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Jüdische Musik als Dialog der Kulturen
Jewish Music as a Dialogue of Cultures

Herausgegeben von/
Edited by
Jascha Nemtsov

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Boaz Tarsi

The Early Attempts at Creating a Theory of Ashkenazi Liturgical Music

The earliest evidence for any attempt to formulate a theory of Ashkenazi liturgical music dates to the last third of the nineteenth century. Moreover, with rare, minute exceptions, even merely the transcriptions of the musical material itself in this tradition prior to the nineteenth century are nonexistent.[1] A millennium-long gap, therefore, separates the moment of this initial approach toward theory and documentation from the era in which the community that carried out the practice first emerged.

There seems to be no doubt that the liturgy has always been sung. We can also maintain a reasonable level of certainty that – to one degree or another – liturgical music has always constituted a systematized discipline. It would also be reasonable to assume that its practitioners were aware that this music comprised a system, or at least recognized that it was governed by uncodified principles transmitted in the oral tradition.[2] The degree to which this practical, performance-oriented system was conceptualized, or when, prior to the written evidence from the late nineteenth century, such a conceptualization occurred is unclear. We can, however, identify some traditional terminology that, although perhaps not systematically defined, served as a shorthand of sorts for communicating guidelines for the combination of various musical building blocks, as well as extra-musical factors that inform the musical aspect of the liturgy.[3] The different kinds of musical rendering, defined by particular combinations of musical and extra-musical factors may be described as „manners of musical conduct".[4]

1 For a complete account of Jewish music sources from earlier periods see Israel Adler, *Hebrew Notated Sources up to circa 1840: A Description and Thematic Catalogue with a Checklist of Printed Sources* (Munich: G. Henle, 1989). For textual references to music, see Israel Adler, *Hebrew Writings Concerning Music in Manuscripts and Printed Books from Geonic Times up to 1800* (Munich: G. Henle, 1975).

2 For some illuminating remarks in regard to this phenomenon, see Simha Arom, „Description and Modelization of Traditional Music: The Dialectic between Indigenous Nomenclature and Structural Analysis," in: *Studies in Socio-Musical Sciences*, ed. Joachim Braun and Uri Sharvit (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1998), 125–133.

3 Hanoch Avenary, „The Musical Vocabulary of Ashkenazic Hazanim," in: *Studies in Biblical and Jewish Folklore*, ed. Raphael Patai, Francis Lee Utley, and Dov Noy (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1960), 187–198.

4 „Manner of conduct" is an initial attempt to express in English the articulate and pointedly precise Hebrew term „*ofen hitnahalut*," offered to me by Ruth Hacohen (introduced in Ruth Hacohen and Boaz Tarsi, „Ashkenazi Liturgical Music: Analysis of Modes of Operation in Historical and Cognitive Perspectives", a paper read at the 15th World Congress of Jewish Studies, 2009). In concrete terms the reality of each manner of conduct may express itself in the various ways in which any number of musical and extra-musical factors may come into play, and the aggregate sum of the interrelations among them.

Words traditionally used to refer to these manners of musical conduct include the German *Gattung* (kind) and *Weise* (way, manner), as well as the Yiddish *gust*[5] and the much more widely accepted (although often misunderstood) term *nusach*.[6] The use of these terms is analogous to the more inclusive modern and postmodern musical use of „mode", particularly in reference to repertoires outside of Western common practice;[7] the most commonly used term is *steiger*.[8] The use of this *steiger* in the context of the Ashkenazi liturgical music tradition reflects the general use and meaning of this Yiddish word to indicate manner, way, how something should be done, kind, or style. Examples include *steiger leben* (way of life), *moderene steiger* (modern way of living), *vi der steiger es* (as usual), or *vi fos steiger in* („for example," literally „as is usual for"). This usage is well attested in the early twentieth century and it was presumably common throughout the previous century and perhaps even earlier.[9]

Given its broad connotations, *steiger* is a particularly apt term for „manners of musical conduct." It seems, therefore, very likely that this meaning of *steiger* is what practitioners had in mind when they used it in the oral tradition, in reference to the different ways to coordinate music with liturgical texts, events, and rituals. *Steiger* signified traditional „ways" of fitting the music to the liturgy, given considerations of text, time, occasion, calendar, and the like. On some level – intuitive and unconceptualized as it was – nineteenth-century practitioners „felt" that the system as a whole consists of various cases of such „manners of conduct," and therefore

5 This word is used primarily among Russian Jewish music practitioners (Avenary, „The Musical Vocabulary of Ashkenazic Hazanim," 190–191). The Yiddish sense of *gust* (clearly derived from the Latin *gustus* in the same manner as the French *goût*, the Italian and Spanish *gusto*, and the further removed but related English „gusto") is primarily „flavor" or „taste." The fact that the modern Hebrew root for „taste" (*T.A.M*) is also used for „accent" (as well as reasoning, cause, argument, preference, penchant, predilection, appreciation, discernment, or perceptiveness) should not in any way be interpreted as a connection between this use of *gust* and the Hebrew term for biblical cantillation signs (*ta'amey hamikra*.)

6 This paper cannot address the term, concept, and usage of *nusach*, nor cite the bounty of references to it in other discussions. Nevertheless, I would like to point out that regardless of the somewhat fuzzy meaning and use of *nusach*, it is different from *steiger* including in the way in which both terms correspond with „mode." Granted, the difference itself is also fuzzy; see for example Judit Frigyesi, *„Ofiya hayichudi shel hamusika beieit hakneset ha'ashkenazi: mecheva le'Alef Tsvi Idelsohn* (The Unique Character of Ashkenazi Synagogal Music: Homage to A. Z. Idelsohn)," *Kenishta* 2 (2003): 161–162. For an initial discussion of the phenomenology and linguistics of *nusach*, including references to other discussions and its connection to the Latin *modus* and the English „mode", see Mark Slobin, *Chosen Voices: the Story of the American Cantorate* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press: 1989), 277–278 (which cites a private communication from Harold Powers), and Boaz Tarsi, „Observations on Practices of *Nusach* in America," *Asian Music* 33 no. 2 (2002): 178–179.

7 This correspondence notwithstanding, the relevance and helpfulness of using the term „mode" in the context of Ashkenazi liturgical music is limited; see the further discussion of the relevance of „mode" below.

8 *Steyger*, *stayger*, and *shteyger* are among the numerous spelling variants found. The exploration and definition of *steiger* is not within the scope of this article. For further, although initial and partial, discussions of this term, see the sources in n. 19.

9 Evidence from the journals includes slightly earlier mention (without presenting a system) of both *steiger* and of various name-titles for categories that are referred to as „mode," *steiger*, and *Gattung*.

used *Steiger* in this sense. Yet, as we shall see, when the earliest theorists of Aṣhkenazi music „translated" *steiger* into a technical musical term in music theory, they did not equate it with manners of musical conduct, nor did they incorporate the idea of manners of conduct into their formal, written theory account of musical practice.

During the late nineteenth century and into the beginning of the twentieth, a number of practitioners began to transcribe traditional liturgical music and describe it in terminology drawn from the Western musical tradition. In almost all cases the author was a cantor, composer, or educator – or some combination of these – or an insider practitioner[10] with scholarly inclinations and some knowledge of the tools of contemporary music theory. These writers aspired to construct a music-theoretical elucidation of their discipline. At the very least, they produced manuscripts and books containing transcriptions of their practice in Western notation. Some wrote introductions to their collections of transcriptions, often including some discussion or comments of a theoretical nature. Some gave presentations or participated in the few conferences we know about, or published articles in professional and Jewish newsletters and journals.[11]

In their attempts to formalize liturgical music and articulate its principles, these early theorists drew on their knowledge of Western common practice, in which scales and modes (portrayed as modal scales) occupy the central position. The earliest source I know that employs a modal system of any kind – in this case, the „pseudo-Greek modes" – is Hirsch and Solomon Weintraub's 1859 manuscript.[12] The first source known to me that introduces a unique scalar system specific for the Ashkenazi repertoire is the work of the nineteenth-century cantor Joseph Singer.[13] By

10 The need for better terminology than „insider" and „outsider" to suit the respective complex and multilayered cluster of phenomena is clear, as expressed or implied in works by, e.g., James Clifford, Henry Goldschmidt, and Barbara Myerhoff; the essays in Jack Kugelmass, ed., *Between Two Worlds: Ethnographic Essays on American Jewry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); or from the actual term *halfie* (in Lila Abu-Lughod's or Kirin Narayan's work) and the discussions it generated. This consideration notwithstanding, I am still using the inadequate term „insider" here for the purpose of brevity.

11 Among these publications are *Di Chazanim Welt*, *Di Shul un di Chazanim Welt*, *Der jüdische Kantor* (Bromberg, 19th c.); *Der jüdische Kantor* (Hamburg, early 20th c.); *Oesterreichische-ungarische Kantoren-Zeitung*, a supplement in *Die Wahrheit*; *Liturgische Zeitschrift*; *Jüdische Rundschau* (Berlin); and *Jüdische Rundschau* (Munkacevo). A collection of papers was published as *Dem Andenken Eduard Birnbaums*, ed. Aron Friedmann (Berlin: C. Boas Nachf, 1922). See also Aron Friedmann, *Der synagogale Gesang; eine Studie zum 100. Geburtstage Salomon Sulzer's und 10. Todestage Louis Lewandowski's (1904) nebst deren Biographien* (Berlin: C. Boas Nachf, 1908).

12 Hirsch and Solomon Weintraub, *Schire Beth Adonai* (Leipzig: M.W. Kauffmann, 1901; first edition: Königsberg, 1859), no page number indicated. I am using the term „pseudo-Greek modes" in reference to the nineteenth-century portrayal of seven Greek modal scales as they appear, for example, in the authentic modes in Glarean's system (Ionian, Dorian, Phrygian, etc.). I borrowed this term from Harold Powers, „From Psalmody to Tonality," in *Tonal Structure in Early Music*, ed. Cristle Collins Judd (New York and London: Garland, 1998), 337, n. 19. Some of these pre-Idelsohn sources also refer to the same scale system as „church scales" – for example, „*den alten Kirchentonarten*" in the introduction to Weintraub, *Schire Beth Adonai*. The allusion to the church here corresponds to the need to show a link to church music, as discussed below.

13 Joseph Singer, „Die Tonarten des traditionellen Synagogengesanges," in *Dem Andenken Eduard Birnbaums*, 90–100.

connecting some of the traditional insider terminology – mainly the term *steiger*, as well as specific names of various *steigers* – to aspects of the practice, Singer put forward a formal scale classification that differs from other existing systems.

In all likelihood, Singer was articulating a principle that had already been recognized on an intuitive level or incompletely conceptualized. By choosing *steiger* as the generic term for the scales he identified, he gave it a narrow, specialized definition in addition to its broad meaning, „manner (of musical performance)". This use of *steiger* – as well as a variety of traditional Hebrew and Yiddish names (not consistently applied) assigned to the different *steigers* – to refer to scales has become prevalent throughout the field among educators (especially in contemporary schools and training programs for cantors) and scholars. It is also used by many practitioners today, but many past and present practitioners' circles are not aware of this term, or use alternative terminology.

Thus, in writings on music theory prior to the work of Idelsohn, *steiger* as a technical term is applied only to scales or scale-structures.[14] Whether this might have been influenced by the similarity to the German verb *steigen,* „to ascend, advance" as a portrayal of a series of tones ascending in pitch, is an involved topic that has yet to be fully explored. The scale systems presented in these writings include the major-minor system of Western common practice as well as pseudo-Greek modes. Many *steiger*s are alterations of pseudo-Greek modes; some are tailored to fit a particular piece of music, while others are adapted to match scales whose Hebrew or Yiddish names are borrowed from titles of liturgical texts (e.g., *adonai malach*, *ahavah rabbah*, *magen avot*, *mi sheberach*, *yishtabach*, *y'kum purkan*, *av harachamim* and many others). Adjustments of pseudo-Greek modes include raising the third in the Phrygian scale (to fit the *ahavah rabbah* scale, which is often entitled *freygish*, *fregish*, or *phrygush*, with the obvious derivation from Phrygian),[15] adding a flat tenth or a leading tone below the tonic in Mixolydian (to match *adonai malach*), or lowering the sixth or raise the fourth in Dorian (adjusting to *magen avot* or „Ukrainian Dorian" respectively).[16] Sometimes the same scale is given different

14 As we shall briefly note, the work of Idelsohn can also be summed up *de facto* as a scale system, but it does include an awareness of motivic factors.

15 To prevent a misunderstanding I need to stress that the perception of *ahavah rabbah* as Phrygian with a raised 3rd is only a reflection of the paradigm of that era and zeitgeist. The reality is that in addition to the fact that *ahavah rabbah* cannot be defined by a scale, and that even from a scalar paradigm there are other differences between Phrygian and *ahavah rabbah*, the conduct of the latter in the actual practice exhibits overwhelming evidence for a symbiosis with the minor rather than any other scale or mode. For an initial discussion of this symbiosis see Boaz Tarsi, „Tonality and Motivic Interrelationships in the Performance Practice of Nusach," *Journal of Synagogue Music* 21, no. 1 (1991): 6–9.

16 This phenomenon is not unique to pre-Idelsohn work only. In Idelsohn's writing, although the names shift into the *makam* system because of the difference in ideological agenda (as described below), *ahavah rabbah* is identical to and interchangeable with *hijaz*; *magen avot* with *bayat,* specifically *bayat nawa*; and *adonai malach* with *makam iraq*. In Leib Glantz, *Rinat Hakodesh: Prayer Modes*, ed. Yehoshua Zohar (Tel-Aviv: Israel Music Institute, 1965), 90, the Hebrew (or perhaps Yiddish) indication on top of a music section in *ahavah rabbah*, as well as an example of the scale itself, states

names in different sources or even in the same source,[17] and vice versa – the same title may refer to different scales.[18]

Consequently, in nineteenth-century theoretical discourse and onwards, *steiger* serves as the primary designation of an approximation of the basic unit in a modal system of sorts (i.e., an equivalent of sorts, of what may be considered a „mode").[19] But in the discourse of insiders, *steiger* comprised what an insider knew about how to perform a given musical section according to the given tradition. This use of *steiger* was in fact ahead of its time: it anticipates the meaning of „mode" in modern and postmodern ethnomusicology, particularly in regard to music repertories and traditions outside of Western common practice. Like the modern, inclusive sense of mode, *steiger* embraced many features besides scales, such as motifs, melodies, intervals, and central tones, as well as their application to extra-musical realities.[20]

freygish in Hebrew script while the English title is „Phrygian" (on pp. 69 and 79, Glantz translates the same term as „Jewish Phrygian").

17 Both Abraham Zvi Idelsohn, „*Der synagogale Gesang im Lichte der orientalischen Music*," in *Dem Andenken Eduard Birnbaums*, 62–69, and Singer, „Die Tonarten des traditionellen Synagogengesanges," identify what would later be called *ahavah rabbah* as *Jischtabach-Steiger*.

18 Among other documents, this is reflected in semi-scholarly insider practitioner sources such as A. M. Bernstein, Moritz Deutsch, Aron Friedmann, Josef Goldstein, Ferdinand Hiller, Alois Kaiser and William Sparger, Isaak Lachmann, M. Markson and M. Wolf, Pinchos Minkowski, Samuel Naumbourg, Josef Singer, and Hirsch Weintraub. For a detailed review of these sources see Max Wohlberg, „The History of the Musical Modes of the Ashkenazic Synagogue and Their Usage," in *Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Conference-Convention of the Cantors Assembly of America* (1954), 36–42, and Avenary, „The Concept of Mode in European Synagogue Chant," 11–12.

19 Selected sources that treat *steiger* as the primary equivalent of „mode" in Ashkenazi synagogue music include Avenary, „The Musical Vocabulary of Ashkenazic Hazanim," 190–191, 194 (primarily an attempt to „translate" the term from its insider's usage); Hanoch Avenary, „The Concept of Mode in European Synagogue Chant," *Yuval* 2 (1971): 11–21; Joseph Levine, „Toward Defining the Jewish Prayer Modes; with Particular Emphasis on the Adonay Malakh Mode," *Musica Judaica* 3, no. 1 (1980–1981): 13-15; Boaz Tarsi, „Observations on Practices of *Nusach* in America"; and Boaz Tarsi, „Toward a Clearer Definition of the *Magen Avot* Mode," *Musica Judaica* 16 (2001–2002): 53–79. For related discussions, which can only be read critically and understood within their context and era, see primarily Baruch Cohon, „The Structure of the Synagogue Prayer-Chant," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 3, no. 1 (1950): 13–32; Avraham Zvi Idelsohn, *The Traditional Songs of the South German Jews*, vol. 7 of *Thesaurus of Hebrew Oriental Melodies* (Leipzig: Friedrich Hofmeister, 1933), xx–xxvi; Joseph Levine, *Synagogue Song in America* (Crown Point: WhiteCliffs Media, 1989), 79–106 (discussed as „the principal prayer modes"); and Eric Werner, *A Voice Still Heard: The Sacred Songs of the Ashkenazic Jews* (University Park, PA, and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976), 46–64.

20 For examples of discourse that attempts various classifications of these different „modes," see Harold Powers, „Semantic Fields of the Terms *Modus* and *Maqam* in Musical and Musicological Discourse," in *Studies in Socio-Musical Sciences*, Joachim Braun and Uri Sharvit, eds., (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1998), 135–147, or a presentation of the overall exploration of this conceptual territory in the „Eastern and Western Concept of Mode" panel in *International Musicological Society's Report of the Twelfth Congress Berkeley 1977*, ed. Daniel Heartz and Bonnie Wade (Kassel: Bärenreiter, and London: The American Musicological Society, 1981), 501–549, particularly Harold Powers's „Introduction: Mode and Modality" (501–503) and the concluding discussion (544–549), and a discussion of specific examples in Harold Powers, „First Meeting of the ICTM Study Group on Maqam," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* (1988): 199–218.

Today, one of the principal challenges for researchers is defining fully what „mode" in the modern sense really means in the context of Ashkenazi prayer music. Within such an involved, complex, multivariate mechanism of musical practice and performance, the category of „mode" extends to cover the multifarious ways in which this performing and experiential complex of phenomena „conducts itself." Each such „manner of conduct" is thus the sum of the guidelines by which cantors, lay practitioners, and other participants „navigate" their way through their performance.

* * *

Why did early „insider" musicologists choose *steiger* – in a narrow sense – as a technical term for the modal or scalar aspect of Ashkenazi liturgical music? The early writers do not explain their decision, but there are several factors that may, consciously or not, have determined it. The divergence between the insider's understanding of *steiger* and its narrow application in written discourse to a collection of scales may reflect a variety of factors. A few of them are singled out here: they relate to the early theorists' limitations, ideology, pedagogical concerns, and engagement with nineteenth-century ideas of nationhood and national traits.

Certainly one factor was the tension between the desire of practitioners and semi-scholars to ground their practice in a valid theory and their shortcomings as musicologists, theoreticians and scholars. Considering their immediate environment, where and how they lived, and social and religious background and conventions, there were considerable limitations on their knowledge of non liturgical music and acquisition of theoretical tools. Thus in their attempt at theoretical discourse, each individual could only use whatever limited background, knowledge, or training he had and, therefore, applied whatever concepts and terms in music theory that were available to him. It is highly likely that the most accessible tool, perhaps the only one at their disposal, was the scale system. Moreover, the theoretical tools and epistemological paradigms now seen as necessary for the description and analysis of non-Western music were not available to professional music scholars, much less the limited circle of Jewish musicians. Indeed, in nineteenth-century Europe, the overwhelmingly dominant music-theory tool, if not the only one, was the scale concept. Despite the emerging interest in what we now call „the other", particularly in the guise of Orientalism, what we now identify as „Eurocentric" conceptual perceptions prevailed. Even when a repertoire was perceived as mode-centered, it was still described and analyzed in terms of its scalar elements, mainly an octave species or an octave type.

Another factor was the desire to establish the ancient pedigree of Jewish liturgical music. The early theorists were not exempt from the influence of the prevalent historical assertion that ideas, literature, liturgy, philosophy, worldview, and other cultural variables outside Judaism are derived from Jewish origins. A quaint illustration of this ideological stance is reflected in one of the lines of the medieval poet *Imanuel Haromi* (Immanuel the Roman), which plays on a biblical quotation related

to the kidnapping of Joseph from Canaan (Genesis 40:15): „*uma omeret hochmat hanigun el hanotsrim? Gunov gunavti me'erets ha'ivrim*" (And what does the wisdom of music tell the Christians? Indeed I was stolen from the land of the Hebrews).[21] Since pseudo-Greek modes were considered as evidence of antiquity, and temporally prior to church modes, their central position in the emerging theory of Ashkenazi liturgical music served the desired attesting to its roots in antiquity and its status as a source tapped by later musical traditions.

This appropriation of the pseudo-Greek modes – the bedrock of „legitimate" music theory at the time – had an effect on both Jewish self-perception and self-representation. Among Jews themselves, it strengthened their sense of ownership of a unique and distinct tradition and the conviction that their music was not just a collection of traditions but rather an intellectually valid system. And to the outside world, it allowed Jews to portray themselves as the custodians of a traditional discipline similar to that of church music, or even its antecedent.[22] Aligning Ashkenazi liturgical music with the pseudo-Greek modes, the customary model for the modal structure of Christian music, facilitated the proposal that church music was, therefore, derived from Jewish music. In fact, some of the early sources for Ashkenazi music theory identify its scales as church modes or „church scales" (compare Weintraub's reference to „*den alten Kirchentonarten*" in the introduction to *Schire Beth Adonai*).

A third factor in the application of *steiger* to a scale system is related to the two just discussed – the limited conceptual tools available to the early theorists, and the influence of the outside world on Jewish practitioners. I believe it is no coincidence that the first attempts to transcribe and theorize Ashkenazi liturgical music occurred at the same time that new schools for cantors or formal training programs in existing schools began to emerge, primarily in Germany and central Europe.[23] These schools and programs supplemented the traditional model of training by apprenticeship with an academic framework of sorts. The prospect of addressing Ashkenazi music in an academic or educational environment would have encouraged putting thoughts into writing, formulating ideas, and beginning to deal with theoretical issues. Moreover, in the process of establishing schools and training programs for cantors, Jewish professional musicians may have been exposed to Western music theory,[24] which

21 Chaim Brody, *Mahberot Imanuel: Immanuel ben Solomon of Rome* (Berlin: Eshkol, 1926), 172.

22 Scattered throughout the pre-WWII professional newsletters and journals mentioned above, there seem to be rare hints of an additional ideological level concerning the ancient origins of this practice. This can be viewed, however, not as an additional idea but as a corollary of presenting church music as stemming from Jewish origins. This notion is discussed below as an independent and primary component in the Idelsohn paradigm.

23 Geoffrey Goldberg, „The Training of *Hazzanim* in Nineteenth-Century Germany," *Yuval* 7 (2002): 299–367.

24 The significance of this exposure is further underlined by the fact that these schools and programs were administered by the state and therefore bound by its formal requirements. See Goldberg, „The Training of *Hazzanim*," 312–220 (on the state-supervised training) and 330–345 (on programs in the non-Jewish seminaries).

could have prompted them to formalize this kind of theory in their own practice on the model of a scale system.

Finally, the semi-academic environment of the new schools may have been the context in which early theorists encountered ideas about the relationship between modal scales and „national spirit" or *Volksgeist*. Although the term itself might have originated with the work of Hegel, the influence of this concept on musical discourse may be traced to Johann Gottfried von Herder's contention that each nation has its own particular *Geist* (spirit) that it should strive to express. This is the ideology that inspired, for example, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm to collect German folk tales, and it reverberated in the field of music as well, influencing musicologists like Carl Dahlhaus, Robert Lachmann, and John (and Alan) Lomax, as well as composer-scholars like Béla Bartók, Zoltán Kodály, and Leoš Janáček, to name only a few.

The principal impact of *Volksgeist* on our case is the idea that modal music as opposed to tonal music – and therefore, the modal scales, as opposed to major and minor scales – is the true expression of the „spirit of the folk". How aware Jewish practitioners were of the prevailing association of the modal scales, especially the pseudo-Greek modes, with „the folk" is not clear. But it is not unreasonable to assume that the prominence of modal scales in Ashkenazi music theory reflected the musical zeitgeist, and the belief that modality in general, and the pseudo-Greek modes in particular, provided the theoretical basis for distinguishing folk, national, or ethnic characteristics in a given repertoire.

In summary, the product of the first attempts to describe the various musical settings used in Ashkenazi liturgical practice was a scale system – a bit vaguely defined in some parts and not completely consistent in others – that contained three types of scales:

1. Scales corresponding to pseudo-Greek modes. In some cases, modes were slightly adjusted to match the scales used in particular musical settings.

2. Scales corresponding to the minor and major modes of Western common practice.

3. Scales identified by their traditional Hebrew or Yiddish names. Many of these scales were unique to the Ashkenazi liturgical repertoire. Others had been assimilated into the repertoire and given their own particular Hebrew or Yiddish names.

This system was strongly influenced, directly or indirectly, by contemporary Western music theory, and its adoption marks a conceptual gap between insiders' intuitions about how the Ashkenazi system worked and the academic or scholarly articulation of the system.

* * *

The main interest of this paper has been the early period of Ashkenazi musicology, prior to the era of Avraham Zvi Idelsohn.[25] But it is worth noting briefly how Idelsohn's discourse relates to the narrative described thus far and how traits of the early period are reflected in his work. Despite the changes that he introduced, the premises of the resulting theory remained remarkably similar, as did the motivations. Like the late-nineteenth-century discourse, Idelsohn's work and the discourse that followed it up to the last quarter of the twentieth century were also influenced by ideology and by zeitgeist-derived factors. And in a process parallel to that of the nineteenth-century narrative, Idelsohn and his successors also developed a theory that is primarily scale-based and scale-derived.

Idelsohn's approach is marked by two new conceptual and methodological emphases. First, historical and comparative musicology, as well as what we now identify as ethnomusicology, become the frameworks that structure scholarly discourse. Music theory plays a subordinate role, introduced only as needed in support of a historical, evolutionary, or comparative point, and otherwise remains at the periphery of the discussion. Second, Idelsohn seems to put across the first serious attempt to introduce the notion that the Ashkenazi prayer modes are defined not by their scale structure alone but also by motivic considerations. This notion was grounded in Idelsohn's preoccupation with Arab music in general and the *makam* in particular,[26] but it had the important effect of grouping the Ashkenazi modal system with other musical systems outside of Western common practice that include both scalar elements and motivic factors, and in Idelsohn's case, particularly the Near East.

The new emphasis on historical-comparative-ethnomusicological approaches and motivic factors were two elements of an overall perspective, an ideology, and at times, an agenda. This ideology is expressed differently from that of the nineteenth century, but the two share similar content and had a similar effect on the development of theory during the Idelsohn and post-Idelsohn eras.

In broad strokes we can describe the Idelsohn agenda as a three-pronged paradigm that both presupposed and strove to prove that the Jewish prayer modes as we

25 There are by far more discussions on this latter era than on the pre-Idelsohn period, particularly on Idelsohn himself (though not specifically on his impact on the music theory of the liturgical repertoire). See for example the essays in *Yuval 5: The Abraham Zvi Idelsohn Memorial Volume* (Jerusalem: Magness Press, 1986); Shai Burstyn, „*Shira chadasha-atika: moreshet Avraham Zvi Idelsohn vezimrey shorashim*," *Kathedra* 127 (2008): 113–114; Frigyesi, „The Unique Character of Ashkenazi Synagogal Music"; Edwin Seroussi, „*Yesod echad lahen: giluy hamizrach ve'achdutan shel mesorot hamusika hayehudit bemishnat Avraham Tsvi Idelsohn*," *Pe'amim* 100 (2004): 125–146 and the sources it mentions; and Noga Tamir, „Musicological-Ideological Aspects in the Work of A. Z. Idelsohn" (MA thesis, Tel-Aviv University, 2005). More recent works that offer context for specific concerns are Judah Cohen, „Rewriting the Grand Narrative of Jewish Music: Abraham Z. Idelsohn in the United States," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 100, no. 3 (2010): 417–453; and James Loeffler, „Do Zionists Read Music from Right to Left? Abraham Tsvi Idelsohn and the Invention of Israeli Music," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 100, no. 3 (2010): 385–416. Some work exploring Idelsohn's perception of the modal system and theory in general, and its influence on the field is under preparation.

26 We should note, however, that Idelsohn's description of the *makam* can only be observed critically (see for example, Frigyesi, „The Unique Character of Ashkenazi Synagogal Music," 151, including the related references in n. 8.)

know them originated in the music of ancient Israel; that all Jewish music, regardless of geographical differences or differences among sects, exhibits the same common traits; and that Jewish music is in essence Near Eastern. The search for an origin in antiquity – both for its own sake and to support the claim of a common Middle Eastern ancestry shared by all Jewish traditions – is the equivalent of the pre-Idelsohn era's preoccupation with demonstrating the priority of Jewish music with respect to church music. In a similar manner, the pre-Idelsohn need to establish this repertoire as a system – similar or at times identical to that of the church or pseudo-Greek modes – is replaced by Idelsohn's identification of the Jewish prayer modes with the *makamat*. Both the recasting of the modes as *makamat* and the preoccupation with the Levant are derived from Idelsohn's zeitgeist: the rise in Zionist sentiment was intertwined with the view that the resettling of Palestine was a restoration of sorts of ancient Israel, and that this restored community should model itself on contemporary Middle Eastern culture, as represented by the Arab world.[27] Nevertheless, for reasons that deserve a separate discussion, Idelsohn's system, despite its introduction of the motivic component, was still *de facto* very much defined by its scalar component (although some of its scales are different and some are given different names, primarily due to the system's Arab/*makam*-oriented outlook).

By and large, Idelsohn's successors maintained his scale-centered approach, and his ideological agenda is reflected in their writings on theory. In Eric Werner's work, for example, there is a slight emphasis on the antiquity of Jewish music in support of the derivation of the earliest church music from the Jewish material. In the case of Leib Glantz, the dominating intent to demonstrate the underlying unity of Ashkenazi [liturgical?] music produced a theory that subsumes almost the entire repertoire under one scale, which appears in three different configurations. On the other hand, in his effort to establish this tradition as a pre-Diaspora practice (including „cleaning it up" or purging it by removing impurities and undermining traits added in the Diaspora), Glantz identified the presence of pseudo-Greek modes or pentatonic scales, which were then considered markers of „ancient", „non-Western", and „authentic" traits.[28] Unlike Idelsohn, however, Glantz did not deal with motivic

27 References to the Levant as an aesthetic idea of that era, sometimes as a subtopic of „Orientalism" or the „Mediterranean style" in Jewish and Hebrew music in Palestine during the first half of the twentieth century, are abundant. A few samples of these discussions are Bathja Bayer, *„Hit'havuto shel 'makam' bashir hayisraeli,"* in *Proceedings of a Conference on Eastern and Western Factors in Israeli Music 1962*, ed. Michal Smoira (Tel-Aviv: Israel Music Institute, 1968), 74–84; Philip Bohlman, „The Immigrant Composer in Palestine, 1933–1948: Stranger in a Strange Land," *Asian Music* 17, no. 3 (1986): 147–167; Philip Bohlman, „Inventing Jewish Music," *Yuval* 7 (2002): 33–74; Shai Burstyn, „Inventing Musical Tradition: The Case of the Hebrew (Folk) Song," in *Proceedings of the International Conference, Rethinking Interpretive Traditions in Musicology, Orbis Musicae* 13 (1999), 127–136; Jehoash Hirshberg, *Paul Ben-Haim, His Life and Work* (Jerusalem: Israeli Music Publication, 1990); and Jehoash Hirshberg, *Music in the Jewish Community of Palestine, 1880–1948* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995).

28 For a thorough and detailed discussion of these themes in the work of Glantz, see Boaz Tarsi, „Music Theory as an Expression of Musical and Extramusical Views Reflected in Leib Glantz's Liturgical Settings," in *Leib Glantz – The Man Who Spoke To God*, ed. Jerry Glantz (Tel Aviv: The Tel Aviv Institute for Jewish Liturgical Music), 175–195.

components at all (although it is inconceivable that he was not aware of work that addressed them).[29] In addition, although his theory is much more inclusive than Idelsohn's, insofar as it aims to unite the various components of the repertoire under the aegis of one or two scales, Glantz's work addresses only the Ashkenazi tradition and does not take into account Jewish liturgical music outside of Ashkenaz.

As mentioned earlier, most research on the Ashkenazi tradition since the mid-1970s – early 1980's has adopted fundamentally different paradigms.[30] It is natural for us current researchers to consider the new paradigms as better. Still, even as recent work seems to be overcoming stumbling blocks created by older perceptions, giving us an increasingly clearer picture of the musical tradition, we need to remain aware of the early origins of theory in Ashkenazi music, if only to recognize what we actually *can* hold on to from it and separate its great contribution from misconceptions that may impede a better understanding, but perhaps more important, to retain the principles and the very essence of how this discipline works as drawn from the earliest evidence at our disposal.

29 This is one of the premises of the debate between Glantz and Wohlberg in Leib Glantz, „The Musical Basis of Nusach Hatefillah," in *Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Conference-Convention of the Cantors Assembly of America and the Department of Music of the United Synagogue of America* (1952), 16–25, and Wohlberg, „The History of the Musical Modes of the Ashkenazic Synagogue."

30 For an analytic overview of the currents and processes in Jewish music studies, both past and present, see Edwin Seroussi, „Music: The 'Jew' of Jewish Studies," *Jewish Studies* 46 (2009): 3–84.