# The Music in a Sephardi Synagogue in Israel: A Case Study

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## Biography

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## Abstract

This article examines the music of the Sabbath morning service (*shaharit*) at one Sephardi synagogue in Israel. It is based on three and a half years of fieldwork (1998-2001) at the Aboav synagogue in the city of Safed. Methods included participant-observation, interviews, and recordings of prayers performed by each informant and by the congregation.1 The music of the Sabbath service is central to the performance of ritual and consists of four musical genres that are performed in fixed places of the service by specific members of the congregation. This study examines the performance of the Sabbath morning service at Aboav from three angles: First, by examining the unique musical traits of each musical genre; second, by viewing the music as a central component of the prayer ritual; and third, by considering the music of the Sabbath service as it reflects ethnic identity and power dynamics within the synagogue's congregation.

## The Jewish Liturgy: Sephardi Jews and Their Liturgical Tradition

The Jewish liturgy consists of the public performance of a selection of texts that are performed with various types of sound structures, ranging from simple chanting to defined melodies. These texts are compiled in two books: the *siddur* (Order of Daily, Sabbath and New Moon prayers) and the *mahzor* (Order of New Year, Day of Atonement and Festivals' prayers) that were ultimately canonized around the 10th century CE. They include biblical verses, texts from the Oral Law (*Mishnah* and *Talmud*), benedictions (some of them were instituted towards the end of the Biblical period), prose insertions from the post-Talmudic period, and liturgical poetry. Liturgical services take place at fixed times of the day (morning, afternoon and evening on regular days), usually (but not necessarily) in a synagogue.

While the texts of the Jewish liturgy have been fixed from the 10th century onward, its performance practice has remained open. Each Jewish community crystallizes its own particular sound system for the performance of the liturgy. Important factors determining the unique sound of liturgical performances in each Jewish community are the surrounding non-Jewish musical cultures and the interaction between expert cantors, the rabbinical leaderships and the congregation. The synagogue congregation studied in this paper comprises two Sephardi Jewish groups. Following the expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula in the late 15th century, exiled Spanish and Portuguese Jews spread over the shores of the Mediterranean, throughout the Maghreb, the Middle East, the Balkans and Italy. These communities identified themselves as "Sephardi" – from the word *Sepharad*, "Spain" in Hebrew (Diaz-Mas:1-9, 35-62). Two major styles of Sephardi liturgy developed after the expulsion from Spain in 1492: the Ottoman (Eastern-Sephardi) and the Maghrebi (mainly Moroccan). The Eastern-Sephardi synagogues throughout the Ottoman Empire shared a network of musical repertoires. The major musical feature of Eastern-Sephardi Jewry is the adoption of the Turkish and Arabic modal systems (*maqamat*) as a basis for the performance of the liturgy. From the Ottoman cantorial style emerged the dominant contemporary style of Eastern-Sephardi synagogue music in the Eastern Mediterranean and beyond, called “Jerusalem-Sephardi” or "Eastern-Sephardi."2 This style resulted from the blending of Turkish, Syrian and Judeo-Spanish elements. The Moroccan Jewish liturgy consists of two layers: traditions that are rooted in the times before the 1492 expulsion of the Jews from Spain, and musical elements from the Andalusian Nuba that found their way into the Moroccan liturgy.

There is very little research literature about the liturgical music of the two groups discussed here. At the beginning of the twentieth century, research on Jewish music concentrated primarily on its historical aspects. The work of A.Z. Idelsohn, still considered one of the greatest scholars of Jewish music, is representative of this approach. He distinguished between the music of the Jews of Spain, those of the Ottoman Empire (Eastern Mediterranean), and

those of Morocco (Western Mediterranean). The fourth volume of his comprehensive research, *Thesaurus of Hebrew Oriental Melodies*, is devoted to Eastern Sephardi Music, that of the Sephardi Jews of the Ottoman Empire (Idelsohn 1923), and the fifth to the music of the Moroccan Jewish communities (ibid. 1925). Liturgical music is a central component of both of these works: Idelsohn analyzes the modal systems of the liturgical music of the two communities, and classifies various categories of melodic systems in their musical repertoire. Two studies of liturgical traditions of individual ethnic groups among the Sephardi communities were done in the 20th century. Lachmann (1940) was the first to document the liturgical tradition of the Jewish congregation of the island of Djerba in Tunisia. Kligman (1997) investigated the modal patterns of the liturgy in one synagogue of Syrian Jews in Brooklyn.

**The Aboav Synagogue**

The Aboav Synagogue is situated in the old city of Safed, in the north of Israel, on the western slope of Mount Canaan. It was built at the beginning of the 16th century by a group of Jews who had been expelled from Spain in 1492. Safed was one of the places of refuge for the exiled Spanish Jews. The synagogue is named after a prominent Sephardi Jewish figure, Rabbi Yitzhak Aboav I, who lived in the first half of the 14th century in Spain and is known for his book "The candelabrum of light" (*Menorat Hamaor*), considered by all Sephardi Jews to be an important work of religious ethics (Shur 1983:9). When the community of Jews from Spain came to Safed in the beginning of the 16th century, they brought a Torah scroll that was written by Yitzhak Aboav in the 14th century and placed it in the synagogue they had built and named "Aboav Synagoue", after their famous Rabbi. This Torah scroll still exists and is situated in a special place in the synagogue. Aboav synagogue has been an active place of Sephardi Jewish worship since the early 16th century, and until the second half of the 20th century its congregation was Eastern-Sephardi, from various parts of the former Ottoman Empire (Shur 1983:43-82). The liturgical tradition created in the synagogue is known as an Eastern-Sephardic tradition, also practiced in the other old Sephardi synagogues of Safed.

After the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, groups from the Maghreb, mainly Morocco, immigrated to Safed and settled there. Some members of these Moroccan groups became regular worshippers at the Aboav Synagogue. At the time of this research (1998-2001), the congregation of Aboav consisted of two large groups and a smaller one. One group was comprised of Eastern Sephardi Jews of Safed, descendants of the Sephardi Jews who settled in Safed immediately after the Spanish expulsion, as well as other Sephardi Jews from the former Ottoman Empire (Syria, Lebanon, and Turkey). This group had about 35 members. The second major group was composed of North African Jews, mostly from Morocco as well as some from Tunis. This group consisted of about 20 people. There was also a very small group (6-8 people) of Ashkenazi Jews.3 My fieldwork involved conversations and interviews with all members of the congregation. However, three people from the synagogue were my primary informants in this study: Shlomo Hadad, the regular cantor, Meir Cresanti, the synagogue beadle, and Shimon Sabag, the *de facto* leader of the Moroccan group in the congregation.

Shlomo Hadad was born in 1959, grew up in Safed, and learned his liturgical performance style from the previous cantor and from the elders of the synagogue. Hadad claims that the musical style of the previous cantor and of the elders had been Eastern-Sephardi, and considers that he is continuing the Eastern-Sephardi tradition in Aboav. Meir Cresanti, the synagogue beadle (*gabai*), is in charge of the administration of the synagogue. Cresanti's family has lived in Safed since the 18th century and his father was the previous cantor of Aboav. He is considered by the congregation to possess a vast knowledge of the Eastern-Sephardi liturgy. In addition to his administrative status, Mr. Cresanti is involved in every aspect of the service performance, including the style of performance and who is entitled to perform. The third primary informant, Simon Sabag, is the prayer leader of the first section of the service (Dawn prayers). Born in 1943 in Morocco, Mr. Sabag performs his part of the service in the Moroccan style, and is considered to be a representative of the North African group in the synagogue.

**Aboav Synagogue images**


**[1]**

**[2]**

**[3]**

**[4]**

**Music in the Abaov Synagogue**

The Jewish-Sephardi Sabbath service is composed of five sections. In Aboav sections of the service are divided between various members of the congregation in the following way:4 Dawn prayers (*tefillot hashahar,* the first part of the *shaharit*) are performed by the Moroccan prayer leader, Simon Sabag, followed by the psalms, which are performed by Mr. Sabag and an Eastern-Sephardi congregation member, usually the beadle. Mr. Hadad, the regular cantor, leads the compulsory prayers, and then is joined by other congregation members for the Cantillation of the Pentateuch and Prophets. Various members of the congregation or guests perform additional services. During my research it became clear that the Eastern Sephardi and Moroccan members of the congregation had very different styles of musical performance. The various styles of performance apparent in the service is, I posit, the result of the influence of individuals who posses positions of power within the synagogue, and who represent the different ethnic groups within the congregation. The music of the Sabbath service therefore mediates in the negotiations between these ethnic groups and is an extremely important component of the expression and maintenance of the ethnic identities within the congregation.5 In order to demonstrate how the music of the Sabbath services reflect the congregation's diversity, I shall now expound on the four musical genres of the Sabbath morning service in detail, closely examining both the musical and ethnographic aspects of performance in Aboav synagogue.

The four distinct musical genres of the Sabbath morning service at Aboav include Cantillation (chanting of the Pentateuch), Psalmody (singing of psalms), prayer chanting, and melodies. These four musical genres constitute the prayer service and are performed to different texts, in particular sections of the service and by specific performers. Each of these four genres has unique and defined melodic and rhythmic characteristics, which I will now discuss in detail.

Cantillation is the first musical genre performed in the Sabbath morning service. Cantillation, which consists of a recitation of the Pentateuch (*Torah*), is usually performed by the regular cantor.6 An examination of his performance shows that he uses an Eastern Sephardi style (also called Jerusalem-Sephardi). This style is typified by specific melodic, rhythmic and modal characteristics (see Braun 1984). Namely, the melodic structures created by Biblical Cantillation reflect a succession of accentuation signs, which in turn reflects the syntax of the text. The resulting musical form of the Cantillation is that of a recurring melody in which each repetition has a different length, reflecting the length of the Biblical verse. The rhythm of the Cantillation shows a fixed pulse but not a fixed meter, and the rhythmic patterns derive from the patterns of accented and unaccented syllables of the text. The text-music relations in Cantillation are varied. Most accents are rendered syllabically; some create a pneumatic texture (two or three notes to a syllable), while a number of accents are performed in a melismatic manner.

**Audio:**
Cantillation of the Pentateuch. Performed by Mr. Shelomo Hadad, cantor of Aboav synagogue.
AC_FL_RunContent( 'type','application/x-shockwave-flash','data','/audio/player.swf','id','audioplayer1','height','24','width','290','movie','/audio/player','flashvars','playerID=1&bg=0xf8f8f8&leftbg=0x998D93&lefticon=0xFFFFFF&rightbg=0x705E67&rightbghover=0x999999&righticon=0xFFFFFF&righticonhover=0xffffff&text=0x666666&slider=0x666666&track=0xFFFFFF&border=0x666666&loader=0xE7E0E2&loop=no&autostart=no&soundFile=http://www.fileden.com/files/2008/2/11/1753715/My%20Documents/PREvol12/CantillationOfThePentateuch.mp3','quality','high','menu','false','wmode','transparent' ); //end AC code

The modal basis of the Eastern-Sephardi style of Cantillation is the Arabic *Maqam Segah*.7 The dominant intonations and prevailing cadential patterns of this style of Cantillation mimic the basic tetrachord of *Maqam Segah,* whichconsists of whole and quarter tones. [example 1a **[5]]**

The first degree of the *Maqam Segah* (*mi* quarter flat) is the recurring recitation tone in the Cantillation as performed by cantor Shlomo Hadad, as well as the main cadential tone, while the third degree (*sol*) functions as the secondary pause. The melodic progression usually encompasses a range of a tetrachord or a pentachord. [example 1b] **[6]**

The presence of these musical traits indicate that the Cantillation performed in Aboav belongs to the Eastern-Sephardi or Jerusalem-Sephardi style that is practiced in the communities of the former Ottoman Empire of the Near East. The Moroccan Cantillation style is not represented at all in the synagogue. It should be pointed out that the musical performance of the Torah in this Eastern-Sephardi style still warrants comprehensive research.

The second musical genre performed in Aboav is Psalmody. Psalmody is the opening section of many morning synagogue services, and consists of a sung selection of psalms. Psalmody in Aboav is performed each Sabbath by two congregation members. One performer represents the Moroccan style and the other represents the Sephardi style (the latter is performed by two individuals who alternate every week.) While the two styles are different, they do share some musical characteristics. Both contain a two-part melody that consists of two motifs, separated by clear-cut stops, and these stops are performed only in certain sections of the verses. Melodically, an interval of a minor second separates the final tone of the first motif and the final tone of the second motif, and the entire tonal system of the psalmody is based on a pentachord. In both styles the rhythm is a kind of flowing rhythm that is based on the prosody of the text.
[example 2a] **[7]**

**Audio:**
Psalmody in Moroccan style. Performed by Mr. Shimon Sabag.
AC_FL_RunContent( 'type','application/x-shockwave-flash','data','/audio/player.swf','id','audioplayer2','height','24','width','290','movie','/audio/player','flashvars','playerID=2&bg=0xf8f8f8&leftbg=0x998D93&lefticon=0xFFFFFF&rightbg=0x705E67&rightbghover=0x999999&righticon=0xFFFFFF&righticonhover=0xffffff&text=0x666666&slider=0x666666&track=0xFFFFFF&border=0x666666&loader=0xE7E0E2&loop=no&autostart=no&soundFile=http://www.fileden.com/files/2008/2/11/1753715/My%20Documents/PREvol12/PsalmodyInMoroccanStyle.mp3','quality','high','menu','false','wmode','transparent' ); //end AC code

Psalmody in Eastern-Sephardi style. Performed by Mr. Meir Cresanty.
AC_FL_RunContent( 'type','application/x-shockwave-flash','data','/audio/player.swf','id','audioplayer3','height','24','width','290','movie','/audio/player','flashvars','playerID=3&bg=0xf8f8f8&leftbg=0x998D93&lefticon=0xFFFFFF&rightbg=0x705E67&rightbghover=0x999999&righticon=0xFFFFFF&righticonhover=0xffffff&text=0x666666&slider=0x666666&track=0xFFFFFF&border=0x666666&loader=0xE7E0E2&loop=no&autostart=no&soundFile=http://www.fileden.com/files/2008/2/11/1753715/My%20Documents/PREvol12/PsalmodyInEasternSephardiStyle.mp3','quality','high','menu','false','wmode','transparent' ); //end AC code

The slight differences of style between the Moroccan performance and the Sephardi performance include different recitation tones, different melodic direction in the second motif of the verse, and different pauses in the melody that create variations of rhythmic structure. Example 2b **[8]** demonstrates this variation, showing how the Moroccan performer omits the stop after the first hemistich of the verse, while the Eastern-Sephardi performer does include this stop.

Analysis of the performances, repeated listening, and interviews with the two informants who perform the psalmody in Aboav led me to the conclusion that in the psalmodic genre there are some central characteristics common to all performers, whether Moroccan or Eastern-Sephardi, but that there also exist differences in execution which afford an Eastern-Sephardi or Moroccan coloring to the music.

Prayer chanting is the third musical genre of Sabbath service in Aboav and includes the performance of most of the prose texts of the Jewish liturgy. Prayer chanting covers the bulk of the liturgy and is performed by the regular cantor alone. Prayer chanting has not been researched enough as a Jewish musical genre in the past. This study explores this genre in a deep and detailed way and examines the different performance styles of this genre in Aboav synagogue. Prayer chanting consists of melodies that do not belong to the three other musical genres of the prayer service, and which have several definite musical characteristics. First, they are based on the modal system of the Arabic *Maqamat Rast* and *Bayat*. Second, the melodic lines are divided into sections and units by primary and secondary cadential tones, and by concluding formulae. Third, the melodic contours are based on tone rows of tetrachords and pentachords and flow around key recitation tones. Finally, the rhythmic patterns are based on a flowing rhythm that consists of stops, accentuations and patterns of tone duration.
[example 3a] **[9]** [example 3b] **[10]**

Prayer chanting in Aboav is a unique musical genre which has not until now been defined as a musical genre in the field of Jewish musical research. It stems from two related musical traditions: the Jewish Sephardi liturgical tradition and the urban musical tradition of the Near East Islamic countries.

**Audio:**
Prayer Chanting in Maqam Rast. Performed by Mr. Shelomo Hadad.
AC_FL_RunContent( 'type','application/x-shockwave-flash','data','/audio/player.swf','id','audioplayer4','height','24','wi

dth','290','movie','/audio/player','flashvars','playerID=4&bg=0xf8f8f8&leftbg=0x998D93&lefticon=0xFFFFFF&rightbg=0x705E67&rightbghover=0x999999&righticon=0xFFFFFF&righticonhover=0xffffff&text=0x666666&slider=0x666666&track=0xFFFFFF&border=0x666666&loader=0xE7E0E2&loop=no&autostart=no&soundFile=http://www.fileden.com/files/2008/2/11/1753715/My%20Documents/PREvol12/PrayerChantingInMaqamRast.mp3','quality','high','menu','false','wmode','transparent' ); //end AC code

The fourth musical genre in Aboav are the melodies sung in Sabbath morning prayers. They are, for the most part, metric tunes with a fixed cyclical structure. All melodies are constructed of a series of two or four musical phrases that usually fit the syntactical structure of the text. In the course of the service, the melodies serve as “musical stations” (Seroussi 1996:64-65). They are clearly distinguishable from the unrhythmical progression of the prayers. These stations are situated at different points in the service, sometimes at the beginning or end of a section, and sometimes at other points. They are usually sung by the congregation as a group.8

**Audio:**
Melody. Performed by Mr. Shelomo Hadad.
AC_FL_RunContent( 'type','application/x-shockwave-flash','data','/audio/player.swf','id','audioplayer5','height','24','width','290','movie','/audio/player','flashvars','playerID=5&bg=0xf8f8f8&leftbg=0x998D93&lefticon=0xFFFFFF&rightbg=0x705E67&rightbghover=0x999999&righticon=0xFFFFFF&righticonhover=0xffffff&text=0x666666&slider=0x666666&track=0xFFFFFF&border=0x666666&loader=0xE7E0E2&loop=no&autostart=no&soundFile=http://www.fileden.com/files/2008/2/11/1753715/My%20Documents/PREvol12/Melody.mp3','quality','high','menu','false','wmode','transparent' ); //end AC code

The melodies in the Aboav sabbath morning service originated in various places and periods. There are among them ancient melodies, songs of Safed’s old tradition, tunes of the Palestinian Arabs, melodies from Syria, Egypt, Morocco, Turkey and Tunis, tunes derived from paraliturgical poetry, Ashkenazi tunes, and others derived from popular Israeli musical culture. The different sources of the melodies also exemplify the ethnic composition of the congregation—every ethnic culture in the synagogue is represented in the repertoire of melodies. Most of the melodies are "adopted" tunes from the Near East musical cultures, and I found that the process of adopting melodies into the prayer service in this synagogue has continued from the synagogue’s inception until the present day.9 The larger part of the repertoire is based on the *maqam* modal system.10 A small group of melodies is based on tetrachords or pentachords and few other tunes are based on the western minor key. A large number of the melodies (27 out of 50) clearly belong to the musical culture of the Near East and North Africa: 12 are Arab melodies, 3 from Halab (Syria), 2 from Iraq, 3 from Morocco, 2 from Tunisia, 4 from Turkey, 1 from Egypt. Thirteen melodies that are of unknown origin have musical traits that relate them to the Near Eastern musical culture, such as modal systems (*maqam*) or styles of melodic contour and structure. Example 4 shows an Arab melody adapted for use in the synagogue setting. [example 4] **[11]**

My research revealed that the performance styles of the musical genres in Aboav reflect individual influence and power dynamics within the congregation. I will now discuss some of the ethnographic and socio-historical aspects of my research in order to clearly show how these dynamics are realized.

In the last two decades, there have been changes in the musical aspects of the Sabbath morning service. Most of the changes in the music have occurred in the melodies, and worshippers consider the cantor, Shlomo Hadad, to be responsible for additions to the repertoire. Mr. Hadad himself repeatedly emphasized that he had initiated the addition of a considerable proportion of the tunes now sung in Aboav. It was he, for example, who introduced the tunes based on *piyyutim* (religious poems). Mr. Hadad is also the initiator of the ritual of singing religious songs in the Eastern-Sephardi style on Friday evenings, called "*bakkashot* singing" (see Ya'ayama 2003:15-73). Since the cantor conducts the singing of the *bakkashot* on the Sabbath eve, he is most familiar with this repertoire, and choses tunes from the *bakkashot* music that he considers most suitable to the text of the Sabbath morning service. The congregation has learned these songs under his guidance.

The cantor also decides which melody is to be sung in a majority of the musical stations of the Sabbath service. Mr. Hadad has a decisive voice in picking melodies and thus his role in choosing the repertoire of the Sabbath services and determining the predominant style of the service’s music is of the utmost importance. Sometimes the cantor’s choice of melodies is motivated by concerns such as welcoming guests or members of the congregation. For instance, during Sabbath services in which a guest of a non-religious family or one of the Ashkenazi members who is not acquainted with the music sung in the Aboav synagogue, is called to the *Torah*, the cantor always performs the tunes in the service in the *Hijaz maqam*, which has an Israeli or Ashkenazi flavor, in his view.

The cantor also chooses the melodies for the celebration of traditional events by the congregation. For instance, on the Sabbath's close to the beginning of the Hebrew month he directs the congregation to sing a specific melody that is always performed on the first day of the month. Similarly, on days close to the celebrations of the holy figures of the Moroccan community (*hilulot tzadikim*) the cantor sings the melody of the *kedusha* to a Moroccan tune associated with these celebrations. Moreover, when the *Lag ba'Omer* and *Simhat Torah* festivals are approaching he sings the melody known as "the Abu family's melody", which is associated with the processions carrying the ancient *Torah* scroll of the Aboav synagogue during these holidays. Singing these tunes is a musical announcement to the congregation of the coming traditional events, and is also a method used by the cantor to uplift the atmosphere in the synagogue and make it more festive.

The cantor's influence on the music of the synagogue is also pedagogical, as he is the central figure in the education of the next generation in the synagogue. Mr. Hadad informed me that since the age of 18 he had been teaching the children of the congregation the liturgy in a style of performance that he calls "our Eastern-Sephardi style". He indicated that he would like to pass on this performance style that he had learnt from the previous cantors of Aboav synagogue, as well as pass on his own innovations (the melodies and the *maqam* system of prayer chanting). The group of children he teaches plays an active part in Sabbath and holidays services, and perform parts of the service, mainly in the Psalmody section and some of the melodies.

Another prominent figure in the synagogue, the beadle Mr. Meir Cresanti, also has a major influence in the synagogue's music. Mr. Cresanti is the son of the former cantor of Aboav. He was taught the liturgy in the Eastern-Sephardi style by his father and is considered by the congregation and by the cantor to possess a vast knowledge of this style and repertoire. Mr. Cresanti has attempted to preserve the Eastern-Sephardi style of performance in the synagogue, and has the authority to appoint all the performers of the service. This authority was given to him by the Eastern-Sephardi group in the synagogue and is accepted by the other participants. During my fieldwork, I noticed that Mr. Cresanti is very strict in his choice of performers for the service and always appoints congregation members to main parts who are of Eastern-Sephardi origin and know this style of liturgy. Even when the cantor is absent, Mr. Cresanti never replaces him with somebody from the Moroccan group.

The third important figure in the synagogue is Mr. Shimon Sabag. Mr. Sabag was born in Morocco and came to Safed at the age of twenty. He has attended Sabbath and holiday services in Aboav since the 1980s, and is considered a proficient performer of the Moroccan style of liturgy. During the time of my research he was the leader and representative of the North African group in the synagogue. In our interview he stated that he had demanded of Mr. Cresanti, the beadle, that part of the Aboav service be performed in the Moroccan style. Mr. Cresanti agreed and appointed him as the prayer-leader of the first section of the service, and of part of the psalm section.

In speaking with these three members of the synagogue, it became clear that the appointment of the performers is an expression of the relationships and interactions of the ethnic groups within the congregation. The cantor and the beadle, who belong to the Eastern-Sephardi tradition that has been developing in the synagogue for five hundred years, hold the foremost posts in the synagogue, and are particularly influential with regard to the performance of the prayers. The central and most important part of the service (the compulsory prayer and the Cantillation of the *Torah*) is performed by the cantor in the Eastern-Sephardi style. However, the Moroccan group in the synagogue is now also represented in the first part of the service, which includes the dawn prayers and the psalm section; this is sung by the same performer in a Moroccan style, in collaboration with the performer of the Eastern-Sephardi style.

The style of worship (*nosah*) and the way in which the prayers are performed in practice is of great concern to the worshippers and their leaders. When the three main informants were asked what, in their view, their "version" of the prayers entailed, they replied: "the music of the prayers," "the tunes of the prayers," and "our tradition." They especially emphasized the melodic progressions: "the singing," "the songs," or "the cantor's performance" (*hazzanut*) as components of their styles. In view of the worshipper's definitions of the styles, and taking into account my own investigation of the music, I can conclude that both the Eastern Sephardi and Moroccan styles of worship are found in the service. In principle, although the liturgical text is a fundamental element of the prayer, it is the music that creates the unique style which constitutes a special version of the service unique to Aboav. This music is performed in styles which the performers and the congregation feel to be correct according to their customs and tradition.

My research has shown that the styles of performance in the Sabbath services reflect aspects of the ethnic identity of groups within the congregation. As the congregation's dominant ethnic identity is Sephardi, the music of the prayers is thus performed mainly in the Eastern Sephardi style. In discussions with the beadle and cantor, they emphasized that they are very strict about performing the main sections of the service (Cantillation and prayer

chanting) in the Eastern-Sephardi style, and that they will not allow these sections to be performed in the Moroccan style. Likewise, the performance of the Psalmody is an example of one way in which the Moroccan group has negotiated with the dominant Eastern Sephardi group in expressing their music within the service. Their demand that the Moroccan style be included in the execution of the prayers demonstrates this. These questions continue to be worked out within the synagogue. For example, in the first year of my fieldwork, the prayer leader of the first section (who is of Moroccan origin) performed solo, while in the second year of my research the psalms began to be sung by two people: the prayer leader, of Moroccan descent, and the beadle, of Safed Eastern Sephardi descent. The performance alternated between the Moroccan performer and the Eastern-Sephardi performer after each section. The Eastern-Sephardi group claims that the liturgical tradition of the synagogue is Eastern-Sephardi, and should be preserved; in general they do not want to accede to the demands of the Moroccan group, which joined the five-hundred year old synagogue only fifty years ago. Therefore, among the genres examined in this study, the Moroccan style is found only in a small number of melodies.

## Conclusions

This study explored the music of a Sabbath morning service at one Sephardi synagogue in Israel. Three aspects were examined: musical characteristics; the role of music in the Sabbath service; and the social dynamics behind the Sabbath performances. As I have shown, this music consists of four different genres that are performed by specific individuals in fixed contexts, with different types of texts. The study revealed the centrality of music to religious ritual at Aboav. It also uncovered the connections between social relations and musical processes within the synagogue. In order to reach general conclusions about musical styles in Eastern-Sephardi synagogues, it would be necessary to extend this research to a greater number of Eastern-Sephardi synagogues in Israel and the Diaspora.11

## Notes

1. The recordings were not done on Sabbath since recording is not allowed on this holy day. I recorded the informants on other occasions. The problem of fieldwork of Jewish liturgy on Sabbath appears in Summit's research of synagogue music in the U.S. (Summit 2000:9-10).

2. In this article the terms "Eastern-Sephardi" and "Jerusalem-Sephardi" are synonymous.

3. The Ashkenazi Jews are descendants of Jews who came originally from eastern and central Europe The Ashkenazi liturgy has its own musical style, but this style is not represented in Aboav Synagogue.

4. See appendix 1 **[12]** for more detailed information.

5. The expression "ethnic group" in this article refers to the cultural boundaries of a group, which create a dichotomy between the members of that group and those outside it (Barth 1969:14). Royce (1982:17-23), following Barth's definition, defines an ethnic group as a group of people who believe that they have a common historical past and culture and who identify themselves with this past and culture through their contact with other groups. "Ethnic identity," according to Royce, is the totality of the feelings of a group with regard to the common values, symbols, and history that create the separate group identity of the group as a whole.

6. The performance of the Biblical texts is done according to a system of signs called masoretic accents (*ta'amei miqra*), which appear below or above the Biblical text, but not in the scrolls from which the portions are read in the synagogue. The accents indicate to the reader the location of pauses or continuous reading. Since each accent has a different grade of disjunctiveness or conjunctiveness, they also indicate to the reader diverse degrees of prosodic emphasis. In theory, each accent has a defined musical realization, but in practice the musical discreteness of each accent decreases from the clearly defined strong pauses down to the weak conjunctive accents. The division of the Biblical text caused by reading according to the accents also has a hermeneutic dimension.

7. In Arabic music, a *maqam* (plural *maqamat*) is a set of notes with traditions that define their relationships, characteristic patterns, and melodic development. The Arabic scales on which maqamat are built are not even tempered like the chromatic scale of Western classical music. The 5th notes are tuned based on the 3rd harmonic. The tuning of the rest of the scale's notes depends on the maqam. Many maqamat include notes that can be approximated with quarter tones.

8. See appendix 2 **[13]** for list of melodies and their origins.

9. For detailed explanation of "adopted" melodies in Sephardi liturgy see Bahat 1986; Seroussi 1988; Seroussi & Weich-Shahak 1990.

10. See appendix 3 **[14]** for list of melodies and their modal systems.

11. The author of this article is currently conducting an extensive study of the Eastern-Sephardi (Jerusalem-Sephardi) musical tradition, under the auspices of the Jewish Music Research Centre at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem.

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