir Zion*, published in 1839 and 1865, respectively. His word painting and attention to correct Hebrew syntax make it abundantly clear that Sulzer was sensitive to the meaning of the texts which he was setting to music, and the best examples also integrate nusaḥ hat'filah, the appropriate prayer modes.

Although Sulzer did not see wholesale emulation of the Protestant aesthetic as the way forward for post-Enlightenment synagogue music, neither did he isolate himself from the non-Jewish musical world. As a worldly Jew, he associated with non-Jewish musicians, studying and collaborating with them as well. Joseph Dreschler has the distinction of being "Sulzer's most industrious Christian collaborator" (Duffy 2013, 34) and contributed 14 compositions to the first volume of *Schir Zion*. Most famous was Sulzer's camaraderie and collaboration with Franz Schubert, culminating in Schubert's new setting of Psalm 92 (*Tov L'hodos*) for choir and soloist. Because Sulzer's knowledge

and experience came from both the traditional Jewish world and the contemporary secular world, he was able to blend the Jewish essence of the old with a new musical sensibility that proved to having longevity and wide appeal to this very day as Jonathan L. Friedmann argues:.

> Sulzer's "settings of Sh'ma, Ki Mitziyon, Hodo Al Eretz, and others are sung in Ashkenazi synagogues of all denominations. His music generates feelings of unity and continuity among dispersed congregations. This is significant, as Sulzer's intent was to create a musical vocabulary – combining indigenous synagogue music with Western musical standard – that would revive synagogue culture and unite Jewish communities throughout Western Europe (Friedmann 2012, 96).

In a sense, this, too, is what A. W. Binder set out to do in his own time. As will be discussed in the next chapter, Binder acknowledges the groundwork laid by Sulzer, but also sees himself as rising above its level of success.

Chapter 3: A.W. Binder Biography

European Roots, Traditional Background

Abraham Wolf Binder was born in New York City on the Lower East Side on January 9, 1895 to an East European Orthodox Jewish family. His father was a *baal t'filah*, and his grandfather was a *ḥazan*, giving Binder ample opportunity to learn the entire liturgical repertoire (Heskes 1971, 8). He studied at yeshiva, and he also studied music composition, conducting, piano and organ at the Settlement Music School. From age four, Binder was singing in his father's synagogue choir, and soon after as a soloist. The sound of traditional Jewish liturgical music permeated his life because of his upbringing and training. His father took him to sing in Cantor Frachtenberg's choir at the age of 7 until 14. (ibid, 15) There he acquired a taste for great European synagogue music.

With a family background rooted in Eastern European Orthodoxy, and a childhood awash with the sounds of the synagogue, one needs to ask whether these conditions were essential to Binder's approach to, and understanding of, sacred Jewish music. Is it necessary to have one foot rooted in the traditional past while the other is walking the streets of New York City? From Binder's writings as collected in Irene Heskes' book *Studies in Jewish Music: Collected Writings of A. W. Binder*, a pattern emerges that suggests that Binder was, in effect, living in two worlds simultaneously, and that tension was at least partly responsible for his drive to synthesize the sounds of the Old World with the musical sensibilities of the New World (Heskes 1971).

Born on the Lower East Side, in what was then a sort of Jewish ghetto because of the density of Jews and Jewish institutions, Binder's life was steeped in *yiddishkeit*. Being Jewish was not a philosophical question, or a reality relegated to one day a week; rather every day was lived among Jews – Yiddish was heard on the streets, and the rhythm of Jewish Time was an integral part of this fabric of life. In 1911, at the age of 16, Binder became the organist and choir director at Temple Beth El in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. Two years later he took on another position as organist and choir director at Temple Adath Israel in the Bronx (Heskes 1971, 16). It was at this point in his life that Binder saw the need for a return of authentic Jewish music traditions in liberal synagogues, speaking critically of the "barren and imitative" music of such composers as Stark and Schlesinger. Heskes writes,

> It was this strong feeling for the wealth of the nusach ha-tefillah (traditional synagogue musical motifs), co-mingled with an enlightened approach to modern musical techniques, which was to characterize all of Binder's professional activities in the ensuing years, and which permeated his musical ideas to the end of his lifetime. (ibid)

Binder's interest in the authentic roots of Jewish music was not limited to the synagogue. As part of his interest in immersing himself in all manner of Jewish musical expression, he studied the folk music of the early Jewish pioneers in pre-state Palestine. While partly interested in exposing himself to this 20th-century "new Jew" culture and transcribing the folk music, Binder also undertook to arrange many of these melodies using his developing ideas of modal harmonization. Examples can be found in his 1926 publication, *New Palestinian Folk Songs (Bloch Publishing Company).*

Association with Rabbi Stephen S. Wise

Rabbi Stephen S. Wise (1874-1949) was an influential early American Reform rabbi who immigrated to New York as a child and received both a traditional Jewish and secular education. Wise received rabbinic ordination from the Jewish Theological Seminary and went on to become a Reform rabbi with strong Zionist convictions – a rare combination at a time when the Reform movement was nominally anti-Zionist. In her biographical portrait of Binder, Irene Heskes writes "Stephen S. Wise possessed great courage and strength of conviction, particularly in regard to his vision of the future of Judaism in all its many facets." (Heskes 1971, 22) The value of this courage and vision, combined with the close working relationship between Wise and Binder, cannot be over-stated. It afforded Binder an incubator of sorts within which he could experiment with new methods of musical expression, as well as a venue in which to enculturate the rabbinical students at the Jewish Institute of Religion with this new musical vision. One may rightly ask whether such a symbiotic partnership combined with the charismatic authority of Rabbi Wise could exist today, and more importantly, whether such an "incubator" is essential to a present-day expression of Binder's creative style.

After hearing a choral performance of Binder's music at the 92nd Street Y in 1921, Rabbi Wise invited Binder to be a music instructor for rabbinical students at the newly-formed Jewish Institute of Religion (JIR). "There, for the first time in America, Jewish music was made a required subject of study for Reform rabbinical students. This was one of Wise's significant innovations." (ibid, 21) The following year, in 1922, Wise formed the Free Synagogue in New York City, and invited Binder to be its music director. Later that same year, Wise encouraged Binder to re-introduce the chanting of Torah after 100

year absence in Reform services (ibid, 23). Binder's stated highest goals: to return to *nusaḥ hat'filah*, to purify it, and to perpetuate it. Wise and Binder had a shared regard for the importance of music in the synagogue service, and the two worked closely together until Wise's death in 1949. During that time, with Wise's encouragement, Binder composed and published his first three Shabbat services: *Hibbat Shabbat* (1928), *Rinnat Shabbat* (1935), and *Kabbalat Shabbat* (1940). Binder continued as music director at the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue until his death in 1966.

In Conversation with Sulzer

Binder regarded Sulzer to be among the great European Jewish composers, but he was also critical of the degree to which Sulzer trimmed ornaments from Eastern European nusaḥ (Heskes 1971, 284), and the way in which he juxtaposed cantorial recitative with a choral response in the Western style (ibid, 286). Sulzer's goal of peeling away the layers of embellishment is explained in his preface to the first volume of *Schir Zion*:

> I made it my duty to give maximal consideration to those tunes which have come down from antiquity and to restore their archaic flavor to its original purity, cleansed form later flourishes of dubious and tasteless character. This restoration was more easily achieved with chants from the High Holy Days than in the Sabbatical chants.

Binder goes on to write in an article marking Sulzer's 75th yahrzeit, "Though Sulzer's intentions were laudable for his time, when they are examined from our point of view, they fall short of complete realization." (ibid, 285). Perhaps most critically, Binder writes about the works of *Schir Zion* volume 1, "In paring off unnecessary musical accumulations on the cantorial chant, which Sulzer set as one of his most important tasks, he sometimes cut down to the bone, and even into the marrow." Binder's criticism of

volume 2 is more tempered, crediting Sulzer's command of the "real nusach of the traditional synagogue" (ibid, 285) after his contact with East European cantors. However, when it came to Sulzer's choral writing, Binder continued to be critical. "Sulzer was, however, least strong in a Jewish way when writing in the choral medium. He rarely struck the Jewish chord. He did not know, nor did any of his contemporaries, how to treat and harmonize the *Ahavah Rabbah* mode." (ibid, 286).

In an article published in the *Bulletin of the Jewish Music Forum* in 1941, Binder both acknowledges Sulzer among the "great classicists and pioneers of synagogue choral music" and states that his music was "not thoroughly Jewish" by modern standards and understandings. Binder excuses this model of synagogue music composition in light of two trends of the time: a larger cultural trend toward assimilation, and the theories and tastes of the then active reformed (sic) rabbis and laymen. Binder also acknowledged that Sulzer's and the German composer Louis Lewandowski's musical style changed over the course of their careers after they came in contact with the cantorial recitative style (cḥazanut) of the Eastern European world.

Yet Binder's praise is measured. He argues that while these composers did seek to integrate the traditional modes and melodies of what can be called the "oriental style", they "disguised them behind the European harmonic system," which, Binder very unequivocally states, "destroyed their Jewish character" (Heskes 1971, 80). Later in the same article, Binder goes on to acknowledge that the innovations of both Sulzer's and Lewandowski's works did penetrate into Eastern Europe, but there as well, their music was seen as lacking a Jewish soul. In contrast, Binder praises the creative work of such composers as Eliezer Gerovitch, Solomon Rosowsky, and David Nowakowsky for their

fidelity in writing down ancient Jewish melodies, as well as their adept choral arrangements which he felt allowed the listener to experience “a deep Jewish spirit” (ibid), thanks in part to the abandonment of the European harmonic structures employed by their predecessors.

Binder also draws a parallel between Sulzer/Lewandowski and the late 19th century composers who came to the United States such as Welsh, Alois Kaiser, and William Sparger, calling them men of “meager musical stature” whose best efforts were only “a mediocre imitation of Sulzer and Lewandowski” (ibid, 81). Without saying so directly, Binder appears to be counting himself among the East European composers who came after Sulzer and were able to rise above the groundwork laid by Sulzer in terms of fidelity and Jewish spirit. The only difference is that his work would be happening in America rather than in Europe.

Chapter 4: Binder’s Approach to Composition

A.W. Binder’s approach to composition is informed by his Judaic and secular musical education, as well as countless influences from the music he heard and the people with whom he worked. This chapter focuses on three main categories of Binder’s approach: awareness of modal harmonization and the limitations of the western European classical harmonic system, his high esteem for nusaḥ hat’filah (traditional prayer modes), and his embracing of contemporary musical language.

Modal Harmonization and Nusaḥ

In an article written for *Diapason* in 1945, Binder recounts the foundational work done by Solomon Sulzer in establishing the classical era of synagogue music.

Notwithstanding this significant accomplishment, Binder goes on to write, “Toward the end of the nineteenth century, serious synagogue musicians began to feel the incongruity between the Oriental *melos* of their musical tradition and the German harmonic system which was being employed as harmonic background.” (Heskes 1971, 95) Binder then goes on to draw a parallel to the Russian folk melodies and singles out Russian composer Modest Mussorgsky for overcoming the incompatibility between German harmonic system and Russian *melos* by changing the harmonization rules. Similarly, Ernest Bloch is praised by Binder for his artful expression of “Jewish *melos* with a harmonic background which reflects its true spirit” (ibid). Composers who came after Sulzer had the benefit of a more adventurous and unencumbered musical language upon which to draw, but in the case of Mussorgsky, he deliberately defied the Western musical conventions in order to find a harmonic system that was compatible with Russian melody, and helped create that new musical landscape. Augmented chords, major and minor seventh chords, chord progressions outside of the established circle of fifths, all of these would be tools that Binder uses to breathe new life into traditional motifs that often clashed with classical Western harmonization.

Binder’s high regard for the traditional Jewish prayer modes and motifs, known collectively as nusaḥ hat’filah, is seen in much of his writing. Binder’s reflection upon his completion of the first of many full Shabbat services in 1928 serves as a clear indication of his intent. Binder wrote:

> I consider my most important contribution to synagogue music to be my association with the return to the nusach ha-tefillah, which is our rich musical tradition in the synagogue, and my efforts to purify it and perpetuate it. I have endeavored to use it skillfully and tastefully in all the services, not only for what it has meant to our forefathers and to the religious services of the ages past, but also

> significantly, for what it can do for the synagogue services of today and into the future. (ibid, 23)

One can see elements of Sulzer's efforts to "purify" traditional chants here, and a sense of continuity, not just out of a sense of nostalgia, but as a vehicle for the perpetuation of future synagogue music as well.

Contemporary Musical Language

Binder was aware of the risk of the gradual extinction of synagogue music that stayed staunchly planted in the musical aesthetics of the past. In keeping with the larger musicological trend of studying the traditional folk music and bringing that into the musical consciousness of the modern people, Binder sought to evade this extinction by infusing his contemporary synagogue music with the roots of traditional Jewish modes and melodies (ibid,79). In an article published in 1941, Binder outlines his specific ambitions, and also, importantly, what he does not intend to change: the act of chanting Torah to traditional trope is to be left untouched, as is the simple davening style of the *baal t'filah*. Binder states that his "quarrel" is with "most of the vocal and instrumental music which we hear in many synagogues throughout the country – Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform" (ibid, 80).

Binder was well aware that musical tastes and conditions had changed over time in the Jewish world. In the late 19th century, the cantor and his choir held a vaunted position in the Jewish community as perhaps the only source of live musical sound, and the congregation therefore demanded elaborate chanting while not being particular about the quality of singing; in Binder's words, "Everything was acceptable in those days too…" (ibid, 82) By the early 1940s, Binder had acknowledged that conditions had

changed, and that Jews no longer depended on the synagogue for their musical fare; instead, the world outside the synagogue provided opportunities to hear the best singers and instrumentalists through the opera, concerts, and the radio, both inside and outside the Jewish community. In order not to drive away the younger generation, synagogue music needed to rise to this level of refinement and to provide a "lofty religious atmosphere" (ibid). Put another way, Binder saw two separate but essential elements lacking in mid-twentieth century synagogue music: artistic excellence, and a "Jewish soul" (ibid) Put these two elements together, and Binder was convinced that Jews would come back to the synagogue in droves, whose attendance had been waning.

The Role of the Cantor and Waning Musical Interest

In an article about the importance of congregational singing, and how to encourage it, Binder lists three possibilities for how best to encourage congregational singing, favoring the use of special rehearsals before a service, and the use of a choral group that sits among the congregation. "Following the cantor" in the least effective of the three choices, with "not much possibility of success" unless carefully executed (ibid, 86). That said, he does invert the pyramid, so to speak, and as a corrective perhaps, lists the cantor as the "musical specialist in the synagogue" whose singing can be replaced by neither the choir nor the congregation. The choir, likewise, has a special role in performing "great choral works of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" that the congregation is incapable of singing itself. Binder rightly identifies the importance of involving children in ensemble singing, to learn congregational melodies that would be sung both in junior services as well as in the larger congregation.

However, Binder's conclusions about the effects of excellent music performed well seem to be overly optimistic and one-dimensional. He claims that if only we sing the "right kind of synagogue music", and sing it well, then one can be assured of a bright future with interested adults, children who enjoy attending, and a "greater spirit of devotion." This begs the question: "What is the 'right kind' of synagogue music?" Less than a year later, in September 1944, Binder writes of the neglect of Jewish music and accuses Jews of a general lack of interest in it. As he declaimed: "the majority of our people are not interested in Jewish music!" (ibid, 90). Binder goes on to boldly say that we cannot speak of a complete Jewish culture or civilization without the existence of folk music and musical art, including vibrant synagogue music. Binder identifies a sort of death spiral of the production of new synagogue music that one could say haunts us to this day. If the Jewish public is not interested in hearing Jewish music, then Jewish composers are not motivated to write Jewish music, and publishers cannot make a case for continuing to print the music. In such a case, the corpus of Jewish music dwindles or at least becomes stagnant, making it even less appealing to the next generation. What is the course of action that Binder recommends? It is manifold. JCCs and other institutions should set aside budgets specifically for musical activities, synagogues should allocate sufficient funds to hire capable singers (presumably both choristers and the cantor), and Jewish music should be performed "whenever Jews gather and there is a musical program." Beyond internal consumption, Binder promotes the performance of Jewish music in community choruses, naturally purchasing copies of music for each member. In addition, he calls for community organization of larger concerts, prizes for Jewish musical compositions, as well as commissioning new works from established Jewish

composers as a way to ensure their livelihood. It is reassuring to know that many such efforts are being made today by organizations such as the Zamir Choral Foundation, which holds a yearly summer festival drawing hundreds of choral singers from around the country and even the globe, showcasing new compositions, and commissioning some of them through generously donated money. In addition, younger generations are keenly pursued under the auspices of HaZamir, an international youth choir organization that attracts singers from all movements as well as unaffiliated Jews up to the age of 18.

In *American Synagogue Music*, ethnomusicologist Mark Kligman explores Binder's efforts to reestablish a "Jewish Spirit" in American synagogue music (Kligman 2007, 270). Kligman highlights an important subject, namely that of culture, Jewish nationhood, and its absence from the driving philosophy of the American Reform synagogue. Despite Binder's impassioned view that "Without a distinctive Jewish art we are not a nation; we cannot speak of a complete culture, nor can we call ourselves a civilization", this was not a primary concern for the American Reform movement as a whole. Rather, the emphasis was on being fully enculturated Americans whose house of worship was a worthy and respectable alternative to the Protestant and Catholic churches (ibid). Kligman writes, "… the ideal way to glorify God in the synagogue was with the repertoire of the concert hall." (ibid) In the face of such challenges, Binder still forged ahead with his vision of synagogue music "ris[ing] to the level of 'pure religious art,'" drawing upon "elements of the Eastern European synagogue tradition, in particular the solo chanting of the ḥazan, which he considered a hallmark of its authenticity" (ibid, 271) Once again, the theme of dichotomy and tension informs the development of *Minhag America* (the American style of synagogue expression from the first part of the twentieth

century). This time the tension lies between Central European or German Jews who had arrived in the mid-nineteenth century, and East European Jews who began arriving in large numbers in the 1880s. German Jewish liturgical music focused on hymn singing and metrical, classical music style, while the East European music focused on largely solo singing that was un-metered, ornate, and made use of vocal improvisation. Historian Michael Meyer writes of a vision of synthesis of these two disparate styles in the 1920s: "Reform congregation would give up their Teutonic coldness and the excess of rationality they had imported from Germany while the Russians and Poles would cast of their inappropriate vestigial orthodoxy" (ibid, 273).

Evidence of Binder's approach will be explored more fully in the music analysis which follows. Two of his compositions, one from Shabbat, the other from Three Festivals, will serve as examples of both his writing for cantor, choir, and organ, as well as a setting that is predominantly accompanied cantorial recitative with some choral responses.

Chapter 5: Analysis of Sulzer's "B'rosh Hashanah" from *Schir Zion*

In Binder's reflections on the music of Solomon Sulzer, he states that the "second volume of Schir Zion… contains some of [Sulzer's] best works." (Heskes 1971, 286). Binder specifically mentions that Sulzer's setting of B'rosh Hashanah is "full of deep feeling." This is a setting of a portion of the larger High Holy Day *piyyut* (liturgical poem) Un'taneh Tokef which is inserted into the morning Amidah on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The mood of the opening figure is traditionally that of a lament, since it states the inevitability of our fate in the coming year. "On Rosh Hashanah it is written, and on Yom Kippur it is sealed…" Modern liturgists such as Rabbi Margaret Wenig have challenged this understanding, arguing that the text does not insist that our fate is out of our hands. The use of the Hebrew indefinite verb tense usually indicates a future tense, but may also be used in an uncertain conditional mood. "Who will live and who will die" could be rendered "Who might live, and who might die."[3] Israel Alter's setting of this text opens with a rather pastorale figure in F-major, perhaps alluding to the role of God as shepherd.

Sulzer's setting for cantor and men's choir (women's voices appear briefly toward the end) reflects a more somber mood starting in B♭-minor in a low tessitura of the bass section, with the lone voice of the cantor continuing with the opening phrase. The cantorial line quotes a "Mi Sinai" tune from *Kol Nidre*, either anticipating that most solemn service on Rosh Hashanah, or reflecting back to it on the morning of Yom Kippur.

[3] Class notes from High Holy Day liturgy class

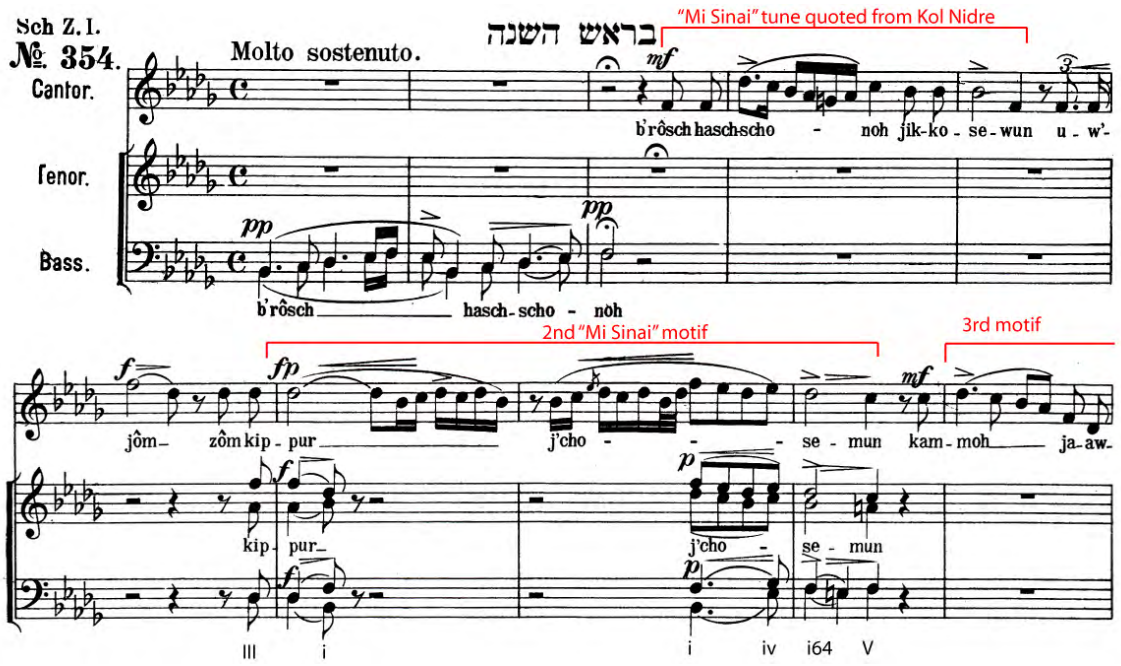


Figure 5.1: B'rosh Hashanah mm 1-10 (opening figure)

The first time that the choir enters in polyphony is at the pickup to measure 7, reinforcing the word "kippur" on a III – i cadence. The brief introduction of the relative major seems to raise spirits momentarily before settling back to the more somber B♭-minor tonality. The chord progression of i iv i64 V on the word "*j'chosemun*" is a half-cadence straight out of classical harmonization with the chromatic E-natural giving some color.

A third *Mi Sinai* motif is quoted starting in measure 10, and continuing to measure 13. No harmonization is offered by Sulzer, only an optional doubling of voices on the word "jibboreun" (note the textual error in Schir Zion: jib-bo-re-**un**, not jib-bo-re-nu).

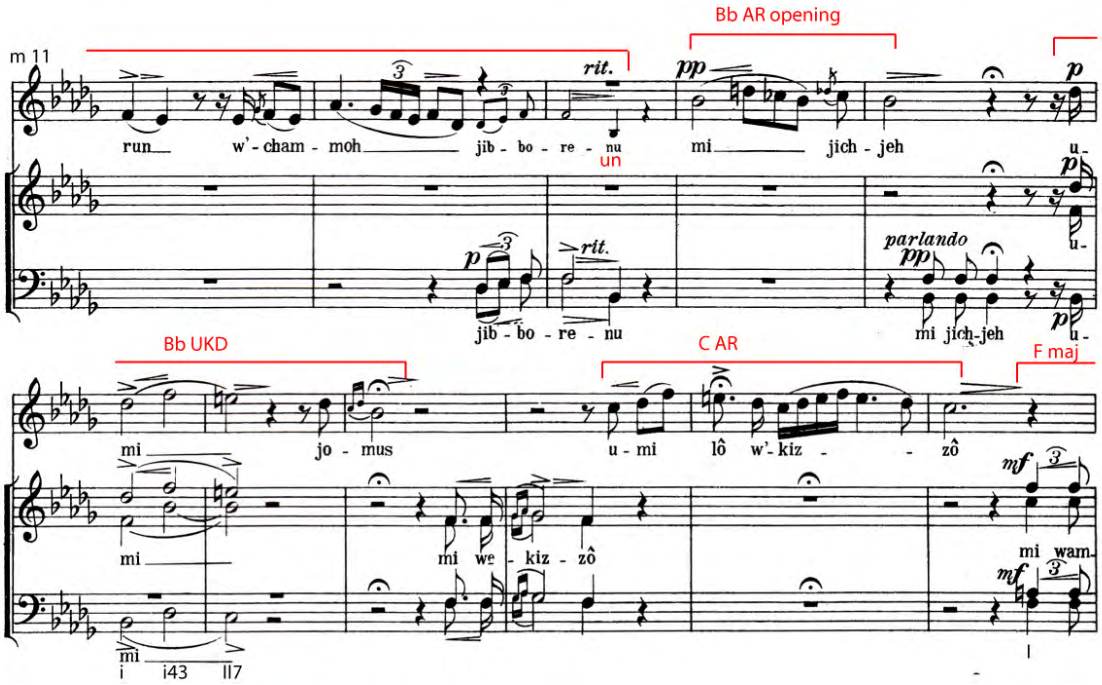


Figure 5.2: B'rosh Hashanah mm 11-21

In measure 14, the mode changes to B♭-Ahavah Rabah, a mode common to parts of the High Holy Day liturgy. The augmented second between scale degrees 2 and 3 arouses tension and is very fitting word painting for “mi jichjeh” (who shall live). The choir answers in a harmonically neutral open fifth – it is hard to know whether Sulzer felt unsure about how to best harmonize this prayer mode, or whether he intentionally wanted to create an uncertain tonality here. Continuing in measures 16 through 18 with pickup, the musical figure resembles a sequence (up a third) from measures 14 and 15, which is typical of Ahavah Rabah. By raising the 4th scale degree, however, Sulzer introduces the Ukrainian Dorian mode on B♭, often used as a color mode to emphasize poignant text; how fitting that he chooses this mode for the words “umi jomus” (and who shall die). The chordal underlay in the choir here is i i43 II7 supporting the word “umi” with a somewhat ethereal and unresolved cadence, then the cantor’s voice alone remains to utter

the word “jomus”. The men’s choir asks in unison in measure 18 “who will see ripe age?” The tonal center seems to be F, and F-major appears to be the chord that Sulzer associates with C Ahavah Rabah. Today’s composer would be much more likely to harmonize C Ahavah Rabah with a C-major chord, but this may have been too intrusive in the classical harmonization rules of Sulzer’s time. The Cantor continues with the rejoinder “And who will not see ripe age?” in C Ahavah Rabah.

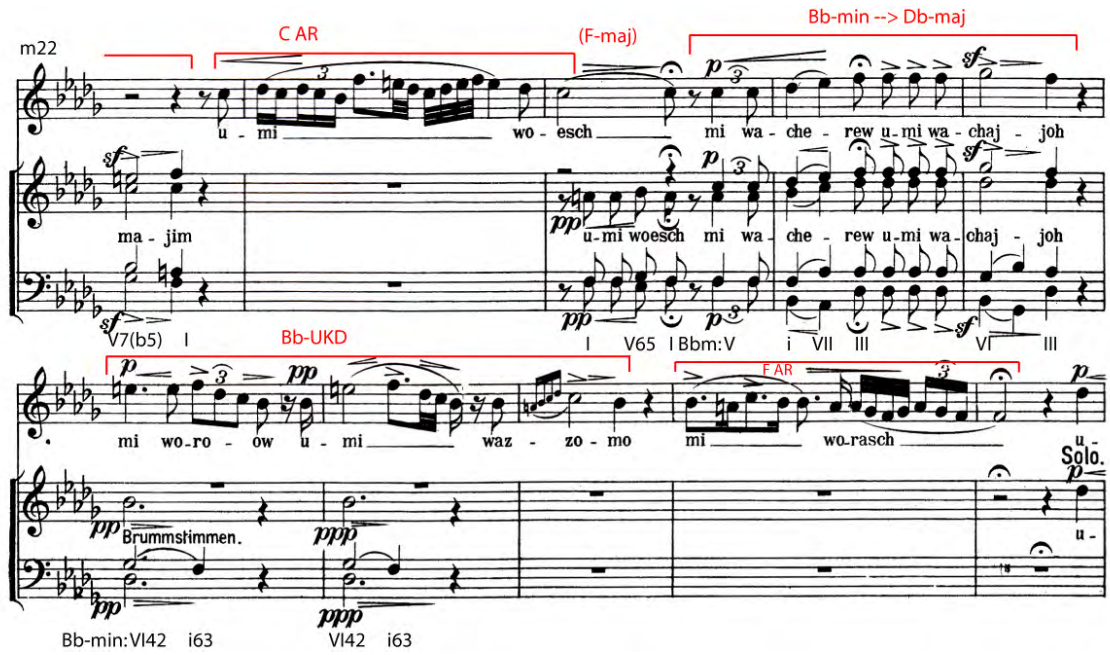


Figure 5.3: B'rosh Hashanah mm 22-31

The alternations between F-major choral responses and C Ahavah Rabah cantorial motifs continues until measure 24, where for the first time, we hear an F-major choral echo under a sustained C at the end of the Cantor’s line. It is likely that the E♭ in the second bass part of measure 24 is in fact, an E-natural, since a minor-seventh chord would be very out of place for this time period. Making this assumption, the cadence in measure 24 is a strong I V I cadence, firmly establishing F-major tonality. Just as soon as this tone center is established, the F-major chord functions as a pivot back to B♭-minor

which is only visited briefly on the way to the relative major, D♭-major. The chord progression in measures 25 and 26 (B♭m: i VI III IV III) can be, perhaps, more clearly interpreted as D♭: vi V I IV I. This plagal cadence seems to function in a similar manner as it does in church music of the time, providing a semicolon in the music, but not a final period. In measures 27 through 29, the tonality returns to B♭-Ukrainian Dorian to underscore the fates of dying by hunger and thirst. Sulzer's word painting for "ra'ash" (earthquake), while not the most florid interpretation, does belie his understanding of the text with the extended melisma suggesting a tremble or two.

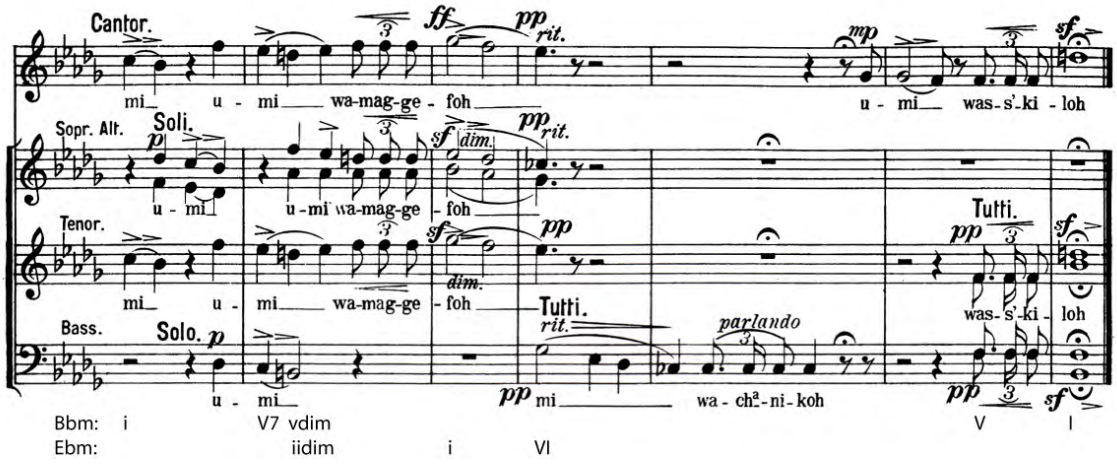


Figure 5.4: B'rosh Hashanah mm 32-38

The final phrase of this setting makes use of the women's voices for no more than three-and-a-half measures, and they are marked "soli" along with the men. This sudden change in vocal texture, both ethereal and layered, along with the haunting harmonization and dramatic crescendo to fortissimo on the high tessitura G♭ for the final syllable of "maggefoh", draws special attention to the words "umi vamaggefoh" (and who by plague). The most sensible way to analyze this phrase harmonically is to consider a pivot to E♭-minor at the second beat of measure 33. In order to understand this chromatic

descent the first beat of measure 33 should be understood as the outline of an F dominant seventh chord (C and E♭). Then the second beat, if respelled, can be understood as an F full-diminished seventh chord (F, A♭ C♭, E♭♭), and that cadences as a ii-diminished chord to i (E♭-minor) at the downbeat of measure 34. From there, the basses descend the major triad of C♭-major on an almost inaudible "mi wachanikoh" (who by strangling), expressing the text very effectively. After a short pause, we then return to B♭-minor through the pivot tone of G♭ (serving as 5 of C♭-major, and ♭6 of B♭-minor) for the Cantor's conclusion of "umi wass'kiloh" (and who by stoning). The sforzando on the last note paints the word "stoning" very effectively, but somehow the tonality of the Picardi third seems too triumphant for today's sensibilities. Looking at other settings of this text, it appears that a move to Ahavah Rabah at the end of B'rosh Hashanah is typical as a way to set up the major "Mi Sinai" tune for *Mi Yanuach*. An example from Israel Alter's *The High Holiday Service* is shown below.

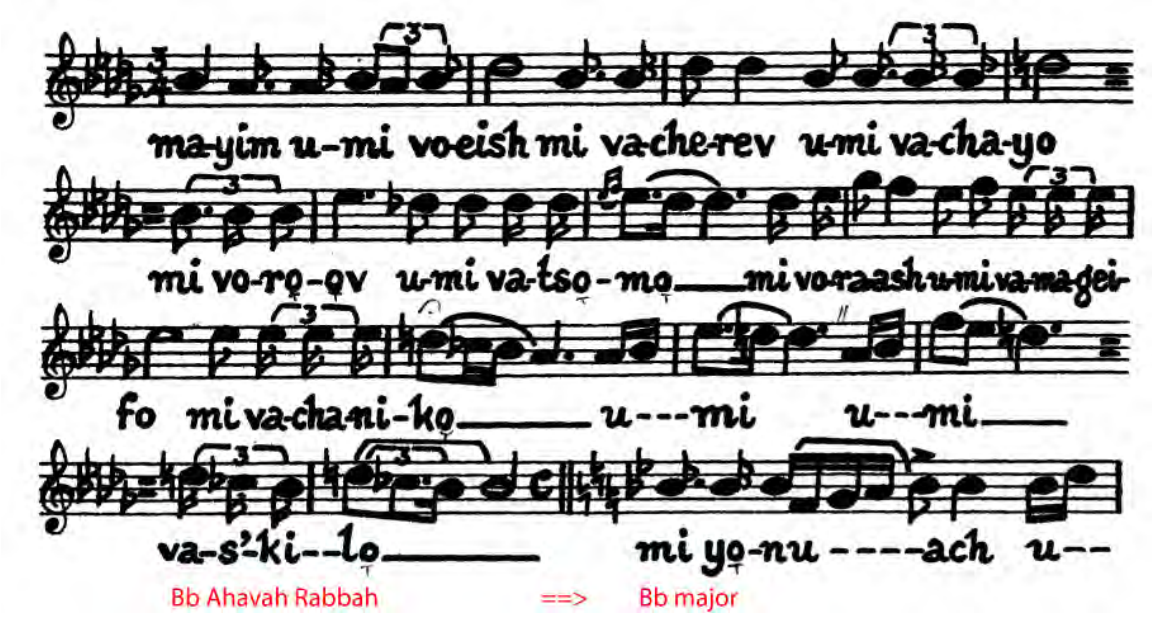


Figure 5.5: Israel Alter Setting

Sulzer's setting in *Schir Zion* flows directly into the same melody that Alter uses (see below), but his approach to the major tonality feels a bit brazen compared to the more subtle approach of Alter. One possibility is that Sulzer did not have the musical tools or language to harmonize Ahavah Rabah the way we would today, and since he wanted a strong choral ending, he was limited to a B♭-major ending with a V – I cadence (common in other music of his time).

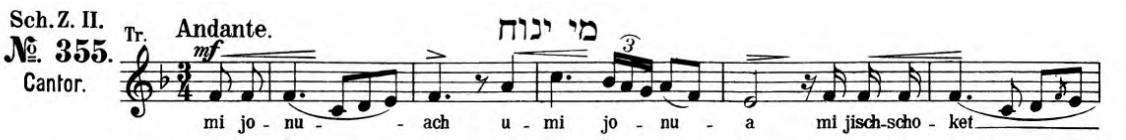


Figure 5.6: Sulzer's Mi Yanuach

While this setting of Sulzer's drew praise from Binder, it can be seen that in certain places, Sulzer's modal harmonization is constrained by the harmonic conventions of the classical period (e.g. measures 15, 17, 21, 24, 37-38). In many other ways, Sulzer succeeds in preserving the "Jewish soul" of quoted melody lines and some modal figures from the nusaḥ hat'filah while also breathing a new life into them using the musical conventions of his day.

Chapter 6: Analysis of Binder's "Hashkiveinu" from *Kabbalat Shabbat*

This movement of the *Kabbalat Shabbat Service* was written in 1930 and provides a ready example of Binder's approach to combining elements of traditional nusaḥ and Western musical form. To paraphrase the preface of an earlier work from 1928, *Hibbath Shabbath*, Binder expresses regret over the paucity of music heard from the "classic masters" in America, namely Sulzer, Lewandowski, Naumbourg, Nowakowsky, and others. Binder praises these synagogue composers for their retention of traditional synagogue melodies and motifs, but notes that their music became difficult for the average American Reform cantor to use since they were based on the texts of the Orthodox prayer book, which differed substantially from the Union Prayer Book. Binder has made "an humble effort" to write new music for the American Reform synagogue in the early- and mid-20th century while retaining the goals of classic masters; namely, to infuse synagogue music with both traditional melodies and modes as well as forms of classical and contemporary secular (and Christian sacred) music. True to the Eastern-European modal conventions, this piece is set in a minor key (E minor) and the solo sections exhibit many typical motivic phrases and moves from the *Magen Avot* mode.

The movement opens with a three-bar instrumental introduction in 6/4 time that introduces a recurring motivic phrase used throughout the choral sections. The phrase is echoed in the left hand verbatim after three beats, and truncated so as to end together with the right hand. The resulting harmonic sequence that is suggested by these two voices is: (Em) i III VI III iv I VII7 i.

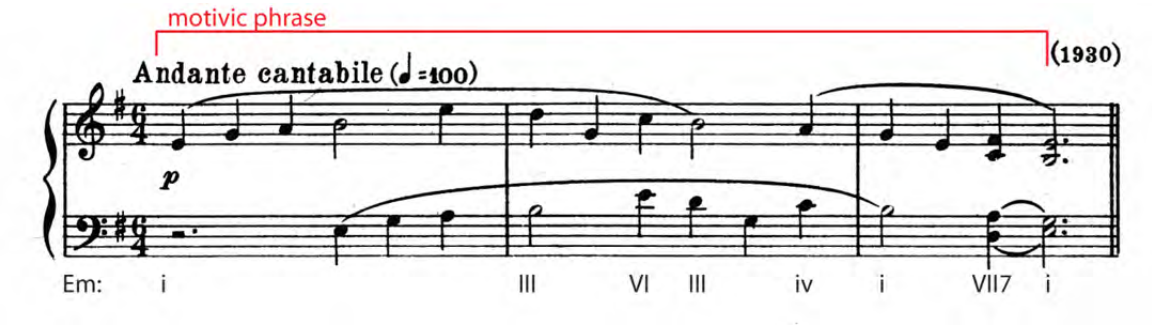


Figure 6.1: mm 1-3 (instrumental introduction)

When the 4-part SATB choir begins in measure 4, the sopranos and altos sing two 2-measure phrases that are a shortened version of the opening phrase. The first phrase in the soprano voice ends on the tonic, while the second ends on the dominant, and the alto provides a tonic pedal tone throughout three measures, moving up to the mediant with alternation with the supertonic establishing the relative major (supertonic functions as the leading tone). The tenors and basses sing one four-measure phrase that is an expanded version of the opening phrase. The effect is rather seamless, that is to say, it does not sound forced or constructed. The resulting harmonic progression is somewhat different than the introductory phrase: i ii i, i vii i VI III6 VII7 III. The last four chords can be more easily recognized as an elaborated authentic cadence in G (IV I6, V7 I), that is to say, a firm arrival in the relative major

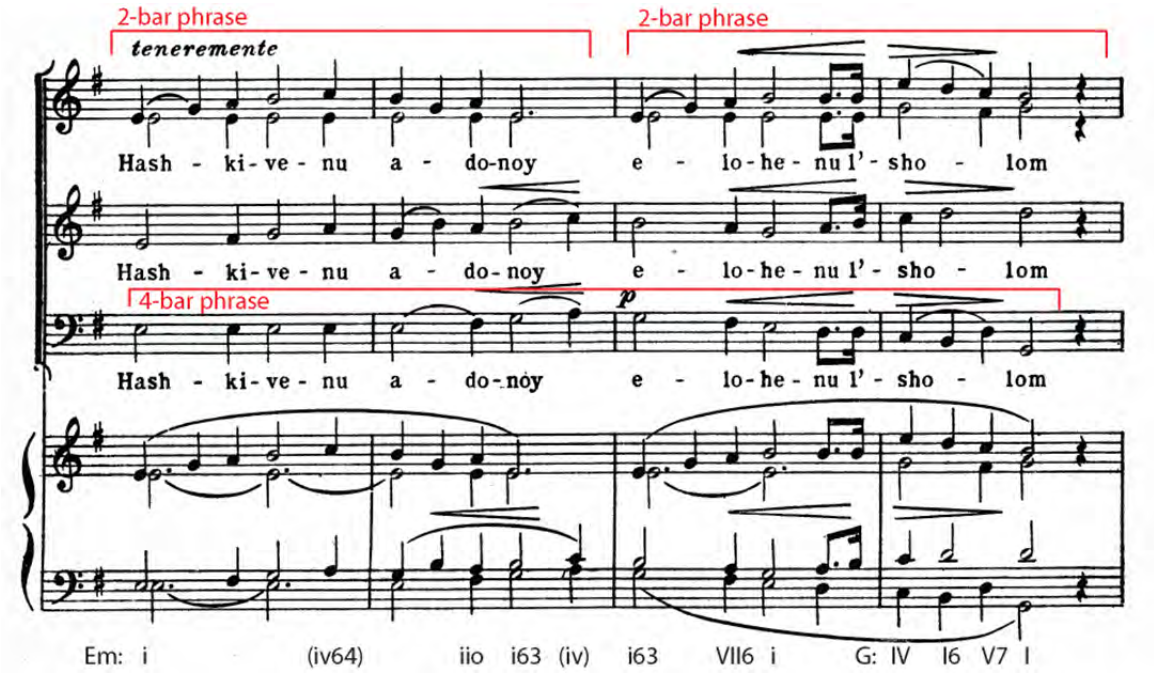


Figure 6.2: mm 4-7 (choral opening)

This pattern is repeated again in measures 8-11 (two 2-measure phrases in the soprano and alto parts, one four-measure phrase in the tenor and bass part). These measures take us back to the original key of E-minor; the pivot seems to happen in second beat of measure 8 where the chord can be heard as a IV7 of G-major, or alternately, as a i6 chord in inversion in E-minor. The plagal cadence into measure 9 (iv-i) reinforces the sense of E-minor leading us to a vii-i authentic cadence.

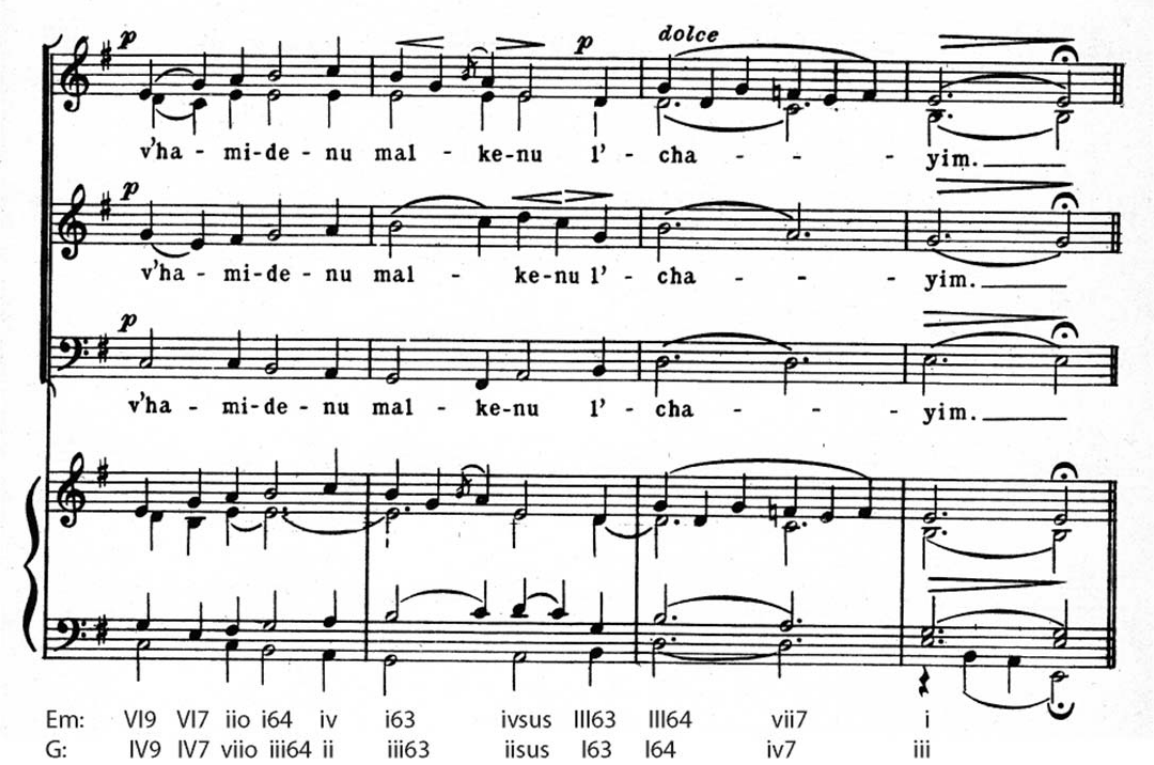


Figure 6.3: mm 8-11 (choral opening, cont'd)

The next section from measure 12 to 23 is a cantorial solo that shows strong signs of Binder's modal awareness. Based on Cantor Andrew Bernard's book, *The Sound of Sacred Time*, we see typical signs of Magen Avot mode, such as the opening interval of 1-5, a move to the relative major (pickup to measure 18) in the intermediate section, as well as the stylistic "Yishtabach maneuver" where the second degree is flatted (F-natural in measure 20) in the concluding phrase. The concluding phrase also exhibits one of the typical scale degree sequences (albeit with ornamentation) of 3-4-1. Harmonically, the key seems to be E-minor for the first measure, but then there is a circle-of-fifths chord progression of (vi ii V I) that takes us to G-major toward the end of measure 13, only to be taken back to E-minor through the descending bass sequence G - F♯ - E in the left hand of the organ accompaniment. This playful alternation between the relative major and minor tonalities seems to be Binder's way of acknowledging that one can hear the

unaccompanied recitative as existing simultaneously in both tonal centers. Beginning in measure 16, another circle-of-fifths chord progression (vi ii V I) brings us back solidly to G-major. The major arpeggio in the voice part strengthens this arrival just as the text proclaims "v'hoshi'einu" (and save us!).

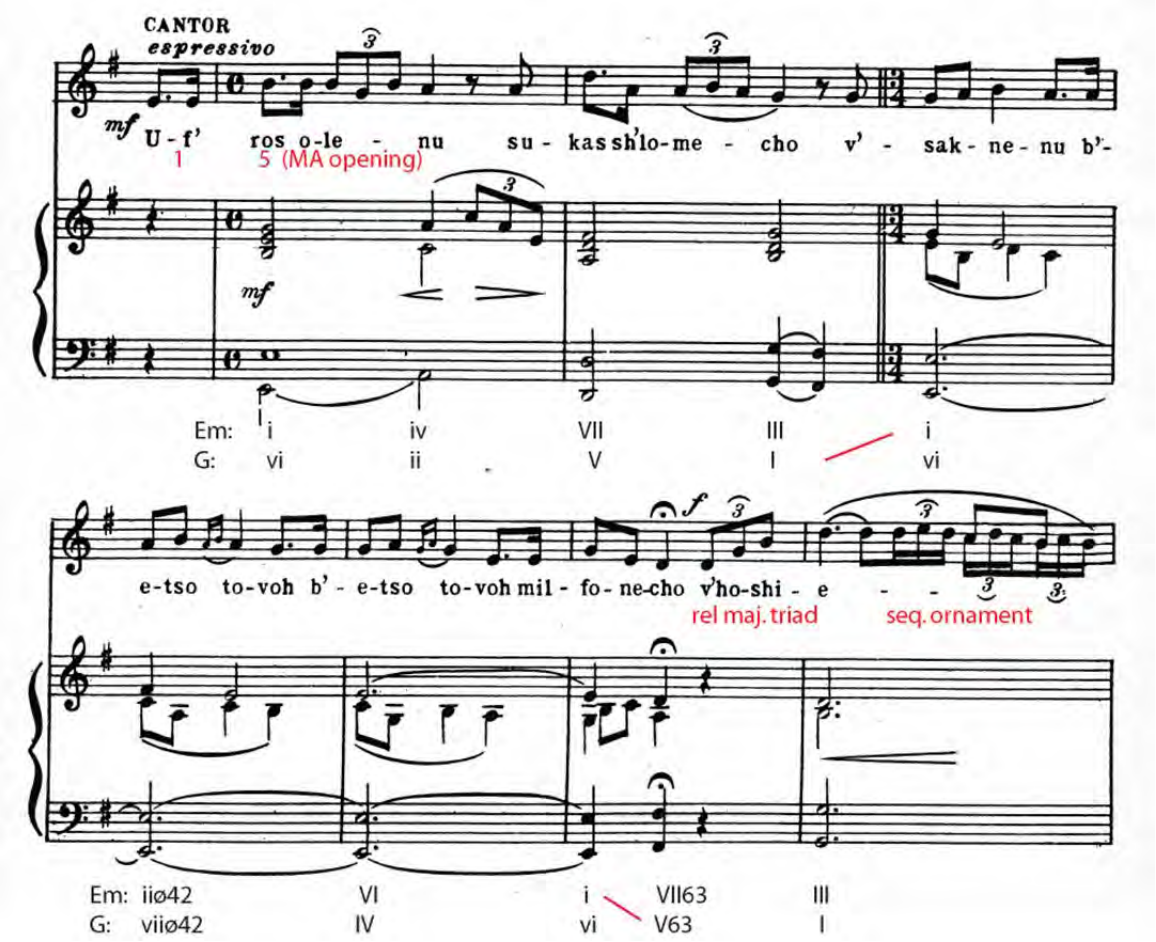


Figure 6.4: mm 12-18 (cantorial recitative)

Only one measure later, the A-minor chord in measure 19 becomes the pivot (G: ii, Em: iv) that leads us into a strong authentic cadence in Em (iv i64 v i). Notably, since the second degree (F♯) is flattened once again in the voice part (Yishtabach maneuver), the resulting V chord becomes half-diminished; lending a very modal sound to the

cadence. This cadence is echoed in the organ in a high treble register, but the sequence becomes (III64 $v^{ø}$ i). I interpret this to be Binder's way of expressing the duality or ambiguity of the tonality of Magen Avot mode.

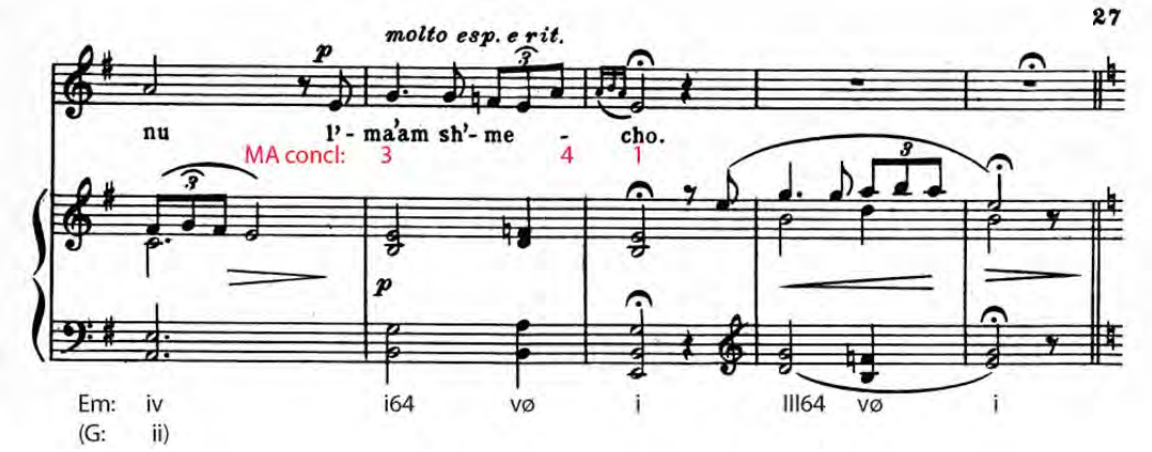


Figure 6.5: mm 19-23 (cantorial recitative, cont'd)

The pickup to measure 24 starts a soprano solo section whose tonal center is A. Moving to a minor scale on the 4th degree is another typical move in Magen Avot mode – it can't be by mistake that Binder uses it here. The A-minor tonality is firmly established with both the voice part gravitating to an A-minor triad as well as an A-minor pedal in the organ. This tonality then "wanders" through a stacked-fifths measure (G-D-A) which destabilizes the feeling of A-minor, leading to a G-minor seventh chord (vii 7) in inversion in measure 26 and a C-major with augmented 4th in measure 27. The introduction of the F♯ foreshadows the use of A-Ukrainian Dorian mode as not simply an ornamental element, but as a stepping stone to B-Ahavah Rabah mode (related closely with A Ukrainian Dorian, the only difference being the tonal center).

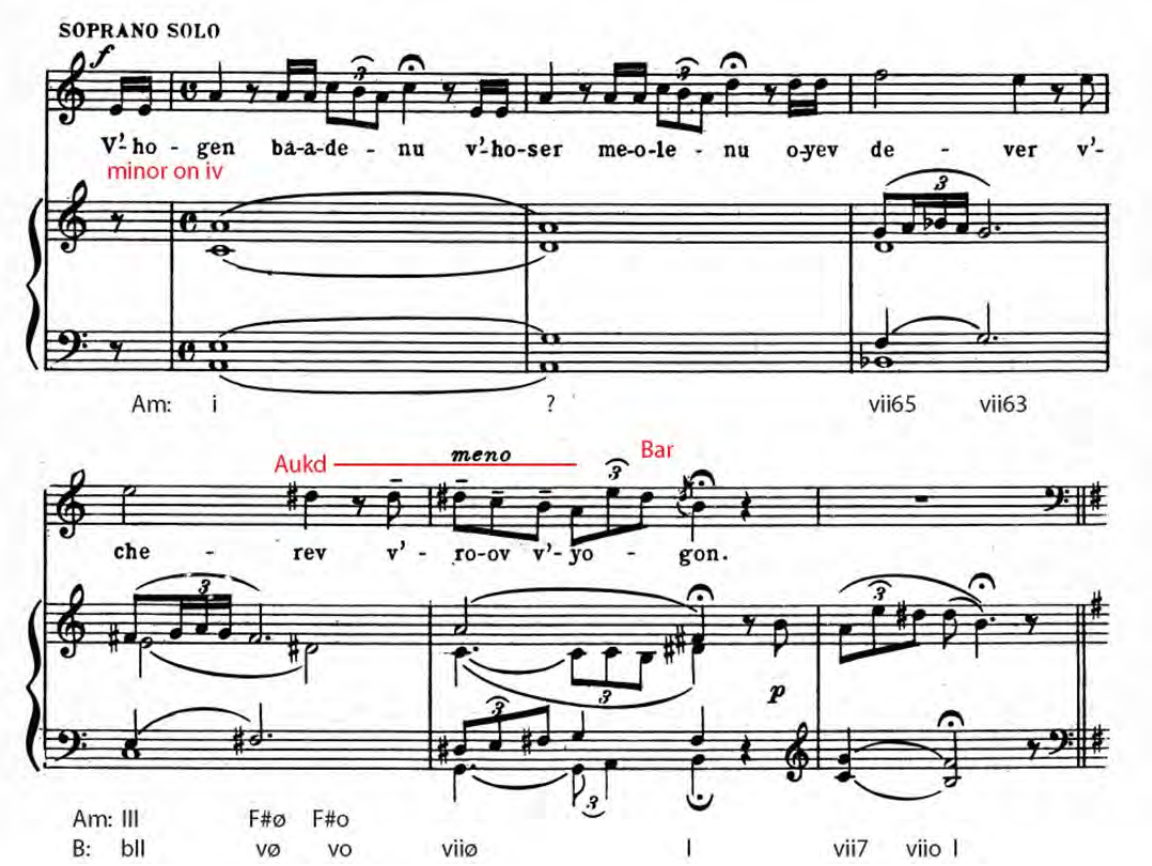


Figure 6.6: mm 24-29 (Soprano solo)

The bass solo starting with the pickup to measure 30 begins unaccompanied, and the B octave jump down suggests, perhaps, some word painting on the word "satan" as a force living in the netherworld. The B-minor chord in the organ in measure 31 may suggest a tonal center of B minor, but the vocal line continues in sequence with an A octave drop and upward arpeggio that is supported with an A-minor chord in the following measure by the organ. Working backwards from the final cadence, it becomes apparent that this chord progression is leading us back to E minor for a recapitulation of the opening choral phrase. The melodic figure in measure 35 (D-C-B-D-A) is immediately recognizable as a Magen Avot move (specifically, the cadence of one of the

intermediate phrases) which predictably leads into a 1 3 2 4 1 concluding phrase in Magen Avot (see Bernard 2006).

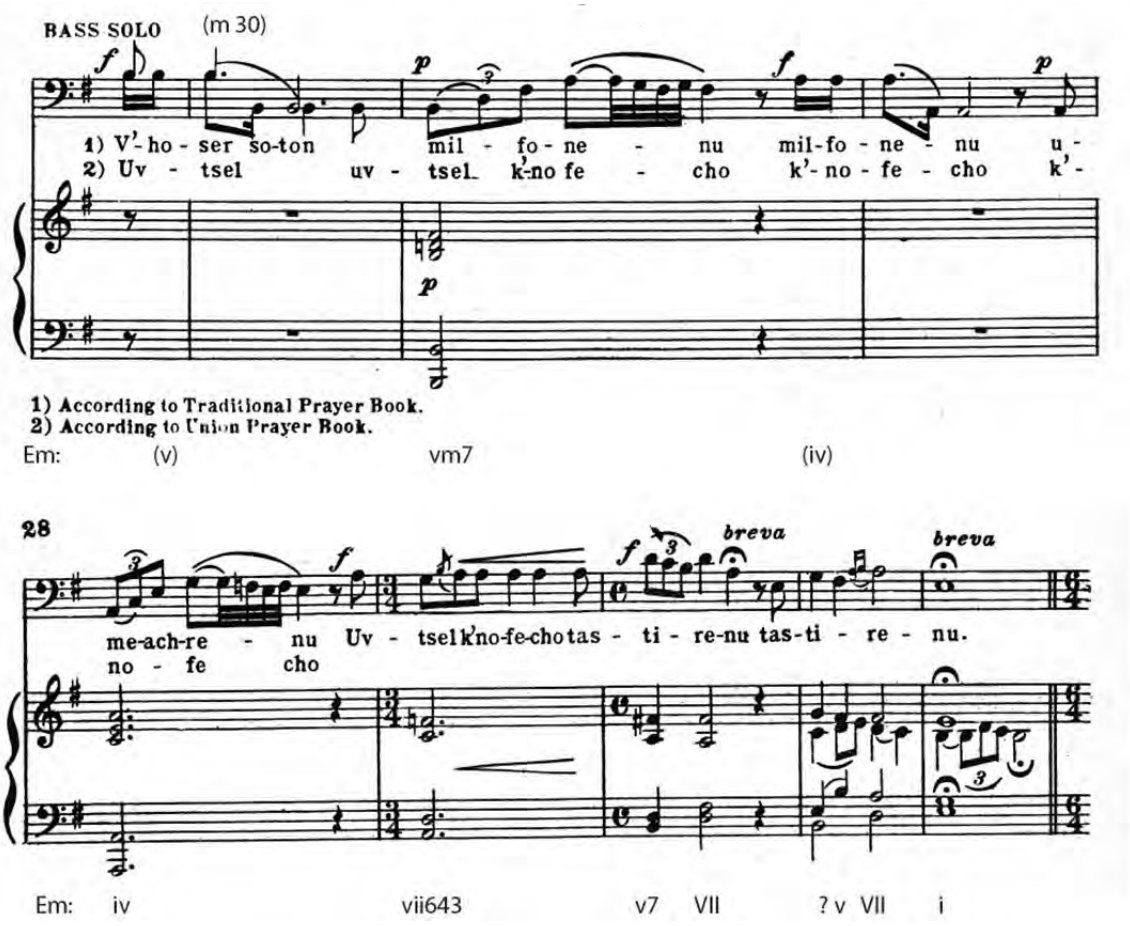


Figure 6.7: mm 30-37 (Bass solo)

The "Ki el shomrenu" section at measure 38 is a verbatim restatement of the opening choral section with only minor time-value changes to accommodate the text. At measure 46, the chord sequence (VI III iv I) resolves in a plagal cadence ending on an E-major chord (Picardi Third). This sequence seems familiar from church music or other classical music, and Binder seems to be using here to evoke a celestial mood around the phrase "v'rachum otoh" (…and you are compassionate), since harmonically, the final cantorial recitative is already set up adequately with the cadence ending in measure 45.

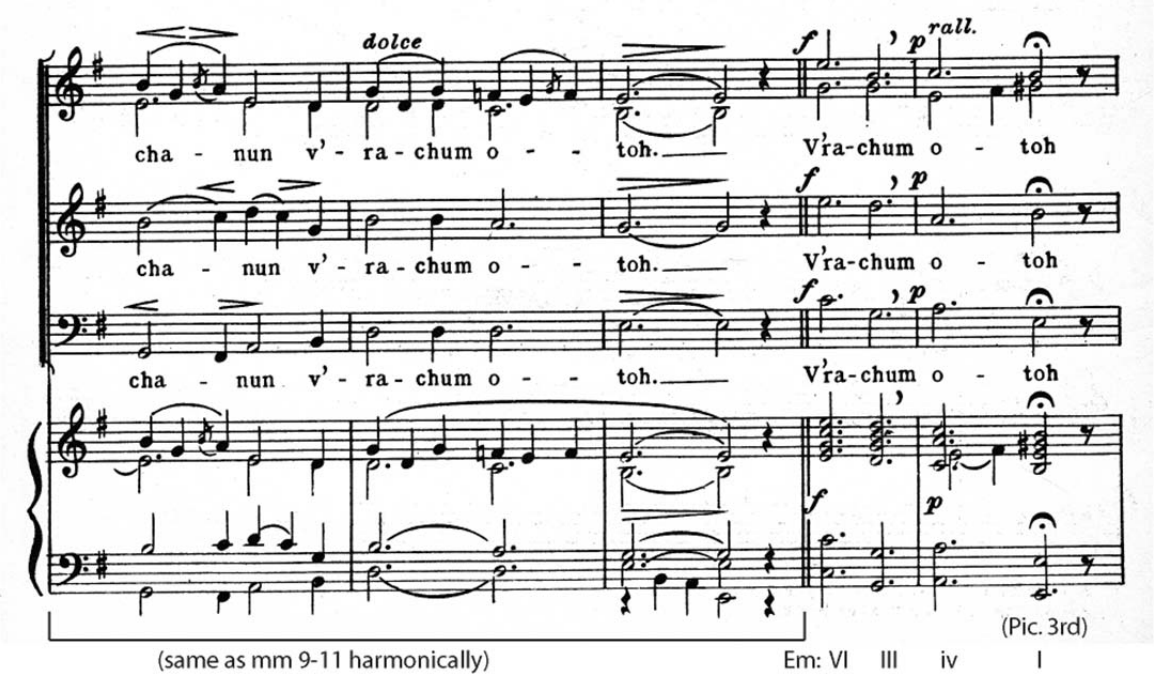


Figure 6.8: mm 43-47 (conclusion of choral "ki el shomrenu" section)

The final page of the Hashkiveinu is entirely a cantorial recitative, which, gauging by Binder's footnote (* may end or begin at this point), he understands to be the traditional lead-up to the *chatima* (concluding blessing) of this prayer that would be chanted by the cantor. The organ accompaniment is very sparse, giving the voice full prominence, and the choir responds to the cantor's "*baruch ata Adonai*" with the traditional "*baruch hu uvaruch sh'mo*" in a rhythm that mimics the natural speaking cadence. The organ comes in at the very end to support the concluding cadence of the recitative (VII i) and the choral response of "Amen" (v i). Interestingly, Binder avoids the use of a (iv i) plagal cadence for either the recitative or Amen; choosing, instead, an (imperfect) authentic cadence for each. This certainly makes the cadence sound different than what one might hear in church music.

Modally, the cantorial recitative is squarely in Magen Avot mode, both in its tonality (natural minor scale) and its use of modal motives. The first opening phrase (ushmor tseiteinu) starts with the 1 5 interval, the intermediate phrase finishes with 2 1 7 suggesting a subtonic cadence, and the concluding figure 3 2 3 4 1 closes the first phrase. The second phrase (ufros oleinu) open 1 5 8 5 (another iconic opening motive) and quickly concludes 5 3 1. The final phrase (barch ata Adonai) opens with an elaborated 3 4 3 4 5, followed by an intermediate phrase with recitation tone on 4, and a classic 7 6 5 7 4 cadence, and finally the concluding phrase which follows the 1 3 4 1 motive.

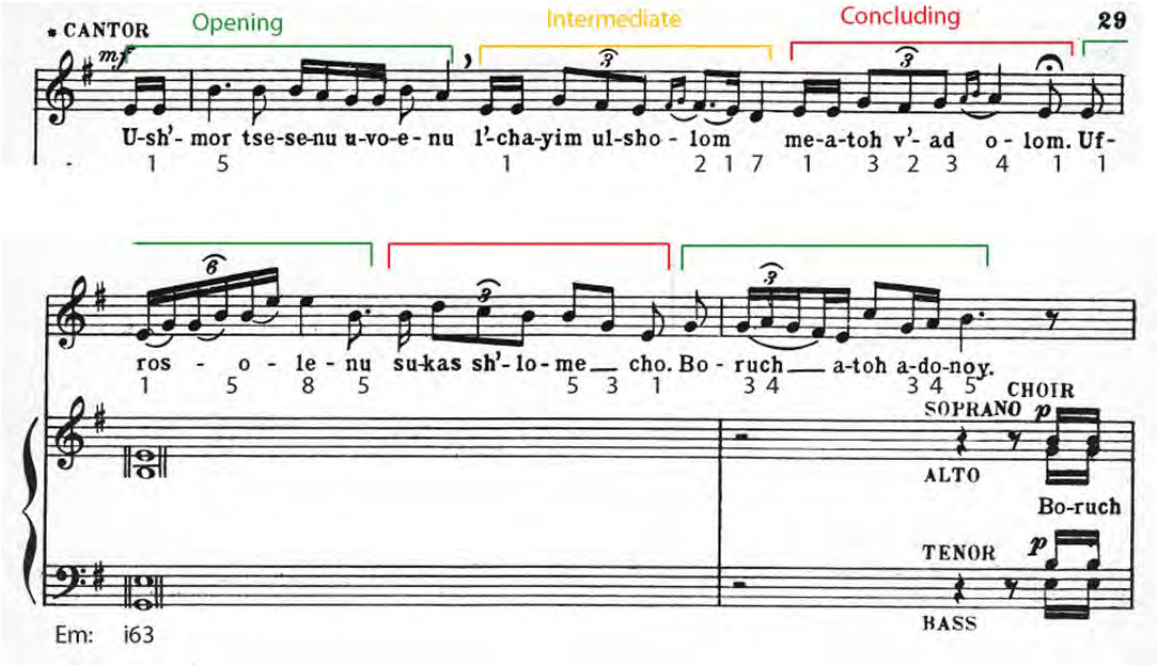


Figure 6.9: mm 48-50 (Cantorial recitative "ushmor tsetenu")

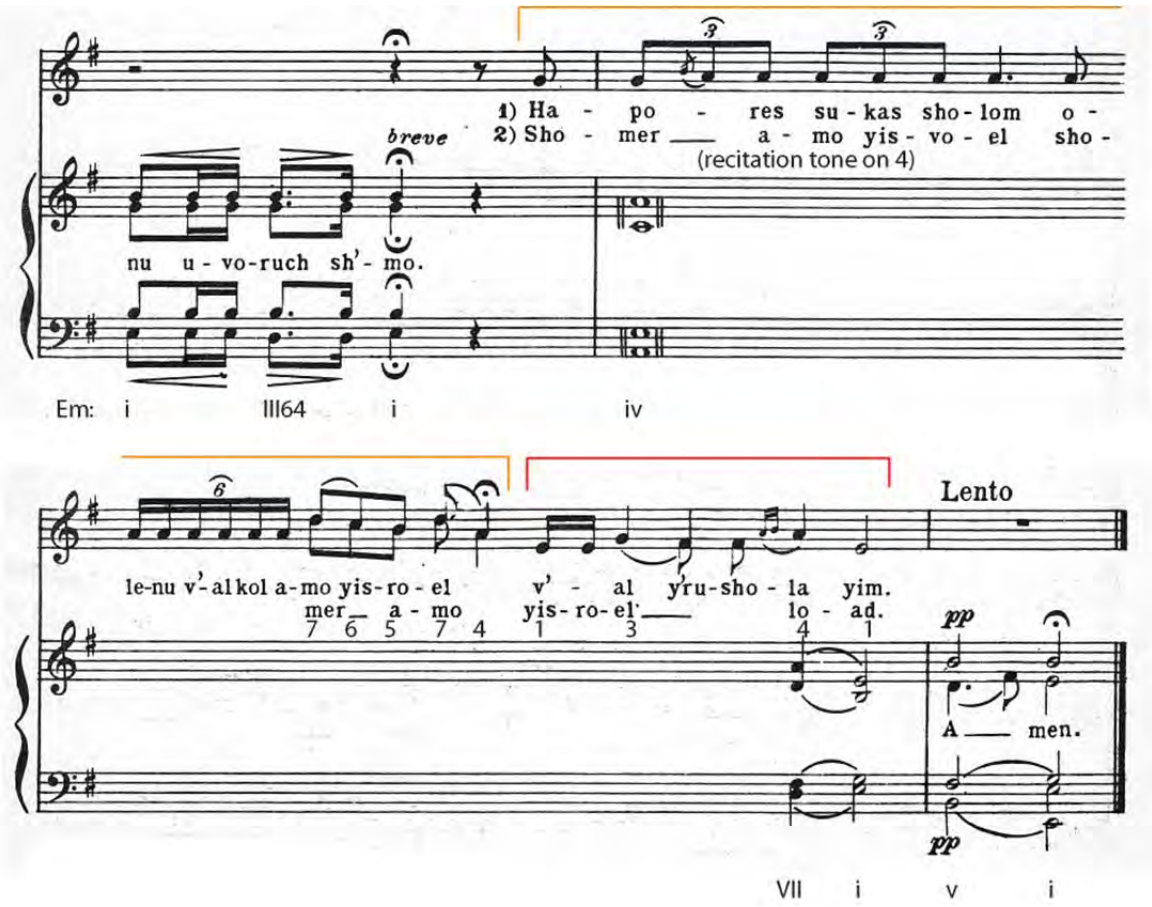


Figure 6.10: mm 51-53 (conclusion of final cantorial recitative)

Chapter 7: Analysis of Binder's "Atoh V'chartonu" from *Three-Festival Musical Liturgy*

This movement of the *Three-Festival Musical Liturgy*, published in 1962, is written for cantor and organ, with a few simple choral responses toward the very end that would be very easy for the congregation to join in. Although Festival days often fall on a weekday with often poor attendance among Reform congregations, Binder nonetheless composed a complete sequence of musical settings for both the evening and morning services. Optional texts are indicated should the festival fall on the Sabbath, and special melodies for each Festival are given for Mi Chamocha and Shira Chadasha. "Atoh V'chartonu" is the text of *K'dushat Hayom*, and is found in the Amidah of the morning Festival service, immediately following the *K'dushat Hashem*. A footnote in the music indicates that Binder's setting is "based on the 'Three Festival' musical tradition." This is abundantly clear if we first consider a traditional setting by Adolph Katchko found in "A Thesaurus of Cantorial Liturgy, Volume 2".

Following the motivic phrase definitions found in *The Sound of Sacred Time* by Andrew Bernard, Katchko's setting demonstrates in a textbook manner the application of opening, intermediate, and concluding phrases. Perhaps the most iconic sound of the Three Festival nusaḥ is the final descending cadence 1 5 4.

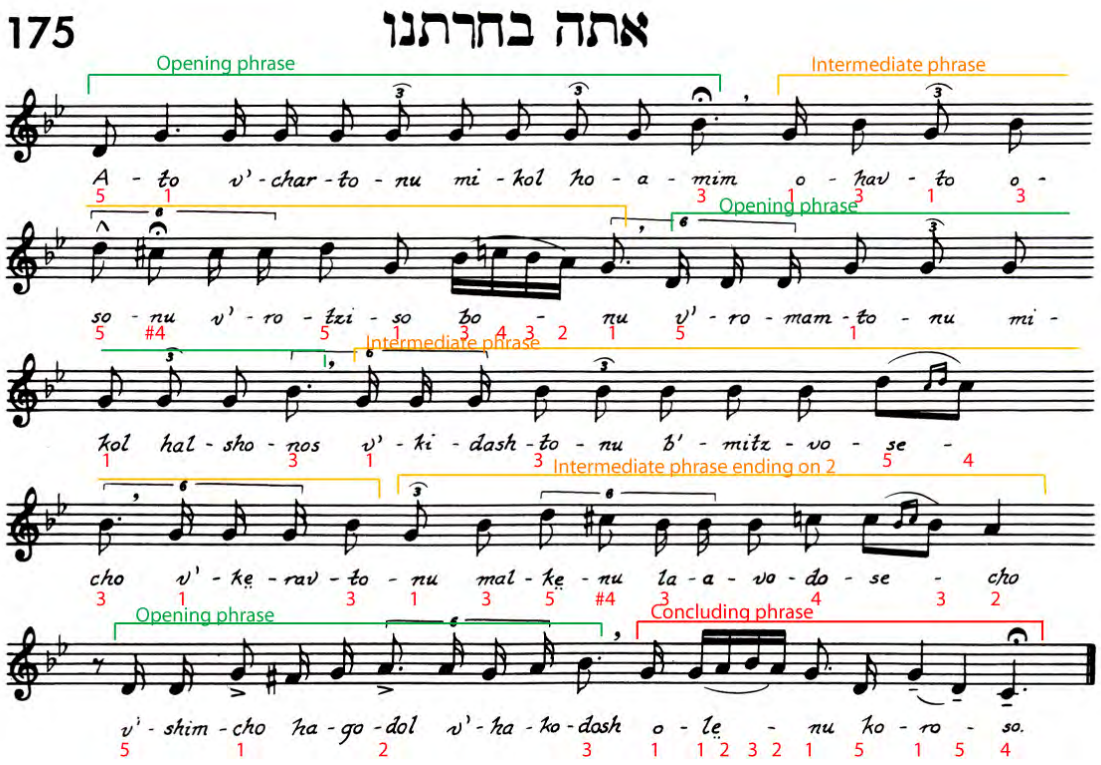


Figure 7.1: Katchko traditional nusaḥ

When comparing Binder's setting, one can see at once that Binder is very faithful to the traditional motivic phrases, only departing occasionally to insert an ornamental flourish, but never abandoning the overall structural elements found in the Katchko setting.

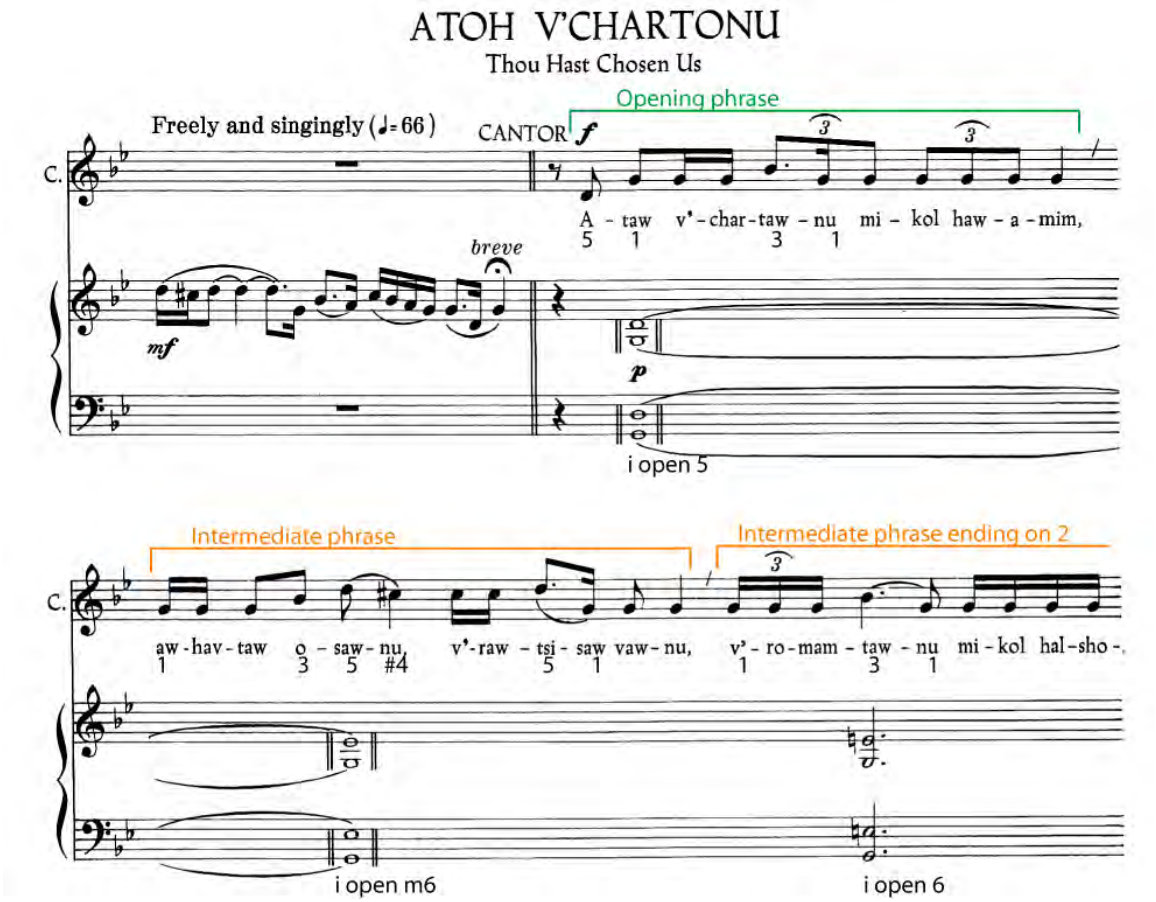


Figure 7.2: Atoh V'chartonu mm 1-3 (Opening figure)

The opening instrumental measure simply outlines some of the motivic elements of the Three Festival nusaḥ such as the raised fourth and the 5 1 opening figure. When the cantor begins chanting in the second measure, the organ provides a very neutral open fifth on G, just supporting the cantor as, perhaps, *m'shorerim* (spontaneous a capella singers) would in a traditional setting. At the word "osawnu", the interval is increased to a minor sixth, and then again to a major sixth at "v'romamtawnu". The effect is to gently increase the tension through stepwise semitone increments. The release comes with the F-major chord in measure 4.

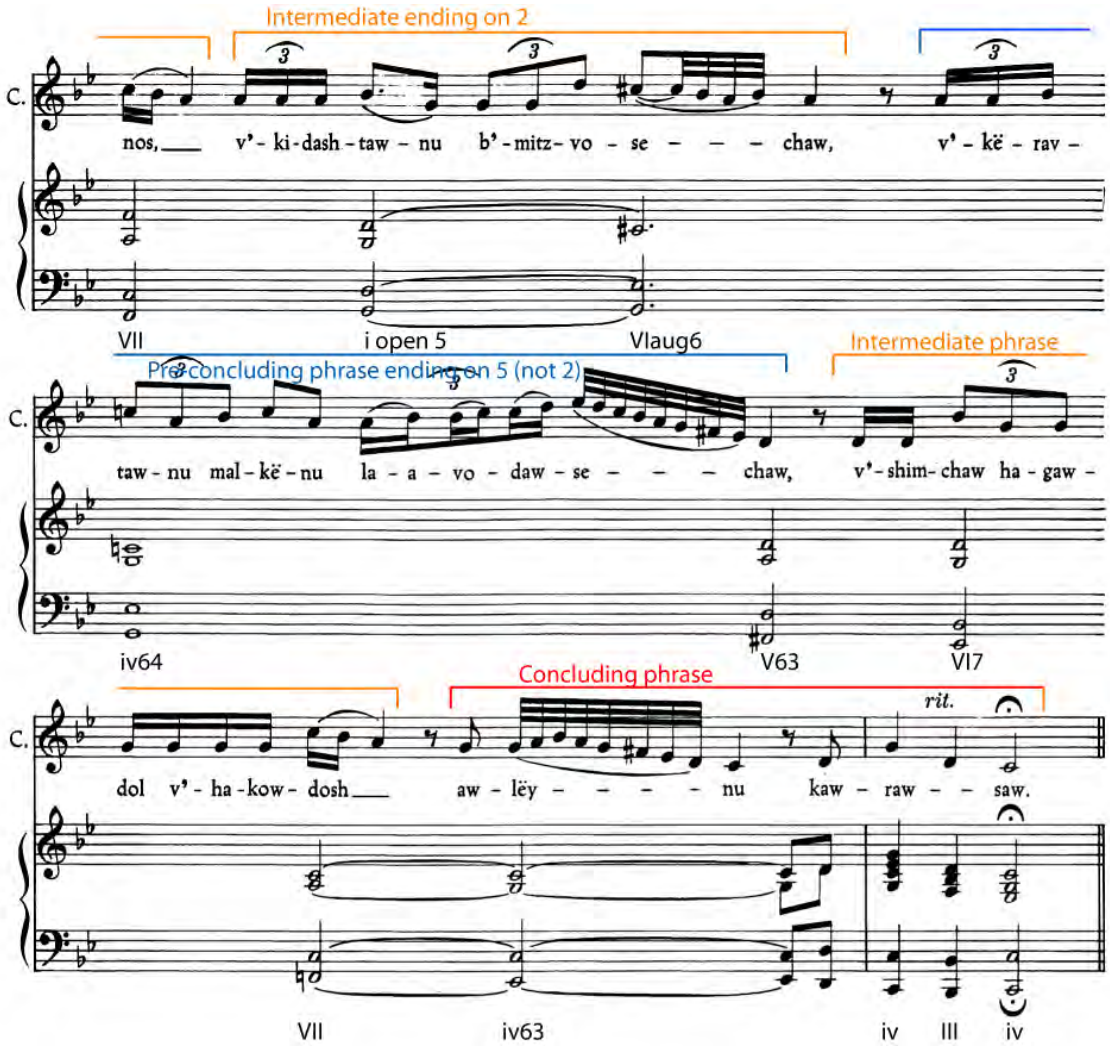


Figure 7.3: mm 4-7 (Conclusion)

Binder then returns to the open fifth sound of the opening vocal phrase for the intermediate phrase ending on 2. To accommodate the raised fourth degree on "se-chaw" one might expect an A-major chord, but Binder is more daring with the use of an E♭-augmented sixth chord, satisfying the need for a C-sharp in a more modern way. In the pre-concluding phrase, Binder departs from the traditional formula of ending the phrase on 2, which would put the tonal center on F (and the mode would be Adonai Malach). Instead, the melisma on "se-chaw" descends to a low D, and he inserts an F-sharp, which

suggests the outline of D Ahavah Rabah. The C-minor to D-major cadence here (iv64 V63) is not in root position, but it follows a typical cadence of vii I in Ahavah Rabah, which is entirely fitting given the embellished melisma in D Ahavah Rabah. In the final intermediate phrase, one would expect a return to a familiar G-minor chord, but Binder is truly modern here, harmonizing instead with an E♭ major seventh chord, then moving to F-major. In the concluding phrase, rather than hearing the traditional phrase in G-minor and ending the melisma on G, Binder instead deviates from tradition a little and continues the downward motion while raising the F, taking us to a C-Ukrainian Dorian tonality harmonized with an inverted C-minor chord. This seems to be a setup for the final cadence which arrives on C-minor after an alternation with B♭-major, a familiar cadence from the Magen Avot mode (natural minor scale).

At this point, the setting moves directly to “Vatiten Lanu”. Again, to show how faithful Binder is to the traditional nusaḥ of this text, it is instructive to analyze a parallel setting by Katchko. Another iconic figure of the Three Festival nusaḥ is the alternate opening phrase in Adonai Malach mode on 4 (C in this case). Intermediate and concluding phrases function the same way here as they did in the earlier example.

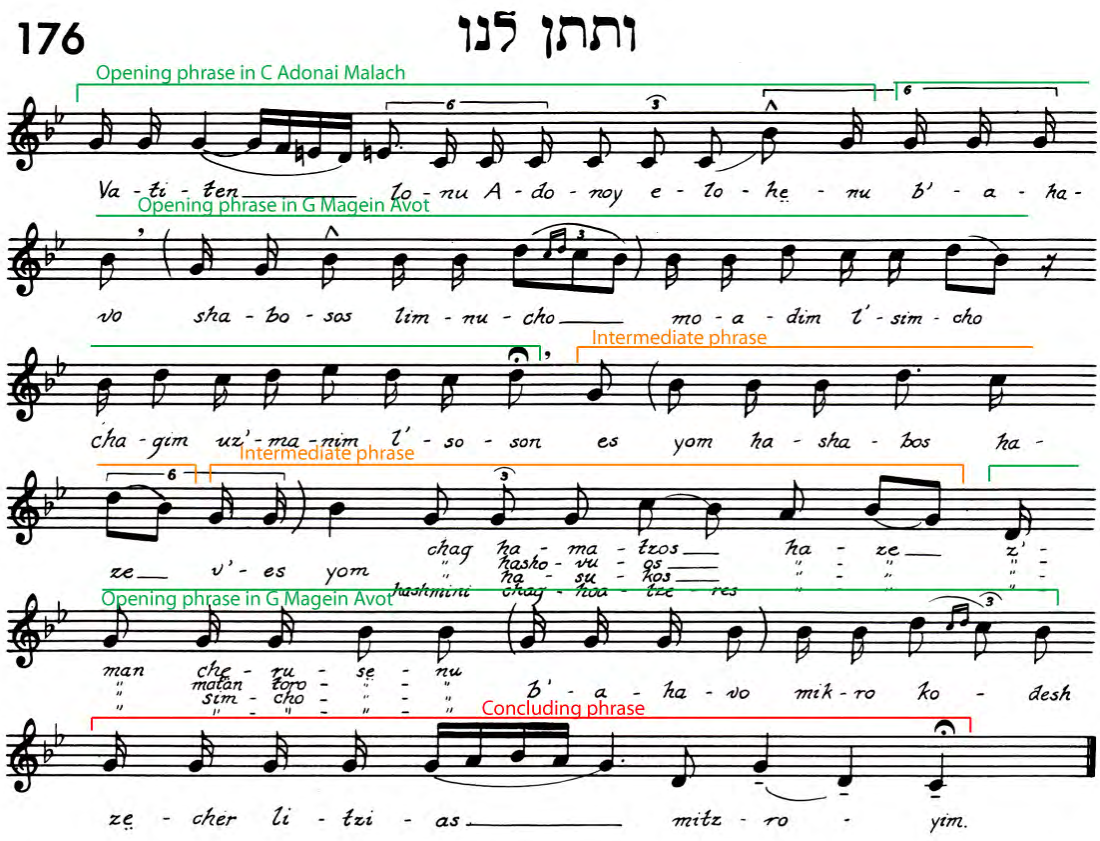


Figure 7.4: Katchko setting of "Vatiten Lanu"

When we compare Katchko's setting to Binder's, there are, not surprisingly, many similarities, with a couple of departures similar to the ones described in the first section. The opening figure is nearly identical, only Binder emphasizes the syllable "law" of "lawnu" rather than "ten" of "titen" as Katchko does. Binder's rendering feels more natural to the speaking cadence of this two-word phrase. Again, we find an intermediate phrase ending on 2 (A), and then a second intermediate phrase that descends beyond the expected scale interval all the way to 5 (D) with a raised seventh degree, outlining a D Ahavah Rabah scale.

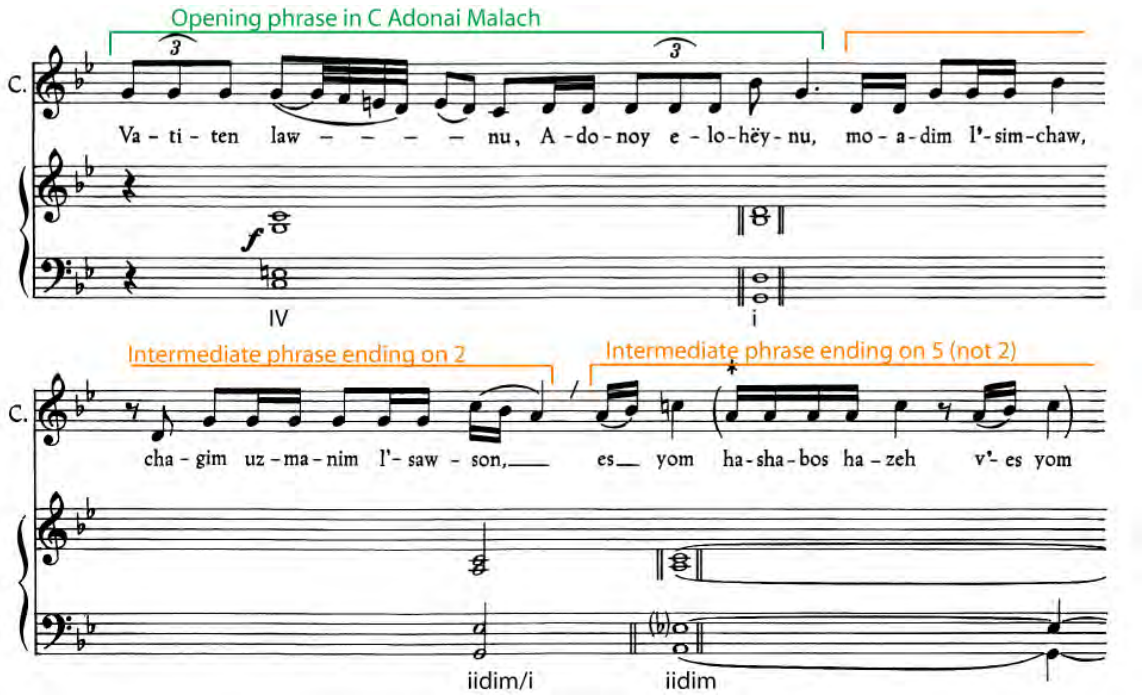


Figure 7.5: Binder's setting of "Vatiten Lanu" 1

Harmonically, the organ starts on the expected C-major chord, moving soon to G-minor for the beginning of the intermediate phrase. While Binder gave us the expected F-major chord earlier for the conclusion of the intermediate phrase, here he gives a new color with the A-diminished chord over a sustained G pedal from the previous chord. This A-diminished chord is continued through the next intermediate phrase as well, and eventually resolves to D-major after a Gm: iv V (or D: vii I) cadence. The final intermediate phrase resolves on the second scale degree as expected, and we are greeted by the F-major chord that was anticipated earlier. The final Three-Festival cadence is harmonized differently here: i III iv rather than iv III iv as at the end of the previous section. The effect is subtle, but the i III iv cadence feels more final due to the contrary motion of the left and right hands of the organ.

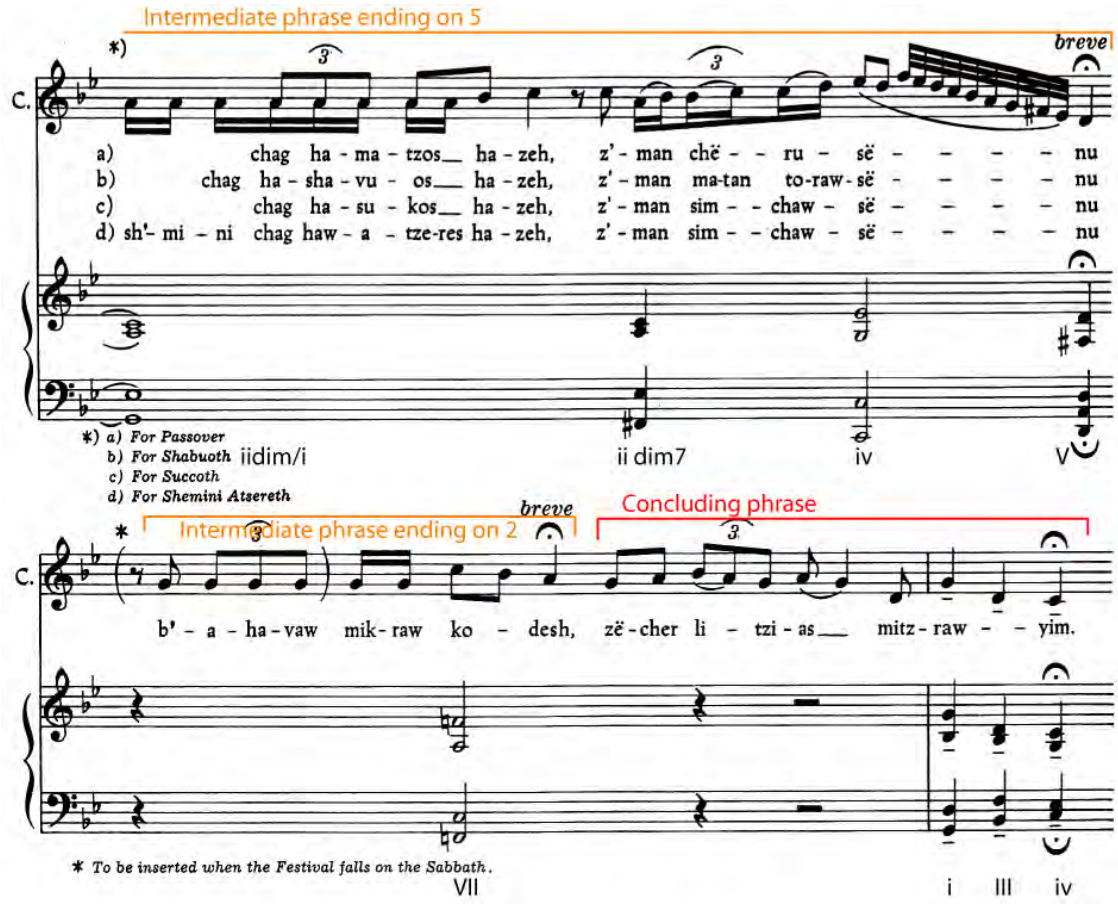


Figure 7.6: Binder's setting of "Vatiten Lanu" 2

The traditional text would continue with "Ya'aleh V'yavo" here, but Binder continues directly to "V'hasienu", reflecting the liturgical reality of the Union Prayer Book in use at that time in the Reform movement. At this point, there is less value in analyzing Katchko's setting of V'hasienu, since it is very similar to "Vatiten Lanu", and the traditional text is substantially longer than the abbreviated version in the Union Prayer Book.

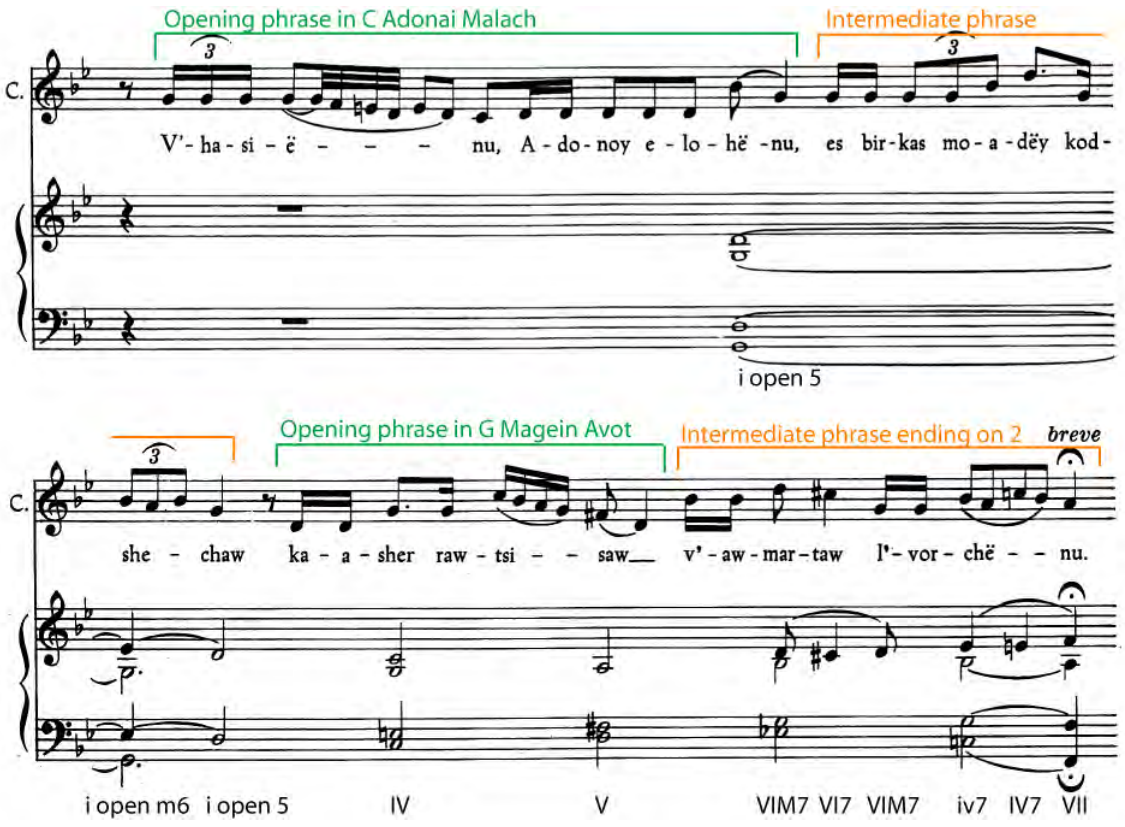


Figure 7.7: Binder's setting of "V'hasienu" 1

Unlike the treatment of the opening phrase in the "Vatiten Lanu" section (where there was a C-major chord under the majority of the figure), the voice is unaccompanied here until just the last two notes of the opening phrase, where we see the now-familiar G open fifth. On the word "kodshechaw" (your holiness), Binder expands the fifth to a minor sixth, seemingly indicating that God's holiness is a step above our earthly existence. One might expect the opening phrase in G Magen Avot to be harmonized first with a G-minor chord, but instead, Binder holds a C-major chord until the last syllable, where he resolves to D-major. The intermediate phrase ending on 2 is rich with modern harmonic variety, starting with an alternation between E♭-major seventh and E♭-dominant seventh chords, then a C-minor seventh chord followed by C-dominant seventh, finally resolving to the

anticipated F-major chord. This degree of chromaticism is atypical of this setting, and coupled with the breve fermata, it is clear that Binder is drawing attention to the phrase "v'amartaw l'vorchenu" (and You promised to bless us).

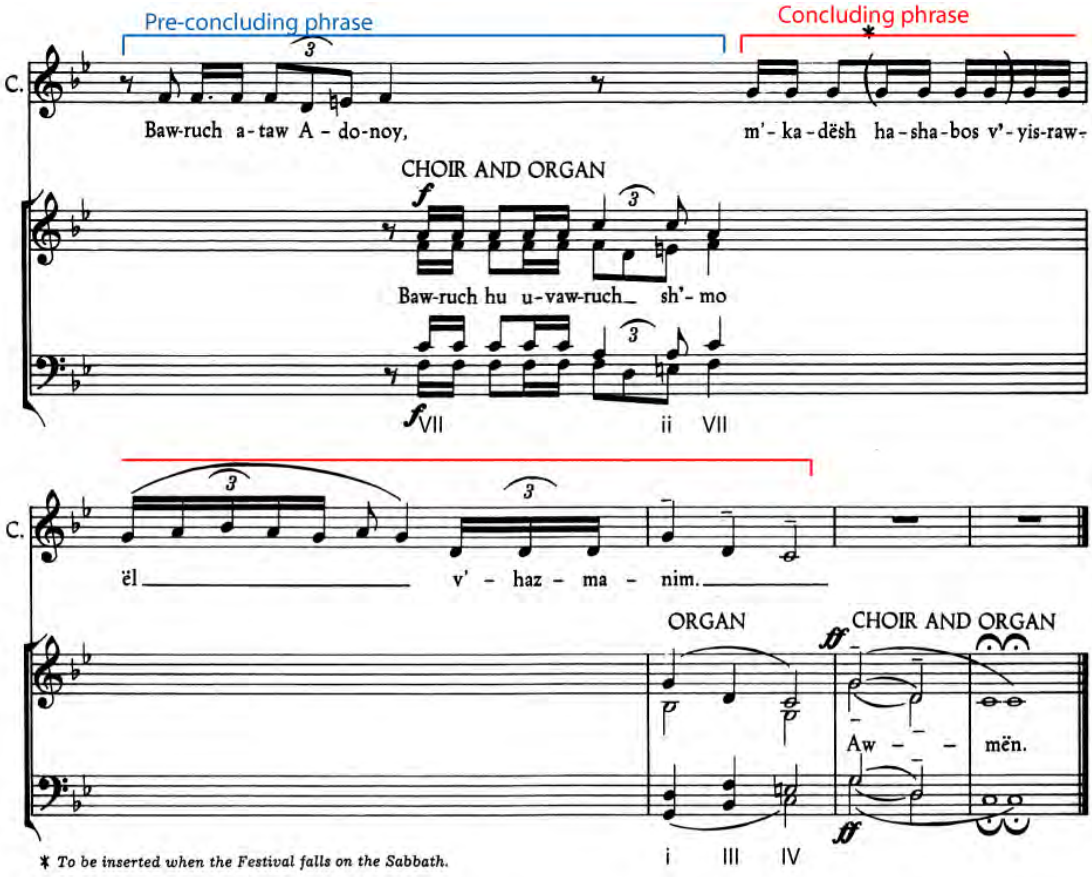


Figure 7.8: Binder's setting of "V'hasienu" 2

The pre-concluding phrase is not exactly the descending major triad on 7 as outlined in Bernard's book, but the melodic figure used by Binder is familiar from other parts of the service, and the choral response firmly establishes a major tonality, with the bass voice echoing the cantor. The start of the concluding phrase is un-harmonized, just as it was in "Vatiten Lanu", giving the impression that Binder wants to emphasize the voice of the cantor leading into the final Three Festival cadence, which is harmonized yet

a third way here. Whereas the cadence has ended on a C-minor chord the first two times, this final cadence of cadences ends more triumphantly on C-major. The choir and organ respond in unison “Amen” following the same iconic three-note Three Festival cadence.

In contrast to Sulzer’s setting of “B’rosh Hashanah” where there were signs of harmonic constraint due to the classical harmony conventions of his time, Binder has a much broader palette of permissible chords to choose from, and makes judicious use of these more dissonant chords to both delight and surprise the listener. Today, this style may start to sound palpably “mid-twentieth century”, but in Binder’s time, the sounds of Gershwin, Copland, and Bernstein were in the air, and this style was fresh and spoke a musical language that listeners would appreciate and understand.

Chapter 8: Conclusions and 21st Century Applications

In this chapter, I will summarize the salient features that both Sulzer and Binder brought to synagogue music, and consider which of these innovations are timeless, and which are more clearly products of their time and place. What is the right balance between honoring the musical styles of the past and acknowledging the tastes of today? Finally, I discuss the process of commissioning a new composition from a local composer, and the iterative conversations that resulted in a setting of "Ein Kitzvah" (High Holiday liturgy) for cantor and choir, with optional keyboard accompaniment (see Appendix A).

As was outlined in chapter 2, perhaps the most salient aspect of Sulzer's work was his belief that, "Jewish liturgy must satisfy the musical demands while remaining Jewish; and it should not be necessary to sacrifice the Jewish characteristics to artistic forms" (Sulzer 1876, 19). This statement is truly timeless, since it speaks only of broad concepts rather than specific characteristics. To put Sulzer's statement in different words, one could say that synagogue music needs to be good, but not at the expense of being Jewish. While melodies modeled after popular culture can be catchy at first, many do not stand the test of time. The music of Raymond Smolover is cited as an example of unsuccessful chasing after popular musical expression without regard for retaining Jewish characteristics (Edelman 2003, 138). Another American composer, Charles Davidson, is offered as a counter-example of a synagogue composer who also emulated the sounds of folk/rock music of the 1960s, but "wisely retained the motives and melodies of the High Holy Day period" (ibid, 139) in his Selichot service, *The Hush of Midnight* (1970). These two examples of relative disuse and success suggest that Sulzer's words ring true, even

today. Synagogue music has to be “high quality” and use a musical vocabulary that is familiar to the listener. This can happen with or without the inclusion of Jewish characteristics, but history suggests that without Jewish characteristics of some sort, the music does not pass the test of time.

Sulzer began the process of integrating traditional Jewish musical motifs and modes with structures of “high art” music of his time. He drew attention not only from other Jewish communities, but also, quite notably, from musicians and aficionados from outside the Jewish world who had no reason to critique his work with undeserved favor. His music was the pinnacle of fine Jewish musical expression in his day precisely because he was fully trained in both realms of knowledge (Jewish traditional prayer and European classical music) and because he drew on them to create confident and vibrant expressions of Jewish musical ideas. His two volumes of synagogue music enthralled listeners from far and near, and some are in use to this day across all Jewish denominations.

While Sulzer can certainly be credited with starting a process that changed the course of musical development in the Reform Jewish world, Sulzer (perhaps like the biblical Noah) was a master “in his generation” (Genesis 6:9), standing head and shoulders above his peers. After nearly 100 years had passed, what would have been thought of as unthinkably dissonant in Sulzer’s day became the new accepted norm in the early to mid-twentieth century. Diminished and augmented chords, tone clusters, non-classical chord progressions, all of these allowed Binder to re-imagine how nusaḥ hat’filah could be harmonized. The result was music that retained a stronger sense of the exotic melos of traditional Jewish music, since Binder allowed himself to explore

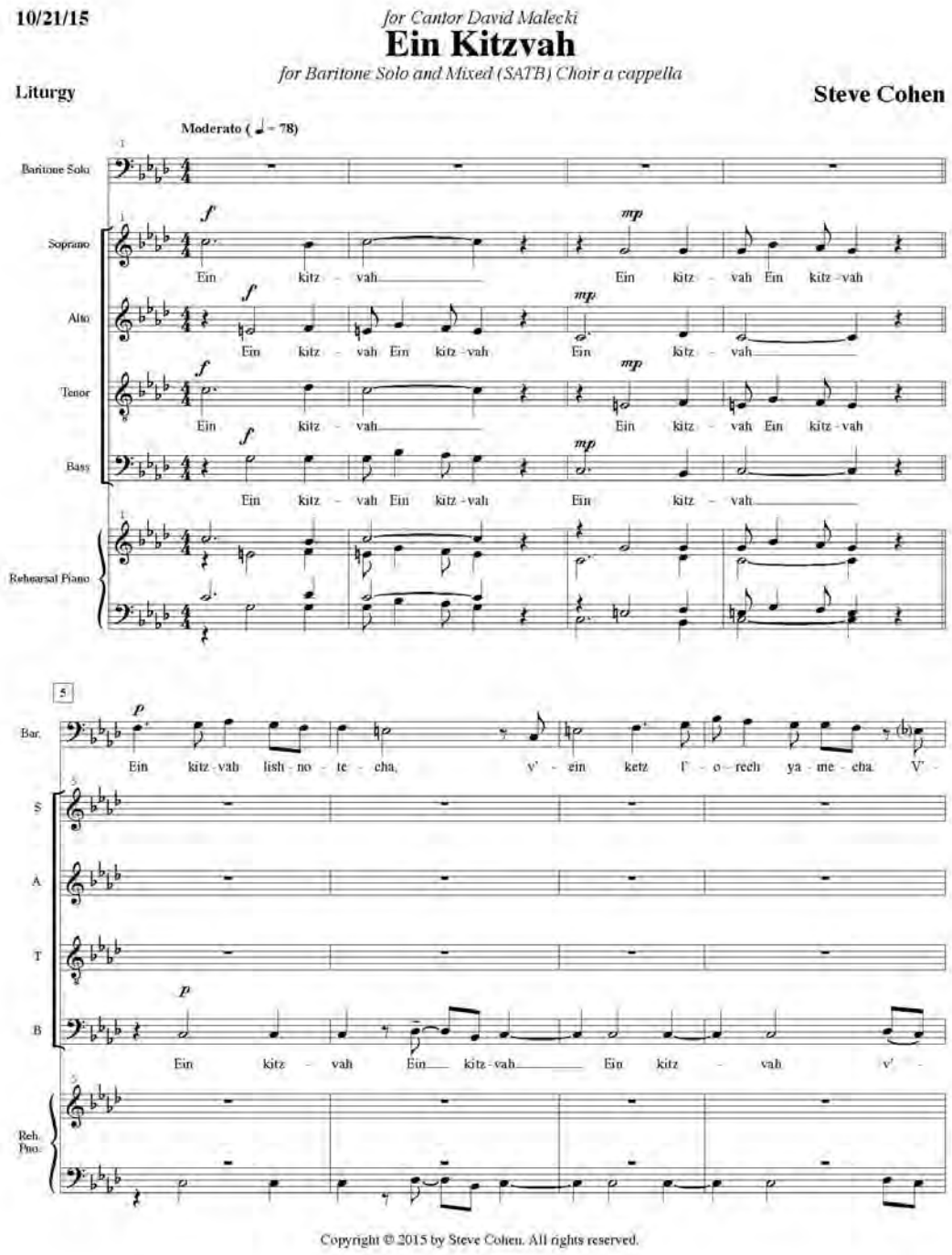
harmonic structures that departed from the more rigid limitations that Sulzer faced in his time. In the musical selections that were analyzed above, Binder's work is seen to be less concerned with reducing the nusaḥ hat'filah to its barest essentials as was Sulzer's inclination. Instead, the nusaḥ is presented in a lead role with the harmonic underpinning always supporting the vocal line rather than constraining it.

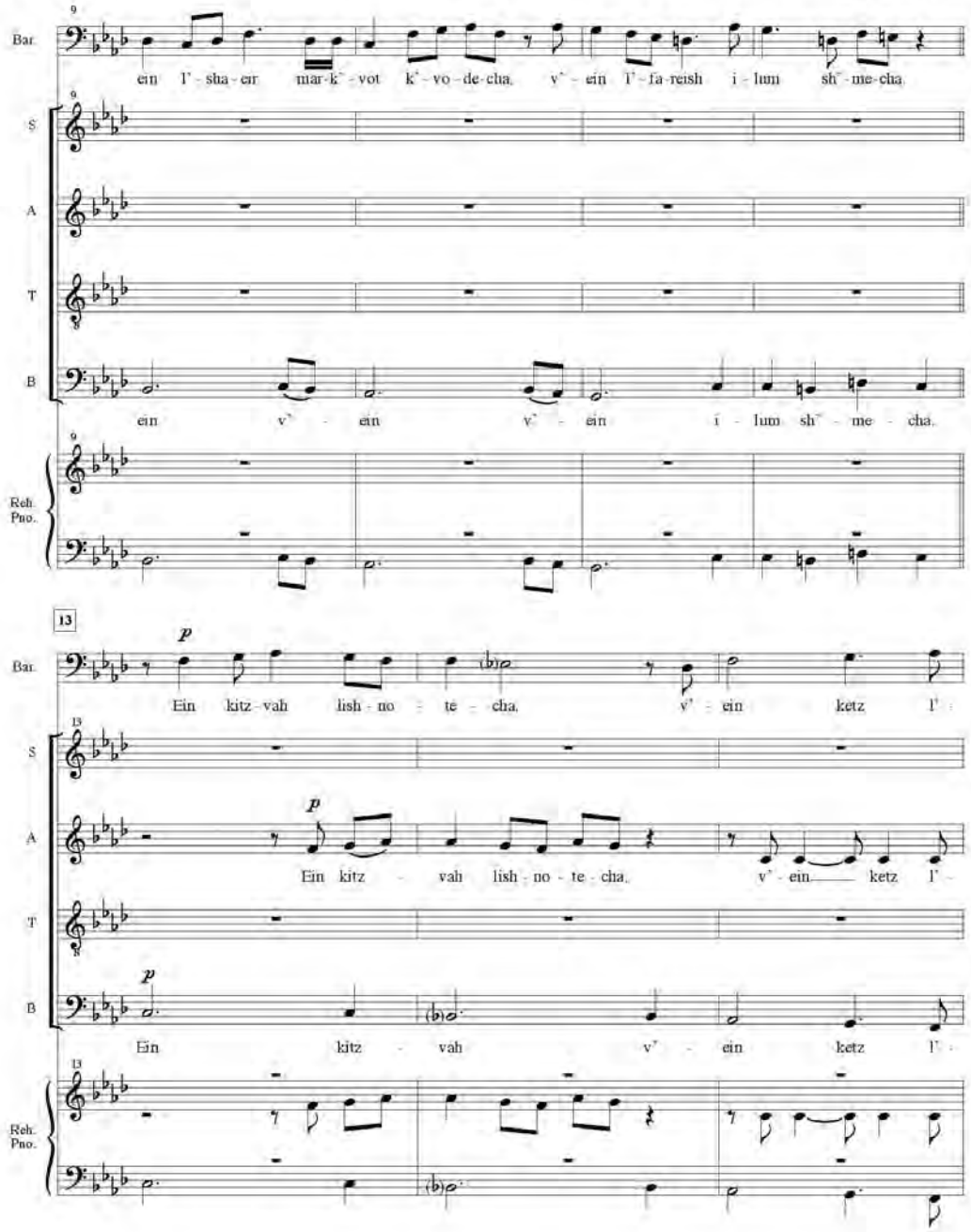
Nearly another 100 years have passed since Binder's early days of musical creativity. With the passage of time, musical tastes have changed, congregants seem to be even less inclined to sit through major musical works with choir and organ; preferring, instead, to participate in the singing at every possible opportunity. Composers of new synagogue music who don't want to suffer the same fate as Smolover can't simply jump onto a passing fad in the wider musical world and hope to harness its popularity for use in the synagogue. Instead, Sulzer's axiom of satisfying musical taste without sacrificing Jewish characteristics seems to be just as valid today as it was 200 years ago. The only significant difference is that of musical taste. With the strong demand for frequent congregational singing and a more inclusive and warm decorum than was fashionable even 60 years ago, it seems that new music needs to address that need by including the congregational voice in the compositions, either in a repeating refrain, or by quoting a familiar folk melody. The exception to this demand for inclusivity may be during the High Holy Days, when congregants have more tolerance for music that is deemed performative rather than inclusive. It is also at this time of the Jewish calendar that music plays a heightened role in creative a majestic mood in the synagogue.

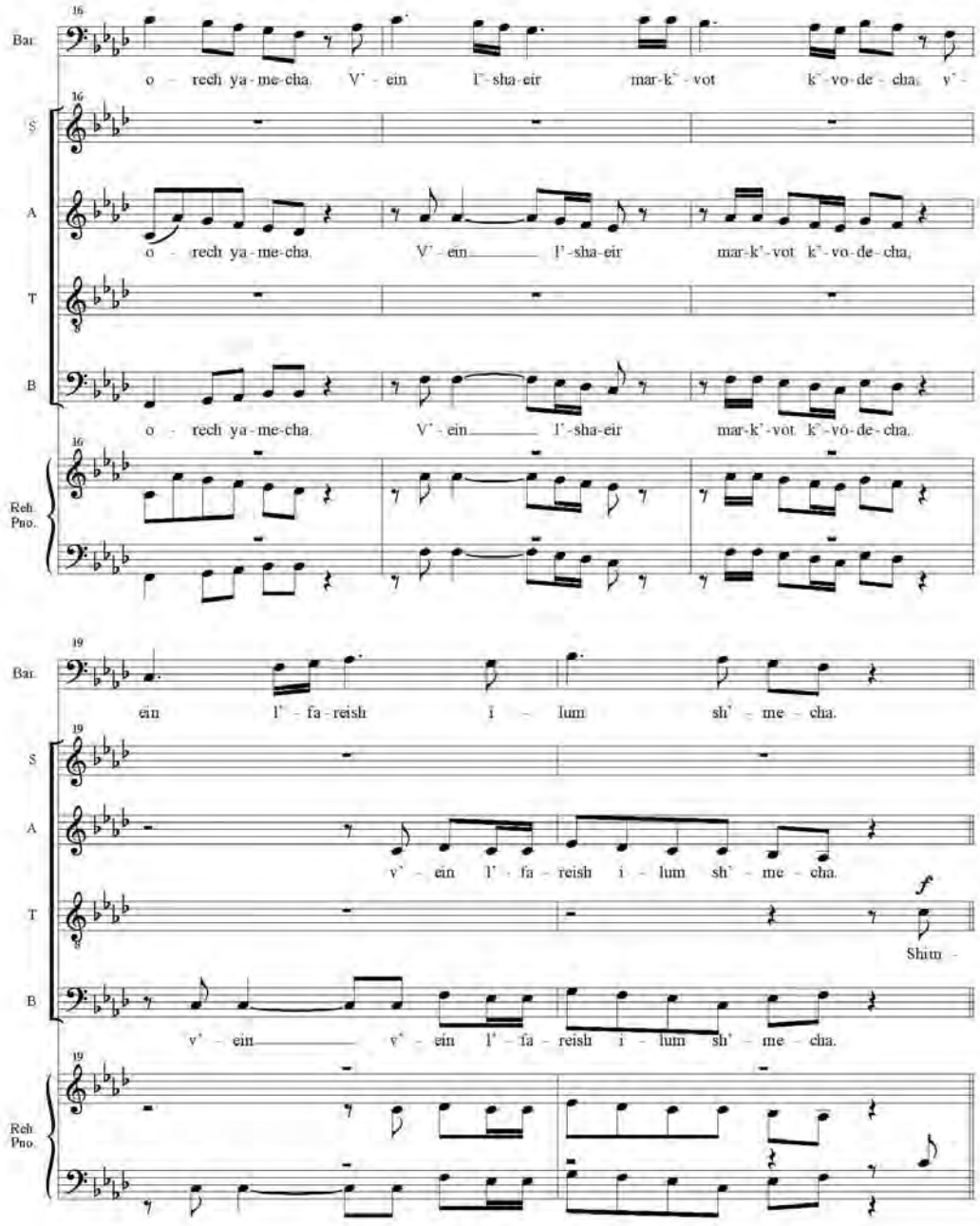
In Appendix A, which follows, I include an example of one such majestic High Holy Day musical setting of liturgical text. The text comes from the Amidah, or central

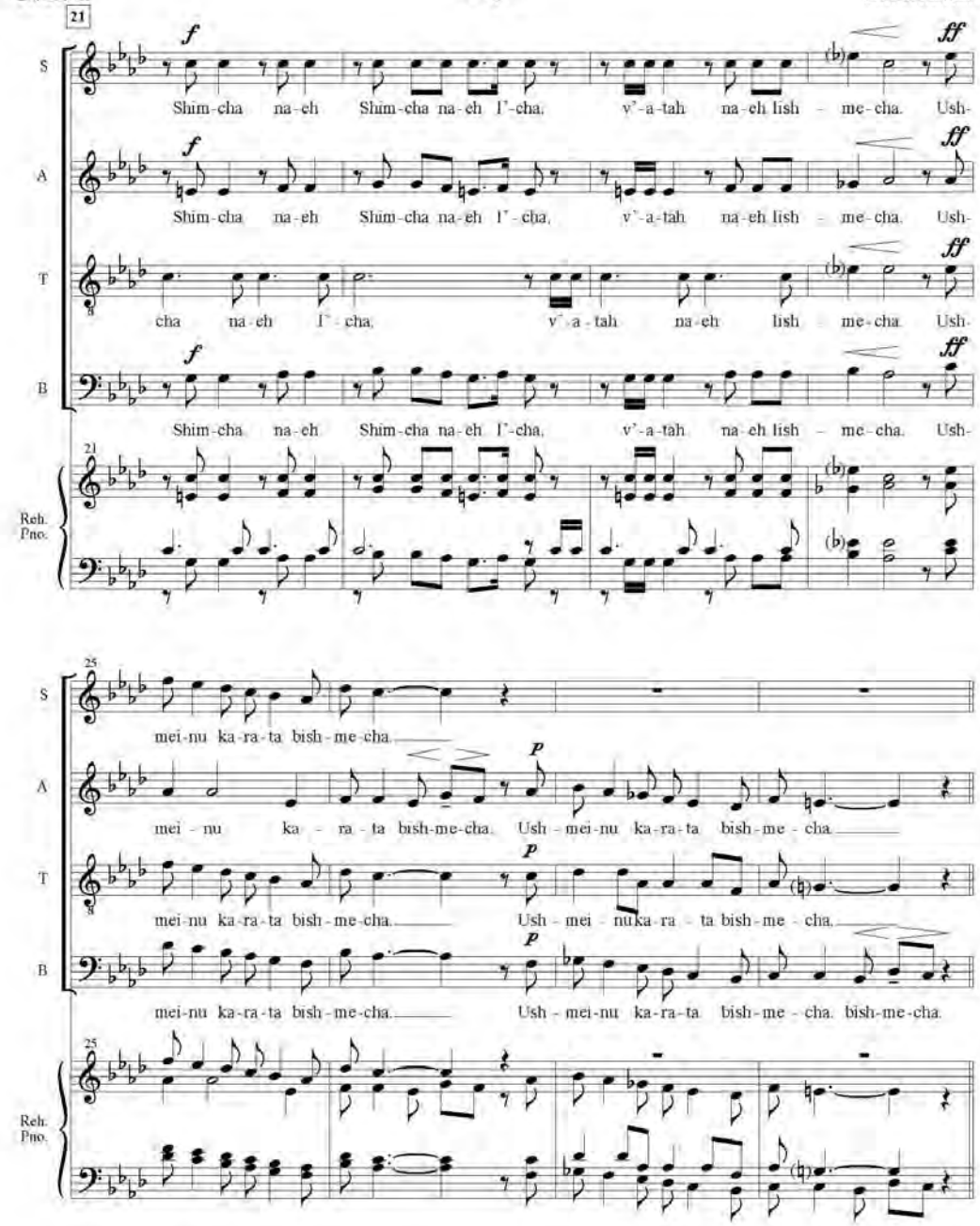
prayer rubric of the morning service. The words of Ein Kitzvah tell of God's years and days having no limit, and that, by being bound up in God's name ("ushmeinu karata bishmecha"), we also have reason to hope for our own spiritual immortality. The opening motif is in Ahavah Rabah mode, appropriately taken from the immediately preceding prayers. The transition to a strong finish in F-major expresses the hope of the text in a musical vocabulary that should delight congregational listeners for many years to come.

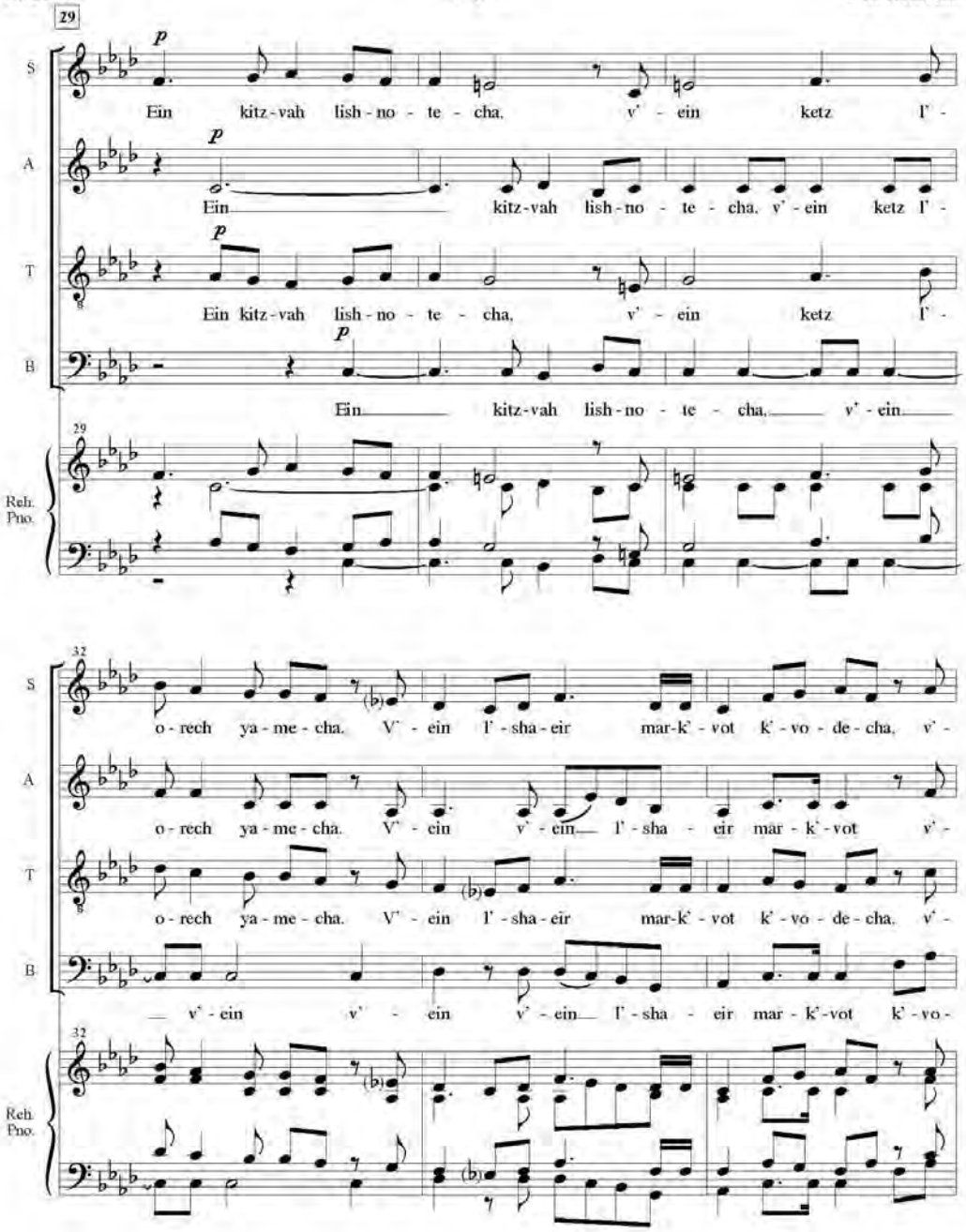
Appendix A: "Ein Kitzvah" by Steve Cohen (2015 commission)

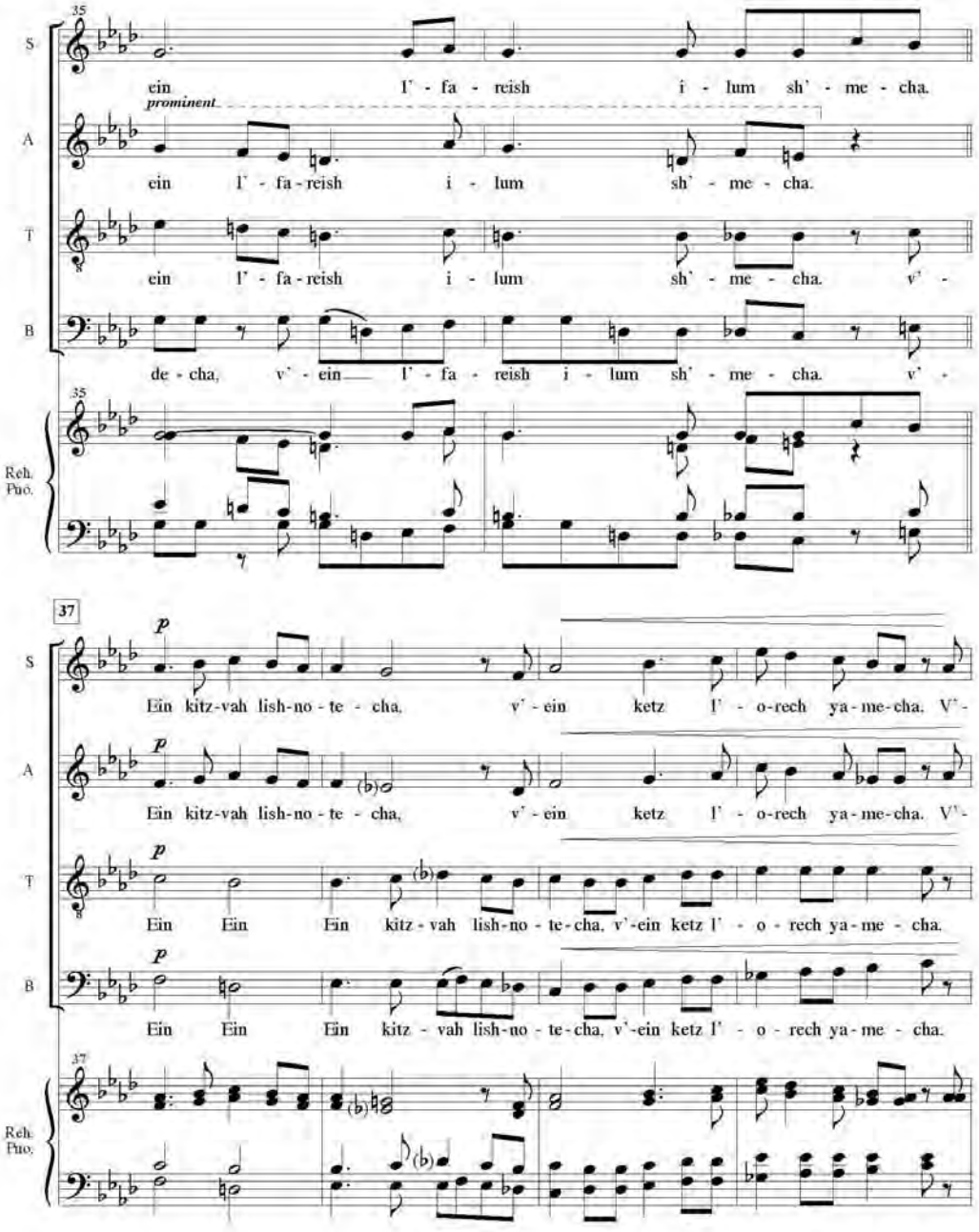


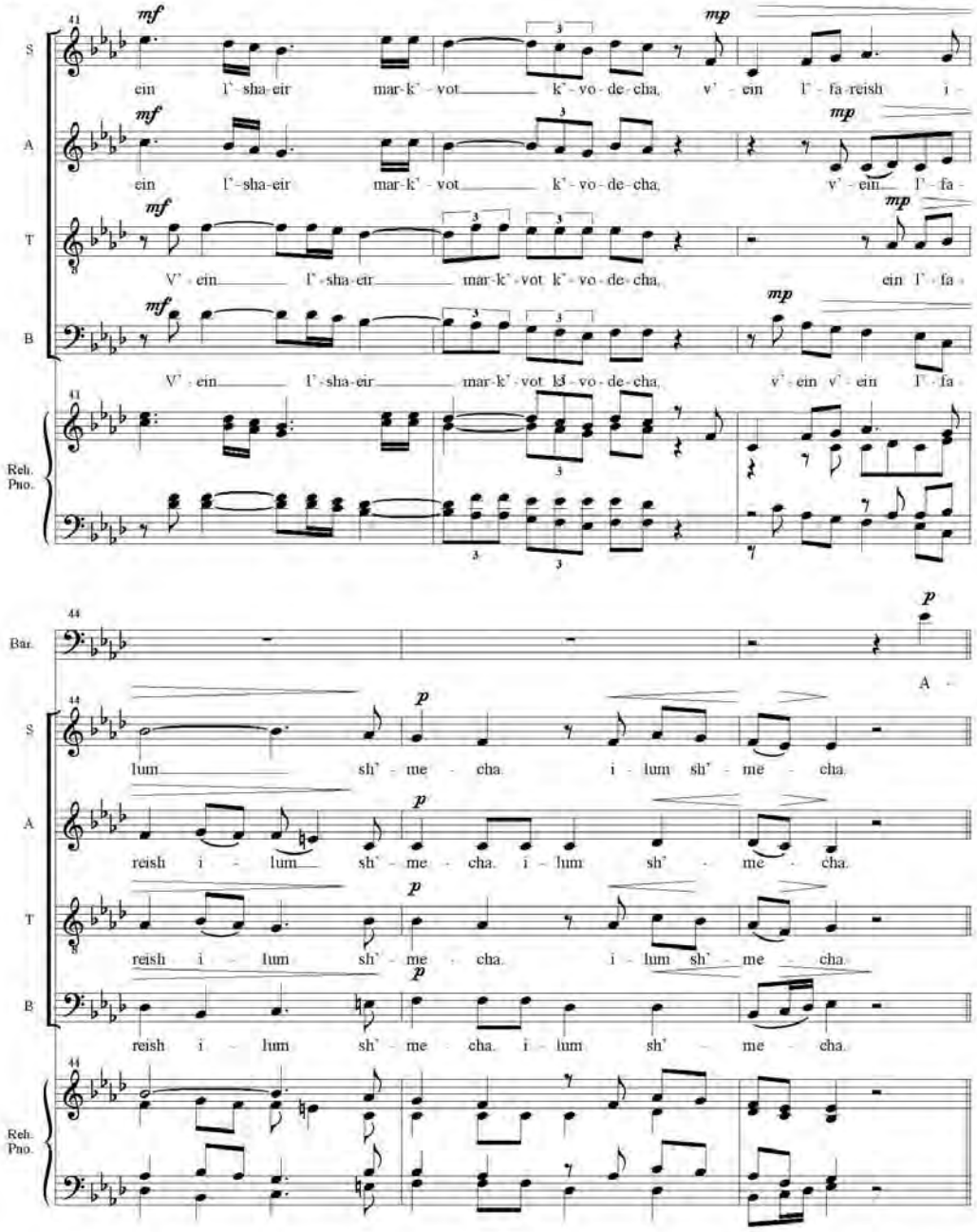

Bar.
ein l' - sha - eir mar - k" - vot k' - vo - de - cha. v' - ein l' - fa - reish i - lum sh" - me - cha.
S
A
T
B
ein v' - ein v' - ein i - lum sh" - me - cha.
Reh. Pno.
13
p
Ein kitz - vah lish - no - te - cha. v' - ein ketz l'
Ein kitz - vah lish - no - te - cha. v' - ein ketz l'
Ein kitz - vah v' - ein ketz l'

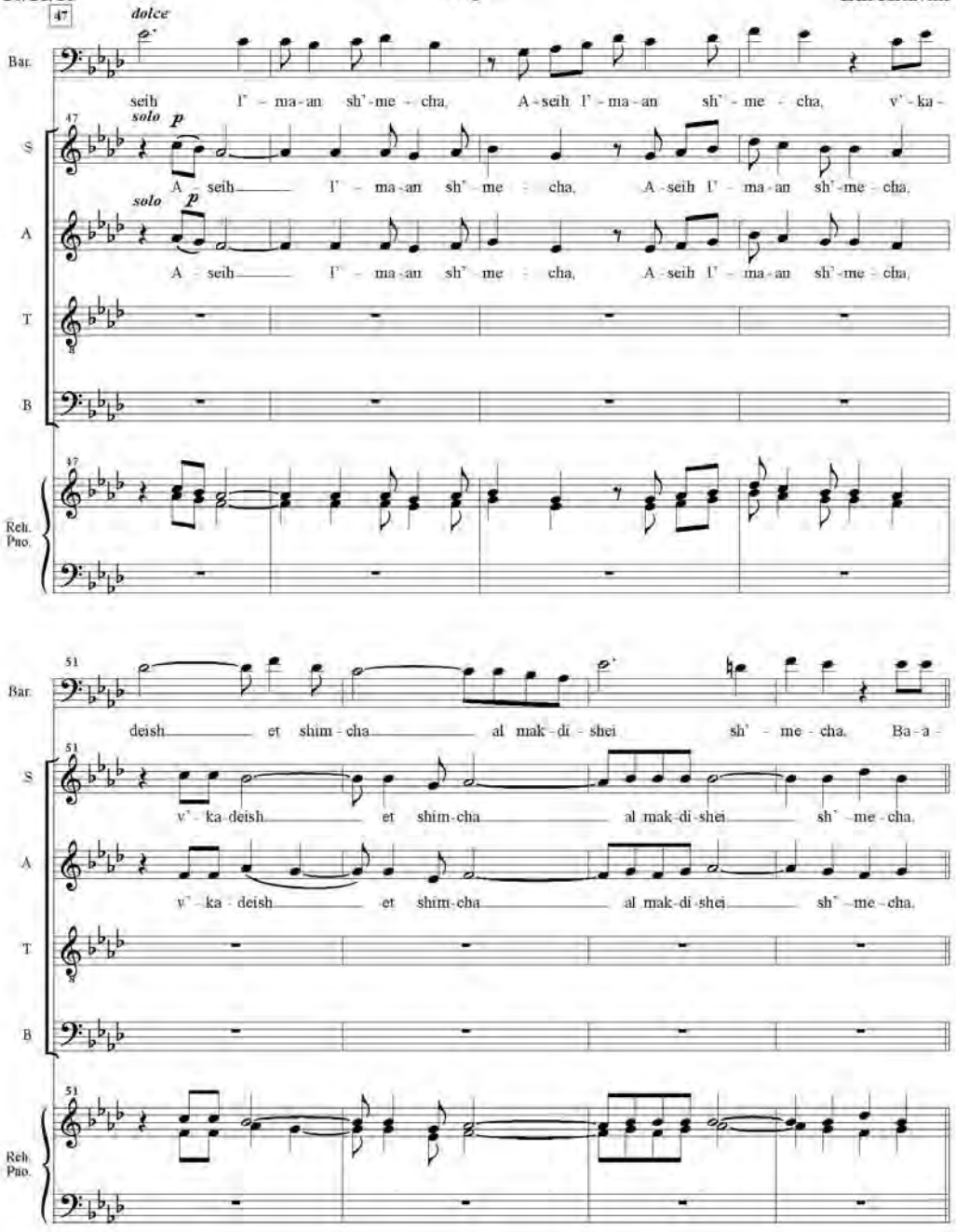

16
Bar.
o - rech ya - me - cha. V' - ein l' - sha - eir mar - k' - vot k' - vo - de - cha. v' -
S
A
o - rech ya - me - cha. V' - ein l' - sha - eir mar - k' - vot k' - vo - de - cha.
T
B
o - rech ya - me - cha. V' - ein l' - sha - eir mar - k' - vot k' - vo - de - cha.
Reh. Pno.
19
Bar.
ein l' - fa - reish i - lum sh' - me - cha.
S
A
v' - ein l' - fa - reish i - lum sh' - me - cha.
T
f
Shim -
B
v' - ein v' - ein l' - fa - reish i - lum sh' - me - cha.
Reh. Pno.

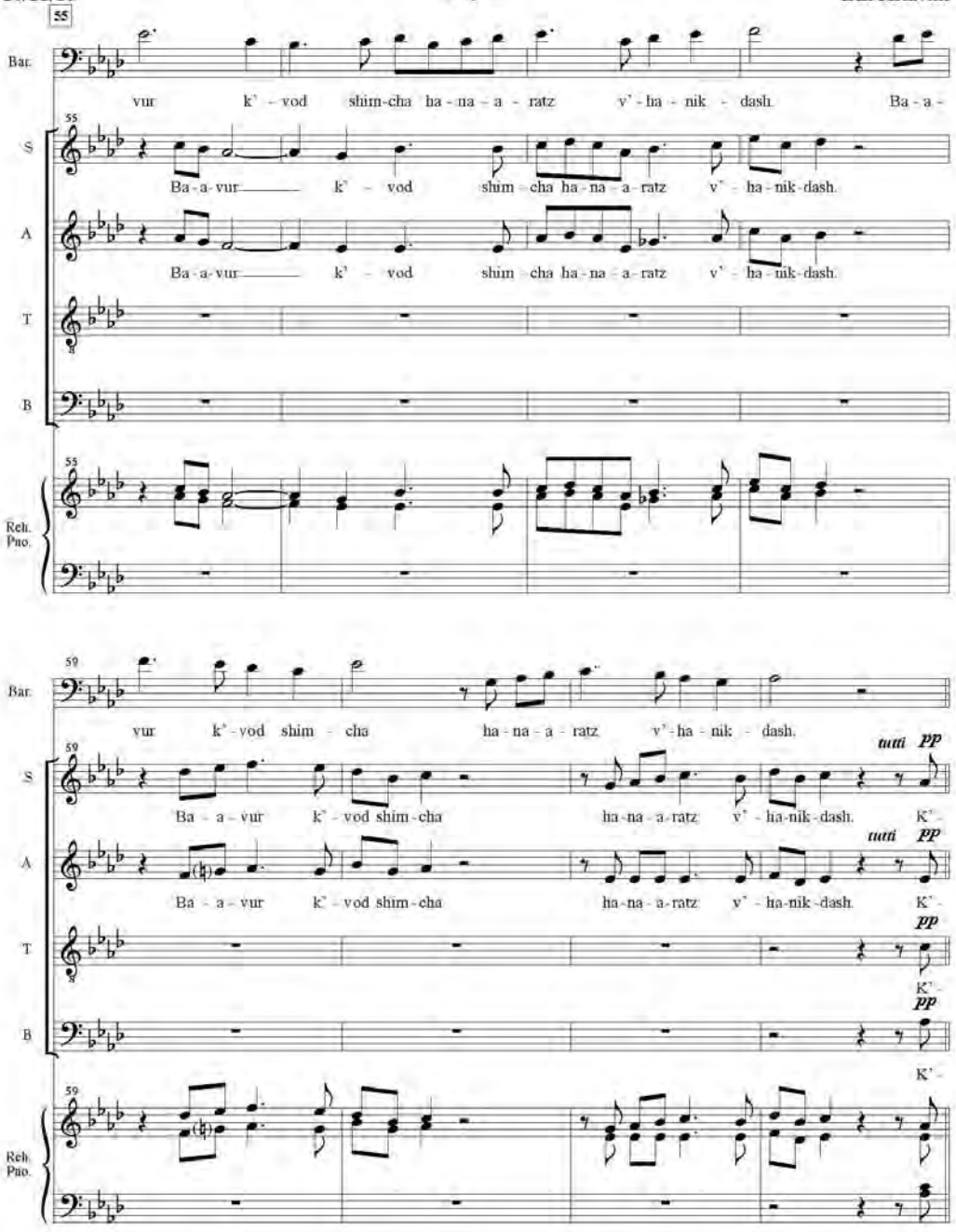

21
S
A
T
B
Reh.
Pno.
f
ff
Shim-cha na-eh Shim-cha na-eh l'-cha, v'-a-tah na-eh lish - me-cha. Ush-
cha na-eh l'-cha, v'-a-tah na-eh lish - me-cha. Ush-
25
p
mei-nu ka-ra-ta bish-me-cha.
mei - nu ka - ra - ta bish-me-cha. Ush - mei-nu ka-ra-ta bish-me - cha.
Ush - mei - nu ka-ra - ta bish-me - cha.
Ush - mei-nu ka-ra-ta bish-me - cha. bish-me-cha.

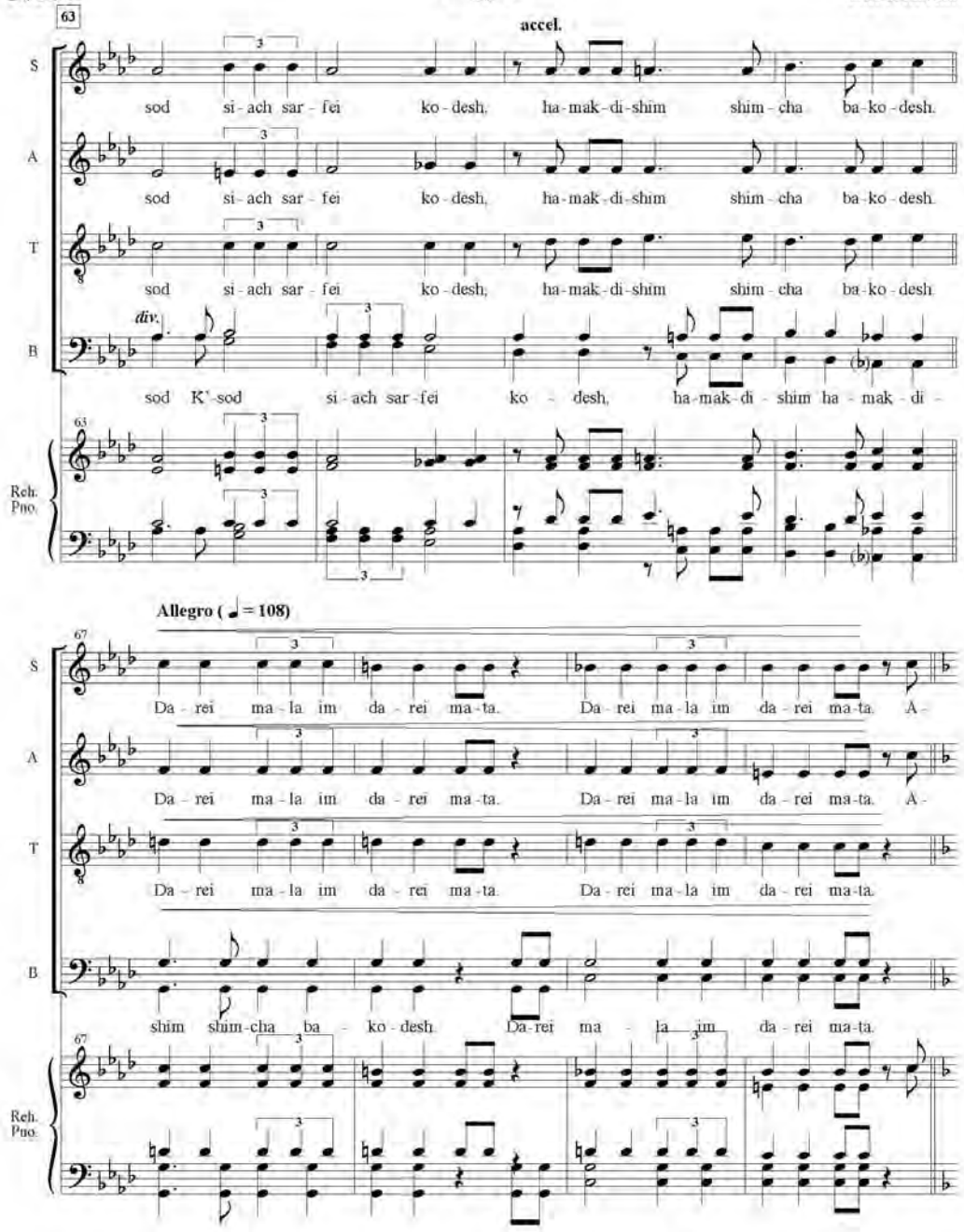

29
S
A
T
B
Reh.
Pno.
p
Ein kitz-vah lish-no-te-cha, v'-ein ketz l'-
Ein kitz-vah lish-no-te-cha, v'-ein ketz l'-
Ein kitz-vah lish-no-te-cha, v'-ein ketz l'-
Ein kitz-vah lish-no-te-cha, v'-ein
32
o-rech ya-me-cha. V'-ein l'-sha-eir mar-k'-vot k'-vo-de-cha, v'-
o-rech ya-me-cha. V'-ein v'-ein l'-sha-eir mar-k'-vot v'-
o-rech ya-me-cha. V'-ein l'-sha-eir mar-k'-vot k'-vo-de-cha, v'-
v'-ein v'-ein v'-ein l'-sha-eir mar-k'-vot k'-vo-

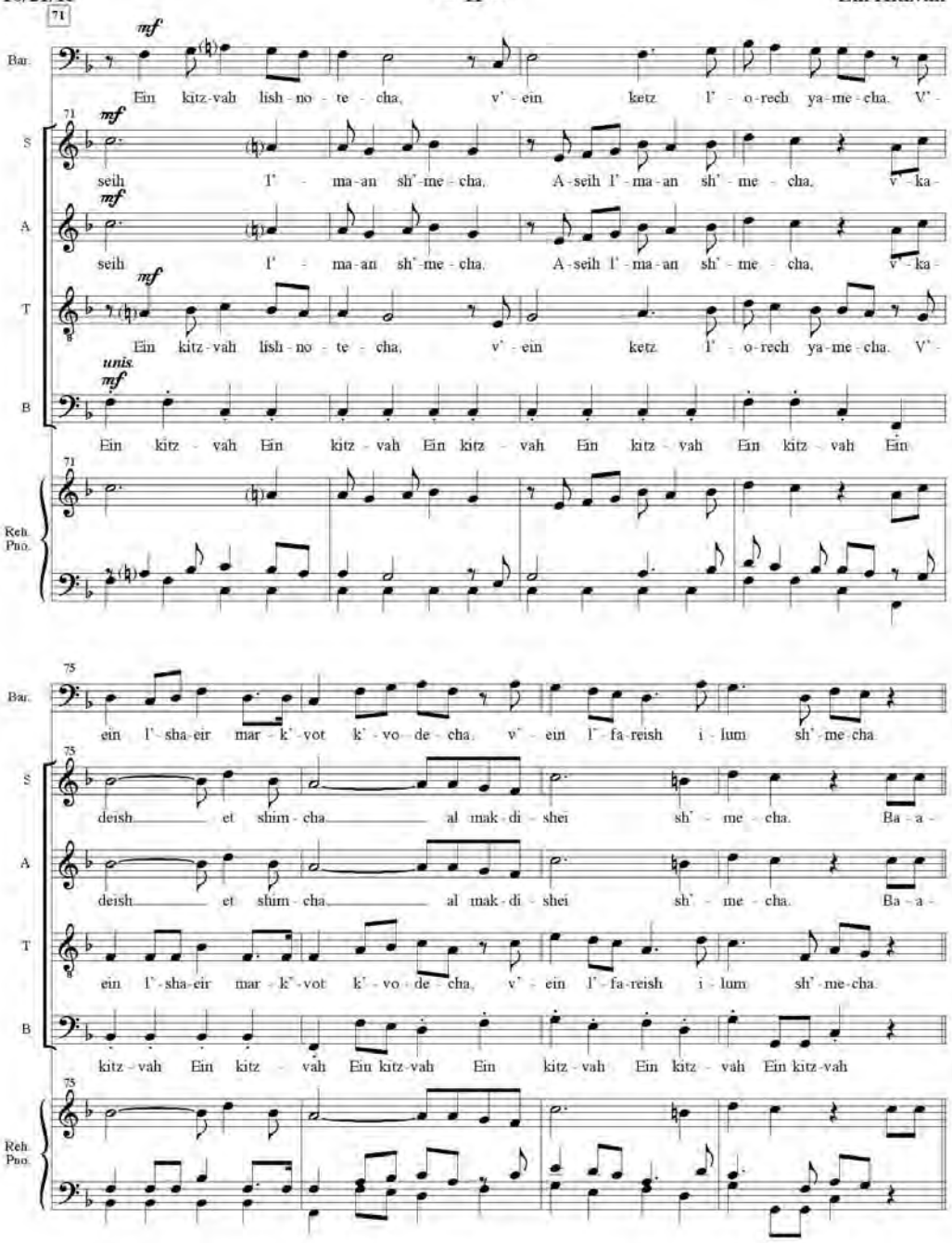

35
S
ein l' - fa - reish i - lum sh' - me - cha.
prominent
A
ein l' - fa - reish i - lum sh' - me - cha.
T
ein l' - fa - reish i - lum sh' - me - cha. v' -
B
de - cha, v' - ein l' - fa - reish i - lum sh' - me - cha. v' -
Reh. Pno.
37
p
Ein kitz-vah lish-no - te - cha, v' - ein ketz l' - o-rech ya-me-cha. V' -
Ein kitz-vah lish-no - te - cha, v' - ein ketz l' - o-rech ya-me-cha. V' -
Ein Ein Ein kitz - vah lish-no - te-cha, v' - ein ketz l' - o - rech ya-me - cha.
Ein Ein Ein kitz - vah lish-no - te-cha, v' - ein ketz l' - o - rech ya-me - cha.

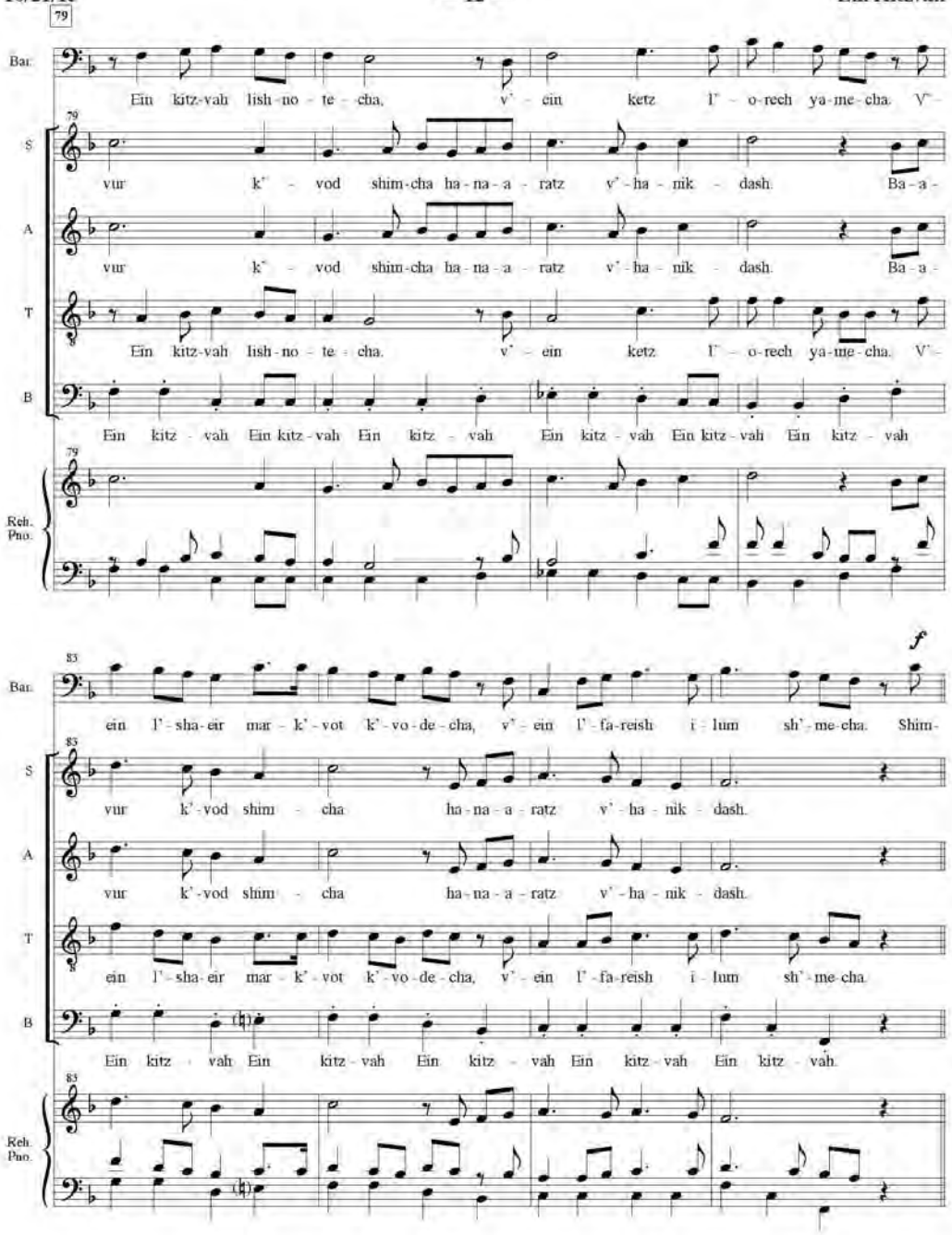

41
S
A
T
B
Reh. Pno.
mf
mp
ein l'-sha-eir mar-k'-vot k'-vo-de-cha, v'-ein l'-fa-reish i-
ein l'-sha-eir mar-k'-vot k'-vo-de-cha, v'-ein l'-fa-
V'-ein l'-sha-eir mar-k'-vot k'-vo-de-cha, ein l'-fa-
V'-ein l'-sha-eir mar-k'-vot k'-vo-de-cha, v'-ein v'-ein l'-fa-
44
Bar.
S
A
T
B
Reh. Pno.
p
A-
lum sh'-me-cha i-lum sh'-me-cha.
reish i-lum sh'-me-cha. i-lum sh'-me-cha.
reish i-lum sh'-me-cha. i-lum sh'-me-cha.
reish i-lum sh'-me-cha. i-lum sh'-me-cha.

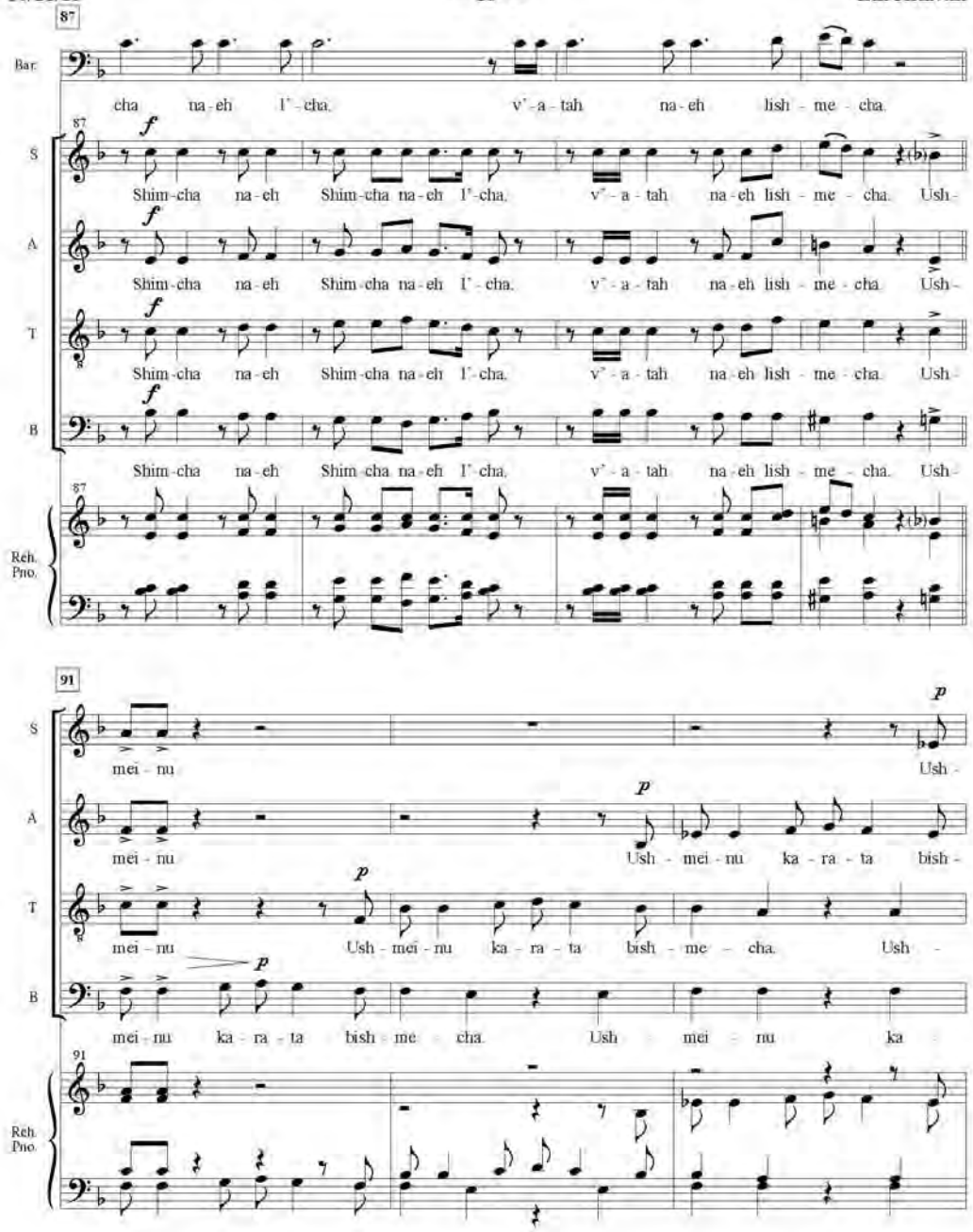

47
dolce
Bar.
seih l' - ma - an sh' - me - cha, A - seih l' - ma - an sh' - me - cha, v' - ka -
47
solo p
S
A - seih l' - ma - an sh' - me - cha, A - seih l' - ma - an sh' - me - cha,
solo p
A
A - seih l' - ma - an sh' - me - cha, A - seih l' - ma - an sh' - me - cha,
T
B
47
Reh. Pno.
51
Bar.
deish et shim - cha al mak - di - shei sh' - me - cha, Ba - a -
51
S
v' - ka - deish et shim - cha al mak - di - shei sh' - me - cha,
A
v' - ka - deish et shim - cha al mak - di - shei sh' - me - cha,
T
B
51
Reh. Pno.

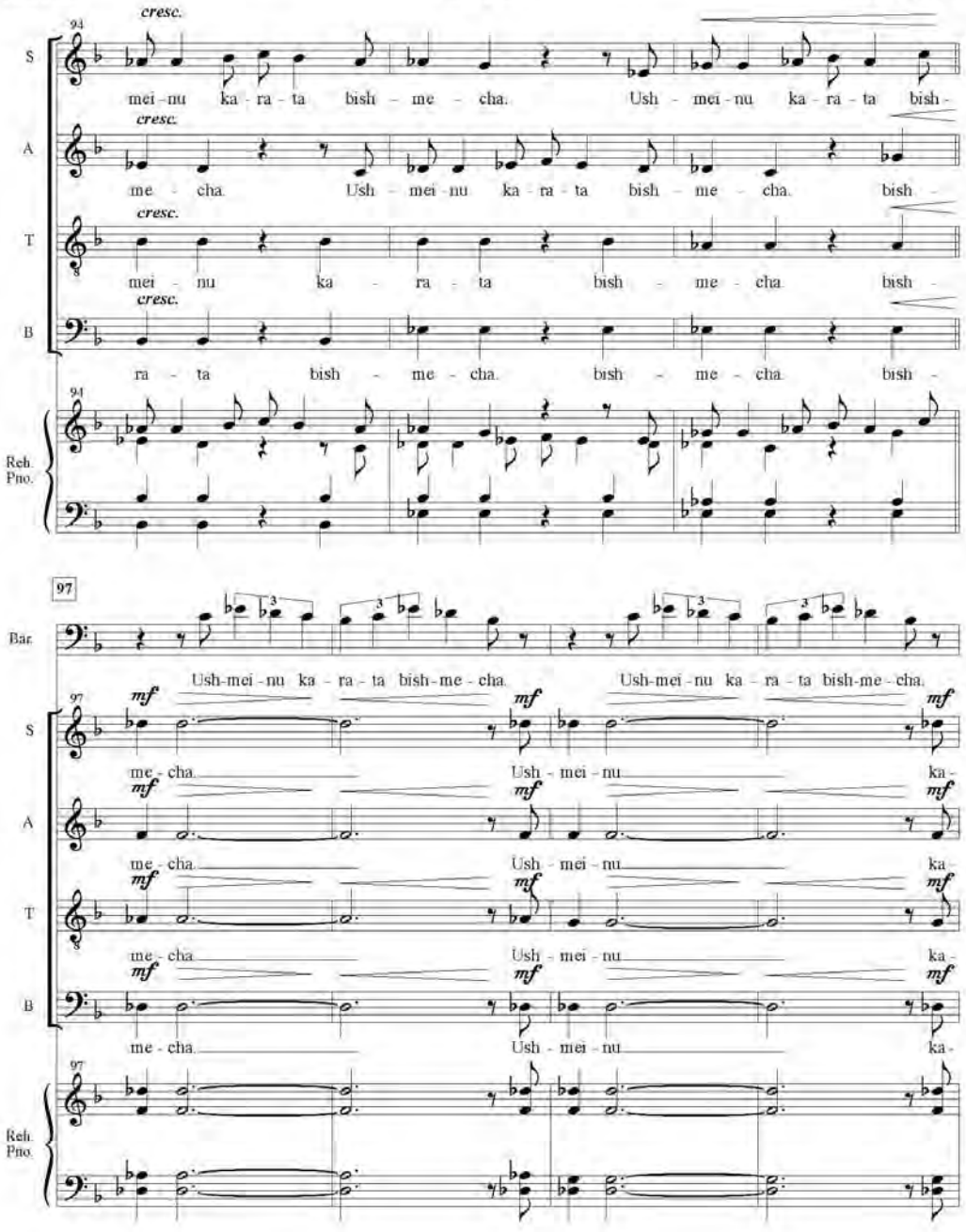

55
Bar.
vur k' - vod shim-cha ha - na - a - ratz v' - ha - nik - dash. Ba - a -
S
Ba - a - vur k' - vod shim - cha ha - na - a - ratz v' - ha - nik - dash.
A
Ba - a - vur k' - vod shim - cha ha - na - a - ratz v' - ha - nik - dash.
T
B
Reh. Pno.
59
Bar.
vur k' - vod shim - cha ha - na - a - ratz v' - ha - nik - dash.
tutti pp
S
Ba - a - vur k' - vod shim - cha ha - na - a - ratz v' - ha - nik - dash. K' -
tutti pp
A
Ba - a - vur k' - vod shim - cha ha - na - a - ratz v' - ha - nik - dash. K' -
pp
T
K' -
pp
B
K' -
Reh. Pno.

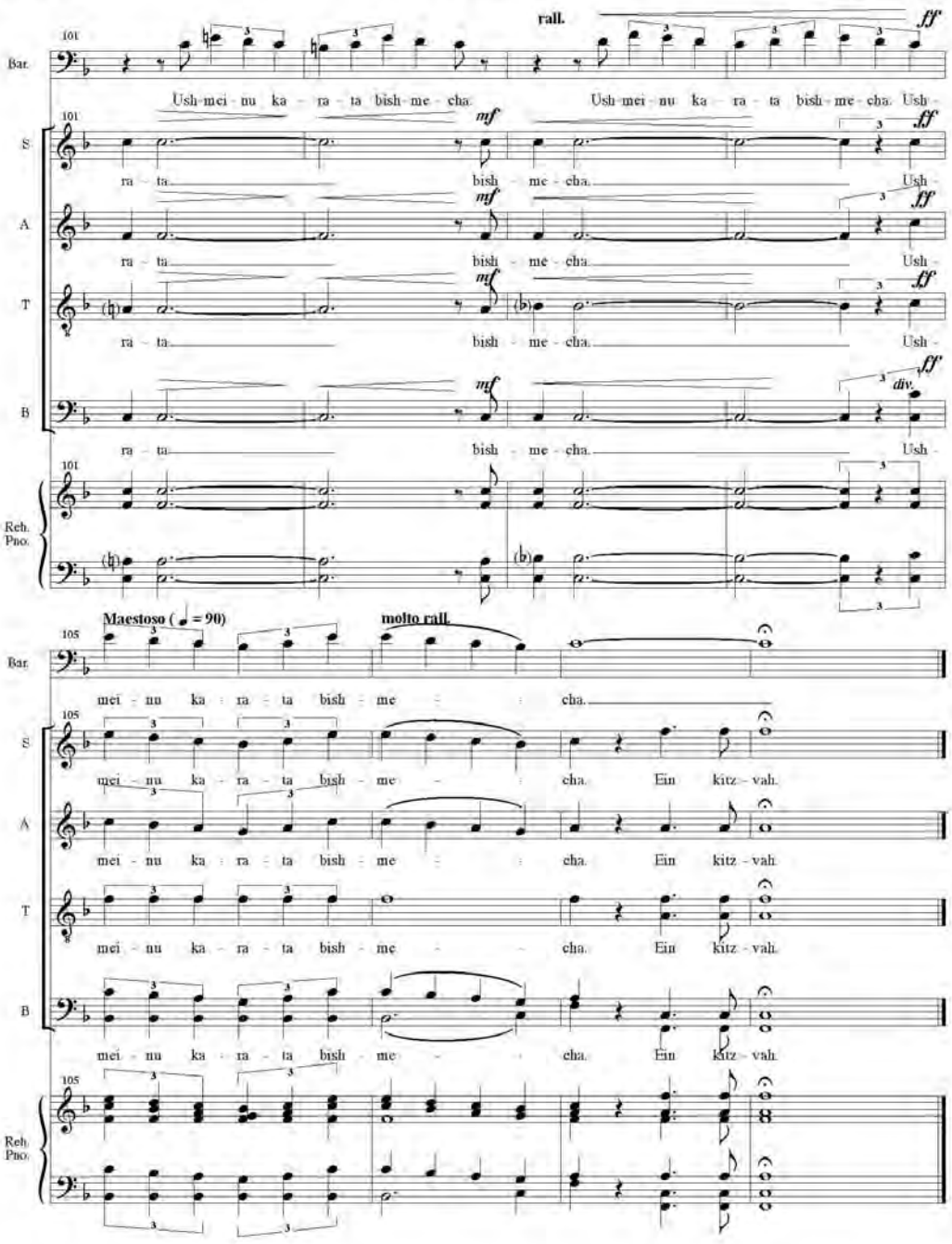

63
accel.
S
sod si - ach sar - fei ko - desh, ha - mak - di - shim shim - cha ba - ko - desh.
A
sod si - ach sar - fei ko - desh, ha - mak - di - shim shim - cha ba - ko - desh.
T
sod si - ach sar - fei ko - desh, ha - mak - di - shim shim - cha ba - ko - desh.
B
div.
sod K'-sod si - ach sar - fei ko - desh, ha - mak - di - shim ha - mak - di -
Reh. Pno.
Allegro (= 108)
67
Da - rei ma - la im da - rei ma - ta. Da - rei ma - la im da - rei ma - ta. A -
Da - rei ma - la im da - rei ma - ta. Da - rei ma - la im da - rei ma - ta. A -
Da - rei ma - la im da - rei ma - ta. Da - rei ma - la im da - rei ma - ta.
shim shim - cha ba - ko - desh. Da - rei ma - la im da - rei ma - ta.


71
Bar.
mf
Ein kitz-vah lish-no-te-cha, v'-ein ketz l'-o-rech ya-me-cha. V'-
S
mf
seih l'-ma-an sh'-me-cha. A-seih l'-ma-an sh'-me-cha, v'-ka-
A
mf
seih l'-ma-an sh'-me-cha. A-seih l'-ma-an sh'-me-cha, v'-ka-
T
mf
Ein kitz-vah lish-no-te-cha, v'-ein ketz l'-o-rech ya-me-cha. V'-
B
unis.
mf
Ein kitz-vah Ein kitz-vah Ein kitz-vah Ein kitz-vah Ein kitz-vah Ein
Reh. Pno.
75
Bar.
ein l'-sha-eir mar-k'-vot k'-vo-de-cha, v'-ein l'-fa-reish i-lum sh'-me-cha.
S
deish-et shim-cha al mak-di-shei sh'-me-cha. Ba-a-
A
deish-et shim-cha al mak-di-shei sh'-me-cha. Ba-a-
T
ein l'-sha-eir mar-k'-vot k'-vo-de-cha, v'-ein l'-fa-reish i-lum sh'-me-cha.
B
kitz-vah Ein kitz-vah Ein kitz-vah Ein kitz-vah Ein kitz-vah Ein kitz-vah
Reh. Pno.


79
Bar.
Ein kitz-vah lish-no - te - cha, v' - ein ketz l' - o-rech ya-me-cha. V'-
S
vur k' - vod shim-cha ha-na-a - ratz v'-ha - nik - dash. Ba-a-
A
vur k' - vod shim-cha ha-na-a - ratz v'-ha - nik - dash. Ba-a-
T
Ein kitz-vah lish-no - te - cha. v' - ein ketz l' - o-rech ya-me-cha. V'-
B
Ein kitz - vah Ein kitz-vah Ein kitz - vah Ein kitz - vah Ein kitz-vah Ein kitz - vah
Reh. Pno.
83
f
Bar.
ein l'-sha-eir mar - k'-vot k'-vo-de-cha, v'-ein l'-fa-reish i-lum sh'-me-cha. Shim-
S
vur k'-vod shim - cha ha-na-a-ratz v'-ha-nik - dash.
A
vur k'-vod shim - cha ha-na-a-ratz v'-ha-nik - dash.
T
ein l'-sha-eir mar - k'-vot k'-vo-de-cha, v'-ein l'-fa-reish i-lum sh'-me-cha.
B
Ein kitz - vah Ein kitz-vah Ein kitz - vah Ein kitz-vah Ein kitz - vah.
Reh. Pno.


87
Bar.
cha na - eh l' - cha. v' - a - tah na - eh lish - me - cha.
S
Shim - cha na - eh Shim - cha na - eh l' - cha. v' - a - tah na - eh lish - me - cha. Ush -
A
Shim - cha na - eh Shim - cha na - eh l' - cha. v' - a - tah na - eh lish - me - cha. Ush -
T
Shim - cha na - eh Shim - cha na - eh l' - cha. v' - a - tah na - eh lish - me - cha. Ush -
B
Shim - cha na - eh Shim - cha na - eh l' - cha. v' - a - tah na - eh lish - me - cha. Ush -
Reh. Pno.
91
S
mei - nu Ush -
A
mei - nu Ush - mei - nu ka - ra - ta bish -
T
mei - nu Ush - mei - nu ka - ra - ta bish - me - cha. Ush -
B
mei - nu ka - ra - ta bish - me - cha. Ush - mei - nu ka -
Reh. Pno.


cresc.
94
S
mei - nu ka - ra - ta bish - me - cha. Ush - mei - nu ka - ra - ta bish -
A
me - cha. Ush - mei - nu ka - ra - ta bish - me - cha. bish -
T
mei - nu ka - ra - ta bish - me - cha bish -
B
ra - ta bish - me - cha. bish - me - cha bish -
91
Reh. Pno.
97
Bar.
Ush-mei - nu ka - ra - ta bish-me - cha. Ush-mei - nu ka - ra - ta bish-me - cha.
mf
me - cha. Ush - mei - nu ka -
me - cha. Ush - mei - nu ka -
me - cha. Ush - mei - nu ka -
me - cha. Ush - mei - nu ka -


rall.
Bar.
Ush mei nu ka ra ta bish me cha. Ush mei nu ka ra ta bish me cha. Ush
S.
A.
T.
B.
ra ta bish me cha. Ush
div.
Reh. Pno.
Maestoso (= 90)
molto rall.
mei nu ka ra ta bish me cha. Ein kitz vah.

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