Masterpieces of the Synagogue

The Art of Cantor Josef Rosenblatt
MASTERPIECES OF THE SYNAGOGUE: THE ART OF CANTOR JOSEF ROSENBLATT

SIDE 1

Band 1 — ELOKAY NESHOMON (O My God, the Soul Thou Gavest Me Is Lamented) (Recorded September 17, 1920)

Band 2 — HABET MISHOMAYIM (Look Down from Heaven) (Recorded June 6, 1921)

Band 3 — ACHENU KOL BETH ISRAEL (Our Brethren, the Whole House of Israel) (Recorded October 15, 1920, and November 4, 1920)

Band 4 — ADOSHEM MOLCHON GEUS (The Lord Reigneth) (Recorded January 9, 1922)

SIDE 2

Band 1 — YISHTABACH (Praised Be Thy Name) (Recorded September 12, 1921)

Band 2 — TIKANTO SHABBOS (Thou Didst Institute the Sabbath) (Recorded September 15, 1921)

Band 3 — DER NEUER "OMAR RABBI ELOSOR" (The New "Omar Rabbi Elozor") (Arr. by N. Shikret) (Recorded September 15, 1921)

Band 4 — ELOKAY AD SHELCHO NOZARTI (O My God, Before I Was Fermed) (Recorded April 7, 1922)

Band 5 — WAF HU HOYOH MISCHAYVEN (The High Priest Awaits the Coming of God) (From "Avoth" of Yom Kippur) (Recorded November 16, 1921)

— Josef Rosenblatt—Levi Rosenblatt; Assisted by R. Kazimirsky

— a prayer, recited upon awaking from sleep, included among the preliminaries to the daily morning service, thanking God for the gift of the soul.

In the recitative, which begins with a low note and gradually rises to a higher pitch, one can almost feel the delicate, tender soul struggling to free itself from its earthly husk.

Neshomah, the Hebrew word for soul, is repeated many times by the cantor, each time, however, with another variation.

HABET MISHOMAYIM

"Look down from heaven and see how we have become a scorn and a derision among the nations; we are accounted as sheep brought to the slaughter, to be slain and destroyed, or to be slain and reproached.

"Yet, despite all this, we have not forgotten Thy name; we beseech Thee, forget us not.

"O Lord God of Israel, turn from Thy fierce wrath, and repent of the evil against Thy people."

—a stanza from the penitential poem recited after the fundamental prayer of the morning service on Mondays and Thursdays, describing Israel's precarious position in exile notwithstanding its faithfulness to God and implored the Eternal to remove His wrath from His people.

The age-old tragedy of Jewry in exile is expressed in this recitative—its anguish, its sorrow and weep, its humiliation, helplessness and shame. It would seem almost impossible to resist the plaintive entreaty of the singer as he throws himself on the mercy of the Heavenly Master.

ACHEINU KOL BETH ISRAEL

"Our brethren, the whole house of Israel, who are given over to trouble and captivity, whether they abide at sea or on the dry land—may the All-present have mercy upon them, and bring them forth from trouble to enlargement, from darkness to light, and from subjection to redemption, now speedily and at a near time; and let us say, Amen."

—a paragraph from the prayer recited by the reader of the service after the conclusion of the Pentecostal lesson on Monday and Thursday mornings in the synagogue, asking God's protection and redemption of the entire house of Israel from its trials and tribulations.

As one listens to the notes of the moving chant with which this prayer is sung one can hear the deep and warm love of the singer for his brethren in distress as well as the soothing assurance of God's salvation.

ADOSHEM MOLCHON GEUS

"The Lord reigneth; He hath reigned Himself in majesty; the Lord hath reigned Himself, yea, He hath girded Himself with strength; the world also is set firm, that it cannot be moved. Thy throne is set firm from of old, Thou art for evermore. Thy hand is filled with righteousness, and the right hand of the Most High executeth justice. The streams of many waters, mighty waters, breakers of the everlasting mountains, which are stilled, the valleys are changed into gladness. By Thy testimonies are the just made perfect, and Thy judgments are the study of the upright."

—psalm 93, depicting God's majesty, recited on every Sabbath eve immediately before the evening service.

There is majesty and grandeur in the free-flowing music with which this recitative is sung. One can almost hear the rolling of the waves of the sea just as one is impressed with the power of God.

YISHTABACH

"Praised be Thy Name forever, O our King, great and holy and God and King, in heaven and on earth. For unto Thee, O Lord our God and God of our fathers, song and praise are becoming, hymns and psalms, strength and domineering, victory, greatness and might, mercy and glory, holiness and sovereignty, blessings and thanksgivings from henceforth even forever. Bless be art Thou, O Lord, God and King, great in praise, God of thanksgivings, Lord of wonders, who maketh choice of song and psalm, O Lord, the life of all worlds."

—the benediction serving as the conclusion of the "verses of song" recited as an introduction to the daily morning service.

The intricate interweaving of florid passages and the quick movement from one mode to another produce an overpowering effect.

TIKANTO SHABBOS

"Thou didst institute the Sabbath, and didst accept its offerings. Thou didst command its special obligations with the order of its drink offerings. Their that thirst in it shall inherit glory and honor; and the secrets of the glory of the Lord shall be hid in it. Surely the Lord hath commanded the clouds to rain; and the sky, to give showers of rain."

—the beginning of the special section from the fundamental prayer of the additional service of the Sabbath which is read after the Pentecostal lesson.

Sabbath joy, the fulfillment of the obligations prescribed for the Sabbath, and hope for Israel's return to its ancestral land are the motifs that lend variety as well as color to this recitative in which the different emotions are given each its own formulation.

OMAR RABBI ELOSOR

"Sa'ad Rabbi Elozor in the name of Rabbi Chanina: The disciples of the sages increase peace throughout the world, as it is said: And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children. Read not here, koniyeh, thy children, but boniyeh, thy bidders. —Great peace have they that love Thy Torah; and there is no stumbling for them. Peace be within thy rampart, tranquility within thy palaces. For my brethren's and companions' sake, I would join peace speaking concerning thee. For the sake of the house of the Lord our God I would seek thy good. The Lord will give strength unto His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace."

—a quotation from the end of the first tractate of the Babylonian Talmud, included in the order of services of the eve of the Sabbath as well as in the additional service of Sabbath and holiday mornings.

In the traditional chant used in the study of the Talmud a colorful pattern of robusto tones, contrast and coloratura in falsetto has been woven by the composer and has been executed by him in his own inimitable manner.

ELOKAY AD SHELCHOB NOZARTTI

"O my God, before I was formed I was nothing, and now that I have been formed I am but as though I had not been formed. Dust am I in my youth, and death has more to my age. Behold, I am before Thee like a vessel filled with shame and confusion. May it be Thy will, O Lord our God and God of my fathers, that I may sin more; and as for the sins that I have committed, purge them away in Thine abounding compassion, although not by means of affliction and sore diseases."

—the conclusion of the fundamental prayer of the Day of Atonement recited in silent devotion, asking God to save the humble and contrite worshipper of his sins.

This expressive indicates man's feeling of his utter worthlessness in the presence of God. Anxious though he is to be purged of his shortcomings, however, he pleads with His Heavenly Father that the cleansing be anything but painful. This is emphasized in the musical rendering by the repetition of the key-word for "not."

WAF HU HOYOH MISCHAYVEN

"And be, too, concentrated on completing the pronunciation of the ineffable name simultaneously with them that blessed and said to them: Be ye clean. And Thou in Thy great goodness didst awaken Thy mercy and grant forgiveness to the tribe of him that ministered to Thee."

"Then he took a sharp knife, and slew the victim according to rule; he received the blood in the blood-vessel and gave him to it to stir it, that it might not congeal before the time of sprinkling; for if it had congealed, so that it could not have been sprinkled, it would have rendered the expiation abortive. Then he took a censer of pure gold, which was thin and light and had a long handle, and put it into three kobs of red hot flaming coals."

—a description in the cryptic style of the medieval Hebraic liturgists of the sacrificial service performed by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement, constituting a part of the additional service of the Sabbath.

The traditional motif has been utilized very deftly in the duet, which by its swift tempo and interlocking phraseology reflects the action it aims to portray.

Notes by Dr. Samuel Rosenblatt

Dr. Rosenblatt, Rabbi of the Beth Tfilon Congregation, Baltimore, Maryland, and son of Cantor Josef Rosenblatt, is the author of the only full-length biography of his father entitled "Yomdeh Rosenblatt," published by Farra, Stearns & Cadby. © by Radio Corporation of America, 1936.

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(Look Down from Heaven)

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(Our Brethren, the Whole House of Israel)

4—ADOSHEM MOLOCH GEUS (The Lord Reigneth)
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CAL 453
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LONG 33 1/3 PLAY
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   (O My God, Before I Was Formed)
5—W'AF HU HOYOH MIS'CHAVEN
   (The High Priest Awaits the Coming of God)
   (from "Avodoh" of Yom Kippur)

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