

# Ethnography and Analysis in the Study of Jewish Music

Yonatan Malin

IN the fall of 2013, I was asked to give a public talk at a symposium honoring Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi (1924–2014), a highly influential figure in post-holocaust American Judaism.<sup>1</sup> The symposium was called “Embodied Judaism: The Sound of Ecstasy,” and we were to consider music in contemporary Judaism and Schachter-Shalomi’s contributions. Schachter-Shalomi, or Reb Zalman—as he was known—did not have formal musical training, and he was not known primarily as a musician (unlike his close contemporary and fellow Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach).<sup>2</sup> But he was very musical: he remembered songs from his childhood in Vienna before World War II, he used music in his teaching and in prayer, and he improvised and composed some of his own songs. He also thought, lectured, and wrote about the role of music in prayer and Jewish life.<sup>3</sup>

I wasn’t sure what to do. The symposium audience was going to include academic colleagues in music, but also colleagues in Jewish Studies and community members. The symposium in fact was designed to bring together academic and non-academic audiences, and to bridge critical inquiry and embodied practice. Zalman Schachter-Shalomi himself was also going to be there. A close analytical reading would not work. Or maybe it would.

This conundrum presents a new twist on one of the central methodological issues in analytical approaches to world music. The common issue, the one that we grapple with all the time, is how to represent musical repertoires for audiences who may be unfamiliar with the music and its culture and may bring habits of listening and understanding that are foreign to it. What forms of notation do we use, and what kinds of terminology? What assumptions do we ourselves bring—from our own backgrounds and training—and are these assumptions appropriate? In essence, the challenge is threefold: how do we become insiders, as musically acculturated as possible (if we are not so already), how do we translate an insider view to others ethically and effectively, and how do we add our own insights about the music at hand?<sup>4</sup>

---

1. Brief biographical accounts can be found on the websites of the University of Colorado Boulder Zalman M. Schachter-Shalomi Collection, <http://www.colorado.edu/post-holocaustamericanjudaismcollections/collections/zalman-m-schachter-shalomi-papers>, and the Yesod Foundation, <http://yesodfoundation.org/what-we-do>.

2. Shlomo Carlebach has been considered “the father of contemporary Jewish music” (Kligman 2001, 99). Carlebach and Schachter-Shalomi both received their rabbinic training at the Central Lubavitch Yeshiva Brooklyn, and in 1950 they were sent out together to do outreach on college campuses. For more on their relationship, see Schachter-Shalomi (2012, 46–48) and Ariel (2003).

3. See Schachter-Shalomi (2004, 2012) and the audio material in the University of Colorado Boulder Zalman M. Schachter-Shalomi Collection, <https://www.colorado.edu/post-holocaustamericanjudaismcollections/collections/zalman-m-schachter-shalomi-papers>.

4. Bruno Nettl (2015, chap. 7) grapples with these issues in a chapter on music analysis from the perspective of

But in the case of the Embodied Judaism Symposium, I would be speaking to a community about its music. The translation of technical terms to non-technical language would be one issue; a second, equally important issue would be how the stories that I tell through music analysis resonate—or not—with values and ideas held by the community.

I did present a musical analysis, an interpretive reading of a song, in the Embodied Judaism Symposium. I designed the analysis both in content and mode of delivery to resonate with Schachter-Shalomi's teachings. I present the analysis in the first part of this paper to show how music analysis may reach new, non-academic audiences by drawing on ethnography and cultural knowledge. I also hope to show that we (music analysts) may come to new understandings of what we do—what music analysis is about and what it is for—once we situate it in new cultural contexts.

In the second part of the paper, I will explore a different set of circumstances, relating to my study of Jewish Biblical cantillation. My prior work on the melodies of Jewish cantillation (Malin 2016) was based on a foundational assumption from the field of music theory—that musical significance and expressive meaning can be discovered in pitches, their relationships through time, and connections to the texts that they set. I chant in services, I have studied sources, and I have taught others to chant. I based the analysis on my own experience and musical intuition.

But I also conducted interviews with other chanters, and one of the compelling stories that emerged didn't have to do with pitches and their relationships. The melodies—the primary material that I had been analyzing—were important, but two of my interviewees experienced them in a tight bond with memories of individuals they had heard, learned from, or taught, along with the specific texts they had chanted. I will respond to this in the second part of my paper; I will analyze a recording from my fieldwork and reflect on the possibilities and limitations of music analysis vis-à-vis personal connections formed through music and ritual.

These two vignettes, on my Embodied Judaism presentation and my work on Jewish Biblical cantillation, both speak to the relationship between author-driven music analysis and ethnographic encounters. Thus, my larger purpose is to explore open and dynamic relationships between music analysis and culture, including public discourse and private experience. Similar issues have been addressed in ethnomusicology and anthropology. Luke Eric Lassiter (2005, 6) suggests that ethnographers “are ideally situated . . . to write texts that are both responsive and relevant to the public with whom they work.” Kay Kaufmann Shelemay (2008) discusses the role of the ethnomusicologist in the transmission and mediation of tradition with vivid examples from her work with the Syrian Jewish community in Brooklyn. She describes a lecture that she gave on the Syrian Jewish musical tradition to an

---

ethnomusicology, Michael Tenzer addresses them in the introduction to *Analytical Studies in World Music* (2006), and they are especially fraught in African music studies (see Scherzinger 2001; Agawu 2003; Erlmann 2004).

audience of mostly Syrian Jews, and she observes, “Mediation can therefore entail not just translating for those outside of the tradition, but also participating in raising awareness of the tradition within the community itself” (151; see also Cohen 2008). My Embodied Judaism presentation similarly raised awareness of Schachter-Shalomi’s musical legacy for members of an American Jewish community. But it involved interpretive music analysis, not ethnographic documentation. In this paper, I turn to the particular challenges of taking music analysis into the field, in the context of Jewish communities and traditions.

### I. THE “SOUL” OF A NIGGUN

The song that I chose to analyze for the Embodied Judaism Symposium was a *niggun*—a melody from the Hasidic tradition (plural: *niggunim*). Hasidism is a movement within traditional Judaism that emerged in the eighteenth century, emphasizing the ability of every person to come close to God (Koskoff 2001, 29; see also Ben-Moshe 2015). This particular *niggun* is called “Menuḥa v’simḥa” (“Rest and Joy”), and it was sung on Friday evenings in Zalman Schachter-Shalomi’s childhood home, in Vienna, before World War II. It is the first song in the volume *At the Rebbe’s Table: Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi’s Legacy of Songs and Melodies* (Rivlin and Miles-Yepez 2011). The song is in a two-part form, with each part repeated and varied at the end (aa’bb’). Example 1 provides an excerpt from the audio recording from Rivlin and Miles-Yepez (2011).

I had decided to talk about this *niggun*, a song that Schachter-Shalomi had learned from his father in Vienna over eighty years ago. What could I do that would be both meaningful and relevant? I wanted first of all to motivate the idea of a close reading of the song. Schachter-Shalomi himself had written about the challenges of getting into a *niggun* so that it becomes meaningful at a deeper level:

There is no question that the seemingly simple accessibility of *niggun* can be deceptive sometimes. A *niggun* is like a person, with an outer form and an inner soul. You can pick up the outer form simply by listening to someone run through the tune a few times. But touching the inner *kavannah*, the intentionality, is not so easy. (Schachter-Shalomi 2012, 56)

I quoted this passage at the beginning of my presentation and suggested that the analysis might be a way toward understanding the “inner soul” of the *niggun*. As I put it then,

I would like to explore the outer form of a *niggun*, one the songs that Reb Zalman sings and teaches—and see if we can also find a way towards the “inner soul.” We might think of the outer form as the abstract layout; it is the kind of thing that we can represent with letters, aabb, or aa’bb’, for example. The inner soul, what is that? It might be many

**Example 1.** “Menuḥa v’simḥa,” sung by Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi (excerpt). Rivlin and Miles-Yepez (2011).

things—but each of these things has to do with the feel of the song, that which brings us, in singing it, to a different place, “a different way of being,” as Reb Zalman puts it.<sup>5</sup>

The claim here, which was implicit, is that the intimate knowledge gained through analysis can help us experience a particular song or piece in a new way—and through that experience we ourselves are changed. It is not a claim that I can defend empirically, but it seems plausible. One might say that the song becomes part of the fabric of our being.<sup>6</sup>

The second challenge was to present the analysis in a way that would be accessible. One can do a lot with direct musical demonstration in an oral presentation. But some form of notation is also useful. Here I found that I could adapt another element from Schachter-Shalomi’s teaching.<sup>7</sup> In the 1950s, he had set words to the melodies of Hasidic *niggunim* (which often do not have any words) in order to convey the *kavannah* or “intentionality.” This in itself was an act of translation; he provided words to help people who had not grown up with the Hasidic tradition (Schachter-Shalomi 2012, 49). Reb Zalman’s words were words of prayer, in simple direct English. I did the same thing; I added words to the melody—but in my case they were words of music analysis. Example 2 provides the words for the first part of the song (repeated) and an audio file with my own voice—singing it as I did at the symposium.

I center myself here,  
I continue up to here,  
And again,  
Once more;  
And then I move with it,  
Just a little more move with it,  
1. And again. [First ending]  
2. That’s all. [Second ending]

**Example 2.** The first part of “Menuḥa v’simḥa” with words and recording by the author.

5. The quoted phrases are from Schachter-Shalomi (2012, 52). Ellen Koskoff (2001, 72) discusses the place of music in Lubavitcher life more generally: “So important is the power of music to express one’s innermost feelings, either positive or negative, that Lubavitchers often cite Schneur Zalman’s declaration that ‘melody is the pen of the soul.’” Schachter-Shalomi was ordained as Lubavitcher Rabbi in 1947; the Lubavitcher Hasidim or Habad belong to the broader movement of Hasidic Judaism.

6. The claim resonates with David Lewin’s observation that analysis requires “special effort to focus our ears”—because, as Lewin puts it, “The most crucial critical demand I make upon my experience of an artwork is that it make me undergo again Rilke’s experience before the torso of Apollo: ‘Du musst dich ändern’ [You must change yourself]” (Lewin 2007b, 62). Lewin misquotes Rilke’s line, which reads “Du musst dein Leben ändern”; see Sheehy (2013, n4).

7. My use of Schachter-Shalomi’s teachings to elucidate the song resonates with a Hasidic idea about musical transmission. According to Rabbi Joseph Isaac, the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, “In order to understand the tune that one of the Rebbes composed, one would need to learn that Rebbe’s teachings” (Zalmanoff 1957, 20114, quoted in Kligman 2017, 4).

Notice first that this is a form of notation. It allows us to track the melody in time; it is a kind of transcription, if you will. The words also index tonal and motivic features of the melody: pitch centrality associated with the tonic (“I center myself here”), motivic development that expands upward (“I move up to here”), motivic repetition and fragmentation (“And again, once more”), and rhythmic momentum with further motivic development (“and then I move with it / just a little more move with it”). There is even an implied IAC and PAC—if we want to get technical (first ending: “and again”; second ending: “that’s all”).

At a more general level, the text draws on two different discursive domains. There is the new-age, meditation-based idea of “centering one’s self”—which is relevant because Schachter-Shalomi had been deeply embedded in the North American counterculture of the 1960s (Ariel 2003). There is also the idea, which can be found in David Lewin’s transformational theory, of inhabiting and moving in a virtual musical space (Lewin 2007a, xxxi).

This text-as-notation got us into the melody, but I wanted to say something more. The length of the phrase interested me musically—and I linked this with a third element from Schachter-Shalomi’s teachings. I pointed out that the length of the phrase is twelve measures or twelve “big beats”—and I demonstrated this with my fingers while singing. I observed that twelve measures is relatively long, and I linked the expansive phrase to an expansive sense of time on Friday evening, when computers and phones have been turned off, and all work is on hold.<sup>8</sup>

I went on to imagine an eight-bar “weekday version,” noting that this would have less *menuḥa* and less *simḥa*—less rest and less joy. The text here again served as a form of notation—which I could manipulate to make an analytical point. Example 3 provides the revised text with a recording. I pointed out that what we lose in this hypothetical “weekday version” is the extra expansion, the phrases “and again, once more,” and “just a little more, move with it” (compare with Example 2 above).

I center myself here,  
I continue up to here,  
And then I move with it,  
1. And again.  
2. That’s all.

**Example 3.** Hypothetical “weekday” version of “Menuḥa v’simḥa” with words and recording by the author.

---

8. The idea of turning away from technology on the Sabbath comes up in Jeffrey Summit’s (2000) ethnography of contemporary Jewish worship in America. Lev Friedman, the leader the Jewish Renewal community B’nai Or in Boston, mentions a new computer and “invites the group to think of Shabbat as a time when ‘all systems are down’” (Summit 2000, 40).

The idea of Judaism as a religion of time, with the Sabbath as a “cathedral” in time, comes from a well-known book by Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (1951). But I also knew from personal contacts and experience that the idea of expansive Sabbath time was important to Reb Zalman. I had in mind a moment on Friday evening in services when Marc Soloway, the Rabbi of Congregation Bonai Shalom in Boulder, spoke about having just visited Zalman Schachter-Shalomi. As I remember it, Schachter-Shalomi asked Soloway what music he was going to use for the service—and then said, whatever you use, sing it slowly.<sup>9</sup>

For the final step in the analysis, I wanted to compare the a and b sections of the song in both musical and cultural terms. I first projected the text for the a section again, this time with line lengths—as in Example 4. I pointed out that each line has one or two “big beats,” which we could notate with one or two measures. I then sang the second half of the song with words that indexed a broader four + four + four phrasing (with the measures counted in Yiddish). Example 5 provides my words and recording for the b section.

With these differences of phrasing in mind, I presented a hypothetical scenario that would put the musical difference in a cultural context—the context of singing around the table on a Friday evening. I observed, “In the a section, I imagine each person at the table nudging, looking at, connecting with those right around her or him. In the b section, I imagine each person looking across the table, or beyond, to those at other *Shabbos* tables, near and far.” One could query the analogy that supports this scenario—an analogy, for instance, between

I center myself here,	[2 measures]
I continue up to here,	[2 measures]
And again,	[1 measure]
Once more;	[1 measure]
And then I move with it,	[2 measures]
Just a little more move with it,	[2 measures]
1. And again.	[2 measures]
2. That’s all.	[2 measures]

**Example 4.** The first part of “Menuḥa v’simḥa” with line lengths (words by the author).

Now, we sing, in four big beats	[4 measures]
Yes, yai, da da da dai, in four big beats	[4 measures]
Eyn, tsvey, dray, fir	[4 measures]

**Example 5.** The second part of “Menuḥa v’simḥa” with words and recording by the author.

9. Schachter-Shalomi (2012, 44) also tells a story of how his teacher Rabbi Yosef Itzchak became very angry when one of his students began to rush a meditative *niggun*.

broader phrase lengths and a view to the distance. But I let the scenario speak for itself at the symposium, with music as a window into imagined cultural practice and imagined cultural practice as a window into musical structure.

At the end of the analysis, I returned to the idea that the *niggun* is like a person, “with an outer form and an inner soul,” as Schachter-Shalomi had put it, and I described the analysis as a way of getting to know this *niggun* in all of its individuality. So, it was really analysis for the sake of analysis, “to hear the piece better” (Lewin 1969, 63), not for the sake of theory. But by situating the analysis within a discursive field that included ideas about inner and outer form, about the soul, and about expansive Sabbath temporality, I also echoed and affirmed ideas from the community.

My purpose in recounting the analysis here is not to contribute to a new theory of Hasidic *niggunim*. Ellen Koskoff (2001, chap. 9), Yaakov Mazor (2004, 2010), and Raffi Ben-Moshe (2015) have explored the genre more broadly, applying Hasidic concepts of prayer, song, and musical structure. My purpose, rather, is to provide a case study of bringing music analysis into the field with interpretive elements that elucidate musical structure. “The field” in this case was not a Hasidic community, it was a gathering of Jews from a variety of denominations (including Jewish Renewal), as well as academic colleagues, honoring Rabbi Schachter-Shalomi.

Bringing music analysis into the field is very much context and occasion dependent. It might be understood as involving particular acts of communication rather than broader truth statements. The challenges of conveying music structure in direct, experiential ways also limit the scope of what is possible in a brief time frame—thus the relatively circumscribed nature of the analysis given here. But in formulating analyses for particular occasions we may come to new understandings of what analysis is about and for. In the terms of Schachter-Shalomi’s teaching, if analysis can lead us to sing or play any piece with deeper *kavannah* (intentionality), then it has served a valuable purpose.

I also spoke at the time about the nature and limits of the analysis in relation to wider repertoires and discourses. I will conclude this vignette with a lengthier quote from the end of the Embodied Judaism presentation:

I want to point out that the analysis that I have presented so far is not a general theory of *niggunim*. It is not about how *niggunim* go in general, or about how *Galician niggunim* go—or even about how *Galician niggunim* for Shabbat go. It is not any of these. It is about this particular *niggun*. We can come back to Reb Zalman’s analogy here, “A *niggun* is like a person, with an outer form and an inner soul.” Each person has a unique soul. And if we want to understand a person, we need to know their individual story. It is the same when we analyze a song—we want to know the song in all of its individuality.

We could also develop a broader theory of *niggunim*. For example, there are various types of *niggunim*; the “*tish-niggun*” or table *niggun* is only one of the types. In his chapter

on *Niggun* (Schachter-Shalomi 2012), Reb Zalman mentions *niggunim* for dancing, *niggunim* of yearning, *niggunim* for cleaving to God, and others. And Ellen Koskoff (2001) outlines some common musical features of Chabad *niggunim* in her book on music in Lubavitcher life. Many of the traditional Lubavitcher *niggunim*, for example, are in four sections—and these four sections may be associated with the four stages of *devekut*—of devotion to God—and with the four worlds of Jewish Mysticism . . .

Finally, a few closing words to those from the College of Music. The analysis that I have presented is quite simple. In our professional work, in music theory, we often explore more complicated repertoires and offer analyses that are both broader and deeper. There is nothing path-breaking here from that point of view. But what I have offered is different in that I have presented an analysis orally, without music notation, and without technical terms like prolongation, *Urlinie*, or hypermeter. And the interpretive elements have a place in relation to our discourse. (Jewish studies folks may also be interested to know this.) The interpretation that I offered is a form of narrative analysis—analysis that seeks meaning by making connections between musical structure and stories. In that sense, it aligns with work by Byron Almén (2008), Michael Klein and Nicholas Reyland (2013), and others who have been engaged with the theory and practice of narrative analysis. The story I told had to do with Shabbat time, nothing more than that. But it was a framework for specific observations about musical structure and meaning.

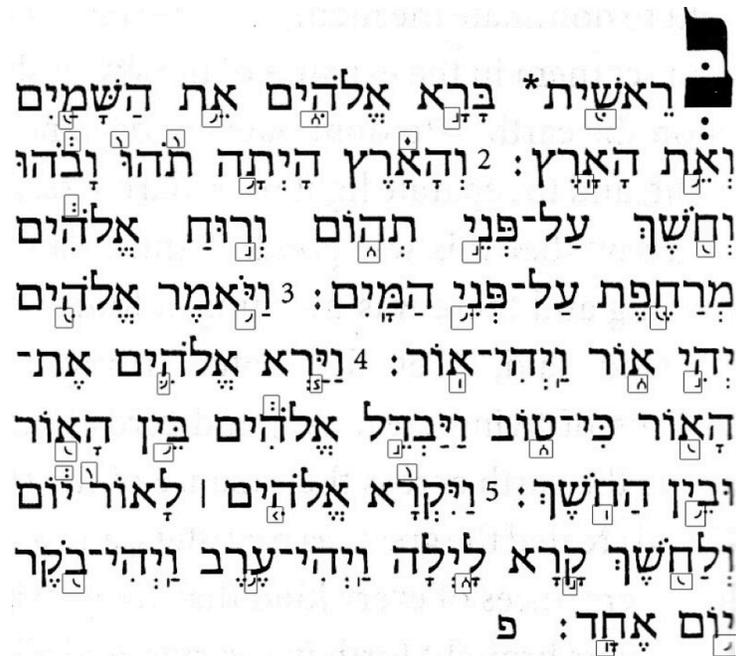
## II. INDIVIDUAL VOICES OF BIBLICAL CANTILLATION

If my first vignette was about inserting myself in a particular cultural context via music analysis, my second one is about listening and grappling with a disconnect between the types of knowledge gained through music analysis and ethnography. This part of the paper is about Jewish Biblical cantillation—the tradition of reading Biblical texts with melodies.

A little background about Biblical cantillation will be helpful. Example 6 shows the text for the first five verses of Genesis, from a printed Hebrew Bible. I have added the boxes; they show accent marks, also known as *te'amim* (singular: *ta'am*) or trope, above or below each word. The *te'amim* have three functions: they show the accentuation of the words, the parsing of the text, and the melodies for cantillation. Readers learn the melodic formula for each accent mark, and then apply this formula to the text.<sup>10</sup>

---

10. The system of *te'amim* in use today was developed in the seventh to the ninth centuries CE, and scholars believe that it codifies and documents an earlier oral tradition (Dresher 1994, 48; Khan 2012, 4, 38). Torah chanting is often taught orally, but current pedagogical sources include Portnoy and Wolff (2000, 2001), Jacobson (2002), and the software program *Trope Trainer* produced by Kinnor Software ([www.kinnor.com](http://www.kinnor.com)). Summit (2016, chap. 10) describes additional online sources and the effect of digital technology on the practice and culture of Torah chanting. Jacobson (2002) provides a detailed account of how the *te'amim* parse Biblical verses; Dresher (1994) relates the parsing to modern linguistic theory. Recordings of 93 cantors chanting verses 1–5 of Genesis can be found online with the “History of the American Cantorate” project (Slobin 1983–85; <http://wescholar.wesleyan.edu/sung/>). Summit (2016) provides a rich ethnography of Biblical chant in contemporary Judaism with information about the liturgical contexts and social significance.



**Example 6.** Genesis 1:1–5 from the Jewish Publication Society Hebrew-English Tanakh (1999) with boxes around the *te'amim*.

The *te'amim* themselves are standard and common to Jewish communities around the world, but the melodies associated with the *te'amim* vary widely. They vary by diasporic community, and within communities they vary by text and occasion. In my prior analysis (Malin 2016), I had compared the modes for different texts and occasions within what is known as the Eastern Ashkenazic tradition—the tradition that is most widely practiced today in the United States. I explored pitch relationships through time, working from notated sources and my own training and experience.

I knew that a next step would be to record individual readers and explore performative aspects of the tradition. But individual voices took on a much greater significance than I expected in my conversations with other chanters. I asked Deborah Bronstein, now Rabbi Emerita at Congregation Har HaShem in Boulder, Colorado, how she understands the relation between the melodies of cantillation and the text. First she said, “You have a lot of time to think about it, the trope makes you think about the grammar . . . you really have time to think, and it is just beautiful.” But then she began to talk about people she has known and their voices: “I often hear the voices of my teachers when I chant. I often can hear the voices of children I’ve taught, and then I hear the conversations that I’ve had with them.” In other words, my question about music and text led Bronstein to talk not about music in the abstract, but about the voices of individuals that she has known. As she was preparing to chant a

passage from the binding of Isaac, Rabbi Bronstein said, “See, I can hear Eli Schleifer sing it; he has a different melody.”<sup>11</sup>

Similar ideas emerged in another interview. Jonathan Levine is one of the most accomplished and skilled Torah readers I have met. He was trained as a child in Philadelphia by cantor Sheldon Levin, and Cantor Levin later became head of the Cantor’s Assembly.<sup>12</sup> I heard Levine chant and then asked to meet with him and record a few passages. At one point, as we were talking, Levine suggested that he could chant a passage from the Prophets with melodies from England—which are different from the melodies that he usually uses.<sup>13</sup> He wasn’t sure at first whether he could switch to the English melodies on the spot. But then he figured out that he could do it by remembering the voice of a person he had known and heard in Oxford. He said, “Well, I’ll remember it [the English melodies] because . . . there was one fellow who . . . did it at the haftarah for Yitro. And so . . . I’ll get that from him and then I’ll be able to do it.” He was in fact able to do it, and quite fluently. Levine didn’t only use his memory of a person to access the melodies; he also associated the person with a particular text. The “haftarah for Yitro” is a reading from Isaiah. In other words, as with Rabbi Bronstein, the memory of an individual voice was linked with a specific passage of text.

The orality of cantillation becomes quite profound in these accounts from Deborah Bronstein and Jonathan Levine. It is not only that the text is transmitted in oral form. The text is imbued with the memory of individual voices, and the text and voices link individuals with each other in diverse Jewish communities. Summit’s (2016) ethnography of Biblical chant includes more stories of connections that people feel when they chant. Summit also tells a story of his own, which resonates with the stories from Bronstein and Levine: “When I learned to chant the Song of Songs, I met regularly with my teacher, Ezri Uval, may his memory be a blessing. We would sit in his kitchen in Jerusalem, drink Turkish coffee and discuss the text together. . . . After thirty-eight years, when I chant the Song of Songs, Professor Uval’s voice still faintly guides me, phrase by phrase, through the text” (2016, 219).

The natural response, from a music-analytical point of view, is to explore the nuances of individual styles.<sup>14</sup> Jonathan Levine’s chanting provides a beautiful case study because it demonstrates an unusual flexibility and sensitivity to the text. Example 7 provides a

---

11. Eliyahu Schleifer is Professor Emeritus of sacred music and director of the School of Sacred Music at the Hebrew Union College Jewish Institute of Religion in Jerusalem, and he was one of Rabbi Bronstein’s teachers.

12. Jonathan Levine earned spending money as a teenager reading Torah, and he is now an active participant and lay leader in the Jewish community, but he is not a professional cantor or rabbi. Cantors maintain and transmit tradition most actively, but there is very wide and often expert participation by community members and lay leaders. For more on the participatory dynamics of contemporary Jewish worship in North America, see Summit (2000, 2016).

13. The melodies used in England are “Western Ashkenazic”; they come from Germany and have been documented in Avenary (1978), Tunkel (2004), and Smith (2005).

14. Ruskin and Rice (2012) provide an informative survey of the role of individuals in musical ethnographies from 1976 to 2002. They find that “the study of individuals is now a norm in the discipline even as ethnomusicologists retain an interest in broadly shared musical, cultural, and social processes within communities” (316–17).

translation and transliteration for the beginning of Genesis, with a recording by Levine.<sup>15</sup> We hear a deep and confident baritone voice, moving through text rapidly and sustaining pitches at the ends of phrases. Levine’s delivery may be called “logogenic” or text centered, and it carries in public spaces without amplification.<sup>16</sup>

Example 8 provides a transcription of the first verse, with the recording. Bar lines represent text phrasing: the double bar line in the middle indicates the main division and the single bar lines indicate secondary divisions. Stemmed pitches correspond with accented syllables.<sup>17</sup> (The *te’amim* specify which syllable should be accented.) The transcription focuses on pitch and phrasing; there is no further rhythmic detail. I have also transposed the pitch for ease of reading.

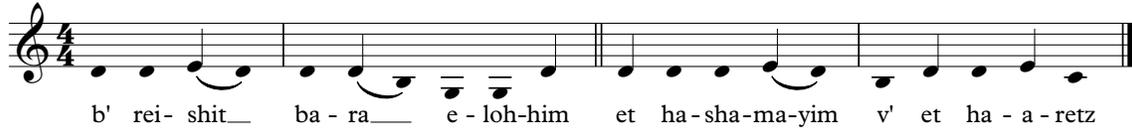
1. b'reishit bara elohim et hashamayim v'et ha-aretz	1. In the beginning God created heaven and earth.
2. v'ha-aretz haitah tohu vavohu v'ḥoshekh al-p'nei t'hom v'ruaḥ elohim m'raḥefet al-p'nei hamayim	2. And the earth was unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep; and the spirit of God was sweeping over the water.
3. vayomer elohim y'hi or vay'hi or	3. And God said let there be light, and there was light.
4. vayar elohim et-haor ki-tov vayavdel elohim bein ha'or uvein haḥoshekh	4. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.
5. vayikra elohim laor yom v'laḥoshekh kara laila vay'hi erev vay'hi voker yom eḥad	5. And God called the light day, and the darkness God called night; and there was evening and there was morning a first day.

**Example 7.** Genesis I:1–5, transliteration and translation with recording by Jonathan Levine.

15. The translation is adapted from the second edition of the *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh* (1999). The transliteration is based on a combination of Association for Jewish Studies (AJS) and Union of Reform Judaism (URJ) guidelines. An apostrophe is used for *sh'va nah*; hyphens separate consecutive vowels that belong in separate syllables; and hyphens are occasionally used in additional places to clarify syllabification.

16. The term “logogenic” is from Curt Sachs; it refers to the origin of music in speech (Nettl 2014, III.8). See also Herzog (2007) and Summit (2013).

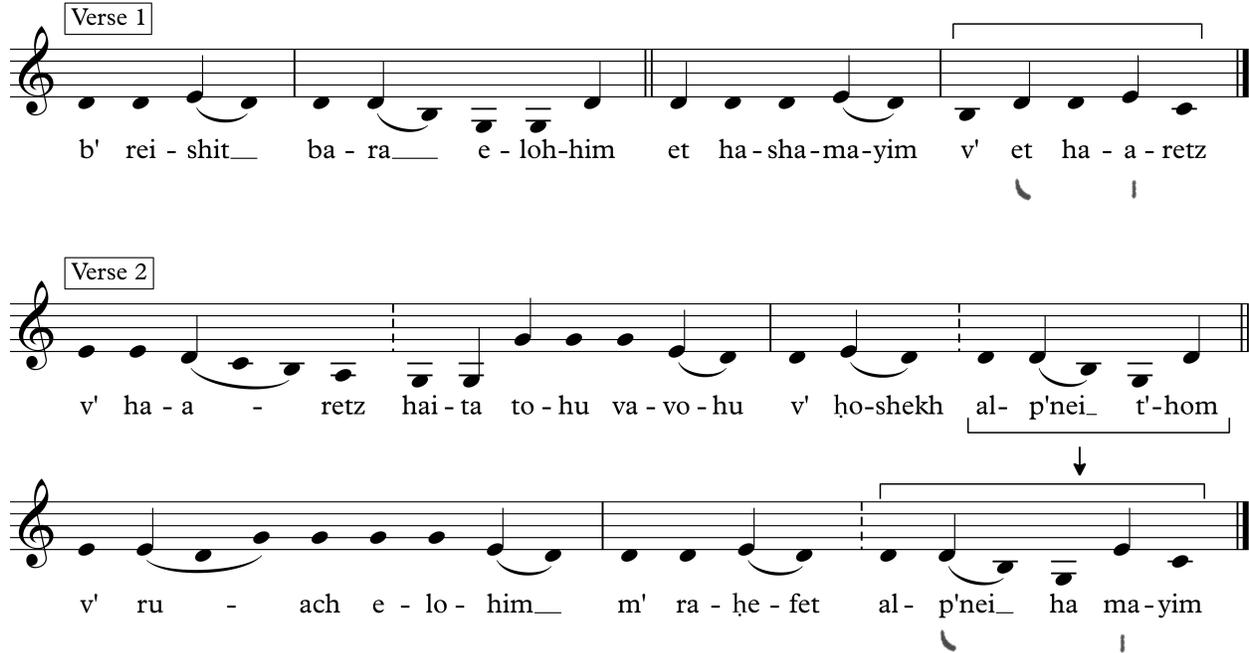
17. Similar forms of notation can be found in Cohen (2003–8) and Jacobson (2002).



**Example 8.** Genesis I:1, recording by Jonathan Levine.

At a basic level, we may notice a recitation tone on D, a dip down to G in the first half, and an arrival on C at the end. (Pitches here refer to the transposed notation.) This reflects generic features of Torah reading in the Eastern Ashkenazic tradition; one can find the same features in notated sources (e.g., Cohen 2003–8; Jacobson 2002, 634–36; Kalib 2002, I:2:43) and in other renditions. The verse also contains a linguistic and melodic parallelism in the second half. The words “et hashamayim v’et ha’aretz”—heaven and earth—are parallel; they are two domains created by God, above and below. And they are set with the parallel musical figures <D-E-D> and <D-E-C>.<sup>18</sup>

It turns out, though, that Levine varies his phrase endings to bring out parallel elements in the text. This is not a generic feature of Biblical cantillation, it is not something anyone would do. Example 9 provides verses 1 and 2 together, along with the *te’amim* for the ends of the verses. (The dotted bar lines in Example 9 represent a further division of the verse, as



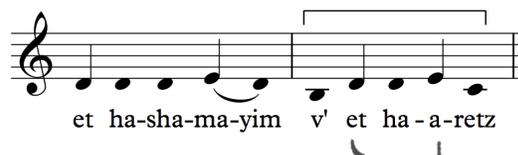
**Example 9.** Genesis I: 1–2, recording by Jonathan Levine.

18. The coordination of textual and musical parallelism occurs sometimes, but it is not consistent. I discuss the effect in more detail in another paper (Malin 2015).

indicated by the *te'amim*.) Brackets above the staves show the ends of the verses to highlight the comparison. The *te'amim* for the verse endings are the same, but Levine chants them differently. In the first verse, he uses the recitation tone D before the E-C close; in the second he descends to the lower G before the E-C close. This change seems to be motivated by a linguistic parallelism in the second verse. The bracket and arrow at the end of the second system show a derivation of the new ending. The two halves of the second verse conclude with “al p'nei t'hom” (on the face of the deep) and “al p'nei ha-mayim” (on the face of the waters). Levine’s descent to the lower G at the end of the verse recalls the figure from the middle, and it thereby reinforces the textual parallelism. In other words, Levine apparently varies the melodies not because the *te'amim* are different, but because he notices and responds to a parallelism in the text.<sup>19</sup>

Levine sang a third variant of the verse ending for the third verse, and here again the variation responds to and reinforces a parallelism within the verse. Example 10 shows the end of verse 1, the middle and end of verse 2, and all of verse 3, along with the full recording for verses 1–3. Brackets in Example 10 show the melodies that go along with the final *ta'am* in the three verses; the first ends <D-E-C>, the second ends <G-E-C>, and the third ends with the

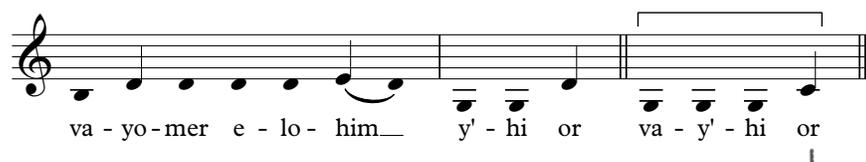
a. Verse 1 ending:



b. Verse 2 middle and ending:



c. Verse 3:



**Example 10.** Excerpts from Genesis I: 1–3, recording by Jonathan Levine.

19. The *te'amim* at the ends of the two verses are called *merkha* and *siluk*; *merkha* is a “conjunctive” *ta'am*, which leads onward, and *siluk* is a “disjunctive” *ta'am* that marks the end of every verse. The melody that Levine uses at the end of verse one is a typical *merkha-siluk* melody in the Eastern Ashkenazic tradition, but the melody that he uses at the end of verse 2 can also be found in a notated source; see Kalib (2002, 1:2:43).

direct ascent <G-C>. This direct ascent at the end of the third verse creates internal parallelism for the text “y’hi or” (G-D) and “va-y’hi or” (G-C)—let there be light and there was light. Again, the melodic parallelism is not determined by the *te’amim*; it is a subtle element that Levine added, on the spot, to help convey the structure and meaning of the text.

Levine’s technique of varying verse endings to reinforce parallelism within the text seems to be rare, if not unique. Summit (2016, 190–92, 195–97) describes a variety of techniques that readers use—including dynamics, ornamentation, and pacing—to convey the narrative and meaning of the text. He quotes a Conservative cantor who explained, “I don’t play with the trope. I don’t change any of the pitches. I am faithful to it, but I’ll change inflection. I’ll change volume. I’ll change the rhythm of text delivery, of a word” (Summit 2016, 190).<sup>20</sup> None of Summit’s sources, which include both professional and lay readers, mention varying the melodies in response to textual structure.

The analysis here also leads back to ethnography. What would Levine say about all of this? How does he describe his practice? Querying musicians about what they are doing, or what they think they are doing, is an obvious way to bring ethnography and music analysis together (see Nettl 2015, chap. 7). Levine and I talked about variant verse endings in another set of melodies—the ones used for readings from the Prophets. Levine observed that he uses different endings, but not (at least in his mind) to convey any particular feature of the text. He said, “Yeah, I’ll throw them in [the different endings]. And I don’t know why, I just think it just helps keep me awake. I don’t know that there’s a real consistency in how I choose to do one over the other and probably I haven’t decided in advance.” Later on, after I had studied the recordings and found these variants that generate parallelisms with the text, I called Levine and asked him about it. He was intrigued; he didn’t know that he had been doing it that way (phone conversation, June 1, 2015).<sup>21</sup> My fieldwork before the music analysis did not hint at what I would find; it did not hint at a direct correspondence between variant endings and text parallelism. After the analysis, my further conversation indicated that the practice was spontaneous. It was not consciously planned, nor was there a conscious awareness of it in the moment.

Studies like this, focusing on recordings and accounts of individual chanters, honor the kinds of memories that Levine and Bronstein spoke about, as well as the combined orality and textuality that lie at the heart of Jewish communities.<sup>22</sup> We might still acknowledge the fact that my analysis focuses on the musical rendition of text, not the personal memories and

20. Joshua Jacobson (2002, 515) allows for flexibility in the performance of the *te’amim* once the motifs are “internalized by constant repetition.”

21. Levine was pleased with the notion that his different verse endings in Genesis chapter 1 were related to text parallelisms. In response, he recalled a poem by John Hollander about Biblical verse, with the line “Its song is a music of matching, its rhythm a kind of paralleling” (Hollander 2001, 26). See Perlman (2004, 21–24) on the relationship between implicit and explicit knowledge.

22. It is also possible to explore performative aspects of the tradition without focusing on individual voices. Ne’eman (2012) provides a computational study of variability among Torah readers in the Eastern Ashkenazic and Moroccan traditions in Israel, with the Jerusalem-Sephardi tradition as a control group.

connections as such. These connections are ripe for analysis via Alfred Gell's (1998) anthropological theory of art and its further critique and development by Georgina Born (2005, 2013). In Gell's theory, "The nature of the art object is a function of the social-relational matrix in which it is embedded," and the anthropology of art is the "study of social relations in the vicinity of objects mediating social agency" (Gell 1998, 7; quoted in Born 2013, 131). Born goes on to consider situations where the "object" involves music, and she explores distinct types of mediation in diverse musical cultures (Born 2013, 139–40, 142–48).

But to say that my music analysis does not address personal memories and connections per se is not to diminish its value, nor is it to overlook the fact that music analysis is itself a social practice (see Butler 2006, 15). Indeed, we may choose to bring music analysis into particular social spheres with endeavors like my presentation at the Embodied Judaism Symposium. We may develop music-analytical studies that are congruent with the particular forms of social mediation, as I have done with my analysis of Jonathan Levine's chanting. And we may simply appreciate the insights of music analysis along with the social structures and networks of a given musical culture.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to David Shneer for his invitation to participate in the Embodied Judaism Symposium, to Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi of blessed memory for his teachings and interest in my work, to Rabbi Deborah Bronstein for her deep insights and generosity, and to Jonathan Levine for sharing his remarkable skills and intuitive musicality. I am also grateful for the perceptive comments on earlier drafts by Rosa Abrahams, Daniel Goldberg, Eyal Rivlin, Chris Stover, and Benjamin Teitelbaum, and the anonymous reviewers for this journal.

#### REFERENCES

- Agawu, Kofi. 2003. *Representing African Music: Postcolonial Notes, Queries, Positions*. New York: Routledge.
- Almén, Byron. 2008. *A Theory of Musical Narrative*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Ariel, Yaakov. 2003. "Hasidism in the Age of Aquarius: The House of Love and Prayer in San Francisco, 1967–77." *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 13(2): 139–65. <https://doi.org/10.1525/rac.2003.13.2.139>.
- Avenary, Hanoach. 1978. *The Ashkenazi Tradition of Biblical Chant Between 1500 and 1900: Documentation and Musical Analysis*. Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University and the Council for Culture & Art.
- Ben-Moshe, Raffi. 2015. *Experiencing Devekut: The Contemplative Niggun of Habad in Israel*. Jerusalem: Jewish Music Research Centre.
- Born, Georgina. 2005. "On Musical Mediation: Ontology, Technology and Creativity." *Twentieth-Century Music* 2(1): 7–36. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S147857220500023X>.

- . 2013. "Music: Ontology, Agency, Creativity." In *Distributed Objects: Meaning and Mattering after Alfred Bell*, edited by Liana Chua and Mark Elliott, 130–54. New York: Berghahn.
- Butler, Mark J. 2006. *Unlocking the Groove: Rhythm, Meter, and Musical Design in Electronic Dance Music*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Cohen, Judah. 2008. "Shadows in the Classroom: Encountering the Syrian Jewish Research Project Twenty Years Later." In *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*, edited by Gregory Barz and Timothy J. Cooley, 157–66. 2nd edition. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Cohen, Miles B. 2003–8. *Nusah Guides for Cantillation of the Te'amim*. Self-published.
- Dresher, Bezalel Elan. 1994. "The Prosodic Basis of the Tiberian Hebrew System of Accents." *Language* 70 (1): 1–52. <https://doi.org/10.2307/416739>.
- Erlmann, Veit. 2004. "Resisting Sameness: A Propos Kofi Agawu's Representing African Music." *Music Theory Spectrum* 26(2): 291–304. <https://doi.org/10.1525/mts.2004.26.2.291>.
- Gell, Alfred. 1998. *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Herzog, Avigdor. 2007. "Masoretic Accents: Musical Rendition." In *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 656–64.
- Heschel, Abraham Joshua. 1951. *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Young.
- Hollander, John. 2001. *Rhyme's Reason*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Jacobson, Joshua R. 2002. *Chanting the Hebrew Bible: The Complete Guide to the Art of Cantillation*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society.
- Kalib, Sholom. 2002. *The Musical Tradition of the Eastern European Synagogue*. Vol. 1 (parts 1 and 2). Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.
- Khan, Geoffrey. 2012. *A Short Introduction to the Tiberian Masoretic Bible and Its Reading Tradition*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press.
- Klein, Michael L., and Nicholas Reyland, eds. 2013. *Music and Narrative Since 1900*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Kligman, Mark. 2001. "Contemporary Jewish Music in America." *American Jewish Year Book* 101: 88–141. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23604506>.
- . 2017. "Music and the Rebbe." Unpublished manuscript.
- Koskoff, Ellen. 2001. *Music in Lubavitcher Life*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Lassiter, Luke E. 2005. *The Chicago Guide to Collaborative Ethnography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lewin, David. 1969. "Behind the Beyond: A Response to Edward T. Cone." *Perspectives of New Music* 7: 59–69. <https://doi.org/10.2307/832293>.
- . 2007a. *Generalized Musical Intervals and Transformations*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- . 2007b. *Musical Form and Transformation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Malin, Yonatan. 2015. "Music-Text Relations in Eastern Ashkenazic Cantillation: A New Analysis." Paper presented at *Magnified and Sanctified: The Music of Jewish Prayer*, University of Leeds, June.
- . 2016. "Eastern Ashkenazi Biblical Cantillation: An Interpretive Musical Analysis." *Yuval Online* 10. <https://www.jewish-music.huji.ac.il/yuval/22542>.
- Mazor, Yaakov. 2004. *The Hasidic Niggun as Sung by the Hasidim*. Jerusalem: Jewish Music Research Centre. 2 compact discs.
- . 2010. "Hasidism: Music." YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe. <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Hasidism/Music>.
- Ne'eman, Mordechai. 2012. "tseliley hammiqra: yesodot ha-musikah shel ha-te'amim [The Cantillation of the Bible: Musical Principles of the Biblical Accentuation]." PhD diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
- Nettl, Bruno. 2014. "Music." In *Grove Music Online*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.40476>.
- . 2015. *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-three Discussions*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Perlman, Marc. 2004. *Unplayed Melodies: Javanese Gamelan and the Genesis of Music Theory*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Portnoy, Marshall, and Josee Wolff. 2000. *The Art of Torah Cantillation: A Step-by-Step Guide to Chanting Torah*. New York: URJ Press.
- . 2001. *The Art of Cantillation, Vol. 2: A Step-by-Step Guide to Chanting Haftarah and M'gillot*. New York: URJ Press.
- Rivlin, Eyal, and Netanel Miles-Yepey, eds. 2011. *At the Rebbe's Table: Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi's Legacy of Songs and Melodies*. Vol. 2. Albion-Andalus.
- Ruskin, Jesse D., and Timothy Rice. 2012. "The Individual in Musical Ethnography." *Ethnomusicology* 56(2): 299–327. <https://doi.org/10.5406/ethnomusicology.56.2.0299>.
- Schachter-Shalomi, Zalman. 2004. "Sacred Music" (lecture). In *Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi World Wisdom 2003/2004 Lecture Series*. Naropa Archive Project. DVD.
- . 2012. "Niggun! A Soul in Song." In *Davening: A Guide to Meaningful Jewish Prayer*, 28–57. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing.
- Scherzinger, Martin. 2001. "Negotiating the Music-Theory/African-Music Nexus; a Political Critique of Ethnomusicological Anti-Formalism and a Strategic Analysis of the Harmonic Patterning of the Shona Mbira Song *Nyamoropa*." *Perspectives of New Music* 39(1): 5–117. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/833534>.
- Sheehy, August. 2013. "Improvisation, Analysis, and Listening Otherwise." *Music Theory Online* 19(2). <https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.13.19.2/mto.13.19.2.sheehy.html>.
- Shelemay, Kay Kaufman. 2008. "The Ethnomusicologist, Ethnographic Method, and the Transmission of Tradition." In *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*, edited by Gregory F. Barz and Timothy J. Cooley, 141–56. 2nd edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Slobin, Mark. 1983–85. “American Cantorate.” Online database associated with the “History of the American Cantorate Project.” <http://wescholar.wesleyan.edu/cantorate/>.
- Smith, Chani. 2005. *Learn to Leyn: Cantillation of the Hebrew Bible*. London: Jewish Music Institute.
- Summit, Jeffrey A. 2000. *The Lord’s Song in a Strange Land: Music and Identity in Contemporary Jewish Worship*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- . 2013. “Cantillation, Biblical.” In *Grove Music Online*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2248782>.
- . 2016. *Singing God’s Words: The Performance of Biblical Chant in Contemporary Judaism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tenzer, Michael. 2006. “Introduction.” In *Analytical Studies in World Music*, edited by Michael Tenzer, 3–38. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tunkel, Victor. 2004. *The Music of the Hebrew Bible: The Western Ashkenazic Tradition*. London.
- Zalmanoff, Rabbi Samuel, ed. 1957. *Sefer Ha-Nigunim*. Vol. 2. New York: Nichoach Publishers.

© 2020 by the author. Users may read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of this article without requesting permission. When distributing, (1) the author of the article and the name, volume, issue, and year of the journal must be identified clearly; (2) no portion of the article, including audio, video, or other accompanying media, may be used for commercial purposes; and (3) no portion of the article or any of its accompanying media may be modified, transformed, built upon, sampled, remixed, or separated from the rest of the article.