

# **Israeli Fusion: The Convergence of Sacred and Secular in Music and Prayer**

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## Introduction

As modern Israel approaches her 65<sup>th</sup> birthday, the nation and its culture are exhibiting many distinguishing traits of a maturing society. Among these are a re-engagement with spiritual identity and a revitalized culture of music and prayer, which together constitute a rebirth of Judaism among non-Orthodox Israelis. The deeply ingrained connection of the Jewish people to its biblical and liturgical texts, themes and traditions is being reinterpreted in a dynamic and creative process that seeks to transcend the labels and categories of the past. The resulting escalation in popular music of material related to the *Tanakh* and the *siddur*, and the rapid evolution of non-Orthodox spiritual communities centered around innovative musical genres, are proving to be transformative in areas of Israeli society formerly considered to be entirely secular.

A direct line can be traced between the origins of modern Israel and the latest developments in culture and spirituality, based on the pioneering spirit that is so typically Israeli and takes a new form in every generation. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, as the Zionist pioneers worked relentlessly to establish the land of Israel, a new society was being created from the ground up. A fresh Israeli culture was taking shape as immigrants flooded to Palestine. The early pioneers who laid the foundation of the burgeoning Jewish state made a conscious decision to leave many aspects of the “old world” behind, including many Jewish traditions. Their focus was to create a “new Jew,” one committed to working the land, fighting for survival and living in a modern world. Notwithstanding their insistence on reviving Hebrew as a modern language, the majority of early Zionists identified as secular Jews, disconnected from traditional practices.

It soon became clear that the majority of Israeli Jews fit into two categories: Orthodox and secular. Israelis strongly identified with one group or the other. There was very little overlap or dialogue between secular and the Orthodox, and neither community expressed interest in understanding or accepting the other. Orthodox Jews chose to ostracize themselves from the secular world, preferring instead to live in insular communities disassociated from the collective Israeli whole. Secular Israelis discarded traditional Jewish practice because it wasn't perceived to be relevant to the modern world.

The secular Israelis who once accepted the rejection of Jewish study and practice in favor of Zionist ideals eventually began to reconsider their de-prioritization of Jewish tradition. Eran Baruch, executive director of *Bina*, the non-Orthodox education association in Tel Aviv, describes the underpinnings of this evolution in three stages:

The first generation rebelled against their parents, but they still knew their tradition.

The second generation was all about establishing new settlements, setting up factories and consolidating the army. But we're no longer so busy building kibbutzim in the Galilee. So, now, the third generation is missing something.<sup>1</sup>

In the last twenty years, there has been much impetus among secular Israelis toward reclaiming their Judaism. With the migration away from classical Zionism and the identity crisis that followed Rabin's assassination in the late 1990's, Israelis began to crave spirituality and new forms of community. Lee Perlman of the Jewish Federation of North America refers to this yearning as "soul-searching" and "soul-building."<sup>2</sup> Secular Israelis began investigating ways to express their Judaism and to connect to prayer, community,

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<sup>1</sup> Brian Blum, "Insourcing Judaism," *The Jerusalem Report*, August 30, 2012

<sup>2</sup> Lee Perlman, "Soul Searching and Soul Building: The Jewish Identity Field in Israel." Paper presented at the Tarrytown Group Meeting, January 2011, 1-20

ritual and tradition.

This thirst for Jewish connection is part of a larger trend that has been identified by the media and scholars as the Jewish Renewal Movement: *Hitchadshut Yehudit*. According to Naama Azulay's doctoral dissertation, this movement addresses two interrelated trends: "renewing the connection between Jews belonging to the Israeli secular sector and their heritage...and the ongoing processes of renewal, in which novelty and tradition are combined in order to be restructured so as to produce meaningful Jewish life for Israeli Jews living in a modern, egalitarian, and democratic society."<sup>3</sup>

Israeli Jewish Renewal has therefore concerned itself with the relationship between sacred and secular elements in Israeli public life and in the spiritual lives of its citizens. The boundary between sacred and secular in Israel has always been blurred. In a place where religion and state are so uniquely intertwined, it follows that there is considerable overlap in political, social, educational, cultural and religious forums. For example, at *Yom Ha'atzma'ut* (Israeli Independence Day) celebrations, the country's political leaders quote the Torah (or famous Jewish scholars) in their opening remarks. On Shabbat, secular citizens are constrained from shopping. Jewish couples of all backgrounds are required to be married by an Orthodox rabbi. And students in secular Israeli schools study Jewish history, Bible and Jewish thought throughout their years of education. Nearly everything in Israel is influenced in some way by religion or by Jewish texts.

Jewish Renewal is in the process of redefining secular Jewish identity in terms of its connection to Jewish literature and study, as well as in terms of how that relationship is expressed in the structures of Jewish communal life. In the realm of Israeli music, this is

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<sup>3</sup> Naama Azulay, "Hebrew We Are And Our Hearts Will We Worship: The Jewish Renewal Movement in Israeli Secular Society," Ph.D. Thesis, Bar-Ilan University, 2010.

reflected in the considerable sense of interpretive freedom with which sacred textual references are employed in popular music. In the domain of spiritual community, the result is a network of independent, non-Orthodox minyanim that are beginning to thrive throughout the country.

My thesis will explore the intersection of the sacred and secular in Israeli society, specifically in relation to Israeli music and emerging trends in *t'filah*. More specifically, this paper will demonstrate that the fusion of secular and sacred elements in music and prayer has given rise to a new form of Israeli Judaism, in which self-identified secular Israelis are embracing contemporary expressions of Jewish text, music, prayer and spirituality.

Chapter 1 will explore the inclusion of religious texts and themes in three main categories of Israeli music: Pre-State Music, Art Music and *Shirei Eretz Yisrael* (Songs of the Land of Israel). This chapter lays the foundation for the outgrowth of the current phenomenon, in which religious texts and themes are integrated into Israeli popular music. Chapter 2 will begin with an investigation of the political and social developments that have led to Israel's cultural and spiritual renaissance, and it will conclude with an examination of several of the most influential trends of that renaissance. Chapter 3 will provide an in-depth examination of the expansive use of sacred texts in popular music, as well as a closer look at two musicians who are helping to dissolve the boundaries between sacred and secular. Finally, Chapter 4 will document the emergence of independent prayer communities as a way for Israelis to connect to their Jewish heritage and spirituality in a creative, non-denominational environment.

## Chapter 1

### Biblical Themes and Religious Texts in Israeli Music

“Every decade since the establishment of the State in 1948 has seen some variation on the theme of using the Bible. From the Yishuv era in pre-state Palestine to this day in modern Israel, the Bible remains a central theme of popular Israeli music.”<sup>4</sup> In order to fully understand how the inclusion of religious texts and themes in Israeli music has flourished during the last 10-15 years (see Chapter 3), it will be helpful to examine their earlier usages in the history of modern Israel. A broad overview of the evolution of Israeli music from pre-Statehood until the present day, specifically focusing on the consistent presence of religious texts and themes, will therefore lay the foundation for this study.

The seemingly sudden and explosive interest in ancient Jewish texts that Israeli musicians currently demonstrate in their music has not been an overnight transformation. On the contrary, it is evident through an exploration of Israel’s rich musical history that Jewish texts and themes have always been a source of inspiration in Israeli music, especially in the formative years of the State, as the identity of the New Israeli was developing.

For the purpose of this thesis, three categories of Israeli music will be defined as the most important historical strands: Pre-State Music, Art Music and *Shirei Eretz Yisrael* (Songs of the Land of Israel). In each case it is possible to document the influence of religious or biblical themes and texts.

Pre-State Israeli music includes a mixture of melodies imported from European

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<sup>4</sup> Naomi Cohn Zentner, “Singing the Bible with a Modern Inflection: Scriptural Events, Places and Personalities in Israeli Popular Music,” 171-197, *Journal of Synagogue Music*, 2009, 171.



sources and original melodies composed in Israel, often incorporating Yiddish or Hebrew texts. It emphasizes certain topical themes, such as pioneering, working the land, and connection with nature. Moreover, pre-State music was intimately intertwined with the fervor and zeal of early Zionism and its longing for a Jewish homeland. In fact, the use of biblical references in pre-State music served as an effective tool for Zionists to advance their message and agenda, by interpreting biblical themes in a historical and nationalistic way. These biblical references especially succeeded in painting a picture of the landscape and agriculture of the land of ancient Israel. According to Cohn Zentner, they were also “seen as a way to herald the Jewish people’s return to their homeland and to their naturally designated role. Recurring biblical imagery of a hardworking Jewish folk living out of doors and deeply rooted to the land was useful to a Zionist establishment intent on creating the image of a “New Jew.”<sup>5</sup>

Also influential on Israeli pre-State music were the Jewish immigrants who moved to Israel as a response to a religious calling. This group of traditional Jews brought with them songs that expressed their desire to maintain a traditional way of life, as well as their desire to rebuild the Jewish homeland in the tradition of the Torah.<sup>6</sup> It can be inferred, even from song titles, that many popular songs of unknown origin commingled a commitment to working the land and a sense of personal spiritual development. "Anu Banu Artzah" ("We have come to our land to build and be rebuilt in her") and "El Yivneh Hagalil" ("God will rebuild the Galilee"), two popular pioneer songs from 1930 and 1910, exemplify this tradition.<sup>7</sup>

As early as 1883, the first Zionist song to incorporate biblical references was

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Marsha Edelman, *Discovering Jewish Music*, 187-220 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003), 192.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

published. “Shivat Tsiyon” (“The Return to Zion”) was composed with original Yiddish lyrics by Elyokum Zunser (1840-1913). This early Israeli song inspired by the biblical theme of returning to Zion, juxtaposed contemporary immigration of Russian Jews with the biblical return to Zion of Judean exiles from Babylonia in the late-sixth century BCE under Ezra and Nehemiah.<sup>8</sup> In his poetic interpretation, Zunser exclaimed that Jews were living in the “Shivat Tsiyon” of the current time. This piece set a precedent that the incorporation of biblical stories, themes, imagery and direct quotations would be an excellent medium through which to find meaning in the modern world.

An example of a pre-State folk song that is full of religious fervor is "Po Be-Eretz Chemdat Avot" (“Here in the land that is the delight of the forefathers”).<sup>9</sup> In 1912, in a school in Jaffa, music teacher, Hanina Karczewski and Hebrew teacher Yisrael Dushman collaborated on a marching song for their students to sing on a hike. Karczewski, who had immigrated to Israel just four years earlier, chose a Yiddish melody by Herman Tzvi Erlich. Dushman, who immigrated seventeen years earlier, wrote his own Hebrew lyrics to be sung with the Yiddish melody: "Here in the land which is the delight of the Forefathers all our hopes will be fulfilled. Here we will live, and here we'll create lives of brightness, lives of liberty. Here the Divine presence dwells, here the language of the Torah will blossom. Plough a trough, sing a song, rejoice joyfully, the buds have already blossomed. Plough a trough, sing a song, rejoice joyfully, the seeds will yet arrive." <sup>10</sup>

What’s interesting about this text is that it interweaves religious and agrarian themes. God’s Presence is experienced in the land itself, and Torah “blossoms” from the seeds that

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<sup>8</sup> Cohn Zentner, 178.

<sup>9</sup> Edelman, 193.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

will be planted. There are also already hope and trust: if you plough it, the seeds will come. This has an analogous spiritual meaning: if we prepare ourselves, Torah will emerge from within, from the point of connectedness, or divine spark that inhabits each soul. This song, that appears to be about plowing the land, is actually calling upon God's Divine presence and Torah to be the inspirational sources for rebuilding the land of Israel.

The students sang this song enthusiastically, teaching it to people along the way. It became so popular that it spread to the Diaspora, where it became "There in the Land of the Forefathers." The musical style of Po Be-Eretz is a European-style march in a minor key, eliciting images of soldiers and nationalism. Songs like this, with religious content, patriotism and connection to the land, became widely accepted and were considered standard repertoire of the pre-State era.

Another noteworthy pre-State song with religious themes is "LeMoladeti," written by Mordechai Zeira. Zeira made *aliyah* from Russia in 1924 and is known as one of the "Fathers of Israeli song." Zeira's first song, "LeMoladeti" ("To My Birthland") described the journey by ship to Israel.<sup>11</sup> The refrain of the text, written by Hillel Avichanan, uses religious imagery and makes reference to the famous line from Psalm 133, "Hinei mah tov, shevet achim gam yachad."<sup>12</sup> The complete refrain reads, "God remembered this forsaken corner of Zion; oh, how pleasant for brothers to dwell together."

The second category of Israeli music to be explored is art music. Between 1929 and 1939, an abundance of talented, classically trained musicians arrived in Israel from Europe.<sup>13</sup> These musicians had been trained in various music conservatories throughout Europe and did

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 199.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 205.

not previously know each other before immigration. Each of them faced challenges and struggles as they fought to re-establish their musical profession in a new country, while simultaneously adapting to a new culture and national identity.<sup>14</sup> These musicians came from Germany, Lithuania, Hungary and Russia, to name a few. With their arrival came the birth of Israeli art music and a distinct blending of Eastern and Western sounds. Many of these new composers made great efforts to write in a new musical style, expanding tonalities and experimenting with Arabic instruments such as the *oud* and the *kanun* to create a post-expressionistic style, fusing old and new, East and West. In their quest for a new sound, they experimented with new modes of composition that would give expression to their new national identity. One music critic in 1946 wrote, “the landscape, the lifestyle, the environment, all require a change and fundamentally different approach.” There were a wide variety of Jewish backgrounds among the immigrant musicians from Europe. Though some were raised as more observant than others, it is clear that they all embraced different aspects of Judaism as well as the new national Jewish identity upon their arrival in Israel. Some of this is evident in their compositions, as reflected in various examples below.

The most influential immigrant at the forefront of the newly developing Israeli art music scene was Paul Ben-Haim (1897-1982). Born Paul Frankenger, he was a pianist, composer and conductor at the Munich Academy of Music prior to his arrival in Israel. He served as an apprentice to Bruno Walter in Munich before a run as Kappelmeister of the Augsburg Opera. Even before his immigration, in 1929, his friend and Jewish composer, Heinrich Schalit, a devoted Zionist, encouraged him to experiment in the field of Jewish

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<sup>14</sup> Jehoash Hirshberg, *Music In The Jewish Community of Palestine 1880-1948: A Social History*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 201.

music.<sup>15</sup> He composed several vocal works set to biblical texts, achieving great success with a setting of Psalm 126.

Ben-Haim embraced his new life in Israel and even became fascinated with the world of Oriental music. He developed a very close working relationship with Bracha Zefira, an Israeli girl with Yemenite roots who vowed to bring the oriental melodies of her childhood to a wide audience through Western-style arrangements. This collaboration greatly influenced the sound and style of Ben-Haim's own musical compositions, incorporating the melody-driven Oriental style and its unique rhythms into his own works. He began experimenting with the characteristic modalities, ornamentation, evocative embellishments and other patterns and motifs that characterized Zefira's blend of Yemenite, Persian, Arabic, Ladino, North African and other eastern Mediterranean styles.

Though Ben-Haim was one of the first European musicians to migrate to Israel, other musicians soon arrived, who also shared his admiration and respect for Oriental music. These included, in the late 1930's, Alexander Boskovitch, Marc Lavry, and Oedoen Partos. They all became active teachers at the Eastern Mediterranean School, with Paul Ben-Haim at the helm in a crucial leadership position. These composers created many instrumental and choral settings of existing Sephardic and Oriental music and eventually began composing their own original "Eastern-style" melodies. Marsha Edelman argues, "they wanted their music to represent the land of indigenous Eastern communities, and the eternal (if ephemeral) spirit of the Torah- not so much as a religious text, but as a testimony to the ancient history of Israel and the values of her people."<sup>16</sup>

It is interesting to reflect on the connection between Jewish identity and compositions

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<sup>15</sup> Edelman, 159.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 208.

set to biblical passages. Given the dominant Orthodox ritual practices in Israel, composers did not write synagogue music for use there. However, it is apparent that composers enjoyed writing music that reflected their Jewish heritage and cultural interests. It can be inferred that the goal of Israeli art music composers was not to illustrate religious orientation per se, but to acknowledge the “historical and expressive content of sacred Jewish literature.”<sup>17</sup> While these composers were not observant Jews, they felt a deep sense of “oneness” with the Jewish people, and their pride in Jewish heritage is evident by the inclusion of ancient Jewish texts in their compositions.<sup>18</sup> In addition, the imagery and expressive language of the Bible is ripe with inspiration for musical interpretation. Edelman points out that the unique internal rhythms of the Hebrew language itself offer the music of Israel a distinctiveness that sets it apart from the national music of any other country.<sup>19</sup> Ben-Haim was a leader and role model in choosing to set his musical compositions to various biblical passages.

One example that illustrates the fusion of Jewish identity, liturgical text and Israeli consciousness is Ben-Haim’s *Roni Akarah*. The text of this a cappella choral work, Isaiah 54:1-5, promises renewal and countless offspring to the seemingly desolate and barren.<sup>20</sup> This lends itself to a modern interpretation of the ingathering of the exiles to Israel, the Jewish homeland, a once barren land. The work is set in four movements, each with its own character and musical content. It is noteworthy that Ben-Haim chose to include a *Shema Yisrael* chant from the Iraqi tradition to express Isaiah’s promise of progeny.

*Roni Akarah* offers a musical *midrash* in which stark contrasts between exciting, vibrant moments of urgency, and quiet, subtle moments of reflection, convey the

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 210.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 209.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 211.

contemporary fulfillment of a biblical prophesy. It embodies both Ben-Haim's stature as a legitimate classical composer in the general music world and his role as a leader in modern Israeli art music.<sup>21</sup>

The third and final category of music integral to the musical roots and subsequent development of music in Israel is *Shirei Eretz Yisrael* or "Songs of the Land of Israel (SLI)." This genre is an extension and expansion of the pre-State Israeli music explored above. SLI, rooted in Zionist ideals, was linked to the idea of establishing a musical expression of a national Hebrew culture through the creation of a Hebrew "folk song" repertory, which came into being in the land of Israel from the 1880's onwards.<sup>22</sup> This newly invented genre of Israeli folk song had several defining characteristics that are noteworthy. First, they were mainly connected with well-known composers and poets who channeled their feelings about the establishment of a new Jewish society in song. "The Hebrew song is the creation of composers who consciously or unconsciously sought a means of tonal organization that would reflect both the people's attachment to the land and the ingathering of the exiles."<sup>23</sup> And second, in an effort to advance their political motives and support Zionism and the Hebrew language, many Jewish organizations such as the Jewish National Fund encouraged and supported the creation, publication and performance of these new Israeli folk songs.<sup>24</sup>

Initially, many of the popular SLI melodies were imported from the European countries of immigrant origin: Russia, France, Poland and Germany. However, it wasn't long before original folk melodies were being written in Israel. And, eventually, Israeli

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>22</sup> Motti Regev and Edwin Seroussi, *Popular Music and National Culture in Israel*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2004), 51-52.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

composers were even influenced by American music. Other original sources of SLI include theater and cabaret songs, youth movement songs and traditional Jewish songs passed down from generation to generation. The vast repertoire of SLI includes songs from the 1880's until today that have become beloved and widely sung by Israelis.

The themes of SLI generally revolve around national and agricultural topics such as independence, war, struggle, loss, and the cultivation and beauty of the land. In addition, a large percentage of SLI include religious themes or references to Jewish textual sources, most frequently the bible. Cohn Zenter states, "biblical influence on Israeli popular music should be viewed as part of the Zionist movement's larger cultural endeavor, which saw the Bible as the cornerstone of an emerging Israeli culture. Referring to the Bible helped disassociate the new Zionist ethos from the religious Judaism of the Diaspora, and to reconnect it instead to agricultural and historical aspects of the Land of Israel."<sup>25</sup> In addition, the consistent reference to biblical themes and texts is a testament to the fact that many new Israelis saw life in the Holy Land as a substitute for religious practice. For others, the use of biblical texts emphasized the common experiences of the Jewish people throughout history, their shared "folklore." One Israeli author, Shai Burstein, explains, "these biblical references allow people to reconnect to the cultural-national roots of the Jewish people prior to their exile from the Land of Israel."<sup>26</sup>

An example of a piece that directly connects contemporary Israeli society with its ancestral roots is *Mul Har Sinai* ("In Front of Mount Sinai"). Written for the *Lehakot Tzva'iyot* (army entertainment troupes) in 1956 by Moshe Vilensky (composer) and Yehiel Mohar (lyricist), this song depicts dual meaning in its reference to Mount Sinai. It references

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<sup>25</sup> Zentner, 175.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 176.



both the redeemed Israelite slaves receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai as well as the Israeli Army Campaign of 1956 in which they captured the Sinai Peninsula.<sup>27</sup> Mohar's imagery of the burning bush from Exodus, Chapter 3, which illustrates God instructing Moses to lead the enslaved Israelites from Egypt to freedom, represents God's eternal Divine presence at Mount Sinai.<sup>28</sup> He asserts in the song that the bush is still burning when the Israeli soldiers return to Sinai for the first time since the ancient Israelites received the Torah in that exact spot.<sup>29</sup> However, in the present day, the flame from the bush burns in the eyes of the soldiers and in the roaring of their engines. The song brilliantly contrasts the divine redemption of our past with the divine redemption of the present, using the biblical source as the connective tissue.

Musical characteristics of *Mul Har Sinai* include use of the *darbuka* (Arabic drum) and accordion, two commonly used instruments in SLI that infuse the characteristic imported Eastern European sounds with a Middle Eastern flavor.<sup>30</sup> The accordion plays an exciting hora dance rhythm with a repeated fanfare motive that could be interpreted as either a military victory or perhaps the sounds of a shofar blast. It's interesting to consider whether the poly-cultural musical texture in some way emulates the trans-generational theme of redemption.

One of the most interesting characteristics of SLI is the diversity of musical styles that comprise the repertoire. Though most SLI are written in minor keys, we see a wide variety of stylistic sources, from European folk songs to American rock and roll to songs from the Zionist youth movement and the IDF, and even the incorporation of Middle Eastern

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

rhythms, sounds and instruments, such as the *darbuka*.

Due to the fact that SLI have been amassing since the 1880's, it is impossible to generalize the musical style. However, the absolute defining musical characteristic, despite the style, is melodic ease and accessibility for the listener-singer. This is the most crucial factor due to the fact that SLI are typically sung in large groups, in "*shirah be-tzibbur*," a communal singing phenomenon that symbolizes nationalism and community. Communal singing developed during the *Yishuv* period, in conjunction with Israel's new cultural identity, as people needed a way to build identity, meld the musical traditions of the various immigrants and express themselves as a cohesive society.

*Shirah be-tzibbur* is especially interesting in light of the overarching theme of the intersection of sacred and secular in Israel. This phenomenon of group singing, which generates a sense of community and connection based on a shared history, has been labeled the "secular prayer" of Israel. In fact, the notion of singing around a big table, *tish hagadol*, stems from *hassidic* religious events in which the *rebbe* would gather around a table with other men and sing together. These gatherings, which were often centered around ritual meals, become transposed to the secular world through *Shirah be-tzibbur*.

Musicologists and critics have observed the patterns of *Shirah be-tzibbur* and have found that such secular gatherings become especially popular and in demand during times of war. Of course this is logical because people have a greater desire and need to come together to sing for hope and peace during times of struggle and strife. For secular Israelis, *Shirah be-tzibbur* is their vehicle through which to pray. Israeli lyricist, Ehud Manor comments on *Shira Be-tzibbur*, "When people sing together, in communal singing they feel as though they are one unit...I think that in singing together people search for their belief. People from

secular families, they no longer go to synagogue...at the communal singing they feel like they are in synagogue. They sing about things they believe in, about love, about Israel, about the past, they sing of hope for a better future, and that is their weekly connection like a public prayer." There are many examples of apparently secular songs that are in reality a "secularized" form of prayer.

One of the most beloved songs of the land of Israel is Naomi Shemer's "Lu Y'hi." Initially intended as a Hebrew version of the Beatles "Let it Be," "Lu Yihi" became an instant hit during the Yom Kippur war in 1973, expressing prayers and wishes in relation to the battlefield as well as at home. In fact, it gained the status of a secular prayer.<sup>31</sup> With references to holiday candles and the cry of the shofar, Shemer beautifully weaves together secular and sacred themes, communicating clearly that the soul of an Israeli is inextricably bound to Jewish tradition. As one of the most well-known and prolific Israeli composers, Shemer herself describes the phenomenon as follows:

People love communal singing because they love to sing. People love to dance and sing together. We are a small and family-oriented public who actually comes from synagogue. We seem to have thrown the synagogue away, but we are actually carrying it on our back. We are actually a community, we are still seeking a uniqueness; maybe we need communal singing to feel stronger, maybe we need it to express ourselves, to defend ourselves from all the difficult things that happen to us. That is our natural expression; that is our skin, you cannot separate it from our body.

In summary, the three primary historical threads of Israeli music—pre-State folk music, Israeli art music and *Shirei Eretz Yisrael*—all demonstrate that Israeli music has

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<sup>31</sup> Regev and Seroussi, 67.

always been influenced by Jewish culture and identity, as well as by Jewish customs, traditions and texts. These threads emerged organically in the process of establishing a renewed national identity in the ancient Jewish homeland, as communities were melded together from throughout the Diaspora into a new state. In the last decade, however, there has been a surge in the use of religious texts by popular Israeli musicians in ways that are particular to 21<sup>st</sup> century Israel. The overwhelmingly positive response to this music from the Israeli public supports the idea that there has been a shift in mindset and spiritual needs among secular Israelis. Chapter 2 will outline the key factors and societal developments that precipitated a national yearning for spiritual connection and Jewish learning, thus paving the way for the current success and popularity of sacred and liturgical themes and texts in popular music and the emergence of new, creative prayer communities.

## Chapter 2

### Societal and Political Developments: A Cultural Renaissance

In the 1990's and the 2000's, Israeli society has seen much evidence of a cultural and spiritual renaissance based on religious sources. With the establishment of liberal *batei midrash*, secular *yeshivot*, creative prayer communities, a *piyut* movement and the use of religious texts in popular music by famous musicians, Israeli society is bursting at the seams with a new-found interest and curiosity in reclaiming its Jewish roots. While this cultural phenomenon is fascinating, perhaps the question to ask is “why now?” What events in Israel's evolution have sparked this national response? The first part of this chapter will investigate the key factors and societal developments that have inspired Israel's cultural and spiritual renaissance. The second part of the chapter will explore some of the most successful and influential cultural trends that have grown out of these societal changes.

According to many sources, the overarching reason for Israel's cultural and spiritual renaissance is that classical Zionism is no longer serving Israelis as it did in the past. Musicologist Naomi Cohn-Zentner, says that, “Zionist ideals are no longer compelling and fulfilling; in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many Israelis are searching for ways to fill that gap and are turning to the religion of their parents and grandparents for inspiration.”<sup>32</sup> Second- and third-generation Israelis are suddenly feeling resentful that their parents discarded religion in the founding of the new Jewish state, leaving it only for the Orthodox. A key concept in creating a new Israeli culture upon Israel's establishment as a state was to break away from religiosity. Anything related to the synagogue or the rabbi was seen as irrelevant and old-

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<sup>32</sup> Naomi Cohn-Zentner, *Sing a New Song*, Interview with Reform Jewish Magazine, 10.

fashioned. There was a big push to create an image of a new, secular Jew who worked the land and committed himself fully to being a part of a collective Zionist society. Famous musician Kobi Oz reflects his personal disdain for the Zionist abandonment of religion: “In a way, we forgot some things and we left out some things. Zionism was self-absorbed and self-centered. It forgot the Judaism. This is something we should fix.”<sup>33</sup> Similarly, in the *Israel Studies Forum* journal, Adina Newberg asserts that

the original secular Zionist ethos has ceased to be satisfactory to many Israelis as a way of defining themselves as Jews and Israelis. Secular Israelis maintain that the educational and socializing efforts that shaped them have not concentrated on connecting individuals as Jews per se but only as Israelis. They feel that they have been cheated by the dominant, secular characterization of Judaism, which they see as simplistic, and have thus been denied the opportunity to connect Judaism to an emerging Israeli identity.<sup>34</sup>

In his explanation on why Israelis are seeking new paths to spirituality Eli Gur, director of the United Jewish Federation’s Commission on Jewish Identity and Renewal in Israel, agrees with Cohn-Zentner. “Israeli society has matured. We’ve passed the stage of objections to religion. Instead of focusing on rejection, as the early Zionists did, today the young Israeli can now ask, ‘what do I want?’ or ‘what do I need.’”<sup>35</sup> Other existential questions are also being asked: Who am I? What am I doing here and why? What is my

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<sup>33</sup> Interview with Kobi Oz, Makom Israel, December 2010.

<sup>34</sup> Adina Newberg, "Hitchabrut or Connecting – Liberal Houses of Study in Israel as Political and Spiritual Expression." *Israel Studies Forum*, 2005, 97-114.

<sup>35</sup> Eatta Prince-Gibson, "They're Doing It Their Way." *The Jerusalem Report*, June 2009, 6 11.

connection to this country?<sup>36</sup> These questions, which stem from the political complexities and difficulties of living in a country that is constantly at war, fuel the desire to search for new ways to understand Jewish and Israeli identity. As a state, Israel has reached a time when it is collectively asking, “Who are we?” And Israelis on individual paths towards self-understanding and self-awareness are also asking, “Who am I?” Secular Zionism did not provide sufficient tools to answer these existential questions. Therefore, Israelis are now searching for new paths to provide them with spiritual guidance and expression.

Gur goes on to assert that, in addition to Israel’s maturation as a State, there are two other key factors that helped spark this quest for meaning and spirituality. He suggests “the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin served as a catalyst, propelling much of Israeli society into a deep crisis, in which Israelis began to question their basic assumptions about Israeli society and Judaism.”<sup>37</sup> Rabin’s assassination in 1995 sparked deep soul-searching among the Israeli public regarding the nation’s spiritual identity. People were frightened by the murderous act and ashamed that Rabin’s killer was a religious Zionist. One Israeli woman shares her thoughts on Rabin’s death: “I realized that we had better attend to our future, to the deep gaps between religious and secular, which were threatening to tear us apart. And as my thoughts progressed over the years, I realized that I needed something beyond the intellectual, I needed to touch my spiritual and emotional self, too.”<sup>38</sup>

Gur argues that a third contributing factor to Israel’s quest for meaning and spirituality is the failure to achieve peace with the Palestinians.<sup>39</sup> The inability to achieve peace has inclined Israel to focus efforts inwards, toward its own evolving society.

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<sup>36</sup> Newberg, Adina, 84.

<sup>37</sup> Prince-Gibson, 10.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

Furthermore, Cohn-Zentner points out that not only has Israel failed to achieve peace with the Palestinians, but it is also hated in general by all of its neighbors. The idea that Israel stands on her own, unaccepted by many countries in the larger international community, adds more impetus toward introspection and a search for identity and roots.

Another major influence on the shift toward greater religious consciousness in the broader Israeli culture is the acceptance of Mizrahim<sup>40</sup> into mainstream Israeli society, according to Robbie Gringrass, artist-in-residence for the Makom Israel Engagement Network in the Jewish Agency for Israel. Gringrass asserts that as Israel has become more open to Mizrahim, and as they have finally garnered a voice in the country, their inherently more religious background has filtered into Israeli society. Israeli singer, Kobi Oz, concurs with Gringrass, saying, “The Sephardim never disconnected ourselves from our history, and never lost a generation. Maybe we are the medicine that can cure society’s ills. Maybe that is our job, now, to bring this medication so that we can all feel comfortable with our Judaism.”<sup>41</sup> In order to understand the significance of the *Mizrahi* community’s acceptance into the mainstream, we must examine more closely the struggle for acceptance and legitimacy that Mizrahi Jews have faced since their arrival in the 1950’s.

The ethnic gap that formed between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews actually took its shape in Israel before the establishment of the State in 1948. Between 1882 and 1939, formative years in Israel’s history, the Ashkenazic Jews settled the land, conceptualized the new Jew, and established a fresh Israeli national culture based on Zionist ideals, a strong

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<sup>40</sup> Mizrahi Jews descend from mostly Arab-speaking Jewish communities of the Middle East such as Iraq, Syria, India and Iran. Jews from Yemenite, Georgia, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Turkey are also grouped into the Mizrahi category.

<sup>41</sup> Ben Kamoun Shimon, "Reconnecting Roots," *Jerusalem Post*, May 2010, [www.JPost.com](http://www.JPost.com) (accessed January, 2013).



work ethic, fusion of their European roots with the new culture, and the development of Hebrew as a modern language. By the 1950's, when large numbers of Mizrahi immigrants flocked to Israel, that new Israeli culture was already well established. Although the Mizrahim had strong Jewish identities and shared a common connection to both homeland and Jewish history with their Ashkenazic neighbors, they were received as outsiders in the land of Israel, and assimilation would not be enough of a factor to ease the inherent tensions. The ethnic gap continued to grow in all areas, including education, politics, socio-economic status, general culture and music.

The Mizrahim eventually gained a modest sense of empowerment with the success of the right-wing nationalist Likud party in 1977. Likud was mostly supported by working-class Mizrahim, and political advancement gave them a sense of pride. Some even attribute the rising popularity of *Musiqat Mizrahit*<sup>42</sup> to the political success of Likud.

Other cultural processes not related to politics were also in play. The Ashkenazi-established culture in Israel had largely excluded any music from Middle Eastern cultures in the effort to promote *shirei erez Yisrael* as the new state-sponsored genre of music, which was intended to unify the various ethnic groups and to introduce new immigrants to Israeli culture. In the 1950's and 1960's, even though there was a large influx of Mizrahim to Israel, all proto-Mizrahi music was completely absent from Israeli radio programming. The Anti-Arab attitude in Israel was strong and unmistakable. Any music that resembled an Arab sound was dismissed. It was too foreign, not Israeli enough, and did not fit into the accepted mainstream category of Israeli folk music. In addition, the Ashkenazi-dominated culture did

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<sup>42</sup> Eastern or oriental music that is the popular musical style associated with Jews who migrated to Israel from Arab or Muslim countries in North Africa or the Middle East. Mizrahi music is recognizable by its wide range of ethnic "colors," including influences from Yeminite, Turkish, Greek, Arabic, Persian, Kurdish, and Moroccan musical styles.

not want to be associated with the lower-class Mizrahi Jews in any way, including the acceptance of their music.

Mizrahi music gained an underground audience in the 70's and 80's, but the genre's growth was stunted due to the poor quality of the cassette tape recordings.<sup>43</sup> The 1980's brought about technological improvements of Mizrahi music with the switch to digital recordings and CD production. Cultural barriers such as which radio stations would play Mizrahi music began to break down in the 1980's and into the 1990's. Finally, by the late 90's, Mizrahi music had achieved mainstream success in Israel, consistently topping the Israeli music charts. In fact, Mizrahi music and musicians are seen today as authentically Israeli, and their music can be heard on nearly every radio station in Israel. Galeet Dardashti points out, "the mainstream success of *musika mizrahit* not only made the sounds of Arab music begin to sound less foreign to Israelis but also emboldened Mizrahi and Palestinian Israeli musicians interested in bringing more traditional Middle Eastern music to the fore."<sup>44</sup>

This new-found success is due in part to the Mizrahi Jews' own efforts to preserve their cultural traditions in the process of assimilating into Israeli society. While Mizrahi music provided an important outlet for self-expression and identity, it was also essential to the Mizrahim that their style of music be accepted into the wider Israeli culture. The Mizrahi

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<sup>43</sup> Mizrahi cassettes were available for purchase in areas frequented by the lower-class Mizrahi population such as in the Central Bus Station in Tel Aviv or the Mahane Yehudah market in Jerusalem. It was during this early stage that Mizrahi music was nick-named, *musiqat qasetot* (cassette music), or *musiqua shel ha-tachana ha-merkazi* (music of the Central Bus Station).

<sup>44</sup> Galeet Dardashti, "Patronage and Expediency: The Deployment of Middle Eastern Music in Israel." PhD., The University of Texas at Austin, 2009, 38.

community now views the broad enthusiasm for its music as symbolic of their newly gained cultural acceptance in Israeli society as a whole.<sup>45</sup>

This understanding is further documented by Benjamin Acosta in an article entitled “The Cultural Politics of Israel’s *Mizrahim*: From Marginalization toward Dominance,” in which he defines three factors for the cultural and political rise of Israel’s Mizrahi population. First, despite being encouraged to assimilate, the Mizrahi population maintained their cultural traditions, found strength to overcome discrimination and even broke down negative stereotypes attached to “Mizrahi.” Second, many Ashkenazim recognized that their stereotypes of Mizrahi Jewry were exaggerated and excessive. Over time they eventually accepted and adopted many Mizrahi practices and symbols. Finally, “the failure of the Oslo peace process validated the Mizrahi views on Jewish-Muslim relations and consequently delegitimized the primary political party of the Ashkenazi elite.”<sup>46</sup>

Ultimately, as intimated by Gringrass, the loyalty of the Mizrahim to their traditions and their religious fervor has established the legitimacy of their music. It is interesting to note that for many years young Mizrahi kids were embarrassed by their parents’ Hebrew accents and ashamed of the “ethnic” music to which their families listened. They tried so hard to fit into the Ashkenazi-driven culture in Israel. Now, in the 90’s and 00’s, the overall acceptance of Mizrahi traditions is evidenced by Israel’s curiosity and interest in supporting a piyut<sup>47</sup> revival (to be explored later in this chapter), in which some of those same Mizrahi children have played an important role. During the same period Mizrahi musicians have achieved

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Benjamin Acosta, "The Cultural Politics of Israel’s Mizrahim: From Marginalization toward Dominance." *Culture Critique* , 1-15, March 2011, 1.

<sup>47</sup> Liturgical poetry that have been sung regularly in Sephardic communities for generations

mega success in the music industry.

It can be ascertained that the cultural and spiritual renaissance in Israel is a direct result of the key political factors and societal developments described above. Having proposed these phenomena as the impetus for this renaissance, we will now examine the most successful and influential trends in Israeli society that grew out of these key societal developments, beginning with the establishment of liberal *batei midrash* in the 1990's and continuing with the birth of the piyut revival which followed soon after.

In the early 1990's Israeli culture welcomed the development of liberal *batei midrash* (houses of Jewish study), modeled after traditional *batei midrash*, but with a contemporary, pluralistic twist. In liberal *batei midrash* there is no adherence to *halachah*, and men and women study together. In Israel's cultural and spiritual renaissance, liberal *batei midrash* have provided meaningful access to Jewish engagement for secular seekers. According to Adina Newberg in the *Israel Studies Forum*, "they represent an attempt to connect and reconnect to the sources of Jewish learning and strive to reconcile universalistic and pluralistic aspects of Israelis' identity with their Jewish identity that has been dormant since the establishment of the State of Israel."<sup>48</sup> The ever-present conflict with the Palestinians causes life in Israel to be extremely difficult, leading to existential questions that leave Israelis thirsty for answers. Part of their quest is an exploration and re-examination of Jewish identity and its role within Israeli society, an activity perfectly suited to the progressive *batei midrash*.

Interestingly, the demand for the creation of institutions of this kind began as early as 1967 in the aftermath of the Six-Day War, when issues such as life and death, power and

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<sup>48</sup> Newberg, 101.

occupation affected young Israelis.<sup>49</sup> There was additional demand for study programs during the Lebanon War (1982) and during the first Intifada (1987-1993), when “Israelis were again faced with existential questions about themselves in relation to Israel and their reasons for living as Jews in a bloody and painful part of the world.”<sup>50</sup> As discussed earlier, Rabin’s assassination in 1995 was also a major catalyst for a quest for identity and meaning as Israelis entered a period of soul searching. “The deepening schism between religious and secular Jews which followed the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 generated a desire to engage in a dialogue through the mutual study of Jewish texts. The study of Jewish sources was now regarded as a basis for the renewal of collective Jewish Israeli solidarity.”<sup>51</sup>

As part of closing the gap between religious and secular Jews, many secular Israelis reached the point of craving a new connection to their Jewish roots. The Shenhar Commission (1994) investigated the nature of Jewish studies in Israeli education, concluding that the study of *Tanach* in school was the only connection Israelis had to their Jewish roots. Secular Zionism had not introduced them to great Jewish thinkers such as Rambam, who *could* provide guidance around existential issues such as mortality, belonging, loss and pain.<sup>52</sup> One liberal *batei midrash* student exclaims, “I don’t need to live in Israel if I will only be guided by Freud and Foucault. I might as well live in France or the United States. What is the big difference? If I am here I need to understand those who connect me to this place.”<sup>53</sup> This student, along with many other Israelis, was craving intellectual and moral

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 100

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

guidance from a Jewish perspective in order to navigate their own tumultuous relationship with Israel. Another participant in liberal *batei midrash*, who found the study of Jewish texts to be an essential aspect of his life, recalls feeling lonely and desperate during his service in the Lebanon war. He promised himself that, if he survived, he would “try to understand what is so special about Israel- its land, its history, and its people.”<sup>54</sup> This pluralistic engagement in text study expresses a personal and national yearning for connection to something greater than the individual. Adina Newberg suggests that the students’ strong bond to Judaism, juxtaposed with the feeling of alienation to anything religious and traditionally Jewish, creates this yearning.<sup>55</sup>

Today there are over a hundred programs throughout Israel that offer Israelis the opportunity to study Jewish text in a pluralistic framework. It is important to note that Panim, an independent non-profit umbrella organization promoting religious pluralism and Jewish renaissance in Israel, provides resources and advocacy for these programs. In the 1990’s Panim adopted the expression “Jewish renewal in Israel” to market their intention to “make meaningful and diverse Jewish cultural experiences the birthright of all Israeli Jews, and work towards long-term, national reform that will make pluralistic Judaism an ever-present and key factor influencing all aspects of the public agenda.” (Panim Website- <http://en.panim.org.il/>)

Although the exact structure and curriculum of each *batei midrash* program varies slightly, each program promotes a commitment to study, student participation, openness to finding personal meaning in the text, lack of dogma and censorship, and encouragement of

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

students to explore and push their own boundaries.<sup>56</sup> While the majority of the student population is non-observant, many programs encourage both religious and non-religious students to study together.

Adina Newberg has concluded from her interviews and observations with *batei midrash* participants between 2000-2003 that these Israelis seek *hitchabrut* (connection) to the Jewish people, to the ‘other,’ to the spirit, to a different kind of Zionism and to God.<sup>57</sup> One student explained the purpose of study as finding “live connections to who we are.”<sup>58</sup> Another student said, “The purpose is to be a link in the culture that is generations old- to be a part that receives and gives in a chain of Israeli culture.”<sup>59</sup> The connection to ‘the other’ refers to breaking down barriers in Israeli society that relate to Haredi anti-Zionists, Palestinians or religious settlers in the West Bank, bridging the political-philosophical gaps through communication.<sup>60</sup> Connection to the spirit encompasses openness to self-expression and an inward exploration of the soul. Connection to a different kind of Zionism means finding a way to fuse liberal, universalistic philosophies with Jewish identity.<sup>61</sup> Finally, finding a connection to God is often a result of the personally and communally inspiring experience of this sacred work.

In the last twenty years many studies have examined the impact that liberal *batei midrash* have had on Israeli society. It is clear that the positive experiences in these study communities have encouraged students to pursue social action opportunities and ritual practice. Later I will explore the emergence of ritual and prayer practice in secular

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

communities in greater detail in chapter 4, as it is a major trend in Israel's cultural and spiritual renaissance, with important links to emerging music.

In addition to the establishment of liberal *batei midrash* in the 1990's, the other major cultural trend in the post-Zionist cultural and spiritual renaissance is the *piyut* revival. Similar to the underlying intention of the liberal *batei midrash*, the *piyut* revival aims to break down barriers between different groups of Israelis, as well as to promote a vast array of Jewish ethnic cultures through education. In fact, the *piyut* revival directly builds on the success of the liberal *batei midrash* by providing another medium in the search for cultural, spiritual and religious identity. Musicologist Dr. Edwin Seroussi asserts that

performance of *piyutim* has lasted until today because it has always had a wide range of social purposes beyond the religious meanings of its texts. It symbolizes a direct connection between the past and the present, bridging between different geographical locations, embodying the historical continuity of the use of Hebrew language, and finding a link between past creators and transmitters of *piyut* traditions and our own time.<sup>62</sup>

The creation of *piyutim* (liturgical poetry) dates back to sixth century Palestine, and the art of the *piyut* flourished in the Golden Age of Spain during the Middle Ages, when Jews lived under Arab rule.<sup>63</sup> "The *piyutim* composed here described the faith, longing, love, suffering, and sorrow of the Jews, who were living mostly in the Diaspora."<sup>64</sup> The *piyut* traditions varied from one country to the next but always served to maintain the sense of

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<sup>62</sup> "The Piyyut Is Jewish Soul Music." *Jewcy*. Tablet Magazine, Mar 2006.

<sup>63</sup> Dardashti, 136.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.



Jewish community, often strengthening hopes of the eventual return to Zion.”<sup>65</sup> In the period of late antiquity and onward, *piyutim* were used as prayer embellishments in synagogue worship.

From the 16<sup>th</sup> through the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, *piyut* played a large role in the lives of Middle Eastern Jews. Sadly, with the immigration of most Mizrahim to Israel in the 1950’s, many Jewish traditions and customs, including *piyut* practices, were lost in the assimilation to the new Israeli culture. The current *piyut* revival is an exciting cultural phenomenon that seeks to re-establish *piyut* as a relevant and engaging practice in Israel.

In 2002 the Hillel House of Hebrew University partnered with The Avi Chai Foundation<sup>66</sup> in a program called *Yedidi Ha-Shakhahta* (“my friend, have you forgotten?”), exposing college students to Mizrahi *piyutim* in an effort to strengthen and explore their Jewish identity. The project was a success and expanded to offer weekly classes and monthly concerts pairing a popular Israeli musician with a *paytan*. Similar initiatives soon began at Hillel Houses in other large Israeli universities.

Also founded in 2002 was the groundbreaking Avi Chai supported program, *Kehillot Sharot*, (“singing communities”). Yossi Ohana, a Moroccan Jew and Mizrahi rights activist, who immigrated to Israel in the 1950’s at the age of six, founded the project. As an adult, Ohana felt that he had lost his Mizrahi traditions. In an effort to fill a void and reconnect to his roots, he began studying texts, including *piyutim*. Several years later, on the heels of the success of the liberal *batei midrash*, in the midst of the cultural renaissance and at a time when Middle Eastern music was gaining popularity in Israel, he gained funding from the Avi

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Avi Chai is a private foundation funded by an American Jewish philanthropist. Avi Chai aspires to encourage Jewish study and literacy among secular Israeli Jews so that they can become active and knowledgeable partners in the shaping of Jewish life in Israel.

Chai foundation to launch *kehilot sharot*. Ohana's specific goals were to expose *piyut* as a form of Jewish expression, encourage reflection and strengthening of Jewish identity, and unite people of different Jewish backgrounds through love of poetry and music.<sup>67</sup> He also intended to strengthen the weak sense of community in Israel and to stimulate Jewish revival.<sup>68</sup>

The *kehillot sharot* singing groups exist throughout Israel and meet once a week for two and a half hours. A facilitator and a rotating guest *paytan* lead the group, focusing on different *piyut* traditions such as Andalusian (North African), Babylonian (Iraqi) and the Sephardi-Yerushalmi tradition (Turkish and Syrian influences).<sup>69</sup> The members of each group are quite diverse in background and reflect a mix of women and men, Ashkenazi and Mizrahi, religious and secular, young and old. The session consists of studying the *piyut* text, learning about the cultural and musical traditions of the specific study unit, and singing. Moshe Silberschein, a participant in *kehillot sharot* and professor at the Jerusalem campus of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, says that some of the most significant cultural sharing occurs during the break in the middle of the session. He says that breaking down ethnic barriers is as important as studying and singing *piyutim*. Silberschein also admits that he didn't realize he was a victim of "Zionistic New Jew culture" until joining *kehilot sharot*. The group has also helped him rediscover his own Ashkenazi tradition from a different outlook and has given him a new appreciation for his own roots.

One example of a barrier being transcended in *kehilot sharot* arose from the initial resistance among some ultra-Orthodox *paytanim* to hearing women sing. Eventually this

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<sup>67</sup> Dardashti, 143.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

tension dissipated as the *paytanim* realized the importance of full participation by everyone in the group. They resolved the issue of *kol islah* by explaining that “their teaching of mixed groups is part of a unique path for bringing people closer to Jewish tradition.”<sup>70</sup> In a similar vein, secular participants came to appreciate traditional garb as representing something different than their preconceived notion of ultra-Orthodox Jews. The whole experience promotes a meaningful encounter that moves beyond judgment and cultural assumptions.

In 2005-2006, the remarkable website *Hazmanah l’Piyut* (“An Invitation To *Piyut*”) was launched, providing the most comprehensive *piyut* resource to date. The site offers information about *kehilot sharot*, as well as articles on *piyut*, hundreds of *piyutim* and thousands of musical recordings from various traditions. The website aims to preserve the tradition of *piyut* while also inspiring new and creative contemporary uses for this unique expression of Judaism. “Throughout Jewish history the *piyut* has been a tool of both entertainment and meaning for people searching for their roots. Today it is telling a story of the connection between Jewishness and Israeli identity as elements that link the traditional and contemporary world.”<sup>71</sup>

One unforeseen connection between traditional and contemporary that has grown out of the *piyut* revival has been its influence on Israeli pop and rock stars. Once these famous Israeli musicians began collaborating with well-known *paytanim* on joint concerts, they themselves became inspired by the ancient *piyut* tradition. They actually requested their own Israeli-musician *kehilot sharot* group, where they could study and learn *piyut* together. It wasn’t long before these musicians began incorporating *piyut* into their own music, and in 2004, many of Israel’s most famous musicians participated in a concert called “Yehuda

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<sup>70</sup> “The Piyut Is Jewish Soul Music.” *Jewcy*. Tablet Magazine, March 2006.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

Halevi on the Corner of Ibn Gabirol.” The success of this concert proved that the *piyut* movement was having a major impact on Israeli culture. Chapter 3 will explore this phenomenon of popular Israeli musicians experimenting with *piyutim* in greater detail.

In summary, the maturation of Israeli society has resulted in a migration away from its strict Zionist roots toward an environment that is more receptive to religious language, thought and culture among supposedly secular Jews. Political developments have caused non-Orthodox Israelis to increasingly seek out greater spiritual meaning in their lives. Mizrahi citizens over time have risen to the fore, and their religious sensibilities have had a compelling impact on the greater culture. The non-Orthodox population has become energized around Jewish learning in ways that have contributed to the revival of *piyut* as an art-form, and the establishment of *kehillot sharot* as the latest outcropping of the tradition of Israeli communal singing. All of these factors have influenced the way sacred themes and texts have flourished in the general musical culture, and how nonconventional prayer communities (and their music) have become an exciting frontier of Israeli spiritual life.

### Chapter 3

#### The Fusion Phenomenon: Jewish Texts in Popular Music

*“In mixing and smudging the secular and the religious, East and West, the Hebrew language and top artists, it could be that the Israeli music scene is finally beginning to play a new Jewish melody.”<sup>72</sup>*

“Father, oh merciful Father. Be to me a trusted soul mate. Cushion my heart in Your faith. Lend to me awe at the sound of Your Name.” These poignant words make up the chorus of Kobi Oz’s “Prayer of the Secular,” from his newest CD, *Mizmorei N’vuchim*, “Psalms for the Perplexed.” This fervent and honest personal prayer juxtaposes in the same song such a broad array of religious, social and political commentary that a listener might reasonably wonder if Oz is endorsing Judaism or opposing it. He jabs a *Haredi* man for fearing God and acting like a systematic robot. He questions whether the Reform Movement has reinterpreted Judaism or created an entirely different religion. Later in the song he says, “Bless Thy children of all kinds, both religious and also secular.” In the end, it seems that, through a modern Israeli lens, Oz is raising questions about the complexities of life and religion as a means of struggling with, and ultimately reconnecting to, his own Jewish roots.

Whether through modern *midrash* on a sacred text, reviving an old melody in a contemporary way, or writing new music to the ancient words of a *piyut* (or any rabbinical or liturgical text), Israeli musicians are inspired by our Jewish heritage, and they are motivating

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<sup>72</sup> Robbie Gringrass, "Israeli Rock Finds Religion." *The Jewish Daily Forward*, June 2009.

others to listen with care, and to look within their Jewish identity for answers. In this chapter we will trace the major influences and defining traits underlying the rapid expansion of popular music that incorporates sacred texts and themes, with reference to its leading figures. We will characterize the two primary streams of individuals composing such music: those returning to a religious identity, and those whose orientation remains secular. We will then examine in detail the artistry of two prominent composers in this genre, Kobi Oz and Yonatan Razel.

This is an exciting and significant time in the evolution of Israeli music. The line between sacred and secular is blurred, and the majority of Israelis seem to embrace and welcome having that middle ground. Robbie Gringrass comments as follows on the secular and religious communities' mutual embrace of popular music with religious undertones: "a common searching and a shared grappling with Israeliness, modernity and Judaism seems to be far more compelling and uniting than denominational definitions would have us believe."<sup>73</sup>

The vibrant emerging phenomenon of a thought-provoking exploration of religious themes and texts ultimately marks a return to traditional Jewish roots. This ever-expanding and far-reaching trend can be experienced in music of all genres, including rap, rock, reggae, folk and even classical music. The funk rap band *Hadag Nachash* included a cover of Avihu Medina's *Shab'chi Yerushalayim* (Psalm 147) on its 2006 CD, *B'ezrat Ha'Jam* (With the Help of Jam) In 2007 rocker Meir Banai released *Sh'ma Koli*, "Hear My Voice," a CD of adaptations of ancient *piyutim*. And in 2006 Ovadia Hamama shot out of obscurity with his acclaimed *Ana B'koach*, which was played on radio stations throughout Israel and embraced

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

by the country as a communal prayer transcending societal boundaries.

The roster of popular Israeli musicians exploring Jewish texts as a source of musical inspiration appears to be endless: Shlomo Gronich, Ehud Banai, Kobi Oz, Etti Ankri, Berry Sacharov, Yonatan and Aharon Razel, Idan Reichel and Shuli Rand, just to name a few. And what is the common thread among the plethora of Israeli musicians who are all singing religious texts? It seems that the uniting motivation is a common desire to break the mold, to overturn prejudices, to bring people together and to remind them of their essential Jewish heritage.

Popular Mizrahi religious singer Gad Elbaz is “on a mission from God” to bring together religious and non-religious Jews around the world.<sup>74</sup> Elbaz is waging a war “against narrow-mindedness on both sides of the religious-secular spectrum in Israel and among Jews worldwide.”<sup>75</sup> Elbaz says, “my ambition is to bring a non-religious audience closer to spirituality. I think they’re very open and will embrace the message if given the opportunity.”<sup>76</sup> Kobi Oz, known for infusing his music with social and political commentary, says that his CD, *Mizmorei N’vuchim*, referenced above, is a message for all Jews, not only for Israeli Jews.<sup>77</sup> He aims to strengthen the brotherhood of Judaism.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, folk-rock musician Shuli Rand, a *Breslov Chassid*, aims to reconnect Jews to their Judaism. He

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<sup>74</sup> David Brinn, "A Mission from Gad." *The Jerusalem Post*, [www.JPost.com](http://www.JPost.com), September 11, 2008.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Kobi Oz Video Interview, Makom Israel.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

believes that culture, specifically music, is the bridge for bringing together the secular and religious communities.<sup>79</sup>

In exploring this phenomenon in Israeli music, it is important to understand the Jewish backgrounds of these musicians who are so committed to preserving and sharing Jewish ideas and texts with their audiences in the public, and presumably secular, arena. Generally, these musicians fit into one of two categories: those who have formally returned to traditional Judaism, and those who still identify as secular.

The first category, that of Israeli musicians who are *chozrim bit'shuvah*,<sup>80</sup> was foreshadowed by the famous Israeli film director, actor and comedian, Uri Zohar, who became a *chozer bit'shuvah* in the late 1970's, and who became an emblematic public figure through his return to the Orthodox community.<sup>81</sup> "Zohar symbolized the irreconcilability between two cultural realities that fervently denied each other's relevance, even though they were 'stuck' together in the same small country."<sup>82</sup> In fact, secular Jews often experienced *chazarah bit'shuvah* as a "physical and emotional rupture, a tragic separation from the person who chose to follow the paths of Torah."<sup>83</sup>

As evidenced by today's popular musical trends, this irreconcilability between religious and secular is fading away, displaced by efforts to bridge the gap. While Uri Zohar certainly set the stage in the 1970's for many famous Israeli artists to follow in his footsteps, the trend of returning to religion has now become much more accepted by Israeli society.

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<sup>79</sup> Shuli Rand Video Interview, *Shuli Rand Wants to Reconnect Jews to Judaism*, Ynetnews, May 2010.

<sup>80</sup> Literally "returning in repentance." A term that refers to a person who chooses to become orthodox by returning to one's faith. Interchangeable with the term *ba'alei teshuva*.

<sup>81</sup> "A Song for Many Voices: The Soul of Secular Israel," Shalom Hartman Institute Blog post, June 2009.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.



This is demonstrated by the fact that the Israeli public embraces many openly religious, popular Israeli musicians who are fusing their passion for prayer with their passion for music. They speak about their devotion to God in a public forum, they dress in traditional clothing and they grapple with their own questions about religion in the texts of their music. Shuli Rand, whose 2008 CD, *N'kuda Tova*, “Good Point,” based on *Rebbe Nachman’s* teachings, says these words on his single, *Ayeka* (translation from <http://www.creedia.com/content/shuli-rands-ayeka-where-are-thou>):

God, if we can talk candidly, sometimes I don’t have the strength to be in Your world. Should I hide from Your face? What can I state? What should I justify, what should I speak? Merciful and compassionate One, revealed here before you is a Jew hanging on by a hair’s thread. Fighting sadness through despair that gnaws like a worm, happiness has fled me, and so has my reason. Voices from the past whisper for me to stop, but I keep on striving in the darkness. And ask, and request, where art thou?

The reality of a religious man performing folk-rock music for a mixed crowd of Orthodox and secular Jews, singing original compositions that bring to light his own doubts and theological questions, is proof that Israeli society has become more accepting of this public dialogue with religion. Rand also argues that the paradigm of Uri Zohar’s revolution thirty years ago—changing your personality and breaking who you were in order to return to religion—is no longer the standard. Rand believes that *chozrei bit’shuvah* are now adopting

a new type of Judaism that allows them to remain who they are while incorporating their new values and essence into their core identity.<sup>84</sup>

Not only has the act of becoming *chozrim bit'shuvah* become more accepted in Israeli society, it has also become less black and white in its definition. Musicians Meir and Evyatar Banai each underwent a public process of *chazara bit'shuva* and continued their professional musical careers after their personal transformation. In a newspaper interview, Evyatar Banai asked Meir, "From which religious genre do you come?" Meir replied, "I am a freelancer; all those divisions are long gone. Passé."<sup>85</sup> This suggests that the new type of Judaism has a post-denominational tendency that is not specifically Orthodox or Reform.

In addition to breaking down religious and secular barriers, Etti Ankri, dubbed a "rock genius" and a "poet of Israeli spirituality," is fusing her *Sephardic* (Tunisian) roots with *Ashkenazic* traditions. In concerts, Ankri weaves a *Chassidic* story from Poland into her dialogue before performing her famous *midrash* song about the Exodus from Egypt, punctuated by rhythms from her *Mizrahi* roots.<sup>86</sup> Ankri became *ba'alat teshuva* in 2001 and continues to perform in front of mixed audiences of men and women. Her latest CD, which was received warmly by critics and audiences alike, is a collection of the poetry of Rabbi Yehuda Halevi set to her original music compositions.

The second category of artists driving the expansion of religious themes and language within the popular culture still identify themselves as secular Jews. They feel proud of their Judaism and want to express that pride through music. Some have rediscovered their

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<sup>84</sup> Shuli Rand Video Interview, *Shuli Rand Wants to Reconnect Jews to Judaism*, Ynetnews, May 2010.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Gringrass

heritage through personal study, in the *batei midrash* or the *piyut* movement, or on their own, and this has influenced the creation of their new music.

In 2005, iconic musician Shlomo Gronich<sup>87</sup> began his own personal exploration of creating music for biblical texts after being inspired by the words of *Ilu Finu* from the Shabbat morning liturgy. Riding high on a wave of inspiration and spiritual enlightenment, Gronich composed settings to twenty new prayers within one week. In speaking about his connection to the text, he says, “I think ancient lyrics have so much power just because they are so old. They gather so much power during the thousands of years. It feels so pure and clean and fresh and good to sing these lyrics, especially today when the radio and everything around us seems to go into fashion music and fragments. I find it a very quality and refreshing experience.”<sup>88</sup> Similarly, renowned Israeli world musician Idan Reichel talks about his connection to using biblical texts: “I use the Bible because all the most important and beautiful things have already been said, so the best that I can probably do is repeat them. There is simply no greater love song than what you find in the Book of Psalms.” These musicians gain access to meaning not by returning to traditional Judaism as a practice, but rather through the beauty and provenance of sacred literature.

Another secular Israeli artist who has found meaning in sacred texts and encountered huge success through religiously-informed material is Ovadia Hamama. His 2006 CD, *Shamayim Va'aretz*, “Heaven and Earth,” explores spiritual issues that bear on the reality of the Israeli experience. His modern interpretations of ancient prayers spring to life with richly

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<sup>87</sup> Shlomo Gronich, one of Israel’s most well-known musicians, has released 18 albums since he began recording music in the early 1970’s. He is recognized as having a unique musical style that combines elements of different music genres, including *Shirei Eretz Yisrael*, rock, rhythm and blues, Mizrahi, Klezmer and Middle-Eastern.

<sup>88</sup> Ben Bresky, “A-7 Interview with Musicial Star Shlomo Gronich - Inside Israel - News - Israel National News.” *Israel National News*, June 2008.

orchestrated textures. Highlighted on the cover of his CD is a stirring image of a pair of clear hands holding a sphere with sea, sky, earth and a dove. At the center is the old city of Jerusalem sending a white beam of light up to the heavens. Hamama sits on a cloud in the sky, hunched over his guitar, gazing down toward the earth. He says that he is “looking with eyes who are constantly searching for poetry, and who find it usually in the place where man is torn between the opposites.”<sup>89</sup> This visual portrays the disc as a powerful and imaginative creation and expression of the Jewish spirit. Hamama does not identify as religious, but he wears a *kippah* when he does “holy things,” such as going to synagogue or singing religious songs on stage.<sup>90</sup> He is not interested in being pigeonholed in a box.

I wonder if all people have to be the same. From my point of view, not all have to be the same or wear the same clothes or have the same positions on everything. That’s what makes things interesting in life. Each person has to do *t’shuvah* on his life, on his behavior, on his music. My music is religious, and I do hope my character is religious, and by that I mean pure and from the soul and having good intentions.<sup>91</sup> Hamama has an optimistic, simple message that he tries to convey in all of his music: that prayer can be a vehicle for change. He says,

I believe in the power of music. I believe it can work on your soul. It can make you feel better, and in that way it’s a very holy instrument. It’s not only to help you be popular. For me, music can change the atmosphere and the energy of people and in that way, can even change the world.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Timora Lesinger, "Jewish Rock in the Holy Land." *Ynet*. Ynetnews, January 29, 2007.

<sup>90</sup> Ben Bresky, "Ovadia Hamama, Famous for 'Ana Bekoach' Hit, Releases New CD." *Israel National News*, May 6, 2009.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

For Hamama, then, the music itself, rather than a formal religious discipline, is an instrument of *t'shuvah*.

In order to further understand this phenomenon of spiritual expression within popular music, the remainder of this chapter will treat two popular musicians in greater detail. By investigating the upbringing, religious background and expressive style of these contrasting personalities, who represent unique musical and spiritual points of view, it will be possible to better understand the highly individualized nature of this medium.

Kobi (nickname for Yaakov) Oz, known for his provocatively probing lyrics, biting satire and cutting-edge Eastern-inspired popular music, grew up in the development town of Sderot with his Tunisian parents. At the age of fifteen, Oz was already playing and composing music, and he got his musical break by playing keyboards in the group *S'fatayim*, who blended Israeli Moroccan styles with rock music. By the early 1990's, Oz formed the infamous band, Teapacks, often credited with paving the way toward the legitimization of Middle Eastern music in Israel.<sup>93</sup> In 2008 Teapacks represented Israel in the Eurovision Song contest with their politically charged and controversial "Push the Button," which comments on Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Beginning in 2005, Oz began five years of Jewish study with various organizations, "soaking in the rich marinade of Judaism."<sup>94</sup> This culminated in his performance in the 2009 *Piyut* Festival in Jerusalem. His material from this experience blossomed into his next solo CD project, "Songs for the Perplexed." Around the same time in 2009, his band, Teapacks, disbanded. On his transition from singing with Teapacks to becoming a solo artist, Oz says,

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<sup>93</sup> Shimon, Kamoun Ben. "Reconnecting Roots." *www.JPost.com*. Jerusalem Post, 2 May 2010. Web. 07 Jan. 2013.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

Teapacks wanted to bring different sounds and voices into Israeliness, but today I feel that I am more Jewish than Israeli. I haven't become religious, nothing dramatic has happened. But facing the colonialism that has tried to control us through branding, I stick to my Judaism, and I won't be branded as religious or anything else. This is an artistic development, not a trend.<sup>95</sup>

Despite being on his own, Oz continued to gain popularity as a solo performer, songwriter and producer, even as he helped discover new talents in Israel such as the popular rap group, *Hadag Nachash* (Snake Fish).

He toured Israel experimenting with the new religiously-inspired music until he felt comfortable enough to record "Songs for the Perplexed." Oz commented that live audiences received the new material positively, and that he was proud to perform for people who were reconnecting to their Jewish roots.<sup>96</sup> Despite his fears of being dubbed a newly religious musician, he recorded *Mizmorei Nevuchim*<sup>97</sup> anyway. He was able to successfully convey his personal truths, which integrate a religious sensibility with contemporary Israeli life, to both public and critical acclaim. In fact, one journalist points out, "Oz has recognized that Israelis are hungry for significance and meaning in their popular music and for relevance to the issues that are increasingly engaging the public—poverty, corruption, lack of political leadership and the role of religion."<sup>98</sup> Oz successfully balances religion, political commentary and his characteristic satire throughout the CD.

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> In 2011, Oz released *Mizmorei Nosafim*, "Some More Psalms" as a follow up to the *Mizmorei Nevuchim*.

<sup>98</sup> Ben Kamoun Shimon, "Reconnecting Roots," *Jerusalem Post*, [www.JPost.com](http://www.JPost.com), May 2, 2010.

When reflecting on some of his musical contemporaries who have become *chozrim bitshuvah*, who are also expressing ancient texts with new musical interpretations, Oz says he prefers his method. “I like to reflect on those texts and the music from my place, from Tel Aviv, from having fun on the beach in Tel Aviv. This is a special space and it doesn’t involve being disguised as a Jew in Poland in the early 1900’s. I try to bring it here to these modern times and talk with it and not go there.”<sup>99</sup>

Though Oz did not grow up religious, he is proud of his *Mizrahi* Jewish roots and feels inspired to express his unique connection to Judaism in “Songs for the Perplexed.” Oz explains in a video interview that he believes Zionism robbed his grandfather of being able to express his Jewish Tunisian way of life when he moved to Israel. Encouraged to assimilate in the new Israeli society, Jews from the Diaspora had to wipe away their past in order to fit in. Oz believes his family’s story is more ancient and significant than roughly one century of Zionism. As a result, Oz wanted to study great Jewish texts, so he could preserve his grandfather’s story by carrying the history on his own back. Oz feels responsible for reintroducing Jewish thought and *Mizrahi* traditions into Israeli society, something he says Zionism forgot.<sup>100</sup> At this point in his life, he recognizes that as a teen he viewed his grandfather’s musical tradition as unappealing, favoring the pop music from London. Entering middle age (41), Oz is ready to embrace his Tunisian heritage and reconnect with his grandfather’s world.

Oz’s grandfather, Rabbi Nissim Messika, was a *paytan* and a Rabbi in Tunisia who wrote and sang *piyutim*. After his arrival in Israel, he recorded hundreds of *piyutim* as an effort to preserve this tradition, having realized that it was not part of mainstream Israeli

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Kobi Oz Video Interview, Makom Israel Talks.

culture. Oz's family found the cassette recordings of the *piyutim* after his death. In "Songs for the Perplexed," Oz sings a duet with his late grandfather. He accomplishes this by combining one of the *piyut* recordings, illustrative of his grandfather's ancient-sounding Hebrew and ethnic singing style, with Oz's own contemporary language and vocal manner.

*Elohai* begins with Oz's grandfather chanting the words of an ancient *piyut* that reads, "You are the Lord my G-d. You are the Lord who gathers the scattered of Israel. Gather our scattered from four corners of the earth. And send the Messiah, our King David, son of Peretz." Immediately the listener is transported to an ancient Sephardic culture through the Arabic-style melismatic ornamentation (*silsulim* in Hebrew) and nasal tone. Oz drops a steady percussive beat under his Grandfather's chanting, brilliantly re-contextualizing the ethnic melody in a pop music environment.

The song builds gradually, first adding block chords on the piano and then a catchy guitar riff. As the piano swells, Oz himself enters with his modern interpretation of a personal prayer to God. He sing-speaks in a casual conversational tone, as if he's talking to a friend. His words begin as an honest and open conversation with God. "I have so much to tell You, yet You know everything. I have so many requests to ask of You, but, regardless, You want the best for me. I give You a little smile for every thing of beauty I notice, impressive or delicate." He then observes with some amusement that he's embarrassed because he doesn't know what to call God—Elohim or Elokim, embodying directly within the song the conversation between traditional and progressive Judasim.

The chorus comes in with a more prominent melody as Oz tells God that he has many "thank you's" and "requests" to express, but his "thank you's" always come out corny. He uses rhyme and repetition in the chorus with the words "*todot*" (thanks) and "*bakashot*"



(requests), layering in some harmony on these two key words. This gives some texture to the somewhat simplistic melodic line and reinforces the importance of the two textual elements, bringing out the relationship between the two aspects of prayer, *todot* and *bakashot*.

The second stanza asks God to send love to Oz's deceased grandfather, and to relay the message that religious zealotry and extremism are rampant today in the Middle East. Still, he says with an air of refreshing optimism, "Despite everything, tolerance is bubbling beneath the surface...in the end, people just want to be united in the great Synagogue called the Land of Israel, where everyone is welcome to look up at the heavens, pray for rain and watch out for missiles." Notwithstanding the religious intolerance and physical danger that threaten Israelis on a regular basis, Oz still believes that, at the core, people are good and want to be united. Accordingly, in contrast to the rest of the song, which is mainly Oz's solo voice, harmonized voices sing the word *b'yachad* on a *Mizrahi* trill, making the word "together" or "united" stand out. At the end of the song, he alternates between his chorus and his grandfather's *piyut*, ultimately concluding with his grandfather's unaccompanied voice, just as the song began. This signifies that the tradition lives on, reminding us that the original *piyut* is the inspiration and basis for the whole piece, and reorienting us to the foundational relationship of grandson and grandfather.

*Elohai* contrasts the traditional and contemporary, the young and old, the harsh reality of life in Israel and the necessity of responding to that life with acceptance and humor. Oz pays homage to his ancestry while concurrently speaking to the plight of modern day Israel, all the while conducting his own personal conversation with God. One of the most compelling lines in the song compares the land of Israel to a large Synagogue. Perhaps Oz is suggesting that at the heart of the matter is a group of people who want to belong to a

community that is spiritually fulfilling, unconditionally supportive and built upon the foundation of Jewish tradition.

Kobi Oz is making the connection between Jewish sources and current events in a cool, hip and relevant way. He is thrilled that his music speaks to Jews of all religious persuasions, quipping that “this is what was meant to happen when we came to Israel. All kinds of Jews sit at the same table and learn something together.”<sup>101</sup> He presents questions and fears about religion and politics in an honest and skillful way that makes his music relational and restorative to Israelis across the board. In a statement about why Zionism and Israeli-ism have limited Israel’s Judaic consciousness, Oz says, “My Israeliness could not contain people like me and my family. Israeliness has been around for no more than 100 or 200 years of our history. ‘Psalms for the Perplexed’ is connected to Judaism, which is more than 2,000 years old, and, from my point of view, I feel like someone who’s left the aquarium and moved back into the ocean.”<sup>102</sup>

A second prominent Israeli musician stands in contrast to Kobi Oz by way of his religious orientation. Yonatan Razel, newer to the Israeli popular music scene, is a phenomenally successful *haredi* musician who gained popularity in Israel with his 2007 debut album, *Sach Hakol*, “All in All.” Razel was born in New York to an American mother and a Dutch father, both psychologists, who met at New York University while studying in the same Doctoral program. Michah and Carol Razel decided to move their family to Israel forty years ago when Yonatan was one year old. The secular family settled in the richly cultured and religious Jerusalem neighborhood of Nachlaot. Connecting to the spiritual

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<sup>101</sup> Kobi Oz Video Interview, Makom Israel Talks.

<sup>102</sup> Ben Kamoun Shimon, “Reconnecting Roots,” *Jerusalem Post*, [www.JPost.com](http://www.JPost.com), May 2, 2010.

energy of the Nachlaot community, it wasn't long before the entire family became *ba'alei t'shuvah*. The entire Razel family still resides in Nachlaot to this day: Yonatan, his two brothers, Aharon and Yehuda, sister Ricka and Yonatan's parents all live within two blocks of one another.

As a child, Razel says he was strongly influenced, religiously and musically, by the heavily Sephardic neighborhood in which he grew up. Razel was so comfortable with his Sephardic surroundings that he didn't even know the meaning of the word *Ashkenazi*. From a young age, Razel was trained as a classical musician, studying piano, cello, composition and conducting. As a young boy, his wide range of musical influences included the Sephardic music of his Persian Synagogue, *Beit Yitzhak*, his mother's Beatles albums and his father's and grandfather's classical tastes, especially Bach and Beethoven. As his classical studies progressed, he was also becoming more and more religious. He served as a conductor in the Israel Defense Forces, in addition to playing in the army bands. It was in the army that Razel was introduced to the secular rock world, and he continued to foster this interest subsequently through the teaching and guidance of rock stars Shlomo Artzi and Matti Caspi. After completing his army service, Razel conducted the Israel Chamber Orchestra and the Raanana Symphony Orchestra, as well as conducting other orchestras around the world. Razel was set to begin a master's degree in Boston when he decided to choose a different path.

I had an international career that was already happening, but I knew I had to change my route. On a certain level classical music is very cold and isolating, and I needed people and spirituality. I was religious, but I was surrounded by secular energy, and I

caught myself--I knew this wasn't for me. I had to find another way. So I dropped off the scene and went to learn Torah.<sup>103</sup>

Torn between the world of money and fame and his search as a Jew, Razel left the classical world to go work as a shepherd on a *yishuv*. He then made his way to study in *Yeshiva*, where he found his true calling, spending the next decade immersed in intense Jewish learning.

He eventually found his way back to the music industry, beginning to work on his first album in the early 2000's. However, he had a difficult time finding a label to represent him, because record companies weren't sure who his target audience would be. They were skeptical of his style, which blended classical and popular music with religious texts that illustrated Razel's search for God. Apparently, Razel was a bit ahead of the now explosive trend synthesizing pop music and prayer. Eventually proving the record labels wrong, Razel released three hit radio singles following the 2007 debut of *Sach Hakol*. The compositions on this album represent a personal religious quest to explore the boundaries of faith and doubt. Not surprisingly, given the current attraction to religious content in popular music, Razel has reported that secular Jews approach him saying, "I don't believe in anything, but I find myself singing your music."<sup>104</sup> Razel's album speaks to secular Israelis who thirst for music that reflects deep Jewish values.<sup>105</sup> The album went gold, and, in 2008, Razel experienced more success with his hit duet, *V'hi She'amdah* (which he composed and arranged), collaborating with religious singer Yaakov Shwekey. Razel was named "Singer of

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<sup>103</sup> Granot-Granevich, 42.

<sup>104</sup> Interview, Yonatan Razel.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

the Year” by *Ynet*, and *V’hi She’amdah* won “Song of the Decade” according to the Israeli station Radio Kol Chai.

Razel leads a rich life, studying Torah all day, preparing to take the chief rabbinate *s’michah* exams, devoting late evenings to his music, and touring the country and world when time permits. Somehow, miraculously, Razel is able to fit in quality family time with his devoted wife and four children. Razel recently released his second full studio album, *Bein Hatzlilim*, “Between the Sounds,” produced by Evyatar Banai, which exhibits his accomplished background in orchestral conducting and arranging. Like the first album, the songs on *Bein Hatzlilim* are either composed to, or inspired by, traditional Jewish texts. The CD features many gorgeous pieces, including a fully orchestrated, classical interpretation of *Niggun Belz*. Another noteworthy selection is *Ashira*, a poignant trio with his two brothers dedicated to the Alin Rehabilitation Hospital, where his 5-year-old daughter, Rivki, miraculously overcame a near fatal brain injury. Razel takes the text from Psalms and sings “I trusted in Your kindness, and my heart rejoices in Your salvation. I will sing to God who has been kind to me.”

*Va’ani T’filati* is one of the most successful singles from Razel’s first album. It is a beautiful and soul-stirring piece that expounds upon a person’s exploration of our relationship with God. As the piece begins, Razel is playing a gentle, inviting, repetitive piano pattern that returns periodically in the accompaniment throughout. Razel’s velvety voice enters above his simple yet soulful piano accompaniment, drawing us into the sacred journey of the song. The opening text, *Va’ani t’filati l’Chah eit ratzon*, “Let my prayer be to You, oh God, at a favorable time,” is an excerpt from *Mah Tov*, taken from Psalms 69:14. It sets in motion a highly personal conversation, beginning from the human perspective in

relationship with God. Razel omits the word *Adonai* from the phrase in order to abide by traditional Jewish law of not using God's Name improperly outside the context of actual prayer (a choice that, owing to Razel's religious orientation, stands in contrast to the *Elohim/Elokim* inquiry of Kobi Oz's song). The omission of God's Name imparts an informal, less austere feeling to God, who becomes accessible and approachable.

The text continues with Razel's own words, "Do you hear my voice? Again I stand here naked before you. Do you remember who I am?" This image, reminiscent of Adam standing exposed in the Garden of Eden before God,<sup>106</sup> expresses the vulnerable state of a human being who beseeches God for comfort and reassurance. This statement is sung in a straightforward, conversational tone, juxtaposed with the crescendo in the musical accompaniment and the intensity of the next line, which asks the question, "Do you remember who I am?" The poet answers his own question: "It is me, the little one You placed in the garden, requesting, calling to You to come, to come to me, the person, because I need You in the world." The piano accompaniment fills out, supported by the entrance of percussion and a string section.

As the next stanza begins, a solo string instrument plays a gorgeous, sweeping counter melody, perhaps accompanying the textual shift from the human perspective toward the Divine voice, which responds reassuringly: "So if you hear a deep, deep voice within you, you will understand I haven't left you. If you hear a quiet, quiet voice within you, you will understand I haven't left you." The expressive violin carries forward to the next line: "It is Me, God who created you, requesting, calling you to come, come to Me, to God, because I need you in the world." The violin crescendos at the peak of that phrase on the words, "to

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<sup>106</sup> In the second stanza God addresses the narrator *ha'adam*, "human one," and in the fourth as *ben Adam*, "son of Adam."

me, to God,” as Razel brings out the importance of the word *Elohim* with a vocal embellishment. The song reaches a climactic moment here, “because the world needs you, the human, because you are needed in the world,” with a coordinated increase of intensity in pitch, dynamics and musical accompaniment. This passage is also emblematic of a characteristic Jewish melodic style, in which the vocal part exhibits a certain independence from the predominant meter and rhythm. With Razel’s voice still ringing on the word *ba’olam* (“in the world”), the music makes a transition to the next section, which is a prayerful melding of *niggun* and jazz scat underscored by rich harmonies, coming together seamlessly to express the depth of this prayer.

This leads into a musical interlude, followed by a brief reprise of the *niggun*. The song concludes with Razel tenderly singing the chorus, but with the text changed from “Do You remember who I am?” to “are You with me?” The final line of the song recedes dramatically in volume and tempo and is accompanied sparingly by simple harmonies on the piano, progressing through a jazz chord sequence that leaves the concluding question suspended in mid-air.

Throughout Razel’s music, one can sense the encounter of Jewish spontaneity with both jazz and contemporary pop, so that the music itself embodies the cultural fusion that characterizes the inner life of its composer.

The citation from Robbie Gringrass that began this chapter states,” In mixing and smudging the secular and the religious...it could be that the Israeli music scene is finally beginning to play a new Jewish melody.”<sup>107</sup> We have now seen how the “mixing and smudging” of secular and religious boundaries in Israeli popular music has resulted in a new

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<sup>107</sup> Robbie Gringrass, "Israeli Rock Finds Religion," *The Jewish Daily Forward*, June 24, 2009.

style of musical interpretation. The rich Israeli musical tradition of drawing inspiration from biblical imagery has become expanded into a realm of acceptance within popular music that embraces and encompasses Jews from many streams of belief and practice. Contemporary Israeli composers are reinterpreting the bible for this day and age, just as their predecessors such as Paul Ben-Haim, Moshe Vilensky and Noami Shemer did before them. The new compositional style transcends conventional religious boundaries, melding together Jewish tradition, religious curiosity, different musical and ethnic persuasions, relevance to contemporary Israeli issues, and creative textual interpretation. It is clear based on the artists and musical examples described above that this is an exciting and unique time in the evolution of Israeli music and its role in reinterpreting Jewish spirituality now and in the future.



## Chapter 4

### The Emergence of Independent Spiritual Communities

The renaissance in Israeli society that transcends the formerly strict boundaries between secular and religious is not limited to the reinterpretation of Jewish themes and texts in popular music. Having explored aspects of Israel's cultural and spiritual renewal, including the *piyut* revival and the establishment of liberal *batei midrash* as innovative arenas for experiencing Jewish texts and reconnecting with Jewish identity, we turn now to the domain of “secular” prayer.

The emergence of alternative prayer communities as a means for religious and spiritual expression is an outgrowth of the success of pluralistic text study programs. The first half of this chapter will treat the role of these prayer communities within the context of broader Israeli culture, establishing their defining characteristics and exploring first-hand accounts from both leaders and participants. The second half of the chapter will include a deeper look at three specific prayer communities that have achieved success and popularity: *Niggun HaLev*, *Beit T'filah Israeli* and *Nava Tehila. Yisraeli*. In each case we will delve into the community's inception and goals, its leadership and the demographic range of its members and participants, and the components of its *t'filah* with an emphasis on the role of music.

According to Naama Azulay, leading expert in Israel's Jewish Renewal Movement,<sup>108</sup> the growing interest and participation among secular Israelis in Jewish pluralistic activities—

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<sup>108</sup> The goal of these Jewish renewal groups is to enable Israeli Jews to articulate their Jewish identity in diverse ways, and to enhance the commitment to the revival of Jewish life on the individual and the collective levels.” (Azulay and Tabor, 22.)

*batei midrash, kehilot sharot* and Jewish holiday observances—dates from the 1990's.<sup>109</sup>

Azulay asserts that as individuals became more Judaically knowledgeable, a new outcropping of spiritually-oriented communal organizations developed, laying the groundwork for the birth of secular Israeli prayer houses.<sup>110</sup> Secular Israelis enjoyed studying sacred Jewish texts, such as the *Talmud* and *Mishnah*, and through this process they developed an urge to move beyond intellectual study, bringing Judaism into their lives in a personal and spiritual way. It seemed like the next logical step in rediscovering and reclaiming their Judaism. Between 2001 and 2008, thirty new *batei t'filah*, "houses of prayer," were established in Israel.<sup>111</sup>

While the development of liberal prayer communities has proved successful, Azulay asserts that "the concept of Jewish secular worship" (including prayer, appeal to God, and some dimension of spirituality) is usually treated as an oxymoron in Israel."<sup>112</sup> Those in Orthodox circles argue that it is simply "not authentic Judaism."<sup>113</sup> Labeling these communities as traitors, they will not even recognize them as Jewish, because they operate without rules and disobey the Rabbis.<sup>114</sup> One community member responds:

I don't believe that someone who observes religious law more strictly than I do is somehow better than I am. I grew up in a religious environment, I have benefited from an excellent Jewish education, but I could never find a place for myself in

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<sup>109</sup> Naama Azulay and Ephraim Tabory. "'A House of Prayer for All Nations': Unorthodox Prayer Houses for Nonreligious Israeli Jews." *Sociological Papers* Volume 13, 2008, 22-41. *SOCIOLOGICAL INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY STUDIES BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY*, <http://www.socpapers.org>.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 25

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Eetta Prince-Gibson, "They're Doing It Their Way." *The Jerusalem Report*, June 22, 2009, 6-11.

Orthodox Judaism. In this individualistic world in which we live, it is difficult for a person with independent thought to live according to a codex that was written several hundred years ago, parts of which are simply not relevant to our world today. I need to choose what is appropriate, what speaks to me as a woman, a mother, a Jewish Israeli.<sup>115</sup>

Even beyond Orthodox communities, the general Israeli public has viewed prayer and holiness as foreign concepts in secular spheres.<sup>116</sup> This is due in large part to the long-standing divide between those who identify as secular and those who identify as religious. As stated in chapter 2, Israeli Jewish religiosity was shaped by the polarization that emerged between the religious and nonreligious populations as a result of secular Zionism's rejection of traditional Orthodoxy."<sup>117</sup> As a result of this dichotomy, "secular" and "religious" became the only two acceptable categories by which Israelis could define themselves. Many Israelis identified as secular because they didn't want to be associated with the Orthodox, while other Israelis considered themselves secular because they believed that living in a Jewish State, speaking Hebrew and being with their family for Shabbat dinner was enough. Now, in many instances, the strict distinction between "secular" and "religious" is beginning to be blurred. Itamar Lapid, the prayer leader of the congregation in the community of Shimsheet in the Lower Galilee says, "I hope the day will come when the distinction between secular and religious will be a thing of the past. I don't care about definitions, but rather creativity, which, by nature, breaks through boundaries."<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>116</sup> Azulay and Tabory, 22-41.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, page 24

<sup>118</sup> Yair Sheleg, "Folk Songs and the Shema Blur the Religious-secular Divide," *Haaretz*, June 9, 2006.

For the first time in Israel's history, there are now many communities in which a "secular" Israeli can pray, connect to God and experience spirituality through non-conventional, non-Orthodox pathways. The founders of these communities were determined to create a new approach to Jewish prayer, ritual and spiritual experience, not based on any existing religious movement in Israel, and completely independent of traditional Jewish requirements and mandatory practices.<sup>119</sup> Eli Gur, director of the Federation's Commission on Jewish Identity and Renewal (COJIR) explains:

This is answering a vacuum for people who want to be a part of a collective Jewish culture. It's not against religion or the religious public, but people are choosing to create their own experience. Eighty-four percent of the *kehillot* write their own prayer, which demonstrates that they don't want to be part of the existing movements, not even the liberal ones.<sup>120</sup>

While each prayer community functions as an independent unit and caters specifically to the needs of their group, the *batei t'filah* can be characterized by certain commonalities. It is clear that these non-denominational groups are "part of a search for an Israeli, indigenously-inspired form of Judaism, infused with spirituality and community."<sup>121</sup> Orly Kenneth, one of the founders of *Gan Yavne* Prayer House, located in a rural suburb of Ashkelon, speaks to the Israeli aspect of the search:

It is Israeli because in Israel, as Jews, we must deal with all aspects of our lives.

Abroad, questions of water and sewage, or prostitution or the military are not necessarily Jewish questions. But here they are, because we live in a Jewish state.

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>120</sup> Haviv Rettig, "Seeking an Independent Path to Jewish Spirituality," *The Jerusalem Post*, [www.JPost.com](http://www.JPost.com), May 6, 2008.

<sup>121</sup> Prince-Gibson, 6-11.

Here, literally and figuratively, we must speak the language of the Jews. That is why Jewish life here in Israel is so demanding. Some try to avoid this intensity. Others, like the members of our groups, are trying to cope and find a way to speak this language.

A second commonality is the search for community as a basic human necessity. Israelis are not finding community as they used to, in Zionist circles or *kibbutzim*, which have become less relevant as Israel has matured as a State. They yearn for new communal bonds. Esteban Gottfried, founder of *Beit T'filah Israeli*, asserts, "In order to give the individual a sense of belonging and a meaningful, connected life, a more intimate framework is required—renewing the idea of community and providing a new sense of belonging."<sup>122</sup>

A third commonality among these communities is the creation of a warm, relaxed and informal prayer environment. By nature, Israeli society is laid back and casual, so it follows that secular Israelis would gravitate toward a spiritual community with a similar tone or atmosphere. Most of the *Kabbalat Shabbat* gatherings occur in clubs, homes, school buildings or local youth cultural centers, promoting an informal communal experience.<sup>123</sup> Additionally, while a few of the prayer leaders of these communities are trained Rabbis, many of them are simply congregation members who have studied various courses in Judaism and/or group leadership.<sup>124</sup> The community feels a sense of closeness with their leader since that person is usually already firmly embedded within the group. This dynamic also produces a sense of equality and comfort, knowing that prayer leaders can be ordinary

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<sup>122</sup> Esteban Gottfried, "Jewish Renaissance in Israel through Ritual." *Sh'ma: A Journal of Jewish Responsibility*, 2006, 6-7.

<sup>123</sup> Azulay and Tabor, 22-41.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*, 32.

people with an increased knowledge of Judaism.<sup>125</sup> One participant notes, “I like it most when everything becomes a mess and everyone is walking around and confused, including our leaders. It feels like we are all in it together and making it happen before our eyes, and there is no boss who knows everything.”<sup>126</sup>

In addition to an unpretentious physical space and a familiar prayer leader from the community, the inclusion of contemporary Israeli poetry, readings and songs also gives the service an inviting and authentically Israeli feeling. In addition, this incorporation of Israeli culture makes the service more palatable to secular Jews who may be experiencing *t’filah* for the first time.<sup>127</sup> The melding of traditional and modern texts creates a conversation between leaders and participants about how to interpret their heritage.<sup>128</sup>

A fourth similarity among the *batei t’filah* is the important role of music as a means for spiritual expression and connection to Jewish observances. Group singing has been an essential component in Israeli society since the pre-State era, as evidenced by the continued popularity of *shira betzibbur*. An emphasis on this aspect of *t’filah* makes Israelis feel as if communal prayer singing is an extension of mainstream Israeli culture and contributes to its approachable, familiar nature. One congregant says, “The most important activity here is communal singing. The experience of the adults with their children in the spiritual meeting is very uplifting; a shared experience of transition that separates the weekday from Shabbat.”<sup>129</sup> Also unique to these new prayer communities is the use of a wide array of musical instruments. Specifically, the use of guitar contributes another inviting element that

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 28.

has long been ingrained in Israel's folk music culture. The soothing sound of the guitar reminds congregants of their childhood experiences in the youth movement, their army service or singing *shirei eretz Yisrael*, eliciting a sense of comfort and familiarity.

A fifth common characteristic of these prayer communities is a commitment to inclusivity across the board, including gender, age, cultural background and religious beliefs. Some participants believe in God, while others identify as atheists; some wear *kippot*, while some do not; some pray with words, while others dance or meditate. In addressing the varied theological beliefs of the members of Gan Yavne Prayer House, its leader, Orly Kenneth remarks:

We call ourselves a Prayer Community, even though not all of our members are in dialogue with God or even believe in God, yet we all share a deep desire to acknowledge and belong to something that is greater than the here and now. I believe that if you have a set ritual and liturgy, even if it's flexible; and if you convene at the same time, just before Shabbat; and if you use even some of the words that Jews have used for three thousand years to welcome in the Shabbat—then you are praying.<sup>130</sup>

Finally, the prevailing openness, comfort level and inclusivity of the *batei t'fillah* make it easy for community members to integrate different aspects of their spiritual lives.

One participant says:

For me, our community is a way to bring the different parts of myself together. The community provides me with the sense of belonging. The tradition speaks to my identity as a Jewish Israeli. The family orientation brings my family and my professional and personal pursuits together. And we also volunteer in *Gan Yavne*, so

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<sup>130</sup> Prince-Gibson, 7.

this connects to my belief in social change and social justice.<sup>131</sup>

The general goals and principles of the fifty or so independent *batei t'fillah* communities are sufficiently in alignment with one another that, in 2008, under the sponsorship of the UJA Federation of New York's Commission on Jewish Identity and Renewal (COJIR), they established a network called *Reshet HaKehilot*, "the Israeli Emergent Jewish Communities Network," as way to stay in dialogue and learn from one another. The Network maintains that their shared set of values include egalitarianism, inclusion, pluralism, openness, independence and sovereignty, and post-denominationalism.<sup>132</sup> These groups do not want to be confused with the Reform, Conservative or other organized movements. They want to create their own Israeli interpretation of a Jewish prayer experience, specifically noting that "change will only come from the ground up."<sup>133</sup> Itamar Lapid, the leader of *Reshet HaKehilot*, explains, "What we have in common is that we don't believe Judaism should be outsourced. You shouldn't be a 'customer' of Judaism. You need to take responsibility over your own Jewish life."<sup>134</sup>

In order to more fully understand the culture of *batei t'filah*, we will now examine three communities in greater detail beginning with *Niggun Halev*. *Niggun Halev* ("Melody of the Heart"), was founded in November of 2000 by a group of residents and educators in the Jezreel Valley who sought to create a framework for meaningful Jewish spirituality, aimed at addressing the needs of non-affiliated Israelis.<sup>135</sup> Many of the original founders

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., page 7.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., page 11

<sup>133</sup> Brian Blum, "Insourcing Judaism," *The Jerusalem Report*, August 30, 2012

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> *Niggun Halev* Community Vision Statement.



were involved in Hamidrasha in Oranim<sup>136</sup> and had previously experienced kibbutz life, where they developed a tight-knit bond from working together closely through the years.<sup>137</sup> They had also already experienced some collective ritual as a group, enabling them to facilitate the first secular prayer community in Israel.<sup>138</sup>

*Niggun Halev* began as a community of seven families and expanded to sixty families by 2008. Today, the community regularly draws a crowd of one hundred to two hundred people for *Kabbalat Shabbat* services on Friday evenings, ranging in age from three months to ninety years old. In addition to celebrating Shabbat and holidays, *Niggun HaLev* offers education classes, volunteer opportunities, annual retreats, life cycle ceremonies and youth group activities. The community is led by Shai Zarchi, a secular congregational leader, and Rabbi Chen Ben Or Tsfoni. Zarchi, a founding member of Hamidrasha in Oranim, recalls an early realization that his fledgling prayer group needed leadership:

Suddenly we understood that our secular group was in need of some of authority-not a person who knows it all, not a person who claims to hold the only truth, not a person who dictates to others what to do, but the authority of a figure with a meaningful spiritual world...the ethos of the secular is not anti-authority but it accepts authority only partly...Later, I found that I had to abandon the ethos of anti-authority that I grew up with on a *kibbutz* and to be courageous and contribute my

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<sup>136</sup> *HaMidrasha in Oranim* is an educational center working toward the renewal of Jewish life in Israel. It was established in 1989 by Israeli educators and activists to help non-Orthodox Jewish Israelis address issues of personal and collective Jewish identity and to create a pluralistic cultural and spiritual landscape in Israel. (see <http://www.hamidrasha-israel.org/about-us/>)

<sup>137</sup> Azulay and Tabor, 31.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

ability as a leader in the community...this was something that was new for me.<sup>139</sup>

Rabbi Tsfoni, who was also involved with Hamidrasha in Oranim prior to studying for the rabbinate, helped establish *Niggun HaLev* as the first prayer community of its kind. She went on to enroll in the Israeli Rabbinic program of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Jerusalem, receiving her ordination in 2009. Early in her involvement with the community, Rabbi Tsfoni wondered how it would be possible to establish a *Kabbalat Shabbat* service with individuals who were so unfamiliar with religious ritual:

I asked myself how can we, as a community of people who by and large identify themselves as secular, have a prayer service or observe Shabbat, or have some other ceremony, when we have no tradition, when our people did not see their own parents doing these things, when they do not know the prayers, in short, when they have no tradition. Our task is to create tradition, to make this part of us again.<sup>140</sup>

Rabbi Tsfoni recalls that a visit with a delegation from Hamidrasha in Oranim to Congregation *B'nei Jeshrun* in Manhattan thirteen years ago sparked the desire to create a similar community in Israel: "We suddenly saw people like us (non-Orthodox Jews), defined as secular, for whom prayer is a natural and authentic part of life."<sup>141</sup> The Israeli delegation was shocked by the creativity and spirit of the service and realized that such freedom was limited in Israel.<sup>142</sup> She observed, "the lifestyle of those Rabbis in *B'nei Jeshrun* looked...very much like our lifestyle. They are not like the people we meet in a regular Orthodox synagogue in Israel, but they have something spiritual that we are afraid of, and

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>141</sup> Yair Sheleg, "Folk Songs and the Shema Blur the Religious-secular Divide," *Haaretz*, *haaretz.com*, June 9, 2006.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 29.

that we still don't know how to use..."<sup>143</sup>

Upon returning to Israel, three of the founding members of the congregation immediately sat down to compile a *Niggun Halev* prayer book (see Appendix A) incorporating a mixture of traditional prayers and contemporary Israeli songs and poetry. In an interview with Rabbi Tsfoni during the summer of 2012, she told me that their goal was to take the two languages, the ancient Jewish language of the prayer and the contemporary Jewish language of the pioneers and combine them as two parts of the Israeli identity

During the same interview, Rabbi Tsfoni said that the most important aspect of the service, the part that draws people in, is the music.<sup>144</sup> She explained that, because Israelis understand every single word of Hebrew, they often find it hard to pray, because their beliefs are in opposition to the text.<sup>145</sup> However, she says that music breaks the textual boundaries and allows them a way to move past these discrepancies.<sup>146</sup> To that end, the music utilized in services is extremely accessible and participatory. They use a combination of Israeli pioneer music, Shlomo Carlebach melodies, traditional chants, contemporary Israeli popular music and tunes being written especially for these secular prayer communities. In one service, the melodies range from the *shirei eretz yisraeli* classic, *Shir Haemek* by Daniel Sambursky, to Minkowsky's *Shabbat Hamalka* to Ovadia Hamama's *Ana Bekoach* to a *Shir La'ma'a lot*, (one by Yosef Karduner,<sup>147</sup> another by Or Zohar<sup>148</sup>). In order to facilitate strong communal singing within the service, a group of very talented musicians provides musical

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Interview, Rabbi Chen Tsfoni.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> a *Bresslov* singer who became famous for his *Shir La'maalot* composition which is sung in Orthodox and non-Orthodox communities around the world.

<sup>148</sup> Or Zohar is a Hebrew Union College ordained Israeli Rabbi and musician who began his own independent prayer community, *Tefilat Halev*, "Prayer of the Heart", in Tel Aviv.

accompaniment. Piano, multiple guitars and *tof* are among the standard instrumentation.

As part of my research for this thesis, I had the pleasure of experiencing *Kabbalat Shabbat* services at *Niggun Halev* in the summer of 2012. I was captivated by the congregation's unique blend of spirituality and *shira betzibbur*-style singing. There was a strong sense of community among members in the room, and it was also clear that many of them had cultivated their own individual prayer practices. When talking about prayer, *Niggun Halev* leader Shai Zarchi has said:

One of the things I learned from prayer services in the United States is that many congregants don't understand the words of the prayers. It's like a mantra to them. And then I realized that in Israel, for people unfamiliar with Jewish prayers, praying is like crossing the Red Sea...But if you are interested in ancient words—words that incorporate much beauty and meaning, then you have to work on pushing the limits of their meaning, to expand their perspective so that the people will feel comfortable with them.

At *Niggun Halev*, through creative liturgy, eclectic and accessible music, and a willingness to “push the limits,” this progressive community is forging its own non-denominational interpretation of Jewish prayer.

In 2004, co-founders Rani Jaeger and Esteban Gottfried launched the innovative and dynamic congregation *Beit T'filah Israeli* (BTI), “Israeli House of Prayer,” in Tel Aviv (see Appendix D). They created BTI to address the lack of a relevant, vibrant Jewish spiritual community among the secular population in Tel Aviv, and to infuse it with a unique approach to Jewish communal life that interweaves Jewish and Israeli identities. “As the name Beit T'filah Israeli implies, one of our goals is not only to bring ourselves closer to

prayer, but also to bring prayer closer to us—to the place where our Jewish and Israeli identities meet.”<sup>149</sup> Through a combination of worship styles and artistic expression, BTI has built a new synagogue model for secular Israelis.

Gottfried grew up as an active member of the Conservative Movement in Buenos Aires. He was deeply affected by his rich community life, Jewish summer camp, creative prayer, and by Marshall Meyer, a congregational rabbi and founder of the Latin American Seminary who later went on to establish Congregation *B’nei Jeshurun* in New York City. Upon making *aliyah* twenty-nine years ago to pursue a career in theater, Gottfried was unable to find a prayer community in Israel that spoke to him. He longed for the creative *t’filah* of his youth in Argentina. He tried to explain this type of prayer experience to his Israeli friends, but they lacked the contextual background to understand what he was describing. In the early 2000’s, Gottfried took an organized trip with a group of Israelis to visit *B’nei Jeshurun* in Manhattan. For Gottfried, the experience at *B’nei Jeshurun* reminded him of his youth and felt like a homecoming. For the other Israelis on the trip, experiencing *B’nei Jeshurun* opened up a new modality of Judaism, and they finally understood the approach to which Gottfried had been referring.<sup>150</sup> The group was energized and inspired by this experience, and they immediately began planning their own prayer experience with the intent of making it authentically Israeli.

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<sup>149</sup> Azulay and Tabory, 24.

<sup>150</sup> Since *B’nei Jeshurun* is attributed with influencing both the *Niggun HaLev* and *Beit T’filah Israeli* communities, it’s worth noting a few salient characteristics that cause BJ to feel “authentic.” There is an overall prayerful sensibility that begins with the leaders; the service proceeds with a relaxed flow that conveys freedom within the form of the liturgy; the accessible, ethnically-informed melodies unify the congregants and connect them to the texts being sung; and the ample Kabbalat Shabbat gives people a real chance to transition smoothly from the regular week to Shabbat, making it possible for people to find a truly restful, peaceful spiritual space.

The initial prayer meeting eight years ago began with twenty people who were invited through e-mail. The community grew in numbers by word of mouth, and eventually participants began inquiring if BTI performed life cycle events. Having developed over time from a small *chavurah* to a community to an organization, today BTI has become a center for Jewish life that offers prayer and holiday services, life cycle events, Jewish education and social justice opportunities. BTI is made up of a core community of one hundred and eighty family units and is supplemented by many visitors. During the summer months BTI holds services at the *namal*, the port in Tel Aviv, welcoming between four hundred and one thousand participants on Friday nights. These participants are a mixture of regular BTI community members, tourists and other secular Israelis who happen to be strolling along the *namal* on a Friday evening and spontaneously stop in to check out the service. During the rest of the year, the congregation meets at “The Alma House,” generally drawing fifty to one hundred people for services. BTI is supported financially by modest membership dues, fees for educational seminars offered around Israel, donations and grants.

Services at *Beit T'filah Israeli* are comprised of a combination of beautifully arranged music, modern poetry, literature, personal prayers and traditional elements from the *siddur*. In order to create the perfect blend, BTI has compiled its own special *siddur* (see Appendices B and C), which combines traditional and creative prayer elements. It offers a page of contemporary Hebrew poetry or literature displayed on the opposing page from each traditional text, so as to address the same themes in both an ancient and modern way. Gottfried says, “We are creating something that is specifically tailored for Israeli Judaism.”<sup>151</sup> The *siddur* includes works of classic Israeli artists, such as Naomi Shemer, Lea

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<sup>151</sup> Brian Blum, "Insourcing Judaism." *The Jerusalem Report*, August 30, 2012.

Goldberg, Ehud Manor, Natan Alterman, Moshe Wilensky, Matti Caspi, David Zahavi, Sasha Argov, Uzi Hitman and Arik Einstein. There is even a Hebrew version of the Louis Armstrong standard, “What a Wonderful World,” which has become a favorite at *Beit T’filah Israeli*. On the cover of one iteration of BTI’s prayerbook is the Chaim Nachman Bialik quote that informs BTI’s approach to prayer: “Celebrate your ancestors’ holidays and add to them a bit of your own...What is paramount is that you do everything out of faith, and with a live feeling and a soulful need—and don’t be too clever.”<sup>152</sup>

The music at *Beit T’filah Israeli* is most definitely its heart and soul. Eight to ten professional musicians often lead the service along with Gottfried and Jaeger during the summer months. Cello, violin, clarinet, flute, viola, electric piano and percussion are among the assortment of instruments that one may hear at BTI on a given Shabbat. In addition, they utilize a number of professional singers to empower the congregational voice. Lead vocalist Atalya Lavi, a former contestant on *Kochav Nolad* (Israel’s “American Idol”), sings with such soul and spiritual conviction that she elevates the prayers and their beautiful texts to new heights.

Musical selections at BTI include traditional and Brazilian melodies, Carlebach tunes, original compositions by its own ensemble members, and works by contemporary Israeli performers such as Shlomo Gronich and Yoni Rechter. Gottfried asked Gronich to compose a few melodies for BTI several years ago, which became the spark for Gronich setting out on his own spiritual path and eventually recording several albums of liturgical music. Gronich was amazed by the power of the liturgical texts and completely immersed himself in learning and composing. A mere several hours after receiving a fax from Gottfried with the words of

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<sup>152</sup> Beit T’filah Israeli website, <http://www.kbyonline.org/index.html>

*Ilu Finu*, Gronich had finished his composition. This powerful and captivating melody is now used in Reform, Conservative and non-affiliated services in Israel, San Francisco, Argentina and Los Angeles, to name a few. Other melodies that Gronich composed specifically for BTI include *Zamru L'Adonai*, *Mosheh Kibel Torah Mi Sinai* and *Ki Beiti Beit T'filah*.

The musical compositions utilized for worship at BTI have one major commonality: they are accessible and easy to sing along with, especially for Israelis, who so ably assimilate the Hebrew texts. The style of music feels familiar and comfortable, deriving from Israeli popular or folk genres and imbued with ethnic flair. Characteristic examples include the *L'chah Dodi* by Yoni Rechter, the *Adon Olam* (see Appendix E) based on Yonatan Razel's popular melody for *D'ror Yikrah* (adapted in turn from a popular Sephardic tune) and Shlomo Gronich's *Ki Beiti Beit T'filah*, "My House will be a House of Prayer for all nations" (Isaiah 56), which serves as BTI's "theme song," appropriate as it is for welcoming people of all backgrounds and affiliations. These melodies have a contemporary energy and liberating buoyancy that differs completely in tone from the central and eastern European style that dominated *Ashkenazic* music (and was long the frame of reference for Jewish music in America). The Brazilian *Mizmor Shir l'Yom HaShabbat* (see Appendix F) sung at BTI is a relaxing and gentle Sabbath song. Even if a service participant has never heard these settings before, they sound familiar, and their simplicity and repetitiveness make it easy to hum along.

A somewhat contrasting piece is Yoni Rechter's *T'filah Tel Avivit*, "A Tel Aviv Prayer," that combines a contemplative prayer with a second more playful section reminiscent of early *shirei eretz yisraeli* pioneer songs. *T'filah Tel Avivit* counterbalances a



reminiscence of the Zionist past with a contemporary-sounding modal chant, rolling together essential elements of Israeli music into a single setting.

Another facet of the music at BTI is what Esteban Gottfried calls “niggunization,” yet one more way of inviting people to sing and have a prayerful experience. To paraphrase from his interview:

We take a familiar melody of Gronich or Rechter or Caspi that works on the Israeli soul, that works on differing levels together. Something about it is very familiar, and ancient. Niggunization is to take one of these Israeli songs that has some kind of Jewish soul in it, and to sing it as a *niggun*. It can be an Israeli pop song, but we reinterpret it like a Chassidic *niggun*, and it works.

The overall feeling at BTI is like being at a *shira betzibbur* with hundreds of Israelis singing together. There’s something poetic about that collective sound mixed with being right on the water, staring out into the sea as the sun sets. It’s quite powerful, especially when the silent *Amidah* is concluded by the singing of the Zahavi-Szenesh *Eili, Eili*, integrating yet another classic Israeli song.

In addition to employing contemporary Israeli music and texts in Shabbat services, BTI finds other creative ways to innovate within their broader program. A few years ago they adapted the *Havdalah* service (see Appendix G) to mark the end of *Yom Hazikaron* (Israel’s Memorial Day) and the beginning of *Yom Ha’atzma’ut* (Israel’s Independence Day). The service includes a poem by Yehuda Amichai, selections from Shmuel Yosef Agnon, *El Maley Rachamim* (the traditional prayer for the deceased), Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav’s prayer for peace, Talmud legends, psalms and the traditional *Havdalah* blessings.<sup>153</sup> The

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<sup>153</sup> Azulay and Tabor, 34.

booklet for this ceremony has been reproduced and used throughout Israel. The creation of an Israeli-Jewish service to mark this significant occasion in Israel's yearly calendar demonstrates how Jewish tradition and Israeli culture can successfully merge to create a spiritual opening for secular Israelis.

Another BTI innovation is making space for spontaneous and individual prayer to be voiced within the context of Friday night services. The prayer leader will walk through the *kahal* and invite people to share something from the past week for which they are thankful. After an individual offers his or her reflection, one of the vocalists in the BTI ensemble immediately responds with an improvised interpretation of the same statement in song. The moment is capped off with a congregational chanting of the words "*al zeh ani modeh*," ("for this I am thankful"). Gottfried remarks, "Spontaneity is part of prayer. We must take risks and challenge ourselves to keep experimenting with forms of expression in prayer."<sup>154</sup>

With the hope of making an impact on larger Israeli society, BTI runs seminars and educational programs in schools and community centers, as well as in the army, bringing their innovative Judaism to thousands of young Israelis who have never been exposed to a non-Orthodox approach to Jewish ritual. In the case of the army, the long-term goal is to inspire these soldiers to seek out pluralistic and egalitarian modes of Jewish expression when they move on from the IDF.<sup>155</sup> When asked if such educational efforts will make an impact in the future, Gottfried replies realistically, "It's a process. It takes years or decades to do it."<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Interview, Esteban Gottfried. (Gottfried completed the rabbinic program of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and was ordained in November of 2012)

<sup>155</sup> Blum, "Insourcing Judaism."

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

Gottfried views BTI as a laboratory for experimentation with Jewish prayer and ritual, with the intention of creating new Jewish-Israeli communities that provide a sense of belonging and meaning for otherwise disenfranchised Israelis.<sup>157</sup> When asked about the appeal of *Beit T'filah Israeli*, Gottfried responds, “the main reason people are coming is because it is relevant to their life. This is Jewish practice in a way that you don’t have to be something different than who you are. You are not judged. This is tailor-made for this time in this place. When it’s like this, it’s easy to be engaged.”<sup>158</sup>

It’s clear that *Beit T'filah Israeli* has become a major center for liturgical innovation, the creation of new music, and cultural change through education, all the while remaining true to its independent ideals.

The third and final independent prayer community that we’ll explore is Jerusalem’s *Nava Tehila*, “Beautiful Praise.” Led by spiritual leader Rabbi Ruth Gan-Kagan, *Nava Tehila* was established in 2004 as an egalitarian and inclusive prayer and study community. The community welcomes visitors and members of other religions, as well as Jews of all religious affiliations. *Nava Tehila* specifically seeks to appeal to non-affiliated secular Israelis seeking spirituality, as well as to Israelis who grew up religious and have since left Judaism behind. *Nava Tehila* offers monthly *Kabbalat Shabbat* services (see Appendix H), along with classes in Jewish spirituality, meditation, *Kabbalah* and *Chassidut*. While *Nava Tehila* identifies itself as an independent non-affiliated prayer community, they are strongly influenced and inspired by the contemporary *Hassidic* Rebbe Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and his American renewal movement.

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<sup>157</sup> Esteban Gottfried, "Jewish Renaissance in Israel through Ritual." *Sh'ma: A Journal of Jewish Responsibility*, 2006, 6-7.

<sup>158</sup> Interview, Esteban Gottfried.

Born in Jerusalem, Gan-Kagan grew up in a Zionist Orthodox home as an active member of *B'nei Akivah*.<sup>159</sup> Although she has remained an observant Jew throughout her life, her curiosity led her to develop ideas about how to make Judaism a more relevant, exciting and personal experience.<sup>160</sup> Commenting on Jewish practice, Gan-Kagan says, “In Judaism, observance should be marked by attendance to the place, the time, and the soul. But over the past generations, the rabbis have abandoned the Jewish soul, focusing on the mechanics of the ceremonies, doing ‘what they have to do,’ but not what is meaningful. I am an observant Jew, but my observance has to speak to my soul, too.” Having been schooled in Jewish studies in *Yeshivah*, The Shalom Hartman Institute and Pardes, Gan-Kagan eventually discovered that the ideologies of Reb Zalman’s renewal movement spoke to her search for spirituality. She was ordained in 2003 by Reb Zalman and Aleph–Alliance for Jewish Renewal.

*Nava Tehila* developed organically as Gan-Kagan began to work individually with other spiritual seekers on their own personal quests. She served as their spiritual director, guiding them in their individual sacred journeys. Several of these students had musical backgrounds and expressed themselves best through the medium of music. In their work together, Gan-Kagan encouraged these spiritual seekers to choose a liturgical phrase or verse to study and then set it to music. Gan-Kagan was looking for collaborators to join her in designing a new style of Jewish worship, and, through their spiritual work together, she met Daphna Rosenberg and Yoel Sykes, who have become integral to *Nava Tehila*’s success, serving as the musical prayer leaders and composers of the community’s music.

In 2004, *Nava Tehila* began in Gan-Kagan’s living room with twenty people. Eight

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<sup>159</sup> The largest religious Zionist youth movement, affiliated with *Mizrahim*.

<sup>160</sup> Interview, Ruth Gan-Kagan.

years later, the periodic *Kabbalat Shabbat* service has grown to two hundred and fifty people and now meets monthly in Jerusalem's Baka neighborhood, in the basement of Progressive Synagogue *Kol Hanesama*. *Nava Tehila*'s approach to prayer is experiential and combines elements of singing, dancing, guided meditation and deep breathing, offering multiple pathways of connection for its participants of varied backgrounds. Additionally, Gan-Kagan incorporates elements of *kabbalah*, feminism, ritual creativity, flexible interpretation of *halacha* and even some eastern influences. Despite this wide array of practices, it is the music that serves as the lifeblood of the service.

Rabbi Gan-Kagan and the musicians are seated in the middle of the prayer circle, leading all musical elements of the service without amplification so as to avoid a performative quality. Gan-Kagan asserts that the guitar and drums are the main expression of spirituality for the average secular Israeli; therefore these two instruments have become the basis for the musical accompaniment in services. It is not uncommon to see at least eight guitarists playing on a Friday night, along with several vocalists, cello, harp, violin, flute, ud and multiple *darbuka* and *djembe* drums, infusing the music with an essential rhythmic (and often mesmerizing) quality that adds much depth to the prayer experience.

*Nava Tehila*'s brilliant and captivating music is written entirely by their own musicians, drawing on influences from a variety of styles that include Arabic, Moroccan, African, neo-Hassidic, klezmer, popular Israeli, flamenco, blues, reggae, polka, American folk and rock. Miraculously, all of these styles work beautifully together in the service. Gan-Kagan refers to *Nava Tehila*'s congregationally-friendly approach as "chanting." A single line or two is extracted from each psalm and repeated over and over as the music builds in intensity. In reference to this method of "chanting," Gan-Kagan says, "Sometimes

it's better to do a little bit with *kavanah* ("intention") than doing a lot where it doesn't inspire you."<sup>161</sup> Prayers often begin in a very contained, held-back manner, then gradually crescendo to a loud, celebratory, euphoric place of spiritual, emotional and physical expression. The prayer leaders then guide the prayer energy back to a small, individual, contemplative place, ending in a hushed whisper. This technique is extremely effective and succeeds in capturing moments of individual, personal prayer, as well as facilitating communal moments of elation or deep soulful expression. The combination of short textual excerpts, repetition and simple yet compelling melodies makes participation very accessible. Also, it is common for many participants to dance and clap spontaneously throughout the service as another mode of expressing themselves in prayer.

As in most Israeli congregations, *Kabbalat Shabbat* is the main emphasis of the Friday night service. The leaders take their time to create a prayerful and inviting ambiance, beginning with *niggunim* as a spiritual warm-up prior to moving through the psalms, which in turn build momentum and energy toward *L'Cha Dodi* as the peak of the *Kabbalat Shabbat* sequence. One *Nava Tehila* melody for *L'Cha Dodi*, written by Sykes, demonstrates an ethnic flair with Middle Eastern vocal trills on the refrain and an improvised *niggun* passage that evokes Arabic music. Another *L'Cha Dodi* melody, in three-quarter meter, recalls the feeling of an *Ashkenazi*-inspired folk dance. Its overall joyous and buoyant character, reinforced by an accordion part, stands in contrast to the final stanza, *Boi V'shalom*, which is sung slowly and freely, completely out of tempo and *a cappella*.

A closer look at the planning process of *Nava Tehila*'s monthly services offers additional insight into the remarkable prayer atmosphere that draws individuals to this unique

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<sup>161</sup> Blum, "Insourcing Judaism."

community. The first step is a planning meeting involving Rabbi Gan-Kagan and the core music leaders, Daphna and Yoel. This meeting begins with some form of personal sharing from each member, as well as a prayer to set an intention for their leadership practice. There is a period of silent meditation to provide space for each individual and for the group as a whole. They continue by reflecting together about what's happening in Israel and the world, and within the circumstances of the Jewish calendar, that might inform service choices. New music is often composed at these rehearsals in moments of inspiration. A second meeting occurs a few days before the service, bringing together the service leaders with all of the musicians, so that the entire prayer leadership ensemble can rehearse. The musicians include Israelis active in *Nava Tehila*, along with a blend of students and visitors living in Jerusalem for an extended period of time. This meeting also begins with a "personal share," a prayer circle and silent meditation to unite the group and set an intention for the rehearsal. These two preparatory events foster a sense of community and mutual responsibility among the leaders and musicians, while also inspiring them to be present and spiritually open for giving and receiving the gift of Shabbat.

Rabbi Gan-Kagan has created a deeply moving communal experience through elevated music, meditation and traditional teachings and texts, making Jewish spirituality accessible for all who are curious enough to enter the door. She sees her sacred calling as a responsibility to "create a space for people to meet the *shechina*, which is the divine spark within them and within the community and that moment."<sup>162</sup> When asked what she's learned from the process of creating *Nava Tehila*, Rabbi Gan-Kagan responds, "I've learned that the

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<sup>162</sup> Interview, Ruth Gan-Kagan.

hunger is immense. People crave a Jewish spiritual connection.”<sup>163</sup> This is evidenced by the strong positive reactions that people have after attending a service. One man says, “This has changed my life. It touched me deeply. I went into an inner experience and touched some old pains and joys. I never knew Jewish prayer could be like this. I never thought I would go to *shul* and feel that it is my home.”<sup>164</sup>

*Nava Tehila* exemplifies the most outstanding qualities of the emerging independent prayer communities in Israel: communal aspiration, inclusivity, abundant creativity, intimacy, warmth, collegiality, a relational approach to Judaism, and music that provides the spiritual texture within which prayer and inner growth occur. In the twelve years since the founding of *Niggun Halev*, nearly fifty of these *minyanim* have been created throughout the country. The hunger described by Rabbi Gan-Kagan has given rise to a new phenomenon that has made Jewish spirituality accessible and appealing to a significant number of Israelis who still identify themselves as predominately secular. These Israelis, who never before practiced Judaism in any organized or communal manner, have become interested in exploring spiritual themes because the independent *minyanim* are making such a pursuit accessible in ways that Orthodoxy never offered, and in settings that are largely free of the typical limitations of religious space. The country and many of its citizens have matured to a state of open-mindedness that has made it possible for the individuals in these communities to reconnect with their Jewish roots, while also developing a fresh and forward-looking spiritual practice.

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<sup>163</sup> Interview, Ruth Kan-Kagan.

<sup>164</sup> Interview, Ruth Gan-Kagan.



## Conclusion

The results of this thesis can be summarized in four general categories: the use of religious texts and themes, the importance of communal singing, the development of musical style and the search for meaning expressed through music and prayer.

Biblical texts have been utilized in Israeli music from the *Yishuv* period (1880's-1948) until today. In Pre-State music, biblical themes were employed for their historical or nationalistic significance, especially when referring to a return to Zion, working the land or building camaraderie among the Jewish people. In Israeli art music (1940's-1970's), Jewish identity and peoplehood were reinforced by biblical texts, which also strengthened the establishment of Hebrew as the national language. In *Shirei Eretz Yisrael* (1920's-1970's), rather than specific biblical quotations, it was more common to hear biblical themes and imagery, which served as an early form of modern Israeli interpretive song lyrics. The re-emergence of *piyut* as an expressive form provided a historical basis for contemporary Israeli artists to infuse new life into old texts. Composers have come to appreciate sacred texts for their beauty and impact as poetic lyrics and for their distinctive and highly expressive use of the Hebrew language. In addition to using texts verbatim, Israeli musicians are also taking creative liberties with religious themes, personalizing their song lyrics in order to disclose aspects of their own spiritual journeys. Building on this, musicians have found ways to address cultural, theological and societal concerns in their compositions as modern musical *midrash*.

Communal singing has consistently been an important thread in Israeli society. *Shira Betzibbur* was experienced by many people as a form of secular prayer and as a way of sustaining a sense of tradition in secular society. The songs of famous artists like Naomi

Shemer became communal anthems, especially in times of national crisis. In the *piyut* revival, *Kehillot Sharot* (2000's), became another forum for singing in community. Finally, group singing has become the primary mode of spiritual expression in alternative prayer communities, where an informal musical style serves as a way of cultivating relationship and inclusivity.

Two predominant and related musical trends can be identified from this research: the evolution of a characteristic Israeli melodic style and the melding of influences from many cultures. These have become fully integrated with both the popular music culture (including its renewed religious themes) and the music of independent spiritual communities. Composers like Ben Haim began to adopt elements of a middle-Eastern style and its characteristic modal sounds, and they found ways to utilize their musical language for *midrashic* interpretation of sacred text. In popular music, the accessible, lyrical style of Israeli singing can already be heard in *Shirei Eretz Yisrael*, along with a blend of melodic tendencies from different cultures. As non-Ashkenazi musicians and their distinct approach gained popularity and were increasingly accepted, Sephardic elements became integrated into Israeli music, along with the traditional religious sounds of *Mizrahi* culture. The music of *piyyutim* became a bridge between past and present, introducing a large number of international music styles that have influenced popular composers. In their interpretations of sacred themes, composers have created musical forms that respond to their highly personalized understanding of how such themes relate to their own lives and the life of the nation. In the independent spiritual communities, where easily grasped melodies help to cultivate relationship, an eclectic mixture of music from many cultures has become the norm, and music has become the primary means for guiding the energetic flow of the service.

The search for meaning is the predominant factor underlying the integration of sacred and secular in modern Israel. The influence of classical Zionism has diminished, the need to work the land as a primary occupation has decreased, and Israelis have increasingly turned inward to address their spiritual needs in response to political and societal circumstances. Thousands of Israelis have reconnected to Jewish sources through *batei midrash* and *kehillot sharot*, in order to satisfy their intellectual, existential and cultural curiosity. As a result, there has been renewed interest in God, spirituality and religious practice, along with an increasing acceptance in the secular community of diversity in belief and practice. The resulting dialogue between religious and non-religious Israelis is mirrored in the musical world, where artists are disclosing their personal journeys through the reinterpretation of Jewish texts and themes. The creation, performance and interpretation of music have themselves become expressions of Jewish belief. The emergence of a non-Orthodox spiritual environment, fusing a seemingly secular aspiration for greater meaning in life with the rich heritage of Jewish thought and the language of Jewish prayer, provides access to Jewish spiritual life and sacred text for those distanced from the tradition. This is leading to a uniquely Israeli expression of Judaism and a revitalization of Jewish liturgy.

For me personally, the most compelling aspect of the integration of sacred and secular in Israeli culture is the search for meaning. As a cantor beginning her career, I am on my own spiritual journey, seeking out a connection to something greater than myself. As an avid admirer of Israeli popular music and a frequent visitor to its new *minyanim*, I have experienced spiritual fulfillment, the power of community and a deeper understanding of liturgical texts, through both spiritually-conscious secular compositions and engagement with

communal prayer. Ultimately, my encounter with these dimensions of Israel's cultural renaissance has strengthened my Jewish identity.

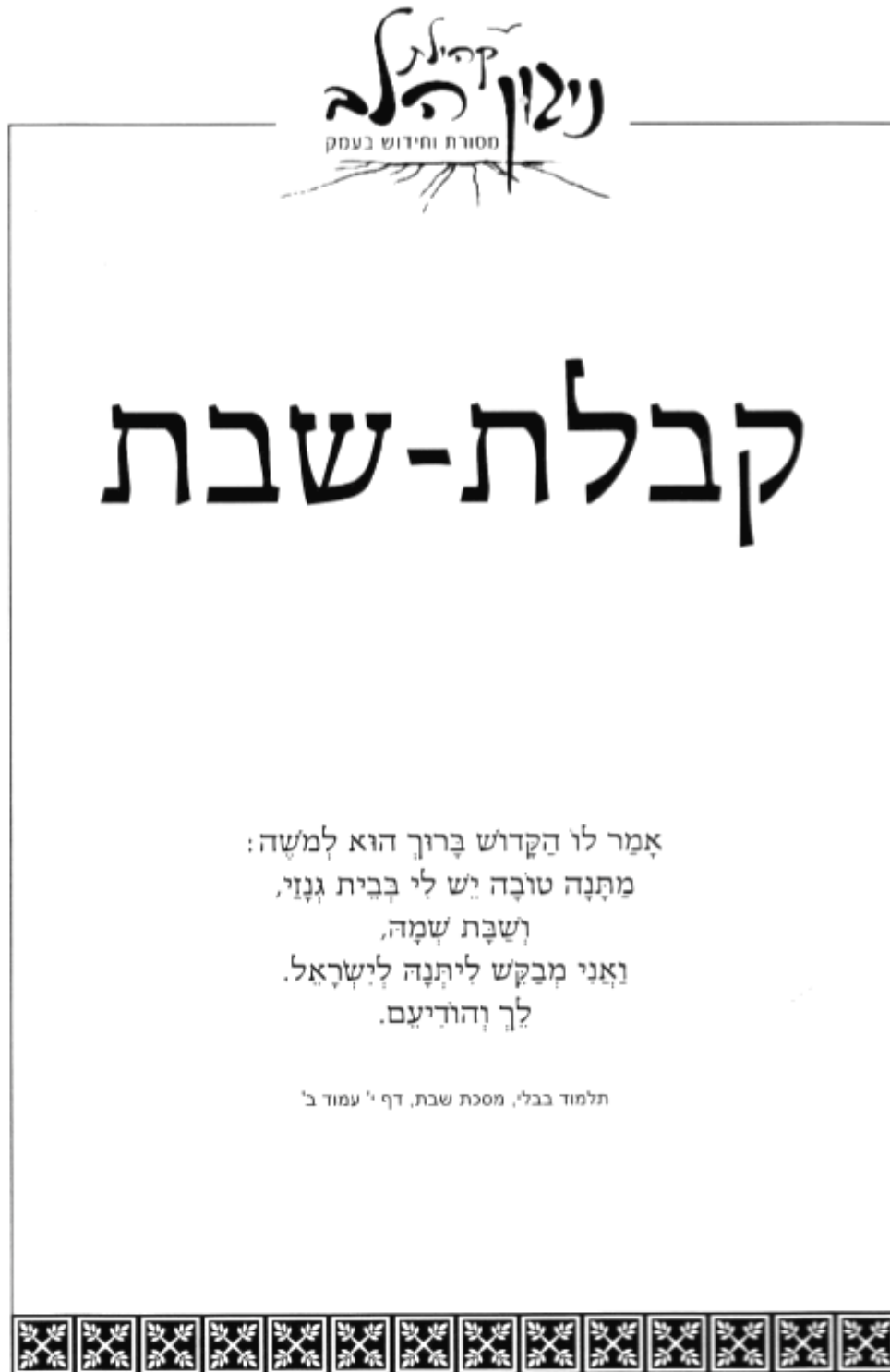
I have been inspired throughout this research by the passionate hunger in Israelis of all ages and cultural backgrounds to reclaim Judaism in a way that speaks to the truth of their experience as citizens of contemporary Israel. I am left wondering what we as Reform Jews in America might glean from the renewed sense of religious curiosity in Israel, and how we might emulate their success as we aspire to re-engage the members of our own congregations.

There are several key components that stand out from my experiences in the Israeli independent *minyanim*. First, there is a collaborative leadership model that demonstrates true partnership and the importance of being in relationship with one another. It's a relatedness that actually generates the musical repertoire, while also determining the overall feeling of public prayer. Such a leadership style is also successful because the leaders embed themselves within the community, as opposed to a separate or dominating presence. Second, there is simultaneously an individual and a communal spiritual awareness, which gives greater meaning and depth to the prayer experience. A third key component is the informal nature of the physical spaces, allowing for a sense of comfort and familiarity among participants. This relaxed environment strengthens the relational quality of the congregation and enhances the feeling of being at "home." Finally, the synthesis of simple melodic compositions with layers of rich instrumentation adds texture and depth, elevating the basic melodic structure into a multi-voiced texture. This approach opens the hearts and souls of individuals and draws them into a more unified community. Each of these four phenomena can be brought into our American synagogues, greatly increasing the effectiveness of our

worship experiences and helping to revitalize our communities.

In ways that extend to a much broader segment of the Israeli population, the treatment of spiritual texts and themes in secular music serves to fuse ancient tradition with contemporary artistic expression. In addition to using this innovative repertoire to supplement my own teaching and leadership of prayer, my intention as a to find creative ways of using modern technology, popular culture and other modalities of contemporary expression to engage congregants with our ancient texts and traditions in relevant and inspiring ways. My engagement with these inventive prayer communities and progressive Israeli musicians has brought home for me the words of Israel's visionary pre-State Chief Rabbi, Abraham Isaac Kook: "The old shall be renewed and the new shall be made holy."

**Appendix A:** Cover of Niggun HaLev's Siddur and excerpts from Kabbalat Shabbat.



## קבלת-שבת

אלו פינו מלא שירה בָּיָם.  
ולשוננו רָנָה בְּהִמּוֹן גָּלִיו.  
ושפִּתּוּתֵינוּ שָׁבַח בְּמִרְחָבֵי רָקִיעַ.  
ועִינֵינוּ מְאִירוֹת בְּשֶׁמֶשׁ וּבִיָּרֵחַ.  
וְיָדֵינוּ פְּרוּשׁוֹת בְּנִשְׁרֵי שָׁמַיִם.  
וּרְגָלֵינוּ קָלוֹת בְּאַיְלוֹת.  
אֵין אֲנַחְנוּ מְסַפִּיקִים לַהֲוֹדוֹת לָךְ  
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ.

עת דודים, בָּלָה - בּוֹאֵי לְגָנִי  
פְּרָחָה הַגֶּפֶן - הַנִּצּוֹ הַרְמוֹנִים  
נִרְנָנָה, נִזְמָרָה

עת שְׁמִיחָה וְעַת אֶהְבֶּה - בּוֹאֵי לְגָנִי. (על-פי שיר השירים)

### שיר העמק

נתן אלתרמן / דיאל סמבורסקי

בָּאָה מְנוּחָה לִיגַע	יָם הַדָּגָן מִתְנוּעָע
וּמְרֻגָע לְעַמֵּל	שִׁיר הָעֵדֶר מְצַלְצֵל
לִילָה חֹר מְשֻׁתָּרַע	זוֹהֵי אֶרֶצִי וּשְׂדוֹתֶיהָ
עַל שְׂדוֹת עֵמֶק יִזְרְעָאֵל	זֶהוּ עֵמֶק יִזְרְעָאֵל
טַל מְלֻמָּטָה וּלְבָנָה מַעַל	תְּבַכֶּךְ אֶרֶצִי וְתִהְלֵל
מִבֵּית-אֶלְפָּא עַד נְהַלֵּל	מִבֵּית-אֶלְפָּא עַד נְהַלֵּל
מָה מָה לִילָה מְלִיל	מָה מָה לִילָה מְלִיל
דְּמָמָה בִּיזְרְעָאֵל	דְּמָמָה בִּיזְרְעָאֵל
נוֹמָה עֵמֶק אֶרֶץ תְּפָאֶרֶת	נוֹמָה עֵמֶק אֶרֶץ תְּפָאֶרֶת
אָנוּ לָךְ מְשֻׁמָּרֶת	אָנוּ לָךְ מְשֻׁמָּרֶת

ידיד נפש אב הרחמן. משוך עבדך אל רצונך.  
יריץ עבדך כמו איל. ישתחנה אל מול הדרך.  
יערב לו ידידותיך מנופת צוף וכל טעם:

הדור נאה ויו העולם. נפשי חולת אהבתך.  
אנא אל נא רפא נא לה. בהראות לה נועם ויוך.  
אז תתחזק ותתרפא. והיתה לה שמחת עולם:

נתיק יהמו נא רחמיך. וחוסה נא על בן אהובך.  
כי זה כמה נכסוף נכספתי לראות בתפארת עזך.  
אלה חמדה לבי. וחוסה נא ואל תתעלם:

הגלה נא ופרוס חביבי עלי את סבת שלומך.  
תאיר ארץ מכבודך. נגילה ונשמחה בך.  
מהר אהוב כי בא מועד וחגנו כימי עולם:

(מתוך תפילת מנחה לערב שבת)

## שבת המלכה

חיים נחמן ביאליק / פנחס מינקובסקי

החמה מראש האילנות נסתלקה -	קבלנו פני שבת ברננה ותפלה,
באו ונצא לקראת שבת המלכה.	הביתה נשוכה, בלב מלא גילה.
הנה היא יורדת הקדושה, הברוכה,	שם צרוך השלחן, הנרות ואירו,
ועמה מלאכים צבא שלום ומנוחה.	כל-פנות הבית יזרחו, יזהירו.
באי, באי, המלכה!	שבת שלום ומברך!
באי, באי, המלכה! -	שבת שלום ומברך!
שלום עליכם, מלאכי השלום!	באכם לשלום מלאכי השלום!



## הדלקת נרות

מדליקים נרות ומברכים:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שַׁבָּת.

ההורים מניחים את ידיהם על ראש הילדים, ומברכים אותם:

לבן:

יִשְׁמַךְ אֱלֹהִים

בְּשָׂרָה, רִבְקָה, רַחֵל וְלָאָה.

"אֲחֻתְנוּ אֵת הִי לְאֶלְפֵי רִבְקָה"

(בראשית כד, ט).

הִי אֲשֶׁר תִּהְיֶי

וְהִי בְרוּכָה בְּאֲשֶׁר תִּהְיֶי.

לבן:

"יִשְׁמַךְ אֱלֹהִים בְּאֶפְרַיִם וְכַמְנָשָׁה"

(בראשית מח, כ). "יִפְיֶפֶת מִבְּנֵי אָדָם הוֹצֵק

חֵן בְּשִׁפְתוֹתֶיךָ עַל כֵּן בֵּרַכְךָ אֱלֹהִים

לְעוֹלָם" (תהלים מה, ג).

הִי אֲשֶׁר תִּהְיֶי

וְהִי בְרוּךְ בְּאֲשֶׁר תִּהְיֶי.

יְבָרְכְךָ יְהוָה וְיִשְׁמְרְךָ: יָאֵר יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּחֲנֹךְ: יֵשָׁא יְהוָה

פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּשֶׁם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם: (במדבר י, כד-כו)

אֲדוֹן עוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר מֶלֶךְ. בְּטָרֶם כָּל יְצִיר נִבְרָא:

לַעֲת נַעֲשֶׂה בְּחִפְצוֹ כָּל. אֲזִי מֶלֶךְ שְׁמוֹ נִקְרָא:

וְאַחֲרֵי כָּכָל הַכָּל. לְבָדוֹ יִמְלֹךְ נוֹרָא:

וְהוּא הָיָה וְהוּא הֵנָּה. וְהוּא יִהְיֶה בְּתַפְאָרָה:

וְהוּא אֶחָד וְאֵין שְׁנֵי. לְהַמְשִׁיל לוֹ לְהַחֲבִירָה:

בְּלִי רֵאשִׁית בְּלִי תְּכֵלִית. וְלֹא הָעֹז וְהַמְשָׁרָה:

וְהוּא אֵלִי וְחֵי גּוֹאֲלִי. וְצוּר חֲבֵלִי בַּעַת צָרָה:

וְהוּא נָסִי וּמְנוּס לִי. מִנֶּת כּוֹסֵי בְּיוֹם אֶקְרָא:

בְּיָדוֹ אֶפְקִיד רוּחִי. בַּעַת אִישָׁן וְאַעִירָה:

וְעַם רוּחִי גִוְיָתִי. יְהוָה לִי וְלֹא אֵיכָא:

הִנֵּה מָה טוֹב וּמָה נָעִים שַׁבָּת אַחִים גַּם יַחַד (תהלים קלג, א).

## שיר של יום

מזמורי תהילים כנגד ששת ימי המעשה

ראשון בשבת (תהלים צה)

לכו נרננה ליהוה נריעה לצור ישענו:  
נקדמה פניו בתודה בזמרות נריע לו:  
כי אל גדול יהוה ומלך גדול על כל אלהים:  
אשר בידו מחקרי ארץ ותועפות הרים לו:  
אשר לו הים והוא עשהו ויבשת ידיו יצרו:  
באו נשתחנה ונכרעה נברכה לפני יהוה עשנו:  
כי הוא אלהינו ונאנחנו עם מרעיתו וצאן ידו היום אם בקלו תשמעו:  
אל תקשו לבבכם כמריבה כיום מסה במדבר:  
אשר נסוני אבותיכם בחנוני גם כראו פעלי:  
ארבעים שנה אקוט בדור נאמר עם תעי לבב הם והם לא ידעו דרכי:  
אשר נשבעתי באפי אם יבאון אל מנוחתי:

שני בשבת (תהלים צא)

שירו ליהוה שיר חדש שירו ליהוה כל הארץ:  
שירו ליהוה ברכו שמו בשרו מיום ליום ישועתו:  
ספרו בגוים כבודו בכל העמים נפלאותיו:  
כי גדול יהוה ומהלל מאד נורא הוא על כל אלהים:  
כי כל אלהי העמים אלילים ויהוה שמים עשה:  
הוד והדר לפניו עז ותפארת במקדשו:  
הבו ליהוה משפחות עמים הבו ליהוה כבוד ועז:  
הבו ליהוה כבוד שמו שאו מנחה ובאו לחצרותיו:  
השתחוו ליהוה בהדרת קדש חילו מפניו כל הארץ:  
אמרו בגוים יהוה מלך אף תכון תבל כל תמוט ידן עמים במישורים:  
ישמחו השמים ותגל הארץ ירעם הים ומלאו:  
יעלו שדי וכל אשר בו אז ירננו כל עצי יער:  
לפני יהוה כי בא כי בא לשפט הארץ:  
ישפט תבל בצדק ועמים באמונתו:

שלישי בשבת (תהלים צ)

יהוה מֶלֶךְ תִּגַּל הָאָרֶץ וְשָׁמְחוּ אֲיִים רַבִּים:  
עָנָן וַעֲרַפֵּל סָבִיבוֹ צֶדֶק וּמִשְׁפָּט מִכּוֹן בְּסָאוֹ:  
אֵשׁ לִפְנֵי תֵלֶךְ וּתְלַהֵט סָבִיב צִרְיֹו:  
הָאִירוּ בִּרְקִיו תִּבֵּל רָאֲתָהּ וַתַּחַל הָאָרֶץ:  
הָרִים בְּדוֹנָג נִמְסוּ מִלִּפְנֵי יְהוָה מִלִּפְנֵי אֲדוֹן כָּל הָאָרֶץ:  
הִגִּידוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם צֶדֶקוֹ וְרָאוּ כָּל הָעַמִּים כְּבוֹדוֹ:  
יִבְשׁוּ כָּל עֲבָרֵי פֶסֶל הַמִּתְהַלְלִים בְּאַלִּילִים הַשֹּׁתְחָו לוֹ כָּל אֱלֹהִים:  
שָׁמְעָה וַתִּשְׁמַח צִיּוֹן וַתִּגְלָנָה בְּנוֹת יְהוּדָה לְמַעַן מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ יְהוָה:  
כִּי אַתָּה יְהוָה עֲלִיוֹן עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ מֵאֵד נִעְלִיתָ עַל כָּל אֱלֹהִים:  
אֲהַבִּי יְהוָה שְׁנָאוּ רָע שָׁמַר נַפְשׁוֹת חֲסִידָיו מִיַּד רָשָׁעִים יִצִּילֵם:  
אוֹר זָרַע לְצַדִּיק וְלִישָׁרֵי לֵב שִׁמְחָה:  
שָׁמְחוּ צַדִּיקִים בִּיהוָה וְהוֹדוּ לוֹ זָכָר קִדְשׁוֹ:

רביעי בשבת (תהלים צח)

מִזְמוֹר שִׁירוֹ לַיהוָה שִׁיר חֹדֶשׁ כִּי נִפְלְאוֹת עָשָׂה  
הוֹשִׁיעָה לוֹ יְמִינוֹ וְזִרְעָה קִדְשׁוֹ:  
הוֹדִיעַ יְהוָה יְשׁוּעָתוֹ לְעֵינֵי הַגּוֹיִם גְּלָה צֶדְקָתוֹ:  
זָכַר חֲסִדוֹ וְאֲמוּנָתוֹ לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל רָאוּ כָּל אִפְסֵי אָרֶץ אֶת יְשׁוּעַת אֱלֹהֵינוּ:  
הִרְיעוּ לַיהוָה כָּל הָאָרֶץ פָּצְחוּ וְרָנְנוּ וְזָמְרוּ:  
♪ זָמְרוּ לַיהוָה בְּכִנּוֹר בְּכִנּוֹר וְקוֹל זָמְרָה:  
בְּחִצְצָרוֹת וְקוֹל שׁוֹפָר הִרְיעוּ לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ יְהוָה:  
יִרְעַם הַיָּם וּמִלְאוּ תִּבֵּל וַיִּשְׁבִּי בָּהּ:  
נִהְרֹת יִמְחָאוּ כַּף יַחַד הָרִים יִרְנְנוּ:  
לִפְנֵי יְהוָה כִּי בָּא לִשְׁפֹט הָאָרֶץ יִשְׁפֹּט תִּבֵּל בְּצֶדֶק וְעַמִּים בְּמִישָׁרִים:

חמישי בשבת (תהלים צט)

יהוה מֶלֶךְ יִרְגְּזוּ עַמִּים יֹשֵׁב בְּרוּכִים תִּנוּט הָאָרֶץ:  
יהוה בְּצִיּוֹן גָּדוֹל וְכֶם הוּא עַל כָּל הָעַמִּים:  
יִדּוּ שִׁמְךָ גָּדוֹל וְנוֹרָא קְדוֹשׁ הוּא:  
וְעַז מֶלֶךְ מִשְׁפָּט אֶהֱב אֶתְּה כּוֹנֵנֶת מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל  
מִשְׁפָּט וְצִדְקָה בִּינְעֻקֵּב אֶתְּה עֲשִׂית:  
רוֹמְמוּ יְהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לָהֶם כִּגְלִי קְדוֹשׁ הוּא:  
מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן בְּכֹהֲנָיו וְשִׁמְוֵאל בְּקִרְאֵי שְׁמוֹ קְרָאִים אֶל יְהוה וְהוּא יַעֲנֶם:  
בְּעֲמֹד עֵנָן יִדְבֹר אֲלֵיהֶם שְׁמְרוּ עֲדֹתָיו וְחֹק נָתַן לָמוֹ:  
יְהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶתְּה עֲנִיתָם אֶל נִשְׂא הָיִיתָ לָהֶם וְנָקָם עַל עֲלִילוֹתָם:  
רוֹמְמוּ יְהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לָהֶם קְדָשׁוֹ כִּי קְדוֹשׁ יְהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ:

שישי בשבת (תהלים כט)

מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד הָבוּ לַיהוה בְּנֵי אֱלֹים הָבוּ לַיהוה כְּבוֹד וְעַז:  
הָבוּ לַיהוה כְּבוֹד שְׁמוֹ הִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לַיהוה בְּהִדְרַת קִדְשׁ:  
קוֹל יְהוה עַל הַמַּיִם אֶל הַכְּבוֹד הַרְעִים יְהוה עַל מַיִם רַבִּים:  
קוֹל יְהוה בְּכֹחַ קוֹל יְהוה בְּהִדְרָה:  
קוֹל יְהוה שֹׁכֵר אֲרָזִים וַיִּשְׁבֹּר יְהוה אֶת אֲרָזֵי הַלְבָנוֹן:  
וַיִּרְקִידֵם כְּמוֹ עֵגֶל לְבָנוֹן וַיִּשְׁרִיץ כְּמוֹ בֵן רֹאמִים:  
קוֹל יְהוה חֲצֹב לְהַבֹּת אֵשׁ:  
קוֹל יְהוה יַחֲלִיל מִדְּבַר יַחֲלִיל יְהוה מִדְּבַר קִדְשׁ:  
קוֹל יְהוה יַחֲלִיל אֵילֹת וַיִּחַשֵּׁף יַעֲרוֹת וַיִּבְהִיכֵלּוּ כָּלֹּ אֲמֹר כְּבוֹד:  
יְהוה לְמַבּוֹל יֹשֵׁב וַיִּשָּׁב יְהוה מֶלֶךְ לְעוֹלָם:  
יְהוה עַז לְעַמּוֹ יִתֵּן יְהוה יִכְרַךְ אֶת עַמּוֹ בְּשָׁלוֹם:

הללויה (תהלים קנ)

הללויה הללו אל בקדשו הללוהו ברקיע עזו:  
הללוהו בגבורתיו הללוהו כרב גדלו:  
הללוהו בתקע שופר הללוהו בנבל וכנור:  
הללוהו בתוף ומחול הללוהו במנים ועגב:  
הללוהו בצלצלי שמע הללוהו בצלצלי תרועה:  
כל הנשמה תהלל יה הללויה:

אנא ברכו גדלת ומינך תתיר צרורה:  
קבל רנת עמך שגבנו טהרנו נורא:  
נא גבור דורשי יחודך בכבת שמרם:  
ברכם, טהרם, רחמי צדקתך תמיד גמלם:  
חסין קדוש ברוב טובך נהל עדותך:  
יחיד גאה לעמך פנה זוכרי קדשתך:  
שועתנו קבל ושמע צעקתנו יודע תעלומות:  
ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד:

# פרידה מהשבוע החולף והתכוונות לכניסת השבת

## ירדה השבת

יהושע רבינוב, דוד זהבי

ירדה השבת אל בקעת גנוסר  
וניחוח עתיק בשוליה.  
ניעמדו מסביב הקרים שושבינים  
לשאת אנרתה הזוהבת,  
תעלינה יונים מפנת הים  
קבל את רוחה הלוחבת.

נשקה השבת לראשו של הברוש,  
לאזוב שבסלע נשקה,  
ניהי הדרך לשרביט של מלכות  
על רמות-דממה מרוננת  
ימשך אז התור בקולו המתוק  
חמדת בסופין מעדנת.

הרטיטה שבת בחנה הגנוז.  
עיני חלונות מכל עבר.  
נתצאנה בנות אל הערב זמר  
זמירות בערגה מצלצלת.  
והיתה העדנה בבקעת גנוסר  
לנשמת עבריות נאצלת.

\* דרשה על פסוקים מפרשת השבוע



# סידור ערב שבת



## בית תפילה ישראלי

"חוגו את חגי אבותכם והוסיפו עליהם קצת משלכם לפי כחכם ולפי טעמכם ולפי מסיבתכם. העיקר שתעשו את הכול באמונה ומתוך הרגשה חיה וצורך נפשי, ואל תתחכמו הרבה."

חיים נחמן ביאליק,

## יָדִיד נֶפֶשׁ

יָדִיד נֶפֶשׁ אֵב הַרְחֵמְנוּ.  
מְשׁוֹךְ עֲבָדְךָ אֶל רִצּוֹנְךָ.  
יָרוּץ עֲבָדְךָ כְּמוֹ אֵיל.  
יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה אֶל מוֹל הַדָּרָךְ.  
יַעֲרֵב לוֹ יְדִידוֹתֶיךָ  
מִנוּפֹת צוּף וְכָל טַעַם:

הַדּוֹר נָאָה זִיו הָעוֹלָם.  
נֶפֶשׁ חֹלֶת אֶהְבֶּתְךָ.  
אֲנֵא אֶל נָא רַפָּא נָא לָהּ.  
בְּהִרְאוֹת לָהּ נוֹעַם זִיוְךָ.  
אֲנִי תִתְחַזֵּק וְתִתְרַפָּא.  
וְהִיְתָה לָהּ שְׂמֵחַת עוֹלָם:

וְתִיק יִהְיֶה נָא רַחֲמֶיךָ.  
וְחֻסָּה נָא עַל בֶּן אֲהוּבֶךָ.  
כִּי זֶה כְּמָה נִכְסוּף נִכְסַפְתִּי  
לִרְאוֹת בְּתַפְאֶרֶת עֲזֶךָ.  
אֱלֹהֵי חֲמֻדָּה לְבִי.  
וְחֻסָּה נָא וְאַל תִּתְעַלֵּם:

הַגְלָה נָא וּפְרוֹס חֲבִיבִי עָלִי  
אֶת סֶכֶת שְׁלוֹמְךָ.  
תֹּאזִיר אֶרֶץ מִכְבוֹדְךָ.  
נְגִילָה וְנִשְׁמַחָה בְּךָ.  
מִדֵּר אֲהוּב בִּי בֵּא מוֹעֵד  
וְחֻנְנוּ כִּימֵי עוֹלָם:

ד' אלעזר אזכרי

כָּכָה כְּמוֹ שְׁאֵנִי הוֹלֵךְ אֲנִי רוֹצֶה לְקַבֵּל פָּנֵי שַׁבַּת הַמַּלְכָּה.  
לְגוֹפִי בְּגָדִים שֶׁל יוֹם יוֹם וְגוֹפִי, אִם בְּכָלֵל, אֵינְנו חֲזוֹק בְּכָלֵל  
וְגַם הַנֶּפֶשׁ לֹא.

כָּכָה כְּמוֹ שְׁאֵנִי הוֹלֵךְ אִם אֶקְבֵּל פָּנֵי שַׁבַּת הַמַּלְכָּה  
וְהִיוּ הַבְּגָדִים לְגוֹפִי שֶׁל יוֹם יוֹם וְגוֹפִי אֶפְשָׁר חֲלֹשׁ יוֹתֵר מִרְגֵּשָׁה  
אֶבֶל הַנֶּפֶשׁ לֹא.

כָּכָה כְּמוֹ שְׁאֵנִי עוֹדְנִי הוֹלֵךְ אִם תִּקְבֵּל שַׁבַּת הַמַּלְכָּה אֶת פָּנֵי  
יִלְבָּשׁ גּוֹפִי שַׁבַּת יוֹם יוֹם וְגוֹפִי יִחְזָק וְהַשַּׁבַּת בְּנֶפֶשׁ תִּהְיֶה.  
לְכִי נִפְשִׁי צֵאִי כָּלָה יוֹם יוֹם לְקַבֵּל פָּנֵי שַׁבַּת הַמַּלְכָּה.

אמיר גלבוע

מִי הָאִישׁ הַחֲפֵץ חַיִּים.  
אֶהֱבֶה יָמִים לְרִאוֹת טוֹב:  
נִצּוֹר לְשׁוֹנֶךָ מִרָע.  
וּשְׁפָתֶיךָ מִדְּבַר מִרְמָה:  
סוֹר מִרָע וְעֹשֶׂה טוֹב. בְּקֶשׁ  
שְׁלוֹם וְרַדְפָּהוּ:

תהלים לד

שׁוֹר לְמַעֲלוֹת אֶשָּׂא עֵינַי אֶל הַהָרִים מֵאֵין יָבוֹא עֲזָרִי:  
עֲזָרִי מֵעַם יְהוָה עֲשֵׂה שְׁמִים וְאֶרֶץ:  
אֶל יִתְּן לְמוֹט רִגְלֶךָ אֶל יָנוֹם שְׁמֶרְךָ:  
הִנֵּה לֹא יָנוֹם וְלֹא יִישָׁן שׁוֹמֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל:  
יְהוָה שְׁמֶרְךָ יְהוָה צִלְּךָ עַל יַד מִיִּנְךָ:  
יוֹמָם הִשְׁמֵשׁ לֹא יִכְבֶּה וַיְרַח בְּלִילָה:  
יְהוָה יִשְׁמְרֶךָ מִכָּל רָע יִשְׁמֹר אֶת נַפְשְׁךָ:  
יְהוָה יִשְׁמֹר צִאתְךָ וּבֹאֶךָ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם:

תהילים קכא



מקובלי צפת חיברו לפני כ-400 שנה טקס קבלת שבת המקדים את תפילת ערבית לשבת. ששת המזמורים הפותחים את קבלת השבת מסמלים את ששת ימי המעשה בבריאת העולם, והפיוט לכה דודי עומד כנגד השבת.

ויקרא אלהים לאור יום, ולחשך קרא לילה; ויהי-ערב ויהי-בקר, יום אחד.

לבו נרננה ליהוה.  
נקדמה פניו בתודה.  
כי אל גדול יהוה.

אשר בידו מחקרי ארץ.  
אשר לו הים והוא עשהו.  
באו נשתחווה ונכרעה.  
כי הוא אלהינו.  
היום אם בקלו תשמעו:  
כיום מטה במדבר:  
בחנוני גם ראו פעלי:  
ואמר עם תעי לבב הם.  
אשר נשבעתי באפי.

תהלים צה

## שיר ליל שבת

יהודה עמיחי / משה וילנסקי

התבואי אלי הלילה  
בבסיס כבר יקשו בחצר.  
מלקמה שאף פעם לא די לה,  
חיא עכשיו במקום אחר

וכבישים שבים בלי הרף  
לבדם כסוס בלי רוכבו  
והקית נסגר בערב  
על הטוב והרע שבו.

צבא והארץ האפילו,  
עוד מעט וככה האור.  
המפנה בה שמיים התחילו  
שוב השנים צריכים לגמור.

## חמדה

דליות רביקוביץ

שם ידעתי חמדה שלא היתה כמוה,  
וזמן ההוא היה יום השביעי בשבת  
וקל כדי אילנות היו מתעצמים לגבה.  
והאור הלך מסביב שוטף בנהר לנבע,  
וגלגל העין את גלגל החמה חמדה.  
או ידעתי חמדה שלא היתה כמוה.  
הזהירו ראשי השיחים והאור לא ידע שבע.  
נתר בגלי הנהר וככל אדוותיו נצת,  
אף ראשי הנהר בעיניו כתפוח וקב לבלע.  
שושני נהר צהבות פערו את פיהן לבלע  
את אדוות הנהר בחפזן וגבעול העשב השט,  
ואותו היום היה יום השביעי בשבת  
וקל כדי אילנות מתעצמים בתשוקה לגבה  
ואו ידעתי חמדה שלא היתה כמוה.

וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים, אֶת-הַקִּיץ, וַיַּבְדֵּל בֵּין הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר מִתַּחַת לְקִיץ, וּבֵין הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר מֵעַל לְקִיץ; וַיְהִי-כֵן. וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְקִיץ, שָׁמַיִם; וַיְהִי-עָרֶב וַיְהִי-בֹקֶר, יוֹם שֵׁנִי:

שִׁירֵי לַיהוָה שִׁיר חֶדֶשׁ.  
שִׁירֵי לַיהוָה בְּרָכּוֹ שְׁמוֹ.  
סִפְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם כְּבוֹדוֹ.  
כִּי גָדוֹל יְהוָה וּמְהֻלָּל מְאֹד.  
כִּי כָל אֱלֹהֵי הָעַמִּים אֱלִילִים.  
הוֹדוּ וְהִדְרֵי לִפְנָיו.  
הִבּוּ לַיהוָה מִשְׁפָּחוֹת עַמִּים.  
הִבּוּ לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד שְׁמוֹ.  
הִשְׁתַּחֲווּ לַיהוָה בְּהִדְרַת קֹדֶשׁ.  
אָמְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם  
אֵף תִּכּוֹן תִּבֵּל בַּל תִּמּוּט.  
יִשְׁמַחוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם  
יִרְעֶם הָיָם וּמֵלֵאוֹ:  
אֲזִי וַיִּנָּנוּ כָּל עֲצֵי יַעַר:  
כִּי כָא  
יִשְׁפֹּט תִּבֵּל בְּצֹדֶק

תהלים ע

## אלוהים נתן לך במתנה

דוד חלמון/איתן מסורי

אלוהים נתן לך במתנה  
דבר גדול, דבר נפלא  
אלוהים נתן לך במתנה  
את החיים על פני האדמה

נתן לך את הלילה והיום  
אהבת תקווה וחלום  
קִיץ, חורף, סתיו, אביב  
(שמה טובה להביט סביב)

נתן לך שדות ירוקים  
מרחים ועצים מלבלבים  
(נחרות, נחלים וימים  
שמים, ירח, כוכבים)

אלוהים נתן לך במתנה  
דבר גדול, דבר נפלא  
אלוהים נתן לך במתנה  
את החיים על פני האדמה

ונתן לך חגים ושבתות  
ואת ישראל ארץ האבות  
ידיים וראש להגשים חלומות  
(ונתן לך את כל הנפלאות)

ונתן לך דברים כל כך יפים  
(הביא לעולם ילדים  
להאזין לשירים, לראות צבעים  
וואו, מה רבו מעשיך אלוהים)

אלוהים, תן לי רק עוד מתנה  
והנה קטנה, אך נפלאה  
אלוהים, תן לי רק עוד מתנה  
את השלום על פני האדמה

## הללויה

יענקלה ולפז/ מני גל

אדם חוזר וקוצר יומו  
צנוע הוא ודל,  
ועל גבו צרות החול  
עומסות לו כמגדל.  
ולפניו רואה פתאום  
את שתי עיניה של ביתו  
והוא אז שר, והן איתו  
שרות הללויה.

הללויה, וזה השיר  
עולה מכל פינות העיר  
כשהאדם ושתי עיניו ביתו  
שרים הללויה.

בונה אדם את בניינו  
מחבל וקלפים,  
יום יום טורח ועמל  
יום יום הם נטרפים.  
אבל אל מול חורבן קלפיו  
עולה השמש מעליו  
והוא אוסף אותם אליו  
ושר הללויה.

הללויה וזה השיר  
עולה מכל פינות העיר  
כשהאדם אוסף את כל קלפיו  
ושר הללויה.

פרושים ימי פני האל  
יודע הוא דרכי  
וכל שירי כמו תפילות  
שולחו למרחקים.  
וכשיגיע סוף התוואי  
אנגל בשקט את חיי  
ושיר חדש צעיר וחי  
ושר הללויה.

הללויה וזה השיר  
עוד יעלה בכל העיר  
והוא חדש והוא צעיר וחי  
ושר הללויה.

...נְתוּצָא הָאָרֶץ דְּשֵׁא מְזִרִיעַ נְרַע, לְמִינְהוּ, נְעִץ עֲשֵׂה-פְרִי אֲשֶׁר  
נְרַע-וּ, בּוֹ, לְמִינְהוּ; וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים, כִּי-טוֹב. וַיְהִי-עֶרֶב וַיְהִי-בֹקֶר, יוֹם שְׁלִישִׁי:

יְהִי מְלַךְ תִּגְל הָאָרֶץ.  
עֲנֵן וְעַרְפֶּל סְבִיבֵיו.  
אֵשׁ לְפָנָיו תֵּלֶךְ  
הָאִירוּ בְּרָקָיו תִּבֵּל  
הָרִים כְּדוֹנָג נִמְסוּ מִלְּפָנָיו יְהִינָה.  
הִגִּידוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם צִדְקוֹ.  
יִבְשׁוּ כָּל עֲבְרֵי פֶסֶל  
הַשִּׁתְחַוּ לוֹ כָּל אֱלֹהִים:  
וְתִגְלָנָה בְּנוֹת יְהוּדָה.  
כִּי אַתָּה יְהוָה עֲלִיוֹן עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ.  
אֶהְיֶה יְהוָה שְׁנָאוֹ נְרַע.  
מִדְּרָשִׁים יִצְיָלָם:  
אוֹר נְרַע לְצִדִּיק.  
שְׂמֹחוּ צְדִיקִים בִּיהוָה.

יִשְׁמְחוּ אִיִּם רַבִּים:  
צִדְקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט מִכּוֹן כְּסָאוֹ:  
וְתִלְהֹט סְבִיב צִרְיוֹ:  
רָאֵתָה וְתַחַל הָאָרֶץ:  
מִלְּפָנָיו אֲדוֹן כָּל הָאָרֶץ:  
וְרָאוּ כָּל הָעַמִּים כְּבוֹדוֹ:  
הַמִּתְהַלְלִים בְּאֱלִילִים.  
שְׁמַעָה וְתִשְׁמַח צִיּוֹן  
לְמַעַן מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ יְהוָה:  
מֵאֵד נַעֲלִיתָ עַל כָּל אֱלֹהִים:  
שְׁמֵר נִפְשׁוֹת חֲסִידֶיךָ  
וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל לֵב שְׂמֵחָה:  
וְהוֹדוּ לְזִכְרֶךָ קָדְשׁוֹ:

תהילים צו

## איזה אחלה עולם

נוסח עברי: עלי מוהר

כְּשֶׁאֲנִי רוֹאֶה בְּחֻלּוֹנִי  
עֵץ שְׁמוּרִיק לֶךְ וּגַם לִי  
אֲנִי שֶׁר לַעֲצָמִי, אִיזָה אַחֲלָה עוֹלָם.

חֲשֵׁמִיִּים כְּחֻלּוֹסִים, עֲנֵן הוּא לִבִּי  
וְחֻבּוּקֵר בְּהִיר וּבִלְיִלָה אִישָׁן  
וְאַחֲלוֹם לַעֲצָמִי, אִיזָה אַחֲלָה עוֹלָם.

וְכָל צַבְעֵי הַקֶּשֶׁת, יָפִים וְחֻדְשִׁים  
פְּרוּסִים אַחֲרֵי הַגֶּשֶׁם עַל פְּנֵי הָאֲנָשִׁים.  
וְחֻיוֹם כֹּה יָפֵה, וְקָל לִי כָּל כֶּךְ  
לִמְרֹא שְׁאֲנִי אוֹהֵב אוֹתְךָ.

וְהִנֵּה תִינוּקוֹת בּוֹכִים בְּמִיטָה,  
מֵחַ שֶׁחֵם יִלְמְדוּ לַעֲלוֹם לֹא אֲדַע,  
אִזּוֹ אֲנִי שֶׁר לַעֲצָמִי, אִיזָה אַחֲלָה עוֹלָם.

וְכָל צַבְעֵי הַקֶּשֶׁת, יָפִים וְחֻדְשִׁים  
פְּרוּסִים אַחֲרֵי הַגֶּשֶׁם עַל פְּנֵי הָאֲנָשִׁים.  
וְחֻיוֹם כֹּה יָפֵה, וְקָל לִי כָּל כֶּךְ  
לִמְרֹא שְׁאֲנִי אוֹהֵב אוֹתְךָ.

חֲשֵׁמִיִּים כְּחֻלּוֹסִים, עֲנֵן הוּא לִבִּי  
וְחֻבּוּקֵר בְּהִיר, וּבִלְיִלָה אִישָׁן,  
וְאַחֲלוֹם לַעֲצָמִי, אִיזָה אַחֲלָה עוֹלָם  
אֲנִי שֶׁר לַעֲצָמִי אִיזָה אַחֲלָה עוֹלָם.

## תודה עזי חיטמן

תודה על כל מה שבראת  
תודה על מה שלי נתת  
על אור עיניי  
חבר או שניים  
על מה שיש לי בעולם  
על שיר קולח  
ולב סולח  
שבכותם אני קיים

תודה על כל מה שבראת  
תודה על מה שלי נתת  
על צחוק של ילד  
ושמי התכלת  
על אדמה ובית חם  
פינה לשבת  
אישה אוהבת  
שבכותם אני קיים

תודה על כל מה שבראת  
תודה על מה שלי נתת  
על יום של אושר  
תמימות ויושר  
על יום עצוב שנעלם  
תשובות אלפיים  
וכפיים  
שבכותם אני קיים.

## פסק זמן

אריק אינשטין / שם טוב לוי

לקחת פסק זמן ולא לחשוב,  
לשבת מול הים ולא לדאוג,  
לתת לראש לנוח מהפיצוצים,  
לתת ללב לנוח מהלחצים.

אני יודע שזה לא הזמן,  
בעצם גם אני עוד לא מוכן,  
אבל הנשמה רוצה קצת מנוחה,  
לתפוס אוויר בשביל לחזור לעבודה.

אולי זה רק משבר קטן וזה חולף,  
אולי פשוט אני נהייתי קצת עייף.

לקחת פסק זמן ולא לחשוב,  
לשבת מול הים ולא לדאוג,  
לתת לראש לנוח מהפיצוצים,  
לתת ללב לנוח מהלחצים.

אולי זה רק משבר קטן וזה חולף,  
אולי פשוט אני נהייתי קצת עייף.

לקחת פסק זמן ולא לחשוב,  
לשבת מול הים ולא לדאוג.



...וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים, אֶת-שְׁנֵי הַמֶּאֱרֹת הַגְּדֹלִים: אֶת-הַמֶּאֱוֹר הַגָּדֹל, לְמִמְשַׁלַּת הַיּוֹם, וְאֶת-הַמֶּאֱוֹר הַקָּטָן לְמִמְשַׁלַּת הַלַּיְלָה, וְאֵת הַכּוֹכָבִים. וַיִּתֵּן אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים, בְּרִקְיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם, לְהָאִיר, עַל-הָאָרֶץ. וְלַמֶּשֶׁל, בַּיּוֹם וּבַלַּיְלָה, וּלְהַבְדִּיל, בֵּין הָאוֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ; וַיְרָא אֱלֹהִים, כִּי-טוֹב. וַיְהִי-עֶרֶב וַיְהִי-בֹקֶר, יוֹם רְבִיעִי:

## מזמור,

שִׁיר לַיהוָה שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ  
הוֹשִׁיעָה-לוֹ יְמִינוֹ,  
הוֹדִיעַ יְהוָה, יְשׁוּעָתוֹ  
זְכֹר חֲסִדּוֹ, וְאַמּוֹנָתוֹ  
כֹּא כָל-אֶפְסֵי-אָרֶץ  
הָרִיעוּ לַיהוָה, כָּל-הָאָרֶץ  
זָמְרוּ לַיהוָה בְּכִנּוֹר  
בְּחִצְצֹרוֹת, וְקוֹל שׁוֹפָר  
וַיִּרְעֵם הָיִם, וּמִלֵּאוֹ  
בְּהָרוֹת וּמִמְאֹ-כָף  
לִפְנֵי יְהוָה כִּי בָא  
יִשְׁפֹּט-תָּבֵל בְּצֶדֶק

תהילים צח

## אל נבקש

תנמי לוי / משה נע

אל נבקש הכל לדעת  
אל נסתקרון לגבי המחר  
יש לפעמים שסיבה לא נודעת  
יש לפעמים שנותר הדבר

יש דברים נסתרים  
לא נבין לא נדע  
נעשה גם דברים  
שנראים בלי סיבה  
לא צריך כל דבר  
לחקור ולשאול  
לפעמים גם מותר  
לא לדעת הכל

אל נבקש סיבה לכל צעד  
אל נבקש לדעת כל סוד  
יש לפעמים שסיבה לא נודעת  
אל נתיאש, אל נפסיק לצעוד

יש דברים נסתרים...

יש בוודאי דברים שעשינו  
ישנם כאלה לא מעטים  
אם עדיין סיבה לכל זאת לא גילינו  
אולי נגלה סיבתם בעתיד

## שקט

יונה וולך / יובל מסנר

שלח לי שקט טוב מוגן  
שלח לי שקט מענן  
שלח לי שקט ממוכן  
לשמוע שקט לא מכאן  
תשלח לי שקט בקופסא,  
מארץ רחוקה.

שלח לי שקט מאורגן  
שלח לי שקט מעודכן  
שלח לי שקט מפואר  
תשלח לי שקט מהכפר  
תשלח לי שקט בקופסא,  
מארץ רחוקה.

שקט, שקט, שקט,  
שקט מופתי  
מיום הולדתי

## אני מאמין

שאול טשרניחובסקי

שחקי שחקי על החלומות,  
זו אני החולם שח.  
שחקי כי באדם אאמין,  
כי ערדני מאמין כך.

כי עוד נפשי דרור שואפת,  
לא מברתיה לעגל פז,  
כי עוד אאמין באדם,  
גם ברוחו, רוח עז.

רוחו ישליך בבלי-הכל,  
ירוממנו במתי-על,  
לא כרעב נמות עובר,  
דרור לגפשי, פת-לדל.

שחקי כי גם ברעות אאמין,  
אאמין, כי עוד אמצא לב,  
לב תקוותי גם תקוותי,  
יחוש אושר, נבין באב.

אאמינה גם בעתיד,  
אף אם ירחק זה היום,  
אך בוא נבוא - ישאו שלום,  
אז ובכזה לאום מלאום.

עד יום מותי  
שקט עד יום מותי.  
שלח לי שקט מהודר  
שלח לי שקט מאולתר  
שלח לי שקט ירחי  
תשלח לי שקט בין  
כוכבים  
תשלח לי שקט בקופסא  
מארץ רחוקה.

וַיִּכְרֶךְ אֶתֶּם אֱלֹהִים, לְאִמּוֹ: פָּרוּ וּרְבוּ, וּמָלְאוּ אֶת-הַמַּיִם בְּיָמִים, וַהֲעוֹף, יָרֵב בָּאָרֶץ. וַיְהִי-עָרֵב יוֹהֵי-בֶקֶר, יוֹם חֲמִישִׁי:

יְהִנֶּה מֶלֶךְ יִרְגֹּז עִמָּיִם  
יְהִנֶּה בְּצִיּוֹן גְּדוֹל.  
יִדּוּ שְׂמֵךְ גְּדוֹל וְנוֹרָא.  
וְעַז מֶלֶךְ מִשְׁפָּט אֶהָב.  
מִשְׁפָּט וְצִדְקָה בְּיַעֲקֹב  
וּמִמּוֹ יִהְיֶה אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
קְדוֹשׁ הוּא:  
מִשֶּׁה וְאַהֲרֹן בְּכֹהֲנָיו  
קָרְאִים אֶל יְהוָה  
בְּעִמּוֹד עָנָן וּבְדֶבֶר אֱלֹהֵם.  
וְחֹךְ נָתַן לָמוֹ:  
אֵל נִשְׂא הָיִיתָ לָהֶם.  
רוֹמְמוֹ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
כִּי קְדוֹשׁ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ:

יֵשֶׁב כְּרוֹכִים תְּנוּט הָאָרֶץ:  
וְרֵם הוּא עַל כָּל הָעַמִּים:  
קְדוֹשׁ הוּא:  
אֶתָּה כּוֹנֵנֶת מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל.  
אֶתָּה עֲשִׂיתָ:  
וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לָהֶם רִגְלָיו.  
וּשְׂמוֹאֵל בְּקָרְאֵי שְׂמוֹ.  
וְהוּא יַעֲנֵם:  
שְׁמָרוּ עֲדוּתָיו  
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶתָּה עֲנִיתָם.  
וְנִקֵּם עַל עֲלִילוֹתָם:  
וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לְהַר קְדִשׁוֹ.

תְּהִלָּתִים עַל

**פִּדְוֶשׁ תְּנֻחָמָא וַיֵּצֵא מִרְקָא** - וַיִּלְמְדוּ רַבִּינוּ: הָרֹאֵה אִדָּם טַח כִּיצַד הוּא מְבַרֵךְ: כֵּן שֵׁנוּ וְרִוּחֵנוּ: הָרֹאֵה בְּרִיּוֹת טוֹבוֹת וְאִילָנוֹת טוֹבוֹת אוֹמֵר בְּרוּךְ שִׁכְנָה לוֹ בְּעוֹלָמוֹ. **מִדְּוֶשׁ רַבָּה** **וְרֹאשִׁית מִרְשָׁה יֵב מִסְקָה א** - מֶלֶךְ מַלְכֵי וְהַמַּלְכִּים הַקְּבִ"ה בְּרַא הָאָדָם הוּא וְנָתַן בִּיָּדוֹ עַל פִּתְחוֹ וְהוּא נָאָה וְהוּא שִׁכְחוּ אִמְרוּ רַבִּי יִצְחָק בְּרִי מִרְיֹן כְּתִיב וַיֵּצֵר ה' אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם, אִשָּׁר יִצַּר כְּבִיכּוֹל הַקְּבִ"ה מִתְנַהָה בְּעוֹלָמוֹ וְאוֹמֵר רִאֲוֹ בְּרִיָּה שִׁבְרָתִי וְעוֹרָה שִׁיבְרָתִי.

**שְׁהַשֵּׁל"ה הַקְּדוֹשׁ**  
**מִרְשָׁתָּה קִרָּה**  
**תוֹחָה אוֹר:** בְּקִשְׁתָּם חִיָּת שְׁכַל הַעֲרָה וְחַיִּי קְדוֹשִׁים, שְׁלֹא תַחֲיֶיהָ הַתַּפְשֻׁטוֹת וְהַקְּדוּשָׁה עַל יְחִידֵי שְׁנוֹתָהּ, רַק עַל כָּל הַעוֹלָה, כּוֹלֵם יֵהִי שְׁרֹבִים לְקְדוּשָׁה. וְאִמְרוּ הֲלֹא אֲנִחנוּ שְׁמַעְנוּ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ, וַיִּשַׁע לְהַקְשׁוֹת לָמָּה לֹא אִמְרוּ אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ, הִשְׁ"י בּוֹהַ הָרֹאֵה הַחַיּוֹב, שִׁכַּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד מֵאֲנֵינוּ חֹשֵׁב בְּעֵינָיו, לִכְךָ אִמְרוּ בְּלִשׁוֹן יְחִיד, כֹּל כֵּן בְּחֻכּוֹנוּ יִהְיֶה ה'.

**פִּדְוֶשׁ תְּנֻחָמָא כִּי תִשָּׂא מִרְקָא** ד מִגֵּן בַּעֲדֵי גִזְיוֹת אֲבוֹת כְּבוֹדֵי שְׁהִירִית שְׁכִינָתָךְ בְּחוֹכֵי וּ וְאִמְרַת "וַעֲשֵׂה לִּי מִקְדָּשׁ וּשְׁכֵנִתִּי בְּחוֹכֵם". **וְחֻזֵּן "אֱלֹהִים מִבְּקֶשׁ אֶת הָאָדָם" מֵאֵת הַרְבֵּה אֲנִירָהם יְהוֹשֻׁעַ הַשֵּׁל:** "אֱלֹהִים זָקוּק לְאָדָם עַל מַטְּ לְהַנְשִׁים אֶת יַעֲדוֹ". "אֱלֹהִים זָקוּק לֵ" וְיִתְנוּ. הֵייתִי מַגְדִּיר אֶת הָאָדָם כְּעוֹרֵךְ אֱלֹהִי: אֱלֹהִים זָקוּק אִדָּם. **רַבִּי מִנְחֵם מִנְדֵּל מִקְדָּשׁ:**

"הֵיכָן נִמְצָא הַבּוֹרָא הֵיכָן שְׁנוֹתֵינוּ לוֹ לְהִיכִנָּס" - "כֹּלל זֶה יֵהָא נִקְוֵי בִידְךָ, מִי שְׁאִינוּ רֹאֵה אֶת הַמִּקְדָּשׁ בְּכָל מָקוֹם, אִינוּ רֹאֵהוּ בְּשׁוּם מָקוֹם". - כְּמַעֲט אֱלֹהִים שְׁנֵה מִפְּרִידִים בֵּין הַפִּילוֹסוֹף הַסִּינִי-טַאוּאִיסְטִי צ'וּאֲנֵג טַסְה וּבֵין הַרְבִּי מִנְחֵם מִנְדֵּל מִקְדָּשׁ, אֲבָל שְׁנֵיהֶם כְּאֶחָד הִתְיַחֲסוּ לַעֲרַת הַחִיפּוּשׁ אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים. כְּאִשֶּׁר נִשְׁאָלוּ עַל יְדֵי תַלְמִידֵיהֶם "הֵיכָן נִמְצָא הָאֱלֹהִים?" הֵם עֲנוּ, כֹּל אֶחָד בְּדַרְכּוֹ שֵׁנוּ, וְהֵיכָן שְׁנוֹתֵינוּ לוֹ לְהִיכִנָּס".

## תְּפִילָּה תַל אֲבִיבִית

עֲלֵי מוֹהֵר / יוֹנֵי רַכְטֵר

אֱלֹהֵי - כָּאֵן אֵין לָנוּ בְּתֵל, יֵשׁ רַק יָם  
אֲבָל אֶתָּה הָרִי נִמְצָא בְּכָל מָקוֹם  
אֲזָ בְּטָח כָּאֵן גַּם.  
וְלָכֵן, בְּשִׂאֲנֵי הוֹלֵךְ פֹּה לָאָרֶץ הַחַוֶּף  
אֲנִי יוֹדֵעַ שְׂאֶתָּה אֲתִי  
וְיָדָה עוֹשֶׂה לִּי טוֹב.  
וְכִשְׂאֲנִי רוֹאֶה תִּירַת, יָפָה וְשׁוֹפָה  
אֲנִי מְבִיט בָּהּ אֲמַנֵּם לְמַעֲנֵי  
אֲבָל גַּם לְמַעֲנֵךְ  
כִּי אֲנִי יוֹדֵעַ שְׂאֶתָּה בְּחוֹכֵי  
בְּשֵׁם שְׂאֲנֵי בְּחוֹכֵךְ.  
וְאוֹלֵי נִבְרָאֲתִי  
כְּרִי שְׂמֵתוֹכִי תוֹכֵל לְרֹאוֹת  
אֶת הָעוֹלָם שְׂבָרָתָהּ  
בְּעֵינֵים חֲדָשׁוֹת.

**"מֵאוֹר עֵינֵינִים"**  
**שֵׁל מִנְחֵם נַחוּם**  
**מִצִּיּוֹנִי (1-1730)**  
1797. "וְכֹל זֶה הוּא עֵי" שֶׁהַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרֵךְ נָתַן הַתּוֹרָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל הַתַּבְלִין שְׂמַתְבְּלִין וּמִמְתִּיקִין לִיעַר הָרַע וְעֵי" הַתּוֹרָה הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרֵךְ מְשַׁכֵּין שְׁכִינָתוֹ בְּחוֹךְ הָאָדָם כְּמוֹ שְׁאִמֵּר הַכְּתוּב "וַעֲשֵׂה לִּי מִקְדָּשׁ וּשְׁכֵנִתִּי בְּחוֹכֵם" (שְׂמֹת כה, ח). וְנִקְרָא הָאָדָם גַּם כֵּן בְּחִיַּת מִקְדָּשׁ, שֶׁהַבּוֹרָא בְּרוּךְ הוּא מַצְמֵם שְׁכִינָתוֹ הָאָדָם הַעוֹבֵד עֵי" הַתְּשׁוּקָה וְהַתְּעוּגוּ שֵׁשׁ לוֹ מַעֲבֹדֹת הָאָדָם כְּאִמְרוּ לְעִיל וְכְמוֹ שְׂמַצִּינוּ בְּמִקְדָּשׁ הַכְּלָלִי שְׂמַצֵּם הַבּוֹרָא בִּ"ה שְׁכִינָתוֹ בֵּין בְּדֵי אַרְוֹן אֲשֶׁר הִשְׁמִיִּים וְשְׁמֵי הַשְּׁמַיִם לֹא יִכְלָלוּהוּ וְכֹל זֶה עֵי" הַתְּשׁוּקָה שֵׁשׁ לוֹ יִתְבָּרֵךְ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, כֵּן הוּא בְּבִחִיַּת מִקְדָּשׁ פְּרִטִי שֶׁהוּא הָאָדָם, הוֹכֵחַ לְחַיּוֹת מִרְכָּבָה לוֹ יִתְבָּרֵךְ... עֵיקַר כּוֹוֶט הַבּוֹרָא בְּצִוּוֵי הַמִּשְׁכָּן וְהַמִּקְדָּשׁ לְהַשְׁרֹת שְׁכִינָתוֹ בְּמִקְדָּשׁ הַפְּרִטִי, שֶׁהוּא הָאָדָם...

נִרְאָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת-כָּל-אִשָּׁר עָשָׂה, וְהָנָה-טוֹב מְאֹד; וְנִהי-עָרֵב  
וְנִהי-בָקָר, יוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי.

#### מזמור לדוד

הָבוּ לַיהוָה בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים: הָבוּ לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד נְעִז:  
הָבוּ לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד שְׁמוֹ. הַשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לַיהוָה בְּהִדְרַת קֹדֶשׁ:  
קוֹל יְהוָה עַל הַמַּיִם אֵל הַכְּבוֹד הָרָעִים  
יְהוָה עַל מַיִם רַבִּים:  
קוֹל יְהוָה בַּכֶּחַ: קוֹל יְהוָה בְּהַדָּר:  
קוֹל יְהוָה שֹׁבֵר אֲרָזִים. וַיִּשְׁבֹּר יְהוָה אֶת אֲרָזֵי הַלְּבָנוֹן:  
וַיִּרְקִידֵם כְּמוֹ עֵגֶל. לִבְנוֹן וְשִׁרְיוֹן כְּמוֹ בֵּן רִאמִּים:  
קוֹל יְהוָה חֹצֵב לְהַבּוֹת אֵשׁ: קוֹל יְהוָה יַחִיל מִדְּבָר.  
יַחִיל יְהוָה מִדְּבַר קֹדֶשׁ: קוֹל יְהוָה יַחֲלִיל אֵילֹת.  
וַיִּחַשֶׁף יַעְרֹת. וּבְהִיכָלוֹ. בָּלוּ אִמֹּר כְּבוֹד:  
יְהוָה לְמַבּוּל יִשָּׁב. וַיִּשָּׁב יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ לְעוֹלָם:  
יְהוָה עַז לְעִמּוֹ יִתֵּן. יְהוָה יַכְרֵךְ אֶת עִמּוֹ בְּשָׁלוֹם:

תהלים כט

אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלֵּא שִׁירָה בְּיָם  
וְלִשְׁוֹנָנוּ רָנָה בְּהַמּוֹן גָּלִיו  
וְשִׁפְתוֹתֵינוּ שָׂבַח בְּמִרְחָבֵי רָקִיעַ  
וְעֵינֵינוּ מְאִירוֹת בְּשֶׁמֶשׁ וּכְיָרֵחַ  
וַיְדִינוּ פְּרוֹשׁוֹת כְּנִשְׁרֵי שָׁמַיִם  
וַיְרַגְלֵנוּ קִלּוֹת בְּאֵילֹת.  
אֵין אֲנַחְנוּ מִסְּפִיקִים לַהּוֹדוֹת לָךְ  
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלֵּהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ.

מתוך תפילת נשמת

אֶחָד אֶחָד וּבְאֵין רוּאָה  
וְשׁוֹב אֶעֱמֹד נִפְעֵם לִפְנֵי עוֹלָם פְּלִאי בְּטָהָרוֹ,  
גֵּן נֶעוֹל וְחֶתוּם, זְרוּעַ חִידוֹת וּפְלָאִים,  
לֹא-חָלָה בָּהֶם יָד וְלֹא-נָסָה אֱלֹהֵם דְּבַר שְׁפָתַיִם,  
לְכַבִּי יִמְלֵא הַמּוֹן וְתִמְהוֹן אֱלֹהִים עַל-פָּנַי,  
בְּעֵינֵי תִזְרַח הַדְּמָעָה וּבְנִפְשִׁי תִרְוַעָה נִאֲלָמָה...

חיים נחמן ביאליק

**Appendix C:** Cover of Beit T'filah Israeli's current siddur.





**Appendix D:** *Beit T'filah Israeli's Informational Pamphlet.*







# Thank you for coming

to Beit Tefilah Israeli.

*Beit Tefilah Israeli is a young and fast-growing, liberal, independent, egalitarian and inclusive community in urban Tel Aviv, which is committed to Jewish spirit, culture, and social action, striving to redefine the Jewish-Israeli identity of the secular Israeli public. Beit Tefilah Israeli (BTI) offers a meaningful context and venue for Shabbat and holiday services, life cycle events, and Jewish-Israeli Identity exploration for a broad range of Israelis who seek a place for spiritual quest in prayer and activism, in a communal and friendly environment. In its first years of operation Beit Tefilah Israeli has gradually become a major player in the area of Jewish renewal and a prominent feature in the world of Jewish culture in Tel Aviv, and in the everyday lives of its members and participants.*

**Why "Beit Tfila Israeli"?** At BTI we wish to not only bring ourselves closer to prayer, but to bring the prayer closer to us, and to the place where our Jewish identity and our local Israeli identities meet.

**To which stream of Judaism do we belong?** We are firm believers in Jewish pluralism, who respect and appreciate all genuine attempts made by all streams of Judaism. Nonetheless, we do not wish to neither belong nor define ourselves through a specific stream, thus making it accesible and appealing to general public and appealing to the general public.

**Do we operate outside of Tel-Aviv?** The liberal spirit and openness that the city of Tel-Aviv offers serves as the best ground for creating a broadminded, relevant, committed, creative and rich Jewish experience. Over the years we are committed to share our expertise with whoever requested our assistance, and for that end we developed a variety of educational programs and initiatives for schools and community centers, as well for the IDF. In addition, we have been supporting emerging communities by providing resources and mentoring services all across Israel and abroad.

**Are we connected to other communities?** Absolutely. Beit Tefilah Israeli maintains constant, meaningful and enriching relations with many communities in Israel and abroad. BTI is always willing to share its rich experience in content development, Jewish rituals, musical experiences and community initiatives, and thus assist new and renewed communities to become spiritual and cultural centers, capable of addressing the many differing qualities and needs of each and every location.

## **Where and when?**

Every Friday evening, right before sunset.

July-August: at the Northern Deck of the Tel-Aviv port

Rest of the year: at our home on 4 Bezalel Yaffe St. ("Alma House")

### Kabalat Shabbat

Every Friday we welcome the Shabbat in a musical praying experience that enables both a personal reflection, as well as a connection to the entire community. During the summer months we gather at the Tel-Aviv Port and during the winter in our home at 4 Bezalel Yaffe St. ("Alma House"). We also run prayers and services for all Jewish and Israeli holidays.

### Activities for Children

Once every two weeks, in tandem with the Kabalat Shabbat ceremony, we invite the children and youth to take part in a creative and enriching Shabbat service for children. The activity is being held in two separate age groups.

### Bar / Bat Mitzva Ceremony

BTI runs a Bar/Bat Mitzva Course. During the course, the Bar / Bat mitzvah boys and girls are invited, along with their families, to design their own ceremony according to their understanding, traditions and beliefs. In addition, BTI holds additional life cycle ceremonies such as: Brith' for boys and girls, Bar/Bat mitzvah for adults, weddings and Shabbat ceremonies for brides and grooms.

### Social Action and Volunteering

Focusing on and dealing with prayer and Jewish texts, naturally strengthens our social awareness, and leads us to volunteer with underprivileged communities. BTI members are involved in a number of social action programs, and are always willing to take part in any worthy initiative.

### The Music of Beit Tefilah

BTI places a special emphasis on the music that accompanies prayers, in so far to create a new Israeli liturgy. Beit Tefilah has a unique and professional ensemble of musicians that do not only perform the prayers, but are also engaged in composing them. In addition, BTI cooperates with leading Israeli musicians (e.g. Shlomo Gronich, Yoni Rechter, etc.), in order to create an indigenous Israeli liturgy that are adjusted to the Israeli experience. BTI's ensemble frequently performs and runs workshops on "Israeli prayers" among different communities in Israel and abroad. **This year, for the first time, BTI has produced a musical CD that collates the finest melodies and prayers, as they were developed at and by the community. The CD is available for purchase on the community's website or at the BTI offices. [Btfila.bandcamp.com](http://Btfila.bandcamp.com)**



### Siddur Beit Tefilah

The new Siddur is the produce of seven years of creative experience in facilitating Shabbat prayers in our community, in a unique manner that combines the old and the new, while creating a multi-layered facet of an Israeli prayer.

The richness and variety offered by the Siddur, facilitate the creation of an anthology of Shabbat and prayer, and enables a personal as well as a communal outlook on current meaningful happenings.

BTI Siddur has become a meaningful resource enjoyed by emerging communities.

You may purchase this exclusive Siddur on the community's website or at the BTI offices.

**The Siddur is particularly recommended for leaders and facilitators of Shabbatand prayer of all streams, and for individuals who wish to enrich theirlanguage of prayer.**





*My advice is:  
Celebrate your ancestors' holidays  
and add to them a bit of your own,  
according to your ability,  
your taste, and your reason.  
What is paramount is that you  
do everything out of faith,  
and with a live feeling and a soulful need -  
and don't be too clever.*

H.N. Bialik, 1930

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Tel/Fax: +972-77-300-3655 | Email: [info@btfila.org](mailto:info@btfila.org) | [www.btfila.org](http://www.btfila.org)

BTI's services and activities are made possible thanks to the generous support of the Jewish Federation of San Francisco, the New Israeli Fund, Reshet Hakehilot, the Julius Stulman Foundation and private donors.

If you would like to make a donation, please use our PayPal account: [BTI@btfila.org](mailto:BTI@btfila.org)



**Appendix E: Beit T'filah Israeli's Adon Olam, melody by Yonatan Razel.**

## Adon Olam

music from "Dror Yikra" by Jonathan Razel

adapted by Beit Tefilah Israeli

as notated by Andrea Rae Markowicz

Voice

A-don o-lam a-she-rem ma-lach b'te-rem kol y'tzir niv-bat sha-lom sha-bat sha-lom sha-bat sha-lom u-m'vo-ra-ach

5 I-et na-sa b'chef-so kol a-zai me-lech sh'-mo ni-kra. sha-bat sha-lom u-m'vo-rach

9 v'-a-cha-rei kich-lot ha-kol I'-va-do yimloch no-sha-bat sha-lom sha-bat sha-lom u-m'vo-rach

13 v'-hu ha-ya v'-hu ho-veh v'-hu yih'ye b'tif-a-ra. sha-bat sha-lom u-m'vo-rach

17 A-don o-lam a-she-rem ma-lach b'te-rem kol y'tzir niv-bat sha-lom sha-bat sha-lom sha-bat sha-lom u-m'vo-rach

21 v'-a-cha-rei kich-lot ha-kol I'-va-do yimloch no-sha-bat sha-lom sha-bat sha-lom u-m'vo-rach

25 v'-hu ha-ya v'-hu ho-veh v'-hu yih'ye b'tif-a-ra. sha-bat sha-lom u-m'vo-rach

29 rah rach v'-hu ha-ya v'-hu ho-veh v'-hu yih'ye b'tif-a-ra. sha-bat sha-lom u-m'vo-rach

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**Appendix F: Beit T'filah Israeli's Mizmor Shir L'Yom HaShabbat.**

## Mizmor Shir L'Yom HaShabbat

lyrics: Psalm 92  
music: Kayla Dinis  
(as notated by Andrea Rae Markowicz)

Voice

miz - mor shir l' - yom ha - sha - bat ——— tov l' - ho - dot la - do -

nai Miz - mor shir l' - yom ha - sha - bat ——— tov l' - ho - dot la - do - nai ul - za -

mer l' - shim - cha el — ul - za - mer l' - shim - cha — el - yon l' - ha -

gid ba - bo - ker chas - cha v' - e - mu - nat - cha ba - lei - lot. Tza - dik ka - ta - mar yif -

rach — k' - e - rez bal - va - non — yis - geh sh' - tu - lim b' veit A - don -

nai — b' - chatz - rot e - lo - hei - nu yaf - ri - chu od y' - nu - vun b' - sei -

vah — d' - shei - nim d' - a - na - nim yi - h' - yu l' - na tzu ki - a vla A do

na a ay tzu ri ve lo a vla ta a vo.

**Appendix G:** Excerpts from Beit T'filah Israeli's Havdalah service to mark the end of Yom Hazikaron and the beginning of Yom Ha'atzma'ut.





ומה כי נבוא מי נאמר: הנה הנבל. נגן לי כזה הנבל.  
הנבל הנבל. חוטים נחבל. לש נבה משקחה. לש צמק מאכל.  
אל תתניני ללכת. אני כל כך שכור ממליתך- כר.  
מלות הכר. מלילות הכר. ראיתי נא איד נשרו דבריד על אדני.

באתי למלים הפשוטות ביותר. ברוכים אתם אדני!

אמיר גלבע

שבהם יש היכרות אישית עם החיים ועם המתים.  
אנחנו מציעים להתעכב ברווח הזמן זה, שבין האבל והשמחה  
ולמלא אותו בטקס של הבדלה. הבדלה בין יום הזיכרון ליום  
העצמאות. לשם כך חיברנו סידור לטקס ההבדלה, ואנחנו  
מקיימים אותו זו השנה השלישית בבית התפילה הישראלי  
בתל אביב.

ההבדלה בין יום הזיכרון ליום העצמאות בנויה מחומרי  
יצירה עתיקים וחדשים, מסורתיים ועכשוויים. באמצעות  
שירה, קטעי תפילה, מזמורים, הגות ושירים ישראליים, ניסינו  
ליצור מעבר רגשי הדרגתי בין המצבים הקוטביים של אבל  
ושמחה, להתבונן ביכולת האנושית לעבור בין מצבי הנפש  
המשתנים תוך שימוש ברבדים שונים של השפה העברית.  
כך, נטלנו את הרשות לשלב במרכז הטקס וריאציה חופשית  
של ברכת ההבדלה בין שבת לימי החול, המותאמת למעבר  
הייחודי שבין קדושת יום הזיכרון לקדושת יום העצמאות.  
סידור זה נוצר מתוך הצורך שלנו, חברי בית תפילה  
ישראלי, לעצב לעצמנו חיי קהילה בעלי משמעות ולחגוג  
יחד את החגים בדרך המשלבת בין המסורת היהודית  
לתרבות הישראלית העכשווית. אנו מפיצים את ההצעה  
לטקס הזה מתוך תקווה שרבים אחרים ימצאו בה עניין  
ויעשו בה שימוש במסגרות קהילתיות ומשפחתיות, או  
שתשמש השראה לעיצוב טקסים אחרים.

ברצוננו להודות ליוצרים בשפה העברית - למשוררים,  
להוגים, לאומנים ולסופרים שאת כתביהם אספנו כאן. הם  
אלה הפותחים את שפתינו, מאפשרים לנו לבטא בדיוק את  
תנועות נפשינו ומעצימים בכתביהם את חוויות החג. קשה  
לנו לתאר את היום הזה בלי יצירתם.

#### בברכת חג עצמאות שמח

אסתר גוטפריד

מכל מזעדי ישראל, יום הזכרון ויום העצמאות הם המועדים  
הקשורים ביותר לחיינו כישראלים. זהו חיבור ישיר, מידי.  
חלק מהאנשים שהשתתפו במאורע היסוד של ימים אלה  
חיים בתוכנו ולצערנו רשימת חללי צה"ל ונפגעי פעילות איבה  
עדיין פתוחה ומתווספים לה שמות נוספים בכל שנה בשנה.  
שלא כחגים אחרים בלוח השנה העברי, המנהגים,  
המסורות ואיפיונם של יום הזיכרון ושל חג העצמאות  
עברו תהליכי התגבשות קצרים ונמצאים עדיין בתהליך של  
התהוות. מסורות לא ממצאיות יש מאין - או כדברי ביאליק  
- "את החגים אין בודים מן הלב. חג הוא עניין של יצירה  
קבוצתית שמשותפים בה כוחות ויסודות מרובים ושונים:  
הדת, המסורת, ההיסטוריה, האומנות, הטבע...".

אין אנו יודעים איך יחוגו חגים אלה בעוד 100 או  
200 שנה, אך כיום יש לנו את ההזדמנות, הזכות והחובה  
להשתתף בתהליך העיצוב שלהם, תוך יצירת שיח בין  
התרבות היהודית והישראלית. החיבור בין שתי הזהויות  
הללו הוא אחד האתגרים העומדים בפנינו בבואנו לעצב  
סמנים טקסיים לחגים אלה.

הצורך בקביעת יום כללי לזכר הנופלים במלחמת  
הקוממיות נולד כבר בתום המלחמה, ובשנתיים הראשונות  
של המדינה, יום הזיכרון צוין במהלכו של יום העצמאות. רק  
ב-1951, הוחלט על ידי המעצה הציבורית להנצחת החייל,  
אחרי שנפסלו חלופות אחרות כמו י"א באדר או ל"ג בעומר,  
כי יום הזיכרון יהיה תמיד יום לפני יום העצמאות, ומאז -  
בכל שנה האבל צמוד לשמחה.

ההצמדה בין שני המועדים הטעונים הללו, עם החיבור  
שבין האבל לחגיגות - גורמים לבלבול ומבוכה שאינה נפתרת  
על ידי הטקסים הממלכתיים רבים הם הישראלים המחפשים  
חוויה אישית יותר. חלקם יוצרים מפגשים בין חברים  
ומעצבים טקס קבוצתי משלהם, וחלקם חוזרים אל 'מדרות

**קהלת** ספר קהלת הוא ספר של חכם ומשורר שמתבונן במקומו של האדם בעולם - "תחת השמש". הוא נע בין דעות שונות ולפעמים קוטביות ביחס למציאות ועובדה זו הולידה פרשנויות שניסו ליישב את "הסתירות". דומה שבהקשר שלנו כמעט שאין צורך להסביר מדוע ההתייחסויות השונות אינן בלתי הגיוניות אלא ההפך - הן ביטוי מובהק ואותנטי של המצב האנושי. ואמנם בשיר על העתים המצוטט כאן מתגלים המצבים ההפוכים כחלק משלמות כוללת של חיי האדם ונדמה שהגדולה האמיתית היא היכולת לנוע ביניהם בצורה נכונה. הטקסט שאנו עורכים - ההבדלה, היא הצעה לתנועה כזו שיכולה לאפשר הזדמנויות להסתכל על עצמנו במבט שונה עם שימת לב לפרטים ולרגשות החבויים בדרך כלל מתחת למעטה היומיום.

**ניגון פתיחה:** ניתן לפתוח את הטקסט בשירה משותפת של ניגון ללא מילים או להפוך שיר מוכר לניגון. "ניגון" הוא שם קוד יהודי לשירה בצוותא ללא מילים, המאפשרת יצירת אחדות ושותפות בין המשתתפים על ידי חזרה על מנגינה. הכוח הטרנספורמטיבי של הניגון מביא את הנוכחים לנקודה משותפת לקראת הטקסט ויוצר מעבר טבעי בין הפרטי והקבוצתי. גם אם אין ברפרטואר שלכם ניגונים, יש הרבה שירים ישראלים שמנגינותיהן מתאימות לניגון, כגון: דמעות של מלאכים, הנסיך הקטן מפלוגה ב', יורם, אלי אתה ואודך, הליכה לקיסריה (אלי אלי).

### לכל, זמן; ועת לכל-חפץ, תחת השמים.

עת לקדש,	ועת למות;
עת לטעם,	ועת לעקור נטוע.
עת להרוג	ועת לרפוא,
עת לפרוץ	ועת לבנות.
עת לבכות	עת לשחוק,
עת ספוד	ועת רקוד.
עת להשליך אבנים,	ועת פנוס אבנים;
עת לבבוק,	ועת לרחק מחפץ.
עת לבקש	ועת לאבד,
עת לשמור	ועת להשליך.
עת לקרוע	ועת לתפור,
עת לחשות	ועת לדבר.
עת לאהב	ועת לשנא,
עת מלחמה	ועת שלום.

קהלת, פרק ג'



## שיר ללא שם

**מדרש חסידי** ישנה דרשה חסידית שמתארת שלוש רמות של שכול. הרובד הראשון הוא הדמעות, הבכי, האופן הפשוט והשכיח ביותר שדרכו אנו מביעים צער. הרובד השני, מעט נעלה יותר, הוא השתיקה. הרובד השלישי, הנעלה ביותר לפי הדרשה, הוא השיר. הבכי – הוא הכאב שלנו, השתיקה – האומץ שלנו, ואילו השיר הוא חיינו. אנו מהללים את אלה שאפשרו לנו חיים והעניקו לחיים משמעות – באמצעות השיר. אברהם יהושע השל

כי שירי הוא בת קול ברוח  
מכתבי השלוח  
מסילת חיי  
געגועי  
הד תפילותי.  
כי שירי הוא עלה ברוח  
הנידף, השכוח  
הוא האור הרך הנפקח  
בלילותי  
הוא אתה ההולך אלי.  
בנדודי חולפות עלי  
תמונות ונשמות  
ושמות שמות  
אתה בא והולך אלי.

איי

עלטה סביב  
הלוואי שאתה מקשיב  
בדרכי הולכים איתי  
נופים וניגונים  
ופנים, פנים  
אתה בא והולך אלי.

יה  
דומיה סביב  
והיה אם אתה מקשיב  
אולי, אולי, אולי  
אתה בא והולך אלי  
אולי, אולי, אולי  
אתה בא והולך אלי.  
כי שירי הוא משב הרוח  
חלוני הפתוח  
מעין כוחי, צחוק ובכי  
קץ ייסורי  
אתה בא והולך אלי.  
אולי, אולי, אולי  
אתה בא והולך אלי.

מילים ולחן: שלום חנוך

### החול יזכר

החול יזכר את הגלים אצל לקצף אין זוכר  
זולת ההם אשר עברו עם רוח לילה מאחר  
מזכרונם הוא לעולם לא ימחה.

הכל נשוב אל המצולות זולת הקצף הלבו.  
גרות הלילה דעכו. הידידות האהבה  
הנעורים שבאו פתע אל סופם.

כמוהו גם על חוף לבם רטט אז משהו חור  
והם רשמו בתוך החול, כשהימים העובר  
האיר פתאום פנים זרות ושחוק רפה.

הכל נשוב אל המצולות...

היו שם קונכייות ריקות שנהמו קינה של גם  
ובית עלמין על הגבעות  
ושנים שחלפו דומם  
בין החצב והקברים והשקמה.

הכל נשוב אל המצולות...

מילים: נתן יונתן  
לחן: שלמה ארצי

## מתוך ההספד של דויד גרוסמן לבנו, אורי

אורי יקירי,

בעשרים לשלוש בלילה, בין שבת לראשון, צלצלו בדלת שלנו. באינטרקום. אמרו שזה מקצין העיר. כבר שלושה ימים שכמעט כל מחשבה מתחילה ב"לא". לא יבוא, לא נדבר, לא נצחק. לא יהיה עוד הנער הזה עם המבט האירוני ועם חוש ההומור המשגע. לא יהיה האיש הצעיר עם התבונה העמוקה בהרבה משנותיו. לא יהיה החיוך החם והתיאבון הבריא. לא יתקיים הצירוף הנדיר של הנחישות והעדינות, לא יהיו השכל הישר שלו וחוכמת לבו. לא תהיה עוד הרכות האין סופית של אורי, ולא השקט שבו הוא מייצב כל סופה. ולא נראה עוד ביחד את משפחת סימפסון ואת סיינפלד ולא נשמע איתך את גיוני קש, ולא נרגיש את החיבוק החזק שלך ולא נראה אותך הולך ומדבר עם יונתן בתנועות ידיים נלהבות ולא נראה אותך מחבק את רותי אהובת ליבך....

... הארת את חיינו אורי. אמא ואני גידלנו אותך באהבה. היה פשוט כל כך לאהוב אותך מכל הלב, ואני יודע שהיה לך טוב. שחיך הקצרים היו טובים. אני מקווה שהייתי אבא ראוי לילד כמותך. אבל אני יודע שלהיות ילד של מיכל פירושו לגדול בתוך נדיבות וחסד ואהבה אין סופיים, ואתה קיבלת את כל אלה בשפע רב, וידעת להעריך וידעת להודות ושום דבר שקיבלת לא היה לך מובן מאליו.

אני לא אומר כרגע דבר על המלחמה שבה נהרגת. אנחנו, המשפחה שלנו, כבר הפסדנו במלחמה הזאת. מדינת ישראל תעשה כעת את חשבון נפשה. אנחנו נתכנס בתוך כאבנו, מוקפים בחברינו הטובים, עטופים באהבה עצומה שאנו חשים היום מכל כך הרבה אנשים, שאת רובם איננו מכירים, ואני מודה

להם על תמיכתם שאין לה גבול. הלוואי שאת האהבה והסולידריות האלה נדע לתת אלה לאלה גם בזמנים אחרים. זה אולי המשאב הלאומי הייחודי ביותר שלנו. זה אוצר הטבע האנושי הגדול שלנו. הלוואי ונדע להיות קצת יותר עדינים זה אל זה. הלוואי ונצליח לחלץ את עצמנו מן האלימות והאיבה שחלחלו כל כך עמוק אל כל מערכי חיינו. הלוואי שנדע להתעשת ולהציל את עצמנו כעת, ברגע האחרון ממש, כי זמנים קשים מאוד עוד מחכים לנו.

אורי היה ילד ישראלי מאוד, אפילו שמו ישראלי ועברי כל כך. הוא היה תמצית הישראליות כפי שהייתי רוצה לראות אותה. זו שכבר כמעט נשכחה. זו שלפעמים נחשבת כמעט לקוריוז. והוא היה אדם ערכי. המילה הזאת נשחקה מאוד וגם הייתה ללעג בשנים האחרונות, כי בעולמנו המטורף והאכזר והציני, זה לא "קול" להיות ערכי, או להיות הומניסטי, או להיות רגיש באמת למצוקתו של האחר, גם אם האחר זה אויבך בשדה הקרב. אבל אני למדתי מאורי שאפשר וצריך גם וגם. שאנחנו אכן צריכים לעמוד על נפשנו. אבל לעמוד על נפשנו בשני המובנים: גם להתגונן, אבל גם להתעקש על נפשנו. להתעקש ולשמור עליה מפני הכוח והחשיבה הפשטנית, מפני ההשחתה שיש בצניניות, מפני זיהום הלב והזלזול באדם שהם הקללה הגדולה באמת של מי שחי את כל חייו באזור אסון כמו שלנו.

לאורי היה פשוט האומץ להיות עצמו, תמיד, בכל מצב. ולמצוא את קולו המדויק בכל דבר שאמר ושעשה, זה מה שהגן עליו מפני הזיהום וההשחתה וצמצום הנפש.

אוגוסט 2006, אב תשס"ז

## בין השמשות

איזהו בין השמשות? אמר רבי תנחומא: משל לטיפה של דם שהיא נתונה על גבי חודה של סייף. נחלקה הטיפה לכאן ולכאן, זהו בין השמשות. [...] רבי יוסף אומר: בין השמשות כהרף עין, ולא יכלו לעמוד עליו חכמים.

תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת ברכות דף ג הלכה א

**עת לתפוד** הגענו לעת התפירה, הרגע החמקמק של בין השמשות שהוא לא יום ולא לילה. מעשה ההבדלה "הצבת שער בין שני המצבים הרגשיים – יש בו היבט מלאכותי ואף על פי כן הוא כלי עבודתו להכלתם ולמעבר ביניהם. "במוצאי יום העצמאות, חשב בן גוריון, ראש הממשלה ושר הבטחון הראשון של מדינת ישראל, האזרח יביט אחורה ויראה את יום העצמאות, אליו הגיע דרך יום הזכרון. הוא יראה את יום העצמאות, יום של שמחה על שותפות אישית בהישג האדיר, ההיסטורי של כינון העצמאות המדינית של העם היהודי במולדתו. יום של שמחה, אבל לא יום של שמחה שלמה. אל יום העצמאות יביא איתו האזרח לפחות קורטוב מתוגת יום הזכרון, יום הדרך העצובה אל העצמאות, יום שבילי האבן ומצבות השיש של בתי העלמין הצבאיים".

אסא כשר, מעריב 23.4.99

## הבדלה

שְׁעָה זו שְׁנֵת־כִּנְסָה לְנִתְיָקָה חֲפָה  
שׁוֹב אֲנִי רוֹצֶה לְרֹאוֹת בְּנִחְמָה.  
שֶׁהִבְטַחְתִּי לְעֲצָמִי כֹה מְעַט  
שֶׁלֹּא קִיַּמְתִּי לְעֲצָמִי כֹה הִרְבָּה.  
נֶאֱבִי שֶׁאֲנִי מוֹצֵאָה בְּהִבְטָחָה  
שֶׁהִבְטִיחַ הִי לְאַבְרָהָם  
שֶׁהִבְטִיחַ הִי לְיִצְחָק  
שֶׁאֲרָעָם יִרְבֶּה יִרְבֶּה כָּחוֹל  
עַל שְׂפַת הַיָּם  
לְרֹב.  
שֶׁאֲנִי לֹא אֲבָרָה.  
שֶׁאֲנִי לֹא יִצְחָק.  
שֶׁהִבְטַחְתִּי לְעֲצָמִי כֹה מְעַט  
שֶׁלֹּא קִיַּמְתִּי לְעֲצָמִי כֹה הִרְבָּה.  
שֶׁאֲנִי יָכוֹל  
שֶׁאֲנִי אֶלָּא חוֹל  
מְעַט מִהִרְבֶּה.

אמיר גלבוע

18 עת ספוד ועת רקוד סדר הבדלה בין יום הזיכרון לחג העצמאות



### קידוש ליום העצמאות

וזכרת את יהוה אלהיך כי הוא הנתן לך פֶּחַ לעשות חיל למען הקים את בריתו אשר נשבע  
לאבותיך ביום הזה: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן: מֵאֵת יְהוה הִיְתָה  
זֹאת הִיא נִפְלְאוֹת בְּעֵינֵינוּ: זֶה הַיּוֹם עָשָׂה יְהוה נִגִּילָה וְנִשְׁמָחָה בּוֹ. בֶּן יְהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ הִגִּיעֵנוּ  
לְמוֹעֲדִים וְלִרְגָלִים הַבָּאִים לְקִרְאָתֵנוּ לְשָׁלוֹם. וְנִשְׁמַח בְּבִנְיַן עִירָךְ וְנִשְׁאֵשׁ בְּעִבּוּדְךָ.  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוה מְקַדֵּשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיּוֹם הָעֶצְמָאוֹת:  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם. שֶׁחֲחִינּוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעֵנוּ לַזְמַן הַזֶּה.

### התקווה

כָּל עוֹד בְּלִבְּךָ פְּנִימָה  
נֶפֶשׁ יְהוּדֵי הוֹמָיָה  
וּלְפָאֲתֵי מִזְרַח קְדִימָה  
עֵין לְצִיּוֹן צוֹפִיָּה  
עוֹד לֹא אֲבָדָה תִּקְוַתֵנוּ  
הַתִּקְוָה בֵּת שְׁנוֹת אֲלָפִים  
לְהִיּוֹת עִם חֲפָשִׁי בְּאַרְצֵנוּ  
אֶרֶץ צִיּוֹן וִירוּשָׁלַיִם.

נפתלי הרץ אימבר

### תקיעת שופר

ובַּיּוֹם שֶׁמִּחַתְּכֶם וּבְמוֹעֲדֵיכֶם וּבְרָאשֵׁי חֲדָשֵׁיכֶם וּתְקַעְתֶּם בַּחֲצֹצְרוֹת עַל עַלְתֵּיכֶם וְעַל זִבְחֵי  
שְׁלָמֵיכֶם וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְזִכְרוֹן לִפְנֵי אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

### תקיעה גדולה

**חג עצמאות שמח!**

## מחר

מָחָר אוֹלֵי נִפְלִיגָה בְּסִפִּינֹת	כָּל זֶה אֵינוֹ מִשָּׁל וְלֹא חֲלוֹם	מָחָר כְּשֶׁהֶצְבֵּא יִפְשֹׁט מִדִּי
מִחוּץ אֵילַת עֵד חוּץ שְׁנֵהָב	זֶה נִכּוֹן כְּאוֹר בְּצִהְרִים	לִבֵּנוּ יַעֲבֹר לְדָם -
וְעַל הַמִּשְׁחָתוֹת הַיְּשָׁנוֹת	כָּל זֶה יָבוֹא מָחָר אִם לֹא הַיּוֹם	אַחֵר כָּל אִישׁ יִבְנֶה בְּשֵׁתֵי יָדָיו
יִטְעִינוּ תַּפּוּחֵי-זָהָב	וְאִם לֹא מָחָר אִזּוֹ מִחֲרָתִים	אֶת מָה שֶׁהוּא חֶלֶם הַיּוֹם
כָּל זֶה אֵינוֹ מִשָּׁל וְלֹא חֲלוֹם	מָחָר יִקּוּמוּ אֶלֶף שִׁיכּוּנִים	כָּל זֶה אֵינוֹ מִשָּׁל וְלֹא חֲלוֹם
זֶה נִכּוֹן כְּאוֹר בְּצִהְרִים	וְשִׁיר יַעוֹף בְּמַרְפְּסוֹת	זֶה נִכּוֹן כְּאוֹר בְּצִהְרִים
כָּל זֶה יָבוֹא מָחָר אִם לֹא הַיּוֹם	וְשָׁלַל כְּלָנוֹת וְצִבְעוֹנִים	כָּל זֶה יָבוֹא מָחָר אִם לֹא הַיּוֹם
וְאִם לֹא מָחָר אִזּוֹ מִחֲרָתִים	יַעֲלוּ מִתּוֹךְ הַהֲרִיסוֹת	וְאִם לֹא מָחָר
מָחָר אוֹלֵי בְּכָל הַמִּשְׁעוּלִים	כָּל זֶה אֵינוֹ מִשָּׁל וְלֹא חֲלוֹם	וְאִם עוֹד לֹא מָחָר
אֲרִי בַעֲדָר צֶאֱן יִנְהֹג	זֶה נִכּוֹן כְּאוֹר בְּצִהְרִים	וְאִם עוֹד לֹא מָחָר
מָחָר יִכּוּ בְּאֶלֶף עִנְבָלִים	כָּל זֶה יָבוֹא מָחָר אִם לֹא הַיּוֹם	אִזּוֹ
הַמּוֹן פְּעֻמּוֹנִים שֶׁל חֹג	וְאִם לֹא מָחָר אִזּוֹ מִחֲרָתִים	מִחֲרָתִים

מילים ולחן: נעמי שמר

## שיר בבוקר בבוקר

פתאום קם אדם בבוקר	להוד אלף שנים מפכות במסתרים,
ומרגיש כי הוא עם ומתחיל ללכת,	אלף שנים צעירות לפניו
ולכל הנפגש בדרכו קורא הוא שלום.	כפלג צונן, כשיר רועים, כענף.
דגנים עולים מול פניו מבין חריצי המדרכת.	פתאום קם אדם בבוקר
וניחוחות לראשו מדיפים עצי אודרכת.	ומרגיש כי הוא עם ומתחיל ללכת,
הטללים רוססים והרים, ריבוא קרניים,	ורואה כי חזר האביב
הם יולידו חופת שמש לכלולותיו.	והוריק שוב אילן מן השלכת.
פתאום קם אדם בבוקר	פתאום קם אדם בבוקר
ומרגיש כי הוא עם ומתחיל ללכת,	ומרגיש כי הוא עם ומתחיל ללכת,
ולכל הנפגש בדרכו קורא הוא שלום.	ולכל הנפגש בדרכו קורא הוא שלום.
והוא צוחק גבורת דורות מן ההרים,	מילים: אמיר גלבוע
ונכלמות משתחוות המלחמות אפיים,	לחן: גידי קורן ושלמה ארצי

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