

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

“SACRED IN YOUR MIDST”: SOUNDING ISRAELI IDENTITY THROUGH THE
PERFORMANCE OF JEWISH LITURGY IN JERUSALEM’S PUBLIC SPACES

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
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MILI CHANA LEITNER COHEN

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Notes on Translation and Transliteration

Unless otherwise noted, all translations included in this dissertation are my own. Translated Hebrew terms are italicized upon first use, except for proper nouns. I offer English translations in parenthesis at the first use of a Hebrew term. I offer a translation only on a word's first occurrence because of the inaccuracies and misunderstandings that can easily plague translations from Hebrew. For example, the word *dati* is best translated as “religious” but carries cultural and national specificities that require a paragraph's explanation in English. I also offer a glossary, which contains all Hebrew terms and their translations. Where it does not affect the meaning, become stilted, or erase a term already in English parlance within Jewish communities, I use English equivalents of Hebrew terms throughout. For example, instead of Har Sinai I use Mount Sinai.

Transliterating from Hebrew to English is a complex matter since there does not exist a single system used to the exclusion of others, and one's choice of transliteration belies political, religious, temporal, and geographic affiliations. I have attempted to maintain simplicity and consistency above all else, and to respect normative spellings even when they defy those two qualities.

The Hebrew ך I render as *h*, to avoid confusion with כ/ך (rendered *ch*) or ה (rendered *h*). This has an added benefit of refusing to give precedence to a particular pronunciation of ך, which varies wildly among my interlocutors and can be indistinguishable from either כ/ך or ה. ק and ך/ק are rendered *k*, the single element of this system that is thus not reversible. I do not use double consonants to indicate the Hebrew *dagesh hazak* unless it is essential to a word's meaning.

Where a conventional Romanized spelling exists, as is sometimes the case with Jewish words used in English parlance, I have used that spelling in place of the aforementioned system. *Megilat Ester* is thus rendered *Megillat Esther* and Ḥabad is Chabad. Names are rendered according to the spelling chosen by that individual.

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A PhD can be a significant financial undertaking and I have been fortunate to be able to learn without concerns in this regard thanks to the generosity of a number of University of Chicago Centers and Departments. A Greenberg Center for Jewish Studies Fellowship, Fuerstenberg Fellowship, Pozen Center for Human Rights travel grant, Center for the Study of Race, Politics and Culture travel grant, and three Wadmond Fund awards offered generous financial support to supplement my stipend and fund extensive fieldwork and specialist study in Israel. Here, I found new academic homes at the Mandel Institute for the Humanities at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and the Van Leer Institute. I am grateful to Paul Mendes-Flohr for finding me a seat at the latter, and for caring so deeply for my family's personal wellbeing. I benefitted too from short courses at the International Doctoral Workshop in Hildesheim and Hebrew University Mandel Center and University of Pennsylvania Katz Center summer school for advanced doctoral students, and from my experience as a Mellon traveling scholar.

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Even before my time in Chicago, the seeds of this dissertation were sown by my professors at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, my undergraduate institution. My violin teacher, Pieter Schoeman, suggested that I should "do something with my brain" during a

conversation about graduate study, which led me to embrace Karl Lutchmayer and Aleksander Szram's offerings on the "other side" of the building. Without their expertise, pedagogical excellence, charisma, and generosity of spirit and time, I would not have pursued doctoral study. Ann van Allen-Russell was instrumental in the logistical aspects of transitioning from performance to academic musical studies. These staff have continued to be excellent role models, not least in their professionalism and passionate commitment to their art, even as I have long departed London.

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Hannah Pasternak-Shames, Naama Cohen, Sara Laya Heller, Jazzie Morgan, Meital and C Maor, Eric Silverman, Joe Brophy, Rachel Fauber, Alana and Yonatan Rahmani, Avigail and Beeri Gurtler Har-Tuv, and Rivka Zimmerman round off the Jerusalem *hevre* who have kept me grounded, loved, and supported through the latter years of this dissertation's life and who will

surely accompany me into future years. They have become a chosen family, so essential for me as the new immigrant that I am; they have truly made Jerusalem home.

I dedicate this dissertation to my family. My father, Dominic, passed away a few months before I defended. He proofread every abstract, article, and chapter that I sent him from my teenage years onward, reminded me to avoid splitting infinitives, learnt rather too much about all kinds of topics in which he showed generous interest, and took my adoption of American spellings and newfound rejection of the very British passive voice in his stride. His pride in, and support of, my chosen path never wavered. His voice speaks through this dissertation. He is missed every day.

My mother, Jane, reminds me often of his pride in my doctoral studies, which she too expresses while elegantly avoiding pressuring me to follow a particular path, instead supporting me unconditionally in my choices. Her support went so far as joining our family in Israel for the final month of my writing process, ensuring that I could complete this process even in August, the one month of the year when Israel does not offer any childcare. I recall my first active musical experiences as all occurring in her presence, including piano lessons (that amounted to nothing) and acquiring my first violin (which amounted to a career path that led me directly to pursue this Ph.D.). I am grateful to her and my sister Tanzy for providing permanence and steadfastness during the many transitions that these eight years have brought.

My husband, David, joined me on this journey, making a leap of faith by choosing to accompany me as I left for the field in 2017, just a couple of months after our first date at the World Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem. He has supported my adventures and misadventures along the way, always gently encouraging me to pursue this project to its end, offering ideas that were pivotal to this dissertation's shape, assisting me in getting to fieldwork

sites at antisocial times of day and night, checking my translations, taking care of our home and children so that I could take an extra hour to write whenever possible, and so much more besides. He appears in this dissertation's fieldnotes repeatedly, illustrating his constant loving presence in every aspect of my life.

During my Ph.D. we gained two new family members, Eliana Ester and Rafael Şahar, who gave new meaning and perspective to this project. To David, Eliana, and Rafael, who bring love and joy to our home, thank you for sharing this journey with me. May we share many more adventures together.

Abstract

In this dissertation I explore common spaces and intersections of the sacred and secular in contemporary Jewish Jerusalem. Based on ethnographic fieldwork from 2015-2021, I argue that the characters of Israel and Judaism, and their evolving relationship, are negotiated through the performance of liturgy in public spaces. Focusing particularly upon indices of race, gender, and nation, I illustrate the competing models, discourses, and ideals expressed by my interlocutors, and explore the historical and epistemological bases thereof. Tensions and conflicts, subtle and violent, are woven through the accounts, as actors deploy liturgy to assert an ideal sound of Jewish and Israeli public space. In so doing, their idiosyncratic deployments come to stand for a broader vision of Jerusalem as the heartland of Judaism and Israel, over and against conflicting attempts.

Introduction: Boundaries and Continuums

ואמר ליה רב נחמן לרבי יצחק, מאי דכתיב: "בְּקִרְבֵּי קְדוֹשׁ וְלֹא אָבוֹא בְּעִיר", מִשּׁוּם דְּבִקְרָבֵי קְדוֹשׁ
לֹא אָבוֹא בְּעִיר?

אמר ליה: הכי אמר רבי יוחנן, אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא: לא אבוא בירושלים של מעלה עד שאבוא
לירושלים של מטה!

ומי איפא ירושלים למעלה? אין, דכתיב: "ירושלים הבנויה כעיר שחברה לה יחדו."
— תלמוד בבלי טענית ה

And Rav Naḥman said to Rabbi Yitzḥak: What is the meaning of the verse: "It is sacred in your midst, and I will not enter the city" (Hosea 11:9)? This verse is puzzling: Because it is sacred in your midst, will God not enter the city?

Rabbi Yitzḥak said to Rav Naḥman that Rabbi Yoḥanan said the verse should be understood as follows: The Holy One, Blessed be He, said: I shall not enter Jerusalem above, in heaven, until I enter Jerusalem on earth, down below, at the time of the redemption, when it will be sacred in your midst.

And is there such a place as Jerusalem above? Yes, as it is written:
"Jerusalem built up, a city unified together" (Psalms 122:3).

—Babylonian Talmud, Taanit 5a

למה ירושלים תמיד שתיים?

למה ירושלים תמיד שתיים, של מעלה ושל מטה
ואני רוצה לקיות בירושלים של אמצע
בלי לקבט את ראשי למעלה
ובלי לפצוע את רגלי למטה.

וְלִמָּה יְרוּשָׁלַיִם בְּלִשׁוֹן זִוּגִית כְּמוֹ יָדַיִם וְרַגְלַיִם,
אֲנִי רוֹצֵה לְהִיזֹת רַק בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם אַחַת,
כִּי אֲנִי רַק אֲנִי אֶחָד וְלֹא שְׁנַיִם

— יהודה עמיחי

Why is Jerusalem always two?

Why is Jerusalem always two, one of above and one of below
And I want to live in the Jerusalem of the middle
Without banging my head above
And without stubbing my foot below

And why is Jerusalem two like hands and feet
I want to live in just one Yerushal
Because I am just one me and not two

—Yehuda Amichai

Maps and Buses

A couple of weeks after completing my A levels, I boarded an El Al flight to participate in a chamber music course on a kibbutz located among the rolling hills of Israel's Galilee. Keen to make the most of my newfound freedom—not only had I finished school, but this was my first solo overseas trip and my first time in Israel—that I booked my return flight for two weeks after the course ended, with no concrete plans as to how I would spend that extra time. I shared a cabin with Meital, a cellist my age who had managed a feat as yet beyond me: she had moved out of her parents' home into her own place in Jerusalem. We became, and remain until today,

firm friends, and Meital insisted I crash on her floor after the course ended so that she could show me around Jerusalem.

Unknowingly, I crossed unmarked borders on my tourist adventures around the city that I would later discover were rendered visible on contemporary maps of Jerusalem. On our casual strolls around the Old City I noticed a diversity of religion, language, dress code, and skin tone, but the busy foot traffic left me unaware that I had drunk coffee in the Christian Quarter, listened to a busker in the Jewish quarter, watched a game of courtyard football in the Muslim quarter, and stopped into a kiosk in the Armenian quarter. One quiet afternoon I took in spectacular views from Ramparts Walk, a route atop the City's walls that starts at Jaffa Gate just a few meters from the glitzy shopping mall Mamilla. I was told it finishes at St. Stephen's Gate, or Shaar HaArayot (Lion's Gate), which sounded interesting enough—I presumed there would be some kind of church dedicated to St Stephen to see. In fact, the more appropriate name to give might have been the Arabic Bab al-Asbat (Minaret of the Tribes), since the end point was firmly in East Jerusalem, a fact that was not noted at the route's beginning. Whether in the moment or in retrospect, more often than not my day took me across territorial lines in one way or another, whether from the secular town center to the neighboring Haredi neighborhood of Mea Shearim, from West to East Jerusalem, from commercial and industrial zones, and to the holy sites of so many religions. With all of this crammed into an area walkable in a single day, I felt as though I was experiencing a microcosm of humanity every time I ventured out to explore. I was not the first to feel this way.

Bünting's 1581 Cloverleaf Map (Figure 0.1) shows Jerusalem at the convergence of three continents, implicitly at the center of the world. It bears resemblance to the contemporary maps of the region that I had seen prior to traveling there, which mark Jerusalem as an intentionally

vague pinpoint on an unnamed border. These maps are exceptional and perhaps intentional in their vagueness. Rather, cartography of Jerusalem has historically tended towards the over-determined, keen to mark those borders that I crossed in order that any would-be adventurer had the opportunity to traverse the city with more awareness than I had possessed. Crusaders mapped the Old City's pilgrimage routes, with styles ranging from artistic representations of personal journeys (such as the Codex Harley map, Figure 0.2, which depicts a pilgrim's experience) to realistic renderings with additional imaginary flourishes (Comminelli map, Figure 0.3, which denotes the Church of the Holy Sepulcher as the center of the world) to attempts at serious cartographic guides for visitors (such as the Cambrai map, Figure 0.4). Little has changed.

Today, the United Nations issues maps zone areas almost street-by-street with dozens of colors indicated in the key, Google Maps shows parallel dotted lines that usually indicate national borders bisecting streets in residential neighborhoods, local political nonprofits create renderings that claim various parts as the capital of Israel, Palestine, or both. While not made explicit, today's various renderings of the city are still over-determined and attempt to represent to various degrees a balance of the personal, the political, and the practical.

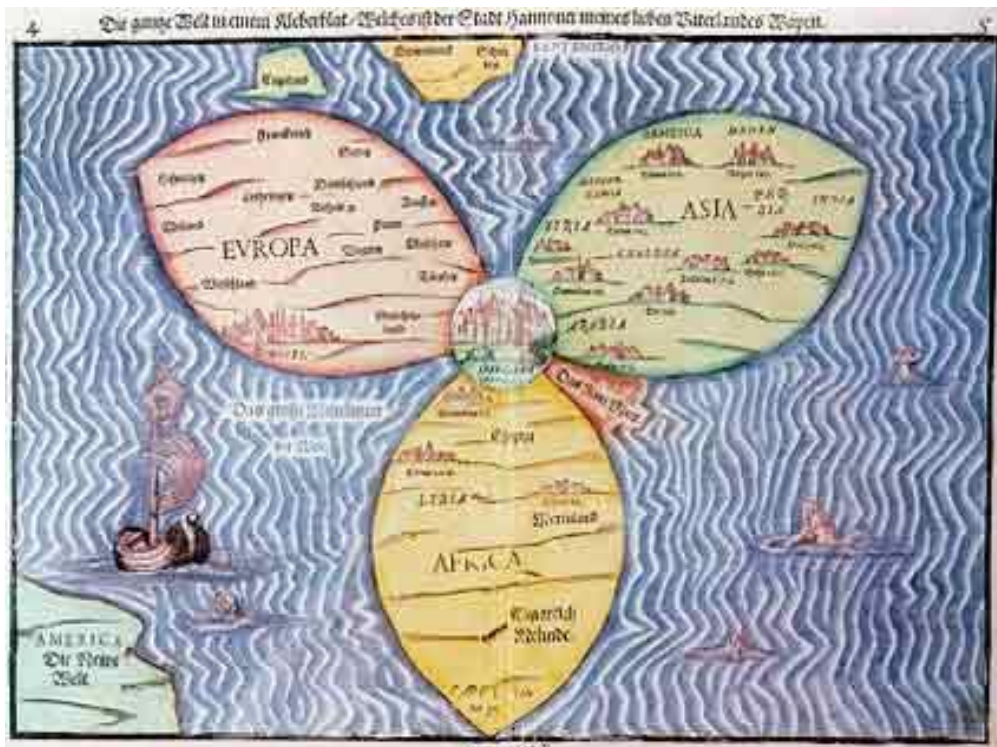


Figure 0.1. Bünting's Cloverleaf Map (1581) (National Library of Israel)

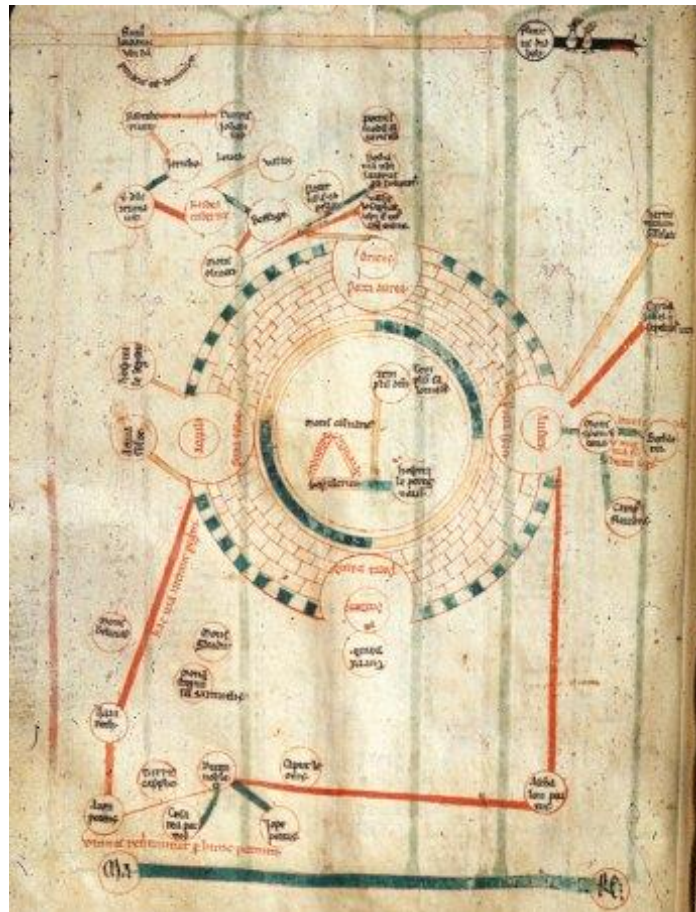


Figure 0.2. Codex Harley map (n.d.) (British Library)



Figure 0.3. Comminelli map (1472) (National Library of Israel)



Figure 0.4. Cambrai *Map of Jerusalem* (1170 (?)) (Médiathèque Municipale)

Some years and trips later, as a new Jerusalem resident and Israeli citizen, I was able to step into the role of tour guide for my parents. Our daily ritual began huddled around a laptop, one tab always open with Google Maps centered on my Nahlaot address, drinking coffee while we planned our day's adventures. I hoped to take them to see my shared office at the Hebrew University's Mount Scopus campus, which, on a clear day, offers views across the desert as far as Amman. "Why does it have a border around it?" my father asked, pointing out the dotted border that seems to encircle the University. "And what's that other dotted line near the Old City? Are we going to East Jerusalem? Is it safe?" My then-boyfriend (now-husband) David and I exchanged a glance, knowing that our answer should rightly capture the weighty complexity of centuries of colonialism and recurrent conflict, an answer that so poorly translated into that dotted circle on the map.

To reach that dotted circle, we boarded an Egged bus on Ussishkin near the *shuk* (market). It was filled with Israeli student types, young men and women likely in their twenties in casual, warming clothing for this cold January day, a bag on their lap or the seat next to them, some reading textbooks, others with headphones in their ears, a few engaged in conversation. Scattered among them was an older couple in religious garbs, she with a small prayer book in hand, he watching the heavy rain pound the fogged-up window. I pulled my phone from my pocket and challenged my parents to a game. "Tell me when you think we've crossed the first line on the map." As we passed down a mixed residential and commercial street filled with black-hat Jews escorting their children to school, I noted that my parents had missed their first chance. A minute later, they missed their second as we turned onto a main road, placing us just to the right of the dotted line that followed its central reservation. Twice more within five minutes, at seemingly random points on the same road near a tram stop, and finally by a gym as

we turned a corner. My parents firmly lost this game and arrived confused and bemused. Of course, my intention was to express to them the limited nature of maps in understanding Jerusalem's complex dynamics, and the false dichotomy of East vs West Jerusalem that they had encountered on their screens and within the British media that they consume.

My mission to complicate their preconceived notions of Jerusalem as a city of two halves had been a success. Rounding up our walk around the campus grounds and buildings, we returned to a bus stop near the Botanical Garden. The 201 coach pulled up just as we sat down on the metal bench, and, keen to escape the chilly January wind that whipped across this hilltop, my father stood to board the coach. I explained, "no, that's an Arab bus, we'll take one of the green buses like the one we came in on." But my father was already quizzing the driver about the route and waved his shiny new Rav-Kav to enquire as to whether he could pay using his Israeli pre-paid transit card. I had never taken an Arab bus before, understanding that even when they ran on more convenient schedules or took ideal routes through shared neighborhoods, this was a degree of separation not to be breached, a divide treated with a holy reverence out of some mix of fear and respect. Egged buses were open to all, yes, but Arab buses were for Arabs alone. Still, my father was beckoning, "it goes by the Old City! Let's go! There are four seats right here at the front." I quietly hoped that we could pass for unsuspecting tourists rather than bold, or even dangerous, Israelis, as I noted the sea of hijabs ahead of me.

The same land, the same roads, the same neighborhoods that I had insisted lacked those dotted lines *still* lacked them, but we experienced a different Jerusalem from the 201. Our choice of bus line determined our experience of Jerusalem, in both cases a curated and limited experience of the city's full diversity and cosmopolitanism. That false dichotomy of East and

West Jerusalem was perhaps not so false after all but was to be experienced in ways that a map cannot express.

Our ability to choose a version of Jerusalem to inhabit and experience by virtue of our choice of bus line is one that is replicated in many everyday engagements within the city. Our discomfort on one of those buses, caused by an encounter with those who chose another version of Jerusalem (whether expected or unanticipated, intentional or accidental), is also an integral part of experiencing the city, particularly in its public spaces.

“Why Is Jerusalem Always Two?”

Yehuda Amichai, in his poem “Why is Jerusalem always two?” which I offer above as this dissertation’s second epigraph, ponders why the city’s Hebrew name, Yerushalayim, uses the dual (plural) form.¹ He yearns to live in a Jerusalem without inherent dualism, a Jerusalem without boundaries and borders, where he can feel able to be his full self without constraint. Amichai leaves this dualism vague and unnamed. While those of us situated in Europe and North America may, by virtue of the media that we consume and the political discourse we encounter, presume that this dualism is Israel vs. Palestine, Jews vs. Arabs, or some other corresponding label, Jerusalem encompasses many more dualisms that Amichai surely intended to evoke in his intentional vagueness. Not only does Jerusalem bear the burden of being Israel’s capital, Judaism’s most prized location, and the center of this infamous conflict, the city exists on the

¹ Whereas the English language offers singular or plural form, Hebrew occasionally uses an additional grammatical number—dual form. Words in dual form use the suffix -ayim. In Modern Hebrew only a finite number of words use dual form, notably words concerning time and body parts, whereas in earlier forms of Hebrew any noun could be treated with dual form, as remains the case in Arabic.

border of other politically and spiritually weighty dualities: mountainous desert to its east and fertile coastal plain to its west; secular and religious residents; the new city and the Old; immigrants and natives; Hebrew and Arabic; Yerushalayim and al-Quds. While our bus journeys wove peaceful paths across these boundaries without fanfare, Amichai points to a reality of Jerusalem as a contested city, a reality that stems from its revered status that has persisted for millennia.

To give but one example, the fifteenth-century Breydenbach-Reuwich map (Figure 0.5), one of the first printed maps of the Holy Land, displays Jerusalem as a city swollen out of proportion, dominating its surrounds. Pilgrimage sites are marked with crosses, overemphasized, and given a caption, thus dominating the cityscape. Jerusalem then, as now, occupied the imagination of those residing near and far, its status and ascribed significance transcending its physical qualities.

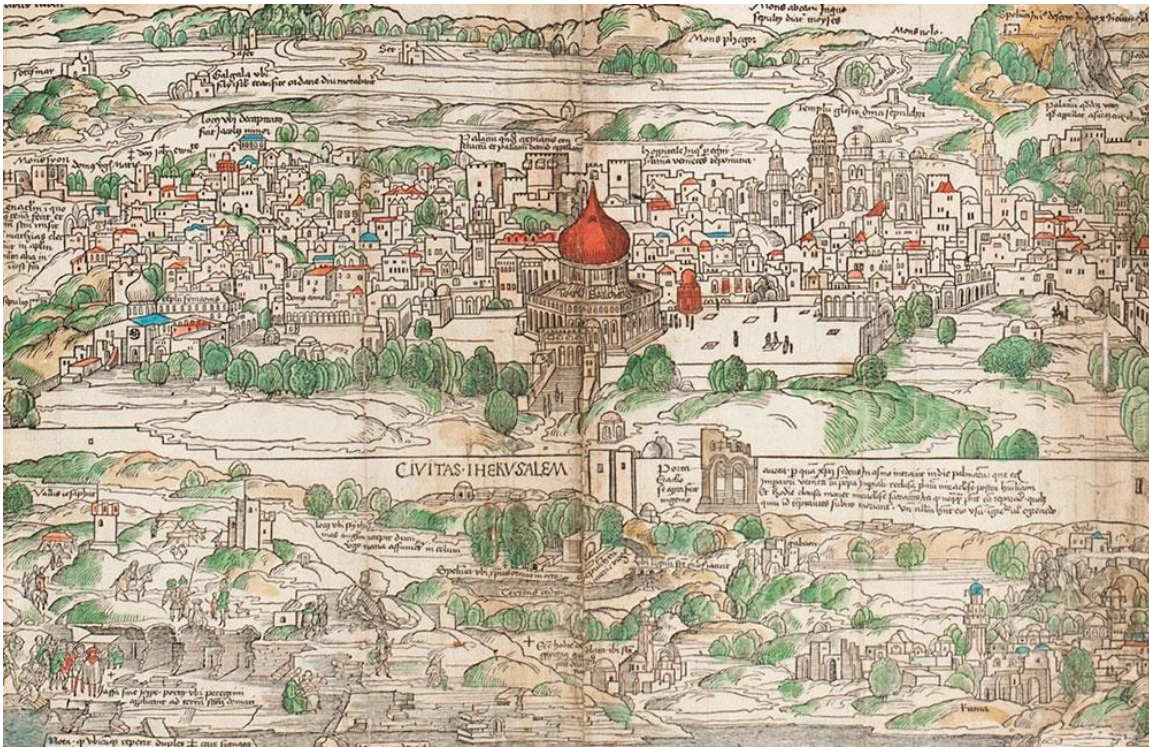


Figure 0.5. Breydenbach-Reuwich map (1486) (The Israel Museum, Jerusalem)

Today, over 350,000 diverse individuals live in West Jerusalem,² an area that takes just an hour to cross on foot from east to west, and twice that from north to south. These residents include settled and transient populations (including Israeli and overseas students, tourists, pilgrims, diplomats, etc.), and the full spectrum of Israeli demographics in every regard (religious, racial, age, socioeconomic). Inevitably, this bustling urban hub is a place of contact between every kind of Israeli and Jew.

By virtue of its ascribed special status and unusual demographic make-up (the latter due in part to the former), Jerusalem is not representative of any entity beyond itself, but its

² As of 2019, the most recent date for which reliable data is available, Jerusalem's total population is 936,430, of which 363,100 live in West Jerusalem and 573,330 in East Jerusalem. West Jerusalem's population is 97% Jewish, compared to 37% in the East (Choshen 2021). East Jerusalem is defined as areas that came under Israeli control in 1967.

happenings do capture a heightened iteration of broader discourses in Israel and Judaism within a city-specific context. Jerusalem is not Israel and it is not Judaism, but it represents both in its dual status as the capital city of the modern nation state and the historical center of the Jewish religion, replete with its holiest sites and key political institutions. It can be understood as a miniature testing ground where burgeoning social issues in Judaism and Israeli society come to the fore as priorities, a holy backdrop for modern identity politics within and between nation and religion.

Returning to Amichai's poem, one notes that its opening phrases "Jerusalem of above" or heavenly Jerusalem (*Yerushalayim shel mala*), and "Jerusalem of below" or earthly Jerusalem (*Yerushalayim shel mata*) are not his own, but rather are drawn from the Babylonian Talmud (Ta'anit 5a), offered as the first epigraph to this dissertation. The Talmud is Judaism's primary legal tome penned by the religion's Sages and likely edited in the sixth century. Its Sages imagine these two Jerusalems as inextricably linked, God's presence in heavenly Jerusalem contingent upon the redemption of earthly Jerusalem. Building upon the Sages' thinking, I am concerned in this dissertation with how "Jerusalem of above"—the Jerusalem of Judaism's Temples, fantastical center-of-the-world maps, and pilgrimage—is envisaged, performed, and negotiated in "Jerusalem of below"—the Jerusalem of grotty Egged buses, corrupt politics, and overpriced groceries.

In order to understand the relationship between these Jerusalems, I examine the enmeshment of religious, political, and cultural circumstances in which Jewish Jerusalemites live, and their subjective experiences thereof, particularly as informed by experiences of encounter with groups understood as their "other" or rival within the parameters of Jewish Jerusalem. Specifically, I examine the contentious vectors of race, gender, and nation—which

are expressed locally through Jewish ethnicity and otherness, womanhood, and Zionism/*mamlachtiyut*—and how Jerusalem-specific conflicts in each of these areas are expressed and sacralized through public performances of Jewish liturgy. Such encounters are in general less known and less reported on outside of Israel than those between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs, but they occupy local imaginations and everyday life to a greater extent. These internal conflicts both generate and reinscribe other (often not unrelated) conflicts, from the discursive to the physical, expressing concerns around Israel's demography, the relative role of Jewish denominations in Israel, Israel-diaspora relations, and more besides. These conflicts concern the nature of contemporary Judaism and Israel; they are, in fact, performative debates as to the ideal nature of these two meta-entities and the relationship between them.

Liturgy Everywhere You Listen

My interest in this topic, and the lens through which I examine it, are the product of fieldwork that I conducted when I had in mind another project altogether. I set out on my first field research trip in 2015 intending to work on a dissertation topic that would have spanned a number of Israeli urban sites and dealt with popular musics in public spaces, broadly defined. What I heard in Jerusalem's streets, though, was liturgy. It was Biblical verses reimagined as dance tracks with thumping beats blaring from a car stuck in heavy city-center rush hour traffic; Boy Scout groups chanting lines from *piyyutim* (paraliturgical songs) more commonly heard emanating from synagogues at dawn services; Kabbalat Shabbat prayers in public squares surrounded by restaurants and bars; a busker offering up electric guitar renditions of Carlebach's folksy religious ditties. I tried to ignore the specifically religious nature of what I heard and

continue with my original project, but my field notes told of this unexpected and seemingly unavoidable religious soundscape in purportedly secular, public spaces. I felt compelled to pursue this unexpected new line of musical encounter that dominated Jerusalem's streets and yet was barely to be heard elsewhere in Israel, and to investigate what it was about these happenings that drew me to linger and listen each time.

Retrospectively, I understand that this compulsion was caused by my repeated surprise that I shared spaces with people whose musics indicated lifestyles and beliefs so different from my own, and the opportunity that liturgical performance affords to make often-appropriate assumptions about the musicker. The same experience of overlapping Jerusalems that I encountered on those two bus journeys played out in a different realm and through different means on that initial fieldwork trip; now, the overlapping layers were the sacred and secular realms. They were notions about how an ideal Judaism should sound, they were visions of a utopian Jerusalem—and they all sounded through the same liturgical canon, sharing specific public sites, often simultaneously. This was not liturgy as worship, but rather liturgy as a means to stake a claim to the nature of Jerusalem's public space, liturgy as a tool that determined the character of Jerusalem as representative of Judaism and Israel. My question became how and why Jewish liturgy was being used to articulate, promote, and negotiate presumably secular identity-based agendas.

Inherently sacred, Jewish liturgy in Israel is also necessarily national. It is national in the sense that the Jewish people constitute not only a religion but a people, a nation, an *am*, *goy*, *leom*, and *umah*—four Biblical Hebrew terms used to describe the nature of the Jewish people all of which translate as “nation,” hinting at the limited ability of the English language to capture the essence of the relationship that holds Jews together as a collective.

Liturgy is also national in Israel in the more specific sense that it is used by and for this modern nation state and its citizens as an audible symbol of Israeliness, in the model of civil religion (see Liebman & Don-Yehiya 2018). It thus functions as a common canon to Israelis (whether Jewish or not) and Jews (Israeli or not). While non-Jewish Israelis and non-Israeli Jews may in fact experience a sense of marginalization when traditional liturgy is deployed as a representation of Israel or Judaism respectively (because of their partial or total exclusion from the nation's idealized demographic category), for Israeli Jews, liturgy is a particularly powerful vector of identity precisely *because* it conflates nation and religion. In its public performance in Jerusalem, Jewish liturgy necessarily represents and regenerates both Israel and Judaism, and their relationship to one another. Independence Day celebrations become a mark of Jewish messianism, Purim becomes a celebration of Israeli multiculturalism. Specific places, too, take on a heightened significance through their service as a site where both the national and the religious are sounded out, and their futures debated through sung prayer.

This blurring of secular and sacred, as unavoidable as the sounds of liturgy in Jerusalem's streets, seems at first examination to be rather uncharacteristic of the dualism associated with Judaism. It is often claimed that binaries such as secular-sacred, holy-mundane (*kodesh-hol*), revealed-concealed, male-female, Jew-other, pure-impure (*tahor-tamei*), permitted-forbidden, Jerusalem of above-Jerusalem of below, categorize every aspect of life, public and private alike.

I wish to argue that despite the common conception that Judaism is preoccupied with binaries such as those listed above, such binaries are better characterized as end points on a continuum. As much as Judaism's rabbis and philosophers have been concerned with defining, characterizing, and legally confining the binaries above, they have been perhaps more interested in the ways in which one may move between and within them. A moment in time, for instance, is

not always just *kodesh* or *ḥol*; the start of a new day begins between sunset and nightfall, a period called “*bein hashmashot*” (between the luminaries). It is a transitional period, the length of which varies by location and time of year. Furthermore, to transition formally from a holy day to a mundane day, a ceremony called *havdalah* is required; the timing of this must fall after nightfall, but may be pushed off indefinitely, allowing each individual to determine the length of a day for themselves. Two individuals may thus share a space in time, while inhabiting different days. If time is more obviously transitional in nature within a solar-lunar calendar, purity laws offer a less obvious example wherein *tahor* and *tamei* (which may be poorly translated as pure and impure) may initially appear as two irreconcilable states, a true binary. Here too, though, processes are required to move from one state to the other, and they are considered with more vigor in Jewish legal texts than the statuses themselves. The *mikveh* (ritual bath) acts as a physical place whereby an individual may undergo, or in some cases begin, the transformation from *tamei* to *tahor*. When the *mikveh* only begins this process, time alone—specifically the completion of that underdetermined measure that is a Jewish day—may complete it. Sex, too, appears a strict binary, with synagogues traditionally separated in two by a physical partition, and men and women allocated distinct roles and responsibilities on the basis of their sex. But Jewish tradition considers there to be six biological sexes and does not assume correspondence between sex and gender (Fonrobert 1999; Freidson 2016; Beaulier 2019).

It is this middle, the space of encounter, transition, and transformation, with which I am concerned in this dissertation, both in lens and in process. Like *havdalah* and *mikveh*, liturgy too occupies this middle space as an expression from the earthly below directed to, and in service of, the heavenly above. From a secular perspective, liturgy appears as a religious product and process. Were it not for religion and its adherents’ desires to communicate to and about the gods,

there would be no liturgy. From a religious perspective, liturgy is a worldly, noisy, imperfect attempt to communicate with ones God (or gods)—and one that may fail for a variety of reasons in the eyes of participating individuals, be that due to the quality of the musicking, one’s own lack of attention, or external disruptors.

In Judaism, rabbinic literature constrained commentary on liturgy to its words, which when commented upon are highly prescribed, and to behavior during prayers, which must be reverent and is described in terms of how God’s might be brought into the prayer space. Rabbis have always treated the textual content and performance circumstances of liturgy as religious edicts that have the status of laws given by God. On the other hand, while the Sages comment that liturgy *must* be sung aloud, they make no comment upon how this might be carried out, leaving this vital, visceral element at the mercy of Jews throughout space and time, a nod to the thoroughly human end of the liturgical continuum.

I take liturgy as my lens in order to elucidate another kind of middle, the “Third Space” of encounter, transition, and transformation of collective and individual identity within Jewish Jerusalem. Homi K. Bhabha (2004) proposes the notion of a Third Space as a zone of contact and negotiation between colonizer and colonized. By rejecting “the binary thought and essentialist identities produced by colonialist knowledge,” he offers space to embrace ambiguity by thinking and feeling beyond other kinds of binary identities: self and other, religious and secular, native and foreign (Bhabha 2004). His emphasis on *negotiation* between parties to create a hybrid is essential to my focus on the “middle” identity of Jewish Jerusalem.

The moments, spaces, and sounds that occupy this “middle” occur when boundaries are blurred, and contact occurs between parties who normally prefer to reside towards opposite ends of a continuum temporarily inhabit its central domain. It is moments, spaces, and sounds that

facilitate, even encourage, this coming together and production of a Third Space: the moments are times of national and sacred importance such as Jewish holidays, the spaces are public areas akin to Oldenburg's "middle space" (Oldenburg 1997), and the sounds are those of liturgical musicking. The moments, spaces, and sounds belong to everyone and to no-one, and it is this which affords them their power to generate a Third Space that is used to explore identities dialogically. Contact zones between ends of identity continuums are echoed in the literal contact zones created in public space through these interactions.

In this dissertation, I explore three "middles" which are at once distinct and inseparable. Racialization, gender, and nationalism are aspects of Israeli and Jewish identity that have been, are now, and will likely forever be in a state of flux, subject to debate and transformation, occupying the Third Space of Jewish and Israeli imaginations as tools to construct imagined utopian iterations of both, played out in real, physical time and space—most evidently in Jerusalem.

These loci of identity may, in fact, each be understood as encompassing multiple continuums. Racialization is not only a matter of black or white, structurally powerful or structurally oppressed. It is also one of sonic racialization versus visual racialization, internal Jewish racialization versus Jewish/other racialization, and histories of colonialism and immigration particular to the region whereby parties may inhabit the position of both oppressor and oppressed, powerful and powerless, at different moments. Gender is not simply a question of male versus female dominance, nor of gender binary versus gender fluidity as a normative model, but for my purposes also idealized models of womanhood for religion and state, and epistemologies and axiologies of religion. Nationalism goes beyond liberal or conservative, jingoistic or unpatriotic, to encompass religious versus secular nationalisms, competing nations

ving to call a single capital their own (Jerusalem, of course), exclusive nationalism versus inclusive nation-building.

Continuums of racialization, gender, and nationalism illustrate the extent to which each identity locus speaks to universal concerns but is also highly localized and intersectional, subject to particularities including Jewish religious law, Middle Eastern colonial history, and Israeli culture, no single locus fully separable from the others. Within this dissertation, these interdisciplinary issues necessarily recur with regularity, providing as they do essential context to the ethnomusicological material that is the basis of my study, and identity topics appear beyond their respective part of the dissertation. I have tried to offer discussion of topics beyond ethnomusicology comprehensible to a reader coming from within the discipline, and I beg forgiveness from readers who might feel rather inundated with a new world of foreign concepts. Rest assured that this was my experience, too, as I entered the field.

Those Who Paved the Way

Thankfully, scholars in ethnomusicology and similar fields have laid important and related groundwork that may provide additional context to readers of this dissertation. Abigail Wood, Michael Figueroa, and Tanya Sermer paved the way with their studies of Jerusalem; we have often trodden the very same streets as one another in our attempts to express Jerusalem's soundscapes ethnomusicologically. Figueroa's dissertation (2014) and book (2022) explore many of the same days (such as Yom HaZikaron) and spaces (including the Western Wall) that are found in this dissertation, but from a historical angle that treats Jerusalem itself as the object of study. He focuses on the city post-1967 as imagined and expressed in poetry and song, and thus

is concerned, as am I, with contemporary identity formation among the city's inhabitants.

Whereas Figueroa's musical objects are purportedly secular, though, mine are sacred, and where he works from the ethnographic to the historical, my focus is more strictly contemporary.

Tanya Sermer also frequented sites and specific events mentioned in this dissertation, notably women's Rosh Hodesh (Jewish new month) prayers at the Western Wall, which is the subject of the second part of my dissertation. Her concern is with musical expressions of political conflict in Jerusalem, and thus her case studies are broad, encompassing religious and secular genres, Palestinian and Jewish musicians, political left and right. Sermer thus contributes important breadth to considerations of music in public space, protest musics, and explicit interactions between the political and the cultural (Sermer 2015). Building upon Sermer's pioneering ethnography, my own work is a more focused exploration that follows the sounds of Jewish liturgy alone, and my analysis focuses on internal Jewish disputes in Jerusalem, as opposed to the broader regional conflict that she addresses.

Abigail Wood's work listens to Jerusalem as a soundscape, drawing upon methodologies from the sub-discipline of sound studies. As with Figueroa and Sermer, Wood's work engages the very same sounds as mine (for example, the sounds of the muezzin and ḥazan at the Western Wall (Wood 2015)). She listens empathetically to Palestinian and Israeli affective experiences of single sonic moments, and the interplay of sounds and narratives that results (Wood 2013; 2015; 2021). Like Sermer, Wood engages with broader regional conflict in her work, and therefore engages with a broader range of sound experiences than I.

Beyond the work of these fellow ethnomusicologists of Jerusalem, my dissertation is informed by scholarship from liturgical studies. I take seriously the calls of Garcia-Rivera and Scirghi (2008), and of Lawrence Hoffman (1987), to attend to the sonic, musical aspects of

liturgy; that is, to take an anthropological and musicological approach to its nature, as opposed to employing a strictly hermeneutical methodology. Hoffman's desire for engagement with "liturgical life. . . within the sociocultural context of that time" (1987: 2) as opposed to liturgy-as-text. Whereas he offers an example of how this might be achieved in his historical reading of Jewish liturgical developments, I offer an anthropological methodology more akin to that of Garcia-Rivera and Scirghi's study of Catholic liturgy. The latter's notion of "liturgical aesthetics" has informed my attempt to attend to the intentions and reality of the musicking that I witnessed in the field—and to treat it as just that, musicking, in addition to its holy purpose. As such, my approach to liturgy is both emic and etic; I treat it as a sonic event replete with discursive meanings, and as a serious act of religious devotion.

Public space, as a criterion of my ethnographic encounters, is an important concept that is woven throughout this dissertation, although it is the places themselves, more than the theorization of their nature, which are important. Ethno/musicologists have treated urban public space with analytic rigor for thirty years or more (Martin Stokes 1994; Lise Waxer 2002; Ursula Hemetek and Adelaida Reyes 2007; Adam Krims 2007; Marina Peterson 2010; Georgina Born 2013; Andrew Eisenberg 2013), often drawing upon the work of Jürgen Habermas, Henri Lefebvre, and those who took up their charge, such as Don Mitchell (1995), Engin Isin (2000), and David Harvey (2000). Geographers and critical theorists dominate this latter category. Much of this scholarship, ethnomusicological or otherwise, whether explicitly engaging with public space theory or otherwise analyzing happenings in public space, is concerned with the right to be seen and heard in public spaces, and therefore with power. I too write in this vein, with my particular questions being who has auditory control of Jerusalem's public spaces, who does not, and what circumstances facilitate such a power (im)balance.

While not central to this dissertation as a whole, in relevant places I also engage with the sub-disciplines of voice studies, racialization theory, and Israeli sociology. A repeating analytic voice of a different kind is that of Jewish law, or *halachah*, and its texts that span two millennia. This seeming broad range of disciplinary engagements is a byproduct of attempting to do good ethnography; that is, to offer as deep and broad a reading of my ethnographic experiences as possible. It also reflects a trend in the academy towards cross-disciplinary engagement, which is similarly borne of the desire to simply do good work regardless of departmental divisions that are a byproduct of the history of the academy. Any one of these sub-disciplinary perspectives could have provided a theoretical framework for my fieldwork, and I hope that my colleagues will fill the gaps that I have left by offering additional analyses of Jewish liturgy in Jerusalem.

What this dissertation offers, then, is a reading of liturgical performance that takes seriously its materiality and spirituality, its musical nature and its holy stature, its Jewish particularity and the broader concerns its performance illuminates. It is a reading of Jewish liturgy that moves beyond normative binary modes of interpreting Jewish ritual life, while engaging my own both/and positionality as Western academic and religious Israeli Jew.

Jewish Jerusalem

In my engagement specifically with *Jewish Jerusalem*, this dissertation also offers a deeper engagement with local conflicts that are less well known within academia. The Jerusalem encounters that capture the imagination of those residing beyond the region parallel those of our bus journeys in their characters—Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs—but, unlike our journeys, those deemed worthy of report are generally conflict-ridden. Documenting the Israeli-Palestinian

conflict is essential work that must continue across genres in order to work towards justice for Palestinians and hold Israel accountable for its mistakes and wrongdoings. Such activist work is admirable and necessary, but it is not work with which I am engaged in this dissertation.

Palestine, as a neighboring emergent nation and a people with a substantial presence as minority citizens, residents, and workers in Israel, will necessarily appear in this dissertation, particularly in its third part that addresses nation-making.

My intent is to contribute to an imagined reality wherein a two-state solution already exists—at least in scholarly discourse—by treating Israel and Palestine as independent entities, and concerning myself with the former. I undertake such a project acknowledging that some readers will take issue with my choice to constitute my object of study in this way, which is informed by the choices afforded to me in the privileged position I assume as both an academic and a Jewish Israeli citizen (a status I chose to acquire during my PhD studies). I hope that by engaging with diverse individuals within Jewish Jerusalem, I can offer a new perspective on Israel and some of its residents that may contribute to understandings of the region's complexities beyond its most infamous struggle.

My dissertation's parameters further exclude the consideration of liturgical developments, as I focus on the way in which liturgy is deployed rather than the content of the liturgy itself. This is a topic worthy of ethnomusicological investigation, given the wealth of new liturgy being created and performed in Jerusalem. Consideration of liturgical content would have added an enlightening dimension to this dissertation, but it will remain a topic for another time.

Race, Gender, Nation

My dissertation is structured in three parts, corresponding to these three loci around which my fieldwork coalesced. Each of these is an identity vector where the Israel and Jewish status quo is either unsettled or currently subject to challenge and debate. Each category is also essential to the character of Jerusalem, and thus of Israel and Judaism. Each has a particular regional history and particular Jewish epistemology, and intersects to some extent with broader global movements and discourses. Within each section, I attempt to balance my own ethnography and positionality with the historical, liturgical, political, and ideological context necessary to understand the often-complex identity negotiations at stake. The context that I provide is inevitably as much a product of my own positionality as my fieldwork; as an Israeli, a Jew, a cis woman, a white-presenting person, and an English-speaker, I make no pretense at neutrality, but rather have attempted to disclose my investment when it has been evident to me. My readers will surely notice other times when various kinds of positionality and bias are revealed, but remain unintentionally unnamed.

Chapter one offers case studies of *seliḥot* (Jewish penitential prayers) and Ḥanukah, through which I illustrate the way in which public celebrations of certain holidays and liturgical moments have become associated with specific *nusahim* (prayer modes, sing. *nusah*) and *edot* (Jewish ethnic groups, sing. *edah*). I suggest that this phenomenon of correspondence between *nusah/edah* and holiday is a particularly Israeli one. Expectations around the soundscape and ethnic identity of holidays in Israel, and in particular in Jerusalem, are reinforced both through their annual repetition in Jerusalem's public spaces and their export to diaspora Jewish communities. In contrast to the diaspora, my Israeli interlocutors propose that their Israeli identity not only exceeds commitment to their own *edah*, but is defined by their ability to embrace and perform liturgy in diverse styles.

In chapter two I develop this notion that Israeliness is characterized by an embrace of cultivated diversity. Centering women’s experiences, I offer the reading of Megillah Esther at popular Jerusalem venue The First Station to illustrate how racialized diversity serves to create a unifying experience of Israeliness, womanhood, and religiosity. I compare this to Sigd, a holiday celebrated by Ethiopian Jews that has recently been given an official status as an Israeli national holiday. This holiday and its associated liturgy present another form of specifically Israeli identity, delicately balancing as it does ethnic specificity and Israeli assimilation. I conclude part one of the dissertation by addressing the racist underbelly of Israeli Jewish society within the broader national project of liturgical ethnic diversity.

Whereas part one addressed racialization in Israel broadly, part two focuses on the religious realm in Israel. I turn to women’s liturgical musicking as a lens into contemporary debate concerning the public role of women in Israeli Judaism. The case studies in chapters three, four, and five are all drawn from women’s liturgical musicking at the Western Wall, Judaism’s holiest site and a national monument in Israel. Chapter three addresses the sonic protests, both audibly and physically violent, that may be found at this site at the start of each Jewish month when two women’s groups vie for dominance in this prized space. I unpack the gendered, demographic, denominational, raced, and national factors that inform the perceived legitimacy of Women of the Wall (Nashot HaKotel) and Women *for* the Wall (Nashim LeMaan HaKotel).³ I also address the practical factors of sound production that are particular to this site

³ Note that Women of the Wall translate the word “women” as *nashot*. The Hebrew for woman is *ishah*, which becomes *nashim* in its plural (as in the group Nashim LeMaan HaKotel), strangely deploying the masculine plural ending whereas one might have expected it to use the feminine ending, which would render the word for women as *nashot*. In these groups’ names, the “Wall” is the Western Wall. While *kotel* means wall in Hebrew in the general sense, it also functions as a shorthand for the specific place when preceded by “The” (*HaKotel*).

and occasion, which impact upon Western norms of sonic beauty that may normatively be expected in liturgical musicking.

Chapter four is focused upon the epistemological differences between the two aforementioned groups—stemming in part from their respective religious education and liturgical entrainment—that result in an inability to enter into dialogue. I share my own path to experiencing and understanding the challenges of incompatibilities between Western feminism, Jewish orthopraxis, and Jewish law. An analysis of *kol isha* (the religious prohibition on women’s singing voices) provides an example of misunderstandings between these groups.

In the final chapter of part two I consider the ways in which the Western Wall encourages ontologies of listening particular to that site. The women’s section ironically provides a shared experience for warring groups who are afforded the opportunity to experience a forbidden other while co-creating the space’s soundscape. I introduce a third women’s group, Original Women of the Wall, to discuss modes of feminine vocality available to this group by virtue of their decision to meet on days other than Rosh Hodesh.

In part three of the dissertation, I take as my subject Zionism and *mamlachtiyut* (a form of religious nationalist patriotism that requires a chapter rather than a parenthesized translation to explain), two forms of nationalism that are specific to Israel and, as in the case studies I offer, may be evoked through liturgical musicking. In chapter six I analyze an interpretation of Megillat Esther that visually evokes the Holocaust, recontextualizing ancient liturgy in the name of a revisionist, Zionist history. Developing this notion of supersessionist history and contemporary mythmaking, I turn to Israel’s “secular high holidays,” as they are often colloquially termed: Yom HaZikaron (Remembrance Day) and Yom HaAtzmaut (Independence Day). Whereas previous chapters have taken liturgy as their lens—using sacred means for

secular purposes—here secular sounds such as air raid sirens and popular song are treated as sacred, further complicating any binary categorization of Jerusalem’s sounds. Liturgy remains in the air, although transformed beyond the canon of the prayerbook into new forms such as the *tekes maavar* (transition ceremony) between these two holidays, which draws upon the traditional Havdalah ceremony.

In the final chapter I center a small sector of the *dati leumi* (religious Zionist) community and their celebration of Yom Yerushalayim (Jerusalem Day). I propose the emergence of a new Israeli paraliturgical genre characterized by the application of a homogenous musical style—analyzed through transcriptions of three songs—to diverse musics, including liturgy, paraliturgy, and secular genres including klezmer and Neo-Hasidic pop. Yom Yerushalayim blurs sacred and secular in the very fact that it is marked as a day, and in the musical ways in which it is celebrated.

COVID-19 transformed the public soundscape of Jerusalem, with mass liturgical musicking banished there as across the world. The period of pandemic restrictions, and the subsequent re-emergence of the events mentioned in the dissertation, is the subject of a brief epilogue.

The sections of this dissertation are written with the intent that each may stand alone, understanding that a reader with a particular interest in one of its three topics may wish to read that part alone. As such, there is some repetition of contextual information where required, for which I hope that those with the wherewithal to read the dissertation in its entirety will forgive me.

PART ONE

**BUILDING A NATION'S IDENTITY: NUSAḤ, EDAH, AND THE RACIALIZATION
OF JEWISH HOLIDAY LITURGY**

CHAPTER ONE

SELIḤOT IS SEPHARDI, ḤANUKAH IS ASHKENAZI, AND ISRAELINESS TRUMPS

ALL

Racialization in the Sounds of Jewish Liturgy

The sounding out of Jewish liturgy is a thoroughly musical and inherently racialized act. Before the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Jews lived in diaspora communities for two millennia without a centralized authority or singular geographic hub. Both the text of the *siddur* (daily prayer book) and its musical performance thus developed in disparate and sometimes relatively isolated communities around the world, and came to reflect in particular the musical vernacular of the surrounding culture. Every prayer of every service, every Torah reading, every study session, is intended to be intoned to set melodic formulas (Idelsohn 1929: 35-37).¹ Indeed, *halachah*, or Jewish law, requires that prayers be offered “with the traditional melodies...the melody that is known, correct and accepted throughout the [Jewish] world...from ancient days” (Margoliot 1902: 584:5) and condemns “anyone who reads the Torah without a melody or studies [halachah] without a song” (Talmud Bavli Megillah 32a). Declarative speech sounds as an intrusion in a traditional Jewish prayer service, and yet despite – or indeed, because of – the obviously musical nature of the liturgy, Judaism tends to shy away from describing it as “music”,

¹ While this edict has been observed for centuries across the Jewish world, Reform Jewry adopted a declarative reading of prayers and the Torah in the 19th century. As a pro-assimilationist movement, this was a nod to their German Christian surroundings. Such a practice has now largely, but not entirely, been abandoned in favor of musical prayer.

preferring instead an emic Hebrew word, *nusah*, to describe the sounds that emanate from the synagogue.²

In the context of liturgical musicking (Turino 2008), *nusah* serves to describe its intonating and musical recitation, which in some instances includes the musical mode, and often the melodic shape and structure of the recitation.³ *Nusah* is a multifaceted term, and its parameters vary according to its contextual usage. It may at once refer to mode, musical style, text, and the inherent relationship between the three that serves to identify the Jewish *edah* (ethnic group) associated with any given rendering of the Jewish canonical prayerbook.

Textual and paralinguistic differences in *nusah* parse the Jewish world into three primary categories: Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and Mizrahi. These broadly align with the three major areas of diaspora, respectively central and eastern Europe; Spain and Portugal (later including North Africa after the expulsion of Jews from Spain in the late 15th century); and the Middle East. These groups all have notable subdivisions and have immigrated over time to new homelands, and there exist distinct groups beyond these master categories,⁴ with the result that Jewish liturgy may sound markedly different from one synagogue to the next depending upon the *edah* that frequents the space. While in much of the diaspora a specific *edah* dominates the Jewish soundscape of an entire country or city,⁵ in Israel, recent waves of immigration from across the

² The same is true in Islam, which shares with Judaism difficulties with translating its specific theological and aesthetic understandings of sound into the English language's categories of "music" or "song" as a result of a similarly non-Western ontology of religious musicking. Whereas Islam presents internal theological and ideological opposition to the use of these English terms and the genres that they encompass, this is not the case in Judaism.

³ This is the case for Ashkenazim, but not for other *edot*.

⁴ Yemenites, Persians, Mountain Jews from the Caucasus, Ethiopians, various Indian groups, and smaller communities such as Chinese Jews, for example.

⁵ The English-speaking Jewish diaspora is overwhelmingly Ashkenazi, whereas India is largely Sephardi. This is the result of specific migrations which provided the springboard for future

Jewish world mean that while Syrian and Lithuanian orthodox synagogues may sit physically alongside one another, the vocal styles within sound continents apart.

An individual selects her synagogue on the basis of its, and her own, *nusah*, since each *nusah* and its associated paraliturgical rituals and musical additions demand a high degree of literacy in order to participate in prayer services. Attending services of another *edah* can feel stilted and laborious, compared to the ease and fluency of one's own synagogue and its associated *nusah*. A middle-aged Israeli-born man of Iraqi descent explained,

In my own synagogue everything flows, I know what happens next, it is very easy and comfortable, no surprises. If I go somewhere else, sometimes I go to the Yemenite synagogue, I am always caught out when something is different. The small differences are somehow harder than the big ones. Even when I feel comfortable with the sound and the accent, there is a different word and I get thrown off. It's not a big jolt, it's just enough to remind me I'm not really in my own place. Sometimes a little reminder is more than enough, especially when it comes over and over through the prayer service. You can never really settle in. (Interview with an Iraqi Israeli, 2018)

Jewish liturgy is inseparable from internal Jewish racialization because its sounds indicate the ethnic group (*edah*) engaged in prayer. Correspondence between *nusah* and *edah* is strong and intergenerational, a powerful identity marker that distinguishes between Jewish communities at a fundamental level because of the relative inaccessibility of the prayer environments of Jewish Others. This in turn amplifies community divisions that inform not only activity within and between synagogues, but the broader social worlds of their participants. In Jerusalem, while a Syrian synagogue serves *Arak*, a local anise-flavored liquor, with meat pastries as they conclude their Shabbat morning services at 9.30am having started as early as 4:00 a.m. in some months,⁶ a

developments, which in turn attracted future waves of migration from those who found a natural home in synagogues already established of their own *edah*.

⁶ During the winter, Syrians, Turks, and Moroccans recite *bakashot* before dawn each Shabbat from Sukkot to Purim (approximately October to March). The Ades synagogue in Jerusalem's *Naḥlaot* neighborhood is particularly renowned for its *bakashot*. When I began my fieldwork in

Lithuanian community next door are about to commence their prayers and will enjoy whisky and herring when they conclude around midday. Families in Israel and diaspora alike raise their children within their edah's framework such that they internalize the norms of their own nusah, paraliturgical music, daily ritual rhythms, and cultural framework.

These cultural differences constitute racialization, which describes the social processes by which race is rendered powerful and meaningful. Racialization is a helpful framework because it acknowledges race as a lived experience that is temporally, geographically, and culturally contingent due to its nature as a social construction. This permits an understanding that racial terminology – which may be expressed using vocabularies of skin color, ethnicity, cultural group, citizenship, or religion – does not correspond to any inherent qualities of the people to which it is attributed, whether such an attribution is generated within the group in question or from without, and yet gives due credence to race as a Durkheimian “social fact” because it informs and constrains both micro and macro level interpersonal interactions in a relatively internally coherent way within a single society at a given time; it is experienced as static and real in spite of its constructed and contingent nature (Omi and Winant 2015).

In this first part of the dissertation, I draw upon racialization theory in order to theorize discourse around edot and their nusahim in contemporary Israel. I illustrate the nationally particular ways in which edah operates in Israel beyond the synagogue walls. The public sphere renders the racialized aspect of liturgy significant for its implications regarding the racialization of the nation more broadly; that is, the preferential treatment of one nusah or intentional use of

December 2017 I lived within earshot of Ades and was woken occasionally by the singing. I attended Ades – although not so early as to attend bakashot – on occasion, but generally opted for Ashkenazi synagogues due to their more forgiving start time. Ades backs onto one such synagogue; they share a courtyard wall.

multiple nusahim conveys implicit messages about the relative status of associated edot, and thus about the ideal character of Israel. In this first chapter, I examine instances wherein holidays have become associated with specific nusahim and edot, and hypothesize reasons for these specific associations. In the chapter that follows, I turn to cases of international cultivation of ethnic diversity during public liturgical events. Together, these chapters illustrate two approaches to nation-making through performances of the inherently racialized musical text that is the siddur, which while differing in their methods achieve a similar goal of promoting Israeli unity through, or despite, ethnic difference.

“Israeli First and Jewish Second”

The musical underdetermination of the siddur has been a boon for contemporary globalized Judaism. In contrast to diasporic communities, Israeli liturgy is distinguished by its *lack* of racialized specificity; that is, by a refusal to commit to a single edah’s musical character. An idiosyncratic Israeli musical-liturgical identity thus exists that is developed out of, and yet distinct from, diaspora identities. For many Israelis, especially those who prioritize their Israeli identity above their Jewish one, this process has had the benefit of allowing Israeliness to supersede their racialized status as a member of a specific edah. Shailee, an Israeli-born masorti Jerusalem resident in her late forties, explained:

Many of us are Israeli first and Jewish second. I feel myself this way, because I have more in common with my fellow Israelis—even non-Jews, also secular and even Haredi Jews—than I do with Jews in America. We speak the same language, we share a history here, we also think of Judaism in a similar way. We are more relaxed with our Judaism because we are Israeli. It is more natural here. . . If you ask me what does it mean to be an Israeli Jew and not a Jew in the diaspora, so I will tell you that Israeli comes first in every way. For loyalty, for identity. My identity as a Moroccan is important. . . but being Israeli is first because we all share this here. (Shailee 2018)

Shailee's sentiment, expressed by many of my interlocutors, illustrates that Israeliness has become the master identity category for many Israelis, a result in no small part of successful past and present governmental efforts to curate an Israeli cultural identity and sense of nationalism (Regev and Seroussi 2004). Shailee's Moroccanness, which determines the synagogue she attends on the few days a year that she opts to go and with which nusah she is familiar, is secondary to her Israeliness. Thus, instead of attending a Moroccan synagogue and enjoying the specific Moroccan nusah and melodies, she prefers to go to the Kotel for most of her liturgical consumption because "it's created to be for everyone, for all Israelis and for all of Israel, so it's the place for me." (Shailee 2018) She notes that her gender is a contributing factor to this feeling.

Also, as a woman, it's easier to join in and feel part of the community at big outside events like on Yom HaAtzmaut or Yom HaZikaron, things at the Kotel, and so on. There is still a mehitzah but because everyone sings together and it's not just the hazan and the men I feel more comfortable. Again, it's about being Israeli, part of being Israeli is that we treat women as full citizens, and in these big events even though they are orthodox I feel as much a part of the spiritual power as any man, we are all together. That is very important for me, and for Israelis overall. You see even Haredim accept it in these festivals. They also recognize that women must be part of Israeli events. So yes, I prefer these national prayers to the synagogue, and that is why I mostly don't go to the synagogue. Women aren't needed in Moroccan synagogues. We *are* needed to be part of Israel. (Ibid.)

I met Shailee at the First Station, an outdoor events and retail space on the edge of East and West Jerusalem (conveniently located within earshot of my apartment when events are amplified). She was there, as was I, to hear Megillat Esther. This text is read twice on the holiday of Purim, usually once at night and once the following day, and it is one of the four mitzvot of the day for observant Jews. Purim is a day of drunken revelry and fancy-dress parties; there is a tradition that even the most secular partake in, that adults become so inebriated that they cannot distinguish between the names of the villain and the hero of Megillat Esther. Getting up in time for a morning recitation of the Megillah can thus be a challenge.

Nevertheless, Shailee and I were at the First Station for a particular annual tradition of the First Station: a 9:30am reading, with each of the Megillah's ten chapters read by a different woman and an eleventh woman rendering the Megillah in sign language. The women appeared to have been selected for their diversity in race, age, and able-bodiedness, and appeared on a stage under a large, covered area at the center of the First Station with rows of wooden benches and plastic chairs filling the void. One chapter was read by an Indian woman dressed up as a witch and using a wand as a pointer to follow the text on the scroll, a child clinging to each leg for the duration of her performance. Another was read, to my surprise, by a friend of mine who is a well-known expert in Sephardi (particularly Spanish and Portuguese) *piyyutim* (paraliturgical songs for the synagogue). She is in her sixties and did not dress up per the Purim custom, rather appearing in a smart pant suit. A college-age, slight young woman in a rainbow wig read another chapter with an American accent, her boyfriend beaming up at her from the front row. Each woman read in her own *nusah*, with a remarkable array of traditions represented such that I have never heard equaled in any other context.

This array of traditions—of *nusahim* and *edot*—was not coincidental, but rather curated. The women's megillah reading is an annual show not only of female liturgical literacy, but also of Israeli diversity and multiculturalism. It is a show of womanhood exceeding the historical divisiveness of racialization of *edot*. This has a particular valence in the religious context of Purim, since the reading of Megillat Esther is one of the few liturgical events that women can perform and fulfil on behalf of men according to orthodox interpretations of *halachah*. Not that all the women were orthodox (and thus bound by this traditional halachic notion) by any means, but they shared a commitment to Judaism and religious ritual such that they had learned to recite a chapter of the Megillah, a major undertaking in terms of preparation time and necessary

preexisting liturgical literacy. They had also all chosen to read at this all-women's event rather than at the hundreds of other readings around the city.

For Shailee, the essence of Israeliness is its encompassing nature, its ability to hold diversity under a single national banner. It contrasts in this way with diaspora Judaism, which she describes as “very Ashkenazi, and I don't think they know much about anything else.”⁷

Emily and Abe, Jewish tourists from Germany and Canada, expressed a similar sentiment talking about their Jewish Other. Emily stated of Israel, “I really enjoy hearing different Jewish traditions, especially in Jerusalem at the center of the Jewish world” (Emily 2019). Abe commented:

What I take from my trips here is diversity, ethnic diversity of Jews; we don't have much of that back home. Everything is traditionally Ashkenazi really, which I love, but I also love seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling new—but still Jewish—traditions. Honestly, when I go home after the summer it can feel like a little European shtetl compared to Jerusalem, where everyone is comfortable with the mixed traditions. That's the difference to me between diaspora and Israel; in diaspora it's comfortable and very uniform, which can be great, whereas in Israel, in Jerusalem, it's definitely less comfortable but I find it more inspiring and I feel like a smaller part of something bigger. A small fish in a huge ocean. Even being Ashkenazi is just one cog in the big Israeli machine. (Abe 2018)

Today, the primary divide within the Jewish world that is recognized by my interlocutors is not between edot (that is, between *Ashkenazim* (Jews with origins in Central and Eastern Europe) and non-Ashkenazim), as was the case until the 1940s, but rather between Israeli and diaspora Jews. This, too, informs the major cycle of proactive paralinguistic liturgical feedback which, while recognized among my interlocutors as predominantly unidirectional, is in fact

⁷ When Shailee thinks about the Jewish diaspora, her first reference point is the overwhelmingly Ashkenazi United States, which has twice the self-identifying Jewish population of Israel. Other English-speaking nations (Canada, the UK, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand) collectively comprise a significant proportion of global Jewry and are similarly dominated by Ashkenazim. However, Shailee's statement fails to recognize non-Ashkenazi diaspora communities in, for example, South and Central America.

bidirectional. Shailee and Abe take a not uncommon discursive stance that suggests that Israel is a superior place to be Jewish because its diverse population's constant encounters with internal others produce new interpretations of traditions such as liturgy. They contrast this with a shtetl-like insularity in diaspora, using language that suggests an antiquated, even fossilized, tradition, that compares unfavorably with Israel. In reality, though, Jewish communities in Israel and the diaspora have a reciprocal relationship, an inevitable product of global Jewish migration and travel, and a product too of collaborative efforts between religious musical ensembles across oceans.

Sigd

Purim provides Shailee and her compatriots with an opportunity to embrace racialized diversity within a framework of unified womanhood, Israeliness, and religiosity. Sigd offers a different structure through which a similar kind of Israeliness is celebrated and informed. The Ethiopian Jewish festival is celebrated fifty days after Yom Kippur at the end of the month of Heshvan⁸ and celebrates the acceptance of the Torah at Mount Sinai. In its contemporary iteration in Israel it also serves to reinforce community identity for the Beta Israel. Its celebration in Jerusalem is entirely public, with crowds gathering on the Tayelet overlooking the Old City

⁸ Heshvan's claim to fame in the Jewish imaginary is its unremarkable nature. It is—or was—understood to be the only month without a religious festival. The timing of the holiday, calculated to fall fifty days after a major Torah-ordained holiday, mimics the relationship between Pesah and Shavuot. Shavuot, which falls fifty days after Pesah, marks the reception of the Torah in Judaism today, just as Sigd, which falls fifty days after Yom Kippur, marks the reception of the Torah specifically within the Ethiopian community. Pesah and Yom Kippur fall almost exactly half a year apart in the Jewish calendar, spacing their two associated celebrations of the Torah as much as possible.

and making a short pilgrimage into the valley and then up to the Old City itself, symbolically reenacting Moses' ascent of Mount Sinai to receive the Torah. While once the preserve of the Beta Israel and a curiosity to the vast majority of Israelis, today Sigd is a national holiday and the celebrations, rich in liturgy and music, are attended by all manner of Israelis, including prominent politicians and public figures showing their respect for this historically marginalized community.

Sigd, like Purim at the First Station, is a display of controlled religious and liturgical multiculturalism that is presented as a form of specifically Israeli identity. Its centering of Jerusalem pays homage to the Ethiopian Jewish Zionist ethos, quietly reminding spectators of the efforts and sacrifices made by Ethiopians to assimilate—highly successfully—into Israel, as well as reinforcing the centrality of Jerusalem and Israel in the Ethiopian Jewish imagination even before their *aliyah* (immigration, literally meaning “ascent”) to Israel.⁹ Flagpoles bearing the starkly blue and white Israeli flag poke out above a colorful sea of embroidered cloth umbrellas in deep reds with gold threads and fringes, rainbow wheel designs, every one seemingly different from the next, providing shade to the *kessim*, the Ethiopian elite religious leaders, who oversee the proceedings. Below, the national colors of orange, yellow, and green stand out among the white gowns and talitot. Dull khaki adds to the color scheme, as hundreds of young men and women enlisted in military service join the ranks of the festivities.

The liturgy includes aspects familiar to any synagogue-goer; at its center are readings that express seminal aspects of Jewish law and the Jews' relationship to God through observance of

⁹ Many Ethiopian Jews remain in Ethiopia, some awaiting the opportunity to move to Israel, even in makeshift camps. Others must remain out of sight due to historical and, in some areas, ongoing persecution of Jews in the country. During my tenure working for the nonprofit Kulanu, I was fortunate to have contact with some of the hidden Ethiopian communities who inhabit rural mountain regions and continue to practice Judaism in isolation.

Jewish law, including the Ten Commandments, sections of the Book of Nehemiah which are cited as the origin of Sigd, and passages that refer to the covenant between God and Israel.

Prayers focus on repentance and return (to God, and to Jerusalem), echoing the themes of Yom Kippur fifty days prior.¹⁰

The liturgical content, visual presentation, and geographic journey (both immediate and historical) of Sigd combine to create a thoroughly Israeli and thoroughly Ethiopian holiday, in an exemplary demonstration of the delicate balance of multiculturalism and assimilation desired by Israel's various governments and by its citizens. The specificity of the Ethiopian language (Ge'ez), liturgy, and very existence of Sigd itself are tempered by the Jewishness of the liturgy and the God it praises, the centering of Jerusalem and its historical Temples, and the civic Israeli symbolism in the form of flags and military uniforms. It bears stating that the very fact that Ethiopians find themselves in Jerusalem is something of an Israeli and Jewish folk story come true; it appears to the devout to be a rendering of the "ingathering of exiles," and heroic stories of wars and survival, treks across Sudanese deserts and daring escapes on huge airplanes, tell a story of a Jewish people in a way that replicates other historical internal Jewish narratives of unlikely, praiseworthy feats—often attributed in religious and secular circles alike to Jewish exceptionalism and protection by God, not least when the Promised Land is involved. Gadi, an Israeli-born Ethiopian man in his early thirties, explained to me—in English, his fourth language—his understanding of Ethiopian Jewish identity during Sigd.

We Ethiopians, we are a success story for Israel. Even though we suffer racism here, we are known for being Israeli despite being black. People admire us for what we went through to get here. I heard some people compare it to the *Shoah* [Holocaust], that we survived against the odds thanks to the kindness of Hashem, his outstretched arm, like *yetziat Mitzrayim* [the Biblical exodus from Egypt]. It's a very Jewish story. Also, Israelis know that many Ethiopians are religious, it helps because it gives us a legitimacy. There

¹⁰ For ethnomusicological studies of Ethiopian Jewry, see Shelemay 1989; 1991.

are other groups, blacks, in Israel, who are not accepted like us because people don't trust that they are Jewish. Ethiopians are trusted. Sometimes there are misunderstandings, but we are trusted. We share a story of aliyah, anti-Semitism, love of Israel, we share the struggles of living in Israel every day. We started in a different place, our skin is black, but we are really at the center of everything that is Israeli. . . I believe this is the experience of every edah when they come here at first. The Mizrahim, the Indians, the Russians—they are still struggling, they came at the same time as us—all of us struggle to be fully accepted in the beginning, to balance our differences with our common ground. To be Israeli but still a little bit in our own world, this is what it is to be Israeli. (Gadi 2019)

Gadi weaves a narrative of conflicting experiences in Israel that he understands to typify the Israeli experience. He reports generalized experiences of racialization among Ethiopians, focusing particularly on their visible blackness in contrast to the overwhelming lighter skin tones of Israel's majority¹¹ and contrasting this with the relatively unconditional acceptance of Ethiopians' Jewishness and their associated integration into Israeli civil society. While other edot struggled in different ways to fully assimilate—Gadi hinting at the suspicion of Russians' Jewish status widely held among Israelis—Gadi understands this tension as a defining characteristic of Israeliness and uses this to further bolster the status of his own community as typically Jewish, despite being a highly visible and relatively recent immigrant group.¹² Peppering his English speech with Biblical allusions and Israeli idioms speaks to his understanding of Jewish and Israeli identities being inextricably linked.

Gadi's narrative recontextualizes otherness in the Israeli context as an essential part of belonging. Despite being a native-born Israeli in the country where one-third of the Jewish

¹¹ Israelis vary greatly in skin tone but are not normally subject to racialization on this basis. Skin tone is occasionally a contributing factor to interpretation of edah, but dress, accent, and body language are more dominant.

¹² Eden Alene, an Ethiopian Israeli, was selected to represent Israel at Eurovision in 2020 and 2021. The choice of Alene—stemming as usual from an annual national televised singing contest—demonstrates that despite their racialization, Ethiopians are in many ways well-integrated into Israeli society and, as Gadi notes, are a recent representation of a normative story of immigration and (limited) cultural assimilation.

population were born overseas, he inserts himself into the immigrant narrative of Ethiopian Jewry, claiming it as his own despite being one generation removed from Operation Moses and Operation Solomon, the two airlifts that brought the earliest generations of Ethiopians to Israel. Gadi's is a classically Israeli mode of identity formation and story-telling. The emphasis on one's *edah*, promulgated by Idelsohn and sustained by future generations of scholars, politicians, and citizens, serves as an opening salvo in many a conversation between peers, and, I suggest, is used more to establish mutual respect based on a common experience of intergenerational displacement and otherness than, as one might expect, to establish difference.

Intrusions

Sigd is both formally and informally a thoroughly Israeli affair. In another context, though, the same individuals, bearing the same sounds and sights, are an intrusion into an act of Israeli place-making. Each Passover, indeed during each of the three Biblical pilgrimage festivals (*shalosh regalim*), tens of thousands gather at the Kotel for *shaḥarit* (morning prayers) specifically in order to receive the Priestly Blessing, which is a ritual performed en mass at that location on those days alone. In 2018 I attended the occasion for the first time. In the middle of *shaḥarit*, the *ḥazan's* (musical officiant of a prayer service) amplified voice was interrupted by a group of Ethiopian men and women donning the same garbs I recognized from Sigd, holding the same umbrellas, and wearing the same white robes and turbans (see figures 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3). They squeezed through the tightly packed crowd, processing slowly across the back of the plaza.

Audible from afar were kebero drums¹³ and the dull metallic sound of a small, suspended, circular, thin sheet of metal being hit with a metal stick. As I, and other curious individuals, pushed towards the group to find out what they were doing in the midst of this major event, singing and ululating voices became audible, and I realized the group was dancing, one swinging a feather decoration back and forth in his hands. The bells and drums were asynchronous, both maintaining a steady pulse seemingly with no relation to one another; the chanting aligned with the drum, but deployed polyrhythms such that those of us not with the group struggled to know which of the three to follow. Some onlookers gathered in concentric circles around the musicians, swaying to their own rhythm in some kind of appreciation while visibly struggling to match their own bodily movements to those of the musicians, busying themselves with their phones as they attempted to take photos and videos of this unexpected turn of events.

Against the backdrop of the mass Birkat Kohanim, this alternative *aliyah baregel* (Jewish pilgrimage on foot for the shalosh regalim) serves to emphasize Ethiopian otherness in the Israeli context. Birkat Kohanim is a supposed display of national unity, welcoming all Israelis and diaspora Jews under the guise of Israel's Chief Rabbinate and offering amplified prayers in the thoroughly Israeli nusah Sefarad.¹⁴ Secular and religious alike take the opportunity for a family outing during the weeklong school break, creating a party-like atmosphere with every demographic represented in a reenactment of the Biblical commandment that every Jew should go to the Temple—the site that once sat atop the Kotel—on the holidays of Passover, Shavuot,

¹³ The kebero drum is a double-headed drum, with its two ends differing in size such that it produces two distinct pitches. In the Ethiopian Israeli community, the drummer hangs it over their shoulder by a thin strap and is played by hand. The kebero is used in both religious and secular musics in Ethiopia and neighboring nations of Eritrea and Sudan.

¹⁴ Nusah Sefarad is essentially a combination of, or compromise between, nusah Ashkenaz and nusahim edot haMizrah. It is popular among Israelis, especially at synagogues that attract a range of edot.

and Sukkot. Every attempt is made to unite Jewry (albeit under the auspices of orthodox practice, presented as the only legitimate iteration of Judaism at this event).

The visual and sonic contrast between, on the one hand, an intentional display of Jewish unity and, on the other, a distinctly Ethiopian celebration, even as both groups celebrate the same festival at the same site, renders the smaller Ethiopian group as Other. They appear as an intrusion, physically working their way through the crowd that envelops them, visually marked by their dark skin and the white clothes, instruments, and umbrella that envelop such bodies and by their traditional dancing techniques; audibly differentiated by their language choice, use of percussion instruments (as opposed to the exclusively vocal liturgy of most Jewish traditions, a result of the ban on instruments on Shabbat and *yom tov* (Biblical holidays)), ululation, and independence from the main event. Their procession began during a quiet moment in Birkat Kohanim; the resounding of the ḥazan's voice served to further emphasize the otherness of the Ethiopians by reminding us, the crowd, that we were in attendance to pray according to our Israeli customs, and not to spectate another tradition.



Figure 1.1. View of the Kotel as approached from the Jewish Quarter entrance during Passover 2018.¹⁵

¹⁵ All figures (photos and transcriptions) without citation were taken or created by the author.



Figure 1.2. Ethiopians sing and drum at the Kotel during Passover 2018.



Figure 1.3. Massed prayer attendees film Ethiopian song during Passover 2018.

While Ethiopian celebrations on Sigd and Pesah are nearly identical, the context in which they occur serves to render the former an expression of Israeliness but the latter a disruption and intrusion measured against Israeliness. On Pesah, the Ethiopian aliyah baregel disrupts an established Israeli norm offered to the public by major, government-supported institutions. The intrusion is uncontrolled, spontaneous to those at the scheduled event, even disruptive. Just as racialization theory elucidates that notions of blackness and whiteness are relative and subject to change based on context, so too Ethiopian assimilation versus belonging is relative to the particular Israeli context within which Ethiopian Jewish liturgy is found. Indeed, this is simply an iteration of racialization's relativity at work, rendered audible and visible in the liturgical context, and made more obvious than in many other contexts due to the shared liturgy and religion of Israeli Jews, whether Ethiopian or of any other edah.

From Racialization to Racism

Appreciation for difference in the context of Ethiopian Jewish public liturgy and uptake of liturgy from an edah other than one's own on Ḥanukah and/or during seliḥot—all (unintentionally) in the name of Israeli unity—is not the complete story of contemporary liturgical racialization processes in Israel. At a (Gregorian calendar) New Year's party in Jerusalem, I stepped into a conversation wherein a twenty-something German was explaining to two Israeli natives, "nobody is exotic from Israel because people here come from everywhere. The only exotic girls are Ethiopians, a bit. I know because they're my favorite." Noticing that I had overheard, he introduced himself, "hi, I'm racist!" (German young man 2017). Later in the evening I stepped out onto the balcony for a conversation with a man in his thirties who had

recently migrated from India to Israel. In the course of our short conversation he mentioned that he was Jewish twice, pointed out that he had made aliyah not only to live with his Israeli girlfriend (she had met him while traveling in India after her military service—a remarkably common course of affairs for Israeli young adults), but also because of his investment in the Zionist dream and his perception of Israel’s existence as a Jewish state as a miracle. He felt the need to justify himself as Jewish and Zionist despite the normative assumption in Israel that everyone is a Jew—something that was unquestionably a result of his Indian features.

Such quotidian interpersonal exchanges are reinforced at the institutional level by events such as Chabad’s “Purim in Morocco,” which offered a drum circle, encouraged attendees to dress up in a djellaba, kaftan, or fez, and get drunk at a low cost on mahia (Moroccan eau de vie made from distilled dates and traditionally produced by Jews due to the formal Muslim prohibition on consuming alcohol). Such blatantly culturally appropriative behavior has been the subject of much public debate in the US concerning Halloween costumes; indeed, Purim is sometimes described as the Jewish Halloween, given the holidays’ common ground regarding fancy dress, alcohol consumption, and after-dark parties. In particular, the moniker “my culture is not a costume” summarizes the wealth of problems associated with cultural dress-up, such as the ability of the costumed to shun the disguise when it suits them, and a lack of serious engagement with or respect for said culture.

Israel’s legacy of racialization differs substantially from that of the US. And while the local desire to play dress-up in insensitive ways has much in common with one iteration of current racial tensions in the US, the intent and awareness differ between the two nations. While in the US, there exists a broad understanding that cultural dress-up is inappropriate, and those who engage in it often do so in order to demonstrate their distaste for political “wokeness,”

critical race theory, and liberalism, in Israel the same practice is often done with all good intentions. The fact that Jewish Israelis without exception share (diverse) multigenerational histories of anti-Semitic persecution, combined with the national sport of self-deprecating humor, means that internal Jewish racist entertainment is widely considered fair game. Racialization is not part of the Israeli vocabulary or imagination, except as it pertains (fairly bluntly) to relations with minority groups, including Palestinian Arabs, Druze, Bedouins, Eritrean and Sudanese refugees, and Filipino migrant workers—all of whom are considered outside of normative Israeli Jewish discourse, rendering racialization within the Israeli Jewish population a non-issue in the minds of many Israeli Jews. As one partygoer put it:

The hard line here isn't between black and white like in America. Here it is Jews and Arabs. Actually. . . Jews and everyone else. Even though many Jews here are Arabs, the Jewish Arabs hate the Palestinian Arabs the most. It's true. That's why they vote right wing. The left wing is all Ashkenazim, whites, they can afford to be nice to Arabs because they are clearly different. But Arab Jews, it's difficult—they don't want to be mistaken, and today they aren't mistaken for Muslims because they made themselves Israeli. . . What I'm trying to say is that for Israeli Jews, we feel like we stick together as a unit against the other groups. We serve in *Tzahal* [the Israeli military], we live together, you know. So between us we don't care if there is some humor about Yemenite this or *Yekke* [Germanic-Jewish] that. We are a unit, and everyone who is not Jewish, they are, well, I don't want to say against us, but they are separate. We are the core, and they are like the blacks in America. I don't mean it to be racist, just to explain how it is. I'm not saying I like the situation but from how I see it, that's the reality. The Palestinians, Druze, Bedouins, Phillipinos, they are all like blacks in America. Of course, it's ironic, because they have the same skin as the Jews from those areas. So it's all in our heads. (Partygoer 2017)

This commentary, from one of the Ashkenazi Israelis who was listening in to the German expressing his preference for Ethiopian women, succinctly describes the reality of racialized experience in Israel at the meta-level, while minimizing internal Jewish racialization that continues to be a source of tension for those on the receiving end of discrimination. The conversation continued as Roi challenged his premise. Roi is a third-generation Israeli of Iraqi origin studying for his undergraduate degree at the Hebrew University and having recently

completed his military service. He grew up in a *masorti* (traditional) family who observed religious rituals to a limited extent.

You can say this because you're Ashkenazi. I wish it could be true. You're right that the biggest divide is between Jews on the one hand and everyone else on the other, because Israel is designed for Jews, so it's harder for everyone else, they have to exist outside the lines. But I understand how they feel sometimes because it can also be hard for Mizraḥim. Not *as* hard, of course. We do okay today. But in the past there was a lot of discrimination, racism, towards us. And still today. You can look past it and see the harmony between Jews, but that's privilege. For me, I still feel it sometimes. For example, look at [the political party] *Shas*.¹⁶ Why does *Shas* still exist? Because Mizraḥim need it, because the Haredim reject us, they don't think we are real Jews. It's true. They will sit with us when they need us, but they prefer to keep to themselves, to marry only other Ashkenazim. This is racism too. It's not throwing stones like with the [Palestinian] Arabs, it's not war, but it's racism. (Roi 2018)

Concluding Thoughts

The tension between the claims of these two Israelis indicates the real yet limited success of Mizraḥi integration, and the lingering influence of pre-statehood racialized discourse exemplified by Idelsohn's work. It shows too the differing perceptions of the state of internal Jewish racialization, which are informed by personal experiences; while Ashkenazim generally have a positive outlook on internal Israeli Jewish unity, those whose edot have been subject to racial characterization historically and today are likely to hold less favorable perspectives that account for microaggressions and ambivalent forms of racialization in spite of their overall identity as thoroughly Israeli Israelis—like Alon and Shailee, the two Moroccan individuals interviewed in

¹⁶ *Shas* is a Mizraḥi political party that was created in 1984 after splitting from what was then the united Haredi party *Agudat Yisrael*. Its primary goal is the popularization of religion among Sephardim both for its own sake and as a political choice. Since *Shas*'s inception, the party has sought to counter both the Ashkenazi-dominated Haredi establishment and, more broadly, the secular Ashkenazi political dominance in the Knesset.

this chapter. Non-Ashkenazi bodies, liturgies, and musics continue to be marked as against Ashkenazi normativity which quietly prevails until today.

In spite of this, perhaps even because of it, Mizrahi and Sephardi musical traditions have come to characterize the Israeli cultural scene both for Israelis and for those observing from overseas. Their markedness as exotic yet firmly Jewish, and thus their suitability as the representative musics of Israel among the Jewish world, may be traced directly to the reports of early ethnomusicologists such as Avraham Zvi Idelsohn and Robert Lachmann, and their attribution of supposedly positive characteristics to the liturgical musics of non-Ashkenazim, such as purity, authenticity, and lack of assimilation (Lehmann 2008; Loeffler 2009; Loeffler 2010; Gur 2011; Davis 2013; Shelleg 2014; Leitner Cohen 2017; Leitner Cohen 2018). Such characteristics have proved in fact rather more ambivalent than auspicious in the *longue durée*, serving as they have to draw a line between Ashkenazim on the one hand, and all other Jews on the other, through a process of fetishization and resulting disassociation towards Mizrahi and Sephardi culture and, thus, individuals. The academic lauding of musical superiority, in the context of the Jewish state, resulted in a heightening of awareness of ethnic difference within a context of Jewish belonging that has proved to be enduring. In relation with this there existed a desire during the pre- and early-statehood years to create clear cultural lines between local non-Jewish Arab populations and the rapidly growing Jewish population. Nevertheless, the work of Idelsohn and later generations of ethnomusicologists may have been instrumental in the way in which these scholars took for granted the inclusion of all *edot* as full, legitimate Jews—something that was not a certainty during an era of scientific racism to which the Jewish world

was not immune, and which has surely informed contemporary Israeli immigration and internal policies that require the equal treatment of all Jews.¹⁷

Today, the primary experience of racialization within the Israeli Jewish community remains ambivalent, in particular for those of non-Ashkenazi origins. There continue to exist what might fairly be termed racist liturgical events and everyday experiences. However, great strides in cultural integration and a unified Israeli identity have been made in some areas, particularly the standardization of liturgical norms around holidays which succeed in creating opportunities for all edot to take primacy on the national stage at different times and a shared understanding that Israeli Jewish identity is characterized by diverse origins and their contemporary expressions—evidence, I suggest, of a young nation increasingly comfortable and confident in its identity.

Whereas in this first chapter I demonstrated the dominance of particular edot and their associated nusahim during specific holidays, in the next I offer case studies of liturgical performance characterized by an intentional and cultivated embrace of racial diversity, which must delicately balance ethnic specificity and Israeli integration. While in one sense these two chapters offer polarizing modes of racialized liturgy—the first emphasizing difference from one holiday to another, the second embracing diversity at a single event and—they achieve a similar goal of strengthening Israeli national identity through shared liturgical experience. Listeners and participants draw upon their literacy of multiple nusahim, a literacy that is unusual elsewhere in

¹⁷ The same cannot be said of non-Jewish immigrants, citizens, and residents. While Jewish equality within Israel is legally required and enforced, there have certainly been historical shortcomings as detailed earlier in this dissertation, and as will be described in the following section.

the Jewish world and that thus reinforces their Israeliness and shared identity even as it draws attention to differences within Israeli society.

CHAPTER TWO

CULTIVATED LITURGICAL DIVERSITY AS ISRAELINESS

Seliḥot

2 Elul, 5778 (Sunday, August 12, 2018)

From the comfort of my sofa I checked the Kotel webcam on my laptop, debating whether it was worth staying up well past my bedtime to walk across the valley and through the Old City to what appeared to be a non-event. Tonight was supposed to be the first day of seliḥot, a late-night service of penitentiary prayers known for its earworm-worthy melodies held during the month leading up to the High Holidays of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur. But even at 11 p.m. the Kotel plaza was nearly empty, save a few lone souls wandering around—perhaps tourists who sought to visit this revered site after the retreat of the beating sun. Knowing that things happen suddenly in Israel, and that arriving on time to any event is close to civil disobedience, I nevertheless braved the trek and arrived a little before the scheduled 12:15 a.m. start time (ethnographers are surely exempt from such unspoken laws). The plaza hosted a few groups of yeshivah and seminary students, but the women’s and men’s sections were busy yet quiet.

A few rows of women pressed their bodies against the cold stones of the Wall and jostled for the right to this coveted position; others sat on the benches that lined the *meḥitzah* (gender partition) and packed into cheap plastic chairs all bunched towards the left side nearest the men’s section. I wandered aimlessly around the plaza for a while, returning to the women’s section and taking a seat at the back near the meḥitzah. I found myself sandwiched between two groups. In

front of me were a group of eight masorti-looking women in their forties, dressed in skinny jeans and brightly patterned skirts, slogan shirts with ripped denim jackets, baseball caps or white lacy material draped atop their heavily highlighted hair, plenty of gold jewelry, chatting less quietly than they perhaps intended. Behind me were some older women wearing flowing floor-length skirts or dresses, heads bowed into their siddurim. Their head coverings were a mix of the traditionally Jewish Israeli style that is preferred by very religious Sephardi women, with a scarf or two tightly wrapped over a volumizer and covering the hairline, and some coverings that were more akin to a hijab and that I had never seen on the streets of West Jerusalem—light, loose fabric draped over the hair and sometimes passed across the shoulders.

Suddenly, a voice sounded from just the other side of the meḥitzah. The masorti women screeched their plastic chairs across the floor to take up positions as close as possible, standing on chairs so that they could circumvent the meḥitzah's visual barrier and achieve a more direct auditory impression. They oriented themselves at a 45-degree angle to both the Kotel and the men's section itself by turning towards the meḥitzah, balancing required respect for the Wall with this desire to better hear and see the men, evidenced by their phones held at maximum height to capture the activity across the meḥitzah. Some of the more typically dati-looking women in the vicinity turned their attention to this new voice too, while others remained immersed in their own prayers, creating an intimate, if divided, prayer service in the midst of this busy evening.

Crackling static sounded as if the Kotel's speaker system was being turned on, but the emanating voice was tinny; the cheap-sounding and relatively ineffective amplification served our ad hoc group well, but would not have carried even as far as the plaza or to the farthest extent of the men's or women's sections. Peeking through the two-centimeter gap between

sections of the mehitzah, I noted that the group for whom these women had been waiting—knowingly or not—was a bunch of soldiers dressed in khakis and officer blues, machine guns slung across their backs, siddurim in their hands. Cheap white Kotel *kippot* (religious head coverings) perched atop their shaven heads, replacing the berets that were tucked under their shoulder tags,¹ except for the man serving as *shaliaḥ tzibur* (prayer leader) who left his purple beret to serve as his head covering. The tinny voice came from a soldier's megaphone, likely used for shouting orders at a checkpoint during the day. Equaling its volume was the walkie talkie radio attached to his belt, still barking military undertakings even as he was presumably off-duty. I supposed that this should have felt disjunct to me, but after a year as an Israeli it didn't.

The masorti women shouted along to the melodies that they knew, often struggling to find their place in the prayer leaflet and relying on memory for the words when they recognized a particularly well-known tune. They contrasted with the older women in their midst with their voluptuous silk headscarves and flowing floor-length skirts praying along with rapt devotion; by comparison, the masorti women looked as if they were at a pop concert. The latter were called upon to assist the former in navigating the prayer leaflet. I struggled too; other groups had started up in the men's section in close proximity to the soldiers, resulting in a cacophony of asynchronous shofar blasts from undetermined sources and overlapping melodies at different speeds and in different registers. The repetition within seliḥot augmented the challenge; the service is dominated by certain motifs (such as the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, which are

¹ These head coverings are picked up at the entrance to the men's section by those who don't wear them on a regular basis; men are required to cover their heads to enter the prayer area.

repeated seven times) and gestures (long silent sections, raising upon toes, bowing)—and different edot have varying orders of the service, which is far from fixed in form.

As our motley crew wrapped up for the night, some of the men nodded across the meḥitzah to acknowledge our presence and participation. The plaza emptied out over the following half hour as I chatted to some of the women about their decision to attend, leaving a few lone Ḥaredi women praying autonomously. It was only then that I understood the reason for the relative quietn and lack of organization that night: tonight was the first night of seliḥot for Sephardim, it being the second day of the month of Elul, but Ashkenazim would not begin seliḥot until the end of this Hebrew month, a few days before the new year of Rosh Hashanah. Being immersed in Sephardi liturgical norms at this time of year, I had forgotten that Ashkenazim would not be attending tonight's event. The Kotel's announcement of seliḥot was more a nod to this liturgical formality, but the real events of the type I had been expecting tonight—blaring loudspeakers, a plaza so full that one can barely move, whole families and tour groups here for the show—would take place upon the commencement of Ashkenazi seliḥot. The Ḥaredi women, then, had not joined us because they were Ashkenazi, and their liturgical tradition did not demand seliḥot for another three weeks. For them, this was the end of Rosh Ḥodesh Elul, but otherwise a normal Sunday night.

21 Elul, 5778 (Saturday, September 1, 2018)

Three weeks later I made it to the Kotel, abandoning my bedtime again. This time I brought back-up: my fiancé and three friends, who insisted that we pause in the middle of the Old City for chicken wings, which they would later devour as they sat on the floor at the very back of the

plaza, leaning against a trash can and a security barrier. The chicken wings meant that my un-Israeli anthropological impulse to be early was flummoxed this time. Rather, as we descended the steps from the Jewish Quarter that lead to the airport security checks at the plaza, things were already in full swing. Flood lights around the perimeter illuminated this midnight scene from on high, with cell phones creating an eerie glow just above head level of the dense crowd that truly filled the plaza. Qubbat as-Sakhra (Dome of the Rock) perched above the scene at Jerusalem's highest point, and the sounds from us tonight, twenty meters down below, seemed congruous with this grand Islamic architecture.

Four loudspeakers, balanced precariously next to an Israeli flag in the men's section, blared at a volume that had been audible to us pilgrims from well before we could see this side of the Old City. Coaxing us towards its source, the ḥazan's long maqamic phrases drew out the words of seliḥot slowly and dramatically. As the ḥazan reached the famous melody, "Aneinu," he stopped altogether to allow the impromptu massed choir to take over. He rejoined the last line with wonderful rhythmic clarity and authority, offering a virtuosic bridge to the musical highlight of the evening, Adon HaSeliḥot. It was a thrilling and surreal experience, joining a crowd of tens of thousands singing at the top of their lungs "we have sinned before you," cell phones lifted high in the air, floodlights, soldiers, babies, Ḥaredim in their best fur hats, and my friends busy with their chicken wings—and so different than my first seliḥot here three weeks prior.

The crowd sang as one, with rhythm and melody so secure that one encountering these maqamic melodies for the first time would be able to transcribe them with ease. My suspicions were raised: where had these thousands been on the first night of Sephardic seliḥot three weeks ago? Tonight had a distinctly Sephardi soundtrack, but it was the first night of Ashkenazi seliḥot.

Could it be that these Sephardim had chosen to forego their own minhag, even shun the Kotel's official announcement of the first night of seliḥot, to join an auditorily Sephardi event but according to the minhag of Ashkenazim? What about the Ashkenazim? Where were they, and why had their first night been musically co-opted by Sephardim, including the ḥazan himself?

Racialization and Tourism of Datiyut

During the intense days as the month of Elul came to an end and Tishrei began, Jerusalem's streets were marked by Sephardi melodies. Tours for secular Tel Aviv types stopped off outside edot haMizraḥ synagogues in the Naḥlaot neighborhood; American bands plastered posters on lampposts promising a night of Sephardi songs. But, like the Kotel, the city's streets had lain quiet during the preceding weeks.

Seliḥot brings to the fore a number of old racial dynamics in Israel: Ashkenazi racial tourism and institutional power, the emic and etic exoticizing of Sephardi music, and Sephardi religious traditionalism. Tourism could hardly be more explicit than during seliḥot, though its racial tones are more subtle. Guides bring in coachloads of local and foreign groups for whom Jerusalem is mysterious, exciting, the pearl of Israel's religious underworld of which they possess little knowledge or personal connection. These tourists are mostly secular, sometimes masorti, but divorced from the demographics of their objects of curiosity. They trek around residential neighborhoods like Naḥlaot and the Old City to the locals' annoyance² for a couple of

² I had the pleasure of living in Naḥlaot when I first moved to Jerusalem in December 2017, shortly before Ḥanukah. Ḥanukah brought enough tourism and associated late-night noise to the neighborhood (Naḥlaot's narrow streets are famed for their displays of ḥanukiot) for me to move out a few months later. Such problems are exacerbated by regular military outings to the area (part of officers' educational training so that they can better understand the character of

hours before seliḥot begins, being alerted by the guide's earpiece microphone as to how this Roman street was discovered and which war gave significance to this archway and who built this-that-or-the-other crooked house and why Jerusalem is, after all, so special, so unique, so ancient, so holy. The devout are the final spectacle of the night; tours inevitably finish in the wee hours with a brief excursion into one or more services, the tourists peering into the synagogue as visitors to a zoo, not daring to step inside the cage, but rather craning their necks around doorways. Perhaps the more daring or less reverential will sneak their bodies just within the bounds of the synagogue building that is as much their inheritance as it is of those within, demarcating their own otherness from this primitive religion through an invisible meḥitzah that separates the tourists from the tour and the secular from the religious. The actual meḥitza in the synagogues in question kept the women—the few who attend—upstairs in their balcony.

Two racializing factors are at play on these tours. The first is the Ashkenazi:non-Ashkenazi balance. Seliḥot is dominated by Sephardim, nusah edot hamizrah, and associated melodies. Sephardim enjoy a longer run of seliḥot—a full five weeks each year compared to Ashkenazim's two weeks.³ As a result, Sephardi individuals have a greater familiarity with and attachment to this seasonal liturgy; it is the soundtrack of an entire Jerusalem season as the summer peaks in its sweltering heat, the pomegranates ripen on trees and appear in the shuk, and shofars blast from home and synagogue windows each morning. Sephardim further compare seliḥot to other cyclical and seasonal paraliturgical rites, such as *bakashot*, which are sung in the early hours between Sukkot and Purim. For Ashkenazim, seliḥot are strongly associated with the

Jerusalem) and Naḥlaot's proximity to the shuk. Noise laws were enacted in Naḥlaot in 2019 following complaints by more proactive residents than myself.

³ Ashkenazim begin seliḥot on the Saturday night prior to Rosh Hashana, unless Rosh Hashana begins on a Monday or Tuesday, in which case they begin a full week earlier than usual. This is to ensure seliḥot are said at least four times before Rosh Hashana begins.

yamim noraim—the high holidays of Judaism—which are specific days dominated by sensations including long stretches in synagogue and highly specific ritual acts (like *tashliḥ*) that mark off these couple of weeks as unusual, an exception to the rest of the year.

This attitudinal difference between edot to seliḥot (seliḥot as a season versus seliḥot as a special occasion) certainly stems from the relationship between each edah's minhag of when the liturgy takes place and the broader nature of Jerusalem's Jewish life during that particular period. The result is that seliḥot, the season, has become more associated with Sephardim. One might generously presume that this is simply a question of frequency; Sephardim know the liturgy more intimately, perform it more often, are heard more often. But it is also true that seliḥot has become a spectacle in part *because* of this Sephardi dominance, an excuse for exoticized tourism of historically maligned and marginalized edot by a predominantly—although not exclusively—Ashkenazi crowd.

The second racializing factor on these tours, which accounts for a significant number of non-Ashkenazi tourists, is the racialization of datiim. The balance of datiim under the touristic microscope in this particular instance skews heavily Sephardi, as described above. Beyond this, the way in which datiim and datiyut are perceived in Israel is a symptom of racialization of these categories of people.

Michael Omi and Howard Winant, in their landmark tome on racialization, claim racialization as a process distinct from religion based on the particular histories of these two identity categories, particularly the later history of the production of racial types (Omi and Winant 1994: 61). However, more recent studies have demonstrated a similarity both in the mechanics of producing racial and religious subjects, and in the lived experience of individuals and groups who are rendered sites of racialized or religious inscription (for example: Asad 1993;

Bowen 2004; Cesari 2004; Kepel 1991, 1997; Kushner 2005; Lewis and Schnapper 1994; Meer 2013; Nielsen 1995; Roy 2004; Silverstein 2005; Taras 2013; Vertovec and Rogers 1998; Werbner 2002; Wikan 2002). Nasar Meer demonstrates the ways in which race and religion have been, and continue to be, co-constituted, a position supported by specific studies on Islamophobia and anti-Semitism (and anti-Judaism). Steve Garner (2007; 2010) and Paul Silverstein (2005) further posit a “new racism” that is based upon cultural hierarchies rather than physical differences.

Within a predominantly Jewish environment, classic forms of racialization are secondary to demographic categories defined by religious status. Israelis are divided into four groups (*hiloni*, *masorti*, *dati*, *haredi*) that supposedly report their choice of religious practice or lack thereof, but are in fact rendered more essential categories in the way they are ascribed and act upon the subject’s body. Additional categories—*datlash* (formerly religious) and *baal teshuvah/hozer bitshuvah* (newly religious)—exist to describe this essentialization of the demographic category into which one is born, recognizing the indelible physical and embodied traces that religion gives even when one attempts to change one’s affiliation.

Michaels notes that race is both essence and performance; in Israel, religion is the same (Michaels 1997). Whereas in the US, the homeland of critical race theory, race is imbued with meaning and significance across society, in Israel the same is true of religious status. As whiteness is constructed in relation to otherness in Europe and the US (Holloway 2005), so in Israel secularity—a foreign concept to Judaism—it is constructed in relation to Jewish religiosity. *Haredim* are subject to boundary erection by the non-religious through similar means to the ways that BIPOC are marginalized in white-dominated countries. While racial terminology (color and phenotypic descriptors) are absent in the Israeli racialization of religion, racial

descriptors and categories are supplanted onto religious groups, resulting in descriptions such as Haredim, their religious practices, and their social choices as primitive and unintelligent.⁴ The essentialization of Haredim as a single unified entity further smacks of racialization, although, as in cases of racialization, it could hardly be further from the truth. Haredim are in fact a broad coalition of sects, ranging from Zionists who are fully integrated into Israeli society to isolationists who deny Israel's right to exist and operate beyond its laws.

While racialization theory and critical race theory are helpful tools in Western liberal, and particularly ex-colonial, contexts, in an ethno-state they only partially illuminate the social dynamics that accrue around skin color. In Israel, understanding a dual process of racialization, with one part being the racialization of religion, permits a deeper understanding of the double burden experienced by Sephardim and other non-Ashkenazim who tend towards deeper levels of religious involvement. In this intersectional experience, Sephardim are racialized for their Arabness, easternness, and darkness (as described in subsequent chapters), but then further racialized for their religiosity (*datiyut*) which is in fact a product of their edot's historical cultural norms. Both the processes and identities that result are peripheralized; datim and Sephardim inhabit peripheral public spaces and even dominate periphery towns, remaining doubly on the

⁴ I encountered these descriptions repeatedly from individuals across the rest of Israeli society during fieldwork, in particular when a point of discussion was raised that touched upon the differences between Haredim and the rest of Israeli society, such as the issue of COVID-19 regulations and vaccinations (Haredim were repeatedly blamed in the media for flouting regulations and causing Israel's various outbreaks), the Mount Meron disaster on Lag BaOmer 5871/2021 (here, Haredim were denounced for falling short of regulated health and safety standards and being above police regulation), and issues of women's integration into politics and society during the four general elections that occurred between 2018 and 2021 while I lived in Israel (Haredim and Hardalim were maligned for failing to have any woman candidates run on their party slates, and for comments regarding the unsuitability of women to fill posts of public office). See Elizur and Malkin. 2013; Bergman et al. 2017; Friedman 1994; Goldscheider et al. 2015; Perez 2012.

margins of Israeli culture while, as we have seen, contributing substantial content to Israeli culture for its transformation into a mass-consumption product. Haredim and Sephardim are similarly rendered a spectacle to behold at events like Seliḥot, entertainment for those who would otherwise consider themselves apart from the localized forms of blackness that these groups embody.

Participation in liturgy *produces* the racialization of religion. Not only the individual's choice to participate actively rather than spectate, but also one's literacy in Jewish liturgy and the degree to which the melodies and words of Seliḥot inhabit one's inner ear—willingly or unwillingly—and act upon the body by forcibly reminding one that this world is the world to which they are supposed to belong, the world to which their body and mind have been entrained to belong.

Seliḥot: “The Sephardi Style Is the Israeli Style”

The attraction of Seliḥot as a tourist event is at least in part the Sephardi soundtrack so closely associated with it, which for many secular and Ashkenazi Israelis offers a limited-time opportunity to step into religious traditionalism while remaining at sufficient distance, both by virtue of the nature of the tour and by their differentiated identity (tour attendees are highly unlikely to share both edah and religious affiliation with Seliḥot participants). But, as I experienced, it is the Ashkenazi schedule that is nationally recognized. This strange confluence of Sephardi and Ashkenazi customs around Seliḥot could be understood as the old problem of Ashkenazi dominance—tourism dominating the Ashkenazi days, Sephardim providing the

massed congregation—or as evidence of ubiquitous Sephardi religious commitment. Certainly, one notices deep-seated racial dynamics at play.

However, I suggest that this amalgamation of Sephardi sounds on an Ashkenazi schedule is a uniquely *Israeli* phenomenon, a national expression of certain preferences around religious practice and engagement that serve to maximize devout participation by removing obstacles thereto. Many more Sephardim report participating as a result of the lower number of nights requiring their attendance under the Ashkenazi(/Israeli) scheduling model; many more Ashkenazim report participating based on the opportunity to sing or hear popular of Sephardi melodies and nusah that have become the Israeli norm. Two Facebook posts from 2022 (figures x.x and x.x are indicative of the latter trend; the former was reported to me by a number of interlocutors over the four years of selihot during which I conducted fieldwork (2015, 2017-19). Such a phenomenon is specifically Israeli because of the degree of integration of edot that is unusual to Israel within the Jewish world, especially the natural evolution of this merging of cultural norms.



Figure 2.1. A meme that circulated on Facebook during the 2022 seliḥot season illustrating perceptions of differences between Ashkenazi and Sephardi “teshuva” (Heimish Humor 2022).

I love Sephardi slichot and am thinking of changing from Ashkie this year. I get up early anyway. So ...

Are there any Sephardi shuls in Beit Shemesh?

Ok seriously ... does anyone know davening times in any of the Sephardi shuls in the Givah?

Figure 2.2. A comment on Facebook by a prominent Ashkenazi Israeli rabbi in 2022 concerning his desire to attend Sephardi seliḥot (anonymized for privacy) (Davidson 2022).

Despite the Ashkenazi scheduling of mass Selihot, the prayers have taken on a distinct Sephardi association. A further contributing factor is likely the unusually “religious” nature of Selihot, as opposed to major Jewish holidays that have taken on a life of their own under the guise of civic

religion. Religiosity, as explained above, is associated with Sephardim. The affective world of *nusah edot hamizrah*'s *seliḥot* rites has become the affective world of *seliḥot* and the season in which it falls. For Jerusalem's residents and visitors, late Elul looks like ripe pomegranates and aggressive sunlight, it smells like dry grass, and it sounds like the shofar and the strains of Sephardi melodies emanating from synagogues late at night and early in the morning—so much so that walking through certain neighborhoods, one hears Sephardi melodies even coming from Ashkenazi synagogues. The particular *māqāmat* (Middle Eastern modes) of *seliḥot* are complemented by a now-commonplace grainy and despondent, even desperate, vocal timbre, which is appropriate for the penitentiary content of the prayers.⁵ This timbre, too, is associated with Sephardi prayer practice in contrast to a certain polish and musicality that is expected of Ashkenazi services, as one self-described masorti Israeli man of mixed Sephardi (Moroccan) and Ashkenazi (Hungarian) heritage explained to me:

When I hear someone praying like they really mean it, I mean if they're not Haredi or a Na-na-nachman type, then I would assume they're Sephardi or Mizraḥi, for sure. If they're putting their soul into it as if they're not just going through their obligations but actually connecting to every word then I definitely assume Sephardi even if the *nusah* was the same. Why? I think part of it is just what you hear here over and over, when you go to an Ashkenazi *shul* [synagogue] it's usually polished and clean, but people are a bit restrained and you can hear that in their tefillah. But with Sephardim and Mizraḥim, also probably with Yemenites, it's more rough and ready, it's maybe less conventionally beautiful, but—and maybe it's related—because it's less shiny and clean and there's not such a concern with everything being perfect, maybe because or maybe as a result, you get a sense that the priority is on the words and connecting with God. (Alon 2019)

Speaking specifically about *Seliḥot*, he and I continued in conversation:

Alon: I wouldn't know about Ashkenazi *Seliḥot*, I'm not really sure what that would be. We have Israeli *Seliḥot*, it's only right before Rosh Hashanah and it's in the *nusah* that I know from my [Moroccan] father. I suppose it would be better if I went for all of Elul but I am masorti, I am not really dati, so I go when everyone else goes. For me it's important to connect to through the melodies that I know, like Adon Haseliḥot [sings], things like

⁵ For a discussion of *māqāmat* in Jewish liturgy, see Kligman 2009.

that. The ḥazan, I appreciate it when I can hear the emotions in their voice between the big songs. I don't know if I believe in *teshuvah* [repentance]. I don't really believe in a God, honestly. I think it's good to reflect, and for me it's part of that process to hear a ḥazan who is really doing it to their God. If I can hear it in his voice, then ok, I connect a bit more.

Mili: What is it about the ḥazan's voice that you want to hear?

Alon: It doesn't hurt if he cries. At least that he is crying out to God. The truth is I feel like I'm supposed to do that too, after all I'm Jewish too. But I don't really believe it, so I want to hear a ḥazan who is doing it on my behalf. That's what the ḥazan is, he is a vessel for the community.

Mili: Did you ever experience a ḥazan during Selihot who didn't succeed in your eyes?

Alon: Listen, to tell you the truth my mother who is Hungarian, she doesn't go to synagogue, but I went once out of convenience to an Ashkenazi synagogue, and I didn't have the right feeling with the Selihot there. For me it wasn't Israeli, it wasn't emotional in the right way. It was very nice, if you want nice it's ok. It could have been any day of the year though, if you didn't listen to the words you wouldn't know it was Selihot.

Mili: Why wouldn't you know it was Selihot?

Alon: No crying! [Laughs.] Like I said before, I don't know Ashkenazi selihot, so part of it is me and what I know. If I don't hear the songs in the way I know them, or hear a ḥazan crying, then it's not Selihot. What do I care about the rest of the prayers? I'm not really interested in doing that. I could do it at home, but I don't of course! So I come for the sounds that you can only hear in Selihot. For me, because I am first Israeli and secondly Jewish, and because my father is Moroccan and my synagogue is Moroccan, so that's what Selihot is. And to my mind, the Sephardi style is the Israeli style. Remember, my mother is Hungarian, I'm not being elitist about Sephardi music, it's just how I hear it as an Israeli. (Alon 2019)

For Alon, as for many Israeli Jews, Selihot is Israeli when it is Sephardi. Selihot is not the only mass public prayer to become associated with a particular edah and its nusah in Israel; in fact, the same can be said for a number of holidays.

Ḥanukah: A Donut and a Lutheran Chorale

During Ḥanukah, the eight-day winter celebration centered around light and fried foods, one melody dominates Israel's nightly Ḥanukiah lighting events. Festivities are held in workplaces as a matter of course, often providing an excuse for a morale-boosting get-together, as well as in schools, universities, and, of course, public spaces (see figure 2.3). While for many the offer of

free *sufganiot* (fried donuts, a traditional Ḥanukah food) is the big attraction, Israelis of all religious and ethnic persuasions gather around the *Ḥanukiah* (nine-branched candelabrum), usually lit by somebody particularly important at the gathering, to sing the blessings over candle lighting and the first verse of the piyyut “Maoz Tzur”.⁶



Figure 2.3. An electric Ḥanukiah on an electric delivery bicycle outside Sam’s Bagels in downtown Jerusalem.

⁶ The later verses become rather militant, recounting as they do various Jewish historical victories over oppressive foreign peoples, and thus containing some rather ethno-centric content in the final verse that many consider distasteful in mixed settings where Jews and Palestinians—and other smaller contingents of Israel’s various religious and ethnic communities—celebrate as one.



Figure 2.4. A double-storey height Hanukiah in Kikar Tzion in downtown Jerusalem.

Not once, during the dozens of public candle lightings that I attended, did I hear any melody beyond the Ashkenazi one which, outside of Judaism, is best known as a Lutheran chorale. Originally a German folk melody, “So weiss ich eins, dass mich erfreut, das Pluemlein auff preiter Heyde” appears in Martin Luther’s 1524 *Etlich Cristlich lider/Lobgesang und Psalm*, also known as *Achtleiderbuch* (Eight Song Book) wherein it is titled “A Christian Song” (figure 2.5), and Böhme's 1877 *Altdeutsches Liederbuch*, which lists it as “Blümlein auf der Haide” (figure 2.7). These versions feature a flattened seventh and differ in their melodic line after the initial phrase, although retaining the overall melodic contour and structure (AABC(C)). The later Böhme iteration is in triple meter rather than the quadruple meter feel of Luther’s chorale, Bach’s chorale setting thereof (BWV 388; figure 2.6) and “Maoz Tzur” (see figure 2.8). Writing of the latter, Joshua Jacobson deconstructs possible alternative origins of the sections of “Maoz Tzur” that are melodically different from its predecessors (Jacobson 1990).

The first setting in the iteration used for “Maoz Tzur” is, perhaps not coincidentally, first found in Isaac Nathan’s setting of Lord Byron’s “On Jordan’s Banks” in *Hebrew Melodies*, published in 1815. Over the decades that followed, the song was republished in Yiddish, German, and French, with German in particular spawning a flurry of translation efforts, perhaps in part reflecting the melody’s origins and local interest in its transformation (Ezust 2003).

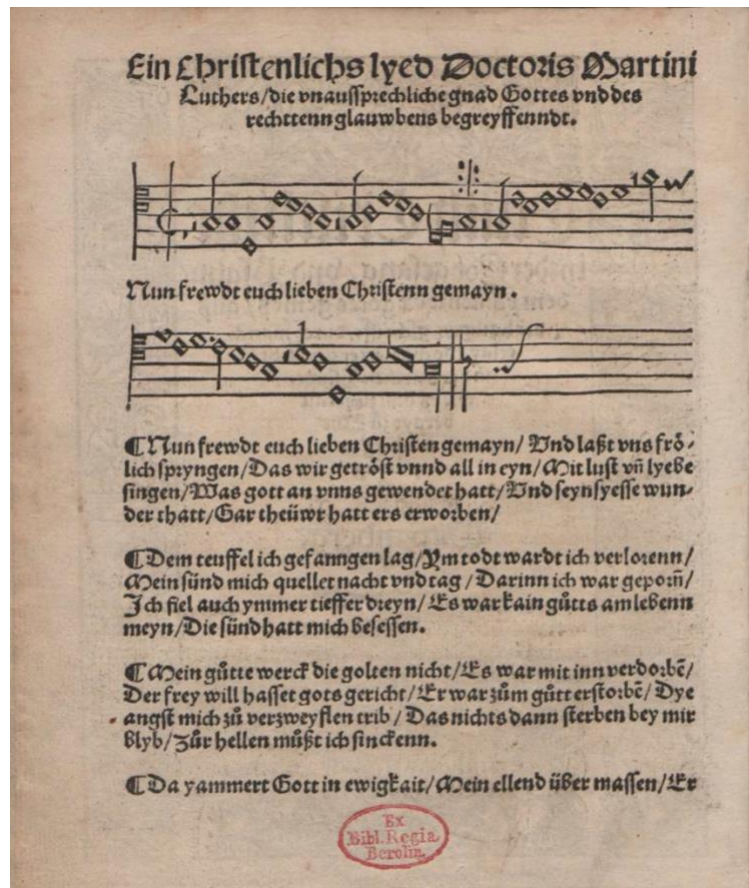


Figure 2.5. “Ein christlichs lyed” (A Christian Song) (Luther 1524).

Nun freut euch, lieben Christen, g'mein.

183.

Figure 2.6. Chorale “Nun freut euch, lieben Christen g’mein” BWV 388 (Bach 1786).

635. Blümlein auf der Haide.

(Mel.: So weiß ich eins das mich erfreut das blümlein auff preter heude.)

jon.

Freut euch, freut euch in die ser zeit, ihr wer den Chri-sten
Denn yet in al-len lan-den geit Gottes wort her dringt mit

al-le! Es ist kein Man, ders weh-ren
schal-le.)

kan, das habt ihr wol ver-nom-men, denn Got-tes

Wort bleibt e-wig be-kan, den-ben als den from-men.

Melodie mit bestehendem geistlichen Text in Babst's Olig. 1545 II. No. 27, mit der Ueberschrift: Ein geistlich vom preter Obertliche Werts durch Exempel des Alten und Neuen Testaments, gemeint und gebietet. — Schon in Schumann's Olig. 1539 steht der Text ohne Melodie. Ein Eingelobend des Liebes. Wirt durch Kunigund Bergottin e. 1528—36 führt die Ueberschrift: Ein geistlich geistlich werts, durch Exempel der schrift. Zu dem Eben als man singt: So weiß ich eins das mich erfreut, das blümlein auf preter heude" Abdruck bei BK. 1841 No. 295. Ich glaube, daß in vorliegender herrlichen Volkswelt die in der Tonangabe bezeichnete erhalten sei. Das weltliche Lied ist sonst nicht weiter bekannt. Krappant ist die Ähnlichkeit des Melodie-Anfangs mit der Weise Dr. Luthers: „Nun freut euch lieben Christen gemein“ (No. 623).

Der Nürnberger Schullehrer Notenbuche hat in seinen Bergkreuz 1551 No. 3 untern geistl. Texte eine ganz andere, dieselbe Eingeweihe beigelegt, die selber Dehnungen, wenig selbstständig und vermutlich von ihm oder einem Meisterfinger componirt ist. Hier der Eingang:

Freud euch, freud euch in di-ser zeit, Ihr wer den Chri-sten al-

le.

Beachtungswert ist die Form: sie ist dieselbe wie der achtzeilige Bavieren, aber mit Binnenreim in 5. und 7. Zeile. Vielleicht wäre es gar der weltliche Melodien: „Ich freue mich dieser sachen!“ (l. oben No. 355).

Figure 2.7. “Blümlein auf der Haide” from Böhme's *Altdeutsches Liederbuch* (Böhme 1877).

ROCK OF AGES

Ma'oz Tsur

Women's Voices (SSA) and Keyboard

Arranged by Samuel Adler

Andante

f

Soprano I
Soprano II

Ma - oz tsur y' - shu - a - ti I'cha na - eh l' - sha - bei - ach.
1. Rock of A - ges, let our - song Praise thy sav - ing - pow - er,
2. Chil - dren of the mar - tyr - race, Wheth - er free or - fet - tered,

Alto

Ma - oz tsur y' - shu - a - ti I'cha na - eh l' - sha - bei - ach.
1. Rock of A - ges, let our song Praise thy sav - ing - pow - er,
2. Chil - dren of the mar - tyr race, Wheth - er free or - fet - tered,

Keyboard

f

5

SI
SII

Ti - kon beit t' - fi - la - ti v'sham to - dah n' - za - bei - ach.
Thou a - midst the rag - ing foes Wast our shel - t'ring - tow - er,
Wake the ech - oes of the songs Where ye may be - scat - tered.

A

Ti - kon beit t' - fi - la - ti v'sham to - dah n' - za - bei - ach.
Thou a - midst the rag - ing foes Wast our shel - t'ring - tow - er,
Wake the ech - oes of the songs Where ye may be - scat - tered.

mp

Figure 2.8. The opening of “Maoz Tzur” arranged by renowned Jewish choral composer Samuel Adler (1957).

It is difficult to explain how this melody became so ubiquitously used for “Maoz Tzur” in Israel, or even among Ashkenazim. Scholars have not grappled with this question, rather describing the melody as “ubiquitous” without explanation as to why. I cannot offer a historical explanation, but wish to suggest that its status in Israel among all edot sits in reciprocal relationship with the dominance of Ashkenazim in diaspora. Ashkenazim have been the dominant edah in all major diaspora nations since Israel’s foundation in 1948, and this “Maoz Tzur” melody was already in mass use among them at that time, particularly in the US, thanks in part to Abraham Binder’s exquisite choral arrangement thereof. While early Ashkenazi immigration to Israel would have ensured the melody’s importation to the new Jewish homeland, mass waves of Mizrahi and Sephardi immigration should reasonably have offered alternatives, as is the case with other holiday liturgy. Instead, it seems that Mizrahi and Sephardi melodies—and those of smaller edot such as the Bene Israel and Beta Israel—were supplanted upon these groups’ arrival by the Ashkenazi melody.

Holidays of Light

During my first year in Israel, soon after arriving from Chicago, I spent one night of Hanukah in my husband’s Syrian grandparents’ home. Because they were born on the Turkish-Syrian border, raised speaking Arabic and Hebrew, I was surprised that they broke into the same melody employed by Bach and Luther. It was singing the Ashkenazi melody in their home that illuminated one possible reason for the ubiquity of this melody even in the least Ashkenazi of homes in Israel, and across public spaces. In the (even nominally) Christian West, Christmas is the major annual religious holiday. In such a context, Hanukah is elevated in importance despite

being a rather minor Jewish holiday. This may be the basis of the nature of its celebration in Israel, whereas Jews who never lived in a Christian hegemonic context celebrated Ḥanukah primarily in the home; after all, Ḥanukah falls, like many religions' and cultures' winter festivals (Diwali, Kwanzaa, Omisoka, Rohatsu, Mahayana New Year), during the darkest and shortest days of the year, right around the winter solstice.

Depending upon the specific cultural and historical context, it has not always been safe for Jews to engage in overt religious acts in public, let alone after dark. While the nature of Ḥanukah is explicitly public, ironically it must be celebrated from within the home in order to be effective, since the halachic requirement of Ḥanukah—upheld fairly uniformly across denominations and levels of observance—is to publicize the miracle by displaying a Ḥanukiah in a place in one's home where it can be seen from outside. Lighting must be done after dark so that the light is visible; from a halachic standpoint, this maximizes the mitzvah of publicizing the miracle and from a sociological standpoint, it creates an atmosphere of warmth, light, and (presumably) joy during a time when one might otherwise experience rather the opposite sensations.

In the West, in order to appease children eager to receive gifts alongside their Christian classmates and capitalize upon the extant “holiday of light” attitude embraced around Christmas, other religions have taken their winter festivals out into public alongside Christmas trees and carols. In dar al-Islam there existed no such parallel winter holiday, not least because Muslim festivals move around the Gregorian calendar since Islam follows an exclusively lunar calendar (as opposed to Judaism's solar-lunar calendar). Without a stable winter holiday which Ḥanukah could parallel, Ḥanukah in dar al-Islam remained in the home and in the synagogue, behind closed doors.

Little wonder, then, that in Israel it was the Ashkenazi iteration of the celebration that caught the public imagination and developed into the national religious and civil-religious version that is celebrated today. As Ashkenazim initiated and championed public celebrations in Israel, both due to their positions of power and their historical mode of celebrating the holiday, so they also naturally opted for the only melody they knew. Thus, ironically, the Ashkenazi diaspora experience of Ḥanukah falling around Christmas has indirectly and inadvertently resulted in the adoption of a Christian-associated melody as *the* Israeli tune for “Maoz Tzur.”

Feedback Loops

Seliḥot and Ḥanukah are typical of the Israeli-Jewish holiday experience in their development of a new Israeli norm that privileges one nusah, one edah’s paralinguistic interpretation of festive liturgy, over those of all other edot. While on seliḥot the reason for Sephardi primacy—albeit tempered by adherence to the Ashkenazi calendar—is religious and sociological, Ḥanukah’s Ashkenazi flavor is a consequence of diasporic historical cultural context. In both cases, the specific musical characteristics offered by the dominant edah’s soundtrack may also be advantageous in their ability to generate a desired affect among Israeli listeners, and typical Israeli discourse both assists in creating, and reinforces, such idealization of racialized sound. These holidays have acquired an ethnic identity that is at the same time their Israeli identity.

Expectations around the soundscape of Jewish festivities in Israel, and particularly in its religious heartland of Jerusalem, are mutually generated and reinforced year after year by audiences and performers, so much so that these localized norms are, to some extent, exported outward across the Jewish diaspora from Jerusalem. Just as Jews physically turn to face

Jerusalem in prayer, so they metaphorically look to Jerusalem for guidance, ideas, and inspiration on current prayer trends. Emily, a young Jewish woman visiting Israel as a tourist from Germany, explained, “I’m sure you meet a lot of tourists here. Actually, we are pilgrims. We come here to be inspired by Jerusalem’s history, but also to bring things back to our own communities. Not just souvenirs from the shuk but also souvenirs that we hear and see in the Judaism here. We feel in Germany that Judaism in Jerusalem can teach us a lot.” (Emily 2019) This sentiment was echoed by another Jewish tourist, Abe, from Canada. “We have an inferiority complex in the diaspora. That’s why we all come on vacation to Israel, especially to Jerusalem—to learn, to see and hear, to soak up the Jewishness here and to take it back home. Whether or not it’s true I feel like the Judaism here is just . . . better.” (Abe 2018)

Public prayer in Jerusalem thus operates as a nexus for a number of feedback loops, from the most global to the most local. Globally, Emily’s and Abe’s participation in public prayer events ensures a bidirectional, if uneven, process, whereby their voices contribute to the overall sound of Jerusalem’s prayer events, and the latter’s aesthetic qualities are internalized by Emily and Abe and exported to the Jewish diaspora. Of course, since Jewish presence in Israel, while continuous for some thousands of years, was by comparison very low until the 1880s, much of the now-exported soundworld is a local Israeli reworking of sounds still sounded in diaspora.⁷ The way in which these diaspora traditions become Israeli is also accounted for by Michael Frishkopf’s theory of feedback loops at the immediate level (Frishkopf 2018). He describes a process in the context of Islamic mass prayers (some of which bear remarkable resemblance to Jewish Jerusalem’s offerings, such as the similarities between *selihot* and *ad‘iyah* (Islamic

⁷ This is less relevant for mass prayers wherein Sephardi sounds are prevalent, since there are no longer substantial Jewish communities in the Middle East or North Africa.

supplications)) that serves to refine a mutually desirable vocal affect according to local preferences, that is, the preferences of those who attend the liturgical events:

During performance, participants may vocally express internal affective states to principal performers, who respond by adjusting paralinguistic variables so as to intensify impact, a cybernetic loop culminating in what I have termed “resonance.” Over time, resonant feedback leads to the emergence of local performative styles each characterized by particular configurations of paralinguistic variables, adapted to their ritual environment, but without affecting discursive meaning. (Ibid., 14–15)

In the Jewish context, Frishkopf’s paralinguistic variables can be applied to choices such as nusah, melody, vocal style, use of instruments, use of amplification, and so forth—the decisions that are not governed by the canonized text itself, and which are, in the Jewish context, all considered to be valid and an issue of minhag, not halachah. Regardless of this formal assessment, paralinguistic choices reveal much about one’s social class, in particular one’s edah. The racial nature of paralinguistic choice differs from Frishkopf’s description of the same process in Islam, which is governed more by nationality and denomination, which itself is relatively geographically determined (Sunni, Shia, Ibadi, and so forth).

Frishkopf’s explanation of the way in which paralinguistic factors change also accounts for the flexibility with which they are generated in the Israeli context: “Thus paralinguistic variables adapt and ramify for at least three reasons. First, because they are unconstrained by requirements of reference (whether of truth or request); second, because texts underdetermine them; third, because they powerfully express, shape, and unify emotion, amplifying collective ritual power through resonance” (Ibid., 15). Per Frishkopf’s third point, Israeli paralinguistic norms in public liturgy are able to take advantage of the most collectively appealing options for each holiday without particularly requiring consistency either within a single festival (such as the melding of the Ashkenazi calendar and Sephardi nusah during Selihot) or between different

festivals (hence a Sephardi-sounding Seliḥot and an Ashkenazi-sounding Ḥanukah). Feedback is furthermore a helpful concept, beyond considerations of vocal quality and to considerations of quantity, as the public vote with their feet, determining which liturgical events become elevated in the national imagination.

The absolute musical flexibility of the siddur—its sonically underdetermined nature as an entirely lexical document—permits this grassroots selection process both in terms of the nusah or melodic origin, and regarding the performance techniques chosen, with these often corresponding in ways that reinforce the racialized nature of the options available.

Diversity as Unity

Liturgical music, as a subtle expression of edah and racialization that draws upon Israel Jews' shared religion and peoplehood and from a common and musically underdetermined canonical text, is itself a powerful tool for negotiating the ongoing project of exploring what it means—and sounds like—to be Jewish in Jerusalem today. Through the sounding of diversity, and the ability of Israeli to assume a position as participant (per chapter one) or listener (per chapter two), a shared literacy is established that differentiates Israelis from the rest of global Jewry. Israeliness comes to be characterized by a delicate balance of ethnic assimilation and multiculturalism, with difference celebrated when it may be employed as part of the nation-building project.

Racialization as sounded in Jerusalem's public Jewish liturgy is a complex matter built on legacies of colonialism, but an issue that is relatively free of conflict in terms of how it might ideally be implemented today. By contrast, in the chapters that follow I turn to the issue of sounding out women's voices. Here, perhaps surprisingly, conflict is a central theme, and one

that may be understood through an examination of the historical and epistemological circumstances that surround women's voicing of Jewish liturgy.

PART TWO

**WHAT WOMEN WANT: THE WEAPONIZATION OF WOMEN'S SONG PRAYER
AT THE KOTEL**

CHAPTER THREE

WOMEN AT THE KOTEL

Prayer at the Fringes of Judaism

At any time of day, on any day of the year, the Kotel buzzes with the heterophonous soundscape of simultaneous prayer services taking place in the men's section of its expansive, gender-segregated plaza. A group of visiting US-Americans is huddled around a bar mitzvah boy who is reading the Torah in the diatonic Lithuanian-Ashkenazi tradition with his Brooklyn-accented Hebrew. His mother stands on her toes atop a low, narrow bench attached to the six-foot-high solid metal meḥitza that separates the men's and women's sections, peering over in hope of seeing and hearing what the meḥitza is supposed to prevent her from experiencing. A few meters away, IDF (Israel Defense Force) soldiers still in their teenage years declaim responsive lines during the antiphonal *kaddish* prayer led in a North African style. Still within earshot, a group of older Iraqi Jews sings together as they prepare for their own Torah reading, which musically will be hardly recognizable as the same reading that the Brooklyn bar mitzvah boy just recited.

The Kotel lies at the imagined center of the Jewish world, but at the edge of contiguous Israel. Visitors from Jewish West Jerusalem must pass through Arab areas of East Jerusalem by bus or cab, or cross the whole of the Old City on foot, passing through the Armenian or Arab Quarter en route. As I pass through the security check, however, and begin to walk across the expansive plaza, I hear this imagined centrality made real. I hear musical techniques and genres from every corner of the Jewish world—strains of Arabic maqam, US-American 1960s folk, Ethiopian call-and-response, Northern European choral part-singing—all of it sung, and all of it

sung by men. I hear all of this liturgy from the other side of the meḥitza in the women's section. I can hear it any morning that I wish, but I am always a spectator, never a participant.



Figure 3.1. The Kotel as viewed from the back of its plaza

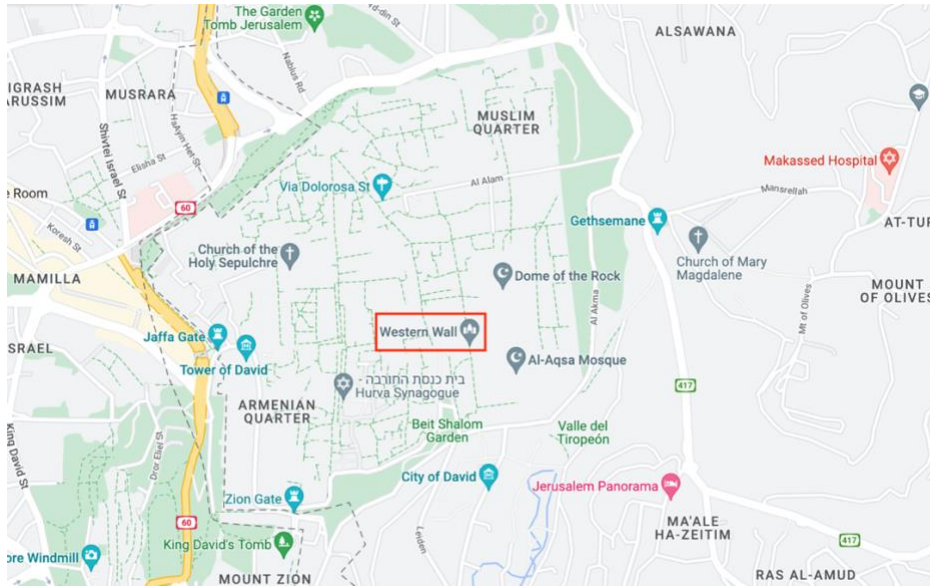


Figure 3.2. Map of Jerusalem’s Old City indicating the Kotel’s location relative to its surrounds.¹



Figure 3.3 Men praying at the Kotel, viewed from behind the men’s section. The mehitza is visible on the right side of the image.

¹ Map sourced from maps.google.com. Annotation by the author.

Like many traditional religious spaces, orthodox Jewish synagogues require men and women to sit separately. Two seating arrangements predominate: a side-by-side meḥitza where women occupy the left side of the room and men the right (or vice versa) with a barrier in between the two, or a balcony for women leaving the main downstairs room for men. Ethnomusicological studies report similar contemporary practices across the world, whether in Muslim Senegalese Sufism, Tunisian stambeli, or Iroquoise ritual performance (see respectively Dang 2017: 358, Jankowsky 2005: 196-198, and Shimony 1980). In Judaism, as in these other spaces, the men's area is the focus of public ritual activity.

Rosh Ḥodesh

Once a month, though, before the sun has risen above the Wall, two groups shift the locus of activity from the men's section to the women's. Rosh Ḥodesh celebrates the new Jewish month and has traditionally been associated with women. It marks the new moon, associated with the ritually significant female menstrual cycle. Since the 1960s, the infusion of feminism into liberal Judaism has generated a flurry of new ritual creations for women's celebrations of Rosh Ḥodesh that reimagine what it means to have a women's holiday, its essence no longer determined by men or intrinsically linked to the typical menstrual cycle. Many of these new rituals center around a women-only prayer service, often with some changes to its canonic content, such as using grammatically feminine forms to refer to God, taking a pick-and-mix approach to traditional blessings and prayers in order to create a thematic service, or employing meditation

techniques. Some groups of orthodox or traditional² women omit the sections of canonic-form prayer services that they understand to require the presence of a *minyan* (prayer quorum): *devarim shebikdushah* and Torah reading, the parts of the service with the most “holiness” (*kedushah*) that have historically been understood to require a minyan of ten Jewish adult men for their performance. Omitting these sections requires a more experimental approach to ritual (re-) creation and emphasizes the gendered nature of Rosh Hodesh events by virtue of their necessary deviation from the usual communal prayer structure.

For thirty years, Women of the Wall have been attempting to celebrate Rosh Hodesh at the Kotel by praying shacharit. Like so many other Jewish women’s groups, they aim to inject new meaning into Rosh Hodesh, but without wanting to transform traditional, halachic modes of worship on the basis of their gender. The group considers it their right to perform all of the traditional Jewish practices that are considered not only permissible, but also obligatory for those who stand on the other side of the mehitza. They say *devarim shebikdushah*, read from the Torah, and serve as *shaliḥot tzibbur*.

² I use the term “traditional” to indicate a subset of Israel’s religious population who should not be described using Ashkenazi ideology and observance-based groups such as orthodox, Haredi, liberal, etc. Mizraḥi and Sephardi communities have always been broadly halachically observant in public spaces and accepted a range of levels of observance as valid. Thus while Israelis tend to parse the population into four categories (*hiloni*, *masorti*, *dati*, *Haredi*), Mizraḥim and Sephardim often exist comfortably beyond those boundaries; they may be *hiloni* on weekdays and *dati* on Shabbat, or *dati* in the synagogue, and *masorti* in the home. Traditional Judaism, then, is *halachically* oriented, embedded in political histories of the Middle East and North Africa prior to 1948, and poorly correlated with normative modes of demographic description within Israeli and Jewish communities.



Figure 3.4. Women of the Wall praying at the Kotel.

Experiencing Women of the Wall's Tefillot

In 2015, two years before I started my fieldwork in earnest, I had a great amount of ideological support for these women. I understood them to be demonstrating the desirable direction of Judaism to the rest of Israel, whose Jewish citizens overwhelmingly self-identify as either orthodox, *masorti* (meaning they accept orthodox authority but are less observant), or secular—but secular from an orthodoxy to which they have deep-seated emotional connections that become evident during lifecycle events such as weddings, births, and deaths. Like most non-Israeli Jews, I identified with a denomination of Judaism that presumed gender equality in ritual activity as normative, and anything other than this as deviant, backward, and repressive of

women and genderqueer people. I followed Women of the Wall's activity sympathetically from afar on social media and read their monthly publicity emails, watching livestreams of services, and reading their accounts of how intolerant Haredi women and men disrupted their prayers with whistles and screams. I balked at the idea that the most important national and historical site of the Jewish people was being coopted by extremists with no regard for diaspora Jewry or my Western, progressive, liberal politics.

The first time that I joined Women of the Wall on Rosh Hodesh was as a likely participant during a preliminary fieldwork trip, my dissertation at the time directed elsewhere and decidedly *not* towards issues of liturgy or gender. Unable to restrain my anthropologically-minded self, and nervous that I might be caught up in a violent encounter or have my face plastered across their livestream for posterity, I opted to observe from a distance rather than whole-heartedly join the action. I left with much the same mindset as I had arrived: this group was being unduly repressed by the government's security forces, and while they were few in number, the stony determination on their leaders' faces conveyed their absolute commitment to this cause—my cause—one that I still could not understand why any woman would oppose.

But to all sides, Women of the Wall were surrounded by a block of hundreds of orthodox, mostly Haredi, women doing just that. An imposing mass of teenage girls prayed in neat rows facing the Wall, rocking back and forth in a motion associated with Jewish prayer called *shuckling*. Their mission: to outnumber and out-pray Women of the Wall such that the latter would be rendered insignificant by comparison, and to establish orthopraxis as the only option in the *Ezrat Nashim*. They seemed indistinguishable from one another; pale faces that appeared never to have seen the sun, dark hair scraped back in ponytails, flowing black skirts meeting black socks or opaque tights mid-calf, stiff starchy blue shirts buttoned right to the top, necks

bowed as their eyes tracked the lines of a book of *Tehillim* or a siddur in a classic Haredi publishing style. I observed them pitifully, questioning how they could be so misled as to act against their own interests, wondering whether any of them would one day manage to escape their insular world, blaming their parents and educational institutions for instilling anti-women values and pretending that their place within Judaism was enough. They, I reminded myself, were the problem with Israel, a good part of the reason that I was choosing to make *aliyah* and become Israeli myself—one more sensible, liberal, feminist voice in this sea of traditionalist values.

I did not return to the Kotel on Rosh Hodesh for almost another year, disturbed by this experience that had disarmed my utopian vision of pluralistic and egalitarian public prayer rights. I still visited the Kotel from time to time, mostly on major Jewish holidays to participate in mass prayer services or to play tour guide when friends and family visited from out of town. Only a year later, with a new dissertation topic and a new passport in hand, did I force myself out of bed at an ungodly hour to join Women of the Wall, this time, strictly for research purposes.



Figure 3.5. Disruption of Women of the Wall prayers by orthodox girls and women. Security personnel in fluorescent jackets form a protective barrier around Women of the Wall.

Voice and Source, Subject and Object

During the prayer service, I again position myself between the two groups. By now, I have learned that the orthodox women and girls style themselves as Women *for* the Wall, and explicitly exist as a loose coalition for the purpose of protesting Women *of* the Wall. Since my last visit, Women for the Wall's Haredi leader has recruited a minyan and professional *hazan* to conduct a full prayer service in the men's section and arranged for a loudspeaker to be erected at the meḥitza, amplifying the men's activity into the women's section. From the women's section we see nothing of the man behind the voice, just a single loudspeaker emerging from behind the meḥitza precisely at the height that the eight-foot high meḥitza stops, giving the disconcerting

impression of a suspended head from which this commanding voice manifested (see figures 3.6 and 3.7).



Figure 3.6. A loudspeaker projects the men's service into the women's section on Rosh Hodesh.



Figure 3.7. View of the loudspeaker from the center of the women's section.

Due to the *halachic* prohibition on using electricity on Shabbat and *chagim*, including sound recording and amplification technology such as microphones and loudspeakers, recordings and live amplification of *hazanim* leading *tefillot* are extremely rare, rendering this divorce between sound and source particularly unusual.³ More broadly, the gap between the *hazan's* voice and its source is an extension of the natural process of fracture between body/producer and sound/produced at the moment of vocal production. Enhancing this gap through technological

³ In other live performance contexts (concerts, national ceremonies), the *hazan's* likeness is almost always projected onto a screen, bringing his technologically mediated face and voice to the audience simultaneously and thus providing enough sonic and visual information for the attendee to feel as if she or he is experiencing the *hazan* without a technological intermediary.

means imbues it with a fetish-character, with unusual allure and power, mystery and uncanniness (Davies 2019; Feldman and Zeitlin 2019). While visibly substituted, the *hazan* remains the primary sonic and discursive “voice” at the Kotel (in both the literal and metaphorical sense), rendering this divorce between source and sound even more conspicuous.⁴ The loudspeaker itself becomes the primary visual focus from the women’s section, more so even than the towering Kotel before us, entrained as we are to focus our eyes towards the source of sound in general, and towards the prayer leader in this particular context.

Walking towards the Kotel, I leave the loudspeaker behind me as I reach the front one-third of the women’s section. This now-bodiless voice carries intimate and awesome evocations of a Divine voice from above. Not inappropriately, the space directly above us, Temple Mount (*Har HaBayit*), is where the Divine Presence (*sheḥinah*) was understood to dwell when the Temple stood, and whence God’s voice was understood to emanate to the Biblical Prophets from between the *keruvim* (golden winged figures) inside the Holy of Holies. Bodiless voices in the Jewish tradition are normally attributed to God or heavenly emissaries situated above the hearer in the heavens. Our gaze no longer follows our ears to the loudspeaker as the substitute source of the dominant voice, but instead is directed upwards to the top of the Kotel, past the caper bushes and pigeons nestled in the Wall’s cracks and crevices. Our necks strain as we crane our heads back to bring the bright blue sky into our vision above the thirty-nine layers of sandstone slabs.

⁴ One might compare this with early experiments in electronic music (particularly acousmatic music intended for “performance” on a speaker system) in the 1940s and 1950s. Composers capitalized upon the new opportunities presented by tape recording technology, manipulating vocal recordings and presenting them as sound without source. Karlheinz Stockhausen’s *Gesang der Jünglinge* is but one example of the way in which an uncanny intense focus on the voice can be produced partly by virtue of its disembodiment.

The mehitza, the loudspeaker, and fellow worshippers no longer register, as human activity leaves our field of vision.

For women, the maleness of this amplified voice at the Kotel—its register, its grain, its commanding role as shaliaḥ tzibbur—may ironically foster a greater degree of Divine intimacy than it does for men. Within the men’s section, the shaliaḥ tzibbur is just a man with a microphone standing among them, performing a quotidian role that any of the other men present might fill. His voice is similar in sound and function to theirs—after all, they too can lead, produce appropriate ornamentation, and sing in the same range as this ḥazan—and without divorcement of sound and source there is no uncanniness, terror, or awe. For women, emulating vocal sounds both inherent and gender-normalized to men through training and regular exposure is an impossibility. In this loaded context, the distance between one’s own vocal capacity and the nature of the disembodied voice reproduces traditional post-Prophetic-era Jewish understandings of the relationship between *bat kol*, the aurally experienced “still, small voice” of a transcendent masculine Jewish God, and the human who experiences this voice.⁵ Both in this ancient religious experience and on this Tuesday morning, the sourcelessness of the voice allows the listener to understand herself in the subject position relative to the voice-as-object, albeit one with a liminally-material status. The voice’s difference from the listener’s own—its vocal character and disembodiment—are ironically the means by which the listener can objectify its sound,

⁵ Hebrew is a gendered language, using masculine and feminine forms. God is gendered masculine throughout Jewish writings. The publication of the Kabbalistic text *The Zohar* in the thirteenth century gave rise to imaginings of God as beyond the simply masculine and produced the *sefirot* as a means of understanding aspects of God’s essence, offering a broader understanding of the Divine through the consideration of God’s feminine attributes and manifestations. Best known among these is the *Sheḥinah*, the Divine Feminine dwelling.

permitting herself an agentive role as listener-subject in this potentially agency-compromising context where her discursive and oral voice is, by comparison, nothing.⁶

Strategies, Discursive and Musical

Women for the Wall behave as they would in an orthodox synagogue: at the appropriate points in the service they variously reply amen, respond to antiphonally-structured prayers, say verses to themselves in an undertone, and join the ḥazan in song. During joyous prayers, small groups form and dance in circles far from the meḥitza, hair flying with the momentum of their movement, eyes closed as they sing aloud with strong, clear voices in the crisp January air beneath the still blue skies. But they are there to hear, not to be heard—except in the heavens above. Their presence is their protest, and their prayer is made public in the world below through the ḥazan’s amplified voice.

Their ḥazan is a remarkable one. Often, when a man is leading prayers, I and other women roll our eyes in collective annoyance when a key is chosen that is utterly inappropriate for an average woman’s vocal range. We quietly complain to one another, sometimes while we should be singing the prayers. This ḥazan at the Kotel, knowingly or not, has picked an appropriate key such that women’s vocal ranges are for the most part nicely facilitated. His ornamentation is well controlled, and combined with his range, tone, and ability to switch between maqamat and Western diatonicism, it suggests that he has had formal vocal training.

⁶ A comparison might be made here with the call to prayer in Islam, which is similarly provided by a disembodied male voice.

Like half of Israel's population, the ḥazan's nusah of choice is Mizraḥi. As discussed in part one of this dissertation, while liturgy is broadly standardized across the Jewish world, minor textual differences remain, and are split roughly along "ethnic" Jewish lines. These divisions are called *edot* when referring to people—usually translated in Jewish Studies as Jewish ethnicity—and *nusah* when referring to liturgy. While anyone with a basic reading knowledge of Hebrew can navigate the *textual* changes between *nusahim*, it is the *musical* differences that draw starker lines between them.

During the nearly two thousand years of Jewish exilic diaspora, Jews adopted the musical norms of their host cultures. Jews in Islamic lands—Mizraḥim—became experts in *maqam* systems. Ashkenazi Jews in Central and Western Europe adopted Western diatonic harmony. Each Jewish community's adopted vernacular music informed its *nusah*, leading to stark differences that serve musically to encode internal Jewish religious and ethnic community identities. Today, synagogues remain divided by *nusah* and, more broadly, musical style. Syrians continue to read the Torah using a different *maqam* each week. Germans retain choirs and organs for congregational hymns. An individual selects her or his synagogue on the basis of its, and one's own, *nusah* since each *nusah* demands a high degree of specified literacy in order to participate in sung prayers. This has come to serve as a powerful identity marker across the contemporary Jewish world, particularly as Jews of different *edot* are increasingly aware of one another's practices and histories.

In Israel, all *nusahim* are not perceived as equally valuable or, to paraphrase a number of my interlocutors, "authentically Jewish." In the early twentieth century, Latvian-Jewish ethnomusicologist Avraham Tzvi Idelsohn conducted a comparative analysis of different *nusahim* (Idelsohn 1992 [1929]). While he perceived Ashkenazi cantillation as musically

damaged through miscegenation with non-Jewish European music, Yemenite and to a lesser extent Mizraḥi communities⁷ were considered the benchmark of Jewish liturgy, supposedly having been immune to external influence and unchanged since before the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, their purity a mark of their lack of contact with Western “civilization.” Idelsohn’s nusah hierarchy is clearly a product of the racialized evolutionary paradigms of his time. Nevertheless, his self-conscious rejection of exilic and assimilated culture and the desire to forge a new, native Israeli culture is a prevailing dominant perspective in Israel today. The result is that Israelis of all edot perceive nusahim such as Yemenite and Edot Hamizraḥ as more legitimately Israeli and Jewish than nusah Ashkenaz, which sits at the very bottom of the prestige pile.⁸

When Women for the Wall choose a Mizraḥi ḥazan, and one with an Israeli accent, they strategically and self-consciously lay stake to a collective identity as native Israelis practicing an “authentic” version of Judaism. Martin Stokes notes that the idea of musical “authenticity,” while failing to describe any qualities of the music, musicians, or audience, has great discursive power as a way of expressing what is significant about the music in question, what “makes us different from other people” (Stokes 1994: 6-7). Women for the Wall’s claim to historical continuity in ritual practice is made primarily through the relatively passive ritual role that women take on at the Kotel, but this claim is strengthened by the musical evocation of a liturgical sound world that all present can decode as conveying a historically corroborated

⁷ Yemenite Jews are not usually considered as part of the Mizraḥi Jewish community despite originating in the Islamicate Arab Middle East due to their relative geographic isolation from the rest of Mizraḥi Jewry until the large-scale immigration of Yemenites and Mizraḥim alike to the State of Israel in 1948. At this point the differences in religious and cultural practice between Yemenites and Mizraḥim were evident enough to warrant the categorization of Yemenites as a group of their own.

⁸ The history of this prestige hierarchy is discussed in chapters one and two of this dissertation.

iteration of Jewishness that conjures soundscapes of Israel and orthodox or traditional Judaism. Positioned in such physical proximity to Women of the Wall, their sonic distance from the latter is rendered all the more evident. Women of the Wall are the sonic Other, defined in contrast to Women for the Wall's strategic sonic authenticity. Just as Idelsohn recognized a spectrum of liturgical sounds ranging from Yemenite and Mizraḥi as most authentic and desirable to Ashkenazi as most assimilated and in need of repair, so too this dynamic is reconstructed at the Kotel today.

Unideal Voices

Since Women for the Wall have been established themselves as the old guard through discourse and vocal production, Women of the Wall's Ashkenazi and diaspora qualities are amplified, creating the impression of a polarity of Jewishness between the two groups. Women for the Wall are explicit in their desire to sound different from Women of the Wall, and the former have the capacity to manipulate their vocal production through their collective liturgical literacy, allowing them potentially to change nusaḥ or vocal style to maximize the production of difference. The split within the Tijaniyya Sufi community in Senegal provides a useful comparison here; Dang reports that the groups' differing vocal practices are an intentional and desirable strategy to indicate differing morals, politics, and aesthetic practices, and the groups similarly compete to be the most audible in public spaces (Dang 2017). Unlike the Senegalese Sufis, however, in Jerusalem only one group displays a self-conscious awareness of the benefits of differentiated vocal production on group identity (re)production. In interviews, Women of the Wall's members and leaders consistently failed to acknowledge or recognize that their vocal production indicates

difference from Israeli norms or from Women for the Wall. Instead, the group's strategic intent is necessarily focused upon its broader political goals, and, on Rosh Hodesh, simply surviving the service with no aesthetic concerns.

Women of the Wall are a predominantly Ashkenazi group, many identifying with the Reform movement, and the vast majority either first-generation immigrants or temporary visitors to Israel. Their desire to be heard both within their group and by their livestream audience inspires them to aim for maximum volume in their prayers. American-accented voices crack as they strain their vocal cords in the upper range of their chest voice. They convey melodies but only as a secondary consideration to decibel level, thus sacrificing vocal sensitivity in favor of volume.

In his *Choralities*, Connor notes that “the choral voice has two opposing dimensions: that of power, and that of sensitivity. The more power I muster in my voice, the less sensitivity and precision I can register in it” (Connor 2015: 7). At the Kotel, Women of the Wall err on the side of power by virtue of necessity; if they did not do so, then praying as a single unit would be impossible. Women for the Wall, though, defy Connor's model. Their use of amplification of a single voice permits the most powerful voice also to be sensitive and precise, but also limits the extent to which we can consider Women for the Wall to be engaging in chorality within the women's section as Connor understands it: as agentive joint voicing that produces a sound that is “one-from-many.” (Ibid.: 1) Thus, we notice that both groups fall short of a paradigmatic and ideal production and experience of chorality by virtue of the circumstances that they co-constitute.

The group's leaders stand on chairs, using exaggerated vertical-plane body language to express visually their purported enthusiasm for this event and, more practically, to serve as a

conductor for those group members in the outer ring of their prayer circle who can hardly hear what the leaders are singing over the amplified *ḥazan*, hundreds of women praying alongside him, and various other sonic distractions. Their embodied and envoiced strategy is the result of this auditorily compromised context, and while even their own supporters criticize it as undignified, the strategy nonetheless achieves its goal of facilitating a unified service for Women of the Wall.

In the Ashkenazi tradition, for some portions of the service the *shaliḥah tzibbur* recites only a few words here and there, while most of the words are left for every individual to say or recite quietly to herself, a practice accurately referred to as “mumbling.” The interposed contributions of the *shaliḥah tzibbur* allow each member of the congregation to know how quickly she is expected to be moving through the liturgy such that the minyan will arrive at key points in the service together.⁹ Individual mumbling fulfills a halachic requirement not only to say, but also to *hear* oneself say, certain sections of *tefillah*. Congregants generally moderate their volume such that they themselves can hear each enunciated word (indeed, this is a halachic requirement), but others situated close to them experience a mostly monotonic drone punctuated by breaths for air. This permits each individual to maintain a focus on her own recitation while experiencing their *tefillah* as part of a larger whole. Women of the Wall, however, are unable to reproduce this normative internal group relationship over the simultaneous amplified service. Attendees adopt one of two strategies: some give up on even pretending to pray and stand in visible silence, while others give a declamatory reading that in any other prayer context would be

⁹ Different minyanim pray at vastly different speeds, so one’s ability to follow a *shaliḥah tzibbur* and infer pacing is essential to joining a minyan. A Shabbat morning service can last from 75 minutes to four hours or more, with services at both extremes incorporating the same liturgical content.

quite shocking and thoroughly inappropriate for abandoning community mindedness and refusal to acknowledge vocally the authority of the shaliaḥ tzibbur.

Women of the Wall’s collective vocal quality—their chorality—goes beyond marking them as diasporic Ashkenazi women. In any religious context, vocal quality functions as a means of entering religious experience, or a barrier thereto when the quality is deemed inappropriate. The voice is understood in major world religions as a “site of divine manifestation” (Eisenlohr 2018: 10), a means of performing and making real the Divine Presence in the world,¹⁰ and of animating the word of God (Cook 2019). This last point is understood quite literally in Jewish prayer, since reading Torah is traditionally considered to be repeating direct revelation from God to Moses on Mount Sinai. Cultural models of the idealized religious voice serve to determine the extent and nature of how a voice will act on congregants. The exemplar model in Northern European Christian traditions might be a pure, clear, bell-like young boy’s voice; in women’s Quranic recitation in Indonesia Anne Rasmussen reports that nasalized timbre is desirable, with a “pinched” sound in the upper vocal range (Rasmussen 2010: 141). Just as Judaism conditions its adherents to understand adult Jewish male bodies as ideal and therefore most visible—evidenced in Talmudic descriptions of women’s bodies as dirty, in women’s increased susceptibility to ritual impurity in the post-Temple era, and in limitations on women’s and children’s visibility in the religious public realm—so too adult Jewish male voices are ideal and most audible. Specifically, the idealized Jewish religious voice, even across edot with vast differences in normative style, sings with comfort and confidence in Hebrew and Aramaic such that textual meaning is conveyed through dynamic and timbral choice, performs vocal failure to convey an

¹⁰ In Judaism, this is the Sheḥinah. Often, Sheḥinah is the feminine component of God.

intimate emotional connection to the text,¹¹ deploys virtuosic ornamentation over a multi-octave range, and demonstrates mastery across the spectrum of timbre and vocal production, from lyrical legato to choppy grain.¹² These qualities are (perhaps obviously) associated with the voice of a ḥazan rather than an average synagogue-goer, much less a secular Jew. If the ḥazan's voice conjures the Divine Presence, Women of the Wall's vocal qualities, constructed at the Kotel in opposition to the ḥazan, struggle to do the same.

A Holy Racket

Whether they “mumble” heterophonically or sing together at maximum volume, Women of the Wall can never gain the sonic upper hand, pitted against Women for the Wall's ḥazan and thronging crowd. When both groups reach a congregational song simultaneously, fifty or so women are no match for around one thousand women and an amplified man. While it may be now be intuited that amplification is available only in the men's section, it bears restating this fact. Even during women's events at the Kotel, such as Ḥanukah candle lightings (canceled in favor of a single lighting on the men's side by the Rabbinute as of Ḥanukah 5780/2019) or visits by prominent Rebbetzins, women's voices are not amplified for the benefit of attendees in the women's section, much less for the whole Kotel plaza.

¹¹ See chapter one for further comments on vocal failure's desirability during seliḥot. Further commentary on vocal failure may be found in Certeau 1996; Porco 2014; Wilbourne 2015; Levin 2019.

¹² The Talmud and later halachic works including the Shulḥan Aruch requires the ḥazan to possess a good choice and meet certain characteristics which, depending upon the occasion in question, may include his age, marital status, and religiosity. The ḥazan is more than shaliaḥ tzibur alone, but rather embodies aspects of an ideal Jew vocally, personally, and religiously.

When only Women of the Wall are singing and Women for the Wall mumbling, third parties take it upon themselves to inflict particularly violent forms of sonic protest to ensure that Women of the Wall will struggle through every minute of their service. Lone-wolf women engage security personnel in heated, shouted arguments, physically pushing up against the edge of Women of the Wall's prayer circle. Back in the main plaza, hundreds of Haredi men jeer behind a police cordon, contributing a background buzz from our distance of fifty or so meters away that rises in volume whenever they had no loudspeaker—no man's voice—to respect.

I was surprised that the Haredi men were willing to disrupt Women for the Wall's silent *amidah* for the sake of causing a distraction to Women of the Wall. The Amidah, recited at each prayer service, is holiest and most important prayer in Judaism, and there are strict halachot prohibiting its interruption—even, says the Talmud, if faced by a snake during its recitation! One would expect Haredim to both to know and respect the restrictions around interrupting the amidah, given their commitment to religious observance. But here at the Kotel, they abandoned their faith's tenants and engaged in counter-halachic behavior. They might instead have chosen to join the Women for the Wall service by praying the amidah just as many in the men's section did, but instead they chose a tactic that reflects their peripheral status on Rosh Hodesh, and in their refusal to participate in a normative way ironically aligned their power and status with the normally-disenfranchised women's section. Tangential and disruptive, they seemed to me to be at odds with *both* groups of praying women, who by comparison appear as models—albeit competing models—of committed Jewish womanhood.

A likely reason for Haredi men's abstention became evident to me on Rosh Hodesh Kislev 5779 (November 2018) when I performed a subversive act by taking a chair to the

mehitza and standing on it so that I might watch the men's service.¹³ I have never seen another woman do this on Rosh Hodesh, although it is not uncommon during a small-scale celebration like a bar mitzvah. The men's service was being conducted by a *Hardal* yeshiva, their Rabbi serving as shaliaḥ tzibbur for a group of predominantly teenagers. *Hardal* is an acronym for *Ḥaredi dati leumi* and refers to the most religiously and politically fundamentalist group of Zionist Jews. Their extreme emphasis on settling the Land of Israel sets them at odds with *Ḥaredi* Jews who by and large reject Zionism on the basis that only the Messiah can establish Jewish statehood. In tefillah, a notable difference between the two ideologies is their conscious cultivation of specific accents that serve to reinforce the historical and political differences between the groups. While *Ḥaredim* favor Ashkenazi accents, a powerful mode of laying claim to a specific ethnic historical continuity, *Ḥardalim* use a modern Israeli accent that broadly seeks to erase inter-Jewish ethnic difference in favor of national unity.

¹³ Throughout this dissertation I offer both the Jewish and Gregorian year when referring to specific Jewish holidays in instances when to mix systems would be unclear or constitute an unusual way of referencing a holiday.



Figure 3.8. Women of the Wall under the passage leading to Temple Mount, surrounded by security personnel.



Figure 3.9. Male Haredi protestors wait to accost Women of the Wall as they exit the women's section (Dunand 2021).¹⁴

Above Women of the Wall's heads passes a suspended passage reaching from ground level to the top of the Kotel constructed from a long tube of wood—rather like a stretched garden shed. This is the entrance to Temple Mount from West Jerusalem, and groups of yeshiva boys have a tendency to chant boisterously as they make their ascent to mark Rosh Hodesh. Perhaps they are unaware of the scene unfolding below, but Women of the Wall's enforced spatial peripherality within the women's section, positioned directly under this tunnel (sometimes within an area demarcated by metal barriers) at the requirement of the police and Western Wall security, renders them more susceptible to this kind of disruption than anyone else at the Kotel.

¹⁴ I was unable to take adequate photos of this confrontation month after month, as I was pushed around within the crowd and had to attend to my own personal safety rather than record the happenings.

Unsurprisingly, Women of the Wall supporters lose their place within the service order, with individuals on the outer rings of their concentric circles physically directing an ear towards the center of the circle to try and hear which line she is supposed to be saying or sneaking a glance at someone else's prayer book for a page reference. Even without all of today's noisy disruption, some degree of organizational disarray is normal for a prayer service. Indeed, in the context of Catholicism García-Rivera and Scirghi repeatedly claim that messiness is essential for beautiful liturgy (García-Rivera and Scirghi 2007). They describe the appropriate amount of mess as a balance between liturgy that is off-limits to the masses (not messy enough, excessively performative) and liturgy that cannot flow because of the need for verbal explanations about the rituals that pre-empt and disrupt the construction of the beautiful (too messy to be comprehensible or suitable for following along, collective performance inhibited by musical or ritual failure).

Women of the Wall make the precise errors that García-Rivera and Scirghi associate with liturgy that is too messy and no longer beautiful. A common sentiment expressed by their less-ardent supporters was stated by Ariel. Ariel was born in the US and made aliyah as a teenager with her religious family, growing up in the Israeli orthodox school system, serving in the military, and completing her undergraduate education before forging a career in music. She became secular due to her discontent with orthodox attitudes towards women, and was attending Women of the Wall for the first time in a few years having recently reembraced religious practice via liberal Judaism. She commented,

The problem is I couldn't concentrate on the *tefillah* [prayers] because it was too noisy and too chaotic, and I'm not talking about the protestors. One woman was screaming instructions at us during the most *kadosh* [holy] moments because there were people in our group who don't know the basics. It didn't feel prayerful to me at all. It was a powerful protest but I can't call it prayer. I was embarrassed. It makes a mockery of progressive [liberal] Judaism and feminist Jews. (Ariel 2019)

If it were not for the stark contrast with the trained, monophonic, Israeli-encoded sounds of Women for the Wall's ḥazan, and the visual orderliness of identically-dressed women sitting and standing and bowing in unison, Women of the Wall's disorganization would have been unremarkable—and might have been avoided altogether without these sonic disturbances. By comparison, however, they sound and look amateurish: untrained, unrehearsed, in a state of disunity.¹⁵ And indeed, in relative terms, they are. It is this contrast in ontologies and epistemologies of Jewish womanhood and their audible repercussions that will be the focus of the next chapter.

¹⁵ I use amateurish as a descriptor but not as a value-judgement. It is a fact that Women of the Wall are in general less liturgically literate than Women for the Wall, especially since many regular attendees are not native Hebrew speakers, and it is also true that their messiness is a result of the sonic violence inflicted upon them which necessitates the prioritization of volume over beauty, and frequently disrupts their flow.

CHAPTER FOUR
JEWISH WOMANHOOD: EPISTEMOLOGIES, ONTOLOGIES, AND AXIOLOGIES
OF PRAYER

The Work of Prayer

To pray Jewishly is quite an undertaking. The breadth and depth of religious, sociological, and musical knowledge required are frankly terrifying to the new attendee. Speed and comfort with biblical Hebrew and Rabbinic Aramaic are necessary in order to follow services, of which there are three per day, their components varying each time. The longest is the morning service, *shaharit*, which lasts at least an hour, whereas *minḥa* and *aravit/maariv*, the afternoon and evening services respectively, are considerably shorter. Components are added or excluded on a daily basis. On Mondays and Thursdays the Torah is read; on festive days (which occur with startling frequency) *Hallel* (verses of praise) and Torah reading are added and *taḥanun* (supplications) excluded; on fast days *minḥa* more closely resembles *shacharit*; certain blessings in the *amidah* change with the seasons; if an attendee is marking a lifecycle event, all kinds of ad hoc liturgical celebrations, such as *piyyutim*, might be added, and so on.

Jewish liturgy spans a speech-song continuum.¹ In components that are not sung to a melody, some lines are mumbled by every individual to oneself, others chanted with Torah trope. Perhaps the bulk use a small number of flexible, repetitive formulas—either *nusah* (not to be confused with *nusah* as a broader differentiation between *edot* as described earlier) or *maqamat*,

¹ See Rings 2019 for more on speech-song continuums in music.

which vary depending on whether the service occurs on a weekday, Shabbat, holiday, and on the time of day.²

Beyond these aural elements, one must learn when to sit, stand, bow, place one's feet together, take small steps forward and backward, occasionally fully prostrate, and so on. There are points during tefillot when talking to fellow congregants is strictly halachically prohibited and socially taboo, whereas at other times it is de rigeur and taking a swig of hard liquor during such conversation may be actively encouraged. None of these embodied aspects are announced; participants who can follow a siddur may have time to read its limited instructions if their siddur includes them, but the most effective way to learn is by showing up, inevitably making mistakes, and eventually understanding ritual practice through imitation.³

Sung components are similarly best understood through participation. There is a wealth of melodies from which the leader can choose; each community maintains its own repertoire of favorites which may amount to, say, three or four melodies each for the piyyutim *Anim Zemirot*, *El Adon*, *Adon Olam*, or *Nishmat Kol Hai* in Mizrahi and Sephardi synagogues. Melodies may replace sections of *nusah* on occasion, such as during *Sim Shalom* in the repetition of the *amidah* on Shabbat. There is no effective way to learn or anticipate these melodies except orally during the service itself over the course of many Jewish yearly cycles, and no way to predict which melody the *shaliah tzibbur* will choose on a given day—this is left to their whim, but well-versed

² In Ashkenazi traditions, three modal formulas, sometimes referred to by their Yiddish moniker *steyger*, dominate the musical *nusah* system: *Ahava Rabah*, *Magen Avot*, and *Adonai Malach*. Each takes its name from a prominent usage thereof within the liturgy. In Mizrahi and Sephardi edot, local *maqam* systems are deployed to similar effect, with a different *maqam* used each week according to the affective tone of the weekly *parashah*. See, for example, Eliyahu 1999, Kligman 2009. A fuller discussion of *nusah* may be found in section one of this dissertation.

³ A comparable process of learning occurs in Catholicism (Garcia-Rivera and Scirghi 2007: 178) and Islam (Rasmussen 2010).

congregants can usually decipher which melody is being used in a matter of two or three notes based on the likely possibilities. Familiarity or lack thereof with a community's repertoire is a powerful marker of inclusion or exclusion that enhances the community's identity and strengthens its boundaries, demanding of the newcomer that she assess the extent to which her own denominational and geographic background and associated musical literacy are aligned with those of this host prayer community. Despite seeming to be a participatory form of musicking, Jewish liturgy is musically poorly suited to participation per Turino's definition, and might be better understood as group performance (Turino 2008).

The pure quantity of obligatory content means that services often proceed at a dazzling pace with individual words barely audible, in order that participants can get to work punctually on a weekday morning or arrive at a reasonable hour as guests to a large holiday lunch.⁴ The regularity of services creates a high degree of liturgical literacy, which in turn permits speed, creating a feedback loop whereby literacy is necessary to participate. But not all Jews are expected or expect to participate in the same way, leading to discrepancies in liturgical literacy on the basis of gender, nationality, and denominational affiliation. Literacy is readily available only to the extent that is considered necessary—unsurprising, given the amount of time and effort (both intellectual and spiritual) required for its acquisition.

⁴ During my time in Jerusalem, those who regularly attended services known to run late were sometimes excluded from meal invitations for fear that the other guests would not tolerate waiting for hours to start their midday meal (especially since some will not eat until after praying). When these latecomers did receive invitations, it was common for them themselves to request that the meal start without them in anticipation of their tardy arrival.

Women, Men, and Halachic Prayer Requirements

Halachah requires prayer of all adult Jews every day, but the specific demands made upon men, women, and the community differ from one another in ways that both reflect and govern gender roles more broadly in halachically-oriented Jewish communities. Men are required by halachah to pray thrice daily at prescribed times, a practice rendered more publicly audible in Muslim worship with the five times daily *adhan*.⁵ A community is considered honorable and worthy if it hosts a minyan for collective prayer during these three tefillot, and while there is no halachic requirement to create or join a minyan, many communities and individual have taken upon themselves an as-binding obligation to do so.

Women have no halachic obligation to attend community prayer with a minyan, although most *poskim* (halachic commentators) agree that there is some level of daily personal prayer obligation for women. Halachah differentiates frequently between the categories of *patur* (exempt) and *assur* (forbidden); women are exempt but not forbidden from a number of *mitzvot* (commandments) including scheduled and communal prayer.

There are various hypotheses both for the initial impetus for this exemption, and for its continuation into contemporary Jewish life. During the Mishnaic and Talmudic eras (200 BCE – 600 CE) when this halachah was developed and codified, Jewish women controlled the domestic domain: cooking, cleaning, and spending a considerable amount of their reproductive years pregnant, breastfeeding, and child-rearing. They were often also gainfully employed outside the home; recorded in texts of this time are accounts of women as weavers, scribes, hairdressers,

⁵ The scheduling of Muslim prayers is speculated in non-academic circles to originate from Yom Kippur, the one day in the Jewish year when prayer is required five times.

farmers, midwives, doctors, cooks, funeral lamenters, and more besides (Ost 2010). Exempting women from attending thrice-daily minyan seems eminently reasonable under such circumstances, where the constraints of a domestic schedule are incompatible with meeting community minyan times.

Today, women are the primary wage-earners in many traditional/orthodox and most Haredi homes, and the same argumentation can reasonably be applied given the similarity of circumstances. In contexts where domestic and/or career demands on women are lesser, apologetic arguments abound: women are more naturally attuned to God due to their inherent spirituality, women do not require reminding at regular intervals to keep God at the front of their minds, women are naturally more attuned to the passage of time by virtue of their biology and do not require mandated prayer times to keep them on track. I use the term apologetic here not as an incendiary, but rather merely to introduce some of the ways in which highly educated religious women choose to maintain a social status for themselves that might, without a “new” rationale, be sufficiently objectionable and out of step with their experience in other realms of life as to generate widespread religious crisis or reform that would challenge the essence of Haredi and right-wing orthodox Judaisms. It bears stating that apologetic arguments are often pushed by men against the will of women, who in some instances either wish to uproot such halachic arguments, seeing them as a form of subjugation, or prefer to avoid apologetics altogether and live with their religious practice in tension with the rest of their life.

Gender Naturalization and Liturgical Literacy

Opportunities to learn to pray, let alone to lead prayer, remain limited for Jewish women in Israel and for orthodox Jewish women globally. In Israel, the orthodox near-monopoly on religious life is perhaps the biggest determinant of women's abilities. The education system is divided into Haredi, religious, and secular schools, with the two former options offering single sex⁶ iterations of orthodoxy and the latter an entirely secular (but still Jewish) and mixed gender alternative.⁷ There is no middle path between a fairly right-wing version of orthodoxy and total secularism. Thus, the parents of the 48% of Jewish Israeli children who send their offspring to religious schools⁸ are choosing for their girls to be naturalized into highly specific and gendered roles, including in the daily prayers that are invariably a focal part of the curriculum. The state funds the naturalization of children into dimorphic gender roles in public schools, with the *meḥitza* visually reinforcing a bipartite division of expectations from an early age.⁹ This is but one means

⁶ I describe religious schools as single sex rather than single gender due to the lack of tolerance of trans people in the Israeli religious community, particularly among children, who are likely to be pathologized if they display a gender identity that differs from their sex assigned at birth. As such, children who wish to transition are denied such opportunities and remain in schools that match their sex assigned as birth rather than their gender identity.

⁷ Religious schools are called *mamlachti dati* and secular schools *mamlachti*. These schools are most often fully state-funded but may be private; the divide between state and private schooling is not particularly significant in Israel as compared to, say, the UK, because of the relatively low and subsidized cost of private education. In this instance, *mamlachti* indicates Jewish (Zionist) public schooling, which differentiates it from the Arab school system and the Haredi non-Zionist system, tellingly termed *hinuch atzmai*—independent education.

⁸ In 2013, 39 percent of Israelis attended *mamlachti* schools, 14 percent *mamlachti dati*, 22 percent Haredi, and 25 percent Arab (Azulay et al. 2013).

⁹ Religious schools are gender segregated. In girls' schools, male teachers form a minyan while the student body can only participate as unnecessary additional congregants. Alternatively, girls pray individually in classrooms during designated obligatory prayer times but must shorten the service as if they are praying entirely alone since they are not understood to have the ontological capacity to form a minyan or serve as *shaliaḥot tzibbur*. This designation has no bearing on their

of identity naturalization encouraged in the education system among other state-run or state-funded public spaces, as explored in parts one (in the case of ethnic identity) and three (national and political identity) of this dissertation.

In the diaspora, there exist substantial networks of private Jewish day schools that are affiliated to liberal Jewish denominations, providing a religious education alternative to those who can afford it. Plenty of Jewish children attend state schools of varying degrees of secularity in their country of residence. There exist too orthodox schools outside of Israel which function much as Israeli *mamlachti dati* schools do with regard to gender and prayer; in the US these are a growing minority of Jewish schools, elsewhere they are the majority.

A majority—perhaps even plurality—of Jewish girls today thus attend schools that require daily attendance at orthodox prayer services, training them to become experts in relatively passive yet remarkably complex ritual roles by developing a form of gendered embodied knowledge that is minimally vocal. The girls cannot form a minyan without male staff members, and if a minyan is formed for their benefit, they cannot lead any part of the service. Most often, though, they pray as individuals in their classrooms before the day's formal learning begins, building upon skills that they gained in mandatory classes on the topics of tefillah and Hebrew from their earliest school days. They will often unintentionally memorize at a young age entire books of prayers in foreign languages¹⁰ along with their choreography, origin, meaning, and so forth. Attending minyanim, whether at school or with their family, reinforces such skills and enhances them by encouraging expert participation in a way that, even while limited to the

actual capabilities—to the contrary, religious schools take pride in instilling liturgical literacy—but is rather a comment on their social status as stated in the most ancient halachic writings.

¹⁰ This is true even for Israelis, for whom the Hebrew of the siddur is quite different to that of everyday modern life. A number of secular Israelis remarked to me how little they can understand of the Tanach and siddur, in particular their syntax and grammar.

women's section, permits a greater degree of verbalization and action than individual prayer without a minyan.

While one might expect Haredi girls to attend synagogue more often than those in orthodox families, and right-wing orthodox more often than liberal orthodox, in fact the reverse is true. In synagogues where women have more avenues of participation often to them, girls are more likely to attend, especially once they reach an age where they are no longer welcome to sit with their father in the men's section (as is common for those under the age of around seven) and instead are sent upstairs, to the back of the room, or behind the meḥitzah, with the rest of the women. Haredi women's sections are the most separated from the action, with views entirely obscured between the two genders. Girls are not welcome at any age in the men's section, and extraneous noise is unacceptable. No surprise then that Haredi girls stay at home with their mothers, and synagogue is usually an entirely male affair.

In recent years, some liberal orthodox congregations, usually described as partnership minyanim, have begun to allow women to perform non-essential leadership roles such as leading Kabbalat Shabbat (a service at the start of Shabbat created by sixteenth-century Kabbalists that is not halachically required) and *pesukei dezimra* (psalms and verses before *shacharit* that are similarly optional). The most liberal communities also allow women to read Torah (the prohibition on women is a matter of *kavod hatzibbur* or community honor which a community can opt to waive), serve as *gabbait* (organizer of the Torah service), and lead Hallel (said/sung on holidays; women are obliged in Hallel and therefore can discharge men's obligation as is the case with any mitzvah that is non-gendered). However, these congregations are the exception, not the norm, and indeed have generated a good deal of debate and division within orthodoxy. Partnership minyanim are found exclusively in cities with substantial Jewish communities

(Jerusalem, New York, London, Melbourne), and number in total perhaps twenty across the globe.

Denominational Differences in Obligation and Literacy

Evidently, in orthodoxy women are entrained in gender performance from a young age through the ways in which they are granted liturgical literacy and afforded opportunities to practice and perform their embodied knowledge. In liberal Judaism, one would surely expect quite a different situation, given that its associated denominations—the Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist movements—operate on the basis of gender egalitarianism. One would reasonably expect such statutes, made explicit in the edicts of these movements, to translate into a common liturgical literacy that facilitates equal access to leadership roles.

But two major obstacles prevent such a reality. Firstly, older congregants of the Conservative movement—of which there are a disproportionate number—grew up in an era in which women had not yet been granted full equality in public prayer, nor the opportunity to become rabbis or cantors. Their Jewish education was less comprehensive in terms of skills like Torah reading and prayer leading, and in order to participate later in life they would have to play catch up in order to obtain the aforementioned skills. For many this was simply impractical alongside the demands of adult life (these skills are normally taught leading up to bar/bat mitzvah age during childhood). Thus a swathe of older women take on a more passive, spectatorial role within prayer, although they may be actively involved in other community activities at their synagogues.

Secondly, there is a low level of literacy across liberal Jewish denominations in general. This phenomenon is the subject of much internal critique within the movements, and its causes are debated, but it ultimately hinges upon the lack of obligation within liberal Judaism, in particular the lack of obligation to pray. The concept of religious obligation has been variously transformed or rejected for both theological and practical reasons and replaced with a notion of Judaism as a cultural heritage or pick-and-choose religion.

The Reform movement rejected halachah as binding from its inception, claiming a theological ground that made obligation and consequences of Divine punishment or reward redundant. Today, its rejection of halachah is more practical than theological, owing to the change in the way in which US-American Jews affiliate with denominations, which is now predominantly on the basis of the extent of a family or individual's observance. Reform Jews are the least observant of the three major denominations (excluding Reconstructionist Judaism, which is a smaller and younger denomination), and a top-down effort to change this would likely lose the Reform Movement most of its affiliates. The Conservative Movement expects its members to be halachically observant on paper, but in reality it is but a handful of its most faithful members who observe its halachic positions; even those at its rabbinical schools often stray from what is formally expected of them when out of the public eye. Neither movement expects in reality that its members pray daily. Indeed, weekly attendance at Shabbat services is reserved for the more observant, and many attend just on the High Holidays, perhaps twice a year.

The broad concrete consequences thereof include a lack of weekday minyanim and relative paucity of Jewish religious education. Every orthodox man is expected to be able to serve as shaliaḥ tzibbur and read Torah per his community's needs, and orthodox women are

expected to have the skills to participate as congregants to the extent that mainstream orthodoxy permits. One would not, however, presume such universal proficiencies of liberal Jews. They must go out of their way to obtain this literacy and find congregations where they can practice newfound skills. Serving in liturgical leadership is generally reserved for “professional Jews” such as rabbis and cantors, or for formerly orthodox men and, less often, for formerly orthodox women.¹¹ For Women of the Wall attendees, who are almost without exception liberal Jews with diasporic roots, following a noisy, disrupted service led by Israeli women is a challenge that sometimes exceeds their individual competencies.

Adjusting Expectations

This tension in liturgical literacy between Israel and the diaspora, between orthodox and liberal Jews, is one that I experienced myself not only over the course of following Women of the Wall and Women for the Wall at the Kotel over five years of ethnography, but also in my own personal search for a synagogue.

My secular and diasporic upbringing reinforced the challenge of obtaining liturgical literacy when I started to attend synagogue in Chicago. In Chicago, my entry into a Conservative

¹¹ Anecdotally, it is more common for women to leave orthodoxy and remain engaged in liberal Judaism than it is for men to do the same, for the obvious reason that women have something to gain by shifting allegiance while men lack such an incentive. Orthodox women do now have limited opportunities to obtain professional leadership skills, especially in Israel, the USA, Canada, and the UK, where there has been a push to maximize halachic women’s involvement. One area in which orthodox women often have expertise is chanting Megillat Esther on Purim, a task that the Mishnah explicitly permits women to undertake in order that their community fulfil the obligation of hearing the Megillah twice during this holiday. This, and other, limited but extant opportunities for orthodox women can provide the capacity and incentive for women to leave orthodoxy and pursue more extensive leadership in liberal Jewish contexts.

synagogue was softened with page-number announcements, siddurim with transliterations and translations, and explanations of rituals in situ. Weekly attendance for a couple of months on top of a basic reading knowledge of Hebrew was enough to feel comfortable within the expectations of the service structure and earn a place as one of the more confident members in this large, well-known synagogue. The barriers to entry and comfort were low but extant, and I was pleased that I had earned my status as a competent regular.

Coming from this background, I was utterly at a loss when I first attended an egalitarian minyan in Jerusalem. The service's details were barely recognizable to me and the pace was beyond my capacity, the room full of confident Hebrew speakers. While I had anticipated the need to adjust to Israeli minyanim just as to the rest of Israeli everyday life, the difference in literacy was beyond my expectations even with this crowd comprised predominantly of *olim* or second-generation "Anglos".¹² The Torah reading was completed by one woman at such a speed that I could barely distinguish individual words while trying to follow along in my *Humash* (volume containing the first five books of the Torah). The whole tefillah was run with efficiency and finished in half the time that my Chicago minyan required. I had expected this egalitarian group to run tefillot in a similar manner to my Chicago synagogue, but two key differences between Israeli and US-American liberal Jews indicated the reason for their disparities: first, many Israeli liberal Jews were raised orthodox and defected to liberalism later in life, and second, Israeli Jews conduct everyday life in Hebrew. Both gave the Israeli minyan members a

¹² Anglo is a term used widely in Israel which encompasses immigrants and their descendants from white English-speaking countries (most often the US and UK, but also Canada, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and Ireland). It presumes a certain level of wealth, a high level of integration into Israeli society facilitated by acceptable Hebrew competency alongside strong English-speaking social communities, and often a strong and relatively rigid religious affiliation to a particular Jewish denomination, including liberal denominations.

significant head start on liturgical comprehension to which Chicagoans could hardly begin to aspire. The Chicago minyan's relaxed pace had made clear how very welcome newcomers were and gave ample time to regulars to complete their personal prayers without rushing. I missed this warmth in Jerusalem, where tefillah was more businesslike, an obligation to discharge before the real business of kiddush and chat could begin.

After eighteen months in Israel I had adjusted to this new pace such that my husband and I switched allegiance to two more Israeli, more efficient minyanim. We had become frustrated with some of the now-apparent Americanness of our initial choice. Extended singing during tefillah, American-accented Torah reading, excessive emphasis on changes in personnel during the Torah service rather than on the reading itself, and a central authority figure(s) such as a rabbi or cantor were some aspects that now irritated me, whereas I had once considered them the highlights of my Shabbat synagogue experience. Instead I sought out minyanim that were efficient, offered rotating shlihei tzibbur, and were intended for Hebrew speakers. (Today, I comfortably move between various egalitarian, partnership, and orthodox minyanim including the aforementioned egalitarian synagogue, with my primary consideration being the social affordances of each minyan, and tefillah style only a secondary issue. This, I suspect, is the mark of a true Israeli!)

When I take a leadership role in Israeli minyanim, usually as a *baalat korei* (Torah reader), I am an averagely skilled participant at best, and receive praise primarily due to the obviousness of my extra need for preparation indicated by my non-native accent, and perhaps also for my background as a trained singer, or my unusual gender-nusah combination as a

woman reading using Aleppo trope;¹³ in any case, I am not praised for my mastery on the same basis as an Israeli would be, and am subject to different standards and considerations when minyan attendees assess my contribution.

Trips back to Chicago have become challenging as a now-sufficient Israeli. Our usual ninety-minute Shabbat service is dragged out over four hours, and explanations that had previously felt welcoming and inclusive now seeming more like an insult to any regularly practicing Jew's intelligence. We have considered attending an orthodox synagogue in Chicago despite our personal distastes for enforced gender-based limitations within ritual practice, purely out of a desire to be part of a more literate minyan. To emphasize the extent of difference in skill level between diaspora and Israel, my self-declared Israeli mediocrity, bolstered by my (rabbi, Israeli) husband's skills, earned us a job-share in an important diaspora Jewish outpost as a rabbinic family, where I teach adult and childhood education classes in Jewish studies and Hebrew, advise on halachic practice, read Torah, and lead services. While in a small, unknown Israeli minyan I am a below average *datiah* Jew, in some of the most prominent diaspora communities I am an expert.

Practicing Prayer

Attending Women of the Wall events is not only a prayer and protest opportunity for their liberal and overwhelmingly diasporic supporters, but also an educational outing, a chance to put into

¹³ Sephardim, including Syrians, overwhelmingly maintain traditional gender roles in the synagogue, meaning that women do not learn to read Torah. A byproduct of this is that almost all women Torah readers use nusah Ashkenaz. I, however, learnt to read Torah from my (Syrian) husband, meaning that I am an unusual exception to this gender-nusah norm.

action skills that few orthodox spaces tolerate or offer to women. This is particularly pertinent in orthodox-dominated Israel, and Jerusalem even moreso with its high numbers of Haredim and its status as the geographic and spiritual focal point of Judaism. For some women it is one of their first public performances of religiosity. Many are unaccustomed to following a service entirely in Hebrew because they live in the diaspora or socialize primarily in English-speaking communities—religious or otherwise—in Israel.

While one might expect that their experience thus accords with mine when I first moved from Chicago to Jerusalem, in fact the overall atmosphere of the group in terms of how ritual is performed and explained is much more akin to a diaspora liberal service than an Israeli one, particularly in terms of Hebrew literacy, the celebration of individuals, and the need for orienting announcements. There is, however, a degree of disarray that is usually countered by slower, guided services found in diaspora synagogues. Noisy, violent, circumstances at the Kotel and a small group of Israeli leadership mean a fast-paced service is the order of the day, despite this being an inappropriate choice based on the competency of most participants. Whether a result of the circumstances at hand or a lackadaisical attitude towards halachic intricacies of prayer, few are concerned with details such as having a seat available for portions that should really be said while seated or making sure to say or hear every word of the service, leading to an ad hoc atmosphere. Compared to orthodox Israeli women, with their years of daily prayer training and tight adherence to halachic prayer requirements, it is no wonder that Women of the Wall look and sound heterophonous.

Prestige in Public and Private

Liturgical literacy and leadership are key modes of gender entrainment in Judaism. They are powerful tools that establish social boundaries and hierarchy between traditional and liberal Jews, between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim, and between genders. In traditional Judaism, the corollary between gender and liturgical leadership determines one's social activity. On Shabbat, men go to synagogue, leading and performing religious rituals, while women stay home with the children and host meals.¹⁴ During the week, men learn Torah and attend minyan thrice daily; women are responsible for the lion's share of housework and childcare.¹⁵

This model expresses a binary gender distinction with associated expectations for labor and ritual practice. It also disrupts how we have been trained to think about bipartite gender models in traditional societies. Recalling Sherry Ortner's "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?", one notes the supposed cross-cultural norm that women are rendered subordinate to men through their association with low-prestige, nature-associated labor, whereas men's labor is considered a form of cultural production and high prestige (Ortner 1974). Traditional Judaism is poorly-aligned with Ortner's model. Women's tasks are often high prestige with home and family the center of traditional Jewish life, and the financial stability that a woman's place in the workforce provides essential—and recognized as such by men—for her usually-large family.¹⁶

¹⁴ I have been hosted by traditional families for Shabbat and told not to go to synagogue with the men because the lights are not turned on in the women's section on Shabbat, since women are not expected to attend.

¹⁵ Note the similarity between today's traditional gendered roles and halachic responsibilities described earlier in this chapter.

¹⁶ According to the *Statistical Report on Ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) Society in Israel 2017* (Cahaner et al.), the average Israeli Haredi couple have seven children; only half of Haredi men are employed and often in low-wage work or paid part-time Torah study (*Kollel*) versus three-

The domestic sphere *is* run by women in traditional Jewish contexts, but it is the most important social space for men, too, who are secondary social actors in this space. It is worth noting that this model is not unique to orthodox Jews, and that it may in fact be Western Europe and North America that are the global outliers in presuming public activity as the way in which social value is determined.

Traditional Jewish women among my interlocutors object to the way in which liberal Jewish women are attempting to disrupt a finely-balanced gender interplay on the basis of their perception that traditional women are brainwashed into accepting their oppression, and are thus missing out on the most important parts of ritual life; specifically, rituals performed only by men. Leah Aharoni, the leader of Women for the Wall, explained it to me as follows:

In Christianity and in Islam, religion happens in church or in a mosque. In Judaism, religion happens at home. The main religious institution in Judaism is the *home*, not the synagogue. What are the main religious rites in Judaism? It's Shabbat, it's *kashrut* [dietary laws], it's family purity, it's Jewish education—these are the things that make a religiously observant home. . .they're not in the synagogue. It's *great* that there is a synagogue, it's great that people go to pray, but that's sort of like step two. It's not step one. And I think we've been really affected by foreign culture in thinking that religion happens in the synagogue. For Reform and Conservative women, for whom there's little religion in the home because they *don't* observe Shabbat, or they *don't* necessarily observe *kashrut*, and they *don't* observe *taharat mishpahah* [family purity], the only place to express religion is the synagogue. And if the synagogue doesn't give them *access*, they feel like they don't have any way of religious outlet. But if we return religion to where it's supposed to be, which is at home. . .women really have the reins of Jewish religious life. (Aharoni 2018)

Leah understands Jewish women and their control of the domestic sphere to be the defining forces of Jewish culture. Women who push for a more substantial role in public prayer, such as serving as *shaliḥat tziḇbur* or chanting the Torah, are compensating for their lack of desire or inability to create a spiritually fulfilling home environment. Instead, they mimic men and men's

quarters of Haredi women who are usually the primary breadwinners and are well-integrated into the Israeli workforce.

purported second-best place in Jewish life as ritual practitioners, relinquishing their home's Jewishness and their own femininity in the process, and eroding the holistic Jewishness of the family and community in favor of a fragmented, performative Judaism:

[The] message that Women of the Wall try to bring is a message of women's equality and feminism and women's liberation. As a woman who is deeply involved in women's empowerment, I think that this message that you have to do what *men* do to be equal and worthy is just about the most disrespectful. . .disempowering message you can send to women, because it tells me that. . .the only way for women to be of value is to do what men do. (Ibid.)

Leah traces this liberal Jewish need for women's public-ritual performativity to Western feminism and its call for gender equality, which she understands to be a foreign, Christian-derived import that has no place in Judaism—a common trope in orthodox circles. Traditional Judaism is not the only religious culture that fosters claims that feminism is incompatible with pious femininity. Elaine Peña records such an attitude in Mexican and diasporic cults of the Virgin Mary (2011); Mahmood notes a similar stance among Muslim women in Egypt (2004).

Feminism? Womanism?

Talal Asad claims that when values such as individual autonomy, equality, liberty, and rationalism are presented as a form of morality, we are witnessing the translation of Christian ethics into a secular political language. Secular beliefs then function as an identity system dressed up as values and morality, enacted in much the same way as a set of religious beliefs: through a “cultivated practice of the self” displayed in ritual performance (Asad 2018).

Feminism, I suggest, is a fine example of this secular ethical system that Asad describes, but as he rightly notes, the teleological assumption of Judaism being superseded by Christianity, and

Christianity by secularism, creates an unassailable rift between traditional Jewish values and secular values. Per Asad, feminism, as a product of secularism, is ideologically incompatible with Judaism because it is an example of how historical political processes have necessarily distorted Christian interpretations of Jewish doctrine beyond anything recognizable within Jewish Scripture or practice. Asad notes that, indeed, in order to successfully translate Jewish ethics into Christian ethics, or Christian into secular, adherents to an older ideology such as Leah will likely no longer recognize the values in their new formulation. Leah explicitly rejects the possibility that her push to return to a woman-led, high-prestige domestic sphere is feminist, but we might understand her valuation of women's labor as a riff on womanism, the US-American Black women's movement that similarly rejected the racial, cultural, and historical legacy of Western feminism and identifies value in culturally contingent femininity and women's "natural" labor (Phillips 2006).

Womanism may be a productive way of understanding the attribution of importance to women's roles in traditional and religious societies beyond Israeli and Jewish contexts, although womanism itself carries fraught, politically and geographically specific, and deeply signified histories of its own. This is to say that when feminism is roundly rejected by a group of women, a change in terminology may be useful in expressing pro-woman attitudes within the group or identified therein by the broader community. Asad's theory, if its application is entirely appropriate to feminism, suggests that there cannot be non-secular feminisms; this may not necessarily be the case whether due to my own ill-advised assumption that feminism fits his model, or due to a shortcoming in his model. Religious movements that post-date the rise of feminism are the most obvious outliers; one example might be Reconstructionist Judaism which has, among other gender related practices, developed a wealth of feminine-language and gender-

neutral God terminology and names that are in everyday use and feature heavily in Reconstructionist siddurim.

Empathy and Emic Perspectives

Leah's claim that reading Torah is not a high prestige ritual, and that the private sphere is more inherently valuable than the public, is not a perspective that I was able to empathize with when I first entered the field. In order to understand her assertion that men and their ritual musicking are secondary to her domestic role, I needed to engage with the epistemological structures that inform every aspect of her life: halachah.

Six months into my fieldwork I enrolled at a co-educational *yeshiva* (seminary for Jewish Talmudic study) in Jerusalem, the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies, in order to begin studying halachic texts in depth. I spent my summer of 2017 at the institution, beginning with communal prayers in the Beit Midrash (yeshiva's study hall) at 7:00 a.m. The first time I read from the Torah was during one of these mornings. Classes and *hevruta* (a traditional method of dialogic study in pairs) took up the bulk of the day. Around one hundred of us sat in a low-ceilinged room, two to a table, with dictionaries stacked in precarious piles next to egregious numbers of coffee cups as we hunched over these ancient texts. Every morning was dedicated to studying the Talmud Bavli, a 1400-year-old text written in its own peculiar forms of Hebrew and Aramaic. I struggled with the language and the seemingly illogical free-associative thought processes, listening in as great rabbis who lived in different eras from one another were set up by the

anonymous editor(s)¹⁷ to debate the minutiae of seemingly irrelevant or fanciful topics, like whether a husband who fails to annul his wife's flippant vows is required to divorce her, whether Hanukah candles should be lit in increasing or decreasing order from one day to the next, and the daily workings of the Temple which, at the time that the Talmud was compiled, had already been defunct for some five hundred years since its destruction. More than the topics and even the language, the foreign and remarkably complex modes of logic and legal reasoning that dominate the Talmud offered an unmatched intellectual challenge both for its novel epistemology and in its own right.

Afternoons offered philosophy and *Tanach* (Hebrew Bible). My *hevruta* Talia and I attempted to decode the unusual Hebrew vocabulary and syntax found in the song Moses sings in parashat Haazinu (Deuteronomy 32) just before he dies, and to derive theological insights for contemporary life. We reviewed the contradictory approaches of Medieval thinkers regarding the afterlife and Messiah, spurring some passionate arguments in the Beit Midrash as *hevrutot* wrestled with whether Rambam or Ramban made more sense regarding their timeline from creation to the end of days. The Beit Midrash buzzed with the unconventional scene of mismatched *hevrutot*—such as a twenty-something queer tattooed female college student from Brazil with a retired American orthodox *oleh* (immigrant) with *tzitzit* (ritual fringes) and a black kippah—zealously engaging in these biblical and rabbinic debates as if they were our own, despite our topics of study rarely overlapping with our daily lives. Respite came in the form of half-day field trips (*tiyulim*) armed with a siddur and pocket-sized Tanach so that we could read verses about the sites we visited, and pray together in the great outdoors.

¹⁷ There is a disagreement between the religious and academic worlds as to whether the Talmud has a single editor or multiple.

A little after 5:00 p.m. each day, I stepped out of Pardes into the aggressive heat of the Talpiot industrial zone, squinting as my eyes attempted to adjust from yellowing books to the blazing midsummer Middle Eastern sun. As each day passed, the transition back to the everyday world became a little easier, not because yeshiva became less thrilling but because I learned to take the world of the Beit Midrash out into 2017 Jerusalem with me. I learned to speak its language—both literally and rhetorically—and gradually Jerusalem started to look and sound different. I heard idioms from the Torah escape the mouths of women on the 34 bus that took me home from Talpiot and read over the shoulder of a Haredi man learning Mishnah on the tram to the open-air market, or shuk. I started to assess my surroundings according to Talmudic logic, looking for patterns and correspondence rather than logic—a strategy that served to lessen my frustration with certain aspects of Israeli society that do indeed seem to defy all logic. I returned to Pardes part-time the following academic year to pursue studies in Talmud and halachah, and the year after in the advanced Kollel halachah program, now captivated by this alternate universe and the possibility of seeing the world around me in a new light. (It also offered a distraction from writing this dissertation at a pertinent time.)

My own transition from projecting and internalizing only an English-speaking, secular, capitalist world to developing the capacity to also engage in a Hebrew-speaking world of Torah and mitzvot—even while living in the same Jerusalem apartment—is what allowed me to conduct the fieldwork in this chapter. Developing this second worldview, a kind of “going native” (Narayan 1993) within a religion and nation that already I called my own, allowed me to code-switch such that I could talk with Leah, understanding, empathizing with, and agreeing with her perspective even while my initial self, the one tasked with writing a PhD, could code-switch back into control and feel antagonized by her comments.

Translating Jewish Languages, Real and Metaphoric

I had learned to speak Leah's language, both figuratively in the way that her modes of narration, argumentation, and reasoning derive from biblical and rabbinic styles, and literally in her coding of her religious identity within her language choices such that any English speaker without this particular shared background would struggle to understand us—so much so that this dialect has been termed “yeshivish” within the English-speaking Jewish world. Yeshivish involves deploying phrases from religious texts as idioms, using Yiddish and Aramaic words, performing halachic expertise, and on a broader scale, engaging in a vocal and linguistic act of piety through choice of topics and mode of engagement. This was the way in which Leah and I engaged, intimating to one another our shared competencies and worldviews even as our choice of language itself deviated from national-social expectations.

Even as we used Hebrew words and phrases in most sentences we uttered, Hebrew is a third language for both of us. Our comfortable deployment of religious terminology is not necessarily matched by an equally comfortable grasp of the Hebrew language as a whole. Hebrew competency and engagement is non-negotiable in Israel (Shohamy and Kanza 2009), and precisely because of this, in a country where every Jewish citizen carries a living memory of immigration (if they are not a first-generation immigrant, their parents or grandparents almost certainly are), differences in national origin are rendered linguistically evident in ways beyond language of choice. Accents persist—perhaps surprisingly—even among second-generation immigrants. Second- and third-generation Arab Jews, while unlikely to speak Arabic, often retain or actively cultivate strains of a familial Arabic accent such as an *ayin* that differs from

their *aleph*; some Russians similarly retain traces of accent in the second generation (see for example Spolsky and Shohamy 1999; Massad 1996; Ben-Rafael 2007).

In the case of Arabic, this is particularly encouraged and developed within synagogue settings. Second- and third-generation Mizrahim and Sephardim may speak Hebrew with an Israeli accent in everyday life as a natural mode of national assimilation. In the synagogue, however, skills such as *ḥazanut* and Torah reading are developed in cultural isolation, not as part of a national project. *Nusah* and accent are inextricably linked; education is familial and inter-generational—thus as a new, native Israeli generation learn to read Torah, they learn also to pronounce words in the style of their inherited tradition. Performing correctly in synagogue is not something broken down to its constituent components, rather it is the entire performance of ethnicity that determines whether one is a good Spanish-Portuguese *ḥazan*, or a good Syrian *baal koreh*. Humor also plays a part in Israelis' abilities and desires to cultivate diasporic accents. Comically imitating grandparents and parents to jibe at their old country ways, or rabbis of that generation, is a popular sport within the *masorti* and *dati* population (which comprises the vast majority of non-Ashkenazi Israeli Jews). Arabic as a language was discouraged during mass Arabic-speaking immigration during the 1940–50s due to an Ashkenazi-led desire to differentiate between Israel and her Arab enemy neighbors. Both Russians and Mizrahim maintain particularistic cultural practices that serve to differentiate their group within Hebrew-speaking Israeli society. The recognizability and social significance of such accents are enhanced by the non-existence of regional Israeli accents.

Social performance does not end with verbal utterance, but extends to dress code. Head coverings alone allude to how one might speak; not only whether a man chooses to wear a *kippah* but whether it is black or colorful, knitted or velvet, large or small; a woman who covers

her hair/head can further be assessed depending on whether she uses a wig or scarf, if the former then how long and “real” looking it is, if the latter, how much hair is left exposed and the style of wrapping. A woman can also be assessed by the length of her sleeves and skirt and the tightness of her trousers if she wears them, offering dozens of informational points that all Israelis know how to read in order to build a comprehensive sociological picture of an individual upon sight alone. Body language, more limited in its informational content, completes the performance.

The way in which Israelis build complex and broadly accurate impressions of one another based on their verbal and extra-verbal style is unusual in its specificity and multi-dimensional element, and extends theories of “regime of language” or “language ideology” beyond their usual deployment. Amanda Weidmann describes these as “bodies of culturally constructed knowledge about how language works and how it should be used” that include the voice’s relationship to its broader context (Weidmann 2006: 9-10). Everyday modes of pre-vocal performance inform interpretations of more obviously performative and musical uses of voice. Women of the Wall’s kippot predict US-American accented Hebrew; Women for the Wall’s religious school uniforms suggest vocal passivity in favor of male vocality. The same is true in reverse, although less frequently experienced: on approaching the Kotel, hearing an amplified service before the plaza comes into view permits assumptions about the nature of the crowd and their self-presentation choices.

Kol Isha in Ethnomusicology

With my newfound ability to engage with halachic texts and yeshivish communities, I became aware of a disconnect between ethnomusicological writing on Jewish women’s liturgical singing

and my own experience thereof, whether in practice, in the traditional Jewish texts I was learning, or as conveyed to me in conversations with Israeli dati women. The premise of kol isha has been thoroughly documented in research on Jewish women's musicking, with the consistent claim that orthodox women may not (per halachah) and will not (per their personal and community halachic observance and orthopraxis) sing outside of the domestic sphere or within earshot of anyone who is not direct family (see, for instance, Adelstein 2013; Koskoff 1995; Shelemey 2009; Summit 2016).

Adelstein, for example, claims that kol isha was the cause of “women's voice[s being] shut out of the synagogue for centuries” (2013: 132), whereas using the doctrine of kol isha to support the silencing of women is a modern interpretation, and the reason women have historically been absent from synagogues is due to a broad parsing of roles along gender lines; her analysis confuses correlation with causation. (The chapter as a whole makes otherwise compelling claims about perceptions of women's voices in ḥazanut.) In making her claim, Adelstein cites Koskoff (1995), who makes the grandiose claim that “most [orthodox] rabbis” recommend to men not to hear women sing, a claim which has no factual basis and could only so much as be posited as true for the most extreme Ḥaredi sects or claimed by someone who presumes the only kind of orthodoxy to be Ḥaredi Judaism.

These and other uses of kol isha lead me to suspect that ethnomusicological literature on Jewish women's music generates an internal web of citations which has resulted in repetitions of a particular theorization of kol isha informed by the earliest ethnomusicological accounts thereof which lack specificity and appropriate historical context. Given that as yet, no orthodox Jewish scholars have addressed kol isha—that is to say, nobody who has native knowledge of the community under examination—ethnomusicological literature derives from limited interactions

with orthodox Jews under unusual conditions of fieldwork and from likely second-hand liberal Jewish readings of the Talmud in Masechet Brachot devoid of their broader halachic context.

Furthermore, in much of the contemporary orthodox world there has been a general trend since the 1970s towards adopting *humrot* (stringencies) and an associated prestige attached to those who adopt more conservative positions within orthodoxy's broad tent. Take Koskoff's work on Lubavitcher women. Not only are Lubavitchers an extreme sect within orthodoxy, but their insularity renders any fieldworker liable to presume that positions being represented are reality, while in fact women may well have stated positions that are more stringent than either the halachah or their community requirements out of this broader impetus towards competitive *frumness* (religiosity beyond halachic requirements). In any case, even if Koskoff's work did represent the full reality of Lubavitcher women's musical life, and even accounting for her own explicitly feminist and liberal positionality, such a contextually extreme first ethnomusicological case study of kol isha has possibly become a victim of its own success by influencing later studies in women's music where a similar emic theoretical baseline should not have been assumed. But my own fieldwork recordings testify to the volume of orthodox women's singing during Rosh Hodesh prayers at the Kotel, presenting a conflict with ethnomusicological scholarship that claims such a thing cannot be so; indeed, it would indicate that dati and Haredi women are acting against Jewish law and normative practice.

Jewish Women's Voices: Hermeneutics and Praxis

Kol isha derives from the Biblical suggestion that a woman's singing voice can be sexually appealing, as described in the Song of Songs: "let me hear your voice, because your voice is

pleasant and your appearance is attractive.” In the Talmud Bavli, Masechet Brachot 24a, the Amoritic Sage Shmuel comments upon this verse that “the voice of a woman is *ervah*” (“kol isha ervah”), *ervah* meaning nakedness, sexual incitement, exposure, or indecency—in any case, a strong negative descriptor. His comment appears in the context of a discussion about whether a husband and wife who are lying naked in bed are allowed to say Shema, a foundational Jewish prayer. Other body parts described as *ervah* in the same passage are a woman’s little finger, hair, and leg. Read in context, this is an admonition about men’s presumed tendency to hypersexualize whatever part of a woman they can experience, rather than a statement about the objective sexual nature of particular bodily features. Exposing one’s little finger is hardly inherently promiscuous behavior, nor, it follows by association, is singing. More importantly, religious readers of this text recognize it as blurring the lines between halachah and *aggadah*; *aggadah* is a non-legalistic genre that conveys moral or ethical lessons disguised in fanciful stories and allegories—a sort of ancient Jewish *Aesop’s Fables*.

Certainly *kol isha* has a dubious status from the outset, evidenced by the complete lack of further discussion thereof in both instances. When the same citation is brought in Masechet Kiddushin, its only other Talmudic mention, it is with reference to a woman’s *speaking* voice. Here, ways in which rabbinic and ethno/musicological understandings of voice differ are key to understanding the consequences of Masechet Kiddushin for *kol isha*. The ethno/musicological subfield of voice studies is increasingly embracing the notion that speech and song exist on a vocal continuum that encompasses diverse communicative modes; for centuries composers have exploited this idea across genres from minimalism to rap, *opera buffa* to *Singspiel*, and pioneering contemporary scholarship by Zeitlin, Feldman, Rings, and others explores commonalities to spoken and sung vocal production and perceptions thereof across diverse eras

and locations (Feldman and Zeitlin 2019). In the rabbinic imagination, however, speech and song are treated as functionally differentiated domains. For example, one finds a discussion in the Talmud Bavli Masechet Megillah 14a about the use of song and sung texts to celebrate miracles. While the verbs deployed (iterations of the roots *aleph-mem-resh* and *kuf-resh-aleph*, usually indicating speaking and reading) are common to both speech and song, the celebratory occasions listed are explicitly linked to the musical nature of the texts described. In Bavli Nedarim 38a there is explicit citation of a Biblical song (*Haazinu*) as being stylistically distinct from its surrounding text—in this particular instance, used as a performative pedagogical tool by Moses before his death as he attempts to impart key lessons from God to the Jewish people. Thus, when a single source is offered twice, once with reference to speech and once with reference to song, its inconsistent application discredits the source in both cases, and so its associated passages are not to be taken seriously as halachah but instead understood as aggadic teachings.

A minority of later rabbinic authorities interprets kol isha as a halachic non-issue on different grounds, still based on the juxtaposition of this citation in Masechet Kiddushin and Brachot (Berman 1980). They reason that one can derive from the dozens of statements made by women in the Talmud that, in contrast to the source in Kiddushin, a woman's speaking voice is an acceptable, even desirable addition to that male-dominated domain. Thus a woman's voice is neither normatively nor desirably to be understood as ervah. Since this discredits the source in Kiddushin as disproven by more substantive and numerous sources elsewhere in the Talmud, so too the same source in Brachot referencing singing must be discredited.¹⁸

¹⁸ Critiques of singing in the Talmud usually refer either to contexts where this coincided with sexual impropriety, or reflect the notion that music should be banned altogether in the post-Temple era.

In general, later halachic codes either ignore kol isha entirely or clarify that a woman's voice is a problem only when she might distract a man from study or prayer or interact with him in a socially inappropriate manner, and/or only in cases where men are not usually exposed to women's voices, presumably because they work, study, and pray in gender-segregated contexts.¹⁹ Stated in this way, kol isha appears to be no more than the explication of social norms as expounded from a male perspective—that is, from a place of concern over maintaining decorum and the status quo in the public sphere, and in particular avoiding distraction during spiritual work. Neither of these broader concerns is controversial even today, although one might balk at the implicit presumptions that all men are heterosexual and the sole possessors of libido that they struggle to control, and that women do not and should not inhabit public spaces of politics, prayer, and study.

To challenge further the legitimacy of kol isha, we notice myriad examples of women both singing and speaking in public from the Tanach that were not only acceptable, but even prophetic. Examples include Miriam's song in the Book of Exodus, Abraham being commanded to listen to Sarah, and Jeremiah telling Israel to listen to the wailing voices of women in mourning. Elsewhere in Rabbinic texts, one notices that women are required to sing Hallel on Rosh Hodesh, Purim, and Hanukah, and that a woman may chant Megillat Esther on Purim, even for an all-male audience.

This ambivalent history of kol isha is known to many orthodox Jews, whose education—which takes place in religious schools from cradle to adulthood almost without exception and

¹⁹ The Rambam, for example, lists kol isha as a prohibition alongside a wealth of other sexually provocative acts that men should avoid, some of which are clearly exaggerations in the rhetorical style of Brachot, where a woman's little finger is cited as provocative. See Berman 1980 for further discussion.

regardless of country—centers around religious texts and their contemporary application. Where a religious reader would have these counter-sources and their own personal experiences in mind while learning about kol isha, an academic or liberal reader is more likely to take Shmuel’s comment at face value. Neither of the latter two groups is immersed in the reality that women in traditional/orthodox homes continue to sing songs around the Shabbat table, hum to themselves in the street, and forge careers that depend upon their spoken and sung voices, as they have throughout Jewish history.

Since the 1970s there has been a movement to the right within orthodoxy, including an increasing and extreme concern over *tzniut* (women’s modesty). As a result some Haredim have adopted limited aspects of kol isha in a way that aligns with a basic reading of Masechet Brachot while being out of step with Jewish tradition. For example, some Haredi women will choose not to sing at a Shabbat table if male non-family members are present. They will, however, sing in a synagogue or at the Kotel within a women’s section where their voice is unlikely to be directly associated with their body and thus, the logic goes, with their potential sexuality.

An informative example of this contemporary phenomenon is the Facebook group “Kol Isha! For Jewish Women and Girls Only” which boasts over 6500 members.²⁰ Most use the platform as a space of female empowerment where they share their talents, usually singing along to religious, pop, or show tunes in their living rooms, and the absence of a male gaze inspires the confidence to post in a public online forum when these women may not have any desire to take their voice on stage or into a less self-selecting public sphere. Others see the forum as an additional publicity opportunity for their existing amateur music career, evidenced by links to

²⁰ The group vets entry to permit only female-presenting individuals access to its content (and may deploy other criteria to limit entry, such as signs of religious Jewishness). It may be found at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1839677729610763>.

public YouTube channels or websites with vocal clips available for anyone to hear. For a minority who do hold by kol isha, the Facebook group offers a rare chance for public vocal performance. Most of these women live in insular Haredi neighborhoods such as Ramat Beit Shemesh in central Israel, or Monsey in New York, and as such do have in-person female-only performance opportunities at their disposal that are harder to find in more diverse areas. Even members of the latter group inadvertently demonstrate their limited respect for kol isha by posting in a Facebook group whose supposed limited audience could easily be extended to men if a group member listens to an upload at home in the company of men, or through shared Facebook accounts (not uncommon in the religious Jewish world), or simple fraud. Given the seriousness with which Haredim approach halachah, it is clear that these women's adherence to kol isha is a social norm but not a halachic requirement, or else they would take more stringent measures to protect the privacy of their voice.

Elizabeth and Leah: Leadership Strategies and Perceptions of the Other

Misconceptions about kol isha are held even by those whose personal experience should permit them a more nuanced understanding of the gap between text and praxis. One of Women of the Wall's organizers, Elizabeth, reported her perceptions of what Haredi women and men think about Women of the Wall's Rosh Hodesh prayer: "both the *image* of a woman with these objects *and* the literal kol isha [are equally powerful]. . . There is going to have to be some sort of learning curve, culturally, where people are going to be pissed off hearing women out loud. . . They've never come to the Kotel and heard women singing or reading Torah." (Elizabeth 2018)

Elizabeth rejected orthodoxy during her teenage years, having been raised in a liberal-learning New Jersey modern orthodox home and sent to Jewish day schools before making aliyah as a young adult. She has an undergraduate degree in Jewish studies and possesses the ability to study the Talmud and halachic texts at a level beyond that which is accessible to most liberal Jews. In this sense she has much in common with many of Women of the Wall's staff and board, who are often from an orthodox background but left to join liberal Jewish denominations—usually the Reform movement—due to their dissatisfaction with orthodoxy's gender ideology and politics. By contrast, most Women of the Wall supporters and attendees grew up as secular or liberal Jews.

Elizabeth's comments are representative of how Women of the Wall's leadership, staff, and supporters speak about their detractors at the Kotel, which might come as a surprise given that she, like the rest of the upper echelons of the organization, has the capacity to represent orthodox viewpoints and was never limited by kol isha in her personal experience of orthodoxy. How, then, I wondered, can Elizabeth claim that a woman's voice is shocking to Women for the Wall, and suppose that traditional Jewish women have never heard women singing? Elizabeth stands next to Leah at the Kotel, hearing Leah and her thousands of supporters sing, and yet recites these edicts about kol isha without reference to this monthly experience.

During a number of conversations I have had with Haredi women in Israel about kol isha, the response I receive has been generally consistent with that of the Kotel's official position expounded by their female and Haredi Director of Communications, Yohanna, who stated, “when it's a big crowd...in Hebrew we say *b'nivlah*, it's like it [gets] swallowed between all the sounds, so [there isn't] a problem...A woman can pray, a woman can sing. As long as there's an *hafradah* [separation/meḥitza], and there's holiness, I don't see a problem.” (Bisraor 2018)

Yohanna, speaking with direct reference to Women of the Wall, redirected my focus away from kol isha and towards other concerns that she shares with Haredi women about decorum at the Kotel. Contrary to Women of the Wall's desires, she is deeply invested in replicating an orthodox synagogue at the plaza by insisting that a mehitza and holy atmosphere are essential. While Yohanna and others would take issue with a woman using her solo voice performatively, say by performing secular pop songs in front of a mixed-gender audience, she sees no such problem with women's voices in a context that is otherwise denoted as holy. While a mehitza is a halachic necessity by all orthodox standards, concerns about kol isha are considered moot, not worthy of serious discussion, at this holiest of places by its Haredi guardians. This stands in stark contrast to Elizabeth's imaginings of Yohanna and her fellow Haredot.

While both Leah and Elizabeth, leadership figures in their respective groups, clearly have shortcomings in their ability to empathize with the other's ideals of Jewish womanness, Leah displays abstract and experiential knowledge of the Other—the liberal Jewish woman—which cannot be said of Elizabeth, who epitomizes that Other in so many ways. This provides an insight into the relative success of Women for the Wall. Leah has the capacity to theorize feminist Judaism and interpolate it onto Women of the Wall's activity in order both to justify her positions to detractors and promote her cause to sympathizers, a notion suggested with specific regard to the procurement of cultural authority in Samuel Fleischaker's *The Ethics of Culture* (1994). In contrast, Elizabeth is unable or unwilling to speak in Leah's halachic language (perhaps a willful forgetting of her orthodox education) and fundamentally misrepresents the nature of Women for the Wall's prayers and gendered ideology of voice.

Leah's critique of Women of the Wall emphasizes a growing rift between traditional and liberal Judaisms, which she expresses in geographic and ethnic terms, contrasting Israel and Sephardim on the one hand with Europe, America, and Ashkenazim on the other.

[Liberal Judaism is] an American import, it's also a UK import. I think Sephardi Jews, if they decide they're not going to keep a certain mitzvah, or they're going to let it go, they don't turn it into an ideology, whereas in Europe they do, and in America they do... The European approach is much more dialectic. Whereas I think the Sephardi way is much more encompassing... we don't think that the Conservative and Reform movement did good things for American Jewry. They presided over the biggest stretch of assimilation... and we don't think it's the right thing to import to Israel, it's not even necessary here. (Aharoni 2018)

By using Israeli and Sephardi as synonyms, Leah further codes the nusah of her hazan as a political choice, a means of affiliating her group with native Israeliness and thus by virtue of musical contrast reinforcing the liberal, Ashkenazi, and diasporic inclination of Women of the Wall, all purportedly inferior versions of what Leah's group have to offer.

The extent and nature of the two groups' objections to one another are dissimilar, as are their primary tactics and discursive strategies. Women of the Wall meet as a small group of fifty or so. They attempt to stake a claim to this Israeli territory despite their religious marginality and propose an opportunity to improve the status of Jewish women by transforming the role of women in ritual practice. Women for the Wall, backed by the State, bring hundreds or even thousands to the Kotel and strategically define their foes as foreigners through both explicit discourse and musical differentiation. As such, the situation at the Kotel closely resembles the structural power differential described by Marleen de Witte with reference to conflict between traditional *wulomei* and Pentecostal leaders in Accra, Ghana.

In order to exert their authority over the "strangers of the land" once a year, an authority normally exerted by the state, the *wulomei* have been able to mobilize large groups of poor, frustrated Ga youth, who violently enforce customary law. Their boldness in the name of the spiritual obligations of local citizenship is a way of claiming supremacy over these "foreigners" who do not respect the Ga people or their customs (de Witte 2016: 142).

While the Kotel's violence is primarily (but not exclusively) enacted vocally, whereas in Accra it is primarily physical, the similarities between Accra and Jerusalem's contention for spiritual supremacy are remarkable, in particular the linking of spiritual legitimacy, local norms, and non-legalistic discursive citizenship. The primary actors in the traditionalist groups similarly bear resemblance—large groups of indignant youth enacting the will of a higher, state-affiliated institution, which itself is aligned with a traditionalist attitude supported by only a minority of the populace. Where the two contexts differ is in the geographic specificity of the site of conflict; in Accra the conflict expands across the city during particular seasons, with the contested sounds amplified from numerous churches and meeting houses, whereas in Jerusalem the Kotel is the primary site of conflict performance and contesting parties have mutually limited such activity to Rosh Hodesh. Notable too is the difference in the gender of those whose voices are contesting and contested: in Accra they are presumably predominantly or exclusively male, although de Witte doesn't disclose gender information, whereas at the Kotel they are exclusively female—the latter is surely a less frequently documented gender balance in conflict zones, particularly those that spill into physical violence as is the case in this instance.

In attempting to minimize the role of women in public prayer, Women for the Wall ironically bring themselves to the forefront of activity on Rosh Hodesh, matching the public status of Women of the Wall and pro-actively seeking attention and fame in order to further their cause through radio interviews, websites, online think pieces and blogs, flyposting in religious neighborhoods, and their pure force of presence at the Kotel.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE NECESSITY OF ENCOUNTER IN VALUED PUBLIC SPACE

Models of Competition

The Kotel is a remarkable space, serving at once as a religious site, a Jewish historical treasure, and an Israeli national monument. As such, it is a space where oppositional social identities are brought into contact. Groups that maintain social boundaries and distinctions to demarcate their limits in everyday life inhabit a single plaza, resulting in the potential for explosive contact.

Martin Stokes observes this same phenomenon in Northern Turkish *horon* dance, Northern Irish military band parades, Irish “traditional” music, and Hindu Kalasha musical performance (Stokes 1994: 8-10). He cites these case studies to illustrate the ways in which musicking can create or illuminate a society’s internal boundaries and classifications. Musicking, too, can be used to lay claim to space or identity when either are subject to competing claims by multiple groups, as they are at the Kotel.

In Northern Ireland, where Protestants and Catholics vie for symbolic control of public space, Stokes identifies sonic and visual violence as key modes of control by the dominant group. Aurally, the sheer volume of a marching band’s brass and percussion is “an assault on the ears,” and visually, “the symbolic control of urban space” is achieved through “graffiti, flags, the language of signs and color coding.” He notes that the latter are “daily fact[s] of life” in Northern Ireland (Ibid., 8). In Jerusalem, the same effect is accomplished through clothing choices of residents, determinations about what billboard postings appear in each neighborhood, the kashrut

status of restaurants, and the prevalence and nature of frequently-hung political party and issue banners draped from apartment balconies.

De Witte's fieldwork in Accra points to a similar phenomenon. She demonstrates the multivalent nature of "competition for symbolic control over urban spaces" (2016: 134) Beyond power struggles between different religious groups, she notes that encounters between humans and religious powers—in Accra, God, or spirits—are rendered political and competitive as multiple groups use sound to bring a spiritual physical presence (in the form of sound waves that permeate a particular space) into the city. Secularity and quietness also vie for control, saturating urban space with signified sound. De Witte's work demands the consideration of the limits of urban space, of how much competition it can hold.

Demarcating Sonic Publics

Ironically perhaps, while in Northern Ireland a model of dialogue and coexistence finally prevails, and while in Accra a model harmonizing tradition and modernity is at least idealized by competing parties, at the Kotel competition based on perceived existential threat is the dominant sentiment and shows no signs of abating; to the contrary, warring factions are taking increasingly severe measures in an attempt to silence and even banish their detractors. As in Northern Ireland's darker days, various sonic techniques of violence are deployed: whistles—produced by either the metal instrument or one's hand—are particularly piercing in this otherwise vocally-dominated space. Jeers and shouts are directed towards security forces from men and women alike, combined with physical force as men jostle against metal barriers and women forcefully brush their shoulders against the edge of Women of the Wall's circle or, when behind the men's

barricade, push out their chests in an effort to appear physically dominant as they stand face to face with security personnel on the other side of the flimsy metal barrier. This behavior is amplified as Women of the Wall leave the women's section in song, their walk across the back of the plaza towards their waiting buses leaving them exposed to physical and sonic violence from men who had, until this point, been restrained at some physical distance from the group.

The racket at this point every month marks a turning point from an aural experience dominated by liturgical song to one dominated by piercing screams and whistles from girls and women accompanied by a drone of deeper men's shouts. Women of the Wall are physically jostled despite the best efforts of the all-woman security force who surround them in fluorescent yellow jackets, whose strange beauty and fragility (they are, after all, young women employed to protect other women from physical violence) are marked by their contrast to the sights and sounds on each side of their lines (see figures 5.1 — 5.4).



Figure 5.1. Physical violence; a Women of the Wall supporter shows a bloodied hand after being assaulted by Haredi men just outside the Kotel.¹



Figure 5.2. Sonic violence performed by a Haredi woman using a whistle in close proximity to Women of the Wall.²

¹ Photo provided by Women of the Wall.

² Photo by Miriam Alster/FLASH90 (2013).



Figure 5.3. Material violence; Women of the Wall siddurim lie in tatters on the Kotel plaza following their destruction by Haredi men.³



Figure 5.4. A female security guard gazes out from her post as part of a protective circle around Women of the Wall.

³ Photo provided by Women of the Wall.

Despite Jerusalem's religious, social, national, and ethnic/racial diversity, the city's residents have developed modes of self-presentation that serve as a daily performance that encodes one's social and religious group, erecting boundaries between oneself and various others upon sight—behavior that Warner describes as constitutive of various “publics” (Warner 2005). As in other segregated cities such as Chicago and Johannesburg, residents know which streets mark the boundaries of a particular group's “safe space,” where their norms function as de-facto law and where they take care to code-switch when they enter a neighborhood under control of a social group not their own. At the Kotel, however, interactions between publics are necessitated by the scarcity of space and prayer time and because the site has been socially constructed in contemporary Israel as the young nation's most historically, religiously, and possibly geographically, significant site.

The Israeli government's ongoing attempt to control how this site sounds via its proxy institutions—the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Western Wall Heritage Foundation—is nevertheless an exception in a country otherwise tolerant of the sounds of religious diversity; as the sun sets on a Friday evening, I hear church bells, the call to prayer, and the Shabbat siren from my home in Talbieh, and prior considerations of legislating a volume limit on these public expressions of religiosity were thrown out even by the current right-wing government. At the Kotel itself, the most audible religious expression is unquestionably the amplified call to prayer from Al-Aqsa Mosque, situated atop Temple Mount (Haram esh-Sharif) overlooking the Kotel, which reverberates off of the high stone walls at the back of the Kotel plaza punctuating any Jewish activity below.

Sound and the Subject

Whether engaged in a women's liturgical protest or interrupted in personal prayer by the muezzin's call, the Jewish subject at the Kotel listens in a particular way that is conditioned by the qualities of the place itself. Sound is invested with power by culturally-conditioned listeners who have come to express semiotic congruences between a particular sound type and personal affect based on repeated experiences, including experiences of a specific place. The muezzin's call thus stimulates different affective responses in a *dati leumi* Israeli as opposed to a Muslim Palestinian. A woman reading the Torah at the Kotel *feels* different than when the same sounds are heard in a US liberal synagogue, even when it is the same person hearing in both contexts.

This approach to sound, popular with scholars of anthropology and history, is not the only model offered within sound studies to account for how the sonic becomes meaningful. A competing model, the "auditory real," suggests that sound itself acts directly on the embodied subject (Cox 2011: 153–55; Kittler 1999 [1986]: 16). The muezzin's call possesses particular sound qualities that provoke a common response among diverse listeners, which we might suppose to be spiritual or religious in nature. A woman's voice reading the Torah similarly elicits essential embodied responses irrespective of the setting. Applying this model here would require the acceptance of ontological differences between men and women's voices in a way that can never be remediated; from an Israeli perspective, a woman's voice sounds alien in Torah reading and a religious Israeli man has an inherent authoritative vocal quality in prayer that is relatively lacking in non-Israelis, women, and secular Jews.

A productive suggestion is offered by Eisenlohr (2018: 4), who proposes that both approaches are operative for any given sound experience. In this model, a woman's voice in

Jewish ritual practice might be so heavily conditioned as a subversive and unusual listening experience as other that even when rituals have been reformed in favor of female equality for generations, as in US-American liberal synagogues, this quality of liminality is retained such that it may as well be essential in terms of the extent to which responses thereto are standardized.

Nina Eidsheim (2012; 2015; 2019) moves beyond these models, positing that we listen to the human voice not only as an auditory experience, but also as a multisensory one guided by subjective listening practices.

While it may seem that a listener's assessment of a voice is based purely on the voice as it is heard, this evaluation is actually made on the basis of an informational composite, parts of which may more strongly influence the listener's judgment. What we refer to as "sound" is in reality a composite of visual, textural, discursive, and other kinds of information. In other words, the multisensory context surrounding a voice forms a filter, a "suggestion" through which we listen. As such, our contexts and our attitudes determine what we hear (Eidsheim 2012: 10).

Eidsheim's observation alerts us to the reality that auditory experiences cannot be isolated from the multisensory body's broader perceptions. What one sees—in her study, the singing subject's skin tone—informs the voice that one perceives. Listening, like so many other sensory activities that we presume to be the realm of a single sense, is, in fact, a multisensory experience. In Jerusalem this is particularly the case in terms of community self-presentation through clothing. In Adam Krims's *Music and Urban Geography* (2007), we learn that the opposite is also true. Whereas Eidsheim examines how perception of music is shaped by its sounding context, Krims points out that music itself serves to shape how we perceive space and place. What we see informs how we hear; what we hear informs how we see.

Particular Ontologies of Listening

I suggest that the Kotel as a place demands of the subject a particular mode of listening that is informed very little by the Kotel's status as a remnant of the outer wall of the 2000-year-old Temple, but instead is constructed and reconstructed continually in three ways. First, the architectural design of the Kotel plaza post-1967 mimics the prototypical synagogue, with a meḥitza, requirements for modest dress and kippot for men, and a number of arks in the men's section containing Torah scrolls. Per Eidsheim's understanding, this visually conditions the subject to expect to hear men performing synagogue rituals and not to hear women at all. Conversely, by Krims's logic, hearing only men at the Kotel creates an expectation of a traditional synagogue arrangement, so the Kotel's barebones meḥitza arrangement is augmented in the viewer and listener's mind to indicate a synagogue type setting, when in fact there are substantial visual differences between an orthodox synagogue and the Kotel.⁴

Second, one's mode of listening is constructed by the strategic physical location of the Kotel. The Wall is a physical barrier between East and West Jerusalem, and the Eastern extent of contiguous Jewish Jerusalem. The site is difficult to reach from West Jerusalem proper, requiring either a half-hour walk through the Old City's twisting, mountainous alleys, also passing through at least one of the Armenian, Christian, and Muslim quarters, or a bus ride that skirts the border of the Old City where it butts up against Arab villages. In either case, visitors cannot but subject themselves to a multi-sensory experience of local non-Jewish others in order to reach this most

⁴ The Western Wall Heritage Foundation capitalize upon the latter inference, claiming the Kotel to be the world's largest outdoor synagogue when it in fact has no such formal status, and re-titling the chairman of the Western Wall Heritage Foundation—a "quasi-governmental" administrative position—as the Rabbi of the Kotel. For a critique of the retitling of this position, see Solovy 2015.

Jewish of sites, the journey a reminder that only as a result of the 1967 war does the Jewish state control Jerusalem as far as the Kotel.

According to Eidsheim's reasoning, in necessarily experiencing one's own liminal Jewishness in the world's only Jewish nation by walking in the shadows of towering Christian and Muslim holy sites as one passes through streets with a heavy military presence and airport-style security, arriving at the Kotel plaza acquires a different resonance; whereby hearing Jewish liturgy cannot be taken for granted. Rather, a heightened attunedness to Jewish sounds is conditioned en route to the site.

On the other hand, Krims's argument suggests that as one walks this route through the Old City, the most prominent sounds are the Arabic language and the amplified *azzan* (call to prayer, sometimes transliterated *adhan*) emanating from hundreds of mosques across the Muslim quarter. None is more prominent than the Al-Aqsa's mosque's intonation thereof which, due to its position at the highest point of the Old City on the peak of a mountain, can be heard with clarity from most vantage points within a radius of half a kilometer. The muezzin is a reminder of Jewish liminality and the limits of Jewish (if not Israeli) sovereignty, conditioning the Jewish visitor to the Kotel to expect a less than typical Jewish sight/site—and indeed this is confirmed by the overbearing presence of Qubbat al-Sakhrah's gold dome that offers a more impressive religious spectacle than the plain limestone wall, slightly crumbling and with pigeons nesting in bushes that grow from between stones, that is the Kotel.

The third mode of conditioned listening is produced by governmental efforts over the *longue durée* to inscribe the Kotel with the highest degree of religious and national meaning. Military swearing-in ceremonies and Remembrance Day events take place here, and world leaders are frequently brought to the Wall, adding civil-national importance to the site. This

imbues its soundscape with the solemnity and weight befitting of any national monument, as the Kotel is presented as a representation of the Israeli nation to the world beyond. Jews at the Kotel hear their own self-importance even at the edge of Jewish Jerusalem, bolstered by years of occasional visual conditioning on civil holidays (Eidsheim's model). Alternatively, hearing unusually diverse expressions of Judaism at the Kotel imparts an aural sense of the centrality of this place to Jewish experience, which then informs one's visual perception of the Kotel by giving weight to the few symbols of Israeliness and Jewishness present in the face of overwhelming Muslim imagery (Krim's model).

Modes of vocal production and reception are recalibrated at the Kotel according to this heady combination of geography, history, religion, and nation, with a comprehensive sensory experience informing both the Jewish and Israeli centrality and liminality of the site.

Encounter, Transformation, Co-Creation

The Kotel's visual imitation of an orthodox synagogue and Haredi administration informs our expectation that we will not hear much from the women's section. Most of the time this is the case, and the vast expanse is eerily quiet. The fact that this expectation is almost always fulfilled renders the transgression of the Kotel's gender norms on Rosh Hodesh so potent. Similarly, the historical lack of female participation and leadership in public Jewish ritual, especially in gender-separated spaces and in Israel, makes the mass female presence, and its primacy, at the Kotel on Rosh Hodesh both remarkable and powerful.

Not only are the shift in the locus of activity from the men's to the women's section and the use of liturgy for political protest transgressive of this space's norms, but both women's

groups also violate their own internal community standards of practice. Haredi women who proclaim that they don't need to perform in public are doing precisely that; those women are also the primary actors in, and organizers of, this counter-protest. Liberal Jewish women are choosing a gender-segregated site when their ideal of non-segregated prayer is available elsewhere at the Kotel;⁵ acting against their habitus they engage with traditional liturgy and ritual. Women of the Wall bring the sound of female ritual leadership to the Kotel and in so doing import a distinctly diasporic sound to Israel, staking a liberal Jewish claim to this Haredi-run site and professing Jewish national allegiance over loyalty to Israeli norms.

Women for the Wall's response to this push for change might be halachically acceptable, but it is certainly not normative within the Haredi community. Recall that traditional women typically do not attend synagogue or take on ritual leadership roles. This is a group organized entirely by Haredi women, advertised among the Haredi and orthodox world via radio stations and word of mouth. By virtue of Women of the Wall's choice to pray out of their comfort zone in the women's section, Women for the Wall cannot rely on male leadership, organization, or turn-out. They themselves must attempt to dominate the women's section, even if they otherwise never set foot in a synagogue to pray with a community. They must beat Women of the Wall at their own game, and in the process inadvertently disarm stereotypes of traditional women, successfully showing that participation in liturgy can be loud, visible, and woman-led without

⁵ Robinson's Arch is situated south of the main Kotel plaza, through a small nondescript gate, and down winding metal stairs that lead to an archeological site and a platform on stilts. It is entirely separate from the main plaza and is empty most of the time, in large part because Israelis and visitors alike are unaware of its existence and/or location. This area is designated for prayer without a mehitza. In 2016, Women of the Wall signed a compromise agreement (*Mitveh HaKotel*) that would have them relocate to Robinson's Arch. For a variety of reasons, some of which will be discussed later in this chapter, they have refused to move to that area and continue to meet in the women's section.

requiring women to step into ritual leadership roles. Both women's groups adapt their usual engagement with liturgy and ritual in order to challenge the other, using a site that neither group would otherwise frequent with such regularity and in such massed numbers, but which both navigate expertly and from something of a shared perspective.

These women share a commitment to the Kotel site, an understanding of its constructed national and historical significance, an experience of religious Jewish womanhood in Israel, and a belief that prayer can be—must be—more than communication with the heavens above but a mode of expressing earthly needs to and among earthly beings. We pray to God on Rosh Hodesh, but with an ear directed towards the Supreme Court and government, with the latter's responses explicitly the reason to show up at God's ancient dwelling place. We women share too an exclusive embodied knowledge of the women's section, the backdrop to Rosh Hodesh that exists before and after shaharit: the hemmed-in-ness that is created by the Kotel that looms before us and the metal mehitza to our left and the towering solid stone wall to our right and the wall of bookcases at the back and the one narrow path that allows us to enter and exit this zone past the women who give out modesty shawls, the sonic backdrop of plastic chairs scraping as they are dragged over marble floors and toddlers babbling while tugging on their praying mother's dress and the birds screeching as they circle overhead, the nimble dance as we hop over prams and around *shtenders* (portable lecterns) and politely jostle with our shoulders to take the prized spot that just opened up where we can press ourselves onto the cold slabs that are the Kotel itself and feel the warm breath of women tightly packed to either side of us, the options of siddur or Tehillim which are all that we can find on the glass-doored bookshelves where the regulars sit along the shaded back wall of this walled-in pen that is the women's section. We share its

sounds, smells, sights, and limitations, immersed in both the quotidian sensory experience and the Divine rapture that it can offer those who can move beyond worldly senses and concerns.

We co-create the space and sound world of the women's plaza anew each moment from a place of intimate, embodied understanding of the nature of this place, an acoustemology (Feld 2015) of both the local built environment and its ways of sounding and feeling, layering our own bodily presence and vocal emissions atop the extant atmosphere to produce the thick, heady, sensory environment. It is our *collective* presence that generates this transient state on Rosh Hodesh whereby the Kotel's presumed importance is rendered audible and visible and worthy of global attention. One group could not accomplish this without its counterpart because it is the contestation itself that creates a noteworthy atmosphere.

The women's section's four walls are not merely a monument, a mehitza, an old wall, and a bookcase. They are a safety net and a territory, delineating the limits of men's influence and the zone of female jurisdiction. They permit a zone of controlled encounter with the forbidden other, with whom daily interaction is rare and intimate encounter almost unheard of.

Transgressive Listening and Switching Teams

On Rosh Hodesh Sivan I stood next to a group of three mid-teen girls in orthodox school uniforms who, like me, had positioned themselves just beyond the outer circle of Women of the Wall, a transitional zone extending about five feet in every direction inhabited by liminal attendees including photographers, journalists, curious but hesitant Women of the Wall would-be supporters, unaffiliated Haredi protestors, police, security personnel—and an anthropologist or two. These teenagers looked to be part of Women for the Wall's demographic, but rather than

participating in that group's massed prayers as part of the neat lines of uniformed young women they were unabashedly observing Women of the Wall and whispering among themselves. When I asked them why they were not praying with either group, they snickered and stated unequivocally that they were against Women of the Wall, but continued to watch what to them constituted an illicit novelty.

They had been told by their schoolteachers and rabbis that Women of the Wall and their values and goals are anti-Jewish, anti-Israel, and a threat to both, but for precisely that reason the girls had never experienced any form of liberal Judaism in their community. This was their opportunity to see this sacrilegious group for themselves under the guise of protest, continuing to denounce Women of the Wall while unable to resist the seductive urge to know them, their rabbis having invested Women of the Wall with such power by forbidding the girls any access to them or their associated practices.

Perhaps twenty others like them had come with the intent of joining Women for the Wall's prayers, but had instead foregone their siddurim for a chance to better understand what it was they were supposed to be protesting. Shira, an Israeli-American woman who has been attending Women of the Wall regularly since its inception over thirty years ago, suggested to me that the encounter generated on Rosh Hodesh has the potential to put Women for the Wall's attendees and other traditional women in a precarious position.

When they come here and we're here doing tefillah, they have an experience that they can't ever forget, it's life-changing. One time I remember a woman came up to me very upset. She had brought her daughter here for what she said was a special day, I'm not sure exactly but I got the impression she had got her first period. Anyway she didn't know we were going to all be here on Rosh Hodesh, or she forgot, whatever. She came up to me at the end and said, "I just wanted some special quiet prayer time at the Kotel with my daughter, mother-daughter bonding time, to mark this important day. But instead you are all here and I have to deal with her questions, 'Mummy, why are those women praying like that?'" And I told the mother, "This is Judaism! Judaism is all about asking questions." But what stuck with me is that her daughter will grow up differently now because she saw and heard us reading Torah and

praying as a group of women. And she saw how ugly and anti-woman, anti-typical-feminine, Haredim can be. Now she knows this, what *we* do, is available to her at the Kotel and she can't forget that this exists as an option for women. (Shira 2019)

Shira describes the denaturalization of gender that comes from the co-creation of space and mutual encounter by two different women's groups drawn from polarized sectors of Israeli society. In an effort to overcome their adversaries they must encounter one another. This encounter necessarily transforms every individual subject in some way, whether they redouble their sense of belonging to a group—but now defining themselves against a *known* other—or develop a more ambivalent attitude towards a community of which they had imagined themselves to be a part.

Traditional and Haredi women and girls are more susceptible to this because of the forbiddenness of liberal Judaism within their communities, although their rebellion is limited to spectating since their attendance as part of a school or social group means they cannot be brazen in their dissent for fear of the consequences upon discovery. Liberal Israeli Jewish women have usually experienced traditional Judaism—often grown up within it—so the alluring element of the unknown is absent. Further, liberal Judaism's minute number of adherents in Israel means that Israel's liberal Jews are offered a traditional alternative to their religious practice every day. But Women of the Wall supporters are not immune from wandering eyes. I have witnessed the occasional participant of theirs leave the group during tefillah to pray alongside Women for the Wall, and a higher number abandon prayer altogether mid-service, either going home, to work, or to seek refuge nearby but away from the main plaza.

Gal, a twenty-something raised by an Israeli mother and US-American father in the United States recently made aliyah and describes herself as a secular-raised, left-wing orthodox

feminist.⁶ She left in tears midway through her first Women of the Wall service because her expectations, based on seeing the group on past months' Facebook livestreams, were not met. She voiced her disappointment at Women of the Wall "screaming and shouting their prayers," something that she "expected from the Haredim, but not from Women of the Wall." (Gal 2019) She retreated to a quiet corner at an archeological site near Dung Gate to collect her thoughts, where we talked about her experience.

She believed that she had been pushed to the center of the prayer circle by Women of the Wall leadership as a new face in order to try and demonstrate falsely that their supporters were numerous and diverse (Gal has dark brown skin unlike the rest of the group, who are white or white-passing, and wears clothes that suggest she is orthodox) and not limited to a small group of regulars. She described this experience as "tokenizing" and, with her new in-person understanding of the group's tactics, was concerned that her personal and professional life might suffer from association with this group that, until the day she encountered them in person, she supported "without any reservations." She felt uncomfortable being filmed and associated in perpetuity with this group. Gal voiced that she had considered joining Women for the Wall in order to complete her prayers, but was at first physically unable to do so due to being surrounded by circles of Women of the Wall, and then was "too upset to pray at all and too mad at the whole situation with everyone antagonizing each other." (Ibid.)

⁶ Left-wing is not a term that translates well between North America/Europe and Israel. In Israel, the term primarily refers to approaches to the political "security" situation; that is, policies pertaining to the West Bank and Gaza, and in everyday use does not indicate someone's social or economic leaning. In conversations pertaining to religion, claiming a left-wing political identity marks one as on the periphery of the dominant *dati leumi* community, who trend overwhelmingly right-of-center on security issues. Liberal Judaism in Israel is, by contrast, strongly associated with left-wing security positions and a commitment to social justice. Gal's political descriptor thus also offers useful information about not only her stance on security and social issues, but also her tenuous religious affiliation.

In a similar vein, Emma, taking a post-college year in Israel to learn Torah and connect to her Jewish roots, objected that she was “not experiencing prayerfulness” during Women of the Wall’s tefillah (Emma 2019). She simply wanted to pray shaharit in a way that allowed her to maximize her focus and intention, and chose to defect to the group that she perceived to be offering that experience during musaf, the last section of the prayer service—perhaps a mark of their greater volume among other considerations. While Gal objected to Women of the Wall’s tactics and prayer style, Emma simply found a preferable alternative at her disposal. For both young women, this was their first time praying with Women of the Wall, and the two young women both explicitly mentioned that the way the group used their voices in prayer was a motivating factor in their abandoning them mid-service.

Take Three: *Original Women of the Wall*

Cheryl, an Israeli-American who has lived in Jerusalem for most of her life, was a founding member of Women of the Wall back in 1988 when the impetus for the group came about from two orthodox women seeking gender-segregated, halachic, non-denominational prayer at the Kotel. Since 2016, Cheryl has resigned as a board member, reduced her attendance, and detached herself from the group’s core of regular attendees. Her reasons are entirely political; she objects to their agreement to a proposal—since revoked unilaterally by the government—that would have Women of the Wall move to Robinson’s Arch.

While of no lesser religious status than the main plaza, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, few people know of the existence of Robinson’s Arch as an alternative prayer area. Little money is dedicated to it, signage is almost non-existent, the infrastructure appears

temporary, and basic facilities found at the main plaza—toilets, Torah scrolls, siddurim, ritual hand-washing—are not available here. The entrance is a small opening in a wall between Dung Gate and the main plaza’s busiest security point, passed by thousands each day but invisible to anyone not aware of its presence. A wobbly metal staircase descends steeply down into an active archeological dig site, leading to a narrow dirt pathway that opens out into one large square riser with plastic parasols and black boxes that can serve as seating.

A section of the Kotel itself can be accessed by crossing the riser, passing through a small gate, down some more stairs, and onto another riser that runs a good length of the wall—but all of this has been closed purportedly for safety purposes since a part of a stone fell in August 2018 and the wall is covered with scaffolding such that its status as Judaism’s prime religious monument seems farcical. The lack of financial investment and intentional marginalization of Robinson’s Arch within the larger Kotel area is both representative of, and a contributor to, governmental and broader Israeli attitudes towards liberal Judaism. This situation has been intentionally orchestrated by the Western Wall Heritage Foundation and the government’s religious affairs wing.

Cheryl objects ideologically to Women of the Wall’s agreement to a government offer which would have them move their tefillah to Robinson’s Arch in exchange for upgrades to the area. When this “Kotel deal” was signed by both sides in 2016, she started a splinter group called Original Women of the Wall, comprising women who were variously committed to praying in a women-only space and maintaining a visible liberal Jewish presence at the Kotel’s main plaza.

The deal that they’re negotiating with their twenty-six conditions—part [of it] from the Haredi side is that once *Nashot HaKotel* [Women of the Wall] moves to Keshet Robinson, all tefillah at the Kotel, the men’s and women’s sides, will be under the jurisdiction of the Western Wall Heritage Foundation, that is, Haredi. In other words...if we decided to go to the Ezrat Nashim [women’s section] with tallit, tefillin, whatever, we wouldn’t be

allowed...It completely excludes any kind of non-Haredi women's activity at the main, visible plaza. (Cheryl 2018)

Beyond this practical desire to have liberal Judaism rendered visible (and, implicitly, audible) at the Kotel's main plaza, Cheryl also considers herself and her group to be morally obliged to reject the "Kotel deal." This illustrates part of the difficulty of achieving compromise in a religious matter that is, for those invested in the outcome, a matter of enacting absolute God-given truth as an ethical obligation.

When the deal was first announced back in January 2016...a Conservative rabbi in the States who I know...wrote a letter to me, it was basically an open letter to his congregation, but he used me as the retort, and so he sent me a copy. [It] said..."It's no surprise to me that you're standing up for women's rights and you're standing on the side of justice, *but* you have to understand the deal for Keshet Robinson [Robinson's Arch] is...practical. It's pragmatic, it's what we can get." I wrote him back...and I said, "I'm not interested in what we can get. I'm interested in what's *right*. When my granddaughters and great granddaughters look back at this, I don't want them to say 'she took what she could get.' I want them to say 'she stood up for what was right.'" (Ibid.)

Unlike the slick emails, Facebook publicity, and local media coverage that Women of the Wall and Women for the Wall use to remind women that Rosh Hodesh is approaching, Cheryl opts for a low-tech approach and has the group meet on unremarkable weekdays at 7:00 a.m. in order to avoid organized protests, police, or security intervention.⁷ She also alternates between mornings that require Torah reading and those that do not in order that a *sefer Torah* (Torah scroll) does not always need to be smuggled past security. When Original Women of the Wall need a *sefer*

⁷ The police and security presence at the Kotel on Rosh Hodesh is atypical in both style and quantity for the Kotel. On an uneventful day there is a substantial presence at the Kotel's entrance gates, but otherwise security personnel remain at the back of the plaza well behind the limits of the men's and women's prayer sections, and such presence is barely noticeable. It is only in the case of a scheduled event that security becomes visible within the Kotel plaza itself, and as such Original Women of the Wall's last-minute, minimally publicized *tefillot* draw no extra measures.

Torah, they borrow a miniature one from an orthodox synagogue in south Jerusalem and hide it in a hiking bag.⁸ A specified young, Israeli-born group member is always able to pass security without being searched; she looks and sounds like a post-high school young woman preparing for a tiyul by praying, and is able to talk her way out of searches by professing the difficulty of removing, unpacking, and repacking her hefty load.

Celebrations and Commiserations

I joined the group a number of times from the spring of 2018 onward, augmenting a group of between eight and fifteen women of drastically diverse ages, religious observances, political commitments, and nationalities. We were rallied by word of mouth, SMS, and individual emails. Services are usually scheduled to welcome a visitor from abroad, celebrate a wedding, or facilitate someone saying kaddish. Kaddish is a prayer that is said by the closest relatives of someone who passes away during every prayer service for the year following their death, and then on the Hebrew date on which they died in future years (called a *yahrzeit* for Ashkenazim, or *nahalah* for Sephardim and Mizrahim). Kaddish is said only with a minyan, so mourners will sometimes—especially on a *yahrzeit*—arrange a special minyan in their homes or with particular individuals. Women saying kaddish is not universally recognized as an appropriate practice, although it is a widespread observance in the liberal modern orthodox world and has increasing popularity across orthodoxy. Because of its continued liminal status, women have begun to

⁸ As of summer 2022, Original Women of the Wall own their own sefer Torah and no longer need to borrow one, but still smuggle it into the Kotel in disguise.

recruit their own minyanim when they are required to say kaddish rather than rely on synagogues to provide such an opportunity.

Another purpose for which Original Women of the Wall meet with surprising regularity is to celebrate weddings. The week before or after a wedding, the groom is traditionally called up to the Torah on Shabbat and often reads the weekly parashah. In egalitarian and liberal settings, the couple are called up together, and the bride is just as likely to read part of the parashah as the groom. Two days before my own wedding, I read the weekday Torah reading with Original Women of the Wall; the following Shabbat, a day after the wedding, my now-husband and I split the full parashah between us at our regular minyan. We now have a tradition to do this every year. Occasions such as weddings and commemorations of family deaths tend to entice people to commit to attending tefillah in order to ensure that there will be a minyan so that kaddish can be said and the Torah can be read—and necessary celebrations or commiserations can be made by a group in a religious context, replete with its strict yet thoughtful prescriptions on how emotional days should be managed by all attending. Original Women of the Wall capitalizes upon this need by scheduling tefillot almost exclusively for such occasions.



Figure 5.5. Reading Torah at the Kotel with Original Women of the Wall.

The Affordances of Women's Voices: Counter-Cultural Prayer

Cheryl's text messages are often accompanied by a comment about the anticipated quality of the leading in an effort to entice interested individuals to come. Self-deprecating of her own vocal abilities, she selects who will lead tefillah and read Torah on the basis of their vocal prowess above all. In fact she herself has never led because, while completely liturgically literate and capable of these tasks, she considers her voice to be inadequately beautiful for such a place and occasion. She will, though, occasionally perform these roles in synagogues.

Original Women of the Wall regular leaders are renowned in Jerusalem's liberal religious world for their classical vocal training and make regular appearances at women's and liberal public liturgical events. Most have formal vocal training, whether Western classical, traditional

Jewish, or both, and have been performing in one or both of these contexts since their teenage years. At the Kotel, nonetheless, stage performativity is eschewed; tefillah is conducted as quietly as is possible while keeping the group at a singular pace, although I have always found myself needing to strain to hear the leader. Instead of projecting for the benefit of their usual congregation or audience, the leaders instead direct their voices to the upper echelons of the Kotel. Their heads tilted slightly backwards, the group dynamic is rendered of secondary importance to their intimate song to the Divine.

Early in the morning, the emptiness of this vast expanse emphasizes the pseudo-room created by the back wall of the Kotel, its two side surrounds, and the barrier at the back of the men's and women's section, and the way in which this spatial quality permits the creation of a sense of air held in suspense and stillness—quite a different affect from that of the very same space on Rosh Hodesh. I never fail to notice the sensation of hearing my own footsteps as I approach the plaza, the rustle of our prayer books at every page turn, and each individual voice reciting the *shema* (a central creed in Judaism). The quietness of the plaza offers ample opportunity for vocal control, for soft, gentle timbre, for dynamic range, for playfulness, for intimacy: in other words, for conventionally *feminine* sung prayer. Each leader seized this chance to display vocal artfulness such that on one occasion when I was invited to read Torah the week before my wedding, I suspect that I sounded—by contrast and despite my best efforts—brutish, aggressive, and uncouth (this despite a lifetime of classical vocal training and weeks of practice. This was one of my first public Torah readings, and the idea of it taking place at the Kotel filled me with considerable dread). A regular member had gently hinted to me before the service began that volume is not desirable in order to avoid attracting attention or, ideally, even being noticed

by those beyond the limits of our intimate women's collective.⁹ These traditionally feminine vocal qualities sound in stark contrast to those audible on Rosh Hodesh.

Carolyn Abbate claims that when women perform with their voices, part of the social subversiveness thereof is in drawing the male gaze, “the aural equivalent of staring,” thus “slip[ping] into the male/active/subject position” (Abbate 1995: 254).¹⁰ It is precisely this which Original Women of the Wall eschew. They pursue an anonymity of sorts, performing only for themselves and God. For this quietest of groups, there *is* no male gaze, nor even a female gaze from within the women's section, and their performance deliberately avoids vocal qualities that might demand such a thing; there is no “drowning out” of other sounds, no refusal to perform conventional femininity, no vocal act of resistance, no challenge to men's positions of power on the other side of the mehitza, no pursual of male/active/subject position. When the shaliḥot tzibbur shun their own authority and subjecthood by refusing to make themselves clearly heard and by directing their gaze towards God's supposed residence, they reject not only the importance of the male gaze but also the male ontologies of Jewish prayer, instead cultivating a woman's space that exists not in dialogue with the other gender but on its own terms, its own ideals performed, if not constructed, quite apart from their relationship to male norms.¹¹ Even

⁹ Projection is usually valued in Torah reading and leading in order that the potentially sizeable congregation will be able to follow along. The challenge is compounded since in Israel, the leader/reader usually faces the same direction as the congregants at the front of the group and thus has her back to them, as is the case with Original Women of the Wall's set-up.

¹⁰ Abbate's comments here might offer a productive argument in *favor* of restrictions around kol isha from a Western and non-Jewish perspective. That is, just as one might reasonably understand women choosing to dress in an unassuming way to avoid the male gaze (as has been noted as a fashion trend in the autumn/winter of 2019–20), so too one might understand a desire to limit male access to the female voice as a mode of shunning unwanted attention.

¹¹ That is to say, while the male gaze is irrelevant in this performance context, the same cannot necessarily be said for the context in which the shaliḥot tzibbur learned their skill. The fact that I can describe their vocal quality as conventionally feminine, and their backgrounds as trained

their desire to circumvent hostilities suggests an anti-violence disposition that is counter-cultural in a space that serves to reinforce masculine normativity even within the women's section.

The group's active efforts to avoid confrontation rarely fail, and when they do it is usually because of the complaints of a lone Haredi woman who enters the plaza to pray, notices the group as she walks past us towards the Wall, and understands what she sees to be forbidden by halachah. When this happens, if the cries of protestation endure longer than two or three minutes then one woman will break off from the group, attempt to engage the protester in conversation, and while so doing to draw her away from the group's location slightly in order that the tefillah might continue.

The non-confrontational prayer style, nonetheless, has another benefit. One month, as we finished taking the miniature sefer Torah out of a hiking bag and set it onto a small reading stand and I approached in order to read from the Torah, a Haredi woman approached the group from the direction of the Wall and laid her hand upon the parchment. She looked up at us with an expression of joyous disbelief; I nervously smiled back, anticipating grievances or even violence towards the scared object. She remained in this position, holding onto the sefer Torah, until we completed the Torah service, upon which she beamed at us and then left the plaza without ever uttering a word. After the service, Cheryl noted to me that this is not an infrequent occurrence, and that for most Haredi women the presence of Original Women of the Wall provides their first opportunity to see the handwritten scroll of a sefer Torah up close, or to touch one, or to hear Torah read by women. Traditional Jewish women also step into the group to say kaddish on occasion, similarly joining and leaving without a word.

musicians within specific musical cultures, means that masculine ideals of femininity have come to bear on these women's musicking.

Encounter, then, provides a two-way street for women to experiment with their own tefillah practice. Regardless of the occasion, scale, or prior distaste for one another, Jewish women in Israel who are usually confined (whether or not by their own choice) to a specific religious demographic and its associated practices experience alternative vocalizations of prayer as they share this intimate women's site. By conducting an all-women battle to exclusive prayer rights in that same space, they demonstrate pro-woman attitudes and practices previously unthinkable in Jewish history on the most appropriate of days—Rosh Hodesh. The Kotel's historical, political, and national significance is a strategic setting for women “coming into voice” as individuals and as loose assemblages (Sinha 1996: 498), both literally and metaphorically, pouring into the women's section from extremes of Israel's political, religious, and ethnic spectrum temporarily to transform an overwhelmingly male-dominated space and soundscape and render men mere bystanders.

PART THREE

LITURGY IN THE SERVICE OF THE NATION

CHAPTER SIX

MYTHOLOGIES, TRANSLATIONS, AND MESSIANIC CIVIL RELIGION

Sherut Leumi—National Service

When Israeli teenagers graduate high school, most are conscripted into the military for multi-year service. Those who are ineligible or object for ideological reasons may volunteer for an alternative form of enrollment called *sherut leumi*, or national service. Most participants in this program are orthodox young women who believe that it is inappropriate for them to perform military duties, or are keen to prepare themselves for the caring professions that they aspire to work within—a popular choice for women from the *dati* sector. National service has a public image of being the pursuit of selfless individuals who choose to spend years living in near poverty in order to serve the nation's underfunded nursing homes, hospitals, special education schools, immigration hubs, at-risk centers, and so forth. These teenagers, whose jobs are considered to be unpleasant and undesirable and yet foundational to Israel's ethos of social welfare, are lauded for their service to the nation and its ideals.

This chapter and the subsequent bring a new meaning to the concept of *sherut leumi*, which in its literal meaning has broad relevance in the construction of the State of Israel and Israeli identity. Cultural products including music have a long history of being put to work in service of the nation (Even-Zohar 1981; Herschberg 1995; Zerubavel 1995; Regev and Seroussi 2004; Saposnik 2008). Today just as orthodox girls are conscripted into national service to

realize idealized Israeli social values, so too is liturgy conscripted into national service in the name of nation building and nationalism within the realm of civil religion (Liebman and Don-Yehiya 1983). In parts one and two of this dissertation, I demonstrated that the expression of race and gender through liturgy is intrinsic to broader efforts to define the nature and limits of Israeli identity and behavior. Here, in part three, nationalism as identity explicitly takes center stage through case studies of a reading of Megillat Esther, the so-called “secular high holidays” of Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut, and (in chapter seven) Yom Yerushalayim. Israel’s sacred form of Statist nationalism, *mamlachtiyut*, takes center stage, bringing to the fore once again complex sacred/secular continuums, which encompass the middle ground between Israeliness and Jewishness, Israel and (Arab) Other even as attempts and claims are made to define Israeli nationalism tightly and thus exclude those beyond that definition.

These case studies share practices of collective musicking and listening greater in both number and degree than presented in the preceding chapters; while part one focused on musical elites such as ethnomusicologists, pop stars, and expert liturgists, and part two on highly invested women musicking in groups, this section’s consideration of nationalism necessarily involves broad swaths of the population, rather than particularly powerful or specialist groups—or at least, they involve the nation’s people as ideally imagined by those who participate in the events to be described.¹ There exists a common understanding of acceptable modes of musicking at these events, without internal conflicts and negotiations that characterize liturgical deliberations of race and gender. Nonetheless, the specters of race and gender echo in this section even as their

¹ Similarly, Bohlman comments that “[d]iscussions of music and nationalism most often focus on the elite or the marginal—in other words, the castes of composers and ethnic or racial outsiders whose music consciously or unconsciously represents the nation or challenges the nation” while his ethnomusicologically-minded book highlights, to the contrary, “down to earth forms” of, and active participation in, nationalism (Bohlman 2011: 5).

idealized type and role are implicitly agreed upon by the masses, contributing as they do to iterations of imagined idealized Israeliness.

The conscription of liturgy into the service of nationalism is not unique to Israel, but Israel's character as the world's only Jewish nation means that there exist particularly Israeli forms and functions of liturgical nationalism alongside iterations that are either common globally or shared between specific kinds of nationalisms. In order to render Israeli particularities more visible, I offer first a brief overview of musical nationalism's features from a distinctly Western academic perspective, followed by a discussion of the ways in which, and reasons why, this normative theoretical understanding captures only a limited aspect of the liturgical and liturgically themed case studies that follow. In so doing, I continue to emphasize the necessity of embracing Jewish epistemologies in order to understand more fully the nature of public liturgical musicking in Israel. The meanings and intentions of this musicking cannot be adequately encapsulated by Western (secular) thought alone, due to encompassing of both sacred and secular means for both secular and sacred ends.

Musical Nationalisms

As Francis Toye claimed in a 1918 article in *Musical Quarterly*, “[n]obody is quite sure what nationalism means. Everybody, more or less, feels that it postulates something to do with race, something to do with traditional songs and dances” (Toye 1918: 12). Despite rejecting what “everybody” thinks in his opinion piece, Toye captured the broad and indeterminate generalist understanding of nationalism that characterized academic thinking of his era and popular thinking until today. Happily, academic definitions have crystalized considerably over the past

century such that musical nationalism may be characterized beyond a “vague feeling” (Ibid.) about folk songs of so-called ethnic groups, although disputes concerning its precise definition remain.

This is evident in the differing priorities of those studying what they understand to constitute musical nationalism in, for example, North America as opposed to Europe. While European ethnomusicologists often today remain concerned with documenting non-elite musical practices that are considered valuable for their characterization of a nation or people (a methodology that has much in common with historical musicology’s concerns on the topic and might also be characterized as folk studies), North American ethnomusicologists are generally more interested in modes and meanings of transmission and reception of music that is explicitly understood to be deployed for political means.² While this is a sweeping generalization and does not accurately characterize all scholarship from the continents, it is indicative of different academic definitions of musical nationalism as being in the former case the music of a nation, and in the latter case nationalist music.

Sorting out music of a nation from musical nationalism is a task with much in common to that of distinguishing between the national and the nationalist. Taruskin notes that “nationalism should not be conflated with the possession or display of distinguishing national characteristics,” but rather demands an approach that is deeply concerned with intent (Taruskin 2001).³ He

² For some analyses of the state of the field that support this generalization (explicitly or implicitly), see, for example, Nettl 1959, Nettl 2010, Rice 2014, Greve 2016, Morgernstern 2018.

³ This is the precise opposite of the argument made by the aforementioned Toye (1918), who wished to do away with any connection between nationalism and race or folk song, replacing the definition of nationalist music with an entirely decontextualized understanding that links music or a musician with the community in which they exist. Toye privileged broad racial groupings over smaller-scale national ones, thus suggesting that any form of musical nationalism that corresponded to modern Europe’s national borders was nonsensical, presumably even if the

continues, “music has always exhibited local or national traits,” this being an essential quality of music, as any other cultural product, but one of secondary importance to Taruskin in considerations of nationalism. Taruskin, then, differentiates between the essentially national—that which cannot help but indicate a nation or locale, or its associated racial or ethnic group—and the intentionally nationalist—that which is created in order to serve, or put to work in service of, a particular type of political (in the broadest sense) ideology. The very same performance or work might fulfill either category, or both at once, depending upon intent and context.

Musical nationalism, as all expressions of nationalism, is, according to theories of romantic nationalism, inextricably linked to racialized definitions of peoplehood and to boundary-making.⁴ Herder was a great proponent of the development of *Volkslied* and *Nationalism* by all nations, which he understood as extending to people-without-land such as Jews: see, for example, his description of individual Psalms as *Nationalgesang* (national song) (Bohlman and Herder 2017; Patten 2010: 657). He perhaps unintentionally presented an embodied and thus racialized iteration of the concept through his focus within musical nationalism on language, and thus implicitly the voice, that most corporeal musical instrument, and through comparisons between the bounded nation and the genetically-related family unit (Patten 2010: 683). He proposed, as Toye would some centuries later, that nationalism might be developed independent of state borders, focusing instead on cultural cohesion among a group that may not necessarily correspond to the entire populace within a particular nation-state, that

intent was to express commitment to, or identification or solidarity with, a nation state. He supposed that races possessed distinctive musical characteristics and suggested that Central Europeans were particularly “gifted” at harmony, for example. This mindset, typical of its time, corresponds to much of the racial logic presented in the first chapter of this dissertation.

⁴ There exist other models and theories of nationalism, but due to the specific geographical and national context of Israel, and the theories of nationalism which have most impacted the State before and since its foundation, I focus here on romantic nationalism of the Hederian type.

may extend beyond such borders or form a minority group within them—the kind of grouping that might today be described as “ethnicity,” a term subject to significant (and justified) critique within racialization studies (Ibid.).

Bohlman, explaining Rousseau’s *Dictionnaire*, notes that “especially in song, one observed distinctive ways in which the people of different nations and cultures sang; in voice, because of its embodiment of the physical, one could actually hear human difference” (Bohlman and Radano 2000: 14). Couple this with Herder’s claim—borrowed by Taruskin—that song functions as the archetypal national/ist music, and it is quite evident that song’s usefulness in national/ist projects is precisely a product of its embodied and thus racialized nature, because nationalism remains a racialized project.

Folk song, then, has been touted as a particularly useful genre for nationalist purposes, both for its embodied and thus racialized nature and for its obvious benefit of including words, which, while often rather general, still assist in conveying a more explicit and specific meaning than abstract instrumental music alone. For this reason, folk song has frequently been coopted into other genres. Classical choral singing that incorporates folk melodies, as one example, has proved to be a powerful mode of expressing nationalist sentiment, wherein “quantity and volume combine forces to articulate the modern nation” (Bohlman 2011: 5). Bohlman extends this relationship further still, suggesting “we experience music and nationalism through the voices of the people” (Ibid.). In Bohlman’s model, music and nationalism are independently eloquently expressed through voice; it seems obvious, then, that their combined expression should also be borne out most effectively, and thus most commonly, through voice.

Nationalizing the Sacred

Working from an understanding of musical nationalism as characterized by some balance of national musical characteristics, folk song, voice, racialization, perceived and/or actual difference, and some elusive form of national identity, one notes that sacred music is rather well placed for the project of serving the nation. Taruskin sees the confluence of sacred music and nationalism as exemplified by “secular works on sacred or sacralized themes” which allows “[association] with the nation rather than the [religious body]” (Taruskin 2001). This description, while appropriate for the Christian contexts about which Taruskin is writing, cannot be extended to Judaism—nor, indeed, to Islam.

In the Israeli context, such a definition fails for a number of reasons that fall into two categories: the first is the difficulty in defining what does—or, perhaps more precisely does *not*—count as “sacred or sacralized” as opposed to “secular” in a religious state wherein the primary language is Hebrew, civil religion prevails, and citizenship claims are predicated upon religious belonging as defined by the religion itself. As such, Israeli composers of purportedly secular works, such as those in the Western classical tradition, might attribute the same excerpt deployed in their composition as Israeli folk music or Jewish religious music, or consider the two to be inextricably linked.

The second (related) category whereby Taruskin’s definition falls short is that of impossibility of distinguishing between the supposed binary of “nation” and “religious body” due to their intentionally messy boundaries. Both the idea of creating “secular works on sacred or sacralized themes” and that of differentiating between the “nation [and] religious body” rapidly fall apart in the pseudo-theocratic modern nation state, wherein such binaries are intentionally

blurred. Taruskin's theorization of sacred musical nationalism thus falls short in the context of officially Jewish and Muslim countries in particular, wherein religion and the nation-state project are inextricably linked.⁵ In her *Singing A Hindu Nation: Marathi Devotional Performance and Nationalism*, Anna Schultz suggests that Hindu musicking in India may similarly defy Taruskin's definition. Schultz offers a pair of concepts—"nationalizing devotion and devotionalizing the nation"—as modes of exploring the complex relationship between sacred music and nationalism in that context (2013: 156).

Heightening the difference between Christian and Jewish/Islamic contexts is the often-voiced concern that nationalism pollutes and sullies music⁶—think of Wagner's damaged reputation as a result of his German nationalist affiliations during the Nazi era, or the rash of cease-and-desist letters received by President Trump's campaign team in 2016 and 2020 from musicians concerned about their reputation by association. In Israel, nationalism is not considered damaging to music's status, religious or otherwise, because nationalism itself lacks the negative connotations which have accrued to it in Western nations (at least among liberals); nationalism is not the preserve of the right, nor does it foster associations solely with the working class and with working class practices, but rather, as we have seen in earlier chapters of this dissertation, continues to be understood as an essential tool of large-scale community building in the face of mass immigration to a young state. While its specific iterations are determined by demographics such as class, edah, religious affiliation, and age, there exists a common understanding that nationalism is a necessity that must be fostered through cultural means. Thus

⁵ See, for example, Rasmussen's analysis of women's Quranic recitation in Indonesia as an expression of religious nationalism (2010). Theories of religious nationalism have been abundant in India's recent history (Manjari 2019).

⁶ See Bohlman 2011: 9-11 for an analysis and debunking of this popular sentiment.

music's service of nationalism is not considered troubling by Israeli Jews, even while groups entertain different ideas about what kinds of music serve the national and nationalist project most effectively.⁷

The dati leumi community are deeply invested in shaping the Israeli nationalist project, and in the production of sacred musical nationalism to serve their particular vision of the idealized nation. At its most effective, dati leumi musical nationalism has come to characterize a normative and ideal Israeli vision of itself that has been extrapolated for use by the nation at large. At its most divisive, their liturgical nationalism is considered inappropriate, idolatrous, and in need of denouncing to maintain Israel's desired international image as a Western democratic nation. It is the prominent, divisive, and particular sound of this community's iterations of liturgical nationalism that are under examination in this chapter and the next.

Megillat Esther

On Purim, it is a religious requirement incumbent upon all Jewish adults to hear Megillat Esther twice. The Megillah's trope system, like the Megillah itself, is heard but once a year on this holiday, rendering the art of reciting the text a specialized skill even within the Jewish liturgical realm. To learn to read Megillah requires substantial preparation for the sake of just one day of the year.

While some attend Megillah readings in synagogues, a popular alternative option in Israel is to take advantage of the sunny spring weather and attend outdoor readings in public spaces.

⁷ Of course, for Israeli minority groups such as Palestinians, all forms of nationalism that are drawn from Judaism (whether as religion, culture, or ethnic group) are problematic.

Outside of Israel, one struggles to find such an offering due to security concerns regarding public Jewish events, the centralization of Jewish life in the synagogue, the relative lack of concentrated Jewish populations, and the less than favorable weather in the more densely populated Jewish areas during March. Two organizations, Chabad and Tzohar, each offer hundreds of readings across Israel, from bustling, secular Tel Aviv to the tourist resort of Eilat in the South and the Northern mountains of the Golan Heights. Chabad is a worldwide Hasidic orthodox Jewish outreach organization that aims to increase religious observance among all Jews, and Tzohar is an Israeli orthodox nonprofit offering religious services to the Jewish population beyond the auspices of the State's Rabanut, again with the aim of encouraging and increasing orthodox observance within a *dati leumi* model.⁸

⁸ Tzohar are particularly well known for their kashrut certification that challenges the Rabanut's monopoly on this religious service. They also offer an alternative orthodox route to marriage, conducted in collaboration with the Rabanut but acting as their friendly, modern face, with the intention of encouraging liberal and secular Israelis to marry within the state-recognized system rather than marry overseas or "off the books." Their slogan is "Keeping Israel Jewish, Together."

Purim



in Memory of Dr. Aryeh (Leon) Kronitz z"l

Our family oriented Megillah readings are led by Tzohar volunteers in cultural and community centers across the length and breadth of Israel. They are a focal event for local residents, and are attended by young and old, secular and religious, immigrants and veteran Israelis.

In 2018 we staged 459 Megillah reading locations, attracted 90,000 participants and began cooperative ventures with national organizations such as the Israel Fire Brigade and WIZO, as well as in homes for the elderly in conjunction with the Ministry for Social Equality.



To establish a Tzohar Megillah reading in your community, or to find your nearest Tzohar Megillah reading experience

email Hani at hanige@tzohar.org.il

[Click for Purim 2021 events](#)

Figure 6.1. Tzohar's online listing for Purim events administered by their Jewish Holidays Department (Tzohar 2018).

In Jerusalem, Chabad's and Tzohar's offerings are supplemented by readings organized by independent groups and synagogues, and event spaces. The two institutions nevertheless maintain a stronghold on public readings, with weeks of publicity advertising Chabad's multiple readings every hour, on the hour in central Jerusalem. Tzohar offers readings in spaces like hospitals and retirement communities, as well as in more overtly public spaces, but due to their technological additions to the Megillah they were limited to spaces that facilitated their projector system—and that tolerated the message their projector slides conveyed.

Tzohar at the Tea House

On Shushan Purim 2018⁹ I attended a night-time Tzohar Megillah reading in a tea house on Hillel Street in the town center scheduled for 8:00pm, the first event of what promised to be a long night of partying and fulfilling the pseudo-mitzvah of getting drunk—an idiosyncratic religious requirement to celebrate the ancient Jewish victory over the Persians that Purim marks. Feathered, glittering Colombina masks hung along one wall of the darkened room, with the usual offerings of fine tea replaced by cocktails served in chunky wooden mugs. A dozen or so twentysomethings sat in small groups at wooden tables, and a projector screen dominated the small space. I took up a seat on a raised area at the back of the room and examined the booklet that I had picked up from a pile stacked on a table near the entrance, which contained the text of the Megillah and its blessings, as well as information on the various government, corporate, and nonprofit sponsorship that Tzohar had attracted for their Purim happenings, and adverts for future Tzohar events.

⁹ Purim occurs one day later in Jerusalem and other walled cities than it does elsewhere in recognition of the historical fact that fighting in the walled city of Shushan, the capital of the Persian Empire where the Purim story occurred, continued for an additional day, as noted in the Megillah itself. This day is called Shushan Purim. Israelis can opt to celebrate Purim for two consecutive days by attending, for example, Purim festivities in Tel Aviv, and then Sushan Purim activities the next day in Jerusalem. They can also opt to skip Purim altogether by traveling in reverse. See Shulḥan Aruch Orach Chayim 685:1 for the halachic basis of Shushan Purim.



Figure 6.2. The tea house on Hillel, with attendees to the left and behind the camera, and the couple from Tzohar to the right.

A man and woman wearing fancy dress costumes—another Purim quirk in which the rest of the attendees had not partaken—sat in the center of the room. The woman fiddled with a laptop connected to the projector, attempting to find the correct slideshow file, and the man pulled from his satchel a box containing a Megillah scroll. She wore an orange wig covered with a headband to indicate her married and religious status while simultaneously partaking in the spirit of the evening, and settled into her seat as the man, likely her husband based on their body language, stood to introduce the evening’s proceedings in Hebrew. He rushed through his prepared slides

on the history of Purim and the Megillah apologetically, as though he had expected a different kind of audience to whom this might be more interesting, all the while he doing the talking and she clicking through the slides. Given that the same slideshow had been distributed to the chanters of all 450 Tzohar performances, this section intended for children and secular adults was indeed out of place in an evening faux-cocktail-bar event for Jerusalem's dati millennial crowd.

The man offered a virtuosic reading with characterful voices for the protagonist Esther, her heroic uncle Mordechai, the villain Haman, and feminist icon, deposed Queen Vashti. His artful and comic rendering of the biblical book was not enough to distract me from the content of the slideshow. More than just offering the text of the Megillah or providing a visual prompt for those for whom following fourth-century Hebrew posed a challenge, the slideshow served to translate the narrative of the Megillah into a contemporary context. To understand this act of translation, one must first be familiar with the rather complex story that this liturgy tells.

King Ahashverosh of Persia, known for his debauchery and drunkenness, holds a seven-day banquet in Shushan. On its last day, he orders Queen Vashti to appear before the guests wearing nothing but her crown. She refuses and is thus deposed from her royal position. Ahashverosh then looks for a replacement queen from among his empire, deciding upon Esther, an orphan girl who was, secretly and unbeknownst to Ahashverosh, Jewish. Her uncle and adoptive parent, Mordechai, halts a coup against Ahashverosh's life and is held in favor in the King's court. Ahashverosh appoints Haman as the top local official, and Haman takes issue with Mordechai's refusal to bow down to him. Upon discovering that the reason for Mordechai's behavior is his Jewishness, Haman plots to kill all Jews in the Persian empire and acquires Ahashverosh's permission to do so on the thirteenth day of the Jewish month of Adar. Haman is

offended by Mordechai yet again and sets out to request Aḥashverosh's permission to kill him immediately, but Aḥashverosh had been reminded of Mordechai's previous service after dining with Esther, and instead honors Mordechai. During another banquet the next night, Aḥashverosh promises to grant Esther anything she wishes. She reveals her Jewishness and requests that Haman's order to exterminate all the Jews of the empire be halted. Haman ends up being hung on the gallows he had built for Mordechai. On the thirteenth of Adar, Aḥashverosh amends the decree to permit the Jews to kill anyone who would seek to harm them. Haman's family and supporters are killed in the hundreds, encouraged by Esther.

Cocktails, Masks, Squeaky Hammers, and...Auschwitz?

The themes of Jewish persecution in diaspora and eventual triumph are hardly unique to Megillat Esther, and indeed are commonly cited as the normative Jewish experience over the past two millennia. The stories of Ḥanukah and Pesah contain similar themes. A popular joke tells that every Jewish holiday can be summarized as "they tried to kill us, we won, let's eat." Tzohar's slideshow accompanying the Megillah attempted to draw a parallel between the Purim story and the Holocaust and establishment of the State of Israel, the most modern, extreme, and emotionally evocative among the many Jewish narratives of persecution and eventual triumph.¹⁰ Three of the evening's slides illustrate the ways in which this parallel was presented.

Firstly, in chapter three, verse thirteen (see figure 6.3), Haman sends forth his decree across Persia that all Jews must be killed: "And letters shall be sent by the couriers to all the

¹⁰ It should be noted, though, that presuming a relationship between the Holocaust and Israel's foundation is a shaky claim at best, and one that erases the experiences and contributions of non-European Jews.

king's provinces, cause all the Jews to be destroyed, killed, and to perish, young and old, little children and women, in one day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month which is the month of Adar, and their spoils will be taken as plunder.”¹¹ Illustrating this verse was a slide depicting two parchment scrolls, each stamped with a Nazi crest, and a magnifying glass suggesting that Haman’s words were contained within this scroll and thus proposing a parallel between the Nazi regime and the Persian persecution.



Figure 6.3. Illustration of Megillat Esther 3:13, paralleling Haman’s decree to Nazi law.

Secondly, in chapter seven, verses three and four (see figure 6.4), Esther petitions King Ahashverosh to cancel Haman’s decree and let the Jews live: “For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish; now had we been sold for slaves and bondswomen, I would have kept silent, for the adversary has no consideration for the king's

וְנָשְׁלוּחַ סְפָרִים בְּיַד הַרְצִיִּים אֶל-כָּל-מְדִינֹת הַמְּלָכָה לְהַשְׁמִיד לְהַרְגוֹ וּלְאַבֵּד אֶת-כָּל-הַיְהוּדִים מִנְּעָר וְעַד-זָקֵן טָף וְנָשִׁים
 בְּיוֹם אֶחָד בְּשִׁלּוּשֵׁה עָשָׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ וְשִׁנִּים-עָשָׂר הוּא-חֹדֶשׁ אָדָר וּשְׁלֹשׁ לְבוֹז

loss.”¹² The gates of Auschwitz appear as a speech bubble emanating from Esther’s mouth, implying a parallel between the impending fate of Persia’s Jews in the Megillah and the fate of Europe’s Jews in the Holocaust. Rather bizarrely, Auschwitz is visually implied as a memory through its black and white photographic depiction in an otherwise colorful cartoon scene, despite occurring centuries after the story of Esther. Auschwitz is rendered as a historical fact, and by comparison, Megillat Esther less so. Perhaps Tzohar’s intention was to imbue a sense of relatable, historical fact—especially given the predominance of descendants of Holocaust survivors in Israel—even for those for whom believing in the literal truth of religious texts proves challenging, thus creating a meaningful mode of engagement even for secular attendees at their various events.

כי נמפרנו אגני ועמי להשמיד להרוג ולאבד וְאֵלֹהֵי לְעַבְדֵיִם וְלִשְׁפָחוֹת נִמְפָּרְנוּ הַחַיִּי שְׂמִי כִּי אֵין הַצָּר שָׁנָה בְּגוֹמַק הַמְּלִדָּה ¹²



Figure 6.4. Illustration of *Megillat Esther* 7:3-4, paralleling Haman's decree to Nazi law.

Thirdly, in chapter 9:1–2 (see figure 6.5), the Jews' fate is transformed:

And in the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, on the thirteenth day thereof, when the king's order and his edict drew near to be put into execution, on the day that the Jews' enemies looked forward to ruling over them, it was reversed, the Jews should rule over their enemies. The Jews assembled in their cities, in all the provinces of King Ahashverosh, to lay hand on those who sought to harm them, and no one stood up before them, for their fear had fallen upon all the peoples.¹³

Here, the newfound power over life and death that the Jewish people have attained through royal pardon, presumably via God's unacknowledged hand, is paralleled to the work of the Israel

¹³ ובשנים עשר חדש הוא-חדש אדר בשלושה עשר יום בו אשר הגיע דבר-המלך ודתו להעשות ביום אשר שברו איבי היהודים לשלוט בהם ונהפוך הוא אשר ישלטו היהודים המה בשנאייהם נקהלו היהודים בעריהם בכל-מדינות המלך אחשנרוש לשלח יד במבוקשי רעתם ואיש לא-עמד לפניהם כי-נפל פחדם על-כל-העמים

Defense Forces who are praised by the *dati leumi* community for doing God's work in defending the Jewish holy land and thus reversing the fate of Jews in the wake of the Holocaust.¹⁴

The reversal of fortune is no longer the amendment of a royal edict turning Jews from persecuted to rulers, but rather the establishment of the State of Israel and its military prowess in the wake of the Holocaust. This is implied rather than made explicit in the slideshow, which shows a photo only of soldiers, the supposedly parallel historical trajectory left for the audience to determine having been primed through prior images evoking Nazism and Auschwitz.



Figure 6.5. Slide showing the association between reversal of Jewish fortunes in the Megillah text and the Israeli military in the State of Israel.

¹⁴ The purimshpil has a long history of transmission in the Ashkenazi diaspora, and often reflects and commentates upon political-religious situations. In this regard, Tzohar's offering is part of an abiding Jewish tradition

The implication of a historical trajectory from Nazism to the Holocaust and then the State of Israel is ahistorical, or at best represents a selective version of events, and erases the contributions of non-European Jews to the foundation of Israel. The latter did not experience the Holocaust as Europeans did, but maintained a deep commitment to Zionism both in theory and practice before, during, and after Israel's establishment. Furthermore, Zionism's beginnings in Europe far predate the Holocaust and have a more substantive underpinning than reactivity to anti-Semitism. Ascribing Israel's foundation to the Holocaust undermines Jewish self-determination and presumes the need for a foreign colonial power to do the work of nation-forming in a reactionary way caused by guilt, pity, or both. While there was increased international support for Israel's existence as a Jewish state in the wake of the European genocide, the groundwork had been laid decades prior, including by an antecedent shadow government. A Jewish presence in Israel was a given for some centuries already, and their anti-colonial (that is, anti-British Mandate) efforts were perhaps the most important component in the handover of power from the Mandate to the local Jewish population. Israel's independence, like the independence of many colonized African and South/Southeast Asian nations from 1945–1960,¹⁵ was part of a global uprising against white colonialism *and* a product of a particular mode of nationalism. Why, then, would Tzohar willingly and knowingly misrepresent the Zionist project to which they subscribe in their portrayal of the events of the Megillah? What purpose does this serve such that historical misrepresentation is warranted?

¹⁵ Colonialism continues to exist globally in both explicit and discrete forms. The “decolonization” movement of approximately 1945–1960 facilitated formal independence beyond Africa and Asia, for example in Pacific Island nations, the Caribbean, and South America.

Distorting Texts as an Act of Translation

This process of transforming the Megillah is an act of translating a religious text into a nationalist one. Its new rendering allows the Megillah to retain much of its original meaning; the words themselves are unchanged, the performance style requires no alteration. This act of translation means that new meanings and historical significance accrue to both the Megillah and contemporary Jewish history. These require a willful distortion of both the ancient and modern historical narratives, their historicism is sublimated to their national service through a process of myth-making.

For example, Tzohar intends to show an unstated Divine hand in both these narratives. In the religious Jewish world one learns that while God's name is conspicuously absent from the Megillah, His hand in events should be obvious (despite some rather unholy events like mass slaughter and forced prostitution). So too, some (naive) post-Shoah theology suggests that the Divine gift of the Land and State of Israel justifies the Shoah, which is then cast as an unfortunate necessity. Tzohar adopt this myth-making process that transforms a recent Jewish genocide into a holy inevitability, turning Holocaust victims into martyrs and, by implying that the Holocaust resulted in Israel's foundation, portraying Israel itself as an exceptional modern nation-state founded by God's hand. Mythologizing the birth of a nation-state as an exceptional Divine event is not unique to Judaism,¹⁶ but an effort to overhaul such recent history—within living memory—is unusual.

¹⁶ A seventeenth-century text *Keralolpathi* claims that the then-independent southwest Indian coastal region of Kerala was recovered from the sea by the god Vishnu's avatar. A century later, the region's ruler altered such an understanding while simultaneously reinforcing its basic concept, stating that the region was to be given to Vishnu, and that he was ruling on Vishnu's behalf (Johnson et al. 2022: 275). More recently, Pakistan, independent from British rule since

The parallel of unseen Divine intervention also increases the relative importance of both the Megillah and, arguably, Israel's foundation within the broad scope of Jewish history. As Jewish holiday stories go, the Megillah occupies a modest position relative to the narratives around the origins of Pesah or Hanukah, to give but two examples. The foundation of Israel as a specific occurrence was part of a much longer human effort towards independence and is of limited relevance to diaspora Jewry. But situating the two events as part of a broader holy trajectory bolsters the status of both by implying that they are part of a Divine Messianic plan which, as will be explored in the next chapter, is a mindset pervasive in the dati leumi community and used by some, for example, to justify the expansion of Jewish territories in disputed and Palestinian-controlled areas.¹⁷

Expanding Israeli Supersessionism

The deployment of intentional teleological slippage and ahistorical myth-making by Tzohar on Purim serves to translate not only the text of the Megillah from a religious to a national-political one, but also to transform the meaning of the holiday itself from a drunken minor spring celebration to a holiday of considerable civil and nationalist stature, and its liturgy from a

1947, passed the Objectives Resolution in 1949, declaring that God had delegated His authority to the Pakistani people to rule their new nation-state.

¹⁷ The use of Messianic ideology to justify anti-Palestinian policy and action is the preserve of a small minority of dati leumi individuals. For most, Zionist Messianism is limited to religious fervor and future hypothetical desires, such as the rebuilding of a Jewish Temple on the Al Aqsa compound (also called Haram esh-Sharif, Har HaBayit, and Temple Mount), which is currently controlled by Jordan's Jerusalem Islamic Waqf. For most, such Messianism draws short of taking any action to bring about such a change, although they might pray for it to occur and engage in discourse to the same effect. While Haredim also subscribe to Messianic theology, their iteration is distinctly apolitical in nature, and they actively oppose any proactive human-led efforts to bring about the Messianic era.

religious text of secondary importance into a Messianic foreshadowing of the State of Israel's foundation. In other words, Jewishness is superseded by Israeliness, the latter incorporating elements of the former, adopting its religious, ethnic, and cultural aspects as fodder for a national and nationalist project.

This same supersessionist process occurs on a grander scale each year during the civil holidays of Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut. On Purim, Tzohar cater predominantly to the *dati leumi* and *masorti* sector, which are inherently Zionist; they are preaching to the choir, affirming already-held beliefs, bolstering both religious and nationalist ideologies for those who already hold them. But on Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut the participating public is substantially expanded to include all those residing in Israel without their choice or consent, even by auditory force.

At 8:00 p.m., Yom HaZikaron is ushered in according to the spirit of the Jewish calendar, whereby the changing of days occurs in the evening, but rather than occurring at sunset per *halachah* the day instead begins according to the secular clock, offering the convenience of a later formal beginning to proceedings and the ease of an on-the-hour scheduling while retaining a clear nod to the religious day. A siren is sounded across the entire nation to remind every person within Israel's borders of the solemn occasion. The siren renders itself unnecessary; such is the gravitas of the approaching day that in the minutes before 8:00 p.m. the country grinds to a halt. Buses pull over on major highways, pedestrians check their watches and cease walking, TV and radio programming pauses. The discipline with which Israeli Jews observe the beginning of Yom HaZikaron is remarkable in its ubiquity, and exceeds in its universality any religious observance and possibly any other civil ritual. Little wonder that this day and the one that follows have been termed "Israel's secular high holidays."

This auditory practice on Yom HaZikaron attempts to conjure empathy with, and gratitude for, the plight of the vast numbers of dead, injured, disabled, and traumatized Israelis who have suffered through their military national service, professional military duty, or reserve duty (*miluim*), or have been victims of terror attacks. Whereas in nations across the globe the desire to generate collective remembrance is triggered by a voluntary act of silence, in Israel empathy for wartime experience is involuntary. Listening bodies of all residents are conscripted to relive personal trauma associated with the siren that stems from the near-universal experience of running to shelter from incoming missiles from Gaza or Lebanon. All bodies in Israel—Jewish, Palestinian, tourist, citizen—are required to reflect upon their own wartime experience through re-living a key auditory trigger, in order to maximally appreciate the sacrifice and loss of the Israeli military.¹⁸

Interruption: The Siren

Abigail Wood notes that Israel’s civilian listening during wartime is characterized by a state of auditory hypervigilance, and further, that individuals experience fear upon hearing the siren based upon extensive associative experience.¹⁹ While this may be true for residents living in specific border regions (close to Gaza or Lebanon), much of the country hears the siren only infrequently. In Jerusalem, for example, the siren is more closely associated with its role in marking the beginning of Shabbat. The capital was until recently considered exempt from such

¹⁸ This bears comparison with Martin Daughtry’s analyses of war-related triggers in the auditory realm (Daughtry 2015).

¹⁹ Ailsa Lipscombe, writing about modes of listening during the COVID-19 pandemic, terms contextually different but processually similar phenomena “modes of traumatic listening” (Lipscombe 2022).

concerns due to its shared exalted political and religious status among Israelis and Palestinians alike rendering it safe from attack. In its different uses, the siren's sound is adjusted slightly; Shabbat is a single, pure tone; Yom HaZikaron (and Yom HaShoah) a steady tone which begins with a swooping ascent and crescendo and ends with the opposite; rockets warrant a slowly oscillating pitch in the same pattern as the beginning and end of the Yom HaZikaron siren. In the grand scheme of the auditory public, their similarities far outweigh their differences.

I experienced this for myself in May 2021 from my Jerusalem apartment. Hearing a siren at this unanticipated time—as opposed to in the context of Yom HaZikaron, Yom HaShoah, the beginning of Shabbat, or even a pre-publicized practice siren—caused me, a citizen of over three years, and my husband, who grew up in Jerusalem and served five years in the Israeli military, such confusion that we were unable to act for some time. My ten-month-old daughter was ill and had been home from daycare, which was fine because we were nervous about the long drop-off and pick-up walk which took us down roads that served as the borders between Jewish and Arab neighborhoods, which during this time of increased tensions felt like an intrusive act.

We were about to put her to bed when the siren sounded. We froze, deeply confused by the incorrect use of the siren, as I recalled that even if this *was* real—surely not, though—we had a couple of minutes to shelter; the time a rocket takes to arrive from Gaza in each region is at least vaguely known even to Jerusalemites. We had not had paid much attention to anything from *Pikud HaOref* (Home Front Command), the institution responsible for this kind of information, for more than a year, since they had been tasked with logistical management of the COVID-19 crisis and thus their normal public information campaigns—images of Israel divided into color zones based on how long a rocket takes to reach that area, diagrams of stairwells explaining

which floor is the safest in old apartment buildings with nowhere else to shelter—had all but disappeared.

We, like many Israelis (especially Jerusalemites and Israeli Arabs), had no access to a bomb shelter that we could run to within the time it would take a rocket to fall. It was flooded. Our inaction was thus inconsequential, but after later checking Pikud HaOref's infographics we realized we had not made the right decision by fleeing to the stairwell, and had obviously made a poor choice in sneaking down to the front door to see if anyone on the street knew what was happening (it was from there that we heard a boom that confirmed that yes, this had indeed been a real siren, and that either the rocket had landed somewhere within earshot or been intercepted by the Iron Dome in our vicinity). Later that night we calculated the angle at which a rocket would hit our apartment if coming from Gaza, and therefore determined that in the case of another siren our baby's room was the safest place to shelter.²⁰ This was a small piece of good fortune; she had just learned to sleep through the night, and the prospect of not having to intentionally wake her for the sake of a rocket was reassuring, even as our complete lack of appropriate available safety measures was not.²¹ My husband repeated to me many times that Jerusalem is in the mountains, and rockets are notoriously poor at navigating hilly terrain, so we

²⁰ In 2022, when rockets again were fired at Jerusalem (this time on Tisha B'Av, a religious fast day), I was ironically pleased that I recognized the sound of the Iron Dome intercepting two overhead. The sirens did not sound since the rockets were not on course for our neighborhood, and in any case, we were wiser about procedures and had identified our nearest bomb shelter (just across the road) and made plans in case of sirens overnight.

²¹ Seemingly trivial calculations made during war such as whether one's baby should be woken for a siren or whether the baby should sleep in the bomb shelter all night inform one's experience of war at the deepest level. Friends of mine who were parents to babies and children in Modiin, Tel Aviv, and small kibbutzim and moshavim within rocket range reported that their ability to let their children sleep uninterrupted was the most significant controllable factor in their mental health. Many families assigned the house or apartment's *maamad* (bomb shelter) as the children's or family's bedroom for the duration of the attacks, thus limiting their need to manage their children's fear and trauma to daytime hours.

would be fine anyway. He was right, but our shared response to that initial stimulus was hard to forget because it told of our inexperience and powerlessness.

Such an experience of temporary paralysis is reported in the same context by Kaplan (2009) in his analysis of Israeli wartime radio self-regulation. Kaplan notes that his roommate's paralysis was a matter of confusing the commemorative steady siren, which the roommate thought she was hearing, with the air raid oscillating siren, which was actually warning of the start of the Yom Kippur war.²² I, like Kaplan's roommate, lacked embodied entrainment as to how to respond to this sound in this unusual circumstance. While I recognized the sound as conveying danger, the lack of normative context around the sound made immediate appropriate action impossible. I had learnt to stand at solemn attention for sirens on Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaShoah, to steadfastly ignore the test air raid sirens ("only *frierim* [suckers] hide from the siren"),²³ and to treat the Shabbat siren as an admonition to speed up final Shabbat preparations, I had no training in the siren's most essential purpose, the purpose for which the siren exists.

Wood's thesis may be extended from her claim that individuals experience fear upon hearing the siren during wartime based upon extensive associative experience, to account for other kinds of associative experiences and responses that have nothing to do with wartime. Fear may also be generated upon hearing the siren based on precisely the opposite entrained scenario of that which she describes: that is, based on repeated ritual use of the siren and a lack of

²² In a reversal of this incident, Kaplan also reports that during the Second Lebanon War, a family from the north stayed with Jerusalem's mayor away from the line of fire. When the Shabbat siren sounded, the children panicked and sought shelter (2009).

²³ I overheard this comment during an air raid test siren in Jerusalem, 2019. This attitude extended for some to real sirens; as the May 2021 siren sounded, we noticed a man continuing to stroll down the street outside our apartment building front door, and when we asked him if he knew what had happened, he commented "it's fine, the rocket is just as likely to hit you there inside as it is to hit me outside, just carry on with your life."

embodied knowledge about appropriate reaction when it is used in times of war, rendering the siren terrifying when it unusually warns of rockets precisely for the lack of embodied knowledge possessed by many Israelis, and terrifying when it is used for commemorative events in regions that have regularly known war.

It is ironic that the appropriation of the siren across the nation for commemorative purposes can trigger trauma or imbue inappropriate embodied knowledge, such that the siren's use for emergencies is less effective, and that the very possibility of marking Yom HaZikaron in such a way is facilitated by regular experiences of war in Israel. Whatever its use, the siren binds Israel together through nonconsensual auditory experiences and the creation of a public soundscape that invades bodies and homes, bringing the public into every space in the nation whether the occasion is Shabbat, Yom HaZikaron, or a rocket attack. In this way, the siren and public liturgical musicking differ from one another, but they share important work in fostering civil religion through their ability to bridge secular and sacred purposes. Just as the siren may sound sacred when it ushers in Shabbat on Friday night, so too may liturgy sound sacred when Hallel rings out from within the walls of a synagogue. Just as the siren may sound secular when it warns of rockets raining down, so too may Hallel sound secular when shouted by young men and accompanied by the pounding of drums and the pumping of fists. And just as the siren sits within that secular sacred continuum when it calls the nation to embodied action on Israel's secular High Holiday of Yom HaZikaron, so too may Hallel bridge that middle ground when sung in a public park the next day on Yom HaAtzmaut. Both the siren and liturgy generate a range of affective experiences through their manifold uses across the secular and sacred realms, most importantly a sense of national belonging or othering that then informs an individual's identity within the Israeli nationalist project. Thus on Yom HaZikaron, civil religion is cultivated

through the sounding of the siren and of liturgy, penetrating homes and pervading public spaces, drawing together secular and sacred symbols and auditory devices in service of the national project.

Consensual, Co-Constituted Public Commemoration

In contrast to its opening aurality with the compulsion to hear the siren, as the night of Yom HaZikaron presses on, Israeli Jews are offered a plethora of ceremonies to partake in performative, and often musical, modes of mourning and commemoration, as liturgy and musicking shifts to center stage. These ritualized gatherings normally include group singing, poetry readings, lighting memorial candles, reciting lists of local victims, and laying wreaths. In 2019, fifteen Jerusalem neighborhoods strategically located across the city hosted such ceremonies under the auspices of the *iriyah* (city council).²⁴

Some of the ceremonies' content is normative across national borders as a commemorative strategy, in particular wreath-laying, which originated in Ancient Greece and has a history of use from mourning early Christian virgin martyrs in Europe to British Victorian era mourning practices whereby specific sentiments were communicated through flower choice in the wreath (Batchen 2006: 92). Today, in a sign of the internationalization of wreath laying, the act has become a common diplomatic show of shared mourning and a symbol of post-war reconciliation, with politicians and heads of state commonly partaking in the ritual on visits

²⁴ By strategically located, I mean that the ceremonies were *not* held in Haredi neighborhoods and were dotted around the rest of the city such that nobody would have too long a journey to reach their nearest ceremony.

overseas and during multinational remembrance events such as European holidays on May 8th and 9th that mark VE Day, or Bastille Day, which falls on July 14th.

Other ritual acts on Yom HaZikaron are particularly Jewish, such as the lighting of a *ner neshamah* (memorial candle). While lighting candles is a ritual act found in many religions, such as the Catholic practice of lighting a candle on All Saints Day, its particular iteration on Yom HaZikaron draws in timing and type from Yahrzeit practices. In this custom, someone who has lost a spouse, parent, or child lights a candle on the Jewish date on which the person died. The candle is of a specific type, usually contained in a metal tin and intended to last at least twenty-four hours. The same practice is observed on some Jewish holidays. This candle, the *ner neshamah*, has a pervasive presence on Yom HaZikaron both in ceremonies and in organizations' imagery, a sign of the permeating of a Jewish memorial practice into Israeli civil life, the candle deployed even by those who would never think to light one for its original purpose.

Perhaps the most distinctly Israeli practice on Yom HaZikaron is that of the collective sing-along. Even in the numerous instances where famous pop stars are brought in to lead the musical proceedings, it is understood by all that they are merely leading or officiating over a musicking process that exists for, and is generated by, a broader public collective. These celebrity musicians' stature as celebrities is rendered irrelevant on this day, and their voices are intended to be obscured. This is evidenced by both the relative balance of instruments, with the lead singer's microphone amplified at a low level and often unused for songs that the public sing confidently, and the use of huge projector screens displaying lyrics for the public's benefit, often employing the Hebrew font associated with death notices. The repertoire is inevitably drawn from *Shirei Eretz Yisrael* (Songs of the Land of Israel, a folk/national genre), in particular songs that explicitly address themes of mourning, war, loss, and so forth, as well as songs that have

obtained an association with the day in the national imagination (such as Leonard Cohen's *Hallelujah*).²⁵



Figure 6.6. Yom HaZikaron collective singing event at the First Station in Talbieh, Jerusalem, 2019.

²⁵ Kaplan (2019) offers specific examples, of this process and an analysis of the way in which associations between national mourning and specific songs are produced.



Figure 6.7 Some of the audience at Yom HaZikaron at Kikar Safra, Jerusalem, 2019.



Figure 6.8. The stage at Yom HaZikaron at Kikar Safra, Jerusalem, 2019.

These shared practices, from the generic to the specific, serve to promote a sense of unity and cohesiveness within Israeli Jewish society.²⁶ Michael Figueroa (2014) claims that participants' attendance is characterized by the sublimation of the individual's subjectivity in favor of a sense of collective belonging. This was indeed my own experience in attending both small-scale neighborhood gatherings over three years, and even more so at the city's biggest annual gathering in Kikar Safra when I attended in in 2019.

Unusually for Israel, the event started on time at 9:00 p.m. with thousands of mostly young Israelis, in their teens through thirties and attending with partners or friends, sat on vast adjoining Persian rugs and filling the 4000 square meter plaza. The scene immediately reminded me of Tisha B'Av, a Jewish holiday mourning the destruction of the Temple where one practice is to refrain from sitting on chairs as a sign of sorrow, except that I had never seen so titanic a crowd at any Tisha B'Av gathering. Two large projector screens flanked a musical set-up, and the program alternated between sing-alongs and short animated films created specifically for Yom HaZikaron, focusing on the individual experiences of soldiers who had died in service.

What lacked, contextually, was applause. Rather, through sitting together at the same level, with musicians lacking their usual riser, and the strength of thousands of obedient singing voices, the impression was that of a democratized, co-created tribute. One participant expressed the atmosphere as being "like a warm hug," conveying Figueroa's notion that in order to feel at the center of such events as an individual—for this participant, feeling as the recipient of the hug—one must ironically prioritize the communal—giving the sensation of this warm hug to others through participation (Figueroa 2014). Evidently, a pervasive sense of "cultural codes"

²⁶ Blacking (1973) claims that this is song's primary purpose.

determined the success of this process, which relied in its success entirely upon the unspoken norms that govern behavior at commemorative events (Kaplan 2009: 324).

Figuroa suggests that this is a feature of Jerusalem life, that individuals are drawn to being part of a “cultural fabric” and shun individual independence (2004: 236). My experience is that Jerusalemites are, in fact, fiercely tribal, and rarely come together in the way that occurs on Yom HaZikaron; more often, religious and ethnic divisions govern behavior and emphasize difference, which is precisely what makes Jerusalem’s cultural fabric so conflict-ridden, fascinating, and explosive, as this dissertation attests. All the more powerful, then, is that residents are able temporarily to sublimate their individuality and group allegiances on Yom HaZikaron and sit side-by-side, uniformed soldiers next to yeshivah boys, young dati families next to secular students, to co-create an event that successfully manages shared national trauma.

Particularly Jewish or Particularly Israeli?

Yom HaZikaron’s more unusual features, as compared to other memorial days globally, are derived in most cases from Jewish religious practices. On the one hand, Yom HaZikaron is explicitly presented as a secular holiday within the category of “Israel’s secular high holidays” and is clearly aligned in its very existence with a broader global notion of a (secular) remembrance day, which functions as a solemn reminder of the tragedies of war. On the other hand, the day is scheduled according to the Jewish calendar (both in terms of the time that it starts and the day of the year on which it falls) and engages symbolism from Jewish mourning customs. Importantly, it also commemorates those who died defending the Jewish State; discourse around the day includes the continuing need to reiterate Israel’s right to exist in peace

as a Jewish nation, thus rendering the day explicitly Jewish in nature, at least nationally and ethnically.

On Yom HaZikaron, as with Tzohar's Purim narrative, the entanglement of Jewishness and Israeliness and the slippage between sacred and secular is intentional. Sacred Jewish rituals serve the nation effectively on these occasions precisely because commemoration requires "uniformity of music preferences and cultural values" (Kaplan 2009: 320). Purim's liturgy becomes nationally commemorative through the pictorial evocation of the Holocaust; Yom HaZikaron's essentially commemorative nature is Judaized because shared symbols—which for Israel's diverse Jews must be Jewish symbols—are the most effective mode of generating collective sentiment.

It seems that differentiation between Israel and Jewish markers is unimportant to participants relative to the importance of these symbols working effectively. One young, uniformed soldier at Kikar Safra stated, "it doesn't matter in the end, what does it matter to me if this thing is Jewish? It matters that it brings us together today. I'm not against something Jewish of course, but it's not relevant if it is or isn't." I asked him whether the ceremony brings us together as Jews or as Israelis, to which he responded,

Yes and yes. Of course, when we are remembering our brothers who were killed, we remember who killed them. Even people who hold Israeli passports [killed them]. But they are not true Israelis. I'm not saying they're all like this but today it feels that to be fully Israeli you have to be Jewish, because it means we share this feeling of us versus them...not in a combative way, but regarding who feels the sympathy and sadness. If we are honest, you and I know that today is for Israeli Jews alone. We and only we need this day. (An anonymous soldier 2018)

The soldier expressed an oppositional Israeli and Jewish identity while also dismissing such a notion. For him, the irrelevance of differentiating between Jewish and Israeli identity was related to the irrelevance of both these notions to his Others, that is, those against whom he was charged

with protecting Israel, those with whom he placed the blame for the very need for Yom HaZikaron to exist. Hila, a young woman who came to Kikar Safra with two university friends, reported a different relationship to the day. She said,

For me even though I'm *datiyah* it's not about Judaism today. Maybe it's *because* I am *datiyah* actually. Like maybe for someone who is not connected to their Judaism it is obvious that there are Jewish things about today, to me it's not specific enough to notice and I see it as more Israeli. Israel is Jewish of course, so it's never *just* Israeli. But I think you have to think about it from the experience of people who grew up here. For us Judaism is everywhere, we don't have to put a name to it over and over. The question is, does it matter? It's not like the *yamim noraim* [High Holy Days]. It's just in our essence. We are incapable of not being Jewish. So you have to try and separate out when something is just Israeli which has to be a bit Jewish, and when something is really *dati*. Yom HaZikaron is not *dati*, it is Israeli and it is extremely important, but I don't think of it as a religious thing even though we know there is a religious imperative to live here and that's in the end why we end up having this day. (Hila 2018)

Both the soldier and Hila expressed the inextricable bond between Israeliness and Jewishness and questioned the relevance of trying to separate out these identities. Their experiences of the day clearly differed substantially, Hila having opted for *sherut leumi* over military service and never having known anyone who died in military duty or from an act of terror, while the young soldier was on active duty as part of his term of conscription and was mourning friends and colleagues; Hila, too, being a religious Jerusalem-born woman while the soldier was a secular man here on a temporary posting. But they shared an understanding that what was at work was a process of ethno-national identity affirmation. The event's Jewishness was contingent upon these symbols being used within and at the service of the civil national Israeli context, any Israeliness contingent upon excluding non-Jewish iterations and elements thereof.

Havdalah and the *Tekes Maavar*

As Yom HaZikaron transitions to Yom HaAtzmaut, the need to recalibrate the national mood from mourning to celebration is facilitated by various ceremonies that similarly play upon the intersections and continuums of Jewishness and Israeliness, and of sacred and secular. These ceremonies are often called *havdalah* (meaning separation, division, or parting) after the ritual of the same name that marks the end of Shabbat and each biblical holiday, and/or referred to as a *tekes maavar* (transition ceremony). In its Shabbat iteration, the ceremony always uses wine, a multi-wicked lit candle, and fragrant spices,²⁷ and when the Ashkenazi text is used *havdalah* is often sung to a Debbie Friedman melody, especially in public contexts (*havdalah* is often conducted at home with one's family unit).²⁸ As such, *havdalah* is musically and ritually distinctive within Judaism's traditional liturgy.

Its use to bridge transitions from sacred to secular time render it an appropriate and effective basis for the creation of new ceremonies to assist with the challenging emotional transition from mourning to celebration. Rabbi Yael Karrie of Kol HaNeshamah synagogue in Jerusalem, organizers of a major *tekes maavar* in the city, explains that “this ceremony between Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut exists [because] it's a very hard transition, and you need

²⁷ When performed at the end of a yom tov (Jewish holiday of biblical origins), *havdalah* often requires fewer of these elements.

²⁸ As a woman Reform cantor, the popularity of Friedman's *havdalah* melody across denominations including Haredi and orthodox Judaism is perhaps surprising. However, the melody has taken on the de facto status of “miSinai” (from Mount Sinai), a lighthearted expression used to describe tunes that attain a status that supersedes that of any composer and become essentially anonymized, as though they are as ancient as Moses himself. It is highly unlikely that most synagogue-goers in the orthodox and Haredi world are aware that the melody was composed by Friedman, and equally unlikely that they are interested in its origins relative to its effectiveness.

to do something to...ease your way from one to the other. The aim is to connect people emotionally to this specific time; time is a very important factor in Judaism and we can see it in havdalah, so we connect these things.” (Karrie 2018)

Each year, the stage was already set prior to Yom HaZikaron for Kol HaNeshamah’s evening ceremony, with Israeli flags draped over stage monitors, and one oversized flag hung as a backdrop, signaling the imminent new focus. Such symbolism, present across the country, feels awkward during Yom HaZikaron as the preparations for celebration are paused for twenty-five hours. Simply arriving at such a setting at the end of a long day of mourning already begins to recalibrate one’s mood, as one notices an abundance of blue and white symbolism replacing black and white imagery and memorial candles.



Figure 6.9. Kol HaNeshama’s 2018 Havdalah ceremony.

Calling Kol HaNeshamah's ceremony "Havdalah" betrays the quantity and variety of content that was offered beyond the Debbie Friedman melody with alterations to the traditional Havdalah words. Reading of Israeli poetry, the prayer for the State of Israel, popular simple and repetitive modern folk songs,²⁹ and the national anthem "HaTikvah" all featured, as did a reading of the Israeli Declaration of Independence to a constructed nusah in major tonality reminiscent of the Ashkenazi trope for Megillat Ester.³⁰ Rabbi Levi Weiman-Kelman, emeritus rabbi of Kol HaNeshamah, who oversaw the creation of the city's first ceremonies at Jerusalem's First Station, explained the need to include diverse content in the ceremony,

I think [there is] a very strong need to include modern secular Israeli poetry...as a kind of acknowledgement that it's pluralistic and open...[we are] trying to find the right balance between traditional stuff and secular stuff. Now we have an advantage in the tekes havdalah that we just made up the tekes, it's not like there was anything else, and it's in some ways based on the Havdalah between Shabbat and the end of Shabbat. [But] you want to have *El Malei Rachamim* and kaddish to recognize the end of Yom HaZikaron, but also a Chaim Guri poem, you know, a secular poem [for] Yom HaAtzmaut, also I'd say another huge influence on this I'm going to throw out is the whole world of piyyut that has become huge over the past years. (Weiman-Kelman 2018)

Weiman-Kelman emphasizes the need to include content from diverse sources such that it will appeal to a pluralistic audience. He explicitly includes both sacred liturgy and secular elements that would not normally find a home side-by-side in a single ceremony. More so, the liturgical fragments that have been adopted are drawn from diverse parts of Jewish prayer that would not

²⁹ For example, "Ozi VeZimrat Yah" and "Od Yavo Shalom Aleinu."

³⁰ To my knowledge, the "nusah" used to read the Declaration of Independence is not used for any liturgy, but closely emulates the purpose of nusah in its rendering of grammatical inflection, as well as imitating the sounds of Megillat Esther in the Ashkenazi tradition—the trope that most closely resembles diatonic major in its tonality when heard by a Western ear. I suspect this is a purposeful choice intended to convey the "happy" nature of Yom HaAtzmaut, given the average listener's associations between diatonic major and positive affective states.

be combined in any traditional context, and Weiman-Kelman considers it important to incorporate musical traditions of Israel's various edot for a fully pluralistic experience.

All of this content would be familiar musically and lyrically to any Israeli Jew, whether ḥiloni, masorti, or dati, rendering it an ideal repertoire for audience participation.³¹ And the audience did indeed participate. Kol HaNeshamah's singer and keyboard player descended from the staging to audience level to demonstrate his desire for all to sing and dance along; this physical repositioning of himself as one of the audience made clear his intention that this should be an event for and by the public. By offering familiar sounds, including those from secular Israeli culture as well as Judaism's "greatest hits," Kol HaNeshama's curators reported a high rate of turn-out and active participation.

The inclusion of familiar content extends beyond the sonically familiar elements described above, and into the realm of the visual and embodied. The blue and white Israeli flag is paralleled in the unofficial uniform of Yom HaAtzmaut—blue and white clothing—sporting by performers and audience alike, implying a unified intention that preceded and continued beyond attendance at the ceremony. With gentle coercion, twenty or more audience members engaged in circle dancing in the *rikud ha'am* Israeli folk dance style to some of the popular melodies offered by the band.

During the pre-statehood and early statehood era, *rikud ha'am* was the artistic expression of the muscular "new Jew," the *ḥalutzim* (pioneer immigrants) who worked the land on kibbutzim and symbolized the Jewish people's rebirth to physical and political strength (Rossen

³¹ Ḥaredim too would be familiar with the repertoire, although they do not attend such events for religious-ideological reasons; they believe that only the Messiah has the ability and right to found a Jewish religious state and as such do not recognize the authority of the State of Israel to celebrate Jewish national independence of a purely civil nature.

2014). But today the dance style is instead associated with nostalgic Zionist idealism including the Shirei Eretz Yisrael musical genre, and is most often practiced by individuals in their fifties or older. It retains a history that allows it to preserve its status as a national symbol, and as a group dance that involves holding hands and coordinating complex steps in a circle, rikud ha'am demands collective artistic action appropriate for a national dance. On Yom HaAtzmaut, dancing in this style marks bodies as nationally Israeli and as entrained into Israeli bodily norms. Coupled with the exclusive use of the Hebrew language, a sense of national belonging is offered to those at ease with these multi-sensory, multi-faceted symbols—and denied to those who lack familiarity, or do not identify, with these symbols.

Awkwardly, due to the wealth of parties that take place across Israel in the first hours of Yom HaAtzmaut, many such ceremonies are often pushed into the late afternoon of Yom HaZikaron. Since even the act of beginning Havdalah sends the message that the next Jewish day has begun (because one cannot create fire as part of the ritual during Shabbat, and thus must wait until Shabbat has finished to begin Havdalah with its associated candle), ceremonies that begin two or more hours before the end of Yom HaZikaron effectively cut the day short. This occurred during 2018–2020 at the First Station's offerings. The venue, situated in the German Colony, is an open-air leisure complex in an expensive part of town, which offers restaurants, shops, pop-ups, events, and attractions (such as the annual book fair and an unseasonal summer ice skating rink), and is perhaps best known for its stage, which hosts all manner of free, family-friendly music and dance events on almost every day of the year. Its lack of government affiliation or funding means that the venue is known for being particularly welcoming of non-orthodox religious music, such as its kabbalat shabbat offerings that run through the summer months and rotate hosting responsibility between approximately five liberal Jewish congregations.

As Yom HaZikaron draws to a close, the venue offers not only the Reform synagogue Kol HaNeshama's ceremony, but also a later tekes presented by the Orthodox Union [OU], a global conglomerate that works in every field concerning orthodox Jewry directly or peripherally, from book publication to disability activism to kashrut certification. A skirmish in 2018 led to the pushing forward of Kol HaNeshamah's slot as early as 6:00pm the following years, more than two hours before sunset and three hours before the day formally ended. A disagreement arose when OU organizers arrived early to their ceremony to find men and women praying together without a meḥitzah and attempted to set one up for their own event while the Reform ceremony was still ongoing. Unsurprisingly, attendees refused to move, and some actively impeded the construction of the meḥitzah, perhaps out of a sense that infringing on the Reform-led event was bad manners, perhaps out of ideological opposition to any form of meḥitzah. In future years, the OU's local Facebook page warned attendees not to come early in order to avoid disrupting "an earlier event," but may have been intended to minimize any opportunity for interaction, both out of a desire to limit the kind of altercations that occurred in 2018, and to stop orthodox attendees from accidentally stumbling across a liberal Jewish event in a public space.

Ironically, such a statement gives credence to the religious nature of Kol HaNeshamah's ceremony. The OU's concern over the lack of a meḥitzah and desire to stop their followers from attending is evidence that they view the Reform alternative to be more than a purely political or civil gathering; were that the case then a meḥitzah would not be necessary even by the OU's orthodox standards, and there would be no ideological imperative to limit orthodox individuals from marking this transition twice in one night. Perhaps even more ironically, while Israel is a bastion of orthodoxy in an increasingly liberal Jewish world, Kol HaNeshama had the lion's

share of Israeli attendees for their Hebrew language ceremony, while the OU operated entirely in English, a clear sign that their event was intended for tourists and new immigrants from English-speaking countries. Both events, though, are run by peripheral religious organizations within the Israeli context—one Reform, one English-language—and as a result, are fighting for second place with their more creative approach to incorporating liturgy, compared to Jerusalem’s best-known tekes Havdalah. While their peripherality within Israel may seem paradoxical for public celebrations of Yom HaAtzmaut, it is in fact precisely the reason for their popularity; while Israeli natives and integrated immigrants celebrate the holiday with their families, usually with a barbeque in a park, tourists and new immigrants more often rely on public events in order to connect to the day. The big event for Israelis happens a few minutes’ walk from the First Station at Teddy Park.

Israeli Independence for and by Israelis

At Teddy Park, with the backdrop of the Old City’s walls, the “Atzmauta” celebrations formally begin at 6:30pm each year with what the organizers describe as “songs between remembrance and independence,” a poorly attended continuation of that which may be heard on the radio every Yom HaZikaron. A few speeches were offered but largely ignored, including one from Jerusalem’s chief rabbi. Shortly before 7:00pm, the park suddenly swelled with dati leumi individuals of all ages, identifiable by the men’s knitted head coverings called *kippot srugot* and the towering scarves covering married women’s heads. From my perch atop a wall at the back of the park, I greeted at least thirty people whom I knew from my own synagogue and social circles as they happened to join the event.

By the time darkness fell the space was tightly packed and buzzing with excited anticipatory conversation. I realized that we had been waiting for darkness to fall, because the prayers to follow would begin with the evening prayer service, aravit. This was a gathering for the halachically-minded, for those who take their religious practice seriously, and were not willing to forego religious law for the sake of a national holiday, and yet would willingly come from across Jerusalem to join in an event of great personal and political significance.



Figure 6.10. Atzmauta at Teddy Park, 2019.

We began with Kabbalat Shabbat, a marked departure from the notion of a tekes havdalah; while havdalah marks the end of Shabbat, Kabbalat Shabbat marks its beginning. Implied, then, is that for this group in Teddy Park, the big day was just beginning, whereas for the groups at the First Station both Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut were worthy of a significant ceremonial

status, evidenced by the creation of ceremonies that emphasized the change in emotional expectations. Some of the words of Kabbalat Shabbat were changed in order to remove specific references to Shabbat, replaced with more broadly applicable well-known verses of praise. There was no prayer book to follow, and the huge projector screens offered no help, but this public was able to anticipate verses from the Tanach that were adopted within a word or two of the alternative line beginning. We continued with aravit, which follows Kabbalat Shabbat on Friday nights. After this came hallel, an additional to the prayer service usually reserved for Jewish holidays.

Singing Hallel on Yom HaAtzmaut is a contested practice and a political statement. It suggests that Israeli independence is a holy, God-given, miraculous event on par with millennia-old biblical holidays such as Pesah and Rosh Hodesh. Jewish detractors to this practice form two main camps: the first protest the idea of a Jewish state before the coming of the Messiah and refuse to acknowledge secular authority over such a nation (mostly Haredim, including Israeli Haredim), and the second object to Israeli nationhood either entirely or as a religious concept—for instance, because of their concerns about the nature of the statehood (for anti-Zionists); the latter category comprises almost entirely US Americans and European young, liberal Jews.³² These objectors have served to incentivize those who see Israel as a gift from God to mark their temporal and physical territory by engaging in acts such as singing Hallel on Yom HaAtzmaut. Such a choice is powerful while remaining of an internal discursive nature; understanding the

³² This latter category of objection is most often held by non-Israelis, in particular by young American Jews for whom anti-Zionism is a popular political ideology in contrast to most of world Jewry who are broadly Zionist. See Rosenfeld's controversial *Progressive Jewish Thought and the New Anti-Semitism* (2006) for extrapolation of this category of anti-Zionist American Jews. Atheism is not a barrier to Zionism for most Jews, including the many secular Israelis who participate in liturgical Yom HaAtzmaut celebrations.

significance of such a liturgical choice requires knowledge of Judaism, halachah, and the relationship between these and Zionism. The use of traditional liturgy, both Hallel itself and the use thereof within a broader prayer service, disguises the intensely nationalist and Zionist nature of the celebration to those who are not Jewishly literate.

Hallel was followed by the most creative liturgical element of the evening, a prayer for the safety of Israel's citizens in the south of the country who had been under rocket attack from Gaza for some days. The prayer followed the traditional *misheberach* ("He who blessed") formula, which evokes the names of Judaism's forefathers and foremothers before expressing specific needs. In this case, the prayer continues by asking for protection for Israel's military, security forces, and residents of the South, followed by asking for healing for the injured. It concludes by requesting strength for the southern residents and all who reside in Israel and a rapid defeat of Israel's enemies. The prayer's explicit military references and nationalist sentiment are not particularly unusual, clearly inspired as they are by the prayer for Israel's military (*misheberach lehayeylei tzahal*, which is recited in synagogues each Shabbat in Israel and the diaspora). The content of this new prayer adds specificity in its requests specifically for Gazan border communities, a decision that does, however, bolster the exclusive nationalism of the prayer event in a way that traditional liturgy—even hallel—cannot offer due to the relative genericism of the canonized words in the traditional prayers.

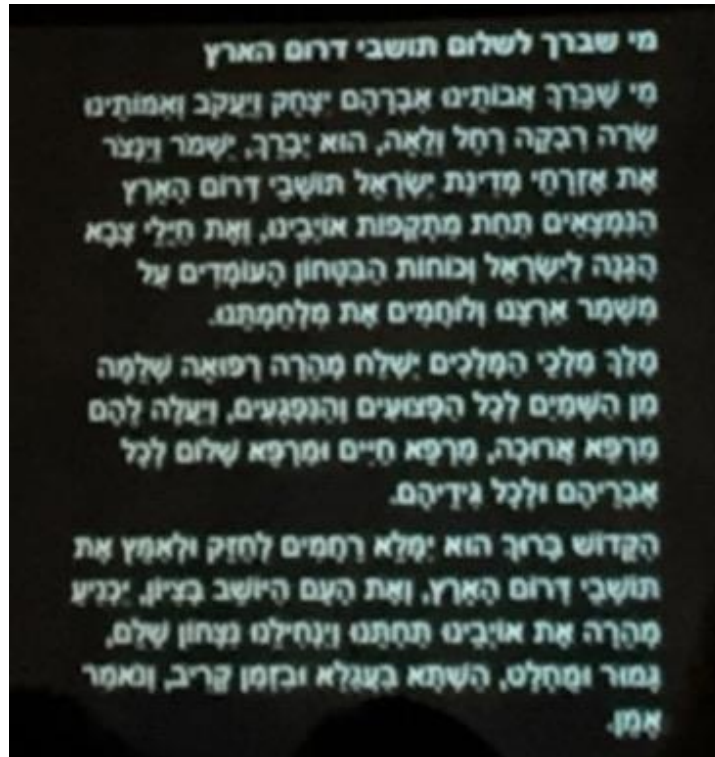


Figure 6.11. *Misheberach* for the residents of Israel's South, projected onto a screen at Teddy Park.³³

Concluding the evening was an unaccompanied mass singing of Psalm 126,³⁴ once a contender for the Israeli national anthem, sung here to the melody of the actual Israeli anthem “HaTikvah,” which segued without announcement into Hatikvah itself as if it was the only possible thing to do

³³ This specific misheberach translates as follows: “The One who blessed our forefathers Avraham, Yitzhak, and Yaakov, and our foremothers Sarah, Rivka, Rachel, and Leah, may He bless and keep and bring to victory all the citizens of the State of Israel who live in the south of the Land, who find themselves under attack from our enemies; and the soldiers of the Israeli Defense Forces and the security forces that stand guard over our land and fight our wars. May there come from the heavens to all the wounded and the injured a full recovery, a life-filled and peaceful recovery for every limb and organ. May the Holy One blessed be He be filled with mercy to strengthen and give courage to the residents of the south of the Land, and to the nation that resides in Zion, subdue quickly our enemies under us and impart to us complete, final, and total peace, soon, speedily, and without delay, and let us say amen.”

³⁴ The public knew this psalm from memory because it is used to introduce *birkat hamazon* (grace after meals) on Shabbat and Jewish holidays and is often sung aloud in this context.

at that moment. While a band formally led the proceedings, even the lack of a hand-out prayer book could not stop the audience from effectively maintaining control of the event; this informal communal leadership structure is akin to that in many *dati leumi* synagogues where the prayer leader is a symbolic figurehead more than anything else. Without their amplified instruments and singer's voice leading us, the acoustics changed drastically for the Psalm and anthem, giving me the sense that I was being swallowed by the strong collective voices of the hundreds around me who seemed each to sing with more commitment and resolve than I had ever experienced at a formal religious service.

This, clearly, was the most meaningful religious event of the year for many attendees, an instinct that I confirmed in later interviews with several participants. The *tekes* successfully captured the imagination of a major demographic in Jerusalem by blending spirituality, religion, and nationalism, and thus guaranteeing attendees a more effective bonding mechanism for collective effervescence than any one of these alone. Because of its obvious appeal to a particular demographic, a result of the specificity of its liturgical content (highly traditional, with the inclusion of *hallel*), it seemed to conjure stronger emotional responses from attendees than the offerings at the First Station. Both of the latter—*Kol HaNeshamah* and the OU—were designed to capture the imagination of passersby through deploying diverse, short, readily-identifiable liturgical and secular pieces appropriate to the general Israeli population. They appealed to the shared nationalist sentiment of their audience, but at Teddy Park the ceremony was *also* tailored to religious commonalities, allowing a greater degree of content specificity and a more effective experience of collective national belonging.

Teddy Park's success is also predicated upon the unusual decision to take a traditional prayer service into a secular public space. While Israelis are accustomed to praying in

synagogues and at public sites such as the Western Wall, Temple Mount,³⁵ graveyards, and so on, mass prayers are uncommon outside of religious sites such as these. At the same time, evening prayers on Yom HaAtzmaut are offered by few synagogues, with congregations understanding that potential participants would rather be out partying that night, or at least spending time with their friends rather than with those with whom they usually pray out of geographical convenience. Teddy Park thus becomes the major sanctioned prayer event of the night, with little else comparable on offer across Jerusalem, pushing all those who wish to engage in a religious ceremony into public view.

Liturgy and Nationalism

Liturgy is engaged in a form of *sherut leumi*, national service, in diverse ways and on diverse occasions in Israel. Religious holidays become national, and civil holidays are rendered religious, as creative agents intentionally blur the boundaries between secular and sacred in order to appeal to those who otherwise might opt out of overtly nationalist or religious rituals. Blurring lines between secular and sacred, liturgical and nationalist, Jewish and Israeli, also accounts for the complexity of identities inherent within these holidays and others besides. Amorphous ideas of peoplehood, ethnic identity, and cultural commonality are most effectively expressed precisely when they remain undefined.

Even within this effective, broad nationalism, there exist differences of liturgical practice that appeal to Israel's various Jewish communities; the malleability of liturgy when used beyond

³⁵ While officially still illegal, I was offered the opportunity in April 2021 to pray *minḥah* with a group of Jewish visitors to Temple Mount, and a few months later word of this practice reached the Israeli media.

its traditional prayer services permits the expression of more specific iterations of nationalism, such as the three havdalah or tekes maavar ceremonies described in this chapter that link Yom HaZikaron to Yom HaAtzmaut. Their audible differences that express their ideological heritages betray the common agenda shared across three religiously and politically distinct groups; that is, collectively singing national pride and commitment into reality through the deployment of liturgical texts and melodies. Liturgy, as we have seen, is ripe for translation, selective deployment, and reinterpretation in ways that can serve Israel's broad demography, allowing diverse citizens to find meaningful personal connection to their nation, even if they would never usually step foot in a synagogue to hear such liturgy.

In contrast to the broad appeal of liturgical reinterpretations on Purim, Yom HaZikaron, and Yom HaAtzmaut, the chapter that follows will chart a holiday, Yom Yerushalayim, that has become the domain of one specific Israeli Jewish demographic. While some of the processes described in this chapter apply to liturgical reworkings on Yom Yerushalayim too, the irrelevance of popular appeal has resulted in more entrenched and specific musical practices being developed for its annual celebration.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MAMLACHTIYUT AND JEWISH PARALITURGY ON YOM YERUSHALAYIM

Yom Yerushalayim

On a pleasantly warm and dry day in May 2018, Israel awoke as Eurovision champions. Much of the nation slept in, especially in Jerusalem, home to a large student and freelance worker population wont to sleep late, work in cafes from mid-morning, and stay up late to enjoy the cool evenings of this transitional season. It being Sunday, the working week should have been at least off to a sleepy and hungover start in the town center.¹ But as Google Maps testified, half the city's roads were closed (not such an unusual occurrence, since Jerusalem's roads are cordoned off for marathons, politicians' visits, and the like with frustrating frequency) and the city stayed quiet and empty as though Shabbat had been extended. For one particular group, though, this was the quiet before the proverbial storm.

Charting a course through smaller still-open roads to the town center, I sat in a café that was open despite the unusual circumstances and overheard quotidian conversations—two women complaining about their boss, a young Haredi couple on a date, a mother fussing over her squirming toddler—occasionally seeing a group of ten to twenty young men hurriedly passing by the window with Israeli flags attached to flagpoles twice as tall as they were. They passed quickly and quietly, such that I couldn't hear them above the café noise. Caravans of military vehicles patrolled on roads otherwise emptied of traffic. Nobody in the café turned an eye to

¹ Israel's working week begins on Sunday and concludes around lunchtime on Friday, in accordance with observance of Shabbat from Friday dusk until Saturday nightfall.

acknowledge the commotion. Outside its windows, a new world was being constructed, and nobody inside paid it heed. This was the start of Yom Yerushalayim, a holiday that occupies an ambivalent position in the national imagination, revered by a minority, ignored by the rest, but offering a musical soundscape that bridges secular and sacred in ways not heard or seen on any other day.

In 1967, against all odds, Israel won a war. Egypt, Jordan, and Syria fought a six-day campaign that saw Israel capture the Golan Heights, Gaza, Sinai, the West Bank, and the most prized territory of all, East Jerusalem. Sinai was returned to Egypt in exchange for peace, but Israel retained the rest of the land as its own. Gaza, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights acquired a peripheral and internationally disputed status, neither fully Israeli nor part of any other nation. East Jerusalem, though, with its Old City and Western Wall, was to be integrated into Israel proper as quickly and fully as possible. Jerusalem's beating heart would be Jewish once more. Jordanian military snipers were replaced by Israeli police cars, Arabic by Hebrew, the call to prayer by the shofar—though hummus and pita were constant staples.

Today, this victory is celebrated with a national holiday: Yom Yerushalayim (Jerusalem Day). As suggested in the previous chapter, there is nothing remarkable about marking a military event with a national holiday. VE Day marks the Allied victory in World War Two on or around May 8th in nineteen European countries. India remembers its victory over Pakistan each December, and both Koreas celebrate victory over Japan in August. Note, though, that this Israeli celebration is out of step with these seeming parallels. Its name offers the first hint of its difference; Jerusalem Day is no Victory Day or Liberation Day. It is named for the capture of half of a city in a war that produced more substantial and impressive territorial gains.

The day's nomenclature is informed by the theological-political belief that Jerusalem is the most important territory for a Jewish State, and that its capture was the most noteworthy aspect of the Six Day War. This religious impetus carries through to its scheduling, which, as with Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut, aligns with the Hebrew calendar. Yom Yerushalayim thus shifts around the Gregorian calendar in the same way as traditional Jewish holidays like Yom Kippur and Passover.² Special prayers are added to some synagogues' services, the ultra-orthodox Rabbinate declared it a minor religious holiday, and one may purchase a special Yom HaAtzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim *mahzor* (holiday prayer book) printed by the renowned Jewish religious publishing house, Koren. The government retains control over many of the day's ceremonies and offers workers the right to take a day of paid leave if they so wish, a benefit otherwise only offered on minor religious holidays such as Purim.

Far from VE day in the UK, featuring a two-minute silence, family-friendly street parties, and evenings at the pub, and far from Korea's National Liberation Day, Gwangbokjeol, with its free museums and solemn flag-raising ceremony, Yom Yerushalayim is not a day filled with acts of remembrance, all-community celebration, or military pomp. Rather, it is a religious and political *cause célèbre* marked by a minority of the population; a day that not only remembers, but attempts to create, a religious and political reality on the ground that, as we shall see, is far from a foregone conclusion.

² So too Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut are scheduled according to the Jewish calendar, as discussed in the previous chapter.

National Event, National Minority

Despite its place on the civil calendar as a national event, plenty of Jewish Israelis manage to overlook the day, blissfully—even willfully—unaware of its coming and going until they read the evening news. Yom Yerushalayim falls as the last of a flurry of civil holidays within a span of two weeks, following Holocaust Memorial Day (Yom HaShoah), Remembrance Day (Yom HaZikaron), and Independence Day (Yom HaAtzmaut). More than just a clever name, Yom Yerushalayim is celebrated almost exclusively in Jerusalem, a sociologically and geographically peripheral city despite its formal status as the nation’s capital. Residents beyond Jerusalem are rarely interested in the day, unless they are part of a particular sub-demographic: the most notorious and extreme wing of the *dati leumi* (religious nationalist) community.

As noted in previous chapters, *datiim leumiim* are a highly integrated and active part of the Israeli landscape in all fields of life: politics and public policy, military, medical, academia and research, and so on. Their depiction in international media usually fixates on a small, unrepresentative, and extreme faction of “settlers” who harbor racist opinions that they claim are derived from Torah, and who are not afraid to use violence against their Palestinian neighbors to exert their purported superiority and their right to dwell in Israel-writ-large. While they claim their extremism is religiously justified, many among them who use violence are not in fact particularly observant, but rather use this as a cover for their actions. This is evident in the initiation of such confrontations by these Jews on Shabbat, which is contrary to Jewish law on multiple fronts.³ While this extreme minority’s infamous actions can lead them to be mistaken for the *dati leumi* demographic at large, they are not representative of that broader group in their

³ The South Hebron hills see such violence most weeks on Shabbat (Shani 2021).

political *or* religious choices. I refer to this small, extreme group—the notorious stars of Yom Yerushalayim—as “right wing datiim leumiim.”

Their extremism is a distortion of the broad basis of dati leumi ideology, as expounded by Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook. Kook (1865–1935) was an immigrant from Lithuania to Mandatory Palestine, where he developed the basis of today’s dati leumi ideology. He saw the potential for melding modern European secular nationalism with the Torah’s demand for Jews to settle the Land of Israel. Rav Kook, as he is known in religious circles, believed that Jewish political sovereignty was a means of fulfilling Torah prophecy in a twentieth-century context. While Kook never lived to see the State of Israel, his proposed fusion of politics and theology, specifically the creation of a political nation state with a religious scriptural justification, offer perhaps the first practical suggestions for implementing *mamlachtiyut*, a statist ideology that treats the nation as Godly and God as an invested political actor, and which today is the defining feature of dati leumi ideology and Yom Yerushalayim (Kook 2015).

Mamlachtiyut, which lacks an English equivalent, conjures a flattening of State and God into one, whereby the State becomes God and God is inherent in the State. It suggests an unwavering adherence to State policy, a kind of expanded nationalism on religious and ideological grounds that encompasses, but conceptually exceeds, patriotism. Because the State acquires the all-knowing, all-just nature of God, traditional belief in God is not necessary for mamlachtiyut, but a belief in Judaism or Jewish peoplehood as godly is crucial. Allegiance to Israel is predicated upon the Torah; there can be no separating the two, and as such the State attains a godly reverence.

Much of the dati leumi population, along with the rest of Israel’s residents, choose to forget Yom Yerushalayim. If the holiday should rear its head in conversation, it is most often met

with disdain; the day's political and religious connotations offer reasons for objection on multiple fronts. Some, such as the secular population, object to its theological undertones regardless of the particular nature of the religious content. Others dislike the day's political element, decrying the idea of a holiday that can be understood to celebrate a bloody battle, with some political commentators noting that the 1967 war produced thousands of refugees and created the political reality of today's Israel to which they ideologically object. And another group of detractors take issue with *mamlachtiyut*, that is, the combining of the political and the religious. For example, much of the ultra-orthodox community rejects the idea that there could be a Jewish sovereign state until the Messiah comes, opting out of the political and military system altogether.⁴ And of course, Arab Israelis harbor negative sentiments towards this holiday because the 1967 war which it celebrates led to Israeli impingement upon much of their land, and directly affected their communities' autonomy and freedom for the worse.

The same intentional blurring of religious and militaristic-political lines—*mamlachtiyut*—that renders Yom Yerushalayim challenging, distasteful, and even painful for these groups, is the essence of its appeal for right wing *datiim leumiim*. These revelers are brought together through their shared, highly specific political and religious ideals, which renders this day's nationalism particularly effective for those subscribing to such values.

⁴ Other Jewish groups envisage an ideal Jewish state that would function differently from the one that currently exists, such as a one-state solution or two-state solution, and dislike the entanglement of the religion to which they are committed with a political agenda to which they object. Some groups do not see a Jewish state as desirable (Daniel Boyarin is one prominent example writing from this perspective in academia).

Demographic Homogeneity, Musical Opportunity

The fact that Yom Yerushalayim is celebrated by a small and demographically-homogenous minority of Israeli Jews is not only a boon for the creation and reinforcement of nationalist *mamlachti* sentiment, but also the for the musical opportunities it affords. A large proportion of the participants in the day's main event, the Flag March (in Hebrew known as *rikudegalim*, a portmanteau of "flag dance"), are high school aged teenagers bussed in from *yeshivot tichoniot* and *ulpanot* (boys' and girls' religious high schools, respectively) in and around Jerusalem. These institutions share affiliations as *mamlachti dati* (religious national) schools and are often part of the Bnei Akiva movement. Less than ten percent of Israel's high school population attend such institutions; excluding Haredim and non-Jews who have their own schooling systems, two-thirds of Israelis are eligible to attend *mamlachti dati* schools, which shows the schools' minority status even within the modern Israeli Jewish population.⁵

Despite participant groups coming from within the Israeli school system, a closer comparison might be drawn to youth movements regarding the way in which commonalities and an "imagined community" (Anderson 1983) are effectively created without the need for direct interpersonal contact between students from the *mamlachti dati* school sector. On Yom

⁵ Modern as opposed to Haredi, meaning those integrated into normative educational systems. Most Jewish Israelis send their children to *mamlachti* (state secular) schools, including many families who might prefer the religious offerings of the *mamlachti dati* system, but wish to opt out of its politics. Similarly, some religious families send their children to Haredi *hinuch atzmai* schools such as the girls' Bais Yaakov movement, even if the family are not Haredi, in order to ensure their children's religious education while limiting the kind of political content found in *mamlachti dati* schools. These observations stem from my conversations with Israeli parents and peers, many of whom inhabit similar socio-economic and religious circles to my own, and who feel torn in their desire to promote pro-Palestinian, left-wing politics to their children while ensuring they receive the kind of thorough Jewish religious education rarely found outside Israel. Most of these parents would describe themselves as *dati leumi*.

Yerushalayim, the imagined community becomes real as students who share distinctive modes of praying, singing, dancing, and learning, discover themselves to be part of a movement that extends beyond the borders of their particular institution. While the march's route is coordinated in advance between the staff—rabbis—of these institutions, the wealth of common musical and para-musical activity is a product of the demographic and ideological uniformity of the movement, rather than any prior rehearsal or planning. Groups of teenage boys select and musically transform songs from diverse genres and sources—liturgy, paraliturgy, folk, pop, klezmer, Neo-Hasidic—thus sounding out their unified political-religious ideology of *mamlachtiyut* via stylistically unified musical arrangement.

But Where Are the Women?

Young women constitute a substantial proportion and absolute number of attendees (one-quarter to one-third of the total, per my estimates over three years of attendance) and also engage in the singing, dancing, and marching. However, their musicking is qualitatively different to that of their male counterparts. It is less organized, with girls fragmented into small groups of three to ten or so—as opposed to the boys, who gather in entire high school year groups of fifty or more—with a smaller and less unified song repertoire reflecting the relatively decentralized activity of the girls. The genders are separated on the march, with different meeting points, performance stages, speakers, and routes, and this separation permits and encourages gender-differentiated musicking that is already established due to the ways seminaries and yeshivot expose their students to different musical and social ideals. The boys, who are expected to enroll in both advanced religious study and military service upon graduation, are encouraged to form

the kinds of close social ties with their age-group cohort that occur in the military and learn to vocalize topical chants in an appropriate manner. Asaf, a soldier on duty on Yom Yerushalayim, explained his own experience of this entrainment.

I'm studying at a *hesder yeshivah*, it means I'm learning but also serving in the military. We all do this. All the kids you see here today, they're going to do this. So, the schools, the high schools in the *mamlachti dati* stream, they prepare the kids, the boys really, about how life is going to be. It's basically the most important thing we do in high school, learn to be soldiers, get prepared. We get hyped up, we support each other no matter what, you can see it in these kids...they're like a military unit already. Look at how they sing as a unit. It's good for them, they're prepared to be good soldiers before they ever hold a gun. See how they're chanting together, it's the right mindset. Trust me, I've been through it. The soldiers who come from outside [of the *mamlachti dati* school system], they don't know how to fit in like we do. They don't have the tight community, the idea that we are all one. (Asaf 2018)

Since women are not expected to serve in the military but rather, as explained at the opening of chapter six, to enter *sherut leumi* (national service), high schools instead aim to prepare them for the caring professions in which they will essentially intern, as well as offering a thorough secular education to support these women entering the workforce. Miriam, a final year high-school student on the march, shared her experience.

I feel that our school is very careful about creating women who are kind, thoughtful, God-fearing, also intelligent. They create rounded people who will contribute to the Jewish people and the State of Israel. So, you see today, many of us are very joyful, we sing and pray about the Yom Yerushalayim with our friends...I don't really like how the boys celebrate. It's very loud, very aggressive. It would be wrong for us girls to be like this. Boys and girls have a different energy, and you can see it here: the boys are shouting and marching, we are singing and dancing. It's like they are the military, and we are the spiritual element, maybe. Both are important to create the whole of the Jewish people, but boys and girls are different. (Miriam 2018)

Not only does the social and musical energy of the genders differ, but the relative visibility of men and women is unbalanced on Yom Yerushalayim. Public stages, scattered through the town center, and major squares such as Kikar Tzion and Kikar Tzahal (marked on the route map,

figure 7.1), are devoid of any female performers. The dominance of men in these prized public spots creates a pseudo-religious sense by mimicking the gendered roles and gender balance found in the synagogue; that is, women as passive spectators with men holding all key public ritual roles. Gender segregation, encouraged through megaphone announcements and different routes, ensures that women cannot be drawn into the “aggressive” and “military” style of musicking that would be unbecoming of a nice religious girl. This chapter, then, tells the story of the male militarized musicking that Asaf and Miriam describe, through my female eyes as I traversed the Flag March in 2018, 2019, and 2021.

Musical Repertoires and Transformations

Back to 2018. In the middle of the afternoon—later than scheduled, of course—the trickle of small groups walking past the cafe turned into a slow-moving stream of white and blue pouring down the hill towards me from a meeting point in Sacher Park into the city center. I left the cafe to join them, pausing at Kikar Tzion, a major pedestrian hub connecting Ben Yehuda Street, a tourist hotspot, and Yafo, a long commercial road that stretches from the Old City to the shuk and the suburbs, now famous for its tramline.

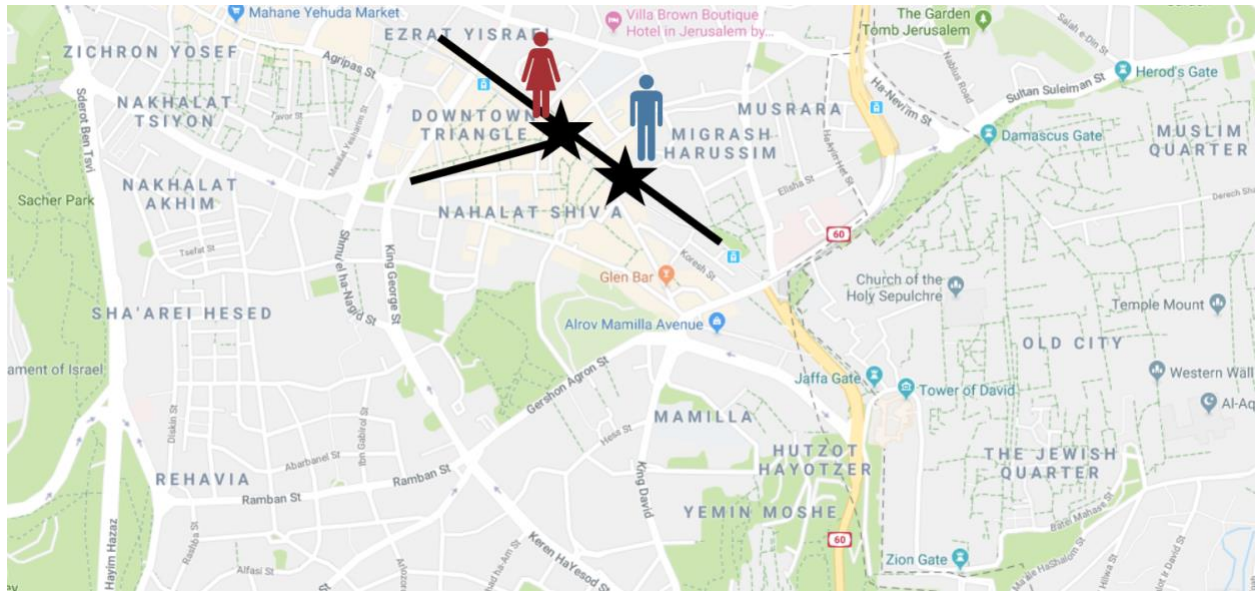


Figure 7.1. The 2018 Flag March route through Jerusalem, with risers indicated by stars and their assigned gender indicated by icon.

Today, temporary risers had been constructed on both sides of the tram tracks, one here at the Kikar and another about 250 meters down the now-empty road at the corner of Shlomtzion Street. An electric guitarist tuned up as police arranged metal barricades around a temporary stage. Israeli flags hung from every lamppost, a remnant of Independence Day ripe for repurposing, and volunteers in reflective jackets stood aside bundles of oversized handheld flags, ready to hand them out to celebrants later in the day. Flimsy wooden tables were erected onto their folding metal legs by nonprofit organizations hoping to recruit likely supporters to their various causes.

As this mass of people approached, their drums and whistles and chants grew from a distant rumble to a noisy, heterophonous clatter. For about half a kilometer, Yafo was so densely packed with dancing crowds that maintaining my position within the crowd was a challenge—and avoiding moving flagpoles added a certain degree of danger.

I had expected some kind of performance on the stage to capture my attention, but it remained empty. Instead, the large open space was dominated by one well-known Jerusalem yeshivah, whose students formed a circle around a void and began to chant. Their choice of song was “Ve’ye’etayu,” an anonymous piyyut that follows an alphabetic acrostic governed by an identifiable repeating structure. One individual sings a short line of text as a solo, and after each line everyone responds with *v’yitnu lecha keter melucha* (“and they will give you the crown of sovereignty”). After three lines and their refrains, a short wordless tune sung to “ay ay ay” vowels serves as a chorus, allowing just enough time for a new volunteer to be selected for the next line of text.

♩ = 135

veje-e-ta-nu ko-l la-vo-de-cha ve-yit-nu le-cha ke-ter me-lu-cha vi - var-chu

6
she-m ke-vo-de-cha ve - yit-nu le-cha ke - ter me-lu - cha ve - ya-gi - du

10
va - iy - im tzid-ke - cha ve - yit-nu le-cha ke - ter me - lu - cha

13
nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay

16
nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay

19
nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay (nay nay nay) nay nay nay nay nay nay

22
nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay nay

Figure 7.2. Transcription of “Ve’ye’etayu.” Ascending staves indicate the soloist, while descending staves indicate all other participants.



Figure 7.3. Yeshivah high school boys gathered in a circle, singing “Ve’ye’etayu.”

The repeating refrain features the word *melucha*, which shares a root with *mamlachtiyut*, and the piyyut’s words tell of the anticipated Messianic era when all of humanity will recognize the Jewish God as their own. The song is drawn from the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur liturgy, the most serious days of the Jewish year that bridge ten days when Jews believe God judges humanity, and on those days offers a relative reprieve from hours of prayers. The incorporation of this paraliturgy imports the spiritual of the High Holidays to Yom Yerushalayim, with the clear implication that this day is worthy and sufficiently important to warrant singing piyyutim, such as “Ve’ye’etayu,” otherwise reserved for the holiest of days.

While remaining an unrehearsed group vocal performance of the same words and melody that one would recognize from the High Holidays, stylistically the difference is notable. “Ve’ye’etayu” in the synagogue is a disciplined affair, the gabbaim handing out slips of paper to soloists with their verse printed, congregants diligently singing their part and searching with their eyes for the next soloist at the end of each refrain. After all, this is the holiest day of the year, and

for most, one of the most anticipated and loved piyyutim. In Kikar Tzion on Yom Yerushalayim, soloists are pulled from the crowd and hoisted atop the shoulders of a willing and enthusiastic participant. Loud hushing precedes each new soloist's first line, indicative of the lack of discipline within the circle; the boys often chat to one another, necessarily loudly given the volume of the singing, the tram's horn, and strains of other nearby song circles and stages. The chatter occurred mostly during the wordless refrain, sung loudly and yobbishly without much concern for the melody. Someone not previously familiar with the melody would struggle to transcribe it, given the blurring of notes into one another (to the extent that certain passages more closely resembled a glissando) and approximation of pitch. This sloppiness stems also from the ever-changing key choice, which changed multiple times within single verses. Sometimes this was a result of the soloist simply shouting their lines, rather than singing, leaving the crowd to negotiate a key among itself. Soloists who attempted to sing in a particular key paid no heed to the previous soloist's choice, instead opting for whichever range would allow them to project their chest voice most effectively. Tempo, too, was up for grabs by each soloist, who generally sang at an inconsistent tempo that the crowd did not attempt to match; rather, the crowd sang at a faster pace than the soloist during their responsive lines and accelerated through the wordless refrain as though it was an inconvenience that must be tolerated before the real business of the next verse might begin. Singing while jumping and flag waving does not make for aesthetically beautiful timbre or afford vocal control, and the effect is a version of "Ve'ye'etayu" with more stylistically in common with soccer crowd chants than its synagogue iteration.

"Ve'ye'etayu" gave way at its conclusion to another chant that I heard a number of times sung by groups of both genders: "Am Yisrael Hai." This famous Shlomo Carlebach melody is set to just six Hebrew words, rendering it an accessible and memorable choice appropriate for

impromptu performance. The words translate to “the people of Israel live, our Father still lives,” seemingly a relatively benign sentiment that affirms Jewish survival despite a history of persecution. In contemporary Israel, though, the words *am Yisrael hai* have become associated with racism and right-wing ideologies. For example, the slogan may be found as graffiti scrawled in non-Jewish neighborhoods in South Tel Aviv with the implication that only Jews belong in Israel, and in 2015 now-politician Itamar Ben-Gvir was arrested by Jerusalem police for shouting the phrase on Temple Mount in response to a provocation from a Muslim woman who approached him and shouted “Allahu Akhbar” (God is great). Debates over the legality of uttering the phrase went to the Jerusalem Magistrate’s Court, who deemed it legal; the very fact that a court decision was necessary illustrates the contentiousness of the slogan and thus of the song, when used in potentially political provocative contexts.⁶

The way in which “Am Yisrael Hai” is performed on Yom Yerushalayim transforms the song from a folksy ballad into a militaristic chant. This musical style, combined with the obviously political nature of Yom Yerushalayim, renders the song a provocation and a political statement.

⁶ The song remains a favorite of Jewish children’s camps in the US, though, where it lacks any such political connotations.

♩ = 80

am yi-sra-el hai am yi-sra-el hai am yi-sra-el am yi-sra-el am yi-sra-el hai

5
od a-vi-nu hai od a-vi-nu hai od a-vi-nu od a-vi-nu od a-vi-nu hai

9
am yi-sra-el am yi-sra-el am yi-sra-el hai am yi-sra-el am yi-sra-el am yi-sra-el hai

13
am yi-sra-el am yi-sra-el am yi-sra-el hai am yi-sra-el am yi-sra-el am yi-sra-el hai

Figure 7.4. Transcription of “Am Yisrael Hai.”

Further down Yafo Street, a group of yeshiva boys encountered some on-duty female army recruits. Datiim leumiim put high value on fulfilling mandatory army service, considering it a religious duty to protect their God-given State. While right wing factions discourage women from serving in the military in favor of *sherut leumi*, this does not dampen their appreciation for all those who enlist, including the secular women they serenaded on Yafo.

This group of young men seized the opportunity to transform a lesser-known tune, sometimes sung during Passover, either at the Seder in some Ashkenazi traditions or during Shabbat meals at that time of year, into a tribute to their older protectors. “Karev Yom” is a piyyut that Edwin Seroussi traces to Byzantine-era Palestine, when its concluding line, “it came to pass at midnight,” was part of a series of poems associated with the Exodus narrative (Seroussi 2015). While its place in the *Haggadah* (the text recited at Seder night on Passover) also relied on the significance of that final line, on Yom Yerushalayim it was the penultimate line

that captured the musical attention of the young men: “set guards over your city all day and all night”.⁷

The two previous examples offer stylistic changes to an existing melody and a recontextualization that imbues the performance with new meaning, but “Karev Yom” is subject to an even more thorough transformation that also includes the discarding of its most commonly used melody in favor of one better suited to the musical style that characterizes all three songs on Yom Yerushalayim.

♩ = 105

shom-rim haf-ked haf-ked le-iyr-cha kol ha yom ve-kol ha-lay-lah

5
shom-rim haf-ked haf-ked le-iyr-cha kol ha yom ve-kol ha-lay-lah

9
ta-ir ta-ir ta-ir ta-ir ta-ir ke-or-yom hesh-kat lay-lah

13
ta-ir ta-ir ta-ir ta-ir ta-ir ke-or-yom hesh-kat lay-lah

Figure 7.5. Transcription of “Karev Yom” in its original version.

⁷ Kulp (2009) offers a translation of the full text: Draw near the day which is neither day nor night; Exalted One, proclaim that Yours are day and night; Set guards over Your city all day and night; Brighten as day the darkness of the night; And it came to pass at midnight!

♩ = 85

sho - mrim haf - ked haf - ked le iyr - cha kol - ha - yom - ve kol ha - lay - lah

5
sho - mrim haf - ked haf - ked le iyr - cha kol ha - yom ve - kol ha - lay - lah

9
shom-rim haf - ked le - iyr - cha kol - ha - yom ve - kol ha - lay - lah_____

13
shom-rim ha - ked le - iyr - cha kol - ha - yom ve - kol ha - lay__ lah_____

Figure 7.6. Transcription of “Karev Yom” as heard on Yom Yerushalayim.

These song choices, as we hear them on Yom Yerushalayim, share a number of features.

Sung by a group of male unaccompanied voices, they often feature some form of antiphony or call-and-response, with a limited vocal range to make it easy for untrained voices to project in a chest register. They are sung at a relatively fast tempo and offer the opportunity to accelerate towards climactic endpoints.

In their original iterations, the three songs are all Hebrew language songs with short, repetitive texts drawn from paraliturgical sources, but their similarities do not extend to their musical setting. “Ve’ye’etanu” is usually heard at a point when congregants are tired from hours in synagogue (on Yom Kippur, most of the way through a twenty-five hour fast), and the vocal style reflects congregants’ exhaustion, and yet their desire to inject energy into this crowd-pleasing high point of services. It is sung at a steady pace, giving the ad-hoc soloists time to sing the perhaps unfamiliar words clearly, perhaps with an unintentional *accelerando* in the nigun-like

bridge between verses that can never be too fast lest the gabbai fail to find the next soloist in time. “Am Yisrael Hai” is strongly associated with Carlebach’s guitar accompaniment that is replicated in song circles, camps, and synagogue settings, meaning that it is usually sung in a relaxed manner. Its popularity in the Reform movement and outside of synagogue services means that unlike “Ve’ye’etanu,” it is often performed with harmonic accompaniment, and often by groups that have limited Hebrew competency. “Ve’ye’etanu” is linguistically challenging for those with less Hebrew. “Karev Yom,” unlike “Ve’ye’etanu” and “Am Yisrael Hai,” is more associated with professional solo performances by musicians trained in the Western classical tradition, due to the melodic complexity of its original melody’s long phrases, slow tempo, and the relatively challenging modal structure that alternates between minor and altered Dorian (with a raised fourth). Performance styles are informed by the song’s presumed history as a Hasidic nigun and its incorporation into the Shirei Eretz Yisrael canon. Singers such as Theodore Bikel, Daphna More, and Yaffa Yarkoni create an aura of mystery and excitement through timbral choice, employ ornamentation that evokes the possible Hasidic origins of the song, and replace the modern Hebrew uvular fricative /r/ with a rolled /r/ as is common in Shirei Eretz Yisrael.

In summary, then, these three songs are drawn from diverse sources, differ in their musical styles, and express different sentiments in their lyrical content despite sharing a place in the Jewish paraliturgical canon. On Yom Yerushalayim, their performance renders them stylistically remarkably similar. The songs have been transformed, rearranged, in such a way that they bear great relation to one another, but little relation to their original iterations.

As bands started to perform on the men’s and women’s stages, dancing replaced singing and the air became a sea of flags such that even standing on a bench my view of the stage was completely blocked by blue and white. Long, distorted guitar solos, throatily sung religiously-

themed Hebrew lyrics, lots of crash cymbals and drum fills, and all-male performers with flowing tzitzit and *peyot* (sidelocks) were the order of the day on both the women's and men's stages. Further down the street at Kikar Tzahal, a group sang Hallel, the verses of praise usually reserved for Biblical Jewish holidays,⁸ and a high school klezmer band performed on the back of a slow-moving truck.

Into the Old City

At Kikar Tzahal the klezmer band turned left. The square is a major intersection where one can turn right to remain in West Jerusalem, left to enter East Jerusalem, or continue straight to Jaffa Gate and enter the Old City where its Armenian and Muslim quarters meet. Here, the tens of thousands of us split up. With some exceptions, men turned left with the klezmer band, and the women who followed behind continued straight to Jaffa Gate. I followed the men, keen to be close to the musical hub of the march until its end, watching dozens of teenage boys singing and dancing with closed eyes in front of the moving stage, tzitzit flying, while dense groups walked at a painfully slow speed and took a break from their singing to chat. The klezmer band ground to a halt as they reached a roadblock set up by the Jerusalem police, signaling that we were entering unfamiliar territory.

Leaving the live music behind and walking down Sultan Suleiman Street was a bizarre experience. I would never normally stray into this neighborhood, and on the few times I have walked this road it has been in the opposite direction, leaving the Old City by the "wrong" gate after playing tour guide for friends or family to return back home to West Jerusalem. Shop signs

⁸ For further discussion, see chapter six of this dissertation.

are written in Arabic, kippot replaced by burkahs, and synagogues give way to mosques. If a Palestinian State ever comes to fruition, most of its citizens would hope for this to become the beating heart of its capital, and as a visually identifiable Israeli Jew I stay out of the area due to a mix of respect, fear, and lack of purpose to stray from West Jerusalem.

I understood now that our uncomfortably slow pace was intended to ensure that the maximum number of Palestinians would witness our right to chant “Am Israel Hai” and wave Jewish alt-right Avodah Ivrit and Lehava flags within ear- and eye-shot. We marched brazenly into this Arab neighborhood of East Jerusalem with Israeli flags flying and Hebrew nationalist chants permeating the air. The young men were back to relying on their voices alone for music and returned to the chants and songs from earlier in the day, with some additions to the repertoire. At Damascus Gate’s amphitheater-like entrance, we stopped altogether, giving marchers time to absorb the momentous nature of standing there without need to fear violence or hide their Jewishness.

To sing Jewish songs at Damascus Gate was viscerally perturbing. As each yeshivah arrived, they regrouped and used music to make their presence known to those Arabs who had been temporarily banished from their usual places of business and worship, and now stood pressed against a double wall of barriers observing the spectacle with clear disdain, separated from us by heavily armed Israeli police who seemed through their helmets to be about as impressed as the local Arabs. I need hardly point out the irony of needing a heavy military presence to celebrate the anniversary of the capture of this very area.

As I passed through Damascus Gate and into the Muslim Quarter, the blazing summer sun was stifled by close, cold stone walls that gave an oppressive, damp shade to the tight alleyways. Metal shutters covered almost every storefront in the usually bustling shuk, shop

owners having been advised by the Israeli military that the latter could not guarantee their physical safety if they chose to remain open. The young Jewish men banged their fists and flagpoles against the shutters and the tinny clatter reverberated off the walls opposite and the low stone ceilings above. I was scared—not because I was in an Arab neighborhood and concerned about creating conflict, but rather scared for my physical safety as the young men pushed and shoved and squeezed in spaces that could not contain us. I felt as though any jostle might create a riot, crushing me even further into the cold, clammy walls that offered no room for error in our collective steps.⁹

Whereas out in the open spaces of West Jerusalem each group had created a circle for singing and relied on the leadership of the older boys or their rabbis, here any sense of authority was lost. Smaller groups broke out into chants, with long gaps bridging the vocal outbursts. The repertoire was of a similar character to the songs that featured earlier on Yafo Street, and the storefront shutters served as a percussive replacement for the drums that had been abandoned somewhere outside of the Old City.

A new melody lent itself particularly to this environment. “Yerushalayim Shel Zahav” (Jerusalem of Gold) was composed by Naomi Shemer in 1967, mourning the unfulfilled Jewish connection to Jerusalem and praising the city’s beauty. She added a triumphant final verse upon hearing the news that Jerusalem had come under Israeli control during the six-day war. The song thus became associated not only with the city and the war, but also with Jerusalem Day, and functions as the day’s unofficial anthem. Best known in its rendition by singer and acoustic

⁹ Retrospectively, in the wake of the Meron disaster—a 2021 crowd crush that claimed the lives of forty-five Haredi men and boys celebrating Lag BaOmer—I realize that my fear was likely well-placed.

guitarist Shuli Nathan, the lilting 3/4 song opens with a minor mode verse followed by a chorus in the major.

What I heard in the Old City, though, was a substantially altered version of the song. Some of the rhythmic elements and the chorus's lyrics remain, but the pitch contour and affect are entirely different. Shemer's high-register female singing voice with its distinctive vibrato is replaced by adolescent male chant. 3/4 becomes 4/4. The verses are discarded in favor of repetition of the chorus, with its easier-to-recall lyrics. Acoustic guitar accompaniment is substituted with percussive, punctuating handclaps, which are accentuated by flag poles beaten against walls and shutters, the sound reverberating around the low-ceilinged alleyways.

♩ = 96

a - vir har-im tza-lul ka - ya-yin ve - rey-ah or - a - nim ni - sa ba-ru-ah ha-ar

6
bay-im im kol pa - a - mon-im uv - tar-de-mat i-lan va - e - ven shvu - ya ba-ka-lo

12
nim__ ha - iyr a-sher ba-dad yo-she-vet u-ve-li-bah ho - ma ye-re-sha-la-yim shel za

18
hav ve-shel ne - ho - shet ve - shel or ha-lo le - kol shi_ ra - yich a - ni ki - nor ye - ru - sha

25
lay - im shel za - hav ve shel ne - ho - shet ve - shel

28
or ha - lo le - kol shi__ ra - yich a - ni ki - nor

Figure 7.7. “Yerushalayim Shel Zahav” in its original version.

♩ = 155

ye-ru-sha-la - yim shel za - hav ve-shel ne ho-shet ve-shel or ha-lo le

5
kol____ le-kol shi ra-yich a - ni a - ni ki - nor ye-ru-sha-la - yim shel za

10
hav ve-shel ne ho - shet ve - shel or ha - lo le -

13
kol____ le-kol shi ra - yich a - ni a - ni ki - nor

Figure 7.8. “Yerushalayim Shel Zahav” as heard on Yom Yerushalayim.

This secular song, as a late 1960s addition to the Shirei Eretz Yisrael folk style, might be expected to lend itself to *shirah ba'tzibbur* (collective singing) as a normal mode of performance within that genre, but “Yerushalayim Shel Zahav” has broadly remained a song for public consumption rather than public musicking. Beyond Yom Yerushalayim, one notable exception is its use on Shabbat by Syrian Jewish communities, who employ the chorus melody for the kedushah, the holiest part of Judaism’s holiest prayer, the amidah. The use of a folksy pop song in such a context is reflective of the fact that this song is less than secular; it employs Biblical imagery in its descriptions of the holy city, and it bears association with the 1967 war that many regard as a holy victory. The song is not only topically well-suited to Yom Yerushalayim, particularly given the year of its release, but shares a coalescence of secular and sacred.

Popular Songs for Populist Politics

The practice of rearranging and repurposing Israeli popular songs for religious nationalist purposes is well-established within a related sector of Israeli society in a rather different context. The soccer club Beitar Yerushalayim draws support from the politically right-wing among the secular, masorti, and dati leumi sectors. While fans may not be religiously observant, they adopt the language of mamlachtiyut to bolster their nationalism and Jewish superiority over non-Jewish Israelis. They intersect with right-wing datiim leumiim in their infamously extremist political views, particularly their exclusionary nationalist, anti-Arab, and anti-assimilation beliefs which they enforce upon the club's players and staff through violent activities. They are known, too, for their chants at matches, which I hear from my home over four kilometers away from their stadium. As may also be heard on Yom Yerushalayim, their chants are usually accompanied by portable percussion, whistling, and coordinated clapping rhythms, and the words include religious themes, including even Biblical verses, to convey a religious, nationalist sentiment focused on both Jerusalem and Judaism's privileged positions within the purportedly secular state.

The musical traits of chants at Beitar matches and on Yom Yerushalayim, despite their religious lyrics, veer towards something more militaristically desirable than liturgically “beautiful,” as do the collective excitement and empowerment that are generated. Portable percussion—drums and whistles—form the primary accompaniment, establishing a rhythmic and metric framework appropriate for marching. As the ultimate war instruments, untuned percussion offer portability and are easy to play, with few technical demands and no music reading ability required. Any verbal or vocal command, chant, or song can be adapted to fit the beating of

drums, and their rapid decay means that there is silence between each drum stroke allowing the human voice to be heard even when the drums themselves seem deafeningly loud. This makes untuned percussion the obvious musical choice both for the military battlefield and for a march—or indeed, a modern-day march that celebrates a military victory, or a battle on the soccer field that can spill over into military-type physical confrontation between two sides.

Eduardo Herrera (2018) notes that in Argentina, soccer chants permit the construction of a kind of masculinity that can promote physical violence and xenophobic racism. In fact, Herrera's experiences in a context far removed from the Beitar stadium or Yom Yerushalayim offer insights into the ways in which the Flag March is successful in galvanizing a specific demographic into a spontaneous, energetic display of musical stamina. Whereas Herrera notes a potential cognitive dissonance, as fans are caught up in a bonding experience that leads them to verbally express sentiments that are not their own, in Jerusalem the marchers more likely hold anti-Arab views and identify with the lyrical content of their marches in their everyday lives (especially due to their enrollment in institutions that endorse the march), but are galvanized through the overcoming of fear that would normally inhibit their physical presence on the march route, especially as it leaves West Jerusalem. In Jerusalem as in Argentina, relationships with the local police are carefully negotiated in order to ensure that the anti-social elements of the activity are adequately tolerated.

Herrera further notes that collective chanting can become a “mass ritual” of sorts. Influenced by David McDonald's work (2009, 2010, 2013), Herrera characterizes “mass ritual” as disciplined, synchronized, repetitive performance of a collective action that engenders a sense of support and shared cultural identity. The sound and behaviors that I encountered on Yom Yerushalayim might be characterized in such a way no less than the Beitar soccer matches. In

particular, the repetitive chanting during the Flag March precisely matches Herrera's description of musicking that "elicits peer-group validation of behaviors that can be homophobic, racist, and violent," (Herrera 2018: 472) as chanting serves to clarify the group's identity through the structural othering of outsider groups. In Argentinian soccer, this is achieved through lyrical choice and musical style; in Jerusalem, these sonic factors are bolstered by the route's march and its very existence. In both instances, individuals are galvanized through "collective states of disinhibition" to act in ways that they would not as individuals (Herrera 2018: 488). Of course, Herrera's use of the term "ritual" is significant; even without liturgy, behaviors and musicking on Yom Yerushalayim are ritualistic in nature and intention.

Much of what happens on Yom Yerushalayim, then, is common to other experiences of mass, ad hoc, participatory musicking among men.¹⁰ The processes of nationalism and musicking techniques found on Yom Yerushalayim may be found beyond Israel's borders. It is specifically the practice of adapting *liturgy* to militarized, nationalist contexts, and the use of diverse genres *alongside* liturgy for that same purpose, that is unusual to the Israeli context.

Aspirational and Confrontational Nationalism

Yom Yerushalayim is further an unusual (although not unique) display of nationalism due to the aspirational and reactionary nature of the celebrations. Already noted is the irony of requiring a military presence to permit a march through a supposedly captured territory; one would hardly imagine that a military victory warranting celebration would require marchers to be separated

¹⁰ For additional examples pertaining to sporting contexts, see Heaton 1992; Kytö 2011. For examples concerning mosh-pit behavior at live performances of heavy metal live performance, see Riches 2014; Gruzelier 2007.

from local residents by hundreds of armed police and military. The irony, though, is illustrative of the contingent and partial nature of the 1967 “victory” and its ongoing disputes over the status of East Jerusalem, which, while claimed by Israel as fully Israeli territory, de facto functions in some areas as a no-go zone for Jewish Israelis. The Flag March’s route is confrontational because it challenges the reality on the ground, and as such it demonstrates that the claim the day makes—of a military victory resulting in a “unified Jerusalem”—is aspirational and propositional.

The march reflects a particular form of Israeli cartography, the kind touted by right-wing governments that shades all of Area C¹¹ in the same color as Israel’s uncontested regions, and that erects a security barrier far beyond the Green Line and even beyond Palestinian neighborhoods.¹² Cartography can be constructed on paper more readily than in the streets, hence the need for military protection when right-wing *datim leumiim* wish to march according to these kinds of maps. So too must a Messianic vision of a future “Jerusalem for the Jews,” an “undivided capital,”¹³ touted by this extreme group, be enforced, again providing a certain irony that any Messianic era might be so divisive as to require machine guns in the streets. (Judaism normatively portrays the Messianic era as a time of supreme peace.)¹⁴

¹¹ The West Bank is divided into areas A, B, and C. Area A, comprising the largest Palestinian urban areas, is controlled by the Palestinian Authority, B, which is a border zone around Area A, by both the Palestinian Authority and Israel, and C by Israel. The latter accounts for over 60% of the total area and includes 400,000 Israeli Jews, 300,000 Palestinians, as well as unpopulated land. Under the 1995 Oslo II Accords, Area C was supposed to be returned to Palestinian control, but this has not happened.

¹² This dissertation’s introduction offers further comments on the cartography of Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

¹³ These phrases are sometimes seen on Yom Yerushalayim banners, notably in 2012 when it was a favored slogan.

¹⁴ See, for example, *Mainmonides Mishneh Torah Hilchot Teshuvah* 8:7.

While Yom HaAtzmaut celebrations are stable from year to year, with predictable locations for public prayer and predictable content within each ceremony, the route of the Flag March is subject to political debate and pressure to the extent that the route may change even once the march has started, as occurred in 2021 when Hamas fired a rocket at Jerusalem during the early evening celebrations and triggered a war with Israel. In 2022, the numbers permitted to enter the Old City were limited to eight thousand each at Jaffa Gate and Damascus Gate, with safety concerns cited (likely a consequence of the deaths that occurred on Lag BaOmer 2021 at the Mount Meron, where a stampede occurred due to overcrowding). Despite the instability of the Flag March's route, its sounds remain remarkably similar between years, participating groups, and locations on the March, offering participants a vestige of certainty that they themselves create, even as politicians debate the possibility of an imminent war erupting as a direct consequence of the march, or as governments fight for survival, as Knesset factions fight about the appropriate way to police the marchers.

Sounding *Mamlachtiyut* as Israeli Paraliturgical Genre

On Yom Yerushalayim, diverse Jewish musics including klezmer, Neo-Hasidic rock, folk, Shirei Eretz Yisrael, piyyutim, and liturgy coalesce on the streets of Jerusalem, secular and sacred brought together such that no song can maintain a status as entirely one or the other. Hallel is brought out of the synagogue into the streets, and from its rabbinically-prescribed and limited holiday times to this new Statist, Messianic celebration; diasporic klezmer is sanctified through its position alongside revered High Holiday piyyutim and Israelified through the flag-waving that accompanies it through the streets of the Jewish state. The heritage-based, participatory nature of

these genres is transformed through the vocal and embodied performance of young men, which is characterized by militarism, antagonism, incitement, and excitement.

This amalgamation of sounds and styles is musical *mamlachtiyut* in action.

Mamlachtiyut, as I described earlier in this dissertation, is the particularly Israeli version of Statism characterized by intentional blurring of the religious and the militaristic-political, the flattening of God and State, the expansion of nationalism to the untouchable status of a deity, and the unwavering, reverent allegiance to Israel, Torah, and Jewish people. Each of these characteristics is performed musically: liturgy is performed in a militaristic fashion with the aesthetic style characterized by 4/4 time, chanting, and drums, which intentionally blurs the liturgical-religious and the militaristic-political; songs praising God and songs praising Jerusalem are offered up in praise of the State's expansion in a flattening of God and State; State becomes Godly and attains the untouchable status of a deity through the equal treatment of Jewish genres including liturgy, folk, klezmer, and pop, which are transformed musically into a single genre that blurs the lines between sacred and secular musics in service of a nationalism that does the same. These source musics are exclusively Jewish (at least in their lyrical content),¹⁵ but beyond that lack any unifying musical qualities. Their treatment as a unified genre epitomizes

¹⁵ In 2022, a social media argument broke out in the English-speaking Jewish religious community after one individual publicly "outed" Jewish artists who had released covers of secular music with new lyrics, criticizing their lack of attribution or copyright permissions as being against both civil law and halachah. Most fans defended Jewish musicians' choice to engage in this illegal mode of musical creation, to the point of cyberbullying the whistleblower. This illustrates the fact that musics selected for Yom Yerushalayim on the basis of their Jewishness are not always entirely Jewish creations. This does not affect their suitability for use aesthetically or religiously, as a simple change of words is understood by some to sanctify a secular song. The founder of Chabad, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (the Alter Rebbe), described this as "tzu makdish a niggun," a Yiddish phrase meaning "to sanctify a melody." (Golinkin 2021)

mamlachtiyut, with total, reverent allegiance to Israel, Torah, and the Jewish people paralleled in this musical ethnic exclusivity and celebration of the day itself.

I propose that the music of Yom Yerushalayim may best be understood as a new paraliturgical category. Edwin Seroussi defines paraliturgy and explains its social role by contrasting it to liturgy:

Religious gatherings are the main social context for the practice of traditional Jewish music. These occasions can be divided into two principal types: liturgical services, which are sanctioned by halakhah and therefore normative according to religious legislation; and paraliturgical events, which share some characteristics of the liturgical services but are optional... The predictability and routine of the public worship, added to the tendency of the rabbis not to allow elaborated musical performances, led to the development of additional, private devotions, and eventually to the emergence of non-normative, paraliturgical customs (Seroussi 2001).

He further characterizes extant Jewish paraliturgy as frequently being associated with a season or holiday to the extent that it may become a “musical symbol of its season” (Ibid.). Musically, he notes that across specific genres, Jewish paraliturgy tends to be structured with alternating solo verse and choral refrain, which encourages mass participation, and is usually sung by men.

On Yom Yerushalayim, all of the features that Seroussi identifies as characterizing Jewish paraliturgy are present. The gathering is religious in nature (political too, but its participants rationalize their participation on the basis of religious duty) and retains some limited characteristics of a liturgical service including its participant demographic and religiously themed vocal musicking, while deviating from normative worship in important ways like location, canonical status of repertoire, and socially-normative physical movements (sitting, standing, and bowing of liturgy is replaced by marching, flag-waving, and clapping of this paraliturgy). Seroussi identifies paraliturgy as optional, a custom, and non-normative, characteristics that overlap with one another to broadly indicate the extra-halachic nature of

paraliturgical musicking and its status as adjacent to sanctioned religious liturgy. I would add to Seroussi's observations that while Judaism's liturgy has broadly been a top-down creation with its importance impressed by Sages and rabbis who made its thrice daily performance obligatory on all adult Jews,¹⁶ paraliturgical songs and genres have more often found their footing through grassroots popularity, sometimes despite rabbinic caution regarding the lyrical content or concern that a paraliturgical song's popularity may overshadow halachically required prayers.¹⁷ Yom Yerushalayim's sounds also fit Seroussi's definition for their seasonality, solo-refrain song structure, suitability for mass participation, and male dominance.

Interpreting the music of Yom Yerushalayim as a new paraliturgical genre affords a more nuanced understanding of paraliturgical development, Yom Yerushalayim, and their status within contemporary Israel. Naming these sounds as paraliturgy legitimizes this form of musicking that does not conform to normative notions of para/liturgical beauty or aesthetic desirability, which in turn demands that scholars, political commentators, journalists, and the like take seriously the musicking of these boys' shouts and chants. This may facilitate reports of the day's happenings that offer a more nuanced reading of its *religious*-political nature, as opposed to extant commentary that frames Yom Yerushalayim as an act of political extremism. By framing its music as a whole as paraliturgical, the explicitly religious elements cannot be written off as exceptions, but must rather be interpreted as central, thus demanding more accurate

¹⁶ As discussed earlier, some interpret the thrice daily prayer obligation as applying to men alone, while understanding women as being obliged in prayer but without time-based strictures on its performance.

¹⁷ One example of a piece of paraliturgy that has stimulated rabbinic concern is Kol Nidre, ironically perhaps the best-known Jewish prayer among non-Jews that has been subject to many musical reimaginings, including those by Max Bruch, Arnold Schoenberg, and John Zorn. It is first mentioned in the ninth century by the Amram Gaon, who compiled the first complete siddur. He expressed concern, shared by many later rabbis, that "Kol Nidre is a foolish custom and it is forbidden to say it" (Seder Rav Amran Gaon helek aleph, amud mem zayin).

representation of the way in which participants themselves understand the day and bring it into being through their performance.

Reading this music as paraliturgy indicates the ongoing development of Jewish musics beyond the strictly secular and the strictly sacred. Seroussi states that the composition of piyyutim ceased in the early twentieth century (2001), suggesting a cessation of the paraliturgical genre with the longest and most recent history of creation. Whereas there may be broad agreement that piyyutim are no longer being composed according to traditional definitions thereof, what has not been suggested until now is the creation of new paraliturgical *genres*, which then opens the opportunity for the creation or inclusion of new works within said genre. Songs such as “Yerushalayim Shel Zahav” and “Am Yisrael Hai” may thus be described as paraliturgical, at least in some contexts, naming the sacralizing process to which they have been subject for some years already; as noted previously, “Yerushalayim Shel Zahav” may be heard in Syrian synagogues, the holy kedushah set to its melody. Until now, this has been understood as bringing the secular into a sacred space. I suggest that a more appropriate interpretation is the deployment of an already-sacred paraliturgical song into a new and exclusively sacred space; in other words, the affirmation of its status as a new piyyut. Acknowledging the ongoing grassroots creativity of Jewish communities is a task that must be taken seriously.

Related to this is the need to acknowledge the sounds of paraliturgy beyond the synagogue walls. Scholars have successfully located its sounds in women’s spaces, for example, but public space—implicitly secular space—has not been a space where paraliturgy has been noted as occurring in the Jewish context. Recognizing paraliturgy in public space opens the opportunity to recognize continuums of sacred-secular musicking, and new musical developments in the realm of civil religion.

Finally, the creation of a new paraliturgical genre parallels and complements the creation of new Jewish liturgies, both in Israel and the diaspora. The Reform, Reconstructionist, and Renewal movements are trailblazers in this arena, but the orthodox establishment is not entirely immune to liturgical development, having adopted the Prayer for the State of Israel and Prayer for Hayelei Tzahal (Israel's military servicepeople) in the recent past. While orthodoxy remains conservative in its liturgical development, public spaces provide an opportunity for orthodox individuals to engage with the new liturgy emanating from progressive Jewish institutions, such as ADVOT and Beit Tefilah Israeli.¹⁸ It seems logical that if new liturgy is being produced, so too is new paraliturgy being produced, but the latter has been slower to gain recognition than the former.¹⁹ Noticing both formal and informal modes of musical prayer offers a complete picture of Jewish religious development in the twenty-first century.

The Sacralizing of Civil Religion

Oz Almog notes how in early twentieth-century Israel, the singing of Shirei Eretz Yisrael folk songs in close-knit groups filled a similar function as prayers chanted in the synagogue,

¹⁸ ADVOT is the Reconstructionist movement's "poetic community" that offers annual cohorts of liturgists structured writing opportunities to encourage the creation of new Jewish liturgy and paraliturgy. Beit Tefilah Israeli offers a "secular Kabbalat Shabbat" at the Tel Aviv port weekly, which includes new prayers and works of secular Israeli poetry and literature.

¹⁹ Creations coming out of ADVOT, Beit Tefilah Israel, and similar institutions is described as "liturgy" in the context of progressive denominations, who have a more flexible understanding of liturgy's boundaries due to their regular updating of their siddurim to reflect ideological positions, political trends, identity issues, etc. (For example, some offer gender neutral language for ritual roles such as receiving an aliyah to the Torah.) However, one might reasonably argue that the new creations fall into the category of paraliturgy, as they are not incorporated into siddurim with regularity and instead often constitute new rituals for individuals, or meditative poetry.

reflecting the construction of early secular practices alongside traditional Jewish symbolism and presenting an example of Israel's evolving civil religion (Almog 2000: 21). He describes Shirei Eretz Yisrael as the “new Jewish liturgy,” paralleling the “new High Holidays” of Yom HaShoah, Yom HaZikaron, and Yom HaAtzmaut, and offering a musical dimension to the model of civil religion offered by Liebman and Don-Yehiya (2018). With the establishment of the State of Israel, this “new Jewish liturgy” took on an additional role as “tom-toms urging the tribe to battle” (Almog 2000: 21). Almog, citing Oz, intended this in a strictly metaphorical sense, suggesting that Shirei Eretz Yisrael became the nation's rallying cry, a soundtrack that could unify the new nation in the face of relentless waves of immigration from across the Jewish world.

Today, the “new liturgy” of Shirei Eretz Yisrael has been replaced by liturgy (and paraliturgy) itself, and the metaphorical tom-toms and battle are real as drums accompany chants and rockets fly overhead on Yom Yerushalayim. Civil religion is being re-sacralized through the increasing incorporation of explicitly religious symbols, expression of religious fervor connected to such symbols, and religious justification—including use of language of halachic obligation—thereof. Thus, mamlachtiyut replaces Zionism; both forms of nationalism sit to the middle of the secular sacred continuum, but mamlachtiyut is decentralized towards the sacred end. The existence of Yom Yerushalayim itself as a national holiday may be interpreted as part of this trend toward sacralizing civil religion; so too the way in which non-religious musical inclusions in its paraliturgy demand a religious reading due to their placement alongside, and treatment as, sacred music.

Civil religion, characterized by Liebman and Don-Yehiya as the appropriation of “ceremonials, myths, and creeds of the Jewish religious tradition” in order to “legitimate the

social order, unite the population, and mobilize the society's members in pursuit of its dominant political goals" (2018: ix), appears to be increasing in both prominence and religiosity in recent years. This contrasts with their observation in 1983 that "civil religion has declined in importance in recent years" (2018: x) and indicates an about-turn in political trends in the nation. It may also or additionally be the case that examining civil religion from the perspective of liturgical musicking identifies only happenings that trend religious, or that a musically informed study reveals aspects not sufficiently accounted for in a political tome, but it is also the case that many of the events I describe in this dissertation have emerged for the first time, or significantly changed in nature, since Liebman and Don-Yehiya's publication, suggesting that a sacralizing trend in the nature of Israel's civil religion is indeed underway. What remains the same is the confluence of the secular and the sacred in civil religion, the dominance of the middleness in debates and conflicts concerning the nature of Israeli identity, and the inextricable link between Jewishness/Judaism and Israeliness/Israel.

As a form of nationalism, civil religion is limited in its relevance within the State of Israel because it necessarily excludes citizens and residents who are not Jewish or who identify with peripheral forms of Judaism, and because in some cases it is aspirational rather than realist (such as on Yom Yerushalayim, when participants attempt to enact a unified, Jewish Jerusalem that simply does not exist). Its limited and exclusionary nature is also the basis of its success for the majority of the nation's citizens, who hear their own complex and specific dual identities as Israelis and Jews sounded in the nation's self-expression.

Yerushalayim Shel Emtza

Israel's ideal citizen identifies as both Israeli and Jewish, neither one to the detriment of the other, secular and sacred identities entwined in an intimate dance. This choreography, writ large, is danced by the nation too, not least in its capital and emotional heartland that is Jerusalem. Amichai expressed his desire for "Yerushalayim shel emtza," the Jerusalem of the middle, a utopia that he considered to be unattainable, instead feeling that he was "banging [his] head above and...stubbing [his] foot below," being split and pulled in conflicting directions despite being "just one me and not two" (1998: 144). But perhaps it is precisely this that characterizes and even unifies Jerusalem and Jerusalemites' experiences: the inevitability of running into sounded conflict in public space, the tug of war within the middle of the secular-sacred continuum, the weighty responsibility of constituting Israel's capital and Judaism's heartland and of becoming part of the fabric of this city which demands so much of its residents in their everyday lives. Jerusalem is neither one nor two, neither divided nor united. The lines on its maps are at once true and not, meaningful and irrelevant. Jerusalem resides in the middle spaces, at the heart of Bünting's clover, with those who enter the city contributing—whether reluctantly or willingly—to the nature of Judaism and the identity of Israel, not least through the sounding of liturgy in its public spaces.

Epilogue: Public Liturgy During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Public space underwent an unprecedented and unexpected transformation during the time that I wrote this dissertation. COVID-19's impact in Jerusalem was similar to that elsewhere in the world insomuch as mass events were rendered both unlawful and (broadly) undesirable. Streets, squares, and venues fell silent as lockdowns relegated residents to their private spheres and tightly regulated movement beyond the walls of one's home. Events that I attended annually were cancelled in 2020, and in some cases in 2021, as Israel attempted to limit wave upon wave of outbreaks, contending with an increasingly-defiant population who demanded, in particular, the right to practice religion in public.

Events that were not cancelled were transformed radically beyond sonic and visual recognition. The First Station was deserted, its restaurants and shops shuttered, the bicycle and walking paths that pass through it seeing more activity than its main stage. Services relocated from synagogues to Zoom, hallowed walls and ḥazanut replaced by unintentional use of the mute button and underdressed congregants wrangling children, tallitot askew.

Post-lockdown, as religious activity was included in the first genre of permitted gatherings,¹ the Kotel was parsed into capsules with the construction of orderly rectangular rooms across the men's and women's sections (see figure 8.1). For once, the meḥitza was barely visible, dwarfed as it was by two-meter-high temporary walls and tented structures on both sides.

¹ Even at the height of COVID-19 restrictions, mikvaot remained open in order that women could fulfil the requirements of taharat hamishpaḥah. For discussion of the special status of this religious institution during the pandemic see Zohar 2020; Bitton and Hain 2021.



Figure 8.1. The Kotel during COVID-19, with capsules to physically divide worshippers (Western Wall Heritage Foundation 2020).

Women of the Wall pivoted as their primary mode of gathering was suspended, replacing Rosh Hodesh events with social media livestreams. As restrictions eased and allowed pods at the Kotel, they prayed as a small group comprising its Israeli board members. They could not be interrupted by nay-sayers, resulting in a drastically different sonic and discursive experience for those who watched live via Facebook and Instagram, and a need to transform their messaging from a one of victimhood to one of hope, their pod offering an ironically utopian glimpse of what could be. Original Women of the Wall, though, barely changed their activities since they meet as a small group and eschew media attention. Women for the Wall, the biggest of the three groups, was the last to be able to resume activities, since their *raison d'être* (disrupting Women of the Wall) requires close sonic and physical contact. Mass gatherings in this space, such as selihot and Birkat Kohanim, were subject to restrictions that similarly transformed their character, and

that returned a focus to the strictly religious—as opposed to nation-building—elements, their performance justified on religious grounds as a Jewish communal obligation to God rather than an opportunity to, say, bolster a Jewish presence in the Old City, reinforce the Kotel’s status as an Israeli heritage site, or increase participation in liturgical musicking.

For my part I did not witness these transformations of key public spaces firsthand, since I had planned to complete my fieldwork in the end of 2019 in anticipation of the arrival of my first child in July 2020. (I was most fortunate in this regard, as many of my colleagues’ fieldwork plans were cancelled, requiring a complete rethink of their dissertation research.) Nervous about this unknown disease and the vulnerability that my unborn child and I shared in this climate, I ventured out of the house only for medical appointments and daily walks.² Our young family then relocated to France to see out the pandemic’s first winter, returning to Israel in the era of vaccinations (for adults, at least).

On our dusk walks at the end of hot Jerusalem summer days during the late months of my pregnancy, we frequently encountered street minyanim.³ These informal gatherings filled the evening air with strains of song, and on Friday nights, ad-hoc Kabbalat Shabbat services were such a popular phenomenon that we could walk for an hour and never be beyond earshot of at least one such service. The government’s ever-fluctuating cap on how many people may gather informed the changing sound of these street minyanim. When the cap was ten, the voices were overwhelmingly all-male because of the orthodox edict that ten adult Jewish men are required to

² For more on the sonic flux of the COVID-19 era, see Lipscombe 2022.

³ Such minyanim were essentially a compromise offered by the government—which included Haredi parties—to allow the fulfilment of this religious custom that some view as obligation with some semblance of safety. It was understood that Haredim would continue to gather inside their yeshivot and synagogues for prayers, spaces effectively off-limits to the Israeli police, unless offered a viable, legal alternative for prayers.

make a minyan, which is a desirable status for prayers because it permits the recitation of a full prayer service. When the cap increased, women's voices were heard too, except in Haredi neighborhoods where the lack of visual separation between men and women outdoors was deemed inappropriate. Ironically, while Haredi women were no longer permitted to attend services at all, in non-Haredi communities women's access was increased as couples and families flaunted the voluntary separation of genders, instead standing in family units, sometimes for the first time in a religious setting.

Nusah, too, told a story of ethnic immigration from one neighborhood to another, and later in the pandemic as larger groups gathered on the doorsteps of synagogues, mapped aloud the locations of synagogues frequented by different edot. Spaces informally out-of-bounds to those whose edah, gender, denomination, or social class did not match the identities of those within became accessible to all, as outdoor services unintentionally democratized access to Jerusalem's liturgical worlds. At the precise moment that massed public performances of liturgy disappeared, a greater diversity of public liturgy poured out onto Jerusalem's streets. Smaller, more intimate gatherings allowed for the preservation of diversity in a way that a mass gathering which must cater to a larger audience cannot. The debates around Israeli identity at stake in this dissertation's fieldwork, debates that are relevant at key public sites and in key public events, were rendered irrelevant as there was space—literal and metaphorical—for the gamut of liturgical sounds, with every street corner up for grabs.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, street minyanim remain popular even today. Many synagogues remained outdoors during the Delta and Omicron variants, returning indoors only in the Spring of 2022 once restrictions were completely done away with and vaccinations available to all ages. In some instances, returning to the synagogue building was a move resisted by congregants keen

to protect their health and/or autonomy, and rabbis forced the move by, for example, requiring the return of a sefer Torah or making threats about the membership status of those who failed to return.⁴ Street minyanim allowed synagogue members to form small, strong internal coalitions by catering to various interest groups; a single synagogue might informally split into a young families minyan, an older men's minyan, and a single person's minyan, overcoming conflicts and struggles within the synagogue by allowing greater self-governance by each interest group. My own synagogue created "pods" during the 2020 High Holidays, and members enjoyed characterizing each pod by its participants' qualities. (We, of course, were in the "noisy young families" pod, which allowed us to enjoy services without worrying about whether our baby's crying was bothering anyone nearby, and ensured a plethora of competent childminders if we needed an extra pair of hands while performing ritual duties.) It is also unsurprising, then, that some street minyanim continue to this day, in a potentially permanent change to Jerusalem's liturgical scene that may supplement (rather than replace) its character and offerings prior to the pandemic.

In the Summer of 2022 as I pen this epilogue, I am returning to the sites and sounds of this dissertation for the first time since they constituted fieldwork, and for the first time post (?) pandemic.⁵ The Israeli public appears broadly to share a global appetite for amnesia and ahistoricism, hungry for the return of familiar events that corroborate the pandemic's supposed endpoint. Willingly, institutions responsible for the sounds such as those mentioned in this dissertation have resumed public liturgical events. While amnesia might be a desirable state for

⁴ Waxman reports on this phenomenon (2021).

⁵ I employ the phrase "post pandemic" despite the continued presence of COVID-19 to reflect both popular discourse to this effect, and the return to forms of everyday activity that characterize 2022 thus far.

some, after two bleak and quiet years, even an event that returns unchanged cannot be heard in the same way. Those happenings that have returned have attained a new status of permanence in the Jerusalem soundscape because of the active choice that was made to reinstate them after their absence. The same sounds cannot sound the same, but their endurance tells of Jerusalem's inimitable status as the center of Bünting's cloverleaf, the city that is both above and below, the beating heart of Judaism and Israel that will continue to play host to encounters, conflicts, and debates as to the ideal character of both. While the sound of the city, the nature of these struggles, and the character of Jerusalem may change, its offering as a capacious sounding board betwixt and between secular and sacred is surely here for generations to come.



Figure 8.2. Attending Kabbalat Shabbat at the First Station with my children (no longer as a fieldwork activity), August 2022.

Glossary of Hebrew Terms

The glossary is ordered according to Latin alphabetization following the transliteration guide that prefaces this dissertation's introduction.

A Note on Number and Gender

Hebrew is a gendered language, meaning that nouns and verbs listed below may gain a suffix to indicate number and/or gender. Where relevant, terms are listed in the masculine singular.

Feminine singular forms most often add “ah” or sometimes “it”; masculine plural forms add “im” and feminine plural “ot” or occasionally “iot”. There are exceptions to all of these. Where the plural may be challenging to identify, or where I first use a word in its plural form, I have indicated it in parenthesis below.

Glossary

Adon HaSelihot: Paraliturgical pizmon in the form of an acrostic sung during selihot and on Yom Kippur.

Aggadah: Non-legalistic rabbinic genre that conveys moral or ethical lessons through stories.

Aliyah: Immigration to Israel, literally “ascent.” Also, the term used for the synagogue honor of being called to the Torah to recite the blessings before and after it is read.

Aliyah BaRegel: Jewish pilgrimage to Jerusalem performed thrice annually for the shalosh regalim (Sukkot, Pesah, Shavuot).

Amidah: Judaism's central prayer recited thrice daily while standing. If a minyan is present, the entire amidah is repeated aloud by the shaliah tzibur. Also called the shemoneh esreh, meaning “eighteen,” for its original eighteen blessings in its weekday iteration.

Aneinu: Prayer recited on fast days and as part of seliḥot.

Aravit: The evening prayer service, also called maariv.

Assur: Forbidden by Jewish law.

Ashkenazi: Deriving from Northern-Central Europe, and areas where Jews immigrated from there such as Eastern Europe. Used to describe people, liturgy, and other cultural objects. (Compare: Mizrahi, Sephardi.)

Baal Korei: Person reading the Torah during a service.

Baal Teshuvah: Newly religious, someone who has adopted orthodox religious observance following a secular or non-orthodox upbringing, literally “master of return [to God].” See also: ḥozer bitshuvah.

Bakashot: Paraliturgy recited prior to dawn on Shabbat by some Sephardi and Mizraḥi congregations. The service may last several hours.

Bais Yaakov: Global network of Haredi girls’ schools.

Bar Mitzvah: Ritual celebration marking the transition to Jewish adulthood for thirteen-year-old boys.

Bat Kol: Rabbinic concept of an inaudible Divine voice that expresses God’s will.

Bat Mitzvah: Ritual celebration marking the transition to Jewish adulthood for twelve-year-old girls.

Bein HaShmashot: Period of time between sunset and nightfall that bridges Jewish days, literally “between the luminaries.”

Beit Midrash: Yeshiva study hall.

Birkat Kohanim: Prayer recited by Kohanim daily during Shaḥarit (in Israel) with accompanying ritual motions.

Birkat hamazon: Grace after meals.

Dati: Religiously observant; in the Israeli context, orthodox Jewish.

Datiyut: Religiousness, religiosity.

Dati Leumi: Religious Zionist, a major demographic group in Israel broadly corresponding to modern orthodoxy in diaspora.

Datlash: An acronym of dati lesheavar, meaning “formerly religious.” Used to describe someone raised orthodox who later became secular.

Devarim shebikdushah: Literally “words that are in holiness,” a term for specific parts of liturgy that require a minyan, such as kaddish, kedushah, and barchu.

Edah (pl. edot): Jewish ethnic group.

Elul: Month in late summer preceding the High Holiday season associated with teshuvah and self-improvement through introspection.

Ervah: Halachic term for nakedness, sexual incitement, exposure, or indecency.

Ezrat nashim: Women’s section.

Frier: Sucker, idiot, someone gullible.

Gabbai: Synagogue official, especially one who organizes and conducts the Torah service.

Haggadah: Text recited at Seder night on Passover.

Iriyah: City council.

Kabbalat shabbat: Weekly evening service marking the start of Shabbat.

Kaddish: Aramaic prayer recited with a minyan at transition points during services.

Kashrut: Dietary laws.

Kavod hatzibbur: Rabbinic notion of a community’s dignity or honor which governs certain extra-halachic behaviors.

Kedushah: Holiness, also the term for the third blessing of the Amidah, the holiest part of the holiest prayer in Judaism.

Keruvim: Golden winged figures inside the Holy of Holies.

Kippah (pl. kippot): Round head covering worn by men and some women.

Kodesh, kadosh: Holy.

Kol isha: Religious prohibition on women’s singing voices, literally “voice of a woman.”

Kotel: Literally “wall,” also used to refer specifically to the Western Wall.

Halachah: Jewish law.

Hallel: Verses of praise, mostly Psalms, incorporated into Shaḥarit on festive occasions.

Havdalah: Ceremony at the conclusion of Shabbat and other important days.

Hesder Yeshiva: Program combining military service with yeshiva study.

Ḥalutzim: Pioneer immigrants in the pre-statehood era.

Ḥanukah: Rabbinic holiday falling in the winter, celebrating a Jewish victory over the Seleucids and characterized by the nightly lighting of a Ḥanukiah.

Ḥanukiah: Nine-branched candelabrum lit on each night of Ḥanukah.

Ḥardal: Acronym for Ḥaredi dati leumi, meaning dati leumi Jews who tend towards stricter interpretations of halachah.

Ḥaredi: People who observe halachah strictly, eschewing a modern lifestyle.

Ḥazan: Musical officiant of a prayer service.

Ḥazanut: Cantorial music as a genre; the art of cantorial singing.

Ḥevre: Friendship group.

Ḥevruta: Traditional method of dialogic study in pairs.

Ḥiloni: Person who is secular.

Ḥinuch atzmai: Independent education system in Israel.

Ḥol: Secular time.

Ḥozer bitshuvah: Newly religious, someone who has adopted orthodox religious observance following a secular or non-orthodox upbringing, literally “returning to repentance” or “returning to return [to God].” See also: baal teshuvah.

Ḥumash: The first five books of the Torah, the Pentateuch.

Ḥumrah: Halachic stringencies.

Maamad: Bomb shelter inside a house or apartment (as opposed to a public shelter, which is termed a miklat).

Maariv: The evening prayer service, also called aravit.

Maḥzor: Holiday prayer book.

Mamlachti: Israeli school system catering to the secular population; literally “national.”

Mamlachti dati: Israeli school system catering to the dati leumi population; literally “national religious.”

Mamlachtiyut: A form of Israeli religious nationalist patriotism, Statism.

Masorti: Traditional, often referring to Jews who perform some religious rituals of their choosing but do not observe all mitzvot or feel bound by mitzvot.

Maqamat: Middle Eastern modes.

Misheberach: Prayer traditionally incorporated into the Torah service to make specific requests, such as for health/healing or military success.

Mehitzah: Gender partition in a prayer space.

Miluim: Military reserve duty.

Minḥa: The afternoon prayer service.

Minyan: Prayer quorum of ten men (in orthodox Judaism) or ten adult Jews (in progressive Jewish denominations).

Mishnah: First major codified rabbinic work compiled around 200 CE, expounding religious laws from the Tanach.

Mishpaḥton: In-home daycare, usually for babies.

Mitzvot: Commandments, whether Biblical or rabbinic in origin.

Mitveh HaKotel: Compromise agreement regarding the creation of a substantial egalitarian plaza at the Kotel in exchange for Women of the Wall’s relocation from the women’s section to the egalitarian section.

Mizrachi: Deriving from Middle Eastern Jewry. Used to describe people, liturgy, and other cultural objects. A catch-all for Israeli political movements encompassing non-Ashkenazim. (Compare: Ashkenazi, Sephardi.)

Megillat Esther: The Book of Esther.

Mikveh: Ritual bath.

Naḥalah: Yearly anniversary of someone’s death; Hebrew term (see *yahrzeit*).

Ner Neshamah: Memorial candle lit on the anniversary of someone's death (see: *naḥalah* and *yahrzeit*).

Nusah: Prayer mode.

Oleh (pl. *olim*): Person who immigrates to Israel.

Patur: Halachic category meaning "exempt" from an obligation.

Pesukei deZimra: Psalms and verses recited before *Shaḥarit*.

Peyot: Sidelocks sported by religious men.

Pikud HaOref: Home Front Command.

Piyyut: Paraliturgical song genre.

Poskim: Halachic commentators, especially those who give halachic rulings.

Purim: Rabbinic holiday falling in the spring, celebrating a Jewish victory in Persia and characterized by costume dress and drunken revelry.

Rabbinate: Shorthand for the Israeli Chief Rabbinate, Israel's ultimate religious authority with legal and administrative authorities.

Rikud ha'am: Israeli folk dance, often characterized by circle dancing and strictly choreographed.

Rosh HaShanah: Two-day biblical holiday falling in the early autumn, celebrating one of Judaism's four new years as part of the High Holiday season.

Rosh Ḥodesh: Jewish new month occurring with the new moon, literally "head of the month."

Siddur: Prayer book.

Sigd: Ethiopian Jewish holiday fifty days after Yom Kippur marking acceptance of the Torah and desire to reside in Israel.

Sefer Torah: Torah scroll.

Seliḥot: Penitential prayers performed at night during Elul and the High Holiday season.

Sephardi: Deriving from Spain, Portugal, and areas where Jews fled to during the Inquisition such as Morocco. Used to describe people, liturgy, and other cultural objects. A catch-all for non-Ashkenazi liturgy. (Compare: Ashkenazi, Mizrahi.)

Shaharit: The morning prayer service.

Shaliah tzibur: Prayer leader.

Shas: Israeli political party created by and for Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews.

Shavuot: Day-long biblical holiday falling in the early summer, celebrating the giving of the Torah.

Shehina: Divine presence, a feminine and mystical concept of the Jewish God.

Shema: Jewish creed of faith recited twice daily.

Shirah ba'tzibbur: Collective singing, literally "singing in public."

Shirei Eretz Yisrael: Songs of the Land of Israel, an Israeli folk genre.

Sherut leumi: Voluntary national service post-high school for those who do not perform military service. Popular among religious young women.

Shoah: Holocaust.

Shtender: Yiddish, portable lectern used for prayer leading or study.

Shul: Synagogue, originally a Yiddish term in common usage globally.

Shuk: Open-air market.

Sufganiot: Fried donuts, a traditional Hanukah food for Ashkenazim.

Sukkot: Week-long biblical holiday falling in the early autumn, characterized by building and dwelling in temporary outdoor booths.

Tahanun: Supplications, performed twice daily except on festive occasions.

Taharat (ha)mishpaha: Family purity laws, also referred to as "niddah."

Tallit: Prayer shawl with tzitzit attached to its four corners worn during Shaharit by Jewish men and some Jewish women.

Tanach: The Hebrew Bible; an acronym for its three constituent parts (Torah, Neviim, Ketuvim).

Tashliḥ: Ritual performed during the High Holidays.

Tekes maavar: Transition ceremony.

Tefillah: Prayer.

Tefillin: Phylacteries; leather boxes with straps worn on the head and non-dominant arm by Jewish men and sometimes Jewish women.

Teshuvah: Return to religious observance, repentance from sin.

Tiyul: Field trip or hike.

Tzahal: Abbreviation for the Israeli military, Tzva HaHaganah LeYisrael (literally “Army of Defense for Israel.”)

Tzitzit: Ritual fringes attached to a four-cornered garment, which may be an undergarment for daily wear or a prayer shawl during Shaḥarit.

Tzniut: Modesty or humility, usually referring to how women dress.

Ulpanah: Girls’ religious high school.

Yahrzeit: Yearly anniversary of someone’s death; Yiddish term (see naḥalah).

Yamim Noraim: High Holy Days, occurring in the autumn.

Yekke: A German-speaking. Used, often in jest or as a critique, to describe someone who is punctual, exhibits extreme attention to detail, and is suspicious of mysticism and spirituality.

Yeshiva: Seminary for the study of Jewish religious texts, primarily the Talmud. Women’s parallel institutions are usually called seminaries.

Yeshiva Tichoni: Boys’ religious high school.

Yom HaZikaron: Israeli Remembrance Day.

Yom HaAtzmaut: Israeli Independence Day.

Yom Kippur: Day of Atonement, a biblical Jewish fast day.

Yom Tov: A biblically-mandated celebratory holiday, literally “good day.”

Yom Yerushalayim: Jerusalem Day, a civil holiday in Israel.

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Interviews by the Author

- Interview with a German young man, Jerusalem, December 31, 2017.
- Interview with a partygoer, Jerusalem, December 31, 2017.
- Interview with Abe [surname withheld], Jerusalem, December 11, 2018.
- Interview with Alon [surname withheld], Jerusalem, January 7, 2019.
- Interview with an anonymous soldier, Jerusalem, May 7, 2018.
- Interview with an Iraqi Israeli, Jerusalem, April 30, 2018.
- Interview with Ariel [surname withheld], Jerusalem, March 4, 2019.
- Interview with Asaf [surname withheld], May 13, 2018.
- Interview with Cheryl Birkner Mack, Jerusalem, July 19, 2018.
- Interview with Elizabeth [surname withheld], Jerusalem, November 1, 2018.
- Interview with Emily [surname withheld], Jerusalem, January 29, 2019.

Interview with Emma [surname withheld], Jerusalem, May 6, 2019.

Interview with Gadi [surname withheld], Jerusalem, 27 November, 2019.

Interview with Gal [surname withheld], Jerusalem, May 6, 2019.

Interview with Hila [surname withheld], Jerusalem, May 7, 2018.

Interview with Leah Aharoni, Jerusalem, October 31, 2018.

Interview with Levi Weiman-Kelman, Jerusalem, October 15, 2018.

Interview with Miriam [surname withheld], May 13, 2018.

Interview with Roi [surname withheld], Jerusalem, January 31, 2018.

Interview with Shailee [surname withheld], Jerusalem, November 21, 2018.

Interview with Shira [surname withheld], Jerusalem, March 6, 2019.

Interview with Yael Karrie, Jerusalem, August 28, 2018.

Interview with Yohanna Bisraor, Jerusalem, October 18, 2018.