



# TEN ZEMIROT 'AMI

New Melodies for *Piyyutim*  
from the Aleppo *Maḥzor* (1527)

Jerusalem, 2012

Jewish Music Research Centre  
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem



	<b>Author</b>	<b>Composer</b>	<b>Paytan</b>
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[2] <b>Ayom tziva et 'amo (Kurd)</b>	Elazar	Rabbi David Menahem	Yehezkel Zion
[3] <b>Taqsim Ney (Bayat-Hüseyni)</b>			Rabbi David Menahem
[4] <b>'Anu be-hamon shir (Bayat-Hüseyni)</b>	Shmuel Hadayan ben Moshe	Rabbi David Menahem	David Shiro
[5] <b>El simḥat gili (Ajam)</b>	Abraham	Rabbi David Menahem	Yehezkel Zion
[6] <b>Simḥu 'ami (Rast)</b>	Hillel	Yair Dalal	Rabbi David Menahem
[7] <b>Mawal Nahawand</b>			David Shiro
[8] <b>Rofe meshuvah (Nahawand)</b>		Elad Gabbai	David Shiro
[9] <b>'Adi nafshi (Hijaz)</b>	Ovadyah ben Aharon Melamed	Roni Ish Ran	Rabbi David Menahem
[10] <b>Shokhen bilvavi (Rast-Mahur)</b>	Shmuel	Rabbi David Menahem	David Shiro
[11] <b>Halel temallel (Bayat)</b>	Abraham Ibn Ezra	Elad Harel	Yehezkel Zion
[12] <b>Yom 'amadeti lehodot (Sigah)</b>		Yair Dalal	Rabbi David Menahem
[13] <b>Mi pi el (Hijaz)</b>	Elazar	Rabbi David Menahem	Yehezkel Zion
[14] <b>Avarekh shem kevod (Bayat)</b>		Roni Ish Ran	Rabbi David Menahem

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## INTRODUCTION

*Ten zemiroth 'ami* is the second disc in the new “Contemporary Jewish Music” series of the Jewish Music Research Centre. This new series differs in character from the classic documentary series, “Anthology of Musical Traditions in Israel.” The discs do not aspire to compete with the proliferation of commercial recordings appearing under the label “Jewish music” in Israel and around the world. The main goal of the new series is to encourage experimental creation drawing on Jewish sources—the same sources that the Centre labors to document, research and understand.

In every living, breathing culture, every generation feels obligated to add something new to its capital. Composition of new melodies for *piyyutim* (liturgical poems), which had almost disappeared in the last generation, is a clear example of this type of undertaking. It sheds new light on ancient *piyyutim* that are still relevant to the community and can be brought back to life on the wings of the new melody. This is the guiding principle behind this publication.

The entire project is the initiative of Yair Harel, director of the website “An Invitation to Piyut” ([www.piyut.org.il](http://www.piyut.org.il)), in cooperation with the Jewish Music Research Centre, whose researchers have developed a close relationship with the website. The direct inspiration for this project is the excellent publication *Ma zor Aram Zova: Order of prayers according to the costum of the Holy Congregation of Aram Zova (Aleppo/Haleb, Syria)*, a facsimile reproduction of the Venice edition of 5287/1527 printed in 5767/2007 by Yad Ha-Rav Nissim of Jerusalem, with the sponsorship of

the Edmond J. Safra Foundation. This unique *maḥzor* contains many *piyyutim* composed by local poets and sung by the community during yearly and life cycle events.

The impressive, important corpus of Hebrew song from Aleppo dwindled in the course of time, being replaced by new *piyyut* traditions, particularly those brought East by Jews exiled from Spain. Generations of Halabi *paytanim*, influenced by the late Sephardic style and by post-17<sup>th</sup> century kabbalistic thought from Safed, created a new *piyyut* tradition whose performance continues in full force to this day. An outstanding figure of this new type of song is R. Israel Najara (c. 1550-1625). For most of his life, Najara lived in Syria, and left a decisive literary and musical stamp on the Halabi Hebrew poets who came after him. Like Najara's poetry, the work of the Halabi poets was based on local Arabic music, which developed through a mutually influential relationship with Ottoman Turkish music—a trend that continued until the early twentieth century.

Hebrew Halabi poetry reached its peak as part of the singing of *bakkashot* (songs of seeking, as in the *piyyut* by R. Shlomo Ibn Gabirol, "Early will I seek you"), the early Sabbath morning vigils during the winter, an ancient custom that gathered powerful momentum among kabbalist circles in the Land of Israel, Syria, and Iraq. With the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the dwindling of the Jewish community of Aleppo, and especially after the establishment of the State of Israel, this repertoire continued to be sung among the diaspora of Aleppo Jewry on three continents: Europe, America (North and South), and Israel.

The Halabi repertoire is the backbone of the *bakkashot* in the style known as “Jerusalem Sephardic,” and of the renewed singing of *piyyutim* in Israel. Those interested in *piyyut* in modern Israel will certainly welcome the new publication of *Mahzor Aram Zova*, and find inspiration for the renewed singing of these ancient texts. Because the musical tradition practiced during the period in which the prayer book was first printed did not pass the test of time, Israeli composers have written new melodies in the spirit of the contemporary Arabic musical tradition. In these compositions one easily recognizes the significant influence of Egyptian popular urban music of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on the soundscape of the Sephardic-Mizrahi *piyyut* of the last few generations. This music is based on the principle of *maqam* (musical modes, pl. *maqamat*), as formulated in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon. Western music, to which the Arabic countries were exposed in the colonial period—from the 1830s to the 1950s—had a degree of influence on modern Arabic music too, for example, its formal design and orchestration. This modern Arabic style is dominated by the *'uganiya* genre: the opening section of the piece is in the main *maqam*, while the following sections move to other *maqamat*. A refrain in the main *maqam* returns after each section. At the end of the piece the composition returns to the opening *maqam*. In each of these sections, the singer sings one verse of the *piyyut*. Short instrumental and vocal interludes may be added at the opening of the piece or between the sections.

This unique project took shape after the Edmond J. Safra Foundation showed interested in collaboration with the “An Invitation to Piyut”

website and the Jewish Music Research Centre of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Of the hundreds of *piyyutim* in the *maḥzor*, we chose twelve for which we commissioned new melodies. The work of composition was divided among five Israeli composers who are now involved in integrating the *piyyut* with the art of the Arabic *maqam*: R. David Menahem, Roni Ish-Ran, Yair Dalal, Elad Gabbai, and Elad Harel. I am most grateful to all of them for their contribution. Two *paytanim* active in Halabi synagogues in the United States joined the Israeli *paytanim* for performance of the *piyyutim*: David Shiro and Yehezkel Zion. I would like to offer a special thanks to them for contributing to this project with heartfelt enthusiasm. The *paytanim* were accompanied by an ensemble comprised of the best Mizrahi musicians in Israel today—a new generation who grew up within the world of traditional and modern music and has succeeded in becoming the next link in the impressive chain of Mizrahi Jewish musicians, while preserving the highest standards of playing in the *maqam* style.

Elad Gabbai dedicated himself faithfully to the complex work of artistic production and musical direction and this project owes much of its success to him. Hana Ftaya, chief editor of the “An Invitation to Piyyut” website, did the preliminary research, wrote the explanations accompanying this disc, and prepared the comments and glossary for the *piyyutim* (see Hebrew section of the booklet). Yaniv Yitzhak of the website staff directed the production. Additional thanks go to R. David Menahem for also acting as production consultant. We thank all the individuals mentioned here, as well as the staff of the Jewish Music

Research Centre under the direction of Sari Salis, for their contributions to this project.

This venture is the latest addition to the new era of activity at the Centre, in which the terms “research” and “composition” are no longer two separate or conflicting terms in the field of music. Since 1964, the Centre has functioned at the meeting point between musical ethnography and Israel’s society and culture. Further, the Centre has recorded and published the complete set of *bakkashot* in the Jerusalem-Sephardic tradition, on the disc “*A Song of Dawn: Jerusalem-Sephardic bakkashot at the Har Zion synagogue,*” (no. 20 in the series “Anthology of Music Traditions in Israel”). It is thus fitting that the Centre publishes these new compositions from the *piyyut* corpus of the Halabi Jewish community, as they were inspired also by the ethnomusicological research.

We offer our most sincere thanks to the representatives of the Edmond J. Safra Foundation for facilitating this project. We also thank Dr. Jack and Louise Hoffman of Perth, Australia, for their generosity in providing the Jewish Music Research Centre with the preliminary resources for producing this new series of recordings, of which this disc is a significant component.

**Edwin Seroussi**



## MAḤZOR ARAM ZOVA — ITS HISTORY, TRAITS, AND PIYYUTIM<sup>1</sup>

Aleppo was home to one of the oldest and most remarkable Jewish communities of the Middle East. To this day, the main synagogue of Aleppo is considered one of the most significant Jewish monuments in the area. It held the well-known Keter Aram Zova (Aleppo Codex), one of the most important manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible, thought to have been written in the early 10<sup>th</sup> century and considered by researchers to be the most exact version of the Masoretic text. The Jewish community of Aleppo was in continuous existence from the time of the Roman Empire until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Under Muslim rule, Aleppo became the urban center of northern Syria with a sizeable Jewish population.

The centrality and vitality of the Jewish community of Aleppo in the late Middle Ages explains the creation of such an extensive literary work as the *Maḥzor Aram Zova*, first printed in Venice in 5287/1527. This *maḥzor* is one of the most significant prayer books ever published. It records some of the unique liturgical customs of Eastern Jewish communities in the period between the latter days of the *minhag Eretz Israel* (Palestinian rite) and the early days of print publication in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The *maḥzor* preserves a wide variety of Palestinian customs, and is one of the best specimens of these customs extant today.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on Shulamit Elizur, Yona Frenkel, and Meir Benayahu, Introduction to *Seder ha-tefilla ke-minhag Aram Zova* (Jerusalem: Yad Ha-Rav Nissim, 5767/2007).

The *maḥzor* contains over 1700 pages and is divided into two sections. The first section includes *bakkashot*, and prayer services for weekdays and Sabbath, Passover, Shavuot, and fast days. The second section covers Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, Sukkot and Shemini Atzeret, and many *piyyutim* for events and special occasions. The *maḥzor* is a precious find—only few incomplete copies exist. Over twenty years ago, the Yad Ha-Rav Nissim Research Institute took on the complex project of searching for the copies and collecting quality facsimiles, with the goal of putting together the most complete version possible and making it available to the public. The *maḥzor* was published in 5767/2007, with the support of the Edmond J. Safra Foundation, in a high-quality facsimile edition in two volumes, and an additional volume of Hebrew and English introductions.

The basic rite in the *maḥzor* is in the Musta'arabi tradition, practiced in Eretz Israel, Syria and Babylonia, Kurdistan, Persia, and Yemen prior to the arrival to the Eastern Mediterranean of the Jews expelled from Spain. These communities bear the general name of Shami (i.e. from Damascus). But in Aleppo as well as in other communities, this type of liturgy also underwent certain changes. After the advent of the Sephardic Jews from Spain, their rite began to spread throughout the lands to which they wandered, and as their presence gained strength in their new home countries, the Musta'arabi tradition dwindled and the Sephardic tradition took over. In contrast to the other Eastern Jewish communities, the Aleppo community preserved its unique rite for an extended period after the arrival of the Sephardic Jews, but after several

generations, it completely disappeared. In the past few generations, the Halabi community did not have access to their local *maḥzor* and did not pray according to its format. Further, they were hardly aware of its existence.

### PIYYUTIM IN THE MAḤZOR ARAM ZOVA: THEIR WRITERS AND MELODIES

This *maḥzor* is significant in that it represents a meeting point of many traditions, as well as in the plethora of its *piyyutim* and *paytanim*. No other Eastern *maḥzor* contains so many *piyyutim*—their number reaches 622, and they were written by over 120 different *paytanim*. Interestingly, although the format of the *maḥzor* is close to the ancient Palestinian rite, its *piyyut* corpus is completely different from what was customary in Eretz Israel. It reflects a late liturgical reality, in which the *piyyutim* do not appear embedded within the normative prayers, but independent of them.

The oldest layer of *piyyutim* in the *maḥzor* is almost entirely based on the prayer book of R. Sa'adia Gaon (10<sup>th</sup> century Babylonia), and he is the oldest *paytan* represented in the *maḥzor*. The later layers include material of Eastern, Sephardic, and local Syrian origin. The latest poetic layer in the *maḥzor* seems to be the section titled *pizmonim* (i.e. songs with refrain) printed at the end. These *pizmonim* are classified by social occasion: holidays, special Sabbaths, and life cycle events (circumcision, bar mitzvah, wedding, and mourning periods).

Most of the major Andalusian *paytanim* from the classical period (10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries) are represented here, although these are a relatively small number compared to their entire corpus and their presence in the holiday prayer books of other communities. The most popular of these poets is R. Yehuda ha-Levi, followed by R. Shlomo Ibn Gabirol, R. Moshe Ibn Ezra, and R. Avraham Ibn Ezra. Alongside them are less well-known Andalusian poets, as well as some who lived in Christian Spain at a time closer to the expulsion. The early Syrian *paytanim* of the 11<sup>th</sup> century are not represented here, but the presence of later Syrian *paytanim*, some from Aram Zova itself, is strongly felt. We take special note of *piyyutim* signed with the name of the city, “Zova,” or others in which the poets specifically mention the community of Aram Zova and request divine mercy for it. Some of these local *piyyutim* and *paytanim* appear only in this *maḥzor*.

We may also understand the flowering of the *piyyut* in Aram Zova against the background of this city’s importance as a musical center of the Middle East for hundreds of years. For good reason, Aleppo has earned the nickname “Um el Tarab” (“mother of musical inspiration”). Music was one of the pleasures of city life that was shared by all its residents—Jews, Muslims, and Christians, and by all layers of society. Jewish and Christian musicians performed in cafes next to their Muslim colleagues. Sufi leaders with musical talent also appeared in performances at cafés or parties. The audience included Jews, *paytanim* or cantors who learned in these contexts new melodies and set Hebrew words to them. Thus the *piyyut* tradition of the Halabi Jewry reveals a strong connection between

Jewish and Muslim music from Aleppo. This connection also serves as the backdrop for this disc.

## ABOUT THE *PIYYUTIM* ON THIS DISC

Of the hundreds of *piyyutim* in *Maḥzor Aram Zova*, we chose twelve that represent various forms and types of content. We invited Israeli composers to write the music for the *piyyutim* in the spirit of the Aram Zova *piyyut* tradition, as it has been preserved via oral tradition to this day. As mentioned, the principle guiding the composition was the Arabic *maqam*, as formulated in Syria and other countries (particularly Iraq) that we believe had a connection with *Maḥzor Aram Zova*. At the foundation of this project stands the relationship between the ancient texts and relatively new music, identified with the descendants of the community that originally created and performed the *piyyutim* in the *maḥzor*. To clarify, we have no record, not even in the *maḥzor* itself, of the use of the *maqam* principle in performing the *piyyutim*, either before or at the time of printing in Venice. The composers who took upon themselves the work of writing the music proceeded on the belief that the *maqam* is an ancient tradition that in some way stood at the background of the original tunes of the *piyyutim* in the *Maḥzor Aram Zova*.

## 1. TEN ZEMIROT 'AMI

COMPOSER: ELAD GABBAI / MAQAM: RAST–MAHUR

A *piyyut* for the Sabbath by an anonymous poet. The *piyyut* appears in the *maḥzor* as a *seliḥa* for Sabbath corresponding to the Biblical portion Ki Tetze. At the beginning of the *piyyut*, the poet calls for the congregation to awaken in the middle of the night and praise God in song. We do not know if this refers to the custom of the Aram Zova community to recite *seliḥot* in the early morning of Sabbaths in the Hebrew month of Elul, or to the custom of singing *bakkashot*. At any rate, we identify here a reference to this custom as if it was already practiced at that time.

## 2. AYOM TZIVA ET 'AMO / ACROSTIC: ELAZAR

COMPOSER: RABBI DAVID MENAHEM / MAQAM: KURD

This is a *piyyut* for the Sabbath, for which we know only the author's first name, Elazar. The title of the *piyyut* gives the instruction to sing it according to the melody of another *piyyut* in the *maḥzor*. Although the *maḥzor* indicates that this *piyyut* is a *seliḥa* for the Sabbath of the Biblical portion Shoftim, only one sentence suggests the topic of *seliḥa* (repentance)—*im ta'asu zot ashreikhem ve-yimḥal Elohim pish'eihem*—"If you do so, you will be praised, and God will forgive your transgressions." The poet weaves into the *piyyut* fragments of biblical verses and references from the book of Isaiah that are recited (in the Sephardic and Eastern rites) before the Sabbath morning *qiddush*.

### 3. TAQSIM NEY (BAYAT-HÜSEYNI)

#### 4. 'ANU BE-HAMON SHIR / ASCRIBED TO SHMUEL HA-DAYAN BEN MOSHE

COMPOSER: RABBI DAVID MENAHEM / MAQAM: BAYAT-HÜSEYNI

A *piyyut* for *brit milah* (circumcision) included in the section of *seliḥot* for the Sabbaths of the month of Elul. The author is apparently R. Shmuel Ha-Dayan ben Moshe of Aram Zova (c. 1150-1200). R. Shmuel was a prolific poet, and several of his poems are of an exceptionally high level. We do not know whether the description *dayan* (religious judge) refers to a position he occupied, or whether he was the son of the well-known Dayan family of Aram Zova. The *piyyut* was written for a *brit milah* of a boy born into the community, as we learn from the last verse—“We welcome you, people of Aram Zova.”

#### 5. EL SIMHAT GILI / ACROSTIC: ABRAHAM

COMPOSER: RABBI DAVID MENAHEM / MAQAM: AJAM

A simple, short *piyyut* for *brit milah*, appearing in the *pizmonim* section at the end of the *maḥzor*. The first letter of each verse forms the acrostic “Abraham,” and this may be the name of the poet or of the father of the newborn boy.

## 6. SIMHU 'AMI BANIM VE-AVOT / ACROSTIC: HILLEL

COMPOSER: YAIR DALAL / MAQAM: RAST

In this *piyyut* for Sukkoth (Feast of the Tabernacles), the poet focuses on the *mitzvot* (religious deeds) of the holiday: shaking the four species (*arba'at ha-minim*), sitting in the *sukkah*, and rejoicing. The call to rejoice on the holiday is strongly emphasized, and the poet uses a variety of words to express it. The *piyyut* appears in the *pizmonim* section at the end of the *maḥzor*.

## 7. MAWAL NAHAWAND

### 8. ROFE MESHUVAH

COMPOSER: ELAD GABBAI / MAQAM: NAHAWAND

This *seliḥa* by an anonymous poet belongs to the *seliḥot* section for Shabbat Shuvah (the Sabbath between the New Year and the Day of Atonement). As they did on all the Sabbaths of the month of Elul, members of the community rose early to recite *seliḥot* on this special Sabbath too. Based on the refrain (*be-yom Shabbat shuva...*) and the insertion of a verse from the Haftarah (additional Biblical reading) of Shabbat Shuva ("Erpa me-shuvatam ohavem nedava," Hosea 14:5), we may assume that the *piyyut* was written specifically for this Sabbath, as opposed to the other *seliḥot* for this Sabbath appearing in the *maḥzor*.



## 9. 'ADI NAFSHI / OVADIA BEN AHARON MELAMED

COMPOSER: RONI ISH RAN / MAQAM: HIJAZ

This is a *seliḥa*, included in the *maḥzor* in the *seliḥot* section for Sabbath of the Biblical portion Ki Tetze. The refrain, “*Qumi ori ki ba orekh*,” is taken from the opening verse of the Haftarah for the Sabbath Ki Tavo (Isaiah 60:1). We do not know whether this *piyyut* was first written for *parashat* Ki Tavo and copied for Ki Tetze, or whether this citation is used simply for its general meaning of solace. At any rate, the plea for forgiveness and atonement is prominent in this *piyyut*, while simultaneously, it expresses consolation and faith in the forgiveness of debts and sins.

## 10. SHOKHEN BI-LEVAVI / ACROSTIC: SHMUEL

COMPOSER: RABBI DAVID MENAHEM

MAQAM: RAST-MAHUR

This is one of the three *piyyutim* in the section titled “*Piyyutim* for the Reader of the Haftarah.” In most Eastern Jewish communities, young boys were trained to read the Torah and Haftarah (before reaching barmitzvah age of thirteen, the customary age for reading), and when they reached an advanced level, they were called to the Torah to read the *maftir* portion. This was a joyous event for the boy and his family, and several *piyyutim* were composed in honor of it.

## 11. HALEL TEMALLEL / R. ABRAHAM IBN EZRA

COMPOSER: ELAD HAREL / MAQAM: BAYAT

This *piyyut* is for the prayer *Nishmat kol hai*, which appears in the *maḥzor* in the section of *seliḥot* for the Sabbath of the Biblical portion Shoftim. We recognize here the influence of R. Shlomo Ibn Gabirol's magnificent poem *Keter malkhut*. The *piyyut* praises God who is beyond all praises and human understanding. The text as it appears in the *maḥzor* is somewhat flawed. The text (in the Hebrew section) and the notes are taken from Israel Levin's edition of the liturgical poetry of R. Abraham Ibn Ezra.

## 12. YOM 'AMADETI LE-HODOT

COMPOSER: YAIR DALAL / MAQAM: SIGAH

The author of this *seliḥa* is unknown. It appears in the section of *seliḥot* for Shabbat Shuvah. The content of the *seliḥa* does not indicate that it was composed especially for Shabbat Shuvah, although it does mention the word *shuvah*. Each stanza except for the third ends with a biblical verse.

### 13. MI-PI EL / ACROSTIC: ELAZAR

COMPOSER: RABBI DAVID MENAHEM / MAQAM: HIJAZ

This *piyyut* for Simḥat Torah appears in the *maḥzor* after the service and Torah reading for that holiday. We readily recognize its opening—*Mi-pi El, mi-pi El, titbarach Israel*—from the well-known Simḥat Torah *piyyut* beginning *Ein adir ka-Adonai, ein baruch ke-ben Amram* (which does not appear in the *maḥzor*). Like other *piyyutim* that were originally written for Shavuot (Pentecost) but were also sung on Simḥat Torah, the topic is the giving of the Torah. Some ascribe it to R. Elazar ha-Bavli (13<sup>th</sup> century, Baghdad), but this attribution has not been confirmed.

### 14. AVARECH SHEM KEVOD SHOKHEN ME'ONIM

COMPOSER: RONI ISH-RAN / MAQAM: BAYAT

This is a *piyyut* of the type called *reshut le-ḥatan* (lit. “authorization for the groom”), by an anonymous author, sung in honor of the groom when he is called up to the Torah on the Sabbath following his wedding. It begins with praise of God, then asks him to bring joy to the bride and groom and grant them long lives like Abraham and Sarah. It then calls the groom to rise up and read from the Torah, and concludes with a plea for redemption. Interestingly, the *piyyut* calls for the groom to read a text concerning *av hamonim* (father of multitudes), referring to the forefather Abraham. This follows the ancient custom of reading in honor

of the groom a special Torah portion, unrelated to the portion for that week. This special portion begins with "*Ve-Avraham zaken*" (Genesis 24:1) and speaks of the successful marriage between Isaac and Rebecca.

## ON THE ARTISTS

### ELAD GABBAI – MUSICAL DIRECTOR, COMPOSER, KANUN

Elad, the son of the late *paytan* and *hazzan* Moshe Gabbai, is a Jerusalemite musician who plays the kanun and 'ud. He has a B.A. in music from Bar-Ilan University. In addition to being responsible for musical productions, he plays in a variety of musical projects involving *piyyutim* and ethnic music in Israel and abroad. Gabbai teaches music, kanun, and *piyyut* in the Center for Middle Eastern Classical Music in Jerusalem.

### YAIR DALAL – COMPOSER

Among the pioneer Israeli ethnic musicians, Yair Dalal was born to parents who immigrated to Israel from Iraq. He plays the violin and 'ud, and composes. His specialty is Israeli ethnic music, world music, and the weaving of traditional Jewish-Iraqi sources into his compositions. Dalal performs to enthusiastic audiences both in Israel and abroad.

### RONI ISH-RAN – COMPOSER

Roni Ish-Ran is founder and musical director of the Shaharit ensemble. Having grown up in the Jerusalem-Sephardic tradition of song, *piyyut*, and *hazzanut*, he went on to graduate from the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance, specializing in Middle Eastern music. Ish-Ran teaches in the Center for Middle Eastern Classical Music in Jerusalem. He is a

co-author of a booklet for teaching 'Songs and Roots' which is being produced by the Ministry of Education.

### RABBI DAVID MENAHEM – COMPOSER, PAYTAN, NEY

A musician, *paytan*, and *hazzan* in the Iraqi and Jerusalem-Sephardic tradition, Rabbi David Menahem absorbed the Iraqi *piyyutim* from his grandfather, *Hakham Gurji Yair*, of blessed memory, who was one of the preeminent *hazzanim* in Iraq in the twentieth century. He is the Rabbi of the "Ateret Nehemiah" community in Jerusalem. He played with some of the legendary Iraqi Jewish musicians who used to be members of the now defunct Oriental Orchestra of the Israel Broadcasting Authority. Rabbi Menahem has been one of the central figures in the revival of interest in and performance of *piyyutim* in Israel, and he plays frequently with vocalists and artists in Israel and abroad.

### ELAD HAREL – COMPOSER, 'UD

Elad is a musician, a *paytan*, and a *hazzan* in the Iraqi and Jerusalem-Sephardic traditions. Since the age of fourteen he has been playing the violin and 'ud. He is an expert in playing the 'ud in the classical Arabic tradition. Harel teaches *maqam* theory at the Renanot Institute and performs Arabic music and *piyyutim* in numerous venues in Israel and abroad.

## YEHEZKEL ZION – PAYTAN

Born in Jerusalem, Yehezkel Zion is a *ḥazzan* and vocalist in the Jerusalem-Sephardic tradition that permeated the Ades Synagogue of the Aleppo Jews in Jerusalem, home to many of the greatest *ḥazzanim* of the previous generation. He has released some thirty CDs, and many of his songs have become permanent fixtures in the Sephardic song tradition. Zion served for many years as the personal *ḥazzan* for Rabbi Ovadia Yosef. For the past two decades he officiates as the Chief *Ḥazzan* in the Beit Torah congregation of Aleppo Jews in Brooklyn.

## DAVID SHIRO – PAYTAN

David Shiro was born in Israel to parents from Aleppo. His family home was suffused with singing and *piyyutim*, and his grandfather, David Shiro of blessed memory, was one of the *piyyut* leaders and *ḥazzanim* in the Great Synagogue in Aleppo. The young David Shiro began his musical career under the tutelage of the kanun master Abraham David Hacohen from Iraq and his father Rahamim Shiro. For the past eighteen years he has been the main *Ḥazzan* of the Shaare Zion synagogue, an important center of the Aleppo Jews in Brooklyn. He has recorded dozens of CDs.

### RAFI SHAWAT – VIOLIN

As a gifted violinist, Shawat began his career quite young. In the past decade he has served as a *hazzan* in the synagogue of the Iraqi community in New York. During that period he participated in a project headed by David Shiro whose purpose was to collect and preserve the *bakkashot* repertoire of the Aleppo Jews. He has accompanied the foremost *hazzanim* in Israel and abroad, and today is the musical director of the ensemble “Kodesh Israel.”

### NETANEL ITZHAKOV – VIOLIN

As an accomplished violinist, Itzhakov plays in the New Andalusian Orchestra (Ashkelon) and in the “Kodesh Israel” ensemble. He performs with numerous Orthodox artists who specialize in the Israeli Mediterranean genre.

### ARIEL COHEN – DARBUKA

Having graduated with a B.A. from the Music Department of Bar-Ilan University, Cohen specializes in the research of Arabic classical music. He is the musical director and conductor of the Israel Oriental Orchestra. He plays with some of the legendary Jewish musicians who used to be members of the now defunct Oriental Orchestra of the Israel Broadcasting Authority. In addition he accompanies singers in the Israeli Mediterranean genre, such as Sarit Hadad and Shlomi Saranga.



## YOSEF HAIM HAREL – DAFF (FRAME DRUM)

Harel, whose expertise is accompanying *piyyutim* and Arabic music, performs in a wide variety of concert venues. Among those whom he accompanies are David Shiro, Moshe Habusha, and Yehiel Nahari. He has also played with several ensembles in the International 'Ud Festival and the Piyyut Festival in Jerusalem.

## HAGAI BELITZKI – DOUBLE BASS

Hagai Belitzki has a M.Mus. in Oriental Music from the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance. He studied under the 'ud player and vocalist Nino Bitton and specialized in ethnic music and jazz. In his playing he weaves together traditional and modern techniques. He teaches and gives master classes and has recorded with top musicians and a variety of musical ensembles in Israel and abroad.

## GUEST MUSICIANS

Yair Dalal – 'ud (*in Simḥu 'ami*)

Armond Sabah – accordion (*in Ayom tziva et 'amo*)

## MEMBERS OF THE CHOIR

Elad Gabbai, Elad Harel, Yosef Haim Harel, Ariel Cohen, Rabbi David Menahem, Rafi Shawat, and the boy vocalist Nehorai Arieli.

