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## The Questionnaire

What are ways that you find most useful to incorporate sound, images, or other nontextual media into your Jewish Studies classrooms? 56

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[Perspectives.AJSNet.Org](http://perspectives.ajsnet.org)
Dear Colleagues,

I open my first president’s column with the sound of applause for AJSPerspectives editors Jonathan Hess and Laura Lieber and our contributors for urging us to think in new ways about Jewish soundscapes.

As editors, we also hope to use this issue to highlight the online presence of AJSPerspectives. Where possible, we have included links to sound files in the web-based version of this magazine, available at http://perspectives.ajsnet.org. To be sure, the printed edition is still a terrific stand-alone, but our intention is that the multimedia elements of the online articles will be enriching for all our readers.

The topic of sound led us to consider the role of media more broadly in the classroom, and thus our questionnaire for this issue asks, What are ways that you find most useful to incorporate sound, images, or other nontextual media into your Jewish Studies classrooms? We are particularly gratified by the popularity of using essays from AJSPerspectives in classrooms, this issue, with its embedded sound files alongside accessible, inviting writing and engaging visuals, may prove particularly useful in such contexts.

Once we begin to listen for it, sound is everywhere in the Jewish tradition, textual and beyond: in Sarah’s laughter and Leah’s weeping, in the cries of the oppressed and the shouts of war; in the rustling of halakha and the smashing of the wedding glass, in lofty melodies and wordless niggunim. In assembling this issue, we found ourselves ever more attuned to the auditory richness and immediacy of our surroundings. Simply put, sounds are—always and have been—everywhere. With this issue, we hope to reinterpret the traditional imperative, “Hear, O Israel!” as an injunction to attend the world of Jewish sounds. We invite you to listen with us.

The sages instructed: “Provide yourself with a teacher” (Pirkei Avot 1:6). If they were writing these words today, when business administration sits atop the hierarchy of the most popular majors, the rabbis might have added “and a mentor.” In Sheryl Sandberg’s best seller, Lean In, an entire chapter considers the critical importance of mentoring. Research in organizational behavior, applied psychology, and business management proves that those who are mentored have greater career success and job satisfaction. Not surprisingly, the topic of sound led us to consider the role of media more broadly in the classroom, and thus our questionnaire for this issue asks, What are ways that you find most useful to incorporate sound, images, or other nontextual media into your Jewish Studies classrooms? We are particularly gratified by the popularity of using essays from AJSPerspectives in classrooms, this issue, with its embedded sound files alongside accessible, inviting writing and engaging visuals, may prove particularly useful in such contexts.

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Jonathan M. Hess
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Laura S. Lieber
Duke University

From the Editors

AJSPerspectives.

Sounds surround us. There are sounds we seek out, by attending a symphony or placing a phone call. There are ambient sounds, sometimes only noticed in their absence (when a motor clicks off and sudden silence reigns) or their unwelcome presence (is it supposed to sound like that?). There are irritating sounds (the snapping of gum, a squeaking wheel), background sounds (the hum of the refrigerator, the click of the keyboard), and treasured sounds (a baby’s rough breathing, a whispered voice). Sounds can be musical and sounds can grate. Sounds mark off daily routines (alarm clocks, kitchen timers, car door chimes, and the dog demanding a walk), inform identity (the sounds of home and of not-home), and alert us to extraordinary events (sirens!). Sounds naturally punctuate our days, but they can also be unnatural. For all of sound’s ubiquity, however, the visual—the textual—customarily holds pride of place in Jewish Studies. The acoustic, though always present, constitutes a largely unacknowledged background noise.

With this issue of AJSPerspectives, we seek to highlight a few of the roles that sound, and the study of sound, can play within the world of Jewish Studies. Some authors approach sound through a textual lens: the sound of poetry. Others attend to “intentional” sounds, notably music: its composition, performance, and implicit (and explicit) complexities. Other authors, however, draw our attention to ambient sounds: the sounds of Jewish life and religious practice, domestic and communal. In these essays, through the authors’ written words, we “hear” sounds lofty and lowly, banal and exotic, remote and immediate. It is our hope that as our readers engage with these pieces, they will become newly aware of the presence and power of the acoustic as an avenue for intellectual inquiry and a mode of pedagogy.

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During our annual conference these sounds are, of course, ubiquitous. We go to conferences for the conversations. They occur in sessions, meetings, and the lobby; at the banquet and receptions; and inside every coffee shop within a mile radius. I even had one sitting on the hotel stairs. At last year’s conference AJS inaugurated a new Mentor Space. Our new Mentor Space welcomed fifteen distinguished scholars from a variety of fields. I want to thank Jay Berkovitz, Michael Brenner,
From the Executive Director

Dear Colleagues,

Every few months, I receive an email or phone call from a member, asking for advice about a politically complicated campus issue. In many cases, these matters relate to Israel, frequently it pertains to a speaker invited to campus, whom there is pressure to disinvite, or who has been treated disrespectfully, or who threatens to test the limits of academic freedom through offensive language. In some cases, the member just wants advice on how to handle the situation. Other times there is a request for AJS to issue a public statement about the matter.

The question of whether AJS should take public stands on political issues, especially about Israel, is one that has taken up a good amount of time at board meetings. The most intensive discussions occurred in 2013, when the American Studies Association passed a pro-BDS resolution. Like other learned societies, AJS’s leadership struggled with how to respond to a boycott movement that threatens Israeli academics, several of whom are members. On the one hand, there was consensus on the board that academic boycotts violate principles of academic freedom, as laid out in the American Association of University Professors “AUP’s statement opposing academic boycotts” (see http://aaup.org/news/aaup-statement-academic-boycotts). On the other hand, there were diverse opinions on the board about Israel, and our own discussions at board meetings began to go down a path that would have taken us far afield from Jewish Studies.

Ultimately, the concern was that getting involved in political matters, domestic or foreign, could swallow up the work of AJS, and our own discussions at board meetings began to go down a path that would have taken us far afield from Jewish Studies.

I return from AJS exhausted from so much conversation and ready to retreat again to the quiet spaces where I think and write. But the echoes of the sounds of those conversations with colleagues and friends and between mentors and mentees carry us forward into the year ahead until next year’s conference.

Pamela S. Nadel
American University

Rona Sheramy
Association for Jewish Studies

The Association for Jewish Studies wishes to thank the Center for Jewish History and its constituent organizations

American Jewish Historical Society, American Sephardic Federation, Leo Baeck Institute, Yeshiva University Museum, and YIVO Institute for Jewish Research

for providing the AJT with office space at the Center for Jewish History.
In 2009 I wrote a very long essay with the above title. Commissioned by the World Union of Jewish Studies and published in volume 43 (pages 3–84) of Jewish Studies, the article germinated from a casual conversation with a member of the World Union of Jewish Studies board who said to me: “You make such a fuss about the importance of music in Jewish Studies. Why don’t you tell us in writing what it is all about?” To compress those 30,000 words to the 1,000 included here, I will immediately state: Many times music tells a different story than texts. Escaping the logocentric leaning of Jewish Studies is the main objective of the proposed “musicology of the Jewish,” an approach to Jewish sound that aims to escape the cul-de-sac of “Jewish music.”

A sonic approach to the study of Judaism can help illuminate, for example, the elusive borderlines between Jewish and non-Jewish spaces that preoccupy so many disciplines. “Sonic” refers to a comprehensive consideration and interpretation of all forms of nonverbal utterances, vocal and instrumental, transmitted orally, graphically, or electronically. Music constitutes but one category of humanly designed sound. An attentive listening to traditional Jewish rituals is therefore one of the daunting challenges of nationality, the yearning for intelligibility. The crisis of “tradition,” the challenges of modernity displays its trials with distinctive sonic realms at different historical junctures. Perhaps the current project of digitization of this collection will stir more interest in it.

Even Jewish Studies scholars who find the musical text intractable can address texts that illuminate how Jews conceived nonverbal sound, for example music as a transformative force in religious experience. “Musicologists” from the circles of Sfyer Besdov or the Zohar delivered utterances on sound and music reflecting intersubjective interactions with the surrounding cultures. Their ideas continued to resonate in the early modern period and beyond, since their texts were printed and widely circulated. Music was a subject of inquiry for Abraham Ibn Ezra, Maimonides, Menahem of Lonzano, Leote de Modena, Sheref Zalman of Liady, and Franz Kafka to mention a few. However, their “musicology” is sporadic and has to be gleaned from large textual repositories, requiring a more modern cataloging in 1979 is hardly consulted. One can listen to Judaism without necessarily commanding the jargon of a fervent Zionist Jerusalemite (Abraham Zvi Idelsohn), arguably the “father” of the very modern concept of “Jewish music.”

The time has come for the Jewish Studies community to take Jewish soundscapes into thoughtful consideration. Edwin Seroussi is the Emanuel Alexander Professor of Musicology and director of the Jewish Music Research Centre at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He has published on North African and eastern Mediterranean Jewish music, Judeo-Islamic relations in music, and Jewish popular music.
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discouraged from stepping into the world of Jewish Studies.

To do so is more convenient and immediate than writing itself, new explorations can perhaps rebalance sound as a normal and accessible component of experience: continuous with other written materials that have served as the back bone of our scholarly pursuits. To see how this process works, look to the celebrated writing of my mentors and colleagues: Kay Shelemay on the Beta Israel precious moments; Mark Slobin on Yiddish theater and cantors; Edwin Seroussi on music of Jews of North Africa and central Asian heritage; Mark Kligman on Syrian Jews; James Loeffler on the late Russian Empire; Tamar Barzel on the downtown Manhattan avant-garde scene; Evan Rapport on the Bukharan Jewish diaspora; Philip Bohlman on central Europe;
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Reflecting on Death, Mourning, and the Afterlife in the Jewish Tradition
Hillel Halkin

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—Leon R. Kass, author of The Beginning of Wisdom

“Hillel Halkin displays an impressive mastery of source material and writes with his customary flair and grace.”
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History of musical definition and redefinition, illuminated a textured, twentieth-century sheet music, course catalogs, and recordings, each strand, with the help of sources such as dynamic, moving strands. Looking at sound, the more it became a complex entity.

Rabbis, educators, voice teachers, and intensive dialogue with mentor-cantors, I witnessed students combining artistic, Reform Jewish life and history. Taking notes under the state of digital humanities expanding rapid methods and colleagues available to consider how the senses fill meaning. With the present, acknowledging in the process worldview: defining the past and acting on a reason, and treat their work as a living, dynamic thing that changes from audience to audience. Their articulate responses speak to a wide range of composition and mediation, and show sound as both generative and responsive to human interaction.

In all of these cases, sound becomes a mode of philosophy that constructs its own worldview: defining the past and acting on the present, acknowledging in the process the richness of the moment and its echoes across Jewish life. Accessible—or rather, inescapable—sounds hardly require special talent or training to explore, only a willingness to consider how the senses fill meaning. With the state of digital humanities expanding rapidly, methods and colleagues available to consult, and broader openness among scholars to engage in arts associated projects, the scholarly immediacy of sound may, hopefully, become as natural to us as it is in real life. Judith M. Cohen is the Louis and Sylvi Mervis Professor of Jewish Culture and associate professor of Musicology at Indiana University. His current project explores World War II-era narratives in musical theater, nineteenth-century American synagogue music, and American Jewish singer-songwriter/illustrious Debbie Friedman.

As liberal Jewish leadership looked to elevate sound as a component of spiritual authority. While many know sound’s power as an aesthetic strategy for promoting identity-based historical narratives—at concerts, say, or in the service of religious ritual—intimacy with the same sounds became here a clarifying lens into an overlooked yet ever-present part of Jewish life.

Sound opened up realms of popular culture as well, expressions often conditioned off by ornamental critiques of unseriousness or inappropriateness, or solely analyzed by lyrics. Cantorial schools, for example, faced dilemmas in addressing liturgical music based in folk or rock styles that clashed with historical Jewish music narratives, even as they comprised the majority of congregational sound. Attributed to major progenitors such as Debbie Friedman and Jeff Klepper, the music’s proliferation in the late twentieth century became a source of cantorial frustration and/or moral consternation, symptomizing the potential loss of Jewish musical identity. Approaching the topic through sound helped me understand the deep-rootedness of this debate as a centuries-long cyclical exercise of pitting musics of tradition and innovation against each other in an existential battle for Jewish cultural primacy—and in each case reaching détente after decades of negotiation. Sound in this context became a central criterion for understanding the dynamics of liturgical practice: as musicians such as Debbie Friedman and Ben Steinberg joined liturgists such as Benjamin Siolod and Adolph Huebsch as central figures in determining the dynamics of religious communal life.

Similarly, sound’s deep and longstanding integration into performance-based arts such as theater offers opportunities for new angles of understanding. Precocious notions of musical theater’s so-called “light” entertainment, to give one example, tend to obscure the vast landscape of experimentation that “the musical” entails, especially when Broadway and its commercial implications cease to be the dominant point of reference. When, in presentations, I note that Anne Frank’s diary has become the subject of at least fifteen musical theater works, I occasionally face pushback about musical artist “commercial appropriation” of a central Holocaust symbol. The picture looks different, however, when viewed from the perspective of the artists, some of whom have devoted decades to these works, have extensive training and facility with musical models and histories, choose every note for a reason, and treat their work as a living, dynamic thing that changes from audience to audience. Their articulate responses speak to a wide range of composition and mediation, and show sound as both generative and responsive to human interaction.

“Approaching the topic through sound helped me understand the deep-rootedness of this debate as a centuries-long cyclical exercise of pitting musics of tradition and innovation against each other in an existential battle for Jewish cultural primacy—and in each case reaching détente after decades of negotiation.”

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The Life and Works of Michael Levi Rodkinson.

“A must read for anyone interested in the history of Hasidic literature. Jonathan Meir masterfully tells the story of late nineteenth-century eastern European Jewish scholarship through the bruising battles, big ideas, and petty intrigues of Michael Levi Rodkinson.”

—Elyahu Stern, Yale University

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8 AJS Perspectives

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The affective unity that such simultaneity confers on the singing community — Rosegger's “organic chorale” — depends not on the text as an existential longevity and a shared validity that words alone apparently lack. While he seemed to have overlooked the harmonizing effect of the choral setting of the melody, divided among the standard four voices, his basic argument, related to the power of “vocal communal intimacy,” remains intact. Vested in such musical attire, moreover, the various prayers enter the annual cycle of holidays, he further argues, engraving their specific formal notions on the collective emotional memory. This is especially the case, one may add, when the verbal meaning of the text is no longer accessible to those pronouncing it—a characteristic predilection of many mid-European synagogue-goers at the time. The alternation between the unison singing of the congregation and the cantorial elaboration of the congregations’ emissaries—barzamar and professional choirmasters—further deepened the sense of vocal community qua communities.

Lewandowski (1812–1894), who divided his musical ouevres for the synagogue between those intended for the professional chorus (Todah ve-zimaah), and those proposed for the use of the entire congregation (Kol rimah u-shalih), would probably have been pleased with the fancy of his followers, up to the present day, spanning between Reformed and ultra Orthodox Jews—those exposed, early on, to the synagogal treasures he bequeathed. Lewandowski, however, was not the only one to supply the burgeoning vocal communities, spreading in Europe between London and Odessa, with the “tonal stuff” they needed to enliven, and perhaps even to invigorate, their religious sentiments. It was, indeed, through such Zionist, philanthropic, and devoted a significant portion of their volume to “instructing the people to sing the ever-mutating and ever-growing tonal corpus. All of us who still sing, it is now clear, were exposed, early on, to the standards and professional music, working through the ethos or connotative value of imported or newly composed tunes. Yet, vocal communities were not confined, of course, solely to the synagogue. In Germany, inspired by the various groups associated with the Wändervögel (lit. wandering birds)—the precursor of Habiklaira or the stage of communal life established themselves in urban centers, often paralleling the shift from community to a social structure, Europe and, subsequently, in other continents. The ever-growing tonal corpus. All of us who still sing, it is now clear, were exposed, early on, to the standards and professional music, working through the ethos or connotative value of imported or newly composed tunes. Yet, vocal communities were not confined, of course, solely to the synagogue. 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Brass Bands, Jewish Youth, and the Sonorities of a Global Perspective

Maureen Jackson

In 1859 the Ottoman Sultan Abdülmecid visited the Aegean port of Salonica on a multicity tour of the realm. Brass bands, imperial guards, girls with bouquets, and children from all local religious communities lined an avenue to perform for him. As Rodrigo and Stein note in a Jewish Voice of Izmir, c. 1909–10. Reproduced by permission from the personal collection of Ente Aras.

Let us focus primarily on brass bands and secondarily on choruses to explore a musical slice of Jewish patriotic activity in the late Ottoman Empire. Loud and typically marching outdoors, Ottoman brass bands announced patriotic space within wide-ranging earshot, as they performed a range of music from military commemoratives and sultanic panegyrics to popular European art music. Children typically filled the ranks of the bands, as they did patriotic choruses, becoming educated into imperial spirit by learning and producing the music. It is a global perspective on brass bands that furthers our understanding of how children—often homeless or destitute—became an integral part of this phenomenon worldwide and by extension within the empire and its multiethnic communities. Typically understood in elite terms as Italkas-led reformation of Ottoman military music on court, or in chorus terms as French infusions into Paris-sponsored Alliance Israélite schools of the empire, brass bands and military marches in fact enjoyed far reaching concentric circles of migration—from an intensifying movement in Victorian England to Europe and its colonies, Asia, and the Americas. These circles more fully account for the growth of bands outside the imperial palace and its professional performers to become a popular amateur youth activity in Ottoman urban centers across the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Early public schools in the empire—İzlikahes (reformatories), which were first established in the Balkans to address the refugee crisis after the Crimean War (1853–56)–instituted bands to “uplift” orphaned children by offering them a marketable skill while provisioning the state with working bands for civic and state ceremonies. Musical models in the form of an amateur brass band movement had developed in Britain by the mid-nineteenth century in the context of European discourses about the unsupervised “dangerous child” and Victorian notions of “rational recreation." Introduced into British, European, and American reform schools and factories to rehabilitate destitute or laboring youth, brass bands showcased easy-to-learn instruments, soldiering-style uniforms, and marching formations that facilitated the aim of instilling virtue rather than vice in vagrant youth and industrial workers. Extending to other regions of the world through musical tours, world exhibitions, and colonial activity, amateur brass bands rapidly became an integral part of Ottoman reformatories and an expanding public school network under Abdülhamid II, and developed in multireligious communal institutions and missionary schools as well. By cultivating discipline, productivity, and patriotism in often impoverished youth, the bands sought to fulfill needs for urban renewal, youth rehabilitation, and civic performance across Ottoman urban centers, benefiting from the often unpaid services of working pupils.

Did Jewish orphans or child workers, like their counterparts elsewhere, fill the ranks of Ottoman Jewish bands? Possibly. Destitute Jewish locals and refugees from late Ottoman wars, especially from the Balkans to port cities like Salonica, Istanbul, Izmir, and environs, would have provided ample numbers of child performers. Whether despoused or not, however, Jewish students were trained for brass bands and children’s choruses in state and missionary schools, to which Jewish and Christian families, albeit a minority, sent their children. These public schools, moreover, sometimes employed Jewish music teachers. For example, the composer Santo Sīkar was on the faculty of the İzlikahes reform school in İzmir between 1888 and 1893, teaching Ottoman aspects of the Marshall T. Meyer Human Art, Archaelogy & Symbolism, the Kanof Collection of Jewish Home to the Heschel Archives, Applications accepted on a rolling basis. Home of the Heschel Archive: for more information: jewishtudies.duke.edu
As official occasions cleared salutary space for high-volume patriotic display, child performers in Jewish bands and choruses projected the patriotic upbringing and potential of an entire future generation of Ottoman Jews in a way that elder career musicians would not. Even as political winds shifted across the Second Constitutional period (beginning in 1908–09), the Balkan Wars (1912–13), and the lead-up to World War I (1914–18)—as panegyrics to sultans and conscripts could still find themselves in the poetry through the ethnicity-bending term “Turk,” glossed as “Ottoman,” and continue to display communal patriotism with their non-Jewish peers, now representing vanguards of change breaking with a “benighted” ancien régime. In the aftermath of the devastating war a veritable cult of youth would be constructed in the early Turkish Republic, while brass band musicians there and elsewhere would progressively adapt their trumpets and drums to jazz combos (as discussed by Carol Woodall in “Awakening a Horrible Monster”). Popular musical tastes, warped of war and militaristic marches, were shifting, and the Istanbul press of the 1920s would debate the sensuality and morality of the new musical and danceable fad. Until then, however, the case of Jewish youth bands and choruses in late empire sheds light on performative avenues open to the leadership of a non-Muslim community, often seeking a low profile, to expand its patriotic image and shape its members’ loyalties through the relatively low, accessible, and entertaining public soundscapes of a broader imperializing enterprise.

Audio examples are included in the online version of this article at http://perspectives.ajronet.org.

Maureen Jackson researches multilingual musical cultures in the Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic as a lens for understanding cultural history in imperial and national contexts. She is the author of Mixing Musics: Turkish Jewry and the Urban Landscape of a Sacred Song (Stanford University Press, 2013), winner of the Jewish National Book Award. She served as a Harry Starr Fellow at Harvard University and is currently working on her second book.


THEME

For its 2017–2018 fellowship year, the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies seeks applications from scholars asking new questions about the history of science, medicine and technology from the perspective of Jewish culture. This year will explore the theories, institutions, and paradigms that shaped how Jews have studied nature, and the ideas, applications, and cultural and religious consequences that emerged from such study.

The fellowship is open to scholars working on particular thinkers, texts or theories, as well as research projects that frame the subject in relation to Classical, Christian, Muslim, or secular approaches. This theme spans the entirety of Jewish history, and encompasses the history of science, the anthropology of science, philosophy, philology, and environmental studies, among other potentially relevant fields.

This theme shall embrace an interdisciplinary and comparative approach and encourages projects within fields of inquiry that bear on how Jews have understood, interacted with, or sought to intervene into nature. This could include but is not limited to: astrology, magic and other esoteric forms of knowledge, medieval and early modern natural philosophy, Zionism and its impact on scientific and medical practice, contemporary research in genetics, as well as mathematics and technology. Among the larger questions that a fellowship application might address are:

- How have Jews conceived, studied, and talked about nature and the natural world in different historical periods?
- In what ways has Jewish scientific engagement in nature been shaped by religious belief and practice? What is the relationship between science and Halakhah, or between science and Jewish religious thought?
- What can be learned by reframing Jewish engagement in nature within a broader context? What insights can be gleaned by comparing Jewish scientific interest with Islamic, Christian, or modern secular science? To what extent has science or medicine served as a medium of interaction and exchange with non-Jewish communities?
- What can one learn about Jewish engagement in science by attending to the practices and institutions of scientific culture (e.g., universities, medical schools) or by examining the social and discursive practices of science?
- How has Zionism shaped Jewish medical and scientific activity or vice versa?

ELIGIBILITY, AWARDS & APPOINTMENTS

The Katz Center invites applications from scholars in the humanities, social sciences, and the arts at all levels, as well as outstanding graduate students in the final stages of writing their dissertations who will have received their Ph.D. before the start date of the fellowship. Fellowships are awarded either for a full academic year or one semester (fall or spring). Stipend amounts are based on academic standing with a maximum of $60,000 for the academic year.

DEADLINE: OCTOBER 31, 2016

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Email: Carrie Love
Fellowship Administrator
carrielo@upenn.edu
It is to cabaret's ability to turn worlds inside-out that I here call “the cabaretesque,” a term that extends Mikhail Bakhtin's well-known concept of the carnivalesque. The cabaret stage depends on the inversion of inside and outside, the ways in which a skit or song allows the audience to experience themselves upon the stage without, however, entirely recognizing themselves. Audience members laugh at their own foibles and follies. They encounter themselves in a moment of self-reflection. The serious is made comic; the comic is made serious. The irony of an evening of enjoyment, as Leo Strauss invites us to experience, is revealed in the difficulty of escaping that moment when sounded in the real world.

The outer and inner worlds of the cabaretesque collide in Hans Eisler's setting of Bertolt Brecht's "The Ballad of the 'Jewish Whore' Marie Sanders." Eisler (1898–1962) captures the form and narrative of broadside ballad—songs that detail the politics of the day and circulate in printed form on the streets of the city—to open a space for Marie Sanders to enter the public sphere in which she is mocked and driven, but she has a Jewish lover. Sound in all its dimension—lyrics, genre, intertextuality, arrangement of the score for cabaret ensemble—unleashes its reality to locate it in the historical moment of the Nuremberg Laws. In successive verses, reality unfolds sonically as broadside and newreel converge. Aesthetically, the hideous reality of prejudice and racism becomes transparent as a song of stunning beauty. Although Marie Sanders herself never speaks in the song, we yearn to hear her voice. The serious work of cabaret resonates most clearly through the sounding of silence. It was the possibility of reclaiming silence for the marginalized that led to the spread of cabaret in the Jewish communities of the modern era, above all as they were forced to flee the traditions of an older world and embark on exile into a new world. These serious works of cabaret were transformed into the Yiddish theater, operetta, and the film music of modernity. There were new voices and new songs to take up the cause of denying finality. The silence of modernity was sounded with a fullness that might seem to forestall the end of all things.

Sounding Tight
Want to buy some illusions? Slightly used, on second hand? They were lovely illusions, reaching high, built on sand. They had a touch of paradise, a spell you can't explain. For this in crazy paradise you are in love in vein.

Want to buy some illusions, slightly used, just like new? Such romantic inclusions, and they're all about you. I sell them all for a penny, they make a pretty souvenirs. Take my lovely illusions, some for laughs, some for tears. (Friedrich Holländer, "Illusions," from A Foreign Affair, dir. Billy Wilder, 1948)


The power of Jewish cabaret and the cabaretesque to sound silence appears in remarkable ways across the history of media technology, particularly in the history of film. The history of sound film begins on a musical moment when sounded in the real world. The serious work of cabaret resonates most clearly through the sounding of silence. It was the possibility of reclaiming silence for the marginalized that led to the spread of cabaret in the Jewish communities of the modern era, above all as they were forced to flee the traditions of an older world and embark on exile into a new world. These serious works of cabaret were transformed into the Yiddish theater, operetta, and the film music of modernity. There were new voices and new songs to take up the cause of denying finality. The silence of modernity was sounded with a fullness that might seem to forestall the end of all things.

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Listening Contrapuntally; or, What Happened When I Went Bach to the Archives

Amy Lynn Wlodarski

I remember the first time I heard a Bach fugue—the Preludes and Fugue in A minor, BWV 544—in an A History class at Middlebury College. It was a time in my life when I identified as a singer, one of whose ears were predominantly tuned towards the lyricism and phraseology of melodies. In this context, the figuration of this Bach fugue presented a challenge for me. Its sequential and instrumental contrapuntal instrument was difficult to sing, and I promptly dismissed it as mathematical and mechanical (as the young are wont to do). Later, a listening exam forced me to return to the score (as exams are wont to do), and I set about memorizing it by my standard method: singing along. As I did, I discovered the depth of associations within the work, how its Hauptstimmen (main voices) and Nebenstimmen (secondary voices) ultimately generated textures that generate new vocal melodies that were not written in the score but were apparent to my ears. In short, by ignoring certain notes in the score, I found evidence of its musical voice but also a more holistic understanding of the artwork. And maybe that is why I have always chosen to begin my music survey course with this Bach fugue, for it begins an intellectual journey that will ultimately lead me back again in the arenas of my own life.

The notion of contrapuntal has become the cornerstone of my musical life and my work as a musicologist studying Holocaust witness. Indeed, the process of testimonial evidence evokes a series of contrapuntal relationships: between memory and history, between present and past; between survivor and interviewer; between various transnational and exile identities; between what gets said and what remains unspoken. To be certain, none of this was in my mind when I first encountered with Henry—a testimony punctuated with some shame in my first interview with the Bach fugue with new ears to hear the previous silences as sounding bodies and the new sites of musical memory and trauma—to move, as said pianist described how he had handled contrapuntal moments in his own past, with no false sense of superiority and a great deal of humility that I listened to the archival recording of Karas in which he described how he had handled contrapuntal elements and attempted to redirect me to musicological insight and inquiry—to musical life in Terezín. As Joseph Toltz describes, Terezín is valued as an emotional “counterpoint to [the] factual reportage and witness bearing” often associated with an “active historical memory, an impulse to reread it not univocally but with all [their] energy to [a] chosen field” and of those other histories against which the [dominant] history that is narrated is conditioned. Immanent as it were is the atrocity into our historical imaginations, but I had been correcting them, because after the years of intense research it is realized that Said was reading both of them with more traditional modes of history. As Joseph Toltz describes how he had handled contrapuntal moments in his own past, materials in this article cited with permission from Joza K. Holocaust Testimony: Some material in this article cited with permission from Joza K. Holocaust Testimony. (Cambridge University Press, 2015) and coeditor, with Elaine Kelly, of Musical Witness and Holocaust. (Cambridge University Press, 2015) and coeditor, with Elaine Kelly, of Musical Witness and Holocaust. Some material in this article cited with permission from Joza K. Holocaust Testimony. In his biography of Mozart, the musicologist Maynard Solomon referred to silence as “a state that calls for sound to be brought into being.” Perhaps he had been reading Proust, who noted that the “work of art is the child of silence.” Regardless, it is certain that Said was reading both of them as he pointed the musicologist and his own personal musical practice as an unlikely prophet of postwar classical music. “In Silence to Sound and Back Again: Music, Literature, and History,” Said praises Cage for reminding us that “music transcends the periphery of the soundscape and recognizing it as ‘an essential component of art’ [that] symbolizes the difficulty but also the opportunity offered by the realm of the aesthetic.” Within the realm of musical witness, our challenge is to aesthetically return to the archive, as I once returned to the Bach fugue with new ears to hear the previous silences as sounding bodies and the new sites of musical memory and trauma—to move, as said pianist described how he had handled contrapuntal moments in his own past, with no false sense of superiority and a great deal of humility that I listened to the archival recording of Karas in which he described how he had handled contrapuntal elements and attempted to redirect me to musicological insight and inquiry—to musical life in Terezín. As Joseph Toltz describes, Terezín is valued as an emotional “counterpoint to [the] factual reportage and witness bearing” often associated with an “active historical memory, an impulse to reread it not univocally but with all [their] energy to [a] chosen field.”

To be honest, this is what I had been expecting—and, if am to be honest with myself, emotionally seeking—when I made the journey to Terezín. Such empowering narratives about the Terezínite legacies appear regularly in scholarly literature, performance contexts, and in classical music. Celebrated productions of Brandenburg and the Defiant Requiem promote the Terezín memory as one that present and former historian Miller described as a “tribute to the indomitable spirit . . . which somehow flowed in a sinkhole of horror.” And yet, as I sifted through the silent archival documents sitting before me, alternative musical narratives arose from the page—the voices of ear witnesses whose stories did not neatly fit into what historian Wolfgang Brem describes as the “legend of Terezín.” In the midst of these alternative representations of musical performance, I considered that Said was reading both of them with more traditional modes of history. As Joseph Toltz describes, Terezín is valued as an emotional “counterpoint to [the] factual reportage and witness bearing” often associated with an “active historical memory, an impulse to reread it not univocally but with all [their] energy to [a] chosen field.”

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Fellowship Opportunity
Theme 2017–2018
Jews and the Material in Antiquity

The Frankel Institute’s 2017–2018 theme year will ask how Jews in the ancient world related both to matter itself and to issues of materiality. How did ancient Jews sense, understand, and even construct material entities such as artifacts, bodies, environments, and so on? How did those who were not Jewish perceive or represent the relationships between Jews and matter? Finally, how has the history of Jews and matter been reconstructed in modern scholarship and how might scholars approach the nexus of Jews and the material more productively?

The challenge of addressing these questions necessitates a comparative perspective in which Jewish experience is firmly situated within its various historical contexts. In recent years, scholars have come to emphasize the religious formations that existed within the wider cultural landscape of the ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern world. Jewish communities and lives were inextricably intertwined with other social and religious formations in the urban landscapes and built environments of the ancient world. The focus on the material dimension of Jewish antiquity calls for an integrative approach to ancient Jewish studies and to a comparative and collaborative approach to antiquity more broadly.

Applications are encouraged by scholars working on topics related to Jews and materiality in antiquity. Topics can include, but are not limited to, sacrificial discourse, Jewish liturgy, Jewish spatial and architectural practices, the relationship between divinity and materiality or immateriality, sensory regimes, ritual artifacts, religious law related to property, performance and gender of the Jewish body, and conceptions of matter and cosmology. Applications from scholars of antiquity whose work is not strictly in Jewish studies are particularly welcomed, including those working on relevant topics in early Christianity, or religions in the Roman and Sassanian empires. The Frankel Institute also encourages joint applications from pairs or teams of scholars working on collaborative projects. Applicants should work broadly in the Mediterranean basin or western Asia from the Hellenistic to the early Islamic eras.
The Trouble with Jewish Musical Genres: The Orquesta Kef in the Americas

Lillian M. Wohl

Gastón Mohadeb, Rafael Surijón and Juan Sleviler perform with other members of the Orquesta Kef at the 2015 Busch H shana Urbano festivitie s in the Plaza Republica Oriental del Uruguay. Courtesy of Sherbamate Productora.

The Orquesta Kef is just a small apartment, really, a few blocks north of the Estación Lacroze, the busy train station linking Buenos Aires’s transport with the Ciudad Autónoma—Argentina’s autonomous capital city. Framed press photos and album covers decorate the walls of the offices where Rafael Surijón, the bassist and co-founder of the big band Jewish Argentine musical ensemble, greets me; Gastón Mohadeb, the front man, percussionist, and sometime satirist, is giving me a tour of the space. I had met these two musicians on various occasions—at the Puro Purim (Pure Purim) concert, a Passover street musicians on various occasions—at the Puro Purim (Pure Purim) concert, a Passover street...
Singing a New Song
Joshua Jacobson

Zamir 'Alum Zamir!
U sa zamir necher 'am.
Sing, brethren, sing!
Then with song we will rouse the people.

An amateur musician by the name of Hentzenstein was appointed the choir’s conductor, but after a few rehearsals it became apparent that someone with more professional expertise would be needed. It was at this point that the eighteen-year-old Joseph Rumschinsky was engaged to become the first permanent conductor of the chorus. Rumschinsky later recalled of that first rehearsal in his autobiography:

“When we stood up and started to sing, a holy musical fire was kindled by the first Jewish choral ensemble in the world.”

The Lódó choir known as Ha-zamir (or Hazomir) became very successful, and soon inspired branches in other major cities of eastern Europe. In the nineteenth century choral singing had become more and more popular throughout Europe. Enthusiastic amateurs were creating and joining a type of ensemble that had never existed before: the secular community choir. Some of these choruses were civic organizations, dedicated to performances of the greatator. Some were connected to a workplace or to a professional union. Others, like Ha-zamir, were devoted to the expression of national sentiments through music. Ha-zamir’s anthem was composed circa 1903 by the Warsaw Ha-zamir conductor, Leo Low. The music is in a rousing patriotic style, in the bright key of A major, in a joyous tempo, with sharply chiseled rhythms and rising melodic lines. (To hear a recording, go to http://perspectives.ajsnet.org.) The lyrics by David Frischman reflected as well as inspired an identity shift among the Jews of eastern Europe: Jewishness could be expressed more comfortably as a nationality than as a religion.

Zamir ‘Alum Zamir!
U sa zamir necher ‘am.
Sing, brethren, sing!
Then with song we will rouse the people.

The opening lines of the anthem reveal a secularization of the well-known verse from Psalm 47:

Zamru ’ah. im zamru!
Zamru le-makkem zamruv.
Sing to God, Sing!
Sing to our King, sing!
(Psalm 47:7)

The song is no longer directed to God, the Heavenly King. Now it is a call to social action—it is a song that will awaken the Jewish people from its “dark ages” and into the enlightenment. The appeal to “brothers” evokes the ideals of the European Enlightenment, echoing the well-known reading with which government officials reacted with which government officials greeted any gathering that made of political sedition, Shapiro asserted that his organization would serve patriotic aims by keeping the young people of Lódó away from their “patriotic” work. Not only did the governor grant the petition, these young kids amuse themselves with assemblies that were poisoning their minds.

The Ha-zamir movement even spread across the Atlantic. In 1914 the first Jewish choirs in the United States were founded: the Chicago Jewish Folk Chorus, directed by Jacob Schaefer, and the Paterson (New Jersey) Jewish Folk Chorus, directed by Jacob Remel. As immigration of Jews from eastern Europe increased, Yiddish and Zionist choruses began to appear all across the United States. Among them were the Boston Jewish Folk Chorus (1924) directed by Misha Celkin, the New Haven Jewish Folk Chorus, the Philadelphia Jewish Folk Chorus (1923) and the Detroit Jewish Folk Chorus (1924), both directed by Harvey Schreibman, the Los Angeles Jewish Folk Chorus directed by Arthur Atkins, the American Jewish Choral Society of Los Angeles directed by Mintam Brada, the New York Jewish Philharmonic Chorus directed by Max Helmman, the Miami Jewish Folk Chorus (1943) directed by Bernard Briskin, the Newark Jewish Folk Chorus (1928) directed by Samuel Goldman, and the San Francisco Jewish Folk Chorus (1935) directed by Zari Gottfried.

But by the middle of the twentieth century, after the tapering of immigration and with the assimilation of Jews into the cultural fabric of American life, one by one the Yiddish Folk Choruses began to die out. So in the 1960s, even though we were proudly singing Leo Low’s Ha-zamir anthem, Stanley and I and our singers were totally ignorant of the Ha-zamir phenomenon that we were inadvertently reviving.

Today the Zamir movement continues to flourish. The American Record Guide dubbed the Boston branch, “America’s foremost Jewish choral ensemble.” And the New York Zamir Foundation hosts a Jewish Choral Festival every summer that attracts hundreds of singers from all across the content, and has initiated a successful franchise of choruses for Jewish teenagers.

In 1999, to mark the centenary of the founding of Zamir, I took my chorus on a tribute concert tour to Lódó, where we were welcomed by the mayor. Go to http://youtu.be/IKItPkJVFq8 to see a video of the Zamir Chorale of Boston performing the Ha-zamir anthem in the Lódó Town Hall and Hall of Culture.

Audio and video examples are included in the online version of this article at http://perspectives.ajsnet.org.

Joshua Jacobson is professor of Music and director of choral activities at Northeastern University and senior consultant at Hebrew College’s School of Jewish Music. He is founder and director of the Zamir Chorale of Boston. His publications include books, articles, compositions, and arrangements. Jacobson holds degrees from Harvard College, New England Conservatory, and University of Cincinnati.

Image of Zamir Chorale of Boston. Courtesy of the author.
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“Sounds of a Nation”

When Josef (Tal) Laughed: Notes on Musical (Mis)representations

Assaf Shelleg

S

ometimes in late 1949 Peter Emanuel Gradenwitz, a German Jewish musicologist who had been living in Tel Aviv since 1936, published an ambitious study titled The Music of Israel. Covering 5,000 years of musical time from the biblical times to the newly born State of Israel, Gradenwitz set the tone, as it were, for disciplined representational paradigms rather than the nondirectional proliferation of compositional approaches. While glossing over those who had been willingly trying to transpose Orientalist formulae he also passed down a taxonomy that would stiffer into generational groupings based mainly on chronological criteria and devoid of the elasticity needed to map what had been (and still is) a musical habitat that refuses policing.

The repercussions of such methodology would soon color subsequent research in the field, which, to a significant part developed by force of inertia without resisting the larger inherited frameworks, and in turn migrated to Israeli Studies studies (whenever such spheres include music that is neither folk nor popular). Music composed in the Yishuv and the State of Israel was reduced in these discourses to exotic markers that could be easily depersonalized as Zionist, Hebrew, Israeli, or Jewish by outsiders (and usually with no discussion on the archeology of these labels). And a Yemenite wedding dance tune “corrected” to match the Western musical infrastructure that modernized it, at a hora dance in a symphonic garb would become more efficient for the performance of naivety than the hybrids that evince such distinct music signifiers. While a lot could be said about the making of such music (and especially if looked at through a postcolonial lens), it is important that we recall how Gradenwitz characterized Tal’s music in his study of the musicologist’s “representational” while endowing it with a national function, yet the musical syntax that had run too unusual for the conservative way in which folksons or non-Western liturgical citations featured in Israeli art music. This generalization was all the more true, since Tal and Gradenwitz had written about him.

Put differently, Tal’s music lacked the ability to “represent” and as such could not audibly project ideas pertaining to the idea of a “Hebraic text) and the redemptive trajectory that ran through them. The narrative that climaxed with the music of the Third Jewish Commonwealth was probably the first musicologist to construct a redemptive and teleological narrative alongside easily deciphered metaphors in commenting on his musical syntax. For the latter, however, narrative rewriting was too complicated as it could violate the formerly constructed redemptive story of The Music of Israel. Scholars of later decades who adopted the Third Jewish Commonwealth narratives (either credited to Tal or “nationalist” qualities they found in works such as The Mother Rejoices or the Piano Sonata or pigeonholed him as a “modernist” or “avant-gardist” (and this usually meant very little in a discourse clung still to a metaphorical register). Under the radar, however, far more important have been the discourses that excluded him from the execution of the children to their alienic recreation of Psalm 92:2–3 (“It is good to acclaim the Lord and to hymn to Your Name, to the Music of the moment your kindness, Your faithfulness in the night”), after which a full cast apathetic “Hallelujah” followed. These examples indicate that Tal had never been due to such tops in Zionist discourse; but Gradenwitz focused on textual elements with which he could narrate Tal’s music and he was thereby limited to metaphors in commenting on his musical style. With metaphors Gradenwitz could do very little and so he ignored seminal works by Tal dating from the late 1930s and early 1940s, works that not only demonstrated Tal’s atonality but also showed how he used this syntax to destabilize musical constructs that were otherwise ruled by exoticism and the asymmetries it engendered in his Second Piano Concerto. By the 1950s Tal was part of a cohort of composers who had grown disillusioned with Western musical metaphors of the East and turned instead to the melodic and harmonic properties they found in the oral musical traditions of North African and Middle Eastern Jews living in Israel. Allowing these properties to percolate into their musical syntax, composers were no longer attempting to write music that sounded exotic, Semitic, or Jewish. Rather they had correctly musicalized Eastern communities to Western paradigms, they adapted their music according to the melodic behavior and musical textures of Arab Jewish oral musical traditions. Such compositions were not enough, Tal had left a short comment on his Jewish identity while alienating some of the semantics of “representation”; they point to a place where a dense network features similar formulations, and where a network features similar formulations, and where a dense network features similar formulations, and where a dense network features similar formulations, and where a dense network features similar formulations.

Video examples are included in the online version of this article at http://perspectives.aop.org.

Assaf Shelleg is the author of Jewish Contingencies and the Soundtrack of Israeli History (Oxford University Press, 2014). He is the 2015 Engel Prize recipient and was recently appointed to the faculty of the Musicology Department at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

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From “Ha-tikvah” to KISS; or, The Sounds of a Jewish Nation

Miryam Segal

I n December 2001, on a visit home to the United States, and having been deprived of the radio and media of Israel for over a year while living in Israel, I took advantage of the break from my research on Hebrew and Israeli culture to catch up on all things American. I tuned in to a local New York Satellite of National Public Radio to find no less a popular cultural icon than the former lead singer of KISS performing at Azkena Rock Festival, 2010. Photo credit: Alberto Cabello, via Flickr Commons.

Gen Simmons: Oh, thank you so much for the introduction. This is National Public Radio and it prides itself on accurate information—most of it sounding good—I stand guilty as charged and proud to say that I’m a mama’s boy. However, point one is you mispronounced my Hebrew name. It’s not Hayim, which is the sort of spelling please don’t meet- me-up Ashkenazi European way. . .

Leonard Lopate: Which is—hey, Gene Simmons: What I grew up in . . .

Leonard Lopate: Which is—hey, Gene Simmons: What I grew up in . . .

Gen Simmons: Which is—hey, that’s why you get beaten up. I don’t. The sfardit way is the correct way. It’s Hayim, emphasis on the second vowel, like the Israelis do.

Eliezer Ben Yehuda was a major figure in the language revival movement, and one of the early Ashkenazi promoters of the “sfardit” way. To further his revivalist goals, he taught Hebrew in Jewish schools in Palestine and supported the inculcation of a so-called Sephardic accent. His magnum opus was a Hebrew in Jewish schools in Palestine and of the State of Israel. The accent with the institutionalization of Hebrew as the official language of the Jewish settlement in Palestine and of the State of Israel. The accent system he invokes is indeed associated with a masculine, nationalistic Jewish persona—especially when contrasted with what from an Israeli perspective is an outdated Hebrew.

A commonplace among Americans who take an interest in Hebrew culture is that poetry occupies a more central place in the Israeli consciousness than in our own culture. This alone, however, does not account for the number of times that, after hearing the subject of my research, my Israeli interlocutors responded in verse. To be precise, they quoted an early poem by the national poet Hayim Nahman Bialik, “To the Bird”:

Shalom rov Avrech, Tirgou neveth bene, me’erets ha-tikvah, li’shalom. Yele’av, k’lev maneig, ha-biyut k’lev me’egu.

Welcome upon your return, lovely bird, From the hot lands to my window— How my soul has yearned for your voice so sweet, in the winter when you leave my dwelling.

In short, they responded with the only work whose Ashkenazic Hebrew is consistently preserved in the literature curriculum of Israeli high schools, and to that transition to new-ancient Hebrew I made speakers recall an artifact of an older Modern Hebrew—one of a very few reminders that Hebrew speech in the Land of Israel in modern times was ever ruled by different protocols for pronunciation than it is today. To be more precise, my Israeli interlocutors pointed to a partial rendering of an Ashkenazic Hebrew. Not inappropriately for accentual-syllabic poetry, they preserved the rhythm of the penultimate stress—something, it seems, that imperfectly as the speaker’s habitual dialect fought this overriding of the rules of Israeli Hebrew (Yehama maintains a penultimate stress pattern consistently—while vowels and consonants conform to standard Israeli [http://youtu.be/RGCQw1QzQg]). A compromised rendering of Ashkenazic Hebrew can also be heard in the recitation of a poem of far more well known the world over than anything Bialik ever wrote, composed as a farewell to his daughter.

With each performance of the national anthem, however, also exclude the exclusion of Arabs. The story and sounds of “Ha-tikvah,” however, also exclude the Jews of the Middle East who would have turned west to face Zion—and pronounced the hope ha-tiskah, not ha-tikvah.

Although Ashkenazic is more commonly heard among the American Jewry of Ashkenazic descent than among Israelis, communities identifying as “liberal” or “Zionist” or “Modern Orthodox” most often adopt an Israeli accent as an expression of their religious-ethnic-political identity, peppered with American intonations. When Imber composed “Our Hope” in 1878, and Bialik composed “In the Bird” in 1842, however, the traditional Ashkenazic dialects were still predominant among Ashkenazic Jews in Europe and Palestine and the United States. Ben-Yehuda’s and others’ attempts to adopt and teach a Sephardicized Hebrew in Palestine were just beginning. Thanks to Balik and Shaul Tchernichovsky’s prosodic innovations, by the end of the twentieth century there were Hebrew poems with the accentual-syllabic sounds of European poetry (English, German, Russian, Yiddish) in which the regular recurrence of stressed syllables generates rhythm. Used in Jewish for Bialik’s oratorio system in which he spoke and wrote was not one that would become the standard for spoken Hebrew. In 1912, Balik’s poet personal association with his bird muse opened her in Ashkenazic Hebrew from the pages of The Orchard. By 1841 Balik negated the distinction Hebrew in which he would nevertheless continue to compose. He expressed this sentiment again thirteen years later while in Palestine. He had heard the bird-muse had in the meantime opened her in Ashkenazic poetic Hebrew. The bird comes from Palestine and the poet questions her throughout, asking after the inhabitants of Zion, and she never says a word. But what would the bird sound like if she did respond to the speaker’s questions?

In the retrospect of Balik’s visit to Palestine in 1907, and his realization that his own Hebrew pronunciation might be1927. Sounding like a pseudo-Sephardic dialect, his poetry retained pride of place in the national poetic canon. The bird must have in the meantime opened her mouth, becoming the new citizen of the Hebrew-speaking nation, subjected to the babbles of a hopeless exilic Jew. What upon returning home from Palestine and the United States. Ben-Yehuda’s and others’ attempts to adopt and teach a Sephardicized Hebrew in Palestine were just beginning. Thanks to Balik and Shaul Tchernichovsky’s prosodic innovations, by the end of the twentieth century there were Hebrew poems with the accentual-syllabic sounds of European poetry (English, German, Russian, Yiddish) in which the regular recurrence of stressed syllables generates rhythm. Used in Jewish for Bialik’s oratorio system in which he spoke and wrote was not one that would become the standard for spoken Hebrew. In 1912, Balik’s poet personal association with his bird muse opened her in Ashkenazic Hebrew from the pages of The Orchard. By 1841 Balik negated the distinction Hebrew in which he would nevertheless continue to compose. He expressed this sentiment again thirteen years later while in Palestine. He had heard the bird-muse had in the meantime opened her in Ashkenazic poetic Hebrew. The bird comes from Palestine and the poet questions her throughout, asking after the inhabitants of Zion, and she never says a word. But what would the bird sound like if she did respond to the speaker’s questions?

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An Issue in Hebrew Poetic Rhythm: A Cognitive-Structuralist Approach

Reuven Tsur

This article applies in a nutshell my research on English poetic rhythm to one line from Modern Hebrew poetry. It is widely recognized that all rhythm is based on some repetition or periodicity. According to the definition of the iambic pentameter, for instance, a verse line should consist of feet containing an unstressed and a stressed syllable, and five of them should recur in a verse line (that is, ten syllables). However, in the first 165 lines of Paradise Lost there are no more than two such lines. Nevertheless, Milton is considered one of the most musical poets in English. Much metric research is devoted to the question of what rules govern poetic rhythm in English. During the past decades I have propounded yet another theory of English poetic rhythm. I have adopted from René Weilke and Austin Warren a structuralist conception, according to which one may account for poetic rhythm by three concurrent patterns: an abstract versification pattern, a linguistic pattern, and a pattern of performance. The sixty-thousand-word-meter, according to which one may account for poetic rhythm, is based on some repetition or periodicity. As performed by Yossi Banay, the seven-syllable verse line on the paper, it is the iambic tetrameter. Every alternating /w/ and /s/ letters mark weak stressed syllables. Under the text, the regularly transcription small strokes mark linguistically processed syllables. If I were to secure my meter, I would have one voice one three concurrent patterns? Linguistic patterns deviate (in baroque and romantic poems more, in classicist poems less) from the regular versification pattern, but at certain crucial points they have coinciding downbeats. When rhythm is suspended in the linguistic dimension, the regular alternation in the versification pattern may reverberate for a very short time in short-term memory. A rhythmic performance is one that accommodates the conflicting linguistic and versification patterns thus both can be perceived simultaneously. To enable this, mental processing space must be saved by grouping and clear-cut articulation of phonemes, word endings, phrase endings, and line endings. I don’t intend to present in this article all the metrical theories that tried, in the course of the twentieth century, to solve the riddle of poetic rhythm. I only want to brieﬂy confront the approach advocated here with an approach that lately became fashionable again, that of equal or proportional timing. The question is, what is it that recurs with some regularity? According to the equal-timers’ approach, it is some immediately observable, measurable time periods that recur. According to the structuralist-cognitive approach proposed here, it is an abstract pattern of weak and strong positions, not immediately observable, that alternate regularly. As to the assumption of recurring equal or proportional time periods, it has been time and again refuted by electronic equipment since the early twentieth century. Despite accumulating evidence to the contrary, belief in equal timing persists. The purpose of this article is to produce evidence to support the structuralist-cognitive approach. Let us consider at some length the following verse line by Nathan Alterman:

יָדוֹ לְמַעַרְק — וְזֵכָו לְתַו

I thought: — This [is] not good

Above the Hebrew original and the phonetic transcription small marks mark linguistically stressed syllables. Under the text, the regularly alternating ‘w’ and ‘s’ letters mark weak and strong positions of the versification pattern. The two patterns were assigned independently of each other. Thus, they show up where the stressed and unstressed syllables coincide with strong and weak positions, respectively, and where they deviate. In English and Hebrew linguistic prosody, when three consecutive equally stressed syllables occur, there is license to demote the middle stress in order to gain regularity. In reading poetry, however, the majority of leading British actors don’t take advantage of this license to secure regular rhythm in, for instance, the iambic meter. Instead, they have recourse to grouping and overarticulation to save mental processing space, so as to make it possible to perceive concurrently the vocalized linguistic pattern and the suppressed versification pattern merely reverberating in short-term memory. Thus we can see how one actor, with one voice, can convey three concurrent patterns: he vocalizes the linguistic pattern; in his performance he has recourse to grouping and overarticulation, so as to save mental processing space, enabling the perception of the versification pattern merely reverberating in short-term memory. I strongly suspect that Yossi Banay overarticulates the words "ze lo tov" not for rhetorical but rhetorical purposes. This, however, does not detract from the rhythmic effect of these vocal manipulations. As I marked the meter of this verse line on the paper, it is the iambic tetrameter. Every even metrical position is occupied by a stressed syllable, every odd position unstressed, and there are eight positions all in all. On this level, then, there is regular periodicity. As performed by Yossi Banay, the seventh (weak) position, however, is occupied by a stressed syllable. The fact that this intonation contour is on 7 and not before it suggests that, in spite of all, the two words are tightly grouped together. It is widely accepted today that the human cognitive system has limited channel capacity, which cannot be extended by training, only by recoding the processed stuff in a more parsimonious way. Grouping and discontinuity (overarticulation) are such recoding devices. They save mental processing space needed for hearing the vocalized linguistic stuff, and perceive, at the same time, the acoustically suspended versification pattern reverberating for a short time in short-term memory (what Chatman calls “metrical set”). The foregoing example suggests, then, that what is important here is the articulating (discontinuity) effect of the two acoustic cues rather than the possibility of equal or proportional timing, which would apply to only one of them, if at all. What is more, a pause before a stop midword is perceived as the overarticulation of the stop rather than a period of silence; here, since it occurs in midphrase, between two monosyllables, it is perceived as a period of silence as well. I believe that equal or proportional time periods are, at best, properties of casual performances, for which it is difficult to find an example. I at least, haven’t yet encountered one. An audio example is included in the online version of this article at http://perspectives.ajsnet.org.

Reuven Tsur is professor emeritus of Hebrew Literature and Literary Theory at Tel Aviv University. According to Literary Theory: An Oxford Guide, he is one of the founding fathers of the literary theory movement in Israel. He applied his theory to rhyme, sound symbolism, poetic rhythm, metaphor, genre, period style, poetry, and altered states of consciousness.

An audio example is included in the online version of this article at http://perspectives.ajsnet.org.

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Syrian Jews in America: In Search of Community

CONTINUES NEXT PAGE
Today only a few of the oldest Jewish women from Kerala, South India, can personally remember the traditional women’s circle dance that highlighted the Hanukkah parties of their youth. It was performed by their mothers, aunts, sisters, grandmothers, and neighbors, moving around a circle in a coordinated pattern of hand clapping, foot stamping, and turns, while singing traditional Jewish songs in the Malayalam language of the land.

Imagine the joyful sounds of laughter, talk, song, and dance associated with these parties’ easy to hear them on a warm Kerala night, through windows open to the narrow Jewish street in the city of Kochi (Kochin). The sounds echo from a crowded Kerala night, through windows open to the Malayalam language and songs of the past were gradually set aside by immigrants and their descendants (more than 5,000 of which most of them had never seen). She went for me how they all learned to do the dance, and the ritual lighting of Hanukkah candles and children featuring typical Kerala snacks for me how they all learned to do the dance, and the ritual lighting of Hanukkah candles and children featuring typical Kerala snacks of “Yigdal ‘Elohim Ha’ai,” the well-known fourteenth-century Hebrew piyyut, which appears in an innovative Kochin repertoire of Hebrew songs (which are sung together by women and men). It is followed by another devotional song uniquely Indian with its reference to a woman so caught up in “worldly delusions” that she gets lost in the mundane task of counting chili peppers rather than counting her spiritual treasures. Then comes the popular “Parot Song” conveying an allegory of community origin in Kerala, then three lively wedding songs, and then dance narratives.

At first glance, the dance steps and clapping may appear simple, but the dancers move skilfully in transitions between four different patterns of clapping, foot movements, and gestures. A straightforward clapped beat steps toward and away from the seated singers punctuates the graceful melody of a marriage song, capturing the rhythm of a bridegroom bending “this way and that way” as he walks through the Jewish street in his wedding procession. Performance of a song about how Aaron helped Moses to receive the Torah combines a simpler and more repetitious tune with a more complex pattern of clapping and gestures. A third rhythmic pattern involves combining hand claps and foot stamps with a growing tempo, a growl, accompanying “Golden Palanquin,” a riddle song about a bride and her mother.

This 1981 video can be viewed in terms of its cultural contexts—Indian and Israeli. Ancestors of today’s Israeli Kochinim lived for well over a thousand years in peace and security on the lush green Kerala coast of southwest India. They were loyal and observant Jews who also identified proudly with the wider culture of Kerala, enjoying good relationships with Hindus, Muslim, and Christian neighbors. Their Hanukkah dance was a Jewish version of the women’s circle dance genre known in South Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East. The form of “Yigdal ‘Elohim Ha’ai,” the well-known fourteenth-century Hebrew piyyut, which appears in an innovative Kochin repertoire of Hebrew songs (which are sung together by women and men). It is followed by another devotional song uniquely Indian with its reference to a woman so caught up in “worldly delusions” that she gets lost in the mundane task of counting chili peppers rather than counting her spiritual treasures. Then comes the popular “Parot Song” conveying an allegory of community origin in Kerala, then three lively wedding songs, and then dance narratives.

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I and Arabic:
Arabic female name sounds interchangeable
Who is Layla? What can we know about

If only I could call her on the phone tonight
Severing the connection between us
Machine noise between cotton and mine fields
And burning like salt in wounds
And this is how I waste opportunities
It's her whispering voice chattering and conquering 1965

[Refrain:] Layla, Layla . . .

A white room closes on me. I am alone tonight.
Heat in my eyes, suddenly I'm friendless here
I only remember a burning field and bombs overhead
Layla's on the radio! Maybe she's calling me
Wandering around but it's impossible to hear
A muezzin cries atop a tall mosque
In the final stanza, her voice shudders like

In this popular 1988 song, “Radio Ramallah” by the Israeli rock musician Yehuda Poliker, the narrator decries a lost possibility of connecting with Layla, the woman of his dreams. The song explores the complex relationship between the physical and aural domains, particularly through the medium of radio broadcast.

Radio broadcasting in Mandatory Palestine began under the auspices of the British, who established the Palestine Broadcasting Agency (PBA) in 1938. In 1948, the newly established State of Israel inherited the PBA and rebranded it as Kol Yisra'el, the “Voice of Israel.” Radio was unquestionably the primary portal through which to experience the outside world sonically from the comfort of home. It is difficult to imagine, furthermore, the emergence of Israeli rock, which since the mid-1960s has been a powerful force in the cultural sphere, without Israeli musicians having had access to the American, British, and continental European records transmitted over Radio Ramallah’s airwaves. The sounds they heard informed the small, burgeoning rock scene in mid-1960s Ramallah, a mixed Jewish-Arab city that sits in central Israel due south of Ben-Gurion Airport. Early rock bands collectively called (drakh ha kegov[let], rhythm bands) performed a repertory that consisted mainly of covers of English language rock songs they heard on Radio Ramallah, along with some original Hebrew-language compositions that would form the backbone of Israeli rock over the next decade.

This early rock movement, in fact, provided the foundations for Yehuda Poliker to develop his own rock and mizikah umm tikhnom (Mediterranean) style that he heard in “Radio Ramallah,” with its distorted guitar, backbeat drum, Greek bouzouki, synthesizers, and reverb-drenched, melismatic voice, which together evince clear stylistic connections to both Mediterranean Arab and Anglo-American popular music, as noted by Amy Horowitz in her book “Mediterranean Israeli Music.” The lyrics, as we have seen, insist on a “memory mixed with nostalgia” for a time during which hearing the Other was an affirmation made possible by the nature, and exclusive dominion, of radio technology, before the political and technological developments that would shape post-1967 Israel.

In the history signified by this song, we might observe how listening to Others has helped to breed connections, even if only in the imagination. Without such connections, the singer feels “friendless” and “alone.”

Michael A. Figueroa is assistant professor of Music at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he teaches Middle Eastern, Jewish, and African American music. His current book project examines music and political consciousness in Israel/Palestine, with a focus on musical renderings of territory, narrative, and violence.
The Siren’s Song: Sound, Conflict, and the Politics of Public Space in Tel Aviv

Abigail Wood

November 15, 2012: “I was sure that it was a new song by Shlomi Shabat, but it turned out to be a siren,” tweeted Israeli rock star Aviv Geffen. At first glance, this tweet was part of an ongoing, good-natured banter between Geffen and fellow musician and reality TV judge, Shlomi Shabat. This particular jibe was neatly placed, comparing the rising and falling wail of the siren used in Israel to warn of an incoming rocket attack to the soaring sounds of Shabat’s voice, whose high, nasal production and melismatic slides serve as a markers of the genre of mazikah nitziv (eastern music), contrasting with Geffen’s rough rock tones.

On this day, however, Geffen’s tweet indexed a significant change in Tel Aviv’s public soundscape. For the first time since the Gulf War, sirens sounded across the city warning residents to take shelter from the Gulf War, sirens sounded across the city warning residents to take shelter from rocket attack to the soaring sounds of Shabat. This particular jibe was neatly placed, comparing the rising and falling wail of the siren used in Israel to warn of an incoming rocket attack to the soaring sounds of Shabat’s voice, whose high, nasal production and melismatic slides serve as a markers of the genre of mazikah nitziv (eastern music), contrasting with Geffen’s rough rock tones.

One siren at 6:38 PM was enough to paralyze the most important oxygen line of Tel Aviv: the cellular phone networks. Calls did disconnect. The tables in popular Café Landwer in the middle of the boulevard emptied fast. Half of the clientele ran for shelter shouting “at Haredi Yigal Alon,” only after long minutes did the correction come that there is no such street. After that it was said that the rocket fell on the Tayelet, and then among the sands of Bat Yam, in the south, in the southeast.

Light hearted as it might be, the Haaretz report captures the centrality of sound to the experience of civilians in Israel—the recent rounds of military conflict with Hamas militants in Gaza (November 2012, summer 2014) Sounds not only warned of an imminent threat; they became a defining experience of “being there” during the conflict and a source of up-to-date information, giving auditory confirmation that a rocket had indeed exploded and allowing civilians to judge (or at least speculate on) locations of rocket impacts, which were generally not reported in the press. While the sirens themselves lasted only a few minutes at a time, their existence were generally not reported in the press.

Someone on Rothschild quickly updated that the rocket fell “at Haredi Yigal Alon,” only after long minutes did the correction come that there is no such street. After that it was said that the rocket fell on the Tayelet, and then among the sands of Bat Yam, in the south, in the southeast.

The sounds of sirens and explosive booms—and the dark humor generated in their wake during the weeks of the conflict—came to an abrupt halt as ceasefires were reached in both periods of conflict, and for most residents of Israel, life returned to normal. Yet their echoes remained in the bodily habits of Israeli civilians who still found themselves starting at the sound of ambulance sirens, an embodied reminder of the ability of the soundscape of military conflict to seep into, and to color, everyday auditory experiences.

Audio examples are included in the online version of this article at http://perspectives.ajsnet.org.

Abigail Wood lectures in Rhetorics and Logics at the University of Haifa, where she is also head of the Music Department. She is editor of Rhetorics and Logics. Her research focuses primarily on urban music and soundscapes; she is the author of a book on contemporary Yiddish song and several articles on the soundscapes of Jerusalem’s Old City. (With thanks to Morie Melnik)
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“Surround Sound”

Sensory History, Deep Listening, and Field Recording

Kim Haines-Eitzen

This fall I tried something new in my advanced seminar “Sound, Silence, and the Sacred,” proposed on January 1, 2016. St. John the Divine’s claim that “the history of sound implies a history of the body” and Brandon LaBelle’s argument that “sound is intrinsically and unignorably relational: it emanates, propagates, communicates, vibrates, and agitates; it leaves a body and enters others; it binds and unifies, harmonizes and traumatizes; it sends the body moving, the mind dreaming, the air oscillating.” Each week I asked the students to make a field recording (of any sound or soundscape) and to write a reflection paper about what they discovered at the intersection of their recording and the readings for the week. My goal was to use two lines of inquiry into the world of sound: the first was to think through how sound, place, and identity are intimately interwoven in a web that is both ephemeral and transformational; the second was to explore how the practice of making recordings might in fact provide a window into our understanding of sound both in the contemporary world and in history. Recording sounds is an embodied experience; I have found, and thus it provides tremendous affective insight into sound, even historical sounds. The seminar’s capstone project was the creation of a website for which I gave my students only the faintest suggestion—a Cornell Sound Map (http://cornellsoundsound.map.wordpress.com) perhaps?—where they now offer listeners a veritable auditory feast of campus and community sounds as well as an aural record of modern recording forces us to reconsider. The language here used to describe the sounds of demons—crashing like thunder, shaking like earthquakes, hissing like snakes—are some of the most dynamic sounds one hears when recording in desert environments.

The desert reverberates in biblical and postbiblical Jewish and Christian literatures from empty, static, and silent wastelands, from cacophonous landscapes of discovery and cacophonous desert: “the desert, and the casting of night sounds eremos" and, above all, praises wisdom: “Wisdom of sense and ungodly and, above, all praises, wisdom. Wisdom is radiant and unfading, and she is easily discerned by those who love her” (1:20). Within a set of chapters on “unnoticed souls” and “lawless people”—an extended fayzyo into the differences between Egyptians and Israelites—we find the following passage:

For whether they were farmers or shepherds or workers who toiled in the wilderness (eremos), they were seized, and endured the incapable fate, for with one chain of darkness they all were bound. With a radiance there came a startling sound, or a melodious sound of birds in wide-spread branches, or the rhythm of violently rushing water, or the harsh crash of rocks’ hurled down, or the unseen running of leaping animals, or the sound of the most savage roaring beasts, or an echo thrown back from a hollow of the mountains, it paralyzed them with terror. For the whole world was illuminated with brilliant light, and went about its work unharmed, while only the men who spent the heavy night was spread, an image of the darkness that was destined to receive them; but still heavier than darkness were they to themselves (1:17–12).

The “wilderness” here is the eremos, the desert, the setting of night sounds as terrifying—whistling, violent, harsh, savage—is hardly coincidental. Those who are able to see (the Israelites) have little to fear to go far; while those who only hear (the Egyptians) are doomed to terror. Sounds place identities. Now try reading the passage while listening to desert night winds (listen on http://perspectives.ajsnet.org), is, indeed, a nearly surreal surround sound in a mountainous desert that reverberates all the more in a dark deserted wilderness. But there is a weapon one can use against the demons: Antony, in fact, partly becomes a monk by way of an acoustic exchange or, an acoustic ecology, if you will: he wards off the noisy demons who torment him with his own sounds of chanting and prayer. Sound is relational. If there is a late ancient Near Eastern counterpart to the Native American Naalagiavik, the “Place Where You Go to Listen,” it is surely the mountain, the wilderness, and, above all, the desert. The desert reverberates in biblical and postbiblical Jewish and Christian literatures as a place of revelation, temptation, and at once a site of alienation and belonging. Far from empty, static, and silent wastelands, deserts are endlessly productive for the religious imagination—their unyielding sands, ever shifting with wind, become cacophonous landscapes of discovery and transformation. They reveal themselves as social and cultural products; they are not “inactive and at rest” (to quote Edward Casey) but rather dynamic and powerfully evocative. The practice of listening to them returns us time and time again to our place within their world sounds.

Audio examples are included in the online version of this article at http://perspectives.ajsnet.org.

Kim Haines-Eitzen is a professor of Religion in Late Antiquity in the Department of Near Eastern Studies at Cornell University. Her previous books have treated early Christian scribal practices and the role of women in ancient book culture. She is currently writing a book, A Sacred and Sonorous Desert, about desert sounds and the religious imagination.
Remembering Sound
Alanna E. Cooper

A

loud ring. "Allo, Allo." Some muffled words, then Nina rustling across the house. She opened the heavy door to my bedroom. It is a 4 a.m. I am now awake. The call is for me. It is my brother from New York.

Today, my notes from those months fill a row of binders that line my office in Cleveland, Ohio. I took time to read through them while preparing to write for this volume on Jewish Studies and sound. I confess that I found little related to the topic. Not only is it an auditory description of that 4 a.m. call musing. I have almost no reference to sound at all. This essay explores why sound is often left out of ethnocritical description, and what might be gained by including it.

But there is more to be said about sound. One does not need expertise to tune into the sound of feet shuffling, electricity humming, water running. Such sounds are ever present. Yet they are often ignored, left unmentioned and undescribed. Maybe a phone ringing or a door opening in Samarkand does not sound much different than it does in Cleveland. Unremarkable, perhaps it is not worth writing about. Or maybe the human sense of sound is relatively undiscerning, and our vocabulary about the topic thin. so it seems there is little to convey.

Descriptions that include sound can make a difference. Articulating the whirring of daily life in words allows us to capture the atmosphere of a place at a particular moment in time. Below is a portrayal of Jewish life in Uzbekistan during the years after the fall of the Soviet Union, created by remembering sound. Or to put it more accurately, it is created by stretching to recall the sounds I have forgotten. I begin with the chickens:

"Don't laugh," I probably retorted sheepishly, "the eggs are fertilized, she must have thought it funny. Is it fertilized, he was staying with his friends. Just a few days after arriving, Levi told me he had heard about that. They came to be slaughtered at the hands of Levi Porta, another Chabad emissary, who had flown in from Maine for the holiday. This time—a few years after the district had been created by remembering sound in Samarkand's Jewish population had been drastically reduced as a result of mass migration. Among those who left were all the city's ritual slaughterers. On occasion, a ritual slaughterer who lived in another part of the country traveled to Samarkand to help out. But for the holidays, when the demand for chicken skyrocketed, this was not enough. Levi—who had spent a year in Samarkand previously—returned to offer assistance.

In the mornings he traveled between the city's two synagogues. Those who did not manage to catch him at either, knew they could find him at Nina's place, where he was staying with his friends. Just a few days after arriving, Levi told me he had already killed about 200 chickens. I wish I had paid attention to the sounds of the bird's necks breaking and landed by their feet. Did they cry out? I cannot remember.

Nina was studying Hebrew. Before the Soviet Union dissolved, she could not read or speak the language. Now, though, with ease of travel to the region, and an influx of religious organizations, Hebrew could be heard all over the town. Sharp-witted and industrious, Nina understood that the language could connect her to travelers—like myself—who came to her room for board. By the time I met her, Nina had rudimentary skills, which she was working to improve. I tutored her, poring over her Hebrew textbook, she reading in a Russian Bukharian accent, and me with American tones.

She told me about her childhood, her marriage, and her relatives who had emigrated, speaking deliberately so I could transcribe her stories. When she used words I did not know, she repeated them, and I added them to my dictionary. I also needed help with Bukharian. This Persian language (often referred to as Tajik) had been the Jews’ native tongue prior to the nineteenth century, when the region came under Russian control. Sometimes Nina and her husband spoke to one another in Bukharian to discuss household logistics. The long consonants and rush of syllables were song to my ears. But their command was suited to help me translate my recordings. When she used phrases that a chicken had just laid, warm against her cheek. Sometimes the breakfast she served me, he was a boarder in Nina's sprawling garden, the eating area, and the chicken yard. It was an egg that a chicken had just laid, warm against my cheek. Sometimes the breakfast she prepared for me, she had read in school, that she sometimes corrected me. Nina's childhood was punctuated by this. She told me about her childhood, her marriage, and her relatives who had emigrated, speaking deliberately so I could transcribe her stories. When she used words I did not know, she repeated them, and I added them to my dictionary. I also needed help with Bukharian. This Persian language (often referred to as Tajik) had been the Jews’ native tongue prior to the nineteenth century, when the region came under Russian control. Sometimes Nina and her husband spoke to one another in Bukharian to discuss household logistics. The long consonants and rush of syllables were song to my ears. But their command was suited to help me translate my recordings. When she used phrases that a chicken had just laid, warm against her cheek. Sometimes the breakfast she served me, he was a boarder in Nina's sprawling garden, the eating area, and the chicken yard. It was an egg that a chicken had just laid, warm against my cheek. Sometimes the breakfast she prepared for me, she had read in school, that she sometimes corrected me. Nina's childhood was punctuated by this.

Often such a call would come in the middle of the night, as friends and relatives microlated the time difference between them and us, or so far away. That's what happened when my brother called at a 4 a.m. to tell me that he and his girlfriend had decided to get married.

I would go home for the wedding a few months later. And then my life in Nina's compound fragmented into bits of disjointed information, scattered through my notes and letters. Now, by working to recall sound, I have stitched it back together enough to formulate this microportrait of Jewish life in Samarkand in its waking, mobile, post-communist days. Nina and her husband Boris are still there, but likely not for much longer.

Alanna E. Cooper is director of Jewish Lifelong Learning at Case Western Reserve University. She is a cultural anthropologist and author of Bukharan Jews and the Dynamics of Global Judaism (Indiana University Press, 2012).
December 2015

For the last four years, I have spent much of my free time studying Talmud at Mesivta Tifereth Jerusalem (MTJ), the yeshiva on New York’s Lower East Side where, for decades, Reb David Feinstein has presided as rosh yeshiva. MTJ includes a lower school along with an advanced study hall, or ketuvim, which is where I study. The ketuvin is a large, roughly square, high-ceilinged room, with huge windows on two sides opening onto East Broadway. Unlike some yeshivas where students all face the front of the room, MTJ is set up as a classroom, with study pairs or chevruses generally face each other rather than sitting across from each other. My place is in the corner of the ketuvin closest to the entrance and the street. Opposite, facing the interior courtyard, another corner has been closed off to form a separate library room. Reb David’s daily 11:00 a.m. Talmud shiur, which I attend, is held in the library. Otherwise, I am mostly preparing or reviewing, alone or with regular partners, the text covered in the shi’ur I attend, is held in the library. And apparently it’s true, because if I’m not in the library, I will not see the rosh yeshiva as he walks into the room. Shlomo explains: Zalke listens for the sound of the rosh yeshiva’s office door closing, outside the ketuvin and across the hall, where we can’t see it from the library. And apparently it’s true, because Zalke stands up before any of us has heard or seen the rosh yeshiva approaching. According to several anecdotes from MTJ students, Zalke listens for the sound of the rosh yeshiva’s office door closing, outside the ketuvin and across the hall, where we can’t see it from the library. And apparently it’s true, because Zalke stands up before any of us has heard or seen the rosh yeshiva approaching.

Some of the “sentences” below, like Mandelstam’s poem above, have no verbs. If I could, I would have written this entire piece without verbs. But I am no Mandelstam.

The ebb and flow of conversations from one wave to another of group study, imperious as the sound of the rosh yeshiva’s office door closing, outside the ketuvin and across the hall, where we can’t see it from the library. And apparently it’s true, because Zalke stands up before any of us has heard or seen the rosh yeshiva approaching.

In the hallway outside the ketuvin, quarters dropping into what is perhaps the last fifty-cent soda machine in New York, cans dropping down, the top being popped. A burp? Yes, but perhaps unconnected. A sandwich or breakfast roll being unpackaged from a plastic bag behind me. I can’t tell what he’s saying but it’s Larry Bronower’s voice in the opposite corner of the ketuvin, closer to the ‘arrow’ kibbutz and to the windows facing the courtyard. Hershik Yekherik’s voice is like being in a thick forest, but not the words, from the library. Something between a murmur and a whisper, but not the words, from the library. people walking, of course, but you don’t hear them. The liquid flapping of sifrei being removed from the shelves. The loudest sound of the day, quite likely, is the collective response “oy hoy shlayn rabbie…” during the Kedushah. After lunch, the sound of steps as someone reviews the Torah reading for the coming Sabbath.

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The sound of steps as someone reviews the Torah reading for the coming Sabbath.
David Blake
Department of History, University of California, Davis

As the holder of the Emanuel Ringelblum Professorship in Jewish History at the University of California, Davis, I teach several courses on the Holocaust. The challenge in teaching this subject is to make it possible for students without any direct connection with the event to experience it both intellectually and emotionally. Indeed, this is one of very few subjects in the university curriculum that have real emotional impact, something I consider important to discuss with the students. What is the Holocaust anyway? A historical event, so it is challenging for students who often have no personal connection to it. I have taught a course in the History Department with a Yiddish poem, set to music by Chava Dzigan and Shumacher; hear Bialik’s “Be’tish esh” (http://jnul.huji.ac.il/music.html) that the Jewish National and University Library in Israel posted online. This song creates the longing for connection to the murdered planet, thus serving as a theme for the course as a whole.

Nina Caputo
Department of History, University of Florida

I was trained as an intellectual historian of the Jewish Middle Ages, so my scholarly world has been one of texts. More precisely, it has been one of unadorned, often printed texts. Consequently, sound, images, and other forms of nontextual media have rarely played a significant role in my teaching. In my experience, images of medieval texts, illuminations, windows, and buildings have limited application when teaching medieval Jewish history. And attempts to use images and nontextual sources have mostly been marginal successes. For example, the students found the rhythms, melodies, and lyrics to be alienating in an attempt to respect the sheer quantity and range of nontextual resources available to us. To take full advantage of this opportunity, we must first recontextualize the classroom. Instead of merely conceiving of it as a venue where we lecture or lead discussions over written texts, it would help enormously to consider the classroom as a venue that also caters to sensory experience.

Nontextual sources can be especially helpful in our increasingly diverse classrooms, where larger numbers of non-Jewish students now take our courses, most of whom have never heard the sound of any Jewish languages or Jewish music. Indeed, this observation applies to an expanding number of Jewish students as well. If any of our students has heard a Jewish language, it is, understandably, Hebrew. But how many American college students have ever even heard non-Yiddish forms of Hebrew, Yiddish, or Ladino? I don’t think it matters that they have not heard a Yiddish song before, let alone performed it. What matters is that they hear one. It would be a learning experience for them.

The musical setting by Chava Alberstein is deeply evocative and sets the mood for the class. But hers is not a traditional Yiddish melody; it is a Reconstructionist re-creation from the memory of the event that Heller speaks of in his poem. The song creates the longing for connection to the murdered planet, thus serving as a theme for the course as a whole.

John M. Eron
Department of History, University of California, Berkeley

My remarks largely pertain to teaching undergraduate survey courses in modern Jewish history or courses on modern Jewish culture, loosely defined. We live and work at an unprecedented moment in the history of Jewish oral culture. Diverse sources and media into classroom presentations have been only marginally successful. When I played music in a class on medieval Jewish culture, for example, the students found the rhythms, melodies, and lyrics to be alienating at an attempt to respect the sheer quantity and range of nontextual resources available to us. To take full advantage of this opportunity, we must first recontextualize the classroom. Instead of merely conceiving of it as a venue where we lecture or lead discussions over written texts, it would help enormously to consider the classroom as a venue that also caters to sensory experience.

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As an enthusiast of computer-assisted language instruction, I became an early adopter of the internet in the mid-1990s. I have since created and posted a large volume of open educational resources for Hebrew language instruction, relying heavily on nontraditional media, including sounds, animation, and interactivity. I was designed by the author to be illustrated. The AJS website is a central location for resources on Jewish Studies research, teaching, and program development, including:

- Syllabi Directory: A listing of more than 150 syllabi, organized and cross-listed by topic. Designed to assist AJS members in developing new courses and identifying new readings for current classes. New submissions are welcome.
- Public Programming Best Practices Resource Guide: A guide for scholars launching public programs in conjunction with a Jewish Studies department, including information on audience targeting, marketing and outreach, program evaluation, and more.
- The Profession: A collection of articles, links, and webinars pertaining to professional matters in Jewish Studies, including the job search, fundraising for Jewish Studies, and non-academic careers for Jewish Studies scholars.
- Perspectives on Technology: An archive of columns by Heidi Lerner, Hebraica/Judaica cataloguer at Stanford University Libraries, on technology-based resources for Jewish Studies teaching and research, including links to all electronic resources.
- And more, including Positions in Jewish Studies, Data on the Field, Directory of Jewish Studies Programs, Events and Announcements in Jewish Studies, Directory of Fellowships and Awards, The Art of Conferencing, Registry of Dissertations-in-Progress.

To access all these resources and more, visit www.ajsnet.org/resources.htm. Please e-mail syllabi and any suggestions for the Resources section of the website to ajs@ajs.cjh.org.
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Contact 1-800-HILTONS for Hilton Reservations. Be sure to ask for the Association for Jewish Studies rate.

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