



LIBRARY COPYRIGHT NOTICE

www.huc.edu/libraries

Regulated Warning

See Code of Federal Regulations, Title 37, Volume 1, Section 201.14:

The copyright law of the United States (title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material.

Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specific conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be “used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research.” If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of “fair use,” that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law.

Conversion & Ordination:
An Exploration of Performative and
Liminal Transformations through Ritual and Music

Emily Hoolihan Short, MSM & MAJNM

Senior Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
for Cantorial Ordination and Master of Sacred Music Degree

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

Due Date: March 2, 2023

Written Project Advisor: Rabbi Kim Geringer

Table of Contents

Introduction

I. Overview of Performance Studies Lens

A. Ritual

B. Liminality

II. Conversion

A. History & Background

B. Individual & Process

C. Ritual

III. Ordination

A. History & Background

B. Individual & Process

C. Ritual

IV. Results of Research

A. Description of Seminaries

B. Comparative Analysis of Ordination Ceremonies

C. Analysis of Interviews

V. Musical Tradition & Recommendations

A. Ordination Liturgy

B. Conversion Liturgy

Conclusion

Appendix

Bibliography

Abstract

This thesis examines ordination and conversion life cycle rituals through the lenses of performance theory, liminality, and musical soundscapes. Beginning with an Introduction and ending with a Conclusion, there are five main chapters that comprise this work. Chapter I offers an introduction to ritual and liminality, followed by Chapters II and III, which closely examine the rituals themselves. Chapter IV discusses the results of interviews I conducted with individuals who had participated in these rituals, while Chapter V considers musical selections that could be adopted for each ceremony. I considered these two rituals as individualized ceremonies that often function within larger, communal moments. I was particularly interested in the relationship between the individual, private moments, and the communal experience. How might each inform the other? The individual enters the ritual and exits with a changed status. This transition through liminal space, within a fixed, sacred rite of passage, holds rich opportunities for musical exploration and meaningful spiritual discovery.

My methodology includes textual research on the two life cycle rituals, interviews with individuals who have undergone one or both of them, and a study of the liturgical and secular music that could accompany them. I utilized books, articles, a selection of master's theses on similar topics, as well as reference websites. My big questions were about how an individual's transformation takes place and what the musical soundscape of the ritual that marks that transition might look like. I charted the transformative journey through a three-pronged approach, looking at the individual, the process, and the ritual itself. An important goal was to craft a musical soundscape for these two rituals, highlighting the repertoire through my senior

recital, while evaluating them through a performance and liminality lens. I hope I have opened a new door into the literature and wisdom about these Jewish rituals.

Introduction

When my father converted to Judaism in 1993, it changed the trajectory of my family's life forever. He chose and committed to a life driven by Jewish values and traditions. As a result, my parents decided to only have Jewish holidays in our home, and to raise their children solely in the Jewish faith. As a Jewish leader, I have always been drawn to the power of choice and how that manifests in our everyday actions. What inspires someone to choose Judaism, whether as someone born Jewish or not? This important question was one of many that helped me to choose the topics of ordination and conversion rituals for my thesis. Someone who decides to undertake one or both of these rituals should recognize the inherent responsibility within each transformation. A person who chooses Judaism embraces the commandments given to the Jewish people and chooses to live their life abiding by these values. A person who chooses to become Jewish clergy assumes the immense responsibility of being a spiritual teacher and pastoral presence in the lives of their Jewish community members. So I wondered: how might further research about the rituals that mark these choices be relevant to us today?

Both ordination and conversion rituals have been well researched in a historical framework, but the literature examining the music and ritual structures themselves has left much to be desired. This thesis begins in Chapter I by presenting the groundwork for understanding ritual and liminality through a lens of performance theory. My goal was to analyze these two rituals as transformative rites of passage, considering the different phases of personal development that an individual embarking on these transitions goes through. Chapters II and III open with a historical background and framing of the two rituals, followed by a review of the development of an individual's processes and the liminal journey they go on. Chapter IV offers detailed comparative descriptions of ordination and conversion practices among several

progressive Jewish communities. The research focuses on firsthand witnessing of ordination and conversion ceremonies, along with interviews with clergy, Jews by Choice, and scholars and professionals of the progressive movements of Judaism.

Chapter V offers musical recommendations for both ordination and conversion rituals. My goal was to offer a deeper understanding of the musical soundscape behind these rituals, or the lack thereof. In doing so, I decided to become a *mikveh* guide through Mayyim Hayyim, a Jewish non-profit organization dedicated to making *mikveh* accessible for everyone, regardless of denomination, ability, or gender. The course I took ushered me into a deep learning of immersion and how it can play a meaningful role in both of these rituals. I explored how we might offer a private moment at the *mikveh*, complemented with music that fits the mood and tone of either ritual. Grappling with this challenge began my journey of exploring how liturgical texts, set to music, could mark this covenantal shift in status as someone becomes a Jew; it also helped me develop part of my senior recital repertoire. The same can be said about ordination, when the student becomes the teacher. In climbing up the steps of the *bima* to the ark, the student receives a blessing that bridges their transformation from student to clergy. How might we choose liturgical settings that mark this sacred moment of time, personalize it for each candidate, and celebrate the enormous milestone witnessed by the people of Israel and the Divine?

Finally, the Conclusion focuses on what is still missing from these rituals and suggests areas of research for further exploration. Learning is never complete, of course, and there are always ways we can continue to grow in our knowledge and expertise. It is my hope that, as a result of this research, the larger academic community, both Jewish and non-Jewish, will now have access to a beautiful mosaic of Jewish liturgy analyzed through a performance studies lens, and that this thesis can provide the groundwork for creating intentional sacred moments within

ordination and conversion rituals. Just as Rabbi Abraham Joshua Herschel once spoke of Shabbat as “a palace in time,” we might consider these two rituals in the same light. Exploring these sacred rites of passage and understanding the metaphysical status change that individuals undergo will help us to better understand all Jewish rituals better.

Chapter I: Overview of Performance Studies Lens

Performance Studies is an academic discipline in which the world is studied through the lens of performance. “Performance” includes a broad spectrum of activities, such as sports, rituals (religious and secular), the performing arts, entertainment, and even the actions of everyday life. One can look at almost anything as “performance,” studying the behavior, actions, and embodiment of the activity. Performance Studies is also an inclusive, interdisciplinary field that has challenged patriarchal and colonized cultures, leaving space for marginalized and underserved communities. For example, scholars have utilized performance theory to better understand developing nations/cultures and their ritual practices, without interfering in their traditions or appropriating their customs. Performance Studies scholar Victor Turner planned a “World Conference on Ritual and Performance” in 1981, focused on the performances of the Yaquis of northern Mexico and the American Southwest, as well as the work of Suzuki Tadashi, the founding director of the Suzuki Company of Toga, a Japanese theatre troupe from the coast of Japan. This conference sought to learn from these cultures and communities in an educational setting, without overstepping and influencing their rituals. Turner wrote, “A performance is declarative of our shared humanity, yet it utters the uniqueness of particular cultures. We will know one another better by entering one another’s performances and learning their grammars and vocabularies.”¹ Ultimately, Performance Studies is designed to simultaneously adjust and contribute to the changing world around us.

This thesis focuses on embodied performance of rituals, in which “to perform” refers to the “being” of the ritual, or existence itself, and the “doing” of the ritual, the activity that is being performed. Ritual can be defined as a collection of memories encoded into actions, performative

¹ Richard Schechner and Sara Brady. “Chapter 1: What Is Performance Studies.” Essay. In *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. London: Routledge, 2013. 20.

and structural.² According to Émile Durkheim, “Rituals are not ideas or abstractions, but performances enacting known patterns of behavior and texts.”³ There are two main types of rituals, secular and religious. This thesis focuses on religious rituals and, more specifically, rituals that accomplish a permanent, personal transformation, known as a rite of passage.

There are four approaches to ritual considered in this analysis. First, I examine the structure of ordination and conversion rituals. What do they look like and sound like? How are they enacted in space? Who performs them? Second, I analyze the functions of these two rituals. What do they accomplish for the individuals performing or involved in them, the community, and the overall culture? Third, I look at the processes behind the rituals. What is the underlying dynamic behind the rituals, and how are they justified to create change? Lastly, I consider the experience itself. What is it like to be a participant in the ritual, as opposed to a bystander or facilitator? Ritual “as performance” is at the center of this research. As Roy A. Rappaport writes in his book, Ecology, Meaning, and Religion, “Without performance, there is no ritual, no liturgical order.”⁴

The final element of my ritual analysis is the lens of liminality. Liminality is defined by Victor Turner as a period of time in which a person is *betwixt and between* personal identities or social categories. Ceremonial rituals, such as ordination and conversion, mark a moment in time when an individual passes from one defined identity to another. The liminal period is likened to being in limbo, sleep, or even death.⁵ Liminality has a three-fold structure, three phases through

² Ibid, 52.

³ Ibid, 57.

⁴ Ibid, 191.

⁵ Victor W. Turner. “Chapter 3: Liminality and Communitas.” Essay. In *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969. 95.

which an individual moves from one defined identity to the next.⁶ There is the preliminal phase, where no transition or change has yet taken place. The middle section is the liminal phase, in which sacred transformations and actions are performed and take on power. The final phase is the post liminal phase, where the individual has been transformed, and a permanent change of status and identity is claimed, acknowledged, and displayed.

The liminal frame accomplishes two things. First, an individual undergoing the ritual temporarily becomes “*nothing* and is put into a state of extreme vulnerability where they are open to change.”⁷ The journey from oneself to another is a process marked by vulnerability and openness to change. Second, the person participates in a ritual, is endowed with a new identity, and claims the new power or status accompanying that identity. This liminal phase uses objects and actions that take on significance beyond their practical use. A few other terms must be defined to better understand the liminal phase. The “*limen*” is the threshold that becomes the passageway between places and identities. An example of this would be the *bima* of a synagogue, where life cycle events take place. This threshold is suspended in time and space, yet it remains a passageway for ritual transformation. It is framed by a “*lintel*,” which outlines the emptiness, such as the physical framing surrounding the *bima* and ark.

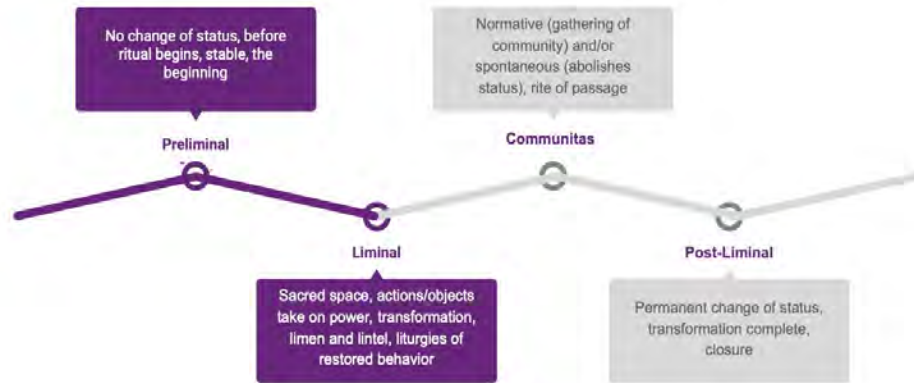
Additionally, a “*liminoid*” represents the symbolic actions or activities that serve a function similar to the rituals themselves. An example would be the Torah service where a scroll is paraded around, giving congregants the chance to kiss and touch this sacred object. The time between the liminal phase and the post liminal phase can be described by the term “*communitas*,” in which there is either a normative community gathering to mark the

⁶ Richard Schechner and Sara Brady. “Chapter 1: What Is Performance Studies.” Essay. In *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. London: Routledge, 2013. 59.

⁷ Ibid, 66.

transformation or a spontaneous abolishment of status generated by the ritual process. For example, normative *communitas* happens when an entire congregation joins together saying the words of the *Sh'ma*. The *communitas* is official and imposed upon the community, even if not every person in the room feels connected to the text. Spontaneous *communitas* is much less common, taking place often inside a ritual process. An example of this would be a *tish* at a traditional Jewish wedding, where men are on one side, dancing and celebrating with the Rebbe, moving in a “group-think” style mentality, setting aside formality and normative roles.

The purpose of this thesis is to consider how rituals might be seen *as* performance, not performance itself, by recognizing that those performing said rituals are not impersonating others. The ritual is expressly for the individuals enacting it. The meaning and consequence of ritual can be authentic without a theatrical frame, further distinguishing a ritual from a theatrical performance. Despite these differences, ritualists are frequently judged by bystanders and participants on the basis of their performative skills. The charisma of a ritualist can be compared to the presence of an actor in this way. Furthermore, the symbolic actions that take place in a ritual are often connected to what one might call “liturgies.” Through a performance studies lens, “liturgies” are defined as sequences of publicly performed symbolic behaviors expressing meaning shared by the performers and receivers. The flowchart below is a visual representation of the liminal process:



Chapter II: Conversion

History & Background

Conversion rituals have existed for as long as Jews have existed. Many scholars call the biblical Abraham and Sarah the first informal converts, since they themselves were the first Jews. In Genesis chapter 12, Abram and Sarai leave their home for the land God has intended for them. The Hebrew reads, **וְאֵשֶׁר רָכְשׁוּ וְאֶת־הַנֶּפֶשׁ וְאֶת־כָּל־רְכוּשָׁם**, pointing to the souls that Abram and Sarai gathered on their journey. In his book, Conversion to Judaism: A Guidebook, Lawrence J. Epstein suggests that this is the first instance of Jews welcoming the stranger into Jewish peoplehood.⁸ In biblical times, an individual became Jewish without a formal ritual; instead, they were only required to give up paganism and accept the practices of the Jewish community, like Ruth. For most converts, this meant joining a people with a distinct religious view and practice.

Throughout history, views on conversion have shifted, sometimes politicized by the era or moment. Until the Common Era, Judaism welcomed converts and rarely proselytized. In Judaism, the God of the Israelites is not only the God of the Jewish faith, but also the God of all humans, regardless of religion.⁹ Everyone has a portion of the world to come. With the rise of Christianity, and later, Islam, the perception of conversion underwent a shift. Epstein writes that “Both Christianity and Islam taught that their religion was the sole path to salvation, so that conversion changed from being a voluntary act to one forced on people, whether they wanted it or not, in the name of saving them.”¹⁰ At the turn of the 20th century, Reform Judaism opened

⁸ Lawrence J. Epstein. *Conversion to Judaism: A Guidebook*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1994.

⁹ Ibid, 28.

¹⁰ Ibid, 32.

the door for converts. Conversation became very popular because it offered new Jews space to question, embrace what aspects of Judaism worked best for them, and build a community of Jews around them. The rise of conversion continued through the 20th century, as intermarriage rates began to rise.¹¹

Two important factors led to the embracing of converts by the Reform and Conservative communities. First, many intermarried Jews did not want to abandon their faith because they had a non-Jewish spouse. Second, as these communities began to embrace interfaith families, more non-Jewish partners considered conversion. By not forcing non-Jewish partners to convert but instead welcoming non-Jews and encouraging conversion, interest in and commitment to Judaism continued to rise.¹²

Individual & Process

Structurally, the Reform Movement's conversion process has seven steps, laid out by the Gerecht Family Institute for Outreach. A conversion candidate begins by finding a Jewish clergy person whom they trust and feel comfortable confiding in. The individual should anticipate that the clergy person will ask questions, initially focused on discerning if conversion to Judaism is the best choice for them. The second step is the longest part of the conversion process, and often the most consequential - the study and learning about Judaism. This part of the process can take many forms. Some conversion candidates meet one-on-one privately with their clergy mentor, while others take Introduction to Judaism courses with a cohort of conversion candidates. According to Rabbi Leora Kaye, a leader of the Gerecht Institute, these courses often meet once a week for a few hours over 16-18 sessions. The sessions cover basic Jewish information ranging

¹¹ Ibid, 35.

¹² Ibid, 37.

from holidays and text study to marking Jewish time by enacting Jewish rituals such as lighting Shabbat candles or shaking a *lulav* and *etrog* on Sukkot. After about a year, the clergy mentor considers whether or not the candidate is ready for conversion. These steps of the conversion process are the preliminal phase, in which no true shift in status has taken place, the individual is still stable in their role, yet curiosity and learning are moving them forward.¹³

Once the decision is made to proceed, a conversion candidate transitions to the final three stages of conversion, the liminal phases. The first is a communal stage, in which the conversion candidate sits before a *Beit Din*, a religious court, made up of three Jews, one of whom is usually clergy. According to Rabbi Kaye, the convening of the *Beit Din* is an opportunity to determine the Jewish learning of the conversion candidate.¹⁴ This takes place just prior to the essential ritual of conversion itself. The candidate sits with a group of learned Jews, sharing what they have learned over their conversion journey; the *Beit Din* is invested with the authority to determine whether or not this individual is ready to convert. If they are ready, the conversion candidate moves to the next stage of conversion. Depending on whether the conversion candidate is male assigned at birth or an individual with a penis, circumcision is a potential next step that takes place at this stage. Circumcision, prior to immersion, is required in Conservative and Orthodox Jewish denominations, but not Reform. If the individual is already circumcised, a ritual circumcision known as *Hatafat Dam Brit* might take place, in which the penis is pricked to bring up a drop of blood, symbolizing circumcision. The circumcision ritual is always accompanied by a blessing, although it is not necessary for *Hatafat Dam Brit*.

The final stages of the conversion process are those in which a conversion candidate's identity lives between being a Jew and a non-Jew, the epitome of the liminal phase. According to

¹³ Rabbi Leora Kaye, interviewed by author, May 29 2022.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Rabbi Sara Luria, “Transitioning to being Jewish is a thousand steps and full of intangible pieces.”¹⁵ This final stage takes place at a *mikveh* for the immersion process. Immersion, or *tevillah*, is required in all Conservative and Orthodox communities, and is almost always part of a Reform conversion as well. Water signifies rebirth and renewal in Judaism, making it perfect for moments of transition and transformation. Not only is water essential for survival, but it also appears in several key Jewish texts. In the Creation story, God spends an entire day separating the waters from dry land. Rabbi Lawrence Troster notes, “In rabbinic sources, water is a metaphor for Torah because of water’s necessity for life and as a transformative substance.”¹⁶ Throughout Jewish history, when communities moved around the world, the first permanent structure built was generally not a synagogue but a *mikveh*, showing the importance of this ritual. One *mikveh* has become the centerpiece of the contemporary *mikveh* movement - Mayyim Hayyim, a modern 21st century *mikveh* center. According to their website, “Mayyim Hayyim is a resource for learning, spiritual discovery, and creativity where women, men, and people of all genders and ages can celebrate milestones like weddings and b’nai mitzvah; where conversion to Judaism is accorded the honor and dignity it deserves; where survivors of trauma, illness or loss find solace; and where those who immerse monthly can explore the ritual on their own terms.”¹⁷ Most importantly, “Mayyim Hayyim makes *mikveh* accessible and meaningful for the full diversity of our people for the first time in Jewish history.”¹⁸ Mayyim Hayyim offers seven *kavanot*, seven intentions, for an individual to consider in that preparation period. All seven

¹⁵ Rabbi Sara Luria, interviewed by author, August 5 2022.

¹⁶ Rabbi Lawrence Troster. “Jewish Teachings on Water - Faith in Water.” Green Faith. Accessed November 4, 2022.
https://www.faithinwater.org/uploads/4/4/3/0/44307383/jewish_teachings_on_water-greenfaith.pdf.

¹⁷ Mayyim Hayyim, About Page. Accessed on January 2 2023:
<https://www.mayyimhayyim.org/about/>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

intentions are reminders that bodies are pure on their own. Upon arriving at the *mikveh*, the conversion candidate is required to shower and prepare for the immersion. They should be clean and untarnished, with no physical barriers between the body and the water upon immersion. The conversion candidate is welcomed into the *mikveh* room by a *mikveh* guide, invited to descend the seven steps into the water, where they immerse three times and recite the *tevillah* blessing:

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו על הטבילה

*Blessed Are You, Adonai, Sovereign of the Universe, Who has made us holy through Your commandments, and commanded us concerning immersion.*¹⁹

Upon conclusion of the ritual, the *mikveh* guide and any other witnesses determine that the immersion has been successfully completed. The role of the witness is valued highly in Judaism, supporting the idea that being Jewish and in relationship with the Holy One is not a solitary act. Rather, the most sacred moments of Jewish life are affirmed within the community and among others. Immediately after immersion, the *Shehecheyanu* blessing is recited, perhaps followed by a celebration with the *Beit Din*, family, and friends. The final step of the liminal phase is the pronouncement of the convert's new Hebrew name. This is a deeply personal and sacred moment - the purest affirmation of one's Jewish identity. In choosing a Hebrew name, the convert officially moves from seeing the Jewish community as outside themselves to being a member of the faith. Becoming a child of Abraham and Sarah means that the convert becomes part of a community, a family, a people.

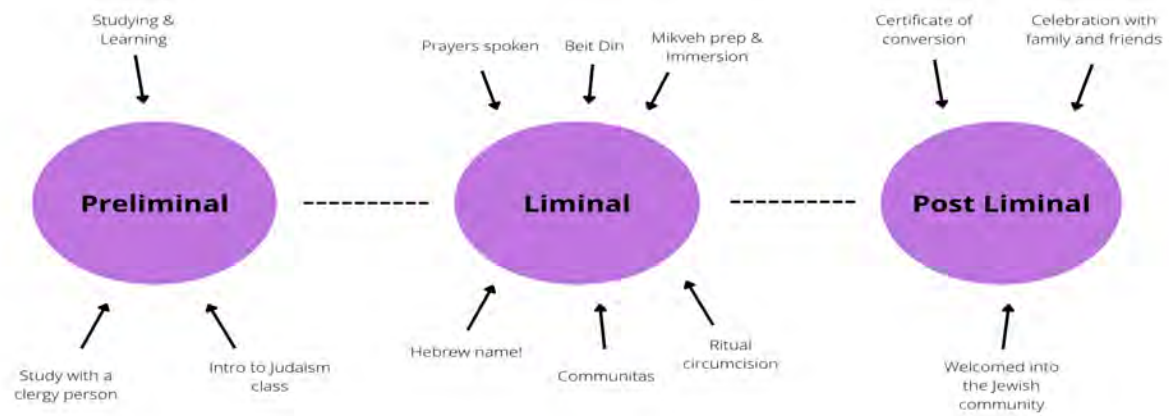
¹⁹ See Appendix A.

Ritual

Unlike some other Jewish rituals where the institution confers a change of status, the *mikveh* immersion ritual that confers a transformation of status is fulfilled entirely by the individual themselves. Immersion is dependent on preparation and intention, its meaning drawn from the power given to the ritual. Anita Diamant, author of The Red Tent and founder of Mayyim Hayyim suggests that the *mikveh* “needs to be a very parve place; it needs to be blank, so people can make what they want out of it.”²⁰ A “blank slate” for each person who enters the *mikveh* allows the intentions they bring to manifest and come to life. When someone enters that water, it validates every moment of their conversion experience up until that point, and the water seals the journey that has already begun. The individual moves from *tameh* (ritually impure) to *tahor* (ritually pure) as they immerse, solidifying their new status as a Jew. Sara Luria challenges us to consider alternative meanings for these two terms in relation to the *mikveh* - ones with less dogmatic and patriarchal connotations. Instead of words that declare some “pure” and others not, Rabbi Luria adopts the terms “ready” and “not ready” to emphasize that the immersion experience is a personal one. By moving from “not ready” to “ready,” the one about to be converted feels that “the *mikveh* is a physical experience of what you’re feeling inside of you [...] the sound of water clears our mind [...] our brain gets flooded and resets in the water.”²¹

²⁰ Anita Diamant, interviewed by author, June 4 2022.

²¹ Rabbi Sara Luria, interviewed by author, August 5 2022.



Chapter III: Ordination

History & Background

The origins of ordination, also known as “*Semikhah*,” trace back to the *Tanakh* in Numbers 27:18-23, where Moses “ordains” Joshua and seventy elders in front of the entire Israelite community. The text reads:

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה קַח־לְךָ אֶת־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־נֹון אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־נָרוּם בּוֹ וְסִמַּכְתָּ אֶת־יָדְךָ עָלָיו:

18: And יהוה answered Moses, “Single out Joshua son of Nun, an inspired man, and lay your hand upon him.

וְהֶעֱמַדְתָּ אֹתוֹ לִפְנֵי אֱלֶעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן וּלִפְנֵי כָל־הָעֵדָה וְצִוִּיתָה אֹתוֹ לְעֵינֵיהֶם:

19: Have him stand before Eleazar the priest and before the whole community, and commission him in their sight.

וְנָתַתָּה מִהוֹדְךָ עָלָיו לְמַעַן יִשְׁמְעוּ כָל־עַדְתְּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

20: Invest him with some of your authority, so that the whole Israelite community may obey.

וּלִפְנֵי אֱלֶעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן יַעֲמֹד וְשָׂאֵל לוֹ בְּמִשְׁפַּט הָאוּרִים לִפְנֵי יְהוָה עַל־פִּיו יֵצְאוּ וְעַל־פִּיו יָבֹאוּ הוּא וְכָל־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֹתוֹ וְכָל־הָעֵדָה:

21: But he shall present himself to Eleazar the priest, who shall on his behalf seek the decision of the Urim before יהוה. By such instruction they shall go out and by such instruction they shall come in, he and all the Israelite [militia], and the whole community.”

וַיַּעַשׂ מֹשֶׁה כְּאֲשֶׁר צֻוָּה יְהוָה אֹתוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ וַיַּעֲמֵדְהוּ לִפְנֵי אֱלֶעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן וּלִפְנֵי כָל־הָעֵדָה:

22: Moses did as יהוה commanded him. He took Joshua and had him stand before Eleazar the priest and before the whole community.

וַיִּסְמְךָ אֶת־יָדָיו עָלָיו וַיִּצְוֵהוּ כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה בְּיַד־מֹשֶׁה:

23: *He laid his hands upon him and commissioned him—as יהוה had spoken through Moses.*

Ordination has shifted over the centuries. At certain points, it was conducted similar to how Moses ordained Joshua, giving him both legal authority and a spiritual connection, as if God had touched Joshua through Moses. Other times, the spiritual component was deemed unnecessary or unachievable so the legal status of conferring ordination took precedent. These decisions were largely determined by which group of rabbinic leaders was in charge at the time. Prior to 120 CE, all rabbinic ordination took place within the Palestinian school of authority. Then a shift in power took place as a result of the Bar Kochba rebellion and the Hadrianic persecutions.²² At that point, the head rabbi and Patriarch of the Palestinian school became the sole determiner of ordination. Previously, individual rabbis were allowed to ordain their own pupils, but in the violence and expanding network of Jewish life in Palestine, this responsibility was centralized in the hands of the rabbinic patriarch alone. The root סמך meaning “to lay one’s hands upon” denoted the physical act that took place as a person was ordained.²³ According to Maimonides, the chain of ordination continued from Moses and Joshua without interruption through the time of David (1035 to 970 BCE). Individuals were either ordained or received *minui* (from the root מנה, meaning “to appoint to office”.) At this point in history, all ordinations deemed by the rabbinic Patriarch were solely under the Palestinian authority.

By the time of Judah I (135 to 217 CE), the Babylonian schools of rabbinic thought were beginning to emerge. They were eager to bring ordained figures into their communities, but the Palestinian authorities opposed this. As a result, it was decided by the Babylonian authorities that

²² Solomon B. Freehof. *The Institution of Ordination*. [Graduate Rabbinic Thesis]. 1915. Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion. 5.

²³ Ibid, 11.

Palestinian ordination would not be valid in Babylonia. To counteract this ruling, a new term for ordination was developed, *Kabbalat Reshuth*, קבלת רשותא, or the act of “receiving authority.” This was the Babylonian authorities' work-around, giving one with this distinction the permission to judge like an ordained person, but it did not include the transfer of the holy spirit or a solemn ceremony. The transmission of authority by the laying on of hands was not part of this type of ordination. These ordinations were legal procedures which bestowed all of the practical tools essential to ordination.²⁴ Over time, Palestinian ordination became obsolete and Babylonian *Kabbalat Reshuth* grew. Around the time of the Patriarch Judah II (mid-third century CE), the rabbinic Patriarch's power diminished, and ordination by any individual rabbi, with the agreement of a Beit Din, resumed.

According to Rabbi J. Newman, “*Semikhah* was one of the most essential foundations upon which religious life of the Jewish people was built.”²⁵ Our modern ordination ceremonies build upon this foundational act where the laying of hands connects each ordination candidate to a chain of tradition, back to the passing of leadership from Moses to Joshua. New traditions for these ceremonies, based on our past and in relation to our present, developed, resulting in the various ordination ceremonies that take place now in the United States. Rabbi Judith Lazarus Siegel writes in her thesis, The Development of Ordination Liturgy, that “Myths are a way that we can draw on the past, while twisting the facts to suit our own purposes [...],” thus the ordination ceremony can be a recollection of these myths about the origins of clergy themselves.²⁶

²⁴ Ibid, 15.

²⁵ Rabbi J. Newman. *Semikhah: A Study of its Origin, History, and Function in Rabbinic Literature*. England: Manchester University Press, 1950. 102.

²⁶ Rabbi Judith Lazarus Siegel. “The Development of Ordination Liturgy.” [Graduate Masters Thesis] Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion. 2006. 48.

Ordination is not only a Jewish practice, but a Christian one as well. “The laying of hands appears to have been a familiar practice by Jesus in pronouncing a benediction and in performing acts of healing.”²⁷ As the laying of hands became a Christian custom, it was once again dropped in Jewish tradition, and the oral declaration of “rabbi” became the new procedure. For Jews, the laying of hands is associated with a transfer of spiritual power and legal authority. Dr. Everett Ferguson notes the differing language used to describe the laying of hands. Early Christians performed this act with the word, *sim*, describing a light touch with which a blessing is bestowed. Alternatively, Jewish tradition uses the word *semakh* to represent an act comprising physical contact and legal significance. Thus, Ferguson argues, “[That] these features were absent or not prominent in Christian ordination further supports a separation of the Christian rite from a background in *samakh*.”²⁸

Ultimately, despite differences in terminology and meaning, the laying of hands was temporarily abandoned in Judaism at the end of the Tanaitic period (approximately 10-220 CE). This was in response to the dissonant voices of Jewish authority in the Palestinian and Babylonian schools of thought, along with the rise of Christian practice and the desire to differentiate their respective practices from one another. As a result, other customs were adopted to mark this ritual transfer of power. Laying of hands resurfaced in modern times as an optional form of blessing in the ordination ceremonies (see Chapter VI). The word *minui* was once again adopted to describe ordination, along with ritual garments and a court declaration of the title of “Rabbi,” followed by a public discourse and song.²⁹ Ultimately, there were many words to

²⁷ Everett Ferguson. *Jewish and Christian Ordination: Some Observations*. In The Early Church at Work and Worship, Vol I. The Lutterworth Press, James Clarke & Co, 2013. 131.

²⁸ Ibid, 132.

²⁹ Freehof, Solomon B. *The Institution of Ordination*. [Graduate Rabbinic Thesis]. 1915. Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion. 31.

describe the function of the English word, “ordination,” defined by the religious group and individuals involved.

Individual & Process

The journey to ordination is not an easy one. For most progressive clergy, it takes many years in seminary to join the ranks of Jewish leadership. Most progressive seminaries have three to six year graduate study programs offering Bachelors, Masters, and PhD degrees in addition to ordination. Some require their students to study for a period of time in Israel, while others only require stateside education. These programs grant their graduates Master’s degrees in Hebrew Letters, Hebrew Literature, Sacred Music, Education, and/or Jewish Studies. Some have full time residency requirements, while others offer virtual learning to accommodate students from a variety of different backgrounds.³⁰

While the journeys to ordination and the ordination ceremonies themselves look different, they all include a moment when the student receives a *semikhah* document. This document certifies that the individual is now to be recognized as a rabbi or cantor of their denomination, having completed their institution’s requirements of study. These essential components of ordination help to consider the ritual itself. How does the transformation from student to rabbi or cantor take place? With what power is this ritual imbued, and how does it manifest in the moment? What elements of the ritual take on new significance? Most importantly, how does this rite of passage exist within time and space, giving the individual undergoing the ritual the opportunity to transform?

³⁰ See Appendix B.

Ritual

Arnold van Gennep writes in Rites of Passage, that with rituals, “[...] there are ceremonies whose essential purpose is to enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another which is equally well defined.”³¹ This is exactly how one might define the transition from student to clergy. For this ritual, the preliminal phase is the longest, as it contains the years of study bringing a student to the clergy. Finally, students reach the date of ordination. To mark this momentous occasion, some students choose to go to the *mikveh* to ritually prepare for and acknowledge this special day.³² The transformation from student to clergy takes place in a very short moment of suspended time. The student relinquishes the title of “student,” temporarily settling into a liminal status as they begin the journey from oneself to another. “It is as though they are being reduced or ground down to a uniform condition to be fashioned anew and endowed with additional powers to enable them to cope with their new stations in life.”³³ This moment takes place in what Richard Schechter would call a “limen,” or a threshold that becomes the passageway between places.³⁴ One might consider the *bima* on which the individual is being ordained as the “limen”, enlarged in space and time yet possessing a sense of liminality. As the student crosses the *bima*, pausing in front of the ark for the ordination blessing, they transform from student to rabbi or cantor.³⁵ The chart below (from right to left) provides a visual interpretation of this ritual.

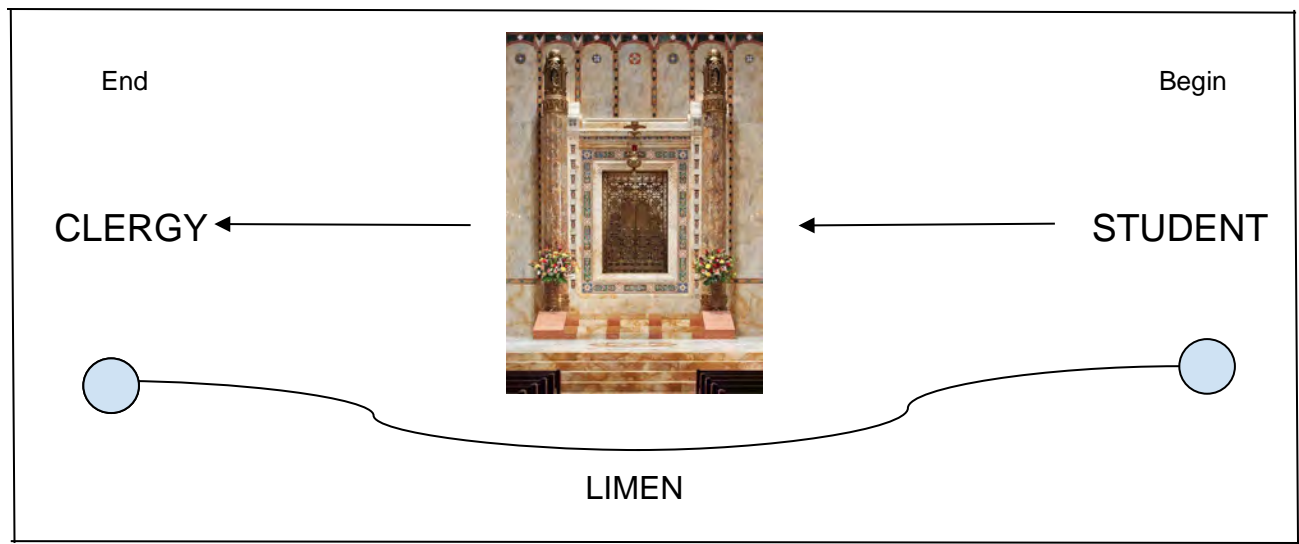
³¹ Arnold van Gennep. *The Rites of Passage*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2019. 3.

³² See Appendix D.

³³ Victor W. Turner. “Chapter 3: Liminality and Communitas.” Essay. In *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969. 95.

³⁴ Richard Schechner and Sara Brady. “Chapter 1: What Is Performance Studies.” Essay. In *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. London: Routledge, 2013. 67.

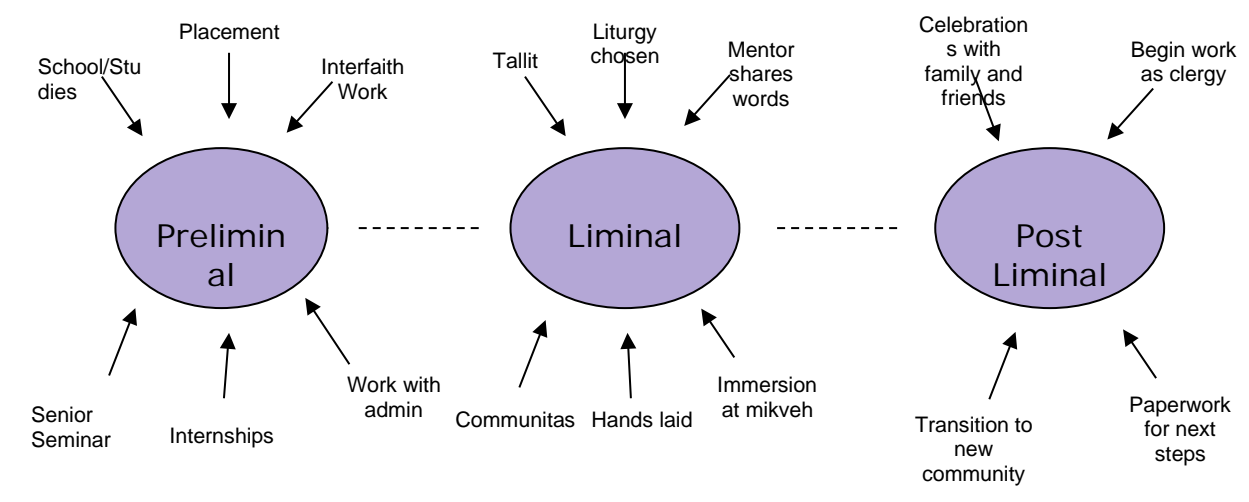
³⁵ Ibid, 66.



Within the room, three sets of people participate in the ritual. First, there are the individuals being transformed, the students. Second, there are the individual(s) managing the transformation, often the president of the institution or a clergy person of high status who confers the title of “clergy” onto the students. The third group is composed of the witnesses to the transformative ritual, often the teachers, family, and friends of the ordainees. All three parties are swept up into the “normative communitas”, meaning a relationship among those jointly undergoing ritual transition. This comes with gathering at an official event such as an ordination ceremony. Without each group’s presence, the ritual would not be complete. These rituals provide stability in the lives of those who participate, but they also adapt and change over time, reinventing traditions.

Depending on the institution, certain rituals and/or objects might be part of the ordination. Some bestow students with a *tallit*, marking this moment of sacred transition with a garment of fringes representing the 613 commandments given to Jews at Mt. Sinai. With the numerical value of the word *tzitzit* (“fringes”) being 600, plus the eight fringes and five knots on the *tallit*, adding up to 613, the student is metaphorically wrapped in the commandments of the

Jewish people. Others invite mentors to privately share words of blessing and celebration with the ordinee. Some institutions allow students to choose a liturgical song to accompany their walk across the *bima*, making each individual transformation unique. Some institutions follow the sacred tradition of laying hands upon the ordinee, acknowledging the tradition of Moses and Joshua. Once these liminal moments are complete, the transformation has taken place and the student has become a rabbi or cantor. As all ritual transformations end in a form of closure, the newly ordained clergy conclude this process with celebrations of their impressive accomplishment.



Chapter IV: Results of Research

The modern progressive ordination ceremonies currently used in the Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist movements do not have a single origin. Rather, they represent pieces of history that helped develop the ceremonies we know today. On July 11, 1883, in Cincinnati, Ohio, four rabbis from Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) were ordained at Plum Street Synagogue in the first ordination ceremony in the United States. Each rabbi received a document of ordination written in both English and Hebrew. The President of the college, Isaac Mayer Wise, offered a “*neshikat semikhah*”, a kiss of ordination, upon each of these men and proclaimed them to be rabbis of the Jewish faith. Although there was no physical laying of hands, the blessing of a kiss suggests a similarly intimate action. His words were as follows:

*I declare before all the people and in the presence of this congregation that you are ratified rabbis in Israel. May God's blessing be upon you and the charge of God through Moses to Joshua be verified in you. 'Be strong and courageous.'*³⁶

In 1951, the first cantors were invested at HUC in New York. The term “investiture” was the honorific chosen to recognize graduating cantors as clergy in the eyes of American law, giving them parsonage and certain tax benefits.³⁷ Beginning in 2012, cantors were also “ordained” alongside their rabbinic colleagues. On May 7, 2023, the first non-binary transgender cantorial candidates are scheduled to be ordained as cantors in the Reform Movement, a historic moment in progressive Judaism. Not only has the diversity of the individuals being ordained

³⁶ David Philipson. My Life as an American Jew, an Autobiography. Cincinnati: John Kidd and Son, Inc. 1941. 22.

³⁷ Judah M. Cohen. *The Making of a Reform Jewish Cantor: Musical Authority, Cultural Investment*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2019.

expanded over time, the ceremonies themselves have diversified in many ways. Examples of this diversification are discussed further in the Conclusion.

Description of Seminaries

In the spring of 2022, I attended nine progressive seminary ordination ceremonies, some of them online, to better understand the then-current Jewish ordination landscape. The following institutions were part of my study: HUC-JIR's four campuses New York, Los Angeles, Cincinnati & Jerusalem, the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) in New York, the Academy of Jewish Religion (AJR), the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies at the American Jewish University in California, Hebrew College in Massachusetts, and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC) in Pennsylvania. For the purposes of institutional comparison, I will consider the four HUC-JIR campuses as one institution.

The six institutions have different pathways to ordination for their students, but there are consistencies across the schools that mark a similar educational route to Jewish leadership. First, four of the six institutions require some form of education in Israel. The opportunities range from a summer-long ulpan (learning intensive) to a year-long program based in Jerusalem. Regardless of denomination, a relationship with Israel is a priority for these institutions. Every institution has some form of a Hebrew requirement, whether it be modern and/or biblical Hebrew. The programs range from three to six years long, depending on the education status of the individual entering the program. The median length of the rabbinical and cantorial programs is five years, including the various Masters degrees granted to students in addition to their ordination.

Each of these institutions is affiliated with one of the progressive denominations of Judaism, with HUC-JIR representing the Reform community, JTS and Ziegler representing the

Conservative communities, RRC representing the Reconstructionist community, and AJR and Hebrew College representing the non-denominational communities. Each institution now offers ordination status to all of their students, both rabbis and cantors. This is a fairly new concept, with JTS being the most recent institution to move from “investing” their cantors to “ordaining” them, as of April 2021.³⁸ Another new approach taken by a few of these institutions is the move towards virtual learning. As the landscape of Jewish life begins to shift in the United States, institutions are considering how the training of future Jewish leaders should reflect these changes. Should institutions remain bound to the large metropolitan areas of Jewish life on the coasts, or should they try to reach Jews in less populated areas with low-residency programs? Only three of the six institutions have full time residency requirements, but even this obligation is currently under review.³⁹

Comparative Analysis of Ordination Ceremonies

Despite the fact that four of these institutions have cantorial programs, only two held ordination for both rabbis and cantors (HUC-JIR New York and Hebrew College) in 2022. Neither JTS nor AJR had a cantorial ordination class that year, while HUC-JIR New York had eight cantorial ordination candidates, and Hebrew College had two. It is important to note that Hebrew College’s cantorial ordination ceremony was separate from the rabbinic ordination. The rest of the ceremonies were only for rabbinic candidates. The formality of the HUC-JIR New York ceremony matched that of HUC-JIR Cincinnati, with marshalls guiding the processional and recessional, along with a strict order of service and musical accompaniment throughout.

³⁸ “Graduating Cantors Will Be Ordained, Not Invested.” Jewish Theological Seminary, April 14, 2021. <https://www.jtsa.edu/news/graduating-cantors-will-be-ordained-not-invested/>.

³⁹ “Strategic Planning - Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion.” HUC-JIR Strategic Planning Recommendations, 2021. <https://huc.edu/about/strategic-planning>.

HUC-JIR Cincinnati was the only ordination ceremony held on Shabbat, differentiating it from its fellow progressive movement partners and campuses. AJR held a service where the majority of the ceremony was dedicated to offering awards to faculty and students, similar to that of RRC. AJR, Ziegler, JTS, and RRC all had public ordination rituals where the Priestly Blessing was bestowed upon each new clergy person in front of the entire community. By contrast, all the HUC-JIR campuses and Hebrew College offered the Priestly Blessing privately, followed by a communal song or blessing. HUC-JIR New York's ordination ceremony had the most musical components overall out of all the nine ceremonies. All nine ceremonies utilized music in some form, accompanied or *a cappella*.

Another distinctive feature of these ordination ceremonies was the opportunity for candidates' mentors to offer a personal blessing. HUC-JIR Los Angeles & Jerusalem, AJR, Ziegler, Hebrew College, JTS, and RRC all involved clergy mentors in the ceremony. HUC-JIR Cincinnati and New York were the only two ceremonies without this added component. Some of the mentorship moments involved the presentation of a *tallit*, a private, personal blessing before receiving the Priestly Blessing, or a coming of age story about the ordination candidate shared publicly before the community. Regardless of style, all of these mentorship moments made the ceremonies feel more intimate and personal. Every ordination ceremony had either an address given by the Dean or President of the institution or by an invited speaker. They all began with a processional into the sacred space, a synagogue and ended with a recessional out, accompanied by music.

The nine ordination ceremonies were significantly different from each other, even among the four HUC-JIR campuses.⁴⁰ Prior to attending and watching these ceremonies, I had two

⁴⁰ See Appendix C.

assumptions. The first was that each institution would uphold the physical action taken by Moses when he laid hands on Joshua, marking the moment of *smicha*, the conferring of authority and the spiritual transfer of power. The second assumption was that music would be central to the ordination ceremonies, acting as a vessel for spiritual connection and transformation. After watching all nine ceremonies, it became clear that these assumptions were unfounded. Out of the nine ceremonies, only HUC-JIR, RRC and AJR included a laying of hands on ordinees as a physical marker transitioning them from student to clergy. (One student at RRC chose to not have hands laid upon them.). The other institutions either offered a verbal blessing in place of this physical action or simply bestowed a document of *smicha*. The assumption about music being a spiritual throughline for these ceremonies also turned out to be unfounded. The five non-Reform ceremonies had moments of music within them, but the majority of the time was dedicated to speeches, awards, and the moment of ordination itself. One piece of liturgy was central to all nine ceremonies, regardless of cantorial presence, the Priestly Blessing (in Hebrew, the ברכת כהנים). Every ordination ceremony had the Priestly Blessing sung or recited at the candidates' moment of ordination.

A few elements of each ceremony were unique. HUC-JIR was the only institution to have a woman rabbi ordain rabbis and cantors at all of its ceremonies, its Provost, Rabbi Dr. Andrea Weiss. At the HUC-JIR New York ceremony, this was just the second year that rabbis and cantors were ordained together simultaneously. In previous years, they had been ordained first by program (cantorial followed by rabbinic), then alphabetically. In 2022, all ordination candidates, regardless of program, were ordained in alphabetical order. In HUC-JIR Los Angeles, the ordination ritual took place underneath a *chuppah*, the ritual canopy traditionally used in Jewish weddings to mark the new home and relationship the couple will be creating together.

Candidates in Los Angeles walked down the center aisle of the synagogue with their mentor to the *chuppah*, as though they were walking to the beginning of their new relationship with God and the Jewish people in a spirit of hospitality and openness. In the Los Angeles ceremony, the provost of HUC-JIR also took the opportunity to speak about the ordination of Joshua, although not at the other three ceremonies. In HUC-JIR Cincinnati, the ordination ceremony was designed as an elaborate Shabbat service to bring the community together with a preconceived liturgical structure and familiar texts. Finally, HUC-JIR Jerusalem ended its ordination ceremony with Israeli dancing and music, unlike any other ceremony I viewed.

At Ziegler, one special moment was when the group of ordination candidates all stood on the *bima* to receive their blessing of ordination collectively. There was no individual ritual, instead a collective one. This contrasted with the unique opportunity RRC took in having the candidates themselves speak the words of the Priestly Blessing, essentially blessing themselves instead of their faculty or mentors doing so. Another memorable moment occurred at the JTS ceremony, when all the ordination candidates and their mentors stood up to face each other. At that point, the mentors took five minutes to speak to each individual about the journey ahead and offer them words of blessing, done in front of everyone but spoken quietly and privately. Finally, the ordination ceremony at Hebrew College addressed most directly the concept of transition. The faculty member offering a speech prior to the ordination ritual shared that this new cohort of rabbis would be moving into a land of the unknown, a thin space. “As rabbis, you are the bridge between the Divine and the human [...] you bridge the distance in between.”⁴¹

⁴¹ Hebrew College Rabbinic Ordination Ceremony - Video at 3:01:00 .

Interviews

I interviewed 24 adults from different walks of life about their conversion and ordination processes. They included influential individuals in my personal life, Jewish clergy mentors, and individuals with expertise in conversion and ordination. Two theories of mine directed the interviews, and led to a multitude of important findings. The first theory focused on a specific subset of my interviewees - those who were both clergy and converts. I wondered if the emotional and spiritual experiences of both their conversion and ordination rituals resonated similarly for the participants; the answer was yes. One participant, both a cantor and convert, said that “It [ordination] was very literally parallel to the *mikveh*. One I walked down seven steps into the water, the other I ascended up to the Torah.”⁴² Another participant, a rabbi and convert, shared that, “These were the two times I acquired a new name. One being my Hebrew name, the other being *rav*.”⁴³ Participants noted that although both rituals are personal, private moments of spiritual status change, there are often public celebrations held with family, friends, and the community who brought them to this moment. Even a clergy student who had converted five years prior to attending rabbinical school thought, “My journey to the rabbinate gives me a feeling very similar to that of my journey to Judaism.”⁴⁴ Rabbi Dr. Lawrence Hoffman remarked that these two rituals are indeed similar because “They involve theoretically existential changes in being, whereas most events don’t.”⁴⁵

According to Rabbi Hoffman, these two rituals began to align with the rise of Christianity. Ordination and conversion were private, insignificant matters in Rabbinic times,

⁴² Cantor Stefano Iacono, interview with author, March 3 2022.

⁴³ Rabbi Annalisa Stryer, interview with author, March 21 2022.

⁴⁴ Anonymous third-year rabbinical student at HUC-JIR, interview with author, March 3 2022.

⁴⁵ Rabbi Larry Hoffman, interview with author, July 26 2022.

often only done in the presence of the rabbi bestowing the title of rabbi on an individual or converting them to Judaism. With Christianity, ordination became an act of sanctification; as Hoffman explained, “You’re a different person [...] ordination becomes a change of inherent status of a person [...] you’ve now been called.”⁴⁶ Many of the Christian-turned-Jewish converts I spoke to felt like the *mikveh* experience would bring up feelings of discomfort and “imposter syndrome.” One interviewee said that the *mikveh* was the final step of this long journey with no clear written guide on what to do “once you get in there.”⁴⁷ Until that point, they were exploring and learning with others and given space to make mistakes in a classroom setting. The immersion moment placed the individual alone in the room, which made one person question as they began to immerse, “Am I doing this right? Is there a wrong way? I felt like I only get one shot at this life changing moment.”⁴⁸ One person shared that their mentor told them, “The *mikveh* doesn’t have to be a one-time immersion - I go every year on my conversion anniversary, so you can go again too.”⁴⁹ Instead of perceiving the *mikveh* immersion as only a consecration moment that marks sacred time, like a baptism, immersion can also be experienced as a moment of renewal for the self; it does not have to be a one time only opportunity. In fact, progressive *mikva’ot* welcome people at all stages and points of life to come and immerse. In Judaism, immersion in water offers all Jews the opportunity to mark sacred moments. While conversion in both Judaism and Christianity takes place in one ritual, the *mikveh* offers endless opportunities.

The second assumption I brought to this research was that the physical actions and components of the blessing are essential to the rituals themselves. Instead, I learned that it is not

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Anonymous third-year rabbinical student at HUC-JIR, interview with author, March 3 2022.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

the physicality of these rituals that makes them what they are, but instead, the intention and power symbolized by them and their meaning for the individual undergoing the ritual. I heard this throughout my research and interviews. An example can be found in the ordination ceremonies I witnessed. As described earlier in retelling of Moses' ordination of Joshua and the other leaders, I assumed that the physical laying of hands movement was a crucial component to the ritual process which would ultimately determine where the power lay. This was, in fact, proven false by my interview conversations. At Ziegler, a communal *smicha* ritual was performed in which the entire ordination class received a blessing together. A recent graduate from the College claimed that they did not feel left out by not receiving the physical laying of hands. Rather, they felt validated by the meaningful ritual created in place of the laying of hands.⁵⁰ Thus, the actions performed were granted power by the participant themselves. Another example was in the conversion process. Many converts spoke about the moment they held the Torah for the first time and spoke the words of the *Sh'ma* following their *mikveh* immersion. Before that moment, the Torah had been a somewhat foreign, intangible sacred symbol to them. Once holding it and speaking the words of the *Sh'ma* after immersing, the Torah was imbued with the power of the ritual itself. As such, I came to the conclusion that the institutions that oversee ordination and conversion rituals confer the legal change of status for these rituals, but not the spiritual authority. The moment someone becomes clergy or becomes a Jew is not necessarily dictated by a verbal or written declaration, but often is a spiritual shift within. The spiritual calling to be a Jew or become a rabbi/cantor is entirely personal, and as many of my interviewees showed me, often an ineffable calling. I concluded from these conversations that

⁵⁰ Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies Graduate, interview by author, August 6 2022.

the power of spiritual authority and personal transformation carried by these rituals ultimately comes from within the individual.

Another observation I made about conversion is that music is so often utilized in public spaces that one can forget how powerful it can also be in private spaces. Generally, ordination has some musical elements built in, and conversion does not regularly employ music at all.

Rabbi Lisa Rubin, the Director of Central Synagogue's Center for Exploring Judaism, reflected that "Music is a huge hurdle in conversion," commenting on the lack of appropriate music for the conversion ritual and opportunities to execute it.⁵¹ For cantors, music is a sacred vessel of spirituality, acting as a connection point beyond words. So why not include music in one of the most life changing, immersive rituals of our faith? As an answer, I decided to create liturgical outlines for what music in these rituals could look like and how they might impact the individuals in these sacred moments of time.

⁵¹ Rabbi Lisa Rubin, interview with author, June 9 2022.

Chapter V: Musical Traditions & Recommendations

One objective of this study of ordination and conversion rituals was to build upon the existing literature on these subjects and identify gaps or absences. The amount of research done on the musical traditions of these two rituals is minimal compared to the historic and rabbinic foundations that support them. As a cantorial student, I always approach ritual with the lens of musicality serving as a vessel for understanding and connection. Based on my research, I found that the music chosen to accompany these rituals can play an important role in the impact not only for the individuals undergoing the ritual but also for the observers and facilitators.

Ordination Liturgy: A Proposal

For an ordination ceremony, certain liturgical pieces and melodies can contribute to the creation of an atmosphere of welcome, celebration, contemplation, and holiness. Each institution that I studied made specific musical choices to convey their vision of ordination. The following proposals are based on my analysis of nine ordination ceremonies across the progressive Jewish spectrum.⁵²

The first decision to be made about an ordination service is when it should take place. Some institutions choose to hold it on a Sunday at the end of the school year, while others choose it on Shabbat. By presenting the ritual on Shabbat morning, there is a built-in structure for the service. Instead of having to envision an ordination ceremony and start from scratch, one can work within the confines of a liturgical structure that already exists. Additionally, the liturgical melodies are ones familiar to most congregants, encouraging them to participate.

⁵² See Appendix E.

However, the non-Shabbat option offers more freedom for creativity and artistry; thus why my recommendation utilizes this service form.

The beginning of my proposed service will start with either a *niggun*, a wordless song, or a melody rejoicing and welcoming. There are many liturgical settings that would work for this moment. Some of the examples in the ceremonies I witnessed included “Bina’s *Niggun*” by Joey Weisenberg, “*Baruch Haba*” by Stephen Glass, “*Mah Tov*” by Louis Lewandowski, and “Psalm 100 - *Ozi V’zimrat Yah.*” Depending on the community, the style of the music might vary from classical repertoire to familiar folk melodies. Following this opening song, words will be shared commemorating the important day. I recommend three speakers, each elected by the ordination class. One person should be a professional respected in the field, who can speak to the challenges and changing tides of the Reform Jewish world. The next two should be a faculty member and student voted upon by the ordination class to speak, representing the cohort’s interests and journey.

Then, a series of psalms will be sung, to celebrate the joyous nature of the day. Author Yehudi Wyner writes that, “The Psalms have been viewed by theologians as expressions of [humanity’s] thirst for moral, ethical, and spiritual grounding and [their] search for a guiding faith—all of which amounts essentially, in theological terms, to [humanity’s] pursuit of God.”⁵³ This description offers the perfect explanation for the inclusion of an array of psalms in an ordination ceremony as ordination candidates begin their next step in their quest for pursuing a meaningful relationship with the Holy One.

⁵³ Yehudi Wyner. “The Book of Psalms and Its Musical Interpretations.” Milken Archive of Jewish Music. Accessed November 19, 2022. <https://www.milkenarchive.org/articles/view/the-book-of-psalms-and-its-musical-interpretations>.

It is important to include a reflection upon the past years of study and an acknowledgement of all the people who played a role in the culmination of the journey to the rabbinate and cantorate. So, a blessing for learning and transition is the perfect choice for the next piece in our ordination ceremony. Jewish liturgy offers many texts of gratitude for these moments. One might choose to do a choral version of *Kaddish D'rabbanan*, in which the ordinees thanked their teachers for the years of support and knowledge they provided. Another option would be to mark this moment with the ten daily *mitzvot* commanded in the text of *Elu D'varim*. There are a number of different compositions for this piece including solos and duets. Ben Steinberg wrote a beautiful duet with a high and low voice that plays back and forth with each other. Cantor Jeff Klepper and Rabbi Daniel Frelander wrote an upbeat rendition, as did Jacob Leizman. Depending on the tone one is looking to create, it could be a great moment for collective acknowledgement of these *mitzvot*, or a listening moment of collective reflection. Compositions featuring these ten *mitzvot* would pair nicely with the text of *Lamdeini*, a poem by Leah Goldberg expressing mindfulness and wonder for learning. Lastly, one might conclude this section with a choral rendition of *L'dor Vador*, affirming the tradition of passing Jewish knowledge, text, and music from one generation to the next.

For the next section of the ceremony, I propose a prayer asking for good health. The *Mi Shebeirach* text is not just for individuals who are physically, emotionally, or mentally unwell; it can also be used as a petition for ongoing goodness and well-being in someone's life. As keepers and confidants of their community members, clergy might be particularly in need of this blessing for themselves. The text that was part of each ordination ceremony I attended was the Priestly Blessing. It is clear that for the progressive movements of Judaism, this prayer is used to either mark the moment of transformation from student to clergy or finalizes the transformation as a

whole. Some ceremonies kept the Priestly Blessing moment private during the ritual, while others made it public. If it is publicly shared, this would be the perfect opportunity for a choral pronouncement at the completion of the ordination ritual. Cantor Richard Cohn wrote a lovely “*Birkat Kohanim*” for choir that highlights both the English and Hebrew texts. Another option is Danny Maseng’s setting, a simple melody where the choir validates the text with “*kein yehi ratzon,*” making it an ideal piece to be sung by both cantorial and rabbinic ordination candidates regardless of advanced musical skill. If shared privately, an alternative way to honor the individuals being ordained would be to have them choose the music that accompanies them through their ritual. This moment is beautifully concluded with the words of *Shehecheyanu*, thanking the Holy One for bringing those being ordained to this moment.

For the ordination ceremony’s conclusion, there is a variety of different recessional pieces that could be sung. Similar to the joyous and welcoming nature of the processional, I would suggest Psalm 96 or Psalm 150 as options. Both texts are celebratory and uplifting along with music that marks the festive occasion. Louis Lewandowski’s *Hallelujah* is a melodic example that could joyously accompany the ordination candidates out of the space. Another musical option would be to conclude with a text familiar to the attendees, such as *Ein Keloheinu* or *Siman Tov u’Mazel Tov*. The former is a song full of praise and joy thanking God for the many blessings in our lives. It is also a text utilized across denominations with melodies from all over the world making it an ideal choice. *Siman Tov u’Mazel Tov* is a classic, go-to suggestion for moments of celebration, so it could be the perfect concluding piece. Many of those witnessing the ceremony would be able to sing along to melodies they knew, making it a communal moment of participation. Other melodies that could be added to the ceremony include the American national anthem or the Israeli national anthem, *Hatikvah*. There is comfort and

familiarity with these texts for everyone involved in the ritual, and their use would mark the occasion with a nod to American and/or Israeli nationality, particularly in affiliation to the organization. Ultimately, the goal is to create an ordination ritual whose melodies and prayers inspire and support the new clergy, their teachers, family and friends. A sample program of an ordination ceremony is included in Appendix E.

Conversion Liturgy

The story of Ruth, chanted on Shavuot is, in part, a tale of “conversion” to Judaism. After the death of her husband, Naomi’s son, Ruth says to her mother-in-law:

אַל־תִּפְגְּעִי־בִי לָעֻזְבֹּךְ לָשׁוּב מֵאַחֲרַיִךְ כִּי אֶל־אַשֶׁר תֵּלֶכְי אֲלֹךְ וּבְאַשֶׁר תִּלְיִנִי אֵלַיִן עֲמֹךְ עָמִי וְאֶל־הָיָה אֱלֹהֵי:

“Do not urge me to leave you, to turn back and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go; wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God.”⁵⁴

There is a plethora of liturgical music written about Ruth’s story ranging from contemporary melodies to classical art songs. Rabbi Jeffrey Saxe wrote a beautiful arrangement utilizing elements of the traditional trope cantillation from the Book of Ruth in his song, “*I’ll Stay With You*,” in which he blends the English and Hebrew texts of Ruth 1:16-17 together. Rebecca Mann does the same in her modern arrangement of “*Ruth’s Song*.” She chose to balance two voices together, making Ruth and Naomi’s conversation come to life as the Hebrew and English melodies function contrapuntal to each other. More classical renditions of Ruth’s story include Simon Sargon’s “*Ruth Song*” and the “*Song of Ruth*,” two renditions written by Kurt Weill and

⁵⁴ Ruth 1:16, Sefaria, Accessed on September 2 2022:
<https://www.sefaria.org/Ruth.1.16?lang=bi>.

Maurice Goldman respectively. These art songs bring text to life by painting the story of Ruth's struggles in a melodious manner.

The seven *kavanot* for immersion created by Mayyim Hayyim could be added to liturgical music specific to a conversion ritual and ceremony.⁵⁵

י. הִינֵנִי *Hineini*. Here I am.

Take a minute and think about the transition mikveh will help you mark today. Immersion in the mikveh represents a spiritual transformation from one state to another. In traditional language, your change is from ritually unready (*tamei*) to ritually ready (*tahor*). Prepare yourself by writing in a journal, saying a personal prayer, or reading something of meaning to you. Breathe deeply. Sigh audibly.

Beginning with *Hineni*, one might use various renditions of the *Hineni* prayer to signify that the conversion candidate is moving from *tameh* (unready) to *tahor* (ready). For example, the song, “*Here I Am*” by Jewish musician and composer, Sue Horowitz, is a beautiful text and melody connected to this moment of readiness. Adapting from the text of Ruth 1:16, Horowitz writes, “Where you go, I will go, Where you lead, I will follow,” continuing colloquially with “I come with trust, I come with justice,” and “*Hineni*, here I am, I come with peace of mind, I know just where I stand, Here I Am.”⁵⁶ I wrote a companion to Horowitz's piece, which combines the text of the *Hineni* with Chava Mirel's “*Sh'ma*” as both texts are declarations of a covenant with God. The text I wrote for this *Hineni* is meant to be accessible for any lifecycle moment involving immersion. The text reads:

Hineni, here I am, here I stand on this day ready to take the next step.

As I enter these holy waters, may I inscribe my name in our chain of tradition.

⁵⁵ See Appendix F.

⁵⁶ See Appendix G.

May I be a sacred vessel as I honor my journey that has brought me to this moment today.

2. **הַדּוּר מִצְוָה** *Hiddur mitzvah*. The unadorned body is beautiful in itself.

Remove all jewelry as well as makeup, paying special attention to the eyes. Remove nail polish on fingers and toes. (Acrylics may stay on if they have been on for more than a month.) There is no need for adornment or artifice in the mikveh. There should be no physical barriers between the body and the living waters.

The second of the Mayyim Hayyim *kavanot*, *Hiddur Mitzvah*, is an opportunity for the convert to acknowledge their raw, simple beauty as they leave no physical barriers between themselves and the water. A melody that could work beautifully here is a *niggun*, such as Iris Karlin's "*Ruth's Niggun*." Whether it be sung as one washes themselves in the shower before entering the *mikveh*, or as one is entering the *mikveh* and immersing in the water, the melody is the perfect accompaniment to this special moment. Karlin writes, "The *niggun* transforms us musically to a faraway land [...] an old Jewish modality to start our travel in time and set the mood."⁵⁷ The melody utilizes the Jewish musical mode known as Ukrainian Dorian, transporting the listener and/or singer into a sacred mindfulness for the ritual.

3. **נְקִיבִים נְקִיבִים** *Nekavim nekavim*. You fashioned the human being intricate in design.

Empty your bladder. Our tradition celebrates and blesses the body in every possible moment and mode.

The next *kavanah* is *Nekavim Nekavim*, which reminds those who recite it to be grateful for the internal workings and functioning of their bodies. A part of the Jewish daily morning liturgy, *Asher Yatzar*, expresses gratitude to the Holy One for making human bodies function

⁵⁷ See Appendix G.

every day. Dan Nichols wrote a beautiful “*Asher Yatzar*” with English lyrics alongside the *chatima*, or concluding phrase of the prayer:

ברוך אתה יי, רופא כל בשר ומפליא לעשות.

Blessed are You, Adonai, who heals all flesh and acts wondrously.

Nichols’ English lyrics are, “I’m perfect the way I am, and a little broken too. I will live each day as a gift I give to You.”⁵⁸ Another option for this text could be Debbie Friedman’s melody, which she overlapped with her rendition of “*Elohai Neshama*,” the next *kavannah*. *Elohai Neshama* moves the focus from the physical, internal workings of the body to the spiritual ones.

5. אלהי, נשמה שנתת בי טהורה היא. *Elohai neshama shenatata bi tehorah hi*. The soul in me is pure.

Shower or bathe with thoughtful attention to the miracle of your body. Pay attention to every part of yourself. Wash yourself, head to toe; shampoo your hair, lather your shoulders, back, arms, belly, and genitals. Scrub elbows, knees, and heels, removing calluses and dead skin. Wash between fingers and toes. Relax and enjoy. The water of the mikveh will feel even sweeter after this.

For the purposes of immersion, this phrase describes how the convert should be aiming for simplicity of self and being as they immerse in the *mikveh*. By removing everything on their physical being, the convert can reflect upon what it means to truly be created in the image of God.

⁵⁸ Dan Nichols. “Dan Nichols & Eighteen.” Dan Nichols Music. Accessed on July 9 2022: <https://www.dannicholsmusic.com/resources>.

4. בְּצֵלֶם אֱלֹהִים *B'tzelem Elohim*. I am made in the image of God.

Remove all clothing, eyeglasses, contact lenses, dental plates, hearing aids. Each person enters the mikveh as naked as on the day of his birth, as on the day of her birth. Without rank or status. Simply a human being. Gloriously a human being.

B'tzelem Elohim connects beautifully to the first theme of the covenant, a reminder that every human is in partnership with God. Prayers such as the *V'ahavta* emphasize our covenantal relationship with the Holy One. Composer Ben Haim wrote a reverent and contemplative *V'ahavta* melody that outlines the basic qualities of the *mitzvot* God has given us. It then blossoms at the end as he reminds of these commandments "...so that we may be holy unto our God".

6. כָּל הַנְּשָׁמָה תְּהַלֵּל יָהּ *Kol haneshama t'halet yah*. The breath of every living thing praises You.

Clean your ears, blow your nose, brush and floss your teeth, rinse your mouth, comb your hair. Stand before the mirror. Consider all of your senses. Look into your own eyes and smile. Think about the words that come from your mouth.

The covenantal relationship displayed in this prayer is related to the sixth *kavanah*, *Kol HaNeshama*, meaning "the entire soul." This *kavanah* invites the convert to clear their senses, face themselves, and listen to the words that come out of their mouth. One might consider the prayer *Yih'yu L'ratzon* to accompany this *kavannah*, in particular, Ernest Bloch's "*Silent Devotion and Response*." This choral piece stills time, as it enhances a cappella voices together with alternating swelling and quieting phrases. The tenderness of his musicality highlights the text so beautifully, bringing forth the true meaning of how we should focus on the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts.

7. תיקון עולם *Tikkun olam*. We can stand for justice; we can build a world of peace and justice.

Clean under your nails—toenails, too. (Nails do not need to be cut.) Consider the power of your hands and feet to create wholeness in your life, in our world.

Tikkun Olam, or “repairing the world,” invites the convert to consider the power of their own voice and physical self to make the world a better place. Many songs and melodies fit this description, but for the conversion candidate, *Oseh Shalom* could be utilized here. This text asks God to bring more peace into the world. *Oseh Shalom* can function as a bridge between humans and the Divine, emphasizing the shared role of repairing our world through peace. Whether *Oseh Shalom* is sung during the immersion process itself or immediately following would determine what tone and melody to be used. For a more soothing, meditative rendition, one might use Cantor Jeffrey Klepper’s melody which gently beckons the listener to mindfully consider the text. If an upbeat, enthusiastic melody is the better fit, Yoel Sykes’ version is the perfect fit. Full of rhythmic beats that support a contagious melody, Sykes wrote a classic that brings these words to life. To conclude the immersion experience, one might sing the *Shehecheyanu*. Michael Hunter Ochs’ rendition is an accessible, teachable, and memorable rendition for this moment. With the text of the blessing being the heartbeat of the song, surrounded by a light, flowing melody, his “*Shehecheyanu*” can be a fitting completion to the ritual of immersion. A list of all these pieces can be found in Appendices G & H.

Mayyim Hayyim’s seven *kavanot* are the perfect framework through which to bring music to the conversion experience, specifically to the ritual act of immersion. So much of Jewish life is celebrated with music, why not this sacred ritual marking a new beginning!

Chapter VII: Conclusion

I chose to research ordination and conversion rituals for a few reasons. Not only are both relevant to my personal life, as described in the Introduction, I also found very little written about them. Different writers have explored the historical foundations of these two rituals, but no one had considered the relationship between them, the musical landscape that envelops them, or the legal and spiritual authorities that guide them. These were the issues that drew me to these subjects.

To begin, ordination and conversion rituals are more connected than I had originally thought. I brought to this research a background in performance theory and an interest in liminality, wondering if or how these rituals might be related. I knew that all rites of passage, secular or religious, have an arc of transformation that takes place over a period of time. All rituals have a learning and training period that occupies the preliminal phase, followed by the liminal phase where the ritual takes place. Immediately after, a post liminal phase begins where the individual who underwent the ritual learns how to live in their new identity. Both conversion and ordination follow this pathway of transformation. Rabbis and cantors go to seminary, converts study with a clergy person and/or formally study about Judaism. The final ritual commences in a public or private manner, then the new rabbi/cantor or convert resumes life with their new identity. Going forward, they function in the world with a new identity and new responsibilities, a life-changing spiritual transformation having taken place.

I also discovered a clear similarity in how the two rituals were experienced by those who had undergone both. My interviewees who had undergone both conversion and ordination reported that their conversion and ordination experiences felt similar. Many had not realized this until I asked them to reflect on those two moments in their lives. The rituals themselves and the

transformations that occurred within the subjects' *neshamot* felt unequivocally related. This is important information for those facilitating these rituals, because it should help them consider further how they might handle these rites of passage differently. What does one have that the other does not? How can we enhance each transformation for the person involved so the ritual manifests in the most meaningful way? One way we can do this is by concentrating on the musical arc shaping these rites of passage.

In designing an ordination ritual, institutions have such a plethora of music to choose from. Ranging from classical melodies to choral pieces to contemporary works, there is no limit to what the ritual could look like musically. Nevertheless, I discovered a significant absence of music in the ordination ceremonies I attended. I would argue that this is due to the fact that the majority of students being ordained in 2022 were rabbinic. Despite JTS, Hebrew College, and AJR all training and ordaining cantors, Hebrew College only had two cantorial candidates that year, while JTS and AJR had none. I believe that the presence of a cantorial program and cantorial candidates for ordination plays a very important role in the musical decisions and artistic creativity possible for these ceremonies. In their absence, it is inevitable that music will end up playing an accompanying role rather than a leading one. Music can serve as a bridge between the mundane and Divine, offering melodies to fill the gaps when words fail to express thoughts and feelings. The involvement of Jewish musicians, composers, arrangers, conductors and instrumentalists can enormously enhance the ritual of ordination which can be beautifully painted through music as seen in a few of the ceremonies I observed in 2022.

While ordination rituals often lack musically, they are still more likely to include at least some music compared to conversion rituals. Upon beginning my research, I had not heard of a single conversion that utilized music as part of the experience. All the clergy I spoke with who

officiate at conversions reported that they did not include music as a central or even secondary element of the ritual. The converts I spoke with reported that their conversion rituals were largely quiet, meditative and solitary, with no music. I wondered why this particular life cycle ritual generally lacks music when music plays such an integral role in so many other Jewish life cycle rituals. Many converts I spoke with said that they would have appreciated music being part of their conversion ritual, that it would have brought them comfort to hear familiar melodies from *tefilah* or other Jewish experiences. As part of my research, I have compiled a selection of music for use in conversion rituals to enhance and complement this meaningful moment. I showcased some of these melodies, along with a collection of ordination-related music in my senior recital on September 21, 2022, included in the Appendix. In offering this diverse assortment of music, I hope that people will consider and include the melodies which best represent the essence of the ritual they are hoping to create.

I began this research believing that the institutions conducting the rituals assumed the authority to confer permission onto people in their own name. In other words, for someone to become a Jew or a clergy person, the institution would create a ritual, conduct it, and transform the person involved. They do indeed do this, but it is not the only component necessary for ordination and conversion candidates to feel transformed. Through the conversations I had with my interviewees, I learned that many people felt there was more to it. As I described in the previous chapter, most converts and new clergy reported that they did not truly harmonize with their new identity until they gave themselves internal permission to experience it in a meaningful way. While the external authority symbolized and expressed by the ritual was conferred by the institution, the internal authority was entirely dependent on the individual undergoing the ritual. I believe that a person must give themselves permission to incorporate the blessing bestowed upon

them into their identity. One cantor I spoke with noted that after a dedicated and studious pre-liminal phase of the ritual process followed by the ritual itself, “[the individual has] prepared for public status change, and now [they] have changed. [They’ve] accepted everything that comes with it.”⁵⁹ The institution can say someone is a cantor, rabbi or a convert, but until the individual acknowledges the status change themselves, the transformation is not complete. Once they embrace it and accept the spiritual responsibility that comes with the ritual, the transformation has been achieved. As Cantor Stefano Iacono said, “The outside matched the inside at that point,” which is the hope for everyone who undergoes these rites of passage.⁶⁰

For future research, I recommend looking into the changing demographics of our progressive movements. Throughout history, Jewish liturgy has continuously adapted to make it more accessible and relatable to a diverse Jewish population. For instance, instead of utilizing masculine pronouns for God in translation, many prayer books now use gender neutral English. A next step could be to modify the Hebrew, when needed, to reflect gender neutral Hebrew too. A resource for doing this can be found on the website “Non-Binary Hebrew Project” website.⁶¹ The site offers examples of how one might expand the Hebrew to include those who are transgender, non-binary and/or anyone who does not conform to the traditional gender binary. An example of this modification in action was demonstrated at Ze’evi Tovlev’s senior recital during which Ze’evi modified familiar songs and liturgical texts with non-binary Hebrew. It was an example and an affirmation of how flexible Hebrew can be to embrace all human beings, regardless of gender. The recital was an example of what clergy can do every day to honor the

⁵⁹ Cantor Stefano Iacono, interview with author, March 3 2022.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Lior Gross and Eyal Rivlin. “Nonbinary Hebrew Project.” Accessed on February 9, 2023. <https://www.nonbinaryhebrew.com/>.

ritual elements of liminality and transformation while navigating the ever-changing world around us, as well as the bridge between ourselves and the Divine.

This thesis has been a passion project of mine from the very beginning. Exploring two rituals that have impacted my life in different and meaningful ways was deeply fulfilling. I am looking forward to diving into further research in the future as I enter the cantorate and begin to perform conversion rituals myself. As I approach my own cantorial ordination in May 2023, I anticipate a multitude of emotions. I have questions about my own transformation and what it will feel like to exist betwixt and between the two identities of student and cantor. My research will continue as I discover more about myself through these rituals when I am both the individual who undergoes and the professional who facilitates. May we always be curious about the liminal, sacred transformations of life cycle rituals which bring humans closer to their communities and the Divine.

Appendix A: Conversion Immersion Ceremony by Mayyim Hayyim

Conversion

AN IMMERSION CEREMONY
FOR AN ADULT

(under the guidance of your sponsoring clergy)

Immersion

טבילה T'VILAH

FIRST IMMERSION

Slowly descend the steps into the mikveh.

Before immersing, say:

It is between me and the water now
The water is my medium
With it I inscribe my name
Invisible and permanent
The house of Israel becomes my home!

Immerse completely so that every part of your body is covered by the warm water.

*When you emerge, recite **one** of the following blessings:*

ברוך אתה, יי אלהינו, מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו, וצונו על הטבילה. Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech ha'olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav, v'tzivanu al hat'vilah.

Blessed are You, God, Sovereign of the Universe,
Who has made us holy through your commandments,
and commanded us concerning immersion.

or

ברוך אתה, יי אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו על הטבילת גרים. Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al t'vilat gerim.

Blessed are You, God, Sovereign of the Universe,
Who has made us holy through your commandments,
and commanded us concerning immersion for conversion.

SECOND IMMERSION

Take a deep breath and gently and completely immerse for the second time.

*When you emerge, recite **one** of the following blessings:*

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל	Sh'ma Yisrael,
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ	Adonai Eloheinu,
יְהוָה אֶחָד.	Adonai Echad.

Hear O Israel, *Adonai* is our God, *Adonai* is One.

or

May the words of my mouth, the meditations of my heart,
and this act of immersion seal my devotion to a life of Torah,
a life of service, and a life made holy by acts of loving-kindness.

THIRD IMMERSION

Relax, let your body soften, as you slowly and completely immerse for a third time.

When you emerge, say:

Holy One of Blessing, You have made me a Jew.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,	Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech ha'olam,
שֶׁהֵחֵינֵנוּ, וְקִיַּמְנוּ, וְהִגִּיעֵנוּ לְזֶמַן הַזֶּה.	shehecheyanu, v'kiy'manu, v'higianu la'zman hazeh.

Blessed are You, Sovereign of the universe,
Who keeps us alive, and sustains us, and enables us to reach this day.

*This is a moment when the universe is especially open to your prayers.
Take a few minutes to express your own heart's prayer,
then exit the mikveh when you feel ready.*

ATTRIBUTION

¹ Kushner, Rabbi Noa Rachael. "Shared Meditation." In *Choosing a Jewish Life* by Anita Diamant, 117. New York, NY, Schocken, 2016



TOPICS	Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC)	Academy of Jewish Religion (AJR)	Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies (Ziegler)	Hebrew College	Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS)	Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR)
Denomination	Reconstructionist	Non-denominational	Conservative	Non-denominational	Conservative	Reform
Israel requirement	No Israel requirement	No Israel requirement	1 year in Israel	3rd year in Israel	2nd year in Israel	1st year in Israel
Years of Program(s)	5 years (years 4 & 5 online)	3-5 years (all online, if needed)	4-5 years	5-6 years	5 years rabbi/3-5 years cantor	5 years for rabbi and/or cantor
Masters degree offered	Master of Arts in Hebrew Letters	Master of Arts in Jewish Studies	Master of Arts in Rabbinic Studies	Master of Arts in Jewish Studies or Education	Picked by ordination candidate	Master of Arts in Hebrew Letters or Hebrew Literature & Master of Arts in Sacred Music
Residency requirement	Wyncote, PA residency & online options	Online - building in NY	Online - building in Los Angeles for 1 residency year	Boston, MA residency	New York, NY residency	Year 1 in Jerusalem, 2-5 years in Los Angeles, Cincinnati, or New York
Ordination status	Smicha for rabbinic candidates	Smicha for rabbinic & cantorial candidates	Smicha for rabbinic candidates	Smicha for rabbinic & cantorial candidates	Smicha for rabbinic & cantorial candidates	Smicha for rabbinic & cantorial candidates
Hebrew Requirement	Biblical Hebrew courses taught	Biblical Hebrew courses taught	Biblical & Modern Hebrew courses taught	Biblical & Modern Hebrew courses taught	Biblical & Modern Hebrew courses taught	Biblical & Modern Hebrew courses taught

HUC-JIR New York	HUC-JIR Cincinnati	HUC-JIR Los Angeles	HUC-JIR Jerusalem
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processional: <i>Baruch Haba</i> by Stephen Glass & <i>Baruch Haba</i> by Yaakov Bergman • Welcome by Dean • <i>Samachti B'omri Li</i> by Charles Osborne • Greetings by Board of Governors Chair Elect • Presentation of Humanitarian Award • <i>Elu D'varim</i> by William Sharlin • Remarks by President of HUC-JIR • Address by Judith Plaskow • <i>Lamdeini</i> by Benjie Ellen Schiller • Kavanah offered by Provost Rabbi Dr. Andrew Weiss • Presentation of ordination candidates & ordination ritual (laying of hands) • <i>Hallelujah</i> by Louis Lewandowski • Faculty & Family/Friends Blessings • <i>Shehecheyanu</i> by Tzvika Pik • Prayer for Country & State of Israel • <i>T'filah</i> by David Burger • Moment of Remembrance • <i>Oseh Shalom</i> by Ben Steinberg • <i>Birkat Kohanim</i> by Richard Cohn • Recessional: <i>Ein Keloheinu</i> by Isadore Freed & <i>Non Komo Muestro Dio</i> (Trad) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processional: <i>Mah Tov</i> by Louis Lewandowski • Welcome by the Dean • Speech by President of CCAR & Rabbi of Wise Temple • Worship Service for Shabbat • Remarks by President of HUC-JIR • Address by Rabbi Sally Priesand • Presentation of ordination candidates & ordination ritual (laying of hands) • Remarks by past board chair of Board of Governors • Class of 2022 Blessing • <i>Shehecheyanu</i>, led by Dean • Mourner's Kaddish • Benediction • Recessional: <i>Psalm 150</i> by Louis Lewandowski 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processional: <i>Ashira Ladonai</i> by Yonatan Razel • Welcome by Rabbi of Stephen Wise Temple • Greeting by Dean • Remarks by President of HUC-JIR • Remarks by past board chair of Board of Governors • <i>Elu D'varim</i> by Ben Steinberg • Address by Rabbi Laura Geller • Kavanah offered by Provost Rabbi Dr. Andrea Weiss • Presentation of ordination candidates & ordination ritual (laying of hands) • <i>Turn It Around</i> by Benjie Ellen Schiller • Reading/Blessing by Ordination Class • Benediction • Recessional: <i>Ivdu Et B'Simcha</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processional: <i>Shiru L'Adonai</i> by Shani Ben Or, Boaz Dorot & Neta Rosner-Wachs • Welcome by Dean & <i>Hatikvah</i> • Remarks by President of HUC-JIR • Presentation of Doctor of Humane Letters • <i>Samachti B'omrim Li</i> by Charles Osborne • Spiritual Counseling Certificates • Blessings offered by two speakers • <i>Or Zarua</i> by Niggunim Ensemble • Presentation of ordination candidates & ordination ritual (laying of hands) • Speech given by each new rabbi • <i>Adonai Malach</i>, sung by Rabbi-Cantor Shani Ben Or • Recessional: <i>Yismichu HaShamayim</i> & Other Israeli Songs

Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC)	Academy of Jewish Religion (AJR)	Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies	Hebrew College	Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processional: <i>Ozi V'zimrat Ya</i> • Speech by Board of Governors Chair • Speech by President of RRC • Faculty and student awards • Doctors of Divinity awards • Ordination Ritual & Public Beit Din (laying of hands) • Presentation of Smicha • <i>Psalm 65</i>, written by ordinee • Reading by zoom ordinee • <i>Priestly Benediction</i> • <i>Mi Shebeirach</i> • Closing Prayer • Recessional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bina's Niggun</i> by Joey Weisenberg • <i>National Anthem</i> of USA & <i>Hatikvah</i> • Invocation & <i>Shehecheyanu</i> • Speech by President of AJR Board • Speech by the Dean • Speech by Mayor of Yonkers • Faculty Award & Student Awards • <i>Hinei Mah Tov</i> by Elana Arian • Ordination Ritual & Public Beit Din (laying of hands) • <i>Priestly Blessing</i> • Presentation of Smicha document • <i>T'filat HaDerech</i> by Debbie Friedman • Recessional: <i>Ozi V'zimrat Yah</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bina's Niggun</i> by Joey Weisenberg • Processional: <i>niggun</i> on guitar, mandolin, and voice • Speech by President of Ziegler • Speech by President of AJU • Speech by Dean • Presentation of tallit from sponsor to candidate • Text study, taught by one of the ordinands • Kaddish D'rabbanan • Original Song: <i>Hadrana La</i> • Greetings by Beit Din • Group ordination blessing & presentation of Smicha document (no laying of hands) • Benediction & <i>Shehecheyanu</i> • Recessional: <i>Siman Tov u'Mazel Tov & Oseh Shalom</i> 	<div> Cantorial: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ana Dodi</i> • Presented with HC Tallit • Personal blessing from mentor • Ordination Ritual & Public Beit Din (laying of hands) • Recessional </div> <div> Rabbinical: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Niggun</i> by cantorial students • Speech by Faculty • Ordination Ritual & Public Beit Din (no laying of hands) • Presentation of Smicha document • Recessional </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processional • Presentation of tallit from mentor & private words of blessing • Speech by Dean • Ordination Ritual & Public Beit Din (no laying of hands) • Presentation of Smicha document • <i>Birkat Kohanim</i> • New rabbis charge • Faculty Blessing • Kaddish D'Rabbanan • Recessional

Appendix D: Before Ordination Immersion Ceremony by Mayyim Hayyim

Before Ordination

AN IMMERSION CEREMONY

Intention

כוונה KAVANAH

To be read before preparing for immersion:

Pirkei Avot teaches that there is an unbroken succession of Torah from Sinai to the present day:
"Moses received the Torah and transmitted it to Joshua; Joshua to the Elders; the Elders to the prophets;
and the prophets transmitted it to the men of the Great Assembly."

Here I stand on the eve of my ordination,
ready to become a link in *shalshet hakabalah*, the chain of tradition.
I, _____, enter these living waters on the precipice of becoming a *k'li kodesh*,
a sacred vessel for the holy work of supporting the Jewish community.
I know this work will be both glorious and challenging.
May these waters buoy me as I honor the journey that has brought me to this place in my life.

Immersion

טבילה T'VILAH

FIRST IMMERSION—GRATITUDE

To be read at the mikveh's edge before you enter the water:

I honor the richness of the experiences that have brought me to this moment.
I am thankful to my teachers, my mentors, and my supporters
who helped me on my path toward becoming clergy.
May I find the wisdom, courage, and strength to serve with compassion,
and may I be worthy to take on the mantle of being a Jewish spiritual leader.

*Slowly descend the steps into the mikveh waters and immerse completely so that every part of your body is
covered by the warm water. When you emerge, recite the following blessing:*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech ha'olam
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּטַבִּילָה בְּמַיִם חַיִּים. asher kidshanu bi-t'vilah b'mayyim hayyim.

Blessed are You, God, Majestic Spirit of the Universe
who makes us holy by embracing us in living waters.'

SECOND IMMERSION—HINEINI/BEING PRESENT

To be read before you immerse:

I acknowledge my feelings about stepping into this unknown role.

Take a moment to name what you are feeling.

May my heart remain open.

May I find the resources and connections I will need to fulfill the promise of my ordination.

Take a deep breath, and gently and completely immerse for the second time.

THIRD IMMERSION—CELEBRATION

To be read before you immerse:

While I know that there is still much to learn, I celebrate the completion of my studies.

I rejoice in my ordination, *simchat smicha*.

As David and Miriam danced before God in joy, so my heart dances in jubilation.

Relax and let your body soften as you slowly and completely immerse for the third time.

When you emerge, recite the following blessing:

ברוך אתה, יי אלהינו, מלך העולם. *Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech ha'olam*
שהחיינו, וקיימנו, והגיענו לזמן הזה. *shehecheyanu, v'kiy'manu, v'higianu la'zman hazeh.*

Holy One of Blessing, Your Presence fills creation.

You have kept us alive, You have sustained us,

You have brought us to this moment.²

I ascend the seven steps with hope to serve God and the Jewish people
with all of my mind, my heart, and my spirit.

ATTRIBUTIONS

This ceremony was created by Matia Rania Angelou, Deborah Issokson, and Judith D. Kummer, with contributions from Rachel Stock Spilker, for Mayyim Hayyim Living Waters.

¹ Created by Mayyim Hayyim Ritual Creation Team, 2004

² Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley; *Vetaher Libenu*. Sudbury, MA. 1980. p. 104

Appendix E: List of Ordination Ritual & Ceremony Melodies/Liturgy

1. Niggun or Welcome Piece for the Processional

Examples: Ozi V'zimrat Yah (Psalm 100), Bina's Niggun, Ana Dodi, Hinei Mah Tov (Psalm 133), Baruch Haba (Psalm 118), Shiru L'Adonai, Mah Tov, Pitchu Li (Psalm 118)

2. Choice of Psalm(s) or Verse(s) of Text, to highlight the joyous nature of the day

Examples: Samachti B'omrim Li (Psalm 122), Shiru L'Adonai (Psalm 96), Adonai Malach (Psalm 97/99), Or Zarua (Psalm 97), Hallelujah (Psalm 150), Ivdu Et Adonai B'simcha (Psalm 100), Ozi V'zimrat Yah (Exodus 15:2), V'taheir Libeinu (based on Proverbs 20:9), Psalm 65

3. Blessing & Prayer of Learning & Transition

Examples: Kaddish D'Rabinan, Elu D'varim, L'dor Vador, Lamdeini, V'haarev Na, Turn It Around

4. Blessing & Prayer of Protection & Health

Example: Mi Shebeirach

5. Choose ONE of the following for Ordination Ritual:

Priestly Blessing (in form of song)

OR

Instrumental music chosen by ordinee to accompany their personal ritual

6. Shehecheyanu Blessing

7. Concluding Piece for the Recessional

Examples: Shiru L'Adonai (Psalm 96), Hallelujah (Psalm 150), Ivdu Et Adonai B'simcha (Psalm 100), Oseh Shalom

Additional Recommendations:

- ❖ National Anthem of the United States and/or the Israeli National Anthem, HaTikvah
- ❖ Siman Tov u'Mazel Tov - song of celebration often sung at Jewish lifecycle events

Appendix F: Mayyim Hayyim Seven Kavanot

Seven Kavanot for Mikveh Preparation

CREATED BY MAYYIM HAYYIM LIVING WATERS

The Holy One created the world in six days, but made it complete with Shabbat, the seventh day. The number seven suggests wholeness and represents the creative process. Seven steps lead into the *mikveh*.

These seven *kavanot*—preparatory meditations—are offered in the hope that your immersion will provide you a sense of *shleimut*—wholeness and peace.

1. **הִנְנִי Hineini. Here I am.**

Take a minute and think about the transition *mikveh* will help you mark today. Immersion in the *mikveh* represents a spiritual transformation from one state to another. In traditional language, your change is from ritually unready (*tamei*) to ritually ready (*tahor*). Prepare yourself by writing in a journal, saying a personal prayer, or reading something of meaning to you. Breathe deeply. Sigh audibly.

2. **הַדּוּר בּוֹצֵהָ Hiddur mitzvah. The unadorned body is beautiful in itself.**

Remove all jewelry as well as makeup, paying special attention to the eyes. Remove nail polish on fingers and toes. (Acrylics may stay on if they have been on for more than a month.) There is no need for adornment or artifice in the *mikveh*. There should be no physical barriers between the body and the living waters.

3. **נִקְבִּים נִקְבִּים Nekavim nekavim. You fashioned the human being intricate in design.**

Empty your bladder. Our tradition celebrates and blesses the body in every possible moment and mode.

4. **בְּצֵלֶם אֱלֹהִים B'Tzelem Elohim. I am made in the image of God.**

Remove all clothing, eyeglasses, contact lenses, dental plates, hearing aids. Each person enters the *mikveh* as naked as on the day of his birth, as on the day of her birth. Without rank or status. Simply a human being. Gloriously a human being.

5. **אֵלֹהֵי נֶשְׁמָה שֶׁנִּתְּתָ בִּי טְהוֹרָה היא Elohai neshama shenatata bi tehorah hi. The soul in me is pure.**

Shower or bathe with thoughtful attention to the miracle of your body. Pay attention to every part of yourself. Wash yourself, head to toe; shampoo your hair, lather your shoulders, back, arms, belly, and genitals. Scrub elbows, knees, and heels, removing calluses and dead skin. Wash between fingers and toes. Relax and enjoy. The water of the *mikveh* will feel even sweeter after this.

6. **כָּל הַנְּשָׁמָה תְּהַלֵּל יְיָ Kol haneshama t'hailel yah. The breath of every living thing praises You.**

Clean your ears, blow your nose, brush and floss your teeth, rinse your mouth, comb your hair. Stand before the mirror. Consider all of your senses. Look into your own eyes and smile. Think about the words that come from your mouth.

7. **תִּקּוּן עוֹלָם Tikkun olam. We can stand for justice; we can build a world of peace and justice.**

Clean under your nails—toenails, too. (Nails do not need to be cut.) Consider the power of your hands and feet to create wholeness in your life, in our world.

Now that you are ready in body, mind and spirit, wrap yourself in the sheet provided and let the Mikveh Guide know you are ready. The guide is here to help make your immersion as meaningful as possible, to answer questions, provide guidance, insure privacy, and, where appropriate, to assure you that your immersion is “fit” or *kasher*.

As you enter the *mikveh* do not rush. Walk slowly. Count the seven steps into the water stopping on each one.

Relax into the embrace of the water, into whatever the next moment may hold for you.

Welcome. In the *mikveh*, every body is a sacred vessel.



Reproduced with the blessing of Mayyim Hayyim Living Waters, mayyimhayyim.org - בְּיָמֵינוּ

Appendix G: List of Songs from Conversion Liturgy

- ❖ *Ruth's Niggun* by Iris Karlin
- ❖ *Ruth's Song* by Simon Sargon
- ❖ *I'll Stay With You* by Jeffrey Saxe
- ❖ *Ruth's Song* by Becky Mann
- ❖ *Here I Am* by Sue Horowitz
- ❖ *V'ahavta* by Ben Haim
- ❖ *Sh'ma* by Chava Mirel (with additional English lyrics to *Hineni* by Emily Short)
- ❖ *Song of Ruth* ("Entreat Me Not To Leave Thee") by Maurice Goldman
- ❖ *Song of Ruth* by Kurt Weill
- ❖ *Song of Ruth* by Michael Hunter Ochs
- ❖ *I'm Finally Home* by Rachelle Nelson & Lisa Segal
- ❖ *Asher Yatzar* by Dan Nichols
- ❖ *Asher Yatzar/Elohai Neshama* by Debbie Friedman
- ❖ *Yihyu L'ratzon* by Ernst Bloch
- ❖ *Yihyu L'ratzon* by Dennis Arlan
- ❖ *Yihyu L'ratzon* by Michelle Citrin
- ❖ *Yihyu L'ratzon* by Elana Arian
- ❖ *Oseh Shalom* by Yoel Sykes
- ❖ *Oseh Shalom* by the Spanish Portuguese Synagogue tradition
- ❖ *Oseh Shalom* by Julie Silver
- ❖ *Oseh Shalom* by Debbie Friedman
- ❖ *Oseh Shalom* by Jeff Klepper, arr. Joshua Jacobson
- ❖ *Achat Sha'alti* by Chava Mirel

- ❖ *Eilu D'varim* by Ben Steinberg
- ❖ *Shehecheyanu* by Michael Hunter Ochs





*A Musical Soundscape of Ordination &
Conversion Rituals*

DFSSM Senior Recital
presented by
Emily Anabeth Hoolihan

September 21st, 2022 | 25 Elul 5782
10:30AM EST

Recital Advisor: Cantor Benjie Ellen Schiller
Thesis Advisor: Rabbi Kim S. Geringer
In partial fulfillment of HUC-JIR Cantorial Ordination

Part 1: Conversion

Ruth Niggun 	Iris Karlin
	Violin: Elana Arian & Recorder: Ivan Barenboim
	Flute: Caroline Sonett-Assor
	Piano: Pedro d'Aquino
Ruth's Song	Simon A. Sargon
	Piano: Pedro d'Aquino
I'll Stay With You	Rabbi Jeffrey Saxe
	Guitar: Elana Arian & Clarinet: Ivan Barenboim
	Flute: Caroline Sonett-Assor & Piano: Pedro d'Aquino
Ve-ahav'ta	Paul Ben-Haim z"l
	Organ: Pedro d'Aquino
Ruth's Song	Becky Mann
	Guitar & Vocals: Becky Mann
	Violin: Elana Arian & Clarinet: Ivan Barenboim
	Flute: Caroline Sonett-Assor
Y'varech'cha 	Debbie Friedman z"l
	Trio: Sierra Fox, Beth Reinstein & Margo Wagner
	Guitar: Elana Arian & Clarinet: Ivan Barenboim
	Flute: Caroline Sonett-Assor & Piano: Pedro d'Aquino

Part 2: Covenant

Here I Am	Sue Horowitz
	Guitar: Elana Arian & Recorder: Ivan Barenboim
	Flute: Caroline Sonett-Assor & Piano: Pedro d'Aquino
Veh'yeih Sham	Cantor Benjie Ellen Schiller & Rabbi Lester Bronstein
	Vocalist & Pianist: Cantor Benjie Ellen Schiller
	Flute: Caroline Sonett-Assor
Sh'ma/Hineni	Chava Mirel (Hineni lyrics by Emily Hoolihan)
	Trio: Sierra Fox, Beth Reinstein, & Margo Wagner
	Guitar: Elana Arian & Clarinet: Ivan Barenboim
	Shruti Box: Emma Rebecca Maier
Silent Devotion and Response	Ernest Bloch z"l
	Choir: Sydney Michaeli, Emma Rebecca Maier, Rokhl Weston, Ella Gladstone Martin, Agnes Valdman, Becky Mann, Kalix Jacobson, Ze'evi Tovlev, Kevin McKenzie, Justin Callis, Gabriel Lehrman, Gabe Snyder, Isaac Sonett-Assor, Joseph Flaxman Conductor: Jordan Goldstein

Part 3: Ordination

- Shiru L'Adonai 🎵.....Rabbi-Cantor Shani Ben Or, Neta Rosner Wachs, & Boaz Dorot
Choir: Sydney Michaeli, Emma Rebecca Maier, Rokhl Weston,
Ella Gladstone Martin, Agnes Valdman, Becky Mann, Kalix Jacobson,
Ze'evi Tovlev, Jordan Goldstein, Kevin McKenzie, Justin Callis, Gabriel Lehrman,
Gabe Snyder, Isaac Sonett-Assor, Joseph Flaxman, Beth Reinstein
Guitar: Elana Arian & Clarinet: Ivan Barenboim
Flute: Caroline Sonett-Assor & Piano: Pedro d'Aquino
Percussion: Sierra Fox & Margo Wagner
- V'ha'arev Na.....Cantor Gerald Cohen
Piano: Pedro d'Aquino
- Samachti B'omrim Li.....Cantor Charles Osborne
Choir: Sydney Michaeli, Emma Rebecca Maier, Rokhl Weston,
Ella Gladstone Martin, Agnes Valdman, Becky Mann, Kalix Jacobson,
Ze'evi Tovlev, Kevin McKenzie, Justin Callis, Gabriel Lehrman,
Gabe Snyder, Isaac Sonett-Assor, Joseph Flaxman
Organ: Pedro d'Aquino
Conductor: Jordan Goldstein
- Birkat Kohanim.....Cantor Richard Cohn
DFSSM Class of 2023: Sydney Michaeli, Emma Rebecca Maier, Rokhl Weston,
Ella Gladstone Martin, Agnes Valdman, Becky Mann,
Kalix Jacobson, Ze'evi Tovlev, Isaac Sonett-Assor
Organ: Pedro d'Aquino
Conductor: Jordan Goldstein
- Shehecheyanu 🎵.....Michael Hunter Ochs
Guitar: Elana Arian & Clarinet: Ivan Barenboim
Piano: Pedro d'Aquino

🎵 = please sing along!
Piano & Organ: Pedro d'Aquino
Strings: Elana Arian
Clarinet: Ivan Barenboim
Flute: Caroline Sonett-Assor
Percussion: Sierra Fox and Margo Wagner
Shruti Box: Emma Rebecca Maier



PART 1: CONVERSION

Conversion has always been a part of my family's story. My father converted to Judaism shortly before marrying my mom, and that decision changed the trajectory of my own, personal Jewish story. Every time I walk into a new Jewish space, at least one person approaches me wondering, "so...Hoolihan? That's not a very Jewish name. Where's that from?" I tell them, "well, it's Jewish, because...I'm Jewish." I have always been proud to share my family's story and commitment to Judaism.

I chose to research conversion as part of my senior thesis, because it holds such a personal connection and beckons many exciting opportunities. I realized that of all our life cycle rituals, conversion had the least amount of music involved. B'nei Mitzvah, Weddings, Funerals - all moments of Jewish life where music acts as a vessel for spirituality and connection. What about the ritual of conversion? In a moment where we joyously embrace a new Jew into our community, why doesn't our ritual reflect exactly this with music guiding us?

The following liturgical melodies celebrate the joys, struggles, and biblical tales of the conversion journey. My hope is that we can utilize these meaningful melodies in our conversion ceremonies, and as part of the conversion process for our congregants and communities.



The niggun transforms us musically to a faraway land. Desert, heat, struggle, and yet some sparks of hope. An old Jewish modality to start our travel in time and set the mood. The melody invites everyone to join along without words, either humming or with a "dai dai dai...", in the very ancient Jewish spiritual tradition of the Niggun

-Iris Karlin

Ruth Niggun

Iris Karlin

Largo

7 13 19

rit. . . .

Ruth's Song - Al Tifg'i Vi

"Do Not Entreat Me To Leave You"

Composer: Simon Sargon

אל־תִּפְגְּעִי־בִי לְעִזְבֹּתָ לְשׁוֹב מֵאַחֲרַיִךְ כִּי אֶל־אַשֶׁר תִּלְכִּי אֵלָיוּ וּבְאַשֶׁר תִּלְיִנִי אֲלֵיךְ עִמָּךְ עַמִּי וְאַל־תִּהְיִי אֵלָיִךְ:
בְּאַשֶׁר תִּמְוֹתִי אֲמוֹת וְשֵׁם אֶקְבֵּר כֹּה יַעֲשֶׂה יְהוָה לִי וְכֹה יוֹסִיף כִּי הַמָּוֶת יִפְרִיד בֵּינִי וּבֵינָךְ

<p>Al tifg'i vi l'ozveich Lashuv mei-acharayich Ki el asher teilchi eileich Uva'asher talini, alin Ameich ami, veilohayich Elohai. Uva'asher tamuti amut V'sham sham ekaveir Koh ya'aseh Adonai li, v'choch yosif Ki hamavet yafrid beini uweineich Al tifg'i vi l'ozveich.</p>	<p>Do not entreat me to leave you Or ask me not to follow you Wherever you may go, I will go Wherever you may lodge, I will lodge Your people will be mine And your God will be my own Wherever you may die, I will die. And there will be my grave. Thus, may God do to me and even more. For only death will divide you from me Do not entreat me to leave you</p>
---	--



I'll Stay With You (Ruth 1:16-17)

Composer: Rabbi Jeffrey Saxe & Keyboard Arrangement: Dave Schlossberg

כִּי אֶל־אַשֶׁר תִּלְכִּי אֵלָיוּ וּבְאַשֶׁר תִּלְיִנִי אֲלֵיךְ עִמָּךְ עַמִּי וְאַל־תִּהְיִי אֵלָיִךְ:
בְּאַשֶׁר תִּמְוֹתִי אֲמוֹת וְשֵׁם אֶקְבֵּר וְאַל־תִּהְיִי אֵלָיִךְ

<p>Ki el asher teilchi eileich. Wherever you go, you know, I'll follow. U-va-asher talini alin. Wherever your journey takes you, I'll stay with you.</p> <p>Don't ask me now to leave you, to go back to my home. My past will always stay with me, but this new place is my own. Ameich ami, veilohayich Elohai. Your people are my people, and your God, my God.</p> <p>Ba'asher tamuti amut, v'sham ekaveir Elohayich Elohai. Whatever place our journey takes us, that's the place we're meant to be, With you standing right beside me.</p> <p>Ki el asher teilchi eileich. Wherever you go, you know, I'll follow.</p>
--

Uva'asher talini alin. Wherever your journey takes you, I'll stay with you.

Waterfalls and Abundance by Rosa Blumenfeld

The water rushes by, abundantly falling down the mountain. We are here at a waterfall. Imagine it in your mind. The water falling. All of it together as one body yet each droplet its own being. We are all connected to that water, including you. Take in the sound of it. Imagine the feel of it in your mind's eye. Think about how it smells here. Look at the vegetation, the trees, the plants that grow everywhere the water touches the rock. Imagine what it would be like, feel like, to swim in this water. Not just to feel the heavy cascade of it as it falls on top of your head. But also to bathe and luxuriate in the feel of it surrounding, encompassing, and holding you as you swim in the tiny lagoon beneath the waterfall itself.

Abundance. This is one of the many lessons that the water teaches us. It is always here. It is never running out. There was always enough. And it is the same with our hearts. There was always enough love in the world. And we can always choose to grow, expand, and crack open our hearts. To love harder, love more, love deeper. Abundance.

The society that we live in tells us that there are so many finite things. This leads us to be afraid that the things that we need will run out. This is a lie. And the water reminds us that we are connected. That there is enough. And that we are enough. It falls down in a mighty stream. So listen. Just listen and be with it for a few moments as you let your body really take it in and imagine yourself in its flow.



Ve-ahav'ta: Thou Shalt Love

Composer: Paul Ben-Haim

וְאָהַבְתָּ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-לִבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל-מְאֹדְךָ:
וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֶנִּי מְצַוְנֶךָ הַיּוֹם עַל-לִבְּךָ:
וּשְׁנַתָּם לְבָנֶיךָ וּדְבַרְתָּ בָּם בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבִלְכֹתְךָ בְּדֶרֶךְ וּבְשֹׁכְבְּךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ:
וּקְשַׁרְתָּם לְאוֹת עַל-יָדְךָ וְהָיוּ לְטֹטְפֹת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ: וְכַתַּבְתָּם עַל-מְזוֹזֹת בֵּיתְךָ וּבְשַׁעְרֶיךָ:
לְמַעַן תִּזְכְּרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֶת-כָּל-מִצְוֹתַי וְהָיִיתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים לֵאלֹהֵיכֶם: אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

<p><i>V'ahavta et Adonai Elohecha</i> <i>B'chol l'vav'cha uv'chol naf-sh'cha</i> <i>Uv'chol m'odecha.</i></p> <p><i>V'hayu had'varim ha-eileh</i></p>	<p>Thou shall love Adonai, thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might.</p> <p>And these words, which I command you on</p>
---	---

<p>Asher anochi m'tsav'cha Hayom al l'vavecha. V'shinantam l'vanecha V'dibarta bam.</p> <p>B'shiv-t'cha b'veitecha Uv-lech-t'cha vaderech, Uv-shoch-b'cha uv-kumecha.</p> <p>Uk-shartam l'ot al yadecha V'hayu l'totafot bein einecha Uch-tav-tam al m'zuzot beitecha Uvisharecha.</p> <p>L'ma'an tizk'ru va'asitem et kol mitz-votai vih'yitem k'doshim leiloheichem. Ani Adonai Eloheichem.</p>	<p>this day, shall be upon thy heart.</p> <p>Thou shall teach them diligently unto thy children, and shall speak of them when thou sittest in thy house, when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.</p> <p>Thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes.</p> <p>Thou shalt write them upon the doorposts of thy house and upon thy gates.</p> <p>That you shall remember and do all of My commandments, and be holy unto your God.</p> <p>I am Adonai, your God.</p>
---	---



Ruth's Song

Composer: Becky Mann

כִּי אֶל-אֱשֶׁר תֵּלַכְי אֵלֶּךָ וּבְאֶשֶׁר תִּלְיִנִי אֶלֵּין עִמָּךְ עַמִּי וְאֵלֶּהְיָ אֱלֹהֶי:

<p>Where you go, I will go; Where you lodge, I will lodge; And your people shall be my people And your God my God.</p> <p>Ki el asher teilchi eileich Uva'asher talini alin Ameich ami veilohayich Elohai.</p>
--



Y'varech'cha - Priestly Blessing

Composer: Debbie Friedman

יְבָרֶכְךָ יְהוָה וַיְשַׁמְרֶךָ: אָמֵן.
יְאֵר יְהוָה א פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּחַנֶּךָ: אָמֵן.
יֵשָׁא יְהוָה א פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּשֶׁם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם: אָמֵן.
כֵּן יְהִי רָצוֹן:

<p>Y'varech'cha Adonai v'yishm'recha.- Amen, Amen.</p> <p>Ya'eir Adonai panav eilecha vichuneka. Amen, Amen.</p> <p>Yisa Adonai, panav eilecha, v'yaseim l'cha shalom.</p> <p>Amen.</p> <p>Kein y'hi ratzon.</p>	<p>May God bless you and keep you. Amen, Amen.</p> <p>May God's light shine upon you, and may God be gracious to you. Amen, Amen.</p> <p>May you feel God's presence within you always, and may you find peace.</p> <p>Amen.</p> <p>May it be so.</p>
--	---



PART 2: COVENANT

Covenant has been the guiding word of connection for me between the ordination and conversion rituals that I have been studying. Both of these rituals are described in our Tanakh, enacted by our ancestors thousands of years ago, and they continue to be performed today.

Through the journey of these rituals, I have found a few prayers that might resonate with individuals who are going through conversion or becoming ordained. They each establish our personal and collective relationship with God. They also mark the liminal moments of each ritual, when someone is not yet a Jew, but also not 'not' a Jew, or not yet clergy, but also not a novice student.

Our liturgy provides moments of comfort and understanding in the naming of these liminal moments. May these texts help us to guide ordinands and converts to mark the moments of being betwixt and between their identities and roles.

Here I Am

Composer: Sue Horowitz

Lyrics: Sue Horowitz & Rabbi Lev Baesh

I come with joy, I come with hope.
I come with vision and intention.
I come with prayer, I come with love,
With searching and sacred questions.

CHORUS:

Hineni, Here I Am.

I come with peace of mind.
I know just where I stand, Here I Am.

I come with trust, I come with pride.
I come with justice and with freedom.
I come with history, I come with family,
With knowledge, and with wisdom.

CHORUS

Where you go, I will go.
Where you lead, I will follow.
Your people will be mine
And your God will be my God.
We welcome you with open arms,
With joy and hope, with prayer and love.
We welcome you with trust and pride,
With history and family.

CHORUS



Veh'yeih Sham

Composers: Cantor Benjie Ellen Schiller & Rabbi Lester Bronstein

Text: Exodus 24:12; Psalm 69:14

עֲלֵה אֵלַי הַהָרָה וְהִיְהִי-שָׁמָּה.
וְאֲנִי תַפְלִיתִי-לָךְ | יְהוָה עֵת רָצוֹן אֱלֹהִים בְּרַב־חֶסֶדְךָ עֲנֵנִי בְּאַמֶּת יִשְׁעֶךָ:

*Alei eilai, haharah veh'yeih sham.
Come up to Me on the mountain and be there.*

*Va'ani t'filati l'cha Adonai eit ratzon.
As for me, let me be my prayer when the time is nigh.
Veh'yeih sham, let me be there.*



Sh'ma

Composer: Chava Mirel

Sh'ma Yisraeil Havayah Eloheinu Havayah Echad
שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד

**Hineni, here I am.
Here I stand on this day
Ready to take the next step.**

**As I enter
these holy waters,
May I inscribe my name in our chain of tradition**

**May I be a sacred vessel
as I honor my journey that has brought me to this moment today.**
based on Mayyim Hayyim's conversion and ordination immersion rituals



Silent Devotion and Response
Composer: Ernest Bloch (1880-1959)

יהיו לרצון אמרי פי והגיון לבי לפניך יהוה צורי וגואלי

<i>Yih'yu l'ratzon imrei fi V'hegyon libi l'fanecha Adonai tzuri v'go-ali. Amen.</i>	May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable to you, Adonai, my Rock & my Redeemer.
--	--



Between by Yehuda Amichai
Translation by Robert Alter

Where will we be when these flowers turn into fruit
In the narrow between, when the flower is no longer a flower
And the fruit not yet a fruit. And what a wonderful between we made,
For each other between body and body. A between of eyes, between waking and sleep.
A twilight between light, not day and not night.

How your spring dress so quickly became a flag of summer
That flutters already in the first wind of fall.
How my voice was no longer my voice, but like a prophecy, almost.

What a wonderful between we were, like earth
In the clefts of the wall, a small stubborn earth
For the valiant moss, for the thorny caper bush, whose bitter fruit
Sweetened what we ate together.

These are the last days of books.
Next come the last days of words. Some day, you will understand.



PART 3: ORDINATION

Ordination, like conversion, is not only a change of status, but a change of being. There is an enormous responsibility held by ordination candidates – one that is not held lightly. This spring, I watched eleven ordination ceremonies online from different seminaries across the country. Not one was the same, and they each marked this special rite of passage in their own way. For this section of my recital, I've compiled some classic ordination ceremony melodies, contrasted with new, upbeat contemporary works.

God-willing, I will be ordained with my classmates as a cantor on May 7th, 2023. After watching my classmates and colleagues become clergy the past few years, I wondered what that moment of ascending the bima to the ark to receive the Priestly Benediction, then descending as a rabbi or cantor was like. What elements of the ritual were required, and what was optional? What did that moment feel like? May we cherish this austere and remarkable accomplishment with liturgy that uplifts us, affirms our covenant with God, and marks this liminal threshold of responsibility with love.



Shiru L'Adonai, Shir Chadash

Composers: Boaz Dorot, Neta Rosner Wachs, and Rabbi-Cantor Shani Ben Or

Text: Psalm 96

שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה כָּל-הָאָרֶץ:
שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה בְּרָכוּ שְׁמוֹ בְּשָׁרוּ מִיּוֹם-לְיוֹם יְשׁוּעָתוֹ:
סִפְרוּ בַּגּוֹיִם כְּבוֹדוֹ בְּכָל-הָעַמִּים נִפְלְאוֹתָיו:
כִּי גָדוֹל יְהוָה וּמְהֻלָּל מְאֹד נִרְאָה הוּא עַל-כָּל-אֱלֹהִים:

<i>Shiru L'Adonai, shir chadash</i> <i>Shiru L'Adonai, kol ha'aretz</i> <i>Shiru L'Adonai, bar'chu sh'mo</i> <i>Basru miyom l'yom y'shuato.</i> <i>Sapru vagoyim k'vodo</i> <i>B'chol ha'amim nifl'otav.</i> <i>Ki gadol Adonai, um'hulal m'od</i> <i>Nora Hu al kol elohim.</i>	Sing to Adonai a new song, sing to Adonai, all the earth. Sing to Adonai, bless God's name, proclaim God's victory day after day. Tell of God's glory among the nations, God's wondrous deeds, among all peoples. For Adonai is great and much acclaimed, God is held in awe by all divine beings.
---	--

V'ha'arev Na

Composer: Cantor Gerald Cohen

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו לעסוק בדברי תורה.
והערב-נא יהוה אלהינו את-דברי תורתך בפינות, ובפי עמך בית ישראל
ונהיה אנחנו וצאצאינו, וצאצאי עמך בית ישראל. כלנו יודעי שמך, ולומדי תורתך לשמה.
ברוך אתה יהוה המלמד תורה לעמו ישראל.

<p>Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'olam Asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu La'asok b'divrei Torah.</p> <p>V'ha'arev na Adonai Eloheinu Et divrei Torat'cha b'finu Uv'fi am'cha beit Yisrael V'ha'arev na b'finu v'nih'yeh anachnu V'tse'e'tsa'einu v'tse'e'tsa'ei am'cha beit Yisrael</p> <p>Kulanu yodei sh'mecha V'lomdei Toratecha lishma Baruch Atah, Adonai, ham'lameid Torah l'amo Yisrael.</p>	<p>Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who hallows us with mitzvot, commanding us to engage with words of Torah.</p> <p>O Adonai, our God, let the words of Torah be sweet in our mouths, and the mouths of Your people Israel, so that we, our descendents, and the descendents of all Your people Israel may know you, by studying your Torah.</p> <p>Blessed are You, Adonai, who teaches Torah to Your people Israel.</p>
---	---



Samachti B'omrim Li

Composer: Cantor Charles Osborne

Text: Psalm 122

שָׁמַחְתִּי בְּאִמְרֵי לִי בֵּית יְהוָה נִלְךָ עֲמֻדֹת הָיוּ רִגְלֵינוּ בְּנִשְׁעָרָיו: יְרוּשָׁלָּם:
יְרוּשָׁלָּם הַבְּנוּיָה כְּעִיר שְׁחֻכָּה-לָהּ יִחְדָּו:
נִשְׁשָׁם עָלֵינוּ שְׂבָטִים שְׂבָטֵי-יָהּ עָדוֹת לִישְׁרָאֵל לְהָדוֹת לִשְׁם יְהוָה:
שָׂאֵלוּ שְׁלֹם יְרוּשָׁלָּם יִשְׁלְיוּ אֹהֲבָיו: יְהִי-שְׁלֹם בְּחִילָךְ שְׁלֹה בְּאַרְמְנוֹתֶיךָ:
לְמַעַן אֶתִּי וְרַעֲי אֲדַבְּרָה-נָא שְׁלֹם בָּךְ: לְמַעַן בֵּית-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֲבַקֶּשֶׁה טוֹב לָךְ:

<p>Samachti b'omrim li Beit Adonai neileich Omdot hayu ragleinu Bisharayich Y'rushalayim</p> <p>Y'rushalayim hab'nuyah K'ir shechub'ra la yachdav Shesham alu shivtei ya eidut l'Yisrael l'hodot l'sheim Adonai</p> <p>Sha'alu sh'lom Y'rushalayim Yishlayu ohavayich Y'hi shalom b'cheileich shal'va b'arm'notayich</p> <p>L'ma'an achai v'rei-ai adabra na shalom bach L'ma'an beit Adonai Eloheinu avaksha tov lach</p>	<p>I rejoiced when they said unto me: 'Let us go unto the house of Adonai.'</p> <p>Our feet are standing within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem, that art builded as a city that is compact together.</p> <p>Whither the tribes went up, even the tribes of Adonai, as a testimony unto Israel, to give thanks unto the name of Adonai.</p> <p>Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; may they prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.</p> <p>For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say: 'Peace be within thee.' For the sake of the house of Adonai our God, I will seek thy good.</p>
--	---



For Thresholds by Rabbi Benjamin Spratt

We bless the doorway, the empty space between spaces, the boundary defined by opening, the edges given meaning by movement.

On the brink of it all, we look backwards, naming the walls that gave both structure and confinement.

The adornments that signal past self, the familiar textures of comfort and worn paths.

Before the threshold, we note the feelings that stir.

Grief at letting go of all that we outgrew; gratitude for all we received; relief for all that we may leave behind; fear for abandoning what gave definition.

We feel the pulse of these feelings, both slowing and speeding our step, towards all that comes next.

Before the threshold, we honor this space.

Giving love to the Self we have been, and the ways we endured and evolved; giving embrace to one another in all we held, in pain and possibility and purpose.

Giving appreciation for the blessings that sparked joy and belonging; giving gratitude for the quakes that forced us to grow.

Before the threshold, we prepare ourselves for opening.

In the unknown, we name the mystery of becoming and wonder what this new space may mean.

We claim our courage nested against our fear; we affirm our excitement twined with our loss, and we rise to a new chapter in all its inevitability and with all its opportunity.

Birkat Kohanim

Composer: Cantor Richard Cohn

Text: Numbers 6:24-26

יְבָרֶכֶךָ יְהוָה וְיִשְׁמְרֶכָּהּ: כֵּן יְהִי רָצוֹן:
יְאֵר יְהוָה אֶפְנֵי אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְיִתְחַנֶּנָּהּ: כֵּן יְהִי רָצוֹן:
יֵשָׁא יְהוָה אֶפְנֵי אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְיִשְׁעָם לָהּ שָׁלוֹם: כֵּן יְהִי רָצוֹן:

Y'varech'cha Adonai v'yish'm'recha Kein y'hi ratzon.	May God bless you and keep you. May it be so.
Ya-eir Adonai panav eilecha vichuneka Kein y'hi ratzon.	May God's light shine upon you, and may God be gracious to you. May it be so.
Yisah Adonai panav eilecha, v'yaseim l'cha Shalom Kein y'hi ratzon.	May you feel God's presence within you always, and may you find peace. May it be so.



Shehecheyanu

Composer: Michael Hunter Ochs

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהֵחֵינּוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעְנוּ לַזְמַן הַזֶּה:

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'olam Shehecheyanu v'kiy'manu V'higiyanu laz'man ha-zeh. Amen.	Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, for giving us life, sustaining us, and enabling us to reach this season. Amen
---	--



Interviews

1. Rabbi Benjamin Altshuler - interviewed on June 14, 2022 via Zoom
2. Rabbi David Adelson - interviewed on March 7, 2022 in person
3. Rabbi Cantor Shani Ben Or - interviewed on July 26, 2022 via Zoom
4. Rabbi Stephanie Bernstein - interviewed on March 3, 2022 via Zoom
5. Rabbi Caitlin Brazner - interviewed on June 29, 2022 via Zoom
6. Rabbi April Davis - interviewed on March 10, 2022 via Zoom
7. Anita Diamant - interviewed on March 14, 2022 via Zoom
8. Rabbinical student, Tim Gaylord - interviewed on April 13, 2022 via phone
9. Cantor Kat Hastings - interviewed on March 7, 2022 via Zoom
10. Rabbi Dr. Lawrence Hoffman - interviewed on July 26, 2022 via Zoom
11. Rabbi Heidi Hoover - interviewed on March 10, 2022 via Zoom
12. Cantor Stefano Iacono - interviewed on March 3, 2022 via Zoom
13. Rabbi Leora Kaye - interviewed on May 18, 2022 via Zoom
14. Rabbi Sara Luria - interviewed on April 28, 2022 via Zoom
15. Lucy Marshall - interviewed on March 22, 2022 via Zoom
16. Cantor Jenna Pearsall - interviewed on July 29, 2022 in person
17. Dr. Andrew Rehfeld - interviewed on March 17, 2022 via Zoom
18. Rabbi Lisa Rubin - interviewed on June 9, 2022 via Zoom
19. Rabbi Annalisa Stryer - interviewed on March 21, 2022 via Zoom
20. Rabbi Kari Tuling - interviewed on March 15, 2022 via Zoom
21. Rabbi Dr. Andrea Weiss - interviewed June 24, 2022 via Zoom
22. Rabbinical student, Edith Yakutis - interviewed on March 25, 2022 via Zoom

23. An anonymous third year rabbinical student at HUC-JIR - interviewed on March 3, 2022
in person
24. An anonymous rabbinical graduate from the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies -
interviewed on June 8, 2022 via phone

Ordination Ceremonies

1. HUC-JIR Los Angeles: <https://vimeo.com/710161083>
2. HUC-JIR Cincinnati: <https://vimeo.com/713256842>
3. HUC-JIR Jerusalem: <https://vimeo.com/644997398>
4. HUC-JIR New York: <https://vimeo.com/709105175>
5. Hebrew College: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ys_6rkvTJP8
6. Jewish Theological Seminary: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nj-qZmRbmLc>
7. Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies:
<https://www.facebook.com/events/2110099785831169?ref=newsfeed>
8. Academy for Jewish Religion: <https://vimeo.com/715319565>
9. Reconstructionist Rabbinical College: <https://rrc.edu/graduation-2022/>

Bibliography

1. Cohen, Judah M. *The Making of a Reform Jewish Cantor: Musical Authority, Cultural Investment*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2019.
2. Epstein, Lawrence J. *Conversion to Judaism: A Guidebook*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1994.
1. Ferguson, Everett. *Jewish and Christian Ordination: Some Observations*. The Early Church at Work and Worship, Vol I. The Lutterworth Press: James Clarke & Co, 2013.
2. Freehof, Solomon B. "The Institution of Ordination." [Graduate Rabbinic Thesis]. Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion. 1915.
3. Newman, J. *Semikhah: A Study of its Origin, History, and Function in Rabbinic Literature*. England: Manchester University Press, 1950.
4. Nichols, Dan. "Dan Nichols & Eighteen." Dan Nichols Music. Accessed on July 9 2022: <https://www.dannicholsmusic.com/resources>.
5. Philipson, David. My Life as an American Jew, an Autobiography. Cincinnati: John Kidd and Son, Inc. 1941.
6. Schechner, Richard, and Sara Brady. *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. 3rd ed. Routledge, 2013.
7. Siegel, Judith Lazarus. "The Development of Ordination Liturgy." [Graduate Masters Thesis] Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion. 2006.
8. Troster, Lawrence. "Jewish Teachings on Water - Faith in Water." Green Faith. Accessed November 4, 2022. https://www.faithinwater.org/uploads/4/4/3/0/44307383/jewish_teachings_on_water-greenfaith.pdf.

9. Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969.
10. van Gennep, Arnold. *The Rites of Passage*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2019.
11. Wyner, Yehudi. "The Book of Psalms and Its Musical Interpretations." Milken Archive of Jewish Music. Accessed November 19, 2022.
<https://www.milkenarchive.org/articles/view/the-book-of-psalms-and-its-musical-interpretations>.
12. "About Page." Mayyim Hayyim. Accessed on January 2 2023.
<https://www.mayyimhayyim.org/about/>
13. "Graduating Cantors Will Be Ordained, Not Invested." Jewish Theological Seminary, April 14, 2021. <https://www.jtsa.edu/news/graduating-cantors-will-be-ordained-not-invested/>.
14. "Strategic Planning - Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion." HUC-JIR Strategic Planning Recommendations, 2021. Accessed on December 21, 2022.
<https://huc.edu/about/strategic-planning>.
15. "Ruth 1:16." Sefaria, Accessed on September 2 2022:
<https://www.sefaria.org/Ruth.1.16?lang=bi>.
16. Gross, Lior and Eyal Rivlin. "Nonbinary Hebrew Project." Accessed on February 9, 2023. <https://www.nonbinaryhebrew.com/>.