CD I – 59:00

1. Yitbārek ‘egzi’abəḥer… wazəntu wə’ətu samāy 3:39
2. Yitbārek ‘egzi’abəḥer…nəgru lə’egzi’abəḥer 3:31
3. Kālḥu kʷelomu melā’əkta samāy 5:33
4. ‘Afqərnākə 3:42
5. Waye’əzeni tansə’u 5:13
6. Ṣwa`əkuka 3:47
7. ‘Elohe ‘Amlāka ‘Avrəhām 4:28
8. Hāle hāle yəbārkəwo 6:17
9. Yitbārek ‘egzi’abəḥer 3:25
10. We’etu ʾAmlākiye ʾEsebḥəwo 2:57
11. Herzəgā followed by yitbārek 4:01
12. Hāle luya wanevāvo 3:19
13. ‘ʾEləbomu 2:12
14. Wanevāvo 2:26
15. Bə’ənti’ahomu feṭərā 4:15

CD II – 52:00

1. ‘ʾEṣuv gevrəka 3:06
2. Yətbārek… wanevāvo 7:56
3. Gənayu…’Ayte mə’ayte…wafṣəmā Musye 10:12
4. Gənayu 5:30
5. Watətfesāḥ bəba`əleka 1:48
6. Waṣoru tāvotomu 4:05
7. Wayi`ārgu devre 2:04
8. Hāle hāle yəbārkəwo 6:18
9. Zegevre ‘aviya wamenkəra 4:32
10. ‘Anverewā wəsʿa kərsā 2:13
11. Bəlā` waṣāgəv 1:47
12. ‘Ansə’i ‘a`əyantəkə 2:18

CD III – 66:00

1. ‘Anta mehari meharena 2:51
2. ‘Itāmāsən ‘əgzi’o 6:03
3. Bəḥatitu qeduś qeduś 1:43
4. Hāle luya hāle ‘əleka 3:32
5. Menāvərta beta Dāwit 7:15
6. ‘Egzi’o semāna 11:13
7. Kālə’ ṣəllāt 1:43
8. Yitbārek ‘egzi’abəḥer…’Amlak ‘Ābawina ‘antə 2:26
9. Menu kamakə 3:06
10. Hāllitā 5:44
11. Yitkenayu lite 1:30
12. Baruk ‘Avrəham, ‘Adi gezarā, Salām kidāna 4:47
13. ‘ʾEsebāhaka bakʷwelu gize, Zegevre ‘aviya wamenkəra, Wə’ətus kəma mər`āwi, ‘Amlākə `ālem 10:25
14. Sebhatat-‘Amlake ləkʷelu manfas 3:44

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הליטורגיה של ביתא ישראל נעימות התפילה של יהודי אתיופיה
The Liturgy of Beta Israel Music of the Ethiopian Jewish Prayer

AMTI 0118

הליטורגיה של ביתא ישראל

נעימות התפילה של יהודי אתיופיה

The Liturgy of Beta Israel

Music of the Ethiopian Jewish Prayer

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The Liturgy of Beta Israel

Music of the Ethiopian Jewish Prayer

Selections and commentaries: **Simha Arom, Frank Alvarez-Pereyre, Shoshana Ben-Dor and Olivier Tourny**

Jerusalem, 2019
Jewish Music Research Centre, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

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Preface

Some scientific enterprises, like good wine, mature over a long period of time. The present publication, dating back to 1986, is the result of a similarly deliberate and painstaking process, and in view of the fact that it was undertaken with French colleagues, the wine metaphor is a most natural fit.

The clandestine *aliyah* (immigration) of Ethiopian Jews that started in 1979 became publicized in the wake of Operation Moses when a significant proportion of the Jewish population of Ethiopia was flown from the Sudan to Israel between November 1984 and early January 1985. In the wake of this operation, the Israeli absorption authorities decided to gather the *Qessoch* (*Qessoch*, priesthood; sing. *Qes*, from the Amharic *qəs*, also called *kahena*t, sing. *kahen*, from Ge'ez *kahən*) at a learning institution in Jerusalem, Machon Meir, to familiarize them with the general history of the People of Israel and Orthodox religious law (*Halacha*) that regulates the private sphere among Jewish citizens in the State of Israel. These religious leaders of the Beta Israel community were seasoned practitioners of the unique Ethiopian Jewish tradition, which differs from *Halacha*. It quickly became obvious that such a contentious re-education process would lead to the rapid erosion of the autochthonous liturgical practices of the Beta Israel. Under the initiative of Prof. Simha Arom of the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) and with the support of the Maison des Cultures du Monde in Paris, a project of systematic recordings of the *Qessoch* started at Machon Meir.

Arom's bold initiative found an immediate echo in Israel. Following joint French-Israeli scientific programs launched at the beginning of the 1980s in several disciplines in the

Humanities and Social Sciences, particularly in ethnomusicology, the Jewish Music Research Centre and the Department of Music of the Jewish National and University Library (JNUL, today the National Library of Israel) became involved in Arom's project. Under the guidance of the late Prof. Israel Adler and with the supervision of the late Avi Nahmias, the sound technician of the National Sound Archives at JNUL, a more ambitious plan of recordings was launched in 1986/7. Prof. Frank Alvarez-Pereyre (CNRS, France), a renowned linguist and anthropologist, and Shoshana Ben-Dor (Israel), an expert on Beta Israel studies, joined the team, assisting Arom in the recordings, especially in their anthropological and linguistic aspects. Additional recordings were conducted in 1989 in order to provide a more comprehensive picture of the liturgical practices for the yearly and life cycles.

In the 1990s the recordings became the basis for a thorough scientific project on the music and text of the Beta Israel liturgical repertoire. Dr. Olivier Tourny (at the time a Ph.D. candidate) carried out the musicological phase of the project under the supervision of Simha Arom. Frank Alvarez-Pereyre and Shoshana Ben-Dor continued the ethnographical work with some of the *Qessoch* recorded in the 1980s. They also conducted a systematic study of the liturgical texts, their sources and internal organization. All these efforts made possible a comprehensive understanding of the Beta Israel liturgy, as it was performed in Ethiopia until the mid-1980s.

When appointed director of the JMRC in the year 2000, I inherited this complex and ambitious scientific project and took upon myself to assist this dedicated team of renowned scholars to bring it into fruition. In the process of developing this project, we benefitted from an early critical reading by our colleague at the Hebrew University, Prof. Steven Kaplan, then at the Ben Zvi Institute and a doyen in Beta Israel scholarship.

We thank Prof. Kaplan for his contribution. Eventually, it took longer than expected for the Beta Israel project to reach completion, but it is never too late to publish a work of scientific distinction that has been the focus of the JMRC master program for two decades.

It is my pleasure to thank first of all Prof. Simha Arom, a guiding torch in world ethnomusicology, who envisioned this project and realized it with his characteristic *rigueur* and dedication. The Beta Israel community, bringing together Africa and Judaism, was a most natural field for Arom, a most distinguished Africanist and scion of a prestigious European Jewish family. As a Holocaust survivor, Arom profoundly understood the ordeals of the Ethiopian Jews and the dangers that they faced. He could also identify with the agony of their displacement from their homeland (even if on their own will) and the difficulties in starting afresh in a new country. No less grateful are we to his three colleagues without whom this ambitious project could not have materialized. Frank Alvarez-Pereyre, Shoshana Ben-Dor and Olivier Tourny were faithful companions of Arom in this three-decade long adventure. Each one contributed to the successful completion of a vital part of this project. Tourny's input was absolutely crucial in the very last and complex stages of this project and I am particularly indebted to him.

The present three CD set and accompanying booklet is one element in the set of publications of the Beta Israel liturgy project. A detailed book will follow and a section of the JMRC website will be established to include hundreds of musical scores that were prepared over the years and accompany the book, as well as additional information.

Edwin Seroussi

This project was made possible thanks to the generous backing of many institutions and individuals who supported our team over the years. The authors of this publication would like to acknowledge with enormous gratitude their assistance and support.

First and foremost we acknowledge the *Qessoch* whom, with great dedication, patience and full awareness of their contribution to the future generations of their community, participated in a project that is, above all, a monument to their own legacy. The research team profoundly thanks Abba Bayenne Demoza, Qes Adane Tekuye, Qes Avraham Tezazu, Qes Immanu Tamayat, Qes Qassata Menasse, Qes Tehefesaku Melkitsedek Fikadu, Qes Mahari Rahamim Nega, Qes Semai Shmuel Nega, Qes Bire Yeheskel Iyasu, Qes Imharen Yirmiyahu Fikadu, Qes Shetu Meherat and Qes Mekkonen Yosef Taye, Qes Birku Tegenya and Avraham Invarem for their crucial contributions to this project. Our deepest thanks also go to many other members of the Beta Israel community who, at one time or another and to one degree or another, generously assisted us in our research.

Rabbi Yitzhak Elidar at Machon Meir facilitated our work with the *Qessoch* at the very beginning of the recording project. He assisted the team in coordinating most of the recording sessions that constitute the core of our collection.

The initial support of the Maison des Cultures du Monde, under the guidance of its then director Cherif Khaznadar, was vital. Three institutions played a key role in making this project a reality by sharing the vision and sense of urgency: The Jewish Music Research Center and its founder and director Israel Adler; the National Sound Archives of JNUL, headed by Avigdor Herzog and later by Gila Flam, Avi Nahmias of blessed memory, the remarkable technician behind these original recordings and

Gil Stein who supervised the last stages of processing the recordings; and last but not least, the Laboratoire de Langues et Civilisations à Tradition Orale (CNRS, Paris) with Jacqueline M. C. Thomas as its director. All our recordings are part of the Sound Archives collection of the National Library of Israel. In the present publication, we refer to them by their catalogue number (preceded by Y or Yc) in the NLI.

In the initial stage of this project, Benni Nadau translated from Amharic into Hebrew during recording sessions and at a concert that took place in Paris at the Maison des Cultures du Monde with the *Qessoch* performing. Avraham Yerdaï adeptly accompanied the *Qessoch* at that event. Qes Avraham Tezazu and Shoshana Ben-Dor transcribed the prayers and translated them from the Ge'ez.

At an intermediate stage, Dr. Margaret Hayoun assisted the project on specific issues related to the transcriptions of the liturgical texts. She also shared with us her connections to other religious leaders of the Ethiopian Jewish community in Israel. Ada Wertheim completed some of the scientific transcriptions.

Two institutions strongly supported this project for a very long period during its advanced stages and until the present: the Centre de Recherche Français de Jérusalem, with the French National Centre for Scientific Research and the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs on the one hand; and the JMRC, and its present director Edwin Seroussi, on the other hand. Preliminary versions of our findings were published in two essays included in Parfitt and Trevisan Semi (1999: 235-256). The doctoral dissertation by Tourny (1997) and the thesis by Atar (1998) are other offspring of our larger project.

The short history of the Ethiopian Jewry in the State of Israel and its present situation are topics marred with controversy. It is our sincere hope that the present work will

contribute, if only symbolically, to lessening the sense of frustration that accompanies large sectors of the Beta Israel community in Israel to this day. By dedicating this publication of the community's liturgy in its ancient sacred language, Ge'ez, to those spiritual leaders who maintained it and generously shared with us their knowledge of it, we hope to create a space for dialogue and understanding. We hope the main beneficiaries of our work will be the children and grandchildren of those who undertook tortuous and life-threatening journeys from Ethiopia to Israel, starting in 1979 (with small groups arriving directly in the late 1970s). By listening to the unique sounds of their spiritual guides and understanding the prayers performed in complex and at times remote historical contexts, new generations of Jews of Ethiopian origin may regain a sense of pride by delving into how, and to what extent, Beta Israel related in the past to the rest of the Jewish people.

Simha Arom, Frank Alvarez-Pereyre, Shoshana Ben-Dor, Olivier Tourny

The Beta Israel Liturgy: Components and Dynamics

Introduction

The present album offers a comprehensive selection of recordings of the Beta Israel (Ethiopian Jewish) liturgy from the large corpus collected by us between 1986 and 1989. The selection aims at representing the main genres, contexts of performance and performance practices of this liturgy. Our approach to the Beta Israel liturgy is phenomenological. It is based on a detailed analysis of a large corpus of recordings and focuses on the intrinsic characteristics of the musical system as performed by authoritative figures within the community.

Previous studies of this repertoire were based on selections of the Beta Israel liturgy gleaned from oral and written sources aiming at reconstructing aspects of its historical development as a means to trace the history of the community. Our goal was to document and preserve the Beta Israel liturgy as comprehensively as possible. After the immigration of the vast majority of the Jews from Ethiopia to Israel, their liturgical practices were under threat of disappearance due to the monopoly Orthodox Judaism has in Israel in matters of religious practice at the state level. Also the long standing social and political pressure of the agencies of the state on all immigrants to align themselves with a brand of European-based Israeliness, a trend that goes back to the beginnings of the State of Israel, was enforced on the Beta Israel community as late as the 1990s, further eroding its religious practice.

This overview covers the following topics: the ethnography of the liturgy, the texts of the prayers, the texts and their literary setting, and the music of the liturgy. For a

detailed background on Beta Israel's history and culture, including aspects of their liturgy, the reader should consult the rich literature on the subject from the second half of the nineteenth century to the revisions in the twenty-first century. Works by Aescoly, Ben-Dor, Kaplan, Leslau, Quirin, Parfitt and Trevisan Semi, Salamon, Schoenberger, Shelemay, Trevisan Semi and Parfitt, and Weil (see list of references at the end of this booklet) offer a picture of the complexities and contradictions in the study of Beta Israel culture.

At the outset of our project we asked the following questions: To what type of religious culture does the Beta Israel liturgy belong? What is or what has been the place of liturgy in the religious culture of the Beta Israel in Ethiopia? What is the available documentation and hardcore evidence at hand to address these questions? To what degree of certainty can one provide answers to them? What kind of insight is it possible to gain from the study of the Beta Israel liturgy based on our detailed recordings and on the study of the textual, musical and ethnographic sources that we have assembled?

We treat the liturgy of Beta Israel as a religious system, exploring the main protagonists in the performance of the liturgy, the liturgical and paraliturgical calendars, the written and the oral sources for the liturgy, aspects of ritual, languages and categories within the liturgy. Addressing the texts means reporting on their literary genres and religious sources, moving into the thematic, stylistic and literary organization of the prayers. As far as the music is concerned, we shall consider the formal organization of the repertoire, and the implicit musical systematics that explains how the sounds of the liturgy materialize in performance as well as the inner musical syntax that characterizes the melodies. It is only by tackling the ethnographic, literary and musical dimensions of

the liturgy in an interdisciplinary vein that one can get a sense of its role and meaning in the life of the Beta Israel.

The Beta Israel liturgy and Ethiopian Christianity

All the monotheistic religions in Ethiopia bear traces of Jewish heritage. Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity shares with post-Biblical Judaism traits that are not found in other communities of the Christian commonwealth, such as circumcision on the eighth day and the observance of the Sabbath, avoidance of certain foods forbidden by the Torah and the veneration of the Ark of the Covenant. To some extent, Ethiopian Christianity may reflect what Christianity was at its outset.

Historians are deeply divided on how Judaism and Christianity affected each other in Ethiopia. We have just noted some of the Judaic practices found in Ethiopian Christianity. On the other hand, Beta Israel adopted monasticism (16th century), but then used it as a means to separate itself from Christianity. Did Jews borrow monasticism from their Christian neighbors, yet transform it in order to reinforce the distinction between the two religions? Did such borrowing give Ethiopian Judaism a Christian hue?

Ethiopian Jewry has relied on a well-developed set of rules when stressing its essential difference from the Christian population. Strict separation was an important argument in the 16th century decision of the prominent Sephardic Rabbi David ben Zimra of Egypt that Ethiopian Jews were Jews on rabbinic grounds. After the arrival of an important portion of the Ethiopian Jewry to Israel four hundred years later, some

rabbinical authorities, mostly Ashkenazi, argued that its lack of acquaintance with the Talmud and of any written document of divorce, required a symbolic conversion to rabbinical Judaism. This decision overruled Rabbi David ben Zimra's 400-year old ruling and created a rift within the rabbinical establishment in Israel and in the Israeli society at large.

Considering the Judeo-Christian entanglement in Ethiopia, the first issue one confronts when studying the liturgical texts of Beta Israel is their relation with Christian ones. Steven Kaplan has summarized the complexity one faces when dealing with the religious culture of Beta Israel until the first half of the 15th century and its intertextual dimensions. "Under the leadership of such former Christians as Abba Sabra and Tsega Amlak [son of Zera Yakob and his Jewish wife], a newly-emerged religious elite began to manipulate Christian cultural elements in order to strengthen the Beta Israel identity. [...] Nowhere are the consequences of this 'monastic revolution' more clearly evidenced than in the study of Beta Israel literature. With the possible exception of their prayers and one or two larger works, virtually the entire corpus of Beta Israel literature is of Christian origin. Among the prominent works that fall into this category are the Death of Aaron, Baruch [included in the Apocrypha and Septuagint, hence composed in Judea before the destruction of the Temple], and the Book of Angels. Such works were not accepted unaltered by the Beta Israel, but rather underwent a process of adaptation and censorship where virtually all obviously Christian elements were eliminated." (Kaplan 1987a:15).

In a country where Christianity seems to heavily reflect its Jewish inheritance, akin to the early stages of the Christian religion, it is not surprising that the Beta Israel population would have drawn from the religious literature of their Christian

neighbors, while adapting and censoring it. Such a mechanism of control seems to imply the existence of internal paradigms as to which of the borrowed texts would have conformed with the Beta Israel creed (compare with Quirin, 1992:40 62-63).

This Judeo-Christian textual sharing in Ethiopia is even more complex in relation to the liturgy. According to the quotation above, Kaplan (1987) proposed that the liturgical corpus of texts demonstrates no noticeable Christian influence. Shelemay (1989) on the other hand has argued that Beta Israel's liturgy was strongly influenced by Christian culture (see also Quirin 1992). Interested in the musical dimension of the liturgy but also drawing on textual evidence, Shelemay chose not to focus on the specific nature of the music of the Beta Israel liturgical repertoire in comparison with the Christian one. She also refrained from comparing the literary structure of the Beta Israel pieces with Christian ones, or the internal organization of the textual sources within the liturgy. In those two parameters, it becomes obvious that sharp differences exist between the Beta Israel and the Christian liturgies in Ethiopia. The results of our musicological and literary analyses of the Beta Israel liturgy shed light on a long-standing process of conscious and systematic differentiation. Such difference reflects a profound awareness by the Beta Israel leadership of the opposition between the Jewish and Christian religious systems in Ethiopia as much as their cognizance of the numerous points of possible intersections between them.

Liturgical categories, languages and sources of the Beta Israel liturgy

Beta Israel use two terms to describe the status of each prayer in their liturgy, *Ṣolot* or *Zemāre*. *Ṣolot* refers to a statutory prayer and *Zemāre* to an optional one that often has the status of a religious song. Some sections of the liturgy are considered *Ṣolot* for specific occasions, but can be used as *Zemāre* for others, usually on the occasion of festive meals. For example, *Bəlā` waṣegəv* (Yc 2825/10), is only a *Zemāre*. Prayers that are *Ṣolot* on a specific occasion but can be used as *Zemāre* are *kəla' ṣəllāt* (Yc 2828/6), *'Əlabomu qəva'a qedusan* (Yc 2828/8), and *'Anverewā wəsta kərsā* (Yc 2828/10). They are all part of the *Ṣolot* for *Ma'arir Seni,* one of the annual holidays. However, they can be used as *Zemāre* for festive meals or to accompany the removal of the *Orit* (Holy Scriptures) from the Ark and its return during services.

Almost all Beta Israel prayers are performed musically. Performing each liturgical text with its appropriate music is considered indispensable. The ideal setting for the musical performance of the prayers is when a group of *Qessoch* or a group of *Qessoch* and elders are present, so that one, and occasionally two, assume(s) the role of soloist(s) and the others perform as a choir. Individuals can also sing prayers, but this situation limits greatly the mode of prayer performance. The same text can be performed with different melodies on different occasions. Only a very limited number of prayers are spoken, such as the blessings preceding and following meals, and the blessing at the end of services.

There are two sets of liturgies, the annual cycle and those performed in events of the life cycle. With rare exceptions, the liturgy for both sets is transmitted and performed orally. Although the Jewish Ethiopian laity believes that oral tradition preserves all the

prayers, and orality indeed maintains large portions of it, some sections were kept and transmitted in written form as well. *Qessoch* particularly skilled in writing copied these written collections by hand. Upon ordination, the new *Qes* received these texts in the form of books as part of the gifts granted to him as a sign of his new status.

Three written collections of liturgical texts are extant: *Kahən Maṣhaf* (The Priests' Book), *Sa'atat* (lit. Hours), and *Maṣhaf Āsteray* (Book of *Asteray*). *Sa'atat* contains prayers from the daily service. Both *Kahən Maṣhaf* and *Sa'atat* contain prayers for holidays and Sabbaths, each one preserving different sections of the same service. *Kahən Maṣhaf* opens with the prayers for *Sav'e Senvet* (Seventh Sabbath) and *Berevo'a Senvet*. However, the prayers in both collections are not written in the order of their performance. A performance of a service is therefore a mixture of prayers taken from different sections from the *Sa'atat*, the *Kahən Maṣhaf* as well as prayers preserved only orally.

Maṣhaf Āsteray contains the prayers of the holiday *'Āstaseryo* or *Āsteray* (equivalent to the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur) and appear in the order in which they are performed. *'Āstaseryo* is the one day when *Qessoch* must use a book on account of the complexity of the service. If they prayed orally, they could miss some text.

All the prayers that we recorded for the present anthology were performed orally. On no occasion did a *Qes* read from a book. When checking the liturgical materials after the recordings, we found out that about half of the prayers appear in written sources while the other half seems to exist only in oral tradition. A small number of pieces are preserved partially in written form and partially orally, i.e. the first units of the prayer are written and the rest is known orally. In one case (CD III-1, *'Anta mehari meharana*)

the first units of the piece appear in *Kahən Maṣhaf* with an instruction at the end, *bel*, i.e. "say (to the end)." There is no clear-cut native distinction between types of texts, functions or literary structures that would be linked to the opposition between oral and written forms of transmission.

Most Ethiopian Jews come from Amharic speaking areas in Ethiopia, while Jews from the northern province of Tigray and to some extent those from Wallkait speak Tigregna. However, the prayers of Beta Israel are mostly in two other languages, Ge'ez and ʻAgawegna. Ethiopian Christians and Jews retain Ge'ez, the spoken language of Ethiopia in the first millennium CE, as their liturgical language and the language of the Holy Scriptures. ʻAgawegna is a general designation for a family of languages of the Agaw peoples in northwestern Ethiopia. Ethiopian Jews had their own dialect of ʻAgawegna, called Qwaregnia, known today only to a few elders and the *Qessoch* from the Qwara region. Close to this language was a Jewish dialect called Falashigna. There is some scholarly debate as to whether the portions of the Beta Israel liturgy in ʻAgawegna are original compositions, translations from Ge'ez, or whether some of the liturgy in Ge'ez was translated from original texts in ʻAgawegna.

Many of the Beta Israel prayers are entirely in Ge'ez. No piece recorded by us is entirely in ʻAgawegna. When the two languages occur in one prayer, their relationship in each piece contributes to the segmentation of the narrative and semantic hierarchy of the thematic constituents of the prayers. The vernacular languages of the regions from which Ethiopian Jews come, Tigregna and Amharic, appear in religious rituals only in spoken blessings, which are based on some extemporization. It is notable that the Christian liturgy is exclusively in Ge'ez.

Within the corpus that was recorded for this study, there are three literary sources for the Beta Israel liturgy: 1) the Hebrew Bible (called the Old Testament in Christian sources), 2) the Apocrypha and Pseudo-Epigrapha, 3) original Beta Israel religious literature. All of these texts are in Ge'ez. The Bible was translated into Ge'ez from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Bible that was produced by the Jewish community of Alexandria in the 3rd century BCE.

Beta Israel use two terms to refer to the Bible, *Orit* and *Maṣhaf Qedus*. These terms are interchangeable. *Orit*, from the Aramaic word *Oraita*, literally means Torah, i.e. the Five Books of Moses (Pentateuch). When referring to the *Orit*, native speakers may be referring either to the Pentateuch or to the entire Bible in Ge'ez in manuscript form. This can sometimes lead to confusion: when *Qessoch* talk about reading from the *Orit* on the *Səgd* (the holiday marking the renewal of the covenant during the Return to Zion), they are referring both to the chapters read from the Torah as well as to those read from the Book of Nehemiah.

The term *Maṣhaf Qedus* - literally "Holy Books" - refers only to the whole Bible and is usually used when referring to either its Ge'ez or Amharic translations in printed form that are used exclusively for studying. These printed volumes have been obtained from Christian publishers since the middle of the nineteenth century. In addition, also the Book of Psalms, called either *Dawit* or *Mazmur*, exists in printed form. It contains, in addition to the Biblical Book of Psalms, other psalm-like sections from the Bible, such as the Song of the Sea (Exodus 15) or the Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32) and certain pseudepigraphal canticles, such as the Canticle of the Three Children (Hanania, Azaria and Mishael) and the Canticles of Hezekiah and Menashe. These books were also obtained from Christians and used for studying and reference.

According to Beta Israel *Qessoch*, apocryphal prayers are included in parts of the liturgy. Sections of the prayers of Hezekiah, Jonah and Simon are included in the prayer called *Halita* of *Save'e Senvet* (Seventh Sabbath) while the prayers of Menashe and Daniel appeared in the offering of incense for the synagogue. The Book of Jubilees, though important for establishing much of the calendar and many customs of Beta Israel, is not quoted or paraphrased in the liturgy itself.

Another source for the Beta Israel liturgy is the book *Te'ezaze Senvet*, a Beta Israel composition that relates both midrashic material and commandments to be observed on the Sabbath. According to Kaplan (1987b), part of *Te'ezaze Senvet* is based on the Christian composition *Dersane Sanvat*. Quotes or paraphrases from *Te'ezaze Senvet* appear twice in our corpus.

During the ceremony for the naming of a newborn child, the *Qes* reads from the Book of *Ardet*, a composition shared by Beta Israel and Christians in Ethiopia, which contains magical names of God. As opposed to the Christian version, in which Jesus addresses his twelve Apostles, in the Beta Israel version Moses addresses the twelve tribes of Israel.

When Beta Israel *Qessoch* were asked to relate to the aforementioned categories of texts, they immediately stated their dependence on the Hebrew Bible. The most frequently used word, *Orit,* can refer to either the Octateuch (the Torah, Joshua, Judges and Ruth) or the whole Bible. They referred to the Pentateuch as "holy," and to the Apocrypha and Pseudo-Epigrapha as "important" and "part of our heritage." They rejected any relationship to the New Testament.

Ideally, a *Qes* is assumed to have learned the *Orit* (in Ge'ez, not only in Amharic), *Maṣhaf Qedus* and the Book of Psalms by heart when learning the prayer texts, with their musical and ritualistic aspects. If he has not mastered these three texts, he will have difficulty in integrating the liturgical sections based on Biblical quotes.

Liturgical calendars

Determining the exact yearly cycle of Beta Israel is difficult for a number of reasons. Beta Israel annual festivals are based on the lunar cycle with the new month being declared upon its sighting by religious authorities. Nevertheless, because these holidays are tied to the seasons of the year, the lunar calendar must be adjusted to the solar one. Beta Israel make this adjustment by adding a full month to the year every so many years. The Ethiopian Christian calendar, which is the official calendar in Ethiopia, is also based on lunar months (thirty days) even though the calculation is not based on an actual sighting of the new moon. To compensate for the difference between twelve months of thirty days and the full solar cycle, the Christian Ethiopians add a thirteenth month of five to six days every year (*Pagwemen*). Because of the apparent similarity of the two calendars, and because Beta Israel do not have Jewish names for all of the months, they have often described their own holidays relative to the Ethiopian months in which they occur. The two calendars are similar, but not identical, every year.

A comparative chart (see charts 1 and 2) shows the similarity between the general Ethiopian calendar and the Beta Israel calendar. It also illustrates the uniqueness of the Beta Israel calendar when compared to the Christian one. The general Ethiopian

calendar begins on the first of the month of *Maskaram* that falls on September 11 (or 12 in leap years). Unlike the Ethiopian year, the traditional Beta Israel year starts in the month of *Nissan* (also pronounced *Lessan*) in accordance with Exodus 12:2. However, beginning in the 1950s, Jews from the Gondar area who received printed Jewish calendars from Israel began to relate to *Tishre* as the beginning of the year. There is a debate within the community as to whether the New Year falls on the first of *Nissan*, or on *Berhan Sāraqa*, the first of the seventh month according to the Bible, or the first of *Tishre* in rabbinic tradition.

According to the Jewish Ethiopian tradition, *Fāsika* or *Qorban* (i.e. Passover), which occurs fourteen days after the beginning of *Nissan*, should happen during the Ethiopian month of *Miyazia*. If in a particular year the beginning of *Nissan* occurred in the month of *Magavit* and, according to calculations, *Fāsika* would also occur on that month in the following year, the *Qessoch* determined that, in the next year, a month would be added before *Nissan*. This month bears the name *Aderash* and it occurs approximately every three years. Hebrew names of months which survived among Beta Israel are *Nissan* (or *Lessan*), *Tevet*, *Tammuz*, *Av*, *Elul* (*Lul*) and *Tishre* (*Tahasaran*).

In principle, the Beta Israel observed all the holidays from the Torah according to the Biblical date in their calendar. These holidays, however, usually bear Ge'ez names. In addition, the Beta Israel observed a number of unique holidays. Conversely, they did not observe post-Biblical holidays such as *Hanukkah*, *Tu biShvat* and *Lag baOmer*. They observed the fast of Esther (*Ṣoma Astar*) for three days, but not the holiday of *Purim*.

Chart 1: Calendar

Ethiopian month	Gregorian dates	Hebrew months (approximate)
Maskaram	11/12 September to 10 October	*Tishre*
Teqemt	11 October to 9 November	*Heshvan*
Hedar	10 November to 9 December	*Kislev*
Tahsas	10 December to 8 January	*Tevet*
Ter	9 January to 7 February	*Sh'vat*
Yakatit	8 February to 9 March	*Adar*
Magabit	10 March to 8 April	*Nissan/Iyyar*
Miyazia	9 April to 8 May	*Iyyar*
Genbot	9 May to 7 June	*Sivan*
Sane	8 June to 7 July	*Tammuz*
Hamle	8 July to 6 August	*Av*
Nahase	7 August to 5 September	*Elul*
Pagwemen	6 September to 10/11 September	

Chart 2: Beta Israel prayers according to the annual cycle

Weekly:

Senvet (Sabbath)

Monthly:

Sərq Warḥi (in Tigrean) or *Tchereka Bā'al* (in Amharic): New Moon

Tenth day (reminder for *'Āstaseryo*)

Twelfth day (reminder for *Ma'arir*)

Fifteenth day (reminder for *Qorban/ Fāsika* and *Bā'ala Maṣalat*)

Reminder for *'Asfa 'Esert*

Every seventh week:

Save'e Senvet (Seventh Sabbath)

Annually:

Leisan - Nissan (*Magabit/Miyazia*)

Qorban/Fāsika - Passover (*Magabit/Miyazia*)

Ma'arir Seni - Shavuot (in Sane)

Soma Tomos and *Avṣom* - Fasts (*Hamle/Nahase*)

Baravo'a Senvet - The fourth Sabbath of the fifth month (*Nahase*)

Tāzkar 'Abrəhām - A memorial for Abraham (*Nahase*; cf. Aescoly 1952)

Berhan Sāraqa - Rosh Hashana (*Maskaram*)

'Āstaseryo – Yom Kippur (*Maskaram*)

Bā'ala Maṣalat - Sukkoth (end of *Maskaram* or *Teqemt*)

Səgd - Renewal of the Covenant (end of *Tekemt* or beginning of *Heidar*)

Ma'arir Hedar - Shavuot (*Hedar*)

'Asfe 'Esert - A memorial day (*Tahsas*)

Baravo'a Senvet - The fourth Sabbath of the fifth month (*Tahsas* or *Ter*)

Tāzkar 'Avrəhām - A memorial for Abraham (*Tahsas*; cf. Leslau 1957)

Prayer texts

Two major groups of prayer make up the Beta Israel liturgy: composed and based on pre-existing texts. The term "composed" refers to texts that are not based on any pre-existing source, such as the Pentateuch, the Apocrypha, or the Psalms. "Composed" texts are therefore *original religiously oriented creations* designed for liturgical purposes. The pre-existing sources of the Beta Israel liturgy include extensive passages from the Bible and the Apocrypha in Ge'ez and religious texts created in Ethiopia and kept in manuscripts. Those prayers based on pre-existing texts may consist of literal quotes, paraphrases or imitations in the style of the pre-existing sources.

Many prayers are a combination of composed material and material based on pre-existing texts. Whether pre-existing material consists of quotes, paraphrases or

stylistic imitations, some principles guide the use of specific pre-existing texts. This is especially important because frequently texts from different Biblical chapters are juxtaposed. Sometimes these are verses from the same Book - such as Psalms - and sometimes from different books, for example, a quote from the Psalms or a quote from the Prophets mixed with a quote from the Torah. Furthermore, there are cases when the juxtaposition of the texts generates a new meaning, not implied in either of the texts when they appear separately. And sometimes, quotes also appeared to be purposely altered.

Thus the use of Biblical quotes, paraphrases and imitations seems to have been a purposeful act of textual elaboration. There are several types of textual elaboration. Usually, this is carried out by creating some kind of framework in which key phrases are lifted out and repeated with each unit in the prayer, using either simple repetition or alternation, sometimes with the addition of composed phrases and sometimes without. In addition, a dynamic is set up by the relationship between composed material and material based on pre-existing texts, both regarding individual prayers and groups of prayers that are performed together.

Of the three possibilities - pieces with composed text only; pieces that are a mixture of pre-existing texts and original composition; pieces that only quote pre-existing texts - the last one seems to be the most rare within the prayers we recorded. The second category is the most common. Most prayers of this type have the following pattern: a composed introductory section in Ge'ez or a combination of Ge'ez and 'Agawegna followed by quotes or paraphrases of pre-existing texts. These texts are usually not quoted in the order in which they appear in the original pre-existing texts. They are apparently combined according to the way in which the compilers of the texts wished

to express a basic idea related to the occasion when the prayer is performed, or to some religious theme they wished to emphasize.

Texts in the Biblical style or of Biblical content so closely simulate the Biblical text that it is hard to believe that they are not direct quotes. This feature points to the remarkable fluency of the composers of the prayers in the Biblical texts and their literary style. At the end of prayers, there is frequently a composed closing formula often performed by the soloist(s) and choir together. This formula frames the whole liturgical event.

According to some Ethiopian Christian clergy and as confirmed by a survey of an extensive corpus of Ethiopian Christian liturgy by Velat (1966), several observations can be made about Christian-Jewish relations in the field of liturgy. In many cases, the raw material from which Christian and Beta Israel liturgy draw, i.e. the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament, is the same. But the system for using Biblical materials is radically different. This is most noticeable in the quotes from the Book of Psalms. When quoting from Psalms, Christians quote blocks of verses in consecutive order, in terms of both the verses and the order of chapters of the Psalms. Beta Israel does not follow this practice. Quotes from the Prophets in the liturgy are less usual in both traditions, but when they occur, they are different, usually in the manner of inclusion in the prayer. Finally, quotes from the Pentateuch, particularly from its "legal" sections, have a key role in Beta Israel liturgy but are missing from the Ethiopian Christian liturgy. Common to Christians and Beta Israel is the evocation of important or less important protagonists of the Biblical text. However, in the Beta Israel liturgy, this is frequently done in the context of a quote, a feature not found in the Christian liturgy.

The literary techniques for using Biblical texts or other quotes or paraphrases of it in the Beta Israel liturgy are the following:

1. Whole chapters, always with some manipulation or stylization added. The only two examples in the corpus are Psalm 33 and Psalm 136.
2. Long sections of different **pre-existing texts** juxtaposed one with the other with minimal or no composed material as a framework or connecting the quotes. This is also relatively rare.
3. Relatively long quoted sections from **pre-existing texts**, which are placed, either alone or in juxtaposition to other texts, but within a **definite composed framework**, which contributes to our understanding of the meaning of the prayer or its relation to the liturgical event.
4. Short sections, sometimes even single verses or half-verses from **pre-existing texts,** scattered within **composed** material, and again, with the composed material clarifying the meaning of the text as a whole.

Pre-existing texts, particularly Biblical ones, were used in two ways, or with two purposes: **prescriptive** and **homiletic.** We arrived at this conclusion based on:

1. Matching the quotes as they appear with their sources,
2. Considering the connection between the Biblical quotes juxtaposed one next to the other as well as the relationship between the quotes and the context of composed Ge'ez phrases or the accompanying 'Agawegna texts within the prayers,

3. Looking at the types of manipulation which occurred with the Biblical texts, such as abbreviations, expansions, or repetitions of keywords or phrases, or changing of the wording,
4. Checking the connection between these texts (with their various changes) and the occasions on which they are performed.

Structure, content and themes of the prayers: Prescriptive and homiletic

On various occasions, especially during the yearly cycle, but also in life cycle events, Biblical passages, particularly from the Pentateuch, are included in the Beta Israel liturgy to prescribe and reaffirm legally binding topics related to each occasion. Worked into the prayer's text are, for example, the rationale for the holiday, as well as the law from the Torah that makes it and the manner of its observance legally binding. These passages are sometimes juxtaposed with the Torah verses into a framework which makes the non-Biblical text as legally binding as the Torah itself. The anonymous compilers of the Beta Israel prayers most likely composed them in this manner in a premeditated act of reinforcing the Biblical precepts with their own original texts.

Structurally speaking, there are two types of prescriptive prayers. The more dominant one, the *Wanevavo* type, has the following components:

1. An optional introduction,

2. The sentence: "And God called (or said) to Moses, (saying): tell the children of Israel and speak to the house of Jacob…" (see Exodus 19: 3b)
3. A quote, usually from the Torah, but sometimes from other Biblical sources, and on one occasion from a composed Beta Israel text, which relates to the command to observe on the specific occasion and/or the way in which it is to be observed,
4. The phrase, somewhere toward the end of the previous quote, "a law forever it shall be for you" or "a law forever in your days," even if it is not part of the original Biblical quote (compare Leviticus 23:14b, 31, 41 and also Leviticus 7:36, 16:31 and other legal sections of priestly law),
5. The continuation of the prayer.

All the other prescriptive prayers that lack this structure nevertheless fulfill the same purpose.

Biblical passages appear in prayers not only for prescriptive but also for homiletical purposes. The purpose of these types of prayers is literary emphasis or embellishment, or usages that are even more complex. In total, we recorded up to eight different categories of homiletical prayers. These categories are not always mutually exclusive, as certain passages could fit into two or more. They differ according to their purpose:

1. Ordinary, close to the prescriptive prayers,
2. Paradigms for petition,
3. For appropriate behavior or,
4. For praise (2 and 4 are sometimes combined),
5. Offering of thanksgiving,

6. Descriptions of important places or events to emphasize their importance to the community,
7. Previously existing texts that are grouped because of similar words or themes,
8. Prayers based on a whole Biblical chapter or large sections of it.

From the point of view of content and themes, the non-prescriptive Beta Israel prayers can be divided into three main types: descriptive, petitionary and homiletic. Descriptive prayers may contain any of the following: a narrative of God's miracles; a narration of actions of the Forefathers; a list of God's attributes; a list of the attributes of the City of Jerusalem or the Temple in Jerusalem; the Sabbath or holidays; or events in an individual's life. Petitionary prayers contain a request addressed to God, usually for forgiveness or mercy or that the prayers be heard. Other individual or community needs are also stated. There is frequently, as might be expected, a connection between descriptive and petitionary types.

Homiletic prayers may be divided into two sub-types: narrative homily and prescriptive homily. Narrative homily will present the acts of God, the Forefathers or events in a person's life, with the goal of instructing those who pray in the paradigms of appropriate religious behavior. Prescriptive homily on the other hand will employ Biblical material, at least partially from the Torah, to instruct on the practices associated with a specific event or occasion, the reasons for these practices and the divine authority that dictates them.

Performance practices of liturgical texts

The diverse literary nature of the Beta Israel liturgical texts is closely bound to their actual performance. The mode of performance depends on a number of factors: the number of performers; their status; the nature of the performance occasion; the time available for the performance of the prayers; the whim of the performers. Let us examine now these factors one by one.

Prayers can be performed by one or two individuals or by a group consisting entirely of *Qessoch*, of *Qessoch* and lower-rank clergy, or of *Qessoch* and learned men. An individual performs the prayers according to a simple musical line. When there are two performers, one will take the role of lead singer or soloist and the other will assume the role of the "choir." This type of performance usually consists of the repetition or the alternation between two voices.

When there is a group of performers, the roles are divided between a lead singer or soloist and the choir. There is usually one lead singer per piece, though occasionally there can be two performers who sing the soloist part together. The role of the soloist may be transferred from one person to another during the performance of a single piece. This shifting of roles is usually extremely smooth following cues between the performers that are unnoticeable to observers. The other performers make up the choir.

Following this typology, the performance of a prayer may consist of: 1) long solo sections, 2) alternation between two soloists or between soloist and choir, 3) repetition, 4) a type that combines alternation and repetition, which we call *hemiola* (see below), 5) other types. Prayers are sung according to one of these modes of performance or according to different combinations between them.

The first soloist in a service will usually be the eldest or most honorable *Qes* present. If a person of this status arrives after the service has already begun, he will nevertheless be given the role of soloist. The presence of a particularly honorable *Qes* will also determine the mode of performance, since the choir will usually chose to repeat his words "out of respect" (i.e. a preponderance of repetition). Adding to the words of the honored *Qes* would be seen as a sign of disrespect for his status.

In some cases, modes of performance of a certain prayer on a specific occasion are determined by a fixed tradition. This can occur in pieces with one or several modes of performance. The nature of the occasion also influences the mode of performance. More solemn melodies will be sung on occasions deemed more solemn whereas joyful occasions will often be marked by lively measured melodies to which the prayers are sung. The latter pieces are frequently accompanied by hand and arm movements, swaying, stamping and shuffling around in a circle, and/or a sort of grunting.

One mode of performance is recognized by the *Qessoch* as being the most esthetic: the hemiola, where alternation and repetition are combined in a systematized way: solo and choir alternate on three lines and then repeat the same text with a reversal of roles in the singing of these lines. In other words, while the melodic units follow a ternary organization, the alternation between the soloist and the choir follows a binary organization (see CD I-4).

If only limited time is available for the performance of prayers, the performers will tend toward alternation or repetition. If more time is available, many of the same prayers will be performed partially or entirely in the hemiola pattern.

The soloist and choir may decide on a certain mode of performance or a mixture of types of performance according to their whim. Each soloist will determine how his section of the prayer is to be performed, if this prayer is not performed according to a fixed tradition. He will cue the choir by singing his opening section in a way that indicates how he wishes the section to be performed: by singing a long section to indicate repetition or a small number of words to indicate the hemiola pattern.

The literary structure of the individual prayers is based on the relationship of the sections performed by the soloist and the choir. On this basis, the pieces are performed according to one of the following principles: repetition, alternation, and complexity. These principles are expressed in the three basic performance patterns: antiphonal, responsorial and hemiola, which generate a specific dynamics within each unit, each piece and throughout the entire corpus. A unit is a discrete portion of a prayer text usually defined as a single pattern of repetition, alternation or hemiola. There are pieces that illustrate more than one principle. We will describe the structures that occur within a piece, the relationship between the units in various pieces, and the dynamics created thereby.

a. ***Repetition***

The use of repetition in the performance structure of the liturgy assumes a number of forms, each of which deserves some attention. The first type is at the level of the unit, that is a unit performed first by the soloist (that may vary from a word or two to several lines) and thereafter repeated in its entirety by the choir. Other forms of repetition are worthy of attention: repeating phrases which appear throughout a piece or a significant part of it; or words which repeat several times within a piece. In some cases, whole

longer units may be repeated within the same piece. The repetitions usually emphasize the meaning of a prayer on a semantic level but may also have an aesthetic value.

b. ***Alternation***

Alternation means that each voice - the leading and the responding one - sings a different portion of the text, thus advancing the chanting of the prayer more quickly than in the repetition pattern. Each new unit is based upon this complementarity between the leading and the responding voices.

There are two ways of classifying alternation: either by the number of alternations that occur between the two voices within a unit; or by the relative length of the alternating sections within a unit. The division of alternation into sub-types based on the relative length of each part gives only a glimpse of the diversity of performance options. When combining the length of each part, with the number of alternating parts that create a unit, as well as the extent to which some of the parts repeat within units or in successive units, one finds even more diversity.

When examining units on the basis of the number of alternations that occur between two voices within a unit, it was found that the structures can have one, two, three, five, six (possibly three times two), seven and ten part units (two times five). It should be noted that out of the sixteen examples of prayers in the corpus based only on alternation, eight contain fixed formulas. Five contain only closing formulas.

c. ***Complexity***

Prayers of the Beta Israel liturgy are largely built upon structures that combine alternation and repetition. The most common way of combining alternation and

repetition results in what we have called the hemiola pattern, of which there are twenty-six types in the recorded corpus.

Quantitatively hemiolas are very important in Beta Israel liturgy. The uniqueness of this form helps greatly in defining the specificity of this liturgy. Twenty-four pieces in our corpus have only hemiola-type units. About fifteen pieces combine hemiola-type units and repetition-type units; two pieces combine hemiola-type units and alternation-type units. The remaining pieces combine all three types of units.

The twenty-six types of hemiolas derive from the structural combination of three different principles. The first one refers to the *number of segments containing original semantic information* in each new unit of six lines. These segments actually do not exceed four (segments a, b, c, and d) so that in one unit of six lines there might be one to four original semantic segments dispatched through the three first lines which are then repeated. The second principle refers to the *relative semantic autonomy* of each of the four segments. According to this relative autonomy, the different segments will or will not necessarily enter into modes of combination to build a fuller semantic entity. Finally, the third principle refers to *the ways the semantic segments are distributed throughout the three lines*: the same segment might be stated as such in each of the lines, the three lines repeating the same segment, which is again repeated, with a reversal of roles in the second half of the hemiola. In other cases, an identical semantic segment might be repeated twice on the same line, over the three lines or over only two. When three semantic segments are included in one unit, each of the segments might be stated with each new line, or otherwise: the first one on the first line, the first again on the second line together with the second segment, and then the third segment on the third line.

When considering the relationship between these three principles of the hemiola pattern some basic rules emerge. The third line either combines lines 1 and 2, or adds to 1 and 2, either fully or partially. Line 2 can totally or partially repeat line 1 or be different from line 1. In the majority of the cases, line 1 contains one segment of information. In the minority of the cases, that segment is repeated. In those cases when in line 1 there is a doubling of information, that same information - if conveyed again in line 2 - is conveyed only once. With the exception of one type in which each line contains totally different information, all other types, to varying extents, combine information in the first two lines, sometimes with additional information in the third line, in order to create a new message.

The reasons behind such a variety of possibilities and choices are indeed semantic, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The setting of a literary content is in its turn linked to a set of criteria that range from the fixing of a literary pattern to the setting of the mood of the piece, from the statement of a basic theme which is elaborated further on in the prayer, to aesthetic reasons.

In terms of literary purposes it appears that repetition, alternation and complexity tend to deal with both aesthetics and ideation. The analysis of the recorded repertoire shows that each of the three principles might convey these two purposes. It also shows that, since repetition, alternation and complexity might operate at the level of whole pieces, sections, units, lines or words, aesthetics and ideation might feature concomitantly on a large or small level. Yet, each of the three literary processes might be related to a relative specialized function: alternation appears to have a structural function by marking sections inside of a piece. It also helps to reinforce certain themes. Repetition emphasizes structure in a more systematic way but also reinforces structure (as set up

through alternation and complexity) and themes. Hemiolas, on the other hand, have a much more aesthetic value; they convey enjoyment and help with the memorization of texts and their content.

To describe the literary identity of Beta Israel prayers we referred to different categories: written and oral texts; languages; sources and types of religious texts; texts from original sources (mostly the Bible) and composed texts, quotes from the original sources and sources that are paraphrased. It became clear that these categories are bound to cultural functions and that there seems to be interplay between them. Let us examine now these two kinds of relationships.

As noted previously, both orally transmitted and written prayers consist of composed texts and combinations of composed texts and pre-existing material. More oral prayers contain pre-existing material (thirty-four pieces) than written ones (twenty-three pieces). One *Qes* explained the reason for this disparity: a text that already exists in written form, i.e. in the Bible, does not need to be written into the prayer text. This occurs even though, as noted above, there are almost no prayers in the recorded corpus in which the pre-existing text was quoted extensively and in an unaltered form.

Moving now into languages, forty-nine prayers in the corpus are in Ge'ez and forty-two are in a mixture of Ge'ez and 'Agawegna, with the proportions between the two languages varying greatly. Four prayers are a mixture of 'Agawegna, Ge'ez and one or both of the vernacular languages spoken by Beta Israel (Tigregna and Amharic). Of the prayers that appear in written form in one of the prayer corpuses noted earlier, twenty are in Ge'ez and twenty-two contain a mixture of Ge'ez and 'Agawegna. Of the prayers preserved only in oral form, twenty-four are in Ge'ez, nineteen contain a mixture of

Ge'ez and 'Agawegna and four contain a mixture of 'Agawegna, Ge'ez and vernacular languages. Finally, from the limited number of prayers that are preserved partially in written and partially in oral form, three are a combination of Ge'ez and 'Agawegna and the rest are in Ge'ez.

This inventory reveals the importance of 'Agawegna in the total corpus of Beta Israel prayers. 'Agawegna sections or words, however, appear only in those prayers or parts of prayers which are composed. From the corpus, it is obvious that the 'Agawegna portions of prayers are more or less evenly distributed between the prayers that are written and those that are preserved only orally. All quotations from, or paraphrases of, pre-existing texts are in Ge'ez. Future research in 'Agawegna, a language understood today by very few members of the community, will certainly enrich our understanding of the Beta Israel liturgy.

Turning to the literary processes determining the prayers, we detected two general purposes, aesthetics and ideation. These purposes are expressed in general literary functions such as the overall structuring of the pieces, the fixing of literary and semantic patterns, the use of fixed opening or closing formulae, and the emphasis on a theme.

Literary purposes and functions became transparent in an analysis that considered the following two aspects of prayers: the structural principles by which the literary material is delivered in each specific prayer (repetition, alternation, complexity) and the different levels of segmentation within each piece at which these structural principles work (the whole piece, sections, units, phrases and words).

The overall complexity that characterizes the recorded prayers as a whole is not only a function of those pieces where the literary principle of complexity is at work, namely the

pieces in the hemiola pattern. Rather, this general complexity is rooted in the constant interplay between the literary purposes and functions and the processes and levels.

Looking into the rhetoric and contents of the Beta Israel liturgy, we found that there are four types of prayers (prescriptive, descriptive, petitionary and homiletic) and four main themes (attributes of God; aspects of the relationship between those praying and God; symbolic features; homiletic/instructional themes).

The results obtained by the three analytical approaches discussed above converge into one main conclusion: the liturgical categories, literary processes, and content, each have their own share in the shaping of Beta Israel cultural distinctiveness. Taken together, the three approaches largely confirm that the Beta Israel liturgy is an intentional cultural creation that expresses deeply ingrained religious paradigms. The oral nature of the principles at work in the conception and performance of the Beta Israel liturgical texts is essential in achieving their effectiveness in the rituals.

The liturgical contexts and the setting of the prayers

Prayers for the annual cycle

The liturgical cycle of the Beta Israel is organized according to a number of groupings. These include daily prayers, prayers tied to the weekly cycle, to the monthly cycle, and to the yearly cycle.

Within the daily cycle, the *Qessoch* group the prayers by the order of their time of performance: morning prayers, afternoon prayers and evening prayers. Morning

prayers are performed right before and after dawn. Evening prayers are performed after dark and occasionally late into the night, sometimes separated by a meal or by a meal and a period of rest. Afternoon prayers could be performed from about noon on.

Though this order of prayers may have been modeled after the normative Jewish division of the three daily prayers, it carries the logic of grouping prayers by their order of performance during the day regardless of the natural conditions of light or darkness. Divisions that are more traditional (as discussed by Shelemay 1989 and Leslau 1957) seem to be much more clearly oriented toward ordering the prayers according to the natural conditions of dark or light. Thus, morning prayers performed consecutively were divided by those performed before and after dawn, even in the absence of any noticeable break between them.

Within the liturgical cycle there are prayers that can be categorized as common to all occasions (for example, the afternoon prayers said at about noon that are constant for weekdays and all holidays). There are also cycles of prayers that occur either on all Sabbaths or on all holidays. Some prayers are unique to a single or to rare occasions. On the other hand, there are also occasional prayers occurring during the yearly cycle or the Sabbath cycle that are also used for specific life cycle events. We proceed in this survey from the more general to the more specific prayers, keeping in mind that only representative samples of prayers for specific events will be presented.

One prayer series that we recorded is the one opening every early afternoon service, whether weekday, Sabbath, holiday or *Səgd*. The timing of this series is set to after midday on weekdays and *Səgd* and after the festive meal on Sabbaths and holidays. These prayers are *Yitbarek... zegevre* (Yc 2826-5a), *Meharena* (Yc 2826-5b) and *Kiyake*

(Yc 2826-5c). This series, in addition to expressing various types of praises of God, is also full of expressions of trust that God can answer prayers, as well as requests that God show mercy and forgiveness to those who praise Him.

The first prayer in this series is the *Yitbarek* prayer that is identified as the opening prayer for afternoon services. It praises God for His greatness, saying that He is worthy of being praised in various ways and for all eternity. The prayer then goes on to list specific attributes of God as creator, savior, provider of forgiveness and care-taker for all. God is identified as the Lord of all of the Forefathers, beginning with Abraham and ending with Hanania, Azaria and Mishael, to whom He made His voice heard at Sinai. Another chain of praise follows this one, partially in Ge'ez and partially in 'Agawegna. New ideas, which occur toward the end of the recorded section, relate to the hearing of the prayer of David (with a quote from Psalms 6:7), and the recalling of the covenant with Noah marked by the appearance of the rainbow.

The second prayer, *Maharena*, which calls upon God to be merciful, first asks that God forgives those praying for various types of sins they have committed and then requests forgiveness for the sake of the Sabbath, the holidays, the Torah and the Forefathers. The last prayer in this series, *Kiyake*, expresses trust in God as the one who will protect, as the only God, king and creator, and ends with a statement that it is good to trust in God (Psalms 118:8a-9a).

We thus see that the series opens with a praise of God. Based on this praise and the recognition of God's attributes, it is possible to request His mercy and forgiveness. The series closes with an expression of trust that this request will be fulfilled. It is interesting

to note that this trust is based in part on a belief in the importance of the covenant and the virtues of the Forefathers.

All evening prayers of all holidays open with the prayer *Herzəga*. This prayer is also chanted as part of the morning services of all holidays. It exists in our corpus in three versions, each for a different occasion (Yc 2826-11/Yc 2827-1; Yc 2828-12; Yc 2836-3). The longest version (with fifty-two textual units) is the first one. Much of the opening section of this prayer is in 'Agawegna and includes many of the epithets of God as they appear in 'Agawegna, most built around the syllable *her*. In general, the prayer contains praises of God, with long series describing both the ways in which God is to be praised and God's many attributes. He is to be praised by all, including the angels, for, among other things, providing the Sabbath, the holidays, the Torah and the prophets. He is praised as a righteous God. Close to the beginning, this prayer includes the phrases which read: *zə'vtṣəhani* (also sometimes *ze'avṣnehane*, which means who brought us) *'əske yom 'əske zati ʿələt ze'iyəresa'əkəni* (*ze'iyəresa'əkəni*) *'əske yom 'əske zati ʿələt*, which literally means: "Who has brought me to this day, to this day, who has not forgotten me to this day, to this day". It is to be noted that the phrase "to this day" appears first with the word *yom* for day and second with the word *'ələt* for day. Of these two, *ʿələt* is the common word for day in Ge'ez.

This text is common to the occasions on which this prayer is said. However, at the beginning of the prayer there is a short section identifying the specific holiday when this prayer is said. This section always begins with the phrase *Musye ba'al halshawe Herzəga* or with that phrase followed by *'Aron ba'al halshawe Herzəga*. that identifies the source of the holiday, namely the laws promulgated by Moses and Aaron. In the following line, the name of the specific holiday, followed by the phrase *ba'al halshawe*

Herzəga, appears. In recording Yc 2826-11, the line reads *Fasika baal halshawe Herzəga*, labeling the holiday as *Fasika*. In Yc 2828-12, there are two such phrases, one beginning *'Ami ba'al*, i.e. the holiday of the year, and the other, beginning *Sərq ba'al* i.e. the holiday of the month. This appears at the beginning of a series of prayers said on *Berhan Saraqa*. The prayer *Herzəga* is followed by the following prayers: *Beruk Yitbarek 'egzi'aveḥer 'amlak Ǝsrael..., Zegevre, Behatitu qedus*, and ends with *Wanevavo*.

Another prayer series is found in the order of prayers for the morning of the New Moon and all yearly holidays except for the *Səgd*. The shared importance of these occasions is marked by the series of prayers that remain constant during the morning service, namely, *'Ǝsebehake* (Yc 2833-6a), *Zegevre* (the best example being Yc 2829-7-9; another example being Yc 2833-6b), *Kal'hu kwelomu mela'əkt* (Yc 2829-10), *Yətbārek... wayəmla* (Yc 2827-2) and *Behatitu qedus* (Yc 2827-8). It should be noted that the prayers *Ǝsebehake* and *Zegevre* are also a basic component of the wedding service; and *Zegevre*, with adaptations, is used in funerals.

A prayer section for each occasion, whether New Moon or holiday, always appears at the beginning of this series, identifying the occasion and providing at least one of the reasons for its observance. These "identification sections" will be discussed for each occasion described below.

The chain of prayers that follows the identification section and that begins with *Ǝsebehake*, expresses three major ideas: praise of God, which is expressed in different ways; the sanctity of God; and thanks to God for having brought the celebrants to this day or occasion. In addition, the first and the last prayers in this series relate in different ways to praying to God or recognizing God's relation to the Temple in Jerusalem,

perhaps indicating that it would be the most appropriate location for celebrating these occasions.

Ǝsebehake praises God, expresses belief and trust in Him, and relates to praying to God in His House as well as asking Him for guidance. Since this idea is appropriate for young people about to be married, its inclusion in weddings is natural.

The longest example of *Zegevre* (Yc 2829/7-9) in the corpus is a composite one, which contains textual units from a number of occasions. Those used on holidays are units I through III, and V through VI. In addition to declaring God as the Creator who is to be hallowed in praise, who provided a perfect world, is just and has ultimate power, greater than that of any man, units II and III contain the oft-repeated phrase which thanks God for having brought this celebrant or celebrants to this occasion and to not having forgotten them until this day. Added to this phrase is *menu yəre 'eya ləsenayat wəmenu yərekəva lə`amətate heywot*, which literally means "(he) who will see good and who will find years of life."

The prayer *Kal'hu kwelomu mela'əkt* appears in our corpus in two versions (a shorter version in Yc 2829-10, and a longer one in Yc 2832-3). It is the shorter of these two versions that appears in this chain of prayers. However, while on one occasion this prayer appears in this chain on every holiday morning, on another occasion it was said during *Fasika* and *Ba`al masalat* on only the first and last mornings. In this prayer, the angels in each of the seven heavens praise God, each with different words of praise. According to the *Qessawost,* this prayer is based on Isaiah's vision of God being praised by his angels (Isaiah 6).

The next prayer, *Yitbarak ...wayəmla* - said "in the middle of the morning prayers" and also as part of the evening service - opens with the declaration that God is to be praised as creator of everything, thus His world is filled with praise by all He created. This prayer also contains the phrase *za'avtsəhanee* which occurred in the prayers *Herzəga* and *Zegevre*. After this brief introduction, the prayer goes on to describe God's holiness, greatness and eternal nature, in short verses beginning with the phrase *behatitu qedus qedus*, meaning "He alone is holy." This phrase is also evidently influenced by the declaration of the angels in Isaiah (6:3) that the whole world is full of His Glory, a phrase that occurred earlier in that same prayer. This three-word chorus is continued in the next prayer unit, *beḥatitu qedus qedus*, which emphasizes the holiness of God and ties it to three other ideas: the Temple as the holy place of God, the giving of the Torah and the dedication of the firstborn of every animal or of man to God as found in Exodus 13:2. This is the last prayer of the series recorded for the corpus. *Herzəga* and the series of holiday morning prayers, which we have just discussed, do not occur on *Səgd*.

The closing series of prayers *'Alvo* (Yc 2830-11), *Yitbarek* (Yc 2830-13), and a spoken blessing (Yc 2831-1/2), come at the end of all festive morning services, including the Sabbath. *'Alvo* opens with the statement that there is no God other than God and none who can be compared to Him. The following section, composed largely in 'Agawegna, repeats the name of the holiday, in this case *Berhan Saraqa*, relating it to the holidays declared by Moses and Aaron, in phrases almost identical to those appearing in the *Herzəga* prayer that opens all holiday evening services. God is declared to be just and pure before the house of Israel. In a final statement, it is said that God is to be worshipped and blessed forever.

The closing *Yitbarek* is based on the apocryphal prayer called the Canticle of the Three Children, Hanania, Azaria and Mishael. In this prayer, God is praised with various descriptions and attributes, referring to His Holiness and greatness, His being enthroned on high, His unchanging nature and His eternal nature.

Finally, the eldest or most honored *Qes* usually offers a spoken blessing. It opens with praises of God, in 'Agawegna, and then continues in Ge'ez, thanking God for bringing all to this occasion and praising various attributes of God. Verses from Psalm 81 are repeated here, showing that this version of the prayer was meant to be for *Berhan Saraqa*. The blessing details many attributes of God, praises of Him and includes appeals for the community that are in some cases standard phrases in Ge'ez while others, more extemporaneous in nature, are in Amharic or Tigrean.

Sacrifices

The offering of animal sacrifices for holidays, including the eve of the New Moon and chickens slaughtered on the New Moon, as well as slaughtering animals for festive meals and for *Tāzkar* (the event marking the anniversary of a deceased person after seven days or a year) were an integral component of liturgical events and festivities. Slaughtering and sacrifices followed a set of rules. Before the animal was slaughtered, the prayer *Dərma Her* (Yc 2831-3) was recited. This prayer opens with praises of God in 'Agawegna. God is described as the one who brought the celebrants to this day. He will receive this offering with favor as He looked favorably to the offering of Abel and accepted the prayer of David.

Dərma Her is followed by the *Yətbarek* based on the version of the Canticle of the Three Children for this occasion (there are other versions of this prayer for other occasions. See Yc 2825-12, Yc 2830-13). While reciting *Yətbarek*, the *Qessoch* put salt and pepper three times on the head and tail of the sacrificial animal and add a blessing in ʻAgawegna. The animal is then tied and slaughtered. Another *Yətbarek* prayer follows, which praises God as the God of all flesh and spirit. Following the second *Yətbarek*, the prayer *Hale Hale yevarkewo* (Yc 2831-8/9 and Y 5722-8) is chanted but to a different melody than the one we recorded. This prayer describes various creatures in heaven and earth who praise God and His many attributes.

Recently, the order of the offering of sacrifices was altered; the animal is first tied and then slaughtered. This change reflects the sense that the practice of sacrifices by the Beta Israel in Israel is dying out as a result of to "the loss of purity." As put by the *Qessoch* interviewed, in days gone by, those offering the sacrifices were known to be in a state of absolute purity. It was then customary to add the prayer *Məswa'ətе ʻAviel* or *ʻAviel* (Yc 2831-4). In this prayer, the community requests that their sacrifice be accepted as was the sacrifice of Abel as well as the prayers of Aaron and the priests. God is asked to view these offerings, called *meṣuwat*, favorably. Presently, people are considered to be impure, so a brief statement is added which says "offering, lead us in the true path." Sacrifices are frequently called now "a gift."

When an offering was made for *Tāzkar* or the New Moon in full ceremony, the meat for that offering could be eaten only on that day and the day after. On the third day it was burnt (compare Leviticus 7:16-18 and 19:5-8). However, *meṣuwat*, i.e. the festive bread that was offered at these festive meals, could still be eaten on the third day.

A cow, sheep or goat was sacrificed as expiation for sins and burned without any blessing. Whoever slaughtered the animal was impure until the evening. An additional animal could be slaughtered at the same time for consumption at a meal.

Life cycle rituals

Specific rituals marked the events of the individual's life cycle: birth, purification, marriage, divorce (if it occurs), and death. In most cases, the liturgy was an important component of these events as well as the offering of sacrifices.

Birth rituals

A baby boy was circumcised on the eighth day after his birth in accordance with Genesis, 17 and Leviticus 12:3. The term for circumcision among Beta Israel was *gezarə* (literally, to cut). A qualified trained man or woman performed the circumcision. Unlike in rabbinical Judaism, Beta Israel did not circumcise on the Sabbaths or *ʻĀstaseryo*, though they did circumcise on other holidays. There is some disagreement as to when to perform the circumcision if it occurs on Sabbaths or *ʻĀstaseryo*. According to Aescoly (1943), the baby would be circumcised on the seventh day if the day of circumcision was a Sabbath or *ʻĀstaseryo*. According to the *Qessoch*, in these cases the circumcision was postponed to very early Sunday morning after the Sabbath or the day after *ʻĀstaseryo*.

The circumcision took place on the stone fence surrounding the hut of the mother. This fence demarcated the boundary between the pure realm outside the fence and the impure one within the fence. The attending *Qes* or *Qessoch* slaughtered a rooster

as a sign of atonement for spilling the blood of the baby. The circumciser would then perform the act of circumcision while the *Qessoch* would pronounce the appropriate blessing. However, they could not touch the child, because he was considered unclean as long as his mother was unclean. This was followed by three short prayers sung by the *Qessoch* (Yc 2833/4) that comprise an organic liturgical unit unique to the ritual of circumcision (the first and third of these prayers appear on other occasion as well). The first prayer *Baruk ʿAvrehām* refers to various blessings that were given to Abraham before he received the commandment of circumcision (Genesis 14:19 and 12:2b but in reverse order). The second prayer *ʿAdi gezarə* refers to the requirement to cut off the foreskin on the eighth day, quoting from the commandment given to Abraham (Genesis 17, especially verses 11-12). The third prayer *Sālam kidane* refers to the eternal covenant of peace given to the Forefathers. The names of the recipients of the covenant are recited: Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob/Israel, Moses, Aaron and, in the final unit, their descendants. This liturgy reinforces the command to circumcise, ties it to Abraham and confirms this act as a sign of the eternal covenant of peace between God and Israel.

Purification of the mother took place forty days after the birth of a son, or eighty days after the birth of a daughter in accordance with the Beta Israel understanding of the laws in Leviticus 12. On the day of purification, the mother fasts, and toward sundown she goes down to the local running water source. While holding the baby, she immerses herself one time for each day of her quarantine. She then lies face down on the ground and the *Qes* beats her lightly with a cluster of twigs, one time for each day of quarantine. As mentioned above (see section on Beta Israel textual corpus), the *Qes* at this moment

reads from the *Book of Ardet*. He blesses mother and child, and officially announces the child's name. A big celebration follows this ceremony.

Wedding rituals

Marriages were arranged by the parents of the bride and groom and took place when the couple was very young. *Qessoch* conducted the ritual sections of the wedding. In Ethiopia, the bride and groom were usually from separate villages so that, in most cases, celebrations took place both at the groom and the bride's village. If no *Qes* inhabited either the bride or the groom's villages, the ritual sections of the wedding took place in another village that had a *Qes* in residence.

Festivities begin in the groom's village with the groom getting dressed at his father's house. When ready, he comes out of the house with his friends and stands in front of the elders and *Qessoch* who are waiting for him outside. The groom is then seated in a booth of boughs built for the occasion, surrounded by all the elders and *Qessoch*. A new white ribbon with a red stripe in the middle is brought. The *Qes* chants *ʿƎsebəhake* (Yc 2833-6a), a prayer stating that God is to be praised at all times, expressing belief and trust in God and asking Him for guidance. The *Qes* places the ribbon at the groom's feet, then on his knees and chants *Zegevre*. This prayer contains the following themes: God, recognized as the creator, is to be hallowed and praised. He is to be thanked for allowing the celebrant to reach this time. He is recognized as the provider of a perfect world and as having a power greater than that of any human.

The ribbon is then tied to the groom's head as the *Qes* chants *Wəʾətus kəma məršāwi* (Yc 2834-2a) while dancing in front of the groom. This text combines the description of God as a bridegroom leaving his canopy (see Psalm 19:6) with the blessings of

fruitfulness and fecundity (see Deut. 7:13-14). This prayer is followed by *ʻAmlākə ʻalemə* (Yc 2834-2b) praising God and asking Him to bless His faithful with peace, mercy, healing, light and justice. The prayer asks for guidance and then goes on to describe Jerusalem and request blessings for her. The *Qes* then sits down or joins in the dancing and singing which continues at the booth. The contents of songs for this occasion were secular.

A final blessing is given at the booth and the groom and his friends depart for the bride's village. The trip might take a number of days. In the bride's village, the *Qes* or *Qessoch* receives the bridal party with great honor and again repeats the prayers *ʻƎsebəhake* and *Zegevre*. Dancing, singing and feasting go on through the night. On the evening of the second or third day, the bride and the groom are seated in the special booth and sign or make a mark on a wedding agreement stating in essence that "I and this person were married on (the date) before witnesses and *Qes* (with the names). I and this man (or woman) are married from now on. She is my wife and he is my husband, from this day and forever". This agreement is written in the vernacular.

In the middle of the day following the day of the wedding agreement signature, the groom's party comes to the house of the bride's family to take her to the groom's village. A close friend or relative of the groom carries her on his back; usually she is completely covered. The women accompany her while singing special songs (*zafen* in Amharic, or *derfi* in Tigrean) and the *Qessoch* sing the prayer *Təʻaməmu daqiqa ʻƎsraʻel* (Yc 2826-3) which calls Israel to believe in God, praises Him as creator of the heavens and declares that God is to be praised amidst rejoicings. The women bless the bride that she might be a source of blessing and bear many children as in the Biblical blessings to Rebecca

(Genesis 24:60). The wedding party then departs for the groom's village where they are greeted with celebrations. The bride and the groom then go off to their private quarters to consummate the marriage. If the bride is a virgin, a *Qes* would bless the couple the next morning.

Although only the prayer *Wəʼətus kəma məʻāwi* is unique to weddings, it is important to note the themes emphasized by the specific combination of prayers that accompany this crucial ritual of the life cycle. It contains general principles of faith, trust in God and praise for Him, but these prayers also ask for guidance, thanking God for bringing the celebrants to this occasion and recognizing their dependence on Him. The verse from Psalm 19:6 specifically describing the joy of the bridegroom is part of this liturgy, as well as blessings for the fertility and fecundity of the young couple. Finally, the blessings for the couple are also projected towards Jerusalem.

Mourning rituals

The funeral of a deceased person (*Fetāt*) took place on the day he or she died. A full funeral was held for those who were thirteen years old or older. For younger persons, only a short service was held at the home of the family. When news of someone's death had to be transmitted to a distant village, the bearer of the sad tidings would visit the house of the person who was to receive the news. If he arrived in the evening, he would always wait until the next morning to deliver the news.

Qessoch conducted all mourning rituals. When someone came to inform a *Qes* that a person had died, the *Qes* said *Wasəmkeni ʻEgzə ʻegziʼabəḥer* (Yc 2835-5), a prayer that includes all the attributes of the name of God and of God Himself, particularly His mercy, forgiveness, eternity, justice, power and saving grace toward Israel. This prayer

contrasts God's eternal nature to man's mortality. The *Qes* also said "In God's name, do not touch me," a saying based on a Beta Israel midrash according to which the earth rejected God's desire to create man out of it by saying "Do not touch me".

As the body was carried to the cemetery, the *Qessoch* walked ahead of the pallbearers and chanted *Wasəmkeni* (Yc 2835-5). *Qessoch* did not enter the cemetery and chanted the rest of the prayers from a distance. The body of the deceased was buried on his or her right side, with the head pointing east.

The prayers for the full funeral comprise a liturgy that deals with similar themes as other life cycle events but with different emphases: God's greatness and mercy, His judgment of all souls, and a warning to the mourners about how to conduct their lives as well as a request that God be merciful. *Menu kamake* (Yc 2835-7) emphasizes God's greatness and mercy with a request to be merciful with all those present. *Səbḥatat*, which begins *'Amlak lekulu manfas* (Yc 2835-9), is a very complex prayer. After an opening that relates to God as all-powerful and the undying source of both healing and death, there is a detailed narration based on the book of Enoch that describes the judgment of all souls before God. Both the deeds of man and their trembling and judgment before God are depicted in detail. The prayer ends with a statement describing the positive fate of the just, praising God for His justice. The prayer *Mela'ikte senayan* (Yc 2835-11) speaks of the gathering of the beautiful angels and reports about their acceptance of the soul of the departed. This prayer is based on the idea that when angels see a beautiful soul that has died, they gather around it and rejoice. With the covering of the grave, *Wayə'əzeni* (Yc 2835-13) was recited: God is asked to remove His anger, be merciful and remember His covenant with the Forefathers, beginning with Abraham and ending with Solomon.

In contrast to this elaborate liturgy, the short service held at the home of a deceased person younger than thirteen included only the prayer *Wasəmkeni*.

The mourners, along with those who buried the deceased, sit for seven days at home and do not go out to work. It is customary to give money to the family at the funeral and during the seven days of mourning, as well as to provide them with food and drink. The mourners themselves do not prepare food. On the third and the seventh day, a *Qes* comes to the home to purify the mourners with the ashes of a red heifer. The mourners then immerse themselves in water mixed with the ashes. It was believed that one should never speak evil of the dead or the mourners. Though *Qessoch* do not enter the cemetery, they do observe the seven days of mourning and receive food from their neighbors.

At the end of the seven days of mourning, beginning in the evening and continuing through the next morning, the ceremony called *Tāzkar* takes place. *Tāzkar*, also called *Fetat,* as is the funeral, is compulsory for all relatives and friends of the deceased, not only at the end of the seven days but also on the first anniversary of the death. According to belief, the performance of this ritual benefits the soul of the departed. If relatives wish, they can also perform *Tāzkar* annually on the anniversary of the death of their dear one.

On the afternoon before the *Tāzkar*, a Qes slaughter a sheep or a cow in memory of the departed (see above under "Sacrifices") purchased by the family with money donated to them during the seven days. The blessings accompanying all rituals of animal slaughter are chanted, including *Yətbarak* (Yc 2830-13). The spilled blood of the animal demonstrates respect for the departed. *Wat* (a stew) is prepared from the animal for all relatives and friends attending the *Tāzkar*. Neighbors and friends provide bread

(both *ənjera* and *bereketa/meṣuwat*) as well as beer. These contributions are made in memory of the departed or of other departed relatives of the contributor, all of whom are eulogized as each contribution is presented. Male neighbors and relatives serve the evening meal to all, between the regular service held at sundown and the special prayers for the *Tāzkar* that follow the meal.

The evening prayers begin with the words *Buruk wə'atu Yətbārek əmqədme ʿalem wə'əmdehere ʿalem* ("May He be blessed from all eternity and to all eternity"). They include *Səbhatat* (Yc 2835-9), which is also performed at the funeral. It is possible to add in any of chapters 1 to 10 from the book of Psalms, with the introduction *Mehevere Dawit* (Yc 2836-1), a text describing King David as the great composer of Psalms. The evening prayers always close with *Baruk Adonai zevaraka le senvat* (Yc 2825-6).

Tāzkar prayers resume the next morning before dawn and are incorporated into the regular morning service. The prayers begin with *Wasəmkeni* (Yc 2835-5). Another prayer which is repeated from the funeral is *Mela'əkte senāyān* (Yc 2835-11). In addition a *Halita* (Yc 2829-12-13, Yc 2830-1) is added. Both of these sections are variant performances of Psalm 33, which calls upon the righteous to rejoice over God's greatness as the lover of justice, as creator and as doing acts of redeeming grace toward Israel. Another prayer included in the morning *Tāzkar* is *Yətkenayu lita* (Yc 2830-9) which thanks God for providing food and clothing and declares his eternal nature. The morning prayers end with a very touching prayer *Sālam leke/leki* (literally "farewell to you"), after which *bereketa/meṣuwat* is served first to the *Qessoch* who bless and cut it, and then to all in attendance, followed by a meal. With this, the official part of the *Tāzkar* ends.

Music of the Beta Israel liturgy

The Beta Israel prayer chants are orally transmitted and their performance is not subject to any theorization or notation. As all liturgies, the Beta Israel liturgy consists of the public delivery of a prescribed corpus of texts. This function is carried out in Beta Israel communities according to a formulaic principle, i.e. sacred verses are conveyed by melodic formulas. However, the sacred texts of Beta Israel are in prose and the length of verses is therefore extremely variable. This variability affects the configuration of the musical phrases since a widely disparate number of words in each verse need to be accommodated to the same melodic formula. This accommodation is realized through an intercalation principle: within a sung verse, an opening melodic cell is repeated as the length of the verse requires and the rest of the melodic and rhythmic formula is fitted to the last fragment of the verse. The same melodic formula can support the performance of several texts. Conversely, the same text can, depending on context, be set to different melodic formulae.

Melody

With very few exceptions, a Beta Israel prayer consists of a sequence comprising a variable number of verses corresponding to diverse realizations of the same melodic formula. Variants of the same musical formula are generated by changes in the length of the verses. Put differently, the entire musical structure of the prayer is contained within one and each of its verses. Moreover, not only are most prayers based on varied

reiterations of the same melodic formula, but one can find similar melodic patterns extending throughout various prayers. Therefore, one cannot help but notice that different prayers sound very much like each other. What is the source of such a listening impression? The answer lies in what we call "melodic pilgrims," i.e. mobile melodic phrases appearing in different prayers. However, does this recurrence occur in all prayers or in just some of them? In which pieces does this process occur? When the same melodic phrase appears in different prayers, is its position always the same or is it variable? Is there a finite number of mobile melodic units?

When trying to answer these different but related questions, one comes to understand that this music makes use of the compositional process of *centonization*, which entails using a limited stock of melodic units or cells in different melodic contexts. The musical system of the Beta Israel liturgy functions on a small stock of melodic units. The specific choice and arrangement of a given number of such mobile musical units provides each piece with its unique identity.

By applying two criteria to the definition of what a melodic unit is, it is possible to reduce considerably the number of formulas employed in the Beta Israel liturgy. The first criterion is that of melodic movement. Typically, the melodic movement in this repertoire proceeds by conjunct degrees, each one characterized by its directionality. A second criterion is the frequency with which the same melodic unit appears in the whole corpus. The typology of melodic units following these two criteria brings to light *prototypical units*.

Most cells start with an ascending melodic movement of three conjunct degrees and descending by several conjunct ones. The most typical cell consists of a succession

of three ascending degrees followed by two descending degrees. Three slightly more developed cells appear as well, consisting of three ascending degrees, followed by three, four, or five descending degrees respectively. Four other – more reduced – cells consist of three ascending degrees followed by a descending degree; three ascending degrees; three descending degrees and four descending degrees.

From these eight cells, it is possible to reconstitute all melodic formulas found in the corpus, regardless of their length and modal manifestation. The eight prototypical cells found in the Beta Israel liturgy contain all the melodic material brought into play in this tradition. In its turn, the longest of the cells contains all the others. It is therefore the *matrix* or "meta-prototype" of this material.

These cells constitute an inventory of abstract melodic contours. In fact, by neutralizing the size of the intervals separating the constitutive degrees of the anhemitonic pentatonic scale (major seconds and minor thirds) to retain just the progression order, the contour stands beyond the notion of mode. From a cognitive point of view, each contour constitutes the mental reference for all formulas deriving from it.

When considering the modalities of the connections between the prototypical cells, what are their most significant characteristics? As we have seen, within each formula the most prevalent melodic movement involves conjunct degrees. On the other hand, intervallic leaps – particularly major thirds and fifths – appear more frequently at the junction between melodic units. Another syntactic characteristic results from the lengthening of the verse and concerns the intercalation principle mentioned above. Such an intercalation generally comes before the last cell of the verse. Finally, the

melodic movement proceeds sequentially, namely, by reiteration of the same melodic cell, transposed to different degrees. This always occurs in descending order.

Form

Musical form in the Beta Israel liturgy is based on repetition of a musical phrase and on the fundamental principle of alternation between one or two *Qessoch* acting as soloists while the rest of the participants form a choir. This ubiquitous alternation can follow either an antiphonal principle based on the choir's reiteration of the melodic phrase set out by the soloist or a responsorial one. In the latter case, the choir repeats throughout the whole prayer, without any variation, the same melodic and textual formula in response to the varying phrases of the soloist. The choir's response is generally brief, sometimes consisting of just one word. The response melody can differ from the soloist's one, or be similar to it, taking over a segment of the soloist's melody. In the Beta Israel liturgy, the first case of antiphony is the most frequent one.

However, as we have already seen in the section on performance practices of the Beta Israel liturgy, one also finds musical forms that are more complex in which antiphonal and responsorial processes coexist, but the modalities of their organization do not follow strictly their binary character. Such forms are the ones defined by us as the *hemiola pattern*. In European music of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, this term referred to a group of three notes having the same duration as one of two notes. The Jewish Ethiopian liturgy offers an original application of this principle, using the 3:2 / 2:3 ratio in the distribution of the melodic material between soloist and choir (for

details see section above "Performance practices of the liturgical texts"). Furthermore, within the same prayer – or even within the same verse – different modalities of distribution of the material can follow one another.

Formal structures based on the hemiola pattern are quite unusual in orally transmitted music. They do not exist in the Ethiopian Christian tradition. However, they are found in chants in the Sufi community in Gondar. Outside of Ethiopia they are attested in Senegal, among the Kujamaat Diola and the Wolof, and in Mali among the Malinke.

Sometimes the three forms, i.e. antiphonal, responsorial and hemiola, appear in the same prayer. A piece can begin with an antiphonal chant followed by a hemiola second section and ending with a responsorial one. In prayers of this combined type, the number of sections varies; three on average but there can be more. In practice, the demarcation between the different forms within a prayer is extremely difficult to differentiate for an unfamiliar listener. The modes of combining the three forms are diversified because different sections of the same prayer may derive, partly or fully, from the same melodic formula and the same musical mode. In these cases what differentiates between sections of a piece is most often their temporal organization rather than melodic material.

Time

Many melodies in the Beta Israel liturgy flow in a free rhythm, whereas others have a regular beat clearly marked by the regular stamping of the priests' feet on the ground. The strictly measured prayers form a well-defined category. Nevertheless, prayers

without clear beat comprise the majority in our corpus even though in the past some of these unmeasured prayers may have had a steadier beat. *Qessoch* testified that in Ethiopia some prayers that in Israel are performed *a cappella* were accompanied on the frame-drum called a *negarit*, while others by both a *negarit* and a small metal gong, the *metqe*. However, back in Ethiopia, there were also prayers sung *a cappella* and this category, called "without instrument," includes pieces whose melodic flow is without steady beat.

There are four different conceptions of musical time or, more precisely, four ways of characterizing it in the Beta Israel liturgy. These four conceptions are unmeasured prayers; prayers emphasized by musical accompaniment; unmeasured prayers accompanied by a rhythmic *ostinato*; and strictly measured prayers. In the unmeasured prayers, the melody lacks an isochronal beat calibration. On the musical level, an irregular alternation between more or less short notes and long ones characterizes the unmeasured prayers. Long notes always appear in the descending melodic movements within the verse, after all the formulas have been developed and before the breaths that mark the segmentation of the verse. They also may occur at the beginnings of verses, after an ascending melodic movement.

In the second category, the pieces, depending on specific circumstances, require the use of the *negarit*. The *negarit* has no metric function. Its role is to provide sporadic and emphatic punctuations to the chant. This instrument has an exclusively liturgical function. This is why only *Qessoch* played it and were responsible for its custody. The *negarit* was used on all religious rituals except the Sabbath and *ʾĀstaseryo*.

Prayers (or certain sections of prayers) of the third category are those accompanied by a rhythmic *ostinato* provided by the *negarit* and the *metqe* struck with a metal clapper. This instrumental *ostinato* consists of the uninterrupted performance of an invariable rhythmic figure consisting of five short values. The first, third, and fourth values are marked by the *metqe* while the *negarit* only punctuates the first one in the cycle. Frame-drum and gong regulate the flow of the melody, but the irregularity of the accompaniment prevents us from considering the pieces in this category as measured ones.

In strictly measured prayers, our fourth category, music is calibrated by a regular beat. The beat can be materialized in the music itself or remain implicit, as is frequently the case in traditional African music. In the Beta Israel tradition, measured pieces are clearly defined because they are always related to dancing. The term *zlia*, which means leap or hopping, is always associated with this type of prayer chant. In Ethiopia, this dancing involved collective circular – or semi-circular – movements performed by the *Qessoch* while singing. Sometimes, *Qessoch* used their prayer sticks, *maqwamaya*, to sporadically stamp on the ground.

Measured prayers are an important part of this liturgical music tradition. Musical scansion generally covers the entire measured prayer. The *Qessoch* stress the clearly rhythmic organization of these chants by stamping their feet on the ground or by emitting vocal sounds whose principal aim is to maintain the scansion. Subdivision of the beat is always binary. Despite this clear rhythmic character, frequent overlaps between soloist and choir turn absolute periodicity into a rare occurrence in the measured pieces. The overlap depends on the soloist's initiative and the lack of regularity in his entrances is the factor that disrupts periodicity in measured prayers.

Scales

The most frequent scale on the Beta Israel liturgy is the anhemitonic pentatonic scale that excludes half-tones. The range of each prayer is rarely wider than an octave. As we have seen, the melodic movement of the prayers generally proceeds by conjunct degrees with all verses within a prayer ending on the same note – the *finalis*, which is constant.

As in most orally transmitted music, the notion of absolute pitch is ignored among the Beta Israel and the scales of their prayers are not submitted to normalized temperament. Furthermore, at times, the pitch of a piece rises progressively throughout its performance.

When performances of vocal music are not associated with melodic instruments, there is instability in the intonation of certain degrees of the scale. Most often, this instability appears only in the first verses of the prayer. Since in the Ethiopian Jewish liturgy most prayer chants rely, as noted above, on the anhemitonic pentatonic scale, such a phenomenon is widespread. This scale is composed of two types of intervals, the major second and the minor third. Since the smallest interval is the full tone, the potential dispersion of intervals is wider than in a diatonic scale where the half-tones decrease the possible deviations from precise intonation. It is therefore difficult to determine with precision the size of certain intervals. For instance, where is the boundary between a "large" major second and a "small" minor third? Without an answer to this question, it is impossible to know the pentatonic configuration (i.e. the sequence of seconds and thirds) characteristic of each piece, or to identify the two full tones whose position is decisive for characterizing the musical mode.

In sum, it appears that if the chants fit an identifiable pentatonic framework, the system permits much flexibility. Experimentation revealed that modifying the size of intervals between the conjunct degrees (major seconds or minor thirds) has no effect on the chant's identity, as long as their order of succession remains the same. Thus, in this liturgical tradition the notion of *contour*, rather than scale, is crucial in distinguishing between different melodies.

Plurivocality

At first glance, the chants of Beta Israel seem essentially monophonic: melodies are performed in unison, sometimes in octaves. Yet, one often senses that in choral sections the melody branches out into intertwined lines, creating in the listener the impression of a rudimentary and sporadic plurivocality. The degree of plurivocality varies widely, from heterophony to contrapuntal textures. However, it is hard to determine what falls under one category of plurivocality or another. Among the reasons for this indeterminacy are fleeting melodic movements that occur around the main melodic line. Sometimes, they are clearly perceptible and sporadically repeated: in this case, a certain consistency of plurivocality is present. In many other cases, however, it is extremely difficult to determine whether we are confronting simultaneous variants of the main melodic line or a countermelody.

At times, the choir's interventions create the impression of a general hubbub that makes the identification of the main melodic line hard to grasp. This impression emerges from the choir's members singing the same melodic unit in a more or less simultaneous

manner. Their voices generally join in unison at the end of each verse and more rarely in notes of long duration within the verse itself. Between those points of convergence, many rhythmic shifts take place between the voices. These shifts are more or less discernible and permanent depending on the prayer. Heterophony also originates in individuals' melodic variants. These variants are characteristic of some *Qessoch* who slightly deviate from the main melodic line followed by the other members of the choir. Melodic heterophony can appear at any place within the chant of a prayer except for the ends of verses that are, as already noted, always sung in unison.

Contents of the CDs

CD I

THE SABBATH

1. ***Yitbārek 'egzi'abəḥer... wazəntu wə'atu samāy*** (soloist: Qes Rahamim)

The text of this prayer can be found on any Sabbath during the year. However, in this recording, it is specifically related to the beginning of the fourth Sabbath of the fifth month but the melody is identical to that of all other Sabbaths. The text refers to the observance of the Sabbath, as stated in Biblical sources and as shaped by the Beta Israel. This observance is attributed to the authority of Moses. It draws mainly on Exodus (31:14 and 15b; 20:8-10) and ends with a paraphrase of Deuteronomy 27:15, a curse directed towards the idolaters who do not maintain God's commandments. Written sources of the Beta Israel liturgy include several textual variants of this prayer.

This piece is sung in a responsorial form by a soloist Qes (A) and a choir of *Qessoch* (B). Each verse sung by the soloist is completed by the choir. The piece is unmeasured – without regular beat. Numerous individual melodic variants emerge among the singers of the choir in addition to the slight temporal discrepancies between them creating a heterophonic texture.

2. ***Yitbārek 'egzi'abəḥer...nəgru lə'egzi'abəḥer*** (soloist: Qes Yirmiyahu)

A prayer for Friday night, as the Sabbath begins. The melody remains the same from one Sabbath to another, but the text is open to change. The same piece may be sung also

after the Sabbath meal. The text partly draws on Psalm 107 but also includes composed passages. It praises God, the Patriarchs and their good deeds towards humankind, the poor and those who suffer, in that order. The text ends by reaffirming God's power and sovereignty.

The piece is performed antiphonally: the choir repeats very precisely each of the soloist's enunciations (soloist: A / choir: A). A single melodic formulation, first enunciated by the opening soloist, is repeated throughout the piece.

3. ***Kālḥu kʷelomu melā'əkta samāy*** (soloist: Qes Melkitsedek)

A prayer with similarities to and variations on the texts comprising the *Qeddushah* of the Jewish liturgy. It is part of the morning prayer on any Sabbath of the year. The melody, however, changes on the morning of the Seventh Sabbath. This text is also found in the morning service on *Sərq Warḥi / Tchereka Bā'al* but with a different melody. It describes God's attributes, manifestation and throne. It goes on to describe all His creatures, heavenly or earthly, indicating that they praise Him, bow before Him and ask that their prayers be heard. Though entirely composed, this prayer echoes Isaiah 6:1-6 and expands on it. It describes how angels in each of the seven heavens praise God, beginning with "Qeduś, qeduś" (only twice).

This prayer greatly differs from the two preceding ones in its formal organization. It contains three different sections: an antiphonal section, followed by a long solo – a very rare occurrence in the Beta Israel liturgy – and a short conclusive formulation sung in turns by the soloist and the choir.

4. ***'Afqərnākə*** (soloist: Qes Avraham)

This piece is part of any Sabbath morning service. A portion of its text is sung to a different melody on the Seventh Sabbath. It is a completely composed prayer in Ge'ez and 'Agawegna, in alternation. The text mentions those who seek God, asking Him that He should not abandon them. The person praying turns to God asking that his prayer be fulfilled.

The distribution of the verses of *'Afqərnākə* follows the hemiola pattern. Each verse contains three melodic units (A, B, C), distributed in two hemistiches as follows: A-B-C/A-B-C.

Soloist	Choir	Soloist	Choir	Soloist	Choir
A	B	C	A	B	C

While the musical material follows a binary organization, the alternation between the soloist and the choir follows a ternary one.

Another characteristic of this piece is its plurivocality: at certain points the choir sporadically sings in simultaneous intervals of a third, or even a fifth, producing a rudimentary form of polyphony.

5. ***Waye'əzeni tansə'u*** (soloist: Qes Avraham)

This prayer comes right after the preceding one during the Sabbath morning service. On the Seventh Sabbath it is sung in a different melody. The text focuses on the notion of judgment. Anyone who turns to God wishes to be fairly judged. God should go after

the enemies of those who pray. He is asked to be merciful and to refrain from being angry at those who pray.

The piece opens with a rather elaborate melodic formula sung by the soloist and closes with another elaborate formula sung simultaneously by the soloist and the choir. In between these two sections, the melodic material is organized in a hemiola pattern of a particular kind: unlike the previous piece, it does not follow the 2 vs 3 pattern but 2 vs 5. Each verse contains three melodic units (A, B, C), repeated in the same sequence in both hemistiches, as shown in the following table:

Soloist	Choir	Soloist	Choir	Soloist	Choir	Soloist	Choir	Soloist	Choir
A	A	B	B	C	A	A	B	B	C

6. ***Ṣwaʾəkuka*** (soloist: Qes Yirmiyahu)

A prayer for the Sabbath morning, including the Seventh Sabbath, with a section in Ge'ez and 'Agawegna, in alternation. It opens: "I called out to You." God is the only one and those who pray assert that God should not forget them. The prayer ends by recalling some of God's attributes.

The structure of this unmeasured piece follows the hemiola pattern. The two constituent parts of the verse – A and B – are organized in the following binary form: A-A-B/A-A-B. Although the melody is in the pentatonic anhemitonic scale, the intonation of some degrees is unstable, a phenomenon characteristic of music based on this scale whose smallest interval is a full tone. As in various other African musical repertoires, in the

Beta Israel liturgy the contour of the melody prevails over the exact intonation of the intervals.

7. ***'Elohe 'Amlāka 'Avrəhām*** (soloist: Qes Rahamim)

As for the four preceding pieces, this prayer is sung during the Sabbath morning service. Its tune differs on the Seventh Sabbath and this is the version heard in this recording. According to some *Qessoch*, the text with this tune is also sung in the afternoon of the *Səgd* festival. On the other hand, the same text with a different melody is sung at non-liturgical events. The text firstly alludes to the Forefathers and God's covenant with them. Then comes an evocation of Jerusalem and the Temple, with quotes from Psalm 122 (verse 3; second half of verse 6 and first half of verse 7). Yet, those portions of verses that allude to the actual pilgrimage to Jerusalem are skipped. The prayer ends by recalling that God is God over the Heavens and Earth.

The piece consists of three sections that follow one another without interruption. The first two are antiphonal: the first one is unmeasured while the second follows a regular metric pattern. The final section is also metric but in the hemiola pattern.

8. ***Hāle hāle yəbārkəwo*** (soloist: Qes Avraham)

A prayer in Ge'ez for the morning service of regular Sabbaths, the Seventh Sabbath and the *Səgd*. The melody is the one for these two latter occasions. The text mixes composed passages and quotes from Biblical sources (primarily Psalm 148; also Isaiah 49:12; I Samuel 2:4; and other quotes). It begins with an introduction stating that God is eternal and should be praised by all His creatures, then a section that praises Him for sustaining the weak; the rest of the prayer details the list of creatures that should praise

God, including those who sing the prayer. An extended version of this text is found in written sources of the Beta Israel liturgy.

This relatively long piece is completely antiphonal, consisting of one melodic formula repeated by soloist and choir.

9. ***Yitbārek 'egzi'abəḥer*** (soloist: Qes Rahamim)

This piece is heard on different occasions in the liturgical calendar, such as the second prayer during the *Səgd* service, the closing of the Friday morning prayers and during *Tāzkar*. A shorter version is performed during the Sabbath morning service. Ultimately, the same melody and a slightly different version of this text are also heard on the New Moon. The present recording, however, is for Sev'e Senvet and Berevo'e Senvet. The purpose of the prayer is to praise the Lord. It builds on Biblical motifs where God as the Creator reigns in the firmament. The text builds on the first chapter of Genesis, on Psalm 29 and on a brief reference to Ezechiel 1:3.

This prayer contains three hemiola verses and a final antiphonal verse. In comparison to the average in the Beta Israel repertoire, its range - more than an octave – is relatively wide.

ANNUAL CYCLE

FĀSIKA **(Passover)**

10. ***We'etu Ämlākiye Ǝsebḥəwo*** (soloist: Qes Yosef)

This prayer is considered the equivalent to the song performed by Moses and the Children of Israel after crossing the Sea of Reeds. It is heard during the morning service

of Passover, Rosh Hashana (*Ber'hān Sarāqa*), on the New Moon, as well as during the service on the 10th, 12th, and 15th day of each month. The text praises God in general terms, and speaks of Him as a hero. It refrains from alluding to Pharaoh, his army or the Sea of Reeds itself. Several Biblical quotes included in this text are from Exodus 15 (the Song of Moses or Song of the Sea), second half of verse 2, and verses 6 and 15. Also included are portions of Moses's farewell song in Deuteronomy 32, verse 3 and the first half of verse 10. These last quotes are introduced by the formula "I shall sing the song …"

The piece has two sections – the first is antiphonal and the second in the hemiola pattern. The eight verses of the first part give rise to numerous ornamental variants, both in the hemistich of the soloist and in that of the choir. The rhythmic flow of this prayer, apparently free, is nonetheless regulated. In Ethiopia, two percussion instruments – a gong and a frame-drum – accompanied its performance in an *ostinato* consisting of five equal durations of which the first, third and fourth were marked by a stroke. The choir part includes the frequent superposition of different melodic patterns, thus generating an embryonic polyphony.

11. ***Herzəgā*** followed by ***yitbārek*** (soloist: Qes Melkitsedek)

This piece consists of two songs that can also be heard separately. The first one, *Herzəgā*, appears regularly during the evening service of Passover while the second one, *yitbārek*, is heard in the morning service on the same holiday but also on Rosh Hashana (*Ber'hān Sarāqa*) and at the beginning of *'Āstaseryo*. However, the two songs are performed back to back only on the New Moon of the month of Nissan and on (*Ber'hān Sarāqa*).

Herzəgā is mainly in ʿAgawegna, but continues in Geʾez, praising God for having allowed the worshipers to come to this event. It is used frequently throughout the Beta Israel liturgy as one of the equivalents to the Hebrew blessing Sheheheyanu said by Jews to celebrate special occasions or express gratitude for new and unusual experiences. However, unlike Sheheheyanu, a formula that remains identical for all occasions, the text of *Herzəgā* is modified to fit each liturgical occasion.

Herzəgā is antiphonal. A passage from it chanted by the soloist serves as a transition to *Yitbārek,* a responsorial prayer. In Ethiopia, the singing of *Herzəgā* was accompanied by a frame-drum. The instrument did not fulfill any rhythmic function; it was merely used to punctuate some words and emphasize certain parts of the text.

***MAʿĀRIR* (Shavuot)**

12. *Hāle luya wanevāvo* (soloist: Qes Melkitsedek)

A prayer in Geʾez for two occasions related to Shavuot according to the Beta Israel calendar, Hedar Maʾarir and Maʾarir Seni. It combines close variations on several Biblical passages. It firstly states the prescriptive pattern which is to be found throughout the Pentateuch when God sees Moses as the one who transmits the divine commandments. The text then lists several obligations, among them: the writing of the second Tables of the Law (Exodus 34:1; Deuteronomy 10:1-5), the public reading of the Torah every seven years (Deuteronomy 31:10-13), and the continuous studying of the Torah (Joshua 1:8).

As in *ʿElohe ʿAmlāka ʿAvrəhām* (track 7), this piece opens with an unmeasured section followed by a measured one. However, *Hāle luya wanevāvo* differs from *ʿElohe ʿAmlāka* in that both sections of the former are in the hemiola pattern.

13. *ʿƎləbomu* (soloist: Qes Yosef)

Another prayer for Hedar Maʾarir and Maʾarir Seni. It can also be sung in the evening in the context of the cycle of the seven Sabbaths or when one removes the Torah scroll from the ark for its public reading in the prayer house. It can also be sung during the Sabbath meal. The text concentrates on the consecration of the *Qessoch* and on their role in the sacrifices for the transgressions of the people (Exodus 29:20). It then refers to the writing of the second set of Tables of the Law, to the Temple, and to God's glory, the center of which is located in Zion. Adaptations of Deuteronomy 1o: 2 and 5 are to be found on these points, as well as of I Kings 8:29 and of Psalm 50:2-3. The text ends by closely linking the sacrifices with Moses, Aaron and his son Eleazar (cf. Numbers 20:22-29 on Aaron and Eleazar).

From the beginning of this chant, one is clearly aware of its measured nature. The dance-like character of the piece quickly becomes concrete when the *Qessoch* scan the rhythm with their feet on the floor. The melody is in the hemiola pattern. The breakdown of the number of beats of each hemiola is steady, i.e. 5-6-11/5-6-11 for the repetitions of the first hemiola, and 4-4-8/4-4-8 for the following ones. The phenomenon of the soloist's overlapping the end of the choir's enunciation that often occurs in measured pieces of the Beta Israel liturgy takes place, in this case, over one or two pulsations.

***BERHĀN SARĀQA* (Rosh Hashana)**

14. *Wanevāvo* (solist: Qes Avraham)

Due to its character and content, this piece is close to one of those for Shavuot in our selection *(e.g. Hāle luya wanevāvo)*. The melody for the present prayer is for *Ber'hān Sarāqa* and for the New Moon. The beginning conveys formulations that are close to the legislative portions about the holiday in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, but also in Exodus. As noted, the framework acts as a standard introduction to any prescriptive text for holydays of the Beta Israel liturgy followed by Psalm 81:4-5. They come together with a statement that aims at giving an eternal character to any commandment. God is saintly and kind with those who listen to Him. The prayer ends by praising God and quoting from Psalm 33.

This piece contains two sections based on the same melodic formula, which provides a good illustration of the organization of form in the liturgical music of the Beta Israel. The music of the entire piece is contained in the soloist's first enunciation. The formula (A) contains two motifs (a and b), both gravitate around the same note. The first section is antiphonal: the soloist's formulation (A=a-b) is repeated by the choir (A=a-b). The second section is in the hemiola pattern; it contains the same motifs but they are distributed differently than in the first one:

Soloist	Choir	Soloist	Choir	Soloist	Choir
a	a	b	a	a	b

15. *Bə'anti'ahomu feṭərā* (soloist: Qes Rahamim)

A prayer performed in the very early morning of *Ber'hān Sarāqa*, before sunrise. The text binds the creation of Heavens, Earth, and Water to the Forefathers, for whom they have been created. A clear link is established between *Ber'hān Sarāqa*, the world's creation and the Forefathers. The qualities of the latter are said to benefit their offspring. Such an extension of the meaning of the Biblical text brings the Beta Israel closer to rabbinical Judaism.

Bə'anti'ahomu feṭərā is in the hemiola pattern. It is entirely measured and accented shortly after its beginning by the *Qessoch*'s stamping of feet as in *'Ǝləbomu* (track 13); some *Qessoch* add a rhythmic gasping and hissing to their feet movements.

CD II

***ʿĀSTASERYO* or *ʿĀSTERAY* (Yom Kippur)**

1. ***ʿƎṣuv gevrəka*** (soloist: Qes Adane)

A piece for the middle of the service for *ʿĀstaseryo*. It is also part of the liturgy of Friday evening of Beravo'a Senvet, when the service is held all through the night but in this last case, the melody is different than in the present selection. Several sections of the text are in Ge'ez but thereafter Ge'ez and 'Agawegna are mixed. The prayer begins with a standard expression of praise to God. His might and miracles are recalled. The text ends with an evocation of Pharaoh's defeat on the Sea of Reeds.

This antiphonal piece is measured, although a regular beat pattern is not clearly perceptible from the beginning but becomes apparent when the soloist's part switches from one priest to another. The choir's part has a dense heterophonic texture produced by individual melodic variations and slight rhythmic shifts.

2. ***Yətbārek... wanevāvo*** (soloist: Qes Rahamim)

This prayer can be heard around noon or in the afternoon during the service for *ʿĀstaseryo* (Aescoly 1951). It opens with prescriptive formulations that have been described previously. Some of the phrases are from Exodus and others from Leviticus. The passages that specifically relate to Yom Kippur are then listed (Leviticus 16:29-31 and 23:26-32). The prayer goes on to stipulate that the Sabbatical Sabbath, i.e. Yom Kippur should be observed. It then focuses on the description of and praise for Jerusalem, the city of Abraham and Isaac, that has to be acclaimed by those who pray with their prayers and songs. The people of Israel are bound to Jerusalem

through different obligations. The prayer evokes the letters *dalet* and *zayin* which have performative power. Justice and light shall arise from Jerusalem.

The prayer contains two sections, the first of which, very brief and unmeasured, is antiphonal. It leads to a dance song in the hemiola pattern, marked by the stamping of the *Qessoch*'s feet and the sporadic emission of rhythmic guttural sounds. In this piece, unlike the preceding ones, several *Qessoch* take turns in the role of soloist; as this is not predetermined, it sometimes happens that two or more of them start singing the solo simultaneously. The periodicity of the chant is variable; it can have 16, 18, 22, or even 24 beats per hemiola. This is mostly due to the overlapping of certain solos with the end of the choir section.

3. ***Gənayu...ʿAyte məʿayte...wafṣəmā Musye*** (soloists: Qes Yosef and others)

These three pieces conclude the services of *ʿĀstaseryo*.

The first prayer consists of several sections. It includes verses from Psalm 136, expanded with such Biblical passages as: Psalm 104; Psalm 148; Job 29:16; Job 37; Isaiah 45:7a; Job 12:22b ; Isaiah 58:11c. It is a hymn to the powers of God as the Creator. He is called to answer the prayers of those who praise Him. He is asked to keep His creatures close to the Torah, to His Law. Those who pray petition God that they are able to pray (lit. bow) inside of God's house in Jerusalem, and see His glory. The second prayer, entirely composed, calls upon the God of the forefathers and prophets to reveal Himself. The third prayer relates to Moses finishing all of his work.

This liturgical unit contains four distinct musical sections performed without interruption with several *Qessoch* succeeding each other in the soloist's part. The first and third sections have a free rhythmic flow while the second and last ones have a steady

pulse made audible by the stamping of feet and panting sounds of the performers. The first section combines antiphonal with hemiola patterns. As in *Yətbārek... wanevāvo* (track 2), the second section, in which dancing accompanies the singing, illustrates the variability of the periodicity of the hemiola: from 24 to 48 beats. The third section is different. While this section's musical content is the same as that of the previous one, it is completely unmeasured. The last section, like the second, is accompanied by dancing, but the period of the hemiola – 24 beats – remains unchanged, even in passages when one soloist succeeds another. The festivity of the danced prayers of Beta Israel performed in the various services during *'Āstaseryo* contrasts sharply with the contemplative mood that characterizes services on the same holiday in other Jewish communities.

***BĀ'ĀLA MAṢALAT* (Sukkoth)**

4. ***Gənayu*** (soloist: Qes Rahamim)

A prayer from the morning services for holidays, except for the first and last days of *Fāsika* and for the last day of *Bā'alā Maṣalat*. It is a simplified and shorter version of one of the last prayers for *'Āstaseryo*. It is also based on Psalm 136 but does not include many other Biblical references.

The melody of this prayer is specific to *Bā'alā Maṣalat*. It greatly resembles the melody of *Nəgru la'egzi'abəḥer* (CD 1, no. 2) but here it is performed in the hemiola pattern rather than antiphonally.

5. ***Watətfesāḥ bəbaʿaleka*** (soloist: Qes Yosef)

This is a specific piece for *Bā'alā Maṣalat*. It is based on Deuteronomy 16:14 and mentions the duty to rejoice during this holiday. One should rejoice not only with those who dwell in our house, but also with the needy who live outside. At the end of the text Shim'on is mentioned. He is supposed to bless Israel. Despite the mention of the specific holiday in which it is performed, this prayer does not include sentences of prescriptive nature based on Leviticus that usually characterize the Beta Israel prayers related to the liturgical calendar. Therefore the reference to Deuteronomy 16:14 could be interpreted as an indirect justification of this holiday. In fact, Sukkoth was not celebrated according to rabbinical traditions. Only after their modern encounter with the scholar Jacques Faïtlovitch after 1904 did the Beta Israel start to integrate the *sukkah* and the four species into their celebration of *Bā'alā Matsalat*.

This piece follows the hemiola pattern (A-A-AB/A-A-AB) and is accompanied by dancing. When the soloist, who systematically skips the last beat when he overlaps the choir's part, does not perform the overlapping, the periodicity varies from 24 to 30 pulsations per hemiola.

Səgd

6. ***Waṣoru tāvotomu*** (soloist: Qes Melkitsedek)

This prayer opens the *Səgd* liturgy, in the morning. It is performed as the Orit (Torah) is taken out of the prayer house to the high location where the holiday will take place. The text recounts how the Children of Israel carried the Ark and how the archangel Michael guided them. It then refers to the forty years of wandering through the desert with the

cloud leading the Children of Israel during the day and a pillar of fire leading them at night. Zion becomes the central motif in the second part of the prayer. The exiled from Zion are mentioned and the glory and gold with which Jerusalem will be dressed upon their return. Several Biblical quotations appear in this second part: Isaiah 51:9; Isaiah 46:16, Isaiah 60:4; Zechariah 2:14.

This piece in the hemiola pattern is measured. The soloist systematically overlaps with the choir at the end of the choir's part, with overlaps sometimes extending over three beats.

7. ***Wayi`ārgu devre*** (soloist: Qes Rahamim)

The formal celebration of the *Səgd* starts once the Torah arrives at the mountain top location where the holiday ritual takes place. The present piece is the first one to be performed when the participants have reached the spot chosen for the occasion. The selection and use of Biblical references found throughout this prayer indicates how the *Səgd* has been invested with Biblical authority. The model for this holiday is found in Nehemia, chapters 8-10, and more specifically in the episodes of the public reading of the Torah and the renewal of the covenant during the era of Ezra and Nehemia.

The first part of the prayer quotes from the section of Zechariah 14:16 that commands a yearly holiday, originally for Sukkoth but here adapted for *Səgd*. The second part of the prayer corresponds to Nehemia, chapter 9, describing the public reading and interpretation of the Torah. This chapter comprises the central section of the public Biblical reading during the *Səgd*. Beta Israel maintains that what occurred once during Ezra's time should occur every year.

This is an unmeasured antiphonal piece in which several voices in the choir are superimposed (mostly in thirds and fifths), producing an embryonic polyphony.

8. ***Hāle hāle yəbārkəwo*** (soloist: Qes Melkitsedek)

A prayer performed during the *Səgd* and in the service for the Seventh Sabbath. The melody in this recording is the one specific to the *Səgd*. The text shows some similarities with another piece (CD I, 8, *Hāle hāle yəbārkəwo*) which appears to be equally common to *Səgd* and to the Seventh Sabbath.

This piece is very similar to its counterpart (CD I, no. 8) in terms of its melodic material, its antiphonal form, and the number of verses. The two prayers differ only in their respective pivotal notes.

ANNUAL CYCLE: Pieces for all Occasions

9. ***Zegevre 'aviya wamenkəra*** (soloist: Qes Yirmiyahu)

This prayer can be heard on different occasions of the liturgical calendar, including the Seventh Sabbath, but not on an ordinary Sabbath. The text is a fragment from a larger prayer sung to the same melody on *Berhan Sāraqa*, the New Moon and *Tāzkar*. The text states that God should be praised eternally. He is the Creator. He has favored they who praise Him by enabling them to perform the prayer. God's judgment upon man and the ensuing demise of man contrast with God's eternal nature. However, it is through the observance of the holidays that man is alive. It is also part of the wedding service.

In Ethiopia, *Zegevre* – like *Herzəga* (CD I, no. 11) – was accompanied by a frame-drum that fulfilled an emphatic rather than rhythmic function. In this piece in the hemiola pattern, short enunciations alternate with very long ones. The chant has a narrow range.

10. ***ʿAnverewā wəsta kərsā*** (soloist: Qes Shmuel)

A portion of the morning service on Ma'arir Seni and the *Səgd*, this piece is also performed on different holidays when the Torah scroll is returned to the Ark in the prayer house. It is also performed as a song during festive meals on any occasion of the liturgical calendar. The text tells about the return of the Tables of the Law to the Ark, based on Numbers 10: 35-36. It then proceeds with long excursions on Zion, such as God's consideration for Jerusalem and the pilgrimage to Zion. Among several other Biblical references one should specifically mention Psalm 50:2-3.

The piece consists of two sections: the first one is in the hemiola pattern and the second one antiphonal. It has a regular beat and is accompanied by stamping of the feet and rhythmic sounds of hissing.

11. ***Bəlāʾ waṣāgəv*** (many different soloists)

This piece, truly para-liturgical, is performed on Sabbaths or holidays at the end of any communal meal, following the morning prayer on the Sabbath, or on a holiday. Such meals take place outside the prayer house or at homes close to the prayer house. The text of the prayer tells about the food, beverage and attire that are appropriate for Sabbaths and holidays. These ideal notions can be understood literally or on a more abstract level, as a means of sanctifying the Sabbath and holidays by the valorization of mundane objects.

This piece is based on the hemiola pattern. From the third verse onward, the melody changes and the tessitura changes accordingly.

12. ***ʿAnsəʾi ʿaʾəyəntəkə*** (soloist: Qes Adane)

This prayer centering on Jerusalem is part of the afternoon service for *ʿĀstaseryo* and *Səgd* but can also appear on Sabbaths and holidays. Essentially, the text is an adaptation of Isaiah 49:18 or 60:4. A call is issued to the City of Jerusalem: watch the Children of Israel coming from afar to gather in it.

This antiphonal piece is measured, yet its rhythmic articulation is flexible, which further emphasizes its heterophonic texture.

CD III

1. ***'Anta mehari meharena*** (soloist: Qes Yirmiyahu)

This prayer closes the morning services for any of the holidays, as well as the New Moon and the 10th, 12th and 15th of the month. It is a call for God's mercy. The reasons for such a call are that God defines Himself as merciful, and He should be merciful given the observance of the Sabbath, the holidays and the Torah. The request is then extended to the Forefathers and to the Sages. The prayer concludes with the declaration that God is eternal.

The melodic material in this piece resembles that of the prayers in CD I, nos. 4 and 14. In many prayers of the Beta Israel, the contour of the melody develops in an upward movement followed by a downward one, like an arc. In this prayer, the contour follows the opposite direction, downwards and upwards. The melodic material, following the hemiola pattern, is distributed between the soloist and the choir as follows: A-A-A'/A-A-A'. A unique dynamic performance by the soloist sets this piece apart.

2. ***'Itāmāsən 'əgzi'o*** (soloist: Qes Schmuel)

The prayer is included in the afternoon service of *'Āstaseryo* and in the evening services of *Fāsika*, except for the first day. As an echo to Genesis 18, the prayer begins with a call to separate the righteous from the sinners. It then refers to Abraham, considered a model for the righteous person who is to be saved. It goes on to state the curses that should not befall the righteous, those who pray. They should be protected from illness, death, hunger, war and exile. The text ends with a call for general deliverance. Those who pray identify themselves with those who shall pray on the Temple Mount.

The piece consists of three measured sections. The first antiphonal section is followed without interruption by a second one in which the melodic material – the same as in the first section – evolves into the hemiola pattern. The third section also follows the hemiola pattern but its melodic formulae slightly differ from those of the previous two sections. The more salient features of this prayer are the simplicity of its melodic material, dancing, rhythmic sounds of hissing, and collective performance, i.e. numerous soloists singing in turns.

3. ***Bəḥatitu qeduś qeduś*** (soloist: Qes Shmuel)

A prayer for several liturgical occasions: the morning of the New Moon, the afternoon service for any holiday, the evening on *'Āstaseryo* and the Seventh Sabbath. In this recording we hear the melody specific to the New Moon. Two other melodies for this text clearly differentiate between *'Āstaseryo* and the Seventh Sabbath. However there is no clear consensus among the *Qessoch* as to whether the melody in this recording is specific to the New Moon or not. The text opens with praises to God and His holiness followed by praise for the Temple in Jerusalem, the holy sanctuary where God dwells. It also includes two additional motifs: God as endower of the Torah, and that the firstborn male child be dedicated to God (Exodus 13:2).

The piece is in the hemiola pattern, with hemiolas following two types of periodicity: first 2-4-5/2-4-5, then 3-4-5/3-4-5 pulsations. Its scale is tetratonic and the range does not exceed the fifth. The performance of *Bəḥatitu qeduś qeduś* is accompanied by dancing.

4. ***Hāle luya hāle ʿaleka*** (soloist: Qes Avraham)

A prayer for specific days of the month in which foundational events are remembered, in this case the 10th, 12th and 15th of each month, and *ʿArfe ʿesert*, the commemoration of deliverance after the Biblical Flood. They who pray are always to praise God, who is asked to be eternally merciful and just. Praises to God are eternal, since He Himself is eternal. God's attributes are alluded to, with a partial quotation of Psalm 145, specifically starting from verse 13.

The piece consists of three sections. A first long antiphonal verse is followed by a hemiola section. The third section is again antiphonal. The piece is unmeasured and the choir produces a heterophonic texture. In the second section, we can hear several plurivocal passages resulting from the superposition of two melodic units sung previously in succession.

5. ***Menāvərta beta Dāwit*** (soloist: Qes Adane)

A prayer for the morning service of *ʿĀstaseryo* and the Seventh Sabbath and optionally on *Səgd*. The text focuses on Jerusalem. It starts by quoting Psalm 122:5b and 6a and develops by quoting Psalms 122:9 and Isaiah 58:7. They who pray wish to ascend to Jerusalem. The text recounts the benefits of such an ascent, followed by a description of the obligation to take care of the stranger and the needy. The prayer ends by quoting Psalm 84:4, describing the Children of Israel who sanctify God, the Children of Jacob who are considered princes, God who hears Jacob's prayer, and the opening of the princes' doors (with a paraphrase of Psalm 24:9).

The piece consists of four sections, alternating between the antiphonal and the hemiola patterns. The first and the third sections are antiphonal while the second and the fourth

(except for a truncated verse) are in the hemiola pattern. In the third section, various *Qessoch* assume in turns the role of soloist. Starting in the third section and until the end of the prayer, the singing is measured and marked by the *Qessoch*'s stamping on the ground.

6. ***ʿEgziʾo semāna*** (soloists: Qes Shmuel and Qes Avraham)

A prayer for the morning prayers for any Sabbath, the Seventh Sabbath, the fourth Sabbath of the fifth month, and the *Səgd*. It is also used for personal requests, such as recovery from illness. It is a call to God, who is asked to listen to those who pray. It lists Moses' prayers, David's Psalms, the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple, Elijah and Elisha's prayers, and Ezra's prayer, as well as placing a prayer in Noah's mouth. Just as those who uttered these Biblical prayers were heard, so should their call be rewarded with a positive answer.

Despite its length, this piece is strictly antiphonal: the choir repeats the unique melodic formula first enunciated by the soloist. The variable length of the text's verses entails the use of *recto tono*, i.e., the recitation of some passages on the same pitch.

PIECES SHARED BY THE YEAR AND LIFE CYCLES

7. ***Kālaʾ ṣəllāt*** (soloist: Qes Yirmiyahu)

A piece for many occasions: the morning service for *Maʿarir Seni*, and also for the ordination of a Qes. It is heard on many other liturgical occasions when the Orit is taken out of the Sacred Ark. It can also function as a table song at a festive meal on a

regular Sabbath, on a holiday, and on the Seventh Sabbath. The text treats the Tables of the Law and the two Orit that God etched on stone and gave to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Although this piece is very short, it consists of two different melodies sung one after the other without a pause. Both melodies follow the hemiola pattern. They are measured and both total twenty-eight beats in each hemiola, although those beats are not distributed in the same way: 3-4-7/3-4-7 in the first melody, then 4-3-7/4-3-7 in the second one. At times, the soloist slightly overlaps with the choir's part. We can hear the *Qessoch* stamping their feet and the sporadic sounds of panting.

8. ***Yitbārek 'egzi'abəḥer...'Amlak 'Ābawina 'antə*** (soloist: Qes Avraham)

A prayer for the morning service of Fridays, holidays, New Moon and *Səgd*, belonging to the series of opening prayers for these occasions. It is also sung after a sacrifice has been performed in conjunction with *Tāzkar*. On each of these occasions, the text and the melody remain the same. The text offers praise to God. It is based on the apocryphal prayer of Azaria, Hanania and Mishael, and expands on it.

This unmeasured piece is antiphonal. The choir produces heterophony. The recitation of the text lengthens gradually on the *recto tono*.

9. ***Menu kamakə*** (soloist: Qes Avraham)

This piece is part of the Friday morning service and is also performed during funerals. On both occasions text and melody are identical. The prayer opens with overall praise of God. The explicit ground for such praise is that He is the source of renewal. His mercy is then requested. The prayer ends by stating that God is holy and just and that no-one can be compared to Him.

This piece has one section in which two melodies succeed one another in the hemiola pattern. As it is often the case in the liturgy of the Beta Israel, the soloist's formula in position 3 in the hemiola cycle – and therefore the mirror formula sung by the choir in position 6 – are longer and end on the *finalis*, giving these positions a cadential character.

10. ***Hāllitā*** (soloist: Qes Avraham)

A prayer for the morning prayers on the New Moon, *Berhan Sāraqa* and for *Tāzkar*. It cites several psalms but is also a composed text. Psalm 33:1-6 make the introduction by celebrating God as just, forgiving, and as the creator. It continues with several verses from Psalm 47, as well as isolated verses of Psalms 93, 97 and 99 that mention God's deeds as king. The composed portions of the prayer single out David and Ezra as the authors of the praises of God.

The melody of this unmeasured piece is characterized by the short melodic formula in positions 2 and 5 of the hemiola pattern, based on the following alternation: A-B-A/A-B-A. The piece ends on a concluding litany shared by the choir and the soloist.

11. ***Yitkenayu lite*** (soloist: Qes Yeheskel)

A piece for the morning service for the 10th of the month and occasionally for *Tāzkar*. God is thanked for feeding the needy, for giving water to the thirsty and for covering the naked. God is then praised as the First one and the Last one, for being eternal.

In this piece, the distribution of the melodic material follows a common hemiola pattern: A-A-B/A-A-B. The soloist parts A and B sometimes overlap with the choir's part, creating plurivocal moments.

LIFE CYCLE

ʻADI GEZĀRA (Circumcision)

12. ***Baruk ʻAvrəham, ʻAdi gezarā, Salām kidāna*** (soloist: Qes Shmuel)

The prayer consists of three sections that could be heard separately on other occasions such as weddings (in the case of the first) or *ʻĀstaseryo* and the Seventh Sabbath (the third). However, when they are performed together in the present order they turn into a specific piece for circumcision. In the context of circumcision, the first section tells about how God blessed Abraham before imposing on him the commandment of circumcision. The second section refers to the obligation to cut the flesh of the foreskin on the eighth day with reference to Genesis 17:11-12. The third section mentions a covenant of eternal peace, with the circumcision itself called an eternal covenant. The piece proceeds by naming those who have been awarded such an eternal covenant: Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob/Israel, Moses and Aaron and, finally, their offspring.

These three pieces in the hemiola pattern are sung one after the other without a pause. While the rhythm of these pieces does not seem obvious at the beginning, it rapidly becomes marked by the *Qessoch* stamping their feet and emitting sounds of hissing. The period of the hemiola varies according to the length of the verses, from 4-4-8/4-4-8, to 3-3-6/3-3-6, to 3-3-7/3-3-7, to 3-4-5/3-4-5.

QESHERA (Wedding)

13. ***ʻƎsebāhaka bakʷwelu gize, Zegevre ʻaviya wamenkəra, Wəʾətus kəma məršāwi, ʻAmlākə ʿālem*** (soloists: Qes Avraham, then Qes Yirmiyahu)

The prayer consists of four pieces that are performed in this order at weddings. The two first pieces can be heard separately on other occasions. In the first section, those who pray declare that they shall always praise God, believe in Him constantly and be faithful to Him. Praying in the House of God is then mentioned. Finally, those who pray ask God to guide them. The second piece appears independently in other Beta Israel celebrations. Those who pray are grateful for being allowed to be present at the liturgical event and perform it, praising God for it. The third section contains the blessings for the wedding proper. It quotes part of Psalm 19 and links it to the groom. Then come the blessings for procreation and fertility of the land found in Deuteronomy 7:13-14. The last section of the prayer is a call to God. The eternal One is asked to bless His worshipers with peace, mercy, comfort, light and justice. The section closes with a set of blessings for the city of Jerusalem: peace for the city of the Forefathers, for the Temple, and for Zion the Holy.

The four pieces sung together at wedding ceremonies constitute an interesting set from the musical point of view. The performances are varied, the soloist's part is shared by several *Qessoch* in turns (sometimes, within a single piece), and the melodies and the time organization show great variety. The first prayer, relatively short, is antiphonal. The second one starts after a pause. It contains two sections, one in the hemiola pattern, and a second one responsorial with very long enunciations followed by very short ones. The third prayer contains three different sections; the first one follows the

hemiola pattern. In Ethiopia, the first two prayers and the first section of the third were accompanied on a gong and a frame-drum. Starting with the second hemiola section, the prayer is marked by the *Qes* stamping his feet on the ground. The third section, antiphonal, is characterized by a different musical mode. Finally, the last prayer consists of three sections: the first and third are in the hemiola pattern, while the middle section is antiphonal and in a different musical mode.

***FETAT/TĀZKAR* (Mourning)**

14. ***Sebhatat-ʿAmlake ləkʷelu manfas*** (soloist: Qes Yirmiyahu)

A prayer for mourning the dead during funerals and at a ceremony for *Tāzkar*. It opens by mentioning some of God's attributes (paraphrasing Deuteronomy 10:17-18). The next idea, that God brings death onto each creature, is followed by an echo of Psalm 56. The second part of this prayer establishes that God is eternal and that they who pray admit His eternal nature. God is the universal master. He reigns sitting on His sanctified throne in Heavens. God then turns to Enoch. Each person's acts are written down in a book of judgment after having been evaluated by God. Every person will be judged on the Day of Judgment according to his deeds.

The prayer's first section is responsorial. A long solo section follows, which is a rare practice in the Beta Israel liturgy. The mourning context of this prayer adds emotional depth to the soloist's performance.

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