HEBREW UNION COLLEGE - JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
NEW YORK SCHOOL

INSTRUCTIONS FROM AUTHOR TO LIBRARY FOR THESIS

AUTHOR: Wendy Shermet

TITLE: The Jewish History and Music of Bessarabia

TYPE OF THESIS:

RABBINIC ( ) SSM (✓) D.H.L. ( )

D.MIN. ( ) M.A.R.E. ( ) M.A.J.S. ( )

1. ( ) May be used without my written permission.

2. (✓) My written permission is required for use during the next 5 years.

Note: The Library shall respect restrictions placed on theses for a period of no more than ten years.

I understand that the Library may make a photocopy of my thesis for security purposes.

3. The Library may sell photocopies of my thesis. ___ yes ✓ no

12/18/00
Date

Wendy Shermet
Signature of Author

. . . . . .

THE KLAU LIBRARY
HEBREW UNION COLLEGE
JEWISH INSITITUTE OF RELIGION
BROOKDALE CENTER
ONE WEST FOURTH STREET
NEW YORK, NY 10012

LIBRARY RECORD

Microfilmed: _____ *Date*

_____
Signature of Library Staff Member

March 5, 1996

The Jewish History and Music of Bessarabia

Wendy Shermet
Masters Thesis
December, 2000

Number of chapters: Five

Contribution of thesis: This thesis explores the special role Bessarabia played, particularly in the nineteenth century, in nurturing and furthering Jewish music. Also explored is the development of Jewish settlement, life and music in this region.

Goal of thesis: To show the importance and contribution of both general Jewish music and hazzanut from the Bessarabian region, and to show the continuum from those cantors who sang in Bessarabia to the hazzanut of today.

Division of thesis:

Materials Used: Primary sources include interviews, recordings and musical scores. Secondary sources include encyclopedias, biographies, histories and atlases.

THE JEWISH HISTORY AND MUSIC OF BESSARABIA

WENDY SHERMET

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirement for Master of Sacred Music Degree

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
School of Sacred Music
New York City, New York

2001
Advisor: Dr. Martin A. Cohen

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments

There are many people who have contributed to my interest in Eastern European Jewry in general, and the music of that region in particular. First I would like to thank my advisor Dr. Martin A. Cohen. With knowledge, humor and understanding he has guided me through the process of writing this thesis.

Dr. Carole Balin introduced me to the richness of our heritage in that region, and dispelled key myths about life there. Many thanks are due to Dr. Mark Kligman, who encouraged my interest in this area and provided musical information, friendship and serious deadlines.

The cantorial faculty at Hebrew Union College has been wonderful and supportive throughout these four years. Thank you to Dr. Eliyahu Schleifer, who provided the initial names of Bessarabian cantors with which to start, and sent valuable emails. Thanks to Cantor Noah Schall, a walking encyclopedia of hazzanic knowledge, who can always be depended upon for original manuscripts and dry humor.

I deeply appreciate the input and encouragement of Cantor Israel Goldstein, my Recital advisor, for helping sort out the level of importance of these Bessarabian cantors. Thanks to Cantor Jack Mendelson for his ability to teach us hazzanut and to make us laugh. Many thanks to Joyce Rosenzweig for her Yiddishkeit and musicianship.

Several people outside of the school have been generous with their time and knowledge: I would like to thank Hankus Netsky for his emails and phone conversations regarding Bessarabia; thanks to Boris Sandler and Elena Leikind of *The Jewish Forward* for their time and generosity in sharing their lives with me; Eleanor Gordon Mlotek of

YIVO for introducing me to Bessarabian folk music and for her obvious devotion to Yiddish culture; and Loren Sklamberg of YIVO for his recording assistance.

My classmates at HUC-JIR have been encouraging and supportive throughout these four years. Thanks especially to Seth Warner for his computer help. Thank you to the rest of the School of Sacred Music Faculty, and to those members of the rabbinic faculty with whom we studied.

Finally, thank you to my family, most especially Len and Sam, who have accompanied me on this journey with great patience and humor.

Wendy Shermet
December 12, 2000

Preface

Bessarabia is a small geographical area situated on the northwest coast of the Black Sea. It has never been politically autonomous; in turn, Greece, Rome, Turkey, Romania and Russia have controlled it. Bessarabia has no grand mountains, nor does it possess a port on the Black Sea. What it does have is an interesting and rich Jewish history, particularly as regards Jewish music.

I first heard of Bessarabia when a relative casually mentioned that the Shermet side of the family was from there, "somewhere near the Dniester River". Having no other information about my great-grandparents, this novel bit of information stuck in my mind. It sounded very exotic and Middle-Eastern, which of course it was not.

Using a Russian name website I traced derivations of the Shermet name as far back as 1495, when a Fedko Shemet Filipov syn Khalanov was a landowner. There was also Sheremet Beliaev syn Kerekreiskogo, a Moscow boiar in 1566, Ivan Vasil'evich Sheremetev Bol'shoi in 1576, and Senka Mustofa Sheremetevskii, a landowner in 1500. These names make sense in the context of the Jewish role as caretakers of estates for absentee landlords. It is possible that these Jews took their Russian surnames from the estate they managed. It is also possible that these landowners *were* Jewish. In an interesting aside, the main airport in modern Moscow is called Sheremetyevo, *yevo* meaning "city".

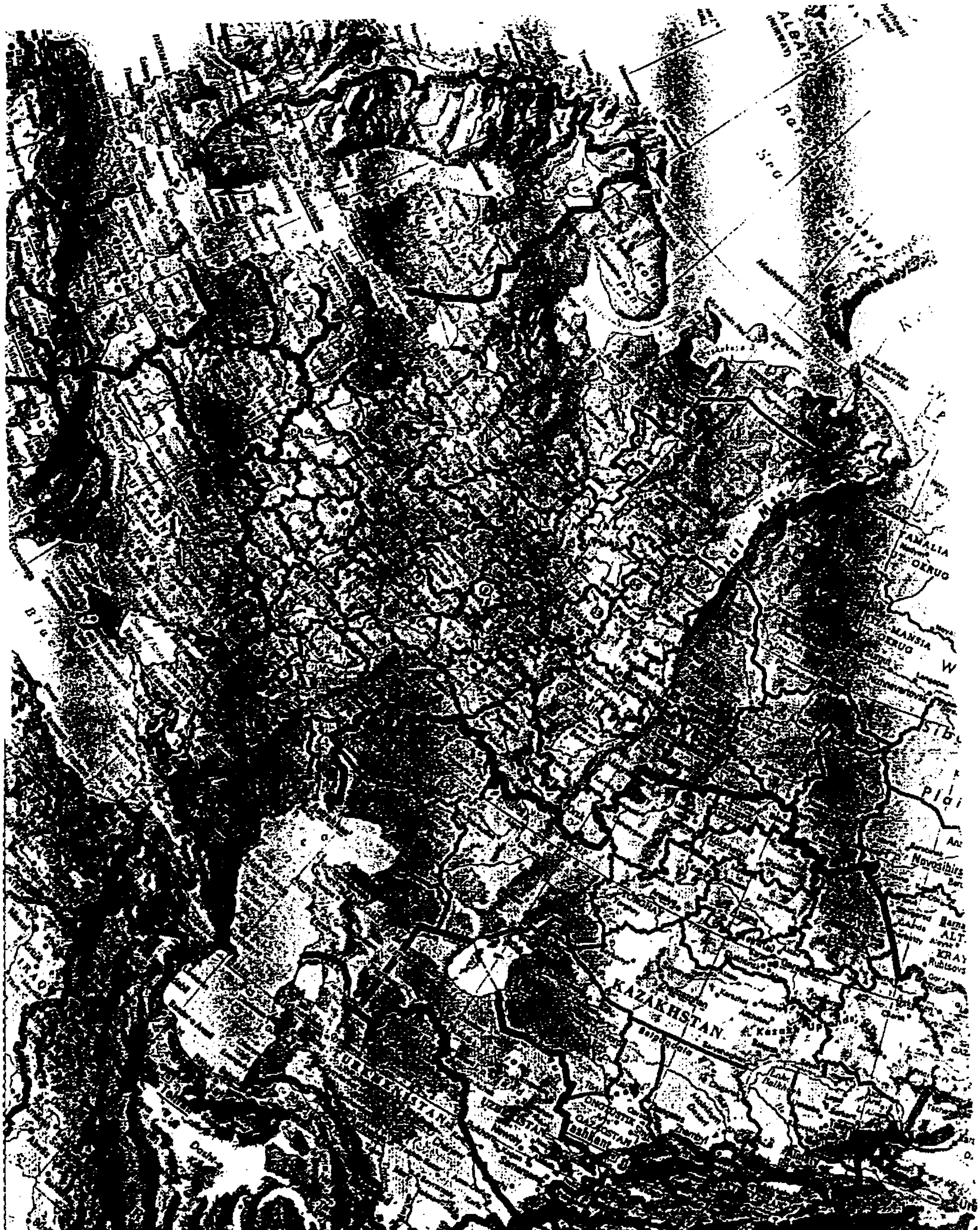
The Shermets came to the United States and Canada by 1903 at the latest, and spoke Yiddish, Russian and probably Romanian upon arrival. Thereafter they refused to speak anything but English upon learning it; this was no doubt part of their overall desire to forget Eastern Europe.

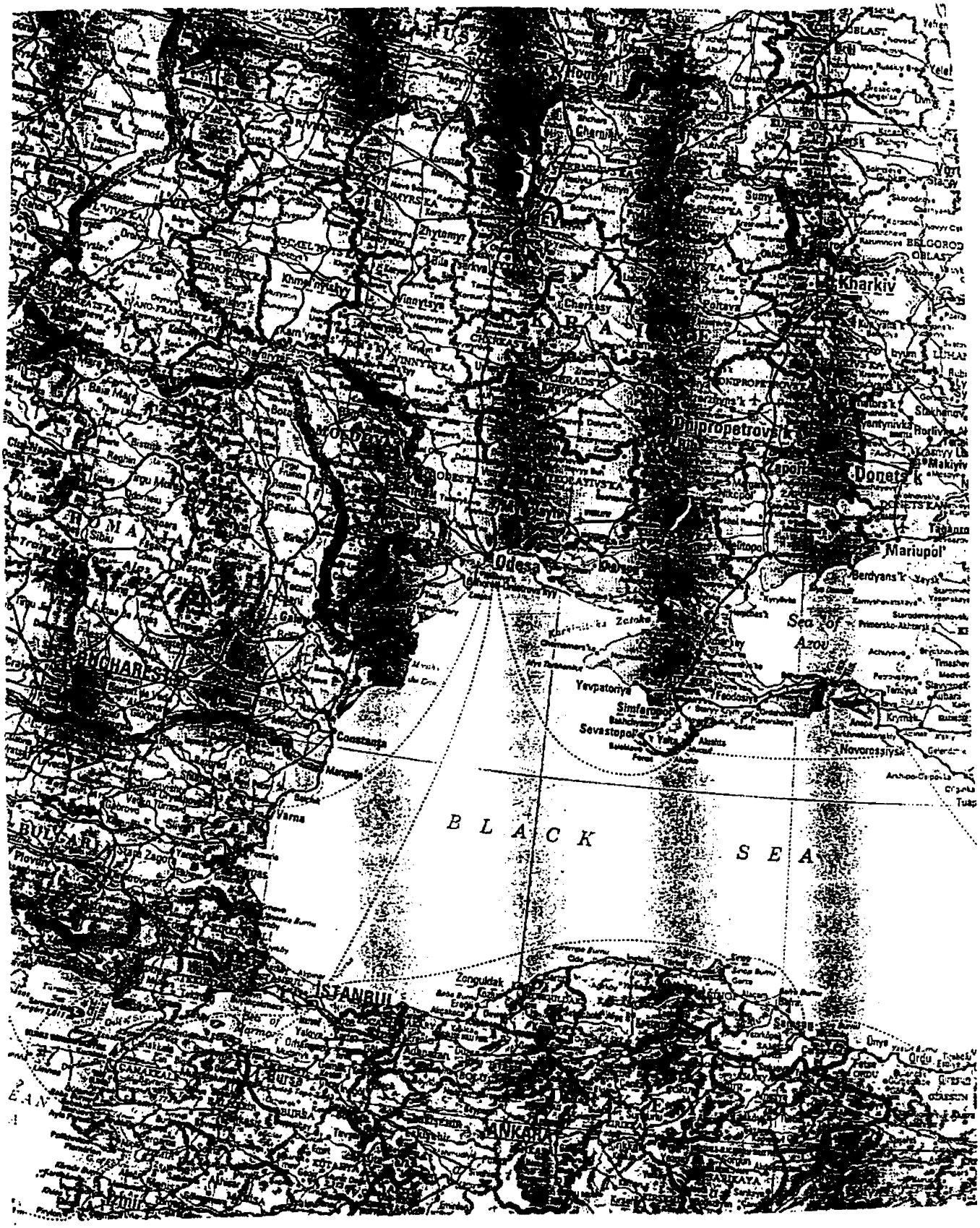
Last year I discovered courtesy of Cantors Eli Schleifer and Noah Schall that Bessarabia was a veritable breeding ground of cantors and hazzanut, and decided to link my interest in family history with cantorial studies. Kishinev, the capital, was called "the city of cantors". According to Noah Schall, "all" cantors come from Bessarabia; Eli Schliefer amended that to "every one in three".

This thesis explores the settlement history of East European Jews in general and Bessarabia in particular. The chapters are divided into the following subjects: general and specific history, Bessarabian life, musical history, cantorial life, and the cantors themselves. Migration trends, employment, war and laws, and everyday life are explored within these chapters.

I am especially interested in the hazzanim who either came from Bessarabia originally, or sang there during their careers. There was a wealth of hazzanut in Bessarabia during the nineteenth century, in Kishinev and other cities such as Belz and Bendery.

It is my contention that the cantors who served in Bessarabian synagogues contributed greatly to the music that cantors learn and sing today. Students who studied with them migrated to the United States and became the teachers of American cantors. Kishinev in particular, while perhaps not as prestigious as Odessa or Kiev, was nevertheless an important part of the two thousand year-old development of both sacred and secular Jewish music.


KAZAKHSTAN


Kharkiv
Dnipropetrovs'k
Donets'k
Mariupol'
Odesa
Sea of Azov
Yevpatoriya
Simferopol'
Sevastopol'
Novorossiysk
Constanta
Varna
BLACK SEA
ISTANBUL
ANKARA
Zonguldak
Samsun
Ordu
BUCHAREST
Berdyans'k

Chapter One – History

The Black Sea Region

Jewish civilization in Eastern Europe possibly antedates its counterpart in Western Europe. Eastern Europe was partially settled by people moving with Alexander the Great (356-323 BCE) from Hellenized Asia; Western Europe was mainly settled by people from the Roman Empire. "Among the ancient Jewish settlements in Eastern Europe the colonies situated on the northern shores of the Black Sea, now forming a part of the Russian Empire, occupy a prominent place."[1]

Greeks from Asia Minor and the Ionian Islands moved to the Crimea (Tauris), on the north shore of the Black Sea in sixth century BCE, and exported corn to Greece. After the reign of Alexander the Great, Judea was Hellenized and Jews began to migrate. This migration became the start of the Diaspora, and some of these Jews may have gone to Tauris.

There were also Greek colonies in pre-Roman times that had trade ties with Judea, and it has been confirmed that Jews had been in that area dating from the fifth century BCE. Decebal, the king of the Dacians (whose country was later called Romania) gave the Talmaci Jews privileges, allowing them to live anywhere in Dacia. A synagogue found in the Bosporous in Taurus has been dated to 80-81 CE, and coins have also been found. These Jews spoke Greek, had Greek names and enjoyed civil autonomy. According to Abraham Z. Idelsohn, Oriental Jews from Persia and the Caucasus further settled the area. In addition there were Tartaric Khazars, proselytes who then moved in with and spread among other Jews.

The above-mentioned Khazars are an interesting footnote in Eastern European Jewish history. They were allegedly warlike Finno-Turkish tribes from the Caucasus and Caspian region. They turned west toward the Black Sea after Arab conquests prevented them from migrating further east, and settled both at the mouth of the Volga at the Caspian Sea, near Astrakhan, and in the Crimea.

One legend maintains that Greek bishops tried to convert them, but Judaism was said to have succeeded in approximately 740 CE. The King of the Khazars at the time was a man named Bulan, whose kingdom was situated between the Caliphate of Baghdad and the Byzantine Empire. Jews frequently traded between the two, passing through, and apparently mingling with, the Khazar people. The Khazars were eventually defeated by Russia, moved to the Crimean Peninsula and by 1016 had fully lost their kingdom.

Another story has it that Jews participated in a "test of creeds" in pagan Russia in 986 for Vladimir, Prince of Kiev. Russia chose Greek Orthodoxy at the end of the tenth century. Some of Jewish/Khazarian Tauris became part of Kiev. There is also the theory that choosing Judaism enabled the Khazars to stay neutral between the Moslems of the east and the Greek Orthodox in the north and west.

In a further footnote, Arthur Koestler wrote in *The Thirteenth Tribe* that East European Jews were of Khazar-Turkish ancestry and were not from the West. He also said that shtetl origins went back to the thirteenth century and were a link between Khazarian market towns and Polish-Jewish settlements.[2] A final story has the Khazars coming down from southern Russia and entering Moldova and Wallachia.

The Roman Emperor Trajan conquered Dacia in 107 CE, which then became the eastern-most part of the Roman Empire. A Roman decree in 397 CE gave protection to

the Jewish Dacians, who had been there since at least this conquest. Archeologists have found ten Jewish funeral inscriptions, marked with *Deus Aeternus* and *Adonai Aeternus*.[3] Rome abandoned this region two hundred years later, but legionnaires had settled there and intermarried with the local population; they became Romanians. Latin was the language, with Slavic, Greek and Turkish added with each ensuing conqueror.

When the Roman Empire split apart, the Black Sea colonies were drawn toward Constantinople and Jews and Greeks alike traded in Byzantium. In the fifth and sixth centuries, persecutions by the Byzantine Church led Jews toward Tauris once again. The boundaries of what was to become known as Bessarabia were the Dniester River on the east, the Prut on the West, and the Danube and Black Sea in the south.

Establishment of Moldova, Romania and Bessarabia

There were two medieval Danubian Principalities, one of which called itself Moldova (the Russian pronunciation is Moldavia). Moldova was founded in the fourteenth century, and established its capital west of the Prut River. One myth says that the country was named after Dragos Voda's dog. During the fifteenth century these Moldovans colonized the Turkish and Slavic areas east of the Prut. This was called Bessarabia, after the Bessarab family of *boyars*.[4] The Ottomans ruled both halves of Moldava beginning in 1511.

Jews were invited in the seventeenth century to settle small Moldovan towns for economic reasons. They came because of that and the persecutions in Poland and the Ukraine, and also arrived in the south from Spain after the Expulsion. Jews moved from Germany, Poland, Turkey and other areas in the sixteenth century; they also came specifically to Bessarabia because by that time they were not allowed to live in Moldava.

A synagogue in Iasi, on the Prut River, dates to 1678. Jews contributed to the economic growth of the region even though they were themselves poor. There were a few professionals such as doctors and lawyers, but the majority worked in trades. Jewish neighborhoods were restricted although there were no actual ghetto walls as in Germany. Because of isolation and the completely different manner of custom, faith and language from the peasants, "...the Jews in Moldavia...lived, throughout their historical presence in these principalities, an existence filled with a profound feeling of insecurity and uncertainty."[5]

At this time in Turkey, the Sultan's Jewish dignitaries (such as Solomon Ashkenazi, 1520-1602), had ties with the Moldavian court, and many commercial deeds were drawn up in Hebrew. However, in 1640 the Moldavian Church codes declared Jews to be infidels, and one was not permitted to do business with them. Sephardi Jewish traders also frequently visited Bessarabia from Constantinople beginning in the fifteenth century. The trade route connected eastern countries with the Black Sea shore communities and Poland. The first Jewish communities in Bessarabia were in the south; later the northern area was settled in part by Polish Jewish immigrants.

Moldava became an official part of Turkey in the eighteenth century; in 1857, Moldava in the north and Muntenia in the south became part of Romania. Again, Bessarabia was separate from Moldava at this point, as it was part of the Russian Pale of Settlement. King Carol I ascended the Romanian throne in 1866, gained independence from Turkey in 1877, and declared the "Kingdom of Romania" in 1881.

Romania was in a sense caught between two worlds. "Attracted by language and cultural affinities to the Latin countries of West, especially France, yet geographically

facing east and maintaining religious ties with the Slavic world, a climate of conflicting values was inevitable. This was reflected in the development of the Romanian shtetl."[6] However, as bad as the Romanian shtetl was, the ones in the Pale were worse. A Romanian father was more apt to actually work between wars instead of only study, and Romanian Jews considered their Pale brethren to be fanatics.

Romanian Jews apparently also mistrusted Bessarabia and viewed it as a foreign place, although it was literally steps away. Even so, "[t]he Russian-speaking peasants brought their produce to the market and were regular customers in town [Stefanesti, on the border of Bessarabia], though they still spoke only Russian. The Bessarabian shtetlech, such as Beltz, Lipconi and Edinitz, were on friendly relations with the ones on the Romanian side of the Prut, with whom they shared a language and a religion."[7] They also shared a certain way of life, including no indoor plumbing or water.

Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia from 1762-1796, annexed the Crimea from Turkey in 1783 and participated in the division of Poland in 1795. Russia gained two hundred thousand square miles of land as a result of this. The Russians held onto Moldova until 1856, whereupon it reverted to Romania until 1878, although Bessarabia stayed in Russia as the most southwest part of the Pale of Settlement. The Treaty of Berlin in 1878 brought Romania back into the Russian fold. "Bessarabia historically and ethnically belonged to Moldavia, which in 1859 merged with the Volach tribes, thus forming the linguistically as well as ethnically almost completely uniform Rumania."[8]

At the end of World War I in 1918, the *Sfutul Tzarei* (the Supreme Council of Bessarabia), declared independence, and then acceded to annexation by Romania. This annexation was ratified in 1920 by the Treaty of Paris, and signed by England, Italy,

Japan and France. In the Third Article of this Treaty, all minority rights were stipulated. This was followed by a new constitution in 1923 that guaranteed equality for all.

After World War II, the Soviets created the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, which encompassed the land between the Prut and Dniester rivers. This situation continued until the breakup of the Soviet Union. Bessarabia is now officially called Moldova, and Kishinev remains its capital city.

Poland

The history of Poland and its Jews is critical to the story of East European Jews, particularly in the Pale of Settlement. It is largely from Poland that Jewish learning, skills and trades were honed; after Poland broke apart most of its Jews were brought into the more hostile Russian fold.

The earliest settlers in Poland were called "Polanie", which meant "dwellers in the plains". Poland had become a commercial colony of Germany by the time of the Crusades. Bohemian Jews in Prague were being forced to convert and they, too, went to Poland. Jews were most likely attracted to the region in the beginning because of trade, and may have been there as early as the ninth century for that reason.

Poland divided into feudal principalities after the second half of the twelfth century, and in general their rulers protected the Jews living there. Boleslav of Kalish, for example, wrote a charter of protection in 1264 for the Jews. The church fought this practice and added many restrictions against them. German rabbis, teachers and cantors left for Poland, Russia and Hungary.

Poland was unified in 1319 under Vladislav Lokietek, and his son Casimir the Great (1333-1370) made the country prosper and welcomed Jews; many German Jews

again moved east after more massacres and the Plague. All was not peaceful, however. Jews began to suffer under King Vladislav Yaghello (1386-1434), who ruled in Lvov (Lemberg) in Galicia. The king had converted to Catholicism and was forcing Lithuanians to follow. In 1407 there were anti-Jewish riots in Cracow. The motives for these, according to Dubnow, were economic jealousy and religious intolerance. In 1463 the Church instigated more Cracow riots. In 1494, King John Albert (1459-1501) established the first Jewish ghetto in Poland after a fire in Cracow. In 1495, the Grand Duke Alexander Yaghello expelled them from Lithuania. One speculation is that this may have been in reaction to the Spanish expulsion.

By the end of the fifteenth century there were twenty-five thousand Jews in Poland, which was experiencing its 'Golden Age' due to economic prosperity. This population grew to approximately one-half million by the mid-1600's. Jews lived primarily in the towns and controlled the mostly agricultural exports, domestic trade at fairs, and imports. Goods were exported to Moldava, Wallachia, Turkey and Austria.

Some Jews leased land belonging to royalty and nobles for the purpose of farming. They were the "Third Estate", the economic link between the peasants and the rulers. Additionally they were engaged in fishing, lumber and manufacturing, money lending, credit and mortgages. Those crafts to which they were permitted to belong were in competition with the Christian guilds. Jews also pioneered the ready-made clothing industry, an early example of capitalism. Jewish doctors in Poland had either arrived from Spain after the Expulsion, or had been trained at the Catholic University of Padua in Italy.

Jews had autonomy during this period. The Council of the Four Lands (*Va'ad Arba Arazot*) controlled the community starting in the second half of the sixteenth century. The primary unit of this was the *Kahal*, which dealt with the state. For religious issues the rabbis provided the *din*, and regulated cultural and moral matters. Provincial councils handled larger affairs such as big fairs. The four lands of this Council were Great Poland (Posen), Little Poland (Cracow), Polish or Red Russia (Podolia and Galicia) and Volhynia (Ostrog). Lithuania was represented until 1623 but after that had its own Council.

Western European Jewry began to move east in the sixteenth century as a result of unrest in Germany and elsewhere. "... [t]he destinies of the two Eastern centers – Turkey and Poland – were not identical. The Sephardim of Turkey were approaching the end of their brilliant historic career, and were gradually lapsing into Asiatic stupor, while the Ashkenazim of Poland, with a supply of fresh strength ... were starting out on their broad historic development."[9]

Even poor Polish Jews were educated, at the very least in Talmud Torahs. Students attended the cheder and yeshiva, and Yiddish literature existed that was mostly directed toward women, such as *Tsena-Urena* by Jacob Ashkenazi. Women also had a translation of the Pentateuch along with legends and morals. Girls learned to read prayers, most often in Yiddish translation. This level of education was again the result of economic prosperity in the general population. Talmudic study in Poland grew in the first half of the sixteenth century.

The Rabbis controlled Polish Jewry, dealing entirely with Talmudic questions, but in popular literature demons, miracles and magic held sway. Poland declined during

1648-1772 owing to three factors: economic class struggle, racial/religious intolerance, and people infiltrating from Southern Russia.

Polish kings had controlled the Dnieper river basin, which runs south through Bessarabia and eventually into the Black Sea. This brought Catholics into conflict with the Greek Orthodox peasants. The Poles looked down upon the Russians as an inferior race, as being 'Asiatic'. Jews were the intermediaries between the Ukrainian peasants and their geographically distant Polish landowners, which led to resentment on the part of the peasants. The Jews were also deeply involved in the sale of liquor.

Ukraine was under the Polish rule of John Casimir II, and Polish culture and faith were forced upon the native population. The East Orthodox Church suppressed and enserfed the peasants to the Polish nobility, and tensions grew in the towns between Jews and non-Jews. The native population of the Ukraine on the southeast border (frontier) of Poland was racially Russian and Greek, Orthodox in religion, and agrarian.

By 1764 there were one million Jews in Poland, whose territory extended from Courland on the Baltic Sea to the Dniester; Moldava at that time was under Turkish rule. Russia, Prussia and Austria exploited Poland in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, aided by Polish rulers' distraction in their war against the Swedes and Turks. This war led to higher taxation of their five territories, but in the end they became financially broken. Western Jewry, also impoverished after the Thirty Years' War, had to take in Polish refugees. The *Va'ad* borrowed from both Jews and nobles and the Catholic orders, which in turn taxed the poor. The Polish Diet dissolved the *Va'ad* in 1764, and thereafter individual Jews paid taxes to the state.

The commercial activities of Jews, especially liquor, brought them into severe conflict with their non-Jewish neighbors. "These pursuits often resulted in a clash between the Jew and the peasant, that outlawed serf who was driven to the tavern, not by opulence, but by extreme poverty and suffering, brought upon him by the heavy hand of the aristocratic landlord."[10] Ukrainian serfs and Cossacks attacked Jews and Poles again in the early eighteenth century, encouraged this time by the Russians. In 1768 there was yet another Cossack attack, under the motto of "A Pole, a Jew, and a dog above them – their faith is all the same."[11] In the same year, Frederick II of Russia planned to divide Poland into three sections, sharing with Hapsburg Empress Maria Theresa.

The first step of this division occurred in 1772. Poland lost four million people, equal to 35% of its population. Russia gained Polish Livonia and White Russia, plus 1.3 million new people, whereas Prussia received only West Prussia. Catherine the Great received one half of the remaining Polish territory in 1793, and tried to secure the rights of the Jews. She recognized the potential economic benefits of having Jewish settlers.

This second partition also brought a law that year delineating the Pale of Settlement, "...which was to create within the monarchy of peasant serfs a special class of territorially restricted city serfs."[12] The thrust for this division came from the Christian middle class and not the monarchy, which suggests economic competition. With the creation of the Pale, 4% of Russia held 94% of its Jews. The Dnieper was the central river in this area.

By 1795, Poland no longer existed as a separate state.

Establishment of the Pale of Settlement, and Chmielnitsky

The Russian Pale of Settlement was simply where most Jews were already allowed to live before the Polish partitions occurred. Bessarabia was a relatively new addition to the territory, and became the most southwest corner of the Pale.

In 1804 a new constitution stated that as of January 1, 1807, Jews could not hold land leases for taverns, saloons or inns. This adversely affected almost half of the Russian Jews. However, they were allowed to attend all schools and open their own. To go to the state schools meant having to learn Russian, Polish or German.

By 1897, some one hundred and twenty years after the Pale was established, it comprised three hundred eighty-six thousand, one hundred square miles and four million, eight hundred and ninety-nine thousand Jews, 94% of Russia's Jewish population. Within the Pale, Jews were 11.7% of the total population. By the time it was finally abolished after the Russian Revolution of 1917, there were six million Jews in this area.

Before discussing Russia any further it is necessary to describe one more incident in history that affected Bessarabia. The Chmielnitsky Massacres of the seventeenth century eventually caused large numbers of Ukrainian Jews to flee west; they brought with them their culture, religious ideas, and their own musical language.

Bogdan Chmielnitsky (1593-1657), a "hetman" of the Zaporogian Cossacks, tried to liberate the Ukraine from Poland. He was not able to accomplish this, but he did lead the Cossacks along with the Haidamaks (peasants) in killing one hundred thousand Jews in 1648; this was the beginning of the terrible relationship between Ukrainians and Jews. Coincidentally, this was the same year that Shabbatai Zvi began his messianic movement. The word "pogrom" means ruin or devastation, and derives from "ravages of an invading

army"[13]. The word "Cossack" derives from Kazak, or Kozok, which is of Tataric origin. It means 'vagrant, free warrior, rider, adventurer, and free booter'.[14] The Cossacks were originally organized to fight the Tatars.

To stir up support, Bogdan said: "You know the wrongs done to us by the Poles and Yids, their leaseholders and beloved factors, the oppressors, the evil deeds, and the impoverishment, you know and you remember."[15] A treaty was drawn in 1649 that stipulated Jews could not live in the Cossack sections of Ukraine.

Only 10% of the Ukrainian Jews remained in Polish Ukraine, Volhynia and Podolia after these pogroms. The latter two provinces were the center of Hasidism and the Baal Shem Tov. The others emigrated to Lithuania, Poland and Western Europe. Chmielnitsky received Moscow's protection in 1654. In 1667, the Truce of Andrusovo folded the Ukraine (including Kiev) and the left (west) bank of the Dnieper (Bessarabia) into Russia. The right bank of the river remained in Poland.

Between 1648 and 1658, one hundred thousand to five hundred thousand Jews were killed in Poland. Despite this, European Jewry remained centered in Poland until the Partitions.

Early Russia

The roots of Russian anti-Semitism are centuries old. "The very earliest phase of Russian cultural life is stamped by the Byzantine spirit of intolerance in relation to the Jews."[16] The first pogrom took place in Kiev in the twelfth century.

German Jews fled to Poland and the Principality of Kiev after the first Crusade in 1096. By the thirteenth century, Tatar Khans conquered the Crimea, Kiev and Moscow, which brought Tauris Jews into contact with Russian communities. Moscow had sought

to politically align with the Khan. In the meantime, Russian hatred of Jews continued; one reason was the so-called "Judaizing heresy" in Novgorod. Some Orthodox Russians converted to Judaism and this movement spread to Moscow, alarming the Church. Another reason given was that Grand Duke III's son died under the care of his Jewish doctor, Master Leon. The doctor was beheaded in 1490, which was followed in 1504 by burning Jews at the stake in Skharia. Jews were thereafter barred from entering 'holy Russia' except as itinerant merchants.

Jewish Life in Czarist Russia and the Pale of Settlement

Nicholas I

Nicholas I, who ruled from 1825 to 1855, was most likely the worst of the Czars in the nineteenth century as regards his treatment of Russian Jews. He sought to appease both landowners and the military, and to solidify his political power. He did so in part through his abuse of Jews. Until his ascension to the throne, Jews had not distinguished between Polish and Russian rule; taxes rose and economic opportunities remained limited in either case.

All Jews thus far belonged to two groups, their community and their trade guild or estate. In this respect they were little different than the bulk of the peasants who lived there. "Until 1905, there were no citizens in Russia, only subjects... [Everyone had]...only inescapable obligations mitigated by the occasional privilege... [Russia was]...an essentially lawless society."[17]

But Jewish social structure began to shred under Nicholas. He actively despised and tried to convert them, had them expelled from towns, heavily taxed, and closed their printing presses. His most notorious and punishing edict was the 1827 Conscription

Law. The Recruitment Statute of the Jews, on August 26, 1827, forced Jewish boys to serve twenty-five years in the Russian military; in some cases they had to serve from the ages of twelve to eighteen, before their twenty-five years even began. These minor children were called cantonists. Four to eight people per one thousand were taxed; that is, they had to either pay or serve. This law did not affect the Bessarabian Jews until 1852.

In some cases the very Kahals that were supposed to help protect their communities did the terrible work of conscripting children, in order to fill the quotas. They drafted village Jews before city Jews, and it was mostly the poorer burgher class that could not buy their children out of conscription. Nicholas sought to "de-Judaize" through this enforced lengthy contact with the outside, non-Jewish world. As Russia was involved in the Crimean War, there was unfortunately ample opportunity for long separations from home. Many never returned.

Seventy thousand Jews were drafted into service between 1827 and 1854, with a horrifying fifty thousand of them under the age of eighteen; they were easier to convert. There were even children under the age of twelve who were sent. The Kahals used *khappers* to catch the children. "...[n]ow there come Jews, religious Jews, who capture children and send them off to apostasy. Such a punishment was not even listed in the Bible's list of the most horrible curses. Jews spill the blood of their brothers, and God is silent, the rabbis are silent..."[18]

The most traditional Jews took this horror as a sign from God to repent. Young men escaped, maimed themselves, entered yeshivot and married young to escape the draft. For the first time in this kind of community, Jew oppressed fellow Jew. The

conscription scourge was not as bad in Bessarabia, and other Jews fled there as a partial refuge.

"To Nicholas, the Jews were an anarchic, cowardly, parasitic people, damned perpetually because of their deicide and heresy; they were best dealt with by repression, persecution, and, if possible, conversion."[19] All Jews were forced leave Kiev, and the Law of 1825 (later revoked in 1858) forbade Jews from settling in villages or in the western frontier zone. This was amended in 1838 to read that they could settle in villages, and Jewish doctors were allowed to hold public office.

The 1835 "Statue concerning the Jews" on April 13, 1835 newly defined the Pale of Settlement. It contained Lithuania (Kovno, Vilna, Grodno and Minsk), southwestern provinces (Volynia and Podolia), urban White Russia, Little Russia, New Russia (which included Bessarabia), the Baltic provinces, and the Government of Kiev excluding the City of Kiev. Young men were not allowed to marry under the age of eighteen, nor girls under sixteen.

By 1836 there was Hebrew book burning and censorship, and Jews already in the frontier zones were expelled in 1839. Thirty thousand Jews converted between 1825 and 1855, largely due to the draft. Nineteen thousand, five hundred and fifty-three Jews were conscripted between 1844 and 1853, and sixty thousand cantonists converted between 1837 and 1897. In 1842 Nicholas forbade anyone from leasing land to Jews. Despite this, between 1836 and 1854 there were seventeen farming colonies established, owing to the amount of empty land at the time. The nobles in Bessarabia did not want Jews to have land, although the agriculture movement did spread there.

His death on February 18, 1855 led to some small political reforms. A revolution in Austria in 1848 led to constitutional civil rights in 1867, and many Jews moved there. Finally, it should be noted that the Bessarabian Jews did not suffer quite as much as the rest of their Pale co-religionists. They had autonomous status before Russia annexed Bessarabia in 1818, and therefore the anti-Jewish laws that followed partially spared them. This slight easing of their troubles ended in 1835 when that autonomy was revoked. All laws affecting the Jews in the Pale then applied to them equally.

Alexander II

Alexander II was Czar from 1855 to 1881. He attempted some reforms, embroiled Russia in the Turkish War, emancipated the serfs in 1861, and reduced army service from twenty-five to six years. He alone among the four Czars who ruled for almost a century tried to bring Russia into a semblance of modernity. However, "...the main aim of the reforms that had been instituted was not to liberalize the regime but rather to make it possible for the autocracy to survive under modern conditions."[20] Alexander had a vested interest in keeping his privileges intact, even if it meant slightly loosening his grip.

Between 1861 and 1881 he increased rail tracks from one thousand to fourteen thousand miles, a vital economic link in such a large country. The southwest area of Russia became an important port destination for transporting goods. "For a time the Ukraine, New Russia (the Odessa region), and the southwest region [Bessarabia] became the granary of Europe, the leading exporter of wheat and barley."[21] Jews were encouraged to move to these areas, as they were sparsely settled in relationship to the rest

of the crowded Pale, and Jews financed a part of this food industry. However, the rise of railroads eventually harmed the centuries-old trade habits of pushcart Jews.

The reforms in Russia gave rise to nationalism and allegiances outside one's faith. Eastern Europe resisted this trend, but by the second half of the nineteenth century nationalism was spreading across the land. Many people searched his or her folklore and histories, and industry and science grew. "Belz [a city in Bessarabia] was first among the Orthodox to turn civil emancipation to account for Orthodoxy and to elect an ultra-Orthodox rabbi to the Reichsrat."[22]

Alexander II abolished the conscription of children with his Coronation Manifesto in 1856, thus ending a particularly hateful chapter in Jewish life. That year also the Treaty of Paris specifically impacted the Bessarabian Jews. Part of the southern section of the Pale reverted to Romania, including Kishinev. Many other Jews moved there due to the lax enforcement of restrictions. This area reverted back to Russia in 1878, although Jews on Romanian tax ledgers were allowed to stay there.

Alexander emancipated thirty million serfs in 1861. By 1865 he allowed Jewish artisans, mechanics and distillers to live anywhere in the Empire. Narodnaya Volya ("The People's Will") assassinated him in 1881. Jews were blamed within six weeks, and pogroms began in Southern Russia. Radical and liberal Russians who had begun to appear in the 1870's, kept silent, thus leading to severe disillusionment among young Jews who had placed their faith in the possibility of true assimilation. His successor, the reactionary Alexander III, hated Jews and stopped any further progress.

Alexander III

Alexander III ruled from 1881 to 1894, dragging Russia back from modernity under his leadership. Some Jews fled overseas in reaction to his policies, some converted, and the remainder was newly restricted to the Pale of Settlement. His goal in fact was the above, to have one third of the Jews leave, one third convert, and one third die of hunger. Between 1880 and 1900 one million did leave.

The ones who left for America began their journey via Brody on the Austrian border. Despite the hardships most Jews stayed in Russia, Congress Poland, Galicia and Romania. "... masses of Jews remained in that world of traditional piety, accepting pogroms, economic hardships, and deprivations as God's will. They had spared themselves at least that traumatic disillusion in Gentile society."[23]

Under the "Temporary Rules" issued on May 5, 1882, "...a new attempt was made to drive the Jews from the forbidden fifty verst zone along the Western border of the Empire, particularly in Bessarabia. These expulsions had the effect of filling the already over-crowded cities of the Pale with many more thousands of ruined people."[24]

Pogroms continued to take place, many in the south. In 1871 there had been a pogrom in Odessa, the most southern city in the Pale. It was between Jews and Greeks and was as usual motivated economically, this time over the sale of corn and groceries. Another pogrom was the Balta (Podolia) Pogrom in 1882. In the twenty-one years between Balta and the Kishinev Pogrom there were about ten others, but none in Bessarabia. Jews were expelled from Moscow in 1891.

In all there were two hundred and forty communities in southwest Russia alone that experienced pogroms in 1881. "In the aftermath of the pogroms, the Russian

government became noticeably more repressive in its Jewish policy; and, for the first time, large numbers of Jews turned to Zionism or simply fled the empire, going mostly to the United States."[25]

The southwest region remained primarily an agricultural and food manufacturing area until World War I. There was an enormous influx of Jews into the Ukraine, an unfortunate migration in view of the long-standing anti-Semitism in this area, which dated back to Chmielnitski. However, "[T]here is no basis whatsoever for accusing the rural peasants of having initiated the waves of pogroms: only after the rioting began were the villagers drawn in."[26] Again, urban business competition, governmental acquiescence and newspaper hate mongering were among the causes.

Nicholas II

Nicholas II ascended the throne in 1894 and was also reactionary and autocratic. Under his rule poverty increased 27% and the liquor trade was outlawed, affecting two hundred thousand Jewish livelihoods. He went to war with Japan, and both the Kishinev Pogrom in 1903 and a labor revolution in 1905 occurred during his reign. This revolution was followed by renewed oppression by the government. He was assassinated in 1917.

A century of Czarist rule had been ruinous to the Jews. "Russian legislation concerning the Jews may be characterized as follows: autocratic, intolerant, rapacious and chaotic. Its purpose was to amalgamate the Jews into the general society but it nevertheless discriminated against them economically."[27] It must be acknowledged that serfs had no rights either.

"The population in Southern Russia was not as hostile to the Jews as was that of the former Polish provinces. A decree circulated by the Senate not to elect Jews was not

obeyed in Odessa or in Kishinev."[28] Jewish life managed to continue, even thrive, despite the repression. "Except for the persistent oppression by a heartless government, the picture within the community was not completely black."[29]

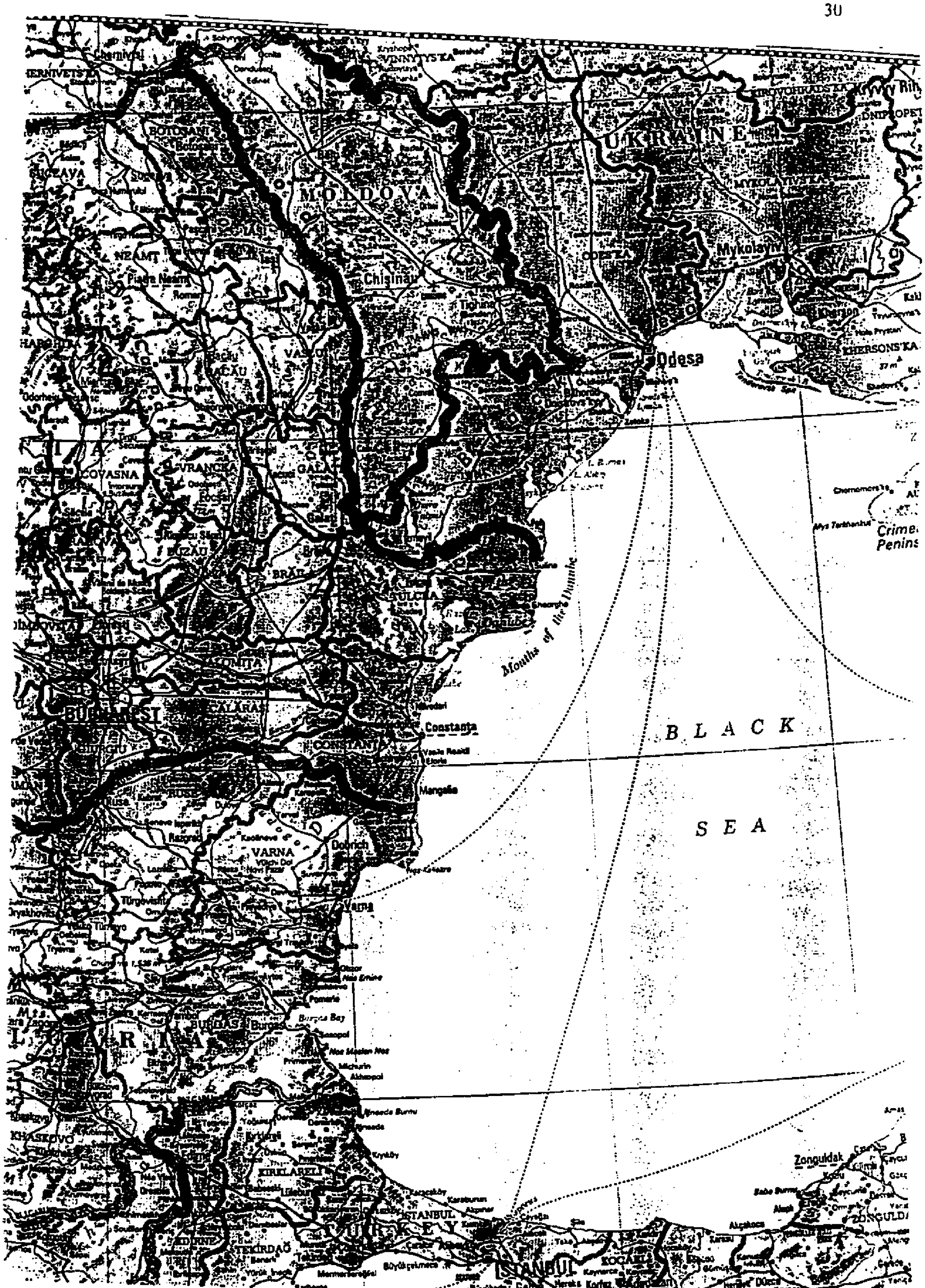
These Eastern European Jews became central to Herzl's vision of Zionism, who became involved in the aftermath of the Dreyfus Trial. Dubnow's opinion was that even Zionism, however, was messianic and subjective. Four million Russian Jews lived in the Pale by 1900, but there were only five thousand Jews living in Palestine divided among twenty-five agricultural communities. By World War I there were twelve thousand in forty-three colonies. Ahad Ha'am, on the other hand, was concerned with the plight of Judaism itself. He thought that Judaism *is* nationalism. (As an aside, Dubnow is quoted as saying that the philosophical differences between these two men constitute a good description of the differences between Orthodox and Reform Judaism.)[30]

Arkady Kremer founded the Jewish Labor Bund in 1897, which offered an attractive competition with Zionism. Before that, "Hasidism had been the only Jewish movement that championed the common man and gave him and the more advantaged equal standing before God."[31] By World War I the Labor Bund organized the Yiddish (secular) school system.

Between 1898 and 1900 there arose two revolutionary groups in Russia, one called the Social Democrats, and the other Social-Revolutionary, which approved of terrorism.

Chapter One - Endnotes

[1] Dubnow, S.M. *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland,* Vol. I. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1916), 13.
[2] Sternberg, Ghitta. *Stefanesti, Portrait of a Romanian Shtetl.* (Exeter, Great Britain: A. Wheaton & Co., Ltd., 1984), 31.
[3] Butnaru, I.C. *The Silent Holocaust – Romania and its Jews.* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 2.
[4] Feldman, Walter Z. *Bulgareascu/Bulgarish/Bulgar: The Transformation of a Klezmer Dance Genre.* (Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois, University of Pennsylvania, Winter, 1994, Vol. 38, No.1), 31.
[5] Butnaru, 4.
[6] Sternberg, 3.
[7] Ibid., 12
[8] Vigoda, Samuel. *Legendary Voices: the fascinating lives of the great cantors.* (New York: Cantor S. Vigoda, c.1981), 182.
[9] Dubnow, Vol. I, 66.
[10] Ibid., 265.
[11] Davidowicz, Lucy S., Editor. *The Golden Tradition – Jewish Life and Thought in Eastern Europe.* (North Vale, NJ: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1989, 1967), 12.
[12] Dubnow, Vol. I, 315.
[13] Dubnow, Vol. II, footnote, 191
[14] Dubnow, Vol. I, 142.
[15] Davidowicz, 10.
[16] Dubnow, Vol. I, 31.
[17] Stanislawski, Michael. *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews: The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia – 1825-1855.* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1983), 7.
[18] Ibid., quote from Y.K. Katsenelson's grandmother, 33.
[19] Ibid., 10.
[20] Aronson, I. Michael. *Troubled Waters: The Origins of the 1881 Anti-Jewish Pogroms in Russia.* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990), 21.
[21] Ibid., 27.
[22] Davidowicz, 34.
[23] Ibid., 50.
[24] Dubnow, Vol. II, 385.
[25] Aronson, 61.
[26] Ibid., 117.
[27] Levitats, Isaac. *The Jewish Community in Russia, 1844-1917.* (Jerusalem: Posner and Sons, Ltd., 1981), 5.
[28] Ibid., 12.
[29] Ibid., 67.
[30] Davidowicz, 56.
[31] Ibid., 61.


UKRAINE
MOLDOVA
Chisinau
Odesa
Mykolayiv
Kherson
Tighina
NEAMT
BOTOSANI
VRANCEA
COVASNA
BUZAU
BRAILA
TULCEA
CALARASI
Galati
Mouths of the Danube
Constanta
Mangalia
Ruse
VARNA
Dobrich
Varna
Burgas
Burgas Bay
KHASKOVO
TEKIRDAG
KIRKLARELI
EDIRNE
ISTANBUL
Zonguldak
B L A C K
S E A

Chapter Two – Bessarabian Life

As we have seen, Jews were forced to live in crowded and artificial conditions in Russia upon the breakup of Poland. "... the Jews of Poland, for centuries governed by their autonomous institutions in a near-feudal society, were catapulted into a modern political world."[1] German Jews had been affected by the growing movement of *haskala* centered in Berlin, and brought it with them east; this brought them into conflict with traditional society. The Eastern European Jews tried to reconcile both.

Before *haskala* and hasidism appeared, rabbinic Judaism was more tolerant and open. In fact the Vilna Gaon had encouraged secular studies, abolished much of the *piyyutim* in worship and had introduced congregational singing even before the advent of German Reform. After these movements appeared, however, it became repressive and entrenched. The Rebbe of Belz was in the forefront of this rabbinic entrenchment.

By the second half of the eighteenth century, middle class Jews were able to receive a good secular education in addition to learning Hebrew, Yiddish and the local language. Merchants used the languages of their trade partners from other countries. These East European towns were centers of trade and finance. The non-Jewish population was largely rural, but most of the Jews were in some kind of trade and lived along the major trade routes.

New Russia, acquired from Turkey in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, encompassed Ekaterinoslav, Kherson, Tavrida, and Bessarabia. The first three suffered from the pogroms of 1881. As this area was sparsely populated, the economic pressures found in other, crowded, areas of the Pale were not as strong. These Jews spoke Yiddish (a mix of Hebrew, Aramaic, French, German and Slavic components that

developed in the twelfth century) in their communities. They also knew Russian, Polish, Ukrainian, Belorussian or Lithuanian, depending on where their work took them.

Most Jews lived in towns and trading centers and it often took an entire family to support itself. The marketplace was in the center of the shtetl, comprised of small shops, stalls, and taverns. Some managed estates for absentee landlords, one of the ongoing causes of bitterness among the serfs. Landlords began to manage their estates themselves after the serfs were emancipated, which caused loss of work and income for these Jews. Some continued to manage grains and forestry products.

The advent of industrialization tended to hurt Jewish labor, as small businesses could not compete with factories, or pushcarts with trains. The "May Laws" of 1882 forbade Jews from moving from their towns into villages, to acquire rural land, or to work on Sundays and Christian holidays. The Senate granted citizenship to Jews in 1892 but the damage was done; emigration had been increasing for the previous decade due to economic hardships and pogroms.

Religion was a way of life in all East European shtetlech. Until the seventeenth century all Bessarabian Jews were "ruled" by a chief rabbi. Bessarabia had its first contacts with Hasidism by the end of the eighteenth century, and by the early nineteenth century Hasidism was dominant there as in the rest of Eastern Europe, with the exception of Vilna, the rabbinic center. The rebbe reigned supreme in the Ukraine, while in Russian and Austrian villages Jews practiced a simple devotion to God. Chabad Hasidism was centered in White Russia and Lithuania.

Only the most pious Jews wore the *tallit katan*, and most women did not cut their hair after marriage. The majority of men did cover their heads during meals. Women

had a prayer translator called a *firzugern* for services. The Jews that lacked formal schooling were more apt to adopt the customs and habits of the Moldavian peasants; one of the more unfortunate of these was the consumption of alcohol. "The hasidic rank and file, particularly in the South-west, began to develop an ugly passion for alcohol."[2]

Aside from the rabbi there was the *gabbai* (elder), the *ne'eman* (treasurer), and perhaps a cantor. Deputies resolved communal matters including the hiring of cantors, and some communities chose the wealthier men to direct budgets. Traditional rabbis and crown rabbis were elected by pewholders. The community leaders were responsible for the sick, handicapped, poor and homeless among them.

Perhaps the most hated jobs in a town were that of *sdatchik* (army recruiter) and *sborshchick* (tax collector), as was particularly evident during the reign of Nicholas I. The kahal remained in control from 1772 to 1844, at which point Nicholas outlawed it. It had provided a central leadership that was afterward replaced by (and fragmented among) maskilim, Hasidim, Mitnagdim, and toward the end of the century, Zionists. Both Zionists and the Hovevei Zion society were present in Bessarabia, and Kishinev was represented at the First Zionist Congress in 1897.

Despite rebbe resistance, *haskala* did appear in Bessarabia during the 1830's and 1840's. Jews were able to attend government schools from the end of the 1840's, with six in place by 1855. They were in Belz, Khotin, Brichany and Ismail, with two in Kishinev. Bezalel Stern, an educational reformer of the maskilim, established the first secular school in 1838 in Kishinev. The curriculum included Hebrew grammar and composition, Bible (using Mendelssohn's translation and commentary); German, French

and Russian; Talmud tractates; Jewish moralistic literature; math and physics; rhetoric; Russian and world history and geography; calligraphy; and mercantile law.

Eastern Europe during the nineteenth century is frequently regarded as a place saturated by poverty of life and mind. However, "...contrary to popular image – Eastern European Jewry had never been completely cut off from foreign intellectual developments and scientific learning."[3] According to Dubnow, not enough people took advantage of their opportunities, and laid the blame squarely on the rabbis (when he was not blaming the Zionists or another group). He thought rabbis exacerbated the problems of their people by encouraging early marriages and refusing to allow secular education, rendering many men unfit for real work or life, although of course the women worked. In Hasidic circles "...the intellect was rocked to sleep by mystical lullabies..."[4], and "Hasidism and Tzaddikism were, so to speak, a sleeping draught which lulled the pain of the blows dealt out to the unfortunate Jewish population by the Russian Government."[5]

Non-synagogue music was a luxury, heard mainly on festive occasions such as weddings. The violin was a favorite instrument, along with piano in a few upper class homes. Radios did not appear until the early 1930's but records were played, including favorite cantorial recordings. Shtetl dwellers considered klezmer musicians and actors to be frivolous and artificial even while welcoming the distraction.

Well-known poets wrote many favorite shtetl songs in the nineteenth century. For example, there is *A Brivola der Mammen* by S. Shmulewitz, and *Of'n Pripichick* by Mark Warshawski. "It must also be emphasized that songs are one of the most potent means of perpetuating and reinforcing the accepted values, by instilling them at an early age and by giving or withholding social sanction...Through them, we glimpse into the soul of a

culture."[6] As we shall later see, however, the majority of folksongs were created anonymously and through a wide mixing of regional elements.

Toward the end of the century, nationalistic Hebrew songs sought to instill Zionist fervor in the people. Hasidic songs had religious and messianic themes, and many of the Romanian lullabies and Yiddish songs had been transplanted from Poland. There were also migration songs that told of missing each other, and love, theater and wedding songs, Hebrew songs for teaching, and general Romanian songs.

By 1897 there were five million Jews in the Pale, whereas there had been only one million in 1800. 48.84% lived in towns, 33.05% in shtetlech and 18.11% in villages.[7] Big families were encouraged despite overwhelming poverty and congestion. "Large masses of Jews lived in crowded housing of very poor quality. Their food was of poor quality as well. Consequently their health record was often worse than that of the neighboring gentiles."[8] This situation was slightly better in Bessarabia due to its abundance of agriculture.

The professions at the end of the century broke down as follows: 43% in trade and commerce; 7.1% in agriculture; 6% in professions (such as doctor); and 43.9% artisans.[9] One hundred and seventy-three thousand, six hundred and forty-one lived in the various Bessarabian cities, with over fifty thousand in Kishinev alone. Jews constituted 11.8% of the entire Bessarabian population.

After industrialization arrived in a town, it was apparently a humiliation to have a factory worker in the family. The sweatshop clearly did not begin in New York City. Jews mistreated their fellow Jew, especially the apprentices who were as young as nine years old. It was a disgrace to be a tailor or a cobbler; even the lowly cantor had a higher

status. Mothers frequently had to send their children to work because the fathers did nothing but study. Conditions at the trades were bad, but they were even worse at the factories. Folksongs were written about all of these working conditions.

In the census of 1897, Jews accounted for 82% of agricultural traders in Bessarabia, 89% of the manufacturing trade, and 88% of cattle dealers. Jews were involved in agricultural pursuits there more than in any other area except Palestine. Most of the agricultural product was farm produce, along with some river timber. Before World War I, Bessarabia as part of the Pale had depended upon Russia for the trade of fruit and grain; after the War as part of Romania, this became more difficult. Continuing this pattern after the fall of the Soviet Union, Bessarabia (now Moldava) has been hurt economically without its "mother" country to help support it financially.

Vigoda maintained that Jews actually had a fairly good life in Bessarabia due to agriculture such as wheat, vegetables, corn and fruit. Because the land was rich, food prices were affordable. Wine was readily available and there were animal byproducts such as hides. He suggested this abundance is one reason that Bessarabia was fought over by Russia and Romania.

Bessarabian Jews took pride in their relative abundance, and every important occasion was marked with the presence of the cantor. A plate was passed as in Berditchev, but the "haul" was higher in Bessarabia because life was better. "The cantor was a highly regarded, important factor in the life of the community, whose services were sought after in every walk of life, greatly appreciated and rewarded."[10] The cantor was indeed rewarded with *kavod*, but for most the money was in short supply.

By 1918 there were two hundred and seventy thousand Jews in Bessarabia. Kishinev had sixty thousand in 1922 and eighty thousand by 1930. Between 1925 and 1929 there was a famine in Bessarabia, the end of which unfortunately coincided with the worldwide Great Depression. The Jewish population was desperate, one half requested charity, and there were many suicides. A Jewish Cooperative in Bessarabia helped those it could and some aid was received from overseas. Charities were stretched very thin at this time, though. To make matters worse, Romania then seized all tobacco farms, 75% of which were owned by Jews.

Bessarabia had thirteen hospitals, a tuberculosis sanatorium, thirteen homes for the aged, and aid societies for both illness and child welfare. In 1928 the "Numerus Clausus" limited the number of Jewish students in secular schools and universities. Even with that, 53.2% of doctors in Bessarabia were Jewish by 1936, as well as 78.6% of the lawyers. However there were no Jewish judges, prosecuting attorneys, officials, state engineers or technicians. The Romanian government further harassed the lawyers.

Despite this educational persecution there were six hundred *cheders* with twelve thousand students in 1930, twenty-six private schools with thirty-five hundred students and one trade school for two hundred girls. By the end of the 1920's, 49.6% of the men were literate, of whom 19.6% knew Yiddish. 24.3% of women were literate and 9.4% of them knew Yiddish.[11] One of the problems, however, was that a good secular education did not lead to civil rights and inclusion, and could therefore raise false expectations. Usually the only thing that truly helped a Jew in the larger world was conversion.

The Kishinev Pogrom

Fifty thousand Kishinev Jews lived in relative peace alongside their sixty thousand Christian neighbors by the end of the nineteenth century. However, a man named Krushevan who edited the local paper, *The Bessarabetz*, was determined to undermine these relations. He was aided in his work by an incident that occurred on February 16, 1903. Michael Ribalenko was killed in Dubossary, a town near Kishinev. His body was found on February 22, and although in fact a relative killed him it was blamed on Jews. The reason given was the old one of Jews needing his blood to make matza. *The Bessarabetz* inflamed the public with this story.

Additionally a servant girl working for Jews committed suicide. Rumors and circulars spread stating that it was all right to punish Jews during Easter. On Easter day, April 6, rioting and looting against the community began in the morning. Killing started that night and went on through the following day. Forty-five people were killed, eighty-six seriously wounded, five hundred otherwise hurt, fifteen hundred houses and stores looted, and there were incidences of rape.

"Neither the pogroms at the beginning of the eighties, nor the Moscow atrocities at the beginning of the nineties can compare, in their soul-stirring effect upon Russian Jewry, with the massacre of Kishinev."[12] Poverty at the time of the pogroms was 23.9% in all of Russia, which helps to explain the economic jealousies, not that Jews were any better off than their Christian neighbors. In the cities, poverty was between 25-39.7%.

Between April 19 and 21 there was a three-day riot. Moldovan, Albanian and Macedonian gangs from other villages came in to attack Jews. The upper classes were on the side of the rioters, and both the police and the five thousand soldiers who were

רשימות

הרוגי הפוגרום הקישינובי בימי כ״ב-כ״ג ניסן בשנת ה׳ אלפים תרס״ג (6-7 אפריל שנת 1903 למספרם.)

זכרים	יוסף קנטור
יחיאל זלצר	צבי בולגר
משה מחלין	חיים שלום ניסנזון
יהושע ברלדסקי	שמואל אורמן
קאפל קינרסקי	אברהם יצחק ווסטיין
יעקב טוניק	משה צבי קיגל
אברהם כהן	אהרן ברוכמן
ישראל אולמן	יצחק רוזנפלד
מרדכי מינדיוק	יוסף צבי גרינברג
ישראל פלשטיאן	דוד חרטון
בנימין ברנוביץ	קלמן בולוביץ
זוסיא פנרזשי	שמואל לשקוב (ילד משוגע)
בן ציון גלנטר	שמעון פישמן (ילד משוגע)
חיים ליב גולדיס	נקבות
דוד חצקילביץ	ריילה קוזה
שמחה בוליער	רייזה קצף
צבי ליס	חי׳ שרה פנרזשי
יהודה קרופניק	עטיל ברנר
יצחק קרופניק	פייגע ספיזק
דוד דרכמן	חי׳ לאה קיגלמן
מרדכי גרינשפון	פייגה בוליער (בת שלוש עשרה)
יצחק דוד בליצקה	

מלבד ההרוגים האלה מתו אחרי זה בבית-החולים עוד שמונה מפצעי הפוגרום. ויהי מספר החללים שנפלו בפוגרום הקישינובי ארבעים ותשעה.

מספר הנפצעים בפוגרום היה ארבע מאות ותשעים וחמשה,

מהם נפצעו פצעים קשים תשעים וחמשה איש.

Figure 3. List of those killed in the Kishinev pogrom in a memorial album, published in 1903, Jerusalem. J.N.U.L.

Figure 5. The Zionist committee of Kishinev, 1920. From Yizhak Korn, *Yehudei Kishinev*, Tel Aviv, 1950.

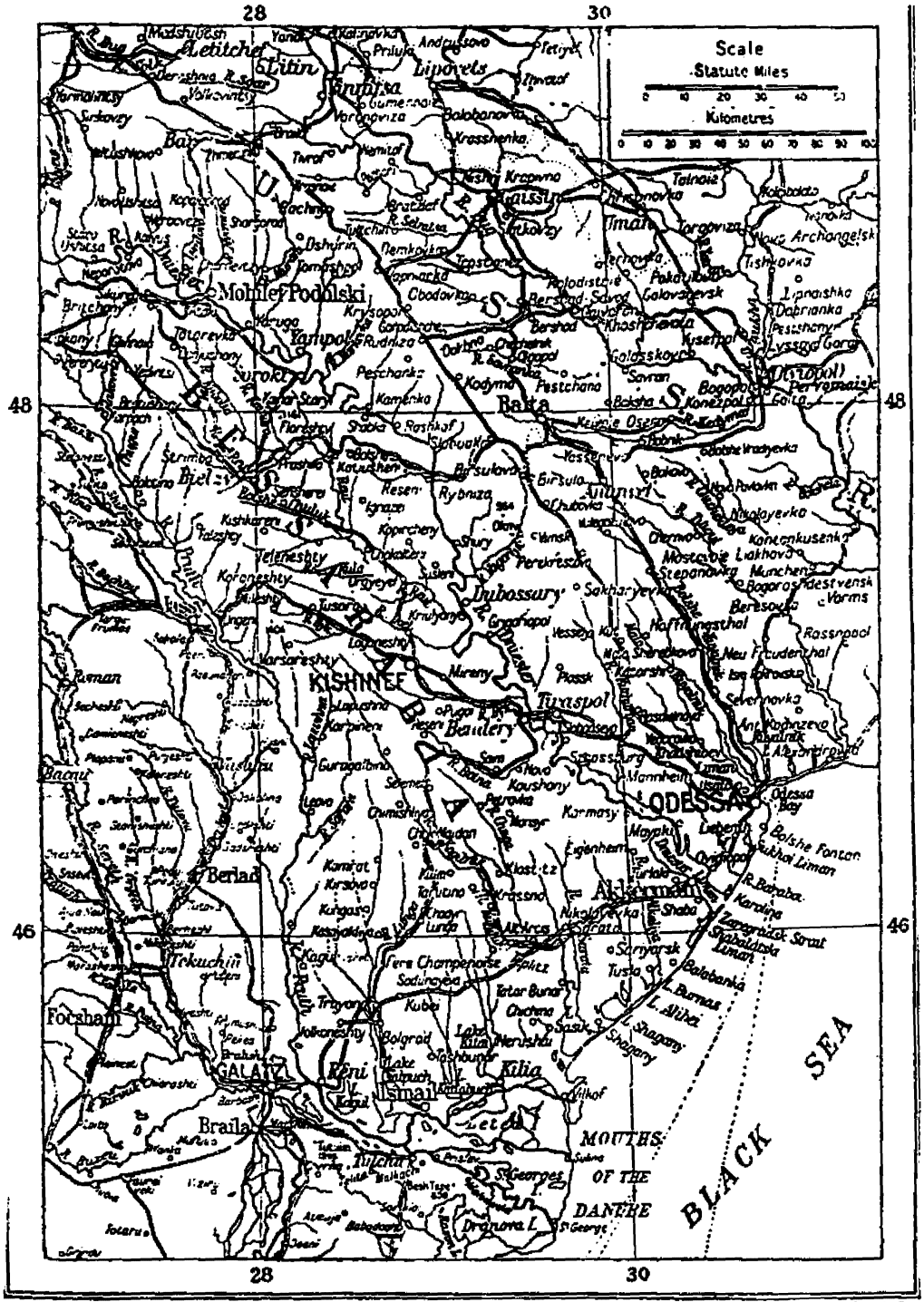
stationed in Kishinev at the time made no move to stop the violence. The total damage included two thousand, seven hundred and fifty families affected in some respect, one million, one hundred ninety thousand dollars in damages (1903 dollars), forty-seven killed, ninety-two badly hurt, and other injuries to three hundred and forty-five people.[13]

Count Cassini, the Romanian ambassador at the time to the United States, issued a statement to the Associated Press on May 18 that included the following lies: Jews would not work in agriculture, only wanted to lend money and take advantage of peasants. This destroyed the peasant, and therefore incurred bad feelings. Cassini maintained that he actually tried to help Jews with agricultural colonies, had no personal bad feelings against them, and there were some 'good' Jews. With these statements he managed to rewrite the previous one hundred years of Romanian and Russian policies against the Jewish community.

Trials were held in 1903 and 1904. At the first trial there were four hundred prisoners, twenty-five of whom were sentenced to some kind of punishment. A mere eighteen men received sentences at the second trial. The court allowed no credible witnesses and civil actions were denied. In the United States there were many resolutions and petitions, editorials in newspapers, and even condemnation in Congress. It is unlikely that any of this had much effect on policies in Bessarabia, but at least some money was collected for the broken Jews.

A petition was written and submitted to Russia; Minister of the Interior Plehve would not accept it. One theory maintains that the czarist regime was being attacked by leftist revolutionaries on one hand and by internal corruption on the other, and pogroms were a way to divert attention from their problems.

Bessarabian Jewish children coming from the famine area (1938-39) to Bucharest, rescued by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee



 Alexander Gross F.R.G.S.

Map of Bessarabia indicating in conspicuous letters cities and towns having considerable Jewish populations

"After the outbreak of the Kishenev pogrom Easter Sunday, 1903, the Bund began to organize its young men in armed resistance groups, called *selbshuts* (self-defense), who were readying to fight pogromists."[14] And, "...after 1881, the masses – raw, ignorant, and unprepared – began to act and to determine their own fate."[15] The Russo-Japanese War started in 1904, and in 1905 there were yet more pogroms, the worst one in Odessa although it also affected Bessarabia.

Anti-Semitism had become officially incorporated into politics all over Europe; it was a path to political power. The nineteenth century occasioned one major period of pogroms during 1881-1884. Enthusiastic nationalism grew into malignant twentieth century totalitarianism, wherein nations had precedence over people. Twentieth century Eastern European Jews experienced pogroms from 1903-1906, 1918-1921, and then of course, the Holocaust. Socialism became the solution to all problems for the revolutionary movement in Russia. This in turn led to Soviet Zionists, who saw the solution to the Jewish agony as lying outside of Russia altogether. This eventually led to the settlement of Palestine and creation of Israel.

Bessarabian Jews during the World Wars

Although World War I is not immediately regarded as destructive for the Jewish community, Jews were in fact killed and tortured by Russians and Poles. Germany occupied the Pale and Congress Poland in 1915, exploiting resources and ravaging the Jewish economy. After the War, many Eastern European countries did incorporate civil rights for minorities, including the Ukraine and Romania. It was brief in the Ukraine, which experienced an astonishing two thousand pogroms between 1919 and 1921. In an

interesting aside, Germans at this time actually protected Polish Jews from anti-Semitic acts.

Also interesting is the fact that, despite Romania's harsh treatment of its Jews, they were the only minority to fight alongside Romanians during the first War. To be fair, Romanian peasants had a very hard life. They had land but no money with which to cultivate it, or they lived among enormous families in villages. There was increasing resentment toward anyone they saw as having money or control. Government employees were not paid, poverty was rampant, and the whole situation was ripe for negative political exploitation. "Anti-Semitism in Romania percolated downward from the ruling classes, whose interests it served."[16]

Romania gained control of Transylvania in Hungary, Bukovina from Austria, and Bessarabia from Russia after World War I. "Under Russian rule they had suffered discrimination in everyday life. Living under the permanent threat of pogroms, robberies, and arson, they had vivid memories of the pogrom in Chisinau [Kishinev] in 1903. They lived in restricted zones without civil rights, and therefore organized their lives within their own community. Economic activity was closely connected with that of Jews from across the Dniester (Nistru)."[17]

After Bessarabia reverted back to Romanian control, economics worsened and Jews became even poorer. They had no money to absorb industrial goods, many spoke only Yiddish, and only the young, educated and professional Jews spoke Russian. "The education they received was influenced by nineteenth century ideas and literature..."[18] Jews in Bessarabia and the Old Kingdom (Romania) were subject to "permanent and

violent anti-Semitic outbursts."[19] Clearly nothing had been learned from the carnage of the War.

Even so, "...after 1917 Bessarabia was no longer part of the Russian Empire, and the Jews there obtained equal rights with the rest of the population, comprised of Romanians, Ukrainians, Bulgarians, and Tartars, with whom they had never had good relations."[20] On March 23, 1923, Parliament gave all Jews in Greater Romania equal rights, albeit under protest. The Bessarabian Jews had in general welcomed the transfer back to Romania; life under one hundred years of Tsarist rule had just been too hard.

At this time there were two hundred thousand Jews in Bessarabia, 4.2% of the population. Chisinau was 36% Jewish and one half of the total Jewish population lived in shtetlech. They were the largest minority group to join Romania after the War.

Despite (or perhaps because of) their considerable presence in Romania, they were barred from public service jobs, the army (ironic considering Nicholas I's conscription horrors), the higher courts and university professorships, among other jobs. Transylvania, Bucovina, and Bessarabia together sent five Jews to Parliament in 1926. The legionary movement was especially active in Bessarabia due to its severe poverty and old traditions of anti-Semitism. After the War, King Carol II returned to Romania bringing with him his fascist sympathies; he was a supporter of Mussolini.

Included within the geographical area of Bessarabia was the Transnistrian region, which became a mass deportation center during the Second World War, particularly for Jews of Romania, the Ukraine and Bessarabia. Romania had almost eight hundred thousand Jews before World War II; by 1944 there were three hundred and fifty thousand

remaining. As of 1992, there remained only fifteen to twenty thousand, the majority of whom were over the age of sixty-five.

"Anti-Semitism, as a form of social expression, has always existed in the life of Romanian society..."[21] In this regard the Romanians were all too akin to Ukrainians and Russians. (It is ironic that one cannot say Germans and Poles have always been inherently anti-Semitic, at least not in the same way.) Romanians attributed all the problems of nineteenth century society to Jews. Their aristocracy wanted neither the rise of a middle class nor the betterment of peasants, and Jews were a useful scapegoat in keeping anger from being directed toward the nobles.

Bessarabia reverted back to what was now the Soviet Union at the beginning of World War II. "...June 26, 1940, the Soviet Union sent an ultimatum to Romania. It categorically demanded the retrocession of Bessarabia, whose annexation in 1918 it had never recognized..."[22] Between 1940 and 1944 over four hundred thousand Jews were killed in Romania, the liberated provinces, and Transnistria. The Red Army entered Bessarabia on June 28, 1940, and the Russians once again controlled Jewish life. Many were arrested, deported to camps and sent to Siberia.

Romania's leader Ion Antonescu declared on July 8, 1941: "[A]t the risk of not being understood clearly by some traditionalists who may still be among you, I am for the enforced emigration of the entire Jewish population of Bessarabia and Bucovina, which must be pushed beyond the frontier...It makes no difference to me that we will go down in history as barbarians...If it is needed, shoot all of them with machine guns!"[23]

It was also noted that "...the sufferings of approximately 450,000 people, of whom 350,000 died, were not caused at the request of Germany or under German

pressure. The massacres in Bessarabia and Bucovina in July and August 1944... were carried out by the Romanian armed forces."[24] The Romanian army 'liberated' Kishinev on July 17, 1941, and in the process killed more than ten thousand Jews.

On July 25, 1941, twenty-five thousand Bessarabian Jews were sent east into the Ukraine across the Dniester River. The German troops in the Ukraine did not want them because they might carry disease and in general were considered a burden. The Germans sent them back west across the river. On August 17, 1941, they were once again forced into the Ukraine.

The Germans now occupied Kishinev and had forced out the Russians. Ghettos were formed as holding pens from which to send the Jews to extermination camps in Transnistria. These camps lacked food, water, windows, roofs and healthcare. Transnistria itself was an area of land between the Bug and Dniester rivers, and was administered by Romania. It had previously been called the Moldavian Socialist Republic under the Soviets and was considered part of the Ukraine. It was not a geographically 'real' place in terms of autonomy, but was rather a body-dumping ground for Antonescu and the Nazis.

On September 28, 1941 the Bessarabian camps began to close, and all Jews were transferred to Transnistria. The Kishinev ghetto was also emptied. In the summer of 1942 the Jews from the Old Kingdom (Romania proper) were sent to labor camps in Bessarabia, to replace the Jewish workers who had been transferred to Transnistria. By June of 1944, the Soviets closed the frontier which included Transnistria. It is terribly ironic that the Russians, long a scourge of the Jews, were fighting against the Jews' new and most terrible enemies.

Antonescu sensed by 1943 that an Axis victory was in doubt, and treated his Jews a little better for the sake of appearances. He also schemed to send Jews to Palestine. By 1944 he wanted to leave the Axis altogether, and Romania became an unexpected haven of sorts for Jewish refugees, especially those from Hungary. There were two hundred and two thousand, nine hundred and fifty-eight Jews living in Bessarabia in 1940; two hundred and two thousand, seven hundred and thirty-one were transported to Transnistria. The Jewish population of Romania in 1945 was four hundred and twenty-eight thousand, three hundred and twelve, but this number includes many refugees from Ukraine, Russia and Bessarabia. Many of these sought to leave for Palestine.[25]

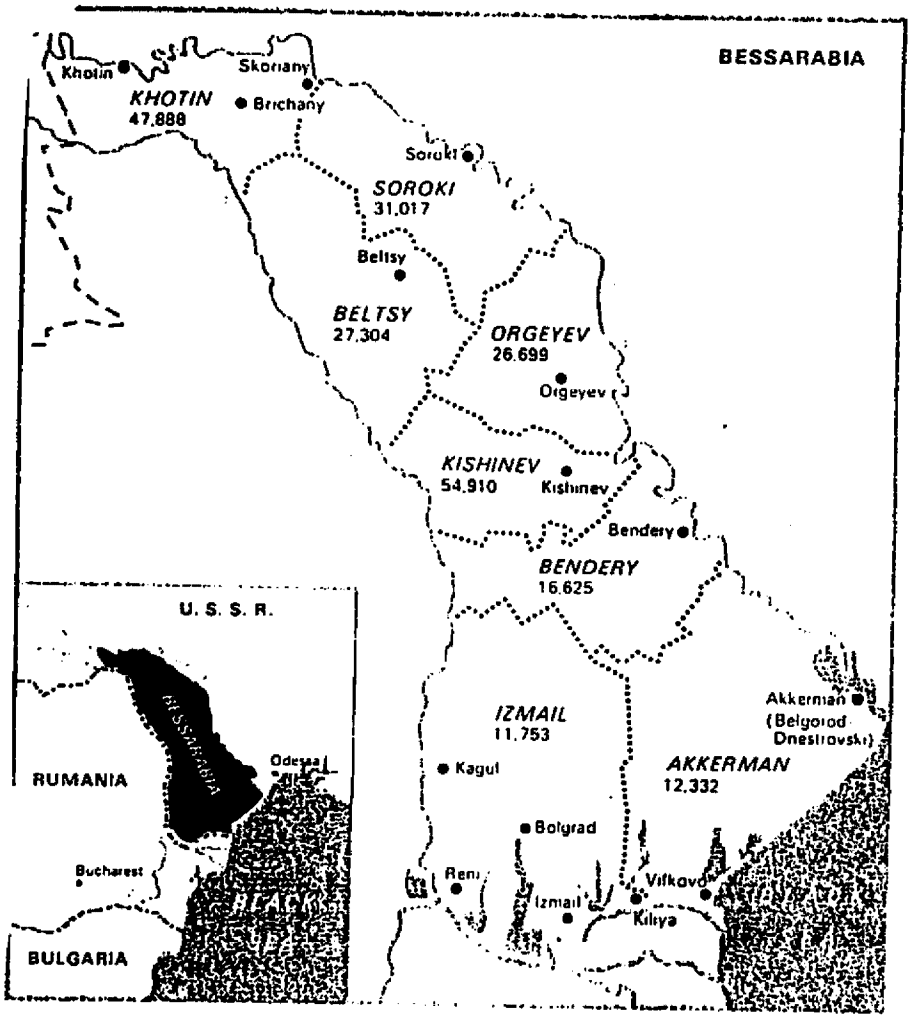
When the Soviets regained this area after August 1944, the part of Bessarabia that included Kishinev became known as the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic. There were few Bessarabian Jews alive by this point. They had either been slaughtered by the soldiers or had been transferred to camps in Transnistria. Those left alive by War's end either returned to Romania proper or left for Palestine.

"Bessarabia – a Soviet Moldavian Republic instead of an integral part of Moldavia, which it historically has always been, constitutes a cynical spoof played on the Rumanian people and brutal utter disregard of the just aspirations of the sovereign Rumanian state. But what can you expect from perfidious 'fonye ganef'?"[26]

Specific Bessarabian Cities

Kishinev

Kishinev (also spelled Chisinau) is the capital of Bessarabia, with a 1940 pre-War population of one hundred and thirteen thousand, eighty thousand of which were Jews. A



Main centers of Jewish settlement in Bessarabia in 1897, showing total Jewish population according to districts.

Jewish cemetery was found in a village near Kishinev that dates back to the eighteenth century. A *chevra Kaddisha* was established in Kishinev in 1774, with a membership of one hundred and forty-four people. Kishinev became the capital of Bessarabia under the Russians in 1818. Jews from other parts of Russia moved there because of commerce and agriculture. The foundation stone of the Great Synagogue was laid in 1816. The first secular school opened in 1838, partly as a result of the Russians' attempts to assimilate the Jews. However, *haskala* was not especially compelling there.

The city started to develop by the end of the eighteenth century. At the time of Bessarabia's 1812 annexation to Russia there were seven thousand people living there altogether. Kishinev became a center for commerce and crafts under Russian rule. From the start of the nineteenth century until 1941, the population of the city varied from one hundred and ten thousand to one hundred and twenty-five thousand. Most Jews earned a living in trade, in factories and as artisans. Jews ran approximately 90% of the industries, such as milling, tobacco and fruit.

Social stratification in Kishinev was typical for an East European city. There was much poverty, largely caused by the pogroms and anti-Semitic Czarist laws, and many Jews received charity. Their daily life also mirrored that of other cities. Most Jews were traditional and religious, although Russian life, culture and revolutionary ideas influenced the educated. Kishinev Jewry was not homogenous; it was, rather, clannish, and they fought against each other's ideas. In particular there were adherents of the Rabbi of Talna, and the Rabbi of Bahoosh.

Jews owned twenty-nine out of thirty-eight factories in Kishinev by 1898, including both agricultural products and printing. However, due to the Russian policies

many were poor and needed the charitable institutions. In 1898 they organized into the Society in Aid of the Poor of Kishinev. Things remained "stable" until World War I. That same year (1898) there were sixteen Jewish schools with twenty-one hundred students, with seven hundred Jewish students attending general schools.

Kishinev became the most "famous" city in Eastern Europe directly as a result of the 1903 Pogrom. Up until that time it was little known on a global scale, but that all changed in the Pogrom's aftermath. A second pogrom took place in 1905 which killed twenty-nine Jews and injured fifty-six. The Jewish population dropped from sixty thousand to fifty-three thousand two hundred and forty-three due to the 1903 Pogrom, with many more leaving after 1905. The city ceased to develop economically as a result.

Romanian rule did nothing to improve life in Kishinev or elsewhere in Bessarabia. The government ignored treaties and instituted laws starting in 1924 that took away citizenship rights of these Bessarabian Jews. In 1937-38, as Romania moved closer to Hitler, political rights and work rights ceased to exist. World War II devastated the Kishinev Jews. In its prime it had many Jewish organizations, plus Yiddish schools, a Yeshiva, and a Tarbuth school established by its chief rabbi, Judah Zirelson. He officiated from 1910 to 1941, whereupon a bomb killed him.[27]

Jewish homes were sacked in Kishinev during World War I by Russian troops retreating from Romania. The Romanian army came in and proved to be no better. Life was bad in Kishinev but other Jews came there nevertheless due to the Russian Civil War and pogroms in the Ukraine. Seminary students and agricultural faculty, in a classic example of biting the hand that provides for it, led the attacks. There were calls to fight "...against the Jew-boys, the speculators, the parasites, and the corrupt."[28] Jews couldn't

make a living after citizenship was revoked in 1924, and every year there were riots and threats.

Jews continued to leave, especially under the government of A.C. Cuza. Zionists were active in Kishinev, and they and the Yiddishists fought to control the direction of the schools; Romanians encouraged these schools only because it might weaken Russian culture. Kishinev athletes participated in the first two Maccabiah Games in Palestine in 1932 and 1935. Hebrew texts were published in Kishinev from the end of the nineteenth century, along with newspapers and weeklies.

All Jewish organizations were closed in 1940 when the Russians gained control of Bessarabia. Germans and Romanians came back in the summer of 1941, and with this the killings, the ghetto and transferal to Transnistria began. Two-thirds of those sent there died of hunger, disease and exposure, and it is estimated that fifty-three thousand Jews died out of a 1941 population of sixty-five thousand in Kishinev.

In 1947 there remained only fifty-five hundred Jews in Kishinev. No B'nei Mitzvah were allowed after 1961, and all synagogues were closed in 1964 except one. Mohelim were warned against performing circumcision and the cemetery was damaged and closed in the 1960's. By 1970, however, an astounding sixty thousand Jews again lived in Kishinev.[29]

Kishinev was a leading center of hazzanut along with Odessa and Berditchev. Emphasis was placed on emotion and soul stirring in comparison to the more modern practices in Western and Central Europe. Vigoda said that all residents of Kishinev would and could sing synagogue songs they heard from the cantor.

Many cantors who later achieved world renown started their careers in Kishinev. It was the best place to learn the craft because it was a city of genuine Yiddishkeit. They learned niggunim, hazzanut, basic nusach, table songs and *Kloizes* (a Hasidic Rebbe's songs of prayer, learning and socializing). They also heard and learned the regional *Volach* (Moldavian) melodies, *dongas* and *Doynes*. These songs were sung in the home and eventually ended up as part of synagogue repertoire.

"Kishinev was also the city where a cantor who was ambitious, had to complete successfully a postgraduate course, pass the rigorous tests and get 'Smicha'... to be ordained, to get the approbation of the public. It was well known that the world at large had great confidence in the uncanny judgment and the ability of the Kishinev liturgical experts to take the measure of a cantor's competence."[30] A cantor had the opportunity to move upward upon achieving status in Kishinev, which usually meant Odessa or Berditchev.

Kishinev and Odessa frequently traded back and forth, with Kishinev sending to the port city both its agricultural goods and its cantors. Odessa was a larger, more prosperous city, and was therefore a mecca for ambitious cantors. "As far as the cantorial profession was concerned, Kishinev played the role of a waiting room which led into the reception room, Odessa."... "As an illustration, it may suffice to mention only the names of Minkowsky, Rozumny, Kalechnick, Bachman, Swet and Steinberg, all of whom came to Odessa by way of Kishinev."[31]

Unlike other cities that gave their names to cantors (Lomzer, Minsker, Rovner, Belzer), Kishinev never gave "Kishenever". It was too lengthy for one thing, and most

cantors didn't stay there long enough, with exceptions such as Kilimnick and Kalechnick. They 'sheltered' there until they could find something better.

Vigoda ventured reasons why Kishinev could not compete with the other centers of Jewish cantorial life. They certainly knew how to pick cantors; it was not easy getting a job there. Many would compete, and "...the experts (and who is not an expert, when it comes to cantors?) found fault with each and everyone of them...".[32]

These 'experts' were cheap, however, and gave cantors *kavod* but little money. One cantor who had experienced economic constraint there told the officials: "Instead of trying out the applying cantors at the pulpit, you ought to first lock them all up for several days in an empty room, where they would have no possible access to either food or drink and the one among them who can stand the hunger and thirst for the longest time, would be the right man for you, for he will be able to get along on a starvation diet, the only kind your salary allows for."[33]

After World War II, all sixty Kishinev synagogues were closed.

Belz

Belz was the other major center of hazzanut in Bessarabia, and had a strong Hasidic court. Jews were invited to settle there in 1779 and had their rights established in 1782. Two hundred and forty-four Jewish families lived there by 1817; by the end of the nineteenth century they constituted 56% of the population at ten thousand, three hundred and forty-eight people. One reason for the growth was the 1882 May Laws, which caused Jews from other areas of the Pale to move there. Many Belz Jews left at the turn of the century, for all the same reasons that others left Eastern Europe.

Still, by 1930 Jews were a solid 46% of Belz's population. In June of 1941, two-thirds of the city was destroyed, and those Jews who were able to fled to Vlad. Eventually those that remained were deported to Transistria. As of 1970, only fifteen thousand Jews were left in Belz.

The following is excerpted from an interview with Boris Sandler, editor of *The Jewish Forward*, on August 31, 2000, who is originally from Belz. This interview was conducted in Hebrew, Yiddish and English, with translation aid provided by his associate Elena Leikind. I have edited the discussion, which primarily centered on the conditions of Bessarabia and Belz today.

Sandler's great-grandfather was a hazzan educated in Berlin, and his sons were meshorerim. His maternal grandfather was a *shochet*, and Sandler grew up speaking Yiddish, Russian, Hebrew and Romanian. He specifically divided Judaism into Yiddishkeit and religion; his upbringing was the former. He grew up in a kosher home however, which was very easy because "the *goyim* didn't bother to look into their pots!"[34] Anyone who wanted to live a Jewish life could do so at home.

In the 1920's a group of Bessarabian Jews immigrated to Argentina, because Baron Hirsch supported Jewish colonies there similar to Rothschild's support of Palestine settlements. Despite the harshness of the Romanian government, Jews still had more freedom under their rule than under Russian rule.

During World War II the Romanians wanted Bessarabian Jewry to be annihilated rather than put in the Kishinev ghettos. At the beginning of the war there were some ghettos, but just for a couple of months; later on they were all killed. Before the war there were three hundred and fifty thousand Bessarabian Jews; three hundred thousand

were killed. They were killed very unusually, according to Sandler. Unlike the Polish Jews who were killed in ghettos, the Bessarabian Jews were treated like the Gypsies in that they were moved, driven into the forest and killed on the way. They were also put into trains and shot while traveling. The ones left alive were not given food or water.

Those Jews who had gold and were able to escape fled to the Ukraine. They bribed the men in charge to keep quiet, because the Ukrainians killed them as soon as they discovered they were Bessarabians.

Part of the reason for Romanian hatred against Jews was due to the fact that they considered Jews to be traitors. Bessarabia became part of the Soviet Union in 1939 and many Jews were leftists. In addition to religion this is why, according to Sandler, the Romanians made sure Jews were killed.

Sandler's father and paternal grandparents were in a concentration camp in Transnistria on the Bug River. The rest of his family hid. [At this point in the interview Sandler began to speak about his mother, who was evacuated. Ms. Leikind could not continue to translate for a few moments because she remembered her own mother's experiences, who fled into Russia.] His maternal grandparents ran wearing only their nightclothes, and his grandmother was beaten.

After the war ended, republics such as Moldova and Lithuania that joined the Soviet Union in the 1940's were more Jewish than all of the others. Until the 1960's there were still synagogues in most places in Bessarabia. Then the Russians started an anti-religious campaign against Jews and all other faiths, and synagogues were closed. In the 1970's people bought or rented houses and used them illegally as synagogues. Jews

lived double lives as Sandler grew up. Ms. Leikind's remark regarding that was "[I]t was everywhere also in the United States, I mean come on!"[35]

Moldovans began to fight for their independence in the 1980s and in the process started to support Jews, hoping this would lead to favor (money) in the eyes of the international Jewish community. Sandler himself was chair of the Jews of Bessarabia. The Soviets had torn down Jewish structures, and since independence the Moldovan premier has built Jewish schools and synagogues; Jews have also started demanding their houses and old synagogues back.

There is a law now that Yiddish and Hebrew are national Jewish languages, and Jews receive support from the Moldovan government for help in projects. Consequently there are now state Jewish schools, a museum and a library. The Academy of Science has a department of Jewish history, music and literature in Kishinev. There is also a Jewish television station and radio program, both of which Sandler headed at one time. "Jews started to get paid, you know, like everyone else, for what they did in the kehilla, jobs."[36]

Bessarabian Jews performed all kinds of work under the Soviets, including farming, and there was even a Jewish head of a collective farm. Most Jews now have an education in fields like medicine, engineering and business. They travel frequently, to Israel, the United States and Germany.

Many Belz Jews have settled permanently in Germany. The reasons for this startling fact are that, knowing Yiddish, it is easier to learn German, and they are able to remain in Europe. In addition many of them are in interfaith marriages, and Germany is

more open in that regard than Israel. Finally, Israel is considered just as economically difficult as Moldova.

When people left Moldova for Israel in the 1980's, they did not think seriously about their destination; they simply wanted to leave. Many Jews left because of the politics in Moldova and Russia; it was like a sinking ship and people were running to save themselves. These Jews did leave of their own free will, however, there was no coercion. The Jews who go to Germany would prefer the United States or Australia, but they consider life in Israel to be too onerous.

In the final analysis, Sandler thinks that nothing of Jewish value is left in Bessarabia, and that everything is good - in its own time.[37]

Bendery

Jews have been recorded there as early as 1769, with a burial society existing from 1793. There were one hundred and one Jewish families out of a total of three hundred and thirty-one in 1808. Aryeh Leib Wertheim became tzaddik there in 1814, and his line continued until World War II. By 1897 there were ten thousand, six hundred and forty-four Jews, which constituted one third of the total population. They had a hospital, an old-age home, and both a secondary and elementary school. Their livelihoods were much like those in Kishinev, centered on agriculture, commerce and artisan crafts. Under the Soviets in 1940-1941, wealthy Jews were sent to Siberia along with rich non-Jews. Some escaped across the Dniester and fled into Russia's interior. Those remaining in Bendery were killed by Romanian troops in 1941.

There are currently fifteen thousand Jews living in the whole of Moldova.

Chapter Two - Endnotes

[1] Davidowicz, Lucy S., Editor. *The Golden Tradition – Jewish Life and Thought in Eastern Europe.* (North Vale, NJ: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1989, 1967), 13.
[2] Dubnow, S.M. *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland.* Vol. II. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1916), 124.
[3] Stanislawski, Michael. *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews: The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia – 1825 – 1855.* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1983), 50.
[4] Dubnow, 116
[5] Ibid., 125.
[6] Sternberg, Ghitta. *Stefanesti, Portrait of a Romanian Shtetl.* (Exeter, Great Britain: A. Wheaton & Co., Ltd., 1984), 173.
[7] Aronson, I. Michael. *Troubled Waters: The Origins of the 1881 Anti-Jewish Pogroms in Russia.* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990), 35.
[8] Ibid., 40.
[9] Labin,Saniel. *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia,* Vol. 6. (New York: Universal Jewish Encyclopedia Co., Inc., 1940, 1948), 246.
[10] Vigoda, Samuel. *Legendary Voices: the fascinating lives of the great cantors.* (New York: Cantor S. Vigoda, c. 1981), 185.
[11] Labin, 248.
[12] Levitats, Isaac. *The Jewish Community in Russia, 1844-1917.* (Jerusalem: Posner and Sons, Ltd., 1981), 163.
[13] Adler, Cyrus, Editor. *Voice of America on Kishineff.* (Philadelphis: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1904).
[14] Davidowicz, 62.
[15] Ibid., 63.
[16] Sternberg, 30.
[17] Butnaru, I.C. *The Silent Holocaust – Romania and its Jews.* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 32.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid., 1.
[22] Ibid., 65.
[23] Ibid., 103.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid., 163, 193-195.
[26] Vigoda, 182.
[27] Labin, 403-404.
[28] Lavery, Theodore. *Encyclopedia Judaica.* (Jerusalem: The MacMillan Co., Keter Publishing House, 1971), Col. 1066.
[29] Ibid., Cols. 1064-1069.
[30] Vigoda, 186.
[31] Ibid.

Endnotes Continued

[32] Ibid., 313.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Interview with Boris Sandler, August 31, 2000. Comment by Elena Leikind, translator.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid. Sandler filmed a documentary about Bessarabia in 1991, in Yiddish, Russian and Hebrew. Also, there is a society of Bessarabian Jews in Tel Aviv that has a museum and library.

Chapter Three - Musical Traditions of Eastern Europe

Jews were dispersed as far as the Iberian Peninsula, the Rhine and the Danube following the Second Temple Destruction. Music was all but completely suppressed for secular purposes, no instrumental music was allowed in worship, and the art of the Levites vanished.[1]

Lazare Saminsky maintained, in *Music of the Ghetto and the Bible*, that Jewish music accompanied *galut* migration from Asia Minor to Eastern Europe to the Danube area, and up the Rhine toward the northwest of Europe. He said that the further Jews got from their Asiatic roots, the less they assimilated the songs of their neighbors.

Jewish art music had practically vanished by the eighth and ninth centuries. Only traditional prayer chanting and Torah cantillation remained. But about this same time the *paytan* appeared in North Africa and Spain, creating poetry that was affixed to a melody, either by the poet himself or the cantor. Many of these melodies came from outside the Jewish world and infiltrated the synagogue service. They came from troubadours, minnesingers, and from Oriental, Turkish and Moorish-Spanish sources.

Jewish minstrels appeared early in the second millennium, and spread popular musical culture to isolated Jewish communities. "Minstrelsy in general holds an important share in the formation of common European melody types", and "...Jewish folk musicians became powerful agents in the exchange of tunes and styles; they were also fully accepted by the gentiles and their rulers."[2] Many of them were in Turkey.

The practice of adopting melodies from the outside spread to Europe. Rabbis composed synagogue songs in folk style between the tenth and fourteenth centuries in Germany. Eventually some of these became "traditional". Some were used for *z'mirot*;

for example, *Eliyahu haNavi* has been sung since the eleventh century, along with *Echad mi yodea* and *Had gadya* for Pesach.

Jewish culture still existed despite a chain of destruction that started with the First Crusade in 1096. Talmudic students worked as *badhonim* (wedding singers and entertainers), and wandered about spreading songs. Some of them were also versed in German church and secular music. Jews read the German poets and French Jews knew troubadour songs. By the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries Jews had their own epic poetry and minstrels of Yiddish literature and song. All texts were meant for song or singsong style.

Two occurrences around the year 1500 further affected Jewish musical life. One was the expulsion from Spain which caused many Spanish Jews to move east into the Ottoman Empire, to which the Bessarabian region then belonged. Concurrently the problems in Central Europe caused masses of Jews to move to Poland. This resulted in Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jews converging on one geographical area, bringing with them their culture and customs; they influenced one another.

As one consequence, Turkish melodies were used for Hebrew hymns. Israel Najara in the late sixteenth century assigned every poem a *maqam* (a mode used in Arabic music) designation. Even so, European traits were retained, and Arabic meter was replaced with syllabic/western meter in order to better set the Romance texts.

Despite its rejection of strictly *maqam* features, hazzanic music did employ the free rhythm, ornamentation, and some of the scales allied with the Greco-Moldavian and Crimean music, more so than the music of Belorussia and Lithuania. Russia's annexation of southern Ukraine in 1783, which continued until the annexation of Bessarabia in 1812,

brought these regions together with a link between Balkan, Caucasus and Ashkenazi Jews. A link was established even earlier when the Ottomans annexed Podolia (1672-1699).[3]

The Hasidei Ashkenaz influenced their fellow Jews by their joyous attitude toward God via music. "Singing is the natural expression of joy, and a frequent change of melodies prevents daily prayer from becoming mere routine."[4]

Italian Jews moved to German and Slavic areas in the fifteenth century; among them were klezmorim. Later in the sixteenth century *magidim* (moralistic orators), and *darshonim* (mentors) arrived. By this time the Yiddish minstrel ceased to exist, and only the *badchon* was left. Also Germans started traveling east in greater numbers. "To the Slavic lands the German Jews brought their Judeo-German (Yiddish) tongue, their intellectual baggage, and former mode of life."[5] What is ironic is that in their yearning for home (Germany), Jews kept alive the old German folktales that were fading even in Germany, such as the King Arthur legend.

Poland is not known for its contribution to secular art, and in the seventeenth century religiosity there overtook all other forms of expression. The old Yiddish art had disappeared by the eighteenth century, and by the nineteenth century there was none left in Western and Central Europe.

Intonation, rhythm, and modality were each affected by this mix of German and Slavic/Asian elements, and singers became more sentimental due to the western romance influence. On the other hand, eastern traits moved back west after the Chmielnitsky massacres in 1648. Eastern rabbis and cantors fled to the West and took positions there.

These western communities liked the eastern style of singing a great deal. Writers during this period stressed in particular the emotional power of hazzanut. Emotion and penitence characterized East European Ashkenazi hazzanut in its pre-Hasidic form. "Common to the Russian and other East European peoples is the tendency to attribute to music a decisive power over human behavior and mode of action; the same is true of the Jews living among them."[6] The cantor's voice used all available color, including high falsetto, glides and trills. These were traits of trained opera singers as well.

Despite the general enjoyment of this music, the Council of the Four Lands in Poland announced in 1623 that cantors could do only three or four extended pieces on Shabbat. Furthermore, the pogroms of 1650 and 1655 had the affect of reducing music at weddings; one could not be too joyous even there, and only the essential prayers could be sung. Popular singers had to get a license called a *ketav badhanut*. There was some small protection: the sheliach tzibur and beadle could not be dismissed without cause.

There were two *minhagim* in Eastern European liturgical music. One was *minhag Polen*, used in Bessarabia, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, Ukraine, Volhynia and Poland. "The concept of minor as expressing sadness and of major as reflecting joy appears to have been Western European, and not at all shared by Slavic area peoples."[7]

The two main chant patterns of *Polen* were *ahavah raba*, a modified Gregorian Phrygian; and Ukrainian Dorian, a form of old Dorian. Both were used in conjunction with the Slavic-Oriental augmented second. Eduard Birnbaum theorized a common Byzantine origin for the Polish-southern Russian musical traditions, and thought they traded back and forth between Slavic and Jewish ritual music.

Some liturgical melodies were dance-like, called 'the Polish style'. They were similar to Slavic dances; some early examples of these were finally written down around 1800 by western cantors. In general the melodic line was monodic and comprised of many small melodic cells, with no notes held for an entire phrase. It was always ornamented, rhythmically free and absent of bar lines. The *shtayger* mode (*ahava raba*) was very common and frequently modulated. A cantor had to be able to improvise "... like the oriental singers' shifting from maqam to maqam."[8]

Individual cells and whole pieces alike were varied. Again, the primary rule for a cantor was expression, even if this resulted in rendering the text unintelligible. Words were repeated despite halakhic injunctions against this practice. All of this seemed excessive to the more restrained cultures in the west, but it was just right for both the 'sorrowful' modes and the equally sorrowful living conditions. One interesting point is that joy was most often expressed in imitations of foreign song, as if Jewish music did not even have the vocabulary for happiness.

The medieval idea had been that hazzanut should reflect only *kavanah* and should not borrow from the "outside", such as from opera, minstrels and bands. Most cantors had no formal musical education and relied upon their ear in imitating simply melodies. By the eighteenth century some cantors did begin to use music notation. Unfortunately they used this new skill in the main to record their own compositions and not the old traditions. Because of this we really know Eastern Ashkenazi music only from the early nineteenth century on. Jeruchoam Blindman (Hakaton) is one of the first cantors to be accessible, because his music was both written down and carried forward anecdotally.

As conditions for Jews deteriorated in the nineteenth century, some cantors chose assimilation and emancipation. Another way, chosen by Hasids, was to celebrate the inner life and in the process ignore and try to forget the reality of conditions around them. This affected their use of music; the first group adopted the use of organ from churches, while the second group used the wordless niggun.

Hasidic niggunim spread after the death of the Baal Shem Tov through the medium of Shabbat meetings. Eventually some Hasidic courts had permanent instrumental bands, singers and "niggun makers". The most popular niggunim in the nineteenth century were influenced by Slavic folk music.[9]

Despite all the converging styles and sounds that commingled, East European Jewish music was not affected by western art music, easily available to the middle classes. This is because most of the Jews lived in the Pale, a still-medieval culture. They were very poor in the main and did not possess a large middle class. Most of the really talented singers were restricted in their artistic impulses to synagogue song or life cycle melody, and Jewish singers did not go to the opera. Furthermore there was an almost compulsory obligation to serve the community with one's talent. Gratification did come in the form of community devotion, whose attention was fixed on the cantor as the only outlet for artistry. With the adulation came criticism, because the 'audience' was extremely knowledgeable.

Older Ashkenazi hazzanut, not comparable to western art music, can be compared to some of the oriental styles. The key element was expressivity because the community emotionally identified with their hazzan's voice; they stopped their own singing to listen. Nineteenth century cantors such as Hakaton and Nisi Belzer did not use the tricks and

excessive coloratura that led to later cantorial stereotypes. In the West the cantor practiced musical restraint and the congregation sang along.

Solomon Sulzer in mid-nineteenth century Vienna influenced not only his Western colleagues but East European cantors as well. Some went west to study with him, and the choral synagogues also drew cantors and composers. However, "[T]heir creations do not lack touching moments, but are 'conductors' music', incompatible with the strong and style-conscious work of their older contemporary Nissan Spivak (Belzer)."[10]

A top cantor had only two places to work. He sang either in an Ashkenazi synagogue whose congregation no longer sang communally (except the Hasids), or in a European/Near Eastern Sephardi shul where communal singing did exist – except for the cantor's solos. "The phenomenon of the 'star' cantor may possibly be correlated with the existence of high-prestige, artistic male singers in the gentile host cultures."[11]

According to Max Wohlberg, an important twentieth century Jewish composer, European Ashkenazi liturgical music was fairly well set by the eighteenth century. Some of these cantors were hired for the big jobs in the west, like Weintraub and Birnbaum. Abraham Baer studied with these eastern cantors in order to learn the nusach. Wohlberg maintained that over two hundred such eastern cantors, composers and conductors were important.

One of them was Nisi Belzer. "[He] practically established a whole new school and distinct style, which for more than two generations became the norm. The recitations of Razumni and Kalachnik became the most staple items in the chazzanic repertoire."[12] Wohlberg also included Rovner, Minkowsky and Baruch Schorr, although he considered

them to be known mainly to other cantors. Those he considered well known by the public were Rozumni, Blindman, David Moshe Steinberg, Yossele Rosenblatt and Leib Glantz.

Russian-Jewish cultural life for all purposes disappeared following World War I. Cantors and other musicians emigrated and those that remained had to be mute. Music remained unpublished, rotted, and in the end Russia produced no more great cantors.

As for secular Yiddish songs, they described and dealt with conditions of life in Eastern Europe. They were not for the most part musically sophisticated, but rather caught the expressions of the people in their longing for redemption, their struggle in the galut, the ghetto and the horrible conditions. They also spoke of everyday life and life cycle events.

Most of these songs in all categories are anonymous. "No other Jewish community [as the one in Eastern Europe] created a body of anonymous folk song to equal the Yiddish folk songs of the nineteenth century."[13]

One song speaks of training Jewish soldiers to be sent to the Russian-Manchurian border:

> Between vale and hill are we being driven,
> We are being driven to the Amur [the river of the Manchurian border]
> How will we cross the Dniester? [where this song's recruits came from]
> We are being driven to the far-off Amur![14]

According to Ruth Rubin, no war or soldier songs glorify war. Instead, they all speak of the horrors of the life and the suffering of the soldiers.

Another anti-Czarist song speaks of the Russo-Japanese War and the 1905 Revolution:

> Japan is settling accounts for the blood of Kishinev
> The Czar has finally gotten his punishment.
> God has shown him that what he got
> Was because of the bloody pogroms.
> Little Japan is cutting the tyrant down,
> The little one is now killing the big one;
> Because you oppressed the people,
> Exiled innocent ones,
> They are taking revenge from afar.[15]

There are even folk songs about white slavery, a condition created by Russian oppression in the Pale along with thieves, pimps and prostitutes. Of the many categories of Yiddish folk song, one of the most helpful was the humorous song because life was so terrible. "...[t]he butt of most of the songs is the all-consuming poverty which hung like a pall over the vast majority of the many millions of Jews in Czarist Russia."[16]

Another butt of jokes was the cantor, "utilizing a prevailing slander that cantors were a bit on the simple side and were Jacks-of-all-trades and masters of none..."[17] Further targets of jokes were the members of the kahal and their toadies, nor were teachers spared. Songs made fun of the rebbe, his followers, bad marriages, the difficulties between tradition and *haskala*, and how hard everyone had to work. Humor was a way to find light in the dark Russian day.

There is a difference between folksong and folk-like song. A true folksong has more than one composer; many people contribute as it expresses an entire people. These songs changed a great deal through travel, and published music was not affordable or available to the mass of Jews. Yiddish was the common language, and songs were *n'ginah sheb'al pe*.

One person in the spirit of the community composed a folk-like song, although it expressed his own vision and personality as in the case of our American composer Stephen Foster. This was especially true of the Russian composer Mark M. Warshavsky (1845-1907). He and others wrote about the typical shtetl with its unpaved streets, lack of theaters and concert halls, and its religious superstructure. Women sang Yiddish songs at their tasks.

Folk music reflected the Jewish milieu but the tonality was frequently borrowed from their surroundings. Geography, society, language, religion and other factors affect all music, and Jewish music was no different. However, one important difference is that because Jews were so isolated and at odds with the surrounding Christians, and so different in customs and faith, this is reflected in Jewish music in addition to the influence of Jewish cantillation and modes.

"The Yiddish folk song was influenced by the music of the Slavs, the Poles and the Rumanians. The minor scale as well as the continuous use of the augmented second would seem to indicate such influence. The augmented second, however, is also present in Oriental music, as is the minor mode."[18] Bugatch also detected the presence of the Rumanian *volechl* and the Ukrainian *Hopke*. He said that it was very hard to ascertain who influenced whom.

The *Hopke*, according to Macy Nulman, is a Yiddish term that means (not surprisingly) 'hop'. It is a dance in two or four time, and includes leaping or skipping. Hasidim dance it at weddings, Simchat Torah and at other special events.[19] The *Volechl*, or *Vollech* is a folk song, either recitative or rhythmic. It came from Wallachia, Romania, and is characterized by the augmented fourth in the lower tetrachord.

According to Carl Engel the *volechl* originated in Asia and is included in the folk songs of Turkey, Hungary, Transylvania, Moldavia and Wallachia. It is described as 'free fantasy', is either sung or played, and the musician is allowed to freely embellish. Many Hasidic dance melodies and wedding songs are in this style, and it is also present in almost every religious service.

"Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov...explains that the reason for chanting the *Ya'aleh* hymn on Yom Kippur Eve to a Walachian melody (*beniggun valuchu*) was because in Walachia the Jews suffered the greatest cruelties of the tyrants (1456-1462). Because the Walachian Jews never changed their customs, nor denied their God, the people of Israel sing the Walachian tune on their most holy day, Yom Kippur."[20] According to Vigoda, Bessarabian Jews incorporated the customs of their gentile neighbors, including their songs. At the Pesach seder they hummed *Froodze Verde* (Green Leaves) with the Haggadah text. On Rosh Hashana they sang Romanian folk songs before the Shofar was blown. At parties they sang a *Tshaban* or *Valachel* (*Volechl*). Some of these tunes appeared in the compositions of Kalechnick.

Eliyahu Schleifer, editor of Chemjo Vinaver's *Anthology of Hassidic Music*, said there is no complete division between *nusachot* and niggunim; sometimes Hasidim would sing partial niggunim during a service. Two niggunim in Vinaver's collection are taken from Belzer songs. Schleifer says these fragments survived long after the compositions themselves and that this is true also for Sulzer, Rovner, Rosenblatt and Lewandowski pieces. (p.147, Vinaver). He added that this is especially true for pieces sung by cantor and *zingerl*, the boy soloist, or by two choirboys. "Since Nissi Belzer appeared many times before various Hassidic courts, it is quite natural that some of his tunes were

adopted, and became Hassidic songs and *niggunim.*[21] Singing in parallel 6ths was common, especially for two boy soloists, an alto and soprano, or cantor and boy. In the latter case the cantor sang the lower line.

The Hasids warred against excess in synagogue song. In their opinion cantors had impure thoughts even while praying, and artistic singing inhibited congregation singing. They also thought, in the first generations, that even the boy choristers were impure.

Therefore the tzadik served as precentor, even if he had no voice. This changed as their 'courts' grew and they built themselves palaces. Their music became more intricate and they were influenced by chorshuls, whose cantors traveled and sang at rabbinic courts.

The chorshuls grew out of the hazzan-bass-*zingerl* tradition of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; this trio grew into larger choirs. These boys and men formed vocal chords, repeated words after a long embellishment by the cantor, and gave responses such as "Amen". After cantors learned music theory in the nineteenth century, they were able to actually write down lengthy compositions. Since most were too long for a regular service, these were sung in concert halls or on special holidays, and at rabbinic courts. Schleifer said that Nisi Belzer, one of the premier cantors who fully utilized his choir, first studied with Baruch Karliner, who emphasized cooperation between cantor and choir.

Specific Jewish Music Categories

Folk Music

According to Idelsohn, eastern Jewish folk music was created by people living in Slavic countries such as Ukraine, Lithuania, Southern Russia (Bessarabia), Poland,

Hungary and Romania. It developed from the end of the sixteenth century until the twentieth century. Although the bulk of the Jews in these countries came from Germany, German musical elements were retained largely in the synagogue but not in folk song. German Jews who remained in Germany developed a parallel folk music based on German idioms, but this did not transport into the east. "In the Slavic countries, the Jew instinctively swung toward his neighbor's Oriental folk music, so much more closely akin to his own song."[22]

Nulman's opinion was that folk music development ranged from the end of the sixteenth century to the end of the nineteenth, and was found mostly in the Slavic countries. These were secular songs structured by biblical and prayer modes, especially the love songs. "Nature songs were alien to the East European Jew. He was generally a ghetto dweller living in a large city, forced to occupy himself with commerce and trade, and entirely estranged from nature."[23]

Themes included love, cradle, children, humor, work and soldiering. The general traits included the following: the spirit of Jewish life; bilingual text such as Yiddish/Hebrew; modal, with very few major scales; free recitative style (meter, if present, changes frequently, and the most common meters are 2/4, ¾, 4/4 and 6/8); and ornamentation.

One famous bard was Wolwil Zbarazher Ehrenkranz (1826-1883). He sang in halls and cafes and took some of his melodies from the synagogue liturgy, or imitated them. He sang in Yiddish and translated them into Hebrew to publish them. He was a *badhon*, a folk entertainer; there were also *leitzim* or *leitzonim*, jesters and comedians. They were permitted at weddings and at Purim. Another entertainer was Eliokum Zunser

(1838-1913), who composed six hundred songs. A few women wrote secular songs, but none of these singers, male or female, had formal music education.

There were no more *badhonim* after the mid-nineteenth century in Central Europe, but they remained in Eastern Europe into the early twentieth century. As we have previously seen, many Russian Jews sent their sons to Romania during the reign of Nicholas I to avoid the draft. They grew up without a proper Jewish education and loved the *badchonim*. Only the songs of the *badchonim* were meant for the public; all other folk songs were sung in the privacy of the home. Occasionally Hasidic songs were sung in shul, but not as part of the service per se.

Idelsohn mentioned two distinct types of folksongs in the east: general, which was both religious and secular, created and sung by both men and women; and Chasidic song, which was always religious and for men alone.

The text of the folk song itself did not for the most part influence the shape of the melodic line. Tunes were reused with different words or were reshaped. The same melody could be used for a love song or a satiric song. The texts themselves were in Hebrew and Yiddish, sometimes both, and occasionally with a third local language such as Ukrainian. The texts in Hebrew were *z'mirot*, intended as table songs for Shabbat meals and other festivals.

There are religious songs in Yiddish, but the bulk represent regular life. Under the Czars, folksongs reflected the miseries of life in the Pale. This was not just economic but included the struggle between old and new, such as haskala and socialist movements versus the old traditions. Songs also depicted the burdens of the Jewish women, with their many children and struggles to support their families. "The folk song of the East

European Jewish people is a true mirror of their life in the 19th century and in the 20th up to the Bolshevik regime."[24]

Idelsohn thought that love and artisan songs especially were influenced by the rise of Yiddish literature and increasing craft creations in the nineteenth century. He further divided folk music by tonality. One group is based on biblical and prayer modes (trope, *ahava raba*) and synagogue tunes, which are themselves based on the former. In addition to the above, he includes in this category the *magein avot* mode, *adonai malach*, Lamentations, High Holiday trope, Akdamut, Tal, the Kol Nidre melody, and the "study" mode from S'lichot and Prophets.[25]

Mode or manner is called *shtayger* in Yiddish, such as the above-mentioned *ahava raba*. This mode can be compared to the second mode of the Greek-Orthodox tradition and the Persian-Arab *Hijjaz* scale. There is no such comparison in the West.[26]

Another group of songs is based in minor and uses a minor seventh. These songs do not use a leading tone to the tonic, or the major seventh half step. There is also a big difference between the tonality of Eastern European song and that of Germany. Out of seven hundred and eighty German tunes studied by Idelsohn, only twenty-seven were minor. Greek and Arabic folk music also have more minor examples, as does the old Spanish folk music.

"The conception of major as expressive of joy and minor of sadness, is apparently an interpretation invented by the German nations. The Semitic, Latin and Slavic nations do not share this conception. Therefore, do we find so many joyous tunes, dances and humorous songs in minor among the folk songs of these nations."[27] However,

Idelsohn also attributed this to racial characteristics and not social conditions, as he was always eager to find a "Jewish gene".

Folk rhythm is simple and lacking in syncopation. Jewish folk songs do change meter within a song, however, unlike other nationalities' music. In Hasidic songs there are often bars that have one long note, in the form of an exclamation. Idelsohn maintained that the Jewish folk song form is "identical" to that of the Ukrainian, Polish and German folk song in form if not in content.

"...[t]he oral tradition of the Jewish folksong, in Eastern Europe, was further made fluid by such migratory individuals as itinerant musicians (klesmorim), wedding jesters, cantors and the young Talmudic scholars; not to mention those influences which were bound to descend upon the Pale from the outside."[28]

Hasidic Music

Jews contributed Hasidic music (mostly deriving from Poland and the Ukraine) along with hazzanut and folk music to the larger European community. Idelsohn saw Hasidism as a continuation of a long line of mysticism running through Judaism from ancient times, and music as one expression of that. Singing was a duty in devotion during the days of Isaac Luria in Sefad. After the *Shulhan Arukh* (an encoded formula for Jewish life) became entrenched and an end unto itself, reaction set in, and emotional life took hold and attached itself to a mystical vision of Judaism.

The founder of Hasidism was Israel Baal-Shem-Tov (Besht) who lived in Galicia and Podolia from 1700 to 1760. His successors in leadership were called tzadikim, and they gathered around themselves courts of devotees. Mixed in with halakhic Judaism were superstition, good and bad spirits, heaven and hell. Only through the tzadik could

prayers reach heaven. The Besht's followers were in Poland, Southern Russia, Romania and Hungary, while Chabad Hasidism was found mostly in Lithuania and White Russia. Some hazzanim served at the rebbe's "courts".

Hasidim were unaffected by haskala infiltrating from the west. They also separated out from their fellow Ashkenazi Jews by forming their own shuls and using the Luria Sephardi ritual in worship. The rabbis were fiercely against this movement and did their best to fight it, but by the end of the nineteenth century there were three to four million Hasids.

"Chassidism set piety above learning and regarded the expression of exuberant joy as a chief religious duty."[29] Its leaders regarded singing as the best way to rise toward salvation. "All melodies are derived from the source of sanctity, from the temple of music. Impurity knows no song, because it knows no joy; for it is the source of all melancholy....[T]hrough song calamities can be removed...[M]usic originates from the prophetic spirit, and has the power to elevate one to prophetic inspiration."[30]

Song was the soul of the universe to the Hasid. The tzadik used the purity of music to heal the souls of his followers. "Some held that the sphere of music is near to the sphere of penitence."[31] The tzadiks themselves composed tunes, but Idelsohn points out that it is difficult to tell which they actually composed and which they took from surroundings and molded through their own emotional life. Each tzaddik court had its own style or special mode, and texts were often a mix of Hebrew and Yiddish. Melodies were derived from synagogue modes, Ukraine and Slavic Oriental folksongs, Cossack dances and military marches. They were all reworked to fit the Hasidic spirit.

The rebbes hired court-singers to study them and provide appropriate music if they were not themselves musical. This singer then presented the songs at Sabbath meals with and without words. The tzadik would frequently be precentor at worship, but paid little attention to the regular synagogue musical traditions, which further antagonized the rabbis (*mitnagdim*). The followers of a tzadik learned the melodies at the *tisch* and took them back to their homes.

Most Hasidic tunes are textless. Shneor Zalman apparently said that words interrupt the flow of emotions in prayer and that when the words end, the melody must also. Wordless songs can go on forever. Regarding the use of non-Jewish melodies for their own use, "like the zealous Christians in the Middle Ages, some of the Tzadikim considered it their holy duty to save secular tunes for sacred purposes."[32]

Eventually Hasidism separated into two branches, the Besht branch in Poland, Southern Russia, Rumania and Hungary, and Chabad founded by Shneor Zalman of Ljadi, mostly present in Lithuania and White Russia. Hasidic songs are generally not for worship per se, but rather help the worshipper attain readiness for prayer. It influenced hazzanut in Eastern Europe; most hazzanim were raised among them, if not of them, and were steeped in mysticism and emotionalism. Unlike regular folk music it was exclusively for men. Ruth Rubin maintained that Hasidic music was the most striking feature of Eastern European Jewish music, and that it strongly influenced nineteenth century cantorial music, Yiddish folk songs and modern Israeli music.

Klezmer Music

According to Hankus Netsky, Kishinev was the birthplace of klezmer. He described the area as the "Mississippi Delta" of East European Jewry[33], which goes a

long way toward explaining both the rich musical life of the region and the reason that none of my relatives ever wanted to discuss their birthplace.

Kishinev had active klezmer bands, as did the town of Orgyeyev. "The leader of that band was a famous clarinetist by the name of Nechmyo Klezmer, alias Nechemyo the Talner, or Nechemyo Reifenmacher, or Nechemyo Koltun(er). His son, Moshe Kovadlo was a famous violinist who immigrated to New York."[34]

One form of klezmer music is the *buglarish* or *buglar*, which originated in Bessarabia as the *bulgareasca* ("in the Bulgarian manner") and spread to Eastern Ukraine. In America between 1881 and 1920, this became identified as a major form of klezmer dance music. It achieved its final form in New York between 1920 and 1950. Buglar became the American Jewish term for all klezmer dance music. It was like a chain dance, and in its use of a six-beat measure was unlike the Ashkenazi dance which for the most part was symmetrical.

Walter Z. Feldman traced this dance from Bessarabia, and said that klezmer was created by Eastern European and American professional and hereditary musicians. In places such as Romania they had close contact with Gypsy musicians. Because the music had association with non-Jews, and because it was passionately emotional without prayer context, it was only marginally accepted in Jewish society of Eastern Europe.

Klezmer families sometimes intermarried with *badhonim* families. Further, "...there is some evidence that Gypsy professional musicians had been assimilated into the Jewish community via the klezmorim...representing the lowest rung on the *yikhus* [lineage status] scale."... "While the mobility and business acumen of many klezmorim

fit into accepted patterns of Jewish professionalism, most Jews regarded the klezmorim as irresponsible, sexually active and violent."[35]

According to Feldman, Bessarabian music must be regarded as belonging to the furthermost eastern Ashkenazi, as opposed to the western-most Sephardi. It had Greco-Moldavian and Crimean Tatar elements. The movement of musical elements from south to north was identical to the process in cantorial music at the end of the eighteenth century.

"Southeastern Europe brought forth infinitely more creative Jewish musicians than did the Northern part, apparently because of the inspiration drawn from the Near East which borders the Southeastern districts. Volynia, Ukraine, Podolia and Bessarabia were the cradle of the great Jewish singers and composers."[36] Feldman felt that this theory is convincing.

Several things happened when Russia annexed Bessarabia. Jews who spoke Yiddish moved from the Ukraine into Bessarabia because Russia was less oppressive to Jews in the newer regions than in the old Pale. At the same time, Bessarabian Gypsies now had freedom of movement in Russia. Turkish Gagauz and Christian Bulgarians also moved into Bessarabia. There had been Ashkenazi, Sephardi and possibly Crimean Jews in Bessarabia before the nineteenth century; the annexation caused many more to move there. "During the same period Jews appear prominently as musicians in Bessarabia and the West Moldavian capital Iasi."[37]

Bessarabian music had within it peasant elements from Turkey, Romania and Western Europe in the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century in Odessa and Kishinev, the *buglarish*, *zhok* and *doina* were considered "ethnically natural genres."[38]

However, Jews outside of Bessarabia and Romania saw these countries as having no religious or secular (Yiddish) culture.

Yiddishists in America idealized this southern region as being free from religious restriction and as lands of plenty. This was definitely in contrast to the reality of life there. Feldman said that it was "precisely their proletarian and marginally Jewish cultural traits which seemed more relevant to the New World situation."[39] Bessarabian and Southern Ukraine dialects were predominant in American Yiddish theater.

Chapter Three - Endnotes

[1] Rubin, Ruth. *Voices of a People.* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Second Edition, 1973)
[2] *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 12. (Jerusalem: The MacMillan Co., Keter Publishing House, Ltd., 1971), Cols. 597 and 624.
[3] Feldman, Walter Z. *Bulgareasca/Bulgarish/Bulgar*: The Transformation of a Klezmer Dance Genre. (Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois, University of Pennsylvania, Winter, 1994, Vol. 38, No. 1)
[4] *EJ*, Col. 605.
[5] Rubin, 23.
[6] *EJ*, Col. 628.
[7] Heskes, Irene. *Passport to Jewish Music: Its History, Traditions, and Culture.* (New York: Tara Publications with Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 1994), 48-49.
[8] *EJ*, Col. 653.
[9] Ibid., Col. 638.
[10] Ibid., Col. 655.
[11] Ibid., Col. 679.
[12] Heskes, Irene and Wolfson, Arthur, Editors. *The Historic Contribution of Russian Jewry to Jewish Music.* (New York: National Jewish Music Council of the National Jewish Welfare Board, 1967), 3.
[13] Rubin, 209.
[14] Ibid., 213.
[15] Ibid., 221.
[16] Ibid., 159.
[17] Ibid., 162.
[18] Bugatch, Samuel. *The Yiddish Folk Song and its Importance to Jewish Music,* 12.
[19] Nulman, Macy. *Concise Encyclopedia of Jewish Music.* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Second Edition, 1973), 112.
[20] Ibid., 256.
[21] Vinaver, Chemjo, Edited by Eliyahu Schleifer. *Anthology of Hassidic Music.* (Jerusalem: The Jewish Music Research Centre, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1985), 151.
[22] Idelsohn, Abraham Z. *Thesaurus of Hebrew Oriental Melodies,* Vol. 8. (Jerusalem: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1973), viii.
[23] Nulman, 81.
[24] Idelsohn, x.
[25] Ibid., xii.
[26] *EJ*, vol. 12, Col. 605.
[27] Idelsohn, xviii.
[28] Weisser, Albert. *The Modern Renaissance of Jewish Music.* (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., Inc., 1954), 34.
[29] Idelsohn, viii.
[30] Ibid. From *Likkute Moharan*, a collection of sermons by Nachman of Braslav, Jerusalem 1874, F.54aff.; 62b.

Endnotes Continued

[31] Idelsohn, viii.
[32] Ibid., x.
[33] Phone interview with Hankus Netsky, spring of 2000.
[34] Email from Eliyahu Schleifer, spring of 2000.
[35] Feldman, 4.
[36] Ibid., 9.
[37] Ibid., 12.
[38] Ibid., 27.
[39] Ibid., 28.

Chapter Four - Cantorial Life

The cantorate dates back to the first centuries of the Common Era, arising out of the role of the reader and precentor who chanted the texts and prayers. Early Talmudic tracts state that a good cantor-reader of the Torah was supposed to sing pleasantly, proving that Judaic knowledge alone was not qualification enough even in the beginning of the profession.

Sacred song was augmented and modified during the Middle Ages, particularly with the rise of *piyyutim*. The Middle Ages also gave final shape to the modes and recitative that are used today. (Saminsky maintained that the cantorate changed little from the thirteenth to twentieth centuries, but we will see later that in fact it went through serious changes starting in the nineteenth century, due to both *haskala* and the growing influence of western musical forms.)

Cantors have participated in funeral services as far back as the twelfth century, and have read the *ketuba* at weddings from the thirteenth century. By the sixteenth century they were allowed to collect fees at funerals, for which they chanted *El Male Rahamim*. Cantors have taught children from at least as far back as Gaonic times in Babylon for extra income, and this was also a common practice in Eastern Europe as a way for a community to afford a cantor.

Cantors sang in non-synagogue venues by the tenth century, similar to traveling troubadours. Hazzanim wandered about as Jewish minstrels during the sixteenth century, gradually developing over the next two hundred years into 'hazzan-artistes', particularly in Eastern Europe. They brought Jewish music culture to small villages and large cities

alike. In smaller towns the cantor also served as the *shochet*, and performed *brit milah*. In larger towns he was the *stadt-hazzan*, a status that came with privileges and adulation.

Cantors received gifts for rendering various services from at least the twelfth century on; it was the only way poor towns could afford one. This practice was further justified by the fact that "[T]he Bible itself sanctioned this method in allowing the Kohen to receive certain gifts for services rendered."[1] In twelfth century Eastern Europe, cantors survived on collections taken at weddings and *chagim*. There was no set salary scale, and if a salary was paid, the entire community contributed toward it.

Cantors were sporadically paid by the fifteenth century. In the Middle Ages, "...even under the best of conditions, cantors were expected to suffer economically since their calling was a spiritual one and it was felt they ought to shun mundane rewards."[2] Along with status, salaries began to improve toward the end of this period. However, as we shall see more specifically in the nineteenth century, most cantors were never able to save money or retire comfortably. Sometimes in lieu of cash they received benefits such as tax exemption. But cantors remained poor and held other jobs throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The hazzan of the main synagogue in a larger city received a salary and share in the emoluments. These were donations on Shabbat and *hagim*, collections at the end of a Torah book, wax from Yom Kippur candles, ½ % of "rehash" at weddings, and engagement money. In addition, there was money from weddings or deeds of sale. Cantors would go from house to house on Hanukkah with a bass and singer, his meshorerim, and sing for donations. The meshorerim also sang with him during the *Yanim Noraim*. A further area of income came from Hasidim, who visited the graves of

their tzadikim. The cantor and beadle received income from holding the mausoleum keys.

Despite all the services that a cantor provided, a Roman Jewish poet known as Immanuele Romano portrayed a thirteenth century hazzan as a *schlemiel* in his book *Mahberot Imanuel.* The cantor was "...a luckless and ignorant creature, humiliated by and given crumbs from the opulent table of his congregation; yet capable of lifting the latter and himself to high ecstasy when possessed by inspired song."[3] However, "... as a rule [despite exceptions], the *chazzanuth* of our day presents the same picture of distress, ignorance and bad taste as it did in the Middle Ages."[4] Rabbis likewise accused cantors of possessing neither knowledge nor correct grammar, and said that they neglected their ancestors' traditional chants.

It is true that starting in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries more emphasis was put on the voice and music, and less on Judaic knowledge, piety and wisdom. Music began to supersede text as a result, which was one of the major changes from the old days of simply leading prayer. Rabbis objected strenuously, of course. Some felt that the cantor was being given importance out of proportion to his place in Judaism. In the German areas especially, cantors were expected to hold to stringent standards.

In a further example of this low regard, "...[t]wo legal opinions tell of a cantor and his assistant caught visiting a brothel, eating non-kosher food, violating the Sabbath, eating leavened bread on Passover and cursing the Jewish people in Russian."[5] Despite the rabbis' censure, the art of the hazzan started peaking in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and improvisation continued to develop. Cantors began to study

music formally by the late eighteenth century; some read, played instruments, collected and published music.

"Only in Eastern Europe did conditions favor the *chazzan's* making himself solely an artist."[6] This was because of the enormous numbers of Jews who had practically no cultural outlets and were isolated, and it led to a different spiritual life than that of Western Europe. Even though many villages were geographically remote, cantors and *klezmorim* did travel, bringing with them the 'latest' songs.

Cantors in both Western and Eastern Europe in the mid-nineteenth century were influenced by Solomon Sulzer's style of service leading, which imitated the decorum of churches, plus the use of organ and choir. Strictly observant Jews wanted the old style, though, and said the new were *galochim*, priests of the church, and that their music was *galochish*. One Yiddish proverb said: "as der chazan ken kein ivrei nit, heisst er a kantor" –" when the *hazzan* doesn't know the Hebrew prayer meanings, he becomes known as a cantor."[7]

Those German Jews that migrated east after the Crusades were 'superior' in terms of culture but not in numbers; even so, they had a very large influence on the music of native Eastern European Jews. Idelsohn thought that the pre-German East European Jews had an Oriental synagogue service, and brought this flavor into the Ashkenazi synagogue song. This freed the Ashkenazi *minhag* of its strict melody, and added modal improvisation. However, cantorial migration was not confined to movement eastward. After the Chmelnitski pogroms in the Ukraine, some cantors moved to Central and Western Europe, and fused their sound with German Ashkenazi song there.

Improvisation (*sogachts* in Yiddish) was and is the main artistry of the hazzan. "The coloratura in the Eastern European chazzanuth is like the soul in the body; without it, that 'chazzanuth' loses its vitality, its charm, its fascination."[8] Idelsohn found corollations between cantorial ornamentation and those in Arabic and Turkish music, Ukrainian folksong, and Gypsy instrumental music. Interestingly though, he maintained at the same time that there was a 'Jewish gene' for our music, a contradictory statement. Idelsohn further maintained that most East European cantors were tenors because Jews liked sweet voices; he stated that this also was an Oriental preference.

Unlike their Western colleagues, East European hazzanim expressed messianic longing, and concentrated on texts that expressed religious, national and ethical themes. They revived the *piyyut*, largely eliminated during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. German cantors chose halakhic and other 'necessary' texts. In a further difference from German cantors of the medieval era, an East European hazzan was expected to be not only a fine singer but also steeped in the culture, tradition and folksong of their people.

There were two main types of hazzan in Eastern Europe. One was the singer/composer, and the other was the composer/choir-leader, who did not generally sing as well as the first type. Nisi Belzer fit into the latter category. Despite some educational gains, most cantors during the first half of the nineteenth century could not read music. Some men who did not have good voices became hazzanim anyway. A few of these were talented enough to train good choirs, and limited their solos in that fashion. "...while the *chazzan* with the beautiful voice often made the prayers merely a tool of his

solos, using the choir as a mere accompanying body, these voiceless *chazzanim*... were forced to express the Synagogue song through the choir primarily."[9]

There were regional differences within Eastern Europe as well. During the second half of the nineteenth century, parts of Eastern Europe became more open to the West and *haskala*, as seen in the development of the Chorshul. In interior Russia, however, hazzanut retained ties to the sounds of the Russian Greek Orthodox Church, which featured long tones and no ornamentation.

According to Vigoda, there was a further delineation to be made in the cantorial art. One school of hazzanut arose from Berditchev, the city of Reb Levi Yitzhak Berditchever, which was characterized by *Gefeel Chazzonut* – a "tender, meaningful mode of cantorate."[10] The other was from Odessa, which featured a more modern form of synagogue song and used choir. Both Nisi Belzer and Hakaton were of the Berditchev school although as we shall see later, these styles intermingled.

In a speech given by Nathan Stolnitz at the Cantors' Assembly Convention in 1959, he said that Lithuanian hazzanut was simple and traditional, and then gradually was influenced by cantors from Volhynia, Ukraine, Bessarabia and Romania, thereby becoming more colorful.[11] Idelsohn had stated a similar view earlier, saying "Southeastern Europe brought forth infinitely more creative Jewish musicians than did the Northern part, apparently because of the inspiration drawn from the Near East which borders the Southeastern districts. Volhynia, Ukraine, Podolia, and Bessarabia were the cradle of the great Jewish singers and composers."[12]

In the 1840's a Chorshul (choir-synagogue) came to Odessa. The service in the first years was traditional, with the best cantors, trained choirs, a clean building and

congregational decorum. In this they were like the Reform in the West. Because Odessa was a cosmopolitan center and prosperous port city, it was open to currents from far and wide. Therefore they had the choir, and regarded no-frills ritual chanting as an archaic leftover from the Middle Ages.

Later some chorshuls added an organ, dispensed with the women's gallery and changed the liturgy, but not as many as in the West. Music for a chorshul was arranged for four (male) voices, and used after 1840 in the East for the modern synagogue. The choir school's purpose was for the study of repertoire for Shabbat and *hagim*. Most were modeled after the Viennese Seitenstettengasse Temple of Salomon Sulzer, and used his services and choir techniques.

Most small towns still could not afford a cantor and used volunteers. Every city hazzan had meshorerim. These (often very young) boys were not paid, and depended upon tips and meals at rotating homes. They waited at cemeteries with the hazzan for visitors during the month of Elul, receiving tips for singing *El Male Rahamim*. Whatever pay they received aside from tips came from the cantor's own salary.

"Despite the great praise showered on a local hazzan, he was very low on the social scale. The fact that he was dependent on handouts seems to have played a part in his evaluation."[13] Even so, Zavel Kwartin said in 1952 "...[B]urdened Jews...see the hazzan as a true spokesman for their buried feelings, who evokes with his prayers their longing for a better future."[14] Hazzanim were fought over in Eastern Europe because the synagogue was the only place for regular culture of any kind. And cantors were in demand, because by 1860 there were five hundred and ninety-six synagogues in seventeen Pale *gubernias*.

Cantors were constantly at the mercy of public opinion and the rabid fans of other cantors, the disapproval of rabbis, and a life of little economic comfort. But when the *hagim* approached, a cantor's congregation began to take special care of him and pray for his health. The hazzan himself became a veritable recluse and took all kinds of medicines and herbal remedies, gargled and drank *gogl mogls*, a mixture of honey and egg yolks.[15] He stayed indoors and hid his throat from the elements. The first time he sang at all was for S'lichot, and by then he was completely hoarse. It was Vigoda's opinion that they were always sick at that time because of the sudden exposure to the elements. Belzer did the opposite, going to the mikvah in any weather and forcing his choir to join him.

As time passed, more cantors heard and then sang opera. Even in Eastern Europe cantors would be the person in the town most likely to have contact with the outside, non-Jewish world. The less-talented cantors, with no regular position, traveled widely and met many people. "...[w]ell before the advent of opera and widespread secularization, hazzanim were bringing the outside world into the Jewish community at the same time they were maintaining the old ways."[16]

Despite the upheavals and troubles in Jewish life of the nineteenth century, or perhaps because of it, "...[the period of 1844-1917] was one of extraordinary growth in liturgical music, first in Russia then in Poland."[17] Early cantors included Piche (Joshua) Abrass, Jacob Bachman, Nisan Blumenthal, Yeruham Blindman (Hakaton), Nisi Belzer and Solomon Rozumni. Later cantors included Mordecai Hershman, Yossele Rosenblatt, Gershon Sirota and Zavel Kwartin. These names number among the greatest hazzanim.

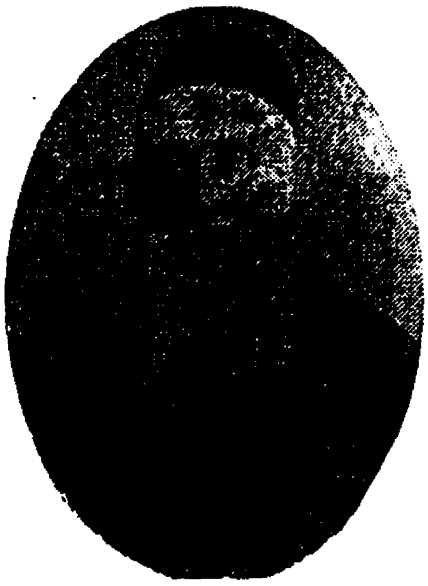
Increasing exposure to Romantic music in general and Italian opera in particular led to more vocal artistry for its own sake, and less emphasis on prayer leading. Vigoda thought Jewish music was also being destroyed from within. In his opinion, adherents of Solomon Sulzer changed too much, and in the process there was the threat that nusach "...would be violated, crippled, watered down to the extent that they would become unrecognizable by the infusion of operatic arias, folk songs and church music."[18] Only the great cantors of Eastern Europe stood against total musical assimilation, and recognized the need for improvement *and* purity. They attempted to do so through their own teaching.

While cantors such as Pinchas Minkowsky were firmly opposed to synagogue music being used in any other context, Zavel Kwartin reported getting letters from Jewish soldiers during the Russo-Japanese War, which said these recordings kept up their morale. By the end of the nineteenth century the Russian revolutionary spirit was spreading among Jews and breaking down tradition. Young Jews received a standard European education, and the last generation of hazzanim in that century did not, for the most part, receive the Jewish training their predecessors had. Idelsohn thought they considered themselves professional artists as opposed to *sheliah tzibburim*, as actors of the bima, using cheap coloratura and other tricks.

Eastern European immigrants in America included these virtuoso cantors in the first two decades of the twentieth century. "...[I]t was...inevitable that the East European cantorial art should, by the time it settled in America and surrendered further to the manufactured myth of American 'showmanship', have fallen into a shameful state of mediocrity and debasement."[19]

Chapter Four - Endnotes

[1] Landman, Leo. *The Cantor: an historic perspective; a study of the origin, communal position, and function of the hazzan.* (New York: Yeshiva University, 1972), 20.
[2] Ibid., 26.
[3] Saminsky, Lazare. *Music of the Ghetto and the Bible.* (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1934), 181.
[4] Ibid., 182.
[5] Levitats, Isaac. *The Jewish Community in Russia, 1844-1917.* (Jerusalem: Posner and Sons, Ltd., 1981), 106.
[6] Idelsohn, Abraham Z. *Jewish Music.* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1929; Reprint Schoken Books, 1956), 181.
[7] Landman, 73.
[8] Idelsohn, 183-184.
[9] Ibid., 304.
[10] Vigoda, Samuel. *Legendary voices: the fascinating lives of the great cantors.* (New York: Cantor S. Vigoda, c. 1981), 21.
[11] Stolnitz, Rev. Nathan. *On Wings of Song.* (Toronto: Artistic Printing Co., Ltd., 1968.)
[12] Idelsohn, 311.
[13] Slobin, Mark. *Chosen Voices: the Story of the American Cantorate.* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 15.
[14] Ibid., 16.
[15] Vigoda, 256.
[16] Slobin, 21.
[17] Levitats, 106.
[18] Vigoda, 23.
[19] Weisser, Albert. *The Modern Renaissance of Jewish Music.* (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., Inc., 1954), 143.



Yeruchom Hakoton
(1798-1891)

Nisson Belzer
(Spivak)

B. Schor
(1823-1904)

Zeidel Rovner
(1857-1944)

Chapter Five - The Cantors

Yerochom Blindman (haKaton)

Chayim Yerochom ben Avraham Haleyvi Blindman was born in Bessarabia, lived from 1798 to 1891, and was in a sense the grandfather of Bessarabian hazzanut. His nickname was "hakaton" because he was very small, a man in fact so short that Vigoda said he could have "... walked under the table with an opened up umbrella."[1] Because he needed something high to stand on while officiating, Vigoda thought this may have started the custom of all cantors mounting, at the very least, stairs before beginning a service. (Vigoda also thought this was a presumptuous habit, as precentors are supposed to call to God from the depths.)

Blindman was considered to be a child prodigy. He sang in the chorus of the Bezalel Schulsinger, and studied with Nissan Blumenthal and Wolf Shestapol. By 1834 he was an itinerant cantor and sang throughout Russia and Austria, becoming known for his lyric tenor of four octaves and his great falsetto. He also introduced variations and embellishments into traditional chant, and mastered improvisation.

According to Vigoda, Blindman began a "golden age" in hazzanut by creating a new style through merging nusach and contemporary musical forms. He also wrote choral songs in folksong style that used four-part settings. His compositions in minor were influenced by the *Magen Avot* and *S'licha* modes, while his compositions in major were military imitations. Blindman had only basic knowledge of music theory, but he could play the piano.

He was Kishinev's first famous cantor, officiating there shortly before 1860. He also worked in Berditchev (1861-72) and Tarnapol (1877-1886). In addition to sending

its cantors to Odessa, Kishinev also provided cantors to Berditchev, such as Blindman, Belzer, David Moshe Steinberg and Shliepack. Odessa stressed talent while Berditchev sought Jewish education, knowledge and a fear of God. Odessa wanted 'the voice' and did not expect the cantor to be a rabbi in terms of how he lived his life. Berditchev sought a mensch and godly person. Blindman fit well in Berditchev because he was both pious and learned, and rabbis respected him. He never ate or drank outside his home.

Zeidel Rovner considered Blindman to be generous and knowledgeable. Rovner's regard added to the rift between Blindman and Nisi Belzer, whom Blindman thought lacked ability both as composer and cantor. Rovner himself feuded with Belzer, exemplifying Vigoda's comparison of cantors to prima donnas. "Every one of them blows his own horn, thinks the world of himself and is convinced that there is nobody like him in the world. He is terribly jealous of the success of a colleague."[2]

The behavior of a particular cantor's fans did not help either. They were just as rabid as today's sports fans. Or, like opera fans, they organized claques which booed and insulted a rival cantor. They threw rocks and wooden stands at each other and spread nasty rumors. Despite the feud, Belzer cried at Blindman's funeral and said to Rovner, "Zeidel, the crown of our heads has fallen. Our great loss is irreplaceable."[3] David Novakowsky, who was Minkowsky's choir director in Odessa and who studied with Blindman, said: "Yeruchem is a wonderful, highly gifted genius of traditional Jewish liturgical art. As for Nisi Belzer? Well, Nisi is a Litwak and enough said."[4]

Nisson Spivak (Belzer)

Spivak naturally follows Blindman in discussion due to their ties to one another. He sang in Blindman's choir as a boy and married his niece. These two cantors also enjoyed a long and elaborate feud, the seriousness of which is open to debate.

Spivak was born in a small shtetl named 'Moosh' in Lithuania in 1824, and grew up in a poor family. He showed musical promise at the age of eight but there was no hazzan in his village with whom to study. His father took him to Zitomir in Southern Russia where he became a meshorer to both Baruch Karliner and Blindman, who eventually gave him the choir's leadership. His inherent talent compensated for his lack of formal musical education.

Unfortunately, what Spivak lacked that was even more important was a good voice. There are several theories about what happened to him, since he clearly had a pleasing voice as a boy. One is that he lost his voice in an accident. Another is that Blindman, jealous of the boy's talent, pushed him to the extreme in the chorus and ruined his voice. A third, psychological reason is that as a youth in Blindman's choir, a nobleman heard him and planned to take him to St. Petersburg, baptize him and put him in the Imperial Pravolsavna Church; Spivak lost his voice the night before this was to happen. Whatever the reason, his vocal chords were apparently partially paralyzed and his voice was hoarse and choked.

After marrying Blindman's niece, his father-in-law suggested he try writing music. Spivak, who had tried business and failed in every attempt, showed his first composing efforts to Blindman. The mistakes infuriated the older man and he threw away the music. At that point Spivak vowed to become a cantor just to spite him.

His first positions as cantor were in Belz and then Kishinev for a total of fifteen years, despite his lack of a good voice. His nicknames "Nisi Kishinever", "Nisi Belzer" and "Nisi Berdichever" come from those cities (plus Berditchev). Belz loved Spivak, who became attached to the Talner Reb. He received three rubles a week at his first position in Belz, half of which was really earned by passing the plate on Kol Nidre.

In 1861 he ironically succeeded Blindman in Kishinev at the central ("Turkish") synagogue, which had been built in 1816 while Kishinev still belonged to Turkey. Blindman had moved on to Berditchev, where he eventually had to endure Spivak's presence yet again.

Spivak made sure his choir was very good and paid them well, unlike other cantors. He made up for his vocal limitations through the use of improvisations, songs and choral arrangements, which are numerous. His pieces are often very long because he wrote for the concert setting. He was a 'city-hazzan' and as such had to supply his entire community with music. He himself only sang on special *Shabbatot* or *hagim.*[5]

Spivak always wrote for solo with choir accompaniment, or choir only. "Chorists were frowned upon by the ultrapious chassidim for the reason that as a general rule they were thought to be 'Kalim', not very observant Jews, who usually were taking the tenets of religious law lightly."[6]

His music is more harmonically developed than Blindman's. "We may count Nissi Belzer as the greatest musical genius of Synagogue song that Eastern Europe produced. He stands wholly on Jewish-Oriental ground..."[7] He was also influenced by military music and opera, and tried fugues and canons. Saminsky thought he might have been the greatest of the synagogue composers, citing *Av harachamim* and *Hayom haras*

olam as examples. Macy Nulman said that Spivak was "...known as the leading exponent of nineteenth-century Eastern European synagogue song."[8] Ordinary townspeople knew and hummed his melodies.

His style of writing was a blend of supplication and pleading, plus a demand for justice. Spivak felt he had "clients" whom he served and whom had been given a rotten deal in life. His tenors and sopranos pray and plead while the altos and basses present bitter arguments, thus covering all sides.

Despite his issues with Blindman, Spivak owed his musical knowledge in part to him along with Zalman Umanyer and Baruch Karliner. Although he was stern with his choir and considered himself a perfectionist, his music was in fact full of mistakes. Congregations did not mind either the errors or the length of his pieces; they would listen for hours. Despite the years he spent in Belz and Kishinev, his real fame was achieved in Berditchev. Spivak's choir there had eighteen to twenty-four singers, and he supplemented their meager salaries from his own wages. He concertized to raise funds for them, put them up at inns instead of private houses, and paid the inn bills himself.

Spivak knew what a hard life it was to be a musician in Russia without becoming an apostate, and he discouraged his two sons from following in his path. They were drawn to secular music in any case. His son Alter had a best friend named Avraham Berkowitch, with whom he shared a love of opera. In time Berkowitch became known as Kalechnick, cantor of Kishinev. Alter eventually went to the conservatory at St. Petersburg, and tragically died young.

Neither Spivak nor Rovner were well accepted in Odessa. In Spivak's case this was due to the Odessa emphasis on having a cantor with a pleasing voice, whether or not

the choir was good. They also rejected Rovner's voice plus his use of non-Jewish dance melodies in his music.

Spivak was a devout Hasid. Before S'lichot he went to the mikvah and forced his whole choir go with him at two in the morning. Of this practice his critics said, "He was not thereby taking any undesirable chances...He had nothing to lose, since he was anyway hoarse all the time."[9]

Spivak died while on a concert trip to the Hasidic rebbe of Sadgora in 1906.

Boruch Schorr

Schorr was a contemporary of Nisi Belzer. He was born in 1823 in Lemberg (Lvov), which is northwest of Bessarabia on the Dniester River. He came from an old Hasidic family and eventually was chief cantor there. As a child Schorr sang at Hasidic gatherings, and became a *zingerl* at the age of nine with the Bezalel Odesser. After that he was a chorister with Blindman, himself a disciple of the Odesser

When he became Bar Mitzvah at home, he was already ready to publicly daven as cantor. Schorr moved to Iasi (on the border between Romania and Bessarabia) and sang in the choir, marrying a girl there with a wealthy father. He was therefore able to keep studying music and did not need to earn money immediately.

His cantorial career began in Khotin, Bessarabia from 1846 to 1848. He then worked in Kamenetz Podolsk, returning to Iasi in 1851. "This period of his life in the Roumanian city was the most fruitful and productive phase of his career."[10] He wrote *Omnom Keyn* there, and *Od Yiskor Lanu.* His *Omnom Keyn* ("Ay, 'Tis Thus") is published in Chemjo Vinaver's *Anthology of Jewish Music*, with the comment that Schorr was a master of modes and was influenced heavily by Hasidic song.

Schorr spent some time in Budapest in the Rombach Temple after Iasi, and then returned to Lemberg where he remained chief cantor at the central synagogue for the following thirty-one years. He wrote *N'ginoth Baruch Schorr*, *Yithron L'chachma* and commentaries on texts.

It was said in Lemberg that he was the *baal t'filo* while Zeidel Rovner was the *klezmer*, not a compliment to Rovner.[11] Schorr's compositions were especially strong in the Eastern European choral style. Saminsky said that he represented the old mastery of synagogue style, using as an example his *Ya'ale* sung on Kol Nidre. He maintained it had a close relationship to the Yemenite *Yevorehehah.*[12]

Schorr wrote and premiered the operetta *Samson* (*Shimshon Hagibor*) in Lemberg. Upon taking a bow on stage with the female lead, he was suspended from his cantorial duties for a month by his rabbi Reb Itzenyu Ettinger. As a result he left for New York, and sang at the Attorney Street Synagogue for five years. Schorr was wooed back to Lemberg in 1896, and died there in 1904 while singing during Pesach. He had six sons, all of whom became cantors.

Jacob Samuel Maragowsky (Rovner)

Maragowsky was born in Radomysl (also spelled Radomishl), Russia in 1856 and died in the United States in 1943, having emigrated there in 1914. Maragowsky's mother called him "zeydele" because he reminded her of her father, which in time changed to Zeidel. Because of her poverty he grew up in the home of Moshe Shpilansky, the town's cantor. Shpilansky wanted to put the boy in his choir, but his mother wanted her son to

be a rabbi. He was unusual for this period in that he never served as meshorer before becoming a cantor.

He studied rabbinics and then worked in business after getting married. He was a follower of the Makarover rebbe and learned the rebbe's melodies in Radomysl. At the age of sixteen and already married, Maragowsky took a pilgrimage to see the rebbe, who was so pleased with him that the rebbe had the young man sing S'lichot and then Musaf during the High Holidays.

He had sung at an early age at Hasidic gatherings and showed evidence of his musical gift then. Although reluctant to be a hazzan, he first led High Holiday services in Kiev at the age of seventeen, returning each year for five years. He studied there with the violinist Aaron Moshe Padhutzer, and also studied music with a chorus singer. Maragowsky officiated in Zaslow in 1881, and then traveled to Rovno to learn more about theory and composition.

It was in Rovno that he earned his nicknamed "Zeidel Rovner". One day after a service he was approached by a representative from Kishinev who offered him a job; apparently Nisi Belzer had recommended him upon moving on to Berditchev. Rovner sang for Shabbat in Kishinev and then gave a concert at the largest concert hall. Gentiles, including the infamous Krushevan, editor of the *Bessarabetz*, attended and became fans. Rovner also davened at the various guild synagogues, as each craft had it's own shul due to the caste system.

He returned to Rovno to decide whether or not to make the move to Kishinev. At that time the most prominent cantor in Kishinev was Avraham Berkowitz, known as

"Kalechnick" because his father sold lime and chalk, the friend of Belzer's son Alter. Rovner's talent overshadowed Kalechnick, and it was said that "...there came to town a little Polish Jew and with one blow of his mouth succeeded in extinguishing the burning 'kalech'".[13] Kalachnick left in disgust for Mohilev Podolsk.

The town of Rovno was loath to let go of Rovner. Representatives from Kishinev actually removed, or "kidnapped with permission", Rovner and his family during the night from Rovno. Eventually they kidnapped his choir also, one by one and dressed in disguises.

Rovner served as cantor in Kishinev from 1884 to 1896. He was a prolific composer despite his lack of formal music education. He "borrowed" from local music and used Slavic tunes, military marches and waltzes, along with traditional Jewish modes. Rovner's choir was first rate, including at various times the future cantors Tkatch, Breeh, Roitman and Hershman. For his concerts he used an enlarged choir and orchestra of at least fifteen instruments.

He used choir extensively in his compositions, and wrote in the style of Belzer. Max Wohlberg said that Rovner and Belzer were representative of concertizing cantors. "Unlike their Western counterparts, these men cultivated a style of *Hazzanut* which emphasized a plaintive, emotional folk quality. Their vocal line was florid and their harmonies unpretentious."[14]

Rovner was considered a better singer than Belzer, of course. In addition it was hard for anyone else to sing Belzer's music, while other cantors could and did sing Rovner's. According to Vigoda, Belzer excelled at *T'filah*, while Rovner was good at *N'ginah*, melodic and rhythmic song. This makes musical sense as, though Belzer's

voice was injured, he could nevertheless declaim, while Rovner could actually sing in prayer. Belzer emphasized soul, and Rovner concentrated on feeling and heart.

Vigoda thought that Rovner's compositions appealed to the masses more than Belzer's because they blended the music of the area with Jewish modes. Belzer's fans, however, called Rovner 'Klezmer', which was not a compliment. Rovner's best-known compositions are *K'dusha*, *V'al Y'dei Avodecha*, *Titborach* and *B'tzeit Yisrael*.[15]

Belzer was jealous of Rovner even though he had recommended him for the post in Kishinev, especially after Rovner moved to Berditchev. Their fans as usual inflamed the situation. They went to the rival cantor's services and instigated physical fights, whereupon the police were called. On his deathbed, however, Belzer praised Rovner and called him the last of the great cantors.

Rovner remained attached to Kishinev even after leaving for Berditchev. "... [a]mong all the cities, he liked best the Bessarabian capital of Kishinev, where he occupied the cantorial post at the central community synagogue for ten years which was a longer period than he spent in any other city in the course of his long career. He left Kishinev solely because he could not get along with the chief trustee of his congregation. This official was the same one who previously was the sole cause of the departure from Kishinev of Pinye Minkowsky. His dictatorial conduct and behavior and his shady deals and actions drove both those prominent cantors from the city."[16]

Rovner replaced Blindman in Berditchev, but had some problems there because people liked Belzer's compositions better than his, which contained too many polkas and mazurkas for their taste. From Berditchev he gave concerts in London, Leeds, Liverpool, and Manchester, and traveled to the courts of Hasidic rebbes. He returned often to sing in

Photo of the late famous Cantorial Composer Zeidel Rovner - Marinovsky (1857 - 1944) together with the late American President John Calvin Coolidge (1872 - 1933), taken at a liturgical concert, 1924.

Kishinev and the other Bessarabian towns of Bendery, Kupshan, Bertchan, Chotin, Belz and Soroko. For the people who lived in outlying villages, it was a rare treat to hear such a famous cantor. Rovner then took a post in Lemberg and stayed until 1911.

He eventually thought it wise to leave Europe, and in 1914 left for the United States. His initial concerts were very successful but he was not happy there, as it was a bad fit for him. He decided to return to Europe, but World War I had broken out and he was forced to remain in America.

After the war he was offered a post in Vienna, but his colleagues in America sought to keep him in New York through a special fund. They planned a concert at the Hippodrome Theater to celebrate the Rovners' fiftieth wedding anniversary in 1923. Cantors such as Minkowsky and Rosenblatt sang, and through this occasion he visited President Calvin Coolidge at the White House.

However, thereafter he sang only during the High Holidays. "The last years of his life he spent like a destitute, lonely recluse in a state of need and want under circumstances of distress and indigence. He was ignored and cast aside as one who did not belong any longer...."[17]

Despite his troubles he retained his sharp wit. One example of this occurred when a young man came to him, eager to be in his choir. He heard him sing and told him the following: "'My dear young man: You have no voice, you cannot read music, your 'Ivreh' is very poor, consequently I cannot possibly accept you into my ensemble.' 'So', said the disappointed fellow, 'What do you think I should do?' 'My best advice to you would be,' replied Reb Zeidel, 'that you should apply for a cantorial position.'"[18]

Rovner died in 1943 at the age of eighty-seven, and his heirs donated his music to Yeshiva University. One wonders where those heirs were in his time of need.

Abraham Berkowitsch (Kalechnick)

Abraham Berkowitsch lived from 1837 to 1917. As previously stated, he was known as Avremele Kalechnick because his father sold calx, whiting and calcimine (*kalech*). He was very pious, an adherent of the Bahoosher Rebbe. He studied Talmud regularly and went to the mikvah before every service. Nisi Belzer was both his role model and second father, due to Kalechnick's friendship with Belzer's son Alter. In fact after Kalechnik took a position in Berditchev, he was the only cantor to whom Belzer would grant pulpit privileges at his own synagogue.

Like Rovner and Belzer, Kalechnick's strong point was not his vocal ability but rather his musicality and originality. "They were creators of new modes in liturgical music, and they were mainly masters of ensemble singing of the synagogue choirs..."[19] Kalechnick was a lyric baritone with good coloratura and middle voice. He could improvise well, was versatile and sweet sounding, and he was very skilled at modulation. Many students studied with him, and his style became known as the 'Kalechnick *Steyger*' for a generation of cantors.

He incorporated the melodies of his gentile surroundings into his works, including folk melodies and opera tunes from Bessarabia. The conductor Novakowsky influenced Kalechnick at the beginning of his career in Odessa. Some of his best known works are *Halleluya, Eshkol, K'dusha, Racheym Aleynu* and *Ki Hinei Kachomer*.

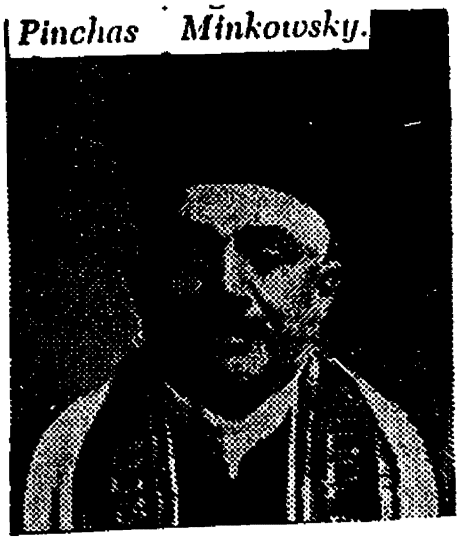
It is the opinion of Cantor Eli Schleifer that Kalechnick was the most important cantor in Kishinev. He studied with the Bazalel Shulsinger (1790-1860, known as Tzalel

Odesser because he served as Cantor in Odessa after leaving Kishinev). In Kalechnick's manuscript *Zloso D'Abraham*, published in the 1890's or early twentieth century, there are recitatives for solo cantor. "The style is traditional, sometimes with lots of coloratura, but there is also some modernity and even a bit of influence of opera style (although no quotes)."[20]

Schleifer further stipulates that there are two opposing trends in Kalechnick's music. One is his modality, particularly the Ukrainian Dorian patterns and the emotional, supplicatory pieces. The other shows influence of opera, especially that of Rossini. He also said there is a musical link between Kalechnik, the Bezalel Odesser and Leib Glantz.

Eventually Rovner arrived in Kishinev and fans challenged the supremacy of Kalechnick, who left Kishinev and went to Mohilev-Podlosk. This was not due solely to the pressure from fans. The rebbe to whom a cantor paid allegiance was also critical. Rovner followed the Makarover Reb while Kalechnick followed the Bahoosh Reb. The Bahoosh followers had the largest number of adherents, followed by the Tolna'er Hasids. Rovner inadvertently helped Kalechnick's cause by making inappropriate comments that created enemies. Jews in Kishinev missed Kalechnik after he was gone, of course. Rovner left town and eventually ended up in Berditchev, replacing Blindman at his retirement.

Kalechnick headed back to the great Turkish synagogue in Kishinev. It had wonderful acoustics but no heat. In the winter the choristers huddled together and rubbed their hands; only the cantor had a fur coat. It was so cold that Kalechnick's breath was visible, which was perhaps one reason for the intensity of his singing.



D. Novakovsky (1848-1921)

P. Minkovsky (1866-1924)

E. Z. Razumny (1866-1904)

He was neglected and ignored as he grew old. He lost his position at the Turkish synagogue and went to the tailors' synagogue. As Vigoda commented, "Who needs an old cantor? He was distraught, perplexed and bewildered. The sudden fall from the high rung on the ladder of success was too much for him. He was desperate. He had to earn a living. All doors seemed closed to him."[21] He traveled for a bit, sang services and taught cantorial students, but he was miserable and lived in poverty. He died in Kishinev in 1917 at the age of eighty.

Pinchas (Pinye) Minkowsky

Minkowsky was born in Belaya Tserkov, Ukraine in 1859. His father was a cantor for forty-five years and young Pinye sang in his choir. He also studied with Nisson Spivak, David Novakowsky, Victor Ratikansky, Robert Fuchs, and Solomon Sulzer in Vienna in 1881. At the age of eighteen he was chosen to be Nisi Belzer's successor.

He was married at sixteen and became cantor at Stempeny'er Synagogue, for four rubles a week. After that he became a meshorer in Belzer's choir. After one year of serving in Odessa he left for New York, but returned after five years to succeed Blumenthal. David Novakowsky was his choir leader at Broder Synagogue, and suggested installing an organ. This became the first one in Russia, although it was played only on Friday afternoons before Kabbalat Shabbat.

While Minkowsky was in Belzer's choir, he once substituted as cantor when Belzer was out of town. Belzer berated him for this, calling him a *drong* (musical ignoramus) and a cripple with delusions of grandeur.[22] But Minkowsky stayed in the choir and followed him to Berditchev also. The offer of a cantorial position at the

Central Community Synagogue in Kishinev to Minkowsky enraged Belzer because he needed him in his choir; nevertheless he became chief cantor of the Chorshul in Kishinev.

In addition to his cantorial duties he both composed and wrote articles, in Hebrew, Russian, Yiddish and German. He wrote in one article that Jews took some of their musical influences from the Egyptians and the Phoenicians. "...[w]e must admit that the musical heritage of Greece, which then dominated the civilized world, did not leave the Jews untouched. The Jews...could not compete with the Hellenes who were an aesthetic nation standing at that time at the very pinnacle of art and science and who looked upon music as a higher form of art and as a goal in itself."[23]

Minkowsky became hazzan in Kishinev in 1878, but apparently had difficulties with a trustee there named Hayim Velvel. Velvel was a Bahoosh Hasid and made his life miserable. Minkowsky was offered a job in a new place run by modern thinkers at a modern choir temple. He took it because Velvel did not pay him. This gave further ammunition to the Bahoosh Hasidim, who seized every opportunity to ridicule the Tolnaer followers.

"It was a serious blow to the prestige of the Tolnaer, who were dumbfounded and dismayed and obliged to hide their faces in shame. It was hard to believe that such a fine, strictly reared, young man would be capable of denying his past and officiating in a reform temple, garbed in gowns and pointed hats, closely resembling those worn by priests in the tzerkve's (churches)."[24]

Unfortunately Minkowsky did not please his new bosses either. He was too old-world and observant for them even though he slowly eliminated his *payes*, broad hats and long coats. The final straw for the Bahoosh Hasids, though, was when he prepared to

participate in a public funeral procession for a temple member. They almost put him in *Herem.*

He decided to leave Kishinev and go to Kherson, at which point he was sent to Vienna for further schooling with Sulzer. He had no choir in Kherson and left to go to Odessa. There he displeased some people by racing through popular prayers and emphasizing neglected prayers, such as *Al Keyn Nekave* and *Veyesoyu.* He was accused of being a *Tsu Lehachesnik* ("one who deliberately does the exact opposite of what is expected of him, merely because he enjoys annoying and vexing people)".[25]

Rozumni had replaced Pitze Abrass at the central synagogue in Odessa, and was himself replaced by Minkowsky. In further trouble, Minkowsky had accepted a contract in Lemberg at the same time. Odessa paid the fine to Lemberg for him and he came to Odessa, but was hampered having to follow Abrass and Yankel Bachman, and soon his shul rejected him. He was publicly abused, and left for New York to work at Kahal Adas Yeshurun on Eldridge Street in 1887.

Minkowsky stayed there five years and received a yearly salary of five thousand dollars, but returned to Odessa in 1892. Nisi Blumenthal recommended Minkowsky upon his retirement, convinced that he would never return to Russia. When he did so, Blumenthal was heartbroken and became paralyzed by a stroke. Minkowsky became Chief Cantor of the Brody synagogue for thirty years, and also taught at the Jewish Conservatory in the city.

His voice was sweet but not especially powerful. He avoided word repetition, falsetto and extraneous coloratura. Minkowsky held strong views about what was appropriate and inappropriate behavior for cantors. He "...wrote tirades against

commercial recording of hazzanim, citing reports that one could hear sacred hymns coming out of the rooms of prostitutes in the city's pleasure quarters."[26] Stolnitz said that Minkowsky objected to recordings because he did not want prayer heard in profane contexts, outside of worship. "His campaign and protests intimidated many colleagues and kept them from following the example of Sirota and Kwartin. As a regrettable result there is no reproduction of the voice of Rozumny."[27]

Minkowsky was well regarded in Odessa by the gentile community. His writings were widely read, which helped him stay out of trouble during the Russian Revolution. Nevertheless he returned to New York in 1922, after the Bolsheviks took control of the Brody shul.

He was not publicly appreciated in New York at this stage, and suffered financially and emotionally. "...[h]is rather dry, solemn, unemotional, modernistic style of delivery was not conducive of sweeping listeners off their feet..."[28] He was scheduled to sing in 1924 at Madison Square Garden, but died a few weeks beforehand. Minkowsky was buried near his father and brother in the Mount Nebo Cemetery in Philadelphia.

Ephrayim Zalman Rozumni

Rozumni lived from 1866 to 1904. His name allegedly originated from an encounter between Tsar Nicholas I and one of his relatives, a rabbi who served as chaplain on a Black Sea ship. Nicholas called him a "smart Jew", a *Rozumny Jevrey.*[29]

Rozumni was considered in some circles to be the absolute greatest cantor of the second half of the nineteenth century. This is despite the fact that his voice was nasal and throaty, called *fargamt*, nor was he particularly musical, inventive or original. He was

thin and frail, his voice was not strong, and like Rovner he never apprenticed as meshorer. Apparently his voice was sweet nevertheless, with a lyric tenor and full use of *messa voce*. He had a good ear but was not a particularly good musician.

Because of that, he always fully prepared so as not to have to rely on improvisation, and to be free to interpret both text and musical phrases. Rozumni possessed excellent coloratura and length of breath, and despite his musical issues he awed everyone. His High Holiday Musaf service apparently lasted five hours. It was his interpretation that affected people, with its coloring and drama. He interpreted the works of others rather than writing much himself. A man named Moshe Ber Kuritiansky, the cantor of the choir synagogue in Yekaterinoslav, wrote many recitatives for him; another composer whose works he sang was Peyse Chotiner.

Rozumni's first position was in Kishinev at the Hekersher Shul, the synagogue of drivers. He left a big impression despite serving there for only two years. He had a bad reputation with rabbis however, and there was one in Kishinev who would not officiate with him. Rozumni vowed to someday have a post there, which is why he returned to Kishinev after leaving Odessa, in addition to the fact that his ex-wife lived there with their three children. Despite his bad qualities he was generous and charitable. He called money *Geltshmelt*, which means "money smells".[30]

After he left Kishinev the first time for Odessa, he became a star cantor, a man "...who was perhaps the most representative, most characteristic, almost classic example of the personal cult."[31] He left Odessa due to a quarrel with the trustees at the Shalashna temple. It was not his first fight; once he threw down his prayer shawl and ran from the

building during a service. Jacob Bachman had been his mentor and for a time they shared a pulpit in Odessa, but Rozumni insulted him also.

Kishinev again offered him a post, but Odessa fought it and the matter was resolved in a *beit din* in favor of Kishinev. Rozumni was the only major cantor who returned to Kishinev from Odessa. In the end, though, he returned to Odessa. He returned to Shalashna and stayed there permanently. Fear of God made him tremble before singing a service, despite his egotism.

In those days in Kishinev and Odessa, when a respected member of a shul died the hearse stopped in front of the synagogue and the cantor stood near the coffin and sang *El Male Rahamim.* Rozumni followed this practice, and in fact one of the few pieces actually attributed to him in manuscript form is that prayer.

He gave away the fortune he earned over the years, died penniless and was buried in a borrowed shroud. Odessa shut down when he died, and Minkowsky and Karniol sang at his funeral.

Jehudah Leyb Kilemnik

The date of Kilemnik's birth is unclear, but he was born in Bessarabia. His mother died while he was young, and his father sent him to Odessa to live with an uncle who was a tailor. He did not like this trade, and entered the choir at the Bagiyavka Synagogue; he also sang as a meshorer to Karniol.

Because of his propensity for pranks he was eventually kicked out of the shul choirs, and then sang in opera choruses. He retained his childhood alto until he was almost sixteen, at which point his voice changed to tenor literally overnight during the High Holidays. Kilemnik then returned to Odessa and studied with Yossel Adelman,

who also taught David Moshe Steinberg. Kilemnik left his teacher before he was ready, and decided to sing three days of Rosh Chodesh instead of two, just to be better. He was fired, of course.

At that point he decided to seriously study, and was lucky to have a lovely voice with high E's and F's. He traveled to various towns with a choir, and eventually ended up in Kishinev at the chorshul on Pushkinskaya Street. People loved his hazzanut, but not his acidity or disposition. At one point in his career he sang in the town of Lipcon in Bessarabia. He demanded money in the middle of Shabbat to continue with Musaf, and was forced to flee enraged congregants. Eventually he also had to leave Kishinev due to his personality.

Kilemnik replaced Belzer in Berditchev, but returned to Kishinev and worked at the community synagogue on Asiatzkaya Ulitza, succeeding Kalechnick. Despite the continuation of his old, bad ways, he remained there this time until he left Eastern Europe altogether.

He was a talented singer but restless, and worked in various other occupations including secular artist, composer, choir leader, rabbi, and at a pharmacy. Life in Bessarabia became increasingly difficult after World War I, and he left in 1918 for London. He worked at the Rothschild synagogue and taught at the Conservatory there. He died of a heart attack at the age of fifty-five.

Friam (Efrayim) Schliepack

Schliepack was born in Padole, Russia and lived from 1882 until 1948. He nickname was *Froyke*. He received an excellent Torah education because his father, Reb Zeyde Kipenyer, was a rabbi and cantor. Schliepack sometimes sang in his father's shul

Cantor J. Rappoport

CANTOR LEIB GLANTZ

as a boy, and knew nusach as well as secular music. He was a baritone after his voice changed, and could sing falsetto.

Among his teachers were Baruch Schorr, Zeidel Rovner and Nisi Belzer. Another teacher was Moshe Kievsky, a cantor famous for his love of food which earned him the nickname *Moishe Achiller*. Schorr traveled a lot and could not get a permanent post because he was unmarried. After traveling to Belz he met and married the daughter of the shochet. He then got the cantorial job there.

Schliepack was capable of great recitative, modulations and improvisation, and could also imitate animals, birds and instruments, earning the name *Froyke Dos Fidele*. "It was said that he had 'a key to *t'filoh*'".[32] He used rhythmic variety, word repetition, modulations and coloratura. He composed for himself and other cantors.

Schorr also served in Kishinev, and went to the chorshul in Berditchev in 1909 for eleven years. Like Belzer he went to the mikvah before a service. Due to conditions in Eastern Europe, he reluctantly left for New York and became cantor at the Brisker Synagogue in Newark in 1925, continuing to compose and concertize.

Schorr took the cantor position at the Romanian Beth David Synagogue in Montreal, from 1927-48, because "[t]he commercialization of Divine services in America was repulsive to him."[33] Vigoda, who knew him personally, also said "[h]e built musical castles in the air, which towered one on top of the other and before you looked around, they toppled down, crashing on your head with the impact of an atomic bomb."[34] *Ribono Shel Olam* alone took him forty-five minutes to sing.

David Moshe Steinberg

Steinberg was born in Kishinev and lived from 1870 to 1941. His father was a *ba'al t'fillah* in Kishinev, and his son was considered to be a prodigy.

Steinberg was a lyric tenor with a fast coloratura and good falsetto. He and others, including Yossele Rosenblatt, recorded his music. "Many contemporaries felt that he was superior to Rosenblatt in his use of falsetto which he rendered effortlessly from forte to pianissimo on a high Bb."[35]

Steinberg's first cantorial position was in Russia, followed by service in Odessa where Rozumni heard him sing. He appeared in the film *Hear, of Israel!* along with Rosenblatt, Adolph Katchko and others.

Jacob Rapaport

Rapaport was born in Telenesht, Bessarabia and lived from 1890 until 1943. His father was a rabbi, a seventh generation descendant of the Baal Shem Tov. Because of this, Rapaport grew up steeped in Hasidic knowledge. The family fled to Tshartkov, Galicia after the Kishinev Pogrom of 1903.

He studied with Zeidel Rovner as a child (he was "kidnapped" for the choir by Rovner), and at eighteen made his cantorial debut in Hungary. Rapaport left for America and became choirmaster at Congregation Ohab Zedek in New York City. He went to Temple Beth-El in Boro Park in 1915, staying for five years.

After also serving in Hartford, Connecticut and the Lower East Side, Rapaport concentrated on composition, especially cantorial recitatives. He wrote for himself and for others, and is considered one of the great recitative composers due to his ability to

Dovid Moshe Steinberg

Ruth Rubin.

Moshe Oysher

write for a specific individual's voice. He had a good tenor voice, but received much more *kavod* for his compositions.

According to Hazzan Jack Mendelson, both Moshe Ganchoff and Noah Schall used his recitatives extensively, and Mordecai Hershman used them exclusively. Schall gives credit in his books of hazzanut to Rapaport, but Ganchoff had a habit of claiming these recitatives as his own creations.

Leib Glantz

Glantz was born in Kiev, Ukraine, and lived from 1898 to 1964. He toured Russia with his father, Kalman Glantz, who was also a cantor and a Talna Hasid. Glantz had a high tenor voice and was able to sing high notes without the use of falsetto. He was an excellent musician and learned Jew, and was able to combine these traits in his original prayer compositions. Glantz sang for six years in Kishinev (1920-1926); previously he studied there with Kalechnick.

Kalman Glantz died in Kishinev in 1923. Leib knew his father's niggunim and arranged one of them, *D'ror Yikra*, for voice and piano. Glantz left for the United States after Kishinev, and served from 1926 to 1954 at a variety of shuls. He then settled in Tel Aviv, where he founded an academy for training cantors. He recorded many albums of hazzanut, folk and Hasidic songs, and niggunim.

Moyshe Oysher

Oysher lived from 1907 to 1958. He was born in Lipcon, Bessarabia, and immigrated to Canada in 1921. Oysher joined his first Yiddish theater company there, and then moved to New York City. After returning from a tour of Buenos Aires in 1932, he decided to become a hazzan like his father and grandfather.

Cantor Shabtai Ackerman

Jacob Bachman
(1846-1905)

Nisson Blumental
(1805-1902)

Irene Heskes said that he was "...a robust tenor who bridged liturgy to mainstream theater, performing on Broadway in "The Jazz Singer..."[36] Even though he was comfortable as a theater performer, he would not perform on Shabbat. He also had the lead in "The Vilner Balabessl". Oysher wrote both liturgical music and texts for Jewish folk songs, and employed distinct Romanian elements in his singing.

Oysher's sister Freidele, born in 1912, also learned hazzanut from her father and sang on the radio. She married Joseph Sternberger, otherwise known as Yossele Bass.

The following cantors and musicians are also important in Bessarabian history:

Shabtai Ackerman

Shabtai Ackerman was born in Kishinev, and studied at the local conservatory there with David Roitman and Abraham Kalechnick. At the age of sixteen he was guest cantor at the Great Synagogue in Kishinev. He was wounded during World War II by the Nazis, and became a refugee in Russia; while there he chanted in the Great Moscow Synagogue. Ackerman was able to flee to Romania after the war, and became cantor at the Baron de Rothschild Synagogue, later serving in Bucharest. After Russia occupied Romania, he left for Israel and served in Tel Aviv.

Ackerman toured the United States in 1955 and served as cantor in Detroit, Michigan.

Jacob Bachman

Bachman was born in Kishinev in 1846. His father apprenticed him to a textile store, where he frequently sang while working. One day a wealthy merchant from Odessa heard him, and prevailed upon Bachman's family to let him journey with him

back to Odessa to sing for the *Betzalel Odessa'er*. Bachman became his student, and then a meshorer to Yankel Gottlieb, who was not much older than he at the time. They traveled together around Bessarabia, Poland and Lithuania, giving concerts and services.

Bachman heard Moshe Pasternak sing during his travels and was influenced by his style. Bachman's original mentor from Odessa then paid for him to go to the St. Petersburg Conservatory. Anton Rubinstein was director of the school during this period, and took Bachman on as a special project, grooming him as an opera singer and accomplished musician.

He successfully performed secular concerts but decided to return to synagogue music. He officiated in Rostov on the Don, Lemberg, Berditchev, and Constantinople. Bachman was then offered a co-position with Pitze Abrass at Yevrevsky Synagogue in Odessa. It turned out to be a politically manipulated situation, and a feud ensued between them. Upon Abrass' death, Bachman was accused of causing it by his presence there. He then alternated with Rozumni at the same shul. Finally fed up with the machinations and intrigues, he left for Budapest where he spent the remainder of his career. Minkowsky took his place in Odessa.

Bachman was a capable composer, and taught at the Budapest Conservatory. He died at the age of fifty-nine in 1905 from illness.

Nissan Blumenthal

Blumenthal lived from 1805 to 1903, and spent his early years in Iasi, Romania, on the Bessarabian border. He officiated in Berditchev and then in Odessa at the Broder Synagogue. Many younger cantors studied with him during their early years. Pinchas Minkowski succeeded Blumenthal in Odessa.

Cantor Joshua Dlin

Cantor Nathan Muchnick

Yoma Dinovitzer

Dinovitzer was born in Russia in 1865 and was raised in Uryiev, near Kishinev. He attended a Kishinev yeshiva and sang in Zeidel Rovner's choir. He was cantor first in Uryiev and then in Kishinev. Afterward he served at the Lemnerya Synagogue, the shul of the chief rabbi of Bessarabia at that time. "Reb Yonah Dinovitzer was one of the last of the great Cantors and teachers of Hazzanuth in Bessarabia who attracted many gifted young talents..."[37] Dinovitzer died in 1923.

Joshua Dlin

Dlin was born in Bessarabia in 1907. He was considered to be a child prodigy at the age of seven, and toured Bessarabia as a child. He became cantor at the Aker Synagogue in Kishinev in 1926. Dlin "...organized and appeared at a cantorial concert in aid of publishing the works of Kalachnick (Bercovitch) at which all the cantors of Romania officiated."[38] He left for Tel Aviv in 1939, and became Chief Cantor at the Great Synagogue there, also serving in the Israeli Army during the War of Independence. Dlin then immigrated to Montreal in 1948, and became cantor at Beth David, replacing Efrayim Schliepack upon his death.

Shalom Katz

Katz was born in Romania and studied in Vienna. He was Chief Cantor in Kishinev before World War II, and also concertized and recorded. Katz won a Prix de Disque in 1950.

Boris Levenson

Levenson was a composer and conductor who was born in Bessarabia in 1884. He studied at the St. Petersburg Conservatory with Glazunov and Rimski-Korsakov, and

immigrated to the United States in 1921. Some of his compositions include *Fantasy on Two Hebrew Themes* (which was recorded by the New York Philharmonic in 1936), *Palestine; a Hebrew Suite* and *Hebrew Fantasy*.[39] He died in 1947.

Nathan Muchnick

Muchnick was born in Bessarabia in 1923 to a family of rabbis and cantors. "In his youth, he was surrounded by the greatest cantors of the Bessarabian area. World War I had brought there many cantorial artists, who came from stormy centers, where revolution and pogroms had broken out."[40]

Muchnick immigrated to the United States and studied at the New York School of Music, Yeshivah Torah Ve'dat, and received a doctorate at City College. He also studied with Zeidel Rovner. He was an officer during World War II, and afterward served as cantor in New York and Lynn, Massachusetts. He also was a radiologist. In 1965 he became President of the Jewish Ministers Cantors' Association of America and Canada. Muchnick has the further distinction of being the great-uncle of David Muchnick, graduate of the School of Sacred Music at HUC-JIR, class of 2000.

Ruth Rubin

Rubin was born in Khotin, Bessarabia in 1906, and was raised in Montreal, Canada. She was a researcher, author and singer. She primarily researched Yiddish folk songs of Eastern Europe and recorded them. Her works include *A Treasury of Jewish Folksong* (1950) and *Voices of a People: The Story of Yiddish Folksong* (1963). Her archives are at the Haifa Music Museum and Library, which was established in 1967.

Joseph Sternberger (Yossele Bass)

Sternberger was born in Karpatch, Bessarabia, and sang as a meshorer under Kalechnick in Kishinev, Hakaton in Berditchev, Nisi Belzer in Belz, Rozumni in Odessa and Baruch Schorr in Lemberg. He was therefore in a unique position to learn from the masters, and know both their strengths and weaknesses. Due to this, he was later an invaluable source of information for such researchers as Vinaver and Vigoda.

Sternberger occasionally worked as a hazzan. He came to the United States in 1922 and married Freidele Oysher, the sister of Moshe Oysher and a Jewish singer in her own right.

Shalom Weinstein

Weinstein was born in Bessarabia, and sang in the choir of Leib Glantz. He also sang in Belz, and officiated at the age of seventeen in Bucharest. In 1930 he moved to Canada and served there.

The following are other hazzanim who came from Bessarabia:[41]

Jacob Joseph Altman, born in Kishinev, immigrated to the United States in 1906 and served at various Bronx congregations. He was also a Yiddish radio announcer.

Harry Brockman was born in Kishinev in 1904, and became the cantor at Beth Elohim in the Bronx.

Benjamin Brownstone was born in Bessarabia in 1888, and immigrated to Winnipeg, Canada in 1921. He was a composer, critic, and choir conductor.

Nachman Joseph Ginsparg, born in Kishinev, became cantor at Anshei Sefarad in Boro Park.

Isaac G. Glickstein, born in Kishinev, came to the United States in 1923 and was cantor at Mishkan Tefillah in Roxbury, Massachusetts. He was also President of the New England Chapter of the Jewish Ministers and Cantors Association.

Leibl Malamut was born in 1905 in Soroki, Bessarabia and immigrated to the United States in 1927. He served in the Bronx. His father Pinie (Pinchas) was a Hasidic cantor in Soroki, Bessarabia.

Meir Chaim Milman was born in 1893 in Bichany, Bessarabia, and came to the United States in 1927. He was Cantor at Poalei Zedek Congregation in Philadelphia.

Solomon Rothstein came to New York from Bessarabia when he was nine, served in Brooklyn and made several recordings.

Aaron Isaac Steinberg was born in Kishinev where his father, Abraham Steinberg, was a cantor. Aaron Steinberg became an opera singer with the Royal Opera of Bucharest, Romania, and later was Cantor with Temple Mount Zion in Philadelphia.

Others cantors from nineteenth and twentieth century Bessarabia include: William Bogzester; Shlomo Bronstein from Kishinev; Judah Leib Gangurski from Kishinev; Zev Wolf Gorchberg from Talenesht; Isaac Icht from Kishinev; Jacob Reman from Belz; Yaakov Spivak from Saroka; Zusie Taraspoler from the Kishinev district; Morris Wolf from Britzane; Kalman Zaslovski from Belz; and Mayer Ber Zeltser from Markuleshtey.

Chapter Five - Endnotes

[1] Vigoda, Samuel. *Legendary voices: the fascinating lives of the great cantors.* (New York: Cantor S. Vigoda, c.1981), 247.
[2] Ibid., 252.
[3] Ibid., 253.
[4] Ibid., 195.
[5] Idelsohn, Abraham Z. *Jewish Music.* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1929), 303-304.
[6] Vigoda, 33.
[7] Idelsohn, 306.
[8] Nulman, Macy. *Concise Encyclopedia of Jewish Music.* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1975), 237.
[9] Vigoda, 258.
[10] Ibid., 68.
[11] Pasternak, Velvel and Schall, Noah. *The Golden Age of Cantors.* (Tara Publications, 1991), 21.
[12] Saminsky, Lazare. *Music of the Ghetto and the Bible.* (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1934), 46.
[13] Vigoda, 212.
[14] Heskes, Irene, Editor. *The Cantorial Art.* (New York: National Jewish Music Council of the National Jewish Welfare Board, 1966), 16.
[15] Vigoda, 269.
[16] Ibid., 221.
[17] Ibid., 240.
[18] Ibid., 244.
[19] Ibid., 315.
[20] Email from Eliyahu Schleifer, Summer 2000.
[21] Vigoda, 320.
[22] Ibid., 189.
[23] Stolnitz, Rev. Nathan. *On Wings of Song.* (Toronto: Artistic Printing Co., Ltd., 1968), 16.
[24] Vigoda, 190.
[25] Ibid., 193.
[26] Slobin, Mark. *Chosen Voices: the Story of the American Cantorate.* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 60.
[27] Vigoda, 93.
[28] Ibid., 118.
[29] Ibid., 100.
[30] Ibid., 283.
[31] Ibid., 54.
[32] Pasternak and Schall, 22.
[33] Vigoda, 342.
[34] Ibid., 343.
[35] Pasternak and Schall, 23.

Endnotes Continued

[36] Heskes, Irene. *Passport to Jewish Music: Its History, Traditions, and Culture.* (New York: Tara Publications with Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 1994), 64.
[37] Stolnitz, 130.
[38] Ibid., 99.
[39] Nulman, 151.
[40] Stolnitz, 93.
[41] Email from Eliyahu Schleifer, Spring, 2000.

Conclusion

Cantors who serve synagogues in America today are part of a continuum that goes back to those wonderful nineteenth and early twentieth century hazzanim who sang in Bessarabia. The history of Jewish settlement in Eastern Europe, with its political and social implications, shaped these cantors' sound and their need to sing. These men in turn taught new young cantors and they in turn moved to America and passed along their art and knowledge to today's cantors.

There are many cantors who have lived and worked in other major centers of Europe, such as Vilna, Berlin and Vienna. However, the sound that we associate so deeply with the "Great Cantorate" was the one practiced within a triangle of Russian cities: Berditchev, Odessa and Kishinev. Although Kishinev was smaller and less glamorous a destination for hazzanim, it was nevertheless a crucial stop in their cantorial journey. The Jewish citizens of Kishinev were great fans and astute listeners; one had to please them to move upward.

Bessarabia was a repository of different cultures and musical sounds, and these non-Jewish elements greatly influenced our hazzanut. We literally sing Romanian dances, Gypsy melodies and Ukrainian songs while we pray, and they were all to be found in this small country near the edge of the Black Sea. Like Israel, Bessarabia for millennia was a throughway for the great migrations of people and conquerors. Each left its imprint there, a place that is both East and West in its history.

Yerochom Blindman taught Nisi Belzer and Zeidel Rovner and so many others who were his meshorerim. They in turn taught their choirboys, who went on to compose, conduct and sing. Many made it to America in the first half of the twentieth century and have been instrumental in forming the backbone of the American cantorate. The

cantorial faculties of Hebrew Union College, Yeshiva University and Jewish Theological Seminary are all musical descendants of those men.

I am fortunate to study with Noah Schall, who knew so many of these cantors personally, and Israel Goldstein, whose mentor was Moshe Ganchoff, himself a beneficiary of the older cantorate. Jack Mendelson studied as a boy with William Bogzester. If we trace our cantorial influences back to the nineteenth century, they will lead eventually to Bessarabia.

I am also grateful that the Shermet side of my family had the courage and foresight to leave Eastern Europe in the early 1900's. One can mourn a lost culture and way of life, but it would not have lasted in any case, as all cultures adapt or die. Jewish music has gathered elements from its surroundings since the beginning and will continue to do so. At the core of our prayer today, however, runs this musical thread from a very small land.

Bibliography
Primary Sources

Alman, Samuel, Editor and Arranger. *Shirei Rozumni – A Volume of Recitatives sung by the late Solomon Rozumni.* London: M.L. Cailingold, 1930.

Belarsky, Sidor. *Sidor Belarsky Songbook.* New York: Ethnic Music Publishers, Inc., 1970.

Berkowitsch, Abraham (Kalechnick). Private Collection of Compositions, courtesy of Cantor Noah Schall.

Bogzester, William. *Habet Mishomayim Ur'ei.* New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1949.

Curtis, Mike. *The Klezmer Repertoire.* Rottenberg, Germany: Advance Music, 1996.

Ephros, Gershon, Editor. *Cantorial Anthology,* Vol. I. New York: Transcontinental Music Publications, Seventh Printing, [1929], 1972.

----------Vol. 2. New York: Bloch Publishing Company, Fifth Printing, [940], 1977.

----------Vol. 3. New York: Transcontinental Music Publications, Fourth Printing, 1975, 1948.

----------Vol. 4. New York: Bloch Publishing Company, Third Printing, 1976, 1952.

----------Vol. 5. New York: Bloch Publishing Company, Second Printing, 1973, 1957.

----------Vol. 6. New York: Transcontinental Music Publications, 1977.

Ganchoff, Moshe, Edited by Schall, Noah. *T'filot Moshe.* New York: Cantors Assembly, 1988.

Goldstein, Israel. Conversations held throughout the year 2000.

Kalisch, Shoshana. *Yes, We Sang!* New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1985.

Kilemnik, Jehudah. Private Collection of compositions, courtesy of Cantor Noah Schall.

Mendelson, Jacob. Conversations held throughout the year 2000.

Mlotek, Eleanor Gordon and Mlotek, Joseph, Compilers. *Pearls of Yiddish Song.* New York: Published by Education Dept. of The Workmen's Circle, 1988.

Mlotek, Eleanor Gordon. *Mirtrogn a Gezang – The New book of Yiddish Songs.* New York: Published By The Workmen's Circle Education Dept., 1972; Second and

Enlarged Edition by Waldon Press, Inc., 1977.

Mlotek, Eleanor and Joseph. *Songs of Generations – New Pearls of Yiddish Song.* New York: Workmen's Circle, 1997.

Netsky, Hankus. Email and phone conversations in Spring, 2000.

Pasternak, Velvel and Schall, Noah, Editors. *The Golden Age of Cantors.* Cedarhurst, New York: Tara Publications, 1991.

Pasternak, Velvel, Editor. *Songs of the Chassidim II.* New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1971.

Rosenzweig, Joyce, Editor. *Grosse Heft.* New York: Hebrew Union College, compiled during 1990's.

Schall, Noah. Conversations held throughout the year 2000.

Schleifer, Eliyahu. Email correspondence throughout the year 2000.

Silverman, Jerry. *The Yiddish Song Book.* Briarcliff Manor, NY: Stein and Day Publishers, 1983.

Vinaver, Chemjo. *Anthology of Hassidic Music.* Edited by Eliyahu Schleifer. Jerusalem: The Jewish Music Research Centre, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1985.

---------- *Anthology of Jewish Music.* New York: Edward B. Marks Music Corporation, 1955.

Tapes and Compact Discs

Barry Sisters. *Their Greatest Yiddish Hits.* Los Angeles: Hatikvah Music International, 1997.

Glantz, Leib. *Prayer and Song.* Chicago: Recorded 1940-1958, Musique Internationale.

----------*The Best Cantorial Works of Cantor Leib Glantz.* Brooklyn: Greater Recording Company, Inc., 1973.

Mendelson, Jacob Ben-Zion. *10th Anniversary Cantorial Concert.* White Plains, NY: Temple Israel Center, 1996.

Mlotek, Eleanor and Zalmen. *Mir Trogn a Gezang.* New York: The Workmen's Circle, 1998.

Pasternak, Velvel and Schall, Noah, Editors. *The Golden Age of Cantors.*

Oysher, Moishe. *A Gala Concert.* Greater Recording Company, Inc., 1973.

YIVO. Collection of 78 rpm recordings onto cassette. New York: August, 2000.

Bibliography
Secondary Sources

Adler, Cyrus, Editor. *Voice of America on Kishineff.* Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1904.

American Jewish Yearbook. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society for the American Jewish Committee, *5662* (1901-2),

Aronson, I. Michael. *Troubled Waters: The Origins of the 1881 Anti-Jewish Pogroms in Russia.* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990.

Avenary, Hanoch. *The Ashkenazi Tradition of Biblical Chant between 1500 and 1900: Document and musical analysis.* Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, Council for Culture & Art, Ministry of Education and Culture, 1978.

----------*Encyclopædia Judaica,* "Music" Jerusalem: The MacMillan Company, Keter Publishing House Ltd., 1971.

"Bessarabia", *The World Book Encyclopædia,* Vol. B2. Chicago: World Book, Inc., 1999.

Braham, Randolph L., Editor. *The Tragedy of Romanian Jewry.* New York: Rosenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies, CUNY, Distributed by Columbia University Press, 1994.

----------*The Destruction of Romanian and Ukrainian Jews During the Antonescu Era.* New York: Rosenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies, CUNY; Social Science Monographs, Boulder; Columbia University Press, 1997.

Bugatch, Samuel. *The Yiddish Folk Song and its Importance to Jewish Music.* New York: Schulsinger Brothers, c.1962.

Butnaru, I.C. *The Silent Holocaust – Romania and its Jews.* New York: Greenwood Press, 1992.

Cohan, Y.L., Collector; Weinreich, Max, Editor. *Yiddish Folksongs with Melodies.* New York: YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 1957.

Davidowicz, Lucy S., Editor. *The Golden Tradition – Jewish Life and Thought in Eastern Europe.* North Vale, NJ: Jason Aronson, Inc., [1967], 1989.

Dubnow, S.M., translated by I. Friedlaender. *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland,* Vols. I, II, III. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1916.

Encyclopedia Judaica, Vol. 12, cols. 595-715. Jerusalem: The MacMillan Company, Keter Publishing House, Ltd., 1971.

Feldman, Walter Z., "Bulgareasca/Bulgarish/Bulgar: The Transformation of a Klezmer Dance Genre." Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois, University of Pennsylvania, Winter, 1994, Vol. 38, No.1

Feuer, Cantor Joseph, Editor. *Golden Jubilee Journal, 50th Anniversary Journal.* New York: Jewish Ministers Cantor's Association of America, Inc., 1947

Fischoff, Ephraim and Lavi, Theodor. *Encyclopedia Judaica,* Vol. 4, Col. 477. Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, Ltd., [1972], 1978.

Hammond *New Century World Atlas.* Canada: Hammond World Atlas Corporation, 2000.

Heskes, Irene, Editor. *The Cantorial Art.* New York: National Jewish Music Council, 1966.

----------*Passport to Jewish Music: Its History, Traditions, and Culture.* New York: Tara Publications in arrangement with Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 1994.

----------*The Resource Book on Jewish Music.* Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1985.

----------*The Cantorial Art.* New York: National Jewish Music Council of the National Jewish Welfare Board, 1966.

Heskes, Irene and Wolfson, Arthur, Editors. *The Historic Contribution of Russian Jewry to Jewish Music.* New York: National Jewish Music Council of the National Jewish Welfare Board, 1967.

Holde, Arthur, edited by Heskes, Irene. *Jews in Music.* New York: New Edition, Bloch Publishing Company, [1959], 1974.

Iancu, Carol. *Jews in Romania, 1866-1919: from exclusion to emancipation.* Translated by Carvel de Bussy. Boulder: East European Monographs, Distributed by Columbia University Press, 1966.

Idelsohn, Abraham Z. *Jewish Music.* New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1929. Reprint Schoken Books, 1956.

----------*Thesaurus of Hebrew Oriental Melodies,* Vols. 8-10. Jerusalem: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1973.

Jewish Ministers Cantors' Association. *Fortieth Jubilee Yearbook.* New York: 1937.

Labin, Saniel. *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. 6.* New York: Universal Jewish Encyclopedia Company, Inc., 1942/1948.

Landman, Isaac, Editor. *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* Vols. 2. New York: Universal Jewish Encyclopedia Co., Inc., 1940, 1948.

Landman, Leo. *The Cantor: an historic perspective; a study of the origin, communal position, and function of the hazzan.* New York: Yeshiva University, 1972.

Lavi, Theodor. "Bessarabia", *Encyclopædia Judaica, Vol. 4:B.* Jerusalem: The MacMillan Company, Keter Publishing House Ltd., 1971, Cols.. 704-708.

Lestschinsky, Jacob. *The Universal Jewish Encyclopædia, Vol. 2.* New York: Edited by Isaac Landman, 1940, pp.244-248.

Levine, Joseph A. *Synagogue Song in America.* Crown Point, IN: White Cliffs Media Company, c.1989.

Levitats, Isaac. *The Jewish Community in Russia, 1844-1917.* Jerusalem: Posner and Songs, Ltd., 1981.

Magocsi, Paul Robert; Matthews, Geoffrey J., cartographer. *Ukraine, an historical atlas.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, c.1985.

Nulman, Macy. *Concise Encyclopedia of Jewish Music.* New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1975.

Rosen, Aaron H., Editor. *The History of Hazanuth.* New York: 30th Anniversary of Jewish Ministers Cantor's Assoc. of America, 1924.

Rubin, Ruth. *Voices of a People.* New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Second Edition, 1973.

---------- (Edited by) *Jewish Folk Songs.* New York: Oak Publications, 2nd Printing, 1965.

Saminsky, Lazare. *Music of the Ghetto and the Bible.* New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1934.

Sendrey, Alfred. *Bibliography of Jewish Music.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1951.

Shiloah, Amnon. *Jewish Musical Traditions.* Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992.

Slobin, Mark. *Chosen Voices: the Story of the American Cantorate.* Urbana and

Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989.

Stanislawski, Michael. *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews: The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia – 1825-1855.* Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1983.

Sternberg, Ghitta. *Stefanesti, Portrait of a Romanian Shtetl.* Exeter, Great Britain: A. Wheaton & Co., Ltd., 1984.

Stolnitz, Rev. Nathan. *On Wings of Song...* " Toronto: Artistic Printing Co., Ltd., 1968

Turabian, Kate. *A Manual for Writers.* Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, Sixth Edition, 1996, 1937.

Vigoda, Samuel. *Legendary voices: the fascinating lives of the great cantors.* New York: Cantor S. Vigoda, c.1981.

Weiner, Miriam. *Jewish Roots in Ukraine and Moldava: Pages from the past and Archival Inventories.* New York: YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 1999.

Weisser, Albert. *The Modern Renaissance of Jewish Music.* New York: Bloch Publishing Company, Inc., 1954.

Index of Maps and Photographs