Misha Alexandrovich

Side 1

Unp'nei Hatoalov

The prayer rendered in this recording was set to music by Bezetel Brum (1809—1833), chairman of the Choral Synagogue in Nikolsky (Russia). Next Shneol

The prayer is recited in the course of bringing the Scrolls forth from the Ark. The Liturgy is from Haashe (Source book of Cabbalah). The melody was arranged by the Cantor Michael Alexandrovich.

Hineni Mekhanam

This prayer is recited before the Omer Count. The music was composed by Samuel Aiman (1887—1948), director of synagogues in England, and is sung in many synagogues throughout the world, as well as a concert piece.

Side 2

Hatzei Elonei Erez

Passages from the Book of Daniel (9:18-19), recited in the Supplication Prayer of Mondays and Thursdays, as well as in the Penitential Prayers. The composer is Cantor Israel Rosenfeld (1886—1956). This prayer is one of the most popular Jewish melodies, sung by cantors everywhere, among the well-known Shabbat and Shabbat Alenu.

Ketzel Vinu Kehet

The principal prayer in the Sabbath Eve Service. The melody is by the well-known cantor Israel Alter, and is in the traditional Sabbath Eve melodic strain.

Yishtob Shekhnah.

From the "Shema Yisrael" prayer recited at the Ark on the Festivals, before the Reading of the Torah. Composed by the Cantor Michael Alexandrovich.

Kee Lelah Tov

A compilation of passages recited when the Scrolls are returned to the Ark. The melody was composed by Cantor David Rasmussen (1864—1943) and is rendered in this recording as arranged by Martin White.

With the ZOA Male Choir

Conducted by Joseph Friedland

With string quartet by Y. Friedland

With Dr. Hanan Wintersitz Piano and Accompaniment

"Return us to Thee, O Lord, and we shall return — renew our days as of old!" — this verse brings special meaning to those who heard the cantorial traditions of Michael Alexandrovich in Riga, Manchester, Kovno, Moscow, and other cities throughout Europe, and to those who are now flocking to the Central Synagogue of Ramat-Gan where Michael Alexandrovich has been serving as Chief Cantor since his arrival from the Soviet Union in the fall of 1971.

Michael Alexandrovich was born in Voronezh, a town in the region of Voronezh Oblast in Russia. He was born on March 18, 1920, to a family of scholars and music lovers. One of his relatives is the famous cantor Ben Zion Ben-Asher, who was a member of the St. Petersburg (now Leningrad) Conservatory. For hours he held his listeners spellbound with renditions from the works of Schubert, Schumann, and Grieg and others. The Latvian press hailed his performances, which, from their beginning, drew from music critics the comment that the "child prodigy," Misha Alexandrovich, was a unique phenomenon in the world of music. Thus heralded, Misha appeared in many cities all over Europe, singing in three languages — Yiddish, Russian and German, as well as delighting his audiences with cantorial works.

When his voice began to change, he enrolled in the Latvia Conservatory for violin and piano work. One of his teachers was the singer Rasa Anikstein, a graduate of the St. Petersburg Conservatory. After World War II, Riga was occupied by the Soviet army, and Michael Alexandrovich and his family were forced to leave the city.

In 1937, for the position of Chief Cantor in the "Ohel Yoasov," Choral Synagogue in Kovno (Lithuania), Alexandrovich was given the engagement, along with a large choir conducted by M. Gerber. On his way to Kovno he passed through France to make a recording of cantorial selections for the French Company accompanied by the famous violinist and pianist Vladimir Dik (the record is today a collector's item). He continued on to Poland, where he was received by the conductor David Eisenstadt, who persisted at the hands of the Nazis.

With Alexandrovich's arrival in Kovno, the "Ohel Yoasov" Synagogue soon became the center of cantorial music, which thronged the Synagogue on Sabbaths and festivals. The Latvian press hailed his performances, which were acclaimed both in Europe and in the Soviet Union.

In 1946, he was called to a position in the Choral Synagogue of Moscow, where he continued to develop his musical talents. He was invited to perform in the Soviet Union, and his performances were widely acclaimed. In 1950, he was appointed to the position of chief cantor at the Central Synagogue of Moscow, where he continued his work until his retirement in 1971.

In 1971, he was invited to Israel, where he taught and performed in various synagogues. He was appointed as the chief cantor of the Ramat-Gan Central Synagogue, where he continued his work until his retirement in 1974.

Michael Alexandrovich announced his retirement in 1974, but continued to perform in public, including the "child prodigy" cantorial work. He continued to perform in the cantorial profession, combining the bel canto style with the liturgical melody of the Jewish community. Young as he was, he was the object of competition among cantorial academies in Europe and America. The late Rabbi Menahem Muckerman, one of the leaders of Latvian Jewry, provided young Alexandrovich with a letter of recommendation to the effect that the "young Michael Alexandrovich is worthy of officiating on behalf of the community wherever Jews abide".

The young (age: 20) cantor's first position was with a cantorial group in Manchester, England. Despite being a native of Eastern Europe, he adapted himself quickly to Western Jewry, but his heart yearned for that part of the world where he was born. When an opening came,
Side 1 Stereo
ISZ-1026 (ZISZ-0091)
Misha Alexandrovich, Cantor

"...השיבו ה' אליך ונשבה..."

* 1. Umip'nei Hatoeineu

(P) 1972

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** 2. Brikh Shmei

* 3. Hineni Mukhan Umezuman

וכשתיפות מכחולת הנבירה של ב.צ.א.
כנורות של תוסף פריידלנברג
עם רביעית כל מותר
עם ד"ר חנא翀נרי, פסטער

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Side 2 Stereo
ISZ-1026 (ZISZ-0092)

Misha Alexandrovich, Cantor

"...":

1. Hatei Eloki Oznekha

2. Retzei Vim'nuhatenu

3. Yehi Ratzon Shenizkeh

4. Kee Lekah Tov

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