

# Enhancing the Yamim Nora'im Prayers through Synagogue Chant: The Significant Role of the Sheli'ach Tzibbur

A number of volumes have recently appeared in print detailing various methods in which one may reach immeasurable heights to help elevate his spiritual and emotional level of prayer. While these publications focus on the individual's prayer, little or nothing is said about the spiritual effect of music on worship.

It is evident that reciting in a chant-like manner is clearly associated with worship; and since worship is essentially a state of feeling, the devotee attains this feeling even more through the influence of chant or melody than by any other means. Prayer is communal and its music serves as a source of emotional communication. Leib Glantz, the celebrated cantor, composer, and scholar, writing in the Hebrew daily newspaper *Davar*, noted that "words alone, even the most sublime, are not able to create the holy bond between man and God. The power of song emphasizes and enriches the yearnings of our hearts and enables us to express our deepest feelings and emotions."<sup>47</sup>

Where words of a text are symbolic and final, music is suggestive. To prevent prayer from being overly mechanical, early Chasidim were known to introduce *niggunim* in their services as an aid to concentration and *deveikut* (spiritual attachment) and to fulfill the requirement of the *mishnah* (in *Avot* 2:18) and Tractate *Berakhot* 28b: "*Al ta'as tefillatkha keva*" (Do not make your prayer fixed). Chasidim feel that the power of the *niggun* is the best medium of approaching God.

The significant role of the *sheli'ach tzibbur*, specifically during the High Holy Days, is best indicated by the number of musically elaborate prayers relegated for recital by the *sheli'ah tzibbur* himself. R. Ephraim Margolioth, writing in his *Mateh Ephraim*, points out that a prayer which requires emotional inspiration is chanted by the *chazan*, and through his recital the congregation is spiritually uplifted.<sup>48</sup> The High Holy Days prayers feature a selection of supplications, poetical hymns, and *piyutim* assigned for recital by the *sheli'ach tzibbur*. Prayers such as *Hineni*, *Mi-Sod Chakhamim*, *Ochilah La-Kel*, and *Yareti* are chanted by the *chazan* with great passion and emotion while the congregation listens and meditates. These are in addition to those supplications and *piyutim* which adorn the High Holy Day liturgy and recited responsively by the *chazan* and congregation. To this group belong such *piyutim* as *Le-Kel Orekh Din*, *Ve-Khol Ma'aminim* and *Imru Le-Elokim*. These hymns bear testimony that it is the *sheli'ach tzibbur* who serves as the rightful representative or emissary of the congregation in enhancing and elevating the spiritual level of congregational prayer.

In his volume, *The Warsaw Ghetto Diaries*, Dr. Hillel Seidman relates how the famous *chazan* of Warsaw, Gershon Sirota, brought a congregation to tears with his awe-inspiring renditions of a Yom Kippur service held in the Warsaw Ghetto.<sup>49</sup>

## MI-SINAI NIGGUNIM

In regards to the musical settings of the *Yamim Nora'im* liturgy, the designation *Mi-Sinai* is often used.

The term *Mi-Sinai* was applied to a corpus of Ashkenazic fixed synagogue melodies and chants that originated in southwestern Germany from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries. Such reverence was given for the musical settings associated with the texts of *Aleinu*, *Avot*, *Barekhu*, *Ha-Melekh*, *Kaddish* before *Musaf*, *Ne'ilah*, *Tal* and *Geshem*,

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<sup>47</sup>. "From the Depths I Call Upon You O Lord," *Davar*, 1957; reprinted in *The Man Who Spoke to God*, by Jerry Glantz (Tel Aviv Institute for Jewish Liturgical Music), 454.

<sup>48</sup>. *Mateh Ephraim* 619:11.

<sup>49</sup>. Dr. Hillel Seidman, *The Warsaw Ghetto Diaries*, translated by Yosef Israel, 128–129.

-*Ve-Ha-Kohanim*, and *Kol Nidrei* that the term *Mi-Sinai* was designated for these melodies. The first to use the term *Mi-Sinai* in conjunction with Jewish music was the twelfth-century saintly Yehudah He-Chasid in his *Sefer Chasidim* when writing about biblical cantillation.<sup>50</sup> Eastern European Jews refer to these tunes as *Skarbova niggunim*, generally meaning “antique” or “old,” or of immemorial age. Specifically, the word means “official,” from the Polish *skarb*. These official tunes, a vital segment of our musical *mesorah*, have been transmitted to us from generation to generation and constitute, even in our days, strong pillars in the *Yamim Nora'im* services.

The motive of fixing these chants in this manner was the decline in the fourteenth century of spiritual life among Ashkenazic Jewry. In order to preserve their heritage, R. Yaakov Molin (1365–1427), the Maharil, the renowned rabbinic authority of his time, codified the synagogue ritual and gave sanctity to the old existing prayer chants. He himself traveled extensively and served as *sheli'ach tzibbur*, thus establishing the customs of German Jewry and influencing the *nusach* of the prayer service. His ruling, obligatory to this day, states that local custom and universal Jewish traditional melodies may not be changed (*al yeshaneh mi-minhag ha-ir afilu be-niggunim*).<sup>51</sup>

The basis for unifying synagogue prayer chant, so that each community utilizes the same time-honored melodies for the High Holy Days, goes back to the expulsion from Spain (1492). Ritual and custom were observed in secret hiding places and the fixed melodies of that period would often serve as a means of recognizing a fellow Jew. As a result, the tunes awakened great emotion and devotional prayer.<sup>52</sup> The suffering of these Jews undoubtedly manifested itself in the *Mi-Sinai* tunes of Ashkenazic Jewry.

The chanting of our prayers is governed not only by the literal meaning of the text but also often reflects the interpretations and commentaries from the wide sources of rabbinic literature.

The following paragraphs will highlight and give insight into some of the leading rabbinic authorities' interpretations and practices regarding *Mi-Sinai* tunes and other fixed synagogue chants while offering possible reasons for these musical customs and usages.

## CANTILLATION

The cantillation of the Torah on the High Holy Days is rendered in a special mode. According to the Maharil, the reason for introducing this special tune is to emphasize the awesome character of the day so that the congregants might lend their ears to the reading and make amends for their faults in reading from the Torah during the rest of the year.<sup>53</sup> The *Mateh Ephraim* points out that *Ve-Ya'azor* and the Torah blessings as well are chanted according to this special tune.<sup>54</sup>

A fascinating story is told of R. Israel Meir Kagan, the *Chafetz Chaim*. Upon being accorded the honor of *aliyat Kohen* on Rosh Ha-Shanah, the *Chafetz Chaim* quickly approached the *bimah* to recite the blessings but to the amazement of the congregation, he stood motionless and in silence before the *Sefer Torah*. After several long moments, he finally commenced to intone the benediction. At the conclusion of the services, several of his disciples approached the great sage and asked, “Rebbe, what was the cause for your delay in reciting the *Birkhot Ha-Torah*?” “For several moments I could not recall the *Yamim Nora'im niggun*,” answered the *Chafetz Chaim*. “I would not utter a sound until I was reminded of the special melody.”

The Torah reading during the morning of Yom Kippur is rendered as on Rosh Ha-Shanah according to the specific cantillation of *Yamim Nora'im*. Regarding the Torah reading during *Minchah*, however, there are varied customs. Some customs use the special *Yamim Nora'im* tune, while others revert to the regular cantillation used during the rest of the year.

R. Joseph Soloveitchik explains that this difference in custom is based on a difference of opinion between the *Mechaber* and the Rama in the *Shulchan Arukh* (O.C. 622:2) regarding the conclusion of the blessings recited after the *Haftarah*. Since, according to the *Mechaber*, the Torah reading concludes the blessings of the *Haftarah* in the morning with *Mekadeish Yisrael Ve-Yom Ha-Kippurim*, the Torah reading is motivated by the uniqueness of *Kedushat Ha-Yom* (the sanctity of the day) of Yom Kippur. Thus, the cantillation is the same used at *Minchah* as that of Yom Kippur morning. The Rama, however, maintained that one should shorten the blessings after the *Haftarah* at *Minchah* of Yom Kippur and conclude with the blessing, *Magein David*. Therefore, we can infer from this position that the motivation for reading the Torah and *Haftarah* at *Minchah* of Yom Kippur is not the sanctity of the day, but simply the fact that

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<sup>50</sup>. R. Yehudah He-Chasid, *Sefer Chasidim*, edited by J. Wistinezki and Jacob Friedman (2nd edition, 1924), 817.

<sup>51</sup>. O.C. 619.

<sup>52</sup>. Abraham Eliezer Hirshowitz, *Sefer Minhagei Yeshurun*, 2nd edition (Vilna, 1899), 39.

<sup>53</sup>. S.Y. Agnon, *Days of Awe* (New York, 1965), 62.

<sup>54</sup>. *Mateh Ephraim* 584:18.

Yom Kippur is a *Ta'anit Tzibbur* (a public fast day) and thus the cantillation should be no different from any other fast day throughout the year.<sup>55</sup>

### **BAREKHU – MA'ARIV**

The *Barekhu* prayer recited by the *sheli'ach tzibbur* serves as a signal to summon the congregation to public worship.<sup>56</sup> The congregation responds with "*Barukh Hashem Ha-Mevorakh Le-Olam Va-Ed*" – "Blessed be the Lord who is blessed for ever and ever." This response is based on the text "*Ki Sheim Hashem Ekra Havu Godel Le-Elokeinu*" – "When I proclaim the name of the Lord, give glory to God."<sup>57</sup> After the congregational response, the *sheli'ach tzibbur* then says, "*Barukh Hashem Ha-Mevorakh*," etc. By adding the phrase "*Ha-Mevorakh*" – "Who is Blessed" in the opening formula, the *sheli'ach tzibbur* does not exclude himself from the rest of the congregation in their blessing.<sup>58</sup> If one does not hear the *sheli'ach tzibbur* chanting *Barekhu* but hears only the congregational response, he should respond with them. If, however, he does hear the *sheli'ach tzibbur* saying "*Barukh Hashem Ha-Mevorakh*," etc., he should respond only with *Amen*.

During the time that the *sheli'ach tzibbur* recites *Barekhu*, the congregation customarily recites silently, "*Yitbarakh Ve-Yishtabakh*" – "Blessed and Praised." This personal prayer should be said only when the invocation is prolonged by the *sheli'ach tzibbur* in singing a melody, but when he pronounces the words, the congregation must keep silent and listen.<sup>59</sup> The practice of singing a melody is in part to allow the congregation time for reciting "*Yitbarakh Ve-Yishtabakh*."<sup>60</sup>

The *Barekhu* melody to the *Ma'ariv* of *Yamim Nora'im* is chanted in a grand manner, in a major mode that stands for exaltation. Why is the *Yamim Nora'im Ma'ariv* introduced with such a lofty musical theme? The melody serves as a prelude in creating the atmosphere of the day. The melody and its text proclaim immediately that the Kingdom of *Hashem* is one of the major themes of the High Holy Day service. Early Chasidim of Chabad referred to the first night of Rosh Ha-Shanah as "Coronation Night" at which time God is crowned King of the world.

It was customary for those who lived in the villages throughout Europe to come to the city on Rosh Ha-Shanah and Yom Kippur and gather together into one congregation because "*Be-Rov Am Hadrat Melekh*" – "in the multitude of people is the King's glory."<sup>61</sup>

It is for this reason that Ashkenazic Jews throughout the world join together with the *Sheliah Tzibbur* in this majestic theme. The melody theme to *Barekhu* is utilized as well to the adjacent prayers throughout the entire *Ma'ariv* service.

### **HA-MELEKH**

The *sheli'ach tzibbur* begins *Shacharit* with *Ha-Melekh*. The chant in its melismatic form (many notes to one syllable) was introduced by the Ashkenazic authority, the thirteenth-century R. Meir of Rothenberg. It was popularized by the Maharil who often served as a *sheli'ach tzibbur* for the *Shacharit* service of Rosh Ha-Shanah. He began in a soft, plaintive manner and gradually increased the volume heard by the congregation with great awe. In most congregations, it is customary for the *sheli'ach tzibbur* to chant *Ha-Melekh* while standing in his place and then to walk up to the *amud* and conclude with the text "*Yoshev al kisei ram ve-nisah*" – "Who is sitting upon a high and lofty throne."<sup>62</sup>

It is interesting to note the change in the text from the year round "*Ha-Melekh Ha-Yoshev*" – "The King who is sitting." The *Yamim Nora'im* version conveys the idea of immediacy – that the King is presently on His throne, because during these awesome moments of *Shacharit*, *Hashem* is actually sitting in judgment.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>. Dr. Arnold Lustiger, ed., *Machzor Mesoras HaRav Le-Yom Kippur: Yom Kippur Machzor* (New York, 2006), 682–683.

<sup>56</sup>. O.C. 57:1.

<sup>57</sup>. Sifri, *Parashat Ha'azinu*, 32:3.

<sup>58</sup>. *Berakhot* 49b (Tos.).

<sup>59</sup>. *Magein Avraham* 57:3.

<sup>60</sup>. *Tur*, O.C. 57.

<sup>61</sup>. S.Y. Agnon, *Days of Awe* (New York, 1965), 50.

<sup>62</sup>. Maharil, *Rosh Ha-Shanah* (Warsaw, 1874), 38b.

<sup>63</sup>. The Levush, as cited in Rabbi Nosson Scherman, ed., *The Complete Artscroll Machzor, Rosh Ha-Shanah* (Brooklyn, 1990), 262.

The opening musical motives of *Ha-Melekh* are the same as those that begin the *Kol Nidrei* and are chanted with great trepidation and emotion. From *Yoshev* until *ram ve-nisah* the *nusach* chant shifts into the mode of the High Holy Day *Shacharit Kaddish*.

## KADDISH

Each half-*Kaddish* in the High Holy Day liturgy has its particular musical mode or fixed melody closely associated with the section that immediately precedes or follows it. By the seventeenth century, the melodies of these *Kaddeshim* were already set. Categorized as *Mi-Sinai* tunes, they were known to be awe-inspiring. The text was considered very important and therefore it became the duty of the *chazan* to prolong its singing to give the worshipper time to meditate.<sup>64</sup>

Of special significance are the *Kaddish* tunes chanted before the *Musaf* of *Yamim Nora'im* and for the *Tal* and *Geshem* prayers on the festivals. Originally identical, they later branched out into separate melodies.<sup>65</sup>

The High Holy Day *Musaf Kaddish* is distinguished by a popular melody based on the *nusach* chant, beginning with the words *Be-Chayekhon* and *Le'ela*. Written in the nineteenth century by the Eastern European cantor-composer, Wolf Shestapol, the melody has become standard in numerous Ashkenazic synagogues throughout the world.

## CHAZARAT HA-SHATZ *Musaf Rosh Ha-Shanah* (repetition of the Rosh Ha-Shanah *Musaf* service)

## AVOT

The *sheli'ach tzibbur's* *Avot* repetition of the Rosh Ha-Shanah *Musaf* service is of primary importance.

The Rambam writes in *Hilkhos Shofar* 3:7 that the congregation is obligated to hear the sound of the *shofar* in association with the blessings of the *Amidah*.<sup>66</sup>

Moreover, many authorities hold that those who, due to ignorance or some disturbing noise were unable to recite the silent *Amidah* for themselves, may fulfill their obligation by listening attentively to every word intoned by the *chazan*.<sup>67</sup> Thus in reciting the opening benediction, *Avot*, the *Aron Kodesh* is opened as the *sheli'ach tzibbur* intones the traditional melody with great trepidation and deep feelings of emotion. R. Meir of Rothenberg was known to have chanted the *Avot* in an emphatic tune<sup>68</sup> and the Maharil would extend the tune of the word *Atah* in order to give melodic expression of *Kavanah*.<sup>69</sup>

The *Avot* chant generally features free rhythm with rich and fluent melismata while entire sections are often sung without words.<sup>70</sup>

## MI-SOD CHAKHAMIM

A significant number of prayers recited on *Yamim Nora'im* are assigned to the *chazan* while the congregation listens and meditates. In some of them he calls upon the congregation to join him in praising God; in others he pleads for God's aid and indulgence in his important responsibility of representing the congregation. In *Mi-Sod Chakhamim*, the *chazan* asks for *reshut* (permission) to insert *piyutim* (poems) during his repetition of the *Amidah*. These *piyutim*, known as *kerovot*, are interpolated into the early benedictions of the *Amidah's* repetition at each service of the *Yamim Nora'im* with the exception of the *Musaf* service for the second day of Rosh Ha-Shanah. The reason for the omission is due to the fact that there are no new *piyutim* introduced to this service. *Mi-Sod Chakhamim* is an appeal by the *sheli'ach tzibbur* to God, in the words of the wise and discerning poets of Israel, to bear with him while he embellishes the service.

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<sup>64</sup>. Chibburei Likkutim (Venice, 1715), 4.

<sup>65</sup>. A.Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Music: Its Historical Development* (New York, 1929), 159.

<sup>66</sup>. Dr. Arnold Lustiger, ed., *Machzor Mesoras HaRav Le-Rosh Ha-Shanah: Rosh Ha-Shanah Machzor* (New York, 2007), 492.

<sup>67</sup>. Dr. Elie Munk, *The World of Prayer*, vol 2 (Jerusalem/New York, 2007), 208.

<sup>68</sup>. Abraham Zvi Idelsohn, *Jewish Music: Its Historical Development* (New York, 1932), 158.

<sup>69</sup>. Macy Nulman, *Concepts of Jewish Music and Prayer* (New York, 1985), 31.

<sup>70</sup>. Abraham Zvi Idelsohn, *Thesaurus of Hebrew Oriental Melodies*, vol. 8 (New York, 1973), 40.

The musical motives for *Mi-Sod Chakhamim* and the *piyutim* that follow are in the *kerovah* mode, the emotionally expressive scale of *Ahavah Rabbah*.

Other *piyutim* relegated to the *chazan* and which are also chanted in the *kerovah* mode appear in the *Shacharit* services of *Yamim Nora'im*. These include *Yareti Bi-Ftzoti*, *Atiti Le-Chanenakh*, *Eimekha*, and *Shulachti*.

The popular *piyut Ochilah La-Kel* is chanted to the same *nusach* as that of *Mi-Sod Chakhamim*, in the *kerovah* mode.

*Ochilah La-Kel* serves as a prelude to the *piyutim* interpolated in between the *Malkhuyot*, *Zichronot*, and *Shofarot* units on Rosh Ha-Shanah and the *Avodah* section of Yom Kippur.

The *Aron Kodesh* is opened for the recitation of *Ochilah La-Kel*. This prayer is recited solely by the *sheli'ach tzibbur* because the text reads: "In the congregation of the people I may sing of His power and render joyful melody concerning His deeds (*Asher bi-kehal am ashirah uzo, abi'ah renanot be'ad mifalav*)."<sup>71</sup>

The *kerovah* mode is popularly utilized on *Yamim Nora'im* to texts and *tefillot* which are assigned for recital by the *sheli'ach tzibbur* himself. It is in this mode and through his inspirational recital that the congregation is emotionally uplifted in prayer.

### **U-NETANEH TOKEF – BE-ROSH HA-SHANAH**

A highlight moment of the High Holy Day *Musaf* service is reached when the *Aron Kodesh* is opened and the chant of *U-Netaneh Tokef* begins. The text, *Be-Rosh Ha-Shanah*, a section of the celebrated *U-Netaneh Tokef* prayer, describes how *Hashem* judges the world on the *Yamim Nora'im*. From the beginning of the prayer until "*Mi yanu'ach*" there is no specific or fixed *nusach* (melody chant). However, from the phrase "*Mi yanu'ach u-mi yanu'a*" – "who shall be at ease and who shall wander about," to the end of the prayer, the *sheli'ach tzibbur* chants the text according to a fixed *nusach* and increases the rate of speed at which he is reciting. This is done with the intention of confusing the Satan, (*Le-arbev et Ha-Satan*) while he listens to the enumeration of the various decrees in prayer.<sup>72</sup>

### **KOL NIDREI**

Perhaps the best known of the melodies categorized as *Mi-Sinai* is the Ashkenazic musical setting for *Kol Nidrei*. This musical setting which is an expression of deep religious feeling became rooted in the people and spread into many countries. The *Kol Nidrei* text acquired significance for the conversos during the Spanish Inquisition when they recited it secretly on Yom Kippur to renounce their promise to adopt the new religion that had been forced upon them. However, the well-known Ashkenazic melody used today does not date back to the time of the conversos. It is unknown to Sephardic and Oriental Jews, who recite *Kol Nidrei* to a completely different chant.

The first to mention a fixed *Kol Nidrei* tune was R. Mordecai Jaffe (1530–1612). In his rabbinical code, the *Levush* (ch. 619), he approves of the quality of the tune but complains that, in spite of his efforts to correct certain errors in the text, *chazanim* were "unable to incorporate the changes in the course of their chanting because they are too attached to the old melody which fits the familiar text." Abraham Zvi Idelsohn suggests that this "old melody" is the present tune, which developed between the middle of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, he states that it was a *chazan* of southwestern Germany who "voiced the sentiments of the terror-stricken conversos as they recited the *Kol Nidrei*, in a touching tune which expresses the fear, horror, fervent pleading, and stern hope for ultimate salvation."<sup>74</sup>

In his *Machzor Vitry*, Simchah ben Shmuel described the method of the *Kol Nidrei* recitation as follows: "The first time the *chazan* must utter it very softly as one who hesitates to enter the palace of a King to ask a gift of Him whom he fears to approach; the second time he may speak somewhat louder; the third time more loudly, as one who is accustomed to dwell at court and to approach his sovereign as a friend."<sup>75</sup> According to the Maharil, the chanting of the *Kol Nidrei* should be prolonged until nightfall in order to enable latecomers to hear it.<sup>76</sup>

The musical motives of *Kol Nidrei*, which are of cantillatory character and of German minnesong origin, permeate the liturgy of the High Holy Days. For example, the well-known opening motive appears in the *Ha-Melekh*

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<sup>71</sup>. Abudirham.

<sup>72</sup>. Macy Nulman, *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Prayer* (Northvale, 1996), 97.

<sup>73</sup>. A.Z. Idelsohn, *Thesaurus of Hebrew Oriental Melodies* (Leipzig, 1933), vol. 7, p. 34.

<sup>74</sup>. A.Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Music: Its Historical Development*, 228.

<sup>75</sup>. *Machzor Vitry* (Berlin, 1892), 388.

<sup>76</sup>. Maharil (Warsaw, 1874), 45b.

prayer and its ending is identical with parts of *Aleinu* and *Avot*. It has been suggested that the association of the *Aleinu* motive with *Kol Nidrei* originated in the twelfth century in Blois, France, where many persecuted Jews died while singing the *Aleinu*. Thus the Jews of France and the Rhineland adopted the *Aleinu* motive for this most significant hour and declaration of the *Kol Nidrei*. Furthermore, its melody, which is triumphant in character, is most fitting at its conclusion.<sup>77</sup>

*Kol Nidrei* is so far reaching that it was utilized by classical composers of the secular world of music. The German composer/conductor, Max Bruch (1838–1920) composed a concerto (op. 47) in 1881, entitled “*Kol Nidrei*” for cello and orchestra and in Beethoven’s Quartet No. XIV, Opus 131, sixth movement (Adagio Quasi un poco Andante, measures 1–5) there is a remarkable resemblance to the *Kol Nidrei* melody.

## ASHAMNU

The *Ashamnu* prayer from the *Vidui* section of each Yom Kippur and *selichot* service is rendered in a most jubilant and majestic manner. Chanted in a major scale, the melody in its entirety is almost identical to the cantillation of *Shirat Ha-Yam* (Song of the Sea).

The mood of victory and triumph depicted in the *shirah* would seem to appear inappropriate to *Ashamnu*, a prayer of confession. Its text alone denotes a dirge-like chant. Why then was the *shirah* melody employed to the chanting of *Ashamnu*?

In the concluding *mishnah* of *Ta’anit*, the Tiferet Yisrael (R. Israel Lipschutz, 1782–1860) explains that it is proper to sing the *Ashamnu* prayer and that with true and sincere repentance through its jubilant singing, one’s transgressions may be reversed and transformed to virtues (*zekhuyot*).<sup>78</sup>

R. Joseph Soloveitchik, in a *Teshuvah* lecture in 1973, discussed the conceptual distinction between communal and individual confession.

According to R. Soloveitchik, when the individual confesses he does so from a state of depression, insecurity, and despair in the wake of a sin for which he has no assurance of being acquitted. In contrast, *Keneset Yisrael* (the Jewish community) confesses out of a sense of confidence and even by rejoicing with the singing of the *Vidui* in a heartwarming melody.<sup>79</sup>

## VE-HA-KOHANIM

Recited as part of the *Musaf Yom Kippur Avodah* service, the prayer *Ve-Ha-Kohanim* is a deeply emotional chant which commemorates the service at the Temple in Jerusalem. Its opening motives also appear in the *Musaf Kedushah* for the High Holy Days and Hoshanah Rabbah.

Abraham Baer, in his monumental *Ba’al Tefillah*, notates verses from the *Yotzrot Piyutim* (poems) of *Parashat Shekalim* according to the opening motives of *Ve-Ha-Kohanim*. By utilizing the melody of *Ve-Ha-Kohanim*, the worshipper recalls and stimulates his longing for the rebuilding of the Temple with the offering of *Mahatzit Ha-Shekel*.<sup>80</sup>

In his 1979 *Teshuvah Derashah*, the Rav, R. Joseph Soloveitchik, described the recitation of *Ve-Ha-Kohanim* by his father and grandfather as being said with utmost enthusiasm and ecstasy. “Although I am not a musician or musicologist,” said the Rav, “all one had to do was hear the *niggun* (tune) of *Ve-Ha-Kohanim* to understand. One did not even need to hear the words in order to feel the nostalgia for what once existed and is no longer.”<sup>81</sup>

## NE’ILAH

The *Ne’ilah* service of Yom Kippur is highlighted by frequent melodic changes, modulations, and *nusach* variations. The frequent changes were designed with the intention of elevating the worshiper to greater emotional heights of *hitorerut* and devotion. Also, the *Ne’ilah* service forms a synopsis of all previous prayer themes and melodies recited during the entire period of *Yamim Nora’im*. Each *nusach* chant has its own traditional melody that fits the prayer text and sets the mood.

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<sup>77</sup>. B.M. Casper, *Talks on Jewish Prayer* (Jerusalem, 1958), 67.

<sup>78</sup>. *Tiferet Yisrael – Ta’anit* 4:8.

<sup>79</sup>. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Before Hashem You Will be Purified*, summarized and annotated by Arnold Lustiger (Edison, 1998), 119–120.

<sup>80</sup>. Abraham Baer, *Ba’al Tefillah* (1877), 151.

<sup>81</sup>. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Before Hashem You Will be Purified*, 148.

According to R. Soloveitchik, the day of Yom Kippur must be transformed into a *Yom Tefillah*, a day of prayer. To accomplish this transformation, the rabbis instituted the *Ne'ilah* service. The function of *Ne'ilah*, says the Rav, is to transform all previous prayers into one unified prayer activity and without reciting the earlier prayers, one is not qualified to participate in *Ne'ilah*.<sup>82</sup>

R. Soloveitchik's concept of a unified *Ne'ilah* service is musically realized with the usage of all previous prayer themes and *nuscha'ot* recited throughout the High Holy Days.

### **KADDISH SHALEM (Full Kaddish or Kaddish Titkabel)**

At the conclusion of *Chazarat Ha-Shatz*, the *Kaddish Titkabel* takes on a spirited and cheerful quality. Often a chasidic melody or a tune with a marked tempo or a *niggun simchah* (melody that expresses fervent rejoicing) is adapted. The purpose of using such a melody is to lessen the fear that prevailed for the *Yom Ha-Din* and thus enable the worshippers to return home with hope and confidence that their prayers were acceptable.

It is a tradition among Lubavitcher Chasidim to sing Napoleon's March in the middle of *Kaddish Titkabel* prior to the sounding of the *shofar* at the conclusion of *Ne'ilah*. The march is remarkable for its joyous, rhythmic character. It was played in 1812 by the armies of Napoleon when they crossed the Russian boundary near Prussia in their invasion of Russia. The *Alter Rebbe*, R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi, had left his native town when the armies of the enemy were approaching. He asked that the march be sung for him, and after a moment's contemplation, he designated it as a song of victory. The singing of this *niggun* symbolizes the victory of the Jewish people over "*Satan*" and the belief that all prayers recited on Yom Kippur were accepted.<sup>83</sup>

The traditional chants of the synagogue, which so profoundly stir the hearts of our people, and which have aroused interest even outside the Jewish faith, have been handed down to us from generation to generation.

It is incumbent upon all of us to help preserve our synagogue music heritage. Our *nuscha'ot*, which set the mood and remind us of the particular occasion, are often reflected by rabbinic literature. *Nusach* chant is not merely the traditional melody used for the liturgy; *nusach* actually interprets each phrase of the liturgy in musical terms.<sup>84</sup>

A unique illustration of the significant role of music in prayer may be found in a commentary on the verse "*Va-etchanan el Hashem*" – "and Moses beseeched God in prayer." The *Ba'al Ha-Turim* points out that the numerical value of the word *Va-etchanan* is equal to that of *shirah* (song). Moses recited songs before God so that He would accept his prayer.<sup>85</sup>

In describing the position the *sheli'ach tzibbur* takes when praying, the mishnah uses the phrase "*oveir lifnei ha-teivah*."<sup>86</sup> Various interpretations have been offered for the word *oveir*. R. Menachem Mendel Hager, author of *Ahavat Shalom*, wrote that the *sheli'ach tzibbur* is comparable to a channel through which passes a spiritual stimulus to the individual and entire Jewish people. In this sense, the Sages used the expression "*oveir lifnei ha-teivah*" – "passes before the Ark," and not "*omeid lifnei -ha-teivah*" – "to stand before the Ark," as the word *pass* implies transmitting. It is by means of his prayers, especially during the *Yamim Nora'im*, that the *sheli'ach tzibbur* becomes an influential "medium" through whose devotional chant many influences are transmitted.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>82</sup>. Ibid., 159–160.

<sup>83</sup>. Dr. Eric Werner, *A Voice Still Heard: The Sacred Songs of the Ashkenazic Jews* (University Park, PA, 1976), 185.

<sup>84</sup>. Dr. Arnold Lustiger, ed., *Machzor Mesoras HaRav Le-Rosh Ha-Shanah: Rosh Ha-Shanah Machzor* (New York, 2007), 294.

<sup>85</sup>. *Ba'al Ha-Turim*, *Devarim* 3:23.

<sup>86</sup>. *Berakhot* 5:4.

<sup>87</sup>. Macy Nulman, *Concepts of Jewish Music and Prayer* (New York, 1985), 98.