

THE "PROCLAMATION STYLE" IN HEBREW MUSIC

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*To Eric Werner,
my dear and highly esteemed friend*

The melody-style we want to deal with here is quite well known to specialists of Hebrew music. Nearly all of them have encountered it, although, as far as I know, only a few have found it worthy of particular attention.¹ This is rather strange, the more so since, in our opinion, it is one of the oldest strata of ancient Hebrew music. The sharp exposition of the intervals of the fourth and the fifth seems a striking characteristic of a group of ancient Jewish melodies. They are "spinal" tones (Gerüsttöne, as Hornbostel would say), basic tones, often in their very nakedness forming pure tetratonic, pentatonic, and occasionally — in more rudimentary formations — tritonic patterns, which are nearly always of a certain "proclamatory", announcing, declaring, declamatory character; their function being always a simple, summarizing one. In our opinion this melody-group, unified by the dominant role of these "spinal" tones, belongs to a very old stylistic layer, the group of blessings. Apart from the fundamental "spinal" tones, the group shows various sorts of structures.

Let us examine some typical examples (see Music Examples Nos. 1–7).²

If one wishes to establish the tonality of these melodies he should not let himself be deceived by their various ways of "filling up" or "completing" and by other glosses; the basic structure, the skeleton of the melodies, plainly shows — as we said above — pentatonic, sometimes tetratonic, even tricordic (tritonic) patterns, with one or two central tones, the fourth being markedly emphasized. Obviously, in the practice of many centuries, and even through misunderstandings, these patterns took on more modern scale types, presumably under the influence of more modern musical surroundings and newer styles. More than once, in their course or in their conclusions, they turned into modal and even major melodies. Nevertheless in nearly every case their

¹ Cf. E. Werner, *The Sacred Bridge* (London–New York, 1959), pp. 519–539; H. Loewenstein (Avenary), "The Role of the Pentatonic Idiom in Jewish Music", in *The Jewish Music Forum*, 7–8 (New York, 1946/47): 27–33.

² Sources of the melodies: Nos. 1, 3–7: From the author's Hungarian collection. No. 2: A. Baer: *Ba'al Tefilla* (1877); E. Werner, "The Tunes of the Haggadah", in *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore*, 7 (1965): 57–83.

construction may direct us, and may “unmask” their filling-tones (“pian”-tones, as Chinese theory would put it).

It is only natural that this melody-type also appears among the “lection”-melodies of the Torah-cantillation (particularly if we do not consider the cantillation of the Bible to be a series of lection-signs, but the organic remnant of an ancient melody-world), in the Haftara benediction, etc.

We suppose that the festive shofar-signals are also in some way connected with these melodies, which likewise may have been “proclamatory” melodies, besides imitating the loud diction and the intonation. On the other hand we do not know whether they are or were present in *every* Jewish rite, thus in fact representing a common inheritance, or whether they developed or rather survived in large numbers only in certain parts of Southern or Eastern Europe (Ashkenazim). The examples quoted here are, at any rate, from a relatively narrow region — the Hungarian-Polish-Balkan borderland. We wonder whether they exist in present-day Israel.

Let us put these questions: How old is this style? What tokens are there of its antiquity?

Some musicologists admit only the melodies of a narrow compass to be archaic. Now, most of the melodies mentioned here are of a wide compass. But China, Indonesia and Polynesia are also full of wide-ranged melodies. Can all of these be new? Did not his natural surroundings call the attention of man to the wider relations of the over-tones as well, a very long time ago? The “grand vent” melodies of the European Middle Ages are also of a wide range. It has been conjectured that the wide-range (far-sounding, signalling, whooping) melodies developed among peoples leading an agricultural, isolated peasant way of life. But what about the nomadic and alpine peoples who also communicated by means of such signalling, proclamatory melodies? If it is really the factor of great distances that brought about such styles as opposed to closed, tight, recitative, narrow compass melodies, they should have developed among every ancient, agricultural peasant people. If we return now to our “proclamatory” melodies: Their tonal system, at any rate, is so archaic that even today they stand at some early stage of development; they were obviously connected with such communities where the thesis-like teaching proclamation and confession of faith preserved its importance during many centuries, being one of the central factors of their life. And thus it is certainly not by chance that they have become precisely the representatives of an historical period of ancient Jewry.

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1. *Hā laḥmā*

Musical notation for the first piece, *Hā laḥmā*. It consists of three staves of music in a single system. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is written in a style characteristic of Hebrew music, with a mix of quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, and rests. The second and third staves continue the melody, with the third staff featuring a triplet of eighth notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

2. *Mah ništannah* (= Talmud lection)

Musical notation for the second piece, *Mah ništannah*. It consists of two staves of music in a single system. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The melody is characterized by a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The second staff continues the melody, featuring a triplet of eighth notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

3. *Birkat hak-kohanim*

Musical notation for the third piece, *Birkat hak-kohanim*. It consists of two staves of music in a single system. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The melody is written in a style characteristic of Hebrew music, with a mix of quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, and rests. The second staff continues the melody, featuring a triplet of eighth notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

4. *‘Omer Benediction*

Musical notation for the fourth piece, *‘Omer Benediction*. It consists of two staves of music in a single system. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The melody is written in a style characteristic of Hebrew music, with a mix of quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, and rests. The second staff continues the melody, featuring a triplet of eighth notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line.



5. *Mi še-beraḳ*



6. Torah Lection (festive)



7. *Haḳṯarah* Benediction



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ABBREVIATIONS

(N.B.: The special abbreviations and sigla used by N. Allony are listed at the end of his article.)

<i>AHw</i>	W. von Soden, <i>Akkadisches Handwörterbuch</i> , Wiesbaden, 1959 →
<i>AL</i>	M. Steinschneider, <i>Die arabische Literatur der Juden</i> , Frankfurt a.M., 1902
<i>AMl</i>	<i>Acta Musicologica</i>
<i>b</i>	Babylonian Talmud
<i>CAD</i>	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> , Chicago, 1956 →
<i>CB</i>	M. Steinschneider, <i>Catalogus librorum Hebraeorum in bibliotheca Bodleiana</i> , Berlin, 1852–1860
<i>CS</i>	E. de Coussemaker, ed., <i>Scriptores de musica medii aevi...</i> , Paris, 1864–1876
<i>DTO</i>	<i>Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich</i>
<i>Etissfeldt</i>	O. Eissfeldt, <i>The Old Testament — An Introduction</i> (tr. from the 3rd German edition by P. R. Ackroyd), Oxford, 1965
<i>Enc. Mus. Fasquelle</i>	<i>Encyclopédie de la musique</i> , Paris, Fasquelle, 1958–1961
<i>Erlanger</i>	R. d'Erlanger, <i>La musique arabe</i> , Paris, 1930–1949
<i>Farmer, Gen. Fragm.</i>	H. G. Farmer, <i>The Oriental Musical Influence and Jewish Genizah Fragments on Music</i> , London, 1964; repr. of two art. from <i>Glasgow University Oriental Society, Transactions</i> , 19 (1963): 1–15 (“The Oriental Musical Influence” = pp. 7–21 of repr.); 52–62 (“Jewish Genizah Fragments on Music” = pp. 22–32 of repr.)
<i>GS</i>	M. Gerbert, ed., <i>Scriptores ecclesiastici de musica...</i> , Sankt Blasien, 1784
<i>HOM</i>	A. Z. Idelsohn, <i>Hebräisch-orientalischer Melodienschatz</i> , Leipzig–Berlin–Jerusalem, 1914–1932
<i>HU</i>	M. Steinschneider, <i>Die hebräischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters</i> , Berlin, 1893
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>IMS</i>	International Musicological Society
<i>IQ</i>	<i>Islamic Quarterly</i>
<i>JA</i>	<i>Journal Asiatique</i>
<i>JAMS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Musicological Society</i>
<i>JIFMC</i>	<i>Journal of the International Folk Music Council</i>
<i>JMT</i>	<i>Journal of Musical Theory</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>KS</i>	<i>Kirjath Sepher</i>
<i>m</i>	Mishnah

<i>MD</i>	<i>Musica Disciplina</i>
<i>MGG</i>	<i>Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart</i> , Kassel, 1949 →
<i>MGWJ</i>	<i>Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums</i>
<i>MQ</i>	<i>Musical Quarterly</i>
<i>NOHM</i>	<i>New Oxford History of Music</i> , London, 1955 →
<i>PAAJR</i>	<i>Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research</i>
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia Latina</i> (ed. Migne)
<i>1Q</i>	Dead Sea Scrolls, Qumran Cave 1
<i>1QH</i>	“Thanksgiving Scroll”
<i>1QM</i>	“War Scroll”
<i>1QS</i>	“Manual of Discipline”
<i>REI</i>	<i>Revue des Etudes Islamiques</i>
<i>REJ</i>	<i>Revue des Etudes Juives</i>
Riemann, <i>Hbd. Mg.</i>	H. Riemann, <i>Handbuch der Musikgeschichte</i> , Leipzig, 1919–1922
Riemann, <i>ML</i>	H. Riemann, <i>Musik-Lexikon</i> (quoted edition indicated by exponent)
<i>RM</i>	<i>Revue de Musicologie</i>
<i>RQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
<i>SIMG</i>	<i>Sammelbände der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft</i>
Steinschneider, <i>Cat.</i> Berlin	M. Steinschneider, <i>Verzeichnis der hebräischen Handschriften [der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin]</i> , Berlin, 1878–1897
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>y</i>	Jerusalem Talmud
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZDMG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>
<i>ZfMW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft</i>
<i>ZGJD</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland</i>