

## JEWISH MUSIC HISTORICALLY CONSIDERED.

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An historical treatment of the music associated with Jewish worship must consider the forces registered in Jewish history. These appear in the ever-changing environment and in the readjustments which the new conditions make necessary. Jewish music owes its being to these inner and outer causes, and a comprehensive view of our sacred melodies must consider the origins of the component parts, their liturgical fitness and their intrinsic worth. Though the large bulk of these melodies were derived from different ages and peoples, they are Jewish in the sense that they symbolize and express the Jew's holiest emotions. Origins no more affect our melodies than they do our institutions or customs. Let the investigator trace the beginnings of our holy days to some non-Jewish source if he will. For us these days will retain all the Jewishness with which they have been invested by sacred association. Jewish music records the subtlest emotions which swayed the Jew's heart during his age-long struggle; and it was called into being by Jewish sighs and tears, by Jewish faith and aspiration. What we owe to that music has never been fully realized. If the study of Talmudic dialectics has stimulated the Jewish mind, the music of the Synagogue has nourished the Jewish heart. If David's music dispelled the melancholy broodings of an afflicted king, the song of the Synagogue has rendered a similar service for an afflicted people.

Music occupies an honored place in our sacred literature. The first musician is mentioned in the earliest portions of the Biblical narrative,<sup>1</sup> and music was associated with every im-

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. IV. 21, 29, 30.

portant event, both public and private, and both sacred and secular.<sup>2</sup> "Israel must have been a people of unusual musical temperament whose daily nourishment was song and sound."<sup>3</sup> This seems to have been generally recognized,<sup>4</sup> and the place of the modern Jew in the realm of music is regarded by one writer as "a survival of the old faculty."<sup>5</sup> There is a close connection between song and worship, and there are significant reasons for the preference this art received in Israel. This medium adequately expressed the most subjective of emotions, and its development was unhampered by the restrictions put upon painting and sculpture. The intimate connection between music and religion is further indicated by the etymologies of the words "Prophet"<sup>6</sup> and "Music."<sup>6\*</sup> It is therefore in connection with the service that the most elaborate specimens of music are found.

## BIBLICAL TIMES.

While no provision is made for liturgical music in the Pentateuch, such was the case in pre-exilic times. The instruments

<sup>2</sup> Feasts, Isa. v. 12. Victory, Judges, xi. 34. Vintage, Judges xxii. 19. Wedding, Jere. vii. 54. Sacrifice, Lev. ix. 24; Ps. xxvi. 6, 7; Ecclesiasticus L. 16, 18. Inspiration for prophets, II Kings iii. 15. Pilgrims, Isa. xxx. 29. Departure, Gen. xxxi. 27. Neginah, a byword, Lam. iii. 14, 16.

<sup>3</sup> C. H. Cornill: Music in the Old Testament, Monist, April, 1909.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. cxxxvii. 3. Assyrian monument translated by Winckler, and quoted by Cornill in the Monist, April, 1909.

<sup>5</sup> H. E. Krehbiel: American Hebrew, May 27, 1891.

<sup>6</sup> I. Chron. xxv. 1, 3. הנביאים בנורות בנבלים ובמלצחים, "Der Sanger wird zum Propheten; und der Prophet wird zum Sanger gemacht." I. Benziger, II Chron. 14, in Marti's Hd. Kom. נבא Utter in a low voice. As nabû, call, proclaim, name; weakened form of נבע bubble up, pour forth. (of flow of words under excitement of inspiration). Heb. and Eng. Lexicon, Brown, Driver, Briggs, p. 611.

<sup>6\*</sup> Music, μουσα. Dor. μουσα ὕμνον connected with ἡμαντις and ἡμνια mania, indicating inspiration. "Leo Mayer: Hd. buch der griech. Etymol., IV., p. 361, quoted by Gressmann, p. 13, n. 2. Religious revivals accompanied by song, e.g., Modern Hassidim. Ancient example, see Dr. Kohler's article on Therapeutæ, Jewish Ency., XII, p. 138. This throws light on the psychology of both religion and music.

enumerated include the stringed, the wind and the percussive groups.<sup>7</sup> For a description of these we are compelled to go to Egyptian, Assyrian and Babylonian sources. The earliest music must have been strongly influenced by David,<sup>8</sup> although the origins belong to prehistoric times. After the exile the music in the service becomes more elaborate<sup>9</sup> and the place of the musician and singer rivals that of the Levite. From the literary structure of many of the psalms we infer that the singing must have been antiphonal.<sup>10</sup> It is equally probable that secular melodies were employed for liturgical purposes. This is indicated by the headings of some of the psalms, which appear to be musical rubrics.<sup>11</sup> The singing was probably relegated to a chorus which was augmented by a boys' choir and was accompanied by an orchestra consisting of stringed and percussive instruments.<sup>12</sup> The Levites who participated in the singing received special training,<sup>13</sup> and the number of instruments was fixed so as to assure the proper blending of tone color and volume.<sup>14</sup> The character of that music cannot be determined, but from our sources and from comparative studies, we know that it must have been unisonous (II Chron. v. 13; occasionally the octaves were used) and that the element of rhythm played the principal rôle. We usually find Asaph in connection with the cymbals, Heman with the harp, and Jeduthun with the lute (I Chron. xvi. 5, xxv. 1, 3). The latter period was influenced by the theory of Greek music, but the original elements were not altered. While the psalms were intoned responsively either by two choruses or by the leader and a chorus, the congregation joined in the singing of the Amen, Halleluiah, and "For His

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<sup>7</sup> Gressmann: Musik u. Musikinstrumente im A. T. See Polychrome Bible, Appendix to Book of Psalms, pp. 217 ff.

<sup>8</sup> Amos vi. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Ezek. ii. 65, male and female singers. Neh. x. 40; vii. 6, 2.

<sup>10</sup> Ps. xlvii., xlii. and lxxx., etc.

<sup>11</sup> Ps. lxxx., lxxxiv., "To the tune of the lilies." "To the tune of the wine press." Similarly II Sam. i. 8.

<sup>12</sup> Er. ii. 6; 13b.

<sup>13</sup> Five years' course. Hul. 24a.

<sup>14</sup> Er. 10a, 13a.

## CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS.

Kindness endureth forever.”<sup>15</sup> The earliest forms must have consisted of a kind of speech-song or declamation, which may have been based upon a definite scale.

### TEMPLE ORIGINS.

That some elements of the Temple song were carried over into the Synagogue is certain. We are told by Judah ben Hananiah (Succah, 53a) that the choristers in the Temple went in a body from the Temple into the Synagogue. The Scriptural readings, the Psalms, the Amidah, Shma and the Baruch Sheamar form the oldest portions of our liturgy,<sup>16</sup> and it is in the musical forms of such parts that the old traces are to be sought. The great bulk of Temple music cannot be recovered,<sup>17</sup> but traces of this music have been retained in the musical traditions of both Church and Synagogue.<sup>18</sup> The earliest indication of a cantillation is found in Neh. viii. 8, and was doubtless used in the second Temple.<sup>19</sup> This form of “strain” is common to the ancients, and though the Neginoth were invented by the Massorites, the cantillation is much older. The numerous references scattered throughout our literature collected by Ackermann, L. Löw, and others, are of the greatest historical significance. For our especial inquiry they have but an indirect bearing, since they simply describe the effect of the music and the occasions for the same, but they tell us nothing about the system itself. The disappearance of the ancient melody was somewhat accelerated by the cessation of instrumental music<sup>20</sup> in Jewish worship, and more directly because of the absence of a definite system of notation,

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<sup>15</sup>Neh. v. 13, I Chron. xvi. 31, Succah, 10b, the signal given by means of a Sudarin (defined as “flag-signal”). Succah, 10b, Jer. Ber., 14c, Taan. 16b, I Cor. xiv. 16.

<sup>16</sup>Jewish Ency., art. “Liturgy.”

<sup>17</sup>“Die althebraische Tempelmusik ist und bleibt verschlossen,” Ackermann, p. 481. Regret expressed for the loss of the same, Sotah v. 4.

<sup>18</sup>Gevaert's investigations in Leitner's *Der gottesdienstliche Volksgesang*, Freiburg, 1906.

<sup>19</sup>Meg. 32a, Ned. 37a, Ber. 62a.

<sup>20</sup>Succah, 50b. עיקר שירה בפה ולא בכלי

and the repeated misfortunes which discouraged the desire for song. Most of our traditional music is of a much later origin, although traces of antiquity are clearly discernible. These appear in "codas" or closing phrases of our cantillations, chants, and in the old "modes" or scales which have also been preserved in the plain song of the church.

#### TRADITIONAL VARIANTS.

Tradition has transmitted musical forms of varying antiquity and these are found in the Ashkenazic, the Sefardic and the Oriental rituals.<sup>21</sup> The differences in these are accounted for by differences in environment. It is noteworthy that parallel variants are found in the vocalization of the Hebrew. In several instances, however, common tonalities are found.<sup>22</sup> Because of the greater social and cultural isolation of the Ashkenazim, it is claimed that they have retained more of the traditional song than have the more favored Sefardim.<sup>23</sup> Others hold that these differences existed before the Diaspora, and therefore the claim of greater antiquity for any one cannot be established.<sup>24</sup> It is undeniable, however, that the northern or Ashkenazic ritual is more distinct and shows fewer external influences. Because of their greater isolation, the northern Jews were compelled to satisfy their religio-esthetic needs from within, hence the Ashkenazic ritual contains a fuller development of the traditional material and a greater number of original compositions. Thus we find many of the prayer motives directly borrowed from the cantillations, and many chants are developed from well-known stereotyped refrains that frequently occur in the liturgical song.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Ackermann d. Syn. Gesang., p. 17.

<sup>22</sup> Jewish Ency. IX., art "Music." See Scriptural and Prophetic Readings for Ashkenazim and Sefardim, art. "Cantillation," Vol. III.

<sup>23</sup> F. L. Cohen's view in Kaiser's paper on Sulzer, C. C. A. R. Year Book, Vol. XIV., p. 238.

<sup>24</sup> C. Adler in Preface to Songs of Zion, similarly Ackermann in Winter und Wuensche. Jud. Literatur.

<sup>25</sup> A. Friedmann: Syn. Gesang., p. 23.

## MUSICAL FORMS.

The musical forms used in the Synagogue are the cantillation, prayer-motive, fixed melodies and hymns. That a cantillation was used in the second Temple is certain.<sup>26</sup> All the variants of cantillation represent a parallel setting for different parts of the Scriptural readings, and the scale or "mode" of each reflects the character of the text or the occasion for which it is employed. Often the cantillation changes so as to give emphasis to a particular passage. Such examples are found in the Prophetical cantillation and in the book of Esther. The Haftarah is intoned in a mode somewhat similar to our minor scale.<sup>27</sup> The refrain, however, is intoned in a brighter strain and the same cheerful note is carried over<sup>28</sup> into the subsequent benedictions to express the hope for the Davidic restoration. A similar change is found in the bright Megillah cantillation when the text speaks of the captivity (Esther ii. 5, 6) or when Mordecai's grief is described (Esther iv. 1). In the last two passages the mournful Eicho cantillation replaces the happier one heard throughout the Megillah. The musical equivalents for Job, Proverbs and Psalms have not been retained by Ashkenazim and Sefardim. There is a distinct chant for some of the books of the Hagiography, but these are only partially indicated by "Neginoth."

The prayer-motives resemble the cantillation only in the possession of a distinct mode for each occasion. The choice for such a mode is by no means arbitrary, but it is prompted by its esthetic fitness for the text or the occasion. In form the prayer-motive is free, and, with the exception of the definite tonality and stereotyped refrain, is left entirely to the improvisation of

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<sup>26</sup> Jer. Meg., 24, 480 places of worship in Jerusalem. Talm., Bab., Meg., 32a. Er., 11b; Succah, 53a. Cantillation in Reuchlin's *de accentibus*, etc. (1518), shows hardly a change. This points to the fixity of tradition. Cohen: *Mus. Ass'n Proceedings*, London, June 13, 1893, Meg. 32a, Ned. 37a, Ber. 62a.

<sup>27</sup> Dorian D E F G A B C D.

<sup>28</sup> Talm., Jer. Ber., Ch. I. שכן מצינו בנביאים שהיו חותמין את דבריהם בדברי שבה ונחמות.