

REDEFINING DIASPORA CONSCIOUSNESS:  
MUSICAL PRACTICES OF MOROCCAN JEWS IN BROOKLYN

by  
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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the  
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## Abstract

### Redefining Diaspora Consciousness: Musical Practices of Moroccan Jews in Brooklyn

by

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This dissertation examines the role of musical practices in the synagogue life of Maroka'im (Moroccan Jews) in Brooklyn, New York. Living in an urban setting known for its diverse and robust Jewish life, community members utilize several different types of musical expression to *emblemize* three distinct diasporic ethnic identities: Jewish (of ancient Israel), Sephardi (Spanish), and Maroka'i (Moroccan). Based upon ethnographic fieldwork carried out between 2008 and 2013, this study demonstrates how Maroka'im in Brooklyn use musical expressions to evoke more than one sense of diaspora consciousness—Jewish, Sephardi, and Maroka'i—to foster what I term a *layered diaspora consciousness*.

To illustrate this layered diaspora consciousness, three domains of communal synagogue practice are analyzed. In the first domain, the ritual of sacred text cantillation called *Kriat ha-Torah*, community members rely upon a select repertoire of melodic motifs for chanting the Torah. These melodic motifs are instrumental in fostering a sense of pan-Maroka'i identity and for establishing co-ethnic recognition in communities throughout the Maroka'i diaspora. Choices about text, melody, and performance opportunities for processional liturgy and honorific songs determine the nature of associations with the Jewish and Sephardi diasporas. In the second

domain, of *hazzanut* or the art of cantorial performance, close analysis reveals ways in which Maroka'im compile liturgical text repertoires, employ certain melodic tropes and contrafacta as vehicles for conjuring associations with several different Moroccan musical traditions, and emphasize rhythmic, melodic, and vocal performance aesthetics to stylize liturgical chant. Liturgical texts include idiosyncrasies related to each layer of diasporic identity; performance aesthetics emphasize stylistic idiosyncrasies that evoke associations with specifically Mediterranean and Maghrebian patrimonies. In the third domain, a ritual celebration for venerating *tsaddiqim* (Jewish saints) called a *hillula*, local practices emphasize a standardized song repertoire which is recognized throughout the Maroka'i diaspora. This repertoire includes pieces from several different musical and poetic genres valued by community members for their historical associations with Maroka'i identity and modern associations with a new iteration of a Sephardi-Mizrahi identity. Foregrounded in the synagogue life of Maroka'im in Brooklyn, musical expression is employed by community members to consistently reinforce and reiterate a sense of belonging to multiple Jewish diasporic ethnic communities.

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*Yotzer ha-Shirah u-Makor ha-Berakhah* (Creator of Song and Source of Blessing)

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## Notes on Orthography

The table below indicates the transliteration convention followed in this dissertation. Certain Hebrew letters are transliterated in more than one way. While the first spelling is preferred by me for transliteration, throughout this dissertation I rely upon the common English spelling for widely known terms.

### Consonants

א	‘
ב	b
בּ	v
ג	g
ד	d
ה	h
ו	v (consonant); u (vowel)
וּ	w
ז	z
ח	ḥ <i>or</i> ch
ט	t
י	y
כ (final ך)	k
כּ (final ך)	kh

ל	l
מ (final ם)	m
נ (final ן)	n
ס	s
ע	‘
פ (final ף)	p
פּ (final ף)	f
צ (final ץ)	ts <i>or</i> s̥
ק	q <i>or</i> k
ר	r
שׁ	sh
שׂ	s
ת	t
תּ	t <i>or</i> th

## Vowels

◌̄	ah
◌̄	a
◌̄	ay
◌̄	i or ee
◌̄	e or eh
◌̄	a
◌̄	a
◌̄	eh
◌̄	u or oo
◌̄	e or 'e
◌̄	o
◌̄	o
◌̄	u or oo
◌̄	i or ee

## **Chapter One:** **Constructing Diasporic Identity – Context and Concept**

The notion of diaspora is often at the forefront of discussions about Jewish identity. Often highlighted in these discussions, as the most important aspects of diasporic Jewish identity, are a persistent homeland orientation towards the ancient land of Israel and the transnational<sup>1</sup> nature of the worldwide Jewish community. Moreover, many cultural expressions, such as language and religious practices, operate to foreground the notions of *galut* (exile) and *geulah* (redemption) as two major aspects of the diasporic nature of Jewish identity. For example, the proclamation in Hebrew, “*le-shana ha-ba’ah be-Yerushalayim* [for the next year, in Jerusalem]” at the conclusion of the Pesah (Passover) seder every year reiterates the geographic and historical source of the *galut*, and the hope for *geulah*, in the ancient language of the dispersed people. Similarly, by simply glancing at a page of the Talmud,<sup>2</sup> one can find numerous commentaries by community leaders from different parts of the world and different eras of Jewish history debating the theological and jurisprudential aspects of Jewish communal life. An awareness or consciousness of the diasporic nature of Jewish identity has been explicit in the construction of Jewish identity for centuries.

Cultural expression is a realm of human experience that is integral to identity formation. During centuries of cohabitation with host cultures in different parts of the world, Jewish groups have been using cultural expressions, such as food, literature, philosophy, and music, as well as

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<sup>1</sup> *Transnational* implies a constellation-like geographic construct for a community with a persistent national identity that traverses the borderlines of modern nation-states. The sustenance of ties—economic, political, and social—across borderlines is central. “Diasporas arise from some form of migration, but not all migration involves diasporic consciousness; all transnational communities comprise diasporas, but not all diasporas develop transnationalism” (Vertovec 2004:282).

<sup>2</sup> The Talmud is a multi-volume work developed over centuries to explain the laws of Judaism. In many ways, it has served as the blueprint for Jewish identity.

language and religion, to foster an awareness or consciousness of communal belonging to a worldwide Jewish<sup>3</sup> community. These expressions have served to foster co-ethnic recognition and a “national” identity over a great geographic expanse. Furthermore, they have helped differentiate group insiders from outsiders. Along with a diasporic community’s use of cultural expressions to reiterate connections to a particular geographic origin, and to foster connections between members of the transnation, cultural expressions also make space for adaptations, changes, hybridizations, and even neo-fundamentalisms to emerge. Thus, communal boundaries in Jewish communities worldwide have been subject to constant negotiation. Reified, relaxed, or reconfigured, these changing boundaries have allowed *different Jewish ethnic identities* to emerge.

---

<sup>3</sup> *Israelite*, rather than *Jewish*, is my preferred label for those who are genetically born into or choose to convert to this particular ethno-religious heritage. While typically understood today to mean members of the ancient kingdoms of Israel until the destruction of Jerusalem and the Holy Temple in 586 BCE by the Babylonian, as a label, Israelite encompasses the long history of a people who have adhered to an identity associated with the Biblical patriarch Yisrael, the religion of the Torah, and the sacred connection to the land. In fact, the preferred terms found in sacred texts and several rabbinic texts are *Am Yisrael* (nation of Israel), *B’nai Yisrael* (children of Israel), and *Kelal Yisrael* (community of Israel), all of which are more clearly translated as Israelite than Jewish.

*Yehudi* (Jewish) is common in rabbinic writings as well, but in my estimation should be seen as an expression of Pharasaic Judaism which was itself a product of the Kingdom of Judea during Roman control of the ancient land of Israel. Additionally, not all “Jewish” people can be clearly associated with the kingdom of Judea, further problematizing the use of this archaic label. After all, there were members of eleven other tribes who dwelled in the ancient kingdoms of Israel. And the use of the label is itself a capitulation to the lack of agency Israelites have experienced throughout the centuries—Romans first made the association because it was the kingdom they were conquering, then Christians using the story of Judas’s treason towards Jesus helped solidify its place as the label of choice. Nevertheless, for conventional purposes I begrudgingly acquiesce to use of the label “Jewish” throughout this dissertation.

Over time, different Jewish ethnic identities<sup>4</sup> have developed, challenging monolithic perspectives on Jewish identity. Any attempt to conceptualize Jewish identity as something that is completely fixed, stable, and unchangeable is a fool's errand. After all, it is inconceivable that ethnic variations would not have emerged in a diasporic community that has inhabited several continents and existed during several eras of history, from antiquity to the present. While Jewish diasporic ethnic identities are still based upon certain common elements—a connection to ancient Israel, Hebrew language, and Judaism—they must be appreciated in context; Jewish ethnicities are a result of juxtaposing these elements with new communal experiences in different locales.

Varied experiences in the local communal lives of Jews in disparate parts of the world have produced important and lasting changes to Jewish identities. For instance, we know that the use of Hebrew is integral to all Jewish ethnicities. Yet, the emergence of hybridized languages, such as Judeo-Spanish among the Jews who were forced out of the Iberian Peninsula at the end of the fifteenth century or Yiddish in much of Central and Eastern Europe, shows ethnic variation in Jewish identity brought about using cultural expression. Unique sociopolitical histories, intra- and interethnic tensions, and differing migratory and settlement patterns have meant that new markers of ethnicity have emerged in different Jewish groups. These experiences

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<sup>4</sup> Several scholars use the term *Jewish sub-ethnicity* to refer to different types of Jewish ethnicity (Ray 2008; Medding 2007; Rebhun 2011). Influential sociological literature had defined sub-ethnicity as the “presence of nationalities within an ethnic group” (Der-Martirosian, Sabagh, and Bozorgmehr 1993). While tempting as a method for identifying different Jewish ethnic groups in the United States, I find it problematic because referring to a Jewish group by a nationality other than ancient Israel—e.g., Russian-American Jews—obfuscates the centrality of ancient Israel as a national homeland. Seeing “Russian” as the primary nationality tends to relegate “Jewish” to simply a religious indicator. Because of the historical and geographical breadth of the Jewish community, and because of the contested understandings of Jewish national origin, I have chosen to rely upon the simpler *Jewish ethnic identities*.



have brought varying degrees of acculturation and colored each community's ethnic identity, producing complex and multifaceted Jewish identities.

Musical expressions have had an integral role in defining Jewish identity, and have served as an important means for community members worldwide to emphasize a diasporic ethnic identity related to the ancient land of Israel. For instance, references to the homeland are common in liturgical and song texts. At times, there are even textual references to disparate nodes of the diaspora community's geographic constellation. However, it is the ways of making music—the instruments, stylistic qualities of performance, repertoires, and idiosyncratic approaches to melody, rhythm, and harmony—that serve as the most powerful means for negotiating the boundaries of communal identity. In these aspects of musical expression, we can see the diversity of the Jewish diaspora and of the different Jewish ethnicities contained within it.

Musical expressions are also qualified as a means for expressing a socio-historical consciousness, a key factor in communal identity construction. Music links memory to identity construction by signifying, through learning and transmission, associations among listeners with a subjective, shared historical consciousness (Lucia 2002:127) and realities of the present (Shelemay 1998:26). Individual memories, while residing in the individual mind and subject to individualized experiences, are through musical expressions often made and experienced in social gatherings. Musical expressions tend to transcend the individual in the service of the communal, communicating numerous indices, which, when recognized as such, symbolize an individual's *belonging* to a particular cultural group. Thus, while musical expressions reinforce or reiterate the diasporic nature of Jewish identity, they can also negotiate the boundaries of Jewish ethnicities.

This study focuses on the use of musical expression within the *Maroka'i* (Moroccan Jewish) community of Brooklyn to negotiate boundaries of a particular Jewish diasporic ethnic identity. I will argue that community members use musical expressions to construct a multilayered Jewish diasporic ethnic identity—an identity with includes a consciousness of three different Jewish diasporas. *Maroka'im* (pl.) use musical expressions to emphasize connections with the Jewish,<sup>5</sup> Sephardi (Spanish), and Maroka'i diasporas. Each of these diasporas is distinctive, having carved a specific place in the identity of community members by association with specific geographic centers and by the persistence of a transnation through the sustenance of communal ties.

### **New Jewish Migration**

Since the second half of the nineteenth century, Jews worldwide have been on the move. With the breakup of the Ottoman Empire, the horrors of World War II, the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, and postcolonial independence movements in North Africa and the Middle East, the geographic construct of the Jewish diaspora has been altered immensely. Many communities have been completely uprooted from places where Jewish life flourished for

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<sup>5</sup> I prefer to use the term *Yerushalmi diaspora* instead of *Jewish diaspora* since *Yerushalayim* (Jerusalem) refers to the geographic location of the Holy Temples—first and second—of ancient Israel. The destruction of these Holy Temples has been the most enduring source of feelings of exile in Jewish identity. For sometime I have felt that the term *Jewish diaspora* is obfuscating and confusing, especially when writing about multiple Jewish diasporic ethnic communities. But since *Yerushalmi* has been established as the label for the Palestinian Talmud and for a set of cultural practices (including music) associated with a modern group of Sephardi-Mizrahi immigrants to Israel, and because *Jewish* is so esconced in the lexicon as the moniker of choice for describing all the people worldwide who follow rabbinic Judaism, use Hebrew as a language of prayer, learning, and perhaps even speech, and continue to recognize ancient Israel as a geographic land of origin, I have opted to adhere to *Jewish diaspora* for the sake of clarity.

centuries. The majority of the world's Jewish population now resides in the United States or Israel.<sup>6</sup>

American Jewry is comprised primarily of the descendants of Jewish immigrants from Europe, most of who came to the United States between 1850 and 1950. By the turn of the twentieth century, the United States had become a focal point for Jewish migration, promising religious freedom, civic enfranchisement, and political and economic stability. In the final three decades of the nineteenth century, the United States began accepting large numbers of Jewish migrants from Germany, Russia, and other parts of Western and Eastern Europe (Diner 2004). World War II accelerated Jewish emigration from Europe.

After the founding of the modern State of Israel in 1948, Israel joined the United States as an important destination for Jewish migration. Immigration to the historic homeland, albeit in the modern era and as part of a burgeoning nation-state, became a new possibility for members of the Jewish diaspora. Up until a little over a century ago, the notion of Jewish return to the land of Israel, *en masse* and accompanied by a return of Jewish sovereignty in the ancestral land, was only possible through an intervention of Divine will. Although Jewish people had lived in Ottoman-controlled Palestine for centuries, and some isolated historical incidents of mass immigration with the intention of encouraging *geulah* (redemption) have taken place, the reality of world Jewry for the past two thousand years has been one where Jewish life exists throughout

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<sup>6</sup> According to a 2013 study published in the *American Jewish Year Book*, the population of world Jewry was 13,854,800. The U.S. Jewish population was 5,425,000, or 39% of the world Jewish population. The Israeli Jewish population was 6,014,300, or 43% of the world Jewish population. For comparative purposes, France is the country with the third highest Jewish population, 478,000 people, or just 3.6% of the world Jewish population (Dellapergola 2013).

the world with no where to call a permanent home. Modern Zionism<sup>7</sup> sought to encourage the establishment of a Jewish state as a modern nation-state. Immigrating to the eastern Mediterranean in the late nineteenth century, Jewish farmers from Europe began establishing a physical presence in the ancestral land. In 1917, the Balfour Declaration explicitly called for a Jewish state to be established in the former Ottoman territory. After three decades of colonial rule by Britain, the war for the independence of British Mandate Palestine—involving Jewish and Arab locals, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq—led to the establishment of the modern nation-state in 1948. Israel's existence brought a political reality and physical possibility to the notion of a return to the homeland, fundamentally altering the diaspora consciousness of Jewish communities worldwide.

Israel is once again a center for contemporary Jewish life. However, it is not *the* center. Israel's existence is special in that it does serve to bolster a modern Jewish diaspora consciousness by imbuing Jewish identities worldwide with philosophical and physical connections to the country as the modern embodiment of the ancient homeland. But the United States, and especially New York and Los Angeles, are also important centers of Jewish life that project great influence in Israel and around the world. The New York City metro area is home to as much diversity in Jewish life as Israel and has a well-established history as a locale with a significant Jewish population.

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<sup>7</sup> *Modern Zionism* is a political movement drawing from ideas developed in Europe about modern nationalism, not a movement to bring back the Holy Temple. The *raison d'être* of Modern Zionism has been to re-establish Jewish self-determination in the world of nations. The goals of this movement should not be confused with the additional aspirations embedded in the Jewish diaspora consciousness of a return *of* Zion, not just *to* Zion. *Religious Zionism* is a political movement based on the belief that resettling the historic homeland will induce the messiah to come. The primary progenitor of this political philosophy was R' Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935). His mission was to reconcile Modern Zionism with Judaism (Schwarz 2002:131-155).

In the twentieth century we have seen the largest geographic reconfiguration of the world's Jewish community. This reconfiguration was problematized by the reestablishment of the State of Israel, which has drawn many Jewish immigrants into a nation-building project for the seeming completion of the community's two-thousand-year-old exile from Jerusalem. Due to mass migrations and resettlement, numerous ethnic identities have been produced and persist. From these, some new Jewish diasporic ethnic identities have begun to emerge. Entire communities have been uprooted and dislocated, and in some cases persistent homeland orientation towards places other than ancient Israel has begun to produce new diasporic configurations within the worldwide Jewish community.

### **Developing Diasporic Ethnic Identities**

No matter where Jewish people have traveled and settled, they have made an effort to maintain some connection to a national origin. Despite this fidelity to ancient Israel as a land of national origin, members of the transnational Jewish community have been integral to the development of many of the world's cultures. Jewish identities have emerged to express ethnic peculiarities, including differences in language, dress, food, religious customs, laws, and musical practices. Several of these peculiarities are related to geographic particularities of existence, where Jewish identities coalesce and correlate with non-Jewish identities. The experiences of Jewish people vis-à-vis their non-Jewish co-ethnics have been extremely varied, with different degrees of enfranchisement or marginalization depending on time, place, and political trends.

During the 1960s, seminal works like Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan's *Beyond the Melting Pot* (1963) still viewed differences in Jewish ethnicities (see "The Jews," pp.137-180) as remnants of cultural expression that would naturally disappear into a so-called

*super* Jewish ethnicity in America. Glazer and Moynihan recognized the power of ethnic persistence in challenging assimilation in an urban context such as New York, where ethnic enclaves tend to thrive because of factors related to proximity: close living, ethnic businesses, and communal institutions. But they still regarded Jews as one super ethnic group in New York City's tapestry-like conglomeration of ethnic groups, rather than recognizing the diversity of Jewish ethnicities. More recent studies have shown how some Jewish ethnic identities have endured. Complex but enriching, the study of contemporary Jewish identities has scholars challenging traditional notions of the Jewish diaspora by emphasizing particular ethnicities within the Jewish diaspora community (Ray 2008; Ben-Ur 2009; Beinun 2005; Shelemay 1998; Kligman 1997 & 2009; Koskoff 1978; Rapport 2006; Sobol and Summit 2002; Slobin 1989). A few of these studies in particular (Shelemay, Kligman, Rapport) have come from ethnomusicologists whose subjects share one important feature: they are living in New York City. These ethnomusicological studies show that ethnic differentiation between Jewish communities is present and persistent in the contemporary United States.

Many Jewish people can claim another ethnic identity as well—Russian, German, Ḥasidic, *Mizraḥi* (Eastern).<sup>8</sup> Such ethnic affiliations can center on geographic origin (nation or region) or approach to Jewish religious or cultural practice (Ḥasidism). Such affiliations, however, are not the same as an individual or community with a present consciousness of membership in a transnational group that continues to cultivate ties to a secondary homeland.

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<sup>8</sup> *Mizraḥi* (Eastern) is a term used to describe Jewish communities from eastern Arab lands (Iraq, Kurdistan, parts of Syria), the southern and eastern edges of the Arabian desert, Persia, and parts of Central Asia. Eastern Mediterranean Jews—Syrian, Lebanese, Palestinian, and Egyptian—are often considered *mizraḥim* (pl.) as well due to instances of cultural overlap, but the influx of post-expulsion Sephardim in 1492 had such an influence on these areas that use of *mizraḥi* is misleading if not qualified.

Therefore, while many Jewish ethnicities are present in New York, a consciousness of belonging to an additional diasporic group informs only some of them.

### **A Layered Diaspora Consciousness**

To have a diaspora consciousness, I believe an ethnic group must cultivate a particular state of being that includes homeland orientation and transnationalism. An additional Jewish ethnic identity becomes truly diasporic only when a robust consciousness of another homeland in addition to ancient Israel, as well as a sense of belonging to another transnation in addition to the transnational Jewish community, are maintained through cultural expressions of the community. The group uses the circulation of ideas, religious practices, texts, lineages, linguistic elements, foods, and music to emphasize these multiple homeland connections and transnational affiliations.

In this dissertation, I will show how musical expressions in the synagogue life of a particular Jewish ethnic group—Maroka'im (pl.)—construct dimensions of what I call a *layered diaspora consciousness*. This is a phrase I have created and use to describe the complex juxtaposition of multiple Jewish diasporic ethnic identities informing Maroka'i identity in Brooklyn, New York. Multiple Jewish diasporic ethnic identities are articulated through narratives about communal history and tradition—law, custom, and spirituality—and by experiences with hybridity, translocality, and transnationality (Slobin 2003). Ultimately, this dissertation is focused on how members of Brooklyn's Maroka'i community use forms of musical

expression to reproduce, reinterpret, and transmit traits from three overlapping yet distinctive diasporic ethnic identities—Jewish, Sephardi, and Maroka'i.<sup>9</sup>

I envision this layered diaspora consciousness as an amalgamation of different diasporic ethnic identities. These layers should not be seen as hierarchical or nesting, but rather as comingling. Instead, I picture streams, drawn together from several sources—historical moments and geographic origins—to form a complex, multilayered consciousness about what it means to be Maroka'i. In other words, multiple diaspora consciousnesses are incorporated into the same body, individual and/or group. The layers should be thought of as *interacting rather than competing with one another*; a co-mingling of diasporic identities. To borrow the idea of *bricolage*<sup>10</sup> from Levi-Strauss (1968 [1962]), a layered diaspora consciousness emerges as a whole by drawing upon and bringing together objects or indices of identity, at times haphazardly, from different diasporic ethnic identities. In terms of diaspora consciousness, this means identifying emblems of diasporic identity and reiterating them through cultural expression. These emblems are used to constantly refashion diasporic identity, from generation to generation and person to person. In the case of Maroka'im, this same process has been reiterated multiple times since community members are dealing with three diasporic identities.

As a dynamic cultural expression, music has a privileged role in effecting this layered diaspora consciousness. Music is a dynamic medium that engages with the past and present simultaneously, used to convey communal narrative histories and negotiate communal

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<sup>9</sup> In each instance of diasporic ethnic identity, I have chosen the Hebrew appellation to be clear that I am referring to Jewish cultural groups.

<sup>10</sup> *Bricolage* is a term Levi-Strauss (1968 [1962]) uses to describe how mythological systems of identity are formed from a complex of borrowed objects and symbols. Identity is not an inert construct, but rather one pregnant with significations based upon emblems—objects and symbols—whose meanings remain in constant flux and in need of re-examination.



boundaries and cultural influences. Musical expression has a specialized role in the life of Brooklyn's Maroka'i community. It is the preferred medium for performing liturgical rites, recitation of sacred texts, and para-liturgies<sup>11</sup> used in the home and synagogue, as well as a fundamental element in celebratory events. Musical expression plays a role not only in transmission, but also as a means of incorporating characteristic elements associated with other Jewish ethnic communities into the community's consciousness.

### **Maroka'im in Brooklyn**

In addition to belonging to the Jewish diaspora, Maroka'im (pl.) in Brooklyn identify strongly with two other diasporic groups. While one would expect members of this community to express a consciousness of the diaspora identity that began to emerge after the expulsion of Jews from Jerusalem nearly two millennia ago, this is not their only diaspora consciousness. As explained above, this layer is obvious and important to any Jewish ethnic identity; references to Jerusalem in Jewish texts and songs are widespread in all Jewish ethnic communities, embedded in religious philosophies and historical narratives that highlight the schismatic break from ancient Israel and the enduring *galut* (exile) of the diaspora. Looking closely at liturgical and sacred texts in Brooklyn's Maroka'i community, and aspects of musical expression—vocal style, melodies, repertoires—one can see additional references to Sephardi and Maroka'i diasporic consciousnesses. Regular public performance emphasizes these multiple consciousnesses, each

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<sup>11</sup> *Para-liturgies* are collections of material that serve a liturgical function outside of the synagogue. For instance, the Shabbat meal always begins with *Kiddush* (sanctification), a series of sacred and semi-sacred texts performed aloud.

sharing several primary features—similar cultural traits, a schismatic break from the homeland(s), diasporic migration, and the formulation and maintenance of a transnation.

### **Maroka'i Layer**

Most community members have or had immediate or extended family that directly participated in the diasporic migration that began from Morocco in the 1950s. Between 1950 and 1965, mass emigration and resettlement away from Morocco and into a diasporic constellation of communities—a web of smaller communities spread over a large geographic expanse—reduced the formerly large and robust Jewish community to only 1% of what it had been two decades earlier (Zafrani 2005:290).<sup>12</sup> A growing sense of insecurity within the Jewish community brought about by the confluence of postcolonialism, pan-Arabism, and Moroccan nationalist movements was coupled with a growing desire to be part of the newly established State of Israel and a participant in the Modern Zionist cause. Despite this ideological propensity towards the burgeoning state of Israel, not all Maroka'im immigrated to Israel. For much of the Francophone and western educated segment of the Maroka'i community, European and North American countries offered cultural similarities, economic opportunities, and some already existent familial ties.

Maroka'i communities large and small now exist in cities in Morocco, Israel, France, the United States, Canada, and parts of South America. Not only can many community members claim direct participation in the migration and establishment of these communities, but many have also been able to take advantage of new technologies in travel and communication that have

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<sup>12</sup> Morocco's Jewish community, which included nearly 250,000 people at its peak, now numbers closer to a mere 3,500 (DellaPergola 2013). Most live in Casablanca, with a few in Marrakesh, Tangiers, and Rabat. However, the population is regularly augmented by those who come for holidays, family visits, as pilgrims, or as heritage tourists. (Hirschberg 1974; Stillman 2010).

helped immensely in the process of constructing and sustaining communal ties, promoting transnationalism. Many people with whom I have spoken refer to family in Morocco, Israel, and France, telling stories about how different family members ended up in different parts of the world. Many community members travel regularly to these countries, regaling others with stories about their travels when they return. Some use the Internet to watch videos posted by others, to participate in forums for discussing Maroka'i culture, or to connect with fellow Maroka'im on social networking sites.

Localized musical expressions are important for fostering a sense of connection to the Maroka'i diaspora as well. As historical narratives are used to convey aspects of consciousness, in this case by emphasizing the diasporic migration and settlement patterns of so many community members' families and friends, musical expressions are used to convey aspects of consciousness that are part of the cultural body of knowledge presumed to be shared by people throughout the diasporic community. For instance, specific melodies used in local performances of liturgical rites forge a deeper connection to the transnation than the myriad individualistic connections that proliferate on Internet social networking sites. The melody "strikes a chord" in individuals—as individuals, as part of the local community, and as part of the Maroka'i transnation. Affirmations of a melody's place in the community's sense of self come through gestures, participation, expressions of approval, and general acceptance on the part of community members who are present. It is understood that the melody is part of the cultural identity of the community. The fact that these musical expressions are often performed in sacred and semi-sacred contexts only increases their importance, focusing the community's attention on the music in a unique way.

## Sephardi Layer

For Maroka'im, another diasporic ethnic identity is present and important as well—a Sephardi<sup>13</sup> identity. The memory of a *Sephardi place*, the *there*, is already layered with the experience of another *here*—a here immediately prior to the here and now. The expulsion of Jews from the Iberian Peninsula, enforced by the Alhambra Decree (Edict of Expulsion) from Spain in 1492, brought a wave of Jewish immigrants to parts of North Africa, the Levant, the eastern Mediterranean, and isolated parts of Western Europe (Gerber 1994). For many centuries, there had already been close ties between Jewish people on either side of the Straits of Gibraltar, but following the Alhambra Decree, Morocco was inundated with its largest influx of immigrants from the Iberian Peninsula. In the ensuing centuries, a transnation and a homeland orientation centered on a connection to Sepharad (Spain) would endure in the cultural expressions of the exile communities. As Haim Zafrani (2005) suggests, a “Judeo-Maghrebian personality” manifested itself in North Africa in this society’s dual loyalty to world Jewish thought, trends, and humanities in general, and to Morocco’s “sociocultural and linguistic landscape of the Islamic West and the old Hispano-Maghrebian world” (Zafrani 2005:288). Even before the most recent iteration of the diasporic migration from Morocco and ensuing transnational construct described above, a consciousness of at least two layers of diasporic identity already permeated the “Judeo-Maghrebian personality”—Jewish and Sephardi.

The idea of *Sepharad* as a place with a distinctive type of Jewish identity would not come into the popular consciousness of Jewish communities around the world until after the mass

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<sup>13</sup> *Sephardi* or *Sephardic* has become an umbrella term used to refer to all Jews from Islamic countries. However, it is more accurately used to describe Jewish people with genealogical roots in pre-1492 Spain.

migration of 1492, and the concept was perhaps not fully developed until much later (Israel 2002). While many Jews had already emigrated from Spain before 1492, the calamitous expulsion efforts of the emboldened, unified Christian kingdoms<sup>14</sup> were necessary to finally force large numbers of Jews from Spain, marking the beginning of a *Sephardi diaspora*. As Jonathan Ray explains:

At no point did a Sephardi community exist that operated in a politically cohesive manner, nor was there anything that might be described as a Sephardi consciousness. For Iberian Jews as well as for their Christian counterparts, social, political, and even cultural identity rarely transcended one's city or region. Thus the Jews of Iberia did not possess a "national" character prior to their expulsion in 1492...Likewise, the Hebrew term *ha-Sephardi* as an appellative among the Iberian exiles, though common, was not used with any particular precision or consistency in the first generation. (Ray 2008:17-18)

There is evidence in rabbinic writings of an Iberian polity prior to the expulsion from Spain. However, a communal experience of upheaval and dispersion, and the subsequent identification with a land of origin on a national scale, would ultimately color how these immigrants viewed themselves and were viewed by others, and affect how they would adapt to new surroundings.

This Sephardi layer has been complicated by the incorporation of a myriad of different modern Sephardi identities. These Sephardi identities are hybridizations, localized to specific regions—the Eastern Mediterranean, the Levant, and parts of Europe (Holland, Great Britain, and Italy)—and even more recently to specific nation-states such as Syria, Morocco, and Turkey. Identifying a Sephardi diaspora consciousness requires recognizing elements of cultural practice that have been circulated and adopted by disparate groups. For instance, neutral intervals in

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<sup>14</sup> Total unification of Spain under Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, was facilitated by the marriage of his grandparents Isabella (Queen of Castille and León) and Ferdinand (King of Aragon).

melodic modes came to be used throughout much of the Sephardi diaspora despite their historical absence from the Maghreb until after Ottoman control extended to Algeria.

This picture is further complicated by the fact that not all Jewish people from these “Sephardi” areas are really part of the Sephardi diaspora. These regions all have a history of factionalized Jewish groups, where distinctions between locals and Sephardi exiles were promoted for centuries. Some communities, in Uzbekistan, Iraq, and Kurdistan, identify or have been identified as Sephardi with no real historical evidence of a strong Sephardi presence. But because Sephardi, Mizrahi, and Maghrebi Jewish communities do share some important cultural features, namely the fact that most resided in Islamic societies, a Sephardi diaspora consciousness emerged that could encompass disparate communities of people. As small as it may be in these Mizrahi communities, there still has been a presence of a Sephardi historical consciousness.

Nevertheless, any attempt to categorize these disparate communities as part of one super group is a problematic endeavor. For outsiders, an umbrella “Sephardi” identity might be useful, but this would be painting a picture with broad brushstrokes, and ultimately perpetuating ignorance about Sephardim. The emergence of the State of Israel further encouraged the notion of a pan-Sephardi identity. During its earliest years, members of Israel’s political and religious elite, comprised almost exclusively of individuals from a European background, tried to lump all Jews from the Islamic world into one neat category. As an influx of immigrants from Arab and other Islamic countries met hegemonic factions in government and religious institutions, these

factions branded this conglomeration of ethnic groups "Sephardi." *Ashkenazim* (European Jews)<sup>15</sup> used this appellation, often disparagingly, to categorize the "other."

For Jews from these Islamic countries, taking ownership of the term Sephardi has meant wresting it away from its pejorative connotation as an identifier of cultural backwardness. Insider efforts have been made to emphasize an intra-communal narrative about the historical importance of Sephardim to the Jewish world. In recent decades, community members have been working to take ownership of this generalizing appellation to claim a sense of cultural capital that harks back to the rich Jewish culture of pre-expulsion Spain. It seems that even in an era when advocates of pluralism encourage more understanding and acceptance of micro-identities, trends towards homogenization, or at least blanket group identities, continue to serve a purpose for community members. Homogenization seems to provide a means to define belonging, political and economic strength, and religious acceptance.

The term *Sephardi* ultimately serves for insiders and outsiders alike as an umbrella term for this conglomeration of different ethnic identities. Even though each Sephardi identity is intensely localized and affected by different historic and cultural conditions, it is easier to understand them as one group (Ben-Ur 2009:45). Of course, the keen observer will have to pay attention to the anomalies. While the coalescing and synthesis of these ethnic identities has had some homogenizing effect on the pan-Sephardi community, ethnic boundaries persist as a phenomenon that prevents the type of blanket understanding of the community, as all the same

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<sup>15</sup> *Ashkenazi* (sing.) is a term used broadly to refer to European Jewry. Historically Ashkenaz is used to refer to a specific geographic region, including the Rhineland and Alsace in modern-day eastern France and western Germany, with important centers of Medieval European Jewish life. After massive Jewish migration eastward during the High and Late Middle Ages, Ashkenazi communities were established in central and eastern Europe. These communities would, over the centuries, become the center of Ashkenazi Jewish life, developing Jewish thought and cultural practices that would remain forever associated with a greater Europe.

and culturally backward, that we see described above. Members of Sephardi ethnic communities move fluidly between a sense of belonging to smaller ethnic communities and to a larger, pan-Sephardi diasporic ethnic community. Many move back and forth between identifying themselves, their history, and their cultural expressions as *Sephardi* or as part of a specific Sephardi ethnic group.

Throughout modern history, Sephardim have been (at times contradictorily) marginalized, orientalized,<sup>16</sup> subjugated, revered, avoided, co-opted and/or embraced; they have been Arabized, Balkanized and Africanized. Despite this, it is clear that they are a cultural group that exists and expresses itself in the world.

### *Sephardim in America*

By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Sephardi Jews began to immigrate to America. Aviva Ben-Ur (2009) makes an important distinction between the historical experience of ethnic Jewish communities from former Ottoman territories of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Levant, and that of the Ashkenazi communities that form the basis of American Jewry. She suggests that even the earliest Ashkenazi immigrants to America did not cultivate ties to their homelands. One reason was that these countries were remembered as places of oppression and alienation for centuries. In contrast, Jewish people from Islamic countries felt exiled and continued to hold nostalgic ideas about what was generally a history of cultural confluence (Ben-Ur 2009:183). For most, a similar historical consciousness that went back even further, to the Convivencia of the Golden Age(s) of Sepharad in medieval Iberia, continued to permeate their

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<sup>16</sup> Orientalism is a notion developed by Edward Said (1979) to describe the way portrayals of the Orient by Westerners, in scholarship, economic endeavors, and as part of European colonialism in the Middle East and North Africa, have been used to justify perjorative stances about peoples in the Orient.



communal identity as a characteristic distinguishing them from Ashkenazim. When the early Sephardi immigrants established themselves in America, they began to rely upon their Sephardi diaspora consciousness as a means for developing a larger ethnic group identity. In the earliest decades of Sephardi life in America, it was too soon to speak of another diasporic identity. The focus remained on Sepharad (Angel 1982).

As Max Aaron Luria (1930) noted in his early study of Sephardim in New York, despite modern ethnic associations this Sephardi diaspora consciousness included “a deep-seated, tender memory and a pronounced nostalgia reverting to the Spain of their ancestors, the home of their fathers for so many centuries” (Luria 1930:323-324). He saw the love of and devotion to Spain, present in community members’ historical consciousness, as tantamount to their love of and devotion to Jerusalem (Ben-Ur 2009:158).

Maroka'im are part of a diverse Sephardi community that was first established in Brooklyn in the 1930s by Jewish immigrants from the former Ottoman Empire—especially Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Turkey, and the Balkans—who came to New York as early as the 1890s. Like Maroka'im, members of these communities share a historical consciousness of belonging to the exiled Spanish Jewish community. Maroka'im regularly use the term *Sephardi* to describe themselves, like others in the Sephardi community. Most use the term to connect with fellow Jews of the Islamic world, despite a lack of clarity about any direct lineage to Spain. But in the case of Maroka'im, there is a deeper historical consciousness of the community's connection to Spain. Religious customs, poetry, music, and lineages circulated between communities in Morocco and the Iberian Peninsula even before the expulsion from Spain (Gerber 1994). This circulation intensified after the many exiles from Spain settled in Morocco's urban centers. For

centuries to come, Morocco would remain host to the largest community in the Sephardi world. Today, Maroka'im continue to outnumber other Sephardim in Israel, France, Canada. With such a rich historical consciousness of Sepharad, and as the largest Sephardi ethnic group in most nodes of the Sephardi diaspora, Maroka'im are integral to any negotiation of a Sephardi diaspora consciousness in Brooklyn.

Of the many ethnic groups that make up Brooklyn's Sephardi community, however, by far the largest and most notable is the Syrian Jewish community. Syrian Jews immigrated to America from Aleppo in the first and sixth decades of the twentieth century. More recently, Syrian Jews from Damascus immigrated in 1989 seeking political asylum from the Assad regime. They have added a new dynamic to both the Syrian community in particular and Brooklyn's Sephardi community generally. Due to historical ties as part of the Ottoman Levant, many Lebanese and Egyptian Jews identify closely with Syrian Jewry.<sup>17</sup> Syrian Jews in Brooklyn greatly outnumber other ethnic Sephardi groups. But while Syrian Jews have established themselves at the core of the Brooklyn Sephardi community, Maroka'im remain at the core of the worldwide Sephardi diaspora community.

While the Syrian Jewish community remains the largest Sephardi group in Brooklyn, Jewish immigration to America in the past three to four decades has expanded the traditional boundaries of the community geographically and ethnically. Now inhabiting a large swath of southern Brooklyn, the Sephardi community has become a locus for immigrants who identify as

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<sup>17</sup> Lebanon and Syria are historically seen as connected, forming two parts of the same region. Both territories were under Ottoman rule for several centuries. At the end of the nineteenth century, Egypt became a destination for many Syrian Jewish migrants pursuing economic opportunities. After World War I, when many Egyptian Jews immigrated to America, several families were reunited in Brooklyn (Sutton 1979).

Sephardi and/or Mizrahi and is therefore growing increasingly diverse. Synagogues bearing Sephardi or Mizrahi ethnic affiliations flourish alongside synagogues that serve a diverse membership, reflecting a simultaneous trend towards ethnic persistence and the development of a kind of pan-Sephardi ethnic identity. For Maroka'im and for other ethnic Sephardi groups, the landscape for identity construction that Brooklyn provides has become a space for the latest iterations of a Sephardi layer of diaspora consciousness. The diversity and concentration of Sephardi ethnic groups in such a small geographic area has worked as a catalyst for engaging in the processes of translocal identity constructions. Once again, cultural expressions such as music play a vital role in negotiating boundaries.

## **Framing Diaspora**

Scholars studying Jewish communities tend to privilege certain lenses—namely, those of history, literature, biblical studies, and political science. Less common has been the utilization of a diaspora studies perspective (Ray 2008). This is ironic, since the term *diaspora* has been so historically linked to the Jewish people's experience. Perhaps precisely because of this association, a blind spot has prevented scholars from looking at some Jewish ethnic identities as diasporic. Discussions of diaspora as a concept for understanding Jewish identity have tended to focus almost exclusively on the common understanding of Jewish diaspora: the Jewish people of ancient Israel were forced into exile 2,000 years ago, and they scattered throughout the world, living as a marginalized people in host cultures, with a perpetual longing for a return to the homeland and for the opportunity to rebuild Zion.

In this section, I will review some classic statements on diaspora. I will focus on what I see as a key process for developing a diaspora consciousness: ethnicization. Ethnicity continues

to be at the heart of much scholarship on diaspora: after all, the field of diaspora studies stems from ethnic studies. Participation in a migratory dispersal from a homeland, a persistent ethnic identification through boundary maintenance, and the sustenance of a transnational network of co-ethnics are all features of the Jewish community's experience with migration and settlement during the past two millennia. In recent years, as scholars have sought to better understand the paradigmatic nature of similar ethnic identities, the concept of diaspora has become relevant for describing cultural groups with experiences of migration and settlement similar to those of the Jewish people. This dissertation refocuses the diaspora studies lens on an individual Jewish ethnic group, showing how musical expressions are used to encourage a process of ethnicization that ultimately expresses multiple diasporic ethnic identities.

The process of ethnic identity construction as active, not passive, and as having a social component, is intimately tied to the maintenance of communal boundaries. Literature focused on diaspora has extended the idea of boundary maintenance, providing a fresh way to think about why and how certain ethnic identities resist assimilation. As individuals engage in a collective endeavor that goes beyond simple inheritance or biology, the maintenance of cultural boundaries is now seen as historically contextualized and affected by modern politics. Boundaries of ethnic identity, and by extension diasporic ethnic identities, are perpetually in motion and never completely static.

I use *ethnicization* here to refer specifically to the process of formulating, negotiating, and ultimately maintaining boundaries. The formation of social boundaries often has the express purpose of inventing an ethno-cultural heritage. Ethnicization is a process that goes beyond recognizing or perpetuating existing parameters of identity. It fashions new boundaries or adds layers to existing ones, when necessary. Cultural expressions are instrumental to ethnicization in

particular and to boundary maintenance in general. By defining shared cultural features, such expressions as language, food, ritual, and music help community members construct their ethnic identity. Musical expressions are used to erect, reify, negotiate, renegotiate, and even destroy communal boundaries. It is here, in this space of boundary maintenance and through the process of ethnicization, that the consciousness(es) at the heart of diaspora ethnic identity is defined.

### **Defining Diaspora**

Gabriel Sheffer's *Modern Diasporas in International Politics* (1986) was a bold attempt to show how the concept of diaspora applies to a myriad of cultural groups. This edited volume focuses on the effects of diasporic identities—Jewish, African, Indian, and Palestinian (a novelty at the time)—on international relations. Jacob Landau's paper, included in Sheffer's volume, focuses on cultural expression in general and language in particular. He suggests that diaspora identities are dynamic, formulated, iterated, and manipulated through language.

William Safran's (1991) article in the first issue of the journal *Diaspora* offers an attempt at a comprehensive definition of diaspora. He grounds the term in the Jewish community's historical experience, while also attempting to frame the emergent discourse on diaspora. His paradigmatic definition of a diaspora community includes six criteria: dispersion; collective memory of a homeland; complicated relations with the host culture; a desire to return to the homeland; sustaining a connection to the homeland; and fostering ethnic differentiation (Safran 1991).<sup>18</sup> Despite challenges to his definition and his insistence on the Jewish community as the

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<sup>18</sup> More specifically, Safran's six-point paradigm is as follows: 1) dispersion from a specific original "center" to two or more peripheral, or foreign, regions; 2) retention of a collective memory, vision, or myth about the original homeland—its physical location, history, achievements, sufferings; 3) a relationship with the dominant element of society in the hostland that is complicated and often uneasy, conjuring a persistent belief among community members that they are not and will never be fully accepted by the host society; 4) a desire to return to the ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home, and as the place to which they or their descendants

archetypical case (Cohen 1997; Boyarin & Boyarin 1993; Clifford 1994, 1997), Safran later reiterates his argument that the Jewish diaspora remains complete, exceptional, and definitive, despite its peculiarities:

The Jewish diaspora continues to be used as prototype because it combines such features as ethnicity, religion, minority status, a consciousness of peoplehood, a long history of migration, expulsion, adaptation to a variety of hostlands whose welcome was conditional and unreliable, and a continuing orientation to a homeland and to a narrative and ethnosymbols related to it. (Safran 2005:39)

Responding to his detractors, Safran expands his definition to argue that cultural, religious, economic, and/or political relationships with the homeland are reflected in a significant way in communal institutions. Despite suggestions by others that several groups should be considered diasporic even through partial fulfillment of his six criteria, Safran insists that any extension of the concept of diaspora in this way is unsatisfactory.

Robin Cohen (1997), one of Safran's most prominent detractors, moves well beyond the Jewish diaspora in his formulation of another classic statement on diaspora. He advocates using the term as a descriptive but not necessarily definitive way of characterizing identity. In his descriptive approach to the term,<sup>19</sup> Cohen emphasizes traits or common features shared by

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would (or should) eventually return; 5) a continued relationship, personally or vicariously, with that homeland, and an ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity that reaches across political (national) boundaries; 6) the pursuit of survival as a distinct community by maintaining and transmitting cultural heritage derived from their ancestral home and the symbols associated with it (Safran 1991).

<sup>19</sup> Cohen's nine criteria (1997:26; italics added by me) emphasize departures from Safran's definition: 1) Dispersal from an original homeland, *often traumatically*, to two or more foreign regions; 2) *alternatively, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade, or to further colonial ambitions*; 3) a collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history, and achievements; 4) *an idealization of the putative ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety, and prosperity, even to its creation*; 5) *the development of a return movement that gains collective approbation*; 6) a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history, and the belief in a common fate; 7) a troubled relationship with host societies,

different diaspora communities, rather than insisting on fulfillment of an identity paradigm. Any trace of diaspora is enough to render a community diasporic. This looser perspective allows for myriad communities (and individuals) to be considered “diasporas.”

In at least a partial return to the language of immigration and assimilation, Cohen proposes that time, distance, and the increased movement of peoples due to globalization weaken any continued relationship with a homeland, and that any connection to a homeland will ultimately become merely symbolic. He adds that victimization as a tenet of the diaspora experience is often overstated, and that efforts to territorialize the goal of a diaspora community (the need for return) may not be “necessary or ethically defensible” (Cohen 1997:ix-xii). Cohen diminishes the centrality of homeland—physical or mythical—in defining diasporic identity. He argues that a residual symbolism of geographic origin is enough, and that assimilation to the host culture and forfeiture of any real physical desire for return or connection with a homeland do not diminish one’s ability to claim membership in a diasporic group.

In my estimation, symbolism should not be underestimated. Symbolism can elicit a powerful response from individuals, remaining as more than a residual element of identity. Safran suggests that once homeland becomes a distant memory and constitutes only a residual symbolic identity, only a faint remnant of one’s origins, then a true *diasporic* identity ceases to exist. He sees Cohen’s perspective as an attempt to discredit, perhaps because of Cohen’s personal political attitude toward Israel, an exceptional feature of the Jewish diaspora: a persistent homeland connection after two millennia (Safran 2005:52).

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suggesting a lack of acceptance at the least, or *the possibility that another calamity might befall the group*; 8) a sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members *in other countries of settlement*; 9) *the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism*. Cohen’s insistence that any of these characteristics can be used to claim a diaspora identity replaces Safran’s archetypal diaspora community.

Cohen also presents a taxonomy of different diaspora types: 1) victim/refugee; 2) imperial/colonial; 3) labor/service; 4) trade/business/professional; 5) cultural/hybrid/postmodern (Cohen 1997:178). His subsequent discussion of the Jewish diaspora relegates it to being just one type of diaspora (victim/refugee), in effect eliminating it as an ideal or archetypal case. From his taxonomy, Cohen also seems to suggest that diasporic identities can exist in the absence of ethnic features. Although an occupation may be important to one's identity, it represents only a segment of one's life and rarely connects entire groups or generations of people. Instead of trying to classify diaspora types, it is perhaps more useful to think of these categories as different causes of diasporic migration. Nevertheless, Cohen's allowance for partial fulfillment of criteria, including tenuous connections to homeland brought about by time and globalized flows of people, and his categorization of different diaspora types, open the door for many more individuals and communities to claim diaspora as an integral part of identity.

Rogers Brubaker warns in "The 'Diaspora' Diaspora" (2005) of the danger of too loose a definition—that everything from "ethnocultural or country-defined" diaspora to "the white diaspora, the liberal diaspora, the conservative diaspora" now lives under the rubric of *diaspora studies* (Brubaker 2005:3). Based upon his survey of the literature, Brubaker points to the emergence of three general characteristics of diaspora: 1) dispersion; 2) homeland orientation; and 3) boundary maintenance (ibid:5). He cautions, however, that regarding diasporic identities as reliant upon these phenomena presupposes a unique form of identity. This view has the potential for encouraging essentialism. As Brubaker argues, "we should think of diaspora not in substantialist terms as a bounded entity, but rather as an idiom, a stance, a claim. We should think of diaspora in the first instance as a category of practice" (ibid:12). In Brubaker's estimation, we (scholars of diaspora studies) should be wary of promoting any sort of *groupism*.



Instead, we should be looking for ways in which communities use expressions to emphasize a diasporic identity.

Brubaker's argument makes sense, especially in the context of disparate individuals who, with present-day mobility, can now claim participation in a number of diasporas. Zheng (2010) extends Brubaker's "category of practice" to thinking of diaspora as "a new analytical category with which we take part in current discourses on cultural politics, and a new empowering *consciousness* [emphasis mine] for many people who are struggling in their everyday lives to live with, claim, and belong to multiple cultural identities" (ibid:28). This consciousness is cultivated through processing different diasporic phenomena: dispersion, homeland orientation, and boundary maintenance. For Zheng, musical expression by Asian/Chinese Americans negotiates identity, resulting in a belonging to and juxtaposition of multiple cultural identities. Her efforts to complicate the dichotomous global/local construct, to challenge universalist notions about the experience of displacement, and to ponder the Asian-American movement's lack of interest in diaspora as a cultural identity marker,<sup>20</sup> contribute to the notion that diaspora is "an idiom, a stance, a claim." For Zheng, identifying as Asian-American becomes strictly a choice. She insists that the disparate nature of the Asian-American movement limits any claims of diaspora, and that practices of diaspora consciousness are in turn strictly individualistic.

Despite Brubaker's eloquent argument (and Zheng's supportive musical case study) in support of releasing the constraints of thinking about diaspora as applicable only to bounded groups, the construction of a Maroka'i diasporic ethnic identity is often a communal endeavor. Brubaker is concerned with the consequences of groupism, and especially the characterization of

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<sup>20</sup> Zheng sees Asian-Americanism as a social movement, a collaborative group effort by disparate individuals and communities from East Asia to construct a politically empowered sector in American society.

a group from without. Yet, any notion that identity as strictly individualistic can result in essentialism as well. Overlapping, individual iterations of diaspora consciousness, coalescing around agreed-upon parameters of identity, are often produced in a communal setting in ways that encourage a concomitant group identity to emerge. Often, one purpose—or even the main purpose—of communal gatherings is to iterate group identity. Brubaker’s suggestion is thus important: that we look for ways that groups define themselves through practice.

A community provides a focal point for individuals to engage with other individuals who share many aspects of identity. Although one may be a businessman and the other a doctor, shaping their experiences of a greater society, they share many elements of their cultural identity consciousness. Many of these elements—such as history, religion, language, and musical traditions—are best appreciated in a communal environment. While the boundaries of the group are necessarily porous, as no two individuals experience their diasporic existence in the same way, community members have a command of communal boundaries even as they are renegotiating an individual stance within their particular diaspora.

Perhaps it is a matter of something in-between. A diaspora consciousness is elaborated in the individual mind, but nonetheless socially constructed. Individual expressions of agency and reactions to experience play an important role in forming a diasporic identity, since individuals make the choice of “joining up” (Turino 2004:7). Diasporic formations, like nations, “are not objective entities but are constructed identity units, based on signs and discourses of similarity and unity” (ibid:5). According to this argument, individuals use “signs and discourses of similarity and unity” to corroborate features of group identity. These features may be historically defined or incorporate presently experienced elements, or they may be determined through ritual, opening the possibility for individual experiences as well as established and accepted narratives

for identifying community. The discursive process that Brubaker and Zheng describe, whereby diaspora is an individualistic claim or stance, is here recognized for its potential to pursue and describe a collective identity. Brubaker is rightfully wary of *groupism* and the essentialist notions that can come with it; but as Turino suggests, “group identities are the foundation of all social and political life” (ibid:8). Thus, an understanding of how a group identity emerges—and it can emerge—requires examining both individuals and groups. Here, ethnography remains the approach *par excellence*.

For Turino, artistic expressions can be used to formulate the subjectivities on which diaspora identity units rely. “Because subjectivity and identity are the result of the ongoing interaction between particular subjects and their objective conditions, they are at once individual and collective” (ibid:8). Musical expression is both informed by and reiterates a collective body. Borrowing from Peircean semiotics, Turino goes on to suggest that one look for “signs that emerge from deep socialization...and those that are consciously manipulated as emblems of identity” (ibid:10). Thus, the individual performer, the performance, or any number of other elements found in the collective body are malleable and can incrementally or substantially change the group’s identity.

While Brubaker’s warning about groupism is justifiable, I am not entirely convinced that we can avoid thinking of bounded entities once we add an additional characteristic—transnationalism—to his notion of diaspora. The nation, or the transnation in the case of a diasporic group (Appadurai 1996; Portes 2003; Vertovec 2007), is basically a grouping of people. As Benedict Anderson states, a nation “is an imagined political community...*imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion”

(Anderson 1991[1983]:6). Thus, the consciousness of belonging to a diaspora often includes cultural practices and expressions that are understood by the people of a transnation as shared, even if ties between community members are less than robust or barely present as a result of time and distance. Therefore, while a sense of membership in a transnation is not necessarily fundamental to the concept of diaspora, it is a prevalent feature in many diasporas. It certainly encourages ethnic persistence by facilitating communal belonging and helping in the process of boundary-building. In the case of Jewish diasporic identities, some include transnationalism and some do not. For instance, for Brooklyn's Maroka'im, belonging to the Jewish, Sephardi, and Maroka'i diasporas also means belonging to three different transnations. Members foster sociocultural ties over a great geographic expanse, emphasizing one or more diasporas in any given context.

### **Boundary maintenance**

Boundary maintenance, a term derived from discourses on ethnicity, is used to describe how cultural groups promote continuity in cultural identity. As Brubaker points out, "the question relevant to the existence of a diaspora, is to what extent and in what forms boundaries are maintained by the second, third, and subsequent generations" (Brubaker 2005:7). Since boundaries operate as a framework for mitigating change, we need to think about how these boundaries operate for diasporic ethnic groups.

Early thinking about ethnicity emphasized the primordial nature of these boundaries, whereby shared ancestry and cultural values were identifiers never to be transcended. An ethnic group was generally understood as a population which is (1) largely biologically self-perpetuating, (2) shares fundamental cultural values, realized in overt unity in cultural forms, (3) makes up a field of communication and interaction, and (4) has a membership which identifies

itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order (Barth 1998[1969]:10-11). When a group is recognized from without as “other” and different from the mainstream, these inherent elements may come to be seen objectively as vital ways in which human collectives are categorized.

*Boundary maintenance* is a concept that implies two things: that communal boundaries exist and are maintained. But is boundary maintenance merely boundary reinforcement—a process whereby community members perpetuate distinction and difference through solidarity and dense social relationships? And conversely, does negotiating boundaries, a natural part of the social component of boundary maintenance, imply that boundary-erosion is present and destroying group identities? In my opinion, boundary maintenance should not be seen as synonymous with boundary-reinforcement—a means of either perpetuating essentialist notions of identity or staving off unforeseen, corrosive effects to communal identity. Instead, boundary maintenance should be seen as a social activity open to mitigating circumstances for the individuals and the collective bodies involved.

Frederik Barth (1969) argues that ethnicity is “the social organization of difference,” that ascription (by the self and others) is determined through interaction, and that the features of greatest importance are “boundary-connected” (Barth 1998[1969]:6). He argues that ethnic groups, as culture-bearing units, define themselves through the sharing of common cultural traits that are neither primordial nor solely inherited. Thus, members construct and maintain communal boundaries through a sense of social agency. The aspects of the boundaries are determined through a process of socialization in the present and based upon a historical consciousness. For diasporic ethnic groups, this means defining group identity based upon a historical consciousness

of cultural practices related to the homeland, and through a consciousness of shared cultural practices over a great geographic expanse.

Barth argues further that “we must expect to find that one ethnic group, *spread over a territory with varying ecologic circumstances* [emphasis added], will exhibit regional diversities of overt institutionalized behavior which do not reflect differences in cultural orientation” (ibid.:12). In the borderlands of identity, we find forms of diversity that should not necessarily be perceived as major departures from the constitutive core of group identities. Anomalies can coexist with similarities. Barth encourages us to think of group identities as open to change and activated through individual participation in social life.

In *Immigrant America* (2006), a study of transplanted groups in America, Portes and Rumbaut challenge the assumption that boundaries naturally mitigate pressures for change. Transplanted groups and individuals—uprooted though not entirely divorced from their homelands—have differing experiences of ethnic distinctions. Boundaries are constructed, perpetuated, and/or dissolved over time. The authors privilege social organizations that function as ethnic institutions, such as religious centers (synagogue, mosque, church), loan organizations, and schools, as elemental for encouraging an “authentic” ethnicity. According to them, ethnicity would be lost without these already-existing social organizations, or if there were not enough new immigrants to create these organizations shortly after their arrival (Portes and Rumbaut 2006:49).

Portes and Rumbaut also emphasize the role of spatial factors. When new ethnic immigrants live near one another, spatial concentration may help ethnic persistence. Conversely, if ethnic immigrants are spatially separated, there will be less ethnic persistence, as the ability to sustain ethnicity is challenged by acculturation with other prominent ethnicities. With respect to

a diasporic ethnic group like the Maroka'im in Brooklyn, on the one hand, the spatial situation in a dense population center like Brooklyn helps immensely in the community's efforts to congregate regularly and assert their particular cultural identity. On the other hand, the community is part of a diasporic constellation. At the root of diaspora is a spatial factor—dispersion and spread. In this seeming paradox, between there and here, the language of immigration and assimilation reaches its limit. When looking at a diasporic ethnic community, one must consider both aspects of spatial organization, recognizing how each functions to construct identity.

In sum, communal identity, and especially ethnic identity, depends upon boundary maintenance. This boundary maintenance is clearly more a social process than a naturally occurring phenomenon. Different spatial situations require different approaches to maintaining boundaries. While living in close proximity may reinforce a sense of community, diasporic ethnic group members must also be conscious of the transnation. Boundary maintenance is an active process. Boundaries are perpetually negotiated in response to changes in the community, but they must be clearly enough defined for individuals to perceive the parameters of identity.

### **Ethnicization**

Ethnicization is the process of imagining and ultimately defining an ethno-cultural heritage, as a means of gathering individuals into a group. The term "ethnicization" has appeared in many studies related to the organization of peoples around an ethnic identity (Balibar 1991; Milikowski 2000; Yi 2007; Ben-Ur 2009). Jonathan Sarna (1978), a renowned scholar of Jewish studies, suggests that understanding the "process of ethnicization" is important for understanding how immigrants become ethnics. He explains ethnicization as a process different from the experiences of fragmented ethnic groups in America in earlier generations. Sarna suggests that

cultural and social unities are increasingly the norm as a consequence of two factors: subscription and adversity. Individuals may choose to be part of a community with whom they share common cultural features. At the same time, a sense of shared adversity, as fellow outsiders, compels community members to identify with their ethnic group. Individuals are pushed towards co-ethnic recognition from two directions. Political adversity has long been seen as a catalyst for ethnicization (Barth 1969; Cohen 1974), but the willingness to subscribe to a particular ethnicity, even when faced with the supposed opportunities of the American melting pot, has been baffling to those who prefer the language of immigration and assimilation.

A question arises about what activates this form of ethnicization. Is it necessity or something else? Responses to external events often have an effect on the nature of communal boundaries. Abner Cohen explores this idea, giving it the term “political ethnicity” (Cohen 1969). Cohen argues that adverse political conditions bring people together, and that political adversity from *without* is the primary propellant for ethnicization. “Ethnicity is essentially a political phenomenon, as traditional customs are used only as idioms, and as mechanisms for political alignment” (ibid.:200). External physical and cultural pressures help to foster identification within an ethnic group. Responses to an external classification as the ‘other’ can actually encourage ethnic identification.

However, this perspective privileges externality. Accommodation can also come from increasing complementarity. Relationships can form between individual members of different groups, often to the benefit of both. I do not want to suggest an either/or situation, but rather that one must recognize the coexistence of both externality and internality. The Sephardi community in Brooklyn has coalesced around external pressures, such as categorizations by Ashkenazi Jewish groups. But the spatial conditions of the community also encourage accommodation,



whereby most Sephardim live in very close proximity to one another and participate in many of the same institutions. Community members are encouraged to share a historical consciousness about Sepharad as a place where co-ethnics have ancestral ties, where aspects of cultural practices—religious customs, philosophy, and poetry, food, and music— shared by a particular cultural group come from.

Thus, Sarna's original suggestion continues to be true, that we see ethnicization as a process that produces communal boundaries through both ascription and adversity. As Terry Hum argues, ethnic enclaves do not reproduce for involuntary segregation alone, but rather members underscore "the capacity of ethnic solidarity and social networks to facilitate economic mobility, community life, and cultural continuity" (Hum 2004:27). Brooklyn's Maroka'i community, as a locale in the diaspora, is central to the process of ethnicization. Here, individuals choose to live and associate, and identify with one another.

Bringing in the different spatial considerations helps us to better appreciate a diasporic ethnic identity. Viewing ethnicization as part of the construction of a diaspora consciousness, we must see the extension and invention of boundaries as historically and spatially conditioned (Sollors 1989). "By historicizing the phenomenon [ethnicity], the concept of invention allows for the appearance, metamorphosis, disappearance, and reappearance of ethnicities" (Conzen et al. 2005:86). While Sollors is concerned with how scholars condition the boundaries of ethnicity, the invention of boundaries is seen here as a product of community members' imagination, based upon communal narratives of history. For example, historicizing a great migration, with an emphasis on exile, can be crucial for coloring the boundaries of an ethnic group that wishes to claim diaspora. Similarly, reiterating a narrative of geographic dispersion encourages a diasporic

tinge to this process of ethnicization by emphasizing particular spatial conditions. Moreover, the role of ethnicization in developing a diaspora consciousness often includes phenomena addressed by writers like Safran (1991) and Cohen (1997), such as feelings of isolation, persecution, or being unwelcome in a host culture.

### **Transnationalism**

We must look at ethnicization as it relates to the transnational group, thus telegraphing the process beyond the local.

The shift from *inter*-national to *trans*-national marks a revisionist scholarly turn. The idea of transnationalism challenges the rigid, territorial nationalism that defines the modern nation-state; the dividing line is replaced by the borderlands of shifting and contested boundaries. At times, it is transnationalism unbound; *music, not surprisingly, offers the most potent medium for transcultural crossings and breedings* [emphasis mine]. At the same time, transnationalism identifies a multiplicity of migrant networks and communities that transcend received national boundaries. The idea of diaspora—as an unending sojourn across different lands—better captures the emerging reality of transnational networks and communities than the language of immigration and assimilation. (Lie 1995: 304)

Transnationalism is a term that best describes interethnic ties that reach beyond national boundaries. Born of a need for critical terminology to articulate modern flows of humans, products, and capital in an increasingly globalized world, transnationalism serves to highlight the connectivity between individuals over great geographic expanses and a refusal to privilege one locality. This “consciousness of multilocality” (Zheng 2010:12) has produced diaspora identities that are relatively independent of any particular nation. Individuals have agency with regard to identity, choosing how to envision themselves. As diaspora institutions, social networks, and narratives—many of which focus on the homeland—become decentralized, members of diaspora communities can reproduce aspects of homeland identities while also developing hybridized identities in localized settings.

Inherent in transnationalism is a tension between community members' association with a particular geographic locale or with the transnation. Is a diasporic community member, and especially a person whose family has been located in one locale for multiple generations, native to this locale or to the transnation? One is pulled between reification of an individual and communal historical identity, and adaptation to a new cultural milieu. "Diaspora cultures thus mediate, in a lived tension, the experiences of separation and entanglement, of living here and remembering/desiring another place" (Clifford 1997:255). This *lived tension* exists during a liminal period when an immigrant member or community is adapting to a new *here*.

While Clifford suggests that this lived tension occurs during a liminal period, I feel it is integral to diaspora consciousness and can be persistent beyond a liminal period. This tension incorporates both the ethereal and the physical. While many gradually lose a diaspora consciousness through assimilation, polyethnicity, or severing of ties with the homeland, others use communal narratives, language, texts, rituals, traditions, and technology to reinforce every aspect of diaspora consciousness. The *lived tension* is perhaps even more crucial: the longer it takes for a resolution between *there* and *here*, the more emboldened a diaspora consciousness becomes. Clifford regards the *lived tension*, with its lack of resolution towards the hostland, as a form of resistance (Clifford 1994:307). I regard it as an aspirational state of being for members of diasporic communities, not simply a stopping point on the way to assimilation.

As the root of diaspora, the homeland may retain a level of primacy in the imaginations of individuals and communities. However, the transnation mitigates its influence. A homeland orientation, either physical or mythical, does not mean that direct ties must be sustained with the home nation. Similarly, the home nation cannot necessarily project power over the nodal communities; a nodal community may hold primacy in the development of capital, economic and

cultural. Paul Gilroy (1993) and James Clifford (1997) emphasize transnationalism as the key component of the decentralized nature of diaspora identity, suggesting that a homeland orientation, in the form of continuing ties or a desire to return, is not as primary to diaspora identity as the transnation. For Gilroy, the Black Atlantic serves as a large transnational site where consciousness of an African homeland does not include any real connections between the homeland and diasporic communities that have been severed from specific sites on the continent. However, the homeland is more than symbolic, since it serves as the physical site of the roots of the collective community. Homeland orientation ultimately helps to tie the transnation together.

The term diaspora stands for an analytical framework for understanding how certain identities are formed and fostered. Stéphane Dufoix (2008) argues for a broader framework that “takes into account the structuring of the collective experience abroad based on the link maintained with the referent-origin and the community stance this creates” (Dufoix 2008:3). A homeland orientation colors how a community reacts to its immediate environment. Similarly, belonging to a transnational group provides a reason for self-ascription and helps ethnics deal with local and global adversities. Finally, at the core of diaspora identity must be a consciousness of the boundaries of the group. These must be cultivated and constantly negotiated, providing parameters of group identity that can be iterated and reiterated through cultural expressions.

### **Music and Diaspora Consciousness**

To sum up, a *layered diaspora consciousness* occurs when consciousnesses about multiple diasporic identities coalesce in the same entity. The layers of diaspora consciousness correlate with community members’ experiences of diasporic moments in their history; diaspora and historical consciousness are linked. But like all diasporic ethnic identities, these identities rely upon cultural expressions to convey important characteristics and features of ethnicity that

go beyond the historical. Musical expressions in Brooklyn's Maroka'i community, and specifically in the synagogue life of the community, convey multiple facets of group identity, including elements from multiple and significant diasporic identities. These expressions evoke historical consciousness while also serving as a means for incorporating current trends and experiences into the community's present identity.

Several works of recent scholarship have examined how music articulates diaspora consciousness (Shelemay 2006; Turino 2004 & 2008; Sugarman 2004; Eyerman 1999; Duarte 2005; Zheng 2010). As scholars have noted, music is a privileged cultural expression within immigrant communities, while the ease of circulation in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries—through portable instruments, recordings, and file sharing—makes music particularly useful for constructing identity in burgeoning diasporic communities:

Musical activity tends to be prominent within most immigrant communities, in part because music is so portable and, since the early twentieth century, so readily reproduced through various media. Music helps bridge challenging transitions, at once conveying powerful memories of the past and providing a medium through which multiple aspects of everyday life can be enacted and interpreted. From ritual to politics to entertainment, music has the capability to embody ideas and sentiments important for individual and collective well-being. (Shelemay 2006:304)

According to sociologist Fernanda Duarte's (2005) study of diaspora consciousness within the Brazilian community in Australia, listening to music and the re-creation of Brazilian social spaces through musical performance are important for "enacting *saudade* [deep emotional longing] which fosters an immediate link with the homeland at an affective level" (Duarte 2005:322). Thus, Duarte recognizes the prominent role of music in the diasporic ethnic community's life, and particularly its role in promoting a homeland orientation.

For diasporic communities, “deterritorialized” musical products and performers, which are no longer tied to one specific place, promote reciprocity between the diaspora and the homeland, often favoring diaspora producers. Thomas Turino (2004) points out that mass media commodities can serve as fulcrums for constructing a transnational community by providing “common soundscapes and culture experiences” (Turino 2004:18). Regarding different ethnic Albanians living in Albania, Kosovo, and their diasporas, Jane Sugarman (2004) shows how music circulation helps to unify members of the community. Music encourages class- and generation-based audiences to emerge that transcend one nation-state, subverting homeland primacy in cultural production. In this case, diasporic musical expressions do not work to de-emphasize the homeland so much as to expand the bona fides of ethnic associations in the larger community. A historical consciousness of the homeland will not disappear, and the Albanian language will persist as an important feature of Albanian diasporic music. But the circulation of music encourages community members in the homeland(s) to join the transnation. Both of these examples suggest that music has a prominent role in the construction of diaspora consciousness. In both cases, music mediates the “lived tension” discussed above—the juxtaposition of *here* and *there*. The homeland is featured at the same time that the localized communities acquiesce to the transnation and to their newer, localized circumstances.

In his essay “Moving Culture,” Ron Eyerman (1999) makes an interesting observation about the role of music in ritual contexts, arguing that ritual music is important for developing social movements. Drawing on Turner (1969) and Schechner (1993), Eyerman notes that rituals, performative by nature, produce a type of *liminality* or “individual or collective states or periods of transition between ordered structure, in which actors ‘lose themselves’” (Eyerman 2005:123).

“In the space opened by the movement, established constraints can be cast off and ‘freedom’ expressed in practices which can be seen, learned and transmitted to others” (ibid.:123).

Borrowing this idea about how social movements are constructed through ritual, one can see that ritual encourages members to subscribe to a diasporic ethnic community. The “freedom” or freedom space (as well as *time*) produced by the concentrated context of ritualized performance encourages a social experience whereby community members are actively “joining up” (Turino 2004:7)—joining the diasporic entity. Musical expression successfully transmits diasporic “emblems of identity” (ibid.:10)—icons and indices<sup>21</sup>—precisely because the concentrated setting of ritual demands group consciousness. These settings of deep socialization, where a group of people have the freedom to move together and connect through musical expression, have the express purpose of encouraging people to recognize their place in the group.

### Synagogue

For Maroka'im in Brooklyn the synagogue is more than a community center. It is a sacred place that inspires reverence in the people who congregate there, resulting in a focus and seriousness among community members about their purpose for gathering. For instance, when a liturgical song is unfamiliar, or the Torah is chanted with any mistakes in diction (however slight), community members react. Convening in the communal setting of the synagogue is a regular part of community members' lives. For many, daily attendance encourages conformity to

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<sup>21</sup> Turino draws upon semiotics to explain two types of processes for constructing emblems of identity. Icons are possibilities or imaginaries, while indices are empirical, actual, and indexical. Song texts can be iconic, where the composer talks about ideals. Melodies, on the other hand, are clearly indexical; they are or are not recognizable as bound to an empirical source (Turino 2004:13).

a communally understood ideal of identity. This is an important communal setting where diaspora consciousness is developed on a very regular basis.

Through their promotion of group expression, synagogue rituals serve to inspire community members to step outside of individualistic endeavors. For example, religious prohibitions against using electronic devices on Shabbat and holidays help to focus community members' attention. This prohibition changes the reality of an entire group, inspiring a different type of social connection. Yet the synagogue is not cut off from the outside world. Practices, especially musical ones, incorporate elements from multiple diasporic centers (ancient Israel, Spain, Morocco, modern Israel) and transnational nodes (Israel, France, Canada, United States). Much must be conveyed in a short period of time. Through text, melody, rhythm, style, repertoire, and programmatic application, musical expression is well suited for such a task.

Take, for instance, the regular use of an Enrico Macias melody for "Hashkivenu," a prayer that is an important part of the Shabbat morning liturgy. Marokai'm in Brooklyn incorporate the work of a French composer who has based his career on the fusion of North African and French pop styles. Macias has become an iconic personality, symbolizing for Maroka'im a significant producer of Maroka'i identity outside of Morocco. The performance and transmission of this melody within the synagogue helps to construct a Maroka'i space and time that explicitly showcases the transnation. Freeing themselves from a particular center, the community uses musical expression to transmit a melody which everyone considers part of the Maroka'i diasporic community, thereby constructing group identity.



## **Methodology and Chapter Outline**

### **Methodology**

This study is based upon standard methods used in ethnography and ethnomusicology: participant observation, interviews, note taking, audio and/or video recording, and musical transcription and analysis. In this study, it was necessary to employ several unusual methods to accomplish my fieldwork. One methodological implication of working with a traditional Jewish community is that some conventional data collecting tools are not always available. For instance, because of prohibitions related to the use of electronics and writing during liturgical services on Shabbat and most holidays, I had to rely upon recalling conversations and melodies after the fact. Similarly, capturing a live audio recording of a liturgical service on Shabbat or festivals was out of the question.

In some respects, the necessity of working around these challenges was an asset to this study: I was encouraged to pay closer attention during performance to commit things to memory (melodies, actions, gestures), and to seek affirmation of my perceptions more often through conversation and interviews. I also found it necessary to pursue contacts for additional interviews. I was fortunate to develop relationships with many generous people in the community who granted me time for such follow-up interviews. Because of these interviews with specialist informants (rabbis, cantors, singers) and knowledgeable lay members, and because I made sure to attend as many events as possible where I could take notes and record audio and video, I collected much useful data. During my years in the community, participating in countless events and interactions, I have collected data on liturgical rites, cantillation practices, song texts, and different performance contexts: weddings, bars mitzvah, saint celebrations, festive meals, and special parties.

To gain access to some areas of inquiry, I had to participate closely in the community. I also had to understand and respect certain boundaries of inquiry and acceptable behavior. I was continually challenged to strike a balance between joining the community—especially particular synagogue communities—and remaining sufficiently on the margins. As a self-identifying Moroccan Jew with an unusual background, with a South African wife of German and Lithuanian background, I have had a unique position as both an insider and outsider. I was raised by a father who converted to Judaism as a young United States serviceman in Casablanca and a mother who was born to a family with deep and differing roots in Morocco (my grandmother was from a Sephardi family lineage and my grandfather was from a rural, Berber-Jewish lineage). I grew up engaging different Jewish ethnicities and religious orthodoxies (Reform, Conservative, and mainstream Orthodox). I am thoroughly familiar with the basic tenets of religious practice, speak Hebrew and French, and can carry on a conversation about Jewish history and thought. Yet, my upbringing and background are so different from the typical community member that my place on the sidelines is always reserved, should I seek it. This insider/outsider status has clearly been an asset to my fieldwork as I have been able to gain trust and access from leadership and laypeople alike, at the same time that I have been able to maintain objectivity and utilize my connections beyond the community for comparative analytical purposes at every turn.

I have been living with my wife and children in the community for the past several years. My relationships with community members have become lasting friendships and associations. I have worked hard to develop a broad base of informants in order to have the perspective needed for this study. After moving into the neighborhood, one friend suggested that I “pick a *kehillah*

(community) and stick with it.” This is the typical route, as one is expected to become part of a particular synagogue community and develop there with one’s family. While I followed this approach in part and became more deeply invested in two particular synagogue communities, I also wanted to visit and become familiar with multiple synagogues in order to gather a broader perspective on the data I intended to collect. Yet, frequenting some communities meant having less contact with others. Knowing that a marginal presence might hinder continued access to people and places, I always had to balance my absence with my presence.

Being enculturated into the community also demanded from me a presentation of insider knowledge of the community and its religious practices. I had to cultivate trust in the community by showing others that I belong. Fortunately, my familiarity with traditional Jewish practices, my matrilineal Moroccan heritage, and my skill in speaking Hebrew helped me immensely in gaining access to the community. As R’ Dweck commented to me early in my tenure in the neighborhood, “I can see from your *davening* (prayer practice) that you know what’s up” (p.c., R’ Joseph Dweck, January 5, 2011). Such a level of enculturation helped convey to community members that I understood the boundaries of inquiry and acceptable behavior.

In this study, I focus on three different domains of musical expression in Brooklyn’s Maroka’i community: *Kriat ha-Torah* (the ritual of sacred-text cantillation), saint veneration celebrations called *hillulot* (praises), and *ḥazzanut* (the art of cantorial performance). Each of these domains of musical practice takes place primarily in the synagogue and occurs during what are considered very important regular moments in communal life where group participation is foregrounded. *Kriat ha-Torah* is the apex of many synagogue liturgical services. *Hillulot* bring people together to honor the life of great *tsaddiqim* (saints) in Jewish history. Liturgical services,

where *ḥazzanut* plays a central role, are valued by community members as occasions for carrying out ritual devotion in a congregational setting. Thus, musical expressions in synagogue life form the basis of this study.

Netivot Israel is the largest Maroka'i synagogue in the area and the site where a great deal of my data was collected. Nearby are two additional Maroka'i synagogues—*Ḥesed l'Abraham* and *Shevet Yisrael*—which were primary sites for seeing the breadth of communal musical practice. There are other smaller Maroka'i synagogue communities, as well as many Maroka'im who do not frequent Netivot Israel, *Ḥesed l'Abraham*, or *Shevet Yisrael*. Visiting these non-Maroka'i synagogues and speaking with as many Maroka'im in these places as possible, I further expanded my understanding of the integration of Maroka'im into the larger Brooklyn Sephardi community. Similarly, in Syrian and pan-Sephardi synagogues, and especially *Sha'arei Shalom* and *B'nai Yosef*, I have cultivated relationships and conversed with a number of non-Maroka'i members of Brooklyn's Sephardi community who have contributed to this project in important ways.

From individuals marginal to the community to rabbinic leaders, synagogue presidents, and specialists in musical practices, my informants represent a wide range of community members. My primary informants included R' Gad Bouskila, rabbi and leader of Netivot Israel synagogue; R' Chaim Dahan, *ḥazzan* (cantor) of *Ḥesed l'Abraham* synagogue; R' Avraham Amar, rabbi of the Sephardic Home for the Aged; R' Shlomo Lankry, rabbi and leader of *Ḥesed l'Abraham* synagogue; R' Michael Kakon, professional singer, *ḥazzan*, and guest pulpit rabbi; Amram Abesror, *ba'al koreh* (reciter of sacred texts) of *Ḥesed l'Avraham* synagogue; Jacob

(Coco) Tordjman, a semi-professional musician; Maurice Perez, director of Netivot Israel synagogue; and my good friend, R' Joseph Dweck, Syrian rabbi and leader of Sha'arei Shalom synagogue. Many short interviews and public interactions with others in the community have also added input to this study.

An additional point of inquiry involves the use of cyberspace. Consumption patterns related to the use of new media—the Internet, CDs, mp3 files—have informed life in the community as well. Cyberspace is an important developing space where diaspora community members engage and interact with one another. However, because I am primarily interested in how musical expressions are presented in the synagogue, where musical expression occurs in a live context and the use of electronics is restricted, I discuss the role of cyberspace and other new media only where it is appropriate. Experiences with cyberspace—listening to music, watching videos, chatting with family or friends—can be incorporated into the communal experience in the synagogue. However, the use of it and other electronic media is important in community members' lives primarily outside in the down times, between communal gatherings.

In addition to my fieldwork in Brooklyn, I have had the opportunity and pleasure to work within settings throughout the Maroka'i diaspora. While beyond the scope of this study, I have incorporated my experiences and data gathered in Morocco, Israel, France, and Canada whenever helpful. Furthermore, my engagement with other communities, especially with Syrian Jews in Brooklyn, Modern Orthodox Ashkenazim, a large and mostly secular Maroka'i-Israeli family, in circles of Muslim musicians, and with scholars of music and Jewish studies, has been instrumental in providing me a wide scope with which to analyze and appreciate aspects of this study.

## Chapter Outline

The introductory chapter has, I hope, provided a sufficient overview of the subject and thesis of this dissertation, along with important theoretical ideas regarding the role of music in the construction of a layered diaspora consciousness. In chapter Two, which provides a context for my study, I present a focused history of different diasporic migrations as they pertain to Maroka'im, as well as more information on the establishment of the community in Brooklyn's polyethnic Sephardi community. I provide a primer on the most important Moroccan Jewish musical traditions, including a discussion of influential styles such as *āla-Andalusit*, *cha'abi*, and *musika mizrahit*. Finally, I present an overview of influential popular musicians and publications. Additionally, this chapter discusses musical terms and looks at the primary performance contexts of communal life in Brooklyn, including the synagogue and the home, as well as familiar performance occasions.

Chapter Three, 'Kriat ha-Torah,' examines the ritual of Torah cantillation and demonstrates how ritual and cantillation practices work together to emphasize three layers of diaspora consciousness. Elements of the ritual, including actors, objects, performative substance (liturgical and para-liturgical texts and accompanying melodies), and the practice of sacred-text cantillation are used to define different aspects of each layer of diaspora consciousness. Sensitivity to the nuances of these elements and practices, and especially to how they are reiterated, enables one to perceive the nature of a consciousness that is steeped in historical traditions even as it negotiates the present.

Chapter Four, 'Hazzanut,' examines the role of this musical expression in negotiating a distinctly Maroka'i approach to liturgical performance. After a close examination of liturgy,

including a discussion of differences and similarities between Maroka'i and other Jewish ethnic communities' approaches to liturgical texts and their presentation in ritual, the chapter focuses on the use of contrafactum and the emphasis of certain performance aesthetics.

Chapter Five, 'Hillula,' explores the communal veneration of particular Jewish saints. After defining the components of a traditional hillula and changes in the nature of the event in Brooklyn, this chapter focuses on how the hillula song repertoire has been undergoing a process of standardization in the Maroka'i diaspora and how the practice of this repertoire contributes to ethnicization within the local community. Analyses of a number of song texts reveal Sephardi poetic conventions, textual themes related to the Jewish and Sephardi diasporas, and specific references to Maroka'i notions about Jewish sainthood.

Finally, Chapter Six revisits the notion of a *layered diaspora consciousness* with a summary of how each of the previous chapters contributes to understanding the role of musical expression in constructing this important aspect of Maroka'i identity. Additionally, I offer a short statement on how this study contributes to present research, and specifically to discourses related to diaspora in the academy.

## **Chapter Two:** **Contextualizing Brooklyn's Maroka'i Community**

As Claude Lévi-Strauss warned, “the problem of writing the history of a present without a past confronts ethnography” (Lévi-Strauss 1963:3). To better appreciate the contemporary construction of Maroka'i identity in Brooklyn, and especially to understand how a layered diaspora consciousness informs the identities of individual community members, it is necessary to provide a deeper historical context. One might argue that at the time Lévi-Strauss wrote this warning, historical literature about many communities was lacking; lack of historical literature is usually not a problem faced by most ethnographers today. However, historical literature related to Brooklyn's Sephardi community in general, and Brooklyn's Maroka'i community specifically, remains relatively scarce. This chapter begins with a focus on historical roots, major migrations, geography, and institutions of the Maroka'i diaspora community, with a necessary emphasis on Brooklyn's community in particular. A summary of several socio-historic transformations concludes this section. While Lévi-Strauss focused on the needs of anthropology, especially the need for strong historical contextualization for proper ethnography, I believe that good ethnomusicology demands a similar attention to musical contextualization. Thus, an examination of features from several musical genres and styles follows. These features inform local Maroka'i musical expressions and are prevalent in the domains of musical practice discussed in the ensuing chapters.

For Maroka'im in Brooklyn, a layered diaspora consciousness comes from membership in multiple diaspora communities. The first, the Jewish diaspora began after the destruction of Jerusalem and subsequent expulsion of Jews from this city in the first century of the Common Era. Despite evidence of Jewish life in Morocco as early as the last centuries before the Common



Era, as far as most are concerned the absence of the *Beit Ha-Mikdash* (Holy Temple) in Jerusalem is the important marker of exile and the commencement of the Jewish diaspora. Because Israelites began migrating away from the Levant well before the first century of the Common Era, in some sense the Jewish diaspora should be considered layered already—post-first temple and post-second temple. However, in normative Jewish thought, the earlier dislocation was only a precursor to a more sustained and longer exile to come. From 200-600 CE, contributors to the Talmuds of Babylonia (*Bavli*) and Jerusalem (*Yerushalmi*) developed an exhaustive blueprint with the expressed intent for the practice of an ethno-religious identity in exile.

The Jewish diaspora continued to grow, with Jewish communities established in Asia, Europe, and Africa. Jews lived in Iberia from the earliest centuries of the Common Era (Gerber 1994). By the end of the fifteenth century, the Christian monarchy governing Spain forced the dissolution of historic Jewish communities, eviscerating Jewish life on the Iberian Peninsula. The mass exile of 1492 marks the beginning of a Sephardi diaspora. Once again, a federation of disparate Jewish communities in a discrete region was uprooted, and Jewish people were compelled to emigrate and settle outside the land of their ancestors. The Islamic world, and especially Morocco and Turkey, became favored destinations for Sephardi resettlement. For several centuries prior to the fifteenth century, Jewish life extended from the Maghreb to Andalus. As Haim Zafrani points out, “extraordinary freedom of movement and communication characterized the Mediterranean world at this time and its concomitant cultural and socioeconomic unity” (Zafrani 2005:5). Despite this characterization of a Hispano-Maghrebian society, the arrival of Sephardi exiles *en masse* brought discord to established Jewish

communities in Moroccan cities.<sup>1</sup> In the ensuing centuries, Sephardi influences in spiritual and ritual life, trade, and cultural forms such as art, music, poetry, and literature would become pervasive and adopted as an integral part of Maroka'i identity (Assaraf and Abitbol 1998).

The last diaspora community is related to the modern nation of Morocco as a homeland for Maroka'im. Like membership in the Jewish and Sephardi diasporas, a consciousness of this diaspora is cultivated through cultural practices and social connections—memory, language, religion, food, and music are circulated throughout the transnation. Through these vehicles, Maroka'im also participate in a Moroccan diaspora comprised of non-Jews (primarily Arab Muslims), interacting in several locales as fellow nationals; incidentally, musical contexts provide a cherished space for these interactions. But not all nodes of the Maroka'i diaspora are shared with all Moroccans. For instance, the Muslim Moroccan diaspora does not extend to Israel, and Amsterdam, though a historically important center of Sephardi life, is not part of the Maroka'i diaspora. Despite some engagement with other Moroccans, Brooklyn's Maroka'im remain mostly focused on engaging with fellow members of the Maroka'i diaspora community and with members of other localized ethnic Jewish communities. In these instances, Maroka'im belong to a Maroka'i transnation and a translocal Jewish community. In all nodes of the Maroka'i diaspora, people must also engage dominant host cultures (France, Canada, United States). Brooklyn's Maroka'im do so as well, especially in business, higher education, and through mass media.

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<sup>1</sup> Muslims and Jews share a consciousness of al-Andalus, as a region with a rich history for the respective communities and as a place from which both communities were expelled. However, the Jewish experience of expulsion and resettlement was markedly different in several ways from Muslims, not least because there was no land of Jewish sovereignty to move to.

Musical practices in Brooklyn's Maroka'i community are central to expressing a diaspora consciousness. Informing these practices are several different musical genres and styles. While the presence of certain features in communal musical practices suggests associations with the histories of these overlapping diaspora communities, several aspects of musical life show community members engaging in inventive approaches to *cultural conservatism* that result from modernity and new contexts of communal life. Community members use musical expressions to create modern boundaries of identity, engaging in conserving signs of identity as a means for characterizing continuity and authenticity. Musical practice does not simply reflect the past, brought forward in time through an inherent natural continuity. Since the entire construct of Maroka'i life was fundamentally altered by migration, technology, and modern politics, any perceived continuity does not truly exist as a reflection of authenticity. Rather, conservatism is intentional. Favoring certain genres and styles, languages, stylistic aesthetics, instruments, artists, texts, and even specific melodies, community members are able to emblemize a multilayered diasporic ethnic identity.

## **Histories of Dispersion**

### **Jewish Diaspora**

The Jewish diaspora has long served as the archetype in discourses about cultural groups that participate in a migratory spread from a particular homeland and experience an enduring sojourn in several host cultures. Membership in this diasporic community, a community bound together by a connection to a homeland and by self-identification as part of an ethnic group with a long history of genetic and cultural continuity, has been fundamental to the identity of *Am Yisrael* (the people of Israel) worldwide for nearly two millennia. The Jewish diaspora is

typically discussed as beginning in 70 CE with the destruction of the second Holy Temple in the capital city of ancient Judea, *Yerushalayim* (Jerusalem). The loss of sovereignty in and migration away from the historic land reformulated the Jewish nation into a transnation, into a group of people who remained connected primarily through distinct cultural practices and a shared experience of marginalization by host cultures as perpetual *others* or outsiders. The destruction of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, as the house of Zion,<sup>2</sup> is a crucial part of the Jewish diaspora consciousness. The inception of this diaspora represents a schismatic break in the relationship between God and the Children of Israel. According to rabbinic tradition, the Romans waged war against the Judean kingdom on behalf of God, essentially facilitating the loss of Jewish self-determination in and exile from the Promised Land. The exile will continue as long as the Holy Temple remains destroyed; rebuilding is a feat that only the hand of God, through a messianic emissary, can accomplish.

This narrative about the Jewish diaspora emphasizes displacement from the historic homeland by the Romans. The fundamental problem here is not the issues of the centrality of the ancient land of Israel, or of Jerusalem as the home of the Holy Temple. It is not the notion of exile and redemption either. The issue is that a Jewish diaspora consciousness existed and was developing at the same time that political and spiritual sovereignty were being expressed in Jerusalem during the Second Temple Period (sixth century BCE – first century CE).

Crucial to this construction of Jewish history and identity is the simple fact, often consciously or unconsciously suppressed, that Diaspora is not the forced product of war and destruction—taking place after the downfall of Judea—but that already in the centuries before this downfall, the majority of Jews lived voluntarily outside of the Land. (Boyarin & Boyarin 1993:722)

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<sup>2</sup> In biblical and rabbinic writings, Zion is the place where the presence of the Divine, in the Holy Temple, dwelled. Modern Zionism is a political movement that encourages Jewish migration to the ancestral homeland region, where Zion existed. See chapter one, footnote 7.

As was the case during this period of Jewish history, the opportunity exists today for all Jews to return to the ancestral homeland with the emergence of the modern State of Israel in the twentieth century. Despite the expressed ideology of Modern Zionism, that all Jews must immediately immigrate to Israel because it is the only proper place for them to live, the reality is that the freedom to immigrate is not compelling enough to dissolve the diaspora. Several million Jews remain outside of Israel.

A center-periphery model, where the homeland exists as a political entity with special status, is now possible for the Jewish diasporic community for the first time since before the Roman expulsion. Israel is no longer treated as a historically distant political entity. The *homeland* is no longer simply a communal remembrance or place to long for; it is a political reality and a central focus of contemporary Jewish life. Hebrew has emerged as a spoken language once again, only because of the foundation of the modern state. Synagogue community members worldwide have prayed and continue to pray towards Jerusalem. Because of modern travel, many people can now visit and experience being in Israel. Members from disparate Jewish communities remain in close contact with Israel, visiting family and friends. Many Jews also consume Israeli media via satellite, the Internet, and through a plethora of readily available recordings and published books. Ironically, the diaspora of diasporas, the Jewish diaspora, has actually become more akin to other diaspora communities by having a homeland, a modern political entity, to include into the geographic constellation that comprises the diasporic community.

Yet, a bifurcated Jewish identity has been developing, whereby a central component of the narrative about the Jewish diaspora—that Jerusalem remains the focal point of homeland orientation for the worldwide Jewish community—is juxtaposed with a comfort in the expansive

and almost rootless nature of the worldwide Jewish community. Boyarin and Boyarin (1993) argue that Jewish identity is integrally diasporic and therefore in no way necessarily associated with the modern state of Israel. Jewish ethnocentrism, encouraged by diaspora, is necessary and central to the development of Jewish identity. “The Rabbis produced their cultural formation within conditions of Diaspora, and we would argue that their particular discourse of ethnocentricity is ethically appropriate only when the cultural identity is an embattled (or, at any rate, nonhegemonic) minority” (Boyarin & Boyarin 1993:718). A level of ethnocentricity is at the heart of valuing and maintaining boundaries of difference, and part of the very nature of Jewish diasporic existence. Accordingly, Jews living as minorities in host cultures worldwide have the right to ethnocentrism as a means for cultural continuity. “The renunciation (not merely "recognition") of temporal power was to our minds precisely the most powerful mode of preservation of difference and, therefore, the most effective kind of resistance” (ibid. 723). Exile as a persistent state of Jewish being remains central to Jewish identity. Exemplified in the narrative of the Jewish diaspora, exile persists so long as Jerusalem is not physically or spiritually complete. Sovereignty over Jerusalem remains disputed internationally and the Holy Temple remains in ruin. Because of this perpetual exile, modern-day Jerusalem (and by extension Israel) must be seen not as *the* center of Jewish life but rather as *a* center of Jewish life.

Israeli emigrants<sup>3</sup> and Jews from other parts of the Jewish diaspora tend to favor the United States because of its plethora of large Jewish communities. Israelis are already well acquainted with American culture, learning English in primary schools and using it in commerce. Most Israelis consume American television, movies, and music, and many have familial ties in

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<sup>3</sup> The Israeli transnation, another modern diasporic community, is comprised of emigrants from the state of Israel. Their self-identification as citizens of Israel is distinct from their Jewish heritage (Gold 1994).

the United States. The centrality of the United States in contemporary Jewish life challenges a rigid interpretation of the center-periphery model, since the Jewish population of the United States is almost as large as Israel's. Important aspects of American Jewish cultural life are influential throughout the Jewish world, including religious thought, the arts, business, and politics. The *rabbanut* (rabbinical leadership) in the United States, and especially in the New York area, can even make religious rulings respected and upheld in Israel. Yet, for Jews worldwide, the modern state of Israel will always enjoy the special status gained by Jewish sovereignty in the homeland.

A Jewish diaspora consciousness continues to inform Jewish identities everywhere. Despite Israel's centrality in world Jewry today, relating to the modern nation-state is not a necessary part of Jewish identity. Certainly some religious Jews living in Jerusalem have a complicated relationship with and at times express antagonistic feelings towards the modern, secularist state. But the history of a political entity in that land, coupled with a renewed self-determination for the people from that land, makes some sort of connection to Israel a reality for most Jews worldwide. Israel's importance to Jewish identity cannot be ignored. The religious notion of the exile of God's manifest presence in the physical world, the narrative of a long history of communal loss and disaffection, and modern social and economic connections throughout the Jewish transnation keep the consciousness of a Jewish diaspora at the forefront of expressions of Jewish identity in all Jewish ethnic communities worldwide. This is certainly the case for Maroka'im in Brooklyn.

### **Sephardi Diaspora**

*Sephardi* (Spanish) is an appellation for Jews from Spain. Of course, inherent to anyone's use of the term is an understanding that it refers to an ethnic Jewish community that no longer

exists in Spain. Since the Alhambra Decree (1492) and the forced expulsion of Jewish people from Spain (and Portugal a few years later), Jewish life has been almost non-existent in the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>4</sup> Instead, Sephardim (pl.) resettled into a diaspora that stretched from the Levant to northern Europe and the Americas.

As discussed in Chapter One, the moniker Sephardi is simply misleading. In modern parlance it is used to differentiate between Jews from vast parts of the Islamic world and Jews from Europe (Ashkenazim).<sup>5</sup> The “Sephardi” world now includes Central Asia, Persia, former Ottoman areas, Eurasia, and even the Indian subcontinent. While certain communities were established by significant numbers of Sephardi exiles, sustaining ethnic boundaries through various cultural practices like marriage, language, and even different ways of practicing Judaism, claims of Sephardi heritage are truly hard to substantiate genealogically and rarely result in evidence of any pure Sephardi ancestry (Lehman 2008).

The Ottoman Empire—which encompassed much of the Balkans, the eastern Mediterranean, and the Maghreb up to modern-day Algeria—with its growing mercantilism and cosmopolitanism, welcomed Sephardi exiles after the expulsion from Spain. The close proximity to and historical ties with the Maghreb, and especially Morocco, made this region a preferential destination for many Sephardim as well. The Sephardi transnation was born during this period as ties between Sephardi diasporic communities were cultivated through similar circuits of communication, trade, and travel fostered and utilized by Muslims throughout the Islamic world. A Sephardi diaspora consciousness would be encouraged in the ensuing centuries around

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<sup>4</sup> Raphael Minder reports on the current Spanish government’s efforts to develop policies to encourage Jewish immigration and reclamation of citizenship. Anyone who can provide a certificate of Sephardi heritage from the Federation of Jewish Communities in Spain and speaks Spanish is entitled to pursue Spanish citizenship (*New York Times*, May 19, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> See chapter one, footnote 15.



ancestral connections to Spain and through cultural expressions such as poetry, theology, language, and musical practices. Over time, the pervasive impact of Sephardi Jewry in large and influential parts of the Islamic world and the incorporation of elements from native Jewish populations in a myriad of ways fostered an expanded sense of a Sephardi diasporic community.

Over time and space, because of similarities in cultural expressions and a shared historical consciousness about Sepharad as a homeland, a diaspora consciousness emerged among people identifying as Jews from Spain. Even in places like Fez, Morocco, where Sephardim were a large and established group that tried to institutionalize difference from the local Jews, assimilation, acculturation, and hybridization eventually allowed for most Jewish people in Morocco to identify with a Sephardi heritage. The integration of Sephardi exiles into existing Jewish communities, through intermarriage, assimilation, and transference of Sephardi customs and practices, broadened the community. For Jews brought into the Sephardi fold via expanding familial and communal associations, cultural expressions became important for claims of a Sephardi identity. More people could now relate to the Sephardi Golden Age in Andalus.<sup>6</sup> This period is often romanticized as a time when Jewish life in Moorish Spain included a command of self-destiny to a degree unprecedented since the expulsion from Jerusalem. The schismatic break and mass expulsion of an entire people left an indelible mark on the Sephardim,

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<sup>6</sup> The Sephardi Golden Age is part of the *Convivencia*—a romanticized notion of interculturality and coexistence among the three major faith groups. Taking place during the reign of the western Umayyad and later Cordoba Caliphates (8<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries), the narrative of the *Convivencia* suggests that Muslims, Jews, and Christians participated in a pluralistic, harmonious society and took strides together in mathematics, the arts, music, philosophy, and economic invention and expansion (Menocal 2002). “Forever afterward, the tenth and eleventh centuries would be remembered by Jews as the nation’s “Golden Age,” an epoch in which they enjoyed unusual political power and could participate actively in the dominant culture” (Gerber 1994:28). This ‘Golden Age’ produced some of the Jewish world’s most revered rabbis, poets, and philosophers. The brilliance from this period continues to resonate today.

and what cultural materials were produced before this break—such as rabbinic texts, poetry, foods, language, and music—would endure as symbolic reminders of what it meant to be Sephardi.

*Sephardi Historical Connections in Morocco*

For Maroka'im, connections to Sepharad predate the advent of the diaspora community. Long before the fifteenth century, Andalus had become a revered cultural center in the northwestern edge of the Islamic world. Ideas, material, and significant historical figures traveled between Iberia, the Maghreb, and points further east. Jewish scholars, artists, and merchants were well positioned to move throughout the Islamic world. Networks of co-religionists and fellow cultural elites, probably with economic means, made this a viable possibility. In 1086, Andalus came under the rule of the al-Murabitun (Almoravids), whose empire stretched from their capital in Marrakesh, southern Morocco, well into modern-day Algeria, and ultimately encompassed the Cordoba Caliphate. In 1148, the al-Muwahhidun (Almohades), an empire whose leadership was fierce and religiously intolerant, would gain dominion over all the provinces of the al-Murabitun. Christian populations dwindled and ultimately disappeared during their reign (Lapidus 2002:309). These dynasties were based in Morocco, likely increasing ease of movement between Andalus and the Maghreb.

The character of connections between the Maghreb and Andalus can be gleaned from biographies of important individuals. Several individuals who were part of the cultural elite in Umayyad Spain—Jewish and Muslim—had Maghrebi roots. Tariq Ibn Ziyad, the mercenary general of the Berber army that led the Muslim conquest of Iberia in 711, was from Morocco. Dunash ben Labrat (920-990), the Fez native, after sojourning in Baghdad under the tutelage of Saadia Gaon (882-942), imported methods of versification and poetic meters from the Abbasids

to Cordoba. Ben Labrat revolutionized Hebrew poetry by translating a number of Arabic poetic meters into Hebrew language (Cole 2007:23). “Dror Yikra” remains a favorite piece of the Shabbat para-liturgical repertoire in several Jewish ethnic communities and is often sung during Shabbat meals. Haim Zafrani suggests that it was “rabbis from the Maghreb who were the teachers of Spanish Jewry” (Zafrani 2005:5). After studying in the famed yeshiva of Kairouan, Tunisia, Isaac al-Fasi (1013-1103), a highly regarded scholar of Jewish law, established himself in Fez, Morocco, where he lived for 40 years and composed his most famous commentary on Jewish law (*Sefer ha-Halakhot*). He finally settled in Lucena, Spain, established a yeshiva, and taught a number of important Sephardi icons. Yehuda Halevy, Joseph ibn Migash, and Maimon ben Obadia (father of Maimonides)<sup>7</sup> learned at al-Fasi’s feet (Carr 2000:146,154).

While it is clear that there were ties between Jewish communities in the Maghreb and Iberia for centuries, determining their extent remains difficult. It is certainly plausible that most ties during the medieval period were between select individuals with enough connections and wealth (not to mention desire) to take advantage of the trade and travel opportunities across the Strait of Gibraltar. These ties were instrumental in advancing and circulating great innovations in Jewish cultural practices (Hirschberg 1974:14). The proximity and function of Morocco as the

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<sup>7</sup> Some influential families started seeking refuge from the turmoil in Iberia as early as the twelfth century. The family of R’ Moshe ben Maimon, better known as pre-eminent religious scholar, philosopher, and physician Maimonides (1135-1204), settled in Fez after leaving Cordoba, Spain. Maimonides would later travel to the Levant and finally settle in Alexandria, Egypt. Influential figures such as Maimonides could make an impact in new places, not necessarily as bearers of a *Sephardi* tradition, but rather as members of the cultural elite well versed in scholarship, mercantilism, religious philosophy, and the arts. Maimonides became an important Sephardi icon not because he brought something uniquely Sephardi in tradition with him when he moved from place to place, but because he was part of the forced removal of Jews from a region still enticing to the Jewish imagination. His existence and cultural production are seen as belonging to, or at least a result of, the Golden Age.

nearest neighbor clearly make it historically probable that a strong relationship existed between Jewish communities in both locales.

After 1492, many Sephardim settled the northern coast or urban centers in the interior of Morocco; a second wave of immigrants from Portugal came several years later and settled primarily in coastal centers.<sup>8</sup> While the Jewish populations of northern coastal towns became almost entirely Sephardi, in urban centers like Fez, Meknes, and Marrakesh, these *megorashim* (aliens) were thrust into living side by side with *toshavim* (natives).<sup>9</sup> Though ties existed between communities in Morocco and Andalus for several centuries, this large-scale immigration strained relations between members of these two Jewish ethnic groups.

In *Jewish Society in Fez* (1980), Jane Gerber describes the tumultuous sixteenth century in this important capital city, where the already densely packed *mellah* (Jewish quarter) created an acute sense of marginalization for newly arriving Sephardi immigrants.<sup>10</sup> Their living

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<sup>8</sup> King Manuel I, completing the exile and dislocation of Iberia's Jews in 1497, expelled remnants of the Sephardi community in Spain that had sought refuge in Portugal.

<sup>9</sup> *Megorashim* and *toshavim* were the emic terms for these two groups at the outset. The toshavim—Jews in Morocco prior to the Sephardi immigration—lived throughout the land, imbued with similar cultural characteristics and expressions as their Arab and Berber neighbors. In an important work by Norman Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands* (1979), a number of socio-political issues and incidents, as well as manners and customs that Maroka'im shared with their Muslim neighbors, are discussed at length (Stillman 1979:255-322).

<sup>10</sup> First instituted in Fez during the reign of the Merinids (1244-1465) as a means for the sultan to separate and protect the Jews (LeTourneau 1961; Garcia-Arenal 1978; Gerber 1980:19; Goldberg 1983), ghetto-like quarters called *mellahs* (salt) were common to all Moroccan cities by the eighteenth century. The mellah was a semi-autonomous area for Jews, with an appointed representative to deal with the king on behalf of the community (Gerber 1980:86). The mellah of Fez is often referred to as a kind of ghetto. Laws about particular styles of dress, prohibitions on modes of transportation, and curtailments on types of industries Jews were allowed to work in made life in the mellah of Fez very similar to the lives of Jews in the cities of Europe. But unlike a Jewish ghetto in the European sense, the Jews of Fez had more freedom of movement in and out of this quarter.

In coastal cities that did not yet have a mellah nor other social restrictions common in Fez, Jews were given more freedom of movement and association, and could even be found employing

conditions had changed drastically, living in a walled-in quarter of the city and subject to stringent rules meant to emphasize their *dhimmi* status.<sup>11</sup> Discord between toshavim and megorashim developed immediately as well, with megorashim creating separate institutions from toshavim. Communal institutions such as synagogues and schools, and practices such as butchering and marriage, were reconstructed by Sephardim to be decidedly distinct. Sephardi rabbinic responsa from the period deplore the level of scholarship and the lack of religious observance on the part of the toshavim. The *Etz Chaim*, a period responsum, describes two separate rabbinic courts in operation at the time (Gerber 1980:54-64).

Sephardim worked closely with Muslims to trade inland goods with the Portuguese (Cornell 1990:385). They were also viewed as assets by the ruler of Fez, Muhammad al-Shaykh al-Wattasi (ruled 1472-1504).

The Jews were intimately familiar with his Spanish and Portuguese foes and could no doubt offer vital services to him. They would be a loyal element in the midst of popular anti-dynastic hostility in Fez and they were renowned for their skills, including their prowess in arms production (ibid:25).

Many Sephardim were immediately welcomed into the higher echelons of Muslim society, enjoying stature as members of the cultural elite in Moroccan social life, especially in and around

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Muslims (Cornell, 1990:390). Schroeter (2002) shows how this urban model explains the close contact between Jews and the ruling Muslim elite despite what seems like very restrictive living conditions. As artisans and musicians, occupations in which Jewish participation was allowed and even encouraged under Muslim law, Jews produced much of Morocco's cultural life (Schroeter 1993).

<sup>11</sup> *Dhimmi* (people of the book) is a term used in the Qur'an to describe Jews and Christians as fellow believers of the God of Abraham. Dhimmi status extends to all Jews and Christians the right to practice their faiths, albeit as second-class citizens. The social conditions for dhimmi are described in the Pact of 'Umar (717 CE), a letter addressed to the early Islamic missionary. This pact has been interpreted and applied very differently, depending on time and place. In most cases, dhimmi status meant institutionalized discrimination towards Jews throughout the Islamic world, including special taxes, ghettoization, discrimination from certain forms of trade, special clothing, and/or limitations on property rights (Lewis 1984; Stillman 1979, 1991; Gerber 1994).

urban centers. Non-Jewish authorities did not seem to care too much about the distinction between Sephardim and locals. Despite intra-communal efforts at distinction, integration was forced upon megorashim and toshavim because they were Jews—an “other” ethno-religious group. They could not escape their dhimmi status, no matter their promise or talents.

In the ensuing centuries, the shifting boundaries of Maroka’i identity would ultimately bring toshavim and megorashim into a sort of rapprochement (Schroeter 2008). While certain towns remained Hispanic, especially on the northern coast, or Berber in the hinterlands, most Maroka’im developed an integrative identity that included elements from both communities. The impact of developments in the Sephardi diaspora on local Maroka’i life was quite apparent in Jewish thought as well. The importation of Lurianic Kabbalah from the Levant, an endeavor whose progenitors included many Sephardi exiles, has been well documented (Idel 1997:189-222; Goldberg 1990). Over time, the boundaries between toshavim and megorashim relaxed. In major cities like Fez, Meknes, and Tangiers, where the megorashim tended to dominate in numbers, Sephardi practices prevailed.

### **Maroka’i Diaspora**

The socio-political climate in Morocco changed drastically for Jews with the advent of French colonialism at the end of the eighteenth century. French rule was established with Treaty of Fez, making Morocco a French Protectorate in 1912. Jews were emancipated from the mellah in all Moroccan cities. Muslim animosity towards Jews increased as similar and normative class distinctions between Jews and Muslims were challenged. Dhimmi status had proscribed Jewish social mobility for centuries and was no longer accepted law. Because of an already established familiarity with French culture from the efforts of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU) in

earlier decades,<sup>12</sup> Jews were more apt to be offered employment by the colonial power. Growing social mobility allowed more Jews to obtain positions of influence in Moroccan society. While the Nazi takeover of the French colonies during World War II put an abrupt halt to Jewish advances in Moroccan society, in essence, opportunities for Jews improved drastically under French colonial rule.

Relations between Jews and Muslims in Morocco were further destabilized in the late 1940s and 1950s by the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and by growing sympathies in Morocco's Arab Muslim community with Pan-Arabism. Israel's War of Independence in 1948 put Jews and Arab Muslims in direct military confrontation for the first time in history. While it was happening in a region geographically far removed from Morocco's borders, the impact of the conflict on the popular consciousness of Jews and Muslims in Morocco could be felt locally. Modern media, and especially radio, brought news of conflicts abroad into people's homes on a regular basis. Leaders of Morocco's independence movements in the early 1950s also drew strength and support from Pan-Arabism for their aspirations to end French colonial rule. In 1956, King Mohammed V returned from exile in Madagascar to Morocco, dislodging the French Protectorate government from power once and for all. Even though many in the Jewish community were sympathizers with Moroccan independence movements and had great admiration and respect for the king, the return of Arab rule during a time of increasing conflicts between Jews and Arabs abroad put local Jews in a very precarious position. Israeli success in the Sinai War of 1956 exacerbated local resentments and catalyzed a growing sense of

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<sup>12</sup> By the mid-nineteenth century, the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU), a French Jewish organization, began establishing schools throughout the Maghreb to advance their mandate to expose, and thus *enlighten*, the backward Jews in the Arab world to French culture (Laskier 1983, 1994).

vulnerability amongst people in the Jewish community. Doubts grew about the sustainability of Jewish life in Morocco.

### *Leaving Morocco*

Once the largest Jewish community in the Islamic world, with a population reaching roughly 250,000 by 1951 (Laskier 1994:89), the vast majority of Morocco's Jews emigrated in a little over one decade. Migrations away from Fez, Marrakesh, and Casablanca, and smaller towns such as Ouezzane, Meknes, and Tetuan, as well as villages on the Sahara desert border and in the Atlas and Anti-Atlas mountains ended a 2,000-year, robust presence of Jewish life in the region almost overnight. Despite this exodus of Jews, Morocco remains the only Muslim country with a significant Jewish population. Of the roughly 3,000 Jewish people that presently live in Morocco, most live in Casablanca, Tangiers, or Marrakesh. By 1963, a Maroka'i diaspora was established and had a footprint on five continents—Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, and South America.

It is convenient to think that the breakdown in Jewish-Muslim relations was the primary factor leading to the mass emigration of this 2,000-year-old Jewish community. According to Laskier, Maroka'im had developed a strong Francophile spirit that could not be reconciled with the anti-colonial attitudes gaining favor in Morocco. Another equally compelling reason to leave was that a Jewish state had been established. The allure of participating in this nation-building project, a homeland for the Jewish people, was strong. However, the reason for the mass emigration of Jews from Morocco is not simply a story of modern ruptures between the Jewish and Muslim community, nor between the past and present. How these groups perceived westernization, pan-Arab nationalism, decolonization, Zionism, and the creation of the State of Israel creates a complex picture (Gottreich and Schroeter 2011). Not all Maroka'im embraced



westernization; many Maghribi rabbinic figures were at best ambivalent to aspects of westernization when the AIU began establishing schools. Community members certainly did not hold a monolithic view of Zionism. Religious Jews from rural Atlas villages were skeptical about immigrating to Israel on religious grounds (Tsur 1998); many Casablančan Jews found nation-building and its economic challenges unpalatable as well. Adding to this complexity, it is important to historicize the phenomenon of the “Arab Jews,” of Arabness as a persistent part of Maroka’i identity, and how this Arab-Jewish identity intersects with this great social transformation (Gottreich 2008). The history of Jewish-Muslim relations is not a linear story. As André Levy points out, there were certainly many challenges to their relationship pre-colonialism (Levy 2003). One thing remains: Maroka’im and Moroccan Muslims are forever linked by a shared history, despite the mass emigration of Morocco’s Jews.

From Casablanca and other port cities along the northern coast, emigrés could make their way to French ports, and then on to the West or Israel. Most Maroka’i immigrants to France or Canada were from these coastal cities. Jews from coastal cities (Tangiers, Tetuan, Mogador, Rabat) had had the most exposure to westernization and the economic means to relocate to the West. By the mid-1950s, Casablanca had become the most popular staging point for emigration. For Maroka’im, the magnetism of Casablanca had already been well established as this, Morocco’s most cosmopolitan city, offered economic and social opportunity for decades. Jewish people from inland cities and regions had already been migrating to Casablanca for some time.<sup>13</sup> In the run up to emigration, however, Casablanca became central.

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<sup>13</sup> Several informants have reminded me that ‘everyone says they’re from Casablanca...but in reality, they’re not.’ I usually hear this from people who are Francophile. This statement serves as an almost derogatory categorization of the non-Francophone Jews of Morocco. However, it also reinforces the fact that Casablanca was an early crucible for the process of ethnicization that helped to forge a pan-Maroka’i identity, even before emigration.

The typical itinerary for an emigrant from Morocco's interior included transport to Cadima Camp near Casablanca, sea transport to Marseilles, and then sea transport to the Port of Haifa in northern Israel (Laskier 1994:118). According to official French statistics and the Jewish Agency for Israel sources, nearly 93,000 Maroka'im came to Israel between 1949 and 1956 (Laskier 1994:126). The majority of Maroka'i immigrants were from rural parts of Morocco. These immigrants arrived in a poor and growing country and were lumped together in Zionist transit camps by Israeli immigration authorities with little knowledge of or concern for the diversity of Maroka'i cultural mores. French, *Mugrabit* (Moroccan Arabic), and *Tamazight* (Berber) speakers were now sharing tight quarters. Many Maroka'i immigrants were later moved to *moshavim* (collective agricultural settlements) or to urban centers like Haifa.<sup>14</sup>

Israel now has the largest Maroka'i population of any country. Coupled with the central role that Israel has played in global Jewish life for the past half-century, the Israeli-Maroka'i community wields great influence throughout the Maroka'i diaspora. Population flows to and

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<sup>14</sup> In mixed Jewish-Arab towns like Haifa, Maroka'im were given incentives to move into homes formerly occupied by Arabs (Shokeid 1982:33). According to Shokeid, the Israeli authorities thought that Maroka'im would make good neighbors since Jews and Arabs were living in close proximity to each other before 1948. Prior to the immigration from Middle Eastern countries, the majority of Israelis were of eastern or western European heritage. These "veteran" Israelis had organized the nation's political and social ambitions according to their will (Shokeid 1982). The prevailing narrative held that the promise of Zionism was to build a new state, devoid of ethnic differences, where all citizens were to be bound solely by a Jewish national identity. Of course, this national identity was envisioned by the power structure according to a Euro-Jewish or Ashkenazi model.

Attitudes in the Israeli-Arab community were already being informed in reaction to the European Jews. A popular sentiment in Arab communities suggested a need to promote traditional Islamic values to safeguard their women from this new "Western secularism" and its "corrupting influences" (Shokeid 1982:39). By the time Maroka'im were moving in, they too were experiencing confrontations with secularism very similar to those of their Israeli-Arab neighbors. Nevertheless, an awkward ethnic alliance between Maroka'im and Israeli-Arabs never quite settled into a true partnership because the tension surrounding the questions of Muslim versus Jewish dominion in the Holy Land prevailed and still prevails.

from Israel show that many Israeli-Maroka'im have emigrated from Israel in recent decades, adding significant numbers to the ranks of Maroka'i diaspora communities. Maroka'im from France, Canada, and Morocco have also been moving around, to other sites in the diaspora. The September 11, 2001 attacks and the growing political tensions in the last decade over the Israeli-Arab conflict have been likely catalysts. These Maroka'i migrants have been instrumental in reinvigorating Francophile attitudes in several Maroka'i diaspora communities. For example, in Netanya, Israel, a booming housing market, vacation industry, and local small business community have been developed in large part by Maroka'im from France (Ben-Rafael 2011).

### Two Socio-Historical Transformations

The notion of a single Maroka'i community emerged from the diasporic migrations of the mid-twentieth century. The upheaval of emigration and resettlement drove away provincialities and regional identities. While this was perhaps an expressed intent of authorities in Israel, Maroka'im with ethnic similarities tended to band together in other locales as well. Similar to how regionally specific identities of the Sephardim were diminished in favor of a pan-Sephardi or Iberian identity in the generations after the Expulsion in 1492,<sup>15</sup> the Maroka'i diaspora experience has encouraged ethnicization as a means for galvanizing the community. Today, provincial Maroka'i identities are traces of a time and history glorified or romanticized, appearing on occasion in passing conversation about one's familial roots.

A second major transformation is a change in the linguistic nature of the Maroka'i community. The growing use of French, English, and Modern Hebrew, coupled with the waning

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<sup>15</sup> In contrast to the Sephardi experience, a conscious effort to sublimate regional identities in favor of a Moroccan national identity began before emigration. Ideas about modern nationalism popularized during the European colonialist period in North Africa were affecting Jews and Muslims alike.

use of *Mugrabit* (Moroccan Arabic) and the syncretic Jewish languages of Morocco (Judeo-Arabe, Judeo-Spanish, and Judeo-Berber), have led to a fundamental change in the linguistic nature of the community since the mid-twentieth century. Hebrew has become the *lingua franca* of the Maroka'i transnation for all matters related to religious expression. Before the 1950s, knowledge of Hebrew was reserved for the men of the community (the learned class), who used it in liturgy and for studying Hebrew texts. In Brooklyn, where roughly half of the community is comprised of Israeli-Maroka'im, Modern Hebrew is the native language for many. Along with French, which is still prevalent as a spoken language in Maroka'i communities worldwide, Modern Hebrew is now a common language of discourse. English is obviously important in Brooklyn, but most Maroka'im living in Montreal, Toronto, Los Angeles, Miami, and Israel speak it as well. Besides Maroka'im in Anglophone areas, in Israel English language studies are emphasized in primary schools. English is a common language for global commerce. Maroka'im worldwide are increasingly exposed to English media. Thus, the Maroka'i community remains multilingual, although the languages have changed.

The Maroka'i diaspora community now functions as a transnation in several ways. There are strong communication, business, and religious ties between Maroka'im living in different communal nodes of the diaspora. There are regular flows of people traveling amongst these nodes. The fact that community members generally speak several languages facilitates a kind of comfort in different places. While Maroka'im clearly sustain a homeland orientation towards Morocco, a Maroka'i diaspora consciousness is focused primarily on associations with a transnational group of Jewish Moroccans that operates exclusive of the homeland.

For members of the Maroka'i diaspora, sustaining relationships over such a large geographic expanse has never been easier. Access to family members and friends via modern

communication and travel technologies has become so immediate that the geographic distance between people has been minimized. These technologies operate on a scale never seen before in human history, providing means to construct a communal constellation that can be vigorously reinforced. In the nodes of this diasporic constellation, once distinctive regional identities—*Fassi* (Fez), *Marakshi* (Marrakesh), *Ouezzani* (Ouezzane)—have diminished and given way to identification with Morocco, the nation-state. Maroka'im have become Maroka'im because of the diaspora.

Despite the opportunities certain technologies provide to foster and sustain communal ties over great distances with relative ease, many aspects of Jewish life still take place locally. The use of these technologies is often prohibited during religious observances. For instance, the use of automobiles and electronics is strictly forbidden on Shabbat and most religious festivals. The regular opportunities to experience locality give community members in each node of the Maroka'i diaspora a chance to foster local aspects of Maroka'i identity. In a place like Brooklyn, where so many other Jewish ethnic groups cohabitate, Maroka'im must constantly negotiate the boundaries of identity. Thus, while associating with a Maroka'i transnation, for the most part these locals are American or becoming American and exhibit several cultural qualities fostered in Brooklyn that are distinctive from other diasporic Maroka'i cultures.

### **Maroka'im In Brooklyn**

Brooklyn has been and remains an important locus for Jewish life in the United States. According to Ilana Abramovitch and Sean Galvin (2002), Jews have represented from one-quarter to one-third of Brooklyn's total population since the late nineteenth century (Abramovitch and Galvin 2002:8). Jewish immigrants from Western and Eastern Europe, Central

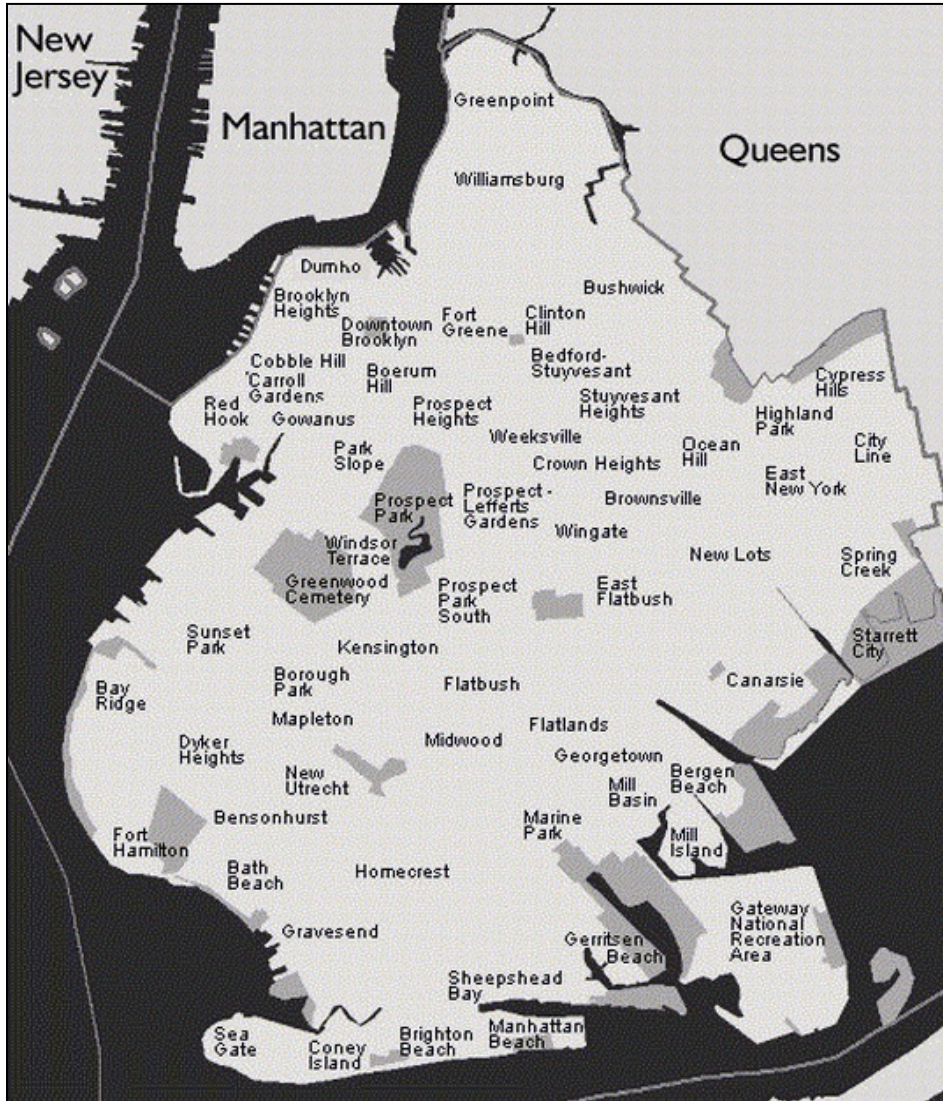
Asia, North Africa, and the Levant moved to this borough of New York City in great numbers. Jewish thought and practice are extremely diverse. Ultra-Orthodox religious Jews still promoting clothing fashions from nineteenth-century Poland can be found sharing the streets with ‘hipster’ secularist Jews wearing the latest fashions available. Brooklyn is home to Andy Statman, the well-known and masterful Ḥasidic Klezmer icon, as well as the Shandes, a popular indie-pop, lesbian, Anti-Zionist outfit. Brooklyn has the most diverse Jewish cultural life and is the most populous and densely situated Jewish locale in the world.

In 1851 a small group of German and Alsatian Jews established Beth Elohim in the Williamsburg neighborhood as the first synagogue in Brooklyn. In 1921, Jews from Aleppo, Syria moved from the Lower East Side in Manhattan to build the Magen David synagogue in Bensonhurst (Brooklyn). By 1940, Brooklyn’s Jewish population was expanding. There were 83 synagogues just in the area of Brooklyn that includes the Brownsville, New Lots, and East New York neighborhoods. Jews in these neighborhoods accounted for nearly 80% of the total residents of these neighborhoods at the time (ibid. 2002:5-7). After World War II, a plethora of Ḥasidic sects immigrated to Brooklyn, establishing communities in Borough Park, Flatbush, Crown Heights, and Williamsburg.

Jewish immigrants from the former Ottoman territories of the Eastern Mediterranean, and particularly countries like Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt, form the basis of Brooklyn’s Sephardi community (Sutton 1979). In recent decades, immigrants from Damascus, Morocco, and Israel have significantly increased the population and diversity of this already heterogeneous and sizeable community. Drawn by the magnetism of Jewish life in Brooklyn, Maroka’im have established themselves as an important part of Brooklyn’s Jewish community and Brooklyn’s Sephardi community in particular. From just west of Ocean Parkway eastward to beyond Ocean

Avenue, reaching as far north as Avenue K and as far south as Avenue X, Brooklyn's Sephardi community now inhabits a swath of Brooklyn that includes parts of a number of adjoining neighborhoods—Bensonhurst, Gravesend, Flatbush, Midwood, and Homecrest (figure 2.1).

**Figure 2.1: Brooklyn Neighborhood Map**



While Israel, France, and Canada were absorbing most of Morocco's Jewish émigrés from 1950-1970, Maroka'i immigration to Brooklyn was relatively minimal until the 1970s. However, beginning in 1948, and then again in 1956 and 1957, small groups of promising young boys were brought to Brooklyn from Morocco to be rabbinical students at the renowned Mirror

Yeshiva by R' Avraham Kalmanowitz, the *rosh yeshiva* (head of school).<sup>16</sup> As in several other accounts included in *When Two Worlds Met* (2006), a collection of personal histories from several participants in the Mirrer program, R' Shimon Cohen suggests that there was a fear of secularism permeating the Maroka'i community. Cohen writes, "at the time, it was becoming increasingly difficult to inculcate youth with a comprehensive Torah education in Morocco" (Birnbaum 2006:112). As R' Avraham Portal writes, "his [Kalmonowitz's] arrival [in Morocco] signified the beginning of a Torah revolution for Moroccan and Sephardic Jewry in Flatbush [Brooklyn]" (Birnbaum 2006:51). Many of the rabbinical students from the Mirrer Yeshiva currently occupy important positions in Brooklyn's Sephardi community, working as pulpit leaders in several synagogues, as teachers, as members of the Sephardic Rabbinical Council and *Hevra Kadisha* (burial society), and as business leaders in the area.

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<sup>16</sup>The Mirrer Yeshiva in Brooklyn is one of two seminaries founded by refugees from Mir, Belarus, who survived the Nazi onslaught in World War II by escaping to Shanghai. Mirrer advances a Lithuanian-based approach to rabbinics stemming from eighteenth century R' Eliyahu ben Shlomo Kramer from Vilnius (the Vilna Gaon).



**Figure 2.2: Boys arriving in New York from Morocco.**

(From *Mirrer Yeshivah Pamphlet* in American Jewish Historical Society Archives)



\* R' Avraham Kalmanowitz in the center, with the lengthy beard

The Mirrer Yeshiva campus was situated near Brooklyn's Sephardi community; it has since been completely engulfed by the Sephardi community and is now surrounded by Sephardi synagogues and schools. The Sephardic Community Center is just one block away. According to R' Dahan, the proximity of the Mirrer Yeshiva to the Sephardi community helped these young boys from Morocco to resist total assimilation into the Ashkenazi community (p.c., R' Chaim Dahan, January 13, 2006). They found important commonalities with fellow Jews from other Islamic countries—Syrian, Egyptian, Lebanese, and Turkish Jews. “Of course it was important [having Sephardim nearby]! I married a Syrian and have been teaching at Magen David Yeshivah [a Syrian school] for over 30 years” (p.c., R' Yitzhak Sebbag, July 18, 2007). Thus, the ethnogenesis of Brooklyn's Maroka'i community was reliant upon connecting with two

‘proximal hosts’<sup>17</sup>—the Ashkenazim associated with the Mirrer Yeshiva, and the Sephardim living just blocks away. In the ensuing decades, steady immigration of Maroka’im to Brooklyn would help bolster this small population and provide important links to the Maroka’i diaspora.

Members of Brooklyn’s Maroka’i community tend to be observant of *halakhah* (Jewish law), professing obedience to the rabbinic interpretations codified in the *Shulkhan Arukh* or Code of Jewish Law (published by R’ Joseph Karo in 1565). In practical terms, this means emphasizing three main areas of halakhah: *kashrut* (dietary laws), *sniut* (modesty laws), and *Shabbat* (observance of the Jewish Sabbath). Different interpretations of halakhah in the modern era are at the heart of the development of denominational Judaism in the West: Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist. In contrast to Ashkenazi communities, Sephardi communities do not usually subscribe to any of these denominations of Judaism in particular. However, Sephardim generally conform to basic Orthodox principles of practice, including the separation of men and women during liturgical services, the exclusive use of Hebrew for liturgical rites, adherence to kosher dietary laws, and Shabbat observance.

Maroka’i practices, like those of other Sephardi groups, conform most closely to those of Orthodox Judaism. Most Maroka’im who regularly attend synagogue (daily, on Shabbat, and on holidays) follow accepted norms of Orthodox Jewish practice. When asked about their religious affiliation, most members of the Maroka’i community simply answer “Orthodox” or “traditional.” The only other terms one might hear are *haredi* (ultra-religious) and *dati* (religious), implying a nuanced differentiation in how strict an interpretation of religious practice they possess. The general absence of denominational Judaism in the Sephardi community

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<sup>17</sup> A ‘proximal host’ is a group within society that new migrants are attached to because of shared cultural and/or geographic origins (Mittleberg and Waters 1992:416).

implies that there is a much wider range of observance on the part of individual community members. A ‘big tent’ approach in the Sephardi communities typically allows for more diversity in religious practice, as well as a greater respect for the boundaries between the public and private spheres of individual’s lives. Nevertheless, this community’s religious mores are based on observing the basic tenets of halakhah, which are accepted and respected by leadership and laymen alike, according to the history of normative Judaism.

In addition to halakhah is *minhag* (custom). *Minhagim* (pl.) are often regarded as having the same importance as halakhah, defining an individual community’s traditions. In *Netivot ha-Ma’arav*, Eliyahu Biton defines a plethora of minhagim and halakhot as they pertain to Maroka’i Judaism (Biton 2006). Of course, there are so many anomalies that the document is simply a starting point. Nevertheless, it is necessary to keep in mind both minhag and halakhah when trying to understand a community’s perspective on Jewish practice.

### Synagogues

By the early 1980s the number of Maroka’im living in Brooklyn reached a critical mass. Community leaders decided they needed a place to congregate and to pray according to the Maroka’i tradition, to satisfy the growing community swelling in numbers from a steady stream of immigrants from Morocco and from Israel. The popular sentiment among community members was that they needed some separation from Ashkenazi and other Sephardi groups. “We needed a place to do our *tefilot* (prayers)” (p.c., Maurice Perez, July 7, 2010). The community began by renting space at the Mirrer Yeshiva. Due to the size of the community and what Perez described as growing tensions between the community and Mirrer Yeshiva over space, the Maroka’i congregation moved to Le Chateau, a catering hall in the neighborhood. In 1990,

important donors provided funds to purchase a property on Ocean Parkway and to build a synagogue. King Hassan II offered to send artisans from Morocco to decorate the sanctuary. They are responsible for hand carving the mosaic patterns of the walls. By the time Netivot Israel synagogue finally opened its doors in 1991 as the first Maroka'i synagogue in the United States, the Maroka'i community in Brooklyn had grown to nearly 600 families.

As communal gathering sites, synagogues serve to house many different types of activities, such as liturgical services, life-cycle events, classes, and parties. Living near family and synagogues is preferable; in one square block of Homecrest, Brooklyn, there are six different synagogues with distinctive ethnic and religious affiliations. Leadership in most synagogues includes a rabbi, a ḥazzan and a *nasi* (president). While rabbis train in Orthodox *yeshivot* (seminaries), ḥazzanim do not usually possess any formal institutional training in music. Instead, they prove themselves through trial opportunities and are offered positions through popular approval.

In the map of Brooklyn's Sephardi community (figure 2.3), I have marked three types of synagogues—Moroccan, Syrian, and mixed-Sephardi. More synagogues are present in this area than I have marked. I have added callout boxes to the figure to emphasize the sites where I conducted most of my ethnographic research. These sites provided important comparative research for this study. Informant interviews were often conducted in private homes. Each is located within walking distance of a synagogue, but in the interest of respecting privacy, these homes have not been marked on the map.

**Figure 2.3: Map of Synagogue Sites in Brooklyn**



In Brooklyn’s Sephardi community there are four distinctly Maroka’i synagogues— Netivot Israel, Hesed l’Abraham, Ahavat Shalom, and Shuva Yisrael. Several Maroka’i rabbis lead other Sephardi synagogues in the neighborhood. Some Maroka’im have confessed to me that they frequent two or three synagogues on a regular basis, including non-Maroka’i synagogues. But most express loyalty to one of these four Maroka’i synagogues. Even though someone may pray often in another Sephardi synagogue, communal events and holidays compel individuals to reconnect with the Maroka’i community. The synagogue remains the best place to do so.

All four Maroka’i synagogues use the same liturgy, sacred books, and general repertoire of songs. In each synagogue one can hear the same myriad of spoken languages bantered about—English, French, Hebrew, and Mugrabit. One’s choice of affiliation with any particular synagogue is usually determined by personal feelings about the rabbi, the synagogue’s location, and the size and religious character of the congregation. For instance, R’ Pinto of Shuva Yisrael

was trained in an Israeli yeshiva, is *haredi* (ultra-religious), and gives his sermons completely in Hebrew. Netivot Israel, on the other hand, has more Francophone members and has R' Gad Bouskila, a beloved rabbi with a renowned voice for hazzanut and a major leadership role in the Maroka'i community. Ahavat Shalom's small size offers a special intimacy, while Hessed l'Avraham is more "relaxed" (p.c., R' Chaim Dahan, January 13, 2006).

### Three Primary Research Sites

Most of my ethnographic research took place in two Maroka'i synagogues—Netivot Israel and Hessed l'Avraham—and in one Syrian synagogue—Shaarei Shalom. Because of its size, centrality to the establishment of the Maroka'i community in Brooklyn, and particularly robust musical activity, Netivot Israel synagogue has been my primary research site (figure 2.4). It is named after a small town in southern Israel where R' Yisrael Abuḥatsira once lived and is now buried. This synagogue serves as the locus for Maroka'i activities in the community. While I conducted fieldwork in Morocco in 2006 and 2011 and in Israel in 2008 and 2012, time and again informants surprised me with their awareness of Netivot Israel synagogue. Some—and especially community leaders with whom I spoke—emphasized their familiarity with this Maroka'i synagogue above others in the United States. Furthermore, I felt that an in-depth examination of a single synagogue community would provide depth to this study. Of course, as mentioned above, outliers intersect with the synagogue community on a regular basis and for comparative research I did spend considerable time at other sites. But for studying the construction of identity, I felt it would be more enriching to my research to establish stronger ties in one particular congregational community.

**Figure 2.4: Netivot Israel Synagogue (Facade)**



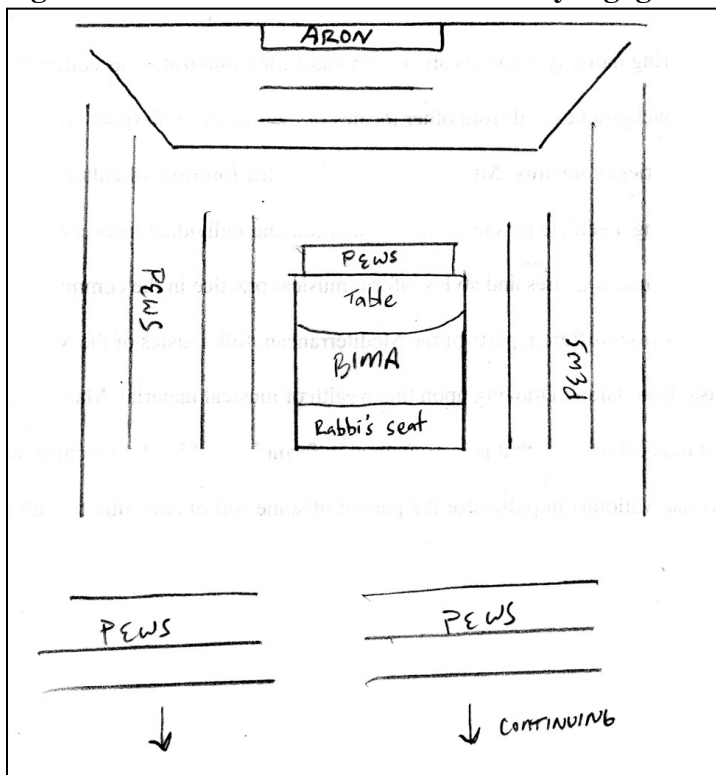
**(Sanctuary)**



The synagogue's sanctuary space (figure 4) is quite large and includes a balcony section for women behind two-way glass. This is in accordance with the rabbi's interpretation of the halakhah stipulating the separation of men and women during liturgical services. The floorplan is typical of a Sephardi synagogue, with the *bima* (reading lectern area; called a *teivah* in Syrian synagogues) in the middle of the room and the *aron* (cabinet) built into the front wall and storing multiple Torah scrolls. The bima is elevated and serves as the place for the *hazzan*, as the *shaliah tzibur* (public messenger; representative) of the community, to lead liturgical services, and for the recitation of all sacred texts. The rabbi's seat is a special padded bench positioned just behind the space where the *hazzan* stands; there is room for one more person on the bench, and when another rabbi visits he is usually offered a seat here, next to R' Bouskila. At the front of the sanctuary is a stage, which includes the aron.

Netivot Israel synagogue is ornately decorated. The white walls have a hand-chiseled pattern reminiscent of designs found throughout Morocco on important buildings and fancy homes. Large chandeliers hang from the ceiling. Twelve stained glass windows adorn the parameter walls, each depicting a tribe of Israel. Wooden pews of four plush seats each, organized into two rows of ten, stand to the left and right of the entrance. Two rows of longer pews stand on each side of the *bima*, leading to the aron.

**Figure 2.5: Schematic of Netivot Israel Synagogue Sanctuary**



*Hesed l'Avraham* (kindness for Abraham) is the second largest Maroka'i synagogue in the community. *Hesed l'Avraham* is similar to Netivot Israel in design and communal character, so much so that several people in the community are known to oscillate between the two on a semi-regular basis. Like that of Netivot Israel, the sanctuary design is reminiscent of Morocco with its ornate woodwork. A unique and interesting feature of *Hesed l'Avraham* is its foremost wall, where the ornately decorated aron is located. It is a replica of the *Kotel* (Western Wall) in



Jerusalem, replete with plastic shrubbery protruding from between the yellowish-beige bricks. Praying in H̳esed l'Abraham, in this physical space, promotes an explicit integration of Maroka'i and Jewish elements.

Like many other Sephardi synagogues in Brooklyn, Sha'arei Shalom synagogue counts a number of Maroka'im among its members. Despite characterizing itself as Syrian, the community's leadership includes a Maroka'i rabbi—R' Benhamou, the rabbi of the youth congregation. This is not uncommon, as a number of mixed-Sephardi congregations in the neighborhood have Maroka'i rabbis. Thus, Sha'arei Shalom was interesting to me as a place with a recognizable Maroka'i contingent in the congregation, but it has also been important for conducting comparative research. By examining the liturgical and sacred text cantillation practices, as well as musical practice at communal events, I have been able to develop a nuanced understanding of overlapping or divergent aspects of Sephardi identity. Finally, my relationship with the rabbi of Sha'arei Shalom, R' Joseph Dweck, has been instrumental in exploring ideas about diaspora expressed in rabbinic Jewish thought. He is a very knowledgeable source on Syrian Jewish music, and an accomplished performer in his own right. Our friendship has been a valuable result of this study.

### Population

My population estimate of the Maroka'i community in Brooklyn is based on the number of family memberships in Maroka'i synagogues, a sampling of individuals who frequent other Sephardi synagogues but still identify as Maroka'i, and the number of regular visitors to the community. For instance, there are 127 official family memberships at Netivot Israel (p.c., Maurice Perez, July 7, 2010). However, according to Perez, this number is deceptively low as many regular worshippers and attendees at communal events are not registered members. With

an average of 4-5 people in each family, official membership translates into roughly 400-500 members. Including additional, non-official members, the population of Netivot Israel is probably closer to 650 people. This scenario holds for the other Maroka'i synagogues.

Guests pass through the community regularly and should be counted in any population estimate. They include family members visiting from Israel, Morocco, or France for communal celebrations, holidays, or vacation, and dignitaries from other Maroka'i synagogues in the United States and Israel. Because of the distance from home, most guests usually stay for extended periods of time and are well known to community members. On holidays and special events Netivot Israel swells with people as many attendees come who do not frequent the synagogue regularly on Shabbat.<sup>18</sup> The turnout on Yom Kippur (the holiest day of the year) is so great that the entire social hall is converted into another worship space. These visitors should be considered a part of the community, even if for a limited time. Thus, including synagogue memberships and estimating the number of locals and visitors from out of the neighborhood, I believe the Maroka'i population in this part of Brooklyn to be between 5,000 and 6,000 people.<sup>19</sup>

Maroka'i communities in Manhattan, Queens, Los Angeles, and Miami are primarily comprised of immigrants from Israel. However, as in most of the other Sephardi groups in Brooklyn, many members of Brooklyn's Maroka'i community are immigrants from another country. Most people in the community have direct links to Morocco, France, and Israel. At Netivot Israel synagogue, roughly half of the community is comprised of immigrant families from Morocco, including all who hold leadership positions. The congregational composition is

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<sup>18</sup> As a weekly focal point of synagogue activity, Shabbat is an important differentiating factor in who is and who is not considered a regular attendee.

<sup>19</sup> Crown Heights, Brooklyn, has a significant Maroka'i presence in the Chabad-Lubavitch community. While there is interaction between people in these parts of Brooklyn, the locality that religious Jewish life demands limits contact.

similar at H̄esed l'Avraham and Ahavat Shalom; Shuva Yisrael is an important exception in Brooklyn as most of its membership is Maroka'i-Israeli. This part of Brooklyn attracts a certain type of Israeli, typically those who come from Sephardi-Mizrahi and religiously observant backgrounds. Thus, while Israeli immigrants have a strong presence in Brooklyn's Sephardi community in general and in Brooklyn's Maroka'i community in particular, Israelis are not as dominant here as they are in other parts of the United States. For this, Brooklyn's Maroka'i community is known in other nodes of the Maroka'i diaspora as an important site of Maroka'i ethnic activity in the United States.

### Language

Trying to determine the commonly spoken language of the community can make someone feel confused. In social halls, one catches oneself caught in the linguistic crossfire of this polyglot community. Even during liturgical services, performed exclusively in Hebrew, salutations and mutterings in between prayers can be in any of community's common languages. Most community members are at least bilingual—Hebrew and English—and a good portion are also fluent in or understand French. People sometimes jump from one language to another in mid-sentence. Mugarbit is vanishing, though unlike English and French, it still appears in liturgical practice on a few select occasions throughout the year.<sup>20</sup> Most fluent Mugarbit speakers are elders in the community and often choose to converse in English, French, or Hebrew instead. Even in Morocco, French has been the preferred language in the Jewish community for generations; when I have been in Morocco, I have rarely heard Jewish people speaking Mugarbit.

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<sup>20</sup> On the holiday of Tisha B'Av, *haftarah* (additional biblical readings during Kriat ha-Torah) recitation is in Mugarbit and Hebrew. During the seven weeks between the festivals of Pesah and Shavuot, congregations sing the "Ein Kelohenu" prayer in Mugarbit every Shabbat morning.

Once commonly spoken syncretic Jewish languages like Judeo-Arabic, Judeo-Spanish, and Judeo-Berber are relatively non-existent in Brooklyn. Judeo-Arabic does appear in texts—songs, some liturgy, and especially philosophical and exegetical works written by earlier generations of rabbis. Historically reserved for home life, French, Hebrew, and English have essentially replaced Judeo-Spanish. The resurgence of Judeo-Spanish in Sephardic music in the past decade has not really permeated the Brooklyn community. Outside of synagogue music, most community members listen to American and Israeli pop or Arabic music (eastern Arab classical and Moroccan). Aramaic is not spoken, but most are quite familiar with it since it appears in several liturgical texts and is the language of Talmudic rabbinic discourse. By and large, most people in the community oscillate fluidly between Hebrew, French, and English.

### Marriage

It is increasingly common for community members to intermarry with other types of Sephardim or Mizrahim, and even Ashkenazim. Several community members have gone out of their way to marry Maroka'im (or other North Africans), even traveling overseas to find a spouse if necessary. Generally, it seems the trend is to seek a Sephardi mate. This usually suffices to please most families.

According to halakhah, in the case of intermarriage the religious customs of the male are followed in the family.<sup>21</sup> Because the synagogue is a predominantly male domain in the Sephardi community, Jewish practice is still governed by this principle. But in other realms of Jewish life, adherence to this principle is under negotiation. Whereas it was customary to move to the city of

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<sup>21</sup> This practice resulted from a common interpretation of an expression in the Talmud: *ishto k'gufo* (his wife is like his body; Talmud Bavli *Yevamot 52a*). This Talmudic discourse is based on the verse in the Torah that states: “God fashioned the rib that he had taken from the man into a woman, and He brought her to the man” (Genesis 2:22).

your husband's family after marriage, in Brooklyn a sustained exposure to pluralistic Jewish life challenges total acculturation to the husband's religious customs. The density of Brooklyn encourages in-laws who probably live in relatively close proximity to their children to have a greater role in a married couple's life. Women also have the ability to express much more agency in the home life of the family, challenging traditional gender roles.

Today, Maroka'im living in Brooklyn associate with the Maroka'i transnation, a local and transnational Sephardi community, a wider translocal community made up of several different Jewish ethnic groups, and the Jewish transnation. On certain city blocks, every residence or commercial establishment is Sephardi; on most the Sephardim intermingle comfortably with immigrant communities from Russia and China as well as established Italian and Irish ethnic enclaves. Interaction between Maroka'im and Ashkenazim is quite robust. For instance, several Maroka'i youth still attend Ashkenazi yeshivot and Maroka'im work regularly with Ashkenazim in business. However, similarities in synagogue life, in language, food, and settlement patterns, as well as interethnic connections abroad (especially in Israel) encourage closer relationships between Maroka'im and members of other Sephardi communities. In some sense, Brooklyn's Maroka'im stand on the cusp between East and West, comfortably straddling a divide their ancestors were familiar with for centuries.

## **Maroka'i Music**

The synagogue is the central space where community members gather to engage in communal musical practice. It is the most important site for exploring how Maroka'i identity is expressed through music. Though I focus primarily on liturgical and para-liturgical music in synagogue life, musical practices from beyond the synagogue that play an important role in the

synagogue are important as well. Therefore, I devote some space to musical genres that would be categorized as non-liturgical since they do impact musical life in the synagogue.

Maroka'i musical practices can be categorized as liturgical, para-liturgical, or non-liturgical. Literature about Moroccan musical practices is available and generally falls into one of three categories: songs of the synagogue service (Idelsohn 1929; Amzallag 1986; Sabbah 1991; Seroussi 2006), the para-liturgical *baqqashot* (supplication poetry),<sup>22</sup> and non-liturgical balladry in Judeo-Spanish (Armistead, Silverman, and Katz 1986; Cohen 1989; Weich-Shahak 1992; Seroussi 2001a:1037). The case studies presented in this dissertation focus attention on the musical practices that are central to identity construction in this node of the Maroka'i diaspora. The aggregation of contextual material about Maroka'i music to follow will hopefully better prepare readers for understanding the musical life of Maroka'im in Brooklyn presented in the subsequent chapters.

Performed most often in the synagogue, liturgical music accompanies religious ritual.

While the performance of liturgy does happen outside of the synagogue, such as when ritual

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<sup>22</sup> *Baqqashot* is the name of both a specific collection of para-liturgical texts and the ritualized musical expression of these texts, based on a Lurianic kabbalistic practice of late-night singing. Several Sephardi communities perform baqqashot weekly during the winter months. The baqqashot cycle begins just after the holiday of Sukkot and concludes with the Shabbat just prior the spring holiday of Purim. Each week's selection of baqqashot corresponds thematically with the weekly Torah portion.

*Shir Yedidut: ha-Shalem*, newly edited by R' Meir Attiyah (2005; first printed in Marrakesh 1921), is a compendium of baqqashot texts used in Maroka'i communities worldwide. Included with each text are melodic cues, notes on authorship, and references to an accompanying recording compiled by R' Attiyah and his choir in Jerusalem. The selection of piyyutim in the Maroka'i baqqashot repertoire is quite diverse, representing Sephardi Golden Age poets, poets active in North Africa and other parts of the Mediterranean Jewish world, and several pieces directly related to a confraternity of kabbalists in sixteenth-century Safed, northern Israel. Ample literature exists on the baqqashot, including literature that discusses the place of baqqashot in the collective imagination of the Maroka'i community as emblematic of a specific ethno-religious identity (Zafrani 2005:177-194; Seroussi 1986, 2001a, 2006; Chetrit 1991).

services occur in one's home during *shiva* (seven-day mourning period), these occasions are rare. There are three daily ritual services, which when extended on Shabbat and festivals are typically more musically elaborate. The cantillation of sacred texts occurs on Shabbat, festivals, and Mondays and Thursdays. According to halakhah, musical expression during liturgical services is without instrumental accompaniment. Similarly, because of a prohibition on the use of electronics on Shabbat and festivals, playing musical recordings or aiding singing with amplification is also unacceptable.

Para-liturgical musical expression is part of any religious ritual outside of the normative liturgy, which because of content or performance context still imparts a sacred quality to the experience of participants. Festive meals, life-cycle events, and special communal events, such as baqqashot, hillulot, and kinnot, provide opportunities to perform para-liturgical music. These practices most often take place in the synagogue, home, or a special catering hall. For instance, during Shabbat meals in the home, community members sing common songs, often in Hebrew or Aramaic, that focus on the holiness of Shabbat and of God. Another occasion is the baqqashot parties popularized in the 1970s in Israel. These performances of a select repertoire of *piyyutim* (semi-sacred poems)—traditionally performed a capella in the synagogue on Shabbat mornings—often occurred in social halls with the expressed intention of imbuing political activism with sacred purpose (Seroussi 1986).

Music practiced in the synagogue is either liturgical or para-liturgical. By contrast, the performance and consumption of non-liturgical music takes place exclusively outside of the synagogue—music consumed on radio, the Internet, and television. The boundaries between these categories can be quite blurry at times since some material can function within several categories. For instance, a recorded song by the mid-twentieth century Syrian-born composer and

eastern Arabic music icon Farid al-Atrash would be considered non-liturgical. If this song is performed during a wedding, with Hebrew text in place of the original Arabic, the context and content transform the piece into a para-liturgical expression: the expression of the love relationship between a man and a woman is now imbued with a sacred quality because of the wedding and the language. Aspects of the song, such as the melody, can be used in liturgical services, changing its category once again. By contrast, songs in Modern Hebrew heard on the radio often include biblical or liturgical references that can impart an otherwise non-liturgical popular piece with a sacred quality. Thus, there is some fluidity between these categories, encouraging cross-pollination and resulting in interesting fusions at times.

### **Musical Genres**

Several musical genres have a privileged place in Maroka'i musical life. *Al-āla al-Andalusiyya* (Arabic) or *āla-Andalusit* (Hebrew) is the Arab-Andalusian classical music of Morocco that is believed to originate in al-Andalus. Together with *āla* (as it is popularly called), lighter classical styles such as *djiri*, *ghranati*, and *melhūn* play a prominent role in Maroka'i liturgical music. Eastern (*sharki*) Arabic music is influential in the Maroka'i community as well, especially the work of mid-twentieth century Egyptian and Syrian Arab and Jewish composers, which has a significant role in Eastern Mediterranean Sephardi liturgical and para-liturgical music as well (Kligman 2009; Shelemay 1998). The exposure to this Eastern Arabic music comes from mass media exposure via radio, recordings, and television, and an intensive local interculturality between Maroka'im and Syrian Jews in Brooklyn. Many Maroka'im love and cherish the great works of Muḥammad 'Abd al-Wahhāb, Farid al-Atrash, and Sayyid Darwīsh, as well as the repertoire performed by the diva Umm Kulthūm, having been exposed to their recordings in Morocco. *Musika mizrahit* (Eastern Music), a popular genre developed in Israel in



the 1970s and 1980s, is very familiar to most members of Brooklyn's community as well. Musika mizraḥit artists generally came from Sephardi-Mizraḥi heritage and sought to blend elements from Oriental and Western pop music in their work (Horowitz 2010). Songs composed or performed by such artists as Jo Amar, Avihu Medina, and Zehava Ben continue to dominate the local Israeli radio station, which has a limited broadcast area focused on the Sephardi community in Brooklyn.<sup>23</sup> Together, these genres form the repository of musical elements that are drawn upon to construct the musical practices of much of synagogue life for Maroka'im in Brooklyn. Each element is used to signify aspects of member identity.

While not a musical genre per se, Hebrew poetics deserve special mention. Piyyutim are the song texts for much of the liturgical and para-liturgical music in the community. Piyyutim, and the light classical genre called *pizmonim* (pl., song texts),<sup>24</sup> include several musical aspects of interest. For instance, specific quantitative and/or syllabic meters, as well as certain versification forms such as the *muwashshah* and *zajal* (from Spain), are distinctive of the Sephardi world within the transnational Jewish community. Some piyyutim have even traveled into the non-liturgical sphere, popularized by recording artists like Jo Amar and Shlomo Bar.

*al-Āla al-Andalusiyya (Āla-Andalusit)*

al-āla al-Andalusiyya is Morocco's classical Arab-Andalusian musical genre; in eastern Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya Arab-Andalusian-based music is called *ma'lūf* (Davis 2004; Touma

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<sup>23</sup> *Radio 'Esser* (Radio 10) in Brooklyn, 96.7 FM, is transmitted in the Sephardi neighborhood. Entirely in Hebrew, this station broadcasts local news and news about Israel, music, religious programs, and local advertising. The music programming focuses on the Sephardi-Mizraḥi community by highlighting musika mizraḥit.

<sup>24</sup> In contrast to piyyutim, pizmonim utilize a lower register Hebrew, are shorter, and have been written with the specific intention of being accompanied by music. Many pizmonim have been written with the expressed purpose of repurposing melodies from Arabic classical and popular music into Hebrew through contrafacta (p.c., R' Joseph Dweck, January 23, 2008).

1996). Āla (as it popularly called) is considered part of the patrimony of Andalus. The development of the Arab-Andalusian classical music tradition is attributed to the legendary ninth-century master musician, theoretician, and teacher Ziryab. Welcomed into the western Umayyad court of Abd al-Rahman II in Córdoba (Guettat 2000:119-131; Touma 1996:68-69), he had been a protégé of Ishaq al-Mawsili in Baghdad. Ziryab is credited with establishing the first conservatory of music in al-Andalus, where he purportedly developed important conventions for instrumental performance (especially on the oud) and established the general parameters of the Arab-Andalusian classical music that would become the progenitor of the Maghrebi styles that exist today (Reynolds 2008).

The *nūba* (song suite), whose development is ascribed to Ziryab, serves as the primary structure of these Arab-Andalusian styles. Each *nūba* is based upon a single *ṭabʿ* (melodic mode) or collection of *ṭubūʿ* (pl.), with melodies and texts that progress through different *mawāzīn* (pl., rhythmic modes) at increasing tempos. Initially each *nūba* was associated with an hour of the day, and the *ṭubūʿ* used in a particular *nūba* signified certain metaphysical qualities (Guettat 2000:137). By the early sixteenth century, with the influx of Iberian exiles, regionally specific Arab-Andalusian traditions began developing in the Maghreb (Touma 1996:68-83). Each of the Arab-Andalusian classical styles of the Maghreb continues to adhere to these systems of musical organization—*nūbāt* (pl.), *ṭubūʿ*, and *mawāzīn*.

When the eighteenth-century musician and theoretician al-Ḥāyḳ canonized the components of āla music in his compendium *Madjmūʿat al-Ḥāyḳ*, he included eleven of the original twenty-four *nūbāt*, twenty-six *ṭubūʿ*, and five *mawāzīn*. There was no mention of neutral intervals (Guettat 2000:259; Schuyler 1978). While maʿlūf styles do have a few *ṭubūʿ* that include neutral intervals (Langlois 1996:265), there are no such melodic modes with neutral

intervals in *āla*. It has been suggested that perhaps this absence is due to the introduction of Western instruments by the French, leading to the avoidance of these melodic modes (Schuyler 1978). I would suggest that Morocco's historical resistance to the Ottoman Empire has more to do with this. The pervasive use of neutral intervals in the melodic modes of Ottoman music was no doubt responsible for their adoption into *ma'lūf* traditions. In any case, the *nūbāt* used in Moroccan *āla* have not and do not use neutral intervals at all. Because of this, Moroccan *ālī* (musicians) often insist that *āla* is definitely part of the Andalus patrimony and even more authentically Andalusian than the other *nūba*-based styles of the Maghreb.

Melodic approaches drawn from *āla* are used in Maroka'i liturgical and para-liturgical performance. Similar to the Eastern Arab *maqām* (sing.) system and the Hindustani *rāga* system, a *ṭab'* is melodically developed by treating each note in the mode as a station or emphasis point. When a *ḥazzan* improvises during specific moments in the liturgical service, this approach to melodic construction is quite apparent. Rhythmic approaches from *āla* are also incorporated into the practice of Maroka'i liturgical music. What Habib Hassan Touma calls a "rhythmic-temporal structure," whereby a quantitative and qualitative division of time is implied by the performer in fixed cycles or free rhythm, governs much of Maroka'i performance (Touma 1996:47).

Rhythmic cycles are as important as the structure of heavy and light strokes. Quantitative divisions of time, organized according to a particular number of beats, are just as important as the qualitative configuration of the deep and light tones of the drum within a given cycle. It is this qualitative aspect that often differentiates two different rhythmic cycles with the same number of beats from one another. Similarly, an intra-rhythmic integrity defined qualitatively is crucial to sacred text cantillation and liturgical practice, when the absence of accompanying instruments leaves rhythm solely in the hands of the *ḥazzan*.

A beloved canon of song melodies and texts remains at the core of āla practice. New texts continue to be composed based on portions of the eleven nūbāt of al-Hāyk. As performers and purveyors of Arab-Andalusian classical music for centuries, Jewish poets and musicians from the Maghreb have been adding Hebrew texts to this corpus of Arabic texts and developing an autochthonous melodic repertoire (Chetrit 1999). The incorporation of elements from āla into liturgical, para-liturgical, and even non-liturgical music remains a means for emblemizing Maroka'i identities worldwide.

*Gharnati (Djiri), Melhūn, Matruz, Cha'abi, and Musika mizrahit*

Several musical styles derived from Arab-Andalusian music have developed in the Maghreb into differentiated nūba-based classical forms, defined by temporality and geography. The presence of nūba elements—ṭubū', poetics, and instrumentation—allows practitioners of nūba-based classical styles to claim a patrimonial link to Andalus (Glasser 2008:6-7). *Gharnati* (from Granada) is associated with the western Algerian cities of Tlemcen and Algiers. The border city of Oujda also became a prominent place for gharnati practice. Musicians and listeners emphasize gharnati's historical authenticity—descended from Andalus—and its geographical authenticity—from Granada and Tlemcen—as a means to express ideas of patrimony about the genre. “Nūba discourse reinforces specific senses of urban place while at the same time nurturing feelings of connectedness to distant cities” (ibid:14).

Maroka'im generally call gharnati music *djiri* (from Algeria). The border area between Morocco and Algeria has long been porous. Because of this, Maroka'i claims to cultural expressions of this region are normal. While distinctions are made, the history of translocal Jewish life in this part of the Maghreb makes incorporating western Algerian cultural expressions into Maroka'i identity an entirely palatable incongruence. Djiri songs are a large part

of musical life in the Maroka'i diaspora. Musically astute Maroka'im in Brooklyn can point to the provenance of a melody as djiri and not āla, or vice versa. This recognition is based on whether the piece is considered "heavy Moroccan [āla]" or not (p.c., R' Chaim Dahan, January 13, 2006). Djiri is considered a light classical style, with shorter and easier melodies. For most members of Brooklyn's Maroka'i community, the specific provenance of melodies is usually unknown; djiri and āla melodies are simply recognized as part of a common Arab-Andalusian musical tradition and part of the patrimony of Morocco.

Like djiri, *melhūn* (melodic poem) is also considered a light classical style based upon nūba elements. It is related to āla with far fewer ṭubū' and mawāzīn and does not follow the nūba-style song suites. Melhūn tends to rely upon new texts in the *qaṣida* and *zajal* poetic forms, in colloquial Arabic and Hebrew. It is historically associated with working-class men, tradesmen, and craftsmen working in northern Moroccan cities like Fez, Tangiers, Chefchaoune, and Ouezzane. Practitioners would create short verses to sing in āla style (Dellai 1996).

Quite often melhūn ensembles were comprised of performers of different genders and ethnicities. In Christopher Gall's (2004) interview with Said el Meftahi, an accomplished melhūn musician in France, Meftahi comments that "*les plus grands chanteurs du Melhoun peuvent aussi etre de religion juive*" (the greatest singers of melhūn can also be Jewish) (Gall 2004). Meftahi goes on to list several important Jewish contributors to melhūn, including Cheikh Zouzou, Saoud Daoud, Albert Suissa, Zohara el-Fasiyya, and Samy el Maghrebi. Melhūn artists have also been open to incorporating Western instruments, such as the piano, banjo, and even saxophone. Similarly, the incorporation of women performers is undoubtedly an expression of urbanity on the part of many practitioners. The historical milieu of the genre coincides with the advent in several cities in Morocco of new social norms regarding the roles of men and women.

Today it is still popular for its relative simplicity in relation to āla—simpler poetics and limited ṭubū‘—and is performed in cities throughout Morocco.

These classical and light classical styles of Arab-Andalusian music in the Maghreb are emblematic of Maroka’i identity. As one informant—a friend of a friend in his early thirties—commented to me at Netivot Israel synagogue after Rosh Hashanah services in 2008, “when I’m driving around, I only listen to āla. It is my music.” He continued explaining that locally, where other Sephardi-Mizraḥi styles are quite prominently heard throughout the Brooklyn Sephardi community, he felt playing this music as loud as he could in his car was a statement to others that there is another Middle Eastern music. “I pump it out of my car stereo speakers, *davka* (in spite)!” Several songs used in Maroka’i musical life in Brooklyn and in other diaspora communities come from this mélange of styles of Arab-Andalusian, nūba-based musics.

*Matruz* (embroidered garment) is a popular style that utilizes some nūba elements. However, whereas the light classical styles hew closely to nūba traditions, *matruz* is considered more progressive. In the early twentieth century, musicians working in urban centers like Fez, Tangiers, and Casablanca began confronting and embracing new technologies that would make a particularly strong impact on music making. “Print, recording, and broadcast technologies are all examples of the way in which Maghrebi-Andalusi music was socially relocated in the first decades of the twentieth century” (Glasser 2008:21). For example, from recordings and radio, these musicians were exposed to sounds from the East. Radio was helping greats like Umm Kulthūm permeate households across the entire Arab world. In comparison to other nūba-based styles, *matruz* has an expanded repertoire of melodic and rhythmic modes, incorporating eastern Arab modes and Western instruments.

In its earliest days, *matruz* was an even more prominent reflection of a growing urbanity in several Moroccan cities than *melhūn*. *Matruz* artists with mixed-gender ensembles were challenging societal gender norms as early as the 1940s; Zohara el-Fasiyya, the female Jewish singer and Moroccan music icon, had one such ensemble. Among Jewish performers, it was common practice to improvise verses, jostling between Arabic and Judeo-Arabe or Judeo-Spanish (Zafrani 1999:78-79). The willingness on the part of performers to borrow and incorporate from several different sources, and the openness of a growing listenership, gave *matruz* a strong voice in the burgeoning popular music scene of mid-century Morocco.

*Cha'abi* (from the countryside; also spelled *sha'abi*) is the name for both a specific rhythm and a Maghrebi popular musical genre. By the mid-1960s, *cha'abi* flourished as a popular music genre throughout the Maghreb. Like *matruz*, *cha'abi* includes a mixture of elements, but it is not derived from *nūba*-based Arab-Andalusian tradition. Instead, it draws mostly upon indigenous musics in the Maghreb. Its roots can be traced to the folk musics of the region, especially from rural Berber communities in the mountains and on the edge of the Sahara. In the ensuing decades *cha'abi* served as a backdrop for innovative popular music artists to explore and incorporate new instruments and electronics, multiple languages, and dance music. *Raï* music is a modern popular genre that is related to *cha'abi*, incorporating several aspects of the genre. All *cha'abi* music, early and recent, remains organized around a propulsive six-beat rhythmic cycle that never relents.

Several songs performed in Brooklyn come from *cha'abi* composers working in Morocco and in Israel in the 1950s and 1960s. Notable Jewish artists include Salim Hālali and Victor el-Maghrebi. Through *contrafacta*, most *cha'abi* songs are performed locally with Hebrew texts. What would otherwise clearly be non-liturgical music is incorporated into the religious sphere of

the synagogue without controversy. Songs from this repertoire are often performed during festivals and weddings, reiterated constantly so that they remain a regular part of the popular consciousness of community members.

*Musika mizraḥit* (eastern or oriental music) is an ethnically based popular Israeli music genre, developed primarily by Sephardi-Mizraḥi immigrants and their progeny. Regev and Seroussi characterize it as a “major expression of a profound process of social change that has affected mizraḥi Israelis since the 1970s” (Regev and Seroussi 2004:175). It is based on forms of Western, Eastern Arab, and Greek popular music. Familiar elements include verse-chorus song forms, functional harmony, and pop/rock instrumentation. The use of Eastern Arab *maqāmat* (pl., melodic modes) is pervasive in approaches to melodic composition. Rhythms coming from several different Mediterranean musical traditions are incorporated into the genre as well. These stylistic elements, including vocal aesthetics, language, and melodic ornamentation, provide *musika mizraḥit* with a unique “color” (as the term is used in Racy 1982). The conglomeration of stylistic features employed could be quite different from one song to the next on a given album.

*Musika mizraḥit* became the sound of a loosely stitched-together otherness that symbolizes the Sephardi-Mizraḥi community in Israel. Amy Horowitz argues that *musika mizraḥit* artists have been successful at encouraging an Israeli nativity to emerge within the Sephardi-Mizraḥi pan-ethnicity, through the appropriation and incorporation of Western elements as well as reliance upon and confidence in their Mediterranean (Maghrebi and Mizraḥi) aesthetic (Horowitz 2010). The politics and musical elements of this genre present a synergetic relationship whereby artists and listeners draw a decisive conclusion about their place in the new Israel. On the one hand several aspects of the music reinforce a Middle Eastern ethnicity, rooting



purveyors in the region geographically, while on the other hand it incorporates western influences in a way that resembles cultural developments within modern Israeli society.

Maroka'im in Israel were active in developing the genre. One of the icons of musika mizrahit, the Yemenite singer Zohar Argov, recast several songs by Maroka'i cha'abi composers as musika mizrahit, including the well-known piece by Victor el-Maghrebi titled "Lahla Yizid Aqtar." Zehava Ben, another central figure in the genre, is a Maroka'i-Israeli who gained much fame for her ability to "transgress boundaries" between regional ethnic styles (Horowitz 2010:129). Her ability to marshal stylistic features from different musical cultures epitomizes the socio-political ethos of musika mizrahit. Her biggest selling album features a song by Umm Kulthūm, "Inta Omri." Its continued presence in Arab *sūqs* (markets) even rebuffs the modern political fault lines between Jews and Muslims. Ultimately, Maroka'im around the world recognize their participation in this pan-Sephardi genre.

In Brooklyn, musika mizrahit is an important non-liturgical genre that for most Israeli-Maroka'i immigrants signifies their youth and for all signifies belonging to the modern Sephardi diaspora. Besides finding an outlet on the local Hebrew language radio station in Brooklyn, musika mizrahit continues to form the soundtrack for most DJs at weddings and fills many iPods and CD players of local drivers. Several restaurants in the neighborhood feature it as background music. Walking around, it is normal to hear musika mizrahit hits coming from open car windows. In the synagogue, stereos are not used, but on weekdays you are likely to hear a cellphone ringtone with a sample from a favorite artist. Musika mizrahit melodies are sometimes incorporated into the repertoire of several different synagogue genres. It is a genre familiar and beloved to most in the community, for its songs, for what it represents politically, and as a realm of commonality between Maroka'im and other local Sephardim.

### Maqām-based Music

*Maqām*, as a system for melodic composition and improvisation, is associated with several eastern Mediterranean musical practices. Maqāmat are melodic modes, comprised of different combinations of short tone rows (trichords, tetrachords, or pentachords), based upon a system of melodic theory developed by al-Fārābi (d. 950) and his successors.<sup>25</sup> Maqām-based music is distinctive because of the presence of neutral melodic intervals and for the adherence to a “tonal-spatial component [that] has a binding and previously fixed organization” (Touma 1996:xx). The ‘tonal-spatial component,’ whereby practitioners using these melodic modes rely upon a nucleus-like tone row and certain rules for developing melodies that emphasize the characteristics of a particular mode, is not exclusive to maqām-based music. Maqām-based music is similar to ṭab‘-based music in this sense. However, in the context of Maroka’i traditional musical genres, the maqāmat themselves are foreign. The sound of neutral intervals is not entirely novel as they have been present in eastern Algerian and Tunisian nūba-based traditions for centuries. And certainly a couple generations of Maroka’im have already been exposed to the sound of maqām-based music via radio and recordings coming from the Eastern Arab countries to Morocco before the mass emigrations of the 1950s and 1960s. Nevertheless, the value placed on āla as the foundation for liturgical song and the influence of regional folk styles on the popular music genres of mid-twentieth century Morocco have kept the presence of neutral intervals somewhat more limited in Maroka’i musical expression. This is certainly true of synagogue practice in Brooklyn’s Maroka’i synagogues.

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<sup>25</sup> Mīkhā’il Mīshāqah (1800-1889) was the first to propose dividing an octave into 24 equivalent melodic intervals (Touma 1996:16).

An important exception is the presence of popular Eastern Arab melodies in festive settings (weddings, meals, parties). Performers hired from other parts of the Sephardi community, including Israelis enculturated in the *Yerushalmi-Sephardi* (Jerusalem-Sephardic) *ḥazzanut* tradition, will often present pieces from their repertoire that utilize maqām. Yerushalmi-Sephardi ḥazzanut is a maqām-based approach to cantorial practice, developed and popularized as a specifically Israeli liturgical style. Practitioners and purveyors of Yerushalmi-Sephardi ḥazzanut belong to a diverse Sephardi-Mizraḥi community that is historically rooted in the Sephardi exile immigrant community which formed in the Old City’s Jewish Quarter at the end of the fifteenth century. In the ensuing centuries, immigrants from other parts of the Sephardi-Mizraḥi sphere—Ottoman provinces in the Balkans, Turkey, and the Levant, Iraq, Persia, Bukhara, and North Africa—increased the population and diversity of this community. By the latter half of the twentieth century, when a much larger number of immigrants from Muslim countries emigrated to Israel, the development of a specific Yerushalmi-Sephardi ḥazzanut style had been developing, incorporating and featuring Eastern Arab maqāmat, melodies, and aesthetics (Barnea 1997).

The Yerushalmi-Sephardi style as it is known and practiced in modern times represents a transformation in maqām-based ḥazzanut practice. Its development epitomizes what Edwin Seroussi suggests as the “maqāmization” of Jewish liturgy in the Sephardi world: a repertoire of songs, representing a wide geographic provenance, have been adapted to Eastern Arab maqāmat, and songs from non-Jewish (Muslim), maqām-based sources such as radio, recordings, and film (especially Egyptian film from the mid-twentieth century) have been adopted into the musical life of the synagogue community (Seroussi 2013:298-299). In recent decades, through the circulation of performances on radio, the Internet, and via various forms of recorded media, as

well as through invitations to ḥazzanim from Israel to visit or relocate to Sephardi synagogue communities in several countries worldwide, Yerushalmi-Sephardi ḥazzanut has become *the* primary style associated with the Sephardi-Mizraḥi community of Israel and as such has been influential throughout the Sephardi diaspora

While Maroka'i immigrants to Jerusalem in earlier centuries and even in the twentieth century joined this community and had some influence in the development of the style because of several leadership roles being held by Maroka'im (Barnea 1997:23), for the most part Maroka'im established separate synagogues in Israel and practice a distinctive liturgical tradition in Jerusalem and other cities in Israel (Sharvit 1986). Individual performers may be able to perform maqām-based songs and even utilize maqāmat with neutral intervals in composition and improvisation, but generally, in communal singing contexts, song melodies of Yerushalmi-Sephardi provenance are often stripped of neutral intervals. Perhaps one could view this practice as a form of *de-maqāmization*. Reliance upon the ṭab' system and the prevailing use of western instruments within the popular musika mizraḥit genre provide plenty of opportunities for Maroka'im to express an Arab musical aesthetic without relying upon maqām.

### **Poetic Genres**

In Brooklyn's Maroka'i synagogues, several different poetic forms are present in the texts during the course of any event. Liturgical services include post-biblical prayers combined with biblical verses, piyyutim, and passages from the *Mishnah* (review) and the Talmud.<sup>26</sup> Festive meals often include a few prayers and several piyyutim and pizmonim. With the introduction of a style of verse-chorus form via musika mizraḥit and Western popular music, and

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<sup>26</sup> The Mishnah is the foundational text of the Talmud. It was compiled in the earliest centuries of the Common Era in six parts, and is understood to be a redaction of the oral-based rabbinic law of Judaism.

the use of Modern Hebrew, new poetic forms are being introduced into the musical life of the synagogue. Almost all texts are performed with musical accompaniment, set to specific melodies or chanted according to general tropes. Even texts used for study—Talmud, exegetical works—are often performed according to a sing-song formula for studying.

Biblical Hebrew poetry (Psalms, Song of Songs, Song of the Sea) utilizes parallelism, whereby an equal number of words or syllables are set in two parts, dividing a line of text into two hemistichs. Textual relationships between verses can also present parallelism through the use of semantic elements and thematic weight. For instance, the first and fourth line of a text might employ metaphors such as *thunder* and *lightning*, while the second and third lines use *dew* and *warmth*. Characteristic of biblical poetry is also the use of stressed syllables. These stresses can be parallel—three stressed syllables per hemistich—or non-parallel or “free rhythm.” 3:2 relationships between stressed syllables per hemistich are common examples of free rhythm (Hrushovsky 1972:1201).

Many of Sepharad’s greatest Hebrew poets utilized quantitative meters stemming from Arabic poetry in their work. These meters are comprised of short (U) and long (–) syllables, characterized by vowel sounds, in a recurring pattern. “This distinction of long and short vowels disregarded syllabic stress, which was the major rhythmical factor in biblical poetry” (Hrushovsky 1981:63). Several Arabic meters were common to both Jews and Muslims in Andalus. However, because two consecutive short syllables are not possible in Hebrew, four of the sixteen common Arabic meters could not be reproduced in Hebrew; a Sephardi Hebrew innovation was the use of consecutive long syllables, in which short syllables are avoided altogether. Hebrew poetic meters followed particular rules for treating short and long syllables, such as always following a short syllable with a long syllable. Often syllabic meters in Medieval

Spanish poetry were intertwined with these quantitative meters. While in both Medieval Hebrew and Arabic poetry it is common to find six or eight syllables per stich or hemistich, Hebrew disregards the short vowels in counting them (Hrushovsky 1981:63).

Most liturgical prayers composed by Medieval Sephardi poets follow the *qaṣīda* model (Scheindlin 1991:18), the most pervasive poetic form in the Arab world. As in Arabic, Hebrew *qasidot* (pl., in Hebrew; *qaṣā'id* in Arabic) are usually in a high linguistic register. Qasidot often incorporate biblical references. A *qaṣīda* is a versification form where each line is divided into two equal parts (a couplet) with a consistent rhyme of the concluding syllable: AA AB AC... The quantitative meter remains the same throughout the piece. Ideally, each line should contain a complete idea. In religious qasidot, the voice of the poet is present at all times, implying a personal conversation and intimacy between the poet and God (Scheindlin 1991:23).

Joseph Chetrit (1981) stresses that two different types of themes were treated in Maghrebi Hebrew poetry. The first, coming from the Sephardi tradition, he calls “individualized” piyyutim that express a personal relationship between the poet—maybe as a communal representative—and God, or focus on individualized life-cycle themes, such as weddings, births, circumcision, and funerals. The second type, what Chetrit calls “social” texts, express communal interests such as social or economic issues, political or religious ideologies, historical events, even religious customs (Chetrit 1981).

Two other important and related poetic forms are the *muwashshaḥ* (ornamented) and the *zajal* (happy noise). These are the most prominent forms used for para-liturgical Maroka'i song texts. The *muwashshaḥ*, considered a post-classical poetic form that originated in eleventh-century Andalus, is similar to the *qaṣīda* in that it relies upon quantitative meter and is written in high-register Arabic or Hebrew (Gil 1991). In contrast to the *qaṣīda*, the *muwashshaḥ* combines

classical and modern rhythmic meters, organizes lines into strophes, and has a refrain. The refrain is usually two lines that have a different rhyme scheme from the three- to five-line strophes: aa bbbb aa cccc aa, etc. Hebraized *muwashshat* (pl.) are also called *kharja* (girdle) poems, employing a rhyming scheme whereby the last syllable of the last line of each strophe rhymes with the refrain (Rosen-Moked 1985; Hrushovsky 1972). Because they are both strophe-refrain forms, the *muwashshah* and *kharja* are preferred for *āla*. The refrain provides a natural place to change or develop a melody.

Like the *muwashshah*, the *zajal* originated in Andalus and is also a strophe-refrain form. The *zajal* always has a characteristic shared rhyme in the last line of the strophe (AA bbba AA ccca), and can have more variations in the internal rhyme scheme of each strophe than the *muwashshah* (AA bcba AA deda, etc.). Because the last line invariably rhymes with the refrain, a Hebraized *muwashshah* is sometimes mistaken for a *zajal*, but an important distinction between the two forms is the linguistic register. A *zajal* uses vernacular languages rather than high-register Arabic or Hebrew. While the *literati* increasingly favored the *muwashshah*, focusing on themes of spiritual worship, love, and piety, the introduction of colloquial language was an innovation that typified the *zajal* and was instrumental as a means for discussing the issues and ideas of the masses (Abu-Haidar 1997:33). In Andalus, the *zajal* often included two languages—Arabic for the strophes and Spanish for the refrain. Which came first, the *zajal* or the *muwashshah*, is still unclear (Monroe 1989). In the case of *zajals* in the Jewish community, the refrain might be in Judeo-Arabic or Judeo-Spanish. Historically, the *zajal* was an important vehicle for non-devotional thematic content as well. While strophe and refrain forms like the *muwashshah* and *zajal* continue to govern the overall melodic form of the musical accompaniment—often soliciting an A-B melodic form to match the strophe and refrain—the

explicit performance of the quantitative aspects of the poetic meters must acquiesce to the melody or rhythm of the piece.

Muwashshat, zajalim, and qaṣīdot permeate Maroka'i musical life. These poetic forms are included in liturgical, para-liturgical, and even non-liturgical repertoires of song texts. In Brooklyn, where familiarity with the qaṣīda and the muwashshaḥ also exists in several other ethnic Sephardi communities, these poetic forms and several texts based upon them operate as vehicles for interethnic musical expression. These poetic forms serve as emblematic of Sephardi-Mizraḥi identity, having helped galvanize a local expression of a pan-Sephardi identity in Brooklyn.

Just as the experience of diaspora migration has brought together Maroka'im from different backgrounds into localized spaces, the transnational circulation of musical material has provided the fodder for constructing localized Maroka'i identities. These different musical and poetic genres form a treasure trove of material for Maroka'i musical practice. The volume of material, forcing community members to make choices about what to weave together from these several different streams of influence, mitigates any impulses towards conservatism. Brooklyn's community members ultimately decide what to remember and reiterate in an effort to emblemize the boundaries of their specific diasporic ethnic identity.

## **Conclusion**

Brooklyn's Maroka'im belong to three diasporic communities. Commencing at different moments in history under unique circumstances, the Jewish, Sephardi, and Maroka'i diasporas intersect with each other in many ways and places. While one diasporic Jewish ethnic community can be related to another, each also offers a distinctive Jewish history, nationality,



spirituality, and cultural life. For instance, the expulsion from Spain is fundamental to the Sephardi diaspora, permeating the historical consciousness of Maroka'i identity as well. As a means for constructing identity, choices about how cultural life is practiced—especially musical practices in the synagogue—are central in how aspects of all three diasporic identities are remembered and reiterated. A layered diaspora consciousness ends up defining similarities and distinctions between Maroka'im and other Jewish ethnics.

This study focuses on what is happening in present-day communal life. The dynamism involved in constructing identity within the community is best understood from the descriptions of the space Maroka'im occupy in Brooklyn. Even though there are distinctly Maroka'i synagogues, the fluidity with which community members choose synagogue attendance in the neighborhood—from the earliest years when boys from Morocco came to a large and powerful Ashkenazi institution to regular attendance at myriad other Sephardi synagogues—shows the porous nature of physical boundaries in the community. This local interculturality between ethnic Jewish groups is very present in Maroka'i life in Brooklyn. Maroka'i synagogues remain one of the most important places for Maroka'i identity to be expressed. Along with private homes and catering halls, synagogues are an incubator for ethnicization as community members from different backgrounds and from other locales of the Maroka'i diaspora come together to negotiate boundaries of identity. Musical practices lie at the forefront of cultural practice in such contexts, providing a vehicle for communal expression and individual incorporation.

Certain musical genres and styles inform musical practice in the community, including classical musics from different parts of the Mediterranean, folk musics of the Maghreb, and popular music from Israel. Drawing upon this wealth of musical material, Maroka'im practice a multifaceted musical identity that is instrumental in formulating Maroka'i identity writ large.

Balancing conservationist impulses for the pursuit of some sort of authenticity with desires to incorporate aspects of musical practice shared with other Jewish diasporic ethnic groups, Maroka'im construct an identity that is permeated by a layered diaspora consciousness.

Each of the three subsequent chapters focuses on certain areas of musical practice within the life of Brooklyn's Maroka'i community. Through participant-observation in several different contexts, and from discussions with informants about these practices in casual conversation, during shared car rides, and in the course of Internet expeditions together, the data cultivated and presented in this ethnomusicological study reveal how the construction of complex diasporic identities can be facilitated by concentrated public expressions. The public presentation of the Torah reading, including the accompanying cantillation practices and songs, the music of hillula festivals, and the music of liturgical services are examples of concentrated public expressions, and are therefore central domains of musical practice in the cultural life of Brooklyn's Maroka'i community. The resultant emblems of identity aid in the definition of communal boundaries and foster a consciousness within all members of what Maroka'i identity means.

### **Chapter Three:** **Kriat ha-Torah – Sacred-Text Cantillation and Liturgy**

*Kriat ha-Torah* (Torah recitation) is an essential part of ritual life in synagogues worldwide. Segments of sacred texts drawn from the Torah (Pentateuch) and other parts of the Hebrew Bible<sup>1</sup> are chanted before the congregation, according to specific rules and customary practices, as a component of the liturgical service. A specialist usually recites the Torah according to a prescribed system of cantillation. Started as a public, marketplace ritual in Jerusalem in the latter part of the sixth century BCE (Elbogen 1993), *Kriat ha-Torah* has evolved into a central part of synagogue ritual, constituting a service within a service. *Kriat ha-Torah* consists of a processional liturgy performed as a Torah scroll is carried through the congregation before and after cantillation, cantillation of the Torah, and cantillation of a weekly segment from prophetic texts. In Sephardi synagogues, the *Kriat ha-Torah* liturgy is augmented by several short songs, sung in honor of certain individuals when they ascend the *bima* (elevated reading lectern) during the recitation of the Torah. Although the *Kriat ha-Torah* ritual also includes non-musical components, it is in the musical expressions—sacred text cantillation, processional liturgy and *bima* songs—that one can best appreciate how community members define their diasporic ethnic identity.

Cantillation of the Torah is performed according to specific rules that have been codified in the form of a set of graphic symbols called *te'amim* (accents; lit. tastes). The *te'amim* function as a notational system, as a mnemonic system of para-textual symbols used to assist the reader

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<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew Bible, known in Hebrew by the acronym *TaNakh*—*Torah* (teaching), *Nevi'im* (prophets), *Ketuvim* (writings)—includes twenty-four books. It represents the Jewish canon of sacred texts, and includes Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Twelve Prophets, Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles.

with the proper accentuation of the words, punctuation of the verses, and phonetic cues. While this syntactical and phonetic information is generally understood in a consistent way throughout the transnational Jewish community, the musical connotations of this notational system differ widely from one Jewish ethnic community to another. Maroka'im have their own discrete melodic motifs corresponding to each of the te'amim symbols, providing a very important means of practicing a distinctive Jewish identity. Maroka'im adhere closely to these discrete melodic motifs.

The way cantillation is practiced in Brooklyn's Maroka'i community also reflects the process of ethnicization that has been defining and communicating boundaries of a pan-Maroka'i ethnic identity. The codification of specific melodic motifs is a result of a transnational impulse to define communal identity in diaspora. Audio recordings and the Internet, two important means for inscribing and sharing an otherwise oral tradition, have been catalysts for this ethnicization. However, what is most important to ethnicization is that community members reiterate these motives every day in synagogue practice, and transmit them to the next generation locally through tutoring and classes. Cantillation practices foreground the Maroka'i layer of diaspora consciousness.

Processional and bima songs are two important additional types of musical expression during Kriat ha-Torah. Processional songs are liturgical pieces. While the liturgical texts are the same as those used in most Sephardi communities, the melodies conjure a distinctively Maroka'i association. Bima songs are short songs, for which sometimes only a short fragment is performed. The repertoire is wide-ranging and includes a number of modern compositions. Whereas te'amim practice in the Maroka'i community emphasizes a pan-Maroka'i ethnic identity, a direct result of emigration and diaspora, bima and processional songs are used to

iterate a hybridized ethnic identity that emphasizes both Maroka'i and Sephardi layers of diaspora consciousness. The use of certain bima songs indicates the symbiotic relationship that exists between Brooklyn's Maroka'im and members of other local Sephardi communities. While the chief concern of this chapter is to show that the musical practices found in Kriat ha-Torah in Brooklyn's Maroka'i community are vital for constructing a layered diaspora consciousness—and primarily Maroka'i and Sephardi layers—the larger context of Kriat ha-Torah also shows a consciousness of the Jewish diaspora.

As I proceed through this contextual discussion, I highlight distinctive practices. After this contextual material, I present an ethnomusicological analysis of Maroka'i approaches to te'amim to show the results of a process of ethnicization through which community members have been defining a pan-Maroka'i identity. Following this discussion of te'amim, I focus on bima and processional songs to show how the Sephardi layer of diaspora consciousness is being renegotiated in the Maroka'i community through incorporation and exclusion. Clearly defined boundaries promulgate a distinctive Maroka'i identity, while also coalescing with more fluid boundaries to encompass additional Sephardi ethnic identities as well. These musical expressions—te'amim and bima and processional songs—are imbued with emblems of identity that have symbolic meaning for community members.

## **Defining Kriat ha-Torah**

According to Biblical tradition, Ezra the Scribe began public recitation of the Torah following the Babylonian exile (586-538 BCE). During the reign of King Cyrus of Persia, members of Babylonia's Israelite community were invited to return to Jerusalem to rebuild

Solomon's temple.<sup>2</sup> While most of the Israelite elite stayed in Babylon, Ezra moved to Jerusalem and began public recitations of the Torah on market days (Monday and Thursday) and on Shabbat as a means of reacquainting the populace with the sacred text of Israel. Kriat ha-Torah is a reproduction of this historically based ritual, which since that time period has become a fundamental part of synagogue practice. It is still performed every Monday, Thursday, and Shabbat, as well as during festival days such as Rosh Hashanah, Pesah, and Shavuot.

At the heart of Kriat ha-Torah is the Torah scroll. The central text of Jewish mythology and law, it contains the basic framework for living as a Jew. It also contains the secrets of God's and the world's existence. According to accepted religious thought, the word of God passed through His prophet and pupil Moses. *Torah*, derived from the Hebrew verb *hu'rah* (to be shown), is the term for this teaching. The Torah is God showing Moses the secrets of existence as well as the role of the Israelite nation in existence. The Torah consists of five books: Genesis or *Bereishit* (in the beginning), Exodus or *Shemot* (names), Leviticus or *Vayikra* (He called), Numbers or *Bamidbar* (in the wilderness or desert), and Deuteronomy or *Devarim* (things or words). Together they form the written law and record of the Jewish people, from the time of creation through the exodus from Egyptian bondage until Moses's death on the precipice of the promised land of Israel. Jewish tradition holds that all five books form a complete work.<sup>3</sup>

Most of the performative elements, such as te'amim, selections of sacred text, and service liturgy, were defined and circulated throughout the Jewish diaspora and codified in the Talmud

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<sup>2</sup> *Ezra* 1:1-3.

<sup>3</sup> The notion that the five books of the Torah were composed at the same time and represent a complete work has been challenged by scholars pointing out grammatical and stylistic anomalies in the latter two books, Numbers and Deuteronomy (Friedman 1987). According to Jewish tradition, anomalies are simply clues to the secrets of Torah.

and in the Aleppo Codex (tenth century CE).<sup>4</sup> While Kriat ha-Torah is an ancient ritual that has served as a focal point for Jewish synagogue practice for centuries, it has also been an important and highly revered space within Jewish ritual where aspects of cultural practice colored its performance in different Jewish ethnic communities. Accordingly, musical expressions have been playing a central role for some time in service of characterizing emblems of Jewish ethnic identity. No other Jewish ritual commands the kind of reverence and attention of Kriat ha-Torah.

It is a ritual inserted into the longer liturgical rites for Shabbat, festivals, and on Monday and Thursday mornings; synagogue services are longer on these days because of the Torah reading. Torah cantillation serves as the apex moment of communal synagogue practice. As R' Gad Bouskila once admonished worshippers from the pulpit, "If you can't make it in time for the beginning of Kriat ha-Torah, there are other synagogues that start later. Go there."<sup>5</sup> In many synagogues it is common to see the majority of seats fill up shortly before Kriat ha-Torah. Although the preceding liturgical rites and prayers are important, one must not miss the recitation of the Torah. The Torah text remains central to normative Judaism and Kriat ha-Torah is the ritual vehicle for maintaining its supremacy as *the* sacred text above all others.

Kriat ha-Torah comes at the end of *Shaharit* (the morning liturgical service), after the *Shema*<sup>6</sup> and the *Amidah*<sup>7</sup> prayers. The Shema and the Amidah are meant to spiritually focus and

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<sup>4</sup> The Aleppo Codex or *Keter Ḥalabi* (Aleppo Crown), a product of the Tiberius Masorah or group of scribe-scholars working to delineate delineating aspects of Jewish tradition in this small town near the Sea of Galilee, gained worldwide acceptance as the standard Hebrew Bible text (Shiloah 1992:100). Its publication was preceded and influenced by the work of R. Aaron ben Moshe ben Asher (d. 960 CE), a leading figure among the Tiberius Masorah and author of *Sefer Diqudegi haTe'amim* (Book of Grammar and Accents).

<sup>5</sup> Rabbi Gad Bouskila, from the pulpit at Netivot Israel, May 10, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> The *Shema* (hearing) is the affirmation of monotheism and a reminder of the Israelite exodus from Egypt, spoken by God directly to the Israelites.

prepare community members for Kriat ha-Torah. On Shabbat and festivals, after the rabbi's customary sermon, there is a short *musaf* (additional) service meant to evoke a remembrance of the additional priestly animal sacrifice services that used to be performed on Shabbat in the Holy Temple of Jerusalem.

Derived from the Hebrew verb *koreh* (קרא), to read or to call out, *kriah* (קריאה) is a gerund: a reciting, calling out, crying, or shouting. The kriah of the Torah must be clearly audible. Because the purpose of the ritual is public recitation or cantillation, it is incumbent upon all community members to listen intently. According to Maimonides (R' Moshe ben Maimon, 1135-1204), the renowned and revered Sephardi rabbi, philosopher, and doctor:

From the moment the reader begins to read the Torah it is forbidden even to talk about some matter of law; rather all must listen, and be quiet and pay attention to what he reads, as it is written: (Nehemia 8:3) "and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the Torah." (Mishneh Torah, Tefillah 12:9)

In Maroka'i synagogues, when the kriah begins silence prevails. This meticulous attention to practicing silence has always struck me when visiting Maroka'i synagogues, in Brooklyn, Canada, France, Israel, and Morocco. At Netivot Israel synagogue, conversations or even whispers during the kriah will prompt stern glances, hand gestures, or outright silencing by others. It is acceptable to chat only between recitations, especially if this momentary lapse in cantillation is utilized for discussing the text that was or is about to be performed. On my many visits to other synagogues, I have never observed the same attention to decorum during kriah as I have in Maroka'i synagogues.

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<sup>7</sup> The Amidah is a central component of each liturgical service in the synagogue. The *Amidah* (standing), alternatively called the *Shemoneh-Esrei* (eighteen), is the recitation of eighteen blessings. Individuals recite the eighteen blessings silently, as a standing meditation. After every one is complete, the *hazzan* repeats the eighteen blessings aloud.



The meaning of the term *kriah* is similar to that of *Qira'a* (Qur'anic recitation). In scholarship on the recitation of the Qur'an, there is a debate about whether *qira'a* constitutes real musical expression. According to some jurisprudential perspectives, "music" is forbidden in Muslim society. Qur'anic recitation is considered an extra-musical expression because it is sacred and performed without instruments (al-Faruqi 1979; Nelson 1985). Though the latter two points are true of Torah cantillation as well, there is no jurisprudential condemnation of music in Jewish law and thus musical expression in general is allowed. Nevertheless, because there is such diversity of melodic practice for Torah cantillation, the question of whether this cantillation really constitutes a musical expression does persist (Shiloah 1992). In any case, it is not acceptable to simply read the Torah aloud. Individuals can quote a line or two during study or informal conversation, but during *Kriat ha-Torah*, where longer passages are performed, chanting is mandatory.

*Kriah*, the Hebrew word itself, is understood by some to suggest a different kind of experience for the performer and listener. R' Joseph Dweck explained to me that "the letter *alef* (א) implies a closeness or love in the relationship" between the expositor and the receiver of the words, incorporating a finer philological point about the meaning of the word (p.c., R' Joseph Dweck, March 12, 2011). In the case of the Torah, the expositor is God and the original receiver the holy prophet Moses.<sup>8</sup> Hearing the *kriah*, members of the transnational Jewish community feel they are communicating directly with God. Where prayer is *Yisrael* (the people) coming to talk

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<sup>8</sup> *Vayikra* (and he called), the Hebrew name for the Biblical book of Leviticus, is spelled *vav-yud-quf-resh-alef* (ויקרא). The letter *alef* implies that God is speaking with Moses, directly. When God speaks to another Biblical prophet, Bilaam, who is considered a bad prophet, the letter *alef* is missing at the end of the word. *Vayikar* (ויקר) is often translated as *he happened upon*, which has a slightly derogatory connotation. Thus, the presence or absence of the *alef* is indicative of the differing natures of God's relationships to his prophets.

to God, the Torah is God talking to Yisrael (Munk 1961:173). During a sermon at Shaarei Shalom on Shabbat *Bereishit*, the first Shabbat after Rosh HaShanah, R' Joseph Dweck suggested that the earliest words in the Torah convey the essence of man's existence.<sup>9</sup> At this moment, man could see absolute truth. Mankind came to rely on the sense of hearing for explanation of God's truth only after he disobeyed God's commandment to refrain from eating from the "tree of knowledge about good and evil" (Genesis 2:9). In other words, mankind's ability to understand the existential reality of God's truth, "in God's eyes," was diminished by the sin of eating from the tree, while the sense of hearing became and remains the best faculty for receiving God's truth in the hope of understanding it. Dweck explained to me later that hearing facilitates a linear acquisition, in sequential time, of the Torah's precepts. The Torah is the explanation of exactly how a Jewish person is to navigate the world and its temptations, and listening is the best way for the soul to absorb the message. Therefore, the kria must be audible if man is to approach God's truth (p.c., R' Joseph Dweck, October 17, 2009).

### **Elements of Kriat ha-Torah**

Kriat ha-Torah is comprised of three primary elements: objects, performative materials, and actors. While the general purpose and characteristics of these elements are similar, peculiarities exist in each and help one to differentiate between Jewish ethnic communities. A better understanding of the musical expressions discussed in this chapter depends on understanding the elements of the ritual and recognizing indicators of diaspora consciousness even in the extra-musical aspects of communal performance.

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<sup>9</sup> R' Joseph Dweck, synagogue sermon, October 17, 2009.

### Objects

Ritual objects have important functions in Kriat ha-Torah. The Torah scroll, its case, the *haftarah* scroll (additional sacred texts), the *yad* (decorative pointer), the *tallit* (prayer shawl), and the *aron* (cabinet) all serve specific functions in the ritual. Every Jewish synagogue community uses these objects for Kriat ha-Torah. The construction of these objects and their use can symbolize different ethnic identities.

A Torah scroll must be handwritten<sup>10</sup> on sheets of parchment from a *kosher* animal, sewn together with animal sinew. Although there is no set size for a Torah scroll, most are between seventeen and twenty-two inches in height. Each end of the lengthy scroll is attached to a dowel. Sephardim use a round or octagonal case made of wood or metal to hold the Torah scroll. The case is often inscribed with the names of donors or their families. Finials, which can be quite elaborately constructed, sit atop each of the two protruding dowels. These cases are often decorated with scarves tied to the finial posts (figure 3.1a).

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<sup>10</sup> Despite translations of the Torah into many languages, the only permissible language other than Hebrew for composing a Torah scroll is ancient Greek, according to R' Shimon ben Gamliel in Talmud tractate *Megillah:9a*. This practice no longer continues.

**Figure 3.1a: Sephardi Torah Case (CJA)**



**Figure 3.1b: Torah scrolls in the aron at Netivot Israel synagogue**



Because a Sephardi case stands upright on the bima table, anyone sitting or standing nearby can easily see the letters of the scroll when open. There are very strict rules governing the written text; professional scribes inspect the process closely, often double- or triple-checking each other's work for accuracy and quality. The ink must not run. The kerning of letters must not be too tight. If a Torah scroll is missing a single letter, it is considered *pasul* (invalid).<sup>11</sup> Because the Torah is handled quite often, community members, and especially those in positions of authority, regularly inspect the text for any problems. For instance, if the ink cracks, causing a letter to split or fall off, the Torah scroll is *posul* and can no longer be used until it has been fully repaired. In the Torah scroll the lettering is free of the *nequdot* (dots and dashes) used to indicate certain vowels and certain consonantal sounds; these *nequdot* appear only in printed texts of the Hebrew Bible. Many letters in the Torah scroll have special calligraphic adornments called

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<sup>11</sup> Many people suggest that the Torah text has mystical qualities and contains secrets of God. An old Hasidic adage states that in each Torah there is a letter that belongs to every individual; its place in the narrative reveals something about that person.

*ketarim* (pl., crowns). Every community in the transnational Jewish community uses the same text and adheres to the same level of concern for its basic form.

In Sephardi synagogues it is common to find an additional scroll containing *haftarot* (pl., additional writings). This scroll is also handwritten on parchment, and its case is similar to but much smaller than a Torah case. The scroll of *haftarot* contains a collection of excerpts from additional biblical writings—Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah—that are read after the Torah. The *haftarah* (sing.) usually corresponds to a particular theme or moment in the Torah text and is often prophetic in nature. Whereas a Torah scroll is a necessity for a congregation, a *haftarot* scroll is a luxury, and many congregations simply rely on a printed book.

In accordance with the religious precept of *tzniut* (modesty), the Torah scroll must be covered when not in use. Principles of modesty apply to the object just as they would to someone's body. Thus, the scroll must be covered even between readings, during a pause in the cantillation. Sephardim close the case almost completely or simply cover the written parchment with a *tallit* (prayer shawl) so that the scroll is not visible. They are careful not to close the case completely, lest someone should think that Kriat ha-Torah is finished prematurely.

A *yad* (hand) is used to read from the Torah. It is typically handcrafted from metal or wood, with a miniature hand on the end with an extended finger. A *yad* can be quite ornamental. The *ba'al koreh* (master reciter) holds the *yad* as he reads to keep his place in the text. This is considered preferable to a finger since a sharp fingernail or oil from the skin might cause damage to the lettering.

The *aron* (sacred cabinet) is usually built into the sanctuary wall nearest to Jerusalem; in the West, the *aron* is always along the eastern wall. In Sephardi liturgy the *aron* is also called a *hekhal* (palace). It is representative of the innermost sanctum of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem,

where the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments were kept. Its purpose is to house the Torah and haftarah scrolls (figure 3.1b). The Torah must be removed and returned to the aron at the beginning and end of the service. Opening the aron and carrying the Torah is a special honor. It is customary for the entire congregation to remain standing whenever the aron is open, out of respect for its contents.

A *tallit* (prayer shawl) is used for Shabbat and festival morning services. Sephardi men and boys over the age of thirteen, after their bar mitzvah, wear the tallit for the entire service. It is customary in Maroka'i synagogues for congregants to put the tallit over their heads as an extra sign of respect. When the Torah is carried through the sanctuary, one refrains from touching the Torah case directly with the bare hand. Instead, many people hold the corner of the tallit in the hand as an intermediary.

The *tzitzit* (fringes) at the four corners of the tallit hold special significance as a direct commandment from the Torah:

Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'Throughout the generations to come you are to make tassels on the corners of your garments, with a blue cord on each tassel. You will have these tassels to look at and so you will remember all the commands of the Lord, that you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by chasing after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes. Then you will remember to obey all my commands and will be consecrated to your God'. (Numbers 15:38-40)

Maroka'im and other Sephardim typically look for ways to incorporate the *tzitzit* into the ritual. For instance, the Sephardi custom is to hold *tzitzit* in the air between one's fingers as an extra sign of respect for the Torah when lifted. The *tzitzit* can even function for the *ba'al koreh* as a *yad*. For the deluge of handshakes that greets someone when he returns to his seat from the *bima*, Marokai'm have a custom of putting the *tzitzit* between one's index and middle fingers before shaking a fellow congregant's hand.

Although the objects used for the Kriat ha-Torah service have shared a common form throughout the Jewish diaspora, examining the structural or stylistic differences among them is important. Additionally, seeing how they are used, including the different gestures, helps us appreciate how they symbolize distinctive ethnic characteristics. While some might think that these are minor differences—for example, the use of the tzitzit for shaking hands—they are used to express belonging or immediately identify an outsider.

### Performative Materials

In Maroka'i communities, most of the performative materials used in Kriat ha-Torah are expressed musically. In addition to the cantillation of text and processional and bima songs, several blessings are chanted. The rabbi's sermon is also central to the ritual, though it is clearly not a musical expression. But because most of the performative materials include a musical component, musical expression is central to defining Maroka'i identity in this context. A short examination of these performative materials will offer more evidence of distinctive layers of diaspora consciousness.

Whenever kriah is performed, only a *parashah* (portion) from the Torah is read. The *parashah* is chosen either for its relation to the annual cycle of reading the entire Torah,<sup>12</sup> or for its relevance to a particular occasion, such as a festival day. The generally accepted order and parameters of the *parashiyot* (pl.) are based upon Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, "Hilkhot Tefillin u'Mezuzah v'Sefer Torah" (laws of *tefillin*, *mezuzah* and *Torah*). The name of a *parashah* is drawn from an incipit in the first or second verse. For instance, "*Bereishit barah Elokim*" (In the

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<sup>12</sup> For some Reform and Conservative synagogues, a triennial cycle for complete reading of the Torah is used instead, reducing the amount of text read each week and thus expediting the completion of liturgical services. Also, because many non-traditional synagogues do not designate a *ba'al koreh*, effectively encouraging more community members to perform cantillation, the longer cycle makes preparation for these laymembers much less arduous.

beginning, God created...; Genesis 1:1) is the opening of *Parashat Bereishit*. Similarly, each Shabbat is associated with a *parashat ha-shavuah* (portion of the week): Shabbat Bereishit, Shabbat Lekh-Lekha. On *Shabbatot* (pl.) that coincide with holidays, such as Pesah or Sukkot, certain verses from the Torah that pertain to the occasion can be added, whereas if the festival day falls during the week, the parashah relates to the mention of the holiday in the Torah. Generally, a Shabbat parashah is longer than a festival parashah.

A parashah is further segmented into several portions called *aliyot* (pl., ascensions). According to halakhah, each *aliyah* (sing.) must be a minimum of three verses long. In general, each Shabbat the parashah is divided into seven segments but eight aliyot, since the concluding three to six verses of the seventh aliyah are reread as the *maftir* (additional) aliyah. For holidays, the number of aliyot varies from three to six. During *Minḥah* (the afternoon service), the first nine verses of the next week's parashah are divided equally into three aliyot. These three aliyot are repeated on Monday and Thursday morning in anticipation of the upcoming Shabbat.

### Actors

Everyone in the congregation performs a role in Kriat ha-Torah. Members stand as the aron is opened and remain standing for the entire Torah processional. Every person must listen intently to the kriah; this usually includes following along in a printed book during cantillation. There are some specific roles for individuals, including the *ba'al koreh* (master of recitation); the *somekh* (assister) and the *gabbai* (synagogue manager), who remove the Torah and carry it from the aron to the bima; *olim* (ascenders, pl.) who bless the Torah and stand with the ba'al koreh while a portion of text is chanted; and the rabbi. The same individuals perform some of the roles each time: the rabbi, ba'al koreh, somekh, and gabbai. The olim and those who remove and



return the Torah to the aron change each time Kriat ha-Torah is performed. While everyone in the community is actively involved, some roles stand out.

In Sephardi synagogues, only men perform the individualized components of the ritual. Men are in control of all ritual objects and have exclusive rights to carry, bless, and cantillate the Torah. Despite the fact that their participation in the Kriat ha-Torah ritual is proscribed, women still take part as listeners (arguably the most fundamental participatory role in the ritual) and sing along in an undertone with the bima and processional songs.<sup>13</sup> In Maroka'i synagogues, women often stand for the Torah processional and take part in the auction for aliyot and other honors during Kriat ha-Torah. However, if they win an auction, they must appoint a male to carry out the honor. There are a few occasions when more participation by women is appropriate.

Throwing candies and ululating for someone on a special occasion, such as a bar mitzvah, or for a *ḥatan* (bridegroom) when he is called to the Torah for an aliyah on the Shabbat prior to his wedding, are notable for how noticeable women's participation becomes. Women can also call out names when the rabbi performs a blessing for the health and recovery of loved ones who are ill. In general, the role of women in the ritual is limited, and in most Maroka'i communities in Brooklyn the women are sequestered upstairs, in the back of the sanctuary, and meant to be hardly visible.

Most Sephardi congregations have a designated ba'al koreh. His primary job is to chant the Torah audibly and according to the *minhag* of the community. The ba'al koreh must be intimately familiar with the Torah text, including anomalies in the pronunciation of certain words

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<sup>13</sup> The accepted practice is that women do not sing or perform in front of men. According to the halakhah of *Kol Isha* (woman's voice), a woman may not sing in a manner that will be heard by a man during *Kriat Shema* (Talmud Bavli: *Berachot 24a*; Shulkhan Arukh: *Orakh Ḥaim 75:3*). In liturgical contexts, where men and women often sing together, women are careful to keep the volume of their singing voices lower than men.

and versification. He must also be familiar with the community's *minhagim* (pl.) as they relate to melodic and linguistic approaches to cantillating the text. According to Amram Abesor, the ba'al koreh at Hesed l'Avraham synagogue, a Maroka'i ba'al koreh can use *silsulim* (ornamentations; melodic embellishments) only if they add to the cantillation and do not distract the listener from the text or render the cantillation in an unfamiliar style (A. Abesor, July 14, 2010). The purpose of a designated ba'al koreh is to perform the kria clearly and in a manner familiar to community members. Typically, the position of ba'al koreh in Brooklyn's Maroka'i community is hereditary or given to someone because of his obvious skill.

**Figure 3.2: R' Gad Bouskila Reciting Megillat Esther**



There are occasions when someone besides a designated ba'al koreh may perform Torah cantillation. In the event of a bar mitzvah, the honoree will usually perform part or all of the parashah as a rite of passage. On the anniversary of a bar mitzvah, that person may wish to cantillate an aliyah as a commemoration of this important life-cycle event. Similarly, if a distinguished person in the community joins the ba'al koreh at the bima, and he knows the text and cantillation well, he may want to perform the kriah himself. At Netivot Israel synagogue, when visitors come to the community from other parts of the Maroka'i diaspora, it is customary to offer them the opportunity to perform the kriah of their aliyah. These guest performances confirm for community members that the cantillation tradition they use in Brooklyn is found worldwide (R' Gad Bouskila, May 10, 2008). In contrast, if a guest is unfamiliar with the community's style of cantillation, as in the case of a visitor from another Jewish ethnic community, he will usually demur from performing the kriah. As Albert Abitbol responded when I asked him why a particularly distinguished individual did not perform his own kriah, "he's a *buz-buz* [slang term for Ashkenazi]. He can't do it like us, so he just goes up [to the Torah] and listens" (p.c., A. Abitbol, May 30, 2009).<sup>14</sup> Community members would not have been pleased with such a change to the cantillation. Furthermore, in the case of an Ashkenazi visitor to a Maroka'i synagogue, the pronunciation of the Hebrew would also be different. This would surely exacerbate the unfamiliar nature of such a kriah. Thus, while there are occasions for others to perform kriah, a designated ba'al koreh remains preferable.

In his chapter "Dinei Ba'al Koreh" (Laws of the Ba'al Koreh), Shlomo Man (2002) presents 43 *halakhot* (pl.) regarding the legal and customary parameters of who can be a ba'al

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<sup>14</sup> It was already clear to me that this individual was not Maroka'i because when he blessed the Torah, he sang the blessing in the Ashkenazi style. When I saw that he did not perform his own kriah, I asked Albert whether he could have.

koreh and exactly how a ba'al koreh should carry out his duty. Drawing on earlier sources of rabbinic law—*Shulhan Arukh*, *Sha'arei Efrayim*, *Mishnah B'rurah*—Man adds explanations of discrepancies and commentary on contemporary approaches to the laws. For instance, in relation to cantillation Man writes that a designated ba'al koreh must have a pleasing voice and be strong, a man of good deeds, and loved by the community (Man 2002:142). I've never seen community members polled on whether they like the ba'al koreh or how they would identify a “man of good deeds.” Nevertheless, it is an honorable position in the community and a responsibility that every ba'al koreh takes very seriously. Man adds that according to halakhah, a community does not need a designated ba'al koreh as long as the person who recites the Torah understands the meaning of what he is chanting and can ensure correct grammatical pronunciation of the Hebrew (Man 2002:142).

According to R' Ovadia Yosef, a leading voice in the contemporary Sephardi diaspora, Sephardim must make a special effort on *Shabbat Zakhor* (Shabbat of Remembrance) to hear the kria according to a Sephardi minhag. R' Yosef insists that because there is a special commandment from the Torah to remember the story of Amalek's attack on the Israelites in the desert (Deut. 25), not hearing this parashah in a familiar kria can be problematic. R' Eli Mansour, a popular rabbinic authority in Brooklyn's Sephardi community, publishes a daily email on a topic related to halakhah or minhag.<sup>15</sup> Regarding this parashah, he adds that “every person should ensure to hear the reading from somebody who reads according to his own family tradition” (Mansour 2011).

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<sup>15</sup> *The Daily Halachah* is an email listserv generated and distributed by Syrian Rabbi Eli Mansour, covering a wide range of topics related to halakhot and minhagim. He often cites rabbis with differing perspectives before explaining why a particular perspective is appropriate for the Sephardi community.

Specifically addressing Sephardi students who attend Ashkenazi yeshivot, however, R' Yosef adds, “the Sephardi accent is the authentic one. Their [the Ashkenazim's] accent is wrong. They are stubborn and don't want to change” (Alpert 2011). This challenging statement by R' Yosef was made in support of Maroka'i-Israeli R' Meir Mazuz, an important rabbinic figure in the Maroka'i diaspora community, who rebutted a claim made by a leading Ashkenazi rabbi in Israel that Sephardim do not pronounce God's name correctly. According to this Ashkenazi authority, Sephardim have been remiss for some time in failing to carry out the halakhah to hear parashah Zakhor. While insisting that any approach is acceptable, R' Mansour adds his voice to this linguistic argument by contending that the modern Sephardi pronunciation of God's name is more historically accurate. To support his argument, Mansour references well-known Sephardi poets Shlomo Ibn Gabirol (1021-1058) and Yehuda Halevy (1075-1141):

Rabbi Shelomo Ibn Gabirol, in his rhyming Azharot hymn, writes, “Anochi Ado-nai, Keraticha Be-Sinai.” He clearly intended for Hashem's [God's] Name to rhyme with “Sinai,” even though the final vowel in Hashem's Name is a Kamatz, and the final vowel of “Sinai” is a Patah. This proves that he pronounced the two vowels identically. Similarly, Rabbi Yehuda Halevi wrote in the “Mi Kamocha Ve'en Kamocha” hymn which we sing on Shabbat Zachor, “Bi'ymeh Horpi Mi'kadmonai, Bi Diber Ru'ah Ado-nai.” The word “Mi'kadmonai”—which ends with the Patah sound—is used to rhyme with Hashem's Name. Likewise, in the famous “Sur Mi'shelo” hymn which we sing on Shabbat, the word “Emunai”—which ends with a Patah vowel—is used to rhyme with Hashem's Name (“Sur Mi'shelo Achalnu Barechu Emunai, Sabanu Ve'hotarnu Ki'dbar Adon-nai”). These and other examples clearly testify to an ancient Sephardic tradition to pronounce the Kamatz as a Patah. (Mansour 2011)

While Man and the halakhic authorities Man cites seem to be satisfied with correct grammatical pronunciation, privileging syntax above all else, these Sephardi rabbinic authorities clearly insist that followers also recognize the importance of aural elements in kria—Hebrew phonetics and cantillation. Their argument seems to emphasize minhag as much as halakhah. In this case, minhag and halakhah ultimately become intertwined and indistinguishable. Even

though halakhah is often touted as more important than minhag, here boundary building according to minhag is given greater importance as an expression of a specific Jewish ethnicity. Minhag is used to promote a strong boundary between Sephardim and Ashkenazim.

A subsection of Man's chapter, "Changes in the Melody of Kriat ha-Torah," focuses on parsing differences between Ashkenazi and Sephardi minhagim, specifically with regard to melodic approaches to the cantillation of certain passages of Torah on special occasions. While Man does not make specific reference to "Sephardi," he uses the phrase, "There are places where..." and regularly references the *Mishnah Berurah*—a text citing differences between Ashkenazi and Sephardi minhagim—to suggest deviations from the normative (Ashkenazi) approach (Man 2002:155-158). Despite efforts to codify halakhot related to the ba'al koreh, there is clearly room for minhag to prevail as an acceptable and indeed crucial marker of differences in Jewish ethnicity.

For kriah, individual community members are invited to become olim, joining the ba'al koreh at the bima. Described above as the segment of text read, the term *aliyah* (ascension) is also a term used to refer to the action that these community members perform during the ritual. Olim bless the Torah and remain close to it while kriah is performed. Olim have the honor of representing the entire congregation for a short moment during the most important service in the synagogue.

There is a hierarchy to the types of individual olim. The first *oleh* (ascender, sing.) is a descendant of the *Kohanim* (pl., members of the priestly caste); the second *oleh* is a descendent of the *Levi'im* (pl., Holy Temple attendants). Going forward, anyone from *Yisrael* (children of

Israel) may be honored as a member of the greater Jewish community.<sup>16</sup> R' Eli Mansour explains that the number of olim from each category—Kohen, Levi and Yisrael—culminates with eight aliyot for each group by week's end (Mansour 2010). On Shabbat, the Kohanim and Levi'im receive one aliyah each during the Kriat ha-Torah of *Shaharit* (morning service) and *Minḥah* (afternoon service); Yisrael receives five aliyot during *Shaharit* and one during *Minḥah*. During *Shaharit* on Mondays and Thursdays, the only other occasion in a regular week for Kriat ha-Torah, each group receives one aliyah. Thus, Kohen, Levi, and Yisrael each have eight aliyot per week. According to R' Mansour, this practice was instituted in Jewish tradition as a means to ensure equitable distribution among different segments of the community. He again blurs the line between custom and law, elevating minhag to the status of halakhah by emphasizing that customs like this should not be taken lightly:

These insights underscore the importance of the traditional customs we observe. Even after viewing just a small glimpse of some of the profundity underlying our customs, we immediately recognize their significance and deep meaning. We must therefore cherish them and carefully observe them, and never belittle them or consider their observance unimportant. (ibid.)

Before and after each aliyah, the *oleh* blesses the Torah. The Torah case is closed almost completely to hinder any view of the Hebrew text during the blessings. Generally, it is customary in Sephardi synagogues for the *oleh* to hold his tallit in front of the Torah scroll during the blessings; it is common in Maroka'i synagogues for olim to cover their heads with the tallit from the moment of ascension throughout the entire *kriah*. Before beginning the blessings, a Sephardi *oleh* will often proclaim: *Ha-Shem imeikhem* (may God be with you all). Congregants then

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<sup>16</sup> The *Kohanim* and *Levi'im* are members of the priestly tribe of Levi. Because of the Babylonian expulsion and ensuing diaspora in 586 BCE, the remaining eleven tribes were mixed or lost. These are collectively referred to as *Yisrael*.

respond: *ye-varekhekha Ha-Shem* (may God bless you).<sup>17</sup> The *oleh* begins with the blessing, *Barukhu et Ado-Shem ha-mevorakh* (blessed is He who blesses). The congregation responds and the *oleh* repeats: *Barukh Ado-Shem ha-mevorakh le-olam va-ed* (blessed is He forever). The *oleh* completes the sequence of blessings with a lengthier benediction extolling God for choosing the nation Israel to be the recipients of His Torah. Once the *ba'al koreh* has completed the *kriah*, the *oleh* passes his *tallit* in front of the Torah scroll again and recites a concluding blessing thanking God for the giving of Torah to the world. In Maroka'i and other Sephardi synagogues, the blessings before and after each *aliyah* are often barely audible to congregants, even those sitting nearby.

On Shabbat and holidays, there is an additional *aliyah*, called *maftir* (an “addition,” from Talmudic literature for an additional thought at the end of a discourse), which serves as the final reading from the Torah. The *oleh* called for *maftir* can be from any group: Kohen, Levi, or Yisrael. While short—a repeat of only the last three to six verses of the seventh *aliyah*—it has special significance as the last reading of the Torah for the day. This *aliyah* serves as the moment

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<sup>17</sup> This practice is thought to originate in the biblical *Book of Ruth*, where Boaz (Ruth's husband) exchanges these greetings with his field workers (Ruth 2:4). According to R' Eliyahu Biton (2006), the Maroka'i *minhag* is to bow when saying this and to refrain from saying *Rabanan* (gentlemen) before the *ba'al koreh* begins (accessed via email listserv *Darké Aboténou*, January 10, 2010). In Sephardi synagogues in Brooklyn, most (but not all) congregants say *Ha-Shem I'meikhem*, but the careful attention that Biton suggests for these other *minhagim*—bowing and refraining from saying *rabanan*—is something I have never witnessed, nor have any informants expressed to me the need to be careful of these details. In Maroka'i synagogues, the practice of proclaiming *Ha-Shem I'meikhem* is noticeably less popular, but congregants respond when it is said. The absence of these practices in Brooklyn may be due to the time spent in Ashkenazi *yeshivot* by a great portion of the Maroka'i Jews, especially the rabbis, since the congregation follows the rabbi. *Ha-Shem I'meikhem* is never said in Ashkenazi synagogues. In fact, while I was attending an Ashkenazi synagogue, a Yemenite acquaintance commented to me before he ascended the *bima* for an *aliyah* that the congregation would not know how to respond when he said *Ha-Shem I'meikhem* “because they are Ashkenaz.” He was correct! The congregation remained silent, save for two or three of us Sephardim in the room.



of passage into adulthood for a young boy (and for a young girl in non-traditional synagogues), when he becomes a *bar mitzvah* (son of the commandment). Typically, for the maftir aliyah the bar mitzvah candidate approaches the Torah as an oleh for the first time, recites the necessary blessings, and performs the job of the ba'al koreh to show the entire community that he is now prepared to take upon himself the tenets of a full-fledged member of the Jewish community. Sometimes the maftir aliyah is reserved for someone celebrating a special occasion, such as the birth of a child or an anniversary, or for a learned community member. Despite his obvious learning, in most Sephardi synagogues the rabbi is rarely called for the maftir aliyah as he is often honored with significant aliyot throughout the year instead—the recitation of the Ten Commandments, the Song of the Sea, or aliyot on holidays.

It is common (though not required) that the oleh for the maftir aliyah, upon completing the blessings, chants the *haftarah* (additional segments from the prophetic writings in the Hebrew Bible). The melodic cantillation is markedly different from Torah cantillation. Because so many haftarot come from the prophetic books, often including passages from Isaiah foretelling exile and redemption, the melodic cantillation is generally more somber in tone. The haftarot remind community members of an important element in their Jewish diaspora consciousness: exile. In western Ashkenazi practice, the last verse of the haftarah is usually intoned with an uplifting melody to suggest that redemption is possible and near, if only the words of the prophets will be heeded. In Maroka'i synagogues, the reciter emphasizes the haftarah's message by pausing before the last verse. The whole congregation recites this verse aloud in unison. The reciter then repeats this verse to conclude his recitation. Following the haftarah kria is a series of blessings by the oleh for the redemption of the faithful, the truth of His prophets, and the holiness of the Shabbat.

In most Sephardi synagogues, the repetition of part of one aliyah—usually the sixth—is common to accommodate additional olim. This repetition allows more people to receive an aliyah than the requisite number of individuals. In Maroka'i synagogues, part of the sixth aliyah is always utilized for this purpose. By contrast, Syrians tend to insert extra aliyot by further segmenting the second aliyah; instead of reading the aliyah for Levi as usual, it will be truncated to make room for additional aliyot, thus preventing any duplication of the text. Sometimes Syrians also repeat part of the sixth aliyah, if need be. Adding aliyot is unusual in Ashkenazi practice altogether. Adding aliyot is helpful when visitors come to the synagogue for a special occasion: for a bar mitzvah, a baby naming, or an upcoming wedding. Similarly, if someone returned from a trip the previous week or is returning to synagogue the first time after a surgery, attack, or other hazardous incident, he can come to the Torah for an aliyah and recite *Birkat ha-Gomel* (blessing for deliverance from danger). In Ashkenazi communities, if someone must say Birkat ha-Gomel, he simply ascends the bima in between aliyot, just before the last aliyah, recites Birkat ha-Gomel, and descends.

During the entirety of kriah, one or two individuals (not olim) stand on either side of the Torah, usually the *gabbai* (synagogue manager) and the *somekh* (assistant to ba'al koreh). In Sephardi synagogues only a somekh is necessary, though most Sephardi communities have both. The gabbai is a layman caretaker of the synagogue whose duties generally include being a point person for all sorts of organizational activities in the community. However, for Kriat ha-Torah he usually has the honor of picking the olim. Of course, on a special occasion such as a bar mitzvah or the Shabbat before a bridegroom's wedding, he will make sure that these individuals have aliyot first before doling out the remainder to others in the community. In Maroka'i synagogues, at the beginning of Kriat ha-Torah, before the Torah is removed from the aron, it is customary

for the gabbai to stand with the rabbi and auction aliyot to potential olim in exchange for promises of future charitable contributions. The bidding can generate high returns, especially on holidays. At Netivot Israel synagogue, some community members dominate in this process by regularly outbidding competitors. This is an important source of income for synagogue operations. Winners can give the aliyah to another community member—this often happens at Netivot Israel synagogue—as an expression of good will or camaraderie. After each auction, the rabbi blesses the winner and whoever will take the aliyah, imploring the gathered to respond with a hearty *amen!*

During each aliyah, the gabbai takes his place standing to the right of the Torah and following the text in a printed book. The somekh stands to the left of the Torah. His role is more important to the ba'al koreh than the gabbai's. Following along in a printed book, he uses hand gestures to cue the ba'al koreh in how to chant the text. These cues—for the te'amim—signify grammatical clauses, the ending of verses, or syllabic emphases, and can cue certain types of melodic markings. He also provides correct Hebrew pronunciations when necessary. Today, with the ubiquity of printed copies of the Torah text, most congregants are eager to help out with this duty. Nevertheless, it is the somekh's responsibility to help the ba'al koreh perform his duty as well as possible.

In most Sephardi synagogues, the rabbi usually sits to the side and listens to the Torah like any other congregant. At the end of Kriat ha-Torah the rabbi gives a sermon, usually connecting ideas from the parashah to the current state of communal life. At Netivot Israel, R' Gad Bouskila is even more involved, helping with the auctioning of aliyot, blessing each winner, accompanying the Torah processional, blessing olim, and delivering a sermon. When an oleh descends from his aliyah on the bima, it is customary for him to shake or even kiss the rabbi's

hand. Maroka'i rabbis are very careful not to allow congregants to actually kiss their hand, pulling it away just as they get close. This was explained to me as a gesture of humility; the rabbi does not want to be treated like a haughty king (p.c., R' Gad Bouskila, May 10, 2008). Instead, the rabbi will place his hand on the congregant's head and give a short parting blessing.

From examining the objects and primary actors in the Kriat ha-Torah service, one can already see the juxtaposition of layers of diaspora consciousness. The characteristics of objects used in the ritual and the roles of different actors show evidence of intercultural exchange among Sephardi communities in the past and present. Although we have seen some isolated evidence of pan-Sephardi practices, the aggregation of these elements often shows an overlapping of certain boundaries between Sephardi ethnic groups. Furthermore, while there is obviously much overlap with Ashkenazi boundaries, there are also numerous instances where the distinction between Ashkenazim and Sephardim is quite pronounced. Without getting into the merits of any particular approach to Kriat ha-Torah, one can see that the negotiation of certain communal boundaries fosters diasporic ethnic identities. For instance, Man's repeated use of the phrase "There are places where..." serves as an example of how an Ashkenazi rabbinic interpretation of the ba'al koreh's role is fundamentally informed by the notion that there are many Jewish people and communities whose practices are foreign. These communities shares approaches to Torah cantillation that are distinct from him or his community.

### **Kriat ha-Torah—a Vehicle for Layered Diaspora Consciousness**

Kriat ha-Torah serves as a vehicle for encoding aspects of a layered diaspora consciousness: homeland orientation, transnationalism, and the negotiation of identity boundaries. It is a significant means for instilling a persistent homeland orientation in the consciousness of members of the transnational Jewish community. Synagogues, decentralized

since the destruction of the Holy Temple and free from a central authority, function as gathering centers for worship where the performance of Kriat ha-Torah still reminds all Jews of the historical and religious foundations of the diasporic community. Community members know that they are carrying on a practice that served as the foundation for the return and recovery of the Israelite nation at the commencement of the Second Temple Period (the fifth century BCE through the first century CE). While no one is actually reading the Torah publicly in the market outside the Holy Temple, working as desperately as Ezra to rebuild the religious principles of a severed society, Kriat ha-Torah reproduces an act that was part of the Holy Temple atmosphere. Thus, in a visceral way, the narrative of exile from the temple cult is reiterated each time the ritual is performed.

Kriat ha-Torah is a reminder of both similarities and differences between the communal groups that are included in the transnational Jewish community. The basic elements of the ritual have been the same throughout the Jewish diaspora. Distinctive practices, however, remain important and acceptable. “Part of B’nai Yisrael’s (the transnational Jewish community’s) mission in *galut* (exile) is to incorporate elements from the other ‘*amim* (peoples or nations)” (p.c., R’ Joseph Dweck, November 11, 2009). Inherent to the fabric of the transnation are acceptable differences, incorporated into Jewish practice from living amongst non-Jews, as an understood part of the historical experience of the nation in exile.

Kriat ha-Torah operates as a space to negotiate boundaries of Jewish ethnic identities. When the boundaries of these identities must also incorporate additional diasporic ethnic identities, the ritual becomes a space for the reproduction of layers of diaspora consciousness. The result is similar to James Clifford’s notion of a *lived tension* (Clifford 1997:255), whereby community members are living in a stage between connection solely to a homeland and to a

transnation. The basic form of the ritual is inhabited by distinctive approaches to practice—from the homeland—but the need to incorporate aspects of practice from other Jewish diasporic ethnic groups presents itself. As an audible ritual, Kriat ha-Torah serves as the most sublime vehicle for educating members of the transnational Jewish community about shared historical origins and laws at the same time that it promotes ethnic particularities. If part of diasporic communities, these ethnic particularities promote layers of diaspora consciousness to emerge.

## **Te'amim**

The cantillation of Torah and other sacred texts is performed according to para-textual markings called *te'amim* (pl., accents; tastes), a shorthand for *te'amei ha-Mikrah* (the calling tastes). The *te'amim* are used exclusively for the TaNaKh (see footnote 1). Along with nequdot, the *te'amim* were codified in the Aleppo Codex as a means to control the text. But the invention of the *te'amim* was a remarkable innovation at the time. By that point in Jewish history, the Talmud had already become a definitive document of laws and practices of the Israelite religion. However, among the passages in the Talmud related to Kriat ha-Torah, very few deal with how to render the text. There are statements outlining how to divide the text into aliyot (*Megillah 22a, 23b, 24a*) and imploring listeners to be present and attentive (*Berachot 8a*), and several laws for who can be called for an aliyah and how (*Ketuvot 25b, Megillah 21a*). Despite these important statements about how to conduct the ritual, there are no passages conveying phonetic or syntactical information and no prescriptions for melodic cantillation. The Aleppo Codex, and specifically the inclusion of the *te'amim* and nequdot, filled this void.

### Phonetics and Syntax

The phonetic and syntactical cues provided by the te'amim and nequdot have been instrumental in developing a basic, accepted understanding of the Hebrew Bible throughout the Jewish world. Symbols above or below the text provide cues for syllabic accentuation. Ensuring this important phonetic feature of text performance is a step in safeguarding the meaning. In Hebrew, different patterns of syllabic stress can suggest different grammatical tenses or change the meaning of an entire word. *Mil-el* and *mil-ra*, used for liturgical and Modern Hebrew pronunciation (Spector 1965), describe the simple accentuation of the first or last syllable of each word, respectively. For instance, SHA-lom is *mil-el* and sha-LOM is *mil-ra*. In this case, there is no change in meaning between the two ways of accentuating the word. However, if Shalom is someone's name, *mil-el* is appropriate for pronunciation. Te'amim mark many more variations in syllabic accentuation, suggesting that the sacred texts are in a higher linguistic register than liturgical prayer.

Te'amim are also responsible for conveying important syntactical information (Waltke and O'Connor 1997; Dzialosynski 2004). There are two general types of te'amim: *mehabberim* (pl., conjunctive) and *mafsiqim* (pl., disjunctive). Without the te'amim, some verses can be misunderstood. For instance, if understood correctly, the verse "vayehi erev vayehi boker yom ehad" (it became evening and it became morning one day; Genesis 1:5) implies that evening and morning together form one day. The *mehabberim* or *mafsiqim* symbols provide this syntactical information. For proper understanding of the aforementioned verse, kriaah must be performed with a pause between *boker* and *yom*: *vayehi erev vayehi boker / yom ehad* (it became evening and it became morning / one day). Therefore, a *mehabber* (sing.) symbol connects words in the first part of the verse, followed by a *mafsiq* (sing.) symbol to insert the vital pause. The

mehabberim serve to connect evening and morning as part of one idea. The mafsiq essentially serves as a comma, further emphasizing that “evening and morning” are together, and separate from what is to follow. Finally, a mehabber is used to form “one day.” The verse opens with a conjunctive te’am, has a disjunctive te’am in the appropriate place to separate the ideas, and closes again with a conjunctive te’am. In Maroka’i practice, specific melodic motifs are associated with each of the mehabberim and mafsiqim symbols to help congregants aurally recognize the syntactical distinctions. Thus, the ba’al koreh’s performance presents a basic understanding of the text to the congregation through the te’amim—through phonetic (syllabic accentuation) and syntactical cues.

Nequdot, while not part of the te’amim, are included in the Aleppo Codex to ensure the clarity of the text. Nequdot are generally unnecessary, as a reader can often decipher the correct Hebrew letters from the context. For instance, *bet* (ב) and *vet* (ב) are distinguishable by the *nequd* (sing.). From context, one will know which letter to pronounce. Similarly, the placement of the nequdot distinguishes certain letters from one another: *shin* (שׁ) and *sin* (שׂ). Since the Torah scrolls do not include any markings, performers study printed versions of the Hebrew Bible to memorize both the te’amim and the nequdot.

### **Te’amim as a System of Musical Notation**

According to Amram Abesror, R’ Michael Kakon, and R’ Gad Bouskila, three figures in Brooklyn’s Maroka’i community who regularly perform and teach kriah, the musical rendering of the Torah text is determined clearly by the te’amim. The te’amim function as a prescriptive musical notation system for a clear set of melodic motifs. Abesror studied the te’amim with a private tutor as a boy growing up in Marrakesh. After immigrating to Brooklyn in 1966 and attending the Mirrer Yeshivah, Abesror assisted with the establishment of the Maroka’i prayer



group that would eventually form the basis of Netivot Israel synagogue. With his brother-in-law R' Shlomo Lankry, Abesor established H̳esed l'Abraham synagogue. He serves as the ba'al koreh at H̳esed l'Abraham and prepares young boys in Torah cantillation for bar mitzvah. As Abesor explains, "I've been exposed to all the styles—Ashkenazi, Misri (Egyptian), Yerushalmi (Yerushalmi-Sephardim). They are all beautiful. But we [Maroka'im] pronounce each te'am more. We try to be very clear" (p.c., A. Abesor, July 14, 2010).

Expressing the melodic motifs in an unmistakably recognizable way is of the utmost concern to community members. The musical expression given to each of the te'amim is the most important aspect of practicing Kriat ha-Torah that Maroka'im use to distinguish themselves from all other Jewish ethnic groups. The te'amim have become central to the process of ethnicization in the community, whereby these melodic motifs and their application to the text are conceptualized, taught, learned, and ultimately practiced as an important means for promoting a distinctive ethnic boundary. It is clear that te'amim symbols index certain aspects of cantillation for all Jewish ethnic communities, but the extent to which individual communities rely upon these symbols for their musical quality varies. For Maroka'im, they are a means for constructing a distinctive identity.

While the te'amim convey a normative understanding of syntax and some phonetic cues, they have been less successful in providing a standardized approach to musical expression. Amnon Shiloah maintains that "although every Jewish congregation uses the same accents (te'amim), from the musical standpoint not all congregations give true musical expression to each and every symbol" (Shiloah 1992:103). For instance, in Yemenite communities several mafsiqim symbols utilize similar melodic motifs, whereas meḥabberim are almost tuneless (*ibid.*). Avigdor Herzog goes further by stating that:

It must always be remembered that the accent signs (te'amim) themselves are not, and never were, a sound script with the same possibilities and limitations of the music notation which developed in Western Europe. They are only reference aids to the evocation of 'motivic ideas' which, in themselves, are an orally transmitted patrimony. (Herzog 2007:662-663)

As a non-Western notational system, the te'amim may not describe musical performance as accurately as modern staff notation, but for Maroka'im this system of notation is more than a reference aid for evoking motivic ideas. Herzog seems to discredit the notion that an "orally transmitted patrimony" can preserve a small number of discrete melodic motifs. Perhaps he is suggesting that only with the aid of western notation can melodic formations be described and properly reiterated without corruption, as he asserts that only among the Ashkenazim "was the [te'amim] system developed and augmented with the aim of having each accent sign expressed by a distinct melodic formation" (Herzog 2007:659). In Brooklyn's Maroka'i community, the melodic motifs for each of the te'amim are distinct and reiterated with little deviation, despite the reliance by the ba'al koreh on the paratextual markings only. Melodic variation should not be seen as a corruption or deviation from the norm, but rather as ornamentation or extension.

R' Kakon explained to me that the te'amim also help to tell the story. For instance, when something special is happening in the story, te'amim with ascending melodic motifs might appear on the name of a biblical character, such as Abraham or Jacob. The melodic motive can also signal an important event or occurrence in the text (p.c., R' Michael Kakon, February 20, 2005). In the first verse after the Ten Commandments, there is a te'am with a very sophisticated melodic motive attached to the first mention of the Israelites. According to Kakon, this represents the magnitude of the moment of communal affirmation of God's most cherished ordinances (Exod. 21:15).

### The Zarqah Table

One of my first contacts when starting fieldwork for this study was R' Michael Kakon. We met at a small judaica store, then owned and operated by R' Shlomo Lankry of Hessed l'Abraham synagogue. When I mentioned my interest in Maroka'i music, R' Lankry immediately introduced him to me. R' Kakon is a professional singer from Marrakesh, who, after spending time in yeshivot in Paris, London, and Lakewood, New Jersey, immigrated to Brooklyn in the early 1980s. He is fluent in Hebrew, English, French, and Arabic. While living in Brooklyn, he travels to New Jersey regularly, to serve at a pulpit for a small Maroka'i synagogue in Fort Lee on holidays and many *Shabbatot* (pl.). He is conversant in several genres of Sephardi-Mizrahi music, but generally performs only at Maroka'i affairs—weddings, hillulot, and other festive occasions. His ex-wife is Israeli, and his teenage children currently reside there. They visit Brooklyn and he visits Israel regularly, to spend time together. When I first met with R' Kakon and expressed my interest in learning more about Maroka'i musical practices, he immediately opened a printed Torah book to its inside cover, pointed to a Zarqah table of words with symbols, and said to me, “This is one hundred percent authentic Moroccan!” (p.c., R' Michael Kakon, November 17, 2004). What he was showing me was for him—and as I would learn later from others as well—an important source of Maroka'i musical identity, passed down unadulterated from the homeland. Holding the Zarqah table (see figure 3.3), he pointed at the text as he performed each of the te'amim, one by one.

The Zarqah table is a reference guide and tool for learning the most common te'amim. The title of the table is derived from the name of the first te'am: *zarqah*. Each super- or sub-textual symbol is paired with a corresponding Hebrew or Aramaic name. In the Maroka'i

community, the Zarqah table is used to teach and study the te'amim symbols and their corresponding melodic motifs.

**Figure 3.3: Sephardi Zarqah Table – Te'amim Names and Symbols**

**טעמי המקרא – לפי מנהג הקריאה של עדות המזרח**  
 (Ta'amei ha-Mikrah – According to the Recitation Custom of Eastern Communities)

<sup>1</sup> זְרָקָה <sup>2</sup> מִקָּף-שׁוֹפָר-הַנִּלְיָה <sup>3</sup> סְגוּלָתָא <sup>4</sup> פָּזֵר-גָּדוֹל  
<sup>5</sup> תִּלְשָׁה <sup>6</sup> תִּלְשָׁה <sup>7</sup> אֲזָלָא <sup>8</sup> גְּרִישׁ פְּסָקוֹ <sup>9</sup> רְבִיעַ שְׁנַי-גְּרִישִׁין  
<sup>10</sup> <sup>11</sup> דְּרָגָא <sup>12</sup> תְּבִיר <sup>13</sup> מְאָרִיךְ <sup>14</sup> טַרְחָא <sup>15</sup> אֲתַנַּח <sup>16</sup> שׁוֹפָר-מְהַפֵּךְ  
<sup>17</sup> קְדָמָא <sup>18</sup> תְּרֵי-קְדָמִין <sup>19</sup> זְקָף-קָטָן <sup>20</sup> זְקָף-גָּדוֹל <sup>21</sup> שְׁלִשֵּׁלַת  
<sup>22</sup> תְּרֵי-טַעְמֵי <sup>23</sup> יְתִיב <sup>24</sup> סוּף-פְּסוּק

Zarqah	~	1	Revi'a	◊	9	Qadma	˘	17
Maqaf Shofar Holekh	◡	2	Shenei Gereshin	”	10	Trei Qadmin	˘ ˘	18
Segulta	∴	3	Dargah	⋮	11	Zaqef Qaton	˙	19
Pazer Gadol	˘	4	Tevir	˘	12	Zaqef Gadol	˙˙	20
Talshah	◊	5	Ma'arikh	˘	13	Shalsholet	⋮	21
Tilshah	◊	6	Tarkhah	˘	14	Tere Ta'amei	˘˘	22
Azlah Geresh	˘ ˘	7	Atnah	˘	15	Yetiv	<	23
Paseq		8	Shofar Mhupakh	<	16	Sof Pasuq	˘	24

\* Numbers correspond to melodic motifs discussed below

Names for a few te'amim suggest clear syntactical function, such as *sof pasuq* (verse end). Several names come from the shape of the symbol, such as *revi'a* (four), which has four sides and is shaped like a diamond (see figure 3.3, symbol #9). According to the Sephardi Pizmonim Project (SPP) website, the meaning of the names of several te'amim imply their melodic shape. For instance, *zarqa* (scatterer) implies a “scattering of notes” and *shalsholet* (chain) a “string of notes.”<sup>18</sup> However, this seems a bit arbitrary to me. What is a scattering of notes? According to my informants, these specific names have no connotations that govern the melodic performance of the text. For Maroka'im the symbols, as prescriptive devices, operate independently of their names as a notational system for exact melodic motifs.

The earliest known Zarqah table was compiled between 1505 and 1511 by the Christian humanist Kaspar with accompanying early western melodic notation for each symbol (Shiloah 1992:104). Today, there are two widely accepted versions of the Zarqah table—one Sephardi (as in figure 3.3) and the other Ashkenazi. These tables typically appear in the introductory pages of printed editions of the Torah. The discrepancies between the two tables are minimal. Almost all of the names of the te'amim are the same between the two. There are more symbols in the Ashkenazi table since it also includes obscure te'amim. My Maroka'i informants dismissed the missing te'amim as rare and therefore not necessary to include in the standard table.

Maroka'im divide the Zarqah table, which has 24 te'amim symbols, into 19 specific melodic motifs. Certain combinations of te'amim are performed together since they often appear together in the texts. However, sometimes these combinations are broken up or spread out over

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<sup>18</sup> The Sephardi Pizmonim Project is managed by David Betesh, who has digitized and made available many recordings of Syrian, Egyptian, Iraqi, and Yerushalmi-Sephardi versions of *pizmonim*, Torah cantillation, liturgical songs, and *maqāmat* (pl.). <http://www.pizmonim.org/taamim.htm>, accessed November 13, 2009.

multiple words, in which case the melodic motifs will be truncated or extended, respectively. In figure 3.4, the name for each te'am or common combination of te'amim appears in Hebrew script with its corresponding symbol above the staff; a transliteration of the Hebrew appears below the staff. The corresponding melodic motif appears in the staff notation. The figure ends with a tone row of six pitches—four main and two auxiliary pitches.<sup>19</sup> This cannot be considered a melodic mode or hexatonic scale, as there is no emphasis of a tonic as a resolution point for the melodic motifs. It is interesting to note that this tone row does not correspond to any particular *'tab* (see Chapter Two) found in the Maroka'i classical Ala-Andalusit genre. However, a correlation can be drawn between how the two systems, the te'amim tone row and Ala-Andalusit *ṭubū'*, are practiced. Both systems skip certain notes or treat them as only passing tones as a common way of constructing melodies.

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<sup>19</sup> Hollow noteheads are emphasized pitches, while filled-in noteheads are generally treated as passing tones.

**Figure 3.4: Zarqah Table, Amram Abesror, Recorded July 14, 2010**

1 זָרְקָה 2 מִקַּף-שׁוֹפָר-הוֹלֵךְ סְגוּלָתָא 3 4 פְּזֵר-גְּדוּל 4  
 Zar - qah\_\_\_\_\_ Ma-qaf sho-far ho-lekh se-gul-tah Pa-zer ga - do\_\_\_\_l

5 תִּלְשָׁה 6 תִּלְשָׁה 7 אֲזַלָּא גְרִישׁ 7  
 Tal- shah\_\_\_\_\_ Til - shah\_\_\_\_\_ Az - lah ge - re\_\_sh

8 פָּסְקוּ 9 רְבִיעַ 10 שְׁנֵי-גְרִישׁ 10  
 pa - se\_q Re - vi\_\_\_\_\_ - 'a She-nei ge-re-shi\_\_\_\_\_ n

11 דַּרְגָּא-תְּבִיר 12 13 14 15 16 17  
 Dar-gah\_\_\_\_\_ Te - vi\_\_\_\_\_ r Ma-a-rikh-Tar-khah At-nah Sho-far m-hu-pakh qad ma\_\_\_\_\_

18 תְּרֵי-קַדְמִין 19 זְקַף-קַטוֹן 20 זְקַף-גְּדוּל 21 שַׁלְשֵׁלֶת  
 T - rei qad-mi\_\_\_\_\_ n Za - qe\_f qa-ton Za-kef-ga-do\_\_\_\_l Shal-she\_\_ le\_\_ t

22 תְּרֵי-טַעֲמֵי 23 יְתִיב 24 סוּף-פָּסוּק  
 Te - re ta' - me\_\_\_\_\_ Ye - tiv Sof pa\_\_ suq

20  
 \_\_\_\_\_

\* Performed with D as Tonic

A number of specialist informants in the community have verified that these melodic motifs are standard in Maroka'i te'amim practice. Dan Bouskila, an excellent and very precise ba'al koreh at Netivot Israel synagogue, R' Kakon, a professional ḥazzan and ba'al koreh, R' Avraham Amar of the Sephardic Home, and R' Gad Bouskila have all corroborated that

Maroka'im use this repertoire of melodic motifs for the te'amim. The Zarqah table remains a central tool for teaching and practicing Torah cantillation. As a clear collection of the most essential te'amim symbols, it is important for conveying the specific melodic motifs that accompany each te'am. R' Bouskila teaches a class on the te'amim to pre-bar mitzvah boys every Shabbat afternoon. He begins by using the Zarqah table. Similar to R' Kakon, R' Bouskila feels strongly about the role of te'amim in defining Maroka'i identity. "It is very important to pass our *masoret* [tradition] to our children. This [te'amim practice] is definitely from our masoret!" (p.c., R' Gad Bouskila, January 24, 2010). As an important community leader, his presence to teach the class every week adds significance to the learning of te'amim.

#### *Motivic Development and Variations in Performance*

Some variation is expected in the performance of te'amim motifs. Abesror explains that one type of variation, *silsul* (decoration, ornamentation), is intentionally applied to te'amim. If a ba'al koreh expresses the te'amim motives clearly, then silsul will be welcomed and appreciated as beautification, not distraction.

The basic *te'amim* are the basic [*sic*]. You can say a *zarqah* this way [motions a variation]. It is always the same. You can hear the zarqah. No matter how good the *hazzan* (cantor; often used interchangeably with ba'al koreh), you can still hear the zarqah... [sings two variations of zarqah] ... Some people [ba'alei koreh] would go on, make it fancier. But you will always feel the zarqah. (p.c., A. Abesror, July 14, 2010)

These melodic variations should not be viewed as corruptions of the core melodic motifs, but rather as motivic developments. In R' Kakon's performance of the Zarqah table (figure 3.5), it is apparent that little variation exists. Kakon respects the intervallic and intrarhythmic structure of each motif, and is careful that his silsulim do not distract from the general character of each motif.



**Figure 3.5: Zarqah Table, R' Michael Kakon, Recorded November 17, 2004**

1 זַרְקָה 2 מִקְרֵי שׁוֹפָר הַזֶּה סְגוּלָתָא 3 פְּזֵר-גְּדוֹל 4 פְּזֵר-גְּדוֹל

Zar - qah Ma-qaf sho-far ho-le-kh se-gul-tah Pa-zer ga - do 1

5 תְּלִשָּׂא 7 אֲזֵלָא גְרֵישׁ 8 פְּסִיקָא

Tal sha h Az-lah ge - re-sh Pa-se q

9 רַבִּיעַ 10 שְׁנֵי-גֵרֵשׁׁינִי

Ra-vi a Sh-nei ge-re- shi n

11 דַּרְגָּא-תְבִיר 12 דַּרְגָּא-תְבִיר 13 מְאַרְיָהּ טַרְחָא אַתְנָה 14 מְאַרְיָהּ טַרְחָא אַתְנָה 15 מְאַרְיָהּ טַרְחָא אַתְנָה 16 אֲשׁוֹפָר-מְהַפֵּךְ קַדְמָא 17 אֲשׁוֹפָר-מְהַפֵּךְ קַדְמָא

Dar gah Te-vi r Ma-a-ri-kh Tar - khah At-nah Sho-far m-hu- pa-kh qad-ma

18 תְּרֵי-קַדְמִיִן 19 זַקְרָה-קַטוֹן 20 זַקְרָה-גְּדוֹל 23 יְתִיב

Te-rei qa d - mi n Za- qe-f qa-ton Za - qef ga - do l Ye-tiv

24 סוּף-פְּסוּקָא

So-f pa-su-q

\* Performed with “D” as Tonic

From a closer examination of the performance of three separate te’amim—Zarqah, Azla Geresh, and Dargah Tevir—by three different performers—R’ Avraham Amar, Amram Abesror, and R’ Gad Bouskila—figure 3.6 illustrates that the integrity of the melodic motifs is kept intact.

For instance, silsulim such as the appoggiatura figure employed by R' Bouskila at the conclusion of tevir should not be heard as disruptive to the overall clarity of the motif. We can also see from the figure that the performers approach other melodic elements with a concern for keeping the motif clear. The melodic range of the respective motives, the intervallic relationships between tones, and the origination and resolution tones of each melodic motif (with the exception of leading tones or grace notes) are consistent. For example, in every performance of zarqah in figure 3.6, the origination tone is E, and after the melody ascends the resolution tone is B. Another important feature of Maroka'i te'amim practice, especially in how silsulim are incorporating, is the adaption by performers of the Andalusī *mawwāl* (non-metrical vocal improvisation) with its idiosyncratic approach to using the 'ṭab. As shown in figures 3.4 and 3.5, the fourth degree of the scale (in this case the note G) is omitted. Each of the performances in figure 3.6, with silsulim or without, respects this approach to melodic construction. As Abesror emphasizes, no matter how a performer executes the tea'mim, one must be able to clearly hear and identify the melodic motifs. It should be apparent that there are indeed clear melodic motifs in Maroka'i practice for each of the te'amim.

**Figure 3.6: Three Expositions of Te'amim from the Zarqah Table**

The figure displays three musical staves, each representing a different te'amim motif. Each staff is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and includes three expositions of the motif. The motifs are:

- Zarkah:** The first staff, with Hebrew text זַרְקָה above it. The three expositions are attributed to R' Avraham Amar, Amram Abesror, and R' Gad Bouskila. The notes are Z, a dotted quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, and a half note. The lyrics are "Za.r - qah", "Zar - qah", and "Za\_r - qah".
- Azlah Geresh:** The second staff, with Hebrew text אֲזֵלָה גֵרֵשׁ above it. The three expositions are attributed to R' Avraham Amar, Amram Abesror, and R' Gad Bouskila. The notes are a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, and a quarter note. The lyrics are "Az -lah ge - re\_\_sh", "Az -lah ge - re\_\_sh", and "Az - lah ge\_\_\_\_ -re\_\_sh".
- Dargah Tevir:** The third staff, with Hebrew text דַּרְגָּא תְּבִיר above it. The three expositions are attributed to R' Avraham Amar, Amram Abesror, and R' Gad Bouskila. The notes are a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, and a half note. The lyrics are "Dar -gah Te -vi\_\_\_\_ r", "Dar - gah\_\_\_\_Te - vi\_\_\_\_ r", and "Dar -gah Te - vi\_\_\_\_ r".

Rhythmic variations are also bound to appear in different expositions of a motif. After all, most cantillation is performed without a regular pulse. For the te'amim motives to remain identifiable, the intrarhythmic relationships between notes, and specifically the relationship between long and short durations, must be kept relatively intact. For instance, in dargah tevir, the first half of the motif has notes of short duration, while the D, E, F# at the conclusion of the motif must be longer. A durational emphasis on certain notes is also used in characterizing certain te'amim motives. For example, in the part of te'am dargah tevir, the D, E, and F# must be of equal duration. This is also the case for *azla g'resh*, where the duration of the last two notes of the motif, E and F#, must be the same and must be as long as, if not longer than, any preceding tones in the motif. Similarly, the duration of the E at the opening of the *zarqah* is as long as any note in the motif. Both R' Amar and R' Bouskila repeat the E, adding a durational emphasis and making it the longest tone in the motif. Thus, even without an agreed upon or regulated pulse, rhythmic aspects still play an important role in these performances. Each performer has a clear approach to rhythm, so that the te'amim motives have consistency and are recognizable.

While it is one thing to perform the te'amim motives as part of the Zarqah table, it is another to practice applying te'amim to the Torah texts. This returns us to the question of whether it is possible to respect the integrity of a melodic motif during cantillation. Because cantillation is inherently logogenic, musical expressions are governed by the need to adapt to changing text. The same te'am can be used to express words or phrases of differing syllabic length. Maroka'im resolve this problem by repeating one note to include all the syllables. For instance, in performing the opening verses of *parashat Vayetzei* (Genesis 28:10-32:3), R' Kakon sings two different passages that use a *mehabber* (sing.) te'am: *ma'arikh tarḥah atnah*. In figure 3.7, he demonstrates and explains how the melodic motif is kept intact despite variations in the number of notes. To execute the words *mi-Be-er* (*ibid.* 28:10), Kakon repeats the D before resolving to the two E's. In another verse (*ibid.* 28:12) with the te'am *ma'arikh tarḥah atnah*, Kakon repeats notes in two places, accommodating the phrase *magiah ha-shamaimah*. He insists, "See, this is still ma'arikh tarḥah atnah. You hear it is the same" (p.c., R' Michael Kakon, February 20, 2005). In both examples, the integrity of the melodic motif for *ma'arikh tarḥah atnah* is reinforced by his reiteration of less crucial tones in the melodic motif.

**Figure 3.7: Te'am Ma'arikh Tarḥa Atnah, R' Michael Kakon, Recorded February 20, 2005**

Te'am: Ma'arikh Tarḥa Atnah  
מְאַרְיֵךְ טַרְחָא אַתְנָה

Ma - a - ri - kh Tar - ḥa - At - nah  
(Br. 28:10)

Va - ye - tze - Ya - kov mi - Be - er Sha - va  
(Br. 28:12)

Ve - ro - sho - ma - gi - 'a ha - sha - mai - mah

Kakon also makes sure that the intrarhythmic integrity and the melodic structure of the motif remains intact by aligning key tones in the melodic motif with points in the text where the te'amim symbols appear (see figure 3.8). Additionally, he treats the te'amim symbols like accents, adding rhythmic emphasis on these tones.

**Figure 3.8: Several Te'amim Applied to Torah Text, R' Michael Kakon, Recorded February 20, 2005**

(Br. 28:10)  
Ma - a - ri - kh Tar - ḥa - At - nah  
Va - ye - tze - Ya - kov mi - Be - er Sha - va

(Br. 28:10) Sof - pa - suq (Br. 28:11) Shofar - mehu - pakh qad - ma  
Va - ye - lekh Ha - ra - na Va - ya - len Sha - m

(Br. 28:11)  
Ma - a - ri - kh  
Va - yish - ka - v

The correlation of melodic and rhythmic elements in each performer's exposition of the Zarqah table shows that clear melodic motifs are indeed a part of Maroka'i te'amim practice. The performance by R' Kakon shows that when te'amim are applied to text in cantillation, and melodic motifs must be fit to the text, each te'am remains recognizable. This approach to te'amim practice is part of the ethos of the Maroka'i community. The perpetuation of the notion that preserving the clarity of the te'amim motives is important happens locally and throughout the Maroka'i diasporic community. Practicing te'amim is a regularly part of synagogue life. As Kakon exclaimed when I first began working with him, te'amim practice is a touchstone for community members as a central aspect of Maroka'i identity.

### *Kriat Shema*

*Kriat Shema* is a central component in the two main liturgical services, *Shaharit* (morning service) and *Arvit* (evening service). The Shema is a combination of three passages from the Torah (Deut. 6:4-9; *ibid.* 11:13-21; Numb. 15:37-41) that includes several basic tenets of faith for all Jews: monotheism, certain halakhot (mezuzah, tzitzit, tefillin), the Jewish exodus from Egypt, and the development of the Mosaic desert cult of Y-H-V-H. The Shema is preceded and followed by blessings and liturgical prayers that emphasize God's role in creation, His love for the people Israel, and the exodus from Egypt. It is interesting to note that the last blessing of Kriat Shema, which concludes with the words "*ga'al Yisrael*" (who redeems Yisrael), reiterates an important aspect of a Jewish diaspora consciousness—that all of Yisrael (the transnational Jewish community) will be redeemed (*ga'al*). In essence, if Yisrael will listen and perform God's commandments properly, especially those just iterated in the Shema, they will be released from exile and restored as a nation in Zion.

The liturgical portions before the recitation of the Shema are usually performed aloud by a *ḥazzan* while members of the congregation follow along in an undertone. The *ḥazzan* will trail the community, so that when he arrives at the Shema text, everyone else is ready and waiting. At this point, the entire congregation proclaims in a loud voice and with eyes covered the first verse, *Shema Yisrael, Ado-nai Elokeinu, Ado-nai Eḥad* (Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One)! A short affirmation verse is then interpolated into the text and recited silently before continuing aloud.<sup>20</sup>

At this point, Ashkenazi and Sephardi congregations generally differ in the practice of Kriat Shema. In Ashkenazi synagogues, the next four verses of the Shema are chanted together by the congregation (Deut. 6:5-9), followed by a silent recitation of the remainder of the verses by each community member individually. In Sephardi synagogues, the Shema continues aloud with a kriaḥ by the *ḥazzan* according to the *te'amim*. In Maroka'i communities, however, the *ḥazzan* generally refrains from performing the continuation; rather, a different member of the congregation performs the kriaḥ on each occasion. Someone may spontaneously carry on, or the *ḥazzan* or *rabbi* may gesture to someone. At Netivot, the accepted practice is for an able young boy from the congregation to perform the kriaḥ.

The kriaḥ of the Shema is an opportunity for community members to hear the *te'amim* in the synagogue twice daily, whether or not Kriat ha-Torah is performed. Because different individuals perform the kriaḥ, a community-wide reiteration of a distinctively Maroka'i approach

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<sup>20</sup> This affirmation verse, *Barukh shem kavod malkhuto le-olam va-ed* (Blessed is the glorious name of our king, forever), is mentioned in Talmud as the response of Jacob the Israelite patriarch to his sons on his deathbed in Goshen, Egypt (Talmud *Bavli*, *Pesachim* 56a). It is also thought to be the passage of praise uttered by the people when gathered at festival times at the Holy Temple, when the high priest would pronounce God's divine name (Talmud *Bavli*, *Yoma* 66a).

to te'amim occurs regularly. In one interview with R' Bouskila, where we discussed Maroka'i identity at length, including his role as a community leader, ḥazzan, and father, I asked him to perform the Zarqah table. Afterwards, he ended by spontaneously performing the Shema for me. He was clearly making a statement about its centrality, as the most sacred of sacred passages and as a valued vehicle for te'amim practice. For him, the text is central to Judaism and the musical expression is central to being Maroka'i. Shortly before this moment, he shared a story of when R' Shlomo Amar, Chief Sephardi Rabbi of Israel, made an official visit to Brooklyn. After a service at Netivot Israel, R' Amar remarked to R' Bouskila that he was so proud to come to a synagogue in New York "of his brethren" (R' Amar is Maroka'i) to find that the Maroka'i minhag was still being performed correctly. R' Bouskila concluded: "Nothing has changed in the way we do it. The *tefilah* (prayer liturgy) and everything we do should be according to our *masoret* (tradition)" (p.c., R' Gad Bouskila, February 24, 2010).

The Shema, and specifically the practice of performing it aloud with the te'amim, is imbued with symbolism for the community. As R' Bouskila demonstrated, it is a central proclamation of Jewish faith and it is the apex moment of a liturgical ritual with clear expressions of Jewish diaspora consciousness. No matter which synagogue in the world one chooses to pray in, this text will be present. However, the expression of the Shema, its musical rendering in cantillation, is an important means for accentuating boundaries of a Maroka'i identity.

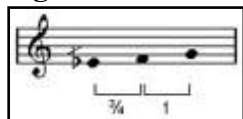
#### Comparison with Syrian Jewish Approach to Cantillation

Syrian *ba'alei koreh* (pl.) in Brooklyn have a restricted conceptualization of melody during kriaḥ, using only the bottom trichord from maqām *Sīkāh* (figure 3.9). Instead of strict melodic motifs, maqām *Sīkāh* is used in a modal fashion as the basis for continuous melodic



invention (Ya'ar 1996). As confirmed by R' Joseph Dweck, "The kriaḥ is totally in maqām Sīkāḥ" (p.c., November 5, 2009). The Syrian approach to creating melody in cantillation centers mostly on adhering to this specific tone row.

**Figure 3.9: Lower Trichord of Maqām Sīkāḥ**



According to a quote from Yeziel Nahari included in Kay Shelemay's *Let Jasmine Rain Down*,

If you hear some song in maqām Sīkāḥ, and you know how to read the Sefer Torah [according to Syrian practice], although you don't know which maqām is the song [sic], you say to yourself, "Ah, it's very similar to how we read the Sefer Torah. So, is that maqām Sīkāḥ?" (Y. Nahari, p.c. January 6, 1986; Shelemay 1998:123)

Although three tones do not allow for as much melodic sophistication as the Maroka'i practice, where the tone row is much larger, there are moments when the ba'al koreh may try to make a melodic differentiation for more obscure te'amim. However, according to Charlie Tobias, this practice is not standardized (p.c., Charlie Tobias, January 13, 2012). Tobias is a ba'al koreh at Shaarei Zion synagogue,<sup>21</sup> performing Torah cantillation in one of their prayer quorums every Shabbat and on holidays. Born and raised in Brooklyn, he is a well known figure in the community. In addition to his duties as a ba'al koreh at Shaarei Zion synagogue, he is the head of the Hebrew language resource program and faculty member at Magen David Yeshivah, a Syrian school, and the most prominent tutor of bar mitzvah-aged boys in the community. He explains to me that *Sof pasuq*, the *te'am* for concluding a verse of text, is marked by a resolution to the tonic and by a pause, and that these are the only specific melodic cues for Torah cantillation in the Syrian community. Such an approach does not obscure the basic meaning of

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<sup>21</sup> Shaarei Zion synagogue is by far the largest Syrian synagogue (building and membership) in Brooklyn and a hub for communal activity. Shaarei Zion is the official pulpit of Brooklyn's Syrian Chief Rabbi, Saul Kassin.

the text, since the performance of the te'amim stills conveys syntactical information. But as shown above, the Maroka'i practice of being meticulous with specific melodic motifs can add another dimension to the syntactical information, thus potentially deepening the listener's experience of the text.

Performance of kriaḥ in Maroka'i synagogues is typically slower than in Syrian synagogues, perhaps because Maroka'im are more concerned about the reproduction of specific melodic motifs. When asked about Syrian cantillation, R' Dweck remarked, "We just move quickly through the te'amim" (p.c., R' Joseph Dweck, November 5, 2009). When asked why, Tobias answered, "We [Syrians] don't have time to waste. We just get it done" (p.c., Charlie Tobias, January 13, 2012).

A significant area of co-ethnic recognition—a shared boundary—between Maroka'im and Syrians is located in the pronunciation of the Hebrew. While many of the consonants in the Hebrew alphabet are phonetically common throughout the Jewish world—the pronunciation of the Hebrew letter *shin* (שׁ) is *sh* in every community—many others are not. For instance, in most Ashkenazi communities the Hebrew letter *tav* (ט) is pronounced as a *t* and *tav* (ט׃) without a *dagesh* (dot) is pronounced as an *s*. With or without this *dagesh*, most Sephardim pronounce both letters with a *t* sound.<sup>22</sup> For Ashkenazi Jews, the pronunciation of the letters *het* (ח) and *khaf* (כ) are the same. In Brooklyn's Sephardi community, which includes many Maroka'im and Syrians whose families never immigrated to Israel, the letters *het* and *ayin* remain distinctive, pronounced by many with a guttural quality that differentiates them from the letters *khaf* and *alef*, respectively. *Het*, for instance, is a pharyngealized consonant with a vowel-like articulation

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<sup>22</sup> Several Mizraḥi communities, such as the Yemenite and Iraqi communities, differentiate the pronunciation of these letters with a *t* and *th* sound, respectively.

(Ladefoged 2001:218-19). To perform the letter *het*, one must open the throat, drop the chin, and place the tongue in a hollow position. This production of this letter resides in the lower back area of the mouth. Produced in the upper back area of the mouth, the *khaf* is velarized instead. The guttural sound of the *het* and *ayin* are phonetically distinctive and noticeable to the enculturated ear. Similarly, the pronunciation of *ayin* (ׁ) and *alef* (א) do not differ from one another in Ashkenazi pronunciation, but do in Sephardi pronunciation. In any case, the lack of distinction in how the letters *het* and *khaf* are pronounced, and how *alef* and *ayin* are pronounced, has become the standard in Modern Hebrew.

The limitations possible on prescriptions for Hebrew phonetics by the *te'amim* markings have, like the limitations on melodic prescriptions, made it possible for different Jewish dialects to emerge without a loss of mutual intelligibility. Dialectical differences can be stark or subtle. The development of Modern Hebrew by Eliezer Ben Yehuda has had a tremendous effect on Hebrew phonetics. In constructing a national language to serve the modern Zionist endeavors of unification, return, and nation building in Israel, Ben Yehuda used what he considered as a generally Sephardi model for pronunciation.

Hebrew pronunciation in many Syrian synagogues still differs slightly from Maroka'i pronunciation. One can hear similar differences in the spoken vernaculars of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) in these countries. Most people in Brooklyn's Sephardi community, including Maroka'im, also speak Modern Hebrew. However, in Maroka'i communities the linguistic register of *Kriat ha-Torah* is distinguished from spoken Hebrew by emphasizing the phonetics of a Maroka'i Hebrew dialect. The Maroka'i practice of switching the linguistic register through dialect is another facet of the community's approach to language that distinguishes it from the practices of other communities. Concomitantly, with an influx of Israeli trained *hazzanim* (pl.,

cantors) immigrating to Brooklyn in the past two decades, typically finding gainful employment in Syrian synagogues, the Yerushalmi-Sephardi style of liturgical practice—which favors a Modern Hebrew pronunciation of the ayin and ḥet—has begun to alter the nature of Hebrew pronunciation in the Syrian community. However, while this Yerushalmi-Sephardi accent is pronounced during liturgical services, like the Maroka'im, the Syrian approach to te'amim during Kriat ha-Torah still emphasizes the phonetics of a Syrian Hebrew dialect. Most ba'lei koreh in Syrian synagogues still come from Brooklyn's community, having avoided the results of Ben Yehuda's efforts. Ultimately, there is an important area for co-ethnic recognition between Maroka'im and Syrians in Brooklyn, based upon a shared boundary related to a feature of their linguistic identity, meted out within the context of te'amim performance.

#### *Aesthetic Features*

Several Maroka'i informants have suggested to me that the beautification of the Torah performance is vital: “That is why Maroka'i is the most beautiful kriah ... because we care about the sound too—for the Torah” (p.c., A. Abitbol, May 30, 2009). Although the concept of *hidur* (beautification) extends to other practices in Jewish life, it is foregrounded in Kriat ha-Torah. The ba'al koreh and listeners are engaging with a particular notion of their Jewish identity—that for Maroka'im, the text must be rendered musically for the beautification of the Torah.

Two preferred stylistic features of the ba'al koreh's vocal approach include a nasal tone and the use of the highest extremes of one's melodic register. This vocal timbre is beautifying and the high register adds clarity and intensity to the kriah. For Maroka'im, to be considered decent at Torah cantillation, the ba'al koreh must incorporate these aesthetic features into his performance. Dan Bouskila, the longtime ba'al koreh of Netivot Israel synagogue until 2010, is regarded highly for his ability to produce the proper vocal aesthetics. As Jacob Tordjman once

commented, “Dan was the best! Unbelievable at kriah” (p.c., Jacob Tordjman, April 28, 2012). When pushed to explain, Tordjman added that Bouskila delivers the te’amim very clearly and that his voice is pleasant. Having often witnessed Bouskila’s kriah myself, I can confirm that his choice of register is high and the nasality of his voice is very pronounced.

### **Te’amim Practice as a Boundary Builder**

To see how crucial te’amim practice is to the diaspora consciousness of the Maroka’i community, one must recognize that the codification of the melodic motifs has resulted from an impulse to develop an ethnic expression accepted by the transnational community as a symbol of identity. Te’amim practice in Brooklyn is indicative of this impulse and the resultant pan-Maroka’i ethnic identity, a key component in the definition and communication of a specifically Maroka’i layer of diaspora consciousness. Little regard is given today to the regional differences that existed just over a century ago. People do not speak of Fez, Meknes, Marrakesh, or Rabat styles of te’amim practice. Instead, most community members simply speak of a general Moroccan style.

In *The Cantillations and the Melodies of the Jews of Tangier, Morocco* (1993), Ramon Tasat maintains that there is a persistent distinction in the te’amim practices of the communities of Tangiers and Casablanca. He suggests that because of the proximity of Tangiers to Spain, a Spanish or more authentically Sephardi style of te’amim practice survived there during the centuries after the expulsion from Spain. According to Tasat, a unique aspect of the socio-historical development in Tangiers and several other towns on the northern coast of Morocco—that these communities were comprised almost exclusively of Spanish exiles—helped to protect Sephardi traditions from change or from assimilating features of established styles from other parts of Morocco.

Casablanca, however, served as a metropole for migrants from different parts of the country before the mass emigrations of the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>23</sup> One cannot speak of a specifically *Casablanca* style of te'amim, for this cosmopolitan center's Jewish community was quite diverse and was not historically significant before the French Protectorate. For these same reasons—diversity and short historical roots—this city served as a crucible for the early development of a pan-Maroka'i identity in the generations before and during emigration. Thus, the Casablanca style that Tasat refers to is most likely the result of the assimilation of different regional styles into a pan-Maroka'i style. The te'amim became an important tool, in Morocco, for ethnicization even before emigration. Once removed from the homeland, a consciousness of a larger homeland along the modern nation-state borders of Morocco began to emerge. The practice of te'amim is now central for transmitting to subsequent generations a characterization of a single, larger community identity.

R' Bouskila, who was born and raised in Casablanca, traces his familial roots to the Dra'a Valley southeast of Marrakesh. R' Kakon and Amram Abesror are from Marrakesh. R' Amar is from Casablanca. Discussions about te'amim with these gentlemen suggest that a pan-Maroka'i identity has emerged in practice. While migration began within Morocco, before emigration and the development of a diasporic community, the fostering of a boundary around a communal identity based upon the larger borders of the Moroccan nation-state became imperative only following emigration and the community's dispersal.

Even when performance anomalies present themselves, community members dismiss differences in favor of the accepted norm. One Shabbat, an elder of the Netivot Israel

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<sup>23</sup> Casablanca and other coastal towns in the north (under the Spanish Protectorate) were especially important during the Interwar Period, between World War I and World War II. The cities represented greater safety than rural areas.

congregation, Mr. Chetrit, performed the kriah of his own aliyah. Mr. Chetrit, advanced in years, is from the *shleuh* or mountainous village area in central Morocco. While his expressing of the te'amim was similar to the standard Maroka'i style, he was less concerned with the clarity of each motif and vocal aesthetics. At times, he even truncated the melodic range of several motives. His pronunciation of the Hebrew differed slightly, with some guttural sounds accentuated even more than usual. His approach was distinctive enough to provoke a strong reaction amongst congregants present at the time. Mumbblings and smiles exploded after he completed his aliyah. The imaginations of many of those present seemed to be tantalized by a hearkening back to a disparate Maroka'i community that predated the formalized Maroka'i te'amim style that we hear today. When I asked Albert Abitbol what he thought, he just remarked that this was an "old school" way of performing the kriah (p.c., A. Abitbol, May 30, 2009), and no longer the normative way of practicing the te'amim.

The approach to practicing te'amim in the Maroka'i community is indicative of the need to construct a diasporic ethnic identity offering an agreed-upon way, "tradition," or minhag for belonging to the group. The experience of diaspora always demands ethnicization. Ethnicization, and in particular examples such as the codification of the melodic motifs of the Maroka'i te'amim, is a necessary communal impulse when dealing with the unprecedented engagement between Jewish ethnics from disparate backgrounds. Never before had Maroka'im come into such close contact with so many other ethnic Jewish communities as they have in Brooklyn and other sites of the Maroka'i diaspora. Additionally, never before have the means to develop and sustain transnational ties been so accessible to so many community members. While even before the 1990s tapes were made and children were taught a recorded oral tradition, there are now recordings of te'amim circulating on the Internet on websites such as YouTube and on Maroka'i

diaspora websites such as dafina.net. Despite this engagement with several tools of modernity, one must remember that electronic means of recording and consuming are forbidden when the congregation gathers to practice te'amim. Consciousness is therefore very important, as individuals draw upon what is embedded in themselves and the community to ensure that what is performed and transmitted is accepted as indicative of Maroka'i identity.

This fundamentally pan-Marokai diasporic ethnic identity relies on clear emblems of identity—the te'amim—to project a distinctive layer of diaspora consciousness. Community leaders have coalesced around a particular style of te'amim, including a discrete set of melodic motifs, ways of applying te'amim to sacred text, and even performance aesthetics. These leaders are transmitting this valuable practice to the next generation as an emblem of communal identity.

### **Processional and Bima Songs**

There are a number of additional musical expressions during the Kriat ha-Torah service that serve to articulate a layered diaspora consciousness for Brooklyn's Maroka'im. Before and after kriah, there is a processional liturgy for carrying the Torah from the aron to the bima for kriah, and then returning it to the aron. When olim ascend the bima for an aliyah, well-known para-liturgical songs—piyyutim and pizmonim—are sung aloud by members of the congregation. While the songs for the processional liturgy are distinctly Maroka'i, the bima songs used by Maroka'im in Brooklyn show the community's familiarity with a wider repertoire that includes melodies from Morocco, from neighboring Syrian communities, and from the Sephardi-Mizrahi fusion popular music style in Israel called musika mizrahit (see Chapter Two). Like the te'amim, the melodies for processional songs tend to reinforce a distinctively pan-Maroka'i ethnic identity. However, the bima songs show the interactivity between the Maroka'i



and Sephardi boundaries of identity, promoting the integration of multiple layers of diaspora consciousness.

### **Processional Liturgy**

Just after the auctioning of honors for Kriat ha-Torah, the aron is opened, the congregation stands, and the processional liturgy begins. The first honor goes to the individual who performs *petikhat ha-heikhal* (opening the aron). He receives a special blessing of well-being from the rabbi for himself and his family. Another member of the congregation then approaches the aron to remove a Torah scroll for Kriat ha-Torah.<sup>24</sup> He holds the case in both arms, being very careful not to drop it by resting it on his right shoulder. “The right side of your body is more respectful than the left. King David was right-handed” (p.c., Yair Peretz, May 15, 2010). After he receives a similar blessing from the rabbi, this individual begins the processional by carrying the Torah from the aron through the standing crowd, finally bringing it to rest on the bima.

The liturgical texts used for the beginning of Kriat ha-Torah, including the opening of the aron and the processional to the bima, are standard in most Sephardi synagogues. On Shabbat and festivals, the liturgy commences with the singing of the prayer *Atah ha-r’etah la-da’at* (You, the witness for His knowledge) to a Maroka’i melody (figure 3.10a).<sup>25</sup> Maroka’im add the verse *ki mi-Tzion tetzei Torah u-dvar Ado-nai* (from Zion came the Torah and the word of God). Subsequently, an Aramaic prayer, *Berikh shemei demarei* (Blessed is the name of the Master of the World),<sup>26</sup> is read aloud; this prayer is also included in Ashkenazi liturgies. As the Torah

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<sup>24</sup> On holidays or the beginning of the lunar month, two Torah scrolls are used for kriah. In these cases, an additional person will receive the honor of carrying the second scroll.

<sup>25</sup> Deut. 4:35

<sup>26</sup> *Zohar*, “Vayikhal,” (12:225)

begins to make its way through the congregation, the Sephardi liturgy continues with the singing of *Ashrei ha-am* (Content are the people).<sup>27</sup> Again, this is a Maroka'i melody (figure 3.10b).

Although the Syrian melodies for this liturgy (Kligman 2009:139) are well known in Brooklyn's Sephardi community, one never hears these melodies in Maroka'i synagogues and only on occasion in mixed-Sephardi synagogues.

**Figure 3.10: Kriat ha-Torah Opening Processional Melodies**

**a) Atah Ha-R'eta**

A - tah Ha - re - ta la - da - a t ki Am - o - nai Hu - ha - E - lo - hi - m...

Ki mi - Tzi - on te - tze To - rah U' - d - var A - mo - nai mi - Ye - ru - sha - la - yi - m

**b) Ashrei ha-'Am**

Ash - rei ha - 'am she - ka - kha lo a - sh - rei ha - 'am she - A - mo - nai El - o - hav  
Go - d - lu l' A - mo - nai i - ti u - ne - ro - me - ma she - mo ya - h - dav

Once the Torah arrives at the bima, Maroka'im open the case and lift it so that all can see the written text. At this moment, called *hagbaha* (elevation), male members of the congregation raise their tzitzit and women their open hands in honor of the Torah. Together, the congregation reads aloud the last portion of processional liturgy before kriah. This piece of liturgy, *Vezot ha-Torah* (And that is the Torah),<sup>28</sup> is sung in Ashkenazi communities without *hagbaha*; Ashkenazim perform *hagbaha* at the end of kriah, before the return of the Torah to the aron. Other Sephardim in Brooklyn have the practice of carrying an open Torah during the

<sup>27</sup> Psalm 144:15

<sup>28</sup> Deut. 4:44

processional and raising it just before placing it on the bima, thereby alleviating the need for a special moment for hagbaha. The Maroka'i practice seems to be an integration of the two prevailing customs.


After kriaḥ is completed, a few additional blessings—for the congregation, Israeli and American armed forces, and for the new month—are pronounced from the bima by the ḥazzan or rabbi. In Sephardi communities, the return processional begins with the singing of a short liturgical piece: *Yimlokh Ado-Shem leOlam, Elohayikh Tzion ledor vador Halleluyah* (God will be king forever, your God, Zion, for all generations, praise God!).<sup>29</sup> In Maroka'i synagogues, it is common that a young boy or small group of boys receive the honor of singing these verses (figure 3.11a). Again, although the Syrian melody is well known in Brooklyn (Kligman 2009:142), a specifically Maroka'i melody is preferred in the Maroka'i synagogues. The individual who carried the Torah from the aron begins to carry it from the bima through the crowd once more, as the congregation sings *Mizmor le-David* (Psalm 29). Though this is the standard text used for the return processional in all Jewish communities, the melody is specifically Maroka'i (figure 3.11b).

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<sup>29</sup> Psalm 146:10


**Figure 3.11: Kriat ha-Torah Return Processional Melodies**

a) Yimlokh Amonai Le-Olam

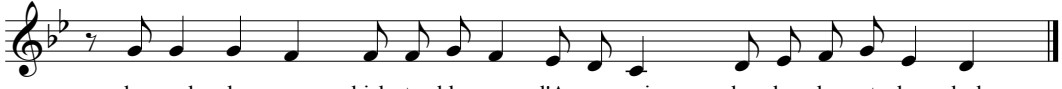


Yim-lokh A-mo - nai le - o - lam El - o - ha - yi - kh Tzi - o - n le - dor va - dor ha - lle - lu - Yah

b) Mizmor Le-David



1. Miz - mor le - Da - vid ha - vu l' A - mo - na - i Ka - vod va - oz ha - vu l' A - mo - nai  
 2. Be - nai ai - lim ha - vu l' A - mo - na - i



ka - vod she - mo hish - ta - kha - vu l' A - mo - nai be - ha - dra - at ko - desh

The difference in processional liturgies between Sephardi and Ashkenazi communities is quite pronounced. Although there are moments where the texts are the same, for the most part they are dissimilar. There is more similarity amongst Sephardi communities in the liturgical texts used, but the melodies remain quite distinctive between Sephardi groups. We can deduce from the performance of processional liturgy in Brooklyn's Maroka'i community that there is a recognition of both a shared Sephardi boundary with other Sephardi groups in the text, and a distinctive Maroka'i boundary in the melodies. Inseparable in performance, the texts and melodies of the processional liturgy emphasize a consciousness of two different diasporic ethnic identities.

### **Bima Songs**

In Brooklyn's Maroka'i synagogues, it is common practice for congregants to sing short segments of popular para-liturgical songs—*piyyutim* (high-register Hebrew poetry) or *pizmonim* (short Hebrew song poems)—to honor an *oleh* as he takes his place on the bima next to the *ba'al*

koreh. In Maroka'i synagogues, the singing is often extended if the crowd feels motivated. For instance, when a bridegroom receives an aliyah, the women throw candies and children scamper about to pick them up. This provides more time before kria is performed, which is often filled with a lengthier rendition of the bima song.

While bima songs are not sung for every oleh, they are relatively prevalent in the Brooklyn's Maroka'i community. If an oleh is a well-respected member of the community such as the rabbi, gabbai, a big donor, or even a special visitor, or if there is a special occasion in an oleh's life such as a bar mitzvah, the birth of a child, or an upcoming wedding, then it is likely that a bima song will be performed in his honor. By contrast, in Syrian synagogues, bima songs are reserved for special occasions only. R' Dahan explains that in "authentic Maroka'i synagogues, like in the heart of Dimona or Ashdod (towns in Israel), you will hear many more songs [for olim] than in Brooklyn" (p.c., R' Chaim Dahan, November 20, 2008).

In *Shirei Dodim ha-Shalem* (SDS), the Maroka'i songbook published in Israel by R' Meir Attiyah (2005 [1986]), an entire section is devoted to a repertoire of such songs (2005:192-207). Short song texts, 4-8 verses long, are organized by the type of oleh, according to status in the community, life-cycle occasions, and popular names. There are song texts specifically for a Kohen or Levi, for an oleh who is revered as a *hakham* (learned or wise individual), or for a *dayyan* (judge) in the community. There are bima songs specifically for an oleh who has been called for the aliyah of the Song of the Sea (Exod. 15:1-18) or the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:2-17, Exod. 34:11-27 and Deut. 5:6-21). There are bima songs for someone who is becoming a bar mitzvah, has recently become a bridegroom, or simply someone considered a sharp student. There are song texts for popular names (e.g., Shmuel, Yosef, Eliyahu). The final two pages of this section contain a collection of pizmonim texts that are applicable to any oleh.

While the practice continues in Brooklyn's Maroka'i synagogues of honoring olim with bima songs, Dahan's comment suggests that the local repertoire is somewhat different. In Brooklyn, one is more likely to hear songs that are popular in both the Sephardi and Maroka'i diaspora communities. Certain pieces are favored time and again, including "Nagila Halleluyah," "Shalom Leven Dodi," "Mekave Ani Lo," and "Yotzer Miyado." This repertoire serves as an example of the incorporation of emblems of a more recent iteration of Sephardi diaspora identity into the consciousness of Brooklyn's Maroka'im. Songs like "Nagila Halleluyah" and "Shalom Leven Dodi" are popular in other Sephardi communities in Brooklyn and around the world. "Shalom Leven Dodi" is a text written by Shlomo ibn Gabirol (eleventh century). Thus, it has a certain cachet as a product directly from Sepharad. Twentieth-century performer Jo Amar popularized the melody commonly performed with this text, a melody that remains well known in all Sephardi communities today. "Nagila Halleluyah," a song with a text and two melodies all composed in the twentieth century, was first popularized in the Sephardi synagogues of Jerusalem as an expression coming from a shared Sephardi-Mizrahi community. Expressions from this community, operating as one site of the Sephardi diaspora, have had an impact in other sites of the Sephardi diaspora like Brooklyn. Songs such as "Atah El Kabir" or "Şur Yah El," which are popular among Brooklyn's Syrian Jews (Shelemay 1998), are completely absent from the Maroka'i community's repertoire of bima songs, in Brooklyn and abroad. Similarly, songs such as "Mekave Ani Lo" and "Yotzer Miyado," songs popular in the Maroka'i diaspora, are rarely heard in other Sephardi synagogues and are never used as bima songs. In places like Ashdod, Ashkelon, or Dimona—three settlement towns in Israel with large Maroka'i populations—these Maroka'i songs, while well known, are generally absent from the bima song repertoire because they are not part of the repertoire appearing in SDS (p.c., R' Chaim Dahan,

November 20, 2008). Nevertheless, they are popular in Brooklyn as distinctively Maroka'i expressions.

In short, like the processional liturgy, the bima songs performed in Brooklyn's Maroka'i community promote a consciousness of two diasporic ethnic identities: Sephardi and Maroka'i. Furthermore, the performance of these songs indicates an area of synagogue practice where different Sephardi groups share in a similar practice. This practice encourages co-ethnic recognition, reinforcing a relationship between groups. While the repertoire may differ, the performance of bima songs is a fundamental part of Kriat ha-Torah in all Sephardi synagogues.

### *Nagila Halleluyah*

“Nagila Halleluyah” (Praise God! We will rejoice) can be heard in several Sephardi synagogues in Brooklyn. It is also common at weddings, festive meals, and many other social gatherings. The text was written by the prolific *paytan* (poet musician) Asher Mizrahi<sup>30</sup> in the first half of the twentieth century. The song pleads for the *geulah* (redemption),<sup>31</sup> including the return of Zion—the physical abode of the spiritual presence of God—to Jerusalem. While spiritual redemption could be an important impetus for anyone immigrating to Israel in the twentieth century, the connotation of *geulah* as alluded to in the text (see figure 3.12) is mostly absent from the markedly more secular ideology of the European *halutzim* (pioneers) who saw

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<sup>30</sup> Asher Mizrahi was born in Jerusalem in 1890. He moved to Tunisia during the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), and then returned to Jerusalem in 1919, after the Balfour Declaration. However, he returned to Tunisia after the Arab riots of 1929 in Jerusalem. His works often evoke Jerusalem and Zion and should be seen as an important example of Arab Jewish Zionist expression (Assal 2009).

<sup>31</sup> Geulah is both physical and spiritual. Strictly speaking, Zionism as a political movement is most concerned with Jews returning to the physical homeland, rather than the spiritual *geulah* as an expressed purpose. Thus, for a segment of the religious Jewish community living in Israel and abroad, *geulah* has not happened and cannot happen until Divine intervention. However, among Sephardim there is strong sympathy for Zionism and an expressed feeling that the physical and spiritual *geulah* are both in process (p.c., R' Joseph Dweck, October 11, 2010).

Zionism as primarily an endeavor for fulfilling a historical and genealogical imperative. There remains an important caveat in the text about the need for the messiah to come and help in the rebuilding of God's sanctuary. This is a common theme in religious poetry and allows both Zionists and anti-Zionists to coalesce around the same text. For the Zionist, the modern State of Israel is the beginning of geulah, though the messiah must come for the redemption to be complete. The anti-Zionist regards the State of Israel as a farce until the messiah comes and establishes Jewish dominion in the land, thereby reestablishing Zion. During numerous conversations, members of the Sephardi community in Brooklyn, including Maroka'im, expressed a feeling that geulah is underway and that this song is indicative of their sentiments on the subject of Zionism.



Figure 3.12: “Nagila Halleluyah” Text (translated by Samuel R. Thomas)

נְגִילָה הַלְלוּיָהּ, נְגִילָה, בָּא זְמַן, בָּא זְמַן, הַגְּאֻלָּה

אֵל שַׁדַּי, קַבֵּץ נְדָחַי יְדִידַי	אֵל שַׁדַּי, קַבֵּץ נְדָחַי יְדִידַי
וְגַרְשׁ מְשֻׁנְאֵי, וְגַרְשׁ מְשֻׁנְאֵי	וְגַרְשׁ מְשֻׁנְאֵי, וְגַרְשׁ מְשֻׁנְאֵי
נַפְשִׁי, בְּהֵם גְּעֻלָּה	

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שְׁלַח לִי, בֶּן יִשָּׁי גּוֹאֲלִי	שְׁלַח לִי, בֶּן יִשָּׁי גּוֹאֲלִי
וּבְנֵה לִי, בַּיִת הַיְכָלִי	וּבְנֵה לִי, בַּיִת הַיְכָלִי
בְּאוֹיְבֵי, עֲשֵׂה כָּלָה	

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רַחֲמָן, חוּס עַל עַם, לֹא אֶלְמָן	רַחֲמָן, חוּס עַל עַם, לֹא אֶלְמָן
וּשְׁלַח לָהֶם, צִיר נְאֻמָּן	וּשְׁלַח לָהֶם, צִיר נְאֻמָּן
וּנְסַדֵּר שִׁיר וּתְהִלָּה	

Rejoice and praise God, rejoice, the time has come for redemption

God Almighty, gather the far flung, your beloved people  
Remove me from my haters, in them is loathing for my very essence!

Send me the son of Yishai, my savior (messiah),  
And build my sanctuary, and for my enemies, their end is made.

Compassion and pity for my people, no more widows  
A messenger of our faith will be sent, and orderly we will sing and praise!

There are two well-known melodies for “Nagila Halleluyah.” The first, Raḥamim Amar’s melody (figure 3.13), is characteristically in the compositional style of Eastern Mediterranean *takht* (small ensemble) music from the early twentieth century. Amar, who collaborated with Mizraḥi in Jerusalem, was a resident of Jerusalem and instrumental in developing the Yerushalmi-Sephardi musical style. Utilizing Eastern Arab maqāmat and compositional approaches popular in regional Arab musics from the early to mid-twentieth century, composers such as Raḥamim Amar were instrumental in developing a boundary of Jewish musical practice that would have a great influence on the development of Jewish religious music (cantorial,

festival, and life-cycle music) in Jerusalem, and ultimately the entire country (piyut.org.il, accessed on December 20, 2009). His melody for “Nagila Halleluyah” quickly became popular in Sephardi-Mizrahi Jewish communities. According to the website piyut.org.il, Amar’s melody is in maqām *Ḥuzzam*. In *Shir u’Shvaḥah Hallel v’Zimrah* (SSHZ) and *Sefer Shirah Ḥadashah ha-Shalem* (SHS), two published volumes of pizmonim popular in Brooklyn’s Syrian community, the melody appears in the section of pizmonim to be performed in maqām *Sīkāh*. These two maqāmat—maqām *Ḥuzzam* and maqām *Sīkāh* —are related, as they are both rooted in a *Sīkāh* trichord: E half-flat, F, G. However, maqām *Ḥuzzam* continues with the *Hijāz* tetrachord—G, Ab, B, C—for the upper part of the maqām, while maqām *Sīkāh* continues with the *Rāst* tetrachord: G, A B half-flat, C.

Figure 3.13: “Nagila Halleluyah” Melody (composed by Raḥamim Amar)

Maqam: Ḥuzam

Sikah \_\_\_\_\_ Hijaz \_\_\_\_\_

**A**  
na - gi - la ha - lle - lu \_\_\_\_\_ Yah \_\_\_\_\_ na - gi \_\_\_\_\_ la na

**Fine**  
ba \_\_\_\_\_ ze - ma \_\_\_\_\_ n ba \_\_\_\_\_ ze - ma \_\_\_\_\_ n ha - ge \_\_\_\_\_ u - lah

**B** 1x inst. 3x chor  
2x vox  
El \_\_\_\_\_ Shad - dai \_\_\_\_\_ qa \_\_\_\_\_ - be \_\_\_\_\_ tz ni \_\_\_\_\_ - d -

1.2. | 3.  
hai ye \_\_\_\_\_ - di \_\_\_\_\_ - dai \_\_\_\_\_

**C** 1x vox  
2x chor  
ve \_\_\_\_\_ - ga \_\_\_\_\_ - re \_\_\_\_\_ sh ve - ga - re \_\_\_\_\_ sh mi \_\_\_\_\_ sa n -

1. | 2. **back to A**  
ai \_\_\_\_\_ ai \_\_\_\_\_ naf - shi ba - hem ga - 'a - lah \_\_\_\_\_

A second melody for “Nagila Halleluyah,” based on the Turkish maqām *Ḥusaynī*,<sup>32</sup> is very popular in Brooklyn’s Sephardi community (figure 3.14). Using a Maroka’i name, SDS designates maqām *Kurd-Mizri* (Eastern Kurdish) as the maqām for “Nagila Halleluyah,” with a short explanation that the lower tetrachord is maqām *Bayāt*—D, E half-flat, F, G—and the upper tetrachord is maqām *Rast*—G, A, B half-flat, C (Attiyah 2005:229). Of course, historically in Morocco there is no maqām *Kurd-Mizri*, but rather *ṭubū‘*; the adoption of maqām in the Maroka’i community as a system for designating melodic modes is relatively recent. The differences between the Maroka’i maqām *Kurd-Mizri* and the Eastern Arab maqām *Ḥuzzam* are that maqām *Kurd-Mizri* has one extra tone in the mode, a fundamental tone one three-quarter step below the tonic of *Sikāh*. The Maroka’i maqām *Kurd Mizri* is actually synonymous with the maqām *Ḥusaynī*. It is clear from these publications that the cue to which maqām, and in turn which melody, should accompany “Nagila Halleluyah” differs.

Since maqām *Ḥusaynī* and the Maroka’i *Kurd-Mizri* are the same, it is most likely that SDS is referring to this second melody. Composed and recorded in the 1970s by Moshe Eliyahu, an Israeli singer from Damascus, Syria, it is the only melody for “Nagila Halleluyah” performed in Maroka’i communities. In most Sephardi congregations in Brooklyn, Eliyahu’s melody is more popular than Amar’s melody, even though the Syrian songbooks seem to refer to Amar’s melody. SDS erroneously attributes the text to Eliyahu, which may be due to the popularity of his compositions and recordings. He revitalized the text and as an artist in the *musica mizrahit* genre connected with a new generation of Sephardim in immigrant communities in Israel populated by Jews from North Africa and other parts of the Middle East.

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<sup>32</sup> Maqām *Ḥusaynī* is in the *Bayāti* family of maqāmat and is a popular modulation from maqām *Bayāti*. The lower tetrachord for maqām *Ḥusaynī* is *Bayāti* and the upper tetrachord is *Rāst*. Maqām *Ḥusaynī*: D, E half-flat, F, G, A, B half-flat, C.

**Figure 3.14: “Nagila Halleluyah” Melody (composed by Moshe Eliyahu)**

na - gi - la ha - le - llu - ya - na - gi - la (na) ba ze-man ba ze-man

ba ze ma - n ha - ge - u - la h El Sha-dai Sha-dai Sha - dai - qa-

betz-nid-hai-yedi - dai ve ga - resh-mi - sa - nai ve - ga-resh mi-sa - nai

Eliyahu recorded and released his melody on the Azoulay Brothers record label, a label founded in 1950 by a Maroka'i immigrant to Israel, Rafael Azoulay, and named for his sons (p.c., Zaki Azoulay, February 13, 2012). By the time Eliyahu's recording appeared in the 1970s, record labels such as Azoulay Brothers had been featuring diverse artists from different Middle Eastern countries. This record label specializes in promoting Maroka'i artists, and played an influential role in the development of musica mizrahit by recording and popularizing some of the genre's significant figures: Eliyahu, Jo Amar, Victor Soussan, Emil Zrihan. Musica mizrahit artists were central in helping to define the character of Israel's Sephardi community by negotiating the integration of different Sephardi identities into a contemporary Sephardi-Mizrahi pan-ethnic identity (Horowitz 2010; Thomas 2012). Azoulay Brothers, while contributing to this musical phenomenon, has also been particularly instrumental in documenting Maroka'i music, including secular music in Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic as well as religious music.

As discussed in Chapter Two, familiarity with the sounds of the Eastern Mediterranean, including approaches to melody and rhythm in Eastern Arab musical traditions, was growing within the Jewish communities of Morocco by the mid-twentieth century. The experience of Maroka'i immigrants living in Israel as part of a multifaceted Sephardi-Mizrahi community, where the use of Eastern Arab maqāmat was common, catalyzed familiarity with neutral intervals for many community members. While neutral intervals remain foreign to the Moroccan *tubū'*, which still operate as the basis for modes used in cantillation and liturgical chanting in Maroka'i synagogues (Amzallag 1986), they are now present as part of a shared boundary of Sephardi-Mizrahi identity. Maroka'im have stretched their tonal comfort zone in the past couple of generations, and use songs like "Nagila Halleluyah" in select ways in synagogue musical practices. In the context of synagogue ritual, songs with neutral intervals really stand out when performed, alerting everyone present to a shared boundary of musical identity with other Sephardim.

A figure like Farid al-Atrash remains a favorite in the Maroka'i community's musical consciousness. As R' Amar explained to me, "For the Syrians, it is Umm Kulthūm, Muḥammad 'Abd al-Wahhāb, and [Abd al-Ḥalīm] Ḥāfiṣ. For us, it is mostly Farid" (p.c., R' Avraham Amar, November 12, 2011). Al-Atrash's songs, and songs by composers such as Moshe Eliyahu, are typically shorter and thus easier to incorporate into the context of bima songs.

The Israeli encounter between Maroka'im and other Sephardi communities accounts for the song's popularity in Brooklyn. Immigrants from Israel constitute a significant part of Brooklyn's Maroka'i community. A new diasporic node of the Sephardi diaspora—Israel—clearly transmitted an emblem of identity in the form of a popular song to the Sephardi transnation. This song is popular in Brooklyn's Sephardi community because it is popular in

Israel's Sephardi-Mizrahi community. The appearance of "Nagila Halleluyah" on the Azoulay Brothers record label, together with the growing comfort in the Maroka'i diaspora community with the sounds of the East and a reverence for Asher Mizrahi's texts, propelled this song into the standard musical repertoire of the modern Sephardi diaspora. The presence of "Nagila Halleluyah" in Brooklyn's Maroka'i community represents a larger, shared boundary of ethnic identity with other Sephardim. Its use as a bima song—arguably the most popular one—gives it a special place in the local Maroka'i community's consciousness as well.

*Shalom Leven Dodi*

Similar to "Nagila Halleluyah," "Shalom Leven Dodi" is emblematic of a shared diasporic ethnic identity between contemporary Sephardim. The text makes a strong historical connection to Spain, since Shlomo ibn Gabirol composed it. This text has remained popular throughout the Sephardi diaspora for centuries. Despite the resurgence in popularity of "Shalom Leven Dodi," set to a new melody and recorded by renowned twentieth-century performer Jo Amar,<sup>33</sup> this piece has not been incorporated into the bima song repertoires of other Sephardi communities in Brooklyn. Nevertheless, it remains familiar to most and is performed in other Sephardi communities on several other occasions. Its place in the bima song repertoire of Maroka'im has as much to do with the historical provenance of the text as the provenance of the melody. While there is an awareness of the text as a product of the Sephardi diaspora for generations, as everyone I have spoken with about it points out the acrostic of the composer's name (Shlomo [ibn Gabirol]), the song continues to live on in the ritual practice of Brooklyn's

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<sup>33</sup> According to [piyut.org.il](http://piyut.org.il), Algerian Mohammed W Muḥammad 'Abd al-Wahhāb i composed the melody and Jo Amar's popular rendition of "Shalom Leven Dodi" is an example of contrafactum ([piyut.org.il](http://piyut.org.il), accessed December 20, 2009).

Maroka'im as an emblem of a specifically Maroka'i diaspora identity because of Jo Amar's fame in performing it.

“Shalom Leven Dodi” is a strong example of Sephardi historical roots in Maroka'i identity. Shlomo ibn Gabirol, an iconic individual in the Sephardi poetic tradition, composed the text as a dialogue between two lovers, God and Israel (figure 3.15).<sup>34</sup> Ibn Gabirol was the first to introduce the full range of Hispano-Arabic poetic conventions into the Hebrew piyyut, including quantitative meter, syllabic meter, panegyric lyrics, and a rhyme scheme drawn from the qaṣīda form (Scheindlin 1991; Scheindlin 1986; Carmi 1981:101). “Shalom Leven Dodi” is a strong example of Ibn Gabirol's use of these conventions. The text follows a qaṣīda form and keeps a consistent syllabic and quantitative meter throughout.

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<sup>34</sup> The original text began *Shalom Lekha Dodi* (Peace to you, my beloved). It is not clear when it was changed to *Shalom Leven Dodi* (Peace to my beloved son), but this is the widely accepted opening line.



Figure 3.15: “Shalom Leven Dodi” Text (translated by Samuel R. Thomas)

(85) - פיוט - סי' שלמה (אבן גבירול)

שְׁלוֹם לְבֶן-דּוּדִי / הַצַּח וְהַאֲדָמוֹן  
שְׁלוֹם לְךָ מֵאֵת / רְקֵה כְּמוֹ רְמוֹן :

לְקִרְאֵת אַחֻתְךָ רוּץ / צֵא נָא לְהוֹשִׁיעָה  
וְצֵלַח כְּבֶן יִשָּׂי / רַבַּת בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן :

מָה לְךָ יִפְהַ-פְּיָה / וְתַעֲוִרֵי אֶהְבֶּה  
וְתַצְלִצְלֵי קוֹלְךָ / כְּמַעִיל בְּקוֹל פְּעַמּוֹן :

הָעֵת, אֲשֶׁר תִּחְפֹּץ / אֶהְבֶּה, אֲחִישְׁנָה -  
מֵהֵר, וְעֲלִיךָ / אֲרִד כְּטַל תְּרִמּוֹן :

\_\_\_\_\_ א"ם למסרת \_\_\_\_\_

ג"א - \* כי תעורר.

Peace to my beloved children / pure and Godlike  
Sow in peace / your bodily temple like a pomegranate plant  
Call your sisters running / out, please, for salvation  
And succeed like the son of Yishai / numerous are the children of Ammon  
What is your beautiful opening / awakening my love  
And the sounds of your voice / coating me like the sound of a bell  
The time, which is your desirous / love, I will hasten towards  
Quickly, rise up / and I will descend like the dew of Mount Hermon

It is common to hear “Shalom Leven Dodi” sung at festive meals, at informal gatherings or parties, and at life-cycle events. Yehezkiel Zion, a prominent ḥazzan in Brooklyn trained in the Yerushalmi-Sephardi cantorial tradition, commented that “Shalom Leven Dodi” is “a Moroccan song that everybody here [Brooklyn] knows” (p.c., Yehezkiel Zion, March 30, 2008). He identifies the song with the Maroka’i community and seemingly glosses over the Sephardi heritage of the text. In this exchange, he was referring above all to the melody (figure 3.16) popularized by Jo Amar. R’ Dahan explains that the knowledge of this melody is due to “its catchy and simple” nature. He adds that among Sephardim in Brooklyn, “The younger

generations are unfamiliar with other melodies. Jo Amar made it popular again” (p.c., R’ Chaim Dahan, March 5, 2008). According to Dahan’s suggestion, Jo Amar’s performance was solely responsible for popularizing the text again, even though it has long been part of the paraliturgical repertoires of Sephardi piyyutim. For instance, it is part of the Maroka’i baqqashot cycle on parashah Vayeira. This melody is so closely associated with ibn Gabirol’s text that for a ḥazzan such as Zion, the song is simply Maroka’i. Although he clearly knew that ibn Gabirol composed the text, the melody he chose to highlight signified his own connection with the Maroka’i community. As an outsider of sorts, he was expressing a dual consciousness of the Sephardi and Maroka’i identity of the piece by signaling his acceptance of this melody for the text.

**Figure 3.16: “Shalom Leven Dodi” Melody (composed by Mohammed Wahhabi)**

Along with Zion and R’ Dahan, several others with whom I spoke about this song immediately associated its text with Amar’s melody. To test this point, I would begin singing the melody without words. Every informant began applying the text to the melody almost immediately. It seems that whenever “Shalom Leven Dodi” is performed, the song evokes an association with Maroka’i identity among members of the larger Sephardi community.

Jo Amar's rendition of this melody for "Shalom Leven Dodi" was one of the first recordings produced on the Azoulay Brothers record label. His popularity as a world-renowned Maroka'i artist and as the progenitor of this song is a source of pride in the Maroka'i diaspora community. Of thirteen recordings posted on piyut.org.il, ten are Maroka'i, while the other three are from Iraq, India, and Italy; several of the Maroka'i recordings are renditions of this familiar melody. The song's association with Jo Amar and its function as a bima song reinforce the notion that "Shalom Leven Dodi" is an important expression of identity in Brooklyn's Maroka'i community. Like "Nagila Halleluyah," it imbues a revered moment during Kriat ha-Torah—when an oleh is about to bless the Torah on the bima—with a dual Sephardi and Maroka'i consciousness.

#### *Integrating Maroka'i and Sephardi Layers*

Several bima songs used by Maroka'im in Brooklyn encourage the integration of layers of diaspora consciousness into communal identity. Through musical expression, the boundaries of distinctive Sephardi ethnic identities can interact and overlap in a space where a larger boundary of a contemporary Sephardi-Mizrahi ethnic identity exists. A song such as "Nagila Halleluyah" is considered a product of the contemporary Sephardi diaspora community and thus an emblem of a modern Sephardi-Mizrahi identity. If it had been written three centuries ago, this text could have been considered emblematic of a particular regional Jewish rather than Sephardi ethnic identity, like many songs that are already clearly identified with Jewish communities in regions of Morocco, Algeria, Yemen, or Iraq. However, the historical contexts of the song's development coincide with larger historical moments when the consciousness of the Sephardi diaspora was undergoing a major transformation. Song texts by Asher Mizrahi were gaining popularity in a number of Jewish communities in the Levant and North Africa from the early to

middle twentieth century. The popularity of Moshe Eliyahu's melodic composition some decades later gave "Nagila Halleluyah" a new life as a product of the contemporary Sephardi diaspora community, in which Israel had become a new node. Eliyahu's composition was an instant hit throughout the Sephardi diaspora community. Although the melody was a product of the Eastern Oriental community—its composer was from Aleppo and compositional features, including rhythm and maqām-based melodic approaches, were very Eastern Mediterranean in nature—"Nagila Halleluyah" is a Sephardi song because of the unique historical frame in which it was produced. No doubt the presence of Eliyahu's recording on the Azoulay Brothers record label helped propel it into the repertoire of bima songs in Maroka'i diaspora communities. But its contemporary use as a favorite bima song relaxes distinctive boundaries between groups and instead encourages the integration of two layers of diaspora consciousness, Sephardi and Maroka'i.

By comparison, the historical trajectory of a song like "Shalom Leven Dodi" shows a different kind of interaction between distinctive Sephardi ethnic boundaries. It too emphasizes a consciousness of the symbiotic relationship between a particular, modern Sephardi diasporic ethnic group (Maroka'im) and the Sephardi diaspora writ large. The text is connected historically to Spain and therefore lies deep in the consciousness of the whole Sephardi diaspora community. But unlike "Nagila Halleluyah," "Shalom Leven Dodi" remains associated with a particular Sephardi ethnic community, despite the historicity of the text and its familiarity as a common piece in the para-liturgical repertoires of several other Sephardi ethnic communities. "Shalom Leven Dodi" remains emblematic of Maroka'i identity and is performed in other Sephardi communities in Brooklyn with a consciousness of this. As R' Kakon and R' Dahan have

commented independently, they both use it and have heard it used for liturgical contrafacta in pan-Sephardi synagogues. But as a bima song, it is popular only in the Maroka'i community.

“Shalom Leven Dodi” showcases the Maroka'i contribution to the newest iteration of Sephardi diaspora identity. A song such as “Shalom Leven Dodi” serves in practice to express both a Sephardi and a distinctive (Maroka'i) Sephardi identity. The coexistence of the musical and contextual elements in such bima songs reveals the ways in which layers of diaspora consciousness can intersect and at times even intertwine.

During Kriah ha-Torah in Brooklyn's Maroka'i community, bima and processional songs provide a space where musical expression often incorporates two layers of diaspora consciousness, Sephardi and Maroka'i. In contrast to the practice of te'amim, bima and processional songs provide more room for expansion and incorporation. Ethnicization is still apparent in the use of these songs, but from exploring these musical expressions, we can see how the community constructs multiple boundaries of identity.

## **Conclusion**

Preserving the character of communal identity, in a new land and as part of a geographically diffuse transnation, demands that community members recognize points of difference or construct new boundaries of distinction between self and other. Conversely, co-ethnic recognition is important for community members in understanding larger boundaries of identity. Points of sharing exist in a liminal space between tighter and looser boundaries. Displacement and diasporic migration serve as catalysts in the boundary-building process. This process, described as ethnicization, is dynamic and arises from a need to define characteristics of communal identity.

Kriat ha-Torah is an important ritual in Jewish communal life when community members of different Jewish ethnic groups engage in boundary construction by using musical practices that can imbue their experience of the ritual with emblematic musical expressions. Kriat ha-Torah provides community members with a means to advance a consciousness about self. For Brooklyn's Maroka'im, musical expressions are central to many aspects of the Kriat ha-Torah ritual and operate as vehicles for constructing boundaries of identity. Torah cantillation, the apex moment of the ritual, is central to the definition of a Maroka'i diaspora ethnic identity. The te'amim serve as a notational system for prescribing sacred text cantillation in all Jewish communities, but in Brooklyn's Maroka'i community the practice of te'amim serves as an opportunity to reiterate a specifically Maroka'i emblem of identity. Upon emigration and settlement into a transnation, different ways of rendering the te'amim have coalesced into a singular style. This style has subsumed regional differences from the homeland in favor of clearly defined melodic motifs, evoking a larger conceptualization of the homeland. The fixing of te'amim melodic motifs is borne out of a need to relate an aspect of cultural practice to a new ethnic or national identity. It is the nexus of constructing a stance (as Brubaker might suggest). The expression of te'amim in the community is not seen as malleable and ultimately susceptible to change or assimilation, but rather functions specifically to enshrine a characteristic element of Maroka'i identity.

Processional and bima songs are two additional and important types of musical expression during Kriat ha-Torah in Brooklyn's Maroka'i community. Whereas te'amim practice emphasizes a pan-Maroka'i ethnic identity—a direct result of emigration and diaspora—bima and processional songs are used to negotiate a hybridized ethnic identity that emphasizes both Maroka'i and Sephardi layers of diaspora consciousness. They serve in part to foster co-ethnic

recognition of boundaries of another particular Jewish diasporic ethnic identity: Sephardi. What happens when multiple displacements bring a new iteration of another diaspora identity boundary? Maroka'im, Syrians, and Egyptians in Brooklyn—all co-ethnics who associate with each other as members of the Sephardi diaspora—have had to renegotiate the boundaries of a Sephardi diaspora identity in modern times. The texts and the melodies of bima songs work together to foster a sense of a symbiotic relationship between co-ethnics. Here, preservation and incorporation operate in a lived tension between two distinctive ethnic identities.

In Brooklyn's Maroka'i community, the melodic, linguistic, and aesthetic approaches to te'amim practice are vital for encoding a diasporic identity centered on a clear Maroka'i boundary of expression. The processional liturgy and bima songs encourage a shared boundary between Maroka'im and other Sephardim. These musical expressions are rich with emblems of identity, pregnant with indices that serve to symbolize identity for community members. Perhaps no other ritual in the life of the community serves as important a role for conceptualizing and iterating a layered diaspora consciousness than Kriat ha-Torah.

## **Chapter Four:** **Hazzanut – Liturgical Performance Choices**

### **The Art of Cantorial Practice**

*Hazzanut*, or the practice of liturgical music, is a valued part of synagogue life in every Jewish community. When Jewish liturgical texts are performed aloud, they are usually expressed musically. However, traditional Jewish law proscribes accompaniment by musical instruments during most Jewish liturgical services.<sup>1</sup> Thus, vocal performance—by soloists, choirs, or entire congregations—is integral and foregrounded in *hazzanut*. Singing has always been considered an important way of worshipping God. In the Torah Moses and the Israelites are said to have sung on several notable occasions (Exodus 15:1-18; Numbers 21:17; Deuteronomy 32:1-43). On several other occasions singing is emphasized in the Hebrew Bible (Samuel II 6:5; Chronicles II 29:27; Isaiah 5:1, 12:5, 23:16). Several psalms include verses about singing as well (Ps. 13, 28, 33, 68, 71, 95, 100, 105, 137, 144, 147, 150). *Hazzanut* serves as a means to invigorate worship and to focus communal musical expression. It provides the soundscape for most Jewish liturgical rites.

*Hazzanut* also implies an ethnically distinctive way of practicing liturgical music. Time and again individuals have emphasized *hazzanut* in conversation with me as an impetus for their choice of which synagogue to attend. Synagogue congregations in Brooklyn's Maroka'i community practice *hazzanut* similarly to congregations in other locales of the Maroka'i diaspora. As in most Maroka'i communities, *hazzanut* practice in Brooklyn represents an

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<sup>1</sup> Instrumental accompaniment has been a part of *hazzanut* in most Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist congregations for the past several decades (Slobin 1989; Cohen 2009). Since the vast majority of Sephardi congregations (including all Maroka'i congregations in Brooklyn) associate with Orthodox Judaism, the traditional proscription against musical instruments in worship is followed.



aggregation of styles from what was once a diverse and loose federation of regional communities in Morocco. A compulsion in Maroka'i communities to develop a pan-Maroka'i identity began even before emigration from the homeland (Morocco) and ḥazzanut can surely be seen as a practice used to further this effort. Nevertheless, during the last half century, as Maroka'im have fostered a transnational group outside the homeland, efforts at conservation have increased. Azoulay Brothers produced several albums during the 1970s featuring liturgical material. Several different websites and YouTube channels have been setup to circulate recordings and videos of ḥazzanut. However, one must realize that Maroka'i ḥazzanut practices also set boundaries around a particular Jewish diasporic ethnic identity that is in essence multifaceted, complex, and hybridized. In urban contexts like Brooklyn, community members have had to confront many different types of Jewish ethnic groups and their practices. Thus, despite community members' use of ḥazzanut to foster a particular diasporic ethnic consciousness, some aspects of local practice reveal associations with other Jewish ethnic identities. Ḥazzanut is a category of communal practice that helps to foster a consciousness of a layered diasporic identity.

Maroka'i ḥazzanut is distinctive in Brooklyn as locals remain faithful to a transnational practice of incorporating nūba-based ṭubū' for *mawāwīl* (pl.), specific melodic tropes based on ṭubū', and melodies of Maghrebi provenance. Practices include the use of select repertoires of liturgical texts and melodies, contrafacta, and the reiteration of particular performance aesthetics. After several years of regularly attending different Sephardi synagogues in the neighborhood, I have had the opportunity to collect rich data on the role of ḥazzanut in the communal life of Brooklyn's Maroka'im and to compare their practices with other Sephardi practices. Because of proscriptions against using electronics on most occasions when ḥazzanut is practiced in the synagogue, much of the data presented in this chapter comes from individual demonstrations by

informants and from notes taken after participant observation. I have, however, been able to include material in this chapter from ḥazzanut performance on Tisha B'Av, a rare holiday in the Jewish calendar when recording is permitted. With the trust of many, I was granted permission to make recordings of services on Tisha B'Av in New York, Israel, and France. The data presented in this chapter are thus diverse and represent multiple facets of ḥazzanut practice in the community.

This chapter is divided into several parts: background information on the actors and materials of ḥazzanut, including the role of the *ḥazzan* (cantor), liturgical text repertoires, and the interdependency between music and text in ḥazzanut; an analysis of Jewish liturgical services, including a comparative analysis between Maroka'i and Syrian approaches to structure and the incorporation of extramusical associations into ḥazzanut practice; an exploration of contrafacta as a means for reiterating and developing melodic repertoire in the community; and an analysis of how significant performance aesthetics, including rhythmic, melodic, and vocal aesthetics, are employed in local ḥazzanut practice.

### **The Ḥazzan**

In most Jewish communities, a designated individual, called a *ḥazzan*, serves as a prayer leader, or *shaliaḥ tzibur* (community representative), and as an authority on liturgical musical practice. As *shaliaḥ tzibur*, a ḥazzan performs a sacred duty for worshippers as an intercessor between the community and God. In most synagogues, lay leadership in the form of a *shaliaḥ tzibur* is common, especially during weekday services. Whoever stands before the community to act as *shaliaḥ tzibur* must of course be considered an upstanding member of the community. Nevertheless, many synagogues seek to employ a ḥazzan full-time because liturgy for Shabbat and holidays is lengthier, more complex, and includes more musical expression. Additionally,

community turnout is usually greater on these occasions. Having a ḥazzan on staff is a valued asset. Carrying the additional responsibility as an authority on the liturgical musical tradition, as a specialist with knowledge of communal musical practices that is entrusted to transmit this valued aspect of communal identity to the next generations, the ḥazzan is an essential figure in most Jewish communities.

However, historically in Maroka'i communities there was a differentiation made in the roles of musical specialist and shaliaḥ tzibur. *Paytanim* (poet-singers) were holders of specialist musical knowledge, leading musical practices in several contexts in communal life, such as life-cycle events, hillulot, and parties. These performers typically did not lead synagogue liturgical services, leaving the role of shaliaḥ tzibur to the rabbi of the congregation.

In Morocco, I remember just the rabbi leading as shaliaḥ. No matter if *paytanim* (poet-singers) were there or not. He [rabbi] would have the *kavod* (respect; honor) to lead. (p.c., R' Michael Kakon, February 06, 2008)

At Netivot Israel synagogue, R' Bouskila performs most of the ḥazzanut. He has a wonderful voice, and a command of the liturgy and musical material. On occasion, other congregants may lead services, but this is rare. Despite the continuation of the practice of having the rabbi lead services at Netivot Israel synagogue, in local Maroka'i congregations the tendency is to rely upon lay ḥazzanim to lead services. Typically a few skilled, knowledgeable, and respected congregants take turns acting as ḥazzanim. At Hesed l'Avraham synagogue, R' Shlomo Lankry never leads. Instead, several congregants, such as R' Chaim Dahan, R' Michael Kakon, or Avi Benchimol, take turns performing the role of ḥazzan. One who regularly perform this role may actually be called a ḥazzan out of respect, even though he holds no official employment from the congregation. A ḥazzan must be male, known to be religiously observant, able to perform several pieces solo, in a responsorial format, and lead congregational group singing. For instance, R'

Chaim Dahan is often referred to as a ḥazzan by congregants and community members alike even though he is not officially employed by Hased l'Abraham synagogue. He possesses a deep knowledge of Maroka'i liturgy and assumes some leadership role in musical practices at the synagogue; he often performs as the ḥazzan or chooses who will.

*Ḥazzan*, as shaliaḥ tzibur and music specialist, is a common leadership position in most Ashkenazi congregations. Several Sephardi congregations in Brooklyn now employ a ḥazzan in such a role as well. According to R' Michael Kakon, this seems to be a relatively recent development. He suggests that having a full-time ḥazzan is an adoption of an Ashkenazi or western Sephardi congregational practice. Upon reflection about the conflation of roles—music specialist and shaliaḥ tzibur—in the Maroka'i community, he adds, “maybe we also got it [having someone other than the rabbi as shaliaḥ tzibur] from the Ashkenaz [sic]” (ibid. 2008). Despite this modern trend in several local Sephardi congregations, one can find evidence of professional vocalists active in the Egyptian Jewish community centuries ago referred to as ḥazzanim. In some cases, they are called *paytanim* or *meshorerim* (composers). According to S.D. Goitein, several Cairo Geniza documents describe ḥazzanim as being poets, composers and performers of panegyric pieces for wealthy donors, as traveling performers, and as officiants at weddings, funerals, and other life cycle events. But whether they were employees of a synagogue, or if the position always demanded a certain realm of duties, is not clear (Goitein 1967:219-228).<sup>2</sup> In any case, the integration of the musical specialist and prayer leader into the

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<sup>2</sup> Ḥazzanim were apparently expected to earn a significant part of their personal income from offering additional services in the community, including acting as judicial scribes, matchmakers, tutors, and *shoḥetim* (ritual slaughterers)! Regarding the latter, the workdays are never in conflict with one another; one cannot slaughter animals on Shabbat or most holidays (Goitein 1967:223, 228).

role of a single individual is a recent addition to Maroka'i liturgical practice, and is certainly evident in Brooklyn.

In Sephardi liturgical practice, a ḥazzan only begins to lead about halfway through the service, taking over at a pivotal moment. Other congregants perform several liturgical pieces before the ḥazzan can begin. In most Sephardi congregations in Brooklyn, the same individuals perform this preliminary material each time the services are conducted. In Maroka'i congregations, different individuals are encouraged to perform this material each time. By contrast, in Ashkenazi liturgical practice it is typical for the ḥazzan to lead the entire service, from beginning to end. Because opportunities for members of Maroka'i congregations to perform in the synagogue abound, several community members have expressed to me their interest in developing a decent level of competence in ḥazzanut, and several congregants are indeed quite skilled in ḥazzanut practice. Thus, in a Maroka'i congregation individual congregants remain very involved in the practice of ḥazzanut throughout most of the service.

Still, the ḥazzan plays an integral role in most Maroka'i liturgical services. When the Maroka'i ḥazzan finally does assume his leadership role, he has total autonomy over musical practice. He can choose to perform the texts alone or pass verses to other congregants to perform. When he allows another congregant to sing, the ḥazzan will usually set the melody first. If a congregant expresses the melody incorrectly, the ḥazzan or another congregant will swiftly cut him off and take over.

In Brooklyn's Maroka'i community, many individuals practice ḥazzanut, but only a few are given the title of ḥazzan. These individuals, while typically not employed in this position, still assume a role in synagogue leadership. They are ultimately responsible for leading the bulk of liturgical services, acting as shaliaḥ tzibur and as the transmitters of Maroka'i ḥazzanut.

## Nusah

*Nusah* (wording) is a term often used to connote both textual and musical aspects of Jewish liturgical practice. However, in Brooklyn's Maroka'i community, as in most Sephardi communities, it is used primarily to discuss liturgical text; *ḥazzanut* remains the favored term for discussing liturgical musical practice. The text-music connection is obvious, as *nusah* is an integral part of *ḥazzanut*. But the ways in which they operate as different aspects of Jewish liturgical practice needs to be understood in order to appreciate how *nusah* and *ḥazzanut* function independently as means for constructing Jewish diasporic ethnic identities. Discussions of *nusah* in Brooklyn's Maroka'i community focus on textual idiosyncrasies in the liturgy, such as the ordering of words and prayers, the presence or exclusion of certain *piyyutim* (sacred poems) and *pizmonim* (short, lyrical poems), and the deeper meanings of the texts.

Typically, synagogue congregations choose a particular *nusah* to follow, based on a historical geographic association (city, country, or region) or philosophical outlook (kabbalistic, rationalist, ḥasidic, denominational). The four most common *nusahim* (pl.) are *nusah Ashkenaz* (European), *nusah Sefard* (Spanish but used by Ḥasidic communities),<sup>3</sup> *nusah Sephardi ve-Edot ha-Mizrah* (Sephardi and Eastern communities) or *nusah Edot ha-Mizrah u-Ma'arav* (Eastern and Western [Sephardi] communities), and *nusah ARI* (the *nusah* of R' Isaac Luria of sixteenth

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<sup>3</sup> Despite the name, *nusah Sefard* is commonly used by several Ḥasidic groups with no direct connection to Sephardi identity or Sepharad. *Nusah Sephardi*, which is used by the Spanish and Portuguese congregations, should not be confused with *nusah Sefard*. *Nusah Sefard* incorporates aspects of *nusah Ashkenaz* and *nusah Edot ha-Mizrah*, emphasizing kabbalistic themes developed in sixteenth century Safed, Palestine, a key center for Sephardi mystics in the century after the expulsion from Spain. Since its inception in the late eighteenth century, the Ḥasidic movement has emphasized Lurianic Kabbalah in its philosophical and practical tenets. While nuanced versions of *nusah Sefard* exist for different ḥasidic groups—some versions are almost identical to *nusah Ashkenaz* and some are much closer to *nusah Edot ha-Mizrah*—all versions include kabbalistic additions found in *nusah ARI* (Wertheim 1992).

century Safed, Palestine). Several congregations can use the same basic nusah, though nuances often emerge between them. Nusah Ashkenaz is the basis for most nusahim in the United States (Summit 2006; Elbogen 1993; Werner 1976). The different denominations of Ashkenazi Judaism practiced in the United States and worldwide, including Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist Judaism, typically follow some variant of this nusah. Nusah Sephardi ve-Edot ha-Mizrah, or nusah Edot ha-Mizrah as it is normally called, is the most common in Brooklyn and other Sephardi-Mizrahi communities worldwide. While most Hasidic communities use nusah Sefard, members of Chabad-Lubavitch use nusah ARI. Brooklyn's Maroka'im use *siddurim* (prayerbooks) with the byline *nusah Yehudei Maroko* (Moroccan Jews) printed on the title page, a nusah that is very similar to nusah Edot ha-Mizrah u-Ma'arav with some additions from nusah ARI.

Most of the differences between the nusahim of Maroka'im and other Sephardi groups in Brooklyn appear in festival liturgies. For instance, on the festival of Simhat Torah, the piyyutim "Kiri Ram Kiri" and "Hanenu Yah Hanenu" appear only in nusah Yehudei Maroko. Conversely, two popular Sephardi piyyutim, "Simhu Na" or "Shirah La-El Neranena," appear only in nusah Sephardi ve-Edot ha-Mizrah. While such differences in nusahim can be relatively small, they are often amplified as emblematic of identity boundaries. When asked one Shabbat about several discrepancies between the liturgical service and the printed *siddur* (sing., prayerbook), R' Bouskila responded, "I am compiling my own nusah. I make the small changes to the printed text that I know from Morocco, from hearing my father and his father in *shul* (synagogue). Just because it is printed does not make it right!" (p.c., R' Gad Bouskila, June 16, 2013). As R' Bouskila's statement above implies, nusah can be very idiosyncratic. In his case, as the rabbi and the hazzan at Netivot Israel synagogue, he is even making changes to nusah Yehudei Maroko by

emphasizing particularities in the text as a means to foster a deeper connection to the homeland. As a living authority figure, he feels he can go beyond the static nature of the printed text to foster a consciousness of the homeland on behalf of all congregants.

### *Interaction between Nusah and Hazzanut*

Studies of nusah tend to highlight implied aspects of musical practice that are inseparable from the text:

The meaning of nusach [*sic*] in a musical context [ḥazzanut] could in theory refer to the ordering or systematic organization of a wide variety of musical factors. These would include scales, motifs, tetrachords, intervals, melody types, tonality, rhythmic patterns, meter, tempo, intonation, range, and others, as well as a variety of extra-musical elements. (Tarsi 2002:176)

As Tarsi points out, nusah can govern several aspects of liturgical musical practice. However, this is true primarily in Ashkenazi ḥazzanut practices.<sup>4</sup> The nusah for a particular occasion—Shabbat, a festival, or life-cycle occasion—will imply to the Ashkenazi ḥazzan both particularities in the liturgical text as well as specific aspects of musical practice (prayer modes, melodic motifs, tempo). Several Sephardi congregations in Brooklyn also rely upon extramusical, text-based elements in determining ḥazzanut practice. However, these associations between text and music come from *outside* of the liturgy. In *Maqām and Liturgy* (2009), Mark Kligman describes how for Syrian Jews in Brooklyn, “meaning ascribed to music associated with the biblical text [portion of the week] plays a significant role in shaping the [liturgical] music, the Sabbath morning liturgy in particular” (Kligman 2009:164). In communities that rely upon a standard repertoire and order of maqāmat for liturgical melodies, that use a system of

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<sup>4</sup> Ashkenazi *ḥazzanus* (ḥazzanut) is a specialized form of practicing Ashkenazi nusah. Based upon western-style recitatives from the late nineteenth century, the ḥazzan is the supreme soloist, singing alone or accompanied by a choir (Klein 2011; Slobin 1989). The compositions incorporate many of the musical aspects of Ashkenazi nusah, including prayer modes and melodic motifs.



extramusical, textual associations in the form of weekly prayer modes, each maqām is determined by specific associations with literary themes in the parashah, or with themes associated with certain holidays. For instance, when parashah Lekh Lekha is read from the Torah (Breishit 12:1-17:27), which recounts Abraham and Isaac’s covenant through circumcision, parts of the Shabbat morning liturgy will highlight maqām Şabā. This maqām is associated with the covenant between Yisrael and God, and is thus a favored maqām on several other occasions: the Shabbat liturgy during the week of parashah Mishpatim (Shemot 21:1-24:18), at a bar mitzvah, and for many of the typical songs performed at the *Brit Milah* (circumcision ceremony) (Kligman 2009:177-178).<sup>5</sup> In this maqām-based approach to the connection between nusaḥ and ḥazzanut, which forms the basis of liturgical practice for many Jewish communities from the Islamic world and is prominently employed by Yerushalmi-Sephardi ḥazzanim (Barnea 1997), the liturgy stays the same while prayer modes and melodies change from week to week.

In Maroka’i ḥazzanut practice, any ṭab‘ is available for use with the liturgical texts. Brooklyn’s Maroka’i ḥazzanim tend to rely upon a few favored ṭubū‘, emphasizing them in improvisation and by drawing upon certain well-worn melodies (Amzallag 1986; 1998:106). But Maroka’im do not adhere to any one particular ṭab‘ for the greater part of any liturgical service. And during improvisatory moments, a ḥazzan may choose to carry on in the same ṭab‘ as the previous melody or foreshadow an upcoming melody by changing the ṭab‘. While extramusical, textual-based associations are present in Maroka’i ḥazzanut practice, they are not relied upon or as determinant for governing melodic choices for liturgy in this community as they are in other Sephardi communities.

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<sup>5</sup> On the Sephardic Pizmonim Project website (<http://www.pizmonim.com>) and in the Sephardi Ḥazzanut Forum listserv there are several discussions about the extramusical associations between maqāmat and textual meaning.

For the weekly para-liturgical baqqashot ritual, aspects of the biblical text, such as themes in a story, a particular character, or a historical moment, are used to determine the collections of accepted piyyutim and *ṭubū‘* (nuba-based melodic modes). The *ṭubū‘* change from week to week. During a weekly class on baqqashot with R’ Amar at Netivot Israel, he showed students how, during the week of parashah *Toldot* (Genesis 25:19-28:9), that *ṭubū‘ Raml al-Māya* or *Iṣbahān*<sup>6</sup> can be used for the prayer “Az Yashir Moshe” during Shaḥarit on Shabbat. Thus, the *ṭab‘* or *ṭubū‘* used for the baqqashot on any given week could be used in ḥazzanut practice as an organizing element in parts of the liturgical service on Shabbat (p.c., R’ Avraham Amar, October 19, 2010). However, it is not always possible to incorporate the weekly *ṭubū‘* from baqqashot into liturgical practice, since half of the year, during the summer months, the baqqashot ritual is not performed.

One might expect a clear boundary between Maroka’i and Ashkenazi approaches, but Brooklyn’s Maroka’im have also rebuffed the Syrian approach entirely despite significant and intensive local exposure. Because of proximity and sustained exposure to the hegemonic influence of Syrians over local Sephardi institutions, including synagogues, schools, and other communal outlets, one might expect more assimilation of Syrian ḥazzanut practices into the Maroka’i community. At times it is possible to hear neutral intervals creeping into some other communal musical expressions (parties, festive meals, life-cycle events), but the use of Eastern Arab maqāmat is absent from local Maroka’i ḥazzanut practice.

In all Jewish liturgical practices, nusah and ḥazzanut are typically interrelated in some way. An important distinction between Sephardi and Ashkenazi approaches to this

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<sup>6</sup> *Ṭab‘ Raml al-Māya*: **D E F G A B C D C Bb A G F E D**  
*Ṭab‘ Iṣbahān*: **D (E) (F) G A B C D C B A G (F) (E) D**

interrelationship is that most aspects of musical practice used in Sephardi ḥazzanut exist independently of the synagogue. For instance, the Moroccan ṭab‘ *Ramal-Maya* comes from āla-andalusit, incorporated into the synagogue from a genre of musical practice that exists outside of the synagogue. In contrast, Ashkenazi prayer modes, such as *Phreygish*,<sup>7</sup> first and foremost derive from Ashkenazi nusah. While prayer modes such as Phreygish have been brought out of the synagogue and incorporated into non-liturgical Jewish musical expressions such as Klezmer, both the name and structure of such modes suggest that they still remain within the Ashkenazi Jewish community.

As in other Sephardi communities, in the Maroka’i diaspora community several aspects of non-liturgical musical practice flow into the synagogue ḥazzanut. This flow—from outside to inside—is encouraged because ḥazzanut stands independently of nusah. Nusah and ḥazzanut are related insofar as liturgical music is reliant upon text, but for Maroka’im the separation between these realms of cultural practice is definitive.

While these two spheres of practice coincide, often bringing out hybridized expressions in the process, they function differently. For Maroka’im in Brooklyn, the texts tend to imply associations between community members and their Jewish and Sephardi diasporic identities. Ḥazzanut, on the other hand, tends to imply associations with Sephardi and Maroka’i diasporic identities. Together, nusah and ḥazzanut encourage multiple associations at every turn of phrase.

## **Jewish Liturgical Services**

According to rabbinic tradition, early Jewish liturgical practice developed from the Torah. The first prayer recited was probably the Shema, as it is the primary declaration of faith in

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<sup>7</sup> Phreygish is an altered Phrygian scale: C Db E F G Ab Bb C. Incidentally, the intervallic construction of Phreygish is the same as the descending scale of the Eastern Arab maqām Ḥijāz.

the God of the Hebrews. It includes a verse compelling practitioners to “speak of them [mitzvot] ... when you lie down, and when you rise” (Deuteronomy 6:7).<sup>8</sup> Normative Jewish practice calls for three daily services —*Shaharit* (morning), *Minḥah* (afternoon), and *Arvit* (evening)—each of which can be performed during a designated period of time each day. Up until midday<sup>9</sup> one may recite *Shaharit*, after which the time for *Minḥah* commences. If one misses the allotted time for a particular service, one has missed the chance to perform that service for that day. Rabbinic tradition teaches that the three patriarchs instituted these prayer services: Abraham instituted *Shaharit* (Genesis 22:3), Isaac instituted *Minḥah* (Genesis 24:63), and Jacob instituted *Arvit* (Genesis 28:11). The Biblical Book of Daniel includes the only mention in the Hebrew Bible of all three daily services together. Here we also find a formula for prayer: thanksgiving, petition, and supplication (Daniel 6:11-12). A fourth service is included, called *Musaf* (addition), which is intended to commemorate the additional public sacrifice offering performed by the high priest in the Holy Temple on Shabbat and festivals.

During the Second Temple Period (fifth century BCE – first century CE), liturgical texts were developed as Israelites began practicing religious rituals in synagogues. The *Anshei Knesset Gedolah* (Great Assembly of Rabbis), a body of early rabbinic codifiers of Judaism, devised a formulaic set of prayers and blessings to be recited during each service. Several Aramaic prayers and Hebrew piyyutim were included later. Over the past two millennia, different *minhagim*

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<sup>8</sup> Incidentally, this verse mentions lying down before rising up. Like the account of creation in Genesis, where each day is marked with the phrase “...it was evening, it was morning...,” the Shema emphasizes the normative Jewish practice of marking the beginning of each day at sunset.

<sup>9</sup> Midday is determined according to halakhic hours, which vary depending on the season. According to the Vilna Gaon, daytime is divided into twelve equal parts (<http://www.kehillatisrael.net/hcal/zmanim.html>, accessed May 21, 2013).

(customs) developed in different parts of the Jewish diaspora, yet the basic format and texts of liturgical services remain relatively consistent worldwide.

In addition to the three daily services, and to the Musaf service on Shabbat and festivals, there are several additional liturgical services throughout the year. For example, the *Yamim Nora'im* (High Holy Days) include many special liturgical services, such as *Hallel* (praise), *Selihot* (penitential prayers), and *Birkat ha-Geshem* (prayer for rain). Certain life-cycle events also have special liturgical services: *Kiddushin* (wedding ceremony), Brit Milah, and *Shiva* (mourning). Consequently, there is a wealth of services and accompanying liturgies to explore in Jewish life.

While any of these services would be germane for analyzing liturgical ritual, I have chosen to focus primarily on Shabbat and festival days. These are regular occasions in the community when much of the richest liturgical music practice takes place. Since the nusahim for Shabbat and festivals are generally similar between communities throughout the Jewish diaspora, the text and format of services serve as a kind of constant. This constant helps to bring minor differences in text and nuances in approaches to ḥazzanut between Jewish diasporic ethnic communities into stronger relief. Furthermore, the regularity of such occasions serves as a powerful means for reiterating boundaries of Maroka'i identity.

### **Jewish Liturgy: A Closer Look**

Jewish liturgy consists of several different types of texts—prayers, blessings, psalms, and piyyutim. Prayers can be supplicatory or laudatory, about God's mysteries, handiwork, and desires, or about *B'nai Yisrael* (children of Israel), their role in the world, longing for Zion, or compulsion to perform Torah *mitzvot* (commandments). Many prayers incorporate passages from biblical texts, including the Torah, psalms, and prophetic writings. Blessings are similar to

prayers, except that they generally include at the beginning or end of the prayer a formulaic statement that begins *barukh ata Ado-nai* (blessed is He, God...). Blessings are also declarative statements meant to express existent realities, spiritual and physical. One performs the blessing on wine because the wine exists. A deeper spiritual meaning associated with this blessing is that it is a declaration recognizing God's omnipotence as well—God created the grapes, the winemaker, the know-how, and the occasion for enjoying the wine. Some blessings seem like pleas, but in reality they are declarations of what God will undoubtedly provide in the future (p.c., R' Joseph Dweck, October 17, 2012).

*Tehillim* (Psalms) are laudatory texts. Rabbinic tradition teaches that King David compiled a collection of 150 *Tehillim* (Book of Psalms) from his own writings and from orally passed down works by great biblical figures like Moses, Joshua, and even Adam (Talmud Bavli *Bava Basra* 14b). David was considered a prolific composer and musical genius. Some *tehillim* are short (Psalm 117 has only two verses) and others much longer (Psalm 119 has 176 verses). The general theme of most *tehillim* is the exaltation of God as the omnipotent.

Several *piyyutim* appear within Jewish liturgy as well. These poems come from different periods in Jewish history and from different places in the Jewish diaspora. *Piyyutim*, which are typically expressed in a high-register Hebrew, range in thematic content from love, joy, and ecstasy to exile, despondency, and despair. Of course, God always appears as a protagonist. Most *piyyutim* used in liturgical practices are associated with certain *nusahim*. The presence of select, additional *piyyutim* can even serve as an important means for distinguishing between different Jewish ethnic groups. Some *piyyutim*, such as “*Yedid Nefesh*” by sixteenth-century poet and

kabbalist R' Eliezer Azkari,<sup>10</sup> were disseminated widely throughout the Jewish diaspora and appear in all nusahim.

These are the types of liturgical texts—prayers, blessings, psalms, and piyyutim—that comprise liturgical services. Certain texts appear in every service. Different *Kaddishim* (sanctification prayers) are used at pivotal moments in each liturgical service. The *Amidah* (standing, silent meditation) is a series of blessings performed in every service. The *Barekhu* (blessed are You) is the call to worship and the *Aleinu* (upon us) is the concluding prayer of every service. While variations in nusah for these texts exist, the presence and function of these blessings are common to all Jewish communities.

In Sephardi communities, ḥazzanim typically perform a few texts elaborately, using them as vehicles for highlighting skill and musicality. Kaddishim, as pivotal moments in the services, are used by ḥazzanim to refocus the community on the progress of ritual. Kaddish (sing.), the *Amidah*, and *Kedushah* are three pieces performed regularly.

### *Kaddish*

*Kaddish* (sing.) is one of a few prayers composed in Aramaic.<sup>11</sup> It begins with the phrase *yitgadal ve-yitkadash, she-mei rabah* (His great name will be exalted and sanctified). Several variants of the Kaddish prayer are used in liturgy: the *Ḥatzi Kaddish* (Half Kaddish), *Kaddish Titkabel* (Complete Kaddish), *Kaddish al-Yisrael* (Rabbi's Kaddish), and *Kaddish Yatom* (Mourner's Kaddish). The *Ḥatzi Kaddish* is the shortest Kaddish and is performed most often to

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<sup>10</sup> “Yedid Nefesh” first appeared in Azkari's *Sefer Haredim*, a work completed in 1588 but published in Venice (1601). The advent of the printing press and modern publishing certainly helped “Yedid Nefesh” circulate throughout the Jewish diaspora, gaining it wide popularity in very short time. There is, however, some doubt over its authorship (<http://imhm.blogspot.com/2010/06/who-wrote-yedid-nefesh.html>, accessed June 24, 2013).

<sup>11</sup> The earliest known appearance of Kaddish is found in a siddur of R' Amram Gaon (ca. 900) (Assaf 2003:228-233).

signal the beginning of a new section of liturgy. Kaddish Titkabel is performed at the conclusion of a section of liturgy. Kaddish al-Yisrael is performed after reciting rabbinic literature, such as *Mishnayot* (segments from the Mishnah). For Kaddish Yatom (better understood as Orphan's Kaddish), mourners in the community stand together and recite one version of Kaddish at the end of every service. A person is considered to be in a state of mourning for up to one year after a close family member passes away. In all variants, the Kaddish emphasizes God's exalted nature and name, and the commitment to the Hebrew God incumbent upon all *B'nai Yisrael* (children of Israel).

### Amidah

The *Amidah* (standing) is a collection of prayer-blessings performed in an individualized, standing silent meditation. The *Anshei Knesset ha-Gedolah* (Men of the Great Assembly), active at the inception of the Israelite synagogue cult and responsible for canonizing the TaNaKH, contributing to the Mishnah, and conducting liturgical rituals during the Second Temple Period, devised some form of the Amidah. The Amidah, also known as the *Shemoneh Esrei* (eighteen blessings), is meant to include everything that a person needs to pray for on a daily basis: prayers for individual and communal well-being. Over time, and especially after the destruction of the second temple, certain blessings were added to the Amidah.<sup>12</sup> Today, the Amidah is performed as a central part of each Jewish liturgical service in the synagogue. It now contains a standard nineteen prayer-blessings, and is recited by each congregant in an undertone. During Shaḥarit and Musaf, after completing the Amidah, congregants stand silently while the ḥazzan repeats the blessings aloud—the *Ḥazarah* (Returning)—on behalf of everyone in attendance.

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<sup>12</sup> The prayer for the return of Zion ends with the blessing *ha-maḥazir Shekhinah le-Tzion* (God, the returner of the holy spirit to Zion). This prayer immediately precedes the *Birkat Kohanim* (blessings of the priests), commemorating part of the now defunct Temple service.



In Brooklyn, Maroka'im will often choose to perform the Musaf Amidah entirely aloud. "The ḥazzan begins Musaf [Amidah], everyone joins in during Kedushah, and only then congregants continue silently. That's the way it is supposed to be. Only here do we sometimes do two [silent and then full recitation]" (p.c., R' Chaim Dahan, June 20, 2013). There is an opinion in the Mishnah that stipulates that the Musaf Amidah should always be performed aloud, as a communal prayer. According to R' Elazar ben Azariah, "the Musaf prayers [Amidah] are to be said only in a congregational fashion" (Mishnah *Berakhot* 4:7). "We tend to follow R' Elazar ben Azariah's opinion, whenever possible, in matters of *minhag* (custom)" (p.c., R' Chaim Dahan, June 20, 2013).

Because of the Ḥazarah, the Amidah prayers on Shabbat and festivals, especially during Shaḥarit and Musaf, are communal moments when musical practice is integral. Interestingly, the silent Amidah is one of the few moments during liturgical services when musical expression ceases for a moment. In the context of a larger service, one might consider this a rest or pause that itself serves a musical purpose. The silence accentuates the constant vocalizing of liturgy that precedes the Amidah and continues afterwards. Hearing the ḥazzan begin the Ḥazarah is an exciting moment for the congregation, breaking the silence and signaling the continuation of the service. Congregant focus is intense at this moment as everyone is standing and prepared to listen.

### *Kedushah*

The *Kedushah* (holiness) prayer is a liturgical highlight, happening in the middle of the Ḥazarah. After chanting the opening three *shevakh* (praise) blessings of the Ḥazarah, the ḥazzan in Sephardi communities leads the Kedushah as a responsorial prayer extolling God's infinite nature. No matter what a congregant may be doing, catching up on prayers if they were late,

repositioning themselves, or blowing their nose, Kedushah demands immediate attention from all congregants. Everyone stands in unison, giving their rapt attention to the ḥazzan as they listen to him proclaim God's eternal and pervasive holiness on behalf of the entire congregation. After each verse, the congregation responds to the ḥazzan in a predetermined fashion by either repeating his verse or answering with the next, depending on the place in the text. This intensity continues until the conclusion of the Kedushah and the next blessing of the Amidah, after which a moment of release commences. The ḥazzan continues with a 'cooling down' period, performing the rest of the Ḥazarah in an individualistic, chanting manner while congregants are free to remain standing, sit, or even roam around.

Like the Kaddish, several versions of the Kedushah are used and some of the starkest differences between nusahim can be found in the Kedushah text. Which text is used and when, idiosyncratic wording, and several nuances in grammatical structures are important markers of difference between nusahim. Most Ashkenazi communities follow nusah Ashkenaz or nusah Sephard. In these nusahim, the Kedushah for Shaḥarit includes the text *N'kadesh et Shimkha* (we will sanctify Your name). Chabad-Lubavitch and most Sephardi groups, including Maroka'im and Syrians, begin Kedushah for Shaḥarit with the text *Nakdishakh v'na-aritzakh* (we sanctify and venerate You). With a slight change to the wording at the beginning of this text, communities following nusah Ashkenaz and nusah Sephard use this Kedushah during the Musaf Amidah. Instead of *nakdishakh v'na-aritzakh*, these nusahim begin Kedushah with the words *na-aritzkha v'nakdishkha* (we venerate You, and sanctify You). There are subtle differences in the word order and the endings of each word—*akh* or *kha*. According to R' Gad Bouskila, endings of *akh*, which sound like a Biblical Hebrew pausal, in fact connote a gendered understanding of the text similar to Modern Hebrew (p.c., R' Gad Bouskila, November 2, 2010).

R' Bouskila interprets this ending as having esoteric meaning, drawn from a focus in Lurianic Kabbalah on the feminine aspect of the *Shekhinah* (divine spirit) (Fine 2003). The Shekhinah is acted upon, and we (humankind) are the actors sanctifying and venerating the Divine.<sup>13</sup>

In most Sephardi congregations, the ḥazzan's penultimate musical moment is the Kedushah prayer. Everyone is standing and he is completely warmed up. In most Ashkenazi communities, the Shaḥarit Kedushah is recited responsively between the ḥazzan and the congregation. The Ashkenazi ḥazzan typically chants the Kedushah according to the prayer mode for the occasion (Shabbat or a festival). Sephardi ḥazzanim, however, perform this Kedushah moment elaborately. Congregants respond by repeating the opening verse in an undertone, only after the ḥazzan has finished. Syrian ḥazzanim, of course, adhere to using song melodies in the weekly maqām. But in Maroka'i synagogues, the ḥazzan will use any song melody of his choosing, and may perform it alone or divide up the verses between himself and other individual congregants.

### **Service Structure**

A *minyan* (quorum of ten adult males) must be present to carry out all parts of a Jewish liturgical service. Without a minyan, sacred text cantillation cannot be performed, and certain prayers will also be skipped. Provided there is a minyan, a typical morning service flows as follows: services open with a collection of psalms and piyyutim, followed by the *Barekhu* (call to

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<sup>13</sup> This difference in gendered endings is also prevalent in the piyyut "Yedid Nefesh." The author of "Yedid Nefesh," R' Eliezer Azkari (1533-1600), was a prominent figure in the early development of Lurianic Kabbalah in Safed, Israel. According to the original published text (1601), Azkari ends most lines with *akh*. Despite the absence of vowel markings in the printed Hebrew text, it is clear from the syllabic meter which ending he intends. Incidentally, "Yedid Nefesh" is performed this way in most Sephardi communities.

Interestingly, nusaḥ ha-Ari, which closely resembles most Sephardi nusaḥim, relies upon the version of Yedid Nefesh common in most Ashkenazi communities. Conservative and Reform Judaism, both borne from Ashkenazi Orthodoxy, now follow Azkari's original version.

prayer), the *yotzer berakhot* (blessings of creation) section, which includes Kriat Shema, silent Amidah and the ḥazzan's repetition aloud, and concludes with Aleinu and Kaddish Yatom. On Monday, Thursday, Shabbat, and festivals, liturgical sections are added and Kriat ha-Torah is performed. On Shabbat and festivals, Kriat ha-Torah is also included during the Minḥah service. Similarly, Kriat Shema is part of every Arvit service as well. Services are punctuated by Kaddish prayers, which are employed to help define the different sections as the ritual develops. The overall structure of Jewish liturgical services remains consistent, no matter the time of day, the occasion, or the congregation (Elbogen 1993).

### *Shabbat Morning*

Maroka'im follow the standard structure of Shabbat morning services found in Orthodox Jewish communities. Mark Goodman describes the Shabbat morning service as “a multi-act drama in which each act is both self-contained and yet functions as part of the larger plot to move the drama to its climax” (Goodman 2012:37). Focusing on the emotional nature of each act he adds that

The traditional Shabbat morning service begins with Act I, the *Birkot Hashachar* [*sic*] (morning blessings), which serves to open the service and set the tone of gratitude to God. Act II, the *Pisukey d'Zimrah* [*sic*] (verses of praising songs), serves as a transition into the correct emotion of prayer. The formal service begins with Act III, *Shacharit* (morning service), which builds to the climax in Act IV, the Torah service [Kriat ha-Torah], a re-enactment of the majestic revelatory event on Mt. Sinai. The drama closes with Act V, *Musaf* (additional), which begins to dissipate the dramatic tension as the drama comes to a close. Each act, or section of prayers, is self-contained and yet functions within the context of the service to move the dramatic tension forward toward its climax in the reading of the Torah. (ibid:37-38)

This description is fitting, and certainly ḥazzanut plays a significant role in achieving the emotional transitions. Many Jews tend to refer to what Goodman calls Acts II and III as simply Shaḥarit. This is the moment that most congregants arrive for services on Shabbat morning, having performed Birkhot ha-Shaḥar at home beforehand. A few congregants will come to the

synagogue before services begin, to recite these blessings. Most in Brooklyn's Sephardi community call the *Pesukei de-Zimrah* (verses of praise in song) section *Zemirot* (songs of praise) instead, but similar to most Ashkenazim, Maroka'im still use the term *Pesukei de-Zimrah* to refer to at least part of this section. For Maroka'im, this larger section is divided into two parts: *Mizmorim* (hymns) and *Pesukei de-Zimrah*. These parts of the service are generally performed together, fostering a positive energy and tone early on. The *Barekhu* is a pivotal moment in the service, marking the time when all worshippers are expected to have arrived. Like most Sephardim, Maroka'im tend to call this *yotzer berakhot* section of *Shaḥarit*, which includes the recitation of the *Shema*, simply *Kriat Shema*. After what community members call "the *Amidah* of *Shaḥarit*" (p.c., R' Chaim Dahan, April 4, 2005), which includes the silent, standing meditation, the *ḥazzan's* repetition aloud, and the *birkat kohanim* (priestly blessing),<sup>14</sup> *Kriat ha-Torah* is performed. Figure 4.1 describes the flow of the entire Shabbat morning liturgy according to the preferred terminology of Maroka'im in Brooklyn.

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<sup>14</sup> *Birkat Kohanim* is a collection of three blessings drawn from verses of the Torah (Numbers 6:24-26). These blessings are performed by men who trace their patrimonial lineage to the priests of Israel. They gather on the upper *bima* and face congregants with their *tallitot* (prayer shawls) over their heads.

**Figure 4.1: Service Structure at Netivot Israel Synagogue**

<b>Birkhot ha-Shaḥar</b>
Morning blessings — passages from Torah, prophets, Talmud, and rabbinic prayers
<i>Kaddish Al Yisrael/D’Rabbanan</i> (of Israel or of the rabbis)— includes additional strophe honoring all studious people in Yisrael, especially rabbis and their students; recited by mourners
<b>Shaḥarit</b>
<i>Mizmorim</i> (hymns) and <i>Pesukei de-Zimrah</i> (verses of praise in song)— several psalms, piyyutim, and biblical passages
<i>Ḥatzi Kaddish</i> (sanctification prayer)— short version of sanctification prayer
<i>Barekhu</i> (blessed is He)— call to prayer
<i>Kriat Shema</i> (recitation of Shema)— yotzer berakhot liturgical section, containing blessings, prayers, and cantillation of Shema text
<i>Amidah</i> (standing)— silent, standing meditation; a formulaic set of nineteen blessings
<i>Ḥazarah</i> (returning) — repetition of Amidah prayers aloud by service leader; includes <i>Kedushah</i> (holiness) prayer and <i>Birkat Kohanim</i> (blessings of the priests)
<i>Kaddish Titkabel</i> (complete)— full version of Kaddish prayer
<i>Kriat ha-Torah</i> (Torah service)— auctioning of aliyot, opening prayers and procession, recitation of Torah portion, haftarah, additional prayers, return procession
Rabbi’s sermon
<b>Musaf</b>
<i>Ḥatzi Kaddish</i>
Amidah/Ḥazarah — can be performed separately or together <sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> While the Amidah is always performed separately in Arvit, Shaḥarit, and Minḥah, during the Musaf service the prayer leader can start it aloud and leave individuals to conclude silently after

<i>Kaddish Titkabel</i> —full version of sanctification prayer
<i>Adon Olam</i> (master of the world)—piyyut
<i>Mishnayot</i> (excerpts from the Mishnah)—passages extolling Torah study and Holy Temple practices on Shabbat
Kaddish Al Yisrael/D’Rabbanan
Barekhu—last call to prayer, led by mourners
<i>Aleinu</i> (on us) – concluding prayer thanking God for all that He has created
Ḥatzi Kaddish or Kaddish Yatom—recited by mourners

Shabbat morning is a fine opportunity for experiencing the flow of liturgical services in a Maroka’i synagogue. Shabbat morning services are especially rich in musical material. Copious singing glorifies and sanctifies Shabbat. The liturgy is extended with extra piyyutim and prayers. The increased attendance at synagogue offers an energetic crowd of participants. At Netivot Israel and Ḥesed l’ Abraham synagogues, a buffet of Moroccan delicacies usually follows morning services. At Netivot Israel synagogue, congregants conclude this socializing time by coalescing into small groups to study for another fifteen minutes or so before walking home. R’ Bouskila’s Talmud study group is always quite animated, with congregants debating the finer points of the text rather boisterously.

### **Mizmorim and Pesukei de-Zimrah**

Arvit and Shaḥarit on Shabbat and festivals each have a large collection of texts to open the services, including several psalms, piyyutim, prayers, and biblical passages. In Maroka’i congregations in Brooklyn, Mizmorim and Pesukei de-Zimrah typically last a total of thirty to forty-five minutes, and include individualized, responsive, and group singing. While in

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the Kedushah prayer. As explained above, this is relatively common in Maroka’i practice because of the opinion of R’ Elazar ben Azariah on the subject.

Ashkenazi congregations the ḥazzan leads from the beginning, performing these pieces in an undertone and audibly chanting only the opening and concluding lines of each text, everything is performed aloud in Sephardi communities. According to R' Bouskila, a good ḥazzan takes time and is very careful to enunciate each word throughout the service. "You have to watch that you don't go too fast, or lose people. I am the shaliaḥ [tzibur]" (p.c., R' Gad Bouskila, November 2, 2010). In achieving what he sees as a goal of ḥazzanut—to keep congregants together as they move through the liturgy—services end up being a bit longer at Netivot Israel synagogue than at most Sephardi synagogues in Brooklyn. On a typical Shabbat morning, when there is so much more text and singing than on weekdays, services begin at 8:15am and finish at 11:00am. Most Maroka'im in Brooklyn seem to be happy with this practice of performing all texts aloud, and some even carry strong opinions on the matter. "Sometimes I have no idea where the ḥazzan is in the Ashkenaz *shul* (synagogue) I have to go to when I'm in Florida. [It] drives me crazy! Not right" (p.c., Albert Abitbol, May 30, 2009).

Amongst Sephardim, there are several important differences in the how the service develops, including the organization of the liturgical texts, idiosyncrasies of nusah, where pivotal moments occur, and how these moments are marked by worshippers. Mark Kligman's study of Syrian Jewish liturgical practice in Brooklyn, *Maqām and Liturgy* (2009), provides a close look at the practices followed by most Sephardi congregations in Brooklyn. He divides the morning liturgy into two sections: Zemiroṭ and Shaḥarit (ibid:76-79). In comparison, what most Sephardim in Brooklyn call the Zemiroṭ section includes all of the Mizmorim and part of the Pesukei de-Zimrah for Maroka'im. In addition to differences in wording for a few prayers, there are texts in the Maroka'i liturgy absent in most Sephardi congregations. Prior to the "Barekhu," the pivotal moments of the service occur at different points for Maroka'im. Maroka'i ḥazzanim



takes the lead as shaliaḥ tzibur later in the service, much closer to the “Barekhu.” Several pivotal pieces are emphasized differently. For instance, in Maroka’i congregations sing some pieces collectively or may feature certain members at a particular moment. Despite these inconsistencies in practice between Maroka’im and their Sephardi brethren, the general order and choice of texts are similar between communities.

**Figure 4.2: Comparison of Opening Sections of Shabbat Morning Liturgy**

<p>Maroka'i Shaḥarīt Liturgical Sections: Based upon practices at Netivot Israel and Ḥesed l'Avraham synagogues, <i>Siddur Ve-Zerah ha-Shemesh: Nusah Yehudei Maroko</i></p>	<p>Halabi (Aleppo) Syrian Liturgical Sections: Based upon practices at Sha'arei Shalom synagogue, <i>Siddur Kol Yaakob Hashalem: Ke-Minhag Aram Tzoba</i>, and adapted from Kligman 2009:76-77</p>
<p><b><u>Mizmorim</u></b> *Hodu la-Shem Kir'u be-Shemo (<i>Mishlei trope</i>) Romemu Ado-nai (<i>return to Tehillim trope</i>) El Neqamot Aromimkha Ado-nai Ado-nai Melekh, Ado-nai Malakh **<i>Hoshi'einu Ado-nai</i> Lamnatze'aḥ Mizmor le-David Ranenu Tsaddiqim L'David be-Shanoto Tefilah le-Moshe Yoshev be-Seter Elyon Mizmor Shiru la-Ado-nai Shir la-Ma'alot Esa 'Einai Shir ha-Ma'alot le-David Samaḥti Shir ha-Ma'alot Elekha Nasati Shir ha-Ma'alot le-David Lulei Ado-nai Halleluyah Hallelu et Shem Ado-nai  Hodu la-Ado-nai Ki Tov **<i>Yigdal Elohim Hai</i>  <b><u>Pesukei de-Zimrah</u></b> *Barukh she-Amar Mizmor Shir le-Yom ha-Shabbat (<i>begin Iyov trope</i>) Ado-nai Malakh Ge'ut Lavesh Yehi Khevod Ado-nai Ashrei Yoshvei Vetekha Halleluyah Hallelu Nafshi Halleluyah Ki-Tov Zamrah Halleluyah Hallelu et-Ado-nai Halleluyah Shiru La-Ado-nai Halleluyah Hallelu et-Ado-nai Halleluyah Shiru La-Ado-nai  <b><u>Concluding Section of Pesukei de-Zimrah</u></b> *Halleluyah Hallelu El be-Qodsho (<i>mixture</i>) Barukh Ado-nai Le-'Olam Amen Va-Yevarekh David et Ado-nai Va-Yosh'a Ado-nai *Az Yashir Moshe Ki La-Ado-nai ha-Melukhah *Nishmat Kol Ḥai Elohei ha-Rishonim Ve-Ilu Finu Malei Matsil 'Ani me-Ḥazak (Shavat Aniyim) Be-Miqeḥalot  <b><u>Hazzan Begins</u></b> *Yishtabaḥ Shimkha La'ad Malkenu  <b><u>Ḥatzi Kaddish</u></b> Kriat Shema (yotzer berakhot)</p>	<p><b><u>Zemirot</u></b> (primarily in maqām Sīkāh) Hodu la-Shem Kir'u be-Shemo (Romemu Ado-nai) El Neqamot Aromimkha Ado-nai Ado-nai Melekh, Ado-nai Malakh Lamnatze'aḥ Mizmor le-David Ranenu Tsaddiqim L'David be-Shanoto Tefilah le-Moshe Yoshev be-Seter Elyon Mizmor Shiru la-Ado-nai Shir la-Ma'alot Esa 'Einai Shir ha-Ma'alot le-David Samaḥti Shir ha-Ma'alot Elekha Nasati Shir ha-Ma'alot le-David Lulei Ado-nai Halleluyah Hallelu et Shem Ado-nai  Hodu la-Ado-nai Ki Tov *Barukh she-Amar *Mizmor Shir le-Yom ha-Shabbat *Ado-nai Malakh Ge'ut Lavesh  Yehi Khevod Ado-nai Ashrei Yoshvei Vetekha Halleluyah Hallelu Nafshi Halleluyah Ki-Tov Zamrah Halleluyah Hallelu et-Ado-nai Halleluyah Shiru La-Ado-nai Halleluyah Hallelu El be-Qodsho Barukh Ado-nai Le-'Olam Amen Va-Yevarekh David et Ado-nai Va-Yosh'a Ado-nai Az Yashir Moshe  <b><u>Hazzan Begins Shaḥarīt</u></b> (maqām of the week) Ki La-Ado-nai ha-Melukhah Nishmat Kol Ḥai (Elohei ha-Rishonim) Ve-Ilu Finu Malei Shavat Aniyim (Matsil 'Ani me-Ḥazak) Be-Miqeḥalot (U-ve-khen) Yishtabaḥ Shimkha La'ad Malkenu  <b><u>Ḥatzi Kaddish</u></b> Kriat Shema (yotzer berakhot)</p>

\* Notable pieces      \*\* Nusah differences

In most of Brooklyn’s Syrian and several of Brooklyn’s other Sephardi congregations, the ḥazzan stands at the *teivah* (platform; called *bima* by Maroka’im) while congregants perform most of the texts early in the service. *Zemirot* are generally performed in *maqām Sīkāh*,<sup>16</sup> with a few exceptions. For instance, the ḥazzan foreshadows the *maqām* of the week by singing the “*Ado-nai Melekh*” (God is King) prayer before the congregation returns to reciting prayers together in *maqām Sīkāh*. In Maroka’i practice, however, the ḥazzan sits for most of the service, standing only to perform “*Ado-nai Melekh*” before returning to his seat until much later. In most Sephardi congregations, the ḥazzan takes the lead at “*Ki La-Ado-nai ha-Melukhah*” (Because to God is kingship), but in Maroka’i synagogues individuals in the congregations perform several pieces more before the ḥazzan takes the lead just prior to the *Barekhu*, at “*Yishtabaḥ Shimkha La’ad Malkenu*” (Your name will be exalted).

The *nusaḥ* for *Arvit* and *Shaḥarit* is very similar amongst Sephardim. However, there are several differences, in the wording of certain texts and in which pieces are typically included. For example, an interesting discrepancy between Maroka’i and Sephardi *nusaḥim* is in the last line of the “*El Adon*” prayer during *Kriat Shema*. The Sephardi *nusaḥ* concludes with the text *Seraphim, ve-Ḥayot ve-Ofanei ha-kodesh* (three types of angels). Maroka’im conclude this prayer with the text *Seraphim, ve-Ofanim, ve-Ḥayot ha-kodesh*, the same three types of angels just in a different order. When asked about this particular difference in wording, R’ Bouskila responded “I’m not exactly sure why. While its okay to wonder why, this is just the way we [Maroka’im] do it. And this is the most important thing” (p.c., R’ Gad Bouskila, June 10, 2010). This particular order of angels may have become part of the Maroka’i *nusaḥ* because of a well-

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<sup>16</sup> According to Kligman’s analysis of the melodic approach to *Zemirot*, only the lower trichord of *maqām Sīkāh*—E half-flat, F, G—is utilized (Kligman 2009:85-91).

known reverence for the *Zohar* in several parts of Morocco. It was circulated widely in southern Morocco, in the region where R' Bouskila's family and the Abuḥatsira rabbinic dynasty come from. Harvey Goldberg (1990) suggests that the *Zohar* text went through a process of "ritualization" in Morocco, whereby excerpts were inserted into the synagogue liturgy to encourage familiarity and acceptance amongst all classes of Jewish society. (Goldberg 1990:235). *Seraphim, Ofanim, ve-Hayot ha-kodesh* is the order of angels presented in the *Zohar* (*Zohar Terumah 132*). Incidentally, this ordering of angels is used in the "El Adon" text in nusah Ashkenaz as well. The presence of this nuance in the text of Ashkenazi nusah adds to evidence about the nexus of kabbalistic activity between northern Spain and southern France from whence the *Zohar* came (Scholem, Garb, and Idel 2007).

Generally speaking, several similarities between Maroka'i practice and the practices found in other Sephardi communities exist. However, several instances in Maroka'i approaches to nusah stand out as emblematic of the boundaries of a distinctive diasporic ethnic identity: terminology, differences in service order, participant roles. Nevertheless, the boundaries are quite blurry sometimes as well, between Maroka'im and other Sephardim, and between Maroka'im and Ashkenazim. Accordingly, adding the musical expression, ḥazzanut amplifies nusah and foregrounds communal boundaries.

### *Emet – The Melodic Tropes*

The opening texts for Shabbat evening and morning are considered one complete work in three parts. The Shabbat evening service begins with *Kabbalat Shabbat* (receiving the Sabbath), a liturgy instituted by followers of Lurianic Kabbalah that has been widely accepted and is performed today throughout the Jewish diaspora. *Kabbalat Shabbat* precedes Arvit on Friday

evenings and includes several psalms and the popular text “Lekha Dodi,” a piyyut written by R’ Shlomo Alkabetz (c. 1500–1580), to welcome Shabbat.

In Maroka’i practice, these liturgical sections—Kabbalat Shabbat, Mizmorim, and Pesukei de-Zimrah—represent three parts of one whole. Together, they support a kabbalistic interpretation of the significance of the Sabbath. As R’ Chaim Dahan explains, “Shabbat is *emet* (truth)” (p.c., R’ Chaim Dahan, April 4, 2005). According to a kabbalistic exegesis on the first verse of the Torah (Zohar, *Bereishit Bara Elokim...* (In the beginning, God created...; Genesis 1:1), the beginning of creation is based on truth. By taking the last letter of each of these Hebrew words—Bereishit (tav), Bara (alef), Elokim (mem)—one can formulate the word *emet* (truth). Shabbat represents the completion of God’s creation, the day on which God rested. *And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because in it, He saw all that He had created* (Genesis 2:3). The last three words of this verse, *bara Elokim la-‘asot* (which God in creating [His works] had made), once again formulate *emet*: bara (alef), Elokim (mem), la’asot (tav). Thus, to express *emet* is to reinforce a tenet of faith in God and His creation on the holy day of Shabbat.

By using a sequence of melodic tropes associated with three different biblical texts—*Iyov* (Job), *Mishlei* (Proverbs), and *Tehillim* (Book of Psalms)—Maroka’im imply the Hebrew word *emet*. As R’ Chaim Dahan continues, “What Moroccans do, they’re very strict to proclaim that this is a day [Shabbat] of *emet*. So we take each letter of the word *emet*—*Alef, Mem, Tav*—and this tells us what *te’am* (taste; melodic formula)<sup>17</sup> to use for each section: Alef is *Iyov* (Job), Mem is *Mishlei* (Proverbs), and Tav is for *Tehillim* (Psalms)” (ibid.). Thus, an important musical

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<sup>17</sup> Here, the term “te’am” connotes a general taste to the melody, created by applying a loose melodic figure to the text rather than the exact motifs we find in Torah cantillation.

correlation between ḥazzanut practice on Shabbat and the mystical concept of Shabbat being *emet* is made through the use of specific melodic tropes associated with certain biblical texts.

The melodic tropes<sup>18</sup> for Iyov, Mishlei, and Tehillim are based upon tone rows, applied line-by-line to texts in a chanting fashion. Certain tones in each melodic trope are given greater weight, emphasized either through repetition or duration. Similar to what Randhofer calls “the dichotomous melody” for describing how melodic formulas are used for chanting Psalms in a Kurdish Jewish community, these Maroka’i tropes operate as a “two-part psalm tone model that does not necessarily have to coincide with the *parallelismus membrorum*<sup>19</sup> of the psalmodic verses” (Randhofer 2005:246). The main part of each melodic trope is a two-part melodic structure that is applied to the text. It can coincide with the versification of the text, but does not have to. It often does, but respecting the integrity of the melodic trope is of superior concern to performers than respecting the integrity of the text versification. Thus, in instances where verses are longer, and especially in cases where verses have three or more pausal points, the melodic tropes start towards the end of one verse and continue into the next.

For melodic contrast, each trope has a secondary melody, which is incorporated at various times in each text. In the following discussion and analysis of segments of a liturgical piece within each trope, the A melody is the primary melody and the B melody is the secondary melody. In the trope figures, the B melody is indicated by the familiar designation *on cue*. In

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<sup>18</sup> I use melodic trope in place of te’am as I feel it better represents the idea of applying a melodic theme to the texts; rendering liturgical texts with these melodic tropes is similar to Torah cantillation, but dissimilar enough that I feel continuing to use the term “te’am” would be confusing. Additionally, since trope has been used as a synonym for te’am in literature related to Jewish cantillation practices, it is not entirely foreign to the field.

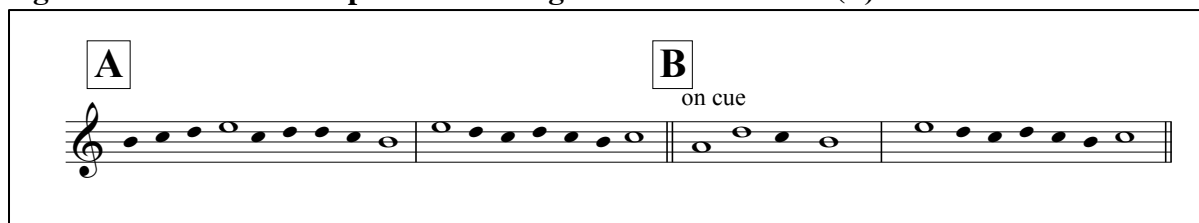
<sup>19</sup> *Parallelismus membrorum* is a poetic technique utilized in several ancient cultures of the Middle East. Typically, each verse consists of two semantically related thoughts. While most Psalm verses are divided into two parts, three-part verses commonly appear as well.

performance, the B melody does not appear at regular intervals. The B melody can come after any number of verses performed in the A melody. In some cases, the B melody is repeated before returning to the A melody.

The use of these melodic tropes in Maroka'i ḥazzanut, as vehicles for melodic invention, is a good representation of the nature of ṭab'-based approaches to composition. Certain tones in the melodic mode are emphasized, and treated like moments of melodic repose. The elements of this ṭab'-based practice, while similar in some ways to maqām-based approaches to ḥazzanut found in other Sephardi traditions, are central for promoting a distinctive yet blurry boundary between Maroka'i and other Jewish ethnic identities.

Kabbalat Shabbat begins with the psalm “Lekhu Neranena” (We go forth to sing to the Lord; Psalm 95) and concludes with the prayer “Kol Yisrael” (for all of Yisrael; Talmud Bavli *Sanhedrin* 10a). These texts are performed according to the Tehillim trope (figure 4.3a).

**Figure 4.3a: Melodic Trope for Chanting Psalms or *Tehillim* (ת)**



In these excerpts of “Lekhu Neranena” (figure 4.3b), one can see how the integrity of the melodic trope is respected in practice. In measure one (Psalm 95:1), after beginning with a sequence of notes of short and equal duration, E is emphasized by a longer tone. This durational differentiation appears later in the same measure as well. Similarly, in measure three (Psalm 95:2) the same approach is employed and through durational differentiation the integrity of the melodic trope is preserved.

**Figure 4.3b: Excerpts from “Lekhu Neranena” (Tehillim Trope)**

**A**  
 Le-khu ne - ra - ne - na\_\_\_\_ l'A - do - nai na - ri - 'ah le - tzu\_r yish-'ei\_\_\_\_ - nu

**A'**  
 3 Ne - qa - de - mah fa - nav be - to - dah biz - mi - rot na - ri\_\_\_\_ - 'a lo

**B**  
 5 Bo - u nish - ta - ḥa - veh ve - nikh - ra\_\_\_\_ - 'ah niv - re - khah lif - nei A - do - na\_i 'o - sei\_\_\_\_ nu

**B'**  
 7 Ki\_\_\_\_ hu\_\_\_\_ E - lo - hei\_\_\_\_ nu va\_\_\_\_ - na\_h - nu

8  
 'am mar - 'i - to ve - tzon ya - do ha - yom im be - qo - lo\_\_\_\_ tish - ma\_\_\_\_ - 'u

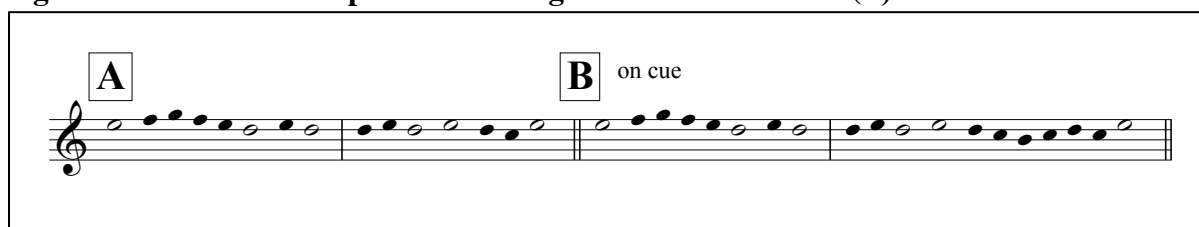
Repetition can be used to either extend the trope or to emphasize the importance of a particular tone. For instance, in measure one, the three iterations of the note C do not constitute an effort to emphasize the hierarchical nature of the tones in the melodic trope. Rather, here they are employed to extend the melodic phrase so that the two-part melody can align with the pausal point of the verse. Similarly, in comparing measures two and four, one can see how the reiteration of D and C for the syllables “yish” and “ei” in measure two simply extends the melodic phrase rather than changes the integrity of the melodic trope. Conversely, the repetitions of the note E at the beginning of measure two constitute a combination of short and long durations, emphasizing the importance of E in the second part of the melodic trope.



In measure five one can see how the contrasting, secondary melody is applied to the text (Psalm 95:6). E is then repeated several times before the melodic figure continues with notes of equal duration, one-by-one, until the finalis in measure six. The finalis is emphasized by being both the natural finishing syllable of the verse and by the durational differentiation made with the longer note C. Beginning with measure seven, one can see how a typical parallel verse (Psalm 95:7) can be extended to include both the secondary melody and a full return to the primary melody. The first pausal point of the verse comes at the end of the two melodic phrases of the secondary melody. The second half of the verse is then extended to fit with the two melodic phrases of the primary melody. It is also important to point out that the tone E at the beginning of the primary melody in measure seven is emphasized by a melodic figure, rather than duration or repetition. By leaping away from the E—two diatonic steps above—and returning to the E, the tone is emphasized and the melodic phrase is extended.

The Mizmorim section of Shaḥarit begins with the text “Hodu l’Ado-nai Kir’u bi-Shemo” (Offer praise to the Lord, call out in His name; Chronicles I 16:8-37). At the outset, the congregation sings the first twenty-four verses of the text together according to the Mishlei trope (figure 4.4a). The congregation then returns to the Tehillim trope for the remainder of the text and for several more pieces to follow. This appearance of the Mishlei trope is a relatively short amount of the service. The interpolation of the Mishlei trope into Shaḥarit accomplishes what R’ Dahan described above: a means of bringing in *emet* through the ritual experience of ḥazzanut. He adds that King David is credited with being the author of Psalms, and King Solomon, his son, with being the author of Mishlei. The proximity of these two tropes represents a connection between these two biblical figures (p.c., R’ Chaim Dahan, April 4, 2005).

**Figure 4.4a: Melodic Trope for Chanting Proverbs or *Mishlei* (ז)**



To communicate the integrity of the Mishlei trope, practitioners must approach melodic invention in a similar way as we have seen with Tehillim trope above: durational differentiation and repetition. Additionally, three significant melodic characteristics of this trope stand out. The first is the major third interval at the end of the second phrase in both the A and B melodies. The second is the descent to a leading tone below the tonic in the second phrase of the B melody. The third significant melodic characteristic is the relative similarity between the A and B melodies; what little differentiation is present is between the second phrases of both the A and B melodies.

The excerpts below (figure 4.4b) show how the Mishlei trope is applied to the text.

**Figure 4.4b: Excerpts from “Hodu l’Ado-nai Kir’u bi-Shemo” (Mishlei Trope)**

In measure one, the length and repetition on the note D, before a diatonic step up to E and back down, is characteristic of the trope. We can see the same approach in measures three and five. In

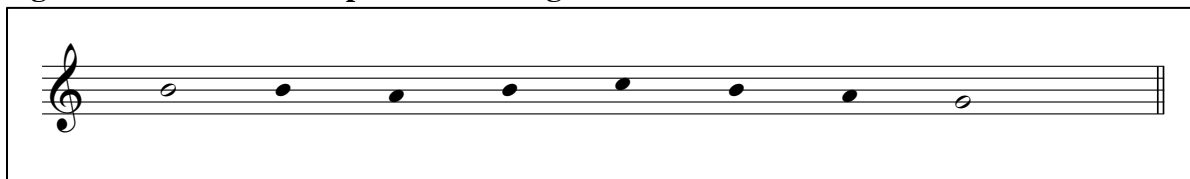
measure two, four, and six, we can see the resolution to the major third above the tonic. In all three cases, the trope is applied over a single syllable. Finally, in measure six we can see the characteristic descent to the leading tone, the note B on the syllable “yom,” in the midst of a string of tones with the same durational value. Throughout the piece, the Mishlei trope is kept intact.

Just prior to the beginning of Pesukei de-Zimrah, after a return to the Tehillim trope for several psalms, the community performs a psalm responsively together: “Hodu l’Ado-nai Ki Tov” (Psalm 136). This piece is simply intoned, adding a singing quality to the pronouncement of its short verses rather than rendering it melodically, and is usually led by a different individual each week. In nusah Yehudei Maroko, there is an additional piyyut, the popular “Yigdal,” just after “Hodu l’Ado-nai Ki Tov.” This piyyut is performed at the conclusion of services Friday night in Maroka’i and many Ashkenazi congregations, but apart from the Marok’ai community, it is entirely absent from the Shabbat morning liturgy of most Jewish communities, including other Sepahrdim in Brooklyn and Ashkenazim. The congregation usually performs “Yigdal” collectively. According to Jacob Tordjman, collective performance of this piece is usually preferred in Brooklyn because “people don’t know too many tunes for it. Besides, the rabbis here, they like to speak. So it makes the service go quicker...leaves them more room to talk. In Morocco, we would take more time to sing and less time [for the rabbi] to talk” (p.c., Jacob Tordjman, November 28, 2009). Tordjman is a musically skilled and knowledgeable informant in the community. He explained that because he moved to Brooklyn from Morocco in the 1990s, he has a greater range to his repertoire of melodies than most members of the community. His sister is married to Mike Bouskila, who immigrated to the United States from Morocco in the early 1970s to attend an Ashkenazi yeshivah in Lakewood, New Jersey, before settling in

Brooklyn and becoming the president of Netivot Israel synagogue. Mike Bouskila is R' Gad Bouskila's first cousin as well. When a special guest is visiting, or R' Bouskila wants to extend the service, it is possible to hear "Yigdal" performed responsively instead. This is, as Tordjman points out, a rarity in Brooklyn.

"Barukh she-Amar" is a pivotal piece in the Shabbat morning liturgy, marking the official beginning of Pesukei de-Zimrah. A different thematic tone is set as the texts move from praise of God in the abstract to revering the actionable God as the supreme force in the cosmos. While "Barukh she-Amar" appears in the morning liturgy every day of the week, it is performed collectively only on Shabbat and festivals. In most Sephardi congregations in Brooklyn, it is performed in maqām *Nahāwand*,<sup>20</sup> breaking up the plethora of pieces in maqām *Sikāh* that precede and follow it. According to Kligman, at several Syrian synagogues in Brooklyn "Barukh she-Amar" is performed with the melody of the Israel national anthem "HaTikvah" (Kligman 2009:90). In Maroka'i congregations, members sing a standard melody based upon a unique melodic trope (figure 4.5a).

**Figure 4.5a: Melodic Trope for Chanting "Barukh she-Amar"**



The practice of applying the trope to "Barukh she-Amar" follows the same conventions as the practice of applying the Tehillim and Mishlei tropes. Once again, repetition and durational differentiation help to keep the melody within the character of the melodic trope (figure 4.5b).

<sup>20</sup> Maqām *Nahāwand*: C D Eb F G Ab Bb C

**Figure 4.5b: Melody of “Barukh she-Amar” According to Trope**

Ba - rukh she - a - mar - ve - ha - yah ha - 'o - lam, Ba - ru\_kh hu, Ba - rukh 'o - me\_r ve - 'o - seh,  
 3  
 Ba - rukh go - ze\_r um - qa - yeim, Ba - rukh 'o - se\_h be - rei - shit,  
 5  
 Ba - rukh me - ra - hem 'al ha a - retz, Ba - rukh me - ra - hem 'al ha - be - ri - yot,  
 7  
 Ba - rukh me - sha - lem sa - khar tov li - rei - av, Ba - rukh hai la - 'ad ve - qa - yam la - ne - tzah  
 9  
 Ba - rukh po - de\_h u - ma - tzil, Ba - rukh she - mo, Ba - rukh a - tah A - do - nai E - lo - hei - nu me - lekh ha - 'o - lam,  
 11  
 13 ha - El av ha - ra - ha - man, ha - me - hu - lal be - fe 'a - mo,  
 15 me - shu - bah um - fo - ar, Bil - shon ha - si - dav va - 'a - va - dav  
 uv - shi - rei Da - vid 'av - da - kha ne - ha - le - lakh A - do - nai E - lo - hei - nu, Bish - va - hot  
 17  
 19 u - viz - mi - rot, un - ga - de - lakh un - sha - be - hakh un - fa - a - rakh ve - nam - li - khakh  
 21 ve - naz - kir shim - khah mal - ke - nu E - lo - hei - nu, ya - hid, hai ha - 'o - la - mim  
 22 me - lekh me - shu - bah um - fo - ar 'a - dei 'ad she - mo ha - ga - dol. Ba - rukh a - tah A - do - nai  
 me - lekh me - hu - lal ba - tish - ba - hot. miz - mor shir le - yom ha - shab - bat...

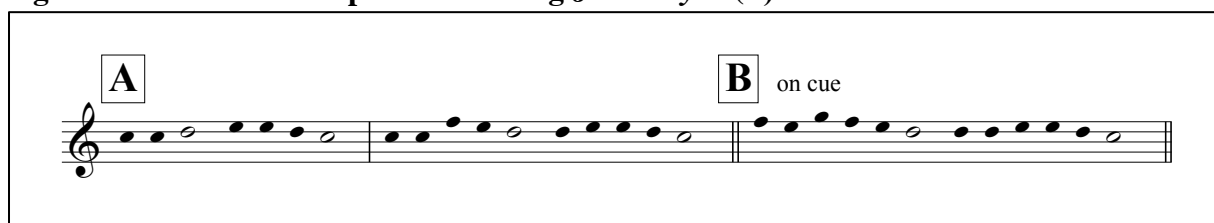
At this point in the service, the intensity grows as the texts are rendered more quickly.

Syllables are rarely held for more than one note. In some instances we find a rapid succession of

syllables. For instance, in measures nine, twelve, sixteen, and twenty-one, we see several syllables performed within a short span of time. The moments when blessings are recited, beginning with the formulaic *Barukh ata Ado-nai* (blessed are you, God), offer two melodic climaxes in “Barukh she-Amar.” These climaxes occur in measures ten and twenty-one, where we find the same melodic figure used for both blessings. The melodic range of the trope is extended upwards by two diatonic steps above the normal trope. The stark change in the duration of the notes—they are longer than several notes before them—adds to the intensity of the figures.

The Iyov trope (figure 4.6a) begins with “Mizmor Shir le-Yom ha-Shabbat” (Song of Praise for the Sabbath Day; Psalm 92) and continues through “Halleluyah Shiru l’Ado-nai Shir Ḥadash” (Praise God, sing to the Lord, a new song; Psalm 149). In all, this section of liturgy contains eight texts. In most Sephardi synagogues in Brooklyn, the ḥazzan begins this section of liturgy with a mawwāl, in any maqām he chooses for “Mizmor Shir le-Yom ha-Shabbat.” Subsequently, individuals or pairs of congregants take turns performing several more pieces in maqām Sīkāh up to and including “Halleluyah Shiru la-Ado-nai” (praise God, sing a song to the Lord). In Maroka’i practice, individual congregants take turns performing each text. While there is no set group or order of performers—anyone can jump in at the beginning of a text and perform it—certain members of the congregation are more likely than others to take the lead. “Some people can take [over], because they have a good voice or know the words very well” (p.c., Jacob Tordjman, November 28, 2009). According to R’ Dahan, a group of individuals typically emerges within every congregation that people trust to perform the ḥazzanut correctly during these moments (p.c., R’ Chaim Dahan, April 4, 2005).

**Figure 4.6a: Melodic Trope for Chanting Job or *Iyov* (ס)**



Similar to “Barukh she-Amar,” in Maroka’i practice texts in this section of the service are performed at a faster pace than earlier texts. There are a few notable differences in how the Iyov trope is practiced that encourage this increase in pace. While the Tehillim and Mishlei tropes both have two primary and two secondary melodic phrases, the Iyov trope contains two primary melodic phrases and only one secondary melodic phrase. Another difference is that each melodic phrase of the Iyov trope is typically applied to a full verse, rather than to a half verse like we find in the practice of the Tehillim and Mishlei tropes. Another difference is in the practice of emphasizing notes, which at this point in the liturgical service are always coordinated with the pausal points in the texts. The overall result is less time between verses. I have noticed that the performers during this section are typically lay leaders, some of which seem to exhibit nervousness when taking the lead. This nervousness may be a contributing factor in the increased pace of performance as well.

Within this section of liturgy is the psalm “Yehi Khevod.” It focuses on God’s undying kingship over the whole world, *le-dor va-dor* (generation to generation). Excerpts of the melody (figure 4.6b) show how the Iyov trope is rendered.

**Figure 4.6b: Excerpts from “Yehi Khevod” (Iyov Trope)**

**A**

Ye - hi kha-vod A - do - nai le - 'o - la\_\_ m, yis-mah A - do - nai be - ma - 'a - sav

**A'**

3 Ye - hi shem A - do - nai me - vo - rakh, me - a - tah ve - 'ad 'o - lam

**B**

5 Ram 'al kol go - yim A - do - nai, 'al ha - sha - ma - yim ke - vo - do

The following section of liturgy does not adhere to any particular trope or *ṭab’*. Instead, the same melodies are heard each week, for each piece. According to R’ Dahan, singing the same melodies each week is not a rule but standard practice. A *ḥazzan* does have the choice to change the melody if he wants (p.c., R’ Chaim Dahan, April 4, 2005). “Halleluyah Hallelu-El be-Qodsho” (praise God, praise the Lord in His holiness; Psalm 150), the first piece in this section, is a psalm performed collectively and set to the same melody each week (figure 4.7).

**Figure 4.7: Melody for “Halleluyah Hallelu-El be-Qodsho”**

ha\_\_\_\_ - lle-lu\_-yah ha-lle-lu E-l be-qo\_d sho ha\_\_\_\_ - le\_\_ - lu hu\_\_ bi\_\_ r-qi - 'a 'u\_\_ zo

9 ha\_\_\_\_ - le\_ - lu\_ - hu bi\_\_\_\_ - ge - vu\_ - ro\_ - tav ha\_\_\_\_ - lle-lu-hu ke\_\_\_\_ - rov gud-lo



The psalm contains a total of six verses. The excerpt in the figure shows verses one and two. The melody follows a two-four meter throughout.

As in other Sephardi congregations, “Barukh Ado-nai le-‘Olam” (Blessed is God forever) and “Vayevarekh David” (And David blessed) are collectively recited in Maroka’i congregations. However, while Syrians return to maqām Sīkāh for this part of the liturgy, Maroka’im base their collective chanting on a part of the ṭab‘ used for the te’amim of Torah cantillation (see Chapter Three). Only the first five tones of the tāb‘ are used: D, E, F#, G, A. As in Torah cantillation practice, the fourth degree is generally skipped, unless used as a neighboring tone when emphasizing the third or fifth.

“Vayosha Ado-nai” (and God saved; Exodus 14:30-31) and “Az Yashir Moshe” (then Moses sang; Exodus 15:1-19), biblical passages recounting the exodus from Egypt, are the final two pieces of this section of the liturgical service. “Vayosha Ado-nai” is either performed with the te’amim tāb‘ or set to a well-known melody; “Az Yashir Moshe” is always a highlight. In Syrian congregations, both pieces simply remain in maqām Sīkāh. In Maroka’i practice, one congregant will lead “Az Yashir Moshe,” performing the entire passage alone or singing a few verses before passing it to another individual in the congregation to continue. Despite it being a biblical passage, the preferred practice is to apply a melody instead of te’amim to this text. Each week the performance approach and melody for these biblical passages can change. While this individualized approach to performing liturgical texts is similar to practices described above, only Maroka’im break up individual texts between several congregants.

Maroka’im conclude Pesukei de-Zimrah with “Ki la-Ado-nai ha-Melukhah” (Because to God is kingship). The Syrian ḥazzan assumes his leadership role at this point, introducing the maqām of the week. Kligman notes this as the beginning of Shaḥarit in Syrian Jewish



community and the point when the ḥazzan assumes leadership are different from those of most other Sephardi communities. The Maroka'i and Sephardi nusaḥim are very similar, yet several parts of Maroka'i nusaḥ clearly show connections to other parts of the Jewish diaspora. How melody is constructed—the incorporation of specific song melodies from beyond the synagogue and general similarities in approaching *taqsīm* (improvisation)<sup>21</sup> in maqām and nūba-based traditions—remains an area of confluence between Maroka'i and other Sephardi ḥazzanut. But when in the service pre-existing melodies are used instead of *taqsīm*, and where these melodies come from, are clearly points where Maroka'i ḥazzanut practice diverges from other Sephardi practices in the neighborhood.

In sum, the liturgical service is an important context for expressing Maroka'i ḥazzanut, and in turn a key opportunity to reiterate emblems of communal identity. Individual community members rely upon such emblems to associate their individualized identities with others. In several instances in the liturgical texts and in the liturgical music, boundaries of the Maroka'i diasporic ethnic identity clearly overlap with those of other Jewish ethnic groups. But in many instances, Maroka'i practice still stands as distinctive. Ḥazzanut is a musical practice that in the context of liturgy allows for the expression of both exclusion and inclusion. This stance of constant negotiation is what encourages multiple diasporic identities to coexist in the consciousness of community members.

## **Contrafacta**

The practice of contrafacta is popular in the Sephardi diaspora community. The replacing of sung texts written in Arabic about sensuality with Hebrew texts that express themes related to

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<sup>21</sup> *Taqsīm* often connotes a way of improvising whereby the performer develops melody according to the melodic mode(s), emphasizing the tonic and pivot points as structural points.

Jewish spirituality is a practice that dates from at least thirteenth-century Spain (Avenary 1979; Seroussi 1990). Many of the piyyutim by sixteenth-century paytan R' Israel Najara (c. 1550-1625), written in Safed and published in his *Zemiroth Yisrael* (Songs of Israel), include references to Arabic and Turkish songs from which the melody is derived.

The practice of preserving the melody while transforming the text is seen as a commendable endeavor. The use of contrafacta is described in several Jewish communities as a way of imbuing otherwise mundane songs with holiness. As the chief rabbi of Brooklyn's Syrian community R' Jacob Kassin describes in his introduction to *Shir u-Shvachah Hallel ve-Zimrah*, "the melody is a holy spark...it is necessary to use holy words [Hebrew] ... in order to lead the spark from the realm of evil to the realm of holiness" (Kassin 1997:32). Kassin is grafting an idea from Lurianic Kabbalah in this quote: sparks.<sup>22</sup>

In Brooklyn's Syrian Jewish community, the para-liturgical *pizmonim* (short lyric poems) tradition relies upon contrafacta quite extensively. Nineteenth-century R' Raphael Taboush of Aleppo is credited with restoring and revitalizing pizmon composition, "initiating a modern school of pizmon transmission that survives most actively in Brooklyn" (Shelemay 1998). He was thought to be a master of a particular type of contrafacta practice, called *tarkib*, whereby the *paytan* (poet-composer) pays special attention to the sound and structure of the original text: the phonetics, syllabic meter, and rhyme scheme of the original text are preserved in the Hebrew. Stories about R' Taboush often emphasize that he would return home from Aleppo's coffeeshops, having memorized song melodies and texts from the live performance, and

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<sup>22</sup> This, another aspect of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world) drawn from Lurianic Kabbalah, suggests that sparks of the divine presence have been scattered throughout the world. It is incumbent upon everyone to collect these sparks as a means for inducing *geulah* (redemption). See Chapter Four, page 10-11.

immediately compose pizmonim. Similarly, several Maroka'i paytanim, most notably the prolific twentieth century R' David Bouzaglo of Casablanca, are revered for their masterful practice of tarkib (Amzallag 1998:107-109; Attiyah 2005 [1986]). The meaning of the original Arabic texts is generally discarded, replaced with Hebrew texts that emphasize Judaic religious themes and utilize biblical quotes pervasively.

A popular example of the use of tarkib in the Sephardi community comes from the Farid al-Atrash piece "Ma Kuli Wekultilo" (He Spoke to Me and I Spoke to Him). His song serves as the foundation for Yerushalmi-Sephardi paytan Nissim Levy's pizmon "Mul Eli Ve-Godlo" (In Front of My God and His greatness; SUHV #705b). This is a well-known and commonly performed pizmon in Brooklyn's Sephardi community, especially amongst Syrians, Egyptians, Lebanese, and Yerushalmi-Sephardim. R' David Elmkies, a Maroka'i paytan in Israel, also based his pizmon "Mekave Ani Lo" (I Long For it [Holy Temple]) on Atrash's "Ma Kuli Wekultilo." "Mekave Ani Lo" is preferred by and performed regularly in Brooklyn's Maroka'i community at life-cycle events, meals, and even as a bima song during Kriat ha-Torah. It is also included in the popular Maroka'i songbook *Azamer be-Shabhin* (113). Maroka'im occasionally employ Atrash's melody for liturgical texts as well. But while tarkib is highly respected throughout the history of the Sephardi diaspora as a contrafacta style that demands a high level of poetic craftsmanship, a different contrafacta style is more common for Sephardi ḥazzanut.

In contrast to tarkib, where new texts are composed that mimic the phonetics of the original, liturgical texts are set and cannot be changed. Instead, contrafacta practice in ḥazzanut demands a different set of skills. Ḥazzanim must fit the liturgical text to a pre-existing melody, without losing the character of the melody or the text. The integrity of melodic phrases hinges on respecting aspects of melodic construction, such as tonal motion, characteristic intervals, and

durational relationships. When the Sephardi ḥazzan performs contrafacta, he must keep these aspects in mind. While seeking to preserve the integrity of the melody, there is room in this approach for invention. Ornamentation, extending phrases, tempo changes, and modulation are available options for invention. Because liturgical texts are sacrosanct, they must always be rendered in a way that is considered respectful. In Sephardi contexts, this means pronouncing each of the words clearly and audibly. In performing a contrafactum, the ḥazzan must be careful not to compromise the meaning of the liturgical text. He must pay close attention to enunciation and grammar. Similarly, care must be taken to extend words in certain places, such as during final syllables of a word, coordinating conjunctions, and punctuation points.

The goal of the Maroka'i ḥazzan is to fit melody and text together smoothly. "You have to fit it together, like this [R' Dahan demonstrates]. Some people don't know how to do it so easily. That's why someone has to know what they're doing before being ḥazzan" (p.c., R' Chaim Dahan, March 21, 2005). If a person's performance results in compromising either the meaning of the text or the character of the melody, he risks producing something unfamiliar to the congregants, or worse, something considered disrespectful or improper.

Sometimes the liturgical text is too short or too long for a melodic phrase. When there is too much text to fit neatly with a melodic phrase, the Sephardi ḥazzan will increase the rhythmic density or repeat tones in the melody. This latter option often extends the melodic phrase without compromising its intervallic integrity. Another option is to stretch one line of text over two melodic phrases.

Conversely, when there is too little text, the ḥazzan must stretch the words. Employing melismas, ḥazzanim can elongate the text to fit a melodic phrase. But whereas other Sephardi ḥazzanim commonly employ melismas on vowel and consonant sounds, Maroka'im tend to

focus on open vowel sounds only—oh, aa, and ee. Maroka'im also employ a distinct set of vocables—*he, na, ne, no*—to help shorter texts fit longer melodic phrases. These vocables are standard and recognized throughout the Maroka'i diaspora; they are used in liturgical services and baqqashot, two realms of musical practice in the community where contrafacta are used robustly. In sum, performing contrafacta in a liturgical setting demands that the ḥazzan balance ways of grafting pre-determined texts onto melodies from other sources. The ḥazzan must apply musicality above all else.

### **Favoring Melodies**

Maroka'i congregations in Brooklyn have grown accustomed to hearing a select repertoire of familiar song melodies. Certainly some melodies are chosen because they are already known to fit well with certain liturgical texts; this is reminiscent of *ṣanā'i'* in *āla-andalusit*, where certain melodies always accompany certain texts in the *nūba* song suites. Ḥazzanim possess the opportunity to introduce new melodies when they choose to. Maroka'i ḥazzanim in particular often do so by drawing upon disparate sources. Melodies used in Brooklyn communities' liturgical practice, as in other communities in the Maroka'i diaspora, tend to come from *āla-andalusit*, *cha'abi*, *ghranati*, *djiri*, and *musika mizrahit*. This disparate selection of genres and styles is much wider than one finds in other Sephardi communities in Brooklyn, where much of the melodic fodder comes from the *turāth* (heritage) music produced in Eastern Arab countries such as Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon since the 1940s. The through-composed nature of compositions by Muḥammad 'Abd al-Wahhāb, or Sayyid Darwīsh, which is especially typical in the *qaṣā'id* of Riyāḍ al-Sunbāṭī (Danielson 1997:110-125), provides ample room for the relatively smooth performance of contrafacta with liturgical Hebrew texts. While song melodies from Syrian, Yerushalmi-Sephardi, or Chabad-Lubavitch genres are heard in

Maroka'i synagogues, and a couple of key pieces—"Lekha Dodi," "Adon Olam"—are often performed with well-worn Ashkenazi melodies, the tendency is to favor song melodies with a Maroka'i pedigree.

In several liturgical services throughout the year, when the nusah is more specific to the Maroka'i community (Qinnot, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Shavuot), melodic pedigree matters even more. This is especially the case when dealing with Sephardi and Maroka'i piyyutim. Often written in muwashshat/zajal form or in syllabic meters, these types of piyyutim fit well with the common A-B melodic form of many light classical and folk pieces from Morocco. Many Hebrew qasā'id (thought to be from al-Andalus) fit particularly well with the ṣanā'i' melodies from āla-andalusit as well. Thus, while the Maroka'i approach to contrafacta practice in the context of ḥazzanut is similar to other styles of Sephardi ḥazzanut, the melodies used present different issues between the groups and construct a very different soundscape for community members.

Surrounding certain holidays, Maroka'im in Brooklyn use melodies to evoke a connection between the time of year and the ḥazzanut. For instance, during the week of Shavuot (festival of weeks) the piyyut "Lekha Dodi," a central liturgical text in the Kabbalat Shabbat service, is set to a melody that is associated with the Maroka'i piyyut "Torat Emet Natan Lanu" (The Truth of Torah was Given to Us) (p.c., R' Chaim Dahan, March 21, 2005). Shavuot is the holiday when the Ten Commandments were proclaimed from Mount Sinai to the congregation of Israelites. During Hanukah, the popular Ashkenazi melody for the piyyut "Maoz Tzur" (Rock of Ages) is used for "Lekha Dodi."<sup>23</sup> Around Pesah, the common Seder melody for the piyyut

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<sup>23</sup> "Adon Olam" (Master of the World), a piyyut in the liturgy performed each Shabbat morning at Netivot Israel synagogue, is also set to a well-known Ashkenazi melody. This melody is common to most Ashkenazi congregations in the United States.



“Dayeinu” appears in numerous liturgical services as well. During the Shabbat Shaḥarit liturgy on Pesah, the melody for the Maroka’i piyyut “Yaḥid be-Arba” is used for “Ado-nai Melekh, Ado-nai Malakh.” In each of these cases, Maroka’im use contrafacta to evoke calendrical connections.

The reiteration of this diverse assortment of familiar melodies fosters an equally diverse set of identity associations. Melodies from songs in Arabic, by Jewish and Arab composers from North Africa, form a sonic repository of references to a pan-Maroka’i community of Jews who now coalesce around a larger national homeland. The regular use of melodies from other Sephardi and Ashkenazi communities provides important intersection points along the borderlines of different Jewish diasporic ethnic groups, encouraging overlap and an expanded sense of ethnicity. Ultimately, the development of a repertoire of favored melodies not only works to establish boundaries of Maroka’i ḥazzanut practice, but it also reiterates the value of contrafacta as a favored approach to musical expression in the community.

### **Making Medleys**

Using a medley of melodies for a particular liturgical text is part of a distinctly Maroka’i approach to ḥazzanut. *Medleying* mimics the stringing together of short melodies that is characteristic of nūba in āla-andalusit. In nūba practice, the ṭab‘ stays the same when new melodies are introduced or when the *mizān* (rhythmic mode) changes. Each melody is coupled with a particular text, forming a *ṣan‘a* (lyric form). There are several types of *ṣanā’i‘* (pl.), distinguished by the number of verses in the text. When performing āla-andalusit, the *ṣanā’i‘* are decided by the artists in advance. Several are typically performed in sequence, and usually the artists will keep to *ṣanā’i‘* in the same ṭab‘. By predetermining the *ṣanā’i‘*, everybody knows

which melodies will be included, the sequence of melodies, and how many times to repeat each melody before changing (Guettat 2000:273-277).

In Brooklyn’s Maroka’i synagogues, it is common to hear a medley of at least two melodies in one liturgical text. As in nūba, the melody changes in the course of one performance. However, unlike in sana’i practice, specific melodies are rarely coupled with specific texts in advance. Since the liturgical text doesn’t change, it is not so important to think in terms of ṣan‘a. After all, the Maroka’i ḥazzan is going to fit whatever liturgical text he is working with to his melody of choice. Despite this freedom with the text, there are several melodies that are typically performed together. Because of this, the ḥazzan will also change the ṭab‘ when necessary, moving fluidly between ‘tubū that share tones so that he can concentrate on performing melodies that are recognizable to community members. Only the medleying of melodies is preserved as an effect from nūba.

*Ra’u Banim and El Adon*

In analyzing two separate performances by Maroka’i ḥazzanim in Brooklyn, we can see aspects of a distinctively local Maroka’i approach to contrafacta practice. Both performances are based on the same melody, “Qum Tara” (Stand Up and See) (figure 4.9).

**Figure 4.9: “Qum Tara” Melody (with original Arabic text, transposed to C from G)**

The musical score for "Qum Tara" is presented in two staves, labeled A and B. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 2/4. The melody is transposed to C major from its original G major. The lyrics are written below the notes, with horizontal lines indicating the duration of each syllable. The first staff (A) contains the first two phrases: "Qum ta - ra" and "Ba - ra - 'im il - lu z tan - da -". The second staff (B) contains the final phrase: "fi q 'an - ku - li ji - ha'".

The melody has four distinct melodic phrases, each four measures long. The B section melody works with the original Arabic text as a refrain.

Jews and Muslims commonly perform this song throughout the Moroccan diaspora. While the Arabic text is thought to be from al-Andalus, the melody of “Qum Tara” is of western Algerian provenance. Maroka’im commonly associate it with the djiri style of light classical music that is closely related to the nūba-based gharnati style (from Tlemcen, Algeria, and its satellite cities). This piece is a good example of the porous boundary between western Algeria and Morocco within the Maroka’i consciousness of homeland. The melody of “Qum Tara” more closely resembles the Moroccan ṭab‘ *Dhil* than the Algerian ṭab‘ *Dhil*<sup>24</sup> found in *ma’lūf* (classical nūba genre) (Guettat 2000:363-366; 379-380).

“Qum Tara” was popularized by a mid-twentieth century Jewish songstress from Oran, Algeria, Reinette l’Oranaise or Sultana Daoud, who was the first to record it and disseminate it on radio. It is quite plausible that because of her Jewish background, her recordings were consumed early on in urban communities where access to modern recording and radio technologies was more common than in the hinterland Jewish communities. Maroka’im often include this region in their conceptions of the geographic and ethnic borders of communal identity. Several additional musical icons claimed by Maroka’im, including Salim Halali, Enrico Macias, and Cheikh Raymond, are from Algeria.

“R’au Banim” (when His children saw) (figure 4.10) is part of the liturgy for Arvit on Shabbat evening (Friday night). It is the first prayer and blessing after the Shema passages are recited in Kriat Shema. The text is comprised of biblical verses (Exodus 15:11; Jeremiah 31:10)

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<sup>24</sup> Moroccan ṭab‘ *Dhil*: **G A B C D E F# G | G F E D C B A G.**  
Algerian *ma’lūf* ṭab‘ *Dhil*: **G A B C D E F G | G F E D C# B A G**

and connecting lines, concluding with the blessing *Ga'al Yisrael* (He Who Redeems Israel).

Exile is a central theme. “Ra’u Banim” highlights the moment when the exodus from Egypt is complete, after the Israelites cross through the Red Sea.

**Figure 4.10: “Ra’u Banim” Text (translation by Samuel R. Thomas)**

When His children saw His mighty actions, they exalted and praised His name, accepting His kingship upon them with gladness. Moshe and the children of Israel sang before Him with great joy, as they proclaimed:	ראו בנים את גבורתו, שבחו והודו לשמו, ומלכותו ברצון קבלו עליהם. משה ובני ישראל לך ענו שירה בשמחה רבה, ואמרו כולם.
(Who is like You, eternal amongst the gods, who is like You glorious in sanctity, revered in praise, doer of miracles?)	(מי-כמוכה באלים ה' מי כמכה נאדר בקדש, נורא תהלת עשה-פלא.)

R' Kakon's performance of “Ra’u Banim” highlights several ways a contrafactum can be performed by Maroka'i ḥazzanim (figure 4.11).

**Figure 4.11: “Ra’u Banim,” Performed by R' Michael Kakon (March 3, 2005)**

\* *altered rhythmic cycle (removed or added beats)*

From the opening phrase, one can see that R' Kakon is changing the melody to fit the text. He repeats the opening measure of the first melodic phrase (meas. 2) so that the next word, *banim*, can begin the high point of the melodic phrase (beginning of meas. 3). He extends the last syllable of several words to fit with the melody (meas. 11-12, 19-20). Commas divide the opening line of "Ra'u Banim" into three parts: nine, nine, and fourteen syllables each. Because the original melody has four distinct melodic phrases, a tension emerges over how to perform this contrafactum. R' Kakon applies the first two parts of the opening line to two melodic phrases each (meas. 1-8, 9-16). However, during the third part of the opening line, he repeats the original melody (A'). Here he must also extend the text to fit over all four melodic phrases (meas. 17-32). He takes more time with several syllables, usually the first and last of a word, by stretching them over more of the melody (meas. 17, 20-22, 25-28).

Another notable aspect of R' Kakon's performance is related to rhythm. He does not preserve the integrity of the meter found in the original melody. Because *ḥazzanut* is usually performed without instrumental accompaniment, and especially because the *ḥazzan* is accustomed to performing solo, great liberties are often taken with the rhythm of the melody. R' Kakon consistently cuts rests, truncating the meter (figure 4.11: meas. 8, 16, 20, 24, 32).

R' Chaim Dahan uses the same melody for "El Adon" (God is Master), a text from the Shabbat morning liturgy preceding Kriat Shema (figure 4.12).

**Figure 4.12: “El Adon” Text (translation by Samuel R. Thomas)**

God is the master of all creation	אל אדון על כל המעשים
He blesses and is blessed by every soul	ברוך ומבורך בפי כל הנשמה
His greatness and goodness fill the world	גדלו וטובו מלא עולם
knowledge and wisdom surround him	דעת ותבונה סובבים הודו
He is exalted above the celestial beings	המתגאה על חיות הקדש
And He is adorned in glory above the celestial chariot	ונהדר בכבוד על המרכבה
Purity and justice stand before his throne	זכות ומישור לפני כסאו
Kindness and mercy fill His glory	חסד ורחמים מלא כבודו
Good are the luminaries which our God has created	טובים מאורות שבראם אלהינו
made with knowledge, wisdom, and insight	יצרם בדעת בבינה ובהשכל
He gave them energy and power	כח וגבורה נתן בהם
To have dominion over the world	להיות מושלים בקרב תבל
Full of splendor they radiate brightness;	מלאים זיו ומפיקים נגה
Beautiful is their brilliance throughout the world	נאה זיום בכל העולם
They rejoice in their rising and exult in their lot	שמחים בצאתם ששים בבואם
carrying out with reverence the will of their creator	עושים באימה רצון קוניהם
They honor and glorify His name,	פאר וכבוד נותנים לשמו
To remember His majesty, they use rejoicing and song	צהלה ורנה לזכר מלכותו
He called forth the sun, and it shone;	קרא לשמש ויזרח אור
He saw fit to regulate the form of the moon	ראה והתקין צורת הלבנה
All the hosts of heaven give him praise;	שבח נותנים לו כל צבא מרום
Glory and grandeur come from the angels	תפארת וגדלה שרפים, ואופנים וחיות הקדש

This text is found in all nusaḥim, after the *Barekhu* (call to prayer) and preceding the Shema passages. It is a stand-alone piyyut of unknown authorship. The verses are ordered according to the Hebrew alphabet, with the beginning letter of each hemistich forming an acrostic. It is written in a parallelistic or antithetic form consistent with early Hebrew piyyutim (Hrushovsky 1981), without quantitative or syllabic meters. The discrepancy between nusaḥim discussed above regarding the order of angels is pertinent to this text as well. The final verse includes *Seraphim, ve-Ofanim, ve-Hayot ha-kodesh*. Despite this discrepancy, however, most of the text is the same in all nusaḥim.

Like R' Kakon, R' Dahan takes liberties with the original melody. At the outset he expresses the melody closer to the original than R' Kakon (figure 4.13) and does not repeat the first measure.

**Figure 4.13: “El Adon,” Performed by R’ Chaim Dahan (March 21, 2005)**

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a label in a box:

- System 1 (Label A):** Measures 1-8. Lyrics: El a - do \_\_\_\_\_ n ha - ko\_\_l ma\_\_-'a-\_\_-si\_\_\_\_ m ba-
- System 2 (Label B):** Measures 9-16. Lyrics: rukh u - m - vo ra\_\_\_\_\_ kh be - fi kol ha-ne- sha\_\_mah, (he) go-de-
- System 3 (Label A'):** Measures 17-24. Lyrics: lo\_\_\_\_\_ ve - tu - vo\_\_\_\_\_ ma\_\_-le\_\_\_\_-'o - la\_\_\_\_\_ m, da-
- System 4 (Label B'):** Measures 25-32. Lyrics: -a\_\_t u - te - vu na\_\_\_\_\_ h so -\_\_-ve - vi\_\_\_\_\_ m ho - do

However, at the beginning of the A' section (meas. 17-20), Dahan repeats the melody of the first measure and cuts out the pause between phrases, essentially shortening the finalis of the first melodic phrase (meas. 20).

Because the “El Adon” text is based upon parallelism, it fits well with a melody that has an even number of phrases. Each line is divided into two parts, and R' Dahan applies each hemistich to one complete melodic phrase. However, the hemistiches are not even in syllabic length, demanding skill to perform a convincible contrafactum. For instance, the second hemistich of the first line (Barukh...) has thirteen syllables. R' Dahan must fit more text into this

melodic phrase than in the previous one (meas. 9-15). One can see that the syllables at the end of this line are more rapidly expressed, with no use of melisma during this entire melodic section (meas. 12-15).

In several instances R' Dahan favors extending text by expressing more melody with an open vowel sound, even when that syllable ends in a consonantal sound (meas. 2-4; 11-12; 23-24; 30). For instance, “adon” is pronounced *a-don*. R' Dahan extends the second syllable for a significant amount of melody (meas. 2-4), before completing the phrase with a stop on the consonantal sound—do\_n. Emphatic consonants are a feature of several styles of sacred text recitation in the region, including Qur'an and Torah. Umm Kulthūm is revered for her ability to bring this way of expressing text, with emphatic consonants, into her approach to musical practice (Danielson 1997:140). But while Eastern Mediterranean Sephardi ḥazzanim will perform melismas on emphatic consonants, very similarly to Umm Kulthūm, Maroka'im prefer to work with the open vowel sounds and simply emphasize consonantal sounds at the end of a melisma.

In each performance, R' Kakon and R' Dahan change to the same second melody towards the end of their respective liturgical texts. The new melody is from the Moroccan nūba Iṣbihān, in the ṭab' *Zawarkand*.<sup>25</sup> It is part of the *insiraf* (fast) or *khruj* (exit) section. The melody (figure 4.14) is more active and performed at a faster tempo than the “Qum Tara” melody, building excitement into the end of the liturgical text. The melody begins at a high point, expressed from the fourth degree pivot point (G) beyond the top note of the ṭab', descending and coming to a finalis on the fourth degree (G). R' Kakon introduces this melody at the concluding line of the prayer: *mi ka-mokha ba-Elim Ado-nai...* (who is like You, God...). R' Dahan changes

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<sup>25</sup> Ṭab' Zawarkand: **D E F# G A B C D | D C B A G F# (F) E D**



to this melody at the line, *me-le'im ziv u-me-fikim no-gah* ([they are] full of brightness and glowing).

**Figure 4.14: Second Part of “El Adon,” Performed by R’ Chaim Dahan (March 21, 2005, tab’ Zawarkand transposed to F from D)**

♩ = 108

1

me\_ le-im zi\_\_\_\_\_ v um-fi-qim no-gah (eh) na-eh zi-vam be-khal ha-'o-la\_m se -

5

mei-ħim be tze-tam sa-sim be-vo-am 'o-si\_m be-ei- mah ra-tzon qo-nei-hem

9

pe - er ve - kha - vo\_\_\_\_\_ d no\_\_\_\_\_t - nim lish - mo tza -

11

ha - lah ve - ri - nah le - zei - kher mal - khu - to\_\_\_\_\_ qa\_

13

\_\_\_\_\_ra la-she-mesh va-yiz-rah or ra-ah ve-hit qi\_\_\_\_\_n tzu - rat ha-le-va-nah

17

she-vaħ not-nim lo\_\_\_\_\_ kal tze-va ma-ro\_\_\_\_\_m tif - e - ret ug-du-lah se\_- ra-fi\_\_\_\_\_m

21

se - ra - fi\_m ve\_- o - fa-nim ve - o\_- fa nim\_\_\_\_\_ ve - ħa yo.t ha-qo de\_\_\_\_\_sh

rit. . . . .

The introduction of the second melody is an explicit effort to create a short medley, just as in a *nūba* performance. Furthermore, the increase in tempo and melodic activity, and the choice of a melody that expresses the high end of the *ṭab‘* are ways of conjuring the *nūba* form. Along with the ways both *ḥazzanim* deal with grafting the liturgical texts onto these melodies, their practice of medleying is an important means for fostering associations among community members between *ḥazzanut* and a particular Andalusī-based, Maghrebīan musical tradition. In this sense, the concept of *borrowing* in *contrafacta* practice, that is usually limited to text and melody, can be extended here to include form as well.

### **Incorporating New Melodies**

A thirst to incorporate new *old* melodies into Maroka’i *ḥazzanut* practices exists worldwide, and is especially present in Brooklyn. This reflects a conservationist impulse within the community that privileges melodies imbued with a sense of authenticity. For instance, in R’ Avraham Amar’s *baqqashot* class, we learned a melody for the *piyyut* “*Dodi Yarad le-Gano*,” a *piyyut* found in both the hallowed *baqqashot* and in *shirat āla* (*piyyutim* set to *āla-andalusit*) repertoires. Thereafter, R’ Gad Bouskila made a conscious effort to use it for the liturgical text “*Az Yashir Moshe*” during Shabbat morning services. As we both had attended sessions with R’ Amar, where R’ Amar had demonstrated how the melody for “*Dodi Yarad le-Gano*” could specifically be used for “*Az Yashir Moshe*,” R’ Bouskila was delighted that I was following his efforts at incorporating this melody into his repertoire. He was also happy that I had noticed because this meant that he had successfully conveyed the melody in his *ḥazzanut*.

Showing how such melodies could be used in the liturgy is common in the Maroka’i diaspora. While participating in a *shirat āla* class in August of 2005, led by R’ Haim Bitton at Jerusalem’s North African Cultural Center, I witnessed the same approach to transmitting

repertoire. After teaching a piyyut and melody, R' Bitton then demonstrated how contrafacta could be performed using one melody for several different liturgical texts. Similarly, R' David Kadoch, from Toronto's Maroka'i community, has a YouTube channel where he presents several melodies and demonstrates how they can be used in ḥazzanut (<http://www.youtube.com/darkeabotenu>, accessed June 13, 2013).

The use of this method of transmission conveys a respect and value for practicing contrafacta as part of Maroka'i ḥazzanut. The practice of contrafacta is seen by community members, and especially by leaders in the community, as a vehicle for ethnicization. "You can take this *manginah* (melody) and put it into the *tefilot* (prayers), like this [demonstrates]. For 'Az Yashir' or anywhere you like" (p.c., R' Avraham Amar, October 28, 2010). The rabbi's demonstration was meant to emphasize his feeling that bringing more Maroka'i melodies into the ḥazzanut was important. By reiterating melodies of Moroccan provenance in the context of liturgical texts, community members can be constantly exposed to a distinctive soundscape that raises their consciousness of what is emblematic of Maroka'i identity. This is compounded with the introduction of new *old* melodies.

Several pieces in the liturgical services highlight Maroka'i ḥazzanut as essential to ethnicization, emphasizing correlations and distinctions in practice between Maroka'im and members of other Jewish diasporic ethnic communities. Certainly we have seen that nusah is germane for exploring these correlations and distinctions. But the focus of this section has been on the practice of contrafacta, a rich, robust, and valued way of bringing liturgical texts, performed in the synagogue, together with expressions of musical identity from outside the synagogue.

Like many other aspects of communal practice, *contrafacta* are used to negotiate the boundaries of Maroka'i identity, defining what is specifically Maroka'i as well as making room for the incorporation of expressions from other Jewish ethnic diasporic communities. As we have seen in other chapters, the boundaries of a larger pan-Maroka'i ethnicity can be promoted through musical practice. For Maroka'i *ḥazzanut*, the dissolution of formerly regional styles of practice has created spaces for incorporation. Along these boundary lines are spaces of overlap where aspects of Maroka'i *ḥazzanut* practice are also synonymous with aspects of practice in other Jewish ethnic communities. And beyond these spaces are additional boundary lines of Jewish identity, expressed in belonging to the Jewish diaspora. Here, textual meaning and liturgical text repertoires are perhaps most important to consider. Ultimately, a layered diaspora consciousness emerges from Maroka'i *ḥazzanut* as associations with the three distinctive diasporic identities are embedded in the practice of *contrafacta*.

### **Performance Aesthetics**

Several stylistic features of *ḥazzanut* performance in Brooklyn's Maroka'i community, contained in approaches to rhythm, melody, and vocal practice, promote distinctive performance aesthetics. Through certain ways of accentuating melodies and texts, local *ḥazzanim* rhythmicize liturgical songs in a way that evokes strong associations with the homeland and with other communities in the diaspora. While Maroka'i *ḥazzanut* practices are based upon the *nūba*-based *āla* musical genre in several ways, rhythmic approaches by *ḥazzanim* in Brooklyn tend to privilege a particular *mizān* (rhythmic mode). *Mizān Cha'abi* is similar in nature to several *nūba*-based *miyazān* (pl.), however its provenance and application in *ḥazzanut* differs. Certain stylistic features of Maroka'i vocal practice remain distinctive while others occupy a borderline space

where Maroka'i ḥazzanut practice resembles that of other Sephardi ḥazzanut practices. Approaches to melodic expression, including preferred vocal range and methods of improvisation and characteristic melodic figurations drawn from the Maghrebian practice of the mawwāl, stand out in Maroka'i ḥazzanut performance. Other aspects of vocal practice, including vocal timbre and diction, place Maroka'i ḥazzanut practice within a larger Sephardi milieu. In analyzing several ways these performance aesthetics are produced, one can see how ḥazzanim aggregate their use to emblemize Maroka'i identity and negotiate shared boundaries of identity with other Sephardi groups.

### **Rhythmic Aesthetic**

Through presenting a characteristic rhythmic aesthetic, ḥazzanim in Brooklyn reiterate connections to the homeland of Morocco and foster a sense of belonging to the Maroka'i diaspora community. While instrumental accompaniment is forbidden in the synagogue during liturgical services, using one's hands and lecterns, tables, or thighs as a percussive instrument is not. Therefore, ḥazzanim and congregants in Brooklyn Maroka'i synagogues will tap with their fingers or hands to create rhythmic accompaniment. However, the absence of instrumental accompaniment in ḥazzanut practice allows for solo performers to add or drop beats to rhythmic cycles. Sometimes, with hand taps ḥazzanim can get more explicit in their efforts to conjure a particular rhythm, even adhering to a perceivable cycle at times. This happens most often when leading congregational singing. Maroka'i ḥazzanut relies upon conjuring one prominent rhythmic mode from the Maghreb—however loosely it is performed—and upon rhythmicizing liturgical texts by accenting melodic tones or emphasizing certain syllables.

From folk styles to nūba-based classical genres, most of the musical traditions in Morocco are based on short, cyclical rhythmic modes. In the nūba-based genres, these specific

rhythmic modes are called *miyazīn*. Similar to an *iqā'* (Eastern Arab term for a rhythmic mode), a *mizān* (sing.) is organized according to heavy and light drum strokes, called *dum* (low, heavy sound) and *tak* (high, light sound). Taks, dums, and even rests are treated with equal stature in the rhythmic cycle, and their unique combination creates the character of each particular mode. Certain strokes are accented in the cycle, often implying a sense of meter. However, unlike many western meters, these accents are not necessarily arranged so that the strongest emphasis is on “beat one.” Many western meters are defined by the presence of the weakest beat before the strongest. In *miyāzin*, it is possible for two strong beats to follow one another. Many melodies in *āla* begin or conclude on off beats, often confusing the non-enculturated listener. Thus, differences of opinion remain on exactly where to represent the beginning of many *miyazīn* (Amzallag 1986:34; Touma 1996:76; Atiyah 2005[1986]:27). Certainly a *mizan* operates in *nūba*-based musical genres as a periodic structure that includes repetition of identical material with little or no variation.

#### *Mizān Cha'abi*

Several *miyazīn* utilize the same number of beats. The character of the rhythmic mode is therefore defined by the organization of heavy and light strokes. In several *miyazīn*, heavy strokes come at later points in the cycle, foregrounding a sense of syncopation. Several cycles are performed with differing emphases, producing a hemiola effect. Within certain *miyāzin*, it is also common to find sesquialtera employed as a means for incorporating more rhythmic density into the primary cyclical frame. Syncopation, hemiolas, and sesquialtera are fundamental aspects of *miyazīn*, providing cyclical rhythmic modes with excitement and a feeling that they are in perpetual motion and never need to end.

According to Edwin Seroussi, the miyazīn of āla-andalusit are kept alive in Maroka'i synagogues in Israel through the practice of baqqashot (Seroussi 2001a). Ḥazzanim skilled in the baqqashot and āla will often incorporate miyazīn into their ḥazzanut as well. In Brooklyn, the preference is to rely upon a single rhythmic mode for most ḥazzanut: mizān Cha'abi. Mizān Cha'abi is similar to one of the modes in āla: mizān *Quddam* (progress). However, mizān Cha'abi is more versatile in that its nature allows for a free flow of hemiola effects and for much more variation in accenting different beats. Nevertheless, the occasional Israeli-Moroccan visitor to Brooklyn has tried to infuse local ḥazzanut practice with other miyāzin from āla, but these rhythmic modes remain out of general favor.

The word *cha'abi* (folk) is often used to describe several different rural and urban styles of music in the Maghreb. Generally called *cha'abi* and based loosely on mizān Cha'abi, these styles can include traditional and western instruments, electronics, songs in different vernacular languages, and melodic or rap vocals. Artists like Salim Halali, Albert Suissa, and Victor Soussan, all Jewish performers of popular concert music who were active in the latter half of the twentieth century in Morocco and Israel, relied upon mizān Cha'abi extensively in their work. This mizān conjures an association with a larger homeland region in the Maghreb, and represents the rhythmic underpinning of much of the popular music consumed by Maroka'im during the period of emigration.

Within mizān Cha'abi are two distinct rhythms: *Cha'abi* and *Karatchi*. Cha'abi, the primary rhythm and namesake of the mode, is expressed in six beats (figure 4.15a). Like the āla mizān *Quddam*, the characteristic dum on beat five provides a heavy stroke in the later part of the cycle that operates like an offbeat and instills a propulsive nature to the mode. "This (accentuation pattern) makes it (Cha'abi rhythm) feel like a galloping horse [demonstrates with

his fingers on the table]” (p.c., R’ Avraham Amar, October 28, 2010). While variations in the Cha’abi rhythm are possible and indeed abound, this emphasis on the fifth beat is compulsory for characterizing the mode.

**Figure 4.15: Mizān Cha’abi**

Two basic variations of Cha’abi, presented in Figure 4.15 with western time signatures for ease of understanding the temporal space, are defined by the placement of taks on beats one and four or on beats one and three. These emphases are used to imply two different patterns of organizing the beats: either 3+3 or 2+2+2. The rhythm can be expressed in either pattern, without compromising the cycle and the placement of the characteristic dum. In any given song, one variation can prevail or performers can explore different patterns by emphasizing taks in different places. By nature, the Cha’abi rhythm encourages play, and performers can go back and forth with accenting taks on different beats at will and with ease. For more variation, the cycle is often doubled, becoming twelve beats with characteristic dums on beats five and eleven. This doubling opens the possibility for more possibilities in structuring tak patterns.

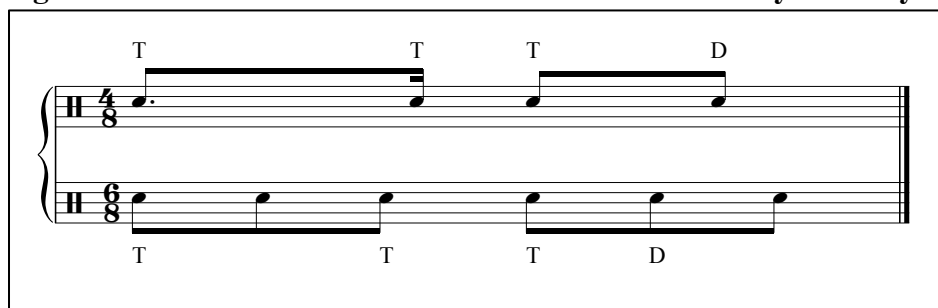
Within mizān Cha’abi is another rhythm called Karatchi (figure 4.15b). The Karatchi rhythm is a duple version of the Cha’abi rhythm, expressed within four beats.

The organization of heavy and light strokes is basically the same as in the 3+3 Cha’abi rhythm, with taks used to define the beginning and midway points and the dum appearing on beat four in the latter part of the rhythmic cycle. The use of the Karatchi rhythm as a precursor to the



introduction of the Cha'abi rhythm is common in several Maroka'i musical practices and reminiscent of how miyazīn progress in nūba-based classical musics, from slow to fast. By using sesquialtera to modulate from a two- to three-beat cycle, performers are able to retain the metronomic speed of the beginning and midpoint of the rhythmic cycle. As a result, the Cha'abi rhythm, which is denser, feels faster than the Karatchi rhythm; six beats occupy the same temporal space instead of four. Additionally, the dum appears slightly earlier in the Cha'abi rhythm, as beat five of the six-beat structure is necessarily expressed earlier than beat four of the four-beat Karatchi structure (figure 4.16).

**Figure 4.16: Relation Between Karatchi and Cha'abi Rhythmic Cycles**



Maroka'i ḥazzanim tend to perform longer pieces of liturgy according to this same method, starting with the Karatchi rhythm and modulating to the Cha'abi rhythm, and then fluidly migrating between the two six-beat Cha'abi rhythmic feels (3+3 and 2+2+2).

However, at times it can be difficult to tell if ḥazzanim are choosing to perform in one cycle or another. In solo performance, fluidity of beat adding and dropping happens as ḥazzanim regularly truncate melodic phrases and ignore rests (see R' Kakon's "Ra'u Banim," Figure 4.11). Rather than considering this a performance flaw or lack of skill on the part of ḥazzanim, it would be better to recognize it as a propensity of solo performance and even as part of a specific rhythmic aesthetic in Maroka'i ḥazzanut. When speaking with several informants about this apparent discrepancy between the intended cycle and the actual performance, suggesting that

perhaps it was because of a lack of experience performing with an ensemble, everyone simply shrugged off the discrepancy as a non-issue. If they were performing these melodies outside of a ḥazzanut setting, then it would be a different matter of concern. Maroka'i ḥazzanim do not consider their ḥazzanut to be arhythmical or in free rhythm. Instead, they see their practice as a reflection of a type of musical expression that they are most skilled in, which without instrumental accompaniment lends itself to a loose sense of the mizān. In other words, just evoking the Cha'abi or Karatchi rhythms is adequate. What are preserved and incorporated into ḥazzanut are the propulsive feel of the rhythms in mizān Cha'abi, with the consistent placement of the dum in the second half of the rhythmic cycle, and the natural tendency to float back and forth between both expressions of the six-beat Cha'abi rhythms.

Ḥazzanim accomplish the intended rhythmic aesthetic by added accents or emphases with their voice. Often when lengthening melodic phrases, offbeat accentuations of the syllables will be employed to obtain the desired effect. Using vocables, Jacob Tordjman demonstrates the practice of this aspect of the Maroka'i rhythmic aesthetic. "Like this, it sounds Moroccan [performs while accenting]. You see?" (p.c., Jacob Tordjman, November 28, 2009). He adds and drops beats, never concerned that performing this melody with an ensemble would require a stricter interpretation of the rhythm. Emphasizing syncopation is central to conveying a propulsive feel. Shortening certain tones or cutting the ends of certain phrases achieves a staccato-like shortness and pause, which rhythmicizes the text even if compromising meter.

### Yigdal

"Yigdal," discussed above within the context of the Shabbat morning liturgy, is performed with several different melodies in Brooklyn's Maroka'i community on Friday nights. One can see from an excerpt of "Yigdal" performed by Jacob Tordjman (figure 4.17) how mizān

Cha'abi is applied. He does so with syllabic accentuations, emphasizing and breaking the words in such a way as to characterize the Cha'abi rhythm.

**Figure 4.17: “Yigdal,” Performed by Jacob Tordjman (November 28, 2009)**

clapping:

Yig dal E - lo - him Hai ve-yish-ta - bah nim - tzah ve-ein 'et El me-tzi-v - to

9

(E)ha-d ve-ein ya - hid ke - yi hu - do ne' - la.m ve-ga.m ein sof le-a

15

h - du - to

\* *altered rhythmic cycle (removed or added beats)*

He slaps his hand against his leg throughout. Marked across the top of the notation, one can see from the outset that he begins by structuring the Cha'abi rhythm according to a 2+2+2 meter before quickly changing to the 3+3 meter. He continues to emphasize the latter by slapping on beats one and four throughout. His vocal accents generally mark the first and fifth beats of the measure. As expected, the emphasis on the fifth beat is present throughout.

He also accents consonantal sounds in syllables as a way of rhythmicizing the text, often emphasizing offbeats. In measure nine, while accenting notes on beats one, two, four, and five to emphasize the 3+3 meter, he accents the consonantal sound (d) on beat two as well. In two more instances, in measure thirteen (beat 5) and in measure fifteen (beat 2), he accents consonantal sounds (m and h, respectively) on offbeats as a means to imbue the piece with more of a propulsive feel. In measure thirteen, Tordjman switches to emphasizing a 2+2+2 feel by accenting beats one, three, and five, which is heard in stark contrast to the established 3+3 feel of

the preceding measures. This effect is particularly strong when coupled with the continued slapping of his hand, creating a clear hemiola. Finally, as an example of how the rhythmic mode is loosened, at the conclusion of the couplet Tordjman holds the note and syllable (meas. fourteen, beat 4 until meas. fifteen, beat 1) over the bar line, adding a beat to accomplish the melodic descent to the finalis (meas. 15-16).

*El Adon Revisited*

Returning to R' Chaim Dahan's performance of the second part of "El Adon," we can see that he utilizes many of the same techniques as Tordjman to rhythmicize the melody (figure 4.18).

Figure 4.18: Second Part of “El Adon,” Performed by R’ Chaim Dahan (March 21, 2005)

♩ = 108

1



me le-im zi v um-fi-qim no-gah (eh) na-eh zi-vam be-khal ha-o-la\_m se -

5



mei-him be tze-tam sa-sim be-vo-am 'o-si\_m be-ei - mah ra-tzon qo-nei-hem

9



pe - er ve - kha - vo d no t - nim lish - mo tza -

11



ha - lah ve - ri - nah le - zei - kher mal - khu - to qa -

13



- ra la-she-mesh va-yiz-rah or ra-ah ve-hit qi n tzu - rat ha-le-va-nah

17



she-vaḥ not-nim lo kal tze-va ma ro m tif - e - ret ug-du-lah se - ra-fi\_m

21



se - ra - fi\_m ve - o - fa-nim ve - o - fa nim ve - ha yo.t ha-qo de sh

rit. . . . .

After clearly establishing the basic pattern of the Karatchi rhythm in the first measure, he emphasizes it throughout by adjusting the melody to fit. In several measures he accents the characteristic dum on the offbeat of beat two.

At two distinct points (meas. 3 and 20) he employs a hemiola by singing a quarter-note triplet figure that implies the six-beat Cha'abi rhythm (2+2+2). This, of course, could be the beginning of a very common shift between the two rhythms of the mode if he were to sustain the new rhythmic pattern. Interestingly, when this melody is performed in nūba Zawarkand, in an āla-andalusit setting, it is always expressed in the six-beat Quddam rhythm. The similarity between miyazīn Quddam and Cha'abi allows him to recast the melody in the two-beat Karatchi rhythm quite easily, since Karatchi is part of mizān Cha'abi.

In Maroka'i synagogues in Brooklyn, the disparate backgrounds of community members, with lineages rooted in different parts of Morocco and from different parts of the Maroka'i diaspora, coalesce around a general Maroka'i rhythmic aesthetic. Tordjman's and Dahan's practice is indicative of this rhythmic aesthetic. Ḥazzanim and other congregants regularly try to apply approaches to rhythm drawn from musical traditions of Morocco to all sorts of melodies, no matter their provenance. It is quite interesting to hear popular melodies from other Jewish ethnic communities incorporated into ḥazzanut practice from time to time, recast with a Maroka'i rhythmic aesthetic.

By reiterating or simply conjuring a prominent rhythmic mode like mizān Cha'abi, and by accenting tones in a way that emphasizes a syncopated feel—whether corrupting the rhythmic mode or not—Maroka'im in Brooklyn practice rhythmicizing liturgical texts in a particular way as a means for promoting a distinctive identity. This rhythmic aesthetic has become emblematic of an identity shared by insiders throughout the Maroka'i diaspora, and recognized by outsiders as a practice that belongs to this particular Jewish diasporic ethnic group.

### Melodic and Vocal Aesthetics

Upon first encountering Maroka'i ḥazzanut, several aspects of melodic and vocal style immediately stand out as distinctive. Drawing on Mark Slobin's argument that stylistic features can be understood as symbolic of what belongs within the boundaries of an ethnic identity (1984:38), Uri Sharvit (1986) touches on two aspects of vocal practice—melodic expression and timbre—suggesting that “four salient stylistic features continue to determine meaning in this way [for Maroka'im and Sephardim], namely non-harmonic melodic movement, repetitive and non-developmental progression, melodic intricacy, and nasality” (Sharvit 1986:132). These features are certainly present in Brooklyn's Maroka'i community and serve as representations of a blurred line between different Sephardi ḥazzanut practices. As general features, Jews in the world of Islam share these features of vocal practice with co-ethnic Muslims and Christians as well.

Beginning with vocal timbre, Maroka'i ḥazzanim prefer to express melody at the top of their vocal range without crossing into falsetto. This often gives the melody an urgency or emotional intensity. R' Chaim Dahan suggests that this is a vestige of a Spanish (Sephardi) approach to singing that is still valued in Maroka'i ḥazzanut (p.c., R' Chaim Dahan, March 21, 2005). When talking about R' Haim Louk, a contemporary popular Maroka'i singer, R' Dahan explains that his approach to vocal aesthetics helps to promote another layer of distinction, between northern and coastal parts of Morocco from southern, inland areas. “His style is very Spanish...as opposed to French Morocco, the southern part. He sings really high [pitch range] and soft. We're a bit more rough” (ibid. 2005). “We're” refers to the founders and leadership of Brooklyn's community. This identification with French Morocco is prominent among many Israeli immigrants in the community as well. In almost the same moment, R. Dahan has used

vocal aesthetics as a means for reiterating the complexity of intersections between a historically-based Sephardi identity and a contemporary Moroccan identity.

Sharvit, focusing on *nasality*, suggests that this approach to vocal timbre is integral to how melody is expressed in several different Sephardi ḥazzanut practices. It allows for the execution of certain melodic figures.

Singers from both Oriental and Jerusalem-Andalusian traditions sing with widened pharynx and loose uvula, creating a nasal vocal quality they consider ideal. This style enables cantors and singers from both Sephardic groups to use flexible intonation together with rapid figurations, trills, and glissandi (Sharvit 1986:132).

The general characteristics of melodic expression that Sharvit emphasizes—non-harmonic melodic movement, repetitive and non-developmental progression, and melodic intricacy—are indeed present in Maroka’i ḥazzanut practices. However, Maroka’i approaches to melisma, improvisation, and melodic variation are specifically governed by the rules and norms of the Andalusī mawwāl as practiced in the Maghreb.

The mawwāl, a non-metrical, melismatic vocalization of text, is not unique to Maroka’i ḥazzanut; it is integral to other approaches to Sephardi ḥazzanut as well. But the Andalusī mawwāl as practiced in the context of Maroka’i ḥazzanut is in accordance with Arab-Andalusian musical traditions as practiced in the Maghreb. The Maroka’i approach to mawwāl is based not on maqāmat but on ‘tubū. How one approaches melodic invention in a ṭab‘ is similar to maqām, emphasizing certain tones or a series of tones within a melodic mode. In maqām practice, pivot tones that combine two *jins* (tetrachords or trichords) are often used as melodic starting or ending points. In ṭab‘ practice, several tones can be emphasized equally. Because some ṭubū‘ can share the same scalar structure, they are differentiated only by emphasis tones (figure 4.19).

Furthermore, in some cases one ṭab‘ may be different from another only because of an altered passing tone used in descending melodic phrases. Several ṭubū‘ have a different set of tones on



the ascent from the descent. In any case, it is up to the individual performer of an Andalusī mawwāl to clearly state the ṭab‘ by carefully choosing pausal points or landing tones when expressing melody.

**Figure 4.19: Ṭubū‘ Comparison**

**Ṭab‘ Maya: C D E F G A B C Bb A G F E D C**

**Ṭab‘ Raṣd al-Dhil: C D E F G A B C B A G F E D C**

Ways of practicing diction, register, and ornamentation add to the distinctive nature of the Andalusī mawwāl.<sup>26</sup> Extending consonantal sounds is possible but less prevalent in the Andalusī mawwāl, especially the Hebraized version. It is customary for singers to reach for the high end of their vocal range, especially during a mawwāl. Ornaments, including trills, glissandos, appoggiaturas, scale-wise motion, and arpeggios, are robustly employed as well.

An additional aspect of Maroka’i vocal practice that helps to foster a distinctive Maroka’i vocal aesthetic is interplay. The first type has individual congregants taking turns performing a line or two before *passing* the song to another individual congregant to perform. This *passing* of the song can be governed by the passer’s knowledge of a receiver’s performance ability. It is common to see an individual point or nod towards an individual whom he wants to succeed him. On other occasions, another individual will simply take the melody. Whoever sings the loudest and with the most gusto will usually prevail. Either a soloist knows to whom he is passing the melody, or an individual who tries to take the next line knows that he must be able to perform correctly or he will lose out to a more experienced singer who will step in and take the lead.

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<sup>26</sup> As influences from Eastern Arab musical practices have become pervasive in Morocco since the mid-twentieth century, especially from popular artists such as Umm Kulthūm, Fairouz, and al-Aṭraṣh, the Andalusī mawwāl has lost ground to the mawwāl style typical in Eastern Arab music. This is evidenced in the work of popular Maghrebi artists such as Rafik El Maai (<http://youtu.be/Y2EWdgNaeLA>, accessed June 10, 2013) and Abdelwahab Doukkali.

Another type of interplay is between a soloist (often the ḥazzan) and the congregation. Responsorial singing, a form of interplay where the soloist prompts the group to respond, is not unusual in the liturgical contexts of several different faith communities. However, responsorial singing in Maroka'i ḥazzanut practice usually involves the soloist extending his melodic phrase into the congregation's response. This creates moments of melodic overlap, the consequences of which are desirable harmonic outcomes and exciting interaction. In another form of interplay, several congregants who feel an obligation or desire to express the text along with a soloist will do so by singing along in a low, murmuring voice. The soloist has several voices following his melodic phrase at every turn, creating a constant heterophonic hum. During a mawwāl-type performance, the congregation will often react at the pausal points that a soloist creates. These pausal points—tones emphasizing the ṭab'—are sung together loudly, in unison with the soloist, for just a moment.

While the foregrounding of vocal practice and the prohibition on instrumental accompaniment are common throughout the Jewish diaspora, the way that vocal practice is carried out in Maroka'i synagogues in Brooklyn works effectively to emphasize Sephardi and Maroka'i layers of diaspora consciousness. While Maroka'im use timbre, ways of expressing melody, and forms of interplay to cultivate a vocal aesthetic that is emblematic of a particular Jewish diasporic ethnic identity, several approaches to vocal aesthetics also emphasize elements that are associated with both the larger Sephardi diasporic community and with the Maroka'i diasporic community.

### *Tisha B'Av*

Tisha B'Av (ninth day of the Hebrew month Av) is a holiday in the middle of the summer for commemorating the calamities of Jewish history and the enduring exile of the Jewish

diaspora. According to accepted Jewish tradition, it is the day that both the first and second Holy Temples were completely destroyed (Mishnah *Taanit* 4:6). Incidentally, this is also the day that the Alhambra Decree was published in 1492, expelling all Jews from Spain. There are several more calamities associated with Tisha B'Av, including the commencement of the First Crusade, the expulsion of Jews from England (July 25, 1290) and France (July 21, 1306), and the day that the mass deportation of Warsaw Ghetto residents began (July 23, 1942). It is observed as a fast day, with no food or drink for twenty-five hours. Congregants gather in the synagogue, sitting on the floor in dim lighting. It is also common for congregants to refrain from greeting one another when arriving at the synagogue, as this is a day of communal mourning. Maroka'im have a custom to travel in the afternoon to visit the gravesite of a *tzaddik* (holy man), to pray for his intercession in heaven on behalf of the entire community.

In addition to the usual service liturgy—Kaddishim, Amidah, Shema—the liturgy for Tisha B'Av includes specific biblical passages and piyyutim that emphasize exile, destruction, and loss. The Torah reading (Deuteronomy 4:25-40) for Tisha B'Av includes several verses warning the Israelites that they will be expelled from the land and that “God shall scatter you among the peoples, and you shall be left few in number among the nations” (Deuteronomy 4:27). The Haftarah (Jeremiah 8:1-9:23) warns of the impending fall from grace. All Jewish communities recite *Megilat Eikhah* (Book of Lamentations), the prophet Jeremiah's firsthand account of the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 586BCE. Like other Sephardim, Maroka'im also recite *Iyov* (Book of Job) on Tisha B'Av morning.

A special collection of piyyutim, called *qinnot* (lamentational poems), is performed in the morning before Kriat ha-Torah. Maroka'im have an extensive repertoire of qinnot. “We [Syrians] only have a few that we do. Moroccans are known for having a lot” (p.c., R' Joseph

Dweck, July 30, 2009). Qinnot are somber and tend to revolve around the themes of the holiday—exile, diaspora, and disaffection. The Maroka'i collection of qinnot includes several piyyutim written by Spanish Golden Age poets, such as Yehuda Halevy, Shlomo ibn Gabirol, and Moshe ibn Ezra. But it is the piyyutim written by Maroka'i paytanim, many of whom were active in the immediate generations after the expulsion from Spain, which comprise the bulk of this liturgy. Some of these qinnot lament the expulsion from Iberia, even mentioning specific places in Sefarad by name. Most remain focused on the general themes of *galut* (exile) and *geulah* (redemption) (Hazan 1995:73-74).

As a consequence of the large collection of qinnot in Maroka'i communities, Tisha B'Av is a holiday rich in musical expression. While the tenor of the holiday affects ḥazzanut—Ḥatzi Kaddish is not as elaborate, there are no Pesukei de-Zimrah, and Kedushah is performed in a demure way—the qinnot provide fodder for copious singing. Since no one is anxious to get home for a meal or a drink, staying together to sing also helps to pass the time.

Tisha B'Av is one Jewish holiday when the use of electronics is permitted. From an ethnomusicologists' perspective, it is a rare opportunity to record musical practice in a liturgical context. I have attended and recorded qinnot in Jerusalem, in Strasbourg, France, and in Brooklyn, New York. Tisha B'Av is also an occasion when automobiles and other means of modern transportation may be used. Therefore, community members may visit synagogues that they might otherwise not be able to attend on Shabbat or other festivals. In Brooklyn, Netivot Israel synagogue swells with visitors from other neighborhoods, especially visitors from Crown Heights.

In all Maroka'i synagogues it is commonplace for congregants to sit on the floor, along the walls of the sanctuary. In Jerusalem, at R' Ḥaim Bitton's synagogue in the neighborhood of

Kiryat Yovel, I had the good fortune to sit with several highly skilled and well-respected ḥazzanim from around the country—Shimon Illouz, Maimon Cohen, and R' Ḥaim Bitton. Ḥazzanim see Tisha B'Av as a rare opportunity to get together and perform. In Brooklyn's Netivot Israel synagogue, R' Gad Bouskila is joined by his brother Dan Bouskila and several other strong performers, including Toby Levy, Jacob Tordjman, Ḥaim Azran, and Shlomo Marciano. Congregants typically sit along the walls of the sanctuary while the strongest singers sit close to the *Aron* (Torah cabinet) and to one another.

### Levavi Malei

“Levavi Malei” is a popular *qinah* (sing.) written by R' Yaakov ibn Tzur (1673-1753).<sup>27</sup> Many of his qinnot are included in the Maroka'i liturgy for Tisha B'Av; his brothers, R' Moshe and R' Shalom ibn Tzur, each composed several qinnot that appear in the liturgy for Tisha B'Av as well (Ḥazan 1995:74). According to Joseph Chetrit, R' Yaakov ibn Tzur was one of the last generation of *paytanim* (poets) in Morocco to compose piyyutim with the quantitative meters popularized by the Sephardi Golden Age poets (Chetrit 1999:186).

The text of “Levavi Malei” is steeped in inferences to the Jewish diaspora (figure 4.20a).

### **Figure 4.20a: “Levavi Malei” Text, translated by Samuel R. Thomas**

#### **Refrain**

*Levavi:* My heart is full of sorrow, ridden by oppression.  
The city of Zion has been taken over,  
she is like an [unjustly] inherited parcel of land.

#### **Strophes**

*Yeter:* My heart is maximized from excessive pain.  
In the eyes of my enemies, my spirit has been taken in an ambush,  
like a lion succumbing to a sword.

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<sup>27</sup> Born in Fez and active throughout northern Morocco, R' Yaakov ibn Tzur lived in Fez, Meknes, and Tetuan. In addition to being appreciated for his composing of several qinnot, he is considered an important jurist and practical kabbalist in Maroka'i history (Goldish 2008:1xi).

- 'Ir:* The great city and people of light are dull, departing and losing their sheen. In anger and rage, she was forcefully cut off, bequeathed against her will.
- Qoder:* My essence is darkened. From my land, under pressure, I was expelled. And in the city of my affection, a nest of beasts of the field now resides.
- Balah:* Aged and overcome, I am like a lion, subdued by hateful and cruel oppressors. My inner sanctum has been covered over by their poor state.
- Ahali:* My tent has been plundered; I have been left alone, as my beloved has wandered away. I will assemble and regroup, in sackcloth and ashes.
- Ba:* The moment comes that her cutting off, fear, and trembling will cease. As a united people, one congregation and group, the rich and the destitute.
- Nehi:* Through moaning and lamentation, I will be raised by music in every country. There is no pardon, no salvation, and no release.
- Tzadu:* My sides are limp, and my arms weak. For my devotees, plunderers were strong, and evil ones rushed over them like the sea.
- Ve-'ashesh:* I have been weakened and concealed, usurpers defiling my name and spreading falsehoods about me.
- Ruhi:* My soul is broken, my spirit embittered. Oh Rock, wrapped in light, to You I call. Do not distance Yourself from me.

Beginning with the destruction of Jerusalem, Ibn Tzur presents the typical trajectory of the Jewish diaspora narrative. The present condition of Yisrael is sad, oppressed, and lost, but the future holds hope for redemption and a return to the homeland.

The anguish of exile and the constant yearning for Zion is palpable in his words: “The city of Zion has been taken over” and “In anger and rage, she was forcefully cut off.”

Throughout, he describes the lot of the people and God as being shared. He bemoans the loss of the Holy Temple, describing its conquerors as physically mighty but spiritually poor. To Ibn Tzur, the occupants of Jerusalem are lowly animals. He shifts to a hopeful stance in the sixth strophe, suggesting that the moment to end the exile has come: “The moment comes that her cutting off [exile], fear, and trembling will cease.” Describing the power of singing qinnot to

gather in the exiles, he writes: “Through moaning and lamentation [qinnah], I will be raised by music in every country.”

Clearly this text fosters a consciousness of the Jewish diaspora. This is to be expected on Tisha B’Av and in the qinnot liturgy. While some qinnot may be skipped and not performed in the interest of time, congregations throughout the Maroka’i diaspora favor this text. In the several years and places I have attended Tisha B’Av qinnot, it has never been passed over. The text is rich with diasporic symbolism. In the period that it was written (eighteenth century), the impact of Lurianic Kabbalah was being felt throughout the Jewish world, and especially in Morocco. However, any reference to messianism on Ibn Tzur’s part remains relatively minimal in this piece. He tends to focus generally on the promise of *geulah* (redemption), a hope that extends back quite far in biblical history. The messianic fervor on the rise in several locales of the Jewish diaspora was relatively absent in Ibn Tzur’s milieu in northern Morocco.

Fig 4.20b: “Levavi Malei” Text, from *Kol Tehina* (p. 199), (Hebrew and transliteration).

		Refrain
<b>Le-va-vi malei / ya-gon ki tzar bi rodeh</b>		לְכָבִי מֵלֵא / יִגוֹן כִּי צָר בִּי רוּדָה
<b>Ir Tzion ya-rash / o-tah ke-sa-deh ya-rash</b>		עִיר צִיּוֹן יִרָשׁ / אוֹתָהּ כְּשֶׁדָּה יִרָשׁ
		Strophes
<b>Ye-ter le-va-vi / me-rov makh-o-vi</b>		יִתֵּר לְכָבִי / מֵרֵב מִכְאוּבֵי
Bir-ot o-ye-vi / ni-tzav ke-la-vi / Naf-shi le-kaḥ-ti tzo-deh <b>Le-va-vi...</b>		בְּרֵאוֹת אוֹיְבֵי / נִצְבֵי כְּלָבִיא / נַפְשֵׁי לְקַחְתָּהּ צוּדָה לְכָבִי
<b>'Ir ra-ba-ti 'am / or shim-shah hu-'am</b>		עִיר רַבְתִּי עִם / אוֹר שְׁמֵשָׁה הוֹעֵם
Be-af uv-za-'am / hai-tah le-sal-'am Ve-gam le-qi-pod mo-rash <b>'Ir...</b>		בְּאֵף וּבוֹנֵם / הֵיְתָה לְסֻלְעֵם / וְגַם לְקַפּוֹד מוֹרָשׁ עִיר
<b>Qo-der Sha-ḥo-ti / Ki me-ad-ma-tai</b>		קוֹדֵר שְׁחוֹתִי / כִּי מֵאֲדַמְתִּי
La-ḥutz nit-rad-ti / u've-ir ḥem-da-ti Qin-na ḥa-yat sa-deh <b>Le-va-vi...</b>		לְחוּץ נִטְרַדְתִּי / וּבְעִיר תְּמַדְתִּי / קִנְנָה חַיֵּת שְׂדֵה לְכָבִי
<b>Ba-la be-sa-ri / tzo-rer akh-za-ri</b>		בְּלֵה בְּשָׂרִי / צוֹרֵר אַכְזָרִי
Ra-vatzh ka-a-ri / bim-'on de-vi-ri Ve-rish-to 'a-lai pa-ras <b>'Ir...</b>		רַבִּץ כְּפָרִי / בְּמַעוֹן דְּבִירִי / וְרִשְׁתּוֹ עָלַי פָּרֵשׁ עִיר
<b>A-ha-li shu-dad / nish-ar-ti ba-dad</b>		אֶהְלִי שְׂדֵד / נִשְׂאֲרַתִּי בְּדָד
Ve-do-di na-dad / 'al ken et-go-dad Ve-sak va-e-fer e-'e-deh <b>Le-va-vi...</b>		וְדוּדֵי נָדָד / עַל כֵּן אֶתְגוֹדֵד / וְשָׂק וְאֶפֶר אֶעֱדָה לְכָבִי
<b>Ba 'et qe-fa-dah / pa-ḥad ur-'a-dah</b>		בָּא עֵת קֶפְדָּה / פָּחַד וּרְעָדָה
Le-om ye-ḥi-dah / qa-hal ve-'e-dah 'A-shir ve-gam dal va-rash <b>'Ir...</b>		לְאוֹם יַחֲדָה / קָהַל וְעָדָה / עֲשִׂיר וְגַם דָּל וְרָשׁ עִיר
<b>Ne-hi ve-qi-nah / a-rim bim-gi-nah</b>		נְהִי וְקִינָה / אֲרִים בְּמִגִּינָה
Be-khol me-di-nah / ki ein ḥa-ni-nah Ein go-el ve-ein podeh <b>Le-va-vi...</b>		בְּכֹל מְדִינָה / כִּי אֵין חֲנִינָה / אֵין גּוֹאֵל וְאֵין פּוֹדָה לְכָבִי
<b>Tza-du tze-'a-dai / gam ra-fu ya-dai</b>		צָדוּ צְעָדֵי / גַּם רָפוּ יָדַי
Ki 'al ḥa-si-dai / gav-ru sho-de-dai Ur-sha-'im ka-yam nig-rash <b>'Ir...</b>		כִּי עַל חֲסִידַי / גָּבְרוּ שׁוֹדְדֵי / וְרָשָׁעִים כִּפִּים נִגְרָשׁ עִיר
<b>Ve-'a-shesh 'atz-mi / ve-nikh-ḥad 'atz-mi</b>		וְעֶשֶׂשׁ עֲצָמֵי / וְנִכְחַד עֲצָמֵי
Ki mit-qo-me-mi / bo-zeh et she-mi U-de-va-rim 'a-lai bo-deh <b>Le-va-vi...</b>		כִּי מִתְקוֹמְמֵי / בּוֹזֵה אֶת שְׁמִי / וּדְבָרִים עָלַי בּוֹדָה לְכָבִי
<b>Ru-ḥi nish-be-rah / ve-naf-shi ma-rah</b>		רוּחִי נִשְׁבְּרָה / וְנַפְשִׁי מָרָה
Tzur 'o-teh o-rah / e-lei-khah eq-ra Mi-me-ni al te-ḥe-rash <b>'Ir...</b>		צוּר עוֹטָה אוֹרָה / אֶלְיָךְ אֶקְרָא / מִמֶּנִּי אֵל תַּחַרֵּשׁ עִיר



Ibn Tzur signs his piyyut in the typical acrostic fashion (figure 4.20b), using the first letter of each strophe: Y – ‘A – QO – V – I – B – N – TZ – U – R. “Levavi Malei” is a Hebrew muwashshah of the highest order, following the strophe-refrain form throughout. With few exceptions, the five-line strophes follow one quantitative meter:

—U— /—U— /—U— /—U— /  
 —U— ,—

**Ye-ter le-va-vi / Me-rov makh-o-vi / Bir-ot o-ye-vi / Ni-tzav ke-la-vi /  
 Naf-shi le-kaḥ-tah , tzo-deh [strophe one]**

Similar to the refrain, where the second and fourth lines always end with two additional long syllables, the first four lines of each strophe each contain five syllables while the fifth line has seven. This change in the metrical structure of the fifth line of each strophe operates like a bridge in the text between the strophes and the refrain. Similarly, the rhymes of the fifth line of each strophe alternate to match those of either the second or fourth lines of the refrain, whichever one is sung after that strophe (figure 4.21).

**Figure 4.21: “Levavi Malei” Fifth Verse Rhyme Scheme**  
 aBcD eeeeB aB ffffD cD ggggB aB hhhhD cD ...

The strophe-refrain form and the syllabic structure correlate with the common melody used in synagogues throughout the Maroka’i diaspora (figure 4.22). The first three lines of each strophe are based on the same melodic phrase (A). The fourth and fifth lines are combined into one melodic phrase (B). The same melodic phrase (B) is then repeated for the first and second or third and fourth lines of the refrain, respectively. The resultant melodic form is: **AAABB**.

**Figure 4.22: “Levavi Malei” Melody (transposed to G from E)**

**A**

ye - ter le - va \_\_\_\_\_ - vi \_\_\_\_\_ ni - tza.v ke - la-vi naf'-shi le qaḥ - ta.h tzo\_\_ -deh  
 me - rov makh o \_\_\_\_\_ - vi \_\_\_\_\_ Refrain...  
 bir - o\_\_ t o \_\_\_\_\_ y - vi \_\_\_\_\_

**B**

Le - va \_\_\_\_\_ - vi ma - lei ya - gon ki tzar bi \_\_\_\_\_ ro \_\_\_\_\_ - deh  
 'Ir tzi \_\_\_\_\_ -yon ya - rash o - tah ke - sa - deh \_\_\_\_\_ ya \_\_\_\_\_ - rash

The melody is based on the ṭab‘ Sīkah-Espagnole, a specifically Jewish ṭab‘ related to the ṭab‘ Sīkāh. In āla-andalusit, the ṭab‘ Sīkāh is the third mode of the nūba Ghribat el-Ḥassin. It is similar to the Eastern Arab maqām Sīkāh, as it is built from the third degree. The stepwise construction is, however, just like that of maqām Kurd. Neither ṭab‘ Sīkāh nor Sīkah-Espagnole includes neutral intervals. The pivot tones in both ṭubū‘ are completely different from those of maqāmat Sīkāh and Kurd.

The ṭubū‘ Sīkah-Espagnole and Sīkāh share the same basic scale.<sup>28</sup> The emphases in ṭab‘ Sīkah-Espagnole are on the first, fourth, and sixth degrees, giving this melodic mode a different tonal structure from ṭab‘ Sīkāh. This is reflected in the melody of “Levavi Malei” as well. The B melodic phrase stays almost entirely between the first and fourth scale degrees. The A melodic phrase begins on the fourth degree, before returning to the first scale degree. This is a typical way of differentiating ṭab‘ Sīkah-Espagnole from ṭab‘ Sīkāh.

<sup>28</sup> **Tab‘ Sīkāh:** E F G A B C D E D C B A G F E  
**Tab‘ Sīkah-Espagnole:** E F G A B C D E D C B A G F E

Both the poetic and melodic structures of “Levavi Malei” emphasize a connection to Spain. These elements work together as emblems of a Sephardi diaspora consciousness, conjuring specific connections to Spain as a homeland. These elements are juxtaposed with expressions of exile in the text that are properly understood as referring to the Jewish diaspora. However, one could certainly conjecture that the intensity of ibn Tzur’s feelings could be related to his personal experience as a member of a well-known Sephardi family, who had a clear connection to the exile from Sepharad.

In separate field recordings of “Levavi Malei” in Jerusalem and in Brooklyn, congregants can be heard relying upon forms of interplay that foster a Maroka’i vocal aesthetic. At Netivot Israel, after the congregation begins by singing the refrain together once, soloists take turns performing two complete strophes and refrains. In both cases, when a soloist sings a strophe, congregants follow along in a soft murmur. When a soloist resolves his melodic phrase, at a pausal point in the mawwāl, the congregants burst out and sustain an audible vocable (ah) on the same tone. After the soloist completes a strophe, the congregation replies by singing the appropriate lines of the refrain in unison—either the first and second or third and fourth lines of the refrain. However, unison singing in this context always results in heterophony. Individual voices stand out among the masses as everyone seeks to express the melody in a quasi-mawwāl fashion. Despite the presence of a constant meter during these unison parts, a loose expression of the rhythm prevails. As the congregation enters, the soloist usually extends his rendition of the B melodic phrase. This moment of overlapping melodic expression creates a sense of passing the melody and text back to the group. Furthermore, the temporal uncertainty embedded in how the ending and beginning of the phrases are expressed also encourages desirable heterophony to occur. The reiteration of interplay techniques helps to emblemize Maroka’i ethnicity.

The short text (five syllables) of each of the first three line and a free rhythmic approach to expressing the melody encourage the soloist to take liberties and use melismatic figures in his expression of the melody. Despite this, the periodicity between each expression of the phrase remains reasonably consistent. The soloist can generally extend syllables at will. However, an additional layer of rhythmic organization does play a part in mitigating total rhythmic freedom. The quantitative meter of each line contains a short syllable at the midpoint (—U—). While the soloist uses the first two and last two syllables for free rhythm phrases, he relies upon the short midpoint syllable as a rhythmic turnaround of sorts or fulcrum for the melodic phrase.

**Figure 4.23: “Levavi Malei,” Performed by a) R’ Gad Bouskila; and b) Toby Levy**

The figure displays two musical performances of the phrase "Levavi Malei". Each performance is shown on two staves of music. The first staff of each performance contains melodic phrase A (boxed) and phrase A' (boxed). The second staff contains phrase A'' (boxed) and phrase B (boxed). The lyrics are written below the notes, with horizontal lines indicating syllable boundaries and melisma. Performance (a) is by R' Gad Bouskila and performance (b) is by Toby Levy.

**a) R' Gad Bouskila:**  
 Staff 1: **A** ba-la be - sa - ri Tzo - re r akh za - ri **A'**  
 Staff 2: **A''** ra - va tz ka - a - ri **B** Bim -'on de vi - ri ve rish - to 'a - lai pa - ra s

**b) Toby Levy:**  
 Staff 1: **A** ve -'a - shesh 'a - tz - mi **A'** ve - ni - kh - had 'a - tz mi  
 Staff 2: **A''** ki mit - qo - me - mi **B** bo - zeh et she - mi u - d'va - rim 'a - lai bo - deh

Soloists perform variations on the A melodic phrase, using certain melodic ornaments that come from the Andalusi mawwāl. For instance, at the beginning of R’ Bouskila’s expression

of the second and third lines, he oscillates between the fourth degree of the ṭab‘ (C) and the characteristic and important sixth degree (Eb). This oscillation of the minor third interval is also part of how this ṭab‘ is typically expressed. Another example is Toby Levy’s performance of the second and third lines. He introduces the A-natural leading tone to emphasize the Bb, followed shortly by a return to the Ab for the descent to the finalis of each phrase.

Both performers also displace the emphasis tones of the ṭab‘ by delaying the melody, another typical device for melodic variation found in Andalusī mawwāl practice. At the beginning of R’ Bouskila’s second exposition of the A phrase, he begins with the emphasis tone (C), moves away from it immediately, and then returns to it. When he returns, he also adds emphasis by making this tone longer than the previous and following tones of the melodic phrase. In Toby Levy’s performance, he delays the emphasis tone (G) at the beginning of his exposition of the B phrase.

Together, lines four and five contain twelve syllables (5+7), many more than the five syllables contained in each rendition of the A phrase. The soloist returns to a regular beat pattern for the B phrase, implying a two-four meter (figure 4.23a). This meter takes precedence over the quantitative poetic meter, which at this point is disregarded. As mentioned above, after the soloist returns to a steady beat, he finishes the phrase with a ritard or rubato on the final two syllables, creating overlap with the congregation when it begins to sing the last B phrase in unison.

Several other pieces in the Tisha B’Av qinnot are performed similarly. A ḥazzan or the rabbi sets the key or tonal center for each piece. In some cases, the rabbi will motion to whomever he wishes to perform. At other times it happens organically, with one vocalist taking the lead. The interplay is always the same, with the soloist passing off the melody and text to the

next soloist or to the congregation. The whole time, either congregants follow along in an undertone or wait for a moment of more robust communal expression—with a response phrase or by emphasizing the landing tone from the *ṭab‘*.

Qinnot such as “Levavi Malei” serve to foster a consciousness of three diasporic identities in the Maroka’i community. The text includes themes of exile and redemption that are central to evoking a Jewish diaspora consciousness. Elements of its poetic structure, such as the *muwashshah* and the use of quantitative meters, remain popularly associated with Sephardi diasporic identity. Several stylistic features related to the performance of this *qinah* also conjure a Sephardi diaspora consciousness, including vocal timbre and approaches to melody: non-harmonic melodic movement, repetitive and non-developmental progression, and melodic intricacy. Of course, some *piyyutim* found in other Maroka’i liturgical contexts are based on melodic forms that coincide with the *muwashshah* as well. In “Levavi Malei,” approaches to melodic expression hew closely to *ṭab‘*-based improvisation found in Andalusī *mawwāl* practice. Analysis of ways congregants use ornamentation, pivot tones, and melodic development shows a distinctly Maroka’i approach to melodic variation. Expressions of melody by soloists are often imbued with oscillations between two notes, characteristic chromaticism, and melodic displacements. While the general performative aesthetics of Sephardi *ḥazzanut* are related to the aforementioned vocal stylistic features, the distinctive ways Maroka’im approach practicing these features propagate a specific consciousness of the Maroka’i diaspora amongst community members. On a whole, the textual themes, composition, melodic setting, and performance of “Levavi Malei” serve to express the character of the layered diaspora consciousness that formulates the basis of Maroka’i identity in Brooklyn.

## Conclusion

Approaches to nusah, the practice of contrafacta, and performance aesthetics are important aspects of Maroka'i ḥazzanut practice that community members use to emblemize Maroka'i identity. While boundaries can be very distinct or part of borderline areas, allowing aspects of other Jewish ethnic diasporic identities to be fostered in tandem, ḥazzanut allows community members to feel as though everything they are doing is part of the "Moroccan way." Despite this, distinctive aspects of Maroka'i ḥazzanut conjure a layered diaspora consciousness. Ḥazzanut, a musical practice that is integral to the worship ritual, heightens awareness of the multi-layered, multi-faceted nature of the community's identity.

Through particularities in the liturgical texts, Maroka'im assert a distinctive approach to worship. At the same time, they recognize that most of the nusah they rely upon is what other Sephardi congregations in Brooklyn are using, distinct from other Jewish ethnic groups. Yet, never too far from one's thoughts is a consciousness that most of the text is the same throughout the Jewish diaspora. Through the reliance on mizān Cha'abi as the main mode for rhythmicizing liturgical songs and infusing melodic figures with accentuations of melody and text that conjure syncopation and hemiola effects, participants in ḥazzanut practice emphasize clear boundaries of Maroka'i identity. Yet, vocal stylistic elements and approaches to melody foster co-ethnic recognition between Maroka'im and other Sephardim. Textual themes of qinnot and several other prayers never stray too far from emphasizing galut and geulah, the core tenets of a Jewish diaspora consciousness.

In ḥazzanut practice, musical emblems are reiterated repeatedly. Whether it is the texts, melodies, performance aesthetics, or contexts of communal participation, the amalgamation of references to and associations with the Jewish, Sephardi, and Maroka'i diasporas never

diminishes. Congregants use the context of ḥazzanut to engage with one another and the world in a process of identity formation.



## **Chapter Five:** **Hillulot – Repertoire and Reiteration**

While attending a *hillula* (sacred celebration) in Morocco for R' Amram ben Diwan, a *tsaddiq* (Jewish saint)<sup>1</sup> buried in Ouezzane, Maurice Benchimol, a friend of mine and resident of Casablanca, commented to me: "I want my kids to know that this is how we view the dead...not like the movies in the West" (p.c., Maurice Benchimol, April 30, 2010). He was adamant that the Maroka'i approach to the dead and the afterlife is very different from the typical story lines found in Hollywood horror films. Coming to visit gravesites is a welcome opportunity to commune with the dead, not a scary, gory, spooky experience. The *hillula* is a special occasion to celebrate the dead, when the community gathers to create an atmosphere of abundant revelry to honor several *tsaddiqim* (pl.) through song, stories, and acts of supplication, such as prayer, lighting candles, and feasting.

In addition to being occasions for connecting with beloved *tsaddiqim*, diasporic *hillulot* (pl.) have also become important vehicles for expressing Maroka'i identity. Now conducted in multiple locales, including the gravesites in the homeland (Morocco) and in Maroka'i communities around the world, the *hillula* has been transformed from an occasion focused exclusively on communing with a *tsaddiq* to one where expressing communal identity is of equal importance. It is clear from Benchimol's comment above that even at the most famous *hillula* in Morocco, the one for R' Amram ben Diwan, he has been affected by this transformation in purpose: the *hillula* has become an iconic expression of Maroka'i identity. While the main

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<sup>1</sup> Other common terms used by Maroka'im for a saint include the Arabic terms *mul* (lord, ruler), *sidna* (our master), and the Berber term *baba* (father). For female saints, *tsaddeqa* in Hebrew and *lalla* (lady) in Arabic are quite common (Ben-Ami 1998:19-22).

components of the hillula ritual endure, community members now use these components both to connect with and honor specific tsaddiqim and to negotiate the boundaries of Maroka'i ethnicity.

Musical expressions have long been central to the hillula, alternating between foreground and background throughout the event. The formal gatherings in synagogue social halls and community members' homes have replaced the informality of the gravesite. Music is ever-present in both types of setting, operating as a soundtrack to the event. Songs and chanting are used programmatically as well, accompanying the ritualistic parts of the celebration. For instance, the crowd energetically performs songs about the tsaddiq to mark the commencement of the hillula at the gravesite. In the more formal settings away from the gravesite, songs often mark moments during the event, accompanying candle lightings and storytelling about the tsaddiq. Songs usually signal the courses of the traditional feast or *seudah*.

Community members in Brooklyn also use musical expression to negotiate identity boundaries between themselves and other localized Jewish ethnic groups. Several songs clearly establish Maroka'i provenance—those that have texts in Maroka'i languages, are attributed to Maroka'i composers, or are performed according to Maroka'i aesthetic features. Even when songs seem to promote an exclusively Maroka'i ethnic identity—through melody, language, subject, aesthetics, or historical or artistic provenance—inferences to the Jewish and Sephardi diasporas occur and evoke a wider identity boundary. These inferences often reside in the same language, textual themes, and historical provenance. Recognition of aspects of shared identity between co-ethnics from other Jewish ethnic communities leads to a consciousness of a more complex identity. The overlapping or shared aspects of identity with co-ethnics from other Jewish communities, fostered in the musical expressions, force the boundaries to expand and result in areas where the boundary lines become quite blurred. This allusion to multiple diaspora

identities juxtaposes belonging and non-belonging and ultimately conjures a layered diaspora consciousness.

In this chapter I examine the emergence of a standardized hillula song repertoire as a means for defining a pan-Maroka'i identity. The development of this repertoire is the result of ethnicization, catalyzed by major shifts in the constitution of the community brought about by internal and diasporic migrations in the mid-twentieth century, and has served to foster the institutionalization of the hillula as an iconic communal expression of Maroka'i diasporic identity. By analyzing a few popular pieces performed regularly in Brooklyn's community, I will show ways in which this process has been central to the development of a layered diaspora consciousness.

What began as a process in Morocco continued in diasporic nodes like Brooklyn. Songs popularized in the Maroka'i community before and just after emigration from Morocco—songs for *tsaddiqim* and several *hafla* (party) songs—are prominently featured pieces in the repertoire. These songs symbolize Maroka'i identity, conjuring associations among community members as well as connections to the homeland, especially the historical and socio-cultural context of the homeland before emigration. Several pieces were incorporated into the hillula after the Maroka'i diaspora started to form. Like certain bima songs in the practice of *Kriat ha-Torah*, several melodies incorporated into the hillula repertoire from the Israeli popular music genre *musika mizrahit*—a genre central to modern Sephardi identity—emphasize Maroka'i participation in the contemporary Sephardi diaspora. References imbue so many song texts with associations of the historic Jewish diaspora that there is little opportunity to overlook the centrality of this diaspora to Maroka'i identity. Thus, in arguing that the hillula is an iconic Maroka'i practice, one need look no further than the music to see that in this expression of identity, three distinctive layers of

diaspora consciousness are ever present. The hillula repertoire exemplifies the exclusion, incorporation, and hybridity at the heart of negotiating boundaries of identity, and its performance reiterates for community members Maroka'i roots and routes—socio-historical, geographic, religious, and linguistic.

## **Defining the Hillula**

The veneration of saints is prevalent in Moroccan religious history. *Maraboutism*,<sup>2</sup> the practice of saint veneration, has been a part of Islamic life in the region for centuries. The practice in Moroccan Jewish communities looks very similar to that of Islamic communities, with a prevalence of shrines, pilgrimages, and narratives of other-worldly attachments to saintly figures. The emergence of cults surrounding charismatic religious figures and the increased confidence in the effects of the metaphysical and mystical on corporeality have been common aspects of North African Jewish spirituality since the sixteenth century. The idea of holy individuals acting as interlocutors between this and the supernal world is a historically important feature of a general Moroccan *ethnopsychiatry* (Crapanzano 1985). Maroka'im have been venerating tsaddiqim for centuries with pilgrimages to gravesites to recite prayers, pleading to the tsaddiq for supernatural guidance and intervention.

Hillulot are held biannually, on the anniversary of the tsaddiq's passing—the *azkarat neshamah* (remembrance of the soul)—and on the Jewish holiday of Lag B'Omer (thirty-third day of the Omer period), an All Saint's Day. Because every tsaddiq's *azkarat neshamah* correlates with the Hebrew calendar, the date on the Gregorian calendar changes each year. This

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<sup>2</sup> Maraboutism incorporates elements from Sufism, such as an emphasis on the master-teacher relationship, sequestered solemnity, wandering ascetics, and holy men. Several folk practices considered extra-Islamic, including making amulets, fortune telling, and supernatural guidance, also play a prominent role in Maraboutism (Geertz 1971; Eickelman 1976; Crapanzano 1985).

is also the case for Lag B'Omer. Hillulot begin at night as days on the Hebrew calendar always commence at sundown. Celebration throughout the night and well into the daylight hours is typical of hillulot at the tsaddiq's gravesite. If the azkarat neshamah falls on Shabbat or a holiday, then postponement of the hillula until the following day is appropriate.

Lag B'Omer is the azkarat neshamah of the second-century tsaddiq R' Shimon Bar Yoḥai,<sup>3</sup> the purported author of the *Zohar*, the seminal text of Jewish mysticism or Kabbalah.<sup>4</sup> He is the oldest tsaddiq venerated with a hillula. Folklore abounds about Bar Yoḥai's miraculous deeds and his knowledge of the esoteric aspects of Judaism. A popular legend surrounding his death contends that when his students gathered at his deathbed, he revealed esoteric wisdom about the relationship between God and humanity and expressed joy at embracing God's spirit at the moment of his departure. Therefore, he is memorialized through celebration and never by mourning (*Idra Zuta*, *Zohar* III:287b-296b). This legend is the reference point for the development of the hillula as the best means for memorializing all tsaddiqim.

The hillula is a celebration in honor of a tsaddiq—a commemoration of a Jewish saint's life, leadership, and miraculous deeds. Hillula (הלולא) is synonymous with the Aramaic term for

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<sup>3</sup> Living during the Mishnaic period, after Bar Kokhba's revolt against the Romans (132–135CE), R' Shimon Bar Yoḥai is a legendary figure in Jewish history. After escaping from Jerusalem, from a warrant for his arrest and death by Roman authorities, he and his son survived by living in a cave in the Galilean hills of northern Israel. He is considered an important rabbinic authority in the Talmud, and is often cited on matters of Jewish law and custom (*Shabbat*:33b).

<sup>4</sup> Debate continues about the authorship of the *Zohar*. It was first published in Aramaic and disseminated by thirteenth century R' Moses DeLeon of Avila, Spain, who claimed to have discovered the 1700 page masterwork. Gershom Scholem, the preeminent scholar of Kabbalah, suggests that Bar Yoḥai could not have been the author. Scholem's evidence includes inconsistencies in Aramaic grammar, knowledge of Israel geography, and even traces of Spanish in the text (Scholem and Hellner-Eshed 2007). Orthodox Jews, however, still contend that Bar Yoḥai is the sole author, and that the contents of the *Zohar* were passed from generation to generation in oral form as a means of protecting kabbalistic secrets. DeLeon simply made the text available to the wider public. For a detailed examination of the impact of the *Zohar*'s proliferation in Morocco, see Chouraqui (1952) and Goldberg (1990).

a wedding celebration, and similar to the Hebrew word *hillel* (praising);<sup>5</sup> the word *hillula* connotes a sacred quality to the celebration as a time for a holy union between participants. In this case, the union is between the community and the tsaddiqim. R' Gad Bouskila explains that at the hillula, “we celebrate because we know that their *neshama* (soul) is closer to God. Their body is dead, but their neshama is still with us” (p.c., R' Gad Bouskila, November 3, 2010). He emphasizes the “us” by adding “even when we pray for ourselves and our needs, we must always keep the whole *kehilla* (community) in mind as well” (*ibid.*).

Since the tsaddiq's spirit is in attendance, and the tsaddiq is therefore thought to be more accessible during the hillula, this is an occasion for expressing great joy. Thus, along with the supplication prayers one might expect at the gravesite of a tsaddiq, the typical hillula also includes an atmosphere of general revelry, with copious amounts of food and drink (especially alcoholic), music, fire, candles, wailing, and dancing. The celebration intensifies the connection between those in the corporeal world and the tsaddiq in the supernal realm.

### **Primary Elements of the Hillula**

The primary elements of a hillula include the tsaddiq, pilgrimage, a *seudah* (festive meal), fire, prayer, and music. These elements aid in the sanctification of the occasion. Through ritual, symbolic meanings are associated with these elements, fostering a connection between the tsaddiq and the celebrants. For instance, flames rise high at the tomb of the tsaddiq R' Amram ben Diwan in Ouezzane, Morocco, bringing light and warmth to the gathered and symbolizing the tsaddiq's presence. “If you look closely at the flames, you can catch a glimpse of the

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<sup>5</sup> Similarly, the Hebrew phrase *hallelu-Yah* is best translated as “praise to You, God, and our holy union with you.”

tsaddiq's face" (p.c., Patric Elbaz, April 30, 2010).<sup>6</sup> Similarly, celebrants partake in a festive meal in honor of the tsaddiq during each hillula. This feast symbolizes the satisfaction and contentment the tsaddiq has brought to the community; his stature and interventions in the heavens have brought God's blessings to the community.

There have been changes to the hillula elements in the diaspora. Most apparent is that the pilgrimage to the gravesite, while commendable to carry out, has become optional for most people. The performance contexts of hillulot have changed drastically from the gravesite to synagogue social halls, individual community members' homes, and cyberspace. The intensity of individual expressions of the esoteric, often encouraged by being in the physical presence of the tsaddiq's tomb, has diminished. Historically, the pilgrimage to the gravesite of a tsaddiq resulted in a hillula that could last several days. The azkarat neshamah would be the apex moment of a multiday event, with revelers arriving beforehand and often leaving a day or so later. It remains at least an all-night affair. A diasporic hillula generally lasts only four to five hours and now includes sermons and stories from the rabbi, community leaders, or individual hosts. Several other elements have changed as well. In Brooklyn, I have participated in multiple hillulot, scheduled in different synagogues, for up to a week after the actual memorial date for a tsaddiq. Instead of bonfires next to or on top of the grave, individual participants now light individual candles at the hillula or privately at home.<sup>7</sup> Participants have had to ponder what about the hillula remains fit for reproduction and how to carry out the ritual in new contexts.

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<sup>6</sup> A similar experience with the Baba Sali was described in a news report by Israel's Channel Two News. His likeness appeared posthumously to a couple in the form of an image of his face, etched into a living room wall by the flames (<http://youtu.be/PXyzXtaIWt4>, accessed November 1, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> In many Hasidic neighborhoods in Brooklyn, bonfires are lit in the streets during Lag B'Omer in honor of R' Shimon Bar Yoḥai.

While many of the original elements remain a part of the hillula in the Maroka'i diaspora, the distance from the homeland has catalyzed changes to the hillula, and in the process new ideas about its meaning have emerged. Their ritual function has developed from being exclusively about venerating tsaddiqim to also expressing Maroka'i identity. While the tsaddiq is still in the foreground, there have been changes to how these elements are used. For instance, musical expressions are both presentational and participatory. At the gravesite, musical expression is mostly participatory, with informal performance the norm and used primarily to keep the celebratory atmosphere intense. The move towards presentational performance, with the hiring of professional musicians, means a change in the role of musical expression in the context of diasporic hillulot.<sup>8</sup> As Thomas Turino suggests, the nature of the performance is informed by the “ideologies and contexts of reception,” whether presentational or participatory (Turino 2008:27). Clearly, the context of reception has changed drastically. The ideology about the function of musical expression, as a means for promoting the celebration and revelry necessary to connect with the tsaddiq, changes in the diaspora. Augmented by an explicit purpose of emblemizing a specific Jewish ethnic identity, the ideology about the nature of musical practice now includes

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<sup>8</sup> Participatory and presentational musical moments share space in the diasporic hillula. This integrated way of practicing music evokes the current condition of the transnational community as well as a break or migration away from the traditional approaches to performance of *hillulot* in Morocco—a kind of *third way*. By bringing an example from Sugarman (1997) about singing at a Prespa, Albania wedding, Turino concedes that “turn taking, in which group attention is trained on a given individual, represents a different, sequential, type of participatory tradition *where a component of presentation starts to be mixed in*” [emphasis mine] (2008:49). Turn taking, or ‘sequential rather than simultaneous participation’ (2008:48) is the approach to performing in the Prespa community highlighted by Turino as an instance where stretching the boundaries of his participatory/presentational taxonomy is viable. In *hillula* performance a similar *third way* exists, but instead of turn taking, the integration of presentational and participatory performance is more simultaneous than sequential. In any case, as in the Prespa example, too strict an adherence to presentational versus participatory performance does not allow for appreciating the true nature of *hillula* performance as an integrated performance useful for identity construction.



more than fostering a connection with the tsaddiq. If interested in expressing Maroka'i identity in the form of presentational performance, then community members need an agreed-upon repertoire. This has been an impetus for developing a standard hillula song repertoire.

### *Tsaddiqim*

A tsaddiq is usually a man<sup>9</sup> whose achievements in adding to the corpus of Jewish thought and as a community leader are apparent. Additionally, he must have exhibited exemplary personal behavior during his lifetime. Yet, to achieve the status of a saint worthy of veneration, a community-wide perception must exist that the tsaddiq also possessed clairvoyance and supernatural abilities. Recognition as miracle workers while still alive eludes most rabbinic leaders. Instead, this recognition usually occurs posthumously. A revelation during a dream of a visit from the tsaddiq, or an extraordinary event at the time of death or burial are the most common ways clairvoyance is attributed to a leader (Ben-Ami 1998:23; Bilu and Abramovitch 1985). For example, if someone has a miraculous recovery from an illness, intervention by a tsaddiq in the supernal realm is often cited as the cause. Ultimately, laypeople have an important role to play in deciding which individuals merit memorialization with a hillula.

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<sup>9</sup> There are, however, several *tsaddeqot* (female saints) recognized by the Maroka'i community as having mystical power. Issachar Ben-Ami argues in *Saint Veneration Among the Jews in Morocco* (1998) that this is because of an important difference between Sephardi and Ashkenazi societies: "the Sephardic Jewess was much more involved in community life than was the Ashkenazi Jewess" (Ben-Ami 1998:308). Lalla Sol Ha-Tsaddiqah, better known as Lalla Solica, is the most famous female Jewish saint. Buried in Fez, she is revered in Maroka'i folklore for her nineteenth century martyrdom in the face of forced conversion to Islam (Ben-Ami 1998:315). Ben-Ami suggests that the phenomenon of *tsaddeqot* in Morocco is due to a confluence of factors: 1) a uniquely Sephardi perspective on women that encouraged more involvement by women in community life, including the prolific and almost exclusively female development of secular poems and romances for nuptial ceremonies and bereavement activities; 2) an affinity for women in the Biblical and Talmudic literature; and 3) the intense involvement of Moroccan women, Jewish and Muslim (Arab and especially Berber), in the cult of sainthood and pilgrimage (Ben-Ami 1998:307-308). By contrast, in Hasidic communities, the only Ashkenazi communities regularly practicing saint veneration, female sainthood is non-existent.

As early as the thirteenth century, “innovative Kabbalah,” a Sephardi approach to Jewish mysticism championed by Avraham Abulafia and Moshe DeLeon, emphasized an individual’s ability to acquire esoteric knowledge (Idel 2000:152). Concomitantly, an energetic community of mystics led by Avraham Maimuni (Maimonides’ son) sought to incorporate ideas from Sufism, such as holy men and *tariqa* (mystical path to enlightenment), into Jewish practice (Fenton 1998:150-151). Reconciliation between early forms of Sephardi Kabbalah and this pietistic approach culminated in the advent of Modern or Lurianic Kabbalah<sup>10</sup> in the sixteenth century (Idel 2000; Fine 2003). A central teaching promoted by the influential confraternity of sixteenth-century rabbis in Tsfat—which included many Sephardim—suggested that man could induce *geulah* (redemption, physical and spiritual). Called *tikkun olam* (repairing the world), the idea is that each individual has a role to play in making reparations for the causes of the Jewish diaspora. These causes are in essence the breakdown of the relationship between God and the ancient Israelites because of the latter’s wayward actions.

A notion related to *tikkun olam* is that individuals (*tsaddiqim*) can access the cosmos and bring about beneficial effects for the community. The *tsaddiq* exists as a special interlocutor between this world and the world beyond. Lawrence Fine describes this as the development of a *cult of personality* in Lurianic Kabbalah. Whereas a *tsaddiq* is first and foremost a righteous and illustrious person, to rise to the level of a mystical *tsaddiq* he must also possess the ability to work miracles and convince others of his status as an intercessor between the physical and supernal realms. Many great rabbis throughout Jewish history are considered *tsaddiqim*. Several

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<sup>10</sup> Lurianic Kabbalah is the product of several mystics. The most prominent and influential was R’ Isaac Luria (1534-1572)—the *AriZaL* (the lion, of blessed memory). He was considered a master practitioner of Jewish mysticism. Although he did not leave any published works in his own pen, his primary pupil, R’ Haim Vital (1543-1620), wrote and published several collections of Luria’s oral teachings.

were leading figures in the development of Jewish thought and are renowned for their moral and ethical character. However, few are venerated with hillulot. Individuals such as R' Shlomo Yithaki (Rashi), whose exegetical works on the Torah and Talmudic commentaries are considered foundational resources in Jewish thought, is considered a tsaddiq in the sense of being righteous and learned but not for his clairvoyance. The community does not celebrate a hillula for Rashi or many others who have been posthumously designated as tsaddiqim—Saadiah Gaon, the Vilna Gaon, Maimonides, Yehuda ha-Levi, Hillel, or Shammai. Bestowing mystical saintly status on a tsaddiq, with the important exceptions of R' Shimon bar Yoḥai and R' Meir Ba'al Ha-Ness, is generally a post-Lurianic phenomenon.<sup>11</sup>

Historically, most Maroka'i tsaddiqim lived within the past five centuries, after the Spanish expulsion of 1492. With the spread of Lurianic Kabbalah to North Africa in the late sixteenth century, the veneration of Maroka'i tsaddiqim accelerated. Lurianic Kabbalah would have a major impact on Jewish mystical thought and practice worldwide, emphasizing the study of the Zohar (see note 4 above) and the notion that rabbinic leaders could possess mystical, saintly prowess. A few Maroka'i rabbis have become tsaddiqim since the emigration period; all lived in Israel.

In Brooklyn's Maroka'i community, only a few hillulot are practiced regularly each year. The hillula for R' Shimon Bar Yoḥai and several other tsaddiqim on Lag B'Omer is the most popular. R' Meir Ba'al ha-Ness (master of the miracle)—popularly called Rebbe Meir—was a contemporary of Bar Yoḥai. A special reverence for these two tsaddiqim in the Maroka'i

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<sup>11</sup> Among his many innovations in the practice of Jewish mysticism, R' Isaac Luria instituted an annual pilgrimage to R' Shimon Bar Yoḥai's gravesite in Meron, a small mountain town in the Galilee, to celebrate Bar Yoḥai's life with a hillula. Luria is also said to have expanded the hillula ritual by adding a bonfire, music, and a festive meal in the tsaddiq's honor.

diaspora community is evident in their inclusion in the *Anenu* (answer us) prayer in the Yom Kippur liturgy.<sup>12</sup> Rebbe Meir's azkarat neshamah is the 18th of the Hebrew month of *Iyar* (falls in April or May), which is four days after Lag B'Omer. Because of the proximity between the two dates, some synagogue communities will simply emphasize him on Lag B'Omer.

A very popular hillula in Brooklyn is for the tsaddiq R' Yisrael Abuḥatsira (1890-1984), popularly known as Baba Sali (praying father), who by many accounts is the latest and perhaps last great Maroka'i tsaddiq (Bilu 2010). He was born on September 26, 1889 (Rosh Hashanah 5650) in Tafilalt, an oasis region in southern Morocco. He is part of the Abuḥatsira dynasty<sup>13</sup> of rabbinic sages and tsaddiqim and was the spiritual leader of the Jewish community in Erfud, a small town on the edge of the Sahara desert east of Marrakesh. After immigrating to Israel in 1964, he eventually settled in a small southern town called Netivot. His tomb in Netivot has been a major pilgrimage and hillula site since his death in 1984, attracting thousands of worshipers from around the world. A large portrait of Baba Sali hangs above the entrance to the social hall at Netivot Israel synagogue in Brooklyn. Typically there are several hillulot for Baba Sali in different synagogues and private homes throughout Brooklyn. These take place during the week

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<sup>12</sup> The *Anenu* prayer asks for communal and personal atonement on behalf of the elders. While in most communities the list of elders is restricted to biblical figures Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, in Maroka'i synagogues Bar Yoḥai and Rebbe Meir are also included. A legend relates that during Roman rule in first century Israel, Rebbe Meir saved his sister-in-law from a brothel by bribing her guard with money and spiritual protection. Regarding the spiritual protection, the guard was told that if he proclaimed "God of Meir, answer me," he would be protected from any harm. He tested Rebbe Meir's promise on a pack of wild dogs. When the guard uttered the phrase, the dogs immediately ceased their pursuit of him (Talmud Bavli: *Avodah Zara, 18b*).

<sup>13</sup> He is a descendant of R' Shmuel Elbaz, a student of Tsfat kabbalist and scribe of R' Isaac Luria, Ḥaim Vital. Elbaz migrated to Morocco from Damascus in the seventeenth century. The family name was changed to Abuḥatsira, or "son of the carpet," as the legend of Elbaz's journey says that he escaped danger in Damascus, traveling miraculously over seas on a magic carpet toward the Maghreb.

of his azkarat neshamah, the fourth day of the Hebrew calendar month of *Shevat* (usually in late January or early February).

According to popular folklore, Baba Sali made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1922. After stopping in Egypt to visit his grandfather's grave, he continued on to the gravesite and synagogue of R' Isaac Luria in Tsfat. Despite its being closed to the public for decades because of a legend that suggested that any visitor who entered the synagogue would die shortly after emerging, Baba Sali demanded that the caretaker let him in. His travel partner and guard, Moshe Chetrit, accompanied Baba Sali inside while holding onto Baba Sali's cloak for protection. He reported that after Baba Sali opened the aron and read a short passage from the Torah, turned around to exit the synagogue, and emerged unscathed. Baba Sali then pronounced the synagogue safe for all visitors (*Actes Miraculeux de la Famille Abihssira*, <http://www.familleabihssria.blogspot.com>, accessed June 14, 2010).

News of Baba Sali's action spread fast, establishing his saintly status early on in his career. When he left Morocco and immigrated to Israel, his renown catapulted him into his role as the de facto spiritual leader of the pan-Maroka'i community. His reputation for clairvoyance preceded him and was appreciated throughout the Jewish world. Individuals regularly sought his counsel and blessings, including heads of state, army officers, and other rabbinic leaders.

R' Yaakov Abuḥatsira—popularly called *Abir Yaakov* (Noble Yaakov)—is considered the greatest of the Abuḥatsira dynasty and one of the most respected rabbis in Maroka'i history.<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, he is buried outside of Morocco, in Damanhour, Egypt, where he died while

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<sup>14</sup> R' Yaakov Abuḥatsira is the grandfather of the Baba Sali who died in the area of Alexandria, Egypt on his late nineteenth-century journey to the land of Israel from Morocco. He is buried in Damanhur. His father, R' Massoud Abuḥatsira, is the scion of the Abuḥatsira dynasty in Morocco.

conducting a pilgrimage to Palestine on January 4, 1880 (20 *Tevet* on the Hebrew calendar). Baba Sali traveled the same path in 1922. According to legend, Abir Yaakov passed away just after Shabbat, on a Saturday night, in the home of Moshe Seroussi (<http://www.zadikim.org/index.asp?pageID=17373&siteLang=3>, accessed on July 12, 2010; p.c., Edwin Seroussi, January 23, 2012). Before he died, he told his host that he preferred to be buried in Damanhour and not in Alexandria, despite the latter being a much larger center of Jewish life. Initially, the host tried to transport him to Alexandria anyway, but each time they would try to move his body rainstorms would erupt. They finally relented and buried him locally (p.c., R' Gad Bouskila, December 26, 2010).

R' David u'Moshe has special significance for one particular family in Brooklyn's community—the Marcianos. They host a hillula in his honor because they believe that R' David u'Moshe helped resolve a health issue for a family member. This family member visited his gravesite in Morocco, pleading for intervention for his ailment. Subsequently, his health improved drastically. Since this experience, the family has been hosting this hillula.

In the Chabad-Lubavitch community, a Ḥasidic sect with a sizeable Maroka'i presence, Maroka'im also perform hillulot for R' Menachem Mendel Schneerson—the Lubavitcher Rebbe—and other Lubavitch rebbes from generations past. In the Chabad-Lubavitch community, there is a similar practice to the hillula called a *farbrengen* (informal celebration; Yiddish). There is no specific reason and therefore multiple opportunities to carry out a farbrengen. An azkarat neshamah of any historic rabbinic leader (all of whom are considered tsaddiqim in the Chabad-Lubavitch community) is an occasion when community members host farbrengens. When Chabad-Lubavitch Maroka'im host a farbrengen for the Lubavitcher Rebbe, they transform it

into a hillula. Because he is buried locally, in Queens, New York, many will make a special visit to the gravesite to mark the occasion before returning to Brooklyn to celebrate.

### Pilgrimage

Making a pilgrimage to the gravesite of a tsaddiq is considered honorable. Among community members, the longer the distance one travels to visit a tsaddiq the more laudable the pilgrimage. Ben-Ami describes a man in 1963 who traveled from Casablanca to Ouezzane by donkey to visit R' Amram ben Diwan. This journey is four and a half hours by car. According to Ben-Ami, there are eighteen tsaddiqim in Casablanca (Ben-Ami 1998:213). But for this man to travel to Ouezzane, by donkey, he was clearly going out of his way and garnered accolades from community members for doing so. Traveling to a saint's gravesite is still revered, and even with modern transportation this is considered an act of special devotion.

During French colonial rule, due to an increase in the general economic means of Jews in Morocco, coupled with the technological advances in transportation, such as cars, modern roads, and trains, different types of pilgrimages were encouraged. Suddenly, hillulot were not just for the religiously devout; they were becoming a popular destination for Jewish tourism. Max Elmkies, a Casablanca native, described his experience of attending the hillula in Ouezzane for R' Amram ben Diwan during the 1950s: "From all over, from Casablanca, Meknes, and Fez ... you should have seen [it]. People arriving in cars and setting up [and] camping all around" (p.c., Max Elmkies, April 21, 2010). Accoutrements like car radios and fine wine contributed a Western-style, middle-class flavor to the experience.

Beginning in this period, a majority of Maroka'im began to travel to certain gravesites leading to a popularization of the most accessible tsaddiqim. Despite an increase in mobility, with people being able to travel greater distances, certain sites, particularly those more easily

accessible by modern transportation and with good security, were privileged over the more obscure burial places. The adventurous few could and would continue to travel to shrines such as that of Baba Hena, who is buried in the Dra'a valley along the northern edge of the Sahara desert; that journey would have been much too arduous for the average pilgrim just a generation earlier. Instead of making the pilgrimage to a special tsaddiq once in a number of years, venerated sites were starting to come on a biannual basis to a select few tsaddiqim—for the tsaddiq's azkarat neshamah and for Lag b'Omer.

As Jewish families from the hinterlands of Morocco began to migrate toward regional metropolises, such as Fez, Marrakesh, Tangiers, and especially Casablanca, local accessibility remained important. As a result, certain tombs became popular. One must remember, however, that the internal migration happened quickly in preparation for the mass emigrations of 1956 and then again during the early 1960s. These people did not have a chance to participate for too long in popularizing local hillulot and were typically short on economic means in comparison to established families in the metropolises.

Anyone is welcome to participate in a hillula. In fact, historically hillulot in Morocco would include Jews and Muslims. Practitioners of Islam in Morocco tend to share a reverence for tsaddiqim with Jews. While Muslims could visit tsaddiqim, Jewish visitors were prohibited from *zawiyas* (Ar., saint shrines). Today, people who consider themselves disciples of a tsaddiq may have a propensity to venerate a particular one, but everyone is welcome to join them and they are welcome to venerate other tsaddiqim as well (Ben-Ami 1998:49). Hillulot are also important opportunities for gender comingling and for women in particular to participate in the public sphere. As Weingrod points out, “there are few occasions during which women do not remain on the outer edges. Participating in hillulot [sic] is one such time” (Weingrod 1990:80).



The hillulot for R' Amram ben Diwan continue to draw pilgrims from multiple continents. The geographic location of the tomb, equidistant from Tangiers, Fes, Meknes, and Casablanca, the ease of access, and the tsaddiq's renown came together in Mr. Elmki's day to help popularize this hillula. Yet, there is a popular sentiment that the only exclusivity about who is welcome lies in the hands of the tsaddiq. He will ultimately decide whether or not you attend.

The rabbi (Amram ben Diwan) decides who will be able to make it and who will not. You must be invited by the tsaddiq, *zikhron l'vrakha* (remembrance and blessing). If he doesn't want you to attend, something will get in the way of your journey...flat tire, sickness...something. (p.c., Liliane Shalom, April 30, 2010, in Ouezzane, Morocco)

Making a pilgrimage to the tsaddiq's gravesite has always been a sign of one's devotion. Doing so now shows both special devotion to the tsaddiq and the value individuals place on their Maroka'i heritage. People coming back from hillulot in Morocco often regale local community members with stories about how things are in the homeland, how the local Jewish community is faring, who came to celebrate and from where, and, as a part of recounting their trip, experiences with the tsaddiq at the hillula.

Most Maroka'im no longer possess the opportunity to visit the scores of tsaddiq gravesites in Morocco. Pilgrimage to many gravesites has become a prohibitive endeavor. To journey from Israel, Canada, or the United States is costly. Even for Maroka'im living in more proximate communities (in Morocco or France), the tsaddiq's tombs in distant places are difficult to visit. The disintegration of so many Jewish communities in Morocco makes conducting these further afield pilgrimages more difficult and at times potentially dangerous. There is little kosher food and few familial connections left in the far-flung recesses of the Moroccan hinterland. Thus, only the most popular tsaddiqim are visited with any regularity.

Tsaddiqim who emigrated from Morocco in the mid-twentieth century tend to be buried in Israel, a more accessible place for Maroka'i pilgrims to commune with tsaddiqim (Weingrod 1990; Bilu 1984). While this does afford more members of the diasporic community opportunities to venerate deceased tsaddiqim—the Maroka'i community in Israel is the largest in the Maroka'i diaspora and Israel is an attractive place for Jewish tourism—pilgrimage to Israel remains difficult. The distance and costs involved are enough to dissuade many potential pilgrims. Subsequently, the hillula remains an important and popular spiritual practice in the Maroka'i diaspora. Despite the absence of an acute physical connection to the tsaddiq's resting place, individuals utilize local spaces to gather and celebrate. A tsaddiq rests in the supernal realm; “no matter where we are, he is always available” (p.c., R' Gad Bouskila, November 3, 2010). Nevertheless, Brooklyn community members still try to make pilgrimages to gravesites in Morocco and Israel. The familial ties that many in Brooklyn have in these two locales remain robust and persuasive. It is considered honorable to venerate a tsaddiq at his tomb, whenever possible.

### *Seudah*

Anthropologist Alex Weingrod (1990) writes about a hillula for R' Chouri in Beersheba, Israel. Weingrod describes the hillula as a performance that develops in three acts: a celebration in the synagogue on the preceding Shabbat, the pilgrimage and activities at the cemetery, and the *seudah* (festive meal). In characterizing the second act as the main event, he describes the chaos and spontaneity that imbue the gravesite hillula of a tsaddiq (Weingrod 1990:47-50). In the absence of a tsaddiq's gravesite, as is the case in the Maroka'i diaspora most of the time, the three acts Weingrod describes have been altered. What was once a multiday event, and continues

to be so in Israel and Morocco with the inclusion of the preceding Shabbat, the hillula is now primarily an event a few hours long.

While food has always been one of the most important components of the traditional hillula, a composed banquet in the style of a seudah has not. In Brooklyn, the seudah has become the main event or focal point, serving to syncretize all three acts as Weingrod describes. The seudah can be a small affair with snacks or a large affair, elaborately decorated and catered. The social hall of a synagogue usually functions as the space for the seudah, but on occasion, someone might host one in their home. The seudah now functions as the context for the entire ritual, bringing together the music, candles, food, and veneration of the tsaddiq into a focused event. This distinguishes a diasporic hillula from a gravesite hillula, providing a discrete frame or context for expressing meaning (Weingrod 1990:47-68). This event is a crucible for ethnicization, encouraging perpetuation and innovation that in tandem work to construct Maroka'i identity.

Festive meals are common in Jewish life, and meals are seen as semi-sacred experiences, beginning with a blessing over sharing bread and concluding with a short liturgy thanking God for sustenance. Food plays an important part in the ritual by giving each individual a sense of wellbeing and sustenance, as well as multiple opportunities to perform blessings. At a gravesite hillula, platters are passed around with fruit, nuts, and cakes, giving every individual an opportunity to make a blessing on a food in the presence of the tsaddiq. It is common to see snacks sprinkled on the gravesite, in an act of sharing with the tsaddiq.

At gravesite and diasporic hillulot, it is a special honor for a host to be able to invite venerators to share in a meal together. As expected, Moroccan cuisine is featured, including myriad salads, a spicy fish dish, and chicken with nuts and fruit. In Brooklyn, no seudah is

complete, however, without modern Israeli fare, like hummus and pita, fried eggplant, or select Syrian delicacies such as *lahem bagene* (minced meat pies) and baklava. Similarly, the assortment of libations is quite diverse. Wine, whiskeys, and fig brandies share common space on each table.

At Netivot Israel synagogue, in Brooklyn, tables are set up throughout the social hall to accommodate 100-150 people. Private homes fit far fewer. For instance, at an annual women-only hillula for Baba Sali hosted by his granddaughter Anna Lipsker in her apartment in Brooklyn, typically thirty to forty guests attend by invitation only. When a special guest rabbi comes to a hillula, a much larger space is usually necessary to accommodate the expected turnout. Maurice Perez, director of Netivot Israel synagogue, reported that Baba Barukh (R' Barukh Abuḥatsira, son of the Baba Sali) occasionally visits to celebrate Baba Sali's hillula with the community. So many people from the greater New York metro area make a special effort to attend that he has to organize the rental of a banquet hall (p.c., Maurice Perez, July 12, 2010).

At the seudah, many participants recount stories to one another about their pilgrimages to visit tsaddiqim.

When we were coming back (to Cairo), I asked our driver to stop to get a drink. He said 'No, we cannot stop. The guard told me not to stop until Cairo.' I asked, 'What is going on?' He tells me that there is some information about some people wanting to bomb the Jews visiting Ribbi Yaakov (Abuḥatsira). Then he says to me, 'what are you worried about? Abuḥatsira is with you. You don't have to worry. Abuḥatsira watches you! After you Jews leave, we go and pray at Abuḥatsira.' This is what Abuḥatsira is (protecting all who venerate him). (p.c., R' Gad Bouskila, December 26, 2010)

In this quote, from a speech given at a seudah hosted by R' Bouskila in his home for the hillula of Abir Yaakov, he recounts a part of a pilgrimage he made to the tsaddiq's tomb in Damanhour, Egypt, in 2009. R' Bouskila uses this story to show the persistent power and presence of the tsaddiq, protecting his venerators. R' Bouskila emphasized that the tsaddiq's presence was also

at this hillula in Brooklyn, just the same. It happened that during this seudah that a blizzard was raging in the streets of Brooklyn. The similarity was not lost on participants.

Individuals in Brooklyn's community often use a hillula seudah as an occasion to discuss hillulot they have attended elsewhere, especially gravesite hillulot in Morocco. Overhearing conversations at several hillulot, these individuals tend to recount the trials and tribulations of the pilgrimage, their mystical experiences, and, if talking about Morocco, their impressions of how the country has changed since they emigrated. Community members born in the diaspora often respond by expressing their desire to visit. It seems that the inaccessible tombs of Morocco spark their imaginations most of all. In any case, for children and adults alike, getting together to honor a tsaddiq in such a fashion seems only a natural part of their identity: the Moroccan way to carry out a memorial celebration of a holy individual.

The controlled environment of the seudah has encouraged the addition of two components to the hillula ritual: fundraising and sermons. *Tsedaqah* (righteous giving; charity) has always been and remains an important part of all hillulot. At a traditional hillula, it is customary to give whatever amount of tsedaqah one sees fit. This may be putting a few coins in collection boxes or making larger donations to the upkeep of the shrine or even to one's local synagogue. In Brooklyn, as in other communities in the Maroka'i diaspora, two new fundraising tools have become a vital component of the hillula experience: entrance fees and candle auctions.

Everyone has an opportunity to participate in giving tsedaqah by paying a cover charge or entrance fee. No one will be turned away, but one is expected to contribute to help cover costs and to secure one's rightful inclusion in the rabbi's benediction for the community in the name of the tsaddiq. Bigger fundraising happens during the seudah, when an auction for the rights to light or take home special tsaddiq candles occurs. Traditionally, where there might be a synagogue or

social hall next to a larger tomb, auctions for maḥia<sup>15</sup> glasses for use by the gravesite are also included.

In Brooklyn, candles suffice. They are elaborately decorated, usually bear some inscription(s) in Hebrew, and often have an image of the tsaddiq on the side (figure 5.1).

Winners of these candle auctions light the biggest candles at the seudah, after which they take them home, taking great care to protect the flames, as it is improper to deliberately extinguish the candle (p.c., Yair Peretz, November 2, 2010). Winners of smaller candles typically take them home unlit.

**Figure 5.1: Hillula Candles for Tsaddiqim**



Candles hold special significance as a physical manifestation of the soul of the departed.<sup>16</sup>

The flame is considered an important means for bringing the tsaddiq’s spirit into the physical world—an esoteric conduit. “The flame from the candle brings the light of their (the dead’s) soul

<sup>15</sup> A popular fig brandy in Morocco, considered a specialty of the Jewish community.

<sup>16</sup> Whenever one visits a Jewish grave, it is customary to light a candle and place it close to or on the grave. When visiting the shrines of tsaddiqim, individuals bring or buy candles. There is often a special area for lighting candles, though some graves are covered with stones and set aflame. In such cases individuals continually add to the flames by simply throwing candles into the bonfire.

into this world” (p.c., R’ Gad Bouskila, November 3, 2010). In this sense, candles are invested with spiritual energy related to the tsaddiq. While attending a hillula for Baba Sali in Israel, I was once asked to deliver three candles to a woman in Paris. In Ouezzane, Morocco, it is common practice to place two candles on the flaming rocks atop R’ Diwan’s grave, to the point of a slight disfiguration of the wax. These candles are then removed from the heat and taken home for use as Shabbat or festival candles. From the candle auctions, and if there is an entrance fee too, the synagogue stands to raise significant funds throughout the course of the hillula.

The centrality of the seudah has also given rise to sermons and storytelling. A focused audience listens closely to the *ba'al ha-bayit* (master of the house; e.g. a rabbi, personal host) and any other esteemed guests when they share thoughts and stories about the tsaddiq or teachings from Torah. While commonplace at all hillulot in the Maroka’i diaspora, at the tombs of tsaddiqim the chaos of the crowd does not really provide an opportunity for such sermons. Instead, individuals tend to share inspirational words with one another. At a seudah in Brooklyn, a *berakhah* (benediction) in the name of the tsaddiq, performed by a rabbi, serves as a punctuation mark at the culmination of each sermon. Despite the shift in focus towards the leadership of the community during seudot, sharing *berakhot* (pl.) and words of Torah between individuals is still commonplace.

The seudah synchronizes attention on the tsaddiq, with the eating and chatting, the auctioning and lighting of candles, and the storytelling. Missing for participants in diasporic hillulot is the sense of accomplishing a pilgrimage and the experience of physically communing with the tsaddiq. The seudah is invested with more importance at diasporic hillulot, probably because of these missing elements.

### Prayer

Prayer during a hillula is at the same time scripted as well as spontaneous. It is always dynamic. Some prayers come from Jewish liturgy but most are personal and individualized. Prayer seeks to bring the tsaddiq's spirit closer to each individual. There is no particular liturgy for a hillula. Most often participants will read different chapters of Tehillim (Psalms). Different collections of psalms emphasize certain types of beseeching—e.g., for health, peace, sustenance. One in particular, Psalm 119, is divided into sections, each associated with a Hebrew letter. It is customary to recite multiple sections according to the spelling of the tsaddiq's, one's own, or someone else's name. Personal prayers are always encouraged, unscripted and in whatever language is most comfortable for participants. Because of the typically large number of people who participate, gathering a minyan (prayer quorum of ten individuals) is not difficult. Thus, participating in the three daily prayer services in the presence of the tsaddiq is a special opportunity most venerators desire to take advantage of.

### Music

Musical expression in the new contexts of diasporic hillulot has several functions. Dislocated from the gravesite, it fosters connections with tsaddiqim amongst participants through song texts full of praise, literal and allegorical. The singing of songs about tsaddiqim also encourages group participation and focus. Celebration in the name of and because of the tsaddiq is central to the hillula, and clearly music is integral to the general revelry. Music is involved throughout, aiding in the ritual and programmatic components of the hillula.

The hillula is not, however, a music festival. There may be a pre-arranged ensemble performing, but it is not a concert. Many performances, especially at the gravesite, remain spontaneous. While the chaos and spontaneity at diasporic hillulot have diminished, moments of



musical participation during the seudah do offer the best opportunities for some unprescribed actions to surface. This is quite evident in the heterophonic singing and improvisatory bursts of rhythmicized clapping. As the night ebbs and flows, specialized performers may surface to offer up their skills. This might include musicians who play an instrument, such as the oud, violin, or keyboard (if there is electricity), and a plethora of singers.

Since a hillula is a celebration, music is vital and necessary for adding to the atmosphere of the occasion.

As long as there is music, there is simha [joy]. Along with Arak [a fig-based libation] in the middle of the table, then we are ready to go. (p.c., Maurice Perez, July 12, 2010)

Without music, the hillula cannot take place. According to Jewish thought, joy, like other emotions, is not to be taken lightly. It enlivens the spirit and encourages communal bonding. At a gravesite hillula, singing and drumming encourage communal participation. Small groups of people cluster around a drummer or cadre of drummers to sing in unison with fellow revelers. On the fringes of a cluster, one will see people dancing about in no particularly choreographed expression. Interestingly, it is in these clusters that the normally strict boundaries between the sexes can be challenged in an outright fashion.<sup>17</sup> The joy that comes from such communal participation, fostered by the music (and perhaps the alcohol too), sends an important message that the tsaddiq belongs to the people.

We must remember, [that] Baba Sali, *zikhron le-verakha* (remembered for blessing), loves every one. Each person. (R' Gad Bouskila, Baba Sali Hillula, January 25, 2011)

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<sup>17</sup> On most sacred occasions in Maroka'i life, including during liturgical services, weddings, and even most meals, women and men are strictly separated. Recently built or renovated shrines are built in such a way as to discourage any opportunity for such comingling. For instance, at the tomb of Baba Sali, a separation wall was built over the middle of his gravestone in order for men and women to have separate access to approach him.

The energy level rises with singing and dancing. Praises to the tsaddiq and to God are repeated in song.

While joy is central, one must recognize that joy is not just exuberance. According to a story about Baba Sali, he responded to a houseguest that songs are not merely for increasing exuberance—which is in itself considered extremely important in the context of a hillula—but are also important for increasing Torah knowledge.<sup>18</sup> Torah knowledge brings joy to the inner soul. Musical expressions, and especially the song texts, become a conduit for realizing this inner joy in addition to the outer joy or exuberance.

Music also helps with the program of the seudah, punctuating the auctioning of tsaddiq candles and sermons, and for honoring dignitaries. At public hillulot, musicians are set up near a head table full of rabbinic dignitaries. The music helps to facilitate auctioneering, punctuating bids and sales as a foregrounded component for tsedaqah gathering. The rabbi is grateful to the musicians for their microphones, but especially for their help in energizing and extending the bidding. When the winner proceeds to the front to claim his candle, the band plays and everyone claps along. When there are multiple sermons, the musical interludes also break up the hillula programming.

Musical expression has acquired a new function in the diasporic hillulot. It conveys several socio-historical aspects of Maroka'i identity, including honoring historical figures, referencing religious thought, and promoting geographic and linguistic associations. These socio-historical aspects are central in negotiating boundaries of identity, characterizing what is authentically Maroka'i for community members. While music has long been central to expressing identity in Jewish life, the conscious effort to portray a Maroka'i diasporic identity is

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<sup>18</sup> *Acte Miraculeux de la Famille Abihssira*, <http://familleabihssira.blogspot.com>

relatively new. Social history, an important aspect of this identity, now has a voice in the music. The hillula performance context, the texts and melodies, instruments, and stylistic aesthetics work to iterate social history. It is this function of musical expression that is explored most in the subsequent section of this chapter.

## **Hillula Repertoire**

Since the middle of the twentieth century, beginning with large-scale internal migration of Morocco's Jews towards metropolises, a standard hillula repertoire has been emerging in the Maroka'i transnation. This repertoire of hillula songs, in local practice, reveals significant tendencies about how community members conceptualize identity. The reiteration of certain socio-historical aspects of Maroka'i identity is crucial to the development of a layered diaspora consciousness. Several musical pieces in the hillula repertoire foreground a Maroka'i diaspora consciousness. Others, however, are included to iterate aspects of both a Sephardi and Jewish diaspora consciousness. This hillula repertoire operates as a canon of sorts to emblemize a particular Jewish diasporic ethnic identity.

Gone are the fluid and myriad repertoires of the historic hillulot in Morocco; those regionally specific repertoires included pieces that reflected different Maroka'i ethnicities. For instance, near the eastern city of Meknes, a prominent center for the *āla* genre, hillula songs were based on the common melodic modes and performed on instruments typical of the region—oud, kamanche, riqq. For hillulot in the Shleuh, the region along the Atlas Mountains that is dotted with small villages, the bendir frame drum and melodies in pentatonic scales were prominently featured. In the north, songs in Judeo-Spanish were common, while in the south one would have been more likely to hear songs in Judeo-Berber or Judeo-Arabic.

Some community members bemoan the waning familiarity with so many historic hillula songs, expressing nostalgia for the music at hillulot in the homeland of their childhood. Prominent in regional hillula repertoires were songs for particular tsaddiqim. “The music [songs] of the tsaddiqim...there are so many. But here in the United States we don’t have anybody who really knows all the songs” (p.c., Maurice Perez, July 12, 2010). While this diminution of knowledge leaves community members like Perez with a heavy heart, the diaspora has also brought the disparate Jewish communities of Morocco together into a new transnation. The standardized hillula repertoire provides Maroka’im with a clear sense of communal identity: it presents individuals with a script for belonging. At the same time, it keeps the community connected to multiple and distinctive diasporic groups.

Whenever and wherever hillulot are performed, participating in the reproduction of this repertoire invigorates historical associations among community members—with Morocco, Sepharad, and ancient and modern Israel. These pieces, as well as songs in Mugrabit by well-known gharnati and cha’abi performers from mid-twentieth century Morocco and Israel, provide clear examples of how the provenance of certain pieces in the repertoire promotes a homeland orientation toward Morocco.

Several songs in the hillula repertoire foster associations with the Sephardi diaspora, including those songs based on texts written by Sephardi poets from medieval Spain and those incorporated from other communities in the Sephardi diaspora; several of the latter are modern songs adopted from musika mizrahit. Songs popular in other Jewish ethnic communities in Brooklyn also appear in the diasporic hillula repertoire. The presence of these songs, from Brooklyn’s other Sephardi communities and from the Chabad-Lubavitch community, shows the

powerful influence of local Jewish life in other Jewish communities around the world. When I visited hillulot in Morocco and in Israel, I was struck to hear several of these songs performed.

Most songs in the hillula repertoire reiterate historical ideas about the Jewish diaspora, including *galut* (exile) and *geulah* (redemption). Listening to the performance of much of this repertoire, one is reminded that the transnational Jewish community is still an evolving and modern diasporic identity. In addition to the aforementioned classical ideas about the Jewish diaspora, there are elements in the music that remind community members that the diaspora continues even if its constitution is different from centuries past.

The emergence of a standard hillula song repertoire has been instrumental in the institutionalization of the hillula as an iconic Maroka'i communal expression. Some pieces emphasize a Maroka'i heritage. Other pieces emphasize connections between community members and the historic Sephardi and Jewish diaspora. Several pieces emphasize more than one of these layers at the same time. Thus, when maintaining that the hillula is a uniquely Maroka'i ethnic expression, one need look no further than the music to see that, taken together, the songs performed at hillulot in Brooklyn conjure multiple associations for community members of Maroka'i roots and routes. These roots and routes do not lead to some sort of pure, essentialist Maroka'i heritage, but rather to a layered diaspora consciousness about Maroka'i identity.

### *The Language(s) of Song*

Saint veneration has always been a folk expression. Historically, tsaddiq songs at most hillulot would be in the vernacular of the local populace. For instance, in northern communities—Tangiers, Tetuan—where the Spanish influence persists until this day, tsaddiq

songs in Judeo-Spanish (Ladino and Hakatia)<sup>19</sup> were more common. Similarly, many songs performed at the hillula for R' Makhluḥ ben Yosef Abuḥatsira, buried in the southern Dra'a Valley town of Tarkellil, would likely have been in Judeo-Berber. The tsaddiq, after all, belongs to the people—to the folk. Besides a few pieces in Muḡrabit or in one of these syncretic languages (Judeo-Berber, Judeo-Spanish), songs in Hebrew now predominate in the hillula repertoire.

While songs in Hebrew would have appeared at hillulot in Morocco, they were not as prevalent as they are at today's diasporic hillulot. Historically, in Maroka'i communities Hebrew was the language of prayer and study, limited to the male sphere and to those knowledgeable of high-register poetics. As Hebrew has become a prominent colloquial language throughout the Maroka'i diaspora community, songs in Hebrew now form a large part of the repertoire. Two important exceptions are "Tsaddiq el-Zaz" and "Baba Sali," both of which are in Muḡrabit and are still performed regularly.

The restructuring of traditional, linguistically diverse hillula repertoires into a standard hillula repertoire has encouraged a narrowing of the gaps between members of the elite and commoners, as well as men and women. More people can now understand the texts. Because Brooklyn's Maroka'i community has a relatively large Israeli contingent in comparison with several other nodes of the Maroka'i diaspora, Hebrew is now as popular as French and English. The demand for all immigrants in Israel to learn the modern, conversational Hebrew had an especially strong impact on women. Hebrew language instruction is also highly valued

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<sup>19</sup> Ladino and Hakatia are closely related. Both are languages based on medieval Castilian Spanish and written in Hebrew or Latin characters. However, whereas Ladino includes direct translations of Hebrew phrases into Spanish, Hakatia tends to use paraphrases of Hebrew. Furthermore, Hakatia incorporates words and phrases from Arabic as well (p.c., Judith R. Cohen, November 19, 2011; Stillman 2004).

throughout Brooklyn's Sephardi community as the lingua franca of the transnational Jewish community. The opening of a door to a large segment of Maroka'i society is the result. More women now understand Hebrew, and along with their male counterparts are now poised to appreciate the texts. This growing familiarity with Hebrew as a spoken language has helped with the popularization of several classic piyyutim and catapulted a number of more recently composed pizmonim into the worldwide hillula repertoire.

A tension has emerged, however, between generations of Maroka'im. The first-generation diasporic immigrants want to preserve Mugrabit as a part of their roots, whereas the second and third generations think of Mugrabit as a relic of the homeland and see their privileging of Hebrew as necessary to engaging linguistically with the modern transnational Jewish community. Yossi Marciano, a teenager in the community born in Brooklyn, explains, "yeah, we know songs in Moroccan [Mugrabit] ... but we just like to sing 'em at a hillula or a party" (p.c., Yossi Marciano, December 13, 2010). Thus, it seems in the context of the hillula, Mugrabit songs provide an opportunity for members of the younger generations to coalesce around an expression of Maroka'i identity important to other segments of the community, to the older generations. A tension emerges between relinquishing and preserving the past. Songs in Mugrabit and Judeo-Spanish are given a place in the hillula. They are elevated from being relics of the past to being a vital part of practicing identity. Similarly, when members of the older generations participate in Hebrew songs, they feel they are engaging with the future generations of the community.

### **Categories of Song**

The hillula repertoire can be divided into two types of songs — *shirim retziniyim* (serious songs) and *hafla* songs (Arabic; party songs). These labels do not connote anything about a

song's rhythmic, melodic, harmonic, or orchestral traits, but rather differentiations in subject matter, function, and language. Shirim retziniyim are songs that honor tsaddiqim or songs that are based upon piyyutim. The category of *hafla songs*—also called *shirei mesibah* (party songs)—includes pizmonim and songs sung in Maroka'i vernacular languages, such as Mugrabit, Hebrew, French, syncretic languages such as Judeo-Arabic or Judeo-Berber, and dialects of Judeo-Spanish.

There is no set order to presenting the hillula repertoire. However, tsaddiq songs, which are considered shirim retziniyim, are always in the foreground to add a sense of importance and seriousness to the occasion. Tsaddiq songs are associated with a particular tsaddiq because he is the subject of the text, may have composed the song (text or melody), or may have had a connection with the composer. For instance, if the composer of a particular text or song was related to, worked for, lived near, or associated with a tsaddiq in some other recognizable capacity, his song would be associated with that particular tsaddiq. Many songs from the hillula repertoire can be performed on other communal occasions, but most tsaddiq songs are performed only during hillulot. Because there are just a few songs associated with specific tsaddiqim—about the tsaddiq or written by the tsaddiq—these songs are often repeated multiple times during a hillula.

Songs about several different tsaddiqim are likely to be performed during most diasporic hillulot. The choice of which tsaddiq songs to emphasize is governed by the hillula. Most tsaddiq songs are about a particular tsaddiq, and therefore songs for the venerated tsaddiq always take precedence. “We must give them [the tsaddiq] the ultimate *kavod* (respect)” (p.c., R’ Gad Bouskila, November 2, 2010). Only at specific moments in the hillula do songs about other tsaddiqim usually appear. For instance, the performance of songs about a tsaddiq featured on a



candle comes before and after the auctioning of that candle. At private hillulot, in someone's home, the crowd will be much smaller and candle auctioning will not happen. In these cases, usually only songs featuring venerated, related, or multiple tsaddiqim are performed. On Lag B'Omer, however, there are really no restrictions. It is a great opportunity to hear the range of tsaddiq songs in the local community's repertoire.

In Brooklyn's community, it is relatively common to hear songs that reference multiple tsaddiqim or sainthood in general. There are fewer performance opportunities for venerating Maroka'i tsaddiqim and less knowledge of melodies and texts to sing about them. For this reason, several community members in Brooklyn have told me that the occasion of a hillula provides a rare chance, just a few times a year, to gather and celebrate the centrality of Jewish sainthood in Maroka'i life. "The tsaddiqim are always there for us. We must remember them" (ibid.). While emphasizing songs about the venerated tsaddiq is always preferred, tsaddiq songs about other tsaddiqim are often welcome under the appropriate circumstances. At Baba Sali's hillula in Netivot, Israel, which features an outdoor market beyond the tomb area, merchants sell paintings of several different tsaddiqim and multiple sound systems blare an array of tsaddiq songs in all directions. Inside the tomb area, however, professional musicians perform on an exclusive stage and only perform tsaddiq songs featuring members of the Abuḥatsira family.

The second type of shirim retziniyim includes piyyutim. These piyyutim employ a high-register Hebrew, flowery language, and incorporate verses from the Hebrew Bible. While the text would seem to take precedence, especially since a piyyut is literally a poem, musical settings for the texts are important and specific melodies typically accompany specific piyyutim. Community members admire piyyutim, since many performed during hillulot are also included in the hallowed repertoire of *baqqashot* (supplication poetry) (see Chapter Two, fn. 23) and/or

attributed to historically significant *paytanim* (poets). For example, several piyyutim come from the pen of Sephardi Golden Age poets Yehuda Halevy and Shlomo Ibn Gabirol, sixteenth-century poet R' Israel Najara, and eighteenth-century Moroccan poet David Ḥassin. At a hillula, performers consistently weave shirim retziniyim—tsaddiq songs and piyyutim—into the musical program to sustain a reverent mood throughout.

In contrast, most hafla songs at hillulot in Brooklyn are pizmonim. Through the practice of contrafacta, Hebrew texts are accompanied by melodies from Moroccan, Algerian, Egyptian, Syrian, and Lebanese Arabic music. As discussed in earlier chapters, an attraction towards popular Egyptian composers has given Maroka'im a point of commonality with members of other Sephardi-Mizraḥi communities in the neighborhood.<sup>20</sup> A few piyyutim, such as “Yotzer Miyado,” are treated with a shorter and catchier melody more typical of pizmonim. Doing so changes the function of the piyyut, moving it into the category of hafla songs.

Several Maroka'i poets, such as the twentieth-century paytan R' David Bouzaglo, were masterful at Hebraizing Arabic songs, both melodies and texts. The Maroka'i songbook *Shirei Dodim ha-Shalem* (2005 [1986]) features several examples of contrafacta by R' David Bouzaglo. Each of his pizmonim includes a reference to the original Arabic song. In addition to using the original Arabic melody, Bouzaglo also incorporates the phonetics of the original text in his Hebrew compositions (p.c., R' Avraham Amar, October 11, 2010).

Pizmonim texts often invoke the popular themes of *galut* (exile) and *geulah* (redemption). Some speak explicitly of a return to the homeland (in this case, the modern State

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<sup>20</sup> In *Let Jasmine Rain Down*, Kay Shelemay (1998) discusses the use of pizmonim in Brooklyn's Syrian Jewish community. During hillulot in Brooklyn, Maroka'im perform a few pizmonim popular with Syrian Jews. These pizmonim do not typically appear in the standard hillula repertoire performed by communities in other nodes of the Maroka'i diaspora.

of Israel), and of the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Holy Temple. Some include references to religious themes, such as the *mashiah* (messiah) and the messianic era, sin and forgiveness, and the relationship between God and man. Another popular theme—Jewish history—conjures events in the biblical and diasporic life of the Jewish community, from the covenant with Abraham to the Holocaust and the Israeli-Arab Six Day War.

Mugrabit pieces—gharnati and cha’abi songs—are a treasured part of the hillula repertoire and generate enormous excitement whenever performed. Popular in Morocco before emigration and still sung in Mugrabit—especially songs by composers such as Salim Halali, Samy el-Maghrebi, Jo Amar, Cheikh Mwizo, and Cheikh Raymond—the texts for several of these songs focus on romantic themes, privileging love or celebration. These songs are therefore common during wedding celebrations in the community, but are almost never heard during Shabbat, festivals, or at other community events. But their place in the popular songbook of Maroka’im in Morocco, and the hillula as a folk festival of sorts, makes them naturally fit for inclusion in the hillula repertoire.

These songs became part of the diasporic hillula repertoire precisely because they are emblematic of a robust pan-Maroka’i community that developed in Morocco before the schismatic break of mass emigration. “Everyone knew these songs. Salim [Halali], Mwijo [Cheikh Mwijo], Raymond [Leyris; Cheikh Raymond]. They were the best!” (p.c., Albert Abitbol, May 12, 2009). Radio and recordings were instrumental in the popularization of these songs. People were playing them at hillulot in Morocco, from recordings in car or tabletop stereos (p.c., Max Elmkies, April 21, 2010). In the 1960s and 1970s, several performers re-recorded classic Mugrabit songs for Azoulay Brothers. When I visited Ouezzane, Morocco in

2010, for the hillula of R' Amram ben Diwan, these same classic recordings were still being played by people using CD players, iPods, and car stereos.

Even though fewer in the community understand these texts today, as the younger generations distance themselves from regular usage of Mugrabit, the resonance of a language so closely associated with the history of the community in the homeland is striking. One can hear several individuals at the seudah uttering a few recognizable words during the performance of such a song, or punctuating its conclusion with a phrase or two remembered from their parents or childhood.

Modern Israeli songs, especially from the musika mizrahit genre, are also popular as hafla songs. They tend to be light and upbeat. The incorporation of these songs into the hillula repertoire promotes another point of commonality between Maroka'im and other Sephardi-Mizrahi groups. Similarly, songs from the Ashkenazi community, especially from Hasidic and Yeshivish<sup>21</sup> communities, are welcome during Brooklyn's hillulot and promote connections between Maroka'im and Ashkenazim. "We like those songs too. They're very *leibadik* (energizing)" (p.c., Gabriel Bouskila, May 22, 2011). Bouskila uses the Yiddish term, *leibadik*, capturing both the source and nature of these songs.

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<sup>21</sup> *Yeshivish* is a term used to refer to ultra-Orthodox Jews of Ashkenazi descent who are not Hasidic.

**Figure 5.2: Hillula Repertoire Chart**

<u>Shirim Retziniyim</u>		<u>Hafla Songs</u>
<b>Tsaddiq Songs</b>	<b>Piyyutim</b>	<b>Hebrew Pizmonim, Mugrabit Songs, and Leibedik Songs</b>
*Tsaddiqim el-Zaz Oḥil Yom Yom (Ḥassin) *Ashira Na *Yodu Lekha Rayonai Bar Yoḥai *Ashir Shira ve-Zimrah *E-erokh Mahallal Nibi	Oḥil Yom Yom (Ḥazan) Yedidi ha-Shakhakhta Kokhav Tzedek Yotzer Miyado Tishbi Tzuri Levavi Shalom Leven Dodi Agadelkha	Nagila Halleluyah Mekave Ani Lo Shema Koli Azreini El Ḥai Ḥabibi Yah Ḥabibi Shabḥi Yerushalayim Ashore Shira Sidi Ḥbibi/Dorbeha Ya Qalbi Ya Rayaḥ Omri Ma Ninsak Am Yisrael Ani Ma-amin Moshiakh

**\* songs performed only during hillulot**

The hillula is a valuable occasion for appreciating the juxtaposition of different layers of diaspora consciousness through musical expression. No other event in Maroka'i life includes such a rich diversity of musical expression at any one time. One can hear the compulsory tsaddiq songs, piyyutim, pizmonim, and Mugrabi, Mizraḥi, and Ashkenazi songs in one setting. Furthermore, the length of the event, the new diasporic context which focuses on the seudah, and the absence of religious prohibitions on musical performance afford a unique opportunity to experience more of the breadth of the Maroka'i community's repertoire of songs. In addition to having songs that purportedly promote an authentically Maroka'i ethnicity (which is really a recent pan-Maroka'i ethnicity), there is also room for incorporating songs from other communities. Multiple associations lie at the heart of what makes this repertoire so important to

developing a layered diaspora consciousness. In the reconfiguration of Maroka'i communities, in Morocco and in the burgeoning transnation, communal celebrations demand a basis of knowledge: a collection of songs that everyone can participate in singing together. For this demand, the standardization of a hillula repertoire has provided the community with a canon of songs emblematic of a distinctive Jewish ethnic diaspora group.

### **Tsaddiq Songs**

Many songs included in the standard hillula repertoire are part of other musical contexts in the life of the community. For instance, *Shalom Leven Dodi*, the very popular piyyut discussed in Chapter Three is sung at weddings, engagement parties, during *Kriat ha-Torah* (at least a fragment), and often during festive meals. By contrast, the performance of tsaddiq songs is typically reserved for hillulot. Most tsaddiq songs are piyyutim, employing the linguistic register and themes one would expect. Texts tend to emphasize aspects of Jewish and Sephardi identity, through literary themes, poetic approaches, and biblical and historical references. It is quite common to hear a tsaddiq song referred to as “a piyyut in honor of so and so.” Performed several times a year, many tsaddiq songs reiterate a significant aspect of communal religious thought—that the holy man (or woman) has mystical prowess.

Melodies for most tsaddiq songs are of Maroka'i provenance. However, one discussed below, “*Oḥil Yom Yom*,” is a melody common to Syrian and Egyptian Jews. “*Bar Yoḥai*,” another popular tsaddiq song outside of the Maroka'i community, is an example of another instance where the melodic provenance alludes to Maroka'i participation in a pan-Sephardi-Mizraḥi community. Thus, the presence of a layered diaspora consciousness in the Brooklyn

Maroka'i community's practice of tsaddiq songs is robust, despite what might be thought of as a particularly Maroka'i ethnic expression.

### **Tsaddiq el-Zaz**

“Tsaddiq el-Zaz” (The Beloved Saint), an important tsaddiq song in the hillula repertoire, is a general hagiographic hymn sung in honor of a specific tsaddiq or adapted to honor several tsaddiqim. Issachar Ben-Ami suggests that there is a standard version of "Tsaddiq el-Zaz" that mentions thirteen different tsaddiqim. He bases this on an anonymously published leaflet of hillula song texts (Ben-Ami 1998:107). From what I have heard and seen, people do rely upon several of these well-known verses, but only in instances where the person performing does not have the desire or capability of improvising new text. At graveside hillulot, this song is randomly and spontaneously performed, often so many times during the night that one cannot or should not even try to keep count. However, in Brooklyn, the performance of "Tsaddiq el-Zaz" is more controlled. Like other diasporic hillulot, the environment—a synagogue or a home with everyone sitting around tables—discourages the aesthetic of spontaneity that one still finds in the chaotic atmosphere at a gravesite. In Brooklyn, at times the performance of “Tsaddiq el-Zaz” is also presentational, used to highlight some specific moment during the hillula ritual, such as candle lighting or after a story about the tsaddiq is told. Nevertheless, others nearby are always eager to join in. With “Tsaddiq el-Zaz,” community members try to preserve the feel of the gravesite hillula. This is a well-known piece throughout the Maroka'i diaspora, repetitively performed during all hillulot to reinforce both a reverence for sainthood and the practice of hillulot as distinctively Maroka'i.

“Tsaddiq el-Zaz” loosely follows a zajal versification form.<sup>22</sup> It is a strophe-refrain form, which employs colloquial language in the refrain (figure 5.3).

**Figure 5.3: “Tsaddiq el-Zaz” Refrain Text**

Zekhuto tkun m’ana	[Judeo-Arabic]
Ḥna w-Yisrael khwana	[Judeo-Arabic]
Hodu l’Adonai ki tov <sup>23</sup>	[Hebrew]
May his [the tsaddiq] merit be with us, With us and Israel our brethren Praise the Lord for He is good! (Translation from Ben-Ami 1998:106)	

Each strophe consists of five lines, followed by a bilingual three-line refrain in Judeo-Arabic and Hebrew. Strophes are often sung in Mugrabit, but they can be performed in whichever language the singer chooses; historically, regional vernaculars would prevail while today, throughout the Maroka’i diaspora, Hebrew is preferred. There is no set quantitative meter, but lines are usually eight syllables long. The final syllables of each of the first four lines of a strophe rhyme, while the fifth line, which highlights the name of the tsaddiq, rhymes with the refrain. Together, these five lines form a strophe. “Tsaddiq el-Zaz,” with its unusual strophe length of four instead of five lines, and its inclusion of colloquial language, clearly hues closer to a zajal than to a muwashshah.

Strophes typically extol the tsaddiq, his mystical powers, Torah knowledge, wisdom, character, and leadership. The first two lines of the refrain allude to the tsaddiq’s achievement as a conduit between heaven and earth; the second line extends the tsaddiq’s provenance from the local community to the entire transnational Jewish community. As the localized communities developed first into a pan-Maroka’i community and then the Maroka’i diaspora community, this

<sup>22</sup> See chapter two, page 51.

<sup>23</sup> Sometimes the last line of the refrain is replaced with another well-known verse from Hebrew liturgy: *ki l’olam ḥasdo* (His kindness is everlasting).



verse has taken on new meaning. The “us” is now broader, often interpreted in the context of a local community’s ethnically diverse congregation. Clearly the extension “and Israel our brethren” emboldens a notion that there is some distinction between this particular Jewish ethnic community and the rest of the transnational Jewish community. In talking to me about Abir Yakov, R’ Gad Bouskila implies this distinction: “the tsaddiq is ours [Maroka’im], but he looks after everyone [all of Israel, the transnation], no? (p.c., R’ Gad Bouskila, December 26, 2010). Interestingly, from looking around the room at hillulot in Brooklyn, the “us” now includes Maroka’im from all sorts of backgrounds. Clearly, the borderline of the communal identity alluded to in the text has shifted in the consciousness of performers from just a century ago until today.

The third line of the refrain, in Hebrew, praises God’s kindness. This verse is common to all Jewish communities worldwide. Its appearance in several different liturgical contexts simply augments the feeling of “Tsaddiq el-Zaz’s” sacred quality. However, its place in the refrain pushes participants’ consciousness of identity boundaries further from the particular and towards a larger area of cohabitation with co-ethnics globally. Whereas the first line of the refrain focuses on the tsaddiq’s personal relationship with the community, and the second line extends his provenance over the entire transnational Jewish community (but still makes a distinction), the final line appeals directly to the omniscient divinity; God’s kindness extends to all of Israel. Of course, when hearing this refrain performed by a Muslim man when I was attending R’ Amram Ben Diwan’s hillula in Morocco, I couldn’t help thinking that in his mind, he must be envisioning the third line as an extension of God’s kindness to include all mankind.


Performances of “Tsaddiq el-Zaz” can be very short—sometimes just the refrain—or lengthy, extended through the addition of multiple strophes. Several hillula participants can take

turns improvising verses according to the standard formula, soliciting approving roars, claps, and ululations from others present. In Brooklyn, when community members are short on improvising ability, they will sometimes rely upon reiterating well-worn verses. A professional singer like Henry Abittan, whom the community in Brooklyn hires on occasion to come from Montreal to perform at hillulot, adds many verses to “Tsaddiq el-Zaz.” He has likely developed his own repertoire of verses. When one person finishes singing a strophe, the group punctuates his exposition by singing the standard refrain together.


Most lines are performed according to a standard melody (figure 5.4). The melody only changes for the third and final lines of the refrain. The rhythmic integrity of the primary melody is kept intact, even as individuals perform the melody loosely and at different tempos.


**Figure 5.4: Tsaddiq el-Zaz Refrain Melody: a) Maurice Perez, July 12, 2010; b) and c) Lahcen in Ouezzane, Morocco, May 2, 2010.**

Maurice Perez

a)    
 ze - khu - to\_\_\_\_\_ tkun m' - a - na Hna w'Yis - ra\_\_\_\_\_ el\_\_\_\_\_ khwa - na

Lahcen, Ouezzane

b)    
 z - khu - to\_\_\_\_\_ tkhun m'a - a - na H - na w'Yis - ra\_\_\_\_\_ el\_\_\_\_\_ khwa - na

c)    
 Ho - du l'A - do\_\_\_\_\_ - nai ki Tob

When the refrain enters, the congregation sings along and establishes a strong rhythmic pulse by adding claps or by pounding on the table. While one expects in a typical muwashshah/zajal form that the strophes will follow the same melody throughout and be followed by a contrasting

melody for the refrain, much like a qaṣīda the primary melody for “Tsaddiq el-Zaz” never seems to cease. While the contrasting melody finally comes for the last line of the refrain (figure 5.4, c section), the melodic figure is very similar to the primary melody. The rhythm is slightly different, but this is negligible. The lower leading tone used to resolve most phrases becomes the resolution tone for the end of the refrain. The bigger demarcation of change is the group performance at the refrain, and ultimately the change of performer for the next strophe.

A layman’s piece that is usually performed by random members of the congregation, “Tsaddiq el-Zaz” will never have the same expectation of perfection attached to it that many other songs do. Part of its charm comes in the imperfection of performance. In addition to the excitement created from improvising verse texts, different singers often produce what I call an *ambiguous third*. The apex point of the main melodic figure—the starting point for a descending stepwise melody that resolves to the tonic—is a third above the tonic. This third is major or minor, depending on the performer. In the case of Perez (figure 5.4a), his high point is an Eb, which is a minor third above his tonic C. In Lahcen’s performance (figure 5.3b), his high point is a major third above his tonic A. The ambiguity of the third, as evidenced in these two performances, reveals the loose nature of this song’s historical application in the hillula.

Another important feature of the melody is its use of a tetrachordal structure. Approaches to melodic composition that emphasize tetrachordal structures are not so common in the folk musics of the mountainous regions or the small desert communities of Morocco; outside of the cities, where Andalusī (Arab and Sephardi) influence was less pervasive, the melodic structures tend to be based on pentatonic scales. In “Tsaddiq el-Zaz” we find a melody hueing closer to the structure of a partial ṭab‘.

“Tsaddiq el-Zaz” is emblematic of the layered diaspora consciousness that informs Maroka’i identity. Embedded in the textual and melodic material are references to multiple diasporic identities. For instance, the language of the song’s refrain conjures orientations toward Morocco, Spain, and Israel, and towards multiple transnations. Judeo-Arabic, a dialect of Moroccan Arabic, connects community members to the homeland of Morocco and to other Middle Eastern Jewish groups. As in Algeria, Egypt, Syria, or Iraq, Hebrew and Hebraized words abound in several Jewish dialects of Arabic. The call and response performance style of each presentation of a strophe and refrain, and the celebration of Jewish sainthood, suggest a distinctive Maroka’i identity. Strains of Sephardi diaspora identity are evident in the versification model and the melodic setting. The zajal-like elements, especially in rhyming verse and the use of colloquial language, help to establish a connection to Spain. Sephardim were particularly instrumental in the introduction and expansion of this Hispano-Arabic form in North African Jewish communities. Finally, the Hebrew refrain not only conjures associations with Israel, the land where many Maroka’i immigrants in Brooklyn came from and where the language of this refrain is the vernacular, but the specific liturgical reference recalls their membership in the transnational Jewish community. The reference to Israel (the ethno-national identity and not the modern-nation state) from a popular segment of Hebrew liturgy, and its repetition in performance, is naturally an associative marker of a Jewish diaspora consciousness. Symbolic aspects of Maroka’i identity, an identity inherently imbued with multiple, overlapping diasporic ethnic identities, coalesce even in this, a song considered at first glance to be an apt example of a purely Moroccan expression.

## Ohil Yom Yom

In the standard hillula repertoire, there are two different piyyutim with the same title: "Ohil Yom Yom" (I will wait daily). The first piyyut was written by the eighteenth-century Maroka'i *paytan* (poet and singer) R' David Ḥassin (1720-1792) from Meknes, Morocco (Elbaz and Hazan 1999). While it is a well-known piece in several Sephardi communities, it is performed at Brooklyn hillulot to honor the tsaddiq Rebbe Meir Ba'al ha-Ness (master of the miracle). Though used specifically for Ba'al ha-Ness, Ḥassin's text takes a telescopic view of Jewish history by highlighting several different tsaddiqim and rabbinic leaders to bring the listener back to ancient Israel, to the Jewish Mediterranean and Persia, and to nodes of the Sephardi-Mizrahi community during centuries of Jewish life in the world of Islam. It is a favorite for performing at other hillulot, especially Lag B'Omer, because of its inclusion of so many tsaddiqim.

The second "Ohil Yom Yom" was written by R' Eliyahu Ḥazan (1847-1908), an important figure in modern Sephardi religious life. Born in Izmir, Turkey, he traveled throughout North Africa before becoming the *Hakham Bashi* (Chief Rabbi) of Alexandria, Egypt (Stillman 1995:29-47). His piyyut, framed like David Ḥassin's one, is an ode to Jerusalem, looking forward to the [re]building of the city and the return of the *Shekhinah* (God's dwelling spirit) to Zion.<sup>24</sup> While Ḥassin's "Ohil Yom Yom" is clearly a tsaddiq song, Ḥazan's clearly is not. However, because of a relationship between the two, it is necessary to discuss them together. The

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<sup>24</sup> The *Shekhinah* (God's dwelling spirit; extant presence) is described in biblical passages as a cloud that descended upon the tent of meeting during the desert sojourn of the Israelites and subsequently on the inner sanctum of the Holy Temple. With the destruction of the Holy Temple, the Shekhinah withdrew from the world. Lurianic Kabbalah advocates methods for inducing the return of the Shekhinah to Zion, to the spot where the Holy Temple will be rebuilt and the exile of the Jewish diaspora annulled.

same two melodies accompany these texts, and at times performers swap lines in the refrain lines between the two pieces. Both are included in the hillula repertoire of Maroka'im and are therefore performed quite regularly in Brooklyn.

The performance of these songs has been important to the construction of Maroka'i identity. Because hillulot are seen as a distinctive and very important Maroka'i communal context, the focus on all cultural expressions contained therein is heightened. But while this performance context may be seen as an expression of a distinct communal identity, with clear-cut boundaries that differentiate Maroka'im from other ethnic Jewish groups, pieces like "O'hil Yom Yom" often operate as vehicles for demonstrating that many ethnic boundaries for this community overlap with others and are necessarily porous. Thus, references to Jewish, Sephardi, and Maroka'i diaspora ethnic identities come forth, embedded in text and melody. The performance of these songs in the communal life of Brooklyn's Maroka'im, and especially in the context of the hillula, serves to remind participants of a complex Maroka'i identity. Reconciled moment by moment, several identities are consciously (and perhaps subconsciously) brought to the fore during the performance of these pieces. This musically imbued juxtaposition is a reflection of ethnicization in the Maroka'i community.

Several instances and themes in the texts point to different streams of diaspora consciousness. Both texts highlight messianism, a core principle of Jewish faith. A love for Zion expressed in both piyyutim emphasizes a consciousness about the Jewish diaspora—especially the notion of exile and return. Both Ḥassin and Ḥazan rely upon Sephardi poetics throughout their compositions, using common syllabic meters, rhyme schemes, acrostics,<sup>25</sup> and the

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<sup>25</sup> Acrostics have been a very popular technique among Sephardi poets for centuries, used as a signature or to honor another individual. As early as the eighth century, the Andalusí poet

muwashshah versification form. Ḥassin is more explicit about highlighting a historically based Sephardi diaspora consciousness, focusing several strophes on important Sephardi rabbis. The inclusion of these piyyutim in hillulot, and the popularity of Ḥassin's text in the song repertoires of other Sephardi groups today, establish them both as emblematic of a modern Sephardi diaspora consciousness. For Maroka'im, however, the historical provenance associated with both texts encourages a specifically Maroka'i diaspora consciousness as well. Ḥassin is revered as a prolific paytan from eighteenth-century Morocco. The imagery in his text is indicative of the influence of Lurianic Kabbalah in the western Maghreb and the centrality of saint veneration in Maroka'i life. Several important linguistic peculiarities, typical of Maroka'i piyyut composition, are present in Ḥassin's piece. Ḥazan, who traveled to Morocco during his lifetime and worked closely with the Maroka'i rabbi and eventual Hakham Bashi of Cairo R' Rafael ben Shimon (Stillman 1995:29-31), has been adopted as an important rabbinic figure in the Maroka'i community. While this piyyut provides textual evidence of a modern, Sephardi approach to Zionism that is indicative of the Maroka'i community's stance on the nationalist movement, the inclusion of Ḥazan's piyyut in the Maroka'i baqqashot pinpoints the affirmation of his stature in the Maroka'i community. Several elements in the texts, such as literary themes, versification models, and historical provenance, are important for foregrounding multiple streams of diaspora consciousness.

*Ḥassin's "Ohil Yom Yom"*

Widely considered the most prolific and esteemed paytan (poet) in Morocco's history, R' David ben Ḥassin was well respected as a learned man in Meknes. This city, a center for the

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Dunash ben Labrat used an acrostic to sign his name in his well-known Shabbat piyyut "Dror Yiqra."

legacy of Sephardi Jewish thought in Morocco, was where Ḥassin spent several years as a confidant of and personal paytan to R' Amram ben Diwan, the most-visited tsaddiq in Morocco to this day (Elbaz & Hazan 1999:82). Ḥassin was an important transitional figure in Maroka'i Hebrew poetry. He utilized both the historic quantitative poetic meters popularized by medieval Spanish poets and the syllabic meters increasingly popular in the contemporary Hebrew poetry from the Middle East. His inclusion of Aramaic passages from the Talmud into the language of the Maroka'i piyyut and his creation of new words in Hebrew are indicative of Maroka'i innovations in poetics in the post-Lurianic era. Similarly, he incorporated ideas from Lurianic Kabbalah, especially about mysticism and messianism. These elements represent a departure from the classical Sephardi linguistic tradition (Elbaz and Hazan 1999:102; Hazan 1995:140-142), and show the emphasis of the Zohar and Modern Kabbalah in Maroka'i life (Cernea 1988; Goldberg 1990). Elements of his inventive writing style still reverberate today in a number of different piyyutim now part of the hillula repertoire. These poetic and thematic elements are emblematic of a Maroka'i identity that has been imbued with a Sephardi diaspora consciousness.

Beyond the hillula, in the Maroka'i and other Sephardi communities generally, Ḥassin's piyyut is beloved because he focuses on several legendary rabbis who are significant to the Israelite and the Sephardi transnations. Most are from the Tannaic Period (first–third century CE) and were active in the area of Tiberias, a city on the Galilean Sea coast that served as an influential center of early Jewish life during and after the Roman period. The surrounding area has long been renowned for its history of mystical activity. From ancient Israel, during the Taanaic Period, and later among the sixteenth-century kabbalists, this region is supposed to be the location for the beginning of the Messianic Era. While several strophes focus on Taanaic Period figures, Ḥassin incorporates a wider breadth of Jewish history by honoring notable



Sephardi figures, including the twelfth-century R' Moshe Bar Maimon (Maimonides) and R' Haim Abulafia (1660-1744). Both of these figures are buried in Tiberias.

In the Maroka'i community, this tsaddiq song remains most closely associated with Rebbe Meir (p.c., R' Gad Bouskila, November 2, 2010). Of Rebbe Meir, Hassin writes:

Har gavoha ve-ram 'al, hukam alav mima'al /  
Rebbe Meir hu ba'al, *atya ve-tim-haya* [Aramaic]

Regarded as a distinguished and high mountain, he was established from high above /  
Rebbe Meir is the master, of miracles and wonders

The popularity of Hassin's piyyut, with its reference to Rebbe Meir and inferences about sainthood and messianism, make it a favorite in Brooklyn's Maroka'i community for hillulot and on several other communal occasions. According to R' Gad Bouskila, even during hillulot for other tsaddiqim, the performance of this piyyut accompanies the presentation of a special candle lighting to honor Rebbe Meir. The piyyut honors several of Rebbe Meir's Tanaitic Period (10-220 CE) contemporaries as well, such as R' Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, R' Hānanya, R' Akiva, and Akiva's 24,000 martyred students. Nevertheless, it is performed in Rebbe Meir's honor most of the time.

Conspicuously absent in Hassin's piyyut is any direct reference to R' Shimon bar Yoḥai, who was by far Rebbe Meir's most famous contemporary and the tsaddiq with the widest global recognition and renown. Along with Rebbe Meir, he was one of only five surviving students of R' Akiva. These five represent the continuation of R' Akiva's school of thought (p.c., R' Joseph Dweck, May 3, 2012). Only a veiled reference is made to Bar Yoḥai in the verses:

ve-ḥamishah talmidim, tsaddiqim ve-ḥasidim /  
mi-zahav neḥmadim, moneh she-baḥan hayah

And five students, saintly and pious /  
from the beloved gold [ones], it was recorded and accounted

Circulated throughout the Maghreb and the Levant, Ḥassin's piyyut is found in a number of prominent collections of Sephardi-Mizraḥi piyyutim and pizmonim. The popularity of his text among several different Sephardi-Mizrahi groups means that it is emblematic of a modern Sephardi diaspora consciousness. Familiarity with his piyyut serves as a connection point between Sephardi communities. It is included in the Brooklyn Syrian songbook *Shir u'Shvahah Hallel v'Zimrah* (SUHV #345).<sup>26</sup> However, Ḥassin's text functions very differently in Syrian communities. It is popular simply because it is considered a historic and great Sephardi piyyut. Ḥazzan Yoḥai Cohen of Sha'arei Shalom synagogue is a professional performer in the Sephardi community. Of Tunisian and Iraqi background, Cohen is a native of Beit Shean, Israel schooled in the Yerushalmi-Sephardi style of ḥazzanut who immigrated to Brooklyn a decade ago to pursue a career in music. According to Cohen, the text makes no specific reference to the individuals as tsaddiqim. For him, Ḥassin's concern with including these rabbinic figures was their roles as icons of the Sephardi community (p.c., Yoḥai Cohen, November 12, 2011). He performs the piece because of its Sephardi provenance and popularity, not because of any associations it may have as a tsaddiq song.

For Maroka'im, "Oḥil Yom Yom" has been included in the hillula repertoire as a means for honoring Rebbe Meir and for lauding *tsaddiqut* (sainthood). The hillula, a context absent from Syrian communal life, provides Maroka'im a framework to imbue song texts with additional meaning, especially when there are references to specific and historic individuals. The inclusion of Ḥassin's "Oḥil Yom Yom" at hillulot makes tsaddiqim out of all the figures mentioned in the text.

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<sup>26</sup> For a more detailed look at this songbook, see Shelemay (1998:138-143) and Kligman (2009:46-49).

Hazan's "Ohil Yom Yom"

Like Ḥassin's, Ḥazan's piyyut is included in the revered Maroka'i baqqashot tradition. Both paytanim rely upon Sephardi poetics in their work, conjuring associations with the Sephardi diaspora. Like Ḥassin's text, Ḥazan uses a syllabic meter of seven syllables per hemistich and follows the muwashshaḥ versification form, keeping the integrity of the rhyme scheme throughout. However, Ḥazan's "Ohil Yom Yom" is a different case from Ḥassin's in some important ways. Though he bases his text on Ḥassin's, his subject matter is quite different. He focuses on messianism and love for Zion, not individuals or tsaddiqut. He fashions his piyyut as an ode to Jerusalem, not to any person(s). Nevertheless, his piyyut is a serious song.

Ḥazan clearly bases his piyyut on Ḥassin's (Elbaz & Hazan 1999:127).<sup>27</sup> His word-for-word incorporation of some of Ḥassin's text pays homage to the great Maroka'i paytan. Like Ḥassin, he also uses a very similar, two-line *madrikh* (guiding refrain) at the outset of his piyyut (figure 5.5).

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<sup>27</sup> According to Elbaz and Hazan (1999:127), there are at least two other texts based on Ḥassin's "Ohil Yom Yom" text. One is a matruz piece, alternating lines in Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic. The other is a piyyut glorifying R' Shimon bar Yoḥai.

**Figure 5.5: “Oḥil Yom Yom” – Ḥassin/Ḥazan Madrikhim (pl., guiding refrains)**

<u>Eliyahu Hazan - Oḥil Yom Yom</u>			
Oḥil yom yom eshta'eh	aini tamid tsofiyah	עֵינֵי תָמִיד צוֹפִיָּה	אוֹחִיל יוֹם יוֹם אֲשֶׁתִּתְּאֶה
	I will wait for the day, the day of wonder. My eyes are always observing.		
Matai avo v'er'eh	Yerushalayim b'nuyah	יְרוּשָׁלַיִם בְּנוּיָהּ	מַתַּי אָבוֹא וְאֶרְאֶה
	When will I come and see the [re]building of Jerusalem		
<u>R' David Ḥassin - Oḥil Yom Yom</u>			
Oḥil yom yom eshta'eh	tamid aini tsofiyah	תָּמִיד עֵינֵי צוֹפִיָּה	אוֹחִיל יוֹם יוֹם אֲשֶׁתִּתְּאֶה
	I will wait for the day, the day of wonder. Neverending, my eyes look forward.		
E'eb'rah na v'er'eh	admat kodesh Tiveryah	אֲדַמַּת קֹדֶשׁ טִבְרִיָּה	אֶעְבְּרָה נָא וְאֶרְאֶה
	Please allow me to cross and see the holy land of Tiberias		

In the first hemistich—*Oḥil Yom Yom Eshtaeh*—he replicates Ḥassin’s text word for word. In the second hemistich, Ḥazan makes a slight change by transposing the first two words, altering the meaning. Where Ḥassin writes *tamid eini tzoḥiya* (never ending, my eyes look forward), Ḥazan writes *aini tamid tzoḥiya* (my eyes are always observing). This transposition makes sense in the context of the second line of the madrikh. Here, Ḥassin and Ḥazan differ entirely. Refashioning the biblical passage where Moses first looks at the land of Israel that will be inherited by the Israelites, Ḥassin writes *E’eb-rah na v’er-eh, admat kodesh Tveriyah* (please allow me to cross and see the holy land of Tiberias). Like Moses’ plea in the Torah (*Devarim 2:23-28*), this is a petition to God by Ḥassin for a chance to see the Holy Land. He has fine-tuned the biblical passage to reflect his urge to see Tiberius, the place of so much saintly activity throughout Jewish history. In Ḥazan’s second hemistich, he writes *matai avo v’er-eh, Yerushalayim b’nuyah* (when will I come and see the [re]building of Jerusalem), imploring God to get on with the redemption of Israel. From his vantage point, he has been there and has experienced a renaissance of Jewish life in the Holy Land generally and the holy city of Jerusalem specifically.

In any case, the slight differences to the madrikh in both piyyutim—whose refrains are repeated several times and are thus very familiar—are important for characterizing Maroka'i perspectives on two different subjects.

Ḥazan focuses on the theme of geulah as the total redemption of the transnational Jewish community from the exile of the Jewish diaspora, integrating a historico-religious view of Jewish messianism with a modern political perspective on the love of Zion. But whereas Ḥassin sees the messianic era beginning with a mystical, otherworldly spark, ushered in by a single savior character to re-establish the primacy of the Jewish people (*Am Yisrael*) as the safekeeper's of God's Jerusalem, Ḥazan expresses the rebuilding of Jerusalem in more prescient terms, as a reality he feels is possible for Jewish people to induce in the new political climate of modernity. For the modern member of the transnational Jewish community, Ḥazan's text portends a fulfillment (at least in part) of the nation's aspirations. This is clear from the last strophe:

Ḥa-zaq, am dal ve-ev-yon / ha-yeqarim be-nei Zion  
Ha-bayit ha-zeh ye-hi-yeh el-yon / le-'al-may 'al-maya

Strong are the poor and downtrodden / the beloved children of Zion  
This house<sup>28</sup> will be exalted / forever to come

Ḥazan's sentiment challenges the longstanding assumption that Jewish sympathizers with the contemporaneously burgeoning Modern Zionist cause, at least the politically active component of the cause, were rare in the Jewish communities of the Islamic world.<sup>29</sup> His view of the catalyst for the redemption and the kind of society this redemption should bring probably

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<sup>28</sup> *This house* has a double meaning: the Holy Temple and the Nation of Israel.

<sup>29</sup> Ḥazan's publication, *Zikhron Yerushalayim* (Remembering Jerusalem; 1874), is an important book highlighting an early Sephardi perspective on Zionism. He advocates for Jewish political unification as an imperative in the era of modernity and suggests that the love of Zion is an "intensely deep sentiment which is shared by most Jews" (Stillman 1995:34). This love for Zion serves as a catalyst for unifying members of the Jewish diaspora in service of an actionable cause.

differs from the Hertzlian Zionist perspective, but this is debatable. The return to the ancient land of Israel by Jews from around the world is a vision that Ḥazan himself did not see fully realized when he wrote this piyyut, but one which members of the transnational Jewish community recognize: a viable, sovereign Jewish State in the land of Israel, with a rebuilt Jerusalem (albeit without the return of the Shekhinah). Thus, Ḥazan's text tries to reconcile two aspects of the Jewish diaspora consciousness: the schism, exile, and messianic redemption narrative and the modern political support for an actionable Zionism.

Both Ḥassin's and Ḥazan's piyyutim are important pieces in the hillula repertoire. Performed regularly in Brooklyn's Maroka'i community, they conjure important aspects of a layered diaspora consciousness among members. The provenance of the composers, textual elements like versification and linguistic approaches, themes of sainthood, messianism, and Zionism, are meaningful to participants during hillulot. Reiterated in this context, where musical expression is foregrounded, these songs play a vital role as building blocks for constructing a particular Jewish diasporic ethnic identity.

### Melodies

In Brooklyn's Maroka'i community, two different melodies are used interchangeably to accompany these piyyutim. The first melody (figure 5.6) is based on the *Āla-Andalusit* classical genre, from the *nūba* (song suite) *Hijaz el-Kabir*.<sup>30</sup> This melody is also used for the Maroka'i

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<sup>30</sup> Like the maqām *Hijaz*, the Maroka'i ṭab' *Hijaz el-Kabir* (which is the first ṭab' of the *nūba* of the same name) has the characteristic augmented second in the lower tetrachord (D Eb F# G). Similarly, this ṭab' also has a different upper pentachord when ascending (G A B C D) than descending (D C Bb A G). While the maqām Ḥijāz uses a neutral interval on the ascending upper tetrachord (G A B half-flat C D), the Maroka'i ṭab' does not (Guettat 2000:363; Attiyah 2005:35).

baqqashot, for *parashaot Bo* and *Mishpatim*.<sup>31</sup> When asked to sing “Oḥil Yom Yom,” with no further prompting, R’ Michael Kakon chose to perform this melody with Ḥazan’s text (p.c., R’ Michael Kakon, December 1, 2010).

**Figure 5.6: “Oḥil Yom Yom”—Maroka’i Melody in ṭab‘ Hijaz el-Kabir**



This is a melody revered for its historic and geographic provenance, and its place as part of the baqqashot repertoire. Its use to accompany either text emphasizes a Maroka’i diasporic ethnic identity, making a connection to the homeland and emboldening a sense among community members that it is part of their ethnic identity. “On Lag b’Omer, we sing a lot of songs for R’ Meir,” said R’ Chaim Dahan. As he often liked to emphasize to me during our interviews, “The Moroccan one goes like this. [sings first melody]. That’s the Moroccan way” (p.c., R’ Chaim Dahan, September 20, 2010).

<sup>31</sup> The chapter in *Shir Yedidut* (Attiyah 2005) for parashah *Bo* includes Ḥazan’s “Oḥil Yom Yom” (piyyut #300). In the chapter for parashah *Mispatim*, the melodic cue for a piyyut called “Ashira Shir” (I Will Sing a Song; piyyut #471; author unknown) refers to “Oḥil Yom Yom”. Attiyah writes, “according to the melody for Oḥil Yom Yom, #300.” Despite Ḥazan’s piyyut being the only “Oḥil Yom Yom” included in *Shir Yedidut*, and therefore clearly the melodic model for “Ashira Shir,” the refrain for “Ashira Shir”—*E-‘e-be-rah na ve-er-eh, et ha-aretz ha-tovah* (Please allow me to pass and see the good land)—is refashioned from Ḥassin’s “Oḥil Yom Yom.”

Though popular among Maroka'im, the first melody is not the most popular for "Oḥil Yom Yom." It remains exclusive to the Maroka'i community, but a second melody is more common and popular in several other Sephardi communities (figure 5.7). Originally accompanying an Arabic text, this melody was composed by mid-twentieth century Egyptian-American bandleader Mohammed el-Bakkar (<http://www.piyut.org.il>, accessed November 3, 2010). "This is the Yerushalmi (Yerushalmi-Sephardi) one. You've probably heard this one, yeah?" (p.c., R. Chaim Dahan, September 20, 2010). When I asked R' Gad Bouskila to sing "Oḥil Yom Yom," he began with this second melody. "Most people know this one better" (p.c., R' Gad Bouskila, November 2, 2010). To gauge knowledge about these songs in the Syrian community, I asked R' Joseph Dweck, several other members of Shaarei Shalom synagogue, and local oudist Victor Esses if they could even think of any other melodies for "Oḥil Yom Yom" besides the Bakkar melody. No one could recall any other melody. According to the popular Syrian songbook *Shir u'Shvaḥah Hallel v'Zimrah* (SUHV) and the community pizmon website, this is the only melody (<http://www.pizmonim.org>, accessed November 3, 2010).



**Figure 5.7: “Oḥil Yom Yom” Melody (composed by Mohammed El Bakkar)**

The musical score for "Oḥil Yom Yom" is presented in five staves. The first two staves represent the first melody, labeled 'A'. The first staff shows the melody in G major, 2/4 time, starting with a quarter rest followed by a series of eighth and quarter notes. The second staff provides the accompaniment with a steady bass line. The third and fourth staves represent the second melody, labeled 'B'. The third staff shows the melody, which begins with a quarter rest and continues with a sequence of eighth and quarter notes. The fourth staff provides the accompaniment for this second melody. The fifth staff concludes the piece with a final chord and a double bar line.

The necessary familiarity with both melodies for “Oḥil Yom Yom” that allows for the interchangeability one expects to hear at hillulot is thus limited to Maghrebi Sephardi communities. This is clear in Brooklyn’s Maroka’i community by member knowledge and use of these melodies in local hillulot.

Several informants in the Maroka’i community suggested that this second melody, which is in the Eastern Arab maqām Ḥusaynī,<sup>32</sup> is also of Maroka’i provenance; one even suggested it is from a Judeo-Spanish song, even though he could not recall which (p.c., Toby Levy, November 2, 2010). The prominence of the second melody, and the misconceptions about its background, testify to the hegemony within the realm of musical practice of the Syrian community in Brooklyn’s Sephardi community as a whole.

<sup>32</sup> See Chapter Three, footnote 32.

What we see from the reaction of informants to this melody for "Oḥil Yom Yom" is that community members have become so familiar with the neutral intervals found in Eastern Arab musical traditions that they focus on the melody's provenance—reputedly from Morocco or from a Judeo-Spanish song (presumably passed down orally in Morocco)—to promote differentiation. This imagining of provenance serves as a means to establish a boundary between themselves and other Sephardi communities. Simultaneously these informants are participating in the blurring of an ethnic boundary by incorporating the neutral interval songs with ease.

Maroka'im have adopted several melodies and songs common to other Sephardi groups into their repertoires, for hillulot and other occasions, knowingly and at times unknowingly. Maroka'i singers have had to acculturate to the melodic approaches of the Eastern Arabic musical traditions. Intervals found in the maqāmat systems no longer sound foreign to them. The presence of neutral intervals in the musical expressions of Maroka'im in Brooklyn simply augments their familiarity with nūba-based traditions.<sup>33</sup> The result is a larger boundary, where Maroka'im participate in promoting a pan-Sephardi ethnic identity.

Hillulot in Brooklyn provide a rare opportunity to hear all versions of "Oḥil Yom Yom" in the context of one single occasion. A familiarity with both Ḥassin's and Ḥazan's texts, and with both the Maroka'i and Egyptian melodies encourages willful interchange at hillulot. The willful interchange, between the different melodies and texts, actually helps to temper the redundancy of hearing the same pieces several times.

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<sup>33</sup> Katz (1968) suggests that amongst second-generation Jewish immigrants to Israel from the Levant, in an effort to differentiate the pan-Sephardi community from the hegemonic Ashkenazi community at the center of power, cantors and singers could be heard applying neutral intervals to familiar melodies (HaTikvah, Mipi El, Maoz Tzur) and even emphasizing these intervals in communal melodies. Brooklyn's Maroka'im have done similarly, by taking melodies associated with other communities—especially Ashkenazi melodies—and infusing them with a "Maroka'i flavor" (p.c., R' Chaim Dahan, September 20, 2010).

### Yodu Lekha Rayonai

Performed regularly in Brooklyn is a popular tsaddiq song in honor of Baba Sali called “Yodu Lekha Rayonai” (Thank You, Creator of Ideas). According to *Yagel Ya’akov*, a substantive and authoritative commentary on several piyyutim written by different members of the Abuḥatsira rabbinic dynasty, Baba Sali composed “Yodu Lekha Rayonai” (Yigal 1995:117-120). It is rare to find a piyyut used for a tsaddiq song, composed by the tsaddiq himself. Usually, a text is associated with a tsaddiq because it is a panegyric piyyut. Furthermore, “Yodu Lekha Rayonai” became a popular song throughout the Maroka’i diaspora even before Baba Sali passed away in 1984. These features of the provenance of “Yodu Lekha Rayonai” stand out, making this addition to the hillula repertoire unique.

The text for "Yodu Lekha Rayonai" (figure 5.8) presents several instances where Baba Sali reveals his own association with different diasporic identities. He makes clear allusions to ideas of Lurianic Kabbalah and to normative ideas in Jewish thought, expressing his identity as a member of the transnational Jewish community. His expressions about the end days and the exile of the Jewish community infer a strong diaspora consciousness. Baba Sali relies upon a number of poetic conventions to convey Sephardi identity, including an acrostic, a reference to popular versification forms, and an emphasis on a personalized relationship between the poet and God. He includes several references to his role as a mystic and interlocutor between the supernal realm and his followers. By doing so, he brings out a clear association with tsaddiqut, an aspect of Maroka’i identity further emphasized by the performance context for this piyyut as well.

### Figure 5.8: “Yodu Lekha Rayonai” Text

- 1) Yo-du le-kha ra-yo-nai, El mi-be-ten yo-tze-ri  
‘al kir-vat-kha be-Si-nai, le-ha-ir et ne-ri  
‘al ken be-ta-ḥa-nu-nai, a-fa-er be-shi-ri  
Be-khol ya-mai ve-sha-nai, ‘ad la-‘ad le-’o-lam

My thoughts will serve to recognize You, oh Lord, who formed me from the belly  
You approached Sinai, to ignite my luminescence  
In my pleas (in this piyyut), I will splendor you with my song  
In all my days and years, forever and ever

#### Refrain:

*Es-maḥ bakh, es-maḥ bakh, es-maḥ bakh, El ‘o-lam*  
*Es-maḥ bakh go-el naf-shi, et ge-u-lat ‘o-lam*

I will be gladdened in You, God of the world  
I will be gladdened in You, redeemer of my soul, redeemer of the world

- 2) Se-son li-bi he-mah, be-zo-khe-ri ḥa-sa-dav  
Ki ba-ḥar mi-kol u-mah, Yis-ra-el ‘a-va-dav  
Ne-tzer ne-ti-’ah ta-mah, ha-avot ye-di-dav  
E-ven tze-dek she-le-mah, mi-sho-resh gid-lam

These (praises) enliven my heart, in my remembrances of His kindness  
Because He chose from all people, Yisrael His servants  
Stem of this wholesome planting, the fathers (Avraham, Yitzhak, and Yaakov) are beloved  
As the perfectly righteous Rock, He raised them from the root

- 3) Re-tzo-ne-kha esh-a-lah, ḥai ba-’al ha-ra-tzon.  
Ka-a-sheer ba-te-ḥi-lah, na-hag-ta et ha-tzon  
Be-mir-‘eh tov ve-nif-la, ve-ha-yah kol ‘el-tzon  
Ro-‘eh Yis-ra-el se-lah, ha-a-zen et qo-lam

I ask to be Your obsession always, you oh lifesource, master of desire  
As in the beginning, You guided Your flock  
In a wonderful and good pasture, there was utter contentment  
Oh great shepherd of Yisrael. put Your ear to their voices

- 4) Atah hu ha-Elohim, ha-‘ed ve-ha-da-yan  
Qum na li-krat ge-va-him, tze na me-zu-yan  
Lin-qom niq-mat-kha me-hem, le-ha-she-lim kol ‘in-yan  
Shim-kha ve-khis-a-kha, she-hem me-‘a-yin kol ḥai ne-‘e-lam

You are the Lord, witness and judge  
Please rise up against the haughty, go out with Your armaments against them  
Enact vengeance upon them, solving every predicament  
(For the sake of) Your name and throne, they are but living obliviously

5) Le-‘o-seh nif-la-ot le-va-do, et ye-ri-vai ya-riv  
A-qa-veh ta-mid ḥas-do, hash-kem ve-ha-‘a-rev  
Ve-lo ya-sekh ba-‘a-do, et ti-ra-to ya-ḥa-riv  
Ve-az na-shir likh-vo-do, ha-shi-rim be-mu-she-lam

Wonderments are His to enact, opposing rivals His domain alone  
I will forever expect His kindness to come, morning and night  
If not on His own behalf, why destroy His palace (temple)<sup>34</sup>  
Thus, we will sing to His honor, perfected songs of praise

6) Ḥa-zeq Tzion mo-‘a-de-nu, a-she-mer me-khu-ve-net  
Mul ze-vul miq-da-she-nu, she-hi ha-no-te-net  
Ko-aḥ ‘el-yon le-ga-no, ‘e-den ha-me-kho-ne-net  
A-she-mer bam kol ḥef-tze-nu, hem miq-dash ve-u-lam

Strengthen Zion during our special season, (it is) the focus of all concentration  
Just in front of our holy abode (temple), that was given to us  
Strength to the One who readies His Garden of Eden  
In them are all our desires; they (holy temple and garden) are the holy place and space

7) Zot hai-tah li be-‘an-yi, ge-do-lah hav-ta-ḥah  
Le-av ha-mon ni-se-yi, bein be-ta-rim zar-ḥah  
Le-mor ma-tai ve-a-yeh, u-me-tze-nah me-nu-khah  
Be-kha kol ma-a-va-yai, El ta-a-vat ‘o-lam

This came to me in my troubled time, this great promise  
As the tested father of the masses (Avraham), at the moment of the covenant<sup>35</sup>  
To speak of when and where, I will find from whence rest will spring forth  
In You is every desire, God, delight of the world

8) Qetz ya-mim ga-leh, le-‘am e-leh ‘a-mu-sai te-la-ot  
Ga-dal tza-‘a-ri va-‘a-ma-li, be-fil-ai pe-la-ot  
Me-tza-pim a-vot ve-‘o-le-lai, ‘a-se le-to-vah ot  
Ke-li-lo ge-di-lai ba-ne-kha ‘al ti-lam

Reveal the time of days, to the nation [of Israel] laden with hardship  
My burden and labor has grown, wondrous amounts  
Fathers and babes are expecting, make a good sign  
His crown grows on the brow of His children<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> God would never destroy the *Beit ha-Mikdash* (Holy Temple), as He built it. Surely, then, he’ll rebuild it.

<sup>35</sup> The way of making a covenant describe in the Torah (Genesis 15:17-18).

<sup>36</sup> One wears *tefillin* (phylacteries) on the brow, like a crown.

For members of Brooklyn's Maroka'i community, "Yodu Lekha Rayonai" serves as an example of Baba Sali's clairvoyance, mystical abilities, and role as an interlocutor with the cosmos. According to R' Chaim Dahan, there is a reference in the text (6:1) to the Dawson's Field hijackings on September 6, 1970, when 56 Jewish airline passengers were held hostage in Jordan by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).<sup>37</sup> The High Holy Day season was to commence in a few days, and as Dahan explained, Baba Sali made public comments prior to the release of the hostages assuring followers that these passengers would be home for the holidays. Popular perception is that Baba Sali's access to the cosmos had affected the outcome (p.c., R' Chaim Dahan, September 20, 2010).

Baba Sali conveys in the text his own sense of being an interlocutor. First, he reminds God that he received the prophecy of redemption in a promise (7:1). He likens himself to Abraham, trusting in God's covenant. He alludes further to knowing what the moment of rest (redemption) will be (7:3). Second, he implores God to reveal the secret of the time of redemption to the people, in a sign (8:1-2). Baba Sali suggests that his burden, as a leader of the community and knower of the secret, has grown unbearable.

Baba Sali's knowledge of kabbalistic principles is present in the text as well. In one line (4:4), he alludes to a kabbalistic interpretation of a verse in the Torah: *va-yomer ki-yad 'al-kis Yah milhamah la-Ado-Shem ba-Amaleq mi-dor dor* (For he said, because the Lord has sworn that He will have war with Amalek from generation to generation; Exodus 17:16). Amalek is a figure from the Torah narrative that has become a metaphor for all persecutors of Yisrael, throughout the generations. *Khisei* (throne) is normally written: *khaf-samekh-alef* (אכפ). However, in this

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<sup>37</sup> During the Black September hijacking, the PFLP diverted TWA Flight #741 from Frankfurt to Dawson's Field airport in Jordan. All hostages were released on September 27, 1970 (26 Elul), less than one week before Rosh Hashanah (Raab 2007).

Torah verse, the word *kes* (throne) appears without the letter *alef: khaf-samekh* (כס). The kabbalistic interpretation that Baba Sali is incorporating into this piyyut is that God's throne will not be complete until Amalek is truly destroyed. Only through God's will and action, metaphorically conceptualized as His name, can Amalek be destroyed.

In another passage (6:2-4), alluding directly to his Jewish diaspora consciousness, Baba Sali focuses on the kabbalistic concept of two Jerusalems, two temples, and two Gardens of Eden. Here he suggests that the readying of these places in the upper (supernal) realms, by God, will ultimately lead to the revealing and rebuilding of these places in the lower realm. *Geulah* (redemption) remains at the forefront in Baba Sali's work. It is a religious concept that applies to the entire Jewish people and includes physical and spiritual qualities. Baba Sali wrote this piyyut while living in Israel, but in his eyes, the physical return to *Eretz Yisrael* (land of Israel) is not enough to consider the great exile finished. Only when the *Shekhinah* (Divine presence) returns to the Holy Temple will redemption truly commence.

The idea that an individual can induce *geulah* appears multiple times in the text. This shows Baba Sali's familiarity with *tikkun olam*, the kabbalistic notion popularized throughout the Sephardi diaspora in the centuries after the expulsion from Spain. He recognizes in this notion that each individual has a role to play in making reparations for the causes of the Jewish diaspora. The further idea that an individual, such as a *tsaddiq*, can gain access to the cosmos and affect the community for good is what Lawrence Fine (2003) describes as the development of a "cult of personality" in Kabbalah practices. The *tsaddiq* exists as a special interlocutor between this world and the world beyond. Baba Sali expresses in this piyyut a self-knowledge of his role in *tikkun olam* and as a *tsaddiq* of the people.

Poetic Conventions in “Yodu Lekha Rayonai”

In “Yodu Lekha Rayonai,” Baba Sali uses an acrostic to spell out *Yisrael hazak* (Yisrael is strong). The common understanding is that this acrostic is a double-entendre, referring to himself and to the transnational Jewish community. However, I would suggest another possibility as well. As we have seen in the instance of “Oḥil Yom Yom,” the refrain from one popular piyyut can often serve as an example or foundation for another text. “Yodukha Rayonai,” a popular Shabbat piyyut by the prolific sixteenth-century kabbalist and paytan R’ Israel Najara, may very well be the model for Baba Sali’s refrain. R’ Israel Najara also incorporates *Yisrael* as an acrostic, something Baba Sali most likely sought to reproduce in his piyyut.

Like Ḥassin’s “Oḥil Yom Yom,” Baba Sali composed this piyyut primarily in Hebrew with a sprinkling of Aramaic passages from the Talmud. Historically, the depth of a piyyut text was reserved for members of the cultural elite. Despite his use of flowery imagery, incorporation of biblical verses and religious themes, and the occasional use of a higher linguistic register for parts of the Hebrew text, “Yodu Lekha Rayonai” is aimed at the masses.

“Yodu Lekha Rayonai” has a four-line strophe and two-line refrain. The versification form of “Yodu Lekha Rayonai” is reminiscent of the strophe and refrain muwashshah/zajal forms. However, whereas the strophes of a muwashshah/zajal have a rhyme scheme independent from the refrain, the concluding couplet of each strophe in this piyyut matches the refrain’s rhyme scheme (Abu-Haidar 1997:19). Baba Sali thus hues closely to the kharja form, ending each strophe with the same phonetic syllable as the refrain. Adding complexity to his versification, Baba Sali includes a rhyme at the hemistiche as well, which is not necessary in a kharja (figure 5.8). Still, despite these sophisticated elements, I believe Baba Sali’s intention was



that “Yodu Lekha Rayonai” be accessible and comprehensible by everyone, so that all could connect with his tsaddiqut.

The refrain, however, is a departure from these conventions. The text functions much like a chorus in the Western popular verse-chorus form. The text, *esmah bakh* (I will be happy), is repeated three times, forming a kind of textual hook. Typically, an individual community member sings each strophe and refrain before someone else in the community takes the next. However, as R’ Dahan explained to me, for “Yodu Lekha Rayonai” the entire community sings the refrain together (p.c., R’ Chaim Dahan, September 20, 2010). While it is clear that Baba Sali relies upon poetic conventions familiar to Sephardi circles, the textual hook represents a diasporic incorporation of a Western-style approach to versification. It is unusual in any piyyut, and essentially unheard of in a muwashshah/zajal/kharja form.

A favored literary mode for the Sephardi poet is expressing a personalized relationship with God. This is clear in the third line of the first strophe, “*al ken be-tahanunai, afa-er be-shiri*” (Even in my pleas [for redemption], I will praise [You] in song). The addition of the letters *alef* (א) in *afa-er* and *yud* (י) at the end of *b’shiri* are two examples of a grammatical device meant to imply the poet’s individual voice. In the refrain, *esmah bakh goel nafshi, et ge’ulat olam* (I will be gladdened in You, redeemer of my soul, redeemer of the world), Baba Sali repeats this grammatical device to emphasize his personalized hopes for redemption. His expression of a personalized relationship may be a Sephardi convention, but the themes of national identity and redemption are intertwined to remind community members that his hopes are the hopes of the Jewish diaspora community.

We have seen a number of ways that Baba Sali uses textual elements in “Yodu Lekha Rayonai” to embed emblems of Sephardi and Marokai identity, how he alludes to the Jewish

diaspora, and even how he incorporates a Western compositional device—the textual hook.

Similarly, we can see from the musical setting of this piyyut (figure 5.9) examples of how

Maroka'im are negotiating identity and territorial claims in a new, diasporic construct.

**Figure 5.9: “Yodu Lekha Rayonai” Melody**

**A**

Yo - du l' - ka\_\_ ra\_\_ - yo\_\_ - nai El mi - b - te\_\_n yo - tz -  
 Al kir - bat - kha b' si\_\_ - nai l' ha - ir - e\_\_t ne\_\_

1. ri\_\_ - ri\_\_ al -  
 2. ri\_\_ - ri\_\_ al -

**B**

ken b' takh - nu - nai\_\_ a - fa - er b' shi - ri\_\_ b'\_\_

**A'**

kol ya - me\_\_v' sha\_\_ - nai ad la - ad l'\_\_ o\_\_ - la\_\_ m

**C**

es - ma\_h bakh es - ma\_h bakh es - ma\_h bakh es - mah bakh l' - o - lam E\_s

**A'**

mah bakh go - e\_\_l na\_\_ f - shi et g - u - la\_\_t o\_\_ - la\_\_ m

\* Chaim Dahan variation of **B**

The approach to melodic construction is a departure from traditional Maroka'i musics. The composer does not rely upon common melodic approaches found in nūba-based forms or Eastern Arabic musical traditions. Whereas in these traditions modes are commonly comprised of two tetrachords, the melody for "Yodu Lekha Rayonai" is based on a Western natural minor scale. It begins on the fifth degree of the scale and resolves to a clear tonic, implying both western melodic and harmonic approaches. There are harmonic structures more akin to popular Western music present as well. As mentioned above, the refrain text suggests a cognizance of modern approaches to song form through Baba Sali's allusion to the Western popular verse-chorus song form. The accompanying melody and harmony help to reiterate this popular song form. We see a descending pattern employed in the C section to emphasize the repetition of the textual hook. These musical elements characterize the routes embedded in Maroka'i identity.

Melodies and melodic forms for Sephardi piyyutim are typically more logogenic, following the text closely. For example, with its unchanging rhyme scheme and quantitative or syllabic meter, a single, repetitive melodic line, producing an "AAAA" type form, is the usual setting for a qaṣīda. The melodic form of a traditional muwashshaḥ/zajal/kharja is similarly logogenic, commonly resulting in an AAAA BB form. In "Yodu Lekha Rayonai," despite the consistent rhyme scheme, a contrasting melodic line accompanies the third stiche in the strophe. The melodic motion implies a strong dominant, setting up the kind of tension and release we would expect from Western-style song melodies. When performing this B section for me, R' Chaim Dahan implies a dominant to resolve to the relative major, a stark change in the harmonic tonality that emphasizes a cadence very familiar in Western composition.

The descending melodic pattern that accompanies the refrain—what I have marked as the "C" section—hints again at the influence of Western-style functional harmony. The arpeggiated

background accompaniment of the accordionist in a popular recording by R' Haim Louk plays off the descending stepwise motion of the melody, standing in stark contrast to what one would hear in traditional Maroka'i musics. The resulting melodic/harmonic song form for "Yodu Ikha Rayonai" is: AABA CA. Even though R' Bouskila explained to me that most of the piyyutim written by the Abuḥatsiras in the twentieth century are set to cha'abi songs—melodies in 6/8 meter, following an AB melodic form—"Yodu Lekha Rayonai" is based on a different stream of compositional inspiration.

In diasporic hillulot, where the stated purpose remains connecting with a tsaddiq, the occasion has also become an important opportunity for expressing a new iteration of Maroka'i identity. Pieces like "Yodu Lekha Rayonai" help to define a Maroka'i identity that integrates overlapping strains of diasporic identity. As Regev and Seroussi (2004) suggest regarding the popular Israeli musical genre *musika mizrahit*, *eclecticism* provides a framework for perpetuating a pan-Sephardi identity by allowing for the incorporation of a diversity of musical expression. *Musika mizrahit* is a viable expression of pan-Sephardi identity because its eclecticism is based on familiar elements: textual expressions of Sephardi life in Israel, performers making the music, and instruments. We can see a similar eclecticism at work in the song repertoire of the diasporic hillula. In "Yodu Lekha Rayonai," this eclecticism is quite intense. This tsaddiq song conveys ideas about communal history and religious thought. The cultural provenance of its composer imbues the piece with unquestionable authenticity, promoting continuity. He relies upon familiar poetic conventions, and incorporates expressions of mysticism. The musical accompaniment suggests the incorporation of several elements from beyond the genres of typical Maroka'i musics. Approaches to melody, form, and harmony draw the listener westward. The performance

of “Yodu Lekha Rayonai” gives community members an opportunity to juxtapose many different layers of diaspora consciousness.

## **Conclusion**

In an address on Yom Kippur, as he prepared to bestow a blessing for the king of Morocco upon a consular emissary, R' Gad Bouskila of Netivot Israel synagogue implored congregants to “remember that our tradition is special, and remember what Morocco still means to us” (September 18, 2010). The impulse to recognize a Maroka'i ethnic identity with communal roots, loosely defined in collaboration with borders of the modern nation-state, has become an important part of the community's diasporic narrative. The conceptualization of a singular Maroka'i identity can be seen as an extension of what Arjun Appadurai describes as culturalism—a “conscious mobilization of cultural differences in service of larger national or transnational politics” (Appadurai 1996:13-15). This is also a form of ethnicization. Maroka'i ethnicity is being territorialized into a new, transnational construct in which community members are active participants in constructing identity. Furthermore, members are socially constructing this identity, taking any concept of it beyond prohibitive notions of a primordial essence. The hillula, and the emergence of a standard hillula song repertoire in the Maroka'i diaspora, is a context for constructing ethnicity. A fluidity of perception about what is actually emblematic of a Maroka'i diasporic ethnic identity remains.

Musical expressions are vital in negotiating this tension between continuity and change, embedding emblematic aspects of identity in song and liturgical texts and melodies, instrumentation, approaches to aesthetics, and performance contexts. The result is a layered diaspora consciousness, juxtaposing three distinctive diasporic ethnic identities at all times. As

local community member Toby Levy commented to me, “I’m Jewish, yes, but I’m Sephardi, and Maroka’i. You cannot separate” (p.c., Toby Levy, November 20, 2010).

The socio-historical aspects of ethnicity are characterized in musical expression in the diasporic hillula. In Morocco, the primary components of the hillula included pilgrimage to the gravesite of a tsaddiq (Jewish saint), music, feasting, praying, and bonfires and candle lighting. In communities like Brooklyn, the dislocation from gravesites has required a transformation of the ritual in new performance contexts. Musical expression is now foregrounded, with electronic sound systems, the employment of professional ensembles, and enclosed spaces like synagogue social halls and homes inviting a new kind of focus on the music. The chaotic spontaneity of a gravesite hillula has disappeared, and the nature of performance has changed from being primarily participatory—where everyone and anyone is a part of the music making—to jostling back and forth between presentational and participatory (Turino 2008:27). Musical expression now has multiple functions: to honor tsaddiqim, historical figures, and important dignitaries; to play a programmatic role in the event; to inspire general revelry; and to iterate identity.

How, when, and where songs are performed and the texts themselves all point to different aspects of a Maroka’i identity in Brooklyn. This is why a repertoire for the hillula has emerged, innovating or adding to the ritual by giving it a clear songbook. Whether it is the messianic themes indicative of Maroka’i approaches to the Sephardi poetic tradition, words from heroes of the Golden Age surfacing on the lips of present-day Jews in Brooklyn, or melodies inferring different routes, we can see transnational and historical connections made on a daily basis through performance and performance context.

When reconsidering R’ Bouskila’s urging of congregants to remember “what Morocco means to us,” we must therefore consider that a territorial connection with Morocco, the nation-

state, has eroded for most. The community has been generally uprooted, without any possibility of returning *en masse*. Morocco is increasingly a territorialized imaginary, based on a collection of fluid ideas about identity. Maroka'i life is now part of a deterritorialized transnation where Maroka'i identity is defined more often in this diasporic context. Individuals in the community still engage directly with the homeland, but because most Maroka'i life is happening in other parts of the world, Morocco is becoming increasingly symbolic. But because of statements like R' Bouskila's request that community members remember "what Morocco means to us," the homeland is destined to remain central to communal identity. While significant physical engagement with the homeland remains a part of many community members' lives, with family, economic, and tourism interests still quite robust, musical expressions such as those found in the hillula foster a sense of transnationalism. Utilizing such an occasion to come together as a worldwide community, to reiterate certain songs, encourages community members to relate to the homeland beyond the symbolic. The expression of music is a physical activity, and community members use hillula songs to conjure a consciousness of roots and routes. Whether it is drawing from historically-based ideas, engaging with modernization or new constructs of power, or dealing with new influences on musical expression, the Maroka'i diaspora consciousness is "a lived tension" (Clifford 1994:307) between what is *there* and what is *here*.

## **Chapter Six:** **Concluding Thoughts**

The literature concerning diaspora has been expanding in recent years, sustained in large measure by an interest in the effects of population movements and globalized social connections on ethnic identity. Contributing to this conversation by focusing on a contemporary Jewish diasporic ethnic group, this study reassesses Jewish identity as an archetype of diasporic identity. Two central tenets of a Jewish diaspora consciousness are exile from the ancient land of Israel, and Jerusalem in particular, as well as an undying hope for return and redemption. Fostered for over two millennia, this diaspora consciousness remains at the heart of Jewish identity worldwide. During the lengthy course of Jewish history, participation in additional diasporic communities by members of particular Jewish ethnic identities associated with other homelands besides ancient Israel, with or without an expressed desire for return, has encouraged the development of a layered diaspora consciousness.

Cultural expressions, such as music, are especially well equipped for negotiating the overlapping boundaries of different Jewish diasporic ethnic identities. The layered aspect of Maroka'i identity is based upon a historical consciousness that emphasizes three primary diasporic moments in the community's history—Jewish, Sephardi, and Maroka'i. Despite the importance of the Jewish diaspora, as the oldest layer and one consciousness shared by all Jewish people, the Sephardi and Maroka'i layers of diaspora consciousness are equally significant to Maroka'im. In fact, the casual observer would most likely see the Maroka'i layer as very prominent, especially when experiencing the community's musical expressions. But by analyzing musical expressions on a deeper level, one can see that multiple layers of diasporic identity are



present. The function of musical expressions in ritual and other communal contexts, through text, approaches to melody, and styles of performance, is to project the group's complex identity to fellow community members. *Layered diaspora consciousness* is the recognition by community members, through participation, gesturing, and discussion, that their identity contains a comingling of aspects of multiple diasporic ethnic identities. This consciousness or state of being, imbued with awareness of self and other, belonging and marginality, is emphasized through musical expression.

Thinking of identity in these terms provides a framework for discussing and understanding the interplay between the historical and cultural contexts of our lives and the subjective and objective experiences that connect these contexts. Stuart Hall writes that “we think about identification *usually* [emphasis mine] as a simple process, structured around fixed ‘selves’ which we either are or are not” (Hall 1996:445). As an inherently dynamic expression, musical practices are responsive to the experiences of a particular ethnic community, in any given place or at any point in history. They can be used to foster social connections and ways of belonging to a transnation at the same time they are used to promote distinction and differences between local groups of people. In the case of a multilayered Jewish diasporic ethnic identity, distant or direct connections with another particular homeland must be fostered to remain a significant. The result is at best a comingling of boundaries of diasporic ethnic identity that evokes a complex and at times blurry picture of Jewish identity. As Paul Gilroy argues, identity is constantly negotiated through consciousness; “[Identity’s] capacity to be changed, reshaped and refined, its malleability, is cultivated and protected as a source of pleasure, power, danger, and wealth” (Gilroy 1997:314). Developing a layered diaspora consciousness is contingent upon the characterizing of transformative experiences, whereby individuals and whole communities

must disassemble and reassemble their identity: *re-membering* the body. In the process of reassembling identity, variations arise as a result of new experiences and outside influences. The transformative experiences that prompt individuals to reassess their identities are not small-scale trends, whether communal or historical. To understand the transformative nature of these experiences, one must look at a larger historical moment to assess the results of certain events and trends.

Diaspora consciousness stands at the nexus between memory and transmission, transnationality and transculturality. It is a state of being imbued with a gestalt of lived and imagined life. Diaspora consciousness is a socialized form of identity whereby individuals form a collective identity through narratives of historical place, a present beyond one place or perhaps even placeless, and numerous shared cultural traits. Although historical narratives are attached to a locale or region, the renegotiation of identity by a dispersed community precludes being shackled by this historical consciousness. The experiences of individuals and communities in the transnational color diaspora consciousness. In recent decades, communications technologies have been a catalyst for diaspora consciousness. However, despite having the ability to collectively negotiate diasporic identity in a faster and more robust way, nodal communities require time to absorb localized experiences and incorporate changes before those changes can radiate effectively to other nodes and be adopted into the collective diaspora consciousness. In the most basic sense, a diaspora consciousness is at the heart of one's identity only insofar as an individual is inculcated with diasporic affects and can reiterate them. A diaspora consciousness relies upon individuals and communities to bring forward a historical consciousness, and upon their ability to navigate and negotiate experiences of the present. Thus, we need to think of identity construction as a process-oriented rather than goal-oriented endeavor.

Central to engaging this dynamism is ethnicization, a process by which community members negotiate boundaries of ethnic identity(ies) to define an ethno-cultural heritage. Maroka'im rely upon several different musical expressions in synagogue life to emblemize and ultimately juxtapose multiple and distinctive Jewish diasporic ethnic identities. All Jewish communities practice some form of Kriat ha-Torah, the ritual and the sacred text cantillation. Within the context of Kriat ha-Torah, Maroka'im reiterate a specific approach to sacred text cantillation that characterizes a distinctive boundary of practice. The system of melodic motifs Maroka'im employ for the te'amim symbols for Torah (and haftarah) cantillation has been crucial in emblemizing a pan-Maroka'i identity. These boundaries, fostered by this distinctive approach to te'amim practice, are now recognized and reiterated throughout the Maroka'i diaspora as a distinctive part of this Jewish diasporic ethnic identity. However, within the context of Kriat ha-Torah, Maroka'im use bima songs to allude to a Sephardi diasporic ethnic identity. The soundscape constantly generates associations with different Jewish ethnic identities, projecting a distinctively Maroka'i diaspora consciousness at the same time areas of overlap with other Sephardi groups and Jews worldwide are reiterated.

Liturgical music serves in religious rituals as a means for expressing religious identity. For Brooklyn's Maroka'im, ḥazzanut serves as a means for expressing Jewish identity and providing a vehicle for expressing a distinctive Jewish ethno-religious identity. In Jewish liturgy, God, the community, and the individual take turns being the focus of ritual and text. Embedded in much of Jewish liturgy are reverberations of a Jewish diaspora consciousness. While God is praised in one moment for embracing the people Israel in perpetuity, the Divine spirit is begged in another moment to commence with the redemption. For Maroka'im, several aspects of ḥazzanut also foster a Sephardi diaspora consciousness. Textual idiosyncrasies and the practice

of contrafacta are presented as similarities in liturgical practice among Sephardim. Similarly, though mawwāl practices differ between Maroka'i and other Sephardi ḥazzanut practices, the fact that they are based on melodic modes—ṭab' and maqām respectively—drawn from Arab musical traditions reinforces a sense of a shared identity boundary. While the existence of larger boundaries of shared practice encourages a Sephardi diaspora consciousness, a Maroka'i ḥazzan's repertoire and approach to melodic invention, however, locate his practice of ḥazzanut in a distinctly Maghrebian patrimony.

From the gravesite of a tsaddiq to synagogue social halls and homes throughout the Maroka'i diaspora, the practice of hillulot includes the reiteration of a standard repertoire of songs for celebration and saint veneration. Songs of Maghrebian Jewry, glorifying tsaddiqim or *tsaddiqut* (sainthood), based upon literary themes and poetic conventions that forever resonate as a memory of the great poets of Sepharad, conjure a Jewish diaspora consciousness by emphasizing galut and geulah. The incorporation of several songs from Mediterranean popular music genres into the standard hillula repertoire telegraphs associations between Maroka'im and a modern Sephardi identity.

These three domains of musical expression are central to the synagogue life of Brooklyn's Maroka'i community. For community members, the synagogue is an institution for engaging the Divine and fellow community members. It is a sacred space and a meeting place where an ethno-religious identity is expressed. Kriat ha-Torah, ḥazzanut, and hillulot provide contexts for musical expressions that reiterate this ethno-religious identity. Through the practice of sacred text cantillation, song repertoires, liturgy, contrafacta, and ways of emphasizing certain performance aesthetics, community members express ideas that conjure associations with one or more diasporic ethnic identities—at times juxtaposing all three—and formulate a layered

diaspora consciousness. These musical expressions foreground ideas about *self* and *community*, globally and locally, that promote a sense of belonging to the Jewish, Sephardi, and Maroka'i transnations among community members.

### *Positioning This Study*

Ethnomusicology now provides a strong voice in the fields of diaspora studies and Jewish studies. Several important works related to diaspora studies have come from ethnomusicologists and have been cited in this dissertation. Understanding the role that musical expression plays in the lives of members of diaspora communities is valuable to a field of scholarship that is inherently interested in processes of identity formation and the circulation of cultural practices. The field of Jewish studies is beginning to expand its purview beyond the historical and textual as an interest in contemporary Jewish communities and in different Jewish cultural practices grows. This expansion is evidenced by the recent establishment of the first chair in Jewish music studies at the University of California at Los Angeles, the announcement of several funding opportunities related to studying contemporary Jewry, and the greater presence of papers related to Jewish musical expression at recent annual conferences for American Jewish Studies and the Society for Ethnomusicology.

Ethnomusicologists, scholars of diaspora studies from various disciplines, and Jewish studies scholars should find this study germane for understanding how a sphere of cultural expression operates as an agent of diasporic ethnic identity construction. Of particular interest to scholars with an interest in multiethnic communities will be this study's focus on the role of musical expression in emblemizing, negotiating, and juxtaposing distinct boundaries of diasporic ethnicities. Several related fields, such as religious studies, migration studies, and Middle Eastern studies, will also find this dissertation helpful. My hope is that I am contributing

to an understanding of musical expression in Jewish religious life, how music travels, and in what ways musical expression in the Maroka'i community is a reflection of a Maghrebian patrimony.

Having completed this stage of research, I wish to inquire further into the borderlines between Jewish ethnic groups. In this era in Jewish history, which includes the establishment of Israel, decimation of one-third of the worldwide Jewish population, and immigration of most of the world's Jews to the United States and Israel, we see members of different Jewish ethnic groups engaging with one another on an unprecedented level. Contact is robust and rich, with, for example, several synagogues expressing different ethnic traditions located within a small area of cities such as New York City, Tel Aviv, and Jerusalem. Furthermore, I am interested in developing inquiries into the continued impact on the construction and maintenance of diasporic identities by phenomena related to globalization, such as fluidity in population movement, cyberspace, and international citizenry. I hope to develop methods for researching musical expressions that rely upon the fast-paced global circuits of communication. Finally, I anticipate building upon the research contained in this study, and especially the modes of inquiry, to add to our understanding of religious identity in several different layered diasporic identities, and the role that musical expression plays in fostering this type of identity within transnational groups. My hope is that this exploration, into how a modern ethnic community with such a long and storied history uses musical expression to construct a multifaceted identity, will shed light and understanding on individual and communal processes in human development.

### *Modern Trajectories*

Along with increased migration since the early twentieth century, modern technology has enabled those wishing to develop a diaspora consciousness to foster more robust physical ties

with the transnation. Modern travel and communication technologies have made sustaining ties between community members much more affordable. One can travel great distances by airplane at relatively low cost. Most migrants sustained homeland orientations and transnational connections even before modern electronic means, but telephones, cheap airfares, and emails make it much easier today.

Members of the younger generation of Maroka'im in Brooklyn take advantage of these technologies to sustain ties to a Maroka'i transnation. Most regularly travel abroad, to visit family members in Israel, Morocco, and France. Many are continually adding artifacts of diaspora culture to cyberspace. Photos, comments on social media websites, videos, and music files flood the Internet. Musical artifacts foster transnational bonds through file sharing, video links, and social networking sites. Such technologies, as modes of transnational interaction, are now pervasive in the lives of community members, young and old.

Writing when the Internet was still nascent, Robin Cohen makes the prescient observation that

transnational bonds no longer have to be cemented by migration or by exclusive territorial claims. In the age of cyberspace, a diaspora can, to some degree, be held together or re-created through the mind, through cultural artifacts and through a shared imagination (Cohen 1997:26).

He recognized the effects of the *age of cyberspace* and its many advances in technology, particularly in communications. Cyberspace has encouraged diasporic communities to become completely geographically decentered. It has fostered an increasing sense of transnationalism in the community, developing familial, communal, and economic ties. Cyberspace also provides virtual spaces, inherently divorced from any physical, geographic locale, for discussion forums on identity.

Despite cyberspace and other modern technologies being increasingly utilized to express Maroka'i identity, these technologies will continue to play a very circumscribed role in the synagogue life of local community members. Such analog experiences—youths must disengage from their digital universe—as coming to synagogue and praying together, learning and hearing Torah cantillation, and the intensity of celebrating a hillula together define identity in a different kind of experiential way. The local community, as a link in the chain of Jewish history, has had experience fostering diaspora consciousness for centuries. Instilling homeland orientations toward Morocco, Sepharad, and Israel can happen disconnected from such technologies. R' Bouskila's te'amim class on Shabbat afternoons is one example of how the older generation is passing tradition to the next generation. While cyberspace as a new context for constructing identity is certainly increasingly significant in the lives of community members, the synagogue, and especially the analog experiences created by cultural practices that happen in it, remains central as a gathering place to express Maroka'i identity.

#### *Layered Diaspora Consciousness Revisited*

Maroka'im have been subject to similar impulses regarding boundary construction and maintenance as many other immigrant groups in New York City. Settling in Brooklyn, in the context of a large and diverse Jewish community, as part of a sizeable Sephardi community, has encouraged Maroka'im to construct distinctive identity boundaries associated with a modern nation-state homeland and to negotiate shared boundaries through assimilation and hybridization. The boundary lines of Maroka'i ethnicity can be quite clear or blurry, depending on the context. To make matters more confusing, community members often make remarks in one moment that promote difference and in the next promote similarity. This seeming paradox—encouraging the



recognition of both distinction and resemblance—is at the heart of a layered diaspora consciousness.

*A layered diaspora consciousness* results from the incorporation of traits from multiple diaspora identities or layers of diasporic identity through active processes of retention and development. Identities are not static, nor do they simply reflect a structuring of traits. Instead, identity construction is an activity that engages both historically based cultural expressions and present forces or circumstances. Any diaspora consciousness (layered or not) operates from a unique stance—a state of being of an individual and/or community—informed by diasporic features: roots or geographic origin, cultural boundaries, and migratory spread. This stance is continually being qualified, making the construction of identity perpetually incomplete.

As part of the Jewish diaspora (at least as Safran, et al envision it), Brooklyn's Maroka'im are intimately tied through history and a shared sense of tradition to co-ethnics from different Jewish ethnic communities. Despite a plethora of similarities, important distinctions between Maroka'im and other Jewish ethnics remain. Geulah, a key component of a Jewish diaspora consciousness connoting both a physical and spiritual return to the homeland, does not factor into a sense of a Sephardi or Maroka'i diaspora consciousness. Furthermore, the absolute nature of exile forced upon the Jews of ancient Israel by the Romans and upon the Sephardim by the fifteenth-century Spanish monarch is not synonymous with the mass migration of Jews away from Morocco in the mid-twentieth century. Until this day, a Jewish community, significant in size and influence, remains in Morocco, and a love and respect for Morocco is clearly evident in statements from community members, by invitations to heads of state to attend communal events, and through the continuation of business and social ties with residents of Morocco (Jewish and non-Jewish). In sum, a consciousness of the cohabitation of three different and

distinctive Jewish diasporic ethnic identities, which juxtaposes associations with different homelands and transnations, is translated by musical practices in synagogue life and remains a prevalent part of communal identity for Maroka'im in Brooklyn.

## Glossary

All words are from Hebrew, except where indicated

**āla:** al-āla al-Andalusiyya (Ar.) or āla-Andalusit (Heb.) is the nūba-based classical genre of Morocco.

**Aleppo Codex:** authoritative medieval manuscript of the Hebrew Bible, with te'amim

**aliyah:** passage from the parashah read on bima during Kriat ha-Torah

**Amidah:** central, standing meditational prayer in each Jewish liturgical service

**aron:** sacred cabinet

**Ashkenazi (pl. Ashkenazim):** Jews from European countries

**ba'al koreh:** master reciter

**Baba Sali:** R' Yisrael Abuḥatsira (1890-1984); a prominent Maroka'i rabbinic leader in the twentieth century

**baqqashot:** supplication poems; vocal musical genre within several Sephardi communities

**bima:** elevated reading lectern

**cha'abi:** of the people; name of a particular rhythmic mode in Maghrebi music

**contrafactum (pl. contrafacta):** the substitution of one text for another without a change in melody

**djiri:** nūba-based, light classical musical genre associated with western Algeria; also called *gharnati* by Maroka'im

**galut:** exile

**hafla:** party

**haftarah:** passage from prophetic writings performed after Torah recitation

**Ḥazarah:** cantorial repetition of the Amidah prayer

**ḥazzanut:** art of performing liturgical song

**Kaddish (pl. Kaddishim):** sanctification prayer

**kharja:** Hebrew girdle poem; related to the muwashshah

**Kriah:** recitation of sacred text

**Kriat ha-Torah:** ritual for Torah recitation

**mafsiqim:** disjunctive te'amim symbols

**maqām: (pl. maqāmat, Ar.):** a system of melodic modes in Eastern Arab traditions, built from smaller tone row units that may or may not utilize neutral intervals

**mawwāl (Ar.):** non-metrical vocal improvisation, often performed at the beginning of a piece

**mehabberim:** conjunctive te'amim symbols

**mīzān (pl. mawāzīn, Ar.):** general term for rhythm in North African music

**musaf:** additional liturgical service, added after Shaḥarit

**muwashshah (Ar.):** strophe-refrain poetic form popular in Arabic and Hebrew poetry

**nequdot:** dashes and dots used to differentiate vocalic and consonantal sounds in Hebrew

**nūba (pl. nūbāt, Ar.):** 'suite' in Andalus-based musics in North Africa. Comprised of different ṭubū', mawāzīn, and ṣanā'ī.

**nusah:** liturgical text order

**oleh:** ascender to bima for aliyah

**parashah (pl. parashiyot):** segments of Torah text read each Shabbat

**paytan:** poet

**Pesukei de-Zimrah:** verses of praising songs in the Shaḥarit liturgy

**piyyut (pl. piyyutim):** semi-sacred poetry, composed in a high-register Hebrew

**qaṣīda (Ar.):** strophic poetic form, popular in Arabic and Hebrew poetry

**qinah (pl. qinnot):** lamentational poem performed on the holiday of Tisha B'Av

**Sephardi (pl. Sephardim):** Jews with origins in Spain

**seudah:** festive meal

**Shaḥarit:** morning liturgical service

**shaliaḥ tzibur:** public representative; prayer leader during liturgical services

**Shekhinah:** Divine presence

**Shema:** lit. hearing; biblical passage recited twice daily as affirmation of monotheism

**shirei retziniyim:** serious songs

**Shulkhan Arukh:** Code of Jewish laws

**silsul:** decoration; melodic ornamentation

**ṭabʿ (pl. ṭubūʿ, Ar.):** general term for melodic mode in North African music

**TaNaKh:** acronym for Hebrew Bible, including Torah, Nevi'im, Ketuvim

**taqsīm:** instrumental improvisation according to maqām

**tarkib:** a style of practicing contrafacta whereby the phonetics and rhyme of the original text (usually in Arabic) are preserved in the Hebrew text

**te'am (pl. te'amim):** a performance cue for reciting sacred texts (ch. 3) and a general melodic trope for chanting liturgical texts (ch. 4); also called *te'amei ha-miqrah*

**tefilah (pl. tefilot):** prayer liturgy

**Tehiliim:** Psalms; praises

**tikkun olam:** repair the world; concept drawn from Lurianic kabbalah

**Torah:** primary sacred text of Judaism

**tsaddiq (pl. tsaddiqim):** Jewish saint

**tziltzulim:** melodic ornaments

**zajal (Ar.):** strophe-refrain poetic form, related to the muwashshah, incorporating multiple languages

**Zemirot:** praising songs; opening part of Shaḥarit liturgy

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