

THE PRIESTLY BLESSING IN THE ASHKENAZI SYNAGOGUE: RITUAL AND CHANT

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If one had to select the most impressive ceremony in the traditional synagogue, it is quite certain that the choice would fall on the ritual of *birkat kohanim*, the threefold priestly blessing (henceforth PB). The ceremony whereby the *kohanim* stand barefoot in front of the ark with their prayer shawls covering their heads, bodies and hands, with their arms, stretched out under the cover, swaying right and left, is a ritual that inspires mystery and awe. The feeling of other-worldliness is greatly enhanced by the ancient chants and melodies that come from under the prayer shawls of the *kohanim*. All Jewish communities from Yemen to Lithuania cherish special chants for the ritual and they are all worthy of research. Yet the Ashkenazi traditions have developed the richest variety of chants, melodies and compositions for the PB.

Paradoxically, this is due, at least in part, to the restrictions that the Ashkenazim imposed on the ceremony. The Ashkenazi communities in the Diaspora perform the ritual fewer times during the year than any other Jewish community within the rabbinic tradition, yet they have the richest number of chants and melodies for the PB. The richness springs from the association of the PB with certain Festivals and Holy Days, it is influenced by the customs and beliefs associated with the PB, which, to be sure, are common to most Jewish communities, but are strongly expressed by the Ashkenazim. It is also related to the admission of folk melodies into the ritual. Cantorial chants and florid recitatives were created for substitute prayers when the PB ritual was not performed and finally, the Reform struggle with the ritual and the attempts to reshape it have helped to create numerous compositions in modern styles.

* This study owes much to Israel Adler's exemplary catalogue of musical manuscripts (Adler 1989). Some of the conversations Prof. Adler and I had on various topics in conjunction with the catalogue inspired me to research the melodies of the priestly blessing. I would like to thank Dr. David J. Gilner, director of the Klau Library at the Hebrew Union College Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati and the other librarians there for their help in opening for me the treasures of the Birnbaum Collection.

The purpose of this article is to survey the traditional developments of the PB ritual and its music in the Ashkenazi communities in both Central and Eastern Europe and to discuss the later developments in the Reform congregations of Germany and North America. In order to do this properly, we must probe into the various spiritual meanings of the ritual as well as its historical, halachic and liturgical aspects, each of which has contributed its share to the complex web that created the context within which the music of the PB has developed. We therefore need to start from the beginning and weave our way through the various developments until we reach our times.¹

ORIGINS OF THE PRIESTLY BLESSING: THE TEMPLE AND THE EARLY SYNAGOGUE

The PB through which the *kohanim*, the traditional descendants of Aaron the archpriest bless the people Israel, evolved out of the Jerusalem Temple worship. There the priests blessed the people daily during the sacrificial ceremonies. The injunction upon the priests to bless the people and the formula of the blessing is given in the Book of Numbers 6, 22–27.

וידבר יהוה אל משה לאמר
דבר אל אהרן ואל בניו לאמר
כה תברכו את בני ישראל אמור להם
יברכך יהוה וישמרך
יאר יהוה פניו אליך ויחנך
ישא יהוה פניו אליך וישם לך שלום
ושמו את שמי על בני ישראל
ואני אברכם

The Lord spoke to Moses saying:

Speak to Aaron and to his sons saying:

Thus shall you bless the children of Israel saying unto them:

“May the Lord bless you and protect you.

May the Lord shine His face upon you and be gracious unto you.

May the Lord lift His face to you and may He grant you peace.”

Let them place My Name upon the children of Israel

and I shall bless them.²

1 A concise overview of the historical development of the PB ritual is given in Elbogen 1993: 662–66. Our survey will depart from his in various points.

2 An interesting scientific interpretation and translation of the Blessing is suggested by Hanan Brichto, *EJ* 13: 1060–61.

The priestly invocation, an ancient prayer of great beauty and classical simplicity, asks for and at the same time promises God's blessing, protection, light, grace and peace. The rhetoric power of the invocation lies in its concise layout. Formulated in but fifteen words, the blessing is organized in three cleverly-structured verses: All verses are linked by the invocation of God's name as the second word; the two last verses are connected by three common words and the verses grow from three to five to seven words. The structure of the verses and their rhythm must have played an important role in the reverence that the PB has enjoyed from ancient times to nowadays. Many have venerated it as an incantation of magical powers and have used it on amulets to ward off evil spirits.³

The biblical injunction concerning the PB does not provide any instructions for the priests as to when and how to bestow this blessing upon Israel. It is generally assumed that the formula was used in biblical times during the ceremonies that accompanied the daily sacrifices.⁴ But the priests pronounced it on other occasions as well, especially during festive ceremonies of national significance.⁵

Talmudic descriptions of the Temple rituals suggest that the PB ceremony took place twice daily after the regular sacrifices in the early morning and in the afternoon. On public fasts it was performed three times, the last time towards sunset at the closing of the Temple gates.⁶ It was placed in the short priestly liturgy that accompanied the sacrifices. This consisted of three benedictions of '*avodah*, *hoda'ah* and *shalom* (the privilege of worshiping God, general thanksgiving and prayer for peace). The PB was performed between the second and third benedictions.⁷ Thus the prayer for peace could follow the promise of peace as pronounced in the PB.

The *kohanim* (priests) performed the ritual while standing on a *dukan*, a raised platform, or on the steps leading from the main courtyard of the

3 The earliest amulets extant are two silver plaques from the First Temple Period (7th–8th Cent. BCE) that were found in Jerusalem during the archeological excavation season of 1979–80. See *EJ Decennial Book* (1994: 102–3). In later times the PB was inscribed on amulets against the evil eye. See "Amulet", in *EJ* (2: 906–915).

4 While the finding of the above-mentioned amulet cannot prove the ceremonial usage of the PB formula in a formal ritual of the First Temple, it can certainly suggest that this venerated text was adopted from the Temple cult, see Reif (1993: 85).

5 See for example the descriptions of the consecration of Aaron (Leviticus 9, 1–24, esp. v. 22), the ceremony on Mounts Gerizim and Eval (Joshua 8, 34–34) and the renewal of the Passover celebrations at the time of Hezekiah (II Chronicles 30, 13–27).

6 Mishnah, *Ta'anit* 1, 3.

7 Mishnah, *Tamid* 5, 1; B. Talmud, *Megillah* 18a.

Temple to the wall that surrounded the sanctuary.⁸ They faced the people and raised their hands above their heads.⁹ The priests chanted all of the three verses of the blessing without interruption and they pronounced God's name *kik̄tavo* as written, i.e. they enunciated the ineffable Tetragrammaton YHWH.¹⁰ When they concluded, the people responded with the doxology "Blessed is the Name of His glorious Kingdom forever".

The PB was always performed with chant. We can generally assume that the priests of ancient civilizations chanted their sacred texts, especially the ritual formulae of great sanctity and magical power. But a passage in the Midrash confirms the use of a chant for the PB beyond the shadow of doubt. The passage relates the diligence in which the priests concealed the Holy Name, lest it be abused and desecrated by unworthy people. It quotes R. Tarfon saying: "Once, when I was [standing] in line with my brethren the priests [in the Temple], I cocked my ear towards the high priest and heard him uttering it [i.e. the Holy Name] betwixt the chant of the priests (*ne'imat ha-kohanim*)."¹¹ The ritual of the PB was transferred to the early synagogues with a few changes. In the synagogue, the priests raised their hands only up to their shoulders, never above their heads, they stopped after each verse so that the public would be able to answer *Amen* three times, and they pronounced the Holy Name as *Adonay* never uttering the ineffable Tetragrammaton.¹²

- 8 According to a *Baraita* (*Tosefta, Sotah 7, 7*) the PB is pronounced, "when the priests stand on the steps of the Temple hall". A fragment of some Zadokite document that was found in the Cairo *genizah* may suggest that the priests surrounded the *dukan* before blessing the people, see Lévi (1913), but this is not at all certain. I am grateful to Prof. Ben Zion Wacholder for directing me to this source. Dr. Wacholder expressed his doubts that the words *סוּבְרֵי רִיבְנֵי* in this document refer to a priestly processional.
- 9 According to one opinion in the Mishnah (*Tamid 7, 2*), the High Priest raised his hand only up to his forehead, below his *ziz*, the diadem on which God's name was engraved, as respect to the Holy Name.
- 10 The Talmud cites cases where the priests refrained from pronouncing God's Holy Name. B. *Yoma 39b* quotes a *Baraita* (*Tosefta, Sotah 13*) relating that after the death of the High Priest Simon the Just, "his brethren, the priests refrained from blessing [the people] with God's Name". Later rabbinic literature interpreted this passage to mean that since the death of Simon the Just, God's Name was pronounced as *Adonay* even in the Temple. See Paksher (1993: 4–5). According to the Midrash (*Numbers Rabbah 11, 8*), when the sinners (i.e. those who took God's Name in vain) multiplied, the Name was transmitted only to the most pious priests.
- 11 *Numbers Rabbah 11, 8* and B. *Qiddušin 71a*. The latter source mentions also God's name "of twelve letters" and of "forty two letters".
- 12 See Langer (1988: 10–12) on the desire of some rabbis to perpetuate the Temple form of the PB in the synagogue.

CURRENT ORTHODOX PRACTICE

The current Orthodox practice of the ritual is still based on that of the early synagogue, which in turn is derived from the Temple cult. However, during the centuries it acquired many rules and bylaws as well as new interpretations. The most important sources of these are the Talmud (mainly in B. *Sotah* 38a–40b) and midrashic lore (particularly Numbers *Rabbah* 11, 3–5). The rules were summarized or reiterated and codified by the rabbinic authorities such as Maimonides (1138–1204, in his *Mišneh Torah Hilkoṭ tefillah* 14) or Joseph Caro (1488–1575, in his *Šulḥan ‘aruk Oraḥ ḥayyim* 128, *Hilkoṭ nesi’at kappayyim*). R. Moses Isserles (known as the ReMA, ca. 1525–1572) summarized the Ashkenazi practices in his commentary on the *Šulḥan ‘aruk* and in various responsa, and his rulings became standard for all the Ashkenazi communities.¹³

The PB ritual is performed during the cantor’s loud repetition of the *‘amidah*. Just as it was in the Temple, it is still part of the three benedictions mentioned above *‘avodah*, *hoda’ah* and *šalom* (the privilege of worshiping God, general thanksgiving and prayer for peace) and it is placed immediately before the last benediction, *birkat šalom*. The *kohanim* must officiate barefooted, just as their priestly ancestors did in the Temple.¹⁴ They should stand in front of the congregation, preferably on a *dukan* a raised platform in front of the Holy Ark (hence the popular appellation *dukan* and in Yiddish *dukhanen* or *dukhenen* for the PB ceremony itself).¹⁵ While they bless the people they should officiate with their backs to the Ark, facing the congregation. They must

- 13 The halachic regulations of the PB are summarized in Idelsohn 1932: 192–194. The best thesaurus of rules and regulations pertaining to the PB is Paksher 1993. The most thorough English exposition of the ritual, its rules and its meanings as seen from a current Orthodox point of view is Gold 1981. On the controversy about the early synagogue practice of the PB, see Hoffman (1979, esp. pp. 53–56).
- 14 This is presented in the Talmud as one of R. Yoḥanan ben Zakkai’ nine decrees. The sages of the Talmud wondered about the reason for this rule and offered an unconvincing one: The *kohen* must not wear his sandals lest the lace would tear and he would miss the ritual because he would have to fix the sandal there and then. And if he would not perform the ritual, people might think that he had a blemish or that he was forbidden to bless Israel because he came of dubious descent. (See B. *Sota* 40a). The Ashkenazi custom is to wear socks or other light non-leather footwear.
- 15 Prof. Hebert Paper, in a conversation with me, said that he believed that the Yiddish *dukhenen* came from the Slavic *dukh* which is the basis for words that indicate ‘spirit’ or ‘ghost’. I have not been able to find confirmation to this etymological interpretation. Nevertheless it stands to reasons that Jews (or even non-Jews) in Slavic countries would associate this ceremony with the world of spirits and the *kohanim* under their white prayer shawls with apparitions.

pronounce the PB in Hebrew and they are not to skip a single word. The cantor or another member of the congregation must prompt them word-by-word.¹⁶

The ritual of the PB is called *nesi'ut kappayyim* or *nesi'at kappayyim* i.e. raising the palms of the hands. While the *kohanim* raise their hands to bless the people, special sanctity engulfs them and especially the palms of their hands.¹⁷ Therefore they must wash their hands before officiating. Preferably, the descendants of the non-Aaronite sons of the tribe of Levi should pour the water on their hands. According to a common Jewish belief, the *šekinah* God's presence dwells on the *kohanim* and especially on their fingers while they bless the people. It is therefore forbidden to look at the hands of the *kohanim* during their ritual.

On which days should the PB ritual take place? This is a rather confusing issue. In Israel, especially in Jerusalem, the ceremony takes place once every weekday, in the morning (during *Šaharit* service), twice on the Sabbaths, New-Moon Days (*roš-ḥodes*) the three Pilgrimage Festivals and Rosh Hashanah (the second time during the additional *Musaf* service), again twice on the four official fast days (the second time during the late afternoon *minḥah* service) and three times on Yom Kippur (the third time at the last service of the day, *Ne'ilah* before sunset).¹⁸ All Jewish communities, Ashkenazim and Sephardim alike, follow this rule. However in the Diaspora the rule is quite complex and it depends on local customs and restrictions that developed during the ages. The western-Sephardim and Italian communities restricted it to the Sabbaths, Festivals and High Holy Days. The Central-European Ashkenazim restricted it further. They proscribed it on the Sabbaths and limited it to the Three Pilgrimage Festivals and High Holy Days.¹⁹

16 See Nulman (1985: 94–95). Nulman cites the remark of the *Keli yaqar* commentary on Genesis interpreting this custom in a mystical way. According to this interpretation, the cantor, who recites the words of the PB on behalf of the congregation, strengthens the blessing of the *kohanim*. Thus the power of the blessing is enhanced by the dialogue between the emissary of the people (the cantor) and the transmitters of God's blessing (the *kohanim*).

17 Debated among rabbinical authorities, see Gold (1981: 43), this is nevertheless a strong belief among the people.

18 In Haifa, Safed and other places in the Galilee, the ceremony is not performed on weekdays.

19 Some communities limited the ritual to the *Musaf* services on the Festivals and Rosh Hashanah if they occurred on weekdays (but not on Sabbaths) and to the *Musaf* and *Ne'ilah* services on Yom Kippur. Others, especially the communities of the Rhineland, performed the ritual during the *Šaharit* service as well and some did so even on Festivals

The Ashkenazi communities of Eastern Europe were the most restrictive. They allowed it only during the *Musaf* services of the Three Festivals and Rosh Hashanah and the *Musaf* and *ne'ilah* services on Yom Kippur.²⁰ Thus, in the Ashkenazi Diaspora the ceremony could be performed from a minimum of fourteen to a maximum twenty seven times during the year. Various reasons were given for the limitations, but none of them is satisfactory.²¹ Perhaps the primary cause was the fear that the frequent repetition of the ceremony would help make the synagogue a permanent substitute for the Jerusalem Temple; but even this cannot be confirmed. The ceremony could therefore be performed only in services where the longing for the restoration of the Temple worship in Zion was most clearly pronounced. Be it as it may, that the ceremony was performed only on the special Festivals and High Holy Days made it precious, mysterious and holy and inspired the Ashkenazi communities to adorn it with special chants and melodies

ORDER OF THE PB RITUAL IN THE ASHKENAZI SYNAGOGUES

The common procedure of the PB ritual in most Ashkenazi synagogues is as follows: During the loud repetition of the '*amidah*' when the cantor is about to conclude the benediction of *qeduššat ha-šem* the *kohanim* leave their regular seats at the synagogue. Those, who for some reason cannot officiate, exit the synagogue²²; those who can, remove their shoes

and Holy Days that occurred on the Sabbath. For details see Paksher (1993: 7–9) and especially his commentary *Meqor ha-berakah*, notes 25–44. See also Zimmer (1996: 132–51).

- 20 See for example the prescription for the Rosh Hashanah and Passover morning services according to the customs of Worms in Kirchheim (1987: 106–108, 121, 233, 235–236) and cf. the Austro-Hungarian customs as represented in Tirna (1979: 56–57).
- 21 Elbogen 1993: 64 remarks: "It [i.e. the PB ritual] seems to have fallen into desuetude in Europe very early, apparently because it made the prayer too lengthy, and also because priests were not always present in the synagogue." But the length of prayer was not an important issue before the nineteenth century and there is no reason to believe that in any given community during the Middle Ages fewer *kohanim* would attend the services on the Sabbaths than, say, on the eighth day of Passover.
- 22 According to the strict rules of halacha, a *kohen* is forbidden to officiate at the PB if he has a blemish on his hands or one or more of his fingers are missing, if his hands are dirty or dyed (however, if the congregation know him well he is allowed to officiate); if his pronunciation of Hebrew is unclear; if he has a sick stomach; if his beard never grows because of hormonal deficiencies; if his clothes are torn to the point that his arms are seen; if he is guilty of killing another person, even by accident; if he transgresses against Jewish law out of ideological motives; if he is drunk; if he is married to a divorcee or any woman forbidden to him by Jewish law; if he is a son of a woman that was forbidden to his father; if he has touched a dead body recently, or if his profession makes him defiled by touching

and walk to the basin that is usually located in the vestibule. There, they are attended by the *Leviyyim* who pour water on their hands. After washing and draining their hands, the *kohanim* reenter the synagogue and when the cantor chants the benediction of 'avodah (worship) they proceed towards the ark. If the synagogue has a *dukan* (a raised platform before the ark), they ascend it and if not, they stand on the floor before the ark. They face the ark while the cantor chants the benedictions of 'avodah and *hoda'ah* (thanksgiving). When the cantor reaches the concluding paragraph of *hoda'ah* with the words *vekol ha-hayyim yoduka selah* the *kohanim* raise their prayer shawls over their heads and pull them forward to cover their hands.²³ While doing so, they pray softly:

May it be your will,	יהי רצון מלפניך
Our God and God of our Fathers,	יי אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו
that this benediction	שתהא הברכה הזאת
[by] which you have commanded us	שצויתנו
to bless your people Israel	לברך את עמך ישראל
be a full blessing	ברכה שלמה
and that it should not contain	ולא יהיה בה
any obstacle and sin,	שום מכשול ועון
now and forever.	מעתה ועד עולם

Then, under their prayer shawls, they raise their hands to the height of their shoulders their fingers are closed. When the cantor concludes the benediction of thanksgiving, he, or a member of the congregation, cries out "*Kohanim!*"²⁴ This signals the *kohanim* to begin their blessing, and summons the congregation to rise and face the *kohanim* but to avoid looking at them. The congregation rises. The people whose seats are in the *mizrah* the front of the synagogue, move towards the middle of the

dead bodies regularly (e.g. if he is a physician); if he is in the seven days of mourning for a first degree relative. If he is not fasting, he is not allowed to officiate on the fast day. See Paksher (1993: 41–68). These rules are not strictly followed nowadays.

23 R. Moses Isserles in his addendum to Caro's *Šulhan 'aruk, Oraḥ ḥayyim* 128, 23 notes the following: "The *kohanim*...should not look at their hands, therefore they have followed the custom to draw the prayer shawl over their face and [leave] their hands outside the prayer shawl. There are, however, communities where [the *kohanim*] are used to [hide] their hands inside the prayer shawl so that the people would not watch them." Most Ashkenazi *kohanim* nowadays follow the latter custom, only a few leave their hands uncovered.

24 The call for the *kohanim* is not voiced if only one *kohen* officiates. If the cantor himself is a *kohen*, he must officiate with the other *kohanim*, then someone else from the congregation announces the beginning of the ritual and prompts the *kohanim*.

sanctuary and turn towards the *kohanim* in order that they too be included in the blessing.²⁵ All congregants bow their heads. In some congregation people cover their heads with the prayer shawls.²⁶ Fathers gather their children under their prayer shawl or place their hands on the heads of the children so that the blessing would be transmitted to them.²⁷

Meanwhile, the *kohanim* spread their fingers in the traditional form so as to form in each hand an image of the Hebrew letter shin²⁸ (ש) joining the hands thumb to thumb. Then they begin to chant their benediction:

Blessed are You, Lord,	ברוך אתה יי
our God, King of the Universe,	אלהינו מלך העולם
who sanctified us	אשר קדשנו
with the holiness of Aaron	בקדשתו של אהרן...

The *kohanim* now turn around clockwise to face the congregation and they conclude their benediction:

...and commanded us	ורצונו...
to bless His people Israel	לברך את עמו ישראל
with love.	באהבה.

The congregation responds: *Amen*.²⁹

25 According to Talmudic sources, only those who stand in front of the *kohanim* receive the blessing. See Caro *Šulḥan ‘aruk, Oraḥ ḥayyim* 128, 28 and Paksher (1993: 133).

26 Some orthodox women developed the custom to face sideways during the PB ceremony so as not to be tempted to look at the *kohanim*.

27 Cf. Genesis 48,13–20.

28 This form is the only one accepted in the Ashkenazi tradition. However, it seems that in old days the *kohanim* spread their fingers evenly with spaces between all fingers. The Book of *Zohar* (Numbers 146b) says: “We have learned: A *kohen* who spreads his hand [for the PB] must [insist] that the fingers would not be joined one with the other, in order that the [ten] Holy Crowns would be blessed each separately” Furthermore, the *Zohar* recommends placing the right hand above the left (*Zohar: Re’aya meheimna*, Numbers, 145a). Ashkenazi Kabbalists strive to spread their fingers in the traditional manner and at the same time create hair’s-breadth spaces between the joined fingers, they also lift their right hand slightly above their left.

29 In Frankfurt, the *kohanim* said the preliminary benediction facing the congregation. The same custom is common among the Hasidim of Ḥabad (Lubavitsher). Turning around in the middle of the preliminary benediction is an attempt to compromise between two halachic opinions. Rashi (commentary to B. *Sotah*, 39b) maintained that the *kohanim* should face the congregation before the preliminary benediction, whereas Maimonides (*Hilkot Tefillah* 14, 12), maintained to the contrary that they should face the congregation after the preliminary benediction, see Gold (1981: 40).

The cantor (or a man from the congregation) chants the words of the PB and the *kohanim* repeat after him word by word.³⁰ During the chanting of each of the seven words *yevarekēka*, *ve-yišmerekā*, *eleka*, *viḥunekka*, *eleka*, *leka*, and *šalom* the *kohanim* turn their torsos and sway their hands left and right, to the South and the North, in order to include all the people in their blessing.³¹ The swaying is extended on the last word: *šalom*.³² The congregation responds *Amen* after each of the three PB verses.

When they have concluded the benediction, the *kohanim* turn around clockwise to face the ark again. Then they lower their hands, close their fingers, put their prayer shawls back in the normal position and murmur the following prayer:

Master of the universe,	רבנו של עולם
we have done that	עשינו מה
which you decreed upon us.	שגזרת עלינו
You too, do unto us	אף אתה עשה עמנו
as You have promised us:	כמה שהבטחתנו
“Look down from your holy abode,	“השקיפה ממעון קדשך
from heaven,	מן השמים
and bless your people Israel	וברך את עמך ישראל
and the land You have given unto us,	ואת האדמה אשר נתתה לנו
as You had sworn to our forefathers,	כאשר נשבעת לאבותינו
a land flowing with milk and honey.” ³³	ארץ זבת חלב ודבש”

At the same time the cantor chants aloud the last benediction of the *‘amidah* according to the appropriate modal patterns of the day, while members of the congregation recite to themselves the Talmudic prayer:

- 30 Some Middle Eastern communities, such as Yemen and Egypt, follow Maimonides' opinion that the first word of the PB, *yevarekēka*, is to be chanted by the *kohanim* immediately following their benediction without being prompted by the cantor. An example can be found in Idelsohn 1925, no. 14. The custom is not common among the Ashkenazim.
- 31 In Frankfurt and some other German towns the *kohanim* turned their heads, not their body (Gold 1981: 42).
- 32 Ashkenzi halachic authorities have disputed the custom of swaying on the last word, since the word *šalom* is a noun, not a verb. Those who were against swaying on it maintained that the act, which is a symbolic inclusion of all the congregants into the blessing, should take place only on the words that include the pronoun you, i.e. verbs that end with the second person suffix ך (Gold 1981: 42–43).
- 33 The end of the prayer is based on Deuteronomy 26, 15.

Mighty [God] on High, who dwells by power, ³⁴	אדיר במרום, שוכן בגבורה
You are Peace and your name is Peace	אתה שלום ושמן שלום
May it be your will that you grant unto us	יהי רצון שתשים עלינו
and unto your people, the house of Israel,	ועל עמך בית ישראל
life and blessing to safeguard peace. ³⁵	חיים וברכה למשמרת שלום

The *kohanim* remain before the ark until the end of the cantor's chant. Then they descend from the platform, they put on their shoes and return to their regular places in the synagogue. While they go back to their seats, people greet them; shake their hands and thank them with the words *yiššar koah*

THE SIMPLE CHANT

Kohanim vary considerably in their singing ability, most of them do not have any musical education. They are never even trained to chant their blessing, but absorb their melodic lines in early youth by listening to their fathers and other older members of the family. According to religious law, they should begin to officiate in the PB at the age of thirteen years and one day, when they become Bar mitzvah. But they are encouraged to participate with the older *kohanim* from an early age. They learn the chant by performing it. Each of them develops his own variant, or variants, and when a few *kohanim* chant together, one can always hear melodic lines in heterophony. In spite of their meager training, many *kohanim* are able to sing complicated melodies (although many complaints have been voiced on the poor execution of these). Thus, when we survey the melodic repertoire of the Ashkenazi *kohanim* both east and west we find that the PB chants ranges from the simple chants to complicated melodies.

In its simplest form the chant can be heard in the Ashkenazi synagogues of Israel, mainly in Jerusalem, on weekdays and Sabbaths. Since the Ashkenzi community of Israel is predominantly of Eastern-European descent, all the *kohanim*, including those of the Central-European parentage, utilize versions of the Eastern-European chant.³⁶

34 Meaning of Hebrew uncertain.

35 Taken from B. *Beraḳot* 55b, this was originally a Talmudic alternative prayer for anyone who dreamt a dubious dream. This issue will be discussed below.

36 Tragically, only a handful Israeli congregations is of German-Jewish descent and even they have forgotten their original chants. Their prayers are now dominated by Eastern-European chants.

The chant is of two parts: (a) the preliminary benediction, *ašer kiddešanū bikdušato šel aharon*, which is sung by the *kohanim* alone, and (b) the PB proper, where each word is chanted by the cantor and repeated by the *kohanim*. The congregation answers *Amen* after the preliminary benediction and after each of the three priestly verses.

The Israeli custom to perform the PB ritual daily gives us an opportunity to examine the Eastern-European Ashkenazi chant in its simplest and basic form. The chant version given as Ex. 1 is an approximation of the simple chant that could normally be heard in Israeli Ashkenzi congregations. The chant spans a fifth (in our transcription d to a), it utilizes four notes: d-f-g-a. The lowest note d serves as the opening note of the chant and of most melodic patterns within the chant. It is also the final note of each of the three verses of the PB and thus is also the *finalis* of the entire chant. The middle note f may sound as f[#] or higher by some *kohanim* and anywhere between f and f[#] by others. It marks a semi-cadence in the preliminary benediction (some *kohanim* also end the preliminary benediction on it) and it closes all the words of the PB save the last word of each of its three verses. The note g is the dominant recitation-tone in the preliminary benediction, but in the PB itself it assumes a less important function and is usually exchangeable with a. The highest note a marks the stressed syllables in the Ashkenazi pronunciation of Hebrew, which is usually the penultimate syllable of the word. In the preliminary benediction, it marks the most stressed syllable in each group of words.

Modally, the simple PB chant is related to the group of Eastern-European chants that serve as aid in Talmudic studies and other similar functions and which some scholars subsume under the category of “study mode in minor”.³⁷ The reason for this relationship is not clear. It may have stemmed from the thought that the PB is a quotation from the Torah.³⁸

37 See for example Cohon (1950: 26–29).

38 Other prayer chants that are related to the “study mode” in the Eastern-European tradition are the benediction before the Torah reading, the mourner’s *qaddiš* and the early morning prayers on weekdays.

Announcer *Congregation*

Ko - ha - nim! Am k' - do - she - cho ko - o - mur.

kohanim
Bo - ruch a - to a - day - noy e - loy - hey - nu me - lech ho - oy - lom

a - sher ki - de - sho - nu bik - du - sho - soy shel a - ha - royn vi - tzi - vo - nu P - vo - reych es -

congr.
a - moy yis - ro - eyl b' - a - ha - vo. o - meyn

cantor ^(h) *kohanim* *c* *k*

ye - vo - re - che - cho ye - vo - re - che - cho A - day - noy A - day - noy

c *k* *congr.*

vi - yish - me - re - cho v' - yish - me - re - cho o - meyn

c *k* *c* *c*

yo - eyr yo - eyr A - day - noy A - day - noy po - nov

k *c* *k* *c*

po - nov ey - le - cho ey - le - cho vi - chu - ne - ko

congr. *c* *k*

vi - chu - ne - ko o - meyn yi - so yi - so

c *k* *c* *k*

A - day - noy A - day - noy po - nov po - nov

c *k* *c* *k* *c*

ey - le - cho ey - le - cho v' - yo - seym v' - yo - seym le - cho

k *c* *k* *congr.*

le - cho sho - loym sho - loym o - meyn

Example 1. Simple PB chant in Israeli Eastern-European Synagogues.

Very few examples of the simple chant of Central-European communities have come down to us. The versions given in cantorial manuals are usually adorned with Festival and High Holy Day melodies. One version of a simple chant is given in Lewandowski's *Kol Rinah u'T'fillah* of 1871 (p. 74, no. 99). Since this manual was intended to serve as guide and resource book for cantors in small congregations, the PB chant that Lewandowski provides under the title *Sseder Duchan* was indeed minimal, containing only the essentials for the cantor, the *kohanim* and the congregation (see Ex. 2)

The chant begins with the cantor's call "*Kohanim!*" and the congregational response (lead by the choir) *'Am qedošeka, ka'amur* after which the *kohanim* chant their preliminary benediction (the choir and congregation respond *Baruḳ hu uvaruḳ šemo* and *Amen* at the appropriate places). Then the cantor chants each word of the PB and the *kohanim* repeat it in the same melodic pattern. The choir and congregation answer *Amen* after each priestly verse.

The chant is clearly divided into two musical sections. The first one is the chant of the *kohanim*; the second is the combination of patterns led by the cantor. The *kohanim* tend to hover around the recitation tone *g* especially in the first segment of their chant, which ends with the words *šel Aharon*. At this point the *kohanim* turn around to face the congregation and the recitative becomes more varied. It now aims towards the patterns of the cantor. The cantor uses the cadential pattern *d-e-f[#]-g* of the *kohanim* and, by omitting the *f[#]*, turns it into the initial pattern of each verse. The cantor's patterns are cleverly organized to accommodate the growing verses from three to five to seven words, and the patterns always lead to the cadential formula of the congregational *Amen* (see Table 1).

Table 1. Melodic patterns in the simple PB chant according to Lewandowski.

Melody	d-e-g	g-a-b	a-b-e	c'-b-a	g-a-d	b	e-a-g-f [#] -g	e-f [#] -g
Verse 1	<i>Yevarekeka</i>	<i>Adonay</i>					<i>Veyišmerekka</i>	<i>Amen</i>
Verse 2	<i>Yaer</i>	<i>Adonay</i>	<i>Panav</i>	<i>Eleka</i>			<i>Vihunekka</i>	<i>Amen</i>
Verse 3	<i>Yissa</i>	<i>Adonay</i>	<i>Panav</i>	<i>Eleka</i>	<i>Veyasem</i>	<i>Leka</i>	<i>Šalom</i>	<i>Amen</i>

The sophistication of the chant, its tendency towards the major mode, the *Amen* cadences and the common time of the patterns make one suspect that it is a product of the Moderate Reform tendencies of the

SSEDER DUCHAN.

N^o 99.

Vorb. Chor u. Gem.

Ko - ha - ntu: um k - do - schu - cho ku - o - mur:

Kohanim. Chor u. Gem. Kohanim.

Bo - ruch ut - to a - do - noj, bo - ruch hu u - wo - ruch schi - mo, " - ko -

he - mu me - lech ho - o - lom. a - scher Kidd - scho - mu bik - du - scho - sso - schei - a - ha -

ron, w' - zi - wo - nu, i - wo - ruch ess am - mo jiss - ro - el N - a - ha -

Chor u. Gem. Vorb. (Die Kohanim wiederholen singend jedes Wort des Vorb.)

wo, o - men. J'wo - re - ci - cho, a - do - noj, w'jisch - nire - eno.

Chor u. Gem. Vorb. u. Kohanim.

o - men. Jo - er. a - do - noj, po - now, e - le - cho,

Chor u. Gem. Vorb.

wi - chu - nek - ko. o - men. Ji - sso, a - do - noj. po - now,

Chor u. Gem.

e - le - cho. w'jo - sseu. icho, scho - - lom o - men.

Example 2. Sseder Duchan from Lewandowski 1871: 74, no. 99.

nineteenth century (about which, see below). Yet a closer look will reveal some traces of older type chants. The ambitus of the chant is a mere minor seventh d-c' with a heavy reliance on g as recitation tone and

finalis. The modal scale could be described as Hypo-Ionian rather than major, the chant for the preliminary blessing is similar to the one in other German sources.³⁹ and some of the patterns are similar to those used in Germany during the *šaharit* services of the Three Festivals.⁴⁰ We may therefore conclude that the chant is a combination of old and new elements and as such it should represent the basic formulae as would be accepted in some Western Ashkenazi synagogues during the nineteenth century. However, many Ashkenazi synagogues could not be satisfied with such short patterns because they were influenced by the custom in which the congregation responded to each word of the *kohanim* with a biblical verse.

THE PRIESTLY BLESSING AND CONGREGATIONAL VERSES

In the Temple and perhaps also in the early synagogue, the congregation remained silent during the ritual of the PB; it was only allowed a short response at the end of the blessing or at the end of each verse. From early times, however, people felt a need to offer some prayer during the ritual of the PB, as if to respond in kind to the blessing uttered by the *kohanim*. Some rabbis maintained that the congregation should recite fifteen biblical verses, one during or immediately after each word of the PB, others objected to the practice and allowed only an *Amen* response after each of the three verses.

The controversy goes back to Talmudic times and is still an issue in current synagogues. Referring to the congregational verses (B. Sotah 40a) R. Ḥiyya bar Abba said: “Whoever recites them [in the synagogues] outside the Temple is in error.” R. Ḥanina bar Papa added, “Know that they should not be recited even in the Temple. Is there a servant who would not listen [quietly while] being blessed [by his master]?” To this, R. Aḥa bar Ḥanina retorted: “Know that one should recite them even [in the synagogues] outside of the Temple. Is there a servant who would not pay homage [while] being blessed [by his master]?” In the sixteenth century, R. Joseph Caro, the greatest authority on halacha, forbade the recitation of the congregational verses.⁴¹ R. Moshe Isserles permitted the congregational verses, but he concluded his dictum with the suggestion that “it is better not to recite them.” R. Jacob Emden (1697–1776), the

39 E.g. Baer (1883: 287, no. 1251).

40 Cf. Lewandowski (1871: 54, no. 73).

41 *Šulḥan 'aruk*, *Orah hayyim* 128, 26.

greatest authority on Ashkenzi liturgical practice after Isserles, stated categorically: “[Members of the congregation] are not permitted to recite any verses while the *kohanim* bless [the people]. This is the law of the Talmud.”⁴²

The responsive verses remained popular among the Ashkenazi congregations in spite of the rabbinic objections,⁴³ yet the selections varied considerably from one community to another. Attempts towards standardization are found in French sources of the fourteenth century, such as the *Maḥzor Vitry* by R. Simḥah of Vitry and *Orḥot ḥayyim* by R. Aaron Hakohen of Lunel.⁴⁴ Over the centuries, the selections were fully standardized and most Ashkenazi printed prayer books prescribe the same verses.⁴⁵

Needless to say, even those who condoned or encouraged the recitation of the responsive verses did not intend them to be voiced allowed or chanted, but to be muttered, whispered or merely contemplated by the members of the congregation. Yet some Ashkenazi congregations chanted them aloud. R. Judah Ashkenazi of Tiktin, in his commentary to the *Šulḥan ‘aruk* protested against this custom saying: “I have witnessed a scandal whereby a multitude of people screamed the verses in a loud voice and then went back [to the beginning of the selection] and again screamed all the verses from *yevarekēka* to the word [which was chanted by the *kohanim*], and one could not hear the voice of the *kohanim* for their voices.”⁴⁶

R. Judah would have been scandalized even more if he heard the innovation introduced in Lithuanian and Latvian choral-synagogues at the end of the nineteenth century, whereby at the end of each priestly verse, the choir and the congregation sang the additional responsive

42 Emden (1904: 257)

43 See Paksher (1993: 17).

44 A comparative table of verses as they appear in these sources is given in Paksher (1993: 148).

45 In some prayer books, such as the one by the *Ḥatam Sofer* of Pressburg, two verses are given for each word. The standard verse in regular letters and an additional or subsidiary verse in smaller type.

46 Commentary *Ba’er heitev* to *Šulḥan ‘aruk*, *Oraḥ ḥayyim* 128, 26. The standard prayer-book of the Central-European Ashkenazim, *Seder ‘Avodat Yisrael* by Seligman Baer (1868: 359-60), provides the standard verses, but in the preface to the PB ritual it instructs us as follows: “Those who use to recite verses that correspond to every word of the blessing should take care to say them only during the cantor’s chant, but not during the chant of the *kohanim* and it is better not to say them at all.”

verses aloud to metrical melodies.⁴⁷ It seems though that the singing of such verses was a unique custom of these synagogues and not the common practice in other traditional Ashkenazi congregations.⁴⁸

CONGREGATIONAL VERSES AND THE CHANT OF THE KOHANIM

As mentioned above, in spite of his reservations, R. Moses Isserles permitted the recitation of the congregational verses in Ashkenazi synagogues. He explained that his permission was given on the basis of the prevalent *minhag* (accepted custom)⁴⁹ that in turn was based on a liturgical-musical consideration. Isserles remarks: “Nevertheless, since nowadays the *kohanim* chant [the PB] with prolonged *niggunim* [melodies], it has also been customary [for the congregation] to recite verses, just as I have explained above as regards *Bareku*” Isserles refers here to the custom of many Ashkenazi congregations to recite a doxology while the cantor chants an outdrawn melody on the words *Bareku et Adonai ha-mevorak* at the beginning of the evening service or the beginning of the *Šema* section in the morning service.

This raises a liturgical chicken-and-egg question: Did the *kohanim* prolong the PB chant in order to enable the congregation to recite the responsive verses, or vice versa, did the prolonged chant of the *kohanim* generate the recitation of the verses by the congregation. In the same manner one could ask whether the need to recite the congregational doxology made the cantors prolong the chant of the *Bareku*, or the long, melismatic chants of the cantors lead to the creation of the alternative doxology for the congregation. Practical thinking would support the first hypothesis, namely that the *kohanim* began to prolong the chant after the congregational verses were introduced.

47 The melodies are found in two sources: (1) Ms. Mus. 145(d) dated “Paglin 1905” in the Birnbaum Collection at the Hebrew Union College, Klau Library, Cincinnati. It contains a number of Eastern European PB chants that Birnbaum notated as he heard them from a certain cantor Paglin from Lithuania. The source contains a rather confused notation of the chant for the cantor and the *kohanim*, and a clearly written melody, marked *Chor*, for the two congregational responsive verses following the priestly words *veyišmerekā* and *šalom*. (2) Bernstein (1927: 81, no. 193). Under the title *šomreni el*, Bernstein printed the same melodies for the responsive verses. His notation carries the remark: “*Niggun* at the *duchenen*. Introduced decades ago in the choral-synagogues of Kovna, Vilna, Libau, *et al.*”

48 The use of the verses in Sulzer’s synagogue will be discussed later in this article.

49 In liturgical matters, an accepted custom may override a rabbinical law. See Langer (1998, esp. pp. 245–254).

The alternative hypothesis is more in line with the medieval fear of the liturgical *horror vacui*. To avoid the empty feeling of uncontrolled moments, liturgical spaces had to be filled in. Thus the Christian liturgy filled the spaces that were opened by the melismatic chants with additional tropes and sequences, texts and additional syllabic chants. It is therefore possible that the congregational verses were introduced in order to fill in the liturgical spaces that had been generated by the long, melismatic chants of the *kohanim*. Once a prayer of this kind was inserted, the chant had to grow even longer in order to allow further space for the prayer.

While the usual Ashkenazi practice as recorded in most musical sources of the nineteenth century is not to prolong the melody for every word of the PB, some older rabbinical responsa may indicate that the *kohanim* used a melody for each word, or perhaps even two or more melodies for the same word. Outside of the Ashkenazi realm there existed testimonies to this effect since the fifteenth century. R. Aharon of Lunel in his book *Kol Bo* (ca. 1490), Section 225, testifies to the Provençal custom. He explains that the cantor prompts the *kohanim* word by word in order to make sure that they do not err, because they sing a long melody on each and every word and are therefore prone to mistakes. לפיכך החזן מקרא אותן מלה מלה שלא יטעו לפי שהן מנגנים מאד בכל מלה ומלה וכיון שכן יהיה קרוב לטעות.

An Ashkenazi responsum of the same century, by R. Israel Isserlein (*Terumat ha-Dešen*, Resp. 26; Isserlein died in 1460 in Neustadt near Vienna) testifies that the Ashkenazim too used long melodies for each word (see Isserlein 1882). The response deals with the following question: “*Kohanim* who chant the PB when they ascend the *dukan*, are they permitted to sing two or three melodies, such as [a different melody] for every verse or a different melody for every word?” Isserlein’s response is negative. While he approves the general custom to chant the PB with an extended melody and praises the *kohanim* who are able to do so, he nevertheless warns them to use one and the same melody for all the words of the PB, lest they confound the sacred text. This, he says, may happen to the best musicians among them. As their minds are occupied by the changing melodies, they would miss the prompting of the cantor and utter the words in a wrong order.

When Isserlein referred to all words of the PB, he may have meant only twelve out of the fifteen words of the benediction. A restriction on chanting God’s name *Adonay* to an extended melody was generally

observed in all Ashkenazi communities. Of the other twelve words, the seven on which the *kohanim* turn left and right were the ones most commonly embellished. The sixteenth-century authority on the liturgical customs of the town of Worms, R. Judah Löw Kircheim, says (*Minhagot Vermayza* 1525: 107-108): “And the following are the words on which the *kohanim* double their *niggun* [=chant in this context]: *yevarekēka*, *veyišmereka*, *eleka*, *viḥunekka*, *eleka*, *leka*, *šalom*”. In some communities, however, all the twelve words were sung to one or more extended melodies. The earliest record of a melody for the twelve words, which was used in an Ashkenzi synagogue, is the one incorporated in the documents of the Ferrara controversy during the early decades of eighteenth century.

THE FERRARA MELODY

Israel Adler discussed the Ferrara melody extensively in his *magnum opus* on the Hebrew musical manuscripts.⁵⁰ A summary of his findings will serve our purpose here. The controversy was raised by a pious, but perhaps not very wise *kohen* named Neḥemiah b. Baruk of Ferrara in the summer of 1706. The subject of the controversy was a melody that the *kohanim* of Ferrara used to chant for the twelve words of the PB (excluding the word *Adonay*) while the congregation recited the responsive verses. Neḥemiah protested against the contemporary execution of the melismata of this melody in the Italian-Rite Synagogue of his town where he himself officiated as *kohen*. He maintained that the customary singing of all of the embellishments on the syllable *a* at the end of each word violates the rules of Hebrew accentuation and he suggested that on the words *veyišmereka*, *eleka* and *viḥunekka* the melisma be sung on the penultimate vowel *e*. Trying to implement his ideas, he was met with fierce opposition and, at least for a while, he had to leave his own place of worship at the synagogue of the *Italiani* and he joined the Sephardi synagogue of the same town. He then sent for the learned opinions of some Italian rabbinic leaders of his times and the correspondence resulted with numerous *responsa* and pamphlets pro and con.

The modern reader is astounded at the amount of erudition as well as animosity that was invested in this great controversy of a *versus e*. But thanks to this dispute we have an accurate transcription of the melody in

50 Adler (1989: 26–30).

two sources: One is Ms. Mich. Add 13 of the Bodleian Library in Oxford; the other is a printed book in the Klau Library of Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati called *Meziz u-meliz* (Venice 1714/15) whose author is identified by Adler as Mordecai b. Jacob Z̄ahalon. The manuscript and the book record part of the rabbinic dispute and the efforts of Z̄ahalon to find a compromise that would satisfy all parties.

The copy at the Hebrew Union College Library contains a fascicle of twelve pages that was intended as an appendix to the rabbinic literature on the subject. The fascicle prints four versions of the melody in Renaissance diamond-shaped notation. Of the four versions, the first presents the customary melody as sung in the Italian synagogue of Ferrara; the second provides the alterations suggested by Neḥemia ben Baruk̄ and sung in the Sephardi synagogue of Ferrara; the third is R. Judah Briel's attempt to merge the previous two versions. In this shape the melody was sung in the Ashkenazi (Tedesco) synagogue of Ferrara. The fourth version is presented as the "Chant customary in the countries of Ashkenaz" (see Ex. 3).

D. Ashkenazi version (other countries)

1.1: יִבְרַךְ הוֹי: a b c

le-va-re-che-cha a % % % % a [adonay]

1.2: וְיִשְׁמַר:

ve-is-me-re-e-ca (c)a a a a a % % a

Example 3. The "Ashkenazi" PB Melody in Adler's transcription (Adler 1989:30).

As Adler has shown, the two "Ashkenazi melodies" are none but variations of the Ferrara Italian tune.⁵¹ In spite of their titles, it is rather doubtful that they originated in any Ashkenazi community outside of Italy. It is difficult to prove that this particular melody stems from Peninsular or Mediterranean origins; yet it does sound more Sephardi

51 The melody was reprinted in Vinaver (1955: 187, no. 41) with words in an attempted Ashkenzi pronunciation. Vinaver accepted the view that "the tune was employed by the Ashkenazic communities of that time."

than Ashkenazi. The practice resembles Southern European and Sephardi traditions,⁵² a good example of which is a Moroccan chant in Idelsohn's *Thesaurus* (Idelsohn 1929a, no. 237). Nevertheless, while it is doubtful that the melody was ever used in German congregations, it is still clear that it was used in at least one Ashkenazi synagogue, that of Ferrara.

MELODIES RECORDED BY ABRAHAM BAER

A firm testimony to the extensive Ashkenzi use of melodies for the twelve words of the PB in German Ashkenazi congregations is found in Abraham Baer's *Baal Tefillah*.⁵³ Under the title *Dukan la-kohanim* (*Priestersegen*), Baer presents a selection of PB melodies of the Northern-German and Western-Polish traditions in a score-like layout (see Ex.4).

The first two staves marked M.A. (= *Minhag Askenaz*) represent the melodies used in the German synagogues. Of these, the upper stave contains the melodies used during the *Šaharit* services of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and the middle stave prints the melodies used in the same congregations for the *Musaf* services of the High Holy Days, eighth day of Sukkot, first and last days of Passover and second day of Shavuot. Each of the staves has a double-stem notation. Usually in Baer this represents two versions of the same melody. But the lower melodic line here seems like an attempt to provide a second part to accompany the melodies in modern synagogues. The third stave marked M.P.u.A. (= *Minhag Polin* and others) represents the melodies used in the Polish synagogues on all occasions. In all the versions, the cantor is expected to sing each word with its long melody and the *kohanim* are to repeat both of them.

The difference between the German and the Polish traditions is quite clear. Whereas the German synagogues use extensive melodies for all twelve words (the holy name *Adonay* is sung to a special short motif), their Polish counterparts content themselves with melodies on the seven words on which the *kohanim* turn left and right, and even there, the melodies are shorter and simpler. The German melodies begin with long wordless strains and end with closing cadences on which the words of the

52 See Seroussi (1996: 106–9).

53 See Baer (1883: 198–199, nos. 857–864 and pp. 287–289, no. 1251).

טובא
 רובן לכהנים (Priestersegen.)

Nº 1253. Jede Abtheilung wird erst vom Vorbeter recitirt, dann von den Kohanim wiederholt.

M. A. *)
 לטובה יי, סתנה יי
 מל וגשם

M. A.

M. P. u. A.

J' wo - re - ch'

J' worch'cho sdo.noj

J'wo - rech'cho sdo.noj

cho s donoj

Chor. Vorbeter dann Kohanim.

w'jisch m're.cho o.men jo - er sdo.noj

w'jisch m' re - cho o.men jo - er sdo.noj

jisch m' re - cho o.men jo - er sdo.noj po -

po - now e - le - cho

po - now e - le - cho

now e - le - cho

Chor

wi.chunneko. O.men.

wi.chunneko. O.men.

wi.chun - nek - ko. O.men.

*) Diese Weise wird nur zu Schachtris Rosch Haschachonah und Jom Kippur in den aschkenasischen Gemeinden gebraucht, in welchen zwei Mal (zu טובא u. שחריט) das רובן לכהנים stattfindet.

וְיִשְׁמַע

Vorbeter dann Kohanim.

The musical score consists of six systems of three staves each. The top staff is the vocal line, and the bottom two are piano accompaniment. The lyrics are written below the vocal line. The music is in a complex, asymmetrical structure with a wide ambitus.

Lyrics:

Jis - so e do - noj
 jis - so e do - noj
 jis - - - so e do - noj po - - - -
 po - now e - le - cho
 e - le cho
 - now e - - - le - - - - cho
 w'jo - sem l' cho
 l' cho
 w'jo - - - sem l' cho
 scho lom. Omen.
 scho lom. Omen.
 scho - - lom. Omen.

Chor.

Example 4. PB Melodies in Baer's Baal Tefillah.

PB are chanted. The melodies consist of two asymmetrical sections, each of which is made of two segments. Their complicated structure and wide ambitus make us wonder how the untrained *kohanim* could have sung them accurately. This is especially true of the second melody, the one intended for the *Musaf* services. While the *Šaharit* melody is clearly derived from the familiar traditional chants of the High Holy Day morning service, particularly those for the benedictions before *šema'* (cf.

Baer, pp. 224–227, nos. 1002–1024).⁵⁴ the *Musaf* melody seems to be a cantorial creation connected rather vaguely to some chants of the three Festivals. Is it possible that contrary to Baer's indications, the cantor performed them in their entirety and the *kohanim* merely repeated the cadences, or did the *kohanim* chant the lower, easier version of each melody?

In addition to the difficult melodic structure, the performance of the ritual according to these melodies needed a good control of the combination of the words, body movements and sections of the melody in the intricate pattern as shown in Table 2. In addition, one should always remember that many *kohanim* experience physical stress when the ritual is very long, because they must hold their arms up and their fingers spread out in the traditional shape during the entire blessing.⁵⁵

As a rule, in Baer's German melodies, the first word of the PB and the last word of each verse, which are accompanied by movements to the left and the right, are chanted with the whole melody. The three other words with left and right movements (twice *eleka* and once *leka*) are chanted to the second half of the melody. The four words with free movement *ya'er*, *panav*, *yissa*, *panav*, *veyasem* alternate the first and second halves of the melody. As mentioned above, the word *Adonay* on which movement is frozen, is chanted with a special short motif. The same combination of words, movements and melodic sections are used in other similar melodies.⁵⁶

The complex scheme as represented in Baer was by no means the general practice of Ashkenazi Jews in Germany. Some congregations limited the melodies to the words on which *kohanim* had to move their bodies and hands to the left and to the right. A wider accepted practice was to chant the extended textless melodies only before the last word of each of three verses of the PB. These outdrawn melodies enabled the congregation to recite the prayers for dreams and for sustenance.

54 Friedmann (1901: 272) advises the cantor to build the melody of the High Holy Day PB ceremony on the traditional pattern of the *Šaharit* service of the same days. An excellent example of such melody is the one by Abraham Jacob Lichtenstein. The melody survived in a facsimile transcription made by Eduard Birnbaum (Birnbaum Collection, Mus. 125(4)).

55 Some *kohanim* have complained to this writer about cantors who had caused them discomfort by their long and outdrawn melodies. To be sure, rabbinic authorities allow the *kohanim* to relax their hand position between the words of the PB, but the *kohanim* try to avoid that.

56 See for example Baer (1883: 198, no. 857 and p. 199, no. 864).

Table 2. Text, movement and melodic sections in Baer's German melodies of the PB

PB word	Movement of <i>kohanim</i>	Melody of <i>kohanim</i>
<i>Yevarekēka</i>	Left and right	Whole
<i>Adonay</i>	Frozen	Special motif
<i>Veyišmerekā</i>	Left and right	Whole
Congregation: <i>Amen</i>		
<i>Ya'er</i>	Free	1st half
<i>Adonay</i>	Frozen	Special motif
<i>Panav</i>	Free	2nd half
<i>Eleka</i>	Left and right	2nd half
<i>Vihunekka</i>	Left and right	Whole
Congregation: <i>Amen</i>		
<i>Yissa</i>	Free	1st half
<i>Adonay</i>	Frozen	Special motif
<i>Panav</i>	Free	2nd half
<i>Eleka</i>	Left and right	2nd half
<i>Veyasem</i>	Free	1st half
<i>Leka</i>	Left and right	2nd half
<i>Šalom</i>	Left and right	Whole
Congregation: <i>Amen</i>		

BAD DREAMS AND PRIESTLY MELODIES

Rabbinic lore has found various allegorical and mystical connections between the Song of Songs and the PB. The earliest associations of this kind are found in the *Midrash Numbers Rabbah* and the rabbis explored this avenue of interpretation during the Middle ages and later. Thus, for instance, the words “Behold, he [the lover] stands behind our wall watching through the windows, peering through the lattices” (Song of Songs 2,9) are connected to the PB in the following way: God, the lover of Israel, stands behind the wall of the synagogue, watching through the windows, peering through the five apertures.⁵⁷ formed by the hands of

57 The word החריכים, the clefts, is interpreted as ה' החריכים = five clefts or apertures.

the *kohanim* through which He blesses Israel. A similar interpretation of Song of Songs 3, 7–8 connects the PB with fearful dreams. The biblical text reads “Behold, the bed of the King Solomon, sixty mighty man surround it; [the strongest] of the mighty men of Israel. They all hold swords, learned in warfare. Each man, his sword on his thigh, against fear in the nights.” King Solomon in this verse is another allegorical image of God, King of Kings, Master of Peace,⁵⁸ the sixty mighty men are the sixty letters of the PB, each of which has the power to guard Israel against fearful dreams at night.⁵⁹ Using this interpretation, the Talmud (B. *Berakot* 55b) suggests the following procedure as cure for uncertain dreams:

האי מאן דחזא חלמא ולא ידע מאי חזא, ליקום קמי כהני בעידנא דפרסי ידיהו, ולימא הכי: רבונו של עולם, אני שלך וחלומותי שלך, חלום חלמתי ואיני יודע מה הוא, בין שחלמתי אני לעצמי ובין שחלמו לי חבירי ובין שחלמתי על אחרים, אם טובים הם — חזקם ואמצם כחלומותיו של יוסף, ואם צריכים רפואה — רפאם כמי מרה על ידי משה רבינו, וכמרים מצרעתה, וכחזקיה מחליו, וכמי יריחו על ידי אלישע, וכשם שהפכת קללת בלעם הרשע לברכה — כן הפוך כל חלומותי עלי לטובה. ומסיים בהדי כהני, דעני צבורא אמן.

Any man who has seen a dream and does not know what he has seen, let him stand up.⁶⁰ before the *kohanim* when they spread out their hands, and let him say thus: “Master of the Universe, I am yours and my dreams are yours. I have dreamt a dream and I do not know what it is. [All the dreams,] – be they those that I have dreamt about myself, or those that my friends dreamt about me, or those that I have dreamt about others – if they are good, strengthen and sustain them like the dreams of Joseph; and if they need remedy, heal them as You did to the waters of Mara through our Master Moses and as [You cured] Miriam of her leprosy and Hezekiah of his sickness and as [You purified] the waters of Jericho through Elisha. And just as You turned the curse of Balaam the Wicked into blessing, so turn all my dreams for good.” And let [the dreamer] conclude [his prayer] together with the [last word of] the priests, so that the public may say Amen [on both].

58 According to this interpretation, the name Solomon, in Hebrew *Šelomoh*, is, derived from *šalom* in a possessive construct that would mean, “His is Peace”. King *Šelomoh* is therefore the Supreme King, Master of Peace.

59 See Gold (1981: 44) for further discussion of this idea.

60 May we deduce from these words that in Talmudic times it was customary for the congregation to sit before the *kohanim*, while the *kohanim* would recite the PB standing?

The prayer, which dates back at least to the early fifth century *Amoraic* School of Amemar II, Ravina and Rav Ashi, became part of the regular PB ceremony in the synagogue. According to the Talmudic statement, the prayer was to be said once during the recitation of the PB, and only by people troubled by dubious dreams. In later practice, however, the prayer was enlarged and members of the congregation whispered it three times, once at the conclusion of each verse of the PB. In the Ashkenazi communities, where the PB ceremony was performed only on the Three Festivals and High Holy Days, this prayer became a collective supplication for all the dreams that people had seen between one sacred day and the next. Therefore all congregants had to recite it. In most communities the prayer was not recited if the Festival or Holy Day fell on the Sabbath, since supplications of the kind were not to be said on the day of rest.

Kabbalistic interpretations of the PB encouraged the recitation of yet another supplication at the end of the ritual. The Kabbalah interpreted Num. 6, 27 (“Let them place *My Name* upon the children of Israel, and I shall bless them.”) to denote that God’s name is hidden in the combinations of letters that make up the PB. The sixteenth century Kabbalist, R. Moses Cordovero, believed that the hidden name is the Kabbalistic mystical combination of twenty-two letters expressed in the four mystical words *אֵלֶיָּהוּ אֵלֶיָּהוּ אֵלֶיָּהוּ אֵלֶיָּהוּ*.⁶¹ By complicated numerical calculations of *gematria* Cordovero was able to show how the first four words of the PB hinted at the four words of the Kabbalistic name and how the rest were derived from them. The Kabbalists of the Lurianic School regarded this name as an appellation of the Divine Providence, the power that provides food and clothing, sustenance and success to humans.

The practical result of the Kabbalistic speculations was an additional long prayer that was recited by the congregation before the last word of the PB. It is an appeal to God the Sustainer and Provider to help the worshiper and his family by the virtue of the Holy Name of twenty-two letters. The Name appears in the prayer, but it must only be contemplated, never pronounced. Some communities recited the prayer in addition to the one on dreams; however, most of them limited the

61 See Cordovero (1786), Gate 21, Chapter 14. The origin of this “name of twenty-two letters” is unclear. On various interpretation of this name see Heller (1908) and Kraus (1908), see also “Gleichsetzung mit Dionysos und Sabazios,” in Gressmann (1925: 16–19).

recitation of the prayers for dreams to the end of the first and second verses and recited the prayer for sustenance at the end of the last verse.

While the congregation recited the prayers, the *kohanim* moved their hands and bodies to the left and the right and chanted the last words of the verses with an extended melody. Here again we face the question whether the congregational prayers were created to fill in the liturgical space that was opened by the long melodies of the *kohanim*. The general belief among the Ashkenazim is to the contrary, namely that the words that end the PB verses were sung with extended melodies in order to help the congregants say their prayers.

SEASONAL MELODIES FOR THE PRIESTLY BLESSING

In many Ashkenazi communities, both east and west, the melodies were limited to *veyišmereka*, *viḥunekka* and *šalom* the three words that end the three PB verses respectively. There was however a major difference between the melodies sung in the German-speaking countries and those sung in Eastern Europe. The former preferred the traditional melodies that were associated with the yearly cycle whereas the latter preferred various other melodies that developed as local traditions.

The Central-European Ashkenazim adorned each festival and holy day with an identifiable melody, or melodic pattern. These 'seasonal melodies'⁶² were of different origins. Some were borrowed from liturgical or para-liturgical *piyyuṭim* (i.e. poetic texts); others were adopted from secular Jewish songs or from gentile sources. Used in salient prayers during the services, these tunes served as special musical garments to highlight the uniqueness of the holy day and thus together they created a musical calendar. Some of the same melodies were transformed and incorporated into the PB ceremonies. Thus they served as a musical linkage between the PB ceremony and the particular holy day.

Abraham Baer, whose transcription of the complex PB melodies was described above, provides in his cantorial manual (Baer 1883: 198–199, nos. 859–862) a set of four such melodies (see Ex. 5). A similar set of five melodies, notated by Itzik Offenbach, is given in his cantor's manual of ca 1828–34.⁶³

62 See Idelsohn (1929b: 144–180) and Werner (1976: 81–102). Werner calls them 'Seasonal Leitmotifs'.

63 Ms. S.6337 at the Hebrew Union College Library in New York, fol. 30a. Adler (1989: 459–468, esp. p. 467) has important information about the Ms. and the origins of some tunes.

עֲרֹכַת הַיּוֹם לַבְּרִיאָה (Priestersgegn.).

זרע: № 889. vorech' cho e do. noj

לְבוֹטָחַת: № 890.

לבן: № 891.

לְחֹדְמָה וְשָׂמֵר: № 892.

v'jisch - m're - cho.

Jo. er e do. noj ponow e - lecho

vi. chun nech - - ho.

וַיַּעַבְדוּ, וַיְבָרְכוּ, וַיְשַׁבְּחוּ wie oben; וַיְפָחוּ וַיְשִׁחוּ and וַיְשַׁבְּחוּ wie: וַיְבָרְכוּ, וַיְשַׁבְּחוּ und וַיַּעַבְדוּ.

Example 5. PB Melodies for the Festivals according to Baer (1883).

Western Ashkenazi tradition regarded the following as the musical symbols of the Three Pilgrimage Festivals: The melody of the Haggadah song *Addir hu* for Passover, the Western march-like melody for the beginning of the Aramaic poem *Akdmut* for Shavuot, and the *Schüttel*

Hodu melody associated with the shaking of the *lulav* for Sukkot.⁶⁴ The first three melodies of Baer and Offenbach are variants of the Festival tunes. All of the three were originally associated with the *hallel* services of the respective festivals and were borrowed from the chanting of the psalm verses *hodu l'Adonay ki tov* (Ps. 118, 1–4) or *ana Adonay hoši'ah na'* (Ps. 118, 25) into the PB ceremony. Their connection to Baer's corresponding *hallel* melodies (no. 814 second melody for Passover, no. 815 for Shavuot and no. 816 second melody for Sukkot) is quite clear. Yet the versions he uses for the PB varies from the originals. This is not the case for all cantors' manuals. Thus, for instance, in his manual, Aron Friedmann does not find it necessary to provide melodies for the PB on the Festivals; instead, he inserts a note to the effect that the PB should be sung "according to the melodies of the *hodu* in the *hallel*" (Friedmann 1901: 205).⁶⁵

The fourth seasonal melody is titled in Baer *l'Hazkarat-nešamot*, i.e. for the memorial service. Offenbach calls it מתיים ניגון. This is a Yiddish title pronounced *meysim nign* and it is derived from the Hebrew *niggun metim* meaning "the melody of the dead" But contrary to its titles, this melody is not sad, mournful or macabre. If we could rely on general European taste it would seem that the melody inspires festivity and well-being. Indeed, the melody was known in Southern-Germany as *niggun matnas-yod* and was associated there with the festive ceremony of *Mattenat-yad*, which was held on the last day of each of the Three

64 On *Addir hu* see Idelsohn (1929b: 168–196, 174–175). The other melodies have not been properly researched. There is some confusion about the *Akdmut* melodies, Idelsohn (1929b: pp. 156, 160) and Werner (1976: 89–90) discuss briefly the psalmodic chant that is now used mostly in the Eastern European communities. They do not mention the Western march-like melody. Sulzer (1865, no. 143) prints the chant as the congregational response to a newer cantorial melody. Friedmann (1901, no. 274) presents it as an "Alte Melodie". Baer (1883, no. 822) prints four melodies two of which are variants of the psalmodic chants and the march tune. I was unable to find any research on the origins of the Sukkot melody, my own feeling is that it is derived from the prayer for rain, *T'fillat gešem* on Shemini-Atzeret, but further research is needed. Baer describes the last melody as P.W., i.e. Polish melody. The melody does indeed show some modal characteristics of Eastern European folk songs, which may raise some questions about the supposed Southern-German origins of some of the seasonal melodies.

65 The Birnbaum Collection (Mus. 72, Appendix 3, *Notenblatt* 4) contains a melody for the PB, titled ריגון לפסח, i.e. a PB melody for Passover. Like so many other Western European synagogue melodies for this feast, the priestly melody is also based on the traditional tune of the famous Haggadah song *Addir hu*. *The melody is exceptional, however, because it sets all the words of the PB.*

Pilgrimage Festivals.⁶⁶ Since this ceremony is now forgotten, it needs a brief description.

The ceremony was based on the last verse of the Torah portion that is read on the last day of the Three Pilgrimage Festivals. In this verse (Deut. 16, 17) the Israelites are enjoined to give a donation (in Hebrew *Mattenat-yad*) to the Lord on the Festivals of Pilgrimage, each according to his means. The ceremony developed during the late Middle Ages in Southern-Germany and gradually spread to other German communities. It was not known in Eastern Europe. The procedure is described in the manuals of religious customs, mainly those of Worms and Frankfurt.⁶⁷ In Worms, the ceremony took place immediately after the reading of the *haftarah*. The monthly president of the community would approach the rabbi requesting him to receive pledges from each member of the congregation. The rabbi, holding the communal Pentateuch in his hand, would ascend the *bimah* and would exchange pledges and blessings with the cantor. Then, after pronouncing a blessing for all the dignitaries who sat on the *bimah* the rabbi would descend with the holy book in his hands (in some communities the rabbi would hold a Torah scroll in his arms), and face each congregant separately. Every man approached would rise and pledge a donation for the synagogue. In Frankfurt, money was also pledged for the “students of Torah and the poor people of Jerusalem.” In return, the rabbi would pronounce a blessing on the donor with a special *Mi šeberaḳ* prayer. Returning to the *bimah* the rabbi would recite a collective blessing on behalf of the entire congregation, after which he would proceed to officiate in the ceremony of returning the Torah scrolls to the ark.

While the Rheinland Jews celebrated the *Mattenat-yad* ceremony, other German communities, especially those of Northern Germany and some of the Austro-Hungarian ones, observed *Hazkarat-nešamot* — otherwise known as *Yizkor* — the memorial service for the dead.⁶⁸ This

66 In the Diaspora, the eighth day of Passover, the second day of Shavuot and the eighth day of Sukkot (i.e. Shemini-Atzeret).

67 See Kirchheim (1987: 191) and Kaschmann (1968: 228). See also Baer (1883: 190).

68 Chants and choral music for *Yizkor* are printed in many cantorial books of Northern Germany. See, for example Friedmann (1901: 206–208, nos. 277–279). R. Eisik Tirna, whose book of customs describes the liturgical usage of Austria at the beginning of the sixteenth century, mentions the memorial service in the order of prayers for the last days of the Festivals, see Tirna (1979: 65–66, 73, and 136). Austrian cantorial books from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries print music for *Yizkor*. See Sulzer (1840: 96–98, no. 62) and Wodak (1898: 152–155, nos. 442–444). Wodak no. 443 is a special *Mi šeberaḳ*

was perhaps the result of the influence of *Minhag Polin* namely the ritual customs of the Eastern-European communities on German Jews from the eighteenth century on. In some German speaking communities, mainly in Northern and Eastern Germany, both *Mattenat-yad* and *Yizkor* were observed. Abraham Baer, cantor in Göteborg (Gothenburg), South-West Sweden, speaks for many North German communities when he says (Baer 1878: 190, no. 828): “On the days when *Mattenat-yad* takes place, there follows...in most congregations the memorial service of *Hazkarat-nešamot*.”

We therefore suggest that the melody described by Itzik Offenbach as *meysim nign* originated in the Rheinland communities and was associated there with the atmosphere of generosity and well-being that the *Mattenat-yad* ceremony inspired. In fact, a variant of this *ältere Melodie* served in Frankfurt as a joyful processional march tune for the returning of the Torah scrolls to the ark on the three Festivals.⁶⁹ The melody was known throughout Germany, but it was associated with the dead in the communities where the memorial services were performed on the same Festivals either after or instead of the *Mattenat-yad* ceremony. From there it was borrowed into the memorial service on Yom Kippur. Variants of the melody were sung in some Eastern Europe congregations on every occasion when the PB ceremony took place without any connection to the *Yizkor* service.⁷⁰ The second part of the melody can still be heard in American and Israeli synagogues of Eastern European origins.

The melody gained special popularity towards the end of the nineteenth century. Together with the melodies of *Kol nidrei* and *Ma'oz zur* it was considered a symbol of Jewish national music. It was then arranged for keyboard instruments as music for home use.⁷¹ In 1896, Ernst Pauer and Francis L. Cohen cooperated in publishing an anthology of favorite Jewish melodies arranged for piano by Pauer. Among other favorites, this publication (Pauer 1896: 14–15) contains a

prayer for those who donate money to the synagogue in memory of their loved one. This may reflect the influence of the *Mattenat-yad* ceremony on the Festival services of the Austrian congregations. Cf. Tirna (1979: 65, note 34).

69 See Japhet (1881: 91, no. 53).

70 The Hassidim of Ruzhin sang an embellished variant of the melody on all of the Three Festivals and High Holy Days. See Sharvit (1995: 58, no. 47).

71 Thus for instance, the Birnbaum collection in Cincinnati contains a simple contrapuntal arrangement by Birnbaum himself (Mus. 135 a). The arrangement is dated “17 Febr. 1904” and was a (birthday?) gift to a friend, S. Magnus.

fantasy-arrangement of the melody, under the title “‘Matnath Yad’, *Memorial of the Departed*”. In his article on the PB (Cohen 1901), Cohen relates that this arrangement “attracted the attention of the late Queen Victoria, and was played as the introductory voluntary at several memorial services of the British royal family.”

In addition to the above four seasonal tunes, Itzik Offenbach provides a vivacious tune which Israel Adler (1989: 467) identified as the “melody known in the oral tradition as the ‘Fassbinder’ tune...but closer to the tune of ‘Ich ging durch einen Grasgrünen Wald’”. Adler cites a Frankfurt tradition (Ogutsch 1930: 91, no. 284, see Ex. 6 below) showing that the melody was sung there during the High Holy Day services. Ogutsch places the melody in the *Ne’ilah* service of Yom Kippur and he specifies that the melody should be sung in all the relevant High Holy Day services, and in the *Musaf* services on the first day of Passover and on the *Matnas-Yod* days.⁷² Ogutsch’s version is the fullest and best representation of this melody because it gives us an insight into the division of the melody between the cantor and the *kohanim*. This is a typical German nature and hunting’ tune of the eighteenth or early

Nr. 284  (in allen 7-Gebeten, bei 70 Tress und 7 Russen)



J'wo-re - ch' - cho J'wo-re - ch' - cho, Adau - noj,
 Adau - noj w'jisch-mre - cho
 w'jisch-m' - re - cho. etc.
 po - now po - now, ö - le - cho
 ö - le - cho wi - chun - nek - ko. etc.

Example 6. The “Fassbinder melody” in Ogutsch 1930:91, no. 284.

72 A variant appears in another Frankfurter cantorial book, Japhet (1881: 102–103, no. 60), with no assignment to a particular Holy Day.

nineteenth century with fast triple meter and horn-calls (the E-flat major key is no mere coincidence). Even the word *Adonay* – the notes of which are not part of the original melody – is chanted like a horn call. Melodies based on German folksongs and rococo-style tunes were sung in many German synagogues even during the most solemn PB rituals of the year and way into the twentieth century.⁷³ Does this attest to a certain tendency of the German Jews to robust humor, or to romantic and self-effacing irony? It is hard to tell.

EASTERN MELODIES FOR THE PRIESTLY BLESSING

Contrary to their Western brethren, the Eastern European Jews did not use the seasonal melodies for the PB. As we have seen, some Eastern European synagogues used the *meysim nign* for all Festivals and High Holy Days, but in most communities, other melodies were sung. The *kohanim* tended to preserve local melodies that were transmitted orally within their families or within one congregation or town. Some of them were specific to certain holy days, but their connection to the day was not necessarily through the traditional *nusah* melodic patterns, but through some emotional connection to its meaning.

In his above-mentioned article, Francis Cohen brings an example of a melody, which he describes as a “chant of Polish origin, probably of the seventeenth century” and praises it as “a typical example of a Hebrew melody” (see Ex. 7). The chant is indeed typical to Eastern-European melodies for the PB. It is similar to tunes used for the *piyyuṭim* on the Eve of Yom Kippur and therefore may have originally been used for the PB on the High Holy Days. Contrary to Western practice where the *kohanim* were supposed to repeat the melody of the cantor, here the cantor does not chant the melody. He prompts the *kohanim* with the word to be chanted and leaves the longer melody to the *kohanim*.

A comparison of PB melodies in German cantorial manuals and in Eastern-European collections shows that in addition to the difference in style, modality etc., there is a marked difference in the origins of the melodies. With some exceptions, the German melodies seem to spring from the cantors’ world of traditional chants, seasonal melodies, rococo

73 A good example of a rococo melody in the shape of a minuet (although marked as Adagio) is the one in Japhet 1881: 104–105, no. 62). Another interesting one, for the seventh day of Passover, was transcribed by Eduard Birnbaum (Birnbaum Collection Mus.126, 4, 3).

BIRKAT KOHANIM

The musical score is written on four staves. The first staff is for the Cantor, marked *Moderato*, with the lyrics "Ye - ba - re - ke - ka: Ye - ba - re - ke - ka: A - do - nai:....". The second staff is for the Priests, with the lyrics "A - do - nai:.... We - yish - me - re - ka. Abl.....". The third staff continues the Priests' part with "Abl.....". The fourth staff is for the Congregation, marked *Lento*, with the lyrics "We - yish - me - re - ka. A - . - men.".

Example 7. PB melody "of Polish origin" in Cohen 1901.

music and even cantorial fantasia, whereas the Eastern-European melodies come out of the folk inventiveness of the *kohanim*. Like folk songs in general, some were of genuine beauty or interesting structure while others were trite ditties. This may explain Abraham Moshe Bernstein's criticism. Bernstein, a most important cantor of Vilna, a composer and an avid collector of Jewish music, found fault with the eastern PB melodies. In the preface to his *Muzikalisher Pinkos* (Bernstein 1927: col. XV–XVI) he expressed his disappointment with most of the *kohanim*-melodies that he had heard in Eastern-European synagogues. Of the nine melodies that he published in the *Pinkos* (pp. 80–81, nos. 184–192), only two, the melodies from Szack (Shatzk, Poland) and Amdur (Lithuania, nos. 185 and 190 resp.)⁷⁴ found favor in his eyes since they were "earnestly appropriate for the occasion and [carried] in them the signs of old age." Indeed both melodies are of curious modality and asymmetrical structure (See melody no. 190 in Ex.8). Since the Eastern European *kohanim* tended to preserve melodies of local and family traditions, the number of such melodies must be quite big, and we need a project to collect, classify and research them.⁷⁵

74 The Szack and Amdur melodies were reprinted in Vinaver (1955: 187, nos. 42–43). Vinaver added nonsense syllables as text underlay.

75 Thus, for instance, three interesting melodies for the PB were preserved in the Birnbaum Collection Ms. Mus. 141, dated 1905. Birnbaum notated them as a certain Cantor Paglin of Lithuania sang them.

אמְדוּר. אַרְיֶטְעוּסְטֶען פֿון דײַ אַסְרײַם צײַט.

№ 190



Example 8. Kohanim-melody from *Amdur* (Bernstein 1927, no. 190).

Thanks to the creativity of the Hasidim, the Eastern-European treasure of melodies for the PB was enriched with a great variety of tunes. These were frequently created by special request of the Hasidic spiritual leaders, the *Rebbes*. An outstanding example is the PB melody of the Hasidim of Ḥabad (Lubavitch), which was composed by the “*kapelye*” i.e. the court singers of the “Middle Rebbe,” R. Dov Ber of Lubavitch (1774–1828) and was later printed in the first book of the Ḥabad melodies (Zalmanoff 1948: 21–22, no. 27, see Ex. 9). In his introduction (p. 78), Zalmanoff quotes part of his 1944 interview with the Rebbe of Ḥabad at the time, R. Joseph Isaac of Lubavitch. The *rebbe* had the following to say about the *niggun* and its meaning:

The *niggun* of the priestly blessing is very profound and is *mekuwwan* [a Ḥabbad term which means that the melody has Kabbalistic connotations and is of the highest degree of sanctity]. I heard it first in Riga from the oldest Hassidic *kohanim*. And R. Samuel Jacob Katz the *kohen* told me that he heard from his grandfather R. Velvil, who was one of the Middle Rebbe’s *kapelye* that one day, the Middle Rebbe asked the directors of the *kapelye* to compose a special *niggun* that would be suitable for the PB at [the ceremony of] raising the hands. The *kapelye* members set themselves to the task and after some time they created a new *niggun* and sang it before the Rebbe, but it did not find favor in his eyes. And so it happened a few times until they composed this *niggun* [which] found special favor in the eyes of the Middle Rebbe and he then said: “In this *niggun* there are *tenu’ot* [i.e. melodic patterns] of bitterness and joy within the idea of hope”.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Some deeper kabbalistic remarks on the *niggun* can be found *ibid.* in Zalmanoff’s quotation from the same Rebbe’s discourse in honor of the second day of Shavuot 1939.

27

כו

ניגון לברכת פהנים יָלְכָהּ ד' וַיִּשְׁמְרָהּ

(נסדר מה'קאפעליע" של כ"ק אדמו"ר האמצעי ו'ע)

Adagio

mf

פהנים

חזון פהנים חזון

א - דו - א - שם - דו - א - שם

פהנים

חזון פהנים חזון

א - דו - א - שם - דו - א - שם

קהנים

חזון פהנים חזון

א - דו - א - שם - דו - א - שם

פהנים

חזון פהנים חזון

א - דו - א - שם - דו - א - שם

פהנים

חזון פהנים חזון

א - דו - א - שם - דו - א - שם

The image displays a musical score for a Habad Priestly Blessing (PB) Chant. It consists of ten staves of music, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are written in Hebrew characters below the notes. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings. The lyrics are:
 Staff 1: אֱלֹהֵינוּ
 Staff 2: אֱלֹהֵינוּ
 Staff 3: אֱלֹהֵינוּ
 Staff 4: אֱלֹהֵינוּ
 Staff 5: אֱלֹהֵינוּ
 Staff 6: אֱלֹהֵינוּ
 Staff 7: אֱלֹהֵינוּ
 Staff 8: אֱלֹהֵינוּ
 Staff 9: אֱלֹהֵינוּ
 Staff 10: אֱלֹהֵינוּ

Example 9. *Habad PB Chant* (Zalmanoff 1848: 21-22, no. 27).

The chant is none but a cleverly embellished version of a chant similar to the one presented in Example 1 above. It is built on three melodic segments: one (on the word *Adonay*) consists of one motif and the others of two motifs. The second motif could be an open-ended one leading to *g*, or a closing one ending on *e*. The arrangement of the melodic segments is similar to that of the motifs in Lewandowski's melody (see Table 3 and cf. Table 2 above). The chant is usually sung in a very slow tempo with

much fervor and the dialogue between cantor and *kohanim* enhances its special characteristics. The word *Adonay* (transcribed here as *Adoshem*) is sung on a short motif by the cantor and is imitated exactly by the *kohanim*. For all the other words, the *kohanim* enlarge the cantor's melody by repeating a melodic pattern within the motif. PB chants of similar and different structures exist among other Hasidim and they deserve research.

Table 3. Segment layout in the *Habad PB chant*.

	Opening Word	God's Name	1st middle Word	2nd middle Word	3rd middle Word	Penultimate Word	Closing Word
Verse 1	A/g	B/g					C/e
Verse 2	A/g	B/g	C1/g			A1/g	C/e
Verse 3	A/g	B/g	C1/g	A1/g	C1/g	A1/g	C/e

CANTOR'S SUBSTITUTE PRAYER FOR THE PRIESTLY BLESSING

As seen before, the Ashkenazi custom in the Diaspora limits the PB ceremony to the Holy Days. On all other occasions, or when there are no *kohanim* in the synagogue, the cantor is expected to chant a substitute prayer in lieu of the ceremony.⁷⁷ The prayer reads:

אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו
ברכנו בברכה המשלשת
הכתובה בתורה על ידי משה עבדך
האמורה מפי אהרון ובניו כהנים, עם קדושך, כאמור:
יברכך יי וישמרך
יאר יי פניו אליך ויחנך
ישא יי פניו אליך וישם לך שלום

Our God and God of our forefathers,
bless us with the threefold blessing
that is written in your Torah by Moses your servant,
[and is] pronounced by the mouth of Aaron and his sons

⁷⁷ In many congregations, the cantor chants the beginning of the prayer until the word *ka-amur* even when the *kohanim* perform the ritual. A similar text, which was probably used in Babylonia during Geonic times, is the standard PB in the Karaite liturgy.

the priests, your holy nation, as it is said:

“May the Lord bless you and protect you

May the Lord shine His face upon you and be gracious unto you.

May the Lord lift His face to you and may He grant you peace.”

The congregation answers each one of the three verses with *Ken yehi razon* (So may be [God’s] will).

This prayer is usually chanted to the traditional melodic patterns (known in Eastern Europe as *nusah*), which govern the benedictions chanting of the *‘amidah*. Thus, on weekdays, the substitute prayer would be chanted in the quasi-pentatonic mode that governs the entire *‘amidah* of the day, whereas on the Sabbath, the same prayer would be chanted in the *Ahava rabbah* mode.⁷⁸ When, professional cantors chant it as part of the Sabbath service, they tend to embellish the simple formula or opt to create extended pieces using the text as basis for extended cantorial recitatives. The embellishments are usually performed on the first part of the prayer, i.e. the introduction to the blessing, while the text of the PB itself is left to a relatively simple chant (see Ex. 10).

Eastern-European virtuoso cantors have made this prayer an important avenue for musical development (and sometimes of vocal showoff).⁷⁹ One of the most interesting compositions of this kind is Hirsch Weintraub’s notation of what is probably a composition by his father Shlomo Kashtan, in the Birnbaum Collection, Ms. W.78. The setting for cantor and choir is too long to be presented here. It contains outdrawn and highly embellished recitatives for the cantor and almost equally long responses for the choir and it ends with a long piece on the congregational private prayer *Addir ba-marom*. The cantor’s part for the words *Adonay* and *veyišmerekā* will suffice to show the virtuosity of the piece and its special modal development. Interestingly, Kashtan (or was it Weintraub?) did not hesitate to break the rule which forbade singing long melismata on God’s name (see Ex. 11).

78 A weekday chant from the German tradition can be found in Baer (1883: 23, no.85), a counterpart example from the Eastern-European tradition in Spiro (1980: 75–76). A Sabbath chant from the German tradition is Baer (1883: 134–35). The upper line in this prayer represents the traditional chant in the *Ahava rabbah* mode, whereas the lower line presents a new chant in major. An Eastern-European chant in the same mode can be found in Ne’eman (1969: 82–83, no. 89).

79 A good example is Berele Chagy’s setting, see Chagy (1937: 39–40, no. 79).

מַחֲרִיטֵי קוֹחָנִים

E-to-hey - nu vey to-hey A - so -
 sey - nu bo-r'-chey-mu vab'-ro-cho ham'shu-le-she-s
 ba-to-ro hak'-su-vo al y'-dey mo-she av-
 de-cho ho-a-mu-rom mi-pi a-ha-ron u-vo-nov ko-ha-
 nim am k'-do-she-cho ko-o-
 mur y'-vo-re-ch'-cho a-do-nay v'-yish-m'-re-cho
 yo-eyr a-do-nay po-nod ey-le-cho vi-cha-ne ko
 yi-so a-do-nay po-nod ey-le - - - cho v' yo-
 seym l-cho sho-tom

Example 10. Substitute prayer for the PB, from Katchko 1986: 33, no. 36A.

[cantor] Duchan

a - do - noy

[cantor] w' - jisch - m' - re cho

Example 11. Excerpts from Kashtan/Weintraub's setting of the substitute prayer.

NINETEENTH-CENTURY MODERATE REFORMATION

With the emancipation of the Jews in Germany and France and the attempt of the Jews to be integrated into the European culture of the time there came an increasing awareness of the shortcomings of the synagogue worship from the point of view of decorum. One of the sore spots was the traditional PB ritual. The most disturbing components of the ritual were: the taking off of the shoes in the synagogue, the excessive motion in the sanctuary while the *kohanim* walk to vestibule and then again to the ark, congregants leaving their seats to greet the *kohanim* when they returned from the ritual, the loud recitation of the responsive verses or the prayer over dreams by members of the congregation, the recitation of the irrational Kabbalistic prayer at the end of the PB, the unmusical chanting of those *kohanim* who could not carry a tune, and finally the heterophonic dissonant chanting of those who were able to sing well. Some of these concerns were reflected in the new synagogue regulations that were issued in Germany from the 1830s on (discussed at great length in Petuchowski 1968) and similar ones that were agreed on by worship committees in American synagogues.

The 1843 *Synagogen-Ordnung* for the Grand Duchy of Mecklenburg-Schwerin required that “the change of footgear of the *kohanim* in connection with *duchanen* ...take place in the vestibule, and must never be done within the synagogue itself”. It also forbade the “expressions of thanks, *yiyasher koah* to the *kohanim* after the conclusion of the Priestly Benediction.”⁸⁰ Similar ordinances were adopted at the same time by other communities in Germany and three decades later (1874) by the Neo-Orthodox synagogue in Frankfurt, under the leadership of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch.⁸¹

While the ordinances tried to eliminate some of the most offending features of the ritual, radical opinions were voiced against some of the essential parts of the ceremony. Such a stand was taken by Rabbi Dr. [Max] Lilienthal in his article “Propositions to a Minhag America” (*The Israelite* 2, no. 22, July 12, 1855, p. 182). Lilienthal, attacked the traditional rules and customs of the ritual from both points of view of halacha and modern sense of decorum. Armed with extensive quotations from the rabbinic authorities that were against certain customs, he

80 See Petuchowski (1968: 118–19).

81 See Petuchowski (1968: 123–124). On Hirsch and his relation to the Reform ideas see Reif (1993: 281–82) and Meyer (1994: 77–79).

recommended that they be abolished in modern American synagogues. One of his most important targets was the custom of chanting the PB in long melodies. These, he believed, were introduced by the congregational recitation of the biblical verses and the prayer for dreams, which in his opinion were in themselves “illegal” from a halachic point of view. He summarized his argument as follows:

But having proved the illegality of this recitation, it is not more than fair to do away with these melodies too, the unmelodious singing of the Kohanim causing hilarity and disorder quite unbecoming of the dignity of divine service. A plain, devote recitation of the words is all that the law requires, entirely satisfying thereby the altered taste of our time.

According to the foregoing investigation therefore, the Kohanim need not to put off their boots, nor wash their hands, nor form a cabbalistical partition with their fingers, the biblical verses and the רבשׁע [i.e. the prayer for dreams] have to be done away with, and the Kohanim may plainly and devotedly recite the words or the blessings, without intruding upon the time of the congregation or disturbing the decorum of the services by an unmelodious singing of some antiquated melodies.

A more moderate view was expressed in the bylaws that were partially approved by Congregation B'nay Yeshurun of Cincinnati on February 27, 1848. Under the influence of Rev. James K. Gutheim, a preacher and “reader” (i.e. cantor), the modern (but at that time still Orthodox) Congregation adopted a “Plan for the better Regulation of our worship, with several Amendments”.⁸² Article IV deals with the PB ritual as follows:

Duchan

Sect. 1 Cohanim are not permitted to דוכן except by the permission of the President in which Case the[y] must have ... a previous understanding with the Chasan about a Simplified Harmonious melody.

82 On the German origins and history of this congregation see Sarna and Goldman (1994: 165–168). On the religious background of the by-laws and the internal conflicts between the traditionalists and modernizers, see Goldman (1995: 123–125). I am grateful to Dr. Karla Goldman for sharing with me important information from her research, for providing me with a copy of the by-laws of the congregation and for directing me to the relevant passages in *The Israelite*.

Sect. 2 The taking off of shoes the Washing of hands must be done in the Vestibule not in the Synagogue.

Sect. 3 A laut [sic] Repetition of the פסוקים [responsive verses] in ברכת ריבישעי on the part of the Congregation or the Recitation of the ריבישעי [i.e. the prayer for dreams] is not permitted.

We do not know what “Simplified Harmonious melody” the *hazzan* and the *kohanim* of B’nay Yesurun chanted, but we are aware of earlier European attempts to simplify and “harmonize” the chants of the *kohanim*. Hartwig Philip Ree and his cantor L.B. Mayer made such an attempt during the early 1820’s in Aarhus, Denmark (see Ree 1825). It was part of a re-shaping of the entire synagogue service as is reflected in Ree’s “Proposal for a Most Urgent Synagogue Order”.⁸³ A musical companion composed by L.M. Mayer accompanied the proposal.⁸⁴ The basis of Ree’s text was Wolf Heidenheim’s famous orthodox prayer book and his “reformation” was limited to the exclusion of certain Aramaic prayers and ancient *piyyuṭim* and to the modernization of a few synagogue practices. As Birnbaum remarked,⁸⁵ Ree’s Proposal may have served as a model for the Sulzer-Mannheimer moderate reformation of the ritual in the Vienna synagogue and for the creation of the new Viennese *Siddur, Minhag Vienna*.⁸⁶

While Ree’s liturgical changes were minimal, the musical changes were extreme. L.M. Mayer’s *Gesangbuch* eliminated all traditional chants: even the *Kol Nidrei* text was set to a new simple melody in the major mode. The songbook contained four-measured recitatives called *Vorträge* (i.e. chant formulae), all of them in 6/8 meter. The first *Vortrag* served as the chant for the opening verses of the psalms for *Kabbalat Šabbat*; the other three *Vorträge* were settings of the benedictions before the synagogue functions of blowing the Shofar (no. 20), the PB ritual (no. 23) and the public reading of the Scroll of Esther or the kindling of the Hanukah candles (no. 28). All of the *Vorträge* were based on two or three melodic patterns called by Ree: “*Litr. A, B, oder C*”. They were all in what seems to sound as B-flat major and had the limited range of the

83 Ree 1825, Birnbaum Coll. Mus. 62, transferred to BI.H.235. See Adler (1989: 270).

84 Birnbaum Coll. Mus. 72. Israel Adler discusses the companion in detail in Adler (1989), under item 074.

85 Cited by Adler (1989: 324).

86 Mannheimer came originally from Copenhagen and retained his connections to that city during his years in Vienna.

minor sixth f'-d''. The preliminary benediction before the PB was based on the same simple patterns; the PB itself was again a simple B-flat major melody. It appeared twice in the *Gesangbuch*: once as a solo for the cantor to be sung at the Sabbath *Musaf* service (no. 12) and a response by the congregation with the text *Addir ba-marom*; the second time it appeared among the Rosh Hashanah prayers under the title *Duchan* (no. 24, see Ex. 12). The tempo was extremely slow; the fermata signs indicated that the melody of the cantor was to be repeated by the *kohanim*.

Ree's instructions for the PB are unclear as to who should chant the preliminary benediction before the PB. The structure of the melody

Duchan

(♩. 80)

(♩. 60) *Andante molto*

j'vo - ra - ch'cho a - dô - noj vjisch - m'ra - cho
jo - er a - dô - noj po - nov e - la - cho vi - chu - na - ko
ji - so a - dô - noj po - nov e - la - cho
v'jo - sem l'cho scho - lom

Example 12. L. M. Mayer's *Duchan* for Rosh Hashanah (nos. 23–24).

suggests that he intended the cantor rather than *kohanim* to chant this prayer, a practice that would contradict the halacha. The instructions for the PB itself are clearer:

The cantor first sings the entire word [and is imitated by the *kohanim*]. After the cantor intones *veyišmerekā* he leads the *kohanim* in singing the entire melody of the first verse twice on the vowel *a* and only after that do the *kohanim* repeat the word *veyišmerekā* and the congregation responds with *Amen*.

It is interesting to note that Ree retained the custom of singing a long melody before the last word of each verse of the PB in spite of the fact that he rejected its original cause. Ree says (1825: 31):

The *Y'hi ratzon* should be rejected like all the other prayers with Kabbalistic meaning. An exception should be made only for those who have studied the Kabbalah (the secret lore). The usual interspersed verses found in all prayer books should also not be prayed. This is clearly stated in [Heidenheim's] *Mahzor* prayer book published in Altona in 5564 [i.e. 1804] second part, fol. 100, 127, in the name of many theologians.

SULZER'S CHANT AND CHORAL RESPONSES

Decorum and majesty within the traditional framework was the ideal to which Isaac Noah Mannheimer and Solomon Sulzer strove when they undertook in 1826 to reshape the worship services at the Vienna Synagogue and to form *Minhag Vina*. As mentioned before, they may have been influenced by the Aarhus reformation of Hartwig Philip Ree whose book appeared in print a year earlier. One of the means to achieve the goals of Mannheimer and Sulzer was to simplify the synagogue chants. However, Sulzer was too good a musician to allow the music of the synagogue deteriorate to the simplistic Aarhus formulae of L.M. Mayer. Sulzer introduced new recitatives, but also preserved the old chants, some of which he "purified" from excessive embellishments.

When Sulzer started dealing with the PB, he had to confront the Viennese synagogue regulation according to which the PB was to be said, not chanted for fear of the cacophonous singing of the *kohanim*.⁸⁷ He reshaped the ceremony and apparently also trained the *kohanim*.

87 See Werner (1976: 208) and Wolf (1861: 27).

Sulzer's early setting of the PB (*Schir Zion*, vol. 1, no. 68) made the cantor lead the ceremony with a simple chant whose patterns were imitated note for note by the *kohanim*. An optional lower part was added to the chant of the *kohanim* so that they could sing in two parts.⁸⁸ While the *kohanim* chanted their blessing, the choir chanted the additional biblical verses in unison or in three-part harmony and responded *Amen* at the end of the verses.⁸⁹

But Sulzer changed the practice in his later years. In the 1865 setting (*Schir Zion*, vol. 2, no. 154) he added an organ part to accompany the *kohanim* and to regulate their singing (the cantor's part remained unaccompanied).⁹⁰ Above the organ notes Sulzer printed the beginnings of the biblical verses, but he indicated that the choir should recite them "leise betend" i.e. praying softly.⁹¹

Interestingly, none of Sulzer's versions of the PB incorporates the traditional Western Ashkenazi seasonal melodies or any other textless niggunim for the end of the three verses. This should indicate that *Minhag Vienna* did not recognize the prayer over dreams as a valid petition for the modern worshiper. However, in the later 1905 edition of *Schir Zion* Sulzer's son, Joseph, weaved motives of the *meysim nign* into the chant of the cantor.

FRANKEL'S PRIESTLY SHOW

While Sulzer and Mannheimer strove to elevate the PB ceremony to a dignified ritual, some other moderate Reform leaders tried to turn the ritual into a sacred show. In his *Response to Modernity* Michael Meyer describes the ceremony of the PB ritual as performed in Zacharia Frankel's Reform synagogue in Dresden on the feast of Shavuot 1840 as follows:

88 For a more daring attempt to set the chants of the *kohanim* in two parts, see Berlijn (1864).

89 It is not clear whether by making the choir chant the additional biblical verses Sulzer introduced a new practice, or he reshaped an old Southern German tradition that he had heard in his youth.

90 In his later years, Sulzer advocated the use of the organ in the synagogue as a means to regulate congregational singing. In his own synagogue, however, Sulzer never allowed the use of the organ, see Avenary (1985: 163–70).

91 Werner (1976: 214) praises this setting: "The composition breathes a high and quiet solemnity."

When the time arrived for the priests to bless the congregation, the folding doors in the side hall opened and with measured step fourteen *kohanim* entered, dressed alike in black clothing, white robes and skullcaps. In precise and pleasing unison this “choir of priests” intoned their blessing of the congregation in alternation with the cantor and choir. “Tears of the most heartfelt emotion streamed from most every eye. The numerous non-Jews of every station who were present were taken aback; they had not anticipated anything like it.” How very different it was from the customary dissonance!⁹²

Unfortunately, we do not have any further information on the music that was heard on this auspicious occasion.

The utilization of the choir in the PB ceremony, which began in the Sulzer’s time, reached its peak during the 1880’s in the modern choral synagogues of Odessa and Levov (Lemberg) under the influence of Jacob Bachmann. His book of compositions for cantor and choir contains a setting of the PB ceremony for four adult male soloists (the cantor, another tenor and two basses) the *kohanim* (in unison) and a boys and men’s choir in four parts (Bachmann 1884: 139–142). The cantor sings the chant pattern with the accompaniment of the other three soloists, the *kohanim* repeat the cantor’s patterns in unison and then the choir echoes the *kohanim* by singing the same patterns in a harmonization that is similar to that of the soloist group. Before singing the last word of each verse, the choir and the *kohanim* sing a textless melody in unison (see Ex. 13).

THE “CLASSICAL” REFORMATION AND THE PRIESTLY BLESSING

From its incept, the Reform movement struggled with the problem of the *kohanim*, their halachic status, the rules concerning them and their obligations, the rituals that they performed and the ideals and historic memories that they represented.⁹³ The existence of a hereditary prestigious cast of any kind contradicted the ideal of equality as had been preached by the ancient Prophets and seemed to materialize by the French revolution. To the Reformers all Israel are priests in the sense

92 See Meyer, (1994: 106). The passage is based on the eyewitness description of Bernard Beer as published in the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* 4 (1840: 376–377, 518–519).

93 See Philipson (1931: 248–249).

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Solo.

CANTOR.
TENOR .

Solo.

BASSO I.
BASSO II.

KOHANIM

Coro.

is - so o - do - no po - nov

is o - do - no

Coro.

is - so a - do - no

o - le - cho w, jo -

po - nov o - le - cho

po - nov

sem i, cho a - cho - lom

w, jo - sem i, cho a -

sem i, cho

KOHANIM.

Coro.

a - cho - lom

Finc.

6822

Example 13. Extract from Bachmann's Setting of the PB (Bachmann 1884:142).

expressed in Exodus 19, 6 “You shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” Beyond that, the status of the *kohanim*, their rights and duties were glaring remnants of the ancient worship in the Jerusalem Temple. They symbolized the yearning to return to Zion, to rebuild the Temple and to reestablish the sacrificial rite, all of which the German Reformers rejected vehemently. This ideological stand together with the urge of the Jews to become Germans of the Mosaic faith militated against the PB ritual. Needless to say, the ancient and ethnic look of the PB ritual was in itself a good reason for rejecting it. Nevertheless, various Reform temples maintained the ritual despite the new convictions and sentiments. It was performed even in the flagship synagogue of the German Reform Movement, the Hamburg Temple, as witnessed by the Temple’s prayer book of 1819 and its revision of 1841. Furthermore, as David Ellenson points out, Abraham Geiger, a fervent advocate of ideological consistency and compatibility of ritual with Reform ideology, who had criticized the Hamburg *Gebetbuch* in 1841 for this deviation from the ideals, retained the PB ritual in his own prayer books of 1854 and 1870.⁹⁴

Gradually, however, the ritual fell into disuse. In addition to all other causes, later Reform practice curtailed or abolished the *Musaf* service on the Sabbaths and Holy Days. Since, however, the *Musaf* on the Festivals and the High Holy Days was the main occasion for the PB ritual in the Diaspora, the latter deteriorated to the point of extinction.⁹⁵ In various Reform congregations the “reader,” namely the cantor or the rabbi, chanted or recited the traditional substitute prayer in lieu of the ritual.⁹⁶ It is quite remarkable that the United Synagogue, “the legally recognized body of Orthodox synagogues in London” under the leadership of Rabbi Herman Adler, took the same stand. The 1890 official prayer

94 See, Ellenson (1999: 151 and 157) and Seroussi (1996: 106–9).

95 See Philipson (1931: 180–181). In some congregations the ceremony was retained in the *Šaharit* service.

96 Elbogen (1993: 66) concluded his historical survey of the PB ritual as follows: “By the decision of an assembly of the rabbis in Frankfurt in 1845, the recitation of the Blessing by the priests was eliminated completely in Reform congregations in Germany and America, and only its recitation by the precentor was retained. This became the practice even in conservative congregations; or at the very least, the simplest form of the Blessing was restored, and all the wild growths, particularly the superfluous singing, were eliminated.” Considering the variety of practices in the Reform congregations, this statement is a bit exaggerated. The last words however can teach us much about its writer’s point of view, which was shared by Jewish intellectuals in Germany in 1913, when the statement was originally written.

book of the United Synagogue edited by Simeon Singer excluded the PB ritual in favor of the reader's (i.e. the cantor's) substitute prayer, this practice lasted two decades after which the PB ritual was restored (see Reif 1993: 283–286, 305–06). Interesting as well is the practice in the Conservative synagogues in America. While the official stand of the Conservative movement as expressed in its prayer books is to retain the PB ritual, many synagogues choose to omit it and to have the cantor chant the substitute prayer in its stead. The standard Conservative prayer book for the High Holy Days (Silverman 1951: 172 and 401) provides the text of the ritual in small print and that of the substitute prayer in large print. The instruction above the ritual text is that it should be used “When the Kohanim offer the Priestly Blessing”.⁹⁷ This is in contrast to the Orthodox inscriptions on the substitute prayer, which would normally instruct the cantor to chant it only if there are no *kohanim* in the synagogue.

Reform rabbis who insisted on retaining the ritual found creative solutions for the problem of the *kohanim*. David Einhorn, who “at least as early as 1844 had associated chosenness with the priesthood of the entire Jewish people” (Meyer 1994: 247), had the entire congregation serve as *kohanim*. In his prayer book (Einhorn 1862: 63), he prescribes the PB to be sung so that each verse is first chanted by the *Vorbeter* [the cantor or the rabbi] and is then repeated by the choir and the congregation.

Benjamin Szold, Rabbi of Oheb-Shalom Congregation in Baltimore, found a compromise between the need for a ceremonial PB and the reform ideology. His prayer book (Szold 1865) prescribed the recitation of the substitute prayer during the services of the Sabbath, the Three Festivals and the New Year (See pp. 164–165, and 343–344). However, for the Additional Service of the Day of Atonement he prescribed the following ceremony (pp. 506–507): “The Congregation arise, the Rabbi ascends the place before the Ark, turns his face whilst reciting the Priestly Blessing towards the Congregation. Each word is said by the reader [i.e. the cantor] and repeated by the Rabbi.” Thus the rabbi assumed the role of the *kohen* once a year. The Berlin Reform Temple

97 The prayer book served most Conservative congregations in America from the early 1950's to the late 1970's. The prayer book that replaced it (Harlow 1972) printed the alternatives with the same-size lettering (pp. 282–85 and 588–91), but retained the evasive instructions: “When *kohanim* chant the blessing, congregation rises. When they do not, *Hazzan* continues at the top of the following page.”

went one step further. The sixth suggestion of its liturgical committee meeting in 1845 reads: "The priestly benediction is to be pronounced, not by the so-called Aaronides, but by the preacher and the choir."⁹⁸

Similar opinions were voiced in America. *The Israelite* 4, no. 23 of December 11, 1857 (p. 181) published a letter to the editor signed by a certain T. from Rochester, N.Y., and titled "A few thoughts suggested by the mode of pronouncing the Priestly Benediction, in the Temple of New York" The writer praises the services that he attended at Temple Emanuel during the High Holy Days, but criticizes the traditional ritual of the PB that he saw there, as follows:

The question arose in my mind, why must the Cantor dictate every word to the person whose office it is to pronounce the Benediction? Why must it be sung? Why should it not solemnly pronounced at the close of the service? Moreover, why not close the services, on EVERY occasion of Divine Worship in the Synagogue with this Benediction? What holier, what nobler function could the RABBI perform than that of dismissing the Congregation, by pronouncing the formula prescribed by God himself? The Rabbi, the Preacher — HE is our priest.

The writer continues with some reference to Kings David and Solomon and he concludes his remarks:

But in our days, when even according to the Rabbinical code, every father is permitted to bless his children with the priestly blessing: why may not the Rabbi bestow the same blessing on HIS children the members of the Congregation?

As this sentiment grew more popular among laymen and clergy, various Reform congregations took the PB out of its traditional place before the last benediction of the *'amidah* and placed it at the very end of every service, morning or evening, as the final benediction of the rabbi. This change, which became standard in the American Reform temples, was undoubtedly influenced by the identical practice in Protestant churches.⁹⁹ It was remarkably similar in church and temple: The

98 Quoted from Philipson (1931: 245).

99 It is noteworthy that the PB is not part of the traditional liturgy in the Catholic Church, in spite of the priestly status of its clergy. This is probably a result of the Pauline rejection of the temporary Aaronite priesthood in favor of the ultimate priesthood that began with Melchisedec (Malkizedeq, Gen. 14, 18–20, Ps. 110, 4) and was epitomized in Christ (NT, Hebrews, Ch. 3–8).

congregation would rise. The pastor or rabbi would stand before the altar or the ark and raise his hands; then, to the chordal accompaniment of the organ, he would intone on one note or recite the PB. The choir would answer *Amen* once after each verse and (in some churches and temples) would conclude with a festive triple *Amen* (see Ex. 14a and b). The Christian and Jewish ceremonies differed in that the pastor would normally intone the PB in English and the rabbi would recite it in both Hebrew and English; the pastor would also invoke the Trinity at the end of the blessing.

This form of benediction gave rise to numerous triple-*Amen* compositions for the Reform choirs. Thus, for instance, Jacob Weinberg ends his “Sabbath Eve Service (Servizio Pentatonico)” of 1935 with ten different versions of the triple *Amen*.¹⁰⁰

The use of two languages for the PB in the Reform temples provided the opportunity for various liturgical and musical setting. Verses could be exchanged between the cantor or soloist (in Hebrew) and the Rabbi (in English), or between the rabbi and the choir in various ways. At times the entire benediction would be entrusted to the cantor and choir. This gave rise to a great variety of musical settings of the PB in one or both languages and in various musical styles. Some of these are remarkable musical vignettes. Among the latter, one should mention Herbert Fromm’s *Y’vorech’cho* from his “Aday Israel: Friday Night Service” of 1943. It begins with the cantor chanting *Yevarekēka* on the motif of the word *Vehakohanim* from the traditional chant of the ‘*Avodah*’ service of Yom Kippur and develops into a beautiful exchange of modern-style recitative and choral answers. One should also mention *Yevorech’cho* by Max Janowski. The composition begins with an opening English statement of the choir “Our Lord, bless us according to Thy will” (see Ex. 15); it continues with an exchange between cantor and choir whereby the cantor chants the Hebrew verses in a modern form of Eastern-European cantorial recitative and the choir answers with the English counterparts in a Mendelssohnian style in the minor mode. The final choral statement is a fugato on the words “and give thee peace”.

During the 1970s, in the aftermath of the Vietnam War and the rise of protest against big corporations and the establishment, Reform congregations felt a need to become less institutional and more intimate. Laymen and religious leaders alike were tired of the formality of Classic

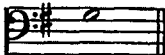
100 On Weinberg’s Service and its style, see Fallon (1999: 57–63).

The Service

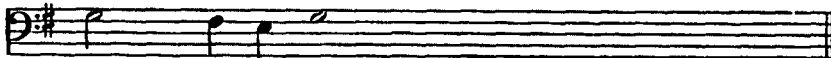
¶ Then the Minister, standing at the Altar, shall sing or say the Benediction.

THE BENEDICTION

Minister



THE LORD bless thee, and keep thee.
 The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee.
 The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace:



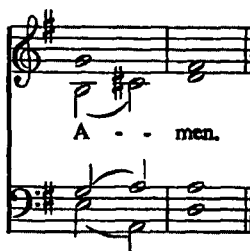
In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

¶ The Congregation shall sing or say:



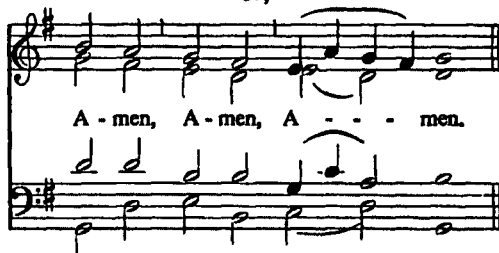
A - men.

Or,



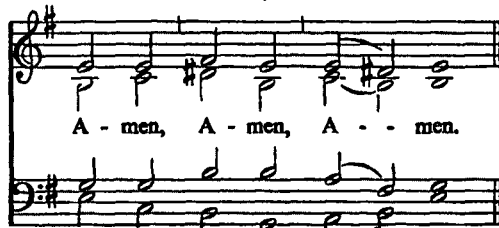
A - - men.

Or,



A - men, A - men, A - - - men.

Or,



A - men, A - men, A - - men.

Example 14a. Final benedictions from the Service Book and Hymnal of the Lutheran Church in America (Minneapolis 1958: 30).

BENEDICTION

ORGAN

p Y'varek'cho Adonoy v'yishm'recho. May the Lord bless thee and keep thee.

Yo'er Adonoy ponov e'lecho vichmekko. May the lord make His countenance to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee.

Yiso Adonoy ponov e'lecho v'yos'em l'cho sholom. May the Lord turn His countenance unto thee and grant thee peace.

Andante
CHOIR

A - - - - - men. *Andante*

p *pp*

Example 14b. Final benediction from Isadore Freed, *Sacred Service for the Sabbath Eve* (New York, 1953: 70).

Y'VORECH'CHO

Andante

Speaking Choir

Max Janowski

Our God and God of our fa - thers may Thy blees - ing rest up - on us ac -

cord - ing to the gra - cious pro - mise of Thy word Y' - vo - re - - ch' - cho A - de -

noy - v' - yish m' - re - cho v' - yish - m' - re - cho.

May the Lord bless thee and keep thee may the Lord bless thee and keep thee *mf* Ya -

May the Lord bless thee and keep thee may the Lord bless thee and keep thee

Example 15. Beginning of Y'vorech'cho by Max Janowski.

Reform services and sought the intimate, cozy service of the *Havurah* — a small group that assembled in private homes or in small chapels, or again in midst of nature. Reform rabbis felt uncomfortable with the role of the priest, they regarded themselves as religious professionals whose task was to teach and to lead the congregation from within, not to pontificate from above. Many rabbis expressed the new ideals by casting away their rabbinical robes. With the robe went the PB dismissal. Reform rabbis preferred to deliver the final benediction in a neutral way or in the first person plural (“May God bless us and keep us”). Many would end the service with a general verse about God blessing the people Israel, and not a few omitted this practice altogether. The PB was pronounced only on special occasions such as life-cycle events. Obviously, no new musical settings of the PB arose from this phase.

POST SCRIPT

The current trend in the American Reform movement is the pursuit of what is vaguely called ‘spirituality’. This signifies a break from the ideal of rationality that was the slogan on the banner of Reform Judaism from its incept. Under the quest for spirituality, young Reform rabbis and congregations seek to probe the world of emotions and the feeling of the beyond. Some turn for inspiration and guidance to Oriental, non-Jewish sources, others explore Kabbalistic and neo-Hasidic ideas and customs, still others try to find special spiritual meaning in the regular prayers. Under these circumstances the PB seems to emerge as a new source of inspiration. Notion of tradition, lore, liturgy and admittedly naive approaches to Judaism mingle together to create anew some kind of PB ritual. Indeed, attempts to revive the ritual have been made in Conservative synagogues and in some of them the revival is accompanied by certain innovations. In a letter to the *New York Times* (14 January 1997), Dr. Neil Gilman of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America asserted that he and his daughter performed the PB ritual together in Conservative synagogues.

In the Reform Movement, however, the revival takes on a different guise. In their *Torah in Motion: Creating Dance Midrash* JoAnne Tucker and Susan Freeman suggest a simple choreography for a ritual dance called “Blessing of Peace.” (Tucker and Freeman 1990: 164–165). The dance is intended to reflect the spiritual atmosphere emanating from the PB. The authors are not clear as to when the dance should be performed,

whether it is to be staged during the service or in other congregational meetings, or if it is meant only for children services.

The instructions for the teachers are first to “have the group explore dissonant movement.. Once the dissonant movement is clearly realized, [to] ask the group to explore the opposite kind of movement — fluid movement in which the body moves as a whole without tension..[and finally to] teach the traditional gesture which accompanies the blessing — lifting the hands and spreading the thumb and middle two fingers to create the Hebrew letter *Shin*.” Here comes an explanation that the traditional hand shape of the PB is derived from the letter *Shin* the initial of the word *shalom*, peace. The group is then asked to “improvise, using this gesture as the theme of their movement.” A ‘dance midrash’ follows, in which the participants are asked “to be Aaron or one of his sons” and to bless the people. No music is specified in connection with this dance.

The association of the PB with spirituality in the American Reform movement may sometimes take on an otherworldly dimension. The October 1995 bulletin of the Sinai Temple, in Marion, Indiana printed the following Rosh Hashanah message by its student-rabbi Brenner J. Glickman:

I write to you now moments after the Rosh Hashanah morning service. Everyone has left. I am alone trying to comprehend and understand what has happened here today...

Today...while Nancy Lutz and Jeff Bell were singing the Priestly Blessing, one of the main doors of the building came open, shining the bright light of the outdoors into our sanctuary. Just then, a car passed by and reflected the sun’s rays straight through the now open doorway and on to all of us. In the next moment we read as a congregation, “Bless us, Our God all of us together with the light of Your presence...” After the reading, as I related to the congregation what had just occurred and the amazing coincidence with what was written in the prayer book, the doors closed.

I don’t know if God intended to physically shine Heavenly Light upon us, or if it was just a random occurrence of the wind. I don’t pretend to understand God’s way and methods, but I do know that God does shine light upon us.

Mr. Glickman (now Rabbi Glickman) related to this writer that after the service, a woman came to him and told him that she felt that when

the doors opened, her late husband came to her and told her that he was all right and that she should not worry, she would be just fine.

Within this framework, there is now also a quest for means and methods of healing. Influenced by the American healers, Reform rabbis now look for prayers and ceremonies of healing within the Jewish faith. So far, to this writer's best knowledge, no Reform rabbi has yet explored the ceremony and ritual of the PB for healing and no music has been composed for it.¹⁰¹ Soon, however, when the Reform Movement of America will discover the traditional relationship of the PB ceremony to the therapy of dreams, we may see a restoration of the PB ritual in the Reform synagogues. The day may not be distant when a female Reform rabbi will stand barefoot before the ark, her prayer shawl over her head, and, with her hands raised in the form of Shin under the *tallit* she would intone the PB with the old *meysim nign*, the 'melody of the dead'. Or, more likely, she would lead the congregation in a pop melody in the style of Debbie Friedman or Craig Taubman, or again, she would chant each word many times over as a mantra.

101 As this study is going to print, the Synagogue 2000 project lead by the American Reform Movement is about to publish a collection of music titled *R'fuah Sh'leimah: Songs of Jewish Healing*. The collection includes no setting of the PB.

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